'BROKEN PEOPLE'

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FADE IN:

(MONTAGE)

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - FIELD - DAY

Three siblings practice their Gaelic Football skills.

The youngest is JOEY BROCKLISS; a slim, hyperactive 11 year old with puppy dog eyes.

The middle brother is RICHIE; stocky build, 12 years, one of his teeth is capped and discoloured.

The eldest is MARCUS; scrawny teenager, 14 years.

Richie wrestles past Marcus and Joey, bounces the ball then shoots for goal. A herd of cows invade the pitch.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - STREAM - DAY

The siblings take off their socks, shoes and roll up their jeans. Leaves and branches are mashed into an amateur dam.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE - OLD BARN - DAY

Marcus tackles Richie into a pile of loose hay. Joey bundles on top.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - MOORS - DAY

The brothers canter on horseback across the moors. Richie and Joey's horses bite at each other, stumble, and regain their balance.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - HAY FIELD - DAY

The brothers lie prone on bales of straw.

(END OF MONTAGE)

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The siblings are seated at the table. Richie holds his knife up as a mirror and inspects his discoloured tooth. Their mother, REBECCA (brunette, late 30s) serves dinner.

MARCUS

Where's Dad?

REBECCA

He started his new job so he'll be working tonight. Richie, don't play with your cutlery.

MARCUS

And?

REBECCA And... we'll need to move.

The siblings groan.

REBECCA

They've given us an apartment... in the home.

MARCUS We won't have a house?

REBECCA Not for a while.

MARCUS And it's a home?

REBECCA

It's a place where boys and girls who have been naughty need our help.

RICHIE

It's prison?

REBECCA

No. It's a nice house where children can learn right from wrong.

Richie looks at Joey.

RICHIE

You're going to prison!

Richie laughs.

JOEY

Mum!

INT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - BROCKLISS KITCHENETTE - DAY

SUPER: "CHARLESMORE YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME, 1982".

Rebecca prepares breakfast in her dressing gown. Joey rubs sleep from his eyes.

REBECCA

Joey, I'm out of milk. Can you go downstairs and ask the kitchen staff for a pint? And tell Marcus and Richie to get a move on for school.

INT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - DINNER HALL - DAY

An overweight female cook prepares food as she listens to music on the radio. Joey peers at her over the counter of the serving hatch.

Behind them at the opposite end of the dinner hall, a girl screams. Joey freezes. Then in a gradual motion turns around.

ESCAPEE GIRL leans half in and half out of a large window. Her holdall lies on the concrete practice yard outside. Joey's father (SAM BROCKLISS, late 30's, tall, slight build, Magnum P.I. moustache) pulls her legs. She screams again.

Sam heaves her indoors. She clatters onto the wooden floor and gets to her feet. Her screams continue. Sam grabs her by the arms.

> SAM You need to stop! Right now!

She calms. Her mouth falls open as she catches her breath.

SAM

You're not going anywhere but I'm not going to hurt you, so take it easy.

Sam lets go of her arms.

SAM I don't want to see an atomic cloud over your head... Ok?

Sam smiles. She stares back with piercing green eyes, takes a couple of deep breaths then explodes.

ESCAPEE GIRL Fuck you, ya fucking cunt!

She puts her body behind a fake right hook to his head. Suckered, he raises his hands to his ears in anticipation. She follows with a straight left and connects with his nose. Sam cups his bloody nose in his hands and falls to his knees.

Members of staff arrive and restrain Escapee Girl.

ESCAPEE GIRL I ain't finished with you yet!

She kicks and screams as she's dragged from the hall.

In shock and mouth hanging open, Joey hasn't budged. The cook puts her arm around him, smiles a sympathetic smile and coerces him into the kitchen.

INT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Holding a bloody handkerchief to his nose, Sam tilts his head back. His BOSS paces in front of him.

BOSS I hear you've been bonding with the kids?

Sam stares through him.

BOSS A little claret once in a while doesn't hurt anyone.

Sam dabs his nose with the bloody snot-rag.

SAM

A little?

Boss glances at a staff timetable pinned to the wall.

BOSS You're taking the boys to their football match today, right?

Boss grimaces at Sam's nose.

BOSS

You don't look up to it, Sam. I'll get someone to cover for you.

Boss reaches for his telephone.

SAM

No. No. I'm fine. I'll take them.

Leaving the office, Sam stops at the door.

SAM

I'm absolutely fine.

BOSS

Alright. Give those dysfunctional bastards a good shoeing.

EXT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - RECREATIONAL PLAY AREA - DAY

Rebecca and Joey walk past some monkey-bars to the sandpit where a YOUNG OFFENDER (boy, mid-teens) plays. He points down at the sand.

> YOUNG OFFENDER My fucking sandpit!

> > REBECCA

Hey! Watch your language! It's OUR sandpit. It belongs to everybody.

INT. MINI-BUS (PARKED) - RIVAL OFFENDERS' HOME - DAY

Rival hooligan inmates create a wall of noise, shouting and jeering in the background. Sam addresses his teen football squad.

SAM

Don't let them into your heads. Do what we've practiced. Play your game, your style, your way.

Sam wags his finger.

SAM Come on, let's get out there.

EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH - RIVAL OFFENDERS' HOME - DAY

Sam leads his squad through a corridor of high chain-link fences where inmates hang off the sides. The young hooligans create a cauldron of unwelcome noise. They spit, howl and pull faces. Sam steps up to shake his hand. Rival Coach smiles with the mouth, not the eyes.

SAM

Good luck.

Rival Coach snorts a laugh.

RIVAL COACH Fuck you very much.

On the sideline, Sam looks around at the hostile reception and his eyes flicker due to nervousness.

The ref blows his whistle and the match is underway.

(MONTAGE)

Rival school perform a series of heavy handed fouls. The ref pays no attention. Each bone crunching challenge is met with derisory laughter and congratulatory applause from Rival Coach.

A rock solid challenge, a swift bit of footwork and one of Sam's players gain possession of the ball. He gallops across midfield towards goal.

The home fans perform a Millwall Roar; an intimidating wall of sound that builds and builds without pause for breath.

Sam's player bears down on goal. About to shoot, the roar of the Roman amphitheatre erupts. He loses his nerve and scuffs the ball. It goes so far wide that it's almost a throw in.

Rival Coach laughs. Sam looks away in pained frustration then remembers to applaud his player's efforts.

(END OF MONTAGE)

In the final moments of the game one of Sam's players is hacked down inside the box.

Referee!

In a moment of indecisive madness, the referee stares at Sam.

RIVAL COACH Oi! Ref! Don't fucking look at him!

SAM

Penalty!

The nervous referee points to the penalty spot. The home fans froth and roar their disproval.

RIVAL COACH

Ref! Oi Ref! You've got to be fucking joking me!

Sam's striker holds his nerve and hammers the penalty home.

RIVAL COACH Fucking disgrace... fucking disgrace. Fucking disgrace! You're a fucking disgrace!

The match continues but there's little time left. Sam looks at his watch.

SAM

Blow up, ref!

The ref blows his whistle for full time and the prison grounds go into meltdown with angry boos and taunts. Rival Coach, now livid, bolts for the referee but is held back by his assistants.

Sam's team make a mad dash for the safety of their bus.

INT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Patrolling the dimly lit empty corridors, Sam stops outside the girl's dormitory to admire their embroidered spirograph wall art.

Giggling reverberates through the girls' door. Glass smashes. A dull thump hits the ground. Sam looks up. The girls hush each other.

INT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - GIRLS' DORM - NIGHT

Sam notices a broken window. His attention then turns to the only boy in the room, JACK.

Jack slips a little on the broken glass. The girls giggle. The glass crunches under foot as he rights his balance.

> SAM What the hell do you think you're doing in here at this time of night?

> > JACK

Well, the boys' dorm wasn't really my cup of tea. And I think we'd both agree...

Jack nods at the broken window.

JACK

...I could no longer live off the land.

He winks at one of the girls before Sam grabs his arm and frog-marches him out. Escapee Girl steps out of the crowd and picks up a shard of glass.

SAM

Out you go laddie.

DORM GIRL #1

Let him stay!

Escapee Girl moves behind Sam. She puts the piece of glass to his throat and whispers in his ear.

ESCAPEE GIRL I fucking told you we ain't done.

She backs Sam up to the door, pinning it shut. Applying just enough pressure, she draws blood from his neck.

A member of staff patrols the corridor outside.

STAFF Sam? You in there? Everything alright?

The door handle waggles.

ESCAPEE GIRL Get the fuck out, you cunt!

A break in concentration and she loosens her grip. Sam grabs her wrist and forces her to the floor.

Sam sits on the couch, looking white faced, in a state of shock.

REBECCA

This place is no good for the kids, Sam. We need to move.

Sam puts his head in his hands.

JOEY (V.O.)

Until that night, Dad had never felt at risk. But that was the straw that broke the camel's back. He resigned the next day; a shadow of his former self.

INT. YOUNG OFFENDERS' HOME - BOSSES OFFICE - DAY

Sam and five colleagues are seated in a meeting. Boss paces backwards and forwards.

BOSS Does anyone even know what to do about this girl?

Sam lifts his arm and lacking confidence, raises it inch by inch until visible.

BOSS

Yes Sam?

SAM

Well, I think -

Boss startles everyone with an aggressive tone.

BOSS

Ah! Ah! Ah! Shut up! Fucking shut up! Nobody wants to hear from you! You're fucking leaving. Fucking traitor!

JOEY (V.O.)

The last few weeks of the job were just horrible. We got out of there and moved to the city. Dad couldn't find any work but Mum took a low paid job at the college and we got by. EXT. BROCKLISS END-TERRACE - STREET - NIGHT

A removal van is parked outside the new Brockliss residence. Opposite is an Islamic Halal butcher shop.

JOEY (V.O.)

The atmosphere was uneasy in the city. The fear could be oppressive. I'd like to tell you that my brothers and I became well rounded individuals but life doesn't work like that. We did, however, become resilient.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - MARCUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Surrounded by stacked unopened boxes in his attic bedroom, Marcus stares out of the window. Beyond their backyard, the public waste-ground is littered with discarded furniture and trash.

On the other side of the waste ground, a row of terraced houses runs parallel. The end terrace is in a state of disrepair. The roof is so damaged that it has begun to bow inwards.

In the distance a red neon cinema sign flashes.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A car is heard screeching to a halt, then wheel-spins. Joey wakes with a startle, leaps out of bed and looks out of the window.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - STREET - NIGHT

A police van sideswipes a joy-rider's car; it crashes into a neighbour's wall. Five police officers surround the stolen vehicle.

> POLICEMAN #1 Get out of the car!

POLICEMAN #2 Get out of the fucking car!

The male driver and female passenger refuse.

Policeman #1 smashes the driver's window with his straight stick baton. The man is dragged out on to the road. The girl panics and becomes hysterical.

POLICEMAN #2

Shut up!

The girl screams. Three of the policemen shout in unison.

POLICEMEN

Shut up!

The girl does as she's told.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joey climbs back into bed. His eyes wander around the patterns, cracks and marks on the ceiling.

LATER

Joey gasps and sits up in bed. His eyes narrow. Downstairs the letterbox creaks opens, then... nothing. With a sigh of relief he relaxes.

The letterbox opens again and Joey's eyes are as big as saucers. He gets out of bed to investigate.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Joey peers over the banister downstairs and waits. The letterbox opens. Joey holds his breath.

A pair of black eyes fills the void of the letterbox; they examine the hallway from left to right.

Joey is paralysed with fear. The sinister eyes climb the stairs and get a fix on him. The stare lasts 10 seconds then the letterbox creaks shut for the night.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

The Brockliss siblings are dressed for school. Sam leads them out of the house.

Their JAMAICAN NEIGHBOUR is in his driveway fixing his car. Sam points at another neighbour's property.

SAM Did you see that last night? The joyrider; the police rammed him through the wall.

JAMAICAN NEIGHBOUR

Joy-riders always coming through here thinking they Nelson Piquet.

Jamaican Neighbour points at a buckled lamppost.

JAMAICAN NEIGHBOUR

One smashed into that last week. But you know... my wife... she just laugh and laugh, she does.

SAM

At joy-riders?

JAMAICAN NEIGHBOUR Yeah man. She laugh at them all the time.

SAM

Really? Wow.

Sam ponders for a second.

SAM

Come on kids, let's get you to school.

Rebecca hurries out of the house with a camera.

REBECCA Hang on. Let me take a photo. You all look so smart in your uniforms.

Rebecca notices Sam has his car keys.

REBECCA

You're taking them in the car? I thought we agreed they'd take the bus.

SAM

Some kids were throwing fireworks at the bus driver so they stopped the route.

The siblings form up; Joey and Richie either side of Marcus. They lean on him. Rebecca crouches and takes their photograph.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

The architecture of the sibling's new school appears to have been transplanted from the Eastern bloc; flat roofed and grey with a washed out pebble dash finish.

Richie is about to enter his classroom when he's distracted by the pinging of coins on concrete. He takes a detour to the rear of the classroom and there, boys play 'pitching pennies' with their lunch money.

GAMBLER BOY #1

Play for tens?

Another boy nods and they take turns flicking 10p coins against the wall.

GAMBLER BOY #2

Winner!

The boy gathers his winnings.

INT. RICHIE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Dumped vandalised furniture mounts up in a corner. Richie scans the graffiti and bubblegum plastered furniture for a suitable chair. The classroom door slams shut behind him. A layer of dust shifts across the floor.

He lays claim to an empty desk in the middle of the room and takes stock of his neighbours. Behind him TALL BOY smiles and nods. Richie smiles back, his discoloured tooth noticeable amongst pearly whites.

TALL BOY

Hey, have you seen that new computer game? You have to go around cleaning teeth before they all rot and fall out.

One of the boys on a nearby desk laughs. Another (BIG NOSE MALC) does not.

BIG NOSE MALC Don't take that off him.

Richie and Tall Boy stand then square off. Most of the classroom is oblivious. Tall Boy folds his arms and looks smug.

Richie throws a clumsy right hook which connects with Tall Boy's cheek. Horrified, Tall Boy stoops, buries his face into his desk then wraps his arms around his head for further protection.

Big Nose Malc nods in approval. Richie rains punches down on Tall Boy for 30 seconds before FORM TEACHER intervenes.

> FORM TEACHER You're not here five minutes and already... fighting. Go to the Holding Room. I will be writing to your parents. Go!

INT. SCHOOL HOLDING ROOM - DAY

A collapsible wooden screen segregates The Holding Room from another room. Richie heads to the front. An older boy makes a throat cutting gesture at him.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER stops writing and looks up.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER Sit down, shut up and read anything. I don't care what it is.

INT. JOEY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Joey's form teacher is an elderly petite woman with bad teeth, a hunched back and is sporting a neck brace. She has strawberry-blonde hair which has thinned into a combover.

Joey takes a seat next to ROCKABILLY JOHN (ginger ducksarse hairstyle).

> ROCKABILLY JOHN I know what you're thinking. Hot, isn't she? Don't go falling in love just yet.

JOEY What happened to her?

ROCKABILLY JOHN She's a fashion victim. Neck braces are all the rage.

Joey looks puzzled.

ROCKABILLY JOHN One of the girls in our class cracked her over the back of the head with a chair.

JOEY

Whoa!

Rockabilly John opens his bottle of Tipp-Ex correctional fluid and applies the finishing strokes to the words 'Sex Pistols' on his pencil case.

ROCKABILLY JOHN You like them?

JOEY What's a Sex Pistol?

ROCKABILLY JOHN

They're a band. My brother got me into them. He's seen them three times. They spit on you but you spit back.

JOEY

Ugh, why? Doesn't sound very nice.

ROCKABILLY JOHN

You better think about which gang you'll join. There are Punks, Rockabillies, Mods or Skinheads.

JOEY

Which one are you?

Rockabilly John points to the rebel flag on the back of his denim jacket.

ROCKABILLY JOHN I'm a Rockabilly.

JOEY

That sounds good.

ROCKABILLY JOHN Stitch a rebel flag into your coat.

Across the room, TIM (suspicious narrow eyes) whispers to his buddy. They shoot Joey sinister glances.

INT. SCHOOL TOILETS - DAY

As Joey enters the toilets, Tim's buddy steps out from the right and surprises him. Joey hesitates. Tim darts in from the left.

Joey has only enough time to shut his eyes before Tim's knucklebone splits his bottom lip. Joey falls to the stone tiled floor and lies there, eyes open but stunned.

Tim and his friend move either side and take turns stamping on Joey's head. A small glimmer of consciousness is booted from Joey's brain and he blacks out.

The boys direct their efforts to Joey's chest then move to his rag doll arms and legs. With their aggression satisfied, they leave.

Joey regains consciousness and sits upright. His hand shakes as he touches his swollen and bloody mouth. He examines the blood on his fingertips.

Joey shudders as he exhales then wipes his eyes. He gets to his feet and beats the dusty boot prints out of his uniform.

> JOEY (V.O.) I was late for my first lesson and I couldn't say why. Nobody likes a grass.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Tea cup and saucer in hand, Joey's doddering, obese HISTORY TEACHER shuffles to class. A heavy dose of the shakes has spilled more tea into his saucer than is left in his cup.

INT. HISTORY CLASS - DAY

Joey arrives late and makes a bee-line for a seat at the back.

JOEY Sorry I'm late sir.

HISTORY TEACHER Come to the front!

Joey comes forward and looks around at his classmates.

HISTORY TEACHER

I bet you wish you were back at your old school!

JOEY

Yes sir.

HISTORY TEACHER Yes sir! Why were you late, boy?

Joey looks at Tim then back to History Teacher.

JOEY

Don't know sir.

HISTORY TEACHER Don't know sir! Go and stand on your desk until you learn the importance of punctuality.

Joey performs the climb of shame onto his desk. History Teacher sniffs the air.

HISTORY TEACHER Who's eating spearmint?!

A boy in the front row raises his hand.

HISTORY TEACHER I hate spearmint!

History Teacher holds his hand underneath the culprits chin.

HISTORY TEACHER Spit it out. Spit it into my hand.

The boy tilts his head forward and lets the gum fall out.

EXT. MATHEMATICS BLOCK - CORRIDOR - DAY

Marcus is on his way to his maths lesson. A sign on the wall reads: "KEEP TO THE LEFT".

Wielding a metal ruler, CRAZY LEE (14 years) runs down the middle of the corridor and hits students at random. Marcus receives a hefty whack on the top of his skull.

The bell sounds and pupils disappear into their respective classrooms. Marcus stands alone, rubs his head and examines his timetable.

A door flies open and UPSET TEACHER wanders out. Teenage laughter follows. Her eyes well up. She wipes them, regains her composure and turns back to her class.

> UPSET TEACHER You two boys will cause less disruption if you're not in my class!

She points at the corridor.

UPSET TEACHER Move your desks and chairs by the time I'm back! You can work outside!

Leaving the building, she barges past Marcus.

UPSET TEACHER (sotto) Steal my walkman.

Marcus takes a deep breath and enters the classroom.

INT. MATHEMATICS CLASS - DAY

A boy gazes into a small piece of mirror; then colours his tramline-haircut pink with a fluorescent pen. Marcus searches for a seat.

Another boy presents a deck of nude playing cards to three friends; one of whom touches the deck and gets an electric shock.

A pupil wearing Ray-Ban sunglasses moves his head from side to side doing an impression of Stevie Wonder.

Marcus takes a seat next to LEYTON (blonde, almost white, flat top hairstyle).

Amidst the chaos of the classroom, Marcus notices SARAH MAGUIRE and gawps at her beauty (heart shaped face, luscious lips, black shoulder length hair and blue eyes).

LEYTON

Ah, you're Lee's replacement. He got moved to another class. Our teacher couldn't handle him.

Marcus ponders who Lee might be.

LEYTON

He was in the corridor just now, hitting people with a metal ruler. You'll know him when you see him.

MARCUS

Oh I know. We've met.

LEYTON

Hey, do you want to see my party trick? I ate a chocolate bar at break time. Watch this.

Leyton coughs, heaves, then regurgitates his snack. He shows Marcus the chocolate-biscuit evidence on his tongue.

LEYTON

Good, eh?

MARCUS

Yeah. Awesome.

A hand taps Leyton on the back. He turns and has a short, whispered conversation before returning to Marcus.

LEYTON

He wants to fight you.

Marcus glances back at the boy.

MARCUS

Fine with me.

LEYTON

Good lad!

Upset Teacher enters the room with a renewed confidence. She looks down at her notes whilst addressing the class.

> UPSET TEACHER Everyone! Everyone please!

Marcus flicks through his course book.

The class look outside and giggle. On top of the building's flat roof, two boys sit on chairs at their desk and pretend to study.

Upset Teacher runs over to the window.

UPSET TEACHER Working outside means the corridor! Not the roof!

MOMENTS LATER

The bell sounds for the next lesson and the room empties. Marcus reaches for his bag; his hand grabs at thin air. Frantic, he looks under all the desks but no luck.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

The school grounds are empty. Everyone is at their next class. Searching for his bag, Marcus imagines the boy that wanted to fight him in every alcove and doorway.

He gets sight of his bag, sticking out of a bin by the school kitchens.

INT. SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

Marcus arrives. The class is noisy with chatter. Students heat test tubes with their Bunsen burners. A vandal uses his to melt pens.

> MARCUS Sorry I'm late sir.

SCIENCE TEACHER That's fine, sit down.

Marcus sits on a tall, wooden stool next to Sarah Maguire. He catches sight of the name on her course book: "SARAH MAGUIRE".

At the next table, a pupil presses his glowing test tube into a boy's back. The boy screams and drops to his knees. Science Teacher lunges at the culprit.

> SCIENCE TEACHER What the hell are you doing?!

DISABLED BOY (spina bifida) is seated at one of the long laboratory tables; his leather jacket strewn over his crutches on the floor.

Crazy Lee looks at Disabled Boy, then over at Science Teacher, who helps the injured boy up. Crazy Lee grins.

SCIENCE TEACHER

Someone take him to the nurse and get his back checked out.

Crazy Lee dashes across the room and snatches Disabled Boy's leather jacket. Disabled Boy lifts one of his crutches but fumbles and drops it just out of his reach.

Crazy Lee runs to the window and holds the jacket out at arm's length.

DISABLED BOY

Lee! No!

Lee lets go. The jacket flaps around in its descent like a broken kite before landing two floors below in the mud. Disabled Boy scrunches his eyes up in frustration.

DISABLED BOY

Fuck! Off! Sir, Lee just threw my jacket out the window!

Science Teacher doesn't hear him. He's too involved with reprimanding the burnt blazer boy.

SCIENCE TEACHER

...and when you get to the headmaster's office, tell him exactly what you've done and why I've sent you!

Marcus smiles at Sarah then looks at the classmate to his right. BILLY (6' tall, designer stubble, earring, large biceps, kept behind for a couple of years) plays with a razorblade and runs it up and down his cheek.

BILLY

I like scars.

Scared, Marcus looks down at his notebook.

SCIENCE TEACHER Gather around my desk everyone.

Science Teacher switches on a red laser.

SCIENCE TEACHER We're going to do some work with lasers and light refraction. The class budge up around Science Teacher's desk. His white lab coat snags on the machine. As he turns to write on the chalkboard, the machine rotates and the laser passes over everyone's eyes.

> SCIENCE TEACHER Oh excuse me, sorry about that.

The boys in the front row feign blindness, stare and wave their hands in front of their eyes. Science Teacher looks puzzled.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - SPORTS HALL - DAY

Marcus eats his lunch and explores his new school surroundings. Up ahead a gang of boys form a circle. Curiosity draws Marcus closer. He peeks through a gap in the crowd. Two boys square off; LAURENT VALIANT (15 years, French accent) and BEN BOSWORTH (15 years, school bully).

> LAURENT I'm not scared of you Bosworth.

BEN That's good Frenchie `cause I'll be waiting for you after school.

Ben shoves Laurent then wanders off. Marcus steadies Laurent's balance.

MARCUS New here? Welcome to the jungle.

They both look across the courtyard at Ben.

MARCUS What's his problem?

Ben punches a boy in the stomach. The boy doubles up, winded.

LAURENT

He tried pushing me around. He's in for a shock. I'm a black belt in Karate.

The bell rings for the end of lunch. Students head to the next class. Ben has a final word with his crew.

BEN

That French kid's dead.

BOSWORTH CRONY Watch out man, I heard he does karate.

They laugh in unison.

BEN If he tries any of that shit, I'll fuck him up. He ain't a top lad.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Home time and the children spill from the school gates. DEPUTY HEADMASTER stands on duty.

A mini pulls up with four sixth form passengers inside. The teen on the passenger side (CAPTAIN CAVEMAN) has swept his long hair forward over his face, used a baseball cap to hold it in position and put on a pair of sunglasses. He turns to Deputy Headmaster.

CAPTAIN CAVEMAN How ya doing?

The passengers laugh. The driver revs the engine then speeds away.

The mini continues into the distance where a gentleman cyclist is peddling at a relaxed pace. The car swerves and makes contact; the wing mirror comes off and the cyclist skims and grazes over the pavement.

Uninterested in the cyclist, a group of 20 rival school boys strut towards the school gates.

Leaving school, Joey notices two teenagers opposite; one leans on a car and aims a pistol at the gates. Nobody pays them any attention. Joey puts his head down and gets moving home.

The rival schoolboys let out a battle cry and begin their attack run. A boy charges the school gates like a Kamikaze pilot. In one swift motion, Deputy Headmaster catapults the unlucky teen over a fence into a school field.

EXT. RECREATIONAL PARK - DAY

Joey jogs to catch up with Rockabilly John and fellow classmates. They walk through an area enclosed by high trees and thick bushes. A gang of boys congregate next to an old, padlocked tool shed. Their ring leader is LEWIS (15 years, tall, scruffy unkempt brown hair, large gap between his teeth).

They block Joey's path.

LEWIS What shall we do with them, boys?

A cat stretches on the corrugated iron shed roof. Lewis reaches towards it. The cat rubs up against him.

Joey's classmates back peddle the way they came in and get away. Joey, however, isn't agile enough and Lewis' cronies restrain him by the arms.

Lewis talks to the cat as he strokes its tail.

LEWIS Hel-lo love-ly girl. Hel-lo love-ly girl.

He gives the cat an almighty yank, launching it screeching skyward. The cat crashes onto the shed in a state of shock with its back arched and fur spiked. It scratches in panic, trying to sink its claws into the metallic roof.

Lewis turns his attention to Joey.

LEWIS

I know what to do with him. We need some target practice. Leg and a wing?

Joey winces as one of the gang pulls at his arm, jarring it. The others grab his legs. Together the boys hurl him into the brambles and stinger nettles.

Joey wriggles. Barbed thorns scratch and puncture his skin. Lewis and Co. watch him untie himself from his thorny prison. Relieved to be free, Joey gets to his feet.

Lewis' gang are quick to seize him and throw him back in. He becomes even more enveloped by the nettles and thorns.

The gang collect large stones and brickwork from under the bushes and in the soil. Joey flinches as they take turns pelting him with projectiles. The boys tire and seek their entertainment elsewhere. Joey pulls at the brambles with lacklustre effort. Exhausted, he lies back in the undergrowth.

EXT. PETROL STATION - REAR WASTE GROUND - DAY

A gang of teen criminals stand around on broken slabs of concrete. Marcus crosses the busy highway and joins them. He eyes the scary mob with unease and remains low profile at the back.

In the middle of the crowd, Ben and Laurent stand five feet apart. Ben saunters over and speaks in a relaxed tone.

BEN

Laurent, before we get into this ...

Ben's sovereign rings glint in the sunlight. He puts his arm around Laurent's shoulder.

BEN

...a few ground rules.

Laurent lowers his guard and listens. His eyes scan the cracks in the broken concrete floor.

Ben delivers a speedy right hook. He follows up with a combination of machine gun punches. The jagged rings cut into Laurent's cheek like cookie cutters.

Wide-eyed, he falls to the ground and touches his cheek with his tongue. A hole has been bored and the tip of his tongue sticks out. Ben stands over him and catches his breath.

Round two begins and Ben throws more punches. Laurent has spaghetti legs and thrashes about. He grabs at Ben's lapels and pulls himself up. Ben pushes him then smashes his face off a brick wall.

MARCUS

He's had enough!

Laurent crawls on all fours and is no longer compos mentis. A baseball bat is handed from the crowd and Ben delivers bone crunching home-runs to the body.

A siren sounds in the distance and the crowd disperse. Marcus rushes over and cradles Laurent's head in his lap. A gang member spits his chewing gum into his hand then, as a parting gift, slams it into the back of Marcus' head.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - STREET - DAY

Marcus picks at the gum in his hair. PAKISTANI BOY (10 years) runs up to him. Marcus sits on his garden wall, arms folded.

PAKISTANI BOY If you ever hit me, the whole street would come out and kill you.

The boy runs away. Marcus grits his teeth, tugs hard and rips the ball of gum out. He rubs the back of his head as he walks towards the front door.

Broken remains of the lounge window crunch under foot.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - DAY

Sam and Rebecca clean up their ransacked home.

MARCUS

What did they take?

SAM

The video recorder and the stereo. They must have got spooked. They didn't go into other rooms.

REBECCA

I still have my jewellery.

SAM

I'm going to put locks on every door in the house.

JOEY (V.O.)

City life was faster than we were used to. There was no time to come to terms with burglaries, insults and beatings; they all blurred into one long running itinerary. We soon became fatigued and jaded.

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - DAY

ENGLISH TEACHER looks over pupil's shoulders as he navigates the room. He stops behind Joey and surveys his writing style.

ENGLISH TEACHER Let me see how you're holding your pen, Joey.

Joey rests his pen between his index and middle fingers. He lifts his hand to show English Teacher.

ENGLISH TEACHER Come with me to the front.

At the front, English Teacher takes out a large piece of cardboard from behind his desk. On the cardboard are nine different pictures of hands holding pens.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Class, I want you to pay attention. Quiet please. Joey, please show the class how you hold your pen.

Joey holds his pen up. English Teacher checks Joey's style against the cardboard examples and finds a match at number seven.

ENGLISH TEACHER

The way you hold your pen Joey is, socially speaking, classed as rude. I want you to use pencils from now on until you can develop a more acceptable style.

EXT. SCHOOL LANE - DAY

Three older boys walk home from school behind Joey. Nobody says a word.

JOEY (V.O.)

Sometimes the silence before confrontation bothered me more than pain itself. Eye contact was always a trigger so I'd delay the inevitable by concentrating on the ground. I'd try to lose myself in the pavement cracks.

OLDER BOY #1 steps out in front and forces Joey to halt. Towering over him, he splays his arms wide.

> OLDER BOY #1 Look at his big fucking ugly eyes.

He punches Joey in the stomach, winding him. OLDER BOY #2 steps up.

OLDER BOY #2

Make sure you don't wear those fucking trousers again. You look fucking ridiculous.

Another punch is thrown into Joey's stomach and he takes a knee. He looks down at his trousers as he gasps for air.

> OLDER BOY #2 Mum and dad shop at Oxfam? You look like a fucking tramp.

> OLDER BOY #3 If we see you wearing those virgin socks again, we'll give you another dig.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

Sam watches TV while his wife reads the newspaper.

REBECCA It says here there was a fight at the school the other day.

Sam stares at the TV.

SAM Boys will be boys.

Rebecca stares at Sam until he snaps out of his TV trance.

SAM What? Slow news day? That made the paper?

REBECCA One of them blinded an old lady.

SAM

What?

Rebecca reads from the newspaper.

REBECCA

It says there was a pitched battle with gangs on either side of the highway. Someone threw a brick. A bus was going by and it smashed the window, blinding an old dear.

INT. SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The boys of Joey's class change into their P.E. kits.

JOEY

Sir, I don't have any trainers.

P.E. TEACHER goes into his office and heaves out a large cardboard box full of old muddy trainers.

P.E. TEACHER Don't hang around. Match up a pair and get them laced up.

INT. SCHOOL SPORTS HALL - DAY

P.E. Teacher addresses Joey and his classmates.

P.E. TEACHER

Let's get warmed up before our game at Stoke Boys School. We'll start on our passing skills. Everyone get in a circle.

The class form a large circle with the P.E. Teacher on the outside.

P.E. TEACHER Say their nickname before you pass them the ball.

P.E. Teacher points at each boy in the circle and with haste, gives them all big cat nicknames.

P.E. TEACHER Leopard! Lion! Cheetah! Puma! Lynx! Tiger! Leopard! Lion! Cheetah! Puma! Lynx! Tiger! Leopard! Lion! Cheetah!

The football is slammed down in front of Joey.

P.E. TEACHER

Go!

Joey panics and passes the ball without saying the boy's nickname. P.E. Teacher puts his nose up to Joey's face.

P.E. TEACHER Are you thick? I said call out their name.

P.E. Teacher slams the ball down again.

P.E. TEACHER

Go!

Joey can't remember. His mind scrambles for a nickname. Everybody stares at him.

> JOEY Sir, I... I don't remember...

P.E. TEACHER

Ugh! You're wasting my time! I hate people who stand around doing nothing! How are you supposed to play if you can't even remember a name! Pass the ball!

Joey has tunnel vision and his heart is racing.

JOEY

Lion!

Joey passes the ball to the wrong boy. P.E. Teacher is livid.

P.E. TEACHER

He's not lion! He's not lion! Give me the ball! You'll never get anywhere! People like you are a waste of space!

EXT. STOKE BOYS SCHOOL - FOOTBALL PITCH - DAY

Stoke scores five easy goals. P.E. Teacher motions to Joey to come off the bench. Joey looks surprised.

P.E. TEACHER I'm subbing you on...

Joey grins from ear to ear.

P.E. TEACHER

But I do so with a heavy heart. I don't have any other players.

Joey's face drops. He joins the match and the ball gets passed to him in midfield.

P.E. TEACHER Joey, play it wide! Pass it to… (sotto) What the hell's his name?

Joey gawps at his forgetful teacher. A Stoke player nicks the ball and gallops away.

P.E. TEACHER Joey Brockliss! My grandma could pass the ball better than you! You couldn't kick your way out of a paper bag! You couldn't kick the skin off a rice pudding!

Joey takes a throw-in. The ball ricochets off a Stoke player and goes out again a little further up the pitch.

> P.E. TEACHER That's better Joey Brockliss! Another ten yards to us! We'll take it!

Another throw-in and two players collide for the ball. It goes out for another throw.

P.E. TEACHER Good work Joey! That's a few more yards!

In the dying seconds, Stoke score again. P.E. Teacher puts his head in his hands.

INT. SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

P.E. Teacher is red faced with rage and slam-dunks football boots and sports equipment into a large sack.

P.E. TEACHER (sotto) Twenty-five years teaching...

He looks up at the dejected boys' faces.

P.E. TEACHER Well don't just sit there! Come and help me! The lads spring to life.

P.E. TEACHER

I hate when someone's working and lazy people sit around watching!

INT. SCHOOL MINI BUS (MOVING) - SUBURBS - DAY

Joey reads a magazine article about Rocky III. His arm drapes over an armrest. Next to him is HOMOPHOBIC STU.

HOMOPHOBIC STU Only gays sit like that.

JOEY

Like what?

HOMOPHOBIC STU The way you sit.

Homophobic Stu makes his hand go limp.

HOMOPHOBIC STU Look at your arm hanging down. Look at your wrist.

Joey moves his hand and rests it on his stomach.

JOEY

I'm not gay.

HOMOPHOBIC STU Yeah you are.

Homophobic Stu turns Joey's hand over and points to a bracelet wrinkle on his inner wrist.

HOMOPHOBIC STU You've been gay for so long, you even have a line across your wrist.

JOEY

I'm not gay!

HOMOPHOBIC STU I hate gays. You're fucking dead when we get off the bus.

JOEY

Alright then.

EXT. BUS STOP - SUBURB - DAY

The school bus rattles away into the distance.

JOEY (V.O.)

The irony about this kid was, years later, he finally got around to questioning his own sexuality. After much soul searching he made the declaration to family and friends that he was actually gay.

Joey and Homophobic Stu stare at each other.

HOMOPHOBIC STU I hate fags.

JOEY

I don't want to fight.

As Joey turns away, Homophobic Stu dishes out windmill punches to his back and arms. The straight armed punches swing in to little or no effect. Relieved, Joey steps forward to return fire.

Heavy and accurate punches smash Joey's mouth from the periphery. His gums split open and he falls back into the road. TOUGH KID stands over him.

A truck driver pulls up.

TRUCK DRIVER Oi! That's enough! Break it up!

Tough Kid shakes hands with Homophobic Stu and the boys disperse. Joey picks himself up and cries; his red stained teeth visible. He spits blood and fragments of his gums.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Homophobic Stu and Tough Kid chase Joey during break time. He's forced indoors.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Joey takes sanctuary in a classroom. Outside in the corridor, Homophobic Stu hides in an alcove. Tough Kid flushes Joey back out into the corridor. Joey sprints down the corridor. Stepping out from the alcove, Homophobic Stu trips him. Joey slams into the corner of a wall. His forehead smashes open and blood gushes from the wound. He stumbles to his feet, blinded by blood and staggers outside into the playground.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Joey looks down. The blood splatters out onto the concrete playground. A teacher blows her whistle and the school children become statuesque.

INT. SCHOOL - HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - DAY

SCHOOL NURSE fastens a makeshift bandage around Joey's head. HEADMASTER and P.E. Teacher look on.

HEADMASTER Your dad's en route and will pick you up from the hospital.

JOEY

What'll happen at the hospital?

HEADMASTER

They'll probably just give you a butterfly clip.

JOEY What's a butterfly clip?

P.E. Teacher shakes his head.

P.E. TEACHER

You won't need a butterfly clip, Joey. You'll just need some stitches.

HEADMASTER

A butterfly clip's no big deal. The hospital will fix you up in no time.

P.E. TEACHER

They'll give you some stitches and you'll be home before you know it.

Headmaster grits his teeth.

HEADMASTER

We'll see.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DENIM JEAN SHOP - DAY

Marcus and Richie are in a large crowded discount store. Jeans are stacked in pigeon holes from floor to ceiling. Richie waits on a bench outside the saloon style changing rooms.

SHOP ASSISTANT knocks on the changing room door.

SHOP ASSISTANT Need a different size?

MARCUS

Um...

SHOP ASSISTANT Everything ok?

Marcus opens his mouth to reply but in the next changing room, MOUTHY TEEN pre-empts him.

MOUTHY TEEN No! It's not fucking ok!

Confused, Marcus stares at the separating wall between the two changing rooms.

MARCUS

What?

Mouthy Teen loses it and bangs on the separating wall as fast as possible. Alarmed, Richie jolts to his feet and with caution, edges towards the source of the commotion.

Mouthy Teen continues to punch the changing room wall.

MOUTHY TEEN Who the fuck are you talking to?-Who the fuck are you talking to?-You wait till we get outside-We'll see who the fucking hard man is-Fucking talk to me like that?-Wait till we're outside.

The hammering and the shouting stop. With no sign of Marcus, Richie fidgets and stares at the changing room doors. The doors burst open and Marcus and Mouthy Teen throw wild punches.

Shop assistants jump in between to separate the boys. Richie circles around and waits at the shop entrance.
Mouthy Teen nods to a friend and they follow Marcus outside. Marcus nods at Richie.

MOUTHY TEEN Shit, there's more of them.

Scanning from left to right amidst the throng of shoppers, Mouthy Teen hesitates.

MOUTHY TEEN

Leave it.

EXT. MINI BUS (MOVING) - CITY STREETS - DAY

A small transit mini bus (approx. 15 seats) takes Marcus and Richie home. The bus pulls in at the railway station.

INT. MINI BUS - RAILWAY BUS STOP - DAY

A couple of passengers board; one of them is FARE DODGER (Pakistani boy, 13 years old). He brushes past the driver without paying and sits opposite Marcus and Richie.

BUS DRIVER You forgot to pay, mate.

Fare Dodger folds his arms and smiles.

FARE DODGER I didn't forget.

The bus driver sighs and drives on.

BUS DRIVER You have to pay! You can't travel for free! Everyone pays!

Fare Dodger laughs.

FARE DODGER I ain't paying.

BUS DRIVER Either you pay... or I go to the police station.

FARE DODGER Go then! I ain't paying!

BUS DRIVER Right! We're going back to town! The driver swerves into a U-Turn across the other side of the road. The passengers are thrown to one side.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The mini bus pulls up.

BUS DRIVER

Everybody off!

The bus driver points at Fare Dodger.

BUS DRIVER

Not you!

Fare Dodger puts his legs up on the seat in front and smiles. The other passengers grumble as they exit the bus.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Marcus and Richie trudge along; their house is in sight. Up ahead, Lewis and two of his gang step out from an alleyway. They wield big sticks. Marcus sees them and stutter-steps.

The gang form a line across the pavement. Marcus and Richie venture wide left and right to avoid them but Lewis & Co. block their path. Marcus attempts to appease them.

MARCUS

Alright then?

They grab the Brockliss boys and pin them against a wall.

LEWIS Where you going lads?

The gang smash the brothers' legs with their sticks. Their bodies twist and flinch in pain.

A RIVAL SCHOOLBOY happens to walk by, smiling. Lewis does a double take at him.

LEWIS

Oi, where were your lot on the weekend? Shit yourself?

Rival Schoolboy continues to walk and shouts back.

RIVAL SCHOOLBOY Full diary mate. Fight ya Saturday.

Richie feels the grip on his jacket loosen. He breaks free and bolts for home. Stick in hand, Lewis gives chase. The other boys gang up on Marcus and trap him against the wall.

MARCUS

Run Rich!

LEWIS CRONY #1 Shut the fuck up!

Lewis' cronies take turns belting Marcus with their sticks. Marcus flinches but keeps his eyes on Richie, willing him home.

With fear-driven blinding speed, Richie's front door key hits the lock, twists and he stumbles inside. However, Lewis jams his foot in the door and pushes his way inside.

Seeing this, Marcus wrestles to free himself but can't move.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Richie runs behind the dining table and Lewis approaches. In a 'you move a little to the left, I move a little to the right' dance, Richie keeps safe distance.

Lewis' frustration gets the better of him. He climbs onto the table, picks up the salt and pepper cellars and throws them at Richie.

Feeling claustrophobic, Richie flees for the door. Lewis leaps off the table and bundles him to the ground. He then lashes him with his stick.

> LEWIS Don't you ever fucking run from me again.

Richie rolls up into a ball, covering his head. The beat down continues.

RICHIE

Alright! Alright!

Lewis tosses his stick aside and kneels on Richie's arms, making it impossible for him to move. The pepper cellar lies next to them on the carpet. Lewis empties the black peppercorns into his hands then rubs them into Richie's eyes.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - STREET - DAY

Lewis exits the house and strides up to Marcus.

LEWIS Like I told your brother, don't ever fucking run from me.

Marcus receives another parting-shot-whack from the gang before they leave.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

Marcus sits on the kitchen sideboard. Richie is opposite, on the washing machine. Joey washes his hands at the sink; his ten fresh vertical stitches noticeable on his forehead.

RICHIE

You're this knight and you have to save a girl from the dragon. You have to fight monsters and canoe around whirlpools and rapids. It's amazing.

MARCUS

I dunno. It sounds wack to me.

RICHIE

It's an ace game. The graphics are like a cartoon.

JOEY

Where's Dad?

MARCUS

Picking Mum up from work.

Sam & Rebecca arrive home, enter the kitchen and put groceries away. Richie and Marcus escape upstairs. Joey turns away from the sink towards his mum, hands still soapy.

JOEY

I had an accident at school today.

REBECCA Just a minute sweetie.

She continues to argue with her husband.

REBECCA I'm telling you now. Sort out your finances or I'm moving out.

SAM Where would you go?

REBECCA I'll move in with your mother.

JOEY

Mum?

SAM I'll get a job. I applied for one.

JOEY

Mum?

REBECCA

Doing what?

SAM Security guard.

REBECCA Ha! I bet the money's crap.

JOEY

Mum!

REBECCA Just a minute! For God's sake, I'm talking to your father!

JOEY I don't believe in God!

Rebecca looks wide eyed and incensed.

REBECCA What did you just say? Frightened, Joey backs up out of the kitchen. Sam sighs and stares out of the window.

REBECCA

What did you just say to me?!

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - DAY

Rebecca stomps after Joey, her hand raised, ready to lash out. Joey runs for the front door. She throws her glasses case and it clatters behind his heels.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - PORCH - DAY

Joey grabs the circular door handle but his soapy hands slip around it. He panics as his mother nears. Rebecca snarls and her eyes narrow with rage.

> JOEY Sorry, sorry, sorry! Mum, please don't hit me!

Rebecca restrains herself, exhaling some of her tension. She takes a second to calm. Her expression clears. Then she notices the stitches on her son's forehead and kneels in front of him.

REBECCA

What happened?

JOEY

Just an accident.

He looks down at the floor.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - RICHIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joey joins Richie in his bedroom. They look out of the window onto the street. Three neighbourhood boys motion for them to come out and play.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - WASTE GROUND - DAY

Richie and Joey meet LEON and the Cooke siblings, SIMON and OLIVER. The neighbourhood boys hurry into the thick undergrowth at the edge of the waste ground. The Brockliss boys scramble after them and the Cooke's pet dogs dive in last.

INT. CHILDRENS' DEN - DAY

On one side of the den odd planks of wood have been hammered together to form a crude wall and hold back the brambles. A filthy, flea-ridden paisley carpet is the flooring. Candles and matches are strewn about and a section of the carpet is blackened from fire.

RICHIE

Who we hiding from?

OLIVER

Shhh. Listen.

A car races past then its brakes screech. It turns around and races past again.

SIMON

Bloke grassed on us for stealing. One night a load of us taped up his car with masking tape; windows, doors, exhaust, the lot. Took him two days to get it all off.

Oliver sniggers. The boys listen to the car revving nearby. Then it races away for good.

OLIVER He's gone. Come on, we'll show you around.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

The boys pass VIC, the local butcher, as he pulls down the shop's metal security grate. Richie notices red spray paint graffiti: "MEAT IS MURDER".

VIC

You lads are wasting away. You're all skin and bones. Mind out for those drains. You'll fall down `em one day!

Oliver points to the Charred Gibbet pub.

OLIVER

My dad pretty much lives at that pub. Wait for us. Just gonna scav a ciggie off him. Oliver holds the pub's frosted glass door open. An exiting drunk casts himself at the mercies of the pavement and vomits. Oliver skips past him inside.

MOMENTS LATER

Oliver puffs at his cigarette as the boys continue their tour.

In the background, the pub's doors burst open and two combatants brawl outside. A double-decker bus rumbles along in their direction.

One of the men is knocked out into the road and with a metallic shudder, the bus driver brakes to avoid hitting him. The boys' view of the man's fate is obscured by all the traffic. The unconscious man is dragged to the pavement. The boys' relief manifests itself as laughter.

They arrive at an end terrace wall which is used for graffiti. Two boys with black marker pens tag their street aliases onto the brickwork.

To the right is a small communal garden; a square pavement yard surrounded by a border of weeds and scrub brush.

The tall and proud figure of CARL (18 years old) stands in the middle of the communal garden. Arms folded, he is master of all he surveys.

CARL

(sotto) Finished with my woman `cause she couldn't help me with my mind.

The boys avert eye contact.

SIMON

Alright Carl?

Carl doesn't respond. His jet black eyes stare at a pub up the street.

OLIVER

What's going on?

CARL See those lads? Outside the pub? The boys look over at five men joking around. Carl doesn't break his stare.

CARL

If any of you need respect, go over there and take them on.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - WASTE GROUND - DAY

Back at the waste ground, Simon climbs out of their den with a handful of metal shuriken throwing stars. He gives some to Oliver and Leon. They take turns throwing them at an old door propped up against a wall.

> RICHIE What's up with that Carl?

OLIVER

He's 100% pure psycho. His brothers are all in prison. Never question anything he says to you.

Oliver offers Richie a throwing star.

OLIVER

Have a go.

RICHIE

Nah I'm alright.

OLIVER

Have a go!

RICHIE

I'm alright. You throw it. I'll watch.

OLIVER

I didn't ask if you were alright. And I'm not asking you, I'm fuckin' telling you.

Richie looks at Joey.

RICHIE

We better go.

Oliver presses his nose up against Richie's face.

You're starting to fucking irritate me. Have a go or I'll punch your fucking teeth down the back of your fucking throat.

Richie blurts out in panic.

RICHIE

One of them's plastic.

Oliver shoots the other boys a surprised look and laughs. Simon and Leon chime in with laughter.

> OLIVER They're fucking what?

RICHIE

Plastic. One's plastic.

Simon squeals a high pitch laugh. Oliver gets back in Richie's face again.

OLIVER

I don't care what they are. I'm going to punch those fucking teeth down the back of your fucking throat; plastic or not fucking plastic. When I say you have a go, you fucking have a go.

Richie steadies his hands then throws a ninja star at the door.

RICHIE

Right lads. Cheers, see ya later.

EXT. COOKE RESIDENCE - FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Oliver and MR COOKE pass each other at the threshold of their dilapidated home. Simon hangs back in their tiny front yard. Beneath their rusty 182 house number, Simon peers into a wooden barrel full of rain water. Two drowned kittens stick out of an opening in a sack. Simon gives his father a hurt look.

> MR COOKE Can't keep feeding `em.

Open mouthed, Simon stares at his dad.

MR COOKE I'm off to the pub. See ya later ol' son.

Mr Cooke gives Simon a hefty pat on the back and walks away.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

The Brockliss family car, a beaten up Datsun, is parked outside. Ben Bosworth watches the brothers jump out. The car moves off and the exhaust pipe rattles into the distance. Ben sneers in disgust.

INT. SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The boys get dressed into their school uniforms. Ben and Marcus get changed at the same bench.

BEN So tell me Marcus, what car's your Dad got?

A loaded question, Ben grins at his followers.

MARCUS

It's a Datsun.

BEN

A Datsun! Wow, they must be hard to find! And what's that fucking noise it makes?

Marcus doesn't reply.

BEN

It rattles. That's the fucking noise it makes. Is that exhaust gonna fall off?

MARCUS

Yeah, I think -

Marcus is mid-comment when Ben gives him an uppercut to the stomach. Catching him off guard, Marcus is winded. Ben moves closer with a predatory glide. Anticipating what might happen, Marcus raises his hands in a loose guard.

BEN

Hands down.

Too nervous, Marcus can't comply. Ben speaks in a determined tone.

BEN

Hands... down.

Marcus still can't lower his guard. Ben points at Marcus' face.

BEN

I said ... hands ... down!

Marcus lowers his hands and Ben throws a couple of punches. In a knee-jerk reaction, Marcus raises his hands again. Ben fumes with rage and lashes out with savage punches.

A final punch winds Marcus again. His knees buckle and he leans against the wall, holding his gut.

MARCUS Ugh, you… winded… me… again.

Ben moves in closer, incensed, fists clenched.

BEN What did you just say to me?

MARCUS

I said you winded me.

Ben turns and raises his fists aloft, smiling at his friends.

INT. ART CLASS - DAY

An Afro-Caribbean boy enters the class. The boys at his table, including a Chinese boy, giggle as they hold cardboard Ku Klux Klan masks up to their faces.

The Afro-Caribbean boy is surprised at first then ignores them and finishes his drawing. The boys take down their masks.

CHINESE BOY

Sign your drawing. Use your artist's name.

The Afro-Caribbean boy scribbles a signature: "MIKE THE COON".

Two boys stand behind the art teacher (MRS SALTERTON) and graffiti vaginas on the chalkboard.

MRS SALTERTON We won't begin until you both sit down.

The boys ignore her. She takes a moment then distributes handouts amongst the class.

Ben searches up and down the aisles.

BEN

Who's got my fucking jumper?

Ben roams back and forth. Everybody avoids eye contact.

MRS SALTERTON Sit down Benjamin.

Ben ignores her. HELPFUL BOY sees the jumper on the back of a chair and picks it up.

HELPFUL BOY

Is this it?

Ben examines the jumper for damage. He turns towards Helpful Boy, who now looks like a deer caught in the headlights.

HELPFUL BOY

I... I found it.

Ben smiles with the mouth but not the eyes.

BEN I know. I know. You did.

Helpful Boy breathes a sigh of relief. Ben turns away then spins around and punches him in the stomach. Helpful Boy falls to his knees in pain.

BEN

Don't ever take my stuff again ya fuckin' tea leaf.

MRS SALTERTON Benjamin, that's enough! Sit down!

A girl enters the class and addresses Mrs Salterton.

GIRL

Mr Hughes sent me to ask for the keys to the stockroom.

Mrs Salterton puts the keys in the girl's hand but doesn't let go.

MRS SALTERTON

When you give Mr Hughes the keys, say... 'with love'. No... wait. Just... just give him the keys.

The girl leaves.

MRS SALTERTON

Now, where were we? Oh yes. Do you all have a copy of the handout?

BEN

1, 2, 3...

Ben and his cronies shout in unison.

BEN & CRONIES

Prostitute!

Mrs Salterton's concentration is unbroken.

MRS SALTERTON Last week your homework was to draw, freehand -

BEN

1, 2, 3...

BEN & CRONIES

Prostitute!

Mrs Salterton pauses to contemplate retribution then continues.

MRS SALTERTON

Everyone pass me your homework. I'll mark them while you're getting on with today's handout.

The class pile their drawings on Mrs Salterton's desk and she flicks through them.

A pencil sketch of a street massacre grabs her attention. The scene shows policemen, pedestrians and shop-keepers dead or dying from machine gun wounds, hand-grenades, car accidents and torture.

Mrs Salterton contemplates her grade then writes in red on the back: "A-".

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - WASTE GROUND - DAY

Oliver addresses Richie and Joey as they walk.

OLIVER You're gonna meet one of our best mates: Rog.

LEON You should know before we get there. Rog's house stinks. But don't say nothing. Ever since their mum died, Rog's brother pees on his bedroom floor.

OLIVER Smells so bad, if you're there long, you'll get a headache.

INT. ROGER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Blue bottle flies buzz around. Rog (12 years) comes downstairs to greet the boys.

ROG

Alright lads?

OLIVER

Ready?

ROG

Wait here a sec.

Rog disappears into a room. Joey puts his sleeved hand over his nose and mouth. Oliver looks at him.

OLIVER

Don't do that.

Joey lowers his hand. Rog re-appears and the boys head outside.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Amongst the adults lining up to get into the 'no age limit event', Joey, Richie, Leon, Rog and the Cooke brothers are the only children visible.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The boys climb the neon starlit steps en route to the dance floor. They ascend into a thick cloud of smoke. Simon jumps the last few steps. The bass thumps out.

SIMON

Here we go! This is it! This is it!

Unused to the smoke, Richie's eyes narrow. Joey coughs. The Cooke brothers and Rog vanish into the crowded dance floor.

> LEON Richie, come with me.

Joey follows but Leon stops him.

LEON Wait here for us. We'll be back soon.

Leon leads Richie up a metallic spiral staircase. From their bird's eye view, the boys watch a fight break out on the dance floor. Bouncers cut through the crowd to settle everybody down.

Overlooking the dance floor, Leon and Richie sit with two teenage girls in a darkened booth.

LEON Lorraine meet Richie. Richie, Lorraine.

Leon French-kisses his girlfriend and doesn't come up for air. Lorraine looks at Richie.

LORRAINE

Wanna make out?

Richie hesitates.

LORRAINE

It's easy. Just imagine you're chewing gum.

They French-kiss, stop, then kiss again. At the next liplocking intermission, Richie looks over the balcony. He pans across the crowd from left and right but Joey has gone.

LORRAINE You're a good kisser. You should practice on me.

RICHIE I gotta check on my brother. Be right back.

Leon comes up for air.

LEON

Where you going? Joey's fine.

Richie finds Joey at the bar. He's on his knees and buries his face in his hands. Richie moves his hands away to reveal a bloody nose and tears streaming down his face.

RICHIE

What happened?

Joey nods towards a man in his late teens.

JOEY That bloke head-butted me.

Richie walks over and taps the man on the shoulder. He turns around to reveal a tough demeanour. Richie feels daunted.

RICHIE

Why did you hurt my brother?!

TOUGH MAN

I wanted to know if my head-butts hurt!

Richie wonders if he misheard him over the music.

RICHIE

What?!

The man delivers another of his trademark head-butts. Richie staggers backward and falls to his knees next to Joey. Richie holds his head in pain. Tough Man stands over him.

TOUGH MAN Do they?! ... Do they hurt?!

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - PHONE BOX - NIGHT

Richie and Joey are squeezed into a phone box. Richie makes a call.

RICHIE

Dad? Can you pick us up? We're in town.

INT./EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR (MOVING) - CITY - NIGHT

Sam drives Richie and Joey home. Rebecca is in the passenger seat.

REBECCA You boys have a good time tonight?

Richie and Joey look tired. They stare out of their respective windows. Rebecca looks back at the boys for a reply.

JOEY

Yeah... I guess.

RICHIE Billy Connolly any good?

REBECCA Amazing. I laughed so hard, I thought I was going to die.

Rebecca looks at Sam.

SAM I'd prefer it if he didn't swear as much.

REBECCA Well, I loved it.

RICHIE

Where's Marcus?

SAM He's staying at Laurent's tonight.

INT./EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR - NIGHT

The Brockliss family pull into their driveway. They are taken aback to see their front door wide open.

SAM

Everyone stay in the car.

JOEY

What's going on?

REBECCA

Stay in the car!

Sam gets out of the car and looks with apprehension into the darkened household.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sam sneaks down the hallway, peering into each room. The lounge, dining room and kitchen doors have all been crowbarred off their hinges and are leaning against their respective walls.

EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR - NIGHT

Richie looks out of his car window into the shadowed portal of his home. Sam re-emerges from the darkness.

SAM It's ok, they've gone. But they've made quite a mess.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The wardrobes and drawers have been ransacked and emptied onto the bed. Rebecca sighs.

REBECCA Sam, they've taken my jewellery; even my mum's keepsakes.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Joey, Richie and Leon walk around town with the Cooke brothers and their two mangy, flea-ridden dogs. They stroll past a man urinating between two shops.

They approach a hardware shop.

LEON I'll wait outside with the dogs.

INT. HARDWARE SHOP - DAY

The Cooke brothers lead Richie and Joey to a large shelving unit full of spray paint cans at the back. The shopkeeper is preoccupied serving customers.

> SIMON Grab some cans. Put them anywhere; in your pockets, down your top, even in your socks and pants.

The boys steal as many cans as possible and leave the shop unnoticed.

EXT. FURNITURE STORE - ROOF CAR PARK - DAY

SIMON Richie, you need a tag. Think of a good name for yourself.

RICHIE

Why?

SIMON So you can tag it everywhere.

LEON

All city baby!

SIMON Leon, come here and hold me over the edge.

Leon holds Simon over the edge of the flat roof car park. He spray paints his tag: "SIM182".

INT. FURNITURE STORE - DAY

Simon takes a mangled rubber toy out of his pocket and giggles. His two dogs yap. He opens a wardrobe, tosses the toy inside and shuts the door before the dogs can get at it.

SIMON

Run!

The dogs leap back and forth, howling at the cheap wardrobe. The boys run through the store doubled up in hysterical laughter, crashing into laundry boxes and sets of drawers.

At the back of the store, the dogs continue to howl. Crying with laughter, the boys bump into bemused customers as they trip over each other to reach the exit.

> LEON I'm going to piss meself!

EXT. DERELICT MECHANIC'S GARAGE - DAY

The boys play in the abandoned garage. They leaf through old paperwork and jump down into the repair pit.

OLIVER

Lads! Over here, some stairs!

They leap up over a dangerous section of stairs where they've crumbled away. Joey is the last to jump and is reluctant. The other boys beckon him over and he only just makes it.

The staircase leads up to a flat roof over looking the city. The boys enjoy the panorama view.

EXT. RIVER QUAY - DAY

Oliver stubs out his cigarette, strips to his underwear and dives into the quay. Leon joins him.

Joey and Richie are last to take the plunge. The siblings come up choking on the oily water.

Leon climbs onto a moored yacht, runs along the deck, screams and dives back into the water.

PASSERBY GENTLEMAN

Don't run on those boats. You'll slip. If you bang your head and fall in, they'll never find you in there.

OLIVER

Shut your face.

LEON Yeah, nobody asked you. The boys get out of the water and sit with their legs dangling over the side of the quay.

Simon makes an appearance as he exits the souvenir shop. He dumps a box of ice creams on the ground.

> SIMON Dinner is served. A gift… from the gift shop.

EXT. HIGH STREET - SHOP FRONT - DAY

The boys arrive outside a shop with a large granite foyer. It's closed for the day and the street outside is bustling with a large congregation of teenagers.

Early 1980s hip-hop plays on a ghetto blaster in the foyer. The boys shake hands and pass around cigarettes. A crew of B-BOYS, sporting matching black and white Nike tracksuits, demonstrate some of their break dancing on a piece of lino.

Five colourful and attractive B-GIRLS strut their way through the crowd to the foyer. They line up and posture opposite the B-Boys.

Maintaining eye contact with a B-Boy, one of the girls walks to the centre of the foyer and puts her ghetto blaster down. She turns the boys' music off. They groan and complain.

She presses play on her ghetto blaster and the graphic equaliser pulses to `80s break dance mixes.

(MONTAGE)

A B-Boy versus B-Girl break dance battle begins. B-BOY #1 throws down the gauntlet with his first, albeit simple dance move. He finishes with a pose and returns to his crew.

B-GIRL

How ancient can you get?

Both crews take turns performing. However, the girls have much better, more impressive moves. The battle ends with two crews up-rocking. One of the girls smacks a boy's baseball cap off his head.

(END OF MONTAGE)

Leon chats with an older friend from his street, MARTIN TYLER (18 years old). Richie and Joey hang around.

LEON Martin, Richie wants to borrow your ghetto blaster. Can he?

MARTIN

Alright but if anything happens to it, you're dead.

RICHIE

It'll be fine.

EXT. CATHEDRAL GROUNDS - DAY

The boys walk in single file; Leon in front, then Richie playing Martin's ghetto blaster and Joey at the back.

They pass a dozen YOUNG BOYS (8-10 years old) sitting on a wall.

LEON I know some of them. They sniff glue. Hold on to that radio.

The Young Boys walk alongside Richie.

YOUNGBOY #1 Give us your radio.

RICHIE

It's not mine.

YOUNGBOY #2

Give it!

Young Boy #1 throws punches into Richie's stomach. Young Boy #2 pinches and twists the skin on his hand. He can see Richie's too scared to let go so bites down on his knuckles.

LEON

Just keep walking.

After 30 seconds of unsuccessful punching and biting, the Young Boys give up and walk back to their wall.

Richie swaps the radio to his other hand and examines his bloody bite marks.

Richie, Joey and Leon arrive at the Tyler residence to return Martin's ghetto blaster.

MRS TYLER (Martin's mother) chats in the street with a neighbour. Ten feet away, her TODDLER DAUGHTER plays on the pavement.

JOEY Going home for tea. See ya in a bit.

RICHIE

See ya's later.

Leon walks over to the toddler and Richie follows.

LEON 'ello little darlin'.

Richie puts the ghetto blaster down on the pavement and Leon gives him a playful thump on the arm.

> LEON Those glue sniffers are right head cases, aren't they? What they do? Bite ya?

RICHIE

Yeah... a bit.

Richie shows Leon the bite marks.

LEON

Ah, you'll be alright.

Leon gives him a playful shove. Richie falls back over Toddler Daughter who bursts into tears. Richie looks at his grazed hands then gets back to his feet. He rubs Toddler Daughter's arm.

RICHIE

You ok darlin'?

MRS TYLER What's going on over there? Is she ok?

Still crying, Toddler Daughter goes to her mum. Leon looks back at Mrs Tyler then turns his attention to Richie.

LEON Fucking dick! What you do that for?!

Mrs Tyler watches. Leon punches Richie in the head a couple of times and he falls back onto the pavement.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - SIMON & OLIVER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mr Cooke stands in the doorway and drinks from a lager can. His sons are asleep in their bunk beds.

Simon climbs out of the bottom bunk and sleep-walks over to the window. He takes hold of the sash window frame and pushes it upwards. The window frame rattles but doesn't budge. Nails have been hammered into the frame to keep it shut.

Mr Cooke sets down his lager and guides his son back towards his bed. Simon wriggles in his slumber and falls backwards, butting his father in the mouth.

Incensed, Mr Cooke snarls and thumps Simon on the jaw, knocking him out.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

MRS COOKE daydreams at the wall above the gas hob. The 1970s flower wallpaper is torn and splattered in cooking fat. A fatty congealed mess heats up in the frying pan.

The floor is made of uneven concrete and the curtains are grey and moth-eaten. Lager cans pile up on the window sill.

Simon enters the kitchen. Mrs Cooke snaps out of it.

MRS COOKE

Morning Sime.

Simon touches his bruised jaw.

SIMON

What happened? I woke up on the bedroom floor.

MRS COOKE

Oh darlin'. You were sleep walking again.

Simon bites his nails.

Stop gnawing on your hands and eat something decent.

Mrs Cooke tips the greasy grub onto Simon's plate. She smiles.

MRS COOKE Eat up or you'll get another shiner from yours truly.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Richie and Marcus eat their breakfast at the table. Bleary-eyed, Joey traipses into the room. He wipes the sleep from his eyes. Marcus looks up at him.

MARCUS

Morning princess.

JOEY

Shut up.

Rebecca enters the room.

REBECCA

Joey, that was Mrs Lawless on the phone. Remember her son, John, from your old school?

Joey grins.

JOEY

Is John coming over?

REBECCA

I've said it's ok for him to stay over this weekend. It'll be good for you to see him again. You could both go swimming at the baths.

INT. COMMUNITY SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Joey's friend JOHN LAWLESS sits at the side of the pool, his feet splashing in the deep end. Joey swims about in front of him.

JOEY

Watch this.

Joey takes a deep breath, ducks under and propels himself to the bottom of the pool.

John gets bored of Joey's blurred underwater image and looks around at the other kids. His stare locks up with a boy opposite, DAGGER EYES. Neither can find it in themselves to look away.

Joey swims back up with a gasp.

JOEY Come on, get in. I'll race ya.

John gets in and swims a little but is distracted by Dagger Eyes. John responds with his best tough guy stare.

Happy to swim, Joey is oblivious.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

John looks into his locker mirror and combs his hair. Joey kneels to tie his shoelaces. Something drips onto the top of his head; then another and another. He touches his hair and feels a damp patch. Puzzled, he looks up to see Dagger Eyes and friend standing over him.

DAGGER EYES

Fucking scum.

Both boys spit at Joey. Frightened, he grabs his towel and leaves the locker room with John.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - STREET - DAY

JOEY Let's get some lunch at mine.

John and Joey cross the busy road. They turn a corner and behind them Dagger Eyes and friend catch up.

The two boys set upon John with a quick and brutal attack. He is pummelled against the wall of a town house with no time for defence or retaliation. Joey freezes in fear.

Devastating punches land on John's face with sickening perfection. Joey grabs Dagger Eyes' friend but loses the tussle and falls to the pavement. No sooner had it begun than it had ended. Dagger Eyes and friend disappear onto another street. John scrunches his eyes up and cries. Blood pours from his mouth. Joey helps him to his feet and the boys walk home.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - DAY

Rebecca holds the front door open for MRS LAWLESS to step inside.

REBECCA Thanks for coming so soon. It was awful what happened.

MRS LAWLESS I left him here... to have a nice time... and your son is a terrible influence!

Mrs Lawless coerces John out of the house, slamming the front door behind her.

EXT. COOKE RESIDENCE - DAY

Mrs Cooke answers her front door to Richie and Joey. Her face is purple and swollen. She turns away indoors, leaving the door open for them to enter.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

The house lies in a darkened state as light sockets hang empty. The tattered curtains are closed; even in their poor condition, little light gets in. A cheap table and a couple of chairs make up the bulk of the furniture.

Richie and Joey notice stacks of empty lager cans on the mantelpiece and in the corners of the room.

MR COOKE I'm away for a pint.

Mr Cooke slams the front door. The loud bang makes Mrs Cooke flinch. Simon comes downstairs and points to a shadowy mess on the floor.

> SIMON Mind the dog shit, Richie.

Joey gazes at the damp patches on the ceiling. Richie steps over the dog mess.

SIMON Let's go get Leon. We've got a great idea for making money.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

(MONTAGE)

The Cooke brothers, Leon, Richie and Joey rattle charity boxes at people's front doors.

LEON

Hi, we're collecting on behalf of St John's Ambulance. £1 gets you a raffle ticket.

Some people pay a few coins and receive bogus raffle tickets. Others see through the deception.

RICHIE Please give generously to St John's.

The man chases the boys and they scamper off down his driveway.

MAN Fuck off ya filthy robbin' bastards!

(END OF MONTAGE)

SIMON We did well. Check it out.

Simon shakes the charity box.

LEON Richie can look after the money. My parents will nick it off me.

OLIVER Yeah, my old man will spend it down the boozer.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sam and Rebecca watch TV. Richie and Joey walk single file through the lounge. Rebecca eyes the boys with suspicion.

Richie notices he's under surveillance and speeds up. The charity box in his jacket rattles.

65

REBECCA

Come back!

Richie steps back into the room.

REBECCA

What was that?

RICHIE

What was what?

REBECCA

I wasn't brought over on the last banana boat! Unzip your jacket!

Richie complies and hands the donation box to his mother.

REBECCA Where did you get all this?

RICHIE

We… err -

REBECCA I don't want to know. Go and give it all back.

RICHIE I can't! I don't know where -

REBECCA Take it back! Joey, bed! Now!

Richie takes the charity box and drags his feet outside.

EXT. LEON'S RESIDENCE - NIGHT

As soon as Leon answers his door, Richie thrusts the charity box into his chest. Leon plays pass the parcel and pushes it back to Richie.

> LEON Whoa. What are you doing?

RICHIE I can't keep it. My mum's doing her nut. LEON Bury it in the park then. Behind the old tool shed.

RICHIE

Κ.

Richie looks pensive for a moment.

RICHIE Will it be ok there?

Leon shuts his front door.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - JOEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joey lies in his bed and listens to distant voices in the street. The voices become louder until shouting can be heard outside the house. Curiosity forces him out of bed. He draws the curtain and peeks outside.

At the Halal Butchers opposite, the old Pakistani shopkeeper puts cardboard boxes in his recycle bin. Four drunk white RACIST BOYS (late teens) walk towards him.

> RACIST BOY #1 Fucking Paki!

RACIST BOY #2 Different coloured cunt!

RACIST BOY #3 Go back to where ya came from!

The shopkeeper rushes inside and bolts his door. The fourth racist boy pulls the pin from an imaginary hand grenade and throws it at the shop. Joey watches and his breath becomes shallow with fear.

One of the racist boys looks back at the Brockliss home and catches sight of Joey.

RACIST BOY #4 What the fuck are you looking at, Paki lover?!

Joey releases the curtains and leans out of sight against his bedroom wall.

RACIST BOY #1 Nigger lover! Joey remains hidden, pinned to the wall.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - SIMON & OLIVER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Cooke brothers are fast asleep in their bunk beds. Returning from the pub, Mr Cooke slams the front door shut. The noise wakes both brothers.

Simon rubs his face, stretches and turns over. He winces in pain at the old bare mattress. A couple of rusty springs jut out.

SIMON

Fucking springs.

Simon shuts his eyes. Oliver listens to the muffled sound of his parents arguing downstairs. A glass smashes.

Oliver gets out of bed and tiptoes across the room. He takes a red lens army flashlight and a knife from a drawer. Holding the torch in one hand, he puts the knife between his teeth and slides on his back into the airing cupboard.

The argument continues downstairs.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - AIRING CUPBOARD - NIGHT

Lying on his back, Oliver illuminates a shelf above him. He aims his red beam at some graffiti carved into the wood:

"GOOD ++++".

Oliver's torch skirts along the shelving until he settles on another piece of graffiti:

"BAD ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ++++ ||||".

Using his knife, he scratches another notch into the bad column.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Mr and Mrs Cooke square off.

MRS COOKE

A skin full and he's a fucking hard man! Come on then, hard man! Remember to take your rings off first! Come on! Mr Cooke prowls towards Mrs Cooke with a sinister snarl on his face. Mrs Cooke's voice cracks.

MRS COOKE I said rings off!

Mr Cooke continues his advance.

MRS COOKE

Please!

Mr Cooke pauses to hear his wife's plea. Mrs Cooke grits her teeth in anticipation of the inevitable.

MRS COOKE

Don't!

Mr Cooke draws his hateful expression nearer.

MR COOKE I know. I know. Sh, sh, sh.

MRS COOKE

Fuck you!

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - SIMON & OLIVER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Oliver grimaces as he listens to a series of bangs and crashes. Then, silence.

INT. COOKE RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Oliver enters the darkened lounge and with a sharp intake of breath, discovers his mother unconscious on the floor. He falls to his knees and holds her head in his hands.

Mrs Cooke groans as she comes to. Her husband lights a rolled up cigarette and offers it to her. She doesn't respond.

MR COOKE Come on, don't play the fucking victim.

Her eyes flicker. Mr Cooke leans over and put his cigarette between his wife's fingers. She takes hold but doesn't smoke. He opens a can of lager and stares at the floor.

Oliver steps back into the shadows of the hallway.

Mr Cooke takes a swig of lager then offers the can to his wife. She flinches.

MR COOKE Are you taking the piss?

Mrs Cooke speaks with an exhausted whisper.

MRS COOKE

No.

MR COOKE I hardly touched ya!

Mr Cooke paces the room.

MR COOKE

Don't fucking put this on me! You're not hard done by. I look after ya, don't I? I put a fucking meal on the table. The fuck do you do? Sit around... fucking moping... I mean, look at this fucking pigsty!

He shakes his head in contempt.

MR COOKE Nothing to say for yourself?

He leans over his wife and growls.

MR COOKE Don't fucking ignore me.

She scrunches her eyes up in anticipation. Mr Cooke lays the boot in. Oliver jumps from the shadows and intercedes, guarding his mum.

OLIVER

No! Enough!

MR COOKE Say no to me? Ya little fuck!

He grabs at his son. Oliver wrestles free and Mr Cooke falls back against the mantelpiece. He holds his back in pain. Oliver runs outside. EXT. SCHOOL FOOTBALL PITCH - P.E. LESSON - DAY

Richie and Simon play in a Gaelic Football match. The boys' steam train breath puffs into the air.

The ball carrier is caught, swung in a circle and knocked out as his head bounces off the solid turf. The ball trickles away. The class stop playing to marvel at the injury.

The ref kneels over CONCUSSED BOY.

GAA BOY #1 Ref hasn't stopped play!

GAA BOY #1 scoops up the loose ball and hurries off with it. An opponent grabs at his jersey with terrier like persistence. Frustration boils over and the ball carrier delivers a back-fist, bloodying TERRIER-BOY'S nose.

> TERRIER-BOY I'm gonna fuckin' kill ya!

Players from both sides shove each other and the match breaks down into a 'pile-on' for the ball. The P.E. Teacher looks up at the battle royal with a wide eyed expression and blows his whistle.

> P.E. Teacher Right you lot! Cut it out!

The P.E. Teacher returns to Concussed Boy.

P.E. TEACHER How many fingers am I holding up?

CONCUSSED BOY

Yep.

P.E. TEACHER Ok get him out of here!

P.E. Teacher blows his whistle to signify full-time then turns to the mob of players.

P.E. TEACHER Go get showered and changed!

The muddied, lethargic school boys traipse back from the lower fields. Simon talks to Richie as they head to Boot Hall. He nods back at P.E. Teacher.

SIMON

I ain't waiting for that dirty faggot to watch me. I'm gonna get showered now, before he gets back.

Simon jogs ahead of the class.

INT. SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - DAY

P.E. Teacher and class enter the locker room. Simon is seated on a bench with a towel around his waist.

P.E. TEACHER Have you had a shower, Simon?

SIMON Yes sir. Just now.

P.E. TEACHER I'm going to ask you again. This time I want the truth. Have you had a shower?

SIMON Yes sir. I swear. Just now.

P.E. Teacher glares at him.

P.E. TEACHER Go and get a shower and next time don't bloody well lie to me!

Simon looks furious.

SIMON

I've just told you. I've showered. Don't need two showers!

P.E. TEACHER Who do you think you are, dictating to me?

P.E. Teacher snatches Simon's school uniform off his cloakroom peg.

P.E. TEACHER You can have your clothes back after you've had a shower!
P.E. Teacher walks back to his office and notices a Post-It Note stuck on his office door: "HOMO". Irritated, he tears it off the door and goes inside.

Simon picks his muddy P.E. kit off the floor and gets dressed.

SIMON

Lend us 10p, Richie.

Richie hands the coin over.

EXT. SCHOOL LANE - TELEPHONE BOX - DAY

SIMON Mrs Hegarty? It's Simon. Simon Cooke. Can you go next door and give my mum a message?

INT. P.E. TEACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

P.E. Teacher writes report cards in his tiny, cluttered office. His door is kicked open which scares him half to death. The door bangs off the inside wall with such force that the handle leaves an impact crater.

Fists clenched, Mrs Cooke stands in the doorway. P.E. Teacher cowers against the wall.

MRS COOKE Call my son a fucking liar?!

He takes half-breaths.

MRS COOKE Take his fucking clothes?!

He remains open-mouthed. She grabs him by the collar and raises her fist to him. He squeezes his eyes shut.

MRS COOKE You fucking nobody cunt!

She lowers her tone and whispers in his ear.

MRS COOKE If my son says he's showered then he's fuckin' showered, right? He looks down to avoid eye contact and nods in dejected agreement. She swipes at a cardboard box. It falls off a shelf and the tennis racquets inside clatter over his head. She grabs Simon's uniform off the desk and struts out of the room.

INT. MUSIC CLASS - DAY

Music teacher MR REYNOLDS plays the piano. Marcus doodles in his notebook.

Two girls in the middle of the room snigger as they paint Tipp-Ex correctional fluid onto their eyelids and lips.

The piano playing is interrupted by an argument at the back of the room.

BEN Well, fucking do something about it then!

Mr Reynolds groans.

MR REYNOLDS

What the hell's going on now ?!

LEE Sir, Ben just ate my disco tickets!

Ben laughs. Marcus feels the draft of Mr Reynolds rocketing up the aisle and looks back.

The music teacher takes hold of Ben's lapels and with one swift tug, launches him through the air. He clears two desks and lands with a dull thump. Without hesitation, Ben gets to his feet, folds his arms and grins at Reynolds.

MR REYNOLDS

Oh, I suppose you want everyone to believe you're not bothered.

Teacher and pupil stare at each other.

MR REYNOLDS

Right, that's it! Get out! Go to the headmaster's office! Then to the holding room!

The bell sounds for the end of the lesson and Marcus gathers his possessions. Laurent approaches; his stitches and war wounds are visible.

> LAURENT Leyton's looking for ya. He wants a fight.

MARCUS

Why?

Laurent shrugs.

MARCUS

You know him. Talk to him or something.

LAURENT He just wants a fight, that's all.

Marcus slows in putting his books away and looks deep in worry.

INT. MUSIC BLOCK - CORRIDOR - DAY

Last to leave the room, Marcus lollygags along the corridor. Ahead of him double doors spring open and Leyton advances.

LEYTON

Alright then?

MARCUS Listen, I don't want to -

In quick succession, Leyton dishes out a barrage of thumps to Marcus' skull. His equilibrium gone, he flounders back down the corridor.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

The door bursts open and Marcus gets hammered back into the room. He lies fatigued on the dusty floor. Desperate to get to his feet, he falls forward into Leyton. The boys grapple.

LEYTON Want some more, do ya?

Leyton's knuckles slam into Marcus' skull. FEMALE TEACHER shouts from the corridor.

FEMALE TEACHER

You two! Break it up!

Leyton runs away, out of the room and down a flight of stairs. Marcus runs back down the corridor towards the double doors. He attempts to get past Female Teacher. Tears well up in his eyes.

FEMALE TEACHER

What's your name? Stop when I'm talking to you!

MARCUS

Fuck off.

Female Teacher snatches Marcus' bag, opens it and gets his class info from a notebook.

FEMALE TEACHER Go to the headmaster's office! Now Marcus!

INT. HEADMASTER'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Mr Reynolds can be heard through the HEADMASTER'S door. Marcus eavesdrops.

MR REYNOLDS You're suspending me for a week?!

HEADMASTER

You cannot lay your hands on a student! Ben Bosworth will also be suspended while we clear this mess up.

The door opens and Mr Reynolds marches out.

HEADMASTER

Next!

INT. HEADMASTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Marcus avoids eye contact with Headmaster. His vision hops around the room; fake plant, building contractor calendar, Newton's cradle, window sill, filing cabinet, pattern of grain on wooden desk.

HEADMASTER

Now tell me Marcus, what's going on? You were seen fighting with another boy. Marcus rubs his eyes.

HEADMASTER

You're not going anywhere until you tell me what happened.

MARCUS

I'm not a grass.

HEADMASTER Then we'll be here a long time.

MARCUS

It was just a fight. It's not a big deal.

HEADMASTER

I was given the impression that you were on the receiving end. Am I right?

Marcus shrugs.

MARCUS

Look, this school has two sets of rules. The ones you make... and ones we make.

HEADMASTER And which rules do you get to make?

MARCUS The one that says... protect yourself at all times.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The pupils of year 11 are seated in rows. Their tutors sit on cheap plastic seats at the front. Metalwork teacher, MR BANKS addresses the assembly.

MR BANKS

These are your final months here. Soon, you'll take your exams and look for work... or if you're really lucky, go to university. I want to say a few words about the working environment. You will be expected to behave like adults. You won't get second chances like you do here. Ben Bosworth snorts.

MR BANKS

If you break the rules, you WILL get the sack. For those of you that like a fight, you'll have a very different experience out there.

Mr Banks motions to his metalwork colleague MR TAYLOR. He stands up and faces him.

MR BANKS You won't be able to push men around.

Mr Banks grabs hold of Mr Taylor by the lapels.

MR BANKS You might be in an office or a factory or a confined space like a lift...

Mr Banks drags him close in mock confrontation.

MR BANKS You're not going to get away with it. You're playing with the big boys now.

He releases his grip. The pupils look puzzled.

MR BANKS Now, I believe Mr Hussain would like to say a few words.

MR HUSSAIN stands.

MR HUSSAIN

The future may seem uncertain to you right now. Life is at times painful, especially when you're developing. However, don't be afraid to accept new challenges and grow.

Mr Banks sighs.

MR HUSSAIN

Remember, very little grows on jagged rock. Flowers that bloom in adversity are the most rare and beautiful of all.

Marcus looks gob-smacked by this beautiful idea.

Mr Banks rolls his eyes.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LOCAL SHOPS - DAY

Rebecca and Marcus carry groceries along a row of terrace shops.

Marcus looks startled to see Leyton. Leyton walks up to him and extends a hand. Marcus feigns confidence and the two boys shake.

MARCUS

Alright then?

LEYTON Yeah. I got suspended; a week's holiday off school.

Leyton winks.

MARCUS What did your dad say?

LEYTON

Ah, he don't care.

Rebecca looks at her watch and glares at Marcus.

MARCUS Alright, nice one. I gotta go. See ya later.

EXT. RECREATIONAL PARK - DAY

Richie hurries to the site of his buried charity box. A Rastafarian man walks by in the other direction.

RASTA (sotto) Greasy, white trash.

A hole has already been dug near the tool shed. The charity box has gone and a pile of soil is all that remains.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - WASTE GROUND - DAY

Leon and the Cooke brothers are seated on a garden wall. Oliver laughs.

OLIVER

You really do that?

I hid the tape recorder in my mum's laundry box. She doesn't even know it's there.

The boys laugh.

SIMON

Sick fuck.

Leon simulates sexual groans. Oliver shakes his head in dismay.

Richie passes by as he heads home. He nods at Oliver. None of the boys nod back.

> RICHIE I guess someone dug up the money?

The boys stare. Leon shrugs. The cold atmosphere makes Richie nervous.

RICHIE

Well, I... I guess I'll see you in a bit.

Richie leaves with his tail between his legs.

OLIVER

Asking us where our money is? That boy needs to keep his fucking mouth shut.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

Richie arrives home and enters the kitchen.

RICHIE

Dad?

Sam leans on the sink, stares out of the window and looks desolate.

RICHIE

Dad?

Sam snaps out of it and faces his son.

RICHIE

Where's Joey?

SAM

He's at the police station. He's been caught stealing. When the police bring him home, I want you to go to your room, put on your music as loud as you can and stay there.

Richie looks puzzled. The doorbell buzzes.

SAM

Go!

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - RICHIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Richie sits cross-legged in front of his carry-handle tape recorder. The music is as loud as the wee device can go. His heart races and he bites his lip in nervous anticipation.

Sam's muffled voice downstairs gets louder and louder. Richie prods the volume dial on the tape recorder but it's already at maximum.

Joey's painful yells drown out the music. Richie's breathing becomes erratic. He rests a trembling finger on the stop button. Joey screams in pain.

> JOEY Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop!

Not being able to take the screaming any longer, Richie sprints downstairs.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

Richie crashes through the lounge door to see their father beating Joey like a man possessed. Richie dives between them.

RICHIE

No! No more! Dad! Stop!

Sam freezes, eyes locked in an aggressive trance. He exhales and looks shocked by his own behaviour. In a despondent tone, he speaks to Joey.

SAM

Go to your room.

Still on the floor, Richie gets his breath back and watches a ghostly Joey leave the room. Sam stares at the floor.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

Marcus watches a cartoon on TV. Joey enters the lounge. Rebecca hands them plates of toast.

JOEY Happy birthday Marcus.

REBECCA Happy birthday sweetie.

Marcus smiles at his mum.

MARCUS

Where's Richie?

JOEY In the shower. I'm next!

MARCUS Niagara Falls couldn't clean you up, ya dirty dog.

The doorbell buzzes.

REBECCA I'm off to work. See you tonight. We'll have some cake.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - DAY

Rebecca opens the front door. Laurent Valiant has a gift box in his hands.

REBECCA

Oh hi Laurent. Come in.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

Laurent enters the lounge and hands Marcus his gift.

LAURENT Happy birthday, Marcus.

MARCUS Thanks mate. Here have some toast. Marcus slides his plate in front of Laurent.

JOEY Ah yes, the peasants bring forth gifts to show their love and respect...

LAURENT Who says you're not a peasant too, little man?

JOEY I hereby decree... to the great unwashed...

Marcus opens his present.

JOEY

...let them eat toast!

Laurent bites into his toast but doesn't like it. He presses his index finger into the soggy, butter saturated bread and looks appalled.

Marcus puts his hand into the gift box.

JOEY

Here we see King Marcus as he raises aloft the holy...

Marcus hoists out an iron medieval mace complete with spikes.

JOEY

...shit!

Marcus looks stunned.

MARCUS

It's... a mace? Err, thanks mate. Thanks a lot.

LAURENT

I thought it would come in handy in case of trouble. You know?

Marcus and Joey remain stunned.

LAURENT I knew you'd like it.

JOEY

Walk softly and carry a medieval mace. You're so trendy.

LAURENT I wanted your gift to be a bit, you know, retro.

JOEY He's right. The Dark Ages are very retro.

MARCUS

Joey, enough!

Marcus turns to Laurent.

MARCUS

I can see that. I... I appreciate it mate.

JOEY

You know what else is retro. Drowning wenches.

Joey laughs.

MARCUS

That's it. I've had enough. Let's get him!

They chase after Joey. Marcus gets him in a playful headlock and knuckles the top of his head.

MARCUS

You are a cheeky, naughty boy.

JOEY You're messing up my hair.

MARCUS

Poor baby.

LAURENT Marcus, we better get going.

JOEY

Where you going?

MARCUS School trip to a rollercoaster park. JOEY You jammy, jammy bastard.

MARCUS Language motherfucker!

Marcus and Laurent leave. Joey picks up the medieval mace, shakes his head and drops it back into the box.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - WASTE GROUND - DAY

Richie hikes over dusty grey debris, bricks, carpet cuttings and old timber as he makes his way to town.

> JOEY (V.O.) At times around the world you'll see aggression building. Here situations didn't build, they exploded. There were no big stand-offs and few warning signs.

Fresh out of the shower, Joey jogs to catch up.

EXT. COUNCIL ESTATE - ALLEYWAY - DAY

Joey and Richie walk through the claustrophobic high walled alleyway. The red bricked wall cuts away where concrete steps lead up to council flats.

Some movement to the left catches Richie's eye. Leon and the Cooke brothers are seated high on the wall. They glare at the Brockliss siblings. Richie pretends to be unaffected. Joey is less practiced and glances up at them.

Oliver jumps down onto Richie. They tumble, jar and graze against the concrete path. Simon and Leon follow. Horrified, Joey hunkers down against the opposite wall.

> JOEY (V.O.) The cuts, grazes and the dirt on our backs were just appetisers; a chequered flag to begin the pain proper.

Oliver throws a clumsy right hook; it windmills in and glances off Richie's jaw. Oliver's whirling dervish momentum sends him spinning to the ground.

Richie gets to his knees as Leon and Simon plant their boots onto his chest. They alternate their piston-like stamps and bash the fight out of him.

OLIVER

Get off him a minute. Let Simon play.

Simon moves in with his best Neanderthal skills; some kicks, stamps and punches but mindful to avoid repetition for the public spectacle. He tires. The boys cheer, grab hold of him and leave the alleyway.

Richie sits up right, collects his thoughts and gets his breath back. He spits blood from his swollen mouth. Joey cries for a moment but wipes the tears away.

JOEY

Let's go home.

RICHIE I gotta go to town.

JOEY Well, I don't want to. Not after that.

RICHIE I know. But I'm still going to town.

Joey wipes the tears from his eyes again.

JOEY I can't. I'll see you later.

Joey heads back. Richie touches his swollen lip with the tip of his tongue.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL COACH (MOVING) - COUNTRY LANE - DAY

Sarah Maguire strides with confidence from the back of the bus to the middle aisle. She smiles at Marcus.

SARAH

Hey birthday boy.

Marcus' eyes widen with interest. He smiles back.

Several rows in front, Ben Bosworth kneels on his seat and faces backwards. He looks disgusted by Marcus' and Sarah's pleasantries.

SARAH

Come out with us next weekend. I'll buy you a birthday drink.

MARCUS

Yeah I'd like that.

Sarah scribbles down her phone number, hands it to Marcus then returns to the back of the bus.

Marcus becomes aware of Ben's unwanted attention and slouches in his seat out of view.

EXT. THEME PARK - CAR PARK - DAY

The school bus arrives, the brakes sigh and the door opens. The excited school children step out onto the pitholed car park and huddle up in their cliques.

Ben Bosworth approaches Marcus and mimics Sarah.

BEN

Hey birthday boy.

Marcus ignores him, turns and chats to Laurent. Affronted, Ben raises his knee and plants his hefty Dr Martens boot into the small of Marcus' back. He tumbles forward across the loose gravel but is quick to his feet.

Fearful of their last encounter, Laurent edges backwards into the crowd. Two Pakistani boys step up.

PAKISTANI BOY #1 Give him birthday digs!

Arms folded, Ben savours the moment. Like jackals, the Pakistani boys set upon Marcus and move around him dishing out punches and kicks.

Marcus shoves Pakistani Boy #1. The boys recompose themselves.

PAKISTANI BOY #2 Feeling brave?

MR BANKS

Break it up!

The children meander over and line up at the ticket gate. Marcus takes a moment to pat himself down and straighten his clothing. He rubs at a footprint mark on his jacket. INT. HIGH STREET - ELECTRONICS SHOP - DAY

The shop is wall to wall with BBC, Sinclair, Apple, Atari, Amstrad and Commodore technology; some have games loaded, others display spreadsheets and monochrome pie charts.

Richie shuffles through some cassettes, then walks up behind an older boy playing 'Pitfall!'. He gives Richie a fleeting look. A few moments later "GAME OVER" appears on screen.

RICHIE

Can I have a go?

OLDER BOY That was your fucking fault!

He puts his hand on Richie's face and pushes him backwards. Richie crashes into the counter behind him. He grimaces and holds his back in pain.

EXT. CONCRETE COMMUNAL GARDEN - DAY

Ever present, Carl keeps a watchful eye on the neighbourhood. He sees Richie walking past, reaches out, puts his fingertips on his chest and stops him walking any further.

Looking menacing, Carl stares at him. He then leans forward and rests his forehead on Richie's; his jet black eyes burrow into Richie's fear.

Too afraid to move, Richie experiences tunnel vision and a huge adrenalin dump in his veins. He loses himself in the fearful sound of Carl's beast-like breath.

Rog walks by on the other side of the street. He spots the impending doom, crosses over and approaches with care.

> ROG He's alright, Carl. He's alright.

Carl's forehead remains fixed in position.

ROG You met him, remember? He's ok.

Carl doesn't respond.

ROG Remember? Carl? Remember? He's ok. Carl draws his head back. He stares at Richie. Then a smile breaks out across his face like there was never a problem.

CARL

I know, Rog. I know. He's ok.

EXT. THEME PARK - BOATING LAKE - DAY

Marcus and Laurent reach the middle of the lake and stop rowing. They take turns dipping their hands into the icy water.

Marcus peers overboard into the watery depths. Laurent pulls at his sleeve and nods in the direction of the shore. Ben and the two Pakistani boys stare from the ticket kiosk.

LAURENT

Let's stay out here. They'll get bored.

BEN

See you soon!

Pakistani Boy #1 makes a throat cutting gesture. Marcus sighs. Ben and his friends walk away.

INT. THEME PARK - CABLE CAR - DAY

Marcus' cable car passes through a canopy of trees on its way to the top. Ben and his friends stare up from their cable car. Marcus looks back at them, then turns to Laurent.

> MARCUS I don't think we can beat them.

LAURENT I'm not fighting. Not after last time.

MARCUS I know. I mean... that's understandable.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL COACH (MOVING) - COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

Marcus hunkers down in the corner at the back of the bus.

BEN

Where is he?!

Marcus keeps a low profile, slouching further in his seat.

BEN Where's Brockliss?

PAKISTANI BOY #1 Yeah, where's birthday boy?

LEYTON I see him! He's at the back! Trying to hide in the corner!

Marcus sits up a little as if to suggest he wasn't hiding. Kneeling on his seat, Ben Bosworth grins back at Marcus.

> BEN We'll see you when you get off the bus.

PAKISTANI BOY #2 We'll wait for you in the car park.

MARCUS (sotto) I'm going to fucking die.

LATER

Marcus looks out of the window. Anticipatory anxiety builds in the pit of his stomach.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL COACH (MOVING) - MOTORWAY - DAYDREAM

Marcus has flashbacks of Laurent's petrol station beating. He then remembers being kicked in the back at the theme park and the throat cutting gesture at the boating lake.

The words "...see you when you get off the bus" and "we'll wait for you..." ring in his ears.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL COACH - COACH STATION - NIGHT - DAYDREAM

Gravel crunches under tyre as they return to the coach station. The bus trundles to its parking bay and comes to a halt.

Marcus looks at the emergency exit next to him and contemplates a hasty exit. He fidgets and his breath becomes shallow.

(DAYDREAM)

The bus reverses a little then comes forward again.

Marcus panics and grabs at the emergency lever, the alarm sounds and he tumbles out onto the tarmac below. He runs toward the subway underpass.

MR BANKS Marcus! Marcus! Come back!

From the far side of the car park, Marcus turns to face Mr Banks. The school kids hang around on the pavement and watch. Some, like Sarah, appear puzzled at Marcus' decision to run; whilst others look entertained. Marcus gives Sarah a pained look of embarrassment. Mr Banks laughs.

MR BANKS

They're only messing with you! They weren't really going to hurt you!

The school kids laugh. Marcus walks with caution back to the bus. A familiar voice speaks up from behind.

BEN

Hey Marcus.

Ben punches Marcus in the face.

(END OF DAYDREAM)

INT./EXT. SCHOOL COACH - COACH STATION - NIGHT

The gears of the bus crunch and Marcus snaps out of his daydream.

Stepping off the bus, Marcus tenses as he expects fists to fly. His focus leaps from person to person as he pans across the coach station crowd. Someone knocks over a suitcase and his head snaps around.

EXT. SUBWAY UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Marcus minds his step near broken beer bottles and hurries through the graffiti'd concrete tunnel. The ground is covered in a gritty paste made from street grime and rain soaked shoes. He stops as he exits the subway and looks puzzled.

No one lies in wait. Aside from the muffled rumble of traffic, it's as quiet as a city can be.

He turns back into the subway and reviews the last piece of graffiti; a caricature of a teenager. He ponders the exaggerated spray-painted features and remembers where he's seen him before.

(FLASHBACK)

Lewis and cohorts pin Richie and Marcus against a wall. They beat their legs with sticks.

A RIVAL SCHOOLBOY happens to walk by, smiling. Lewis does a double take at him.

LEWIS Oi, where were your lot on the weekend? Shit yourself?

Rival Schoolboy continues to walk and shouts back.

RIVAL SCHOOLBOY Full diary, mate. Fight ya Saturday.

(END OF FLASHBACK)

EXT. SUBWAY UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Marcus gawps at the caricature of Rival Schoolboy. He is depicted brandishing a hammer.

Graffiti underneath reads: "A hammer didn't help you!".

Marcus inhales deeply, sighs and exits the subway. He jumps and nearly has heart failure as he steps into the path of a runner.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Marcus sits on the kerb and eats scorching hot chips from the paper wrapper.

He opens up his jacket to reveal a large hole in the lining. He wraps up his food and stuffs it in there for later.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Marcus bites his lip and deliberates; to the right, a maze of interconnected alleyways, straight ahead a longer but well lit main road.

JOEY (V.O.)

There was no 'good block, bad block'. Often the worst neighbourhoods gave us the least hassle. One day well-lit main roads were safe, the next day it might be better to take a darkened alley.

Marcus opts for the main road and walks on.

JOEY (V.O.) Marcus made up crazy rules to get from A to B: Take this road after 6pm on a weekday. Don't go down that street on a Friday night after 8. All on the basis of fearful moments we experienced. Random rules for random beat-downs.

MOMENTS LATER

A front door opens and bangs against its hinges. CHRIS (14 years) charges out of his house and accelerates down his garden path towards Marcus; a deer caught in the headlights.

Chris grabs him by the throat and presses his nose into Marcus' face. Wide-eyed and unequalled in rage, he snorts, froths and gnashes his teeth. Marcus tries to lean away from the rabid animal but is held in place.

MARCUS

Chris! Chris! It's me! From school! Remember?

Chris growls a string of unintelligible words into Marcus' cheek.

MARCUS

I'm in one of your classes!

Chris relaxes and lowers his hands. In a placid trance, he plods back up his garden path, goes inside and with the sweetest of touches pushes his front door to.

EXT. DUAL CARRIAGEWAY - NIGHT

Marcus looks down into another concrete subway as cars bullet past. Only one light functions; erratic, it flickers on and off. Marcus exhales. A lull in traffic and he bolts across the dual carriageway, alley-oops the crash barrier and waits.

MOMENTS LATER

All clear and he steps out into the road again. Four men in a car blasting loud music pass by in the opposite direction.

Marcus glances over but keeps moving. The two nearside passengers point at him and the driver takes the next exit and doubles back.

Marcus gets off-road, sprints through an alleyway and heaves himself over a tall wooden fence. The car races and gets closer.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Richie, Joey and Rog saunter downstairs. Marcus passes them on the staircase, dashing to his room.

ROG

Alright Marcus?

MARCUS

Lads.

Rebecca exits the lounge and stands at the foot of the stairs. Richie, Joey and Rog file past.

REBECCA

Marcus?!

Marcus shouts from his bedroom.

MARCUS

Yeah?!

Rebecca pauses and appears pensive.

REBECCA

Happy birthday!

MARCUS

Thanks!

REBECCA Aren't you coming down?! MARCUS Yeah... in a bit! Just doing some homework!

Rebecca waits for a moment then returns to the lounge.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - MARCUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marcus pushes his bedroom door to, locks it and takes his jacket off. He stands in the middle of his room, jacket held by fingertips and half draped on the floor.

In desolation, he stares at the wood grain pattern on the window sill. He lets his jacket slip from his fingers to the floor and a scrap of paper flutters out. It has Sarah's telephone number on it.

He examines the paper, screws it up and throws it into the corner of the room. Marcus slumps down with his back against the wall. A tear rolls down his cheek.

JOEY (V.O.)

I never saw Marcus and Laurent hang out after that. They'd say hi in passing but that was it. I guess the threat of violence was too much to bear for Laurent. I couldn't blame him after what he'd already been through.

Appearing catatonic and unable to process today's events, he stares at the wall.

Still visible on the screwed up note in the corner of the room: "Happy birthday" (with a heart drawn over the letter i).

JOEY (V.O.) Years later at university, Laurent got heavily into drugs. One night whilst driving at speed and under the influence, he had a head on collision with another car. The crash was fatal; he died at the scene.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

Marcus watches TV. Richie enters the room and holds up the vinyl LP 'Aerosmith - Get Your Wings'.

RICHIE

Can I borrow this?

No.

RICHIE

Fuck you then!

Richie empties the record from its cardboard sleeve onto the floor then tears the album sleeve in half. Astonished, Marcus leaps from his chair and chases Richie out of the room.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

The boys continue their chase and swerve around an open dishwasher. Richie seeks solace behind their father.

MARCUS

I'm going to kill him!

SAM

No you're not!

Richie mouths "fuck you" at Marcus.

MARCUS I am! I'm going to kill him!

SAM

No! You're not!

Sam smashes Marcus in the head. He falls backwards onto the dishwasher and breaks the door off its hinges. He lies sprawled out and dazed.

Rebecca runs into the room.

REBECCA

What the hell is going on?

SAM

Marcus was threatening Richie.

Marcus gets to his feet and Rebecca shoots him a disappointed look.

INT. SCHOOL EXAM HALL - DAY

The students sit one per desk in typical ordered rows. The teachers patrol the aisles. A teacher at the front addresses the hall.

TEACHER

You may begin!

There follows the cascade of rustling papers.

Marcus has the unenviable position of being sandwiched between two amateur criminals.

To the rear is the giant of a lad Billy, who has a collection of sharp implements and a penchant for the scars they etch out. Sneering, Billy stabs at his exam paper with a compass.

Sitting in front is Lee. Lee's exam papers are still face down. His left leg stretches out across the gangway as if he was at home watching television. He stares into oblivion and gnaws on his nails.

Marcus leans flat against his desk, wracking his brains for each answer.

Billy sprinkles his carved exam papers around his feet like confetti. Boredom already setting in, he takes aim with his compass and hurls it at Lee.

The compass rotates through the air over Marcus' head. It then clatters against the back of Lee's thick skull and drops to the ground.

Lee looks down at the sharp implement then looks back at Marcus, who remains close to his desk to avoid incrimination. Marcus shakes his head to signify he's innocent.

Lee's focus moves to Billy, who smiles, stretches and looks full of himself.

Lee inhales as he revs up his rage. Aware of the impending violence, Marcus attempts to appear normal by mouthing imaginary exam questions.

Lee's school blazer flicks up into Marcus' face as he speeds past. Launching himself into a rugby tackle, Lee sideswipes Billy off his chair into a ground and pound brawl. Their arms and legs kick out, jolting Marcus' chair.

A tall but skinny male teacher is quick to get in between the two and interrupt the fight.

TALL TEACHER Right you two. Up! Now!

Billy grabs Tall Teacher and is strong enough to hold him in place. Lee follows suit. The boys glare at him.

BILLY

Really? You want some too?

Tall Teacher's eyes flicker with nerves. He releases his grip and walks to the far side of the hall. The scrap continues and their mistimed kicks and punches shunt Marcus' chair forward.

EXT. SCHOOL EXAM HALL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Marcus leaves the exam hall looking weary. His year pour out into the corridor where the next throng of 6th Form hopefuls line up; one of which is Sarah. She stops Marcus for a chat and the two lanes of children blur past.

> SARAH Rach's parents are away Saturday night. She's having a party.

The crowd going into the exam hall sweep Sarah away.

SARAH

See you there!

Lee dishes out punches to those going into the exam hall.

MARCUS

Lee, I need to ask you something.

Lee continues his happy slap harassment.

MARCUS

I need to give you some money.

Lee turns to Marcus but is disappointed to have to stop punching.

LEE What you after, you little shit?

MARCUS

I need some booze. I heard you can get it.

LEE

A magnum for a fiver.

Marcus hands Lee a five pound note.

LEE

Be at the warehouse, Saturday lunch, one o'clock.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Marcus and Rog crouch beneath a small window at the rear of the warehouse. The window opens. A hand holds out a magnum of booze. Marcus grabs it. The window slams shut.

ROG

We headin'?

MARCUS

Yeah.

Marcus and Rog wander through a large industrial wasteland.

EXT. SUPERMARKET CAR PARK - DAY

Marcus looks at his watch. Both boys scan the traffic along the main road.

ROG You told your dad half one, didn't you?

MARCUS Yeah. I'll give him a bell. He's probably just held up.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - PHONE BOX - DAY

Marcus makes the call home. Outside, Rog leans against the door of the phone box.

MARCUS Hi. Dad. I think we missed ya.

SAM I was just there. Where were you?

MARCUS

Yeah. I realised. There's two car parks here. Sorry about that. Um, can you come out again? Please? Rog opens the door.

ROG Tell him he's a stupid old twat for getting lost.

Rog steps back and the door closes.

SAM

What did he say?!

MARCUS What did who say? There's a lot of people here, a lot of noise.

SAM

Who was it?!

MARCUS Dad. Leave it. Please.

SAM

I'm only going to ask you one more time. Who was it?

MARCUS

It was Rog. He didn't mean it. He just talks that way. He talks like that to HIS dad.

SAM Tell him, he can either walk home now or wait till I deal with him.

MARCUS

Dad –

Sam hangs up the phone.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PEDESTRIAN AREA - DAY

Marcus exits the phone box and winces at Rog.

MARCUS Why did you have to say that?

ROG Well, he shouldn't fuck things up, should he? Marcus rubs his eyes.

MARCUS

He said you can walk home now or wait and take some shit off him. Either way, you're walking. Sorry, man.

Rog dismisses the threat with a snort.

ROG

I'm alright waiting.

Marcus hangs his head.

EXT. SUPERMARKET CAR PARK - DAY

Sam jumps out of his car. He leaves the engine running and car door open.

SAM

Is he here?

Marcus is slow to nod. Rog is standing off to the side ten feet away. Sam locates him but double checks.

SAM

Him?

Marcus sighs.

MARCUS

Yeah.

SAM

Get in the car.

MARCUS

Dad -

SAM

Marcus, get in the car!

Marcus gets in the car and slumps down in the passenger seat.

Sam grabs Rog by the lapels, lifts him off the ground and pins him to a wall.

Sam leans in. Rog's eyes widen with fear.

SAM Ever speak to me like that again...

ROG

I won't.

SAM

Good.

Sam lowers him back down.

SAM

Better get moving. You've a long walk ahead of you.

INT./EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR (MOVING) - SUBURB - DAY

SAM Rog lives here, doesn't he? Show me where.

MARCUS

Why?!

SAM I want a word with his dad.

Marcus stares out of his window.

INT./EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR - ROGER'S HOUSE - DAY

Marcus watches from the car.

Sam waits on the doorstep. Rog's father (early 40s, tired, dishevelled) opens the door. He appears surprised and nods in agreement to everything Sam says.

INT./EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR - SUBURBAN SHOPS - DAY

Sam pulls in at a small row of shops. There is a prolonged silence between father and son.

Sam gets out and goes to the cash machine. Marcus waits in the car.

As he approaches the ATM, he's pestered by a swarm of flies. He swats at them and steps forward. The cash machine is caked in dog faeces. He puts his hand over his mouth and runs back to the car. SAM They treat the city like a bloody sewer.

Back in the car, Sam looks at his son. Marcus stares out of the window.

EXT. CITY CENTRE - HIGH STREET - DAY

Buses park end to end along the street. Taxis and mini buses dart in and out of traffic. Rog walks home.

He glances around himself at pedestrians and traffic. A fleeting look upstairs at the back of a bus catches a YOUNG MAN'S eye. Fuming with rage, Young Man batters the windows with his fist.

YOUNG MAN

Who you looking at?! Who you looking at?! Cheeky fuckin' cunt! Fuckin' think you're hard?! Fuckin' cunt!

Rog avoids further eye contact. Young Man follows him along the upper deck as he walks, bangs on the windows and rages.

YOUNG MAN

Fucking wait down there! When the driver's back and opens these doors, I'll give ya a fuckin' caning! Fuckin' look at me, ya fuckin' cunt!

Rog detours from his planned walk home and slow-jogs down a side street away from the agro.

INT./EXT. BROCKLISS FAMILY CAR - DUAL CARRIAGEWAY - DAY

SAM

You... uh... you going to learn to drive?

MARCUS

Yeah. I reckon.

SAM

Ah, you'll make a good driver, son. You know why? Because you're cautious.

Sam pulls up at a red light on a busy dual carriageway junction.

SAM

Don't let people get to you when you're driving.

MARCUS Yeah, I know. I won't.

The lights change to green. Sam turns the engine off to pretend the car stalled. He relaxes in his seat.

SAM

Oh well.

MARCUS What are you doing?

Sam shrugs.

SAM

Oops, I stalled.

Behind them, drivers sound their horns.

MARCUS

Dad, I get it.

Marcus looks back through the rear window. Agitated drivers flip two fingers and wanker hand gestures.

MARCUS Start the car! What are you doing?!

SAM They can beep all they want. I won't drive until I'm ready.

MARCUS Unbelievable. This is so embarrassing!

The lights change back to red.

SAM It's important to be calm.

MARCUS Someone'll see me from school!

Marcus puts his head in his hands. Sam starts up the car. The lights change to green and he accelerates away.

JOEY (V.O.)

Rog never spoke to us again. The stolen charity money and Richie's subsequent beat down by the Cooke brothers sent us to the doldrums. We became ostracised. We'd see the lads from afar but always kept safe distance.

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE PARTY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marcus joins the party clutching his prized magnum of booze. 1980s tunes blast out. The hallway and stairs are packed with teens.

Marcus places his hand on the lounge door ready to push. The door springs open and a drunken teenage boy is thrown from the room. Marcus jukes past him into the lounge.

The ejectee prangs into the hallway radiator and is rendered unconscious. A large CHINESE BOY stands in the open doorway.

> CHINESE BOY Touch her like that again and I'll kill ya!

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE PARTY - LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's standing room only as the lounge is crammed wall to wall with teenagers. A kissing couple lie pinned between the skirting board and the back of the couch.

> BOY BEHIND COUCH Turn the lights out, will ya?!

Marcus shouts over the music to a stranger.

MARCUS

Have you seen Sarah? You know? Rach's friend. Is she here yet?

STRANGER

No. I don't think so, man.

Marcus sits with his back to the wall and opens his booze. He tips the bottle to the ceiling and chugs until blacking out.

LATER

Marcus comes to and focuses his eyes on a boy juggling kitchen knives. He looks around the room for Sarah then tips the bottle up and blacks out again.

He opens his eyes to a different group of people around him.

BOY #1 Well, you shouldn't bet, should ya? I told you you'd never eat everything in their fridge! Pay up!

BOY #2

Ugh, I'm gonna fucking chuck!

Boy #2 vomits down the back of an armchair.

Marcus guzzles more booze but this time a blurred hand reaches down and pilfers the bottle with ease.

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE PARTY - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A couple make out on a double bed. They remain sealed at the lips; even when two drunken girls crash through the bedroom door. They ricochet off the bed frame and land on the floor.

> DRUNK GIRL #1 Don't fucking call him!

DRUNK GIRL #2 grabs the bedside phone.

DRUNK GIRL #2 I bet he misses me. Like I miss him.

DRUNK GIRL #1 No! You'll regret it in the morning!

DRUNK GIRL #2 I bet he misses my blowjobs.

DRUNK GIRL #1 puts her hand on the telephone ringer and cuts her off.

DRUNK GIRL #1 You're making a fool of yourself!

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE PARTY - LOUNGE - NIGHT

RACHEL'S FATHER arrives home outraged. He strides into the lounge and pulls the plug on the music.

RACHEL'S FATHER Everyone out!

Rachel's mother flaps her way into the lounge in a heightened state of anxiety.

RACHEL'S MOTHER There are people in our bed!

They hustle out of the lounge to deal with those upstairs.

CHINESE BOY Need a lift home, Marcus?

Marcus looks at his empty magnum bottle on the floor.

MARCUS Thanks but I need to clear my head.

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE PARTY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marcus uses the hallway to ping-pong left and right towards the front door.

EXT. RACHEL'S HOUSE - STREET - NIGHT

Marcus sits on the kerb. His breath is visible in the night air. Behind him people leave the party.

EXT. SURBUBAN STREET - NIGHT

Marcus drags his heels up the long straight road lined with terraced houses.

At a junction on the right, three men in their early 20s relish the sight of a lone pedestrian. SLICK (slim, good looking with slicked back hair), SKINNY and FAT MAN.

They leave the junction and time their march so to fallin behind Marcus. They position themselves close enough to almost clip his heels. Marcus feels the intended claustrophobia but doesn't dare look back at them. Fat Man winks at Slick.

> FAT MAN Leave him, he's alright.

Slick speaks in a drawn out psychotic tone.

SLICK He's alright. He's alright.

The clatter of their footsteps reverberate off the houses. Marcus is consumed with dread. He quickens his step in time with the beating of his heart. The three men adjust their gait to remain on his heels.

Testing their interest, Marcus slows to a stroll. The men slow down too. Their combined quick-slow dance routine comes to an end.

In one sudden move, Marcus stops, turns and faces Slick.

MARCUS Why are you doing this?

His words still trail from his lips when Slick's clenched fist is inbound. The bony knuckles clatter against Marcus' temple and both of them drop to the pavement.

Slick delivers punches to the back of the skull while Marcus wrestles for his freedom. He escapes the barrage of punching and is first to his feet. Running on fear, Marcus rockets out of town. Skinny and Fat Man are too slow to react and drop gears to a jog.

Slick, on the other hand, is fast enough out of the blocks. He sprints within Marcus' slipstream. Their legs blur and their shoes clatter in a staccato rhythmic percussion.

The grimy pavement blurs under foot. They match each other stride for stride. Low on oxygen, Marcus gasps for air but doesn't slow.

Two tall lean silhouettes appear ahead. A TALL SAMARITAN walks towards them with his girlfriend.

MARCUS Help! They're trying to get me!

Marcus and Slick blink past. The drum roll effect of shoes on pavement diminishes. Marcus realises he's alone. He stops to look back at Slick, who is exhausted and rests on a garden fence. Marcus croaks to breathe. Gasping, he can't get air into his lungs fast enough. He looks back at Tall Samaritan, who argues with Fat Man. Fat Man shoves him a couple of times.

Marcus places both hands on top of his chest-bone and rattles as he vacuums for air.

Another shove and Tall Samaritan responds with the o goshi Judo throw. Fat Man is launched over a hedgerow into a private garden.

EXT. INNER CITY APARTMENTS - ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Marcus gets off the main road and jogs down a darkened alleyway. Moving through the shadows, he arrives at a dead-end of garage doors.

He grips the branch of a tree with both hands, climbs to the base of the crown and surveys the neon cityscape. Multiple sirens can be heard in the distance.

> MARCUS (V.O.) It's too far. It's just too dangerous.

He leaps to a flat garage rooftop then takes a short drop into the darkness and lands in someone's garden.

Marcus knocks on the owner's front door. A woman (50s) and her son (20s) answer the door.

MARCUS

Sorry to wake you. People are after me. I don't know where to go.

SON

I bet I know who it was. They're here most nights looking for it.

The woman contemplates Marcus' predicament then smiles and opens the door wider.

WOMAN

I'll make you a cuppa, ok? Then we'll get you a taxi home.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - DAY

Marcus hurries past his father to the front door.

SAM

Hey! Marcus!

Marcus looks over his shoulder.

SAM Hear anything more from Rog since he walked home?

MARCUS No… but… I don't think it matters.

SAM

What doesn't matter?

MARCUS

Rog… or… anyone. It's unimportant. Sorry, I gotta go.

Marcus grips the door handle.

SAM

Whoa, whoa, whoa. What do you mean by that? Nothing matters?! No-one matters?!

MARCUS

You know what? I just don't give a shit anymore.

Sam's face flashes with anger.

SAM What did you just say to me?!

MARCUS I said… I don't… give… a shit!

Sam's eyes widen and he grits his teeth. He smacks Marcus hard around the side of the head sending him sideways against the doorframe.

Sam unleashes his rage. Again and again with heavy hands he punishes Marcus' skull. Each attack plunges Marcus' vision into temporary darkness.

Sam circles around, delivers a heavy slap to the side of the head and Marcus stumbles back down the hallway. Sam strides after him, belts him again and Marcus trips backwards into the lounge. INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE - DAY

Each blackout-inducing crack to the head jolts Marcus to the far side of the room. He collapses into an armchair.

The dizziness passes. He stands to face his father.

MARCUS

Fuck you!

Sam continues his attack and Marcus is buffeted back into the hallway.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - HALLWAY - DAY

A rabbit-slap to the back of the head and Marcus stumbles into the dining room.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The table is set for dinner. Marcus is sprawled out next to it on the floor. Rebecca arrives.

Marcus sits up, back to the wall and rubs his sore head.

SAM He's been using foul-mouthed language, Becky.

Rebecca has a face like thunder.

SAM

I don't know what to do with him. I'm going out for some air.

Sam leaves. Rebecca stands over Marcus and points at his face. Marcus flinches a little.

REBECCA

You... are a waste of space! Do you hear me?!

Marcus trembles a little. Rebecca lunges to grab him by the shirt. Off balance and panicked, he springs back towards the table, snatching a knife in the process.

He pushes back against the wall to raise himself then slides away from his mother.

Rebecca leaps to close the distance. Marcus points the knife at her and she freezes. He rests the wooden steak knife handle on his chest, blade pointing outward at his mother.

MARCUS

You stay away from me.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - STREET - NIGHT

A Volkswagen Scirocco pulls up in the empty street. An Indo-Pakistani man gets out carrying an AK-47 assault rifle. He leaves the door open, leans on the roof and squints in the twilight to examine the row of houses.

He raises his weapon, takes aim then lowers his rifle again. He scratches his head.

Still unsure of his target, he takes aim at a house four doors up from the Brockliss home. Squeezing the trigger, he lets rip with a short burst at the masonry, dives in his car and races off around the corner.

House lights come on throughout the street.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam dives out of bed in a panic, knocking books and a glass of water off his bedside cabinet.

SAM

Everybody stay down!

Sam crawls over to the window, crouches and peeps from behind the curtains.

SAM It's… it's ok. I think he's gone. Yeah… he's gone. He's gone.

Rebecca lies back in bed and sighs.

REBECCA I'm sick of this place.

INT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - LANDING - NIGHT

Joey, Marcus and Richie meet on the landing.

JOEY

I'm scared, Marcus.

JOEY

Aren't you?

Marcus turns back to them and folds his arms to hide the fear.

MARCUS

No.

RICHIE Well, I don't feel safe.

Sam walks out onto the landing.

SAM

Everything's ok. He's gone. Back to bed please lads. You'll never get up for school.

Marcus loses himself in thought.

SAM

Marcus, you're meant to be setting an example. Let's go! You're up early for work experience!

INT. TAKEAWAY KEBAB SHOP - NIGHT

Ben Bosworth slaps the counter for every second he's made to wait for his order.

The shop door behind him opens and the blurred figure of a teenage boy enters. Ben pays him no attention and the figure waits off to the side, out of view.

The takeaway owner brings Ben's food to the counter.

BEN `bout fuckin' time! I'm starv -

A pistol is pressed into Ben's neck.

EXT. KEBAB TAKEAWAY SHOP - STREET - NIGHT

A gunshot is heard.

EXT. BROCKLISS RESIDENCE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Marcus and Sam leave home at the same time.

SAM

See you later.

MARCUS

Yep.

Over the fence, Jamaican Neighbour scrapes ice off his car.

JAMAICAN NEIGHBOUR

Morning!

SAM Morning. What was all that about last night?

Jamaican Neighbour points up the road.

JAMAICAN NEIGHBOUR Family feud. The police already caught the guy. There was another shooting last night too; at a takeaway. Something to do with drugs.

Jamaican Neighbour shrugs and continues to scrape the ice off his car. Sam looks weary.

JOEY (V.O.) We lived in the city for 10 years. I remember not seeing or feeling kindness in so long that I felt numb.

INT./EXT. DOUBLE DECKER BUS (MOVING) - GREENBELT - DAY

Marcus climbs the winding staircase to the upper deck. His fellow passengers are blue collar workers, stony faced and tired eyed. Tough kids from Marcus' school are slouching at the back, knees pushed up against the seats in front.

The air is thick with cigarette smoke and the windows have all steamed up. The bus judders and Marcus is thrown into a seat.

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He gazes back over his shoulder to I.D. the reprobates. One of the tough kids draws penises in the window's condensation. With clairvoyant-like intuition, he swivels around to face Marcus and conjures a black-hearted smile.

Marcus snaps around to front and centre. The bus stops and room is made at the back for Afro-Caribbean Kid.

TOUGH KID Where the fuck you been?

AFRO-CARIBBEAN KID Borstal, man.

Afro-Caribbean Kid laughs.

TOUGH KID

How was it?

AFRO-CARIBBEAN KID It ain't that bad.

EXT. FARM - STRAWBERRY FIELD - DAY

Marcus and his co-workers crouch in the dry earth. Plastic punnets are filled with strawberries. Busy with his hands but not his mind, Marcus drifts off to thoughts of Sarah.

He is shocked back to reality with an influx of pain. A baseball sized lump of dry mud and stone impacts hard, cutting and bruising the skin around his cheek and right eye.

In a delayed panic, he flinches and his breathing becomes erratic. His focus jumps from worker to worker to identify the culprit.

> LEWIS What the FUCK'S he doing here?!

CO-WORKER

Calm down.

Lewis raises himself, arms splayed and eyes piercing, as psychotic as they come.

LEWIS What the FUCK are you doing here?!

Lewis fumes at Marcus and waits for an answer.

Lewis picks up another piece of stony-mud and throws it. Marcus covers up and the projectile shatters against the sleeve of his Campri ski jacket.

CO-WORKER

It's enough!

Co-Worker grabs Lewis and manoeuvres him backwards.

CO-WORKER Go and work over there, if it's a problem.

With a sour look on his face, Lewis shrugs him off and heads over to the next field.

Dazed, Marcus collects his thoughts. The dusty contour of his eye tingles with pain. His fingertips mix the blood and dust together on his bruised cheek.

FARM SUPERVISOR clocks Marcus being unproductive, tending to his face. He is stealth-like in his approach from behind. Marcus remains unaware. He leans forward and puts his mouth up close to Marcus' ear.

> FARM SUPERVISOR Oiiiiiiiiiiiii

The scream is so loud that Marcus' hearing is reduced to a temporary high pitch whistle. Farm Supervisor stands over him, pointing and ranting in muted silence. With a pop, Marcus' hearing returns.

> FARM SUPERVISOR You won't be able to doss about and keep your job in the real world! So stop lazing about and get back to work! I've got my eyes on you.

EXT. CITY CENTRE - HIGH STREET - DAY

Marcus joins a queue at a bus stop. Two positions in front is Sarah. She gives a half-look over her shoulder but avoids looking back again.

MARCUS

Hey. Sarah.

Sarah pretends not to hear. Marcus looks puzzled.

MARCUS

Sarah?

Marcus pulls at the sleeve of her jacket. Sarah turns her head a fraction but remains facing forward. She delivers an uncertain wave which could be perceived as being dismissive, if not for her friendly tone.

SARAH Oh hey Marcus, good to see ya.

Marcus moves parallel to the queue and positions himself just behind Sarah.

MARCUS I'm sorry I didn't see you at Rach's.

Sarah doesn't turn around.

MARCUS

I was going to call you. I -

SARAH

I was grounded. It's all good. No worries. We'll do another party soon.

MARCUS

Rach told me what you did for me on my birthday... telling those guys on the coach not to give me a beat down. I had no idea.

SARAH

It's ok. I know them. I've been watching them fight and steal since we were in infants.

MARCUS

Well, I really appreciate it.

An awkward silence befalls them as Sarah still won't turn around.

SARAH

No probs.

Marcus takes hold of Sarah's arm and gently turns her towards him. She avoids eye contact and looks at the ground, ashamed. Her eyes and cheeks are swollen, cut and bruised. Astonished, Marcus trembles.

MARCUS

What happened?

Sarah puts on a brave smile.

SARAH

Oh you know how it is here. I see you've been having fun too.

Sarah points at Marcus' cut and bruised eye contour.

MARCUS

Oh, yeah. You know me, clumsy bastard. But do you know who did this to you?

SARAH

I don't know. We were on a night out and walking to the next bar in the lower precinct. Some lads just ran up and set upon us.

Sarah shrugs. Their mini bus arrives.

INT./EXT. MINI BUS (MOVING) - CITY STREET - DAY

Seated together, sunshine moves across their bruised faces. Sarah rests her head on Marcus. A smile is forced from his lips.

FADE OUT:

END