"A WALK AMONG THE TOMBSTONES"

Screenplay by

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from the novel by

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REVISED
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BLACK

We hear the sound of A POLICE RADIO OVER. We then...

FADE IN:

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - MORNING

Two cops. The one behind the wheel is DANNY ORTIZ -- thirties, wrapped in a nice suit, pair of dark shades atop a shaved head.

ORTIZ
Anyway...
(shrugs)
That's all I gotta say.

He turns now to the passenger seat:

ORTIZ
Manana.

The other cop, MATT SCUDDER -- few years older with hair cut close, slept-in overcoat and no tie -- turns, looks right at us/CAMERA as he replies to his partner:

MATT
Fuck you.

He then opens his door and gets out of the car.

EXT. STREET - WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - SAME

As Matt kicks the car door closed with a heavy boot, then turns, doesn't look back as the car now pulls away into traffic. Matt crosses the street to a BAR.

INT. BAR - SAME

Dark. Empty. Dust motes float in sunlight that breaks from the open door as Matt enters. THE OWNER, a tubby, grey-haired man, straightens up from some chore behind the bar as Matt enters.

OWNER
Scudder.

Matt takes the owner's newspaper and heads straight for a booth in the back, sits down and starts to read. From the day's headlines, the sharper among us may pick up that we're several years back in time. We then...

CUT TO: A CLOSE UP OF THE TABLE

As a steaming CUP OF COFFEE is set down. Followed by first one, then two SHOTS OF BOURBON.

OWNER
You're welcome.

Matt dumps one shot into the coffee and takes a sip. He silently reads the paper while, behind the bar, the owner goes through his own morning routine of wiping down, stocking this and that. It's quiet in here. We HOLD ON MATT. Savor the peace. But then...

The door opens, spilling a wedge of light into the joint that, for an instant, illuminates half of Matt's face. He keeps on reading, reaches for that second shot glass while we hear...

VOICE
Kay passo, homie? Remember us?

And then sharp LAUGHTER. Followed by...

OWNER (OS)
Okay. Alright-- fuckin get outta here, botha you. I told you last night I--

Then BANG. **LOUD.** As A GUN GOES OFF -- shocks Matt, who drops the second shot glass onto the table and instinctively reaches for his own GUN, fumbles it clear of his holster, only to drop it onto the floor, the sound of it hitting the hardwood apparently getting one of the assholes over by the door looking this way, because just as Matt ducks down to pick up his lost weapon...

...A SHOTGUN BLAST blows away half the booth. Light spills in as once more the door swings open as TWO FIGURES get the fuck out of there while Matt slides out of the booth, his gun firmly in both hands now as he crosses the joint in a few quick steps, ignoring the cut down owner lying on his back behind the bar, floating in a sea of his own blood.

EXT. BAR - WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - SAME

As Matt steps outside and immediately fires his gun we WHIP PAN TO an old BONNEVILLE parked at the curb where TWO DOMINICAN BANGERS now sit while a THIRD dives into the backseat just as Matt yells...

MATT
Police--

...and then shoots the diving man several times before he's even halfway in the car, adrenaline and fear now overriding the booze.

The car starts away from the curb when Matt turns and shoots the driver once in the face, killing him just like that, but the car keeps rolling down the avenue, no one alive at the wheel anymore.

The guy in the passenger seat panics, fires wild with the shotgun, blowing a big hole through the roof as Matt's spent clip bounces off the sidewalk and he reaches into his coat for another, all the while keeping one eye on the last guy as he now jumps from the rolling Bonneville and takes off running like a banshee.

Matt runs down the sidewalk after him, passing the BONNEVILLE which jumps the sidewalk and rolls along wreaking its own havoc.

As Matt runs, adrenaline overrides everything including fear, as the guy starts firing wild shots over his shoulder with a pistol, puts a couple holes in Matt's flapping overcoat.

Matt returns a few shots of his own, but then stops, takes his time, and blows the guy off his feet just as he turns into an alley.

INT. ALLEY - SAME

We see Matt now walking up the alley. The thug crawling along, his leg roaring with blood. He gets up, Matt unceremoniously kicks him in the wound and the man screams, but keeps somehow pulling himself along like Matt's not even there. Determined...

The thug finally reaches out with a shaky hand for his GUN which had apparently slid away from him. Matt steps on his wounded leg. The banger screams once more and covers his head with his leather jacket. Matt crouches down, calmly pulls the jacket down and puts his gun to the banger's forehead.

MATT
Did you throw shots at me, asshole?

BANGER
(grabs one of the many gold crosses around his neck)
Please...

MATT
Did you?

And now Matt presses the gun into the man's forehead...

BANGER
I'm sorry--

MATT
Fuckin-A you are.

We hear A WOMAN SCREAM somewhere off in the street. Matt ignores the scream, cuffs the guy as we PUSH PAST MATT to the mouth of the alley, whatever chaos on the street beyond is washed out by bright light as we now...

FADE TO WHITE

MATT (VO)
I stopped drinking that day.

FADE IN: CLOSE-UP MATT - NOW

Weary, but still watchful. A stare that can still daunt the receiver.

MATT
It just wasn't as much fun after that.

We hear SOFT LAUGHTER at that, and now we...

WIDEN TO REVEAL: AN AA MEETING HALL

Matt stands at the microphone addressing the group.

MATT
I'm eight years sober. And... I... well, I guess, I'm just...

He stands there another moment. Nothing left to say.

MATT
That's all. Thanks.

Matt starts out of the room as A WOMAN makes her way to the mic.

WOMAN
My name is Denise, and I'm an alcoholic- addict...

MATT/EVERYONE
Hi, Denise!

As Matt walks out of the room, we see another MAN -- early thirties, long hair, faded, green army jacket over jeans and a sweatershirt -- get up and follow Matt out.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A light rain begins to fall as Matt hurries down the steps and pulls up his collar. He starts down the street, people taking one look at him and giving him plenty of room. He crosses the street, umbrellas opening up all around him. Now the MAN from the meeting exits the church, pensively watches Matt cross as we then...

CUT TO: VETERANS AVE. (BROOKLYN) PAYPHONE - NIGHT

Pouring rain. The payphone is RINGING as a black BMW jumps the curb and KENNY KRISTO -- forty, in a long leather duster, jeans and black boots, hurries out of the car, his door hanging open into the street as he runs and grabs the receiver...

KENNY
Hello?

VOICE (PHONE)
Where's the money?

KENNY
In the backseat, two bags like you said.

VOICE (PHONE)
Good. Now leave it, walk up Sixty-sixth Street to Avenue M.

Kenny looks around the neighborhood, the dark storefronts, but can't see anybody.

KENNY
And then what?

VOICE (PHONE)
Wait on the corner for five minutes, then walk back, get in your car and go home.

KENNY
What about my wife?

VOICE (PHONE)
She'll be in the car waiting for you.

EXT. STREET - TWO BLOCKS AWAY - NIGHT

As Kenny paces back and forth in the rain. He checks his watch, looks down the street. He then quickly starts walking back the way he came.

EXT. STREET - KENNY KRISTO'S CAR - NIGHT

As Kenny now runs to the car, whips the door open...

KENNY
Carrie!

But THE CAR IS EMPTY. He stands there a moment, looking around.

KENNY
Fuck this shit...

He takes out his keys and opens the trunk. It's empty as well. And now we hear THE PAYPHONE RING ACROSS THE STREET. He slams the trunk and runs to it. Picks it up...

VOICE (PHONE)
Go home. She'll probably get there before you do.

INT. KENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Decent art mixed with pricey antiques. We glimpse the panicked Kenny in a framed mirror as he bursts through the door.

KENNY
Carrie!

We clock more of the deluxe furnishings as he moves through the house. Black & white photographs of A WOMAN are everywhere...

KENNY
Carrie!

Kenny throws open a door, calls up the staircase. He knows she's not here. He stands there a moment, then suddenly PUTS HIS FIST THROUGH THE WALL. Then his OTHER FIST.

He sees himself in the MIRROR and smashes both of his hands against it, shattering the glass. Slicing his hands.

He stares up at a huge PORTRAIT OF HIS WIFE -- CARRIE -- that hangs above the fireplace. She's beautiful, dark, and young; no more than twenty-five-years-old. It's her image we see all over the walls.

KENNY
Oh, God... please...

THE PHONE RINGS. Kenny grabs it on the first ring.

KENNY
Where is she?!

VOICE (PHONE)
My apologies. There was a slight change in plans.

The CALLER ID BOX reads UNKNOWN CALLER. We can hear someone else LAUGHING in the b.g.

KENNY
Where *is* she?

VOICE (PHONE)
She's just around the corner from you, on, uh, Seventy-ninth Street. I believe it's the south side, three or four houses from the corner--

KENNY
What?

VOICE (PHONE)
There's a car parked illegally at a fire hydrant. A grey Ford Tempo. Your wife's in it.

KENNY
She's in the car?

VOICE (PHONE)
She's in the trunk.

KENNY
You put her in the trunk?

VOICE (PHONE)
Don't worry. There's plenty of air. But it's cold out tonight, so you'll want to get her out of there as soon as possible.

KENNY
Is there a key? How do I open the--

VOICE (PHONE)
The lock's broken. You won't need a key.

KENNY
If it's broken, why can't she--

The LINE GOES DEAD. Kenny drops the phone, looks at his hands, both covered with bloody cuts from the broken mirror.

EXT. SEVENTY-NINTH STREET - NIGHT

Where a battered Tempo sits parked at the curb. The windshield is starred and the passenger door is deeply dented. Kenny now moves INTO FRAME, approaches the trunk and hesitates -- THE LOCK IS MISSING ALTOGETHER. He flings the lid open and we...

CUT TO BLACK

As A CAR WIPES PAST and we now REVEAL:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Where Matt sits alone in a booth. The man from the AA meeting watches him a moment, then crosses the street and goes inside.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

As Matt folds back the newspaper, smiles at the waitress who refills his coffee cup. When she moves away, we hear:

VOICE
Hello, Matt.

And now Matt looks up and sees the man from the meeting standing there. Matt looks at him blankly. Doesn't know him from Adam.

MAN
It's me, Peter-- Peter Kristo.

MATT
Oh. Peter. Hi.
(then)
Do I know you, Peter?

PETER
I led a meeting a few weeks ago.
(explaining)
I'm a painter... got hooked on smack in Art School...

MATT
Yeah, you're the one, did the Jackson Pollack number on the wall a the john with the blood from your...

PETER
--syringe. Yeah, that was me.

MATT
I enjoyed your story.

PETER
Thanks.
(indicates the booth)
You mind...

MATT
Sure. Sit down.

Peter slides in and Matt watches Peter glance this way and that. He smiles nervously at the WAITRESS who appears.

PETER
Nothing for me, thanks.

MATT
Something wrong, Peter?

PETER
It's... my brother.
(then)
He needs your help.

MATT
What kind of help?

PETER
I think it would be better, you came out to Bay Ridge, we talked about it there.

MATT
Bay Ridge...

PETER
My brother'll pay for your cab out there and back. And your time. Whether you take the job or not.

Matt can see Peter's not in good shape. The guy can't sit still.

PETER
Please. Just hear what he has to say. That's all I'm asking.

Matt looks past Peter, watches as the waitress now comes out of the kitchen balancing a plate of food on her fingertips while she grabs a bottle of ketchup off the counter, and then heads this way.

MATT
Uh-huh, and when would your brother like to have this chat?

PETER
Right now.

Matt watches, somewhat sadly, as the waitress now sets down a steaming plate of STEAK & EGGS in front of him.

MATT
That's what I thought you were gonna say.

Matt puts some money on the table, takes one last look at the meal he's not gonna have.

MATT
It's faster, we take the subway.

EXT. SUBWAY - BAY RIDGE - NIGHT

We CRANE UP as Matt and Peter walk up from the subway and start off towards the nicer neighborhoods down closer to the water.

EXT. KENNY KRISTO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Matt starts up the walk, Peter hangs back on the sidewalk. Matt stops, turns back.

PETER
I'm gonna wait out here.

Matt looks at him.

PETER
It's all right. He's expecting you.

And now the door opens and we see Kenny Kristo standing there. He's wearing the same clothes from the night before, except that now he's barefoot and his right hand is bandaged. Matt watches now as he and Peter look at each other a moment, before Peter finally turns away.

KENNY
Mr. Scudder. Come in.

INT. KENNY KRISTO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Matt comes inside, Kenny extends his hand.

KENNY
Kenny Kristo. Thank you for coming.

He moves away from the door.

KENNY
Can I get you something to drink? Not a *drink* drink. I know you know Peter from AA, but there's coffee made or I can offer you a soda…

Matt sees a pile of BROKEN GLASS in a corner. An overturned chair. A broken lamp, looks like it was thrown against the wall.

MATT
Coffee's fine.

As Kenny pours a cup, Matt looks through the doorway, can see that the entire house is a mess, looks like it's been tossed.

KENNY
So, you're a private detective, is that right?

MATT
Unlicensed.

KENNY
What's that mean?

MATT
It means that sometimes I do favors for people and sometimes in return they give me gifts.

KENNY
Gifts. Uh-huh. But you used to be a cop, right?

MATT
I was with the Sixth Precinct in the village for a while, and before that I was over here with the Seventy-fifth.

KENNY
So why'd you quit?

MATT
I didn't like the hours.

KENNY
What, the corruption get to you?

MATT
Not really. It would've been hard to support my family without it. What can I do for you, Kenny?

Kenny considers Matt a long moment.

KENNY
This was really my brother's idea, bringing you out here.

MATT
You want, I can leave.

Kenny glances at the portrait above the fireplace, then...

KENNY
Someone's kidnapped my wife.

MATT
(beat)
That's a federal matter.

KENNY
They said not to call the police.

MATT
Naturally, they would. When did this happen?

KENNY
Yesterday.

MATT
You should be talking to the FBI.

KENNY
I'm talking to you.

MATT
Look, Mr. Kristo--

KENNY
Kenny.

MATT
Look, Kenny, if you're asking me to run a bag, deliver money, that's not something I--

KENNY
I already paid them.

MATT
(beat)
When?

KENNY
Last night.

MATT
How much?

KENNY
Four hundred thousand.

And now Matt cuts a look at that portrait.

MATT
And your wife?

KENNY
She's dead.

Matter of fact. No emotion. Kenny takes a breath.

KENNY
I paid them, but they killed her anyway.

MATT
I see. And I'm sorry.

KENNY
I don't want you to be sorry. I want you to find the men who did it, bring them to me.

Matt looks at the portrait once more.

MATT
You say you paid them the four hundred the same day?

KENNY
That's right.

And now Matt levels his gaze at Kenny.

MATT
You mind I ask, what kind of business you're in, Kenny?

KENNY
Construction.

MATT
What exactly do you construct?

KENNY
Houses.

MATT
Uh-huh. And I guess Peter's standing outside in the rain right now because he -- what, doesn't like your building methods?

KENNY
He doesn't approve of my profession.

MATT
Since when is drug dealing a profession?

Kenny just looks back at him. Matt smiles.

MATT
I mean, that's the reason, isn't it, I'm sitting here and not the cops? You're a dealer?

Kenny considers Matt a moment, clears his throat, then...

KENNY
Properly speaking, I'm more of a trafficker than a dealer. You understand the distinction?

MATT
I really don't give a shit one way or the other. But whoever it was, took your wife didn't just pick your name out of a hat. They must've had some idea you had that kinda cash on hand.

KENNY
That's exactly what I'd like you to find out. Who... did this.

Kenny reaches into a bag, tosses TWO BRICKS OF CASH onto the table in front of Matt.

KENNY
That's ten thousand dollars. Consider it my "gift" to you.

Matt looks at it, but leaves it where it is.

KENNY
You get another ten, you find the two fucks who killed her.

MATT
So that you can kill <u>them</u>.

Kenny says nothing, just looks back at Matt.

MATT
(gets up)
I'm sorry, but I can't help you.

EXT. KENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Matt walks down the walk to where Peter leans against a car, nervously smoking a cigarette.

MATT
Would've been nice, you told me your brother's a fucking drug dealer.

PETER
You wouldn't've come.

MATT
You're right.

And with that, Matt starts down the sidewalk.

EXT. A RESIDENTIAL HOTEL - NIGHT

Midtown. One of those places has a little neighborhood bar attached. Matt crosses through the rain to the lobby.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

As Matt enters, HOWIE, the desk clerk -- twenties, pierced ear, nose and eyebrows -- tips back in A WHEELCHAIR as he feverishly works the controls for *Grand Theft Auto IV*, the game running on the TV stashed behind the counter. As he pulls his headphones off, we can hear KORN blasting away at 100 dbs.

MATT
Howie.
(indicates the chair)
Hurt yourself?

HOWIE
(pops a wheelie)
Found it out back by the dumpster. Mrs. Dahlgren in 202 left it there when Mr. D stroked out last week.

Matt tries not to shake his head, give any kind of reaction to that one at all. Instead, he smiles the best he can and asks:

MATT
Any messages?

Howie rolls over to the message boxes, then stands up out of the chair to reach Matt's box on the top row, takes down a slip and squints at it.

HOWIE
Sol Edwards.

Howie hands Matt the slip, sits back down in the wheelchair.

MATT
Sol Edwards...

HOWIE
He said he was a cop, but I think the guy was fucking with me.

MATT
Sol Edmunds?

HOWIE
Could be. I was watching *Dragonball* and could've maybe heard wrong. But anyways...
(pops another wheelie)
He said to call him at some hospital.

MATT
Some hospital?

HOWIE
Westland or Westside. One of those.

MATT
Which is it, Howie? One's on Long Island. The other one's in Harlem.

HOWIE
(shrugs)
Guess you'll just have to call 'em both.

MATT
Howie, you gotta write this stuff down.

Howie turns back to his game. Matt shakes his head, moves to the elevator, then turns and looks back at Howie.

MATT
Why'd you think he wasn't for real?

Howie looks up. Huh?

MATT
You said the guy told you he was a cop, but you thought he was fucking with you.

HOWIE
Oh, not about that, about your son.

MATT
(stops the elevator door)
My what?

HOWIE
Yeah, that's what I said-- no way Scudder's got a fucking kid!

INT. HOSPITAL E.R. - NIGHT

As an AMBULANCE pulls up, the doors burst open and the ATTENDANTS OFFLOAD what looks like a GUNSHOT VICTIM. Matt slips past them, grabs the first NURSE he sees.

MATT
My name's Scudder. My son is--

VOICE
Matt...

He turns as a young uniformed cop approaches, hand extended.

COP
Sol Edmunds.

He sees the look on Matt's face and smiles.

COP/SOL
You thought it was my old man called... He's dead, five years now. Colon cancer. Shit he ate, it's no wonder--

MATT
About my son--

SOL
Oh, yeah, he's okay, a little banged up is all. He's right over here...

Matt hesitates, then starts to follow the cop down a row of curtained-off beds...

MATT
Which one is it, Mike or Andy?

The cop looks at him.

MATT
The message I got was a little vague.

SOL
It's Michael. He and a buddy borrowed a car, took it for a ride until they ran a red light, bounced off a sanitation truck into a basketball hoop at Linney Park.

MATT
They hit anybody?

SOL
They were lucky. It was after dark, nobody's around.

Sol leads Matt, stops, pulls back a curtain and we see a SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY lying on a gurney, eyes closed, a gauze bandage on his forehead, an ace around his wrist. Matt stares at him...

SOL
They got him sedated.

Matt moves around the gurney, stares down at the kid lying on the bed.

MATT
You call his mother?

COP
My partner did, but she was up in Nyack. At a wedding or something. That's when I remembered the name, and thought how many Matt Scudders could there be--

Matt turns away from the boy, uncomfortable. The cop misreads this.

SOL
Don't worry. He's gonna be fine. And me and my partner, we're not makin' a thing.

The kid opens his eyes. Blinks at Matt.

KID
Who are you?

MATT
Matt.
(then)
Your father.

And now the kid sits up.

KID
Am I dying?

EXT. LONG ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Middle class. A TAXI moves up the street, stops in front of a well kept home.

INT. TAXI - SAME

Matt and Michael in the back. The kid has a bandage on his head.

MICHAEL
You used to have a mustache.

Matt turns to his son.

MICHAEL
And your hair's a lot longer. That's probably why I didn't recognize you--

MATT
No problem.
(indicates the cut)
How you feeling?

MICHAEL
I got a rippin' headache.

They sit there a moment. Matt looks off at the house.

MATT
You repainted the house.

MICHAEL
Jerry did.
(then)
Four years ago.

They sit there in silence a moment, neither knowing what to say.

MICHAEL
You know, I don't remember you being drunk.

MATT
(beat)
That's because I never was.
(then)
But I was always drinking.

MICHAEL
What, like scotch?

MATT
Bourbon mostly. With coffee.

MICHAEL
(nods)
Coffee to speed things up. Bourbon to slow them down.

MATT
Something like that, yeah.

MICHAEL
It was vodka did it to me.

Matt doesn't move. The kid looks around the cab.

MICHAEL
I'd pitch nine innings drunk off my ass and no one would know.

And now Michael looks him in the eye.

MICHAEL
I've been going to meetings. A year now.

Matt says nothing. Barely nods.

MICHAEL
Today, the thing with the car... I uh, I slipped.

MATT
It happens.
(then)
Have you got a sponsor?

MICHAEL
No. I mean, I did, but... he's not sober anymore.

Matt takes a breath, then takes a risk:

MATT
You could call me.
(then)
If you wanted to.

MICHAEL
Are we allowed to do that?

MATT
Allowed? You're my son.

The kid looks at Matt, then turns and looks out the window.

MICHAEL
You remember the Blumes across the street?

MATT
(looks)
The old couple. Sure. Max... and what was her name, Jane?

MICHAEL
Joy.

MATT
Joy. Right. What about them?

MICHAEL
Remember how you look in their windows, they'd be sitting on the couch in front of the TV, each one hooked up to their own oxygen tank.

MATT
The truck came twice a week.

MICHAEL
Max finally died a couple years ago.

Matt nods, not all that sure where this is going, but enjoying the reminiscing nonetheless; glad for his son's apparent effort to reconnect. He doesn't want to jeopardize it, so he keeps his mouth shut.

MICHAEL
Few weeks after that, I see Joy out in the garden. Working. Pushing a wheelbarrow. No oxygen tank. A month later she's going to yoga class with Mom. A year later, she meets some guy and moves down to Ft. Lauderdale with him. We got a Christmas card, picture of her and the guy swimming with the dolphins.

Matt tries to smile as he says this next thing:

MATT
You're telling me you don't need me.

MICHAEL
I'm telling you maybe I never did. So maybe you don't have to feel so guilty about, you know, walking out.

Before Matt can even react to that, they're bathed in LIGHT for just a moment as A CAR PULLS INTO THE DRIVEWAY.

MICHAEL
Shit.

He watches as JERRY, his stepfather and ANITA, Matt's ex-wife, get out of the car. They both look towards the cab. Anita is dressed up, put together and pretty. She starts coming this way.

ANITA
Michael?

MICHAEL
What am I gonna say to her?

Before Matt can answer, Anita opens the door.

ANITA
My God, sweetie, are you all right? I was so--

She stops cold as she sees Matt lean into the light.

ANITA
Matthew.

And now her husband steps up behind her.

MATT
I gave him a lift home.

ANITA
How did you--

MATT
It was a mistake. The uniform thought-- well, when he couldn't get a hold of you, he called me.

ANITA
A mistake?

MATT
He didn't know the... situation.

She looks at her son, at Matt, and just gives a tired nod.

ANITA
All right, well, thank you for bringing him home.

Matt couldn't feel smaller as Michael now gets out of the cab.

MICHAEL
Yeah, thanks for the ride.

Matt nods, holds out his hand.

MATT
Good luck, Michael.

MICHAEL
(shakes it)
You too, Dad.

She looks at her son, touches the bandage as she leads him towards the house. Matt watches for a moment, then turns and faces front.

MATT
(to the driver)
Go ahead.

INT. MATT'S HOTEL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

As Matt gets off the elevator, starts up the hall, we TRACK with him as he starts for his room. Matt slows down as he sees KENNY KRISTO now sits slumped on the floor beside Matt's door.

KENNY
I never told you her name.

He looks up at Matt, his eyes red, his face warped with grief.

KENNY
I don't want you to think I'm cruel or don't care. I just can't say it.

Matt crouches down beside him.

MATT
What happened?

We HEAR A PHONE RING OVER...

INT. KENNY KRISTO'S LIBRARY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

As Kenny naps on the leather couch, book open across his chest. The PHONE RINGS until he stirs, sits up and reaches for it...

KENNY
Hello?

MAN'S VOICE (PHONE)
(in the background, singing)
Hey, Carrie Anne...

KENNY
Hello.

Laughter. Then we hear a different man. Voice low and coarse.

MAN (PHONE)
She never came home, right?

KENNY
Excuse me?

THE OTHER MAN (PHONE)
(in the background)
What's your game? Can anybody play?

CUT TO: A MAN'S LIPS

Blurry, distorted, in tight CLOSE-UP...

FIRST MAN
We got your wife, fucko.

INT. KENNY KRISTO'S LIBRARY - DAY

As the LINE GOES DEAD and Kenny hangs up and gets to his feet. On the wall behind him are framed diplomas from the University of Wisconsin and UC Berkley for degrees in Philosophy and History.

KENNY
Carrie!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

As Kenny quickly crosses the spotless room to the stairs.

KENNY
Baby? You up there?

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

As Kenny lifts the garage door, sees the car is gone. We can hear the phone RINGING INSIDE...

INT. HOUSE - SAME

As Kenny comes back inside, the PHONE RINGING. Kenny looks at the CALLER ID box; it reads PAYPHONE followed by a NUMBER. He picks up the phone, writes the number on his palm...

KENNY
What do you want?

CUT TO: A BLURRY IMAGE OF A MAN

This voice calmer, more cultured than the first guy who called. A well-trimmed goatee frames a doughy mouth. He chuckles. A lot.

SECOND MAN
I want to help you get your wife back. If you want her back, that is.

KENNY
Of course I want her--

SECOND MAN
Then stay close to the phone. And please don't call the police. I'll be in touch. Very soon...

INT. KENNY KRISTO'S HOUSE - DAY

And again the line goes dead. Kenny hangs up the phone, starts pacing the room. He stops in front of the MIRROR, takes a deep breath to calm himself. He closes, then opens his eyes and...

His expression goes from panic to resolve as he turns from the mirror and sits down in a chair next to the phone. It doesn't take long for it to RING. The CALLER ID box reads: PAYPHONE. Kenny lets it ring once more, then calmly answers the phone.

KENNY
Just tell me how much you want?

SECOND MAN
(beat)
What does your wife weigh, Mr. Kristo? One ten, one twenty, somewhere in that neighborhood? Something like... fifty kilograms we might say?

Kenny doesn't answer.

SECOND MAN
So let's see, fifty keys at twenty a key, well, run the numbers for me, why don't you. Comes to a mil, doesn't it?

KENNY
What's the point?

SECOND MAN
The point is you'd pay a million for her if she was product, Mr. Kristo. You'd pay that much if she was powder. Isn't she worth as much in flesh and blood?

KENNY
I can't pay what I don't have.

SECOND MAN
How much do you have?

KENNY
(beat)
Four hundred.

SECOND MAN
Five.

KENNY
I'm not haggling. I gave you the top figure right away. It's four hundred.

SECOND MAN
(beat)
Ah, well, if that's the best you can do. Four hundred it is.

KENNY
Before I give you anything, I want to make sure my wife is all right.

SECOND MAN
That's impossible. I'm at a payphone.

KENNY
How do I even know you've got her in the first place?

SECOND MAN
(beat)
Are you familiar with her tits?

KENNY
Excuse me?

SECOND MAN
They're quite nice. Would you recognize one of them? That would be the simplest way. I'll cut off the one with the pretty mole and leave it on your doorstep. Would that put your mind at rest?

KENNY
Jesus, don't say that.

SECOND MAN
Then let's not talk about proof, okay?
(then)
Put the money in two hefty bags. Go to the phone booth on the corner of Ocean Avenue and Farragut Road and wait for my call.

INT. MATT'S ROOM - DAWN

Sun-faded carpet. Pressboard furniture. A small kitchenette. To describe the room as *monastic* would be to infuse the place with too much cheer.

Kenny sits at the table staring into a cup of coffee. Matt stands at the window, listening to the story. The TV is on (it's always on). The sound muted.

KENNY
They run me around. Then finally tell me she's at home waiting for me. I go home, she's not there either.

He looks up at Matt. This next part's hard...

KENNY
Phone rings again. They send me over to Seventy-ninth Street, tell me she's in the trunk of this abandoned car...

EXT. SEVENTY-NINTH STREET - NIGHT

As Kenny moves around to the trunk. No lock at all.

KENNY
Carrie?

He stands there a moment and flings the lid open.

KENNY
No...

INSIDE THE TRUNK

Are dozens of PACKAGES. Bundles of various sizes wrapped in BLACK PLASTIC and secured with duct tape.

KENNY
No, no, no...

He grabs one of the parcels from the trunk, takes a jackknife from his pocket and cuts away the tape...

KENNY
No, no, no...

A bit of BLOOD runs from the packet and he quickly drops it back into the trunk and starts backing away as he now notices several thin streams of BLOOD running from many of the bundles...

A HIGH ANGLE OF KENNY KRISTO

As he throws his head back and cries out like a gutshot animal, the rain falling all around him like knives as he crumples.

INT. MATT'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kenny sits at the table, trying to keep hold of himself.

KENNY
That's not even the worst part.

Matt looks at him as he pulls something from his pocket.

KENNY
This was taped to the inside of the trunk.

He sets a MICRO CASSETTE TAPE down on the table.

KENNY
With a note said, *For your listening pleasure.*

Kenny takes a small recorder from his other pocket and inserts the tape. He looks up at Matt. We hear nothing for a moment. Just silence...

And then, gradually, we become aware of the sound of BREATHING. A man's hurried, excited breaths. And then, a WHIMPER. Then:

VOICE
SHHHHH...

And then more breathing. The breaths become more hurried, not louder, just faster, and then a long, raspy sigh. A chuckle. Then...

VOICE
My turn...
(singing)
Hey, Carrie Anne...
(whisper)
You wanna kiss me? Hm?
(then)
Here, let's take the tape off.

And now we hear the sound of tape being pulled off skin. More sounds of raspy breathing. Movement. The van shifting on its springs.

Matt looks at Kenny. He's turned away from the table now. We then hear another, horrible sound: A TOOL BOX IS OPENED.

CARRIE (VO)
No--

But her voice is stifled, as if something covered her mouth.

VOICE (VO)
(singing)
Hey, Carrie-Anne...

And now we can hear CARRIE SCREAM. But it's then cut off, as if someone shut off the recorder. Kenny stares at the recorder in front of him, the sprockets turning. Until Matt shuts it off.

MATT
(finally)
I'll find them.

EXT. SEVENTY-NINTH STREET - DAY

The SUN is out now as Matt walks over to the curb where the Tempo was parked, bends down and picks up a shred of torn plastic from a bush. A piece of grey DUCT TAPE is still stuck to it.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

As Matt crosses to the booth where Kenny got his first call. He goes inside, takes out his notebook and writes down the number.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - FLATBUSH - DAY

As Matt does the same thing at the second booth. As he's writing down the number, THE PHONE RINGS and Matt looks at it, then picks up.

MATT
Hello?

But the line goes dead. Matt then steps out of the booth, looks at the neighborhood around it. Looks at the storefronts, at the houses up the side street. A group of kids play in the street.

EXT. D'AGOSTINO'S - DAY

As Matt talks to a BAG BOY.

BAG BOY
She tipped me two dollars,

QUICK CUT TO: THAT DAY

As the Bag Boy shuts the trunk of a car to reveal Carrie Kristo smiling at him, holding out a couple of bills.

BAG BOY (VO)
...which is twice what anybody else tips, if they even tip at all.

CUT BACK TO: MATT AND THE BAG BOY

As Matt looks at the street...

MATT
You said something about a van?

BAG BOY
Yeah, it was parked right there.

QUICK CUT TO: THAT DAY

A BLURRY IMAGE of A VAN parked at the curb. We move past it and see...

BAG BOY (VO)
Two guys got out of it...

TWO MEN in coveralls, some kind of uniform, dark sunglasses looking at a clipboard. The men are moving in FAST MOTION as they get out of the van, then the images SLOW as they stop and look at Carrie...

BAG BOY (VO)
I remember they checked her out pretty good. They were both dressed the same in some kind of uniform...

CUT BACK TO: MATT & THE BAG BOY

As the Bag Boy points...

BAG BOY
They pulled out after Mrs. Kristo, right in front of a Mercedes, almost got hit.

CUT TO: THE STREET

As we see the van pull out in FAST MOTION, then FREEZE as we hear A HORN honk and a Mercedes stops inches from the van.

CUT BACK TO: MATT & THE BAG BOY

MATT
You remember what the van looked like?

BAG BOY
Yeah, it was light blue...

QUICK CUT TO: A GARAGE - RIGHT NOW

Dark, but we can see TWO MEN in here, with SPRAY GUNS, PAINTING THE VAN. WHITE.

BAG BOY (VO)
Definitely light blue.

INT. D'AGOSTINO'S - DAY

As Matt shows Carrie's photograph to a CASHIER.

CASHIER
I could tell she was a good cook, which is rare for young women her age. Nothing frozen her cart, only the very freshest ingredients. Anyway, she asked me if we had any foul madamas and I sent her over to the Arabian Gourmet.

EXT. ARABIAN GOURMET - DAY

As Matt talks to a man wearing a nametag that says "ROLAND" and below that "MANAGER."

MANAGER
Yeah, the van was parked across the street. I thought they were making a delivery...

INT. ARABIAN GOURMET - DAY

As Matt talks to a TEENAGE CASHIER...

TEENAGE CASHIER
I don't remember any van, but I do remember Mrs. Youness came in with some story about three people robbing the place...

INT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

As Matt sits at a table, some sort of STICKY DESSERT in front of him. He's talking with MRS. YOUNESS, a woman in her eighties. She speaks in Arabic. A NEIGHBOR translates...

NEIGHBOR
She saw two men and a woman run across the street away from the store...

EXT. ARABIAN GOURMET - (FLASHING BACK)

As we see two BLURRED FIGURES rush Carrie Kristo across the street...

NEIGHBOR (VO)
...and leap into a truck.

As they all pile into the back of the van and the van blows right by CAMERA... the FRAME REVEALING MRS. YOUNESS watching it squeal around the corner...

NEIGHBOR (VO)
She thought they had just robbed the store...

EXT. D'AGOSTINO'S - DAY

As Matt scribbles in his notebook...

BAG BOY
I think it had the name of some TV repair place on the side. Two initials like...

INT. GARAGE - DAY

As the two men paint over the stencil on the side of the truck.

BAG BOY (VO)
B & R TV...

EXT. ARABIAN GOURMET

As the manager closes his eyes...

MANAGER
R & L Stereo.

INT. THE SMALL HOUSE - DAY

As Mrs. Youness looks right at Matt, says in English...

OLD WOMAN
B & A Appliance.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

As the TWO MEN step back and admire the freshly painted truck. It's now PAINTED WHITE with no initials anywhere. One man is short and round, the other quite tall, well over six feet. They stand with their backs to us. We see no faces just yet.

DISSOLVE TO:

A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

As it's scroll-popped into FRAME. A microfiche slide. BROOKLYN WOMAN KIDNAPPED. A photo of a pretty African-American woman. We get the quick gist through either the sub-head or the first few lines that the woman was returned safely and we then...

WIDEN TO REVEAL:

INT. THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

As Matt, the rain beating against the window beside him, sits at a microfiche station scrolling through old editions of the *New York Times*. He scrolls through the year old newspaper...

We hear SOMEONE COUGHING OS. Matt stops to read another story. Another one like the previous: "WOMAN KIDNAPPED." We hear MORE COUGHING OS and Matt turns and looks at...

A NEARBY TABLE

Where someone, back to us/Matt, bundled up in a down jacket leans over a piece of paper, intensely working on something. Dozens of pages are scattered about the table. The person COUGHS once more, then resumes his frantic scribbling. The LIBRARIAN comes over to the table, puts her hands on her huge hips...

LIBRARIAN
I'd like a word with you, TJ. Over here, please.

Matt goes back to the machine, scrolls on as we then go to...

EXT. BRIGHTON BEACH STREET - DAY

POURING RAIN. An attractive WOMAN, in her early thirties, driving a big black Mercedes, stops for a red light.

INT. MERCEDES - SAME

RAIN POUNDS the roof of the car as the woman adjusts the rearview mirror to check her lipstick. She starts to HUM.

IN THE MIRROR, we see THE GRILLE OF A WHITE VAN pull up behind her. On the seat beside her, a DOG, a Rhodesian Ridgeback, raises its head and looks out. Smelling something...

MATT (VO)
Marie Gotteskind...

QUICK CUT TO: A VACANT LOT - NIGHT

As several GARBAGE BAGS are tossed from the back of a van. We then FREEZE and PULL OUT FROM...

CLOSE-UP OF NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPH

A VACANT LOT. COPS are everywhere. SEVERAL GARBAGE BAGS STREWN ABOUT, A LENGTH OF CRIME SCENE TAPE STRETCHED BETWEEN TWO NARROW BUILDINGS that border the lot on either side.

REVEAL: INT. LIBRARY - DAY

As Matt studies another article.

LIBRARIAN (OS)
I know you've been sleeping in here, TJ...

Behind Matt, the librarian chews out the figure in the jacket.

ON THE PHOTOGRAPH

As we MOVE DOWN to where the caption below the photograph reads "*THE REMAINS OF MARIE GOTTESKIND...*" etc

LIBRARIAN (OS)
I know because Mr. Keyser says you left a God awful mess in the men's room, not to mention the mess you left right there.
(then)
Now, I want you to --

MATT
He'll clean it up. Later. Okay?

The Librarian looks over at Matt who, his back to her, calmly pulls a sheet of paper from the printer...

MATT
Right now he's helping me with something.

She looks at Matt, moves on. And now the coughing person turns and looks this way, his hood falling to his shoulder so that we see. A BOY -- black, fifteen, skinny, intelligent eyes -- turns and looks at the screen.

BOY/TJ
Child of God.

Matt turns and looks at the kid who indicates the photo.

TJ
The name, *Gotteskind.* Means *Child of God.* It's German.

MATT
Huh...
(looks at the screen)
TJ? That short for something?

TJ
Yeah, it's short for TJ.

Matt keeps his eyes on the screen, holds out his hand.

MATT
Matt.

TJ
Short for Matthew.
(sits down)
What am I helping you with, Matthew?

INT. THE WHITE VAN - DAY

Two dark figures inside. Staticky voices come from A POLICE RADIO as they follow the Mercedes. The MAN in the passenger seat, round and short, has a worn FILE open in his lap. He peruses it...

INSERT - FILE

A long lens surveillance shot of a black Mercedes. The same black Mercedes they now follow.

ROUND MAN
It's raining, it's pouring...

He HUMS the rest of it as he now flips through the file. The TALL MAN behind the wheel snaps his gum, blows a bubble. The ROUND MAN frowns at him, turns back to...

THE FILE

Where we see pictures of a BALD MAN coming out of a CLUB with several other men, the name of the club is written in RUSSIAN.

Another blurry photograph shows A WOMAN -- presumably the one in the car in front of us, pregnant -- standing beside the Russian Man, holding his hand. The Round Man now looks up from the file at the car in front of them.

ROUND MAN
...bumped his head against the bed and couldn't get up in the morning...

He clutches the file to his chest, so that we see the DEA INSIGNIA on the front.

TJ (VO)
So these guys we looking for, they be like real seven-thirty, or just like thugs?

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

As TJ now sits at the microfiche machine beside Matt scrolling away. TJ's jacket is now draped over the back of the chair. He wears a *skullie* on his head and a wuwear T-shirt, an animated character on the front that looks a lot like TJ.

MATT
Like real what?

TJ
Seven-thirty. Time they give out the meds in the mental ward.

MATT
Ah, right. *Seven-thirty*. From the Latin *mental*. I don't know. Just keep on looking.

TJ
Be easier, you go upstairs to the computer room, *google* this shit.

MATT
Yeah, well, I'm not really big on... *googling*.

TJ cuts a look at Matt.

TJ
You five-oh?

MATT
Nope.

TJ
Cuz you got that look.

MATT
I work private.

TJ
Yeah? Like Sam Spade?

MATT
Yeah, just like him.

The Librarian looks over at them as they continue scrolling side-by-side. After another moment...

TJ
What I'm sayin, I've read about him. And Marlowe, too. All them guys.

MATT
You spend much time in here?

TJ
Some. When it rains. I like the sound it makes, you know?

Matt looks at the kid. Something more to him than meets the eye. TJ stops scrolling, sits back and shakes his head.

TJ
Huh. How ironical.

MATT
What's that?

TJ
Dumpin' an already dead body in a cemetery.

INSERT - SCREEN

A black & white photograph of the huge, stone entrance to GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY. Several NYPD blue & whites parked out front.

TJ
Tuesday, the body of Leila Alvarez, a twenty-year-old Interior Design major at Brooklyn College was found at Green-Wood Cemetery.

QUICK CUT TO: A GARBAGE BIN

As a MAN in a tight t-shirt and pierced eyebrow lifts the lid to throw away some old flowers, takes one look inside and SCREAMS...

TJ (VO)
Alvarez had been missing two days when Eduardo Solomon, a florist across the street from the cemetery found what was later identified as a portion of the victim's leg in the dumpster behind his shop...

QUICK CUT TO: THE CEMETERY

As the GROUNDSKEEPER, his back to us, wades out into the water with a RAKE, reaches for THE POWDER BLUE GARBAGE BAGS that float on the surface.

TJ (VO)
That same day more human remains were found in more garbage bags scattered about the cemetery.

QUICK CUT TO: A STREET

As LEILA ALVAREZ gets into the back of a van, the DOOR SLAMS and we see A MAN'S FACE in the window of one of the doors.

TJ (VO)
Witnesses say Alvarez was last seen getting into a grey van with three men...

BACK TO THE LIBRARY

As Matt leans over and looks at the screen where we see a photo of a MAN standing out front of an apartment building, an awning above his head reads "THE WINDSOR ARMS." He's surrounded by cops...

MATT
Alvarez' fiancée, Reuben Quintana, told police that he and Leila were supposed to meet for lunch, but she never showed...

TJ
So what, I get a badge now?

MATT
Yeah, and a decoder ring.

TJ watches as Matt now prints out the page.

MATT
I'm gonna go get something to eat. You want a hamburger or something?

TJ
I don't eat meat.

MATT
Oh. Okay. Nice meeting you, TJ.

TJ watches as Matt gets his things together.

TJ
What I'm sayin, I don't care none about cows, you know, I just care about what I put inside my body. No meat. No soda. No Pringles. None a that shit.

Matt nods, grabs his coat, starts to go.

TJ
But... I was thinking about maybe getting a little eat on myself.

MATT
All right. So we can both get our... eat on's together.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - NIGHT

As the Mercedes pulls into the driveway. The woman gets out of the car, grabs a couple of grocery bags, and then leads the big DOG to the front door.

As she goes inside, THE WHITE VAN cruises past the townhouse to the end of the block, then makes a u-turn and doubles back, parking across the street. A WHITE FACE appears in the driver's window.

INT. VAN - SAME

As the two men watch the house. We hear the crackle of the police radio under the Round Man's constant HUMMING.

The Tall Man behind the wheel works on a LOOP of PIANO WIRE. He slips a wood handle on the bottom, looks through the loop at the house... his face is framed by it...

He watches the woman THROUGH THE LOOP as she comes back out and grabs a last grocery bag. He then pulls on the wood handle and the loop CONSTRICTS TO NOTHING.

MATT (VO)
Where do you sleep?

INT. "THE FLAME" COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

TJ wolfs down a plate of pancakes. Matt, a cup of coffee in front of him, watches him.

The kid's drawings are scattered all over the table. Periodically, he picks up a stub of a pencil and absently sketches something.

MATT
...those nights you can't hide in the library?

TJ
I got a bed over at Covenant House. This shelter over at Times Square.

MATT
What happened to your parents?

TJ
(beat)
You don't gotta feel sorry for me.

MATT
I don't.

TJ
Good.

TJ sits back in the booth now.

TJ
You could hire me, though, make me your partner.

MATT
I don't think so.

TJ
Why not? You don't think I got what it takes, be a good detective?

MATT
I'm sure you do. I'm just not the partner type.

TJ nods, goes back to eating, pauses...

TJ
What does it take to be a good detective?

MATT
A strong bladder.

TJ
Come on.

MATT
I don't know what it takes. Takes a lot of things. Instincts. Patience. Blind luck mostly.

TJ
And a good name. One with real flavor. Like Sam Spade or Phillip Marlowe.

MATT
What's wrong with the name you got?

TJ waves him off, looks out the window a moment, then...

TJ
I'm thinking something like maybe...
Daunte Culpepper.

MATT
Quarterback for Minnesota?

TJ
Yeah. It's a good detective name,
but a lame-ass name for a guy plays
football.

MATT
Daunte Culpepper.

TJ
Daunte Culpepper. Private Eye.
(then)
Yeah, I'm feelin' that.

WAITRESS
Sure you don't want a soda or
something, honey?

TJ looks up at her.

TJ
I know you'd just love to get a young
black man like me to drink one of
your sperm killer sodas. But no
thank you, ma'am. I'll stick with
water.

TJ sees Matt looking at him and leans across the table.

TJ
They sell cheap sodas to low income
people, got these chemicals in 'em.
Sterilize you. I only drink water.
Gallon a day. Keep myself hydrated.

MATT
And you don't eat meat.

TJ
You got a problem with that?

MATT
Not at all. My ex-wife was a
vegetarian.

TJ
So what happened? Why'd you split
up? She a clucker?

MATT
A what?

TJ
A chicken. Only feels cats give her nice rings and shit. You ain't bling blingin, you ain't nothin'.

MATT
(beat)
Can't you fucking speak English?

TJ
I hit a nerve. Sorry. What time is it?

MATT
Almost ten.

TJ
Shit, I gotta go. Covenant House closes at ten...

TJ shoves his drawings into his backpack.

TJ
Thanks for the pancakes.

And he bolts out of there. Matt watches him go, then looks to the table where TJ LEFT SOME OF HIS DRAWINGS. Matt picks one up...

INSERT - DRAWING

A mythological figure with a cape, holding raised sword, a half-moon or sickle-shaped symbol on his chest. It's a beautiful rendering. The eyes on the figure are intense and intelligent. Like TJ's.

EXT. MEETING ROOM - A WINDOW - NIGHT

Looking in through a rain-streaked window. An AA MEETING. Matt sits at a roundtable. We hear HIS VOICE just over the rain...

MATT
I was off duty one day in this bar in Washington Heights where cops didn't have to pay for their drinks...

CUT TO: A SHOT GLASS

As it's set down hard next to a cup off a coffee.

CUT TO: MATT (NOW)

As he continues with his story...

MATT
--when a couple guys came in to rob the place.

CUT TO: TIGHT ON MATT (THEN)

As we hear a GUNSHOT and Matt turns with a jerk and we...

CUT BACK TO: MATT (NOW)

As he recites by rote:

MATT
I chased them into the street, shot two dead--

As we hear TWO MORE GUNSHOTS just as we...

CUT TO: THE BONNEVILLE (THEN)

As the DRIVER's head snaps back and we immediately...

CUT BACK TO: MATT (NOW)

MATT
Caught a third one in the leg...

CUT TO: THE ALLEY (THEN)

As Matt kicks the third banger in his wounded thigh. He cries out as we then...

CUT BACK TO: MATT (NOW)

Pensive a moment.

MATT
He'll never walk right again.

CUT TO: THE ALLEY (THEN)

As Matt cuffs the Banger and we hear THE WOMAN SCREAM OS and this time, instead of ignoring it as he did the first time we saw this scene, he turns and looks that way, to the mouth of the alley now once again washed out in WHITE LIGHT...

MATT (VO)
I quit drinking that day.

CUT BACK TO: MATT (NOW)

As he looks at his rapt audience, then...

MATT
It just... wasn't as much.... fun after that.

He says the same line he did in the opening meeting, but says it differently this time. Not so much humor in it.

EXT. FOURTH AVENUE - BROOKLYN - DAY

As Matt comes up from the subway, starts up Twenty-fifth Street. The sky is greying over, threatening rain.

Suddenly, Matt turns around and we see someone quickly duck into a storefront behind him. Matt waits a moment, then turns back and resumes walking.

EXT. GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY - DAY

As Matt walks up the driveway and passes through the huge iron and stone gates. The place has an odd, yet imposing majesty that only an old graveyard can provide.

Matt stands at the top of one of the hills, looking over the wall at the Statue of Liberty beyond. He looks down at the small lake at the base of the hill, surrounded by old crypts and markers.

We hear the SOUND OF THE MOWER and see the GROUNDSKEEPER ride up over the rise towards us...

ON THE GROUNDSKEEPER

As he leans to one side then the other as he steers the mower in and around the markers when he sees Matt standing in his way and stops just shy of him. He's a little man in his thirties with a stringy goatee and long hair pulled back in a ponytail.

MATT
James Loogan?

GROUNDSKEEPER/LOOGAN
Yes?

MATT
You're the gardener here?

LOOGAN
I'm the *Groundskeeper*, can I help you?

MATT
I'm Matthew Scudder.

Matt takes out his Retired Badge and quickly shows it to the man on the mower. Loogan looks at the badge, shuts off the mower.

LOOGAN
Wow, that was fast.
(gets off the mower)
Public Affairs lady at the 77th said it would be at least a week before anyone got back to me.

MATT
Excuse me?

LOOGAN
I really want the book to have an authentic feel, you know?

MATT
Book...?

LOOGAN
That's why this ride along's so important to me, you know? Spend some real time with real cops...

Matt just looks at him. Loogan's smile goes away. He realizes he's been talking to the wrong person. An embarrassed anger replaces his earlier enthusiasm. The flip of a switch. And now:

LOOGAN
What do you want?

MATT
I was wondering if I could talk to you about Leila Alvarez.

LOOGAN
Who?

MATT
The woman they found over here.

LOOGAN
I don't know anything about that.

MATT
Your boss tells me you were here the day they found her.

Now uncomfortable, he turns away, scans the darkening horizon.

LOOGAN
You spoke to Larry?

MATT
Yeah.

LOOGAN
Because my boss is Gretchen. Okay?

And now Loogan starts to walk away from him.

MATT
Oh, boy. I messed up. You're too smart for me, James. Damn...
(then)
Think you can you help me anyway?

LOOGAN
(beat)
I already told everything I know to the police.

MATT
Eduardo, guy owns the shop across the street, says there were about twenty garbage bags over here. That true?

LOOGAN
Well, *Eduardo* was wrong. There were only about ten. And most of those

LOOGAN (CONTD)
were on the Fifth Avenue side. There were two more floating in the pond down there...

MATT
So you saw them?

LOOGAN
No, I saw the pigeon first.

He turns and looks out at the LAKE.

LOOGAN
I keep a coop on my roof, and this was a gray. And it was alone which -- if you know anything at all about grays -- is quite unusual for the breed.

QUICK CUT TO: THE CEMETERY

As we see two POWDER BLUE GARBAGE BAGS floating in the small pond in the middle of the cemetery. A bird lands atop one of them, tries to get inside...

LOOGAN (VO)
Anyway, the bird was sitting on one of the bags.

Loogan wades into the water with a rake, reaches for the bags...

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

He stares at the now pristine pond.

LOOGAN
I fished them both out after I was done with the mowing and threw 'em away.

MATT
You didn't open them?

LOOGAN
I figured it was all just some waterlogged trash kids had thrown in there the night before. They do that, you know, throw their rubbers or their empties into the pond.

MATT
You see cops across the street?

LOOGAN
Yeah, but I didn't make the connection until Vince came running over from the Fifth Avenue entrance.

MATT
Vince?

LOOGAN
He's the other groundskeeper. He's the one found the bags over there.

MATT
Is Vince around? I'd like to talk to him.

LOOGAN
He quit.
(then)
He opened one of the bags.

The guy looks at Matt, then at the water, as if something was still floating out there.

LOOGAN
I was just starting to forget about her. Thank you so much for bringing it all back.

MATT
What's your book about?

Loogan looks at him...

LOOGAN
Please. Don't patronize me.

Matt watches the guy, visibly upset now, climb back on his tractor and ride off, then disappear back down the hill.

EXT. PUB - MIDTOWN - DAY

As Matt goes inside.

INT. PUB - DAY

Matt hangs up his coat on a rack, takes the place in. Lots of cops and lawyers. He stares into the back, takes a deep breath walks to where...

Det. JOANNE DURKIN -- forties, dark suit, her hair pulled back -- sits at a table, in the middle of cleaning up a spilled drink. She picks up a ruined sandwich, a soggy report...

MATT (OS)
Nothing important, I hope.

She looks up, sees Matt standing there. She finally smiles, indicates the wet sheet of paper...

JO
I was just reading about today's dead Dominican drug dealer when the whole soda goes right over...

MATT
Probably a sperm killer anyway.

MATT (CONTD)
(looks at her)
Not that it matters I guess...
(to the waitress)
Just coffee, please.

He sits down across from her and looks around. A lot of guys are looking his way, trying to place him.

MATT
You got your gold shield.

JO
Three years ago.

MATT
Too bad. You looked good in uniform.

JO
Like you noticed.

MATT
I noticed.

JO
You didn't do anything about it.

MATT
Yeah, well, I was a fucking idiot.

JO
Yes, you were. You were a fucking idiot with a wife and two sons.

He shrugs as the waitress sets down his coffee.

JO
What are you doing here, Matt?

MATT
I had the urge to commit a felony.

JO
I know the feeling. There's hardly a day goes by that I don't get the urge myself. Have you got any particular felony in mind?

MATT
I was thinking of a Class D --
Something like Two Hundred Point Zero Zero of the Criminal Code.

JO
Bribery in the third degree.

MATT
That's the one.

JO
Huh. You sure you wouldn't prefer to violate Section Two Hundred Point Zero Three?

MATT
What's that?

JO
Bribery in the second degree. It's the same as your Class D, only for Bribery two the gift you confer's in excess of ten thousand dollars.

MATT
I think class D is my limit. Say dinner, somewhere nicer than here. You could wear your old uniform.

JO
(beat)
I'm married now. Three years.

MATT
(beat)
You happy?

JO
On occasion.

MATT
Good for you.

And he means it. He takes a drink of his coffee, then:

MATT
Three months ago, in Queens, two men grab a woman named Marie Gotteskind off Jamaica Avenue and sprinkle her all over a vacant lot a week later.

Jo looks picks up from her sandwich.

MATT
Six months ago -- in Brooklyn this time -- a woman named Leila Alvarez gets grabbed off the street by three men. Two days later, she was found bumping into herself in a pond in Green-Wood Cemetery.

JO
I'm gonna guess that by such colorful yet coy phrases as 'sprinkled her' and 'bumping into herself', you mean to say that these women were found in a less than whole condition?

MATT
You're eating. We don't have to get into that much detail right now.

JO
Aren't you sweet.

MATT
I'd love to see the murder book on Gotteskind, see what background the one-twelve developed.

JO
I'm sure you would.

Jo looks around the pub a moment.

JO
What's your interest in this?

MATT
I can't say.

JO
Well, Jesus Christ, Matthew. You sure do want it all flowing in one direction, don't you?

MATT
(beat)
I have a client whose wife got taken off the street by a couple guys in a van.

JO
He report it?

MATT
No.

JO
Why not?

MATT
(beat)
He's in the country illegally.

JO
So what? Half the city's in the country illegally.

Matt doesn't say anything. Jo studies Matt a moment, sighs.

JO
The wife come back dead?

MATT
Among other things.

She looks at him a moment.

JO
You really stop drinking?

MATT
So far. You really married?

She ignores him, takes out her pad.

JO
How do you spell "Gotteskind?"

EXT. GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

As James Loogan walks out of the big stone gates, his lunchbox in one hand, an umbrella in the other. He comes down the driveway, starts off down Fourth Avenue. A moment later...

MATT STEPS INTO FRAME and starts to follow. As Matt walks past a storefront window, we see the reflection of someone stepping from the doorway next door and start following him.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - AFTERNOON

As Loogan crosses the street. Matt hangs back a block, walks on the other side. We PAN to another block or so back and see the FIGURE still follows behind Matt.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - BROOKLYN - AFTERNOON

As Loogan enters the old, eight-story building on the corner. Matt steps to the corner now and watches Loogan go inside.

Matt then walks past the building and ducks into an alley. A moment later, a HOODED FIGURE hurries past. Matt grabs the figure by the hood and yanks him into the alley, revealing TJ's startled face buried in the jacket...

TJ
Yo, Matt, what the dealie?

MATT
Hello, TJ.

TJ
I been shadowing you.

MATT
No kidding.

He makes a big show of taking out a notebook, one just like Matt's, and starting to read:

TJ
"I followed subject back from dinner
to a meeting at some church."
(looks up)
You used to drink some, huh?

MATT
Only on days ended with a "y".

TJ nods, turns back to his notebook..

TJ
"I then followed subject back to some shitty ass hotel on 57th where subject remained until--"

MATT
I know where I was, TJ.

TJ
You made me at that flower shop, didn't you?

MATT
I made you back at the subway.

TJ
Damn. This book I'm reading says a foot tail's hard to do on account of they're so easy to spot.

MATT
That they are.

TJ
They say it's better to use three guys, two alternating behind, another guy on the other side of the street.

MATT
Be good, you had three guys.

TJ
You use a lotta payphones.

MATT
So?

TJ
So you don't got no cell?

MATT
I don't like them.

TJ
Don't like computers. Don't like cell phones. Fuckin Amish got more flavor than you do, Matthew.

Matt turns away, looks at Loogan's building.

TJ
I was watching you follow this guy. You didn't try to hide or nothin'.

MATT
He wasn't looking for me.

We TILT UP as Matt looks up at Loogan's building a moment.

TJ
It's funny, me following you while you're following this other dude...

And now we PAN OVER as Matt turns and watches as a DOG WALKER walks A DOZEN DOGS into the apartment ACROSS from Loogan's building.

MATT
Uh-huh. It's real...

And now Matt takes a step towards this other building...

MATT
Ironical.

Matt takes a SLIP OF PAPER from his coat and looks at it, then looks up as the dog walker leads the animals inside the building opposite Loogan's. An AWNING above the door. On the awning are two things: an address, and the name of the building:

"WINDSOR ARMS"

Matt looks down at the photograph he printed out at the library. Leila Alvarez' fiancée, Reuben Quintana, talking to reporters. Above him is the same awning we now look at -- **"WINDSOR ARMS."**

MATT
TJ?

We then PAN BACK TO LOOGAN'S BUILDING as Matt steps away and looks up. One building facing the other across a narrow street.

TJ
Yeah?

Matt turns and looks back at the kid.

MATT
Stop following me.

And now Matt heads for the Windsor Arms, pocketing the page as he goes.

INT. BUILDING - DAY

As a MAN, Latino, handsome, in sweats, out of breath, opens his door to the chain. A tiny yip of a DOG tries to bolt into the hallway.

MAN
(holds him back with his foot)
Mookie-- no!
(then)
I help you with something?

MATT
Reuben Quintana?

The man watches as Matt quickly flashes his "retired" badge.

MATT
My name is Matt Scudder. I was wondering if I could talk to you about your fiancée?

REUBEN
Fiancée? Oh. Leila... Uh, I kinda have this other place I have to be...

MATT
I just need a minute.

The guy considers, then nods, shuts the door, removes the chain and opens it up again and steps aside.

REUBEN
Okay.

INT. QUINTANA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matt follows Reuben into the open space, begins appraising the nice surroundings. An open kitchen. A huge stereo system. A PLASMA TV hanging on the wall.

REUBEN
I get you something to drink?

MATT
No, thank you.

Matt looks at the huge, home gym set-up in one corner -- also first class -- as Reuben turns off the treadmill, grabs a bottle of Evian from the Subzero, takes a drink.

MATT
Must be nice, have the time to go for a jog in the middle of the day.

REUBEN
I'd rather be working.
(announcing)
I'm an actor.

MATT
Yeah, I thought you looked familiar. Have I seen anything you've been in?

REUBEN
I did a *Stetson* commercial, ran on that all sports channel.

MATT
(looking around)
Stetson-- the hat?

REUBEN
The cologne.

MATT
Oh...

REUBEN
Ran during the Stanley Cup finals a few years ago.

MATT
Huh. Missed that one.

Matt watches as Reuben fills the dog's water dish from the bottle of Evian.

MATT
Leila went to Brooklyn College, is that right? Studied decorating?

REUBEN
Interior Design.

MATT
Right...

Matt moves to the window now, looks at the other building, the one Loogan just walked into.

MATT
You know a man named James Loogan? Works at Green-Wood cemetery?

REUBEN
No. Never heard of him.

Matt nods, thoughtful, he turns away from the window.

MATT
You saw the men who took Leila?

REUBEN
Yeah, there were three of them.

MATT
You're sure?

REUBEN
I was there. I was right across the street, at this coffee place Leila was supposed to meet me at...

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

As Reuben looks out the window as LEILA ALVAREZ starts to cross the street. A GREY VAN pulls to the curb...

REUBEN (VO)
I look out the window, see her start to cross the street when two guys get out of a van and say something to her.

MATT (VO)
What'd they look like?

REUBEN (VO)
I couldn't really see their faces. They were holding clipboards. One was tall. Really tall. Like taller than the van...

They say something to Leila and she walks around to the back of the van with them. Reuben bolts for the door...

REUBEN (VO)
Next thing I know, she's getting into the back of the van with them...

EXT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

As Reuben shoves his way through several customers trying to get into the coffee house. He makes it out the door onto the street just as the van rounds the corner. He stands there horrified...

REUBEN (VO)
That was the last time I saw her.

INT. REUBEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matt nods, turns and looks around the apartment, takes in the expensive stereo, flat screen TV, the appliances, furniture.

MATT
This is a nice place. Lots of nice stuff...

Matt looks at the coffee table, its surface is full of SCRATCHES.

MATT
Leila do the *design*?

REUBEN
Yeah. You should see the bedroom.
(then)
Wait, that didn't sound right--

MATT
You don't deal, do you, Reuben?

Matt turns and looks at Reuben, something on his mind now.

REUBEN
What?

MATT
You heard me.

REUBEN
You asking, am I drug dealer?

MATT
Unless you prefer *trafficker*. Or maybe you wanna tell me you made the fifty G pedaling cologne on ESPN.

REUBEN
I've got a trust fund.

MATT
From your rich family up in the Bronx.

REUBEN
My mother won a lawsuit a few years ago.

MATT
Hey, come on, Reuben, not even the dog's dumb enough to buy that one.

The guy looks pissed, but doesn't have quite what he needs to take a swing at Matt. Matt knows this, stays where he is.

MATT
Look, I don't care how you earn your living. But the guys who grabbed Leila? They might have.

REUBEN
How do you mean?

But now Matt sees LOOGAN leave the building across the street. Matt quickly heads for the door, leaving a perplexed Reuben to stupidly stare after him.

MATT
Thanks for your time.

EXT. LOOGAN'S BUILDING - DAY

As an OLD WOMAN unlocks the front door with her key, starts to go in.

MATT (OS)
Let me hold that for you...

And now we see Matt right behind her, smiling.

OLD WOMAN
Thank you.

INT. ENTRANCE HALLWAY - SAME

As Matt moves to the mailboxes, starts looking at them. He sees the name LOOGAN on one of them.

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

As Matt climbs the stairs, stops at a floor...

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

As Matt moves to an apartment door and listens. It's quiet inside. He tries the knob, but of course the door is locked.

WOMAN'S VOICE
That you, James?

Matt quickly backs away from the door, moves down the hall for the stairwell.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

As Matt comes out of the stairwell onto the roof. He walks to a COOP and stares inside, a dozen birds stupidly staring back at him.

He then moves to the edge of the roof, looks down at the apartment building across the way, the height advantage providing an A-1 view down into Reuben Quintana's place. He watches Reuben, on the phone now, pace back and forth.

EXT. STREET - SAME

As Loogan heads to the corner. We hear a bit of THUNDER and he looks up at the darkening sky. He starts to go then stops cold when HE SEES SOMEONE UP ON THE ROOF OF HIS BUILDING.

EXT. ROOF - SAME

As Matt turns away from the edge and looks around, sees A SHED on the far side of the roof. Matt walks over to it and sees the door is PADLOCKED. Matt gives a shove, rips the latch from the rotted wood, and opens the door.

INT. SHED - SAME

As Matt stands in the doorway, RAIN PELTS THE METAL ROOF. He looks at the bags of BIRDSEED, some TOOLS, and some OLD BOOKS that sit on top of a sagging COT. Matt examines the books, all of them PSYCHOLOGY TEXTBOOKS.

A CARD TABLE is set up in a corner with a folding chair. AN OLD TYPEWRITER sits on the table. Matt rolls the sheet of paper out of it and reads:

MATT
...he carried her through the field, the dandelions and cattails still wet with the morning dew, and set her down by a stream, whispering through the strands of her fine, yellow hair, "You're safe now. You're safe."
(then)
Jesus...

Matt turns and moves the junk from the stained mattress, lifts it up. He stands there, staring at a few dozen POLAROIDS spread out across the springs. He picks one up and sees...

Leila Alavarez. Getting dressed by the window. Another shows Leila sunbathing on the roof. In another she brushes her hair. In another one she and Reuben, both naked, embrace on the bed.

JAMES LOOGAN appears in the doorway behind him and THE RAIN STOPS PINGING THE ROOF OF THE SHED. Matt senses something, turns...

MATT
James...

Matt turns all the way around, the photos in his hands, and faces Loogan. Stays calm.

MATT
You caught me.

Loogan says nothing, looks at the overturned mattress.

MATT
You gave the cops a different address, didn't you? That's why they never put you across the street from Leila.

LOOGAN
(beat)
This is my mother's building. I live in Sunset Park, but I'm not allowed to keep my birds there... even though there's room on the roof.

MATT
Your mom home right now? Maybe we could go down and talk, have a cup of coffee.

LOOGAN
I can't let you leave here.

And now we see A KNIFE in his hand.

LOOGAN
They'll kill me if I do.

MATT
Who's "they", James?

LOOGAN
The other two.

Loogan starts to come forward. Matt looks at the knife.

MATT
So what, you gonna stab me now, with that knife?

LOOGAN
It's gonna bother me, too. For a long time. I know it will...

MATT
How much is it gonna bother you, I take that knife away, stick it in your neck?

LOOGAN
(beat)
Could you really do that?

MATT
Yes, I really could, James.
(then)
But I'd rather not.

Loogan looks at Matt, believes him. Matt holds out the photos.

MATT
How 'bout instead we trade?

LOOGAN
Okay.

Loogan bends at the knees and sets the knife down on the roof. Matt steps on the blade before handing Loogan the pictures. He stares at them.

LOOGAN
What was it I said, gave me away?

MATT
Everything. You're a weirdo, James. But then, you were probably better prepared for the real cops, having seen them all morning across the street at the flower shop.

Loogan looks at Matt.

LOOGAN
I never laid a hand on Leila. But the other two — they're the one's you better worry about.

MATT
What other two?

LOOGAN
They're not human. It's not just they've got a lot of hostility toward women, it's the superiority, the grandiosity about it that scares me. People like that, down deep, they really feel inadequate, have to take it all out on other people.

MATT
You've done some reading.

LOOGAN
Research.

MATT
How'd you meet them?

Loogan turns away, reaches into one of the coops, strokes one of his birds with a finger.

LOOGAN
There's this video store near my house. They have this basement where they keep some of their more... specialized stuff. I go there sometimes for--

MATT
--research, I know. You saw them there?

CUT TO: A BASEMENT "VIDEO STORE"

Light floods around high windows blocked off with brown paper. MEN avoid eye contact with each other as they browse the metal racks full of underground videotapes.

LOOGAN (VO)
They always came in together.

We hear a DOOR OPEN and TWO FIGURES start down the wooden steps. Their faces are barred in the shadow of the stairwell.

LOOGAN (VO)
I called them Laurel and Hardy on account of one was tall and the other one was short and round.

BACK TO SCENE:

As Matt takes out his notebook.

MATT
Can you be any more specific than that?

LOOGAN
Well, the one guy was like <u>really</u> tall. Taller than you...

CUT TO: THE BASEMENT "VIDEO STORE"

As the tall one emerges into the dim light...

LOOGAN (VO)
Like near seven feet with pale skin. And he had eyes that were dark, like a bug.

And now the other one emerges a few steps behind the first...

LOOGAN (VO)
And the other one had scars on his face, little ones, like he had bad acne when he was a kid.

BACK TO SCENE:

As Loogan sits down on a stool near the coop, looks at his birds.

MATT
What about names?

LOOGAN
You don't exchange names in places like that, not real ones anyway.
(then)
They loved that I worked in a cemetery. They thought that was funny. They wanted to buy me drinks...

CUT TO: A BAR

A dark shit hole. A BURST OF LAUGHTER comes from the back where Loogan and the other two sit at one of the three rickety tables.

LOOGAN (VO)
So we went to this bar, the middle of the day, drank Rum and Coke, talked about the different videos we liked.

Another ugly burst of laughter. Loogan looks uncomfortable.

LOOGAN (VO)
It was all one big laugh to them, watching all the drug addicts fuck each other.

BACK TO SCENE:

As Matt looks up at Loogan.

MATT
What do you mean, *drug addicts*?

LOOGAN
They didn't do drugs, but they were like obsessed with that whole world: dealers, addicts, the different kinds of drugs... They told me they worked with the DEA.

MATT
They were cops?

CUT TO: A HAND RADIO

Clipped to a belt.

LOOGAN (VO)
They had a police radio. One of those handheld units. And they had all these files on drug dealers, with DEA stamps on them.

WIDEN SO THAT WE CAN SEE:

It's clipped to the round man's belt. He's showing Loogan a bunch of file folders that he's spread open on the table...

LOOGAN (VO)
He said they worked for the DEA on special assignments...

BACK TO SCENE:

MATT
You told them about Reuben?

LOOGAN
No, I told them about Leila, about how I was gonna save her from Reuben...

QUICK CUT TO: ROOF POV INTO REUBEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

As Reuben cuts a bunch of COKE on the coffee table. Leila waiting on the couch, in her underwear.

LOOGAN (VO)
So we came up here and watched them for a while.

BACK TO SCENE:

He looks off towards their building.

LOOGAN
They really liked her. They said they wanted to help her, too.

MATT
So you followed her.
(Loogan nods)
You picked her up off the street.
(another nod)
Then what?

Loogan turns to Matt. He looks lost.

LOOGAN
We drove around with her...

QUICK CUT TO: THE BACK OF THE VAN

More laughter. Ray, the round man, is laughing at something OS. A bit of jerky movement in the back.

LOOGAN (VO)
In this van they have. Got this mattress in the back, all covered up with plastic.

Loogan is at the wheel, glancing back. He sees the girl's face... she looks up at him, pleading with her eyes, her mouth duct-taped shut...

LOOGAN (VO)
She was really scared.

BACK TO SCENE:

As Loogan stokes one of the birds through the bars, with a long finger...

LOOGAN
They loved that. They kept talking to her, kept asking her how much money her fiancée had. They thought he was rich.

MATT
Why?

LOOGAN
Her engagement ring. They were all into it. They wanted it. But when they cut it off...

MATT
Cut the ring off?

LOOGAN
Her finger.

We hear A WOMAN SCREAM OVER as we now...

CUT TO: THE LOOP OF WIRE

As it's held up, flashing in the light...

LOOGAN (VO)
That's when I got out of there.

Suddenly one of the DOORS opens and light floods into the van. We can see LOOGAN running away from the van, his fleeing form disappearing into the bright, white light of the day as we go...

BACK TO SCENE:

As Loogan moves back to Matt...

LOOGAN
We were somewhere in Brooklyn and I just jumped out and ran. And then, two days later...

Loogan looks out at the city.

LOOGAN
I think they thought it'd be funny, I come to work, see the garbage bags everywhere. They knew I'd never say anything.

MATT
Where was this video place, you met these two?

LOOGAN
It moves around a lot. Back then, it was in Flatbush.

MATT
How do I get in?

LOOGAN
They have to know you.

MATT
What if you come with me?

Loogan looks at Matt. He seems so sad now. Finally...

LOOGAN
Can I feed my birds first?

Matt nods, watches as Loogan reaches into a bag of seed, pulls out a plastic cup full of seed and starts walking to the coop.

LOOGAN
(quiet)
Ray.

MATT
What was that?

LOOGAN
That was his name.

MATT
Which one? The fat--

Matt stops talking as James Loogan calmly walks off the edge of the roof and drops from sight. We hear TIRES SCREECHING ON THE STREET BELOW. Followed a moment later by A WOMAN'S SCREAM.

EXT. BUILDING - DUSK

As Matt comes down the front steps and starts off down the street, away from the CROWD that now gathers around something that nobody wants to see, but all of them look at it anyway.

Matt gets to the corner, stops and looks back at the crowd. We hear a WOMAN SCREAM and...

CUT TO: THE ALLEY (FLASHBACK)

As Matt cuffs the banger and, this time, starts walking towards the mouth of the alley, the light less washed out now as we see the chaos out on the street...

MATT (VO)
I stopped drinking that day...

INT. AA MEETING - NIGHT

As Matt stands at the microphone...

MATT
It just wasn't much fun after that.

No one laughs. There's no humor in the statement this time. He puts the microphone down and walks out of the meeting.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - EARLY MORNING

The MERCEDES is parked out front. The ground is wet from the rain the night before. We see the WOMAN come out in her coat, start down the walk...

WIDEN TO REVEAL: OUR POV IS INSIDE THE VAN

As the two Mutt 'n' Jeff figures in the front seat watch her. We can see their breath as the shorter consults a DEA FILE in his lap.

He looks at the PHOTOGRAPH of the bald man in Russia holding hands with the woman, HER FACE BLURRED...

The Round Man looks up, watches as the woman bends down to pick up the paper, then turns and goes back into the house. He sees that she wears WHITE TENNIS SHOES. He reaches for the door...

ROUND MAN
I'll be right back.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - SAME

As Ray moves through the shadows at the side of the house. He approaches a WINDOW, peers inside.

THE ROUND MAN'S POV - INSIDE THE HOUSE

A BALD MAN sits down at the kitchen table with a glass of juice. It's the "Russian Man" from the file. A DOG lies at his feet.

In comes the woman now who hands the newspaper to the man who nods, then takes off her coat and we see she wears A NURSE'S UNIFORM beneath it. She moves off down the hall, her white tennis shoes squeaking on the wood floor...

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - SAME

The Round Man climbs atop a meter, wipes the rain away and peers in through another window at...

A BEDROOM

Where we see ANOTHER WOMAN lying in the bed, her long hair fanned on the pillow, her arms limp at her sides. She stares blankly at the ceiling.

THIS is the woman from the file, the one the Russian Man was holding hands with.

And now the Nurse comes into this room, puts some eye drops into the prone woman's eyes, then sets about fluffing the pillows...

INT. VAN - MORNING

As the Round Man comes in, shuts the door, sits there a moment. He looks at the file, at the woman with the man in Moscow. He chuckles.

ROUND MAN
I wonder, you think he'd pay as much for the nurse?

The Tall Man turns to him. The Round Man sighs.

ROUND MAN
It seems we've made a mistake.
(closes the file)
Let's go.

The Tall Man starts the engine. Ray shakes his head, then watches as the front door opens again, we see THE DOG come out attached to an extension leash. He starts down the steps. And now we see an arm holding the leash inside a RED SLICKER.

ROUND MAN
Wait--

And now we see A FIGURE in the hooded slicker holding the leash as the figure comes out after the dog and starts down the walk. And as the figure walks by the front of the van, the hood falls and we see the face of A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL beneath it.

Her father comes out of the house a moment later in his own coat, and together they walk the dog. The two men watch them go...

ROUND MAN
(smiles, sings)
Hey there, lonely girl... don't you know this lonely boy loves you...

INT. KENNY KRISTO'S HOUSE - MORNING

The house is now squeaky clean. All of the old photographs of Carrie are off the walls. There's no sign at all that she even lived there. Several stacks of moving cartons line one wall. Matt watches as Kenny shoves some of Carrie's clothing into another box...

KENNY
They worked for the fucking DEA?

MATT
Probably not for very long and almost certainly not as agents.

Kenny nods, purposefully starts to seal up the box.

KENNY
Then what were they?

MATT
I don't know. Maybe they used them as confidential informants... or maybe they were office help. Whatever they were, they wouldn't have gone very far or lasted very long.

KENNY
Why not?

MATT
Because they're insane.

KENNY
But they managed to get their hands on some files. One of which had my name in it.

Kenny looks at Matt.

KENNY
And if my name's in a DEA file, that means I'm being looked at.

MATT
Or you were at one time

Kenny thinks for a moment.

MATT
You know a lot of people, do what you do?

KENNY
It's not like we have a union or anything, but I know a few, why?

MATT
I want you to call them up and tell them what happened to Carrie. Tell them you've hired--

KENNY
Jesus, Matt, if word gets out about Carrie-- the cops are gonna be all--

MATT
They've done it before.

This gets Kenny looking at him.

MATT
And they're gonna do it again. But this time I wanna know about it.

KENNY
What do I say?

MATT
(starts for the door)
You'll think of something.

Kenny shakes his head, stares at the all of the boxes.

KENNY
I could have paid them.

Matt pauses, turns back. "What?"

KENNY
I had the whole million. It was our nest egg. You know, the money I was gonna use to get out.

He looks up at Matt now, laughs bitterly.

KENNY
It was our *future*. And I didn't wanna give it to them. Now how fucking stupid is <u>that</u>?

Matt watches as Kenny goes back to automatically shoving clothes into boxes, like a robot.

MATT
She was already dead.

Kenny looks at him.

MATT
And if she wasn't, they would have killed her anyway.
(turns to go)
Call your friends...

EXT. BAY RIDGE AVENUE - DAY

As Matt walks to the SUBWAY, he passes A WHITE VAN parked at the curb, the name VILLAGE PLUMBING stenciled on the side, the windows in front all smoked so that we can't see inside.

EXT. SUBWAY ENTRANCE - DAY

As Matt starts down the stairs, the WHITE VAN drives past. Matt then comes back up a step and watches the van turn the corner.

CUT TO: INSERT OF NEWSPAPER PHOTO

The vacant lot where Marie Gotteskind was found. Two narrow buildings on either side of it. We now...

TILT UP TO REVEAL: THE ACTUAL SITE - QUEENS

As Matt stands across the street, clocking the neighborhood. Most of the storefronts are boarded up around here. The area's dying a slow death. Except for...

...a Bodega. A small Spanish grocery that seems to be quite busy. People go in and out of it. Matt watches a group of teenagers go inside, then crosses to it.

OWNER (VO)
Gotteskind?

INT. BODEGA - QUEENS - DAY

As the SHOP OWNER, a burly, bearded Hispanic man, works behind a shabby deli counter cutting meat.

OWNER
I just knew her as Marie.

We hear the door CHIME and a young KID comes in, walks past Matt who leans on the counter.

OWNER
Jacinto. My man.

The kid says something in Spanish and the owner points him to the fridge in the back.

OWNER
You know where it is. Second fridge over.

Matt watches the kid head to the back. The place is full of people. The group of teenagers talk to A MAN -- Latin, neat goatee, all tattooed and stoved up, in the back of the place.

MATT
She live around here?

OWNER
She worked around here.

MATT
Where?

And now the guy looks at Matt, smiles.

OWNER
On the corner.
(to the kid)
No, no, your mama likes the one percent, not the two.

MATT
She was a dealer?

OWNER
Shhh.

The owner gestures to the kid who takes the carton of MILK back to the fridge and exchanges it for another. Matt watches as the kids walk out of the store, the owner eyeing them, then the man in the back who nods, disappears into a door marked PRIVATE.

OWNER
She worked out of a crib not too far from here.

He smiles as the kid puts a CARTON OF MILK on the counter.

OWNER
Two dollars even.

He takes some money from him, then hands him a couple lollipops.

OWNER
Make sure you give the other one to your brother. And tell your mama hello for me.

He waits for the kid to walk out, then turns to Matt.

OWNER
Around the block, there's this old building...

EXT. DECREPIT BUILDING - DAY

A vacuum repair place downstairs. The other storefront is boarded up, full of GRAFFITI.

OWNER (VO)
Vacuum repair on the ground, a few rooms upstairs...

Matt crosses to the building, goes into a door in between the two retail spaces.

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

Full of trash. More graffiti. Holes punched in the walls. Matt now quietly goes right on up as if he's been up hundreds of these shitty stairwells in his lifetime. Which, of course, he has.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOMS - SAME

Abandoned. Walls are buckled. Ceilings hang down. No one lives up here. No one could. WE FOLLOW MATT into the front room. A window.

Matt moves to it, looks down at the BODEGA across the street. Something's bothering him.

And now we see A FIGURE reflected in the glass behind Matt. Matt turns around and is immediately hit across the face with a BOARD.

Matt goes down and the figure hits him again. Matt's knocked to the floor. He looks up at the big tattooed MAN from the Bodega...

MAN
Hola.

The man kicks Matt in the face and Matt goes down. And now we hear FOOTSTEPS.

Matt looks to the doorway, sees the BODEGA OWNER, still in his apron, now gain the top of the steps and calmly walk into the room.

OWNER
Alright, tell me, cocksucker, right now, what do you want with Marie G?

And now the other man has come out with Matt's wallet followed by his RETIRED BADGE.

OWNER
You on the job, fucker?

MATT
Retired.

OWNER
Who you working for? The family?
(throws the badge at Matt)
Shit. When you guys gonna leave it alone? Huh? We didn't do it, okay?

MATT
Okay.

OWNER
You think we'd chop up a cop, leave her on our own fucking doorstep?

Matt looks at him.

MATT
A cop...

OWNER
My son's a fucking moron, but he's not an idiot.

The other man tries to protest that last remark in Spanish, but the owner shushes him.

MATT
Marie was a cop?

The owner stands up, considers Matt, realizes he's made a mistake.

OWNER
Who are you?

MATT
I'm not after you... or your son. I want the guys who killed Marie.

The other man, rants in Spanish, then pokes his own chest.

MAN
If I don't kill them first.

Matt looks at him.

MATT
You dealing outta the store?

OWNER
(glares at his son)
Not anymore.

MATT
But Marie was working you?

OWNER
Working him?
(laughs)
Fucking moron wanted to marry her.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

As Matt staggers out of the building, looks up at the windows...

INT. AA MEETING - NIGHT

As Matt sits in the back, beaten up, drinking coffee. Other people keep stealing looks at him. And while the room is generally full, the chairs on either side of <u>him</u> remain vacant. Matt stares off, pensive. When we hear...

VOICE
My name is Peter. I'm an alcoholic addict.
(then)
And I have one day back.

Matt turns and looks as now a very shaky-looking Peter Kristo stands at the microphone.

EVERYONE
Hello, Peter.

EXT. MEETING - NIGHT

As Matt walks with Peter down the street.

PETER
I slipped.

MATT
It happens.

He shakes his head, cuts a look at Matt.

PETER
Funny thing is, I didn't even start using until I was twenty-eight. Up until then, I'd never even smoked a joint. Even when I was overseas and half my unit was on one thing or another.

Matt looks around the dark street, sees a quick glimpse of A WHITE VAN moving through the intersection behind them. Hard to tell if it's the same one.

MATT
(watching it)
You were in the army?

PETER
Germany, then Desert Storm. I come home, go back to school, me and Kenny start dealing. You know, just enough to get by.

Matt turns to Peter now.

MATT
You were doing it with him?

PETER
Back then, yeah.
(shakes his head)
I do it to pay for art school and wind up getting hooked on the fucking product and drop out. Meanwhile, Kenny-- he stays in the business, starts making a fortune while I'm eating garbage, sleeping in abandoned buildings, until one night I nearly blow my fucking heart outta my mouth up in Harlem.

Peter laughs bitterly, then blows into his cold hands.

MATT
Where you gonna go now?

PETER
I got this job as a bread maker. It's night work, but I figure I keep busy at night, sleep during the day, I'll get in less trouble.

Matt nods.

PETER
Anyway, I'll see you around.

Matt stands there watching as Peter heads off down the street, rubbing his cold hands together, his posture sad and stooped.

Just beyond Peter, we see the WHITE VAN pull to the curb across the street. Matt looks at the PHONE NUMBER stenciled on the side.

Matt turns and walks to a payphone, watches the van as he dials the number, gets a recording telling him *the number's not in service.* Matt inserts another coin.

MATT
I'd like the number for Village Plumbing.
(then)
I assume it's in the Village.
(then)
Try Brooklyn.
(then)
Try all the boroughs.
(then)
Thank you.

Matt hangs up, watches as the van now disappears around the corner.

EXT. MATT'S HOTEL - NIGHT

An AMBULANCE is parked out front. Matt hears SOMEONE COUGH and sees TJ leaning against the back of it. TJ looks at Matt's bruised face.

TJ
What happened to you?

MATT
I bumped into something.

TJ nods, can't stop coughing, reaches into his backpack for a bottle of water which is when Matt sees the handle of A GUN nestled inside.

MATT
You okay?

TJ
I'm fine....

He takes a long drink of water.

MATT
What you got there in your backpack?

TJ
Just my notebook, some twizzlers, unless you talking about my pencils...

MATT
No, I'm talking about the black Beretta 9 with the taped grip you got tucked beside your water bottle.

TJ looks at Matt, moves back into the doorway, then reaches into his backpack and pulls out a black 9mm.

TJ
You mean, this? My new jammy?

Matt looks at the boy now casually holding the gun in his hand like it's a frisbee. Matt keeps his voice calm, leads TJ over between two buildings. He looks at the pistol, nods...

MATT
That's a nice one. What're you planning on doing with it?

TJ
It's for protection. I'm gonna be a detective, I'm gonna need a piece.

MATT
Uh huh, where'd you get it?

TJ
I'm taking a nap in this alley, I hear some footsteps, see this kid I know works as a lookout for some ballers, I see him drop this bag in a dumpster, then split.

MATT
You stole someone's stash?

TJ
I left the money and the rock where it was.

MATT
They're gonna come back for the piece.

TJ
Nah, they in the wind, Matthew. Cops clipped their ass.

TJ turns away to cough and Matt considers him a moment, then...

MATT
You know how to use that?

TJ
(gimme a break)
Shit...

MATT
Point it at me, like your gonna shoot me.

TJ looks at him.

MATT
Go ahead.

TJ hesitates, then holds it up, points it at Matt, but keeps it sideways the way the gangbangers all think is so cool.

MATT
That the way you hold a gun?

TJ
That's the way I hold it, yeah.

MATT
You know how to jack the clip? Empty it? Clean it?

Matt reaches out and quick as a flash takes the gun from him and pops the clip, snicks out the bullets one by one into his palm.

MATT
But the gun's still not empty. You know that, right? You know there's still a round left in the chamber here...

He opens the breach and shows TJ the last round. No, TJ didn't know that. Matt then hands him the clip and the bullets.

MATT
Now put it back together.

TJ takes the gun, puts the bullets back in the clip, replaces the clip, looks up at Matt and smiles.

MATT
Caress it. Rub it. Like it's part of you.

TJ rubs the gun, nods, likes the feel.

MATT
Feels good, doesn't it?

TJ
It's all oily...

MATT
Turn off the safety.
(TJ does)
Now cock it...

TJ racks the slide, looks up at Matt.

MATT
Now put it to your temple and pull the fucking trigger.

TJ
What?

MATT
You heard me. Shoot yourself in the head.

TJ just stands there looking at Matt.

MATT
Might as well get it over with now, because you walk around with a gun, sooner or later, it's gonna happen anyway.

And now TJ stares at the gun in his hand.

MATT
No rewind. No going out for popcorn and then coming back to the show. It's just you with that gun in your hand, a stupid look on your face and your hash all over the wall.

TJ
You don't ever carry?

MATT
No... anybody's gonna shoot me, they're gonna have to bring their <u>own</u> gun. You take it easy now, TJ.

And with that, Matt turns and crosses to his hotel. He starts to go in, then stops, sighs, turns and goes back to where TJ stood a moment earlier. But the kid is now gone.

INT. MATT'S HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

As Matt walks to the desk. Howie, the desk clerk, pulls down a message.

HOWIE
Jo Durkle's waiting for you next door.

MATT
<u>Durkin</u>.

HOWIE
No, look, I wrote it down.

He holds out the slip for Matt to see, but Matt just looks back at the moron. We hear A CHIME as the elevator arrives, then...

VOICE
Coming through...

Matt turns as two AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS wheel an ELDERLY WOMAN off the elevator. Howie shakes his head as they pass...

HOWIE
They're dropping like flies.

Matt then moves across the lobby and looks into the BAR adjoining. We see JO DURKIN sitting at a table in the back.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

As Matt walks over to Jo. She's got a beer in front of her.

JO
You know, this may very well be the shittiest hotel bar I've ever been in.

MATT
You're lucky it's open.

MATT (CONTD)
(sits down)
They get the early office crowd during the week, but don't even bother to open up on the weekends.

Matt signals to the bartender.

MATT
One of those places, it's basically a bar in the neighborhood without being a neighborhood bar.

JO
Huh, yeah, well, we can talk about the sociology of taverns later. Meantime, I see that you've been busy.
(re: his appearance)
Who did you beat up?

MATT
More the other way round.

She waits as the bartender sets a coke down in front of Matt.

MATT
Thanks.

JO
Friend of mine, Brooklyn South, tells me that a guy named James Loogan took a header offa building out there.

MATT
Wow, that's too bad.

JO
Just so happens building was across the street from where Leila Alvarez used to live.

MATT
You're kidding?

JO
No, I'm not. It also turns out this Loogan was a gardener at Green-Wood Cemetery, the same place Alvarez's body got dumped.

MATT
Groundskeeper.

JO
What's that?

MATT
He was the groundskeeper, not the gardener.

JO
Yeah, well, now he's plant food.

MATT
The great circle of life.

JO
Of course, you don't happen to have any idea why the man killed himself?

MATT
I'm guessing he was depressed.

JO
Yeah, that's what the note said.

MATT
There you go.

JO
One line. Typewritten.

MATT
Sounds pretty open and shut to me.

JO
A typewritten suicide note? You don't find that a little bit unusual?

MATT
Maybe he couldn't find a pen.

JO
They dust the machine, I wonder whose prints they're gonna find on the keys?

MATT
Probably nobody's.

JO
That's what I thought you'd say.
(then)
What happened, Matt?

MATT
Guy walked off the roof.

JO
Matt--

MATT
Loogan didn't kill anybody.

JO
If he was some kind of material witness, or in any other way involved...

MATT
Marie Gotteskind was a cop. That's why there was no background on her.

JO
Actually she was DEA, on loan to Narcotics.

Matt looks at her.

MATT
You looked at the book?

JO
I talked to the cop at the one-twelve who caught it. She was killed in her apartment, then dumped.

Matt thinks about that for a moment.

JO
Apparently, Marie was rather good undercover. Deserved a fucking SAG card from what I hear. But fuck her for the moment.
(then)
What're you doing, Matt?

MATT
I'm trying to find these guys.

JO
And how are you doing that? Outside of getting the shit kicked outta you and helping guys walk off rooftops?

She considers him, then leans in close.

JO
It ever occur to you, Matt, that you may have stopped drinking, but you're still not sober?

MATT
I'm not looking to make any kind of problem. I just want to find these guys.

JO
Why?

MATT
Because it'll feel good.

JO
To what, get them off the board? Or shoot it out with them in the middle of the street?

She shakes her head, lays some money on the table.

JO
You can't say Dallas doesn't love you.

MATT
What?

JO
Nellie Conelly, in the car on the big day, says to JFK, "Mr. President, you can't say Dallas doesn't love you."

She stands up now and looks at Matt.

JO
Things never happen the way you think they will.

INT. A BASEMENT - DAY

As A TALL FIGURE vacuums the floor with a shop vac. The place is neat and orderly. A lawn chair is tucked under a ping-pong table that's used as a desk.

The figure shuts off the vacuum and coils the cord and puts it away in a metal cupboard. He grabs some WOODWORKING TOOLS and a roll of DUCT TAPE off the ping-pong-table-desk and shoves them both into a DUFFLE BAG.

He wipes down a LOOP OF WIRE with a chamois, then throws it into the duffle along with several KNIVES.

He moves to a wall of cabinets and slides a MATTRESS out from behind it. He pulls into the center of the room and lets it fall onto the ground. He then takes some 3 mil PLASTIC and begins to wrap it up.

VOICE
Albert?

He shuts off the light and we then follow him up the wooden stairs. Through a door into...

A BRIGHT KITCHEN

Where he returns the knife to a wooden block. The other man, the shorter and rounder one, stands at the old stove cooking an omelette.

ROUND MAN
You can sit down now.

The Tall Man washes his hands at the sink, dries his hands on a hand towel and neatly replaces it while the Round Man puts the eggs on a plate.

The Tall Man goes to the fridge, grabs a pitcher of low acid orange juice and sits down at a table, already set for two. The Round Man serves them both.

ROUND MAN
There's toast if you want it.

The two of them tuck into their breakfast. All the while, SUNLIGHT continues to stream into the spotless kitchen. Outside we can hear A CHURCHBELL and the sounds of CHILDREN PLAYING NEARBY.

INT. MATT'S ROOM - MORNING

Matt pours himself a cup of coffee, wipes down the counter. The place is already spotless. He sits down at the table, stares at the muted television set. THE PHONE RINGS.

MATT
Hello?

BOY'S VOICE (PHONE)
Dad?

MATT
(sits up)
Michael-- hi... what's-- what's up?

MICHAEL (PHONE)
I realized there were a couple things I needed to ask you.

MATT
Oh... okay.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Mom says, when you were a cop, you... did some things. Is that true?

MATT
Some things...?

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Like did you beat people up?

MATT
(beat)
Yes.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
You ever shoot anybody?

MATT
Yes.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
You ever kill anybody?

MATT
Yes.

More silence on the other end. Then...

MICHAEL (PHONE)
You know step 8, the one about making amends?

MATT
Sure. I know it.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Did you do that? Make amends?

MATT
(beat)
To those I could.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Okay. I guess that's all I wanted to say-- oh-- wait-- Uh...
(then)
I got accepted at Tulane. You know, where Grandpa went?

MATT
You're kidding. Congratulations.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Yeah, I got a scholarship.

MATT
Football?

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Baseball.

Shit. Matt winces, shuts his eyes.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
You know, if you're ever down in New Orleans, maybe you could, you know, look me up...

And now Matt opens them.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
We could go to a meeting together.

MATT
Sure. That sounds great.

Matt stands, suddenly not at all sure of his emotional footing.

MATT
Listen, I gotta get going...

MICHAEL (PHONE)
Yeah, me, too.

MATT
You take it easy, Michael.

MICHAEL (PHONE)
You too, Dad.

Matt hangs up, stares at the television for a moment, then moves to the window and looks out at the city. He looks down, sees TJ down on the street below, shifting from foot to foot, looking up at him.

EXT. MATT'S HOTEL - DAY

As Matt walks out of the building, looks to where TJ stands waiting and stops cold. Matt quickly turns and walks the other way. As TJ calls after him...

TJ
I don't have the gun no more!

...we now see what Matt just saw: the grille of THE WHITE VAN cruising up the street barely half a block behind TJ.

And we now understand that Matt didn't want whoever's inside to connect him to the kid. Matt turns and disappears up an alley.

EXT. ALLEY - SAME

As we see the van stop and now A MAN -- in a flannel shirt and work boots -- gets out. Other than the dark glasses, we can't see his face. Matt looks back, then bolts up an alley as the guy takes off after him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Matt comes out of the alley and picks up his pace. People give him room as he checks the doorways and storefronts for a good place to wait.

Up ahead he sees A MAILMAN come out of a building and start up the sidewalk. Matt runs up the step, stops the door before it closes, then ducks inside as FLANNEL SHIRT exits the alley now...

INT. LOBBY - SAME

As Matt steps to one side of the door, A CRACKED WINDOW in the upper half. He then takes off his jacket and starts to wrap it around his fist when A FACE PRESSES AGAINST THE GLASS, the dark glasses still covering the eyes.

Flannel Shirt tries the door, but finds it locked. He moves away just as Matt quickly steps out from beside the door, all ready to swing at the face in the glass that was there a second ago. Now realizing the guy's moved on, Matt steps back to one side of the door, TAPS LOUDLY ON THE GLASS.

The FACE REAPPEARS and Matt once more steps out and this time nails him one right through the window...

EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME

As Flannel Shirt is knocked on his ass down the steps. Matt comes through the door after him, unwrapping his fist as he comes. Nose broken, brain rattled, the guy struggles onto all fours when Matt kicks him back down to the cement.

The WHITE VAN comes to a screaming halt at the curb just as Matt pulls Flannel Shirt's gun from his waistband and points it at the

gentleman in the sweatshirt who jumps out of the van, his own gun leveled right back at Matt...

SWEATSHIRT
Scudder, I'm gonna assume you're not dumb enough to shoot a federal agent...

MATT
Show me a fucking shield-- right now.

SWEATSHIRT
Okay. I'm reaching for my folder...

He pulls out a badge folder, flips it open for Matt to see.

SWEATSHIRT
Stover. Drug Enforcement. Okay?

Suddenly A GUN is jammed into Matt's ear... then another is in his face as two more FEDS arrive on scene, out of breath from running. Stover takes the gun from Matt, hands it to Flannel shirt who glances at the other feds...

STOVER
Put him in the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

Chock-full of SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT. Matt's now cuffed, jammed in between a couple big guys. Flannel Shirt wipes the blood from his nose...

FLANNEL SHIRT
Great-- it's broken...

MATT
Next time identify yourself.

The guy looks at Matt.

FLANNEL SHIRT
Hey, maybe we should pull over, try again, this time without the sucker punch. See how well you do.

MATT
Why wait?

The guy makes a move for Matt but is shoved back into the side of the van by another agent.

STOVER
That's enough.

Matt and the Flannel Shirt glare at each other across the space. Stover looks at Matt's Retired badge.

STOVER
Who you working for? Kenny Kristo?

MATT
I can't say.

STOVER
Cut it out, Scudder, you're not licensed, so you don't have privilege. And this--
(tosses Matt his "retired" badge)
--gives you about as much legal authority as a fuckin mailman. So the sooner you tell me what you're doing hanging with known drug dealers, the sooner you can get to an AA meeting and not talk about it.

MATT
I'm trying to find Ray and his buddy, what's-his-name, the real tall one?

Matt looks at Stover.

MATT
You know, the two guys, killed Marie Gotteskind?

They all look back at him.

STOVER
I don't know who you mean.

MATT
Really? They're going around saying they're on the DEA payroll. Usually right before they chop someone into little pieces.

STOVER
You keep shaking that tree, Scudder, all you're gonna get is a face fulla bird shit.

MATT
That's a swell metaphor, but I think you know who I'm talking about. Was Gotteskind looking at Kenny?

STOVER
I can't answer that, but maybe Mrs. Kristo can.

Matt looks at him.

STOVER
Although, we haven't seen her around for a while. Have we guys?

And Stover snaps his finger.

STOVER
Hey, I know, maybe you should go talk to the brother, Peter. Seeing as she used to spend a lotta time over there.

Matt takes that in as Stover looks at the other agents.

STOVER
You know what? I was wrong. This guy doesn't know a fucking thing.

Stover bangs hard and loud on the wall behind the driver.

STOVER
We're done here.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Matt stands there, rubbing his wrists, watching the van pull away. When he finally turns, we see his face is tense, getting angrier by the minute.

EXT. PETER KRISTO'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

As Peter crosses the street to the shitty building. He looks dead. His eyes are red; his face, wan and cheerless. His clothing looks like it's all been run over. He enters the building, trips on the first step, goes down and cuts his lip.

INT. PETER'S ROOM - DAY

Kind of place with a hotplate instead of a kitchen. Peter comes in, right away takes a packet of smack from his pocket and starts to put together a fix. He doesn't notice Matt sitting there in the ragged armchair. Matt watches him a long moment, then...

MATT (OS)
In the program, they have this saying.

Peter jumps out of his skin.

PETER
Scudder. Jesus--

MATT
Don't give up five minutes before the miracle happens.

Peter stands there frozen. He really needs to finish what he's just started.

MATT
Of course, the flip side of that one is-- if you do give up, you'll never know.

PETER
What are you doing here?

MATT
Admiring your wallpaper.

Matt gets up out of the chair now, and moves to a wall full of DRAWINGS. All are of Carrie.

PETER
Those are studies I did for the painting.

In one, she's nude, looking back at us over her shoulder.

MATT
You do them all here?

PETER
We had to. She wanted it to be a surprise for Kenny.

MATT
And was he?
(looks at Peter)
Surprised?

PETER
What do you want?

Matt looks at the drawings.

MATT
You and Carrie put the DEA onto your brother, didn't you?

Peter stares at the works spread out on the counter.

MATT
I wouldn't blame you for hating the guy. I mean, it's not just that he has a beautiful wife, and it's not just that he's got all that money while you work some get well job making donuts. What would really get me is how he can be around all that junk and never use.

PETER
(beat)
Carrie had nothing to do with it.

Peter sits down, sets his works on the table in front of him.

PETER
About nine months ago, they go to Bermuda for their anniversary. Carrie asks me to watch the house.

He shakes his head, stares at the tabletop.

PETER
I'm there maybe a day, I find some cash Kenny hadn't locked up. Right away, I don't even think about it, I go to Queens, to this guy I know to score...

MATT
And you get busted.

Peter nods, takes a moment, then:

PETER
I get put in a room with this woman DEA agent. She's so nice to me...
(then)
I give up Kenny like that.

MATT
Of course it didn't hurt that you were in love with his wife.

PETER
You know, sometimes I think he left that money out on purpose.

MATT
Yeah, I'm sure that's what he did. I'm sure this is all exactly what he wanted to happen.

PETER
What do you mean?

MATT
That agent who busted you? The nice one? She was killed by the same two men who got Carrie.

PETER
How did they know about--

MATT
They stole her files.

Peter sits there a moment, letting the implications of what Matt has just said sink in.

PETER
Oh, God...

Suddenly Peter wipes the paraphernalia off the table with his arm. He sits there, his head in his hands and starts to shake. Matt starts for the door...

MATT
Tell your brother I'm done.

Peter looks up.

MATT
I'll return his money tomorrow.

PETER
Does Kenny know? About me...

MATT
Not unless you tell him.

And Matt walks out. Peter waits a moment, then gets down on his hands and knees and starts picking his shit up off the floor.

EXT. TIME SQUARE - NIGHT

As TJ walks along wearing new boots. The icy WIND picks up and RAIN starts to fall.

A BLACK LINCOLN NAVIGATOR pulls to the curb and TWO BALLERS jump out and now fall in step behind TJ.

BALLER #1
Yo, son, those new timbos?

TJ keeps walking.

BALLER #1
Yo, son, I'm talkin to you...

TJ stops, turns around and looks at the trouble that now stands a few feet away on the sidewalk. One of them now opens A KNIFE and they shove TJ into the dark space between two stores.

BALLER #1
You got somethin', doesn't belong to you.

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - NIGHT

As Matt crosses to the bar we saw in the opening. He peers into the window. The place is nicer, more a quaint "tavern" now. In fact the entire neighborhood has changed. Matt turns away...

EXT. TIME SQUARE - NIGHT

As the other baller steps up, puts the knife under TJ's chin.

BALLER #1
You got my jammie, son. My favorite piece.

TJ
I don't got it no more! I threw it in the fucking river!

The two thugs look at him, take him down to the ground, and tear into his backpack. They dump out bags of dried fruit, sunflower seeds, bottles of water.

BALLER #2
Fuckin Sierra sprout ass motherfucker...

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - NIGHT

As Matt sits down on a bus stop bench. Across the street, we see A CAR. A police sedan. It seems to be the only thing LIT UP. Two men sit inside it. One of them is Matt...

EXT. TIME SQUARE - NIGHT

As baller #1 yanks pages of TJ's drawings from the backpack and lets them scatter in the wind.

BALLER #1
What's all this cartoon shit?

But then the kid finds some cash, looks at TJ.

BALLER #1
Yo, son, where you get this loot?

He grabs TJ by the collar...

BALLER #1
You sold my fuckin jammie!

BALLER #2
I'm gonna take them Timbos...

They move to pull TJ's boots off. TJ kicks #2 in the face...

BALLER #2
Motherfucker!

EXT. STREET - ACROSS FROM THE ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

As the kids kick TJ over and over, then run off into the night.

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - NIGHT

As Matt stares at the car across the street. We move towards it now...

ORTIZ (VO)
You need some help, man...

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - MORNING

Our opening shot. Matt's old partner, ORTIZ, behind the wheel. Matt looking out the window at the bar across the street.

ORTIZ
I don't care, you wanna mess up your own shit, but you gonna mess up mine, too. I need to know you gonna watch my back, not come fallin' through the door behind me.

Matt says nothing.

ORTIZ
Anyway.
(shrugs)
That's all I'm saying.

Matt then turns and looks at Ortiz.

MATT
Fuck you.

As Matt starts to get out of the car:

ORTIZ
Manana.

JUMP CUT TO: THE STREET

As Matt gets out of the car, kicks the door closed and we...

JUMP CUT TO: THE BAR

As seen now from across the street, Matt running outside and firing off shots into the Bonneville...

JUMP CUT TO: THE ALLEY

From inside the alley this time as the banger is blown off his feet, starts crawling. Matt appears at the mouth of the alley.

JUMP CUT TO: A WOMAN

As she SCREAMS and we...

CUT BACK TO: THE BENCH - NIGHT

As Matt sits there a moment, staring into the street. He then gets up and walks away...

INT. MIDTOWN NORTH - DETECTIVES ROOM - NIGHT

Quiet. Matt and Jo Durkin are the only two in here. They both have cups of coffee in front of them. She looks at her notebook.

JO
So the brother, Peter, he just stays sober, doesn't try to score, none of this ever happens. Right?

MATT
I guess not.

JO
And he was clean how long before he gets popped in Queens?

MATT
Almost two years.

JO
You'd think he could make it that long, he could make it forever.

MATT
A day's the most anyone can make it.

She considers him a moment as he slides his chair back.

MATT
Watch yourself, Jo.
(gets up)
These guys might even be tougher than you are.

She smiles, watches him turn to go.

JO
You did good work, Matthew. Just like the old days.

MATT
I notice you didn't say the <u>good</u> old days.

And now she smiles at him.

JO
They weren't so bad.

EXT. COVENANT HOUSE - NIGHT

It's POURING RAIN now as TJ, in his socks, his face cut and bleeding, stands at the entrance, a two-hundred plus pound TRUSTEE (a homeless person who works there) mans the door.

TRUSTEE
You just missed curfew, son.

TJ
Fine, I'll sleep on the floor.

TRUSTEE
(closing the door)
You know the rules, doors close at ten.

TJ
Look, I can't be out in the rain, I can't get wet...

TRUSTEE
What are you, like fuckin Broom Hilda? You gonna melt you get wet?

The guy shuts the door in TJ's face. TJ looks up at the pouring rain, hurries across the street to a PAYPHONE. He fumbles in his pockets for change. Starts to dial, but he starts coughing so hard now, he has to double over.

INT. MATT'S HOTEL - NIGHT

Howie sleeps with his head on the desk. Matt comes in bangs the BELL and nearly launches the clerk out of his chair.

MATT
Any messages?

HOWIE
Uh-- JR called.

Matt looks at him, gets on the elevator.

MATT
TJ?

HOWIE
Whatever.

MATT
He leave a message?

HOWIE
Uh, let me think...
(then)
Oh, yeah. He's at Bellevue.

Matt stops the doors with his foot.

INT. BELLVUE ER - DAY

As Matt comes through the doors. He sees TJ sitting in a plastic chair, shivering.

MATT
What happened? Who did this?

He looks at Matt, his teeth chattering, but he can't speak. A MALE NURSE comes over with some hot towels and begins to drape them over TJ's legs..

MALE NURSE
Here you go, sport.

MATT
What's with the towels?

MALE NURSE
Said he had some pain in his legs. Looks like someone threw him a good beating.

MATT
Why's he shaking so bad?

MALE NURSE
Detox.

MATT
What?

Matt looks at TJ who has trouble focusing on Matt now.

MALE NURSE
He comes in, first thing he asks for some demoral or a phentinol patch.

MATT
So?

MALE NURSE
The junkies all do that, come in here, think they can get free morphine.

MATT
Look... *nurse*... the kid's not an addict. Hell, he won't even drink a can of soda.

MALE NURSE
I'm sorry, and *you are*?

MATT
Right now I'm the one telling you to go get a fucking doctor over here. Now.

MALE NURSE
He's underage, and he won't tell me who his parents are. By law I have to call Social Services. Let them decide what to do with him. Now if you'll excuse me...

MATT
Hey--

He turns to walk away, Matt grabs the guy and pulls him back by his white coat.

MATT
You don't wanna walk away from me.

CUT TO: A CURTAIN BEING PULLED BACK

As a young DOCTOR turns and faces Matt.

DOCTOR
He got worked over pretty good, but he was also out in the rain. Either one could have triggered the crisis.

MATT
Crisis?

DOCTOR
He's a Sickler.
(then)
He's got Sickle Cell Anemia.

Matt looks at the curtain.

DOCTOR
You didn't know that?

MATT
No...

DOCTOR
Oh. Well, a sickler gets a cold or a chill, anything that makes a normal person's blood cell count go up -- anytime the body gets ready to fight something, the red blood cells panic, take on a sickle shape... actually creates a jam in the arteries, the blood gets really thick. Suddenly you're not getting any oxygen...

Matt looks at the curtain...

MATT
What're you doing for him?

DOCTOR
Well, when the blood gets thick like that, it can be pretty painful, so we're hydrating him to help thin it out, giving him demoral for the pain. He knew the drill, got in here early enough, so I don't think it'll go on for too long.

Matt nods and then moves behind the curtain, takes in TJ lying there in the bed. TJ turns and looks at him standing there.

TJ
Don't feel sorry for me.

MATT
I don't.

TJ
How long I gotta be here?

MATT
Depends on well you behave.

TJ looks at Matt.

TJ
My mom said one time I got special blood, that I can never get Malaria.

MATT
Really.

TJ
That's how Sickle Cell got started. In Africa. As a defense against Malaria.

MATT
Where is your mother, TJ?

TJ
Why aren't you a cop no more?

MATT
(beat)
You first.

TJ shrugs, looks up and says to the ceiling:

TJ
I had a crisis one time, I was about eleven. She took me to the hospital, but never showed up to check me out. I guess she thought if she left me there, they'd put me with a nice family. Little did she know. I saw her a few times on the street after that, but that was a while ago.
(then)
I guess she had some issues.

He turns and looks at Matt.

TJ
Your turn.

MATT
I was off duty one night in the summer. I was in a bar in Washington Heights where cops didn't have to pay for their drinks.

TJ
Wait a minute--

MATT
Two kids held up the place. On their way out they shot the bartender in the heart. I chased them out into the street and shot one dead and caught the other one in the thigh.

TJ
I heard this already--

MATT
No, you didn't.
(then)
See, one shot, well, the bullet took a bad hop ...

EXT. THE ALLEY - DAY

As Matt gets to the mouth of the alley, sees the crowd standing there, the WOMAN SCREAMING, cradling a limp body in her arm, a single tiny SHOE on the ground at her feet. Matt drops his gun.

MATT (VO)
It hit a seven-year-old girl in the eye, killed her instantly.

Matt drops down beside the woman who now rocks the girl back and forth. Matt tries to see the child, but the woman pulls away...

MATT
Ma'am--

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

As TJ looks at Matt...

MATT
An inch higher and it would have grazed her head, left a nasty scar, that's all.

TJ
And so they quit your ass? After you took on three bangers by yourself? I don't know anybody that tight.

MATT
Tight?

TJ
Brave.

MATT
I wasn't brave. I was just drunk.

TJ stares at him. Takes Matt's hand. Matt looks at the kid.

MATT
Don't feel sorry for me.

TJ
I don't.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - NIGHT

As the rain comes down hard now.

INT. GIRL'S ROOM - SAME

As the Girl reads on her bed, the dog at the foot. The NURSE sticks her head into the room, says something in RUSSIAN.

GIRL
Okay.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - NIGHT

As the NURSE comes out of the house in her raincoat, gets into the Mercedes and pulls out, drives past the WHITE VAN.

INT. VAN - SAME

The sound of A POLICE RADIO. The two figures inside. The tall one reaches for the door, but the Round One holds him back...

THE ROUND ONE
In a minute.

INT. BELLEVUE - NIGHT

As TJ quietly slips out of bed, keeping an eye out so that nobody sees him. The rain pounds the window as he starts to put on his ripped clothes when he sees a SHOPPING BAG beside the bed.

Scribbled in pen on the side of the bag is: "TO: D. CULPEPPER, PI."

TJ opens it and takes out some NEW TIMBERLANDS, A PAIR OF JEANS, WU-WEAR T-SHIRT and a CELLPHONE.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - MOTHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As the young girl, the DOG behind her, comes into the room. She leans over and drops some EYEDROPS into her mother's open eyes, then sits down beside her mother's bed and starts to read. The dog lays down at her feet.

A moment of just the rain on the roof, and then THE DOG BEGINS TO GROWL. He gets up and leaves the room...

GIRL
Watson?

And now we hear THE DOG BARKING LIKE MAD. And then a loud ZAP! Followed by silence.

GIRL
Watson?

She gets up and we follow her into...

THE OTHER ROOM

As she moves to the front hall, stops cold when she sees the DOG LYING ON THE FLOOR, shaking. The door is AJAR. She gasps, runs back to her mother's bedroom, stops cold as...

The Tall Man appears in the doorway, soaking wet. Before she can scream, he holds out THE STUN GUN and fires a taser at her.

As the Tall Man bends down to pick her up, we see the Round Man sitting by the bed looking at the girl's mother. He drops some drops into her eyes, then leans over and whispers in her ear...

ROUND MAN
You don't know how lucky you are.

INT. KENNY KRISTO'S HOUSE - DAY

As Matt pushes open the door. The place is quiet.

MATT
Hello? Anybody home?

Matt pulls out an envelope full of cash that Kenny had given him and tosses it onto the coffee table. He turns to go when...

PETER (OS)
Where have you been?

Matt sees Peter come out of the kitchen, stringy hair in his tired eyes. The man looks shaky.

PETER
We've been trying to call you...

MATT
Where's Kenny?

PETER
Brighton Beach, with a friend, says he's having the same kind a problem Kenny had.

MATT
His wife?

PETER
Worse.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - DAY

As Matt follows Peter to the entrance where two thick bodied RUSSIANS in tweed jackets and caps immediately brace them.

PETER
It's okay... This is Mr. Scudder. Mr. Landau's expecting us.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - DAY

Where Kenny stands with YURI LANDAU, a big man, broad in the chest with a face straight off one of those Socialist Realist murals of the idealized worker. This is the Russian man of Ray's DEA file.

YURI
Where the fuck am I going to get a million dollars?

He stops, turns as Matt and Peter step into the room.

YURI
You're the detective.

MATT
Matthew Scudder.

Yuri catches sight of the big guy who came up with them.

YURI
Dani, that's a good boy. Go back down to the lobby and keep an eye out.
(then)
Now I post guards. The horse is stolen, so I lock the barn. For what? What can they take from me now? She's fourteen-years-old...

And now we see the woman from the Mercedes come into the room. It's clear she's been crying all day.

YURI
This is Anna, the nurse.

Matt nods to her. She can barely look at him. She rubs the back of the dog, looks away. Matt looks at A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE GIRL. He stares at it as Yuri goes on...

YURI
They took her last night. Call us this morning, tell us not to call the police. I remember Kenny calling me up the other day, put two and two together--

Matt stands there. This is the last place he wants to be. Sucked back into something he just walked away from.

MATT
Mr. Landau, listen, you have to know that -- I'm sorry -- what's your daughter's name?

YURI
Ludmilla. But she calls herself Lucia.

MATT
You have to know that the men who took Lucia have already killed at least two women in addition to Kenny's wife.

Matt lets that sink in, then...

MATT
As things stand, they haven't got the slightest intention of releasing your daughter alive.

Yuri looks at him, horrified.

MATT
In fact, there's a strong possibility that she's already dead.

YURI
No...

MATT
The police know about these two. They know who they are, what they're doing.

Kenny looks at Matt.

YURI
No. No police. You have to help me. Kenny said you would... I'll pay you. I'll do whatever you ask. Please...

Matt tries hard not to look at that photograph of the girl. Matt looks at all of them, looking back at him. Now the PHONE RINGS. And RINGS AGAIN. Yuri picks it up. Matt stands there, listens.

YURI
Hello. Yes. Yes. I understand...
(then)
Please. I want to talk to my daughter. You've got to let me talk to her. I'll give you whatever you want....

Matt watches the man, sees the pain in his eyes as he pleads for his daughter. Suddenly, Matt takes the phone from Yuri.

MATT
I hope the girl's alive, asshole.

The nurse gasps at Matt's tone. Matt keeps Yuri away from him. Silence on the other end. Then...

VOICE
Who the fuck are you?

MATT
I'm the best chance you've got, you wanna get your money. But you better not hurt the girl because she's gotta be alive and all in one piece for any kind a deal to happen. You hear me, rape-o?

VOICE
(beat)
Fuck this shit.

And the line goes dead. Matt hangs up.

YURI
I can't believe you talked to him like that--

KENNY
He knows what he's doing.

But then he looks at Matt, "don't you?"

MATT
The important thing right now is to keep Lucia alive. That means these guys have to know they can't get a nickel out of you until we first know that she's okay.

YURI
But if you make them mad...

MATT
They're already mad.

YURI
But you'll give them an excuse to kill her.

MATT
They don't need an excuse. They're gonna kill her anyway.

Yuri turns away, Matt puts a hand on his shoulder.

MATT
What they need, is a reason to keep her alive. If she is alive, I'll help you get her back, but you have to play it exactly as I tell you. All right?

Yuri looks at Kenny who nods.

YURI
All right.

MATT
How much cash have you got?

YURI
I got damn little right now. Do the bastards want cocaine? I got fifteen kilos of slab ten minutes from here.
(then)
I can maybe get my hands on a few hundred worth of schlock, but I can't guarantee the quality and I'd have to return it.

Kenny exchanges a look with Matt, then turns to Yuri.

KENNY
I got a bit over five hundred in cash. Time comes, I'll run back to the house and get it.

Yuri nods, touched by the kindness of his fellow drug dealer.

MATT
Is there another phone I can use?

YURI
My daughter's room.

INT. LUCIA'S ROOM - DAY

As Matt enters, moves to the phone, picks it up and dials. He paces, looks around the room at the posters of In-Sync, Brittany Spears and so on. He looks at the FAMILY PHOTOS on the chest, the pretty face of Lucia staring back at him. He turns away.

TJ (PHONE)
Culpepper Investigations. Daunte speaking.

MATT
Give me a fucking break.

TJ (PHONE)
Matthew. You just wake up or something?

MATT
The hospital said you left.

TJ (PHONE)
Didn't want some Social Services person come haul my ass away to a foster home.

MATT
I need you to get over to my hotel, get something out of my room.

TJ (PHONE)
What's going on?

MATT
There's a box in my closet. I want you to get it for me. I'm gonna call Howie at the desk, he'll let you go up. A guy named Peter will meet you out front. Give it to him.

TJ
They got another one, didn't they?

WE HEAR THE PHONE RING in the other room.

MATT
Room 812. Key's above the door.

INT. OTHER ROOM - SAME

As Matt comes in and answers the phone.

MATT
Yeah.

THE OTHER VOICE (RAY)
I understand we have a new player in the game. I don't believe we've been introduced.

MATT
I'm a friend of Mr. Landau's. My name's not important.

CUT TO: AN EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF RAY'S MOUTH

As he speaks into the receiver.

RAY
One likes to know who's on the other side.

INTERCUTTING THE TWO OF THEM:

MATT
We're on the same side. We both want this to happen.

RAY
Then all you have to do is follow instructions.

MATT
No, it's not that simple.

RAY
Of course it is. We tell you what to do and you do it. If you ever want to see the girl again.

MATT
You have to convince me she's alive in the first place.

RAY
You have my word on it.

MATT
That's funny.

RAY
It's not good enough?

MATT
Let's just say you lost a lot of credibility when you returned Mrs. Kristo in poor condition.

A pause on the other end.

RAY
There were special circumstances with Mrs. Kristo. Her husband tried to haggle. He sliced the price, and we in turn -- well, you can finish that thought yourself, can't you?

MATT
We're not gonna argue the price.

RAY
You'll pay the million?

MATT
For the girl alive and well.

RAY
I assure you she's both.

MATT
Your assurance means shit to me. Put her on the phone, let her father talk to her.

RAY (PHONE)
I'm afraid that won't--

RECORDED NYNEX VOICE
Please deposit sixty-five cents.

MATT
Out of quarters? Give me your number. I'll call you back.

Ray laughs. CLICK. He hangs up. Matt does the same.

MATT
He'll be moving to another payphone.

EXT. MATT'S HOTEL - DAY

As TJ crosses to it, goes inside.

INT. YURI'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

As the PHONE RINGS. Matt picks it up.

RAY (PHONE)
I'm afraid the girl cannot come to the phone. That's out of the question. How else can we reassure you of her well-being?

Matt covers the mouthpiece, looks at Yuri.

MATT
Something your daughter would know.

Yuri looks at the DOG lying on the floor.

YURI
The dog's name?

MATT
Have her tell you-- no, wait a minute.
(covers the phone again)
They could know that. They've been following her for a week or more. They know your schedule, they've probably seen her walking the dog, heard her call him by name. Think of something else.

YURI
We had a dog before this one. A little black and white one, it got sick and we had to put it to sleep.

Matt takes his hand away from the phone.

MATT
The dog's name. And the name of the dog before this one. Have her describe both of them. Then call me back.

Matt hangs up on him.

INT. MATT'S HOTEL - ELEVATOR - DAY

As TJ rides up in the elevator with an old man. The elevator arrives and TJ walks down the hall to Matt's room. He stands on his tiptoes, reaches up and takes down A KEY.

INT. MATT'S ROOM - DAY

As TJ comes into the room, takes in the austere décor. He looks at the muted TV, then something on the fridge catches his eye. As he moves to it, we see one of TJ's drawings is taped there.

TJ looks at it a moment, then moves to the closet and opens it. He sees a box, the size of large boot box, on the top shelf and takes it down. He wants to open it, but it's wrapped round and round with duct tape.

INT. YURI'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

As Yuri paces, Matt looks at the photographs above the fireplace of the family before the stroke. The woman and the little girl. The father and the little girl.

Matt looks off to where Yuri is in the kitchen with Anna, holding her. Matt turns, looks down the hall, sees LIGHT spilling out of a doorway.

INT. WIFE'S ROOM - SAME

The wife in bed. Staring up at the ceiling. Matt moves to the doorway and stares at her. And now, Yuri comes up beside him.

YURI
The sixteen years we've been married, I don't ever remember her even having a cold. Then one morning, she wakes up, says she can't smell anything.

He looks at Matt.

YURI
You were a policeman?

MATT
That's right.

YURI
You dealt with situations like this?

MATT
No. Not like this.

YURI
Still, your gut must tell you something, no?
(then)
What does it tell you now? Is she alive?

MATT
I don't know.

Yuri nods. Not the answer he wanted. THE PHONE RINGS. The two men quickly move out of the room.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - SAME

As Matt picks up the phone.

RAY (PHONE)
I'd still like to know how you figure in this.

MATT
What's the dog's name?

RAY (PHONE)
Ah, well, let's see, what are the old standbys? Fido? Towser? King. Rover, that's always a popular favorite, isn't it? Or Bingo...

Matt reacts, looks at Yuri who sees his expression and lets out a breath.

RAY (PHONE)
(sings)
I had a dog and Bingo was his name-o,
B-I-N-G-O... B-I-N-G-O...

Ray LAUGHS and Matt closes his eyes: She's dead.

RAY (PHONE)
How about Spot? Run, Spot, run! That's not a bad name for a Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Matt opens his eyes.

RAY (PHONE)
The dog's name is Watson.

MATT
Watson.

Across the room, the big DOG LIFTS HIS HEAD at the sound of his name. Yuri nods.

MATT
And the other dog? The one before?

INT. LAUNDROMAT - SAME

Ray's back to us, standing at a payphone.

RAY
She couldn't tell me what breed the other dog was. She was young when it died. They had to put it to sleep, she said. Silly term for it, don't you think? When you kill something you ought to have the courage to call it that. You're not saying anything. Are you still there?

INT. YURI'S TOWNHOUSE- SAME

As Matt and Yuri stare at each other.

MATT
I'm here.

INTERCUTTING THE TWO OF THEM NOW:

RAY
I gather it was a mongrel. So many of us are. Now the name's a bit of a problem. It's a Russian word and I may not have it right. How's your Russian, my friend?

MATT
Tell me--

RAY
(beat)
I may be saying this wrong.
(then)
Balalaika.

MATT
Balalaika.

And Yuri nods unequivocally, turns and hugs Anna.

YURI
She's alive...

RAY
It's supposed to be the name of a musical instrument, or so she tells me. What do you say, does it strike a chord?

He laughs at his own joke while, Matt, feeling lightheaded, leans against the wall and closes his eyes...

RAY
You have two hours to get the money together.

EXT. MATT'S HOTEL - DAY

As TJ comes out carrying the box just as Peter pulls to the curb, the passenger window glides down and Peter leans over...

PETER
TJ?

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - NIGHT

As Kenny pulls a large satchel from the back seat of his car. Peter pulls up behind him, gets out followed by TJ clutching Matt's box.

INT. TOWNHOUSE - BRIGHTON BEACH - NIGHT

As Kenny comes into the room followed by Peter and then TJ. He looks around. Matt comes out of the kitchen, stops cold.

MATT
TJ... what are you doing here?

TJ
(gives him the box)
Handing you this.

MATT
I told you to give it to Peter. Not to come down here--

TJ takes Matt aside, indicates the zonked Peter.

TJ
Matthew, that dude's all spun. No way I was gonna give it to him.

No time to deal with this now, Matt takes the box from TJ, looks to where Kenny opens the satchel he brought.

MATT
How much have we got?

YURI
Hang on a sec...

Dani, the body guard, now comes into the room and spills the contents of an athletic bag onto the floor, banded stacks of hundreds.

YURI
Keep it separate...

TJ
Holy fucking shit.

Yuri now notices TJ who stares at the cash with his mouth open.

MATT
This is TJ. My associate.

Kenny gives Matt a look as Dani hands him a stack of bills. Kenny slips them from their wrapper, looks them over.

KENNY
Paper's good. Ink looks right. Nice used bills. Looks real enough...

Matt looks at the money.

MATT
We'll repackage them slightly. We'll use the Chase wrappers, but we'll take six bills out of each stack and replace them with real ones, three on top, three on the bottom. What's this make the count?

YURI
Let's see, about two ten in schlock. Kenny brought another six.

KENNY
Puts us right about eight.

The PHONE RINGS.

MATT
That's good enough.

EXT. YURI'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

As Peter slips outside and lights a cigarette. Takes a deep drag. We see Matt on the phone in the window upstairs.

INT. YURI'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

As Yuri and Kenny get the bills ready, Anna moves about the kitchen fixing them all something to eat.

MATT
We have to meet face-to-face. You have to have an opportunity to inspect the money and we have to be able to assure ourselves that the girl is all right.

EXT. PAYPHONE - NIGHT

Ray's back to us.

RAY
And then you people come down on us.

INT. YURI'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

As Anna hands Matt a plate of food. He smiles, sets it down.

MATT
You'll have the girl covered.

RAY (PHONE)
A knife at her throat.

MATT
If you want.

RAY (PHONE)
The edge of the blade up against her skin.

MATT
Whatever. We give you the money. One of you holds the girl while the other makes sure it's all there.

RAY (PHONE)
I don't like this face-to-face business.

MATT
We'll set up fifty yards apart. You'll be in place first, you'll see us arrive. You show the girl, then I come over with the money.

RAY (PHONE)
By yourself?

MATT
Yes.

RAY (PHONE)
Unarmed.

MATT
I'll have a suitcase full of money in each hand, a gun won't do me much good.

RAY (PHONE)
Keep talking.

MATT
You check the money. When you're satisfied, you let the girl go. Your man takes off with the cash. You and I wait until you feel good. Then we go home.

RAY (PHONE)
You could grab me.

MATT
You'll have that knife you keep talking about, a gun, too, if you want one.

RAY (PHONE)
You'll see my face.

MATT
Wear a mask.

RAY (PHONE)
Cuts the visibility.

MATT
(beat)
I already know what you look like, Ray.

Silence on the other end. Kenny looks over from the table.

RAY (PHONE)
What do you know?

MATT
I know you're a fat perving fuck who, if I'd met on the street ten years ago, I'd a thrown you out a fucking window.
(then)
It's been a busy year for you and your boyfriend.

RAY (PHONE)
You know, I could cut the little cunt's throat, send her back to Daddy a chunk at a time.

MATT
Then you're dead.

RAY (PHONE)
Oh?

MATT
Yeah "oh." Hear me on this one, Ray. You kill this girl and I'll make you my lifelong project. I'll find you under whatever rock you squeeze under and I'll put a bullet in your fucking mouth. That goes for you and your rape-o pal. You hear me?

And now all three men are looking over from the table. Yuri is shaking. TJ's eyes are like saucers.

MATT
But if you do this deal, I'll sit on what I know about you. You can go set up shop on the other side of the country. There's plenty of dope dealers in L.A.. Plenty of fine looking women out there, too, love to go for a ride in a pretty new truck.

RAY (PHONE)
(beat)
Where do you wanna do it?

MATT
How about Green-Wood Cemetery?

RAY (PHONE)
I think I know where that is.

MATT
You should, that's where you dumped Leila Alvarez.

RAY (PHONE)
Right.

MATT
There are two entrances on the Fifth Avenue side, one around Twenty-fifth Street, the other ten blocks south of there. Take the Thirty-fifth Street entrance and head north about twenty yards inside the fence. We'll enter at twenty-fifth and approach you from the north.

Matt looks at the clock.

MATT
Say ten-thirty. That gives you over an hour to get there and set up.

RAY (PHONE)
Leila Alvarez. I haven't thought about her in a while. She was so scared...

Matt hangs up, his hands shaking. He sees the other guys looking at him.

MATT
Yuri, have you got a rifle?

Yuri looks at Dani who nods.

MATT
Is he a good shot?

YURI
During the day maybe. Dani's a little nearsighted...

KENNY
Peter was a sharpshooter in the army.

They all look at him. Him? Seriously?

PETER
Was a while ago.

MATT
Give him the rifle.

Matt realizes he's still holding the BOX TJ gave him.

MATT
Excuse me.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

As Matt sets the box down on the sink and begins unwrapping the tape. He pulls it round and round the box and then opens it.

We see A COAT jammed in there. Matt takes it out, unfolds it so that we see TWO GUNS -- a small .22 and Matt's .45 -- and a BOX OF AMMO folded up inside. And beneath that, A PAIR OF HANDCUFFS.

He stares at the .45 a moment, then jacks the clip, checks to see that it's loaded, replaces it, racks the slide and tucks the gun into his waistband.

He then pulls on the coat, puts a finger through the BULLET HOLE in one side. He looks at himself in the mirror, then turns away...

EXT. GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY - NIGHT

As the two cars drive through the big stone gates and on into the cemetery.
Yuri and his bodyguard get out of his car and open the trunk. They take out the money while Matt looks at TJ sitting in the back seat.

MATT
What's the drill?

TJ
(pissed off)
Stay in the car. Lock the doors. Call 911 anything goes down. This is such bull--

Matt shuts the door on him, watches Peter examine a RIFLE with very shaky hands.

MATT
You gonna be okay with that?

PETER
I'll be fine.

And as Kenny shuts the trunk, we...

CUT TO: THE CEMETERY - NIGHT

The tombstones, dark shapes in the moonlight. Now we see TWO FLASHLIGHT BEAMS play over the top, the figures of Matt and Kenny followed by the others now coming into view.

We TRACK WITH THEM as they move through the dark cemetery, Peter holding on tight to the big gun in his hands.

They walk silently past the markers and crypts. Further down the hill, we can see the MOON reflected in the small lake where part of Leila Alvarez was found.

Matt looks at the wall, at the street signs on the other side and slows down so that the others can draw closer. He then gestures for them to fan out a ways without advancing any further south.

That done, Matt turns and faces the pitch-black area where Ray is supposed to be waiting and points his flashlight in front of him, triggers three flashes.

For a long moment the only answer is darkness and silence. Then THREE FLASHES OF LIGHT blink back at him, from a little right of dead ahead.

Matt takes a breath and starts walking flanked by Kenny and Dani, each carrying a suitcase containing the money.

ON PETER

As he kneels down behind a marker, using it as a shooting stand for the rifle. He wipes his sweaty hands on his pants.

ON MATT

As he and Kenny and Dani get halfway there when we hear:

RAY (OS)
That's far enough.

Matt nods to Kenny and Dani who move off, leaving the suitcases for Matt. Matt looks at where Ray is supposed to be, but sees only dark shapes.

MATT
Come out where I can see you. And show the girl.

They move into view. Two forms... and then, as the light gets better, we see that one form is made up of two persons; one of the men has the girl in front of him.

RAY
I've got a knife to her throat. If my hand slips--

MATT
Let's hope it doesn't.

RAY
Then you better bring me the money.

Matt turns and hefts the suitcases, looks back at the others, then starts to slowly approach Ray and his partner.

RAY
That's close enough. Put the bags down. And so you know, Albert has a gun.

Matt looks from Ray and the girl to the enormously tall ALBERT. He points a gun at Matt's face. Ray calls from behind him...

RAY
Open the bags.

MATT
Let the girl go.

RAY
The money first.

Matt looks at the guy, then kneels down and unfastens the straps on one of the cases, lifts the lid to show the money.

MATT
Now let her go.

Albert takes a step forward, reaches for the money, but Matt shuts the lid.

MATT
Let her go.

The guy puts the gun right in Matt's face now.

ALBERT
We oughta shoot this cocksucker.

MATT
Don't change the rules now Ray.

ON PETER

Watching the scene through the gun scope, his hands shaking like mad, so that...

THE VIEW THROUGH THE SCOPE

Jittery, back and forth. Hard to see anything.

ON MATT

Staring back at the guy with the gun, his hand drifting behind, toward his own gun tucked into his pants.

MATT
Let her go.

Ray looks down at the girl, sighs.

RAY
Ah, sweet Lucy. I hate to say good-bye, child.

He lets go of her. Albert grabs the suitcases and hurries off into the dark.

MATT
Lucia...

Even in the darkness the girl looks pale and drawn, her hands clutched together at her waist, her arms tight against her sides.

MATT
Come here.

She doesn't move.

AT THE VAN

Albert opens the door, drops one of the suitcases onto the seat and lifts the lid, flips through the money. He rips off one of the Chase straps, fans out a few of the bills.

IN THE CEMETERY

As Matt crouches down...

MATT
Your father's over there, sweetheart. Go to your father. Go on, go ahead...

She takes a step and then stops. She's unsteady on her feet and she grips one hand tightly with the other.

AT THE VAN

As Albert tosses the bills back into the suitcase, is about to shut it when he stops, looks at his hands. He reaches back and turns on the dome light. His fingers have INK on the tips.

IN THE CEMETERY

Matt is trying to get the girl to move...

MATT
Come on, honey... let's go...

Matt keeps his arm at his side. We see the barest hint of the tip of his .22 now protruding into his palm...

RAY
Go on. Run!

She looks at him, then at Matt. Her eyes are vacant and unfocused.

MATT
Yuri. Call her.

YURI
Luschka! Luschka, it's Papa! Come to Papa!

She recognizes the voice, but doesn't move. Yuri replies with something in Russian and the girl unclasps her hands and takes one step, then another.

MATT
What's the matter with her hand?

RAY
Nothing. She's right as rain...
(gives her a shove)
Go on, kid...

As she draws alongside Matt, he reaches for Lucia's hand. She snatches it away, but we can see that TWO FINGERS ARE BANDAGED. Matt stares coolly at Ray.

RAY
Before you set the terms.

AT THE VAN

As Albert holds a bill up to the light. He grabs another, holds it up as well...

IN THE CEMETERY

There's another burst of Russian from Yuri, and now she's moving faster, but hardly running. She can't seem to manage more than an awkward shuffle.

She gets to her father and he gathers her up in his arms. He holds onto her for dear life. He looks back at Matt...

MATT
Go on, Yuri, get outta here.

Matt watches them a moment, then turns back and faces Ray who now has HIS OWN GUN ON MATT.

RAY
I liked her. She was nice.

Matt looks at him a moment, his expression like he's just bitten into an aspirin.

AT THE VAN

As Albert stares at a bill, gets a dark look. He slams the case shut, gets into the driver's seat of the van and takes a portable walkie from the dash...

IN THE CEMETERY

As Matt just stares back at Ray.

RAY
Why aren't you afraid? I've got a gun on you and you act like it's a fucking water pistol.

MATT
I don't know. Maybe I don't care if you shoot me or not. Or maybe there's a high powered rifle pointed at your head right now...

Ray looks around as we now...

CUT TO: PETER

As the rifle in his sweaty hands slips off the tombstone and into the grass. He fumbles for it.

PETER
Shit...

ON MATT & RAY

Ray looks back at Matt.

RAY
I could still kill you.

MATT
I'm right here. Some ways, you'd be doing me a big favor.

Ray considers this, then...

RAY
No, I think I'll just melt into the shadows now.

ALBERT (RADIO)
RAY! THEY FUCKED US!

Matt raises his arm and SHOOTS RAY point blank in the chest with the little .22. Ray goes down on his back screaming at a high pitch and clawing at his shirt.

AT THE VAN

As Albert fires a blast with the shotgun and Matt throws himself behind a marker and pulls his .45.

IN THE CEMETERY

Albert keeps firing everywhere. He pauses, gets a bead on YURI AND HIS DAUGHTER, is about to shoot when bullets begin whizzing past his head.

ON PETER

Firing from his position. He bolts back, fires again...

AT THE CARS

As Yuri, Dani, and his daughter now get into Yuri's car and drive off...

AT THE VAN

As Albert gets inside, starts it up....

ON MATT

As he sees Ray scrambling away on all fours, LIGHT PLAYS ON HIM and now we see the van moving through the cemetery, jumping as it mows over some of the old markers.

ON PETER

As he runs through the dark with the rifle, stops to set up on the van when Ray shoots him from the ground and Peter goes down, grabs his leg. Suddenly the LIGHT FROM THE VAN is on him as...

PETER
Wait--

Albert hits him with the van. Stops beside Ray. The fat man gets up and pulls himself inside as now...

The VAN STARTS BACKING UP THE WAY IT CAME. Matt gets up and runs after it. Ray fires at him from the front window. Matt keeps on running, slipping and falling as he goes, all the while firing at the receding truck which now backs over monuments and trees.

As they near the other gate, Albert cuts the wheel and the van jerks into a tight turn to one side. For a split second, Matt sees Ray's face in the window and fires until his clip empties.

The van disappears through A CYCLONE FENCE onto the avenue and takes off into the night. It starts to RAIN...

Matt turns, sees Kenny standing over Peter. Peter's leg is at an impossible angle, blood runs from his ear as he reaches for Kenny.

KENNY
No, don't move...

PETER
Kenny, I have to tell you--

KENNY
Shhh...

PETER
No, you gotta know--

Peter's eyes meet Matts for a second, then...

PETER
I loved...

KENNY
(misunderstands)
I know. I know. I love you, too, man.
(holds his brother)
I love you, too.

Kenny holds his brother a moment, then stops, looks at Peter, and we see that he stares up at the dark sky, his eyes wide, but empty.

Kenny looks at him a moment, then slowly stands up, keeps his back to Matt as he looks out over the cemetery.

KENNY
What fucking direction did they go in?

ON KENNY'S CAR

As Matt opens the door and freezes.

MATT
Where's TJ?

KENNY
He's not in there?

MATT
No...

Matt looks off towards the dark graveyard, concerned.

KENNY
Maybe he ran off, panicked when he heard all the shooting.

MATT
He can't be out in the rain.
(starts walking)
We have to find him...

KENNY
He's got a phone, right?

MATT
Yeah...

Kenny takes out his cell phone, holds it out for Matt.

KENNY
What's the number?

INT. THE VAN - SAME

As the two men drive in silence. We then BOOM DOWN to the back where we see TJ lying under the mattress. And now we PUSH IN ON THE PHONE CLIPPED TO HIS BELT...

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

As Kenny listens, then takes the phone from his ear, looks at it.

KENNY
No signal...

Kenny takes a few paces, tries to find a better signal...

INT. VAN - SAME

As Ray rips his shirt open, we see a KEVLAR VEST. He pulls it down at the neck, reaches inside. His hand comes away bloody.

RAY
I'm shot...

He turns, reaches for a towel in the back. TJ doesn't move as Ray reaches around beside his face.

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

As Kenny stops walking, checks his phone...

EXT. A HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK - SAME

Even in the moonlight we can see the place has been neglected; the clapboard needs painting, the shrubbery overgrown. A half-flight of steps leads to a screened-in porch that sags in the middle.

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

As Kenny steps up onto a grave marker, checks the phone.

KENNY
Here we go...

EXT. HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK - SAME

The van turns up a driveway, concrete patched here and there with blacktop that runs along the side of the house to a detached two-car garage.

INT. VAN - SAME

As Albert and Ray get out of the car.

RAY
Albert--

Ray immediately falls onto Albert.

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

As Matt walks over to Kenny...

KENNY
It's ringing--

INT. VAN - SAME

Through the back window, we see Albert, the tall one, reaching for the garage door, pulling it down just as TJ'S PHONE RINGS, the SOUND OF THE SLIDING METAL DOOR OBSCURING THE PHONE AS...

TJ
(whispers)
Hello?

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

As Kenny nods to Matt, then...

KENNY
Where are you, kid?
(then)
Oh, fuck.

MATT
(takes the phone)
TJ?
(listens, then)
Listen to me-- get outta there. Now.

INT. GARAGE - SAME

As TJ peers through a grimy window out at the street.

TJ
Shhhh. Calm down, dawg. It's cool. I'm in the garage. They're inside the house.

INTERCUTTING MATT & TJ:

MATT
Which is where?

TJ
Good question...

MATT
Can you leave without them seeing you?

TJ
I think so...

He slowly raises the metal door, it SCREECHES...

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

As Matt hears it and winces...

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

As Albert helps Ray into a kitchen chair. Ray pulls his shirt off, lifts the bulletproof vest over his head. He whines...

RAY
I've never been shot before. There's a first aid kit, Al, in the bathroom.

Albert walks right into the bathroom and begins taking a loud piss. Ray looks over. Can't believe it. First things first.

EXT. GARAGE - SAME

As TJ slides under the space between the bottom of the door and the driveway. Albert's head in the window above him as the man takes a leak. TJ stays low all the way out to the street. He looks back at the dark porch, RAIN falling all around him now.

TJ
I can't see a number...

MATT
Try next door.

TJ
(looks)
694.

MATT
Okay, now walk away from the house, go to the nearest corner.

TJ
In motion...

TJ gets to the corner and looks up at the sign.

TJ
Fifty-first Street.

MATT
Sunset Park...

They all start walking back for the car.

TJ
I'm gonna keep an eye on 'em, make sure they don't--

MATT
No, TJ, you stay put. You hear me? Just wait for us on the corner. Understand?

But the phone's lost its signal.

MATT
Shit.

Matt runs for Kenny's car now.

INT. HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK - KITCHEN - SAME

As Albert comes out of the bathroom, and picks up the two suitcases and starts down the stairs to the basement.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

A few lights are on in the house. TJ steps into FRAME, moves slowly up the driveway. A LIGHT goes on in the basement.

INT. HOUSE - BASEMENT - SAME

As Albert comes down the stairs with the suitcases and throws them onto the ping-pong table. He opens them, sits down and starts to inspect the money more closely.

RAY
Is any of it real?

Ray now appears at the top of the stairs, clings to the banister as he starts down.

ALBERT
Some.

Ray picks up the STUN GUN off the work bench, stuffs into his pants, covers it with his shirt...

RAY
Let me help you.

Ray stumbles to the table.

ALBERT
Here.
(gets up)
Have a seat.

Ray sits down, keeps the gun in his lap as Albert moves to grab another chair. Ray looks up and sees TJ looking in the window.

RAY
Hey, who is--

And before he can get the rest out, Albert is behind him with the LOOP OF WIRE, pulling it tight around Ray's neck...

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

As TJ backs away, slips in the mud, as the tall man garrotes his fat partner, hauls him right off his feet...

TJ
Shit...

TJ gets up, takes off running across the yard. He looks back at the house, runs smack dab into: MATT. He starts to scream, but Matt covers his mouth as he and Kenny step forward.

MATT
Guess we're in the right place.

CUT TO: WINDOW POV - THE KITCHEN

Where we see Albert just below us sitting at the table eating a bowl of cereal. Kenny jumps down.

KENNY
The tall one's in the kitchen. I didn't see a gun anywhere.

CUT TO: THE FRONT DOOR

As Kenny gets ready to break the glass.

CUT TO: THE BACK

As Matt boosts TJ up to look in the window.

CUT TO: KENNY

Breaking the glass.

CUT TO: THE KITCHEN

Albert doesn't hear a thing, keeps eating.

CUT TO: TJ

As he looks at Matt gives him a thumbs up.

INT. HOUSE - SAME

As Matt now comes through the front door followed by Kenny. They walk to the kitchen and stand there. Albert is seated so that we see him in profile, eating his cereal.

After a moment, he senses something and slowly turns to face them. He says nothing at first, but then...

ALBERT
You can have your money back.

He doesn't resist as Matt cuffs the man's hands behind his back. TJ now steps into the kitchen.

TJ
It's downstairs.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

As Matt starts down the stairs in the dark. He pulls a string in the center of the room and the light comes on. He stares at Ray, now lying on the floor. He sees the knives on the workbench. A stun gun. A cleaver.

KENNY
My God...

He sees Kenny on the stairs now. Matt grabs the two suitcases and brings them up while Kenny stares at the tools.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Albert looks at Kenny as he comes back up the stairs.

ALBERT
You're the husband.

KENNY
So?

ALBERT
I was just wondering.

Matt opens the suitcase on the table, checks the stacks of bills...

MATT
Were you just going to leave Ray down there?

ALBERT
Ray? No, I was going to eat something, then clean up before I left.

MATT
What would you do with him?

ALBERT
Cut him up. Wrap him. There's plenty of Hefty bags in the cupboard.

KENNY
And then what? Deliver him to somebody in the trunk of a car?

ALBERT
No, that was just for you.

He looks at Kenny with those dark eyes, but Kenny doesn't look away.

MATT
You have a choice to make Kenny.
(closes the suitcase)
There's a lot of hard evidence against this asshole. He's got his dead buddy in the basement, not to mention the van in the garage is gonna be full of fibers and blood traces and God knows what else. He oughta be looking at three life sentences, plus an extra twenty or thirty years tacked on as a bonus.

KENNY
Can you guarantee he'll do life?

MATT
Nobody can guarantee anything when it comes to the criminal justice system.

KENNY
What if I make the other choice? You with me?

Matt sees TJ standing outside on the front porch.

MATT
No. I could turn him in and sleep just fine.

KENNY
(looks at Albert)
I don't think I could.

MATT
That's why it has to be your decision.

KENNY
Yeah, well, I guess I just made it.

He puts the gun on Albert.

KENNY
Take it easy, Matt.

Matt then turns and walks down the hall, TJ following.

EXT. AVENUE - NIGHT

As Matt and TJ walk to the subway. Matt checks his watch.

MATT
The shelter's gonna be closed. Take the train back to my place.

TJ
Where you going?

INT. AA MEETING - NIGHT

As Matt takes his seat in the back. A YOUNG GIRL, pretty, the face of an angel, no more than nineteen, stands up to read THE TWELVE STEPS.

GIRL
Step one. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

EXT. HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK - NIGHT

The lights on. The decrepit structure standing there like one of the old tilted markers at Green-Wood Cemetery.

INT. AA MEETING - NIGHT

As Matt stares at the girl as she speaks.

GIRL
Step two. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity...

CUT TO: THE HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK

As Matt steps into FRAME. He stands a moment there looking across the street at the house, then crosses to it.

GIRL (VO)
Step three. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understood him.

CUT TO: THE GIRL AT THE MEETING

As she reads...

GIRL
Step four. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves...

ON MATT

Troubled. Listening to the words, as if for the first time.

GIRL (OS)
Step five. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs...

CUT TO: THE HOUSE - NIGHT

As Matt slowly opens the front door. Stands in the doorway. Staring down the hall. Listening. IT IS DEADLY SILENT. He draws his gun and steps inside, the door closing behind him.

MATT
Kenny?

CUT TO: THE GIRL AT THE MEETING

As she continues..

GIRL (VO)
Step six. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

CUT TO: MATT

Listening, staring at her...

CUT TO: THE HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK

We hear only the occasional creak of a floorboard as Matt now starts down the hall for the lighted kitchen. He gets closer, and we see A BLOODY HANDPRINT ON A WALL, and then he quietly moves into the doorway and freezes.

GIRL (VO)
Step seven. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

WHAT HE SEES

Blood everywhere. On the floor. On the walls.

CUT TO: THE GIRL AT THE MEETING

As she tosses her hair back, continues reading...

GIRL
Step eight. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

CUT TO: THE HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK

Matt turns, sees a smear of blood that leads to the doorway to the basement.

GIRL (VO)
Step nine. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Matt cautiously moves to it, looks down the stairs at...

A BODY

Face down, at the bottom of the staircase. As if it had fallen down the stairs. Or had been thrown down.

CUT TO: THE MEETING

Matt listening as she speaks, we begin TO MOVE AROUND HIM...

GIRL (VO)
Step ten. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

CUT TO: THE HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK

As Matt moves down the stairs, slips in the blood and slides to the bottom next to the man lying there.

GIRL (VO)
Step eleven. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him...

It's Kenny Kristo. Eyes wide open, but empty. His head turned at an impossible angle, looking back. Matt looks to where his arms end in a pool of blood on the floor and we see that both of his hands have been cut off.

CUT TO: THE GIRL AT THE MEETING

As Matt closes his eyes...

GIRL
...praying for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

CUT TO: THE HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK

Matt looks out into the basement. It's dark. We see the figure of Ray still slumped in the chair by the ping-pong table.

As Matt picks himself up, then reaches up to pull the string on the overhead bulb, we see the whites of a pair of eyes and some white teeth grinning behind him.

Matt pulls the light on as we see the figure of Albert behind him, A LOOP OF WIRE IN HIS HANDS. He raises it. Matt turning just as Albert slips the wire over Matt's head.

Matt instinctively puts his gun between his neck and the piano wire, momentarily stopping the wire from biting into his flesh, but he then also inadvertently pulls the trigger, the explosion blinding him while the bullet grazes his cheek, leaving a faint RED LINE along Matt's jaw line on its way up into the ceiling.

Matt tries to reach back for the taller man with his other hand while Albert tries to get his own hand on Matt's gun.
He jams the muzzle up into Matt's chin, Matt yanks the gun and the wire comes out of Albert's hand, but the gun flies with it onto the staircase.

Albert makes a move for it, leaps up the stairs and Matt grabs him from behind, slipping in the thick blood on the stairs and the two men go sliding down, right over Kenny Kristo and back into the dark basement.

Albert grabs a hammer from the workbench and immediately brings it down on Matt's shoulder. Matt topples backwards, falling over the dead Ray in the chair and collapsing the ping-pong table.

Albert steps forward and kicks Matt in the face, brings the hammer down again, this time on Matt's hand as he tries to roll out of the way. Matt sees THE STUN GUN in Ray's hands, in his lap.

Albert now grabs a bloody cleaver from the workbench, takes a step towards Matt and raises it over his head. Matt yanks the STUN GUN from Ray's hands and jams it into Albert's belly. We hear THE LOUD ZAP and Albert folds up and goes down.

Albert doesn't move for a moment. Matt lies there on the floor beside him, breathing hard. He finally sits up and ZAPS HIM AGAIN. Matt then gets up, walks back up the bloody stairs.

CUT TO: THE GIRL AT THE MEETING

As she takes a breath, then...

GIRL (VO)
Step twelve. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...

CUT TO: KITCHEN - HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK - SAME

As Matt grabs his GUN from the top step and slowly starts back down the stairs into the basement...

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

As Albert struggles to his knees. Matt walks up to him. Puts the gun to his forehead. Albert slowly looks up at Matt, his eyes the two black marbles of a rabid animal.

ALBERT
I wanted to--

And Matt SHOOTS HIM before he ever finishes the sentence.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

As Matt comes up the stairs, and stands there in the doorway -- gun at his side as we PUSH ALL THE WAY INTO HIS FACE.

Completely torn by what he's just done.

INT. AA MEETING - NIGHT

As Matt listens to the girl finish.

GIRL
...we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principals in our affairs.

We move around Matt, we now see the RED LINE down his face.

EXT. HOUSE IN SUNSET PARK - DAWN

Now a major crime scene, blue & whites, yellow tape everywhere. Matt stands across the street watching Jo Durkin talk to several DETECTIVES. Jo says something and they all look at Matt. Jo then crosses to him. They stand there a moment.

MATT
You want my statement.

JO
Eventually.
(then)
Go home.

And with that, Jo turns and walks back across the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MATT'S HOTEL - MORNING

As Matt crosses to the building, another AMBULANCE pulls away.

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - MORNING

As Matt comes in and takes off his coat. He pauses as he sees TJ sleeping on the couch, a half-dozen pages of his drawings on the floor beside him. Matt pulls a blanket off the bed and covers the boy with it.

He picks up one of the drawings, then sits down in the armchair and looks at it a moment...

He then looks up from the drawing to the sleeping TJ, Matt's own eyes getting heavy now as he SHUTS OFF THE TV and watches the boy sleep, the drawing slipping from his hands to the floor as he himself now drifts off and we then...

FADE OUT.