

INT. FORGOTTEN WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Abandoned, dirty and dilapidated.

A black SUV idles near the only exit, a metal roll-up door.

Blood pools around two dead bodies. A man in a tactical vest and tiger-striped cap, the other a woman next to a red plastic cup.

Police sirens wail in the distance.

AMARA AKUFFO, 30s, Black, in a black catsuit, braces against an overturned table - sweaty, breath ragged, clutches a sparkly black handgun.

A low MOAN.

Slumped beside her, FREYA LOPEZ, 20s, half-White, half-Hispanic, in an edgy steampunk getup, her shirt blood-soaked.

AMARA

Freya, stay with me.

She tucks the gun, lays Freya flat, and rips open her blouse.

FREYA

(weak)

You...fucking up my costume.

Sirens grow louder. Freya stirs.

AMARA

Blame the bullet. Stay still.

Amara finds the wound, then stops. Relieved.

AMARA (CONT'D)

This will hurt.

She presses her hands over the wound. A searing light flares from her palms, silver veins crack through her skin.

The wound hisses, flesh twists into a hard, jagged, cement-gray scab.

Freya SHRIEKS, her body arches in agony.

Amara jerks her hands back, breathless, the glow flickers out.

Sirens ROAR closer.

Amara rifles Freya's vest; Freya swats weakly.

FREYA
No...no more - magic.

AMARA
I need your phone.

Bingo. Phone in hand. She dials, eyes locked on the door.
Outside. Tires screech. Car doors slam.
The call rings.

AMARA (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Esi, answer the phone.

Silence. Then...

AGENT (O.C.)
(bullhorn)
This is the ATF. Come out with your
hands up - Now!

Voicemail. Shit.

AMARA
Esi - it's Momma.

Her eyes well.

AGENT (O.C.)
(bullhorn)
You have one minute to comply.

No time to cry.

AMARA
Dad's not coming. Your
Grandpapa...hello...hello.

Phone dies. She mashes the power button. Nothing.

AGENT (O.C.)
(bullhorn)
Minutes up.

She pats Freya's cheeks. Again. Again.

AMARA
Freya, wake up. FREYA.

Freya's eyes flutter open. Annoyed.

FREYA
Ow! Stop. Let me die sexy.

Amara grips Freya's face.

AMARA
You're not dying. LISTEN. Tell Esi
to stay away from her Grandpapa.
Did you hear me?

Freya blinks, fading.

FREYA
Yeah, yeah..bad...Gran.

Lights out. Breath still steady.

The metal roll-up door SCREAMS. A rotary saw chews through.

Amara glares at the sparks that fizzle inside.

AMARA
(to herself)
I'm strong - I'm strong.

She rises, gun trained on the door.

Off Amara, unsteady but ready.

EXT. VALUE VILLAGE STUDIO APARTMENTS - DAY

The façade screams last stop before homeless.

SUPERIMPOSE: EL CAJON, CA. TWO DAYS EARLIER

INT. SMALL STUDIO APARTMENT #233 - COMMON AREA - DAY

Light barely illuminates this tiny outdated studio apartment.

At a cramped kitchen table, ESI AKUFFO, 16, Black, bandaged
fingers sketch an unfamiliar superhero beside a bag of toys
and a bowl of oatmeal.

A light turns on in the...

BATHROOM

Behind flimsy partitions, Amara dips her worn toothbrush into
a box of baking soda.

AMARA

Esi, did you eat? We need to go.

COMMON AREA

Esi rolls her eyes at the dry bowl of oatmeal.

ESI

No water!

BATHROOM

Disbelief, Amara turns the sink knobs. Nada. She rubs baking soda on her gums, spits and marches into the...

COMMON AREA

She digs a glucose meter from Esi's backpack. Esi, unbothered, offers an unbandaged finger. Amara tests.

ESI

Not hungry. Look - Dad.

Amara's eyes widen for a split second before she's distracted by the beep of the glucose meter. Sighs.

AMARA

You're low.

ESI

He's coming to our rescue.

Amara shoves the meter into Esi's backpack. Her cellphone rings, sees the I.D., and ignores it.

AMARA

We don't need to be rescued.

She opens a small fridge to mayo and an empty insulin vial.

Esi stares at the toy bag.

ESI

Why are we hiding?

Triggered. Amara SLAMS the fridge door. Esi sinks down.

AMARA

We're FINE. Let's go.

INT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE - WAITING AREA - DAY

DMV vibe. Walls covered in Pro-America boilerplate.

Lodged in the corner, Amara repositions her toy bag. Esi shakes her head at a very outdated TV.

ESI

Redd's got robbed again.

INT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE - DIEGO'S OFFICE - LATER

Photos with family and a red cap with a clear message. MAGA.

DIEGO DIAZ, 60s, Cuban, schlubby, shakes two pills from an unlabeled bottle and chews them dry.

Rubs his face at the sight of his bank balance.

Sees an incoming call on his cellphone. Debates. Stuffs the pill bottle in his jacket, composes himself, and answers.

DIEGO

Lou, I was...yeah, I know five
g's,...fucking Lakers choked...TWO
DAYS, come on, Lou...no, no, I'm
good for it, man...I just...

His office door opens. Amara and Esi step inside. Diego looks up, rolls his eyes and gestures for them to sit.

DIEGO (CONT'D)

Yeah, I'll get it...I gotta go.

Diego hangs up and faces his computer; Amara looks away.

DIEGO (CONT'D)

Name?

AMARA

Amara Akuffo, Sir. One k, two f's.

He types - bored - until something catches his eye.

DIEGO

You got some missing information.

AMARA

What do you need, sir?

DIEGO

(nods to Esi)
Her father's name?

Amara tenses up.

AMARA
We weren't officially married.

DIEGO
You wanna live here or not?

Amara hesitates. Esi quickly chimes in.

ESI
Obe Nymarko.

Diego's eyebrows shoot up; his body stiffens. He knows that name.

He turns his head to Amara.

DIEGO
Obe Nymarko - Kojo Nymarko's son?

Amara nods. He returns to the screen, types, and reads.

Esi looks at Amara confused. Amara fidgets.

Diego breathes deep, shakes his head, and stands.

DIEGO (CONT'D)
(Nods to Esi)
She should wait outside.

Amara pats Esi's thigh. Esi trudges out.

Diego locks the door and plods back to his desk. Amara stays glued to the floor.

DIEGO (CONT'D)
You think we're stupid?

AMARA
No, sir. - I didn't do it.

Diego picks up his landline and dials.

DIEGO
I don't care. You're wanted for
murdering your kids father. Jesus.
I'm deporting you and...

Amara stands.

AMARA
..I can PAY. Please. I can pay you.

Diego hangs up and chuckles dryly.

DIEGO
You expect me to risk my ass?

AMARA
It won't cost you. It only has to
cost me.

Diego mulls for a beat. Leans back in his chair.

DIEGO
You're a Nymarko - six grand.

Amara's jaw clenches but she remains composed.

AMARA
Sir, I'll need time to...

He leans on his desk. Stern.

DIEGO
...Two days - six-grand - by noon
Monday - comprende?

AMARA
Yes, sir.

Diego plods to the door and opens it; she gets the hint and
rushes out.

INT. STINNEY HIGH SCHOOL - HALL - DAY

Amara and Esi are searched by wand-wielding security guards.

Esi spots a familiar face, DEMETRICE SMITH, 16, Black, in a
wheelchair, talking to a guy in a tiger-striped cap.

He hands Demetrice a box and they dap. He locks eyes with
Amara and Esi, then slips out a side exit.

ESI
Demetrice, you headed to art class?

Demetrice tucks the box and whips his chair around. Grins.

DEMETRICE
Yo, Esi! Where've you been? Can't
start my day without that smile.

Esi blushes, then catches Amara's side-eye. Straightens.

DEMETRICE (CONT'D)
You never mentioned a sister.

Amara rolls her eyes and nudges Esi toward the main office.

AMARA
Excuse us. We have priorities.

Demetrice turns his wheelchair and purposely lags.

DEMETRICE
Me too. Esi's my priority.

Suddenly, CHARLES "CHEWIE" LONG, 16, Black, varsity defensive end, blasts Demetrice's wheelchair down the hall.

CHEWIE
Look at Cripple Casanova go.

DEMETRICE
Hey! Stop hating.

He gains control of his wheelchair. Hallway kids laugh.

Amara ushers Esi into the...

MAIN OFFICE

School events and rules of conduct clutter the walls. The RECEPTIONIST, (70s) writes on a pad.

Amara signs Esi in.

RECEPTIONIST
What class is this pass for?

Before Esi can respond Principal EBONY MILLS, 40s, Black, pants suit, strides up to Amara.

EBONY
Esi should be in art.

The Receptionist hands Esi the hall pass.

AMARA
Straight home after school.

Esi nods and speed walks out. Ebony blocks Amara's exit.

EBONY
Ms. Akuffo, are you getting my messages?

Amara looks up. Bothered. Ebony pushes a polite smile.

EBONY (CONT'D)
Ms. Akuffo, I'm no fan of C.P.S.,
but Esi needs to be ready for -
emergencies. Do you need...

Amara exhales hard, her lips tight.

AMARA
...Do you hire illegal immigrants?

Ebony falters, her silence answers.

Amara twists her lips, rolls her eyes, and marches out.

INT. LIL ANGELS DAYCARE - PLAY AREA - DAY

Daycare or toy store disaster.

NANCY KNAVS, 50s, White, pudgy and frazzled, scoops up toys
as children scream around her.

She wipes her forehead. A toddler dumps Legos behind her.

NANCY
Happy place. Freya! Amara!

Two yoga moms waltz in with two children at war.

HEATHER, 20s, White, Chanel sunglasses, face in phone,
conspires with her sidekick RACHEL, 20s, Indian, jumpsuit.

HEATHER
We'll do - Nobu today.

ZAC, 4, Heather's son, grabs CONNIE'S, 4, Rachel's daughter,
African-American doll and stabs it with a toy knife.

ZAC
Die ugly! Get out my country.

Connie fights to no avail. He's locked on tight.

CONNIE
Give it! Mom, make him stop.

RACHEL
Connie, you should have left that -
thing at home. It triggers him.

Connie SCREAMS. Nancy has had enough.

NANCY
 Connie, INSIDE VOICE. Zac, GIVE IT.

Both obey. Mom's stare on. Amazed. Nancy takes their toys.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 You'll get these later - Freya!

Freya stumbles out the breakroom and wipes her nose. She's in a Harley Quinn themed costume. Children giggle.

She playfully struts to a toy chest and retrieves a large balloon mallet.

FREYA
 Better run cause it's boppin time!

Children squeal. They fall to the floor when bopped.

Nancy forces a smile. Heather looks Freya over. Judging.

HEATHER
 (to Nancy)
 Does she have a more kid-appropriate costume?

Before Nancy can respond. Freya turns. Full of contempt.

FREYA
 Are fake tits kid appropriate?

Heather and Rachel look mortified. Their mouths ajar.

The front door clicks open. Amara slips inside, and shuffles into the breakroom.

Nancy peeps the time. Annoyed. Discipline will need to wait.

NANCY
 FREYA. Cut the act.

Freya snaps her head, returns to the children. The yoga moms glare at Nancy, demanding atonement.

NANCY (CONT'D)
 My apologies. She's in character. If she wasn't my daughter. To make up for it, I'll discount today's rate.

Heather clears her throat. Get her Rachel.

RACHEL
 My husband's a lawyer.