

DESERT RATS

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First, over BLACK, we hear the SOUND of **David Banner's 'Get Like Me.'** Scattered laughs coming from teenage boys.

EXT. CARL'S HOUSE - DAY

A shitty iPod video frames ALEX (14), carrying an American Flag over his back, as he descends from the front door, down the walkway of a modest looking desert home. He's gliding along to the song, jerking, moonwalking with swag. He has boxing gloves on.

KOTY
Eww, you ugly!

CARL
Okay, okay I see you.

Carl's cousin, BO (16), backs up with his iPod to frame the lawn. CARL (14) steps to the middle of the grass and waves his arms, calling two people to the center. KOTY (14, tall, black) meets Alex's gaze as the two attempt to not smile.

CARL (CONT'D)
Okay, more than anything I want a good fight over a clean fight, but try to keep it clean if you can...or not cause that's kinda better for us. Fighters touch gloves if you choose to.

Koty extends his gloves out, but Alex begins backing up to his side of the lawn.

BO
Damnnn, it's like that?

CARL
Atta boy Alex, that's what I like to see!

Koty retreats to his side.

CARL (CONT'D)
(to Alex)
Alright, fighter you ready?
(to Koty)
You ready?
Let's go to war!

Koty immediately sprints to the other side, meeting Alex on his side before he has a chance to do anything.

He begins throwing BOMBS consecutively while Alex blocks his face, trying to duck the onslaught. Carl and his cousin are laughing hysterically.

CARL (CONT'D)

Beat his ass!

Alex attempts to circle out and get some distance but he is swarmed by a barrage of sloppy punches: hooks, crosses, uppercuts as Koty chases him like he's hunting an inferior animal. Alex covers the back of his head as he runs. He stumbles to the ground.

Koty immediately puts his hands in the air and gives a cocky look towards the iPod. Carl runs over to Alex, laying there catching his breath, and stands over him.

CARL (CONT'D)

(imitating Chris Tucker)

You just got knocked the FUCK out!

They all take a second to control their laughing as Carl approaches Koty, using a Gatorade bottle for a microphone.

KOTY

(into mic)

You know, I went out there and did my thing. Stuck to the game plan. Hate that I had to do that to my son in such embarrassing fashion, but sometimes you gotta put your kids in timeout, feel me?

CARL

Couldn't have said it better myself. Koty, you just shook up the world...well I guess not really since we all expected that to happen because Alex is a pussy. But nevertheless, a job well done, my friend. Koty "The King" Davis everybody!

Koty puts his gloves up towards the camera. Alex begins sitting up in the background.

INT. CARL'S ROOM - NIGHT

A confined boy's room with rap and sports posters on the wall. A dirty laundry path at the side of the bed. Alex is laying down, examining his few strands of armpit hair.

Carl and Bo are staring at a laptop.

ON SCREEN: Carl is uploading the fight between Koty and Alex. After it has posted, a Facebook wall feed is scrolled through, pausing periodically until it reaches a picture of a group of three GIRLS in bikinis.

Koty enters the room, fresh out of the shower.

ALEX
Took you long enough, goddamn.

KOTY
Shutup, before I beat your ass again.

They all laugh, including Alex.

ALEX
(under breath)
I told you if we showered together we could've just saved water-

BO
WOAHHH. What the fuck?

Carl throws a nearby moisturizer bottle at Alex.

ALEX
I'm playing, I'm playing, chill.

Koty peeks over to look at the laptop.

KOTY
Ooo. Zoom in right there. Crystal is maturing nicely.

The boys give a face that shows they're in agreement.

ALEX
Eh, I feel like she's like a six and a half. Seven maybe.

KOTY
Stop playin'. Are you serious?

Alex gives a shrug.

KOTY (CONT'D)
When did your standards get so high?

CARL
Nah, but she actually use to have a thing for him back in like, seventh grade.

KOTY
WHO? ALEX?

CARL
Yeah, swear to god.

Alex begins rubbing his hands, giving a cocky grin.

KOTY
Wow...

CARL
It's cause he has a babyface and dresses like a swagfag.

ALEX
Uhhh no, wrong. It's cause I have a fat cock. Say what you will about me, but you know I got those looks, son. Don't be mad that I pull more hoes.

Koty smacks his lips.

KOTY
Hell naw, you're scared of pussy and you know it.

CARL
Eh, you're like a seven.

They begin laughing. Carl closes the laptop.

BO
Alright forreal, I'm starting to question all of you.

Koty yawns and Alex begins making some space on the ground where he's planning to sleep. Carl retreats into the bathroom and comes out with some sharpies and lipstick, grinning.

CARL
Okay, you guys can sleep if you want, but I'm just letting you know the first one to fall asleep is getting wrecked.

The boys all look at each other smiling. Alex covers himself with a blanket, attempting to create a cocoon. The other boys begin creating distance from one another.

The lights turn off.

KOTY
 Wait, why the fuck do you have
 lipstick?

They all begin laughing.

EXT/INT. JESUS'S EL CAMINO - DAY

The truck bed of a classic looking all black El Camino (think 1970s). A tool box flies from one side to the other as the car makes a sharp right turn.

Godsmack's 'Cryin Like A Bitch!!' yells inside. In the rear view mirror we see the furrowed eyebrows of JESUS (41, slick backed hair, Post Office shorts) looking from the road to his periphery.

Alex sits picking his fingernails together. His face is COVERED in genital drawings. Some with sharpie, and others in half-washed, faded colored lipstick.

The truck maneuvers around a car and cuts off the next person in order to make the yellow light, jerking Alex as he grabs for the Oh Shit handle. Several cars honks can be heard in the distance.

JESUS
 Is it this one??

ALEX
 Uhhh...

JESUS
 YES OR NO!?

ALEX
 (trying to be louder than
 the music)
 Y-yeah I think.

Jesus halts at the last second and makes a sharp left turn into a residential neighborhood.

JESUS
 How the fuck do you not know, man?

The truck begins slowing down as they look on both sides of the street.

ALEX
 It's on the right somewhere...right
 there.

Jesus pulls up to the curb and gets out. Alex continues sitting, unsure.

JESUS
So you're just gonna sit there and
let me talk for you then?

Silence.

JESUS (CONT'D)
COME. Here.

Alex gets out. He catches up to Jesus as he crosses the lawn and up to the front door of:

EXT. CARL'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Jesus pounds on the door, like a policeman responding to a 911 call.

JOEY (45, Carl's Dad) opens the door looking unsettled.

A beat.

JESUS
Are you Carl's Dad?

JOEY
(confused)
Yeah, why?

Joey looks over to see Alex, his eyes filled with embarrassment. He's starting to understand the situation.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Hey...Alex. What's going on?

JESUS
Do you see this fucking shit on his
face? What if I drew all over your
face, huh? Would you like that?

JOEY
Woah, woah... Hang on, just relax.
I don't know what the boys were
doing but--

JESUS
OH, you better hope you didn't
know. Cause if you did and you
didn't do anything, you're gonna
see what I'm about. Were you here
the whole time yesterday?

Joey is still caught off ground.

JESUS (CONT'D)
 (to Alex)
 Was he here the whole time
 yesterday?

Alex shrugs his shoulders uncomfortably, not wanting to answer.

JOEY
 Yeah, I was here but I didn't--

JESUS
 Alright, then I guess we have a
 fucking problem don't we.

Joey sizes up Jesus. Fudges uncomfortably.

JOEY
 Look, I completely understand why
 you're upset and
 (reaching his arm out to
 calm him down)
 I'd be pissed off--

Jesus smacks his hand into yesterday.

JOEY (CONT'D)
 I'm not going to fight you here in
 front of my house.

The two just stare at each other, Jesus's piercing eyes are winning the standoff. Alex is frozen. Jesus points to Joey with a cocky grin.

JESUS
 Yeah, don't worry I got you now.
 (to Alex)
 C'mon man.

They begin making their way back to the truck, Jesus taking occasional glances back at Joey who's still standing at the doorway, concerned.

INT. JESUS'S EL CAMINO - DAY

It's silent as the two glide calmly to a street light.

JESUS
 I keep trying to tell you, son.
 You're going down the wrong path.
 (MORE)

JESUS (CONT'D)

You keep goofing around with those little shits and I'm telling you, we're going to have problems. It's cause you like to be a follower, don't you? You're one of those kinds of kids.

(exaggerated teenager voice)

'Hey Alex lets go set this shit on fire man', 'lets go steal this shit'. Yeah, you don't even have to tell me. I'm gonna fix all that shit. I already know who you are dude.

ALEX

We were just messing around...

JESUS

I don't want to hear it! Are you gonna be the type of person who lets some punks draw shit like that on you and just laugh? If my 'friends' did that shit to me, I would've fought all of them ON sight. No 'if' 'ands' or 'buts'. But you keep doing what you're doing and see where it gets you. I'm not going to be there to hold your hand all the time.

ALEX

Sorry, it won't happen again.

JESUS

Whatever, dude.

INT. ALEX'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alex's face is a little red from his aggressive cleaning. He stares at his cheeks in the mirror.

He begins taking varying selfies, moving his hat from the front to the back, taking pictures of different angles to get his clinched jawline. He lifts his shirt to reveal his skinny abs.

A POUNDING on the door causes him to drop his phone and it cracks.

JESUS

YO, get out here and help me.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A small room with white tile floors. The interior design has a woman's touch with welcoming furniture and matching colors. A dog bed is situated in the corner where ZEUS, a boxer, is laying down.

JESUS
Grab that side.

Alex makes his way over to the mattress and lifts his end. They begin going through the narrow hallway as Alex bangs his end into the wall, struggling to keep it from dragging on the ground.

Jesus shakes his head, annoyed. *Can you do anything right?*

INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

A compact room with a bland tan color. Kobe posters on the wall, a shoe rack with neatly assorted Vans, Converse, and Nikes. A game chair sits inches away from a TV with an Xbox to the side.

TIFFANY (36) is observing the room with her hands on her hips, biting the inside of her cheek.

Jesus and Alex manage to get the mattress on an empty bed frame that lays flush against the wall, right next to Alex's bed. The room looks a little crammed now.

TIFFANY
Well you two won't have much room,
but it'll be okay.

They all look around the room, the reality settling in.

JESUS
(to Alex)
When Antonio gets here, I want you
to show him his chores, where his
classes are at and everything,
okay?

Alex nods his head. Tiffany is still looking at the room, trying to find ways to improve it.

TIFFANY
What if you move your posters to
your side and move that shoe rack
to under your bed?

JESUS

You need to vacuum in here and open up a window, dude. Smells like fourteen-year-old ass.

Jesus walks out. Tiffany approaches Alex and winks at him. *'Don't mind him'*. Begins rubbing his back.

TIFFANY

How are you doing, you okay with everything?

Alex squirms out of her coddling.

ALEX

Yes.

TIFFANY

Okay, okay. Just checking. You know you can always talk to me, right?

ALEX

(dismissive)

Yup.

Tiffany sighs. She tried.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FIELDS - DAY

A sun-beaten track with radiating steel bleachers. Different groups of upper and lowerclassman sit out during lunch on the vast baseball fields behind the bleachers.

Alex is carry his shitty cardboard school lunch tray towards the back of the fields.

KOTY

Well, well, well. Speaking of the devil.

He greets Carl and Koty with their handshake and smiles at the three girls joining them. They're the same girls from the picture on Facebook. CRYSTAL (14), NAT (15), STEPH (14).

CARL

Sorry, dude. My dad beat my ass too. I like obviously didn't know that would happen.

KOTY

(to Alex)

Your dad beat your ass?