

DARK ROOTS  
"PILOT"

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COLD OPEN

A line of text appears on screen. "The presence of evil was something to first be recognized, then dealt with, survived, outwitted, triumphed over."- Toni Morrison, "Sula"

This is a tale about that evil ...

INT. BUNKER- TUNNEL- TIME UNKNOWN

A pair of feet in red, green, and black leather COMBAT BOOTS hurriedly walk down a long tunnel. A low drumming can be heard as they glide by.

STOIC WOMEN with long spears wearing a crossover of African dashikis and traditional armor line the walls, looking on.

As Combat Boots moves closer towards what looks like an entrance, the drumming raises in volume. We see slightly more of her feminine, athletic frame, as she sports black pants and a leather jacket. She nods at a few of the stoic women lining the walls.

When she reaches the entrance, a high-tech door, Combat Boots puts her finger in front of a small scanner.

As the doors slide open, she sees a dimly lit figure sitting at a long table. The only thing we can see on the figure's body is their large, folded, bright white GLOVED HANDS.

The drumming abruptly stops.

GLOVED HANDS (O.S.)

Enter.

INT. BUNKER- CONFERENCE ROOM- CONTINUOUS

As Combat Boots moves to sit down, we finally see her face. With similar features to the guards in the hallway, she has a stern yet graceful look in her eyes.

She notices a manila folder sitting before Gloved Hands.

COMBAT BOOTS

Is this my new assignment?

GLOVED HANDS

(booms)

It's also your final assignment.  
Before your promotion.

COMBAT BOOTS  
I thought I wasn't ready.

GLOVED HANDS  
Then prove to me that you are. To  
us.

Combat Boots opens the folder, revealing her tasks written out and a picture of a young woman, TONI COMBS (18). We'll meet her shortly.

COMBAT BOOTS  
(irked)  
So the Head Council wants me to  
babysit?

GLOVED HANDS  
Not babysit, protect.

COMBAT BOOTS  
Well, tell them no thank you.

GLOVED HANDS  
You know I can't do that.

COMBAT BOOTS  
Why not?

No response.

COMBAT BOOTS (CONT'D)  
Look sir, with all due respect, I'm  
not interested in looking after  
some little girl.

She starts to get up. As she is about to reach the door:

GLOVED HANDS  
Okay, well I'll make sure to tell  
the King that. I'm sure she'll be  
just fine not having to knight you.

Combat Boots stops in her tracks. She turns on her toes and quietly sits back down.

GLOVED HANDS (CONT'D)  
Thank you. And watch your tone.

They both look up towards a security camera in the corner of the ceiling.

COMBAT BOOTS

I can't help that I know what I'm capable of.

(beat)

COMBAT BOOTS (CONT'D)

So what's so special about her? Is she even from Underground Dahomey?

GLOVED HANDS

You are to protect this girl at all costs. Is that understood, soldier?

COMBAT BOOTS

Yes, Commander.

Combat Boots takes a closer look at the file. Her eyes widen reading, "POTENTIAL THREAT: ATLANTEES."

COMBAT BOOTS (CONT'D)

What are you sending me into?

GLOVED HANDS

We got word from one of the rival's spies that they're planting a young soldier there as well, we just don't know who and why.

(whispering)

Look, I know how intense this all might seem but this isn't one of my missions. The King requested you. Personally.

Combat Boots looks down, considering this information. She looks at a small tattoo of a woman's face on her wrist. She's beginning to realize how serious the situation is.

GLOVED HANDS (CONT'D)

So what will it be?

COMBAT BOOTS

I'll accept.

GLOVED HANDS

Your ship leaves in two hours.

Genet jumps out of her seat and promptly exits. From the inside, the door is revealed to be two halves of a traditional wooden African mask.

**SUPER: "DARK ROOTS"**

ACT ONE

1 ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA- INT. HOUSE- HALLWAY- EARLY MORNING 1

A metal version of the same mask is mounted on a wall, surrounded by family photos and hung above a sea of candles, keys, and mail.

TONI (18) passes by as she struggles with a bin nearly larger than her.

TONI  
(raised voice)  
Ma, are you still coming down to help? We have a few more bins to load.

SOLANGE (O.S.)  
(shouting back)  
I'll be down in a minute. Damn!

Toni's father, LOUIS (early 50s), comes in from the door. He takes the bin from her.

LOUIS  
(chuckling)  
It's barely 6 in the morning and y'all are trying to make the neighbors hate us.  
(beat)  
Anything else?

TONI  
(pointing towards a corner near the staircase)  
Yeah, there's two more big bins to put in but the rest is smaller and lighter stuff. Mom should be able to handle it if she ever comes down.

Louis goes to put the bin in the car.

Toni's mom, SOLANGE (mid-to-late 40's), who looks slightly similar to the woman on Combat Boots' arm, finally comes down. She's regal- a natural beauty, and almost glides down the steps.

SOLANGE

Watch that mouth, little girl. Just because you're about to be in college doesn't mean you can talk any type of way.

TONI

Yes ma'am...

Solange walks towards the kitchen.

SOLANGE

And last time I checked, you were the one that needed my help. I didn't tell you to go to school 20 hours away.

TONI

It's 16-

Solange gives Toni a burning stare.

TONI (CONT'D)

You're right, Mom. I'm sorry.

(hesitant)

When you get a chance, though, can you grab my bedding or school supplies?

(beat)

Please?

Solange looks over at the bin and pile of bedding next to it. With her arms crossed, Solange sits on this for a few moments.

SOLANGE

Maybe. Let me grab some coffee and snacks for the road first.

As Solange turns her back, Toni dramatically rolls her eyes and gets back to packing.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

Your eyes are going to get stuck like that.

Toni goes red, not realizing her mom knew what she was doing.

Solange begins making her coffee.

SOLANGE

Now Toni, this is about to be a long trip. Are you absolutely sure you don't want to be somewhere closer like Howard. Or UVA?

Toni comes into the kitchen.

TONI

Mom, we've been over this like a million times. I didn't like any of those schools. The only reason I applied was because you pressed me to.

SOLANGE

I didn't-

Toni gives her a look.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

Okay, maybe I did. But that was only because I wanted you to think about what was nearby...

TONI

I know, but you know I'll be back. Especially for the holidays to eat up all your cooking.

Toni gives her mom a big hug and kisses her on the cheek.

SOLANGE

(kissing Toni's forehead)  
Love you, pumpkin.

TONI

(wiping it off)  
Mom, I'm too old for that!

A sweating but smiling Louis slips into the kitchen and clasps his hands.

LOUIS

Alright Combs ladies, the car is fully packed and we have two full days on the road. Traffic is going to pick up soon. Let's make like trees and leave!

As he exits:

TONI  
That's your husband.

SOLANGE  
And that's your father. You're  
actually related to his corny ass.

They share a laugh.

As Toni walks off, Solange waves her finger and the bedding quietly floats into her hand.

3 INT. CAR- AFTERNOON/EVENING 3

Various shots of the Combs' family travels in their SUV, packed to the brim. As they sing old school R & B, listen to an audiobook, laugh thunderously, and take pictures of the sights, they all truly enjoy one another.

They pass by the signs for Greensboro, North Carolina and Charlotte, North Carolina. Eventually, they pass the sign for Atlanta, Georgia.

4 EXT. HOTEL- EVENING 4

Not too soon after, they pull into a hotel parking lot.

LOUIS  
Alright, pitstop number one.

Sleepily, the family gathers their belongings and trudge out of the car. They walk towards the lobby.

5 INT. HOTEL- HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS 5

Keys in hand, the Combs' walk down the long hallway. They arrive at a set of two adjoining rooms. Louis hands Toni one of the cards and keeps the other for him and Solange. They enter their rooms.

6 INT. HOTEL- SOLANGE AND LOUIS' ROOM- CONTINUOUS 6

Toni opens the connecting door. She walks over to Louis for a hug.

LOUIS  
Night, sweetheart.

Then she walks over to Solange, giving her mom a quick kiss on the cheek.



SOLANGE  
Sleep well, hon.

TONI  
You too.

The adjoining door closes.

SOLANGE  
(to Louis)  
Do you think she's been looking any  
different lately?

LOUIS  
Different how?

SOLANGE  
Well, you know... it's 50-50 that  
she has powers.

LOUIS  
It's also 50-50 that she doesn't.  
Even if she somehow does, they  
probably won't be that intense  
since she's never been back home.

Solange flops onto the bed, stirring.

Louis slumps into the bathroom.

SOLANGE  
Do you think they'll find her?

Louis stops in his tracks. He knows the answer but doesn't  
want to say it aloud.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)  
(tearing up)  
I know we have to let her go on her  
own but I'm so scared, hon.

She motions for the bed sheets to cover her, and they hug  
around her figure. Louis rushes over and begins rocking her  
back and forth.

LOUIS  
She'll be okay, Sol. I promise.  
(whispering)  
I told them not to touch her. They  
won't hurt our baby girl.

SOLANGE  
(quietly)  
Okay...

Solange quietly sobs into his arms.

INTERCUT:

7 INT. HOTEL- TONI'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS 7

Now in pajamas and under the covers, Toni is scrolling through her Instagram as she hears her mom's soft cries.

She clicks on her music app and clicks on the "Rain Sounds" station. This blends into the next day. But not before lightning strikes behind the shades and a quick shock runs all over Toni's body.

8 INT. CAR- DAY 8

A light but steady rain pounds against their SUV. Toni is resting her eyes while Solange is staring out the window like she's in an R & B music video. Louis' focus remains on the road. For once, it's quiet.

Realizing what's on the radio, Louis turns up the dial and begins humming to Lauryn Hill's "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You."

He really starts to get into it, singing passionately to his wife. As Solange begins to notice this, she beams. This is one of the many reasons why she loves him.

The rain promptly stops as they pass a "Welcome to Tillman" sign, which pulls Solange out of her husband's trance and into a more ominous mood mused with the low African drumbeat from earlier.

LOUIS  
Hey Ton, we're here!

Toni's eyes flutter open.

8 NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA- EXT. TILLMAN COLLEGE CAMPUS- CREST HALL- CONTINUOUS 8

Her mouth gapes in astonishment. Tillman is gorgeous.

They pull in front of a building with "Crest Hall" engraved on the side. Looking it up and down, Toni knows she's home. It is buzzing with other students and families moving in.

She walks over to a table in front of the entrance with Louis and Solange close behind. She gives the people at the desk her name. They hand her a key.

SOLANGE

Okay so how did you want to-

But before Solange can finish her sentence, Toni rushes into the open doors.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

-Unpack....

Louis chuckles as the couple starts to unload the car. Solange looks around, paranoid.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

You got in touch with the Head Council?

LOUIS

I did.

SOLANGE

And what did they say?

LOUIS

They said someone would be stationed here to protect Toni.

SOLANGE

Do you know who?

LOUIS

(kissing her head)

Everything is under control my love.

TONI

Are you all coming?

Solange and Louis give each other a look, then start for the door with as much as they can carry.

Combat Boots walks out from another entrance, wearing a polo and adjusting a matching baseball cap. Her name tag reads GENET M.

COMBAT BOOTS/GENET

(low)

This is some bullshit.

AREA RESIDENT ADVISOR

What was that?

GENET

Oh, um... I was just saying this sun is hurting my eyes a bit.

AREA RESIDENT ADVISOR

Right... anyways, I was coming to ask if you could man the welcome table? Most of the other RA's are inside helping residents.

GENET

Sure, I guess.

Genet walks over the welcome table where another RA sits on his phone.

RA

Sup.

Genet nods her head in response.

Louis comes back out to the car and starts pulling out a mini fridge. Or tries to.

LOUIS

Damn.

The lax RA is still on his phone, acting like he doesn't hear anything.

GENET

Let me help you with that, sir.

Genet rushes over and helps take over some of the load. As her and Louis back up towards the door-

SOLANGE

Hon, I told you I was going to come out and help.

LOUIS

It's okay, this nice young lady offered to help.

(distant)

We're going to the top floor. Room 682.

As Louis says this, Solange and Genet lock eyes. They both look like they've seen a ghost.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Miss? We're going all the way upstairs.

GENET

(nervous)

Oh, um, okay. Sounds good.

She shuffles backwards to the elevator, which conveniently reads, "OUT OF ORDER." Great. Just great.

9

EXT. CREST HALL- COURTYARD- LATER

9

Solange stands behind Louis snapping as many pictures of Toni as he can. Solange studies her daughter warmly.

LOUIS

You look just like your mother.

As he snaps the photo, Solange's expression drops.

Toni locks her gaze with her mother and Solange begins to tear up.

TONI

I'll be okay Mom, I promise.

Toni gives her a big hug.

SOLANGE

I'm going to miss you so so much. I just...

(beat)

I have to...

Tears come to the rim as her brain rushes with so much she wants to say.

TONI

(distant)

Mom, are you okay?

SOLANGE

I'm fine, baby. Just fine. Here.

Solange unclasps a bracelet with a charm that looks identical to Genet's tattoo.

Toni looks up, lost for words. Her mother holds onto her hand.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

Walk good, pumpkin.

LOUIS  
(whispering)  
Traffic is going to get bad soon,  
babe.

SOLANGE  
(wiping tears)  
Alright, let me let you go before I  
change my mind.

TONI  
Love you.

She wavers a little, then gives her parents quick pecks on the cheek. Toni disappears into the dorm.

Solange and Louis make their way back into the car. As Solange is buckling her seat, she notices Genet looking out from a window in the dorm. They hold each other's stare for a few beats until the car revs.

When it drives off, Genet vanishes.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

1 INT. CREST HALL- GENET'S ROOM- DAY

1

Genet bolts towards her door.

Suddenly, she feels a buzz in her pocket. Pulling out her holo-phone, it reads, "INCOMING CALL: COMMANDER."

*Note: Underground Dahomey and Atlantees citizens have access to magical technology. Solange and Louis have dated versions of it, including the holo-phone. Genet and Carlos have more modern versions.*

Before she can accept the call-

A cheerful KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK at the door.

Genet opens the door and sees her RA coworker, KACEY(20).

KACEY

Oh! Uh... hi I just wanted to introduce myself.

(holding out her hand)

I'm Kacey. We're on the same area team.

Genet just stares at her hand.

KACEY (CONT'D)

(handing a flyer)

Right. Well, I know you're a bit new but I wanted to see if you and your residents wanted to walk with mine to the movie night happening at the auditorium later?

GENET

Oh, I didn't even know this was happening. Thanks.

KACEY

No prob, girl. And make sure to let your residents know. I can help you make a group chat. I can also give you the rundown from training-

Still gripping the flyer, a distracted Genet shuts the door in Kacey's face.

2

INT. TONI'S DORM- DAY

2

Toni is mesmerized as she studies a sea of medals and pictures. She pauses at one photo.

ELISE (O.S.)

Are you lost?

Toni whips her head to look up at ELISE (18) perched high on her perfectly pink bed with her perfectly pink computer and matching headphones.

TONI

I'm Toni!

Toni stretches out her hand. Elise looks down at her, perplexed.

TONI (CONT'D)

You know, like Toni Morrison. Cade Bambara.

Elise crawls to her lofted dresser, which has a Costco-size bottle of hand sanitizer, and takes a couple pumps. After rubbing her hands together, she meets Toni's handshake.

ELISE

Elise Lanes. Like I stay in mine and you stay in yours.

(sizing her up)

Looks like we'll be roommates this year.

TONI

It's so great to finally meet you!

ELISE

Yeah same...

Elise goes back to her computer and headphones.

Toni moves towards her suitcases of clothes to start unpacking. The basics of her bedding and fridge are already set up.

TONI

So, when did you move in?

No response.

TONI (CONT'D)

(low)

Okay then...



She turns on some music and continues unpacking.

ELISE

Can you turn that down please?

TONI

Seriously?

Then, they hear someone putting up a flyer on the very thin wall outside their door. Toni opens the door and sees Genet.

Slightly stunned-

GENET

Oh, um, hi! I'm your RA.  
(shooting her hand out)  
Genet.

TONI

(meeting her handshake)  
I'm Toni.  
(noticing her tattoo)  
That's crazy, my mom just gave me  
her bracelet that looks just like  
that. Your tattoo is much prettier,  
though.

GENET

Thanks... sorry for interrupting. I  
just wanted to invite you all to  
this event later.

REVEAL: "JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL SHOWING OF 'THE PRINCESS & THE FROG'"

3

INT. AUDITORIUM- EVENING

3

Toni, Elise, and the other first years shuffle in and settle into their seats. They all chat for awhile, trying to break the ice.

A few beats later, the same drumming before is heard again. Only this time it's slightly more upbeat. Then-

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Welcome to the annual showing of  
"The Princess & the Frog." We hope  
you enjoy.

Applause.

LATER

Genet looks around as clips of "The Princess & the Frog" reflects on the students' faces. Her eyes land on a pair of GIRLFRIENDS, whose tears are running off their makeup.

GENET

I never did understand this movie.

Genet put earbuds in and buries her head into a book. She occasionally looks down at her phone to keep track of texts from her Commander (Gloved Hands).

A few seats over, Toni is entranced with nostalgia. Next to her, Elise fidgets as boredom glazes over her eyes.

ELISE

I'll see you back at the dorm.

TONI

Hm?

But before Toni can process what she said, Elise dashes out from her seat to the door.

4

EXT. AUDITORIUM- CONTINUOUS

4

Elise pushes the doors open and turns to see a group of three UPPERCLASS GUYS (20s) passing around a blunt.

Elise walks up to the group.

ELISE

Can I take a hit?

UPPERCLASS GUY #1

(too high to function)

Can you handle it is the question?

Elise snatches the blunt from his hand and takes a longgg hit. When she moves it from her lips, not so much as a small cough escapes her. They're impressed.

ELISE

You might need a new plug, your  
shit is hella weak.

UPPERCLASS GUY #2

Oh really? And I'm assuming you  
know somebody?

ELISE

I've got my connections in New York. Gonna cost you, though.

UPPERCLASS GUY #1

How much?

ELISE

Give me your number and you'll find out.

UPPERCLASS GUY #3

Yo these freshmen girls are wilding!

A silly grin comes across the Upperclass Guy #1's face and they hand over their phone to Elise.

UPPERCLASS GUY #1

Where you headed?

ELISE

Home.

He takes a step closer.

UPPERCLASS GUY #1

You want some company on your way back?

ELISE

No thanks, I'm good.

Elise whisks past him with a sultry stare. As she turns her back, a smile breaks across her face. One down.

5 EXT. AUDITORIUM- NIGHT- A COUPLE HOURS LATER

5

Toni and the other students pile out of the auditorium doors. Beginning to follow the crowd, Toni realizes she doesn't know where she's going. Everything looks a lot different at night...

Suddenly, we see Toni from a distance over the shoulder of someone we haven't met yet. Someone dark and dangerous. His gaze follows Toni's path as she awkwardly figures out where she's going, and a black cloud starts forming around his fingertips.

6

EXT. AUDITORIUM- DAY- THE NEXT MORNING

6

Rows and rows of exhausted students sit slumped in plastic chairs under a large tent next to the auditorium as an ADMINISTRATOR reviews the academic curriculum on a PowerPoint. Toni sneaks a peek on her phone.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Pssst...

Toni looks around, confused about where the sound is coming from.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Psssssssst!

Looking back, she sees a young man, REGGIE (19), trying to get her attention.

GENET

(whispering)

What?

REGGIE

(whispering)

Do you know when is this thing going to be over?

(beat)

This could've been a fucking email!

Toni snorts.

The administrator pauses to look out into the audience to see where the sound came from. They return to the presentation.

7

EXT. AUDITORIUM- DAY- ABOUT AN HOUR LATER

7

An over-caffeinated ORIENTATION LEADER (20s) who's a little too serious about her job takes the administrator's place on stage and addresses the crowd using a megaphone.

ORIENTATION LEADER

Alright first years, we are playing "Common Taste Bingo"! In an orderly fashion, please come to the table in front of me and take a pen and a piece of paper. Once you've gotten your paper, write down 8 of your favorite things down in the squares and see if you can find anyone with the same thing.

Genet goes up to the table to grab her materials. As she returns to her seat, she begins scribbling down her interests. As she finishes, Reggie stands over her shoulder.

REGGIE  
You like R & B?

She looks up and realizes it was the guy from earlier.

TONI  
Is that even a question?

REGGIE  
Okay but what kind of R & B?  
Because I love some H.E.R. and  
Lucky Daye but cannot get down with  
Chris Brown as hard as I try.

TONI  
I like their sounds, but I'm more  
of an old soul at heart. Like  
Prince, Luther Vandross, Anita  
Baker...

REGGIE  
Oh okay, I got you. You didn't  
strike me as an old-head at first  
but now I can def see it.  
(beat)  
Reggie.

TONI  
Toni. Nice to "officially" meet  
you.

About fifteen minutes later. Now sitting at a nearby bench, Toni and Reggie are having a rapid fire about which R & B artists would win in a Verzuz competition.

Suddenly, a CUTE GUY catches Toni's eye.

REGGIE  
You could try to be a bit more  
subtle.

TONI  
(laughing)  
Who, me?

REGGIE  
You could do so much better,  
though. So, do you see how white  
those Air Forces are?  
(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
He probably has a little cleaning  
ritual every night.

They zero in on his hands, which have dirt under the nails.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
But clearly not for his grooming.

TONI  
(nodding to another guy)  
What about him?

A handsome young man with a fro and wearing a VINTAGE  
SWEATSHIRT is chatting with some other students.

REGGIE  
Def an artist and def swings a few  
ways.

All eyes suddenly shift to one side of the quad and are on  
CARLOS (19). A group of people swarm to him.

TONI  
(practically drooling)  
Who's that?

The Orientation Leader from earlier pops up out of nowhere.

ORIENTATION LEADER  
Carlos Ruis. Star of the football  
team and the finest guy at Tillman.

REGGIE  
Where did she come from?-

ORIENTATION LEADER  
But don't get your hopes up - dude  
thinks he's going to the NFL or  
some shit and acts like he's better  
than the rest of us.

The trio notices Elise make a beeline to Carlos and starts up  
a conversation. He begins to somewhat engage until he breaks  
eye contact with Elise, and then looks at Toni intensely as  
dark clouds start to reflect in her eyes. She blinks them  
away.

REGGIE  
(to Toni)  
You already have him falling like  
that?

TONI  
 (blushing)  
 Me? Nah, I'm not too sure about  
 that.  
 (looking at her phone)  
 We have a break, you wanna grab  
 something to eat?

Reggie agrees. They walk towards the cafeteria. Carlos' looks at them and begins to follow after a few paces.

8

INT. CAFETERIA- DAY- CONTINUOUS

8

Toni and Reggie are getting food from the various buffets laid out before them. Toni sees Elise and waves but Elise blows past and acts like she doesn't see her.

Eventually, Toni and Reggie meet in line struggling to hold their food upright.

REGGIE  
 Would it kill them to buy some  
 trays?

TONI  
 Seriously! Like I can't hold four  
 things in one hand. I'm still going  
 to pile up my plate, though.

REGGIE  
 That part.

They share a hearty laugh. While they're not looking, Vintage Sweatshirt (now wearing headphones) slips in front of Reggie in line. Reggie and Toni give each other a look.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
 (to Vintage Sweatshirt)  
 Yo, you just cut in front of like  
 10 people man.

No response.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
 Hellooo?

Still nothing. Toni taps Vintage Sweatshirt on the shoulder. Realizing Toni is trying to get his attention, he takes off his headphones.

VINTAGE SWEATSHIRT  
 (confused)  
 Wassup?

TONI

Yeah. Look I know this line is crazy but you just cut in front of us and all these people. Could you go to the back of the line?

Vintage Sweatshirt looks behind him.

VINTAGE SWEATSHIRT

My bad, I didn't even notice. But I'm already here so would y'all mind if I just stay?

Reggie wants to say something but he bites his tongue.

REGGIE

Whatever...

TONI

No not whatever. We were here first so I would appreciate it if you went to the back of the line like everyone else.

VINTAGE SWEATSHIRT

Who do you think you're talking to?

TONI

You, asshole.

VINTAGE SWEATSHIRT

(to Reggie)

Bro you're really gonna let your bitch talk to me like this?

TONI

The only one who's a bitch is you since you want to act all mysterious like people actually care who you are. Next time you want to call me out my name, make sure you look put together.

She smacks her plate of spaghetti all over his outfit.

Vintage Sweatshirt looks flushed as Toni storms off.

Whoops and "Damns" can be heard all throughout the cafeteria. Genet is stuck in line behind Reggie, appalled.

GENET

(low)

You have got to be kidding me...



REGGIE

I definitely wasn't expecting that  
from her.

Reggie keeps moving forward as Genet stares on. This won't be  
an easy mission like she thought...

9

EXT. ACADEMIC BUILDING- DAY- LATER

9

A little bit later, Toni and Reggie stroll next to tables  
lined up with piles and piles of department information on  
registering for classes, stopping every other table or so.

They walk by the film department table. The handsome FILM  
STUDENT (20s) sitting there gives them a smile. Doing a  
double take, Reggie reels back.

FILM STUDENT

How are y'all doing today? You  
interested in film?

TONI

Only watching them.

FILM STUDENT

Oh word? What's one of your favs?

TONI

Anything classic, The Best Man,  
Love & Basketball for sure-

FILM STUDENT

But we make an exception for Jordan  
Peele?

TONI

Oh definitely. And Lena, Stella  
Meghie- I don't care what anyone  
says, "The Photograph" is my movie!

FILM STUDENT

That toxic love is something  
serious.

They share a laugh.

FILM STUDENT (CONT'D)

(to Reggie)

How about you?

REGGIE

(hesitant)

I do TikToks here and there, but nothing serious. Planning on majoring in business.

FILM STUDENT

Well you can always take an elective or join a club in the department.

The Film Student hands Reggie a flyer for the VR Club.

FILM STUDENT (CONT'D)

I can show you some of our work from last year-

REGGIE

Maybe later. Thanks.

Reggie pulls Toni with him to the next table. He crumples up the flyer, throws it in the trash, and keeps walking. Toni stops and looks into the trash.

TONI

You don't wanna at least think about it?

REGGIE

Nah not right now. I need to focus on my credits situation and make sure I can get into the business major next semester.

Before Toni can get another word in-

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Can I catch you later?

TONI

Oh, sure...

He rushes off. Toni looks around, her eyes landing on the library.

TONI (CONT'D)

Might as well.

She walks towards the building.

10

INT. LIBRARY- DAY- CONTINUOUS

10

Toni walks amidst towering stacks, her thumbs scrolling on an email of books she needs to get.

She finds a bookcase titled "Classic Fiction." Stepping in, her fingers trace over the titles of James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Folktales of Dahomey, among others.

She finds Toni Morrison's "Sula." It's familiar, given her mother's a reader, but she's never gotten to actually read it herself. Toni opens the first page.

Hooked, Toni takes the book over to a corner, slides her back against the wall and settles down.

A COUPLE HOURS LATER

Toni is still entranced reading the book. She picks up her phone to look at the time.

TONI

(low)

Shit.

She gathers her things and then rushes out, leaving the book splayed out on the floor.

As she runs outside, an also reading Genet looks out the window to see Toni moving towards the quad. Genet gathers her things to keep a close eye on her mission.

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

1 EXT. CAMPUS- QUAD- DAY

1

Toni stumbles upon on a huge crowd of students. Not only are they stunning in their style, but in their swag and sway.

## MONTAGE:

- A YOUNG WOMAN dressed to the nines with an iced coffee in hand struts across the quad
- A group of STUDENTS who seem to be the life of the party vogue and sing their hearts out
- A line of FRATS stroll the yard
- The young man from the cafeteria, Carlos, is laughing with a friend and steals a glance at Toni

Toni walks towards a pretzel food truck.

CASHIER

Hi, what can I get for you?

TONI

Hey, can I just get a soft pretzel?

CASHIER

For sure, that'll be \$3.50.

She pulls out her card.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Sorry, we're cash only.

TONI

Are you kidding?

She fumbles around for some cash in her wallet.

Toni looks up to see a toned tattooed arm handing over a five dollar bill. Attached to it is Carlos. He is fine up close, a dark but charming presence lurking in his eyes.

He hands the pretzel to her. A stunned Toni receives it. He chuckles.

Shoving his change into his pocket, he begins to stroll away. Like a puppy, Toni follows after him.

TONI (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

CARLOS  
Don't mention it.

He stops to study her.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
You new? How you liking campus so far?

TONI  
It's cool. Definitely a lot going on.

CARLOS  
Yeah, it's a culture shock but you'll get used to it pretty soon.

GENET'S POV

Across the yard by another food truck, Genet stops and watches this interaction. She pulls out her holo-phone, presses on an app, and soon after can hear their conversation better.

TONI (V.O.)  
You think so?

CARLOS (V.O.)  
For sure. And I already know you're gonna be at all the parties.

TONI (V.O.)  
Well I'm not too sure about that.

He motions towards her phone.

CARLOS (V.O.)  
Can I?

Hesitantly handing him the phone, he scoops it up swiftly with one hand and handles his phone in the other. After a few beats of pressing buttons in both devices, he turns Toni's phone back to her to reveal what he was doing.

CARLOS (V.O.)  
My teammates and I are throwing a party tonight in the stadium parking lot. You should come through.

Genet is rapidly putting the information into her phone.

CARLOS (V.O.)  
See you later freshman.

As he strides off, him and Genet lock eyes. Shit. Does he see her holo-phone?

Genet looks back over to Toni, who's looking in her direction.

TONI (V.O.)  
What's she doing over there?

GENET  
Fuck!

Genet ducks down behind the food truck.

She peeps her head back out and sees Toni moving on, floating towards some other students crowding around a piece of paper sticking on the side of a building. Toni picks up a nearby pen and writes down her name.

After Toni walks off, Genet drifts over to the crowd to get a better look.

CUT TO:

2

INT. AUDITORIUM- DAY- LATER

2

A sea of restless students stream in as they chatter and crawl on top of each other in the seats.

MC (O.S.)  
Tillman University, what the hell's  
up!

The crowd whoops and hollers as an older student runs and dances around the stage to his entrance song. Once it quiets down:

MC (CONT'D)  
What is up first year class!

The first year students cheer. Some boos can be heard.

MC (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
Okay okay... how about my  
sophomores?

The sophomores cheer a little louder.

MC (CONT'D)  
Now for my juniors!

The juniors cheer slightly louder.

MC (CONT'D)  
And now for my seniors, THE CLASS  
OF TWENTY TWENTY-THREE!

The seniors whoop and holler, literally shaking the room.

MC (CONT'D)  
Whew, that is what I'm talking  
about!  
(beat)  
Alright so first of all, I would  
love to give a personal welcome to  
the class of 2025. You have arrived  
to the Motherland!

The audience cheers.

MC (CONT'D)  
Y'all are going to meet some of the  
best people of your lives, truly.  
And you're gonna have an even  
better time because we like-

He turns the mic to the crowd. The older students shout:

CROWD  
To par-tay! Ay ay ayyyyy...

MC  
Freshmen, do it with us! We like-

CROWD  
To par-tay...

The entire room carries off into the Beyonce song, some of  
them starting to get a little too comfortable dancing.

MC  
Alright alright alright. Let's save  
a little something for the parties  
later on tonight. Y'all ready to  
see what TU's got?

The audience cheers some "Yessirs" and "Hell Yeahs."

MC (CONT'D)  
Well then let's do it!

MONTAGE:

- A group of STUDENTS sing a cappella
- A YOUNG MAN plays the piano while a YOUNG WOMAN sings
- A YOUNG WOMAN plays the guitar

Suddenly, Toni steps on stage. She takes a deep breath and the music begins.

She slips and glides across the stage, truly in her own world. To watch her is something beautiful, magical almost.

When she freezes in her final pose, the audience erupts into applause. She's starting to make her mark.

After the show, Toni climbs downstage. As she's trying to find her way down, a group of thirsty GUYS rush up trying to introduce themselves. Toni makes small talk with them but then meets Carlos' gaze across the room. Her phone buzzes.

From Carlos: "Don't forget to roll through the party tonight, it starts at 9. I'll be keeping an eye out for you and your moves lol"

She looks back up but he's disappeared.

3

INT. TONI AND ELISE'S DORM- DAY- LATER

3

Victoria Monet blasting over the speaker, Toni is putting up decorations- the last of her things to unpack. She stops on a picture of her mom and her as a baby. She starts to tear up a little.

Suddenly, Elise bursts in the room. Toni quickly wipes her face.

ELISE

(sighing)

I've been looking all over for you!

(beat)

Are you good?

(looking Toni up and down)

Whatever. Go ahead and get yourself together. We gotta figure our plan out for the rest of the night.

TONI

I heard about this football party,  
it doesn't start till 9-



ELISE

Right but not only do we need to figure out how we're going to get there. We also need to figure out how we're going to pregame-

While Elise continues to get ready, Toni puts on her scarf and quietly climbs into bed. A few beats pass until Elise sees Toni in the mirror.

ELISE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

TONI

Girl I'm so tired, I don't know if I can make myself get ready to go out right now.

ELISE

Oh, you're going.

Elise drags her out of bed and pulls her out of the room.

4

EXT. GENET'S DORM/INT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

4

Elise is dragging Toni down the hallway. Genet is already in her pajamas, her door slightly ajar. She darts her head towards the commotion.

TONI

Where are we going?

Elise shushes her and knocks on a door decorated with the names "Keke" and "Laila."

When the door opens, a group of girls are dancing around and enjoying themselves. An array of multicolored glass bottles are scattered across the dressers and desks.

KEKE

Can I help you?

ELISE

(flipping on her fake nice switch)

Hi! I'm Elise and this is-

KEKE

(to Toni)

Didn't I just see you in the talent show?

TONI

(shy)

Yeah...

KEKE

Girl you were amazing! How long  
have you been dancing?

TONI

Since I was around 3 or 4. I have  
family from New York so my parents  
made sure we went to see Dance  
Theater of Harlem or Ailey whenever  
we visited.

KEKE

I'm from New York! BK baby.

(beat)

Are y'all going out tonight?

ELISE

Yeah, actually we were wondering if  
you were going to that football  
party tonight?

KEKE

Who isn't?

TONI

Right? It sounds like it's gonna be  
lit.

ELISE

But we're brand new and were  
wondering if we could head out with  
you all?

Keke looks at her friends.

KEKE

For sure. Give me your numbers and  
we can touch base so we can all  
head out together.

She hands her phone to Toni. Toni passes it to Elise. When  
Keke gets it back:

KEKE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

And we'll save some alc for you,  
but don't let Genet know.

They look over at the door across the hall. As soon as they  
look her way, Genet immediately shuts the door.

TONI

Noted.

KEKE

Alright, see you in a bit babes!

Toni and Elise walk back towards their room.

5

INT. TONI AND ELISE'S DORM- CONTINUOUS

5

Back in their room.

Toni picks up her phone, clicks on FaceTime and dials Reggie.

REGGIE

Yo.

TONI

What you up to tonight?

REGGIE

In bed watching Netflix. You?

TONI

We heard about this football party.

You wanna come through with us?

REGGIE

I don't know...

TONI

We got a plug for some drinks.

REGGIE

How'd you do that so fast?

Toni turns the phone Elise, who scowls at her.

TONI

Can you be ready and over here in  
like... an hour?

REGGIE

Alright fine. But the minute it  
gets dead, I'm out and jumping  
right back in this bed.

TONI

Bet. See you soon.

She puts the phone down and tries to steady herself. She can do this, right?

CUT TO:

6 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM- PARKING LOT- NIGHT

6

The upperclass group, Toni, Elise, and Reggie walk up on the party. Some people are talking, others are making out, and some are grinding on each other like it's Freaknik.

TONI

It can't be that much different  
from School Daze, right?

REGGIE

More like Euphoria if it was X-  
rated.

TONI

Is that even possible?

ELISE

Where are the drinks?

Elise darts her head around, searching for an in.

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

1 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM- PARKING LOT- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 1

As the trio stands at the edge of the parking lot like deers in headlights, Keke and her group of friends pull them away.

KEKE

Come on. We gotta loosen y'all up!

She yanks them into a nearby apartment.

2 INT. APARTMENT- LIVING ROOM- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 2

They stumble upon a table decorated with various sizes and shapes of liquor bottles.

KEKE

Y'all wanna do some shots?

KEKE'S FRIEND

Uhh, of course.

Keke's friend pulls out two very similar bottles from her black leather Telfar bag. She sets them before Toni.

KEKE'S FRIEND (CONT'D)

Tequila or vodka?

TONI

(clueless)

Is there a difference?

The group erupts into laughter.

REGGIE

This your first time?

ELISE

(mumbles)

Makes sense.

Reggie nudges Elise and shoots her a look.

KEKE

Don't worry, sis, we got you. Let's start you off with a real tequila shot.

Keke goes into the kitchen area and grabs a lime, a knife, a paper plate, and a salt shaker.

She shows Toni how to do a tequila shot. Seeing Keke let it go down easily, Toni decides to give it a try.

As soon as the liquor hits her, her face scrunches up. The group of friends cheer.

KEKE (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
There you go!

Toni sets the cup back down.

TONI  
Give me another.

KEKE  
Yes ma'am!

Keke pours more than a shot into each of the cups. The group takes another tequila shot together. Now they're really getting the party started.

Someone shoves White Claws into Toni and Reggie's hands.

Elise goes into the fridge and pulls out a bottle of cheap red wine. She pours herself a cup and walks towards a couch and sits down. She sips absentmindedly as various guys ogle her.

One of them, wearing bright RED JORDANS (20), has the courage to step up and slide right next to her on the couch.

RED JORDANS  
Hey.

She continues to sip on her wine, ignoring him.

RED JORDANS (CONT'D)  
How you doing?

ELISE  
Can I help you?

RED JORDANS  
That depends. You have any plans later?

ELISE  
(sizing him up)  
Depends...

Toni finishes up her White Claws and begins dancing in the middle of the apartment with the other girls.

TONI  
Come on Reg!

REGGIE  
(laughing)  
I'm good right now, I'll be over in  
a sec.

Reggie moves to a nearby wall as he finishes his can, keeping a close eye on Toni.

Carlos suddenly appears. All eyes are on him but the only gaze he holds is Toni's. Out of nowhere, Genet dressed in all-black watches from the wall.

Knowing his attention is on her, Toni continues to dance. He starts to move in her direction.

CARLOS  
You made it.

He twirls her around.

TONI  
Of course I did.

CARLOS  
Well now the night just got a whole  
lot better.

He pulls her waist towards him.

They begin moving in unison with the music. It's sexy with a humming toxicity brewing. He lifts up her chin for a kiss but Toni avoids it with a drunken laugh.

TONI  
Let's go back to your room.

CARLOS  
(chuckling)  
I don't think that's a good idea.

TONI  
What, are you scared?

As Reggie watches this interaction, he suddenly catches a glance of the film student from earlier. It can't be him, can it?

As the maybe film student continues on his path, he clasps hands with a football player.

He turns his head to the room and stares coolly at Reggie as he finishes his drink. It is him. He gives a wave. Reggie gives a small wave back. He turns on his toes and goes to the table to get another drink. As he fills up his concoction, he feels a tap on his shoulder.

FILM STUDENT

What you drinking?

REGGIE

(startled)

Huh?

FILM STUDENT

(nodding to Reggie's cup)

What you drinking?

REGGIE

Oh. You know... I was trying to make a tequila soda but because this stuff is so cheap, I don't even know what this is.

Reggie takes a sip.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, this is definitely not how they taste in Midtown.

FILM STUDENT

New York? Is that where you're from?

REGGIE

Nah, it's where I went to school last year.

FILM STUDENT

Where'd you go?

REGGIE

NYU Tisch unfortunately.

FILM STUDENT

(impressed)

Got you, got you. Yeah, you definitely give off that big city creative vibe.

REGGIE

Thanks. I'm trying to give Tillman a try but... I don't know yet man.



FILM STUDENT

It is a bit of a shift in culture  
but give it a chance- Hey!

The film student embraces his friend, RAY.

FILM STUDENT (CONT'D)

I didn't think you were going to  
make it.

RAY

I told you I was coming, just never  
said when.

FILM STUDENT

(laughing)

Can't stand your ass.

(turns to Reggie)

Ray this is... I just realized I  
never got your name.

(he holds out his hand)

Logan.

REGGIE

(meets Logan's handshake)

Reggie.

LOGAN (FILM STUDENT)

(looking at Toni and  
Carlos, concerned)

Woah, what's going on over there?

Toni trips over a table and rips her tights at the knee. It's  
not terrible, but blood begins to run.

CARLOS

Let me get you back to my room.

TONI

That actually doesn't sound half  
bad.

CARLOS

Come on, sweetheart.

He takes her hand and leads her towards a dimly lit hallway.  
Obnoxious whoops can be heard from the other football  
players.

Reggie follows Toni and Carlos intently with his eyes, Logan  
and Ray's conversation starting to get muffled.

A few feet away, Genet's stare darkens. She's not so sure  
about this either....

3

INT. CARLOS' BEDROOM- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS

3

Carlos closes the door as he locks eyes with Toni's, which are starting to glaze over. She really is stunning.

He moves to kiss her. As she kisses back, he grows hungrier for more of her. He pushes her to the bed and starts to move down from her lips to her neck. His ancestral strength begins to burst through as he rips her shirt open.

CARLOS  
(breathless)  
Fuck, sorry...

TONI  
(in between kisses)  
It's okay. Keep going.

CARLOS  
(smiling)  
You're dangerous.

He continues to distress her with his lips, moving from her chest... to her stomach... to her legs.... Toni has never been pleased like this before. He rises back over her.

TONI  
Where did you learn to do that?

CARLOS  
(chuckling)  
Now why would I tell you that?

A look of annoyance passes over Toni's face. It's quickly dissolved by the same look in his eyes from when they first met. Only this time, there's more of a threat, a danger raging in them.

He lowers his head back over her neck, baring his teeth as he moves closer. As he is about to sink his teeth into her, the dark cloud that he hypnotized Toni with earlier hovers over his mouth.

Suddenly, an electric protectant on Toni shocks and projects Carlos into the corner of the room.

Toni sits up, not realizing what happened.

TONI  
How did you get all the way over there?

He doesn't answer.

He rushes over and hungrily embraces her into another kiss. After a couple minutes, he tries to take another stab at her neck with his teeth. But this time, he shifts into a shadow-like figure.

Almost as soon as he changes, not only is he shocked by the electric protectant on Toni's body. He is branded by a small symbol that looks very similar to the mask in the debriefing scene and in the Combs' home.

He looks up at Toni and has a flash of a vision of the TATTOO GIRL in war garb running towards him in front of a field of fire. His eyes then settle on the bracelet with the near-identical image. This is a warning.

CARLOS

You know what? Let's get you home.

TONI

What? What did I do?

CARLOS

Nothing. It's just getting late and I have an early practice.

He grabs his keys and goes to the open the door.

4 EXT. CARLOS' BEDROOM/INT. HALLWAY- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 4

A discombobulated Toni stumbles out of the room, following Carlos' lead.

5 INT. LIVING ROOM- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 5

He guides her back into the party with his hand lightly wrapped around her neck. Some of Carlos' friends are blasted while others are passed out on the couch and half-way outside the apartment.

At the sight of Toni, Reggie rushes to her.

REGGIE

(to Toni)

Are you okay?

CARLOS

(sizing Reggie up)

Who's this?

TONI

(to Carlos)

He's just a friend.

(MORE)

TONI (CONT'D)

We came here together.

(to Reggie)

Carlos was about to take me home.

REGGIE

Oh really?

(beat)

I live a couple buildings over, I  
can just can come with-

TONI

No!

(recomposing herself)

I mean, don't worry about it. I'm  
good.

CARLOS

Look, I just wanted to make sure  
she got home safe. We have practice  
in the morning anyways.

Reggie looks over at Carlos' teammates passed out all over.

REGGIE

Do they know that?

Carlos steps one foot closer to Reggie, staring him down.

CARLOS

Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

Reggie begins fuming, knowing he's not going to get anywhere  
with Carlos.

REGGIE

(to Toni)

Can I talk to you for a minute?

(beat)

Alone?

TONI

(rolling her eyes)

Fine.

Reggie grabs her hand and drags her to the hallway.

REGGIE

I'm not letting you go back with  
him.

TONI

Reg-

REGGIE

Do you know how you look right now?

TONI

Who fucking cares how I look, I can  
take care of myself.

(realizing she messed up)

Here.

She types a reminder in her phone to text Reggie when she  
gets back to her dorm.

TONI (CONT'D)

And if I don't text you, I give you  
full permission to knock down my  
door.

REGGIE

Don't be surprised when I roll up  
with the feds.

(beat)

Be safe.

TONI

I'll be okay. I promise.

Her and Reggie share a moment.

As she moves towards the door, a small ripple of electricity  
escapes from Toni's hand.

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

1 INT. APARTMENT- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 1

Toni walks back to Carlos with Reggie close behind alongside Ray and Logan.

CARLOS  
You ready to go?

TONI  
Yeah.

As she steps over a FOOTBALL PLAYER passed out in the doorway-

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
Hey Carlos!

CARLOS  
What's up man? I'm trying to take her home.

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
(noticing Toni)  
She good?

CARLOS  
Yeah, she's cool bro.

FOOTBALL PLAYER  
What about Adam?

CARLOS  
Oh shit, I almost didn't even recognize him. Thought he was some random.

The friends drag the passed out football player from the doorway.

2 EXT. APARTMENT- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 2

The party's conversations start to fade as Toni stands halfway out the door, letting the cool air sober her up.

Suddenly, a hand whisks Toni away into the night.

3 EXT. PARKING LOT- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 3

Too exhausted to scream, Toni looks up and just barely sees Genet squeezing her hand.

4 INT. CAR- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 4

Genet hurriedly straps Toni into the passenger seat and drives her back home.

Seeing that Toni's fallen asleep, Genet occasionally puts her fingers on Toni's wrist to gauge her pulse.

They pull up to their dorm. Genet tries to wake Toni up. No luck.

5 INT. CREST HALL- STAIRCASE- CONTINUOUS 5

Genet walks into the lobby carrying Toni across her back and rushes to the elevator.

Still "OUT OF ORDER."

GENET  
(whispering)  
You have got to be shi...

Toni grunts and starts to stir. Genet puts a soft hand on Toni's head that emanates heat to lull her back to sleep. She starts carrying Toni the rest of the way up.

INT. DORM- HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

Finally, a glistening Genet and still-sleeping Toni reach Toni's room.

6 INT. TONI'S DORM- CONTINUOUS 6

In Toni's room, Genet lays Toni on her bed. She digs into Toni's drawers and discreetly changes her into an oversized t-shirt. As she helps Toni put her head on the pillow:

TONI  
(quiet)  
Thank you...

A serious Genet connects Toni's phone to her charger. Suddenly, a text from Reggie pops up.

From Reggie: "Where did you go?"

Putting the phone to Toni's face, Genet unlocks the phone. As Toni, she responds: "I'm ok, just got back to my room. Bout to go to sleep."

7 EXT. CAMPUS- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS

7

Reggie walks back to his dorm with Ray and Logan, phone in hand. Toni/Genet's text pops up on his screen. Reading it aloud:

REGGIE

Okay but why didn't you say anything?

RAY

Dude give her a break. She did just get to college.

REGGIE

But still...

RAY

She responded, right?

REGGIE

Yeah but-

RAY

Then she should be safe.

LOGAN

(sternly)

Ray.

(beat)

She's lucky to have a friend like you.

They arrive at a building with a brightly lit lobby.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

This is us.

(looking at Ray, then to Reggie)

Hey, did you want to grab breakfast with us in the morning?

REGGIE

Oh, sure that would be dope.

RAY

Sweet, see you then.

Ray slips into the entrance.



LOGAN

Text me when you get back home.

REGGIE

For sure.

As Logan shuts the door, Reggie turns towards his dorm's direction and smiles. He's finally starting to make some friends.

8 EXT. CAMPUS- QUAD- CONTINUOUS

8

As Reggie walks into his dorm, not-so-far-off in the distance is Elise walking hurriedly towards her dorm. Suddenly, she gets a buzz on her phone.

From Red Jordans: "Where did you go babygirl?"

From Elise: "Home."

Red Jordans: "Without me? (side-smirking emoji)"

Elise loves playing this game. Quickly typing: "Ew (sick emoji)"

Red Jordans: "When can I see you again?"

9 EXT. CREST HALL- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS

9

As Elise is thinking on a response, she hears something.

CARLOS (O.S.)

Yessir.

(beat)

Absolutely.

She looks over to see Carlos talking on a holo-phone. She runs behind a nearby tree, poking out her head to continue listening.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

(to hologram)

Everything will be in place by the time of the autumn festival back home. Head Guard is as good as mine.

ELISE

(a little too loud)

Head Guard?

Carlos immediately perks up to see where that voice came from. Elise jumps down behind the tree trunk for cover.

Carlos surveys the area to see who's around. Seeing no sign of anyone, he goes back to his call. How did he hear that?

CARLOS  
(to hologram)  
Yeah I'm alright. Must've been an animal or something.

HOLO-PHONE (V.O.)  
(deep, James Earl Jones-like voice)  
Well, do what you must to complete your mission. No matter who gets in your way, even if it's the girl.

CARLOS  
Yessir.

He closes his phone. He takes a firm stance as he observes the dorm up and down. Quietly, Elise tiptoes over to the dorm's side entrance. As she opens the door, Carlos looks over. She slips in before he can recognize her.

10 INT. TONI'S DORM- NIGHT 10

As Genet exits from the conversation with Reggie, she sees a missed message from Solange. Genet begins to quickly type. She presses send as Elise's silhouette appears as the door swings open.

11 INT. SOLANGE AND LOUIS' BEDROOM- NIGHT 11

Solange suddenly wakes up in a sweat as the text from Genet DINGS on her phone. She looks over at Louis, who's still in deep sleep. She quietly picks up her phone to read the text. Concern washes over her face.

She jumps out of bed and rushes out. Louis gently opens his eyes.

12 INT. COMBS' KITCHEN- NIGHT- CONTINUOUS 12

Solange presses on an app that looks like a contacts book. She types in the search bar "C" and one contact comes up. Pressing on the phone button, she puts the phone in front of her like Carlos did a short while ago.

After a few rings, a blank projection appears on her holo-phone.

13 INT. BUNKER CONFERENCE ROOM- TIME UNKNOWN/INT. COMBS' KITCHEN- NIGHT

Gloved Hands, COMMANDER, sits at his desk from the very beginning, a projection also appearing on his holo-phone.

COMMANDER

Hello?

SOLANGE

(whispering)

You told me she was safe.

COMMANDER

Good evening to you, too. Or should I say morning?

SOLANGE

(whispering)

Stop playing with me. You all told Louis my daughter was going to be protected.

COMMANDER

And she is-

The conversation continues as the next scene takes place.

14 EXT. CREST HALL- NIGHT

14

Back outside of Toni's dorm building. As Solange and the Commander speak, Carlos remains planted in front of Crest Hall. Genet jumps off a wall, looking around. Carlos follows her path with his eyes.

BACK TO SOLANGE IN THE KITCHEN

SOLANGE

(whispering)

Then why was I just informed by one of your soldiers that she came in contact with the enemy?

(beat)

That girl's a child, too, you know.

She looks fiercely at a photo that looks nearly identical to the one on Genet's arm.

For a split second, she sees the same vision Carlos had earlier. Emotions start bubbling up within Solange.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

Whatever, I shouldn't have called-

COMMANDER

Sol, I know it's not my place but at some point she's going to need to know what's at stake here.

(beat)

They both do.

Solange sits on this.

SOLANGE

(stammering)

I haven't found the right time...

GLOVED HANDS

There never will be one.

Solange ends the call and presses her arms against the island in frustration. Hidden from her view, Louis stands near the end of the hallway.

Things just got a little more complicated for this family.

**END OF SHOW.**