

DARK ROOTS

"Welcome to Campus"

Written by

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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, black pants and leather jacket.

When she reaches the entrance, a high-tech door, Combat Boots presses a button. 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.)
You may enter.

INT. BUNKER- CONFERENCE ROOM- CONTINUOUS

As Combat Boots moves to sit down, we finally see her face. 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:

GLOVED HANDS
Not only is it your new assignment,
but it is your final assignment
before your promotion.

COMBAT BOOTS
So soon? I thought you said I
wasn't ready.

GLOVED HANDS

So prove to me that you are. To us.

Combat Boots opens the folder, seeing her tasks written out and a picture of a young woman.

COMBAT BOOTS

(irked)

So the Head Council wants me to babysit?

GLOVED HANDS

Not babysit, protect.

COMBAT BOOTS

Well, tell them I would like a different mission. Something more my speed.

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, you know they make me record our meetings.

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)

(MORE)

COMBAT BOOTS (CONT'D)

So what's so special about her? Is she a native? Connected to someone on the Council?

GLOVED HANDS

She's related to the Princess.

COMBAT BOOTS

Princess? The King has no children.

Gloved Hands doesn't answer.

COMBAT BOOTS (CONT'D)

The King has no children, correct?

GLOVED HANDS

Genet, you are to protect this girl at all costs. She is going somewhere the Others will try to corrupt her.

GENET

The Others? I thought they were no longer a threat when we defeated them in the war twenty years ago.

GLOVED HANDS

We did. But we got word from one of their spies they're planting a young soldier there as well, we just don't know who.

GLOVED HANDS (CONT'D)

(whispering)

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

Genet 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 are you up for it?

GENET

Yessir.

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

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

The same mask is mounted on a wall, only this one is surrounded by family photos and hangs 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)
Mom, are you still coming down to help? We have a few more bins to load.

WOMAN (O.S.)
(shouting back)
Girl, I'll be down in a minute.

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 already trying to wake up the neighbors.
(beat)
Is there 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), finally comes down. She's regal, a natural beauty, and almost glides down the steps.

SOLANGE
Watch your 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 who needed my help. I
didn't tell you to go to school 17
hours away.

TONI
It's 16-

Solange whips around and 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?

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
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.

INT. KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

As she begins to make her coffee:

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

INT./EXT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

Toni comes into the kitchen.

TONI

Mom, we've been over this a million times. I don'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 expand your options. You are going far away...

TONI

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

SOLANGE

(chuckling)

You better be.

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

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

(kissing Toni's forehead)

Love you, ladybug.

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.

INT. CAR- AFTERNOON/EVENING

Various shots of the Combs family's 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 and not too soon after, pull into a hotel parking lot.

EXT. HOTEL- EVENING

LOUIS

Alright, pitstop number one.

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

INT. HOTEL- CONTINUOUS

After getting their key cards from the front desk, 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.

INT. HOTEL- SOLANGE AND LOUIS' ROOM- CONTINUOUS

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

LOUIS

Night sweetheart.

Then she walks over to Solange.

SOLANGE

Rest up, tomorrow's a big day.

TONI

I will, love you.

As the door shuts, Solange flops onto the bed.

LOUIS

You in for the night?

SOLANGE

I'm literally about to pass out.

LOUIS

Well before you go to sleep, I just wanted to say how proud I am. I know this trip might be a little hard for you.

He kisses Solange on the cheek as she goes deep into thought. As he walks towards 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, babe.

He rushes over and begins rocking her back and forth.

LOUIS

Hey hey hey. She'll be okay. She's a strong one.

Solange cries into his arms.

INTERCUT:

INT. TONI'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

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.

INT. CAR- AFTERNOON

A light but steady rain pounds against their SUV. Solange is resting her eyes while Toni 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 opens her eyes and notices this, she chuckles. This is one of the many reasons why she loves him.

TONI

I'm Toni!

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

ELISE

Elise Lanes. Looks like we'll be rooming this year.

TONI

It's so great to finally meet you!

ELISE

Mhmm...

Elise goes back to her computer and headphones.

TONI

(under her breath)

Okay then...

Toni passes the clock on the wall as she exits to go get the rest of her belongings. It reads 12:30.

The next time we see the clock, it reads 2:45.

Putting the final touch on her dresser, Toni steps back.

TONI (CONT'D)

Alright, I think it's done!

The Combs' Family steps back and admires Toni's new living space.

Solange starts to tear up. Noticing this:

LOUIS

Okay before we unleash the waterworks, let me get a few pictures of you two.

Solange wipes her tears away and attempts to smile with her daughter.

He snaps a few pictures.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Now some by yourself, Toni.

Solange steps away and flies out of the room to compose herself. Before he can snap a few more pictures, Toni goes after her mother.

INT. COLLEGE DORM- COMMUNAL BATHROOM- CONTINUOUS

Solange is hunched over a sink, rinsing her face of any evidence of tears.

As she pats her face dry, a WOMAN (early-to-mid 50s) appears at the next sink to wash her hands. They smile politely at one another.

WOMAN

This your first move-in?

SOLANGE

Is it that obvious?

WOMAN

If I'm honest, you're doing much better than I did with my oldest. Him and my ex-husband practically had to pry my hands from the front door.

A laugh slips from Solange. She covers her mouth, embarrassed.

Suddenly, she sees Toni at the door.

TONI

Are you okay Mom?

SOLANGE

Yes sweetheart. You know how I can get with these sort of things. You go back in with your father, I'll be right there.

TONI

You sure?

SOLANGE

Go Toni.

Toni looks unsure about leaving her mother.

WOMAN

It's okay hun, I'll make sure she's back in a minute.

Toni reluctantly shuts the door. The woman goes to dry her hands.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I know how hard it can be but we have to let them go. If we don't, they'll do it on their own. So clean up and get yourself together, Mama. Your baby's waiting on you.

The woman leaves.

Solange looks at herself in the mirror, understanding that she can only do so much as a mother. But it isn't so simple for her and her family...

EXT. COLLEGE DORM- COURTYARD- CONTINUOUS

Solange walks out to the courtyard and sees Louis snapping as many pictures of Toni as he can.

TONI

Okay Dad, I think you've taken more than enough pictures!

LOUIS

(gesturing towards the school sign)
Fine. Can I just get one more of you over there?
(noticing Solange, giving her a kiss)
Hey sweetheart.

Toni rolls her eyes then strolls over to the school sign. As her dad prepares the camera, Toni poses with her hands on her hips. Solange follows them.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

You look just like your mother.

As he snaps the photo, Solange is suddenly on the verge of tears again.

SOLANGE

I'll be in the car.

Before Louis or Toni can get a word in, she rushes off.

Toni starts to go after her, but Louis catches her by the shoulders.

LOUIS
You know how hard this is for her.

SOLANGE
I know, but I'm the one who's
leaving. Who says it won't be hard
for me?

He turns his daughter towards him.

LOUIS
Can I tell you a story?
(she nods, they begin
walking towards the car)
When you were little you used to
cry and cry when I held you.
Thought I must've been doing
something wrong. But when I turned
on some John Coltrane, that was the
only thing that calmed you down.

As they reach the car, he pulls out a big box from the
drivers seat and hands it to her. Opening it, she sees it's a
John Coltrane record and a portable record player.

TONI
Thanks Dad.

They embrace into a hug. Louis turns to her ear.

LOUIS
(whispering)
You might also have a surprise from
your mother in the top left pocket
of your suitcase.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Alright, I think it's time for your
mom and I to hit the road.

Toni locks her gaze with Solange's, who goes from being
slumped in the passenger seat to turning her head on a dime.

TONI
I'll be okay Mom, I promise.

Toni gives her a big hug.

SOLANGE
I'm going to miss you so so much
ladybug. I just...
(beat)
I have to...

TONI
What is it Mom?

SOLANGE
(fanning her eyes)
Nothing baby. Ooh okay now go on in there before I start crying again.

TONI
(laughing and giving her a quick kiss)
Love you.

Solange slips into the car as Toni rushes back up the stairs of the residence hall.

Louis jumps into the car.

LOUIS
Well, we did it! Can you believe we officially have a college freshman?

No response as Solange's eyes follow Toni up the stairs. Louis puts his hand over hers.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Baby, she's going to be just fine.

SOLANGE
Did you get in contact with the Head Council?

LOUIS
I did...

SOLANGE
And what did they say?

LOUIS
They said someone would be stationed to protect Toni.

SOLANGE
Okay good.

LOUIS
They also mentioned the Others were sending someone.

Solange sits on this, begins to start fuming.

SOLANGE
(low)
Louis-

LOUIS
I know, I know.

SOLANGE
No, I don't think you understand.
If the Others lay a single finger
on my daughter, I'll start the war
again myself.

LOUIS
Which is why it won't happen. I've
been in constant contact with
connections back home so you won't
need to worry about it.

SOLANGE
Okay...
(beat)
I'm trusting you Louis.

LOUIS
(kissing her hand)
Everything is under control my
love.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. AUDITORIUM- EVENING

Toni, Elise, and the other first years shuffle in and settle into their seats.

Suddenly, the drum rhythm from before is heard again. Only this time, it's more upbeat, louder and accompanied by the rest of the Tillman marching band.

As soon as they start to feel the groove of the saxophones harmonizing with the flutes, a petite yet powerful woman struts out onstage. Gliding towards the podium, we get our first glimpse at PRESIDENT KINSLEY (50s).

PRESIDENT KINSLEY
Good evening, Class of 2025.

The music continues.

PRESIDENT KINSLEY (CONT'D)
(with even more power)
I said good evening, Class of 2025!

The music promptly stops.

PRESIDENT KINSLEY (CONT'D)
Thank you.
(beat)
Now on one hand, I could bore you with a long speech about how you are entering a great legacy of incredible scholars, artists, and leaders.

Some applause.

PRESIDENT KINSLEY (CONT'D)
Or I could congratulate you on having the highest test score average of any entering class.

Some more thunderous applause.

PRESIDENT KINSLEY (CONT'D)
Or I could shout you out for having the most geographically diverse class, many of you representing the oh so majestic city of New Orleans.

The loudest whoops and hollers of the entire night vibrates throughout the room.

PRESIDENT KINSLEY (CONT'D)

But instead, I'd like to introduce you to one of our most wholesome traditions. The First year screening of "The Princess & the Frog." I hope you enjoy.

Applause.

Clips of the Disney film are seen and reflect on Toni as a broad smile grows across her face.

Elise sits next to her as boredom glazes over her eyes.

ELISE

(whispering)

I'll see you back at the dorm.

TONI

(whispering)

Do you want me to-

But before Toni can finish her sentence, Elise dashes out from her seat to the door.

As "Almost There" finishes, Toni pulls out her phone and texts:

TONI (TEXT) (CONT'D)

Do you want me to come with you?

EXT. AUDITORIUM- CONTINUOUS

Elise pushes the doors open and turns to see a group of four UPPERCLASS STUDENTS (20s) passing around a blunt. She feels her phone buzz and sees Toni's text.

ELISE (TEXT)

No I'm good.

Elise walks up to the group.

ELISE (CONT'D)

Can I take a hit?

UPPERCLASS STUDENT

(too high to function)

Can you handle it is the question?

Elise snatches the blunt from their hand and takes a long, longggg pull. 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 feels hella weak.

UPPERCLASS STUDENT

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

ELISE

I've got my connections in New
York. It's going to cost you
though.

UPPERCLASS STUDENT

And what is that?

ELISE

Give me your number and you'll find
out.

UPPERCLASS STUDENT'S FRIEND

Yo these freshmen are wilding!

A smirk comes across the upperclass student's face and they hand over their phone to Elise.

UPPERCLASS STUDENT

Where you headed?

ELISE

To sleep.

UPPERCLASS STUDENT

(a step closer)

You want some company on your way
back?

ELISE

No thanks, I'm fine.

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

EXT. AUDITORIUM- A COUPLE HOURS LATER

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...

She pulls out her phone, clicks on "Maps," and types in her residence hall. She begins following the directions.

Suddenly, we see Toni from a distance over the shoulder of someone we haven't met yet. Someone dark, handsome, and dangerous. His gaze follows Toni's path as she figures out where she's going.

EXT. AUDITORIUM- THE NEXT MORNING

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.

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.

TONI

(whispering)

What?

REGGIE

(whispering)

Bruh when is this thing going to be fucking over?

TONI

(whispering)

You tell me, I thought it was only supposed to be 30 minutes.

REGGIE

(whispering)

This could've been an email, somebody take me now!

Toni snorts.

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

EXT. AUDITORIUM- ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

An over-caffeinated and under-compensated ORIENTATION LEADER (20s) 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.

Toni 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 oldie 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)
You love making jokes don't you.

REGGIE

That, but you could do so much better. Do you see how white those Air Forces are? He probably has a little cleaning ritual every night.

They zero in on his hands.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

But clearly not for his grooming.

TONI

Well that's a hard pass....
(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. Sorry sis, I might need to steal this one from you.

TONI

You know I don't hate, go head and get yours.

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

TONI (CONT'D)

Who is that?

The Orientation Leader who led the icebreaker earlier pops up out of nowhere.

ORIENTATION LEADER

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

(MORE)

ORIENTATION LEADER (CONT'D)

But don't get your hopes up - dude
thinks he's going to the NFL 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 engage until he breaks eye contact with Elise,
looks over at Toni, Reggie, and the Orientation Leader and
checks Toni out up and down.

REGGIE

(to Toni)

Uhh I think he's looking at you.

TONI

(looking around)

Me?

REGGIE

Yes you. You better get it!

TONI

(laughing)

I'm not too sure Reggie. I mean
he's halfway across the quad and
all those people are around him. He
probably can barely see me.

Toni looks at her schedule on her phone.

TONI (CONT'D)

We have a break, you wanna grab
something to eat?

Reggie nods.

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

INT. CAFETERIA- CONTINUOUS

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 Toni.

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

REGGIE

Would it kill them to buy some
trays?

TONI

Right? Like I can't hold four plates in one hand. I'm still going to pile up my plate though.

REGGIE

Okay!

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)

Excuse me? You have to go to the back of the line.

No response.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

Still nothing.

Toni steps from behind Reggie and taps Vintage Sweatshirt on the shoulder.

Realizing Toni is trying to get his attention, he takes off his headphones.

VINTAGE SWEATSHIRT

(confused)

Can I help you?

TONI

Yeah. Look I know this line is crazy but you just cut in front of my friend and I, and we've been waiting. Could you go to the back of the line?

Vintage Sweatshirt looks over at Reggie.

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 at Toni in embarrassment as she and
Reggie storm off.

Whoops and hollers can be heard all throughout the cafeteria.
Elise is off in the corner of the buffet station appalled.

ELISE

(low)

You have got to be kidding me...

RANDOM GIRL (18) walks up to her.

RANDOM GIRL

That was dope. Did you know who
that was?

ELISE

(annoyed)

No clue.

The Random Girl walks away as Elise stirs with contempt.

EXT. ACADEMIC BUILDING- LATER

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

A group of girls stream by and wave at Toni.

GIRLS

Hey Toni!

TONI

Hey y'all!

The girls exit.

TONI (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Who were they?

REGGIE

You don't know them?

TONI

No clue. Is it bad I'm already losing track of names?

REGGIE

A little, especially since everyone likes you.

(beat)

You really did go off on that guy earlier.

TONI

Well the dude was an asshole, he needed to be called out.

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 your favorite?

TONI
I'm an old soul so anything Spike
Lee, Poetic Justice, Love &
Basketball for sure-

FILM STUDENT
But we make an exception for Jordan
Peele?

TONI
Oh definitely.

They share a laugh.

FILM STUDENT
(to Reggie)
How about you?

REGGIE
(hesitant)
I do little videos here and there,
but nothing serious. I'm planning
on majoring in business.

FILM STUDENT
Well you can always take an
elective or join a club.

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 and throws it in the trash. An
awkward beat.

TONI
You don't want to 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
Sure...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. CAMPUS- QUAD- AFTERNOON

Toni stumbles upon on 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

Rolling her eyes, Toni starts to walk towards a 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 serious?

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 the football player, Carlos, from earlier.

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.

He begins to stroll away. Like a puppy, Toni follows after him.

TONI (CONT'D)

Thank you.

CARLOS

Don't mention it.

He looks her up and down.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

You a freshman? How you liking it 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.

Across the yard by another food truck, Elise stops and watches this interaction.

TONI

You think so?

CARLOS

For sure. And I already know you're gonna be at all the parties.

TONI

Well I'm not so sure about that.

Motioning towards her phone.

CARLOS

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 (CONT'D)

My teammates and I are throwing a party tonight in the stadium parking lot. You should come through.

He takes a piece of the pretzel.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
See you later freshman.

He strides off.

Elise is suddenly behind Toni.

ELISE
So I see you met Carlos.

TONI
(confused)
Where did you come from?

Elise pulls Toni to the less-crowded side of the food trucks.

ELISE
What did y'all talk about?

TONI
Well he bought me a pretzel. And
then he mentioned a party the
football team is throwing tonight-

ELISE
You got invited?

Toni nods.

ELISE (CONT'D)
You're not as uptight as I thought.

TONI
Thank you?

Elise takes Toni's arm and starts guiding her towards their dorm as Elise begins planning their outfits and pre-game plan.

Not too soon after, they stumble upon a group of students crowding around a piece of paper sticking on the side of a building. It's reads "TALENT SHOW SIGN-UP." Toni eyes it for a bit.

Toni picks up a nearby pen and writes down her name. She turns back to Elise.

ELISE
(annoyed)
I don't care what you do. Just
don't embarrass me.

She whisks off as Toni follows her, smirking.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM- LATER

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 freshmen class!

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

MC (CONT'D)
(laughing)
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 2022!

The seniors whoop and holler, literally shaking the room.

MC (CONT'D)
Whew, that is what I'm talking
about! 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. After they quiet down-

MC (CONT'D)
Y'all are going to meet some of the
best people of your lives. 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.

MC (CONT'D)
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 moving towards Reggie and Elise, a group of guys rush up trying to introduce themselves. Toni makes small talk with them but then meets Carlos' gaze across the room. Her phone buzzes.

CARLOS (TEXT)
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.

INT. TONI'S BEDROOM- ABOUT 15 MINUTES LATER

When Toni returns to the room, she sees Elise busy getting ready for the party.

ELISE
(sighing)
Finally!
(looking Toni up and down)
So get yourself together and then
we can figure out our plan for the
rest of the night.

TONI
Carlos said it didn'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 quietly climbs into bed and opens her laptop. 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.

ELISE
Oh you're going. Come on.

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

EXT. TONI'S BEDROOM/EXT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

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
Yeah, that was me.
(reaching out her hand)
I'm Toni.

Keke meets her handshake.

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 and Ailey as soon
as I could walk.

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
wild.

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 when you two are ready we'll 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 Kacey know.

They look over at the door across the hall that is very clearly the RA's room, decorated in various prints and rules.

TONI

Noted.

KEKE

Alright, see you in a bit!

Toni and Elise walk back towards their room.

INT. BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

Back in their room. Toni picks up her phone, clicks on FaceTime and dials Reggie.

REGGIE

Yo.

TONI

What you up to?

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

Oh, I just worked my magic.

Elise scowls at her.

TONI (CONT'D)

Can you be ready and over here in
20 minutes?

REGGIE

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

TONI

Bet. See you in a few!

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM- PARKING LOT- LATER

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 they aren't in public.

TONI

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

REGGIE

This is far from it...

ELISE

Where are the drinks?

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

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!

INT. APARTMENT- LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

They rush into the nearby apartment and 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 we do.

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

Is there a difference?

The group erupts into laughter. Toni looks at them a bit out of sorts.

REGGIE

This your first time?

ELISE

It makes sense.

Reggie shoots Elise a look.

KEKE

Don't worry, 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. They cheer.

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, who wears 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. Do you have any plans later?

ELISE
(looking him up and down)
Maybe...

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

TONI
Come on Reggie!

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.

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.

He takes her hand to the bottle-ridden table. He grabs a dark blue bottle and two cups. He pours his drink in one cup, but in the Toni's he secretly slips what looks like a pill. He hands it back to her and tips her head back to sip.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

There you go...

As she finishes, a seductive look rises in her eyes.

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)
Hm?

FILM STUDENT
(nodding to Reggie's cup)
What you drinking?

REGGIE
You know... I was trying to make a
tequila tonic 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 New York.

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)
You definitely give me that big
city creative vibe.

REGGIE
(chuckles)
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 you never know... 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
didn't say when.

FILM STUDENT
You're a mess.
(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
(looking at Toni and
Carlos, concerned)
What is going on over there?

Toni pushes Carlos onto the couch where Elise sits with Red Jordans and begins to kiss him passionately. He follows her lead, grabbing firmly onto her hips.

ELISE
Are you eff-ing serious?

She immediately jumps up and rushes out the door. Red Jordans laughs and follows her.

CARLOS' FRIEND
(chuckles)
Get a room bro!

TONI
That doesn't sound like a bad idea.

CARLOS
Oh yeah?

He jumps up, 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. He's not so sure about this...

INT. CARLOS' BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

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

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. Too 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, an electric protectant on her shocks and projects him 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 embraces her into another kiss.

After a couple minutes, he tries to take another stab at her neck with his teeth.

This time, 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 a girl that looks like a Younger Solange in war garb running towards him in front of a field of fire. This is a warning.

CARLOS

You know what? Let's get you home.

TONI

Why? 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.

EXT. CARLOS' BEDROOM/INT. HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

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

INT. LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

He guides her with his hand lightly on her neck back into the party. Some of Carlos' friends are blasted while others are passed out on the couch and right outside the apartment. Reggie is still leaning on the wall.

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.
(to Reggie)
Reggie, Carlos was going to take me
home.

REGGIE
Oh really?
(beat)
I can come with-

TONI
No!
(recomposing herself)
I mean, you're okay.

CARLOS
Look man, 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 on the
couches.

REGGIE
Do they know that?

CARLOS
(chuckles, steps a bit
closer and looks down at
Reggie)
Yes they do.

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

REGGIE
(to Toni)
Can I talk to you for a minute?
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

Reggie-

REGGIE

You aren't in the right state of mind. Do you know how you looked on that couch?

TONI

Reggie, I'll be fine. 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.
(hugging her)
Be safe.

TONI

I'll be okay. I promise.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. APARTMENT- CONTINUOUS

Toni walks back to Carlos with Reggie close behind.

CARLOS
You ready to go?

TONI
Yeah.

As she pushes the door open-

FOOTBALL PLAYER
Hey Carlos!

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

FOOTBALL PLAYER
(noticing Toni)
Hey how you doing?

INT./EXT. APARTMENT- CONTINUOUS

Toni gives the football player a small wave as she stands halfway out the door, letting the cool air sober her up.

Suddenly, a hand whisks Toni away into the night.

EXT. PARKING LOT- CONTINUOUS

Too exhausted to scream, Toni looks up and sees the young knight from the beginning, Genet, squeezing her hand.

INT. CAR- CONTINUOUS

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 Toni's dorm. Genet tries to wake Toni up. No luck. She searches for Toni's room number, finding it in a card holder on the back of Toni's school ID.

Genet's eyes grow looking at the illuminated dorm and its snake-like staircase.

INT. COLLEGE DORM- STAIRCASE- CONTINUOUS

Genet looks up at the staircase.

GENET

This can't be so bad, right?

Genet ties Toni up on her back with an invisible rope. She pulls out Toni's room number card again.

Speeding up the stairs, Genet reaches the first hallway. Looking at the sign with the room numbers listed, her eyes grow and look back down at the room number card. Then she looks upwards at the long winding staircase.

GENET (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You have got to be kidding...

Toni grunts, sounding like she's about to wake up. Genet puts a soft hand on Toni's head to lull her back to sleep.

Genet struggles to carry Toni the rest of the way up.

INT. COLLEGE DORM- HALLWAY- CONTINUOUS

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

INT. TONI'S BEDROOM- CONTINUOUS

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

(whisper)

Thank you...

As Genet rises, we see the book *Sula* spilling out the top of her suitcase. This was the gift from Solange that Louis mentioned earlier. The opened page reads: "It is sheer good fortune to miss somebody long before they miss you."

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

REGGIE (TEXT)
Where did you go?

Putting the phone to Toni's face, Genet unlocks the phone. As Toni, she responds:

GENET (TEXTING AS TONI)
I'm ok, just got back to my dorm.
Bout to go sleep

EXT. CAMPUS- CONTINUOUS

Reggie walks back to his dorm with Ray and Logan, phone in hand.

REGGIE
Did y'all see where Toni went?

LOGAN
She should be fine. Didn't she go off with Carlos?

REGGIE
Yeah but it looked like she left before him.

Toni/Genet's text pops up on his screen. Reading it aloud:

REGGIE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I'm ok, just got back to my dorm.
Bout to go sleep
(beat)
Okay but why didn't you say anything?

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

REGGIE
I guess. But still...

RAY
She responded, yes?

REGGIE
Yeah but-

RAY
Then she should be safe.

LOGAN
 (sternly)
 Ray.
 (beat)
 She's lucky to have a friend like
 you.

EXT. CAMPUS- OLD-LOOKING DORM- CONTINUOUS

They arrive at a building with a brightly lit lobby.

LOGAN
 This is us.
 (looking at Ray, then to
 Reggie)
 Hey, did you want to grab breakfast
 in the morning?

REGGIE
 Yeah that would be cool.

RAY
 Sweet, see you then.

Ray slips into the entrance.

LOGAN
 Text me when you get back to your
 dorm.

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.

EXT. CAMPUS- QUAD- CONTINUOUS

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.

RED JORDANS (TEXT)
 Where did you go?

ELISE (TEXT)
 Home.

RED JORDANS (TEXT)
 Without me? (side-smirking emoji)

Elise loves playing this game. Quickly typing:

ELISE (TEXT)
Yup. (kissing emoji)

RED JORDANS (TEXT)
When can I see you again then?

As Elise is about to respond, she hears a voice.

EXT. TONI AND ELISE'S DORM BUILDING- CONTINUOUS

CARLOS (O.S.)
Yessir.
(beat)
Absolutely.

She looks up to see Carlos talking to a hologram on a phone-like device. 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
(whispering)
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.

HOLOGRAM
(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 see who she is.

INT. TONI'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

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.

INT. SOLANGE AND LOUIS' BEDROOM

Solange suddenly wakes up in a sweat as the text from Genet appears 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.

INT. COMBS' KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

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 hologram projects on her phone:

INT. GLOVED HANDS IN BUNKER CONFERENCE ROOM/EXT. SOLANGE IN KITCHEN

Gloved Hands sits at his desk from the very beginning, a hologram also projecting on his phone.

GLOVED HANDS

Hello?

SOLANGE

(whispering)

You told me she was safe.

GLOVED HANDS

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

SOLANGE

(whispering)

There's no time for games. You all
told Louis my daughter was safe
from The Others.

GLOVED HANDS

And she is.

EXT. TONI'S DORM- CONTINUOUS

As they speak, Carlos remains planted in front of Toni's
dorm.

Genet walks out from the entrance, looking around. Carlos
follows her path with his eyes.

SOLANGE

(whispering)

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

GLOVED HANDS

(sighing)

We're keeping her as safe as
possible, but we could only send
over one of our trainees.

SOLANGE

(regular tone)

So you knew they were sending
someone, too?

Silence.

SOLANGE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Whatever, I shouldn't've called-

As she's about to hang up:

GLOVED HANDS

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

(beat)

(MORE)

GLOVED HANDS (CONT'D)

That she's the daughter of a
princess.

Solange sits on this.

SOLANGE

(whispering)

I'm waiting on 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 lot more complicated for this family.

END OF SHOW