

Two or three others sit on simple chairs beside him, all of them waiting. Finally, from somewhere across the room:

VOICE (O.S.)  
Chiron Harris?

At the sound of his name, Black rises, moves toward that voice.

EXT. COURTYARD, ATLANTA AGAPE REHAB CENTER - DAY

Black sits in front of PAULA (40s now, hair pulled back, thinned but a light in her eyes that wasn't there before).

Paula looks down and goes into her pocket, pulls out a cigarette. Lights it, almost puts it in her mouth when she stops and stubs it out.

PAULA  
Quittin' that too.

Black just nodding, indifferent.

PAULA  
Trying to, at least.  
How you been?

BLACK  
Alright.  
(then)  
I ain't sleepin'.

PAULA  
Why not?

Awkward.

PAULA  
Right. If you knew you'd prolly...

BLACK  
Bad dreamin'.

PAULA  
Still?  
You ever thought about talking  
about it with somebody? I mean. You  
know, not even like a counsellor.  
Maybe somebody like, like your  
mama?

Paula laughs, makes light of it. Black still unmoved. Hard to tell which of these two is in rehab and which isn't.

PAULA

Yeah it sound funny to me too. But  
I *am* your mother, ain't I? You can  
talk to me if you want to.  
Or at least *somebody*, you got to  
trust somebody, you hear?

(then)

You talk to Teresa?

BLACK

Yeah.

PAULA

How she doing?

BLACK

(Shrugs)

Good.

Paula mimics Black's shrug...

PAULA

"Good."

...face curling into a beautiful, teasing smile. Hard to not  
love this woman, hard to not give her infinite second  
chances.

BLACK

When you go home?

PAULA

Home?

(beat)

This *is* home. I mean... they  
'lowin' me to stay and work as long  
as I like. I figured, you know,  
might as well help other folks,  
keep myself out of trouble.

BLACK

That's good, mama.

PAULA

Yeah... I think it is too.

(a deep breath)

I really do.

Black nodding his head silently, looking away from his  
mother, over at another mother and son performing this same  
ritual across the courtyard, down at the stubbed cigarette  
still clutched at his mother's lap.

Paula taking a real good look at her son. Something in her face softening at the sight of his hardened jaw, those gold fronts.

PAULA

So...

(beat)

...you still in them streets?

Nothing from Black, eyes shifting to the ground now, down and away.

PAULA

Didn't come all the way the hell to Georgia to have you fall into the same shit, Chiron.

BLACK

I'ma go.

PAULA

No, you gon' listen.

BLACK

To who, you?  
Really, though?  
You?

Black pushing back from the table, rising. Paula grabbing his hand before he can turn, hard as he is, his mother's touch an instant pause, stands still staring at that ground:

PAULA

Not like this, baby.

And...

PAULA

*Not like this.*

Black looking down, looking away, looking anywhere but at Paula.

Black returns to his seat, eyes fixed to a spot.

PAULA

I messed up baby. I fucked it all up, I know that. But yo' heart ain't gotta be black like mine, you hear me? I love you baby. I do, I love you Chiron. You ain't gotta love me, lord knows I didn't have love for you when you needed it, I know that.

PAULA (CONT'D)  
 So you ain't gotta love me but you  
 gon' know that I love you, you  
 hear?

Nothing from Black.

PAULA  
 You hear me, Chiron?

Paula yanking that arm.

BLACK  
 Damn Mama, yeah.  
 (and looking to her now)  
 I hear you.

Paula taking up that cigarette again, lights it this time. A big, deep drag. Savors it, pulls all of it deep down into her chest.

PAULA  
 One step at a time, baby.  
 One step at a time.

CUT TO BLACK.

And over BLACK, the TITLE CARD:

**BLACK**

**III.**

72 INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING 72

Noise and fuzz in here, quads and subs as Black blasts something bass-heavy yet moving, think Erykah Badu Chopped and Screwed.

All elbows and mean mugs as he leans at an angle, seat reclined way back with lips parted to show those fronts; eyes scanning the blocks and corners he's passing as much as the road he's driving.

A moment of him driving this way, then...

73 INT./EXT. BLACK'S CHEVY IMPALA - NIGHT - MOVING 73

Moving with Black as he turns off the main road, pulls into his apartment complex.

As he makes his way through the parking lot, a figure appears ahead of him, a young guy rising from a stoop, caught in the glare of Black's headlights.