

FADE IN:

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

A city buzzing with evening life, whiz by outside.

MARCUS, (18), sits in the passenger seat. Head tilted down. In his lap, a small, but nice store-bought bouquet of flowers. He's not cute, not ugly. Just teenage awkward and insecure. No longer a boy, but not yet a man.

In the driver's seat is TOM, (45). Average middle-aged father. His face kind, but besieged by worry. With his shoulders slumped, he holds on to the steering wheel with both hands.

TOM
Son,... I wish you wouldn't do
this. You're making a huge mistake.

Marcus ignores, looks out the side window.

TOM
Why can't you listen to me?

They drive on in silence. Tom's frustration grows.

TOM
Listen, I know what you're going
through. I was eighteen once too. I
still remember what it was like.

He gets nothing from Marcus.

TOM
I'm older now. I know better. I
know what I felt then was not love.
I thought it was, but it was
just... lust.

Marcus moves a slight inch away from his dad at the comment.
Tom notices.

TOM
Okay, I know that sounds crude, but
it's true. It's nature. Instinct.
We can't escape it. We're flooded
with hormones at that age. Why?
Because we're supposed to go out
and fuck as many girls as we can to
keep our species going. That's it.
It's not love.

Marcus keeps his gaze out the window.

Desperate, Tom sighs.

TOM

Geez! It's your eighteenth birthday, son. You're supposed to party. Be with friends. Hook up with girls. Not propose to some crush you had in middle school.

Marcus glances at Tom, jaw tight.

MARCUS

If I'm old enough to join the military and get killed... and kill. I'm old enough to ask a girl to marry me.

Tom turns into a parking lot of a very rundown apartment building. He peers up at the depressing sight.

TOM

You don't even have a job.

MARCUS

I'll get one.

TOM

Or a car.

MARCUS

I'll get one.

Tom rubs his face. Tries to think of something to say.

Marcus gets out of the car.

TOM

Marcus, please. Can't you trust me just this once? It's not love you --

Marcus shuts the door, heads towards the entrance.

Tom hits the steering wheel.

TOM

Stupid. Stupid. Kid!

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Marcus walks up to the entrance, the bouquet in hand like a shield in front of him. He pushes the intercom button.

CLICK. The door unlocks.

The door opens a crack. A bloodshot eye peers out, studies Marcus for a beat, then opens a few more inches. EDDIE, intense, bad skin, meth mouth, probably much younger than he looks, casts a nervous glance around the outside.

He sticks his hand out. Marcus, pulls money out of his pocket, hands Eddie two ten dollar bills, two fives, and a few singles.

EDDIE
Tryin' to fuckin' stiff me asshole?
It's thirty-five.

Nervous, Marcus digs for some more money in his pocket, drops some coins in Eddie's hand.

Eddie steps aside. Marcus enters. One more glance outside, then Eddie shuts and locks the door.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Dark. Filthy. Naked 30 watt bulbs try to light the way. Unpleasant sounds waft from the apartments. Grunting. Moaning. Yelling. Crying. Screaming...

EDDIE
Last one on the left.

With timid steps, Marcus makes his way down the hall. His apprehension stronger with every door he passes.

He reaches the last door on the left, stands for a moment, takes a deep breath, then knocks.

LOLA (O.S.)
Come on in, baby.

Marcus, hesitates, then decides to hide the flowers behind his back. He opens the door.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOLA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A mattress on milk crates dominates the room. A lamp with a red bulb on a tiny dresser, the sole light.

LOLA, (18), barely dressed, way too much make-up, high as a kite, sits on the bed. She tries to move seductively, but fails due to her right knee being fused straight. She flashes Marcus a whorish smile.

LOLA
Close the door, baby, then come
here. Let Lola show you all her
tricks.

Scared shitless, Marcus, closes the door, takes a few steps
forward. He extends his hand with the flowers.

MARCUS
I. I... I brought these.

Taken aback, Lola stares at the flowers. Her emotions run the
gamut. Soft. Thankful. A tear in her eye. Then, shame.
Followed by cynicism. Anger.

Lola takes the flowers.

LOLA
What am I supposed to do with
these? Buy food? Pay rent?

She stands up, tosses the flowers on the floor.

LOLA
You wanna impress me? Give me cash.
Something I can use. Something I
can get geared up on. Help me
through the day. Not some fucking
plant that's dead next day.

She pushes him down to sit on the bed.

LOLA
Let's get on with it. You already
paid Eddie, so what will it be?

Marcus keeps his gaze down. Speaks softly.

MARCUS
Your name is Marielle. Not Lola.

After a second's shock, she slips back into Lola's character.

LOLA
My name is Lola. I have no fucking
idea who Marielle is.

Marcus looks up at her, meets her eye. She quickly averts her
gaze, starts to unbutton his pants. Marcus stops her.

MARCUS
You went to Lincoln Middle School.

She grabs his hands, places them on her chest, squeezes.

Marcus pulls his hands away.

MARCUS
You were in a wheelchair then.

Lola stands up. Glares at him.

LOLA
What are you? Some sicko with a
disability fetish?

Embarrassed, Marcus lowers his gaze.

MARCUS
No. Not at all. I just --

LOLA
Just what?

Marcus steels himself, meets her eyes again.

MARCUS
I love you.

Lola laughs, but not out of joy.

LOLA
Listen, asshole, I have no idea who
you are, but I have no interest in
pervert virgin boys still wet
behind the ears that get off on
cripples.

MARCUS
I thought you were the most
beautiful girl I've ever seen.

Sadness mixed with anger, Lola points at the door.

LOLA
Get out! Get out now! Or I'll
scream, and Eddie's guys will put
you in a wheelchair.

Marcus stands up, eye to eye with Lola. She tries to look
away. Stomps her foot. Points at the door.

LOLA
Get out!

Marcus, plods toward the door, stops when he gets near, turns
to Lola.

MARCUS

You're the only one I've thought of
for the last three years.

Teary eyed, Lola picks up a bottle of water from the dresser,
throws it at Marcus.

LOLA

Get out!

Crushed, Marcus opens the door, takes one last look at Lola.

MARCUS

I still think you're the most
beautiful girl I've ever seen.
Marielle...

Lola's turn to be crushed. She picks up the flowers from the
floor, throws them at Marcus.

LOLA

Get out! Get out!

She picks the flowers up again. Throws them one more time.

Marcus, leaves, closes the door behind him.

Tears well up in her eyes, roll down her cheeks. She sags to
the floor. Her stiff leg in an odd angle.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Marcus hurries down the hallway to the exit.

Eddie steps out of nowhere, stops him.

EDDIE

I see your face here again, I'll
have you cut into pieces. And,
believe me, people pay for that
kind of shit too. I don't even have
to do it myself.

Marcus attempts to pass him.

EDDIE

Got that, motherfucker?

Marcus squeezes past, rushes to the exit, bolts out the door.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Marcus stalks across the lot. He wipes moisture out of his eye with his sleeve.

A car rolls up next to him. The side window glides down.

Marcus glances at it, then gets inside.

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Tom and Marcus ride quiet while they leave the seedy side of town.

Tom puts his hand on Marcus shoulder, gives it an affectionate squeeze.

MARCUS

Happy now?

TOM

My job as your dad is to help set you up for what life may bring. My happiness is not even secondary.

Marcus ponders this, then share a glance with his dad.

MARCUS

I do love her. Lust isn't it. I know what that is. -- That's why I have Maya Hawk on my wall.

Tom glances at Marcus with affection. They share a smile.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Marcus walks along a path by the lake. A happy dog at the end of the leash in his hand. The dog's busy with all the smells of other dogs.

The dog stops at a grassy patch it finds especially interesting. It takes its time.

Marcus sits down. On a closer look, he notices little white flowers in the grass. He picks one up. Studies it.

LOLA/MARIELLE (O.S.)

You were right. My name is Marielle.

Marcus turns to see Marielle standing by the path. She wears normal clothes. Hides nothing. Accentuates nothing.

No make-up. Which shows a nasty black eye and a swollen lip. She leans on one crutch.

Marcus, stares at her, jumps to his feet. Marielle smiles. Marcus gives her one in return.

LOLA/MARIELLE

I remember you too.

The dog runs up to Marielle, pulls Marcus with it. They stand just a few feet from each other.

LOLA/MARIELLE

You were the only one that was ever nice to me.

Not sure what to say, Marcus' mouth opens and shuts. Marielle looks down at her leg.

MARCUS

I'm really sorry about yesterday. I shouldn't ha --

Marielle smiles.

LOLA/MARIELLE

It's okay. I'm glad you did.

The dog finds a new scent to follow.

LOLA/MARIELLE

Looks like he wants us to follow.

They share a smile, then do.

FADE OUT: