

ONCE UPON A TIME IN NEW JERSEY  
by  
Jason Daniels

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

It is a cold, dark, and silent January night in Newark, New Jersey. The wind whips as snow falls. A hooded young man, CALVIN PAUL, 17, sits on a bench, looking at Downtown Newark's city skyline. He looks around the park, then looks to the sky, as he tries to hold back tears.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Calvin looks around the classroom, that is full of anxious seniors, ready to go home to enjoy their weekend. The English teacher, SANDRA CLARKE, 37, walks about the class.

SANDRA

Now according to Bradley, one of the engaging elements of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, is that they are not monstrosities of virtue, but rather people who are simultaneously accessible and elusive. They are made up of qualities and characteristics that we find within ourselves, while exhibiting an intensity that places them beyond our grasp. Ms. Washington.

A young woman, CRYSTAL WASHINGTON, 17, looks up at Sandra.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Give me some characteristics, some traits, that make up a tragic hero.

CRYSTAL

Well, he must suffer more than he deserves. He must be doomed from the start, but bearing no responsibility for possessing his flaw.

SANDRA

Good. Can anyone else add on to that?

Calvin raises his hand.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Okay, Mr. Paul.

CALVIN

Due to his inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances, he will be doomed to make a serious error in judgement, usually resulting in his demise. He's even given the chance to redeem himself, but he must move, sometimes knowingly, to his defeat.

SANDRA

Very good.

Calvin looks over to Crystal and smiles. She gives him a smile back as the dismissal bell rings. Everyone scrambles to get out of the classroom. Calvin straps on his book bag and picks up his English Literature book.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Hey, Calvin.

CALVIN

Yeah, Ms. Clarke?

SANDRA

You two keep it up. You'll be walking across that stage in no time.

Calvin cracks a smile as Crystal walks up behind him.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

You guys enjoy your weekend.

CRYSTAL

You too, Ms. Clarke.

Calvin and Crystal exit the classroom.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Crystal make their way down the crowded hallway.

CALVIN

So, what are you gonna be up to this weekend?

CRYSTAL

I think my cousin wants to go out to Jersey Gardens tomorrow. I don't know.

CALVIN  
Oh. Sounds like fun.

CRYSTAL  
What about you? What are you doing?

CALVIN  
My dad's comin' over. We're probably just gonna play x-box.

CRYSTAL  
You boys and those damn video games. I don't see how y'all can do it.

CALVIN  
(laughs)  
You should come over and play with us.

CRYSTAL  
(smiles)  
Sorry, I don't do games.

CALVIN  
Whatever.

Crystal laughs as she walks up to her locker. She opens the locker as a young man, QUENTIN JACKSON, 17, comes up behind Calvin and smacks him in the back of the head.

QUENTIN  
What up, fool?

CALVIN  
What the hell is wrong with you? One day you're gonna do that and I'ma turn around and smack you.

QUENTIN  
Yeah, yeah. And how are you doing today, Ms. Washington?

CRYSTAL  
Hey, Quentin, how are you?

QUENTIN  
I'm good. You ready to roll, Calvin?

CALVIN  
Yeah, let's go.

Crystal puts her hair up and ties it with a black bandana. She tosses her books into the locker and closes it.

CRYSTAL

Hey, Calvin, you feel like walking me home?

Calvin looks a bit nervous.

CALVIN

Oh, no, I can't. I have to, uh, I have to pick up my little brother.

CRYSTAL

Oh, okay. Well, I'll see you two on Monday. Bye, Calvin. Bye, Quentin.

QUENTIN

Bye.

Crystal turns around and walks away. Calvin cracks a smile as she walks down the hall. He watches her until he loses her in the crowd of students.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

You know that's some bullshit, right?

CALVIN

I don't even feel like goin' there today, man.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin and Quentin make their way down the street.

QUENTIN

I just don't understand why you don't tell her you like her, man.

CALVIN

I regret telling you. Why are YOU so worried about it? Trust me, I'm gonna tell her when the time is right.

QUENTIN

When the time is right? You know how many times I've heard that from you? When the time is right my ass. It's ridiculous. You've liked her since junior year, Calvin.

(MORE)

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

We're seniors now, man. What the hell are you waitin' for?

CALVIN

I don't even know if she likes me like that.

QUENTIN

(sarcastic)

Oh, yeah, she doesn't like you that. Askin' you to walk her home and shit.

CALVIN

Yeah, so what?

QUENTIN

So what? Let me school you real quick, son. If a member of the opposite sex asks you to walk them home, THEY LIKE YOU.

CALVIN

Look, I can't take the risk of tellin' her how I feel and messin' up our friendship. Making everything weird, you know?

QUENTIN

You realize you sound like a fag now, right?

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin and Quentin walk into a crowded elementary school courtyard and lean up against a tree.

QUENTIN

So, other than not goin' out with Crystal, what are you doin' this weekend?

CALVIN

My dad's comin' over. We're just gonna play some Madden. Chill out. You wanna come over?

QUENTIN

A chance to kill y'all in Madden AGAIN? Yeah, I'll come over.

CALVIN

Cool.

A dismissal bell is heard from inside the building. Moments later, children begin to pour out of the entrance. Calvin looks through the crowd. Seconds later, Calvin spots his little brother, AARON PAUL, 7, in the crowd of students.

Aaron walks over to where Calvin and Quentin stand.

QUENTIN

(to Aaron)

Well, look who it is. The black  
Bart Simpson.

AARON

Shut up, stupid.

CALVIN

(laughs)

Let's go, man, dad will be at the  
house soon.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Aaron, Calvin, and Quentin make their way down the street, which is now filled with elementary school students.

AARON

I'll play you to a game of Madden  
later on, Cal.

CALVIN

Aight. I call the Steelers.

AARON

No, I call the Steelers!

CALVIN

Too bad, I called them first.

QUENTIN

Damn, Calvin, instead of bein' out  
somewhere with Crystal, you're  
gonna be playin' video games with  
this lil' peasey headed punk?

AARON

Who you callin' peasey, dummy?

QUENTIN

Shut up. Grown folks is talkin'.

CALVIN  
Man, will you leave that Crystal  
stuff alone? Look, Monday  
afternoon, I'll walk her home and  
ask her if she wants to go out  
somewhere, okay?

QUENTIN  
(sighs)  
Aight, we'll see.

CALVIN  
Yeah, we'll see.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A woman stands at the sink, washing dishes. The woman is  
SHERYL ROBINSON, 39. She is dressed in baby blue nurse's  
scrubs.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aaron, Calvin, and Quentin walk through the front door.

SHERYL (O.S.)  
Hey, boys, is that you?!

CALVIN  
Yeah, ma!

Sheryl walks from kitchen.

AARON  
Hey, mommy!

Sheryl leans down and gives Aaron a kiss on the cheek.

SHERYL  
Hey, baby. Hey, Quentin.

QUENTIN  
Hello, Ms. Robinson.

CALVIN  
Hey, ma.

SHERYL  
You, we need to have a little talk.

CALVIN  
About what?



SHERYL

Go sit down in the kitchen.

Aaron and Quentin look at Calvin, and try to hide their smiles as they walk toward the back of the house.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Sheryl walk into the kitchen and take a seat at the table.

CALVIN

What did I do?

SHERYL

It's what you didn't do. Didn't I tell you, when you and your brother leave in the morning, to lock that front door? You know they just found three bodies, right down the street the other night?

CALVIN

Okay, and what does that have to do with us? We didn't do anything.

SHERYL

Still ignorant to the ways this world works. What makes you think you have to be doing something to get killed? More than half of the people that are murdered are innocent bystanders, so unless you want me, you, or your brother to become apart of that statistic, lock the damn door.

CALVIN

Alright. I'm sorry. I'll lock the door next time.

SHERYL

(smiles)

You better. How was school?

CALVIN

It was good. Ms. Clarke said if I keep doing what I'm doing, I'll graduate with no problem.

SHERYL

Then keep doing what you're doing.  
You have no idea how proud I am. I  
can't wait until June to see you  
walk across that stage, boy.

CALVIN

Neither can I.

SHERYL

Oh, your father called. He said  
he'll be headed over here as soon  
as he gets off.

CALVIN

Okay.

SHERYL

Well, let me finish getting ready  
for work.

Sheryl gets up from the table and gives Calvin a kiss on the forehead. Calvin smiles as she walks toward the back of the house.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aaron, Calvin, and Quentin are on the couch, playing an intense game of MADDEN '07. They are all into the game, screaming and shouting at the television. Seconds later, there are three knocks on the front door.

CALVIN

I got it.

Calvin pauses the game, gets up, and walks over to the front door. He opens the door and there stands GEORGE PAUL, 40. He smiles and walks into the house, pulling Calvin into a hug.

GEORGE

Hey, how you doin', boy?

CALVIN

(smiles)  
Hey, dad. I'm good.

George lets Calvin out of the hug and walks over to the couch. Aaron jumps up and runs up to him, hugging his legs.

GEORGE

Hey, baby boy. How's my lil' man  
doin'?

AARON

Good.

Aaron lets go of George's legs. George takes off his coat and sits it on the couch.

GEORGE

Ah, Mr. Jackson.

QUENTIN

Hey, Mr. Paul.

GEORGE

I see y'all started playin' without me. I see how it is.

Calvin sits on the couch as Sheryl walks from the back, pulling on a coat.

SHERYL

Hey, George.

GEORGE

Hey, there, Nurse Robinson. How are you?

SHERYL

I'm fine. You got a minute?

GEORGE

(confused)

Yeah, sure. I'll be back fellas.

George follows Sheryl to her bedroom.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, SHERYL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sheryl walks into the room. George enters, closing the door behind him.

GEORGE

What's up?

SHERYL

I just wanted to say thank you for staying with the boys tonight. They got me working the graveyard now and I hate leaving them here by themselves with all the craziness that's going on out here.

GEORGE

Sheryl, you don't have to thank me for staying with OUR kids. And you know anytime you need me, you can call.

George smiles.

SHERYL

Thank you. So, is Georgia still on this summer?

GEORGE

Yes, ma'am. I save about five-hundred more dollars and I have a down payment for a car.

SHERYL

That's good. The boys are really excited about it.

GEORGE

Yeah, well, they haven't seen my side of the family for a while, so it'll be good for them.

SHERYL

Yeah. Alright, I'm gonna head out before I miss my bus. You take care.

Sheryl walks over to George and gives him a hug.

GEORGE

You be careful out there.

SHERYL

I will.

Sheryl lets him out of the hug. She smiles and exits the room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Calvin and George sit on the couch, playing x-box 360. Aaron lies at the other end of the couch, fast asleep. Quentin has gone home for the night. George lets out a long yawn.

GEORGE

Alright, Cal. Let's call it a night.

Calvin kneels down beside the television and starts to disconnect the x-box. George looks at the back of Calvin's head.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You lookin' a little rusty in the back, son. You want me to line you up real quick?

CALVIN

Nah, I'm good.

GEORGE

You still got those trimmers I gave you, right?

CALVIN

Yeah.

GEORGE

Well, you need to put those bad boys to use.

Calvin laughs and sits back down on the couch.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

So, you boys gonna be ready for Georgia this summer?

CALVIN

Yeah. That's all Aaron ever talks about.

George nods and smiles.

GEORGE

How's your momma been lately?

CALVIN

Good. She's just been really overprotective lately.

GEORGE

She's supposed to be. That's her job. That's OUR job. It's a cold, cruel world out there, Cal. That's somethin' you need to understand, man. Things ain't all peaches and cream out there, you know what I'm sayin'?

Calvin nods.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(hesitant)

So, uh, between me and you. Is she seein' anyone right now?

CALVIN

Why you wanna know?

GEORGE

Just answer the damn question, boy.

CALVIN

(laughs)

Nah, she's not seein' anyone.

George lets out a chuckle.

GEORGE

Yes, sir. Your mother's a good woman. You'll be lucky to find one half as good as her.

Calvin nods. George smiles as Calvin eyes a gold rope chain around George's neck. Calvin smiles.

CALVIN

You still wear that thing, huh?

GEORGE

I never take it off. I need to get it cleaned. I want a new one this year. Fourteen carrot gold.

CALVIN

(laughs)

Yeah, okay.

GEORGE

Alright, let me get outta here before I miss my bus.

George stands to his feet and puts his coat on. Calvin stands.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Tell your brother I love him and I'll see him tomorrow.

CALVIN

Okay.

George pulls Calvin into a hug.

GEORGE  
I love you.

CALVIN  
Love you too, dad.

George smiles and lets Calvin out of the hug. He walks toward the front door.

GEORGE  
Don't forget to lock up.

CALVIN  
I won't.

GEORGE  
Alright. See you tomorrow, son.

George opens the door and walks out in to the cold New Jersey night. Calvin smiles. He walks over to Aaron and scoops him up in his arms.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, AARON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin walks into Aaron's bedroom and over to the bed. He carefully puts Aaron in his bed, then covers him up. He smiles, then gives Aaron a kiss on the forehead. He turns off the light and exits the room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin walks into his room and sits on the edge of his bed. He pulls off his sneakers and lies back in his bed. He smiles, reaches over to his night stand, and turns his light off.

EXT. STREET - LATER

The night is cold and silent. Snow has begun to fall lightly. A New Jersey Transit bus begins to approach. The breaks squeal as the bus comes to a stop.

George stands up front, waiting to get off. The bus comes to a complete stop and George steps off of the bus.

GEORGE  
You have a good night.

BUS DRIVER  
You have a good night too, sir.

George starts to walk down the street as the bus pulls off. He puts his hood up to shield himself from the cold. He walks down about half a block when he hears music, blasting from a car in the distance. As the car gets closer, the music gets louder.

On the other side of the street, a black 1989 Cadillac Brougham zooms past George. It rides down another block, before turning around in the middle of the street. It speeds up, then slows down when it gets to George's side. The tinted passenger window rolls down.

MAN

You got the time?

George keeps walking, as if he knows these guys could be trouble.

GEORGE

Nah, man.

The Cadillac speeds up on the sidewalk, blocking George's path. Two MEN jump out of the car, brandishing handguns. One of the men puts a gun in George's face.

MAN

Give me your mothafuckin' wallet!

George puts his hands up and backs into a wall.

GEORGE

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Calm down now.

He hits George in the face with his gun.

MAN

Put your mothafuckin' hands down!

The other man starts to run through George's pockets.

GEORGE

Come on, man, I ain't got shit to give y'all!

MAN

Shut the fuck up!

He pats around George's chest. He reaches under George's shirt and pulls out his gold chain.

GEORGE

(angry)  
Hold on, now!



He punches George in the face and rips the chain from around his neck. George stumbles back. George balls his hand into a tight fist and punches him in the nose. He falls on his back as the other man rushes George into the wall.

Man 1 gets up and runs over to the tussle. George tries to fight both men off. Seconds later, a gunshot is heard. The struggle ends.

MAN 2

Oh, shit.

George backs into the wall, with a gunshot wound in his chest. He slowly slumps down the wall.

MAN

Get the rest of his shit.

Man 2 reaches down and pulls George's wallet from the inside of his jacket pocket.

MAN 2

That's it.

DRIVER (O.S.)

Y'ALL MOTHAFUCKAS HURRY UP!

Man 2 jumps into the back seat of the Cadillac as man 1 stares down at George. George's breathing gets slower and slower. The man turns around and jumps into the passenger's side of the Cadillac. It peels out and takes off down the street.

Sirens echo in the distance as George takes his last breath.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Aaron sits on the couch, playing x-box. Calvin walks from the back, rubbing his eyes. He looks around the living room with confusion.

CALVIN

(confused)

Dad get here yet?

AARON

Nope.

Calvin scratches his head and walks back to his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Aaron and Calvin sit at the table. Calvin talks on the phone.

CALVIN  
(into phone)  
He didn't come in today? You sure?  
Okay. Thank you.

Calvin hangs up the phone.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
They said he wasn't scheduled to  
work today.

Aaron shrugs his shoulders.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - EVENING

The sun has set. Calvin sits on the steps, looking up and down the street. He takes a deep breath.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Calvin sits at the kitchen table. Seconds later, Sheryl steps through the front door.

SHERYL  
Hey, baby.

She walks into the kitchen. She notices the disturbed look on his face.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
I haven't heard from dad all day.

SHERYL  
Maybe he had to work some overtime.

CALVIN  
He wasn't scheduled to work today.

Sheryl caresses his cheek.

SHERYL  
Don't worry, honey. Something  
probably came up. We'll hear from  
him soon.

Calvin forces an uninspired smile. Sheryl gives him a kiss on the forehead and walks toward the back.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Sheryl washes dishes and Aaron sits in the living room, playing video games.

SHERYL  
You hungry, baby?

AARON  
Yeah. Can I get some waffles?

SHERYL  
(laughs)  
Sure you can, sweetie.

Calvin walks from the back of the house, looking like he just woke up.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
Hey, baby. You hungry?

Calvin takes a seat at the table.

CALVIN  
Yeah. You hear anything from dad?

SHERYL  
No, not yet.

Calvin sighs.

AARON  
You wanna play me in Madden, Cal?

CALVIN  
Yeah, I'll be in there.

SHERYL  
You boys and those damn games.

Calvin laughs as the phone rings. Sheryl turns around and picks up the phone.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Hello. Yes, this is her. Vera? Slow  
down. What? What? Oh my God.

Sheryl drops the plate and it shatters on the floor. Calvin  
stands to his feet as Aaron walks into the kitchen.

CALVIN  
(concerned)  
What? What's wrong?

Tears start to roll down Sheryl's cheeks.

SHERYL  
(into phone)  
Who would want to kill George?

Calvin's face goes blank.

CALVIN  
What?

Sheryl hangs up the phone and takes a seat at the table.

AARON  
What's wrong, mommy?

SHERYL  
(hesitant)  
Your father's dead, baby.

Calvin closes his eyes and backs into the wall. Aaron starts  
to cry as Sheryl pulls him into a hug. Calvin starts to cry  
and shake his head no, as if what he just heard was a lie.  
Sheryl beckons for Calvin to come over to her and Aaron.

He is hesitant at first, but he slowly stands to his feet and  
staggers over to them. Calvin joins the embrace as they all  
try to comfort each other.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - MORNING

It is a quiet morning and the entire house is silent. The  
clock on Calvin's night stand reads 6:59am. As soon as it  
hits 7:00am, the alarm starts to go off. Calvin's  
outstretched arm violently bangs on the clock until it stops.

Calvin rises to the edge of the bed, sounding as if he doesn't want to get up. He puts his face in his hands and takes a deep breath. His appearance has changed. It looks as if he has aged a couple of years and the patch of gray hair on his head, along with an unshaven face, doesn't help.

He jumps to his feet, turns on his radio, and heads out of his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, AARON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin kicks Aaron's bedroom door open.

CALVIN  
Hey. Hey. HEY!

Aaron turns over and looks at Calvin with sleepy eyes.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
Come on, man. Get your ass up.

Aaron plops back down in his bed as Calvin exits the room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, SHERYL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin pushes Sheryl's door open.

CALVIN  
Ma.

SHERYL  
I heard you when you woke Aaron.  
What do I keep telling you about  
your mouth?

CALVIN  
(as he exits)  
You wake his ass up then.

Sheryl takes a deep breath.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin walks back into his bedroom and over to his closet. He starts to scramble through the clothes on the floor. He throws some clothes on his bed, then reaches up top. He accidentally knocks down a shoebox from up top.

CALVIN  
(to himself)  
Shit.

As he kneels down to pick up the shoebox, it's true contents are revealed. It is an unloaded glock .22, with a loaded magazine. Calvin picks up the gun and puts it back into the shoebox. He scoops up the magazine and puts it into the shoebox.

He takes the shoebox and puts it back up top. He grabs a rag and a towel, then heads out of the bedroom.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - LATER

Aaron and Sheryl are at the kitchen table, eating breakfast. Calvin comes from the back, fully dressed, and takes a seat at the table. Sheryl has made him a plate, but he ignores it.

SHERYL  
Why don't you eat something?

CALVIN  
I ain't hungry.

SHERYL  
You should eat.

CALVIN  
I said I ain't hungry.

SHERYL  
Fine.

CALVIN  
You ready, Aaron?

AARON  
Yeah, let me get my bag.

Aaron jumps up from the table and runs toward his room.

SHERYL  
What time do you have to be to work?

CALVIN  
Nine.

SHERYL  
You only got twenty minutes. Don't you think you should get going?

Calvin ignores her question.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

I spoke to your aunt Vera yesterday. She asked me why you never call her. She also asked if you're ever planning to go back and finish school.

Calvin sighs.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

It was just a question. A very good question. Everyone keeps asking me if you're going back to school.

CALVIN

Everyone needs to mind their fuckin' business.

SHERYL

Calvin, you should really consider going back. To get your diploma. You have no idea how that feels.

CALVIN

How many times do I have to tell you, I am NOT goin' back to school? School ain't gonna help with none of these bills, is it? I ain't even gonna waste my time.

SHERYL

I'm just saying, Calvin, you only had a few months left and you just dropped out.

Calvin slams his fist on the table.

CALVIN

Like I said, school ain't gonna help with shit around here. I'm NOT GOING BACK. I wish you would get that shit through your head.

Calvin gets up from the table and storms out of the house. Sheryl stays seated, looking upset. George's death has obviously taken its toll on her also. Aaron comes running back into the kitchen.

AARON

Where's Calvin, mommy?

SHERYL

He's outside waiting for you, baby.  
Come here and give mommy a kiss.

Aaron gives Sheryl a kiss on the cheek.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

You have a good day, honey.

AARON

You too, mommy.

Aaron runs out of the kitchen and out of the front door.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Aaron steps out of the house to find an agitated Calvin waiting for him.

CALVIN

How many times do I have to tell  
you, out of the house by EIGHT? Do  
you know what time it is? You're  
gonna make it to school on time,  
but I might be late for work.

AARON

(smiles)

I can't help it. Mommy makes good  
breakfast.

CALVIN

Life's a big mothafuckin' joke to  
you, ain't it?

Aaron's smile fades.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Come on, let's go.

INT. SUPERMARKET - LATER

There is a man up front talking to a CUSTOMER. The man is  
GERALD GRADY, 55. Calvin walks into the supermarket, trying  
to dodge Gerald. Calvin gets away with it for a few steps,  
before he is spotted by Gerald.

Gerald excuses the customer and heads for Calvin. Calvin  
knows he's been spotted, but he keeps walking. Gerald walks  
beside Calvin and stops him.



GERALD

Excuse me? Do you have the time?

CALVIN

(agitated)

Twenty after nine.

GERALD

Okay. Do you see a problem with this situation?

CALVIN

If you talkin' about me bein' a little late, no.

GERALD

Late is late.

CALVIN

Well, you and I both know I'll have all my work done by the time I clock out, so is this conversation necessary?

GERALD

That's not the point. The boss wants this store stocked at a certain time.

CALVIN

Then I better go get started.

Calvin walks away in a disrespectful manner. Gerald shakes his head.

INT. SUPERMARKET, SHOPPING ISLE - LATER

Calvin is on a shopping isle, stocking the shelves with canned food. Down at the other end of the isle, Gerald walks by. He walks back as if something caught his attention. He looks at Calvin for a moment, then down at his watch.

Calvin looks back at him for a second, then continues what he is doing. Gerald walks down the isle to where Calvin is working and looks at Calvin's float, which is full of canned food.

GERALD

Can I ask you a question?

CALVIN  
(agitated)  
Go ahead.

GERALD  
You think you could move any  
faster?

CALVIN  
If I could move any faster, I  
would.

GERALD  
Well, I don't know. You don't seem  
to be applying yourself.

Calvin stops what he's doing.

CALVIN  
Let me ask you a question. Why is  
it that every time you wanna ask me  
a question, you start out with,  
"can I ask you a question?" Don't  
you know that every time you come  
over here fuckin' with me, you slow  
me down even more?

GERALD  
Look, son-

Calvin slams what's in his hands on the floor violently.

CALVIN  
What?! I look like your  
mothafuckin' son to you?! Don't you  
ever call me your son! You ain't my  
fuckin' father!

Customers look at Calvin and Gerald as they pass. Gerald  
tries to calm Calvin down by putting a hand on his shoulder.  
Calvin shoves his hand away.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
Don't you fuckin' touch me, Gerald!  
Don't you ever put your  
mothafuckin' hands on me!

GERALD  
Okay, Calvin. It's okay. Calm down.

Calvin starts to walk away.

CALVIN

Yeah, I know its okay. You can put  
the rest of this shit up yourself  
since your so pressed for time.

Calvin walks off of the isle. Gerald looks down at the float  
and shakes his head.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL, COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Calvin sits on a bench, outside of his old school. From the  
inside, a bell can be heard. Calvin looks down at his watch.

CALVIN

(to himself)  
Lunch time.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL, COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin sits on the bench, watching as students play  
basketball, study, and gossip. A woman walks toward the  
school, pulling keys from her purse. She is about to walk  
past Calvin, but she stops.

SANDRA

Hey.

Calvin over to see that the woman is his old English teacher,  
Sandra Clarke. She gives a confused look, as she tries to  
remember who he is.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

I remember you. Calvin. Calvin  
Paul.

Sandra walks over to the bench and takes a seat beside  
Calvin.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

How have you been?

CALVIN

I been aight, you?

SANDRA

I can't complain.

There is an awkward silence.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

It's been a year since I've last seen you. What have you been doing with yourself?

CALVIN

Nothin' really. Workin'.

SANDRA

I see.

(beat)

We all heard about what happened to your father. I'm sorry for your loss.

CALVIN

(hesitant)

Thank you.

SANDRA

(hesitant)

Can I ask you a question?

Calvin nods.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Why did you stop coming to school? You had so little time left and you were doing so well.

CALVIN

(hesitant)

I just...I wanted to be left alone. School didn't matter. Nothin' did.

SANDRA

I see.

(beat)

When are you coming back to finish?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

I'm not.

Sandra looks at him with great disappointment.

SANDRA

I see. Well, you're a grown man and I'm not going to sit here and try to give you a lecture on how important your education is. I will tell you this, though. Everyone is dealt their bad hands in life.

(MORE)

SANDRA (CONT'D)

That doesn't give you an excuse to give up on yourself. I would've never, in a million years, pegged you as a quitter, Calvin.

Calvin looks away.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

I know you had a lot of people counting on you to walk across that stage. There's still time for you to do it. You and I both know you can still do it.

(beat)

And I know your father would want to see you do it too.

He looks at her. From the inside of the school, a bell can be heard. They both look over to the school.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Time for me to get back to class. It was nice talking to you. I hope I'll be seeing you soon.

Calvin says nothing. Sandra gets up from the bench and walks toward the school. Calvin watches her until she enters the building.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sheryl sits in the living room. She looks as if something bothers her. Aaron and Calvin walk in through the front door. Aaron runs up to Sheryl and gives her a kiss as Calvin walks into the kitchen.

AARON

Hey, mommy. I don't have any homework, so can I play Madden?

SHERYL

Sure you can, sweetie.

Aaron runs off toward the back as Sheryl walks into the kitchen.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Calvin rummages through the refrigerator.

SHERYL

Calvin, we need to talk.

CALVIN  
Yeah? About what?

SHERYL  
Mr. Grady called me today.

Calvin closes the refrigerator.

CALVIN  
Fuck Mr. Grady. He's lucky I ain't  
beat his ass today.

SHERYL  
What the hell is wrong with you,  
Calvin? You have a good job, but  
all you seem to do is bicker with  
this man. Do you know how close he  
was to firing you?

CALVIN  
I don't give a fuck. If he wants to  
fire me, let him fire me. I don't  
care.

SHERYL  
Yeah, that's right, Calvin, you  
don't care, you just don't give a  
damn, do you?

CALVIN  
Come on, man, I just walked through  
the door and you givin' me shit  
already?

SHERYL  
You know what? I am so sick of your  
shit. You walk around here like  
you're the only one who had to deal  
with your father's death. Guess  
what, Calvin? You're not the only  
one. It has taken it's toll on me  
and it has taken it's toll on your  
brother. I understand you lost your  
father, but that doesn't give you  
the right to treat us like shit. We  
loved him, just as much as you did.

CALVIN  
NO, you DIDN'T love him. You didn't  
give a damn about him. If you did,  
you wouldn't have put him out.

SHERYL

(angry)

What the HELL do you think you're talking about?

CALVIN

As a matter of fact, if it weren't for you puttin' him out, he would've been home with us, instead of dying at a fuckin' bus stop!

SHERYL

(crying)

Do you hear the shit that is coming out of your mouth, Calvin? You need help! You need to see a psychiatrist!

Calvin kicks a chair over and storms out of the kitchen.

CALVIN

I ain't tryin' to hear this bullshit! You need a fuckin' psychiatrist!

Calvin storms out of the front door and slams it behind him. Sheryl, in tears, takes a seat at the table.

EXT. ROOFTOP - EVENING

Calvin sits on a rooftop, alone, as he watches the sunset. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aaron and Sheryl sit at the table, eating dinner. Calvin comes through the front door. He walks through the living room and past the kitchen, without saying a word, then disappears into the back.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin lies in his bed, staring at the ceiling. There are two knocks at his door.

CALVIN

What?

Sheryl pushes his door open.

SHERYL  
 Hey, baby. Aaron and I would really  
 like to have you eat with us.

CALVIN  
 I ain't hungry.

SHERYL  
 (pleading)  
 Please, Calvin, please?

Calvin sighs.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

There is silence as Aaron, Calvin, and Sheryl sit at the  
 table, eating dinner. Aaron looks at Sheryl. Sheryl nods at  
 Aaron, as if trying to push him on to do something.

AARON  
 (hesitant, nervous)  
 You wanna play Madden after dinner,  
 Cal?

CALVIN  
 No.

Aaron looks down at his plate with disappointment.

SHERYL  
 Come on, Calvin. All your little  
 brother wants to do is play a game  
 with you.

CALVIN  
 I said NO.

Sheryl throws her fork on the plate.

SHERYL  
 You don't want to do shit anymore,  
 Calvin.

CALVIN  
 Here we go. You givin' me shit  
 because I don't wanna play a game?

SHERYL  
 It's not just that! You don't eat,  
 you don't sleep. All you do is stay  
 in your room. You haven't even  
 spoke to Quentin in almost a year!



CALVIN

Why are you so worried about what I do?

SHERYL

Because I'm your MOTHER, that's why. It's unhealthy, Calvin. You barely talk to us. It seems like you have a grudge against me for something I didn't do. What did I ever do to you, Calvin? If I did anything to you, I'm sorry. But one day you're going to have to realize that the men responsible for your father's death are in prison, okay? Know that someday you're going to have to move on. You're gonna have to let go and let God.

CALVIN

Let God? The fuck you talkin' about, "let God." Let God do what?

SHERYL

(angry)

You need to watch what you say right now

CALVIN

We talkin' about the same God who allowed those bastards to kill my father for thirty-five fuckin' dollars?! That God?!

SHERYL

Lord, please forgive him.

Calvin slams his plate on the table, stands to his feet and looks to the ceiling.

CALVIN

Yes, Lord, please forgive me for what ever the fuck it was I did to you for you to take my father!

SHERYL

Calvin, you need to stop!

CALVIN

Y'all hear that? Neither can I! You know why?! 'Cause God doesn't give a shit about us! None of us!

(MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)

If he did, he wouldn't allow none of the shit that goes on in these streets!

SHERYL

Calvin, it is not that bad.

CALVIN

Oh, come on! Have you taken a walk around our block lately? Mothafuckas is out here killin' kids, man! Little kids! You think if he was any kind of God, he'd allow that kind of shit to happen?! NO! So the next time you wanna talk to me about lettin' God, keep it to yourself!

Calvin swipes his plate off of the table. He goes to walk out of the kitchen. Sheryl bangs her plate on the table and stands to her feet.

SHERYL

Calvin, STOP! We are not done!

He stops and turns around.

CALVIN

I'm done talkin'.

He goes to walk away.

SHERYL

No! You do NOT walk away from me when I am talking to you!

He stops and turns around.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Now I have sat here and LET you take your anger out on this family because I felt it was your way of coping with your father's death. But I am telling you it ends, right here, right now! I'm not asking you to let him go, Calvin, but what we need to do, what we all need to do, is make the best of the time we have left here.

CALVIN  
(hesitant, crying)  
I don't wanna make the best of my  
time here. I wish I was fuckin'  
dead.

Her eyes fill with tears as Calvin walks away. Sheryl sits  
down at the table, sobbing. Aaron takes her hand.

AARON  
It's okay, mommy.

INT. SUPERMARKET, SHOPPING ISLE - AFTERNOON

Calvin is on his usual shopping isle, putting cans on the  
shelf. Gerald walks onto the isle and toward Calvin. Calvin  
notices him coming and takes a deep breath. Gerald walks up  
to Calvin.

GERALD  
I spoke with your mother yesterday.

Calvin ignores him.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
(hesitant)  
She told me about what happened to  
your father.

Calvin starts to look angry.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
Look, I just wanted to apologize  
for the way things went down  
yesterday and, uh, you can take a  
couple of days off to get yourself  
straight. I'll get Rick to fill in  
for you.

Calvin says nothing.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
Well, I'll see you around.

Calvin watches Gerald as he walks off the isle.

INT. BUS - EVENING

Calvin sits in his seat, with his hood on, looking out of the  
window. The brakes squeal as the bus comes to a stop.

People board the bus, paying their fare to ride. The bus pulls off as passengers find their seats.

Calvin continues to stare out of the window as a young woman takes a seat across from him. She sits her purse and a bookbag by her feet. The young woman, Crystal, glances over at Calvin for a second. She sits back in her seat, looking confused.

She looks at Calvin, trying to force words, but nothing comes out. She looks ahead for a moment, then back at Calvin.

CRYSTAL  
(hesitant, nervous)  
Calvin?

Calvin, confused, looks at her. His face goes blank as he starts to fidget in his seat.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
I thought that was you.

He avoids looking her in the eyes.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
It's been a while since we've seen each other. How have you been?

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
Okay. You?

CRYSTAL  
I've been okay, I guess.

There is an awkward silence.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
I've been wondering if I'd ever see you again.

Calvin doesn't say anything. Crystal takes a deep breath.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
(hesitant)  
I heard about what happened to your father. I'm sorry.

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
Thank you.

CRYSTAL

I wanted to tell you that sooner,  
but I had no way to get up with  
you.

He continues to avoid looking her in the face.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

What happened to you, Calvin? It's  
like you just disappeared. Where  
have you been?

Calvin looks down. He looks up and quickly presses the stop  
strip. The bus begins to come to a stop.

CALVIN

This is my stop.

He gets up and walks onto the isle. She grabs his arm.

CRYSTAL

Wait.

She pulls a pen and a piece of paper from her purse. She  
writes on the paper, then extends it to Calvin, as the bus  
comes to a stop. He hesitantly takes the paper.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

You should call me sometime. It  
would be nice to hear from you.

She gives him a faint smile. He nods and walks away. Crystal  
watches him as he exits the bus.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Calvin steps off of the bus and the doors close behind him.  
Crystal looks at him from the window as the bus pulls off.  
She waves at him as the bus rolls down the street. Calvin  
watches the bus for a moment, then walks away.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Aaron and Sheryl sit in the living room, coloring in coloring  
books.

SHERYL

(smiles)

You have to stay in the lines,  
sweetie.

AARON  
Mommy?

SHERYL  
Yes, baby?

AARON  
(still coloring)  
What's wrong with Calvin?

Sheryl stops coloring and looks up at Aaron.

SHERYL  
(hesitant)  
Nothing's wrong with him. It's just  
that...some people have a certain  
way of dealing with pain, that's  
all.

AARON  
Is he gonna be okay?

SHERYL  
(hesitant, smiles)  
Of course he is.

AARON  
Good.

Sheryl gives him a faint smile, then goes back to coloring.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin sits on the edge of his bed, staring at his dresser. He takes a deep breath and stands to his feet. He walks over to his dresser, where Crystal's phone number sits. He looks down at the number for a moment, then picks it up.

INT. WASHINGTON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The phone rings. Seconds later, Crystal walks into the kitchen and answers the phone.

CRYSTAL  
Hello?

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin paces the room.

CALVIN  
(nervous)  
Hello, may I speak to Crystal?

INTERCUT - CALVIN'S BEDROOM/CRYSTAL'S KITCHEN

CRYSTAL  
This is her. Who's this?

CALVIN  
Oh, it's me. Calvin.

CRYSTAL  
Oh, hey. What are you doing?

CALVIN  
Nothin' really. Just sittin'  
around.

CRYSTAL  
That sounds boring.

CALVIN  
Yeah.

CRYSTAL  
Well, we should do something. Go  
out somewhere. What do you wanna  
do?

CALVIN  
I dunno, you?

CRYSTAL  
Um, you know where Howell's is?

CALVIN  
Yeah, over on Walnut.

CRYSTAL  
Why don't you meet me there at  
around seven?

CALVIN  
(nervous, hesitant)  
Uh, yeah. I can do that.

CRYSTAL  
Okay, I'll see you then. Bye.

CALVIN  
Bye.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin clicks the phone off. He throws the phone on his bed and walks over to his dresser. He looks in the mirror. He looks at his reflection with disgust.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin rummages through a drawer. He reaches deeper into the drawer and pulls out a pair of electric trimmers. He looks up at the mirror.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, BATHROOM - LATER

Calvin carefully trims his moustache. His face is now cleanly shaved. He clicks the trimmer off and places them on the sink. He gives a faint smile at his reflection.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin runs around his room, getting ready for his evening out. He sits on the edge of his bed and puts his boots on. He stands to his feet and walks over to the mirror. He grabs his jacket from the back of the chair and heads out of his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aaron and Sheryl sit in the living room, watching television as Calvin walks from the back.

CALVIN  
Be back later.

Calvin marches out of the front door. Aaron and Sheryl look at each other with confused looks.

INT. HOWELL'S COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Crystal sits at a table, sipping hot chocolate. Seconds later, Calvin walks in. Crystal smiles when she sees him. He walks over to her table and sits across from her.

CRYSTAL  
Hey.

CALVIN  
Hey.



CRYSTAL  
Thanks for coming.

CALVIN  
I didn't have anything else to do.

CRYSTAL  
What have you been up to?

CALVIN  
Nothin' much, really. Just workin'.

CRYSTAL  
Where do you work?

CALVIN  
The Pathmark on Bergen.

Crystal nods.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
What about you? What have you been  
doin' with yourself?

CRYSTAL  
Nothing. Just taking a break before  
I start at Seton Hall in the  
spring.

CALVIN  
I see.

She takes a sip of her hot chocolate.

CRYSTAL  
How's Quentin?

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
I wouldn't know. Haven't really  
spoke to him in a while.

CRYSTAL  
About a year?

Calvin nods. She takes another sip of her hot chocolate.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
So, do you have a girlfriend yet?

Calvin fidgets in his seat a bit.

CALVIN  
(nervous)  
Huh?

CRYSTAL  
(laughs)  
A girlfriend. Do you have one?

CALVIN  
Oh, uh, no. No girlfriend.

She nods.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
(hesitant)  
What about you?  
(mumbling)  
Do you have a boyfriend?

CRYSTAL  
(laughs)  
What did you say?

CALVIN  
(clears throat)  
Do you have a boyfriend?

CRYSTAL  
No. No I don't.

She laughs as Calvin gives her a nervous smile.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
Can I ask you a question?

Calvin nods.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
(hesitant)  
What happened to your father?

Calvin's smile fades.

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
He, uh, he was walkin' home from  
his stop and these dudes saw him,  
decided to rob him. Police said it  
looked like there had been a  
scuffle and that's when they  
probably shot him. For thirty-five  
dollars and a...a fuckin' chain.

CRYSTAL

Jesus, that's terrible. Did the police ever catch them?

CALVIN

Yeah. They caught them a day after they robbed this lady in East Orange. The bullets matched the gun that was used on my father. That was it. Sixty years for all three of them.

CRYSTAL

Well, that's good, right?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

They kill an innocent man for tryin' to protect what's his, what he has worked for.

(beat)

Sixty years ain't shit for what they did to my father. I'd kill those mothafuckas myself if I could.

Calvin looks down. Crystal, somewhat shaken by how cold he has become, forces an uneasy smile.

EXT. WASHINGTON RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Calvin and Crystal approach the front steps of her house.

CRYSTAL

Well, here I am.

CALVIN

This is your house?

CRYSTAL

Yeah, this is it. Thank you for walking me home.

There is an uncomfortable silence.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Well, thanks for coming again. It was good to see you tonight.

CALVIN

It was good to see you too.

CRYSTAL  
 Are you going to be okay walking home? It's a long walk from here to Eighteenth Street.

CALVIN  
 I'll be aight.

CRYSTAL  
 Call me when you get in so I know you made it home, okay?

Crystal steps closer toward Calvin and stares him in the eye. She puts a hand on his cheek.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
 There's something different about you. Something in your eyes.

Crystal smiles, then turns around and walks away. Calvin looks as if he has something to say, but is having trouble saying it.

CALVIN  
 (hesitant)  
 Hey, Crystal.

She turns around.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
 Are you doin' anything Saturday night?

CRYSTAL  
 Not that I know of. Why?

CALVIN  
 (nervous)  
 Because, um, I was wondering if you...if you wanted to go out somewhere. Maybe to get something to eat?

CRYSTAL  
 (smiles)  
 Are you asking me on a date?

CALVIN  
 (hesitant, stammering)  
 No, well, maybe...yes.

CRYSTAL  
 Sure. I'd love to.

CALVIN  
(relieved)  
Okay.

CRYSTAL  
Good night, Calvin.

CALVIN  
Good night.

Calvin tries not to smile as she walks into the house. He turns around and starts to walk down the street.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Aaron sits on the couch, playing video games. Calvin walks through the front door. He walks over to the couch and takes a seat beside Aaron. Aaron looks at him like he's crazy.

CALVIN  
Where's mom?

AARON  
Sleeping.

CALVIN  
Oh. Why are you lookin' at me like that?

Aaron shrugs his shoulders.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
Can I play?

Aaron nods.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
I call the Steelers.

Aaron hands Calvin a controller and doesn't say anything.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MORNING

Sheryl is in the kitchen, washing dishes. Calvin comes from the back of the house and takes a seat at the kitchen table.

SHERYL  
Hey.

CALVIN  
Hey.

SHERYL  
Where were you last night?

CALVIN  
Just went for a walk.

SHERYL  
Oh. You hungry?

CALVIN  
Nah, not really.

SHERYL  
(to herself)  
Of course you're not.

Sheryl accidentally cuts her finger open with a knife she is washing.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
Ow! Shit!

Calvin jumps up from his seat.

CALVIN  
What? What's wrong?

Calvin walks over to the kitchen sink.

SHERYL  
I cut myself.

Calvin takes a dish towel and wraps it around Sheryl's hand. She looks at him like he's crazy.

CALVIN  
You need to be more careful. You go lay down. I'll finish these.

Calvin notices the weird look Sheryl is giving him.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
What?

SHERYL  
(hesitant)  
Nothing, I just...

She smiles, gives him a kiss on the forehead, then walks away from the sink. Calvin watches her as she walks to her bedroom.

INT. SUPERMARKET, SHOPPING ISLE - AFTERNOON

Calvin is on his isle, doing his usual work. Gerald walks onto the isle. When Calvin notices Gerald, he sighs. Gerald stops at where Calvin is and scans his work area. Gerald looks at his watch.

GERALD

Is this all what's left from the back?

CALVIN

(agitated)

Yeah.

GERALD

I see. Put a little pep in your step, huh? Good job, Paul.

Gerald walks past Calvin, toward the other end of the isle. Calvin looks confused for a moment, then resumes working.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Calvin walks down the street. He walks up to a crosswalk and is about to cross the street, but he stops. He turns around and looks down the street.

EXT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin stands at the front door. He hesitantly rings the doorbell. A moment later, the locks can be heard being undone from the inside. The door opens and there stands Quentin, looking as if he has just seen a ghost.

QUENTIN

(confused)

Calvin?

CALVIN

What's up, Quentin?

Quentin looks as if he can't believe his eyes. Out of nowhere, Quentin pulls Calvin into a tight hug. Calvin looks confused, but hugs him back. Quentin lets Calvin out of the hug and steps back.

QUENTIN

(excited, laughs)

Damn, Cal. It's been a minute, boy.

CALVIN

I know.

QUENTIN

Come on, man. We gotta go out somewhere. Let me get my coat.

CALVIN

Aight.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - LATER

Calvin and Quentin sit in a booth, eating as they talk.

QUENTIN

Nah. I don't believe it. I refuse to believe it. You FINALLY stopped bein' a bitch asked Crystal out?

CALVIN

Yeah, man.

QUENTIN

What she say?

CALVIN

She said yeah.

Quentin throws a french fry at Calvin.

QUENTIN

See?! What did I tell you? What the fuck did I tell you? I told you she liked your stupid ass, didn't I?

CALVIN

Yeah, okay, you were right. You happy now?

QUENTIN

If you would have acted sooner, y'all would probably be married by now, dumb ass.

CALVIN

Anyway, what have you been up to in the past year?

Quentin's smile fades.



QUENTIN

(hesitant)

Nothin'. Just wonderin' if I would ever see my best friend again.

CALVIN

(hesitant)

I'm sorry, man, I just...I was just goin' through a lot.

QUENTIN

That's what friends are for, man. To be there for each other during the bad times.

Calvin looks down.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

I didn't know what to do. I called, you never answered. I came by, you never came out. After a while, I just figured you didn't wanna be bothered. I just felt lost for a minute.

CALVIN

I know. I've neglected everyone that cared about me. Sometimes, I think about the shit I've put my mother and my brother through, and I just wanna die. This whole thing just fucked me up. It's like I finally saw the world for what it really was, you know?

QUENTIN

(hesitant)

I never got the chance to tell you, but I'm sorry about what happened to your pops. Whenever I came around, he always treated me like family. I was sad to see him go, especially like that.

CALVIN

Yeah. But I'm gonna try, man. Try and focus on the future. Stop neglecting my family. My friends.

QUENTIN

What you tryin' to say?

CALVIN  
I'm tryin' to say we boys again.

QUENTIN  
We never stopped bein' boys.

Calvin and Quentin smile, then tap knuckles.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - LATER

Sheryl sits in the kitchen, reading a book, and Aaron is on the couch, watching television. Calvin walks through the front door. He walks into the kitchen.

CALVIN  
Hey, ma.

Sheryl smiles at Calvin as he heads to the refrigerator.

SHERYL  
Hey, Calvin. Where you been?

CALVIN  
Oh, I was out with Quentin.

SHERYL  
(surprised)  
Oh, really. How is he?

CALVIN  
He's good. He said hello.

Calvin takes a seat across from Sheryl. She continues to give him a wide smile.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
What?

SHERYL  
Who's Crystal?

Calvin looks as if he's never heard the name.

CALVIN  
Who?

Calvin quickly gets up from the table, trying to get away from Sheryl. As Calvin flees to his room, Sheryl follows.

SHERYL  
Who? What you mean, who? Boy, don't play with me.

CALVIN  
Come on, ma.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin enters his room and tries to close the door, but Sheryl pushes it open. Calvin jumps on his bed and buries his head into his pillow. Sheryl stands, with her arms folded.

SHERYL  
Don't you, "come on, ma" me. Who is she?

CALVIN  
(muffled from the pillow)  
A friend from school.

SHERYL  
A friend from school, huh? So, what time are you and this, "friend" going out on Saturday?

CALVIN  
(muffled from pillow)  
SHIT!

Sheryl takes a seat on the edge of Calvin's bed and smacks him on the rear.

SHERYL  
So, is she your girlfriend? Have you two had sex?

Calvin sits up.

CALVIN  
No, ma. We haven't had sex and she isn't my girlfriend.

SHERYL  
So, when am I going to meet her?

CALVIN  
Meet her?

SHERYL  
Well, I have to meet her. Make sure she's not one of these little hot tales.

CALVIN  
No, ma. She's not like that.

SHERYL

So, should I thank her for this sudden change in your attitude?

CALVIN

What do you mean?

SHERYL

In case you haven't noticed, you've been a completely different person for the past year.

Calvin looks down.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Hey, if she is, I welcome her. I'm glad to see you happy again. You're gonna put all that hostility behind you. Get all that anger and hate out of your eyes.

Sheryl plays with Calvin's hair. He smiles.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Now, tell me. Is my baby in love?

CALVIN

(snapping back quickly)

No! I mean...I don't know. It's too early to tell.

SHERYL

Okay, well, I still want to meet her.

CALVIN

You will.

SHERYL

When?

CALVIN

Soon.

SHERYL

Alright. I'm going to remind you that you said that you're going to invite her over for dinner the next time I cook.

Sheryl jumps to her feet and walks out of Calvin's room.

CALVIN  
I ain't say all that.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - AFTERNOON

Aaron, Calvin, and Quentin are at a basketball court, just shooting the ball around.

QUENTIN  
So, you ready for Saturday?

CALVIN  
Yeah.

QUENTIN  
Where y'all goin'?

CALVIN  
Just out to eat. Somewhere nice.

QUENTIN  
Somewhere nice? Shit, you better take her ass to White Castle.

Calvin throws the ball to Aaron.

CALVIN  
And that's exactly why you're gonna be beatin' your meat for the rest of your life. You don't know how to treat a lady.

Calvin and Quentin walk over to some nearby bleachers and sit down.

QUENTIN  
I'm tryin' to help you out.

CALVIN  
How the hell are you tryin' to help me?

QUENTIN  
I see it like this. You take her to a nice restaurant, she'll be tryin' to order all that fancy steak and lobster shit, right? Take her to White Castle and she's limited to a sack meal.

CALVIN

Are you serious? I'm one for White Castle, but you're tellin' me to take the one girl, that I've liked since the eleventh grade, to White Castle?

QUENTIN

You listen to me, you won't go home broke.

CALVIN

You're a jackass. Anyway, you ain't got to worry about it. I'm straight.

QUENTIN

You a stocker, man. You ain't straight.

CALVIN

I have more than my work check to live off of.

QUENTIN

What? You ain't dealin', are you?

CALVIN

No. Hell no. I get SSI.

QUENTIN

Oh, okay. From your dad. I got you. How much do you get?

CALVIN

About six-hundred a month.

QUENTIN

Damn, I guess that would help a little bit. I wish I could get six a month.

CALVIN

Considering what I had to go through to get it, it's not worth it at all. As a matter of fact, if I could give all that money back in return for my father, I would.

QUENTIN

Look, man, I know this shit has been hard, but things can only get better from here. Better days are comin', man, better days.

Calvin and Quentin both look up as music, from a car stereo, can be heard by the outside gates of the basketball court.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, STREET - CONTINUOUS

A black 1999 Nissan Maxima pulls up beside the curb, with the music blasting. The car comes to a complete stop. Three young men, LIONEL, MARCUS, and ROB, jump out of the car. Rob bounces a basketball as they head into the basketball court.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - CONTINUOUS

Aaron continues to shoot the ball on the court. Quentin looks at the three young men as they walk onto the court. Quentin looks at them.

QUENTIN

Shit. These fools.

CALVIN

Who are they?

QUENTIN

Dudes from Bergen Street. Niggas think they run the West Side.

Calvin nods. Lionel eyes Quentin for a second, then walks over to where they sit.

LIONEL

Yo, my man, you know the rules. Y'all niggas gotta bounce.

Calvin looks confused.

CALVIN

What? We gotta go?

MARCUS

You deaf, mothafucka?

CALVIN

Why should we leave? This court is open to everybody.

QUENTIN

Come on, Cal. Maybe we should just bounce.

ROB

Listen to ya boy, dogs.

QUENTIN

It ain't that serious, Cal. Let's just go, man.

CALVIN

Nah, fuck all that. We've been playin' at this court since we were six years old. Why should we have to leave?

LIONEL

Are you serious? Who the fuck is this kid? You know who I am? You know where you at?

Lionel turns his attention to Aaron. He starts to walk toward Aaron. When Lionel reaches Aaron, he pushes him, then snatches the basketball out of his hands. Lionel throws the basketball over the gates of the basketball court.

Marcus and Rob think it's hilarious.

AARON

Hey!

CALVIN

What the fuck?

Calvin jumps from the bleachers and onto the basketball court. Quentin springs up after Calvin. Calvin walks into Lionel's face.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

What's your mothafuckin' problem?

Lionel steps into his face as Quentin tries to hold him back. Marcus and Rob walk behind Quentin.

LIONEL

What the fuck you wanna do? I run this mothafuckin' block.

Lionel lifts up his shirt to reveal a handgun.



LIONEL (CONT'D)

I suggest you bitches do like I said and step the fuck off my court.

QUENTIN

Come on, Cal. Shit ain't worth it, man.

Calvin looks over at Aaron, who looks scared.

AARON

Can we go home now, Calvin?

Calvin stares Lionel in the eyes for a moment, then walks away. Aaron and Quentin walk after him.

LIONEL

Yeah. That's what the fuck I thought.

ROB

Pussy ass niggas.

Lionel, Marcus, and Rob laugh as Aaron, Calvin, and Quentin step off of the basketball court.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Calvin walks down the street, enraged. Aaron and Quentin try to keep up with him.

QUENTIN

Calvin? Yo, Calvin? What's wrong, man?

CALVIN

Mothafucka. Should've beat his ass, right there. He had a fuckin' gun, so what?

QUENTIN

Chill, man. The shit ain't that serious.

CALVIN

Nah, fuck that. My father told me to never lay down for anyone!

Quentin runs in front of Calvin and stops him in his tracks. He shakes him at the shoulders.

QUENTIN

You need to check this anger shit, man. He ain't shit but a lowly base dealer. He ain't worth it. Let it go. You got Saturday to think about, not that fool.

Calvin looks around for a second, then walks away. Aaron and Quentin walk behind him.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

See. Now what in the hell would you do without me?

CALVIN

Shut the hell up.

QUENTIN

Admit it, boo. Without me, you'd be another lost soul in Jersey.

Aaron and Calvin laugh at Quentin.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Sheryl sits in the kitchen as Calvin frantically runs around the house, preparing for his date. Aaron and Quentin sit in the living room, playing video games.

SHERYL

What are you looking for, Calvin?

CALVIN (O.S.)

SOCKS!

SHERYL

Look in your drawer. I put some in there this morning.

CALVIN (O.S.)

I already looked!

SHERYL

Slow your ass down and look again!

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin walks into his room and over to his drawer. He opens the drawer and pulls out a pair of socks.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin walks out into the kitchen, fully dressed, and Sheryl stands to her feet.

SHERYL

Aw, look at my baby. On his first date.

Sheryl licks her thumb and rubs Calvin's cheek.

CALVIN

Come on, ma!

SHERYL

What you mean, come on, ma? You don't wanna go to the girl's house looking like who done it and why, do you?

AARON (O.S.)

Yeah, who done it and why!

CALVIN

Shut your stupid tail up.

Quentin laughs as he gets up from the couch.

QUENTIN

Well, people, I'm about to be out.

Quentin walks up to Calvin.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

You have a good night. It's long over due. And don't forget what I said.

(whispers)

Sack meal.

SHERYL

Sack meal? Boy, get the hell out of here.

Sheryl raises her hand to hit Quentin, but he runs away.

QUENTIN

Bye, Cal. Bye, Bart!

AARON

Bye, stupid!

Quentin runs out of the front door and closes it behind him.

SHERYL

You better get going, mister. You don't want to keep her waiting, do you?

Calvin smiles as Sheryl puts a hand on his cheek.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Look at you. Looking like your father.

Calvin smiles, kisses her on the forehead, then walks over to the couch.

CALVIN

Aight, Aaron. If I get home early enough I'll whoop you in Madden.

AARON

Yeah, okay.

Calvin walks over to the front door.

CALVIN

Alright. I'll see y'all later.

AARON

See you later, stupid.

CALVIN

Shut up. Bye, ma.

SHERYL

Bye, baby.

Calvin walks out of the front door, closing it behind him.

EXT. WASHINGTON RESIDENCE - LATER

Calvin stands in front of Crystal's house, waiting. Seconds later, Crystal steps out of the front door. Calvin turns around. She looks as if she put the extra time into preparing herself for their date.

Calvin is speechless. She gives him a smile.

CRYSTAL

Hey.

CALVIN  
(hesitant, nervous)  
Hi. You look...you look nice.

CRYSTAL  
Thank you.

Calvin gives her a smile.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Calvin and Crystal sit in a booth, eating as they talk.

CRYSTAL  
Did you mother tell you we spoke?

CALVIN  
(sighs)  
Yeah.

CRYSTAL  
What's all that for?

CALVIN  
Nothin'. She's just all like, "when  
am I gonna get to meet her?"

CRYSTAL  
And? What's wrong with your mother  
wanting to meet me?

CALVIN  
Nothin', I guess.

Crystal smiles. A WAITRESS walks up to their table with a tall glass and sits it in front of Crystal.

WAITRESS  
Strawberry milk shake for you.  
(to Calvin)  
You sure you don't want anything?

CALVIN  
Nah, I'm good.

WAITRESS  
Okay.

The waitress walks away from the table. Crystal slides the milk shake in the middle of the table.

CRYSTAL  
You should try this.

CALVIN  
I'm okay.

CRYSTAL  
Nooo, I insist.

Crystal picks up two straws, opens them, and puts them in the milk shake.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
Come on.

CALVIN  
(sighs)  
Aight.

Calvin and Crystal both lean in to drink from the glass. They simultaneously drink from the glass until the milk shake is halfway gone. They both sit back in their seats and laugh.

CRYSTAL  
That wasn't so bad, now was it?

CALVIN  
It was aight.

CRYSTAL  
It was aight? You drunk most of it.

Calvin laughs. Crystal smiles at him, stirring the milk shake with her straw, keeping her eyes on him.

CALVIN  
What? Why are you lookin' at me  
like that?

CRYSTAL  
You have gray hair. That was never  
there before.

Calvin runs his hand over his patch of gray hair.

CALVIN  
Yeah, it, uh, it came in about six  
months after my dad died.

She nods and smiles. He faintly smiles back at her.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Calvin and Crystal stand on a street corner.

CRYSTAL

Are you sure you wouldn't have a  
problem with me meeting your  
mother?

A New Jersey Transit bus approaches.

CALVIN

No. I guess I wouldn't.

The bus comes to a complete stop and the doors open.

CRYSTAL

Good...because she invited me over  
for dinner tomorrow night.

Crystal walks onto the bus, smiling from ear to ear, while  
Calvin stands there, confused.

EXT. PARK - LATER

There is a light snowfall as Calvin and Crystal walk through  
the park.

CRYSTAL

So...what made you ask me out?

CALVIN

What kind of question is that?

CRYSTAL

I mean, you never asked me to go  
out with you anywhere when we were  
in school. What made you ask now?

CALVIN

I don't know...I...  
(sighs, hesitant)  
Ever since junior year, I guess I  
kinda had feelings for you.

CRYSTAL

(laughs)  
You "kinda" had feelings for me?

Calvin, embarrassed, looks away. She walks in front of him and stops him in his tracks. He avoids looking her in the eyes.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
Look at me.

He ignores her request.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
(stern)  
Calvin Paul, look at me.

Calvin hesitantly looks her in the eye. She places a hand on his cheek. She smiles, closes her eyes, leans in, and intimately kisses him. Calvin, for a moment, looks as if he is on the verge of floating.

When they part, he gives her a nervous smile.

EXT. WASHINGTON RESIDENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin and Crystal approach the front steps of her house.

CRYSTAL  
Thanks for dinner again.

CALVIN  
Thank you for coming.

CRYSTAL  
So, are you upset that I'm coming to meet your mother tomorrow?

CALVIN  
Even though y'all snuck that one by me, nah.

CRYSTAL  
Well, it serves you right. It shouldn't have taken you so long to tell me you liked me.

CALVIN  
Whatever.

CRYSTAL  
(smiles)  
Are you going to be okay walking home?



CALVIN  
I'll be aight. YOU better get  
inside before your parents start to  
worry.

Crystal gets closer to Calvin.

CRYSTAL  
I think I figured out what it is I  
see in your eyes.

CALVIN  
What's that?

CRYSTAL  
Hate, anger, pain. Behind all that,  
I can see that there's still a  
little love left in your eyes.

Crystal steps a little closer to Calvin.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
Call me when you get in, okay?

CALVIN  
I will.

Crystal gives Calvin a kiss on the cheek, then turns around  
to walk inside her house. She unlocks the door, then turns  
around to Calvin.

CRYSTAL  
Good night.

Calvin smiles.

CALVIN  
Good night.

Crystal walks inside the house and closes the door behind  
her. Calvin turns around, then walks away.

INT. SUPERMARKET, SHOPPING ISLE - AFTERNOON

Calvin does his usual work on the shopping isle. Gerald walks  
on to the isle and up to Calvin.

GERALD  
Hey, Paul, you had a break yet?

CALVIN  
Nah.

GERALD

Well, come on out front. Some of the guys are already out there.

CALVIN

Okay.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin and Gerald sit on a bench in front of the supermarket. Some of their CO WORKERS walk around, talking. Gerald picks up a brown paper bag. He reaches inside the bag and pulls out a sub.

He unwraps it and hands Calvin a half.

CALVIN

Oh, nah, I'm good.

GERALD

It's from Cooper's.

Calvin hesitates, but he takes the half of sub. Gerald smiles and starts to eat his half.

GERALD (CONT'D)

So, where did this certain spurt of energy come from?

CALVIN

What do you mean?

GERALD

What do I mean? You been draggin' ass around here for six months. Actin' all hostile and shit. Now you're mister nice guy?

CALVIN

I haven't really noticed a change.

GERALD

Shit, I have. You were a mean lil' son of a bitch.

Calvin laughs and takes a bite of his sub.

GERALD (CONT'D)

What did you do on your days off?

CALVIN  
Caught up with an old friend of  
mine. Took her out to eat.

GERALD  
Her?

CALVIN  
Yeah.

Gerald chuckles.

GERALD  
I knew it had to be somethin'. You  
went and got yourself a female.

Calvin laughs.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
I'll be damned. Talkin' 'bout you  
ain't notice a change. How long you  
been seein' her?

CALVIN  
About a week.

GERALD  
Are y'all official?

CALVIN  
Not yet.

GERALD  
I see. Boy, I remember those days.  
When I first met my wife, I was  
sixteen years old. She was my first  
and my last. I'll let you in on a  
secret. If you can keep her, keep  
her. You treat her like she is  
God's gift to you. Don't be like  
all these other fools out here with  
eight baby mamas. That ain't the  
way to do it. You find that one  
girl, get married, have a family.  
That's how you do it.

Calvin nods as Gerald takes another bite of his sub.

GERALD (CONT'D)  
Tell me about her.

CALVIN

Well...her name is Crystal. I've liked her for a while now and it's just...the way she looks at me sometimes...it just seems like nothin' in this fucked up world can get me down. And her smile. I can't even put it into words.

GERALD

Listen to you. My man, you in love. That is straight love talk right there. L-O-V-E.

Calvin and Gerald both laugh.

GERALD (CONT'D)

How's everything at home?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

Things have gotten better.

GERALD

Look, man, I know how you feel. Losin' your father at such a young age. It was around the time I met my wife when my father was killed. Murdered over some bullshit. It took me a while to get over it. I was just like you, angry at the world for my father's death. I blamed everyone, even myself, but I started to realize that things EVENTUALLY do get better. They have to. You can't let that anger and hate consume you, because if you do, it will destroy you from the inside, out. My wife told me that on our fourth date. Ever since then, the sun has always shined bright. There will always be better days, son.

Gerald pats Calvin on the shoulder.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Well, it's about time for me to get my ass out of here and go home to my family.

CALVIN

Alright, Mr. Grady.

GERALD

You seein' your lady friend anytime soon?

CALVIN

Yeah, I am. Actually, she's comin' over for dinner tonight to meet my mother.

GERALD

Damn, she wants to meet your mother already? Yeah that's it for you. Once they meet moms, you stuck.

Calvin and Gerald both laugh.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Sheryl is in the kitchen, getting things prepared for dinner. There are three knocks at the front door. She dries her hands and heads to the front door.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sheryl opens the door and there stands Crystal.

CRYSTAL

Hello.

SHERYL

Hi, baby. You must be Crystal. Come on in.

Crystal walks into the house.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Let me take your coat. You can go ahead and have a seat on the couch.

CRYSTAL

Thank you.

Crystal takes off her coat and gives it to Sheryl, then takes a seat on the couch. Sheryl walks to the back of the house. Seconds later, Sheryl walks back into the living room and sits next to Crystal.

SHERYL

So, how are you?

CRYSTAL  
I'm fine, thank you.

SHERYL  
That's good.

CRYSTAL  
Is Calvin home?

SHERYL  
Oh, no. He's at the basketball court with his brother and friend. Just like a man to go play basketball, when he knows you're coming to see him.

Crystal laughs as the oven timer beeps in the kitchen.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
Oh, I better get that roast in the oven. Can you give me a hand?

CRYSTAL  
Okay.

Sheryl and Crystal get up from the couch and walk into the kitchen.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Crystal opens the oven as Sheryl picks up a roaster pan from off of the table.

SHERYL  
Would you believe me if I told you Calvin used to sleep in this?

CRYSTAL  
Really?

SHERYL  
When he came home from the hospital, he was too small for his bassinet, so his grandmother put blankets in this roaster pan and it was his bed until he was two months.

Sheryl slides the roaster pan into the oven, then closes it.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

So, are you guys boyfriend and girlfriend, or has it even got that serious?

CRYSTAL

No. He hasn't asked me yet.

SHERYL

Girl, you'll be waiting on Calvin forever. You know you're the first girl, that I know of, that he's been this serious with? Can you hand me those plates on the counter behind you?

Crystal picks up the plates on the counter and hands them to Sheryl. She starts to set the table.

CRYSTAL

Really? He's never been serious with anyone?

SHERYL

He never really had a girlfriend. In fact, he hasn't been sociable at all lately. He didn't do anything but stay in his room all day. He even stopped talking to us for a while.

Crystal looks down.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

That's why I'm glad you're here now. Baby, whatever you're doing, keep doing it. It makes my days knowing that he's happy again.

CRYSTAL

He said he was happy?

SHERYL

No. You can just tell by the look on his face nowadays. When his father died, it tore him up. He couldn't even bring himself to go to his funeral. He took it so hard, I thought that he'd never be the same again. He stopped eating. He never slept. To tell you the truth, I didn't take it any better than he did.

Sheryl stops and takes a deep breath.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

It just seemed like so much went unfinished. He was planning to take the boys down to Georgia before he died. And I've never told Calvin this, but I think me and his father were about to get back together.

Sheryl trails off for a few seconds, then snaps back into the moment.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

So, how did you two meet anyway?

CRYSTAL

In school. We met in our junior year.

SHERYL

That's another thing. I wish he would go back and finish school. Do you think you can talk to him for me? Let him know how important it is. Not only to me, but himself.

CRYSTAL

I don't know. I can try.

SHERYL

Thank you. Well, I know you're tired of hearing my mouth. Why don't you go down there and tell those boys to get their butts home? Dinner's gonna be ready soon.

CRYSTAL

Okay.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Aaron, Calvin, and Quentin shoot the ball around at the basketball court. Quentin grabs the ball.

AARON

Give me the ball, dummy!

QUENTIN

You gotta steal it from me.



Aaron kicks Quentin in the shin and takes the ball. Quentin rubs his shin in pain.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)  
Ow! You lil' shit!

Calvin laughs.

CALVIN  
Hurry up, Aaron. It's almost time to eat.

QUENTIN  
Fool, please. You ain't worried about eatin'. You all anxious 'cause Crystal comin' over.

CALVIN  
Shut the hell up.

QUENTIN  
What? Don't get mad 'cause I'm tellin' the truth.

Calvin takes the ball from Aaron and shoots it. He misses the shot, but when he goes to pick up the ball, he notices Crystal walking onto the basketball court. She walks up to Calvin and gives him a kiss on the lips.

CRYSTAL  
Hey.

CALVIN  
Hey. What are you doin' here?

CRYSTAL  
Waiting for y'all to come home so we can eat.

CALVIN  
Oh.

CRYSTAL  
Hey, Quentin.

QUENTIN  
Hey, how you been?

Crystal gives Quentin a hug.

CRYSTAL  
It's been a while.

QUENTIN

You have yours truly to thank for that.

Calvin smiles.

CRYSTAL

And who is this fine young man here?

CALVIN

This is my little brother, Aaron. Aaron, this is Crystal.

AARON

You Calvin's girlfriend?

CALVIN

Shut up, Aaron.

CRYSTAL

No, I'm not, sweetie.

CALVIN

Stop bein' so damn nosey.

CRYSTAL

He was just asking a question. Are y'all almost done?

CALVIN

Give us five minutes.

CRYSTAL

Well, hurry up. Your mother's waiting for us.

CALVIN

Aight.

AARON

Can I have a dollar, Calvin?

CALVIN

For what?

AARON

Some candy.

CALVIN

You and that damn candy.

CRYSTAL

Shut up and give him a dollar for  
some candy.

Calvin shakes his head reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a dollar and hands it to Aaron. He snatches the dollar out of Calvin's hand.

AARON

Thank you!

CRYSTAL

Come on, lil' man. I'll take you to  
the store.

Crystal turns to Calvin.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Be done by the time we get back.

Aaron takes Crystal's hand and they walk off of the basketball court.

QUENTIN

Damn, dog. She tryin' to run shit  
and y'all ain't even official yet.  
You about to be a lifetime watchin'  
ass dude.

CALVIN

(laughs)  
Shut the hell up.

They continue to shoot the ball. In the distance, music can be heard blasting from a car radio. Calvin and Quentin turn around to see the black Maxima parking on the street. When the car comes to a stop, Lionel, Marcus, and Rob jump out of the car.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, STREET - CONTINUOUS

LIONEL

Man, what did I tell these punk  
mothafuckas?

MARCUS

Man, leave them niggas alone.

ROB

Yeah, man. Fuck those bitches.  
Let's just roll this blunt.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - CONTINUOUS

Lionel, Marcus, and Rob walk onto the basketball court. They all take a seat on the bleachers as Calvin and Quentin continue to shoot the ball.

QUENTIN  
These fools.

CALVIN  
Fuck 'em.

QUENTIN  
So, when are you asking her out?

CALVIN  
I was plannin' on doin' it tonight.

QUENTIN  
Ohh, shit. You finally becomin' a man, not bein' all scared and shit.

CALVIN  
Shut your dumb ass up.

Aaron and Crystal walk back onto the court. As they pass, Lionel eyes Crystal. Lionel blows out a little smoke.

LIONEL  
Damn, girl.

Crystal rolls her eyes and continues walking.

MARCUS  
Damn, dog. She played you.

Marcus and Rob laugh, but Lionel doesn't find anything funny.

LIONEL  
Fuck that bitch.

Aaron and Crystal walk up to Calvin.

CRYSTAL  
Y'all ready?

CALVIN  
Yeah. Let me get my stuff.

Calvin goes to pick up his things up off of the ground by the goal post. When he looks over to where Lionel and his friends are, he can see him eyeing Crystal.

LIONEL  
 (to Marcus)  
 Watch this shit.

Lionel jumps off of the bleachers. Marcus and Rob laugh. Lionel walks onto the court as Aaron, Calvin, Crystal and Quentin walk off.

LIONEL (CONT'D)  
 Hey, ma? What's it gonna take for  
 me to get in that ass?

Calvin turns around and takes a step toward Lionel, but Crystal stops him.

CRYSTAL  
 Don't. Come on. Your mother's  
 waiting for us.

Calvin eyes Lionel for a second, then turns around to walk off of the court. Lionel laughs as he turns around, back toward his friends. He takes a couple of steps, then turns back to Crystal.

LIONEL  
 Stank ass bitch!

Calvin stops dead in his tracks. He tries to walk out of the basketball court, but he can't. He drops the basketball, turns around, and marches toward Lionel.

QUENTIN  
 Cal.

CRYSTAL  
 Calvin!

Calvin acts as if he can't hear them and continues toward Lionel. When Calvin reaches Lionel, he spins him around by the shoulder and punches him dead in the face. Lionel falls to the ground, as Crystal and Quentin run toward the fight. Aaron stands there, looking scared.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
 Calvin, STOP!

Crystal's request is ignored as Calvin proceeds to give Lionel two brutal kicks to the face. Marcus and Rob jump off of the bleachers and run toward the fight. Lionel kicks Calvin away from him and jumps to his feet. When Calvin regains his balance, Lionel punches him in the nose.

Marcus and Rob run over to Lionel to hold him back, while Quentin tries to hold Calvin back. Calvin has a bloody nose and Lionel has a split lip.

MARCUS  
Yo, chill, Lionel! We don't need  
this shit right now!

LIONEL  
Let me go! I'm gonna kill you,  
mothafucka!  
(to Rob)  
Get the FUCK off!

CALVIN  
Fuck you!

A Newark police cruiser pulls up on the street, beside the basketball court. The POLICE OFFICER shines his light on the group.

POLICE OFFICER  
Is there a problem?

QUENTIN  
No, officer. No problem here.  
(to Calvin)  
Come on, Cal. Let's get the hell  
out of here.

ROB  
Lionel, let's go. We don't need no  
mothafuckin' heat right now.

LIONEL  
Get the fuck off.

Lionel glares at Calvin for a moment, snatches his arm from Rob, and walks toward the bleachers. Crystal sighs as the police officer pulls off, then looks at Calvin.

CRYSTAL  
What the hell is wrong with you?!

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin and Crystal bust through the front door, followed by Aaron and Quentin.

SHERYL (O.S.)  
The food will be ready in five  
minutes, guys!

CRYSTAL  
Okay, Ms. Robinson!

Crystal pushes Calvin to the back of the house, toward his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Crystal bust through his bedroom door. Crystal pushes Calvin on his bed with force.

CALVIN  
Damn, what's wrong?

Crystal slams his door shut.

CRYSTAL  
What you did out there was stupid.

CALVIN  
What was I supposed to do? Let him stand there and disrespect you like that?

CRYSTAL  
So what, he called me a name. Big deal. Sometimes, you just have to let some things go. Now look at you.

Crystal unties a black bandana she is wearing in her hair and sits on the edge of his bed.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
Lay back.

Calvin lies back in her lap. She uses the bandana to wipe blood from Calvin's nose.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
You didn't have to do what you did. It's just stupid to go and fight somebody over something that ain't that serious. I didn't give a damn about what he said. You know who you acted like today?

CALVIN  
Who?

CRYSTAL

Just like one of those tired ass, triflin' fools on the street. And I know that's not how you are. When we were in class together, I knew you were different from the rest of them. Please don't make me think I was wrong about you.

Calvin remains quiet.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

(hesitant)

You know your mother's hurt about you not graduating, right?

CALVIN

Come on, Crystal, not now.

CRYSTAL

She just asked me to talk to you about it.

CALVIN

Well, she already knows how I feel about it.

CRYSTAL

Do you know how she feels? All she wants to do is see you walk across that stage and get your diploma. Do you think that's too much to ask for from the woman who gave birth to you?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

No.

CRYSTAL

Then go back. It shouldn't be that hard for you. Just think of the joy your mother will have as she watches you get your diploma.

CALVIN

I don't know.

CRYSTAL

Well, will you at least think about it?



CALVIN  
 (hesitant)  
 Yeah, I'll think about it.

CRYSTAL  
 Thank you.

She kisses Calvin on the forehead.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)  
 Besides, no man of mine ain't gonna  
 be rollin' around here without a  
 diploma.

CALVIN  
 No man of yours?

CRYSTAL  
 You heard me. No man of mine.

Crystal intimately kisses Calvin.

SHERYL (O.S.)  
 You two! Come on, let's eat!

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin and Crystal walk out into the kitchen, hand in hand.

QUENTIN  
 It's about time.

AARON  
 Yeah. Now we can finally eat.

Calvin and Crystal both sit down at the table.

SHERYL  
 Hold on, baby. I'm going to say a  
 prayer first, then we can eat. Now,  
 everyone join hands.

They all join hands and bow their heads.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
 Full of joy and thankfulness, we  
 say thank you, Lord, from the  
 bottom of our hearts. We look at  
 the food that has been prepared by  
 loving hands, we look into the  
 faces of those that love us and  
 whom we love.

(MORE)

SHERYL (CONT'D)

All good gifts around us are sent  
from heaven about, and we will  
never forget who is our true  
provider. We thank you as you bless  
this food and bless this time  
together. Amen.

Everyone at the table gives a simultaneous Amen.

AARON

Now we can eat.

SHERYL

Boy, stop being greedy.

Aaron laughs as everyone makes their plate. Crystal makes a plate and hands it over to Calvin. Calvin smiles at Crystal, not noticing that Sheryl is smiling at him.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Calvin and Crystal sit on the front steps of the house.

CRYSTAL

Your mother can throw down in the  
kitchen.

CALVIN

Yeah, she's aight.

CRYSTAL

Aight? I wish I could cook as good  
as her.

Calvin laughs.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

(hesitant)

She was telling me about your  
father earlier and how y'all were  
planning to go to Georgia.

Calvin looks down.

CALVIN

(hesitant)

Yeah.

CRYSTAL

You should still go.

CALVIN

Maybe.

CRYSTAL

It would be fun. Me, you, Aaron,  
Quentin.

Calvin doesn't say anything.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

I know you miss him. I see what  
it's done to you. You've never been  
this cold.

CALVIN

I just thought it would never  
happen to me. I never thought I'd  
lose someone so close to me and  
when I did, I just became angry. I  
finally saw the world for the  
fucked up place it is. He always  
would tell me one day I'd see, but  
I never listened to him. He tried  
to tell me a lot of things.

CRYSTAL

It didn't just happen to you,  
Calvin. It could've happened to  
anybody. When something like this  
happens, the only thing you can do  
is focus on what needs to be done  
to make things better. You still  
have a lot of people here that love  
you. You got your mother, Aaron,  
Quentin. You got me. You don't have  
to be angry anymore.

Calvin smiles. She smiles, gives him a kiss on the cheek, and  
rests her head on his shoulder.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

He's still here, you know.

CALVIN

What?

CRYSTAL

Your father, he's still here. He'll  
always be here, as long as you  
remember him.

Calvin smiles and gives her a kiss on the forehead.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - AFTERNOON

Calvin walks out of the supermarket's front entrance. He walks onto the parking lot, then he notices Sandra, loading her trunk with groceries. He walks over to her car.

CALVIN  
Ms. Clarke?

Sandra spins around.

SANDRA  
Oh, hello, Calvin. You scared me.  
How are you?

CALVIN  
I'm good. How about yourself?

SANDRA  
I'm fine. What's going on?

CALVIN  
Well, I just got off work and I'm  
about to head home.

SANDRA  
I see.

CALVIN  
Here, let me help you with those.

Calvin proceeds to help load the groceries in Sandra's trunk.

SANDRA  
So, have you thought about what we  
talked about?

CALVIN  
Coming back to school? Yeah, I  
have. A lot actually.

SANDRA  
Yeah? And?

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
I decided that I'm going to go back  
and finish.

SANDRA  
Really?

Calvin nods.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

(excited)

That is just great, Calvin. I'm so proud of you. That's excellent news. When do you plan on coming back?

CALVIN

I don't know. I was hoping you might have information on some classes I could take.

SANDRA

Okay. I'll see what I can find out for you.

CALVIN

Thank you.

SANDRA

No, thank you. You just don't know. You've made my day. I know you're mother is so proud of you.

CALVIN

I haven't told her yet, but I am when I get home. I know she'll be happy.

SANDRA

I know your father would be happy too.

CALVIN

I know he is.

Sandra smiles at Calvin.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Well, Ms. Clarke, I have to go, but I'll see you soon.

SANDRA

Alright, Calvin.

CALVIN

You have a nice evening.

SANDRA

You too.

Calvin walks away from the car.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - LATER

Sheryl sits on the front steps of the house. Seconds later, Calvin walks up.

SHERYL  
Hey, baby.

CALVIN  
Hey, ma. What are you doin' out here?

SHERYL  
Well, it was a nice day, so I thought I'd come out here and sit for a while.

Calvin nods and sits down next to her.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
How was work?

CALVIN  
Okay. How was your day?

SHERYL  
My day was good. Dinner will be done soon.

CALVIN  
Okay.

He looks down at the ground. Sheryl notices the look on his face.

SHERYL  
What's wrong, baby?

CALVIN  
(hesitant)  
I know I haven't done a whole lot to make you proud. I've taken my anger out on you and Aaron, when all y'all tried to do was love me.

SHERYL  
Calvin, where-

CALVIN

(cutting Sheryl off)

I just wanted to tell you that I'm sorry. Instead of doing what I needed to do to make things better, I only made them worse. I just wanna let you know I'm done dwelling on what happened to dad. With that said, I'm gonna go finish what should've been finished a long time ago. I'm gonna go back and finish school.

Sheryl's face goes blank.

SHERYL

Are you for real?

Calvin nods. She covers her mouth as her eyes begin to fill with tears.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

You don't know how happy you've just made me.

CALVIN

I know it means a lot to you. I know it's a little late in the year, but I'm gonna try to have that diploma for you by the fall.

She caresses his cheek.

SHERYL

I love you so much.

CALVIN

I love you too, ma.

She smiles and pulls him into a hug.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Aaron and Quentin sit on the floor, playing video games as Calvin and Crystal sit on the couch.

CRYSTAL

I don't see how y'all can sit here and play this mess.

QUENTIN

It's a man thing. Don't worry about it.

CRYSTAL

Anyway. What did your mother say when you told her you were going back to get your diploma?

CALVIN

She ain't say too much.

QUENTIN

Hey, let me know when you sign up for those classes.

CALVIN

Why?

QUENTIN

So I can come too.

CALVIN

You wanna go?

QUENTIN

Hell yeah, I'm goin'. My boy's goin' back to school. He's not gonna be a dumb ass the rest of his life.

Calvin laughs.

CRYSTAL

I'll be there too.

CALVIN

Really?

She smiles and takes his hand.

AARON

Can we go to the store?

CRYSTAL

What? Need more candy?

AARON

(playfully)  
Maybe.



CALVIN

Man, don't nobody feel like goin' to the store. You been eatin' too much damn candy anyway.

CRYSTAL

Oh, shut up. Go get your coat, sweetie. I'll take you to the store.

AARON

Okay!

Aaron gets up and runs out of the living room.

CRYSTAL

I'll be right back.

She gives Calvin a kiss on the cheek and stands to her feet, as Aaron runs back into the living room.

INT. MAXIMA - CONTINUOUS

Lionel, Marcus, and Rob sit inside the car. Lionel eyes Calvin's house, his face bruised and battered.

LIONEL

You sure this is the house?

MARCUS

Yeah, this is it.

ROB

You sure you wanna do this shit, man?

MARCUS

Look, there's his bitch.

From the inside of the car, Aaron and Crystal can be seen exiting the house. Crystal closes the door behind her.

LIONEL

Where the fuck is he at?

MARCUS

Shit, I don't know.

LIONEL

Fuck it. Let's just follow this bitch.

Marcus starts the car.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Aaron and Crystal walk down the street.

CRYSTAL  
You ate all that candy from  
yesterday already?

AARON  
What? I like candy.

CRYSTAL  
(laughs)  
I bet you do.

In the background, the Maxima slowly moves down the street.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Quentin sit on the couch. Calvin looks down at the ground.

QUENTIN  
What's up with you? Why you over  
there, bein' all quiet and shit?

CALVIN  
Oh, nothin'. Just feels like shit  
is finally the way it should be,  
you know?

QUENTIN  
It's just like I said. You about to  
go get your diploma, you got a girl  
that cares about you. Shit, from  
what I can see, she's in love with  
your ass. Better days, dude.

CALVIN  
(hesitant, laughs)  
Yeah, you were right. Better days.

QUENTIN  
Negro, please. I'm always right.

Calvin gets up from the couch and walks toward his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin walks into his room and over to his closet. He reaches up top and pulls a shoebox down.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Aaron and Crystal continue to walk down the street, laughing amongst each other.

INT. MAXIMA - CONTINUOUS

Lionel eyes Aaron and Crystal as they continue to walk down the street.

LIONEL

Where the fuck is he at?

ROB

I don't know, but you need to call this shit off.

LIONEL

Nah, fuck that. Pull over. I got somethin' for his ass.

Lionel pulls a handgun from under the seat and cocks it.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Calvin stands in front of a trash can, looking around. He looks at the shoebox in his hands and cracks a smile. He takes a deep breath and drops the shoebox into trash.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Aaron and Crystal walk down the street. Crystal laughs at Aaron, until she sees Lionel standing there, with a malevolent look on his face. Crystal looks at Lionel, with fear in her eyes. She looks down at Aaron.

AARON

What's wrong?

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Calvin is about to walk back into the house, until he is stopped dead in his tracks, by the sound of five gunshots ringing in the air. Calvin stands there for a moment, then runs into the house.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quentin looks out of the window as Calvin runs in behind him. He looks at Calvin.

QUENTIN  
You hear that?

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Quentin walk out of the front door. People are standing outside of their homes, looking and pointing down the street. Calvin looks down the street, with a look on his face as if he is prepared for the worst. Calvin and Quentin begin to walk down the street.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Quentin walk down to the corner. When they look down the street, they see a large crowd of people standing around.

CALVIN  
Oh, no.

Calvin darts down the street and Quentin follows. Calvin reaches the crowd and trudges through. He breaks through the crowd, but what he sees next brings him to his knees. Crystal lies on the ground, with three gunshot wounds in her body.

Aaron has taken two bullets in the chest. Crystal breathes erratically.

CRYSTAL  
(panicking)  
Calvin.

Crystal's breathing gets slower and slower as Calvin's eyes start to fill with tears. Calvin takes hold of her bloody hand.

CALVIN  
 (shaken)  
 It's okay, baby. You're gonna be  
 fine, okay?

Crystal's breathing gets slower and slower. Her grip around Calvin's hand loosens, then her hand falls from his. She closes her eyes and takes her last breath. Quentin steps through the crowd. Calvin looks as if he's about to lose it.

Calvin scoops Aaron up in his arms.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
 He's still breathing!

QUENTIN  
 Oh, God.

Calvin starts to rock back and forth.

CALVIN  
 You ain't goin' nowhere, you hear  
 me, little man? Stay with me.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Sheryl steps outside of the house to see what's going on. Three Newark police cruisers and an ambulance zoom by, with sirens blaring. She starts to walk down the street as four more police cruisers zoom by.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Calvin sits there, with Aaron still in his arms, crying. The two police cruisers come to a screeching halt on the street, as the others approach. The POLICE OFFICERS jump out of their cars and break into the crowd. The ambulance pulls up on the street.

The crowd starts to come apart. Sheryl comes around the block to see Calvin emerge from the crowd, with his shirt covered in blood and with his eyes full of tears. Sheryl's face goes blank.

CALVIN  
 Mom.

SHERYL  
 Oh my God. Calvin!

Sheryl runs toward Calvin.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
Why is there blood on your shirt?!

CALVIN  
Mom! Stop!

She continues to run toward him. When she reaches him, she grabs him by the collar.

<p>SHERYL (frantic) Answer me, God damn it! Why is there blood on your shirt? Where's Aaron? (to the crowd) AARON! (to Calvin) Where is your brother, Calvin?!</p>	<p>CALVIN Mom, stop. Please. Stop.</p>
--	--

The PARAMEDICS wheel Aaron out on a gurney and into the street. Sheryl's face goes blank when she sees Aaron on the gurney.

SHERYL  
Oh my God. Oh my God, no! Aaron!

Sheryl lets Calvin go and goes after Aaron, but two police officers grab her.

<p>SHERYL Let me go, God damn it! That is my son! Let me go, right now! Take your God damn hands OFF me!</p>	<p>POLICE OFFICER I'm sorry, ma'am. We can't let you through.</p>
--	---

INT. HOSPITAL, TRAUMA UNIT - NIGHT

Calvin and Sheryl sit, waiting. Calvin stares at the ground as Sheryl rocks back and forth.

SHERYL  
Lord, please don't take my baby  
from me. Not right now, Lord. He  
hasn't had the chance to experience  
life.

A DOCTOR walks out of the room where Aaron was being treated. Calvin and Sheryl both jump to their feet and run over to the doctor.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
How is he? How is my baby?

DOCTOR  
(sighs, hesitant)  
We couldn't stop his bleeding, Ms.  
Robinson.

SHERYL  
No. Don't you tell me that. Don't  
you dare tell me that!

DOCTOR  
He lost a substantial amount of  
blood.

DOCTOR	SHERYL
There's no easy way to say this.	No! You don't tell me that!

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Aaron didn't make it.

Calvin closes his eyes as Sheryl drops to her knees, crying.  
Calvin tries to comfort her, but it doesn't help at all.  
Sheryl lets out a long, bellowing scream of pain.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Calvin sits in the living room, staring at the floor, still  
wearing the blood stained shirt from the other day.

AARON (O.S.)  
CALVIN!

Calvin looks around the room, only to realize that the voice  
he heard was all in his head. He puts his head in his hands.  
There are three knocks on the front door, but Calvin acts as  
though he doesn't hear them. The door cracks open slowly,  
then Quentin steps in.

QUENTIN  
Calvin?

Calvin ignores him. Quentin walks over to the couch and sits  
down next to him, taking a deep breath.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)  
(hesitant)  
I...I can't even begin to tell you  
how sorry I am. I feel like I lost  
a little brother yesterday too.  
(MORE)

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

And I'm, uh, I'm sorry about  
Crystal. How's your mother?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

I don't know. She, uh, she locked  
herself in her room. She hasn't  
been out all day.

QUENTIN

How are you?

Calvin shakes his head.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

You know, witnesses said that the  
shooter was ridin' in a black  
Nissan Maxima. All we gotta do is  
go to the police. Tell them where  
they need to go.

CALVIN

Then what? Those mothafuckas get  
sixty years? Aaron and Crystal will  
still be dead, and my mother will  
still be in there, fucked up.

QUENTIN

(hesitant)

Look. I know it's gonna be hard,  
but we're all gonna get through  
this shit, aight?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

No. Not this time. I spent all this  
time tryin' to get over what  
happened to my father. Tryin' not  
to be angry anymore. I let all of  
those feelings of hate and anger  
go, thinkin' things could actually  
get better. As soon as I did that,  
shit comes crashin' back down,  
right on my fuckin' head. I swear,  
it's like happiness is a fuckin'  
sin.

QUENTIN

You're talkin' like you ain't got  
nothin' to look forward to.

CALVIN

Me and my mother have to bury my  
baby brother. Crystal is dead.

(MORE)



CALVIN (CONT'D)

What the fuck could I possibly have to look forward to? Nothing. Not in this life anyway.

QUENTIN

Not in this life? Come on, man. Don't talk like that. Not after all you've been through.

CALVIN

I'm just tired, man. Tired of this fuckin' place. Tired of suffering.

QUENTIN

You fight to rise above it. You don't give in to it.

CALVIN

I'm tired of fightin'.

Quentin stands to his feet.

QUENTIN

Sounds like to me you tryin' to give up on yourself. Is that what you're tryin' to do? Quit?

CALVIN

You hear anything I said? There's nothin' left for me to do. I might as well put a gun in my mouth and pull the fuckin' trigger.

Quentin yanks Calvin up by the collar and slams him into the wall.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Get off!

QUENTIN

(angry)

Take it back!

CALVIN

Get the fuck off!

Calvin spins Quentin around and slams him into the wall.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

You don't get it! This shit ain't no fuckin' fairy tale! There is no happily ever after! This is a fucked up place we live in and I'm just...I'm tired of bein' here.

Calvin lets Quentin go and walks back over to the couch.

QUENTIN

You CANNOT let this break you. What do you think your pops would say if he heard you talkin' like this?

CALVIN

I don't know, Quentin. I'm a fuckin' dropout who couldn't even protect his family. He would probably think I'm a piece of shit.

QUENTIN

That's bullshit and you know it. You're just tryin' to make excuses for yourself.

CALVIN

Quentin, I think it's time for you to go.

Calvin sits down on the couch. Quentin straightens himself.

QUENTIN

(hesitant)

I guess that IS it, huh?

Calvin doesn't respond. Quentin nods and walks over to the front door.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

You disappoint me, man.

Calvin continues to ignore him. Quentin looks down, then walks out of the front door, slamming it behind him. Calvin looks down at the floor and takes a deep breath.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - EVENING

Calvin lies in his bed, staring at the ceiling. He hears a noise coming from the kitchen and sits up.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sheryl sits at the table, rocking back and forth in her seat, her eyes dried and irritated. Calvin walks into the kitchen and by Sheryl's side.

CALVIN

Ma?

Sheryl ignores him.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Mom?

Calvin's eyes start to fill with tears as she continues to ignore him.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Mommy?

Sheryl says nothing to him at all. Calvin gives up on talking to her and cries himself back into his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Calvin sits in the corner of his room, holding Crystal's black bandana. He clutches the bandana tightly as a tear falls from his eye. He puts the bandana down and picks up his gun. He picks up the magazine and loads it into the gun.

Calvin looks down at the gun for a moment, then closes his eyes. He takes a deep breath. He sits there for a moment, then opens his eyes. He looks down at the gun.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin looks at his reflection in the mirror. He opens the medicine cabinet and grabs a prescription pill bottle, then closes the cabinet. He stares at the mirror for a moment, then punches the it. He stares at his broken reflection.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin walks into the kitchen to find Sheryl, sitting the same spot, staring into space.

CALVIN

Hey, ma. I'm gonna make you some tea, okay? It'll make you feel better.

SHERYL

(traumatized)

Thank you, baby. That's so nice of you.

Calvin smiles at her as he tries to hold back tears. He walks over to the cupboard and pulls down a tea cup.

He turns on the stove, then reaches under the sink for the kettle. He fills it with water and sits it on the fire.

He walks back over to the table and sits across from Sheryl.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

You are such a good son. I love you so much.

Calvin tries his hardest to hold back tears.

CALVIN

I love you too, mom.

Sheryl smiles back at him. Seconds later, the kettle starts to whistle. Calvin gets up from his seat and walks over to the kettle. He turns off the fire and drops a tea bag into the cup.

He pours the hot water into the cup and starts to stir the tea. He slips the prescription pill bottle out of his pocket, pops it open, then pours four pills into his palm. He drops them into the tea. As he stirs the tea some more, he silently cries to himself.

He wipes his face dry and turns around with a smile.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Come on, mom. Let's go in your room so you can have your tea.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, SHERYL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin and Sheryl enter her bedroom. Sheryl takes a seat on the edge of her bed and Calvin hands her the cup of tea.

SHERYL

Thank you, baby.

CALVIN

You're welcome. I'm going to take a nap now, okay?

SHERYL

Okay, sweetie.

Calvin exits as Sheryl sips the tea.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - LATER

Calvin pulls on a black hoodie. He picks up his gun, cocks it, and slips it into his waistband.

He is about to walk out of his room, until he notices Crystal's bandana on the floor. He kneels down and picks it up.

He puts the bandana to his nose, inhaling Crystal's scent. He puts it into his pocket and exits his room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, SHERYL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin slowly pushes Sheryl's door open. He walks to her bedside to see that she is sound asleep. He takes her hand.

CALVIN

(hesitant)

Hey, ma. I...I'm sorry for doing what I did. I couldn't stand watching you go through the pain of losing another. When you wake up tomorrow, I'll be gone too.

Calvin takes a deep breath.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I just want to let you know that I'm sorry. I said a lot of things that I didn't mean. I also want to thank you for everything that you've done for me and Aaron. Giving birth to us, taking care of us and...and staying strong.

(holding back tears)

And I just want to tell you I am so sorry for the way I treated you. I know you didn't do anything wrong, but I still treated you like shit. If I could take it all back, I would. I really would. I just want you to know that I love you. There hasn't been a time when I haven't loved you and I hope...I hope you can forgive me for what I'm about to do.

Calvin leans down and kisses Sheryl on the forehead.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I love you, ma and I'll, uh, I'll be keeping an eye on you.

Calvin exits the room.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Calvin walks through the living room, with a look of terrible anger on his face. He walks out of the front door and out in to the cold New Jersey night.

EXT. STREET - LATER

It has started to snow. Calvin walks down the street with his hood on, trying to keep from the cold.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX (GEORGIA-KING VILLAGE) - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin approaches an apartment building. The building is one of two buildings in the area. Calvin stops walking and looks up and down the street. Seconds later, he spots the black Maxima, parked across the street.

He looks up and down the street, then creeps into an alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Calvin crouches down in the alleyway, keeping his eyes fixed on the Maxima.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LATER

Calvin sits, crouched in the alleyway as snow continues to fall. He shivers from the cold and amount of time he has been outside. Someone exiting the front entrance can be heard, followed by talking. Calvin peeks around the corner to see Lionel, Marcus, and Rob walk from the building.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX (GEORGIA-KING VILLAGE) - CONTINUOUS

Lionel, Marcus, and Rob walk toward the Maxima.

LIONEL

Where y'all niggas tryin' to eat?

MARCUS

Shit, I don't know. Crowns?

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

A look of anger spreads across Calvin's face. He pulls the black bandana out of his pocket and ties it around his head, concealing his face. He pulls the gun from his waistband, cocks it, then peeks around the corner. He creeps out of the alley.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX (GEORGIA-KING VILLAGE) - CONTINUOUS

Lionel, Marcus, and Rob walk up to the Maxima. As Marcus unlocks the door, Calvin approaches the group from behind. Rob's eyes go wide when he sees Calvin, with gun in hand.

ROB

Oh, shit!

Calvin takes aim and opens fire on the young men. They frantically scatter as bullets tear into cars, shattering windows, setting off car alarms. Marcus and Rob take off running down the street as gunshots continue to ring out. Lionel runs on to the sidewalk.

Calvin runs on to the sidewalk after Lionel, firing random shots at him. Lionel draws his weapon, but he drops it into the gutter. Lionel frantically runs down the street. Calvin stops and takes steady aim at Lionel.

Calvin hesitates for a moment, then pulls the trigger. The bullet tears into Lionel's ankle. He falls to the ground, screaming in pain. Calvin looks around, then walks toward Lionel, who cries in pain.

Lionel slowly crawls along the sidewalk as Calvin walks up to him.

CALVIN

(hesitant, shaken)

Turn over.

LIONEL

(in agony)

Come on, man! What the fuck did I do to you?!

CALVIN

Turn the fuck over!

Calvin kicks Lionel on to his back.

LIONEL  
(scared, shaken)  
Please.

CALVIN  
Shut the fuck up!

Calvin leans down, putting the gun in Lionel's face. Calvin hands shake as he fingers the trigger. Lionel starts to breath heavy. He stares down the barrel of Calvin's gun, wide eyed and shaking.

Silence. All that can be heard, is the howl of the wind, and Lionel's breathing. Calvin fingers the trigger for a moment, then lowers his weapon, letting out a held breath. He looks down at Lionel, lowering the bandana.

Calvin looks down at Lionel for a moment, then walks away. Lionel lies on the sidewalk, crying, as sirens echo in the distance.

EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Snow continues to fall as Calvin walks through the park. He walks over to a nearby bench and takes a seat. The wind whips as snow falls. Calvin sits on the bench, looking at Downtown Newark's city skyline.

He looks around the park, then looks to the sky as he tries to hold back tears.

GEORGE (V.O.)  
I know you're a little too young to understand all of what's goin' on right now.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

CALVIN PAUL, 12 years old, lies in his bed, with a frown, tucked in for the night. George sits on the edge of his bed.

GEORGE  
I just need you to understand that none of this is your fault. Things like this happen, you know? Don't think that I don't love your mother, 'cause I do. It's just that...things aren't workin' out for us right now.  
(MORE)



GEORGE (CONT'D)

Just because we won't be together,  
don't mean that we ain't a family  
no more. We will still be a family  
you understand?

Calvin gives a hesitant nod. George takes a deep breath.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

This might be a hard time for you.  
Anger's natural, grief is  
appropriate, but healing is  
mandatory. It's time for you to  
step up. You're the man of the  
house now. I need you to promise me  
that you're gonna take care of your  
mother and your baby brother for  
me.

CALVIN

(hesitant)

I promise.

George smiles.

GEORGE

That's my man. Come here.

George pulls Calvin up into a tight hug.

EXT. PARK - PRE DAWN

The snow has stopped. Calvin sits on the bench. He takes a deep breath and stands to his feet.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The sun is minutes away from rising. Calvin walks down the street, clutching Crystal's bandana in his hand. He pulls the gun from his waistband, releases the magazine, then drops the gun into a nearby storm drain. He tosses the magazine into nearby trash can.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Calvin quietly creeps through the living room door, slowly closing it behind him.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, SHERYL'S ROOM - MORNING

Sunlight filters in through the window. Sheryl lies in her bed, sleeping like a baby. Calvin walks into her bedroom and over to her bedside. He looks at her for a moment, then smiles.

He leans down and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

INT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE, CALVIN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Calvin lies in his bed, staring at the ceiling. He takes a deep breath, then closes his eyes.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - EVENING

Little children, some with their parents, play in front of their houses. Seconds later, Calvin steps out of the house. He takes a seat on the steps. He looks around at all the playing children on his block.

Seconds later, Quentin walks up. He takes a seat beside Calvin.

QUENTIN

What's up?

Calvin shakes his head.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

(hesitant)

I thought that I'd come by to let you know that Lionel and his boys got locked up. Police scooped 'em up early this morning.

Calvin nods.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

How you feelin'?

CALVIN

(hesitant)

I don't know. Aight, I guess. Just tryin' to figure out what to do now. Where to go from here, you know?

QUENTIN

Go through with what you set out to do. Keep shit movin'. Finish school, live life. For your dad, Aaron, and Crystal. For real, that's about all you can do.

CALVIN

Yeah. I guess you're right.

QUENTIN

Mothafucka, please. I'm always right. The hell you talkin' about you guess I'm right.

Calvin laughs, holding back tears.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

Hey. This is the dawn of a new day, dog. We all gonna stay strong, because believe me when I tell you, we gonna get through this shit. All of us, you hear me?

Calvin nods.

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

That's my boy.

Quentin smiles and pats Calvin on the back.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Sandra sits at her desk, in the empty classroom, grading papers. Seconds later, there are three knocks at the door.

SANDRA

Come in.

There door opens and Calvin steps in, with a bookbag over his shoulder. Sandra's face lights up.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Calvin Paul. What are you doing around here?

CALVIN  
Just got out of class. Thought I'd  
come by and say hi. How have you  
been?

SANDRA  
I've been good. How about yourself?

CALVIN  
Good. Things have been good.

Calvin looks at his old desk and cracks a smile.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
Wow. May I?

SANDRA  
Be my guest.

Calvin takes a seat at the desk.

SANDRA (CONT'D)  
So...will you be ready to walk  
across that stage next week?

CALVIN  
Yeah. It's long overdue.

SANDRA  
It sure is. How has your mother  
been?

CALVIN  
She's been good. She went back to  
work about two months ago.

SANDRA  
Back at Saint Michael's?

CALVIN  
Yeah.

SANDRA  
That's good. That's really good  
news. Sounds like things are really  
back in order now.

He nods and cracks a smile.

CALVIN  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Well, I just wanted to come by  
because I never got the chance to  
thank you.

SANDRA

(confused)

For what?

CALVIN

For helping me realize what I  
needed to do, with going back to  
school and all.

SANDRA

Calvin, I didn't do anything.  
Everything that happened was your  
own doing. With everything you were  
faced with, you managed to work  
through it. Most people would've  
given up in your situation.

(beat)

Your father would be proud.

Sandra gives him a smile. Calvin smiles and stands to his  
feet.

CALVIN

Well, I better get goin'. My  
mother's waitin' on me.

SANDRA

Tell her I said hi.

CALVIN

I will.

SANDRA

Alright, now. You keep in touch.  
Don't be a stranger.

CALVIN

Aight, Ms. Clarke. I'll see you  
around.

SANDRA

See ya, Calvin.

Calvin smiles and exits the classroom. Sandra smiles and  
resumes grading her papers.

EXT. ROBINSON RESIDENCE - EVENING

It is a warm, breezy August evening. The sun has set. Calvin sits on the steps, writing in a notebook. Seconds later, Sheryl opens the door.

SHERYL  
Hey, Quentin just called. He said  
he'll be over in a little while.

CALVIN  
Okay.

Sheryl looks at the notebook with curiosity.

SHERYL  
What are you doing?

CALVIN  
Nothing.

She walks out of the house and looms over Calvin.

SHERYL  
What are you writing?

CALVIN  
(laughs)  
Nothing, ma.

SHERYL  
Will you just tell me what you're  
writing?

CALVIN  
(sighs, hesitant)  
A speech. For graduation.

Her face beams with interest.

SHERYL  
Really?

She takes a seat beside him.

SHERYL (CONT'D)  
Can I hear it?

CALVIN  
You're gonna hear it when I walk.

Sheryl frowns at him. Calvin looks at her for a moment, then sighs. He holds up his notebook.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

(hesitant, reading)

Adversity will be an occasional or consistent companion, for each of us, throughout our lives. No matter how hard we try, we cannot avoid it. The only question is how will we react when faced with it? Will our hardships be our stumbling blocks, or will they be our stepping stones? It is unavoidable. You can't fight it. You must accept it. Develop the proper attitude, for as Ellis Havelock wrote, "Pain and death are a part of life. To reject them is to reject life itself." Although pain is inevitable, suffering is optional. So know that our downfalls are the means of developing our strength. Know that if there were no winter, spring would not be so pleasant, and know, that even in our darkest hour, our souls are replenished and given the strength to continue and endure.

(beat)

That's all.

SHERYL

(hesitant, smiles)

That was beautiful.

Calvin smiles.

SHERYL (CONT'D)

Come on inside. Dinner's almost done.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek, stands to her feet, and walks into the house. Calvin stands and surveys his street for a moment. He smiles, closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and walks into the house.

FADE OUT.