

ON MY BLOCK

Pilot

By

Eddie Gonzalez, Jeremy Haft & Lauren Iungerich

9.8.16

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - NIGHT (1)

We float down from a clear So Cal night onto a '64 Impala Drop Top. With hydraulics popping and the sound booming, the low rider rolls down a long, blue collar block in Lynwood, CA. From the bar covered windows and pitbulls tearing at their leashes, we know this isn't a John Hughes hood.

EXT. LYNWOOD HOUSE - NIGHT (1)

Outside a packed house, the Impala jumps the sidewalk and parks on the lawn. Immediately three tatted up, burly CHOLOS (19), holding bagged 40s, exit the car and pass under a handmade banner reading: CONGRATS 2017 LYNWOOD FAM!

As the Cholos roll into the backyard of a raging house party, we move from fist daps to the sway of hips through the fog of weed and find a crowd of young Black and Latino recent high school grads, Bangers and anointed lower classmen. A true mix of the neighborhood youth... Push past it all to land on a THREE YOUNG TEENS - peeping over a concrete fence.

--MONSE, 14. Half Black, half Latina, aka Blatina. Monse's a subtle beauty hidden beneath a mouth of metal and a flat chest. She's wise beyond her years and knows it.

--RUBY, 13, Latino. Ruby's a short, cherubic, uptight smartie who's muy loco for the ladies.

--JAMAL, 14, Black. A warm, neurotic worrier with a big mouth and no athletic skills, Jamal looks imposing but has no backbone.

MONSE

Do you see him? I don't see him.

JAMAL

Something bad is happening. I feel it. I knew this was a dumb idea.

RUBY

Pop a zannie, J. We can't see him 'cos he's being stealth.

MONSE

No doubt. He's got this. When has Cesar ever disappointed?

JAMAL

4th grade. Kickball tourney. We lost.

BOY (O.C.)
 Only 'cos I picked the big kid with
 no skills.

The friends turn to find: CESAR, 14, Latino. With rough good looks, Cesar's appearance belies a strong cerebral/sensitive persona. He's the glue that keeps the friends together. And right now, he's the hero who's scored four 40s.

CESAR
 (to Jamal)
 And I'd pick you again.

Cesar tosses a bottle to Jamal who misses the catch. Cesar picks up the bottle and hands it to Jamal.

CESAR
 Loyalty trumps victory, *compa*.

Cesar pulls his friends in and turns them toward the party over the fence. As they twist open their beers --

CESAR
 Take it in. This is about to be us.
This is high school.

They all take swigs from their beers, cringing. Jamal even surreptitiously spits the beer back in his bottle as Monse locks in on a LATINO COUPLE going full PDA.

MONSE
 Ruby, you think your brother's
 gonna marry Angelica?

RUBY
 No idea. Mario tells me shit.

JAMAL
 What about that time he said
 Angelica's vag was too tight?

Cesar spits out his beer.

RUBY
 Jamal!

JAMAL
 He said that.

RUBY
 In private! Time and place, dude.
 But -- speaking of tight, check out
Huerita at nine o'clock.

The kids see a HARD-BODIED BLONDE (16) grindin' up on her girlfriends.

RUBY

Monse, if you were a girl --

MONSE

I am a girl.

RUBY

Yeah, but if you were a girl like that.

(off her look)

Would you wear underwear?

(she gives another look)

That dress is like a second skin and I don't see any thong straps.

Annoyed, Monse moves away from Ruby to the other side of Jamal who is quietly talking to himself in a panic.

JAMAL

I'm gonna die. I'm gonna die --

MONSE

Why're you gonna die?

He points to GINORMOUS DUDES IN LYNWOOD FOOTBALL JERSEYS. Jamal is a big kid, but the dudes look like men.

JAMAL

Those guys play for the Wood. Did you know that last year alone over one hundred and fifty kids --

MONSE

-- died playing football. I know. You're stuck on repeat. So, don't play.

JAMAL

No choice. My pops was a legend. It's family tradition... I'm dead.

MONSE

You're not dead. At least not right away. CTE takes time to set in.

(Jamal hyperventilates)

Kidding. Kidding. It's early onset Alzheimer's that's gonna get you.

Immediately, Cesar helps Jamal put his head between his legs then looks over Jamal's back to Monse knowingly.

CESAR
 Football spiral?
 (Monse nods, cracking up;
 Cesar shakes his head)
 Jamal, CTE is not in your future.

Excited, Ruby turns away from the party to his friends.

RUBY
 Guys, check out my game. *Huerita*
 just gave me the nod --

Suddenly, Ruby is grabbed by the neck over the fence by one of the Cholos from the opening. He pulls Ruby into him.

CHOLO #1
 You peepin' my girl, *puto*?

RUBY
 No. God no. I don't peep blondes.

The Cholo tightens his grip on Ruby.

CHOLO #1
 How'd you know my girl was blonde?

CESAR
 Hey! Put'em down. He does your
 Mom's taxes.
 (Cholo squeezes Ruby)
 Mrs. Guzman, right?

RUBY
 (through the choke)
 Three thousand dollar refund.
 Schedule C, line 30, home office
 deduction.

The Cholo ponders and loosens his grip, but doesn't let go.

MONSE
 Seriously dude? Are you so insecure
 that you have to harass a 13 year
 old whose balls have yet to drop.

CHOLO #1
 Shut your hole, *hyna*.

RUBY
 Monse, shut it. Please.

He tightens his grip again as Cholo #2 appears.

CHOLO #2
 What're you doing, ese?!
 (he nods toward Cesar)
 That's Oscar's bro.

Cholo #2 nods toward Cesar. Immediately, Cholo #1 drops Ruby.

 CHOLO #1
 (to Cesar)
 Didn't realize it was you, homie.
 Tell Oscar Sad Eyes sends respect.

As the Cholos walk away, Cesar rubs Ruby's neck.

 RUBY
 Thank God for your brother.

 CESAR
 Don't. Thank God for better things.

They all look sympathetically to Cesar. It's a moment of connection for the crew when... GUNSHOTS RING OUT!

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER (1)

A wave of kids hit the street as the house party scatters in all directions. PUSH INTO THE CROWD running at us and find our Core 4 sprinting, full of exuberance and fear. As a police helicopter's nightsun spotlight shines on them, another round of gunshots echo and they play 'Guess the Caliber':

.357	RUBY	.45	JAMAL
.38	CESAR	.40	MONSE

ON MY BLOCK

As the kids wipe camera, we CUT TO:

INT. RUBY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER (1)

Ruby, Jamal and Cesar are spying through the glass front window REVEALING Mario and Angelica (the couple at the party) in the throes of a quarrel outside the house. Quietly:

 JAMAL
 Angelica's pissed.

 RUBY
 She's always pissed.

JAMAL

Maybe that's why her vag is so tight.

(off Ruby's look)

What? She's makin' Mario cry.

RUBY

My brother doesn't cry.

(upon closer inspection)

Shit. He's crying.

As Ruby and Jamal watch, Cesar leaves and takes us to Monse sitting by herself on the couch. Cesar sits by her.

CESAR

¿Qué estás pensando en esa cabeza grande?

MONSE

Nada. My brain is empty.

(he prods; she relents)

Do I really need some stupid writing camp? I don't wanna waste my summer.

CESAR

It's not a waste. It's bad ass. Not everyone can get in. Even the kids who pay. But you'll need this.

(pulls a NOTEBOOK out)

It's for writing your stories and maybe an old school letter or two for your favorite.

Monse smiles at Cesar. Possibly even a momentary flutter of flirtation when Ruby and Jamal rush away from the window.

JAMAL

The cry baby's coming.

RUBY

Don't stare.

Jamal and Ruby hit the couch as Mario enters, heading to his room as the kids look any which way but at him. Obvious. Mario stops and turns -- eyes bloodshot.

MARIO

Were you peepin' on me?

They all shake 'no' except for Jamal. Ruby hits him.

CESAR

You okay, homie?

Drunk and sentimental, Mario smiles at his brother's crew.

MARIO

Yes. No. I dunno.

(off their empathy)

Look at you. On the verge of high school and shit. All that excitement. All the firsts. First parties, first football games, first love --

(wistful; then)

Want me to drop knowledge?

CORE FOUR

No/Not really/We're cool.

MARIO

(steamrolling)

High school... it's the foundation for the rest of your life. Any false start could be your own dead end. You guys are smart -- setting curves and shit, but you still have to go in hard 'cos there's only one first impression. Whatever identity you lead with sticks with you. So define yourself from the start. Do you want to sit on the sidelines or play in the game?

JAMAL

I just don't want to die.

MONSE

(to Ruby)

Is Mario high?

MARIO

Yes, yes he's high. He's high on life and memories and some seriously good Indo. Whatever. What he's saying... I'm saying -- 'cos only douchebags talk in the third person is... work hard and put your heart out. Even if it's broken by some bitch you've known since Mr. Estrada's seventh grade Social Studies.

(the kids awkwardly eye each other)

But that's besides the point and she's not really a bitch, except when she's drunk. And ya know, F that B, she just dumped me.

(MORE)

MARIO (CONT'D)

She's a baaaatch. Anyway, what I'm getting at -- and this is MOST important -- don't go into high school without back-up. Just 'cos you're killin' it in class don't mean you won't get killed outside of it. You gotta stick together to survive. Got it?

(they nod; then)

I'm going to college, mofos!!

(beat; serious)

Now, kiss my class ring.

As he forces the ring in front of each kid, they awkwardly kiss Mario's class ring. He's about to leave when --

MARIO

Shit, I almost forgot. One last thing: don't bone Monse.

With that, he's gone as the Core 4 sit silently in his wake. They all quietly look at each other, then-- bust up laughing.

MONSE

Why would anyone want to do that?

SMASH CUT:

BOOBS BOUNCING. We are:

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - DAY (2)

As the boobs bounce, a chyron slides in: **10 weeks later**

PULL WIDE TO REVEAL Monse's now a new young woman. Out with the braces, in with a bangin' bod. Carrying her ubiquitous notebook from Cesar, she repeatedly runs her tongue across her perfectly aligned teeth and waves at all the passing neighbors who check out her body: "Sabroso" -- much to her confusion. As she strolls, we get a glimpse of our world: street walkers, bangers, and One-Time everywhere.

Suddenly, Monse's walk turns into a jog as she waves down Mario in his car, about to pull away outside his house.

MARIO

Hey you! How was camp?

MONSE

Tolerable. Mildly life changing.

MARIO

I can see that.

MONSE

You can? How?

He can't stop checking out her new rack. He averts his gaze.

MARIO

Nothin'. You just look -- Ya know,
I gotta roll before traffic hits.

MONSE

No prob. Good luck at Cal.

MARIO

Thanks. And you... keep an eye on
Ruby. Don't know what that kid's
gonna do without me.

RUBY (PRE-LAP)

Adiós amigo!!!

INT. RUBY'S ROOM - DAY (2)

Ruby, sportin' a new slick 'do, and Jamal jump on the bed.

RUBY

I got my own room! My own room!
(he stops abruptly)
So let's not trash it.
(pushing Jamal off)
I don't wanna break my pimp couch
before it gets some play.

JAMAL

Pimp couch?

Ruby pulls out a hand-drawn SCHEMATIC of the furniture arrangement. We see the "pimp couch" (Mario's twin bed) on the diagram. Ruby pulls covers and pillows from his closet.

RUBY

High school is an opp for
reinvention. So if I wanna be a new
man, I gotta live a new life. And
it all starts with my kingdom.

Jamal grabs a COFFEE TABLE book on French Couture.

JAMAL

Royal reading?

RUBY

Ha. No. It's a conversation piece.
(off Jamal's look)
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)
 And 2.99 at Ross. Enough chitty
 chatty, let's feng shui.

They start to move the bed as Monse appears in the door.

MONSE
 I'm back!

JAMAL
 Cool.

RUBY
 Welcome back.
 (beat)
 Can you move that side table?

MONSE
 (picking up the table)
 No, seriously don't make such a
 fuss. I've only been gone all
 summer but really it's no big deal.

RUBY
 How was camp?

MONSE
 Fine. Notice anything new?

She smiles wide. The guys stop and stare at her teeth.

RUBY/JAMAL
 You got boobs.

Embarrassed, Monse drops the table and un-tucks her shirt.

MONSE
 My services are complete. You can
 wait for Cesar to help.

JAMAL
 Then we'll be waiting a long time.

MONSE
 Why? Where's Cesar?

RUBY
 We're not talking to him.

MONSE
 You in a fight?

JAMAL
 No, it wasn't really a fight. It
 was more like --

RUBY

We're not getting into it. Trust us, Cesar's not cool.

MONSE

Well, I'm not cool being not cool.
(to Jamal)
And why aren't you at football --

JAMAL

(deflecting)
We gotta get going before the orientation lines get too long and we're standing in the sun. Even black folk get skin cancer.

RUBY

Screw cancer. I don't want to be sweaty for my ID. Like Mario said, it's all about the right first impression --

MONSE

And sticking together! He told us to stick together. So whatever fight you and Cesar had, we have 72 hours to fix. So tell me...

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - DAY (2)

MONSE

What. Happened?!

The Core 4, now feeling like the Core 3, walk to orientation. Monse is relentless and still badgering for intel.

MONSE

This silent treatment will only last so long. I will break you.
(they're not budging)
Come on, there's no way Cesar did anything on purpose to destroy our crew. Have you forgotten that he's the guy who got us a ride to school every day during El Nino?

JAMAL

He's also the guy who always hooks us up with the flamin' Cheetos during school lock downs.

RUBY

And the guy who saved my ass at the grad party.

MONSE

Exactly. He's the glue of our crew.

JAMAL

But that was then and this is now.

RUBY

Cesar's a dick.

They turn onto a new block, where Ruby and Jamal casually ditch their red cap and red sweatshirt in favor of blue fits - that blend in well in this Crip controlled 'hood. Ruby pulls off his hoodie, then immediately checks his 'do in his cell.

RUBY

Damnit. Did I just jack my lid?

As he checks his 'do, he sees in his cell JASMINE (13), a heavysset Chola with heavier makeup and giant hoop earrings, approaching from behind. Shiiiiit.

RUBY

Code Dread. Code Dread. From the rear.

Immediately, Jamal, Monse and Ruby start walking quickly. Jasmine tries to catch up with them. Talking a mile a minute.

JASMINE

You guys going to Orientation, eh? You know my cousin Beto, the fine one, heeeey -- his daughter Margarita said it ain't nothin'. Unless you stupid and can't spell your name. Then you hold up the line and peeps get -- Ey, why are you walking so fast? I can't keep up. *Tengo* asthma.

MONSE

(without looking back)
Sorry Jasmine, we're havin' a private convo. Real sensitive stuff. Catch you next time.

As Jasmine eats dust in their wake, she inhales her inhaler.

JASMINE

That's whatchoo always say.

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - MURALS - MOMENTS LATER

As the crew rolls up to a MURAL of Martin Luther King Jr. and Obama, they start to slow down.

JAMAL

Man, she is relentless. Nice save.

MONSE

Oh, you're not safe.

JAMAL

Your threats aren't gonna penetrate. I'm not telling what Cesar said.

MONSE

A-ha! So, he *said* something!

RUBY

Jamal!!! Do you need a muzzle?
(Jamal nods, maybe)
Monse, no offense, but you're a loose canon. We're not telling you for your own protection.

MONSE

My own protection?! Eat a dick!

RUBY

Case in point. You don't even know and you're already at Defcon Solange.

Before she can respond, they pass an alley where a BOY (15) is getting kicked to shit by a GANG.

JAMAL

Don't look -- keep walking. 19th street initiation. In 19 seconds, the pain will be over.

Ruby and Jamal move in tight on either side of Monse. Monse looks confused as they protect/smush her between them.

RUBY

Why would anyone want to get jumped into 19? If it were me, I'd join 1st Street. Only one second of pain.

JAMAL

But once you're jumped into the gang, you can't get out. Who wants a lifetime commitment at our age?

MONSE

Apparently, neither of you. Lack of commitment seems to be a noticeable trend in this friendship. As does lack of personal space.

She pushes the guys away from her just in time to see:

Cesar riding shotgun in an Impala heading toward them. The three of them stop and make eyes with Cesar.

RUBY

We can't tell you what Cesar said.

MONSE

Fine. Then, I'll ask myself.

Monse steps in front of the Impala. The car stops to a screeching halt REVEALING OSCAR (22) scary as hell behind the wheel. He rolls down the window.

OSCAR

What the fuck?

MONSE

I uh, just wanted to tell Cesar I was back in town.

OSCAR

And looking like a fine ass *hyna*.

MONSE

An underaged *hyna*.

OSCAR

Not for some.

All the *vatos* in the car laugh 'cept for Cesar who looks away. Uncomfortable, Monse crosses her arms across her chest.

OSCAR

It's all good. You just look a lil' different. What is it?

MONSE

(sardonic)
My boobs.

OSCAR

Nah, you got your braces off.

Then, he looks at her boobs. As all the other vatos in the car laugh, Jamal and Ruby pull her out of the street for the car to pass. Immediately, Ruby wraps his sweatshirt around Monse, covering her new merch. She relents.

MONSE

When did Oscar get out?

RUBY

Six weeks ago.

MONSE

Now it makes sense. Whatever Cesar said, he said to impress Oscar. Cesar's scared shitless of his brother.

JAMAL

Along with everyone else.

MONSE

Then who cares what he said.

RUBY

Just drop it.

MONSE

Do I look like I can just drop it?

JAMAL

Actually, you do. But you won't.

She nods, indignant when...

LATRELLE (O.C.)

(menacing)

Tax time, bitches! Run yo shit!

Our Core Four freeze. Shit. They turn around. From their POV, we TILT DOWN... then TILT SOME MORE. WE KEEP TILTING until we find a tiny dude with corn rows and saggy jeans, LATRELLE, aka L-Train, 14, Black, our kids' bully. What he lacks in size, he makes up for with the Glock in his pants.

LATRELLE

Hands up, money out.

RUBY

How can we take money out with our hands up?

LATRELLE

Fuck you. I know you bookheads got that back-to-school cheddah.

MONSE

It's Orientation Day. So technically, we're neither back to school nor out of school. We're in--

LATRELLE

Double fuck you!

MONSE

Why the double fuck? That's a double-negative. It makes no sense--

Ruby covers her mouth, silencing her.

LATRELLE

I know you got green for photos.
(then, to Ruby)
That's why you got your 'do whipped like a biatch.

RUBY

We don't have any money.

JAMAL

What about that twenty?

Ruby looks at Jamal with frustration as Latrelle puts out his hand. Ruby starts to dole out the dough when suddenly, CECE, 40, the local madam, struts to the crew from her art deco No-Tell Motel past several of her WORKING GIRLS.

CECE

Latrelle, leave my babies alone.

LATRELLE

Or what?

CECE

Better kick rocks 'for I call your mama.

(she leans down to Latrelle and whispers:)

'Cos I sure know your daddy.

(Latrelle stands down)

And pull your pants up. Don't nobody wanna see your Underoos.

LATRELLE

Yes, ma'm.

Cece winks at "her kids". Latrelle heads away, but not before messin' up Ruby's hair.

LATRELLE
Tax you later, bitches.

Off Ruby's frustration...

RUBY (PRE-LAP)
I look wrecked!

SMASH TO:

Ruby's ridiculous ID photo. His hair busted-up. We are...

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - LATER (2)

Jamal looks at Ruby's ID.

JAMAL
Agreed.

MONSE
I still can't believe we hit
Orientation without Cesar.

RUBY
(looking at his ID)
How much do you think it costs for
a do-over?

MONSE
Since when do you care so much
about your hair?

RUBY
Since our school district went
bankrupt and this ID has to last 4
years. How am I gonna land a hot
slice with this mexi-fro haunting
me every time I flash my face?
(Ruby DINGS with a text)
Shit. I gotta go.

JAMAL
Dude, don't sweat the pic. You
finally have your own room!

Ruby smiles. He's got his own room.

INT. HALL/RUBY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (2)

RUBY
Whatdaya mean I don't have my own
room?! It's only been four hours.

ANGLE ON the room to reveal Ruby's pimp couch is now covered in religious relics and crucifixes along with embroidered pillows of Jesus. GENY (40s) Ruby's mom explains:

GENY

Abuelita's room is flooded from the broken washer so she's gonna stay in here til we can dry it out.

RUBY

Did you try renting a Wet-Vac?

GENY

Papa thinks there might be mold.

RUBY

So?

GENY

She can't sleep in there.

ABUELITA (70s) passes between them with a large Virgin Mary glued onto an old Tube TV.

RUBY

Mom, she grew up in an adobe hut, she'll be fine.

GENY

You've never had your own room. Why do you need it now?

Ruby watches in horror as Abuelita puts her Novena candles on his 'conversation piece' coffee table book.

RUBY

For stuff. Like, like... my brain. There's scientific evidence that the brain grows every day and mine needs room -- a room -- to grow. Do you really wanna challenge science?

(Geny gives him a look)

Why doesn't she sleep in the living room?

(Geny shakes her head)

Grandma hasn't been back to Mexico in awhile.

(Geny shakes her head)

Come on Mom, I can't share a room with Abuelita. I'm a man.

GENY

(empathic; softening)

What if I give you another option?

RUBY

Yes, anything. Please. Bring it.

GENY

You can bunk with the twins.

Ruby looks behind him to see LUIS and LUISA (7) giddily picking each other's noses.

JAMAL (PRE-LAP)

Are you high?!

EXT. LYNWOOD SIDEWALK/EXT. CESAR'S HOUSE - DAY (2)

Jamal's standing with Monse a house away from Cesar, Oscar and their Banger buddies drinking on Cesar's front stoop.

JAMAL

I'm not gonna hash shit out. To what end? Death? Cesar might've joined the gang.

MONSE

He's not stupid. He's affiliated, yes, 'cos of his brother --

JAMAL

And his cousins. His uncles. His dad. His grandpas.
(then, under his breath)
Even the gay one.

MONSE

I know. I know.

JAMAL

You knew about the gay one?

MONSE

No! I know that Cesar's family's been in 'The Life' forever. But he's an outlier. So whatever's going on, it's not that.

JAMAL

He's not the same. He dumped us.

MONSE

But I wasn't here so it's not official.

JAMAL

If someone breaks up with you over text is it official?

MONSE

Yes.

JAMAL

Then consider me the text.

(Monse heads off)

Don't go! Please. You're not safe.

MONSE

Why?

JAMAL

Because...

(whispering)

...you've blossomed.

MONSE

Blossomed?

JAMAL

Popped, busted out, puffed your party pillows. Whatever you wanna call your new cha cha bingos -- those homies he's hangin' with, they're thirsty.

Jamal awkwardly throws his hoodie over Monse, further covering up her chest as she passively indulges him. When he's done, she rolls her eyes and heads off.

JAMAL

Okay, don't worry, girl. I got your back...from right here.

EXT. CESAR'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER (2)

Cesar sits on the stoop near the others as Monse appears.

MONSE

I need to talk to you.

CESAR

I'm listening.

MONSE

Privately?

CESAR

We can go inside.

Oscar coughs. Cesar looks to Oscar who gives him a smirk.

CESAR

But uh... if you wanna sit on my face, you gotta put that mouth on pause so I can concentrate.

Oscar daps Cesar as the Cholos crack up. Monse is horrified.

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER (2)

MONSE

Cesar is dead to me!

JAMAL

Told ya.

Monse is charging down the street as Jamal trails after her.

MONSE

He doesn't get to break up with us, we're breaking up with him!

As she's ranting Jamal goes behind a bush.

MONSE

'Sit on my face'? Who says that?

JAMAL (O.S.)

Assholes.

MONSE

I wouldn't put dumb shit like that past Oscar but Cesar?

Jamal finally reappears from behind the bush in his football jersey and pants and holding a duffel -- Monse never pausing.

MONSE

What happened to him?

(beat)

Cesar's gotta be hittin' the pipe. Right? Right.

JAMAL

Could be.

Jamal then purposely gets dirty. Going through sprinklers, then diving into dirt, slaying both his knees and elbows.

MONSE

'Member when sweet Mrs. Jackson who used to rescue dogs got mixed up with Freddy and started tweakin' in the afternoons?

JAMAL
She bit her own dog.

MONSE
Exactly. Totally out of character.

Finally, Monse clocks Jamal's transformation.

MONSE
What're you doing?

Off Monse's confusion, Jamal's dad DWAYNE (40) pulls into a nearby driveway. Dwayne waves at the kids.

JAMAL
Hey Pop!
(to Monse; hushed)
Say nothing and go with my flow.

INT. JAMAL'S HOUSE - SAME (2)

Jamal feigns exhaustion as Dwayne enters and hugs Monse.

DWAYNE
Mon-se! Welcome back, baby. Ready
for the new year?

MONSE
Bound to be a lot of surprises.

Jamal shuts her up by tossing her a bag of chips.

DWAYNE
How was practice?

MONSE
(popping a chip; smirking)
Yeah, how was practice?

Jamal gives the eye to Monse then puffs his chest.

JAMAL
I dunno -- Ask those D1 scouts who
were on my jock. Just another 200
yard day.

Dwayne goes to high five his son, but Jamal misses.

JAMAL
We're gonna be in my room.

INT. JAMAL'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER (2)

Jamal ushers Monse in and quickly shuts the door.

MONSE

Did you quit the team and not tell your dad?

JAMAL

No. Yes.

(off her look)

Look, I tried. I suited up first day, but I just wasn't feelin' it.

MONSE

Wasn't feeling it?

JAMAL

Yeah. I wasn't feeling like breaking my neck. Everyone who knows me knows I suck 'cept my Pops. He keeps thinking I'm gonna wake up one day and be him. But I'm not him. I just need to figure out the right time to tell him.

MONSE

How ironic that a guy who can't keep a secret is keeping the biggest secret of his life.

Jamal nods. And then the biggest shit-eating grin crosses Monse's face. She has leverage.

JAMAL

What?

MONSE

I'm gonna rat you out to your dad about football unless you drop the 411 about Cesar. What did he say?

JAMAL

No.

MONSE

Yes.

(he hesitates; she yells)

MISTER JOHN --

Jamal covers her mouth and spills the beans.

JAMAL

Cesar told Ruby that he 'hit it' with you before you left for camp.

For the first time ever, Monse is speechless.

ACT TWO

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (2)

TIGHT ON Ruby only illuminated by the glow of his ringing iPhone. He answers and we INTERCUT WITH:

INT. JAMAL'S ROOM - NIGHT (2)

JAMAL

What was the context when Cesar said he 'tapped it' with Monse?

RUBY

(whispering)

He didn't say he 'tapped it'. He said he 'hit it'. 'Really hard'. But who cares about context?

Suddenly, both calls are INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MONSE'S ROOM - NIGHT (2)

MONSE

I care!

We're now on a three-way call.

RUBY

Dude, you can't keep one secret!

JAMAL

She was blackmailing me.

RUBY

I can't do this right now.

MONSE

Why're you whispering? Where are you?

RUBY

Hell.

PAN TO Abuelita asleep on the 'pimp couch' hooked to a C-Pap. Night glo Jesus on full display.

RUBY

I'm dealing with some jacked up cracked up bullshit at home and I gotta work it out before school starts. So, this Cesar sitch is just not top priority right now.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)
 (Abuelita rustles)
 Seriously, I gotta go.

MONSE
 Can we just meet up tomorrow?

JAMAL
 Can't. I got a shift at the joint.

RUBY
 Dude, there is no way I'm facing
 'The Inquisition' all by myself.

MONSE
 Jeez, can't we meet at the joint at
 three and chop it up?

RUBY/JAMAL
 Fine.

INT. DWAYNE'S JOINT - DAY (3)

Monse, in a baggie turtle neck, texts as Jamal stuffs napkin dispensers around her.

MONSE
 That's my eleventh text. Ruby's
 almost two hours late.

JAMAL
 Chill. If he said he'll be here,
 he'll be here. Trust me.

MONSE
 Said the guy who pretends to play
 football.

JAMAL
 Maybe my Pop won't notice.

MONSE
 Somehow I don't think that's
 possible.

POP TO REVEAL the restaurant is plastered with pics of Jamal through the years in football gear. Off Monse's look...

JAMAL
 (frustrated)
 Where the hell is Ruby?!

ABUELITA (PRE-LAP)
Cinco minutos más, mijo.

INT. RUBY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY (3)

Ruby is stuck in a vibrant fuschia quinceañera dress as his Grandma takes up the hem. His phone is out of reach nearby.

RUBY
Abuelita! I have to go!

ABUELITA (O.S.)
Cinco minutes más, mijo.

RUBY
That's what you've been saying for the last half an hour. Your client can wait. Valeria's quince isn't even for a month.
(Abuelita keeps sewing)
Can I just get my phone?

ABUELITA
Cinco minutes más, mijo.

Ruby shakes his head, uggh. Suddenly, Monse appears.

MONSE
What's going on?

RUBY
I think it's pretty obvious.

MONSE
Great. So now that you don't have any distractions, walk me through the moment Cesar said what he said.

RUBY
Don't worry about it.

MONSE
There you go again.

RUBY
Go again what?

MONSE
Keeping things from me! You gotta stop withholding, Goddamnit!
(to a horrified Abuelita)
Lo siento, Señora.

Abuelita makes the sign of the cross. Monse grabs Ruby.

EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY (3)

Monse drags Ruby, still in the dress, outside the house.

RUBY
(insecure in the dress)
We need to get back inside.

MONSE
No.
(she blocks him)
What did Cesar EXACTLY say? And how
did he say it? I need to know.

RUBY
You know what I know. What I don't
know is why he said it. But he said
it. We tried to get him to take it
back but he wouldn't. So what else
can we do?! Drop it.

MONSE
(tears in her eyes)
I can't.

RUBY
Why?

MONSE
'Cos I'm still figuring out if I
hate him.
(beat)
How are we gonna survive high
school without Cesar?

RUBY
Mario's not some prophet. Don't
take his words to heart. They're
just words.

MONSE
If that's true then why should we
take Cesar's words to heart?
(pointed)
They're just words.

RUBY
Sometimes it's not what you say,
it's how you say it. And Cesar said
it like he meant it. But things
could be worse.

MONSE
What's worse than losing a friend?

RUBY

Entering high school with a rep.
You're smart enough to know a rumor
could ruin your life.

(Monse nods)

But it's contained.

Monse takes this in. Ruby's right.

MONSE

You're right. No one knows.

LATRELLE

Yo, what's poppin' baby girl?
(Ruby, in the dress, spins
around to face Latrelle)
Dayumm, Boobie, actin' and dressin'
the part of a bitch -- you is one
freaky-ass dude. Monse, hurry and
come shine this wood. Do me good
like you did Cesar.

MONSE

Excuse me?

(to Ruby)

No one knows? Really? 'Cos if
Latrelle knows everyone knows.

LATRELLE

Knows what? That youse a hoochie!

MONSE

K, I officially hate the traitor.
And now I'm gonna kick his ass.

As Monse leaves, Ruby tries to run after her, but remembers
he's in the dress. Shit. He runs inside.

EXT. LYNWOOD SKATE PARK - NIGHT (3)

At the nearby skate park, Monse runs up to Cesar mid-skate
and shoves him off his board, totally disorienting him.

MONSE

You little bitch!

Stumbling to get up, Monse keeps him down by taking swings.
Finally, he gets out from under her just as the momentum from
the swing thrusts her into a nearby bench -- busting her
forehead. Cesar attempts to help her as Oscar/Bangers laugh.

BANGER #1

Damn, that hyna is wild. Must be a
freak on all fours.

Livid, Monse pushes Cesar away and goes hard.

MONSE

I fought for you. I had your back.
For what? For you to impress your
puto friends and humiliate me.

BANGER #2

Yo, Cesar, tell your dog to keep
that bark down.

OSCAR

She better back the fuck up before
she gets smacked the fuck up.

MONSE

Go ahead, *puto*.

Monse baits Oscar just as Ruby and Jamal arrive to grab her.
The boys pull her aside, attempting to calm her down as she
wipes away the blood from her face.

RUBY

This is why we didn't want to tell
you.

JAMAL

'Cos you going crazy.

MONSE

Crazy?! I'm crazy?!

RUBY

Calm down. Breathe.

MONSE

(Defcon Solange)
Don't you patronize me!

Suddenly, all the kids at the skate park whip out their
phones and start filming. Monse shoves away her friends.

MONSE

(to Cesar)
I don't need you.
(to Jamal and Ruby)
Any of you. I was just trying to
keep our crew together. But since
I'm the only one who cares --
you're all dead to me.
(wiping blood from head)
I'll survive on my own.

Monse storms away from her former friends.

ACT THREE

TIGHT ON Jasmine as she applies her eyelashes.

JASMINE

Jasonse? Or Monsmine? Which one you think is the better bestie power name, eh?

PAN TO Monse barely enduring the torture. We are--

EXT. JASMINE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON (4)

Monse's scribbling in her well-worn notebook, ugly wound on her forehead as she feigns interest in Jasmine.

JASMINE

Where we gonna kick it at lunch? And in between classes? We gonna go for flags? No! Flags can kiss my juicy *nalga*. Nothin' but skinny *putas*. We're tryin' out for dance. I ain't that coordinated, but I give good face. And I love that we're doing this together. Feel me? Hell-o?! Monse?

Jasmine snaps in Monse's face. Monse forces a nod and looks across the street to --

EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - SAME (4)

Ruby and Jamal as they're watching the fight from last night on their iPhones.

RUBY

All we were trying to do was be a good friend and now we're not friends. Explain.

JAMAL

Girls are whack.

EXT. JASMINE'S HOUSE - SAME (4)

Jasmine is driving Monse 51/50 practicing awful dance moves.

JASMINE

We need our own routine. Something sick that only we know and bust out (inhaling off her inhaler) ...at lunch or before school or at all the parties we'll be going to.

Cece rolls by, looks at Monse --

CECE

Baby, come by when you're free so I
can take a look at that gash.

Monse looks at Jasmine choreographing their new moves then
back at Cece.

MONSE

How 'bout now? Now a good time?

INT. NO-TELL MOTEL - CECE'S ROOM - NIGHT (4)

Cece cleans and re-bandages Monse's forehead wound.

MONSE

This wasn't supposed to happen. We
were supposed to be friends
forever. Like family.

CECE

I hear ya, sugar.

MONSE

With my mom gone and my dad now
pulling longer cross-country trips,
those assholes are the only other
family I got. We used to share
everything. Didn't matter that I
was a girl, nothing was off limits.
But suddenly I got tits and
everything's gone to shit.

(her emotion building)

What's the big deal? It's just
extra fatty tissue. But now
suddenly everyone's looking at me
differently. Treating me
differently. Like I need to be
'handled'. But I can handle myself.
I'm still me. I'm still the same
girl.

Monse's embarrassed by her tears, but Cece pulls her tight.

CECE

That new body you hatin' on and
think is your weakness, is gonna be
your strength. You don't get it
yet, but you will.

MONSE

Feels like everything is changing.

CECE
That's life.

MONSE
I'm not ready, Cece.

CECE
Then get ready, baby. 'Cos change is comin' whether you're ready or not. And when it comes, you're gonna need your friends.

MONSE
They're not my friends. Friends keep it real.

CECE
I dunno. To me, a good friend is someone who doesn't tell me what I don't really wanna to know.

As this lands on Monse we CUT TO:

EXT. RUBY'S FRONT STEPS - LATER (4)

Ruby and Jamal are still sitting on the stoop, now drinking out of brown paper sacks.

JAMAL
This is lame.

RUBY
No, we're looking hard. This is how we pull in the pussy.

JAMAL
By looking lame? This ain't real.

RUBY
No one knows that.

Suddenly, Monse appears at the foot of the stoop.

MONSE
Hey.

RUBY/JAMAL
Hey.

Beat.

MONSE
So... I'm cool if you're cool.

INT. MONSE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (4)

She enters the dark apartment and gives her father a visual play by play:

MONSE

I'm inside now. Door is locked.
Double bolted. Double chained.
So, get some rest and I'll you when
I wake up. K?

MONTY

K. Love you, Peanut.

MONSE

Love you too. And I promise...
nothin's gonna happen.

They hang up. Monse smiles then, suddenly, she's pulled around by an unseen person. She instinctively grabs a nearby BAT and is about to swing it when Cesar steps into the light.

MONSE

What're you doing here?! Get out!

She's about to take a swing when Cesar grabs the bat.

CESAR

Hear me out. Please.
(beat)
I never meant to hurt you.

MONSE

Then why did you say it? We promised we wouldn't tell anybody.

Off Cesar's remorse --

JAMAL (PRE-LAP)

I can't keep a secret for shit.

INT. JAMAL'S HOUSE - NIGHT (4)

JAMAL

(emotionally vomiting)
I'm not playing Freshman football.
I don't like football.

ANGLE ON Dwayne -- wearing an LA RAMS JERSEY and holding another one for his son. Dwayne takes it in. Gets serious.

DWAYNE

What do you mean you're not playing
and you don't like football?

Jamal starts to panic.

JAMAL

I--I--I... I don't like football,
because... I LOVE football.

(beat)

And I'm playing Varsity!

Dwayne smiles from ear to ear.

DWAYNE

You serious?

(Jamal reluctantly nods)

Bring it in!

Jamal forces a grin as an upbeat Rancherita takes us to...

INT. RUBY AND ABUELITA'S ROOM - NIGHT (4)

Ruby is stuck with Abuelita watching a Mexican Variety show on the tiny TV in their bedroom. As she sings along with the show, he pulls up 'Monse' in his contacts and writes a text:

We will survive. We don't need Cesar.

INT. MONSE'S LIVING ROOM - SAME (4)

As Ruby's text comes in, Monse ignores it--focused on Cesar.

MONSE

You were the one who said we needed
to keep this thing, our thing --
under wraps. That it would create a
rift in our crew and it did. So why
did you do it?

CESAR

Oscar.

MONSE

I don't understand.

CESAR

When he got out, he wanted to get
at you. So I claimed you. To
protect you.

Monse's whole body softens. She releases the bat.

MONSE

But you don't have to protect me.
Protect yourself. Leave. I'll help
you. Get away from Oscar.

CESAR

You don't understand. You're gonna go off and be a famous writer someday. Ruby's gonna follow his brother and go to some fancy college. Jamal, he'll figure things out and get out. But this life, 'The Life', it's my destiny. My family crest is and will always be a gang sign. It's too late.

MONSE

No, it's not. There are so many --

CESAR

(tears in his eyes)

You guys got me all twisted all these years about a future away from this place, but it ain't gonna happen. This is all I got.

MONSE

No, it's not.

She kisses him. The kiss builds as Cesar and Monse unleash all their feelings of hope, disappointment and despair. Things get hot. Monse goes for Cesar's shirt, but he pulls back. She goes for it again. And this time he relents. As Cesar's shirt comes off, quiet revelation washes over Monse.

ANGLE ON Cesar's beaten body. Monse processes the gravity.

MONSE

You got jumped in.

Off Monse's devastation, we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LYNWOOD STREET - DAY (5)

Next morning. First day of High School. One by one, Ruby, Monse and Jamal meet up. No one says a word. Then, Monse, looks at the notebook in her hands and walks toward the opposite side of the street.

RUBY

He's not coming with us.

JAMAL

And why would you want him to?

Monse? Monse!

(to Ruby)

Girls are whack.

She continues to walk toward Cesar's. They walk after her.

They arrive at Cesar's house.

After a beat, Cesar comes out. He looks at his old crew. They look at him. No one says anything, but he joins them and they continue to walk in silence. Together.

Finally, Jamal breaks the silence.

JAMAL

I can't do this.

(they all look at him)

I can't keep a secret. It's gonna make me implode. Why does anyone keep secrets?!

Monse looks at Cesar. He nods.

MONSE

There's something we need to tell you.

Just then, they hear gunshots in the distance. And as one:

JAMAL, RUBY, CESAR, MONSE

.44

They all laugh. The Core 4 is back in sync when... Oscar rolls up in his Impala. He nods to his brother. Cesar looks between his brother and his family -- the Core 4 -- but he has no choice and reluctantly gets in the car. Monse watches as Cesar rides off.

RUBY

(to Monse)

What were you gonna say?

In the car, Cesar turns to look out the back, his eyes locked on his friends as he gets further and further away.

MONSE

Cesar. He needs us to save him.

FADE OUT.