

War of the Bands

By

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INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

JOHNNY "HELIX" HELIX, 10, plays guitar. He wears his hair long, in a grunge-rock style.

The garage is big enough for a small band. The walls and ceiling are soundproofed, and the floor has a thick carpet.

A guitar hangs on one wall above half a dozen framed golden records. Amps and speakers stand against one wall. A door on the adjacent wall leads to the kitchen.

Helix plays a fast melody.

It's a little too fast; he stumbles over it.

He groans and stops.

INT. HELIX FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is large, designed to hold a lot of company.

KAISER HELIX, 37, creeps into the kitchen. His hair is long and his pants are tight. He carries a guitar case and a large duffel bag.

He moves to the garage door.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Helix flexes his fingers over the guitar strings.

Deep breath.

The kitchen door creaks open. Helix looks.

Kaiser steps in, sees Helix; freezes.

HELIX

Dad?

Kaiser looks towards the guitar hanging on the wall; looks back to Helix.

KAISER

Don't, uh... don't mind me. Just keep doing what you're doing.

Helix hangs his head.

HELIX

I was practicing...

Kaiser steps to the guitar.

KAISER  
Practicing what?

HELIX  
Vice Virtue.

Kaiser stops, faces Helix. He's impressed.

KAISER  
Let's hear it, then.

Helix takes a breath.

Plays the same song as before.

Does well. Does really well, actually.

...Then messes up again. Same spot as before.

Kaiser shakes his head. Takes the guitar down.

Helix notices the bag.

HELIX  
What's that?

Kaiser doesn't respond. He puts the guitar in his guitar case.

Helix realizes Kaiser's leaving. His eyes well up.

KAISER  
Come on, don't be like that. You've seen it coming, same as everyone else.

Helix tries really hard not to, but cries anyway.

KAISER (CONT'D)  
This isn't what I want either. But when a man makes a promise to himself... that means something. It's one thing to violate someone else's trust; it's another to violate your own.

Kaiser crouches next to Helix.

KAISER (CONT'D)

I swore I would be the best. And I can't be the best when I'm sitting around at home all the time, you know? The housework, the nagging when I don't do the housework...

He ruffles Helix's hair.

KAISER (CONT'D)

The babysitting.

Helix snuffles, nods.

Kaiser stands.

KAISER (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on your mother for me.

HELIX

Are you gonna come back?

KAISER

I hope so. I'd like to.

He turns to leave.

KAISER (CONT'D)

But no. I don't think I will.

Helix cries. Kaiser tears up as he leaves.

CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN

Beat.

ELECTRIC GUITAR CHORDS play. It's Vice Virtue - the same song Helix was playing.

FADE TO:

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY, SIX YEARS LATER

Kaiser's guitar no longer hangs on the wall. The amps and speakers sit scattered around the area.

Helix, now 16, plays guitar. He wears a Power Bracer: a large, metal bracelet with a green light along the middle, and a few dials, sliders, and buttons.

He plays the same song as before, and does well. The Bracer's light flashes along with the music, and pale green arcs of electricity dance along his guitar strings.

He reaches the solo and screws it up again. The electricity fades away.

He yells and kicks his amp over.

He sits on the amp and runs his fingers through his hair.

The door opens. AMELIA HELIX - 40, but you'd never guess it - pokes her head in.

AMELIA  
Breakfast!

HELIX  
I'll be in in a bit.

AMELIA  
No, you'll be in now. I don't have time to drive you if you miss the bus.

She leaves before Helix can respond. He sighs, flips a switch on his Bracer; the light turns off.

He goes inside.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Helix walks home with CHARLIE "CHUCK" CHARLESON III, 16, and MARY SALIERI, 16.

Chuck is a little chubby, and wears clothes that are too big for him.

Mary wears glasses, and has a geek-chic sort of style.

Mary holds Helix's Power Bracer, looks it over.

MARY  
Don't be such a wimp, Chuck. On green it pretty much just tickles.

Mary hands Helix back his bracer.

HELIX  
See? You'll be fine.

CHUCK  
I don't like being tickled either!

MARY  
But we like tickling you!

Mary tickles Chuck. He fights her off, laughing.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, Sara's getting one soon. I should be able to borrow hers.

Helix groans.

HELIX

That's fine until she joins the band! What are we gonna do then?

MARY

Um, since when is her joining the band just a foregone conclusion?

HELIX

Come on, Mary! Prerecorded drums are fine for now, but if we ever want to compete-

Chuck stops.

CHUCK

No! No! You said we weren't going to compete! You said!

Helix and Mary stop.

MARY

You did say.

HELIX

I'd like to have the option, that's all.

CHUCK

But you said!

MARY

Relax. We don't even have a full band yet.

Mary and Helix keep walking.

Chuck follows.

CHUCK

But he saaaaiid!

HELIX

I know we all hate her or something, but come on. You've heard her play.

MARY

We don't hate her. We just enjoy life a lot more when she's not around.

HELIX

Whatever. We need a drummer, but it doesn't have to be her. If you can find someone else who sounds as good, great. But seriously.

MARY

Yeah, yeah.

HELIX

Just focus on saving up for your own Power Bracer. Borrow Sara's until you can.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

The amps and speakers have been cleaned up. Helix stands at one wall with an amp and his guitar, and Chuck stands at the opposite wall with an amp and a bass guitar. Their Bracers glow green.

Mary sits by the side with a small synthesizer on her lap.

HELIX

Give us a beat.

Mary gets a basic drum beat thumping.

Chuck is terrified.

CHUCK

Go easy on me!

HELIX

You'll be fine. Start playing.

Chuck plays a basic walking bassline. A slender green aura shivers along the bass's strings as he plays.

The aura ripples outward, forming a thin glowing wall in front of Chuck.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Good! Keep it up!

Helix plays a riff on his guitar. A similar green aura ripples off of his strings and coalesces into a spear of green light.

Helix plays a hard chord, and the spear shoots at Chuck's wall.

The wall shatters into nothing. Chuck gasps and stops playing.

CHUCK  
I did it! Did you see that? I did it!

Mary cheers.

HELIX  
Keep playing!

Helix forms a new spear and fires it at Chuck before he can get another wall up.

It hits Chuck square in the chest, knocking him back a step.

He hits the wall and holds his chest.

Helix hoots.

CHUCK  
Ow! You said it tickled!

HELIX  
Keep playing!

Helix fires another spear at him. He ducks it and continues playing.

INT. HELIX FAMILY KITCHEN - NIGHT

A few big bowls of various southern dishes - fried chicken, mashed potatoes, collard greens - rest on the counter.

Helix, Chuck, and Amelia sit around the kitchen table with CHARLIE CHARLESON, 39, and EMILY CHARLESON, 41.

Charlie is a bear of a man, built like an ox and with the body hair to match. Emily is just as tall, but slim to the point of being lanky.

EMILY  
I don't understand. Why is that fun?

CHUCK  
It's not.

HELIX

It's not supposed to be. The point is to help him get better at bass; if he's off in any way, his wall won't be as solid.

EMILY

Couldn't you just hit him?

Chuck gapes. Everyone else laughs.

CHARLIE

Some people do use 'em for fights.

AMELIA

Johnny knows better than to have any part of that.

Helix groans.

HELIX

It's no big deal, mom. It's like boxing, or wrestling. Dad boxed!

AMELIA

You're right! Anything your father did, you should do too.

HELIX

That's not what I meant!

Helix looks to Charlie. Charlie understands.

CHARLIE

It seems fine, Amelia. I looked into it all again when Chuck asked. It's a lot safer than it used to be.

Amelia doesn't look convinced, but she nods.

AMELIA

Just be grateful I'm even letting you keep the... thing. But no fights!

HELIX

Mom! Come on!

AMELIA

That's final!

Helix gets up, stomps away.

INT. HELIX FAMILY LIVING ROOM - DAY

The family room is spacious and comfortable. A couple sofas and a pair of easy chairs all aim at a large TV. A computer on a massive desk occupies the adjacent corner.

Helix and Chuck collapse on the sofas. Chuck turns the TV on; the news plays.

A large banner on the screen reads UNITED STATES WAR OF THE BANDS, and Kaiser Helix sits onscreen along with a NEWSWOMAN.

Helix freezes and stares.

KAISER

-Get me wrong, I would prefer to be entering in my home state of North Carolina. But considering all of the support that Haduwig's given me in the past, when they asked me to represent California with them, I couldn't say no.

CHUCK

Oh no.

NEWSWOMAN

I understand, also, that you agree with Haduwig's dismissal of potential safety concerns?

KAISER

I understand why the sport has the reputation it does - I mean, come on, it was brutal. But it's moved past that now. With all the new safety regulations the Warlords-

Chuck changes the channel to a sitcom.

Helix snaps his head to stare at Chuck.

Chuck winces.

Helix smiles.

HELIX

Let's go to Mary's house.

CHUCK

What?

EXT. SALIERI FAMILY FRONT DOOR - DAY

Helix and Chuck stand in front of the Salieris' massive home. The door opens; it's Mary.

MARY  
Hey, what's-

HELIX  
How fast can you get a Power  
Bracer? How much more do you need?

MARY  
A week, maybe, if I really wanted  
to. Why?

CHUCK  
No. No no no no-

HELIX  
What do you know about the War of  
the Bands?

SARA SALIERI, 17, suddenly stands next to Mary. She wears tight clothes and lots of makeup.

SARA  
Everything.

Helix and Chuck jump. Mary rolls her eyes.

INT. SALIERI FAMILY LIVING ROOM - DAY

The living room is spacious and well-decorated. Helix, Chuck, Mary and Sara sit on a couple sofas.

SARA  
I hear you need a drummer for your  
warband.

CHUCK  
We don't have a warband.

HELIX  
Actually, we were talking about  
asking you-

MARY  
We make the intentional decision to  
de-emphasize percussion.

SARA  
I can respect that. Your opponents probably won't, but different strokes, right?

CHUCK  
We don't have opponents.

MARY  
If you're trying to convince us to let you in the band, you're doing a pretty sucky job of it.

Sara turns to Helix.

SARA  
I know more about Power Bracers and how to use them than those two combined. I've been following this competition since it was rumored two years ago.

Sara looks at Mary.

SARA (CONT'D)  
But most of all, you need a drummer, and I'm the best one you know.

Mary scowls.

HELIX  
Mary, any thoughts?

MARY  
Yeah. I don't think-

HELIX  
Any reasonable alternatives?

MARY  
...Whatever.

HELIX  
Good. You're in.

CHUCK  
You don't want my thoughts?

HELIX  
Nope.

MARY  
I want your thoughts, Chuck.

CHUCK  
I don't even want to-

SARA  
Sounds like it's settled.

Sara holds out her hand. Helix shakes it.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Helix, Chuck, Mary, and Sara rock out.

HELIX  
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY YOU ARE A  
PART OF ME STILL RINGING IN MY EARS  
THE SUM OF ALL MY FEARS

The song comes to a close. Sara shakes her head.

SARA  
No offense, Helix, but your lyrics  
suck.

MARY  
And you can do better?

Sara gives her a look.

HELIX  
Have at them. Nobody's stopping  
you. Songs are a group project.

CHUCK  
So are we done for the day? I'm  
getting tired. And hungry.

HELIX  
Just twenty more minutes, Chuck.

MARY  
We've been working hard, Helix. I  
think we can end a bit early.

CHUCK  
While I do really want to keep  
going, Mary has a good point.

HELIX  
We're not gonna make it in this  
competition if we don't practice!

CHUCK  
I don't wanna make it in this  
competition!

Helix opens his mouth to speak, but is interrupted by Sara.

SARA  
Look, you lazy wannabes! You'll get  
your rest in twenty minutes. Until  
then, you will practice, and you'll  
do it without complaining!

MARY  
Screw you.

Mary and Sara glare daggers at each other.

HELIX  
Come on, guys. I'm not gonna beg.  
But come on.

Beat.

CHUCK  
Whatever.

MARY  
...Okay.

Sara looks at Helix, a little curious. Helix doesn't notice.

HELIX  
Let's do Requiem for an Empty Can.

INT. HELIX FAMILY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Helix loads the dishwasher and Amelia washes a pan.

AMELIA  
No. Absolutely not.

HELIX  
Mom! I didn't even technically ask  
anything yet!

AMELIA  
What about school?

Helix stops loading.

HELIX

The matches are all on Friday and Saturday nights, except the finals, which will be during summer vacation! It's perfect!

AMELIA

Well, the answer is still no. I already told you no fights!

HELIX

You just don't want me to do it because dad's doing it!

Amelia stops washing.

AMELIA

Don't even try that! I said no fighting before all this!

HELIX

Yeah, because I compared it to dad boxing! You don't want me to have anything to do with him!

AMELIA

He left us, Johnny! Why do you want anything to do with him?

HELIX

He's my dad!

AMELIA

I'm your mother!

HELIX

Why are you always like this? I wish Dad had stayed and you had left!

His words hit Amelia in the stomach.

AMELIA

You don't mean that.

Helix knows he went too far, but he doesn't back down.

HELIX

I'm going over to Mary's to sign up.

He leaves.

INT. SALIERI FAMILY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sara, Chuck and Helix lean over Mary, who hunches over a laptop..

MARY  
For crying out loud! Just pick something so we can register.

CHUCK  
How about... Hedgeclipper?

SARA  
Seriously?

MARY  
Hunger Strike?

HELIX  
What? No.

SARA  
Jormungandr?  
[YOOR-moon-gahn-dur]  
As in the Norse serpent that causes the end of the world?

MARY  
That... actually sounds pretty cool. I guess.

CHUCK  
I still like Hedgeclipper.

SARA  
Helix?

HELIX  
Sure, sounds good.

Mary types and clicks.

A page pops up that says "THANK YOU FOR ENTERING! The full bracket and match dates will be posted on April 6."

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Chuck, Mary, and Sara gather around Helix, instruments in hand. Everyone has a Power Bracer now. Helix addresses them.

HELIX

Okay people. Our first match has been announced; we'll be facing some country band, Frog Prince. The match is in a month, which I know seems like a long time, but it'll be here-

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Two stages sit on opposite sides of the otherwise ordinary football field. Lights illuminate the area. The bleachers are half full, with a few ecstatic fans sitting in the front row with self-made Frog Prince shirts and hats. Charlie and Emily sit on the opposite front row, next to MR. and MRS. SALIERI. Amelia is absent.

On one stage is FROG PRINCE, which has a drummer, a fiddler, a double bassist, and a singer. They tune their instruments.

The singer lounges on the edge of the stage, chatting with their fans.

On the other stage stands JORMUNGANDR. Chuck sweats nervously, Mary takes deep breaths nervously, Sara shifts nervously, and Helix paces nervously. They're a little nervous.

A cameraman stands near the sidelines.

MARY

Are they televising this?

Now Chuck's even more nervous.

HELIX

Nah. Probably just filming it for highlights.

Chuck doesn't relax much.

The official DISTRICT MC walks to the middle of the field with a microphone. Nobody has ever been as bored as him.

DISTRICT MC

(deadpan)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming to what will surely be an astounding display of musical prowess.

(MORE)

DISTRICT MC (CONT'D)  
 To my left we have Frog Prince. To  
 my right we have... Joor-mun-gan-  
 druh.

HELIX  
 It's pronounced Jormungandr!

DISTRICT MC  
 ...Yeah. Okay. Anyway, Frog Prince,  
 are you guys ready?

They all nod.

DISTRICT MC (CONT'D)  
 And... you other guys. Are you  
 ready?

SARA  
 Psh!

The district MC coughs.

DISTRICT MC  
 Activate your Power Bracers.

They all do; the bracers glow yellow.

DISTRICT MC (CONT'D)  
 Aaaand fight.

A bell DINGS.

Both bands' drummers start. They drum on the same beat,  
 playing off each other. A yellow aura enshrouds each band.

Frog Prince's bassist plays a thick, syncopated bassline.

Frog Prince's aura surges forward.

HELIX  
 Go for it, Chuck!

CHUCK  
 Aw, man.

Chuck plays a basic walking bassline. Jormungandr's aura  
 moves forward, meeting Frog Prince's a third of the way  
 there.

Helix plays a fast rhythm, generating a large translucent  
 boulder.

Frog Prince's guitarist plays as well, and a dozen whip-like  
 vines of energy grow all around their stage.

Frog Prince's fiddler plays a harmony to the guitar, and the vines extend until they press against Chuck's aura.

Mary blasts out a full melody, adding large spikes to Helix's boulder.

Helix breaks into angsty punk lyrics, and Frog Prince's singer counters with generic country whining. The boulder and vines smash and whip at each other, each pushing their own band's aura along with them.

Jormungandr pushes until they're two-thirds of the way to Frog Prince.

Helix shifts into a vicious guitar solo. His fingers flurry across the strings, and his boulder smashes through Frog Prince's aura.

Frog prince's fiddler plays a solo of his own, and vines whip up and around the boulder, restraining it.

Helix plays hard, trying to break the boulder free, but has trouble.

HELIX

Mary!

Mary plays a rapid series of chords. Her spikes shoot off of the boulder, cutting off the vines entangling it.

His boulder freed, Helix brings his solo to a blistering finish. The boulder smashes into Frog Prince, scattering the band.

The crowd CHEERS, especially Charlie and Mr. and Mrs. Salieri. Jormungandr bows.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Kaiser sits in front of a TV displaying the aftermath of Jormungandr's victory.

The trailer is plastered with posters for his old band, Overqualified - him, Charlie, and Emily.

He smiles.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - NIGHT

Helix, Mary, Chuck and Sara debrief in a circle.

HELIX

That was pretty good, guys-

SARA

Excuse me? You think Chuck was good?

HELIX

He's still learning, but I thought he did well for his skill level.

SARA

He almost lost it-

She glares at Chuck. Chuck withers.

SARA (CONT'D)

You almost lost it for us before things even began!

MARY

Back off a little, geez! You don't have to make this personal.

SARA

Oh please. If Helix weren't such a virtuoso, we would've lost right there, first match of the competition!

Helix lights up, just a little bit.

CHUCK

I didn't even want to do this stupid thing!

MARY

Chuck, relax, you did fine.

SARA

Hey! Problem solved! He doesn't want to do it!

HELIX

Give it up, Sara!

SARA

We'll just get someone who won't drag us-

HELIX

Shut up!

Sara freezes.

HELIX (CONT'D)

I know Chuck's not the greatest bassist out there. But he's my best friend, he's a founding member of this band.

Chuck's face bounces from disappointed to proud to somewhere in between.

Mary nods.

Helix turns to Chuck.

HELIX (CONT'D)

You still need work, Chuck, but you're about a thousand times better than you were two months ago. Keep improving like that, and pretty soon you'll be the best person in this band.

Chuck's face settles on proud.

Helix looks at Sara.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Understand?

SARA

Yeah, whatever, sure.

Sara leaves.

CHUCK

Did you mean that?

HELIX

Mostly. Let's be honest, though; I'll always be the best.

He smirks. Chuck smiles.

INT. HELIX FAMILY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Amelia, Charlie, and Emily sit around the kitchen table.

CHARLIE

They did great, Amelia. Johnny did great.

Amelia sighs.

AMELIA

Of course he did. He's a Helix.

Emily puts a hand on Amelia's shoulder.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Mary, Sara, and Chuck sit together, eating. Chuck and Mary's plates are piled high with junk, but Sara's is a tidy pile of vegetables.

MARY

Wow, Sara, you gonna eat all that?

Sara scowls. Helix arrives with two full plates.

HELIX

I listened to the recording this morning, and we sounded even better than I thought. A thousand points for everyone.

Chuck observes Sara. She makes a face at him. Chuck looks away.

Helix notices the exchange.

HELIX (CONT'D)

We're not good enough yet, though. Chuck, you're getting a lot better, man, seriously. You're not there yet, but you're on your way.

Chuck smiles.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Sara-

Sara interrupts him.

SARA

What? What did I do wrong?

HELIX

Nothing. You did great. I'm mean, you're not perfect, but you're probably closer than any of us. Keep it up.

She's surprised. Pleased.

SARA

Oh. Cool.

Mary rolls her eyes.

HELIX

Last but not least, Mary: you were a little understated. Don't be scared of being big.

MARY

I'm not scared of being big! I'm just... nervous about losing control.

HELIX

From being too big. Also known as being scared of being big.

MARY

I guess you could phrase it that way. If you're weird.

SARA

Grow up.

Mary sticks her tongue out at Sara.

HELIX

Just do it, okay?

MARY

Yes, master.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - NIGHT

Jormungandr plays a fast-paced song.

Charlie enters.

The song draws to a close.

HELIX

Alright! Good job, everybody. Don't get cocky, but I'll be surprised if we even break a sweat in our next fight.

SARA

I think you're already cocky enough for all of us, Helix.

Helix mocks getting shot.

HELIX

Oh! You wound me.

Everyone starts putting their stuff away.

CHARLIE

Alright, Chuck, time to go, don't want to be late. But first, Sara...

SARA

Yeah?

Charlie walks to Sara and her drums.

CHARLIE

That last song, you were riding the kick pretty hard and fast, it kind of drowned everything else out. I think everyone'll like your sound better if you-

SARA

Excuse me, are you in this band?

Everyone stops and looks.

CHARLIE

What?

SARA

I don't remember asking for an outdated rock star's ancient opinion.

Helix, Chuck and Mary's eyes widen. Mary gapes. Charlie chuckles.

MARY

Sara, this is... this is Charlie Charleson.

CHARLIE

I know it's been a little while since Overqualified stopped touring, but-

SARA

A little while?

CHARLIE

Yes, a little while!

SARA

Helix, back me up here, will you? I don't care who he is, he's not in the band. He can't just tell me I'm playing wrong.

MARY  
No, Helix, tell her to show some respect!

Sara glares at Mary.

Helix is flabbergasted.

HELIX  
I... I don't... what? Um.

He clears his throat.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
Okay. Um... Uncle Charlie, we appreciate your advice, and I apologize on Sara's behalf for her... disrespect.

Mary nods. Sara rolls her eyes.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
That said, she's... right.

MARY  
What?!

SARA  
Thank you.

HELIX  
We'd appreciate it if you didn't give us any more unsolicited advice.

Charlie gets pissed, but only for a second. Once he's back under control, he lets out a breath.

CHARLIE  
I understand. And I'm sorry.

HELIX  
No, please. Don't apologize.

Chuck is mortified.

CHUCK  
(quiet)  
Dad, can we go...

CHARLIE  
Right! Sorry. Bye everyone.

CHUCK

Bye.

Charlie and Chuck leave through the garage door.

MARY

Oh my god, Sara.

SARA

Don't give me that! I'm the one who should be pissed at you, siding against me like that!

HELIX

I'll be right back.

MARY

I've got some words for you too, jackass!

Helix ignores her and runs into the kitchen.

EXT. HELIX HOUSE - NIGHT

Helix runs out the front door and catches up to Charlie and Chuck. They stop.

HELIX

Uncle Charlie!

CHARLIE

Helix?

HELIX

Chuck, can I talk to Uncle Charlie for a minute?

CHUCK

...Sure?

Beat.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Oh!

Chuck walks away.

HELIX

I'm sorry. Sara was way out of line.

Charlie looks confused for a second, then laughs.

CHARLIE

That's what that was. I get it now.  
I won't lie, I was kind of upset  
for a minute there.

HELIX

Wait... you... what? You  
understand?

CHARLIE

Bands have to stick together.  
Kaiser did the same thing for me  
when I flipped out about stupid  
things. Many times.

HELIX

Really?

CHARLIE

Yeah, really. I used to be kind of  
a hothead.

HELIX

Riiight.

CHARLIE

I'm serious. Ask my wife sometime.

Helix nods, but he's not convinced.

Short beat.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

But do yourself a favor, and don't  
let Sara do much of the talking  
from now on, yeah?

Helix laughs.

HELIX

Thanks, Uncle Charlie.

CHARLIE

Don't mention it.

Helix walks back home.

INT. HELIX'S ROOM - DAY

Helix's room is far from tidy, but you can still see the  
floor. A computer sits on a desk in the corner, and a sofa  
along the far wall. The bed is unmade.

Helix sits at the computer, watching a video of Kaiser fighting a rap duo. An acoustic guitar leans against the computer desk.

Kaiser plays Vice Virtue, creating an electric stormcloud that blasts the rappers off the stage, winning easily and quickly.

Helix groans.

HELIX

How did... good grief.

He grabs the guitar, starts playing Vice Virtue. Messes up.

He tries again. Messes up again.

He growls. Tries again.

Does better.

Messes up again.

He yells.

Beat.

He pulls out his cell phone. Dials.

INT. MUSIC STORE - DAY

Helix, Chuck and Mary browse aisles of music books, cables, guitar strings, and other music paraphernalia.

Mary holds up a music book titled OBOES AND YOU.

MARY

Chuck, is this what he's looking for?

CHUCK

I don't know. Ask him.

Mary hands Chuck the book.

Chuck looks at the book.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Oh, I don't think-

Mary ignores him, walks away.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Helix, is-

Helix barely spares a glance.

HELIX

No, it's not.

CHUCK

(to Mary)

No, it's not.

Mary waves him off.

Chuck looks around for where the book goes. Can't find it.

HELIX

(to Mary)

How long is this gonna last?

No response.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Chuck, can you ask Mary how long she's going to keep this up?

CHUCK

Sure, but first, uh, where does this book-

MARY

I'm mad at Chuck, too, you know.

CHUCK

What? Why?

HELIX

Then why are you talking to him and not me?

MARY

I'm talking to you now, aren't I? And Chuck, why? He's your dad! You didn't see a need to stand up for your dad?

HELIX

Why do you see a need to stand up for his dad? It seems to me that if anyone should be mad, it should be Chuck! And he's not!

MARY

I guess I'm mad for him then.

Helix rolls his eyes.

HELIX  
I apologized, didn't I?

MARY  
You did?

HELIX  
Yes!

MARY  
To Mr. Charleson?

HELIX  
No, to Santa Claus. Yes to Uncle  
Charlie!

MARY  
I didn't know that.

She walks over to the shelves, plucks a book, hands it to Helix.

He looks at it. OVERQUALIFIED'S GREATEST HITS. The cover shows Kaiser, Charlie and Emily, posing dramatically.

HELIX  
Did you know where that was the  
entire time?

CHUCK  
And do you know where this oboe  
book goes?

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Chuck, Mary, and Sara gather around Helix as he hands out sheets of music.

HELIX  
Time to bone up on the classics.

CHUCK  
Wait, what? This is why we were  
shopping? We can't play these in  
battle.

SARA  
Um, yeah we can.

CHUCK  
Mary?

MARY

Yup. Gives you some solid tactics.

SARA

And also broadcasts exactly what you're going to do. It's a dumb strategy.

HELIX

It's a strategy. Whether it's dumb or not depends on the situation.

Sara mumbles annoyances. The band reads the music.

HELIX (CONT'D)

At the very least, it's good practice. Let's give it a shot, yeah?

CHUCK

I don't understand. It makes sense for a while, but then there are just too many notes. I think this is written for somebody with more fingers than me.

HELIX

Your dad played it. You'll be fine.

CHUCK

Oh, like you can play everything your dad could play.

Helix darkens.

HELIX

Enough jabbering, let's get started.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Helix walks from one class to another. Sara runs up to him.

She has an mp3 player with one earbud in her ear.

SARA

Helix, you gotta listen to this!

Helix stops. She hands him the loose earbud, he puts it in.

He hears VIOLENT DEATHMETAL MUSIC, with fast rhythms and loud screams.

He bobs his head along with it.

HELIX

They're pretty good.

SARA

They're called Grasping Butterfly. I was thinking about what you said yesterday about learning some covers, and thought we could pick up some of their stuff.

Helix removes the earbud and shakes his head.

HELIX

They're good, but we should stick with punk and hard rock.

SARA

Wait, what? What's wrong with my music?

HELIX

It's not personal. Punk and hard rock are two really versatile genres; together there's not much they can't handle. Death metal's got a great offense, but no defense. It's a glass cannon.

SARA

Yeah, but...

HELIX

I'll listen to them, though. Grasping Butterfly? Maybe we can steal one or two of their tricks.

SARA

Of course we can. I'll see you around?

HELIX

Actually...

Sara waits.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Actually, um, I was thinking, too, about, uh... speaking of death metal! You know?

SARA  
 (sarcasm incarnate)  
 Oh, yeah. I do know.

Helix lets out an exasperated breath, looks at the ground, holds up a finger.

He thinks.

SARA (CONT'D)  
 Is this gonna take long?

HELIX  
 What I was trying to say was:  
 maybe, if you're interested, we

HELIX (CONT'D)  
 could work on developing your...  
 rhythm?

SARA  
 Excuse me? What's wrong with my  
 rhythm?

HELIX  
 Maybe sometime when the others  
 aren't around.

SARA  
 Oh. Oh.

HELIX  
 Yeah?

SARA  
 Yeah.

An awkward beat, and they jog away from each other, smiling.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

The arena is equipped with two stages, covered with amps and facing each other. Jormungandr gets set up on one stage.

On the other stands DEATH MACHINE, a death metal band consisting of a screamer, a guitarist, a bassist, and a drummer. They're all dressed in chains and leather.

Chuck looks up at Death Machine and gulps. Sara sighs wistfully. Helix and Mary just stare.

Death Machine gears up.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Kaiser sits in front of a TV showing the Jormungandr/Death Machine match.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

A referee in black and white stripes and a helmet walks onto a small platform in between the stages.

The ref gestures towards Jormungandr. The band powers up their bracers. Helix nods.

The ref gestures towards Death Machine. The band powers up their bracers.

The ref walks off the platform and RINGS a bell.

Death Machine gets right into it, immediately playing hard and fast death metal. A flurry of skulls shoot towards Jormungandr.

Sara pounds on the drums, throwing up a thick aura that slows the skulls down.

Helix plays a fast series of notes, shooting down many of the skulls.

He then sings a basic refrain, creating a field of vibrating strings which destroys some of the skulls that pass through it.

Mary joins Helix in shooting down skulls.

Chuck doesn't move.

CHUCK

W-w-what do I do?

MARY

Give us a wall!

No matter how many skulls Jormungandr shoots down, more keep coming, and the tide creeps closer.

Helix plays harder, faster, shooting down more and more, but he can't get them all.

Sara looks at Chuck, who's still frozen.

SARA

Screw it.

She plays a fast, hard pattern, culminating in a massive drum kick that sends a shockwave towards Death Machine.

Death Machine's screamer counters with a howl that absorbs her shockwave, sends it back, and scatters her drums.

Sara's aura disappears and the skulls get faster and closer.

MARY

Come on, Chuck!

Chuck snaps out of it and starts playing a fast bassline. A translucent stone wall slides up from the front of the stage.

Chuck plays pretty well.

HELIX

Keep it up!

Sara gets up, sets up her snare and toms, and starts playing again, but without her full set of drums, her aura is weaker.

Chuck's wall gets high enough that it stops a skull.

The impact jars the wall and Chuck, and Chuck trips over his fingers.

His wall collapses.

A skull screeches through the band and into Sara, knocking her down.

Her aura fades again.

The skulls come faster.

Chuck fumbles more. A skull hits him. He falls.

MARY

Chuck!

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Kaiser grimaces.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Helix steps closer to Mary. They shoot down more skulls. The skulls still get closer.

Helix ducks one. He's not singing anymore, he needs all of his focus to be on the guitar. He plays with speed and precision, and is shooting down three at a time now.

Mary struggles to keep up.

A skulls hits her synth. It falls.

A skull hits her. She falls.

Helix plays even faster; his guitar blazes with yellow energy, but it's still not enough to stop the tide of skulls.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

KAISER

Come on, come on...

Kaiser winces, groans.

KAISER (CONT'D)

I can't watch this.

He grabs the remote. Points it at the TV.

On the screen, Helix steps to the front of the stage.

Helix shifts into playing Vice Virtue.

Kaiser stops.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

The beat starts off quiet, slow, but still powerful. Helix projects an electric aura like a stormcloud. Bolts of lighting destroy the skulls that pass under it.

The members of Death Machine share glances. They play harder.

Helix's beat picks up. His guitar blasts chains of lighting.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Kaiser leans forward.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Helix reaches the solo. Lighting bounces throughout the stormcloud.

He plays beautifully.

...for the first five seconds. Then he trips over his fingers.

His eyes snap open.

The stormcloud fades.

A skull slams into him.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SOCCER FIELD FLASHBACK - DAY

Young Helix and Chuck, both 10, play in a kid's soccer game.

Kaiser, Amelia, Charlie and Emily cheer from the sidelines.

Chuck has the ball, but is exhausted, huffing and puffing down the field. A member of the other team steals the ball from him without too much trouble.

Helix charges towards the guy with the ball, steals the ball back, and books it towards the goal.

AMELIA

Go Johnny!

Plenty of his teammates are open, but he doesn't pass to any of them.

He reaches the goal, kicks the ball... it's good!

The referee blows a WHISTLE. The children run into a quick line, high-fiving the other team before running back to their parents.

Helix and Chuck run to their parents. Chuck is too tired to show any emotion, but Helix vibrates with excitement.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

You did great, Johnny! Good goal!

KAISER

Sure, but the team still lost.

Helix's excitement fades.

AMELIA

But he did his best, and that's what's important.

KAISER  
Don't lie to the kid.

Kaiser crouches next to Helix.

KAISER (CONT'D)  
John, look. If you listen to your  
mom, you're gonna think that as  
long as you try your hardest, the  
world's just gonna give you  
everything, but it's not.

Amelia rolls her eyes.

KAISER (CONT'D)  
You did good out there, you really  
did. But doing good doesn't matter  
if it isn't good enough. You  
understand?

Helix nods.

Amelia sighs.

Kaiser smiles, ruffles his hair.

Helix smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

The crowd cheers at first, but all sound fades away.

A roadie wakes Helix and helps him up. Other roadies help the  
rest of the band.

Helix feels his chest where the skull hit him. He looks at  
Death Machine, who revel in the the crowd's cheers.

He looks at his band, sore and beaten.

Realization hits him. He drops to his knees.

The roadie helps him up again.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

The aftermath keeps playing, but Kaiser isn't there anymore.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - NIGHT

Jormungandr enters the garage. Chuck collapses on the floor.

Mary sits on a speaker. Helix paces. Sara leans against the wall, pissed. Amelia enters.

                  AMELIA  
Johnny, I know-

                  HELIX  
Mom.

                  AMELIA  
Okay.

She hesitates; leaves.

Beat.

                  SARA  
If no one else is gonna say it, I  
will. Chuck lost that for us.

Chuck buries his face in the carpet.

                  HELIX  
If you hadn't gone overboard like  
that, you wouldn't have gotten  
knocked over, and we could've held  
them off!

                  SARA  
Shut up, Helix! You're as much to  
blame as Chuck! What do you think  
about that glass cannon now? You're  
right, lacking defense sure screwed  
them over!

                  HELIX  
It would've, if we'd been able to  
weather their first assault! And if  
you hadn't gone on the offensive-

Sara points at Chuck.

                  SARA  
I wouldn't have needed to go on the  
offensive if we actually had a  
reasonable defense!

                  MARY  
Hey!



MARY  
Seriously? Are we really doing  
this?

HELIX  
Yea or nay?

MARY  
Yea! God!

CHUCK  
Nay.

Everyone looks at Chuck. He doesn't look up.

CHUCK (CONT'D)  
It's okay. I've never really been a  
good fit.

MARY  
Chuck, shut up. He votes yea.

Chuck's head snaps up.

CHUCK  
I don't! I vote nay.

Helix hesitates.

HELIX  
Chuck, you know this isn't... I  
mean, I don't...

CHUCK  
No, I get it. This is your dream. I  
didn't even want to compete.

Mary turns on Sara.

MARY  
I hope you're proud of-

SARA  
Yea.

Everyone stares at Sara for a beat.

HELIX  
What?

SARA  
I vote yea.

MARY  
(earnest)  
Thank you.

HELIX  
But you brought up the idea!

SARA  
Yeah, well, I changed my mind,  
okay?

Beat. An awkward beat.

Helix struggles to gauge Chuck's reaction without making eye contact.

CHUCK  
So... it's a tie.

HELIX  
Whatever. He can stay.

Sara nods.

Chuck looks at Helix, surprised.

Mary glares at Helix.

Helix leaves.

EXT. CHARLESON HOUSE - DAY

The house is smaller than the Helix home, but just as nice.

Helix stands on the front step. Charlie stands just inside the open door.

CHARLIE  
He's off somewhere with Mary again.

HELIX  
Do you know where they're at? I  
think they forgot to call me.

CHARLIE  
I don't think they did.

Helix scoffs.

HELIX  
Probably right.

Helix turns to leave.

CHARLIE

Helix.

Helix turns back around.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You look up to your dad a lot,  
don't you?

HELIX

What? I don't know. I guess.

Charlie chuckles.

CHARLIE

You guess. Okay.

Charlie chooses his words carefully.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Kaiser was one of my best friends.  
But he could be a real bastard  
sometimes, too. There's a reason I  
haven't tried very hard to  
reconnect with him. There's a  
reason Emily and I didn't leave  
with him.

Helix is kind of shocked.

HELIX

Leave with him?

CHARLIE

The whole Power Bracer, Battle of  
the Bands thing was gaining  
traction around then, and he wanted  
the band to get in on it.

HELIX

He asked you... Why are you telling  
me this?

Charlie sighs.

CHARLIE

I just don't want to see you and  
Chuck ending up like him and me.  
Yeah?

HELIX

...Yeah. I guess. Whatever.

Helix walks off.

INT. SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sara's room is a mess. Her walls are covered with posters and pictures, mostly bands and album covers, but some movie posters and actors.

Sara sits with her back to a computer desk; Helix paces.

SARA  
He's been practicing a lot.

HELIX  
A phrase which here means...?

SARA  
Sometimes three hours a day. And Mary's only forcing two.

HELIX  
Hm.

SARA  
Helix...

Helix stops pacing, looks at her.

SARA (CONT'D)  
Just... I'm sorry, okay?

HELIX  
For what? For convincing me to kick Chuck out of the band, or for changing your mind after I tried?

SARA  
I don't know! Forget it.

HELIX  
Yeah.

Beat. Helix sits on Sara's bed.

He looks at her. Looks down.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
You were right. Both times.

Sigh. Sara nods.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
He has been doing okay. If only because of the lousy competition we've been facing.

SARA

There's a plus side to being in the loser's bracket. You're only fighting losers!

Helix chuckles.

HELIX

It won't keep up, though.

EXT. HARBOR - NIGHT

The harbor is calm, despite the large number of shops and shoppers.

Mary and Chuck sit on a bench looking at the ships. They each have a smoothie.

CHUCK

I guess I'm just still surprised she wants me in the band.

Mary scowls.

MARY

She wants you in the band because you're a valuable part of it.

CHUCK

Helix doesn't think so.

MARY

Helix is an asshole sometimes. More and more lately. You shouldn't care what he thinks about you.

CHUCK

Yeah, right.

MARY

I'm serious.

CHUCK

Helix and I have been friends since, like, the womb. And yeah, he was always kind of a jerk when he wanted something, but he always brought me along with him.

MARY  
You've been friends since the womb,  
and he was ready to just drop you  
the moment you started holding him  
back!

CHUCK  
I've been holding him back the  
whole time.

MARY  
You know what I meant.

CHUCK  
I just think that matters.

Mary's phone dings. She sighs.

MARY  
It does matter.

She pulls her phone out.

MARY (CONT'D)  
But I miss the old Helix.

CHUCK  
Yeah.

Mary examines her phone.

Oh, shit.

MARY  
The bracket's been updated.

She hands Chuck the phone. Puts her hand on his.

MARY (CONT'D)  
We'll be okay.

Chuck looks at the phone.

CHUCK  
Oh, shit.

INT. SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Helix leans over Sara at the computer.

HELIX  
Oh, shit.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Helix and Chuck prepare their instruments.

HELIX  
So... how's things?

Beat.

Chuck shrugs.

Beat.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
Look... about the other day...

Sara and Mary arrive. Chuck is almost as relieved as Helix is.

SARA  
How you doing, Chuck?

Chuck emits a sound halfway between a grunt and a whimper.

Sara laughs. Mary shoots her a look.

HELIX  
We'll be fine. We just need to do what Hobo Hobo did. If we can take the initial assault, Death Machine has no defense.

SARA  
No.

HELIX  
No?

SARA  
Hobo Hobo did good, sure, but they didn't need to work so hard for it. Is this the first you're thinking about fighting Death Machine?

HELIX  
The bracket was only just announced!

MARY  
Oh come on. We've all known this had to happen. It's the way things are set up.  
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

The only way we wouldn't have to fight Death Machine again is if we'd lost first.

HELIX

Whatever. So I guess you've got a plan.

SARA

I'm gonna hit Chuck.

Short beat.

HELIX

What?

CHUCK

What?

MARY

Gently. She's gonna hit you gently.

SARA

Yeah, because that'll get the point across. Put your hands up, Chuck.

CHUCK

What? No!

Sara pulls back a fist. Chuck throws his hands in front of his face. Sara hits his arm, knocking it into his face. He yelps in pain.

Mary runs to him.

MARY

Sara!

Sara turns to Helix.

SARA

Now I'm gonna hit you. Duck.

HELIX

Okay?

Sara rears back and throws another punch. Helix ducks out of the way, dodging the punch.

SARA

If it's that strong, don't block it. Just get out of the way.

Helix ponders. Enlightenment strikes.

HELIX

Hang on. I have an idea.

He steps next to Chuck.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Hit me again.

Sara shrugs, swings. Helix sidesteps the punch, pushes it aside so the blow smacks Chuck. Chuck collapses.

CHUCK

Ow! Why am I the punching bag?

Sara smiles. Mary scowls.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Death Machine sends their constant wave of skulls out.

Jormungandr is on the other stage. Sara and her drums sit at the front of the stage, right in front of Chuck; she makes a wall that Chuck supports, while everyone else shoots down skulls.

HELIX

Now!

As they shift into the chorus, they shift tactics; everyone pours their focus into Chuck's wall, which bends and shifts into a tunnel.

Rather than stopping the skulls, it channels them all into a small tube, which curves to aim back at Death Machine.

The skulls pour into the tunnel...

...And they wreck it, smashing through rather than curving back.

A stream of skulls crash into Sara, scattering her drums.

The wall fades.

Time slows down as:

- Chuck looks at Sara, prone on the ground;
- Looks at Mary as she frantically shields herself; - Looks at Helix as he slides across the stage to help Sara.
- Chuck takes a breath. Here goes nothing.

Time returns to normal speed as Chuck leaps over Sara to stand at the front of the stage.

He plays like never before, and forms a massive wedge directly in front of himself, parting the tide of skulls like the Red Sea.

Helix watches the skulls rush around the band.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Chuck?!

CHUCK

Get her set up!

Mary runs over, and she, Helix and Sara set up Sara's drums.

Chuck's wedge strains against the onslaught, but it holds.

Death Machine's lead guitarist smirks.

He spins as he plays a quick riff, sending a horned skull off the side of their stage.

The skull skirts the edge of the arena, barely avoiding the audience.

As it reaches the rushing wave of skulls surrounding Jormungandr, it spins, its horns turning into a drill.

It burrows straight through the other skulls.

Heads for Chuck.

Contacts right on his temple.

CRACK.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Helix, Mary, Sara, Amelia, Charlie, Emily, and a handful of others stand around a coffin, next to an open grave.

Everyone but Helix cries a little.

Mary cries a lot.

Kaiser stands off in the distance, but still nearby. Catches Charlie's eye.

They nod to each other.

CUT TO:



INT. HELIX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Helix sits at his desk, reading an internet article: "PRETTY LITTLE DEATH MACHINE? USWB DEATH RULED MISADVENTURE, SOME DISAGREE."

A KNOCK at the door.

HELIX

It's open.

The door opens. Amelia pokes her head in.

AMELIA

Your friends are here.

HELIX

What? Why?

AMELIA

I don't know, Johnny. My first guess would be that they wanted to see you, but you're right, that can't be it.

Helix rolls his eyes.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Mary, Sara, and Amelia hang out in the garage.

Mary plays a few simple chords while Sara sings and Amelia listens.

SARA

YOU SAY YOU DON'T KNOW THAT'S OKAY  
YOU SAY YOU THINK NO THAT'S OKAY  
BUT PLEASE, OH, PLEASE DON'T TELL  
ME THAT...

The song ends abruptly.

MARY

And there, that's where I'm stuck.

AMELIA

That's really good, Mary! I love it!

MARY

Sara?

SARA  
I've heard better. But it's not  
awful.

MARY  
It's not finished. I mean-

Helix enters.

He hits the garage door opener.

HELIX  
What are you guys doing here?

SARA  
Nice to see you too, Helix.

HELIX  
Yeah, hi, sorry.

MARY  
We were hoping to jam or something.  
You in?

HELIX  
Um... No. I told you I was busy.

Everyone's faces fall.

AMELIA  
Johnny...

MARY  
Busy with what? The War was your  
life.

Helix grabs his guitar, leaves out the garage door.

HELIX  
Yeah, I don't know, stuff. Sorry,  
bye!

Amelia leaves, following Helix.

AMELIA  
Jonathan!

Beat.

SARA  
...Shit.

INT./EXT. HELIX FAMILY VAN - DAY

Helix hops in the family van. Amelia follows him.

AMELIA  
Jonathan Helix!

Amelia gets in the passenger seat.

HELIX  
Get out, mom.

AMELIA  
Your friends came over here to see  
you. You are not going to just  
leave them like this.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Sara and Mary watch as Helix and Amelia argue. Helix is stoic.

MARY  
What is wrong with him?

Sara gives Mary a look.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I mean, we were Chuck's friends  
too, right? Why avoid us?

Sara glares.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Forget it.

Sara shakes her head. She looks back to the van just in time to see Amelia step out.

Helix drives the van away.

EXT. ARENA - SUNSET

Helix's van pulls around the back of the massive arena. A huge digital sign declares "TONIGHT!!! WAR OF THE BANDS!!!

JORMUNGANDR VS. DEATH MACHINE: THE REMATCH!!!"

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Helix, alone on one stage, plays a blistering solo. He shoots jets of yellow flames at Death Machine on the other stage.

Death Machine's on the ropes; while the guitarist and screamer still maintain a constant attack of skulls, the drummer and bassist instead focus on a wall which can barely withstand Helix's assault.

Helix increases the pace of his solo, yells.

His flames twist into a massive burning tornado that swallows most of the skulls Death Machine fires off.

Some skulls get through, smacking into Helix.

He takes a few good hits, but flames wreath his body and absorb the rest of the impacts.

Helix plays even faster, and his tornado whips into Death Machine, scattering the entire band.

Helix stops playing. Breathes heavily.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - NIGHT

Mary and Sara put away their instruments.

Helix enters, cheerful, wielding his guitar. He's still bruised and battered from the fight with Death Machine.

Everyone stares. He ignores them, plugs his guitar in, and tunes it.

Beat. He looks up at them.

HELIX  
Is something wrong?

MARY  
No! We're just... waiting for you  
to get set up.

HELIX  
Okay. I'm ready.

SARA  
...Awesome!

Mary and Sara unpack their instruments, set up.

Sara looks at Mary. She nods.

SARA (CONT'D)

I don't know if anybody told you,  
but we've got a gig next Friday.  
Battle of the bands.

HELIX

What? Really?

MARY

Not that kind. Old-fashioned  
battle. Who gets more applause,  
that sorta thing.

HELIX

...Oh. I think... yeah, I'm free.  
How much are tickets?

SARA

Don't be an ass, Helix. You know  
what we're asking.

Beat.

HELIX

I don't know. That's not really my  
scene.

MARY

Please, Helix.

Helix matches Mary's gaze.

EXT. VENUE - NIGHT

Helix, Mary, and Sara walk out of the venue, laughing and  
cheering. Helix wears a bookbag, but no Power Bracer; he has  
a tan line where the bracer was. An ecstatic FAN follows them  
out.

FAN

You guys were great! Really, just  
great!

MARY

Thanks!

FAN

Yeah! I've been following you since  
the start of the War! Sara, you are  
a beast!

SARA

...Thanks.



MARY

But what happens now? When you quit, they're not going to let them-

HELIX

I'm not gonna quit.

MARY

...What?

HELIX

I'm not done.

MARY

You're not DONE? What the hell is that supposed to mean?

SARA

Mary-

HELIX

It's not over.

MARY

Those people killed Chuck!

HELIX

And I stopped them!

MARY

Not them! The whole fucking war! No wonder you didn't go to the protest with us. You're the enemy!

SARA

What the hell is happening right now?

Mary gets in Helix's face.

MARY

If you're not with us, you're against us.

HELIX

Mary-

Mary hammers her fists at Helix.

SARA

Enough!

Sara grabs Mary, pulls her back.

Helix doesn't move.

MARY  
You killed him! It's your fault!

SARA  
Shut up, Mary!

Sara tries to restrain Mary. Mary cries and screams and shakes and fights her.

SARA (CONT'D)  
She's wrong! Helix, she's wrong,  
you can't blame-

MARY  
YOU KILLED HIM!

Helix runs off.

Mary stops fighting, just cries.

SARA  
Helix!

He's already gone.

EXT. HELIX HOUSE - MORNING

Helix shambles into view of the house.

He walks up, goes inside.

INT. HELIX FAMILY KITCHEN - MORNING

Amelia slouches at the kitchen table, a cup of coffee in her hands. She looks like she hasn't slept all night.

Helix walks in.

AMELIA  
Where have you been?

No reply.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
Sara's asleep in the living room.  
She waited here for you.

Helix shakes his head.

Amelia sighs, walks into the living room.

Amelia reappears, escorting a groggy Sara.

SARA  
Helix?

Helix grunts.

SARA (CONT'D)  
Mary's really sorry-

HELIX  
No she's not.

Beat.

SARA  
No.

Amelia watches a moment; leaves.

Helix collapses into a chair. Sara sits across the table from him.

HELIX  
I don't blame her.

SARA  
You should. That was crazy.

HELIX  
She and Chuck were... pretty close.  
But even before he died, she and I  
had been drifting-

SARA  
Save it. You don't have to be mad,  
I guess, but you can't stop me from  
being mad for you.

Helix smiles, just a little.

HELIX  
Why are you here?

Beat.

SARA  
Why are you doing this?

HELIX  
What do you mean?

SARA  
Why won't you stop?

HELIX  
I can't stop.

SARA  
But why not?

HELIX  
I just can't, okay?

SARA  
You really think you're going to  
get anywhere alone? We were  
struggling as a full band! All  
you're accomplishing now is pissing  
everyone off!

HELIX  
I know! Okay? I know I can't win.

Long beat.

He takes a breath.

Lets it out.

Looks away.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
So help me.

SARA  
What?

HELIX  
...Help me. Fight with me.

Sara groans.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
I wouldn't be asking if I thought  
there was any chance I could do it  
alone.

SARA  
Come on, Helix.

Beat.

Helix stands.

HELIX  
I need sleep.

Helix walks to the stairs.

SARA  
 Seriously?

INT. HELIX'S ROOM - DAY

Helix sleeps on top of his blankets, fully dressed.

Charlie enters.

CHARLIE  
 Helix.

Helix wakes up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 Why are you doing this?

HELIX  
 Why does everyone keep asking-

Charlie slams a fist against the wall. Helix sits up straight.

CHARLIE  
 Answer the question, John.

Helix turns, hangs his feet off the bed.

Slouches.

HELIX  
 Uncle Charlie... if I just quit?  
 After Chuck...

Helix chokes back tears.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
 How do you not understand?

Charlie softens.

CHARLIE  
 I think I might.

Beat. Charlie sighs.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 God help me. You need a bassist.

HELIX  
 What?

CHARLIE  
I'll play bass for you.

HELIX  
What? Really?

CHARLIE  
You want to practice after dinner?  
Around seven?

Helix looks at a clock. 4:00.

He sits up straight.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
I'll talk to Sara.

Charlie moves to leave. Stops at the door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
It's not your fault. I know why you  
think it is... but it's not. Okay?

HELIX  
It's not that simple.

CHARLIE  
Yeah.

He nods.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Yeah.

He leaves.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - NIGHT

Charlie tunes his bass. Sara finishes setting up his drums.

Helix enters the garage.

HELIX  
Are you sure you want to do this?

SARA  
Oh man! I thought I was, but now  
that you ask, I guess I'm really  
not and I've totally changed my  
mind!

She rolls her eyes, snorts.

HELIX  
Uncle Charlie?

Charlie chokes up, just a little bit. But Helix notices.

CHARLIE  
If you're set on going out there,  
I'm watching your back the entire  
time.

SARA  
Yeah. That.

Beat.

HELIX  
Does Mary know?

SARA  
Yeah. But do yourself a favor,  
don't bring it up with her.  
She's... not thrilled.

Charlie nods.

CHARLIE  
Emily's on her side.

HELIX  
You guys know we've only got one  
band to beat before the national  
bracket, right? You know what that  
means?

CHARLIE  
We're ready to travel.

Sara nods.

HELIX  
Okay. Let's get started.

INT. SARA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sara walks into her room, bruised but cheerful.

Mary steps in behind her, leans against the doorframe.

MARY  
How was the fight, traitor?

Sara's cheer fades. She sits at her computer.

SARA

Fine.

MARY

Helix still completely unfazed by  
his supposed best friend's death?

Sara pauses, looks at Mary, returns to focusing on the  
computer.

Beat.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hey! I asked you a question!

Sara stops. Looks at Mary.

SARA

What.

MARY

How's he doing?

Sara lets out a breath.

SARA

I don't know. Hardcore. Like... I  
don't know.

MARY

I meant how's he dealing with  
Chuck?

SARA

I know what you meant.

MARY

What the hell does "hardcore" mean  
in that context?

Sara spins back to the computer.

SARA

How about instead of hassling me,  
you talk to him?

Mary walks away.

EXT. HELIX HOUSE - DAY

Helix walks to the mailbox. Checks the mail.

Mary approaches from a distance. She sees Helix; stops.

Helix flips through the mail, walks back to the house.

Mary takes a breath.

MARY

Helix.

Helix looks up.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Helix and Mary walk around the neighborhood.

A long silence.

HELIX

How are you... doing?

Mary shrugs.

HELIX (CONT'D)

I know you and I haven't really...  
talked about things. But-

Mary's eyes moisten.

MARY

I don't want to.

HELIX

Okay.

Long beat.

Mary stops.

Helix stops too.

Beat.

Mary keeps walking.

Helix does too.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Have you been following the  
Southwest bracket?

MARY

What? No.

Helix pulls out his phone, fiddles with it.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Wait. Isn't...

Helix hands her the phone.

HELIX  
It concluded last week.

Mary looks at the phone. A news article proclaims KAISER  
HELIX TO COMPETE IN USWB FINALS.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
When we got started, I didn't  
really... I mean, I thought it was  
possible we'd win. I just figured  
we wouldn't.

Mary hands his phone back.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
But now all we've got to do is beat  
El Guapo again - and he wasn't too  
bad the first time - and we're  
going to the finals.

MARY  
When do you... You're gonna fight  
him?

HELIX  
I don't really know. Yes. Yes, if  
we get the chance; they haven't  
announced the brackets yet. But  
that's not, like, the point. For  
me. Maybe.

Beat.

Helix stops.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
It's not the same without you-

Mary stops.

MARY  
I won't.

HELIX  
I know it's not fair of me to-

MARY  
I won't! God, Helix, get it through  
your skull!

HELIX  
 Will you just listen? For like,  
 five seconds?

Helix looks away from her.

Opens his mouth to speak, then stops.

Takes a breath.

HELIX (CONT'D)  
 Just... If we stop now, right? But  
 I feel like... I'd feel like Chuck  
 died for nothing.

He looks at her. She doesn't look at him.

MARY  
 (quiet)  
 You're such an asshole.

HELIX  
 Yeah. I know.

INT. HELIX FAMILY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Helix paces around the kitchen. Charlie and Amelia lean  
 around Sara, who holds a letter. They all read it.

Charlie stands up, lets out a breath.

SARA  
 Holy shi-  
 She looks at Amelia.

SARA (CONT'D)  
 Holy crap. This is awesome.  
 Amelia isn't amused.

AMELIA  
 No. Absolutely not.

HELIX  
 Mom, before you-

AMELIA  
 No!

CHARLIE

Amelia, I'm not crazy about this either, but let's talk about it first, okay?

SARA

I've thought about it. Let's go.

AMELIA

So you're just going to be gallivanting about Las Vegas?

HELIX

Mom. We'll be too busy practicing to get into any trouble.

AMELIA

What about school? How long are you going to be out there?

HELIX

The schedule's been up since the beginning of the War; the final match is a week before school starts. We'll be back by then.

SARA

Plus, I mean, come on. This is worth missing a year of school, if we had to.

Amelia disagrees, and has a mind to tell Sara as much.

HELIX

But we don't! We don't have to.

Amelia stops, thinks.

AMELIA

But what about work? I can't just leave for a month.

CHARLIE

I can. One of the benefits of working for yourself.

AMELIA

Helix is not going to this... event without me.

CHARLIE

I can take care of him, Amelia.

Amelia tears up.

AMELIA

I know you can, Charlie. I know.  
It's just...

She turns to Helix.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

You're going to come back, right?

CHARLIE

Nobody's going to get hurt. You  
have my word.

Amelia still talks to Helix.

AMELIA

...Your father will be there?

Realization slides over Helix.

HELIX

(softly)  
I'll come back, mom.

Helix hugs her.

Amelia cries.

EXT. HELIX HOUSE - DAY

Helix and Charlie throw bags into Amelia's van.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Helix, and Charlie stand with their bags. They look around.

Helix sees Sara and Mary. They walk over.

He cocks his head.

HELIX

Mary?

MARY

Something wrong?

HELIX

Are you coming?

MARY

I'm not fighting.

Sara nods at Helix like she thinks otherwise.

HELIX

But...

MARY

But I am coming.

She looks at Sara.

MARY (CONT'D)

But I'm not fighting.

SARA

Yeah, yeah.

HELIX

That's fine. That's great. Thank you.

MARY

Yeah, well, you're welcome. Let's go.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Helix, Mary and Sara sit in the same row, with Helix by the window, Mary in the middle, and Sara in the aisle seat.

Charlie sits a row behind them.

Helix looks out the window.

HELIX

Holy crap. I think I see it.

Mary leans over to look out the window too. Sara tries to look, but she's too far away.

SARA

Where?

MARY

Woah!

SARA

Where?!

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The Battlefield is a massive stadium, big enough to seat 100,000 comfortably. It's 200 yards wide, 400 yards long, and ten stories high.

A small fleet of taxis drive towards it.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD ENTRANCE - DAY

From the entrance, the height of the Battlefield is more apparent. The windows that line the wall give glimpses of offices and hotel rooms.

Helix, Sara, Mary, and Charlie marvel, along with a crowd of other new arrivals stepping out of taxis. Uniformed aides guide everyone along inside.

HELIX

Holy...

SARA

Good grief.

MARY

How much did this cost?

Charlie whistles.

INT. HOTEL FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Helix steps out of his room. Sara and Mary stand in the hallway, talking.

HELIX

How about this place, huh?

SARA

(sharp)

How big is your room?

HELIX

Pssshhh. Big. I don't know.

MARY

Sara's just mad because I have a slightly bigger bathroom.

SARA

You have a bathtub and a shower! That is not "slightly bigger!"

MC RELENTLESS, 22, and his DJ, DEEJAY, 22, round a corner and come into view. They're rough-looking.

DEEJAY

That him?

RELENTLESS

You Helix?

HELIX

Yeah. What's up?

Relentless snickers.

RELENTLESS

Don't act so chummy, fluffcup.

SARA

Fluffcup?

Relentless sizes them up.

RELENTLESS

You look like pushovers.

DEEJAY

They are pushovers. You saw how hard Death Machine beat 'em.

RELENTLESS

Killed your friend, yeah? Like, he got straight-up murdered.

Helix grits his teeth.

SARA

That's right.

Relentless and DeeJay laugh. Mary steps towards them, but Sara grabs her shoulder.

RELENTLESS

That is a new level of failure. You know he's the only fatality in the War, right?

DEEJAY

Everyone else managed to, you know, not die. Doesn't seem that hard.

RELENTLESS

You guys must really suck.

SARA  
Are you for real? Is this actually  
happening?

Mary fights Sara's grip, but Sara grabs her with her other  
hand, too.

MARY  
Let go!

Relentless laughs again.

RELENTLESS  
Oh, she's mad, ain't she?

He and DeeJay laugh.

DEEJAY  
Good luck in the ring. Hope we  
don't beat you to death.

They walk away.

SARA  
Did that seriously just happen?

MARY  
When's the match?

HELIX  
Against them? Uh, next week. If we  
win tomorrow.

MARY  
I'm fighting.

SARA  
Mary-

She goes into her room, slams the door.

INT. KAISER'S ROOM - DAY

The room is dark, the only light coming from the curtained  
window.

A few KNOCKS at the door.

HELIX (O.S.)  
Dad? Kaiser Helix? Are you in  
there?

Another few KNOCKS.

## HELIX (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hello?

FOOTSTEPS away from the door.

Kaiser steps out of the bathroom. It's not clear if he noticed.

## EXT. BATTLEFIELD ARENA - DAY

If one word can describe the arena, it's MASSIVE. Everything is huge, from the amount of seating, to the size of the amps which line the massive stages on either side of the arena.

Helix, Mary, Sara and Charlie rock out against PGP, a girl group consisting of four vocalists and a DJ.

PGP's DJ maintains a bubbly aura around the group, which absorbs everything Jormungandr can throw at it.

Meanwhile, the singers trade off lead vocalist seemingly at random. The lead vocalist of the moment shoots spears at Jormungandr. The backup vocalists harmonize bindings around members of Jormungandr, attempting to restrict them.

They attempt to ensnare Helix, but he drops to the ground, sliding onto his back without slowing down.

He fires a massive bolt of energy at PGP.

He hits one of the singers, knocking her off the stage.

A massive airbag expands out of the floor to catch her.

The remaining vocalists all harmonize on a single attack.

## EXT. BATTLEFIELD ARENA STANDS - DAY

Kaiser watches from the front row, his hands folded beneath his chin.

A stray blast hurtles right for him; it bursts into an explosion of light and sound as it hits a protective shield.

Everyone around shrieks and flinches and cheers, but Kaiser sits unperturbed.

## EXT. ROOFTOP - EVENING

Charlie leans on a railing, looks out over the city. The area is empty except for him.

Kaiser approaches.

KAISER  
Looks like you haven't lost it.

Charlie doesn't look.

CHARLIE  
Guess you were wrong.

KAISER  
I guess I was.

Kaiser leans on the railing next to Charlie. Charlie still doesn't look.

KAISER (CONT'D)  
How're you holding up?

Charlie shrugs.

CHARLIE  
Can't really describe it.

Kaiser nods.

KAISER  
Emily?

CHARLIE  
She's doing fine. I'd say she's more upset over how fine she's doing. She feels bad about not feeling terrible.

KAISER  
That's good. That's great.

CHARLIE  
Yeah. We'll get through this yet.

Beat.

KAISER  
How's, uh-

CHARLIE  
Your son?

KAISER  
...Yeah.

CHARLIE

He's tough. But everything's been taking its toll.

KAISER

After Chucky, I... I've been thinking about things. About how I've been taking it for granted that I could try to patch things up with him whenever. But...

Charlie turns on him.

CHARLIE

Damn it, Kaiser, what do you want me to say? That you should get to know your own son?

KAISER

I'll screw him up either way.

CHARLIE

Whichever way you choose, I don't think you can screw him up more. The kid's broken, Kaiser.

KAISER

He seems okay to me.

CHARLIE

He is okay. I'm okay too. Okay doesn't mean shit.

Charlie walks away.

Stops.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You should talk to him.

KAISER

I know.

Charlie leaves.

Kaiser stays.

INT. KAISER'S ROOM - DAY

Kaiser steps inside. As soon as the door closes, there's a KNOCK.

He freezes.

HELIX (O.S.)  
Kaiser Helix?

Beat.

HELIX (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Dad? I saw you come in.

Kaiser shuts his eyes.

Long beat.

He reaches for the doorknob.

FOOTSTEPS recede.

He stops. His hand drops.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD ARENA - DAY

Jormungandr stands on the opposite stage of Relentless and DeeJay.

Relentless and DeeJay are relaxed, breezy. Mary is the exact opposite of that; her glare redefines the word "loathing."

The rest of Jormungandr feels Mary's hatred, and it leaves them all tense. Helix shares a glance with Charlie.

HELIX  
Mary-

A buzzer sounds, and the bands begin playing.

DeeJay starts up a fast, jazzy drum beat, creating a field of spikes all over the arena.

Mary breaks straight into a beautiful, rich melody, creating a massive, gilded gauntlet the size of a refrigerator.

She throws it at Relentless, but DeeJay scratches his records, and warps the gauntlet so it misses.

Mary pulls the gauntlet back; she plays a little louder, and the gauntlet grows.

She throws it again, and misses again.

Sara plays a simple drum beat, building a small wall around their stage.

Helix plays along with Mary, filling out the gauntlet, and giving it spiked knuckles. Charlie watches Relentless, waiting.

Relentless raps the spikes up from around the arena, and throws them at Jormungandr, attacking from all sides.

Charlie reacts instantly, catching each of the spikes in a vice and crushing them.

Mary and Helix keep throwing the gauntlet, but DeeJay keeps deflecting it.

Mary enlarges the gauntlet after each miss. She gets increasingly frustrated.

Relentless continues throwing spikes, at an increasing pace.

Charlie has difficulty keeping up.

Helix stops adding to the gauntlet; instead he shoots down spikes.

Mary yells, plays hard and fast and strong.

She hits a hard chord; the gauntlet, about the size of an SUV by this point, clenches into a tight fist and surges forward.

DeeJay tries to warp it, but it's too big and too fast.

It smashes Relentless clear off the stage and into the wall twenty feet behind him.

The wall has no airbags, and he hits it with a SLAP.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Helix, Charlie, Mary, and Sara stand in a large, ornate office, along with DeeJay and an official AIDE.

AIDE

After reviewing the footage, we've decided Jormungandr's use of force, though exceptional, was appropriate, given the circumstances.

Helix and Sara breathe sighs of relief.

DEEJAY

Bullshit! That's bullshit!

AIDE  
Given the restricted timetable of  
the finals, we won't be able to  
have a rematch. If you-

Deejay storms out.

AIDE (CONT'D)  
Well.

MARY  
How is he? Uh, Relentless?

AIDE  
He's stable. They're expecting a  
full recovery in eight to twelve  
weeks.

MARY  
Can I... see him?

AIDE  
I don't know if that's a good idea,  
considering...

The aide looks towards the door.

MARY  
Right. Right.

She sighs.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I'm just gonna...

She leaves.

Sara looks at Helix and Charlie.

SARA  
I'll follow her.

Charlie nods.

Sara leaves.

Charlie turns to the Aide.

CHARLIE  
Are we good?

The aide nods.

Charlie and Helix leave.

INT. HALLWAY

Mary and Sara walk down the hallway together; Helix and Charlie walk out behind them.

Helix tries to follow, but Charlie puts a hand on his shoulder.

CHARLIE

Let's give them some space. I wanna talk to you, anyway.

Helix nods.

They turn down a different hallway.

INT. OUTSIDE MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

Mary stands outside a white, sterile medical environment; she looks in through a window.

Inside the med center, Relentless lies in a glass medical pod; a number of vital readouts display on the side of the pod.

Deejay paces next to the pod.

Sara arrives, stands next to Mary.

Beat.

SARA

How is he?

Mary shrugs.

MARY

Is this my fault?

SARA

What? No.

MARY

Then whose is it?

SARA

Nobody's.

MARY

It has to be somebody's fault!

Beat.

SARA

You were fighting just like you were supposed to be. You didn't break any rules.

MARY

No. No. But I knew what could happen. I knew I could end up hurting someone, and I fought anyway.

SARA

So did he! He knew the risks! If it's anyone's fault, it's his.

Mary grows desperate.

MARY

You're just saying all this to make me feel better!

SARA

That doesn't mean it's not true!

Mary bursts into tears.

Sara doesn't know what to do. She settles on putting a hand on her shoulder.

Mary embraces her. She hugs back.

MARY

Chuck wanted to stop...

SARA

What?

MARY

I fought to let him fight!

Sara realizes what they'd really been discussing.

SARA

Mary...

Mary sobs.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD ARENA STANDS - DAY

Helix and Charlie sit in the stands of the empty arena.

HELIX

What are they going to do with all this?

CHARLIE

With all what?

Helix stands, gestures expansively.

HELIX

This. Like... after the War is over. What happens then?

CHARLIE

I'm sure they'll find some use for it.

HELIX

I guess. They'll have to. They spent too much to just scrap it all.

Helix leans on a railing.

HELIX (CONT'D)

I just can't imagine any other use for it.

CHARLIE

Kaiser talk to you yet?

Helix shakes his head.

Charlie sighs.

HELIX

What was I supposed to do? What am I supposed to do now?

CHARLIE

What do you mean?

HELIX

Should I even be here? Was this...

He tears up; locks his eyes shut.

Charlie stands, leans on the railing next to him.

Long beat.

Helix wipes his eyes.

CHARLIE  
 Whatever you choose, I'm with you.

Helix nods.

INT. READY ROOM - DAY

Helix sits on a bench in a large, open room filled with music equipment and lockers. His guitar leans against the bench next to him.

Mary sits on his other side, head in her hands.

Sara paces in front of them.

Charlie stands near a hallway that leads out. He's still and silent. His bass hangs from his shoulders.

The Aide arrives from down the hallway.

AIDE  
 It's time.

Everybody but Helix gets ready to go.

Helix doesn't move.

All eyes rest on him.

SARA  
 Helix?

Beat.

AIDE  
 What's going on?

CHARLIE  
 Give us a minute.

AIDE  
 What? No, they just called for you!  
 You have to go!

SARA  
 Helix, you with us?

Helix doesn't move.

CHARLIE  
 I'm sorry, but-

HELIX

Go.

Everyone looks at him. Looks at each other.

AIDE

You heard him, let's move!

The Aide runs out. Everyone but Charlie follows.

Charlie nods at Helix. Helix nods back. Charlie leaves too.

Beat.

Helix stands.

Picks up his guitar.

Puts it on.

Flexes his fingers.

Takes it off.

Puts it down.

He paces. Sits. Head in his hands.

Sigh.

FOOTSTEPS. Helix looks up.

Kaiser arrives from the arena.

Helix shoots to his feet.

HELIX

Dad?

KAISER

What's the holdup? You coming?

Helix hesitates.

KAISER (CONT'D)

I didn't come all this way just to have my only competition give up on me.

HELIX

Only competition?

Kaiser shrugs.

KAISER

Charlie is competition too, yeah, sure. I wasn't trying to insult him. I was just trying to... compliment you.

HELIX

You really think...

KAISER

Let's just say I'd rather face your entire band minus you, than face you alone.

Beat.

KAISER (CONT'D)

I mean, obviously, not actually, or I wouldn't be back here.

Kaiser groans.

KAISER (CONT'D)

I'm not good at this stuff, okay? Can we just fight?

HELIX

I don't... want to fight you.

KAISER

Why not? Isn't that why you came here?

HELIX

...Yeah.

KAISER

Then stop moping and let's go put on a show!

Kaiser turns to leave.

HELIX

No!

Kaiser stops, turns back around.

HELIX (CONT'D)

Why did you leave?

Kaiser chuckles.

KAISER  
 We'll have time for this later.  
 There are millions of people  
 waiting to see us-

HELIX  
 (screaming)  
 I've been waiting for six years!

Quiet beat.

KAISER  
 Okay. Okay. Waiting for what?

HELIX  
 For this! For you! To talk to you  
 for three seconds!

KAISER  
 We're talking now. What did you  
 want to talk about?

Helix looks at him like he's a stranger.

Kaiser groans.

KAISER (CONT'D)  
 I know I haven't been a perfect  
 father-

HELIX  
 I'm done. I'm done.

Helix walks away.

KAISER  
 Don't turn your back on me when I'm  
 trying to talk to you!

CHARLIE  
 Don't you dare raise your voice at  
 him!

Helix and Kaiser both wheel around to see Charlie in the  
 hallway. Mary and Sara stand beside him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 We forfeit. You win. They're  
 waiting for you onstage.

KAISER  
 Oh come on! You really want the War  
 of the Bands to just end like that?  
 (MORE)

KAISER (CONT'D)  
After all this time, all the  
trouble everyone went through?

He looks at Charlie. Helix.

No response.

KAISER (CONT'D)  
If you won't do it for me, do it  
for the fans! They spent a lot of  
money for those tickets, and-

CHARLIE  
Get out.

Kaiser throws up his hands in exasperation.

KAISER  
This is ridiculous. What do you  
want from me? What am I supposed to  
do? You want an apology? I'm sorry!  
You want me to spend time with you?  
I'll buy the house next door!

HELIX  
I want Chuck back.

Beat.

Kaiser yells.

Kaiser leaves.

Nobody moves.

Helix looks at the rest of the band.

Mary runs to him. Embraces him.

Sara follows.

Charlie too.

Helix bursts into tears.

ROLL CREDITS

AS THE CREDITS ROLL:

EXT. HELIX HOUSE - DAY

Helix walks up to the front door.

Amelia bursts out of the house, runs up to him, hugs him.  
He hugs back.

EXT. HARBOR - NIGHT

Helix sits on a bench with Sara. He leans his head on her shoulder. She leans her head on his.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - DAY

Helix, Charlie, Sara, and Mary jam together.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Helix, Mary, Sara, Charlie, Emily, and Amelia stand around Chuck's grave.

Mary leans Chuck's bass against his tombstone.

She cries. Sara hugs her.

INT. HELIX FAMILY GARAGE - NIGHT

Helix helps Charlie, Sara, and Mary pack up their stuff.

Everybody says goodbye and leaves via the open garage door.

HELIX  
See you tomorrow.

Helix shuts the door behind them.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END