

WHERE ANGELS DIE

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FADE IN:

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

A dark green Cavalier idles roughly in front of a neglected three story apartment building. One of the apartment doors is wrapped in police tape.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - SAME

PARKER JODE, 38, stares at the frozen, trash-covered earth of the Detroit ghetto surrounding him. He has a nervous intensity about him- his eyes blink a little too frequently.

He eyes a PHOTOGRAPH situated on his dashboard instrument panel. It's an aged, faded snapshot of a MOTHER & SON. She's in her late-20s, he's probably 5. And if we notice, the photo has been folded on one side, as if cropping someone out.

Parker turns his attention to a nearby playground where two little black CHILDREN play amongst broken beer bottles, condom wrappers, syringes, and tin-foil crack pipes.

The children run and laugh without a care in the world. Parker finds a smile and rolls down his window to listen.

CHILD #1

Whatever nigga, my daddy will fuck
yo daddy up!

CHILD #2

Nuh-uh, yo daddy ain't shit!

Parker SIGHS and rolls his window up. He turns on his radio- NPR. He lifts his armrest and removes a pill organizer from the cubby, tapping a few into his palm.

He palms a metal flask from his peacoat and takes a quick pull, cringing slightly as he swallows his medication.

He turns the radio up.

NPR ANNOUNCER

... and for all of you insomniacs out there, according to a new British study, eating an ounce of cheese before bed led to better quality sleep and induced vivid dreams in test subjects.

He turns the volume up more.

NPR ANNOUNCER

Over a dozen cheeses were tested and blue cheese, which the scientists say contains unusually high levels of the amino-acid tryptophan, induced the most vivid dreams. Test subjects were given journals and...

Parker blinks a mile a minute.

A LOUD RUMBLE approaches as the radio transmission GARBLES. A 747 flies low overhead and the entire car GROANS and RATTLES.

Parker frowns and checks his watch. He turns his car off, reaches into his glove-box, and removes a Glock 19.

As he gets out of his car, he lifts the back of his coat and tucks the pistol into his waistband. He locks his car and walks towards the apartment building.

He passes two HOODLUMS walking in the opposite direction. They appear to be in their late teens. As they walk past, one of them snickers, gesturing toward Parker. He does a good job of pretending not to notice.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

He moves up two flights of stairs to apartment 205.

He KNOCKS on the door. No answer. He KNOCKS louder. He hears a baby CRYING inside. He POUNDS on the door with his fist, the door flexing each time his fist smashes into it.

LITTLE BOY

Who is it?

PARKER

It's Mr. Jode, Tavarus. Open up please.

The little boy, TAVARUS, 7, opens the door.

He wears filthy oversized clothes... hand-me-downs that don't appear to have ever been washed. His stomach is distended and his plump cheeks are speckled with a blizzard of dry snot.

PARKER

Hey buddy. Where's your dad?

TAVARUS

In his room. I think he's sick.

PARKER

Why do you think that?

Tavarus SNIFFLES and wipes his nose onto his cheek.

TAVARUS

I told him we had to go to school but he didn't say nuthin. So I yelled it at him but he still didn't say nuthin. Are you gonna take him to the doctor?

PARKER

I don't know. Lets go see him.

Parker enters.

INT. APARTMENT 205 - CONTINUOUS

The two walk through the apartment. Parker grimaces and lifts his arm, burying his nose in the crook of his elbow. The floor is littered with fast food wrappers and dirty clothes.

Tavarus' older sister, JANESSA, 10, sleeps on the couch. The baby, MIETA, is in the other room crying and wailing as if in some kind of horrible pain.

PARKER

What's wrong with your little sister?

TAVARUS

I think she's hungry but I don't know what to feed her. I looked but I didn't see nuthin.

The two walk up to the open door of the master bedroom. Tavarus' father, JAMES HALEY, 42, is slumped over on his lazyboy.

Tavarus begins to lead Parker into the room, but Parker grabs his shoulder.

PARKER
Stay here Tavarus.

Parker enters the-

MASTER BEDROOM

-and approaches James as Mieta SCREAMS her lungs out in the background.

He glances back at Tavarus, who stands in the doorway nervously picking at the door frame.

TAVARUS
Daddy said Aunt Alteria died yesterday.

PARKER
I see... do me a favor buddy, wake your sister up and both of you get dressed okay?

TAVARUS
Okay Mr. Jode.

He turns back to face James, who sits amidst the makings of a heroin escape; the burned spoon, the melted wax stub which used to be a candle, and the needle with the depressed plunger.

Parker walks up to James, who wears sweat pants and a dirty tank top. His eyes stare blankly at the ceiling and a leather belt dangles from the chair's armrest.

Parker feels his neck for a pulse. As he does he stares at James, a storm raging behind those blinking eyes.

He removes a tiny bottle of Purell from his coat pocket, squirts some onto his hands, and vigorously rubs them.

He removes his Samsung and dials 911.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
911, what is your emergency?

PARKER
My name is Parker Jode. I'm a social worker with the city of Detroit.
(MORE)

PARKER (cont'd)
I need the police to come here
immediately. One of the families
I've been assigned has suffered a
death due to what looks like a drug
overdose.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Where are you located?

PARKER
I'm at the St. Josephine projects.
Apartment 205.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Help is on the way.

Parker hangs up and walks into the-

BABY'S ROOM

He stands there for a moment, frozen, as he stares at the
screaming, scraggly-haired infant thrashing about.

Parker reaches into her crib and gently embraces her. Her
cries subside as she's slowly lifted towards him, grasping
his thumb with her tiny hand.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

Parker, carrying a large polyester jacket, stalks past
police cars and various crime scene investigators.

He shuffles over to the playground, where Tavarus sits on
a rusted swing set, his feet dangling over a mound of
filth.

Tavarus wipes his cheeks.

TAVARUS
(sniffling)
Hey Mr. Jode.

PARKER
Hey buddy. I uh... brought you this.
It was your father's and I... I
thought you might like to have it.

Tavarus' eyes well up.

TAVARUS
I don't want it.

PARKER
I'll just leave it here, in case
you change your mind.

Parker drapes the jacket over a bar on the swing set.

Tavarus, shivering, gets up out of the swing, glares at the jacket and lets out an angry YELL. He grabs a stick and begins beating his father's jacket as he CRIES.

WHOOMPH! WHOOMPH! WHOOMPH! WHOOMPH!

Parker watches silently, shivering. After what seems like forever, Tavarus, with nothing left, turns to face him.

He wipes his cheeks with the heel of his hand and stares at Parker with big, glinting eyes.

TAVARUS
(sniffling)
I hate him, Mr. Jode. I hate him.

Parker squats so that they're eye level, rests a hand on his little shoulder.

PARKER
I'm gonna tell you this because no
one was around to tell me when I
was your age: your father fucked up.
Put himself before his family. Put
his needs before your own...
(then)
That doesn't mean he didn't love
you. But it also doesn't mean you
gotta love him either...

Parker wraps his own coat around Tavarus and buttons it at the neck. It's draped around him like a cape.

PARKER
Love yourself, kid. It's the only
love that matters.

Parker hugs Tavarus, discreetly removing his FLASK from the coat as he does.

After a moment, he leaves the kid to his approaching sister and walks back towards the apartment, swigging his flask to warm himself and his thoughts the same.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - NIGHT

Parker, illuminated by the pale glow of grafitti-covered sodium lamps, walks towards his car at a brisk clip.

His arms are wrapped around himself and he exhales thick plumes of frosty mist.

The hoodlums who snickered at him earlier appear, walking back the same way. One of them holds a car stereo, the other a prybar.

TALL HOODLUM

Whatup, bitch, we just stole your stereo.

SHORT HOODLUM

(sneering)

Reparations.

Parker looks out at his car and sees that the passenger window is SHATTERED. He sighs, hard.

He glares at the boys for a second, then pulls his Glock.

SHORT HOODLUM

Oh shit!

They scramble away and Parker bolts after them.

PARKER

Get back here, you fucks!

They round a corner onto a new block. A handful of pedestrians watch Parker sprint by, gun in hand.

Eventually the Short Hoodlum drops the radio and Parker slows to a breathless stop in the middle of an intersection, watching them disappear.

PARKER (cont'd)

(breathless)

Assholes!

He looks around, finally noticing the people staring at him. He holsters his gun and picks up the stereo.

PARKER (cont'd)

(to an OLD WOMAN)

They took my stereo.

OLD WOMAN

Fuck you, pig.

PARKER
Ma'am, I'm a social worker.

A beat as he realizes how ridiculous that sounds. He turns and hobbles back in the direction of his car.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - MOMENTS LATER

He gets into his car, cranks up the heat, and places his stereo atop shattered glass on his passenger seat.

A torrent of freezing air rushes in as he drives off into the darkness, cursing the kids who broke his window.

EXT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Parker parks across the street from a modest brownstone, next to a large, leafless hickory. A single upstairs window is illuminated and CLASSICAL MUSIC can be faintly heard.

Parker turns his car off. He gets out and takes a few steps so he's standing in the middle of the quiet street. He removes his flask, takes a large swig, then lowers it.

He stares up at the illuminated window, his whiskey-laced breath condensing as it rolls off his lips.

Two curious circles peek through the window drape. They are shimmering spectacles framed by a thin, shadowed visage.

We will never see the man's face clearly.

Parker glares at the man now. Takes another swig, then puts his car in drive and rolls into the street.

EXT. PARKER'S HOME - NIGHT

Parker pulls up to a small bungalow in a dimly lit neighborhood. He exits his vehicle clutching a large brown grocery bag.

INT. PARKER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Parker slams the door shut behind him and locks the deadbolt.

Shivering like a madman, he turns his attention to the thermostat and cranks the heat up.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Parker slips his shoes off and carefully positions them on the linoleum at a ninety degree angle next to the front door.

Parker, in his socks, glides across the beige carpet like a water lizard so as not to disturb the perfect line pattern left behind by the vacuum. He does not walk on the vacuum streaks, only in between them.

He sets the brown grocery bag on his kitchen counter. He removes a bottle of Cutty Sark and a large tub of crumbled blue cheese, which he puts in the fridge.

In the bathroom he takes a shower. Later, he wipes all of the excess water from the tiles with a squeegee.

He brushes his teeth one tooth at a time then rinses and spits with Listerine. He stares at himself in the mirror while he flosses.

Later, he cleans his teeth with an electronic water-pick that CHUGGA-CHUGGAS loudly enough for the neighbors to hear.

He pours himself a water and scotch. Half water half scotch exactly. He walks over to his bed wearing his pajamas. In one hand is the scotch, in the other is his Glock.

He notices a wrinkle in the duvet cover. He smooths it out so that it lays perfectly flat then fluffs both of the pillows so that they look just right.

He turns around and sets his pistol and scotch on the carpeted floor and he pulls out a blue sleeping bag and a pillow from under the bed.

He clicks the bedside lamp off and lays down inside the sleeping bag on the floor. He slides his gun a little closer, finishes his scotch, and gazes up into the dark void.

INT. PARKER'S HOME - DAY

Pitch black. We can hear Parker SNORING. His phone RINGS. Parker SNORTS LOUDLY and RUSTLES inside his sleeping bag as he gropes around for his phone.

He answers his phone. Its pale screen dimly illuminates the side of his face in the darkness.

PARKER
 (groggily)
 Hello?
 (listening)
 Ashley? Ashley Perez?
 (listening)
 What time is it?
 (listening)
 Jesus. Why can't your mother take you?
 (listening)
 Alright.
 (listening)
 Yeah, I'll be there in fifteen.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker parks in front of an aging duplex. He HONKS his horn and YAWNS.

Moments later ASHLEY PEREZ, 9, gets into his car. She's radiant, with golden-green eyes and brown, braided hair.

ASHLEY
 Good morning, Mr. Jode. Thanks for giving me a ride to school.

Parker nods then YAWNS again as he pulls out of the driveway.

ASHLEY
 What happened to your window?

PARKER
 Nothing. Just a couple punks.

She notices the torn wires dangling out of the stereo harness.

ASHLEY
 What about your stereo? Did the same people who broke your window take your stereo?

Parker rubs his eyes.

PARKER
 Yes, they did. You're very perceptive.

Cold wind rushes in through the broken passenger window and assaults Ashley's face and neck. She pulls her scarf up over her nose.

ASHLEY

(slightly muffled)
It's freezing in here. Why don't you get your window fixed?

PARKER

I'm gonna make the idiots who broke it pay for it. Was your mother still asleep when you left?

ASHLEY

Uh-huh.

PARKER

She's started drinking again lately, huh?

Ashley shrugs.

PARKER (cont'd)

Anyone coming by, stressing your mom out? Or is anything going on that you might want to tell me about?

ASHLEY

Well, my mom's passed out drunk, so I had to call a stranger with a broken window and missing stereo to drive me to school.

PARKER

True, just know that not everyone has someone to call. That counts for something, right?

INT. P.V. MCNAMARA FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Parker enters his cubical, throws his coat in the corner and slumps in his chair. He sips a cup of 7-Eleven coffee and surveys his desk. He positions his laptop so that it sits dead-center on the desktop.

He glances at his case files, each one representing a family in a desperate situation. He moves to grab one, but his hand trembles and he sighs- changes his mind.

He opens a drawer, removes a manual pencil sharpener and a dictionary-sized box of unsharpened PENCILS.

He begins grinding down pencils over a wastebasket. He closes his eyes, breathing deep and focusing on the mechanical task.

A co-worker, STU FELDMAN, 30's, walks up behind him. He's tall and broad-shouldered. Probably quarterbacked his high-school football team and tag-teamed cheerleaders in his frat.

STU (O.S.)
Porker! Mind if I borrow your stapler?

Parker stops sharpening, opens his eyes, swivels around and shoots Stu an icy stare.

PARKER
It's Parker, Stu. Parker, like a park.

STU
That's what I said, Porker.

Another CO-WORKER laughs from an adjacent cubicle.

PARKER
Whatever.

STU
So, can I borrow your stapler?

PARKER
You have a stapler.

STU
Something's wrong with it. Doesn't click right.

Another LAUGH from another cubicle.

PARKER
Why don't you walk up a flight of stairs and go to the supply closet?

STU
C'mon, Porker, be a friend.

PARKER
I have a long day ahead of me, Stu, I'm not in the mood for your bullshit.

STU
It's just a stapler.

Parker starts GRINDING pencils again.

STU (cont'd)
Why do you always do that, Porker?
You got OCD or something?

PARKER
... No. I do it because it's
meditative.

STU
That's funny, Carol says it's weird
and annoying. What do you meditate
about?

PARKER
You don't meditate about anything,
Stu. It's not football. There isn't
a goal. You do it for the sake of
doing it. Non-attachment, presence-
of-mind and clear-headedness.

STU
I thought there wasn't a goal.

PARKER
Jesus, fuck off already.

STU
Sure, but before I do, how about
that stapler?

A CHORTLE from a nearby coworker. Parker SNAPS the pencil
in half, nearly losing it. DEEP breaths.

PARKER
Is this a game to you? This just
like one of your frat-douche games
you like to play because you're too
afraid to, I dunno... grow up?

Parker swivels his chair back towards his desk.

STU
I need the stapler. I don't get the
big deal-

Parker swivels back around in his chair.

PARKER

The big deal is that tomorrow I've got to run over to the projects to visit a family living in a one bedroom apartment with six people! On top of that, they're all drugged up. You know what drug is real hot right now?

STU

No.

PARKER

Crystal Meth! Do you have any idea what it does to people?

STU

No.

PARKER

Of course you don't. That's because you stay here in your cushy cubicle with your space heater and your vending machine sorting mail all day!

Having lost his train of thought, Parker spins back around in his chair, tries going back to sharpening pencils.

STU

So... what does it do to people?

Parker swivels around in his chair so hard he almost falls over.

PARKER

It makes them paranoid and crazy, Stu! Which is rather ironic because the entire time they're paranoid about me inspecting their home, I'm also paranoid because I'm going to be thinking about where my stapler is and where did Stu put it when he was finished and I bet he didn't put it back on my desk because I've got personal reasons for this shit but every day you come over here and ask to borrow my stuff because you're a man-child that is wasting a perfectly good job that could be a stepping stone for a person who both needs and wants a career in social services!

Parker, out of breath, swivels back around in his chair as Stu stifles a LAUGH.

STU
All you had to say was "no". You
need to de-stress, Porker.

Stu finally leaves. Parker picks up a fresh pencil, his face redder than its eraser.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Parker, carrying a briefcase, walks towards the front door to The Pussycat Lounge. He approaches the bouncer, BLOW POP (30s, black, built like a pitbull). True to his namesake, he's sucking on a Blow-pop.

BLOW-POP
(tongue stained
grape)
Sup, Company Man? Where's the
piece?

PARKER
It's in the glove box.

BLOW-POP
You sure?

PARKER
What do you mean am I sure, of
course I'm sure.

BLOW-POP
Boss says there can't be any more
incidents.

PARKER
You tell me that every time I come
here.

BLOW-POP
Boss says you have a bad memory.

Parker moves past him to enter.

BLOW-POP (cont'd)
So, when you gonna ask her out?

PARKER
Who?

BLOW-POP
Everybody knows, man.

Parker reaches for the door handle.

PARKER
Fuck you, Blow-pop.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Parker walks through throttling BOOTY MUSIC and plumes of cigarette smoke, towards a corner booth as far away from the stripper stage as possible.

He brushes the seat off. He removes a bottle of Purell and some travel tissues from his briefcase.

He squirts down the tabletop, wipes it clean, then squirts and vigorously rubs Purell onto his hands.

He looks up and locks eyes with Ashley's mother, DAHLIA PEREZ, 31, the stripper dancing on stage. Dahlia is gorgeous beyond belief, with soft curves and firm edges in all the right places.

She flashes him a nervous smile. He breaks eye contact and removes reams of paperwork from his briefcase.

The paperwork is sorted into different stacks- police reports, social services investigations, financial reports from the county, client files, and various memos.

He pulls a small spray bottle of Febreze out of his bag, sprays it onto the booth, then sits down.

The cocktail waitress, LETICIA WILLIAMS, 22, saunters over.

LETICIA
You're so funny with your spray bottle, baby.

PARKER
Leticia I need to speak with you about this police report I have here.

LETICIA
Police report?

PARKER

Yes. The report says that your three-year-old son was found at four in the morning more than two blocks away from your home.

Leticia's grin vanishes.

PARKER

Well? Is this true?

LETICIA

Sometimes little Jauntavius gets out. Ain't shit I can do about that.

Parker holds the report up.

PARKER

This will never happen again. The government is going to take him away next time. Do I make myself clear?

LETICIA

(a scolded moment)

So you just gonna sit there and lecture me or you gonna order somethin'? I got other customers you know.

PARKER

I'll have a scotch. Neat.

LETICIA

Two drink minimum.

PARKER

Then make it a double. And tell Dahlia I need to speak with her when she's finished her set.

BACK HALL - LATER

Parker walks down a row of velvet-curtained rooms and enters the last on the left.

INT. PRIVATE DANCE ROOM

He stands, not touching the suspicious-looking couch.

After a long moment the curtain parts and DAHLIA enters. She wears a long faux-fur coat that covers her neck-to-heels.

Parker gulps.

DAHLIA
It's nice to see you, Mr. Jode.

PARKER
Likewise, Mrs. Perez.

DAHLIA
So, what'll it be? I start at forty for fifteen minutes.

PARKER
Oh, no, I'm not here for-

DAHLIA
I'm kidding.
(then, smile fading)
Ashley told me that you drove her to school today.
(eyes sincere)
I'm sorry about that.

PARKER
I told her to contact me if she needs anything, and I like to keep my word. Just try not to let it happen again.

DAHLIA
It won't.

PARKER
Is there anything going on that I should know about?

DAHLIA
You've always been so good to us. To Ashley.

PARKER
It's really no problem.

Her eyes glaze, lips tremble.

DAHLIA
I don't want anything bad to happen.

He moves closer, gently.

PARKER

What's going on? You can tell me.
In fact, you kind of have to tell
me.

She embraces him and cries into his chest. He keeps his
hands off for a moment, then returns the embrace.

She looks up, their faces inches apart.

DAHLIA

You have to leave me and my
daughter alone.

PARKER

That is literally the opposite of
my job.

DAHLIA

Please, Mr. Jode. Please promise me
you'll stay away. I won't fuck up
again. I'll do whatever I have to,
but please-

PARKER

Dahlia, what's going on?

DAHLIA

(whispering)
My husband just got out of jail.
The DNA evidence was thrown out.
He'll be home tomorrow.

Parker lets go of her, taking a step back.

PARKER

Horatio?
(she nods)
Is there anything I can do?

Her eyes are wide, pleading. She shakes her head "no".

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Parker storms out the front door, where Blow-pop smokes a
cigarette and plays a game on his phone.

BLOW-POP

Later, Company Man. Leave your piece
in the car next time.

Parker stops. Blow-Pop points to the bulge under his jacket.

BLOW-POP (cont'd)
Glock. Am I right?

Parker looks down. The imprint of his pistol is indeed visible under the close-fitting jacket.

BLOW-POP (cont'd)
(shaking his head)
You think brothers out here rocking
XXXL hoodies cuz they look cool?

PARKER
(walking to his car)
Thanks for the advice...

INT. P.V. MCNAMARA FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Parker walks past a row of cubicles and arrives at his desk. He takes his coat off and places it on the back of his chair. Something on his desk grabs his attention.

His laptop is clearly crooked. He adjusts it, then scans the room to see if he can tell who tampered with it.

Stu walks over, his arm outstretched. In his hand is Parker's stapler.

STU
Here's your stapler back.

PARKER
What the hell Stu?! Are you for
real?

STU
What's wrong, Porker?

PARKER
What the fuck did I say?

STU
Say about what?

PARKER
Did I, or did I not say you could
go to the supply closet to get a new
stapler if you needed one?

STU

You did?

PARKER

Yes! I did! I said that! I made it perfectly clear!

STU

Oh well, I guess I'm sorry, then.

PARKER

You guess you're sorry?!?

Stu's arm still dangles the stapler in front of him.

PARKER

Look Stu, I know in high-school you were probably the top dog in a litter of shit-eating puppies but you're not in high-school anymore and you're not the fucking top dog you think you are.

Stu stares blankly at Parker as he gets up out of his chair.

PARKER (cont'd)

I'm going to make something very clear, and you'd better listen very carefully. Don't ever touch anything on my desk, ever again. Do you understand? Say "Yes, I understand you Parker" if you understand.

STU

Yes, I understand you... Porker.

Stu GRINS, a challenge. Parker GRINS too, nods.

He leans over his desk, scrawls something on a POST-IT NOTE, grabs his stapler from Stu's hand, and, in one swift motion... HE STAPLES THE NOTE TO STU'S FOREHEAD.

STU

Ahhhh, motherfucker! What the-

Stu RIPS the note from his forehead, STAPLE still embedded in his skin. It reads:

DO NOT TOUCH PARKER'S SHIT!

Everyone in the office stares in stunned silence as Stu seethes, a trickle of blood tracing down the side of his face, Parker staring right through him.

Stu's nostrils flare and he squares his fists, ready to pounce. Parker rounds his shoulders, bares his teeth, and a chilling look flashes across his eyes. A look that says: "let's do this, motherfucker."

Stu hesitates... he's afraid.

STU (cont'd)
I'm pressing charges, you fucking
head case.

Parker watches Stu make for their MANAGER'S OFFICE. He just sits back down, situates his supplies so they're just right. Behind him, CO-WORKERS stand and murmur, gossip spreading.

His hands trembling, Parker pulls a bottle of HAND SANITIZER from his coat, cleanses his hands before he removes a few BLUE PILLS from a travel-sized pill container and tosses them into his mouth.

He unscrews the cap on a WATER BOTTLE and swallows his medication. He takes a few calming BREATHS as he hears an office door creak open down the hall.

His boss, DOUG MULLINS, 42, with a weak chin and limp, blonde hair, peeks his head out.

DOUG
(clears throat)
Parker, a moment please?

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Parker, sitting across from Doug, leans forward in his chair.

PARKER
Doug, I'm sorry. I've had a hell of
a week and, well.... I'm sorry. It
won't happen again.

DOUG
Listen, Parker, you do good work
here and it's clear to all of us
that you care a lot about what you
do.

PARKER

Thank you, sir. Like I said, this won't happen again. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got work to catch up on.

Parker starts to get up, but...

DOUG

The thing is Parker, you're expected to behave like a professional.

Parker's knuckles go white as he clamps his hands around the arms of his chair.

PARKER

Damnit, Doug! How many times have I asked him not to take things off my desk? You know I've got a condition I'm trying to deal with, and he pushes my buttons no matter how many times I ask him to-

DOUG

I know, Parker, I know. But we simply... can't have incidents like this in the workplace...

(then)

I have to suspend you-

Parker's grip on his chair looks strong enough to splinter the wood.

PARKER

Don't do that. I'll apologize to Stu, okay? I'll do it right now. There's no need to suspend me.

DOUG

My hands are tied, this is company policy. You're being suspended indefinitely, pending an inquest into the situation.

PARKER

Please, don't do this to me.

DOUG

It's only until we figure out what the appropriate response should be. Frankly, we'll likely have to place you in another department.

PARKER

I have a medical condition. I need this job. You know I need... something to give me... purpose, to give me... This is what I do. This is all I do...

(then)

I'm sorry, I can apologize in front of everyone.

DOUG

Look at this as a much needed vacation. I know you don't want to take time off, but you'll come back re-energized and focused. Now, how about we start packing up your things?

INT. P.V. MCNAMARA BUILDING PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Parker walks around the passenger side of his Cavalier. He chucks his briefcase and a small cardboard box through the broken window.

In the cardboard box are some travel-sized bottles of Purell, Lysol, Febreze, a box of Clorox Wet Wipes, and Parker's stapler.

PLINK!

Parker kicks his passenger door as hard as he can, denting it.

CLANK! PLINK! CLANK! PLINK! PLUNK!

PARKER

(breathing heavily)

OWW, FUCK!

He bends over and rubs his foot for a few seconds. The passenger door is pockmarked to hell.

He limps around to the drivers side, opens the door, gets in, SLAMS it shut, turns the ignition over, and speeds off.

INT. PARKER'S HOME - DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

Parker stands, FLUSHES the toilet.

LATER, he drinks from a bottle of Cutty Sark as he showers. Columns of steam billow up and engulf him.

EVEN LATER, Parker, wearing a towel, wipes the condensation from his bathroom mirror. He shaves. The green and yellow bottle of Cutty Sark sits half-empty within arms reach.

INT. PEREZ HOME - DAY

Dahlia tidies the apartment. She's somewhat sobered-up, and clearly in distress. She intently vacuums the living room carpet until-

The DOORBELL rings and her heart catches in her throat. She stares at the door until TWO LOUD KNOCKS jolt her to action.

She opens the door to find HORATIO, 36, tall, statuesque-everything about the way he moves exuding strength and control. A smirking Hispanic man with prison ink, old and new, inching up past his collar.

They stare at each other for a moment. Fear ripples across Dahlia's face, but she recovers with a tearful smile. Horatio wraps her in an embrace.

HORATIO

It's okay, baby. I'm home now.
Everything's going to be okay. How's
my favorite girl in the world?

DAHLIA

I've missed y-

Horatio steps out of Dahlia's embrace and approaches Ashley, now standing on the staircase. Dahlia quiets, realizing he wasn't addressing her.

ASHLEY

Papi!

She embraces him. Horatio picks her up, fake-groaning.

HORATIO

(Spanish, subtitled)
*Who's that girl with beautiful green
eyes? Oh my God, it's Ashley!
You're so heavy. What has mom been
feeding you?*

ASHLEY
Macaroni and cheese!

HORATIO
(side-eye to Dahlia)
Is that right? Well Papi's home now,
so mami might have to start cooking
real food again. Would you like
that?

Ashley shakes her head "no", giggling.

DAHLIA
There's meatloaf in the oven, baby.

HORATIO
Meatloaf? I've been eating meatloaf
three nights a week for the last two
years of my life. And I come home,
my first day as a free man, and what
does my wife make?

Dahlia wilts.

HORATIO (cont'd)
(to Ashley)
*You know what I think? I think I
should take you to get some ice-
cream instead.*

ASHLEY
Ice cream before dinner?

HORATIO
*You know the most important thing
that I learned in prison, my love?
(Ashley shakes her
head, intrigued)
Dessert always comes before dinner.*

INT. CORNER STORE - DAY

A cashier stands behind one-inch thick bulletproof glass.
Dahlia and Horatio peruse the contents of an ice cream
freezer.

ASHLEY
What kind should I get?

Horatio clocks a couple of young GANG-BANGERS wandering
the isles.

HORATIO

Whatever you want- we're celebrating.

BANGER #1 nudges the other, "who the fuck's this guy"?

BANGER #2 moves to get an angle on Horatio's face. When he does, he finds Horatio staring back at him in the reflection of the convex ceiling-mirror, smiling.

Unnerved, he gulps and gestures to his buddy, "let's get out of here".

EXT. STREET - LATER

Horatio and Ashley walk down the block, eating their ice cream. Pedestrians occasionally eyeball them; some seem to recognize the man. Ashley is nervous and out of her element. Horatio walks like an Alpha lion among his pride.

ASHLEY

Can we trade?

HORATIO

You don't like yours?

(she shrugs)

Let's play a game. A question game. You answer right, you get a bite of my ice cream.

(she nods, smiling)

What's your name?

ASHLEY

You know my name!

HORATIO

(giving her a bite)

That was a freebie. Hmm...where do you go to school?

ASHLEY

Noah Webster Elementary. I'm in fourth grade.

HORATIO

First grade, second, third grade... I thought you were eight years old!

ASHLEY

I skipped third!

HORATIO

You're too smart- I need better questions. How is Mami doing?

ASHLEY

She's okay. I think she's sad that you were gone. But she's happier when she comes home from work.

Horatio loses a step, thrown by this.

HORATIO

Mami's working? Where?

ASHLEY

A restaurant I think?

HORATIO

A restaurant?

ASHLEY

I guess. She works a few times a week.

HORATIO

When she comes home from work, what does she smell like?

ASHLEY

What?

HORATIO

Does she smell like... french fries?

ASHLEY

(giggles)

No!

HORATIO

Does she smell like... pancakes?

ASHLEY

Nuh-uh!

HORATIO

Does she smell like... perfume and flowers?

Ashley nods, happy to play this game.

ASHLEY

Yes! How did you know?

HORATIO
That's why they call it a guessing-
game, princesa.

He gives her his ice-cream.

ASHLEY
(beaming)
My turn to ask a question!

HORATIO
What's the prize?

ASHLEY
(points to her cheek)
One kiss!

HORATIO
A valuable prize! Deal!

ASHLEY
Why did you go to jail? Mami won't
tell me.

HORATIO
That's because the answer is a
little complicated, honey. Papi got
involved with some bad people, and
had to do a job for them. A very
specific job that he could only do
inside of jail. But your Papi is
back, for good. How do you feel
about that?

ASHELY
Happy!

HORATIO
No lying, or I'll take my ice-cream
back!

ASHELY
I'm not lying!

Horatio crouches and stares into her green eyes. Caresses
her face delicately, staring into those sparkling
emeralds, like their beauty saddens him.

HORATIO
I believe you, princesa.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker, wearing a tweed suit and burgundy tie, sits at a light. The inside of his passenger window has been haphazardly covered over with cardboard and duct tape.

He dials a number on his phone. The light turns green. Parker drives, steering his car with one hand and holding his phone with the other as wind BEATS and HOWLS against his makeshift window.

The phone goes to voicemail.

PARKER

Mrs. Perez, this is Parker Jode. I'm going to pay you a visit later today to meet Horatio and take a look at Ashley's living conditions.

Parker hangs up, grips his steering wheel so tight his knuckles flare white.

EXT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - NIGHT

Parker's Cavalier parallel parks at a meter. He exits, dumps a quarter in a slot, pops a stick of gum in his mouth and eyes the decaying low rises, tenements, and empty storefronts that surround the Music Center.

He spots an OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS parked out front. He takes a deep breath and enters the building.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Parker moves through corridors lined with velvet, gaudy architecture that matches the beautiful music emanating from-

THE CONCERT HALL

- where Parker leans in an archway, eyeing the empty seats of this auditorium. But one seat isn't empty. A man sits in the very CENTER of the middle row.

Even from behind, we can tell it's the Spectacled Man.

On the stage, a SOUND BOARD has been turned on to play the recording of an ORCHESTRA. Beautiful crescendos of percussion, brass and strings.

The Spectacled Man moves his head from side to side like Stevie Wonder, waving his hands like a conductor.

But he stops momentarily, cocks his head to the side, listens intently.

He knows Parker is there.

Parker doesn't flinch, eyes burning holes through the man's skull as he grips the butt of his Glock, contemplating whether to use it.

Finally, he releases his grip, retreats back outside.

And after a few moments, the Spectacled Man returns to his music, to his phantom conducting.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - NIGHT

Parker steps onto the porch and knocks. After a few moments, Dahlia opens, looking petrified.

DAHLIA

Hi, Mr. Jode.

PARKER (O.S.)

May I come in?

DAHLIA

Now's not a great time.

Parker sees that he caught her completely off-guard.

PARKER

You didn't get the voice mail? I left a message.

DAHLIA

No, I'm sorry. I've been so busy trying to get the house ready for-

PARKER

Horatio.

Dahlia swallows her fear. Barely glances at Parker.

DAHLIA

Yes.

PARKER

Where is he?

DAHLIA

Maybe you could come back later.
We're about to sit down to dinner
and-

PARKER

I can't come back later, I'm sorry.
On the voicemail I said I'd be
checking in on Ashley. Is she here?

DAHLIA

(beat)
Yes. In her room.

PARKER

Can you get her for me?

Dahlia stares at him- a look that screams "please just
walk away" more than "help me".

DAHLIA

(bites trembling
lip, low voice)
Come back tomorrow. Please.

She's closing the door when Ashley clomps down the stairs
and sees Parker.

ASHLEY

Mr. Jode!

Parker grabs the door and pushes past Dahlia, entering.
Sees Ashley wearing a bright pink dress with white
stockings and shiny red Dorothy shoes.

PARKER

Hey you! Wow, you look so pretty!
Can you twirl around for me like a
ballerina?

Ashley giggles and does a goofy ballerina twirl on the
steps.

PARKER

Aren't you gorgeous. I bet that-

HORATIO (O.S.)

You like little girls?

Horatio is suddenly there, having entered from the back
porch.

PARKER
 (blinking rapidly)
 Excuse me?

HORATIO
 You're Mr. Jode, the social worker-
 my wife mentioned you. You know,
 when I was in prison, I met a former
 social worker. He was in there for
 touching little kids.

(to Ashley)
 Does Mr. Jode touch you, Mija? Does
 he give you hugs and kisses like
 Papi?

PARKER
 (completely thrown)
 I would never even think about-

HORATIO
 But you kept saying how "pretty and
 gorgeous" my daughter is just now.

PARKER
 I was just being pol-

Horatio croaks a high-pitched LAUGH, the kind that wheezes
 so you know it's genuine.

HORATIO
 I'm just fucking with you, cabrón.
 But can you blame me? Come in.

Parker gulps, steps into the -

INT. LIVING ROOM

PARKER
 You must be Horatio.

HORATIO
 Guilty as charged.

He extends his hand for a shake. Parker eyes it and
 accepts reluctantly. Horatio holds on to him.

HORATIO (cont'd)
 So you are the man who takes care
 of my daughter?

PARKER

No, your wife takes care of your daughter. I just check in every couple of weeks to make sure her needs are being met and to provide support.

HORATIO

And are my wife's needs being met?

PARKER

I meant Ashley. And from what I can see, she's been doing very well.

Parker clears his throat, Horatio's grip tightening.

HORATIO

You sure you don't look after my wife, too?

DAHLIA

Horatio, please...

HORATIO

(sharp)
I'm not speaking to you.

Horatio releases Parker's hand. He takes a pack of cigarettes from his close-fitted jean pocket.

He snaps open a Zippo and is about to light up when he smells something.

He SNIFFS loudly. He gets within inches of Parker's face, continuing to SNIFF in an exaggerated fashion.

HORATIO

What's that I smell? Is that the devil's water on your breath, Government Man?

Parker takes hand-sanitizer from his pocket. Squirts a bunch in his palm and cleans his hands.

PARKER

Ninety percent alcohol.

Horatio grins ear-to-ear.

HORATIO

You think I'm dirty, Mr. Jode?

PARKER
I have a thing about germs. No
offense.

HORATIO
(winks at Dahlia)
They do have a way of getting
around.

Parker turns to clock Dahlia's reaction, but there is none. She just drops her head, resigned, defeated. Not the Dahlia he knows: the resilient single mother doing her best with what she has.

Horatio moves to the kitchen.

HORATIO (cont'd)
A little compulsive, huh? OCD or
whatever?

PARKER
(taken off-guard)
You caught me.

HORATIO
(mocking Parker)
I caught him!

Horatio sits at the kitchen table and motions for Parker to do the same. Parker enters, but doesn't sit.

HORATIO
Honey, pour Mr. Jode a cup of
coffee.
(then, to Ashley)
Can you bring me my pills, baby?
They're in the black leather bag by
the sink.

Ashley nods and runs off, happy for the brief attention. She seems to be the only one not terrified of Horatio.

Dahlia stands at the counter and is about to pour two mugs when-

HORATIO
What the fuck are you doing? Pour
them over here!

DAHLIA
(meek)
Sorry.

She carries two mugs and the pot to the table. She pours them both coffee.

HORATIO
(a chuckle to Parker)
What can I say, prison makes you a
bit paranoid.

Ashley returns with the black toiletry bag. Inside are a half-dozen prescription bottles.

HORATIO (cont'd)
Gracias, princesa.

He unscrews the cap on each pill bottle, removes a pill, sets it down, then moves onto the next. A ritual.

ASHLEY
What are all those pills for, Papi?

HORATIO
They're for Papi's disease,
princesa... HIV.

He unscrews the last cap and removes a pill as Dahlia catches her breath.

ASHLEY
Is that like the flu?

HORATIO
No baby. It's not as bad as the
flu.

He sweeps his meds into his hand, knocks them back and dry swallows. Doesn't even chase them with coffee.

Parker looks like he's just walked into the Twilight Zone.

PARKER
I... I'm sorry, I need to get going.

He crosses to the door.

PARKER (cont'd)
I'll see you in two weeks, alright
Ashley? Call me if... anything
happens.

HORATIO
Don't be a stranger, Government Man.

Parker exits.

EXT. DETROIT STREETS/ INT. CAVALIER - NIGHT

Parker drives like a maniac, taking out all his suppressed emotions on the road. He weaves around traffic, clutching the wheel half-to-death. He pulls his phone from his pocket.

INT. DOUG MULLIN'S HOME - SAME

Parker's boss reclines in his La-Z-Boy in his den, watching TV. His cellphone rings. He looks at the caller ID. Groans.

DOUG

(answers)

I don't know you right now, Jode.

INT. CAVALIER - SAME TIME (INTERCUT)

PARKER

Doug, listen, we need to remove Ashley Perez from her home immediately. I'm talking STAT. I'm emailing over the Perez file and-

DOUG

Didn't I suspend you? ... Today?

PARKER

Her father, Horatio Perez, is a felon who was let out early on a technicality. There is something seriously wrong with this guy, he's bad fucking news. He's mentally unstable and he's HIV positive and making Ashley get his pills for him and Dahlia's scared for her life and you just really need to arrange-

DOUG

Parker!

PARKER

Yes?!

DOUG

Are you done?

PARKER

Yes but just please tell me you'll send someone over there, preferably escorted by a black-and-white.

DOUG

I'm only going to say this once, so listen closely. You are on administrative leave. Do you understand what that means? You are not a social worker. We are not colleagues. You are just an asshole who is one yodel away from an avalanche of litigation that will bury you in paper until the day you die. Do you know how far I had to bend over to keep you from getting arrested for assault with a deadly weapon?

PARKER

A stapler? Listen, Doug, I appreciate everything you did, but you have to promise me-

DOUG

I don't have to promise you dick! I've given Allison your cases. The Perez file is on top. But if I find out that you've had any contact with any of your clients, I will fire you on the spot.

CLICK.

PARKER

Doug! FUCK!

Parker smashes his phone into his steering wheel over and over, inadvertently honking the horn. HONK! HONK! HONK!

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

CLOSE ON tightly-laced black Doc Martens walking along the sidewalk at a brisk clip.

EXT. LIQUOUR STORE - NIGHT

The liquor store's neon sign BUZZES loudly.

A payphone sits in the foreground. In the background, the figure wearing the Doc Martens walks towards us.

It appears to be a very tall woman with long, dark red hair, wearing a charcoal-colored trench coat. She sports sunglasses and blood-red lipstick.

The tall woman continues towards us and enters the phone booth.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The woman, her back to us, puts some quarters into the payphone.

Her bright purple fingernails dial a phone number. The woman turns to face us.

We can see her clearly now. It's not a tall woman. It's Horatio in drag, wearing a red wig. He talks into the phone.

HORATIO

Amigo. It's been too long.

(listening)

I need a ride.

(listening)

No. Just you. And bring your toys.

EXT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - NIGHT

The street is pretty much deserted as Parker approaches the Music Center and takes a hefty pull from his flask. He cringes as he puts it back into his coat.

He walks up to the ticket window, purchases a ticket from the heavysset BLACK WOMAN behind the counter, and walks-

INSIDE

Where we can hear the Detroit Symphony as Parker walks into the concert hall.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

A black LAND CRUISER SUV, full tint, slows to a crawl across the street from the gas station.

Horatio struts to it, and as he does, the driver's door opens in a CLOUD OF SMOKE and a MAN steps out.

HECTOR (32). A sinewy gringo/hispanic mix with black pits for irises. Old beyond his years and smoking a joint. A fedora sits atop a bald crown, barely obscuring a web of high-gauge scars, like a topographical map of some unimaginable past.

A hounds-tooth vest partially covers his torso, but reveals an incredible array of esoteric TATTOOS covering most of his body. Tarot imagery, sacred geometry- a peacock entwined with a snake peaks out from the top of his vest, just below his throat.

Horatio stops a couple of feet from him. They size each other up. Hector's joint POPS and CRACKLES, like something's combusting in it other than marijuana.

HECTOR

I knew you'd become someone's bitch in prison, but I have to say, I wasn't expecting you to stay that way.

A beat. Horatio doesn't laugh. Doesn't drop his gaze. And then Horatio LUNGES, throwing Hector in a headlock! They struggle.

Hector tries to lift Horatio's skirt to see under, cackling through choked breath.

HORATIO

Aye, cabron! You broke my nail!

He pushes Hector away, gingerly inspecting his finger. They grin at each other.

Hector grabs Horatio in an embrace.

HORATIO

How do I look?

HECTOR

Guapa, amigo. Muy guapa.

INT. LAND CRUISER - MOVING - NIGHT

Hector drives, slung low in his seat. The vehicle is befitting its driver: burgundy upholstered, with something resembling a Voodoo doll dangling from the rear-view. Clouded in wisps of marijuana and angel dust.

HECTOR

How's the family, amigo?

HORATIO
I don't know yet. Different.

Hector nods, seen-it-all gaze of a wise man.

HECTOR
I'm glad you're back, hermano. I've
been dying for you to try this shit
right here.

He stabs his pocketknife into a saran-wrapped brick and
hands it to Horatio.

Horatio scoops out a small pile of SHIMMERING FLAKES with
a purple fingernail. High-quality crystal. Snorts it.

HECTOR
Clean, right?

HORATIO
Damn...
(does another bump)
This might be the best shit I've
ever had.

HECTOR
Best part is, we throw it on a
truck, it's a four hour drive up to
Toronto. Fuckin' DEA's barely paying
attention, thinks Canadians don't
like meth. Too congenial, or
something.

HORATIO
So those Chinese fucks that cook out
of the back of the Golden Wok
finally got themselves a real
chemist...

HECTOR
Nah. They got too expensive.

Horatio scrutinizes him.

HECTOR (cont'd)
I took this online business class,
right? They said you gotta cut out
the distributors. Control the
product, control the price.

Horatio nods. Not bad.

HORATIO

Yeah? What did the Chinese have to say about that?

HECTOR

"Please no kill me." "I have family." That sorta thing. I let their guys teach a few of my guys to cook, then got rid of them, so to speak. But, profits almost doubled.

HORATIO

Who's guys did they teach?

HECTOR

Que?

HORATIO

Who's guys did you let the Chinese cooks teach?

HECTOR

Your guys, amigo...

Horatio stares Hector down as he drags on the blunt. CRACKLE! POP! Hector tenses up a bit, until Horatio doubles over COUGHING. Hector cracks up.

HECTOR (cont'd)

What, they don't have dust blunts in prison? Don't drop it, bro!

(takes it back)

Fuck it, I don't like being jefe anyways. Heavy is the crown, or whatever the fuck the saying is.

HORATIO

That's the one, hermano.

They pull into the--

PUSSYCAT LOUNGE PARKING LOT and park in a dark corner.

HORATIO (cont'd)

How short are we?

HECTOR

Before Phase Two rollout?

Horatio opens the glove compartment and removes a terrifying ten inch stiletto- admires it.

HORATIO
That what they call it in online
business classes?

HECTOR
Yes, actually. And we need \$150K
for a space with storage and room
for a lab. Plus equipment,
obviously.

Horatio stuffs the stiletto into his boot holster.

HORATIO
Well, Antonin better have something
for us then.

Horatio breathes deep, letting the PCP-laced blunt wrap
its toxic tendrils around the deepest recesses of his
brain.

Hector massages the base of his skull for a moment,
releasing tension, helping massage the drug through
Horatio's system.

HECTOR
(distant, distorted)
Look not behind thee, my friend.

Horatio takes a large pair of Gucci sunglasses from his
clutch and puts them back on. Wipes the uncut meth from
his nose.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - NIGHT

It's dark. Parker sits in the very last row of the packed
concert hall, cloaked in shadows. He sees everyone, but
nobody sees him.

On stage, brass, strings, woodwind, and percussion blend
beautifully.

The rich, velvety MUSIC spills out into the auditorium,
where everyone sits completely still, enraptured by pure
auditory bliss. Everyone, that is, except for Parker.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Horatio's Doc Martens CLICK-CLACK up to the front entrance
where Blow-Pop plays his cell phone games. The bouncer
looks up— intrigued, amused, and attracted all at once.

BLOW-POP
 Damn baby, where you been all my
 life?

Horatio tilts up his sunglasses, just enough to give a
 wink, but not enough to reveal himself to the CCTV CAMERA
 MOUNTED ABOVE THE DOOR.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

A haggard STRIPPER dances for a few REGULARS. Horatio
 enters and circles the stage, peering into booths.

There's no sign of Dahlia. He approaches the stripper, who
 saunters across the stage and crouches.

HORATIO
 Dahlia. Where is she?

STRIPPER
 She's busy. My schedule, on the
 other hand...
 (spreading her legs)
 ...is wide open.

HORATIO
 Maybe later.

She rolls her eyes and crawls away to another customer.

STAIRWELL

Horatio climbs a staircase and reaches a landing at an
 upstairs office. BODYGUARDS stand vigil on either side of
 the door.

HORATIO (cont'd)
 I have business with the old man.

BODYGUARD #1
 Old man ain't in charge anymore.

HORATIO
 Who's in charge now?

BODYGUARD #2
 Vlad.

HORATIO
 You're serious?

The bodyguards shrug.

INT. VLAD'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Vlad, mid 30's, aspiring Russian mob royalty, totally coked-out but trying to look composed. He sits behind his father's exquisite desk- a centuries old, hand carved relic passed down through the generations.

A HEAVY sits in a corner by a grid of CCTV monitors showing the entire club. ANOTHER HEAVY stands at the door.

Vlad kicks his feet up on the desk, a "casual pose". He doesn't like it and leans forward, trying on an "intimidating hunch". Too jacked-up to sit still.

A KNOCK on the office door and Vlad leaps to his feet. Takes a breath and sits back down.

VLAD

Come in!

The door opens and Horatio enters. The two Heavies shift a little, ready to go for their guns at any second.

Horatio makes a show of acknowledging them, then glances around the unimpressive office (clocking the bay of CCTV security monitors that cover every angle of the club), gaze finally landing on Vlad.

HORATIO

Vlad, is it?

Horatio extends his hand. Vlad doesn't take it.

VLAD

What can I do for you... ma'am?

Horatio ignores the insult, visibly annoying Vlad.

HORATIO

Your father has one hundred and fifty grand that belongs to me. Add interest onto that, and, god rest his soul, let's just round down to one seventy five...

Horatio flicks a smoke up, catches it in his lips. Before he lights it:

HORATIO (cont'd)

(grinning)

... but who's counting, right?

Vlad smiles back, narrows his eyes.

VLAD
 (leans forward,
 cracks up)
 I'm not!

His men all laugh. Horatio laughs twice as hard, wheezing, dying of laughter, throwing Vlad off. As he does, he leans in over the desk (getting a better look at a small safe against the wall).

The Heavies both stand, but Vlad waves them back.

VLAD (cont'd)
 (scanning room)
 Which one of you mongoloid fucks
 let this idiot in here?

HORATIO
 (no subs, deadpan)
*Paverneis, grazna skatina. Ya idu
 priama fpopu.*

VLAD
 (snapping to
 attention)
 Who the fuck are you, man? What, he
 was late on some child-support? I
 got a half-brother I don't know
 about?

Horatio eyes the CCTV monitors, watching Hector enter the club and move to the bar.

HORATIO
 Something like that.

VLAD
 Well, my old man was alcoholic
 asshole. Never wrapped my head
 around how he was always going broke
 when every drink was on the house.
 Problem is, I don't know you and I
 don't know about any money.

KA-BANG!

Two loads of BUCKSHOT rocket from the swiveling sawed-off holstered beneath Vlad's desk as Vlad unlatches the gun. SPLINTERS and PAPER fly.

Horatio flattens onto the floor, gnashes his teeth.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - SAME

The music is so loud, and with the office being upstairs, nobody hears the gunshot.

Hector takes a seat at the bar, balaclava rolled up into a beanie, taking mental snapshots of the security detail.

INT. VLAD'S OFFICE - SAME

The Heavies reach for their pistols as Vlad stands, SNAPS open the sawed-off and ejects two smoking shells. Trembling hands grope around in a desk drawer for fresh ordnance.

Horatio pulls the massive stiletto from his combat boot, likes his chances in this cramped office. Perfect for close-quarters carnage.

Heavy #1 pulls a pistol, but Horatio CHARGES him, drives the blade up under his armpit, then into the side of his neck, crushing him against the door.

Heavy #2 draws his pistol as Horatio pivots his hips, tightens his stranglehold and simultaneously maneuvers #1 between him and #2, using him as a shield.

HEAVY #2

Sasha, move!

Horatio SHOVES #1 into #2, wobbling him- he yanks the blade out and bull-rushes them, pancaking them against the wall. He slips past #1, spiking #2 in the spleen and twisting the blade as he yanks it out in a burst of crimson.

BANG! BANG! #2 gets off a couple of wild shots as Horatio STABS straight through his sternum and he drops the gun.

The gunshots startle Vlad, who fumbles a shell as he watches on in horror, heart redlining off coke and adrenaline.

Horatio pushes barely-alive #1 aside and gets to work on #2, hitting him with a flurry of surgical strikes, arterial spray pasting everything.

Vlad finally manages to shakily feed two shells into the shotgun. He SNAPS it shut, Horatio's ears perking as the gun's breech locks. Vlad raises the gun.

Horatio pivots #2- KA-BANG! KA-BANG! Both barrels of Vlad's shotgun blow the Heavy's back wide open.

Horatio drops the corpse. A moment of stunned silence from Vlad as Horatio stalks towards him, knife, face, and most of his clothes slicked in fresh blood.

Vlad fumbles ONE LAST shotgun shell from the drawer. Nearly drops it while he SNAPS open the breech.

HORATIO

Vlad.

(Vlad keeps fumbling)

Vlad!

(he drops the shell,
looks up)

Put the gun down. Open the
fucking safe.

Vlad's eyes flick to the bay of SECURITY CAMERAS. He sees THREE MORE HEAVIES coming up the stairs, about to kick down the door.

VLAD

Eat a dick. You have a knife, I have
three more men coming to finish you
off. And who painted your nails?
You like like an fuckin' queer.

Horatio sets his jaw.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - SAME

Parker fidgets, watching as the orchestra builds to a crescendo. Violin wands dart back and forth in unison, chanting frantic melodies over booming cellos and haunting harpsichords.

The percussion section picks up, ratcheting up the intensity of the building crescendo.

On-stage, we notice the Spectacled Man as he walks forward, taking front and center.

Even now, the lighting is such that the bottom half of his face is cloaked in shadows, and his eyes hide behind two shimmering glass discs.

He's holding two enormous golden cymbals that cast off a prism of bright orange light.

Parker leans forward in his seat as the Spectacled Man, wearing an immaculate-fitting tuxedo, cocks his cymbals. He's as rigid as a porcelain nutcracker figurine.

He tenses up and-

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - STAIRWELL - SAME

THREE RUSSIAN THUGS converge on the office door. Sweaty, breathing heavy...

HECTOR (O.S.)

Stop!

The thugs look down the stairs and see HECTOR, his black balaclava rolled down, obscuring his face, with a duffle slung over his shoulder and holding an AK "Draco" pistol.

BRATATATATATATAT! Rifle rounds SHRED the wall and the men tumble and collapse down the stairwell.

INT. OFFICE

Horatio and Vlad DUCK as bullets perforate the room around them. When the gunfire stops...

HORATIO
(shouting into
stairwell)

That you, hermano?

INT. STAIRWELL

The strip club has erupted in pandemonium behind Hector. Patrons stampede the exit. Strippers run towards their dressing rooms.

HECTOR

One and only! We need to lock this
shit down and hit the road!

IN THE OFFICE

Vlad tries to load the last round into the shotgun, but Horatio skewers his wrist, pinning the wannabe-gangster to the table as he SCREAMS at the top of his lungs.

HORATIO
(to Hector)
Be down in a minute!

He takes the shotgun and moves to the safe.

HORATIO (cont'd)
(eerily calm)
What's the combination?

VLAD
Fuck you!

Horatio KICKS Vlad's legs out from under him, and he collapses and further traumatizes his wrist. He SHRIEKS, SOBBING.

VLAD (cont'd)
Okay, okay, okay! Please don't kill me, man! It's six-nine... six-nine, six nine... six nine.

Horatio stares quizzically, then shakes his head, punching the numbers. The safe opens, revealing a large leather bag. He pulls it out and finds it stuffed with banded stacks of blue hundreds- easily a few hundred grand.

Vlad sobs, tries to pull the knife from his arm.

HORATIO
It looks like our time's up.

Vlad moans as Horatio presses the shotgun against his forehead.

HORATIO (cont'd)
Oh, I forgot to tell you: Dahlia doesn't work here anymore.

KA-BOOM!

Point blank. Vlad's brains paste the wall.

Horatio crosses to the bay of CCTV monitors and YANKS all of the cables and hard drives from the recording bays. He shoves them in the bag along with the money.

HECTOR (O.S.)
It's go-time, bro!

Horatio hustles to the door and exits to the top of the-

STAIRWELL

Where Hector tosses him a massive .454 CALIBER CASULL REVOLVER.

HECTOR
Phase II, baby!

Horatio nods, steps over the dead goons piled up at the bottom of the stairs.

HORATIO
How we looking down here?

They peer out into the club. A handful of people cower, but most have vacated. Horatio gestures for Hector to move to the front door and follows him, covering.

They're halfway to the exit when the BARTENDER points a pistol over the bar and starts blind-firing. Hector scrambles behind a table and Horatio ducks behind the elevated stripper stage.

Hector sprays rounds through the bar, but the Bartender returns suppressing fire. Another GOON peaks out from the velvet-curtained back room, Uzi extended.

Horatio uses the stage to steady his aim- the Goon doesn't notice until Horatio COCKS the hammer back.

KA-DOON! The massive slug blows him back through the curtains, Uzi clanking to the floor. A woman SHRIEKS! Horatio spins his aim to LETICIA. She crouches, petrified, but still somehow balancing her cocktail tray.

She squints:

LETICIA
Horatio, is that you?

HORATIO
You shouldn't have said that,
Leticia.

He thumbs back the hammer and aims at her chest. KA-DOON! The Bartender and Hector are still trading shots.

Horatio turns his attention to the bar. Thumbs back the hammer. Takes his time following sounds until...

KA-DOON! The Casull blows a softball-size chunk through the bar. The Bartender starts SHRIEKING OS.

HORATIO (cont'd)
 (to Hector)
 Was that really so hard?

Hector flips Horatio off, half-grins. The Bartender leaps to his feet, one arm nearly detached, hanging by a flap.

He RUNS from behind the bar and for the rear exit. Horatio and Hector both empty their weapons after him, but he's moving fast.

HORATIO (cont'd)
 Ammo?
 (Hector tosses him a
 box)
 Pull the car around front.

Hector nods and hustles out the front door. Horatio calmly reloads the revolver and stands, hefting the bag with the cash and hard drives over one shoulder, hearing GUNFIRE erupt outside.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - SAME

SPECTACLED MAN'S POV:

CRASH!

The symphony has reached a fever pitch. We stare out at the packed auditorium as the Spectacled Man CRASHES his cymbals together. He's very, very focused on keeping perfect time.

CRASH! CRASH!

Every time his cymbals smash together and open up, the intense sound waves distort the audience's faces so that they melt and reform like floating wax inside a lava lamp.

The Spectacled Man is in his element, where he belongs.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - BACK HALL - SAME

Horatio peeks into the hall and sees the Bartender running for the emergency exit. He raises the Casull, thumbs back the hammer and-

Gets a CALL on his cell. Answers as the Bartender escapes.

HORATIO
 Que es?

HECTOR (O.S.)
The bouncer is out here shooting up
the Cruiser!

HORATIO
Get out of here, I'll get my own
ride.

HECTOR (O.S.)
Hell no, amigo! Hurry up!

Horatio lugs the heavy bag toward the exit.

HORATIO
Go, that's an order, pendejo! I'll
call you when it's safe to meet!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Horatio pokes his head out and spies the Bartender huffing
it down the back alley, clutching his destroyed arm.

He lines up a shot, takes a breath, and KA-DOON!

The Bartender collapses and rolls another five feet.
Horatio turns his attention into the alley leading towards
the parking lot.

The street has cleared but he sees Blow-Pop, crouched
behind a blue USPS mailbox outside the entrance to the
club, taking potshots at Hector's Land Cruiser, which
peels out onto the street.

Horatio flicks open the cylinder release- one massive
bullet left. He flicks the cylinder closed, thumbs back
the hammer, steadies the hand-cannon and-

KA-DOON! The steel mailbox rocks like it got hit with a
sledgehammer. A red explosion on the other side as Blow-
Pop hits the asphalt.

Horatio sees a Jaguar, abandoned with the door open and
parked across the street. He hustles to it. Finds a STRIP
CLUB PATRON, bled out in the front seat, engine running.

He pulls the body to the sidewalk, throws the loot in the
back, and climbs in the driver's seat.

INT. PEREZ HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dahlia lays awake in the darkened room. She draws a trembling breath as she hears a VEHICLE roll to a stop outside. Engine cuts out.

The front door opens and slams shut. Footsteps approach. The bedroom door opens. Dahlia closes her eyes. Horatio throws the bag on the edge of the bed.

HORATIO

Stop pretending to be asleep.

She sheepishly sits, turning to him. He approaches her.

DAHLIA

I stayed up waiting for you.

She sees his blood-splattered hands and clothing. GASPS.

HORATIO

Don't worry, it's not mine.

(closer still)

You started dancing again. I told you you were done with that.

He reaches a hand out. She stifles a cry, using all her will not to shrink away to nothing. He brushes her hair from her face.

HORATIO (cont'd)

I had to pay your boss Vlad a visit to speak about that. It didn't go so well. I didn't want to do it, but you left me no choice.

She chokes out a sob. A horrible beat, then-

HORATIO (cont'd)

You've never let me down before. We're gonna take care of this, and we're all going to be just fine. You understand?

She nods, trembling.

EXT. FOSTER CARE BUILDING - DAY

Parker's Cavalier idles in a sparse parking lot surrounding a dilapidated brown brick "home" for foster kids, a little playground behind it where a dozen troubled YOUTHS play.

Amongst them, Parker spots...

TAVARUS

alone on a swing-set again, swinging slowly, lost in his own head until another kid, a 7-YEAR-OLD, approaches with a BASKETBALL, offers him a chance to take a shot.

Tavarus stops swinging, says something we can't hear.

7-year-old offers him the ball again, encouraging him to partake in their game.

Tavarus shakes his head, waves him off, but the kid is relentless, puts the ball in Tavarus' hands. Tavarus stands, takes a look at the hoop-less basketball rim, then the kid beside him.

Finally, he rears back and SLAMS the basketball into 7-year-old's face, TACKLES him to the ground, POUNDING him upon the pavement.

Parker leaps from his car, races to the...

PLAYGROUND

and helps a COUNSELOR pull Tavarus off his victim. Parker takes Tavarus, counselor takes the bloodied kid.

PARKER

Calm down. Calm down, man, it's me-
Mr. Jode. You remember me, from
social services. Tavarus!

Finally, Tavarus quits struggling with Parker, the daze of his anger subsiding.

TAVARUS

Mr. Jode?

Parker nods at the acknowledgment.

COUNSELOR

I'm sorry, who are you?

PARKER

I'm with social services- Parker
Jode. I was assigned to Tavarus'
family after... actually, nevermind,
I'm sure you have a copy of his
file.

Tavarus hugs Parker, buries his little face in his stomach.

COUNSELOR

(nods, re: file)

I see. Tavarus, you cannot keep fighting with your fellow-

PARKER

Mind if I have a moment with him?
Stopped by to check-in on him anyway.

Parker and counselor share a glance. "Might as well let someone else try."

COUNSELOR

Sure.

(to 7-year-old)

Come on, Tommy. Let's get you cleaned up.

Counselor takes Tommy inside, Parker kneels by Tavarus.

PARKER

What's going on, buddy?

TAVARUS

Nuthin'.

PARKER

T, I saw you attack that kid.

TAVARUS

Nuh-uh, he hit me first-

PARKER

Don't gimme that. I sat right over there, watched the whole thing. He offered you to join in the game and you hit him...

(no response)

Why would you do that?

TAVARUS

Because fuck it, that's why.

Tavarus crosses his arms, avoids Parker's gaze. Finally, Parker stands, eyes the foster care building.

PARKER

C'mon, I wanna show you something.

Parker walks towards the building, leaves Tavarus behind to decide for himself whether to follow or not.

After a moment, curiosity gets the best of him. He follows.

INT. FOSTER CARE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Parker moves between rows of COTS these kids call "beds," finds one in particular in the corner.

As Tavarus approaches, Parker raises the edge of a sheet to reveal...

A FADED CARVING

on the wooden frame that reads "FUCK THE WORLD" in crude, jagged slashes. Decades old.

PARKER
Know who wrote that?

TAVARUS
Am I supposed to guess?

PARKER
I did...

Tavarus studies the social worker, curious.

PARKER
...when I was your age.

TAVARUS
You was in here too?

PARKER
I wasn't "in here," I lived here. These people took care of me. Fed me, clothed me. Tried their best to give me the direction my home-life couldn't...

(re: the carving)
Obviously, that didn't work too well.

TAVARUS
Looks like you turned out a'ight.

PARKER
Appearances can be deceiving.

Parker sits on the bunk, motions for Tavarus to do the same.

PARKER

Know when I told you to just love yourself, not to care about the rest?

(a nod from Tavarus)

I take that back. I think maybe I'm not the best person to be giving advice right now. No family, no friends, nothing to my name but that shitty car out there...

(then)

Trust me: you don't wanna follow my lead. If I could go back to when I was your age, sleeping on this, playing out there, I'd do a lot different. Listen to my teachers, play with the other kids, try to make friends, try to be somebody that other people can look up to. Don't just love yourself, kid. Love everything. There's no room for hate.

He places a hand on Tavarus' shoulder, rises. Before he goes:

TAVARUS

Mr. Jode...

(he turns)

You were wrong.

PARKER

About what?

TAVARUS

You do got a friend.

Tavarus points at his own chest- this guy. Smiles wide, message not lost on him. Parker smiles too, then turns.

PARKER

Thanks, T. I'll see you soon. So no more fighting, alright?

TAVARUS

Okay, Mr. Jode.

Parker nods, almost buying the kid's answer to an impossible request.

DOWN A HALLWAY

Parker moves for a far exit, but passes a small lounge, an ELDERLY NUN keeping eye on her flock through a window.

Parker doubles back, moves inside...

INT. SMALL LOUNGE - FOSTER CARE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Spots a BUNNY-EARED TV in a corner, MUTED.

PARKER
Sister Henrietta?

She turns, holds a steaming MUG of tea. She's weathered and wise, her eyes flashing recognition immediately.

SISTER HENRIETTA
...Parker Jode? Is that you?

He pulls her in for an awkward hug.

SISTER HENRIETTA
It's been so long.

PARKER
I didn't know- Didn't think you were still here.

SISTER HENRIETTA
Where else would I be?

She SMIRKS.

PARKER
I was just in the area. I'm a social worker for the city now. One of my cases was Tavarus' family.

SISTER HENRIETTA
Troubled child, that one.

PARKER
Troubling circumstances.

SISTER HENRIETTA
I remember a child of similar circumstances. From what I hear, he's all grown up, "social worker for the city now."

She sips her tea.

PARKER
He's happy he had someone like you
to set him straight.

SISTER HENRIETTA
Is that what he is, now?

Parker almost flinches, knows she sees right through him.

PARKER
Just hope Tavarus turns out better.

He turns to leave but he spots that MUTED TV, video of the
PUSSYCAT LOUNGE flashing across a BREAKING NEWS REPORT.

Parker kneels, twists the VOLUME up:

T.V. REPORTER
...and now for a breaking story out
of Detroit. According to
authorities, there's been a mass
shooting at The Pussycat Lounge
gentlemen's club off of Grand Blvd.
and Jefferson Ave.

PARKER
The hell...

Parker and Sister Henrietta both watch.

T.V. REPORTER
The shooting occurred late last
night, and authorities have yet to
identify any suspects, however a
person who witnessed the has ID'd
one of the shooters as a tall
hispanic female. Forensic artists
have completed a rough composite of
the woman which is being
displayed... yes, I'm told it is
being displayed on screen now. If
you or anyone you know has any
information that may be of
assistance to authorities, please-

Parker mutes the TV again.

SISTER HENRIETTA
May the Lord be with them.

PARKER
God left here a long time ago.

He shoots the sister a pointed glance, then rushes out.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker dials Dahlia as he fishtails out of the parking lot. The phone rings a few times and she picks up.

PARKER

Dahlia?

DAHLIA (O.S.)

(filtered)

Mr. Jode... now's not a good time.

PARKER

I heard about the shooting and...
thank god you're okay.

DAHLIA (O.S.)

(filtered)

Yes, but... I'm at the police
station, so I can't talk.

PARKER

Fine, just tell me, is Leticia
alright? Jauntavius doesn't have
anyone else. Kid's three.

DAHLIA (O.S.)

(filtered)

I have to go. I'm sorry.

PARKER

Is she okay? Dahlia! Dahlia!

CLICK.

INT. METRO DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT - SAME

Dahlia hangs up. She sits on a bench inside the main lobby of the police department.

Her lips quiver, and she looks like she hasn't slept in a week.

A SECRETARY walks past with a steaming mug of coffee. She enters a nearby-

INTERROGATION ROOM

And places the coffee in front of Horatio.

Horatio sits across from DETECTIVE TONY BRIGGS, 40s. A big, box of a man, mostly right-angles.

HORATIO
(to secretary)
Thanks, linda.

SECRETARY
My name's not Linda.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
(leans in, quietly)
"Linda" means "pretty" in Spanish.
Hold my calls until I'm done.

She nods and leaves.

Horatio winks at her, then grabs his coffee and takes a protracted SLUUURRRPPP.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS (cont'd)
Your wife says you were home with her, asleep in bed all last night.

HORATIO
Guilty as charged.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
Ever cross-dressed, Horatio?

HORATIO
Why? Want a private show?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
Nice nails.

HORATIO
Huh? Oh.

Horatio sees what Briggs is referring to. His nails are still painted purple. He forgot to remove his nail polish.

HORATIO (cont'd)
My daughter's handiwork. Father of the year, am I right?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS
(deadpan)
We get a lot of those in here.

Horatio sips a coffee. A long, annoying SLURRRRRRP.

HORATIO

I've always said that pigs make the best coffee. So, why the hell did you drag me and my wife down here?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

You ever been to The Pussycat Lounge?

HORATIO

Of course.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Well, then we're off to a good start. Tell me more.

HORATIO

Must have been... a few weeks before I got locked up, so... twenty-nine months ago. Mas o menos.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

You ever do business with Vladimir Povolov?

HORATIO

He's a tennis player, or something, right?

(Briggs waits)

Oh, wait, the guy who owns the titty bar?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

The very one.

HORATIO

Never met him... I'm sure Dahlia could tell you more about him.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Oh?

HORATIO

I mean, she works at the club, but I'm sure you already know that. You should ask her.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Oh we will. I'm sure she'll be very helpful.

HORATIO

(smirking)

I'm sure she will. Why are you asking me about Vladimir... Popov, was it?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Because he's been murdered.

HORATIO

(melodramatic)

Dios mio. What happened?

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

He got robbed last night. Two shooters, likely Hispanic males, one in drag, snuffed him out right in the middle of business hours.

HORATIO

You're telling me two Cholos shot up some Russian gangster's titty bar? And now you're dragging in every "Hispanic male" that's ever set foot in the place? That's so '90s, bro.

DETECTIVE BRIGGS

Well, when you put it like that. But I put it like I'm looking at an ex-con who got out on some bullshit technicality, comes home to find his wife working at some Russian's club, probably sucking him off a couple times a week when the tips are bad. Said ex-con is stupid enough to confront said Russian, realizes he might have just stumbled on a shit load of dirty money, which is where things get interesting. Threats become grand larceny, becomes multiple homicides and here we are.

HORATIO

(finally)

Look, great story and all, but my wife already told you we were spending quality time together last night. At home.

EXT. METRO DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Detective Briggs stands on the steps just outside the front entrance.

Dahlia pulls her gold Ford Ranger out of her parking spot and drives past.

As they roll by in SLOW MOTION, Horatio glares out of the passenger window, eye-fucking Briggs.

Briggs whips out his phone, dials a number.

BRIGGS

He's lying.

(listening)

I don't give a shit. Keep eyes on him, I'll deal with the D.A.

Briggs hangs up.

INT. DAHLIA'S FORD RANGER - SAME

Horatio turns to Dahlia and his smirk disappears. He rests his hand under her chin as she white-knuckles her steering wheel.

HORATIO

You did very good today.

Dahlia stares straight ahead while Horatio scrutinizes her.

DAHLIA

I'll keep doing whatever you want.

HORATIO

That's good. We both what would happen if you betrayed my trust.

He brushes one of her bangs behind her ear. It takes everything she has not to drive the truck straight into a tree.

HORATIO

Right?

DAHLIA

Yes.

(swallows her fear)

I know.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

Parker KNOCKS on an apartment door. A skinny MAN with a Newport dangling from his mouth opens the door. He's black, with track marks.

NEWPORT MAN
Can I help you, cracker?

PARKER
I'm a social worker. Leticia and Jauntavius are my clients. I heard about the shooting, and I came as quickly as I could.

NEWPORT MAN
Well, you're too late. Leticia's dead.

Leticia's niece, AKEVIA, 19, pushes Newport man aside.

She's holding Leticia's three-year-old son, JAUNTAVIUS, a beautiful little boy. He's stark-naked and SUCKING his thumb.

He smiles at Parker.

AKEVIA
You Leticia's social worker?

Parker stares at the little boy. His eyes fill with sadness and well up.

PARKER
Yes.

AKEVIA
Who's gonna take care of Jauntavius now?

Parker CLEARS his throat.

PARKER
Well, the first choice would be immediate family. There's government grants to help with the financial burden but, uh...

His eyes drift back to the child for a moment.

PARKER

...but if that's not an option then the government will put him in foster care.

AKEVIA

You know who shot Leticia?

PARKER

No, but I assure you I'm going to do my very best to find out.

NEWPORT MAN (O.S.)

(from inside)

Whitey says he gonna do his very best! Watch out now!

EXT. PEREZ HOME - MORNING

TWO UNDERCOVER OFFICERS sit in their unmarked Crown Vic, a block down the street, watching the house.

A CAR turns onto the street and approaches.

UNDERCOVER #1

That vehicle look familiar to you?

UNDERCOVER #2

It's slowing down.

They put their hands on their sidearms.

The car parks a few yards behind and a PIMPLY TEENAGER hops out, carrying two-dozen donuts and a cardboard box of coffee.

PIMPLES approaches the cops, knocks on their window.

PIMPLES

Delivery for the gentlemen in the Crown Vic.

UNDERCOVER #1

You've gotta be shitting me.

PIMPLES

It's all paid for, except the, uh, tip.

The cops look at each other. #2 sighs and takes out his wallet. Hands the kid a few bucks, and he leaves.

They look up to see...

Horatio exiting his front door, wearing pajamas. His slippers CRUNCH on the melting snow. He grins and waves.

HORATIO
Hello officers! Hola! Beautiful morning. Enjoy your breakfast!

He opens his mailbox and checks his mail.

As he removes a stack, he folds the junk mail ads around a HIDDEN BURNER CELLPHONE, hiding it from view.

INT. PEREZ HOME - DAY

Ashley, all dressed for school, eats cereal and watches cartoons on her iPad. Her Dora the Explorer backpack sits on the chair next to her.

Horatio appears from the master bedroom. He carries a package tightly wound in butcher paper and twine (about the size of a large encyclopedia).

HORATIO
How's my little princesa?

She doesn't hear him. He takes off her headphones.

ASHLEY
Hi Papi. Want some Trix?

HORATIO
No thank you, mija. Think you can do a me big, huge, gigantic favor? Huh?

ASHLEY
Maybe.

HORATIO
Maybe!?!?

He gives her a tickle attack. She squirms and LAUGHS.

He grabs her Dora backpack, unzips it, and inspects inside.

ASHLEY
What are you doing?

He moves a coloring book aside and stuffs the package into the bag, filling it to near-capacity.

HORATIO

Papi needs you to take something to school for him. Uncle Hector is going to pick it up during recess. Know what?

ASHLEY

What?

HORATIO

If you do this, Papi will buy you anything you want.

He zips her backpack up and holds it up for her. Tight fit, but there's just enough room.

DAHLIA (O.S.)

(from bathroom)

Ashley, sweetheart, be ready to leave in five minutes!

Ashley slips her arms through the strap holes and Horatio lets go.

HORATIO

Well?

ASHLEY

It's heavy.

HORATIO

Yes, but you're a big girl, right?

(she nods)

Now, here's the most important part... this is our little secret, okay? Mami can't find out. And nobody at school either. You keep it safe until uncle Hector comes and picks it up, okay?

ASHLEY

Okay...

He lifts her chin so that he's looking into her green eyes.

HORATIO

Okay?

(she nods)

Very good, my little princesa.

LATER

Horatio dials a number into the burner phone and presses it to his ear. He peeks through his front window blinds.

Through the window, he watches Dahlia and Ashley pile into Dahlia's Ford Ranger. They drive off, giving Horatio a clear line of sight to the undercover cop parked across the street.

HORATIO (cont'd)
 (into phone)
 It's me.

Horatio lets go of the blinds and turns to face us.

HORATIO
 There's been a small change of plans.

INT. DAHLIA'S FORD RANGER - DAY

Dahlia, a trembling, nervous wreck, watches Ashley walk towards her elementary school's front entrance. Ashley turns and waves.

Dahlia puts on a brave smile, waves back, and blows Ashley a kiss.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - SURROUNDING - DAY

Parker drives, clutching the steering wheel, head on a swivel, ready to boil over when: he sees THE TWO KIDS WHO STOLE HIS RADIO exiting a convenience store.

He SWINGS the wheel, lunging the car up onto the sidewalk and blocking their path.

PARKER
 (hopping out,
 pulling Glock)
 Put your hands up right now!

One of them drops his forty and puts his hands up. The other puffs his chest out.

TALL HOODLUM
 Not this crazy white fuck, again.

PARKER

You assholes owe me a new window
and stereo.

An old black MAN (FRANKIE) leans out of the store.

FRANKIE

Officer, they didn't take nothin'.

PARKER

Maybe not from you, go back inside.

FRANKIE

This ain't right how you treat us.
Hiding behind a badge.

TALL HOODLUM

Yo, I don't even think this nigga a
real cop, man.

FRANKIE

Then what the hell are you?

PARKER

I'm a, uh, social worker.

An incredulous beat.

FRANKIE

I'm calling the cops.

PARKER

Please do, and inform them that
these two broke into my vehicle and
stole my stereo. And if you have to
mention the gun, please also tell
them that I am a fully licensed
handgun owner and an employee of
the state of Michigan.

TALL HOODLUM

Chill, Frankie. As long as dude
here don't do nothing stupid.

FRANKIE

Then I'll wait right here.

PARKER

Fine.

(to hoodlums)

I need some information. You tell
me what I need, we'll call it even.

The two hoodlums glance at each other then back at Parker.

PARKER (cont'd)
Well?

SHORT HOODLUM
What do you wanna know?

PARKER
You heard about the shooting?

TALL HOODLUM
Man, who hasn't.

PARKER
Know who did it?

SHORT HOODLUM
PSSHHH. Hell no.

TALL HOODLUM
We don't know shit, and even if we
did, we ain't snitches.

Parker rubs his temples.

PARKER
You sure?

TALL HOODLUM
Man, we don't know jack-shit!

Parker SIGHS. Straightens his gun.

PARKER
Alright. You know the drill.
(To Tall)
You, empty your pockets and put
everything on the ground.
Flip 'em inside out when you're
done.

The Tall one begins emptying his pockets on the sidewalk,
mumbling profanities under his breath.

PARKER
(to Short)
Your turn. And I see the piece,
start with that. Set it on the
ground, slow. One gun drawn and
things can stay reasonable. Once two
come out, people start making bad
decisions. Right?

Short Hoodlum takes a pistol from his belt and sets it down.

PARKER
And the pockets.

He rifles through his pockets and flips them inside out. Parker takes a step forward.

PARKER (cont'd)
Back up.

They backpedal a bit. On the ground in front of Parker are two wallets, a gun, a quarter bag of weed, a 5-pack of Backwood cigars, a baggie with crack vials, and a fidget spinner.

FRANKIE
You know what your problem is?

PARKER
What's that?

FRANKIE
You think the world owes you something.

Parker takes the gun, pockets it, then pockets the weed and blunts.

PARKER
Nope, just these two.
(shaking crack vials)
Selling or using?

TALL HOODLUM
We don't smoke that shit, you stupid?

PARKER
Do you know what "this shit" does to people?

TALL HOODLUM
Yeah, gets 'em high as fuck and keeps 'em coming back.

PARKER
It tears families and communities apart! Little babies dying of dehydration because their junkie parents forget about them for days on end!

(MORE)

PARKER (cont'd)

Girls, twelve or thirteen, get addicted and pimped out because of this shit. Do you know how many young black men lose their lives over this shit every day?

SHORT HOODLUM

A lot, motherfucker. Get outta my face.

TALL HOODLUM

Yeah, unless you gonna give me a job or something. No? You know anybody who wants to give a hood nigga a job?

PARKER

Have you ever considered trying? Get a suit from Goodwill. Ask around. People do it all the time. You think someone's gonna come down here handing out free jobs to punks sipping forties on corners? Where do you think this shit is gonna get you? Locked up or dead. Don't you want more for yourself?

The kids look at each other, start laughing.

TALL HOODLUM

Is that what you did? Went to school, got a suit and a job? Then why you always down here with us, acting like you're doing so much good in the world? Robbing niggas in broad daylight. Face it, man, you ain't helping shit.

Parker tries to think of something to say. Getting nowhere, he picks up the the wallets. He rifles through them, removing the cash and the ID cards.

He counts the cash, stuffs it into his pocket, and examines the ID cards.

PARKER

Jamal Washington and Tavian Lewis. Well, the eighty-three bucks isn't nearly enough to cover my window or my stereo. That means I'll have to come back and see you again.

TALL HOODLUM/JAMAL
 How the fuck we gonna pay you back
 when you jackin' all our work?

SHORT HOODLUM/TAVIAN
 You think the fiends are gonna stop
 smoking 'cause of you? You gonna
 sleep better knowing you robbed some
 niggas for a few rocks?

A long moment.

PARKER
 Yeah.. actually I will sleep better.

He climbs back in his car, reverses off the sidewalk and drives away.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker pulls into a half-deserted strip mall across from a Rite Aid. He slow-rolls past a commercial dumpster, makes sure the coast is clear, and tosses the confiscated handgun and baggie of crack vials inside it.

He continues driving and parks two spots over from Dahlia's Ford Ranger. Dahlia exits her truck, walks up to his passenger door, and gets in.

PARKER
 Hey.
 (off her look)
 I know. I look like shit.

DAHLIA
 You... kinda do. What happened?

PARKER
 Let's see... I haven't slept since the club shooting, and two kids under my care lost their parents this week. I'm suspended from my job. Oh, and I just robbed a couple of teens at gunpoint. Well, they robbed me first. Either way, I think I could really use a joint right now... you wanna smoke?

DAHLIA
 ... You smoke weed?

He takes out the confiscated baggie and a Backwood cigar.

PARKER

I have no idea what to do with these.

Dahlia takes them (hands trembling a bit). She unseals the package and unwraps the cigar as they speak.

DAHLIA

Well, if it makes you feel better, I've seen you in worse shape. Several times, actually.

PARKER

Thanks... I guess.

A few silent beats as Dahlia stuffs and seals the blunt with her bottom lip.

PARKER (cont'd)

You have to tell me, Dahlia: Did Horatio hit the club?

She doesn't say anything for a long moment.

DAHLIA

I almost shot him this morning. While he was taking a bath. I could have done it. Would I have gone to prison?

PARKER

I don't know. If he was in the bathtub, probably.

DAHLIA

Then Ashley would have no one. Sometimes I think it might be better for her that way. Maybe a nice family would adopt her. Maybe she could be okay.

PARKER

It doesn't work like that, Dahlia. Thousands of children go into the foster care system every week. There aren't enough families in the world for all of the abandoned kids.

DAHLIA

That's not true.

PARKER

Maybe not, I don't know. But a child needs their mother.

DAHLIA

What about their father?

PARKER

I never had one, I turned out just fine, right?

DAHLIA

(a chuckle, then her face goes dark)

I have to take Ashley and leave here before he hurts one of us.

PARKER

He did it, didn't he? He killed all those people. Just nod your head.

She doesn't, instead leaning in toward him. He flinches.

DAHLIA

What would we need to disappear? How would we do it?

PARKER

I, uh, well you and your daughter are full citizens, which makes travel easier. Do you have passports?

She inches closer to him, shaking her head "no", but not dropping his gaze.

PARKER (cont'd)

Is your name on the mortgage for the house?

DAHLIA

We rent. The lease is in my name ever since he went to prison.

PARKER

Well, it could be worse. Car notes, credit cards, bills in your name?

DAHLIA

(lips nearly brushing his cheek)

Just a Visa.

PARKER

You need to pay off any balance and close the account. You can do that on the road. You need a different car.

DAHLIA

Kiss me, Parker.

PARKER

I don't know if now's a good-

DAHLIA

Please. I have to ask you something, but you might say no, and then I don't know if I'll be able to let myself kiss you. And I've wanted to for so long, so just...

She turns his chin to her and leans all the way into him, with her mouth and arms and body. They kiss deeply.

She pulls the seat-back handle as Parker SLAMS down and she mounts him. His hands on her breasts and between her legs.

She wrangles his belt buckle.

PARKER

(gears turning)

Dahlia, wait. Wait!

A beat, heavy breathing, then...

DAHLIA

I've been tested. Twice since he's been out.

(then)

And he doesn't fuck me, anyway.

Parker considers this, then nods.

She unbuckles and unzips his pants, then unfastens her own, kissing him harder. She pulls her jeans and underpants to her knees and grinds into him.

EXT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

The Cavalier rocks back and forth. MOANING as Dahlia's arm shoots out through the makeshift cardboard window and latches onto the car's exterior B pillar.

A good 30 seconds of squeals and moans, then Parker climaxes- a ROAR of pent-up frustration, anxiety, and fear, briefly eclipsed by an all-consuming orgasm.

INT. CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

He breathes, coming back around. Takes a sip from his trusty flask. Dahlia remains on top of him.

DAHLIA

Help us, Parker. Ashley and me. I don't know if we can make it on our own. Come with us.

PARKER

Dahlia...

DAHLIA

I'll only ask you once, and I know it's insane, but you don't want to be here either. I know you don't. We can try somewhere else. Somewhere where Horatio won't be able to find us.

(tears find her eyes)

You're kind, and loyal, and you're so wonderful with Ashley! And I'll be good to you. I'm loyal too. And I'll find a good job, and put Ashley in a school and-

PARKER

Dahlia!

(she stops)

Did Horatio kill all those people?

Dahlia finally nods "yes".

PARKER (cont'd)

Is Ashley at school?

She nods "yes".

They "disengage" and rush to pull their clothes back on.

PARKER (cont'd)

We get Ash, then hit my place. I'll make a few calls on the road.

DAHLIA

Should I follow you?

PARKER

No, we'll buy anything you or
Ashley needs on the road, with cash.

She runs to her car, starts getting her shit together. On Parker's blue-gray irises, swirling, a storm brewing.

As the rush of adrenaline burns through his veins, the gravity of his choice begins to catch up to him.

EXT. NOAH WEBSTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Kids run around an asphalt playground, bundled in autumn layers, viewed from...

INT. HECTOR'S TOYOTA LAND CRUISER - DAY

Parked across the street, a few-dozen yards away.

Hector delicately dips his blunt in a small jar of clear liquid.

Then he lights it. The blunt CRACKLES, flaring phosphorescent pink. HE BREATHES DEEP.

DUKE (30s) sits shotgun. A large, hulking man in a slate-gray Carhartt and Dickies.

DUKE

I don't know how you smoke that
sherm shit, bro. That's that devil
shit.

Hector taps a finger to the middle of his forehead, between his eyebrows, as if that's some sort of answer. He tips his fedora up a bit and offers the blunt to the two passengers in back:

"MAGO" and "BRUJA" ("Mage" and "Witch," a pair of middle-aged, leather clad drug-runners) sit in the back seat.

Bruja takes the blunt. Hector turns his attention back across the street. He watches Ashley plays four-square with a few other kids.

Hector hears tires squeal, checks his side mirror, sees a GREEN CAVALIER approaching. Doesn't think much of it until he sees DAHLIA in the passenger seat.

HECTOR

Mira.

The Cavalier parks outside the playground and Dahlia climbs out, calling to Ashley.

DUKE

Oh, shit. What's Horatio's bitch doing here?

Bruja PUNCHES Duke in the back of the head.

BRUJA

(to Mago)

This rote motherfucker call me "your bitch" too?

HECTOR

Cut it out! I think they're taking Ashley!

Dahlia circles the gate, shouting to get Ashley's attention.

MAGO

You think she's making a run for it?

DUKE

We have to tell Horatio.

HECTOR

We'll tell him when we've got his daughter back.

BRUJA

Who's the driver?

HECTOR

I don't know.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker waits in the idling car, drumming his fingers. Checks his mirrors. Takes a swig from his flask. Looks up at a kid staring at him from the playground. Pulls on the flask harder.

Sees the Land Cruiser- the ominous tints- but doesn't pay it much mind. Puts the flask away as Dahlia approaches the playground exit continuing to call for Ashley.

Ashley picks up her heavy backpack and meets her. A TEACHER intercepts, exchanging words with Dahlia.

HONK! HONK HONK! A PANEL TRUCK is stuck behind him.

PARKER

Come on, come on...

The Teacher puts up a fight until Dahlia rips Ashley from her grip. A couple other teachers congregate. Parker tries to obscure his face.

HONK! HONK! HONK!

Dahlia yanks open the back door and shoves Ashley in.

PARKER (cont'd)

Hey, Ash.

ASHLEY

Hey Mr. Jode? What's going on?

Dahlia climbs in. The Cavalier nearly leaps off the curb.

PARKER

Good question. Dahlia, would you like to field questions while I drive?

DAHLIA

We're just going on a little road trip, honey.

ASHLEY

I didn't pack anything.

DAHLIA

It's okay, baby. We'll stop by a Walmart and get you new clothes.

ASHLEY

Where's Papi?

Parker drives through an intersection. The panel truck behind him takes a right, disappearing, and Parker spies Hector's Black Land Cruiser peeling off the curb.

PARKER

How's traffic looking on the 278?

Dahlia studies a MAPS app on her phone.

PARKER (cont'd)

Dahlia?

DAHLIA

It's loading!

ASHLEY
Where are we going?

PARKER
Where'd you like to go?

ASHLEY
Six Flags!

PARKER
Okay, anywhere else? What's your favorite state?

ASHLEY
Wisconsin!

PARKER
Seriously? Why?

Ashley shrugs.

DAHLIA
(shaking head)
Okay, honey, maybe Wisconsin.

ASHLEY
Why are you here, Mr. Jode?

Dahlia and Ashley look at him.

He looks back into his rear-view mirror. The Land Cruiser weaves in-between cars, looming larger by the second.

PARKER
Because your mom's a terrible driver.

ASHLEY
Is papi coming too?

DAHLIA
No, baby, he can't make it- can you please just be quiet for mommy so I can help Mr. Jode pull up directions? Just for a few minutes honey.

A long moment. Parker eyes the rear-view. Ashley tears up.

ASHLEY
Is he leaving again? Why doesn't he want to stay with us?

DAHLIA
We're leaving him. Okay? Just please
just be a tough girl for mommy, I'll
tell you more when we've gotten out
of the-

ASHLEY
We're leaving papi?

DAHLIA
ASHLEY!

Ashley shrinks back into her seat and goes quiet.

DAHLIA (cont'd)
Are you buckled up?

Ashley's seat belt CLICKS. Dahlia sees Parker eyeing the
mirrors.

DAHLIA (cont'd)
(hushed)
Are we being followed?

PARKER
A black Land Cruiser, four cars
back.

DAHLIA
Who are they? Can you lose them?

PARKER
Lose them? Have you seen the car
we're in?

DAHLIA
I don't understand how anyone could
have known-

PARKER
Did you tell anyone else?

DAHLIA
No. I don't understand...

ASHLEY
Maybe it's Uncle Hector.

DAHLIA
Why Uncle Hector?

ASHLEY

I'm not supposed to tell... Papi said it's a secret.

DAHLIA

Sweetheart, if you don't tell me, we could all be hurt very badly. You don't want that to happen, do you?

(she shakes her head)

Me neither. Now go ahead and tell me.

ASHLEY

... This morning when you were showering, Papi put something in my backpack. He said Uncle Hector was going to pick it up at recess, and he said not to tell anyone.

Dahlia grabs the backpack and tears it open. She pulls out the WRAPPED PACKAGE- rips open the paper.

Finds layers of saran wrap and duct tape. GASPS. Tears the rest away and a few vacuum-sealed bricks of CASH fall out.

PARKER

What is it?

DAHLIA

Money.

(lower, angrier)

He sent my little girl to school with a backpack full of drug money...

PARKER

Fuck me...

ASHLEY

(starts BAWLING)

Why did papi give me drug money? Are you drug addicts?

DAHLIA

What? No, honey. We're getting rid of it, that's what we're doing.

PARKER

Jesus fuck...

DAHLIA

STOP FUCKING CURSING!

PARKER

Sorry!

The Land Cruiser bears down directly behind them, gobbling up asphalt at a startling pace. Parker checks his gauge cluster as he flies down the interstate.

CLOSE ON the speedometer, which reads 107 mph. Next to it, the tach needle approaches redline.

The engine WHINES as Parker tests its limits. The duct tape on the outside of the passenger window gives and the entire cardboard flap RIPS off.

Dahlia barely notices as icy wind stampedes into the cabin, blowing her hair all over the place.

A bullet shatters Parker's rear window, and EXPLODES out through his windshield. Parker reflexively jerks and almost spins out.

PARKER (cont'd)

FUCK!

Dahlia and Ashley SCREAM and the package falls into Dahlia's lap.

POP! POP-POP-POP!

Cherry-hot slugs rip through the car.

PARKER

STAY DOWN!

Parker tears onto the exit ramp towards the Detroit River.

The back end of his car drifts out from under him as he knuckles a hairpin turn at 45 mph and careens towards the Ambassador Bridge, which links Detroit, Michigan with Windsor, Canada.

ASHLEY

MAMI!

Parker checks his rearview mirror to see if he's lost Hector. No dice.

PARKER

Stay down, Ashley!

DAHLIA
 (to Parker)
 What are you doing?!? You're headed
 for the Ambassador Bridge!

PARKER
 The Border Agents, they're armed!
 They can help!

DAHLIA
 How do you know they'll protect
 us?!

Parker looks into his rearview and steals a glance at
 Ashley, who cowers and CRIES.

PARKER
 I just do!

A bullet takes out Parker's right side mirror. Parker
 flies through a green light and onto the bridge, SHEARING
 his fender on the steep incline.

PARKER
 Get my gun, it's in the glove box!

Dahlia does. Parker takes it and shoves it into his
 waistband.

PARKER (cont'd)
 C'mon! C'mon!

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

There's been an accident on the bridge, creating an
 impasse. Cars and trucks bottleneck into a single open
 lane as a tow truck HONKS and tries to reach the wreckage.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker and Dahlia notice the fast-approaching wall of
 bumpers.

PARKER
 Christ!

He punches his steering wheel.

DAHLIA
 What are we gonna do?!?

Parker squeegees sweat from his face with his palm.

PARKER
We're gonna make a run for it!

DAHLIA
What!?!

PARKER
You heard me! Hang on!

He SLAMS on the brakes and yanks his steering wheel all the way to the right. The wheels lock and the car spins and drifts.

By the time it SCREECHES to a stop, it's spun 180 degrees and faces the opposite direction.

PARKER
Let's go!

Dahlia's frozen. Ashley SCREAMS.

PARKER (cont'd)
Dahlia! Get Ashley, we have to go!

Dahlia shakes out the cobwebs and nods. She darts out of the car and grabs Ashley from the back seat.

Parker hastily shoves the wrapped bundle of cash back into Ashley's backpack, zips it, and grabs it up as he jumps out of the car.

ASHLEY
Mami!

DAHLIA
It's okay! C'mon baby!

PARKER
RUN!

He snatches the backpack and draws his gun, taking aim at Hector's Land Cruiser, which hurtles towards them.

Dahlia and Ashley run up the bridge towards the border, weaving in between lanes of traffic.

BANG! BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG!

Parker lets his Glock sing as-

INT. HECTOR'S TOYOTA LAND CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

One of the bullets PUNCHES through Hector's windshield, sending bits of glass everywhere. Hector, unfazed, stomps on the gas.

Duke wraps a meaty arm around an AR-15 and leans out the passenger side, opening fire.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

BROP-POP-POP-POP-POP! BRRROPP-POP-POP!

Hollow-points slice through the air all around Parker.

Outgunned, he turns and huffs it up the bridge- not far behind Ashley and Dahlia.

EXT. HECTOR'S LAND CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

The SUV skids to a stop and the crew jump out.

HECTOR

Duke, chase them down! Mago, Bruja,
on me!

Duke beelines it for Parker while the others move to the back of the SUV.

Hector unlatches the cargo hold, which contains roughly half a dozen assault rifles and submachine guns. He hands weapons to Mago and Bruja.

HECTOR

Controlled fire- don't hit the girl.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Parker catches up to Dahlia and Ashley. The border crossing is about a mile and a half away and swarms with BORDER AGENTS.

PARKER

I can see the border! We have to
run faster!

Ashley and Dahlia struggle to keep up.

BRROPPP! BROPPP-POP! BRROPPP-PPOPPP!

Duke, running at full speed, riddles a nearby RV and minivan with his AR-15. PEOPLE stuck in traffic SCREAM and take cover.

Duke quickly gains ground, and Hector and his goons aren't far behind.

Parker frantically glances at Dahlia.

PARKER
C'mon! Faster!

DAHLIA
We can't!

PARKER
You have to!

DAHLIA
We're trying!

Parker, in an effort to put some pavement between him and his pursuers, turns and opens fire on Duke.

BANG! BANG! BANG-BANG! BANG-BANG-BANG!

Duke raises the AR-15 to his chin and answers with a vicious barrage.

BRRROPPPP-PPPOPPP-PPPOPPP-PPOPPP! BROP-POP-POP-POP-POP!

Parker dives behind a pickup as the hollow-points shred everything like meth termites from hell.

He reaches up over the hood of the pickup and returns fire.

BANG-BANG! CLICK.

The Glock's slide racks open. No more ammo.

PARKER
SHIT!

He turns and runs, taking massive strides, using every ounce of adrenaline. He then becomes aware of the fact that he doesn't see Dahlia or Ashley up ahead.

He turns and spots them and his heart almost jumps out of his chest.

They're cowering behind a car a few spots over from where he was shooting at Duke.

PARKER
 (cups his mouth)
 DAHLIA! ASHLEY!

It's too late. Duke reaches them. He yanks Dahlia out onto the pavement by the scruff of her jacket.

ASHLEY
 MAMI! Don't hurt my Mami!

Duke turns and WHISTLES, signaling to Hector that he's found Dahlia and Ashley.

Practically frothing at the mouth, he tosses Dahlia back onto the ground, turns, and sprints towards Parker.

PARKER
 (breathing heavily)
 Jesus Christ.

A grim look of realization falls over Parker as he turns to flee. Hector, Mago, and Bruja reach Dahlia and Ashley.

Although we can't hear him, we can tell by Hector's body language that he's giving Mago and Bruja orders.

Mago nods and he and Bruja grab Dahlia and Ashley, turn around, and head back towards the Land Cruiser.

Hector takes off after Duke and Parker.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Parker runs for his life. Duke is about two hundred feet back and gaining, with Hector another eight or so car lengths back.

The border crossing is still almost a mile away.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON Parker, who's running on fumes. He's out of ammo and there's no way he can outrun them.

He makes a sharp turn towards the bridge's outer support and slides across the hood of a car.

DRIVER
 What the hell!

He climbs over a waist-high concrete slab, past a suspension cable that disappears into the sky like a giant beanstalk, and onto a girder which runs over a mammoth, rusted support beam.

BRRROPPPP-PPPOPPP-PPPOPPP-PPOPPP!

Duke bears down on Parker with his AR-15.

BROP-POP-POP-POP-POP!

PARKER

FUCK!

Slugs RAKE the edge of a buttress near Parker's head and bits of pulverized concrete go flying.

Parker stares down into the icy, choppy water of the Detroit River roughly 150 feet below.

He takes one look back at Duke and Hector. Duke lines up a kill shot just as-

Parker flings the backpack off the side of the girder, tosses his empty Glock aside and-

PARKER

Fuck it!

He jumps, arms and legs flailing the whole way down until-

EXT. DETROIT RIVER - CONTINUOUS

SPLAAASSSHHHHH!

PARKER

Ahhhhh! Ahhhhhh!

Parker thrashes about in the freezing water.

He spots the backpack about thirty feet ahead of him and swims over to it. He grabs it and peers up onto the bridge.

He sees Hector and Duke standing on the girder he jumped from.

Hector snatches the rifle from Duke and takes aim at Parker. Parker swims for his life.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Hector feathers the trigger, but doesn't fire. Lowers his aim- Parker's too far.

HECTOR

Five grand says you won't jump in after that motherfucker and gut him like a trout.

DUKE

It's gotta be like 35 degrees!

HECTOR

Throw in dinner at Ronaldo's and unlimited chicken and waffles, on me, for six months. Fuck it. Plus beers.

DUKE

(grinning)

I'm going to rip this fucker's arms off and be back in time for happy hour!

HECTOR

Give 'im hell.

Duke takes a second to psych himself up, then...

EXT. DETROIT RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Parker goes wide-eyed.

PARKER

What... the... fff-ffuckkk.

Duke LEAPS! Falls, SMASHES into the river like a giant canon ball.

SPLAAASSSSHHHHHHHH!

A terrible look of realization racks Parker's face.

Treading water, he hastily unzips the backpack, removes the plastic-wrapped bundle of cash, turns, and launches it one-handed.

The package lands with a SPLASH about twenty feet away in the direction of the shore, which is roughly 40 yards away.

Duke's head breaks surface as the water froths all around him. He wastes no time and immediately begins swimming towards Parker.

Parker swims as fast as he can towards the floating package while Duke gives chase. Parker is a faster swimmer but upon reaching the package he stops, grabs it, winds up, and launches it shore-ward.

Once again, it flies roughly twenty feet ahead of him and SPLASHES into the river. Each time he stops to throw the package, Duke chips away at his lead.

After the third time Parker reaches the package, he winds up and flings it, but instead of splashing into the water, it lands onto the litter-strewn banks of the Detroit River with a THUD.

Parker turns and sees Duke, who's only about six yards behind him and closing. He turns and, using his last ounce of strength, swims for the shore.

EXT. DETROIT RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

Parker crawls ashore sopping wet and GASPING for air. He stumbles over to the package, wraps an arm around it, and starts huffing it up the riverbank towards the road.

Running against the wind, a thin sheen of ice forms as arctic gusts plow into his dripping wet clothes. His teeth CHATTER and his lips have gone blue.

Duke breaks shore just as Parker reaches the road. He's not as winded, and begins sprinting with a kind of psychotic determination.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DETROIT - CONTINUOUS

As Duke runs, he pulls out a razor-sharp Spiderco knife which was clipped inside his pocket. He flicks it open with a CLICK and darts across the street.

Parker, clutching the package like a football, zig-zags through the streets and sidewalk. Every time he looks over his shoulder, Duke is five feet closer.

Parker turns a corner and sprints through an intersection as the light turns green.

Duke, smelling blood, rounds the corner and, seeing Parker only fifteen feet away, bolts into the street after him.

THUNK!... WHOOMPH!

A red Honda civic PLOWS into Duke, sweeping his legs out from under him.

He SMASHES into the windshield and tumbles up and over the car's roof before rag-dolling onto the street and rolling to a stop.

Parker turns and stares as the Civic swerves and CRASHES into a parking meter.

Blinking rapidly, he catches his breath for a moment and watches, in shock and awe, as Duke slowly begins coming to.

Parker, in a wild fit, SCREAMS as he sprints back into the street towards Duke, who's just barely resumed standing, albeit on very wobbly legs.

Duke, waiting for the stars to settle, looks up just as Parker tosses the package square at his chest. He instinctively catches it as Parker lowers his shoulder and-

WHUUUMMP!

Parker SLAMS into him like a battering ram. The package goes flying and the men careen onto the sidewalk, SMASHING onto the ground.

Both men squirm and roll around on the sidewalk, but Duke, who got the wind knocked out of him twice in rapid succession, is clearly in worse shape.

Parker sees the Spiderco a few feet away. He monkey-crawls over to it, grabs it, stands up, and limps over to Duke, who's still rolling around MOANING.

Parker hunches over him as Duke reaches up and weakly grabs him by the scruff of his shirt.

Parker pushes his arm aside, mounts him, raises the knife high above his head, and snaps it down like bolt of lightning.

CRUUNNCCHH!

As Parker jackhammers the blade into Duke's chest. Blood foams up from Duke's punctured lung and coats his teeth.

Parker turns to go as Duke flails about and paws at his chest, drowning in his own blood.

Parker, shivering, grabs the package and wipes the knife off on his shirt before folding it shut and putting it in his pocket.

Duke's CRIES grow more and more distant as Parker limps away.

INT. DESOLATE PHONEBOOTH - DAY

Parker, his teeth CHATTERING and his whole body trembling uncontrollably, makes a collect call.

INT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

A telephone RING cuts through the soothing sound of CLASSICAL MUSIC.

The Spectacled Man, always in his tuxedo, glides past. We GLIDE ALONG his coat tails as he walks over to a cordless phone sitting on a kitchen counter.

CLOSE ON the back of his head as he presses the phone to his ear. We hear a MUFFLED VOICE for a brief moment.

SPECTACLED MAN

I accept the charges.

A moment later, we hear what sounds like Parker's GARBLED VOICE through the phone receiver.

The Spectacled Man slowly turns around and we see his face clearly for the very first time. He bears a striking resemblance to Parker.

We hold TIGHT ON on his solemn expression for what seems like forever.

SPECTACLED MAN

This is Marcus Jode.

EXT. PEREZ HOME

The undercover cops eye a uniformed, female OFFICER approach them- heavy-knit DPD turtleneck pulled high over her mouth and nose as is usual in winter.

UNDERCOVER #1

Hey, don't the locals know we're here? And did you see this asshole's black-and-white?

UNDERCOVER #2

No. I think I see tits. Probably some sixth precinct bitch. Segura tries taking credit for every sting in the city.

They take out their badges and roll down their windows. They watch the OFFICER, whose eyes we may recognize as Bruja's, stroll up in the mirrors.

OFFICER/BRUJA

How you guys doing?

UNDERCOVER #2

My name's Detective Merkel, this is Detective Grays, we're undercover and you're fucking our shit up.

Bruja narrows her eyes, nods, and pulls what appears to be a giant canister of mace that was strapped behind her back the whole time.

She SPRAYS thick clouds in both Undercover's faces. They cough, gag and go for their weapons, but are unconscious before they can draw them.

INT. MARCUS' OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - DAY

Marcus pulls up across the street from the phone booth where Parker is.

Parker staggers across the street and dives in. He SLAMS the door, tosses Horatio's package at his feet, curls into a ball, and shivers violently.

Marcus turns the heat all the way up then exits the vehicle.

EXT. OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

Marcus opens his trunk and removes an emergency kit.

He opens it finding flares, first aid items, a flashlight, water, and a reflective silver NASA space blankets.

INT. MARCUS' OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

Marcus opens the passenger door. He unfolds the space blanket and drapes it around Parker, who tries saying something but is unable to.

He closes Parker's door and walks around to the driver's side. He gets in, puts the car in gear, and drives off.

He presses a button on the CD player and soft CLASSICAL MUSIC wafts into the cabin.

EXT. MARCUS' OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

As they drive, dark clouds gallop past as day turns to night.

INT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Parker exits Marcus's bathroom, a towel wrapped around his waist.

Marcus sits at his kitchen table meticulously cleaning and oiling his Benelli shotgun. A half empty bottle of brandy sits next to him.

PARKER

Is there something I can wear?

Marcus, polishing the shotgun's breech, doesn't take his eyes off his work.

MARCUS

Should be.

INT. MARCUS' CLOSET - NIGHT

Pitch black. The door swings open and Parker turns the light on.

Parker's speechless: the entire closet is filled top-to-bottom with tuxedo shirts, pants, and jackets.

INT. MARCUS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Parker enters wearing one of Marcus' tuxedos. It fits well given their similar height and build.

Parker sits across from Marcus, who's begun feeding shells into his Benelli.

In the middle of the table is Horatio's package, which has been cut open by Marcus, revealing its contents: compressed ten thousand dollar bundles bound together.

PARKER

I had no one else to call.

Marcus thumbs shells into his shotgun. He doesn't look up.

PARKER

I appreciate your help.

Marcus grabs the bottle of brandy and takes a manly pull. He slides it across the table to Parker, who pushes it aside.

Marcus shrugs and begins wiping down the barrel of his gun.

PARKER (cont'd)

You know I fantasized about killing you... pretty much all the time. I'd go to the symphony and I'd tell myself "Today's the day. This'll be the day I kill that sorry son-of-a-bitch who walked out and left us to rot."

Marcus looks up and stares at him with a detached, emotionless gaze.

PARKER (cont'd)

Aren't you gonna say something?

MARCUS

I waited for it. Every performance was my last. I should thank you, actually. Allowed me to savor every moment.

A sad smile curls the corner of Marcus' lip. Parker's at a loss for a moment.

MARCUS

Life ain't what we want it to be. It is what it is in spite of what we want...

(then)

I wanted to be a father and a husband. But life had different plans for me.

Parker really studies Marcus, now. Perhaps seeing him in a different light for first time in decades.

PARKER

Where were you- all those years?

MARCUS

War. There's something in a man's soul tells him he's gotta fight- for something, against something. Fight we must- even if it's with ourselves.

He turns pointedly to Parker, drives that home.

MARCUS

Music is the only thing I ever found that tamed the monster...

Marcus places the record player NEEDLE upon a weathered record, soft CLASSICAL MUSIC filling the apartment.

MARCUS (cont'd)

If you wanted an apology, you came to the wrong person. No one should apologize for who they are. It's the world who should apologize for asking them to be something different.

Parker grabs the brandy and takes a pull. Cringes. Wipes his mouth. Looks down into his lap for a long moment.

When he looks back at Marcus, his eyes are on fire.

PARKER

A little girl and her mother need my help.

Marcus nods. Parker stands.

PARKER

You got one more fight left in you?

Marcus stands, cocks the shotgun, and grabs his car keys from the tabletop. Without a word, he moves through his door, holds it open and nods for Parker to follow.

A father willing to fight for his son.

INT. MARCUS' OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - NIGHT

Marcus drives, Parker riding shotgun, literally, the Benelli stuffed beside his legs. He gazes out at the passing landscape of downtown Detroit- desolate and destitute.

PARKER

She always said I was just like you.

Marcus glances Parker's way, returns his eyes to the road.

PARKER

And I always wondered- why is that?
That a kid without his father can
become his father without ever
really knowing him.

Parker continues to gaze out the window, perhaps more at his reflection than what lies beyond it.

PARKER (cont'd)

Long time ago, I came to the
conclusion that you were there all
along. Maybe not physically, but
your presence was felt. Or lack
thereof... It's like no matter what,
you can have an effect on the
world. You weren't there but you
were, you still affected me...
haunted me- by not being there...

(turns to Marcus)

Does that make any sense?

Marcus finally turns to Parker, meets his gaze.

MARCUS

I thought about that too, sometimes.
How I left to protect you and your
mother from myself- but that maybe I
couldn't, maybe by being there I
might've hurt you, but by not being
there it's just a different kinda
hurt.

(then)

Look, I don't got the answers. I'm
just swimming 'round in the muck
with everyone else, same as you.

Parker turns back to his window, his little portal to the world out there. Questions left unanswered. The way the world really is.

MARCUS

This girl, you close?

PARKER

Maybe a little too close.

INT. FORD CROWN VIC - NIGHT

We stare at Horatio's front door from inside the Crown Vic parked across the street, the detectives slumped in the immediate foreground.

PULL BACK to REVEAL Marcus laying down in the backseat, hidden from view, his shotgun lying across his chest.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - NIGHT

Parker walks up to the front door, straightens his tuxedo jacket, and KNOCKS.

Moments later the door flies open and Parker is forcefully pulled inside.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Hector SLAMS Parker against the wall and frisks him. Mago and Bruja train their guns on him. Horatio, Dahlia, and Ashley (headphones around neck) sit at the kitchen table.

Hector finds the Spiderco knife & Parker's hand sanitizer, but no gun. He shoves Parker into the kitchen.

HORATIO

(re:tuxedo)

A bit overdressed for the occasion.

(to Hector)

No weapons?

Hector walks over and hands him the sanitizer and the Spiderco knife. Horatio flicks it open and runs his thumb along its serrated blade- blood still caked to it.

HECTOR

It's Duke's.

PARKER

He won't be needing it anymore.

Horatio grins menacingly.

HORATIO

You got bigger cojones than I thought...

(re: sanitizer)

Guess you need this, seeing as you got your hands dirty, Government Man.

Parker cleanses his hands with the sanitizer, keeps it in the palm of one hand, cap still open.

He watches as Horatio goes through his HIV medicine ritual. Opens a bottle, takes a pill out, sets it in front of him, closes the bottle, then moves on to the next one.

Once all five pills are lined up in front of him, he looks up at Parker.

HORATIO (cont'd)

Please sit.

PARKER

I'd rather not, if you don't mind-

Hector SLUGS him in the liver, and there's an audible crack. Parker YELLS out and doubles over, gasping, as Hector pulls the last chair at the table out for him.

He collapses onto it. Thick blood pools from his nose and mouth. Horatio rolls a roll of paper towels across the table to him.

Parker woozily looks at Ashley, who stares at him but says nothing. Dahlia does not look at him. Her mind is likely analyzing any scenario which might end with Ashley alive.

Unlike last time, when he wolfed all the pills down at once, Horatio takes his time here. He dry-swallows the first pill. He takes the other four pills, slowly, one by one, while he converses with Parker.

HORATIO

You came alone, Government Man?

PARKER

Yes.

Horatio motions to Mago and Bruja with his chin.

Mago peers out the front window and Bruja peers into the backyard through the sliding glass door.

They scan the area, then turn and nod.

PARKER (cont'd)

(struggling, to
Horatio)

Why are you still here?

HORATIO

Come again? Speak up!

PARKER

I can't figure why you aren't jumping the border into Canada by now- cops must be on to you.

HORATIO

Leave worrying about the pigs to me. Besides, how else would we all have time to sit down like this? My wife, my daughter, my best, most loyal friends and soldiers, and some random gringo who has apparently gotten to know my family very well in my absence.

PARKER

Jesus Christ, I'm Ashley's social worker, I just-

HORATIO

- Care about her well-being, yeah, yeah, you said that. You know what your problem is?

PARKER

People keep making suggestions.

HORATIO

You're a terrible liar.
(then, to Ashley)
Put your headphones on, princesa.

Ashley does, music blocking out the conversation.

HORATIO (cont'd)

If you're wondering, Dahlia already spilled the frijoles about your encounter. I didn't even have to beat it out of her. I think she wanted to tell me.

Parker goes cold- the jig's up.

HORATIO (cont'd)

If this had happened a couple years back, before I went in, I would have broken all your limbs with a hammer and thrown you into Lake Michigan... I was a very petty, vain man. I thought that I owned the world, that anything I pointed at was mine.

(MORE)

HORATIO (cont'd)
And anyone who got in my way, said
no, I just snapped my fingers and
they were gone.

He notices Ashley, staring at him. He takes her iPad and
turns the volume up.

HORATIO (cont'd)
(back to Parker)
But things happen in life that
humble a man. I walked into that
prison thinking I knew pain. I
didn't know shit. But eventually I
gained some perspective, and I
realized that my wife would have to
have some of her needs met
elsewhere. I can live with that. But
you know what really got to me?
What really clawed into the deepest
recesses of mind and wouldn't let
go? My princesa's eyes.
(turning to Ashley)
My god, just look at those eyes.

Ashley starts to remove her headphones, but Horatio shakes
his head and they remain. Everyone turning to admire her
gold-kissed, radiant green eyes.

HORATIO
Such beautiful eyes... they
sparkle like emeralds, que no? You
know, it's crazy, nobody on either
side of the family has green eyes.
All the way back to my grandparents
and Dahlia's. Hector here once had
the balls to tell me he didn't
think she was mine. He said that
less than one percent of people
have eyes like hers. I Googled it
to make sure, but he was right, like
always. I mean, how could she be my
daughter and have eyes like that?

DAHLIA
Horatio, please baby-

HORATIO
Shut the fuck up!

Dahlia bites her lip as her own eyes well up.

HORATIO

I tried not to let it get to me, you know? But Hector, he's my oldest, closest friend. And he's always had this... way about him... he's always seen things that the rest of us couldn't. Known things. My abuelita called him "el diablo blanco". When we were growing up, getting into fights and shit, I thought it was funny. But as I grew older, wiser- let's just say if anybody else told me what Hector had that night, the outcome would have been very different. But he's my best friend, and he saw something real, and felt I needed to hear the truth. What do you think, Government Man?

A beat as all eyes turn to Parker...

PARKER

I think Hector might be hitting the dust a little hard.

Horatio chuckles, swallows the last of his medication and turns his attention to Ashley, who's trying her hardest to be brave. He removes her headphones.

HORATIO

I know that it shouldn't matter at this point. That a father's love shouldn't falter, no matter what.

(turns to Ashley)

But it would absolutely shatter my heart to find out I'd been lied to. I was there for your birth. I raised you as my own, I gave you everything... I even sent money every week when I was locked up.

PARKER

If only all children were so lucky.

Horatio, still staring at Ashley, and surprisingly choked up, ignores Parker and flicks the knife open, taking Ashley's trembling hand in his.

Parker locks eyes with her, gives her an almost imperceptible reassuring nod.

CLOSE ON: PARKER'S HANDS

as they grip his sanitizer tighter, nearly bursting.

HORATIO

But now, every time I look into those beautiful green eyes, it feels like I'm staring at a lie.

PARKER

Horatio... put the knife away and let me take you to your money.

Horatio is in his own world. He tightens his grip around Ashley's hand. She bursts out SOBBING.

DAHLIA

Horatio!

Dahlia goes to stand but Bruja comes up from behind and shoves her into her chair as Mago stands guard by the front door.

Horatio presses the knife's blade against Ashley's index finger.

HORATIO

(to Ashley)

It's okay, baby, you'll barely feel a thing...

PARKER

Don't do this, Horatio!

Parker moves forward, every instinct telling him to protect Ashley, but Hector digs his MP5 into his temple.

DAHLIA

(sobbing)

Please...

With a flick of his wrist, Horatio slices the tip of Ashley's finger open.

She SCREAMS and WHIMPERS.

PARKER

No!

DAHLIA

Horatio!

Blood trickles out of the cut and pools into the middle of the table as Ashley grabs her hand, CRYING.

HORATIO

I think I've found a way to put my mind at ease. To reassure myself that Ashley and I are bound by blood, like father and daughter ought to be.

Dahlia SOBS quietly as the gears in Parker's head turn.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - SAME

CLOSE ON a tuxedoed arm. It stuffs a rag into the gas tank of Hector's Land Cruiser, then reaches into a jacket pocket and removes a Zippo. It flicks the lighter open.

INT. PEREZ HOME - SAME

Horatio presses the blade against his own thumb and slowly cuts it open, watching the blood ooze out with a fascinated expression.

He locks eyes with Ashley, who holds her finger and SOBS.

HORATIO

Ever played blood brothers,
princesa?

Parker goes to stand but Hector once again shoves him down into his chair and burrows his gun into Parker's neck.

PARKER

Stop! Please! Listen to me...
listen, we can work this out.

Horatio looks at Parker, eyes wild, hair wild.

He grabs Ashley's delicate wrist with his bleeding hand and-

KABOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion RIPS through the living room, blowing the front door clean off its hinges and shattering a row of windows.

Mago, who was standing in the breezeway, is blown to smithereens.

Everyone else, who was in the kitchen, is spared. Horatio pulls his massive Taurus Casull from under the table and aims it at Parker.

Dahlia, bleeding from her ears, reaches across the table and grabs Ashley as they both cower, disoriented and in shock.

Parker looks around, blinking excessively, trying to shake clear. He bleeds from one of his ears as well.

HORATIO
(to Hector and Bruja)
FUCK! The fuck was that?!

Hector dusts himself off and Bruja follows him out the front door.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Hector and Bruja exit out the front door and see Hector's Land Cruiser engulfed in flames.

Marcus lies in wait behind the side of the house. He sees Hector walk out, tiptoes a few steps towards Hector's outer flank, draws a bead with his Benelli and-

BOOM!

Two for one. As Marcus flanks Hector, Bruja walks out and into Marcus' killbox.

He squeezes the trigger and sizzling hot buckshot rips through both of them like a chainsaw.

They fly forward onto their stomachs. Marcus racks his shotgun and a mammoth shell is jettisoned from its breech. Hector goes to turn around but-

BOOM!

His face explodes. Marcus pumps the shotgun again and rests the barrel on Bruja, who lies on the ground writhing and MOANING.

BOOM!

Her body lurches as he blows her insides out, point-blank.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Horatio shoots up out of his chair, backs up against the wall, and aims his Casull at the front door.

HORATIO
Hector! Bruja!

Marcus' silhouette glides into the open doorway, his shotgun raised.

Realizing there's no way to single out Horatio without possibly hitting Parker, Ashley, or Dahlia, he lowers his gun.

Horatio levels his aim on Marcus, but just as he's about to pop one off, Parker AIMS his sanitizer at Horatio, squeezes, squirting the alcohol into his eyes but-

Parker lunges, spearing him and pancaking him against the wall.

KA-DOON!

Horatio fires as he hits the wall. Marcus is hit in the shoulder and flies backwards, landing just outside the doorway.

Parker grabs Horatio's gun-hand and SLAMS it against the wall repeatedly. Dahlia cowers in the corner, holding Ashley tightly.

PARKER
(to Dahlia)
RUN, GOD DAMNIT!

EXT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Marcus slowly sits up. A chunk of his shoulder is blown off. He straightens his glasses and starts crawling over to his shotgun.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Dahlia and Ashley are frozen in fear.

PARKER
RUN!

Horatio's vision is blurred, his eyes still BURNING from the sanitizer, Parker struggling to keep him pinned to the wall but Horatio finds a nearby LAMP and-

WHACK!

Horatio wallops Parker across the head. Parker's legs buckle and Horatio attacks again-

WHOOOMPH!

Parker flies clear across the kitchen, slamming into the wall behind him and collapsing into a heap as-

Parker pulls himself up to his knees, regaining his balance but Horatio aims his gun and Parker, staring down the barrel of the Casull, locks eyes with him.

Horatio cocks the massive hammer and-

PARKER

You're gonna rot in hell for all eternity you sick, twisted-

KA-DOON! BOOM!

These happen literally a millisecond apart:

Horatio pulls the trigger, blowing a giant hole through Parker's chest as-

Marcus kisses Horatio with his Benelli, sending him flying through the air and SMASHING through the sliding glass door. Only his ankles and feet remain IN FRAME.

Marcus, the muzzle of his shotgun still smoking, and bleeding badly from his shoulder, stalks over to Parker.

Dahlia and Ashley follow suit. Dahlia wraps her hands around Parker's face and Ashley grabs his limp wrist.

ASHLEY

(crying)

Mr. Jode! Wake up! Mr. Jode!

EXT. PEREZ HOME - NIGHT

We slowly PULL BACK during a TIMELAPSE:

Ambulance lights. Police cars arrive and secure the scene. The coroner arrives. Corpses are wheeled out in body bags.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ASHLEY'S SCHOOL - DAY

It's spring in Detroit. Sweltering heat radiates off the asphalt.

Marcus, clutching a chain-link fence, watches from a distance as Dahlia picks Ashley up from school. Ashley runs over to her mother and jumps into her arms, knocking her over.

Dahlia, LAUGHING, grabs Ashley and begins tickling her and they collapse onto the grass. Both appear happy and carefree.

Marcus watches. Takes him a long moment before he finds a small SMILE, reassured his son's last fight was worth it.

He crosses the street, unbuttoning and removing his tuxedo jacket, walks around to the back of his Cutlass, pops the trunk open, and places his neatly folded jacket into it.

In the trunk is Marcus' Benelli, a pair of orchestra cymbals, and a bottle of brandy. He grabs the brandy, pours some onto the street as he gazes up at the clouds, then takes a hefty swig himself.

He walks around to the front of the car and gets in. His Cutlass ROARS to life and he drives off, disappearing back into the grimy underbelly of the Motor City.

Dahlia watches, hugs Ashley tighter than ever, her thoughts likely on the man who gave his life to save them.

FADE OUT.