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...

"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’m 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. Saviors 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.

INT/EXT. CHEVY IMPALA - DAY - MOVING

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...

INT./EXT. BLACK’S CHEVY IMPALA - NIGHT - MOVING

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.