

CITIZEN

Episode 101:

"Pilot"

Written By

Alfonso Gomez-Rejon Josh Pate Nicholas Schutt

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HULU

FADE IN:

A prayer card depicting the Virgin Mary with a CROWN OF ROSES is raised to camera.

INT. HOUSE - SOMEWHERE HOT, SOMEWHERE DRY - DAY, CONT'D

The MAN holding the card hears echoes of footsteps. We track his view to a kitchen, and an oven door with a clear window. SMACK -- the palm of a HAND slaps the inside and the oven door creaks open. We connect the hand to a body and below this person are more PEOPLE climbing into the house from a TUNNEL that stretches under the border.

INT. HOUSE, GARAGE - LATER

Dozens of ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS are handed prayer cards -- each with a different saint. Each saint represents the truck you're hustled into. The operation is quiet and efficient. We move in on A GROUP loading into a VAN.

EXT. HIGH AND WIDE OF FREEWAY/INT. VAN - NIGHT, LATER

Packed shoulder-to-shoulder, we linger on one man in the corner. This is GABRIEL (20s-30s, stoic). He pulls an orange from his pocket and hands it to a frightened 10-YEAR-OLD BOY -- MANUEL. He clutches a rolled up comic, takes a piece and hands the rest to his young MOTHER, ISABEL (20s). She begins pulling a wedge out when, without warning, the van suddenly kicks into high gear sending the orange ping-ponging away. A wail of approaching SIRENS.

EXT. FREEWAY/VAN - CONT'D

Picking up speed, the van SLICES right and swerves onto a gravelly shoulder. It loses traction, flipping violently before landing on it's side. The back doors CLANG open -- for a moment, the world is SIDEWAYS -- and the human contents pour out onto a two-lane highway. SEARCHLIGHTS cut swaths behind them, over them.

The boy is wrenched from his mother's hands. His damp cheeks suddenly illuminated by the lights of an oncoming truck. It's too close to avoid hitting him when, from the darkness, Gabriel swoops in and pulls him out of harm's way. Together, they run into the shadows.

CUT TO:

INT. "CASA DEL MIGRANTE" SHELTER - MORNING - 2 DAYS LATER

Gabriel stands with Manuel in the doorway of Casa Del Migrante. The hacienda style structure is hugged between fourth and sixth streets in the middle of a residential area in the East LA neighborhood of Boyle Heights.

CESAR (40s- 60s, a reformed junkie in a faded *Motorhead* shirt) opens the door, adjusting his eyes to the glare.

CESAR

Manuel?

The boy nods. Relief pours over Cesar.

CESAR (CONT'D)

Your mom's in the back.

Manuel rushes into the shelter. Cesar turns to Gabriel.

CESAR (CONT'D)

Thought I'd lost you too. Gabriel, right?

Gabriel nods.

CESAR (CONT'D)

Wasn't supposed to go down this way, man. Trying to operate out of love, you know?

They pass a window and pause to watch ISABEL (20s), holding her son, relieved, before proceeding to:

INT. CESAR'S OFFICE - CONT'D

Notable for it's sparseness: a desk and one chair.

CESAR

Have a seat. Anywhere you want. Can't believe you and the boy are alright -- fuckin' miracle.

(re: his cursing)

Sorry. That's the human Christ talking. "Fully human, fully divine," right?

He hands Gabriel an envelope. Inside: his face has already been photoshopped onto a phony permanent residence card and a driver's license.

CESAR (CONT'D)

You already gave my buddy \$750...

Gabriel pulls out a wad of cash from his sock and counts out the remaining \$750. Then he hands over more:

GABRIEL

For the boy.

CESAR

You sure?

(as he pockets the money...)
 Rent's fifty a week, due Saturdays. I keep my place clean. You might find cheaper but they'll smell like piss and you'll never sleep cuz all the Dominicans come out at night and take your shit -- Whoops. Human Christ again.

He starts fiddling with a hard candy on his desk, notable for the MRS. CANDY logo emblazoned on the wrapper.

CESAR (CONT'D)

No drugs either.

GABRIEL

I'm just here to work.

CESAR

Good, cuz you'll be out in three weeks. I'll be getting you a job. What did you do back home...?

The briefest darkening of Gabriel's stoic demeanor.

GABRIEL

I wasn't a dishwasher.

CESAR

Then you won't be one here either, pa. What else, what else... lights out at 11, no walking on the roof --
 (suddenly hurried)
 Shit, gotta do this thing real quick.

Cesar puts out his smoke and throws on his PRIEST's garb. We begin to realize that these are the back rooms of a CHURCH.

CESAR (CONT'D)

Fully human...

Cesar grabs a cordless mic, hangs it around his neck and starts walking away from Gabriel...

CESAR (CONT'D)
 ... fully divine.
 (turns the mic on)
 In the name of the Father, and of the Son
 and of the Holy Spirit...

PARISHIONERS (O.C.)
 Amen.

INT. ST. TERESA CHURCH - CONT'D

We follow Gabriel's gaze past Cesar at the altar...
 across the TIRED FACES of his parishioners... and up to a
 stained glass window depicting the same CROWN OF ROSES
 that opened our story.

Color begins to drain from the window. A legend appears:

1 YEAR LATER

CUT TO:

INT. OVER & UNDER THE 4TH ST. OVERPASS - DAWN

GRAFFITI KIDS TAG a pedestrian walkway in Boyle Heights.
 We notice a couple of ROPE KNOTS on the metal railing.

GRAFFITI KID
 Fujita, hurry up, fool!

We follow the rope down - *underneath* the overpass - and
 find FUJITA (13, small-framed Japanese-American), tagging
 30 feet above traffic. Spidey on welfare.

Below him, a parked 1992 Camry. Next to this is a canary
 yellow Dodge Ram. Leaning on the hood is RUSTY, a
 muscular and ill-tempered banger angrily trying to frame
 his gang tats in a selfie with his car.

IN THE CAMRY

CHRIS MARTINEZ (20's-30s), a smooth talker in a red
 "VERIZON" short sleeve button down is in mid-conversation
 with ZEIDDY, a slightly out-of-shape Latina who'd rather
 you be scared of her than hit on her.

CHRIS
 Samsung Convoy 3's, Zeiddy.

ZEIDDY
 (annoyed)
 Chris...

CHRIS

\$99 retail. I know a guy. He'll give 'em to me for \$8.

ZEIDDY

You said 6.

CHRIS

That's what I said.

(off her silence)

Works on the metro. I don't want you to miss out. Your friends hear you passed...

ZEIDDY

Bring 'em by next week.

(then)

Now can we...?

Pleased, Chris reaches for a Verizon service agreement that rests atop 20 boxes of new snow silver Gusto model phones. He hands the contract to Zeiddy.

CHRIS

You're on the hook for 42 PTTs. Mrs. Candy should get a tax ID if she doesn't plan on putting anyone's social on the line but yours.

ZEIDDY

(signing, handing back the pen)

I'm cursed with good credit.

He looks at her expectantly.

ZEIDDY (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Ask me again.

CHRIS

Any chance you told her about my brother?

ZEIDDY

No.

Chris sighs, disappointed.

ZEIDDY (CONT'D)

That's right. So stop blowing up my phone all the time about it.

(then)

I *didn't* ask Mrs. Candy... but I *did* talk to Guero. You have to go through her nephew first.

(MORE)

ZEIDDY (CONT'D)

He's number two around here. Ain't you ever heard of politics?

(off his silence)

He wants to meet you.

CHRIS

When?

ZEIDDY

Tonight at Rasta's.

CHRIS

How will he know who I am?

ZEIDDY

Just wear that stupid Verizon shirt.

Chris hands Zeiddy the stack of phones. She opens her door and hands them to Rusty.

We drift skyward, to the blacktop of the overpass.

An MTA BUS WHIZZES by.

INT. MTA BUS - EAST LA - DAWN, CONT'D

The driver is GABRIEL. A working stiff now. Although he is a man in the public eye, it is clear how much he enjoys the anonymity a life behind a strip of Plexiglas affords him. One could assume, rightly, he feels safe.

He pulls to a stop. Isabel hops on, headed to work in a uniform: polyester shirt, and slacks. In her hand is a hat, adorned with furry kitten ears, a cheap *Hello Kitty* knockoff.

She is the first person that Gabriel actually acknowledges. He gives her a tiny smile before swiping his MTA card letting her board on his dime.

A SERIES OF DISSOLVES...

show the progress of time as Gabriel crisscrosses a Los Angeles at once familiar and exotic. Passengers dwindle down to one: Isabel. Gabriel pulls up to her stop, but she's fallen asleep. He stirs her awake. She smiles, embarrassed.

Gabriel eases his bus back into traffic...

CUT TO:

EXT. MTA BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

Gabriel pulls into the depot; the end of another shift.

INT. GABRIEL'S BUS - CONT'D

He notices a COMIC BOOK left under one of the seats and pockets it. He walks off the bus into

INT. MTA BUS DEPOT - CONT'D

Where he finds OSVALDO AKA "OZZY" -- a heavysset co-worker with long black hair heading to the break room.

OZZY

Hey -- you up for a little birthday celebration?

(off Gabriel's look)

Lopez's sixtieth. Might be hard for you to believe but we actually sometimes shoot the shit around here.

Gabriel covers.

GABRIEL

I can do that.

They head for the BREAK ROOM.

OZZY

Now you say yes. But, man, every time I've invited you to Korean BBQ you turn me down.

GABRIEL

I like to know what I'm eating.

OZZY

Soot Bull Jeep. Life changer.

Gabriel WORKS to be engaged.

GABRIEL

Next time.

As they near the BREAK ROOM:

OZZY

It's a suggested ten dollar contribution. Lopez likes imported.

GABRIEL

Not a problem.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a twenty.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

(off Ozzy's look)

I'll kick in a little extra.

Ozzy takes the cash and gestures to a gleaming METRO RAPID ACCORDION BUS.

OZZY

Keep it up, and one day they might let you drive that 60 footer, air conditioner always working, plasma screen equipped beaut.

(then)

My bus is 9 years old, man. My dad drives a newer car. And he's a dipshit.

INT. MTA BREAK ROOM - CONT'D

Gabriel and Ozzy walk in to find a GROUP of their co-workers drinking beer and eating cake.

GABRIEL

(softly)

Hey.

All eyes on Gabriel, SHOCKED.

CO-WORKER 1

Shit, man. He *does* speak English.

The room bursts into laughter. Gabriel, already anxious, smiles nervously, half waves -- moves toward the exit.

LOPEZ, 60, high chieftain of the break room, walks over to Gabriel, pointing to a tub of liquid by the soda machine:

LOPEZ

Get yourself some punch, George.

(then)

It is George, right? Romero?

Relief *quietly* washes over Gabriel.

GABRIEL

That's me.

LOPEZ
Sprite, vodka, Pabst. Hop, skip and go
naked, Romero.

GABRIEL
Beer is fine.

LOPEZ
Fridge is around the corner.

Gabriel rounds the corner, heads towards the fridge...
then keeps walking, out the door.

After a beat, people notice he's gone.

CO-WORKER 2
What's his face leave any money?

OZZY
That dipshit shorted us.

CO-WORKERS 4, 1 & 2
Fuuuuuuck.

Ozzy reaches into his pocket and pulls out the twenty.
Slapping it hard on the counter.

OZZY
I got it.

The group toasts to him.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. "PERALTA'S" MARKET, BOYLE HEIGHTS - CONT'D

Gabriel shops at a run-down deli with wall-to-wall Goya
cans. Suddenly, the store begins to SHAKE: WHOOMP
WHOOMP, a decibel defying bass that can be heard for
miles. Rusty's Dodge screeches into view.

Rusty STROLLS in scowling. Gabriel sees him and visibly
TENSES off the menace Rusty gives off. Rusty HELPS
himself to some items and heads for the EXIT.

For a brief moment, it feels as if Gabriel is going to do
something -- yell out possibly. But, he stops himself.

After another beat, he approaches the Cashier who,
ashamed, averts his eyes.

Gabriel sets his Jumex nectar on the counter.

GABRIEL
How much?

CASHIER
\$1.08.

GABRIEL
For his stuff, too.

CASHIER
You're sure?

GABRIEL
I saw a couple 12-packs of Dos Equis and
some Japanese peanuts, I think. You tell
me.

The Cashier's shame dissipates. He brightens, visibly.

CASHIER
(ringing Gabriel up)
\$21.25.

EXT. "THE ESTRADA COURTS" - EAST LA - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gabriel makes an effort to keep to himself as he trudges
through the housing project he calls home.

The "Estrada Courts" are stout, two-story buildings
spread out over three city blocks and adorned with wrap-
around MURALS of fallen homeboys, religious icons, and
layers of indecipherable graffiti.

Gabriel walks between jammed clotheslines passing a blank
wall where Fujita, armed with a can of spray paint,
considers a new design.

INT. GABRIEL'S APT. AT THE ESTRADA COURTS - LATER

A Spartan one-bedroom. Gabriel pours himself a glass of
water and studies his bus schedule taped to the wall by
the front door. His kitchen window looks directly out
into other apartments. Our eyes roam to other windows,
into other lives, all conspicuously untroubled by their
vulnerability to our gaze. In one such window is Isabel.

A KNOCK on his door and a sweet-natured boy pushes it
open. It's MANUEL holding a plate of his mom's chicken.

MANUEL
Mom said you looked hungry.

GABRIEL
Tell her thank you.

MANUEL
You tell her.

Gabriel turns to his window and holds the plate up towards Isabel:

GABRIEL
Thank you.
(remembering)
Oh --

He grabs the comic book he found earlier and hands it to Manuel.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
For your collection.

MANUEL
(one quick glance)
I already have that one.

Realizing that was rude, Manuel tries thanking him again, this time in a "robot voice" masking as sincerity.

MANUEL (CONT'D)
I mean, "Thank you for thinking of me. I will take it and treasure it forever."

GABRIEL
How's school?

MANUEL
I'm only in it for the chicks.

Though Gabriel is not a literal father to Manuel, he is completely present in his life.

GABRIEL
Drawn anything good lately?

MANUEL
I have a new character. Come over, I'll show you.

GABRIEL
Another night. Tired.

MANUEL
How can you be tired? You sit. All day. That's your job: sitting.

GABRIEL

That's not how I'd describe it.

MANUEL

When are you on the west side again?

GABRIEL

Tuesdays and Fridays.

MANUEL

You know I'm the only kid in school that's never seen the ocean.

GABRIEL

Bet there are a few in Monrovia. You guys should throw a party.

MANUEL

Let me come.

GABRIEL

I've explained this. Those are school days. And your mom rides my bus Tuesdays. She sees you skipping? I'd have to find a new place to live.

MANUEL

Then Friday.

GABRIEL

Again: school. Another time. On my day off.

MANUEL

You don't have a day off. And you don't have a car.

GABRIEL

We'll take the bus.

Manuel leaves. Gabriel removes the foil, grabs a drumstick. He notices Isabel still watching him. They smile. An innocent flirtation.

CUT TO:

INT. "LITTLE RASTAS" - NIGHT

Chris stares down at the bar from a second floor "VIP" room through a large picture window. The dance floor HEAVES with large women stuffed into tank tops; young men, in khaki cutoffs.

He struggles momentarily to seat and balance himself on a short ottoman and present himself to GUERO, 20s-30s -- the charismatic leader of the "Baby Narcos." Dressed in Ed Hardy, Guero is notches above the typical street thug.

He has an affinity for shaved ice DRENCHED in BLUE RASPBERRY SYRUP. He can rarely go long without one which leaves his mouth perpetually colored various shades of blue. In addition to his love of all things ICY, he likes people to think he's very smart and uses big words to showcase his intelligence. It is a quirk, along with his blue lips that only intensifies the fear people have of this wiry graduate of the streets whose greatest skill is hurting people. And although he'd never say it out loud, it is his talent for violence that he is most proud of.

Next to him, a ferocious 300 pounds of ripped muscle, covered in elaborate body art, "armor," that jackets him from head to toe, so dense at times it feels like it's moving -- is CHURCH, Guero's chief enforcer.

His teeth, many of which have been knocked out during his stint as cartel muscle in Jalisco, have been replaced by layers of metal. Braces to fix it, a gold grill to make it look better.

The result is, when he speaks, the sound of his voice is tinged with a dark squeak that hits many of the same chords as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* score. It makes him hard to understand but adds menace to his already deeply unsettling and intimidating presence.

CHRIS

(in Spanish)

My brother and me were delivering 15 elbows a week in Washington Heights at \$5000 a pound. Vacuum-packed cranberry *mois* -- *la mera mera crema*. We were golden. Then this guy who'd only been moving ounces calls and says he wants ten pounds. I was all, whaaat? But I tell him: "I'll do 5 and if it goes OK I'll do the rest." He agrees, then follows us home, beats the shit out of us, takes the *mois* and is all "I know where you live now, I even know where your mom lives, I know your dog's name" -- and he did. He fucking knew my dog's name.

Chris's Spanish is better than Guero's.

GUERO
 (re: Chris' accent)
 What are you Argentinian? Mexican?

CHRIS
 I'm a mix.
 (back to the story)
 So now we're on the line for some major
 bucks. We should've run.

GUERO
 (hooked)
 Did you?

Chris, begins to tweak his Spanish, gradually switching
 to Spanglish until he's speaking entirely in English.

CHRIS
 Nah. We worked our asses off selling
 bunk and *cois* and bussing tables until we
 paid him off. *Then* we ran. Me -- all the
 way to the Golden State. Out clean. Out
 forever.

CHURCH
 But, now you're here.

Chris is momentarily thrown -- not sure what Church said.

CHRIS
 Thanks to my fucking brother -- I am.
 Guy likes the life. He set up a new
 operation in Brownsville and... what can
 I say? Cell phones aren't exactly a fast
 track to an ocean view.

CHURCH
 He can't keep his shit in Texas?

A beat, thinking he understood the question:

CHRIS
 Excuse me?

CHURCH
 (incomprehensible)
 I said: he can't keep his shit in Texas?

A high pitched, metallic squeal from Church's grill
 lingers like audio feedback. It fades.

CHRIS
 No, I'm good.

CHURCH

NO. Why can't. He keep. His shit in Texas?

(then)

Your brother.

Chris finally catches on:

CHRIS

Oh. Damn. Because it's the Wild West down there, man. Fuck with the wrong people and they go Laredo on your ass. What he does have is a connection in the DF. He gets his shit from antidrug officials under the Drug Czar. I can roll up with two trucks at ten a key, 1000 keys in each truck. By the time that hits Florence -- you're all rich men.

Chris looks around, although Church visibly has some doubts he's winning over everyone else. Especially Guero, who sucks on his shave ice.

He eyes Church and then starts speaking to him in *Kabdrose* -- a dialect used to outsmart wiretaps and keep people unfamiliar with it, off-balance.

They use back-words. Sort of. If a word begins with a consonant they may start with an S. Like the name Paulie would actually be Sloppy.

Subtitles will be used.

GUERO

Kinth ryte ride 'em tou.

SUBTITLE: I think we should try him out.

Church nods. Chris has no idea what Guero said.

GUERO (CONT'D)

So you want to meet my aunt...?

CHRIS

Fuck yeah.

GUERO

You and me amalgamate on our thing that can happen.

Guero nods to Church who hands Chris one of the new Gusto Model phones. Putting a thick paw on his shoulder:

CHURCH

Be ready for show and tell when I text you. Bring the chack in the back and make him look good.

Although he only decipheres fragments of this statement, Church's sinister mien is enough for Chris to indicate he understood everything by nodding vigorously.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. "MRS. CANDY" WAREHOUSE - CONT'D

Guero, his lips a glistening turquoise, Church, and a handful of Baby Narcos stroll in. Dozens of workers on the bottom floor sort, pack and load hundreds of Mexican candies (chile-covered lollipops, little marzipan mangos, etc.) into idling cube trucks with the "Mrs. Candy" logo.

Guero GLIDES by a table of WORKERS stuffing handfuls of candy into piñatas. Guero grabs one of these men -- JULIO.

GUERO

(playful)

What oversight you perpetuate to get sent down to the kiddies table, bitch?

JULIO

(broken English)

Made some people upstairs look bad.

GUERO

(smiling)

I can guess who.

He keeps moving. Julio appreciates the attention. Looks at the others working at the piñata table to be sure they witnessed the exchange he just had with Guero.

CUT TO:

INT. "MRS. CANDY" UPSTAIRS OFFICE - CONT'D

Guero and Church walk into an office where employees do Mrs. Candy's real business: cutting and bagging cocaine.

This is done under the watchful eye of MRS. CANDY herself (40s in Sean John sweats; Big Pussy of the barrio).

Next to her is FAYO, her tall, thin-lipped advisor. Notable *not* for rocking a pocket square and *Paul Smith* socks, but for his eyes.

One of which is permanently dilated.

GUERO

The Samsung guy can get us 10 a key.

Fayo smirks -- *doubtful*.

MRS. CANDY

How big a load would I have to buy?

GUERO

2,000.

She's unsure.

GUERO (CONT'D)

(respectfully)

If you don't feel comfortable I can endeavor the guy. Like you said I could.

FAYO

(eyeing Church)

You make a new friend you think you got this all figured out, huh?

MRS. CANDY

I'll meet him.

GUERO

Wait. What?

MRS. CANDY

Set the meeting for *me*, Guero.

FAYO

(dismissive)

It's too big for you.

GUERO

It isn't your decision to make.

(to Candy)

Tia, you still don't think I'm ready?

CANDY

No, I don't. Like Fayo said. It's too big for you... and your babies.

Guero FUMES.

CANDY (CONT'D)

Don't "play" angry, little girl. Go.
Make this happen.

Thoroughly humiliated, Guero departs. Church levels both Candy and Fayo with a cold glare before he too, exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAMONA GARDENS - NIGHT

Julio cuts a considerably sad figure as he plods through another housing development in Boyle Heights. Unlike the Estrada Courts -- the Ramona Gardens are devoid of murals.

As Julio moves for his apartment he FISHES a "sugar" tube from his pocket emblazoned with the "Mrs. Candy" LOGO.

He tears off the top with his teeth, jams it in his nose, and INHALES. Rubs the residual cocaine on his fingers over his gums and pushes into --

INT. JULIO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - RAMONA GARDENS - CONT'D

To find, waiting for him, quietly pissed: ISABEL. He is visibly surprised to see her. The entire scene is in *SPANISH* except where noted.

ISABEL

I looked for you at Abel's.

JULIO

I don't work there anymore.

Isabel nods, looks at his wired eyes, glances at the sugar tubes in his hands, the *Mrs. Candy* logo --

ISABEL

I know who you're working for.

JULIO

(sharp, broken English)
What do you want?

ISABEL

I want to stop chasing you.

JULIO

You left me.

ISABEL

That's not how I remember it.

JULIO

I know this story.

ISABEL

You came first. You came first to get a REAL job.

JULIO

A real job wasn't what saved your ass and got you here.

Isabel looks off.

ISABEL

I don't understand what changed.

Julio glances at a reflection of himself in the mirror -- the tattoos creeping up his neck, the cocaine residue on his fingers.

JULIO

I tried to make us work.

Isabel looks off. She loved this man once.

ISABEL

Not like this...

JULIO

This place, it's like money jail. And I'm not interested in being something less than who I'm supposed to be.

ISABEL

You're supposed to be a father.

He knows what she wants.

JULIO

Shit's tight right now.

ISABEL

Be a man. Take care of your son--

Julio gets angry quick. And yells at her. In English:

JULIO

I'm making moves.

Isabel gets upset:

ISABEL
You aren't doing anything.

He takes her arm, aggressive and starts leading her to the front door.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
You can't just throw me out.

He pulls her to him -- hard.

JULIO
Where do you think we are?
 (then, tortured English)
You think some American judge is gonna listen to you?

He opens the door. Isabel limps into the evening.

JULIO (CONT'D)
I'm not a bank.

ISABEL
It'd be nice if your son stopped asking me if his dad cares about him.

This hangs in the air as Isabel turns away and heads for home on foot, defeated. Julio watches her for a beat; his face, for the first time, riddled with guilt.

FADE TO:

EXT./INT. GABRIEL'S BUS - THE NEXT MORNING

Gabriel's bus sighs to a stop in front of the SEARS TOWER on Soto Street, the tallest building east of downtown. Manuel -- in his school uniform -- notices the route sign, "PCH - Malibu," and climbs aboard.

LATER

Manuel looks out his window on his way west on Hollywood Blvd. He sees WONDER WOMAN posing with tourists before his attention returns to a drawing on his lap, a comic book panel depicting our opening: groups of people crawling through the oven.

Gabriel arrives at Manuel's school. Gabriel turns to the boy as if to say, "Get off." Manuel doesn't move.

It's a Mexican standoff. PASSENGERS fidget impatiently. After another beat, Gabriel relents and drives on.

INT./EXT. GABRIEL'S BUS, "PCH-MALIBU ROUTE" - MAGIC HOUR

The bus, empty save for Manuel, chugs along the PCH. From the rearview, Gabriel spots the boy's wonder at the ocean. Gabriel pulls over and Manuel jumps out and runs for the ocean.

Gabriel watches -- smiling at the boy's marvel. It is clear that internally Gabriel is THRILLED to have brought him here and shared it with the child.

EXT. THE BEACH - CONT'D

Gabriel catches up to an excited Manuel.

GABRIEL

Don't say anything about this to your mother.

MANUEL

I won't.

GABRIEL

Although you shouldn't keep secrets from her.

MANUEL

Then I'll tell her.

GABRIEL

I didn't say to do that either.

Manuel reaches the water's edge. He's gotten his wish.

MANUEL

Did you know there's a fence in Tijuana built into the sea?

GABRIEL

They hope it'll keep people from dreaming. But, it won't. Especially you.

MANUEL

Here.

He tosses Gabriel the comic book he's been drawing. Manuel's pictures (the sketches we will see throughout the story) have a youthful exuberance.

The cover depicts a faceless hero, "ANJEL," in a hooded sweatshirt perched on top of the Sears Tower in Boyle Heights, illuminated by the only working letter in the neon sign: a flickering "A."

Gabriel flips through a few panels. Quick flashes reveal -- drawings of Chris in Little Rasta's pitching Guero his goods -- an event that has already unfolded.

But as he flips FURTHER into it -- the images are blurry. First drafty and unclear. Lacking specificity.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

You like it?

GABRIEL

You mean "Angel." A-N-G-E-L.

MANUEL

Well, this dude spells it with a j and he knows these streets better than you.

GABRIEL

Better than me, huh? Does this one fly?

MANUEL

Sorta. He can jump and climb buildings like it's nothing.

Gabriel nods appreciatively.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

And, he slits throats and cuts people up.

GABRIEL

I don't know about that.

MANUEL

Wanna know where he is now? With my dad.
(he mimics smoking weed)
Making sure he doesn't screw up anymore.

Gabriel reacts to a few grisly panels of Anjel single-handedly taking down dozens of machine-gun-toting VILLAINS -- covered head-to-toe in RED tattoos -- a few of these symbols we've seen... on Church.

Gabriel does his best to cover a sudden twinge of *fear*.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

Those are The Barrio Devils.

Manuel doesn't catch this but Gabriel recognizes them.

GABRIEL

... I see.

Gabriel flips through more of the comic. Sees rough images of a ring. Masked wrestlers. More red-tattooed VILLAINS.

Gabriel flips to the end, but the pages are blank.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Who wins?

MANUEL

I'm not done yet.

Gabriel takes another look at "Anjel."

GABRIEL

Does he speak Spanish?

MANUEL

Of course.

GABRIEL

How's his English?

MANUEL

Mmm, not so good.

GABRIEL

Give him time. All heroes start out a little misunderstood.

(then)

He needs a cape.

MANUEL

No one wears capes any more.

GABRIEL

What's a superhero without a cape?

INT. "PRIMO'S ROPA USADA" USED CLOTHES - LATER THAT NIGHT

Heaping mounds of used clothes selling for pennies a pound. Gabriel approaches a CASHIER.

GABRIEL

Where could I find a cape?

The cashier is not amused.

Gabriel and Manuel wander the aisles, sifting through piles of clothes. Gabriel spots something.

He buries his hand into a stack and pulls out a small hooded sweatshirt so black it's almost blue. He hands it to Manuel who throws it on and strikes a pose, becoming Anjel.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

You were right. You don't need a cape.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. CHRIS' STUDIO APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT, CONT'D

The walls in Chris' \$300/month studio are bare. He is on the soda-stained carpet playing with his daughter ANA (4, adorable). Watching them from his bed is his wife CRISTINA, 20's, pretty, and intensely inquisitive.

CRISTINA

It's impressive. You. Living like this.

CHRIS

I know it lacks your sense of style.

(heartfelt)

I'm glad you came.

Cristina holds out a set of cheap, Virgin Mary earrings.

CRISTINA

These belong to the maid?

CHRIS

(unconvincing)

They were here when I moved in.

CRISTINA

(annoyed)

You would've sold them to your landlord.

He pulls her to him.

CHRIS

You know why I'm here.

CRISTINA

I do. This is a great thing for us.

She takes another look around the apartment.

CRISTINA (CONT'D)

Ana, time to go.

CHRIS

You just got here.

CRISTINA

We've been here long enough. Did you say
bye to daddy?

ANA

Bye daddy.

To Chris, all business:

CRISTINA

Wrap this up quick. Gateway to big
things.

Chris nods distantly. She kisses him and opens the door.
They leave. Chris stares after both of them, his
daughter especially. Once they vanish down the stairs --
Chris pulls out the gusto phone Church gave him.

He has no texts. Nothing to indicate the deal is on yet.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. MANUEL'S APT. - ESTRADA COURTS - NIGHT, CONT'D

Manuel (in his hero sweatshirt) lifts a small potted
plant and grabs his key. He heads straight for the
fridge. Inside is his dinner with a note. He reads it,
smiles, and pockets it.

MANUEL

(off Gabriel's look)

What?

GABRIEL

Nothing. It's nice. She loves you.

Manuel ignores him. He removes his dinner from a
Tupperware and pours it into a pan. He lights the pilot
and accidentally sings himself.

MANUEL

Ah, shit!

GABRIEL

Don't talk like that. Your mom's raising
a gentleman.

(reaching for the pan)

Let me.

MANUEL

(suddenly "cholo")

Alright, cool. You do that while I go
get some 40s, alright homes?

Manuel walks out of the apartment elbows up, side to side. After a beat, he comes back laughing.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

You thought, right? You totally thought.

EXT. MANUEL'S APARTMENT, ROOFTOP - NIGHT, CONT'D

WE FIND Gabriel and Manuel silently overlooking their neighborhood. It's a magical image, as if Manuel had drawn it: a starry night, a full moon, clotheslines flapping in the wind, the Sears Tower and its flickering "A."

GABRIEL

You always alone this late?

MANUEL

Since her new job.

GABRIEL

(nodding)

You know you can always come over if you ever get scared--

MANUEL

Scared?

GABRIEL

Lonely... you know, waiting for her.

MANUEL

(deadpan)

I've got my chicks and I've got my music.

GABRIEL

It's OK to feel shit like that.

MANUEL

Ah, you said shit.

Busted.

ISABEL (O.C.)

-- MANUEL!

INT. MANUEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT, CONT'D

Isabel sees Gabriel and Manuel climbing through the window.

ISABEL
 (in *Spanish*, angry)
Where have you been?

MANUEL
 (in English)
 We were at --

ISABEL
 (in *Spanish*)
No English!
 (to Gabriel)
 Or he'll forget.

Manuel opens his mouth to speak but Isabel cuts him off.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
 School called. Where were you?

GABRIEL
 (guiltily)
 Isabel, it was my fault.

ISABEL
 (re: her son's new hoodie)
 Where did you get that?

GABRIEL
 I bought it for him.

ISABEL
 (her wrath building)
 He has a father like that already. Not
 around to raise him but sure as hell able
 to "hang out" with him.

MANUEL
 Mom, don't --

ISABEL
 (sharp)
 Quiet.
 (to Gabriel)
 He doesn't need another friend, Gabriel.
 He needs something better.

Gabriel looks at the boy and then back at Isabel:

GABRIEL
 You're right.

And he walks out the door. Manuel GOES after him.

MANUEL

Gabriel! Wait!

He SWINGS back to his Mom, eyes brimming with rage. Hurt.

MANUEL (CONT'D)

It was my idea to skip!

ISABEL

I expect Gabriel to know better.

MANUEL

No. You just want me alone all the time.

ISABEL

I want you in school.

Manuel, furious, STALKS off to his room. Isabel sighs, leans against the counter.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIEL'S APARTMENT - SOME MINUTES LATER

Gabriel paces -- worked up and frustrated with himself. There's a knock at the door -- his pace slows. He opens the door to find Isabel standing there, sheepish.

ISABEL

I'm sorry--

GABRIEL

(overlapping)
No, it's my fault.

ISABEL

The last couple of days have been tough.

GABRIEL

Please. It was...

He trails off and the two of them smile at each other. There is a tension that Gabriel breaks, consciously, by stepping away from her -- into his apartment.

She clocks it's sparseness. The bare walls.

ISABEL

You didn't bring anything with you from home...?

GABRIEL
 (softly)
 I want to forget.

ISABEL
 What?

He pivots quickly:

GABRIEL
 Are you hungry?

ISABEL
 YES. Starving.
 (then)
 But, I don't have anything at the house.
 I could go to the store--?

GABRIEL
 No, no. Let's go out.

No sooner has he suggested this when he is suddenly questioning whether or not it's a good idea for them to all go out.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
 But, Manuel already ate.

ISABEL
 He's always hungry.

GABRIEL
 It's a school night.

ISABEL
 I have to get back on his good side
 somehow.

Seeing she really wants to go, Gabriel puts his hand on her shoulder gently.

GABRIEL
 Okay. We'll go. Ozzy's always -- a guy
 from work -- he's always talking about
 this place...

He sees she is looking at his hand on her shoulder. He removes it quickly, awkwardly.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
 ... maybe we could all try it?

Off her look...

CUT TO:

INT. "SOOT BULL JEEP" KOREAN BBQ RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A grill-it-yourself barbecue joint in Koreatown. Gabriel, Isabel and Manuel watch as a KOREAN WAITRESS puts a platter of raw meat, all different shades of purple, on their table.

GABRIEL

One of them's supposed to be pork.

Stabbing at it with his fork:

MANUEL

Which one?

GABRIEL

I think this one.

He slaps the meat and a dozen cloves of garlic onto the charcoal grill. SMOKE spits into the air and Isabel's make-up begins to run.

Gabriel expertly holds his chopsticks and digs into his rice. Manuel does his best to copy Gabriel.

ISABEL

You have nice table manners. You aren't some rich kid are you?

GABRIEL

(matter-of-fact)

Yes. Exactly. That's what I was hiding.

Manuel looks from his Mom to Gabriel:

MANUEL

Hiding what?

GABRIEL

Your mom assumes I have secrets. And she just caught me. Yes, Isabel. I am very wealthy. I bribed Cesar to let me live among you while I research my thesis on immigration reform.

Isabel continues to laugh. Manuel joins in. While he doesn't "get" the joke, he's happy.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
 (gentle, reflective)
 I just had a great mom.

He places a questionable piece of meat on Manuel's plate.

MANUEL
 Is it cooked?

GABRIEL
 I hope so.

Manuel tries it and then FEIGNS choking.

MANUEL
 Aaahh -- it's poison!

Gabriel grabs him playfully and Manuel laughs.

MANUEL (CONT'D)
 (through mouthfuls of food)
 It's delicious, Mom.

Gabriel places cooked meat on Isabel's plate. She studies him:

ISABEL
 There is so much I don't know about you.
 And we practically live in one another's
 home.

GABRIEL
 Separated by metal clotheslines.

ISABEL
 Two worlds, two lives, kept apart by
 Hector's underwear.

GABRIEL
 We should pitch in and buy him some
 bleach.

ISABEL
 I wake up to that -- "a room with a view"
 they said.

They smile knowingly. He flips some of the meat.

MANUEL
 We know you don't have a girlfriend.

ISABEL
 Manuel!

Gabriel blushes. Manuel smiles mischievously.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
... you're shy.

GABRIEL
It's just better I'm alone.

He serves up some more meat.

ISABEL
No one's better alone.

Her hand is about to touch his when a waitress tosses a glass of water on the sizzling grill sending steam spiraling skyward and ruining the moment.

EXT. ESTRADA COURTS/INT. ISABEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Gabriel walks Isabel and Manuel home, all reeking of charcoal and garlic. Her cheeks are streaked with mascara.

ISABEL
It's late, little man.

MANUEL
Mom...!

ISABEL
Teeth brushing in 5-4-3--

Manuel STARTS off but stops. Turns back to Gabriel:

MANUEL
(genuine)
Thank you for dinner, Gabriel.
(off his Mom's look)
I'm going, I'm going.

He GOES home. Gabriel and Isabel follow him to her apartment, slowly. They arrive at her front door, left open by Manuel. Gabriel is unsure what to do. He does what he thinks is safe and starts to retreat.

GABRIEL
Good night, Isabel.

She really doesn't want him to go.

ISABEL
You don't want to come inside for a nightcap?

GABRIEL
 (playful)
 Wow. You're "hardcore, ese."

Isabel acts "cholo" right back at Gabriel (she's good, almost as good as her son).

ISABEL
 I know, ese. Pull out the moronga, vato.

She grabs his arm and pulls him INSIDE.

INT. ISABEL'S APARTMENT - CONT'D

Gabriel remains near the door, resistant.

GABRIEL
 I have an early shift. Canoga Park.

ISABEL
 I don't know anything west of the 5.

GABRIEL
 Canoga Park means I did something to piss off my dispatcher.

She grabs some glasses.

ISABEL
 Live a little.
 (scanning the fridge)
 A Coronita? A tequilita...? Bailey's?

She shows off the Bailey's bottle as if it were something she only pulls out on special occasions.

GABRIEL
 (off her enthusiasm)
 Oh, wow. Bailey's. I'll have that.

He goes to her as she pours out the Bailey's.

ISABEL
 It's been awhile since I've had an adult conversation.

She looks in the direction of Manuel's room.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
 A few days ago... he comes into my room and says, "Beckham named his son after the city his parents did it in. Where did you and dad do it?"

GABRIEL
No "good morning?"

ISABEL
No. He wanted to know where we'd...

GABRIEL
Sure, seems natural.

The temperature rises. Gabriel tries to tamp it down.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
He's a great kid.

ISABEL
Nice to hear a man acknowledge that.

GABRIEL
His dad lives around here, yeah?

ISABEL
Never know it. Shows up now and then.
Drunk. Hung over. Always angry.
(then)
He wasn't like that before.
(wistful)
At least the result of being young, dumb
and in love is my son.
(then)
Thank you for tonight.

Against his better judgement, he moves closer to her.

GABRIEL
We'll do it again.

Isabel is visibly happy and her body language reads as such. He leans in to kiss her good night--

ISABEL
(covering)
Is my breath as bad as yours right now?

GABRIEL
Yeah. Really, really bad.

They repel backward covering their mouths. Isabel catches her reflection in a mirror and wants to die.

ISABEL
(smacking him playfully)
Why didn't you tell me?

CUT TO:

INT. MANUEL'S ROOM - CONT'D

Manuel is drawing in his comic book and listening to his Mom and Gabriel flirt. A development, given his expression, he is very happy about.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIO'S STUDIO APARTMENT - RAMONA GARDENS - NIGHT

Julio is playing video games, speaking words out loud, back words -- practicing Kabdrose. With his poor English, it almost sounds like gibberish. He tries hard to be good at it.

JULIO

Paulie. *Sloppy*. Word. *Drow*.

Suddenly, the front door opens and Guero, crumpling up a finished shaved ice cup, his lips bright blue, and Church enter. This startles Julio. He rises meekly in their presence.

Patting Julio's shoulder, gesturing:

GUERO

Don't get up. Relax. Door was unlocked.

Julio sits. Guero eyes the television.

GUERO (CONT'D)

I love this game. You using the mayhem cheat...?

Julio has no idea what that is, nods. He wants to fit in. And he will soldier through this scene speaking English as best he can.

GUERO (CONT'D)

You can deracinate everything with one punch. You imagine being able to do that for real?

(to Church)

You ever play this game?

Church shakes his head.

GUERO (CONT'D)

Nah, of course not cuz Church can deracinate motherfuckers for real.

Guero sits in front of Julio, leans in close.

GUERO (CONT'D)

Cool?

JULIO

Of course. You know I'm cool.

GUERO

We got this thing set up with Shrek.
You know him? The Sprint guy?

JULIO

Think so.

GUERO

Our thing with him is going down tonight.
And it's important that I make a
demonstrable show of power.

(off Julio's look)

My aunt is finally giving me a chance.

Julio attempts to speak to Guero in **KABDROSE**.

JULIO

Congratulations.

Guero gives him a look.

GUERO

Huh?

Julio realizes he made a mistake.

JULIO

(quickly, in Spanish)

*I'm sorry. I was trying to work on my
kabdrose. I said congratulations--*

Guero cuts him off.

GUERO

You're with me.

Julio's rising anxiety is replaced with pride.

GUERO (CONT'D)

I want to run this like Candy. You know
how my aunt likes to do with new people?

JULIO

Be prepared.

Standing up and nodding:

GUERO

Someone paid attention at job orientation.

He exits the apartment. Church puts his hand on Julio.

CHURCH

Guero appreciates that he can count on you. Till tonight.

Off Julio, this unexpected ascension making him nervous...

FADE TO:

INT. EAST SIDE LUV BAR - THE NEXT DAY

Chris is having lunch. A GUY ambles up to the bar next to him, orders a beer and flashes a thick roll of CASH.

Chris's eyes light up. There's always cash to be hustled.

CHRIS

If I said I had an uncanny ability to pick up strippers, what would you say--?

His cell phone BUZZES.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Hold that thought.

He looks at his cellphone. It's a text from Church: "Tonight."

Chris is quickly anxious. The deal is finally ON. He pulls out another cell phone -- a picture of ANA is the screen saver. He starts scrolling through it. His anxiety compelling him to reach out to his family.

GUY

What's your stripper secret? I've been trying to pick them up for years.

CHRIS

(distant)

I knew this one girl, Cinnamon, we used to sell organic tequila...

He keeps SCROLLING through names. Stops. Dials a number -- a picture of CRISTINA and ANA appear. Off the ring...

CHURCH (V.O.)
 (pre-lap)
 "And do this, knowing the hour..."

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

Church with precision and great craftsmanship "inks" Guero's arm with a tattoo that is identical to the shapes branded on the barrio devils in Manuel's comic book.

CHURCH
 "That now it is high time for us to arise
 from sleep..."

He STICKS another needle of ink into Guero, who winces.

GUERO
 (off Church's glower)
 Fucking aggrieves me, man.

Digging the needle in deeper:

CHURCH
 It's supposed to hurt.

INT. CHURCH'S LIVING ROOM - MANY MINUTES LATER

Guero looks at the new tattoo on his arm -- it is *identical* to the tattoos on the Barrio Devils in Manuel's comic book.

He throws on a SNAZZY jacket, and stuffs a handgun into his waistband. Church enters.

CHURCH
 Nice jacket.

GUERO
 A bonus from my aunt.

Church goes into his closet and rummages around for a beat before he pulls out a rusting Russian made GP-30 grenade launcher.

With a pitiless grin, he hands it to a saucer eyed Guero.

Like a kid in a candy store, he takes the weapon from Church. Cradles it like a baby.

GUERO (CONT'D)

I've only ever seen this on the news they watch at the kebab place.

(then)

This is for real?

CHURCH

(nodding)

You want to be remembered.

As this sinks in...

CUT TO:

INT. MTA BUS (STOPPED) - EAST LA - LATE AFTERNOON

Cesar is sound asleep on the back row. The bus is empty. Gabriel stands above him and gently shakes him awake.

CESAR

(stirring)

What...?

GABRIEL

You're home.

Cesar adjusts to his surroundings. Takes Gabriel in:

CESAR

Looking ragged there, papi.

GABRIEL

I started in Canoga Park.

CESAR

What'd you do to piss off dispatch?

He stands up, pulls himself together:

CESAR (CONT'D)

You got \$35?

(Gabriel nods)

Go see Kitty Kat in Thai Town. Get her to step out the stress -- then take Isabel for a night on the town.

GABRIEL

I have.

CESAR

Now we're talking, papadapolous.

(then)

Where'd you go?

GABRIEL
I took her and Manuel--

CESAR
I think it's time you and she did
something, you know, just the two of you.

Gabriel's cheeks redden. Seeing this:

CESAR (CONT'D)
Yesss. You know, "Be fruitful and
multiply" was just some pretentious
dude's gilded interpretation of what God
was really telling his children which was
go out and--
(mouths)
FUCK.

He does an in-out motion with his arm.

GABRIEL
Take it easy, Father.

Throwing his arm around him, laughing:

CESAR
Hallelujah, the Dead has arisen!

They move down the center aisle of the bus.

CESAR (CONT'D)
There ain't nothing to be afraid of!

A darkness flickers across Gabriel. They arrive at the
front of the bus. Looking out at the neighborhood:

CESAR (CONT'D)
It's nice to be able to drive to the
other side of the bridge.

GABRIEL
Yeah?

CESAR
You don't see it.

GABRIEL
See what?

CESAR
Our neighborhood. It's getting bad.

GABRIEL

You told me a long time ago to steer clear of Mrs. Candy.

He pulls a lever opening the front doors.

CESAR

I think you're the only person in my whole congregation that listened to me about her. I worry, you know. Not just about Candy either... bigger elements. The whole rotten infrastructure.

(then)

I can only do so much.

GABRIEL

Were we better off before?

CESAR

No. You, of all people, no.

(off Gabriel's look)

I know where you're from, the violence you saw.

Not giving him anything:

GABRIEL

I don't know what you're talking about.

Cesar notes Gabriel's stonewall. Pats him on the shoulder:

CESAR

You go and see Kitty Kat? Tell her I have her money.

He bops down the steps and out of the bus.

FADE TO:

EXT. ESTRADA COURTS - DUSK

Gabriel heads home and passes Fujita who is putting the finishing touches on a new mural. Gabriel takes it in --

It's an East Los Angeles version of *The Course of Empire*... Mariachi Plaza is alive with people but all around them, if you look closely, a darkness GATHERS...

Gabriel turns away from the mural and takes in his surroundings -- saturated in rich Technicolor hues. The neighborhood breathes, alive. Things *feel* okay.

Gabriel moves on.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIEL'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

Gabriel changes out of his MTA uniform. And looks at himself in the mirror. On one arm he has a BRAND, a very clear symbol: a P shot through the letter X.

But, the rest of his body -- his chest and his back are riddled with vicious scars. For a *brief* moment we almost hear a guttural ROAR from his past which is interrupted--

ISABEL (O.C.)

Gabriel? Are you home?

Gabriel throws on his shirt and goes to his kitchen to find Isabel across the way at her kitchen window. He waves. She holds up a container of food:

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Leftovers?

HECTOR (O.C.)

(in *Spanish*)

I just ate! Next time!

Gabriel and Isabel smile at one another. He mouths, "*In a minute.*"

CUT TO:

INT. ISABEL'S APARTMENT - DUSK - CONT'D

Gabriel enters.

ISABEL

Manuel! Dinner!

GABRIEL

I'll get him.

Isabel nods and pours the meat into a pan to reheat.

CUT TO:

INT. MANUEL'S ROOM - CONT'D

Gabriel enters. Manuel is not there. Gabriel sees the window is open and knows where the boy is.

As he goes to climb up to the roof he passes Manuel's comic open to a new drawing... rough. Sketches really.

But, the drawing that is beginning to take shape appears to be a meeting of ARMED MEN on a street in Boyle Heights.

EXT. ROOF - DUSK - CONT'D

Gabriel GRACEFULLY PROPELS himself onto the roof to find Manuel looking out over the neighborhood in his "Anjel" sweatshirt -- hood pulled up.

GABRIEL

Keeping an eye on the neighborhood?

MANUEL

Someone has to...

GABRIEL

(good-naturedly)

I don't recommend it on an empty stomach.

Manuel gives him a serious look. He's not messing around.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Dinner's on.

Manuel nods and heads inside. Gabriel takes a look out across the neighborhood -- clouds loom.

INT. ISABEL'S APARTMENT - DUSK - CONT'D

She sees Gabriel and Manuel climbing through the window.

ISABEL

What is he doing up there all the time?

GABRIEL

Protecting the streets.

ISABEL

Oh... good.

She sets out the food. Her cell rings. The ring-tone is set to a catchy cumbia and she unconsciously dances across the room. Manuel's head bops to the beat until the song plays itself out. Isabel sees the Caller ID and chooses not to answer.

Then, from outside, we hear SHOUTS:

JULIO (O.S.)
ISABEL! I know you're in there.

Isabel's demeanor changes instantly. She goes to the door.

ISABEL
Go away.

JULIO (O.S.)
Let me see my son.

ISABEL
You're high.

JULIO (O.S.)
No, I'm not. Please, open the door.

MANUEL
Open the door, mom.

She does, reluctantly. Julio stands there. He spies Manuel over her shoulder and salutes him faux-militarily.

JULIO
Licenciado.

Manuel breaks a smile; his eyes fill with tears. He misses his dad.

MANUEL
(saluting back)
Diputado.

Julio takes a step toward his son -- but finds Gabriel.

JULIO
(*in Spanish*)
Who are you?

ISABEL
(*in Spanish*)
Our friend: Gabriel.

JULIO
(eyeing Manuel, *in Spanish*)
Our?

Manuel avoids his dad's gaze -- not wanting to hurt his dad's feelings and admit that Gabriel is his friend too.

In an attempt to blunt the tension:

GABRIEL
(in Spanish)
I was just about to leave.

Julio sees the table all set.

JULIO
(strained, angry English)
 Doesn't look like it.

ISABEL
(in Spanish)
Julio, come back tomorrow.

JULIO
(in Spanish)
I want to see my son now.

ISABEL
 Please.

JULIO
(charged, in Spanish)
You're still my wife.

GABRIEL
(in Spanish)
You should go.

Julio sizes Gabriel up. And then without warning pulls a KNIFE and steps toward Gabriel menacingly. Before Isabel or Manuel can react something shifts in Gabriel -- his eyes, his demeanor -- it twists into something genuinely frightening.

In a series of violent moves, Gabriel DISARMS Julio and UPENDS him onto the table. Gabriel cocks his fist, ready to deliver the death blow, when Manuel leaps in front of him.

MANUEL
 Stop it! Leave him alone!

The boy's sobbing snaps Gabriel back to reality. He backs off of Julio. He tries to console Manuel, who recoils.

MANUEL (CONT'D)
 Don't.

Gabriel walks OUT; his face stained with confusion. Isabel watches him, in shock at what she just witnessed him do so effortlessly.

JULIO
 (slowly rising to his feet)
 I'm going.

MANUEL
 I'm sorry, dad.

Julio takes his boy in, staggering to the front door.

JULIO
 Big things are happening for your father.
 I'll be able to get you an X-Box.

MANUEL
Come back tomorrow?

JULIO
We'll see.

He gives his wife a cold, anguished stare before
 DEPARTING. Isabel puts her arm around Manuel who pushes
 it off and goes to his room.

INT. MANUEL'S ROOM - CONT'D

Manuel stares out the window. He sees Julio jog/limp to
 a waiting car. Inside of it are Zeiddy and Rusty. The
 image reeks of trouble and this visibly affects Manuel.

The boy pulls his hood over his head and climbs out the
 window and into the night. As he passes under a street
 light it casts a shadow on the side of a blank wall.

It looks like Anjel...

CUT TO:

EXT. MRS. CANDY'S HOME - DIAMOND BAR - ESTABLISHING

Mrs. Candy, rocking *Adidas* running shorts, an *LA Clippers*
 jersey and flip flops finishes mowing a very small patch
 of lawn.

Her house, a nouveau two story Italianate structure, sits
 on a cul de sac in a suburban housing development of
 identical homes.

Candy wipes her brow and smiles at a group of CHILDREN
 loitering at the mouth of her driveway. At her home it's
 Halloween all year long. She walks over to them, digging
 into her pockets and handing out candies.

CANDY
 (winking, *in Spanish*)
*Don't tell your parents where you got
 them.*

The Children thank her and hurry home. Candy heads up her driveway to her garage. Behind her, Guero and Church pull up in Guero's car.

Guero gets out and approaches her.

MRS. CANDY
 Fayo was going to pick me up?

GUERO
 I wanted to take you.

MRS. CANDY
 You're early. Gonna take me a minute.
 (gesturing to her lawn)
 I need to wash up.

GUERO
 Why don't you have someone mow your dirt?

Mrs. Candy puts her arm around her nephew.

MRS. CANDY
 Since you were a little boy what have I
 always said? Don't pay for things you
 can afford to--

Having heard this a million times before, Guero finishes her thought.

GUERO
 Do yourself.

MRS. CANDY
 I knew you listened to me sometimes.

They walk into her GARAGE. She neatly hangs the towel she used to wipe her brow on a work station BRIMMING with POWER TOOLS. Guero stares at them.

GUERO
 You work hard. I just think you should
 treat yourself once in awhile.

MRS. CANDY
 The flashy ones never last.

GUERO

Everyone here in this neighborhood,
albeit, is predisposed to hire a leaf
blower.

MRS. CANDY

(hard)

You need to be smart, Guero.

GUERO

(defensive)

I read. *Details. Forbes.*

MRS. CANDY

This AT&T guy works out -- it's going to
mean a lot more cash in your pocket.

GUERO

I should be doing this one on my own.

Candy glances at Church waiting in Guero's car.

MRS. CANDY

You find this guy in Albuquerque...? And
bring him back here -- and suddenly you
think you know everything?

GUERO

You showed me the angles.

MRS. CANDY

I didn't have a choice.

She takes in her nephew, his bruised blue lips, and the
way the light falls on his frame. She works to cover how
disconcerting the image he's presenting is.

MRS. CANDY (CONT'D)

I bought you that jacket.

GUERO

Yeah, was just saying that.
(then, re: the angles)
You regret showing me?

She fiddles with her power tools.

MRS. CANDY

Only because of what it reminds me of.

His thoughts drifting to his past, Guero turns away from
her.

GUERO

I would have liked to have known him better.

MRS. CANDY

Me too. I like to think that he's happy with the job that I did.

GUERO

You'll know soon enough.

MRS. CANDY

(to his back)

What'd you say?

Guero WHIPS around -- pistol drawn.

GUERO

You had to know I'd find out eventually.

Candy's EYES go WIDE.

MRS. CANDY

Guero, what are you--

He SHOOTS her in her mouth, blowing off her lower jaw. She stands there for a beat, stunned. She tries to adjust what's left of the bottom half of her face.

As warm blood cascades over her hand, she turns away from Guero and starts to walk into her house from a door in the garage.

Guero SHOOTS her again.

Candy FLOPS into a messy jangle in her doorway. Blood and hard candies spilling onto the concrete floor of the garage.

Guero steps over chunks of her mouth, takes off his jacket and lays it over her corpse before he heads to the waiting car.

He smiles at a pleased Church -- shot through with adrenaline -- his blue lips BRIGHT.

CUT TO:

INT. ISABEL'S APARTMENT - CONT'D

Isabel picks up the mess left behind by Gabriel and Julio's fracas. She looks over at Gabriel's apartment. It is dark. She turns toward Manuel's room.

It seems too quiet.

ISABEL

Manuel...?

She waits another beat. Then, heads into

INT. MANUEL'S ROOM - CONT'D

Empty. His window curtains flutter in the wind.

ISABEL

Manuel?

She goes to the open window and stares out onto the dark street. She looks down at her son's comic. It is open to the drawing of ARMED MEN meeting on a street in Boyle Heights. Shooting. Sketches of a massive explosion.

Off her worried look...

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN BOYLE HEIGHTS - SAME TIME

Manuel walks the quiet streets alone. Then, chilling, muffled NOISES... followed by misshapen, disfigured shadows dancing on walls. CRASH. He spins nervously. A GUST OF WIND blows a NEWSPAPER his way. It flies over his head, twirling and landing at the mouth of an alley.

Then his imagination takes over: the newspaper rises, its shadow the shape of a BARRIO DEVIL, a villain from his comic book. He's trapped -- when from above, he sees another shadow, splayed on brick, morph into his hero. (Note: Manuel's characters are coming to life only in his mind).

Anjel swoops down and *shreds* the Devil. Pieces of him swirl around before blowing out into the city. Manuel gives Anjel's shadow a grateful nod. The shadow responds with a playful gesture of success.

Confidence restored, Manuel sprints away. It almost looks like he's walking into one of his own comic book panels before, in his rear, HEADLIGHTS obliterate the shadow.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE AVE, BOYLE HEIGHTS - NIGHT, CONT'D

Guero and Church pull up to a convoy of vehicles. Julio, Rusty, Zeiddy and a handful of Baby Narcos wait.

Guero and Church get out. Guero eyes Zeiddy. Their dialogue is in *Kabdrose*, and **SUBTITLED**.

GUERO

You hear from T-Mobile?

ZEIDDY

He's on his way.

CUT TO:

EXT. MRS. CANDY'S HOME - DIAMOND BAR - CONT'D

Fayo and a CREW of CANDY LOYALISTS pull up to her home in a number of cars. Fayo hops out and jogs toward her home.

He slows near the garage and spots her corpse instantly. His eyes ZERO IN on Guero's jacket. Filled with rage, Fayo SPRINTS for his cars, YELLING.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIEL'S APARTMENT - CONT'D

Gabriel emerges from a shower. A knock at the front door - Isabel. She peeks inside.

Isabel walks in, looking around, her anxiety growing.

ISABEL

He isn't here...?

Off Gabriel's concerned look...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE HEIGHTS - LATE NIGHT, CONT'D

Manuel unwittingly runs closer to Boyle Avenue.

EXT. ESTRADA COURTS/BOYLE HEIGHTS - CONT'D

Gabriel searches wildly for the boy.

GABRIEL

Manuel!

EXT. BOYLE AVE - CONT'D

Chris's Camry roars toward the group. He rolls to a stop behind Guero's car. He gets out.

CHRIS

Am I early?

GUERO

My aunt won't be joining us this evening.

Chris SLOWS. Tension builds.

GUERO (CONT'D)

Come on, Boost Mobile, let's see this.

Chris GATHERS QUICK, flashes a confident grin:

CHRIS

The chack's in the back.

He leads Guero to the rear of his car and POPS the trunk. At the sight of a shoebox-size kilo of blow, Guero smiles.

GUERO

(eyeing Church)

It's like my aunt always said: "Do it in the open."

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE AVE - ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE DEAL - CONT'D

Manuel APPROACHES the gathering. A worried adrenaline COURSES through the boy. He doesn't want his father to be a part of this. He nears a bench. He finds cover behind it and begins trying to SPOT his Father in the group of men circling each other.

SUDDENLY, there is the ROAR OF MULTIPLE VEHICLES.

Fayo and his men BURST ONTO THE SCENE. Their vehicles SCREECHING up to the deal, GUNS BLAZING.

A number of Baby Narcos are SHOT TO PIECES.

Fayo and his crew EMERGE from their vehicles which have formed a semi-circle around Guero's cars.

Both sides strain for cover. Cars and humans are SHREDDED as the scene descends into a VICIOUS GUNFIGHT, QUICK.

Manuel JOLTS with each successive POP of gunfire.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE AVENUE, A BLOCK FROM MANUEL - CONT'D

A stray bullet whistles in Gabriel's direction, and spiderwebs a windshield. Gabriel runs faster.

BACK TO:

EXT. BOYLE AVE - CONT'D

Manuel is FROZEN as Guero's Men and Fayo's crew continue to EXCHANGE gunfire. Both sides have men dropping in bullet-riddled droves.

SLUGS ZIP dangerously close to Manuel.

We GO WIDE -- with every gun shot and flash of light the live action images POP with animation.

Slowly, GRAPHICS FORM, a graffiti mania imprint, until the entire SHOOT OUT evolves entirely into ANIMATION.

In a rapid, flip-book style--

FLIP BOOK CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOT-OUT ON BOYLE AVENUE - ANIMATED - NIGHT

Across the street, Manuel's eyes DART ABOUT as he hurriedly tries in VAIN to PIN-POINT where Julio, his father, is in this melee.

The FORCE of all the ABRUPT SHOOTING knocks Chris on his ass -- STUNNED.

Julio staggers BACK away from the violence. AFRAID.

Guero fearlessly SPRAYS a handful of Candy LOYALISTS with a fusillade.

Church BARRELS over the roof of a car, bullets nipping at his heels. For a moment it *appears* as if his tattoos are alive and *moving*.

FLIP BOOK CUT TO:

EXT. BOYLE AVENUE, BLOCK FROM MANUEL - ANIMATED - CONT'D

Gabriel continues his RELENTLESS sprint to the gun fight. All around him, lights are going on, a neighborhood is reacting to the violence. And in the distance -- the first SQUAWKS of a police response.

FLIP BOOK CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOT-OUT ON BOYLE AVENUE - ANIMATED - CONT'D

Chris LEAPS into his car. Salvos ZIP overhead. He manages to JAM his KEYS into the ignition, and TWIST IT. His engine hums to life. He can barely hear it over shattering glass. With his hands he PUSHES HARD DOWN on the gas.

His VEHICLE PUNCTURES through one of Fayo's cars.

Meanwhile, Julio finds himself in the open, inches from being torn apart in the CROSS-FIRE, clumsily trying to pull a gun from his waistband.

Across the street, Manuel sees the precariousness of Julio's position and moves toward him. The tip of his hood is momentarily back-lit by sodium street lights casting an "*anjelic*" shadow over the combatants. Manuel SEES this shadow. Reacts to it. Empowered by it.

Gabriel ROUNDS a corner just in TIME to see Manuel LAUNCH himself across the STREET, heading RIGHT for Julio.

Gabriel SLOWS at the SIGHT of this. Hesitates. Amazed. The boy moves with a grace and a beauty of movement that is right at the limit of humanly possible. We travel WITH Manuel. Leaping over bullets, somersaulting toward Julio. It's balletic.

Church OPENS Guero's trunk and PULLS out the grenade launcher. Julio SEES Church with that grenade launcher. Aimed in his general direction. He FREEZES.

Church steps toward the combatants, MOVES to FIRE the grenade launcher. Mercilessly.

A SUDDEN FLURRY of movement beside Julio. It's Manuel.

MANUEL

MOVE!

Off the THWOOP of an RPG being FIRED -- the ENTIRE SCENE is CONSUMED by a MASSIVE FIREBALL and the ANIMATION is VIOLENTLY RETURNED to LIVE ACTION.

Gabriel SHRINKS behind a concrete bench to shield himself from the blast.

Those combatants still alive use this moment to RETREAT to SAFETY.

Julio's eyes FLUTTER OPEN. He is surrounded by fire, car debris and bodies. He sees something -- the tip of a hoodie. He crawls to it as cars screech past him.

It is Manuel. He grabs his son's hand and begins running -- then stops. Manuel flops to his side... BLOOD pooling underneath him... the child has been shot through with shrapnel. Julio drops to his knees, emitting a guttural, almost inhuman cry of pain.

Gabriel hears this and knows IMMEDIATELY what has happened. As he approaches the carnage, SUDDENLY, a SHADOW -- ANJEL'S -- LEAPS ABOVE THE FRAY.

As it was in Manuel's imagination moments before, the animated shadow, its face obscured, RUNS up the side of a building. The aftermath of the gunfight is visible below, having returned to a vibrantly colored animation.

THE SHADOW reaches the roof of a building above the violence. It moves toward us, mere inches from the camera. Face impossible to make out.

A light FLICKERS revealing

MANUEL

And then that light is SNUFFED OUT.

END PILOT