

NUNCHI (눈치)

by

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Nunchi (눈치) is a highly valued and actively learned Korean cultural skill referring to the subtle art of understanding others' moods and intentions through observation and context, enabling appropriate social behavior. The Korean language has a specific term for it, emphasizing its importance.

TEASER

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The CAMERA LOOKS DOWN ON the road.

A worn-down bus drives down a battered, unpaved country road.

IN THE BUS

A BOY (18), wearing an open red flannel over a faded black t-shirt, sits alert with bags under his almond eyes like the law gave him a one-way ticket to his death sentence.

The speed bumps and intimidating stares from the BUS DRIVER from the rearview mirror give reason for JACEN O'BRIEN to clutch his backpack like a newborn until his knuckles turned white.

Jacen's attention turns towards the amber highway lights.

The brakes from the bus hiss as Jacen stares at the faded yellow footprints on the uneven concrete.

MARINE CORPS DRILL INSTRUCTORS wait outside for the fresh meat of recruits.

INT. MCRD PARIS ISLAND RECEIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Overhead lights flicker on.

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

File in front of those damn phones!

OLD PHONES - crucified to the wall - watch the chaos.

Jacen files behind.

The NEW RECRUITS from the bus start making phone calls while reading the script taped next to the phones.

It's Jacen's turn.

Jacen dials the phone to the only phone number he remembered.

He picks up and hears only the busy tone.

No one is on the other end of the call.

The Script reads:

YOU WILL SAY THE FOLLOWING.

- THIS IS RECRUIT (LAST NAME)
- I HAVE ARRIVED SAFELY AT PARRIS ISLAND
- PLEASE DO NOT SEND ME ANY FOOD OR BULKY ITEMS IN THE MAIL
- I WILL CONTACT YOU WITHIN 7-9 DAYS BY LETTER WITH MY NEW ADDRESS
- THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT GOOD BYE FOR NOW

Jacen screams the script, hangs up, and walks away tailed by a barking Drill Instructor.

The phone falls and suspends midair like a pendulum.

PHONE

Look at this as a blessing. For one at least it isn't like when Grandma was with us thanksgiving weekend 2 years back, had a stroke, was rushed to the hospital and then passed in a couple of days. That was a mess. I literally just put her house on the market and there's still boxes to go through at the storage place. We all at least have the opportunity of a lifetime to make sure everything is in place.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EARLY MORNING

JOANN (51) squeezes her son's hand in reassurance. Jacen's sisters MATTIE (13) and KATHY (32) start tearing up.

MATTIE

Is there a treatment or some kind of special chemo or something-

JOANN

I don't want to get into the details at the moment but this is what it is. The only thing I ask is that we all be a family about this.

JoAnn continues to sip the coffee Kathy made her.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Kathy. This coffee hits the spot. Why can't the Keurig back home do this?

JACEN

Does Dad know?

JOANN

Even if I told (excuse my French) that son of a bitch, what could he do but make things 10 times worse. Have to look at this situation as a coffee cup half full kids.

JoAnn licks her lips.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Actually Kathy can you put a shot of espresso in this - it's gonna be a long day.

KATHY

Mom I --- how are you taking this so...you should be in bed or NOT HERE! Mattie! Jay! Take her home. When my manager gets here I'm taking off.

JOANN

Dear. All of you. New house rules moving forward. Rule no. 1 - your lives will not be paused for any reason on my account. I will not allow it.

KATHY

But...

JOANN

No butts! Especially the cigarettes you've been leaving near the driveway - at least take them with you before you drive off when you visit us.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

A CUSTOMER taps the glass entrance door.

CUSTOMER

I'm gonna lose my parking spot!
Where is the friggin coffee barista!?

The family look over in disbelief.

JOANN

I gotta drop these two off anyways. I don't need another lecture from Sister Mary Paula hinting at my shortcomings as a mother. She's not payin' the tuition. I AM.

Kathy helps Mattie put her backpack on.

Jacen holds his mom's pocketbook as she puts on her coat.

Jacen is still processing.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Well life can be shit hitting the fan. We just can't make it a shit show.

JoAnn smiles as she finally sees a small grin from Jacen.

The kids laugh.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Promise me this one thing kids. Just be nice to each other and be closer than you ever had been.

(MORE)

JOANN (CONT'D)

Do that and I'll be the happiest
mom in the world. Can you do that?

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

KATHY

We don't open shop til 6am - calm
the fuck down!

INT. OUR LADY OF HOLY DEVOTION - DAY

Close on a crumpled report card. The header reads "Our Lady of Holy Devotion." The correspondence belongs to Jacen. He follows along with the mass and stuffs the report card in his backpack.

CREDITS run over this religious pageantry as the new group of FOREIGN EXCHANGE KIDS are introduced before the congregation.

FRANKIE (17, anti-society/emo dude) elbows Jacen.

FRANKIE

Hey! They have the same eyes as
YOU.

Jacen punches Frankie back in the balls.

JACEN

Okay fuckin' racist.

FRANKIE

I was just joking dude.

NICK (17, just happy to be part of the ride) leans in.

NICK

I think it's nice that things will
be looking less *pale* in good ol'
Holy Devotion. At least you won't
be the token Asian anymore.

JACEN

I am nothing like those shadow
clones up there. I'm one of a kind.

Jacen looks back towards the altar as JESSIE (16, prettiest girl among the new foreign exchange kids) stumbles on her words while reading from the Good Book.

JESSIE

A letter from the apostle Peter...

6 classrooms, 6 syllabi, 6 "orientation anecdotes" from the teachers. Some are nuns and priests.

FATHER CHESHIRE

If no one fesses up who wrote a section from the book of Revelation and wrote 25 times 'I am the Anti-Christ', everyone will be getting a phone call to their parents immediately!

A sea of kids in catholic school uniforms all stacked on bleachers laugh.

FATHER CHESHIRE (CONT'D)

We will be stationing confession all afternoon!

The kids groan.

FATHER CHESHIRE (CONT'D)

Satan will have no power over this school that's for damn sure!

Jacen turns to see Frankie with the biggest smirk possible. He would do some twisted dark shit like that would he?

Everyone takes communion. Jacen approaches and crosses his arms so he just gets a blessing, not real communion, he knows he technically sinned before coming to service. Jacen watches Nick and Frankie cross their arms. Jacen chuckles.

MS. BAXTER

I wasn't born yesterday. Was it gawd-damn Frankie!?

INT. STUDENT COUNSELOR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ms. Baxter, the music teacher, shines up a violin.

MS. BAXTER

The board determined that for the 2008 spring musical, Our Lady of Holy Devotion is going to perform songs from *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Jacen scratches his head.

JACEN

But no one in the student body is Jewish.

MS. BAXTER

THAT'S WHAT I SAID!?! They said that because we are a "God-first" institution, this will "promote the gospel in the local community in a special way".

JACEN

By taking an Anti-Semitic approach.

Ms. Baxter hangs her head down in defeat.

Jacen starts spinning from his interrogation chair.

JACEN (CONT'D)

And I actually don't know what or if Frankie was involved in all that Revelation crap.

Ms. Baxter sighs and lifts her head up.

MS. BAXTER

That means I have to interrogate the juniors and sophomores now. Oh yeah, since this school has me heading the music department AND career counseling...what's your plan after graduating?

JACEN

Why do I need a plan? My sister Kathy works at the coffee shop up the street and she graduated college SEVEN MONTHS AGO.

MS. BAXTER

That's not the point. My job is to make sure you have the grades and be accepted by one of these colleges exactly one month before you get your cap and gown.

JACEN

But I don't want student loans.

Ms. Baxter picks up another violin and bow.

MS. BAXTER

Don't worry you'll pay them off before you know it.

Jacen rolls his eyes.

JACEN
I'll talk to my Mom about it and
give you your answer tomorrow.

MS. BAXTER
Excellent!

Jacen stands up and points at an old box.

JACEN
But I will not be caught dead
wearing one of those!

Ms. Baxter stares at the box of itchy old beards meant to be
costumes for the Fidler on the Roof disaster waiting to
happen.

MS. BAXTER
Bring in the next kid. Thank you...

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MCRD PARIS ISLAND - NEW DAY

STAFF SERGEANT JOHNSON (35), a serious and intense individual
as Marine Corps Drill Instructors are trained and expected to
be, paces in front of Jacen and the other Marine Recruits.
Johnson holds a clipboard and takes roll call.

JOHNSON
Larkson!

LARKSON
Here!

JOHNSON
Moyer!

MOYER
Here!

JOHNSON
I served with your dad over in the
Gulf War. I expect good things from
you Moyer.

MOYER
Aye Sir!

JOHNSON
O'Brien!

JACEN

Here!

Johnson dramatically drops his clipboard.

JOHNSON

You sure as hell don't look Irish.

JACEN

Sir, my mother is Irish.

Johnson is not convinced.

JOHNSON

Recruit! I wanna see your social.
MOVE! NOW!

Jacen scrambles to his gear locker to find his wallet.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I'm not having any illegal commies
in my Corps...

Jacen finds it. Johnson swipes the card and examines it.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Well I'll be...

JACEN

Sir, this recruit was adopted from
Korea.

JOHNSON

Why the fuck you start with that
then?! Dumb ass...

JACEN

Sir, this recruit is -

JOHNSON

I don't give a fuck...O'Brien!
Unless you wanna be one of my
special kids for the next three
months...

JACEN

No sir!

JOHNSON

I've seen it all that these United
States has to offer, but this...

Johnson laughs and picks up his clipboard.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Ms. Baxter and the class watch Jessie play the violin solo of *Cadenza & Fantasy* from *Fiddler on the Roof* seamlessly. Jacen is equally mesmerized.

MS. BAXTER

I'm gonna stop you right there
little miss.

Jessie stops mid-measure. Not knowing what to do.

JESSIE

Did you...not like...

MS. BAXTER

Fuck. I mean Shit. Sorry, sorry I
am in Catholic School.

The kids laugh.

MS. BAXTER (CONT'D)

Don't tell anyone I just said that!
You can play- holy Mary mother of
God. What else you got?

The classroom door swings open as SISTER MARY PAULA (55), an intimidating example of a holy Catholic spearheading the enlightenment of molding the minds under her charge, appears.

You could hear a pin drop.

Sister Mary Paula's gaze lands on Jacen, but immediately turns to Ms. Baxter.

SISTER MARY PAULA

Barb - Ms. Baxter. A word. Come.

Ms. Baxter points at Jacen.

MS. BAXTER

You're in charge. Good practice
since you'll be our esteemed stage
manager for the musical.

Ms. Baxter walks towards the holy nun.

JACEN

What!? I didn't -

MS. BAXTER

Either that or wear one of the
beards to stun the academic board
knowing they casted a Korean Jew...

She closes the door behind her.

The kids chuckle.

NICK

Who are you taking to prom?

JACEN

Isn't that in like three months?

FRANKIE

Proms are just a social invention
to incite teenage pregnancies to
increase the work force and
pigeonhole anyone who dares to
venture into the upper class.

JACEN

Did you take your meds dude?

Frankie stares at the wall.

FRANKIE

Nope. Not for the last three days
actually. Why do you care?

Jacen walks to where Ms. Baxter's chair is.

JACEN

Well you get in a dark place real
fast and I don't feel like dragging
you outta Natasha's house again.

FRANKIE

Whatever.

Jacen plops down and embraces his new role.

NICK

Speaking of Natasha...

Nick rips a page from his notebook, crumples it into a ball,
and throws it at NATASHA (17).

NATASHA

Really!? How old are we?

NICK

Old enough to add sexual immorality to our list of sins come time for confession. Are your folks gone for the weekend?

NATASHA

Maybe. Why does it matter to you?

NICK

Well...we should have a little "housewarming" to make the foreign exchange kids feel welcome. Give them the full American experience.

The kids look over at Jessie placing the bow of the violin in its casing. Jessie notices and gets really shy.

NATASHA

You know what? Not a bad idea. Just make sure you bring something better from your mom's liquor cabinet huh?

Nick smiles. The door swings open.

MS. BAXTER

Jacen, can hear the whole lot of ya down the hall! Shush 'em up.

The door slams shut.

END FLASHBACK.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

JoAnn cuts vegetables on a wooden cutting board.

JOANN

I frankly don't give a flying fuck what you do after you graduate. My whole life, your Nana and all her friends would tell me, "Oh you are gonna be a secretary. Marry. Have kids." That's when I made a promise to never impose anything on my kids when it came to that.

Jacen passes JoAnn a bowl. JoAnn takes it and continues chopping away.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Got a phone call from Nick's mother. She told me that Nick came home with a lot of money...

Jacen stops scrubbing dishes.

JOANN (CONT'D)

...and it wasn't dollar bills he had. Not a debit or credit card. It was a Walmart bag filled with coins...

Jacen stares down at the pile of dishes. Hot water still running.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Funny thing. I turned to the glass coin jar under my desk. The one that once we fill it to the top, that will be the money we'd use to take the family to Disney...

The steam from the running water rises. Jacen turns his attention towards his mother.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Before you lie outta this one - and by the way you are a horrible liar - I have to ask you this one thing: what are Yu-Gi-Oh cards?

JACEN

It's not like that! They'll be worth tons of money years from now!

JOANN

I don't care Jace. That money is also for family emergencies. Do you not forget Mattie's meltdown at ShopRite the other month because she had to count every friggin tile walking down aisle seven?

JACEN

What does that have to do with an educated investment that could bring more money -

JoAnn stops and shuts off the sink.

JOANN

It has everything to do with you not even asking or talking to me about it first!

Jacen slams the plastic dish on the counter.

JACEN

Just like how your days are numbered and I have to somehow keep what's left of this family afloat!

JOANN

Jace...

JACEN

Dad should be here. Why can't he know? He's gonna find out -

JOANN

He doesn't deserve...

JoAnn stops herself and takes a deep breath.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Let's sit.

JoAnn pulls up a chair and pats it.

Jacen sighs and eventually sits across JoAnn.

JOANN (CONT'D)

After I dropped Mattie at the doctor's, I went to the church to... pray.

Jacen looks perplexed.

I asked Him why he gave me the shittiest hand that was dealt to a mother that actually gives a damn for her kids. I did, however, leave with an answer. I guess you can call it my ace in the hole.

JoAnn reaches out and takes Jacen's hand.

JOANN (CONT'D)

He gave me you. Kathy has some shit to sort through but the world is going to eat Mattie alive if you don't watch out for her. We have to work together to make this next chapter work. You got me?

JACEN

I gotchu.

JoAnn lets go.

JOANN

Pokey Man cards are the last thing I need to have on my mind you hear?

JACEN

Yu-Gi-Oh.

JOANN

Well "U-Gotta-Go" get a job.

Jacen smirks.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Make up the money and I can at least guide you along the way. You'd think with all that tuition they'd be showing you how to balance a checkbook. I'll teach ya over the weekend ya hear?

JACEN

Okay Mom...

JOANN

Kathy said be at the coffee shop at 5am sharp. Great, now the school is gonna think I'm the son of a gambler...

INT. 2002 FORD FOCUS - EARLY MORNING

Jacen and Kathy on the way to the coffee shop. He tumultuously changes the radio station, Kathy shoves a mixtape in the cassette player.

KATHY

Stop playing with my shit unless you wanna pay for the last one. That was a good mix tape.

JACEN

I told you for the hundredth time that was Mattie not me.

KATHY

You were in charge so regardless it was your fault.

Both siblings let the track play. Kathy hits the steering wheel to the beat. Jacen stares out his window as the amber highway lights flicker.

JACEN

Well it was either this or work at the Blockbuster the next town over.

Kathy presses the break at the intersection.

KATHY

Mom wouldn't let you step foot on that side of town. Apparently someone got shot Black Friday.

JACEN

Fuck capitalism.

KATHY

Fuck capitalism.

Kathy hits her turn signal and slowly presses the gas.

JACEN

How are you feeling about -

KATHY

- It's none of your business twat.

JACEN

Okay. Okay...jeez.

Kathy reaches over to light a cigarette. The car parks.

KATHY
I cannot believe I'm doing this.
Mom better not say that I didn't do
anything for this family...

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Busy morning in terms of customer foot traffic.

KATHY
Jace do you only have two speeds:
slow and stop!? I need you to
refill the espresso machine!

The customers chuckle.

Jacen gives Kathy a dirty look as he opens a fresh bag of
coffee beans.

JACEN
God help me...

KATHY
Sorry, he's new.

Kathy wipes her brow and digs through her pockets.

KATHY (CONT'D)
I'm taking a smoke break.

Jacen hands a customer a brown bag containing a bakery item
and hands another a cup of coffee.

JESSIE
Thanks...Jacen is your name right?

Jacen blushes and internally starts to freak out.

JESSIE (CONT'D)
So stage manager...that's a high
pressure responsibility...

JACEN
Yes. Yes it is.

JESSIE
Well, seeing you work at a place
like this, I can see why.

Jessie starts trailing in Korean. Jacen's perplexed.

JACEN
I'm sorry...

JESSIE

Oh, I assumed. Are you like Half-Korean, Half-

Jessie starts talking in Mandarin Chinese.

JACEN

No, no, no...I'm adopted. From Korea...

JESSIE

North or...

JACEN

My adopted family are American.

JESSIE

Ohhhhh... I thought it was me. My parents made sure I know at least three languages. If only they saw the people who ended up as my host family.

A Mailman carts in boxes of inventory. The Mailman finds his way towards Jacen.

MAILMAN

Can you sign this?

JACEN

Uh...yeah, sure...

Jessie steps back with her coffee and takes a sip.

JESSIE

We can talk more at the party later. This is pretty good by the way.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MARINE CORPS BARRACKS - DAY

Staff Sergeant Johnson chucks letters at the recruits.

JOHNSON

Larkson...Moyer.

Johnson shakes the package before he chucks it at Larkson.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Better be protein bars and not a sex toy like the last time...

Larkson smirks and opens the contents to reveal a letter and protein bars.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
As you were. O'Brien. O'Brien...

Johnson chucks two letters towards Jacen's way.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Who's Kathy? Are you a Momma's boy
O'Brien.

Jacen stands up in a position of attention.

JACEN
Sir, this recruit's mother is dead.

JOHNSON
Well fuck me...

Jacen sits back down as he stares at the two letters from Kathy and Mattie.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Raise your hand if you have a dead
momma...

Some recruits raise their hands.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Raise your hand if you have a dead
daddy...

Some recruits raise their hands.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Raise your hand if your parents
were just emotionally unavailable.

More hands shot up.

Johnson looks straight at Jacen.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Over two centuries of tradition
this Corps has stood as the bedrock
of America. A brotherhood that
stood the test of time. All you
dumb ass recruits need to do is
rifle qual, finish the crucible,
and you will become a part of that
family of tradition!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. GYM-CAFE-TORIUM OF OUR LADY OF HOLY DEVOTION - DAY

Nick paces from stage left to stage right. He's really getting into character.

Jessie is playing violin with the other student instrumentalists as Nick continues his monologue:

NICK

A fiddler on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But here in our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking his neck. It isn't easy. You may ask, why do we stay up there if it's so dangerous? We stay because Anatevka is our home... And how do we keep our balance? That I can tell you in one word... tradition!

CHORUS

Tradition! Tradition! Tradition!
Tradition! Tradition! Tradition!

Father Cheshire beams a huge grin from his face - conducting the choir. Ms. Baxter is on keys.

FATHER CHESHIRE

Mary Mother of God - Smile! You look like Ms. Baxter hit all of your puppies outside the parking lot. Smile! Nick you got the part...

Jacen walks across the stage and places tape markers.

Sister Mary Paula pulls Father Cheshire aside and whispers something. They look at Jacen but immediately look away once Jacen senses eyes on him.

FATHER CHESHIRE (CONT'D)

Kids! Let's take a 10 minute break.

Sister Mary Paula and Father Cheshire leave the space.

Frankie elbows Nick as walk towards Jacen's direction.

NICK

Dude - Intervention time.

JACEN

What!?

FRANKIE

Jace - you've been super involved in the lamest production of 'Let's impersonate an old Jewish village' made up of majority Italian kids.

NICK

Are you gay? Gay dudes love musical theatre.

Jacen shakes his head in disbelief.

FRANKIE

It's okay if you play the clarinet versus the Cloyster my dude. We won't disown you but our parents, well, that's a different story.

JACEN

Unless you want me to take one of these pieces of tape and beat you backstage. Especially YOU Nick - you had no common sense to deposit that money before going home before your Mom -

NICK

I wasn't thinking -

JACEN

Yeah you weren't.

Natasha lands a wad of crumpled paper that hits dead center towards the back of Nick's skull.

NICK

Hey! Oh it's you...

NATASHA

(Mockingly) Oh, it's you.

Nick sneaks a kiss on Natasha's face.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

So Jace, when are you and Jessie going to be officially a thing?

Jacen blushes.

JACEN

What!?

NATASHA

Jessie doesn't stop asking questions about this guy. Everyone's talking about it. Apparently they have 'excursions' at that coffee shop up the street.

NICK

Oh - phew - that's a relief.

JACEN

Darn it Natasha, these guys were just having an intervention accusing me of being a flaming homosexual.

FRANKIE

Good, but being so involved in this sorry excuse of a -

NATASHA

Babe, it's obvious. Jacen wants to make sure everything is in tip top shape as some reps from those fancy music conservatories are coming out to see her on game nite. Isn't that right Jace?

JACEN

Yeah...exactly.

NICK

My dude...

SISTER MARY PAULA (V.O.)

Father Cheshire and Ms. Baxter speaks highly of you for taking on this project...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. SISTER MARY PAULA'S OFFICE - DAY

A beautiful stained glass Mary holds a baby Jesus. Another image of a dying Jesus looking down towards Mary and the apostle John. In latin it reads:

'WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON!' THEN HE SAID TO THE DISCIPLE,
'BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER!'

Jacen feels uneasy in his chair as he looks across Sister Mary Paula.

JACEN

Yes Ma'am.

Sister Mary chuckles.

SISTER MARY PAULA

You can just call me sister.

JACEN

Yeah, but I already have two and they are not as wholly put together as you.

SISTER MARY PAULA

Can you expound on that?

JACEN

Actually, never mind.

Sister Mary opens a drawer from under her desk.

SISTER MARY PAULA

I've been trying to get in contact with your mother.

Sister Mary presents a small white book.

JACEN

Yeah, she's been pretty busy.

SISTER MARY PAULA

We used to go to school together - your mother and I.

JACEN

Oh...she never told me that.

SISTER MARY PAULA
 Hmmmm...well anyways, the faculty
 take great consideration in our
 graduating seniors -

JACEN
 There's only 27 of us -

SISTER MARY PAULA
 And because there are 27, we have
 the opportunity to ensure we have a
 roadmap in place for each senior
 student. Jacen, you missed the last
 testing date for the SATs.

JACEN
 College isn't in the books for me
 right now.

SISTER MARY PAULA
 You say that now but when you are
 trying to apply for a job against
 those with a degree -

JACEN
 You do realize we as a society are
 recovering from a recession and a
 crash in the housing market right?

SISTER MARY PAULA
 What does that have to do with your
 future?

Jacen stares at the small white book:

KOREA: MY MOTHERLAND...

SISTER MARY PAULA (CONT'D)
 It's your life, but because you
 have made this difficult, I am
 giving you a special assignment
 that must be completed as a
 prerequisite for you graduating
 with the rest of your class.

JACEN
 You can't do that! I am like the
 top 5 in the class.

SISTER MARY PAULA
 Out of 27...

Jacen sighs.

SISTER MARY PAULA (CONT'D)

This assignment will require you to involve JoAnn - your mother as well.

JACEN

What?!

SISTER MARY PAULA

I believe in order for you to move forward, you have to have a clear idea of your roots.

JACEN

You do realize I was like a year old when I was in Korea right? The foreign exchange students aren't having to do this.

SISTER MARY PAULA

We are just looking out for you. Is showing concern a sin?

The nun jots some forms out.

JACEN

(Mumbles) Only if it's because my parents aren't adding to the booster fund for this sad place.

SISTER MARY PAULA

Excuse me?

JACEN

Nothing.

Sister Mary Paula tears the papers from the pad and hands Jacen a copy.

SISTER MARY PAULA

Excellent. I will have Ms. Baxter send you the requirements of this assignment and you will need to submit the materials no later than the day before prom.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. MARINE CORPS RIFLE TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY

A group of MARINE RECRUITS create a school circle around SERGEANT BRIAN LASSATOR (28), a little too charming and optimistic for a lot of Marine's taste as he sees the world with gratitude, scans Jacen.

Jacen's sights are looking down range at the designated target - oblivious and just looking to get through the whole ordeal.

Lassator screams into his megaphone:

LASSATOR
You may commence fire when your
target is ready...TARGET.

The dummy targets rise from the horizon line.

P-TAT! P-TAT! P-TAT! The recruits start firing.

LASSATOR (CONT'D)
UNLOAD! SHOW CLEAR!

The firing ceases and the dummy targets sink back so the recruits in the pits can mark what was hit.

The dummy targets rise back up. Every target has some markers except for Jacen's.

LASSATOR (CONT'D)
Wow Recruit! Come over here! You!
Yes the Asian one!

Jacen sighs and properly stows his service rifle and runs up towards Lassator.

LASSATOR (CONT'D)
Not sure if you realize this, but
if you don't get a 9 out of 9 on
the next stage - the moving targets
- you UNQ.

JACEN
Sir...this recruit -

LASSATOR
You fail bootcamp and they recycle
your dumb ass.

Jacen stares past Lassator - downcast.

LASSATOR (CONT'D)

Well lucky for you - and keep in mind I don't get knee deep with recruits like this -

Lassator swipes Jacen's rifle and inspects it.

LASSATOR (CONT'D)

Well that's your first problem. Sights are off, wow...who did you piss off to get this antique from Vietnam...the serial number here...

JACEN

Proolly Sergeant Harris who broke my glasses and taped my eyes open with bandaids during fire watch. Staff Sergeant Johnson found out and put him on blast.

CLICK! Lassator hands Jacen the empty magazine.

LASSATOR

Staff Sergeant Johnson filled me in on your *interesting* situation. Did you not play shooter games and lived under a rock?

JACEN

No sir. My Mom would only let us read and watch one hour of tv a day...

LASSATOR

Well that makes sense...

Lassator takes out a notepad and jots down his John Hancock.

LASSATOR (CONT'D)

Take this slip to get a new rifle. Come back and we got a lot of work to do. You hear me recruit O'Brien?

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

JoAnn tosses the KOREA MY MOTHERLAND book across the kitchen counter.

JOANN

I swear to Christ Sister Mary Paula is out to get me. Did you know a bunch of us found her playing with an ouija board in the school attic? No wonder she became so obsessed with the church, the demons were starting to get to her.

Jacen stares at the paper that outlines the parameters of the assignment:

JACEN

In conjunction with your 1000 word essay after reading the required reading, you must record an audio interview with your parents outlining the cultural ties and heritage you...

JOANN

You're American Jace! Jeez -

Joann examines Jacen.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Did you know that when they found your biological mother homeless, she was in a vegetative state?

JACEN

Like Terri Schiavo?

JoAnn skims through the book - highlighting the best of Korean culture.

JOANN

Exactly! A complete vegetable and God knows if it was someone she met when she was in the streets or one of the doctors, but guess what kid? Korea wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole! They threw you in an orphanage with three other kids in the same crib.

JACEN

Oh...

JOANN

I'm not trying to be mean. It's the truth. The truth isn't all dandelions or wrapped up in a chain of rosary beads the way Mary Paula wants...

JoAnn grabs her keys.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Get up...Mattie! Get down here! We are going on a road trip! I'll show her your cultural ties...

I/E. JOANN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

JoAnn jams a tape cassette in her dusty car radio.

Jacen turns over the cassette box.

JACEN

Fleetwood Mac?

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW