

Shooting

FADE IN

EXT: SCHOOL PARKING LOT BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

ANGEL, 16, African-American, shoots hoops outside the school. It's afternoon, and school's been out for a few hours now. This school is run-down. The basketball court occupies a corner of the parking lot.

Angel shoots the ball.

Swish through the chain-link net.

A car rolls up. Three MUSCULAR MEN, 20s-30s and tough-looking, get out of the car and walk with purpose to Angel. Angel sees them, but ignores them. They stand under the basket and stare at him.

As Angel shoots, he says ...

ANGEL

Bucket.

The ball swishes through the basket.

MUSCULAR MAN 1 gets the rebound. The three men step closer to Angel.

ANGEL

What y'all want?

MUSCULAR MAN 1

You know what we want. Your brother.

ANGEL

What y'all want him for?

MUSCULAR MAN 2

You know Butter killed my boy.

ANGEL

I ain't seen Butter in a minute.  
What Butter does ain't got nothing  
to do with me.

Muscular Man 2 and 3 step closer to Angel. Angel stands firm.

MUSCULAR MAN 1  
(to his cohorts)

Stop!

He throws Angel the ball.

MUSCULAR MAN 1  
When you see Butter, tell him we're  
looking for him.

INT: BUTTER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Butter's house is bare, almost as if it's abandoned. No pictures on the wall. Lawn furniture is inside instead of real furniture. And yet there are stacks of cash covering all flat surfaces.

BUTTER, 25, is shirtless and tatted up, sitting on the dingy sofa. He counts a stack of 5s, 10s, and 20s.

On the door, KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

BUTTER  
Who there?

ANGEL  
Open up. It's me, Angel.

BUTTER  
Come on in, bro. I ain't seen you in  
a minute.

Angel enters. He looks at the filth and cash everywhere before they hug.

BUTTER

So what brings you by, bro?  
You finally ready to make some  
dollars?

ANGEL  
Looks like you're livin' the  
life.

BUTTER  
Damn straight.

Butter puts a stack of money under Angel's nose.

BUTTER  
Smell it. It's nice.

Angel slaps the money away.

ANGEL  
Get that outta my face.  
Smells dirty.

Butter grits his teeth. Then he laughs and sits back down.

BUTTER  
I see you still got them hoop  
dreams. But you'll come around  
sooner or later.

ANGEL  
(Looking around.)  
This ain't no life to look forward  
to.

BUTTER  
Man, why you want to be a little  
bitch, just like our crack-head mama?  
Keep up with these crazy dreams and  
you'll be just like her. Your broke  
ass will be all about the next fix  
instead of the next game.

Angel is mad and rushes at Butter.

Butter doesn't flinch.

Angel stops, and they stand nose-to-nose, teeth gritted, lips tightened.

ANGEL

I outta knock you the fuck out  
saying some shit like that. It  
ain't like daddy set a good example.  
And at least she let us take her  
to rehab.

BUTTER

Man, she's been in rehab about six,  
seven times. Ain't gonna make no  
difference. Gets out tomorrow. We  
throw a party. She probably won't  
even last the night.

ANGEL

She can do it.

BUTTER

Crack-head ass.

ANGEL

Nah. She's got it this time.

BUTTER

She ain't got shit.

The brothers, still standing close to each other, relax a little.

ANGEL

A'ight.

Butter takes a seat and begins counting his money again. Angel leans against the wall.

BUTTER

Hey man, what'd you come here for anyway? Not like I don't enjoy our visits, but you don't just come by.

ANGEL

Some dudes came to see me. Somethin' 'bout you killin' a man.

Butter stops counting and looks up.

ANGEL

Don't say nothing because it don't matter. I ain't in the life. What does matter is they comin' for you.

BUTTER

I ain't scared.

ANGEL

Yeah. Right.

Angel starts to leave.

BUTTER

Hey.

Angel stops.

BUTTER

Good to see you, man. See you tomorrow.

Angel leaves.

EXT: RICO'S YARD - NIGHT

The crowd mingles in the yard, talking, laughing, and dancing to the THICK BASS bouncing in the background. A grill sizzles and smokes.

Angel's father, RICO, 50, has on his good jeans, wearing them low so his boxers show. He doesn't have a shirt on. He raises a bottle of cheap liquor in the air.

RICO

(to the crowd)

Hey yo! Y'all quiet down now. I got something to say.

The crowd quiets and gives him their attention. The music stops.

RICO

Everybody's got problems, that's for damn sure. Some people just live with the problem and some people can't. Now we're all here for Denise...

The crowd interrupts with joyful shouts and cheers.

DENISE, 50, is skinny with stringy hair. She smiles, but it's a timid smile.

RICO

That's right, everybody. Show her your love. I ain't never met anybody like Denise before. And now she's back here with us. Shoot up, drink up, smoke up ... whatever you got. We celebratin'!

The crowd erupts.

EXT: RICO'S YARD - NIGHT

Butter and Angel stand on the outskirts of the party and look on.

BUTTER

Same ol' shit, different day.

ANGEL

Only we would celebrate mom coming back from rehab by drinking a bunch of alcohol and using a lot of drugs.

Butter gets in Angel's face.

BUTTER

Man, you always acting like you better than everybody. But we's raised on the same streets, in the same house. Your shit stinks, just like everybody's here. I'm tired of you.

Butter disappears into the crowd.

A hand taps Angel's shoulder. He turns to see KEESHA, 17. Her skin is the color of caramel. She wears designer clothes and, as always, chews gum.

KEESHA

What's up with your brother?

ANGEL

He trippin'.

KEESHA

Trippin' on what?

ANGEL

Sayin' I think I'm better than everybody.

Keesha wraps her arms around Angel's waist.



KEESHA

Well, maybe you are better than everybody. I think you are.

Angel holds her as well and they kiss. When they pull apart, he looks off in the distance.

KEESHA

What's wrong?

ANGEL

Just a bunch of shit. Boys from the Three Nine rolled up on me at school. Said something about Butter taking out one of their boys.

Angel watches Butter and Rico have an inaudible conversation.

KEESHA

You think he did it?

ANGEL

I don't know. He's a lot like my dad, so I think he's capable of almost anything.

Angel looks to the other side of the yard at Denise, who is near the table of food. She takes a swig from a bottle of Hennessy and stumbles around.

KEESHA

What's really bothering you?

Angel doesn't answer at first. He looks at his mom, then at his brother and father.

Keesha puts her hand on Angel's cheek and gently moves his face so he is looking at her.

KEESHA

Tell me.

ANGEL

I just look around and ain't  
nothing changed. I want to get  
up outta here, but I don't even  
know if it's possible.

RANDOM PARTYGOER (O.S.)

Drive-by! He's got a gun!

BANG, BANG! Machine guns shoot up the party in a drive-by.  
Screams and chaos.

Smoke.

EXT: RICO'S YARD - NIGHT

Smoke and destruction are everywhere. As the smoke clears, Angel  
stands up and looks around. He sees Keesha first. She's lying on  
the ground, blood on her shirt.

ANGEL

Keesha!

He falls to his knees and scoops up her head, caressing her in  
his arms. He kisses her cheek and neck.

ANGEL

Keesha, please, no! No, Keesha!

He pulls her close again.

She coughs a little. He startles.

ANGEL

Keesha? You're alive! Thank God!

She reaches an arm up to Angel.

KEESHA

Baby! I'm ok. What happened?

Angel hugs her close again. When he looks up this time, he sees Denise, shot dead, the broken bottle of Hennessey at her side.

Stunned, he looks to the other end of the yard, to where Rico and Butter were, and he sees Rico motionless on the ground, covered in blood. Butter is on the ground as well, but Angel sees him cough and squirm.

ANGEL

Keesha, I need to talk to Butter.

KEESHA

(regaining her senses)

Go. I'm ok.

Angel gently sets her down and kisses her before running to Butter.

EXT: RICO'S YARD - NIGHT

ANGEL

Butter! I'm here.

Angel wraps his arms around Butter, not worried about the mud or the blood that gets all over him.

BUTTER

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

ANGEL

(Crying)

I know you are. I know.

BUTTER

I just wanted to do ok. I just wanted to get some money and get up outta here one day.

ANGEL

I know.

BUTTER  
It's you, Angel.

ANGEL  
What?

BUTTER  
You got a chance. It's gotta be you.

ANGEL  
I'll get them for you. They'll pay  
for this.

BUTTER  
Come here, Angel. Let me tell  
you something.

Angel leans down to Butter.

BUTTER  
You should be ...

Butter dies.

Angel, sobbing, squeezes him tightly. His whales nearly match the pitch of the POLICE SIRENS as they approach. The scene is overcome by the flashing red and blue lights.

EXT: POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The front of the police station is still bustling in the middle of the night. Angel and Keesha walk out of the front door and descend the steps, both moving slowly, both visibly distraught. Keesha holds Angel's hand and looks up at him.

KEESHA  
Baby.

He doesn't look at her when he responds.

ANGEL

Yeah?

KEESHA

Baby. I see your face.

ANGEL

Yeah?

KEESHA

Baby. What is it?

This time, she stops walking and pulls his arm, insisting that he stop too.

ANGEL

You really need to ask?

KEESHA

Yes, I do. Sadness, I understand.  
Anger, I understand. I see those  
in your face, but there's  
something else.

He finally looks her in the eye.

KEESHA

No, baby. You can't do it!

ANGEL

What? Can't do what?

KEESHA

You're thinking about killing  
them, aren't you?

ANGEL

And you don't think I can? What,  
you think I'm soft?

KEESHA

Hell no, Angel! You get that  
shit out of your head.

He lets go of her hand.

ANGEL

These dudes deserve to die. And I  
wanna kill the mother fuckers so bad.

KEESHA

Listen to yourself, Angel.

ANGEL

I am listening to myself.

KEESHA

You're talking about killing  
people. Killing people. And not  
only that, but going after these  
guys alone.

ANGEL

And I'll go with my bare hands  
if I need to. Hell fucking yes I'm  
thinking about killing these guys.

KEESHA

Angel, you listen to me, god dammit!  
You lost your father, your mother,  
and your brother in one flurry of  
bullets. It's tragic, and sad,  
and ridiculous, and horrible.

She grabs his hand again.

KEESHA

But there are ways to deal with  
tragedy besides straight up revenge.

ANGEL

*(Jerking his hand away)*

I owe it to them! I ain't gonna spend my life in therapy over this shit. It ain't never going to trial. There ain't gonna be no getting over this unless I ... me ... I do something about it.

KEESHA

Why you?

ANGEL

Because they killed my people. They killed my family.

KEESHA

And what about us?

They lock eyes for a beat.

KEESHA

And what about basketball?

Angel walks towards her and gently grasps both of her hands.

ANGEL

I will always love you. And I love basketball. You and ball are the only two things I've ever wanted.

Keesha rests her body against his. He caresses her.

ANGEL

But this ...

KEESHA

Stop. Think. Don't say anything for a minute. Think about what could happen. Chances are, you could die or you could go to prison. If either of those happen, you've lost both of us. And, if you happen

to get your revenge - you kill all of them - and nobody knows it was you ... then I'll still know. More importantly, you'll still know. Do you understand?

ANGEL

I do.

KEESHA

Things will never ...

ANGEL

... be the same.

They hug tightly. Then Angel pulls himself away and leaves her, right there, on the sidewalk. She falls to a knee, sobbing uncontrollably.

EXT: HIGH SCHOOL COURT - NIGHT

Angel sits in the moonlight, his back against the goalpost. In front of him are a basketball and a gun. He cries as he stares at them.

He reaches forward and picks the gun up from the ground.

Angel stands and begins to walk away.

He stops after a few feet.

Angel drops the gun into a garbage can, turns, and walks back to the court.

Angel picks up the ball, dribbles slowly and deliberately to the foul line. He does his free-throw routine, bends his knees, ball at the ready.

He shoots.

FADE OUT: THE END