

NOONIE
What you holding?

JADEN
Just a gram.

NOONIE motions him to give it to him. JADEN reluctantly pulls a small gram bag of cocaine from his jacket pocket and hands it to NOONIE. NOONIE opens the small plastic bag and dumps the white powder in the trash can next to them. Suddenly a familiar voice breaks the winter silence.

MALIK
You just took food out his mouth,
his mama's mouth, and his sister's.

NOONIE stands frozen and gives himself a beat before turning around. MALIK (40s) walks up to JADEN and eyeballs him. NOONIE finally turns around and comes face to face with MALIK in front of the mural. JADEN stands between two street giants, unsure of what's about to go down. NOONIE continues to stare down MALIK.

NOONIE
Jaden, I'm gon see you back at the
rec center. Run on.

MALIK
I'll see you later lil soldier.

JADEN backs away from the two and walks down the sidewalk in the direction of the rec center.

NOONIE and MALIK are now alone standing in front of the mural. MALIK turns to start scanning the names. NOONIE is still uneasy and doesn't take his eyes off him.

MALIK (CONT'D)
Harold Noonie G Ward. I saw your
news report yesterday. All those
people know who you really are?
They know under all that talk of
peace is a cold blooded gangster?

NOONIE
People can change.

MALIK turns toward NOONIE in anger.

MALIK
People don't change! They just
create masks. And I can see through
the cracks of yours.

NOONIE begins to feel the weight of MALIK'S words. He's rattled.

MALIK (CONT'D)

You keep lookin' at me like I'm the devil, when truth is, I'm just the mirror. I taught you! I made you! Built you! Brick by brick! You think you gon change the Gardens Noon? You are the Gardens!

NOONIE slows his breathing to gather his words.

NOONIE

You're right. You taught me alot Malik. How to read a room. How to navigate profit on every corner. How to lead and build through fear. I can't lie. I fell in love with The Gardens in a whole new way because of you.

NOONIE takes a step closer to MALIK.

NOONIE (CONT'D)

But you think I'm you because of what you taught me? Yeh you showed me how to move, but Cliff Ward showed me how to stand. Took me a long time to heed that, but I'm here now. And I'm not going nowhere.

MALIK chuckles, amused.

MALIK

So you the gardens new janitor huh? Just like ya pops. Gon mop up the streets huh.

MALIK backs away from NOONIE. Police sirens blare by in the background.

MALIK (CONT'D)

Good ole Cliff. Your father was good man. Guess I should owe him thanks too. Cause the day he died, he handed you straight to me.

NOONIE'S face scrunches in rage and his fists tighten so hard then turn red. MALIK walks away with a sinister smile.

BEGIN FLASHBACK...