

OPENING SHOT:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Close on a young black man's hands confidently assembling a customized .38 Smith & Wesson with extended barrel and a 30mm tube scope with side dial. He then raises the gun with scope to eye level and peers through the lens.

POV GUN SCOPE - CONTINUOUS

The young man adjusts the dial on the scope as the blurry lamp on the nightstand becomes clear.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

We see the full body of the young black man, late 20's, athletically built, well dressed, scope still at right eye. He spins a 180 and is now facing the dresser wall filled with numerous awards and diplomas.

POV GUN SCOPE - CONTINUOUS

The view of the scope stops on a nicely framed award which reads : DEAN'S LIST, This certificate of award is presented to ATTICUS TOLEDO for scholastic achievement for the year 2001-2002, University of Southern California.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The young man still holding the scope to his eye jerks the focus to a framed picture on the dresser.

POV GUN SCOPE - CONTINUOUS

An adjustment clears up a slight blur to reveal a picture of a handsome, smiling teenage black boy adorned in an L.A. Laker's jersey.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The young man lowers the weapon from his face. Late 20's, early 30's, determined, yet a hint of sadness. He flips open and spins the chamber of his custom .38. One round falls out as he snaps it closed. The shiny bullet falls near a pile of newspapers and legal briefs stacked near the dresser. Atticus walks over to pick up the bullet but picks up the newspaper on top of the pile instead which reads: "D.A. Wants 16 Year Old Accused of Drive-by Shooting Tried As an Adult."

In disgust he tosses the paper back into the pile and walks over to the picture on the dresser of his kid brother and picks it up.

ATTICUS

Today is for you Jamal.

EXT. PARKING LOT, BALDWIN HILLS, CA. - MORNING - 24 HOURS EARLIER

Light fog lays over a near vacant parking lot in front of a storage facility. To the east an abandoned old Winnebago. On the other end of the otherwise deserted lot three Escalades. Two black, one white.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - STORAGE WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Five young black South C gang members gathered in the alley in front of one of the units joking, clowning around. One of the young men, CHUBBY, built like a Pittsburgh Steelers lineman, is holding a couple of boxes of Krispy Kremes.

ATTICUS

(to Chubby)

Looks like you ready to party.

The other guys start laughing.

CHUBBY

A man's gotta eat.

The laughter continues. OMAR, the most conservatively dressed of the group, looks like he could have been a CPA, donning thick rimmed glasses to accompany his studious appearance.

OMAR

(to Chubby)

I'll take one of those donuts.

Chubby carefully opens the top box, without looking in, and offers to Omar.

CHUBBY

Just leave me the custard creams.

Everyone starts helping themselves to the Krispy Kremes. T.J. notices all the donuts are the same.

T.J.

Mmm, they all custard creams Chubby.

CHUBBY

Back, back. Put 'em back.

No one messes with Chubby on this, each reluctantly putting their custard creams back. Chubby closes *his* box and switches to the other one.

CHUBBY (CONT'D)

Here, this box is for you guys.

Again, they all dig in.

T.J.

I'll take the raspberry jelly.

OMAR

Let's see, I'll have a couple of those maple bars.

ATTICUS

I'll take a couple of those glazed.

LIONEL, the tall skinny one, is patiently waiting his turn but by the time Omar, T.J. and Atticus are through grabbing theirs, only two sprinkle topped glazed are left.

LIONEL

Fuckin' sprinkles!

Raspberry jelly is dripping from T.J.'s mouth.

T.J.

I guess you shit outta luck skinny.

Chubby pensively opens his box and offers to Lionel one of his donuts.

CHUBBY

Here. Take one.

LIONEL

(appreciatively)

Thanks Chubby.

With half a glazed donut still dangling from his mouth, a full glazed donut in his left hand, Atticus approaches the door of storage unit number 213. He punches in the code to the lock.

ATTICUS

This is it.

Chubby pauses momentarily from his custard cream feast, visibly upset.

CHUBBY

213? I told you 'bout that number.

Lionel remains silent but Omar and T.J. are laughing again. Atticus finishes opening the lock and swings open the storage shed door #213. He proceeds to go inside. The rest follow except Chubby.

INT. STORAGE SHED 213 - MOMENTS LATER

Atticus flips the switch to the overhead light. When he turns around he notices Chubby waiting outside.

ATTICUS
(to Chubby)
Trust me.

Chubby doesn't budge. Atticus motions to him.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
Come on Chub. Have I ever let you
down?

Chubby's resistance is slightly melting.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
"The superstitious man is to the
rascal what the slave is to the
tyrant."

Chubby surrenders and walks inside.

CHUBBY
Whatever the fuck that means. You
just better not close that door behind
me.

Atticus walks to the front of the unit and proceeds to shut the door anyway.

ATTICUS
(confidently)
I said trust me, didn't I?

CHUBBY
Shit.

At the rear of the unit is a wall of neatly stacked boxes of Nike shoes. Atticus turns and faces his people.

ATTICUS
213 is bogus. A head fake.

CHUBBY
(confused)
What?

ATTICUS
It's like this. From now on, as far
as anybody's concerned, we're in the
counterfeit shoe business.

Atticus points to the wall of Nike shoes.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Which we are.

(beat)

Too.

OMAR

Huh?

ATTICUS

Our new line of sales. Nikes at 50% off. Seriously.

CHUBBY

What the hell you talkin' about?

ATTICUS

As in seriously enough everybody believes that's what we do.

OMAR

Really?

ATTICUS

Really. And we'll even make money at it too. But not nearly the money we'll be making doing what we always do, next door, in unit 214.

Atticus walks over to the padlocked rear door of the unit, pulls on the padlock, turns and faces his crew again.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

In here...counterfeit Nikes only. Nothing else, period! Always.

Atticus points to the rear door over his shoulder.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Out that door and to the right, is storage unit 214. I worked it out with the man, we pay for it, but it always shows vacant, in probate or something. We NEVER go in through the front door. Always out this door. And always only through the back door of 214 where our real business is. Outside the five of us, nobody will ever know where out shit is.

T.J.

That's genius A.T.

OMAR

I like it.

CHUBBY
(breaking the mood)
I don't. We still standin' in number
two fuckin' THIRTEEN.

ATTICUS
But our real business is in 214.

LIONEL
He's right Chubby.

CHUBBY
I'll do what you say A.T. but I still
don't like it.

ATTICUS
(changing gears)
Look, there's something else I need
to talk you guys about.

CHUBBY
Damn. You sound serious.

ATTICUS
Real serious.

LIONEL
You ain't sick or nothin' are you
A.T.?

ATTICUS
No, it's nothing like that.

OMAR
Then what is it?

ATTICUS
Me and T.J. got something to do
tomorrow...

OMAR
Yeah, and...

ATTICUS
Well, like I said, it's real serious.
And if something should happen to
us...

CHUBBY
(interrupting)
This 'bout Sly, ain't it?

ATTICUS

You have to curb your antipathy toward that brother Chub. It's not good for your health.

Lionel whispers to Chubby.

LIONEL

What's antipathy?

Chubby shrugging his shoulders.

CHUBBY

Either are these damn donuts. And he ain't my brother A.T.

ATTICUS

Look. For your own good, the less you know the better. All I can say is it ain't about Sly, and it's personal. Very personal.

CHUBBY

So what are you tryin' to tell us?

ATTICUS

If something should happen to me, or to me and T.J., this becomes your show Chubby.

OMAR

(feeling slighted)

I don't work for nobody but you Atticus.

ATTICUS

Well I appreciate that Omar, but I'm just saying.

OMAR

You're just saying what? Chubby's in charge?

ATTICUS

"Figuring out who you are is the whole point of the human experience." There's nobody I trust more or who's better at what they do than you Omar. But you do what you do and Chubby does what he does. And Chubby will always have your back brother.

Omar, still frustrated, drinks in what Atticus said.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Look. Lighten up everybody. By tomorrow night me and T.J. will be done with this shit, though we may have to lay low for little while.

A pall falls over the room. Chubby passes a look to Lionel, then Omar. Atticus presses Omar and Chubby.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Well? Well?

CHUBBY

Ok, Ok.

OMAR

(reluctantly)

Yeah. Ok.

ATTICUS

Good. One last thing. Nobody's to call me or T.J. tomorrow. Period. You don't want any record of you calling our cell phones tomorrow. I don't mean to be all cryptic, but that's the way it's gotta be.

Lionel looks confused. Chubby confused and concerned. Omar looks pissed off.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA FIRE STATION 121 - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Thick fog is broken by the screaming sirens and rumbling fire trucks that are heard but not seen. Advancing through the brume the sirens get louder as we eventually see fire engines roaring out of Santa Monica Fire Station 121 into the icy haze.

INT. KTTV NEWS VAN - MOMENTS LATER

STEVE is the driver. He's sipping his Starbucks when a voice comes over the radio. It's SANDRA, the dispatcher.

SANDRA

Steve, we've got a massive pile-up at the 10 and Lincoln. Looks like a bad one.

STEVE

We're on it Sandra.

Steve turns to his cameraman RALPH, and reporter CARLA.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 OK guys, put those lids back on your
 coffee. Sounds serious.

EXT. PILE-UP WESTBOUND S.M. FWY & LINCOLN - MOMENTS LATER

Two big rigs and scores of cars mangled and crushed. Steam shooting from many of the still warm engines. One of the overturned big rigs is a foster farm truck. The only thing moving at the moment are some of the chickens that survived the crash. Feathers are blowing around in the wet fog and landing on the windshields and ground like snowflakes. Ambulances and fire trucks are just arriving on the scene. Sirens howling, emergency lights spinning and flashing.

EXT. FRONT DOOR, APARTMENT - MORNING

Atticus is rapping on the apartment door in what seems like Morse code. (Beat.) He takes a look at his watch, murmurs.

ATTICUS
 "Those that make best use of their
 time have none to spare."

The door opens, T.J. appears.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 You ready?

T.J.
 I need a favor.

ATTICUS
 (pointing to his watch)
 We gotta go.

T.J.
 I know, I know. Just take a second.
 My sister says she's gotta talk to
 you.

Atticus' impatience lowers a level and agrees to go inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

At the living room table which doubles for a study desk is T.J.'s 13 year old sister, TAMMI, tending to her homework. Atticus approaches.

ATTICUS (O.S.)
 What seems to be the problem?

TAMMI
 Yey! Uncle Atticus!

She picks up her assignment page and hands it to Atticus.

TAMMI (CONT'D)
I don't understand this.

ATTICUS
(reads assignment
aloud)
"Baseball: An American pastime? Or
a way of life?"

Atticus lowers the assignment page.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
So what's got you stumped Cammi?

TAMMI
Did you just call me Cammi?

ATTICUS
(chagrined)
No, I don't think so.

TAMMI
Well, I don't even like baseball.
Why didn't they ask me about
basketball or something I know about?

ATTICUS
This isn't about baseball, or
basketball. It's suggesting how
people can live vicariously through
their sports heroes. Their favorite
teams. You know, living your life
through someone else's dreams.

Tammi is trying to jot down verbatim what Atticus is saying.

TAMMI
"... It's suggesting how people can
live vi-...

Tammi pauses and looks up to Atticus.

TAMMI (CONT'D)
'V-i-' what?

ATTICUS
(reluctantly)
V-I-C-A-R-I-O-U-S-L-Y

Atticus snatches the pen from Tammi's hand.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

No no no! You need to think about
the question your teacher posed.
This way your mind continues to expand
and grow.

Tammi grabs another pen.

TAMMI

(picks up writing
again)

Yeah I know.

She stops writing long enough to look at Atticus.

TAMMI (CONT'D)

These words right here, what you
just said. This expands my mind.

ATTICUS

(smiling)

Well, that's all you get from me.
The rest is up to you.

Without looking up from her writing.

TAMMI

Love you A.T.

ATTICUS

You too little sis'.

T.J.

We gotta go.

Both T.J. and Atticus put a little kiss on Tammi's cheek.

EXT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Atticus and T.J. are walking toward the black Cadillac
Escalade parked on the street. A.T. tosses T.J. the keys.

T.J.

I appreciate what you done in there.

They get into their vehicle.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

ATTICUS

She's a smart girl. She can really
be somebody if she don't give up.

T.J.

She ain't never giving up. I won't let her.

(beat)

Hey A.T. I've been meaning to ask you something.

ATTICUS

Go ahead.

T.J.

This soft streak you got for Sly, what's up with that?

ATTICUS

(hesitates)

I talked his girl Melia into going off to school. At first she refused. Didn't want to leave Sly, they were all in love and everything. Finally she agreed but made me swear to her I'd watch out for him. Never let anything happen to him.

T.J.

Shit.

ATTICUS

The dude has a hole in his heart as big as the grand canyon and holds me responsible. I swear I thought she'd come back. Can't blame the man. It really's all on me. It wasn't my place. Wasn't my business.

EXT. LINCOLN OVERPASS - LATER

KTTV news van, equipped with satellite dish, slowly makes its way up onto the sidewalk of the Lincoln Bridge overpass. A crowd of onlookers have assembled.

INT. KTTV NEWS VAN - CONTINUOUS

STEVE

Ralph, you ready?

Ralph fiddles with the lens on his camera.

RALPH

Just about.

STEVE

Carla, it's pretty cold out there. I think you better put on your overcoat.

Carla, a stunningly beautiful young black lady, strokes her new red sweater and puts on a dark blue plaid scarf.

CARLA

No. I promised Perry I'd wear this on my next live shoot. It was a Christmas present. Could you just give me a minute. I want to give him a call.

STEVE

Hurry up Carla. I think we're first on the scene.

Carla dialing her cell phone.

CARLA

OK. OK. Be right there.

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY NEAR NORMANDIE - MOMENTS LATER

The fog has mostly dissipated this far inland. The freeway looks like a giant parking lot. A white Ford Focus is stopped just ahead of a black Cadillac Escalade.

INT. WHITE FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

Older middle-aged WHITE LADY leans forward to turn up the volume on car radio.

TRAFFIC REPORTER

...and the Santa Monica westbound between...

(pauses)

...well, let's put it this way. It's stop and NO go from beyond the 405 all the way back to Normandie. The Santa Monica freeway has turned into a giant parking lot both directions as a result of that massive 100 plus pile-up westbound on the 10 just before PCH. This is real nasty folks.

The lady shakes her head in resignation with a big sigh.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

T.J. is visibly bothered by the traffic jam. He leans forward to turn down the volume on the traffic report.

T.J.

I told you. I told you we need to take Pico, or Olympic.

ATTICUS

You told me? I believe you were talking to yourself. And if you were talking to me, I'm pretty certain I said "You're the man. You would know."

T.J.

Well you know I wasn't talkin' to my god-damn self. You know I was talkin' to you.

ATTICUS

(chuckling)

Yep. I believe you were.

T.J.

And you coulda said, "Yep, you right. We should take Pico." That's what you coulda said.

T.J. lays on the horn to punctuate his frustration.

ATTICUS

(still chuckling)

"The way a question is put can often predetermine an answer."

T.J.

That another Martin Luther King quote, A.T.?

ATTICUS

Nope. Henry Kissinger.

T.J. is so pissed off he starts beating the horn like a punching bag.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Be cool!

T.J.

I'm trying to get that old bitch in front of me to move that piece of shit White Ford up a few feet so that I can get over and make Normandie.

ATTICUS

T.J. what is it about you behind a wheel? On the street, in the thick, you as cool as ice. Never get excited. Never see you sweat. But a little traffic jam, a red light.

(MORE)

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

It's like this nasty old troll takes over your body.

INT. WHITE FORD FOCUS - MOMENTS LATER

Lady nervously adjusts her rear view mirror. She sees two black men in the car that is honking at her. She hits the lock button on her door.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

T.J.

It's like when I get behind this wheel...that's who I am. I'm in charge. I'm in command.

ATTICUS

So that ain't you when you got my back out there on the street?

T.J.

Yeah that's me. That's me too. I always got your back brother. But when I get in this sweet Escalade and put my hands on this steering wheel, well...I'm finally in charge A.T. For the first time really, T.J.'s in charge of something.

ATTICUS

Wow! So this ain't no Dr. Jeckyll and Hyde thing...this is more like Dr. Freud.

T.J.

I know it won't last so I don't get all pussy about it.

ATTICUS

That's some heavy shit Mr. Jefferson. That there is some profound shit!

T.J.

(visibly calmer)

Behind this wheel I'm Leonardo DiCaprio in that boat movie. I'm king of the fucking world!

Atticus laughs in acknowledgment.

T.J. rolls down his window and sticks his head out.

T.J. (CONT'D)

And if that old lady don't move the fuck up I'm gonna have to move her the fuck up.

T.J. shouts thinking the old lady might actually hear him.

T.J. (CONT'D)

Move that piece of shit white Ford fuckin' Focus out of my fuckin' way or I'm gonna do it for ya.

Visibly panicked the lady raises her arms in confusion.

Frustration boiling over T.J. starts pushing forward the Ford Focus with his Escalade's bumper.

T.J. (CONT'D)

That's it!

ATTICUS

(agitated)

What the fuck are you doing? You know what we got in this car!

T.J.

It's cool A.T. It's all good.

With enough room now to navigate T.J. pulls a sharp right into the emergency lane.

ATTICUS

(infuriated)

Pull this wagon over, right the fuck now. Right the fuck now!

T.J.

(smiling)

What?

ATTICUS

You know what today is! This ain't no run of the mill run and gun we on. Turn that fucking engine off!

T.J. obliges.

T.J.

You right A.T. I don't know what the fuck.

ATTICUS

Today's the day T.J. Today's the fuckin' day--and we're fuckin' grown-ups today.

T.J.

You right. You absolutely right.

ATTICUS

You god-damn right I'm right. Today,
this is what we meant to do.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Caucasian man, forty-something, pleasant looking, sound asleep
on bed.

Phone ringing continually, PERRY finally awakens, throws
back the covers and rubs the sleep from his eyes.

EXT. LINCOLN OVERPASS - CONTINUOUS

Carla is on her cell phone one hand cupped over her ear.

CARLA

Pick up Perry. You can't still be
sleeping.

INT. BEDROOM, PERRY ON BED - CONTINUOUS

With a wet dream smile Perry stretches his arms and finally
picks up the phone.

PERRY

Hello.

CARLA (O.S.)

You better get your cute little ass
out of that bed and turn on the
television.

Perry picks up the remote and aims it at the flat panel.

EXT. LINCOLN OVERPASS - CONTINUOUS

Carla stroking her form fitting red sweater.

CARLA

If you want to see your beautiful
wife on television in that sexy red
sweater you got her for Christmas...

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - CONTINUOUS

Perry hits mute button while reading the scroll at bottom.

SCROLL

"Breaking news. Massive 100+ car pile-up. Dense fog blamed for tragic mishap."

INT. BEDROOM, PERRY ON BED - CONTINUOUS

PERRY

You doing a live remote? Where are you, my beautiful sexy wife?

Perry subtly slides his hand just inside his pajamas bottoms.

CARLA (O.S.)

Get your hand out of your pajamas, you dirty old man.

Perry quickly obeys. Guilty smile.

PERRY

Are you on a live cast?

CARLA (O.S.)

I'm on in two minutes. Call you back.

Perry smiles, begins to slide his hand back down his PJs.

CUT TO:

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - MOMENTS LATER

T.J.

Oh shit!

T.J. adjusts his rear view mirror, sees approaching CHP cruiser.

ATTICUS

What is it?

T.J.

Po-leece.

ATTICUS

Just stay cool. Take the citation, whatever, just be cool. Only thing they know is we're parked illegally.

EXT. CADILLAC ESCALADE

Cadillac sits alone in the emergency lane, CHP pulls up and parks behind them.

INT. CHP VEHICLE

OFFICER speaking into radio mic.

OFFICER

California license number 2, z as in zebra, e as in Edward, r as in Robert, numbers 4-6-2. We have a 10-97, Code 4 no assistance requested at this time.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)

Roger that one-Adam-44.

Officer exits his black and white and approaches with caution the Cadillac Escalade. He peers into heavily tinted windows.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE

ATTICUS

(low whisper)

Just stay cool. No reason to do anything but stay calm.

EXT. CADILLAC ESCALADE

Officer taps on driver's side window with left hand, placing his right hand on his holster. Window electronically comes down.

OFFICER

You hiding something in there?

ATTICUS

Why do you ask that officer?

OFFICER

I'm speaking to the driver sir. License, registration young man.

T.J.

Certainly.

He hands both over to the patrolman.

OFFICER

So?

T.J.

(confused)

So? Huh?

OFFICER

So, what are you hiding in there?

T.J.

Huh? Wuttaya mean?

Atticus nervously bites his lower lip.

OFFICER

You know these windows are illegal. It's a \$380 fine, first offense. So I figure if it's worth it to you to pay that fine you gotta be hiding something.

T.J.

Well sir, it ain't worth it to me, but I got no choice.

OFFICER

Really?

T.J.

You see, we got this rap group, and we lease this car we can't afford, and we tint these windows because if we don't nobody's going to pay our music any nevermind.

OFFICER

You call that shit on a stick music?

T.J.

Oh yes sir. It's music alright. It's all we got unless we tall enough to play basketball.

Atticus is intrigued with T.J.'s spin yet visibly concerned. The officer laughs.

OFFICER (O.S.)

Well that's about as honest as I ever heard any of you be.

Atticus' smile is short-lived.

EXT. WHITE FORD FOCUS - CONTINUOUS

Old lady has exited her car which she has pulled over and is angrily approaching the officer. She interrupts.

WHITE LADY

Officer. Officer. That man rammed into my car. He deliberately rammed into my car.

OFFICER

Just a minute mam. Stay right where you are. I'll come to you.

Inside the Escalade Atticus nods to T.J.

EXT. CADILLAC ESCALADE AND CHP VEHICLE

The very animated older lady and the officer begin to talk.

OFFICER

Now calmly mam. You have to stay calm.

OLD LADY

Right there.

She points to his dented front bumper.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE

T.J. instinctually angles for the gun under his belt. Atticus reaches over and grabs T.J.'s arm.

ATTICUS

We can't just pop everybody that gets in our way.

EXT. CADILLAC ESCALADE

OLD LADY

He did that to me. Right there. He did that.

T.J. lays on the horn again and starts his getaway.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM, PERRY ON BED - MORNING

Perry is watching the television. On the screen morning news anchor LISA MEYERS.

LISA

And now we're switching to a live update from Carla Roberson-Brown on this morning's massive, deadly pile-up near Pacific Coast Highway. Carla.

CARLA

Thank you Lisa. This is Carla Roberson-Brown and I'm reporting to you live from the Lincoln Bridge overpass, where earlier a 100+ car

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)
 pile-up has resulted in at least
 four deaths and dozens of injuries.

Perry has put his hand over his heart, patting it.

PERRY
 You're so damn beautiful...

CARLA (O.S.)
 In what has been described as one of
 the worst, most horrific traffic
 accidents in U.S. history...

CUT TO:

EXT. ESCALADE SPEEDING AWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Escalade is traveling northbound on Normandie, faster
 than the other cars but not reckless.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

Atticus is dialing on his blackberry.

ATTICUS
 Don't run any reds or do anything
 crazy until we hear them choppers.

T.J. nods, Looking unexpectedly confident.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Pick up Omar.

Atticus bobs his head in sync with the
 ringing on the other end.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Come on Omar...you always home.

Phone continues to ring.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 Shit. No answer.

He rolls down his window, glances at the sky.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
 How come no choppers?

INT. CHP VEHICLE - MOMENTS LATER

The patrolman is calling in the pursuit on his radio.

OFFICER

This is one-Adam-44, I have a possible
GTA, and assault with a vehicle.
Vehicle is 2006 Black Cadillac
Escalade, possibly northbound on
Normandie between Santa Monica freeway
and Venice Blvd.

The officer's vehicle starts to roll.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

I'm beginning pursuit, requesting
code 30. Repeat code 30.

DISPATCHER

Roger that one-Adam-44. Be advised
all air support is currently
dispatched to Santa Monica. May be
a few minutes.

OFFICER

Roger that.

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - MOMENTS LATER

T.J. has escaped attention as he makes a left off of Normandie
onto 15th.

ATTICUS

Where you taking us?

T.J.

I've got a plan.

ATTICUS

You gotta plan? You planning on
sharing that plan?

T.J.

A.T. You chose me to drive today.
Let me drive.

ATTICUS

I need to know where we're headed.

T.J. makes another sharp left.

T.J.

We headed to Koreatown.

ATTICUS

Koreatown? You crazy?

T.J. makes another left into the alleyway grabbing the garage
door opener off the visor.

He repeatedly presses the button aiming it left, then right.

T.J.

Koreans always be working A.T. That means if one of these doors open...

T.J. keeps working the remote. A garage door just ahead to the left opens.

T.J. (CONT'D)

Bingo...if one of these door open, it probably be empty!

And it is empty.

ATTICUS

Crazy like a fox.

T.J. pulls into the garage and the door closes behind them. Atticus flips open the vanity mirror for some light. Looks over at T.J.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I remember that first day I ever heard of you. That day you called me for Jamal.

T.J.

Yep. And now we here.

ATTICUS

And now we here.

Atticus lays his head back and closes his eyes.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

That was one phone call I wish I never got.

INT. KING OLYMPIC HALL, USC - DAY, 2002--FLASHBACK

Atticus standing confident and vibrant at the lecture podium. The hall is SRO. He taps on the mic.

ATTICUS

Hello out there. I've been asked by Professor Jennings to fill in for him this afternoon. Apparently that tough old codger is not as tough as that nasty Asian bug going around these days.

A fair amount of laughter fills the hall.

JUMP TO:

INT. PODIUM, KING OLYMPIC HALL - LATER

Atticus finishing his lecture.

ATTICUS

So let me leave you with this thought.
Wall Street, main street. CEOs,
hedge fund managers. Martin Luther
King, Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X,
Warren Buffet...

(he smiles)

Atticus Toledo. We all have one
thing in common. The power to change
things. Something. Even if its
just our selves. And lastly, I want
to thank everybody for not walking
out on me.

(pause)

Thank you very much.

The young man receives a standing ovation. His girlfriend
JANICE, sitting in the front row interrupts her applause to
pat her heart and blow a kiss.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LECTURE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Students filing out of the hall pass and congratulate Atticus.

JANICE

That was fantastic. It was so moving
Atticus, you really have a calling.

ATTICUS

Yeah. And it's saying "let's go up
to my room and talk about it."

JANICE

You're horrible.

Atticus' cell phone rings. He takes his phone out of his
pocket and glances at caller ID.

ATTICUS

It's my brother. I gotta take this.
Give me a minute.

Atticus answers the phone.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Jamal, what's up brother?

VOICE (O.S.)

It's not Jamal, it's Tommy.

ATTICUS

What are you doing with Jamal's phone?

Atticus listens attentively.

TOMMY (O.S.)

We were over at my cousins...

He just keeps shaking his head 'no' as he listens.

ATTICUS

That can't be. No way that's true.
Where do they have him?

Atticus listens.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I'll take care of this. Thanks for
letting me know.

JANICE

What is it? What happened?

ATTICUS

(in shock)

They arrested my little brother for
a drive-by...for a drive-by murder.

(pause)

I gotta go.

JANICE

What? I'm coming with you.

ATTICUS

That ain't Jamal. He wouldn't hurt
a fly.

JANICE

It's gotta be some sort of mistake.

CUT TO:

INT. SYLVESTER'S BEDROOM - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Blinds are drawn. Bedroom is dimly lit. Under the covers,
SYLVESTER and JANET are asleep. Talking in his sleep.

SYLVESTER

Melia. Melia. Don't go, don't leave
me. Melia.

Janet is awakened by Sylvester's calls for Melia. She shakes
his arm to awaken him.

JANET
Wake up! Wake up Sly!

Sylvester whips around pointing a black snub-nosed he keeps under his pillow in Janet's face. With the other hand he wipes some sleep from his eyes.

SYLVESTER
What the fuck, girl?

JANET
(defiantly)
What the fuck? Who the fuck is Melia?

SYLVESTER
Huh?

JANET
You callin' out her name. Beggin'
her not to leave you.

SYLVESTER
(upset)
Get the fuck outta here!

Janet looks bewildered and hurt.

SYLVESTER (CONT'D)
Get your sorry ass outta my bed--
outta my life.

Janet is standing there naked, embarrassed, searching for her clothes.

SYLVESTER (CONT'D)
Hurry up before I shoot you or
something.

Crying, Janet scurries out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sylvester, short-fused captain of the 5th and Hill gang, is sitting on the sofa, playing a hand held video game. His two right hand associates are also there. COREY is eating Popeye chicken. DUANE is watching the TV coverage of the massive pile-up on the Santa Monica Freeway.

COREY
Where's Janet?

Sylvester doesn't look up from his video game.

SYLVESTER
Gone.

COREY

Gone to the market? Or gone gone?

SYLVESTER

Gone. Long gone bye-bye!

COREY

Shit, you burn through ol' ladies
like I burn through money.

Sylvester finally looks up, laughs.

SYLVESTER

Yeah I do. Yeah we do.

Duane continues glued to the wreckage on TV.

DUANE

Hey, wouldn't that be something if
A.T. was in that mess?

SYLVESTER

Hey, why don't you have some of
Corey's chicken and shut da fuck up.

DUANE

I'm just sayin'.

SYLVESTER

I'm just sayin' shut da fuck up.

CUT TO:

INT. PERRY & CARLA'S KITCHEN - LATER

Perry is looking in the refrigerator for something to eat.
The phone rings on the kitchen counter.

CALLER I.D. VOICE

Call from Carla.

Perry picks up the phone.

PERRY

I don't know if it was the the
sweater, but you were great.

CARLA (O.S.)

You think so?

PERRY

You're so ready for that weekend
anchor.

CARLA (O.S.)
You think?

PERRY
I know. You the one baby!

INT. STARBUCKS COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

CARLA
Look. I've got some good news.

PERRY (O.S.)
You've got it. KTTV morning weekend anchor Carla Roberson-Brown.

CARLA
Hey, let's have lunch. I can tell you all about it.

PERRY (O.S.)
I don't have to go in all day sweetie.

CARLA
How about Pinks, 12:30? You've been trying to get there for months now. Let's make it a chili dog special.

PERRY (O.S.)
You trying to butter me up?

CARLA
I love you baby.

PERRY (O.S.)
I love you too. 12:30 at Pinks. Yeah baby.

She closes her phone looking more serious than elated.

CUT TO:

INT. CADILLAC ESCALADE - LATER

Still parked inside the garage Atticus looks at his watch.

ATTICUS
It's been long enough

T.J.
You think?

ATTICUS
Yeah, it's time to go.

Atticus and T.J. exit through the garage side door. Atticus, briefcase in hand, with T.J. head to the nearby breezeway.

EXT. BREEZEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

ATTICUS

Shit, I forgot my jacket.

Atticus turns to go back and retrieve it.

T.J.

I'll wait here.

Atticus begins hustling back to the garage.

T.J. (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(loud, urgent voice)

A.T.!

Atticus stops in his tracks, turns. Three Korean kangs have T.J. with a knife at his throat. Atticus hustles back.

ATTICUS

Whoa, whoa, whoa. No need for that.

KANG #1

Shut up nigger, before I take me a slice of little black sambo here.

ATTICUS

Now why would would you wanna go do that?

KANG #1

What, cut this nigger?

ATTICUS

No. Disparage our race. Me and my brother here take offence to that word. Just as I'd assume you and your paper boys here wouldn't like it if I called you tea drinking, pigeon smuggling, crackass gooks. Am I right?

Kang #1 takes the knife from T.J.'s throat and lunges with it toward Atticus. Atticus easily disarms the young Korean of his knife and proceeds to put him in a firm choke hold. The other two Koreans try to rush to the aid of their friend, but freeze when they hear gunshots fired in the air by T.J. He now has the pistol pointed at them. Atticus looks up.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Get the fuck outta here.

The two other Kangs reluctantly walk away.

KANG #2
This ain't over.

ATTICUS
Tough guys, I know.

KANG #2
Not by a long shot.

T.J.
Shut the fuck up and get outta here.

The two thugs walk away, periodically glancing back at their friend, still in Atticus' choke hold. Atticus asks.

ATTICUS
We good?

KANG #1
(struggling to speak)
Yeah, we good.

Atticus let's the young Korean out of his hold.

ATTICUS
Good, like we never met.

The thug picks up his knife and begins to depart.

KANG #1
Like we never met...

He continues to walk away, murmurs under his breath.

KANG #1 (CONT'D)
...nigger.

Atticus not believing his ears tackles the Kang to the ground, commencing an unmerciful beating upon his face, with two viscous blows to each side of his head.

ATTICUS
You just so bad...

Several more crushing blows to the young man's head.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)
Something you wanna say now?

Atticus is relentless in his attack, still more punches.

T.J.

Ok A.T. His jaw's broken in fourteen places, at least. Can we go now?

Atticus finally relents. He stand over the pulverized Korean.

ATTICUS

"When angry, count to ten before you speak; if very angry, a hundred."

To T.J., shakes his head, looks at his bleeding knuckles.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Kids today. They just love to aggravate.

JUMP TO:

EXT. RTD BUS STOPPED AT OLYMPIC AND LA BREA - LATER

Atticus, briefcase securely in hand and T.J. exit the bus.

T.J.

I hate those fuckin' busses. They always smell like carnitas burritos or something.

ATTICUS

Yeah.

Momentarily laughs.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

I can't believe you don't have any fucking money.

T.J.

You either. And I'm hungry.

ATTICUS

My jacket, my wallet still sitting in our ride back in the garage.

T.J.

You'll think of somethin'. You always do.

INT. SILVER PRIUS - MOMENTS LATER

Perry is caught in a horrible traffic jam, glances at his watch.

PERRY

Damn.

Perry takes out his cell phone and auto dials Carla. Carla's phone goes into voice mail.

PERRY (CONT'D)

You didn't pick up Carla, I just wanted to let you know the traffic on La Brea is a mess and it looks like I'm going to be a little late. Sorry. Love you.

EXT. CIRCULAR DRIVEWAY, CENTURY CITY PLAZA HOTEL - LATER

A black Ford Eddie Bauer pulls up through the circular driveway and stops at the curb where a Valet approaches.

INT. BLACK EDDIE BAUER - CONTINUOUS

In the back seat sits JACK DENALI, junior Republican senator from California and his personal aide and confidant, LARRY HUTCHINS. Mr. Hutchins filing away paperwork into his attaché.

SEN. DENALI

Very good work Larry. You're going to make me look brilliant.

MR. HUTCHINS

You are brilliant senator.

SEN. DENALI

Hey, see if you can get a hold of that Hispanic kid who wrote that piece on immigration. You know the piece in the L.A. Times this morning. I'd really like to meet him. Talk about his ideas.

MR. HUTCHINS

I think that might be a nice touch.

SEN. DENALI

Yeah. Absolutely. Let's do it.

MR. HUTCHINS

OK Jack, I'll see what I can do.

EXT. CIRCULAR DRIVEWAY, CENTURY CITY PLAZA HOTEL

Two valets approach the senator's SUV as the rear door opens and Mr. Hutchins exits, followed by Sen. Denali.

VALET

Welcome to the Century Plaza Hotel Senator. If there's anything you need?

SEN. DENALI

Thank you. I appreciate it.

He puts a gratuity in the valet's hand.

INT. SILVER PRIUS - LATER

Traffic still not moving, Perry merges over to make a left at Beverly.

EXT. INTERSECTION LA BREA AND BEVERLY BLVD - MOMENTS LATER

Perry is about to finish his left turn when a young male jogger darts into his path through the crosswalk.

INT. DARK GREY LX 09

Following the Prius through the light, an attractive 30-something young lady is distracted talking on her cell phone. She doesn't see Perry stop and runs into his bumper. They both pull over to the side of the road.

EXT. SW CORNER OF LA BREA AND BEVERLY BLVD.

Atticus and T.J. are in front of a local bakery. T.J. is peering through the window. Atticus, looking away, has witnessed the fender bender.

T.J.

Mmm, mmm, mmm...check out them chocolate chip rolls.

ATTICUS

(not listening)

T.J., come on. Let's go.

T.J.

(turns his head)

What?

Atticus is briskly walking toward the corner.

ATTICUS

Follow me.

T.J.

What's up?

EXT. SIDEWALK NEAR PRIUS AND LX 09 - MOMENTS LATER

The attractive Lexus driver is over-the-top swearing in an obvious attempt at trying to intimidate Perry.

ATTRACTIVE LADY

Why the hell did you stop like that?
What the fuck is wrong with you
anyway?

PERRY

(calm)

Miss, we just need to exchange
insurance cards.

ATTRACTIVE LADY

I'm not giving you anything until
you admit this was your fault. I'm
not giving you a god-damn thing.

Perry laughs.

PERRY

My fault? I don't know about you
but when there's someone in the
crosswalk I tend to try and NOT run
them over with my car.

ATTRACTIVE LADY

I don't know what you're talking
about. There was no one in the cross
walk. Where are they now? I don't
see anyone.

PERRY

Really?

Perry looks down the street and realizes the jogger is gone.

Atticus and T.J. approach. Atticus interrupts.

ATTICUS

Excuse me.

The lady turns to the voice, looks up and down at Atticus
and his briefcase.

ATTRACTIVE LADY

We're busy. We don't want any.

ATTICUS

Excuse me?

ATTRACTIVE LADY

Get the hell out of here. We're not
buying anything today. Compende?

ATTICUS
 (authoritatively)
 I witnessed the whole thing. I saw
 what happened right there from the
 corner.

PERRY
 Amen brother.

Perry reaches in his jacket for his phone.

PERRY (CONT'D)
 Let me call the police. They can
 get your statement and make out a
 report.

Atticus and T.J.'s faces fill with consternation.

ATTRACTIVE LADY
 No, no. There's no need for that.
 I guess it was my fault.

She turns and gives Atticus a "if looks could kill" stare.

ATTRACTIVE LADY (CONT'D)
 Let me get my registration and
 insurance papers.

PERRY
 That's a good idea.
 (to Atticus)
 Can I get you to write down your
 name and phone number and a brief
 statement?

ATTICUS
 Sure.

EXT. SIDEWALK NEAR PRIUS AND LX 09 - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Lady is pulling away in her Lexus. Atticus is finishing up
 his written statement. Looks up at Perry.

ATTICUS
 So you're a lawyer?

PERRY
 How did you know?

ATTICUS
 The yellow pad. It's a lawyer's
 pad, isn't it? It's been my
 experience people that carry around
 lawyer's pads tend to be lawyers.

PERRY

Had a lot of experience with lawyers,
have you?

ATTICUS

A little.

Perry takes a business card out of his wallet and hands it to Atticus. Atticus takes the card and we read: "PERRY M. BROWN, Civil Rights Attorney, Specializing in Immigration Law. 555-789-5600"

PERRY

Look, I really want to thank you.
That was a very stand-up thing you
did here. If I can ever be of help
to you just give me a call.

ATTICUS

Truth is, we're trying to get to a
job interview over in Century City
and our car broke down a few blocks
back.

PERRY

Hey guys, normally I'd love to offer
you a ride, but I'm already...

Perry checks his watch.

PERRY (CONT'D)

...I'm already so freakin' late. I
was supposed to meet my wife at Pinks
for lunch fifteen minutes ago.

T.J.

Pinks. Best damn chili dogs in the
world.

PERRY

Hey, if you got time, maybe I can
buy you guys the worlds best chili
dog as a token of my appreciation.

T.J.

That's sounds great. I'm starved.

ATTICUS

No, we're late too. It wouldn't
look too good if we were late to our
interview.

Perry reaches back into his wallet.

PERRY

Let me give you guys some cab money.

Perry has three twenties in his hand when he looks up and notices T.J.'s t-shirt lifted enough to expose his gun.

PERRY (CONT'D)

You've gotta be kidding me.

T.J.

Just get in the car mister.

PERRY

Come on. Take my car, my keys.
Take my wallet.

ATTICUS

Sorry. We can't take that chance.
We're on a very special mission today.

Atticus nods to Perry to get in the Prius.

ATTICUS (CONT'D)

Like the man said. You better get
in the car.

T.J.

You can give me the keys though.
I'll be doin' the driving.

Perry shakes his head in disbelief, hands over the keys to T.J. and looks up at the sky. Atticus opens the passenger door, slides the front seat forward.

ATTICUS

You get in the back.

PERRY

This is so wrong.

Before Perry enters the back seat, Atticus binds his wrists together with industrial cable ties. Perry noticing Atticus' scuffed knuckles.

ATTICUS

Sorry dude.

As Perry reluctantly slides into the back of the car.

PERRY

What happened to your knuckles?

Atticus glances at his scraped knuckles.

ATTICUS

I got carried away on a punching bag
this morning.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sylvester on the phone to JESSE.

SYLVESTER

Look, I need to find A.T. I got ten
Ben Franklins for you right here.

JESSE (O.S.)

I'll see what I can see.

SYLVESTER

You do that. Sooner better than
later.

JESSE (O.S.)

I'm on it.

We hear a click on the other end. Sylvester flips his phone
shut. Duane and Corey are at Sylvester's side.

SYLVESTER

That boy know everything, but he
slow sometimes.