

Karma High

by

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FADE IN:

An electric guitar plays surf music.

EXT. CALIFORNIA COASTLINE - DAY - AERIAL VIEW

Custom mansions line cliffs that parallel the Pacific Ocean.

SURFERS sit on top of colorful boards in the water below.

As the surf music builds in intensity, THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN, follows a SURFER who pops up on his board. There is a sense of ease and freedom as he rides the wave along the shore, his fin carving into deep blue water, leaving a glistening trail of energy in the sunlight. The music takes us into...

EXT. AFFLUENT BEACH COMMUNITY - RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

A sun-faded SUZUKI SAMURAI, the source of the surf music, pulls over, idles on the side of the road.

INT. SUZUKI SAMURAI

BENNETT WILSON, (17), scruffy blond hair, faded vintage rock band t-shirt, taps his fingers on the steering wheel to the beat, frowns. He switches off the music playing on his cell phone, hits the record button, speaks into the microphone.

BENNETT

The reverb is still too high. Discuss
with Cain at next rehearsal.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET - STOP SIGN - DAY

A 1980's banger station wagon stops at the corner, exhaust pipe rattles.

INT. STATION WAGON

CAIN, (18), 'freedom' drutsa script tattooed on his arm, listens to cool jazz from a speaker rigged through the dashboard. A Fender Jazzmaster rests on the passenger seat.

Cain glances both ways, steps on the gas.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET

A Lifted F-150 truck with blacked-out windows and a dozen Monster drink decals passes the station wagon without stopping, floors it through the intersection.

INT. STATION WAGON

Cain slams on the brake to avoid hitting the truck, HEARS A SIREN, grins.

CAIN

He caught you this time, asshole.

IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, Cain sees a police cruiser pull up behind his station wagon, lights flashing.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET

OFFICER MILLER, (mid-40's), pot belly resting on a belt lined with handcuffs, firearms, and a radio raps on the station wagon's driver-side window, removes a ticket pad.

The station wagon window screeches as the glass rolls down the track, gets stuck halfway.

CAIN

(inside the car)

Jason ran the stop sign and cut me off.

OFFICER MILLER

Driver's license and registration.

CAIN

(inside the car)

I didn't break any laws, Miller.

OFFICER MILLER

You're missing your license plate. That's a violation, Cain. And it's Officer Miller to you.

CAIN

(inside the car)

It's not missing. Someone at school took it. I'm waiting for a replacement in the mail.

OFFICER MILLER

Driver's license and registration.

Cain switches the radio station to heavy metal, blasts it, hands his license through the window.

EXT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY

The school side curb is packed with parked cars. A maintenance truck pulls away, leaves two open spaces in front of the KARMAN HIGH SCHOOL sign. The letter N in KARMAN has been erased with a lighter shade of spray paint, reading 'Karma' High School.

B.G. TWO STUDENTS hang a 2011 DREAM'S ALIVE CONTEST banner on the side of a building.

A luxury SUV pulls into the open curb space.

INT. LUXURY SUV

SHILOH SULLIVAN, (17) sits in the passenger seat, annoyed. She wears a gray knit beanie and sweatshirt over a bright yellow and blue varsity cheer uniform.

MRS. SULLIVAN, (45), diet-pill thin under expensive clothes is equally annoyed. She jams the SUV gearshift into park.

MATT SULLIVAN, (16), Jr. exec vibe, wears a button down shirt, Dickies slacks, sits in the back seat, texting.

MRS. SULLIVAN

(to Shiloh)

You need to send in your college applications before the cut-off date.

SHILOH

If you let me apply for choreography, I'll do it today.

MRS. SULLIVAN

Your father isn't going to pay fifty-thousand a year for a hobby.

Shiloh reaches for the car door handle. Mrs. Sullivan presses the automatic door lock, blocks her exit, hands Shiloh a small shopping bag from the center console.

Shiloh removes lip gloss and mascara from the bag, glares at her mother.

MRS. SULLIVAN

You look washed out under the stadium lights compared to the other girls.

Shiloh dumps the items into the bag, tosses it in the back seat. Matt dodges the bag, continues to text.

MRS. SULLIVAN (cont'd)
Would it kill you to wear a touch of
makeup once in a while?

SHILOH
Would it kill you to stop wearing it?

Shiloh manually unlocks the car door. Mrs. Sullivan reaches over, removes Shiloh's beanie, releasing silky blonde hair.

MRS. SULLIVAN
The least you could do is stop
wearing that ridiculous hat. It hides
your best feature.

EXT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - FRONT ENTRANCE

Shiloh, short with a curvaceous figure, and Matt, tall, average build, exit the SUV.

SHILOH
Goodbye, Vanessa.

MRS. SULLIVAN
(inside sedan)
You know I don't like it when you---

Shiloh slams the passenger door. The Luxury SUV peels away, opening up the two parking spaces.

MATT
Mom wants you to be popular.

SHILOH
Why?

MATT
It has its perks.

Matt motions toward AMBER, (16), in cheer uniform, cute, bubbly, approaching the entrance with a FOOTBALL JOCK.

Matt smiles at Amber as she passes. She returns the smile.

SHILOH
You really think you have a shot with
Amber?

Matt crosses his fingers with a hopeful expression, heads toward campus.

Shiloh takes in the scene around her, watches STUDENTS gather into WELCOMING GROUPS with waves and animated conversations. She zips up her sweatshirt with a yank, heads towards campus.

A TOWHEADED SKATEBOARDER, (16), approaches, weaves his board in and out of gathered students, glides in front of Shiloh, delays her departure.

WE HEAR a turbocharged engine accelerate.

Shiloh turns her attention to the street, sees the F-150 Truck barreling down on the Suzuki Samurai.

INT. F-150 TRUCK

JASON, (18), driving, and TROY, (18), both athletic, wear Letterman jackets, chug energy drinks.

JASON

That fumble wasn't my fault, Troy.
You saw it. Craig screwed up the
pass.

TROY

(can't bring himself
to agree)
Must suck having a dad who took
Karman all the way to State in his
day.

Jason floors it.

EXT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - FRONT ENTRANCE

Shiloh watches the F-150 cut off the Suzuki, park, take up both spaces.

The Suzuki idles in the street next to the parked truck.

Jason and Troy exit the truck, stand next to Shiloh. Jason finishes his energy drink, crushes the can, tosses it in the bushes under the school sign.

SHILOH (O.C.)

Don't be a douche, Jason. Move your
truck up so Ben can park.

INT. IDLING SUZUKI

THROUGH DRIVER SIDE WINDOW, Bennett glances at the NO SCHOOL PARKING signs in front of the mansions lining an empty curb across the street from the Karman High entrance.

JASON (O.C.)

That emo dweeb can fuck off. We got here first.

Bennett presses the clutch, yanks on the stick shift, grinds the gears. Shiloh walks up, speaks through passenger window.

SHILOH

There's usually an open spot under the willow tree at the one-way exit. It's a last resort because of the birds.

BENNETT

Thanks. I'll check it out.

SHILOH

I've had to park there a few times and got totally bombed. Club Soda takes off the pigeon shit.

JASON

(from sidewalk)

So does a baseball bat.

TROY

(from sidewalk)

And it's faster.

PASSING BELL SOUNDS.

EXT. ONE-WAY EXIT LEADING OFF CAMPUS PROPERTY

The Suzuki tires are barely visible under the willow tree. Bennett fights his way out of the low-hanging leaves.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE HALLWAY - BULLETIN BOARD

The halls are empty except for LILY WONG, (17). She adds a flyer to a board full of school announcements.

Bennett walks up. A willow branch sticks out of his backpack.

BENNETT

Anything interesting?

LILY
Submission slips for the Dreams Alive
Contest are in the office.

BENNETT
You entering one of your photographs?

LILY
I am. Please, don't mention it around
my mother.

Bennett nods. Lily removes a flyer advertising *tryouts for Hyde Park's Annual Battle of the Bands*.

LILY (cont'd)
Sorry you didn't make the cut this
year for *Battle of the Bands*.

BENNETT
What are you talking about?

LILY
Cain checked the website last night
to see which bands were selected.
Yours wasn't on it. Didn't he call
you?

Bennett stares at the band flyer in Lily's hand.

LILY (cont'd)
Ben?

BENNETT
(looks up)
I shut my phone off because I was
working on some lyrics.

Lily's smile is kind, supportive.

LILY
There's always next year.

BENNETT
No, Lily, there's not. If we don't
get our songs out for people to hear
before we graduate, there won't be a
band.

INT. PHILOSOPHY CLASSROOM

PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS talk, text, yawn. Philosophy teacher,
MR. BREUER, (38), easy-going Humboldt graduate, switches on
a wall-mounted TV monitor.

DISPLAYED ON THE TV SCREEN, above a Karman High News logo, BRIANNA HENNESSY, (17), in cheer uniform, smiles incisively while speaking. The harsh studio lighting emphasizes her liberal use of make-up.

BRIANNA (TV SCREEN)
 Good morning, Karman High. Brianna Hennessy here, reminding my fellow grads that your senior project is due in three weeks.

Bennett enters, takes a seat in the front row, his desk-chair in front of Jason. Jason, oblivious to Bennett's arrival, plays a game on his cellphone. Shiloh sits across from Bennett, motions to the branch sticking out of his backpack.

SHILOH
 Looks like the spot was open.

BENNETT
 Oh, Yeah.
 (removes branch)
 Thanks for the tip. Good to know.

BRIANNA (TV SCREEN)
 College essay workshops will be held in the library today at three o'clock and A.P seminars---

Mr. Breuer turns off the TV, faces the class.

MR. BREUER
 Nothing like relentless academic pressure to start the day.
 (wry smile)
 Raise your hand if you're passionate about the career you want to pursue after college.

A few students raise their hands. Shiloh crosses her arms. Jason continues to play the game. Bennett sighs.

Mr. Breuer writes *You will never do anything in this world without courage* on the chalkboard, then holds up a text book.

MR. BREUER
 Aristotle. I'll give you ten minutes to go over chapter six, then we'll discuss.

Philosophy Students remove textbooks, including MAYA, (17), cropped hair, diamond nose stud, who sits behind Jason.

Bennett glances at Shiloh. Maya notices, sits up straighter.

MAYA

Hey, Shiloh. I think Ben has
something he wants to say to you.

Shiloh looks at Bennett, curious. Jason looks up from the
game. Bennett shakes his head, opens his book.

JASON

Pussy.

MAYA

(to Bennett)

You should invite her over to your
house.

(to Shiloh)

His band rehearses in the garage
every day after school. I hear them
when I drive by. They're really good.

JASON

(to Bennett)

You're delusional if you think a
nobody like you has a shot in the
music industry, Wilson.

Bennett sinks deeper in his chair. The sight makes Shiloh
angry. She turns to Jason.

SHILOH

Talk about delusional. Less than one
percent of high school football
players make it into the NFL.

Nearby Philosophy Students pick up cellphones, sensing
video-worthy footage.

JASON

What's your plan? Marrying some poor
bastard for his money?

SHILOH

Sounds like a version of your future,
Jason.

Jason notices raised cellphones videotaping him. He pushes
Bennett's desk-chair forward a few feet with his sneaker.

JASON

Loser.

Philosophy Students laugh.

MAYA
Not cool, Jason.

Jason turns to look at Maya. They check each other out, write each other off.

Mr. Breuer motions for Bennett to back up.

INT. KARMAN HIGH CAMPUS - RESOURCE PORTABLE

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS and STONERS draw on, ignore, or read their books. DEREK, (17), on the spectrum, small for his age, stares out the window, an open book on his desk.

Cain stands by the door, reads a book on ANARCHY.

MRS. MARCH, (63), fed up with teaching and ready to retire, approaches Cain, sniffs.

MRS. MARCH
Is that marijuana I smell?

CAIN
Yeah, but it's not coming from me.

MRS. MARCH
Then why are your eyes bloodshot?

CAIN
Must be allergies.

B.G. Derek watches the exchange between Mrs. March and Cain.

DEREK
What's happening?

MRS. MARCH
This doesn't concern you, Derek. Read your book.

B.G. Derek continues to watch the exchange.

Mrs. March takes the book from Cain, reads the title.

MRS. MARCH
What are you allergic to, Mr. Turner?
Authority?

CAIN
It's for my senior project.

MRS. MARCH
Are you planning a rebellion?

CAIN

Not today.

B.G. Derek gets upset, picks up a pencil, taps his desktop in an agitated beat.

MRS. MARCH

Stop that racket, Derek.

B.G. Derek stops tapping. It's a struggle for him to sit still.

Mrs. March takes a long, hard look at Cain.

MRS. MARCH

Why are you in my class?

CAIN

I've been told I have a learning disability.

B.G. The pencil tapping resumes.

MRS. MARCH

I've checked your records. You scored a fifteen-forty on your S.A.T.

Cain is impressed with his score.

MRS. MARCH

(has had it/to Derek)

Stop that now, or I'm calling the principle's office and you can spend the rest of the day there. Again.

Derek keeps tapping. Mrs. March, face pinched into a tight mask, heads to her desk.

Derek bolts towards the door.

MRS. MARCH (cont'd)

(phone in hand)

Stop him, Cain.

Cain steps away from the doorway, looks at Mrs March, claps slowly in approval. Derek runs past him, exits the portable.

PASSING BELL SOUNDS.

MRS. MARCH (cont'd)

Wait outside, Cain.