

FADE IN:

CEMETERY - A COLD AUTUMN MORNING

A large crowd, most in police uniforms, returns to a caravan of, motorcycles and black and white patrol cars.

INSERT: TOMB STONE - OFFICER GABRIEL MORALES - MARCH 27, 1967
- OCTOBER 15, 1999

A Police Squad lingers behind three people at the edge of the grave.

JULIA MORALES, thirties, long black hair cascades past the back her knees. She lifts a black veil. Tears stream over her cheeks into a neck brace. She holds her cane with one hand. With the other she squeezes the hand of her son

OSCAR MORALES, thirteen, a good kid, honest and respectful. He reaches into his black suit jacket and pulls out a magnifying glass. He looks from his mom to

Mrs. Letticia "ABUELA" (grandmother - pronounced a-wella-) Cabrera, Julia's mother, a youngish grandmother, with plenty of spunk. She nods.

Oscar fights back his own tears and lays the magnifying glass on top of his father's grave. Julia and Abulea pull him close.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Julia fishes in her purse for the car keys.

Oscar sobs in quiet despair. Julia hugs him

JULIA

Oscar, you are the man now.

A beat before the comment sinks in, then Oscar takes his mother's cane and opens the door.

A MAN and WOMAN approach.

WOMAN

Our deepest condolences.

Julia nods thanks.

WOMAN

I know this is an awful time for you...
But we are having trouble with your
husbands...

MAN

He missed five house payments.

INT. JULIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Beneath a crucifix in the corner of the room, a votive candle
burns in a shrine to the Virgin Mary.

Julia and her mother pack men's things into boxes. Jockey shorts,
baseball magazines, ties, sneakers etc...

Julia opens a drawer next to a queen-sized bed, removes a .357
Magnum, Police Badge and handcuffs. She looks at her mother.

JULIA

Weren't we a pair, mama? The cop
and the school teacher.

Abuela pats her hand.

JULIA

I don't really mind losing this
house. But if Gabe had to die,
it should have been in the line
of duty. Not by a drunk teenager.

(bursts into tears)

We were so happy. It wasn't much...
but it was ours... ours...Gabe's,
Oscar's and mine...our place...

EXT. LOW COST HOUSING TRACT - CONDO - DAY

Julia whacks the stake of a SOLD SIGN with the end of her cane.
She takes a longing glance at the 'fixer-upper' and turns to
her mother.

JULIA

Mama, we'll miss you.

ABUELA

And I you. Especially Oscar.

Both women turn to the street where

Oscar and two friends carefully pack a telescope and chemistry

kit into the rear of a large U-Haul truck.
Oscar slams the door shut and high-fives his pals.

Julia and her mom embrace.

ABUELA

I wish you were not moving so
far away.

JULIA

Me too. It's a terrific opportunity,
and there are too many memories here.
Too many --

Abuela lays her finger on her daughter's lips.

ABUELA

We do, what we must do.

JULIA

And you? You'll listen to your doctor?
You watch your diet. You --

ABUELA

Es nada. Nothing is wrong with
this heart.

JULIA

Mama, you exercise. Or I'll have
to put you in a home.

ABUELA

This is the thanks I get? I changed
your filthy diapers. And when Oscar
was born, who was the --

Oscar flies into his grandmother's arms. She rubs his scalp.

ABUELA

This niño, I will miss.

She looks over Oscar's shoulder at Julia.

ABUELA

You? I'm not so sure.

Julia burrows into her mother's arms.

INT. U-HAUL - MOVING - SUBURBIA - DAY

A somber mood permeates the cab. Oscar looks up from a science book.

OSCAR

What bird has the most feathers?

Julia's musing snaps when a tractor-trailer pulls out of a crossroad into their path. Oscar watches in admiration as his mother downshifts and speed around the trailer.

OSCAR

Mom, suppose we had an accident?

JULIA

Sorry. Am I making you nervous?

OSCAR

No way. You drive great...But, if we had an accident...What then?

JULIA

Oscar, you're fourteen. I'm not teaching you to drive.

OSCAR

Right, you'd be breaking the law. But suppose you ate a hamburger or something and got food poisoning and we were in the middle of the desert and you were throwin' up all over the place, fighting for breath.

He gags, throws his head against the dashboard and pretends to faint. A beat. He rises with a grin.

OSCAR

How would I get you to the hospital?

JULIA

We're not going through a desert.

OSCAR

Sorry I asked. But you're the best teacher in the world and --

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

The U-Haul truck jerks from side to side - lumbers up and over a small ravine.

INT. U-HAUL - PASSENGER SIDE

White knuckled, Julia winces.

JULIA

Great, you're doing great.

The U-haul bounces over ruts and just squeaks through a gate.

INT. U-HAUL - MOVING - THROUGH A COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

Oscar reaches for the radio switch, looks at his mother.

OSCAR

I did pretty good?

JULIA

Real good. But I'm not eating any hamburgers. How about an eagle?

OSCAR

Eagles don't need a lot of feathers. Think weather, teach.

Julia hits the radio switch herself. The cab fills with SALSA-ROCK MUSIC.

EXT. U-HAUL - LATER

Through the open window the MUSIC blares.

OSCAR

Okay, what creature has the biggest eye?

JULIA

I haven't got the first one yet.

OSCAR

You're never going to get it.

U-HAUL - NIGHT

The truck rolls down a freeway exit ramp. A soft glow emanates from the cab of the truck.

INT. U-HAUL

Oscar holds a flashlight on a map on his lap. He gestures to the left. Julia gives him an 'are-you-sure?' look.

OSCAR
Christopher Columbus didn't
know where he was going either.

JULIA
And when he got here, he sure
ruined the neighborhood.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

In an ugly neighborhood, the U-Haul pulls up in front of a dilapidated apartment building.

INT. U-HAUL CAB

Julia and Oscar exchange a piece of paper with an address and stare up at the complex.

OSCAR
This is it? Home?

JULIA
We owe some money.
(blesses herself)
We'll be out of here by
Thanksgiving. Promise.

OSCAR
Mom, it's okay.

EXT. U-HAUL - STREET - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Oscar carries a stack of boxes up the stairs and disappears into the building.

Inside the U-Haul, Julia sets a box on the loading ramp and climbs out of the truck.

From a distance comes a faint SCREECH of rubber and the loud, bass pulse of REGGAE music.

EXT. STREET CORNER

A black Trans-Am SQUEALS round the corner and flies up the street. Eighty yards from the U-Haul the lights go off. The music goes silent. The car eases to a halt.

Julia, in tight fitting jeans, leans into the rear of truck and hooks a carton with her cane.

INT. TRANS-AM

CHACO, an eighteen year old bad ass in leather and tattoos leans out the driver's side window. He admires Julia's derriere, then grins at his passenger

WOLF, a psychotic adult, who hangs out with kids and HOWLS with pleasure when people suffer.

Chaco eases the Trans-Am closer.

On tiptoes, Julia struggles with the carton.

Chaco blasts his HORN and lets out a shrill, piercing WHISTLE -- at the same moment Wolf HOWLS.

Julia jumps to one side, grabs for her cane, misses and falls to the pavement.

The Trans-Am frogs forward in starts and stops.

The bumper covers Julia's head. The tire stops inches from her face. The engine REVS above her. She rolls, grabs her cane and whacks it against the fender of the car. The car moves forward. Julia shatters a headlight, then crawls under the U-haul.

The engine goes to idle.

Chaco gets out of the car. Wolf BAYS out the window.

Chaco's boots CLICK as he circles his vehicle. He stares down at his broken headlight, runs a finger through the dent on his fender and bends down to see

Julia cowering under the tailgate of the U-haul.

CHACO

You sorry, little, bitch.

A needle sharp ice pick appears in his hand.

CHACO

This is going to cost you.

Julia raises her cane.

OSCAR (OS)

Get out of here, asshole.

Wielding a baseball bat, Oscar races down the stairs.

Chaco gives them both a look of contempt.

CHACO

Wolf.

HOWLING, Wolf opens the passenger door, but his cry is drowned by the wail of an approaching SIREN. Wolf looks over his shoulder to

BLINKING RED LIGHTS IN THE DISTANCE

Chaco gives Julia and Oscar a final look hops in his Trans Am and PEELS rubber down the street.

The SIREN grows louder and louder. An ambulance flies past and disappears into the night.

Julia and Oscar exchange nervous glances. Julia hugs her son.

JULIA

Octopus has the biggest eye.

Oscar slaps her a high five.

INT. JULIA'S AND OSCAR'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Furniture and boxes litter the flat. Oscar exits his room trying to stick an arm through one strap of a backpack.

OSCAR

See ya, mom.

Julia gives her son a visual appraisal.

JULIA

You've got everything? Pen? Books? Paper? You're sure you don't want me to go with you? First day and everything.

OSCAR

Which bird has the most feathers?

Julia opens the door and shoves him on his way.

JULIA

Go on. Get out of here, Dr. Dolittle.

Oscar takes a disappointed look around his new home.
Julia catches it.

JULIA

Outta here by Thanksgiving.
(crosses her heart)
Promise.

INT. THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Hand colored turkeys and pumpkins decorate the walls.

Julia, still with neck brace and cane, sits on the floor dressed in a beautiful latina outfit, surrounded by her students all dressed in their native attire.

A Cuban dancer. A Laotian tet dress. An African dashiki. etc.

Children lick their lips anxiously as Julia lays slices of pumpkin pie onto paper plates and tops them with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

INT. JULIA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A lighted Christmas tree fills the corner of the room.

A turkey sits on a platter in the middle of a table next to a Nativity scene.

Julia, Abuela and Oscar stand behind their chairs, head bent as Julia finishes grace.

JULIA

...in the name of the Father,
Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

The trio bless themselves. Julia hands the carving knife to Oscar.

JULIA

You do the honors.

He grins proudly. Julia slips off the neck brace and unties

the bun in her hair. It tumbles down her back, past her hips.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - LATER

Oscar clears plates from the table. Abuela enters with a huge tray of Mexican desserts. Oscar smiles, but waves her off.

ABUELA

No dessert? Why no dessert?

Oscar slips on a jacket.

OSCAR

I have to go to school.

Abuela shoots Julia a suspicious look.

ABUELA

Esquela, on Christmas Eve?

OSCAR

I'm going to be a veterinarian.

ABUELA

This is good. Muy bueno.

OSCAR

I've got this chillin' biology teacher, Mr. Gundry. He always wears the same tie. He's always telling jokes and he walks around the room smoking his chalk.

Abuela shoots Julia a puzzled glance. Julia proudly motions her son on.

OSCAR

Calls me Zoo Keeper. So do some of the kids. Mr. Gundry put me in charge of the animals. We've got rats, a snake and a tarantula named Saddam Hussein. I'll bring him home if you'd like to see it.

Abuela touches her breast.

ABUELA

No, no my heart wouldn't like it. But you have time for dessert.

Oscar starts out the door.

OSCAR

If it's okay.... I sort of invited my friend Dink over for dessert. He's got nobody to have Christmas with. If we have enough food?

ABUELA

Enough for Pancho Villa and his army.

Oscar waves and shuts the door.

ABUELA

He wants to bring back a tarantula.

JULIA

How are you feeling, mom?

ABUELA

My heart is fine. Your's the one I worry about.

EXT. DIMLY LIT HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

A procession of Christmas Carolers sing Come All Ye Faithful across the street from the school.

Oscar races up to the science wing of Abraham Lincoln High School, pulls out a key and opens the door.

INT. CORRIDOR OF SCHOOL - NIGHT

Oscar's high-top sneakers SQUEAK as he flies down a hallway.

INT. STAIRWAY

Oscar takes the steps two at a time, hurries down an empty corridor, then stops at a T in the hallway when he hears

MALE VOICE (OS)

Give me three weeks in boot camp with these little bat turds and I'd take the wag out of their taggin.

Oscar peeks around a corner and sees

Gus "SARGE" Coin, fifties, the school custodian, who ALWAYS wears a camouflage Marine Corps cap, sits perched on a ladder, Sarge wipes a tag off the wall.

A HUGE Z with a slash through the bottom.

SARGE

Three weeks! I'd whip the little turds
into shape.

Oscar eases around the corner.

OSCAR

Merry Christmas.

Old as he is, Sarge leaps off the ladder and lands on his feet
in a karate stance.

SARGE

Who the hell are YOU? And what the
hell --

(checks his watch)

Are you doing in MY SCHOOL at nineteen
hundred hours, on Christmas Eve?

Oscar holds out two keys.

OSCAR

I'm Mr. Gundry's lab assistant. He
asked me to feed the animals.

SARGE

Gundry gave you the keys to the
whole damn school?

OSCAR

Just the science wing. He trusts me.
He's in Hawaii. Really, I'm his assistant.

Sarge harumfs.

OSCAR

It won't take too long. If you need
a hand.

(points to the graffiti)

My friend Dink's coming by.
Want us to help?

Sarge stares in disbelief.

OSCAR

Most of us don't like that crap
any more than you.

SARGE

You new to this outfit?

Oscar confused for a moment, then laughs.

OSCAR

Joined up in October.

(extends his hand)

Oscar Morales. I want to be a vet.

They call me the Zoo Keeper.

Still leery, Sarge shakes it.

SARGE

What land animal has the most teeth?

OSCAR

Cards in a deck. The numbat. Fifty-two.

Sarge extends a hand.

SARGE

Gus Coin. They still call me, Sarge.

Welcome aboard.

INT. OF BIOLOGY LAB - DARK

Oscar enters, flicks on the lights and closes the door. Animals scurry about in their cages.

Oscar walks past the sinks, gas burners, test tubes and stools to a rear closet.

Around the walls sit dozens of cages with rats, hamsters, frogs and rabbits. A tarantula creeps along inside of an aquarium. A good sized gopher snake slithers through sand in another.

Oscar dons a white lab coat and opens a refrigerator door.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Sarge shoulders the ladder, reaches into a pocket of his coveralls, takes out a pint of vodka, takes a nip, looks back to a door lettered BIOLOGY LAB and mutters.

SARGE

Oscar, you'd make a hell of a Marine.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - NIGHT

In the houses across the street, Christmas lights blink.

The candle light procession disappears around a corner singing Silent Night. Their voices fade.

EXT. CYCLONE FENCE - SURROUNDING THE SCHOOL YARD

SEVEN DARK FIGURES scale one side of the wire and drop down into the vacant school parking lot.

The figures move silently along the wall of the school building, then stop below a window.

DENITRA, female, fourteen, she NEVER TALKS - instead, she uses her hands to express herself. The other kids call her FINGERS.

Denitra points to a window and smiles seductively to the man she adores - Chaco the Trans-Am driver.

Chaco ignores the look and hands a metal bar to Wolf and VICTOR, Chaco's younger brother. Chaco motions to the window with his index and middle finger together.

CHACO

Do it, Fingers.

Denitra hops on the bar. Wolf and Victor boost her to the window. With a knife blade, she pries it open several inches and disappears through the gap.

TORCH, a red headed kid, who always talks about himself in the third person, nudges Chaco. In one hand he holds a Zippo lighter, in the other a rolled up newspaper.

TORCH

Torch wants to burn this place.

CHACO

Someday, Torch. Real soon.

Wolf lets out a low GROWL.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Julia and Abuela wash and dry dishes at the sink.

ABUELA

There is room at my house, if you want to come home.

JULIA

Mama, I'm teaching bi-lingual classes.
Kids here need me.

ABUELA

Everyone needs good teachers.
At home we need bi-lingual teachers.
And Oscar? What about my Oscar.
Where are his friends? Who --

JULIA

He has friends. He's bringing Blink
over for dessert.

ABUELA

His name is Dink not Blink. Have
you met him? He's a good boy like
our Oscar?

Julia turns away. Abuela touches her gently.

ABUELA

Julia, this is a bad place. The people
here... malo.

JULIA

You're wrong, mama. The children are
wonderful. Bright, curious, loving.
They need me....I need them.

Abuela hands her a napkin.

ABUELA

Here is your peace prize, Saint Julia.
But why does my grandson have to be
part of your crusade? Give him
the choice.

JULIA

Sure mama, you ask him to give up
his snakes, spiders and rats.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - SAME TIME

A rat cage with two rats sits near a sink. A sign on the cage
identifies the occupants: REEBOK & ROLEX

Oscar wipes rat droppings off a stainless steel tray, dries

it, reinserts the metal plate, carries the cage back to the wall, then looks into the

Aquarium tank with the tarantula. On the side is a sign ---
SADDAM HUSSEIN

Oscar keeps a close eye on the tarantula as he changes the water and puts in a handful of mealy bugs.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - SAME TIME

From behind a door lettered - FACULTY LOUNGE - come giggles and curses.

INT. FACULTY LOUNGE

Chaco watches bemused as Wolf and the others finish slashing the furniture and trashing the place with Z TAGS.

Chaco throws open the hall door and motions to

TRAN LAN, fifteen, Asian and

SCUD, fifteen. Scud, like the missile, is always going somewhere but never hitting the target. Denitra makes his heart pound and he does most of her translating when people don't understand her sign language.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Wolf and the rest form into ranks. A mock army, armed with large, felt marking pens and cans of spray paint.

CHACO

You know what to do. Do it!

Denitra, Tran and Scud scurry down the hall one way. Chaco, Wolf, Torch and Victor head in the opposite direction.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - SAME TIME

Oscar knocks over a stool as he tries to catch an elusive frog. It hops under a lab bench. Oscar dives after it.

OSCAR

Come 'ere, Madonna.

INT. HALLWAY - THIRD FLOOR

Denitra and Tran spray the Z tag with the slash on the door

of Room 313A.

TRAN

I hate this fucking room.

Scud and Denitra spit on the door.

INT. HALLWAY - MAIN FLOOR - SCHOOL OFFICES

Spray cans HISS as Wolf, Torch and Victor obliterate the names of the Boy's and Girl's Dean on a marbled glass window with a huge Z tag.

Torch rips a Winter Ball poster off the wall, flicks his lighter and gives Chaco a pleading look.

CHACO

Torch, you've got a problem.

Wolf starts to HOWL. Chaco glares. The howl dies in his throat.

INT. STAIRWAY - LANDING

Back on the ladder, Sarge scrapes a wire brush through the tag:
BEANO

SARGE

Graffiti artist, my ass. Vandals,
nothin' but vandals.

(scrapes harder)

Beano, where the hell do you live?
How about I come over to your house?
How about I scribble 'Sarge' on your
walls? On your floors?

From the corridor above, Chaco peeks over the banister and watches as

Sarge scrubs the wall.

Chaco motions Wolf and Victor to come up from below. They run silently.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - SAME TIME

The gopher snake coils around Oscar's neck as he scrubs the glass aquarium. SATAN is lettered on the side.

From outside the lab comes a short burst of laughter, then silence. Oscar turns to the door.

INT. STAIRWAY

Sarge sits on the top stair enjoying a nip. From below comes a low WHISTLE and a menacing HOWL. Sarge stands and peers down the steps.

SARGE

Oscar? That you?

Chaco appears behind him and shoves Sarge head first down the stairway. Sarge hits the wall face first. Bits of teeth and flesh splatter against the tile.

The pint of vodka SHATTERS on the floor.

CHACO

Drinkin' on the job.

Sarge crumbles with a grunt of pain. His eyes roll and close.

Wolf HOWLS as he and Victor race up the stairs. Chaco kicks Sarge viciously in the jaw. There is a loud CRACK. Victor brands Sarge with a Z and a slash.

CHACO

Time to give it up, you useless
piece of shit.

Chaco gives Sarge a mocking salute and kicks him again.

EXT. DOOR TO THE BIOLOGY LAB

The door opens. With the snake still coiled around his neck, Oscar steps into the hall and stares at

Z - TAGS - EVERYWHERE - ON EVERYTHING

OSCAR

Damn it. SARGE?

His voice echoes down the corridor. Immediately, a shrill, high pitched WHISTLE comes from his left. Another answers from his right.

Oscar's eyes dart from side to side. Another WHISTLE, closer. Then another.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB

Oscar shuts the door and pulls out the key, but there is no key hole on that side.

From outside the lab come more WHISTLES and a HOWL. Each closer than the one before.

Oscar pulls the snake from his neck and sets it on the floor.

He flips the light switch. The room goes dark. From outside the door, the WHISTLES and HOWLS grow louder.

The animals in the room begin to stir. The rats squeal and dart about their cage. The Hamster races on a SQUEAKY exercise wheel.

Oscar grabs a lab stool and WHACKS off the end of the light switch.

The WHISTLES and HOWLS build into a crescendo, then silence.

The door bursts open. A hand reaches for the light switch, but finds the stub. Chaco grabs Torch.

CHACO

What's his name?

Torch flicks his zippo and points to the switch.

TORCH

Torch knows Oscar, the Zoo Keeper.

Chaco buries the tip of the ice pick into the plastic stub and shoves the blade upward.

CHACO

Let there be light.

Light fills the lab. Wolf HOWLS and spins a nunchuka.

Denitra makes a sign. Scud nods. Together they back out of the lab quietly.

Tran starts to follow, but he sees the snake, grabs it and disappears.

Chaco opens the door to the rat cage and yanks one out by the tail.

CHACO

Torch says they call you
Zoo Keeper.

Chaco whirls the rat around several times,

CHACO

Don't dis me, punk. Where you
hiding?

then heaves it across the room.

The rat smacks the wall with a THUD and drops to the floor three feet from

Oscar braced in the legs of a lab table. He struggles loose, grabs a stool and comes out fighting.

OSCAR

Killing an animal. What a piece of crap.

Chaco stares at Oscar.

CHACO

Wolf, remember the bitch with the
cane? The one who whacked my car.
This fuckhead had the bat.

OSCAR

You're the fuckhead.

Chaco motions to Wolf.

Wolf whips the nunchukas. One stick and part of the chain wrap around the leg of the stool. Wolf yanks. The stool flies from Oscar's hands.

Victor attacks from the side, gets Oscar in a choke hold, and draws the blade across his throat.

CHACO

Zoo Keeper, you fucked up my car.
You be in deep shit.

Torch turns on a bunsen burner, flicks on his Zippo lighter and turns to Chaco.

TORCH

Let Torch burn him.

CHACO

Right after I stick his nuts.

Wolf HOWLS. Victor tightens his grip on Oscar's neck. Chaco steps in with his ice pick. Oscar spits in his face.

OSCAR

Poltroon. Pig.

Oscar jams an elbow into Victor's stomach. Victor gasps and releases his grip.

Oscar ducks and runs.

From the rear Wolf SMACKS him on the back with the nunchukas. Oscar falls forward.

Victor's knife flashes toward Oscar's back. Misses.

Oscar jumps on a stool and leaps across the lab tables like stones in a pond. The glass SHATTERS as he dives head first through the third floor window.

Wolf lets out a HOWL.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - NIGHT

Covered with blood and garbage, Oscar claws his way over the side of a dumpster box.

O.S. the candle lit procession sings: WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

EXT. THIRD FLOOR WINDOW OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH

Chaco, Wolf, Victor and Torch glare down at

Oscar, a bleeding mangled mess, braces himself up against the bin, then crumbles to his side.

O.S. in the distance, the CLOP of someone running. Gasps and pants for air grow louder and louder.

Oscar turns toward the sound, grimaces in pain and fear.

VOICE

Oscar? Man, that you?

OSCAR

Dink?

DINK, a tall, lanky kid pants for breath as he kneels next to Oscar. Oscar tries to grin, but he coughs up blood and falls into a fetal position.

DINK
Oscar? Oscar?

Dink gasps again and again, whips out an atomizer and sucks in air.

DINK
Oh, shit! Oh, shit!

He jumps to his feet, paces from side to side, not knowing where to go or what to do.

In perfect harmony, the candle lit procession finishes

CHORUS
We wish you a merry Christmas,
and a happy New Year.

From the window above, Wolf HOWLS.

Dink races into the dark.

INT. JULIA'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

On the coffee table waits a wide array of desserts.

Julia sits on the end of the sofa. The neck brace rests at her feet. Abuela brushes her hair as both woman watch the

TELEVISION

KELLY SLATTERY, late twenties, diminutive, but what she lacks in height, she makes up for in solid investigative reporting. Behind her stands an easled chart titled:

WHAT IS WRONG WITH OUR SCHOOLS???

Kelly stabs an old fashioned school pointer at the chart.

KELLY
For the fifth year in a row the
Board of Education finds itself
facing major budget cuts. Teachers
laid off. Programs cut --

Abuela clicks off the television set.

ABUELA

No one here cares about education.
At home we have a --

JULIA

Mama, please?

Abuela nods. Julia takes a subtle look at her watch, but Abuela catches it.

ABUELA

It's nine o'clock. Where is our
Oscar and this Dink person?

The phone RINGS. Both women jolt. Julia grabs her cane and limps to the phone.

Abuela blesses herself.

JULIA

(lifts the phone)

Merry Christmas.....

(listens)

Yes, this is---

(listens)

Dear God! I'll be right there.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Oscar lies on a bed unconscious, covered in bandages.
Plastic tubes run into his arms and down his nostrils.

Julia and Abuela sit at opposite sides of the bed. Each caresses one of his hands. Abuela pinches rosary beads between her fingers and whispers

ABUELA

Hail Mary, full of grace....

Tears streak Julia's face. She looks at her son and turns to the third person in the room. A FEMALE DOCTOR wearing a name tag - DR. BRACE

DR. BRACE

He's stable, but he has suffered
severe head trauma and a punctured
lung.

JULIA

When will he...?

DR. BRACE

Right now he needs rest. Lots of rest.

Dr. Brace takes Julia in her arms and holds her close for a beat, then leaves the room.

Julia stares at the closing door, then weeps aloud and rubs her son's hand.

JULIA

Come on, Honey. You're going to be a vet.
The best damn vet in the world.

(a beat)

You're all I've got...left.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Abuela's head lies on Oscar's bed. Julia gently nudges her awake.

JULIA

Mama, there's a lounge down the hall
where you can stretch out.

Abuela shakes the cramps from her body. Julia rubs her neck.

JULIA

Please. I'll call you when he
wakes up.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

A soft RAP on the door disturbs Julia's restless slumber.
Disoriented, Julia opens her eyes and sees

LIEUTENANT STEVEN MILLER, tall, forties, struts into the room
and waves his badge.

MILLER

Mrs. Morales?

Julia nods.

MILLER

I have a few questions.

Miller saunters to the bed, lifts Oscar's hand and inspects it carefully.

MILLER

Did you know Oscar was at school?

JULIA

Of course.

MILLER

On Christmas Eve?

Julia glares.

MILLER

Yeah, sure you did.

Miller looks under Oscar's finger nails.

MILLER

What was he SUPPOSED to be doing there? It's Christmas vacation.

Julia yanks Oscar's hand from Miller.

JULIA

Exactly, what are you looking for?

MILLER

Spray paint. Someone shoved the janitor down a flight of stairs and trashed the school.

JULIA

You think my son --
(brandishes her cane)
You, son-of-a-bitch! Get out of here.

Miller saunters to the door and exits.

MILLER

Nice language.

Julia starts to toss the cane, looks at her son and sobs.

INT. MOM & POP LIQUOR STORE - EARLY MORNING

Tran Lan hurries down an unlit aisle with a twelve pack of beer under one arm and reaches for a liter of vodka.

A broom stick WHACKS Tran on the back. He cries out and falls to the floor. The vodka bottle flies from his hand and SHATTERS.

The broom handle descends a second time. Tran tries to fend off the blow.

AN ELDERLY ASIAN MAN, Tran's father, draws back the stick for a third blow. An ASIAN WOMAN, Tran's mother, tries to restrain her husband -- to no avail. He strikes again and screams

TRAN'S FATHER

Curse of my soul! You would steal
from your own parents! Why?

Tran speeds around the counter on his hands and knees.

TRAN'S FATHER

Crawl dog! Crawl.

INT. OSCAR'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Abuela has joined her exhausted daughter.

ABUELA

Go home. Get some sleep.

Julia tries to resist, but she knows it's good advice. She gives her mom a hug and Oscar a kiss on the forehead.

INT. OF CHACO'S BLACK TRANS-AM - SAME TIME

Chaco and Torch turn to the back seat where Tran sits petrified between Victor and Wolf.

CHACO

You let an old man kick the
shit out of you?

TRAN

He's my father. I couldn't --

Chaco motions to Wolf and Victor.

CHACO

Twist him.

Wolf and Victor take turns slugging Tran. Torch takes out his

Zippo and FLICKS it on an off.

TORCH

Let Torch show him some real pain.

CHACO

The fat of his arm.

Wolf HOWLS.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MORNING - SAME TIME

Near the entrance, Julia listens to

DR. BRACE

Mrs. Morales, you need some sleep.

JULIA

The police said that a custodian was injured.

DR. BRACE

Did that jerk Miller come into Oscar's room last night?

(off Julia's puzzled look)

Police Lieutenant? Tall? Thinks he's god's gift to the world?

(off Julia's sigh)

We had a bag lady in here who was hit by a bus. Miller wanted to arrest her for stealing a shopping cart.

Julia tries to laugh, she can't.

JULIA

Please. I'd like to speak with the custodian. Maybe, he saw something.

Julia pleads with her eyes. Brace checks her clipboard.

DR. BRACE

Gus Coin. Room 208. He's an ornery sort, but he might like the company.

INT. HALLWAY OF A NONDESCRIPT FLAT - VERY POORLY LIT

In the shadows, a DRUNKEN SLOB, forties, careens from wall to wall, pounds on a door and slurs

SLOB

Your mama's out. Time to play our

game, sweetie.

INT. LIEUTENANT MILLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Miller sits behind a cluttered desk.

Julia darts glances of hatred as she listens.

MILLER

Whether you want to admit it or not,
your son is a member of a gang. At
least a dozen kids trashed that school.

JULIA

Okay. Oscar trashed a school and then
dove out a third story window? Why?

MILLER

Drugs.

JULIA

Drugs? Jesus Christ! What the hell is --

MILLER

I am a police officer, Mrs. Morales. Do
not swear at me.

JULIA

My husband was a police officer. You're
a Cub Scout!

Julia storms to the door.

MILLER

Mrs. Morales, you should be thankful.

Julia spins.

MILLER

I'm treating Oscar's fall as
an accident.

JULIA

Another goddamn accident!
(touches her neck brace)
The drunk driver that killed my
husband and...
(taps her leg with the cane)
did this to me. Said the same damn

thing.

INT. HOSPITAL - OSCAR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Julia, exhausted, tears well in her eyes as she looks down at her pallid son. Oscar's eyes open a crack. He utters a single word.

OSCAR

Penguin.

JULIA

Oscar, I love you.

EXT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

On the bleacher stands, the gang from the school and a few others hang out.

One kid, PARROT, fifteen, with a tendency to repeat things, uses a handful of colored markers to draw a detailed macaw on a wooden seat.

Chaco grabs one of the markers and makes a Z with a slash across the drawing. Parrot's hurt, but too scared to complain.

WOLF

Chaco. Business.

Chaco turns. TWO YOUNG KIDS approach the bleachers.

CHACO

You got money?

Both kids shrug. Their eyes drop to the ground.

CHACO

You punkasses want credit?

Both kids look up hopefully. Chaco turns to his gang and laughs then smacks the closest kid across the face. Wolf lets out a HOWL.

CHACO

You little shits still owe me
twenty.

Both kids turn to run. Torch cuts off their escape and flicks his lighter. The kids freeze.

CHACO

You wanta cook 'em, Torch?

The kids dodge and run for their lives.

Chaco gives them a head start, then turns to his gang.

CHACO

Don't catch 'em. Scare 'em. I wanta see brown in their pants.

The gang pours out of the bleachers and gives chase.

Wolf, Torch and Victor walk to the backstop to watch.

Chaco starts to follow, then freezes, looks down at his foot and sees

The gopher snake from the night before coiling around his ankle.

Chaco's not afraid of much, but he HATES snakes.

Tran grabs it.

TRAN

Lettin' Satan get some air.

Chaco tries to hide his terror, but Tran takes note and stuffs the snake into a black cloth bag.

CHACO

Kill it.

Tran nods and runs after the rest of the gang. Chaco starts toward the backstop, then hears a muffled WHEEZE from the under the bleachers.

Chaco motions to the sides of the bleachers.

UNDER THE BLEACHERS

Dink inhales from an atomizer as he struggles through the scaffolding toward

THE FAR END OF THE GRANDSTAND

Three figures appear in the sunlight, then hurry into the shadows toward Dink. He stops, pants, turns and runs straight into

Chaco who grins and waves the ice pick.

CHACO

What are you doing here, shit
for brains?

DINK

(wheezes)

Nothing, man. Just chillin'.

Wolf, Torch and Victor appear and give Dink the once over. Victor fingers Dink's jacket. Wolf HOWLS, lights a cigarette and blows smoke in Dink's face. Dink gasps for air. Victor rips the collar off his jacket.

VICTOR

Bro's a poor boy. Cheap threads.

CHACO

What are you doing here?

DINK

Nothing.

Chaco pricks the end of Dink's nose. A droplet of blood appears.

CHACO

Lying, Pinocchio.

Dink tries to say something, but he goes into an asthmatic attack, gasping and panting for air.

Chaco cups a hand to his ear and pretends to hear through Dink's coughing spasm.

CHACO

You wanta what?

(to Torch and Wolf)

Hold him.

Wolf and Torch grab Dink's arms.

Chaco whips the cigarette out of Wolf's mouth, shoves it between Dink's lips and squeezes his nose

Dink hold his breath for as long as he can, then inhales.

He turns white. His knees buckle. He fights for air.

Wolf and Torch let go. Dink crumbles.

CHACO

You got two bad habits, Pinocchio.
Nosing around and smoking.
Either one could kill you.

INT. HOSPITAL OSCAR'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Julia, exhausted, leans over the bed and kisses her son on the forehead. Abuela ushers her to the door. Julia looks back toward Oscar.

JULIA

I love you.

Almost embarrassed, she remembers her mother.

JULIA

You too, mom. I --

Abuela understands. She puts a finger across Julia's lips and gives her a hug and a kiss.

INT. HOVEL - KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the sink, Denitra washes a plate in rusty tap water. As she stacks the plate on top of a half dozen others, a large cockroach scurries across sink.

Denitra strikes out with the dishtowel, misses and smacks the stack of plates. They CRASH to the floor. Frozen, she stares at the

DOOR

A beat and it flies open. A WOMAN, dressed to the gaudy nines, stomps into the room, glances at the shattered dishes, then CRACKS Denitra across the face.

Denitra doesn't flinch.

WOMAN

I told your mama...Crack smokin'
slut...I told her, I keep you 'till
she done her time.

(waves around the pig sty)

I give you a fine home...and
what I get...nothin'.

(she CRACKS Denitra again)

I get nothin'. You don't talk...
I tell you chile' you just like

your mama. Uh huh. You evil.
 You goin' straight to hell.
 The front bell RINGS.

WOMAN

Don't you tell nobody we kin.
 You hear me?

(primps out the door)

I ain't your aunt. Your mamma
 ain't nothin'. We ain't nothin'.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Sarge lies on a bed, his jaw wired shut. He listens intently
 to Julia.

JULIA

Oscar's doing okay. Thank you for
 asking.

Through wired jaw and bloodied lips, Sarge makes a feeble attempt
 at speech.

SARGE

Good boy.

JULIA

(smiles proudly)

He was the only person you saw?

(off Sarge's nod)

School opens in a day. Maybe the
 principal or some of the kids
 will help.

Sarge shakes his head no.

JULIA

Why not?

SARGE

Kids scared. Police?

JULIA

They want to arrest Oscar for
 vandalism and breaking and
 entering.

SARGE

(gives the finger)

Cops.

JULIA

My husband was a cop. A damned
good one.

Sarge makes a peace sign.

JULIA

Unless you're talking about
Lieutenant Miller.

Gus gives a 'that's-him' sign.

JULIA

Do you want me to bring you
anything?

Sarge's eyes light up. He sits up and mimes a man opening a
bottle and pouring a drink.

Julia knows what he wants.

JULIA

Coke or Seven-up?

Sarge tries again. Julia laughs.

JULIA

And a straw.

Sarge falls back on the pillows.

INT. DARK APARTMENT - MORNING

SLOB MAN, in a tank top t-shirt, sits on a couch in the dark.
He sucks out the last dregs of beer, crushes the can and tosses
it onto a pile of empty cans.

The front door CREAKS open.

Slob Man shields his eyes from GLARE, then smiles drunkenly
at

A SHADOW IN THE DOORWAY

SLOB MAN

Just in time to play our game.

INT. HOSPITAL MAIN CORRIDOR - MORNING

SEVERAL PEOPLE remove decorations from a Christmas Tree.

Julia waits for an elevator, then suddenly starts trembling.
She shoves open the door to the stairwell and limps up the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Ashen, Julia limps down the corridor, rounds a corner and collides into Dr. Brace. The two women share a long, mournful look.

DR. BRACE

Mrs. Morales, I am sorry.

JULIA

No! No!

Julia pushes her away and staggers into her son's room.

INT. WOLF'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bach's BRANDENBURG CONCERTO blares from a C.D. player.

Pictures of dogs, wolves and coyotes cover the walls.

On a coffee table, an empty syringe lies next to a can of Alpo Dog food.

On a tattered sofa, Wolf waves a tablespoon like a baton in time with the music.

The concerto ends. Wolf digs into the can of dog food, takes out a spoonful, eats it and HOWLS.

His front door CLICKS open. Wolf tries to stand. Can't. He makes a poor attempt at welcoming

Chaco, Torch and Victor.

VICTOR

He's wasted.

TORCH

Fried.

CHACO

(to Wolf)

Did you go to the hospital?

(off his nod)

Zoo Keeper?

Wolf grins, slips off the end of the couch, lies on his back and lifts his arms and legs into the air.

Chaco steps up to Wolf and kicks him in the ribs.

CHACO

No respect for the dead. You're a piece of shit.

EXT. CEMETERY - (FROM THE FIRST SCENE) - LATE AFTERNOON

Julia and Abuela kneel next to a freshly turned plot with a Periodic Table tombstone.

OSCAR MORALES - AUGUST 8, 1985 - DIED JANUARY 2, 1999

In tears, Julia places a wreath of flowers, pushes herself up with the cane and turns to

The flower covered grave of her husband Gabriel. Julia lifts her 'closed fist' and limps down the hill.

Abuela blesses herself and hurries after her daughter.

ABUELA

Where are you going?

JULIA

Back.

ABUELA

That's a bad place.

JULIA

And mama, I'm going to make it worse! Much, much worse.

From behind them comes a WHEEZE. Julia turns and sees Dink, head bent, he extends his hand.

DINK

Mrs. Morales, my name is Dink.

ABUELA

Dink? Oscar's friend? How did you get here?

Dink puffs on an atomizer. His eyes lower.

DINK

I took four buses. I'm sorry.

(starts to cry)
I'm really sorry. There was
nothing I could do.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the table, Julia, Dink and Abuela eat tacos and sip cokes.

JULIA
Dink, you didn't see anything?
Anyone?

DINK
I ran. I ran as fast as I could.
I'm a coward. But I did call the
ambulance.

JULIA
Why didn't you say something to
your parents?

DINK
I live in a group home.

Julia and Abuela exchange sympathetic glances.

JULIA
But you know who did it.

DINK
Not their names. I've only been at
Lincoln for a month. Oscar was my
only friend.

JULIA
Why didn't you call me? Or call
the police?

Dink breathes heavier, pulls out his atomizer and inhales.
Abuela gently takes his hand.

ABUELA
Scared?

Dink nods.

JULIA
Will you help me?

ABUELA
Us.

Dink looks back and forth between the two women.

DINK

I'm a kid. Cops don't believe kids.

JULIA

They'll believe me.

DINK

You just moved here. You don't know what's going down.

Julia puts chin in the palm of her hands and leans closer.

JULIA

You're right. Tell us what's going down.

INT. LIEUTENANT MILLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julia measures her words. Enunciating carefully, like talking to a three year old.

JULIA

Dink was coming to meet Oscar. He was waiting in the school yard. He heard the window break and then Oscar --

MILLER

Why didn't he call us?

JULIA

He doesn't trust the police. He's scared. Will you do anything?

MILLER

IF we took it into court and IF... Dink? That's his name, isn't it?

Julia nods with a ray of hope.

MILLER

IF he was willing to talk, his testimony would be thrown out as hearsay.

JULIA

Those kids murdered my son.

MILLER

Murder isn't the word. Though,

accident may not be either.
If Dink is telling the truth,
then --

JULIA

The truth. Oscar's dead! And those
bastards are walking the streets.
What the hell are you going to do?

MILLER

I'm going to work on it, Mrs.
Morales. I'm going to work on it.

JULIA

So am I, Lieutenant Miller.
So am I!

INT. MAIN FLOOR - ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH - DAY

Students and teachers hurry by the Dean's Office.

Z tags still remain on the marbled glass windows.

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE

At one end of a long counter, an ADORING WOMAN gently runs her
fingers through her son's red hair.

Torch looks up and gives his mother an angelic look.
She pats his head as she defends her son to DEAN OF BOYS.

TORCH'S ADORING MOTHER

He's a good boy. You don't
understand his --

DEAN OF BOYS

He set another fire. I'm not a
psychiatrist, but your son...

Jacob and the Woman continue to discuss Torch while at the

SAME COUNTER - SEVERAL FEET AWAY

Julia stands in front of the DEAN OF GIRLS, late twenties, a
no nonsense Afro-American woman.

DEAN OF GIRLS

What is Dink's full name?

JULIA

I promised not to --

The Dean makes a stop sign.

DEAN OF GIRLS

Let me guess. He's scared.

(off Julia's nod)

Okay, give me the names of the kids Dink heard at the baseball diamond.

Torch cocks his ear to their conversation.

JULIA

He doesn't know their names.

He's new here too.

DEAN OF GIRLS

How about descriptions?

As she waits for a response, torch edges closer.

JULIA

Two Latinos. Three White males. An Asian, an African-American female and a few others. Oh, one of the White males is an adult.

DEAN OF GIRLS

That's it?

(off Julia's nod)

Mrs. Morales, we have nineteen hundred students in this school. And every one of them fits your description.

JULIA

One of them has tattoos.

Torch's eyes go wide.

DEAN OF GIRLS

That only eliminates six hundred guys and a few hundred girls. Mrs. Morales you have to give me something to go on.

JULIA

Where's the principal's office?

DEAN OF GIRLS

Mrs. Field can't do anything.

Even with the limp, Julia manages to stomp to the door.

DEAN OF GIRLS

Mrs. Morales?

Julia turns with renewed hope.

DEAN OF GIRLS

Have you talked to the police?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Framed degrees, plaques and commendations hang from the walls. On the desk an ebony plaque reads:

JOSEPH HONOR - SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

JOSEPH HONOR, fifties, a wily, handsome S.O.B., sits at a conference table across from Julia.

HONOR

It's my understanding that it was an accident.

JULIA

Why would a student dive out of a third story window?

HONOR

Why do kids do half the things they do? A dare? Drugs?

JULIA

How many pupils are enrolled in your district?

HONOR

Thirty-five thousand, give or take.

JULIA

And how long have you been in education?

HONOR

Over thirty -- I don't understand your point, Mrs. Morales.

JULIA

You wouldn't.

Julia throws open the door to find

Kelly Slattery (the television reporter) and a camera crew.
Julia points through the open door to Honor.

JULIA

Ask him if he knows one damn
thing about kids.

HONOR

I have it on good authority that
your son was a trouble maker, a
vandal and the member of a gang.
Kelly rushes into the room with a microphone.

KELLY

What about the gangs?

HONOR

There are no gangs in my schools!

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Abuela shapes tortillas at the sink. From O.S. comes a soft
RAPPING.

INT. JULIA'S LIVING ROOM

Abuela exits the kitchen wiping her hand on her apron. Two gentle
RAPS come from the front door.

ABUELA

Who is it?

VOICE

I'm...I'm a friend of Oscar's.
I'd like to --

Abuela cracks opens the door. A blanket is thrown over her head.
Chaco struts in and slaps her through the cloth. Victor and
Wolf spin her around and around.

Abuela shrieks from inside the covering. Her hand reaches for
her heart.

Chaco whacks her a few more times.

CHACO

Learn something, BITCH. You're on

the wrong road. My road.

Abuela gasps and goes limp. Wolf and Victor drop her. She falls face down into the carpet.

Chaco gives her a kick in the ribs. There's a SNAP.

From beneath the blanket a trickle of blood appears.

Chaco and Wolf saunter out of the apartment.

Victor whips off the blanket and stares down at Abuela.

VICTOR

Chaco, you said she fine. Man,
she's ugly --

Victor realizes he's alone and races out of the apartment.

INT. LIEUTENANT MILLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julia, dressed in black, glares at Miller.

MILLER

Your mother had a history of heart disease?

JULIA

She didn't have a history of broken ribs.

MILLER

When she fell. Older people's
bones are brittle.

JULIA

And that's it?

MILLER

What do you want me to do, Mrs.
Morales? The doctor said she
died of natural causes. Every
death isn't murder.

JULIA

And my son?

Miller gives her a hopeless shrug.

INT. SARGE' HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sarge pours two glasses of Coke and stretches his wireless jaw.

SARGE

And that's about it?

Haggard, but determined, Julia nods.

Sarge hands her a glass and sits down on the bed.

SARGE

Okay. Tell me what you want
with a sixty year old....

(flexes his muscles)

Former United States Marine.

JULIA

You know the school.

SARGE

Every nook and cranny.

JULIA

If I knew the school and had
access to files.

SARGE

You're goin' to war?

JULIA

Yes.

SARGE

How big's your army?

JULIA

Me.

SARGE

The police?

JULIA

No.

SARGE

Anyone in the administration
interested in helping?

JULIA

No.

SARGE

Do you have a plan of attack?

JULIA

It's sketchy.

SARGE

Where do I enlist?

INT. BURGER JOINT - DAY

Dink nervously sucks down a french fry.

DINK

Please, Mrs. Morales. Let be somebody.
I keep seeing Oscar in the all that garbage
and I ran. I ran away.

JULIA

You want to help?

DINK

I want to try.

Julia and Dink toast with milk shakes.

INT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Sarge and Julia stroll through the darkened halls. Sarge points
to this door and that. Julia takes notes on a pad.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF SCHOOL - NIGHT - LATER

Julia lifts several papers from a laser printer.

JULIA

Ready.

SARGE

That's a lot of paper.

JULIA

When your armies small, you need
good information.

Sarge salutes and turns off the school's computer.

EXT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN SCHOOL - MORNING

A bell PEELS. Teachers and Students climb the steps.

ACROSS THE STREET - SAME TIME

Julia and Dink wait in the shadows of a stairway. He points to Denitra and Scud entering the school.

DINK

There's two of 'em.

Julia gives him a hug. Dink's proud for a beat, but begins to tremble when O.S. the bass notes of loud SALSA music break the quiet.

Across the street, Chaco's Trans-Am screech to a stop in the school's red zone.

Dink pulls out his atomizer and inhales. Julia steps out of the shadow for a better look at the car. She sees the dented front fender.

Victor hops out waves to his brother. Chaco REVS the engine and lays a strip of rubber halfway down the block.

Dink points frantically to the car. Julia gives him a knowing smile.

JULIA

He's got a buddy that thinks he's a dog.

Dink gives her a 'how-do-you-know-that' look.

EXT. SCHOOL - TEACHERS PARKING LOT - DAY

Dink points to a battered Ford station wagon.

DINK

That's Buckely's

Julia gives him a pat on the back.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Julia puts the finishing touches on her new creation --Dink. Dink has been transformed into a gangster rocker. Spiked hair, leather jacket etc.

INT. JULIA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Scattered on the table lie a half dozen pieces of metal. Julia lifts each piece, oils it, wipes it with a rag and sets it down.

KITCHEN - NIGHT - LATER

Julia finishes reassembling her husband's .357 Magnum and drops it in her purse.

INT. JULIA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

She stands before the mirror and removes the neck brace. She lifts a pair of scissors with one hand and her long black hair with the other. She hesitates, stares at herself in the mirror. She can't cut it.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - EARLY MORNING

Two joggers run pass a grey haired woman with a cane.

ONE JOGGER

Morning, ma'am.

Julia waves casually. Her hair is streaked with gray and wrapped in a tight bun. She wears thick glasses and black gloves.

She steps off the curb in front of the battered Ford station wagon. She takes a furtive glance up and down the street, pops the hood, pulls out the cables to the sparks plugs, shuts the hood, walks down the street and stuffs her gloves in a shoulder purse.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF THE SCHOOL - DAY

Utter confusion. Teachers sign in and grab their mail. A TEACHER, in a sweat suit lettered: Lincoln High - GIRLS P.E., corners the R.O.T.C. TEACHER.

P.E. TEACHER

(waves a sheet of paper)

They're cutting my dance program. What am I gonna do?

He shoves his own paper in her face.

R.O.T.C. TEACHER

I got discharged. Ten years in this
cess pool and I'm getting canned.

R.O.T.C. TEACHER stomps away. She grabs an Asian man.

P.E. TEACHER

They're cutting my
aerobics class.

ASIAN MAN

(waves a finger)

You get the credential of the
bilingual. Then you be okay.
To be the teacher of the English
like me. Okay?

INT. OFFICE - A GLASS WINDOW - FACING THE MAIN CORRIDOR

Four types of cameras rest on the counter.

A tail of students wait in line on the other side of the glass
as Ignatius "IGGY" Cole, sixteen, a camera nut, dispenses
justice and issues readmit slips.

A female student shoves a note through a slot in the glass,
flirts and gives her female friend a confident look.

Iggy inspects the note carefully, then shoves it back.

IGGY

No one's mother wrote this garbage.

FEMALE STUDENT

(to her friend)

I told you use a dictionary.

IGGY

Next.

INT. HUB OF THE OFFICE - A CIRCULAR DESK

Behind it sits, "B.B." Bushnell, fifties, huge, sporting
violet hair and wearing a long sleeved, floral blouse. From
her secretary's desk, B.B. runs the school. B.B. doesn't take
anything from anyone.

In front of her desk stand two sheepish adults and, Julia.

B.B. hands them a packet, a key and points to a black ledger.

B.B.

You all signed in the book?

They nod. B.B. glances up at a male substitute.

B.B.

The key's for the head. Don't lose it. You're teaching algebra for Mrs. Web. Room 414.

MALE SUB

I'm a P.E. teacher. I don't know nothin' about math.

B.B.

Or English. Go. Teach.

B.B. shoos him off. The next substitute approaches.

B.B.

You're teaching English for Yamaguchi. Room 218.

The sub leaves. Julia steps forward, but a Young Man cuts her off. He pops open a briefcase displaying a hundred Class Rings. He points to the clock, 8:14.

RING MAN

I have an eight fifteen appointment with Margaret Field.

B.B. points to a bench and hisses

B.B.

This is a school. Not a goddamn jewelry store.

Head bent, the Ring Man shuts his suitcase and goes to the bench like a disobedient child.

B.B. scans the substitute list on her desk, then looks at Julia with confusion.

B.B.

Who are you here for?

JULIA

Mr. Buckley.

B.B.
He's out again?

JULIA
Car trouble.

B.B.
Third time in two weeks.
(gives Julia the once over)
He's got some of the toughest kids
in this school...Hell, on this
planet.

JULIA
I like a challenge.

B.B.
You're a saint.

JULIA
Hardly.

Julia turns from the desk and heads for the door.

B.B.
Don't you want his room number?

JULIA
313A.

B.B. scratches her head. Two squealing cheerleaders rush through the door.

CHEERLEADERS
Yearbook pictures! Yearbook
pictures!

They tear around the office snapping pictures.

Iggy turns from the window and snaps pictures of the cheerleaders taking pictures.

The DEAN OF GIRLS comes into the office just as Julia reaches for the knob.

She does a does a double take as Julia exits.

A DOOR LETTERED PRINCIPAL FLIES OPEN

"MAGGIE" Field, forties, feisty, and articulate steps into the room. The Ring Man jumps off the bench and pops his briefcase open.

MAGGIE

(to B.B.)

The superintendent is on his way
and he's bringing a T.V. crew.

Maggie slams her door. The Ring Man sits down.

Through the open door, the DEAN OF GIRLS watches Julia limp down the hall -- she is still trying to put two and two together when

An African-American man in preachers black strolls in.

REVEREND approaches B.B., shoves a card in her face and in a Baptist Preachers voice

REVEREND

Here to discuss Racism! In your text books.
In your classrooms. In --

B.B.

(points to the bench)

Sit down and shut up.

Reverend takes a seat on the bench.

REVEREND

Blessed are the patient.

B.B.

(SNAPS a pencil)

This is going to be a lousy day.

INT. SCHOOL BOILER ROOM

Sarge gathers up tools and pieces of sheet metal. Julia looks on with apprehension.

JULIA

Sarge, you've done enough.

SARGE

Bell rings in five minutes. Get a
cup of coffee. This is gonna take

a while.

JULIA

You've done enough.

SARGE

I was involved in two wars. This is the first one I truly believe in.

A soft bell PEALS three times. Julia starts for the door.

SARGE

Relax, that's not for you. Three bell's for me. But they can wait.

Sarge gives her a kiss on the cheek.

SARGE

Oscar was a fine young man. I wasn't shanghaied, I'm a volunteer.

EXT. SCHOOL - FACULTY PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

The black Trans-Am enters and pulls in front of a Mercedes Benz sedan and a 1956 Cherry Red Mustang.

Hunkered between the two cars waits Chaco's gang.

With a nail, Wolf scrapes a Tic-Tac-Toe board on the door panel of the Mustang. Victor SCRATCHES an X in the middle. Wolf SCRAPES an O above it. Wolf waits for Victor to make the next move, but

Chaco pushes both of them aside and CARVES a Z through the red paint with the tip of his ice pick.

CHACO

Cat game.

He hands his brother Victor a packet.

CHACO

Come back with nine hundred.
You know who gets what?

Victor nods. Chaco nudges Wolf and Torch toward his Trans-Am, then glares when he sees

Tran, twenty feet away, playing with the gopher snake.

CHACO

Dude's disin' me.
He still owes us.

Scud, Parrot and Denitra, overhear the comment and exchange anxious looks.

A long bell PEALS. Scud holds his hands out in front of him like he's hand cuffed.

SCUD

Off to our cells.

Parrot bends his head, extends his hands, mimicking Scud.

PARROT

Off to our cells.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - SAME TIME

Julia unlocks the door, steps inside and gawks.

It's a pig sty. The globes and wall maps look like they've been gnawed by rats. Obscene drawings and carvings cover the walls and desks.

JULIA

(to herself)

Mr. Buckley must have missed the
classroom decorations course.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

Students and teachers charge up stairs, down hallways and disappear into classrooms.

Denitra, Tran, Scud and Parrot enter room 313A, then stop in the doorway and smile as one. Tran sticks his head back into the hallway and shouts

TRAN

Victor, we got a sub!

Victor, surrounded by a group of kids, smiles and takes a wad of money from a KID and hands him a packet of cocaine bindles.

INT. 313A

Denitra, Tran and Scud walk to the window and stare defiantly at the elderly woman leaning against the teacher's desk.

Parrot climbs into a seat, pulls out a handful of colored felt pens and starts drawing a cockatiel.

Across the aisle, MANUEL, fourteen, pudgy, with a pubescent voice and coke bottle glasses taps BEAN, a tall, skinny kid on the shoulder and whispers.

MANUEL

Bean, tell Sashy I gotta funny feeling.

Bean leans forward and whispers to SASHY PINDAR. Sashy gives him a 'who-cares' look, pulls out a mirror and eye shadow and works on her face. A beat, then she turns away from the curious glance of

MEHABEN PALA, female, Hindi, fourteen, though her English is wanting, she has no idea why she is in this class of rejects.

Victor saunters into the room as the second bell RINGS. He tries to slam the door behind him but

Sarge catches it and prods Victor into the room.

Victor resists, but he moves. Sarge shuts the door, heads to a rear door and opens his tool chest.

Victor joins Denitra, Scud and Tran at the window.

JULIA

The bell rang. Please, take a seat.

The group at the window shoot Julia a defiant glare.

PARROT

Please take a seat.

Victor snarls. Behind him, Sarge turns on a drill.

Using her cane as a brace, Julia hobbles to the blackboard and takes a piece of chalk from the sill.

Victor points to the clock: 8:25.

VICTOR

Five dollars the CRIPPLE don't
last ten minutes.

Scud considers. Tran, stifles a laugh and points to the black cloth sack. Inside the snake moves. Scud looks at the sack and back to Victor.

SCUD

No way, man. I ain't bettin' against you.

JULIA

(to Scud)

Take the bet, young man.

Victor, Tran, Scud and Denitra exchange looks.

Julia turns to the blackboard and prints in large letters

INSERT: -- I.M. MADD

JULIA

Let me introduce myself.

Denitra whirls her finger around her temple, making the sign of a crazy person.

Julia catches her in the act.

JULIA

Now here is an intelligent young woman. She understands. Would the rest of you please repeat after me.
I am mad! I am mad!

Manuel, Bean, Sashy, Mehaben join the chant voluntarily.

Parrot can't help himself, he begins to clap.

JULIA & STUDENTS

I am mad! I am mad! I am mad!

Victor, Scud, Tran and Denitra stand transfixed.

At the rear door, Sarge grins and screws in a hasp.

Julia WHACKS her cane on the desk. The chanting stops.

JULIA

Now that you know something about me.

Julia glares at Denitra, Scud, Tran and Victor.

JULIA
Please be seated.

MEHABEN
Miss Madd. There is a seating chart
and a class list in the top drawer.

Julia smiles, opens the drawer, takes out the chart and list
and finds the Hindi girl's name.

JULIA
Thank you, Mehaben.

MEHABEN
You're welcome.

Denitra gives Mehaben the finger.

VICTOR
Bitch.

JULIA
(laughs at Victor)
Bitch? Bitch is an impossibility.

Julia opens her purse, moves the .357 aside, counts out nine
sheets of paper.

JULIA
Bitch is wrong. Much like vixen.
Or heifer, doe, jenny, mare. You
see they all refer to animals.
Ergo, Mehaben cannot be a
bitch.

With her eyes fixed on Victor, she walks between desks
distributing a sheet of paper on each desk top.

JULIA
There must be a more definitive word.
Something that really expresses
your feeling of betrayal.

At the rear door, Sarge drops a padlock through the u-bolt and
SNAPS it shut.

Julia sidles in on Victor.

JULIA
Now this young man?

SCUD
You mean Victor?

Victor shoves Scud down the aisle.

Sarge carries a large strip of sheet metal to the window.

VICTOR
You gave that bitch my name.

JULIA
There YOU go again. Bitch is the wrong word.
Isn't it, Victor?

Scud tries to apologize. Victor shoves him again.

JULIA
And Fucker.

The class does a double take.

JULIA
And shit an asshole, et cetera are so over
used. They've lost all import.
They no longer convey...

She pretends to consider the options as she gets in Victor's face.

JULIA
They don't express true feelings.
Do they, Victor?

Victor glares. Julia moves back to the chalkboard and points to: I.M. MADD

JULIA
But this tells who I am.
How I feel.

She glance at the clock: 8:40 to Scud.

JULIA
Should have taken the bet.

She lifts the class roster and reads.

JULIA

Please raise your hand as I read
your name. Rosendo Alvarez?

SILENCE

JULIA

Rosendo Alvarez?

Scud, Denitra and Tran, look to Victor. He gives them a glare
to kill.

JULIA

Rosendo is absent. Victor Alvarez.

Julia smiles and waves a pencil to Victor.

JULIA

We've already met.... And Rosendo must be
your brother.

(reads)

Eugene Berman?

Manuel makes a shy gesture toward Parrot, then whispers

MANUEL

He only answers to Parrot.

JULIA

Parrot?

Parrot looks up from his drawing and raises a hand.

PARROT

Parrot.

JULIA

Thank you.

PARROT

Thank you.

JULIA

Denitra Lee Davis?

Denitra stiffens. Mehaben points to Denitra.

MEHABEN

She doesn't talk. Call her Fingers.
They all have stupid nicknames.

Denitra snatches the cloth bag from Tran and charges Mehaben. She tilts the bag. The snake plops on Mehaben's lap. Manuel goes over in his desk.

Julia starts forward.

Mehaben lifts the snake and pets it lovingly.

Denitra's mouth drops opens.

MEHABEN

My grandfather raises cobras.

Tran walks up the row to collect his snake.

TRAN

I'm Tran Lan, but I like to be
called Train.

Julia nods. Tran holds the cloth bag open.

MEHABEN

Not yet.

Tran sits and waits for his snake.

Bean taps Manuel's shoulder. Julia hears.

BEAN

Man! That's Satan. That's Gundry's snake.

Julia's smile disappears.

O.S. a BUZZ and a CLANK. The ceiling light dims as Sarge screws the sheet metal plate over the bottom row of windows. The class turns, curious.

Julia continues with the list.

JULIA

Sashy Pindar?

Sashy raises her hand and goes back to her eye shadow.

JULIA
Michael Hoest?

BEAN
Call me Bean.

JULIA
(returns the smile)
Bean it is. Manuel Paz?

Manuel wants to be cool. He rips off his coke rim glasses, and tries to lower his voice. He can't.

MANUEL
Manuel Paz. Here, Miss Madd.

Julia holds back a laugh and looks at the Hindi girl.

JULIA
And Miss Mehaben Pala.

Mehaben raises her hand. The snake slithers down her arm.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - SAME TIME

Ring Man looks at his watch and the school clock. Both read 8:50. He stands and approaches B.B.

RING MAN
My appointment was at eight fifteen.

B.B.
Listen, CLOWN, charging two hundred dollars for those crappy rings. If you don't want to wait, go peddle your wares somewhere else.

Ring Man returns to bench. REVEREND looks at him.

REVEREND
You sellin' jewlery?

Ring Man SNAPS open his briefcase.

ATTENDANCE WINDOW - MAIN OFFICE

Iggy thumbs through an issue of Camera Magazine.

The same two girls approach the window and slip a note through the slot.

INSERT NOTE: Absolutely illegible.

IGGY
I can't read this.

FEMALE STUDENT
You wanted note from mother.
That is note from mother.

The office door SLAMS. MR. ED BUCKLEY, forties, in a suit with a bow tie, rushes up to the sign in desk.

B.B.
Buckley, what do you think you're doing?

BUCKLEY
(amazed at the question)
I'm signing in.

B.B.
Scratch it. You've got a sub.

BUCKLEY
I didn't call for a sub. I had car trouble.

B.B.
I heard. See you tomorrow.

Buckley rips off his bow tie and shuffles out the door.

BUCKLEY
Tomorrow, tomorrow, maybe this place will be gone...tomorrow.

INT. CHACO'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Chaco pulls open a dresser drawer, takes out neatly wrapped packets of drugs and a gun. He jumps when he hears behind him

FEMALE VOICE (OS)
(in Spanish with subtitles)
Rosendo, why aren't you in school?

Chaco tucks the gun in his belt, covers it with his shirt, SLAMS the drawer and turns to

His MOTHER, a matronly, tired woman.

CHACO

You're in America. Habla English!

MOTHER

(in halting English)

Spanish is bonita language.

(a beat)

Why you not come home last night?

CHACO

What the hell do you care?

MOTHER

I'm your madre.

Chaco pushes her aside and walks to the door.

MOTHER

Without education...you are nada.

Chaco whirls and waves a finger in her face.

CHACO

Then, mama, I'll be just like you!
Old...nada, nothing!

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - DARKER

Julia looks to the rear of the room where

Sarge screws in a second strip of sheet metal covering the second tier of windows.

Denitra fingers a question to Victor. Scud interprets.

SCUD

What's going down?

VICTOR

(to Sarge)

Man, what're you doing?

SARGE

Suicide prevention.

Sarge grins at Victor, Tran and Denitra then nudges Scud and in a Marine Corps Drill Instructor's voice commands.

SARGE

Give me a hand, son.

Without thinking Scud helps lift a third strip of sheet metal.

JULIA

Will you please take a seat.

Sarge clicks on his drill. It HUMS. The steel bit drives though a corner of the sheet metal.

Victor lays his hand on Sarge's shoulder and threatens

VICTOR

Take your shit and get the fuck out of here.

Sarge turns slowly and cups a hand to his ear,

SARGE

Can't hear too good. Someone pushed me down some stairs.

Victor's eyes go wide. Sarge leans in close and hisses

SARGE

Listen you sorry ass little turd, get your hand off me or I'll --

Sarge drops the drill an inch from Victor's groin.

SARGE

Drill another hole in your pecker.

Victor leaps and plops down at a desk. Puzzled, Denitra looks at Scud. Scud sits down. Denitra follows suit. Scud points to Victor, and assures Denitra.

SCUD

He's got a plan.

PARROT

He's got a plan.

Cane in hand, Julia walks up and down the rows, points to each student and recites each name.

JULIA
Mehaben...Scud...Sashy.

SASHY'S MAKE UP MIRROR - JULIA'S P.O.V.

Sashy's a bored reflection of disinterest.

Julia approaches Parrot's desk and looks down at the

COCKATIEL DRAWING - It's incredible.

JULIA
Parrot, that's --

Parrot covers it with his arms and looks up at Julia --pleading silently with his eyes -- 'don't-mention-my-drawing.' Julia gets the message.

JULIA
Parrot.

PARROT
Parrot.

JULIA
Denit---Fingers...Bean...Train...
Manuel...

Manuel whips off his glasses and smiles.

JULIA
And Victor.
(moves toward the chalkboard)
We'll begin with vocabulary.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - MAIN CLOCK - 9:01

Ring Man and Reverend sit on the bench comparing jewelry. The door to the main office SLAMS.

FIRE CAPTAIN, forties, in uniform, walks right past B.B. and grabs the knob on the principal's door.

B.B.
You can't --

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - A GREENHOUSE

Maggie Field shoves aside a huge piggy-back fern and searches

through a pile of papers while talking on the phone.

MAGGIE

I can't find the proposal. I've
looked every place I can think --

The door flies open and Fire Captain bursts into her office.

Maggie jumps, then sees who it is, sighs and motions to a chair
in front of her desk.

MAGGIE

(to the phone)

An old friend just came in.
I'll get right back to you.
Ten minutes. Promise.

She hangs up and smiles wearily.

Fire Chief doesn't return it.

MAGGIE

Not a fire drill?

FIRE CHIEF

Maggie, you've got chains on the doors.

MAGGIE

They've cut security. I've got
two hall guards. We're trying to
keep the bad kids out... Not the
good kids in.

FIRE CHIEF

Maggie, you're breaking every code
in the book.

MAGGIE

The superintendent's coming over.
I can't find my budget proposal.
Sarge'll get the chains off in
five minutes. Give me five minutes,
For old times?

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - DARKER

Twelve feet from the floor, only the top row of windows allows
natural light into the room.

At the hallway door, Sarge screws a hasp into the jamb.

On the chalkboard, two words are printed:

VENGEANCE AND MALICE

Julia points to each.

JULIA

We will start with malice.
Malice is defined in the --

A series of loud, rude KNOCKS strike the hall door.

Sarge CLICKS the hasp back and forth and opens the door.

Dink saunters in, the consummate bad ass, dressed to kick butt and take no prisoners. He glares at Julia with utter contempt.

The kids exchange looks.

O.S. the school BELL peals three short RINGS.

Sarge gathers his gear and waves to Julia.

SARGE

General's calling, Mrs. Madd.

He shuts the door. Dink leans against the wall and waves a sheet of paper.

DINK

I'm new. Where's my damn seat?

Julia glares.

DINK

If you're that stupid, I'll find
my own.

Julia picks up her cane. The students look from Dink to Julia.

JULIA

Don't start with me.

DINK

Same shit every school.

Dink reaches for the door knob.

DINK

Creeps for teach.

Julia bolts up the aisle.

JULIA
Be seated, young man.

DINK
Same shit every class.

Dink feigns trouble with opening the hallway door.

DINK
Same crappy teachers.

Julia RAPS her cane on a desk.

JULIA
Take this seat.

Dink shields the door with his body and drops a padlock over the u-bolt.

DINK
Teach, I'm outta here.
Julia gets to Dink and WHACKS him across the back of his leather jacket. A WOP fills the room. Dink falls and screaming, cowering against the hallway door.

DINK
Who are you, psycho chick?

Kid in the room stare bug-eyed.

Sashy peeks up from her mirror and goes back to her blush.

Denitra looks at Scud and signs.

SCUD
She can't hit on us.

PARROT
She can't hit on us?

Victor stands.

VICTOR
Last time you sub here, bitch.
(points around the room)
Nine witnesses saw you --

Julia whirls, eyes crazed, wields her cane and in a low hiss

JULIA
Bitch again, Victor?

Victor shirks.

JULIA
Sit down scum. Shut up!

DINK
Teach, you've got a problem.
A serious problem.

Julia yanks Dink up by the hair and whacks him again on the back of his jacket. Dink crawls to his knees and reaches for the door knob.

JULIA
Madd. I am Madd.

DINK
No shit.

Julia gives Dink another whack. He tries to pull open the door and ends up slapping the lock on the u-bolt.

DINK
No shit.

Manuel taps Bean.

MANUEL
Told you. Told you.

Dink struggles to his feet.

DINK
Teach, you got an attitude.

Julia hooks her cane around his neck, drags him toward the front of the room and shoves him into a desk.

JULIA
Move and I'll take off your nose.

DINK
Chill, Teach. I'm sittin'

Denitra signs to Scud. Scud nods and stands.

SCUD
She's on somethin'.

PARROT
(stands)
On somethin'.

VICTOR
(heads for the door)
We're gone.

PARROT
We're gone.

Julia points to the lock on the door and mimics Victor's voice.

JULIA
Where're you goin' boys and girls?

Scud looks to Victor and Tran for help.

Julia squints and bares her teeth. She wields the cane through the air. Spittle flies from her mouth as she cackles

JULIA
No one's going. No one's
finished their lesson.

Victor sneers and uses Chaco's motion to get Scud and Parrot back in their seats. Dink rubs his neck and curses under his breath.

VICTOR
Let her dig her fuckin' grave.

JULIA
What do you know about graves?

VICTOR
I don't know shit about nothin'.

Julia returns to the board.

JULIA
You've all got paper and pencils.
Give ME a definition of --

She touches the word VENGEANCE.

Mehaben, Manuel and Bean start writing.

Sashy lays down a lip stick brush and looks at Julia.

SASHY

Can I write a story about vengeance?

Julia nods. Sashy goes to work.

Victor folds his arms defiantly.

Scud, Denitra and Tran follow suit.

Dink sees Julia's dilemma, and mimicking Victor, folds his arms across his chest.

DINK

Teach, I ain't got no pencil.

SCUD

I ain't got no pencil neither.

VICTOR

You gotta give us tools, Teach.

Julia tosses pencils.

DINK

I ain't got no paper.

Julia walks to Dink's and shoves him a piece of paper.

JULIA

Write.

DINK

Teach, I don't wanta write no shit.

Julia WHACKS the cane on his desk.

JULIA

I don't want you to write no shit.

JULIA

Write the truth.
Write about vengeance.

Victor laughs. Julia turns to Victor and shouts.

JULIA
NOW! GODDAMN IT!

INT. BOTTOM OF A STAIRCASE - DARK - SAME TIME

A beam of light shines through a crack between the doors.
A motorcycle RUMBLES past on the street outside.

Sarge unlocks a chain wrapped around the panic bars of a double door. High heels CLICK down the staircase. Sarge turns.

B.B. stands with her hands on her hips.

B.B.
Sarge, where the hell were you?

SARGE
Lots of things didn't get done
while I was in the hospital.

B.B.
How's the jaw?

SARGE
Better.

B.B.
No idea who did it?

SARGE
Suspicious.

B.B.
I'd love to help you kick
their respective asses.

Sarge unwraps the chain and looks up at B.B.

SARGE
You would, wouldn't you?

B.B.
Say the word.

INT. MOM & POP LIQUOR STORE - SAME TIME

Tran Lan's parents cower behind the counter terrorized, staring

over Chaco's shoulder as

Wolf and Torch run up and down aisles scooping bottles off the shelves. Glass EXPLODES on the floor.

Chaco pokes guns muzzle into Mr. Lan's throat.

MR. LAN

Chaco, why you do this?

More bottles CRASH to the floor.

CHACO

You broke the law. In America when
you break the law, you have to pay
the fine.

Wolf, sips from a bottle of brandy, waves a small caliber pistol and lets out a HOWL.

Torch loads a shopping cart with top of the line liquor.

MR. LAN

This is wrong.

Mrs. Lan clutches her husband's arm trying to shut him up. Chaco laughs, picks up a broom and swishes it in the air.

CHACO

Child abuse is wrong.

Mr. and Mrs. Lan exchange puzzled looks.

CHACO

Broom beat your son in America you have
to pay a fine.

Mr. Lan frees himself from his wife and raises a fist.

MR. LAN

Why you rob me? Tran is your
friend.

Wolf HOWLS. Torch picks up a can of lighter fluid.

CHACO

Tran does what I tell him.
You are old people.
Old people are useless.

Chaco nods to Torch. Torch sprays a fine stream of lighter fluid

--- IN A Z --- on Mr. Lan's chest. Mrs. Lan cries in anguish. Chaco calmly cocks the gun.

CHACO

You going to pay the fine?

Tran's father kneels, fishes behind the liter bottles of vodka on the bottom shelf, takes out an ancient silk purse, opens it and hands Chaco a wad of bills.

MR. LAN

In my country we have
respect for older --

A VOLLEY of bullets and Tran's father and mother collapse. Chaco dips his finger in their blood and makes a Z with a slash on their foreheads.

CHACO

It's nice to live in America.

Torch squirts lighter fluid on a stack of brown paper bags. Cardboard boxes, the carpet.

Chaco SLAPS him on the head and across the face.

CHACO

Now Tran owns a liquor store. And if Tran
owns a liquor store, we own a liquor store.

Wolf howls.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

The door opens and B.B. sticks her head in.

B.B.

All set.

B.B. shuts the door. Maggie looks to the clock 9:15, then to
FIRE CHIEF.

MAGGIE

There's a passing bell in ten
minutes. Can't it wait until
the kids are in second period?

FIRE CHIEF

Maggie, I'm twenty minutes late
as it is.

MAGGIE

A fire drill close to the end
of the period is a nightmare.
The kids won't know whether to
go back to first period or on
to second.

FIRE CHIEF doesn't argue. Maggie starts across the office.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Victor twists one end of a blank piece of paper and glares at
Julia.

The majority of kids still plug away on the assignment.

Dink slips his hand into a pocket, pulls out a white
packet, cups it in the palm of his hand and flashes it to
Julia.

Julia looks up at the clock, 9:16, then gives Dink an
imperceptible nod.

JULIA

Let's hear someone's definition
of vengeance.

Manuel, Mehaben and Bean raise their hands.

Sashy writes furiously. She stops. Considers raising her hand,
then goes back to work.

Denitra looks at the clock, 9:17, and raises eight fingers to
Scud.

SCUD

Yeah, eight more minutes.

PARROT

Eight more minutes.

VICTOR

Eight more minutes and we're
all going to the principal
and --

(waves good-bye)
Bye-bye, Ms. Crazy.

JULIA
No one's leaving, Victor. Until
you do the assignment.

Victor's up. Knife in his hands.

VICTOR
I'm tired of you Bitch!

Sashy abandons her work, turns and glares as
Victor tosses the knife from hand to hand and closes on Julia.

VICTOR
Let's play some games.

Dink looks from Victor to Julia. and under his breath

DINK
Shit. Not yet.

Victor pats Tran on the back. Tran rises. Scud and Denitra rise.
Dink jumps to his feet between Victor and Julia and screams.

DINK
What a lot of shit!

VICTOR
Yes, let's take the bitch!

The Fire Drill Bell CLANGS and drones on and on.

Outside the door, the hallways echo with voices as kids pour
out of their classrooms.

Victor leads the phalanx toward Julia.

Julia reaches into her purse, draws out the .357.

JULIA
You've called me bitch for the last time.

Ashen, Victor jumps behind Denitra, Scud and Tran,
leaving Dink alone.

VICTOR
You're out of your fucking

head.

Scud, Denitra and Tran exchange a look. Victor's place in the pecking order has definitely dropped.

JULIA

Victor, you haven't finished the assignment. But since everyone else wrote something on vengeance.

Julia takes aim at Dink's knee.

JULIA

Let me give you an example of malice.

She fires. The REPORT rattles the room. Dink screams and slaps the white packet against his knee. What appears to be blood, - splatters everywhere. Dink falls into the aisle.

Julia moves toward Victor with her hand outstretched.

JULIA

Give me the knife, Victor.
And please take a seat.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ROOM 313A

A crowd of students and teachers have stopped in the hall. The Kid that bought the drugs from Victor shouts above the din of the fire bell.

KID

Did you hear that?

SECOND KID

Fire cracker?

KID

Bullshit! That was a gun.
(points to room 313A)
Why ain't they comin' out?

An Asian teacher approaches the door. R.O.T.C. Teacher pulls him aside.

R.O.T.C. TEACHER

Don't be a hero. Let's get the kids out of here.

KID

Somethin's goin' down, man.
Somethin's goin' down.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

The class sits in stunned silence. The fire alarm drones on.

Mehaben searches for something in her backpack. The snake's head pops out. She taps it and it disappears. She pulls out a bright piece of cloth.

Victor turns to Scud, Denitra and Tran.

VICTOR
Bitch is nuts.

PARROT
Nuts.

Denitra makes the crazy sign. Scud nods.

JULIA
Not nuts, MAD! Give me the knife.

Victor looks at the door. Julia catches the gesture.

JULIA
The door's locked, Victor. Try the window!

Victor looks at the sheet metal covering the windows.

JULIA
Lots of kids jump out of windows.
Don't they, Victor?

Victor turns to Denitra, Tran and Scud. Realization begins to set in.

In the background, Mehaben kneels next to Dink and offers help. Gently, he motions her away.

VICTOR
Who the fuck are you?

Mehaben sticks a finger in the blood and gives Dink and Julia a strange look.

JULIA
I'm Oscar's mother.

The comment doesn't quite register.

JULIA

You remember the biology lab. The Zoo
Keeper. I'm his mother.

VICTOR

Bullshit. I saw her on the floor.
You don't look -- Shit.

Victor leaps, grabs Denitra by the hair and draws the knife
across her throat.

VICTOR

Put down the gun and unlock the
door or I'll slit her fuckin'
neck.

A trickle of blood appears on her throat. Scud's eyes flare.

SCUD

Hurt her and I'll --

VICTOR

You'll what, punk!

Dink crawls toward Victor.

JULIA

Give me the knife and sit
down, Victor.

VICTOR

Shoot me, bitch, or I'm going to --

Dink stands and faces Victor. Julia drops the gun in her purse.

DINK

Don't do anything stupid.

VICTOR

Smokin' dude. You the smokin', dude.

Hobbling forward on her cane Julia motions Dink aside.

Victor waves the knife and motions to Scud and Tran.

VICTOR

Bitch's got blanks in the gun.
She's a chicken-shit just like
her chicken-shit son.

Denitra ducks out of his reach. Victor slashes. Misses.

In a blur, Julia lashes out with the cane and whacks it across Victor's hand. The CRACK of fingers couples with Victor's SCREAM and the droning fire BELL. The knife flies into the air and THUNKS against the wall.

JULIA

You haven't finished your lesson.

EXT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Students and teachers pour out of different exits in a somewhat orderly fashion to predesignated spots on the:

STREET - Pockets of kids murmur and point to the

SCHOOL YARD - Classes reform.

BASEBALL DIAMOND - Classes reform.

EXT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL - FRONT STEPS

Maggie watches the proceedings. FIRE CHIEF keeps an eye on a stop watch.

On the street behind them, a white van with CHANNEL 11 STENCILED ON THE SIDE, pulls up to the curb.

Kelly Slattery and two cameramen hop out.

A black Cadillac rolls to a stop in front of the van.

On the front steps, Maggie sighs and watches as

Joseph Honor, superintendent of schools, steps out and is bowled over by the tide of students. Honor starts to take a swing at the closest kids, but pulls the punch and smiles

when Kelly Slattery approaches with a cameraman.

A horn BLARES across the street. Chaco pulls up in the Trans-Am and blasts the HORN on and off.

The bell drones. Maggie nudges FIRE CHIEF and points to Honor.

MAGGIE

Great timing.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Victor stares at his broken hand. Denitra goes to his aid, but, with his good hand, he backhands her away.

Scud cuddles Denitra, wipes the tears from her cheeks and glares at Victor.

A horn BLARES up from the street.

VICTOR

You're in deep shit.

The horn BLAST again.

VICTOR

Deep, deep shit.

Julia moves slowly toward the window, pries the crook of her cane through a crack in the sheet metal and peers down at

EXT. STREET - CHACO'S TRANS-AM

Chaco sits in the driver seat. Wolf paces outside almost daring kids to touch the car.

Torch bulls his way through the crowd of kids, obviously looking for Victor.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - JULIA AT THE WINDOW

Behind her, Victor grabs a felt pen from Parrot and slashes a Z on the page where he has just drawn the cockatiel. He motions to Parrot to get it to the window.

Julia turns back to the class.

JULIA

There's someone I'm dying to meet.

Victor gives her a smug look.

The horn BLASTS again.

JULIA

Now, who has a definition for
vengeance?

EXT. SCHOOL - FRONT STEPS

B.B. holds a clipboard and scans the crowd of kids and teachers across the street with binoculars. She makes a check on the list as she identifies each class.

Honor, Kelly and the cameramen climb the stairs toward Maggie, FIRE CHIEF and B.B.

HONOR

Good morning. Good morning.

The Two Cheerleaders come out of nowhere and snap pictures.

Iggy follows and snaps a couple of his own.

CHEERLEADER

Superintendent. Yearbook!
Yearbook!

Honor puts on his best smile and waves. FIRE CHIEF pulls him aside.

FIRE CHIEF

Why were the doors chained?

Honor smiles innocently at Kelly, glares at Maggie, then lies through his teeth.

HONOR

Doors...chained? If there was a fire
children could be killed.

(turns to Maggie)

Ms. Field we'll have to --

B.B. interrupts and hands Maggie the clipboard.

B.B.

All classes are accounted for --

HONOR

(to FIRE CHIEF)

Time to get back to education.

B.B. gives Honor a look and points across the street.

B.B.

Except Mr. Buckley's class.

Maggie follows her gesture.

ACROSS THE STREET

Although the teachers and students idle about bored, there is

an empty space in the ranks.

FIRE CHIEF

(to Maggie)

Is a class still in the building?

B.B.
 Buckley's got a sub. She probably
 got lost.

The Asian and R.O.T.C. Teachers hurry up the steps.

HONOR
 (to FIRE CHIEF)
 Substitutes got lost. She's probably
 on the other --

R.O.T.C. TEACHER
 (interrupts)
 Did anyone report an explosion
 on the third floor?

Maggie, Honor, FIRE CHIEF and B.B. exchange glances.

ASIAN TEACHER
 I heard it too.

R.O.T.C. TEACHER
 Sounded like a gun.

ASIAN TEACHER
 It came from Mr. Buckley's class.

Maggie looks up to the third floor, can't get a good view and
 starts down the steps.

Kelly signals the cameraman to roll the tape as she pushes a
 microphone toward Maggie.

KELLY
 The superintendent has assured us
 that there are no gangs in --

HONOR
 (interrupts)
 Tell her, Margaret.

Maggie grits her teeth and points to Honor.

MAGGIE
 Talk to him.

Maggie climbs down the stairs. B.B. follows. On the sidewalk
 Maggie looks up to

THIRD FLOOR - WINDOW - MIDDLE OF THE BUILDING

Four strips of metal reflect the sunlight. Maggie and B.B. stare at each other. B.B pulls the binoculars to her eyes.

On the stairs above, Honor pulls FIRE CHIEF by the sleeve.

HONOR
Is YOUR little fire drill over
or not?

FIRE CHIEF
When Maggie says so.

Honor bolts down the steps.

B.B.
What the...?

B.B. hands Maggie the binoculars. Honor grabs her.

HONOR
The drill's over! Get these students
back to class.

Maggie shakes him off and brings the binoculars to her eyes.

WINDOW - THROUGH THE BINOCULAR LENS

A white piece of paper drops through a crack in the metal.

Maggie grabs B.B. by the arm, hands the binoculars to Honor,
and yells over her shoulder as she races for the school doors.

MAGGIE
No one goes back into MY SCHOOL until I
say so.

INT. OF CLASSROOM 313A

Julia watches the class closely.

Manuel adjusts his glasses and in a high voice, reads from a
piece of binder paper.

MANUEL
Vengeance is when if...

The horn BLASTS outside. Victor motions to Scud and mouths -
Chaco. Scud gives him the finger and points to Denitra.

MANUEL
Someone does something bad to you,
you want to kick their butt.

EXT. SCHOOL - CHACO'S TRANS-AM

The Kid that bought the drugs from Victor and heard the gun shot, races up to driver's side of the Trans-Am, and gestures frantically to the sheet metal windows.

EXT. SCHOOL - FRONT STEPS - SECONDS LATER

Chaco pulls the binoculars out of Honor's hands. Honor doesn't even notice. He turns to FIRE CHIEF.

HONOR

It's a bird. A goddamn bird
with a Z in the feathers.

Kelly nods to her cameraman. He pans up to the window.

Behind him, Iggy attaches a zoom lens to his camera and snaps a picture of the window.

Chaco hands Honor the binoculars and saunters back to his car.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - SAME TIME

Maggie taps her fingernails on the counter anxiously.

B.B. flips through a huge black ledger and finally finds the page she wants and points to INSERT: I.M. MADD

B.B.

Buckley's substitute. You think
one of the kid's has a gun?

Maggie turns off the fire bell and races out of the office.
B.B. follows.

INT. 313A CLASSROOM - SAME TIME

At the chalkboard, Julia points to the word

INSERT: MALICE -- Printed beside it in chalk - INTENT TO DO
HARM - WANTING TO DO SOMETHING UNLAWFUL -- DELIBERATE.

Julia looks out over her class and focuses on VICTOR.

JULIA

What is the difference between
vengeance and malice?

VICTOR

FUCK vocabulary...You broke my hand.

PARROT

Hand.

Denitra, close to tears, signs to Scud.

SCUD
(to Victor)
Denitra wanted to help.

VICTOR
Fuck both of you. I need a doctor.

PARROT
Doctor.

Victor slams his good fist on the desk.

VICTOR
Shut up and draw one of your
fucking birds.

Parrot cowers.

VICTOR
I need a doctor.

JULIA
What kind of doctor, Victor?

Victor glares, confused.

Julia takes a white piece of cloth from her purse.

JULIA
A gynecologist?
(off Victor's confusion)
Victor, have you studied biology?

Victor slouches in disbelief.

VICTOR
Shit.

Julia stretches out the cloth.

JULIA
You must know that your mother
was....
(rips the cloth)
Split wide open when you were
born.

The male students stare. The females grimace with pain.

MEHABEN

Tell him, Miss Madd. Tell them all.

Julia's voice takes on a drum beat tempo as she fires off question after question at Victor.

JULIA

Who nursed you?
 Who changed your dirty diapers,
 Victor?
 Who fed you when you were small?
 Who dressed you?

Julia inches closer. Involuntarily, Victor begins to nod.

JULIA

Who gave you a home?
 Shelter from the cold?

VICTOR

My mother. Who gives a shit?

JULIA

Who comforted you when you were
 sick?
 Or when you were scared of the dark?
 Who kicked in my mother's ribs?

VICTOR

Chaco. I just covered her head.

JULIA

How many of you did it take to kill
 a sixty-nine year old woman?

Victor glares.

The class turns as one and stares at Victor.

VICTOR

Bitch has a gun. She's makin'
 me crazy.

The class isn't buying it.

Julia seizes the opportunity and points at Victor.

JULIA

Victor and his friends murdered
my mother...and killed my son.

Whispers fly around the class as the students begin quiet conversations.

Manuel taps Bean and murmurs.

Even Sashy stops her constant primping to stare at Victor.

Denitra signs to Scud and dry spits at Victor. Scud nods.

Tran moves away from Victor, takes a seat next to Mehaben and points to her backpack. Mehaben nods. Tran takes out the snake and pets it.

Victor folds his arms and snarls.

VICTOR

You're supposed to be my back.
Madd's got you all turned around.

Parrot gives Victor a look of disgust that changes to guilt. He looks up at the plated window and jumps to his feet.

EXT. STREET - TRANS-AM - SAME TIME

Chaco leans against his car peering up at

EXT. THIRD FLOOR WINDOW

A hand reaches though a crack in the sheet metal and snatches out the drawing.

On the street, Chaco turns to Torch and Wolf.

CHACO

Get everyone.

Wolf lets out a HOWL.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Head down, Parrot hands the drawing to Julia. She pats his shoulder.

JULIA

It's beautiful. May I have it?

Parrot nods proudly and takes his seat.

Julia takes a deep breath and moves along down the aisles like a lawyer giving closing arguments.

JULIA

Victor, who else was with you?

Victor glares.

Manuel leans over to Bean and tries to whisper, but his voice is just too high.

MANUEL

Miss Madd's got malice.

Julia, looks to Bean and Manuel, smiles and turns back to Victor.

JULIA

Who pushed my son out of a window?

Victor gives her the finger.

JULIA

Who killed my mother?

Victor turns to Scud, Parrot and Denitra, laughs and yells at Julia.

VICTOR
 Your Mother?
 (grabs his crotch)
 This is for you and your mother.

Victor roars with laughter, then stops as one by one students stand.

TRAN
 Man, you're a piece of shit.

PARROT
 Shit.

Denitra stands and signs. Scud interprets.

SCUD
 Shit.

Victor stares from face to face in angry disbelief.

VICTOR
 You're all a bunch of --

JULIA
 Victor! Who killed my son?

VICTOR
 Nothin'. I ain't sayin' nothin'.

Denitra, looks at Victor, signs to Scud and raises her hand.

Scud, scared, darts his eyes from Victor to Denitra.

SCUD
 Are you sure?

Victor realizes what's about to happen and shouts at Denitra.

VICTOR
 Don't say nothin', slut.
 You say a fuckin' word --

Denitra flips him off.

SCUD
 Fingers wants ta say something.

PARROT

Say something?

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Authority breaks down as the kids and teachers wait for the signal to return to class.

Wolf and Torch slip through the ranks motioning to a student here and there.

EXT. STEPS IN FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

FIRE CHIEF, Honor, R.O.T.C., P.E. and Asian Teachers have been joined by DEAN OF GIRLS, and REVEREND.

Kelly turns on her microphone. Her cameramen jockey around for better shots as

Members of the faculty take the opportunity to question Superintendent Honor.

P.E. TEACHER

Why are you cutting my aerobics class?

R.O.T.C. TEACHER

And R.O.T.C.? Kids need to learn discipline.

DEAN OF GIRLS

Two security guards for a school this is a joke.

Deperate, Honor turns to the Fire Chief.

HONOR

This has gone on long enough.

FIRE CHIEF gives him a look of disdain. Kelly's camera man catches the look on tape.

ASIAN TEACHER

How come administrators are never laid off?

R.O.T.C. TEACHER

Why do the students always suffer?

REVEREND

How come you've never kept one appointment with me?

EXT. IN A NOOK AT THE REAR OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Chaco and Torch flip over garbage cans and pile refuse beside the building. Chaco motions Torch to stay put, then struts around the corner of the building.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL

More teachers have abandoned their classes and joined the fray on the school steps.

Kelly moves around the rear of the crowd with a microphone in her hand.

NEW TEACHER 1

We're going into the twenty-first century and you keep cutting funds. What aren't you --

HONOR

Please, please. These are all good questions. Problems that need good answers.

R.O.T.C. TEACHER

Why don't you address them?

HONOR

This is neither the time or place. Right now --

P.E. TEACHER

The time or place? You never meet with us.

R.O.T.C Teacher turns to the gathering.

R.O.T.C. TEACHER

She's right. Why the --

HONOR

Enough, enough. School's back in session! Teachers get your students back to class.

The teachers exchange glances.

HONOR

This is not a request.

Honor stares down one teacher after another.

Begrudgingly, they wave their classes back into school. The kids groan and moan.

REVEREND whispers to the DEAN OF GIRLS.

REVEREND
Blessed are the stupid.

Kelly pulls a cameraman aside.

KELLY
Steve, did you get all of that?

Steve taps the cam-corder.

INT. CORRIDOR ACROSS FROM ROOM 313A - SAME TIME

Maggie and B.B. move cautiously toward the door. From behind it Scud's voice is loud.

SCUD (O.C.)
Like Denitra said, we left the
lab as soon as we saw what was
going down.

Maggie and B.B. exchange puzzled glances. Maggie RAPS on the door.

MAGGIE
Ms...Mrs. Madd? We're having a fire
drill. Everyone has to be --

VICTOR (OS)
She's beatin' people with a stick!
She's got a gun! A fucking gun!

EXT. SCHOOL - SAME TIME

The last group of students and teachers walk back across the street and up the stairs.

FIRE CHIEF
(to Honor)
You should have waited for
Margaret.

HONOR

Your job is to put out fires. Mine
is to teach children to think.

INT. CORRIDOR - THIRD FLOOR

Maggie and B.B. run down the hall then slide to a stop at the top of a staircase when they hear the shouts and jeers coming up the steps.

MAGGIE

That jerk didn't --

The SOUNDS of students get louder.

MAGGIE

No!

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Scud, Denitra and Parrot stand guard over Victor.

SCUD

He won't shout any more or I'll
stomp on his hand.

VICTOR

You're dead, man. All of you
are dead.

Julia walks to the window and crooks her cane behind a piece of sheet metal, pries it away from the window and looks down at the

TRANS AM - JULIA'S (POV)

JULIA
Chaco's pride.

Victor glares.

JULIA
He really likes that car.

Denitra moves toward Julia, grins touches her heart and signs -- 'He loves his car.'

INT. SCHOOL STAIRCASE LANDING - SAME TIME

A wave of kids round a corner and head for Maggie and B.B. Maggie shouts above the DIN.

MAGGIE
Out! All of you, get out of here!

The kids at the front of the pack stop and exchange looks. Behind them, other students push forward.

MAGGIE
School's out! I declare a holiday.
School's out.

The word passes quickly. Students YELL and HOOT their way back down the staircase.

MALE STUDENT
Holiday!

FEMALE STUDENT
Schools out. Ms. Field said so.

BLACK STUDENT
Free at last. Free at last. Dear
God almighty. I'm free at last.

EXT. SCHOOL - SAME TIME

A madhouse as students spew out of the building a second time

- yelling.

STUDENT 1
Holiday!

STUDENT 2
Vacation!

STUDENT 3
I'm out of here.

STUDENT 4
Adios. A bucket of K.F.C.

Kelly motions to roll the cameras as
Honor leaps in front of the throng and flails his arms.

HONOR
Get back inside! Get back --

Kids stampede pass.

HONOR
I am the Superintendent of Schools.
I command --

A HUGE KID picks Honor up by his armpits and sets him aside.

HUGE KID
You're dismissed.

INT. MAIN OFFICE - SAME TIME

Outside the glass, kids tear out of the building. B.B. punches
the keys on the computer, then strikes enter.
The printer HUMS and types out

INSERT: A LIST OF THE NAMES OF THE KIDS IN 313A

Rosendo Alvarez, Victor Alvarez, Denitra Lee Davis, etc...

Maggie on the phone.

MAGGIE
Yes, I would say the situation
is urgent...
(listens)
Ten students, maybe more...Uh huh...
(listens)

But please don't send Lieutenant
Miller, he doesn't relate well
with our students... yes --

Maggie SLAMS down the phone.

B.B.

They're sending Miller.

Maggie nods, rips the printout off the carriage and heads
into her office. B.B. starts to follow, then hurries out of
the office yelling over her shoulder.

B.B.

I'm going to find Sarge.
Meet you outside.

EXT. REAR OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Chaco, Torch and Wolf and nine other tough-looking kids stand
beside a large pile of debris. Chaco points to the exits.

CHACO

Lock up all the exits. We'll meet in
the faculty room.

Carrying strands of rope and pieces of chain, the group slips
into the school.

Chaco motions to Torch and the pile of debris.

CHACO

Wait here.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - SAME TIME

At the window, Julia pries away a corner of the sheet metal
with her cane and turns to the class.

JULIA

Most of you have done your assignment
well. May I continue my lesson?

Other than Victor, the class responds positively.

Julia takes a long look at Victor.

JULIA

Malice and vengeance are cancers.
Cancer eats your body...corrodes
your soul.

(points to Victor)
Victor and his gang of cowards have
given me cancer and the best way
to get rid of my type of tumor
is to remove it.

Julia moves the gun into the opening.

JULIA
And the best way to remove it, is
to attack its source.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL

Honor seizes Maggie by the arm as she exits the building.
He points to Kelly and her cameramen and hisses softly.

HONOR
What the hell are you doing?
Trying to make me look like a
complete jack-ass.

MAGGIE

No one has to try --

A window CRASHES high above them.

Everyone looks up. Glass SHATTERS on the concrete sidewalk.

MIDDLE OF THE STREET

Chaco smiles up at the window on the third floor.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Julia at the window takes aim and opens fire.

EXT. STREET TRANS-AM

As the REPORTS from the gun ECHOES off buildings, the windshield SHATTERS.

Bullets rip through the hood and body of the car with metal wrenching THUNKS.

MIDDLE OF THE STREET

Chaco glares up at the window.

ACROSS THE STREET

A large group of kids cheer as they watch the carnage.

KID 1

Kickin'.

KID 2

Major.

FRONT STEPS OF THE SCHOOL

Iggy snaps pictures.

Kelly yells at her cameraman.

KELLY

Get the window.

WINDOW OF ROOM 313A - CAMCORDER'S P.O.V.

Just as Julia backs out of sight.

KELLY

Did you get him?

Camerman hands her the camcorder.

Kelly peers into the eyepiece.

Iggy taps her on the shoulder and holds out his camera.

IGGY

I got some good ones.

KELLY

They could be newsworthy.

IGGY

Worth bucks?

KELLY

Big bucks.

Iggy's down the stairs.

IGGY

Ten minutes.

SIRENS BLARE. Two Black & White Patrol cars speed up the street.

On a smoke spewing moped, Iggy zips away.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Julia unlocks the padlock and opens the door to the hall.

JULIA

Mehaben, Manuel, Bean...I'll miss
you all. But the lesson's over.

Victor stands and heads for the door.

VICTOR

Maybe I'll put in a good word
with my bro.

Julia hooks him with her cane.

JULIA

Murderer's have detention.

VICTOR

Want me to write 'I shall not kill'
on the fuckin' chalkboard?

Victor laughs, then snarls when he notices no one's moved. .

VICTOR

Split, assholes! Bitch is
letting you go.

Although each has made their own decision to stay, the members
of the class share a ew sense of camaraderie.

MEHABEN
(to Victor)
Bitch...is wrong.

BEAN
(to Victor)
There is a more definitive word.

Manuel wipes off his glasses

MANUEL
(to Victor)
Something that really expresses --

SCUD
(to Victor)
Your feeling of betrayal.

Dink gesture around the class.

DINK
Ma'am, seems like there's been
a revolt.

INT. BOTTOM OF A STAIRWELL - DARK

Metal CLANKS against metal as Sarge tries to pull off a chain wrapped around the bar of the panic doors.

SARGE
What is this crap?

He hefts a lock. Behind him movement. He whirls and grabs B.B.'s floral blouse.

B.B.
So you wanta play rough?

Embarrassed, Sarge lets her go.

SARGE
Sorry.

B.B.
It's okay. What's going on?

SARGE
Someone's trying to lock us in.

EXT. REAR OF SCHOOL

Chaco slips around a corner of the building and kicks Torch's the pile of garbage.

CHACO

This is too small.

Torch pours and dumps another can of garbage on the pile.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Across the street Four Police Officers hold a growing crowd at bay.

Maggie flashes the 313A students list into Honor's face.

Kelly and her crew close in.

MAGGIE

I'm calling the parents.

Honor tries to snatch it, misses. She spins away and stares at the curb as

Lieutenant Miller arrives in an unmarked car.

HONOR

Ms. Field, at this juncture there is no reason to alarm parents.

Honor points to Maggie and gives Kelly a 'how-unreasonable-can-this-woman-be?' look.

HONOR

Ms. Field, at this juncture there is no reason to alarm parents.

MAGGIE

You...You are the --

Kelly points to her van.

KELLY

I've got a cellular phone. But if you want to stay here and keep on top of things, I can alert

the parents.

HONOR

If you give that list to a member
of the media...swear to God I'll
have your --

Maggie hands the list to Kelly.

MAGGIE

Thanks. Contact as many as you can.

Kelly passes Lieutenant Miller on the stairs. Miller looks from Honor to Maggie.

MILLER

Having a little problem?

EXT. REAR OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

The mountain of garbage burns brightly.

Chaco tosses on a few old sweat pants and a plume of smoke rises slowly up the side of the building.

Chaco and Torch head for a rear door.

From inside the door a chain RATTLES, then the door opens Chaco and Torch enter the building.

Growing darker and thicker, the smoke drifts over the top of the school.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Two more T.V. crews arrive. Police vehicles now block one side of the street.

Kelly's Assistant drives off in the Channel 11 Van.

A Police Van speeds up the street and takes its place.

A POLICE SWAT TEAM exits and forms ranks at the bottom of the steps.

TEAM LEADER, starts to issue commands, but LT. Miller tries to take over.

MILLER

We've got a gang war here. Bring your men around the side of the building. Then we'll --

TEAM LEADER

Get away from me.

Honor bounces Miller aside and grabs TEAM LEADER by his shirt.

HONOR

You'll have no trouble getting in. All the doors are open. WE were having--

Cries of alarm come from across the street. The Crowd points to the roof of the school and the billowing cloud of smoke.

HONOR

A fire drill?

Maggie nudges FIRE CHIEF, but he's already on his radio.

INT. FACULTY LOUNGE - SAME TIME

Chaco, Torch and Wolf peer out the window at the

S.W.A.T. TEAM ON THE STREET - CHACO'S P.O.V.

CHACO

We know the school. They don't.

WOLF

Fuckers gonna have a hard time
gettin' in.

Wolf lets out a HOWL.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - EXIT DOOR

Sarge slices through a rope tying the panic bars. B.B. tugs gently at his shoulder.

B.B.

That's the whole story?

(off his nod)

And you're certain you're on the
right side?

SARGE

Affirmative.

B.B. considers, as Sarge fishes in his back pocket and takes out a half pint of vodka, twist off the top and starts to take a sip.

SARGE

A little courage.

B.B. looks at the bottle, then leans down and gives Sarge a smack on the lips.

B.B.

Courage you've got. Let's kick butt.

Sarge, stunned, looks at B.B. and flips the bottle into a garbage can.

EXT. FRONT STEPS OF THE SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Lieutenant Miller twirls a bullhorn like a cowboy pistol, leans

against his car, waits for the media's attention and as officious as possible

MILLER

You up there? You up there on
the third floor...

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - SAME TIME

The bullhorn blasts as the class listens to Miller finish.

MILLER (O.C.)
School's on fire. Better get out
while you can.

Julia again stands at the door.

VICTOR
you gonna make us all burn?

Julia looks at Victor, but worried now.

Scud steps in front of Victor.

SCUD
Torch started it.

PARROT
Torch started it.

Denitra signs to Scud.

SCUD
Denitra's right. Chaco's trying to get us
out in the halls.

VICTOR
Chaco don't care where you're at.
He's my back. You're dead.

INT. MOM & POP LIQUOR - SAME TIME

A Police Officer holds back a crowd at the door.

Kelly's Assistant looks at the student list in his hand and
kneels next to a FEMALE DOCTOR.

STEVE
Mr. and Mrs. Lan?

The doctor nods and covers the bodies with sheets.

INT. OF CLASSROOM 313A

Julia throws open the door.

JULIA

No more. This is my problem. My war.
All of you out of here.

SCUD

If we leave, Chaco, Wolf or Torch
will do us.

Parrot, Tran and Denitra nod in agreement.

VICTOR

Man, you're all on the exit ramp
anyway.

Julia looks to Dink.

JULIA

Please.

DINK

I thought we were a team.
(holds up the atomizer)
And I haven't needed this at all.

Julia looks to Manuel and Bean.

MANUEL

I'm tired of giving 'em money.
Me and Bean have some malice.

BEAN

And some vengeance too. They
jump us for being alive.

MANUEL & BEAN

We'll stay.

MEHABEN

I'll stay.

From outside the window comes the WAIL of sirens.

SASHY

I'll stay. As soon as I go outside
I'll be goin' to jail. Or the gas
chamber.

She senses the silence from the rest of the class.

SASHY

This morning I killed my stepfather.

INT. SCHOOL - NEAR THE MAIN OFFICE

Chaco huddles with his gang.

CHACO

Each of you take a staircase.
No one comes down.
Trouble... whistle.
Room 313A. Three minutes.

Wolf grabs two kids. The gang heads in different directions.

Chaco enters the main office.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - SECOND FLOOR

Two Kids move up the hallway. As they pass door 212, it opens quietly. There's a loud BING. From the Public Address System, Chaco's voice echoes through the corridors.

CHACO (O.C.)

You in 313A. We're coming.

The Two Kids hear Chaco's voice and raise a fist.

Arms reach out. One covered by a floral blouse and the other Sarge's. The two kids disappear into room 212.

INT. CLASSROOM - 313A - SAME TIME

From the P.A. System Chaco's voice fills the room.

CHACO (O.C.)

Reload Gun Shooter.

Victor sneers.

Scud, Denitra, Tran and Parrot share a look of terror.

Julia catches it and heads for the door.

JULIA

Everyone out.

Scud shakes his head no. The gesture passes from student to student.

SCUD

If we leave, they'll stick us
one by one.

PARROT

One by one.

Denitra signs 'one-by-one.'

MANUEL

Together we have a chance.

DINK

Manuel's right.

Julia looks from face to determined face.

JULIA

Cowards only prey on the helpless.
Lets make them welcome.

EXT. REAR OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

FIREMEN rewind their hoses on the hook & ladder truck.

FIRE CHIEF and TEAM LEADER look at the smoldering pile of garbage.

FIRE CHIEF

Arson.

S.W.A.T. TEAM LEADER points to members of his team struggling with the rear doors of the school.
Nothing doing. They don't budge.

TEAM LEADER

Diversion.

FIRE CHIEF nods in agreement. TEAM LEADER points to the hook & ladder.

TEAM LEADER

Can I borrow your truck? We're going in.

INT. SCHOOL - STAIRCASE - SAME TIME

Seven kids follow Chaco and Torch to the top. Three kids follow Chaco to the left. Four follow Torch to the right.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

A media circus now. TEAM LEADER motions to the members of his S.W.A.T Team. Six men rush through the front doors of the building. Two remain with TEAM LEADER.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET

FIRE CHIEF fights the crowd and the media as he tries to guide the hook & ladder into position in front of the school.

INT. LIVING ROOM - POORLY FURNISHED FLAT - SAME TIME

Slob Man lies on the floor in a pool of blood.

Kelly's Assistant and a Police Officer enter through a half open door.

Slob Man moans, stirs, his eyes open. He gives the Police Officer

a bewildered look.

SLOB MAN

She's lying. I never touched her.
Never once.

INT. THIRD FLOOR - CORRIDOR

Wolf saunters up the hall, gun in hand.

A CREAK as door number 307 opens one step away from Wolf.

Wolf stops, cocks his gun. Sarge steps into the hall.

SARGE

Morning.

Wolf HOWLS, steps forward, slaps Sarge's cheek. Sarge turns with the blow. Wolf slaps again. Harder.

WOLF

Homeboy's right, here we got a
useless old man who --

Wolf turns to his gang of teens and watches as

A floral arm appears out a doorway, seizes the last kid by the throat. His feet dangle in the air and then disappear.

Wolf turns back to Sarge.

SARGE

So you want to join the Marines?

Wolf shoots a look back down the empty hall, then back at Sarge.

Sarge locks his hands in the small of his back, military style. He paces back and forth, looks at Wolf from head to toe.

SARGE

Come to attention.

WOLF

You're a fuckin' joke, old man.

He brings the muzzle of the gun to Sarge's forehead.

Sarge strikes fast and deadly. He spins and kicks Wolf in the stomach. Wolf GRUNTS and folds in half.

SARGE

Chest out!

Sarge CRACKS Wolf on the spine. Wolf comes erect. Sarge sends a crushing blow to Wolf's right cheek.

SARGE

Eyes left.

Wolf tries to bring the gun around. Sarge CRACKS him on the left cheek.

SARGE

Eyes right.

Wolf wobbles. Sarge grabs him by the front of his shirt, holding him erect. Wolf tries to focus and aim the gun.

Sarge CRACKS him on the wrist, takes away the weapon.

SARGE

Short arms inspection.

He expertly removes the clip and peers down the barrel.

SARGE

Soldier, this weapon's a disgrace.
It's filled with crud.

Sarge shoves the barrel into Wolf's groin. Wolf folds.

SARGE

Sorry, boy. But we're looking
for a few good men.

Sarge releases his grip on Wolf's shirt.

Wolf tumbles head first to the floor.

O.S. a shrill WHISTLE echos down the hall.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

One of the men from the S.W.A.T. team, armed with an assault rifle, climbs onto the hook and ladder truck.

The other man, armed with a tear gas launcher, approaches TEAM LEADER and waits for instructions. TEAM LEADER looks up to the

ROOF OF THE SCHOOL - EMPTY

TEAM LEADER signals both men to wait.

The Channel 11 VAN returns to the school.

Kelly's Assistant jumps out and runs up to Kelly and Maggie. Most of the other adults join the conference as he relates.

KELLYS ASSISTANT
All hell's breaking loose.

He points to the sheet metal window.

KELLY'S ASSISTANT

There's been a double homicide.
The parents of one of the kids
on the list have been murdered.
And another's was bludgeoned
with a two by four.

Lt. Miller looks at Maggie and Honor.

MILLER

We've got a hostage situation and
a gang war.

INT. CLASSROOM - 313A

Julia stands in the shadows by the window. She peeks through
the crack in the metal and sees

CROWD AND FIRE TRUCK - JULIA'S (POV)

Wearily, Julia turns back to her class where

Bean stands on a stool and pulls the American Flag standard
out of its wall bracket.

Dink and Tran turn over desks and begin to stack them.

Manuel and Sashy rip the tattered wall maps from their racks
and slide the metal bars off their brackets.

At the front board, Mehaben and Denitra pound sticks of chalk
into dust.

VICTOR

Chaco'll be here soon, Gun Shooter.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Iggy sputters up the street on his moped like a Hells Angel.

He drives onto the sidewalk, takes out a stack of photographs
and hands several to Kelly.

IGGY

They aren't perfect.

INSERT: SEVERAL PHOTOS

IN ONE - THE WINDOW AND A SHADOW

IN ANOTHER - THE FLASH OF THE GUN

THE REST - ARE SHADOWS AND BLURS

Miller comes out of nowhere and snatches the photos.

MILLER

These could be evidence.

IGGY

Keep 'em.

Kelly sees Iggy's disappointment and points to the stack of photo's still in his hand.

IGGY

Naw, these are pictures I took --

He peels off the top one and hands it to DEAN OF GIRLS.

IGGY

I have a good one of you.

DEAN OF GIRLS takes the photo with a silent thank you, gives it a cursory glance, then freezes.

DEAN OF GIRLS

This woman! I know this woman.

Honor noses over DEAN OF GIRL'S shoulder and stares down at

INSERT PICTURE: JULIA MORALES in the front office with DEAN OF GIRLS in the background.

HONOR

It's the woman who --

Miller peeks in.

Kelly doesn't know what's going on, but she motions to roll the tape.

DEAN OF GIRLS

She's wearing glasses and she looks older, but that's....

MILLER

Julia Morales...son-of-a-bitch!

MAGGIE

Nice language.

Miller runs down the stairs and grabs TEAM LEADER.

MILLER

Your men are after the wrong man...
woman.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

The Three Man S.W.A.T. team moves through the halls and up the stairs, each member covering the other's position.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

The room is a makeshift fort.

The desks stacked like a wall.

Bean ties the American Flag around a four foot pole and takes a few practice jabs in the air with the pointy end.

Mehaben and Denitra fill plastic bags with the chalk dust. Mehaben hefts a chalk-bomb in her hand.

MEHABEN

You ever try to breath this stuff?

Dink, Tran, Manuel and Sashy bend the metal map holders into jagged spears and head behind the wall of desks.

Julia looks at her pitiful army.

VICTOR

You think those little shits are going to stop Chaco?

A RAP on the door interrupts. Julia brings the gun around.

Everyone in the class stares at the door.

A second RAP, louder. The kids look back and forth from Julia to the door.

SARGE (O.C.)

Julia, it's me.

Julia sighs, hurries across the room, pulls off the padlock and turns to Victor.

JULIA

Reinforcements.

She throws open the door. Her eyes go wide.

Sarge stands in the doorway. His face a bloodied mess. Someone kicks him from behind. Sarge flies into the room, knocking the gun from Julia's hand.

Julia loses her balance and grabs for the wall.

Sarge crashes into the pile of desks and falls.

Chaco saunters into the room.

CHACO

Who the fuck shot up my ride?

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL -SAME TIME

Kelly talks into a microphone as her assistant shoots.

KELLY

What was thought to be a gang
war...may turn...

Several steps below, Miller, Honor and Maggie stand beside TEAM LEADER who's looking up at

ROOF OF THE SCHOOL - TEAM LEADER'S (POV)

Three men attach grappling hooks to the eaves of the building directly above room 313A. One man signals ready.

MILLER

What the hell are you waiting for?
Morales is a psychopath!

Honor grabs TEAM LEADER by the sleeve and pulls him in another direction.

HONOR

There are nine or ten kids in that
room. If you don't attack --

TEAM LEADER looks down at Honor's HAND.

TEAM LEADER

If you don't get your hand off me
I'll break your fucking nose.

Honor leaps backward and grabs Miller.

HONOR

He threatened me. You heard him.

Miller shakes Honor loose. Members of the media close in and Honor continues to rant pointing to Team Leader.

HONOR

He said he was going to --

Maggie grabs Honor by the arm and ushers him to the edge of the crowd. Over her shoulder she says to the media

MAGGIE

Too much pressure. He's losing it.
He's planning to retire.

HONOR

You heard him too. He --

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Chaco and Victor, now armed with Julia's gun, stand near the rear door. Victor points to where

Julia pushes herself up with the help of her cane.

VICTOR

That's Zoo Keeper's mama.

Chaco gives Victor a 'you're-full-of-shit' look.

Chaco stares at Julia for a beat, then rips the comb holding her hair in a bun. The gray streaks disappear as her black hair cascades down her back.

CHACO

Cane Lady! You're in deep shit.

Gathering confidence, Victor points to Scud, Denitra and Parrot.

VICTOR

Gangsters, dis you. Disin' me.

Chaco glares at the trio and whips out his ice pick.

Hands tied behind his back, Sarge struggles to his feet, nods toward Chaco and apologizes to Julia.

SARGE

He's got a pyromaniac holding a butane lighter next to a friend of mine.

CHACO

Torch and Wolf'll take care of that fat bitch just like we...

Chaco looks around the room and finds Tran.

CHACO

Just like I took care of your old man.

Tran doesn't quite get it.

CHACO

Tran, your mama and papa went to Chinaman heaven. You and me own

a liquor store.

Tran bites his lip until blood trickles.

CHACO

They were old...and useless, man.

INT. HALLWAY - ACROSS FROM ROOM 313A

Three men from S.W.A.T. team wait, armed and ready. One man, JOHNSON, whispers into his radio.

JOHNSON

Sir, we're in position.

(listens)

That's a copy.

He CLICKS off and motions the men to stay put.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL - SAME TIME

TEAM LEADER clips his radio to his belt and looks with disgust at the

HOOK AND LADDER TRUCK

The ladder has stopped twenty feet in the air. A S.W.A.T. Team member sits at the end looking back at

FIRE CHIEF and two firemen frantically checking hydraulic hoses.

TEAM LEADER motions to the man with the teargas rifle into a position closer to the window.

TEAM LEADER

On my count.

Maggie hears and bolts.

Miller brings the bullhorn to his lips and yells in his most official tone.

LT. MILLER

Mrs. Morales, I know you have a --

TEAM LEADER kicks Miller in the ass and grabs the bullhorn.

Maggie dives on the man with the teargas rifle.

MAGGIE

You can't shoot at children!

Miller drags her to her feet.

LT. MILLER

You're obstructing justice.

Honor nods. Kelly keeps the film rolling, as

Maggie brushes Miller off and turns to TEAM LEADER and points to the teargas rifle.

MAGGIE

There are a dozen kids in there.
That damned thing could blind one
of them.

LT. MILLER

Better blind than dead.

HONOR

Yeah!

The teachers turn to each other in disbelief.

Maggie gets in TEAM LEADER's face.

MAGGIE

Aren't you trained to negotiate?
What the hell are you doing?
You're attacking a classroom and
you're not even sure who the bad
guys are.

MILLER

The bad guy's a woman. She's
already killed two people.
She thinks some kids killed her
son and her mother. She's a
nut case. And now she's got
nothing to lose.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

With his good hand, Victor drags Sarge by the hair to the rear
door and lifts the padlock.

VICTOR

Open it, or you're history.

Sarge stalls, fiddles with a huge ring of keys on his belt chain.
Victor's having none of it. He grabs one of Sarge's
fingers, shoves it in the hole of the key ring and twists.
There is a CRACK. Sarge groans.

Chaco turns with the sound, laughs, then aims his gun directly
at Julia, motions to the hall with his two fingers and says
to Denitra.

CHACO

Fingers, lock it.

Denitra glares at Chaco while she signs to Scud.

What ever she signed, Scud does not want to repeat it. Denitra bangs on the desk.

In a new dilemma, Scud looks back and forth between Chaco and Denitra.

CHACO
What'd she say?

SCUD
She said --

Sheepishly, Scud starts for the door.

SCUD
I'll lock it.

PARROT
I'll lock it.

CHACO
(to Parrot)
Shut the fuck up.

PARROT
Shut the ---

Chaco whacks Parrot over the head. Denitra POUNDS the desk.

Chaco aims at Scud.

CHACO
What'd she say?

Scud closes his eyes in terror.

SCUD
She told you to get fucked.

Chaco laughs in disbelief, waves the gun around the room like a madman and bulls his way to Denitra.

CHACO
My little nigger girl is mad at Chaco?

He tosses a desk aside, it CRASHES to the ground.

Tran, pretends to get out of the line of fire, inches toward Mehaben.

Dink whispers to Sashy. She palms him her lighter and a

fingernail file.

CHACO

Tells Chaco...Chaco, to get fucked!

Chaco brushes the barrel of the gun against Denitra's lips.

CHACO

I tell you to lock the door, YOU
lock the --

SCUD

I'll lock the door.

CHACO

YOU...Don't do shit!

Scud backs off.

CHACO

My nigger's going to lock the door.

Chaco pushes the muzzle of the gun between her lips.

CHACO

Suck up to me. Lock the door.

Denitra glares.

Tran stands.

TRAN

Chaco. We own a liquor store. Man,
Denitra's got malice. Chicks with
malice aren't good at locking doors.

Tran moves toward the door. Mehaben's body shields the backpack
behind his back.

CHACO

What's this malice shit?

Manuel, Bean, Sashy and Mehaben point to the definition on the
chalkboard.

INSERT: INTENT TO DO HARM

Chaco looks. Mehaben diverts his attention.

MEHABEN

You should have come to class.
We had a lesson in vengeance.

VICTOR

Don't listen to their shit.
They're skullin' you man.

Dink unscrews the top of the atomizer and punctures a hole in the top.

Julia finger's close around her cane.

TRAN

Us Chinks, when we're filled with
vengeance, we're much better at
locking doors.

Chaco doesn't have a clue what he's talking about.

REAR DOOR TO THE CLASSROOM

Under Victor's watchful eye, Sarge finally finds the key and
unlocks the rear door.

VICTOR

We're out, Bro.

Tran walks toward the hall door zippering his jacket shut.

TRAN

I'll lock this door.

CHACO

Fingers is going to lock the
fucking door.

Tran locks the door and smiles innocently.

VICTOR

He's our back.

Chaco sneers at Julia, Scud and Denitra.

CHACO

Now I'm teacher.
(to Julia)
You shot up my car. You have
to pay the fine.

Tran unzips his jacket and starts toward Chaco.

TRAN

Chaco, do I own a liquor store?

CHACO

WE own a liquor store.

TRAN

(reaches in his jacket)
And my people are dead?

CHACO

Dead and gone, bro.

Tran pulls the snake out of his jacket and wiggles it in Chaco's face. Chaco recoils.

CHACO

Get that fucking thing outta here.

Julia inches forward. Denitra palms a chalk-bomb. Scud grabs a metal spear and joins the assault.

Dink moves up the aisle with the atomizer and lighter in his hand.

Tran dangles the snake.

CHACO

Get it away.

Victor watches stunned as Chaco retreats waving his gun.

CHACO

(to Victor)

Shoot fucker.

Manuel snaps the frame of his glasses and holds a coke bottle thick lens in his hand.

Victor aims at Tran and the snake.

Manuel flips the lens expertly - like he's tossing a Frisbee.

The lens hits Victor above his left eye as he squeezes the trigger. His arm jerks toward the ceiling. He screams and covers his eye with the palm of his hand. Blood seeps through his fingers.

He fires the weapon twice. Then there's a CLICK.

EXT. CORRIDOR 313A

Johnson listens to the radio, puzzled. He holds up his hand in a STOP motion as his two men advance on the door to room 313A.

JOHNSON

Hold position...Yes, sir.

Johnson looks at his two men and whispers.

JOHNSON

There's a war going on and

he wants us to wait.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A - SAME TIME

Tran recoils from the blast and crashes against the wall with a thud. Mehaben rushes to his side. The snake slithers away.

The entire class moves forward.

Crazed, Chaco wields the gun from side to side.

CHACO

I'll kill every fuckin' one
of you. Everyone.

No one moves.

A GASP behind him forces Chaco to turn.

Sarge stands behind Victor with his key chain wrapped around Victor's neck like a garrote. He pulls tighter. Victor's eyes bug out. He gags.

SARGE

Put down the gun. Or this turd
goes bye-bye.

With his eyes, Victor begs Chaco to follow orders.

A long beat, then Chaco drops his head and pretends to obey. He lowers the gun and takes a step toward Julia.

Julia reaches for the weapon.

Chaco drops, somersaults and winds his arm around Sashy's waist and his gun at her throat.

CHACO

(to Sarge)

NO MORE GAMES! We're going out
the back --

Sashy's eyes cross with rage. Her teeth flash. Each well polished finger nail a talon.

SASHY

GAMES! No one touches me!

She rakes her finger nails across Chaco's face, bites, kicks

and shrieks.

SASHY

My stepfather touched me!

Chaco backs away from the onslaught. Sashy attacks.

SASHY

I killed that perverted son-of-a-bitch and
I'll kill--

Chaco whacks her across the skull with the butt of the gun.

Sashy falls, but she's far from out. Chaco wipes his fingers across his cheek, sees the blood and takes aim at Sashy.

Dink dives lighting the atomizer. A hot spray of gas, hits Chaco on the side of the face, he screams, whirls and takes aim at Dink.

A WHOOSH and the staff of Julia's cane comes down on Chaco's wrist. TWO SNAPS. As the bone in Chaco's wrist breaks and the cane splinters in half.

In pain, Chaco lifts the gun. Julia hits him with a right cross. Another SNAP as his nose breaks. Chaco falls over a desk and tumbles to the floor, the gun slides across the floor right into

Tran's hand.

Denitra and Mehaben toss chalk-bombs. Chaco goes into a coughing spasm from the white dust.

DINK

Having trouble breathing?

Julia pushes the desk aside and looks down at Chaco.

Wounded, Tran crawls toward Chaco.

On the floor, Chaco sneers up at Julia.

CHACO

Your son was a chicken shit.
So was your mother and so
are you.

Sarge shoves Victor into the crowd.

VICTOR

Chicken shit? You're the chicken
shit. Scared of a fuckin' snake.

Tran crawls up to Chaco and aims the gun at his skull.

Julia kneels next to Tran.

JULIA

If we kill him, we kill him together.

The class agrees quietly. Chaco goes white.

JULIA

Of course, then we're no better
than him.

Tran considers for a long beat, then nods. Julia struggles to
her feet and turns towards the
REAR DOOR - OPEN

Sarge is gone. Dink holds Chaco's ice pick on a slobbering
Victor.

Julia gives Dink a puzzled look. Dink answers Julia's question
before it's asked.

DINK

Said he's on a rescue mission.

Julia smiles, looks around the classroom and gives each student
a proud. She starts toward the hall door.

Mehaben, Denitra, and Sashy huddle in a corner. Mehaben breaks
the circle and points to Sashy.

MEHABEN

Sashy knows she has to go to
jail...

Sashy shrugs.

MEHABEN

But --

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL

The crowd waits quietly and watches

FIRE CHIEF beside the hook and ladder waves to

TEAM LEADER, who acknowledges and waves to the

ROOF OF THE SCHOOL

Where the three members of the S.W.A.T. team straddle the edge
of the building and wait.

TEAM LEADER speaks into the radio.

TEAM LEADER

On my command.

TEAM LEADER signals to

The S.W.A.T. Team member sitting on the end of the fire trucks ladder. He waves, ready.

TEAM LEADER signals back to

FIRE CHIEF fires up the DIESEL ENGINE of the truck. The ladder begins to extend.

INT. HALLWAY - ACROSS FROM ROOM 313A
Johnson, with the radio to his ear, waits.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL

TEAM LEADER speaks into his radio.

TEAM LEADER
On my count. Five.

HOOK AND LADDER TRUCK

The ladder extends closer and closer to the third story window. The man at the end cradles a rifle on his lap.

TEAM LEADER (O.C.)
Four.

THE SCHOOL ROOF

The men ease their ropes down the side of the building.

TEAM LEADER (O.C.)
Three.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE ROOM 313A

Two armed men stand at either side of the door. Johnson holds an arm in the air.

TEAM LEADER (O.C.)
Two.

A CLICK and from the other side of the door.

DINK (O.C.)
Don't shoot...We're coming out.

JOHNSON
(into the radio)
Hold it, Captain. Hold everything.

Johnson watches as the classroom door slowly opens.

JOHNSON
They're coming out --

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL

TEAM LEADER looks at FIRE CHIEF and runs a finger across his throat.

The DIESEL ENGINE stops.

The man on end of the ladder turns, puzzled.

The men on the roof signal they got the message.

MILLER
(grabs TEAM LEADER)
What the hell are --

TEAM LEADER glares him down the block.

INT. DOOR AND HALLWAY - ROOM 313A

Denitra, Scud and Parrot exit with their hands above their heads.

Bean follows with Mehaben. Mehaben dares a look back over her shoulder, but a concerned cop pulls her into the hall.

Sashy exits with her hands extended, like she's waiting for handcuffs. She walks right up to Officer Johnson and begins to confess.

SASHY
I killed my stepfather with a
board this morning.

In the B.G., Dink and Manuel exit -- between them is a BOY?
with very short hair, and a noticeable limp.

Johnson tries to concentrate on the door...but turns when he
realizes what Sashy said.

JOHNSON
You gave him one hell of a headache,
but he isn't dead.

For a beat, Sashy sighs with relief, then furious, she turns
and runs down the hall screaming.

SASHY
Then he has to go to jail. This
time he had to go to jail.

A concerned cop stops Dink, Manuel and the limping Boy in the
hallway.

DINK
He's okay. Just hurt his leg.

The cop waves them on. They hurry down the hall as the team
closes on the open door.

One cop flies through, rifle at the ready, then the second and

finally Johnson.

INT. CLASSROOM 313A

Chaco and Victor struggle with the ropes binding them to desks and try to shout through their gags.

Chaco looks especially tragic, covered in white dust and dressed in Julia's clothing.

Tran stands guard with the gun in his hand and the snake around his neck.

On the floor, next to a clump of Julia's hair lies the broken cane.

EXT. FRONT OF SCHOOL

The crowd cheers and reporters shove microphones at the kids as they exit the school.

BEAN

(into a microphone)

He was big. Taller than me.
Six-six. Maybe six-seven.
Ugly mean dude.

Scud and Denitra stand next to another reporter.

SCUD

(into a microphone)

That's right, huge, sucker.
Blond. Tattoos everywhere.
Like a wrestler.

Denitra peers into the television camera then looks at the reporter and signs, 'is-that-on?' The reporter nods. Denitra waves into the camera.

DENITRA

I ain't nothin' no more mama.
I'm somebody! I'm somebody!
Helped catch a killer.

Honor tries to fight his way out of a crowd of shouting, angry teachers and parents. He loses.

Lieutenant Miller sits alone on the bottom step.

FIRE TRUCK

Maggie, FIRE CHIEF and TEAM LEADER compare notes beside the vehicle.

CHANNEL 11 VAN

Kelly holds a stack of Iggy's photographs in one hand and hands him a hundred dollar bill with the other.

KELLY

Now you're a pro.

Iggy high fives her, lets out a HOOT and runs for his moped.

The crowd cheers loudly as B.B. and Sarge drag Torch and Wolf out the front door of the school.

Kelly stops Manuel on the school steps.

KELLY

It must have been awful.

Manuel ponders the remark for a long beat and looks up at

The sheet metal windows, then

Around at the crowd and across the street

where Dink and Julia (dressed in Chaco's clothing) give him a subtle wave.

Manuel gives Kelly a warm smile, sucks in his gut, draws himself to his full five feet and in a deep, mature voice

MANUEL

Nope. It was a good lesson.
I learned more today, than...

ACROSS THE STREET

Julia and Dink stand face to face.

Simultaneously they say

JULIA & DINK

I was wondering --

They both stop. Waiting for the other to begin
Then start again

JULIA & DINK

If you'd --

They laugh.

DINK

I could use a mom.

JULIA

I could use a family.

FADE OUT:

THE END