

P R O M I S S O R Y

ANTON A. HILL

FADE IN:

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Bizarre collegiate fare adorns the walls. A "Free Wales" bumper sticker. A velvet Elvis tapestry. A poster of two guys pretending to prop up the leaning tower of Pisa.

Just outside, a small, golden, hovering robot trims the hedges. A jello-green VW bug flies by. This is the future, but it's impossible to tell how far.

One of the guys in the poster, JACK FORP, 22, a tall, strapping student, rummages hastily through articles on his bed. He's clumsily dressed in his nauseating white and orange cap and gown.

JACK  
I'm gonna be so...

He comes upon his Baskerville College commencement program. Scanning it, his eyes lock onto the ceremonies start time. 1:10 PM. He shoots a glance at his alarm clock. 1:10 PM.

JACK  
Late!

He dives under his bed. Trips over the ruffles of gown getting in his way. His cap falls on the floor. He grunts in annoyance, but doesn't stop to pick it up.

An array of objects fly out from under his bed. A bright red, "National SuperFriz Champion" frisbee. A bong shaped like an Easter Island head sculpture. A gold-colored Honors Rope. Then all motion stops.

JACK  
Yes!

Wham!

JACK  
Ow!

Rubbing his head, he carefully slides out. Holding a ring box, he sits up against his bed. Opens it. Empty.

JACK  
No!

He closes his eyes. Rubs his temples.

JACK  
Think, Jack. Think!

He opens his eyes. Finds he's staring at the poster of him and his friend. He shakes his head at the ridiculousness of the image. Freezes. A sudden wave of calm washes over his face.

On his dresser sits a framed hologram of him and a statuesque blonde, both formally dressed, embracing in front of a window overlooking a pale lunar crater. The banner above them reads: "Moonstruck Winter Formal."

Jack grabs the hologram. Talks to it.

JACK

I will find it, Tanya. I promise.

He goes to put the hologram back. Spots it, right there, behind where the hologram stood. A stunning ring with a shimmering rock big enough to make a basketball jealous.

Jack smacks himself on the forehead. Grabs the ring. Plops it in the box. Shoves the box into his pocket. Picks up the hologram. Kisses it. Sets it back down. Runs out.

The room is still for a moment. Then Jack runs back in. Grabs his Honors Rope from off the floor. Puts it on. Runs out.

The room is still for another moment. Then Jack runs back in. Grabs his cap from off the floor. Attaches it loosely to his hair. Runs out.

EXT. BASKERVILLE COLLEGE

An oasis in the now-barren southern California desert, it's a sprawling, pristine countryside campus of marble and bronze. The place is eerily desolate, the usual laughter, chatter, and play of a student body absent in the oncoming summer.

EXT. THE DORMS

A cluster of short, boxy, sickly pale, run-down buildings. Clearly not the highest priority on the college's list. Jack bursts out. Dashes over to a...

EXT. QUAD

A flat, open area between a dozen buildings under renovation, and a dozen new ones under construction. A jewel-crusted, Persian-style fountain stuck smack-dab in the middle.

Around the fountain march a couple hundred loud, angry PROTESTORS repeating a loud, angry slogan.

PROTESTORS

What do we want? Free education!  
When do we want it? As soon as  
realistically possible given  
current socioeconomic trends!

Among their signs are, "Loan Terms = Slavery", "GraduCorp Is Evil", "Free Wales from British Tyranny", and, "Death to the theocratic dictator the Dalai Lama." A slew of news people cover the event.

The LEAD PROTESTOR stands on the edge of the fountain barking a speech into a megaphone.

LEAD PROTESTOR

For over a century, GraduCorp has  
forced the masses into indentured  
servitude, perpetuating the upper-  
class stranglehold on society!

Jack cruises in. Stops at the sight of the crowd. Scans the area. No way out, but through them.

LEAD PROTESTOR

Since the Suburban Desertion of  
'77, in this country alone, more  
than 2/3 of the population are  
barely scraping by in rural slums!

Jack wades through the news people easily enough, then hits the rotating throng of protestors.

LEAD PROTESTOR

Only the rich can afford an  
education! Only the rich can  
afford to live in the cities! Only  
the rich can afford to prosper!

Jack dodges this way and that. Fights desperately to get past. No luck. The Lead Protestor spots Jack. Points him out to his associates. A bunch of protestors go over, grab Jack, and drag him back to the fountain.

JACK

Let go! I'm late!

The protestors stick Jack next to the Lead Protestor.

LEAD PROTESTOR

Tell us, my brother! Tell us how  
you feel about GraduCorp shipping  
you off to a Loan Repayment Center  
to slave months of your life away!

He shoves the megaphone in Jack's face. Irritated by the further delay, Jack gets it over with.

JACK

Education is free for those who work for it. I feel proud that I earned mine, and the right to prosper in a city.

Shocked, the Lead Protestor snatches the megaphone, and barks into Jack's face.

LEAD PROTESTOR

Scab!!

The sound blasts Jack straight to the ground. The Lead Protestor repeats the epithet over and over.

JACK

Shit.

Half the protestors turn their angry eyes and chants on Jack. He makes a run for it. The protestors charge after him. Outside the crowd, Jack notices a few campus security vehicles land. A militia swarms in. Surrounds them.

JACK

Shit!

An hors d'oeuvre table hovers overhead. Jack leaps onto one of the table's legs. Jack can hear shots fired and people scream as the table carries him away to an...

EXT. AUDITORIUM

A copper dome-topped complex large enough for several thousand students and their families. As the table descends, Jack jumps off, and runs in.

INT. AUDITORIUM

On the stage sit students, distinguished faculty and guests, and the college's PRESIDENT, a bulky robot resembling a Vegas slot machine.

In the audience, only about a tenth of the students' families are present. The full-payers.

The President rattles off students' names in a cold drone:

PRESIDENT

...Finley Spencer. Hostile Takeover Studies. Laude.

FINLEY, 22, makes his way down to the President. He wears a cocky smile, and bleached-blond dreadlocks wrapped in a Burberry bandana.

Jack slips in at the back of the students. Quietly makes his way to his seat, next to his friend from the leaning tower poster, EDWIN, 22, slicked hair, piercing eyes.

EDWIN

Find it?

Jack pats his pocket.

JACK

Where is she?

EDWIN

Right down there. With Finley.

He points. TANYA TAYLOR, 22, the girl from Jack's hologram, sits a few rows in front of them. She clutches a brand new, personalized Chanel handbag. Next to her, Jack finds Finley caressing his shiny new diploma.

JACK

Man, that Trustafarian tool pisses me off.

EDWIN

In a couple hours, you'll never have to see him again.

JACK

My luck, he'll move to the same city we do.

EDWIN

What you get for falling for a saucy, spoiled tart.

Jack glares at him.

JACK

That's her family, Edwin, not her.

EDWIN

Multiple house-owning, full-paying, corporate vampires.

JACK

You're just jealous.

EDWIN

Did I mention full-paying?

JACK

I don't care about that.

EDWIN

You will when we're serving our terms, and she's sailing in Hawaii.

JACK

That won't matter when we're living together.

EDWIN

In your crusty, little backpacker hostel.

JACK

Best place to raise kids.

EDWIN

I still can't believe she wants to continue your family business.

Jack smiles proudly.

JACK

That's 'cause she's great, and you're you.

Edwin grins at the friendly jab.

PRESIDENT

...Jack Forp. Non-Profit  
Hospitality Studies. Summa Cum  
Laude.

Jack makes his way down. The President hands him his diploma, and an alumnus pen. Jack faces the audience. Holds both articles triumphantly in the air. Edwin, Tanya, and a bunch of other students cheer for him. Except Finley.

EXT. TENT

With the exercises over, the vast minority of present families, friends, and their graduate kids socialize. The family-less ones hang out at the hors d'oeuvre table.

Jack and Edwin are no exception. They both feast on the bounty before them. Edwin plops a strawberry into his mouth. Chews. Frowns.

EDWIN

Annual tuition fees larger than the gross national product of most developing nations, and they won't even get ripe strawberries.

Jack grabs an extra napkin. Folds it up. Tucks it away. Spots Tanya and her parents, TED and TAMMY, both in their distinguished fifties, with Finley and his parents. Finley speaks in an affected Jamaican accent.

FINLEY

Finally, my chauffeur pulls up in a Bentley. Needless to say, I was mortified, mon! Who would ever be caught dead in one of those, mon?!

They all titter.

TAMMY

Oh, Finley. You are so you!

Jack waves. Tanya waves back. Excuses herself. Runs over. Jumps into his arms. They kiss... and kiss... and kiss. Edwin clears his throat. They stop.

JACK

I missed you.

TANYA

I missed you.

Edwin checks his watch.

EDWIN

It has been all of two hours.

Tanya grins at Edwin.

TANYA

Hey Edwin.

Edwin nods politely. Jack sets Tanya down. Glances over at Finley.

JACK

How's Fin-ley?

TANYA

Why don't you ask him yourself?

JACK  
I might catch a bad case of rich-  
loser-itis.

TANYA  
What are the symptoms?

JACK  
Sneezing. Break outs. Loss of  
capacity for abstract thought.

Tanya rolls her eyes.

TANYA  
Well, for your info, Co-per-nicus,  
Finley's fine, and he invited me to  
go sailing with him in Hawaii.

The blood drains from Jack's face. Edwin grins. Nudges him.  
Jack does his best to feign excitement.

JACK  
...Great. How long you two gonna  
be gone?

TANYA  
Couple months.

She rubs up against him.

TANYA  
And I expect you to write me,  
Mister.

JACK  
Every day.

As they're about to kiss again, Tanya's parents join them.

TED  
Jack, my boy!

He vigorously shakes Jack's arm. Slaps him on the back.  
Tammy hugs Edwin.

TAMMY  
Eddie!

EDWIN  
"Edwin," actually.

TED  
Your folks couldn't make it?

JACK

I told 'em I'd rather they keep the hostel open another year than dump the cash on a permit outta the slums.

TED

It was the same for my great-grandfather and his parents. It seems to be the norm these days.

TAMMY

What about your parents, Eddie?

EDWIN

They got three other kids to feed, so blowin' cash on a permit --

TANYA

Daddy, we've narrowed it down to either New York or New LA.

TED

We were just in New LA! The downtown Hilton is marvelous. We had a great view of some of Old LA's submerged buildings.

TAMMY

They just installed this lovely new sponge system. It's quite absorbent.

TED

Hell, now that you two've graduated, you can legally work in any city you want.

Jack puts his arm around Tanya.

JACK

'Long as our kids never set foot in the slums, I'd be happy anywhere.

Ted ushers him and Tanya away from Tammy and Edwin.

TED

I'm glad you feel that way, because Tammy, Tanya, and I have been discussing your and Tanya's future together.

He hands Jack an envelope. Tanya smiles expectantly. Jack opens it. It's a check. The sum catches his breath.

JACK  
...Ted, I can't accept this.

TANYA  
Oh sweetie, please?

TED  
Come on, kid. We know your parents can't help, and, well, Tammy and I feel that you're part of the family.

JACK  
I'm honored, really, but I've never relied on favors, and I don't intend to start now.

He holds the check out. Without a hint of hesitation, Ted takes it back, and tucks it away.

TED  
How long've you got?

JACK  
Should be exactly a year. We'll get our promissory notes when we get there.

TANYA  
Daddy, Jack won the Trustee Fellowship Award three years in a row!

TED  
That's... great!

Not far away, they hear a roar like the sky just split open.

TED  
They're here already?

JACK  
Excuse us.

He drags Tanya over to a remote corner of the tent.

TANYA  
What's wrong?

JACK  
Before I go, I wanna ask you  
something.

Tanya holds him close.

TANYA  
Yes?

EXT. QUAD

Protestors and security are still beating the crap out of each other when a heavily-armored vehicle that'd make a tank look wimpy roars through. Plows them out of its way.

EXT. TENT

Jack digs into his pocket.

JACK  
I wanna ask you...

EXT. VEHICLE

Emblazoned on its side is a blood red sign, "GraduCorp Graduate Delivery Vehicle: We're Here to Serve You!"

EXT. TENT

Jack fishes in his pocket.

JACK  
Dammit. Where'd I put it?

EXT. AUDITORIUM

The vehicle's only a few yards away... and closing.

EXT. TENT

Jack pulls out the ring box.

JACK  
There!

Tanya stares at it, then at him.

JACK  
When you go back to live with your  
parents...

He opens the box. Her ring sparkles in the sun.

JACK  
...will you wait for me?

Tanya just stares at him. Dumbstruck.

EXT. AUDITORIUM

The vehicle parks. Side doors slide open. Uniformed GraduCorp OFFICIALS jump out.

EXT. TENT

Tanya shakes her head. Her slack jaw ripens into a smile.

TANYA  
Yes!

She hugs Jack tight. Kisses him.

JACK  
For a year?

TANYA  
Forever.

Jack removes the ring from the box. Slides it on her finger.

TANYA  
Where did you get this?

JACK  
Left over loans.

Tanya shakes her head in disbelief.

TANYA  
Oh Jack.

She gives him a slow, deep, hot kiss --

Then a gloved hand shoves rudely between them. It belongs to one of the officials. He slaps shackles on Jack's hands. Takes his diploma.

OFFICIAL  
Congratulations, sir. Your diploma will be returned upon completion of your term. Please come with me.

EXT. AUDITORIUM

With Tanya trailing after them, the official drags Jack off to the vehicle.

JACK  
Why does it feel like this is it?

Tanya shakes her head.

TANYA  
Only a year.

She gets in one last kiss before the official shoves Jack inside. Jack calls back to her.

JACK  
I'll write! Every day!

TANYA  
I love you!

JACK  
Love you too!

INT. VEHICLE

Built for efficiency rather than comfort, the interior consists of cramped aisles of small, steel seats, and walls lined with tiny portholes.

Everyone crowds around the portholes. Waves good bye to their full-paying friends.

Jack finds Tanya. She blows a kiss. Finley joins her. Puts his arm around her. Dons a gloating grin. Jack touches the glass.

EDWIN  
You'll see her again before you  
know it.

Jack faces his friend. Finds little solace in Edwin's affirmation.

EXT. AUDITORIUM

Tanya waves good bye. The vehicle's engines roar up. It drives away.

INT. VEHICLE

A few graduates peer out the portholes to see the world begin to zip by. Another official, their HOST, stands at the end of the vehicle.

HOST

Congratulations, graduates. Please turn your attention to this welcome video prepared especially for you.

He hits a button. A screen drops from the ceiling. Flicks on. Accompanied by their slogan's jingle, the GraduCorp logo slides into the middle of the screen. A very professional, gut-wrenchingly sweet FEMALE VOICE chimes in.

FEMALE VOICE

Congratulations, graduates, and welcome to your Graduate Delivery Vehicle.

The image cuts to the inside of a vehicle full of way-happy, eager graduates.

FEMALE VOICE

Not long from now, you'll arrive at your Graduate Loan Repayment Center...

The image cuts to an Italian-style country villa. Dozens of way-happy graduates stroll its grounds, play croquet, and do a little yard work.

FEMALE VOICE

...where you'll bunk, play, and pay off your loans with other graduates just like yourself, in a quiet, relaxing environment.

The image cuts to a crowd of way-happy graduates waving to the camera.

FEMALE VOICE

We hope you enjoy your terms at your Loan Repayment Center. And remember, GraduCorp is here to serve you.

A quieter, faster, more legal, MALE VOICE finishes off the video.

MALE VOICE

Actual terms and Loan Repayment Centers may vary.

The video shuts off. Jack starts a letter to Tanya on his stolen napkin.

JACK (V.O.)

Dear Tanya. It's only been a few minutes since I last saw you, but I already miss you.

EXT. SUBURBAN RUINS

Miles and miles of ghost town sub-divisions. Crumbling cul-de-sacs. Empty carbon-copy houses. Swampy swimming pools. The vehicle thunders through it.

JACK (V.O.)

As we pass through the ruins of ancient suburbs, I find myself dreaming of the home in which we'll one day live.

EXT. CITY

Giant stone walls, like those of a mediaeval city-state, extend for miles around the metropolis. The vehicle rumbles past the gates of the city's grand entrance tower.

INT. VEHICLE

Jack and his fellow graduates crowd around the portholes. Vie for a glimpse of the city.

JACK (V.O.)

Entering the first city I've ever seen, my heart races at the thought of wandering its streets with you.

EXT. ROUTING HUB

Smack dab in the middle of the shiny city, it's a shiny building with a big, shiny red sign that declares, "GraduCorp Graduate Routing Hub: We're Here to Serve You!"

Dozens of vehicles arrive from all directions. Dozens of drop ships launch from out of the hub.

INT. VEHICLE

With an uncomfortable lurch, and accompanying collective groan, they park. Jack finishes up his letter.

JACK (V.O.)

We've arrived at our routing hub. I'll write again as soon as I can. Forever yours, Jack.

The doors slide open. Jack, Edwin, and the rest laboriously rise to their feet, and file out.

EXT. ROUTING HUB

They find themselves in the end of a hallway. They follow it out.

EXT. AIRSTRIP

They end up in a roped-off line leading to several drop ships. An official waves at them.

OFFICIAL  
Baskerville over here!

INT. DROP SHIP

No different from the interior of a vehicle. Jack and Edwin find two free seats at the end of an aisle. Eagerly sit down.

EXT. AIRSTRIP

A hippie, stoner kid, KARTIN, 22, runs out to the drop ship that Jack and Edwin got on.

KARTIN  
Wait!

OFFICIAL  
Hurry up! We gotta go!

Kartin jumps on.

INT. DROP SHIP

To his surprise and dismay, Kartin finds no free seats. The official shuts the door. Beeps his radio.

OFFICIAL  
Ready for take off.

Kartin leans against the wall. Jack notices him. Stands. Points to his seat. Kartin accepts it hungrily.

KARTIN  
Thanks.

He sticks out his hand. Jack shakes.

KARTIN

Kartin. Berkeley. Majored in  
Conflict Resolution.

JACK

Jack. Baskerville. Non-Profit  
Hospitality Studies.

EDWIN

Edwin. Also Baskerville. Double  
major Urban Planning and Zero-Point  
Engineering.

KARTIN

Where's Baskerville?

A guy sitting next to them, with his sleeves rolled up,  
showing off a tattoo of a skewered rabbit on each arm,  
CLARENCE, 22, speaks up.

CLARENCE

'Bout thirty miles east of SC.

He reaches over. They shake.

CLARENCE

Name's Clarence. Majored in Post-  
Desertion History.

KARTIN

I almost didn't make it here. I  
got separated from my class, and no  
one could tell me where to go.

JACK

How'd that happen?

KARTIN

Ask the GraduCorp morons.

JACK

They were straight with us.

CLARENCE

Couple years ago, my cousin gets  
outta NYU, the fuckers ship him out  
here, realize they made a mistake,  
then ship him all the way back.

KARTIN

Nasty.

Jack waves it off.

JACK

The down side of any bureaucracy.  
Bigger it gets, more frequent the  
errors.

EDWIN

Where'd your cousin finally end up?

CLARENCE

Did his term in Jersey. Three  
years. Now he's an analyst in  
Manhattan.

JACK

Three years?

CLARENCE

Some people get as much as five.  
All depends on scholarship  
availability.

KARTIN

I wish they told us our terms  
before we got there.

CLARENCE

That'd be against GraduFuck policy.

JACK

What did your cousin say about his  
term?

CLARENCE

Not much. It was tough. But after  
the first year, he got used to it.

JACK

Either of you ever lived in a city?

They laugh.

KARTIN

You kidding? My family hasn't been  
near one since the Desertion. Four  
generations in the slums. After my  
term, I'll be the first one out.

EDWIN

I thought Berkeley was in, well,  
Berkeley.

KARTIN

Yeah, but it's sectioned off like the Berlin Wall.

CLARENCE

Same with SC.

KARTIN

End of every year, if you're not staying over the summer, they kick your hairy ass out.

The engines start with a jolt. Jack mumbles to himself.

JACK

Makes you wonder how it all happened.

EDWIN

The Desertion?

JACK

Yeah, I mean, one day, things are pretty good --

CLARENCE

Then the market crashes --

KARTIN

Bankrupts everyone but the wealthiest one percent.

CLARENCE

No indictments. No prosecutions. Just rampant poverty.

He eyes them conspiratorially.

CLARENCE

There's evidence that corporations like GraduCorp orchestrated the whole thing.

They give each other a nervous glance. Jack leans in.

JACK

Seriously?

CLARENCE

Destroy the middle class, force the poor into slums, the rich take the cities, the corporations bank off the working man's back.

His words silence the group. The drop ship lifts off.

Jack peers out a porthole. Watches the skyscrapers and routing hub get smaller and smaller. Soon, he can see the entire city, and surrounding countryside. Then an ocean of clouds swallows it up.

Suddenly, all the portholes seal themselves like camera irises, obscuring his view.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

A crescent moon hangs overhead. A dark, thick rain forest spreads out to the horizon. The drop ship slowly descends.

INT. DROP SHIP

Jack is uncomfortably asleep against Edwin's seat. Edwin leans over. Nudges him. Jack grunts. Picks himself up. Stretches. Rubs his sore limbs.

The drop ship lands with a thud. More groans. The door opens. An official greets them with a well-rehearsed smile.

OFFICIAL

Congratulations, and welcome to your Loan Repayment Center. Please make a single-file line, and exit the vehicle in an orderly fashion.

EXT. DOCKING BAY

It stretches out like a wrought-iron skeletal hand. At the tip of one of the docks stands a tall, red neon sign with a couple burnt-out letters. It reads, "GraduCorp Graduate Loan Repayment Center: We're Here to Serve You!"

Jack and co.'s drop ship is one of a half dozen clamping onto the docks. Graduates seep out, coagulating along the bay. Jack, Edwin, Kartin, and Clarence gaze up at the Center.

Resembling a Victorian-era insane asylum, it's a hexagonal stone and iron fortress, with watchtowers topping each corner, and a smokestack that pierces the sky, choking it with clouds of greasy, black fumes.

JACK

Oh hell.

KARTIN

Is that really it?

EDWIN

It's gonna be one long year.

CLARENCE

And this is just the out-side.

A mind-splitting siren sounds. The graduates cover their ears. Cry out.

A set of great iron gates creaks open before the graduates. Dozens of GRADUATE ASSISTANTS flood out. They wear home-made chain mail uniforms, rusty helmets, and carry batons. One goes up to Jack. Yanks off his graduation cap.

JACK

Hey! That's my --!

Ignoring him, the GA flings it away. It sails a few yards from the bay. Suddenly bursts into electrified flames like a mosquito in a bug zapper.

Jack watches sadly as the fried remains float to the ground like a burnt leaf. He turns to the GA. His eyes flare.

GA

Welcome home, graduate.

He and the other GAs prod the graduates inside.

EXT. THE CENTER

Spreading out between its towers and halls is the courtyard. Lined with barbed wire and electric fencing, a dirt road cuts from the entrance gates, across the courtyard, to a smooth, giant monolith, the keep.

The GAs herd the new grads along the road, past thousands of OLDER GRADS, all dressed in red uniforms, all jeering at them. All except a small group of about twenty or so who simply watch them arrive.

The new grads stop at the entrance of the keep. A tunnel, the size of a truck, opens on the surface of the keep's third floor wall.

Click-tap, click-tap. The metallic sound echoes from within the keep. The new grads anxiously watch the tunnel. After a few moments, a mechanical, hovering Machine resembling a 50s-era flying saucer slides out.

Seated on a throne on top of it is the SITE MANAGER, forties, with features and a frown as firm and grave as the Center itself.

Behind him, MAX, late 20s, with short, neatly parted black hair, and thick, bifocal glasses, pumps up and down on a teeter-totter device which provides the Machine's propulsion.

The OGs attempt to crowd around the keep entrance, but GAS hold them at a distance.

The Machine descends till it rests just in front of the new grads, about seven feet off the ground. The GAS form an impenetrable barrier around it.

The Site Manager takes a long moment to survey the new grads. He lifts a hand to Max, who passes him a set of papers. The Site Manager skims them. Hands them back to Max.

SITE MANAGER

I'm the Site Manager of your Loan Repayment Center. The only two words I ever wanna hear outta your mugs are "yes," followed by "sir."

The new grads are silent.

SITE MANAGER

Is that completely clear?

The new grads more or less answer "yes, sir" together.

SITE MANAGER

In my tenure here, no graduate has ever defaulted on their loans!

Silence.

SITE MANAGER

Before any of you so much as dreams of becoming the first, remember that even if you managed to scale your Center's walls...

He points to the six walls around them.

SITE MANAGER

...and penetrated your Retainer Shield, the nearest city is over a hundred miles away, through uncharted, untamed wilderness.

He scans their faces. Blank terror.

SITE MANAGER

Is that completely clear?

Fewer of them are able to respond. The Site Manager nods, contented, then points up at Max.

SITE MANAGER

This is Max, your Head Graduate  
Assistant --

One of the jeering OGs, ANGELA, mid-20s, with long, brown hair, and dark, tanned skin, shouts at the new grads.

ANGELA

Hey, BAs! I got your Master's  
right here!

She gives the new grads a good pelvic thrust. High fives the guys around her. They all laugh. One of the twenty quiet grads, COURTNEY, 22, a short, dweeby, whiny chick, shouts at Angela.

COURTNEY

Shut the fuck up, Angela!

Flipping Courtney the finger, Angela fires back.

ANGELA

Eat my champagne-sauteed shit,  
Oneyear!

That moment, a couple GAs apprehend Angela. Throw her to the ground. Beat the hell out of her.

Jack glances at the Site Manager and Max. They don't lift a finger. In fact, they seem to enjoy the brutality. Jack busts out of formation. Breaks right through the line of unwitting GAs. Edwin yells after him.

EDWIN

Jack, no!

Too late. Jack's on top of the GAs attacking Angela.

SITE MANAGER

Max?

Max leaps off the Machine. Marches through the new grads and their guarding GAs. Jack pries a GA off Angela. Punches him in the face. Max shoves people aside.

MAX

Stand down, graduate!

Jack snatches the baton from the GA he punched. Grabs the other one. Clubs him on the head. Max is only feet away.

MAX  
I said stand down!

Jack has both GAs on the ground, out of commission. He offers Angela a hand.

JACK  
You alright?

Angela ignores his hand. Yells at him.

ANGELA  
Get fucked, New G!

Jack's confused by the term she uses, and by her anger towards him. And it's just enough time for Max to grab him.

MAX  
When I say "stand down"...

Jack watches Angela join her OG friends. She glares at him with embarrassed fury. Max swings Jack around to face him.

MAX  
...it means stand down, graduate.

Like a deflating balloon, the Site Manager's Machine steadily descends.

SITE MANAGER  
Max...?

Jack stiffens up.

JACK  
Yes, sir.

MAX  
It does not mean attack your GAs.  
Is that understood?

JACK  
Yes, sir.

MAX  
I said...

The Site Manager's Machine is only a couple feet above the ground.

SITE MANAGER  
Max?

MAX  
Is that understood, graduate?!

JACK  
Yes, sir! Completely comprehended,  
sir!

The Site Manager's Machine is about to land.

SITE MANAGER  
Max!

Forced to choose between chastising Jack further, and letting his boss seem less intimidating, Max rushes back to the Machine, and pumps it into the air.

The GAs that Jack took down restrain him, sock him, and drag him back to Max and the Site Manager. Max and the Site Manager scowl down their noses at Jack, as if he were a banana slug.

SITE MANAGER  
What's your name, graduate?

JACK  
...Jack, sir.

SITE MANAGER  
Which school are you from?

JACK  
Baskerville, sir.

MAX  
Where the hell is that?

JACK  
'Bout thirty miles east of USC.

The Site Manager nods to one of his GAs. The man moves in front of Jack. Max passes him a cattle prod. Grinning viciously, the GA twirls it. The Site Manager nods. The GA jabs it into Jack's ribs. Jack hollers.

The Site Manager addresses the whole crowd.

SITE MANAGER  
All you steamin' little rat shits  
better be takin' notes!

He nods to the GA. Another jab. Jack hollers again.

SITE MANAGER  
 Your college days are over! For  
 the duration of your terms, your  
 pampered, pansy asses belong to me!

He turns his attention back to Jack.

SITE MANAGER  
 That understood, graduate?

The words barely manage to escape Jack's lips.

JACK  
 ...Yes ...sir.

The Site Manager leans forward.

SITE MANAGER  
 I didn't quite catch that,  
 graduate.

The GA jabs Jack again. He screams.

JACK  
 Yessir!!

The Site Manager sits back, satisfied.

SITE MANAGER  
 Take him in.

A group of GAs drags Jack into the keep. His friends look on with frightened eyes, powerless to help him. The Site Manager waves to Max. With a couple pumps on the Machine, they hover back into the keep.

Another siren rings out. Before any of the graduates are even aware, the GAs round them up, and shove them inside.

INT. THE KEEP

Stuck in some tiny room, the GAs have Jack tied to a chair, barely conscious, where a couple of them take turns beating his face. Then Max barges in.

MAX  
 That's enough.

GA  
 Sir? Site Manager told us --

MAX

And I just told you, that's enough.  
Get him to his room.

The two GAs acknowledge. Max leaves.

INT. THE DORMS

They're dark, dank, and miserable. Connected by rickety, old scaffolds, towering blocks of outhouse-style one-person rooms reach halfway up the Center's walls. Now dressed in the same red uniforms as the OGs, the new grads march to their rooms.

INT. JACK'S BLOCK

GAs drag a worn, bruised Jack, feet first, more than five levels up to his room. 14-A 12.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

A bed. A washbasin. A dinky toilet. A light. No window. Room enough to pace back and forth. The GAs kick the door open. Chuck Jack, like a sack of potatoes, onto his floor, then march out. Slam the door behind them.

Jack lifts his head. Finds some scratches on the wall. It's a quote: "Shoulda gone 2 grad school." He shakes his head. Crawls over to the wall. Slowly scratches his own message.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

Jack's message so far consists of a single vertical bar. After a moment, he stands. Steps outside.

INT. JACK'S BLOCK

Jack peers at the ground. With a rush of vertigo, he clumsily grips his door. Across the way, he sees Kartin, a couple levels down. Kartin leans on the railing. Stares off into space.

JACK

Can't sleep either?

Kartin spots him.

KARTIN

Can't believe I'm really here.

His head droops sadly. A deep, melodious voice answers him.

HUNDRED

Don't you worry, boy. You'll do  
just fine.

Jack and Kartin find HUNDRED, a mountain of a man, tucked  
just inside the room next to Jack.

HUNDRED

That is, until Judgement Day.

He steps out of the darkness. Now Jack can see he's ruggedly  
handsome, somewhere in his 30s.

HUNDRED

Man, what I wouldn't give for a  
Strat, a slide, and a street  
corner.

He gives them a little air guitar. Calls to someone unseen.

HUNDRED

Yo, Trick! Break it out, son!  
These boys need a downer!

A wailing, soulful harmonica blues progression sings out of  
the darkness. Grads all over the blocks start banging out a  
rhythm on the scaffolds and doors.

HUNDRED

Whacha got for me, my people?!

A CHORUS of grads sing out:

CHORUS

Dum duh-dum duh dum!

Hundred's voice fills the hot night air.

HUNDRED

Your first night alone.  
Don't wanna be here.

Courtney's voice echoes from far off.

COURTNEY

Some of us are tryin' to fuckin'  
sleep, Hundred!

Hundred ignores her.

HUNDRED

You're thinkin' 'bout home.  
And chuggin' a beer!

Some grads cheer for beer-chugging. Jack smiles at their enthusiasm. Joins the chorus.

HUNDRED

You miss your girl bad.  
Your old dorm room too.  
That's where you too had  
That great good bye screw!

COURTNEY

Shut up, nut-muncher!

Some of the guys laugh --

Unseen doors crash open. Everyone ducks back into their rooms. Jack opens his door to a crack. Watches quietly.

Armed with a flashlight and a bunch of GAs, Max appears on the ground floor. Scans the rooms. His light stops on Hundred's door.

MAX

Hundred!

Hundred slowly opens his door. Max gestures to a couple of his GAs. They run up the scaffolds. Nab Hundred. Shove him back down. Park him in front of Max.

MAX

Stand him up.

The GAs hold Hundred still. Max brandishes his baton.

MAX

How many times do I have to tell  
you?

He slams Hundred in the stomach as hard as he can. Again and again. Hundred doubles over, but the GAs prop him up.

MAX

No midnight blues!

Hundred gives Max a weak nod. Max answers it with a nasty hook across Hundred's face. The two men trade deadly glares. Max waves to his GAs. They release Hundred. He collapses. Grips his sore stomach.

MAX

Lights out! Now!

He and his GAs leave. Hundred climbs back up to his room. Retreats inside.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

Jack eases his door shut. Slumps down against it.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. JACK'S ROOM - MORNING

Four GAs burst in, shake Jack awake, and drag him out of bed.

GA

Time to get up, and get worked!

EXT. THE COURTYARD

All the grads and GAs are assembled. The Site Manager and Max hover near the keep. They're all watching two GAs pound Jack, who's locked into stocks.

MAX

That last one was forty, sir.

SITE MANAGER

Give him two more.

MAX

Two more!

The GAs hit Jack's back twice more, then release him, and dump him on the ground. Jack groans in agony. His friends run over to him. Help him up. The Site Manager gestures to his GAs. They herd the graduates inside.

JACK

I dunno... if I can take... a whole year of this.

INT. THE MESS

A cafeteria large enough to seat all the Center's grads at tiny, packed tables. Two GAs stand at each exit. A team of OGs prepare and serve chunky, brown slime to eat, and what looks like mud to drink.

Jack shuffles in with Edwin, Kartin, and Clarence. They're each carrying an envelope from GraduCorp. Jack's also got a letter-in-progress and his alumnus pen. They get their meals. Find a place.

They each dig in. Try their best not to actually taste their food.

Jack finds a piece of plastic swimming in his slop. He wretches. Attempts to fish it out. No luck. Grimacing, he reaches in. Drags out a strip of industrial tape. Flicks it to the floor. Goes back to eating, and scribbling to Tanya.

Edwin holds up his envelope.

EDWIN  
So, who's first?

CLARENCE  
I'll go.

He tears his open. Skims it.

CLARENCE  
Yes!

EDWIN  
How long?

CLARENCE  
Eleven more months, three hundred  
sixty four days.

EDWIN  
Kartin?

Kartin opens his. Unfolds his envelope. Gasps.

KARTIN  
Oh my gawd!

They all wait.

KARTIN  
One year!

Edwin tears his open. Skims. Jack stops writing.

JACK  
And it's...

EDWIN  
Four years!

JACK  
Shit!

Edwin crushes his note. Throws it on the ground.

EDWIN  
I knew I should've applied for more  
scholarships! Dammit!

KARTIN  
Come on, Jack. Your woman can  
wait.

Jack sets down his letter. Picks up his envelope.

JACK  
Drum roll please.

The other guys pound their fists on the table. Jack slices  
the envelope open. Slips the letter out. Unfolds it.  
Clears his throat. Coughs. Shakes his head in disbelief.  
Stands.

JACK  
What??!!

Nearby, a couple GAs start to get real curious. Edwin  
notices. Yanks Jack back to his seat.

EDWIN  
What is it?!

KARTIN  
Ten months? Eleven?

JACK  
Thirty...

KARTIN  
Months --?

JACK  
Years.

CLARENCE  
No way!

EDWIN  
Lemme see that.

He takes Jack's letter. Reads it carefully.

EDWIN  
Good thing she liked the ring.

KARTIN  
Ring?

EDWIN

He used his loan to buy Tanya her engagement ring.

CLARENCE

She must be one prime piece.

JACK

She is.

Kartin eyes Jack's note.

KARTIN

It's a mistake. A typo. Just take it to the Site Manager tomorrow.

EDWIN

Yeah, it'll be fine.

Jack nods silently.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Jack crosses to a building on the opposite side of the Center from the keep, near the gates.

INT. GRADUATE RELATIONS

The office designation is written on a cast-iron sign next to massive double doors. Below the sign are an ancient buzzer, and an intercom. Carrying his GraduCorp letter, Jack pokes the buzzer over and over. A GA's voice crackles out.

GA

Yeah, yeah, I'm not frickin' deaf!

JACK

I need to see the Site Manager.

GA

You got an appointment?

JACK

No --

GA

Then go blow yourself.

JACK

I just wanna discuss my term. It'll only take a second --

The GA's voice lightens.

GA  
Your term?

He stifles a chuckle.

GA  
Why didn't you say so?

Before Jack can answer, he hears the clicking and turning of some unseen locking mechanism. The right door opens a crack. He slips in.

INT. LOBBY

A long hallway with a high ceiling stretches out before Jack. He finds the GA behind a shielded area resembling a movie theater ticket booth. The GA buzzes the Site Manager.

GA  
TRR to see you, sir.

SITE MANAGER  
Send him in.

The GA shows Jack the way.

GA  
Straight down to the end. Knock first.

Before he makes it five feet, Jack can hear the GA fight off a bout of laughter. He turns.

GA  
There a problem, graduate?

JACK  
No. Sir.

He continues on... slowly, steadily down the hall. Nervously taking in its immensity. As he draws closer to the door, he can hear Max's and the Site Manager's voices from inside.

SITE MANAGER  
You'd think the cheap bastards could spring for AC. Just one frickin' machine in my window! That's all I ask!

MAX  
I'd kill for a tall, ice-cold beer.

SITE MANAGER  
Now you're talkin'.

MAX  
Well, I'd better go see about the  
drains.

Jack reaches their door. Knocks timidly. Hears footsteps approach. Straightens up. Takes a breath. Max swings the door open. Grins like he just got away with murder.

MAX  
It's you. Too bad I can't stay.

JACK  
The GA said --

MAX  
Oh, do go in.

He shoves Jack inside. Slams the door closed behind him.

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

An oddly small room. A militia of GAs stand guard. The Site Manager is seated in a fancier version of his Machine with a desk connected to his chair by a mechanical arm. He wipes his sweaty face with a wet washcloth.

SITE MANAGER  
The problem is, graduate, that GraduCorp, and by extension your Loan Repayment Center, is a very complicated beast.

JACK  
Yes, sir.

SITE MANAGER  
You can petition your case, but it could take weeks, or even months, before you puncture the lowest levels of the system.

JACK  
Yes, sir. If I may speak freely, sir?

The Site Manager gives him a toothy grin.

SITE MANAGER  
By all means.

JACK

The loan I took out was only for a year of debt, sir. I'm not supposed to be here for thirty.

The Site Manager sighs. Opens his desk. Pulls out a form that would make a phone book feel insecure. Throws it at Jack. He catches it.

SITE MANAGER

Fill that out, in triplicate, bring it back, we'll send it off, and see what happens.

Jack gawks at the daunting enormity of the form.

INT. LOBBY

Jack lets the door close behind him. He can hear the Site Manager and his militia all laugh their asses off. Lacking any clue as to why, Jack simply shakes his head, and gets on his way.

INT. THE MAIL ROOM - DAY

Hundreds of cabinets with locked cubby hole boxes. Jack drops off his letter. Checks his mail. Nothing yet.

JACK (V.O.)

Dear Tanya. These are dark times for higher education.

EXT. THE COURTYARD - EVENING

Jack crosses it at the end of the day.

JACK (V.O.)

It's taking forever to fill out my petition 'cause they wanna know my entire college career...

He enters...

INT. THE LIBRARY

The one-room facility boasts only a few stacks, a microfilm viewer, and a single-cabinet card catalog. Two GAs are on the one exit. Jack reads through records of his grades, scholarships, and loan information.

JACK (V.O.)  
 ...and the library closes fifteen  
 minutes after work ends, so I can't  
 get much done in any single day.

The OG librarian shuts off the lights. Jack quickly fills in a couple more blanks on his form, then packs his things.

INT. THE LAUNDRY

An open, swimming pool-sized washing machine churns away. Sprays suds everywhere. Hundreds of grads keep up the various stages of washing. Jack throws in a load.

JACK (V.O.)  
 Because of the petition, I've been  
 late for a number of shifts, so  
 tomorrow I've got refuse duty.

A GA yells at him.

GA  
 Not when you feel like it,  
 graduate! Now!

INT. THE LIBRARY - DAY

Jack researches. Takes notes. Fills in blanks.

JACK (V.O.)  
 I hope you're getting my letters.

INT. THE FACTORY - DAY

Badly lit assembly lines of grads build and repair everything from GA uniforms to office equipment to Burburly bandanas. Jack and his friends are in a lava lamp line.

JACK (V.O.)  
 I think about you all the time when  
 I'm working...

A GA struts behind them. Whacks them in the back of their heads. After the GA passes Kartin, the GA turns back around. Smacks him.

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack's in bed. Wide awake. Outside, he can hear Hundred and Trick crooning away. He shakes his head in frustration. Gets up. Works on his scratching, which now consists of a "J." He patiently finishes it.

JACK (V.O.)  
...and sleeping.

INT. THE LIBRARY - DAY

Jack pores over cards in the catalog. He comes upon one that grabs him. The title is, "Jungle City outraged over Loan Repayment Center." He sets down his work. Goes over to the microfilm viewer. Skims the articles. Finds the headline --

But the article itself has been burned away.

The librarian shuts off the lights. Jack gives the anomaly a dismissive shrug. Runs back to his work.

JACK (V.O.)  
After weeks of work, I'm done.  
Felt like I was taking the biggest  
final of my life.

He signs his name on the last page.

JACK (V.O.)  
Now all I can do is wait.

INT. THE MAIL ROOM - DAY

Jack drops off a letter and checks his mail. Still nothing from Tanya. He sighs.

JACK (V.O.)  
Hope you're enjoying Hawaii. I  
miss you. Forever yours, Jack.

INT. THE OFFICES - DAY

Fluorescent lights buzz over a sea of desks. An OG leans over Jack's. Breaks it down for him. The OG flips through one of the thick forms from the mammoth stack in Jack's "in" box. Hands the form to him.

OG  
Have your stack done, and in to  
your supervisor by four, otherwise  
you get double duty the next day.  
Good luck.

JACK  
Thanks.

The OG leaves. Jack picks up an unpunched form. Flips to his assigned page. Checks it.

Aligns it with his large, cumbersome, iron stamping device. Chunk! He flips it over. Drops it on the "out" pile.

INT. THE OFFICES

Jack's "out" box is full, and his "in" box is gone. He punches his last form. Checks the time. 3:40. With a satisfied smile, he stands and stretches. Picks up his stack. Heads over to an area marked "Supervisor" --

Wham! Angela smacks right into him. Both their piles scatter everywhere.

ANGELA

Dammit!

She dives for the part of the pile she believes are hers. Grabs some. Stacks them.

ANGELA

Watch where you're going!

JACK

You ran into me.

ANGELA

Then watch where I'm going!

JACK

Whatever you say, Your Royal Pain-in-the-Assness. Here.

He tries to help her. Angela shoves his hands out of the way.

ANGELA

Stop! You'll just mess it up!

She instinctively glances up at him. Annoyed recognition flashes in her eyes.

ANGELA

You!

She stands.

ANGELA

You're that New G! The one that got the GAs all up in my shit!

JACK

What are you talking about?! I helped you!

Angela gets in his face.

ANGELA  
I didn't ask for your "help"!

JACK  
They were beatin' the humus outta  
you!

ANGELA  
I can take care of myself!

JACK  
Fine! Next time they grind you  
into meatloaf, I'll... watch!

ANGELA  
You do that!

JACK  
And sell tickets!

ANGELA  
Great idea! I look forward to it!

JACK  
So do...

He slaps the forms out of her hands.

JACK  
...I!

Shaking with fury, Angela lowers her head. Inhales deeply. Takes in the disaster spread across the floor that used to be her hard work. Her eyes shoot Jack a hungry, enraged glare...

Then she jumps him. They roll across the floor, smacking, punching, and throttling each other.

JACK  
You must've majored in Irritating  
Bitch Studies!

ANGELA  
For your information, Cock Hair, it  
was Renewable Energy Architecture!

They roll into a GA's feet.

INT. THE OFFICES

Their hands chained together, Jack and Angela are at a desk, going through their respective forms in a desperate attempt to re-sort them in time. Jack passes her a form.

JACK

Yours. So... What's your name?

ANGELA

What do you care?

JACK

I don't.

ANGELA

Then why'd you ask?

She passes him a form.

ANGELA

Yours.

JACK

Thanks. Conversation'll make the time go by faster.

ANGELA

You can't wait three lousy minutes?

JACK

Fine. Never mind.

He gives her a form.

JACK

Yours.

Courtney passes by them with her own stack of forms.

COURTNEY

Would you two shut the fuck up?!

ANGELA

Suck my chocolate-coated spunk, Courtney!

She goes back to sorting.

ANGELA

Fucking Oneyears.

She gives him a form.

ANGELA

Yours.

JACK

Thanks. Why didn't you want my help, when they attacked you?

Angela talks down to him as if she'd already explained this a million times.

ANGELA

Think about it, New G. Some sack-scratchin' dweeb rescues me, they think I'm weak. The weaker you are, the harder they pound.

JACK

But why'd they beat you in the first place?

Angela sighs in frustration.

ANGELA

As long as Oneyears are treated better, they won't rebel. No graduate unity, no danger of mass defaults.

JACK

I see.

ANGELA

Good. Now you can shut up.

JACK

As soon as you tell me your name.

Angela passes him a form.

ANGELA

Yours. Get chafed.

JACK

Suits me. I'll just keep talking, and talking, and talking --

ANGELA

Fine! Stop!

She sets down her forms and log.

ANGELA  
"Angela." My stupid name is  
"Angela." Happy?

JACK  
See? That wasn't so hard.

Angela ignores him. Goes back to sorting.

JACK  
Angela. Nice name.

ANGELA  
Yeah, a real fuckin' crowd-pleaser.

JACK  
How long you in here for, Angela?

ANGELA  
Too damn long.

JACK  
Two years? Five?

Angela stops sorting again.

ANGELA  
Look, New G, I told you my goddamn  
name. Can we be quiet now?

Jack's a little stung.

JACK  
...Sure.

They both get back to work. A GA goes up to them.

GA  
Time's up!

Jack and Angela frantically sort the last couple forms.

GA  
I said time's up!

Jack and Angela stop. The GA unlocks their chains.

ANGELA  
Hey, New G.

She grins a nasty, vengeful grin.

ANGELA  
I'm here three more long years.

She grabs Jack's forms. Dumps them on the floor. They scatter everywhere.

JACK  
Dammit!

Angela leaves. Jack grabs his pile. Slaps them on the desk. Attempts to re-sort them. The GA puts his hand in the way.

GA  
Tomorrow, graduate.

Jack stops. Sighs. Storms out.

INT. THE MESS - EVENING

Jack and the guys eat together. Jack works on another letter.

JACK  
Then she dumps my fucking stack on the floor.

EDWIN  
That's harsh, man.

KARTIN  
Maybe she likes you.

Jack laughs.

JACK  
Not funny.

CLARENCE  
At least we're done for the day.

JACK  
Good thing too. I don't think I could stand another minute with that chick.

A hand lands on his shoulder.

TRICK  
Looks like you boys finished your dinner. How 'bout some dessert?

Jack and his friends turn around. Standing behind Jack is TRICK, late twenties, big and mean, with Angela.

Jack and his friends freeze. Jack wipes his mouth. Sizes up Trick. Stands up to him. Edwin, Clarence, and Kartin stand too.

JACK

Look, we know you don't want any trouble, so why don't you kids turn around, sit back down, and nobody has to get hurt?

Trick laughs. Jack laughs. Their friends laugh.

TRICK

Shit. You got nuts, New G, but I got a better idea. How 'bout you four eat some dirt, then maybe we'll let you crawl outta here?

Jack strokes his chin. Pretends to weigh his options. Kartin eyes him, then Trick.

JACK

Thanks, but as you so astutely pointed out, we just ate.

Kartin holds up his hands.

KARTIN

Wait.

Jack and Trick face him. Kartin steps in between them. Puts a hand on their shoulders. Trick recoils at the gesture. Kartin addresses Trick and Angela as if his next sentence were the solution to all their problems.

KARTIN

I was a Conflict Resolution major.

He switches back and forth between Trick, Angela, and Jack.

KARTIN

We all know nobody here really wants to get pummelled, so why don't we just calm down, and let this go? Huh? What do you say?

Jack's eyes go back and forth between Trick, Angela, and Kartin, unsure of whether Kartin's strategy actually worked. Trick turns to Angela. Shrugs. Angela socks Kartin square in the kisser. He hits the floor with a thud.

ANGELA

Conflict resolved.

Jack snarls at her.

JACK

What is your problem?!

He rushes her. Slams her against the next table. Angela's stunned momentarily. Jack punches her a couple times.

The mess erupts like the Coliseum watching a gladiator match. Most of the OGS root for Trick and Angela. The Oneyears don't even pay attention. The only thing the GAS do is hold back the bystanders.

Trick takes on Edwin and Clarence. They manage to deflect most of his blows with their trays. Clarence even gets in a couple jabs.

Kartin lifts his head briefly... then conks out again.

Angela punches Jack in the stomach. Sends him stammering backwards.

ANGELA

Somebody's gotta teach you to keep your nose outta other people's business.

Trick uppercuts Edwin. Knocks him flat on the table. Trick then slams Clarence against a wall. Punches him in the stomach over and over.

Kartin lifts his head again... then conks out again.

Jack and Angela exchange punches.

JACK

You can't just let it go!

ANGELA

What fun would that be, New G?!

Jack delivers a nice one. Angela almost topples over. Jack swipes a nearby tray. Tosses it, frisbee style, at Trick's head. Stuns him. Clarence pushes Trick away --

Then Angela spots Jack's letter. Grabs it. Whistles to Trick. He joins her. Angela shows the letter to Jack.

ANGELA

Well, well, well. Who's Tan-ya?

Jack takes a step toward her. Points a finger at her, his tone deadly serious.

JACK  
Hand it over.

ANGELA  
No... I don't think I will.

She nods to Trick. He grabs Jack. Slams him up against the wall.

ANGELA  
But you're welcome to...

She tears it in half. Lets the pieces flutter to the ground. Grinds them in with her foot.

ANGELA  
...pick it up.

Jack boils silently. Trick throws him to the ground.

TRICK  
Well go on, New G. Do what the lady says.

Jack glares up at them, then crawls to his torn letter. Snatches the pieces.

ANGELA  
See? That wasn't so hard.

She leaves him there. Trick goes with her. Jack and his friends pick themselves up.

INT. THE REFUSE CENTER

Working in a cramped, hot room, teams take turns dragging open tubs of human foulness from old, rusty, dripping faucets to a huge manhole-like pit full of glistening, ghastly filth.

Jack and Hundred, humming a spiritual to himself, are on the same tub, next up. Hundred stops humming. Eyes Jack nervously.

HUNDRED  
You got it, boy?

Jack glances down into the putrid sea of waste swishing around. Chokes back bile.

JACK  
Think so.

HUNDRED

You better. No one's gonna wipe  
you up if you spill it.

They hoist up the tub. Swing it. Count to three. Toss the  
slime into the pit. Go back for more.

HUNDRED

Not bad. You slung dung before?

JACK

Compost duty. Twice a week at my  
parents' hostel. Had to overturn  
four mountains of our guests' crap,  
in the burning, afternoon sun.

HUNDRED

How'd you do?

JACK

Made a mess.

HUNDRED

So what'd you do to book this gig?

JACK

Finished all my shifts late.

HUNDRED

Hell, that takes talent.

JACK

Not if you're petitioning your  
term.

HUNDRED

So that's your riff. 'Nother TRR.

JACK

What's that mean anyway?

HUNDRED

Term Reduction Request. Most  
people don't get 'em. That's why  
the GAs laugh in your face for even  
trying. How long you here?

JACK

Thirty years.

Hundred freezes. Almost drops the tub.

HUNDRED  
You serious??

Jack nods. Hundred laughs his loud, boisterous laugh. Slaps Jack's back.

HUNDRED  
Son, you're alright!

JACK  
How long have you been here?

HUNDRED  
Longer'n anybody else. Why you think they call me "Hundred"?

JACK  
They fucked up your term too?

HUNDRED  
Nah, I'm just in a lotta debt. Didn't stop me from pullin' a TRR, though.

JACK  
How do you deal with this place?

HUNDRED  
I dunno. After a few years, you kinda start to pound out a rhythm.

JACK  
I never wanna pound out a rhythm. I wanna get out, marry my fiancée, and open our hostel.

Hundred laughs again.

HUNDRED  
Yeah, I used to have dreams too.

JACK  
Like what?

HUNDRED  
Nothin' glamorous. See, my sista wants to start a new, free college in a new city where you don't need a degree to live there.

JACK  
What would you do in this utopia?

Hundred beams with pride.

HUNDRED

Open a street festival for artists  
and musicians. I'd sit on a corner  
and jam for anybody who'd listen.

JACK

Music major, huh?

HUNDRED

Couldn't you tell?

Jack gives him a grin.

JACK

Only when I'm trying to sleep.

HUNDRED

Trick and I used to have a lotta  
fun in the old days makin' Max drag  
his scrawny, white ass outta bed.

JACK

What happened?

Hundred shrugs.

HUNDRED

They cracked down. Discipline got  
more severe. Terms got longer.

JACK

How'd they get away with that?!

HUNDRED

The up side of any bureaucracy.  
Bigger it gets, more frequent the  
"errors."

Jack considers that a moment.

JACK

But what about the outside?

HUNDRED

When you were out there, did you  
give a crippled piss about in here,  
or were you hummin' the GraduCorp  
jingle like everybody else?

Jack doesn't answer.

HUNDRED

How long've your buddies got?

JACK

One's got four. Two are Oneyears.

HUNDRED

Then son, I suggest you learn to read maps, and hang a mirror in front o' your face, 'cause lines'll get drawn and backs'll get stabbed.

They toss their load. Splat!

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack patiently works on his wall scratching, which now reads, "J + |." He's half way through adding a horizontal bar above the "|."

INT. THE DORMS

Several grads sneak around in the dark, as if on a hunt.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

Jack's almost finished with the "T."

INT. JACK'S BLOCK

The grads race up the scaffolds.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

Jack's adding the last couple scratches to his masterpiece when his door slams open. He spins around. Standing there are Hundred, wearing enormous glasses, with his hair parted like Max's, along with Trick, and a half dozen other OGs.

JACK

What's going on?!

Hundred and his friends chuckle with glee. Hundred gives Jack a dark, evil grin.

HUNDRED

Son, welcome to Judgment Day.

They surround Jack, gag him, and drag him out.

## INT. THE LAUNDRY

Like pigs on spits, Jack, Edwin, Clarence, and other New Gs inch their way along clotheslines loosely hung across the washing machine. They're each clutching a decrepid GA helmet against their chests.

The rest of the New Gs await their turn on the ground. Led by Trick's upbeat blues harmonica, a host of OGs dance in a big circle around the New Gs, preventing their escape.

Hundred carefully watches the procession. Leaving his place in line, Kartin begs Hundred.

KARTIN

Can we discuss this, please?!

Hundred smacks him. Snaps his fingers. Three OGs pick Kartin up, toss him into the washing machine, roll him around, then drag him to the end of the line.

One New G drops his helmet. A swarm of OGs grab him, yank him out, and stick him behind Kartin.

Jack makes calm, steady, methodical strides, every inch keeping his helmet in check.

Edwin also has his helmet just fine, but he's finding it difficult actually staying on the line.

Some distance ahead of them, Clarence is racing along in the lead when --

Splash! His helmet plops into the suds.

CLARENCE

Shit!

He jumps off. Collects it. Gets in the back of the line, a couple spots after Kartin.

Hundred surveys the New Gs' progress. The forerunners also carelessly drop their helmets. Now Jack's in the lead, plugging along, more than half way across. Hundred nods, impressed.

Jack's almost there when he spies some OGs at the end. They're waiting with full buckets of wash water, just aching to toss them on someone. And worst of all, no towels in sight.

Jack reaches the end of the line, but waits there. Just as the OGs are about to pelt him, he throws his helmet, like a frisbee, at the nearest buckets. Knocks them out of the OGs' hands.

With the would-be pelters caught slightly off guard, and slightly disarmed, Jack jumps them, spilling cold water over him, them, and everywhere else.

Laughing like a drunk hyena, Hundred runs over, and drenches Jack, who hollers at the sudden, icy shock.

INT. THE LAUNDRY

For hours on end, the OGs beat, prod, wrestle, yell at, and in general make the New Gs have a very lousy time, ending with...

Hundred sits comfortably on an overturned bucket. Kartin licks the last of the mud off Hundred's right boot. Hundred grins at Kartin's progress. Puts his boot back on the ground. Lifts his left boot to Kartin's tongue.

Feet away, Jack is the last one standing, surrounded by bottles, and passed-out fellow New Gs. The remaining OGs chant for him.

OGS

Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug!

Jack opens a new one. Downs it in less than three seconds flat. When he finishes, he tosses it on the ground. Wipes the sweat from his forehead. He points at Hundred. Grins like he just banged Miss America.

JACK

That - all - you - got?!

Hundred stands up from his bucket. Kicks Kartin away. Goes right up to Jack. Sizes him up.

HUNDRED

Son, where'd you learn to slam like that?

JACK

A bunch of backpacking Outbackers weened me on triple shots o' washtub moonshine when they were staying at our hostel.

Hundred stares at him, pondering his answer, then grins real wide. Slaps Jack on the back.

HUNDRED  
 Congratulations.

JACK  
 Congratulations?

Hundred doesn't answer. Instead, he just heads out. Trick nods at Jack, then he and the other OGs follow. Jack helps Kartin, Edwin, and Clarence up. They walk each other out.

Hiding in the shadows high above, a GA sees them leave.

INT. THE MESS - MORNING

Jack enters, tired as a dog. Hundred runs up to him. Wraps his immense arm around Jack's neck.

HUNDRED  
 'Morning! We got your place right over here.

JACK  
 I was actually looking for --

Without another word, Hundred practically drags Jack over to his table. Trick's already there. A place has indeed been made out for Jack. Hundred sits across from it. Jack takes his seat. Hundred gestures to Trick.

HUNDRED  
 I don't believe you've met my associate, Trick.

JACK  
 Not formally.

Trick offers his hand.

TRICK  
 You did good last night.

Jack shakes tentatively.

JACK  
 Thanks...

Trick smirks.

TRICK  
 Your buddy sure took a liking to boot a la mud.

JACK  
Maybe that's 'cause Angela helped  
him acquire the taste.

TRICK  
You understand... the other night.  
Nothin' personal.

JACK  
Nothin' at all.

Hundred laughs.

HUNDRED  
That's what I like to see. Let  
dead fish fry, and wet shit dry.

He sees someone approaching the table.

HUNDRED  
My sista!

Jack turns around to find Angela. She sets her tray, and a  
note-filled book entitled "Modern Sewer Designs" next to him.  
Starts eating. Doesn't lay an eye on him.

ANGELA  
Guess you did well last night.

JACK  
Why weren't you there?

ANGELA  
Miss my beauty sleep just to watch  
you shit-sniffing New Gs trip over  
yourselves? Get real.

HUNDRED  
You missed a good show. Boy was on  
fire.

He turns to Jack.

HUNDRED  
You should've seen her though, son.  
She slid down that clothesline  
faster than a bottleneck on a fret  
board.

Angela smirks.

ANGELA  
Ah schucks, Hundred.

TRICK

We couldn't figure out how the hell she kept the helmet from falling off.

JACK

What was your secret?

ANGELA

Firm tits.

HUNDRED

Best. Judgement Day. Ever.

ANGELA

I saw your friend over at the Oneyear table, New G. Don't worry. He won't be the last.

Sure enough, Jack spots Clarence seated with Courtney, and the other Oneyears.

INT. THE COURTYARD

Jack and Angela cross it together.

JACK

I can't understand how Hundred can enjoy this place.

ANGELA

Trick says he used to be bitter and frustrated like the rest of us, but now, we're all he's got.

JACK

No family and friends on the outside?

ANGELA

Cities change people. They forget about us. Move on.

JACK

That happen to you?

ANGELA

I wrote letters for months. Didn't hear dick. One day, this huge package came back. All returned unopened.

JACK  
That's awful.

ANGELA  
That's why I'm gonna found my own  
city.

JACK  
Where you don't have to have a  
degree to live there.

ANGELA  
Hundred told you about it.

Jack nods.

JACK  
So, you two...?

Angela laughs.

ANGELA  
No way. Hundred's like my little  
brother. Why?

Jack's about to respond when --

ANGELA  
Uh oh. Somebody's in trouble.

Jack turns to find a GA coming towards them.

GA  
The Site Manager wants to see you!

Angela nods at Jack.

ANGELA  
Good luck, New G.

JACK  
Thanks.

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Surrounded by GAs, Jack eagerly listens to the Site Manager.

SITE MANAGER  
Your request for term reduction has  
been denied.

Jack's mouth hangs open. Then he blows up.

JACK  
I don't believe this!!

The Site Manager yawns.

SITE MANAGER  
And I have a day to get on with.

Going back to his work, he waves to his GAs. They march Jack out. Shaking with frustration and rage, Jack's mind races to think of some solution.

JACK  
Somebody made a mistake!

SITE MANAGER  
If anyone did, it was you.

Jack struggles against the GAs restraining him.

JACK  
That's impossible! I triple  
checked everything!

The Site Manager ignores him. Jack breaks free of the GAs. Runs up to the Site Manager. The Site Manager's not happy with Jack's proximity.

JACK  
I have to petition again!

The GAs grab him.

SITE MANAGER  
That's out of the question, and a  
waste of my time!

JACK  
You don't understand! I gotta get  
outta here!

The Site Manager waves him off.

SITE MANAGER  
Yes, yes. We all "gotta get outta  
here."

JACK  
I didn't bust my ass just to get  
shafted!

The Site Manager points a finger at him.

SITE MANAGER  
I suggest you change your tone,  
graduate.

JACK  
You can eat my tone!

SITE MANAGER  
Ex-cuse me?

Without waiting for orders, the GAs throw Jack to the ground.

JACK  
This isn't fair! I did what you  
said! I followed the rules!

The GAs beat him.

JACK  
Gotta... get... out!

The Site Manager motions to his GAs. They cease.

SITE MANAGER  
You wanna see my bad side, by all  
means, continue to piss me off.  
Otherwise, this discussion is over.

He nods to his GAs. They pick Jack up. Remove him from the  
Site Manager's sight.

INT. THE MAIL ROOM

Jack drops off his tape-mended letter. Checks his mail. Two  
small packages. He's overjoyed. He tears one open. A stack  
of letters he sent Tanya. Unopened. He shakes his head as  
realization hits.

JACK  
She never got 'em.

He opens the second package. Tanya's ring. And a letter.  
He reads it. His face goes pale. He slumps down against the  
wall --

That moment, Courtney and Clarence wander in. Jack doesn't  
notice them until Courtney snatches his letter. Jack's so  
lost in misery, he doesn't move a muscle.

COURTNEY  
"Dearest Jack."

She holds the letter to her chest. Pretends to sigh.

COURTNEY

Ah, isn't that sweet? "It's been months, and I still haven't heard from you. After we got back from Hawaii..."

She turns to Clarence. Acts all impressed.

COURTNEY

Oo, Ha-wai-i.

She keeps reading.

COURTNEY

"...and found out about your term, Finley and I got married."

She stops.

CLARENCE

Dude, ouch. Sorry man.

Courtney glances at Jack for an explanation. No reaction. Morbid curiosity makes her read more.

COURTNEY

"I know I said forever, but I need someone with me now. I'll always remember you."

She examines the letter upside down, then the back side, as if that could provide further insight. Jack recites the last bit.

JACK

"Take care of yourself. Tanya."

He snatches it, crumples it up, throws it on the floor, and storms out.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

Using his returned ring, Jack frantically scratches out his "J + T" wall message. It's rough on his knuckles, leaving red smears.

He kicks the wall over and over. One kick is particularly hard. He yowls in pain. Grabs his foot. Hops around. Falls on his bed. Sits there. Gazes sadly at the bloodied graffiti on his wall.

He licks one of his stinging knuckles. Rips off some sheets of toilet paper.

INT. THE PRESS

A sea of one-person presses print everything from loan forms to college brochures. Everyone's well at work when Jack stomps in, rubbing his tp'd fingers. He finds his press. Right next to Angela's --

A hand clamps onto Jack's shoulder. He spins around to find a short GA tapping his baton impatiently.

GA  
You're late!

Jack pushes him.

JACK  
Back off, douche bag!

Not taking too kindly to being pushed around, the GA pushes back. Gets in Jack's face.

GA  
Listen here, graduate --!

JACK  
What?! You gonna beat me? Torture me? Pitch it to the Oneyears, ass maggot, 'cause I'm packin' 29 point 5 of I don't give a fuck!!

The whole room is stunned silent. The GA makes quick note of this.

GA  
...That'll be all.

He wanders away. Jack goes back to work.

ANGELA  
Wow. What's your problem?

Jack ignores her. Gets to work.

ANGELA  
Bet I can guess.

No response. Angela points to his fingers.

ANGELA  
Trouble scraping something off your wall?

Jack eyes her, annoyed that she guessed it.

ANGELA  
She dumped you, didn't she?

Jack glares at her. Really not in the mood.

ANGELA  
Wanna know how I know?

No answer.

ANGELA  
Same thing happened to me my first  
year.

Jack stops.

ANGELA  
Worst part is he left me for some  
skanky chemistry TA who was always  
flirting with him.

JACK  
What did you do?

ANGELA  
Got all pissed off, like you. Then  
I let it go. Moved on with my  
life.

Jack shakes his head.

ANGELA  
The sooner you forget her, the  
happier you'll be.

From outside, they hear Max's whining voice.

MAX  
Jack! Get out here!

Jack drops what he's doing. Runs outside. Angela goes after  
him.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Max and the press GA wait impatiently.

MAX  
Why aren't you losers done yet?!

No one answers.

MAX  
I'm waiting!

GA  
Jack was late.

ANGELA  
I forgot to return a book. He was  
dropping it off for me.

Max goes up to Jack.

MAX  
That true?

Jack eyes Angela.

JACK  
Yes, sir.

MAX  
In that case...

INT. THE REFUSE CENTER

Jack and Angela get to work.

ANGELA  
So what was she like?

JACK  
Tanya? She was great. Beautiful.  
Smart. ...Full-paying.

ANGELA  
Ah... now it's all clear.

JACK  
What?

ANGELA  
You went into debt for her.

JACK  
What are you talking about?

ANGELA  
You did a semester, realized how  
much debt you'd be in, were about  
to leave, then met her.

JACK  
Nope. I was on full scholarship.

ANGELA

Then why are you here??

JACK

Tanya's ring. Only loan I ever took out I used to buy it.

Angela laughs at him.

JACK

Stop it.

Angela flutters her eyelids.

ANGELA

Oh no, that's very romantic. If I were her, I'd be very impressed.

JACK

You don't understand. I came from this nasty slum, and there she was, this smart, beautiful, sophisticated --

ANGELA

Rich.

JACK

Rich city girl that had all these things I never did. I wanted to impress her. And she said she'd wait for me. Forever.

ANGELA

And you'd live the urban dream together.

JACK

I should've known there'd be no way.

ANGELA

You never know that shit till it's done.

JACK

So what split you and your guy?

ANGELA

We wanted different things, but were afraid to say it. Nothin' like time and distance to kill the fear.

JACK

I was so into doing my term 'cause  
I had this woman waiting for me.  
But now...

ANGELA

Isn't there something you wanted  
before you met her?

JACK

We were gonna open a hostel  
together. Guess I could still do  
it.

ANGELA

Every great city has one.

Jack nudges her.

JACK

You could design it for me.

ANGELA

I'd love to.

JACK

Really?

ANGELA

Sounds fun. We'll stick it right  
next to Hundred's street fair.

JACK

What exactly are you gonna call  
this new city?

ANGELA

I was thinking "Town."

JACK

That's a terrible name.

ANGELA

Yeah, what do you got?

JACK

How about "Towns-ville"?

Angela pretends to spit out something bitter.

ANGELA

Oh, that's awful!

JACK  
Guess we'll have to come up with  
something better when we build it.

ANGELA  
You're gonna help?

JACK  
Sounds fun.

ANGELA  
It's a deal then. When we get  
outta here, we'll do it.

INT. THE LIBRARY - EVENING

Like a robot, Jack stands behind the librarian desk. Mechanically stamps the back of "The Complete Works of Shakespeare" for the last patron, Courtney. Jack repeats the same words he's repeated all day:

JACK  
Your book is due back in three  
days.

COURTNEY  
How's it feel knowing you're gonna  
be here thirty ass-grinding years?

JACK  
Almost as good as talking to you.

Courtney leans forward. Taps his desk threateningly.

COURTNEY  
You can't leave your shift till I  
go.

JACK  
Take your book.

He shoves her book at her.

COURTNEY  
Maybe I don't want it yet.

They shove it back and forth. Jack grabs it. Shakes it in her face.

JACK

If you don't get outta here right now, I swear I'll shove this bitch so far down your throat you'll be shitting sonnets for a week!

COURTNEY

GA!

Jack's eyes snap open. The GAs run over. Grab him, and the book. Throw them both to the ground.

JACK

I didn't touch her!

Courtney snatches her book, and runs away.

JACK

Would you get off me?!

The GAs back off. Jack gets up. Returns to his desk. Glares at them.

JACK

She's gone. Can I go now?

GA

You're not done.

INT. THE ARCHIVES

A dark, stuffy room with wall-to-wall file drawers of tiny data disks, and a desk with a viewing monitor and printer. The GAs show Jack an open drawer of several hundred disks.

GA

Max wants you to reorganize these.

JACK

They are organized.

One of the GAs pulls the drawer out. Dumps the disks on the floor.

GA

Now they're not.

JACK

You guys get an asshole commission, or is it just part of the job?

GA

Max wants it done tonight.

They leave him there.

INT. THE ARCHIVES

Jack's on the floor with stacks of disks all around him. He's in a zone. Alphabetizes a small handful. He flips past one after the other. Shuffling... Re-shuffling...

Then he freezes. Snaps out of his mesmerized state. Flips back a few. Stops on the one. A blank disk.

JACK

Great. How the hell am I supposed to...?

He sets all the disks down but the blank one. Gingerly steps over the others.

He touches the viewing monitor. It brightens up. He slides in the disk. Sits down. Punches buttons. The same article he saw on the microfilm jumps onto the screen. The difference is, this one is intact.

A passage reads, "...The Jungle City is furious over plans for a new GraduCorp Loan Repayment Center to be built nearby..."

He skims to the bottom of the article. Attached to it, he finds a satellite image of a large city surrounded by jungle. He scrolls the areas east and west of the city. More jungle. Same to the south. But wait...

He spots a tiny hexagon. Zooms in. Doesn't believe his eyes. He prints it.

GA

What are you doing?!

Jack jumps up. Spins around. The GAs are right there. Waiting for answers.

JACK

Nothing.

He crumples up the map. Shoves it into his shirt. Shuts off the monitor. Ejects the disk. Tosses it with the others.

GA

Get back to work!

JACK

Yes sir!

INT. ANGELA'S BLOCK

Jack knocks on Angela's door. It opens a crack. Her sleepy voice greets him.

ANGELA  
Hey. What time is it?

INT. ANGELA'S ROOM

Jack shows Angela the map.

JACK  
If this is our Center, the nearest city's only a few hours travel.

ANGELA  
It's ours.

JACK  
How do you know?

Angela points to different sections of the map.

ANGELA  
There's the mess. And the factory.  
And the Site Manager's office.

JACK  
You sure?

Angela kneels by her bed. Pulls a stack of paper out from under it.

JACK  
What's this?

Angela spreads out a set of hand-drawn floor plans of every level of the Center. Even its underground.

ANGELA  
Months of work. All by observation  
and memory.

Jack gawks at her.

ANGELA  
A girl's gotta have a hobby.

She sets Jack's map next to one of her plans.

ANGELA  
This is definitely us.

JACK  
All we need now is an escape plan.

ANGELA  
Yeah, too bad I don't have one of  
those lying around.

Jack looks over her underground plan.

JACK  
Is there a tunnel that'd lead us  
out of the Center?

ANGELA  
Possibly, but even if we get past  
the Center's walls --

JACK  
The Retainer Shield. Edwin might  
know a way to get us through that.

ANGELA  
Even if we do, there's nothing  
stopping them from coming after us.

JACK  
First, let's figure out the Shield,  
then we'll take care of the rest.

INT. JACK'S ROOM

Jack, Angela, Hundred, Trick, and Edwin huddle around  
Angela's plans.

EDWIN  
There's no possible way that one  
relay could power the entire  
Retainer Shield.

HUNDRED  
Mind translatin' that?

EDWIN  
It means that each of the towers  
must have its own relay. If we can  
knock out even one, it'll shut down  
the entire system.

TRICK  
For how long?

EDWIN  
Long enough to escape.

He shoots Angela a glance.

EDWIN  
Assuming she can find a route.

ANGELA  
Don't you worry about my routes.

JACK  
But that still doesn't take care of  
the GAs guarding the tower.

TRICK  
Let me worry about them.

JACK  
And what about the locks on the  
tower doors --?

Knock knock knock! They all freeze. Jack waves for them to  
hide. Hundred jumps under Jack's bed. Trick and Edwin  
squeeze behind the toilet. Angela presses up against the  
wall next to the door. Jack pretends to yawn. Stretches.

JACK  
...Who is it?

He opens the door. It's Kartin.

KARTIN  
Hey! What're you guys doin'?

JACK  
Sh!

He yanks Kartin inside. Closes the door. Everyone comes out  
of their hiding places.

HUNDRED  
What're you doin' here, Boot-  
Licker?!

Kartin sees Angela's plans.

KARTIN  
You guys gonna escape?

JACK  
Sh! Maybe.

KARTIN  
Cool. Can I come?

TRICK

You're a Oneyear half way through  
your term. Why would you wanna  
risk it?

KARTIN

Looks like fun.

He points to one of Angela's sketches.

KARTIN

That's a Toterbolzen lock! I  
haven't seen one of those since  
Freshman year!

They all stare at him. He grins.

KARTIN

I wasn't always a Conflict  
Resolution major.

JACK

Can you open it?

KARTIN

Blind-folded. Hands tied.

JACK

Then what are we waiting for?

HUNDRED

Hold up, son. What if you're  
wrong? What if there is no city?  
What if that map you found was a  
fake?

TRICK

He's right. We can't risk getting  
out there only to find that there  
isn't there.

ANGELA

If we can get high enough, we  
should be able to see it.

TRICK

How we gonna do that?

HUNDRED

Climb a watchtower?

EDWIN

Too risky.

JACK  
Wait. I have an idea.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Carefully avoiding the lazy beams of the watchtower searchlights, Jack, Angela, Kartin, Hundred, Trick, and Edwin sneak along the wall toward the factory. Once there, Kartin works his magic on the locked door. Jack waves them in.

INT. THE FACTORY

Jack, Angela, Kartin, Hundred, Trick, and Edwin sneak in past the assembly lines, to the boiler room.

HUNDRED  
We ain't got that long before the morning shift starts burnin' again.

JACK  
Then we'll have to hurry.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

Jack, Angela, Kartin, Hundred, Trick, and Edwin find a giant furnace that resembles an antique copper kettle. Trick inspects the furnace door.

TRICK  
Not big enough for Hundred or me.

Angela checks out the smokestack.

ANGELA  
And that's too wide for any of us.

HUNDRED  
Both of you go. We'll wait here.

JACK  
Knock if anyone comes.

He slips into the furnace. Angela's right after him. Hundred closes the door behind them.

INT. THE FURNACE

Jack and Angela crouch under the smokestack opening.

JACK  
Gimme a lift, then I'll pull you up.

Angela nods. Gets on one knee. Cups her hands. Jack gives her his foot. Steadies his hands against the sides of the smokestack. Angela slowly lifts him.

JACK  
You alright?

Angela's strained under Jack's weight.

ANGELA  
...Yep.

Jack kicks his other foot up to the smokestack. Misses.

JACK  
Damn.

Angela impatiently reassures him.

ANGELA  
Take your time. No hurry here.

INT. THE FACTORY

Kartin, Hundred, Trick, and Edwin wait nervously as Jack and Angela thump around inside.

INT. THE SMOKESTACK

With his back pressed against one side, and his feet planted on the other, Jack reaches into the furnace. Pulls Angela up. He groans.

JACK  
How much do you weigh?

Angela grunts.

ANGELA  
Enough.

Jack pulls her up between his legs. Angela puts her arms around his neck to anchor herself. He lifts her legs up between his. She plants her feet at his sides. Rests. They're face to face. Crotch to crotch. He smirks.

ANGELA  
Don't get too excited.

Jack raises an eyebrow.

JACK  
I'll try not to.

Angela slides herself away from him so her back is pressed against the opposite side.

ANGELA  
Now what, genius?

JACK  
We turn around, hook arms, and walk up.

ANGELA  
That's all? I thought you'd come up with something really difficult.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

Jack and Angela stomp out all kinds of racket as they ascend the smokestack.

KARTIN  
Someone might hear!

HUNDRED  
Keep it cool, Boot-Licker.

INT. THE SMOKESTACK

Jack and Angela slowly walk their way up. The farther they get, the narrower their passage becomes.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

Bang! It came from outside the factory.

KARTIN  
What was that?!

HUNDRED  
Keep it cool.

Footsteps clop across the factory floor.

KARTIN  
Shit!

TRICK  
Quiet!

Hundred finds a shovel. Bangs the smokestack. It rings deep and hollow.

INT. THE SMOKESTACK

Jack and Angela are near the top, almost squishing each other. Jack glances down toward Hundred's ringing.

JACK  
Get up there!

ANGELA  
You don't wanna see it?

JACK  
Not enough time.

Angela uncomfortably climbs up out the top.

EXT. THE SMOKESTACK

Angela hooks her arms over the edge. Checks out her surroundings. Nothing but shadowy jungle. She looks to her left and right. More jungle. She turns her head as far as she can. Suddenly spins around.

JACK  
Ow! Careful!

Angela gasps. Lying before her, on the horizon, are the glass and steel skyscrapers of a city reflecting the near-full moon.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

The footsteps are only a few feet away. Hundred opens the furnace door. Sticks his head in.

HUNDRED  
Heat's on!

He slams the furnace door shut.

INT. THE SMOKESTACK

Jack and Angela peer down.

JACK  
Great. Now we're --

ANGELA  
Trapped.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

Hundred motions to the others to get the hell out of there. Kartin swings the door open. Not ten feet in front of them stand Max and a pack of GASs. Hundred, Trick, Kartin, and Edwin dive into the factory darkness.

INT. THE FACTORY

Hundred, Trick, Kartin, and Edwin scatter. Hide behind the assembly lines. Max and his crew swing around.

MAX

Hundred! I know it's you!

He waves to three GASs. They go after the fugitives.

MAX

Get your ass back here now, or I swear, I'll rip your dick off, fill it with water, and use it as the world's smallest sponge!

Hundred makes a direct break for the door. The three GASs go after him. Trick and Edwin take this as their cue. They sneak around, past the GASs and Hundred. Slip out. Kartin's hesitant, but then follows their lead.

The GASs apprehend Hundred. Max joins them.

MAX

You're hiding something. I can smell it.

HUNDRED

Hiding something, sir?

Max socks him in the gut.

MAX

Maybe a night in solitary will smarten you up.

The GASs remove Hundred.

INT. THE FURNACE

Jack and Angela do their best not to fall from the smokestack... but fail miserably. Thud! They hit the floor.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

Max and the remaining GASs enter.

MAX  
What was that?!

INT. THE FURNACE

Jack and Angela sit as still as possible. Jack whispers.

JACK  
What do we do? If he sees us,  
he'll ask questions.

Angela whispers back.

ANGELA  
Wait. I have an idea.

INT. THE BOILER ROOM

Max's eyes lock on the furnace door. He swings it open. Inside, he finds Jack and Angela necking like they're the last couple on Earth, responsible for continuing the species. Jack and Angela freeze. Max glares at them.

MAX  
What the hell is this??!

He steps away from the furnace.

MAX  
People, get your asses to bed!

He waits as Jack and Angela crawl out of the furnace.

MAX  
Any more fuckin' around past lights  
out, and you've got refuse duty for  
two weeks.

Jack and Angela nod sheepishly. Max nods to two GAs. They lead the graduates out.

INT. THE DORMS

One GA leads Jack up to his room. Another leads Angela to hers. The moment before they retire, they steal quick glimpses at each other. Both pretend not to notice.

INT. THE MESS - MORNING

Jack, Angela, Hundred, Trick, Edwin, and Kartin share breakfast together. Despite a night in solitary, Hundred's holding up pretty well.

ANGELA

It was amazing! And Jack was right. Only a few hours travel.

HUNDRED

Guard tower?

TRICK

No problem.

HUNDRED

Locks?

KARTIN

Got it.

HUNDRED

Retainer Shield?

EDWIN

As long as the guards and locks are taken care of, we're good.

HUNDRED

Son?

They all face Jack.

JACK

Let's go. Tonight.

They all share a nod.

INT. THE LAUNDRY

Trick wheels a hamper of soiled graduate uniforms up to the washing machine...

He makes sure no one's watching. Removes bottles of bleach, ammonia, and vinegar from inside the hamper. Douses a uniform. Stuffs it down his own shirt. Dumps the rest into the wash.

INT. THE LIBRARY

Instead of sorting returned books, Kartin sharpens a set of lock picks. He then twirls them in his hand. Aims them, like pistols, at some imagined foe. A GA passes by. Glowers. Kartin grins innocently. Goes back to the books.

INT. THE OFFICES

Between stamping forms, Edwin studies a page, partially hidden up his sleeve, of Angela's map of one of the towers.

INT. THE FACTORY

Between assembling pieces of a brand new, personalized Chanel bag, Angela makes last minute notes on scrap paper.

INT. HUNDRED'S ROOM - EVENING

Hundred stares at the walls in his room. He almost looks a little sad, like he's going to miss this place.

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack waits patiently as darkness slowly envelops his room. Outside, he hears some GAs.

GA

Lights out!

Jack jumps up. Peeks out his door. The moment the GAs leave the dorms, he steps outside.

INT. THE DORMS

Kartin's already there. Jack nods. Kartin nods back. Heads down.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Search lights meticulously scan the grounds. Small groups of GAs are on patrol. Kartin meets up with Trick and Edwin. They sneak over to a nearby tower. Jack, Hundred, and Angela find each other. Head off in the opposite direction.

EXT. TOWER

Kartin unlocks the door. Trick enters first. Then Edwin.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Jack, Hundred, and Angela locate a manhole at the corner between two buildings.

INT. TOWER

Trick climbs a ladder to the top. Quietly pulls out the uniform he prepared. Sneaks up behind the two GAs. Throws it over their heads. They shout muffled cries for help. He holds it tight to their faces. They soon pass out.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Jack and Hundred lift up the manhole. Set it nearby.

INT. TOWER

Edwin and Kartin have joined Trick. Edwin removes a small panel from the wall. Rips out a bunch of wires.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

The lights shut off. A bunch of GAs all over the Center shout out a bunch of expletives.

EXT. TOWER

Trick, Edwin, and Kartin run out. Trick spots Angela across the courtyard.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Angela waves them over. Trick, Edwin, and Kartin frantically sprint for it. Once they're all there, she whispers.

ANGELA

Remember, it'll be smelly, wet, and uncomfortable, so plug your noses, or go to the happy place, 'cause there's no turning back now.

JACK

We all ready?

They're all ready.

JACK

Let's get free.

INT. UNDERGROUND

A misty light creeps through the rusty, slimy tunnels. Angela jumps in first. Inches along the narrow passage. Jack's next. Then Hundred, Trick, Kartin, and finally Edwin, who drags the manhole closed behind him.

Angela clicks on a flashlight, partially illuminating her face, and her map. Before them lie three tunnels. Angela consults her map. Points forward. Goes down the tunnel. They follow...

INT. TUNNEL

Twisting and turning, they hike through tunnel after tunnel until --

Voices. Above them. They look up. A grate separates them from the shoes of none other than Max and the Site Manager. The Site Manager paces back and forth. Angela clicks off her flashlight. They all keep as still and quiet as possible.

SITE MANAGER  
You've checked the dorms?

MAX  
Twice, sir.

SITE MANAGER  
They can't have gotten that far!  
Check 'em again!

MAX  
Of course, sir.

SITE MANAGER  
If they default, Max, it's on your  
watch.

MAX  
I understand, sir.

The Site Manager stops pacing.

SITE MANAGER  
You smell that?

MAX  
What, sir?

SITE MANAGER  
Quiet!

They both listen. Angela waves to the others. Points forward. The Site Manager and Max look down. The fugitives are already gone. Max hurries out.

INT. TUNNEL

With Angela's flashlight back on, the fugitives run like hell. Come upon a right turn. Angela peeks around it.

ANGELA  
There's something there.

She continues.

KARTIN  
Oh, that's awful!

ANGELA  
Happy place, Kartin. Happy place.

After a couple feet, her flashlight beam drops away. She holds up a hand. They stop. She inches toward the drop. Peers down. A couple feet below her is an oozing stream of shit and wash water.

ANGELA  
Sewage way.

JACK  
Why wasn't it on your map?!

Angela glares back at him.

ANGELA  
I can't observe every-thing.

HUNDRED  
We have to cross it?

Angela scans the area with her flashlight. She spots a set of chains dangling only a few inches from their heads.

ANGELA  
Yeah. But it doesn't look too hard.

She sticks the map and flashlight in her pocket. Grabs a nearby chain. Crosses hand-over-hand the dozen or so feet to the other side. Jack and the others follow. Kartin keeps his eyes on the ceiling.

KARTIN  
I think I'm gonna yack.

HUNDRED  
Hurry up, Boot-Licker! Heat's on!

Kartin looks down.

KARTIN  
Oh shit.

He dumps his lunch. Reaches for the chain. His hand slips.

KARTIN

Oh shit!

Splash! He tumbles away like a barrel in a river.

JACK

Kartin!

He jumps in after Kartin.

ANGELA

Dammit, Jack!

Once she dives in, the rest follow.

INT. SEWAGE WAY

Kartin, Jack, Angela, Hundred, Trick, and Edwin all slip down the slimy toboggan over bumps, dips, and small rapids. The sewage way opens up into...

INT. THE DEPOSITORY

It's a cavernous room into which several sewage ways dump, then pour out through a rusted grate at the opposite end. Beyond the grate is the quiet outside night. Angela crawls out of the muck. Points to the grate.

ANGELA

There it is.

JACK

Way to go, Kartin!

They all assemble around Angela. Check out the grate.

HUNDRED

You're up, Boot-Licker.

With his picks ready, Kartin works on the lock...

In the distance, they can hear voices quickly approaching.

ANGELA

Soon would be good.

KARTIN

Gimme a second.

TRICK

We don't have a second!

KARTIN

This is rusted over, slimy, and who knows how old! Gimme a fuckin' second!

The voices are gaining on them.

ANGELA

Kartin!

Click!

KARTIN

Got it!

They all grab onto the grate. Tug at it against the river's current. Its ancient hinges creek. It takes some time and sweat, but they manage to force it open.

JACK

Edwin! Kartin! You two first!

Edwin nods. Holds his breath. Jumps in. Shoots out... splashing far below. Kartin wrenches at the river. Shakes his head.

KARTIN

I don't know about this.

Hundred kicks him out. Kartin hollers all the way down.

KARTIN

Oh shiii...!

Splash.

HUNDRED

Sista, you're next!

Angela gently releases her grip on the grate. Folds up the map. Shoves it down her front. Jumps into the river. Splash.

HUNDRED

Now you, son!

Jack lets go. Sees the strain on their faces.

HUNDRED

Move it!!

With a nod, Jack jumps in. Splash. Hundred and Trick have to dig their feet into the ground to keep the grate open.

HUNDRED  
...Together!

Trick nods. They struggle against the river's current as they crawl into it. It's slow and difficult, but they make it in, up to their necks, barely holding on --

That moment, a slew of GAs rush in.

GA  
Stop right there!!

Hundred and Trick let go. The grate slams closed behind them, tossing them down...

EXT. THE DEPOSITORY

The sky is awash with the brilliance of the Milky Way. Hundred and Trick plummet into the lake, submerge, and come up choking on mouthfuls of nastiness. They swim to shore where their friends await them. Kartin pukes.

Jack grabs a handful of mud. Throws it into the jungle. It splats safely on the ground.

JACK  
Retainer Shield's still out!

EDWIN  
We've probably only got a couple seconds!

They run into the jungle. The second Kartin steps away from the lake, claws of electricity sizzle around the lake edge. One of them zaps Kartin in the ass.

EXT. JUNGLE

Jack stops. Turns around. The Center is clear, quiet. The search lights turn back on. No sign of pursuers anywhere.

ANGELA  
Jack! What is it?

She's waiting for him. The others are already far ahead. His eyes search the Center towers.

JACK  
Nothing. Let's go.

They follow their friends into the night.

Hiding in the shadows of a watchtower high above, a GA sees them disappear.

EXT. JUNGLE

Jack and Angela are in the lead, slashing away vines and bushes with sticks. They hit a small clearing. Angela points to the sky.

ANGELA

Look. Urban light pollution.

The blanket of stars has been reduced to only a few. Jack calls to their friends.

JACK

We're almost there!

They all pick up the pace. The very next plant Jack pushes aside reveals the city Angela saw. The lights of its skyscrapers glow like a chandelier.

ANGELA

That's it!

They all gather around her. Get a peek.

HUNDRED

Well, what are we waiting for?!

He busts into a sprint. Throwing caution quite gleefully to the winds, the others follow. They run through the trees, getting scratched and bumped every step of the way, but not minding a bit.

Then Hundred, Jack, and Angela hit a downhill slope. With a holler, they tumble down... down... down...

Until they hit something that's big, hard, and made of stone. Jack stands. Rubs his head.

JACK

You guys alright?

Angela nods. Hundred groans. Jack eyes the thing they just hit. It's a tower and walls, just like the entrance of the first city Jack saw. Near the top, there hangs a sign that reads, "Welcome to Detroit. Population: 5 million."

JACK

We're here!!

Angela and Hundred pick themselves up. Trick, Edwin, and Kartin reach them. They all check out the sign.

KARTIN  
How do we get in?

JACK  
We'll have to climb it.

A rustle runs through the trees around them.

HUNDRED  
What's that?

From out of the dark come a dozen GASs, followed by Max. Jack and his friends back up against the tower. Except Edwin.

MAX  
You didn't actually think defaulting would be that easy, did you, graduate?

Jack yells at him.

JACK  
We had a six hour lead on you!  
There is no way you could've --!

He eyes Edwin.

EDWIN  
They got to me before you did.

JACK  
Son of a bitch!

He lunges for Edwin. Knocks him to the ground.

MAX  
That's quite enough, graduate.

The GASs seize them.

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

The GASs drag Jack, Angela, Hundred, Trick, and Kartin, all shackled up, before a very irritated Site Manager. Max and accompanying GASs enter after them. Jack nearly tears out of his bonds.

JACK  
What did you offer him?! Better room?! Better food?!

MAX  
GraduCorp has eliminated his term.  
When we're done here, we'll escort  
him to a city.

JACK  
Yeah?! Which one?!

SITE MANAGER  
It doesn't matter, graduate.

Jack's eyes find the Site Manager.

SITE MANAGER  
I must say, Jack, I'm very  
disappointed. After all we've done  
for you, this is how you repay it?

JACK  
You took thirty years of my life!

SITE MANAGER  
You gave those up before you even  
came here.

JACK  
That's bullshit and you know it --!

The Site Manager yawns.

SITE MANAGER  
I'm too damn tired to decide proper  
punishment, so until I do, you're  
in solitary.

He points at Angela.

JACK  
No!!

SITE MANAGER  
As for the rest of you --

JACK  
She didn't do anything!!

SITE MANAGER  
You each get an additional year.  
Except the Oneyear.

JACK  
If it weren't for me, they wouldn't  
even be here!

SITE MANAGER  
You get refuse for...

He rolls his eyes. Pulls a number out of his ass.

SITE MANAGER  
...three months.

He nods to his GAs.

SITE MANAGER  
Take them back to their rooms.  
Take her away.

JACK  
No!! You can't!!

He fights the GAs on him. Breaks free for a moment. Steals a kiss from Angela.

ANGELA  
I'll wait.

JACK  
I know.

The GAs restrain Jack. He yells at the Site Manager.

JACK  
This isn't over!!

The Site Manager yawns. The GAs promptly pull Jack and his friends out of the room.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

As the GAs drag Jack and his friends to the dorms, Jack spots the ones escorting Edwin out the front gates. At the gates, Edwin stops. Turns around. Stares at his former friend. Jack waits for him to say something...

No words come. Edwin turns away. The gates creak open. He leaves. The two GAs follow. The gates slam behind them.

Jack gazes into the starry sky, only minutes before so bright with the hope of freedom. He's still lost in his hopelessness when the GAs toss him inside the dorms.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. THE CENTER - MORNING

Scads of GAs march the Center's towers, stand guard at the gates, and patrol the courtyard. This time, all the graduates are assembled to witness not only Jack's beating, but Hundred's and Trick's. Kartin watches with pained eyes.

MAX

That was forty, sir.

SITE MANAGER

Forty more.

MAX

Sir?

SITE MANAGER

Getting hard of hearing, Max?

MAX

Forty more!

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

One of the GAs who helped restrain Jack the night before hands the Site Manager a set of papers. The Site Manager notices the young man is pretty glum.

SITE MANAGER

It's a bright, sunny Monday morning. The hell is your problem?

GA

Nothing, sir. Just that he had a lotta, well, chutzpah, sir. Almost hoped he'd default.

SITE MANAGER

Perhaps you'd like to join him and have a frickin' heart to heart.

GA

No, sir.

INT. THE MESS

It's quiet. There are triple the GAs on each exit. Each one keeps his eyes peeled for any sign of insurrection. All the grads keep their eyes cautiously away from the GAs. Jack, Hundred, Trick, and Kartin whisper to each other.

JACK  
We gotta do some-thing.

HUNDRED  
But son, what can we do?

KARTIN  
He's right. They're scopin' us everywhere.

TRICK  
And I don't want another year.

JACK  
Don't you see? They'll keep us here as long as they want. And right now, they want.

HUNDRED  
We wanna get her out as much as you do, I just don't see any way.

JACK  
There's gotta be a way. It's right under my nose. I can feel it.

He scoops up a bite of his slop. Finds another piece of plastic. Grumbles.

JACK  
Not again.

He tries to pull it out. Discovers that it's actually a bag with a piece of paper inside. He and his friends stop eating. His eyes go immediately to the nearest GAs. They haven't noticed anything yet. He talks to his bowl.

JACK  
Keep eating.

His friends do what he says. He opens the bag. Fishes out the paper. Unfolds it. It reads, "Be ready. A friend."

JACK  
I think I have an idea.

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack lies awake in his bed, his eyes fixed expectantly on his door...

Sure enough, he hears footsteps quietly approach. His door creaks open just enough for the one pushing it to step in.

The intruder closes it gently, then makes his way, almost tiptoe, across to the bed.

Jack closes his eyes to feign sleeping. The intruder stops at his bed. Leans over it. Jack opens one of his eyes a crack. The intruder's right there. About to poke him awake.

JACK

Now!!

Kartin's arms shoot out from under the bed. Grab the intruder by the legs. Yank his feet out from under him. The intruder falls on his ass. Jack jumps off his bed. Tackles the intruder. Kartin holds the intruder's legs down.

Hundred and Trick run into the room. Relieve Jack and Kartin of the burden of holding the intruder.

JACK

On his knees.

They force the intruder to kneel. Jack turns on his light. The intruder is Max.

JACK

Well, skin my weasel and call me Barney!

They all stare at him.

JACK

Slum expression.

HUNDRED

Not where I'm from.

Jack gestures to his toilet. Hundred and Trick stick Max's head over the rim of the bowl. Close the seat on his neck. Jack places a hand over it. Squeezes a little. Max coughs.

JACK

Start talkin'.

MAX

You're not the only prisoner here.

JACK

The hell is that supposed to mean?

MAX

In GraduCorp's eyes, we're all gears in the machine. Listen to me, and we can all escape.

JACK  
Why would you help us?

MAX  
I've been a gear a long time. I  
want out. This place changes  
people. I needed someone I could  
trust...

FLASH TO:

EXT. THE COURTYARD - DAY

Jack snatches the GA's baton. Grabs the other GA. Clubs him  
on the head. Max is only feet away.

MAX (V.O.)  
The moment you took on those two  
GAs when you first arrived...

MAX  
I said stand down!

BACK TO:

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max doesn't seem to mind the toilet seat against his neck.

MAX  
...I knew you had the guts.

FLASH TO:

INT. THE LAUNDRY - NIGHT

Jack helps Kartin, Edwin and Clarence up. They walk each  
other out.

Hiding in the shadows, Max sees them leave.

MAX (V.O.)  
When you won Judgment Day...

BACK TO:

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack nods, putting the pieces together.

MAX  
...I knew you had the endurance.

FLASH TO:

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Jack yells at the Site Manager.

JACK  
You don't understand! I gotta get  
outta here!

MAX (V.O.)  
The day I heard your petition was  
rejected...

BACK TO:

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack eases up on Max's neck.

MAX  
...I knew you had the will.

FLASH TO:

INT. THE ARCHIVES - EVENING

Jack finds the satellite image of Detroit, and the Center.

MAX (V.O.)  
You just had to know where to go,  
and how to get there.

FLASH TO:

EXT. THE DEPOSITORY - NIGHT

Jack helps his friends to their feet. They hike into the  
jungle.

Hiding in the shadows of a watchtower high above, Max sees  
them disappear.

MAX (V.O.)  
The rest was up to you.

BACK TO:

INT. JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack's confused.

JACK  
Why'd you let us escape?

MAX  
Had to make sure you'd go through  
with it.

JACK  
What if I didn't figure it out?

MAX  
Then I wouldn't be here right now.

JACK  
Since you are here, I assume you  
know a way out.

MAX  
I know the only way out.

JACK  
Does it include Angela?

MAX  
If you want it to.

HUNDRED  
We want it to.

TRICK  
Jack, what if he's lying? It could  
be some elaborate trap.

MAX  
Give me a break. If I wanted you  
losers trapped, you already would  
be.

TRICK  
Maybe we already are.

HUNDRED  
He's got a point, son. It's  
nothin' to him to give us another  
year, or more.

JACK  
Kartin?

KARTIN

Hey, I'm just in this for the  
kicks.

Jack stares hard at Max.

JACK

I don't think it's a trap.

HUNDRED

Jack?

Jack faces him.

JACK

Don't trust him. Trust me.

Max exhales impatiently.

MAX

We ready then, ladies?

INT. THE ARMORY

A big closet decked out in GA gear. Max, Jack, and the guys enter. Max pulls uniforms, helmets, and batons off shelves. Hands them off.

MAX

They'll be armed, so you'll need to  
be armed.

HUNDRED

Who's "they"?

MAX

Your GAs. It'll only be a few  
minutes before the night shift  
realizes something's up.

INT. SOLITARY

A narrow passage lined with rusting iron doors about four and a half feet tall. Max waltzes in. Jack, Hundred, Trick, and Kartin wait around the corner. The GA on duty stands at attention.

GA

Sir!

MAX

As you were.

The GA nods. Relaxes.

MAX  
I'm here to move graduate 13-B 6.

GA  
I never received those orders, sir.

MAX  
You're receiving them now.

GA  
I'll have to confirm that, sir.

MAX  
Will you?

GA  
Protocol, sir.

MAX  
Well then, while you're busy with  
your protocol, I'll get busy with  
your job.

The GA gets on the phone. Max goes to the cell at the end.  
Unlocks it. Opens the door. They can hear Angela's shriek  
at the sudden light.

ANGELA  
Shit that's bright!

Max leans over her.

MAX  
Get out.

Angela squints up at him.

ANGELA  
Where are you taking me?

Jack whispers to himself.

JACK  
Come on Angela. Stop bullshittin'  
around.

Max sighs.

MAX  
Out.

Angela hesitantly slides out of her cell. Sensing something awry, she scans the darkness behind Max.

ANGELA

Out.

His frustration mounting, Max speaks through his teeth.

MAX

Yes, out.

Angela simply nods. Stands up. Max takes her arm. Escorts her to the corner behind which Jack and the others are hiding.

GA

Sir?

Max exhales in frustration.

MAX

Yes?

GA

I can't confirm those orders, sir.

Max spins around.

MAX

Then confirm them in the morning.  
I'm busy.

GA

If it's not too much trouble, sir,  
I really oughta --

Jack leaps out from behind the corner. Runs past Max and Angela. Grabs the GA. Punches him against the wall. The GA hits the floor, unconscious.

JACK

Confirm that.

MAX

Good one, graduate. Now when he  
doesn't report in, the whole damn  
Center'll be crawling up our asses!

Jack ignores him. Pushes past. Angela and the others follow him. Max shakes his head, then joins them.

## EXT. THE COURTYARD

Jack, Angela, Hundred, Trick, Kartin, and Max head towards the keep, with the hole on its third floor.

MAX

Someone needs to get the Site Manager's Machine, while I unlock the gates. Somebody else needs to get your diplomas.

ANGELA

Where are they?

MAX

The Site Manager's office. In his desk.

ANGELA

No problem.

JACK

Why do we need the Machine?

MAX

If they can't reach you, they can't get you. It's our only way out.

JACK

Where is it?

MAX

Follow me.

He addresses the others.

MAX

Soon as you all are done, meet back here.

He and Jack go inside. Angela and the others head off to the Site Manager's office.

## INT. THE KEEP

Two passages on opposite sides of the entry way. One has stairs going up. Max points to it.

MAX

That one leads to the Machine's chamber. Five floors up. You can't miss it.

JACK

Got it.

MAX

See you soon.

Jack nods. Gets on his way.

INT. THE MACHINE CHAMBER

Panting like a dog, Jack runs up the last steps into a dark room. He finds the Site Manager's Machine, hanging from huge lengths of chain. Below it, a large hole spirals down. Outside light sneaks in through the hole.

Seeing no one else around, Jack casually introduces himself to the Machine. Takes hold of its teeter-totter propulsion mechanism. Gives it a good pump.

A gush of air, like that through a bellows, escapes from inside. To Jack's surprise, he and the Machine have gained some altitude...

But it doesn't last long. With a pathetic wheeze, the Machine descends back to its former station.

Jack gives the mechanism a good couple pumps. The Machine gracefully rises a few inches. The chains go slack. Jack pushes away the nearest chain. It slips off. Dangles freely. Its links clink against each other.

INT. GRADUATE RELATIONS

Angela and the others run up to the double doors. She presses the buzzer button.

GA

What?!

ANGELA

The Site Manager wants to see us!

GA

About what?

HUNDRED

TRR!

They hear a stifled laugh.

GA

Hold on.

The doors open.

KARTIN  
That was easy.

They all go inside.

INT. LOBBY

Waiting for them is an army of GASs.

KARTIN  
Oh shit!

He faints. Angela, Hundred, and Trick back up into a triangle formation around Kartin. The GASs close in. The three friends fiercely bear their batons --

The GASs attack. The three friends go on the defensive. It doesn't take long before they overpower their foes, and back them into corners. One of the GASs pipes up.

GA  
Screw this!

He tosses his baton on the floor. Runs away. The others do the same. Angela wakes up Kartin.

KARTIN  
Is it over?

He sits up. Sees the beaten GASs.

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Expecting another skirmish, Angela, Hundred, Trick, and Kartin all run in with batons held high --

It's empty. Angela checks the corners, and behind the Site Manager's chair.

ANGELA  
Something's wrong.

The others go up to the Site Manager's desk. It's shut tight under a zillion padlocks.

TRICK  
Yeah, it'll take us forever to break in.

ANGELA  
Besides that.

It hits her.

ANGELA

Jack!

She runs out.

INT. THE MACHINE CHAMBER

With the process taking forever, Jack's only released a couple chains. He reaches for the Machine's mechanism.

SITE MANAGER

I wouldn't touch that again, if I were you.

Shocked, Jack swings around.

The Site Manager emerges from the darkness. Pounds his right fist firmly into his left palm. Jack gulps. The Site Manager takes a step toward him.

SITE MANAGER

In my tenure here, no graduate has ever defaulted on their loans.

He points at Jack.

SITE MANAGER

A slimy little chicken shit like you is not gonna be the first.

JACK

How did you know?

The Site Manager slowly closes in.

SITE MANAGER

The clamorin' you people've been makin' all fuckin' night would've been plenty, but you can always rely on a Oneyear for confirmation.

Jack breathes the name of the one suspect he can think of:

JACK

Kartin.

FLASH TO:

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Hundred and Trick wait as Kartin works on the locks.

BACK TO:

INT. THE MACHINE CHAMBER

The Site Manager's confused by the name Jack suggested.

SITE MANAGER

Kartin??! No. It was --

COURTNEY

Me.

No longer able to stand not shoving who got the better of him right in Jack's face, Courtney jumps out of the shadows behind the Site Manager.

JACK

You?! How the hell did you know?

COURTNEY

The way you fuckers jabber on every night --

SITE MANAGER

Get back, Oneyear.

Courtney whines.

COURTNEY

You said I could watch!

Both Jack and the Site Manager give her an irritated glance. The Site Manager sighs.

SITE MANAGER

Fine. I don't care.

Jack takes advantage of this tiny moment of distraction. Readies his baton. Courtney points.

SITE MANAGER

What...?

Jack runs over, ready to lop off the Site Manager's head, or at least give it the old college try.

SITE MANAGER

...is he...?

Jack comes down... but the Site Manager ducks. Swings a chain in the way of Jack's baton. Not only blocks the blow, but knocks the weapon out of Jack's grip. Twists his hand pretty badly.

SITE MANAGER

...armed?

The baton slips down the hole.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Like a child coming down a water slide, Jack's baton flies out of the hole in the side of the building. Lands in the dirt. Belting across the courtyard, Angela spies it. Picks it up. Casts a concerned glance up at the hole.

INT. THE MACHINE CHAMBER

The Site Manager turns to Jack. Grabs his injured hand.

SITE MANAGER

Nope. He's not.

Courtney claps. The Site Manager crushes Jack's hand under his fierce grip. Jack growls in pain. The Site Manager backs Jack into the Machine's chair.

SITE MANAGER

Give up, graduate. You'll never get outta here.

Courtney claps and claps.

COURTNEY

Hit him! Hit him!

The Site Manager rolls his eyes. Glares at Courtney.

SITE MANAGER

Shut up, Oneyear!

Courtney's quiet. Jack rolls up a good fist with his uninjured hand. Socks the Site Manager in the jaw. The rock hard man doesn't even flinch. Instead, he just keeps talking to Jack as if nothing had happened.

SITE MANAGER

Where was I?

He glances at the ceiling. Tries to remember.

SITE MANAGER

Oh yes. "You'll never get outta here." The thing about you graduates...

He pins Jack down with his unoccupied hand.

SITE MANAGER

...is you get these expensive educations that plant expensive ideas in your puny pates that tell you...

He slides his hand from around Jack's fist, up to Jack's forearm, and uses Jack's injured hand to clobber Jack's face. Courtney is giddy with girlish laughter.

SITE MANAGER

...to go out and use all that unspent hormonal energy on letting the world know that you're here, and dammit, you have an opinion.

Jack wises up enough to flatten his hand out so that he's at least just slapping himself, rather than clobbering.

SITE MANAGER

What they don't tell you is that the world just doesn't care.

Jack suddenly remembers that he has a hand he's not using, and so uses it to punch the Site Manager in the face.

SITE MANAGER

You should never've gone to college.

Punch!

SITE MANAGER

You would've learned the same thing...

Punch!

SITE MANAGER

...and be in a lot less debt.

Jack takes a quick breath.

JACK

That what you did?

SITE MANAGER  
Nope. I got a PhD.

For a moment, Jack forgets they're in the middle of a fight.

JACK  
In what?

SITE MANAGER  
Media Studies.

JACK  
The hell is that?

SITE MANAGER  
Most pathetically useless degree on  
the planet!

He grabs Jack by the neck. Lifts him up over the chair.

SITE MANAGER  
And you know what?

Jack tries to speak through the Site Manager's hand wrapped  
around his throat.

JACK  
...What?

SITE MANAGER  
I still ain't paid that shit off!!

He releases his frustration by tossing Jack onto the pumping  
mechanism. Even in his beaten state, Jack somehow manages to  
vault over the mechanism. Catches himself precariously on  
the chains. The Site Manager chuckles to Courtney.

SITE MANAGER  
Nimble little bitch, ain't he?

Courtney sits at the hole's edge. Bites her nails in  
anticipation.

The Site Manager goes around the Machine's chair. Jack wraps  
his left arm in the chains. The Site Manager lovingly pats  
the pumping mechanism. Jack wraps his right arm in the  
chains.

The Site Manager stops right in front of Jack. Grins at the  
position he's taken. Bound. Trapped.

SITE MANAGER  
Finally givin' up then?

JACK  
Not even close.

Flexing his arms, he pulls his feet up to his chest, then lets a kick rip into the Site Manager's head that tumbles him over the pumping mechanism, into the Machine's chair.

COURTNEY  
No!!

Jack lets out a relieved sigh.

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Hundred and Trick wait impatiently.

HUNDRED  
There any way this could maybe go a little bit faster --?

Kartin stops. Eyes them both.

KARTIN  
You wanna do this?!

Hundred and Trick look at each other.

HUNDRED  
Sorry. You go ahead, Boot-Licker.

Kartin opens the lock he's been working on.

KARTIN  
Got it!

He faces them.

KARTIN  
And don't call me "Boot-Licker."

He goes to work on the next one.

INT. THE MACHINE CHAMBER

Jack unravels himself from the chains.

SITE MANAGER  
Don't worry, Oneyear. That kinda shit might've worked on Max...

He stands up. Cracks his neck.

SITE MANAGER

...but I'm a whole other chunk o'  
tough.

He starts his march back towards Jack. Savors every single step...

Jack desperately scans his surroundings. No weapons. No escape. He backs up as far as he can without falling into the hole. Within moments, the Site Manager's right there.

SITE MANAGER

That little shit of a GA was right.  
You got chutzpah.

He pulls his fist back for the final blow.

SITE MANAGER

Too bad that won't save you now.

Courtney jumps up with glee. Jack holds his breath...

And they all hear the sound of feet racing up steps. Courtney and the Site Manager turn to see who the hell it could possibly be --

The door smashes open. Angela springs into the room. She's armed with her baton in one hand, and Jack's in the other. She smacks a very surprised Courtney in the face. Knocks Courtney down the hole. Leaps onto the Machine.

Angela's added weight to the opposite side of Jack and the Site Manager sends their side into the air. This frees Jack of the Site Manager's grip, but also of solid ground to stand on. Jack barely catches the edge of the Machine as he falls.

The Site Manager has plenty of footing. He charges Angela. Swings. She dodges. Nails his shoulder. He snarls. Grabs that baton. Tries to wrench it free. She grins a big "fuck you" grin. Plants her other baton deep between his legs.

His face twitches back and forth between surprise and extreme agony. Angela seizes the moment. Smashes him upside the head --

The Site Manager falls...

Tumbles over the side of the Machine. Hollers all the way down. Angela smiles at Jack.

ANGELA

It takes a woman to knock down a  
man.

Jack gives her an impressed nod.

JACK  
Maybe that woman can give me a  
hand?

Angela goes to him. Holds her hand out. Jack takes it.  
Angela pulls him up. They hold each other.

JACK  
What took you so long?

ANGELA  
Ever tried to sprint up five  
flights of stairs?

JACK  
Nope.

Angela gives him a quick kiss.

ANGELA  
Let's get outta here.

Together, they free the Machine of its chains. Give the  
teeter-totter mechanism enough pumps for a smooth descent  
down the hole...

INT. SITE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Hundred peels back a corner of the desk lid. Reaches inside.  
Pulls out a key.

HUNDRED  
What?!

KARTIN  
Those were just the primary locks.

TRICK  
Primary locks?!

KARTIN  
Yeah. I think there's a secondary  
mechanism somewhere in this room.

HUNDRED  
You think??!

Kartin runs over to the nearest wall. Knocks a couple times.  
Shakes his head. Waves for them to do the same. They try  
other walls.

Dong! Hundred finds a hollow-sounding area.

KARTIN

That's it!

He runs over. Knocks it again. Dong dong! He feels around.

HUNDRED

What're you lookin' for?

Kartin doesn't answer. His fingertips grip an edge. Kartin pulls Hundred over. Hundred yanks on the edge as hard as he can. It peels back to reveal a giant combination lock.

KARTIN

I can't pick that.

TRICK

What do we do?

KARTIN

If I had my phones, I could listen for the different clicks.

HUNDRED

I'll give 'er a go.

KARTIN

You're waiting for a low-sounding "chunk."

Hundred places his ear on the metal surface. Tries the dial. Hums to himself. After a moment, he turns it the other way. A couple more turns.

Chunk! The door clicks open...

Inside, they find dozens of diplomas. They search for theirs.

EXT. THE COURTYARD

Jack and Angela emerge over an injured, but alive, Courtney, and a crowd of GAs who try, unsuccessfully, to maintain order among a crowd of grads. The Site Manager is nowhere to be found.

Jack and Angela descend to just above everyone's heads. Max runs out of the building. Jumps on.

MAX

That should do it!

JACK

What took you so long?

MAX

Somebody fucked with the lock.

Not far away, everyone hears a loud clang, then a series of rattling sounds. The front gates creak open.

Max grabs the Machine's controls. Yells back at Jack and Angela.

MAX

Gimme some juice, people!

They obey.

MAX

Where are the others?

As if in answer to his question, Hundred, Trick, and Kartin run out onto the courtyard, diplomas in hand. Once they reach the crowd, they pull dozens of diplomas from out of their uniforms. Toss them into the crowd. Grads go crazy.

Max flies the Machine over to them. Waves for them to jump on.

MAX

Stop being heroes! Let's go!

Hundred, Trick, and Kartin climb on. Toss out more diplomas. Max drives the Machine down the dirt road towards the open gates. He notices a slow, but steady descent.

MAX

Too much weight! Somebody get off!

Jack and the others check their rears. The GASs are still busy with the grads, but now both they and the grads notice a default-in-progress. Many decide to come after them.

JACK

No one gets off!

MAX

Look, graduate, either one of you losers bails, or this ride's over!

ANGELA

If we can stand your bullshit, we can make it to the city!

Max points to the neon GraduCorp sign at the end of the docking bay.

MAX

If we don't clear that sign, we won't have enough altitude to get over your Retainer Shield!

He gives them all a dismissive wave.

MAX

So start drawing straws or comparing dick sizes, 'cause someone's gotta go!

JACK

He's right.

MAX

Of course I'm right!

TRICK

We should chuck you off!

MAX

Don't be an idiot! No one else knows how to drive this thing!

JACK

I'll go.

ANGELA

Jack, no!

They pass through the gates. The GAs and grads are right behind them. The grads reach up to the Machine, in the dinky hope of hitching a ride.

EXT. DOCKING BAY

They're not gonna make the sign.

MAX

Better decide soon!

Hundred grabs Jack by the arm. Looks him straight in the eyes.

HUNDRED

I'll go.

ANGELA

Hundred, no!

His mind made up, Hundred inches toward the back side of the Machine. Angela lets go of her end of the pump. Holds Hundred like she would her own father. Trick takes up her slack.

ANGELA  
Hundred, please!

HUNDRED  
I'm bigger than any of you. I'll  
just slow ya down.

MAX  
He's right!

JACK  
Shut up, Max!

Hundred pulls out of Angela's embrace. Angela shakes her head. Knows he's right, but hates it. Hundred climbs down over the edge.

HUNDRED  
Son!

Jack faces him.

HUNDRED  
You take good care of my sista!

JACK  
I will!

Angela gets on her knees in front of Hundred.

HUNDRED  
Build Town for me.

ANGELA  
We'll come back.

HUNDRED  
Take care of him.

ANGELA  
I will.

MAX  
Hey Hundred!

He turns to face Hundred. Grins real big.

MAX

It was fun!

Hundred smirks. The Machine is about to ram into the GraduCorp sign.

MAX

It's now time, people!

Hundred takes the cue. Lets go. Thud! He hits the bay. Rubs the pain out of his feet.

The Machine rises up like a helium balloon. Its bottom sweeps right for the top of the GraduCorp sign.

Jack removes his helmet. Lunges it, a la frisbee, at the sign. Sparks and pieces of the sign fly everywhere. His helmet tumbles to the ground. Arcs like a chunk of foil in a microwave.

As the Machine turns around toward Detroit, its rear crackles on the Retainer Shield.

Jack and Angela watch sadly as the pursuing GAS and grads catch up to Hundred. The smile never leaves his face as the GAS take him into custody. The GAS drag him, and as many of the grads as they can, back inside.

The Machine rises gently over the Center. Glides off into the night.

Angela stands beside Jack. Takes his arm. They both watch the lights of night play on the gleaming towers of Detroit.

JACK

We'll come back for him.

Angela doesn't answer. Instead, she leans her head against his shoulder.

The Machine becomes another gleaming piece of the sky as it drifts away toward their final freedom.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END