

## **THE CHI**

PRELAP: Donny Hathaway's "Going Down"

EXT. ROYAL'S AC LOUNGE -- NIGHT

WE FIND CHARLES "COOGIE" JOHNSON (16) messy but cool Afro, rockin' a purple T-shirt depicting Yoda wearing headphones, beats wrapped around his neck as he stares at a neon Old Style sign, the CHICAGO'S BEST script flickers and buzzes. Moths dive as he looks in through the smoked glass to see folks at the bar. He ENTERS...

INT. ROYAL'S AC LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Coogie approaches a woman at the bar staring at a SCRATCH OFF lottery ticket, pile of dead ones on the bar next to her.

A BEAT as he sees that she's tuned, singing along to Donny Hathaway. This is LAVERNE (45), Coogie's mom. Pretty once, but you know how it is -- she's here in this bar like she's been a thousand nights before and is happy in her own fucked up way, now if she could just scratch some money outta of these tickets.

She looks up and sees her son, Coogie ENTER. She picks up the last ticket, grabs her lucky quarter and scratches. Nothing. She gives Coogie a look, like maybe he fucked up her luck...

COOGIE  
(re: the tickets)  
Anything?

LAVERNE  
Nope...

COOGIE  
You comin' home?

LAVERNE  
In a bit...

The BARTENDER...

BARTENDER  
He can't be in here.

LAVERNE  
You be nice RJ he leavin' in a minute...

BARTENDER

This is me bein' nice. You pay  
your tab you can have all the  
underage visitors you want.

LAVERNE

(to Coogie)

Never mind him. You got that money  
I gave you?

COOGIE

No.

LAVERNE

Come on and buy your mamma a drink.

COOGIE

Spent it already.

LAVERNE

Spent it on what?

COOGIE

Stuff.

LAVERNE

Stuff? Now you lyin'.

COOGIE

No I'm not. I don't got any.

LAVERNE

So what you come in here for?

Coogie looks over at the bartender witnessing this moment...

COOGIE

Just seein' when you're comin'  
home.

Laverne comes off the stool, wraps him in a sloppy hug...

LAVERNE

You lookin' out for me.

(then)

I'll be back in a bit. Go on, you  
got school in the morning...

Coogie palms his mother's lucky quarter off the bar, kisses  
her and exits...

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

On Coogie as he exits the bar, looks back one more time at the blinking sign. His mother in there. He drops his deck, lowers the beats, hits play and skates the fuck off, shutting out the sitch as we hear Avalanches "FRANKIE SINATRA" Coogie singing along...

COOGIE

*I'm Frankie Sinatra, I'm Frankie  
Sinatra...*

EXT. STREET SOUTHSIDE, CHICAGO -- NIGHT

WE FIND Coogie on his skateboard sailing through the hood, goofy smile, singing along, the streets beautiful in a ruined way.

A BEAT as he waits for a streetlight past some CORNER BOYS crowded around listening to some jams from a nearby Riviera, passing a bottle. Coogie notes the tilt of their hats -- knows these are crewed up dudes, best to avoid. But one of them catches Coogie staring...

CORNER BOY

Fuck you lookin' at?

Coogie skates down an alley...

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Still with Coogie as he kicks off down the block, past some rowhouse, some trying, some abandoned, weeds poking up, trash here and there...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT -- NIGHT

Coogie SKATES around the empty court. He spots a half deflated ball up against the fence. He picks it up, tries to dribble. It does not dribble. He lobs a J at the hoop and it CLANGS off the backboard.

He goes to pick it up and then hears the DULL POP of gunfire somewhere off in the distance. He shoots one last time and hits it...

EXT. STREET CORNER -- NIGHT

PICK UP Coogie skates past some boarded up store fronts, arriving at the corner store as father and son, HABIB & AMIR sweep trash into the street. Coogie pulls up. Off in the distance we hear the whoop of POLICE SIRENS, a constant in this part of town.

A BEAT as Habib blocks him from entering...

HABIB  
Closed.

COOGIE  
Lemme get a grape pop and some  
jerky.

AMIR  
You got money?

COOGIE  
C'mon Amir, you know I'm good for  
it.

AMIR  
Grape pop?

COOGIE  
And jerky. I ain't had nothin' to  
eat yet...

Amir gives Habib a look, steps inside the store, grabs a  
GRAPE POP, TWO STICKS JERKY...

HABIB  
Dollar for the pop and two dollar  
for the jerky.

Coogie holds out a quarter, smiles...

COOGIE  
How much the pop cost?

HABIB  
Dollar.

COOGIE  
How much it cost you? Wholesale?

AMIR  
Seventeen cents...

Habib shoots Amir a look, like don't give that info away.

COOGIE

Okay, I give you a quarter that's like eight cents profit. How you lose on that?

HABIB

Everybody else pay a dollar. You pay quarter then everybody want that.

AMIR

Better than him stealing.

A beat as Habib considers this logic.

COOGIE

I don't do that anymore...

HABIB

Bullshit.

AMIR

No it's true.

COOGIE

C'mon Habib, quarter for the pop and I pay full price for the jerky and we good.

HABIB

Okay, but only this time.

Amir gives him the grape pop, the jerky. Coogie hands Habib two dollars and the quarter he swiped from his mom. He skates away...

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

Coogie turns down an alley, grabs his deck and walks past the overgrown backyards until he comes to a fence. He rattles the fence and then WHAM a DOG charges out, snarling.

COOGIE

Hey girl...

Coogie takes out some jerky, tears off a piece and pushes it through the fence. The dog scarfs it. He opens the grape pop, drinks...

COOGIE (CONT'D)

You like that...

She presses against the fence, begging for more. A beat as he puts hand through the fence and pets her, the whole time watching the back of the house...

THE CAMERA PUSHES up to the back of the dimly lit house. We hear music thumping somewhere inside.

COOGIE (CONT'D)  
(re: the house)  
What's goin' on in there?

The dog stares at him, oblivious...

COOGIE (CONT'D)  
Messed up not feedin' ya... I know  
how that is...

A BEAT as a CAR DOOR SLAM O.S and then A BLACK SUV shoots out the other side of the alley, DISAPPEARING down the street. The dog growls...

COOGIE (CONT'D)  
What's a matter, girl?

Coogie investigates, walking to the end of the alley.

EXT. ALLEY/CORNER HOUSE -- NIGHT

ON COOGIE as he sees a KID laying on the front walk, little drug baggies sprinkled all over the cracked pavement.

COOGIE  
Yo...

Nothing. He crosses over and sees the kid's been shot, blood working out behind his head like a halo...

COOGIE (CONT'D)  
Fuck...

This is JASON, also (16) but we'll find out about him later. For now all we need to know is that he's dead and wearing some TIGHT JORDANS and sporting a dope Lion of Judah CHAIN around his dead neck. Oh and he's got a big old fucking gunshot wound in his chest, but he's still kinda pretty, like he was on his way to being somebody before the bullets.

Coogie looks around getting used to the dead kid and fuck yeah those are some nice Jordans and that chain...

COOGIE (CONT'D)  
Who you piss off?  
(then)  
(MORE)

COOGIE (CONT'D)

Pretty muthafucka like you, prolly  
messin' with the wrong dude's girl.

(then)

Now what you gonna do with that  
chain...

A BEAT as Coogie looks around, sees a YOUNG KID in a white t -  
- a CORNER BOY watching him, let's call him STICK (15) cuz  
he's skinny as fuck and we will see him later. STICK takes a  
good hard look at Coogie, signals POLICE and then DASHES off.

Coogie knows he needs to run the fuck out of there but  
instead he turns back to dead Jason and that chain. Fuck it,  
he GRABS the chain and in doing so gets some blood on his  
hands. Shit, that's trippy and fucked up and he starts to  
gag at the sight of it as he tries to wipe it off. He steps  
back, chain in hand as a POLICE CRUISER rolls up across the  
street. Coogie ducks back against the wall out of sight.  
He's pinned there, listening to the crackle of the police two-  
way.

ANGLE ON the COPS as they EXIT the car. A WOMAN APPEARS on a  
nearby stoop and points in Coogie's direction, sayin'  
somethin' about hearin' shots...

BACK ON COOGIE as he slips the CHAIN out of his pocket and  
HIDES it behind a nearby TRASH CAN. LONG BEAT as he listens  
and sure enough here come the Cops on foot, radio's crackling  
as they see dead Jason and then...

POLICE (O.C.)

Possible ten forty-five ... gonna  
need back-up...

Coogie RUNS. The COPS REACT, guns drawn as they pull down on  
Coogie. Running, yelling into their two-ways.

COP

Stop! Now!

For a minute it looks like Coogie's about to catch one and  
join Jason staring up at the cold Southside sky. But the Cop  
LOWERS his gun...

BACK ON Coogie as he HOPS the fence, DASHES through a yard,  
and breaks out into the street heading for a field by the El  
tracks as the WHOOP of sirens converge...

ON COOGIE as he darts sprints along a house and then ducks  
behind some cars parked on the street as SQUAD CARS converge.

A BEAT as Coogie has a little Butch and Sundance moment  
huddled down behind that car, cops up and down the street.



And so he pulls his hoodie up, stands and walks out into the street, trying to play it cool. And it fucking works...

He makes it past the first set of cops and is twenty feet from slipping into the crowd when BAM he's TACKLED by two officers...

COOGIE  
I didn't do nothin'...

COP  
Shut up!

With brutal efficiency they frisk him and find the last of the jerky as they KNEE, CUFF and SHOVE him into a squad car and we...

INT. SQUAD CAR -- NIGHT

ON Coogie in the silence of the car, watching the cops and flashers and the folks out in the streets, a few of them are recording his arrest on their phones, giving the cops shit. A BEAT as he lock eyes with the corner boy Stick we saw earlier. Stick pulls out his cell, fires off a text.

END OF TEASER

INT. TRESTLE & CRANE RESTAURANT -- DAY

Hip restaurant in the Fulton Market hood -- old brick machine shops reborn as trendy small plate joints catering to the beard and tattoo crowd. WE MOVE THROUGH the bustle of early morning prep to find BRANDON (20) at the sink with fellow prep cook LUIS (20s) as they sort fresh squid...

LUIS  
Check this out, B...

Luis shows him a large squid. A BEAT as he opens up the squid to reveal a small sand shark inside...

BRANDON  
That's fucked up.

LUIS  
Fish eatin' fish.

BRANDON  
Ain't a fish. It's a cephalopod.

LUIS

Whatever the fuck it is it ate a  
baby shark.

BRANDON

Yeah and now we gonna eat it.  
Circle of motherfuckin' life...

CHEF STEVE (O.C.)

The fuck you doin?

They turn and see CHEF STEVE (30s) standing there, tattoos,  
piercings, impatient as fuck. Brandon shows him the shark...

BRANDON

It was inside the squid.

CHEF STEVE

Okay a shark.

BRANDON

Yes Chef...

CHEF STEVE

Yes Chef what?

(then)

Yes Chef I don't have the squid  
prepped because I'm fucking around  
with a shark?

BRANDON

No ... I mean yes...

As he withers under the gaze, Chef Steve's wife, SARAH (28)  
catches Brandon's eye, signals him to shut the fuck up...

CHEF STEVE

We got eighty covers tonight.  
Clean the fucking squid.

BRANDON

Yes Chef.

Sarah steps in, gets the Chef's attention...

SARAH

Greens just came in...

CHEF STEVE

Yeah...

SARAH

Won't deliver without a signature.  
(then)

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Your signature. And it's ninety  
covers now and I really need you to  
be nice.

CHEF STEVE  
I am fucking nice.

SARAH  
No you're not. But that's okay...  
She kisses him. He smiles, she's got him.

CHEF STEVE  
(then back to Brandon)  
If you're good you book through  
those in twenty.

BRANDON  
Yes Chef...

Chef Steve grabs the shark, tosses it to another PREP COOK

CHEF STEVE  
Yo, Manny. Catch.

A confused Manny looks at the shark as the kitchen busts out  
laughing and Chef Steve EXITS with Luis.

A BEAT as Brandon gets busy cleaning the squid. Sarah comes  
over and watches him. Maybe we catch a spark between them as  
Brandon tries real hard to focus on the squid and not the way  
her hair falls across her face or that blouse one button too  
low. But yeah there's something there...

SARAH  
He's just testing you.

BRANDON  
I know.

SARAH  
You want a shot at the line he  
needs to know you can take it.

BRANDON  
Shit, Luis been prep for three  
years. How am I gonna get a shot?

SARAH  
That's all Luis wants to be. You  
don't want it, fine...

BRANDON  
No. I wanna get on the line.

SARAH

Okay, Tahir's leaving. Girl and the Goat...

BRANDON

For real?

SARAH

Fuck Tahir. You want the job I'll tell Chef to give you a shot.

BRANDON

When?

SARAH

I'll let ya know, be ready.

SARAH (CONT'D)

It's what you want, right?

BRANDON

Yeah...

SARAH

Better if we don't have to bring somebody in.

A beat as Brandon absorbs this, goes back to squid...

SARAH (CONT'D)

You're welcome...

BRANDON

My bad -- thanks.

She smiles, meets his gaze a beat too long. He looks away.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Why you doin' this?

SARAH

You're good enough to be on the line, so you should be on the line.

(then)

Just don't fuck me like Tahir...

BRANDON

What if Chef says no?

SARAH

He won't say no unless you fuck it up. So don't fuck it up.

BRANDON

I won't.

SARAH

Better get those squid prepped.

Brandon smiles. Sarah smiles and then EXITS when Luis arrives with produce to be broken down.

LUIS

She wanna throw you somma that pussy...

BRANDON

Naw. She's just bein' nice.

LUIS

Maybe they onna those fucked up swinger couples. You do her and Chef watches. Then they switch it up. You do him. He do you. White folks are into that shit.

BRANDON

She just helpin' me, that's all.

LUIS

Helpin' you with what?

BRANDON

I wanna get on the line.

LUIS

The fuck you wanna be on the line for?

BRANDON

Cuz I got plans.

(off look)

Bust it out here and then me and my girl Jerrika are gonna open our own place.

LUIS

Your girl know about you fuckin' Chef's wife?

BRANDON

Yo shut up with that shit and we ain't fuckin'...

Off Brandon as he looks across the restaurant, sees Sarah...

EXT. STREET SOUTHSIDE -- DAY

CAMERA FINDS KEVIN GREEN (12) and his sister KIESHA (16) on their way to the bus stop for school. Kevin's got his walk-to-school face on -- head down, backpack weighing him down. Kiesha's 16 going on 20, face in her phone, texting away.

They walk by the corner store. Kevin stops, stares at the line of kids lined up for their breakfast nachos, bags of chips, pop, etc...

KEVIN  
Gimme a dollar.

KIESHA  
Nope.

KEVIN  
Okay then I tell mom you ditchin'.  
(off look)  
If she asks...

KIESHA  
You ain't gonna snitch.

KEVIN  
Five dollars and I don't say shit.

KIESHA  
Whathcha gonna do with five bucks?

KEVIN  
Not snitch.

Kiesha rolls her eyes and hands him five bucks. Kevin heads to the corner store as Kiesha jets off and we...

INT. MARCUS GARVEY ACADEMY, HALLWAY -- DAY

THROUGH THE BUSTLE of kids letting loose from various classrooms. THE CAMERA FINDS Kevin EYEING a pretty girl, ANDREA(12) across the way with RHONESHA, one of her pack. Kevin's wingman is PAPA, chubby, got a certain swagger but his clothes are all fucked up, like his mom buys his shit at discount stores. And then there is JAKE. Jake wants to be Kevin, but fronts junior gangster, instead and follows Kevin's lead, sorta...

PAPA  
Walk yo punk ass over there and  
talk to Andrea.

KEVIN

Shut yo fat ass up, Papa.

PAPA

I'm husky not fat and I dunno why  
you trippin' Talkin' to girls  
ain't nothin', you just gotta tell  
'em what's what.

JAKE

Papa's right, the dance is tomorrow  
night.

(then)

You gonna ask Andrea or what?

KEVIN

What if she say no?

JAKE

Then she says no...

PAPA

This is some bullshit. Watch...

Papa goes right up to Andrea and Rhonesha, big smile...

PAPA (CONT'D)

Hey Andrea.

(lesser)

Rhonesha...

ANDREA

Yeah Papa...

Rhonesha shoots Andrea a look and they laugh -- a dagger to  
Papa's chubby little heart.

PAPA

What you laughin' about Rhonesha?

ANDREA

You gonna ask Rhonesha to the dance  
or what? Cuz she might say yes if  
you ask proper.

PAPA

What?

ANDREA

So you don't wanna ask Rhonesha?

PAPA

I didn't say that.

RHONESHA

Say what you gonna say then.

PAPA

I ain't even talkin' to you  
Rhonesha...

ANDREA

What's wrong with your shoes?

PAPA

They Classics...

ANDREA

They were Classics. They trash  
now.

A BEAT as Papa looks at his shoes -- dirty, scuffed up.  
Kevin arrives. Papa fades back to watch with Jake.

RHONESHA

Hey Kevin...

KEVIN

Rhonesha...  
(unnerved, to Andrea)  
Can we talk...

ANDREA

You're talkin' now.

KEVIN

I meant alone...

ANDREA

I'm gonna be late for health class,  
you can walk with me if you want.

KEVIN

I just wanna talk.

ANDREA

I said walk with me. You can walk  
and talk?

Kevin nods, falls in alongside Andrea. Rhonesha peels off.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

Bell about to ring...

KEVIN

History...  
(long beat)  
The test...



ANDREA  
Yeah...

KEVIN  
It's next week...

ANDREA  
Yeah...

KEVIN  
I was thinkin' of studyin' for  
it...

Andrea gives him a look like he's fucking retarded.

ANDREA  
It's a test, what else you gonna  
do?

KEVIN  
Do you wanna maybe study ...  
Together?

Before she can answer the bell RINGS and they are at her  
classroom.

ANDREA  
Okay -- if you tell Papa he should  
ask Rhonesha to the dance...

This is his opening but he blows it...

KEVIN  
Okay...

Off a bewildered Kevin as he races to his room and we...

EXT. ROWHOUSE, SOUTHSIDE -- DAY

Modest split duplex -- WE PUSH IN on the upper floor window  
and FIND A SHIRTLESS DUDE in the upstairs, moving...

INT. ROWHOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

And we meet EMMETT (17) who is enjoying a little morning blow  
job from a girl. We only see the top of her head. We note  
dozens of SHOE BOXES stacked against the wall, more in the  
closet, his little side hustle. A BEAT as the girl stops,  
looks up at him and we see that it's Kiesha and this is what  
she skipped school for...

EMMETT  
The fuck, girl?

Kiesha rolls over onto his bed...

KIESHA  
When I gonna get mine?

EMMETT  
Told ya it have to be like cuz my  
mom's gonna be home soon.

She puts a hand up to her nipple, PINCHES it, slides her  
panties off and throws them at his feet...

KIESHA  
You get those Curry's for my little  
brother?

EMMETT  
Yeah, bright blue.  
(then)  
Now get back over here.

KIESHA  
I ain't finishin' in front of the  
window. You wanna get done, come  
over here.

He takes one last look out the window and then goes to her.

While they do their thing the CAMERA MOVES to the wall above  
the bed where we see photos of two ATTRACTIVE TEENAGE GIRLS  
holding EMMETT'S illegitimate progeny on their laps. Both  
kids look just like Emmett.

WE HEAR the familiar buzz of cell as the CAMERA MOVES and  
finds Emmett's cell blowing up with a call. We see the  
CALLER'S PHOTO pop on the screen under her name, TIFFANY.  
Emmett, deftly grabs the phone sends call to VM...

KIESHA (CONT'D)  
Damn, boy.

Emmett lights up a black and mild, exhales...

KIESHA (CONT'D)  
Who that?

EMMETT  
My boy, Darryl.

KIESHA  
Why you ain't pick up?

EMMETT

How I look answering some nigga's  
call while I'm fuckin' you?

A BEAT as Emmett rises, goes to the window and FUCK -- sees  
his mother, JADA (40s) coming through the gate. He turns and  
sees that Kiesha has his phone.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Get under the bed.

Kiesha just gives him a look, turns the phone around -- knows  
he's lying, wantin' to know who the fuck Tiffany is...

KEISHA

Darryl? Fuck you.

EMMETT

Just get under the bed...

Kiesha puts on a T-shirt, SCURRIES under the bed. Emmett  
sprays Febreeze everywhere as Jada BANGS on the door.

JADA

What'd I tell you about closing  
doors in my house?

Emmett opens the door to reveal Jada standing there in her  
SCRUBS, fresh off work, tired and sussing he's up to no good.

JADA (CONT'D)

What I say?

EMMETT

You said not to do it.

JADA

If all you're gonna do in here is  
fuck and get high the least you can  
do is start paying me some rent.

EMMETT

I'm workin' this friday...

JADA

You ask for more hours?

EMMETT

Yes...

JADA

Now you lyin'.

A BEAT as Jada looks past Emmett and sees Kiesha's PANTIES on the floor, a hand reach out to retrieve them. Jada crosses, STEPS ON THE PANTIES, looks under the bed...

JADA (CONT'D)

What's your name, girl?

KIESHA

Kiesha.

JADA

Kiesha. You hungry, Kiesha?

(off nod)

Would you like to stay for dinner, Kiesha?

(another nod)

You like shrimp, Kiesha?

KIESHA

Yes.

JADA

Well, too bad the salmon was on sale. So, that's what we having.

As Emmett tries to muster the lie, but she knows...

EXT. STOOP -- DAY

WE FIND THREE DUDES holding court talking shit and admiring all the PRETTY WOMEN making their way to work. They are RONNIE (36) he wears his struggles on his face as he accepts a bottle from CURTIS (30s) shirtless, still thinkin' he looks badass but he's half a bum. BARRY (30s) sips an orange juice. Ronnie offers him the bottle. Barry passes, holds forth the juice.

BARRY

Naw man I'm on the juice. Purify the body, sharpen the mind.

RONNIE

Goin' Nation on us and shit?

BARRY

Naw, it ain't that...

RONNIE

Yo man, read the label, that shit's all sugar. Got like ten percent juice...

Barry checks, Ronnie's right...

BARRY

Shit that's ten percent good.

RONNIE

The fuck you talkin' about?

BARRY

Gettin' on the program so I don't  
end up like Chivas Fred...

He indicates an old DRUNK DUDE sitting on a milk crate  
against the fence, drunk and talking to himself.

RONNIE

Program? You don't even got a job,  
nigga.

BARRY

And you do?

RONNIE

Fuck I need a job for?

(then)

So I can pay the government taxes --  
fuck that, shit.

BARRY

Naw man so you can loan me some  
money.

A BEAT as a fine looking girl walks toward them, looking  
right through the motley trio. Ronnie steps up, Curtis right  
behind shirtless while Barry hangs back.

RONNIE

Where you going? You got a man?

CURTIS

Want one?

RONNIE

I know you like that Jodeci...

(singing Jodeci)

*Baby won't you just stay*

*Baby won't you just stay*

*For a little while.*

She just keeps walking. As if they don't exist.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Man, fuck that ho. My girl look  
better than her anyway.

BARRY  
Tracy ain't your girl no more.

RONNIE  
She got my baby, so she'll always  
be my girl.

CURTIS  
He ain't even yours.

RONNIE  
I raised him like he was mine.

BARRY  
Try all you want you ain't gettin'  
back with her.

RONNIE  
Man, fuck both y'all.

A BEAT as an unmarked POLICE CAR rolls up on them. The window rolls down revealing, DETECTIVE RICK NATHAN(40s) lanky, half-assed goatee dribbling down his chin, rumpled shirt and jacket. Curtis and Barry SCATTER when they make him as police.

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
The fuck you doin'?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Need to talk, Ronnie.

RONNIE  
Told you I don't got shit no more.

Nathan lowers his shades...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Just get in the fuckin' car.

Fuck it, he looks around, gets in as we...

INT. POLICE STATION, HALLWAY -- DAY

WE FIND COOGIE being escorted down a long hallway by a large FEMALE OFFICER, hands cuffed behind his back.

COOGIE  
When I gonna get my call?

OFFICER  
You got your call.

COOGIE  
But I didn't get nobody.

OFFICER  
And that's my problem?

COOGIE  
I got rights.

OFFICER  
And I got a head ache from you  
runnin' your mouth...

She keys open a door, shoves Coogie inside.

INT. POLICE STATION, INTERVIEW ROOM -- DAY

Coogie looks around. Bare white walls. CAMERA in the corner. Coogie sees that, smiles, plays to it...

COOGIE  
Help me. Police brutality...

The Officer is not amused...

OFFICER  
You really wanna pull that shit  
with me, son?  
(Coogie obeys)  
My son talk to me like that, he  
knows what he gonna get.

Coogie turns. She keys the cuffs off, motions to a chair bolted to the floor under a bare table.

COOGIE  
Yes Maam...

OFFICER  
Shut up and wait for the detective.

She cuffs him to a ring on the table and exits as we...

INT. NATHAN'S CAR (MOVING) -- DAY

Nathan behind the wheel, Ronnie stares numb with grief...

RONNIE  
Jason ... fuck ...  
(then)  
Where?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
79th, he was shot. Twice...

Ronnie stares out the window at the Southside smearing by,  
trying to hold back tears...

RONNIE  
The fuck he doin' up there?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
He into somethin' I should know  
about?

RONNIE  
Naw. He's a good kid, made all  
city last year. I raised him, you  
know.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
You did right by him.  
(then)  
You in his life then?

RONNIE  
Not really, just check in when his  
moms lets me.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
What about you?  
(off look)  
Stayin' outta trouble?

RONNIE  
What are you sayin'?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Just a question...

RONNIE  
Naw, nothin' like that.  
(then)  
This got nothin' to do with me ...  
shit...

Ronnie starts to lose it again...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
When was the last time you saw him?

RONNIE  
Last week...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
He say anything?



RONNIE

Naw...

(long beat)

Can I see him?

Off this as we UP CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE, HALLWAY -- DAY

Nathan escorts Ronnie down a long tiled hallway. There are at least three new guests of the morgue in body bags atop gurneys awaiting a drawer and eternity. Nathan stops Ronnie at the door as we can hear distant SOBS coming from inside...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

His mom's in there...

(then)

You good with that?

Ronnie nods, opens the door...

INT. MORGUE, IDENTIFICATION ROOM -- DAY

Ronnie's POV as he sees TRACY (30s) standing over the body of her son JASON (the pretty dead kid from the teaser) and she is glowing with grief, sobbing into the void -- her sixteen year old baby boy is on a stainless steel table. Dead.

TRACY

He's gone, my baby Jason's gone ...  
no ... God please ...

RONNIE

Trac ... baby ...

Ronnie tries to hug her. She steps away.

TRACY

What you doin' here?

RONNIE

He was mine too, loved him like he  
was my blood.

Tracy nods at this essential truth as she stares at Nathan, crosses to him. Angry, raw...

TRACY

I wanna know who did this to my  
boy.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
We picked up a kid. He was seen  
standing over your son's body,  
possible robbery.

RONNIE  
Who?

Nathan stands there a beat, realizes he mighta said too much.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
That's all I can say...  
(then)  
Take as much time as you need.

With that he exits and we...

EXT. TRESTLE & CRANE, ALLEY -- DAY

Brandon's girlfriend JERRIKA (20s) pulls up in her car,  
dressed for work.

BRANDON  
She didn't say what she want?

JERRIKA  
Nope. She triflin' -- telling me  
she don't have your number.

BRANDON  
So she still at our crib?

JERRIKA  
Uh-huh.

BRANDON  
Probably wants money.

JERRIKA  
I don't think so...

BRANDON  
I'll deal with it.

JERRIKA  
Damn right you will. She's drunk  
too.

BRANDON  
She's an alcoholic.

Jerrika looks at him, this is clearly a topic.

JERRIKA  
She's your mother.

BRANDON  
Said I'd deal with her. Now you  
wanna hear some good news?  
(then)  
Might be a spot opening up on the  
line.

JERRIKA  
For real?

BRANDON  
They gonna give me a shot, I do  
good and it's mine.

He hops in, leans to give her a kiss. She pushes him away,  
drives...

JERRIKA  
Uh, uh -- you stink.

He tries again and this time she lets him. They share a look  
as we UP CUT TO:

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Brandon & Jerrika enter their apartment. Jerrika waits in  
the kitchen as Brandon ENTERS the living room and finds  
Laverne sitting on the couch staring angrily at some cut  
flowers on the table. She don't even look up.

LAVERNE  
You still washin' dishes or they  
let you sweep the floors now?

BRANDON  
I'm not gettin' into this with you.  
What's so important you can't just  
call me?

LAVERNE  
Got a message. Coogie's in jail.

BRANDON  
Jail?  
(then concerned)  
What he do?

LAVERNE  
Said it was a message. Now I need  
a ride to the police station.

Jerrika pokes her head in at the news Coogie's been arrested.

JERRIKA

Is he okay?

LAVERNE

Don't go pokin' your nose into my business, girl.

Brandon steps between them, gives his mother a hard look.

BRANDON

You don't talk to her like that.

LAVERNE

I talk to her any damn way I please. Now are you gonna take me or do I gotta get a bus?

JERRIKA

You can use my car, I'll take the train.

LAVERNE

What kinda man don't own a car?

(then)

You stop wastin' money on shit like flowers and throw pillows maybe you get enough to buy your own car...

BRANDON

You wanna go or not?

(off look)

Then it don't matter who's car it is...

JERRIKA

You want me to come with?

BRANDON

Naw...

He indicates Laverne as she ENTERS. Stands there staring at Jerrika.

LAVERNE

You know you can get plastic flowers. Save money that way.

Off that we...

INT. MARCUS GARVEY ACADEMY - DAY

CAMERA PUSHES through a noisy cafeteria. Kids are eating flaming hots and banging on tables. FIND Jake & Papa eating lunch as Kevin stares at Andrea across the way.

KEVIN  
I fucked up.

PAPA  
Yeah you did.

KEVIN  
I'm gonna try again.

PAPA  
You a gluten for punishment.

KEVIN  
It's glutton.

PAPA  
Whatever.

KEVIN  
If I can just get the words out, I think she'll say yes.

JAKE  
It ain't like you gone catch her alone. You know these pretty bitches run in packs.

PAPA  
Yeah, but they need to kick Rhonesha's ass out the group. Sitting over there looking like a fuckin' sea donkey.

A BEAT as Kevin rises and does the dead man's walk. He makes it to Andrea's table and just stands there.

ANDREA  
Can I help you?

Long beat, then...

KEVIN  
Can I borrow your ketchup?

ANDREA  
I said we could study now you wanna borrow ketchup. What else you want?

Andrea's pack bust out laughing as Kevin retreats and we...

INT. POLICE STATION, INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Coogie being interviewed by Nathan, drinking an ENERGY DRINK.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
You know about that corner?

COOGIE  
I know a lotta things detective.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Okay Charles why don't you tell me  
what you know.

COOGIE  
It's Coogie, my brother named me  
that cuz I couldn't say Cookie.  
Kept fuckin' up the k.  
(then)  
And I know you ain't got shit to  
hold me on but that don't matter  
cuz you're police and you just make  
shit up cuz you the police.

Nathan takes a sip of his energy drink.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Noted.  
(then)  
Now I still don't know what you  
were doin' standing over a body...

COOGIE  
Cuz you don't know shit about  
shoes...

Coogie looks at Nathan's shoes...

COOGIE (CONT'D)  
You get those at Kmart?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
The mall. They're Clarks...

COOGIE  
They some ugly Church ass shoes.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
They're comfortable. Now what the  
fuck were you doin' over that body?

COOGIE

Told ya, saw them Jordans.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

You wanted them?

COOGIE

Didn't say that.

(then)

You should get some Tims,  
detective.

(off look)

Timberlands. You could work those.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

I wanna get back to what you were  
doin' on that corner.

COOGIE

I wasn't *on the corner* -- I was  
just walkin' by when I see that kid  
layin' there. First I thought he  
was sleepin' but then I saw his  
shoes...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Maybe you saw his shoes earlier,  
followed him in there...

COOGIE

Just cuz I'm thirsty for shoes  
don't mean I'm a killer.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

I seen people killed for less...

COOGIE

Man this is the Chi, people die  
every day...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

What's that mean?

COOGIE

Just how it is detective...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Don't have to be like that...

COOGIE

But it is...

Nathan's impatient, ain't gettin' in to the fucked-upness of  
the place. It's just a job...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Okay, after you checked out the shoes you take anything else from the body?

COOGIE

I didn't take nothin'.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

You had his blood on your hands...

COOGIE

Touched him to see if was still alive.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Maybe you grabbed his phone...

COOGIE

What I want with a phone? They give you brain cancer ya know. Same with that shit you drinkin'.  
(indicates the energy drink)  
Cocaine for white folks.

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Answer my question.

COOGIE

We already established I ain't a thief and I ain't onna them baby shooters.

A BEAT then...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

You know who runs that corner?

COOGIE

Everybody knows that so the only reason you askin' is so you can fuck my shit up. Already told ya I didn't do it.

Nathan drains the last of his energy drink, stands.

COOGIE (CONT'D)

You believe me, right?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Timberlands, huh?



COOGIE  
Real ones, not those fake ass  
Chinese ones they sell on Maxwell  
Street...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Okay.

COOGIE  
Now what?

Nathan exits without answering...

INT. POLICE STATION, HALLWAY OUTSIDE INTERVIEW ROOM -- DAY

Nathan finds DETECTIVE BILL WALLACE, (40s) fat, small eyes  
chopped into his head, waiting for him...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Bill.

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
He give you anything?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Attitude. Told me my shoe game was  
for shit.

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
He's right.

A beat as Wallace peeks in the observation window at Coogie.

DETECTIVE WALLACE (CONT'D)  
Any connect to the victim?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
No gun, no priors except for some  
bullshit shoplifting. Waiting on  
GSR but that'll come back  
negative...

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
Body was in front of Trice's stash  
house.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
So you think this touches your  
thing?

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
You tell me...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Not this kid...

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
Your CI?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
He's not a CI, just a guy who knows  
what's what. I help him, he helps  
me...

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
Maybe I could talk to him.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
He's got nothin' to do with Trice.

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
Okay...

DETECTIVE WALLACE (CONT'D)  
So you gonna kick him?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
We got nothin' to hold him.

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
Standin' over the body, right?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Yeah, but this kid...

DETECTIVE WALLACE  
You're gettin' soft Nathan.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Maybe...

Off Nathan, puzzled by Wallace's interest in this as we...

INT. FORD CITY MALL - FOOT LOCKER - AFTERNOON

Emmett is trying on a pair of LeBron's when Tiffany (the girl  
who's call he ignored earlier) comes storming into the  
establishment with EMMETT JUNIOR (2) and looks like Emmett.

Tiffany watches him lace up the shoes and walk over to a  
mirror, ignoring her.

TIFFANY  
Really, Nigga?

EMMETT

I'm not doin' this with you today.

TIFFANY

I really don't want my brothers to have to come fuck you up. I don't. You need to take care of your responsibilities.

EMMETT

I do. Their names are Davante and Cassius and I can't afford no more.

TIFFANY

Well, you gone have to start 'cause Emmett Junior is your responsibility too.

EMMETT

Just 'cause you named him after me, don't make him mine.

Emmett grabs some Air Force Ones, shouts to a white EMPLOYEE.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Yo what sizes you got these in?

TIFFANY

Fuck you, Emmett!

EMMETT

Yeah, you did. You also fucked your way through the South Side of Chicago.

She SLAPS him. Hard. Tiffany stands back, waits. Emmett thinks about it, but he's not that guy.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

You lucky you did that shit to me. 'Cause a lesser dude would've punched you in yo fuckin' mouth.

SECURITY rushes over.

SECURITY

Take it outside.

EMMETT

I'm a paying customer. I ain't goin' nowhere.

The White Dude backs down, then to Tiffany...

SECURITY

Ma'am, if you're not gonna purchase anything I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

EMMETT

She ain't got no money.

TIFFANY

I'd have some if you paid child support. I can't do this by myself, I got things to do...

EMMETT

So do I...

TIFFANY

Like what? You ain't work enough to pay for YOUR son.

EMMETT

He ain't my son.

TIFFANY

Fuck you talkin' he look just like you...

EMMETT

So we get a paternity test.

TIFFANY

Really?

EMMETT

Yeah, now get the fuck outta my face.

She RAISES her hand to hit him again, but Security grabs her and escorts her out of the store.

INT. TRACY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

WE FIND Tracy sitting on the couch in her living room, the walls filled with pictures of Jason. She's crying but there's not much left as Ronnie ENTERS, lighting a JOINT. He takes a big hit, sits next to Tracy and offers it to her.

RONNIE

Help you sleep...

TRACY

I don't wanna sleep.

Ronnie sets the joint down and tries to put his arm around her, but she gets up and starts pacing back and forth.

A BEAT as Ronnie studies Tracy. She's all he ever wanted but like all good things in his life he fucked it up and now this...

TRACY (CONT'D)

It doesn't make sense...

RONNIE

Where was he comin' from?

TRACY

Texted me, said he was at a party.

RONNIE

Maybe somebody fucked with him there?

TRACY

No. He would've told me about it.

RONNIE

You sure?

TRACY

I know my son...

RONNIE

Your son?

(off look)

Taught that boy to pee straight.  
And that crossover he used to put  
up twenty on Simeon -- we worked on  
that for weeks at the park.

(then)

He was mine too...

TRACY

You say you his father then act  
like it...

RONNIE

What?

TRACY

You need to find out who shot  
Jason.

RONNIE

Okay, I'll ask around.

TRACY

I ain't asking you to ask around.  
(then)  
I'm sayin' you need to set this  
right...

RONNIE

How I gonna do that?

TRACY

You know what I'm asking...

RONNIE

No, I don't Tracy. Cops said they  
had somebody...

TRACY

Cops ain't gonna do shit. I'm  
askin' you to get the muthafuckas  
that killed him. That's what you  
gonna do if you wanna do right by  
me. That's what a real man would  
do.

(off look)

You supposed to be his father.  
Make it right...

RONNIE

Trac...

TRACY

You heard what I said.

She rises, crosses to him and gives him a hug. Off Ronnie as  
we...

INT. POLICE STATION, HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Detective Nathan escorts Coogie toward processing. They  
arrive at a COUNTER behind which a CLERK sits...

DETECTIVE NATHAN

(to Clerk)

Charles Johnson...

The Clerk nods. Coogie's smiles offers Nathan some dap.  
Nathan doesn't take it...

COOGIE

Thanks for seein' that I got  
nothin' to do with this...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
You go to school?

COOGIE .  
You don't gotta lecture me, I'm  
done fuckin' with dead bodies.  
(then)  
You gonna do somethin' about them  
shoes?

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Maybe...

The Clerk passes a tub of Coogie's belongings thru the grate.

Nathan escorts him through a buzzing security door and to a  
busy waiting room filled with families, lawyers waiting...

ON COOGIE as he sees his mother Laverne and Brandon over in  
the corner. They cross to meet him as Nathan hovers.  
Brandon gives Coogie a hug as Nathan approaches Laverne...

DETECTIVE NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Detective Nathan, Ma'am.

He offers his hand. She doesn't take it. He swivels to  
Brandon and he does shake it.

DETECTIVE NATHAN (CONT'D)  
You his brother?

LAVERNE  
They half...  
(then)  
Let's go Charles, we don't talk to  
police.

She grabs Coogie and drags him away, leaving Brandon there.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
You wanna know what he did?  
(off look)  
Found him standing over a body.  
Kid was shot two times in the back.  
Lucky he's getting released.

BRANDON  
Well I'm sure he didn't have  
nothin' to do with that.

A BEAT as Nathan hands him a card...

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
What I need that for?

DETECTIVE NATHAN

Body was on a known gang corner.  
Still don't know what your brother  
was doing there. Maybe somebody  
else figures that out, comes at him  
to settle...

BRANDON

He didn't do nothin' so he's got  
nothin' to worry about.

Off Nathan not so sure...

EXT. POLICE STATION, PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

As Brandon approaches his mother and Coogie he sees Coogie  
trying to hug her and Laverne pushing him away.

LAVERNE

Told you not to fuck around like  
that.

COOGIE

I ain't done nothin'. I'm sorry,  
mama...

LAVERNE

That don't matter to the police.

Brandon arrives, interrupts this. She turns on him.

LAVERNE (CONT'D)

Better not of told them shit.

BRANDON

He just trying to do his job.

LAVERNE

I know what the police do.

A BEAT...

BRANDON

Maybe Coogie could stay with me for  
awhile...

LAVERNE

What for?

(then)

You think you can do better, go on.

BRANDON

That's not what I'm sayin'...



LAVERNE  
(to Coogie)  
You wanna stay with him?

COOGIE  
Maybe for a little bit...

LAVERNE  
Go on then.

Laverne walks back to the car, leaving them.

COOGIE  
You got room?

BRANDON  
We got a couch.

COOGIE  
Sure Jerrika's cool with it?

BRANDON  
Long as you pick up after yourself.

Off Brandon as regards his mother staring daggers at him...

INT. KEVIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Kevin finds Kiesha...

KEVIN  
Need to borrow your phone.

KIESHA  
If it's pokemon go, forget it.

KEVIN  
It ain't that.

Kiesha hands Kevin her phone.

KIESHA  
Five minutes.

KEVIN  
C'mon Kiesha, it's private.

Kevin waits for her to exit and then dials as we...

INT. APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Andrea is sitting on her bed doing homework her phone RINGS.  
INTERCUT AS NEEDED.

KEVIN  
Andrea? It's Kevin...

ANDREA  
How you get this number?

KEVIN  
Rhonesha gave it to me.

ANDREA  
She did? Okay...

KEVIN  
Um, I was just wondering if you  
wanted to go to the dance with me?

ANDREA  
Yeah but Jake already asked me.

KEVIN  
My friend Jake...

ANDREA  
Yes.

KEVIN  
What did you say?

ANDREA  
I said yes...

KEVIN  
Well, okay. That's all I wanted to  
ask you. Bye.

Kevin hangs up, gut punched as we...

INT. EMMETT'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Emmett is still asleep when he hears BANGING on his door.

JADA (O.C.)  
Emmett! Wake your ass up, right  
now! Get up!

EMMETT  
I'm coming!

He opens the door and sees his mother holding Emmett Jr.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

JADA

She came by and just handed him to me -- said you were expectin' him.

EMMETT

That bitch is crazy, he ain't mine.

JADA

Funny cuz he look just like you.  
This was in the diaper bag...

She shows Emmett paternity test results. He has a look.

JADA (CONT'D)

That's right -- says right there  
you his father.

EMMETT

Fuck!

JADA

That's exactly what you did. And  
for some reason you keep doing it  
without a condom.

Emmett tries to leave, but Jada blocks the doorway.

JADA (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going?

EMMETT

I'mma try to find her.

JADA

You're gonna take him with you.

EMMETT

I ain't got no car seat.

JADA

Then I suggest you go buy one.  
This boy is your responsibility  
now. Cause I'm done raising nappy-  
headed little boys. Now if you  
need a baby-sitter here and there I  
got you, but other than that you  
gone have to figure it out.

EMMETT

Ma, she can't just leave the baby  
with me like that.

JADA

She didn't leave him with a  
stranger, she left him with his  
father.

Jada exits the room, leaving Emmett all alone with his son...

EMMETT

Where your mama at?

Emmett Junior grabs a box of Emmett's shoe collection.  
Emmett picks his son up, shows him the shoe.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

You like that?

(nothing)

You know your mamma is crazy as  
hell and so is your grandma --  
leavin' you here like this...

In response Emmett Junior puts the shoe in his mouth as we...

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Brandon puts down several plates of food for Jerrika and  
Coogie to try...

BRANDON

Go on...

Jerrika cuts a piece of steak, tastes it...

JERRIKA

Shit's raw as hell..

BRANDON

That's how white folks like it.

Coogie takes a bite.

COOGIE

You got any ketchup.

BRANDON

You ain't puttin' ketchup on it.

Brandon watches as Coogie wraps the remainder of the steak in  
a napkin.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
What are you doin,?

COOGIE  
Savin' it...

BRANDON  
For what?

COOGIE  
Somethin'.

JERRIKA  
Still needs salt.

BRANDON  
(lovingly busting her right  
back)  
This ain't that salty greasy ass  
shit you serve at Italian  
Gardens...

JERRIKA  
Better watch your mouth...

BRANDON  
Just sayin' when I open my place it  
ain't gonna be like that.

JERRIKA  
Your place, you mean our place...

BRANDON  
My bad.  
(then to Coogie)  
You goin' to school?

COOGIE  
Mom was supposed to sign a note  
explaining how come I missed.  
Can't go back without one...

BRANDON  
Shit, Jerrika'll forge one...

JERRIKA  
I will?

BRANDON  
He needs to get back in school.

Brandon crosses back to the kitchen to grab some coffee.  
STAY WITH him as he gets a text.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
Oh shit...

JERRIKA  
What?

BRANDON  
It's tonight.  
(off look)  
The line.

JERRIKA  
No way...

BRANDON  
They're short. I do good the job's  
mine.

JERRIKA  
Course you gonna do good.

BRANDON  
You don't know Chef.

JERRIKA  
You got this...

On Coogie, watching as Brandon gives Jerrika a kiss...

BRANDON  
Love you...

JERRIKA  
Love you too -- no go. We'll clean  
up, ain't that right Coogie...

With that Brandon grabs his backpack and exits as we...

EXT. MARCUS GARVEY ACADEMY, PLAYGROUND - NEXT MORNING

Kevin and Jake are rolling on the ground scrapping.

KEVIN  
Fuck you, Jake!

Kevin KICKS Jake in the stomach as Papa pulls him away.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Why'd you ask her to the dance when  
you knew I wanted to!?

JAKE  
Cuz you was takin' too long!

PAPA  
That's foul, man. You living foul.

JAKE  
Shut up, Papa.

PAPA  
Don't tell me to shut up.

Andrea and Rhonesha walk up...

JAKE  
Andrea, just go to the dance with Kevin. He liked you first.

KEVIN  
fuck it. Y'all can go together.

ANDREA  
Why don't I just take the both of ya'll?

JAKE  
That's cool.

Looks to Kevin...

KEVIN  
Nah, I don't share.

Kevin grabs his bookbag and pushes through the crowd...

INT. BASEMENT OF REC CENTER -- DAY

Several dozen folks gathered in the basement for wake/memorial of Jason. We see his teammates, friends, teachers, coaches and Tracy pressed into the corner, face in her hands, all cried out...

PULL TO FIND Ronnie entering. He sees the photos of Jason on the wall, the faces of the mourners and then Tracy who looks up and sees him across the way. He crosses to her.

TRACY  
What you doin' here?

RONNIE  
Tracy...

TRACY  
I told you what you need to be doin'.

RONNIE

I am...

TRACY

Well?

(then)

You ain't done shit...

A beat as Ronnie looks around at the mourners making small talk over paper plates of food, tears. Ronnie turns his back on her and walks away, muttering...

RONNIE

Fuck this shit...

And turns around and walks out as we... UP CUT TO

EXT. STOOP -- DAY

Ronnie finds Curtis and Barry in their usual spot. They don't say anything at first.

BARRY

Ain't they doin' a service at the  
rec center...

RONNIE

Tried but I can't do it...

BARRY

How's Tracy?

RONNIE

How you think?

(then)

Yo Curtis, you ask around?

CURTIS

(nods)

Yeah. My cous Reg says onna his  
lookouts mighta saw somethin'.

RONNIE

Somethin' what?

CURTIS

He up there now. Said you might  
come by and holler at him -- on you  
now...

Ronnie nods a thanks and moves off, a man on a mission.



EXT. STREET NEAR 79TH -- DAY

CAMERA FINDS Coogie back in the alley from the teaser. He finds his skateboard where he hid it. He passes the dog and waits for her to come to the fence and feeds her some of the steak Brandon made for it...

A BEAT as he rolls out to the corner, sees the house, some police tape still fluttering off a flagpole.

A BEAT as he looks around, sees some CORNER BOYS watching, conducting small hand pass business. He plays it cool, skates past them. One of the Corner Boys calls out to him.

CORNER BOY

Yo...

Coogie ignores him, continues into the alley. A BEAT as he reaches behind the trash can and retrieve's the LION OF JUDAH NECKLACE he took off Jason's body. He puts it on and skates back out to the street and as he crosses we LINGER ON the same CORNER BOY we spotted the night of his arrest.

A BEAT as the Corner Boy pulls out a cell, fires off a text. Then he turns and whistles and two little kids -- can't be more than 10 years old hop on bikes and follow Coogie down the street.

ON COOGIE as he sees the kids on bikes following him as we...

INT. TRESTLE & CRANE -- DAY

CAMERA FINDS Brandon on the line working the grill, moving deftly as Chef Steve calls out an order...

CHEF STEVE

Two porkbelly, one flank -- fucking  
medium, grilled chee, pasta shroom,  
shrimp app, three side, three  
yellowtail...

The kitchen staff absorbs the order, answering back his portion...

BRANDON

Two pork, one flank -- fucking  
medium...

A beat as he looks across the grill to see Sarah watching him.

CHEF STEVE

He ain't fucked up yet.

SARAH  
Told ya he was good.

CHEF STEVE  
(to Brandon)  
What are you lookin' at?  
(then)  
Eyes the fuck on the grill.

BRANDON  
Yes Chef...

Off this we...

INT. MARCUS GARVEY ACADEMY - GYM - SAME TIME

CAMERA PUSHES through a gymnasium where SIXTH GRADERS are bumpin' and grindin' to the music. WE FIND Jake and Andrea dancing together, but Andrea can't stop staring at Kevin who is posted up on the wall. She breaks from Jake and crosses to Kevin.

PAPA  
Ah shit, here she come.

She stands directly in front of Kevin.

ANDREA  
You wanna dance?

KEVIN  
Nah, I'm good.

ANDREA  
So, you don't wanna dance with me?

KEVIN  
That's what I said.

Kevin looks through her to Rhonesha standing by herself.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Hey Rhonesha! You wanna dance?

Rhonesha nods with excitement. Kevin gets up and walks right by Andrea and grabs Rhonesha's hand. STAY WITH Andrea as she watches Kevin and Rhonesha layin' into it...

EXT. TRESTLE & CRANE, ALLEY -- NIGHT

Sarah finds Brandon, outside after his shift.

BRANDON  
Just takin' five.

SARAH  
You did great, but I'll let him  
tell you that...

BRANDON  
Messed up a few times, I dunno...

She moves in close to him, weird electricity between them.

SARAH  
You got the job...  
(off look)  
You tell him I told you I'll kill  
you.

BRANDON  
Wow, really...

SARAH  
Yeah, really. Doesn't mean he  
won't fire you, but it's yours.

BRANDON  
Thanks...

SARAH  
I didn't do shit.

He moves closer and then BAM the door flies open and out  
steps Chef Steve, carrying two glasses of tequila, oblivious  
to the VIBE his wife has with Brandon.

CHEF STEVE  
Thought you quit.  
(off look)  
Here.

He hands Brandon the glass.

CHEF STEVE (CONT'D)  
You got the job. Don't fuck it  
up...

He motions for Brandon to do the shot as we UP CUT TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER, NEAR 79TH -- NIGHT

We find Ronnie talking to REG (20s) eyes in the back of his  
head...

REG

Never saw your boy Jason up here.

RONNIE

He wouldn't be.

REG

'Cept he ended up dead here and now  
the police all up on us.

(then)

Sorry but that's how it is.

RONNIE

Curtis says onna your boys saw  
somethin'...

REG

Yeah that kid they took who was  
standin over your boy.

RONNIE

You see him before?

REG

Today.

Reg turns and whistles,

REG (CONT'D)

Yo Stick...

Stick the Corner Boy who saw Coogie rolls up.

REG (CONT'D)

Tell 'em what you saw.

STICK

Same nigga the police got he was  
fuckin' around behind the house  
today.

RONNIE

What he look like?

STICK

Got a Quest Love fro, but he  
skinny. I seen him down at the  
store all the time, fuckin' around  
on his skateboard like a white boy.

REG

(to Stick)

Get the fuck back to it...

Stick runs off. Ronnie looks to Reg, like now what...

REG (CONT'D)

Only reason you here is cuza  
Curtis...

(off look)

Do what you gotta do, just don't  
fuck with our shit any more than  
it's already fucked with.

Ronnie nods and moves off as we...

EXT. SOUTH SIDE STREET -- NIGHT

Kevin, Jake, Papa are walking home from the dance.

JAKE

(to Kevin)

We good?

KEVIN

Yeah, we good...

They shake it out...

PAPA

Man, Andrea trappin' both y'all...

KEVIN

Shut up, Papa...

PAPA

I'm just keeping it trill wit  
ya'll. Least I ain't fighting over  
one. Shit, I'm a pimp by blood.

Papa shows them a twenty dollar bill, wishin' it was a roll.

KEVIN

You buyin' us all chips.

PAPA

I gotta bring change back...

The boys laugh and head into the corner store as we...

EXT. STREET NEAR CORNER STORE -- SAME

Ronnie is standing outside watching as Kevin, Jake, and Papa  
walk by laughing and talking shit. Ronnie barely looks down  
at them as they bounce into the corner store. STAY WITH  
Ronnie, watching as he hears something behind him.

A BEAT as he turns and sees Coogie, lookin' just like a skinny Quest Love rollin' on his deck, singing along to his headphones, happy as fuck. Ronnie steps out but Coogie BLOWS RIGHT PAST and into the store with the boys...

Ronnie WAITS. Kevin, Jake and Papa exit, munching on chips giving each other shit. And then Coogie EXITS. Ronnie follows him, the boys just up the street as they cut through an abandoned lot...

EXT. ABANDONED LOT -- NIGHT

Ronnie stays back in the shadows. Hears the boys talking ahead in the dark and of course Coogie...

RONNIE

Yo...

Coogie can't hear him, so he runs up on him...

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Hey muthafucka...

Coogie turns, sees Ronnie and puts his hands up like he's gettin' robbed. But that's when Ronnie sees the CHAIN around Coogie's neck. WTF?

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Where'd you get that chain?

COOGIE

Found it.

RONNIE

That's my boy's chain.

COOGIE

Naw, it's mine, see I wearin' it.

Coogie tries to walk and that's when Ronnie PULLS THE GUN.

ANGLE ON Kevin, Papa and Jake huddled behind some trash cans, pinned there...

JAKE

(whisper)

We gotta get the fuck outta here.

KEVIN

What happens he start shootin'?

They look to Papa who is curled up in a ball about ready to cry. Kevin puts a hand on him, motions for him to chill as he looks out and sees...

RONNIE walk right up to Coogie and puts the GUN against his chest...

COOGIE  
What the fuck?

RONNIE  
You kill my son?

COOGIE  
Man, I ain't kill nobody.

RONNIE  
I'm gonna ask you one more time  
muthafucka...

COOGIE  
C'mon man, I already told you just  
like I told the cops...

RONNIE  
You jacked him for his shit and  
then you shot him. Ain't no other  
way you got that chain...

COOGIE  
Man, I ain't kill your son. I  
swear. He was dead when I found  
him.

RONNIE  
I don't believe you.

Coogie tears the chain off...

COOGIE  
Here...

Ronnie makes no move. All he can see is his son on that  
steel table, dead, Tracy crying...

RONNIE  
Fuck that...

A BEAT as Coogie sees something click in Ronnie's eyes and  
knows he's got about one chance and so he THROWS the chain at  
Ronnie and tries to run.

HOLD ON RONNIE as he squeezes off TWO SHOTS. Coogie falls face down in the weeds. SILENCE descends on the lot as Ronnie realizes what he's done...

A BEAT as Ronnie grabs the chain from the ground and then walks over to Coogie who is still moving, gasping. Ronnie stands over him waiting as he stops moving.

As he starts to move he hears Papa shout and run. Ronnie raises the gun, sees Kevin huddled with Jake. A BEAT as Kevin locks eyes with Ronnie...

RONNIE (CONT'D)  
The fuck you lookin' at?

KEVIN  
Nothin -- please, don't shoot...

KEVIN'S POV as he shuts his eyes, covers his head, waiting for the gunshot. But it never comes. A BEAT as he opens his eyes to see Ronnie running across the lot as we...

EXT. STREET --- NIGHT

RED AND BLUE of police flashers as Nathan stops to badge the OFFICER IN CHARGE. They wave him through to half a dozen cops and EMTs standing around Coogie's body.

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
(sotto)  
Fuck...

A BEAT as Nathan stares down at Coogie, looks up at a UNIFORMED OFFICER...

OFFICER  
Know him?

Nathan gives him a look...

DETECTIVE NATHAN  
Anybody see anything?

OFFICER  
This ain't Skokie...  
(then)  
Nobody saw nothin'...

Nathan nods wearily and then looks back down at Coogie as we



INT. EL TRAIN -- NIGHT

WE FIND Brandon on his way back from work when he his phone rings. He answers it and we hold on his face as he gets the news of Coogie's death

BRANDON

What?

(then)

Say it again ... naw ... Coogie ...

A BEAT as the words land and Brandon drops the phone and we  
UP CUT TO:

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Brandon enters and finds Jerrika waiting for him, she's been crying and all they can do is hug as we...

EXT. TRACY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ronnie at the door as Tracy opens it, sees him standing there and she knows -- she can see it on his face. Ronnie doesn't say a word. He just holds out Jason's chain. A BEAT as she looks at it for a moment, takes it...

TRACY

It's done, right?

RONNIE

Yeah, it's done...

This thought hangs there as Ronnie turns to leave...

TRACY

You wanna stay?

(off look)

Just tonight. I don't wanna be alone.

Ronnie looks at her, nods as we PRELAP: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" and UP CUT TO:

INT. Church, SEVERAL DAYS LATER -- DAY

COOGIE'S BODY dressed in all in white, sitting in a casket as we hear the organ working away as the CHOIR LEAD sings. WE PAN across the assembled and see the pain and frustration and fatigue of another dead kid. The CAMERA RISES and finds Laverne, Brandon and Jerrika in the front pew. Brandon sits staring at the stained glass, numb while his mother seems out of it and Jerrika lets the tears fall.

The hymn finishes a deep silence descends on the church as the Rev crosses to the pulpit...

REVEREND

And now Charles' older brother will  
come up and say a few words.

Brandon stands, walk unsteadily up to the Reverend. He turns and sees the sparse crowd, older folks mostly.

BRANDON

I'd like to make a correction. In the program it says, "Charles Fredrick Johnson is survived by his mother and his half older brother" It is true, we had different fathers, but I loved him with my whole body so I don't know how he could be my half brother. We shared a whole room, he got on all of my nerves, and I loved him -

Brandon tries to keep it together as he looks at his brother in the casket.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

This shit don't even feel real to me. I'm sorry for cursing, but -- I guess I'm just mad I wasn't there for him the way I should've been. And I'm mad at him for being so damn pretty.

Brandon laughs uncomfortably.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Look at him, he was a pretty muthafucka. Prettiest thing in this damn city.

(then)

Coogie wasn't perfect, but he was charismatic and funny. And he'd be pissed if I told y'all this, but he was a virgin.

This draws a look from the Minister, a few uncomfortable laughs from the congregation...

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Don't laugh. I'm mad we live in a world where being a fourteen year old virgin is funny. My brother was shot dead.

(Then)

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
Ain't nobody gonna do nothin' about  
it -- cuz this city don't care no  
more...

A BEAT as the door in the back of the church OPENS and in  
walks Detective Nathan, out of place, drawing stares.

Brandon locks eyes with him...

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
This ain't no way to live, man.

A few amens echo back...

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
... it's just not. My brother,  
Coogie, is gone. It don't make any  
sense. It just don't, all I know  
is that I loved him and...

He trials off again, the Rev appears behind him and opens his  
arms to offer a hug, but Brandon walks past him.

A LONG BEAT as the Rev nods to the organist to play. And she  
plays as Brandon takes the long walk past the casket.  
Instead of sitting he just WALKS DOWN THE AISLE.

The gathered shift uncomfortably as the door opens and then  
slams shut and we hear...

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
Fuck...

As we...

INT. LIMOUSINE - LATER

Brandon, Jerrika, and Laverne sit in the back of a limo.

LAVERNE  
You the reason he's gone.  
(off look)  
Said it better he stay with you and  
look what happened. You supposed  
to be watchin' him. That's what  
brothers do...

BRANDON  
Like you took care of him...

LAVERNE

You got no fucking right to judge  
me. You and your bougie ass  
girlfriend...

Brandon tries to ignore her. Jerrika can't...

JERRIKA

You need to be quiet...

LAVERNE

I ain't talkin' to you.

Jerrika rubs Brandon's arm. She tries to calm him down. It's  
not working.

LAVERNE (CONT'D)

That one may be dead to me in body,  
but you dead to me in spirit.

Brandon bangs on the window to signal to the driver, who  
opens the door.

BRANDON

You can let us out here...

The driver pulls over. Brandon stares at his mother, then  
opens the door, let's Jerrika out and then exits as we...

EXT. MARCUS GARVEY ACADEMY -- DAY

Pick them up still talking about the situation...

PAPA

Seen him all the time skatin' over  
by the store.

JAKE

Yeah he was cool -- bought me a pop  
once...

KEVIN

Well he ain't cool anymore. He's  
dead and we gonna stop talkin'  
about it.

JAKE

What he do to get shot like that?

KEVIN

I don't know and I don't care.  
That dude that killed him saw me,  
not you.

With that he walks off. Papa gives Jake a look...

INT. TRESTLE & CRANE -- LATE NIGHT

The place all but closed. Brandon's just finished cleaning his station when Sarah finds him. He keeps working, ignores her...

SARAH

You okay?

BRANDON

Fine...

SARAH

When my father died I was all fucked up. Said he was going out to get some ice and he never came back. Heart attack...

BRANDON

I don't wanna talk about it.

SARAH

Okay...

BRANDON

Can I get more hours...

SARAH

Yeah, I'll talk to Steve...

BRANDON

Thanks...

SARAH

You help me lock up I'll give you a ride home...

Off Brandon's nod as we UP CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

Sarah drives as Brandon looks out the window...

BRANDON

I don't wanna go home...

As this settles...

SARAH  
You wanna go someplace or just  
drive?

BRANDON  
You gotta get back, that's cool,  
you can let me out anywhere.

SARAH  
No, I'm good.  
(then)  
Steve's out of town.

BRANDON  
I just can't go home, cuz all I do  
is lay there a stare at the  
ceiling.

SARAH  
Okay, I can fix that...

Off Sarah as she pulls into a liquor store...

EXT. LIQUOR STORE -- NIGHT

Sarah and Brandon exit carrying a brown bag and get back in  
the car...

EXT. ROAD NEAR LAKE MICHIGAN -- NIGHT

We find the car parked on a road overlooking Lake Michigan,  
Chicago sparkling behind them. WE PUSH INTO THE CAR...

INT. CAR -- NIGHT

Sarah passes Brandon a bottle of bourbon...

SARAH  
My first boyfriend used to take me  
here.

BRANDON  
I ain't never been up here  
before...

A BEAT as they drink and then it happens, Sarah drops her  
hand into Brandon's lap...

Brandon stares out at the lake and then he turns to her.  
Sees that it's right there for the taking, all he's gotta do  
is reach up and touch her.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

What?

SARAH

Shhh...

She leans over and KISSES him. Pulls back.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

BRANDON

No...

He kisses her back, runs his hands up inside her shirt hungry to feel something besides this fucking black hole in his heart where Coogie used to be. And it goes down, quick and fast, right there in the car, Sarah with her jeans yanked down, Brandon trying to fuck away the grief and it working for like ten minutes as they fumble away at it and we UP CUT TO:

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT --- NIGHT

Brandon enters in the dark. We follow him as he drops his bag, crosses to the bathroom.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Brandon slides into bed next to Jerrika, she stirs rolls next to him and then...

JERRIKA

You been drinking?

Brandon doesn't answer. She rolls back to sleep, leaving him to contemplate the ceiling and his infidelity...

He looks over at the night stand, sees a photo of him and Coogie and there it is -- the haunts, sitting on his chest, wrapping him in black thoughts as we...

INT. CORNER STORE - NEXT DAY

Brandon stands in front of Habib's counter - just like Coogie used to. Brandon could care less that the store is crawling with people and there's a long line of folks waiting behind him. One of which is Emmett, with EJ on his hip.

HABIB

Sorry about your brother.

BRANDON

You see it?

HABIB

Look I don't want any trouble.

BRANDON

I know Coogie used to steal from you all the time, but he was just a kid...

HABIB

He was a thief. He stole a lot of Doritos and a lot of grape pops.

BRANDON

Yeah, but he also cursed muthafuckas out for making fun of your accent. Remember? He's the reason people stopped calling you Aladdin.

HABIB

That is true. That was very offensive to me.

BRANDON

C'mon, you gotta gimme somethin'.

HABIB

Some kids ran in after it happened then run out when the police came.

EMMETT

Would ya'll muthafuckas hurry up? I'm tryna get to the check/cashing place before they close, damn!

BRANDON

Why don't you be a grown up and get a fucking bank account?

EMMETT

Fuck you, nigga!

Brandon turns to Emmett, calm even...

BRANDON

I'm not tryna to start nothin', I'm tryin' to find out about my brother.

(off look)

He was shot right out there...



This lands on Emmett...

EMMETT

My bad...

BRANDON

(to Habib)

So you ain't gonna help me...

HABIB

You should talk to the police.

BRANDON

Yeah, I'll do that...

With that he exits the store and we...

EXT. ABANDONED LOT -- DAY

We see Brandon in the field where Coogie got shot, police tape still up. Somebody has put some cheap ass flowers on the ground, a cross...

A BEAT as he sees Emmett walking across to him.

BRANDON

What you want?

EMMETT

That your brother got shot?

(off look)

Shit's fucked up. What he do?

BRANDON

He didn't do nothin'?

EMMETT

Aight...

BRANDON

Nobody saw nothin' and it happen right here...

EMMETT

I heard my girl talkin' about how her little brother saw it go down.

BRANDON

For real...

EMMETT

He don't have nothin' to do with it, but maybe he saw somethin'...

Off Brandon as we UP CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Brandon knocks on a door. We hear the sounds of kids RUNNING and SCREAMING inside. Hence, no one answering. He knocks again. Kiesha finally answers the door.

KIESHA  
Can I help you?

BRANDON  
You mess with a dude named Emmett?

KIESHA  
Maybe. You know him?

BRANDON  
(nods)  
I need to talk to your little brother about something.

KIESHA  
The big head or the little head one?

BRANDON  
Big head, I guess.

KIESHA  
(shouting)  
Kevin!

A BEAT as Kevin walks to the door, Kiesha leaves them...

KEVIN  
Who the fuck are you?

BRANDON  
Don't worry about it.

KEVIN  
What you want?

BRANDON  
I want to know if you saw the person that killed my little brother.

KEVIN  
Snitches get stitches.

BRANDON  
Really, dude?

KEVIN  
If I tell you who killed your  
brother. You gone kill him. Then  
his brother gone kill me 'cause I  
told you where to find him at.

Kevin tries to close the door on him, but Brandon stops him.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Damn you strong...

BRANDON  
And you gonna show me where he at.

KEVIN  
Man, I ain't showin' you shit!

BRANDON  
Look, little man - I'll give you  
whatever you want if you just take  
me to him.

A beat as Kevin considers this...

KEVIN  
Give me some money and then I'll do  
it.

BRANDON  
Okay...

KEVIN  
Three hundred and twenty four or  
you can just gimme three fifty..

Brandon annoyed and curious by the specificity.

BRANDON  
You want some new J's or somethin'?

KEVIN  
Ain't none of your business what I  
want.

Brandon can't believe he's being hustled by a twelve year  
old. He digs through his pockets...

BRANDON  
I got forty two dollars. That's  
it.

A beat as Kevin considers...

KEVIN  
That works... and you can buy me  
some chips.

BRANDON  
What kind of chips?

KEVIN  
Flamin' hots.

BRANDON  
Fuck it, okay. Flamin' hots and  
forty two bucks. Is there anything  
else you want or can we do this?

Off this as we...

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Brandon and Kevin look more like brothers than accomplices as  
they make their way down a busy Chicago street.

KEVIN  
You tall as hell. You play  
basketball?

BRANDON  
Naw, man.

KEVIN  
Why not?

BRANDON  
Just 'cause you tall don't mean you  
good.

KEVIN  
True.  
(then)  
You sell drugs?

BRANDON  
No.

KEVIN  
I can tell.

BRANDON  
How can you tell?

KEVIN

Cause you just look like you got a regular job.

BRANDON

There's nothin' wrong with having a regular job.

KEVIN

Nigga, you ain't gotta preach to me.

BRANDON

Don't call me that.

KEVIN

I only called you that cuz I don't know your name.

BRANDON

It's Brandon.

KEVIN

Okay.

BRANDON

You saw it?

(off look)

The shooting?

KEVIN

We was comin' home from the dance and this dude jumped another dude, started yelling about a chain.

(beat)

Then we heard the shots.

A beat as this lands on Brandon.

BRANDON

He say anything?

KEVIN

Nothin' I could hear. Just looked scared, tried to run...

(then)

What he do?

Brandon shrugs...

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Musta been somethin'.

BRANDON

Naw my brother wasn't like that.

(then)

This dude who shot him. He see you?

KEVIN

(nods)

Uh huh...

BRANDON

And you know him?

KEVIN

I said I know where he hang and all  
I gonna do is show you so I don't  
get killed.

A BEAT as they round a corner, the store sign glowing just down the way, cars rolling past. Kevin looks across the street, scared as shit as he motions toward three dudes hanging on a stoop. Among them Ronnie...

KEVIN (CONT'D)

There he go. Over there...

They get high and drink, but they  
aren't with no crew...

A BEAT as Brandon studies Ronnie, Curtis and Barry...

KEVIN (CONT'D)

The one with the hat.

Brandon locks in on Ronnie, watching him from afar...

BRANDON

You sure?

KEVIN

Yeah...

(then)

Brandon ... you gonna kill him?

Brandon stares at Ronnie. Good question, as we...

FADE TO BLACK.