

MOONLIGHT

Written by
Barry Jenkins

Based on
"In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue"
By Tarell Alvin McCraney

First, over BLACK, we hear...

The SOUND of the ocean, then...

FADE IN:

1

EXT. 58TH TERRACE/13TH AVE - DAY

1

A bright Miami day. Or what we can see of it: our gaze fixed, looking into the front windshield of a wide, vintage car (think 60s, American).

At the wheel find JUAN (30's, some sort of Afro-Latino thing about him) pulling towards us and coming to a stop. Behind him, a shady, rundown apartment building abuts the road, three boys standing outside it.

Juan cuts his engine, exits the car and begins across the street. The boys tense up as Juan approaches, make room as he continues all the way over to the brick wall behind them.

JUAN

Business good?

One of the boys, TERRENCE (18, dreadlocks and rail thin), bows his chest to speak.

TERRENCE

Business good. Everybody cleaned out, it's in the cut if you want it.

Juan just nodding his head, looking at the ground stretching before them, kind of day where phosphorous fumes wave above the asphalt.

JUAN

Hold on to that, register don't empty til' the weekend, feel me?

Terrence nodding, the other boys' heads bowed slightly, a hierarchy here. As Terrence removes a chocolate Yoohoo from his back pocket...

...a zombie approaches.

Or rather, a customer, tall, lanky, haggard looking man approaching across the road.

TERRENCE

(to himself)

This muh---

The haggard man, continuing over, gets near enough to stand right over Juan. Juan looks up, simmering.

JUAN
Azu you okay, man?

AZU (30s, broken) staggers a bit, face unsure:

AZU
(Realizing)
Oh my bad Juan. No disrespect.

JUAN
What you need?

AZU
You know you my man, right Juan?

JUAN
Azu don't bring that noise. I got
sells, not samples.

Azu reluctantly extends some bills to Juan. Juan paying the money no mind, looks straight ahead as Terrence leans in, takes the money.

Beat.

TERRENCE
Nigga you know the drill.

Azu sighs, turns and begins down the block slowly, deliberately. Terrence watching him go, then...

...motions to one of the other boys, the boy watching Azu carefully then slipping away, around the corner of this complex, the third boy placing his back at the corner of the building.

As the other boy appears from around the corner again, hands stuffed in his pockets...

LITTLE BOY 1 (O.S.)
Get that nigga!

Juan looks away from Terrence, across the road and sees...

2

EXT. HOUSING PROJECTS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

2

Three young boys (adolescents, 12/13 years old) with sticks chasing LITTLE (similarly aged but smaller, a runt) who is running, terrified.

The three boys laughing as they give chase but... this is not a game, more like a hunt.

Little crosses the street in a panic, enters an unfenced lot, heads for the rear most corner as the boys close in, chase him through --

3 EXT. CONDEMNED BUILDING/CRACKHOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS 3

AN UNHINGED FENCE -- Little squeezing through, doesn't look back as the other boys attempt to shimmy and wiggle their way though, too big to glide through like Little.

LITTLE hauling ass, chest heaving as he rounds the corner on this condemned building. On instinct, the stairs taken two at a time, reaches the second story landing and pushes his way into...

3A INT. CONDEMNED BUILDING/CRACKHOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS 3A

Quickly: Little closes the heavy door behind him, engages the dead-bolt.

Beat.

A beat of listening, the SOUND of footsteps hurrying up the steps, rushing to the door and...

POUNDING. Madness and pounding, the boys cackling like Hyenas as they beat the living hell out of that door.

Little shrinking, backing away and covering his ears. The SOUND of things cracking under his feet as he moves: the ground is covered with glass and syringes, small plastic vials rolling around all over.

The pounding stops. Little staring at the door as he HEARS the boys descending the steps with that same juiced energy. Little's eyes never leaving that door -- waiting, anticipating, expe--

BANG! A window, the rear bedroom. Doesn't shatter, just a loud, percussive thump. Little creeps across the room -- the same CRUNCH of glass beneath his feet, creeps into...

THE REAR BEDROOM: more light in here than in the front, from that window. Little edges up to it, leaned away to not be seen. Slowly, stealthily, he raises his eyes above the threshold, SEES the three little bad asses who chased him. On cue --

THUMP! A ratty shoe clanging off the windowpane. Reflex -- Little startles, throws himself against the adjacent wall.

As he clinches his eyes closed, breath cloistered up in his chest--

UP CUT TO:

A GLASS PIPE

...held up to catch the light.

3B INT. CONDEMNED BUILDING/CRACKHOUSE - DAY - LATER 3B

Little stands in the kitchen of this place, holding the aforementioned glass pipe, staring at it closely.

He sets it down, starts opening cabinets and drawers, just a kid exploring, when...

BAM BAM BAM! -- thudding from the living room. Rather than the door, a pounding on the front windows, on the boarded up wood nailed shut where glass would be.

Little huddles in on himself, looks on terrified as...

...a light, a hand as the edge of the plywood gives, a full-size of it giving way to reveal a tall figure, calm. Adjusting for the light, we see him fully: it's Juan.

Juan reaching a leg over the threshold, stands just inside without encroaching on Little's space.

A beat as the two take each other in, then:

JUAN

What you doin' in here, lil' man?

Little says nothing, just watches him.

JUAN

You don't talk to strangers, huh?

Juan takes a step forward... and Little takes a step back.

JUAN

(raising his hands)

Alright.

It's cool.

We cool.

Juan runs a hand across his scalp, thinking -- *What the hell does he do?*

JUAN

Well listen: I'm'a go get something
to eat. You welcome to join me, I
mean....

Juan begins across this small space, gets a hand on the
deadbolt:

JUAN

Mind if I take the front door?

Juan opens the door, steps onto the porch, turns back. His
stance open, one hand on the door, the other open, extended
toward Little.

JUAN

Come on, now.
Can't be much worse out here.

Off Little...

CUT TO BLACK.

And over BLACK, the TITLE CARD:

LITTLE

I.

4	OMITTED	4
5	INT. ROYAL CASTLE - DAY	5

Juan and Little at a booth, plates of food sitting between
them.

JUAN

So...

Little just eating, not a single other care in the world but
this meal.

JUAN

You not gon' tell me what yo' name
is?

Nothing. Little finishing a drumstick, dips a biscuit into
the gravy there. He's hungry.

JUAN

What about where you live? Gotta
get you home, man. Can't just have
you runnin' round these dope holes.

Juan reaching across the table now, slowly pulls Little's tray over to his side. Little just looking down at the empty table before him.

JUAN
My bad, lil' man. I wouldn't do you
like that. I apologize, alright?

Juan sliding the food back to Little with his left hand, with his right reaches across to touch the boy's shoulder:

JUAN
I apologize, alright?

Little looking up now, holds Juan's gaze a moment. Nods his head in assent.

Off Juan...

CUT TO:

5A	OMITTED	5A
6	INT/EXT. JUAN'S CAR - DAY - MOVING	6

Juan at the wheel. And on the stereo, the same song bridged from the previous scene, something old school but slowed (like Al Green's *Let's Stay Together*) chopped and screwed.

Juan ad-libs with the music, crooning. Little gives him the weirdest.

JUAN
(teasing)
What? You don't know nothing 'bout
that chopped and screwed?

Little shrinking into his seat, shy. Juan just shakes his head, megawatt smile as they push on.

7	EXT. JUAN'S HOME - DAY	7
---	------------------------	---

A plot of land, a modest bungalow set way back from the road, the longest grass driveway.

Juan shutting the driver's side door of that Cadillac, beginning up the lawn toward the front door of this place, calls out:

JUAN
Teresa!

Juan continuing up the walk as a woman, (TERESA, 20s, motherly) appears at the front door, steps onto the porch as Juan gestures back to...

8 INT/EXT. JUAN'S CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS 8

Little still sitting in that passenger seat.

Looks out beyond that windshield, Teresa and Juan talking, gesturing animatedly back at the car.

Little shrinking down in the seat a bit, suddenly bashful as...

...Teresa begins towards us, towards him.

Little watching the whole way as she approaches, makes her way down to the driver's side of that Cadillac, a hand to the door there and...

...takes a seat.

A meeting of eyes between Little and Teresa, looking right into one another.

The longest beat, then...

9 INT. JUAN'S HOME - NIGHT 9

Juan, Teresa, Little gathered at a modest dining table, the two grown-ups watching the child going to work on what appears a delicious plate of home-cooking.

Something odd about this dining room: the walls are two colors, in the midst of being painted. A few paint tins and rollers line the floor, a work in progress.

JUAN

You don't talk much but you damn sure can eat.

Teresa smiling.

TERESA

That's alright, baby. You talk when you ready.

Little looking up from his plate at that, something about Teresa's voice, her presence, clicking with him.

LITTLE

My name Chiron.

(and)

But people call me Little.

TERESA

I'm gon' call you by your name.

Little shrugs.

TERESA

Where you live, Chiron?

LITTLE

Liberty City.

TERESA

You live with yo' mama?

A nod yes from Little.

TERESA

And what about yo' daddy?

Nothing. Not a blink, not a nod, barely a breath, just stillness.

TERESA

You want us to take you home, then?

(and)

After you finish eating, maybe?

Little lowering his eyes now, gaze going to the table in front of him:

LITTLE

No.

Teresa and Juan exchanging a look: a confirmation between them.

TERESA

Okay then.

Okay.

You... you can stay here tonight.

Would you like that?

Little nodding yes.

Off Juan taking in this kid...

10 OMITTED 10

11 INT. JUAN'S HOME, SPARE BEDROOM - DAY 11

LITTLE: fast asleep, extremely close to him here, chest rising and falling with the soothing rhythms of sleep.

REVERSE ANGLE: JUAN. Standing above the boy, watching him sleep.

12 INT/EXT. JUAN'S CAR - DAY - MOVING 12

The windows down, a steady but muted wind, Little with his head leaned out the window there.

Juan watches the boy as he drives, taking his eyes away from the road to look across the bench seat every now and then.

13 EXT. PAULA'S APT - DAY 13

Juan and Little standing on the porch of this closed apartment, Juan's hand on Little's shoulder.

They're waiting, Juan looking through the curtains there, no telling if anyone's inside or not. Is raising his hand to knock once more, when...

VOICE (O.S.)

What happened!?

Juan turning, sees a thin, exhausted (but attractive) woman hurrying over.

This is PAULA (mid 20s, Little's mother). From the looks of her uniform and a badge that reads "Paula Harris," a nurse, just off the night shift. She goes right to Little, pulls him into her arms, shields him from Juan:

PAULA

What happened Chiron? Why you didn't come home like you supposed to?!

Nothing from Little, eyes cast down, afraid, ashamed. Paula looking up to Juan, finally gets a good look at him:

PAULA

And who is you?

Juan considering this, is oddly unsure how to respond, so...

JUAN

Nobody.

(and)

Found him yesterday. Found him in that hole over on 15th.

And at Paula's face dropping with recognition:

JUAN

Yeah.
That one.

Paula lowering to her knees, eye-level with Little again, inspecting him:

JUAN

Wouldn't tell me where he stayed until this morning. Some boys chased him into the cut. Seemed scared more than anything.

Little embraces Paula, buries his face in her chest. Paula holding on but looking past him, she and Juan holding eyes.

Paula rises, Little slipping behind her.

PAULA

Thanks for seeing to him. He usually can take care of hisself, he good that way, but...

Paula looking past her son, past this man, thoughts drifting off. From the looks of her, just a hardworking single mother in over her head.

Juan's gaze lingering over her, clearly seeing the same and yet... just a bit more.

14

INT. PAULA'S APT - DAY - LATER

14

Paula standing as Little sits on the couch -- Paula standing above Little, hands on hips.

Doesn't speak, just looks at the boy, a bewildered look. Still in that uniform, strain at the corner of her eyes.

PAULA

You a real damn prize, Chiron, you know that?

Little just looking at his feet, staring at the floor.

PAULA

You got'sta come home when you meant to come *home*, you hear?

Nothing from the boy. Paula gets down to a knee, takes both his shoulders in her hands:

PAULA

You hear?

A slow nod from Little, does indeed.

A beat and, like a wave, something relaxing in Paula, makes her soft, loving again.

PAULA
That's alright baby, that's
alright.

Paula rests a hand on Little's head, pulls him in tight.

PAULA
Mama just want to make sure you're
okay, that's all baby.

Paula still holding on to Little, to say it's for dear life would not be at all an exaggeration.

She releases him and, on cue, Little plops himself down in front of the television, reaches for the analog dial, but --

PAULA
Nuh uh, your TV privileges is
revoked, Buddy Roe.

Off Little...

15

EXT. GWEN CHERRY PARK - DAY - MOVING

15

At first, just dirt and rocks, patches of grass coming into view intermittently as we move over this landscape.

A beat, then...

...the sound of heavy footfalls, twelve to fifteen boys (aged nine to fourteen and of various shapes and sizes, all black), thundering past.

WE GO INTO THIS MASS OF ENERGY

...a wild series of images, our view whipping to and fro as the boys converge and attack, everyone of them focused on a single boy zigging and zagging amongst them.

That boy finally on the ground, a mass of bodies as all the other boys pile on top, a true gang-tackle.

The boys unpiling now, one by one rising from the scrum, unveil the grass-stained body of a fifteen-year-old boy smiling ear to ear.

The tackled kid rises, gets up holding what appears to be a wadded up bunch of newspaper at his chest. All eyes on it as he balances it in his hands before tossing it...

IN THE AIR

...floating, hanging up there forever until it lands...

AT LITTLE'S FEET

Little looking down at this thing in disbelief.

All eyes on Little here, *voraciously* on Little, menace, harm, hunger all written there.

Little backing away slowly, one foot behind the other, but...

...someone kicking the ball, moving it along after him, stalking him.

They all circle Little, no room to back away farther, no escape.

A beat of eyes -- expectant, punitive eyes -- then...

A breath, a flash, a miracle: some *thing* reaching into the scrum, down low at Little's feet, snatches the wad away.

Pandemonium, all minds and bodies following that hand, that paper, the scrum muscling past Little, leaves him bumped but spared as the action moves away, elsewhere along this ruddy excuse for a field.

Little bringing a hand to his eyes, looking after all the movement down there: in the center of all those boys, another kid nearly his size but, in the determination on his face and bravura of his run, a bit... *tougher*.

Off Little watching the boy rip and run and evade kids twice his size...

16

EXT. GWEN CHERRY PARK - DAY

16

Little walking alone along this side street.

Kicking rocks, grabbing the branches of small trees, listless when he hears...

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey Little!

From a ways off that came, Little looking back, into the sun. Can't quite make him out at first but squinting to see him better, a bit of familiarity: it's the kid who just saved his ass.

Little waiting as the kid hurries to catch up. He's a bit fucked up, shirt torn, a scratch along the bridge of his nose.

KID
Wassup man.

LITTLE
Hey Kevin.

KEVIN (a facsimile of Little but stronger, more broken in).

KEVIN
Why'd you leave?

LITTLE
I'on't know.

Kevin falls into step, the boys walking together now.

KEVIN
Yeah, it get borin' after a while,
I guess.

The boys continue on, Little looking to his new friend every now and then, checking him.

KEVIN
(at Little's looks)
What?

Kevin reaches for his own face now, hand to his chin:

KEVIN
Is it bleedin'?

Kevin turns his head just so, invites Little to inspect. Little reaches over, touches Kevin gently at the neck, just below his ear.

Little brings his hand back to himself without a word, just this walking, arms swinging, the sound of their feet along the pavement.

Small glances from one to the other. Kevin smiles:

LITTLE
What?

KEVIN
You funny, man.

LITTLE
Why you say that?

KEVIN
You just is, that's all.

Again this walking, lack of words, just their arms swinging, movement.

Up ahead, the school they've been walking beside all this time gives way to a field. They're headed right for it.

Kevin taps Little, gestures.

17

EXT. GWEN CHERRY PARK - DAY

17

Kevin and Little standing before one another in this clearing, face to face, like ancient samurai before a contest.

KEVIN
See, you just gotta show them
niggas you ain't soft.

LITTLE
I *ain't* soft.

Always and forever a hothead this one.

KEVIN
I know man, *I* know. But...
(pauses for effect)
...don't mean nothin' if *they* don't
know.

No response from Little, maybe he gets it, maybe he doesn't.
No matter....

KEVIN
Come on....

Kevin grabs him, places one arm across Little's shoulder, the other around his waist, rests his head in Little's chest.

KEVIN
...let's wrestle.

Little limply obliging, visually, physically passive.

KEVIN
Come on man, you want these niggas
to pick on you every day?

That gets to Little, the boy locking on, muscles tensing:
they're wrestling.

This is anthropology, anatomical vignettes, the struggle of these two boys isolated to the simple, incomplete movements of partially glimpsed bodies.

These are children. Sexuality is absent these images and yet, the hints of something sensual, fleeting in its appearances; Kevin's cheek wedged close to Little's neck, blades of grass sticking to their skin.

The boys on the ground, turning and rolling and laughing, huffing through exhausted breaths. Slowly, their voices going mute, the only sound the movement of their bodies against each other, against the grass.

Physical exhaustion. The boys lie flat.

Beat.

Both Little and Kevin on their backs, looking skyward, chests heaving from the exertion. Kevin pops tall to his feet, fixing his mottled shirt.

KEVIN

See Chiron, I knew you wasn't soft.

Kevin looking back at Little, looking down at him lying there, Little fully returning his gaze, these fourteen pages the first time he's looked at anyone thus.

18

EXT. JUAN'S HOME - DAY

18

A picnic style table on Juan's front porch, two deck chairs haphazardly beside it.

Little is sitting atop the picnic table, small bookbag tossed to the side, shirt distressed and grass-stained from wrestling. A pencil in hand, he's doing homework.

A beat with Little, diligently at his work, time tables or some such thing, then...

...the SOUND of tires easing to a stop, Little's eyes rising, gazing out after the noise.

Sets his pencil down as the noise ceases -- break pads squeaking, the sound of a car door opening.

Little lowering his eyes as footsteps approach. After a beat of those steps nearing...

REVERSE ANGLE: Juan standing here, keys turning over in his hand, head cocked to the side, a puzzled look.

Little slowly, but... *assuredly* raising his eyes to meet Juan's.

Beat.

Juan looking from Little to the road and back. The look on his face: *How'd he???*

19

EXT. MIAMI BEACH, SHORE - DAY

19

Juan and Little standing ashore, both of them pulling off their shoes, their shirts. This being Miami, both already dressed in shorts, this heat.

Juan moving away, heading toward the surf. Little following, hurrying to catch up, literally taking hold of Juan's shirt as they move...

INTO THE OCEAN

...away from shore, slow, awkward steps, feet in sand.

And Little so small, the water rising quickly.

Juan still moving away from shore, notices Little no longer beside him. Looks back, the boy a few meters behind.

Little looking to Juan and back to the shore behind him, gauging the distance between the two. The look on Juan's face: *Well?*

Little diving into the water before him, face down, arms flailing, fighting the water as much as he's moving *through* it.

Juan steadying himself, buttresses himself against the current as he reels Little in. The boy clings to him, gasping for air, spitting out salt water.

JUAN

Hey hey hey, I got you lil' man, I
got you, *calmate, calmate.*

It's movie magic but they're a good ways out now, thirty, forty yards from shore.

The water's not so deep out here, Juan standing. Little is far out beyond his height however, Juan supporting him, holding him out at arms length.

JUAN

You alright?

A nod from Little as he wipes saltwater from his eyes.

JUAN

Good, good. Now... you gotta help
yourself now, gotta move your legs,
keep yourself up.

Juan watching as Little flails his legs beneath the surface.
Juan laughs.

JUAN

Nah, not like a chicken, you gotta
move 'em side to side like, like
you making waves with your feet.

Juan going into a tread, very smooth, like someone raised in
the water, born at its edge.

Little taking it to heart, does a passable job of treading.

JUAN

Not bad, not bad.
(and)
Bet you ain't know you could float,
huh?

Juan taking a hand and placing it under Little's legs, gently
gesturing him onto his back:

JUAN

Trust me, I got you.

Little laid flat atop the surface now, bobbing with the
waves.

JUAN

Now just relax, alright, *relax*.

Little complying -- Little *floating*, the look on his face
pure joy. For once, a kid.

JUAN

See?

Juan slowly, gently, easing his grasp, letting Little go:

JUAN

Relax now, stay relaxed. See?

Juan circling as Little continues to bob with the surface,
swimming around Little for this last part, is circling him.

JUAN

You ready to learn how to swim?

LITTLE

Yeah.

Juan standing again, gets his arms under Little and turns the boy face down in a swimming position.

JUAN

Alright, you saw me swimming,
right?

Nod from Little.

JUAN

Okay, do like I did, don't put your
head under water. And your arms,
try and do 'em like I did mine.

Little mimicking Juan's swimming as Juan holds him aloft,
Juan holding him fully in place for this practice.

JUAN

Smoother, more easy'like.

Little settling noticeably, gradually. It's a stretch but...
looks passable, like maybe he *could*.

Juan turning him back upright, Little going back to his
awkward treading.

JUAN

Alright lil' man.
I think you ready.

Little considering that, bobbing in the ocean as he treads.
His eyes on the water stretching out before him, endless.
Even in this dying light, stretching on forever.

Meets Juan's gaze now. Finds compassion, hope there.

Off Juan...

20

EXT. MIAMI BEACH, SHORE - DAY

20

Little and Juan sitting ashore, a towel wrapped around the
boy as they watch the moon come up.

The moon making its first appearance on the horizon -- SOUND
of the waves running back and forth, to and from shore.

LITTLE

Juan, can I ask you somethin'?

JUAN

Yeah lil' man, ask me whatever.

Little nodding, taking his time, oddly nervous about this:

LITTLE

Okay... why your name Juan?

JUAN

How you mean?

LITTLE

Juan is like a Spanish name.

(and after a thought)

But you black just like me.

Juan turning his head to the boy. A smile and then a full blown laugh, Juan losing it.

JUAN

(through his laugh)

Little, you a funny lil' dude, you know that?!

Juan slapping his knee here, really enjoying this moment.

JUAN

(coming down)

Let me tell you somethin': it's black people *everywhere*, you remember that, okay? Ain't no place in the world ain't what got no black people, we was the first ones on this planet.

Little embarrassed, poking at the sand before him. Juan places a hand to his shoulder:

JUAN

I'm from Cuba. Lotta black folks in Cuba but you wouldn't know it from being here. Was a wild lil' shorty just like you, used to run around with no shoes on when the moon was out.

Juan's thoughts drifting, taking him away from here for a beat. To those waves possibly, arriving on this shore from that other shore he's describing not so far away.

JUAN

This one time... I ran by this old, old lady, was just a runnin' and a hollerin' and cuttin' a fool, boy. And this old lady, she stop me and she say to me, '*Look at you.*'

JUAN (CONT'D)

I was a lil' bad ass too, you know. She say, 'Look at you' and I say 'Look at you!' Then she smiled and she say, 'running around catching up all this light. In moonlight' she say, 'black boys look blue. You blue,' she say. 'That's what I'm gone call you: Blue.'

Off Little.

21

EXT. PAULA'S APT - NIGHT

21

Little and Juan approach the apartment complex.

JUAN

So how you like swimmin'?

Nothing from Little. Heard him but the words too heavy to present themselves.

JUAN

That good, huh?

Juan grabs Little's head and playfully shakes it. The boy smiles, bashful, happy.

They reach Paula's apartment, Little knocking and calling out:

LITTLE

Mama!

A beat, then... Paula's at the door, a bit drowsy, disheveled in a way different than the work weary version glimpsed before.

A moment of Juan taking in Paula. None of them utter a word for a moment, just the distinct sound of a can opening from inside the apartment, all of them noting it.

LITTLE

Hey Mama.

JUAN

I--

Paula takes Little by the shoulder, pulls him inside.

22 INT. PAULA'S APT - NIGHT 22

Little standing away from Paula, face open and curious as we see what he sees: an average, working class black man -- longshoreman type -- sitting at the small dining table just off the kitchen.

Paula standing as this man sits watching Little, neither of them seeming very familiar with the other; neither seeming very *interested* in the other.

A lot of busy work from Paula there, taking things into her arms: glass things, aluminum things, curious things we cannot *quite* see.

PAULA
(at man)
Come on.

Paula heading off toward the rear bedroom, the man quietly rising after her, the can of Old English we heard opening clutched in his hand as he follows her across the apartment.

Little watching the procession -- confused, suspicious -- eyes lingering on the bedroom door as it closes behind them.

23 OMITTED 23

24 INT/EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY 24

Little entering the front gates of this school.

No other kids around, he's either late or early as a SCHOOL GUARD waves him through.

24A INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, DANCE ROOM - DAY 24A

An open room: high ceilings, grey dance mat spanning the bulk of the room, mirrors running the length of two walls, a ballet studio.

Fifteen to twenty boys and girls moving about -- no coordination, just movement and silliness.

We find Little among them, throwing his head back, moving his hips to lord knows what rhythm. And holy hell: for the first time all film, it looks like he might be having fun as we...

CUT TO:

24B INT/EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY - MOVING 24B

Moving with Little as he makes his way along an exterior pathway within this school.

His backpack pulled tight on his shoulders, no one else around as he crosses this space. Ahead of him, a wooden plank appears, leading to adjoining portable classrooms.

Little heads up the path, steps into...

25 INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PORTABLE CLASSROOM - DAY 25

Little taking two steps in, stops immediately.

REVERSE ANGLE: A circle of boys

...seven in a semi-circle, their backs to us, older looking for an elementary, all of them looking down and *in* on one another.

All eyes go to Little, a hurried, hushed business. One of the boys breaks away from the circle, hustles over. As he nears, his identity becomes clear: this is Kevin from our earlier "wrestle."

KEVIN
Somebody with you?

A nod "no" from Little, Kevin moving past him, over to the portable door and "locks" it. Grabs Little's shoulder strap, pulls him over to the circle.

KEVIN
I swear it was locked.

...wedges Little...

INSIDE THE CIRCLE

...the other boys barely paying attention as we take them all in, drifting from face to face inside this circle.

All their eyes and hands are cast down: they're comparing their dicks.

We drift within this circle:

PORTABLE BOY 1
Yo' shit ugly as hell.

PORTABLE BOY 2
So, at least mine ain't a peanut.

PORTABLE BOY 3
 He got a Freddy Kruger dick, yo'
 shit look like Freddy.

PORTABLE BOY 1
 Yo' shit ain't even that big, it's
 like the same size as mine, look.

Boy 1 leaning into the circle, his head nearly butting Boy 2's, facing him, they may as well be touching dicks.

PORTABLE BOY 1
 See!

Boy 1 distracted now, looking over at Little.

PORTABLE BOY 1
 Who let his ass in?

KEVIN (O.S.)
 He just came in.

Kevin is over at the door again, playing lookout.

PORTABLE BOY 1
 What they call you? *Little*, right?

PORTABLE BOY 1
 Show your shit.

PORTABLE BOY 3
 Why you think they call him *Little*?

Laughs from all the tough guys gathered, Boy 1 grabbing *Little* roughly by the neck, watching as *Little* reaches down to himself, nervously unzips his pants.

Beat.

All the eyes here cast down again, staring down at *Little*, down at his dick.

A curious, prolonged silence, then...

KEVIN

...looking back over his shoulder, back at the circle.

From his vantage, the backs of all those heads cast down and focused on *Little*.

Off Kevin's gaze, CUT TO...

26 INT. PAULA'S APT - DAY (DUSK) 26

Little entering, stopping himself just a few feet inside as the door closes behind him.

A beat of Little listening to the house, tiny ears perked just so. Glances at the far wall -- a modest television used to be there. Blinks in confusion.

Off the sound of silence...

CUT TO:

FLAME

...a chemical flame of blue and red.

27 INT. PAULA'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT 27

The front burner on this gas range, Little's scrawny, lanky arms setting a five-gallon pot of water to the stove.

The quickest beat of Little before the stove, then...

28 INT. PAULA'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - NIGHT 28

Looking down into a quarter full bathtub, fresh water pouring into it from the spigot.

The run of water stopping, the rippling surface slowing as footsteps tread away. A quick beat, then... the return of foot-steps, the sound of them growing nearer as....

REVERSE ANGLE:

Little here carrying that five-gallon pot, from the steam coming off it, searing hot with boiling water.

Gets it right up to the edge of the tub, expertly, *carefully* pours it in, face leaned back to avoid the steam furiously rising from the surface.

Finishes this pouring and sets the pot down behind him, on its side so the handle props most of its metal surface from the carpet. Reaches down to the floor, retrieves a bottle of dollar store dish washing liquid.

As he squeezes a ton of this stuff into the water...

CUT TO:

LITTLE

...in that tub now, soaking in bubbles.

A beat of the boy at peace.

An *extended beat* of this boy at peace, right here with him for a change, no distractions, no deflections.

So young and yet... so much happening behind those eyes. So much *weight*.

29 INT/EXT. JUAN'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING 29

Neck craned out the window, cruising the neighborhood.

VOICE (O.S.)
Heyyyyy, Juan!

Juan barely nodding at whomever that came from, continuing on his way as we CUT TO:

TERRENCE

...counting out dollars.

30 EXT. ABANDONED COMPLEX - NIGHT 30

Terrence completing a transaction, stuffing money into his pockets and nodding in the direction of one of his runners.

Standing opposite him, a face we've seen briefly but will recognize: Paula's longshoreman.

As the longshoreman moves off, approaches the runner appearing from behind the complex, Juan approaches, that smooth easy gait of his.

It's a brief moment, but... Juan and the longshoreman meet eyes as they pass one another, nothing of import, but... a moment.

JUAN

...approaching Terrence with a nod, all that needs to be spoken as Terrence nods back, whistles at one of the other boys, sends him running off into the cut.

TERRENCE
Been a good one today.

Just a nod from Juan, his attention elsewhere now, following after the longshoreman. Down the block a ways, not close but within shouting distance, we SEE the longshoreman getting into the driver's side of a Chrysler sedan.

Beat.

JUAN
They basin'?

Nothing from Terrence, just watching the same as Juan.

JUAN
You lettin' niggas light up at the
spot, now?
(moving now)
You know the rules, no lightin' up
at the spot.

Juan getting to the sidewalk now, moving toward the
longshoreman's car a block or so up ahead.

Gets there, finds the windows rolled up, a flash of flame
emanating from inside. Knocks on the window.

Longshoreman rolls it down with a drugged out smile,
shrugging his shoulders in apology. Juan not amused by the
display and, catching a glimpse of the woman in the passenger
seat, clicks into something much more menacing: it's Paula.

JUAN
What the fuck?

Juan rounding the car, wastes no time getting to the
passenger side door, pulls it ajar:

JUAN
Get out.

PAULA
Who you--

JUAN
Get the fuck out.

Juan *helping* her out, takes her by the arm and pulls her to
her feet, out here in the road with Juan under street light.

Terrence and the others hurrying over at the commotion, Juan
looking to the longshoreman (he's lighting a cigarette,
couldn't care less), waves the boys off.

Beat. A very long beat, Juan and Paula both in shock,
standing in the road with no clue what comes next. The
longshoreman steps from the car, cigarette to his lips, sits
on the hood and leans his back to the windshield, puffs into
the night.

Paula clinching in on herself, closes her eyes, almost
childlike to make it go away.

And then, suddenly... coming alive, moving toward Juan, every step something clicking, something changing.

Gets right up in his face.

PAULA
Who the hell you think you is?

Juan shook, never expected her to jump in:

PAULA (CONT'D)
Who the *fuck* you think you--

JUAN
Bitch.

Juan grabbing Paula, pushing her back against the car, his hand at her throat driving her back as he subdues her.

Drives her against the hood, releases her forcefully. Paula's eyes alight with rage, chest rising as she watches Juan staring at her from across the road.

PAULA
So... you gon' raise my son now?

Nothing from Juan, all stillness in his holding this gaze:

PAULA
Huh?

Juan lowering his eyes, legitimately weighs the question.

PAULA
You gon' raise my son?

Paula sucking her teeth:

PAULA
Yeah... that's what I thought.

JUAN
(snapping)
You gon' raise him?

PAULA
You gon' keep sellin' me rocks?

Paula turns from Juan, reaches into the Chrysler, pulls her pipe, a lighter from there. Holds his gaze while taking a charred, black pull.

Exhales.

PAULA

Motherfucker.

(and now)

And don't give me that "You gotta
get it from somewhere shit" nigga,
I'm gettin' it from *you*.

(beat)

But you gon' raise my son, right?

Paula exhaling into the night air again, lets her head loll a bit to funnel the smoke.

Places the pipe back into the car now, approaches Juan, slow and confident:

PAULA

You ever see the way he walk, Juan?

JUAN

Watch your damn mouth.

Paula real close now, extremely close, her nose at his chin, looking up into his eyes:

PAULA

You gon' tell him why the other
boys kick his ass all the time?
Huh?

No backing down in Paula's eyes, the line drawn, so sure in this declaration.

And Juan? All doubt, prospect of follow-through finally before him, having to be reconciled.

Paula backing away from him, eyes never leaving his:

PAULA

(over her shoulder)

Come on, let's go.

The longshoreman flicking his cigarette to the ground, the two of them slipping back into the Chrysler, ignition catching.

Off Juan, CUT TO...

31 INT. PAULA'S APT - NIGHT

31

Paula and Little facing one another, Little standing at his mother's feet.

We've caught them in the middle of something, just *after* something.

No words spoken, but Little's face: he's lost.

32

INT. JUAN'S HOME, DINING ROOM - DAWN

32

Perhaps a bit later than "dawn" but it's early. Juan moving about in a long-johns top and sweats, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

The moment would seem pure and sweet were it not for the revolver, the tightly rolled wad of bills strewn across the table.

Teresa is at the table with a notepad and pen. Teresa is *counting*.

Juan moves to the table but doesn't sit. Teresa takes up a cup of coffee, gives him a look, goes back to her ledger.

A beat of them in silence this way, Teresa counting, Juan thinking, then...

Juan crosses to the near wall, looks down to a roller there, a semi-dried pan of paint. He takes up the roller, adds a streak of white paint.

Looks off a moment, thoughts gathered. Adds another streak of white, then...

...a POUNDING at the door, a startle to them both and, as the POUNDING resumes, alarming.

Juan sliding the wad of money toward Teresa, takes up his pistol and heads for...

THE FRONT DOOR

...Juan just to the side of the door, pistol dangled in his hand.

JUAN

Who 'dat?

A beat, then...

LITTLE (O.S.)

It's me.

Juan looking down in confusion, doesn't immediately open the door, but... of course opens the door, pistol tucked behind his back to conceal.

Gets a good look at Little.

JUAN
 (freaked out)
 Lil' Man.

Nothing from Little, holds his ground there on the porch,
 but... something in his eyes.

Something smoldering.

33

INT. JUAN'S HOME, DINING ROOM - DAY - LATER

33

Juan and Little sitting at the table. Again silence from the
 kid, everything cloistered up inside him.

JUAN
 Alright, first things first, can't
 sit at the table like that.

Juan rising, takes Little's chair and slides it around the
 table a bit, stops the boy with a playful jolt:

JUAN
 Don't ever sit with your back to
 the door, can't see who creepin' up
 on you.

Little still not amused, a completely straight face:

JUAN
 I saw your mama last night.

That gets Little's attention.

LITTLE
 (sotto)
 I hate her.

JUAN
 I bet you do.
 (and)
 Hated mine too.

Little looking to Juan now, finally a break:

JUAN
 Miss her like hell now. All I'm
 gon' say about that.

Teresa stepping in, sets down some kind of juice before them,
 a glass for Juan, a glass for Little. Juan about to take a
 sip of his when...

LITTLE
 What's a faggot?

Juan... blindsided by that one, unprepared and unequipped to answer that.

Takes a sip of his juice, a deep breath and...

JUAN

A faggot is... a word used to make gay people feel bad.

Little nodding, processing that.

LITTLE

Am I a faggot?

JUAN

No.

You're not a faggot.

(and)

You can be *gay*, but... you don't have to let nobody call you a faggot.

(and after a beat)

Not unless...

Juan looking to Teresa; Teresa motioning him to quit while he's ahead.

He takes another sip of that juice.

LITTLE

How do I know?

Again a look to Teresa, a shrug of the shoulders from her:

JUAN

You... you just do.

(and)

I think.

Little with both hands around his juice, all his senses focused there as his mind goes somewhere altogether different, clearly thinking deeply, forthrightly about this.

Juan reaching his cup back to Teresa:

JUAN

(sotto)

Gin.

(and to Little)

You don't have to know right now, you feel me?

(and)

Not yet.

Little nodding, from his demeanor comforted by this. In this state, so wounded and curious, invites the empathy.

Little's eyes shifting gears. For a considerable beat, is completely to himself, mulling something over.

Lifts his eyes. From the mouths of babes:

LITTLE
Do you sell drugs?

Juan's face? *Crushed.*

He nods yes.

LITTLE
And my momma, she do drugs, right?

Again, something falling in Juan, hangs his head even lower. A nod yes.

Teresa comes over, places a hand on Juan's back.

Little takes a sip of his juice, rises without a word. Exits the dining room.

The sound of his feet on tile flooring, front door opening, closing. Juan not moving, for once undone.

Beat.

Off Juan...

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK, the sound of breathing, not labored or rushed but... proximal, right beside us, then...

FADE IN:

...on a teenaged black boy staring across a classroom, gaze fixed with longing.

REVERSE ANGLE: Another boy's mouth, lips full, parted slightly in the act of "breathing" heard at scene's opening.

As the sound of that breathing escalates...

34

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

34

CHIRON (16) continues his staring. From just the look of him, this is clearly the Little character from moments before aged to his teens.

MR. PIERCE (the biology teacher, late 20's, black) clears his throat.

MR. PIERCE

Uh, Chiron, you need something?

TERRELL, a 16 year old bully, interrupts.

TERRELL

That nigga forgot to change his tampon.

Laughter from the class, pack mentality.

TERRELL

He having women problems today.
Ain't that right, *Little*?

More laughter.

MR. PIERCE

Alright, Terrell, that's enough.

TERRELL

Nah, can't be enough for Little ...
How much you *need*, Little?

CHIRON

Don't call me...

MR. PIERCE

Alright Terrell that's *it*.

Terrell springs out of his desk into Chiron's face.

TERRELL
 What the fuck you gone do, nigga?
 I'll fuck you up.

MR. PIERCE
 Terrell, out! Right now.

Terrell blows a kiss to Chiron walking out.

TERRELL
 School almost out Little....

Chiron looking after Terrell, staring at that closed door long after's it's shut.

35 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 35

The bell's just rung, students funneling through a cavernous hallway, approaching a set of double doors spilling onto the school driveway.

In the middle of it all find Chiron, engulfed in this sea of chaos and, honestly, relieved to be so.

As Chiron scans the mass of students approaching those doors beside him...

...a considerable bump at his shoulder, Chiron looking up to find Terrell knocking past him. Terrell, Pizzo and a crew of roughnecks laugh and ad-lib shit-talk as they continue past, move through the crowd.

TERRELL
 Umma be waitin' for yo' ass *Little*.

Terrell smiling as he hurries on, as if inviting him to a play date.

Off Chiron's shook face...

UP CUT TO:

36 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY - LATER 36

Upstairs now, the second story of this building.

An open air stairwell cornered on two sides by corrugated fencing, Chiron gets on his toes, looks down into the courtyard below --

Terrell is down there, rough-housing and talking shit with a group of knuckleheads.

Chiron speaking to himself...

CHIRON
(sotto voce)
Come on Chiron.

...when he's hears voices echoing behind.

Chiron looks, sees an admin looking type moving away down the hall as a smooth as hell looking teen approaches. As the teen gets closer, his identity becomes clearer: it's KEVIN.

KEVIN
Chiron, what you doing man?

CHIRON
Huh?

KEVIN
You just standing there straight spaced. School been out, nigga, you ain't goin' home?

CHIRON
What you still doing here?

KEVIN
(sucking his teeth)
Detention. Aimes caught me with this trick in the stairway.

CHIRON
What?

KEVIN
Yup.

CHIRON
With who?

KEVIN
Damn you nosy, Chiron.

CHIRON
Oh sorry, my bad.

KEVIN
(Smiling)
All I wanted was some quick head you know, but this chick all like 'Hit that shit Kevin. Hit it with that big dick- Why she had to compliment a nigga? So I was like aight... we can do this. I started banging her back out...

KEVIN (CONT'D)

she started making all this fucking noise though. Mr. Aimes walked in and went all Five-0, almost had my ass suspended, but I told him we was childhood sweethearts and all that, talked it all out. So I just got detention.

(and)

Eh, but that shit stay between us, yeah? I know you can keep a secret.

A slow nod from Chiron.

KEVIN

But real talk, I gotta go before this fool change his mind.

CHIRON

Alright Kevin.

KEVIN

Later, Black.

Off Chiron...

CUT TO BLACK.

And over BLACK, the TITLE CARD:

CHIRON

II.

37

EXT. LIBERTY SQUARE HOUSING PROJECTS - DAY

37

Chiron approaching an apartment complex (different than Little's home in the previous story) in the twelfth stage of neglect, all chipped paint and autos up on cinderblocks out front.

Books and backpack in tow, he climbs a flight of stairs to the second story and approaches an apartment down on the far end. As he unlocks the door...

...a rush of energy greets him from within.

VOICE (O.S.)

(moving)

Uh uh. No you can not be here tonight. I got company coming.

38 INT. PAULA'S LIBERTY SQUARE APT - DAY - CONTINUOUS 38

PAULA (30s now, worse for the wear), looking as strung out as ever as she rushes past him...

CHIRON

Hey Ma....

PAULA

(calling back)

Find somewhere for you to be.

Paula slips into the rear bedroom, closes the door behind her with a considerable thud.

Chiron stares at that door indifferently: this is nothing new for him.

39 OMITTED 39

40 EXT. JUAN'S HOME - DAY 40

Chiron walking up the block, approaching Juan's home.

As he nears it, we HEAR:

TERESA

Well I'll be -- *Chiron?!*

TERESA appears from the yard, out there in the yard, a bushel of dead palm fronds in hand. She's aged some, but certainly aged better than the rest.

Pulls Chiron into a hug, beaming the most amazing smile.

41 INT. JUAN'S HOME - NIGHT 41

Chiron and Teresa at the table in Teresa's dining room, fresh plates of food before both.

Teresa watching as Chiron picks at his plate, paying it just enough attention to qualify as eating. Still...

TERESA

What's wrong?

CHIRON

Nothing, I'm good.

TERESA

Nah. I seen good and you ain't it: what's wrong, Little?

CHIRON
Don't call me that.

TERESA
Don't call you what?
Your *name*?
You *grown* now?

CHIRON
I didn't say that.

TERESA
Then what you sayin'?

Chiron goes quiet. Doesn't take much.

TERESA
I'm just messin' with you boy.
(and)
And you right, that ain't no name
for you no more. That ain't you.
But if you wanna be somethin'
different, you gotta earn it, you
gotta make your name true,
understand?

Chiron bows his head, out of embarrassment, out of shame?

TERESA
Hey, don't put your head down in my
house, you know Teresa's rule: all
love, all pride in this house, you
feel me?

He mumbles, he nods.

TERESA
What's that?

CHIRON
Yeah.
(and)
I feel you.

Teresa rises. She's not a *tall* woman, so...

TERESA
Good.
(she smiles)
Now since you here, there's some
stuff way back on the top shelf in
the kitchen I've been meaning to
get to.

Off Chiron's smiling face....

42

INT. JUAN'S HOME, SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

42

A simple room, small twin bed and a single sitting chair. A window just beyond the bed, looking out onto the side-yard.

Chiron standing over the bed, pulling the corner on a fitted sheet. From the looks of this room, no one sleeps here. From the looks of Chiron, he's made and unmade this bed before.

CHIRON

Thank you for this.

Hadn't noticed Teresa there in the doorway, looking on as Chiron goes about this work.

TERESA

You know you can stay here anytime, right?

CHIRON

Yeah. I know. Thank you Teresa, I mean it.

Teresa moving from that doorway now, approaching Chiron and that bed.

TERESA

But if you gonna stay here you got to learn how to make a bed, boy.

Teresa laughing as she takes that corner of sheet from Chiron's grasp, tugs it lightly: the entire cover slips off with ease.

CHIRON

What?

TERESA

How you mean, *what*? That ain't how you make no bed.

Teresa moving instinctively, has already got the two bottom corners snagged expertly, is pulling the third corner just so as Chiron watches.

TERESA

(playful)

Think you slick, huh? Do it wrong so Teresa show up and do it right, huh?

(laughs)

TERESA (CONT'D)
 You and Juan, thick as thieves,
 lemme tell you.

Teresa looking to Chiron for that last part, what begins as a smile slowly fading, shifting to something more reflective, heavy.

TERESA
 You miss him?

Chiron holding her gaze, his silence answer enough.

TERESA
 Yeah.
 Me too.

Beat.

TERESA
 Me too.

Teresa turning from this room, moves down the hall, the door left ajar behind her.

Chiron staring after her -- puzzling -- just watching the empty space of the threshold there.

Off Chiron's gaze, CUT TO:

42A INT. JUAN'S HOME, BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER 42A

Chiron passed out, deep in sleep.

A beat of this slumber, then... the SOUND of water. Sound of water falling and echoing all over, then...

43 INT. JUAN'S HOME - NIGHT 43

Though less a cut than an exhale, a smooth transition as we drift through this home.

It's later; much later. And the SOUND of that water is insistent, hitting the roof like automatic fire. As we float past a retreating hallway, find...

CHIRON

...moving through this home in the same direction, his back to us -- *leading* us.

As he walks through this space, another sound encroaches upon the SOUND of rain, with every step becoming clearer: the SOUND of a girl moaning, softly whispering inaudible words that soothe and plea.

Chiron slows but continues, walks deeper into the home. He's approaching the kitchen. The SOUND intensifies as he finds...

KEVIN

...pressed hard against the back of a girl, SAMANTHA -- older than both boys, sexy like a music video model.

Samantha leaned over the kitchen counter, skirt hiked up, back arched just so and pressing Kevin close from behind.

Kevin slamming into her again and again, these two fucking in a borderline ridiculous fashion.

Chiron still approaching, just inches away, can see Samantha's eyes, unspeakable bliss.

Kevin notices him finally, looks to him panting that killer smile of his:

KEVIN
You good, Black?

Chiron returning a blank stare.

Above them, the rain pours like the Victorian Falls as--

MATCH CUT TO:

44 INT. JUAN'S HOME, SPARE BEDROOM - DAY 44

Chiron waking from sleep -- in the same position as he'd been sleeping previously -- face someplace between dreariness and confusion, searching for thoughts.

Looks out the window there. There's a small clock beside the bed; checks it.

45 EXT. LIBERTY SQUARE HOUSING PROJECTS - DAY - MOVING 45

Following Chiron down the street as he moves along in yesterday's clothes.

He walks quickly. As he reaches the corner.

VOICE (O.S.)
Chiron...
Chi.... *hey!*

Chiron turning, spots Paula hurrying over, breathing heavy:

PAULA
Hey baby where'd you go last night?

CHIRON

What?
Why?

PAULA

I'm yo' mama, ain't I?

Chiron just holding her eyes, not worth a reply.

PAULA

Why you ain't just come home later,
boy?

Paula smiles, the kind of smile that's been forgiven many times and many places over.

PAULA

You had me worried about you. But
you getting grown I guess I can't
be keeping up with you all the
time. Anyway how Teresa doing? I
ain't seen her since the funeral.

CHIRON

She fine.

PAULA

That's good baby. Listen, Mama
locked herself out the door, can
you... come let me in?

Chiron watching her, confused.

46

EXT. PAULA'S LIBERTY SQUARE APT - DAY

46

Paula and Chiron ascending the steps toward the second story,
Paula moving ahead of him.

She gets to the door first, but... moves just past it to let
Chiron do the honors. Smiles at him, something disguised in
the gesture.

Chiron digging for his keys as Paula watches intently, at
first in his pockets and now in his backpack, Paula's arms
folded in a show of impatience.

After a moment of nodding nervously, scratching at her
neck... Paula pushes past him, takes the door handle and lets
herself in.

CHIRON

I thought you said....

47

INT. PAULA'S LIBERTY SQUARE APT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

47

Paula walking the apartment determinedly, looking behind half-closed doors and even opening a closet or two.

Easing now, she settles in the middle of the space, hands rested at the top of her head. After a beat of thinking, of coming to...

...she turns to Chiron, still there watching from the threshold of the apartment.

Paula smiles. Chiron approaches her:

CHIRON
Mama what you into?

PAULA
I need some money.

CHIRON
For what?

PAULA
That's my business, don't you ask me no shit like that.

CHIRON
I don't have no--

PAULA
Don't lie to me. I'm your mama. That bitch over there ain't no kin to you, I'm your *blood*, remember?
(and)
Now I ain't feeling good. I need something to help me out, baby, just float me across this shake, you hear?

CHIRON
Where I'm supposed to get money from?

PAULA
Teresa ain't give you nothing, huh? Your lil' play-play mama ain't put something in your hand? Now give me that damn money, Chiron.

Chiron reaches into his pocket, grabs a few bills there, can't be more than forty dollars but it's literally his last.

PAULA

Uh huh, I know that bitch like a hooker know her trick. You *my* child, okay? And tell that bitch she better not forget it.

Chiron just stares at Paula, unfolding those bills there, cringing and lining them, force of habit.

PAULA

Go on to school. Ain't you late?

Chiron just staring, his mother in physical form but someone entirely different in mind and spirit.

Paula looks up from her counting, finds that scornful face so much like hers looking down on her.

48 INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

48

Mr. Pierce at the head of a bored looking class, explaining the differences between red and white blood cells.

Turns to the class:

MR. PIERCE

So can you see how a lack of white blood cells could be dangerous to the human body?

Crickets in here, no one taking that bait:

MR. PIERCE

Okay, can anybody explain what will happen to the body when there's not enough white blood cells?

(and)

Nobody's leaving this classroom until I get a response, this is more important for you than it is for me, trust me.

Pierce scanning the room here now, most honestly don't know the answer, others simply don't care.

Shockingly, a familiar hand goes up:

MR. PIERCE

Terrell?

TERRELL

Ummm yeah Mr. Pierce, I'm gonna answer this question, man...

TERRELL (CONT'D)
 but first I just gotta say, why the
hell this nigga Little wearing the
 same shit he had on yesterday?

Big laughs from the class, Terrell hamming it up:

TERRELL
 Ain't enough white blood cells in
 the world to check the funk comin'
 off his ass, this nigga foul Mr.
 Pierce.

MR. PIERCE
Terrell.

TERRELL
 I'm sorry man, I'm sorry, no
 disrespect Mr. Pierce, I'm just
 sayin'.

Chiron gripping both edges of his desk, eyes locked there.

TERRELL
 And check it: without the white
 blood cells, body can't defend
 itself. That's why all them gay
 niggas croakin' off that AIDS shit,
 ain't that right Little?

Off Chiron, still staring at that desk.

49 EXT. LIBERTY SQUARE HOUSING PROJECT - DAY - MOVING 49

Moving with Chiron as he makes his way down this street,
 alone against all this concrete, almost Western-like with his
 heavy backpack and sagging shoulders.

As Chiron continues, notice...

TERRELL

...following behind with a knucklehead friend (PIZZO, 16).
 The smiles on their faces are of pure delight: they're about
 to fuck with him.

Chiron speeds up.

TERRELL
 Hey Little, wait up man, where you
 going to so fast?

Nothing from Chiron, just a quickening of his steps:

TERRELL
Nigga you can't hear?

CHIRON
(over his shoulder)
Home.

TERRELL
(closing in)
Huh?

CHIRON
I told you, man, home.

PIZZO
You live over there nigga.

TERRELL
You going to that Spanish chick
house?

PIZZO
That's Juan lady, ain't it?

Chiron stops walking.

TERRELL
Oh yeah. That chick fine as fuck!
Juan been dead a minute, that bitch
give free head? Or she charge like
Paula? Paula getting cheap though.
A rock can get your rocks su--

Chiron grabbing Terrell at the chest, catches him by surprise, throws all his weight at him, drives him back and stumbling towards a fence.

Pizzo on him, kicks Chiron in the hip, jars Terrell free.

Chiron facing up on Terrell as he backs away, gets three, four feet between them, enough to keep both Terrell and Pizzo in front of him, fists raised.

Terrell shoots a long, heavy stream of spit at Chiron's feet, ridiculously masculine.

TERRELL
Faggot ass bitch, grabbin' my chest
and shit, you see that shit Pizzo?
Look like this nigga was comin' on
to me. I ain't with that gay shit
but if you fuck with me, I *will*
fuck you.

TERRELL (CONT'D)

Give yo' ass more than you can handle, have you beggin' for your crackhead ass mama.

PIZZO

Damn dog, you be like...
...gettin' head from the mama and the son at the same time.

TERRELL

At the same damn *time*, nigga.

The two of them laughing their heads off at this bit of brilliance. Chiron is still standing there:

CHIRON

Fuck you.

TERRELL

What you said? Say that shit again -
- I dare yo' ass, say that shit to my face, nigga.

CHIRON

Whatever, man.

TERRELL

Yeah alright -- you better stay yo' ass right there if you know what's good for you. I mean dog -- why yo' jeans so tight?

Terrell turns to Pizzo, clowning --

TERRELL

I mean real talk -- you see how tight this nigga jeans be? Nigga nuts must be chokin' in them tight ass jeans, boy I swear.

PIZZO

(laughing)

Nigga nuts be like, "Can a nigga get a oxygen tank? We drowning down here."

Terrell and Pizzo clowning, laughing their heads off.

TERRELL

Night, "*Little*."

PIZZO

Haha, yeah -- night night.

50 INT/EXT. METRO-RAIL - NIGHT - MOVING 50

Chiron asleep on Miami's much-neglected elevated train, head leaned against its faded cloth seats as it snakes its way above and through the hardened Liberty City.

From the looks of him, he's been here awhile. From the feel of him, resting wearily if peacefully, he may have slept through several loops of this train, back and forth from the blight of the hood to the glitz of Coral Gables and back again.

His head resting on the window, the lights of the train low. We hear the train wheels moving, the lights of the train flickering off and on... of and on, and... finally off.

50A EXT. COLLINS AVE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 50A

From very high up, as though viewed from the roof of a condo.

And *establishing* that a Metrobus is pulling away from here, having delivered Chiron to...

51 EXT. SOUTH BEACH, 27TH AND COLLINS - NIGHT 51

Chiron moving down a dimly lit side-street, Collins receding behind him, the beach growing louder ahead of him.

We follow him, moving along behind him as the sound around him shifts, from the noise and chatter of care-free exhibitionism out on Collins... to the whispered loop of the ocean ahead.

As he nears the promenade separating the beach from Collins Ave and it's endless resorts...

...he stops, takes a moment to look back. At what, we're not sure but, after a beat, he continues on, moves away from us and down into the darkness of the beach.

52 EXT. MIAMI BEACH, SHORE - NIGHT 52

Chiron sitting on the shore watching the moon and the stars over the ocean. The sky is clear and yet it's wild out, the wind whipping the reeds, ocean running waves upon the shore with verve.

Tonight, the sea seems immense, moon glowing blue, leaving the ocean a deep black that renders it boundless, entropic.

Chiron lost in it all, releasing his troubles in the presence of this nature when...

VOICE (O.S.)
You was waitin' for me?

Chiron turning, looks up into that voice, backlit by the bright beacon of a spotlight mounted on the promenade behind, unrecognizable at first, ethereal.

A shift in the light: *of course it's Kevin.*

CHIRON
Huh.

KEVIN
Nice to see you too.

Kevin smiles.

KEVIN
What the hell you doing out here?

CHIRON
What *you* doing out here?

KEVIN
You in my smoke out habitat, nigga.

A beat as something dawns on Kevin:

KEVIN
Oh shit, you come out here to smoke too, Chiron?

CHIRON
Something like that...

Kevin taking a seat on the sand beside him now, still smiling that incredible smile.

KEVIN
Man you know you don't smoke. Why you pretendin'? You puttin' on a show for me, Black?

CHIRON
Why you keep calling me that?

A puzzled look from Kevin at first, then pulls a blunt from his pocket.

KEVIN
Black? That's my nickname for you.
You don't like it?

A shrug from Chiron as a huge wave hits the shore, demanding their attention as it runs toward them, stops short a few feet.

Keeps their attention a moment: sound of the Ocean, sound of the wind running through the reeds, the night...

Kevin sparks flame to that blunt:

KEVIN
You like the water?

Chiron says nothing.

KEVIN
Well let me introduce you to some
fiyah.

Extends the blunt to Chiron:

KEVIN
Come on now. Ain't gon' bite ya'.

As Chiron takes the blunt, drags on it with Kevin watching...

CUT TO:

53

EXT. MIAMI BEACH, SHORE - NIGHT - LATER

53

Chiron and Kevin laughing their asses off, both high as hell, a joke or memory lost in the cut.

Whatever it was, extremely funny, so funny that as the two stop laughing those gleeful smiles remain, the two of them looking alternately from each other to the ocean and back, allowing themselves this bit of shared pleasure.

KEVIN
That breeze feel good as hell man.

CHIRON
Yeah it do.

KEVIN
Sometimes round the way, where we live, you can catch this same breeze. It come through the hood and it's like everything stop for a second 'cause everybody just wanna feel it. Everything just get quiet, you know?

CHIRON
And its like all you can hear is
your own heartbeat, right?

KEVIN
Yeah... feel so good, man.

CHIRON
So good....

A long beat as that thought lingers between them.

The ocean.

KEVIN
Hell, shit make you wanna cry, feel
so good.

Chiron looking to Kevin now:

CHIRON
You cry?

KEVIN
Nah. But it make me want to.

Kevin flashing that big, cool ass smile.

KEVIN
What you cry about? You cry,
Chiron?

Beat.

CHIRON
I cry so much sometimes I think one
day I'm gone just turn into drops.

KEVIN
But then you could just roll out
into the water, right? Roll out
into the water like all these other
muhfuckers out here tryna drown
they sorrows.

CHIRON
Why you say that?

KEVIN
I'm just listenin' to you, nigga.
(and)
Sound like somethin' you wanna do.

CHIRON
I wanna do a lotta things that
don't make sense.

KEVIN
I didn't say it don't make sense.

Beat.

KEVIN
But tell me: like what? Like what
lotta things?

CHIRON
Damn you nosy.

KEVIN
Uh oh. Look at Chiron cursing...
You tryna get smart with me?

CHIRON
Whatever man.

KEVIN
(laughing)
You trying to get smart?

Kevin reaching a hand to Chiron's neck, places his open palm there deliberately, with feeling.

KEVIN
You trying to get smart, Chiron?

Their eyes meeting here, Kevin slowly working his hand along Chiron's neck, small movement, with feeling.

KEVIN
Huh Chiron?

Slowly, nearly subconsciously, Chiron going weak, leans toward Kevin, their weight supporting one another here on the dune.

All sound drowned by the echoing ocean, the night covering these two as close as they've ever been.

Both sit up again, facing each other and still close, noses nearly touching.

They stare.

These are waters they've never charted, the culmination of invitations they've been sending since day one.

Kevin smiles, his open lips brushing Chiron's. Chiron startles and... leans in.

Heavy this kissing, much deeper than just the meeting of lips. A moment more of this heavy petting then...

...the sound of a buckle being undone, Kevin's hand disappearing down below, a gasp from Chiron and...

...pressure. Rhythm. Pressure and rhythm as Chiron's breath catches in his chest, head fully leaned to Kevin's shoulder, free hand grabbing at the sand as Kevin takes hold of him, a caressing and a pulling and a soothing as....

...Chiron comes, holding onto Kevin for dear life, choking on the sea breeze.

Kevin removing his hand, looks at the cum there before wiping it on the sand.

CHIRON

I'm...
I'm sorry.

Kevin looking at him with the kindest, most open face:

KEVIN

What you got to be sorry for?

Chiron considering that. Honestly so.

The sound of the ocean.

54

INT/EXT. BOX CHEVY - NIGHT - MOVING

54

Chiron sits on the passenger side of this hood chariot, staring at all that passing neon and pastel of South Beach.

His face is pure, open.

CHIRON

Whose car this is?

KEVIN

Who you in it with?

CHIRON

How you got a car?

KEVIN

With money, how else you get a car?
(and)
Boy I swear, for somebody who grew
up in the hood you green as hell.

Kevin looking from the road, over at Chiron.

KEVIN
That's why I like you though.

Chiron looking out the window, blushing like a kid.

KEVIN
You live in the Beans, right?

CHIRON
Yeah.

KEVIN
What's wrong?

CHIRON
Nothing.

Chiron puts his head down. Kevin brings his fist to Chiron's chin. He pushes slightly so that Chiron raises his head.

KEVIN
You sure?

Just a nod from Chiron.

KEVIN
You never did nothing like that,
huh?

A nod no from Chiron. Kevin smiles.

KEVIN
Yeah.
I figured.

Off Chiron, CUT TO...

55 EXT. PAULA'S LIBERTY SQUARE APT - NIGHT

55

Kevin's car pulled up to the curb here, Chiron already out, leaned to the passenger side window.

A stilted moment, unsure how to play this.

CHIRON
Thanks for the ride.

KEVIN
No problem, Black. See you around.

Kevin extends his fist across this space, Chiron reaching in with his free hand to meet it. Their fists connecting and... holding there, just this bit of contact.

Chiron smiles.

CHIRON

Yeah... see you around.

Chiron turning from that Chevy, heading toward the near stairwell. We follow him, Chiron continuing on without looking back, the sound of Kevin pulling away down the block.

Chiron moving up the exterior steps of this Motel 6 like complex, walking along the banister of the second story dragging his hand along the railing.

Reaches his door, gets his key in, holds the doorknob a moment, then, deep breath and...

...he opens it. Just a flash of an image: Paula crossing the living room left to right, hand pressed firmly, aggressively to her own skull, talking to herself.

Chiron unfazed, steps inside and closes the door behind him. Hold on this closed door, the sound of Paula yelling inaudibly behind it, then...

SMASH CUT TO:

AN ALARM CLOCK

...blaring its synthesized squeal.

56	OMITTED	56
57	OMITTED	57
58	OMITTED	58
58A	OMITTED	58A
59	INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY	59

Chiron staring up at the clock as people push past him hurrying for the lunchtime lineup.

Typical high school cafeteria landscape, cool kids wedged into tables to themselves, jocks wedged into tables by *themselves*, band kids not eating at all, just air-playing their sets, particularly the drum-line, forever table-tapping.

And, of course, almost *everybody* is black.

Chiron moves through this mayhem, scanning the room for something, anything inviting. As he passes a group of girls, he spots Kevin sitting by himself.

Chiron's eyes light up but he checks himself, doesn't want to appear too obvious. He begins to take the longest route to get to where Kevin is but, before he can get halfway through his journey... Terrell sits in front of Kevin.

Chiron stops, diverts his attention before either can notice him, heads instead for the lunch-line (his hands have been empty).

OVER IN THE CORNER...

TERRELL

Wassup, Kev.

KEVIN

Terrell, what's good?

TERRELL

Man a nigga don't see school no more.

KEVIN

I hear you man.

TERRELL

Lunch used to be the shit, though.

KEVIN

Nah, the food wasn't never good.

TERRELL

Nigga, I ain't talkin' bout the food. But that Friday pizza was the shit.

KEVIN

(Laughs)

Yeah, I feel you on that.

TERRELL

But back in middle school, you remember, we used to have some fun at lunch. Member, we used to play 'knock down/stay down.'

KEVIN

Yeah my crazy ass was the king of that shit.

TERRELL

Oh hell yeah I remember that shit.
'Member that white boy you fucked
up?

KEVIN

Cuban cat, right? Mauricio?

TERRELL

Kevin you fucked that kid's face *up*
man. We was calling you Tyson after
that shit.

Kevin nearly blushing here.

TERRELL

But nigga's don't do that no more.
I mean. You know.

KEVIN

What you sayin'?

TERRELL

I'm sayin', you know, if I point a
nigga out you gone knock his ass
down?

KEVIN

That's the game ain't it? You dare
me to swing on him and if I do,
it's on you.

TERRELL

Aight.

(and)

Aight Kev. Let me see who ass
gettin' dropped today.

60

INT. HIGH SCHOOL, COURTYARD - DAY - LATER

60

Lunch over, students begin to wander out of the cafeteria and
into the adjacent courtyard.

We've not seen the full of this school yet. It goes like
this: upon entering the guard gate and steps aforementioned,
one enters what's best described as a tunnel, passing the
admin suites and principals offices and ultimately spilling
into this atrium with three stories of classrooms above and
around on four sides, the doors all facing *in* on this
courtyard.

This building did not exist a decade ago; its older, decrepit predecessor demolished and replaced with this vision built most in the image of a prison, constructed by the same money and resources used to erect those spaces and ultimately with the same intention: to keep all who enter *watched* and *in*.

TERRELL

...leans to a stoop out here like a gathering storm, a group of boys milling around him and Kevin.

Pizzo is a part of this entourage too, laughing and pointing to various people as they pass, just loud enough for the circle of boys gathered to hear, all of them pointing and snickering, Kevin included.

A bright, Miami day, yet... a cloud falling over this courtyard -- a *feeling* -- this group scaring the other students in the area as a larger and larger swath of space surrounds them.

Eventually, someone in particular catches Terrell's eye: he immediately stops laughing, goes dark... at the sight of Chiron.

TERRELL

Kevin.

Kevin turns. So does Chiron. They stare at each other.

TERRELL

Hit that nigga Kevin.

Kevin looking at Chiron, meeting his eyes, still wearing the smile of this group-think, straining to.

TERRELL

Come on Kev.

PIZZO

Hit that nigga Kev...

BOY 1

Hit his ass...

BOY 2

Bitch ass!

PIZZO

Hit that nigga!

TERRELL

(at Kevin)

What the fuck you waitin' on?

The boys have surrounded Chiron and Kevin. Kevin steps inside the circle, meets Chiron's eyes for the briefest moment...

...and wallops Chiron, the force of it rocking Chiron back, sends him down to one knee clutching his jaw.

KEVIN

Stay down.

But Chiron begins to stand up.

TERRELL

He want to get *up*?

Knock his faggot ass back down.

Chiron taking a few steps closer to Kevin now, comes right up to him, meets his gaze, chin raised.

Beat. Eyes locked, then...

...POP, Kevin rocking Chiron again, Chiron staying on his feet though, defiant.

After a beat to gather himself, that same clear gaze from Chiron

Terrell... is pissed. Socks Chiron.

It's open season now: the other boys pouncing, punches falling heavy like rain.

KEVIN

Stay down!

BOY 2

Five-0, Five-0!

The boys all separating quickly, slipping smoothly into the crowd as the Old School Guard and other authority figures appear, get to Chiron and pull him to his feet.

Chiron bruised and bloodied, cuts to his lip and nose, a gash above his eye. The Guard attempting to get his attention:

OLD SCHOOL GUARD

Who did it? Which of these niggas
beatin' on you?

But Chiron silent, just staring across at Kevin, the boy returning his gaze, vacant.

The lunch bell Rings.

60A INT. HIGH SCHOOL, PRINCIPLE'S OFFICE - DAY

60A

Chiron sitting opposite PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS, 40s, serious but kind.

Williams just eyes Chiron up, can since the anger simmering beneath the surface. Chiron stares at his feet, refuses to meet that gaze:

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS

Chiron?

Nothing.

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS

Chiron, listen: you're not in trouble. You're not being punished, okay? You did nothing wrong, we know that, okay?

Still nothing, Chiron has completely shut down.

PRINCIPAL WILLIAMS

Look, if you don't tell us who did this we can't press charges, understand?

(and)

All them damn kids standing around, all of y'all out there and don't nobody got the heart to say who did it?

That getting Chiron's attention, head snapping to meet Williams' gaze:

CHIRON

You don't even know.

WILLIAMS

Oh I *don't*? You think all this just started, boy?

CHIRON

I ain't no boy.

WILLIAMS

Hell you ain't: if you was a man it'd be four other knuckleheads sittin' right there with you.

Chiron looking away again out a window there, done with this:

CHIRON
 (low, breaking)
You don't even know.

Williams taking him in again now, looking further, looking better, sees things in Chiron he'd not seen before; sees him:

WILLIAMS
 Look son, I'm not blaming you, I'm not. I know it's hard, believe me, I'm not tryna disrespect your struggle. I just need you to know, if you need some help, if you need somebody to talk to... that door right there, it's always open, you feel me? And as soon as you walk through it, let me tell you -- everything you going through, all of it's gonna get better.

Ignoring that, still set on that window.

WILLIAMS
 You feel me?

Off Chiron meeting Williams' gaze, CUT TO...

61 INT. PAULA'S LIBERTY SQUARE APT, BATHROOM - NIGHT 61

Chiron taking in his own image in the bathroom mirror, left side of his face bruised and swollen, that cut at his right ear clotted with blood.

He runs water into the basin and, looking down into it, we notice that it's already filled with something, a pool of ice.

Chiron lowering his face to the water, submerging his head in it for the longest moment, long enough to make the silence uncomfortable, then...

62 INT. PAULA'S LIBERTY SQUARE APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER 62

Paula sitting at the kitchen table, a dying cigarette in an ash tray there. She looks beyond exhausted. And fried.

Chiron appearing with glasses of water, sits one in front of each of them.

We leave them this way: neither drinking those waters, neither speaking, then...

63 OMITTED 63

64 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY - MOVING 64

Chiron passing the Old Security Guard, entering the building.

We continue with him, up a flight of steps, into the cavernous tunnel of the school entrance.

All eyes looking in at Chiron, in at us.

And the SOUND, so many shifting ticks and voices, whispers accompanying those looks, adolescent energy unhinging itself.

Chiron entering a stairwell, rising, pushing past other kids towards the second story of this building.

Reaches it, steps onto the landing and slips into one of the interior passageways, the sound of those voices and whispers amplified, echoed and refracted off the metal lockers and industrial design.

But Chiron's face? Unchanged, still that blankness, that pensiveness. With him all the way as we lead/follow him around a turn, toward a door and into...

65 OMITTED 65

65A OMITTED 65A

65B INT. HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS 65B

Chiron entering, moving directly to his seat, a wooden chair there.

Sets his bookbag atop his desk, takes the chair, slides it from the desk and...

...brings it down atop Terrell's head.

CRACK!

Terrell spilling to the floor; no blood, no movement, a total collapse to the spot where he sat.

Beat.

Everyone in the class in shock, nobody moving, all eyes on Terrell. He's not moving, not breathing, body prone on the floor. A beat, then...

...he spasms back to consciousness, a quick convulsing and then a reach for his head.

Chiron raising that chair, brings it down on Terrell again, the boy jolting with the impact.

Pierce sets upon Chiron. A few others help restrain him.

66

INT/EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

66

Police lights flash on the school's walls. Kids all stand outside as well as teachers.

Chiron is brought out of the school in handcuffs, lead by two officers, staring and muckraking from the gathering as he passes.

Gets down to the street, is ushered into a police car.

As he stares out from the backseat, a face at the top of the steps stares back: Kevin.

CUT TO BLACK.

First, OVER BLACK, a beat of SILENCE and, immediately after, a gasp for air, then...

FADE IN:

...on a grown man covered in sweat.

67 INT. BLACK'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT 67

BLACK (the same Little/Chiron character but late 20s now), sitting upright.

Eyes open, staring off into the light spilling through the window-pane above this bed.

68 INT. BLACK'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT 68

Black standing at the kitchen sink.

The faucet running in the sink before him and, looking down into it, full of ice cubes, plastic trays from a freezer somewhere nearby.

Takes a towel, dips it into the water, wrings it slightly. Brings it to his face, covers his eyes, his forehead gently with it.

Dips it into the basin again, wipes across his chest. Slowly, he lowers his torso to the sink, submerges his face completely.

69 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 69

Hot today; *hot as hell out today* as Black sweats through baggy jeans and over-sized white tee.

What's more, unlike the pensive Black glimpsed recovering from a fevered dream, this one menaces through a full array of gold-fronted teeth.

They're impossible to miss as the city passes by outside his window, cruising through the Flats.

As the car continues along, we go CLOSE ON: Black's license plate. The vanity spelling BLACK is interesting, but that it's issued in the state of Georgia is more important.

70 INT. ATLANTA AGAPE REHAB CENTER - DAY 70

Black sitting in the reception area of this Rehab Clinic. He doesn't look lost here and yet... he doesn't look comfortable, dressed in a conservative, button-up shirt.

Two or three others sit on simple chairs beside him, all of them waiting. Finally, from somewhere across the room:

VOICE (O.S.)
Chiron Harris?

At the sound of his name, Black rises, moves toward that voice.

EXT. COURTYARD, ATLANTA AGAPE REHAB CENTER - DAY

Black sits in front of PAULA (40s now, hair pulled back, thinned but a light in her eyes that wasn't there before).

Paula looks down and goes into her pocket, pulls out a cigarette. Lights it, almost puts it in her mouth when she stops and stubs it out.

PAULA
Quittin' that too.

Black just nodding, indifferent.

PAULA
Trying to, at least.
How you been?

BLACK
Alright.
(then)
I ain't sleepin'.

PAULA
Why not?

Awkward.

PAULA
Right. If you knew you'd prolly...

BLACK
Bad dreamin'.

PAULA
Still?
You ever thought about talking
about it with somebody? I mean. You
know, not even like a counsellor.
Maybe somebody like, like your
mama?

Paula laughs, makes light of it. Black still unmoved. Hard to tell which of these two is in rehab and which isn't.

PAULA

Yeah it sound funny to me too. But I *am* your mother, ain't I? You can talk to me if you want to. Or at least *somebody*, you got to trust somebody, you hear?

(then)

You talk to Teresa?

BLACK

Yeah.

PAULA

How she doing?

BLACK

(Shrugs)

Good.

Paula mimics Black's shrug...

PAULA

"Good."

...face curling into a beautiful, teasing smile. Hard to not love this woman, hard to not give her infinite second chances.

BLACK

When you go home?

PAULA

Home?

(beat)

This *is* home. I mean... they 'lowin' me to stay and work as long as I like. I figured, you know, might as well help other folks, keep myself out of trouble.

BLACK

That's good, mama.

PAULA

Yeah... I think it is too.

(a deep breath)

I really do.

Black nodding his head silently, looking away from his mother, over at another mother and son performing this same ritual across the courtyard, down at the stubbed cigarette still clutched at his mother's lap.

Paula taking a real good look at her son. Something in her face softening at the sight of his hardened jaw, those gold fronts.

PAULA

So...

(beat)

...you still in them streets?

Nothing from Black, eyes shifting to the ground now, down and away.

PAULA

Didn't come all the way the hell to Georgia to have you fall into the same shit, Chiron.

BLACK

I'ma go.

PAULA

No, you gon' listen.

BLACK

To who, you?

Really, though?

You?

Black pushing back from the table, rising. Paula grabbing his hand before he can turn, hard as he is, his mother's touch an instant pause, stands still staring at that ground:

PAULA

Not like this, baby.

And...

PAULA

Not like this.

Black looking down, looking away, looking anywhere but at Paula.

Black returns to his seat, eyes fixed to a spot.

PAULA

I messed up baby. I fucked it all up, I know that. But yo' heart ain't gotta be black like mine, you hear me? I love you baby. I do, I love you Chiron. You ain't gotta love me, lord knows I didn't have love for you when you needed it, I know that.

PAULA (CONT'D)
 So you ain't gotta love me but you
 gon' know that I love you, you
 hear?

Nothing from Black.

PAULA
 You hear me, Chiron?

Paula yanking that arm.

BLACK
 Damn Mama, yeah.
 (and looking to her now)
 I hear you.

Paula taking up that cigarette again, lights it this time. A big, deep drag. Savors it, pulls all of it deep down into her chest.

PAULA
 One step at a time, baby.
 One step at a time.

CUT TO BLACK.

And over BLACK, the TITLE CARD:

BLACK

III.

72 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 72

Noise and fuzz in here, quads and subs as Black blasts something bass-heavy yet moving, think Erykah Badu Chopped and Screwed.

All elbows and mean mugs as he leans at an angle, seat reclined way back with lips parted to show those fronts; eyes scanning the blocks and corners he's passing as much as the road he's driving.

A moment of him driving this way, then...

73 INT./EXT. BLACK'S CHEVY IMPALA - NIGHT - MOVING 73

Moving with Black as he turns off the main road, pulls into his apartment complex.

As he makes his way through the parking lot, a figure appears ahead of him, a young guy rising from a stoop, caught in the glare of Black's headlights.

Black heads directly for the young guy, then turns away from him, into his parking spot.

74 OMITTED 74

75 INT. BLACK'S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 75

Black on the couch, that same white tee from before but in shorts now, flip-flops at his feet. Travis (early 20s, green, the "young guy" from the parking lot) stands before him, hands clasped together behind his back.

Dim in here, a table lamp bathing Black's slate skin in orange warmth, television raking Travis in a cool blue. So dim in fact, we hardly notice the work going at Black's lap: bills unfurled across disparate bills.

Black counts. Travis watches.

An extended beat of this, Travis' eyes down at his feet as Black nears the end of his count. Finished, he raises his head, brings his gaze to meet Travis'.

BLACK
You short, Travis.

Travis' brow arching with confusion.

TRAVIS
Wait, what?

BLACK
You short.

TRAVIS
Nah I counted it, it's all there,
it's all there on my mama life. You
trippin'.

BLACK
I'm *what*?

Pause.

TRAVIS
I ain't mean it like that.

BLACK
Then how you meant it?

TRAVIS
I mean, I....

Travis trails off there.

BLACK

Where the rest of the roll?

Travis thinks for a second -- maybe he *is* short, maybe his count is off, but... he straightens, chin up:

TRAVIS

It's all there. You might could think I'm short... but when I handed it to you, it was all there. That's on my mama.

BLACK

You sayin' I'm a liar?

TRAVIS

I ain't say that.

BLACK

Then what you sayin'?

TRAVIS

I'm...
I mean...
Dog, I'm just--

BLACK

You just what?

Travis goes quiet, eyes at his feet -- he's fucked. Black let's him stew a minute, then... breaks into a toothy grin.

BLACK

Nah.
Just fuckin' with you.

TRAVIS

Huh?

BLACK

Count good.
You did good -- did real good.

Black extending a few bills toward Travis, waiting as the boy nervously takes them from him.

BLACK

Can't be on the corner if you can't take a nigga just fuckin' with you.

Travis nods. Black extending a few more bills toward him, waiting as the boy nervously takes them.

BLACK
 Heard you been in them dice games,
 too. Watch yo' back with them
 folks. Be better off at Jai Lai,
 dice game bring nothin' but pain.

Travis wrinkling his face at that:

TRAVIS
 What the hell is "high lie"?

Black begins to explain, but... just smiles.

76 INT. BLACK'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT 76

Surprisingly, Black fast asleep, resting peacefully under the
 whir of a small fan.

A moment of him sleeping, then... his phone comes to life,
 vibrating on the bedside table. Black rolls over groggily,
 silences the thing with a flick of the wrist.

After a beat, a second, shorter vibration pierces the quiet.
 Black retrieves the phone. As he does...

BEGIN MONTAGE:

76A INT. BLACK'S APT - NIGHT 76A

QUICK IMAGE: Black moving about the apartment in just his
 boxers.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)
You have...one...new message.

76B INT. BLACK'S APT, KITCHEN - NIGHT 76B

QUICK IMAGE: Black standing before the open freezer door,
 head half-way in to absorb the cool air.

PAULA (V.O.)
 Chiron, this your mother. I know
 it's late but figured you ain't
 never been one much for sleep.
 Wanted to thank you again for
 comin' to see me.

76C OMITTED 76C

76D INT. BLACK'S APT, BATHROOM - NIGHT 76D

QUICK IMAGE: Black in the bathroom, a repeat of his earlier
 ice basin ritual.

PAULA (V.O.)
 That was... that was good of you.
 Hope you gettin' some rest baby.
 (and)
 Hope you come by again soon.

CUT BACK TO:

77 INT. BLACK'S APT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

77

And it's as though he never left: flat on his back above the covers, staring up into nothing, the phone there on the bedside.

An extended beat of quiet here, enough to see this is a man who wrestles with his mind at night, then...

...the phone buzzes again, Black reaching for it instinctively, grabs it without bothering who it is and:

BLACK
 Ma', it's late, I'm tryna sleep, I
 got your message.

Beat.

We can hear the other side of this connection. For now, it's just the white noise of dead air, whomever's on the other end keeping to themselves, then...

VOICE (O.S.)
 (through phone)
 Hello?

Black pulls his phone from his ear, checks the display. It's a 305 number: Miami. His demeanor shifting at the realization.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Eh Black, I mean... Chiron, man.

Black slowly sits up, just up on his elbows there, brings his chest up a bit:

VOICE (O.S.)
 How you doing? This... this Kevin.

Kevin. Black's face startling, though only so much, such a contained man.

KEVIN (O.S.)
 You there?
 Say somethin', nigga.

BLACK

Yeah.
 (and)
 Hey.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Long time no see, right? I asked
 Teresa if she had your number
 and... I'm workin' this job man.
 Lotta people comin' by and this
 dude, he come by today -- made me
 think of you.

Beat.

KEVIN (O.S.)

You there?

BLACK

Yeah, I'm here.

KEVIN (O.S.)

You remember me?

Black looking about himself, around this room before
 answering. Looks more into his memory than anything else:
Yes, he remembers him.

BLACK

Yeah.
 I do.
 Been a while.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Yeah.
 It has.
 (and)
 Where you at?

Black closes his eyes.

BLACK

Georgia.
 Atlanta.
 Been up here ever since....

KEVIN (O.S.)

Yeah, that's what I heard.

Beat.

A very long, very dense, very quiet beat.

KEVIN (O.S.)
 I'm... I'm sorry about that...
 about *all* that, Chiron.
 (and after a pause)
 About all that shit what went down,
 man.

Black looking about himself, about the room, eyes wandering and drifting, had pushed so much of this away.

KEVIN (O.S.)
 Real shit, dog, I *am*.

A sound from Black into the phone, not so much a word as a gesture, guttural, ambiguous, not affirming but a reprieve, an allowance for the space to continue.

Finally, mercifully:

KEVIN
 What you doin' up there?

BLACK
 (coming back)
 Not much.
 (and)
 Just trouble.

CUT TO:

78

INT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER - NIGHT - SAME

78

Simple this place, KEVIN (late 20s now) dressed in a chef's apron behind a staging station, from the looks of the kitchen surrounding him, a diner type place, short-order cook.

KEVIN
 Chiron and trouble always found a way.

Out beyond the staging station Kevin's leaned to, an old school register, tan colored table tops and matching vintage booths.

This is one of those relics that will always be a part of Miami. When the tide finally sweeps the city into the Atlantic, the last note rising from it will be Compay Segundo's "Chan Chan" reverberating from this place.

INTERCUT BLACK AND KEVIN

BLACK
 Yeah... something like that.
 What about you?

KEVIN
I'm a cook, man.

A loud laugh from Black, the clear joy of it a jolt.

BLACK
You a cook?

KEVIN
Yeah man, got sent up for some stupid shit, same stupid shit we always get sent up for. Put me on the kitchen line and I kinda took to it.

BLACK
Greeeeeeaaaaaaaaat day, Kevin Jones: Chef Boyardee.

KEVIN
I cook better than that shit.

BLACK
You better or your ass won't be cooking long, feel me?

The two of them laughing there, the familiarity clear, asserting itself.

KEVIN
Yeah, so... I just thought about you man. There's a jukebox in here, folks come in and play they songs and that's the music we get in here. This dude, man....

Kevin trailing off there, thoughts wondering, eyes drifting over to that jukebox, one of the old school types with actual CDs and pages that flip when commanded.

BLACK
Yeah....

KEVIN
...this dude reminded me of you.

Beat.

BLACK
What'd he play?

A long pause from Kevin, the song wedging itself in his thoughts right now, pushing everything aside.

BLACK
That good, huh?

KEVIN
Yeah...
...that good.
(and)
If you ever come down here, man,
you holla at me.

BLACK
This your number?

KEVIN
Nah, no cell. This the diner. Right
now it's better if folks can't
reach me. I tell niggas, "Call my
momma house if you really need me,"
otherwise I'm only 'bout this J-O-
B.

BLACK
True.
What's the name of the place?

KEVIN
Jimmy's Eastside Diner. If you ever
to town, Chiron, I mean it. Come on
by, I'll cook you somethin', play
that song for you.

Black fully sat up on the bed now, free hand to his temple,
the other clutching his cell to his ear. Just the sound of
his light breathing.

KEVIN
Alright Chiron, be easy.

Click.

Black lowering his phone now, staring at the screen, the
simple information there: *Call Duration: 5min29secs.*

A lifetime.

CUT TO:

79 INT. BLACK'S APT, BEDROOM - DAY

79

A moment of stillness: Black prone atop the covers, just his
boxers and still a small sheen of sweat. From the look of
him, jaw slack, lips parted just so, this has been a restful
sleep.

Slowly, after a beat to watch him this way, Black stirs slightly, a slowed wakening.

Stretches now, body turning, arms reaching beyond this bed, extending toward the light streaming through the lone window there.

Turns on his side. Is about to sit up but... stops. From the look on his face, a realization: he reaches to his crotch.

80 INT. BLACK'S BATHROOM - DAY 80

Black standing before the basin, hands working at something in the water.

No ice, no towel. Instead, he's standing over a muddied plume, a layer of soapy foam atop the surface: he's hand-washing his boxers.

An extended beat of this washing, then...

...the SOUND of music blaring, all highs at first, a rattling trunk following.

81 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 81

Black in mode again: gold fronts, white tee, one hand on the wheel as he pushes through these streets.

Eyes scanning the corners and alleys he's passing, whatever's out there getting little from him, just this glare.

82 OMITTED 82

83 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 83

Black hanging a U-turn, neck craned all the way around to keep an eye on something outside this car.

Headed back the other direction now, he pulls over to the side of the road, honks his horn, three sharp beeps, and...

84 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 84

Black at the wheel, Travis in the passenger seat beside him.

On Travis' lap, a mix of cash and baggies, a greasy, crumpled brown bag wedged between his thighs. He's counting.

The music blasting as always in here, Black nodding his head to an old school Goodie Mob track, then... cutting the music sharply, face going slack as...

...a patrol car passes in the opposite direction, Travis never breaking his count, Black cranking the music, and...

CUT TO:

TRAVIS

...head cocked to the side, a posture of listening.

85 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - PARKED 85

Black parked at the edge of an alley, looking out at Travis standing amongst two other young men.

We can't hear what's being said down there, the whole thing viewed from Black's vantage.

Instead, all long-lens gestures: Travis going through some form of count with his fingers, the two young men bringing their hands to their chests (*Who? Me?!*), the posture of explaining.

Black reaching to the floorboard beneath him,, retrieves the obvious: a .38 Special.

Takes another look down that alley, then... opens the door, steps into the alley and begins towards them.

We don't follow, just watch from this distance, then...

86 INT. BLACK'S APT, BEDROOM - DAY 86

Dangling from a wire hanger, panning with the flow of an oscillating fan: the underwear we'd seen Black wear before, still damp in the humid air.

REVERSE ANGLE: BLACK'S FACE, eyes fixed on the underwear, studying them with a mixture of shock and reverence.

Reaches a hand to them, takes their short hem in his hands, partly to gauge the dampness, partly for wont of touching them.

Something on his mind here, thoughts turning and turning and turning. He checks his watch: half past one.

87 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 87

Observing him through the front windshield of this car, the whole of it viewable from here.

Just the sound of the road, no music, certainly no speaking as Black drifts along what appears to be a highway.

A look of resolution on his face, a peace, a clarity. The image closing in on him now, a slow, subtle zoom pushing in on that face, those eyes.

Just as we near the end of this move, our view pivots, panning away from that windshield, perpendicular to our traveling: nothing but mangroves out there. And across a large median, lanes of other traffic running in the opposite direction.

There's no doubt now, this is not a drive around Atlanta. The speed and highway surroundings should make it clear: he's going much farther.

An extended beat of this traveling, of the road and trees and wind, the speed of the passing land and soundscape escalating, building, the whole of it coalescing into a hypnotic rhythm, then...

WAVES

...both the sight and sound of waves crashing, lashing at the shore.

88 EXT. MIAMI BEACH - NIGHT 88

A muted, wide base to the light, waves rushing onto shore under the watch of a full moon.

There are children at play, a dozen at various ages, all black, 7 to 15 years old.

None of them in proper trunks, most in homemade cut-off shorts and *Fruit of the Loom* white tank-tops. All laughing as the waves rush at their feet, a few feigning fear at the ocean as others -- the boys mostly -- drag them into the surf.

We watch the children at play a moment longer. We've seen none of these kids before, we'll see none of them again.

A final beat of this, then...

89 EXT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER, PARKING LOT - NIGHT 89

A door closed -- Black's car parked deep in the corner of this parking lot, in the farthest back corner away from street light, obscured by low-hanging shade trees.

The diner is away from us, across the parking lot. Black takes it in a moment, pulls on a fresh shirt.

He's moving, crossing the parking lot at an easy clip. It's quiet out, a few passing cars to Black's left running north on Biscayne Boulevard, no foot traffic -- can hear the SOUND of his footfalls on the pavement.

As he nears the threshold of this diner, takes the handle on the entry...

CLOSE ON: an old school bell, the sound of it jingling as the door it's affixed to parts.

90 INT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 90

And right away, the sound of music, something old, soft, and lilting (think Aretha Franklin's *One Step Ahead*).

Black scanning this room, his view of the place a clue for us: this is definitely the same diner we saw Kevin working in during the earlier phone call.

All the details are there, the old-school register, vintage chairs and table-tops. And in the corner, that old school jukebox blessing us with Aretha.

BLACK

...on the move now, crosses the diner with eyes down and ahead of him. There's a counter lined with stools, directly opposite the staging station and adjacent the register.

Black eases up to the counter, places his cell atop it and takes a seat.

No one stirs at Black's movement, no one watches. Looking about the place again, we notice the other patrons: a quartet of college girls in a corner booth shoring up for a night on the town, an elderly gentleman sitting to himself, staring into a cup of mild coffee.

As Black watches the elderly gentleman...

VOICE (O.S.)
(moving)
Be right with you.

A figure moving past, carrying an urn over to the old man, sets a new cup down and pours a fresh coffee, scoops up the old cup as he moves on.

As he crosses to the girls, we see him better: it's Kevin.

We watch as he speaks to them; can't hear any of it but from the feel of it, very jovial, Kevin is good at this work.

A beat of watching Kevin here, isolated bits of him from Black's perspective: Kevin's lips as he speaks, the hand he rests to his neck instinctively.

Finished with the girls, Kevin turns back toward the counter, hands full with their spent dishes. As he approaches, he looks right at Black, right at us...

KEVIN

(moving)

Be right with you, boss, just let me get this out the way.

...and moves past.

Somehow, Kevin has not noticed him.

Something lodged in Black's throat, without thinking places his hand there: *Am I breathing?*

He must be, he'd *better* be: those dishes discarded somewhere in the back and... here comes Kevin.

KEVIN

How you doin' tonight, what can I get you?

Kevin flipping through a stained note-pad, hasn't bothered to look up yet. As he does, his eyes settle on Black's.

Beat.

Kevin watching this man. And Black watching back, the two of them silently holding each other's gaze, pure curiosity.

Kevin's head cocking to the side now:

KEVIN

Chiron?

Nothing from Black, just those eyes. Kevin lowering that note-pad, rounds the counter, comes right up beside him. On Kevin's face: no doubt who this is.

KEVIN

Damn man why you ain't say nothin'?!

Kevin taking Black's right hand in his, pulls him in close and throws his left arm around his back: warm, tight, *masculine*.

The embrace held, Black slowly reciprocating, his left arm cautiously placed around Kevin's back and, subtly, moved there, close but not quite a caress.

The men part.

KEVIN
Damn Chiron.

BLACK
'Sup, Kev'.

KEVIN
What the hell you doin' here, I mean....

Kevin trailing off there as Black nods agreement, gets the oddity of his own actions.

KEVIN
Well shit, you here now, that's all that matter.

Again, that nod from Black, Kevin smiling in reply:

KEVIN
There go that damn noddin', you ain't changed a bit, still can't say more than three words at a time, huh?

A smile from Black. This guy gets him.

BLACK
Said you was gon' cook for me, I know how to say *that*.

Kevin rounding that counter again, Black clocking him as he goes, winds up opposite him, takes up that notepad again.

KEVIN
Yeah I did, man. I did.
What you want? You can pick from the menu or I can give you the chef's special.

Black watching Kevin across this counter.

Over on the jukebox, that song ends, just the muted sound of the girls in the corner there, nothing but this short space between them.

Kevin sets his notepad down.

KEVIN

Yeah.
We here, Chiron.

As Kevin heads for the kitchen, leaves Black with that thought...

CUT TO:

91 INT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER - KITCHEN 91

...all hands and handles, a cast iron skillet going over an open flame.

92 INT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER - NIGHT - LATER 92

Black on his stool at the counter, watching through the staging station as Kevin works over that flame.

Behind him, the group of girls moving toward the exit, bell jingling as they step onto Biscayne.

Black's gaze lingering on them a moment, tracking them as they push farther and farther into the night. Coming back, his gaze settles on the table across the diner: the old man, that cup of coffee.

Black rising now, digs down into his pockets, pulls the bit of cash and change there. Begins across this space, over to the jukebox.

Gets to flipping through the flaps, four to a side, scanning left and right. A bit more flipping until... *bingo*.

A string of quarters, a few buttons pushed then...

...the click and clack of the machine, a disc racked and spun to speed, so quiet in here without that jukebox, then... the SOUND of a disc racked, the jukebox doing its work as...

KEVIN (O.S.)

Chef's special.

Black spinning to find Kevin passing, moving behind him with a freshly plated meal -- carries it across the diner floor, over to the booth abutting the diner window.

Black cocks his head in surprise, makes his way over to --

THE BOOTH

Approaches a smiling Kevin, takes a look at the plate he's made for him: black beans, white rice, a grilled chicken breast with mole coating.

BLACK
So you *Cuban* now?

KEVIN
Only in the kitchen, Papi.
(and)
Sit down, nigga. Or you gon' eat
standin' up?

Black complies, eases into the booth, eyes the food.

KEVIN
Want a drink?

BLACK
I don't drink.

A huff from Kevin -- more playful than skeptical -- leaves the booth, heads back over to the counter. Black watches as Kevin roots around for something, comes back over with a half run bottle of red wine, something simple.

Sets a water glass down before each of them, settles in across from Black, pours.

KEVIN
Nigga I ain't seen you in like a
decade, you gon' drink with me.

Black just looking at this guy: *What can he do?*

The clink of glasses, Kevin taking a sip of his, Black taking a gulp, maybe he *doesn't* drink after all.

Kevin settles his elbow and forearm to the table:

KEVIN
So what bring you here, Chiron?

Curious, innocent, suggestive, all at once. Black just watching Kevin in response.

KEVIN
Eat your dinner man.
(rises)
Eat your dinner.

Black's gaze following Kevin as he replaces the old gentleman's coffee as before, moves on to a young couple sitting in the booth where the group of girls were.

Off Black, CUT TO...

93

INT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER, BOOTH - NIGHT - LATER

93

Later by the look of Black's plate, completely empty.

Black takes up his water glass of wine, a second bottle open there beside the first -- they've been thirsty.

Kevin appears, settles in again.

KEVIN

You remember Samantha?

BLACK

(nodding)

Yeah, I remember her.

Kevin reaching into his wallet, takes out a photo, places it on the counter:

KEVIN

Kevin Jr.

Me and Samantha. Had him young; *too* young.

Kevin watching as Black takes up the photo, brings it close, examines it.

KEVIN

When I got locked up, man. It was hard. *Real* hard. Had me in state, not that county shit. That's when I knew I had to find somethin'. That's when I started the cookin' thing, knew I couldn't go back to the street, not after that.

BLACK

Y'all still down?

KEVIN

Me and Sam?

(beat)

Nah. We still cool though, gotta be for Lil' man, but... nah, not like that.

Beat.

KEVIN

What about you?

BLACK

What *about* me?

KEVIN

Nigga tell me somethin', what you doin', *who* you doin'?

Black going sheepish at that last part.

KEVIN

C'mon nigga, I'm waitin', done cooked for your ass and everything, shit, these grandma rules you know the drill, you gon' eat, you gotta speak.

Black thinking on this, weighing something. Takes another sip of his wine, then...

BLACK

Alright, straight up?
I'm trappin'.

KEVIN

(serious)
What?

Black just nodding.

BLACK

When they sent me up to Atlanta, put me straight into Juvie for beatin' old boy. Met this cat in there, when I come out, put me on the block. Did good at it. Rose up.

Black shrugging his shoulders, no explanation, no excuses.

BLACK

It is what it is.

KEVIN

Bullshit, it ain't what it is, Chiron, that ain't you.

BLACK

Nigga you don't know me.

KEVIN

Oh I *don't*?

Beat.

BLACK

I'ma get my shit straight.

Kevin shooting Black a look:

KEVIN

And I guess gettin' your shit
straight is drivin' twelve hours
down here for no reason?

Kevin looks over his shoulder -- the young couple is up at register, waiting.

Black watching as Kevin heads over, begins ringing their till. It's a small moment, cordial -- Kevin smiling, making small talk with the husband and wife. He's good at this.

The sound of that familiar door jingle on their exit, Kevin beginning back now, stops to buss the couple's table -- arms loaded with plates and silverware as he passes...

KEVIN

(moving)

And why you got them damn fronts?

...doesn't bother for a reply, just keeps moving into the kitchen.

Beat.

Black alone again for the moment. It's dead in here -- no couples, no groups of girls. Kevin is nowhere to be found, there's nothing between Black and the door.

The door.

Black watching the door as...

Kevin reappears, wiping soap foam from his forearms, heading back over. Takes his seat again across this modest booth.

Kevin's thoughts going back to this conversation, the two of them separated by this table; by *only* this table. It's as though they can sense this, both mulling their thoughts, fingering those water glasses.

Black's eyes lifting:

BLACK

Why'd you call me?

KEVIN

What?

BLACK

Why did you *call* me?

Beat.

KEVIN

I told you, this dude came in....

BLACK

Yeah...

KEVIN

He played this song....

Kevin trailing off there, eyes going to the jukebox in the corner. Lets his gaze linger a beat, then...

...roots around a tip jar beside the register. A moment later, he's rounding the counter, heading for...

THE JUKEBOX

...Kevin nearing it, studying a moment before flipping those pages, one after another as Black had before.

From the effort, he does not know what he's looking for. Or rather, he's searching for it, unsure.

BLACK

...watching, looking on as Kevin hovers his finger over those pages, tracing a line along the glass there, mouthing something to himself until finally...

...Kevin's got it: the click of the jukebox, articulating arm shifting, a disc whirring to life and...

Church, juke-joint, cabana: the place where the three meet and meld as the opening organ of Barbara Lewis' *Hello Stranger* fills the air.

Hello, stranger

It seems so good to see you back again

How long has it been?

It seems like a mighty long time

KEVIN

...leaning his back to the jukebox, arms folded.

AT THE BOOTH

...Black sitting sideways, meeting Kevin's gaze as he's listening.

Both watching each other, eyes linked, locked.

Black's eyes in particular here, perhaps from Kevin's perspective, drifting into them: he's opening, he's letting Kevin in.

A beat as the song continues. The second verse:

*Ohhhhhhh, my, my, myyyyyy
I'm so glad
You stopped by to say "Hello" to me
Remember that's the way it used to be
Ooh, it seems like a mighty long time*

It's on the nose, yes, but fuck it: *reminded him*, like a punch flush to the face, forever and always a reminder of this thing, of everything.

Kevin crossing the diner floor, closing the space between them. Settles to the booth again, leans back. He watches Black, but...

...as the song continues, Black's mind drifts elsewhere, mouth agape as Barbara continues ...

*Ohhhhhhhhhh
If you're not gonna stay
Please don't tease me like you did before
Because I still love you so, although....
It seems like a mighty long time*

The two of them this way as the song continues, Barbara "oooo'ing" and "ah'ing" her way through the last few bars as the men listen, nothing else in the world but this moment.

The song ends.

Over at his table, the older gentleman pays them no mind, simply sips his coffee.

Off the DOORBELL JINGLING...

94

EXT. JIMMY'S EASTSIDE DINER - NIGHT

94

Black standing with his hands in his pockets as Kevin works at the door behind him, closing down the diner.

Down the sidewalk from them, the older gentleman moves away, labored step after labored step.

Finished, Kevin turns to Black, the two falling into step without a word, moving across the parking -- Black leading, Kevin just behind.

Occasionally one looking to the other as they go, much said in these eyes and looks, but... just the sound of movement, a heavy key ring dangled at Kevin's side, the whir of Vespas roaming up Biscayne.

Kevin a few steps behind as Black nears the driver's side door. Like anyone seeing this gaudy thing for the first time, Kevin is taken aback.

KEVIN

This you?

Black toggling the alarm system, the Chevy beeping loudly, all lights flashing twice and a piercing beep from that sound system.

KEVIN

You wasn't playin' bout them traps.

A shrug from Black as Kevin takes the passenger side door, gets in.

Black following, the engine on the car coming to life.

A BEAT as the car eases away from here, reaches the edge of the parking lot, pulls into traffic.

95

INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - NIGHT - MOVING

95

Loud in here, part habit, part defense mechanism: little room for words with two cabinets and a sub pushing Slim K's *Purple Haze* remix through these speakers.

Black leaned into the driver's side door as always, one hand on the steering column, other resting on his lap.

Nothing spoken between these two for a beat, just clocking each other on the sly as the passing lights of the streets and storefronts play on their faces.

Black reaches for the dial finally, cuts the volume to a more modest level as Trinidad James begins his mid-track overtures.

Gets Kevin's attention, looking over, expectant:

BLACK

How you get to work?

KEVIN

Jitney.

Bus.

Sometimes Samantha shoot me out there if I got Lil' Kevin.

Black nodding.

BLACK
Can't picture bein' in Miami with
no car, man.

KEVIN
Yeah it's real out here.

BLACK
I bet.

KEVIN
Real slow, real hot, *real* busted,
got me like a duck out here.

Both laughing at that, you can be called a lot of things in Miami and next to snitch, duck is about the worst.

BLACK
You on one.

KEVIN
Nah man, I'm just tired.
(and)
I used to be up in them traps, too.
Wasn't easy; was hard as hell,
harder than this, man, but not
much. Feel like I work damn near as
hard to make a day's pay trappin'
in two weeks cookin'.

Black just nodding, his blinker flicked, the business of driving.

KEVIN
Make everything hurt a lot more.
Feel like that cat from *In Livin'*
Color: "My neck, my back... my *neck*
and *my back*."

That cracking both of them up, nostalgia of it as much as anything else.

The laughter carries them a ways. Before they know it, Black is shifting onto the freeway.

Kevin looking out the window there. On his right as they travel east away from the Miami that brings black boys up so hard: Fischer Island, the Miami immortalized in Rick Ross rhymes and Miami Vices.

KEVIN
Bet on this the ride, Chi'.

BLACK
Can't have you on no Jitney.

More road, more lights, more of the silence mapping out this space between them.

KEVIN
So Chiron....

Kevin looking directly at Black now. They're on the freeway; Black is driving. And yet... Kevin holding this thought aloft, looking across the interior of this car until Black looks back, meets his gaze.

He does.

KEVIN
You just drove here?

BLACK
Yeah.

KEVIN
Like you just was *on one* and got on the highway?

BLACK
Yeah.

A beat as they hold eyes.

KEVIN
Where you gon' stay tonight?

Nothing from Black. *Nothing*, no words, no gestures, nothing rendered from him in this moment.

Black *should* be driving, should have eyes on the road, paying attention to the other cars, the things passed. Instead, all eyes on Kevin, staring back at the man lost in that question, the space between its posing and this beat the clear answer.

Kevin looks away, out the window again. The earth just moved. They both felt it.

Kevin reaching for the dial, raises the volume on that sound system. A moment of this travel, *Purple Haze* enveloping them in this unspoken pact for a beat, then...

96

EXT. MIAMI BEACH PARKING LOT - NIGHT

96

A public parking lot, open-air, twenty-four hours. Black and Kevin exiting the car, Kevin careful not to slam the door, immaculate this car.

He begins across the lot but looks back -- Black is still there, beside the car with the door aloft.

The ocean is out there, the SOUND of it just beyond -- wind and rolling waves -- a pathway sloping down to shore.

In this darkness, he can't see it from here, but... in Black's gaze? He certainly can *feel it*.

The longest beat, then....

UP CUT TO:

96A OMITTED 96A

96B EXT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING 96B

Black and Kevin enter the courtyard of this modest complex, make their way across a gravel walk. The SOUND of window-mounted AC units.

The SOUND of privacy.

97 INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 97

Black standing in the living room as Kevin moves away, disappears into another area of the apartment.

Alone, Black takes the place in: simple, modest, sparsely furnished with things that seem to have been found on sidewalks.

On a table there, a single image of a small boy, a photo that looks very much like the Young Kevin from earlier.

The sound of a toilet flushing, Kevin reappearing now, his work clothes shed, jeans and a T-shirt as he moves through the space.

KEVIN

Want somethin' to drink? Beer?
Water?

BLACK

Yeah. Some water.

Kevin over at the sink now, a straight sight-line to it from the living room here. Black watching as Kevin pours a glass from the tap, adds ice cubes from a plastic tray in the freezer.

Kevin gesturing to a simple folding table near Black, moves over to it and sets down two glasses of water, Black sitting opposite him.

Kevin watching as Black drinks his water, something not quite exaggerated but extended in the act, Kevin's eyes searching the nape of Black's neck.

He smiles.

KEVIN
Who is you, man?

BLACK
Who, me?

KEVIN
Yeah, nigga.
You.
Them *fronts*? That *car*? Who is you,
Chiron?

Black shrugging his shoulders, smiles sheepishly:

BLACK
I'm me, man, ain't tryna be nothin'
else.

KEVIN
So you hard now?

BLACK
I ain't say that.

KEVIN
Then what?

Beat.

KEVIN
Look, I'm not tryna hem you up.
Just... I ain't seen you in a
minute. Not what I expected, none
of it. Not good or bad, just not
what I expected.

BLACK
Well what did you expect?

Kevin thinking about that one, has to ask himself: what *did* he expect?

KEVIN

You remember the last time I saw
you?

At first, just a nod from Black, a plaintive gesture from his
body but in those eyes, so much more.

BLACK

For a long time, tried not to
remember.

Kevin nodding.

BLACK

Tried to forget all those times.
The good...
...the bad.
All of it.

KEVIN

Yeah.
I know.

BLACK

When we got to Atlanta... I started
over. Built myself from the ground
up. Built myself *hard*.

Beat.

BLACK

What about you?

KEVIN

Me? I just kept on, man. I wasn't
never worth shit, never did
anything I actually wanted to do,
was all I could do to do what other
folks *thought* I should do, I wasn't
never myself.

BLACK

And now?

KEVIN

Now? Now I got Lil' Kev', got this
job man, got another 18 months of
probation.

BLACK

Damn... that's real shit.

KEVIN

Yeah, but it's a *life*, you know? I never had that before. Like... I'm tired as hell right now and I ain't makin' more than shoe money, but... I got no worries, man. Not them kind what I had before. That's some real shit, that's that Bob Marley shit, nigga.

Black lightening at that, a little smile. It's only amplified as Kevin starts to do a little bob and weave, ad-libbing a Marley'esque hymn.

Black smiling as Kevin's eyes alight with this little ditty. Kevin rises, heads over to the small kitchen -- running water.

He toggles a small radio. The SOUND of Kevin rotating through the dial, finally landing on a station, late night R&B, like DeBarge's *All This Love*.

Kevin comes back over, settles. Muted music from that kitchen radio. He takes up his glass of water and enjoys another sip.

Black fixes him in his sights, more directly than before:

BLACK

You're the only man who's ever touched me.

The air going out of Kevin's chest, his gaze fixated on Black's lips, anticipating the words falling from there:

BLACK

The only one.

Black's hand is flat atop the table between them. His eyes lower to it:

BLACK

I haven't really touched anyone, since.

98

INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

98

Black sitting at the foot of the bed, fully clothed, hands clasped between his knees, leaned over slightly.

Kevin standing before him, frozen.

They hold each other's eyes an interminable beat.

Black stands shakily. Kevin watches him as he closes the space between them, drawing right up to him. Kevin takes a hand and lays it flat against Black's chest.

A puzzled look coming over Kevin's face.

KEVIN
You shakin'.

BLACK
Yeah.

KEVIN
Wait.

Kevin crosses the doorway, flips a switch:

TOTAL DARKNESS

...only the soft thudding of feet crossing the floor.

Another beat, then, under darkness:

BLACK
I'm shakin'.

KEVIN
Yeah.

BLACK
I'm still shakin'.

KEVIN
Yeah.

The SOUND of bodies touching, the beginning of things, then...

...another sound rising -- from afar -- the SOUND of waves crashing, rushing onto shore.

And mingling with that rush of waves, the sound of lips and hands, the joining of bodies, somewhere in this darkness Black and Kevin re-learning one another as we CUT TO...

99 EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

99

Those waves heard crashing moments earlier on full display, rushing ashore at a frothy run.

Dark out, extremely dark save for the lights of beach bars a ways down the ocean front. The undulating rhythms of the Atlantic catch the moon, glint it all over.

As we observe this movement of water and dance of light, shoulders appear, bare, gaunt: LITTLE from our opening episode.

Calmly, methodically, Little moves across the sand, approaching the water. A beat more of Little easing up to the surf, then...

...he looks back: his dark skin moistened in the ocean spray, moon catching him same as its catching the surface of the Atlantic.

And those eyes: looking right at us, staring plaintively, plainly, nothing requested, no expectation: just a clear, undisturbed openness.

Hold this gaze, then...

...Little turning from us, his form and movement slowly, steadily melding into the flow of light and waves as we heads out into the ocean and we...

FADE TO BLACK.