

NUMBERS AND WORDS

Written By

Grace Sherman

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY-NIGHT

The infinite night sky peppered with bright stars.

BETH (V.O.)
The greatest unsolved problem in
mathematics was the Pythenian
Hypothesis.

We begin to pan down heading straight for planet earth at
lighting speed.

BETH (V.O.)
Developed by the mathematician
Pythenius in the 17th century as he
contemplated the shape of the
universe.

We crash into earth and find ourselves on--

EXT. BEACH 1600'S-NIGHT

Pythenius stands on a beach in the Mediterranean looking up
at the stars in the sky.

The stars begin to move and group together until they form a
mathematical equation.

BETH (V.O.)
Rich in its depth and complexity,
Pythenius never found a solution
and it has perplexed mathematicians
ever since.

The stars begin to fall resembling a cascade of glitter
falling into the ocean. The waves of the ocean rise and swell
until they crash into--

EXT. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY 1800'S-DAY

The River Cam as it flows by a group of students sitting on
the grass arguing. Papers and books out in front of them.

BETH (V.O.)
It was one of the most heated
debates in mathematics.

EXT. CLASSROOM 1900'S-DAY

Albert Einstein lectures on the hypothesis with a group of students.

BETH (V.O.)
It baffled the greatest of minds.

EXT. MIT CAMPUS LIBRARY 1950'S-DAY

A group of students work on the hypothesis. One throws down a pen in frustration.

BETH (V.O.)
But history has shown over and over
again that every challenge worth
the journey waits patiently for the
right hero to conquer it.

ON THE PEN

As it bleeds into--

EXT. INNER CITY GHETTO-DAY

C/U on a game of craps being played in a garbage filled back alley.

TITLE: 1992

A group of young black and brown faces watch the next bets laid on the ground.

All but one. This is DeMarcus Daniels, 15, black, and currently forming a probability equation in his head. The black dots from the dice rise up and form numbers in the air.

A hand grabs the dice. A few good luck shakes before they are thrown to the ground.

The boys groan then stare at DeMarcus.

RODNEY
He won again!

Miguel, 18, eyes DeMarcus.

MIGUEL
How you win again, Nigga?

DEMARCUS
I just did.

MIGUEL
That is the third time. Nigga be
cheatin' for real.

Miguel jumps up. So does DeMarcus. The rest of the crowd gets behind Miguel except one.

This is Little Ed, scrawny, half black and half everything else, 17, but with obvious developmental delays.

LITTLE ED
Come on. He ain't cheatin'.

MIGUEL
Shut the hell up! Retarded dumb
shit.

DeMarcus bends down to collect his money.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)
Don't even think about it.

Miguel pulls out a switch blade. He points it towards DeMarcus.

DeMarcus does not flinch. Does not bat an eye.

LITTLE ED
Leave him alone.

Miguel moves the blade in front of Little Ed's face. DeMarcus calmly steps over to stand in front of Little Ed. Moves closer until his face is centimeters from the blade.

Miguel stares hard at DeMarcus. One of Miguel's boys pulls at his sleeve.

BOY
Come on, man. Let's go. This nigga
bat shit crazy for real.

Miguel holds the blade at DeMarcus a few seconds longer then folds it back up.

MIGUEL
Fuckin' bitch.

He spits on the ground and walks off with his boys right behind him.

DeMarcus bends down and collects his money.

INT. STREET-DAY

DeMarcus walks down the sidewalk with Little Ed in tow. Little Ed pulls a pixie stick from his pocket. Tears it open and pours it in his mouth.

LITTLE ED
D, how did you do that again? Keep
winnin' with them dice like that?

DEMARCUS
It's just probability theory.
Computing for mutually exclusive
events, you know?

LITTLE ED
Oh, yeah I know.

Little Ed does not know. Has no idea what DeMarcus is explaining. They both know this, but never say it. Little Ed opens another pixie stick.

LITTLE ED (CONT'D)
You going to your special school
today?

DEMARCUS
Yeah, I guess. On Thursdays he puts
up problems from past IMO
competitions.

EXT. STREET-DAY

DeMarcus walks down the street. Haunted. In the cross-hairs between boy and manhood. Headphones on his ears. Eyes dart from left to right.

Everything is mathematical. Lampposts bend into right angles, cars form into circles. He writes in his notebook. Flips the page. Scowls. That was his last one.

INT. CLASSROOM-DAY

Nervous looking high school students. They should be. This is advanced calculus.

Mr. Beeman, white, 30's, writes on the board. Personal aspirations for something greater than high school math long ago abandoned. Lives through his students.

MR. BEEMAN

You have 10 minutes. This one comes from the IMO competition in Budapest about ten years ago. Remained unsolved until a couple of Oxford students provided a proof last year. Don't expect you to solve it, just interested in your approach to nonnegative real numbers. Keep in mind that the inequality is symmetric with X , Y , and Z .

The students get to work. Only two black faces in a sea of white.

DeMarcus, one of the two black faces, sits slumped over in the very back of the class.

He lifts his head up to glance at the math problem on the board. Flips through his notebook. No new pages.

He looks around. Leans toward the brunette girl in front of him. Lightly taps her shoulder.

DEMARCUS

Hey, um, Mary Beth, right?

Mary Beth turns around and offers a sweet smile.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Do you have some paper I can borrow?

A blond boy, 17, in the next row focuses on DeMarcus' lingering black hand on Mary Beth's shoulder. Sneers at him.

DeMarcus tenses.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

(loudly)

Yo, you got a problem, Son?

Mr. Beeman looks up.

MR. BEEMAN

What's going on back there?

Mary Beth turns back to her work. The boys continue to stare until DeMarcus slumps back in his seat. He looks at the problem on the board one more time then puts his head down.

Beeman looks at him disappointedly.

ON DEMARCUS.

His head lays sideways on the desk, but he is wide awake. He stares at a bird out the window. The bird flies into the air and then stretches into a less than or equals sign. The tree branches fold into fractions. The leaves blow and form into equations.

DeMarcus writes something on the palm of his hand and closes his eyes.

MR. BEEMAN (CONT'D)

Ok, time is up. Any guesses?

Only one small brave hand raises. The second of the two black faces and she sits in the very front of the class.

This is Beth, 12, child prodigy. Younger and smaller than everyone else. Her oversized glasses slide down her narrow face as she goes to the board.

As she works the problem out students snicker. There are holes in her oversized faded dress. A plait on her head sticks out awkwardly. Her outdated shoes her two sizes too big.

Beth steps back as Beeman looks at her work.

MR. BEEMAN (CONT'D)

Good guess, Beth, but no.

A few students call out more wrong guesses. DeMarcus snores softly in the back.

MR. BEEMAN (CONT'D)

Okay, let me work it out for you.

He copies from a paper as he works the problem out on the board.

MR. BEEMAN (CONT'D)

And so the solution becomes $7/27$.

Beeman circles the answer. Everyone, but a snoring DeMarcus, vigorously copy Beeman's work.

INT. CLASSROOM-DAY-LATER

Students gather their books. DeMarcus stirs from his nap. He gets up and heads to the door.

Beeman stops him.

MR. BEEMAN

What's going on, DeMarcus? This education program was specifically designed for you. Your scores on the academic assessments were the highest ever recorded in the state. Top 1% in the nation. We can get you into college, but you can't skip class and then just sleep when you're here.

DeMarcus just shrugs and heads toward the door. Beeman stops him. Grabs DeMarcus' hand and holds up the palm. Written on it is 7/27.

DeMarcus yanks his hand back. Heads out of the door.

EXT. SIDEWALK-DAY

DeMarcus walks with his headphones on, head down, engrossed in angles and shapes on the sidewalk.

BETH (O.S.)

I bet you knew the answer.

DeMarcus throws a quick glance behind him. Keeps walking.

Beth works hard to catch up to him. Her overstuffed backpack way too big for her small frame. A jar of crawly things rests in her hands.

DeMarcus speeds up in an effort to lose her. It is not happening.

Beth catches up with him. Out of breath. Asthmatic.

BETH (CONT'D)

I bet you're the only one who knew.

DEMARCUS

Go away.

Beth wheezes some more in trying to keep pace with him. He reluctantly slows down a bit.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Why do you nerdy kids always have asthma?

BETH

How am I the nerd and we're in the same accelerated program? Although you never come to English class.

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

Well you barely come to Calculus either, but you never come to English. Besides, since we are the only two from Carver coming over here, we should stick together.

DeMarcus speeds up his walk again, trying to lose her. Beth stays with him.

DEMARCUS

That is what is messed about this entire program. All this to bus us to this uppity ass white school where they constantly looking at you like some kind of alien instead of putting in the money to have these advanced classes at Carver.

BETH

Is that why you never come to English class?

DeMarcus lets out a frustrated sigh. Looks at Beth's hands.

DEMARCUS

What the hell you carrying in that jar?

Beth holds up the jar.

BETH

Earth worms. The other day I found a wounded owl on Juniper. Can you believe it? An owl in our neighborhood. Well I am going to care for it. Kind of like what Billy did in *Owls in the Family*. Did you ever read it? A classic. My favorite book when I was little.

DEMARCUS

When you were little? Aren't you like 9 or something?

BETH

I'm 12!

DEMARCUS

Can't believe your granny let you bring that shit in her house. You know black kids in the ghetto don't do that, right? Keep worms in jars like that to feed stray owls.

Beth thinks a moment.

BETH

Well on the surface, the book is a light-hearted tale about the lovable misadventures of young boys when they decide to rescue two troublesome owls. Underneath it is a tale about survival for those forced to navigate and find meaning in a world that devalues them. That is what black kids in the inner city face everyday.

DeMarcus has no response. They make their way to the bus stop.

DEMARCUS

You know that is why everyone picks on you. Because you're so damn weird.

BETH

I am not weird!

INT. BUS-DAY

DeMarcus heads toward an empty row of seats at the very back. Beth follows him and sits down in the same row.

DeMarcus rolls his eyes.

BETH

So why don't you ever come to English class?

DeMarcus ignores her. Turns up his Walkman. Pulls out his notebook. Starts flipping through pages before remembering he has used them all. He tosses it back in his bag.

He looks at Beth who is still waiting for an answer. She pushes up on the oversized glasses sliding down her nose.

DEMARCUS

Because I don't need it. Numbers make sense to me. Not a bunch of stupid fantasy stories.

He looks out the window. It only takes a few stoplights for banks and upscale boutiques to fade into pawn shops and liquor stores.

BETH

You should really look at the ones on Ms. Anders' list.

DEMARCUS

Dead white authors. A bunch of stories about their experience. It doesn't relate to us.

BETH

Steinback, Huxley, *Catcher And The Rye*. You don't think that relates?

DeMarcus just shrugs.

BETH (CONT'D)

We have also been reading Walker, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison. *Beloved* in my opinion is the most important American novel ever written. I hope to write one some day, too.

DEMARCUS

Numbers are all the expression I need. Besides, I think people talk too much already.

He narrows his eyes at Beth who does not take the hint.

BETH

Essentially we are all writing the same themes. So it really is relatable even when we don't want to admit it. You're listening to Tupac right now, but I know you switch from Iron Maiden as we get closer to our neighborhood.

DeMarcus frowns at her.

BETH (CONT'D)

I can hear it through the headphones.

He turns down his volume.

DEMARCUS

What the hell do you know about it?

BETH

I can see how you would be drawn to both genres.

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

Isn't Metallica's *Eye of the Beholder* saying the same thing as NWA's *Express Yourself* or Iron Maiden's *The Evil That Men Do* expressing the same desperate choices as Tupac's *Trapped*?

Again, DeMarcus has no answer. Starts writing a math problem on the bus seat.

BETH (CONT'D)

Why are you always writing out math problems like that?

DEMARCUS

I am trying to figure something out.

BETH

What?

DeMarcus sighs. She is not going away.

DEMARCUS

The Pythenian Hypothesis. One of the oldest problems in mathematics. All past attempts to solve it have used a metric tensor. But I think there can be a different approach. Each problem I write helps me build that approach.

BETH

How long have you been working on it?

DeMarcus thinks a moment.

DEMARCUS

Since I was seven.

He goes back to writing on the seat.

BETH

You're vandalizing public property.

DeMarcus scowls.

DEMARCUS

I don't have any paper!

BETH

You can have some of mine.

Beth pulls out a notebook decorated with glitter and pink ponies on the cover. Proudly hands it to DeMarcus.

DeMarcus, disgusted by the pink ponies, tears off the cover and tosses it on the seat. Starts writing out a problem.

BETH (CONT'D)

The ultimate boon.

DEMARCUS

What?!

BETH

Ms. Anders is teaching us Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. You would know that if you ever came to class. In every journey the ultimate boon is the great reward of the quest. What the hero went on the journey for in the first place. What will be your ultimate reward for working out the hypothesis? A verified proof? Fame?

DEMARCUS

See, it's all their stories. Mythological bullshit. It has no bearing on us. I ain't on no damn journey. What is important is real, concrete, logical properties that can be measured and are universal. Not stupid fantasies up to mostly white people's interpretation of if they are relevant or not.

BETH

"Reading is that fruitful miracle of a communication in the midst of solitude." Proust.

DeMarcus takes the bait.

DEMARCUS

"Mathematics is a more powerful instrument of knowledge than any other that has been bequeathed to us by human agency." Descartes.

BETH

"Stories of imagination tend to upset those without one." Pratchett.

DeMarcus hides a smile. Tears out a few sheets of paper then writes a math problem in the notebook. Gives it back to Beth.

DEMARCUS

Here, little Integer. Work on solving this. It uses Euler's formula. The most beautiful narrative you will ever lay your eyes on.

Beth stares at the complex problem. DeMarcus goes back to his math.

A beat.

BETH

Why does it make me weird just for wanting to save an owl?

DEMARCUS

Because you ain't some little white boy who lives on a farm in damn Saskatchewan.

Beth gives him a look.

BETH

So you have read it.

EXT. STREET-DAY

DeMarcus and Beth step off the bus. Beth in mid-conversation.

BETH

It's the most informative book on sea turtles ever written. Did you know female sea turtles go onto the beach and dig a body pit in the sand so they can nest? I have always wanted to see it. They are endangered partly due to dirty beaches. Did you know-

DeMarcus starts to walk in the opposite direction.

BETH (CONT'D)

Will you walk me home?

DEMARCUS

Go away, Kid. I got things to do.

He keeps walking.

BETH
I will give you five dollars.

DEMARCUS
I said scram. Damn pest.

DeMarcus walks away. Beth nervously looks at a group of unruly teenagers down the corner. Smoking and drinking. She reluctantly makes her way past them.

They begin with the catcalls as soon as they see her.

THE LEADER
Hey, what's going on girl? My man
want to holler at you.

The teenagers burst into fits of laughter. Beth ignores them as she struggles to walk with her heavy backpack. Holds on tighter to her jar of crawly things.

THE LEADER (CONT'D)
What you got in that backpack? It's
holding you down, Sweetheart.

ANOTHER TEENAGER
Naw, I think it's them glasses,
Man. Damn them shits is big.
Fuckin' nappy-headed ugly ass
bitch.

Even more fits of laughter. Beth tries to walk faster.

ON DEMARCUS.

As he stops walking.

ON THE LEADER

As he starts walking towards Beth.

THE LEADER
I said come here, Bitch!

Beth keeps walking. A rock flies through the air. Hits her hard in the shoulder.

Beth starts to run. The leader chases her. Catches her by the heavy backpack and throws her hard to the ground. Goes in for a kick when--

POW!

DeMarcus lands a hard punch to his face and he falls to the ground. He scrambles up. Gets into DeMarcus' face.

Something in DeMarcus' eye tells the boy he should walk away. He makes his way back to his friends who have not moved an inch from the other side of the street to help.

DeMarcus helps Beth stand up. She holds onto her surprisingly intact jar of crawly things. Tears mix in with the blood dripping from a deep cut on her chin. He wipes some of it off with his sleeve.

DEMARCUS

Give me this.

He hauls her heavy backpack onto his shoulder.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

What you got in here, Integer?
Every book ever written?

They walk towards her run-down apartment building.

BETH

Thank you.

DEMARCUS

I'm only doing it for the five
dollars.

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT BUILDING-DAY

DeMarcus and Beth come inside the front door.

Mr. Xenchao, Chinese, 50's, sweeps the entryway.

XENCHAO

(In fluent Mandarin, subtitled)
Good afternoon, young people. Now
what did you learn today?

BETH

(In fluent Mandarin, subtitled)
We are studying Campbell's Hero's
Journey.

DEMARCUS

(In less than fluent Mandarin,
subtitled)
More importantly, the big problem
today was nonnegative real numbers.

Xenchao chuckles. Goes back to sweeping.

Beth takes her backpack and starts up the stairs. She stops and turns back to DeMarcus.

BETH
Why do you call me Integer?

DEMARCUS
Integer. From the Latin meaning of
untouched, whole, fresh. And it has
infinite possibilities.

Beth thinks a moment.

BETH
Okay, then you're Holden.

DEMARCUS
Why? Because he didn't give a fuck?

BETH
No, because despite everything, he
was the only one who did.

Beth makes her way up the rickety staircase.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD-STREET-DAY

DeMarcus stands hiding behind a tree. Keeps his eyes on a
modest kept house across the street.

A minivan pulls into the driveway of the house. A woman gets
out, opens the back door and helps a little girl get down.

She is 5, black, pretty, holds a stuffed animal. Two pigtails
in her hair. One is coming undone.

DeMarcus starts toward them. The woman looks up. Stands in
front of the little girl.

DeMarcus walks up to them. Pleads with eyes.

MS. SANDERSON
Not again, DeMarcus. You know you
are not supposed to be here.

DEMARCUS
Please, Ms. Sanderson. She is my
sister.

The little girl peeks from behind Ms. Sanderson.

DENIESHA
Marky!

DeNiesha rushes over and gives him a hug.

DeMarcus picks her up. Holds her for awhile. Does not want to let her go.

Ms. Sanderson just lets him. He finally puts her down. Straightens her dress. Starts to re-plait the loose pigtail.

DEMARCUS
Are you listening to Ms. Sanderson?

DENIESHA
Yes, can I come home now?

DeMarcus looks up at Ms. Sanderson.

DEMARCUS
Not today, but soon. I'm working on plan.

DENIESHA
I want to go home with you.

Ms. Sanderson tenses.

DEMARCUS
Have you been working on your math problems?

DENIESHA
Yes.

DEMARCUS
5+5.

DENIESHA
10.

DEMARCUS
10+10.

DENIESHA
10 again. Can I go home now?

MS. SANDERSON
DeMarcus-

DEMARCUS
Look, I have something for you.

DeMarcus pulls out an intricate Origami design made out of card stock.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)
You see this is a revealing flower.

He maneuvers it a little. It opens up and spells DeNiesha.

DeNiesha smiles and grabs it. Gives DeMarcus a hug.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Okay, you be a good girl for Ms.
Sanderson.

He looks up at Ms. Sanderson.

MS. SANDERSON

DeMarcus-

DEMARCUS

She doesn't really like milk. It
makes her tummy hurt. And you have
to read the bedtime story before
she takes her bath. And let her
pick out her own hair ribbons. She
likes to match them to her clothes.
It helps her learn her colors.

MS. SANDERSON

You cannot keep doing this,
DeMarcus. You can visit at the
scheduled family visits. Your
mother knows how to set those up.

DEMARCUS

I know, but she hasn't talk to the
social worker yet. I just want to
see her.

MS. SANDERSON

You showing up like this throws
everything off and can get me into
trouble.

DEMARCUS

I'm her brother!

MS. SANDERSON

There are rules for a reason.

DeMarcus looks down the street.

DEMARCUS

Maybe we could all go the park or
something.

MS. SANDERSON

Say goodbye, DeMarcus.

DeMarcus hugs DeNiesha again.

DEMARCUS

I am going to bring you home real soon, okay? I got a plan.

DeNiesha nods at him sadly. Clutches her Origami gift.

Ms. Sanderson grabs DeNiesha's hand and takes her inside.

DeMarcus watches the door close behind them. He sees neighbors giving him suspicious eyes.

He pulls his hood up and heads down the street.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY-EVENING

DeMarcus walks up to his door. He yanks off a pink final notice from the electric company.

INT. FRONT DOOR-EVENING

DeMarcus comes into the front door. Tense in his own home. He cautiously walks inside.

BEVERLY (O.S.)

DeMarcus, that you?

DEMARCUS

Yeah, mama.

DeMarcus walks into the dimly lit living room. His mother, Beverly, sits on the couch smoking a cigarette. Only 30. Tired and worn down.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

He here?

BEVERLY

Oh, the two of you need to quit.

She stubs out the cigarette and gets up.

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

You hungry?

DEMARCUS

Yeah. I'ma go put up my bag.

INT. DEMARCUS'S BEDROOM-EVENING

Small and cramped but he keeps it very neat. Stacks of books and notebooks all about math. Written math problems on loose leaf paper cover the walls. Posters of Benjamin Banneker and Albert Einstein hang next to N.W.A.

He opens a drawer and adds his cash from earlier to a large bundle. He pulls out a very detailed budget sheet. He adds some numbers to it. Looks satisfied.

INT. KITCHEN-EVENING

Beverly places cooked ham on bread slices for sandwiches.

DeMarcus slaps the pink final notice on the counter.

DEMARCUS

This was on the door.

BEVERLY

I thought we put something on that.

DEMARCUS

No, Nate is the one that said he would take care of it but he didn't. Never follows through with what he says.

BEVERLY

Don't start on him.

DeMarcus shoves the notice in his pocket.

DEMARCUS

I will take care of it.

BEVERLY

You want mustard?

DeMarcus nods. Beverly puts mustard on the sandwiches.

DEMARCUS

You know I went by to see DeNiesha today.

Beverly avoids his eyes.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

She looks real good, like they taking good care of her.

Beverly puts cheese slices on the sandwiches.

BEVERLY

I done told you about that. That ain't doing nobody any good.

DEMARCUS

But she really wants to come home.

BEVERLY

Yeah, well they the ones that took her away over some bullshit.

DEMARCUS

Well they holding all the cards right now, Ma. We want DeNiesha back, we have to do what they say. It ain't all that bad. All you have to do is go to the parenting classes, at least we can get visitation then. And Nate ain't good to have around.

BEVERLY

What Nate got to do with it? He had a few drug charges. They act like he gonna touch the girl or something. It's fucking bullshit.

DEMARCUS

We gotta at least show them you trying, Mama. Maybe go do that medical billing you always talking about. You just got to finish your GED classes. I can help you study.

BEVERLY

DeMarcus.

DEMARCUS

Damn, Mama, what you keeping that nigga around for? He ain't doing shit for us!

BEVERLY

Dammit, DeMarcus! I know that school and them tests say you smart, but you ain't grown. You don't know everything. He helping me get balanced out right now, okay? That is what I need. I know it don't make sense, and I hope it never does. I hope you don't ever get to a point where you understand it.

DeMarcus gives up. Grabs his sandwich and starts to walk out. Beverly stops him. Has to reach up to pull his head down against her's.

BEVERLY (CONT'D)
My baby. My black Einstein. We are
gonna get her back. Don't worry. We
all gonna be fine. Okay?

DeMarcus nods. Gives her a kiss on the cheek. Leaves out of the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus sits on the living room floor eating his sandwich. Writes out math problems in a notebook.

The front door opens and Nate, black, 34, staggers inside. He makes his way into the living room. Stares right at DeMarcus.

DeMarcus gives him a disgusted look. Gathers his stuff and gets up. Walks right by him.

NATE
(slurring)
What's wrong with you boy? You
can't speak?

DeMarcus keeps walking. Breathes slowly. Tries to stay calm.

Nate in one movement grabs DeMarcus by the arms and SLAMS him against the wall. Nate puts an arm against DeMarcus' neck.

NATE (CONT'D)
The problem with you, little Nigga,
is you think you better than
everyone. I need to knock some
sense into you.

DEMARCUS
Yo, get off me, Man. For real!

DeMarcus pushes Nate off of him. Nate falls to the ground.

DeMarcus tries to leave again, but Nate gets up and tackles him back to the ground. They wrestle hard on the floor.

Beverly runs into the room.

BEVERLY
You all stop that now! Nate get off
of him.

DeMarcus gets from under Nate and stands up.

DEMARCUS

You put your hands on me one more damn time.

NATE

Oh, yeah and what you gon' do, Nigga? Hmm. You think you a man? You really think you a man?

DEMARCUS

You think you one? You can't even pay the damn light bill. Sorry as hell.

DeMarcus flings the pink notice at Nate.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

But don't you worry about it. I will take care of it.

NATE

You ain't taking care of shit. You hear me? You do anything with that light bill and I'ma kick ya ass. You hear that? I will beat the dog shit outta you little nigga.

DeMarcus storms out of the room.

INT. DEMARCUS'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus slams his door. He bangs the wall with his fists. Kicks his stack of books.

He breathes hard. Opens and closes his fists. Grabs a notebook from his desk. Sits down and starts working a math problem. Calms down.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS-DAY

DeMarcus sits on the bench of a crowded college campus. Watches students walk back and forth across a wide green lawn. He sees a white convertible blaring rock music swerve wildly into the parking lot. Parks crooked.

The driver is Clint Wheeler, 19, white, good-looking frat boy type. A gorgeous co-ed sits next to him. Clint takes a bump of cocaine chased by a few long sips from a flask.

He rubs his bloodshot eyes. Spots DeMarcus sitting on the bench. Nods at him.

CO-ED
Who's that?

CLINT
Nobody. Just got to take care of something.

CO-ED
Oooh, can he get us weed?

CLINT
Just meet me inside.

Clint takes his back pack and staggers out of the car towards DeMarcus. He grabs him by the arm and rushes him behind a tree.

DEMARCUS
Hey, come on, Man!

CLINT
I got like 20 minutes before this ass fuck class starts.

DEMARCUS
You're the one who's late. And you smell like you drank ethanol straight from your car.

CLINT
Just give it to me.

Clint pulls out a bundle of folded 20 dollar bills and gives them to DeMarcus. DeMarcus pulls out a stack of loose leaf papers covered with solved math equations.

Clint snatches the papers and looks them over.

CLINT (CONT'D)
Did you show all your work on these this time? Fucker counted off on the last one. Accused me of cheating.

DEMARCUS
You are cheating.

Clint scowls at him.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)
Let me explain number 4. It's tricky because the measure in degrees of the angle-

CLINT

No time, but not like I really give a shit either way.

DEMARCUS

Then why are you taking the class?

CLINT

Asshole father insists I continue the family lineage of commercial architects. Cares more about his damn buildings than me.

Clint hurriedly combs through the papers.

CLINT (CONT'D)

What the hell is all this? You were just supposed to do the even ones.

DEMARCUS

I just did them all. Maybe you can get extra credit.

CLINT

Fuck! Now I have to copy all of this over. Dude, no one does the other problems if they don't have to. Fucking class is hard enough.

Clint shoves the papers into his back pack. Starts to leave.

DEMARCUS

Hey, what about the other thing?

CLINT

Oh, yeah. Please take it.

Client takes out a stapled booklet and thrusts it at him.

CLINT (CONT'D)

Egotistical prick self-publishes his own newsletters.

DeMarcus flips through the newsletter with excitement.

DEMARCUS

Josiah Martinson's statement on Pythenian is the most advanced out there right now. He's proposing that-

CLINT
Like I said, Kid. Don't give a
fuck. Be back here next Thursday.
Take home exam.

Clint abruptly turns and heads toward a campus building.

DEMARCUS
You're welcome.

DeMarcus goes back to reading the newsletter.

EXT. BATHROOM-EVENING

DeMarcus takes a bath. He studies a page from the newsletter he has taped to the mirror above the sink. He has marked it up with his own equations.

Bam! Bam! on the outside of the bathroom door.

NATE (O.S.)
I need to take a piss.

DeMarcus ignores him. Keeps studying his math.

NATE (CONT'D)
Now! Get out!

DEMARCUS
Man, you don't own this house. You
need to pee, go to your own damn
house.

NATE (O.S.)
The fuck you say?!

BOOM! BOOM! Nate begins kicking the door.

DeMarcus tenses. Nate finally kicks the door open. Storms over to DeMarcus in the tub.

DEMARCUS
What the hell you doing?!

Nate grabs him and yanks him hard out of the tub.

DeMarcus tries to fight back. Nate gets a firm grip on DeMarcus' slippery wet body as DeMarcus tries to push against him.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)
Man, stop it!

Nate drags DeMarcus into the--

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus tries to fight back. He punches and kicks at Nate.

Nate is able to hold his grip. He pulls DeMarcus to the front door.

He opens the door and shoves DeMarcus into the--

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY-EVENING

DeMarcus falls hard. Nate slams the door. The locks click.

DeMarcus gets up and bangs hard against the door.

DEMARCUS

Let me in, Motherfucker! You can't
leave me out here like this!

Some curious neighbors open their doors and peek into the hallway.

DeMarcus stands there naked and dripping wet. He shamefully cups his private parts.

The neighbors go back into their apartments. No one offers to help.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM-EVENING

A naked DeMarcus searches through piles of discarded clothes in a lost and found closet while cursing Nate under his breath. He spots a long metal pipe leaning against a wall.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM-LATER

DeMarcus sits on the window sill wearing over-sized basketball shorts and a woman's blouse too small to close over his wide chest.

He writes a math problem in the dust of the window with one hand as he holds the metal pipe with the other. Tears in his eyes.

EXT. BEACH-EVENING

DeMarcus, Beth, and Little Ed watch in wonder as a female sea turtle builds a nest on the beach.

LATER.

Beth picks trash up along the beach. Little Ed tries to feed a small turtle some of his pixie stick.

A few feet away, DeMarcus draws an equation in the sand. Looks up at the stars.

BETH (O.S.)

He went crazy you know. Stabbed his eyes out with glass and then drowned himself in the sea.

DEMARCUS

What??

DeMarcus looks down to see Beth has wandered over to him.

BETH

Pythenius. Founder of your precious hypothesis. He was ahead of his time and went mad trying to discover a proof. I've been reading up on him. They say it happens to mathematicians. Nash, Cantor. The level of innovation needed for genius can cause cross wires in the brain.

DEMARCUS

Yeah, well didn't Sylvia Plath die with her head in a damn oven and Tennessee Williams' drug addicted ass choke on his own medicine caps?

He adds to his equation in the sand. Beth hands him the notebook with the pink ponies cover taped back on it.

BETH

I solved the problem you gave me.

DeMarcus gives the problem a quick glance.

DEMARCUS

You could have simplified it more, but not bad.

BETH

On the next page I wrote a poem I am working on for a contest in the newspaper. I want you to read it.

DEMARCUS

What makes you think I want to read
that shit?

BETH

I worked your shitty math problem.

DeMarcus chuckles.

DEMARCUS

Okay. Whatever.

Beth touches the fresh scab on her chin.

BETH

The poem is about my dad. I haven't
seen him since I was three. He
lives upstate. Made a whole other
family. I wrote him letters. Never
hear back.

DeMarcus circles the answer to the problem in the sand.

DEMARCUS

Yeah, well dads can be funny like
that.

BETH

Where is yours?

DEMARCUS

Fuck if I know. Met him once when I
was seven. But from the little I
was told, probably on the right
side of dead with the way he was
skimming dealers.

BETH

When you were seven. The same time
you started trying to solve
Pythenian.

DeMarcus does not answer, but grabs the pink ponies notebook
and starts reading her poem.

EXT. TRAILER PARK-DAY

DeMarcus and Beth wave goodbye to Little Ed as he walks
towards a dilapidated trailer park.

INT. DEMARCUS'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus pulls out the notebook with the taped on cover of the pink ponies.

He flips through the pages. Comes across Beth's poem and reads it again. It's good. He flips to a blank page. The room suddenly plunges into darkness.

DEMARCUS

Damn.

BEVERLY (O.S.)

Now they done cut the lights off.
Dammit, Nate!

Nate curses in the background as DeMarcus rummages through his drawer and pulls out a flashlight. Been through this before. He shines it on the notebook and writes out a math equation.

EXT. COLLEGE PARKING LOT-DAY

DeMarcus walks up and down the rows of parked cars looking for Clint's. He turns and sees two campus police officers walking towards him.

OFFICER #1

There is no loitering on this
campus, Son.

DEMARCUS

I'm not your son and I'm not
loitering. I'm looking for someone.

OFFICER # 2

We have had several cars broken
into over the last couple of weeks.

DEMARCUS

What does that have to do with me?

Officer # 1 grabs his arm.

OFFICER # 1

Let's go, Son.

DeMarcus struggles to push him off. The other security guard grabs him and they both wrestle him to the ground. Slap cuffs on his wrists.

INT. DETENTION CENTER VISITING ROOM-DAY

DeMarcus is in a detention issued T-Shirt and khaki pants. He and Beverly sit across from his caseworker, Mr. Waller, 40's, white.

DEMARCUS

I didn't do anything!

MR. WALLER

Look I can get this dropped and you can go home. But you have to go back to the *Think Right, Do Right* program.

DEMARCUS

Man, forget that program. I don't need that shit. It just brings us down. It doesn't help.

BEVERLY

Damn, DeMarcus, just do the shit. I am sick of coming down here.

MR. WALLER

It is either agree to do the program or stay in here.

DEMARCUS

Man, this is bullshit. I wasn't doing anything. Black kid on a white college campus and I automatically have to be causing trouble.

MR. WALLER

You're going to have to learn how to control that temper.

DEMARCUS

Two big cops rough me up and throw me on the ground for nothing, but I'm the one with the anger problem.

MR. WALLER

I know you're frustrated, but with your record, this is how it has to be. I'm sorry.

Off DeMarcus' scowling face.

INT. BIG MULTIPURPOSE ROOM-DAY

DeMarcus, still scowling, sits in the audience with other teenage boys. A few white faces in a sea of black and brown. A banner hangs showing "Think Right, Do Right Leadership Program."

At the podium is Dr. Maurice Dobbs, black, 50's, self-important.

DR. DOBBS

I am here to tell you now that
there is a war on our young black
males.

A few "yeahs" in the crowd.

DR. DOBBS (CONT'D)

Our young black men are being
incarcerated or killed at a rate
higher than any other race.

DeMarcus folds his arms and shakes his head. He has heard it all before.

DR. DOBBS (CONT'D)

That is why you have to hold your
head higher, walk taller, and take
advantage of every opportunity. You
work hard, you can become
something.

DEMARCUS

(under is breath)
Fucking contradictions.

DR. DOBBS

Excuse me, Young Man?

The room goes quiet. All eyes turn in DeMarcus' direction.

DR. DOBBS (CONT'D)

You have something to say?

DeMarcus stares Dobbs head on. Clears his throat.

DEMARCUS

Contradictions in mathematical
properties lack logic and are
vulnerable to being perceived as
trivial and absurd.

DR. DOBBS

Young Man, you care to simplify that for the rest of us?

DEMARCUS

Everyone is always telling us black boys there is a war on us because we are black and male. Ascribed statuses we have no control over. That does not make me want to work harder. It makes want to find a club and crack some heads. And since you are telling me that my life is worthless, the head I will end up cracking is the nigga sitting here that looks just like me.

A program assistant heads towards DeMarcus. Dobbs holds up his hand.

DR. DOBBS

Please elaborate.

DEMARCUS

You can't pack a bunch of us into this room and say society is against you, but (mocking) hold your head high and reach for the moon. It is easier to sell dope and reach for \$100.00 Sneakers. If you keep telling me that war has been declared on me. That there is a bounty on my head as soon as I get out the womb, that I am a statistic upon conception, then that is how I am going to act.

DOBBS

Young man-

DeMarcus stands up, grabs his bag, and stomps out of the room.

EXT. TRAILER PARK-DAY

DeMarcus and Little Ed walk towards the run down trailer park.

DEMARCUS

I got a plan to get everybody out of this place. My mom. My sister.

LITTLE ED

What about me? My uncle always says
I'm too much of a damn retard to
ever be anything good. I can come
with you, too. Right, D?

DEMARCUS

Of course. You're my right hand
man. Always.

They do their secret handshake. Little Ed heads down the hill
towards his trailer.

INT. UTILITY PAYMENT CENTER-DAY

DeMarcus counts out several bills to a customer service
representative.

The rep hands him a receipt.

REP

Should be back on today by 5.

DeMarcus gives him a nod. Feels proud.

INT. DINING ROOM-EVENING

DeMarcus and Beverly sit across from each other at the table
in a lit up apartment. Plates piled high with hot food. They
smile at each other. This is a good moment.

The front door opens and slams. Nate stumbles into the room.
Throws down his bag.

NATE

I can't catch no kind of damn
break.

DeMarcus and Beverly tense up. The moment is gone. Nate looks
around the room.

NATE (CONT'D)

How the lights get on?

He stumbles into a seat next to Beverly. Gives her a look.
She gets up and goes to the kitchen.

DeMarcus watches her leaves. Looks at Nate in disgust.

NATE (CONT'D)

Don't be eyeballing me, boy.

DeMarcus ignores him.

Beverly comes back with a plate full of food and sets it in front of Nate as he stares hard at DeMarcus.

NATE (CONT'D)
How the damn lights get on?

DEMARCUS
You can go to hell, Man.

Nate jumps up.

NATE
See that's that shit I'm talking about. You disrespectful little motherfucker! You gonna learn a lesson.

DEMARCUS
You can't teach me shit.

BEVERLY
Nate calm down. Just eat. We doing good today.

Beverly puts her hand over his. Nate slaps her hand away, but sits down. Starts to eat hungrily. He continues to stare at DeMarcus.

NATE
How did the goddamn lights get on?

DEMARCUS
Because I paid the bill. You want to know why I paid the bill?

NATE
Shut up.

BEVERLY
Y'all stop!

DEMARCUS
Because I'm the motherfucking man in this house.

Nate picks up his plate and throws it across the room.

He lunges across the table at DeMarcus and they crash onto the floor. Dishes and food spill onto the floor.

BEVERLY
Stop it, dammit!

Nate beats DeMarcus' head into the floor.

NATE
Little Nigga, you gonna learn
today. I'ma beat the goddamn dog
shit outta ya.

BEVERLY
Nate get off of him!

She tries to pull Nate off. Nate pushes her off hard into the table. DeMarcus knees Nate in the balls.

NATE
Ahhh!

Nate clutches himself as he rolls off DeMarcus. DeMarcus jumps up. Lifts his leg to stomp on him. Thinks better of it.

DEMARCUS
Fuck you! Fuck you!

He slams his fist into the wall as he tears out of the room.

INT. DEMARCUS'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus stomps around in his room. His hands shake. He clenches and unclenches his fists. He picks up a notebook, but throws it across the room.

He sinks down against the wall. Breathes heavily. Looks at the long metal pipe from the laundry room laying against a wall in his closet. He clenches and unclenches his fist.

He closes his eyes and takes deep breaths. He opens his eyes. Focuses on one of the math problems on his wall. Begins to calm down when--

Nate TEARS into his room.

NATE
You want to fuck with me?

Nate starts to kick his books. Rips down his posters.

DeMarcus grabs for him. Nate pushes him up against a wall. Knees him in the stomach.

DeMarcus goes down. Nate stomps on him over and over again.

NATE (CONT'D)
You want to know who's house this
is? It's my goddamn house.

Nate stops stomping and looks at DeMarcus moaning on the floor.

NATE (CONT'D)
Dumb motherfucker.

Nate walks out of the room. DeMarcus moans on the floor while clutching his stomach.

His eyes land on the metal pipe, again. Fuck it. He stumbles up, grabs it, and runs out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus stomps into the living room. Eyes narrowed, breath heavy. A tight grip on the pipe.

BEVERLY
Now, DeMarcus. What are you doing?

DeMarcus goes right up to Nate. With no warning he swings the pipe at him. He hits his head, back, legs. Anywhere it will land.

DEMARCUS
Get the fuck out of our house!

Nate tries to duck. The pipe lands against his arm with a crack.

NATE
Awww, dammit!

Beverly tries to stop DeMarcus. He gives her a firm push behind him.

DEMARCUS
Get out the way, Mama!

DeMarcus hits Nate in the stomach with the pipe.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)
Get the fuck out. Get the fuck out.
Get. The. Fuck. Out!

Nate flails around, screams, runs to the opposite side of the room. Does everything, but get the fuck out. Beverly runs over to him.

BEVERLY
DeMarcus, stop!

DeMarcus raises the pipe over his head and brings it down hard just as Nate quickly PUSHES Beverly in front of him. The pipe lands against her skull with a sickening crack. She falls and crashes into a table.

Nate and DeMarcus stare in shock. The pipe drops from his hands as he sinks down to the floor next to her.

NATE

Oh, shit you done it now, Boy! You
done goddamn done it now!

Nate runs out of the room. The front door opens and slams shut.

DeMarcus puts his hands to the back of Beverly's head. Her open eyes stare up unmoving. A heavy amount of blood seeps into the carpet.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER VISITING ROOM-DAY

DeMarcus in an orange jumpsuit cuffed to a metal chair. Mr. Waller and a public defender, Simms, 30's, sit with him.

SIMMS

I can get it down to manslaughter.
The best I can do with his past
issues of violent outbursts.

MR. WALLER

Provide you stay out of trouble you
can stay here until you're 18. Then
serve the rest of the time at
State.

DEMARCUS

(sotto)
He pushed her in front of me.

MR. WALLER

I know it was hard missing the
funeral. And as far as your sister
visiting, that will be up to the
foster family.

We stay on DeMarcus as Mr. Waller and Simms continue talking until their voices fade into the background.

DeMarcus stares at the legal documents on the table. The text on the documents form into math equations as tears roll down his face.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER-HALLWAY

DeMarcus walks in line with other boys into the gym. Corey, 16, white, eyes him.

He sticks his foot out and trips DeMarcus onto the floor.

The rest of the boys laugh. DeMarcus gets up and PUNCHES Corey hard in the face. Three detention officers rush over.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER-DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

DeMarcus sits across from detention director, Mike Berry, 40's. DeMarcus holds tissue to his bloody nose.

Berry opens DeMarcus' file on his desk.

BERRY

You have been here just a few months and it is incident after incident with you.

DEMARCUS

Ain't my fault. They keep messing with me and y'all ain't doing shit about it.

Berry writes something down.

BERRY

That's two points for language.

Berry looks through the file.

BERRY (CONT'D)

You're different from the rest in here, that's true. But you're going to have to start taking some accountability, Son. You're 16 now. One more incident and you will be shipped over to the big boy jail. Then you will know what real "messing with me" is. You understand?

DeMarcus lets out a long sigh.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER-CAFETERIA

DeMarcus sits at a table eating alone. Writes out math problems on a napkin. Corey and three other boys walk over and sit in the empty chairs at the table.

DeMarcus does not look up. Keeps working his problem.

Corey digs into his pudding. His lackeys start eating, too.

COREY

Damn we got some fucked up assholes
in here.

His lackeys nod in agreement. Laughing at some inside joke.

COREY (CONT'D)

My cell mate set a homeless guy on
fire. One dude raped a 6-year-old.
Morales dropped a puppy off a
freeway.

Corey eats another scoop of his pudding. Yanks away the
napkin DeMarcus is writing on. Uses it to wipe his mouth.

DeMarcus stays still.

COREY (CONT'D)

But damn.

Corey wipes his mouth again.

COREY (CONT'D)

To kill your own mama.

DeMarcus is on him in a flash. Yanks Corey onto the ground.
Grabs a tray off the table and starts bashing Corey's head
over and over again.

The cafeteria erupts in pandemonium. The juveniles start
whooping and screaming. Some climb on tables to get a better
look at the fight.

Whistles blow. Alarms blare. Detention officers come rushing
over.

EXT. STATE PRISON-DAY

DeMarcus steps off of a prison bus chained to bigger and
older men.

INT. PROCESSING AREA

DeMarcus stands in a row with the other new inmates as they
put on prison jumpsuits.

Several correctional officers stand watch. One officer stands
in front of the group. Tate, 30's, white, his uniform is the
only way to tell the difference between him and the inmates.

OFFICER TATE

You will be given a bag with sheets, pillow, and toiletries. You are responsible for everything in that bag. You lose anything then tough on you.

Two of the other officers begin handing out the bags.

OFFICER TATE (CONT'D)

Next you will be shown to your cell. Don't ever forget, this is my fucking house. You don't make trouble, you will be fine. You decide you have something to prove, I will prove to you that you don't.

He looks over at DeMarcus who is staring off to the side at a large sign displaying rules. The letters shift into numbers and math symbols as he works out a problem.

Tate walks over to him. Takes a big sniff of air.

OFFICER TATE (CONT'D)

Well you know what I smell, Green?

OFFICER GREEN

What's that, Tate?

Tate takes a hard sniff again.

OFFICER TATE

I smell baby shit.

The officers and some of the inmates start snickering. Tate gets in DeMarcus' face.

OFFICER

Well we got us a big pile of nasty brown baby shit right here. It is running all down your leg, Inmate.

DeMarcus keeps his eyes on the sign.

OFFICER TATE

Now this really pisses me off because it means you didn't know how to act in juvie so they ship you up here. Now I have to waste my time keeping an extra eye on you so none of these dumb fucks gets balls deep in that baby shit ass. And they will try.

DeMarcus keeps his eyes on the sign. Works out his math problem.

Tate gets angrier. Looks at the sign.

OFFICER
Something about them rules interest
you, Boy? I'm the one you need to
listen to. I set the rules in here.
Now you look my way when I'm
talking to you.

DeMarcus keeps staring at the sign. Does not blink. Does not move. Keeps working his problem.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
(loosing it)
I said look at me.

DeMarcus keeps looking at the sign. Tate suddenly whips out his baton and slams it into DeMarcus' stomach.

DeMarcus falls to the floor clutching his stomach, moaning, but keeps his eyes on the sign.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
If I say look at me, you damn well
better do it!

DeMarcus keeps his eyes on the sign. Tate slams the baton down on him again and again.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE

DeMarcus sits bloodied, beaten, and handcuffed across from Warden Peters, just 39, toes that thin line between arrogance and insecurity.

Two correctional officers stand against a back wall.

DeMarcus looks around the office. Observing, clocking the objects on the Warden's impeccably kept desk.

Peters looks down at an open file in front of him.

PETERS
Well you were certainly busy down
at Greenwood. But things are going
to be a little different here.

DeMarcus sits with his face clinched, he opens and closes his hands.

PETERS (CONT'D)

Now because you are a minor, the laws say we have to afford you extra protection. Which we will do but you need to know your place, Son. And that place is not pissing of my CO's. Otherwise they can very well look the other way.

DEMARCUS

I didn't do anything.

Peters points down at his file.

PETERS

Not according to this file. Because in here it says you like to cause trouble.

DEMARCUS

And so you know all about me just by a bunch of notes on paper.

Peters taps the file.

PETERS

This tells me everything that I need to know. And what it says is you're a trouble maker who thinks he's smarter than everyone else. And that shit is not going to fly in here. I have my eye on everything that goes on here. Every goddamn thing. So whatever you think you know, you don't. Because, hypothetically, I can look away while my CO's stick their foot so far up your ass they will kick your teeth out of your mouth from the inside. And hypothetical happens more than you want around here.

DeMarcus leans in closer to the Warden.

DEMARCUS

Well since you like dealing in the hypothetical, how about this?

DeMarcus nods to Peters' desk. The warden shifts nervously.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

I am approximately three feet from your desk.

(MORE)

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

These two goons behind me who both think nepotism got you this job are eight feet away and each about 10 to 15 pounds over the weight limit for correctional officers. Use distance divided by speed to determine that in the time it takes me to get to you before they get to me, I could bash that paper weight against your head and use that self-bought world's greatest boss pen to rip your eye straight from the socket and let it land right there on my file. Then you really will have your eye on everything. Hypothetically speaking of course.

DeMarcus fakes a move like he is going for Peters who jumps back. The CO's rush over and grab DeMarcus.

PETERS

Fuck you, you fucking punk! Take his ass to solitary.

The officers roughly pull DeMarcus up and drag him out of Peters' office.

Peters looks down at his desk. He throws the pen and paperweight into the waste basket.

INT. SEGREGATION CELL

DeMarcus is thrown into the cell by the CO's. The door locks behind him.

He looks around. A bare cell with a bolted bed, toilet, and sink.

He angrily pounds his fist against the wall. Some of the paint cracks. DeMarcus starts to chip some of the paint off with his fingernail. It comes off easily. He gets an idea.

LATER

DeMarcus scrapes and scrapes against the paint. He finally stops and steps back. He has scraped and solved a math problem into the paint. He gets to work on another one.

INT. REGULAR CELL

DeMarcus is led into a cell by Officer Scott, 20's, and case manager, Sam, 40's.

OFFICER SCOTT

As a minor, you get a cell to yourself.

DeMarcus puts his bag on the bed.

SAM

Warden says you cause anymore trouble and you are back in solitary. And you have to attend school.

DeMarcus looks around the cell.

SAM (CONT'D)

And, um, you cannot have the use of pens or pencils.

DEMARCUS

What?!

SAM

Warden's rules. Anything you need to write, someone will write for you. I don't know what you did or said, but you pissed him off something good.

DEMARCUS

Come on, Man. That's bullshit. Then how am I supposed to do the school work? And I have to write out my equations. It calms me down.

SAM

Bottom line, if you're caught with a pen or pencil, it will be viewed as contraband and sends you back to solitary.

INT. VISITOR'S LOBBY

Clint Wheeler sits in the lobby looking pissed. Faded bruise under his eye. Volunteer badge stuck to his shirt.

A door opens and Sam waves him inside. He greets Clint with a handshake. Wrinkles his nose.

SAM

Geez, did you down one in the parking lot? Have you not learned anything?

CLINT

I just want to get these 10 months
out of the way.

SAM

Have your shit together when you
get here or these guys will eat you
alive. Trust me. You come in here
like this again and I tell the
judge.

Sam unlocks a door with his badge and waves him through.

INT. CLASSROOM

DeMarcus sits a with a group of five other teenaged boys.
All, but DeMarcus, have various gang tatoos. DeMarcus uses
old eraser shavings to form an equation on the desk as the
other boys talk shit back and forth.

A CO, white, who has worked four hours past his normal shift
tries to stay awake at the back of the room.

Clint and Sam enter. The boys burst out laughing.

LORENZO

This motherfucker right here.

SAM

Okay, that is enough. This is Mr.
Wheeler. He will be doing GED
tutorials with you every Tuesday
and Thursday. So you will listen
and give him courtesy and respect.

The boys give him a "yeah right" look, but quiet down. Sam
gives Clint a nod.

SAM (CONT'D)

All yours.

Clint and DeMarcus make surprised, yet subtle recognition.
Sam leaves. Clint looks at the group. Scared out of his mind.

CLINT

Um, hey...guys. Yeah. So like he
said, my name is-

LORENZO

Shut. The. Fuck. Up!

The boys bust out laughing.

SEESAW

Saw you on the news. Driving drunk.
Fucked up the girl riding with you
now she can't walk. Another rich
white boy getting away with
probation and community service
hours. And so now you think you can
teach us something. Man, fuck you
with ya tired ass.

Clint looks at the CO who just stares back at him and shrugs.

CLINT

What's your name?

Seesaw flips him off.

CLINT (CONT'D)

Look, why don't we all-

SEESAW

Fuck you white dick faggot ass
motherfucker!

Seesaw throws his book to the front. Barely missing Clint.
All the other boys, except for DeMarcus, do the same.

Clint looks over at the CO again.

CLINT

A little help?

CO

(I hate wealthy spoiled
brats, too)
Just as long as they don't touch
you.

Clint is a deer in headlights.

DEMARCUS

Why don't all y'all just shut the
fuck up and let him teach this
bullshit.

SEESAW

Who the hell put you in charge?

DEMARCUS

Nobody in charge. Just sick of
hearing your assess. Let's get this
over with.

For some reason the boys listen. Sit back in their seats. Clint gives an appreciative glance towards DeMarcus. DeMarcus stares straight through him.

EXT. PRISON YARD-DAY

DeMarcus plays chess at a picnic table with Mearle, a white lifer in his 60's. They use very creative, but very homemade chess pieces.

DEMARCUS

We can't get no real chess pieces in here? This is bullshit.

MEARLE

We used to have 'em. Someone filed down a bishop and used it to stab his cell mate in his ear drum. Don't have 'em no more.

Mearle moves his knight made out of thickly folded paper. He stands up.

MEARLE (CONT'D)

I gotta go take a dump.

DEMARCUS

Man, you always disrupting the game with that shit. Literally.

MEARLE

Son, I'm 62 years old with bleeding ulcers, colitis, and been stuck in a place for the last 30 years that serves rancid garbage seasoned with dirt three times a goddamn day. I am going to have to take an unscheduled shit once in a while.

Mearle shuffles away. DeMarcus bends down and plucks several blades of grass. Spreads them on the table and arranges them into an equation.

FREDDY (O.S.)

What you doing with all that, Little Homie?

DeMarcus looks up and sees three guys now surrounding his table.

FREDDY (CONT'D)
It's cool, Little Nigga. Just want
to introduce myself. I'm Freddy.
This T-Dog and Money.

DEMARCUS
What do you want?

FREDDY
Just want to check in with you. See
how you getting along. If you need
anything. Heard you were pretty
good with numbers and shit. Maybe
we look out for you and you help us
out with some things.

DeMarcus looks them over. Goes back to his equation.

DEMARCUS
I'm good.

All three laugh.

FREDDY
Oh, he good.

DeMarcus ignores them. Plucks more grass blades for his
equation.

FREDDY (CONT'D)
It's a war zone in this shit hole
regardless. Having someone watch
your back mean you might just
survive.

A whistle blows.

OFFICER SCOTT
Step away from the minor!

FREDDY
Okay, Little Homie. Watch yourself.

Freddy and his boys leave DeMarcus at the table.

EXT. PRISON YARD-DAY

The teens play basketball. DeMarcus sits scraping rocks
against a fence and saves the shavings.

He sees Freddy and the other guys looking over at him. Freddy
says something and they start laughing. Walk over to him.

Officers Tate and Scott stand watch on the other side of the yard.

OFFICER SCOTT

I have told them so many times to stay away from the minors.

Scott picks up his whistle. Tate stops him.

OFFICER TATE

No. Warden says he thinks he's so smart, let him figure it out for himself.

They watch the three guys chide DeMarcus then walk off.

INT. DEMARCUS' CELL

DeMarcus sits at his desk shading in math problems on paper with the shavings he saved from the rock.

Freddy and his two boys appear in the doorway. DeMarcus looks up at them and goes back to his work. Freddy and the boys come inside. Sit on his bed.

FREDDY

Now what the hell is this? You always writing on something.

Freddy yanks the paper away from DeMarcus. DeMarcus jumps up. The two other guys rush him and pin him against the wall.

Freddy looks at the papers.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

This math shit again. You know numbers, but don't want to help nobody.

Freddy tears up the papers.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Well now let's see who has the bigger head.

The men laugh lasciviously. DeMarcus tries to run, but they grab him. Freddy punches him hard in the stomach. DeMarcus clutches his stomach in pain. Barely able to breathe.

He keeps punching DeMarcus until he goes down. Next all three guys start to kick him.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

What do you have to say now,
Motherfucker? Hmmm? Still think
you "good?"

Freddy nods to the goons. They flip DeMarcus onto his stomach. One roughly rips down his pants and underwear.

Freddy starts to unbuckle his own pants. Freddy gets down onto DeMarcus' back. DeMarcus suddenly grabs Freddy's arm and bites as hard as he can.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Fuuck!

Freddy rolls off of him. T-Dog tries to grab him, but DeMarcus head-butts from behind. He turns and pushes his thumb into T-Dog's eye.

T-DOG

Ahhhh!

Money comes over to tackle him. DeMarcus ducks and slams him into the wall. He turns around grabs him by the head.

DeMarcus slams his face over and over into the wall until there is a sickening CRACK. A prison alarm blares.

Freddy comes over and tackles DeMarcus to the ground. They wrestle until DeMarcus gains the upper hand.

He pushes Freddy's head back so that his neck is exposed. DeMarcus ferociously bites onto his neck. Won't let go. Like a dog with a bone.

Freddy squirms and screams on the floor. DeMarcus finally lets go with a sickening tear. He stands up and spits a huge chunk of Freddy's neck out of his mouth.

Freddy holds his neck, but it does nothing to stop the blood spurting from his jugular.

Several correctional officers and the Warden run up to the cell. Behind them are case managers and even Clint. They stare in shock at all three men on the ground with one bleeding out.

DeMarcus stands in the middle of it all with his jumpsuit and underwear around his ankles. Blood on his face and body.

The warden stands frozen looking at him. DeMarcus stares back. Never takes his eyes off the warden as he pulls his underwear and jumpsuit back up. Sits down on the floor and crosses his legs.

INT. SEGREGATION CELL

A blood stained DeMarcus fights against the CO's as they toss him inside the same segregation cell from earlier. They slam the heavy metal door and lock it.

DeMarcus bangs against the door a few times. He tears up the bed. Tries to pull the sink from the wall. He bangs on the door again.

He walks over to the wall. Stares at his math problems from before. He chips at it madly. Scraping and scraping. One fingernail breaks off. He scrapes with another.

LATER

He lies down facing the wall. He starts doing sit-ups as he focuses on the math problems and breathes in and out.

Off his breathing we transition to--

INT. SEGREGATION CELL

We just hear breathing. Then DeMarcus comes into frame. Still doing sit ups. Now 23. Besides his muscular body, he looks like shit. Unkept beard. Matted hair. Does not give a fuck.

Advanced mathematics have now been chipped into the paint of two entire walls.

DeMarcus goes to the sink and splashes his face with water. A small window slot in the door opens. A pair of eyes peek in at him. The door unlocks.

OFFICER SCOTT
Warden wants to see you.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE

DeMarcus sits several feet away from Warden Peters with his hands and feet chained. Four correctional officers hover right behind his chair.

Clint sits in a chair next to him. Now 27 with a counselor badge hanging from his neck.

PETERS
What am I going to do with you,
DeMarcus? You have been bumbling
around here for 8 years only a
couple months of which you have
been out of solitary.

He looks down at DeMarcus' file. It has grown thicker over the years.

PETERS (CONT'D)

Refusal to do work assignments, numerous assaults on officers and inmates, another manslaughter charge. All of which have gotten you an additional 10 years in here.

DeMarcus yawns.

CLINT

You have also had two suicide attempts. One left you in a comma for three days because of the blood loss.

DeMarcus stares straight ahead.

CLINT (CONT'D)

You're smart. You could be a leader around here. I am revamping the education program and collaborating with universities to bring in college students to help inmates study for the GED.

DeMarcus gives him a look.

CLINT (CONT'D)

We want you to participate in the class as a tutor. I can get you a work assignment in the prison library. Just for you. You get a feel for what the other inmates are learning with the college students and then you can tutor them.

DEMARCUS

Still trying to make this shit work, huh? It never will.

CLINT

DeMarcus this could be a new beginning and it shows you're trying. And you get out of solitary. Get your visitor privileges reinstated.

DEMARCUS

I want my pen and paper back.

They both look at the warden.

WARDEN PETERS
We will see.

INT. CAFETERIA

DeMarcus is the only one eating alone in the crowded cafeteria.

A group of inmates watch him. They are Browning, Luke, Hangman, and T-Dog with a missing eye.

BROWNING
What's up with that nigga. Mad
dogging me the other day. I'ma have
to show him what's what.

T-DOG
Leave him alone, Man. That nigga
crazy.

BROWNING
Fuck him. Oh, I'm crazy, too.

T-Dog stops eating. Gets real serious.

T-DOG
Naw, Man. For real. That
motherfucker is CRAZY. Nothing to
lose.

The other men nod in agreement. Browning stares at DeMarcus.

INT. CLINT'S OFFICE

DeMarcus sits across from Clint at his desk. Stares at a small picture of his wife and baby.

DEMARCUS
So it was a girl, huh?

CLINT
Yeah, two years old now.

He takes in Demarcus staring at the picture.

CLINT (CONT'D)
Is that something you want someday?

DeMarcus ignores him. Starts to look at something else. Clint lets it go.

CLINT (CONT'D)
Well, as promised.

He lays a huge pile of loose leaf paper on the desk.

DEMARCUS
And the pen and pencil?

Clint takes a breath and pulls out a battered children's supply box. DeMarcus frowns at it. Opens it and pulls out a bunch of old broken crayons.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)
Man, what the hell is this?

CLINT
Best I could get the warden to do.
Take it or leave it.

DeMarcus angrily searches through the box of crayons. Finds a black one and starts writing out a math problem on a piece of the paper.

DEMARCUS
Man, this is bullshit!

CLINT
It's better than nothing. Be nice tomorrow.

INT. VISITING AREA

A group of eight inmates are led into the room by guards. Mearle and Browning are in the group. DeMarcus brings up the rear. Each inmate is directed to a table that has two chairs sitting across from one another.

OFFICER GREEN
Stay seated. No talking until instructed. Keep your hands to yourself. Any funny business and you are out of the program and in solitary indefinitely.

DeMarcus taps his hand on the table. Hair is still matted. He scratches at bits of debris in his beard.

A security door opens. Eight college students and a professor are led inside by a CO. The students carry stacks of books.

PROFESSOR
Just pick a seat and sit down.

The students look curiously at the inmates as they make their choices of where to sit.

A young white guy comes over to DeMarcus. Gives him a friendly nod as he pulls out a seat.

DeMarcus responds with a death stare. The guy slowly eases out of the seat. He almost knocks down the only female in the group as he takes away her seat in front of Mearle.

The woman shakes her head. The only seat left open is the one in front of DeMarcus.

She walks over and sits down at the table across from him. DeMarcus gives her the death stare, too. She is not intimidated in the least. Perhaps because she is--

DEMARCUS

Little Integer?

BETH

Holden?

Beth is now 20. A gold hoop hangs out of her nose. Pierced eyebrow. Well groomed baby dreads on her head. The quiet power of youth, beauty, and intellect.

DeMarcus takes it all in. Actually looks proud.

DEMARCUS

What are you doing here?

BETH

I developed a reading program at the university to tutor high school students. We thought we would try it with the incarcerated population.

Beth looks around the room.

BETH (CONT'D)

(I hate seeing you like this)

You know this is really going to the extreme to test out game theory's Prisoner's Dilemma.

DeMarcus chuckles. He glances at the stack of books.

DEMARCUS

So now I gotta read this crap?

They pick up right where they left off.

BETH

Oh, here we go. People who have a great range of literature actually do better on the language portion of the test.

DEMARCUS

So knowing about a bunch of dead white people's experiences helps them on the test. Culturally biased like I've always said. Once again, numbers are the great equalizer.

BETH

(in fluent Mandarin,
subtitled)

"The problems of the human heart in conflict with itself make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat." Faulkner.

DeMarcus smiles. Thinks for a moment. He is rusty.

DEMARCUS

(broken Mandarin,
subtitled)

"The universe cannot be read until we have learned the language in which it is written. It is written in mathematical language." Galileo

BETH

(in fluent Mandarin,
subtitled)

You need practice.

They both chuckle. A CO stomps over to them. He looks confused.

CO

Speak American!

They both laugh again. The officer grows angrier. He stands over DeMarcus.

CO (CONT'D)

We got a problem, Inmate?

DeMarcus tenses. He jaw starts to clinch. He begins to open and close his hands.

The officer bends down and gets in DeMarcus' face.

CO (CONT'D)
I said do we have a problem,
Inmate? I can take you outta here
right the hell now.

DeMarcus looks at him right in the eye. His hands open and close faster.

BETH
We are fine. DeMarcus, look at me.

DeMarcus keeps staring at the officer.

BETH (CONT'D)
Look at me, DeMarcus. Focus on my
voice.

DeMarcus turns towards her. Focuses on her voice. He calms down.

BETH (CONT'D)
Thank you, officer.

The officer grunts. Walks back to his post.

Beth selects a book from the stack and slides it over to him.

BETH (CONT'D)
The Old Man and the Sea. A poignant
and applicable story about an aging
hero's last journey of loss,
redemption, and self-reflection.
Kind of like Hemingway himself.

DEMARCUS
A slightly boring, mostly overrated
Moby Dick knockoff that has been
shoved down the throats of high
schoolers for decades in a
misguided effort that negates how
real life actually plays out for
some of us.

BETH
Ouch. The theme of finding the
courage to do what is needed to
reach your goals and challenge
whatever gets in the way misguides
youth?

DEMARCUS
Sharks steal black kids' dreams all
the time. When we stand up, we get
killed.

(MORE)

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Not make it back to shore safely
and celebrated as heroes by the
same people that drove us into
danger in the first place.

Beth shakes her head.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Ok, if I have to read that. You
have to work on this.

DeMarcus grabs one of the other books. He looks around and
then flips to the last page of the book.

He slowly rips out the page.

BETH

(Whispering)

What are you doing?

DeMarcus begins to make little tears into the page. He
intricately makes designs into a pattern. Beth watches with
intrigue.

He looks around and then places the sheet flat on the desk.
He has torn a math problem into the paper.

BETH (CONT'D)

Wow. How did you do that?

DEMARCUS

You have to learn be creative in
here.

A loud buzzer sounds.

CO

Inmates, hands to your sides.

All the inmates immediately sit up and drop their hands to
their sides.

Beth gathers her books and leaves with the other students.
Next the inmates line up at a door. DeMarcus is actually
smiling a little.

BROWNING

Oh, that chick got you smiling like
a little bitch, huh?

DeMarcus ignores him.

BROWNING (CONT'D)
What's funny is you go seeing that
girl looking like a damn mess.

INT. DEMARCUS' CELL

He sits at his desk reading. Browning passes by escorted by a guard.

BROWNING
Bitch ass nigga.

DeMarcus looks up at him walking by. He stands up and goes to his mirror. Examines the matted hair and ratty beard.

INT. BARBERSHOP

DeMarcus sits in a chair while getting a haircut.

INT. DEMARCUS' CELL

DeMarcus sits on his cot reading the last page of the book. His hair is cut low and his beard neatly trimmed. He is actually quite handsome.

He grabs a crayon off of his desk. He thinks for a moment and then starts writing on the last page of the book.

INT. VISTING AREA

DeMarcus and Beth sit across from one another. Beth takes out the folded piece of paper with the torn out math problem. It now has markings on it and a circled answer.

BETH
15 over Pi.

DEMARCUS
Correct.

DeMarcus slides the paper towards him. He looks it over.

BETH
Well I had help. Showed it to the
math department chair. Dr.
Martinson.

DEMARCUS
Josiah Martinson is Ivy League now?

BETH

He wanted to know where I got the problem. Thought a computer spit it out. Said he hadn't had a good challenge like that in a while.

DeMarcus slides *The Old Man and The Sea* over to her and opens it up to the back cover.

DEMARCUS

Excuse the crayon.

He taps the book.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

A major theme was how much luck and chance factored into Santiago's journey. So your next problem is statistics. Find the probability of X in four possible outcomes.

BETH

A math problem related to the story? Now you're just showing off.

DEMARCUS

You're the one quoting Faulkner in damn Mandarin.

Clint watches them talk from the other side of the room.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Tell me some more about school. Still working on that great American novel?

BETH

Well I was thinking about continuing with the English doctorate, but my dad is always like (mocking dad's voice) do something that's gonna make you some money. So maybe like an MBA or-

DEMARCUS

Dad? Oh his ass in the picture now? Where was he when your granny was raising you all by herself?

Beth rubs at the childhood scar on her chin.

BETH

(Defensive)

He's trying.

DEMARCUS

I'm just saying you should do what you want to do. Not what anybody else wants. You're too gifted, got way too much to offer to just conform.

He looks around the room.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

And you got the freedom to do it.

Clint walks by their table.

Beth takes a book from the pile. Holds it up.

BETH

100 Years of Solitude.

DeMarcus takes the book. Flips through the pages. Rolls his eyes.

DEMARCUS

Here we go.

BETH

Oh, come on. A cherished story of a multigenerational Latin American family that takes the reader on an imaginative journey of adventure, mystery, and love.

DEMARCUS

An over-written, repetitive, incestuous circus filled with magical thinking and no sense of reality or how actual people live. But I will try to find something worthwhile nonetheless.

BETH

(laughing)
Cynical jerk.

DeMarcus laughs, too. The alarm sounds.

CO

Inmates, back away from the table.
Hands to the sides.

All the inmates scoot their chairs back. Place their hands to the sides. The students gather their belongings and head out the door.

Montage:

-DeMarcus tutoring fellow inmates in the library. He is patient and engaging.

-DeMarcus reading *100 Years of Solitude*.

-DeMarcus and Mearle laughing during lunch in the cafeteria.

-DeMarcus writing math problems in crayon on his paper.

End Montage.

INT. DEMARCUS' CELL

Clint comes to his doorway.

CLINT

So who's the young lady?

DEMARCUS

Just one of the tutors.

CLINT

No, you know her from somewhere.
Your connection is too strong. But
I understand being protective.
She's good for you and you've been
doing really well. Some of these
guys in here get a hint of anything
that's valuable to you and you
become a target. Be careful.

DEMARCUS

I'm always a target and Browning
shouldn't be in the program.

CLINT

Always a target?

DEMARCUS

Always.

Clint thinks a moment.

CLINT

Truncated errors in math are born
out of the impossibility of
measuring infinity on devices with
finite capabilities. What does that
mean to you?

DEMARCUS

Nothing, except they're actually called round-off errors and your understanding of numerical analysis is still shit.

CLINT

It is impossible for your full potential, the brilliance of your mind to be fully realized in a place like this so they will always see you as the error. And yes, always making you the target.

DEMARCUS

See what I am saying?

CLINT

But you can only have power over you. They will come for you and will keep coming for you. In here and long after you leave. The same obstacles will happen again and again in your life over and over until you decide to stop giving it power over you. I agree. Browning shouldn't be in the program, but I can't give the warden just cause to keep him out so he is staying and looking to cause trouble. Be careful.

INT. VISITING AREA

DeMarcus and Beth sit across from each other as he checks over her work.

BETH

I was able to work it on my own, but I showed Martinson anyway. Now he is beginning to think he has seen your work before. As he put it, "Equations that elegant don't come around very often." And the book?

DEMARCUS

The recurrent theme was fatalism.

He slides a paper over to Beth with a complicated equation on it.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Many scientists think that fate can be measured with the statistical approach of First Time Passage. Use the formula to find T, the first passage time above a non negative level of a random process starting from zero.

BETH

What the hell?

DEMARCUS

I provided a formula.

Beth shakes her head.

Browning makes a lewd gesture at them. DeMarcus clenches his hands. Beth touches his arm.

BETH

The road of trials. The hero will encounter many dragons to slay over and over again. But he must never give up. It is how he gets stronger.

DEMARCUS

Still on that journey bullshit. The one thing I ain't is a damn hero.

BETH

He just has to remember to wisely choose which of the dragons are worth fighting. No need to win the battle if he loses all his power in the process.

Browning points a trigger finger at DeMarcus. DeMarcus ignores him.

DEMARCUS

What are you assigning me to read this time?

Beth holds up a book.

BETH

Invisible Man.

She waits for a snarky comment.

DEMARCUS

Okay, I'll give you that one.

BETH

Just please, please take care of it. It is an autographed copy my mentor, Dr. Thomas Crane, gave me after finishing my thesis. You can write your problems all over it. I don't care. Just please get it back to me.

DEMARCUS

Of course.

Beth slides him the book.

MAN

(O.S)

Hey!

They both look up. An inmate jumps up from a table. He picks a book up and throws it across the room.

INMATE

Oh you fucking with me, huh? You really fucking with me?

The student sitting across from him looks scared out of mind. Two correctional officers rush over to the inmate and pin him to the ground.

INMATE (CONT'D)

Ahhhh!

Other inmates start yelling. An alarm blares. DeMarcus seizes the opportunity. He quickly reaches over and puts his hand on top of Beth's.

He carefully picks up her hand and puts it against the side of his face. Holds it there. Closes his eyes. Beth stares at him intently.

For a moment the shouting and the alarms fade into the background, then:

CO

Session over! Inmates, hands to your sides. Back away from the tables.

DeMarcus lingers just a bit with Beth's hand.

CO (CONT'D)

Back away now, Daniels!

DeMarcus reluctantly let's go of Beth's hand. He backs away from the desk. Puts his arms to the side.

Beth and the other students gather their books and follow the guards toward the exit. Beth gives one last look at DeMarcus.

INT. LIBRARY

DeMarcus reads the last page of *Invisible Man*. Lays it down on the desk. Thinks a few moments.

He pulls out a crayon and gets to work. Writes out math equations at the top of the pages.

Takes a blank paper from his stack and writes out a note. He folds it and slips it inside the middle of the book.

INT. VISITOR'S BOOTH

DeMarcus is led into a booth and takes a seat. He grins at seeing a meatier version of Little Ed sitting on the other side of the glass partition. He grabs the phone.

DEMARCUS

What's up, Man? Look at you. How you been?

LITTLE ED

D! I'm okay. Ain't much out here for me. Uncle got me working the junk yard. Still in the trailer. You okay in here?

DEMARCUS

It ain't nothing. You know anything about my sister?

Little Ed shakes his head. DeMarcus swallows his disappointment.

LITTLE ED

I been waiting for you, D. All this time. You were all I got. What about the plan?

DEMARCUS

We still gonna do the plan. Just taking a little more time is all. I got you, Man.

They do their secret handshake against the glass partition.

INT. PRISON YARD-DAY

DeMarcus and Mearle play chess on a picnic table. The copy of *Invisible Man* lays next to them.

Browning and his crew walk up to them.

BROWNING

Well look what we have here.

DeMarcus and Mearle ignore him.

BROWNING (CONT'D)

That is a sweet little piece that
be coming to read you them books.
Got you acting like a little punk.
Nigga gettin' his hair cut, readin'
like a little school boy.

DeMarcus' jaw clinches, but he keeps his eyes focused on the game.

Browning and his crew surround them.

BROWNING (CONT'D)

Yeah, real sweet. Damn, my dick get
so hard looking at her during
class. Bitch must got some real
good pussy. Not like you will ever
find out though.

DeMarcus throws a chess piece down and jumps up.

MEARLE

Let him be, Son. He's just trash
and ain't worth it.

BROWNING

Stay out of this, Grandpa. I can
make today the heart attack that
finally kills you.

DeMarcus clenches and unclenches his fists. He stares Browning straight in the eyes.

DEMARCUS

You don't talk about her, you don't
look at her, and you better find
your way out that damn program.

Browning snatches the copy of *Invisible Man*. His boys throw down Mearle and grab DeMarcus. They hold him as Browning tears out a handful of pages out of the book. Opens his pants and starts to urinate on it.

DeMarcus pushes the guys off of him. Yanks one of the chess pieces made of thick paper and uses a corner to stab Browning in the eye. He grabs his face and slams it into the concrete picnic table. Over and over until the left side of his face caves in. Browning's eye droops from the socket.

The CO's charge over. It takes all five of them to try and pull DeMarcus off. Browning lays twitching in the grass. Blood gushes from his head. His one intact eye stares out blankly. If there is anything left of him it won't be worth it.

T-Dog with the missing eye stands to the side shaking his head.

INT. HALLWAY

DeMarcus pushes, bites, kicks, head-butts, and elbows against six CO's. He surprisingly breaks through. Runs down the hall, The CO's who are not too injured give chase. An alarm blares.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE-DAY

DeMarcus sits across from the warden. His hands and feet shackled. Dried blood all over his face and clothes. Six CO's stand closely behind him.

DEMARCUS

They came after me. I was defending myself.

WARDEN PETERS

Goddamit! Always a damn excuse. Always. I knew putting you around anything civilized was a mistake. I am burying your ass in segregation this time. You are going to be living like something out of the stone age.

DEMARCUS

No, I have to continue with the program. Please. I have to get the book back to that girl. She has been helping me.

WARDEN PETERS

Damn, you got a lot of nerve, Inmate. Fuck you, her, the book, Clint, and his faggot ass program!
(MORE)

WARDEN PETERS (CONT'D)

You are lucky I haven't let my officers beat you into retardation like you just did Browning. You inmates want things handed to you, want special favors, without ever taking accountability for the mountains of shit you create. Damn animals.

DEMARCUS

I just need to get her book back. Can I get a message to her? She will be-

WARDEN PETERS

No, goddammit!

DEMARCUS

Fuck you!

DeMarcus jumps up quickly. Lunges for Peters before the CO's can catch him. He wraps his chained hands around Peters' neck.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Fuck you, motherfucker! Fuck you. Piece of shit. You are the animal. You don't know shit about us. Can't do shit for us! Fuck you!

The CO's work to pull DeMarcus off. The alarm starts blaring again.

Peters makes gagging noises as he tries to free himself. His face flushed.

WARDEN PETERS

Get off me, you fuck!

A CO pulls out a baton. Starts beating DeMarcus relentlessly, as the other CO's work to pull him off Peters.

They finally get him off and wrestle him to the floor. Peters scrambles to the other side his office. He wheezes violently while holding his neck.

INT. SEGREGATION CELL

DeMarcus fights against the officers as he is thrown into his same cell. The heavy metal door closes with a bang.

DeMarcus bangs on the door with his fists and then with his head. He goes to his mattress and tears it apart. He kicks at the bolted sink and toilet.

He sinks to the floor. Looks at his advanced mathematics chipped into several walls.

He goes to a wall. He chips at the paint and starts to etch out a new problem.

This time it is different. He is delirious with it. Almost in a trance. He scrapes and scrapes like a madman. Mumbles to himself.

A slot in the door opens and a tray of food is slid in and the slot is closed.

LATER

The slot opens and the untouched tray of food is removed. DeMarcus keeps scraping out his problem.

Time goes by. DeMarcus chips and chips and chips. He has a gaunt, haggard appearance. Like a man possessed.

All four walls are packed with math problems. His fingers are bloodied. Most of the skin and fingernails torn off long ago. Blood, and even shit, is smeared amongst the math problems.

INMATE (O.S.)

Help me! Help me! You can't leave
me alone like this. I'm comin' for
y'all!

CO's can be heard running by DeMarcus' cell. They start yelling at the inmate.

DeMarcus scrapes and scrapes and then suddenly stops. He stares at the last solution he has written. Drops to his knees.

He makes a bloody circle around it. Breathes heavily. He looks around his cell. The inmate continues to wail in the background.

Suddenly DeMarcus loses it. He beats his hands hard against the wall. The sound of a crack echoes as he breaks one.

He throws himself against the wall. Yells at the top of his lungs. Runs to the sink and bangs his head hard on it over and over again.

His door is unlocked and two CO's rush inside.

CO
Dammit! Not you, too. We don't need
this shit today.

DeMarcus tries to shove against them. Puts up quite a fight
in his weakened state. They finally tackle him to the ground.

INT. PRISON HOSPITAL

DeMarcus sits by himself in a small isolated room wearing a
suicide vest. A cast on his hand. Face bruised and scratched.
A CO sits outside the door facing him.

Clint walks inside the room. His face says it all.

CLINT
What did you do to yourself?

DeMarcus stares straight ahead.

CLINT (CONT'D)
Look, I'm going to put in an order
against you being in segregation so
long.

DeMarcus keeps staring straight ahead.

CLINT (CONT'D)
I don't know if you heard but there
was a ruling on your case.

Clint takes a breath.

CLINT (CONT'D)
It will be an additional 15 years.

DeMarcus keeps staring. No emotion.

CLINT (CONT'D)
And me and the Warden are not
seeing eye to eye on things.
Haven't for awhile so I will be
gone by next week.

DeMarcus briefly flicks his eyes toward him.

CLINT (CONT'D)
But you know it goes like that
sometimes. I see it as an
opportunity to open up my own
practice. But I want to keep in
contact with you. Okay? I want
to...

Clint keeps talking but his voice fades out and all we hear is the sound of DeMarcus breathing in and breathing out.

Breath in, breath out. Over and over again until it fades into--

INT. PRISON CELL

DeMarcus bent over a sink. Splashes water onto his face. He straightens up. Now 41. Water drips off of his matted hair and scarred face, neck, and chest.

He stares straight ahead like he is looking into a mirror. But there is no mirror. Just the wall.

A CO comes up to his cell.

CO
Warden wants to see you.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE

DeMarcus sits in front of Warden Peters several feet away from his desk. His hands and feet chained. Four CO's stand directly behind him. Three more stand against a wall.

Peters looks down at DeMarcus' files which have ballooned to eight thick separate folders.

WARDEN PETERS
You are going to be released the day after tomorrow.

DEMARCUS
So is this the going away party?

WARDEN PETERS
Still the same thick headed asshole you were when you came in here. Let's see how long you last out there.

DEMARCUS
I'm sure the community appreciates your rehabilitative efforts.

WARDEN PETERS
You want to blame everyone else.

DEMARCUS
And you never want take any responsibility.

WARDEN PETERS

I'm painting over all that crap you
marked on my walls the moment the
that door slams behind you.

DEMARCUS

Do whatever you need to show your
power. Glad I could help.

WARDEN PETERS

Get him the fuck out of here!

The CO's grab DeMarcus and shuffle him out of the door.

INT. PROCESSING AREA-DAY

DeMarcus signs a release document. Two CO's and the warden
stand off to one side.

The officer handling the paperwork gives DeMarcus a thick
brown envelope.

DeMarcus opens the envelope and pulls out the torn copy of
Invisible Man and several unopened letters. Many from Beth.

DEMARCUS

Why am I just now getting these?

CO

I don't know where they came from.
They say give you the envelop, I
gave you the envelope.

He pushes a clipboard in Marcus' direction.

CO (CONT'D)

Sign here.

DeMarcus scowls at him and signs the paper. Shoves the
clipboard back at him.

CO (CONT'D)

Good luck out there.

DeMarcus looks back at the warden. The warden gives him a
long look before leaving with his two officers.

EXT. PRISON ENTRANCE-DAY

DeMarcus stands free on the other side of the prison walls
for the first time in 26 years. Takes it all in with a huge
breath.

He looks around. Does not expect anybody to be waiting for him. He starts walking.

CLINT
(O.S.)
DeMarcus.

DeMarcus turns to see Clint in the parking lot.

DEMARCUS
What are you doing here?

Clint walks towards him.

CLINT
What do you think?

He goes in for an awkward hug. DeMarcus stiffens. They settle on an awkward handshake.

DEMARCUS
Look, it's cool you came and all,
but I'm good.

CLINT
Let me help you.

DEMARCUS
I can find my own way.

CLINT
You need a job, a place. It is a
very different world and you don't
have a lot of resources. Actually
none. Get in the damn car.

INT. CLINT'S CAR-DAY

DeMarcus looks out the passenger window as a very different world indeed passes by. A young man rides a Segway down the sidewalk. Store windows display advertisements for a new iPhone. A man talks to himself. Turns to show he is wearing an earpiece.

CLINT
Hey, got something for you.

He reaches in the backseat and grabs a bag.

DeMarcus takes the bag and looks inside. He pulls out notebooks, pens, pencils, and a book. A picture of Dr. Josiah Martinson on the back cover.

CLINT (CONT'D)

Figured you want to your hands back on those as soon as possible. First thing is to get you enrolled-

DEMARCUS

I don't do that shit anymore.

DeMarcus puts everything back in the bag.

CLINT

What? That is Martinson's latest. You know how I feel about the guy. Took everything in me to buy that damn book.

DEMARCUS

Thanks, but I just don't do it anymore. Didn't mean anything anyway.

CLINT

What are you talking about? You're brilliant. We cannot let that go to anymore waste. I know when can get you funding. I want to reach out to local-

DEMARCUS

I said no, man. Fuck!

DeMarcus tosses the bag in the backseat. Clint looks at him. Decides to let it go. Keeps driving. DeMarcus goes back to looking out the window at an unfamiliar world.

INT. CLINT'S HOUSE-EVENING

DeMarcus hungrily wolfs down his food in front of Clint's picture perfect family. His wife, Meghan, 40's, gives looks to Katie (17), Chris (10), and Sarah (4) telling them not to stare.

DeMarcus becomes self-conscious. Puts his fork down.

MEGHAN

Would you like more potatoes?

DEMARCUS

(mumbling)

No, thank you.

DeMarcus looks ashamed. Clint gives him a reassuring nod.
Awkward silence all around.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus' large frame is out of place in the cute purple and white decorated room.

CLINT
You can have this for now. Not sure
how comfortable it will be.

DEMARCUS
Slept on cots and concrete floors
the last 25 years. This is fine.

Little Sarah wanders into the room. Picks up a stuffed bear
and gives it to DeMarcus.

SARAH
This helps keep monsters away.

DEMARCUS
Thank you. I can sure use it.

She gives her father's leg a hug then skips out of the room.

CLINT
Meghan did some research and found
out where your mother is buried. We
knew you would want to go pay your
respects as soon as possible.

DEMARCUS
I need to find Nate Harris.

CLINT
What? No. I don't think that will
be helpful. Something tells me it
is not for forgiveness.

DEMARCUS
You say you want to help. Help me
find him.

CLINT
No. Get it out of your head. You
need to focus on the positive. Now
get some sleep.

He cuts off the lights. Leaves and closes the door.

LATER

DeMarcus lies on the floor staring at Veggie Tale posters on the wall. He has the bear propped up next to him. Clutches on to it.

INT. COUNSELING AGENCY-DAY

Clint takes DeMarcus on a tour of the agency.

CLINT

You have a job keeping the place up, cleaning, fulfilling maintenance requests. All after hours. Does not pay much, but it is something. And you have to come to the young adult processing groups on Wednesday evenings.

DEMARCUS

What the hell for?

CLINT

Because it could be beneficial to the young men. They are 18 to 21. Released from CYC and getting one last chance to turn their life around. But they're a real tough group this go around. I think they could benefit from hearing your story.

DeMarcus

Still trying to do this bullshit. I told you it doesn't work. And they are never going to accept you.

CLINT

It's not about me. What did you need to hear at that age that would have helped you? That is where you can be the most beneficial.

DeMarcus

Nothing would have helped. That's what I've been telling you. And nobody was listening anyway.

CLINT

I have been hearing you this whole time.

DeMarcus
I want to find Nate Harris then.

CLINT
I said no.

DeMarcus
Then you're not really listening,
are you?

CLINT
Jesus, DeMarcus! You would rather
haunt down Nate Harris than visit
your mother's grave.

DeMarcus huffs.

DeMarcus
Look, I will do the job and all
that but I can find me another
place to stay. It will be better
for me.

CLINT
Do what you need to do.

They continue down the hall.

EXT. BEACH-NIGHT

DeMarcus reads Beth's letters. He looks up at the stars.
Nothing forms. No math equations. Just stars.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD-DAY

DeMarcus walks through his old neighborhood.

EXT. TRAILER PARK-DAY

DeMarcus walks toward a run-down trailer park. Sees a very
obese man walking up the steps of a familiar looking trailer.
It couldn't be him.

DEMARCUS
Little Ed?

LITTLE ED
D?

Little (now very big) Ed hobbles over and squeezes him
against his large frame.

LITTLE ED (CONT'D)
It's really you, D. I've waited for
you, man!

DEMARCUS
Damn, Nigga. You been eating them
pixie sticks along with the boxes
they came in? You big as shit.

They both laugh.

EXT. LITTLE ED'S TRAILER-DAY

DeMarcus sits on the couch turning *Invisible Man* over and over in his hands. Flips through it looking at the math problems he wrote inside. Closes the book.

Little Ed comes in and sits in his La-Z-Boy. Tosses DeMarcus a beer.

DeMarcus opens the beer and takes a swig. Chokes it down. It's his first beer.

Little Ed gulps his in under a minute. Tosses the can. Cracks open another one.

LITTLE ED
I missed you, D. You know I got a
daughter.

DEMARCUS
Really?

Little Ed points to a picture on the wall of a little girl.

LITTLE ED
She a lot bigger than that now. Her
mama don't let me see her. Say it
was a one time mistake she was with
me. Don't want the girl to know
someone like me her daddy. Guess
she right.

Little Ed finishes his second beer. Cracks open a third.

DEMARCUS
That's some tough shit, Man.

LITTLE ED
I waited for you. All this time.
Are we still doing the plan?

DEMARCUS

Plan has changed a little. You think you could help me find Nate?

LITTLE ED

Yeah, man. I will help you with anything.

LATER.

Little Ed snores in his chair surrounded by empty beer cans on the floor and coffee table.

DeMarcus rereads Beth's letters. His fingers slide over the university return address.

INT. UNIVERSITY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT-DAY

DeMarcus walks into a front office looking completely out of place. The administrative assistant gives him the once over.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Can I help you, sir?

DeMarcus freezes for a moment. Not used to being spoken to like that.

He reaches in his bag. Starts digging around. The assistant tenses.

DeMarcus finally pulls out the copy of *Invisible Man* and tosses it onto her desk.

DEMARCUS

Um...A student who used to go here loaned this to me some time ago. I just wanted to get it back to her. Beth, Elizabeth Simmons? Do you know where she may be?

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Sir, I could not give you any information if I did know.

The assistant looks at the battered book.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Seems like it was a long time ago. It is your book now.

DeMarcus thinks for a moment. Turns and leaves without taking the book.

EXT. STREET-DAY

DeMarcus sits with Little Ed in his truck on a quiet residential street. Stares at a house.

The front door opens and Nate Edwards comes outside. Now in his 60's. He carries a lunch box and thermos as he shuffles his way to his truck

A much younger woman runs out behind him. She hands him a cell phone.

Nate takes the phone and gives her a kiss. A boy, 10, comes running out. He goes over and gives Nate a hug. Nate hugs him back and then heads off to his truck.

The boy and woman watch him lovingly as he backs down the driveway. DeMarcus seethes.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-EVENING

An elegant party in progress. Beth, 38, leads a few guests through her expansive house while holding a glass of wine. The dreads and piercing long gone. She looks poised, intelligent, confident. We need to look a little deeper.

BETH

So we redid the dining room and living room.

The guests look impressed. They follow her into--

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-MASTER BEDROOM-EVENING

Beth leads the guests inside the room. An attractive young woman (Stephanie) eyes her coldly. Beth points to the wall.

BETH

And we just repainted the wall. The other color was hideous.

STEPHANIE

I liked the beige.

Beth gives her a look. Stephanie knows she just messed up.

BETH

You've been in my bedroom before?

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

All the guests are gone. Beth is in mid-fight with her husband, Cameron, 40's, very handsome, clean cut.

CAMERON

It just happened. You act so spoiled about everything.

BETH

You keep doing this shit over and over again. How am I supposed to act?

CAMERON

I don't even know you anymore. You act like you don't want to be married.

BETH

(shouting)

Don't you dare turn this around!

CAMERON

Quiet. Toni.

BETH

Like she does not know what the fuck is going on by now.

CAMERON

What do you want me do?

BETH

I want you to get the fuck out.

CAMERON

You serious?

BETH

Get out!

INT/EXT - FRONT DOOR-DAY

Beth watches Cameron give their daughter Toni, 12, a hug. He looks at Beth one last time before he grabs his suitcase and leaves.

Beth closes the door. Turns to Toni.

BETH

Honey, I know-

TONI

This is all your fault! You drove him away. You're always so weird about everything.

BETH

Toni, you don't-

TONI

(shouting)

I don't want to talk you! I don't want to be anywhere near you. I want to go wherever dad is going.

She runs up the stairs. Beth throws up her hands. Goes to the living room. Pours a glass of wine.

BETH

(sotto, sadly)

I'm not weird.

EXT. BETH'S HOUSE-FRONT YARD

Toni carries a suitcase out to a car. Cameron sits in the driver's seat. Beth gives a sad wave as they back out of the driveway.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-GARAGE-LATER

Beth sits in the middle of a ton of boxes. She opens a box and pulls out a few notebooks. The spiral notebook with the taped on glittered pink ponies cover comes tumbling out.

She opens it up and flips through the pages. DeMarcus' math problems and her stories. The ink has faded over the years causing the math and stories to bleed together.

Beth puts the notebook down. Thinks about something.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-HOME OFFICE-DAY

Beth sits in front of a computer displaying an inmate database. A phone is to her ear.

BETH

Released? Can you tell me when?

Beth listens for a moment.

BETH (CONT'D)
Well do you have a forwarding
address or somewhere I can find
him?

Beth listens.

BETH (CONT'D)
Well, I am not trying to-

Beth is cut off.

BETH (CONT'D)
Okay, thank you.

She puts the phone down. Goes back to researching on the
computer.

INT. COUNSELING AGENCY-EVENING

DeMarcus sits with a group of young men all displaying
various gang affiliated tattoos. Clint leads the group.

CLINT
So the power to make positive
choices and do something different
lies within you. DeMarcus you have
anything to add?

DeMarcus
Nothing that I didn't say before.
Hard heads learn a hard way.

He looks at Anthony, 18, black.

ANTHONY
What the fuck can this old head
tell us? You think you harder cause
you served some time? I will lay
ya' ass out.

DeMarcus
I'm sitting right here.

ANTHONY
Man, fuck you!

He jumps up and so does DeMarcus. Clint stands.

CLINT
Gentlemen, let this go now.

DeMarcus and Anthony just stare at each other. DeMarcus is not relenting.

The young man gives up. Kicks a chair over and storms out of the room.

CLINT (CONT'D)

Okay, everyone else, you are free to go. And remember, you have the choice to do something different.

Some of the young men nod and take in Clint's advice. Others roll their eyes. One flips Clint off behind his back as he leaves out of the room.

Clint and DeMarcus are left alone. DeMarcus knows it is coming.

CLINT (CONT'D)

What the hell was that? I didn't bring you in to fight with them. You're supposed to be setting an example.

DEMARCUS

They don't want to listen. Not my fault. But I am damn sure not going to sit here and let them come at me like some punk.

CLINT

What was that you had the nerve to tell somebody else about a hard head?

Clint shakes his head. They start straightening the room back up.

INT. CLINT'S OFFICE-EVENING

Clint gives him a brown mailing envelope.

CLINT

This was dropped off for you today.

DeMarcus opens the envelope. Pulls out the spiral notebook with the taped on pink ponies cover.

DeMarcus

Whoa.

CLINT

Message says you would know where
to find her if you wanted to meet
up.

EXT. BEACH-EVENING

DeMarcus and Little Ed sit in the sand. Little Ed spots Beth walking towards them. He waddles over to her. Squeezes her up in a bear hug. She laughs. Keeps her eyes on DeMarcus the whole time.

LATER

DeMarcus and Beth watch Little Ed try to feed seagulls.

DEMARCUS

I tried to return *Invisible Man* to
you at the school.

BETH

Seriously? You still had it?

DEMARCUS

I'm sorry I couldn't get it back to
you.

BETH

I wrote you.

DEMARCUS

They didn't give me the letters.
None of them.

This hangs between them.

BETH

So what was the great math problem
for that one?

DEMARCUS

It doesn't matter. I haven't done
that shit in years. Waste of time.

BETH

Please don't tell me you gave that
up. What about Pythenian?

DEMARCUS

Toiling away at some madman's
useless theory. It was pointless.

BETH

DeMarcus-

DEMARCUS

What about your writing? Has the next great American novel been published yet?

BETH

Nope, went the corporate route. Marketing analyst.

DEMARCUS

Doing what?

BETH

Not really sure how to explain it, but it entails me using four different languages and pays six figures.

DeMarcus

Do you still even write?

BETH

I haven't in years. But I have a husband and kid to think about.

DeMarcus

Little Integer has a kid?

BETH

Yes, and she hates my guts. My husband is not too fond of me right now either. But let's not get into that. What are you doing now?

DeMarcus

Sweeping damn floors and speaking to some hard heads about my life.

BETH

That's a start.

DeMarcus looks out over the beach.

DEMARCUS

The world is just so different now. I really don't know what to do.

Beth looks him up and down.

BETH
Well how about we start with you
looking the part?

INT. CLOTHING STORE-DAY

Beth watches as DeMarcus gets fitted for a fancy suit. He uncomfortably flinches whenever the tailor touches him.

LATER.

DeMarcus stands in the mirror looking damn good in a newly tailored suit. He even gives a smile.

INT. RESTAURANT-EVENING

DeMarcus and Beth all dressed up as they have dinner at a fancy restaurant. DeMarcus devours his food. He looks up embarrassed. Wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

DEMARCUS
Um...on the inside you have to eat
fast. Take your eye off it for a
second and motherfuckers try to
steal it, spit, throw glass in it.

BETH
It's fine.

Beth scoots closer to him. Unfolds his cloth napkin and places it in his lap. She patiently shows him how to hold his knife and fork.

INT. R&B CLUB-NIGHT

Beth and DeMarcus on the dance floor as music pulses through the club. They seem out of place. Step on each other's feet. DeMarcus bumps into a man.

MAN
Yo, watch it, Black.

DeMarcus clenches his jaw. Gets in the man's face.

Beth pulls him away. He bumps into someone else. He starts breathing hard. Looks overwhelmed.

BETH
(Shouting over the music)
What's wrong?

DEMARCUS
Too many people.

DeMarcus rushes past her. Storms out of the club.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus lays the expensive jacket and shirt on the couch and sits down.

BETH
What happened?

DEMARCUS
I'm sorry. Just so many people. I don't like being too close like that. Don't feel safe.

BETH
That was stupid of me to take you there. I thought it would be fun. Cameron always wants to go.

DEMARCUS
It's not you. I'm just not used to being so close to people. I'm uncomfortable with touching. Never got touched except for fighting. The guards, the inmates. Myself. Just always fighting something. Always. Never let your guard down. Always got your arms up. Your fists balled. You take your eyes away for a second and you're done. One thing or another is always looking to destroy you.

Beth sits next to him. Something occurs to her.

BETH
Are you a...

DeMarcus will not look at her. Puts his head down.

BETH (CONT'D)
I, I mean it makes sense if you are. You went in when you were a child basically.

DeMarcus still won't look at her.

BETH (CONT'D)
Well let me show you.

She moves closer to him. He tenses up.

BETH (CONT'D)
It starts with respect. May I touch
you?

He finally looks at her. Surprised. He nods. She touches his
arm. Moves his face to her's.

DEMARCUS
I-

BETH
It's okay. Let me show you. It's
just me here with you now. I am not
going to hurt you and I know for
sure you would never do anything to
hurt me.

That seems to relax him a little. She stands up and leads him
out of the room.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-BEDROOM-NIGHT

DeMarcus and Beth in bed. It is a little awkward as she
directs on him on what to do.

LATER.

Beth and DeMarcus make love with the energy of two forces on
a lifetime collision course finally meeting.

MONTAGE:

-DeMarcus in the driver's seat of Beth's Land Rover. Beth in
the passenger seat teaching him how to drive. It's hilarious
and frightening.

-DeMarcus and Beth on a roller coaster at an amusement park.
They put their hands up as it makes its descent.

-DeMarcus and Beth taking stepping lessons.

-DeMarcus carrying Beth on his back as they chase Little Ed
on the beach. They are all laughing and happy.

END MONTAGE.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAY-DAY

C/U on a cart full of books displaying a Free Books sign.

A few people mill around browsing the books. Dr. Thomas Crane, 70's, mumbles to himself in a British accent. A professor walks by.

PROFESSOR

Crane, my good man. The point of retirement is to stay away from the campus.

DR. CRANE

The advantage of retirement, my boy, is to be able to come to campus for leisure, not obligation.

The professor gives Crane a smile as he walks on by.

Crane picks up the torn copy of *Invisible Man*. Turns to the autographed page. Flips through the pages with math problems written in crayon.

He comes across the note DeMarcus slipped inside.

INT. UNIVERSITY-MARTINSON'S OFFICE-DAY

Crane sits across from Dr. Josiah Martinson, 60's.

CRANE

Don't have a clue about the math.
But the note was written to you.
The crayon is a nice touch.

Martinson reads the note. Slowly flips through the book. Marvels at the equations written in it. He looks up. Astounded.

MARTINSON

Good Lord, Crane, where in the hell did you get this?

EXT. ARTS AND JAZZ FESTIVAL-DAY

DeMarcus and Beth walk through the huge festival. They come to a table displaying body art.

ARTIST

May I?

Beth nods. The artist grabs a jar and applies paint to Beth's arm.

ARTIST (CONT'D)
 Body paint can be the best
 aphrodisiac for young lovers.

He nods at Beth.

ARTIST (CONT'D)
 (To DeMarcus in fluent
 Italian, subtitled)
 Beautiful woman. You put this to
 good use, huh?

BETH
 (In fluent Italian,
 subtitled)
 I can put it to even better use.

They both laugh. DeMarcus looks confused.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-BEDROOM LATER

DeMarcus and Beth making passionate love. Remnants of the
 body paint on the sheets.

LATER

Beth lies face down naked on the bed sound asleep. DeMarcus
 sits beside her. Rubs his hand down her bare back.

He looks over at a jar of the body paint on a table. He grabs
 it. Dips his finger into the paint and begins to write on the
 bottom of Beth's left foot.

All we see are his fingers here and there as they make lines,
 loops, and dashes. When he pulls back, we see an elaborate
 mathematical equation that stretches from her foot, over her
 left buttocks, across her back, and up to her shoulder.

Beth stirs awake. Looks at DeMarcus.

BETH
 What are you doing?

She twists her head to see what he has drawn.

BETH (CONT'D)
 Negro, did you just draw a math
 problem on my ass?

DEMARCUS
 Just wanted to see beauty on
 beauty.

Beth smiles.

BETH
See you still love it. Can't help
yourself.

DEMARCUS
Naw, I'm just messing around. I
will help you wash it off.

BETH
You will not.

She jumps up before DeMarcus can catch her. Runs into the bathroom and closes the door. She turns her back to a full length mirror and stares at the equation.

BETH (CONT'D)
(yelling)
This looks complicated.

She opens the door and peaks out. DeMarcus is asleep. She quickly grabs her phone from the desk and goes back to the bathroom.

She thinks a moment and then takes a selfie in the mirror.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Beth comes into the living room with a towel on her head. Pulls it off to reveal her hair in natural twists.

BETH
Did you put the movie on?

DeMarcus holds up a copy of *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*.

DEMARCUS
Really. You going to do me like
that?

Beth laughs.

BETH
I wasn't trying to clown. It's a
good movie.

She pulls the towel from her head and sits next to him. He pulls his hands through her hair.

DEMARCUS
Can you help me find my sister?

INT. PRISON SEGREGATION CELL

The bright flash and whiz of a Polaroid camera. The light fades to reveal a BODY hanging by a bed sheet tied from a light. The warden stands in the middle of the cell surrounded by CO's.

PETERS

Shit! Shit! Shit! Make sure you get everything. This paperwork is going to monstrous.

An administrative assistant writes notes. The CO with the camera takes a few more shots.

Peters storms out of the cell with the assistant. He passes the other cells as inmates stare out of their small windows with menace and curiosity.

He walks by Demarcus' old cell left open and empty. The math still etched into the walls.

WARDEN PETERS

And get this crap painted over
A.S.A fucking P!

The assistant quickly scribbles the note.

INT. DENIESHA'S HOUSE-DAY

DeMarcus and Beth sit on a couch. Across from them is DeNiesha. All grown up. A young boy and girl sit on either side of her. They stare up at DeMarcus.

DENIESHA

I cannot believe you are sitting
across from me.

DEMARCUS

I used to teach you math problems
at night. Braid your hair and get
you ready for school. You probably
don't remember that.

DeNiesha shakes her head.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

I wrote you so many letters.

DENIESHA

I only got a few. And I didn't know
what to think, you know. I was so
ashamed.

(MORE)

DENIESHA (CONT'D)

It followed me all while growing up
that my brother killed my mother.

DeMarcus puts his head down. Beth slides her hand into his.

DENIESHA (CONT'D)

But Nate was there for me. I ran
into him years after it happened.
He told me-

DeMarcus lifts his head up.

DEMARCUS

Nate?

DENIESHA

Yeah, Nate. He was there that
night, right? He told me a lot of
what happened?

DEMARCUS

And what exactly did he tell you?

DENIESHA

He just said you always had a lot
of anger. You just went off that
night.

DEMARCUS

That's what he told you?!

BETH

DeMarcus.

DEMARCUS

He tell you he used our mother like
a shield. That he punked out like a
damn little bitch!

DeNiesha sends her kids out of the room with a look.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I just want
you in my life.

DENIESHA

I don't know. It has been so long,
you know. I don't really know you.
What I do know, I don't know if I
want my kids to be around that.

DeMarcus nods his head in understanding. The hurt evident on
his face.

INT. CAR-EVENING

Beth drives as DeMarcus looks on in the passenger seat.

BETH

You just have to give her time.

DEMARCUS

That asshole sold me out. He paints me as a devil when it was his fault all along. Fuck that!

He slams his hand against the passenger door.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM-DAY

Beth is working on a laptop. The doorbell rings. She gets up and opens the door to Professor Martinson and two other university professors.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM-DAY

Beth sits across from the men. Martinson lays the copy of *Invisible Man* on the table. Beth picks it up. Goes through it.

BETH

I can't believe he still had this.

MARTINSON

Mrs. Turner, written inside of that book is some of the finest advanced mathematics I have ever laid my eyes on. I don't know if there is more but even that is light years ahead of everyone else.

Beth thinks a moment. She gets up and goes to her purse and pulls out her phone. She touches a few screens. Her face flushes with embarrassment, but she lays the phone on the coffee table.

PHONE

The selfie of Beth's naked body covered in paint with the equation.

Martinson picks up the phone. He is speechless.

LATER

DeMarcus has joined the group. Looks at the men suspiciously.

MARTINSON (CONT'D)

This is remarkable.

Martinson looks over the equations again.

MARTINSON (CONT'D)

You created a whole new approach.
Brilliance does not even begin to
describe this. Just maybe we can
solve Pythenian in our lifetime. Or
at least give a hell of a start to
the next generation.

DEMARCUS

It is solved.

MARTINSON

What?

DEMARCUS

I solved it. Over 15 years ago.

Martinson and the other men look on in shock.

MARTINSON

You're telling me you have a
verified proof for the Pythenian
Hypothesis? Good Lord. Well where
is it?? Show us!

DEMARCUS

Carved into the walls of a dirty
solitary cell in the state pen. But
it has probably been painted over
by now.

MARTINSON

Name your price. Whatever you want
you got it. The amount of grant
money this will bring in will be
unprecedented.

DEMARCUS

I don't have a degree or nothing.

MARTINSON

Of course you don't. What the hell
could we or any other university
teach you? But if you want to you
could attend classes for free.
Teach. Anything you want.

DEMARCUS

No. I want nothing to do with it.

Everyone looks stunned.

BETH
DeMarcus.

DEMARCUS
I said no, Beth.

MARTINSON
Mr. Daniels, I'm sure you can understand the magnitude of this. First, you could have a million dollars off the bat coming to you for just for solving a millennium prize problem. Then there are the research grants and-

DEMARCUS
No!

DeMarcus gets up and leaves.

INT/EXT. STREET-DAY

DeMarcus sits alone in Little Ed's truck watching Nate again kiss his family goodbye as he leaves for work. He clenches his fists.

INT. AGENCY-NIGHT

Group session in progress. DeMarcus stares Anthony down.

ANTHONY
Yo. Why you keep testin' me, old man?! For real. I will stomp your old ass the fuck out.

CLINT
Okay, that's enough. Let's call it a night.

ANTHONY
In due time old man.

Anthony and the rest of the young men begin to disperse.

CLINT
I will sign your contact sheets next week.

He begins to pick up the room. DeMarcus helps him.

DEMARCUS

You sugarcoat too much. They need a reality check.

CLINT

They need adult guidance. Not a sparring partner. What's going on with you?

DEMARCUS

Been watching that motherfucker Nate.

CLINT

Told you not to do that.

DEMARCUS

He got a nice little wife, nice little kid. Living a sweet little life. Never had to pay for what he did. He even turned my sister against me.

CLINT

DeMarcus we have talked about this. These same situations. Round-off errors.

DeMarcus shrugs him off.

CLINT (CONT'D)

Oh, but you don't do that shit anymore, right? Piss away your gifts just to plot against Nate. Give him even more to take from you.

DEMARCUS

Man, fuck you! You don't know shit about the choices that I need to make. About my life!

CLINT

Oh, yeah. That's right. Fuck me, Demarcus. Fuck me. What the hell do I know? Privileged white guy. They will never accept me. We've have had this conversation.

DEMARCUS

Why are you still here, Man? Why? Still doing this savior bullshit.
(MORE)

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Aren't you supposed to be building
skyscrapers somewhere? Why did you
stay?

Clint shakes his head. Thinks a moment.

CLINT

Seeing you that day. In that cell.
Bloodied. Had just laid out those
three assholes. And I kept thinking
you were just a kid. A fucking
brilliant kid who deserved more
than having to fight off killers in
a cell.

DeMarcus sits down.

CLINT (CONT'D)

And a different skin tone and
income bracket, it could have been
me. It should have been me. A few
more fuck ups and it would have
been me. And no savior here. I was
scared shitless seeing you standing
in that cell like that. Was ready
to bolt right then and there. But
in that moment, I finally saw
purpose. Your gifts could not go to
waste and if I could have a hand in
somehow preserving that, I just
might find redemption. This entire
time I have needed you far more
than you needed me.

Clint gathers up his papers.

CLINT (CONT'D)

But here, right now. This is about
you. Not me, not Nate, not Peters.
This is about you. I know you got a
raw deal. I know. But you have to
stop fighting battles you should of
never been a part of in the first
place with opponents long gone.
There is no one left to fight but
you.

Clint leaves him alone in the room.

INT. PRISON SEGREGATION CELL

C/U on a roller as it streaks a line of fresh paint over
DeMarcus' mathematics.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY

Warden Peters walks briskly down the hallway flanked by his deputy and another CO.

WARDEN PETERS
Turning my prison into a damn
circus.

DEPUTY
The university president called the
governor.

INT. PRISON SEGREGATION CELL-DAY

Professor Martinson and other university officials stand in DeMarcus' old cell now freshly painted. No trace of DeMarcus' work.

Martinson gives a cold, hard look to the warden.

MARTINSON
Do you have any idea what you have
done?

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE-DAY

Martinson sits across from the warden.

MARTINSON
So all you can do is keep these men
locked up like animals? Any flicker
of talent and you just let it die
out. You should be ashamed.

WARDEN PETERS
That's easy for you to say,
Professor. You get the ones that
are trusting and undamaged.
Encouraging their potential leads
to developing Facebook and cures
for cancer. In here, creativity is
used to make shanks out of cotton
swabs and toilet paper. And you
better believe that to protect my
guards and everyone else, I will
bury them in concrete with nothing
but their dicks to play with for as
long as I deem necessary.

MARTINSON
You are impossible.

WARDEN PETERS

Professor, why don't you just run along back to your ivy league tower. And if you managed not to get stabbed on the way out, send me a thank you card for letting that "little flicker of talent die out."

Martinson just shakes his head. He gets up and walks to the door. The guards begin to escort him out.

WARDEN PETERS (CONT'D)

But he was one of the few.

Martinson stops walking.

WARDEN PETERS (CONT'D)

Maybe the only one. To spend close to 30 years watching another human being just waste away and knowing whatever he needs you can't give him. Saw it the first day he was here. Maybe that is why we were always at odds.

The warden opens his desk drawer. Takes out several Polaroids and slides them over.

Martinson walks over and picks them up. Gives them a long look before falling into a chair.

POLAROIDS

Picture after picture of DeMarcus' work chipped into the walls.

EXT. BETH'S HOUSE-DRIVEWAY-NIGHT.

Cameron opens the car door for Toni to get inside. He closes it and walks up to Beth. He nods toward the house.

CAMERON

He in there? Better not have had him around my daughter.

BETH

He's not here, but it is really none of your concern.

CAMERON

An ex-con. In my house with my daughter? That is my concern.

BETH
Because fucking your assistant
while our daughter was in the next
room is far less concerning.

Beth turns to walk away.

CAMERON
Come on, Beth. What are we doing
here?

BETH
Look, I don't know. I really don't
know.

Cameron looks toward the house again.

BETH (CONT'D)
He's not there.

CAMERON
Well what does it matter? You have
never loved me like that anyway.

Beth just looks at him. Knows it is true.

Cameron goes back to the car. They stare at each other a long
moment before he backs out of the driveway.

INT. UNIVERSITY-MARTINSON OFFICE-DAY

Beth sits across from Martinson. A few other professors join
them. Laid out on his desk is the copy of *Invisible Man* with
the equations written in crayon, the print out of the
equation painted on Beth's body, and the Polaroids.

MARTINSON
Mrs. Turner, most of the greatest
scientific minds in the world
thought Pythenian could never be
solved without computer assistance
using software that has not even
been invented yet. For a single
human brain to achieve this is the
reason the word phenomenal was ever
created.

Beth picks up one of the Polaroids.

BETH
Isn't this enough?

MARTINSON

It's his own original work. We see how he solved it, but have no idea how he got there. Pieces are missing. His approach is so unorthodox, so advanced. The level of sophistication of some these proofs could take years to learn, let alone master. Bottom line, we need him or this will never reach its full potential.

Beth traces her fingers over the copy of Invisible Man. Gives it a long look.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE-KITCHEN-NIGHT

DeMarcus watches in agitation as Beth cuts up vegetables at the kitchen counter.

DEMARCUS

Nate. Just living his nice little life while the rest of us got screwed. He needs to pay.

BETH

Stop thinking like that, DeMarcus. You should be focusing your energy on other things.

DEMARCUS

Like what?

BETH

Well, have you given any more thought to the university's offer?

DEMARCUS

No need to think about it. I ain't doing it.

BETH

So you're going to throw away this opportunity.

DeMarcus bangs his fist on the counter.

DEMARCUS

You don't know anything.

BETH

Then why won't you do it? Tell me.

DEMARCUS
Drop it, Beth.

BETH
Just tell me. Why did you stop
doing the one thing you loved?

DEMARCUS
Back off. Seriously.

BETH
What are you afraid of?

DEMARCUS
I ain't afraid of shit!

BETH
Then why won't you do it?

DEMARCUS
I said let it go. Stop fucking with
me.

BETH
Dammit, tell me! Why-

DEMARCUS
Because it failed me! It fucking
failed me! I gave it everything.
Everything I had. And all I got in
return was to lose everything I
cared about. And even then. Even
then. I still gave when I had
nothing. And it still didn't save
me.

BETH
Save you from what? What are you
talking about?

DEMARCUS
From the shit they say you're going
to be from time you're born! Cradle
to the grave. But I had a plan. I
had a plan. I had a fucking plan.
And the best I could do was to
still end up just another worthless
nigga in their prison cells. It was
inevitable.

BETH
So no one gets to have it now?

DEMARCUS

No! Nobody cared about me when I was buried under cell bars and concrete. It did nothing for me. Hell no they don't get to have it.

BETH

One of the most important discoveries in this lifetime and you will let it go to waste.

DEMARCUS

You know where I was when I provided a proof for the greatest math problem in history? On the floor of their dirty cell. Smelling the overflow of piss and shit from the buckets we used because they didn't want the risk of me drowning myself in the toilet water. That is where I was.

BETH

And that is where you still are. You haven't left. Now it's you closing the bars. Don't let it take anymore from you than it already has.

DEMARCUS

Oh, what the hell do you know?! You live in a damn fantasy world. That has always been your problem. Ever since you were little. Well here it is, Beth. It came true for you. You got your castle and your luxury carriage outside. Prince charming wasn't so charming, but everything else is perfect. Too bad you sold your goddamn soul to get it.

BETH

You are unbelievable. Don't shit on my life because you want to give up on yours.

DEMARCUS

This a life, Beth? Slaving away at something you hate for your six figures. You fucking sold out.

BETH

And what the fuck are you doing?
Hmm?

(MORE)

BETH (CONT'D)

They don't get to have Pythenian,
but you don't either. Just going to
keep punishing yourself.

DeMarcus slams his fist on the counter again.

DEMARCUS

I ain't your fucking project.
Whatever the hell this is. Be a
distraction from your broken life.
Stand in while prince charming
figures out how to keep his dick in
his pants. Whatever the hell you're
needing me for I can't give you.

BETH

So what now? Go after Nate again.
Repeat the same fucking pattern.
Now who can you blame it on this
time?

DeMarcus swipes objects off the counter. Glass and dishes
shatter on the floor. He charges toward Beth and pins her
against the wall. Puts his face inches from her own.

DEMARCUS

You think you know me, huh? You
have no idea what I am capable of.
What I had to do in there just to
survive. Quit pretending you know
me because you don't know shit.

BETH

And you think you know you? Because
I could tell you that you are
beautiful and brilliant.

DEMARCUS

Shut the fuck up!

BETH

No, you don't want to hear that.
Because you think you're worthless.

DEMARCUS

I said shut up!

BETH

What are you going to do, DeMarcus?
You're so bad. You're so horrible.
Show me.

DEMARCUS

Don't fuck with me. I'm warning you!

BETH

You're so hell bent on being the monster you think you are. Well if you throw away your gifts along with your heart just to, once again, do what you plan to do to Nate, this time you finally will be.

DEMARCUS

Fuck you!

DeMarcus balls his fist and BAM! The hanging pots shake from the force of his fist landing on the wall right beside Beth's face.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

You can go to hell.

BETH

Won't have to go far. I'm looking right at it.

DeMarcus stares at her a long time. Lets her go. Pushes more dishes off the counter before he storms out of the kitchen. Beth breathes hard. Puts her hand to her heart.

INT/EXT. LITTLE ED'S TRUCK-NIGHT

DeMarcus sits outside of Nate's house. He gets out and slams the door.

INT. NATE'S HOUSE-LIVING ROOM

DeMarcus holds Nate face down on the ground by his neck. Nate's wife and son try to pull him off.

DEMARCUS

You think you can shit on people and just get away with it?

NATE

(sobbing)

I'm so sorry. It was so long ago. Please forgive me.

Nate's wife pulls on his arm.

NATE'S WIFE

Please, stop. I called the police.
What are you doing?

DeMarcus looks up at her. It is now his mother pleading with him like she did years ago. Beside her a young DeNiesha is crying.

DeMarcus looks down at Nate. Continues to squeeze the life out of him.

NATE

I am so sorry.

NATE'S SON

Let my daddy go! Let him go.

DeMarcus realizes what he is doing. Finally lets Nate go. He stares at his hands like they are not his. Nate's wife pushes him out of the way as she goes to Nate.

DeMarcus stares at the boy for a minute. Feels ashamed. He stands up and runs out of the house.

Nate sobs on the floor as his wife and son try to comfort him.

EXT. GRAVEYARD-NIGHT

DeMarcus sits in front his mother's tombstone. A pair of car headlights illuminate him. Beth and Little Ed get out. He stays by the car as Beth walks over to DeMarcus.

BETH

What are you doing?

DeMarcus won't look at her.

DEMARCUS

I'm...Are you hurt? Did I hurt
you?

Beth sits in front of him. Grabs his face. Makes him look at her.

BETH

What are you doing?

DEMARCUS.

My mother...She was so young. Her
life. I wanted my sister to...I had
a plan.

BETH

I know.

DEMARCUS

I had a plan.

Tears streamed down his eyes as Beth cradles him.

INT. COUNSELING AGENCY-DAY

DeMarcus and Clint sit with the young men in the therapy class.

ANTHONY

So yeah I rolled up on him. That was my little brother he fucked with so you better believe that motherfucker was going to pay for what he did.

DeMarcus keeps his head down.

DEMARCUS

So it hurt you.

ANTHONY

What, Man? I took up for my brother. That is what I do.

DeMarcus looks at him.

DEMARCUS

It hurt you that you lost your brother to something that you were involved in.

ANTHONY

Whatever, Man.

DeMarcus looks at Clint.

DEMARCUS

Patterns can be the most deceptive of mathematical properties because sequences are often misread as correct and finite while the true nature of their members goes undefined.

The young men look at him confused.

ANTHONY

The fuck you just say, Nigga? I ain't doing your bullshit today. Old ass.

DEMARCUS

We are taught as boys to respond a certain way in the face of tragedy. Just fight. Never let anyone see our hearts.

He stares at Anthony.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

It hurt you.

ANTHONY

You keep talking to me like you know me old man then I'ma have to show you who the fuck I really am. This 429 East Pointe projects, Nigga, I will fuck ya ass up.

Anthony jumps up. DeMarcus stands up calmly. Glances over at Clint again.

DEMARCUS

What I wished I would have known, or what I wished I could have believed is that I didn't always have to fight. Didn't have to always be on guard. If I just put my fists down for one minute, the world just may not open up and swallow me whole.

ANTHONY

Fuck you, Nigga!

DEMARCUS

Yes, because I look just like you. I want you to hate me as much as you can if it will keep you from hating yourself. You don't have to be what they say you are. You still have a heart. You miss your brother.

Anthony starts to cry. Hard tears like he has never cried before. Other young men begin to cry. A powerful moment.

DEMARCUS (CONT'D)

Come on support each other. You
know how to do it.

One by one the other young men stand up. They form a group hug.

Clint watches mesmerized. Moves back to give them space. DeMarcus holds his hand out for him to join. Clint takes his hand and the other young men embrace him. Finally accepting him into the group.

TITLE: 8 MONTHS LATER

EXT. UNIVERSITY-DAY

DeMarcus walks with a leather satchel over his shoulder. Sees Beth and Toni watching a campus event. Beth walks over to him.

DEMARCUS

Following in her mother's
footsteps.

BETH

I wanted to give her a tour of the
campus. Never too early to start
thinking about it.

They make their way to a bench and sit down.

DEMARCUS

So you're finally pursuing the
doctorate. Sorry, I haven't been
around. It has been so crazy.
Everyone wants to know about it.

BETH

Yes, it will be like that for a
while. I saw the 60 Minutes
special. And a world tour? Oxford,
Cambridge. Oooh.

DEMARCUS

Well, you know I got them eating
out of my hand. You can come if you
want. Cambridge. Where Woolf wrote
one of her most famous essays.

Beth shakes her head.

BETH
I better not. I think you should
continue to see what the world has
to offer you on your own.

Beth looks over at Toni.

BETH (CONT'D)
Besides. I need to start showing up
for my family.

DeMarcus nods expectantly.

BETH (CONT'D)
And since I read somewhere you have
started work on your own theorem,
I have something to help you get
inspired.

Beth pulls out a brand new spiral notebook with a variation
of the glitter and ponies.

BETH (CONT'D)
This was a popular design. They
keep making it.

DeMarcus laughs and takes the notebook. Opens it to the first
page.

BETH (CONT'D)
I wrote a few excerpts from my
dissertation proposal for
inspiration.

DEMARCUS
And what makes you think I want to
read this shit?

BETH
I let you draw your shitty math
problem all over me.

She stands up.

BETH (CONT'D)
We have to get going.

He reluctantly follows. Doesn't want her to go.

DEMARCUS
It seems something is always
pulling us apart.

BETH

I think we are always together right when we need to be. The dragons are at rest for now. In due time they will awaken again, vengeful and breathing fire, and we will have to redeem each other once more.

A beat.

DEMARCUS

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." Toni Morrison.

BETH

"But mathematics is the sister, as well as the servant, of the arts and is touched by the same madness and genius." Marston Morse.

Beth gives him a hug. Turns to leave.

DEMARCUS

Peace. Only from you.

BETH

What?

DEMARCUS

A long time ago, this little kid genius was explaining the Hero's Journey to me on the back of a bus. She asked what is my ultimate reward for solving Pythenian. It was not the proof. It was peace. And I only got it through you. This whole time, you have been my only peace. Only you.

BETH

(In Fluent Mandarin,
subtitled)

And the hero returns from the adventure to share his wisdom with the world. All will be enriched by his experience. But not all will know that while his mind helped him achieve the quest, it was his heart that showed him the way.

Beth looks at him for a long time. She touches his face.
Finally walks away.

BETH (V.O.)
(Overlap)
The greatest unsolved problem in
mathematics was the Pythenian
Hypothesis.

INT. OXFORD UNIVERSITY LECTURE ROOM-DAY

Demarcus writes on the board in front of a very packed lecture room. People lean against walls. Some even sit on the floor. Martinson sits in the very front row.

He finishes writing the last of a proof on the board. Circles the final solution. At first it is stunned silence. And then one by one people begin to clap and stand until the entire room erupts in applause. Some even have tears in their eyes.

BETH (V.O.)
But history has shown over and over
again that every challenge worth
the journey waits patiently for the
right hero to conquer it.

INT. BIG MULTIPURPOSE ROOM-DAY

DeMarcus speaks at the front of the room. It is filled with young inner city boys and girls. Behind him a huge banner reads: *The Beverly Daniels Education Academy*.

Along with parents and other community leaders, Clint and DeNiesha are among the audience. We may even see Mr. Beeman and Dr. Dobbs.

Little Ed stands to the side proudly wearing a Beverly Daniels Academy staff shirt. His right hand man. Always.

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM-DAY

Beth stands behind a podium in front of a large audience.

BETH
But I propose today that the hero's
journey is less for the hero and
more for the people who vicariously
benefit from it.

MONTAGE:

-Clint attends a recognition ceremony for the young men from group therapy. Anthony gives him a hug and they pose for a picture.

-Beth sits at the dinner table with Toni as she places the final page on top of her newly typed novel. Cameron comes behind her and kisses her on the head.

-Little Ed proudly walks with his daughter (12) on a tour of the learning academy.

-Warden Peters admiringly observes inmates interacting with tutors wearing Beverly Daniels Learning Academy shirts.

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM-DAY

BETH

And that the hero's ability to conquer is directly motivated by his own internal struggles. That is why it was only the accursed Oedipus who could solve the Riddle of the Sphinx. Why it was the bastard Theseus who finally took down the Minotaur. And why mathematics' greatest problem waited centuries to be solved by one deemed not fit to live outside of a cage.

EXT. BEACH-DAY

DeMarcus sits in the sand reading the new glittered pink ponies notebook Beth gave him. He flips to a new page and begins to write.

LATER

The notebook lays open in the sand as DeMarcus uses a stick to write out a math problem. He looks it over satisfied.

The sand grains begin to lift up and form the math problem in the air. Then dissolve into bright new stars in the infinite night sky.

FADE OUT.