

GANGSTA

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. ESTABLISHING SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES - EVENING

Graffiti notifies the passerby of the gang's territory.

RAP MUSIC plays.

Mom and Pop liquor and grocery stores intermingle with fast food joints, empty lots, abandoned buildings, boarded up windows and cracked glass. The streets are littered.

A young African American boy, 13, LEMONT NATHAN (LIL'L) stands in front of a pawn shop, transfixed by the TV as he watches a beautiful mustang run into frame. Slight, but muscular, he's used to defending himself on the streets. His face is filled with dreams, sadness, wishfulness.

MR. HO, the store owner, comes to the front of the shop and raps on the window. He raps on the window and motions Lemont away.

Lemont's face hardens with his street mask as he gives the Asian his mad dog look.

Mr. Ho waves his fist at the boy and Lemont continues to glare.

SIRENS serenade the streets. Lemont looks around.

A group of kids, wearing gang attire, hang out around an old Mercury convertible that has clearly seen better days.

Lemont quickly walks in the other direction.

Down the street, an elderly woman rocks on her porch, watching the neighborhood.

A police car drives by on patrol.

INT. NATHAN APARTMENT - EVENING

Lemont undoes the multiple locks on the door and enters.

LI'L L

Moms!

RAWSHAN NATHAN, 8, slim like his brother, runs to the older boy and hugs him. There's admiration in his eyes.

RAWSHAWN

You bangin?

From the oversized and well worn chair, his usual place, the voice of NORM JENKINS (late 30s) booms out as he cheers for his team on the TV football game. Empty beer bottles and a bag of spicy pork rinds litter the side of his chair. Norm is EDNA NATHAN's common law husband.

Edna Nathan (mid 30s), a haggard looking, once attractive woman, steps out from the small kitchen. She wipes her hands on a worn apron.

EDNA

Lemont? Where you been?

NORM (O.S.)

Shut the fuck up, Niggas. I can't hear my fuckin game.

Norm ups the SOUND OF THE GAME coming from the small TV set atop the non working floor model.

LI'L L

Fuck your fuckin game!

NORM

Shut yer mouth boy or I'll shut it for you.

He ups the sound again.

LI'L L

Why don't you --

EDNA

Lemont!

Norm looks around the torn tufts of the chair and stares Lemont down. Greasy dreadlocks drip down the side of Norm's face. Norm's stubbled face is scarred and pock marked making him look all the meaner.

Lemont matches with his mad dog stare.

NORM

Woman, get that shit faced nigga outa my sight.

EDNA

Normie --

Norm rises from the chair to his full height of six feet, two hundred and thirty pounds. He takes two steps over to Edna.

NORM

Don't give me lip, Bitch. Both ya
get the fuck outa my sight.

RAWSHAWN

You shut up to my mama.

Rawshawn, barely coming up to Norm's waist, runs up to his
step father. He begins beating on the man's leg to no avail.

Norm, laughing, catches the boy's hands in his and roughly
tosses him away.

Lemont catches his brother before he falls.

Rawshawn then cowers behind his brother as Norm turns and
gives his own mad dog stare.

Edna starts to walk between them in an effort to shield her
sons.

Norm grabs Edna's upper arm and clamps down hard.

EDNA

Ow!

NORM

I can't fuckin' believe you're still
here, Bitch.

Li'L pulls a small pistol from his waist band.

LI'L L

Leave Mama alone! I want you outa
my fuckin house.

Norm turns to glare.

NORM

You think you're a fuckin big shot
nigga with a gun?

She tries to move away and Norm yanks her back closer to
him, almost like a shield. Her eyes plead with her son to
stop this.

LI'L L

You ain't gonna fuck her up again.

Norm moves his hand to the back of her neck, pinching ever
so slightly.

NORM

Tell'm, Bitch. You do what I say.

LI'L L

This ain't your house. You sittin' all day wit yer thumb up yer asshole drinkin and messin with Mama. Get the fuck out or I'm gonna mess with you.

NORM

Bitch!

EDNA

Lemont, let it go honey. Go out with your friends.

Li'L looks from his mother to Norm and back to his mother. He slowly lowers the pistol.

LI'L L

By Blood, this ain't over, Mutherfucker.

NORM

You the man, nigga. Go back to your gang bangin shit-ass friends.

EDNA

Go to Aunt Clarice. I'll be all right.

LI'L L

Yeah, Moms. Whatever you say.

He flips the bird to Norm. His little brother still clings to Lemont's leg.

RAWSHAWN

Take me with, Le. I wanna bang with youse.

LI'L L

Not now, little man. You needs to take care of mama.

EXT. 108 & WILMINGTON - NIGHT

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An abandoned warehouse, this is the kickback center for Li'l L's set.

Totally at ease and totally sure of himself, Li'l L swaggers toward his homies who sit on top of the parked car at the corner.

There is BB (BEN WHITE) an old gangster (OG) -17. Towering over the others, he's scarred from knife and gunshot wounds. He's spent more than a third of his life in jail. His body s covered with tattoos glorifying his gang set.

He has a hardness to him that he wears like a shield.

Wearing a red plaid shirt, big baggy pants, and a red bandanna, he smokes a joint and reclines on the hood with some of his crew.

EZ (EZEKIEL) -14 - is BB's rotund lieutenant. His easy going attitude masks his brutality. He wears the same uniform.

HAMMER (JAMIL), 12 - is smaller than most of them. He's Lil'L's roll dog (best friend); and BOOMER (ALI) is a pudgy 13 year old who speaks with a stutter and loves his boom box.

RAP MUSIC plays as BB passes a joint around.

BB

Yo, nigga, wassup?

Li'L sides up to the car and positions himself in a slouch against the vehicle. He takes a 40 oz Old English 800 beer from Ez and chugs it.

LI'L L

Same ol, same ol.

EZ

Dude, you gotta smoke that pussy shit.

Li'L L takes another swig from the bottle.

LI'L L

Muthafucker. I'm gonna do it.

HAMMER

Beef with mines, den the beef is mines.

Li'L gives his roll dog (best friend) a high five.

LI'L L

You roll with me?

Hammer nods.

BB

Be easy, homez. We gotta take care of dat shit later. We got war. Dem crabs hit on Juke t'day. Can't let e'm get away with dat. Ez, round the soldiers up, man. We bout to get down.

EZ

Dem niggas try'na fade Blood.

LI'L L
Nah, Blood. Dem lames ain't strong
enf for that. You feel me, Blood?

BB
I feel ya.

EXT. NATHAN APARTMENT. -LATER THAT NIGHT

Norm exits the apartment still in an angry mood. He gets into his car - an old Chevy - and turns right toward the beckoning liquor store lights.

A blue faded Cadillac cruises the streets, lights off, following behind him.

At the corner of Jefferson and Vermont, the Caddy pulls up beside Norm, who is about to make a turn. Three masked figures sit in the car. One leans out of the passenger window.

MASKED BOY
Hey! Nigga!

Norm turns to see a gun, wrapped in a blue bandanna. Before he can duck, it fires rapidly.

TAT! TAT! TAT! TAT! TAT!

His car window shatters as the door and Norm are repeatedly hit. He slumps in the driver's seat. Blood spurts from Norm's dreadlocks down his face. His head falls forward on the HORN as the car rolls into the curb and stops. The HORN continues to blow.

FADE OUT:

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. TASHA'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON NEXT DAY

ROBERT PEPERTON (30s) Italian dark, muscular and lean, stands in front of a full length mirror putting the finishing touches on his police uniform.

Still lounging on the mussed bed is African American TASHA HARDY (20s.) She is discreetly covered by the sheet. Her fragile looks fool everyone especially the perps.

ROBERT

Get dressed.

He tosses her uniform shirt onto the bed.

TASHA

So? You afraid of the big bad detective?

ROBERT

I'm outta here. You coming?

Languorously, she stretches.

TASHA

See ya, Officer Bobby.

He SLAMS the door as he leaves.

Her smile fades to a sad weariness. She gets up and crosses the room, catching her face in the mirror. Though in her twenties, her hard life is beginning to show. A few faint wrinkles suggest themselves near her eyes.

Sighing, she shakes her head.

TASHA (CONT'D)

Shit...Shit...

She crosses to the bathroom, lonely, heavy hearted.

TASHA (CONT'D)

Girl, what the hell you doing?

EXT. JEFFERSON & VERMONT - THAT NIGHT

Houses and walls are covered with graffiti.

Yellow tape cordons off the crime scene.

A coroner's van blocks the street as some officers push back the looky loos. Others question possible witnesses. Still others shine flashlights into dark. A k-9 unit works the area.

Dog handlers guide the canines through the area to shift out evidence.

Numbered yellow plastic cones mark where spent shell casings lie. DETECTIVES LEO O'HALLAN (late 30s) and JOEL GOLDSTEIN (late 20s) bend down searching the ground for evidence. O'Hallan is a red haired beefed up Irishman, looking good enough for the cover of GQ. A 3D (detective third grade), he resents having to babysit the college grad newbie.

Goldstein, intense and slender, is eager to prove himself as the newest member of the gang unit. Instead of a yarmulke, he wears an LAPD baseball cap covering his dark curly hair.

LEO

That hat's not gonna stay on long
when you're running.

JOEL

Had no problems in vice.

LEO

In vice, you just played detective.
This is where the real shit happens.
We're up against buffed up, drugged
up kids, better armed than the Green
Berets.

Joel's phone RINGS. Reluctantly, he reaches for it. He glances at the read out.

JOEL

Goldstein. Yeah. Sammy, I'm at
work. No. Later, boy.

He hangs up and sees Leo staring at him.

LEO

Rule one. KEEP your personal shit
at home.

JOEL

I know, but -

LEO

No buts. I told you. Stay focused
or you'll never survive.

JOEL

Yeah, Sir.

He watches an evidence tech, wearing rubber gloves, as he picks up a powder burned blue bandanna and places it in a paper evidence bag.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Someone was either sloppy or it was planted.

LEO

(shrugs)

Doesn't mean shit.

JOEL

You're saying it was random.

LEO

The shit spreads like tooth decay when you don't take care of it. As far as I'm concerned, these fuckers are doing the community a service when they kill each other.

Joel shoots him a look.

JOEL

What about the little ones?

Leo shrugs.

LEO

The damn mushrooms? One less future banger. You getting this?

Leo strolls around to the driver's side of the car.

INT.GANG UNIT CAR - NICKERSON GARDENS - SAME TIME -NIGHT

DETECTIVE JESSE MARTINS (late 30s) a gangly African American sits in the driver's seat. Next to him is newly promoted DETECTIVE VERONICA PEPERTON (late 20s). Blonde, attractive smart, she's Robert's wife. Not someone you would expect working gangs.

Flood lights illuminate the nearly deserted housing courtyard. A beat up sofa sits off to one side with four African American young adults lounging, listening to music and smoking. Red bandannas are clearly seen sticking from the pants pockets.

VERONICA

Quiet tonight.

JESSE

(directs her attention)

See that apartment.

He points to one in the far west corner.

Veronica nods as the curtain falls from the window.

VERONICA

Yeah.

JESSE

Little girl named Denize lives there.
Wants to be a dancer.

VERONICA

You're the one.

JESSE

Yeah. I capped her brother last
month. Had no choice, he was packing.

VERONICA

So that's it. Operation Shoelace is
about guilt?

JESSE

No...I...

The four boys get up. They walk, arms linked in comradery.
Jesse motions in their direction as he starts the car.

EXT. JEFFERSON & VERMONT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Wrapping up the crime scene and finishing the field reports,
Leo glances up from his paper work to watch Joel carefully.
Leo then looks over to the crowd and sees AMBER MADOT, 13,
Ez's baby mama. He nods toward her. The well developed
teen glares at him.

Joel sits on the curb talking with Li'l L.

A tearful Edna is being interviewed nearby by another officer.

Li'L wears a Penn State hoodie over his red shirt. Rawshawn
sits next to his older brother, leaning his head against
him.

LI'L L

You new huh?

JOEL

First day. My partner --.

LI'L L

(sorts)

JOEL

You don't like him?

LI'L L
 He's a cop. You're a cop. But you're --
 You a Jew, huh?

JOEL
 How'd you guess?

The boy motions to his notebook with the name Goldstein on it.

LI'L L
 My auntie worked for folks a few
 years back. Always wore hats.

JOEL
 I see. You have a problem with my
 being Jewish?

LI'L L
 Naw. Cool by you, it's cool by me.
 My auntie said they always treated
 her better than anyone else.

JOEL
 Uh, thanks. I guess. So, you going
 to Penn State when you're out of
 high school?

LI'L L
 Yeah. I'm thinkin about it.

JOEL
 Really? What state is it in?

LI'L L
 (shrugs)
 Who the fuck cares?

Joel is taken a back. He's still not used to the attitude of the kids on the streets here.

JOEL
 Too bad about your father.

LI'L L
 Mutherfucking asshole weren't no
 daddy.

JOEL
 Right. He was your stepfather.

LI'L L
 Mutherfuckin piece of shit more like
 it.

JOEL
 Did he have problems with anyone?

Li'l L gives Joel a long look. Not seeing his brother's look, Rawshawn volunteers with bravado.

RAWSHAWN

The mutherfucker watched TV and sucked up all the juice. Moms be fooled by him, but he ain't gonna hurt no one no more.

JOEL

He slap her around?

Li'l L shrugs. He puts his arm around Rawshawn, hugging him close as if trying to tell him to be quiet, but the boy doesn't get the message.

JOEL (CONT'D)

So who do you think did this?

RAWSHAWN

It be dem crabs. We's at war, ya know. We flatlined them just the other day.

JOEL

Really? Tell me about that.

Joel flips open his notebook.

Li'l L squeezes his brother's hand.

RAWSHAWN

Ow! Le...

Hammer strolls over.

HAMMER

Wassup, Blood?

LI'L L

(shrugs)

Dis here Detective Goldstein.

HAMMER

Oh, yeah, right. I holla at ya later, Blood.

LI'L L

(to Rawshawn)

Go on now with 'im, boy.

RAWSHAWN

But --

A look from his older brother silences the boy.

Rawshawn sighs and slips off the curb, following Hammer.

Joel waits until the boys are out of ear shot.

JOEL

You hang with the Bloods?