

Solemn Warfare Tree

written by

Brandon Delgado

SERIES OF SHOTS -- NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE -- MORNING

The Nashville Parthenon covered in snow. An inch or two of snow also covers the ground surrounding it. The golden morning sunlight lays over the scene like a cloth.

A quiet, resting neighborhood. A lone plumber's truck is heading out for the day.

The Shelby Street Pedestrian Bridge appears mighty cold this morning. Its steel and concrete splattered by yesterday's rain.

Downtown Nashville is slowly waking up. The municipal snow plows clear the way for the day. Local shop owners are arriving and opening up for customers.

From a distance, Nashville's one-and-only cemetery idles. Not a soul in sight.

END SERIES OF SHOTS.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

During the golden hours of winter's dawn, the sun shines on a worn out TOMBSTONE, amongst many. The tombstone reads:

Spartius Caesar - 1973 - 2008 - "He tackled the world. He knew us best. A strong father, who wanted a strong family. His sparks of empathy and moments of clarity were cherished."

WE PAN left, revealing another TOMBSTONE. This one newer.

Marcellus Caesar - 1995 - 2023 - "A brother. A man. A menace in the name of protecting."

LOVIUS CAESAR (late 20s) stands in front of Marcellus' grave. Only his pleated suit pants and black dress shoes are seen. His confident, excited, yet solemn voice is heard.

LOVIUS

Salve, big brother! Look who just decided to visit after THIRTEEN years!

(Chuckles)

It's your young brother, Lovius! No, really! I know- I know, "Little Lovable Lovius", but I'm not five anymore! I'm a man! Just ask the ladies in college who called me "Lover Lovius".

(Laughs)

Ohhh nooooo! Who said that?!

(MORE)

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

No, you're crazy. Not me.

(Laughs)

Oh? Uh- noooo, no, don't mess around like that, brother. I am NOT spiffy. Not at all! The wife picked out my clothes, not me! Lemme tell you something about these high-class women, they *mean* business. You *cannot* say "No" to them! I swear to Jupiter, authority is their kink, if that tells you anything...

(Laughs)

No, it's not like these girls-- or the people we grew up with here, you know? Very carefree spirits, even if it got them in trouble. I know you'd know about that...

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Anyways, you know exactly why I'm back in town. Cousin Tato is getting married, and I just have to travel all the way over here to tell him "RUN"!

(Laughs)

I jest. I'm sure he loves his woman. From what I hear, he has gone all sentimental on us. Who could've seen that coming? No, really!

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Anyways, you crazy bastard, you should feel special, I JUST landed here this morning, and this is the FIRST spot I'm visiting. I haven't even taken out the luggage from my car. Brother, I haven't even seen mother's new home and I'm lodging there! And it's because you know how much this means to me. How much YOU mean to me... I just had to stop by and visit my hero. My valiant tutor. Who helped me be the man I am today. Nothin' but love for you, brother, nothin' but love.

Lovius' feet shuffle around. His voice beings to break. He's choking up.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

No matter what anybody says about you, you know I'm here for you, just like you were for me. It's MY turn to protect you, hear-hear? And that I'll do. And I'll fight, too. For your legacy...

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

... Just tell me it isn't true. Tell me all this NOISE people are talking isn't true. Why would they say those things about you? You've done nothing wrong, right? Please tell me. Tell me it isn't true!

(Crying)

I should've been there for you. It's not right I left after everything you did for me. It's not right I left you all! But I'm here now! And I just wanna talk to you. Just walk up to me, please. My eyes are closed, just please be there when I open them...

Long beat.

Lovius sobs quietly.

WE PAN to reveal Lovius. The cold air has turned his pasty-white cheeks into a rose red. He's clean-shaven with combed, cedar brown hair. His has the face of an innocent boy.

He opens his eyes.

He takes a deep breath to collect himself.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

(Chuckles)

Aw, look at me, send me to Hades, I have embarrassed myself. I just can't help it cry. No... it isn't right for me to disturb you like this. Rest in peace, brother. I'll find out myself. But no surprises, hear-hear? I best not find out you were always some animal-dresser, yes?

Lovius laughs through the tears and sniffles.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUED

Lovius drives to a small, abandoned, two story, apartment complex. Those windows that are not boarded up, have AC unites sticking out. Electrical wires hanging from every wall like vines. The apartment is fenced up, and looks ready to be bulldozed.

There's letters stained on a wall from years of the apartment complex sign. They read, "Caesar-Complex".

Lovius parks across the street in another parking lot.

Taking a quick glance around to make sure no one spots him, he climbs over the fence. He knows exactly where to go. He enters the landlord's unit.

INT. LANDLORD'S UNIT - CONTINUED

Inside, there's little to no furniture left behind. And what is left behind, is layered in dust. To Lovius, this was home.

He stands at the center of the once living room. Suddenly, in his mind, he hears the rapid footsteps of a little boy. He turns to look.

INT. LANDLORD'S UNIT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Lovius now stands out as the apparition watching a kid version of himself run towards another slightly older boy sitting on the floor, tinkering with an old digital camera, in an apartment of a bygone era.

The older boy is a young MARCELLUS (10). His curly, blonde hair is trimmed short. For a young boy, he's built stocky.

YOUNG LOVIUS

(Whispers)

Marcellus, I'm in big trouble!

MARCELLUS

What'd you do, now, Lovius?

YOUNG LOVIUS

I sneaked into father's room to get my toy back and I bumped into their drawer and mother's vase fell and it broke and father's going to find out!

MARCELLUS

Ah, "Lovable Lovius", why didn't
you just ask mother to get it back
for you?

YOUNG LOVIUS

Because mother never fights for us!
But you do!

The sound of a toilet flushing and a door opening is heard.
Footsteps are heard heading into a different room.

YOUNG LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Father's out! Marcellus please!

Young Lovius is on the verge of tears.

MARCELLUS

Fiiinneeee! Here, take this.

Marcellus hands young Lovius his camera.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

Now go hide behind the couch. I'll
take care of this.

YOUNG LOVIUS

Huh?

The deep, booming voice of SPARTIUS (40s) is heard from
another room.

SPARTIUS

What the FUCK?!

Fear ZAPS right into the spine of young Lovius.

MARCELLUS

Just go! Hurry!

Marcellus rushes young Lovius to hide behind a couch, near a
corner.

Afterwards, Marcellus simply stands straight, staring in the
direction of Spartius, who walks into the room. From a
child's eye level, only his hairy legs are seen facing
Marcellus. Nonetheless, we hear the white fury in his voice.

SPARTIUS

Did you. Break. It?

MARCELLUS

Yes.

SPARTIUS
 (Deep breath)
Why?

MARCELLUS
 Because... I... *hate it*. Mother
 feeds those flowers more than she
 feeds us. She's a disgrace!

SPARTIUS
 You little shit. You don't SPEAK of
 your mother like THAT!

MARCELLUS
 Whatever.

Finally, WE PAN up to reveal a grizzly, withered man in
 Spartius. He's about to explode from rage.

SPARTIUS
 One month. One FUCKING month we
 can't go without you already
 causing trouble in our new home!
 That's it!

Spartius GRABS Marcellus by his shirt collar and DRAGS him to
 another room. Marcellus doesn't fight back. Instead, he only
 braces himself. A young Lovius watches from behind the couch.

BACK TO:

INT. LANDLORD'S UNIT - CONTINUED

Lovius had watched his entire flashback unfold. He steps out
 to get some air.

The open-air lobby of the apartment complex begins to bring
 back memories. He stares at a corner, facing the streets,
 neighborhoods, the open world.

EXT. CEASAR COMPLEX - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Late at night, the young Caesar brothers sit at this corner
 observing the cars, the flickering street lights, and the
 night sky. The moonlight shows bruises on Marcellus' arms and
 face.

Once again, Marcellus is tinkering with the early-model
 digital camera.

YOUNG LOVIUS
 Why did you do that?

MARCELLUS

Do what?

YOUNG LOVIUS

You know what I'm talking about.

MARCELLUS

Heh. Sweet talking father will only make him angrier. It's best to just be straightforward with him. Besides, he doesn't like me in any way.

YOUNG LOVIUS

I try to love him, but he doesn't try with me. He doesn't like me either, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

Sorta, I guess? I think he just ignores you. Which is MUCH better, trust me. If he doesn't even know you exist, then how can he ever hold you back from becoming an astronaut, or a cowboy!

YOUNG LOVIUS

But don't you also want to be an astronaut or cowboy?

MARCELLUS

Sure. But right now, I'm a *soldier*. I fight. I protect.
(Teasing)
Because this family is currently at *war*.

YOUNG LOVIUS

What war? With who?

MARCELLUS

With *ourselves*.

Marcellus looks around at the apartment units. For its time, it looks brand new. Some of the interior lights shine from the windows.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

I hear auntie Julia beats uncle Dominus like a mule! She denies it all the time, too! It's wild, no one believe uncle when he talks about it! I didn't believe!

(MORE)

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)
I mean, can you imagine that?
Getting your ass kicked by a *girl*?

Marcellus laughs. Young Lovius looks concerned.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)
Then there's auntie Amelia.

LOVIUS
Amelia doesn't like me, either.

MARCELLUS
Hah, why not?

LOVIUS
She's always asking me for my lunch money! And auntie Julia is always yelling at me when I tell mother. And then there's the way she looks at me! Or how anybody looks at me... Makes me feel lonely.

MARCELLUS
Well, they do talk to each other a lot. She probably tells everybody when the whole family invades our place every Friday! You know how they are, they talk like snakes.

LOVIUS
Why do they keep doing that? Grandpa Romulus is dead. It's *our* place now, but they don't even ask permission to visit.

MARCELLUS
They shouldn't. They're family. And plus, it's tradition. It's always been tradition to gather at grandpa's place every Friday.

LOVIUS
I suppose. I love them all, Marcellus. I really do, but sometimes... I just want to escape.

MARCELLUS
I know, but you shouldn't say that, Lovius.

LOVIUS
Why not?

MARCELLUS

Because family is all you got.

LOVIUS

It'll just be like recess at school.

MARCELLUS

So you want a break, because you're not having fun?

LOVIUS

When has it ever been fun...

Crossed-arms young Lovius pouts. Marcellus is quick to take a flash photo of this moment.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Cut it out!

Marcellus chuckles.

MARCELLUS

Hey, this thing is pretty nifty.

LOVIUS

Where'd you get it?

MARCELLUS

Where else? The dumpster. It's where I got the rope, too.

Marcellus toys with the camera some more.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

Well, anyways, if it makes you feel any better, you know how mother says auntie Amelia is on vacation? The truth is...

Marcellus leans in to whisper to young Lovius.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

She's a *crackhead*!

YOUNG LOVIUS

What's that?!

MARCELLUS

Drugs, Lovius. She loves doing drugs! Last time I saw her, she was twitching on the floor and had foam coming out of her mouth! Don't you remember?!

YOUNG LOVIUS

(Scared)

No! I don't!

MARCELLUS

Oh, that's right. You were too busy watching cartoons. You're missing out on a lot when you're glued to that TV.

YOUNG LOVIUS

I remember the ambulance coming here. But you told me to stay inside and watch my cartoons.

MARCELLUS

Ah yes, that is true. Yeah, sometimes it's best you don't see some of the things that go on in this family. ESPECIALLY what goes on in auntie Rubia's place.

YOUNG LOVIUS

What do you mean? What goes on?

MARCELLUS

No! You're too young for that!

Marcellus rubs young Lovius' hair.

YOUNG LOVIUS

Stop! I'm old enough. Tell me.

Marcellus looks excited to spill a secret.

MARCELLUS

She *fucks a lot* of guys!

YOUNG LOVIUS

Fucks? What does that mean?

MARCELLUS

(Laughs)

You'll find out one day.

YOUNG LOVIUS

What does it mean? Tell me!

MARCELLUS

(Laughs)

No, Lovius. I'm serious, I'm not going to tell you. That woman needs to buy some new curtains that's all I'll say. And poor uncle, he knows.

(MORE)

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

He *has* to know. Yet, he sticks with her. For now, I guess.

Beat.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

Man, our uncles are cowards! I would never let a woman beat me or treat me like trash. At least father isn't like them, he *controls* his family, that's for sure. That's why he owns this whooooole place, not them. That's why grandpa Romulus passed it down to him. Because he's a *man*, just like Grandpa was. He was the *only one* who didn't cry at grandpa's funeral.

Young Lovius is annoyed.

YOUNG LOVIUS

Why do you talk about father like that?

MARCELLUS

Like what?

YOUNG LOVIUS

As if he... doesn't... beat you.

MARCELLUS

Because I'm getting stronger. I'm growing up to be the protector of this family. One day, I'll have thick skin like his.

Young Lovius looks unsure. Marcellus notices.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

Hey, could be worse. We could be learning nothing from our parents like cousin Tato and Baraballa. You should know, you sleepover at their place all the time! What, is our place not good enough?

YOUNG LOVIUS

... They have a Gamecube.

MARCELLUS

Is a *Gamecube* really worth it with all the screaming that goes on in their place.

(MORE)

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

I mean, sheesh, I can hear auntie and uncle YELLING from here.

YOUNG LOVIUS

Tato tells me they took out knives one time. Ready to fight each other.

MARCELLUS

Damn! That's intense! Baby brother, this family is 'EFFED up!

Marcellus sighs. He looks back up at the sky.

YOUNG LOVIUS

What else?

MARCELLUS

Huh?

YOUNG LOVIUS

More secrets.

Marcellus chuckles. Once again, he leans in to whisper.

MARCELLUS

Okay, here's something a little different... father... has a soft side.

YOUNG LOVIUS

Huh?!

MARCELLUS

I know, CRAZY right?! I couldn't believe it myself, either.

YOUNG LOVIUS

What soft side? What does he do?

MARCELLUS

You remember when we all went Downtown on Saturday? The four of us?

Young Lovius nods.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)

They left us at the arcade. You were so busy playing to notice that I sneaked out and followed them. Well, I saw them go into a flower shop, and I kid you not, father was being all lovey-dovey with mother!

(MORE)

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)
 Smelling flowers, grabbing a whole
 bunch of them, and bringing them to
 her!

Young Lovius giggles.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)
 He KNEELED to her! It was freakin'
 bizarre!

YOUNG LOVIUS
 What did mother do?

MARCELLUS
 What do you mean? She was happy.
 She loved it. Mother...
 (Sigh)
 Mother's sweet. Sometimes, I think
 she wants to be our mother, but
 that would mean crossing father.
 It's him who wishes we never
 existed.

YOUNG LOVIUS
 Well, at least he's not *all* bad.

MARCELLUS
 Yeah... yeah.

Marcellus yawns. He gets up.

MARCELLUS (CONT'D)
 Come on. Time to go to bed.

YOUNG LOVIUS
 But you're the one who's tired, not
 me.

MARCELLUS
 You have school tomorrow.

YOUNG LOVIUS
 We both do.

MARCELLUS
 It matters to *you*, not *me*.

YOUNG LOVIUS
 Ughhhh. Five more minutes!

MARCELLUS
 Lovius...

YOUNG LOVIUS
Pleeeaseee?

MARCELLUS
Fine. Five more minutes. But I'm heading inside. And I expect to hear you brushing your teeth in five minutes.

YOUNG LOVIUS
Already brushed them.

MARCELLUS
Ugh, smartass.

Marcellus heads back inside.

Young Lovius remains seated in the corner of the apartment lobby. He stares up at the sky on his lonesome, a curious look in his face.

BACK TO:

EXT. CEASAR COMPLEX - CONTINUED

Lovius stands silently, alone. He stares at the spot young Lovius once sat in. The winter wind whistles.

He looks jaded.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Lovius' car now arrives to a flowery house in a low-income neighborhood. He steps out and knocks on the front door.

No response.

He knocks again. Still no response.

He searches under a rock in the small yard of the house. He finds a key and unlocks the front door with it.

INT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUED

Stepping inside, one can clearly sense that a lonesome individual lives here. Flowery decorations, and a Greek aesthetic to a modest Americana house.

LOVIUS
Mother?

No response.

Lovius heads to the kitchen. Through the kitchen window looking into the backyard, he spots his mother, KONSTANTINA (50s). A timid, small, lovable lady entering elderly age with her greying hair. Her demeanor just radiates innocence and shyness.

She's hanging up laundry on a clothes rack. Sun rays strike down on her through the overcast clouds at just the right angle to make her an angelic sight.

Lovius steps into the backyard. Konstantina spots him and, after *thirteen* years, she's shocked into tears of joy.

Like a soldier returning home, Lovius grins widely, walking towards his mother, who's too surprised to even move her legs.

He hugs her, and her, him. A hug that can last all winter.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
Hello to you, too, mother.

They release their hug. Their hands remain on each others shoulders.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
I've missed you.

Konstantina is only slightly still shocked. She manages to put a hand on Lovius' face, to caress.

KONSTANTINA
(Crying)
I've missed you! My dear "Lovable Lovius".

Lovius' can't help but become teary-eyed himself.

They hug once again.

Finally, they let go of each other.

Lovius takes a DEEP breath to compose himself.

LOVIUS
I tried calling you before coming here, but you didn't answer.

Konstantina begins wiping her tears away.

KONSTANTINA

Oh? I had my phone with me. I must've of left it in the kitchen! Did you find the key?

LOVIUS

No, I didn't, actually. I had to break one of your windows to get inside. Watch your footsteps, you might step on some glass.

KONSTANTINA

(Laughs)

Ohhh, stop it you!

She grins ear-to-ear.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

I can't believe it's really you! After all this time!

She begins crying again. She caresses his face once again. Lovius' looks at her like any little boy would look at their loving mother.

LOVIUS

I'm so sorry.

KONSTANTINA

For what?

LOVIUS

For never visiting. I should've been here after father...

Lovius chokes up.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

After Marcellus--

KONSTANTINA

-- Shhhh... It's okay. You're here now.

They smile at each other.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

Come. Let's head inside. It's freezing out here.

The two begin walking back to the house.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUED

Entering from the backyard, Konstantina doesn't hesitate to turn on the stove and start making some tea. Lovius finds a seat at the kitchen table.

KONSTANTINA

Have you eaten anything this morning?

LOVIUS

I had a breakfast sandwich at the airport cafe. And an energy drink for the first time in years. I couldn't sleep throughout the entire flight, and I was feeling really tired coming out of the airport. I needed a pick-me-up, you know?

KONSTANTINA

Ugh, my poor Lovius, maybe you should go lay down for a little while?

LOVIUS

No, it's fine, mother. This weird weather gave me a second wind, you know? Man, I do not miss Nashville wet winters.

KONSTANTINA

Hm. What did you miss?

LOVIUS

I missed Downtown on Thanksgiving week. But I got here about a month too late, huh?

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

I missed the countryside. Even though I only got to see it a few times when Marcellus would drive me around there... I missed our family cookouts, rare as they were.

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Oh! The food! The hot chicken you and aunties used to make. I miss THAT.

Konstantina perks up, excited.

KONSTANTINA

Oh! Lucky for you, we cooked a whole feast for Olabisi's baby shower and I still have some hot chicken leftover in the fridge.

Konstantina takes out leftover hot chicken from the fridge and starts cooking it on the stove.

LOVIUS

Olabisi?

KONSTANTINA

Tato's fiance!

LOVIUS

What? They had a baby shower before they got married?

KONSTANTINA

They're sparing no time to start a family. They already moved out to the countryside, too!

LOVIUS

Tato? Countryside? Wow, hard to imagine that hothead sitting on a rocking chair watching his field from a porch.

KONSTANTINA

You'd be surprised how much he has calmed down after all these years. You can thank Olabisi for that. The wonders a kind woman can do for a man.

LOVIUS

Guess so. Interesting name, though. "Olabisi". Never heard of one like that.

KONSTANTINA

Tato tells us she's not from here. Not even from this country. Fascinating, isn't it? If you ask me, I think their marriage is going to be a beautiful unification of cultures.

LOVIUS

Hm. Well, I'm happy for Tato. He's changed a lot. It's surprising, but in a good way.

KONSTANTINA

It's been thirteen years, Lovius... A lot of us have changed.

LOVIUS

... In a good way?

Konstantina finished reheating the chicken for Lovius. She serves it to him. She sits on the other side of the table.

KONSTANTINA

In a good way.

Beat.

LOVIUS

I remember, last we spoke... I was harsh on you. All of you.

KONSTANTINA

You were only as confused as we were. None of us knew the truth.

LOVIUS

... Then why wasn't there a funeral for Marcellus?

Konstantina shies away.

KONSTANTINA

We were all still in shock. The family couldn't agree wether...
(Sigh)

Wether he was... worthy or not. So nobody pitched in money for a funereal in time.

LOVIUS

He was only human. Everything he did, everything, was for the family.

KONSTANTINA

You have to understand, Lovius, we were not in the right place.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)
 After what happened between him and
 my Spartius...

Lovius rolls his eyes.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)
 And then *that* night... and then the
 rumors...

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)
 We were defeated.

LOVIUS
 Nobody ever did anything about the
 rumors? The very ones that ruined
 our family name? And rumors began
 to spread, tainting the legacy of
 one of our own.

Konstantina drops her head.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
 You know... I visited him.

KONSTANTINA
 Wh- why would you do that?

LOVIUS
 Mother, because he's my *brother*,
 and I will protect his name. Those
 rumors need to be put to rest.

Konstantina looks uncertain.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
 I owe it to him, wether I like the
 truth or not.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA
 ... Did you visit your father, too?

LOVIUS
 (Annoyed)
 Now, why would I do that?

Konstantina shies away from an annoyed Lovius. He notices.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

No, I didn't. I just, never had that sort of connection with him.

KONSTANTINA

He had a soft side, you know.

LOVIUS

So I've been told.

Konstantina has an urge to hold on to Lovius' hand, but she doesn't. Lovius notices and reaches out to grab hers. She smiles back at him.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

C'mon, I could use your help unpacking.

They leave the kitchen.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lovius lays in bed late at night, staring at the ceiling. He can't sleep. It's bothering him. He sits up.

The room is mostly empty except for a drawer, closet, nightstand, and of course, the queen size bed. Konstantina has also decorated it with her pottery plants.

All the luggage Lovius brought with him is still unpacked and spread out on the bedroom floor. Lovius stares at a red duffle bag. He gets out of bed and heads towards it.

Unzipping the duffle bag, he pulls out a ziplock bag containing prints of pictures. He searches through them until he pulls out the one he was looking for. It's a flash photograph of three men posing, throwing gang signs at some unknown street at night. They're all hispanics dressed like old school gangsters.

Two of the men are visible. One is TATO (late 20s), pencil-stache, neck tattoos, and a side part full of gel.

The other is his brother, BARABALLA (early 20s), on the chubby side, a jolly face, a man who looks more like he's cosplaying as a gangster.

The third, unknown man, is hard to make face of. Mainly because of the picture's fading quality, but also because of the camera's flash not capturing his face quite clearly.

LOVIUS

Heh, the crazy ones. What were y'all up to while I was gone?

Lovius turns the photograph over. On the back, there is a messages written in marker.

Triumvirates. "Ira, officium, pecunia". Caesar family representing Nashville, Tennessee.

Having read this message, Lovius searches through another luggage. He pulls out a laptop and opens it up on his bed. He begins researching the message from the photograph.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Konstantina cooks Lovius breakfast as he enters the kitchen, dressed proper and ready for the day. He carries a satchel with him.

KONSTANTINA

You always loved omelettes, right?

LOVIUS

Yeah. It was the first dish Marcellus taught me how to cook.

Lovius opens his arms to hug Konstantina, she's surprised, but instantly hugs him back.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Good morning, mother.

KONSTANTINA

Awww, good morning, my son.

Lovius finds his seat. Konstantina finishes cooking his omelette and starts preparing her tea.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

Your aunts are coming over today.

LOVIUS

Amitae? Oh boy, it's going to be just like the old days, huh?

KONSTANTINA

It better not be. I don't want you running to your room, hiding from them.

LOVIUS

(Laughs)

Me and Marcellus would only run to protect our ears. Aunties could talk at such high decibels, not even headphones could block them... But, good to know that at least some of the family still gathers every Friday. Traditions never die, huh?

KONSTANTINA

Nope. They just change.

LOVIUS

I remember a time when we would ALL come together and visit Grandpa Romulus at his place.

(Chuckles)

A weekly family reunion.

KONSTANTINA

I enjoyed those visits.

LOVIUS

Yeah, a family of what, fourteen? Crammed into one apartment unit? Ha! When everyone showed up sober and-or calm, it was nice.

Lovius notices Konstantina smile in nostalgia as she begins sipping her tea.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Have you stopped by the apartments ever since...

Konstantina shakes her head.

KONSTANTINA

Me selling the complex, was me closing a chapter in my life. To go back and visit, would be like rereading that chapter.

LOVIUS

Not the best chapter, huh?

KONSTANTINA

Not all of it... but it had its moments.

Konstantina gives Lovius a tiny, innocent smile. Lovius pulls out a modern DSLR.

LOVIUS

I'm gonna go explore the town a bit, before aunties arrive. I promised the wife I would take lots of pictures for her.

KONSTANTINA

... I wish I could've met her.

LOVIUS

I know... You will, I promise. This is a trip I had to take on my own.

Konstantina sees through Lovius lie. She's ashamed.

KONSTANTINA

You didn't trust us.

LOVIUS

What? No! It's just... I didn't know what to expect.

KONSTANTINA

It's okay. This family has always been hard to trust. But we'll earn it.

Lovius finishes his breakfast.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

Whatever happened to the old camera you used to have?

LOVIUS

I still have it. It's sitting in the attic in my house. I doubt it works anymore, but I still keep it for the sentimental value.

KONSTANTINA

You and that camera were like best friends.

LOVIUS

Hah, yeah. Me and Marcellus would always run around taking pictures of everyone and everything. Always catching someone by surprise. Chances were, you could open your closet door and POP! I'd spring out and snap a picture of you.

(Laughs)

Not everyone liked that, but I got some good pictures out of it.

(MORE)

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

I actually based a project in college out of them. "The many faces of unexpected" by Lovius Caesar.

KONSTANTINA

Oh, how I would love to see that!

LOVIUS

Heh. I'll fly you over one day. You can meet the wife, explore the city. You'll love it.

KONSTANTINA

That sounds lovely, Lovius.

The two smile at each other.

EXT. CLUBHOUSE - DAY

Lovius has parked on a neighborhood street leading towards a wide parking lot behind a strip mall. He smiles as he finishes sending a message on his phone.

He looks over and spots a gang of teenagers hanging out behind the back of a clubhouse. They sit on chairs and play music from an SUV.

Lovius takes out the photograph of Tato, Baraballa, and the mysterious man. He holds it up, aligning the composition of the picture to the in person location until it's perfect.

LOVIUS

Triumvirates. Now, why would y'all hang out here, huh? Most dangerous spot in town.

(Sigh)

Ah, fuck.

Lovius steps out of his car and begins walking towards the gangsters, carefully. The closer he gets, the more they begin to notice him. A lot of the "gangsters" appear no older than seniors in high school.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Salve, young bloods, I was hoping to find old warriors here?

One of these young gangsters, a scrawny, teenage boy with lackluster tattoos and oversized clothing approaches Lovius.

GANGSTER 1

Old warriors? We all old warriors here.

LOVIUS

I'm talking from your grandpa's days. This place has a lot of history, you know. And I know young bloods such as yourselves are going to be leaving your mark here, in time.

GANGSTER 1

Ain't no *old warriors* that used to "operate" here. Get me?

Lovius becomes worried at the increasing hostility.

LOVIUS

I'm just looking to see if anyone ever knew a "Marcellus".

GANGSTER 1

"Marcellus"?

The gangster turns back to his gang, confused. They all look confused, too. Except for one. Another scrawny, tattooed high schooler, who steps forward.

GANGSTER 2

Hold on, Marcellus Caesar, yes?

LOVIUS

Yes! Exactly!

GANGSTER 2

Ahhh yes, I remember! He was part of that cow-shit Caesar family. He was "operating" a shitty little crew then one day unleashed his wrath across the other side of the river! Word was he got the life sentence.

GANGSTER 1

Oh shiiit! I remember the name now! No no, brother, see, you got that story wrong. So, the imbecile has his weapon, right? But he's surrounded, 'bout, eight, nine warriors out there in his territory and they all want a pound of flesh from him.

(MORE)

GANGSTER 1 (CONT'D)
 So, they all start rushing him, and
 he starts mowing them down! Stuff
 of legends, brother.

GANGSTER 2
 Shiiiiiet...

GANGSTER 1
 But here's the twist... they were
 all part of his gang.

GANGSTER 2
 No...

GANGSTER 1
 The cow-fucker killed his own
 family.

Lovius snaps.

LOVIUS
 That's a lie!

GANGSTER 2
 Woah... that was kind of vicious.
 You know him or somethin'?

Lovius calms down. He avoids eye contact.

GANGSTER 1
 Oh.
 (Laughs)
 Oh, you're a Caesar, aintcha?

Lovius looks away.

GANGSTER 1 (CONT'D)
 Brothers! He's a Caesar! Finally
 crawling out of your rat holes, ay?

GANGSTER 2
 (To Lovius)
 Hold on. You trying to take back
 territory or sum'?

GANGSTER 1
 Ain't nobody taking my territory.

LOVIUS
 No! No, I'm- I'm just...

GANGSTER 1
 What? *What?* Naw, fuck that, man,
 you ain't taking shit.

Gangster 1 shoves Lovius. The rest are quick to surround him.

Suddenly, he's punched in the gut by one of them. Lovius instantly crumbles into the ground, clutching his stomach.

GANGSTER 1 (CONT'D)

Get his ass, get his ass!

The gang surrounds him and starts kicking, beating, and punching him.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

A bruised and bloodied Lovius enters his car. He's dazed, in pain, but conscious.

His phone rings.

Through snorting blood coming out his nose, he answers.

LOVIUS

(Cheerful)

Hey, honey. Yeah, sorry I couldn't answer your call I was uh... busy.

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Oh yeah? You liked the pictures? Hah, yeah ol' Nashville has changed a lot. *Thirteen years*. Just wait until I tell you about the people... Oh yeah, it's a lot.

Lovius wipes the last bit of blood coming out of his nose.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Yes, mother has changed, too. She's... she's been alone for a long time. She's so, ugh... I look at her and it hurts. It hurts knowing that I wasn't there when she needed me the most. I'm making it up to her. I'm trying.

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

No, I haven't, but I'm actually on the way back to mother's place and she's saying the aunts are going to be there. So I'll be meeting them, and the rest, eventually... How about you? How are you, love? Oh yeah? I miss you, too. You know, I've been having some trouble sleeping, but I know if you were here, all it would take is just five minutes of cuddling with you to fix that... Hah, you know me too well... Okay... Okay. I love you, too. Bye.

Lovius hangs up. Despite a black eye, cut lip, and overall bruised body, he's happy.

EXT. CEASAR COMPLEX - DAY

Having driven back to his childhood home, Lovius trespasses over the fence and enters his old home once again.

Lovius walks around the corner. He finds a seat on the porch of his old home. He takes out the ziplock bag of pictures. He goes through them, starting with the one young Marcellus took of young Lovius as they sat in the corner of the Caesar Complex lobby.

Lovius smirks. He shuffles through some more until he comes across the familiar one of Tato, Baraballa and the mysterious man.

LOVIUS

(Sigh)

What the hell were you doing, brother? How did y'all end up like this?

He shuffles some more and comes across one of Spartius and Konstantina eating at their tiny apartment kitchen table. It looks like an impromptu photo suddenly taken by Marcellus, catching them off-guard. A late 20s Konstantina, young and beautiful, looks pleasantly surprised. Spartius gazes right at the camera, right at our soul with his haunting, piercing stare.

Lovius feels the stare, but he can't look away.

SPARTIUS

(Yelling)

C'mon! FIGHT!

Suddenly, he looks up at the concrete lot in front of him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEASAR COMPLEX - DAY - FLASHBACK

A teenage Marcellus stands in front an angry and drunk Spartius out in the parking lot of the Caesar Complex. Marcellus is holding back every urge to fight back. Spartius bullies him to release those urges.

Some residents watch from their balconies. Young Lovius watches between the porch door blinds. He's nearly in tears.

SPARTIUS

C'mon, motherfucker! You're old enough now. This watchu always wanted ain't it?! Well, here it is! Yo golden chance, boy. Fight yo father, fight him for all the abuse he's put you through, cmon!

Spartius chugs his beer, CRUSHES the CAN and THROWS it right at Marcellus. Two other BEER CANS are revealed on the floor. This has been going on for a while.

He resumes shoving Marcellus. Despite clearly being upset, Marcellus' eyes are glued to the ground. His fists clenched as he resists the urge.

SPARTIUS (CONT'D)

What's wrong, huh? C'MON! You're a CEASAR! You FIGHT!

Suddenly, Spartius goes quiet. Calm. A smirk appears. He leans right into Marcellus' face. The stench of his breath blows into his face as he whispers to him.

SPARTIUS (CONT'D)

You won't fight? Fine. I bet even your pussy-brother can throw a punch.

MARCELLUS

NO!

Just as Spartius turns his back and stares right at Lovius, Marcellus shoves him from behind. Spartius stumbles forward but catches himself. He's amused.

Spartius turns around to find Marcellus with his fists up, footwork like a boxer. Spartius follows.

The two eye each other as they wait for the other to swing first. Marcellus is hating every moment of it, Spartius the opposite.

Marcellus SWINGS and lands a hit on Spartius' ribcage. It's hard enough to stun him for a few seconds.

SPARTIUS

Oh you got moves, huh
motherfucker?! Take another shot,
go on.

Marcellus swings.

Spartius dodges and counterattacks instantly, landing multiple BLOWS on Marcellus.

Spartius sees a chance to pile up more and more hits as Marcellus simply protects his face.

Suddenly, Marcellus swings and PUNCHES Spartius square in the jaw, knocking him out COLD.

An unconscious Spartius falls backwards. His body lands, causing his head to whiplash HARD onto the concrete ground.

CRACK!

The instant the sound of Spartius' skull cracking open is heard, Marcellus' anger turns into despair. He rushes to his father.

MARCELLUS

Father?! Nonononono, father! Wake
up!! WAKE UP!!

Young Lovius cries loudly as Marcellus is on his knees, cussing the bloody head of his own father.

BACK TO:

EXT. CEASAR COMPLEX - CONTINUED

Lovius stares at the spot Marcellus would have been kneeling on.

Long beat.

He packs up the photos back into the ziplock bag.

He begins walking away from the Caesar Complex.

INT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lovius enters through the front door. Gathered around in the living room on sofas, are Konstantina, his aunts, and a most beautiful, dark-skinned woman.

This is the pregnant OLABISI. Her smile bigger than the anyone else.

AUNT JULIA (late 50s) is a feisty, intimidating figure. She's battered and bruised by mother nature. Her black hair always in a messy bun. Tattoos all over her neck and arms. Aunt Julia wears lazy Wednesday clothing.

AUNT RUBIA (early 50s) still dresses like a goth. Lots of piercings and also lots of tattoos. Although, you'd never guess she's in her 50s, so she pulls off the look. Only her eye-bags reveal her age.

AUNT AMELIA (early 50s) always has her hair in a fantastic braid, like a Greek goddess. Unfortunately, that's where her beauty begins and ends. Amelia's skin, throat, and complexion has been withered away from the drugs that abused her. She always carries a vape with her, smoking it.

All smile at Lovius for a fraction of a second until they see his bruised face. Konstantina and the aunts rush to attend his face.

KONSTANTINA

My Lovius! What happened to you?!

LOVIUS

I had a, uh, bit of a skirmish.

AUNT JULIA

What?!

KONSTANTINA

I thought you said you were just going to drive around town?!

LOVIUS

(Playful)

And that I did! I just stopped at the bad side of town, I guess.

AUNT RUBIA

It was those little *cucarachas* at the clubhouse, wasn't it?

LOVIUS

Wow, auntie, how did you know that?

AUNT AMELIA

(Coughs)

Oh please, everyone in town knows those little bastards are always running around causing trouble. Just like your cousins used to.

LOVIUS

There really was no such thing as a secret in this family, huh?

KONSTANTINA

What were you doing there?

LOVIUS

Just... looking for answers.

KONSTANTINA

Why not ask us? We could've just told you.

LOVIUS

You're right. I'm sorry.

KONSTANTINA

(Sigh)

You need ice!

Konstantina rushes to her fridge.

The aunts stand around awkwardly, unsure of what to do. Lovius notices.

LOVIUS

Anyways... I'm back!

He smiles radiates and lights up the room. The aunts can't help but smile back.

Lovius hugs Aunt Julia.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

I missed you, auntie Julia.

AUNT JULIA

Oh, I missed you, too, Lovius.

He hugs Aunt Amelia.

LOVIUS

Auntie Amelia, missed you, too.

AUNT AMELIA

The feeling is mutual.

He hugs Aunt Rubia.

LOVIUS

And of course, you too, auntie
Rubia.

AUNT RUBIA

You've grown so much, dear Lovius.

Aunt Julia introduces Lovius to Olabisi.

AUNT JULIA

Oh! This is Olabisi! Your cousin
Tato's fiance! She's been with us
while we show her all of Nashville!

Lovius walks over and shakes her hand.

OLABISI

Nice to meet you, Lovius. Tato has
told me a lot about you.

LOVIUS

Really? A lot? Well, it's been
thirteen years since I've seen him,
so hopefully it's not all outdated!

Lovius sits next to her on the couch. The aunts find their
seats.

OLABISI

Hah. He tells me you live with your
wife, far, far away, in a great,
concrete jungle, as he describes
it. With glass buildings so tall,
they scratch the sky. Is this true?

LOVIUS

It is true. This place is the
"Forum of the Earth". Every deal
struck, every trip taken, every
idea had most likely passed through
these lands.

OLABISI

Oh, how fascinating! Tato also
tells me that you are a portrait
photographer? When he showed me
your work, I knew right then and
there, I wanted you as photographer
for the wedding.

LOVIUS

He showed you my work?

OLABISI

Oh yes! All the celebrities and athletes you've photographed on your website.

LOVIUS

Oh, right! I was confused for a moment since I hadn't- or *haven't* spoken to him in thirteen years. Sheesh, where's that man at? I need to say *Salve* real soon.

OLABISI

(Chuckles)

He's at work, currently.

LOVIUS

So he invited me for my *supreme* photography skills, huh?

KONSTANTINA

No. He did it because he missed you. Your family did.

Lovius looks around at his aunts. They all smile, politely.

LOVIUS

Ah. Well, in any case, it's an honor. And, it's the least I could do for the silence I've given you all these past few years.

Konstantina returns with a bag of ice. She hands it to Lovius to place on his bruises. She sits.

AUNT JULIA

My dear Lovius, I'm curious, with your work, you must travel a lot, no?

LOVIUS

Oh, yes. Great plains, jungles, swamps, all of it.

AUNT RUBIA

Even Tundras? I've only ever heard of such winter wonderlands.

LOVIUS

Not yet, but, yes, they do exist.

AUNT AMELIA

Oh, to travel.

KONSTANTINA

One of these days, we will finally see the world.

AUNT JULIA

Gets tiring never being able to leave the borders of this ol' city. Dear Olabisi was a breath of fresh air, her being from a desert land far, far away.

All the aunts and Konstantina nod.

OLABISI

Have you visited my land by any chance, Lovius?

LOVIUS

A grand desert? I have not. But I have heard tales and it sounds very fascinating. One of the great wonders of the world resides there.

OLABISI

Indeed.

(Chuckles)

I simply tell stories of my homeland, and your aunts are entertained for days!

All chuckle.

Beat.

LOVIUS

And what stories have my aunties told in return?

AUNT JULIA

Hah! All stories we have are simply of chaos, grand chaos, and depressing chaos! How fun, eh?

LOVIUS

Well, how about something more recent? At least for me. What's the scoop? Who's kissing who? I know there's about thirteen years of gossip I've missed out on.

AUNT AMELIA

Oh, Lovius, you haven't really missed much!

(MORE)

AUNT AMELIA (CONT'D)

(Cough)

It's all been... tame, as we heal.

LOVIUS

Really? Nothing?

AUNT AMELIA

Not really.

AUNT RUBIA

No, not at all.

LOVIUS

That's... kinda of disappointing, I won't lie.

Lovius goes quiet. There's an uncomfortable silence.

AUNT JULIA

... Well, I suppose you should know that me and your uncle Dominus divorced.

LOVIUS

Oh. But you two were together for so long...

AUNT JULIA

Yes, but that isn't always the sign of a healthy relationship, is it? Surprisingly, the divorce was the most tranquil part of our entire relationship. He got the house and custody of our child...

Beat.

AUNT RUBIA

He deserves it. After everything I put him through... It's only fair.

Lovius is awed by such sincerity and honesty from his aunt.

LOVIUS

Wow. It takes a lot to admit that, auntie.

AUNT JULIA

Yes, well, I must be honest with myself. It's the result of being able to recognize that those days are long behind us, now.

OLABISI

Days of chaos?

KONSTANTINA
Days of an imploding empire.

AUNT RUBIA
A bit dramatic there, Konstantina.

The aunts and Konstantina chuckle.

AUNT JULIA
It's all we've ever known! The
Caesar family used to be *filled* to
the brim with drama.

AUNT AMELIA
And, if you ask me, it all started
when papa passed away.

AUNT RUBIA
No, it started when old man Romulus
crossed the border and moved into
our apartment complex with young
Dominus and Spartius.

AUNT JULIA
I say it started when I married
Dominus.

KONSTANTINA
Or I, Spartius.

LOVIUS
Mother...

Lovius looks hurt that Konstantina would say that.

AUNT JULIA
In any case, it definitely didn't
help when papa became pals with old
man Romulus. What a wretched dog he
was. I don't know what papa was
thinking in making him landlord in
his will.

KONSTANTINA
Romulus was a great manipulator.
Must be where Spartius got it from.
Only took after his death for me to
see.

AUNT JULIA
Oh sister, don't think that way.
That Romulus didn't even live long
enough to savor his new title.

AUNT AMELIA

But he did live long enough to
stroke his ego with it.

(Cough)

"The Caesar Complex"? *Please!* WE
built that complex.

AUNT RUBIA

Solemnity, sister, our *parents*
built the complex. We didn't do
much to uphold it.

OLABISI

Was it too much of a financial
burden?

All the aunts, plus Konstantina, shift their eyes to one
another.

AUNT JULIA

... No, we... were demons. As you
can guess, I was abusive. Just...
full of anger. Always.

Beat.

AUNT AMELIA

At the time, my only reason to live
was for the next high. I was a
nasty, little roach...

(Cough)

Scrambling for any high.

Beat.

AUNT RUBIA

And I was, well... I... Ugh, how
else can you put it? Well... I was
a whore. I crushed the heart of the
only man who ever loved me with
such a vice. It might as well have
killed him the way I grieve for him
everyday.

AUNT JULIA

And now we're all paying the prize!
Yay! Living on our lonesome,
divorced or never married, wage
slaves indefinitely!

Beat.

Lovius senses the dread in the room from all the bad memories
haunting the air. He starts to chuckle softly.

LOVIUS

Heh, I remember this one time, back when we still had our Friday family gatherings with Grandpa Romulus, Marcellus found some rope near the apartments and he had this great idea where me, him, Tato, and Baraballa would use the rope to pull uncle Dominus' truck off it's spot. Because we all know how he used to park, right?

The aunts and Konstantina begin to recognize what memory Lovius speaks of. They chuckle softly.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

So we tied the rope to the truck on, uh, what's it called? That little ball where you hook trailer to? There. But the problem is, that rope was too thick, and that ball too small, so that rope was never going to grip tightly! But we didn't know that, and so we start hyping each other up! This is it, big strong boys about to pull an entire truck off it's spot!

The chuckling builds up as the story nears it's climax.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Marcellus at the front, me behind him, Baraballa and Tato behind me. We lift that rope over our shoulders, and at the count of three, we are to PULL and RUN!

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

So... One... Two... THREE!

Lovius yanks an imaginary piece of rope over his shoulder.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

That rope whipped out *instantly* and all four of us go flying STRAIGHT towards Grandpa Romulus' *glass* porch door. *WHACK! WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!* Four consecutive, pudgy, pre-pubescent faces smashing onto that porch door!

(MORE)

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

And ALL of you, aunties, uncles,
nieces, nephews, watching four
smushed up faces sliding down that
glass door.

The aunts are turning tomato-red from laughter.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

And of course, as four boys who had
just spent two hours outside
playing in the summer heat, we were
DRENCHED in sweat. So, we leave
Grandpa Romulus four impressive
imprints of our faces on his porch.

The laughter roars.

The aunts compose themselves.

KONSTANTINA

To this day, I don't know how that
door didn't shatter.

LOVIUS

I suppose the might of four
trouble-makers isn't as strong as
we might think. And of course,
Marcellus tries to take the blame,
despite three other literal face
prints as evidence.

A few, final extra chuckles from the aunts and Konstantina.
Olabisi smiles in wonder.

OLABISI

... Who's Marcellus?

The room drops DEAD SILENT.

Lovius notices everybody looking away, and nobody wanting to
speak.

LOVIUS

... He was my brother.

Sensing the awkwardness, Olabisi backs off.

OLABISI

Oh.

AUNT JULIA

He is... better forgotten.

LOVIUS

Well...

Lovius spots Konstantina giving him a look of "don't start".

Aunt Rubia decides to switch the topic.

AUNT RUBIA

I think we should get started on the food! Olabisi needs to be taught our hot-chicken recipe!

AUNT AMELIA

Oh yes! Finally!

The aunts head to the kitchen. Konstantina smiles briefly at Lovius before following.

Olabisi and Lovius now remain in the living room.

OLABISI

I must've struck a nerve there...

LOVIUS

Sort of, yes. Marcellus is... very complicated history that I'm still trying to figure out.

OLABISI

I think I have heard rumors about him.

LOVIUS

That's exactly what I'm trying to figure out.

OLABISI

... Not even Tato speaks of him. Or much of him. All I know is that, back a way's past, he and Baraballa used to run wild with him in his gang.

LOVIUS

Triumvirates, yes.

OLABISI

Yes... He says he saved him.

Lovius is curious.

LOVIUS

Saved him? Marcellus saved Tato?

OLABISI

Oh yes, it was how we met! He was checked into the hospital I interned at the time. He had broken bones and everything. He had to be wrapped in so much bandage, in the end, he looked like a mummy. I suspect it must've been Marcellus who heard about that and... took care of the problem. He freed him, Tato says.

LOVIUS

Like a wake-up call.

OLABISI

Yes. This Marcellus, he saved my fiance. You speak of him as a lovable brother, yet just the mere mention of his name murdered the atmosphere in this room. This family seems to speak of him in hushed whispers. Strange.

LOVIUS

Yes... yes.

OLABISI

Perhaps you could talk to Tato about it, tomorrow?

LOVIUS

Tomorrow?

OLABISI

Yes, at his bachelor party.

LOVIUS

Bachelor party? Isn't the wedding in less than a week?

OLABISI

Yes.

LOVIUS

And you're okay with *Tato* having a bachelor party so close to the date?

OLABISI

Heh. Lovius, don't worry, the *Tato* you once knew is exactly that. A memory.

Lovius is unsure about that.

OLABISI (CONT'D)

You'll see.

Olabisi stands and heads to the kitchen, joining the aunts, leaving Lovius to contemplate.

INT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Lovius is wiping sweat off his face after finishing a dish of hot-chicken. He's having trouble tolerating the spice.

Konstantina notices as she continues washing the dishes.

KONSTANTINA

Are you going to be okay, Lovius?

LOVIUS

Nashville is not kind to the tongues of those who leave, huh? Hoo boi! Let this be my *delicious* punishment for my thirteen year silence!

Lovius chugs down on his water. He takes his plate and join Konstantina in washing the dishes.

Something is bothering Konstantina.

KONSTANTINA

... Who did you come back to see, Lovius?

Lovius is taken back.

LOVIUS

Wh- what?

KONSTANTINA

You never visit for thirteen years, and when you finally do, the very first place you visit is his grave. You come home today with a black eye because you visited his... *playground*. And now you tell a story of him to Olabisi who should have never known he existed... Who did you come to see? Because I'm not sure it was your family.

LOVIUS

... Mother, how can you say that?

KONSTANTINA

Lovius, I love you, but it hurts seeing how much attention you're giving him. This family simply wishes to move on and not let our past haunt us.

LOVIUS

How is Marcellus haunting any of you?

KONSTANTINA

He is a reminder of a dark past.

LOVIUS

So he must be wiped from our family history?

KONSTANTINA

Please, just understand, bringing up Marcellus is opening old wounds. The things he did--

LOVIUS

-- *Allegedly*, did.

KONSTANTINA

I'm not even speaking about the rumors. He *killed* people.

LOVIUS

And had he not done so? Who would we be mourning today, mother?

Konstantina is frustrated. Her shy nature forces her to quiet away.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Mother... what do you know of the rumors?

KONSTANTINA

Nothing.

A clear lie.

LOVIUS

Mother... What do you *know*?

KONSTANTINA

See! You're so hyper-focused on him! Why?

LOVIUS

Because I'm trying to protect my own brother's legacy! It's the very least I could do after EVERYTHING he's done for me! Mother, I never even got a chance to thank him for protecting me from father. For putting me on the straight path. For being the big brother EVERYONE should have!

Konstantina is very irritated.

KONSTANTINA

Marcellus was a monster! He just used you to justify that!

LOVIUS

How do you know?

Konstantina shies away from an overly irritated Lovius.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

How do you know?!

Lovius realizes he snapped at his poor mother.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Mother, I'm sorry.

KONSTANTINA

... It's okay.

Cautiously, Lovius goes in for a hug. Konstantina shies away.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

I need to go lay down for a bit.

Konstantina leaves. Lovius looks devastated.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Lovius arrives to a modest American house. On the outside, it looks flowery, similar to Konstantina's.

He knocks on the front door. A middle-aged hispanic woman answers. TATO'S MOTHER doesn't recognize him.

LOVIUS

Amita, it's me, Lovius!

Now she recognizes him.

TATO'S MOTHER

Lovius?! No! You're lying! Lovius
is still *this* tall!

She gestures that Lovius would be about five feet tall.
Lovius smiles widely. He hugs her.

TATO'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Come in! Come in!

Tato's mother leads him to the living room. He finds a seat
on the leather sofa. There's a lack of decorations
everywhere.

Through the backyard porch doors, he spots TATO'S FATHER
(50s) pouring ice into a cooler. He's a short man, beer
belly, trucker cap, stained shirt and jeans.

TATO (late 20s) bald, scrawny, tattooed neck, and a
chainsmoker, is flipping through the channels of a TV that
has been setup in the backyard.

BARABALLA (late 20s) short, curly, dirty-blonde hair and
beard, a beer belly in the making. He's dressed very spiffy.
A cardigan, Rolex, big brand prescription glasses, clean and
ironed slacks. He rivals the spiffiness of Lovius. Baraballa
is setting up a table and chairs in front of the TV.

TATO'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Sit, sit! We were just helping your
cousin Tato setup for his bachelor
party. I'll go fetch them.

Tato's mother heads to the backyard. Lovius sees her talking
to the three. They all turn to look inside, spotting Lovius.
He waves at them. Their joy of seeing him has them laughing.
They head inside to greet Lovius. Tato is the first to enter.

LOVIUS

Salve, Tato. Been a long time
hasn't it?

TATO

Pro! Is it really you?

Tato extends his hand out for a handshake, Lovius simply
stares down at it.

Instead, Lovius opens his arms for a hug. Tato laughs. The
two hug.

LOVIUS
*Salve, Baraballa! Look at you!
 Dressed for a meeting with the
 gods?*

BARABALLA
 Wassup, Lovius.

A shy, soft-spoken Baraballa can barely even make eye contact with Lovius.

LOVIUS
 Little cousin, still shy after all
 these years, huh?

Lovius hugs him. A bit awkward for Baraballa, but still pleasant.

TATO'S FATHER
 (In Latin)
 Well, well, how you have grown,
 son.

Lovius hugs his uncle.

LOVIUS
 (In Latin)
 How are you, uncle?

TATO'S FATHER
Bene, Bene.

TATO
 (Chuckles)
 My old man still sees you as his
 own kin.

TATO'S FATHER
 (In Latin)
 Because he always used to stay at
 our place!

LOVIUS
 (Chuckles)
 That is true. It became like
 tradition. While all the adults
 talked at Grandpa Romulus' place,
 us children would go on adventures.

BARABALLA
 Buying snacks.

TATO
 Exploring that jungle.

BARABALLA
Cops and Robbers.

TATO
Friday night wrestling!

LOVIUS
And Marcellus leading the way for
us troublemakers!

The room comes down to a sudden silence.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
Uh... but yes, tradition.

TATO
That it was!

The three laugh. Tato's mother gestures for Tato's father to follow her into the backyard, leaving the three to sit on the sofas.

LOVIUS
So a bachelor party, at your
parent's place, days before a
wedding? That's pretty bold, Tato.

TATO
What do you mean?

LOVIUS
I mean... I won't tell. Vegas
rules, right? What happens here
tonight, stays here.

Tato and Baraballa are confused.

TATO
Naw, we're just gon' have a watch
party.

Lovius is confused.

LOVIUS
Huh?

TATO
Brother... it's Friday night!

Lovius is shocked.

LOVIUS
Ohhhhh! You guys STILL watch
wrestling?!

TATO
 (Chuckles)
 Was that an insult I heard?

LOVIUS
 No, no! I didn't mean it that way!
 It's just... it's just been so
 long, brothers. The Tato I last saw
 would've wanted strippers in cakes.

TATO
 Oh, how long it's been... No, when
 everybody gets here, we'll just
 have beers, order pizza and watch a
 great, staged fight.

LOVIUS
 Huh, okay... okay. I can get behind
 that.

TATO
 Ay, Baraballa, how much you betting
 on Damascus versus Gauss, again?

BARABALLA
 Five-thousand, on Gauss, six-to-one
 odds.

LOVIUS
 F- five *thousand* on six-to-one
 odds? What the fu--

TATO
 -- To Baraballa? That's barely a
 drop in the bucket for him. Lovius,
 this man is making a fortune after
 his ingenious idea!

LOVIUS
 Really?
 (To Baraballa)
 Well, what is it?

BARABALLA
 A better way to transport water.

LOVIUS
 (Laughs)
 Well, shit, reinventing the
 aqueduct, are we?

TATO

Salt water. From the ocean. And less transporting, more making it fresh.

LOVIUS

Huh. Well, there is big money in fresh water these days, so I can believe it. Still, impressive to see these from you, Baraballa! Can I ask, did you go to college for that? I know before I left you were still in... Neptune, you were *just* entering high school! Fuck, I'm old.

BARABALLA

(Chuckles)

I went to Vanderbilt.

LOVIUS

Vanderbilt?!

TATO

And that's *after* he got his act together.

LOVIUS

Damn. That's really good, Baraballa.

BARABALLA

Thank you.

Beat.

TATO

Ay, aunties told me you met Olabisi yesterday, right? What'd you think?

LOVIUS

She's really kind. Soft-spoken, yet succinct. She's got this... aura to her. Aunties even seemed very protective of her.

TATO

(Playful)

Yeah, she's been stuck with them since they met her. They've been keepin' my soon-to-be-wife away from me. Ah, they're taking this whole "can't see the bride before the wedding" superstition too far.

LOVIUS

Uh, I can talk to them about it, if you want.

TATO

Hah, no. I jest, Lovius. *Obviously*, I get to see the love of my life.

(To Baraballa)

Wait, where did she say she was going?

BARABALLA

Manicures, with aunties.

TATO

Pfft, hah! My Olabisi is getting the treatment of a queen! Aunties are fascinated by her.

LOVIUS

I hear she's from a far away land?

TATO

Yes! She makes it sound all mythical and shit. Great big deserts, a river that can quench the thirst of a civilization, and lots and lots of gold!

LOVIUS

She told me y'all met in the hospital after... *that* night. Four years ago, now, has it been?

TATO

Yes, it was afterwards when me and Baraballa finally decided to get our shit together.

LOVIUS

She was your nurse, wasn't she?

TATO

Swear on Jupiter's stone. From being surrounded by man who want you dead, having my jaw broken, face kicked in, to waking up to a goddess treating your wounds. It's something I can't describe. My whole life I was a deadbeat. I failed myself. I failed my little brother. No job, no money. And then you reach rock bottom. And you think, "this is it... *this is it*".

(MORE)

TATO (CONT'D)
 And then the lights go out.
 Nothing. Darkness.

Beat.

TATO (CONT'D)
 ... And then you wake up. And for
 the first time in your life, you
 see a new beginning in the face of
 a goddess. There is no shame to cry
 at such a sight. All my failures,
 and *still*, the gods say I deserve
 peace AND love? *Redemption* tastes
 sweetest to the devout, Lovius.
 (To Baraballa, Playful)
 When are you going to find that
 kind of love?

BARABALLA
 I already have. Money.

TATO
 Brother...

The three laugh.

LOVIUS
 You know... Olabisi also mentioned
 that Marcellus may have been the
 one that saved you that night.

Tato and Baraballa go quiet. They look shameful.

TATO
 ... Yeah. It was him.

LOVIUS
 ... What'd he do?

TATO
 You haven't heard?

LOVIUS
 I've heard the rumors.

TATO
 I mean, where do I start?

LOVIUS
 Last time I was here, Marcellus was
 still in juvie.

TATO

Neptune, that long? Yeah, you missed out on a lot, then.

Tato looks over at Baraballa. Baraballa knows exactly the look he's giving him. He gets up to grab beers for the three of them.

TATO (CONT'D)

So then, by the time Marcellus had been released from juvie, you were already gone, right?

LOVIUS

Long gone, yeah.

TATO

Did y'all ever keep in touch after that?

Baraballa returns with the beers for everyone. He hands them out, and rejoins the conversation.

LOVIUS

Not really. He's the one that convinced me to cut ties with all of y'all, including himself. He told me that I needed a break from this family. I mean, he wasn't wrong. I know I was always the loud and "lovable" Lovius back then, but really, I was so stressed living in the Caesar Complex. So he starts saving up money. Soon enough, he has enough to buy me a ticket for a bus heading North... and a camera.

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

He drove me to the bus station. And right before I board the bus with tears rolling down my face, he tells me, "I never wanted to be an astronaut, or a cowboy, but I would've loved to be the next Richard Avedon". And with that, he hands me our old digital camera.

TATO

... That doesn't sound like the Marcellus I knew.

LOVIUS
... He had a soft spot.

Lovius is humbled by this memory.

Long beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
But anyways, what happened to
Marcellus after I left?

TATO
... He got hard into drugs. I mean,
we didn't know it at the time, but
looking back, he was definitely
traumatized. And he must've been
dealing with some strong feelings
with you leaving. When money got
low, he started dealing drugs. But,
I suppose he was good at it because
then he starts talking about
forming a crew. And who did he talk
to about that?

BARABALLA
Us.

TATO
Us.

Tato and Baraballa take a big gulp from their beers.

TATO (CONT'D)
And he made it sound glorious!
Heavenly drugs, money, women. As
two broke, and lazy bastards, we
were in. *Triumvirates*. And, for a
while, it was fun. Sling for a few
hours, smoke and party the rest of
the day. Some barbaric shit went on
in that clubhouse.

Tato and Baraballa can't help but laugh.

TATO (CONT'D)
But anyways, brother, you know how
the sayin' goes, "*Omnia bona
cipient finem*".

LOVIUS
A good thing coming to an end?

TATO

Triumvirates was a good time!
Especially when the gang started
growing, and that attracted
attention from other gangs. They
don't like that we're expanding
into other territories. We have a
few scuffles here and there until
one day, I get too cocky and try
taking some territory on my
lonesome. Next thing you know--

Suddenly, Tato's mother is heard YELLING at Tato's father. A heated argument has exploded between them. The porch doors are too weak to soften that level of yelling. Their arms flinging angrily, fingers pointing like spears.

The three turn to look out the porch. Lovius is stunned. Bad memories he had long forgotten start flooding his mind.

Their voices start to RASP from how hard they are yelling at each other. Tato and Baraballa look amused.

Just as Tato's father is about to throw a glass beer bottle, he stops himself. He takes a DEEP breath.

And another.

Tato's mother follows. They've calmed down. Tato's mother reaches for his chest, looking up at him, speaking so softly it's inaudible.

He nods.

They hug.

Lovius is even more stunned to see this.

BARABALLA

(To Tato)

It's your turn.

TATO

Ah, shit, that it is.

Tato gets up and heads to the backyard. He's seen speaking with his parents. They remain hugging, and soon enough, Tato hugs the both of them.

Baraballa notices a stunned Lovius watching all this unfold.

BARABALLA
While you were gone... we healed.

CUT TO:

INT. TATO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gathered around the TV in the backyard, Tato, Baraballa and friends of theirs are cheering on the fight. They cheer, they jeer, they chug their beer.

Lovius is in the far back, barely sipping his beer. He looks uncomfortable. Unsure of how to relate with wrestling fans.

During a commercial break, a drunken Baraballa finishes his beer and heads to the cooler in the back. As he digs through the cooler next to Lovius, Lovius becomes curious.

LOVIUS
Baraballa...

Baraballa just now notices Lovius.

BARABALLA
Oh shit, Lovius!

LOVIUS
Hey, let me ask you something...

BARABALLA
What's up?

LOVIUS
That night... when Tato got beat up... where were you?

BARABALLA
Ummmm...

A drunken Baraballa struggles to remember.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)
You know... I think I was... Oh shit, I was with Marcellus!

LOVIUS
You were there with him?!

BARABALLA
Yeah, um, well... we were at the clubhouse and I get a call, yes?
(MORE)

BARABALLA (CONT'D)

A medic talking 'bout how they're taking my brother to the hospital because he was found bleeding and broken in the streets.

LOVIUS

Right.

BARABALLA

And I tell Marcellus, and he gets sad... *real sad*. Never seen him that way... but after that, he starts telling me to pack my truck with everything valuable from the clubhouse.

LOVIUS

Why?

BARABALLA

Well, because he was going to burn it all down, along with the evidence. I didn't know that at the time, though.

LOVIUS

Evidence of what?

BARABALLA

Me and Tato. So nobody will ever know we were involved in the gang.

Baraballa seems to be sobering up. As if remembering that night is killing his buzz.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)

Obviously, I didn't know it at the time. I was in a rush to go see my brother at the hospital. Right before I leave, I find out Marcellus isn't coming along.

Beat.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)

I'm in my truck and he just leans into the window and tells me, "*Familia est omnia*".

LOVIUS

"Family is everything..."

BARABALLA

Yeah...

Baraballa finally gets another beer from the cooler. Afterwards, he sits on the cooler.

LOVIUS

What happened next?

BARABALLA

Well, I arrive to the hospital, and there's my brother, wrapped like a damn mummy. I call mother and father. We stayed there all night.

Lovius tries to not look disappointed, having hoped for more info on Marcellus. Baraballa contemplates a bit.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)

I remember... almost like a fever dream... Marcellus calls me in the middle of the night. Tells me to meet him at the back of the hospital.

Lovius is once again fully attentive.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)

I remember petrifying hallways. As if half-asleep, or sleepwalking, even. But I managed to find the back. Some dock loading area. Marcellus emerges from the dark under a dim light... So much blood on his clothes... but I don't panic. He comes up to me and just asks how Tato is doing. I tell him he's stable, recovering.

Beat.

Baraballa takes a sip.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)

... And he just smiles. Like a proud father. And just like that he turns and walks away... but I don't let him. Not yet. I tell him, "where are you heading"? And he just turns, puts a hand on my shoulder, and tells me, "Off to have one last fun night"... He smiles and laughs.

Beat.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)
That's it. That's the last time I
saw Marcellus.

The story soothed Lovius.

LOVIUS
So that's that... You were the last
Caesar he ever spoke to...

BARABALLA
... No.

Beat.

BARABALLA (CONT'D)
Auntie Konstantina spoke to him.

Lovius is shocked.

LOVIUS
M- mother spoke to him? How- What?
How?

BARABALLA
Wait, shit, you weren't supposed to
know that- I wasn't supposed to
know that. Damn, nobody can keep a
secret in this family.

LOVIUS
(Urgent)
It's- It's too late now. Baraballa,
tell me. How- when- why did she
speak to him?

BARABALLA
(Sigh)
All I know is that Marcellus called
her from jail. I don't know what
they spoke of.

Lovius is disappointed, but understanding.

LOVIUS
It's alright, Baraballa. Thanks
anyways.

The group of men are heard roaring and cheering at the TV.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
Come on, let's see how much money
you've generously donated so far.

Baraballa chuckles.

INT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

After Tato's party, Lovius arrives home. He walks in to a pitch black, quiet house. He tip-toes his way to the kitchen, turns on the lights. He washes his face.

He turns off the lights and uses his phone to navigate to his room. Just before entering his room, he spots Konstantina's bedroom door wide open.

Lovius heads to his room and closes the door.

He stands, idly watching his room for a few moments before finally heading to his bed. He sits on it, The moonlight creates a silhouette of Lovius contemplating.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

LOVIUS
I just want answers!

Lovius had already begun prickling at Konstantina for answers. She's hanging clothes on the line, her back turned to him, trying her best to ignore him.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
(Gentle)
Mother, you spoke to him! What did he say? What did y'all speak of?!

She continues ignoring him.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
You know something! Is it enough to put an end to the rumors?!

KONSTANTINA
(Soft)
Please, Lovius...

LOVIUS
(Calm)
What, mother?

KONSTANTINA
... I'd rather live with the rumors than find out the truth.

LOVIUS

... What does that mean?

Konstantina rushes back inside to the kitchen. Lovius follows behind.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Mother...

Konstantina tries preparing her tea, but she simply can't. There's something pushing her to share.

KONSTANTINA

Ugh! Julia and her big mouth. She can never keep a secret...

Lovius gives her his full attention.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

We had so little time...

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

He called me from jail. He didn't ask for a lawyer. Or for help. He wasn't sad, distraught. He was... calm. He knew what he wanted to say. He told me... He told me he killed some people. He told me he was going away for a long time. He apologized.

Konstantina begins to sob.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

He apologized for luring Tato and Baraballa to his gang. He apologized for convincing you to leave the family. He apologized for Spartius... He said he feels calm... ready to rest in peace. He just needed to know one last thing, how you were doing.

LOVIUS

Me?

KONSTANTINA

... I didn't want to tell him. How could I tell him? If I told him... If I told him...

Konstantina can't muster out any words. Her sobbing has made her too weak to stand.

LOVIUS

... It was't your fault, mother.

Lovius puts his arm over her shoulder and leads her to the sofa. They sit down. Konstantina controls herself.

KONSTANTINA

A few days later, a detective showed up at the house. Julia was there with me... The detective told us they found Marcellus...

(Choking up)

... hanging in his cell.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

This- this *detective* brings news of my son's *death* then immediately tries to tell me my son may have also committed something so unspeakable?! I'm sorry, but excuse me for not being able to control myself in that moment and unleashing my rage at such a rude guest! I kicked him out of the house before he even had a chance to share more details...

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

And Julia of course witnessed everything. And you know how she is, her mind wonders. So she started speculating out loud. And soon enough, everybody starts speculating. And now look where we are.

Long beat.

LOVIUS

... "More details"?

KONSTANTINA

Yes...

LOVIUS

Mother...

KONSTANTINA

Lovius, what good can come of this?

LOVIUS

Closure. Don't you want that?

KONSTANTINA

Not every story has a good ending.

LOVIUS

But it's not a story without an ending.

Konstantina is not convinced.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Okay... Okay, I'm sorry. I shouldn't push.

Lovius begins walking away from the kitchen.

KONSTANTINA

Wait.

Lovius stops.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

I know a name... I know a place.

Lovius turns around. His eyes are widen.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

This small, preppy coffee shop sits on elevated ground amongst other shops next to it. There's a median road directly leading to and from the coffee shop.

From the parking lot, which Lovius is parked in, one can look down at the inclined road as far as the eye can see. Only houses, great big oaks, and desolated shops sit on both sides of this road.

Lovius sits in his car. For the first time, he is nerve-wrecked. He has lost his composure. Whatever it is that's haunting him, is also causing him to sweat.

The courage he builds up seems forced, but it's enough for him to step out of his car and head inside the coffee shop.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUED

The tacky, vibrant coffee shop has a welcoming atmosphere as customers sit in bean bags, stools, or chairs, enjoying their coffee and typing away on their laptops. The workers dress as they wish, bar the required apron.

Lovius looks around, afraid to take another step. He joins the line. As the line moves, his knees become weaker and weaker. The customer in front has finished placing his order.

He's next.

He steps up. Standing on the other side is a young, heavenly brunette who ought to smell of nothing but strawberries and peaches. She wears colorful pins on her apron like generals wear awards. Her smile is perfectly symmetrical. She has no need to put on a joyous, pleasing facade, because that is her already.

This is AGATHA (20s).

AGATHA

Hi there! How can I help you today?

Lovius has lost himself. The lovable, extrovert has run away and left behind a body.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Sir?

LOVIUS

I-... are you... Ag- Agatha...

Agatha is concerned for him.

AGATHA

Um... yes? How do you know my name?

LOVIUS

I, um... there's... Mar-...
Marcellus.

Suddenly, Agatha *recognizes* him. And just as quickly, her attitude changes. She becomes serious. Very serious.

AGATHA

Who are you?

LOVIUS

His... his brother.

Lovius looks ashamed. Agatha observes him VERY carefully.

One of her co-workers, WILHELM (20s), notices the situation while picking drive-thru orders. He looks over-protective, but remains where he is.

AGATHA
What's your name?

LOVIUS
... Lovius.

AGATHA
Why are you here, Lovius?

LOVIUS
... For closure.

Once again, Agatha observes him. She sees the pain and torture happening in him. She knows what he speaks of, too. She relaxes and becomes sympathetic.

AGATHA
... My lunch is in twenty minutes.
You can find a seat and wait. I'll
come get you, okay?

LOVIUS
Okay.

AGATHA
Would you like water or tea in the
meantime?

LOVIUS
Water.

AGATHA
Sure.

Agatha pours him a cup of water as Lovius steadily walks away, not even looking for a seat in particular.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
Lovius, your water.

He turns. He had forgotten. Agatha hands him his cup of water. He turns back around and finds a seat, any seat.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Lovius stares at his cup of water, having not taken a single sip. He's lost in his mind.

Agatha appears, holding a latte for herself, nearly tapping Lovius on the shoulder until she sees how fixated he is.

Instead, she gently walks around to the other side of his table, appearing in his view. This caresses Lovius out of his state of mind. He looks at Agatha and her reassuring smile.

AGATHA
Can we talk outside?

LOVIUS
Yes.

As Lovius steps outside to the patio, Agatha is held back by Wilhelm.

WILHELM
What are you doing? Who is he?

AGATHA
I recognize that pain.

WILHELM
Agatha, he could be dangerous. *Look* at him.

Lovius is seen standing awkwardly, avoiding eye contact. Far from dangerous.

AGATHA
Wilhelm, please. I'm literally just stepping outside.

WILHELM
(Sigh)
... Fine. Just call for me if you feel danger.

AGATHA
(Chuckles)
Wow, I didn't know my father had taught you his military ways.

WILHELM
Don't be ridiculous, I'm no fighter like him. No, I'm more diplomatic. Our manager, tied-up and hassle-free, in exchange for you. A sort of, prisoner exchange, if you will.

The two chuckle.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUED

Lovius and Agatha find their seats on the patio. Agatha has her back to the long, lone road. Her head above the horizon. The winter sun is already setting behind her. The frosty wind blows her hair sideways.

Agatha observes him for a few moment as she sips her latte. Lovius can barely look at her, but he can for sure *feel* her gaze. The extrovert in him remains missing.

Beat.

AGATHA

So... how did you find out?

LOVIUS

My mother told me.

AGATHA

Your mother... *told* you?

LOVIUS

She says... years ago... a detective visited her to tell her about something that happened between you and Marcellus.

AGATHA

Something? She didn't say exactly what?

Lovius shakes his head.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Hold on, this is confusing. That *something* happened years ago. I never spoke of it, neither. How did that detective find out?

LOVIUS

He didn't. He speculated it may have happened.

AGATHA

So it's not even proved?

LOVIUS

No.

AGATHA

Just speculation.

LOVIUS
Just rumors, yes.

Agatha is annoyed and surprised. She shakes her head.

AGATHA
Ugh, I hate that I might know who
told this detective.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
Out of every day, why today? How
are you just now finding out about
this, years after it happened?

LOVIUS
... I don't live here.

AGATHA
But... you were his brother?

Lovius nods.

LOVIUS
We grew up here. I moved away about
thirteen years ago.

AGATHA
And you never visited? Kept in
touch?

LOVIUS
Not really.

AGATHA
Wow...

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
... So then what does this mean to
you?

Lovius finally looks at her, confused.

LOVIUS
Huh?

AGATHA
My story, what does it mean to you?

Long beat.

Lovius contemplates.

LOVIUS

It means... bringing closure to my entire family. They don't know it, but they need it. So that we may finally start to move on. I'll be the first to even learn about what really happened that night.

Lovius begins to sob.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

I need the closure. It's been eating me up all these years. I'm scared of what I'm going to find out about my brother, the very man who raised me, who protected me from our abusive father. He set me free from all the chaos. So I'm terrified of what I'm going to find out, but I need to know. I need to move on, because I'm tired... I'm tired of living every day like it's the day after he died. So if you could just...

Lovius chokes up. Agatha is uncomfortable. She shuffles around in her chair.

AGATHA

Okay...

She closes her eyes as she takes a long and deep breath. She's composed.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I never learned how to drive. Never really had a reason to. I grew up in a far away land, where everything was walking distance. School, the store, friend's house. So when my family moved here, I was determined to keep it that way. So I walked to school, made friends in my neighborhood, and... got a job at the closest place possible, here. Just a fifteen minute walk down that street behind me, take a right, walk another block, and there's my parent's home.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

That night... we finished closing, everybody got in their cars and drove off. I started walking down the street. Felt like Halloween with how foggy it was. I wasn't scared. I love Halloween.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I crossed a street, and I saw him, *I know* I did. It had to be him. Even as a silhouette, I recognized the way he held his cigarette.

LOVIUS

Recognized?

AGATHA

... I had seen him before. He had met up with someone here and bought a camera from them... I remember Wilhelm had to tell him that no smoking was allowed inside. I remember the way he looked at me when he ordered his drink. Coffee. Black...

Agatha is silenced thinking back on that moment. She snaps out of it.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I mean, I get *that* look a lot, but his was... ugh, haunting. So when I walked past him, I recognized that face, but I didn't let it bother me. Maybe he just lived nearby.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Anyways, I walked a few more blocks... Suddenly, I started hearing sniffing behind me. Not *crying* sniffing. More like, someone tweaking. Again, I wasn't afraid. There's always been plenty of tweakers in this town. I knew some from high school. So, again, I didn't think much of it.

Agatha looks ashamed.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

No, what threw me off was that which happened in a split second. His footsteps. I heard them get nearer and in the moments I tried turning around, the footsteps became so fast. Way too fast. Like some creature about to pounce. So before I can even turn to look... he wraps his arm around my neck, and squeezes. Hard.

Lovius' heart is crushed. Pain gushes out. Agatha fights back any tears daring to escape. She stays strong and composed.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I try screaming, but my windpipe was crushed. I try fighting, kicking, *anything*, but he was too strong. He drags me into an alleyway. I smash into a garbage bin and all the dogs in the neighborhood start barking... but nobody ever came out... I fall to the ground and get a view of his face... He's covered in blood... Like a butcher.

There's a slight fear in Agatha's face, but still, she fights to remain composed.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

He pins me to the ground... I hear him unbuckling his belt... he pulls down my shorts... He finally lets go of my neck. And just as I'm about to scream...

Agatha can't contain the tears. She shuts her eyes, forcing the tears out.

She holds herself still. Fighting back the tears. Composure. Deep breath. She shakes her head. Another deep breath.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

In that moment, I left.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I left behind my body. Locked myself *somewhere*. Even after he was long gone, I was still gone.

(MORE)

AGATHA (CONT'D)

My body walked itself back to my house. To my room. I don't know how long I laid in bed, but at some point the sun started rising and I heard my father getting ready for work. I wanted to tell him... I wanted to tell him so badly. He fought in a war! A man like him would've... he would've...

Agatha CLENCHES her fists.

Lovius' wailing stops Agatha in her tracks. Lovius is crying like a child, face buried and hidden.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Lovius...

His catharsis.

Lovius' view of his own brother, has been changed completely.

Lovius attempts to QUICKLY stand up and leave. His composure being completely gone, he stumbles and slips, KNOCKING his chair over. Agatha rushes to help him up.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Lovius!

LOVIUS

I'm sorry! I have to- I have to go!

AGATHA

No! Please! Stay!

Agatha grabs onto Lovius' arm as he tries leaving. He can't look at her. Wilhelm, the customers, everyone, notices. Wilhelm rushes outside.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

(To Wilhelm)

Go back inside!

WILHELM

What?! Agatha, what the hell is going on?!

AGATHA

Go back inside, Wilhelm! Please!

Wilhelm is reluctant, but complies.

Agatha still holds back Lovius from leaving.

LOVIUS
Please let me go...

AGATHA
No! I know this is hard to hear! I know! But please, Lovius. Stay. I need you to stay.

Lovius begins to calm down.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
Let's talk about this...

Agatha gently releases his arm. Lovius takes a seat once again. He's trembling. Agatha takes her seat. Her strength keeps her calm.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
Lovius, the worst part is over.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
It's been years, and I've moved on. I've healed. People would say that I should stay mad, that I should let it fuel me. That I should carry a gun, and hate all men...

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
(Exhausted)
No. That's tiring. That's not me. Why let it change me, you know?

In between his uncontrollable sobs and sniffles, Lovius speaks.

LOVIUS
... Why didn't you report it?

AGATHA
(Sigh)
By the time I finally returned to my body, I just wanted to move on. Of course, there were times I wanted to. I even asked suspicious questions to friends and family. And I'm just now finding out that, that indeed raised some eyebrows back then.

(MORE)

AGATHA (CONT'D)

I also did research online and, well, put shortly, the statistics pretty much destroyed any thoughts about actually going through with it.

LOVIUS

I'm sorry... On behalf of my entire family, I'm so sorry.

AGATHA

It's not your fault, Lovius. Do NOT carry the guilt. But, I'll say this... I'll never forgive Marcellus for what he did. It doesn't make me stronger to forgive him, that's a load of crap. I think, just focusing on living a good life is enough.

Agatha notices Lovius' concerning trembling. She reaches out and holds his hand. Suddenly, Lovius is still.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Lovius, I'd like to keep in touch with you, if that's okay.

Lovius looks at her, surprised.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

You're going to have so many thoughts fogging up your mind. So if you ever need someone to talk to, please, don't hesitate to reach out.

Lovius nods.

Agatha leans back on her chair. The two sit in silence. The winter winds soothing each of them.

Agatha notices her latte had been spilled in the midst of Lovius' chaos.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

(Playful)

You owe me a latte...

Lovius can't help muster out a chuckle.

EXT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUED

Lovius arrives back home. He's about to open the front door when he stops. He realizes he's sporting a very depressed expression on his face. He takes a few moments to compose himself before finally stepping inside.

After closing the door behind him, Lovius notices how quiet the house is and feels.

No sign of Konstantina anywhere.

He heads to the backyard. No sign of her there, either.

Back inside, Lovius notices a letter on the kitchen countertop. The letter is written on a sheet of notebook paper. It's withered. As if kept away hidden for years.

Lovius opens the letter.

INSERT - MARCELLUS' LETTER

"Dear Caesars,

Nobody understands the definition of 'sacrifice' better than I do. The youth I've given up, the dreams I've let go in the name of duty. My life has been cruel. I hate the universe and it hates me. But despite its best efforts, I have accomplished my mission. Lovius was spared from this war. I set him free, to live as the same lovable child I raised, untainted by this family. Now, I lay down my sword. Caesars, I know we've always had our troubles, but we MUST be better than this. If not for us, then for the children. End this war. Plant the seeds for the tree whose shade we will never sit under. It is not too late.

Yours truly,

Marcellus."

BACK TO SCENE.

Lovius is emotionless.

Long beat.

WHACK!

Lovius THROWS the letter against a wall.

LOVIUS
FUCK YOU!!

Lovius sits on a chair. Stressed and upset.

He stares at the letter.

CUT TO:

INT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Konstantina arrives back home. She opens the door, attempting not to make too much noise. She enters and finds only the kitchen light on.

She spots Lovius still sitting on the kitchen chair. He now holds onto the letter. Lovius looks up at her like a child who just had a nightmare.

Konstantina joins him at the table. She pulls out a chair and sits right next to him, putting her arm around him, protecting him.

Long beat.

LOVIUS
... He did it.

KONSTANTINA
... I thought as much.

Lovius suddenly becomes angry.

LOVIUS
And then he writes THIS?! After what he did and he dares try and preach to the choir?!

Konstantina caresses him, calms him.

KONSTANTINA
Shhhhh...
(In Greek)
Calm, my child.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)
Nobody is ever the bad guy in their story. Everything we do, no matter who we hurt, we will believe it was for the best. Marcellus only ever thought he was helping us.

LOVIUS
Helping? Sure, he really did help this family by what he did to...

Lovius can't utter the words. He sighs.

KONSTANTINA

What Marcellus did shook this family tree. We fell and hit rock bottom. All of us.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

You were right, you know. Whether we wanted it or not, it was necessary. We needed a look in the mirror, reminding us that we have been nothing but a family in constant fighting. Fighting that was poisoning this old tree.

Lovius understands. Konstantina caresses his hair, it's soft like a bunny. She smiles, looking down at her son. Tears begin streaming down her face.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

... I regret the years I was too afraid to be your mother.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

As much as you may hate him right now, Marcellus was the one who raised you... I was nowhere to be found.

LOVIUS

But you never hurt anybody.

KONSTANTINA

No, but I stood by and watched as others hurt each other. Lovius, do not think that I voluntarily ignored Marcellus' existence. I have stayed awake many nights, wondering to myself, how my dear Marcellus could've flourished, had I simply showed nurture and love. Had I not been so *WEAK!*

LOVIUS

-- Mother...

Lovius sits upright. He looks her in the eyes. He realizes something.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

... He was doomed from the beginning. Father was never going to let him flourish. Changing his fate would've been a Herculean task. For all of us.

Long beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

But, he was right. We must move on. The war is over. A new era dawns on the Caesars.

Lovius invites back Konstantina's arm around him. She resumes stroking his hair.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

... Where did you go?

KONSTANTINA

Your aunts and I volunteer at the soup kitchen every Saturday. It's a new tradition of ours.

Lovius smiles.

MONTAGE - A NEW ERA

-- Early in the morning, aunt Julia arrives to Konstantina's house. She does not step out. Instead, she waits inside her car. Eventually, Konstantina and Lovius step outside and enter her car. They're all happy to see one another.

-- The three arrive to Downtown Nashville. They find their parking and begin walking along the strip full of shops. They enter a flower shop.

-- Julia is a hoot as she assembles flowers in a goofy matter. Konstantina and Lovius laugh with her.

-- They enter a bakery next, where they find aunt Rubia and Amelia working. They're happy to see them, and then they. They order their food and find a place to sit. Later, Rubia and Amelia, on their breaks, join them at their table. Laughs and cheers are had.

-- As Julia drives them back home, Lovius stares out the window from the backseat. He stares in awe as he notices how much his city has truly changed over the years.

-- Lovius is now the one hanging up laundry on the clothes line. It's a cloudy day, the sun's rays break through, shining directly on him, like a spotlight.

-- Back inside, Lovius checks in on his mother. He enters her room and finds her sound asleep. Strangely enough, she sleeps with one arm reaching out to the other side of the bed, as if cuddling someone dear to her.

-- The next day, as the two are having breakfast, Lovius suggests something to Konstantina that instantly throws off her mood. Reassuring her, he reaches out and holds her hand.

-- Lovius drives Konstantina to the cemetery. There's a hollow atmosphere with the morning mist surrounding them, the prickly branches of trees like spikes. They arrive to Spartius' grave. Konstantina gets down on her knees. She glides her hand on the tombstone, as if caressing his face. She lays a single rose on his tombstone. Lovius watches, attempting to ignore Marcellus' grave right next to Spartius', until he can't no more.

-- Next up, Lovius drives Konstantina to the once Caesar Complex. They park across the street. The Caesar Complex has been razed and bulldozed. A sign for a new, modern complex, featuring a 3D rendering of it, has been placed right outside the fencing. Lovius is hurt. Konstantina puts a hand on his shoulder, assuring him all is fine. She steps outside. He follows. She sits on the hood of the car, so does he. The two begin to reminiscent. Eventually, laughter breaks out.

-- Another restless night for Lovius. Laying in bed does nothing for him. He decides to step outside to the front yard. It's freezing cold, but he doesn't mind. The neighborhood is surprisingly pitch black from the lack of lights. The moonlight illuminates. He walks down the driveway and sits on the curb. Lovius stares up at the stars. Eventually, he takes out his phone and sends a message to someone.

END OF MONTAGE.

EXT. NASHVILLE PARTHENON - MORNING

Lovius stands in front of the gran replica of an ancient era. Tourists are far and few. Must be a weekday. He's waiting on someone.

Eventually, he spots Agatha with Wilhelm at her side. They spot him, and before approaching any further, Agatha speaks with Wilhelm. He looks displeased at what she tells him, but understands. Agatha now approaches Lovius on her lonesome. Wilhelm hangs behind.

AGATHA

Hi.

LOVIUS

Hey.

AGATHA

... You look like you need a hug.

A shy Lovius smiles gently.

LOVIUS

... Yes.

Agatha cautiously goes in for a hug. Lovius accepts.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

Wilhelm really cares about you,
huh?

AGATHA

Heh, he insisted that he join me
when I told him about today. He's
rather overprotective. It's kind of
annoying, to be honest.

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

But, he's sweet. Like a big
brother.

Lovius is reminded of Marcellus. It shows.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean to--

LOVIUS

-- No, it's okay.

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

I never told you exactly why I
returned. It's my cousin's wedding.

AGATHA

Oh, congratulations to them!

LOVIUS

Yeah... Today's the wedding.

AGATHA

Oh? Are you sure you should be
here?

LOVIUS
No, it's fine. It's not until
evening.

Beat.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
I feel like I don't belong.

AGATHA
How so?

LOVIUS
In less than a week, I realized how
wrong I've been about my entire
family for the last thirteen years.

AGATHA
What did you expect?

LOVIUS
Chaos. Imploding. It's all I've
ever known. Except, I didn't live
through it. I just witnessed it. I
never got caught up in it. I...
(Sigh)
I was *spared*. And it's... because
of *him*. I just don't know how I'm
supposed to feel about him. Right
now, I HATE him. I really do.

AGATHA
Hate's not going to do you any
good, Lovius.

LOVIUS
Then how am I supposed to feel?

AGATHA
I don't know, but don't let the
hate brew inside you.

Agatha turns to look at the Parthenon. He joins her.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
Do you like the original one more,
or this one?

LOVIUS
Um, hard to say.

AGATHA
I like the this one better...

Beat.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
It makes me think, even if the
physical form has left us, somebody
will always carry a memory of it.

LOVIUS
Yeah.

Agatha returns to look at Lovius.

AGATHA
You left your family for so long,
but you remained a treasure in
their memories, that they welcomed
you back. Lovius, you do belong.

Lovius turns to look at Agatha.

LOVIUS
Thank you, Agatha.

He takes a deep breath.

LOVIUS (CONT'D)
I have a lot to rebuild. But, I'm
glad I've started.

AGATHA
Keep me updated?

LOVIUS
Of course.

The two remain smiling at each other.

INT. KONSTANTINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Lovius is on the ground packing his photography equipment. As he does, Konstantina picks out a nice, formal attire for him to wear to the wedding.

LOVIUS
What time is auntie Julia getting
here?

KONSTANTINA
Shouldn't be too long now, so you
better get dressed quickly.

LOVIUS
You know, I could've driven us.

KONSTANTINA

Yes, but it would be rude to your aunt, she's been driving me everywhere for oh so many years, now.

LOVIUS

I just hope her driving doesn't match her personality.

KONSTANTINA

I... can try to keep her calm. No promises.

Beat.

Konstantina becomes cautiously curious.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

... So what was she like?

LOVIUS

Huh?

KONSTANTINA

Agatha... you never told me what she was like, or how it went.

LOVIUS

Oh. Um, she's nice... Strong. Really strong. She lives life her own way, no care whatsoever about what others may think. She's... an inspiration. I think you'd like her, mother.

Konstantina smirks.

KONSTANTINA

I think so, too. No ill feelings towards us?

LOVIUS

Why would she have any?

KONSTANTINA

I'm not sure, I just assumed...

Lovius stands to reassure his mother.

LOVIUS

The blame doesn't fall on us, mother.

(MORE)

LOVIUS (CONT'D)

She was the one that had to insist
I calm down. I was a pathetic mess.

KONSTANTINA

Aww, my poor boy.

LOVIUS

(Playful)

No pity, please. I think I've had
enough of that recently.

Lovius grabs his suit and heads out.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Golden hour. As Aunt Julia drives and chats with Konstantina,
Lovius stares out at the countryside road they drive on.
Ranches as far as the eye can see. Houses far and few.

They turn a corner. They enter a sparse neighborhood.

Aunt Julia turns the corner to arrive at a neighborhood. She
slows down to a crawl as they try to find parking amongst the
many cars next to the curb.

AUNT JULIA

It's here, right? It's one of these
houses on the left.

KONSTANTINA

Didn't they say they were
renovating?

AUNT JULIA

Oh yes! Look for a house that looks
like its been renovated!

Lovius spots guests walking towards a particular two-story,
red brick house.

LOVIUS

It's probably the one everyone is
walking to.

KONSTANTINA

Look at all these cars! We are very
late.

AUNT JULIA

Might have to park at the other
end.

Aunt Julia spots a questionable spot in front of a fire hydrant.

AUNT JULIA (CONT'D)
Aha! Maybe not!

She begins to parallel park into the spot.

LOVIUS
I'm not sure this is allowed,
auntie.

AUNT JULIA
Says who? Ah, it'll be fine. We're
not making Konstantina walk all the
way from the other end.

She parks, barely.

As the three step out, they hear the commotion of a party going on at the grandiose house. Lovius locks arms with Konstantina as they enter the house.

Aunt Rubia who had been socializing near the entrance, spots them immediately.

AUNT RUBIA
Sisters! You've made it!

Konstantina and Julia hug her.

AUNT RUBIA (CONT'D)
And you too, Lovius!

Lovius hugs her.

KONSTANTINA
Where's Tato and Olabisi?

AUNT RUBIA
Oh, well dear Olabisi is upstairs
getting ready! Tato is still
greeting guests. So many people
showed up!

KONSTANTINA
Tato is a popular man.

Aunt Rubia finishes her drink.

AUNT RUBIA
Come! I'll take you to him that way
dear Lovius can finally meet the
rest of his family!

Lovius looks nervous.

Aunt Julia spots someone in a different room. She longs for that person.

AUNT JULIA

You two go on, I... need to talk to someone.

AUNT RUBIA

Aii, Julia.

AUNT JULIA

I just want to catch up.

Aunt Rubia shrugs and leads Konstantina and Lovius to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUED

The living room is pleasant and warm to look at. Guests sit on the couch as Tato speaks with them. He spots Lovius and immediately stands to greet them.

TATO

Cousin! Auntie! *Salve*, I am so glad you two made it!

Tato hugs Konstantina and Lovius.

KONSTANTINA

We wouldn't miss it for the world, Tato. How are you feeling?

TATO

Nervous, but ready. Although, I get the feeling somebody is more nervous than me in this room...

Tato looks right at Lovius with a big smile on his face.

TATO (CONT'D)

(Shouts)

It's time *Lovius* meet the family!

The guests, or Lovius' extended family, cheers. Lovius blushes with embarrassment.

TATO (CONT'D)

Who wants to go first? Or actually, should we do oldest to youngest? Oh! Or old family and new family?

(MORE)

TATO (CONT'D)

Oh man, Lovius, you're going to love Olabisi's family! A bunch of comedians, I'll tell you right now!

Konstantina takes a nervous Lovius' hand and guides him to the first family member to greet. It's an older gentleman, dressed for the countryside. He rises from the couch and hugs Lovius. The next family member does the same, and so on and so on.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUED

Konstantina enters the kitchen to find Rubia and Amelia socializing with each other. They spot her and gather next to her. Amelia smokes a vape.

AUNT RUBIA

How's he doing?

Konstantina turns back and looks through the open doorway. The three spot Lovius sitting amongst his old and new family in the living room. Amongst all the hollering and laughing, he remains shy and quiet, but happy.

KONSTANTINA

I've never seen him this way.

AUNT AMELIA

How so?

KONSTANTINA

He's... shy.

AUNT AMELIA

Dear Lovius, *shy*?

KONSTANTINA

Indeed. I'm just as surprised as you are, sister. He was always the first to show love, always the loudest in the room. Now, look at him. Aww, *mou agori*. In a way, it melts my heart.

AUNT AMELIA

What do you suppose turned him like this? Was it... *the news*?

AUNT RUBIA

Undoubtedly.

AUNT AMELIA

(Sigh)

Well, he was the last one remaining that needed their catharsis. Now, he can move on, too.

Konstantina looks worried.

KONSTANTINA

But what if he becomes too reserved? Did I just lose the Lovius I once knew?

AUNT AMELIA

Oh, sister, he is just processing a lot, right now. That takes time. Just be there for him. Be his mother.

Amelia hugs Konstantina.

KONSTANTINA

Thank you, sister.

Beat.

KONSTANTINA (CONT'D)

Where's Julia?

AUNT RUBIA

Speaking with Dominus. Look.

Rubia nods towards another open doorway leading to a dining room.

There, Konstantina spots Julia speaking with a very tall, fit, bearded man. The man has his arm around his wife. A small child runs up to the man and speaks to him. He speaks back to the child as if they're his own. The child runs along.

KONSTANTINA

I'll never get over how much Dominus has changed.

AUNT RUBIA

What marrying a nutritionist does to one, huh?

AUNT AMELIA

Dominus tells me they're thinking about having a child of their own.

KONSTANTINA

Really? How is Julia taking it?

AUNT AMELIA

Look at the way she looks at him. There's love and regret in that stare. I'm sure there's no one she hates more than her own past self.

AUNT RUBIA

You might be right, but you may also be projecting there a little, sister.

AUNT AMELIA

Ahhh, but who here would argue against changing the past?

AUNT RUBIA

But alas, we are not sisters of fate, now are we?

The three sisters chuckle.

Lovius cautiously enters the kitchen. He makes his way to Konstantina's side.

AUNT AMELIA

Lovius!

AUNT RUBIA (CONT'D)

Our shy *agori*!

He gently smiles at his aunts.

KONSTANTINA

Did you enjoy speaking with your family?

LOVIUS

Yes. Mother, I'm going to go get my equipment. Tato says to be ready soon.

KONSTANTINA

Of course. But first, go say hi to your uncle Dominus.

Konstantina nods towards Dominus' direction.

LOVIUS

That's uncle Dominus?!

AUNT RUBIA

(Chuckles)

Incredible, isn't it?

Lovius looks intimidated.

KONSTANTINA

Don't be shy now.

He cautiously walks towards Dominus who is still talking with Julia. Upon spotting him, Dominus is quick to figure out who Lovius is and bear-hugs him with his massive biceps.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Tato's house has a sparse, rolling hill for a backyard. They've dedicated space to the ceremony. String lights, white cloths, and an arch that Tato stands under, waiting, along with his best man, Baraballa and the minister.

Beyond the arch, there's white party tents with tables, chairs, and string lights underneath them, setup for an after party.

All sit on the many chairs laid out on both sides of the aisle.

Lovius stands far off to the side, he holds on to a DSLR, snapping photos of guests.

Suddenly, everyone notices all the lights in Tato's house turn off. They turn to look and amidst the dark house, two women step out, holding torches. They make way for more people stepping out of the house. They begin walking towards the aisle. Lovius begins filming.

The group leads the way for the bride, Olabisi. The two women reach the aisle and light the other torches that had been placed in the surrounding area. The extra added light illuminate Olabisi's pure white dress into a glow.

She smiles as she spots a nervous Tato waiting for her.

Lovius captures every moment and reaction.

Olabisi finally stands under the arch. She looks right into Tato's eyes, a gentle smile on her face. The minister opens his book.

CLOSE UP on Olabisi's and Tato's hands holding on to each other's.

MINISTER

Today, is a day of unification...

Lovius is taken into the moment as he sees true love in Tato's face. Such a rare sight that leaves him in awe.

He looks around. Konstantina, the aunts, cousins, and the rest of the Caesar family all sit, calmly, happy. For once, a family comes together, leaving behind the chaos. Time seems to slow down for Lovius.

MINISTER (CONT'D)
... And so, you may now kiss the bride.

Lovius PANICS as he hears these words. Not realizing had long he had been awestruck, he hastily points and shoots the camera to capture the moment of Olabisi and Tato's kiss.

Everyone claps and cheers.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

Lovius takes some final photos as guests find their seats at the afterparty.

He spots Konstantina and his aunts all sitting in the same table. He finds a seat next to Konstantina.

KONSTANTINA
Did you take lots and lots of pictures?

LOVIUS
Yes.

Like a proud little boy, Lovius shows his mother the pictures he took on the screen of his DSLR.

KONSTANTINA
(Awe)
Well, aren't these just incredible!
Oh! Look at that one! I think that one is my favorite!

AUNT JULIA
Lovius, would you like something to eat?

LOVIUS
Yes, please.

AUNT JULIA
I'll fetch us all a plate!

AUNT RUBIA
 You can't carry all those plates
 yourself!

AUNT JULIA
 Then come help, won't you?

Rubia annoyingly gets up to help. Amelia remains sitting,
 smoking her vape.

AUNT JULIA (CONT'D)
 And you too, Julia.

AUNT AMELIA
 I know, I know. Just taking a quick
 drag.

Amelia puts down her vape right in front of Lovius.

AUNT AMELIA (CONT'D)
 Lovius, watch over it for me, won't
 you?

She winks at him.

LOVIUS
 Sure thing.

The aunts get up and head for the food. Shy Lovius begins
 looking around, sneaking peeks around at the many faces he
 had long forgotten. Some look back, a gentle smile on them.

TATO
 Lovius!

Tato and Olabisi arrive to greet him.

TATO (CONT'D)
 How'd you like the ceremony? Pretty
 badass, right?

LOVIUS
 Yes, it was great.

TATO
 God, look at that camera! That
 could see into the future, huh?

OLABISI
 30.4 megapixel full-frame sensor,
 61-point autofocus system, dual
 pixel "CMOS" autofocus, correct?

Lovius and Tato are both stunned.

LOVIUS

Uh, yes.

OLABISI

I minored in photography.

TATO

And I'm *just* now finding out about this?

OLABISI

You have zero interest in freezing time. I'm the one who invited Lovius because of his artistic ability, remember?

TATO

-- *Annnnd* I invited him out of love!

Lovius and Konstantina chuckle.

OLABISI

Konstantina, my dear, how did you enjoy the ceremony?

KONSTANTINA

Oh, it was very beautiful! It's been a long time since I've even attended one. Thank you!

OLABISI

Oh no, thank you for being so welcoming. You and your sisters made me feel like family within days of me moving here. My family is very grateful for the hospitality you have all shown me.

KONSTANTINA

Ohhhhhh my dear!

Olabisi and Konstantina hug.

OLABISI

And Lovius, I hope you are doing well. We, uh, heard that you... discovered the truth.

LOVIUS

Yes... I'm well. Thank you. It's just going to take some time to process.

Tato puts a hand on Lovius' shoulder.

TATO

If you need space, we'll give you space. If you need ears, we'll give you ears. We are here for you, cousin. We will always be. "*Familia est omnia*".

LOVIUS

Thank you. Really.

TATO

We're all doing better, cousin. And we're all so happy you could be here.

OLABISI

Enjoy the party!

TATO

Oh, and hey! Be ready with that camera, we're about to play some games here, soon!

The aunts return with plates for the table.

AUNT JULIA

Ah, but Tato, we were just barely about to eat!

TATO

Juuuust giving y'all a heads up.

CUT TO:

EXT. TATO'S BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Olabisi is seen discussing with her friends and family. They have gathered at the center of the party, a patch of grass. Olabisi steps out of the huddle to speak with her guests.

OLABISI

Okay everyone! I hope you've enjoyed the food, but now it is time for the games to begin!

The guests cheer and clap. Lovius, Konstantina, and the aunts have finished eating their plates.

OLABISI (CONT'D)

Can I have six men volunteer for our first game?

The guests are suddenly shy. Some chuckles here and there.

OLABISI (CONT'D)
Six men? Anybody?

TATO
(Chanting)
Dominus! Dominus! Dominus!

The guests join in on the chant. Dominus, who had been sitting with his wife and kids, is reluctant. He's egged on until he finally volunteers and steps up to the center.

Tato gestures for Baraballa to join in. Eventually, he also steps up. Other guests, cousins or brother-in-laws to Lovius step up. In the end, eight men, including Tato, are handed an inflated balloon to tie around one of their ankles.

Lovius grabs his camera and finds a spot with a good view of the games that are about to commence.

OLABISI
Okay! The game is simple! All you have to do... is try to pop each other's balloons! Last one standing wins!

All the volunteers laughs. Dominus and Baraballa discuss, as if teaming up.

Olabisi takes her seat. She pulls out a whistle.

Lovius, with his camera, is ready to take pictures and videos.

OLABISI (CONT'D)
Ready... set...

RIIIING!

The party games commence.

Baraballa and Dominus do indeed team up and go after the others. Lovius captures photos with a smile on his face. Laughing as everyone laughs.

One by one, the balloons are popped until Dominus and Baraballa are the last remaining.

They stare at each other's balloons, laughing, like school children. They go after one another. It's an awful lot of awkward shuffling as they try stomping, bending, twisting.

POP!

Baraballa crushes Dominus' balloon. He wins.

The two, and everyone, remain laughing in good spirit.

Olabisi walks up to him, clapping.

OLABISI (CONT'D)
Yay! Congratulations, Baraballa!
Here's your prize!

Tato reaches into a cardboard box and pulls out a neatly wrapped lollipop for Baraballa. He returns to his seat with the others.

OLABISI (CONT'D)
Okay, now I'm going to need six
ladies! Six ladies!

More shy guests.

OLABISI (CONT'D)
... Anybody? I can wait all night!

MONTAGE - MINIGAMES

-- As the next mini game of musical chairs is being set up, Lovius watches on. There's a gentle smile on his face as he can feel himself healing, connecting with the very family he had not seen in so long.

-- Six ladies, including aunt Rubia and Amelia, play a game of musical chairs. In the end, Rubia wins.

-- During the next intermission, while fixated on his thoughts, camera in hand, Lovius slowly realizes his name is being chanted. Tato comes over and grabs him by the shoulders. He's up next to play one of the mini games.

-- The game is mega Jenga. Lovius is incredibly shy at first, uncomfortable, even. Once the game begins, he slowly but surely begins to enjoy himself. He feels the support and joy of his family cheering him on. Lovius wins.

END OF MONTAGE.

After the mini games, the party dies down. Guests are simply sitting around, chatting softly with one another. Some have left, some are leaving, but not before congratulating Olabisi and Tato one last time.

Tato and Olabisi join Konstantina and Lovius at their table. The four wave goodbye to Rubia and Amelia, who are heading out. Julia hugs them before they leave. She returns to the table.

KONSTANTINA

(To Tato)

So what names are you thinking for your baby boy?

TATO

Well, I got dibs if it was a boy, so the pressure is on me. Ugh, I'm not too sure. I'm kind of leaning towards... Hmm... I don't know... maybe "Julius".

KONSTANTINA

"Julius". Ohhhh. I like that.

AUNT JULIA

Did you just come up with that one? It's so much better than your previous suggestions.

TATO

I did. Who knows, maybe there's another artist in this family. A poet, perhaps.

OLABISI

Ha!

All laugh.

Beat.

OLABISI (CONT'D)

Lovius, when do you return to your wife?

The mood shifts. They are all reminded that Lovius does have to leave at some point.

LOVIUS

Tomorrow.

KONSTANTINA

You'll visit, won't you?

LOVIUS

Of course, mother. As much as possible.

TATO
 (Jokingly)
 Well, don't be gone for another
 thirteen years, huh? I mean, I can
 do two, eight, even twelve, but
 thirteen? That's crossing the line.

All laugh.

The group stands up. They all hug one another.

TATO (CONT'D)
 Take care, cousin.

LOVIUS
 You too. I'm happy for you, Tato.

Aunt Julia, Konstantina, and Lovius head out. Tato and Olabisi watch on, finally alone at their house.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lovius sits in the backseat. A grown man looking like a five year old all over again as he stares at Konstantina in the passenger seat. She speaks with aunt Julia.

A faint smile grows on Lovius. He stares out the window. They're driving on a lonely road back home. There's nothing but nature on both sides. The light pollution is absent enough for the stars in the sky to reveal themselves.

He stares up at them.

A long-awaited calm warms Lovius. He relaxes. Slowly, he begins to drift off. The soothing vibrations of the car from driving over a worn road comfort him.

Finally, he sleeps.

WE SEE the car stop at a red light from a hillside.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUED

Suddenly, everything has changed.

The interior of the car is different. It's now that of a vintage hatchback.

Konstantina has changed.

Her hair is now a silky, healthy, walnut brown. She turns to check on Lovius, revealing a much more younger version of herself. She has the soft face of an angel, an awe of a young mother towards her baby.

KONSTANTINA

What do you think he's dreaming of?

WE SEE Lovius is now the little boy he once was. Asleep in the back seat.

Konstantina turns to look at the driver.

It's Spartius.

The eyes of Spartius look at Lovius from the rear view mirror. He contemplates.

SPARTIUS

He's dreaming of the man he will become. Dreaming of time flying forward. He loves us, he does. It's always been in him to love. But he dreams of escaping. He has too much love to be held back. And we shall'nt hold him back. Not while his brother pushes him forward.

Konstantina is stunned by Spartius' beautiful words.

Beat.

She kisses his shoulder and rests her forehead on it.

The light turns green.

The SUV drives away.

THE END.