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by

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REVISED SHOOTING DRAFT

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FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

1 EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN SKYLINE - BROOKLYN BRIDGE - MORNING 1
RUSH HOUR

ON a pair of black Dexter penny loafers diligently pedaling an old Schwinn mountain bike. ADJUST ANGLE now to meet the bicyclist...

He's African-American. Anywhere from 33 to 40. Wears wire-rim glasses, a fresh white oxford shirt, creased slacks and a solid green tie. An unobtrusive figure, at once familiar and yet undiscerning. The type you'd pass on a sidewalk and never even notice. He's TREVOR GARFIELD.

ADJUST ANGLE FURTHER now to reveal the upper promenade bike path and a dramatic view of Lower Manhattan behind him. Morning sun glimmers off the Trade Center towers.

Trevor's shadow skitters along the wooden path, 160 ft. above the East River.

A fat briefcase, strapped to the back of his bike, rocks back and forth as he pumps the pedals.

FROM ABOVE now a sweeping view of Trevor, alone on the bike path, a speck, suspended above a sea of rush hour traffic on the bridge below.

2 EXT. ATLANTIC AVENUE (BEDFORD STUYVESANT) - MORNING 2

A wrought-iron train trestle covered with graffiti shakes as an "EL" TRAIN ROARS overhead. Trevor races parallel with it along Atlantic Avenue. Every city block becomes more and more rundown.

3 EXT. ROOSEVELT WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL (BEDFORD STUYVESANT) - MORNING 3

A cyclone fence frames the stalwart face of the old three-story administration building. Ubiquitous gray patches of paint fail to cover where taggers have most recently left their marks. The ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, a black man with a booming voice, barks at late-comers who are about to be tardy...

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
(clapping his hands)
... Let's go, people! Tardy lock-out starts in one minute! Get your butts in gear! One minute, people! Move it!

(CONTINUED)

- 3 CONTINUED: 3
- SUPERIMPOSE: ROOSEVELT WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL -
OCTOBER 1994
- The Assistant Principal, attention diverted, doesn't even notice Trevor as he enters on his bike and races down the sidewalk in front of the school. With all the prompting, students still don't seem to be in much of a hurry.
- 4 OMITTED 4
- 5 INT. RWHS "A" BUILDING - MAIN ENTRANCE 5
- ... as Trevor squeezes through the doorway past students being processed through card readers and metal detectors and turns down the main hall.
- 6 INT. RWHS - MAIN FLOOR 6
- With a glance over his shoulder, Trevor hops back onto his bike and pedals it down the middle of the corridor. STRAGGLING STUDENTS either ignore him or look at him like he's insane.
- STRAGGLING STUDENT
(as Trevor passes)
... No ridin' bikes in 'a hallway,
stoo-pit.
- 6A INT. STAIRWELL 6A
- As Trevor reaches the end of the main corridor... and steers his bike down the stairs.
- 7 INT. RWHS - BOTTOM FLOOR 7
- Trevor coasts skillfully down the stairs and emerges onto the bottom floor of the school. He pedals away toward the other end of the corridor.
- 7A EXT. TREVOR'S CLASSROOM 7A
- A crowd of 10th graders loiter outside Trevor's room. Seeing him coming, they stir to life with a flurry of taunts. Trevor chooses to face all dissension with a smile.

(CONTINUED)

7A CONTINUED:

7A

As Trevor hops off his bike and unlocks the classroom door, he notices two lovers making out in the hallway...

VOICE IN CROWD

... Yuh late, Garfield.

TREVOR

(catching his breath)

... No, bell hasn't rung yet.
Okay, let's get inside. C'mon.

(as they file
into the room)

... Morning, morning. Rise and
shine.

TWO STUDENTS make passing comments...

AUGGIE

(shaking his head)

... You one crazy-ass nigga, G.

TYWAN

(a quarter stuck
in one ear)

... Damn skippy.

TREVOR

Thank you for sharing, Auggie.

TYWAN

(provoking Auggie)

... Auggie doggie.

AUGGIE (O.S.)

Fuck you, Tywan. Yer mama's a
gangsta-rapper.

Trevor offers a pleasant greeting to the two lovers.

TREVOR

'Scuse me, you two... this isn't
the Playboy Channel.

Trevor enters the room, but ducks his head back into the hall.

TREVOR

'Morning, Juanita.

8 INT. RWHS - TREVOR'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

8

Walls are covered with assorted science posters. Styrofoam nuclei dangle from the ceiling. Trevor unstraps the fat briefcase from his bicycle and sets it on a metal stool next to his desk...

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR
 (enthusiastically)
 Let's get started. August and
 Tywan, you pass out the books.
 Thank you, gentlemen.

Auggie and Tywan don't budge.

TYWAN
 Whas up wit' your car, G? Yer
 Pinto blow up?

The majority of students aren't even paying attention. A
 group in the back is already starting a card game.

TREVOR
 (good-natured smile)
 No, I don't own a Pinto, Tywan.
 (addressing the class)
 Okay, can I have everyone's
 attention?

No response, but it doesn't phase Trevor. He removes
 the front wheels from his bike.

TREVOR
 The purpose of the bicycle is to
 demonstrate the principle of
 centripetal force. That's the
 opposite of the force we studied
 yesterday, which was...

VOICE IN THE CROWD
 Magnum force.

Hoots and laughter.

TREVOR
 Centrifugal force... Centripetal
 force is where the acceleration of
 a body moving in circular motion
 is directed toward its center by an
 opposing force, thus creating
 momentum that constrains the body to
 its circular path. Like a gyroscope.
 (sees nothing
 but yawns)
 It's better if I show you. Here,
 Tywan, you be my helper.

Tywan and Auggie are busy talking in the corner. They
 still haven't passed out the books.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

Tywan? Come on.

Tywan, solidly built like a Rodin bronze, saunters over.

TYWAN

Whad-up, G?

(to rest of class)

Hey, shut up! Y'all too damn loud, man!

Class quiets but only marginally.

TREVOR

I need you to demonstrate centripetal force.

(removes briefcase from stool)

Here, have a seat.

Tywan sits and Trevor hands him the upside-down bicycle.

TREVOR

Okay, hold the bike steady with your knees. That's it. Seat positioned against your chest.

Tywan glances over at Auggie and starts to laugh.

TYWAN

(to Auggie)

Shut up, foo.

TREVOR

Okay, now crank the pedals and get that back wheel spinning about 180 R.P.M.

TYWAN

Whas up wit' dat?

TREVOR

(coaxing him along)

You'll see. Be patient.

A skeptical Tywan starts to crank the pedals, but he's not pedaling hard enough.

TREVOR

... Put some muscle into it.

Tywan cranks the pedals harder now. Trevor back-pedals over to the textbook shelf and randomly selects a physical science book (but doesn't open it).

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED: (3)

8

TREVOR

... Keep pedaling. Harder.

A paper airplane sails past an oblivious Tywan. He cranks harder and harder until he's sweating ham juice. Now, he impales Trevor with a befuddled squint.

TYWAN

(incredulous)

Whas up? I tol' you you was
crazy, man.

A thin smile of confidence from Trevor now...

TREVOR

Now tilt the wheel to your right.

Tywan does and immediately the wheel pulls him to the right, causing the stool to slowly spin on its axis.

TYWAN

(eyes wide like
a little kid)

Aw, damn. I'm spinnin'. Lookit
me, Auggie!

Trevor flickers a smile as Tywan's spinning starts to draw the attention of the rest of the class.

Now Trevor refers to the physical science book in his hand. Smile on his face immediately fades.

INSERT: Physical science textbook. In magic marker. The large number 187 has been scrawled across every page. Trevor flips through the book. He checks the front page to see who it belongs to.

Juxtaposed to Trevor's distracted state, the class is now focused on Tywan's achievement...

CLASS

(attempting unison)

... Tywan, Tywan, Tywan.

9 INT. RWHS - "A" BUILDING - MAIN CORRIDOR - SECOND PERIOD

9

One of the fluorescent lights overhead flickers. The place is deserted except for a custodian who pushes a cresting wave of trash ahead of his broom. Now Trevor heads up the north stairwell at the far end of the corridor. He clutches the desecrated physical science book. A student slides down the banister past him.

10 OMITTED 10

11 INT. COUNSELING OFFICES - WAITING AREA 11

A PUERTO RICAN WOMAN prods a group of gangbanger wannabes. Two of the teens hover over a Sony Walkman, sharing the earphones.

SECRETARY

Okay, fellas, off the table. Put the Walkman away. I said put it away...

A 10th grade counselor's office opens and a student emerges. Trevor walks directly in.

TREVOR

Walter, I need to speak with you.

WALTER (Anglo; 52) is a disheveled middle-aged counselor. A lifer. He chews on an empty smoking pipe as he glances through a student "cum" (cue-mm).

WALTER

(preoccupied)

I'm pretty busy right now, Garfield. What is it?

Trevor sets the book down on Walter's desk and nervously adjusts his glasses.

TREVOR

Could you open it, please?

Walter opens the book.

WALTER

(a weary look
of disgust)

Don't suppose this kid cares about our budget crisis?

(shuts the book)

Have the textbook room charge him for the book.

Walter snaps the book shut and looks up at Trevor. That's all?

TREVOR

One-Eight-Seven is a penal code number for murder, Walter. Means the same thing as T-O-S. 'Terminate On the Spot.'

(CONTINUED)

WALTER

(piqued)

For chrissake, I know what it stands for. Look, kid probably heard it in a rap song. Doesn't mean anything.

TREVOR

... The book belongs to Dennis Broadway. He's a known gangster, Walter -- a 'Five Percenter.'

WALTER

Garfield, if I had a dollar for every time a student threatened faculty... Don't you think you're overreacting a little?

TREVOR

(suppressing
trepidation)

Did you tell Dennis Broadway he was getting a fail from me?

WALTER

(stymied)

I have legal access to those files.

TREVOR

He's a transfer from Nixon High School, isn't he?

WALTER

(becoming defensive)

Look, I'm not obligated to track you down every time a transfer student comes through here. You want confidential information like that, come look it up in his cum (cue-mm).

Trevor exhales a sigh of resignation.

TREVOR

Do you have him on a contract?

WALTER

If he gets through the semester without a fail then he gets to go back to Nixon, so what?

TREVOR

... and be with his homeboys.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

Walter's caught between a rock and a hard place. His instincts lean toward self-preservation.

WALTER

So he blew his opportunity. Now he has to learn to live with the consequences.

TREVOR

I don't think this kid's ready to deal with the consequences. I think he wants me dead.

WALTER

Relax, has nothin' to do with you.

TREVOR

I should have been told, Walter.

WALTER

Hey, I'm on your side, Garfield, but my hands are tied. Kid has a right to his privacy... Know what your problem is? You're an idealist.

TREVOR

What's wrong with that?

WALTER

You only see what you wanna see, that's what's wrong. On one hand you think someone's trying to kill you. On the other hand you actually believe kids are paying attention in your classes.

Trevor resigns himself to the fact that he's come to the wrong person for support.

TREVOR

(collecting himself)

Never mind. It's not a problem.

WALTER

(an empty promise)

Tell you what, as soon as I get a chance I'll summons the kid. Promise.

Trevor's bemusement holds us.

12 INT. RWHS "A" BUILDING - MAIN CORRIDOR - MORNING

12

Trevor retraces his steps back up the empty corridor as the passing BELL RINGS. Within seconds the corridor is teeming with teenagers.

Into SLOW MOTION now. MANEUVERING THROUGH the crowd to DISCOVER DENNIS BROADWAY (16). About ten paces behind. His Snoop-Dogg Afro frames a gold earring and a pair of deep-set eyes filled with vitriol. Oblivious of Dennis, Trevor presses on toward the north stairwell.

VARIOUS SHOTS OVERHEAD and THROUGH crowd as the gap between Dennis and Trevor narrows. Every facial expression, every blink of an eye, all magnified a hundred times.

Broadway's right hand is wrapped in a dirty white handkerchief as he reaches into the front pocket of his baggie Solos and pulls out a block of wood with a ten-penny nail imbedded in it.

13 INT. RWHS - AT NORTH STAIRWELL

13

Trevor's heavy eyelids blink as he slowly glances up into a parabolic mirror on the wall. A silent, paroxysmal terror registers on his face.

In a parabolic mirror, the blurred image of Dennis Broadway, pushing hard toward a conclusion now.

BACK TO SPEED as Dennis explodes forward, body blocking Trevor from behind, pinning him against a wall and sending the "187" textbook flying.

He rams his weapon into Trevor's back.

In a SERIES OF RAPID-FIRE CUTS, filtered sunlight shimmers off the sharpened nail as it slashes downward. A barrage of stabbing motions, tearing at cloth and flesh. Trevor's backward flailing arms are ineffective in blocking the frenzied stabfest. Downward slashing, again and again... 10 times.

Aftermath. As quickly as it began it's over. Dennis Broadway slams open an exit door and is gone. Students scatter like cockroaches. An eerie stillness lingers.

Trevor Garfield is lying on his back now in a pool of blood; black plastic framed glasses in pieces on the floor; lifeless arms spread out at his sides. His rheumy, unblinking eyes stare upward into infinite space. Breathing is the major focus of his concentration now as we SLOWLY MOVE IN ON his face. HOLD and now...

14 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA) - 14

SUPERIMPOSE: LOS ANGELES - SAN FERNANDO VALLEY,
SEVENTEEN MONTHS LATER

It's a tiny one bedroom house in the East San Fernando Valley. A chain-link fence surrounds the perimeter and a large olive tree shades the neatly-mowed front lawn. And in the back there's a wooden tool shed that borders a narrow alley.

15 INT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM 15

In the predawn light a terra cotta angel stands guard over a bookshelf.

16 INT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - BEDROOM 16

Stillness. Now the PHONE RINGS. A shape in the bed stirs. A desk lamp flickers on, illuminating the phone. Trevor's hand reaches for the receiver.

TREVOR

Morning...

SUB UNIT (V.O.)

'Morning, Mr. Garfield. This is the Sub Unit. Are you available for work?

TREVOR

(clearing his throat)

... Yes, uh huh.

SUB UNIT (V.O.)

There's a science class in the Valley at John Quincy Adams. It's a four day assignment. Teacher's name is Eskander.

17 INT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - TREVOR'S PRAYER - SERIES OF SHOTS 17

We hear what God hears over the following...

A) IN SHOWER

Trevor hangs his head under a torrent of soothing water.

B) TREVOR

Ceremoniously, he irons a shirt... and polishes his shoes, a broad scar shows across the back of his hand.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

C) ANOTHER ANGLE

His pressed slacks and tie hang meticulously over a chair as he gets dressed.

D) CRUCIFIX

Now Jesus Christ looks down on Trevor from his crucifix on the bedroom wall.

TREVOR (V.O.)

(kneeling bedside)

... If you're listening, God, please help me today. All I ask is a chance to do my job... t'do the job you put me here to do in the first place.

(prayerfully now)

Please help me accept those things I cannot change... and give me strength to change those things I can.

(beat)

... This is me, Trevor, God.
Amen.

18 EXT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS H.S. (SAN FERNANDO VALLEY) - "A" BUILDING - MORNING

18

Traffic bottle-necks as students cross in front of cars, and big yellow L.A.U.S.D. buses pull in. The green lawn is scattered with students (about 65% Hispanic). Compared to the scarred, institutional look of Roosevelt Whitney, the face of John Quincy Adams is unblemished. (This is your own backyard, not the inner city)

Sagging pants (Dickies, Ben Davis) and oversized jackets (County Bens, Duke, Georgetown) are represented. The different socio-economic and ethnic groups stick with their own kind; the IHPs (Individual Honors Program), the taggers, the Gangbangers, the Asians, the Armenians...

18A EXT. JQA PARKING LOT

18A

Anglo boy, Stevie Littleton, gets out of his mom's Lexus in the school parking lot and walks towards school.

19 INT./EXT. TREVOR'S '64 RAMBLER AMERICAN - FACULTY PARKING LOT DRIVEWAY

19

Trevor sits behind the wheel of his Rambler. Watches a passing parade of students with detachment.

20

INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - "A" BUILDING ENTRANCE - FEW
MINUTES LATER

20

Trevor, fat briefcase in hand, crosses the front lawn. He's not the same Trevor we met back in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Withdrawn, guarded, he manufactures a cautious smile at students in passing.

Trevor now approaches VICTOR SIFUENTES, a young plain-clothes narc, who intermittently wands students with a metal detector at the front doors. FAVOR a kid now who wears a baseball cap with an emblem on the crown that says "Fucd."

VICTOR

... Baseball cap, give it up.

The kid grudgingly reciprocates, handing over his cap.

VICTOR

(stopping Trevor now)

Hold it, please.

Trevor produces his blue employee card.

TREVOR

I'm a substitute.

VICTOR

(pointing)

Okay, you want the Main Office,
straight ahead. Check in with
Mrs. Ford.

21

INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - "A" BUILDING/MAIN CORRIDOR -
BEFORE FIRST PERIOD

21

Trevor wanders up the crowded corridor. Along with his briefcase he now carries a sub folder that contains a homeroom roster, lesson plans and seating charts.

A sporadic row of teachers, like weary sentinels, stand outside their classrooms.

TEACHER #1 is an insipid woman in her mid-forties. She's overweight and wears too much make-up.

TREVOR

... 'Scuse me. I'm lost. I'm
looking for Bungalow...

(checks homeroom roster)

... eighty-six.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 21

TEACHER #1
(pointing)
All the way out, next to the
parking lot. Last bungalow on the
left.

TREVOR
... Thank you.

TEACHER #1
(fatalistic)
Good luck.

Her comment weighs on him as he resumes his winding path through the bustle of students headed for first period.

22 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - MAIN CORRIDOR/CLASSROOMS - 22
TREVOR'S POV

Glancing through open doorways. Observing the inner life of various classrooms in passing... sees students watching TV, teacher ignores them.

INTERCUT WITH:

23 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - CLASSROOM #2 23

ANGLO MALE, 39, slouching behind his desk, attempting to read a newspaper but distracted by an offstage commotion.

CLASSROOM #2 TEACHER (ANGLO MALE)
(erupting)
... Sit down. I come back there
and you're gonna be sorry.

INTERCUT WITH:

24 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - CLASSROOM #3/COMPUTER LAB 24

On the opposite side of the corridor... we can hear Ellen Henry's voice before reaching her doorway. All brightness and light, full of enthusiasm...

ELLEN (O.S.)
(like, a buzzer;
times up)
... EEEEEgghh! Wrong. William,
you know this. C'mon, how do you
find the pound sign? What's the
fastest way?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

Now we see her through the doorway. ELLEN HENRY (TEACHER #3). She's thirty, Anglo, and non-tenured. At the front of the class ten students stand linked together, arm-in-arm, in a human chain. WILLIAM (15) sits behind a computer in the front row struggling to decipher the problem...

ELLEN
(playfully)
You're not thinking.
(a major clue)
How 'bout Binary search.

William remains puzzled. The chain of students delight in chiding him. "C'mon, Beavis!"...

ELLEN
(the answer)
You split them!

Ellen attempts to bisect the impulsive chain of students with a double-handed karate chop. Fickle chain that they are, they resist.

ELLEN
(amused)
... Very funny.

Now a SLOW MOTION fleeting moment as she catches Trevor's passing gaze and openly smiles at him.

25 INT. MEN'S BATHROOM

25

Trevor rinses his face at the sink as Victor Sifuentes' head speaks to him from above one of the heavily graffitied stalls in b.g.

VICTOR
So who yuh here for?

TREVOR
Eskander.

VICTOR
(zipping up,
exiting)
Aw, man, you got bungalow
duty.

26 EXT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - BUNGALOWS - MORNING

26

On a MEANDERING COURSE, MERGING with Trevor now.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

Increasing evidence of tagging, and bands of wandering students, indicate a higher degree of disorder the further one gets from the Main Office.

FROM ABOVE NOW, like Algernon and his maze, Trevor negotiates his own path deeper and deeper into the configuration of bungalows.

... And Trevor's trepidation. Eyes discerning every passerby. His PULSE AUDIBLY RACES, senses heightened.

SHIFTING INTO SLOW MOTION AGAIN... And the reverberating SOUND of a SPRAY PAINT MARBLE as Trevor rounds a corner and comes face to face with three tag-bangers concealing spray paint cans inside their oversized jackets. One of the taggers locks eyes with Trevor as he passes, a slow premonitory burn. The tagger has a "skin tight" (pelon) hair cut and a string of black rosary beads around his neck. A barcode tattoo on the back of his neck identifies BENNY.

27 EXT. UTILITY SHED AND VICINITY - MORNING

27

... Behind the bungalows, adjacent the delivery gate. Meet DAVE CHILDRESS, a forty-something ditto-head. The residual effects of a hangover linger as he sneaks a cigarette before first period. He wears a faded Hawaiian shirt and Huarache sandals. An old military tattoo emblazons his left forearm. As he crushes out his cigarette, something catches his eye.

28 EXT. UTILITY SHED

28

... Thru a chain-link fence we see a handful of cholo-types loitering around the shed.

Childress investigates. As he approaches the fence...

CHILDRESS

... Hey, ese(s)?!

Homeboys scatter in all directions, some hop the chain-link fence, others scurry out a narrow gate behind the shed. Childress weighs an amused smirk. Now out of nowhere a gangbanger lurches from the shed, buttoning his sagging Dickies and tripping over his own feet. He scrambles out the back gate and is gone.

Childress, curiosity piqued, now enters the compound through a tear in the fence.

29 INT. UTILITY SHED - MOMENTS LATER

29

As Childress pokes his head inside he discovers...

Rita Nartinez, seventeen... braless. A niobium belly-ring piercing her navel. She pulls a dark blue sweat shirt on over her head. Glances up at Childress. Masks her shame with a defiant smirk.

(Behind the heavy eyeliner and baggy pants of a chola, Rita's really nothing more than a little lost girl.)

CHILDRESS

(knowing full well)

What the hell's going on here,
lil' sister?

30 INT. BUNGALOW "84" - MORNING

30

Trevor flicks on the lights, exposing bare, colorless walls and closed venetian blinds. His breathing's slightly labored as he sets down his briefcase. His back faces the mob of students that trickle in now as he takes a surreptitious hit off an inhaler. Almost instantly his breathing returns to normal.

Now he shuts his eyes and prepares to conjure up the dormant enthusiasm he used to have. Takes a deep cathartic breath. Now he digs a file folder out of his briefcase, opens it, selects a dispatch and approaches the blackboard.

BELL RINGS as he picks up a piece of chalk... and begins. First he writes his name in the corner of the blackboard. Now he moves to the center of the blackboard and begins to write per the file folder in his hand...

"GLIS WAS VERY FRAPPER. SHE HAD DENARPEN FARFIE'S MARDSEN..."

No one pays much attention. Back still facing the class...

TREVOR

... Before taking roll, I'd like
to prove a point.

Now one or two students begin to notice the indecipherable gibberish he is writing on the board...

(CONTINUED)

BARSEK

(Armenian; a disparaging
laugh)

'Farfie?'

(cholo-like)

Whad up, Farfie?

Trevor mentally blocks out the salvo of grunts, groans and expletives. With each subsequent stroke of the chalk he is exorcising his demons...

TREVOR

... It's not important what... or
who... 'Farfie' is.

Turning to face the class now...

TREVOR

Yuh wanna play, yuh gotta stay.
Have a seat, please.

A handful of students take their seats.

TREVOR

(pacing now)

The point I'd like to make is
this... Anyone here can be a
scientist.

... a grudging buzz of confusion.

ASIAN GIRL

(sotto; puzzled)

... What's he talking about?

TREVOR

... A scientist is like a
detective. He investigates data.
He scratches the surface of things
he doesn't understand to see
what's underneath.

(pointing to blackboard)

... Things like this. Okay, who
wants to read?

Barsek (the class clown) breaks in...

BARSEK

(standing up)

I'll do it.

Trevor quiets a harmless barrage of, "Bart," "sit down" and "Armenian Power sucks"...

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

Come on, we don't need disrespect.
Let 'im do it.

(to Barsek)

What's your name?

BARSEK

Barsek.

A wisp of gratification flickers at the corner of Trevor's mouth.

TREVOR

Okay, Barsek. Read.

(The following is read in fits and starts and accompanied by diminishing laughter and ridicule.)

BARSEK

... Glis was very frapper. She had denarpen Farfie's Mardsen. She couldn't galp a giberter for Farfie. Instead she wharked to plimp a mardsen binky for him.

TREVOR

Okay, anyone know what Barsek just said?

... A unanimous "No." Trevor can see the light at the end of the tunnel now. He's back in the zone.

TREVOR

That's alright. You don't need to understand something to answer a few simple questions about it. Every one of you is capable of decoding data. Watch.

Trevor writes question #1 on the board...

1. WHY WAS GLIS FRAPPER?

TREVOR

... Why was Glis Frapper? Can anyone tell me?

The Asian Girl, into it now, tentatively raises her hand.

TREVOR

(pointing at
Asian Girl)

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (3)

30

Asian Girl's POV as she studies the first two sentences on the board.

ASIAN GIRL
(slowly; cautiously)
... Glis was frapper... because...
she had denarpen Farfie's mardsen?

TREVOR
(understated)
That's right. You got it.
(reactions all around)
Let's try another.

Trevor reads and writes question #2 on the board...

2. WHAT DID GLIS PLIMP?

TREVOR
... What did Glis plimp?

Before Trevor can finish writing the question, an unidentified voice blurts out, "He plimped a Ho." Scattered laughter. Trevor grimaces, shakes his head. Now attempts to add the question mark at the end of the sentence but the chalk breaks, causing dissension.

TREVOR
(searching blackboard ledge)
... Hold on, hold on. Where's
your teacher keep the chalk?

ASIAN GIRL
... In the desk.

Trevor hastily rifles through the teacher's drawers. A startling discovery abruptly halts his search...

CLOSER now INTO a brown paper bag Trevor has opened. Inside the bag is a .357 Magnum.

OFF Trevor's narrowing gaze, an offstage voice interrupts...

CHILDRESS (O.S.)
... Can I help you?

Trevor lifts his head to see Dave Childress standing in the doorway of the bungalow. Trevor shuts the desk drawer. You can hear a pin drop.

Childress piston-chews a wad of gum as he approaches Trevor.

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED: (4)

30

CHILDRESS

Sorry I'm late. Had to handle something. You a sub?

TREVOR

(puzzled)

I thought this was Science. Ms. Eskander.

Childress weighs a shit-eating grin as he glances at Trevor's name on the board.

CHILDRESS

No. This is Dave Childress, American History.

Some students brave a laugh at Trevor's expense.

CHILDRESS

... Don't know how to break it to you...

(glancing at Trevor's name again)

... Garfield... but this is bungalow 84.

Childress now places a patronizing hand on Trevor's shoulder and steers him toward the window blinds.

CHILDRESS

See, you zipped when you shoulda zagged. Course it's not your fault someone jacked the number off my door. Keep askin' Garcia to fix it but all I get is 'nada.'

Childress draws the blinds on one of the windows exposing another bungalow across the way.

31

INT. BUNGALOW #86 - THROUGH WINDOW PANE

31

... In complete disarray. Students clutter the doorway as wads of paper intermittently zing past them.

CHILDRESS

... that mess over there, that's Eskander's.

OFF Trevor's unflinching stare...

32 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - MORNING

32

The bungalow was originally designed for lab science: glass-encased cupboards, a caged white lab rat on a side counter, an 8' by 3' counter top (island) at the front of the room, including a built-in sink and butane gas valve.

Students crowd the opened windows on the far side of the room. The chaotic atmosphere centers around one student... Benny Chacon (18), the tagger we met earlier.

Trevor's back to square one. He struggles with trepidation as he steps into the doorway of the bungalow and hesitates.

A young black girl, LAKESIA STEWART (16), stands near the doorway. She cradles a realistic looking E.N.A.B.L. baby (Education Now And Babies Later).

LAKESIA

You our sub?

Trevor takes a peek at the doll.

LAKESIA

It's not real. We're studying teen parenting in home-ec.' It's computerized, so it cries and shit.

Crowd at the windows begins to disperse now, finding their seats, except for Benny who doesn't budge. Trevor approaches, gazes out the window, eyes sizing up the situation.

33 EXT. BUNGALOW #86 - TREVOR'S POV - TEXTBOOKS

33

Scattered on the blacktop between the parking lot fence and bungalow #86 are 35 science textbooks.

34 INT. BUNGALOW #86

34

TREVOR

(addressing Benny;
without prejudging)

You know how the books got
outside?

Benny plays with the black rosary around his neck. Responds with mock ignorance.

BENNY

No speaky Engless.

(CONTINUED)

Class erupts with laughter. A wad of paper sails past Trevor and out the window.

BENNY

You speak Spanish, Mister... Whas yer name?

TREVOR

Garfield.

BENNY

... You speak Spanish, Mister G?
 (as Trevor ignores
 the question)
 Eh, G... know what dat means when a homeboy calls you 'G'? Dat means gangster, homes. You a gangster, maestro?

TREVOR

No, I'm not a gangster.
 (beat)
 Would you please do me a favor and pick up the books?

BENNY

(righteous indignation)
 Andate a la mierda.
 (more laughs)
 I ain't pickin' dat shit up. You go pick it up.

Benny now finds a seat. Trevor follows him.

TREVOR

What's your name?

BENNY

Cesar Chavez. Don't you recognize me?

Class laughs. Trevor refers to the seating chart (inside the sub folder) in his hand but Benny's not sitting in his proper seat. Benny indicates a 2" by 3" monitoring device strapped to his ankle...

BENNY

See dis? I'm already on house arrest, homes. Ain't nothin' more you can do to me.

(CONTINUED)

34

CONTINUED: (2)

34

Suddenly three students across from Benny (the other three taggers we saw earlier, Cesar Sanchez, Stevie Littleton and Paco) stand with bold impunity. All are 17. Cesar has a buzz-cut, Stevie's an Anglo speed freak with a runny nose and a bleached one-clip haircut (roots showing) and Paco, a Latino.

TREVOR

Sit down, please.

Cesar, Stevie and Paco ignore Trevor and walk out of the bungalow. Their departure is accompanied by a tumultuous outburst of catcalls and whistles.

LAKESIA

(peeking Benny's
hold card)

Mr. G, those guys that jus' walked out aren't even in here this period.

(pointing to Benny)

And this fool's name is Benny Chacon.

BENNY

(whirls in his seat)

Shut yer mouth, hood rat! School girl bitch!

TREVOR

Okay, Benny. That's enough.

Benny turns his wrath on Trevor now.

BENNY

Hey, you ain't no real teacher. Fool, you're nothin' but a sub. T'ink yer so cool... You mus' be 'Mr. culo.'

Scattered laughter. Trevor closes the sub folder and just looks at Benny.

TREVOR

(a cool curiosity)

Why do you wear a rosary?

BENNY

(reacting)

Ain't none a' yer damn business. To put God on me, okay? Why don't you jus' go sit down and read yer newspaper. Wanna-be, mother fucker.

(CONTINUED)

Trevor just stands there, studies Benny. A palpable beat.

TREVOR

Are you done?

There is dead silence as Benny stares Trevor straight in the eye. Trevor stares right back.

BENNY

Jus' gimme a referral. Shit.

Trevor turns and calmly walks back to the island counter, searches and finds a referral slip in one of the drawers, fills it out...

TREVOR

(cool deliberation)

For future reference, anyone who disrupts a class, or in any way infringes on the rights of others to get an education, is subject to disciplinary action.

(beat)

When I'm here, ladies and gentlemen, I expect to be treated decently...

(walks back
to Benny)

... hopefully in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This classroom is our sanctuary, yours and mine. Respect it.

(handing Benny
the referral)

For your information, I am a real teacher.

BENNY

Whatever you say, Opie.

Benny has a smirk on his face as he sashays past Trevor with the referral slip.

TREVOR

Okay, who would like to help me pick up the books?

Benny, a self-aggrandized exit, crumbles the referral slip and tosses it at Trevor, hitting him square in the back.

Like a reflex, Trevor whirls and ducks. Students laugh at his heightened reaction.

34A EXT. JQA - FACULTY DINING ROOM

34A

We see kids at an armored Coke machine. PAN OFF machine to see kids at lunch.

35 INT. JQA - FACULTY DINING ROOM - LUNCHTIME

35

Trevor sits by himself, lost in stirring a bowl of soup. He observes a talkative clique of teachers at the far end of the table, including Teacher #1.

Now Dave Childress sits down, disrupting Trevor's solitude.

CHILDRESS

How goes the battle, Garfield?

Dave bites into a messy sandwich as he skims the front page of a newspaper that someone left behind.

CHILDRESS

D'juh get that binky marsden farfied?

Trevor doesn't say a word. Just keeps stirring his soup ... Now notices Ellen Henry as she enters and joins the food line.

CHILDRESS

Know what I think? I think that Chacon punk's the one who opened your bungalow this morning.

(another bite)

Eskander doesn't know how to lock a window.

TREVOR'S POV - ELLEN AND CASHIER

The cashier (Armenian girl, 15) is one of Ellen's students. As Ellen pays for a sandwich...

ELLEN

... Come by the lab after school, we'll work on it...

BACK TO TREVOR AND CHILDRESS

CHILDRESS

Want some advice?

Trevor slides Dave a glance.

(CONTINUED)

CHILDRESS

First homeboy that gives you the slightest bit of trouble... send 'um tuh Larry Hyland. He's their counselor. Right off the bat, yuh have to sacrifice one. Let 'um know who's boss. Show some balls.

(as Trevor nods)

And don't look for support from the administration. Most of 'em haven't been in a classroom in ten years. They don't know shit. I got tenure and I'm still out here in the damn bungalows. I should be in the 'A' building with a nice air-conditioned room.

(sarcastically)

You met Garcia yet? The principal?

Trevor shakes his head as Ellen Henry takes the empty seat at the end of the table, smiles at Trevor.

ELLEN

Ah! New blood!

(extends a hand)

Ellen Henry, computer science.

TREVOR

Trevor Garfield.

As they shake right in front of Childress' face he can't help noticing the mean scar on the back of Trevor's hand.

CHILDRESS

Nice scar yuh got there.

There's something familiar about this sub.

CHILDRESS

Ever sub here before?

TREVOR

First time.

CHILDRESS

(curiously)

What about permanent?

TREVOR

I taught seven years in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Roosevelt Whitney High School.

(CONTINUED)

CHILDRESS

Roosevelt Whitney? Didn't some teacher get stabbed to death there last year?

TREVOR

Actually, he survived.

CHILDRESS

No, it was on 'Sixty Minutes.' Some gangbanger stabbed this guy with a ten-penny nail like a dozen times in a hallway and...

Childress looks from Trevor silently stirring his soup down to the scar again... and now it hits him.

CHILDRESS

Jesus Christ, you're him. It was you.

Ellen blanches.

CHILDRESS

(awestruck)

Holy shit, Garfield. When was that? December before last? No, it was fall.

TREVOR

October 27.

CHILDRESS

Whadda schmuck. I'm sittin' here givin' advice to a man with a purple heart.

ELLEN

Excuse me...

Inexplicably, she gets up and leaves. As Trevor watches Ellen go, Childress slides closer to him.

CHILDRESS

(sotto)

Lemme tell yuh somethin'. In my book you're a fuckin' hero. Damn straight.

Trevor slides a look back to Dave as he eats his soup.

TREVOR

... Getting stabbed doesn't make me a hero.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

CHILDRESS

(disregards
Trevor's comment)

So what'd they give the kid?

TREVOR

They put 'im upstate in a facility
until his twenty-first birthday.

CHILDRESS

That all? They shoulda caned the
bastard. Like they did that kid
in Singapore. Remember?

(recollecting)

President of Singapore had a few
choice words. Use to have it
memorized... He said something
like, 'When a state of increasing
disorder and defiance cannot be
checked by the rules... then new
and sometimes drastic rules have
to be forged to maintain order.'

(slides Trevor
a glance)

'The alternative is to surrender
order to chaos and anarchy.'

TREVOR

So why do you still teach?

CHILDRESS

Same reason as you, Garfield -- for
the paycheck.

36 EXT. BUNGALOW #86 - AFTERNOON (SIXTH PERIOD; NEXT DAY) 36

The windows and blinds are shut now.

37 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - CLOCK ON WALL - CONTINUOUS ACTION 37

is inching toward the top of the hour.

Closing their books and loading their knapsacks, the
students talk and pay more attention to the inexorable
march of time than to Trevor writing on an overhead
projector.

TREVOR

Okay, someone tell me the
difference between the central
nervous system and the lymphatic
system?

(CONTINUED)

37

CONTINUED:

37

Rita Nartinez (the chola from the "utility" shed) sits near the front of the class. She wears her usual heavy eyeliner and a new nose ring.

RITA
(obscenely)
Mr. G, you gotta nice butt.

Class erupts. Rita enjoys the attention. Trevor turns and looks at her squarely.

TREVOR
You seem to be an expert on anatomy, Miss --
(checks roster)
-- Nartinez. Central nervous system and lymphatic system. What's the difference?

RITA
... Uh...

Trevor doesn't expect anything remotely close to the right answer.

RITA
It's like the central nervous system, that's your brain and spinal cord, and the lymphatic system, that's the stuff in your blood that fights diseases.

A beat. Trevor looks up at her.

TREVOR
Very good.

Trevor notices Cesar Sanchez writing on his desk. Stevie cranes his neck to observe. Paco snoozes.

TREVOR
Cesar.

Cesar throws back his head and jerks both hands from his desk top. Trevor walks up the aisle.

TREVOR
You writing on your desk?

(CONTINUED)

CESAR

(coolly)

You see anything in my hands?

(displaying his
empty palms)

I don't think so.

Trevor looks down at the tagging on Cesar's desktop. In one corner are the letters K-O-S, and below that the word "cartoon."

TREVOR

K-O-S, what's that? That a tagging crew?

Cesar shrugs with a big grin.

TREVOR

Cartoon... Is that you, Cesar?

(off no response)

'K-O-S' has something to do with your friend Benny?

CESAR

... Dawg. You're a sucker. K-O-S stands for 'Kappin' Off Suckers.' Don't disrespect my homeboy, Benny. He don't like it. He don't like you.

Trevor dismisses Cesar's comments.

TREVOR

Do me a favor, Cesar. Go get a paper towel from the counter and wipe off your desk.

(beat)

And Mr. Littleton, please oblige me and turn that tagger shirt inside-out.

Stevie wears a fusion T-shirt emblazoned with a giant spray can.

STEVIE

(refusing)

Hyland said it was okay, Sucker.

Neither of them budge. Momentous deliberation. Now the BELL RINGS and the classroom empties in a matter of seconds. Cesar stares daggers at Trevor as he exits.

Rita hangs back, the last one to leave. She doesn't want anyone to see her talking to Trevor.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED: (3)

37

RITA

(self-conscious)

Don't pay no attention to them.
They jus' tryin' tuh fuck wit'
you, Mr. G. I mean play wit' you.

(beat)

Sorry I said you had a nice ass.

TREVOR

(a pensive beat)

... Apology accepted.

RITA

(in her own defense)

I ain't no school girl.

TREVOR

God forbid anyone should think
that.

Rita flickers an awkward smile, turns and exits. The class empties and Trevor is left staring at the empty desks where Benny and Cesar sat... WHACK --□Trevor's reverie is broken by a BASKETBALL smashing against the side of the bungalow.

POV - OUT THE WINDOW

A group of boys grin mischievously at the reaction they get from Trevor... continue smashing the ball against bungalows.

TREVOR

shifts his gaze from them to the venetian blinds framing the window... to the clock over his desk.

38 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - CLOSE ON VENETIAN BLINDS - LATER (AFTER SCHOOL)

38

as they open --□revealing the clock --□and just as suddenly close. TILT DOWN to find Trevor working the cords to the blinds he's rigged over the timeplace.

A FAINT KNOCK breaks his spell as he glances up to discover Ellen Henry standing in the open doorway.

ELLEN

May I come in?

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

Yeah...
 (points at her)
 ... Ellen.

ELLENA

(pointing back)
 Trevor.

He sees her looking quizzically at the blinds he's rigged over the clock.

TREVOR

(explaining)
 I'm making time a reward instead of a distraction.

Impressed, Ellen peruses the room now with a benign gaze.

ELLEN

Clever... Listen, I wanted to apologize for jumping up like I did at lunch. I was just feeling a little weird...

TREVOR

It's alright.

ELLEN

For what it's worth, Dave Childress thinks you walk on water.

TREVOR

Is that a good thing?

Ellen flickers a grin, point taken.

ELLEN

I think it takes a lot of courage to go back into a classroom after something like that.

TREVOR

Not if the only thing you ever wanted to do was teach.

ELLEN

(smiles)
 Now you see, there's our predicament.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (2)

38

WHACK --□the noise pulls Ellen's attention out the window where the boys play a rough game of BASKETBALL.

ELLEN

I assume you've met Benny Chacon?

TREVOR

I have.

ELLEN

(absently)

Last week Benny and his tagging crew had Ms. Eskander pinned in the corner over there.

(pointing)

... She's seven months pregnant and he's tormenting her with a broom handle... Can I help you with those?

Trevor is trying to put some books on an upper shelf, but he's having trouble raising his arm high enough. Ellen sees he's in pain.

TREVOR

No thanks.

She watches him struggle, then breaks the awkwardness.

ELLEN

So anyway, Gloria kicks Benny... and if the district construes it as assault and battery on a student, she's gone.

TREVOR

They'd do that?

ELLEN

In a heart beat. She's non-tenured, they don't want to get sued...

(with resignation)

Don't be surprised if she files for stress leave by the end of the week. Too bad, too. She's a good teacher.

WHACK... WHACK... Outside, the kids continue to play. The late sun makes their violent shadows swarm over Ellen.

ELLEN

Can I ask you a personal question?

(CONTINUED)

Trevor glances up. Here's what she really wants to know...

ELLEN
(tentatively now)
Why'd that kid attack you?

TREVOR
Because I flunked him.

ELLEN
(sobered)
Is there any way you can see something like that coming?

TREVOR
When they say they wanna kill you, you'd best take it serious. This kid was an O.T. --[]Opportunity Transfer --[]but nobody told me until it was too late.

A beat.

ELLEN
Did you know Benny's an O.T.?... In less than a year he's been convicted of felony assault and suspended twice. I even testified against him as a character witness. Now I get to see him every day in homeroom. I'm stuck with him. Condition of his probation is that he stay in school.

TREVOR
You talk to the principal?

ELLEN
Many times... Three weeks ago, Garcia calls Benny's mother in for a conference, but she refuses to show up. She's afraid they'll deport her because she's illegal. So she contacts the A.C.L.U. and some attorney tells her she doesn't have to come in.

(still can't believe)

Garcia got cold feet and dropped the whole thing.

(fear building)

This kid's threatening me and all he's worried about is a lawsuit.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (4)

38

TREVOR
(intent now)
What'd Benny say to you?

Tears involuntarily well up in Ellen's eyes. HOLD for an awkward moment as she collects herself.

ELLEN
That he wanted to hurt me. Real bad.

TREVOR
Does he know where you live?

ELLEN
I think so. Someone's been phoning me at night and hanging up... Two weeks ago, my car was broken into... And last Friday, I think he was inside my house... But I can't prove it.

The shadows of the basketball players rage inside the bungalow.

ELLEN
(bottom lip quivers)
... I don't know what to do.

TREVOR
You can quit.

ELLEN
You didn't.

OFF Trevor's severe gaze...

39

EXT. LA RIVER OVERPASS - NIGHT

39

... Trace the cold underbelly of the overpass. The glare of oncoming headlights flash overhead as we DISCOVER a tagging wall.

CLOSER now...

... The wall is completely covered with graffiti. The centerpiece of the wall is a 5' by 10' multi-color "placa" that reads...

K.O.S.

ANGLING TO DISCOVER an Anglo tagger now as he defaces the "S" in K-O-S, covering it with his own piece.

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED:

39

Suddenly the lone tagger feels a presence at his back. He freezes. Now slowly turns to see...

... Benny, Cesar and Paco.

Merely shadows. Benny lights a blunt, illuminating his face. Passes it to Cesar...

TAGGER

Do I know you?

BENNY

(indicates tagging)

You should. You're fuckin' with my piece, puto.

TAGGER

(nervously)

... You from K.O.S.? No shit?

Cesar and Paco burst into hysterical laughter which only manages to get Benny piqued.

TAGGER

(panicking)

Look, I didn't mean nothin'. Lemme fix it. I can fix it. Okay?

Cesar and Paco laugh harder.

BENNY

(to Cesar)

Eh, shut up, mojado!

(to Tagger now)

Don't mess wit' me, whiteboy. I'll cap yer ass.

He pulls a .380 or a .25 automatic out of his pocket. Brandishes it at Cesar and Paco...

BENNY

I said shut up! Shut the fuck up!

A BEEPER hooked on Benny's pants pocket BEEPS. Benny shuts it off. The Tagger sees his opportunity and makes a break for it. Without a second thought, Benny SHOOTS him in the leg. Tagger crumbles to the ground. Benny's really pissed now. Checks his beeper's glow-in-the-dark face for the message.

BENNY

(reacting to message)

I don't have no time to put up wit' 'dis shit!

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED: (2)

39

Cesar and Paco attempt to subdue their laughter but fail...

BENNY

You think it's funny?!

Benny lifts a pant leg. Indicates his ankle monitor with the barrel of his gun.

BENNY

I don't call my P.O. in 15 minutes, I'm fucked.

Venting rage, Benny walks up the wounded Tagger and STARTS SHOOTING (one hand high near his face, shooting downward). Now he kisses the crucifix on his rosary like a sick, distorted affectation.

BENNY

Dis is K.O.S.' neighborhood.

Cesar and Paco laugh even harder now, falling all over each other. Benny storms off. He marches past a street lamp and is swallowed up by the night.

40

EXT. L.A. RIVER - NIGHT

40

SUBJECT CAMERA FOLLOWING Benny. Oblivious that he's being followed, Benny walks at a steady pace. As we continue gaining ground on him, a SOUND UPCUT of TREVOR CALLING ROLL transports us to...

41

INT. BUNGALOW #86 - ON BENNY'S EMPTY DESK - NEXT MORNING (FIRST PERIOD)

41

Amid unresponsive cross talk:

TREVOR (O.S.)

Sergio Arrellano... Blanca
Orantes... Andrew Blackwell...
Benny Chacon...

LAKESIA

(chiming in)
Benny's not here.

Trevor gazes opaquely at Benny's empty seat.

LAKESIA

I think he went AWOL, Mr. G.

42 EXT. VACANT DIRT LOT - AFTERNOON

42

An eight-year-old Hispanic kid pulls a red Flexi-Flyer wagon (laden with pop bottles and aluminum cans) across weeds and cracked earth.

He suddenly stops and stares at something in the weeds. Snatches it up, studies it, and tosses it with everything else.

SLOWLY MOVING IN ON the wagon now...

... thru a thin shroud of dust as it bangs and bumps along.

Even CLOSER now on the last retrieved article... It's Benny's ankle monitor.

43 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - "A" BUILDING - MAIN CORRIDOR - DAY (FIFTH PERIOD)

43

Trevor emerges from Assistant Principal Ford's office and walks up the empty corridor, without breaking stride.

ELLEN (O.S.)

(muted)

... Trevor.

Trevor retraces his steps back to the door of Ellen's plant-filled, personalized computer lab. Over the CLACKING of COMPUTER KEYS...

TREVOR

(quietly)

Eskander filed for stress leave. They want me to finish out the semester.

ELLEN

That's great...

TREVOR

(with humility)

It's only 'til the end of the year.

ELLEN

Listen, I never thanked you for letting me cry on your shoulder.

Trevor flickers a conciliatory nod, now he averts his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

TREVOR

That's okay.

ELLEN

(digressing now)

Hey, have you seen Benny lately?

(as Trevor shrugs)

Ford told me he hasn't phoned his P.O. in four days.

(weighs guilt;
whispering)

You know what they say. Be careful what you pray for. Don't get me wrong, Benny's made my life a living hell. I even moved back in with my mother because of him. I love my mother, but if I eat one more dinner off a TV tray or watch one more rerun of 'Wheel of Fortune,' I think I'll lose my fucking mind.

Now an EGG TIMER RINGS O.S. on Ellen's desk. Back into the classroom...

ELLEN

(to class)

Time's up. Everyone stop working.

Realizing now that all the CLACKING COMPUTER KEYS have stopped moments ago. All eyes are fixed on Ellen and Trevor.

... Big knowing grins all around.

44 OMITTED

44

45 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - EVENING

45

Balmy and still.

ON bug zapper above garage, a churning, SLOW MOTION swarm of bugs repeatedly throw themselves headlong into the light.

46 INT. TREVOR'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

46

MUSIC plays faintly on the STEREO. Numerous artifacts occupy the bookshelves. A primitive AFRICAN MASAI BOW (with two arrows) is mounted on a wall.

(CONTINUED)

46

CONTINUED:

46

Trevor, tie loosened. Ellen, in nylon stocking feet, leaning back against a couch. On the coffee table before them are dirty dishes and half-full wine glasses. Trevor's lost in a thin introspective smile.

ELLEN

(breaks the silence)

... So you have a wife hiding in a closet somewhere?

TREVOR

(smile widens)

No. No wife.

ELLEN

Don't you ever get lonely?

Trevor considers the question.

TREVOR

(genuinely)

Sometimes. There's this passage in God's Lonely Man by Thomas Wolfe where he says, '... The whole conviction of my life rests upon the belief that loneliness is the central and inevitable fact of human existence.' I believe that.

ELLEN

God that's depressing.

They both laugh.

TREVOR

... My New York mentality.

(beat)

It's not always easy looking on the bright side.

ELLEN

Especially after spending a year in and out of a hospital, I would guess.

A beat.

TREVOR

Actually, that wasn't the toughest part -- it's the robbery that's been hardest to recover from.

ELLEN

(didn't know about this)

What'd they steal?

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

My passion. My old, unguarded self. I resent that. I want them back.

He offers a smile. Ellen returns it.

ELLEN

They're still there. Everybody around me seems to have given up. They're all so beaten down. But you're different. You refuse to be beaten.

TREVOR

So do you.

Kindred souls. Ellen fills her glass.

ELLEN

Remember the last time a student surprised you?

TREVOR

You mean where a light goes on?

ELLEN

Yeah. Where the kid surpasses all your expectations.

TREVOR

... Been awhile. So few you can actually get through to... You?

ELLEN

(thinks)
... That would have to be Daniel Terrazas. This was last year sometime. Kid was failing miserably ... But he was the best Salsa dancer in the whole school.

TREVOR

(brightens slightly)
Uh-oh.

ELLEN

So I made 'im a deal. Tutoring in exchange for Salsa lessons.

TREVOR

Saw it... Jerry Springer.

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN

No, no. He was a perfect gentleman.

TREVOR

(dryly)

Male teachers can't do things like that. They get arrested.

ELLEN

Yep, double standard... By the way, did you know Cesar Sanchez was Special Ed?

(as Trevor shakes his head)

Yep, he never should've been mainstreamed. His I.E.P. says he's L.H. but he acts more like S.E.D.

TREVOR

Severely Emotionally Disturbed... that's great.

A beat. Then Ellen gets up, wine glass balanced in her left hand.

ELLEN

Come on, Garfield -- on your feet. Lemme teach you how to Salsa.

TREVOR

(resisting)

No, no, I'm no good at that.

Ellen spins the tuner on the STEREO to a LATIN STATION and practically yanks Trevor to his feet.

ELLEN

Let's go. Don't play shy with me, homeboy.

Trevor grimaces, awkwardly relinquishes, as Ellen walks him through it.

ELLEN

(still holding wine glass)

That's it... Okay, follow me. It starts on the one. Step forward with your left foot... One. Change weight on, two.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED: (4)

46

ELLEN (CONT'D)

And three, feet
back together... Now do the same
in reverse, starting with your
right foot.

(talks their way
through)

One, two, three... One, two
three...

Trevor concentrates. Up to speed now. Technically he's got it, he just needs to loosen up. Ellen suppresses a gleeful snicker. Now, Trevor attempts to cut loose. He spins Ellen once, into a tango step, one-two-three. Now an awkward dip, causing her glass to spill wine down the back of his shirt...

ELLEN

(horrified,
giggling)

Oh, my God... your shirt. Oh, no,
I'm so sorry.

TREVOR

(self-conscious)

It's alright.

He dashes toward the hallway bathroom.

ELLEN

Can I help?

TREVOR (O.S.)

Grab the baking soda outta the
fridge.

In a flurry, Ellen rushes into the kitchen. Flips on the kitchen light, jerks open the refrigerator and locates the baking soda.

FOLLOWING now, as she MOVES STEADILY FROM the kitchen TO the hallway bathroom...

47 OMITTED

47

48 INT. TREVOR'S - HALLWAY/BATHROOM

48

as Ellen steps into the doorway and lets out a startled gasp, dropping the box of baking soda.

Trevor is bent over, scrubbing his shirt in the sink. His bare back and shoulders are scattered with brutal knife scars.

A tract house in the central San Fernando Valley. Trevor's Rambler is parked at the curb. The house is dark except for a porch light.

Trevor and Ellen are greeted by Ellen's golden retriever Jack, who's chained to the front porch. JACK WHIMPERS, ready to bark.

ELLEN

Don't start barking, Jack.

TREVOR

(petting him)

Hey there, boy. You're a good dog. Yes, you are.

Jack nuzzles up to Trevor, tail wagging furiously, no barking. Now Trevor stands and faces Ellen...

ELLEN

Sorry for reacting the way I did back there.

TREVOR

Don't apologize. That's how most people react.

ELLEN

Didn't scare me. It just surprised me.

ELLEN

... Thanks for dinner. I had a good time.

TREVOR

You're welcome.

Awkward silence. Trevor struggles with the urge to kiss her good night. They look at each other timidly for a moment. Now he moves to kiss her and she inadvertently adjusts her stance. The result is a kiss that doesn't quite hit her mouth. It's an awkward moment. Ellen feels horrible for him, desperately picks up a strange little plant by her feet.

ELLEN

Here... you need a little life in that place of yours.

Trevor takes it, smiles "thanks"...

TREVOR

... Good night.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: 49
 ... turns and starts toward his car...

ELLEN
 (a half-wave)
 ... Night.

50 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - AROUND 2 AM 50
 In the moonlit darkness. Trevor's abandoned bed. The sheets are twisted and damp. We TILT UP to see a digital clock at bedside reading 2:49 AM, and Trevor's sweat-panted figure moving down the hall in b.g.

51 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - LOW ANGLE - TREVOR - NIGHT 51
 madly pedaling TOWARD us on a bike. He wears running shoes, shorts and a Morehouse College sweat shirt and his face is contorted from the effort. He wipes sweat from his head, takes a gasping hit from his inhaler as CAMERA CRANES UP to reveal Trevor on a stationary bike in the back yard of his house, rapidly going nowhere.

52 INT. TREVOR'S HOUSE 52
 His sleepless night continues. Planted at his desk. Trevor corrects a stack of science papers, like a fervent prayer. Sun peeks through the window above his desk.

CUT TO:

52A OVER SUBURBAN CLUTTER - RISING SUN - ESTABLISHING 52A
 Then burning out to white.

52B EXT. TREVOR'S BUNGALOW - DAY 52B
 Shimmering in heat waves.

53 INT. TREVOR'S BUNGALOW - DAY 53
 It's sweltering. A single fan stirs the air.
 Amidst growing disorder, Trevor stands behind the front counter. AGENDA is written on the overhead as he flips through pages of a physical science text book.
 Rita's out of her seat, feeding the caged, white lab rat.

(CONTINUED)

Cesar, with sunglasses and typical disregard, holds court in the back of the room. He and Stevie are high.

Trevor eyes them, finds what he was looking for in the book...

TREVOR
(addressing class)
Since some of you seem to have an interest in anesthetics, I've prepared a little demonstration.

Glances over at Rita now. Checks the wall clock.

TREVOR
Rita, bring your friend in the cage over here, please.

Bringing the cage over...

RITA
His name's Snowball. Like 'dat lil' pig dude from Animal Farm.

TREVOR
(coolly impressed)
You've read Animal Farm?

CESAR
(above the din)
... schoolgirl.

RITA
(snapping a look)
Shut up, Cesar.

TREVOR
You read Animal Farm, Cesar?

CESAR
No, but I fucked a sheep.

Stevie and Paco love it.

TREVOR
Cesar, come up here.
(gesturing)
I want you to have a front row seat for this.

Surprisingly, Cesar does what he's told as Trevor removes an old pocket watch from his briefcase and sets it next to Snowball's cage...

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

And remove the 'lokes.'

Cesar removes his dark glasses. His eyes are bloodshot and vapid.

TREVOR

Why your eyes so red?

CESAR

(lying)

Mus' be pink-eye, sir.

CESAR

(eyes Trevor's pocket
watch)

Nice watch, homes. Can I have it?

Disregarding Cesar, Trevor opens a drawer and removes two latex surgical gloves from a cardboard box. He puts on the gloves and selects a petri dish from another drawer.

TREVOR

(pointing)

Rita, would you bring me a sugar
cube from the shelf over there?

She does. Trevor now removes a small amber bottle (with an eye-dropper top) from his briefcase. The class starts to settle down now as Trevor pre-measures water in a pipette and adds it to the petri dish.

TREVOR

(referring to text)

Cesar, read Young's rule for us.
Page 564. At the top.

CESAR

(like it's above him)

I ain't gonna read 'dat shit.

TREVOR

Rita, give Cesar your book. Let
'im read.

Rita places her book on Cesar's desk.

CESAR

Forget it.

Jeers from the class, "Come on, read". "Hurry up,
Cesar."

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR
 (prompting him)
 'Young's rule...' Go on.

Rita points to the passage in the book. Cesar slaps her hand.

RITA
 (reacting)
 ... Chunt. (Choont.)

CESAR
 Stoopit bitch.

TREVOR
 Touch her again, Cesar, and you'll
 answer to me personally.

Rita knits her eyebrows at Trevor. Cesar laughs.

CESAR
 You like her, Mr. G?

Class erupts.

RITA
 (shrinking)
 Shut up!

TREVOR
 (genuinely)
 Settle down, everyone. We all
 have to learn how to forgive and
 get along. C'mon, Cesar, read.
 Please.

At first Cesar doesn't budge. Now grudgingly he looks down at the book...

CESAR
 (attempting to read)
 ... Young's rule... ff... fo...

TREVOR
 ... Formulates.

Cesar heaves the book across the room: Class erupts, "Refer 'im," "Send 'im tuh Hyland." Trevor walks over and picks up the book. Class now settles. Watches Trevor closely to see what he's going to do. Trevor gazes at Cesar...

(CONTINUED)

53

CONTINUED: (4)

53

TREVOR

... I say everyone deserves another chance. Whadda you say, Cesar?

Cesar knits his eyebrows, puzzled. Now Trevor walks over and sets the textbook down in front of Rita...

TREVOR

Rita, would you please read Young's rule for me?

RITA

(hesitates and...)

... 'Young's rule formulates proper dosage levels for children and adolescents.'

TREVOR

Thank you.

Resume the lesson now. Trevor indicates the amber bottle...

TREVOR

... In the brown bottle I have a prescription for liquid Demeral.

STEVIE

Where'd that come from, sir?

TREVOR

A doctor.

Cesar grudgingly watches as Trevor places a measured drop of the liquid demeral into the petri dish and stirs the solution.

TREVOR

Demeral is a morphine sulphate... and is soluble in water.

Using the pipette, Trevor administers two drops of the demeral and water solution to the sugar cube, which he has placed inside Snowball's cage. As Snowball eats the sugar cube...

TREVOR

Young's rule says, divide the age of the patient by the patient's age plus twelve, giving us the fraction of the adult dosage suitable for the patient.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

TREVOR (CONT'D)

In Snowball's case, I've calculated the dosage necessary to tranquilize a one-year-old child... then further divided that fraction by 30, based on his weight, to arrive at .002 milligrams.

Having eaten most of the sugar cube, Snowball is rendered unconscious.

TREVOR

... Don't worry, he'll be back to normal in exactly 10 minutes.

Trevor peers at his pocket watch.

54 INSERT - FULL SCREEN - TREVOR'S POCKET WATCH

54

The hour and minute hands read 2:40. HOLD as we...

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

55 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - TEN MINUTES LATER

55

Trevor's pocket watch now reads 2:50...

RITA

... He shoulda woke up by now?

Snowball isn't moving. HOLD for an uncomfortably long moment ON the class, clustered around Trevor's desk.

The class, for once, is completely silent. Beads of perspiration form on Trevor's upper lip as he resolutely watches the sleeping rat.

CESAR

(accusatory)

You just caught a murder case, homes.

Now Snowball begins to stir and the class reacts with scattered applause. A thin smile flickers across Trevor's face. As the BELL RINGS....

TREVOR

Okay, anyone who didn't finish answering the questions on 246, finish them for homework.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

As students head for the doors, he pulls off his latex gloves and looks for his pocket watch... but it's gone.

TREVOR

Hold it, Cesar.

Cesar and Stevie are almost out the door.

TREVOR

Where's my watch?

CESAR

(urgently)

Hey, I gotta go. I ain't got no watch.

TREVOR

Empty your pockets, both of you.

CESAR

Want me to break it down to you?
I gotta catch a bus.

Cesar heads out the door.

56 EXT. BUNGALOW #86 - MOMENTS LATER

56

Trevor locks bungalow #86, picks up his briefcase, and along with the rest of the foot traffic, heads in the direction of the "A" building.

57 EXT. JQA - ON EDGE OF BUNGALOWS

57

As Trevor rounds a corner and runs smack into Ellen on the opposite side of a chain link fence.

TREVOR

(making excuses)

Sorry. I'm trying to catch Hyland before he leaves.

Trevor keeps moving.

TREVOR

I've been meaning to come by your room.

ELLEN

(keeping it light)

... It's almost been a week. My guess is you're avoiding me.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

Trevor's tongue-tied. Now he removes the Proventil inhaler from his pocket, take an innocuous hit.

ELLEN

You okay?

Trevor nods, sustains an awkward smile.

TREVOR

Has nothing to do with you, Ellen.
It's... hard for me...

A struggle, fighting against his true feelings...

TREVOR

Pretty much been like that
since... you know, my accident.
Has nothing to do with you.

ELLEN

Is it because I'm white?

TREVOR

No.

Trevor stares into her eyes, a soulful, searching gaze.
Now he averts a self-conscious look.

ELLEN

We can still be friends. Just don't
pull away.

Trevor just looks at her. Nods, somewhat bewildered.

ELLEN

(back to lighter note)
Now, can I ask you a favor? After
you're done with Hyland, can you
give me a ride to my car? It's at
the mechanics, about five or six
blocks up Lankershim. If you can't,
it's okay, I can walk.

TREVOR

(a little embarrassed)
... I think I can manage that.

Victor Sifuentes approaches now.

ELLEN

Que paso, Victor?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

VICTOR
 (into walkie-talkie)
 Base three to base one. 'Found
 'im.

As their paths converge and they stop, face to face...

VICTOR
 Mr. Garcia would like to speak
 with you in his office.

OFF Trevor's puzzled look...

58 OMITTED

58

59 INT. PRINCIPAL GARCIA'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

59

A wall air conditioner...

blows on Stevie and Cesar's sweaty backs. Trevor enters,
 shirt equally drenched in sweat. The dead silence is
 like that of a courtroom. MR. GARCIA, late forties,
 drawn, sits behind his desk...

MR. HYLAND, stands in the outer office behind a glass
 partition, head lowered. Hyland flashes Trevor a
 defeated smile as we...

Trevor coolly deciphers the situation.

Garcia reaches down, switches on a portable tape recorder.

MR. GARCIA
 You don't mind if I tape record
 our conversation. Matter of
 record. You understand.
 (indicating
 Mr. Hyland)
 Of course, you know Mr. Hyland.

Trevor weighs the situation. Nods.

TREVOR
 Am I being questioned?

MR. GARCIA
 (beat)
 Mr. Sanchez and Mr. Littleton tell
 me you've accused them of stealing
 your watch. If that's the case, I
 need to address the accusation.

(CONTINUED)

59

CONTINUED:

59

TREVOR

... For the record, I primarily suspect Mr. Sanchez. Although I wouldn't be surprised if Stevie was an accomplice.

(glances over at
Cesar and Stevie)

Beginning of sixth period, Cesar admired the watch. I believe his exact words were, 'Can I have it?'

(looks back to Garcia)

Either way, I'd like my watch back.

MR. GARCIA

Anything else?

TREVOR

When I asked him to empty his pockets, Cesar refused.

MR. GARCIA

Is that true, Mr. Sanchez?

CESAR

No way. He never asked me nothin' like that! I don't go 'round taxing no teachers...

MR. GARCIA

Okay. Calm down.

With fervor now, Cesar turns his pockets inside out, emptying the contents (house keys and two dollars in change) onto Garcia's desk.

CESAR

... I ain't got no watch, man.

MR. GARCIA

Mr. Littleton, may we see your pockets too?

Stevie empties his pockets now. Nothing but a twenty dollar bill and an empty pack of Marlboros.

Trevor just stares at him.

TREVOR

(last try)

I'd like a locker search, please.

Garcia hesitates, now looks to Cesar and Stevie...

(CONTINUED)

59

CONTINUED:

59

MR. GARCIA

You're excused, gentlemen. Take your things. Thank you.

The boys collect their belongings off Garcia's desk and shoot looks at Trevor as they exit. Now Garcia turns back to Trevor...

MR. GARCIA

(unflinching pragmatism)

... Let me try and explain something. I try and think of our students here at John Quincy Adams like they're my clients. I can't accuse anybody just on your hunches. I need more than that. I need facts.

(looking at Hyland)

I won't have another law suit like we did with that Blackwell case.

(now to Trevor)

Boy's mother spent \$400 that she couldn't afford on new clothes for her son. Unfortunately we considered the clothing gang attire and sent the boy home. That cost the district a quarter of a million dollars.

(beat)

So I want you to be straight with me, Mr. Garfield. Did you physically see Cesar take your watch?

TREVOR

No, I didn't...

MR. GARCIA

Do you have any witnesses who saw him take it?

TREVOR

(pause)

... No.

MR. GARCIA

Unless there's reasonable cause to show that Cesar, or Mr. Littleton took your watch then I can't authorize a locker search. I'm sorry. Any concerns regarding my decision, you can look up in the handbook. It's section 628.1 of the Education Code.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

TREVOR

(to Garcia)

That was my grandfather's watch.
Can't you see what they're doing?
Weren't you ever a teacher?

MR. GARCIA

Afraid I never had the privilege.
Teaching and being a principal
don't necessarily go hand in hand,
Mr. Garfield.

OFF Trevor's defeated gaze...

60 EXT. GARCIA'S OFFICE - MAIN CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

60

As Trevor and Hyland emerge from Garcia's office and walk
steadily up the empty corridor...

HYLAND

(sotto)

Is it me or is Garcia a real
asshole?

Trevor doesn't respond, lost in thought.

TREVOR

I've been thinking about
videotaping my classes.

HYLAND

... Yeah, well, here's some free
advice. Cover your ass.

Trevor slides him a glance. They stop in front of
Hyland's office door. He unlocks the door with a key...

HYLAND

If Garcia asks, your main purpose
is to observe you, not the
students. Excuse me, I mean his
'clients.'

PHONE RINGS as they enter...

61 INT. HYLAND'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

61

HYLAND

Some gangbanger might think we're
violating his civil rights...

Trevor weighs it as Hyland picks up the phone...

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

HYLAND
 (into phone)
 ... Yeah?

Signals Trevor to take a seat.

HYLAND
 (into phone)
 Sorry, Iris. Completely forgot.

INTERCUT Trevor as his eyes idly fix on an index card box (on Hyland's desk) labeled, "LOCKER COMBINATIONS."

Hyland hangs up.

HYLAND
 (to Trevor)
 Yuh have a minute? Wanna talk to you about our discipline committee. Gotta run up to the office real quick first.

Trevor shifts his gaze back to Hyland.

TREVOR
 Yeah, fine, go ahead. I'll wait.

Hyland rushes out and Trevor glances back at the index box. Momentous deliberation. Now he reaches over and carefully opens the small tin box. Methodically now, he flips through the file cards until he finds Cesar Sanchez's locker combination. Trevor's eyes scanning the information on the locker combination card. LOCKER #204. Combination sequence...08-24-53.

62 EXT. TRAFFIC SIGNAL - AFTERNOON

62

Trevor's Rambler, with Ellen in the passenger seat, stops at a large intersection.

63 INT./EXT RAMBLER - CONTINUOUS ACTION

63

ELLEN
 ... I have to fly up there for a computer conference.

TREVOR
 When's that?

ELLEN
 Day after tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

As Trevor gets distracted by something he sees...

TREVOR

Never been to San Francisco.

64 EXT. RITA'S BUS STOP - TREVOR'S POV

64

At a right angle to Lankershim, down Magnolia Blvd., Rita Nartinez sits alone on a bus stop bench.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Oh, you should go sometime,
Trevor. I think you'd like it.
Really. It's only an hour by air.
Maybe five or six by car.
Completely different attitude
from L.A. Much more like a real
city... like Chicago or New
York...

As Ellen continues talking we see a lowered blue Nissan mini-truck (with matching shell) pull up next to the bus stop. A cholo from the utility shed hangs out the passenger window and taunts Rita. Rita immediately stands and walks back down Magnolia.

The mini-truck follows her in reverse. Rita halts and begins ranting at the cholo, waving her arms all around. Now she stomps away and the mini-truck drives away with a lurch.

ELLEN (V.O.)

... Only problem is I hate to
leave Jack with my mother for any
extended period of time. I'm
afraid she'll forget to feed him
and he'll starve to death.

65 INT. TREVOR'S RAMBLER

65

INTERCUT Trevor's distracted gaze.

TREVOR

If you want, I'll take care of
Jack.

ELLEN

I can't ask you to do that.

TREVOR

(straight at Ellen now)
Sure you can.

Trevor's conference period. He stands atop a ladder in the front of the room, drilling holes in the wall for a jerry-rigged camera mount. As he climbs down, Rita enters. Paces back and forth, wringing a clenched spiral notebook, English Comp. essay tucked inside...

TREVOR

(continues working)

... Aren't you supposed to be at P.E. fifth period?

RITA

(rants; kicks a desk)

... Sunland Boyz gettin' crazy, ol lady's... fucked up. Fuck dis being down shit. I wanna do somethin' wit' my life.

A POLAROID PHOTO drops out of her notebook. Trevor reaches down and scoops it up.

INSERT - POLAROID PHOTO/DEAD GANG MEMBER IN CASKET

Puppet... a young 16-year-old cholo, dressed in gang colors, laid out in an open casket.

ON TREVOR

Now as he hands the photo back to Rita.

TREVOR

... You know this guy?

Rita takes the photo back. She doesn't want to talk about it.

RITA

(unravels now;
begins to cry)

'Gotta make J-C next year. 'Got to! I ain't never gonna get up outta here.

TREVOR

Rita, slow down.

RITA

'Dat bitch Quinn, I'm 'onna sue her ass. 'Swear tuh God...

TREVOR

Okay, okay. Calm down a second.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

Rita collapses into a desk.

TREVOR
Who's Quinn? What's she teach?

RITA
English Comp. She's failin' me.

Trevor tentatively picks up Rita's essay (branded with a big red "F") and begins reading it.

RITA
'Bitch say I don't talk right.

Trevor scrutinizes her with a glance. Now back to Rita's essay.

RITA
She hates me. She's racist
against me.

Trevor sets the essay down on Rita's desk. Regards her with genuine candor...

TREVOR
Just cause you're a Latina doesn't
mean everyone's racist against
you.

RITA
(prideful)
Hey, I'm a La Raza, prof-eh.

TREVOR
Okay... just stop blaming everyone
else. You're too smart for that.
(as Rita's rocked
back)
And every mistake in that essay is
fixable, okay? So relax, it's not
the end of the world.

Rita collects herself, wipes the streaks of mascara running down her cheeks with her sleeve. Trevor studies her for a moment.

TREVOR
(points to counter)
Tissues are in the first drawer.

Rita pulls herself together and walks over to the island counter.

(CONTINUED)

66

CONTINUED:

66

TREVOR
(innocuously)
How come you always wear so much
makeup?

RITA
(wounded)
... To make me pretty.

TREVOR
(frankly)
You don't need it.

She grabs a handful of tissues, dabs at her smeared mascara. Now her hair falls forward, exposing the back of her neck... and a tattoo that reads "Puppet" in a scrawling signature. She tosses her hair back and it disappears.

TREVOR
(slightest bit
probative)
That your name?

He indicates the back of her neck.

RITA
(with fervor and
frustration)
It's a gang thing. But I'm
kickin' dat shit... Jus' cuz I look
down for my neighborhood don't
mean I'm stupid.

TREVOR
I know you're not.

She inserts her "failed" essay inside the rolled-up spiral notebook.

TREVOR
(offers)
The ideas in your essay aren't the
problem, Rita. It's your
punctuation and grammar.
(beat)
They need work. Am I lying?
(as Rita shrugs)
If you want help I'm here for you.
Okay?

RITA
(tentatively now)
... I dunno.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

TREVOR

Have to be in the library after school.

RITA

(shaking her head)

... Somebody could see us.

TREVOR

All right then, I'll come to your house.

RITA

(spontaneous and
decisive)

No... No way.

TREVOR

Where then? You name the place.

The passing BELL for 6th period RINGS. OFF Rita's torn gaze.

67 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - ON VIDEO CAMERA - SHORT WHILE LATER (6TH PERIOD)

67

... fully mounted now on the wall above the blackboard.

NEW ANGLE

Every eye in the class is riveted on the camera. SETTLE ON Cesar and Stevie seated in the back of the bungalow. OFF their malignant stares...

CESAR

(grumbling)

Dog, you invadin' my privacy.
Bitch.

TREVOR

(remaining calm)

Cesar, would you come up here please?

Leveling a hard look, Cesar swaggers up to the island counter.

Rita watches, a bated gaze, from her seat.

Trevor motions for him to come around behind the counter.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

Now Trevor removes his grandfather's pocket watch from his briefcase and furtively dangles it for Cesar to see.

TREVOR

(calmly)

Since you were so concerned, I
though you might like to know... I
found my watch.

Cesar glares at the watch, looks up at the video camera.

CESAR

... You broke into my locker.
Dat's a serious felony, prof-eh.
You caught a case for sure now.

TREVOR

Whadda yuh propose to do, Cesar?
Tell Garcia?

(as Cesar weighs it)

Whadda yuh gonna tell 'im? That I
broke into your locker to steal
back the watch you denied taking?
I don't think so. I'd say we're
even now, wouldn't you, Cesar?

CESAR

No, I'd say we're just getting
started, ese.

Cesar walks out. Trevor smiles innocuously. At a stalemate now. You can hear a pin drop. Suddenly the CRIES of an E.N.A.B.L. BABY break the palpable tension...

68 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - 4 P.M.

68

... Trevor's Rambler is parked out front.

69 INT. TREVOR'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

69

A stilted Rita, planted on the couch. Wearing less makeup than usual.

Her notebook and pens are laid out on the coffee table along with an old English grammar textbook. Trevor stands in the kitchen doorway...

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

TREVOR
 Want something to drink? We have
 Coke, Fanta or Sprite...

RITA
 (self-consciously)
 ... Coke's awright.

OFF Trevor's mollifying nod...

70 INT. TREVOR'S KITCHEN - TREVOR

70

A moment of self-examination as he pours a glass of Coke
 for Rita...

TREVOR
 (to Rita offstage)
 'Want you to know, you're not the
 only one risking a reputation
 here. Normally I don't tutor
 students at my house.
 (adds ice cubes)
 Rita, maybe you can clear
 something up. Can you explain
 to me what machismo is all about?
 Cuz this whole respect/code of
 honor thing baffles me.

71 INT. TREVOR'S LIVING ROOM

71

as Trevor approaches the couch, eyes focused on Rita's
 soda.

TREVOR
 (preoccupied)
 Ask yourself this question. Is
 pride really that important?

Now he looks up and freezes. Quickly turns away.

Rita, lying on the couch, completely naked. Not sexual in
 the least. More like a distorted offering. Or a patient,
 placidly waiting for her doctor.

TREVOR
 (plainly)
 Put your clothes on, Rita.

An awkward moment. Chagrin becomes repressed sobs as
 Rita picks up her pile of clothes off the floor and gets
 dressed. This is one fucked-up little girl.

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

TREVOR

(affected)

No harm done... Don't cry now.

Fully dressed again, remotely staring, Rita holds back tears. Trevor sits down on the couch next to her. Opens textbook.

TREVOR

Why don't you go ahead and copy the first rule there for the verb 'to be.' Can you do that for me?

RITA

(hiccups a sob)

I jus' wan'ed to thank you.

TREVOR

You don't have to thank me, I'm your teacher.

Rita opens her notebook and begins to copy the rule. She wipes at the tears with the sleeve of her baggy sweat shirt. Trevor resists the urge to comfort her.

TREVOR

... From now on I think the best thing for us to do is meet in the library.

72 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - THAT EVENING (MAGIC HOUR)

72

Trevor kneels at the foot of his bed. Fully dressed, shirt and loosened tie. Glimpses up at the crucifix on the wall. Bows his head again...

TREVOR

(prayerfully, to himself)

... I'll try.

73 EXT. BLYTHE STREET PROJECTS - EVENING

73

BOOMING DOWN FROM the Blythe St. sign...

A cement barricade covered in graffiti chokes off street traffic.

... Crack dealers and gangbangers freely wander the rows of clapboard tenements, kids throwing sneakers, bangers drinking from glass bottles.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

Now apartment 105 (Cesar Sanchez's).

MOVING IN ON the MUTED sounds of an ARGUMENT (in Spanish).

74 INT. APARTMENT 105 - CONTINUOUS ACTION

74

Dingy. Yellowing walls. Cesar and his mother continue their arguing as Cesar watches first the "Animaniacs" and switches channels to "The Deer Hunter," while his BABY SISTER CRIES in her high chair.

MRS. SANCHEZ is older looking than her thirty-four years. Clutching her purse...

<p>MRS. SANCHEZ (on the verge of tears) ... Deja mis cosas, Cesar. Me oyes? Ese dinero es para poner comida en el plato de tu hermanita.</p>	<p>(subtitles... You stay out of my things, Cesar. You hear me? That money puts food on your baby sister's plate.</p>	*
--	---	---

Cesar yells at his SISTER to stop CRYING...

<p>CESAR Callate el osico, Rosillo! (now to his mother) Que? Me estas mandando? Yo soy el hombre de esta casa! Enceneme respeto!</p>	<p>(subtitlesshut up, Rosillo! You tellin' me what to do?! I'm the man in this house! you show me respect!)</p>	*
--	---	---

<p>MRS. SANCHEZ Pues si eres tan hombre, ve busca trabajo. Para que mantengas a tu madre y hermanita y no tenga que robar de mi bolsa.</p>	<p>(subtitlesIf you're the man then go get a job. Take care of your mother and sister. Don't rob from my purse.)</p>	*
--	--	---

In a rage, Cesar digs into his pocket and throws twenty dollars in his mother's face. She cowers.

<p>CESAR Tenga, no necesito su pinche, apestoso dinero!</p>	<p>(subtitlesHere, I don't need your stinkin' money!)</p>	*
---	---	---

They're interrupted by a KNOCK at the front door.

CESAR
(indicating door)
I ain't getting it. You get it.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

Cesar plops down on an old worn out recliner and goes back to watching "Animaniacs" on the TELEVISION. ROSILLO STOPS her CRYING and Mrs. Sanchez carefully gathers the money scattered at her feet.

75 INT. APARTMENT 105 - FRONT DOOR

75

Behind the screen door, a silhouette fills the doorway. MOVING IN ON CESAR.

He can faintly hear the O.S. conversation as he watches TV.

MRS. SANCHEZ
(O.S.) Si, quien es? (subtitlesYes, who's there?) *

TREVOR (O.S.) Senora Sanchez? Soy el senior Garfield, Profesor de ciencia de Cesar. (subtitlesMrs. Sanchez? I'm Mr. Garfield, Cesar's science teacher. *

MRS. SANCHEZ (O.S.)
(surprised)
Si, maestro.

Cesar's stunned look lifts him from the recliner.

TREVOR (O.S.) Se que es tarde. Ojala no este estorbando nada. Me permite hablar con usted por un momento? (subtitlesI know it's late. Hope I'm not disturbing anything. May I speak with you a moment?

MRS. SANCHEZ (O.S.)
Entre, por favor.

76 INT. APARTMENT #105 - CESAR'S POV - TREVOR AND MRS. SANCHEZ

76

PIVOTING now to see Trevor enter the front door.

Cesar glares with flint-hard eyes at Trevor.

TREVOR
Hello, Cesar.

Breaking his unrelenting stare, Cesar now squeezes past Trevor and out the screen door, slamming it behind him.

77 INT. APARTMENT #105 - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

77

Mrs. Sanchez cradles Rosillo in her lap.

<p>MRS. SANCHEZ (beside herself) No se que hacer, maestro. El no hace caso.</p>	<p>(subtitlesI don't know what to do, maestro. He doesn't listen to me.)</p>	*
---	--	---

ROSILLO begins to CRY again...

<p>MRS. SANCHEZ Perdona me Dios, pero hay veces que quisiera matarlo.</p>	<p>(subtitlesGod, but there are times I want to kill him.)</p>	*
---	--	---

Suppressing her emotions, she comforts her baby. Trevor weighs a vacuous stare. Now he notices a bruise under Mrs. Sanchez's hairline, above her left eye.

<p>TREVOR (indicating bruise) Como paso eso? Arriba del ojo?</p>	<p>(subtitlesHow'd that happen... above your eye?)</p>
--	--

Overcome with shame, she attempts to cover the bruise.

MRS. SANCHEZ
Nada... es nada.

78 EXT. BLYTHE STREET PROJECTS - EVENING

78

Steadfast and unflinching, Trevor beats a path back to his car, parked outside the barricade. Cesar now appears from nowhere. Carries a '40 ounce' in a paper bag. He's been drinking.

CESAR
(venting rage)
Puto! You lied to Benny. You
said you don't speak no Spanish!

TREVOR
No I didn't.

CESAR
'At's bullshit!

TREVOR
Enjoy hitting your mother, Cesar?
You must be proud of yourself.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

A handful of gangbangers, drinking and loitering around Trevor's car, sharpen their stares and listen intently. Cesar grows nervous.

CESAR
 (to gangbangers)
 ... He's lyin', man.
 (at Trevor)
 Fuckin' liar! Homeboy don't
never disrespec' his mother.
Never. You hear me, joto?!

TREVOR
 Whatever you say, Cesar.

Trevor steps around the gangbangers and climbs into his car...

CESAR
 I'll find out where you stay.
 Trucha, homes!

As the Rambler drives away Cesar heaves his 40 ounce at it. Shatters all over the pavement.

CESAR
 Valla ala chingada!

Cesar stands in the middle of the street, throwing hand signs.

79 EXT. PARKING LOT/BUNGALOW #86 - NEXT MORNING

79

Trevor approaches, via the parking lot, through a gate in a chain-link fence. ADJUST the ANGLE now to discover first period students mobbing the open doorway of Bungalow #86.

TREVOR
 (pushing through)
 'Scuse me. What's going on?
 (and)
 Lakesia, who opened the door?

LAKESIA
 It was like that when I got here.

80 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - CONTINUOUS ACTION

80

Trevor squeezes through the doorway to find Dave Childress pacing the bungalow, assessing the damage. VIDEO CAMERA (AND HOUSING) are scattered in pieces all over the floor.

(CONTINUED)

One of the windows is smashed-in. A serpentine trail of BLACK SPRAY PAINT encircles the entire room. Provocative epithets tag the walls... "Pinche madre", "Puto" and "Fuck you G!"

CHILDRESS

Whoever did this is gonna pay!
Better believe it, ese(s).

A curious stream of students fill the room now. Childress vents his anger at them...

CHILDRESS

(crazed now)
Get the hell outta here!

TREVOR

Dave...
(to Armenian kid)
Barsek, don't touch anything,
okay?

CHILDRESS

Get out!!

And now Snowball... as Barsek discovers him... Lifeless. Impaled by a pair of scissors on the front counter.

BARSEK

(an incredulous,
sickened laugh)
Oh, damn. Lookit the rat.

OFF Trevor's stricken gaze...

Childress snaps. He grabs Barsek by the throat. The crowd scatters, students tripping over each other to get out of the bungalow.

CHILDRESS

Think it's funny?! Huh?! Yuh
little fuck!

Trevor attempts to separate Childress from Barsek...

TREVOR

Dave! No! Let go of 'im!

CHILDRESS

(to Barsek)
D'you do this?!

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

80

BARSEK
 (choking)
 Nooo...

Trevor pries them apart. Barsek crumbles to the floor, gulping for air and scurrying out of the bungalow on his hands and knees.

TREVOR
 He didn't do anything. He's a good kid.

81 EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - MORNING (NUTRITION PERIOD)

81

ESTABLISHING the different student factions.

MUSIC, playing over a PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM, fills the quad.

Trevor, now an interloper, crossing the senior lawn, openly searching for Cesar.

Tag-bangers, a clique of eight or nine K.O.S. wanna-be(s). Feature PACO (16) as they take quick hits off a blunt.

Now Cesar extinguishes the blunt with his fingertips and hides it as Trevor wanders into their midst.

TREVOR
 (glances around;
 sniffs)
 Been smokin' the chronic, Cesar?

CESAR
 (a smirk)
 I'm hooked on phonics... not 'hooked on chronic.'

Laughs all around.

TREVOR
 (not amused)
 You wouldn't happen t'know who vandalized bungalow eighty-six last night?

CESAR
 (feigning ignorance)
 You guys know anything about that?
 (off silence)
 Sorry, maestro... nada.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

(sotto)

Garcia may not think there's enough here to prove anything. But you and I both know who's responsible. Don't we?

CESAR

Whadda you, a narc? Seriously, I don't know what the fuck you're talkin' about.

Trevor maintains his fervent demeanor. Now he notices the ring on Cesar's right index finger.

INSERT - CESAR'S RING

emblazoned with a green marijuana leaf.

TREVOR

(pointing)

The ring, Cesar... lemme have it.

Cesar dramatically jerks back his finger.

CESAR

Watch it, eh... that's my trigger finger.

As Cesar, with purpose, aims an invisible gun at Trevor...

TREVOR

It's inappropriate attire...

CESAR

... Bang.

TREVOR

(momentous
deliberation)

... Are you finished?

Cesar starts to laugh. A crowd begins to gather.

CESAR

What? Finished with what? Don't get crazy on me, dude.

The boisterous crowd escalates... hoots and hollers.

After weighing the situation, Trevor exchanges palpable looks with Cesar.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED: 81

Now he reluctantly back-pedals, squeezing his way past the wall of bodies pressed in behind him.

His departure across an empty lawn is accompanied by a hail of "boos" and taunts.

82 EXT. BURBANK AIRPORT - LANDING RUNWAY - TWILIGHT 82

as an 737 ROARS down onto the tarmac. In the f.g., Trevor and Ellen PEEL away from the curb angrily.

83 EXT. TREVOR'S RAMBLER (AIRPORT VICINITY) - NIGHT 83

Traveling down Hollywood Way.

84 INT./EXT. RAMBLER - TREVOR AND ELLEN - CONTINUOUS ACTION 84
- NIGHT

in the front seat...

ELLEN

... These conferences mainly focus on software now.

TREVOR

(far off)
Software sells.

ELLEN

(flickers a smile)
So, how's Jack?

TREVOR

... Jack's good.

As they pull up to a stop light...

ELLEN

(flirtatious)
And what about Trevor? Was Trevor a good boy, too?

Triggers an unintended response...

TREVOR

(self-consciously)
What's that supposed to mean?

ELLEN

(innocently)
Nothing...

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

TREVOR

Is that supposed to mean something?

ELLEN

(baffled)

Trevor...

The light changes to green. An impatient young man in the car behind them BEEPS his HORN. Lays it on a little too long.

Trevor snaps.

85 EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

85

As Trevor gets out of the car, marching up to the car behind, slamming his hand down on its hood...

TREVOR

Can't you see I'm talking to the lady?!

The young man shrinks, quickly rolling up his window.

86 INT. RAMBLER - CONTINUOUS ACTION

86

as Trevor gets back in and they drive away. Not a word is spoken. Exorcising his demons now. He simmers.

TREVOR

... I'm sorry. Forgive me.

OFF Ellen's disturbed gaze...

87 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

87

as the Rambler pulls into the driveway. Ellen's '92 Jeep Cherokee is parked on the street. Bug zapper above the garage flickers on.

88 INT./EXT. TREVOR'S FRONT YARD THROUGH CAR WINDSHIELD - CONTINUOUS ACTION

88

Light now spills into the front yard. No sign of Jack.

Trevor SHUTS OFF the IGNITION. A portentous silence.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED: 88

ELLEN
... Come out, come out, wherever
you are. Where is he?

Trevor reaches for a flashlight in the glove compartment.

89 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - RAMBLER - CONTINUOUS ACTION 89

Trevor and Ellen step out of the car.

TREVOR
(tentatively)
Jack?

MOVING THROUGH the chain-link fence, into the front yard.
Ellen whistles faintly. Trevor turns on his flashlight.

ELLEN
Here, boy... here, Jack. Come to
Mommy, sweetheart.

The glare of the flashlight fixes on the trunk of the
olive tree.

Jack's chain stretching tautly toward the back alley.

ELLEN
(reacting)
... Oh, my God.

Trevor and Ellen, propelled now toward the alley, hearts
pounding, frantically rushing toward the conclusion as
the flashlight traces the length of the chain...

ELLEN
(right behind Trevor)
Jack?!

The chain disappears over the top of the alley wall.
Trevor kicks open the alley gate and freezes.

90 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - OTHER SIDE OF ALLEY WALL - JACK 90

centered in the flashlight beam, dangling there,
strangled to death at the end of his dog collar.

91 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - ELLEN AND TREVOR - NIGHT 91

ELLEN
(gut-wrenching)
Jack!

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

Trevor holds her back. She unleashes her torment, punching and kicking until fully spent, crumbling to her knees now, sobbing hysterically.

ELLEN

... Jack.

HOLD ON her fitful sobs, and...

CUT TO:

92 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - IN ALLEY - THAT NIGHT
(APPROXIMATELY AN HOUR LATER)

92

Trevor, a beaten hypnotic gaze, watches as an ANIMAL REGULATIONS OFFICER fatefully slams the cargo door of his truck.

ANIMAL REGULATIONS OFFICER

Don't beat yourself up too much.
It was an accident. He was probably
after a cat... or someone walked
past back here in the alley.
Whatever it was, he jumped over the
fence. What can you do?

Ellen watches Trevor's house; behind a screen door.

93 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

93

Ellen sits on Trevor's bed, fighting back tears.

Trevor enters with a glass of water and a pill. Sits down on the edge of the bed.

TREVOR

(offering pill)
It's aspirin...

ELLEN

(refuses it)
... I can't talk to you right now,
Trevor. Please. I'm so upset I
can't even drive. I just need some
time alone.

Trevor acquiesces. Steps over to his desk and sets the glass of water down. A key protrudes from one of the desk drawers. He leans over, removes the key and plays with it for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

TREVOR

(beat)

I know about what's not fair. I left part of my lung in a damn hospital because some gangbanger didn't like the grade I gave him. Sometimes you do all the right things. You work hard in school... get a good job... pay your taxes. Things still go bad.

(eyes flicker)

I'm so sorry, Ellen.

Ellen shuts her heavy eyelids now. Shuts out the world.

94 EXT. ALLEY BEHIND TREVOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

94

A thorough investigation now at the foot of Jack's wall...

... Trevor's flashlight fixes on a faint set of shoe prints in the dirt.

Waffle-soled Doc Martens. He follows their trail, down the alley.

Hesitating at the wall again. He now focuses his flashlight beam on a smattering of graffiti... and discovers a fresh tag...

In black spray paint, the letters K.O.S. Trevor reaches out and touches a coagulated trickle of paint. As he inspects the faint residue on his fingertip...

95 OMITTED

95

96 EXT. FREEWAY UNDERPASS - LATER THAT NIGHT

96

About 2 a.m. The street's empty.

Cesar's darkened apartment is tucked away in the distance. Now a lone figure emerges and beats a path through the projects... CLOSER now... it's Cesar. White T-shirt, sagging gray dickies...

FOLLOWING HIM now... as he crosses the edge of a dirt lot. FOCUSING ON his Doc Marten boots and their waffle-soled print...

97 EXT. FREEWAY UNDERPASS - NIGHT 97

Merging with Cesar as he slinks down the dark alley corridor. Lighting a blunt off his Zippo lighter...

98 FURTHER DOWN 98

Cesar spray paints a wall with a can of black enamel paint. He takes another hit. Chokes down a shit-eating grin. And admires his work... a goofy dog smoking a blunt.

... below the dog he scrawls the word, "CARTOON." Above it, "K.O.S. As he slips the spray can into his front pocket, he senses a presence..

CESAR

... 'At you, Stevie?

Profound silence. Grin dissolves. Riveted, Cesar takes another slow hit off his blunt. Suddenly a coyote darts past him.

CESAR

(startled)

... Hells, man. Stupit dog.

His sick smirk returns. But only momentarily. Now a premonitory flicker registers on his face. He blinks as a Masai arrow splits the darkness and pierces his left pectoral muscle.

Exhaling a stunned breath, Cesar looks down at the arrow. An incredulous, stupefied laugh escapes him as he pulls the arrow out of his chest and studies it...

The normal length of the arrow's been shortened by half and the tip has been fitted with a modified hypodermic needle. (The needle extends from a rubber stopper which has retracted into the hypodermic casing, causing the solution in the hypo to jettison through the needle and into Cesar).

CESAR

... Mutha fuck.

Now back-pedaling, stumbling, dropping the arrow, he turns and runs off.

99 EXT. FREEWAY UNDERPASS 99

Cesar collapses onto a pile of garbage bags. MOVING IN. His eyes fixed and dilated. Forehead beaded with perspiration. Fighting against the effects of the injection...

Now blackness...

100 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (3 AM) 100

Ellen awakens with a start.

She glances about, momentarily disoriented. Now she remembers where she is and what happened.

ELLEN

Trevor?

No response. Choking back emotions.

101 INT. TREVOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 101

TV SET ON. Ellen enters, glances around. No Trevor.

ELLEN

Trevor?

102 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER 102

As Ellen returns. She notices the glass of water on the desk. Bravely collects herself. Crosses over to the desk and sits down.

ELLEN

... Where'd you put the aspirin?

Like an involuntary reflex she tugs on the center drawer of the desk, but it's locked. Now she pulls on one of the side drawers and it slides open. Ellen stops at what she sees...

... a treasure-trove of homemade shivs, Bic lighters, Walkmen, pagers... and Benny Chacon's black rosary beads.

BACK TO Ellen and her curious, sobered look. Now she slowly shuts the drawer.

103 INT. TREVOR'S FOYER - A SHORT WHILE LATER 103

Fumbling in her purse for her keys, Ellen makes a hasty departure.

104 EXT. FREEWAY UNDERPASS - PREDAWN 104

Almost six AM. Encroaching sunlight creeps toward the horizon. A vapid stillness. Not a soul stirs.

105 EXT. FREEWAY UNDERPASS - TIGHT ON CESAR'S FACE -
CONTINUOUS ACTION 105

as he comes to.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

Eyes feverish, registering pain. His head throbs. He begins to move and discovers a pounding in his right hand...

... Lifting his hand up in front of his face. Cesar's ring index finger has been severed clean off. Blood is everywhere.

Cesar emits a silent panic-stricken scream. Reduced to a snot-sobbing wreck, he frantically searches the ground on his hands and knees...

CESAR

My finger. Please, somebody help me! Where's my finger?!

106 OMITTED

106

107 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION - MORNING

107

PUSHING IN ON the Emergency Room Sign... MOVING PAST the unrelenting urgency that permeates the ER. DISCOVER Cesar now in a wheelchair, right hand completely wrapped in gauze. He pleads with two police DETECTIVES...

CESAR

... I put it on my mother, sir.

DETECTIVE #1

(leaning forward;
good cop)

... So your science teacher shot you with an arrow full of drugs then chopped off your finger. Come on, you can do better than that, Cesar.

CESAR

It had to be him!

DETECTIVE #2

(bad cop)

He smoke the `mota' for yuh, too, eh ese?

CESAR

Pinche madre... he hates my guts, man!

DETECTIVE #2

You covering for somebody, homes?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

DETECTIVE #2 (CONT'D)
Cuz, this circumstantial bullshit
won't hold up in court, I'll tell
you that right now.

Detective #1 refers to a rap sheet...

DETECTIVE #1
(sadly)
Caught too many priors, Cesar.
Juvenile GTA, vandalism...

CESAR
I know he did it! Don't you hear
what I'm saying?

DETECTIVE #1
You saw his face?

CESAR
(lying)
Yeah, yeah. I seen him.

Detective #2 shakes his head and grimaces.

DETECTIVE #2
Lemme save yuh from perjuring
yourself, asshole... You're full
of shit.

CESAR
I swear it! For reals!

DETECTIVE #2
(turns to leave)
C'mon, this guy's wasting our time.
(points to Cesar)
Come up with something better than
that, or the truth, then maybe we'll
talk.

Detective #2 walks away. Detective #1 follows.

Cesar hangs his head, mumbling a disparaging flood of
Spanish expletives...

108 INT. E.R. RECEIVING DESK - ANONYMOUS POV - CONTINUOUS ACTION 108

THROUGH passing patients and personnel... APPROACHING the
receiving desk.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

... As the blurred shoulder of an orderly CROSSES OUT to reveal a legal-sized white envelope now on the counter top.

A busy E.R. nurse notices the envelope. Glances around. Picks up the envelope and reads the name typed across the face of it... CESAR SANCHEZ... narrowing her gaze as she opens the envelope.

In the envelope, Cesar's severed finger, nesting in a clump of newspaper.

Appears to be something tattooed across the side of it but we can't quite make it out.

The Nurse gasps and drops the envelope, spilling the finger onto the counter top.

CLOSE now ON the finger and the fresh "tatt" scrawled across its side: R-U-DUN?

SOUND FADES now from the scene, replaced by a TECHNO HIP-HOP TRACK that CONTINUES THROUGH the CUT...

109 EXT. BUNGALOW #86 - AFTERNOON (6TH PERIOD)

109

Rain lashes the faculty parking lot...

110 INT. BUNGALOW #86 - CONTINUOUS ACTION

110

HIP-HOP TRACK FADES now replaced by the buzz of cross-talk. Trevor strolls the aisles, an open science book in hand.

(NOTE: Rita is dressed in overalls, very subdued compared to her usual attire.)

Cesar's back... and seated in his regular seat, across from Stevie Littleton. Uncharacteristically, his eyes are fixed on the book in front of him.

TREVOR

(addressing class)

... Name one of four parts that make up the human hand?

Trevor holds up his hand for display.

TREVOR

... Hands, please.

A reluctant cross section of hands go up.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

6th period is by no means a synchronized whole but there has developed an odd sort of order to its madness.

Trevor looks around. Picks on an Anglo girl in the second row.

TREVOR

Christian.

CHRISTIAN

... The metacarpals.

TREVOR

The Metacarpals. That's one.

(to class)

Name some more?

Now he picks on Rita...

TREVOR

Rita.

RITA

The wrist... and thumb.

A flurry of thumbs go up as if on cue.

TREVOR

Good.

(holding up all his
fingers now)

... And don't forget the phalanges.

Fingers shoot up and wiggle on cue...

CLASS

(in unison)

Phalanges, phalanges, phalanges...

Scattered laughter and groans at this embarrassing routine...

Cesar's beaten gaze remains riveted to his book. Now he slides a look at the "R-U-DUN" tatt on his right index finger. The severed finger has been sewn back on, supported by a finger brace.

Stevie openly stares at the back of Trevor's head as Trevor passes by in the aisle.

111 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - "A" BUILDING/COMPUTER LAB -
AFTER SCHOOL

111

RAIN steadily plays AGAINST the WINDOWS.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

Ellen sits behind her computer, lost in a grading program...

Trevor now enters. Damp hair and shoulders.

TREVOR

May I come in?

Ellen stops what she's working on.

ELLEN

(reticently)

Hi.

TREVOR

(concerned)

Where'd you go the other night?

ELLEN

I was going to ask you the same thing.

TREVOR

... I went for a run.

(changes subject)

Wanna get some Chinese later?

There's a new place in the Valley Center. 'Spose to be pretty good.

ELLEN

(an excuse)

... Can't tonight. Maybe another time.

Weighs it, and...

TREVOR

(stands there for a moment)

... I should probably correct papers anyway. Some of these bungalow kids actually care about a grade. Even Cesar's doing better. Today, for the first time since I took over for Eskander, he actually did his work.

(beat)

Today Cesar Sanchez was a success. Maybe for the first time in his life.

(blinks now)

You alright?

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

ELLEN

... Much better, thank you.

A tacit satisfaction that all is well...

TREVOR

... I really am sorry about Jack.

He exits now leaving Ellen alone with her thoughts.

112 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS SCHOOL LIBRARY - MORNING

112

Before school tutoring session. The minute hand on the wall clock jerks ahead one minute... 7:23 AM.

Trevor and Rita at a table near the back of the library. Trevor gazes blankly at Rita's essay. Rita revises one of the pages.

INTERCUT Dave Childress at the front counter as the librarian (late fifties) photocopies a page from a history book for him. Childress scrutinizes Trevor and Rita as he waits.

Satisfied now, Rita slides the page to Trevor...

RITA

... Finished.

Trevor blinks himself back to reality...

TREVOR

... Let's hava look..

He adjusts his glasses. Pores over the paper...

TREVOR

... Good.

(deliberating)

... I was just thinking, since your essay's about gangs and getting away from their influence, you probably could've left some of those double negatives you like so well.

RITA

(confused)

So now you wan' me to use bad grammar.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR
(explaining)
Only if it suits your topic.

RITA
I know. We're all products of our
environment 'n' shit.

TREVOR
No, I think that's just an excuse.
(beat)
I say if we're strong, we can rise
above adversity.
(lets it sink in)
But it's like rap or hip-hop...
Correct all the grammar and it
loses its impact.

RITA
So you like hip-hop, Mr. G?

TREVOR
(shakes his head)
... I hate it.

RITA
(reacting)
What kinda black man are you?

Trevor bursts forth a laugh.

Childress perks up at the front counter.

Trevor's laugh evokes a smile from Rita. Now she pries
a little further...

RITA
Why you here anyways? Don't you
got nothin' better t'do?

TREVOR
... Everything I wanna do is right
here.
(back on track now)
It's a good essay, Rita. You put
a lot of effort into it, it shows.

RITA
(a laconic grin)
Comes from the heart, maestro.
I'm a writer... not a fighter.

Trevor returns a cognitive flicker.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

TREVOR
 (hinting now)
 ... Ms. Quinn was telling me she
 picks two seniors each year to
 read their essays at graduation.

RITA
 (taken aback)
 She ain't gonna pick my paper.
 Anyway, I don't wanna get up in
 fronna all those people and make
 a fool outta myself.

TREVOR
 Why not? It'd be a Pyrrhic
 victory.

RITA
 What's dat?

TREVOR
 ... In your case, irony. Refers
 to King Pyrrhus. Never mind.
 Look it up sometime.

OFF Rita's reluctance...

113 EXT. LOS ANGELES RIVER/SEPULVEDA DAM BASIN - AFTERNOON

113

A churning fist of muddy water cuts a path along the
 perimeter of a golf course and jogging trail.

TRACING jogging trail, KEEPING PACE now with a die-hard
 runner. Something registers in the runner's eyes, pace
 slowing, now stopping. Not fully comprehending what he
 is looking at...

FOLLOWING HIS GAZE... THROUGH a curtain of rain and tall
 swamp grass... along the riverbank... TO the base of the
 Burbank Boulevard Overpass.

SLOWING ANGLE to discover precariously jutting out of the
 rushing waters, in a tangle of chicken wire fence, a
 partially decomposed torso...

114 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS COMPUTER LAB - AFTER LUNCH
(5TH PERIOD)

114

Ellen walks down an aisle of computers as the class
 settles...

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN

... Before getting side-tracked with viruses and T-S-R programs, we were talking yesterday about E-Mail.

INTERCUT Stevie. Ellen passes Stevie's computer as he shares cryptic information with a kid sitting next to him.

Ellen approaches her computer console on wheels at the front of the class.

ELLEN

If you click-on the mail icon in your tray, you'll be ready to send and receive mail. My computer's already set-up. Everyone go ahead and click the white envelope in the lower...

Ellen's interrupted by her own computer. A little white envelope icon in the lower left hand tray flashes and BEEPS. Now a COMPUTER VOICE announces: "You've got mail."

Ellen's taken aback. Class titters. Now she grins.

ELLEN

Looks like someone's way ahead of me. Alright.

(adapts and demonstrates)

To retrieve your mail simply double click the top item in your mail list.

(as she does)

Since we're all a part of the same network, we share mail... so go ahead and do that.

The message read: TEACHER FUCKS NIGGERS

Class is dumbstruck. Ellen's riveted. Now she turns. Without losing her temper, she scours the class with a narrow gaze.

Class starts to buzz. Now a clicking frenzy to retrieve the same message.

The anonymous message pops up on computer screens all around the classroom.

Ellen's POV of students (and Stevie). Deciphering reactions. LINGERING ON Stevie's poker face.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

Her own poker face now...

ELLEN

Whoever sent that message isn't
as anonymous as they think.

Ellen turns to her console, clicks the REPLY button. A new mail message window opens up. It's addressed to the anonymous sender, STUDENT #00. Ellen types in:

GO TO THE OFFICE

All the while anticipation builds on Stevie's face. He glances around, starting to get nervous.

Ellen now clicks the SEND button...

Stevie's COMPUTER BEEPS... COMPUTER VOICE: "You've got mail..."

... A window opens in the middle of Stevie's monitor revealing Ellen's return message.

Class erupts and Stevie springs out of his seat...

STEVIE

'Dat's bullshit, man!

He rushes up to the front of the class.

STEVIE

You best step off, Ms. H. Cuz you can't prove nuthin'. And I know you can't afford to lose 'dis minimum wage job 'a yers.

ELLEN

(beat and)

You're right, Stevie. I can't afford to live in a big house south of the boulevard. Like you do.

Class erupts again, coming down on Stevie and his wanna-be poor boy from the streets image. They're laughing at him now, not with him. In a rage, Stevie kicks open the hallway door and exits the classroom.

115 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS MAIN OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

115

Ellen hastily enters, looking for Stevie. Addresses IRIS (a thirty-something Hispanic woman) behind the counter...

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

ELLEN

Iris, did Steven Littleton come
in here?

IRIS

Haven't seen 'im.

Teacher #1, the insipid woman, checks her mail slot. It's
her conference period.

TEACHER #1

(appalled)

You're not supposed to leave
your classroom unattended.

ELLEN

(reacting)

Sue me.

Teacher #1 exits in a flurry. Ellen now glances to her
right. Seated there in rigid silence is BENNY CHACON'S
MOTHER (51).

IRIS

(offers; sotto)

Benny Chacon's mother. Told
'er Garcia had to leave early
today but she jus' sits there.
She been saying some pretty
crazy things.

Mrs. Chacon begins speaking Spanish in plaintive spurts.
Ellen can't decipher what she is saying...

ELLEN

(to Mrs. Chacon)

... Espanol, muy poquito, senora.

(beat)

Mrs. Chacon... you have to slow down.

(back to Iris)

What's she saying?

Hesitating. Now with apprehension...

IRIS

You heard 'bout that body they foun'
in the L.A. River... She says she
thinks it's Benny.

OFF Ellen's unblinking gaze...

116 EXT. LOS ANGELES COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE (DOWNTOWN) -
EVENING

116

A concrete fortress... Ellen and Mrs. Chacon approach.

117 OMITTED 117

118 INT. ASSISTANT CORONER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS ACTION 118

Ellen and Mrs. Chacon sit stiffly in front of the ASSISTANT CORONER (mid-forties). Desk cluttered. Half-eaten sandwich in front of him. He nurses a Styrofoam cup of coffee as he flips through a John Doe folder.

ASST. CORONER

You say he's been missing approximately four weeks?

ELLEN

... Four, almost five weeks.

ASST. CORONER

That's a long time. Lots a things happen to a body after four or five weeks. Makes it difficult to I.D.

A faint, incongruous smile.

ELLEN

(indicating John Doe)

So he just sits here?

ASST. CORONER

We keep 'um up to thirty days. Lady, we get 80, sometimes 90 Does a month. Floaters, gangbangers, illegals, junkies. Most of 'um cheap homicides. Nobody's even lookin' for 'em.

(indicating folder)

This guy here, has a dent in his head. Could be post-mortem trauma. Probably hit a retaining wall on his way down river after that rain we had. Who knows.

(beat)

Yuh ask me, this kid was dead before he got his head caved in. Overdose by morphine. That's what it looks like t'me.

Ellen weighs it. Assistant Coroner now refers to some sort of questionnaire.

ASST. CORONER

On the phone you said the mother mentioned some identifying marks.

Ellen refocuses a far-off, introspective gaze.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

ELLEN
 (affirmative)
 She said he has some pockmarks on
 his chest; from a bad case of
 chicken pox. And there's a bar-
 code tattoo on his neck.

A cognitive flicker now as the Assistant Coroner sets
 down his coffee...

119 INT. AUTOPSY ROOM - EVENING

119

The acrid fecal smell causes Ellen to flinch. Averting
 her eyes, she holds onto Mrs. Chacon's arm as they stand
 next to the autopsy table. A plastic diaphanous sheet
 covers the body.

Now the Assistant Coroner raises the sheet...

Mrs. Chacon's traumatic gaze confirms her worst fears.
 She raises a hand to her mouth. Now the tears come...

MRS. CHACON
 ... Benito.

As she comforts Mrs. Chacon...

ELLEN
 (to Assistant Coroner;
 sotto)
 Did you find any rosary beads with
 the body?

ASSISTANT CORONER
 No.

120 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

120

... The digital clock next to Trevor's bed reads:
 2:14 a.m.

Trevor sleeps. HOLD for a portentous moment. Now the
 stillness is broken by a CLATTER at the front door.
 Someone enters the house. Trevor awakens. Jolts out of
 bed. Disoriented a beat.

121 INT. TREVOR'S HALLWAY

121

In boxer shorts and a T-shirt, adjusting his glasses,
 Trevor ventures through darkness...

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

... Who's there?

A light flickers on in the living room.

ELLEN (O.S.)

You should keep your door locked.

ADJUSTING the ANGLE now as the living room comes INTO VIEW...

Ellen paces back and forth, consumed by what's troubling her.

TREVOR

(still half asleep)

What's the matter?

Ellen ignores his question.

ELLEN

(impaling him with
a look)

I just want you to tell me one
thing...

Now something she sees stops her pacing...

... The black rosary beads on the dinner table.

TREVOR

(off Ellen's
puzzled look)

What?

Following her gaze, he picks up the rosary beads. As he places them in a drawer in the credenza.

TREVOR

What is it?

Ellen's confused. Lost in a fixated gaze.

ELLEN

... If you had any idea what I've
been thinking lately... you'd
think I was crazy.

(running it through
her mind)

... Remember that John Doe they
found in the L.A. River. Turned
out it was Benny.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR
(impacted)
Who told you that?

ELLEN
... Benny's mother identified the
body.

Trevor just looks at her, a bated pause. Now he blinks.

TREVOR
Benny was no saint, Ellen. This
is a kid who terrorized half the
school. He even broke into your
house. Maybe we should think
about that 'fore we shed any tears.

Ellen just looks at him.

TREVOR
... Maybe he's better off.

ELLEN
That's a horrible thing to say.

Trevor accepts that it is.

TREVOR
Do you believe for every troubled
kid like Benny there's one or two
others just waiting to take his
place? Like Cesar... or his
friend Stevie.

An awkward moment of silence...

ELLEN
You don't know anything about
Cesar's finger, do you, Trevor?

TREVOR
Sometimes a person just runs out
of bad choices. Then he's gotta
pay a price. What happened to
Cesar was inevitable.

Ellen flickers a terrified smile.

ELLEN
You're scaring me.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

We make choices in life and we live by 'em. You and I chose to be teachers, to stand on principle. Benny and Cesar, they're takers. They want what they want, and they want it now.

ELLEN

Trevor...

TREVOR

(unravelling)

I'm sorry but everyone can't always get what they want. Sometimes you gotta take responsibility for your actions. Have you ever been ready to die for a fundamental principle? They haven't. You think those punks would die protecting your Civil Rights?

ELLEN

Trevor, don't.

TREVOR

Did you know Cesar hits his mother? Steals money from her purse? Did you know that?

Ellen blanches.

TREVOR

Did you know he was here that night? In the alley?

ELLEN

(confused)

What are you talking about?

TREVOR

Cesar. Jack was provoked. It wasn't an accident, Ellen. Cesar killed him.

Ellen just stares at him. Traumatized...

ELLEN

(momentous deliberation)

Where'd you get the rosary beads?

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

TREVOR

(pause and...)

I like you, Ellen. I like you so
much. Do you believe that?

ELLEN

(riveted)

Yes.

Trevor can't find words.

ELLEN

... I don't know you.

With that, Ellen turns and walks out of the house as quickly as she came.

TREVOR

(plaintively)

... You do know me. I'm a
teacher, just like you.

123A EXT. STUDENT QUAD/QUEBRADITA - AFTER SCHOOL
(CINCO DE MAYO)

123A

ESTABLISH hoardes of cowboy hats, belt sashes and boots as they dance to the loud Mexican band music on the patio...

Non-Hispanics, along with non-Quebradita cliques, look on from the lawn area...

DAVE CHILDRESS

hanging back, on the fringes, scoping out the crowd. Notices a pack of cigarettes in the chest pocket of a 15-year-old kid standing next to him. Kid's wrapped up in talking to another kid, points to something O.S.

CHILDRESS

(to the kid with
cigarettes)

... Don't you know it's not polite
to point at people. Everytime you
point a finger at someone else...

(demonstrates)

... There's three fingers pointing
back at you.

(lesson over)

Lemme have a cigarette.

122 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - MEN'S BATHROOM - AFTER SCHOOL 122

... Cinco de Mayo. The sounds of a QUEBRADITA waft in from outside in the quad.

At the same time, Steve follows him into the rest room. They're all alone.

STEVIE

Eh, Mr. G?

Bracing himself with a fixed, straight-ahead look.

STEVIE

(boldly)

I'm talkin' ta you, Garfield.

(beat)

Know what you did to Cesar.

(wild notion)

... I'm thinkin' maybe you did Benny, too.

(incredulously)

That possible? You crush my friend's skull? Fuck 'im up wit' a two-by-four, maybe a baseball bat?

No response. As Trevor starts to leave, Stevie blocks his path.

Trevor steps to one side to go around... but Stevie blocks his path again.

TREVOR

(trying to maintain)

Please, step out of the way.

STEVIE

... You kill my friend? Huh?

Trevor's head begins to swim. His life's falling apart. Like a trapped animal, he back-pedals a step to escape... but then suddenly snaps.

He explodes into Stevie, crushing him against the bathroom wall.

Trevor impales Stevie with a look that says it all.

Stevie immediately shrinks. Trevor now blinks. Cooling himself down. Slowing his breathing. Stevie slips out from under his hold and bolts for the exit.

123 EXT. STUDENT QUAD/QUEBRADITA - CONTINUOUS ACTION

123

Cesar and his tag-bangers... Cesar holds court, drowned out by the MUSIC. Now Stevie arrives. Out of breath. Urgent to tell his story.

Rita... Makeup subdued, wearing a cotton button-down blouse. She watches the Quebradita from behind a tree. A desire to be part of it, she moves a little closer...

... as Cesar notices her. His head races from Stevie's news. Eyes penetrating. Now galvanized. On a rampage, he shoves his way through the crowd.

Victor Sifuentes... on the opposite side of the patio, snapping a look, spotting Cesar moving in for the kill. With a start, Victor barks something into his walkie-talkie and squeezes his way into the Quebradita crowd...

Cesar shoves Rita to the ground.

CESAR
School girl bitch!

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

Rita gets to her feet immediately...

RITA
(shaken)
You gotta problem?!

CESAR
Yer fuckin' maestro, 'at's my
problem!

RITA
I don't know what yer talkin'
'bout!

CESAR
Garfield killed Benny!

Rita looks at him like he's insane. Cesar's entourage
gathers around them.

RITA
Yer crazy.

She turns her back and starts to leave. Cesar grabs
her again...

CESAR
Don't turn yer back on me when
I'm talkin' t'you, bitch. You
think yer better than everybody
else. Well you ain't! You ain't
nuthin' but a whore!

RITA
Fuck you, asshole!

CESAR
What? You forget about the time
in the bungalows? We all had our
turn wit you, man!

RITA
Shut up!

CESAR
(gets in her face)
What the fuck you been fuckin'
a nigger for? Huh? You think
he's gonna protec' you? Stop
me from doin' whatever I want
wit' you? Stop any of us from
doin' what we want wit' you?!

Rita just stands there, destroyed and sobbing now.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

RITA

Fuck you, Cesar.

CESAR

No, fuck you!

He grabs her blouse and rips it wide open. His eyes glisten with fervor now as he punches Rita (with his good hand) square in the face. She crumbles to the ground as Victor bursts through the crowd and restrains Cesar.

As Rita gets to her feet and flees into the Quebradita crowd...

CESAR

Garfield better watch his back!

124 OMITTED

124

125 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

125

Standing room only. An impassioned crowd.

ANGLO WOMAN

... I wanna know if this boy was killed and whether it was gang-related.

The audience erupts in unanimous support...

ANGLO WOMAN

(playing to crowd now)

As a mother and a taxpayer, I have a right to know. And if it was gang-related then I want tighter security...

At this point she's drowned out by the crowd.

On stage the discipline committee, including Trevor, Childress, Hyland and Quinn sit at the dais. Garcia stands at the podium, waiting for silence. MRS. FORD, the assistant principal, a full-figured black woman in her mid-fifties, stands alongside him, gesturing for the crowd to settle down.

MR. GARCIA

The death...

(too noisy)

The death of Benito Chacon is not gang-related.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MR. GARCIA (CONT'D)

That's something you heard on the news. It's wrong. It's misinformation.

HISPANIC MAN

(shouting out)

Who says? How can you be so sure? You're talking about my kid's safety.

MRS. FORD

Please, everyone just calm down.

Audience settles.

MR. GARCIA

Thank you, Mrs. Ford.

(now)

... The police at this point aren't even sure if it's a case of murder. The reason we're having this meeting tonight is to quash all the rumors floating around out there. Okay. Here's what we do know. Benny Chacon ultimately died from a drug overdose, technically it was morphine.

(volume rising again)

Which is what heroin breaks down into...

STEVIE (O.S.)

... Dat's bullshit! Benny was no junkie! I know who did it!

Heads turn...

... Ellen quietly enters now and stands just inside one of the doors at the back of the hall...

Up at the dais, Trevor notices her.

STEVIE

It's not the gangbangers y'gotta worry about. It's the teachers!

MR. GARCIA

That's exactly the type of rumor we don't need, Mr. Littleton.

Stevie deliberately stands and points at Trevor with vitriol in his eyes...

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

STEVIE
... It was Garfield.

The audience grows silent.

MR. GARCIA
(losing his patience)
Say one more word and you're
suspended.

MRS. FORD
... Sit down, Stevie.

Trevor doesn't even flinch. Childress scrutinizes him
with a glance.

STEVIE
(ranting)
You're a fuckin' murderer,
Garfield!

MR. GARCIA
(calling for assistance)
Victor?

STEVIE
... Maybe I can't prove it but I
know he did it. He fucked up
Cesar and he killed Benny.
(to crowd)
Ast 'im!

As Victor and another plainclothes cop attempt to remove
Stevie...

STEVIE
Touch me and I'll sue yer ass!
(as Victor backs off;
now to Trevor)
Yer dead, G! Yer a dead man!

With that Stevie shoves Victor aside and bolts for the
door.

Garcia attempts to regain his composure...

Trevor glances back to the spot where Ellen was
standing... but now she's gone.

126 EXT. FACULTY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

126

Meeting's broken up. Dave Childress, cigarette dangling
from his mouth, jogs a step to catch up with Trevor...

(CONTINUED)

CHILDRESS

Garfield, wait up...

Trevor maintains a steady pace, one hopeful eye scouring the parking lot for Ellen...

CHILDRESS

... Don't let that Littleton punk get to you.

Trevor ignores him.

CHILDRESS

Lil' bastard's a tweaker. He's a speed freak. You didn't know that?

At Trevor's car now. Hesitating. Turning to Childress...

TREVOR

(testing his patience)

What is it, Dave? How can I help you?

Unintentionally in Trevor's face...

CHILDRESS

How 'bout a ride?

(taking a step back)

... The wife wouldn't let me drive my own car. Ain't that a bitch?

Childress is pitiful. Wears a grease-stained tie with his wrinkled Hawaiian shirt and a Windbreaker.

TREVOR

(with resignation)

... You smell like beer.

CHILDRESS

I only had two. That's all. Swear ta Christ.

Raising his palms. Surrendering. Trevor studies him with a sad grimace.

CHILDRESS

I live right up here off Chandler. I'll buy you a drink.

At the end of a gravel driveway, behind a darkened house. Garage door open.

Childress chain smokes and drinks beer as he leans against the dented fender of his '66 Lincoln Continental. Trevor nurses a Diet Coke...

CHILDRESS

... I had the same situation 'round the time of that 'Night Stalker' thing. Remember that? Whole city was scared shitless. My wife was convinced the frickin' mailman was the 'Stalker' for about a week there.

(a tubercular chuckle)

Some mental giant in my 4th period starts this rumor, see. Childress is the 'Night Stalker.' Right?

(chug-a-lugs)

... Idiots. Even after they caught that Ramirez jerk, I'd still hear those fucks '... They got the wrong guy. Childress is the Stalker, ese.'

He finishes beer. Crumples it.

Trevor studies him, without expression. Now he notices something stapled to the tar paper wall...

Trevor's POV of the "Certificate of Excellence in Teaching," yellowed and dogeared, hanging obliquely by one staple.

... as Childress opens another beer.

TREVOR

(excusing himself)

I better get goin'. Thanks for the soda.

CHILDRESS

Wait, wait. Hold your horses. Just hold on...

... Finding a key in a drawer.

CHILDRESS

(a twisted grin)

... Can't leave without meetin' the kids.

Childress unlocks a particle board cabinet against the garage wall.

(CONTINUED)

A watery glint in his bloodshot eyes. Cabinet door swings wide now, revealing a mini arsenal of handguns...

CHILDRESS

Ta-dah... Huh?

Trevor's eyes remain expressionless.

Childress rhapsodizes as he removes and handles some of the guns...

CHILDRESS

... This one's from Czechoslovakia. It's a C-Z .22 automatic. Ten round clip. Glow-in-the-dark sights.

(eyeing the sights)

Ain't that a beauty?

(next)

... Then we gotta custom Smitty, 9 'milli.' With extended grip. These Smith & Wessons kick like a mutha.

(and next)

Now this one's special. A Glock 21. Lightest gun in the world. The barrel and firing pin are metal. See. Everything else on it's plastic.

(handing it to Trevor)

Here, feel that.

Trevor takes it, reluctantly weighs it in the palm of his hand. Sets it down.

Now Childress removes a gun from a holster in the small of his back, under his Windbreaker...

CHILDRESS

... 'Course you can never be too prepared. My pukey lil' Davis .380.

TREVOR

(a severe squint)

You wear that thing at school?

CHILDRESS

(a smirk)

... Don't worry. They never use metal detectors on teachers.

(beat)

I also keep a .357 inside my desk.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHILDRESS (CONT'D)

(a wry grin)

... But you already know that.
 Didn't think I was payin'
 attention, did'ja? Shoulda seen
 the look on your face.

Pretending now. Aiming the .380 at an imaginary
 student...

CHILDRESS

Now, Jose, if I've told you once
 I've told you a hundred times,
 stay in your cotton pickin' seat.
 (aiming gun)

Boom!

Childress laughs and chokes on his cigarette. Now he
 gazes at the .380 in his hand. Lost in a stupid,
 recalcitrant grin...

CHILDRESS

Haven't you ever just wanted to
 blow one of these little bastards
 away?

Childress glances up into Trevor's unflinching gaze.
 Smiles to himself now. Thinks he's funny...

CHILDRESS

(digressing)

... Speaking of blowing, you ever
 wanna fuck a high school girl,
 Garfield?

(off no response)

'Caught yer girl, Rita, bustin' a
 train out in the 'utility' shed
 couple months back. Swear to God.
 She had at least five or six
 cholos lined up back there.

(as Trevor's eyes
 narrow)

Face it, brother, she's a slut.
 C'mon, I know you had 'er.

(bragging now)

I even did her.

TREVOR

You're drunk.

CHILDRESS

I know you been laughin' at me
 behind my back.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

CHILDRESS (CONT'D)

I'm talkin' about screwin' high school broads and you're givin' off this self-righteous attitude like your shit don't stink.

Childress rolls back on his heels.

CHILDRESS

... Tell me the truth now, Garfield. Did yuh do it? C'mon, I won't tell. Did yuh whack Benny? Whadda 'bout Cesar? That was generous, only taking his finger. I woulda cut off his balls.

TREVOR

... Go to hell, Dave.

All traces of a smile fade from Dave's face. Trevor just stands there. Doesn't say a damn word.

Childress makes his own momentous conclusion.

CHILDRESS

(almost exulted)

You really did it. You son of a bitch.

Awkward glint of admiration in Childress's eye. Leans forward, hangs a hand on Trevor's shoulder.

TREVOR

(disgusted)

You probably think you and me are alike.

Trevor turns and exits the garage. PULLING BACK FROM Childress's dull anesthetized gaze. Deep down inside Childress knows he's a pathetic piece of shit...

128 EXT. TREVOR'S DRIVEWAY - AROUND MIDNIGHT

128

Trevor pulls into his driveway, right up to the garage door. He SHUTS OFF the IGNITION and narrows a gaze out the front windshield...

129 INT. TREVOR'S CAR - GARAGE DOOR - TREVOR'S POV - CONTINUOUS ACTION

129

Caught in his headlights, tagged all over.

(CONTINUED)

129 CONTINUED: 129

Spray painted threats like, "YOU'RE DEAD," "187-UM," "TEACHER-K" (crossed out) and a CARTOON VERSION OF TREVOR WITH "X'S" WHERE HIS EYES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.

129A INT. TREVOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SHORT WHILE LATER) 129A

Dimly lit. Trevor stands in front of the television set, staring at a late-night repeat of "Talk Soup."

INSERT - TALK SOUP

A clip from "Sally Jessy Raphael" or "Jerry Springer." One of those Sturm und Drang moments. Everyone points the finger at everyone else. No one willing to take responsibility for themselves.

Only partially watching the television. His eyes are fixed on a point somewhere in his own mind, lost to the world.

130 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS SCHOOL LIBRARY - EARLY MORNING (BEFORE SCHOOL) 130

Into a parabolic mirror above the library doors...

... an empty corridor stretches forever.

Trevor, now unshaven, looking like he hasn't slept, sits amidst total silence in his regular spot. No sign of Rita. He checks his wristwatch.

WALL CLOCK

reads... 7:10 AM.

BACK TO:

TREVOR

peering toward the library doors. Nothing. Now above the doors...

TREVOR'S POV

BACK AND FORTH between the mirror and Trevor. His eyes glazed and unblinking.

FURTHER INTO the parabolic mirror now. Breathing becoming more and more labored.

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

In a flicker, we're transported back to Roosevelt Whitney... Dennis Broadway's image SLOWLY COMING TOWARD us down the long corridor...

BACK TO SCENE

Trevor catches his breath and blinks...

... Back to reality. The mirror is empty.

He removes his Proventil inhaler from his shirt pocket. Suppressing gasps, he takes two hits.

Two girls at the magazine racks whisper to each other, eyes firmly fixed on Trevor.

Suddenly there's a presence at Trevor's side...

LIBRARIAN

... I don't think she's coming.

131 EXT. RITA'S TRAILER (SUN VALLEY) - SAME MORNING
(7:30 AM)

131

Strictly low rent district. The small dirt yard in front is contained within a cinder block wall.

Rita, back to her chola look, heavy makeup, black (right) eye where Cesar punched her, watches her two younger brothers as they fight over a toy truck. Her three-year-old baby sister, Maricella (too big to be carried) straddles her hip as Rita yells at the boys...

RITA

Be nice to your brother, Antonio.
Don't make me go get Mommie.

Trevor's car pulls up. Rita's taken aback.

RITA

(setting Maricella
down)

Go play wit' your brothers.

Rita attempts to thwart him at the sidewalk.

RITA

(almost defensive)
Whatcha doin' here, maestro?

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

(with fervor)

I want you to come back to school, Rita. You can't afford to miss finals. They won't let you graduate.

RITA

(overlapping)

No way. Forget it. I can't. What's wrong wit' you.

Trevor really does look like hell.

TREVOR

(beseeching her)

Cesar and Stevie won't bother you. That's a promise.

Something stirs deep inside her.

RITA

(struggles with it)

Why'd they have to kill Snowball?

TREVOR

... They didn't.

RITA

(on the verge of
tears now)

What's it fuckin' matter?! 'At school shit's for other kids, not me!

TREVOR

That's not true. You're so smart, Rita. Don't you know that? You have an opportunity here to change your life. Please don't throw away everything we've worked for.

Trevor just stares at her, incredulously.

Rita lowers her gaze, unable to look him in the eye. Momentous deliberation, and now...

TREVOR

I know what happened with Childress.

RITA

(knitting her
eyebrows)

What?

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR

(beat)
He won't ever touch you again.

RITA

(protesting too
much)
He ain't done nuthin' tuh me.
That boy's fulla shit. What's he
been sayin'?

TREVOR

Doesn't matter.

RITA

He ain't never touched me no ways.
What's he sayin'? He say he
fucked me?! He say dat?!
(off Trevor's look)
He's a damn liar!
(erupting again;
tears streaming
down her face)
Get the fuck outta here! I don't
need yer damn pity and I don't
need you!

TREVOR

(genuinely)
But I need you, Rita.

Beat.

RITA

(hardening)
You made a mistake. Dat's all.

With that Rita scoops up Maricella and exits.

132 INT. MR. GARCIA'S OFFICE - SAME DAY (LUNCH PERIOD)

132

Trevor sits transfixed in front of Garcia. Still hasn't
shaven.

MR. GARCIA

See these?

Garcia holds up a handful of phone messages.

MR. GARCIA

They're phone calls about you.
Good ones.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

MR. GARCIA (CONT'D)

Cesar's mother told me how you
 tried to help him. You're evidently
 a good teacher. You should be
 commended on your efforts. However...

(pause)

I'm going to have to let you go.

Trevor blinks.

MR. GARCIA

(beat)

As much as I'd like to have you
 stay until the end of the year, I
 can't overlook the seriousness of
 certain accusations.

Mr. Garcia waits for a response but none is forthcoming.

MR. GARCIA

(for example)

... Is it true you had meetings with
 a female student at your house?

TREVOR

I was trying to help her.

MR. GARCIA

The implications are still there,
 Mr. Garfield. I can't afford to
 open the door for another lawsuit.
 Sure you can appreciate my position.

(pause)

You can stay until Friday. I hope
 that will be sufficient.

This part registers only minimally with Trevor.

133 EXT. BUNGALOW 86 - AFTER SCHOOL (SAME DAY)

133

A VAPID SILENCE HOLDS us. The bungalow is awash in a
 sun-soaked pool of light...

Trevor makes his way toward the parking lot with his
 briefcase and a cardboard box of personal belongings.

134 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS - "A" BLDG. - MAIN CORRIDOR/
COMPUTER LAB - CONTINUOUS ACTION

134

Plagued with doubts, Ellen lingers in the doorway,
 confiding with Hyland...

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

HYLAND

You're not being an alarmist.
 (minimizing her
 concerns)

He gets a little overzealous at
 times... like some other people
 I know.

(beat)

I don't think the rosary adds up
 to much either, frankly.

ELLEN

Why?

HYLAND

It's probably his.
 (beat)

Look, when I received my first
 Holy Communion all the boys got
 black rosaries and the girls got
 white. Trust me, there must be
 millions of black rosaries filed
 away in desk drawers from here to
 the Vatican.

Ellen flickers a sad indecisive smile.

HYLAND

This guy's been through a lot,
 Ellen. The system failed him.
 I don't think any of us can really
 appreciate what he's been through.

(beat)

I say we give the man a break.

Ellen acquiesces a pensive nod.

135 EXT. FACULTY PARKING LOT/ADJACENT STREET (3:20)

135

THROUGH a CHAIN LINK FENCE Trevor approaches his car.
 Traffic is bumper to bumper.

136 OMITTED

136

&
 137

&
 137

138 EXT. FACULTY PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS ACTION

138

... as Trevor unlocks his car. And hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

TREVOR'S POV - DRIVER'S SIDE CAR DOOR

... a bold 187 has been "keyed" into the paint.

BACK TO:

TREVOR

Riveted. Now he slides the cardboard box, along with his briefcase onto the front seat.

Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, Ellen pulls up in her Cherokee.

She deciphers Trevor with mixed emotions. Trevor adjusts his stance, covering the "187."

Ellen now tentatively rolls her window down halfway...
TAILPIPE SPUTTERS, a portentous idle.

ELLEN

(stilted)

... I'd like to apologize for
the other night.

Trevor stands there transfixed for a moment. Now he looks into her eyes. A soulful gaze.

TREVOR

Shouldn't listen to me. I was
half asleep.

His eyes become damp. Trevor smiles bravely.

ELLEN

We really need to talk.

TREVOR

... Not tonight. Have to finish
some work...

ELLEN

Tomorrow then? It's important
to me.

TREVOR

(far off now)

... Okay.

ELLEN

(resolves it in
her head)

... How 'bout seven o'clock?

Trevor nods. Ellen flickers a tenuous smile.

- 139 INT. ELLEN'S CHEROKEE - SIDE VIEW MIRROR 139
 ... as she rolls up her window and drives away, leaving Trevor standing in the middle of the parking lot. His image gets smaller and smaller in the mirror.
- 139A INT./EXT. ELLEN'S JEEP CHEROKEE - ELLEN'S POV 139A
 as she watches him in the side view mirror, torn with mixed emotions.
- 140 OMITTED 140
 thru thru
 143 143
- 144 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON 144
 Seeing now that the whole house has been tagged with graffiti (not only the garage) as the Rambler pulls into the driveway. With dead calm, Trevor leaves his box of belongings behind and enters the front door, carrying his briefcase.
- 144A EXT. STOLEN BUICK REGAL - CONTINUOUS ACTION - LATE AFTERNOON 144A
 ... as it parks about two houses down from Trevor's.
- 145 INT. BUICK REGAL - CONTINUOUS ACTION - LATE AFTERNOON 145
 All three tag-bangers produce firearms... Cesar loads the cylinder chamber on his .357 magnum. Stevie double checks a 7 round clip and a 39 Smith and Wesson. And Paco plays with a .38 caliber revolver that he hides in the deep front pocket of is County-Bens.
 The interior of the Buick snaps with the hard sound of gun metal... cocking hammers, loading cartridges and spinning cylinder chambers...
 ... As the gun preparations systematically stop. Cesar now flicks ON an ELECTRIC HAIR CLIPPER, sets it on 'NO CLIP,' and passes it back to Paco. Paco runs the clipper over his head. Hair tumbles off in chunks. Stevie fidgets, picks up a naked one-eyed doll off the floor, raises it INTO VIEW...

STEVIE

Where'd you jack 'dis car from, homes?

(referring to doll)

'At's nasty, man.

- 146 INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - SUNSET 146
 Dutifully seated at his desk. Like a fervent prayer.
 Lost in correcting his final graded assignment.
- 146A INT. TREVOR'S BEDROOM - POV - SUNSET 146A
 PAST wrought iron bars on the outside of the window.
 Sun hangs above a distorted horizon.
- MATCH CUT TO:
- 146B ELLEN'S POV - SAME SUNSET 146B
 ... PAST high tension lines outside Mother Henry's
 kitchen window.
- 147 INT. MOTHER HENRY'S KITCHEN - DUSK 147
 Ellen's preoccupied with thought as she rinses dishes
 and places them in the dishwasher. O.S. hear "WHEEL
 OF FORTUNE" on the TELEVISION.
 Now a wet DISH slips from her grasp and SHATTERS on the
 floor.
- MOTHER HENRY (O.S.)
 Ellen?
- As she picks up the pieces...
- ELLEN
 ... It's alright, mother.
- 148 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - DUSK 148
 Sun goes down. A palpable stillness permeates.
- 149 INT. BUICK REGAL - K.O.S. TAG-BANGERS - CONTINUOUS 149
 ACTION
 All three heads clipped "skin tight." Fixed gazes
 holding. Stevie nurses a runny nose as he smokes
 another "Sherm." Now something flickers in Cesar's
 eyes...
- CESAR
 ... Okay, let's smoke this bitch.

150 EXT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - DUSK 150

The house is quiet now as Stevie and Paco disappear around the back.

Cesar approaches the front door, undaunted, gun drawn. Without breaking stride he kicks open the door...

151 INT. TREVOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - EVENING 151

Trevor sits on his bed, watching the red orb of the sun disappear over the horizon. He can hear DOOR OPENING and someone moving in his house.

TREVOR

I'm in here, Cesar.

Cesar, Paco, and Stevie enter the bedroom, guns drawn.

CESAR

Dont' move, mutha fucka!

Stevie flips on a light. Paco SHOOTS out the TV set in the living room -- an act of intimidation. Cesar jams his .357 under Trevor's chin. Gets in his face.

CESAR

You killed Benny. And you cut off my finger... Say it.

Trevor stares right into Cesar's eyes, unflinching.

TREVOR

Yeah. I did.

STEVIE

Told yuh. Fuckin' A, man.

PACO

Lemme do 'im.

CESAR

No. This nigga's mine.

Cesar sticks the gun barrel right between Trevor's eyes ... and squeezes the trigger. Click. An empty sound.

Trevor blinks. Cesar exhales a malicious laugh. Opens a fist to reveal six bullets.

CESAR

Ever seen The Deerhunter, ese?

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

ANOTHER ANGLE

In the middle of the dark house -- Trevor's dining room table. Trevor on one side, Cesar/Paco/Stevie on the other. Cesar's seated, loading one of the six bullets into a cylinder chamber. He shoves the gun toward Trevor as Stevie and Paco train their pistols on him.

CESAR

You gon' do yourself, mayate.
Put it to your head and pull the
trigger.

Trevor grabs the pistol without hesitation, puts it to his head and squeezes off TWO ROUNDS without incident. He slams the gun down in front of Cesar without a blink. A crazed, watery glint in his eye.

TREVOR

That macho enough for you, Cesar?
Huh? That make me a man?

CESAR

Take more'n that.

TREVOR

Then you do it.

All three tag-bangers are taken aback.

TREVOR

C'mon, show me what you got. Mano
a mano.

STEVIE

He's playin' with yer head.

PACO

Vato's scared. He tryin' to twist
outta it.

TREVOR

I gotta be a fool to prove you're
a fool? -- okay.

Trevor picks up the gun again, puts it to his head and pulls the trigger... click. Slams the gun down.

TREVOR

C'mon.

CESAR

Tha's not how we playin' it.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: (2)

151

TREVOR

Why -- you too chickenshit to play
yer own game? Got no cojones?

Paco lashes out and hits Trevor with his pistol drawing
blood.

PACO

Shut up!

Cesar stares at him.

TREVOR

You gonna let your homies defend
your punk ass, Cesar? You gonna
let me dis you? I pulled three
times, you pussy, you leva, you
coward! Lessee you pull one.
C'mon, be a man! Get some respect
back! Do it!

Cesar takes the gun and raises it toward his head.

PACO

Whatcho doin', homie?

He grabs Cesar's arm, but Cesar pushes him away.

CESAR

(to Trevor)

You disrespectin' me, vato? You
sayin' I ain't a man?

TREVOR

I'm sayin' you're a fool.

Cesar puts the .357 to his temple again...

STEVIE

Don't do it!

They are mesmerized into inaction as Cesar grits his teeth
and pulls the trigger. Click.

PACO

(instant adulation)

You the man, Cesar! You the man!
Orale, vato!

(to Trevor)

He got character, homes.

STEVIE

Crazy mutha fucka.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: (3)

151

Trevor looks at Cesar in disgust as he takes another bullet and blindly loads it into the cylinder chamber.

CESAR

Yer turn.

He spins the cylinder and slams the gun on the table.

TREVOR

You think you got respect now?
Your kinda respect is bullshit.
Only thing you honor is stupidity.
You ready to die for stupidity,
Cesar? I am, if it'll teach you
somethin'. See you can't kill me,
homeboy. Yeah, my body... but
what I am, who I was? That's
been dead for over a year. And
I'm never gonna get it back -- no
matter how many of you I get rid
of. I realize that now...

(furious)

... I was a teacher! I wanted to
help you!...

He snatches up the gun, puts it to his head and pulls the trigger again... click. Trevor slams it back down on the table.

TREVOR

You can't kill me... and you can't
scare me.

Cesar's sweating now, glancing between Trevor and the gun on the table. Stevie and Paco shift uneasily.

PACO

Don't do it, homie.

STEVIE

He's crazy.

TREVOR

Yeah, but isn't that what you
respect? Bein' loco? Don't listen
to 'em, Cesar. If you gonna live
stupid don't do it half-assed --
take it all the way. Take your
turn. Pull the trigger.

Caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place,
Cesar's hand inches toward the gun. Suddenly Trevor is
screaming at him.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: (4)

151

TREVOR

Macho is bullshit, fool! Your
whole way of life is BULLSHIT!

Cesar explodes to his feet and screams right back.

CESAR

It's all I got!

Silence. Trevor studies him with an enigmatic look.

TREVOR

Well then, I'll take your turn for
you...

He snatches up the pistol and puts it to his head...

CESAR

No!

... pulls the trigger. BLAM!! The SHOT knocks Trevor
out of his chair.

152 OMITTED
thru
167

152
thru
167

167A ON PACO AND STEVIE

167A

PACO

You see dat! He's out! He's
fuckin' out! Snuffed hisself!
Aw, shit!

Stevie's stunned.

STEVIE

What'd he do that for?

He walks toward the back of the house like a zombie.

STEVIE

... Let's get outta here.

Paco pulls at Cesar, who's staring at Trevor's dead body.

PACO

C'mon, homie.

CESAR

He took my turn.

(CONTINUED)

167A CONTINUED:

167A

PACO

... What?

CESAR

It was my turn. He took it...
He dissed me.

PACO

So fuckin' what, man! He's dead!
Let's go!

Cesar shrugs him off, picks up the .357.

CESAR

I gotta do this.

PACO

Fuck dis shit! Leave it!

He tries to pull Cesar away, pleading with him in Spanish,
but Cesar shoves him off.

CESAR

I got one chance in six. I'm
'onna beat 'dis bitch... For
honor, vato.

STEVIE

No!!

Paco rushes toward him, but is stopped by the BOOM!
of the .357. Frozen in shock, Paco stares down at
Cesar's body as Stevie re-enters the kitchen.

STEVIE

Cesar?... Why'd he do it? Why?

167B ON PACO AND STEVIE

167B

Not knowing himself, Paco stumbles out of Trevor's
kitchen toward the back door. Finally Stevie follows
him as we PULL BACK to reveal the crumpled bodies of
Trevor and Cesar lying on the floor.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

... Last night tragedy struck in
North Hollywood where a high
school teacher and one of his
students were both found shot
to death inside the teacher's home.

V.O. continues through the...

168 EXT. J. Q. ADAMS H.S. - MORNING (GRADUATION DAY)
TWO WEEKS LATER

168

... the marquee outside the school reads...

HAPPY GRADUATION -- CLASS OF '97

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

... The teacher has been identified as forty-one-year-old Trevor Garfield, formerly of New York City. Most recently he taught science at John Quincy Adams High School in the San Fernando Valley...

(beat)

Confidential sources reveal that the teacher had publicly been accused of foul play in the death of another student whose body was discovered just last month in the L.A. River...

168A EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - AFTERNOON

168A

Graduation in progress. Standing room only. Administrators have begun to take their seats up on a makeshift stage. Garcia, Hyland, Assistant Principal Ford, etc...

(CONTINUED)

168A CONTINUED: (A1)

168A

Bleachers now as guests and family members fan themselves against the searing heat. A banner strung across the top row of seats reads...

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF '97

Faculty members are seated in the first two rows down on the field. In front of a sea of mortar boards.

(CONTINUED)

168A CONTINUED: 168A

Dave Childress now enters, his usual shabby attire, nursing another hangover. He takes a seat away from the other teachers.

168B EXT. ATHLETIC FIELD - PODIUM - SHORT WHILE LATER 168B

As the first speaker approaches the podium...

ON two inch high heels, an occasional wobble as the white high heels make their way up to the podium. ANGLE RISING now, LINGERING ON a clinging powder blue dress and manicured fingernails. HOLD ON her clenched essay. Now CONTINUE UP to reveal Rita Nartinez.

She wears lipstick... and only a moderate amount of eye shadow. She wears a slightly nervous, preoccupied look. Now...

Rita at the podium, as she adjusts the microphone, a nervous reflex. Places her essay on the podium. Stares down at it...

RITA

... The title of my essay is,
'Mi Vida Loca'... 'My Crazy Life'...

Rita hesitates. Now she gazes out at the graduating class.

168C FACES IN CROWD 168C

Waiting... Intently fanning themselves...

168D DAVE CHILDRESS 168D

Apathetic. Arms draped over the empty chairs on either side of him.

168E BACK TO RITA 168E

RITA

(turning to Quinn)
Ms. Quinn, can I say somethin'?
(correcting
herself)
... May I say something?

Ms. Quinn (45) hesitates, now acquiesces with uncertainty...

(CONTINUED)

168E CONTINUED:

168E

RITA

... There's been a lotta talk las' couple weeks whether Mr. Garfield done those things they been writin' about in the newspaper. He once tol' me you can't blame everything on yer environment.

(beat)

But I t'ink you can push a good teacher too far and he might jus' go bad like anybody else...

169 OMITTED
thru
172

169
thru
172

173 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS COMPUTER LAB - AFTERNOON

173

INTERCUT VARIOUS CUTS OF Ellen's hands as she clears a bulletin board... removes a computer graphics display from a wall... empties desk drawers... and packs away her computer in a box.

RITA (V.O.)

... I dunno if Mr. 'G' did all those bad things. All I know is dat teachers don't get no respect. 'At's the simple truth. And if Mr. 'G' is responsible, well den he ain't the only one responsible...

BACK TO:

174 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AUDITORIUM - PODIUM (GRADUATION)

174

RITA

... We're all responsible. You and me... all of us. I'm up here today cuz a him. He was dere for me when nobody else was. Thing is... I shoul'da been 'dere for him too... but I wasn't. I turned my back on the only person who ever cared about me.

(pause)

He said if I could stand up here and read my essay it would be a Pyrrhic victory.

(beat)

I ast' 'im, 'What's up wit' dat?'

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED:

174

A trickle of incongruous laughter, awkward yet cathartic...

RITA

He told me in my case it was irony... and to go look it up... so I did.

(beat)

I wonder now if Mr. 'G' was really talking 'bout hisself.

(beat)

It refers to this guy named Pyrrhus. He was a king back 'round 300 B.C.

Rita refers to a piece of scratch paper she has tucked inside her essay...

INTERCUT ELLEN AND:

175 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS COMPUTER LAB

175

again... as she now empties one last drawer, she discovers her teaching credential. Reluctantly picks it up. Holds it for a moment. Now read across the face of the credential...

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING
issues this document to

ELLEN HENRY

175A BACK TO GRADUATION

175A

RITA (V.O.)

(verbatim now)

... Pyrrhus defeated the Romans on two occasions. But those two victories lost him a large part of his army. Now whenever people say something's a Pyrrhic victory they mean it's a victory gained at too great a cost.

Childress stares off into space, flickers a pathetic smirk.

And now Stevie seated amongst the graduates. Glancing up from under his mortar board cap. He adjusts a gaze into the bleachers.

175B STEVIE LITTLETON'S POV - HIS PARENTS 175B

Early forties, upper-middle class. Stevie's mother catches his eye. Like an incongruous SLOW MOTION dream, she mouth the words, "Were... So... Proud... Of... You."

175C STEVIE LITTLETON 175C

... as guilt eats at him, weaving its insidious web.

175D BACK TO RITA 175D

now at the podium. Holding back tears, Rita now carefully folds up her piece of scratch paper... and fixes a distant unblinking gaze...

176 OMITTED 176

177 INT. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS COMPUTER LAB - AFTERNOON 177

... Slowly SCAN the walls, stripped completely bare now. END ON Ellen standing obliquely in the doorway. Briefcase in hand, files and papers tucked under one arm. Her face, a solemn vacuous gaze.

Now she drops something into the trash can, shuts off the lights, and leaves. As the door slowly closes...

MOVE IN ON the trash can...

... and Ellen's crumpled teaching credential. Add another name to the list of fallen heroes as we...

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS

... and ROLL END CREDITS.

THE END