

Acolyte

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. A MALL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: SANTA ANITA, CALIFORNIA

A massive facility, the parking lot full.

INT. A MALL - THE FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

HANNAH -late twenties- and MARY -her daughter, age nine- are next in line at a noodle shop.

HANNAH

(to the cashier)

I'll take a number seven, extra wasabi.

(to Mary)

And for you?

MARY

(grins)

Udon soup, please.

Behind them, ALI CHEDID -late forties, Arabic, balding, suit, glasses- looks for a table, a salad and drink resting upon his tray.

Standing with a smile, ERIK -thirties, well-dressed, polite, flawless teeth, handsome- offers him his table.

ERIK

Please.

ALI

(nods)

Thank you.

As Erik leaves-

CUT TO:

INT. A MALL - THE SECURITY STATION - CONTINUOUS

-we see that Ali is sitting in a BLIND SPOT...

...and as Erik moves from one security camera feed to the next, his face always obscured...

...because he knows where each and every camera is.

CUT TO:

EXT. A MALL - THE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

As Erik leaves the mall-

CUT TO:

INT. A MALL - THE SECURITY STATION - CONTINUOUS

-we watch as he walks out of the frame of the last camera,  
his back to us.

CUT TO:

EXT. A MALL - THE PARKING LOT

Erik unlocks the door to a slick, ebony range rover...

INT. A RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

...enters, starts the engine, and slips his cell phone from  
his pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. A MALL - THE FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Carrying their food, Helen and Mary take the table of an  
elderly couple who are standing to leave; two over from Ali  
who is enjoying his salad.

WE BOOM DOWN...

...to find a block of C4 attached to the underbelly of Ali's  
table.

CUT TO:

INT. A RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Erik taps a finger against the screen of his phone.

EXT. THE MALL - FRONT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

A shock wave shatters the wall of glass as a torrent of flame belches forth from the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CONGRESS BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

EXT. THE CONGRESS BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The SECRETARY -50s, fit, perpetual scowl, dark eyes, thick mustache, graying temples, intimidating- walks down the stairs with SIMON -40s, hard-core, brilliant, but impatient- and WESTIN -60s, seasoned, brutal, stoic, ever the hawkish patriot.

As other politicians are drawn to a sea of reporters, they duck off into a waiting limousine: silent and stoic.

INT. A LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

The Secretary opens a celebratory bottle of scotch upturned and generously fills a trio of crystal glasses.

They look tired.

The Secretary lowers the bottle and raises his glass.

SECRETARY

To a thirty-percent,  
congressionally approved increase  
in our budget...

SIMON

...may it never dwindle...

Westin opens his mouth to say something, decides otherwise, and sighs as he drinks, gazing out the window.

FADE TO:

EXT. A SNOW-COVERED LANDSCAPE - EARLY DAY - ESTABLISHING

SUPER: **THREE DAYS LATER**

SUPER: **TWELVE MILES SOUTH OF MACKINAW CITY, MI**

Inundated with a heavy layer of white, the endless expanse of pine trees is etched with frozen waterways and a solitary road which weaves through the landscape like a sole artery.

CLOSE ON

A lone figure jogging steadily down the winding road.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Pulling his feet through the heavy carpet of snow, ROBERT - 30s, athletic, distant, preoccupied with memories of old- maintains a healthy pace.

EXT. THE CABIN - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A rustic two-story on a multi-acre spread with an attached garage, surrounded by trees, on the hidden shores of a forgotten lake.

INT. THE CABIN - THE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hot water cascades over tired muscles.

INT. THE CABIN - THE KITCHEN - DAY

A bagel ejects from the toaster, an omelette is flipped, and the last few drops of coffee fill a carafe.

INT. THE CABIN - THE LIVING ROOM - DAY

A stereo is turned on... a track selected.

A beat... and a classical piece reverberates from hidden speakers, adding to the warmth of the interior.

This music plays throughout the day.

INT. THE CABIN - THE BEDROOM - DAY

A cup of coffee is placed upon the night stand as Robert leans down to kiss his wife HELEN -30s, thin, attractive, kind eyes, strong jawline- who stirs with a smile.

EXT. THE LAKE - DAY

Taking a bite from his sandwich followed by a sip of coffee, Robert stands on the dock, watching the sunrise.

EXT. THE CABIN - DAY

An axe splits a log, the blade sinking deep into the old stump. Robert wrenches it free, places another log, and continues cutting.

INT. THE CABIN - THE LIVING ROOM - LATER

The wood is unceremoniously dumped next to the fireplace.

INT. THE CABIN - THE BASEMENT - DAY

Darkness... and a light is switched on, illuminating the workshop of a carpenter; a large workbench situated in the center of the room, dozens of tools lining the wall, an assortment of rocking chairs in various stages of completion.

The gas heater is primed, a tool is selected, and Robert begins his work.

His movements are slow, but steady... and efficient.

Solace has been discovered through routine.

EXT. THE CABIN - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. THE CABIN - THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

With a final stroke of sandpaper, another completed rocking chair is removed from the bench, and placed on the floor.

Watching him with a soft gaze, Helen stands in the doorway, leaning against the wall.

Catching her look... Robert relaxes, and smiles at her.

HELEN

(smiles)

Hey.

ROBERT

Hey.

HELEN  
Want to hit up Andy's for lunch?

ROBERT  
What day is it?

HELEN  
Tuesday.

ROBERT  
(smiles)  
Meatloaf.  
(winks)  
Good call.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

An old -but well maintained- FORD BRONCO rolls past at a leisurely rate.

INT. A TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Robert sits behind the wheel with Helen beside him, her head leaning upon his shoulder.

EXT. A SMALL TOWN - THE MAIN STREET - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: **MACKINAW CITY, POPULATION 839**

Nestled amongst the small array of family owned businesses-

EXT. ANDY'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

-is the only restaurant in town: a greasy spoon diner with dedicated clientele.

INT. ANDY'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

As Robert and Helen enter, they walk past an elderly man who is reading the newspaper.

On the front page, we see a picture of ALI CHEDID and a headline IMPLICATING HIM AS A SUICIDE BOMBER.

Robert and Helen slip into a booth as the WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

Let me guess...

(to Helen)

...an open faced turkey sandwich -  
hold the gravy- with a side of  
fries and a coke...

(to John)

Meatloaf with a side of garlic  
mashed potatoes, extra gravy, corn -  
if we have it, which we do- and a  
coffee, black.

HELEN

Are we really that predictable?

WAITRESS

Did I get it right?

ROBERT

Yep.

WAITRESS

Then that you are and I'll be  
thanking you for it.

(winks)

It makes my job all the easier.

FADE TO:

EXT. DEAN'S HARDWARE - ESTABLISHING - LATER

INT. DEAN'S HARDWARE - CONTINUOUS

For such a small space, DEAN -50s, reed thin, glasses, cap,  
and overalls- has efficiently stocked the place.

Robert places his basket upon the counter as Helen wanders in  
the background.

DEAN

Hey, Robert.

ROBERT

Hey, Dean.

DEAN

You find everything all right?

ROBERT

For the most part.

DEAN  
The most part?

ROBERT  
A one-and-three-quarters plane  
blade?

DEAN  
(searching)  
Sure thing.

Finding it, Dean slides it onto the counter.

DEAN  
Anything else?

ROBERT  
No, I think we're good.

FADE TO:

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

Again, the wheels of the truck roll past...

INT. A TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

...as Robert sits behind the wheel -staring off in thought,  
content- as Helen sits behind him, leaning against the window  
with a soft smile, lost in memories of her own.

Robert reaches across and grasps her hand, squeezing it  
softly.

She smiles without looking, returning the gesture as she  
closes her eyes.

FADE TO:

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

SUPER: WASHINGTON D.C.

INT. SIMON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sipping his coffee, Simon glances over at a high-end printer  
which begins to churn out pages.

Simon studies the pages as he slips them into a file folder.

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sitting behind his painfully-organized desk, Westin diligently makes his way through a large pile of paperwork.

He pauses at a file which contains a picture of the HANNAH and DAUGHTER from the mall.

He hesitates, eyes lingering, and then closes the file, sliding it aside as Simon enters.

SIMON  
Good evening, sir.

WESTIN  
Evenin'.

...and hands him a folder.

WESTIN  
What's this?

SIMON  
A rendition recommendation.

WESTIN  
From whom?

SIMON  
Mr. Secretary himself.

Westin flips through the pages.

WESTIN  
(a beat, then)  
Everything looks to be in order.

Westin signs a page, closes it, and hands it back to Simon.

WESTIN  
Play it safe. Send in a mid-size,  
but for the love of Christ,  
safeties on. This is a catch and  
release: we keep it simple, we keep  
it quick.

SIMON  
Yes, sir.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE CABIN - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. THE CABIN - THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

A stainless-steel chef's knife moves along the cutting board, slicing onions... soon added to a pan with butter and mushrooms followed by shallots and spinach, pasta boiling nearby, a thick steak being seared.

Behind him, Helen kisses his cheek.

Robert smiles.

Out front, a vehicle approaches. As it turns into their driveway, we see that it is a FEDEX TRUCK.

HELEN

(sighs)

You bought another tool, didn't you?

ROBERT

That, my dear, I did.

Helen heads towards the front with a crooked smile and a shake of her head.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The FEDEX van slows to a stop and parks.

The DRIVER -whose face we do not yet see- shudders at the cold, heads towards the rear, swings open the door, grabs a package, and heads towards the front door...

...which opens.

HELEN

Where's Doug?

DRIVER

He says he's laid up with a bug, but between you and me? I betcha' he's out fishin'.

HELEN

(chuckles)

I wouldn't put it past him.

The Driver hands her the digital clipboard.

DRIVER

Sign here?

Helen takes the clipboard, plucks free the pen, signs her name, and -as she clips the pen back into place- notices that it's sticky...

...but she thinks nothing of it.

We see the driver's face for the first time as he hands her a package: it is Erik.

ERIK  
Have a good evening.

HELEN  
You too.

Erik walks back towards the truck.

Helen turns-

INT. THE CABIN - THE FRONT FOYER - CONTINUOUS

-her eyes vacant, shoulders slumped.

She drops the package, stares down at her hand, smells her fingers, mutters something, and slumps-

-into the arms of a pair of masked men.

INT. THE CABIN - THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

The sound of the van doors being shut as -a few seconds later- the FEDEX vehicle drives by.

A long beat...

...and the music abruptly stops...

...but Robert takes little notice.

Pasta drained, topping spread across the steak which is placed upon a cutting board with the chef's knife, and carried into the-

INT. THE CABIN - THE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Robert pauses... features still.

CLOSE ON

A lighter sparking flame, the tip of an ebony cigarette lit, ember glowing, smoke inhaled.

Sitting at the opposite head of the table -with an armed BODYGUARD perched behind him- MESSENGER -40s, thick-spectacles, bored yet amused, three-piece suit with the appropriate hat- twirls the lighter between his fingertips.

The two study one another in silence, the carving board lowered onto the table.

ROBERT  
Where is she?

MESSENGER  
Safe.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

THROUGH THE SCOPE OF A BOLT-ACTION RIFLE we see the cross-hairs steady on Robert's head.

WE PULL BACK

Perched high in a tree, lying prone upon a branch, a SNIPER watches.

SNIPER  
In position.

INT. THE CABIN - THE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Behind Robert, a pair of heavily-armed, masked men step forward, book-ending him, their weapons lowered with safeties off.

MESSENGER  
Now, if you would be so kind as to answer a couple of-

ROBERT  
(interrupting with a growl)  
Who are you... to rendition me?

We can see that Robert's tone casts a cloud over them all.

MESSENGER  
(taken aback)  
Excuse me?

Robert's eyes burn as he carefully chooses his words; his jaw tight, voice guttural.

ROBERT

If you know who I am, then my wife  
is dead. I'll be tortured, made to  
talk, and killed.

Awkward silence.

ROBERT

If you do not know who I am, this  
is either fate, serving us both our  
dues, or someone's playing you at a  
game you cannot win.

The room goes absolutely cold.

MESSENGER

(hesitating, then)  
Robert...

ROBERT

(growls)  
Last time...

Robert leans heavily against the table, his knuckles cracking  
as his fingers constrict around the hilt of the carving  
knife.

ROBERT

Where... is my wife?

The Messenger swallows hard, doing his best to match Robert's  
tone, but sounding forced, shallow, and afraid in doing so.

MESSENGER

Robert. You will answer my  
questions, and in return, she will  
be-

In the blink of an eye, Robert flings the knife into the  
bodyguards's throat, spins, and -as the bodyguard sinks to  
the floor, clawing at his throat with a gurgled scream-  
surges into the two gunmen as Messenger moves slowly, in  
shock.

In a blur of motion, Robert slaps aside one gunman's weapon -  
which discharges into the wall- and lands powerful blow to  
the other gunman's face, breaking his jaw.

Ignoring the weapons in their hands, Robert slips free a  
pistol from one of their hips, and fires into them at close  
range, killing them instantly.

He calmly turns as Messenger fires his own pistol, the shot going wide, and shoots him in both knees, dropping him to the floor, screaming.

Robert kicks aside Messenger's fallen pistol, pistol whips the man unconscious, places a foot upon the bodyguard's chest, and rips the knife free from his throat.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The sniper's face falls at the sound of chaos and death resonating from his earpiece, lowering his rifle in shock, confused.

SNIPER

Holy shit! He just fuckin'-

Trembling, the sniper slaps his hand to his earpiece, eye to the scope.

SNIPER

(hisses, screaming)

Move in! Move the fuck...

THROUGH THE SCOPE

Covered in blood -none of it his own- Robert stands at the window, staring up at the sniper with a knife clutched in one hand, the dead operative's earpiece in the other, held close to his lips.

ROBERT

(calmly)

Where is she?

SNIPER

Christ!

The sniper fires, a window shatters-

INT. THE CABIN - THE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-but the bullet goes wide, thumping into the wall.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The sniper ejects the spent round -hands trembling- and reloads.

SNIPER  
(mutters, panicking)  
Fuck.

THROUGH THE SCOPE

The dining room is empty.

SNIPER  
Fuck!

INT. THE CABIN - THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Robert passes by the stereo, he pauses to select a track - a haunting classical piece- presses play, twists the volume knob to full, and flicks a switch before moving on.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

A trio of masked men -each armed with a silenced MP7- converge upon the cabin...

...pausing as the exterior speakers crackle to life, the music shattering the silence.

THE FIRST MAN

-rounds the corner, the sound of metal tumbling through air, the chef's knife plunging through the black lens of his goggles, sinking deep into his brain.

THE SECOND MAN

-moves through a thick grove of trees. An arm emerges from the foliage behind him, wrapping around his neck as his own knife is slipped from his side, the blade driven deep into his chest as he is dragged -kicking and screaming- back into the darkness.

THE SNIPER

-panicking, the scream in his earpiece savagely cut off, surveys the scene, desperately clinging to his perch, searching...

CLOSE ON

An AXE resting in a stump... wrenched free by a bloodied hand.

THE SNIPER

-hand to his earpiece, searching-

SNIPER

What the fuck is going-

Beneath him, the axe swings upward, driving deep into the base of the branch. Sniper's perch groans as it snaps, sending him tumbling to the ground.

Rolling onto his back, he cringes, scurrying back.

SNIPER

N-

Swinging the axe like a baseball bat, Robert crushes Sniper's head with the flat side of the axe head.

INT. THE CABIN - THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON THE THIRD MAN

The fabric over his mouth moves in and out with each frantic breath. Side-stepping into the room, his weapon at the ready.

The music is deafening, the room empty.

Creeping towards the stereo... he extends his hand... a gloved finger turning it off.

Blessed silence.

Movement beside him...

...as Robert swings the axe downward, cleaving the man's hand from his wrist.

Screaming the man drops to his knees, clutching the spurting wound, turning to glance up at...

...the head of an axe swinging down into the center of his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Standing at the window, Westin stares out at the city.

Behind him, the door is swung open before SIMON -40s, hard-core, brilliant, but impatient- and MULRONEY -30s, tall, handsome, a bit too confident- enter.

SIMON

Sir-

Westin spins, eyes hard, shoulders tense; a tiger stalking prey.

WESTIN

What the fuck is happening out there?

MULRONEY

The induction crew was slaughtered, sir.

WESTIN

By one man.

MULRONEY

Yes, sir. It would seem so.

Westin glowers, moving closer to the window.

WESTIN

And what are we doing to negate this little anomaly?

MULRONEY

A clean up crew has been notified and will arrive on site within the next half-hour.

SIMON

Satellite Delta has been retasked - which, as you know, is no small feat- but with this weather...  
(trailing off)

WESTIN

Maybe he's dead.

MULRONEY

(exhales)  
Yeah, well, no one likes a "maybe"... sir.

Westin stares out the window, lost in thought.

WESTIN

And the wife?

SIMON  
In custody. En route.

WESTIN  
(a beat, then)  
I want to know... what she knows...  
no matter the method... am I  
understood?

SIMON  
Yes, sir.

FADE TO:

INT. THE CABIN - THE BASEMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON

Messenger slowly opens his eyes, the world a blur as he lifts his head.

WE PULL BACK

Bound by rope, his ankles and wrists are pinned to the work table.

Standing nearby, Robert stares into the flame generated by the floor heater... waiting... an empty SYRINGE in hand... and if sensing the man's consciousness, turns towards him.

ROBERT  
Who do you work for?

MESSENGER  
Homeland Security... well... at  
least that's who bankrolls us.

ROBERT  
Where is she?

Messenger's voice is calm, lucid, and wistful, the drug having taken its desired effect.

MESSENGER  
...drop team took her...

ROBERT  
Where was she taken?

MESSENGER  
I don't know. I'm just part of the  
induction crew.

A thick piece of rubber tubing is tied around Messenger's right leg, just above the knee, pulled tight.

ROBERT  
Why was she taken?

MESSENGER  
Because she was selected... by the Playhouse Initiative... for a role in an upcoming production.

A beat... and Robert presses the button on the drop saw, the sound of the revving engine and the sight of the spinning blade slapping Messenger back to reality.

ROBERT  
Explain.

MESSENGER  
The Playhouse, it's... like a bake sale.  
(thinking, then)  
Say we poison the milk supply at a local school. A couple dozen kids are sent to the ER. Most recover. Your wife, having taken her own life, is found in the woods along with a note, detailing a psychotic breakdown... an extremist position formed... the boilerplate backstory for a patsy... politicians run with it... fear-mongering... and congress ups our budget.  
(sighs)  
Robert, listen. We can w-

ROBERT  
(interrupting)  
My name...

Light reflected upon the metal teeth of a saw, his knuckles white.

ROBERT  
...isn't Robert.

The CIRCULAR SAW ROARS to life and plummets downwards-

CUT TO BLACK:

-as Messenger screams with a futile cry.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE CABIN - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Robert exits the front door, and instead of walking along the road, heads into the woods...

EXT. THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

...trudging through the heavy snow.

He removes a satellite phone from his pocket, and dials a number.

EXT. A MIDWESTERN HOME - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

SUPER: **DUBLIN, OHIO**

Plain, quaint, and simple.

INT. A MIDWESTERN HOME - A HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Half-asleep at his desk, GENERAL OLIVER MCTIEG -60s, chiseled from granite, hard eyes- sits with an unlit cigar clenched between ivory teeth, a glass of scotch in hand.

The phone rings. He hesitates... but answers it with a sigh.

MCTIEG

This is McTieg.

ROBERT (O.S.)

Did you know about this?

McTieg's face falls, eyes wide.

MCTIEG

Acolyte?

ROBERT (O.S.)

I didn't think so.

(a beat, then)

They'll be tracing this. Expect a visitor or two.

MCTIEG

What are you talking about?

EXT. THE WOODS - A ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Robert tosses the phone aside where it lands softly in the snow-

MCTIEG (O.S.)

Hello?

-as he puts out a thumb to an approaching SEMI-TRUCK which slows to a halt, pulling over.

INT. A HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

McTieg hangs up the phone and leans back into his chair, staring out his window.

MCTIEG

(mutters)

Fuck.

EXT. THE WOODS - A ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Robert jogs over and opens the door.

INT. A SEMI-TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Perched high in his seat, the TRUCK DRIVER yawns down at him.

TRUCK DRIVER

You gotta' be real fucked in the head to be hitchhikin' in this shit...

ROBERT

(chuckles)

Tell me about it. Where are you heading?

TRUCK DRIVER

Akron. You?

ROBERT

Detroit.

TRUCK DRIVER

(nods)

Come on, then.

EXT. THE WOODS - A ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Robert pulls himself up into the cab and slams the door behind him as the semi-truck roars off into the night.

FADE TO:

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Westin scowls at his computer screen while Simon sits nearby, poring over a stack of folders.

With a phone to his ear, Mulroney enters, sinking into a chair.

MULRONEY

(to Westin)

The clean up crew's on site.

Mulroney puts his phone on speaker and slides it onto Westin's desk.

WESTIN

What's the word, Edgewood?

EDGEWOOD (O.S.)

Strangely enough, our man's on foot.

EXT. THE CABIN - THE GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The garage door stands open as EDGEWOOD -30s, fast, sleek, gruff, irritable- emerges, pausing to light a cigarette as he leans against Robert's Ford Bronco.

Nearby, his men bag and tag the bodies of the dead, slipping them into the bed of a truck.

EDGEWOOD

He's got a truck, a motorcycle, and a snowmobile, but instead of taking one of these...

Edgewood exits the garage, and walks down the driveway, his eyes studying the woods.

EDGEWOOD

...he seems to have simply walked away... which I find, for some reason, rather unsettling.

Overhead, a helicopter roars past, shining its spotlight down upon the terrain, searching.

INT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Comfortable at the controls, BARRIO -30s, latino, a giant of a man and a soldier to the core- eyes the woods with a steely gaze as behind him...

...EGRET -20s, female, stunning, a smirk always playing upon her lips- kneels with a sniper rifle to her shoulder, harnessed to the frame of the helicopter, silently sweeping a hawk-like gaze across the frigid environment.

INT. THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

DYKSTRA -30s, short, lean, a pure killer- searches the perimeter... and spots Robert's satellite phone which he retrieves, slipping it into his pocket.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Standing at the end of the driveway, Edgewood leans against a BLACK VAN.

WESTIN (O.S.)

And the induction crew?

EDGEWOOD

Presumably, all dead. And the odd thing? He didn't search them. Didn't take a thing. Killed 'em... and moved on.

WESTIN (O.S.)

Presumably?

EDGEWOOD

(mutters)

Yeah, we're still lookin' for one of 'em.

INT. THE CABIN - THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Two soldiers make their way down the steep steps, both of whom pause at the sight of the disfigured Messenger bound to the table, his horrifyingly broken form half-swallowed by darkness.

SOLDIER #1

...Jesus...

Soldier #1 flicks the light switch...

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

...and the cabin EXPLODES, consumed by an enormous fireball, illuminating the night.

EXT. THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Dykstra is lifted from his feet by the blast, the trees bowing before the shock wave.

INT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Startled, Barrio tilts the chopper away from the blast...

...as Egret topples out of it, dangling by harness, but bruised nonetheless.

EXT. THE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Edgewood is flung back against the van, denting the door inward as all of the windows implode.

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The phone goes dead.

MULRONEY

Edgewood?

(a beat, then)

Edgewood?

A beat... and the cell phone rings. Mulroney answers it.

MULRONEY

Yes?

EXT. A CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Wrenching open the door of the van, HACKER -30s, thin, wiry, perpetually nervous, bi-foculs- emerges from within, kneeling down beside Edgewood who lays splayed out, unconscious.

HACKER  
It blew up, sir.

MULRONEY (V.O.)  
Come again?

HACKER  
The cabin. It...  
(hesitating, then)  
...went boom.

MULRONEY (V.O.)  
(a long beat, then)  
Fuck.  
(sighs)  
Casualties?

HACKER  
Most definitely.  
(hesitating, then)  
What would you have us do, sir?

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mulroney rubs his eyes, suddenly tired.

MULRONEY  
Clean up as best you can and  
construct me a cover story. I'll  
be in touch.

Mulroney hangs up, only to be met by silence.

SIMON  
Who the fuck is this guy?

Westin's intercom crackles to life.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)  
The Secretary is requesting your  
presence.

WESTIN  
(mutters)  
Of course he is.  
(sighs)  
Tell him I'll be right up.

ASSISTANT (O.S.)

Yes, sir.

WESTIN

(standing)

Is the wife on site?

SIMON

Yes, sir.

WESTIN

And Dr. Elliot?

SIMON

I believe so.

WESTIN

Good. Assign her to his care, and allow him every method and means in her extraction.

(mutters)

Surely the wife must know just who it is that she married.

SIMON

Yes, sir.

Westin heads for the door, running his fingers through his hair, exhausted.

WESTIN

(sighs)

My God, what a business, this...

FADE TO:

INT. A TORTURE CHAMBER - NIGHT

The room is small, the walls bleak, floor cracked. Helen sits in an aluminum chair, her ankles and wrists bound tight in FULL RESTRAINTS, connected to the chain around her waist.

A solitary light shines down from above, offering little in the way of comfort.

Helen's head snaps up as the thick, iron door unbolts and swings inward. A tall, thin, silhouette enters, pushing a cart before him.

HELEN

Please... where am I?

A weathered hand turns a dimmer switch which grants the room just a little bit more light.

Helen's eyes fall on the cart, its contents the customized toolset of a professional torturer; various shaped and sharpened blades, syringes, and so forth.

HELEN  
(hushed, trembling)  
Why am I here?

Emerging from the shadows, DR. ELLIOT -60s, rail-thin, thick-spectacles, greased-back thinning hair, freakishly-white teeth- pulls a seat up before her, offering a vacant smile.

DR. ELLIOT  
Because my employers have  
questions...

Dr. Elliot removes a silver case, plucks free an ebony cigarette, and lights it, the smoke heavy, almost purple.

DR. ELLIOT  
...in need of answer.

In the blink of an eye, Dr. Elliot produces a scalpel out of thin air, slices it across her cheek, and -as she screams- presses it to her neck. Helen holds her breath, eyes wild, shuddering.

DR. ELLIOT  
And they believe you... to have  
them.  
(a beat, then)  
Do you, Helen?

HELEN  
I don't know.

DR. ELLIOT  
Ah...

Dr. Elliot pulls back the blade and selects a syringe, filling it. Helen's eyes grow wide.

DR. ELLIOT  
...but I soon will. So tell me,  
Helen...

Dr. Elliot smiles, slipping the needle into her arm.

DR. ELLIOT  
...tell me about this husband of  
yours...

FADE TO:

INT. THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Secretary stands at the window, staring out across the  
snow swept landscape.

WESTIN  
Sir?

Westin enters, and closes the door silently behind him.

SECRETARY  
Please. Take a seat.

The Secretary turns and drops the folder Simon gave Westin  
down onto his desk.

SECRETARY  
I didn't send this.

WESTIN  
What? How-

SECRETARY  
I don't know. I'm having forensics  
look into it, but from what I hear,  
they ain't gonna' find shit.  
Whoever did this...  
(motions)  
...wanted us to find that man.

WESTIN  
Why?

SECRETARY  
That is the question of hour.  
Who is he anyways?

WESTIN  
A ghost.

SECRETARY  
(sighs)  
Great... and the wife?

WESTIN  
(shrugs)  
Standard citizen.  
(MORE)

WESTIN (cont'd)  
Her file reads like a school  
marm's. Elliot's handling her  
extraction.

SECRETARY  
Good. How fares the erasure?

WESTIN  
The site's being cleared.

SECRETARY  
And the cover?

WESTIN  
Seems one of our planes went down.

SECRETARY  
Is the FAA playing nicely?

WESTIN  
Yes, sir.

SECRETARY  
Good.

The Secretary sinks into his chair.

SECRETARY  
Y'know, as much as even I despised  
having implemented the fucking  
Playhouse Initiative... it worked.  
By sacrificing a few, we save the  
many; a simple -albeit unethical-  
means to a righteous end. In so  
doing, politicians are in a frenzy,  
funding is secure, and the populace  
is on a patriotic tear. It is a  
sordid piece of work, true, but...  
it works... our current predicament  
notwithstanding. And I want to keep  
it working. Am I understood?

WESTIN  
Yes, sir.

SECRETARY  
Good. Now, go.

Westin stands and turns to leave.

SECRETARY  
Wait.

WESTIN  
 (turning)  
 Sir?

SECRETARY  
 (a beat, then sighs)  
 Tell me... does the word "Acolyte"  
 mean anything to you?

WESTIN  
 No, sir... should it?

SECRETARY  
 In searching for this man's  
 identity, I reached out -  
 begrudgingly- to a few of the more  
 shadowy figures in our line of  
 work... and with each, I was met  
 with a long silence, the word  
 "Acolyte", and the parting click of  
 their phone as they hung up on me.

WESTIN  
 Sorry, sir.

Westin turns and leaves the Secretary alone in his office.  
 A long beat, and the Secretary presses the intercom button.

SECRETARY  
 Debbie.

DEBBIE (O.S.)  
 (a beat, then)  
 Yes, sir?

SECRETARY  
 Is the Archivist on site?

DEBBIE (O.S.)  
 (a beat, then)  
 Does he ever leave?

SECRETARY  
 (mutters)  
 Good point.

EXT. A FABRIC SHOP - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: **DETROIT, MICHIGAN**

INT. A FABRIC SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Patches of fabric, spools of thread, and a broad selection of string fill every nook and cranny of the small, commercial space.

Sitting upon a tall stool, BENJAMIN -40s, tall, gangly, and lean- crochet's a long scarf, humming along to CRYSTAL GALE who sings in the background.

The door chime sounds.

BENJAMIN  
Mornin'.

Benjamin looks up, and freezes.

Looking more than a bit worse for wear, Robert stands before him.

ROBERT  
(smiles)  
Mornin'.

BENJAMIN  
(whispers, stunned)  
Acolyte.

A beat... and Benjamin extends his hand.

BENJAMIN  
(motions)  
What have you been up to?

ROBERT  
Keepin' busy. I got a favor to ask,  
Benji, and hell... you owe me.

BENJAMIN  
How ya' figure?

ROBERT  
Paraguay.

BENJAMIN  
Oh.  
(a beat, then)  
Right.

Benjamin stands and presses one button which locks the front door to the store and then a switch, the wood paneling behind him separating to reveal a vast cachet of WEAPONS.

BENJAMIN

(motions)

Have at it.

Robert selects a DRAGUNOV SVD sniper rifle, two silenced-HK semi-automatic pistols, a Steyr-Aug, a sawed-off, pump-action shotgun, a wicked-looking knife, extra clips, boxes of ammunition, grenades and a pile of fresh clothing.

Robert also selects a boxed MONOCULAR and SHELBY LASER MICROPHONE, tossing it in with his gear.

ROBERT

I'll be taking your truck, too.

Benjamin hesitates... and then tosses Robert the keys.

BENJAMIN

Then that'd make us damn near even.

ROBERT

Really?

BENJAMIN

No, I suppose not.

(a beat, then)

I don't mean to impose or offend,  
but... what'd you get yourself  
into, Ace?

Robert stuffs the last of his supplies into a new duffel bag.

ROBERT

They took her, Benji. I don't know  
who... I don't know why... and I  
don't know where... she's the only  
thing that keeps me sane... I feel  
it waning... drifting away...

(lost)

...they took her...

Silence.

BENJAMIN

Oh.

(a beat, then)

Would you like any h-

ROBERT

No. Thanks, but... this one's  
mine.

BENJAMIN  
Okay. Well, then...  
(nods)  
...good huntin'.

ROBERT  
Thanks.

BENJAMIN  
And hey... good seein' ya.

Again, the two men shake hands.

ROBERT  
You, too.

BENJAMIN  
Don't be a stranger, ya' hear?

EXT. A FABRIC SHOP - DAY

The door to Benjamin's truck opens, the duffel bag placed inside.

He gets in, starts the engine, and pulls out-

EXT. A ROAD - CONTINUOUS

-driving off into the distance.

FADE TO:

INT. A LOFT - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. A LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Edgewood and Dykstra tend to their wounds in the kitchen, each a military surgeon in their own right.

Barrio snores softly, asleep on the couch.

Egret sits at a table, silently cleaning her rifle.

Perched over a workbench, Hacker has disassembled Robert's cellphone, and -having removed a chip- uploads the info to his computer.

HACKER  
Bingo.

EXT. A MIDWESTERN HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - DAY

EXT. A MIDWESTERN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

With a bag of garbage slung over his shoulder, McTieg makes his way down the icy driveway.

Pulling out of the garage, his wife EVI -sixties, matronly, with the smile and eyes of the perfect grandmother- stops alongside him.

EVI  
Need anything from the market?

MCTIEG  
Potato chips and some chocolate milk.

EVI  
That sounds like a disgusting pair.

MCTIEG  
(smiling)  
Don't knock it, 'til you try it, hon.

EVI  
(sighs)  
I'll see what I can do.

MCTIEG  
Drive safe!

As she drives off, McTieg drops the garbage... and then turns to find TWO AGENTS -each hard-nosed, nearly soulless- converging upon him with silenced-weapons drawn.

Mulroney stands in their midst, his hands stuffed deep into his pockets, a cigarette dangling from between his lips.

MULRONEY  
General McTieg?

MCTIEG  
That was quick.

MULRONEY  
Were you expecting someone?

MCTIEG  
Did you read my file?

MULRONEY

Yes.

MCTIEG

(walking past him)

Then why'd you ask?

Mulroney and his men share a look as they follow McTieg inside.

INT. THE HOUSE - THE LIVING ROOM - DAY

A LARGE WINDOW looks out over the lawn, the room full of random antiquities.

McTieg pours himself a snifter of brandy, seeming to ignore Mulroney who sits behind him, his men scattered throughout the room, always at the ready.

MCTIEG

I'd offer up a nip, son, but I'm pretty sure that I'm not supposed to like you.

MULRONEY

Does the word Acolyte mean anything to you?

MCTIEG

Of course, and -as you know- he called me last night.

McTieg paces slowly, amused, glancing out the window, scanning.

MULRONEY

Who is he?

MCTIEG

He's one of mine. Was, that is. Back in the day, counter-assassination was my specialty; kind of a "kill 'em before they kill you" sort a' way of thinkin'- real Cold War part two, shit- and I built myself quite the little team. Acolyte was one 'em. Good kid. Good crew. And we had us a good run, but...

(sighs)

...those days are long over and done with. So, tell me...

(MORE)

MCTIEG (cont'd)  
 did he piss in your yard? Or did  
 you piss in his?

MULRONEY  
 His wife, she's been taken in  
 custody.

MCTIEG  
 On what charges?

MULRONEY  
 Charges...  
 (hesitating, then)  
 ...pending.

MCTIEG  
 So, torture...  
 (sighs)  
 ...so sad... for so sweet a girl...

McTieg calmly pulls back his wrist, a SILENCED PISTOL sliding  
 out from within his sleeve, the safety clicked off as he  
 raises.

MCTIEG  
 Where is she?

Mulroney blanches, raising his hands slightly.

MULRONEY  
 I don't know.  
 (on his look)  
 We've got nine secret prisons  
 throughout the country, General.  
 She could be in any one of the-

McTieg fires, the rounds slamming into the wall, punching  
 into-

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

-the head of one of Mulroney's agents.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the agent on the other side of the doorway reacts,  
 entering with gun drawn.

McTieg shoots him twice -killing him- the man's weapon  
 discharging as he crumples, a round hitting Mulroney in the  
 back, dropping to the floor with a cry.

MCTIEG

Do you at least know the physical location of each facility?

MULRONEY

No, I-

MCTIEG

That's a shame, son.

MULRONEY

Don't-

McTieg shoots Mulroney in the back of the head.

He ejects the clip, finds a new one on the bookshelf, inserts it, pulls back the slide, and pushes the pistol back up into his sleeve.

McTieg takes a deep breath, and sighs, pouring himself another drink.

He stands at the window and raises his glass.

MCTIEG

Good luck, kid.

WE ZOOM BACK, THROUGH A SCOPE, AND-

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

-find Robert perched on a rooftop a couple of blocks away, watching him through the monocular, the laser micro-phone resting before him, a headphone bud in his ear.

MCTIEG (O.S.)

(mutters)

And thanks for the fuckin' mess.

Robert smiles as he packs up his gear.

INT. A DINING COMMONS - DAY

Sipping his ever-present cup of coffee, THE ARCHIVIST -70s, balding, glasses, tweed pants, matching tie, frail, yet witty and not without guile- sits alone in the corner, reading a dog-eared copy of ICE STATION ZEBRA.

The Secretary takes a seat across from him, casually folding his hands before him.

THE ARCHIVIST

(nods)

Hello.

As the Secretary twists the face of his wristwatch, we see that -throughout the dining commons- all the cameras have been deactivated.

The Archivist notices this right away and smiles, both intrigued and amused.

SECRETARY

Hello.

THE ARCHIVIST

My, my, Mr. Secretary... such cloak and dagger; my interest is piqued.

SECRETARY

Allow me to cut to the quick.

THE ARCHIVIST

Have at it.

SECRETARY

Over the course of your storied career, have you ever heard mention of the word "Acolyte" in an operational sense?

The Archivist noticeably hesitates before taking a long pull off of his coffee.

THE ARCHIVIST

Yes, sir. I have.

SECRETARY

Good. What does it mean?

A shadow falls over the Archivist's face as he talks with more than a tinge of deadly seriousness.

THE ARCHIVIST

Forgive me my cynical air of rampant distrust, sir, but when a topic such as this is broached-

The Archivist motions up towards the dead cameras.

THE ARCHIVIST

-in such a way, my mind turns to worry.

## SECRETARY

This is not a Spanish inquisition,  
but merely fishing expedition, I  
assure you.

## THE ARCHIVIST

(hesitating, then)

In regards to the word itself,  
"acolyte" means "a devoted  
follower". In regards to our place  
in the world, the word "Acolyte"  
refers to a retired shadow  
operative whose name is whispered  
with bated breath by the most  
amoral among us; revered like  
children might the bogeyman or  
Bloody Mary.

(grins)

Pretty creepy, huh?

## SECRETARY

But I've searched every corner of  
every database in every department  
and believe you me, there exists  
no mention of "Acolyte".

## THE ARCHIVIST

That is because you live in a  
digital age, while I...

The Archivist stands, finishing his coffee.

## THE ARCHIVIST

...do not.

(motions)

Come with me.

EXT. A PAWN SHOP - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: **PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA**

INT. A PAWN SHOP - CONTINUOUS

EDWIN -50s, a large man with thick bi-focals and a faded  
sweater- sits in his cage, listening to polka while reading  
an Archie comic book.

A shadowy figure enters, the hood of a sweatshirt concealing  
his features, as he approaches the cage.

Edwin sighs, stretches, and reaches under the counter...

...where a sawed-off shotgun hangs on a swiveled pinion. He pulls back the hammer.

EDWIN  
What can I do for ya'?

ROBERT  
For a start...

Robert pulls back the hood to reveal his face with a smile.

ROBERT  
...you can stop pointin' that old  
cannon of yours at me, Eddie.

Edwin brings both hands into view.

EDWIN  
Well, well... the ghost of  
Christmases past. So... where's my  
money, you piece of shit?

ROBERT  
(a beat, then)  
Belize.

EDWIN  
You're goddamned right, Belize.  
That truck had two-point-eight  
million in cash, and you tossed a  
grenade into it

ROBERT  
I know, I know... but in my defense  
we were really, really drunk.

EDWIN  
(mutters)  
Haven't touched tequila since...  
(a beat, then)  
So... what brings you about these  
parts anyway?

ROBERT  
You do, Eddie, or -more to the  
point- your collection.

EDWIN  
Oh? Any particular item of  
interest?

ROBERT  
(hesitates, then)  
A Box.

EDWIN

What? As in cardboard, hat, or shoe?

ROBERT

No, as in... a Box.... all black and shiny.

EDWIN

Ah. Now, see... I do have one of those.

ROBERT

Good to hear. Oh, and... I can't pay.

EDWIN

Then why ask?

ROBERT

Because they took my wife.

EDWIN

(reacting coolly, then)  
Who?

ROBERT

That's what I'm lookin' to find out.

EDWIN

Well, in that case...

Edwin spins in his chair, reaches beneath the counter, and grunts as he lifts up a large, black, acrylic briefcase and places it on the counter.

EDWIN

...I suppose I can afford a loaner.  
(serious)  
But only a loaner. I expect this back.

ROBERT

Thanks.

EDWIN

Wait... do you even know how to use this?

Robert grabs the case.

ROBERT

No...  
 (turns to leave)  
 ...but I know a guy.

EDWIN

(a beat, then)  
 Ah...  
 (returning to his comic,  
 sighs)  
 ...I'll set it up, then. Give  
 Matty my regards.

ROBERT

Will do.

INT. AN ELEVATOR SHAFT - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The ancient service elevator moves down through the floors, one after the other, sinking deep into the recesses of the building.

INT. THE ARCHIVES - CONTINUOUS

The Archivist slides up the door of the elevator, and leads the Secretary down a narrow corridor.

The walls are brick while the doors they pass on either side are steel.

THE ARCHIVIST

To win a war, order defines  
 strategy and conducts method which  
 provides balance, and yet balance -  
 as you well know- is unattainable  
 without an equal degree of counter-  
 balance.

SECRETARY

I don't follow.

THE ARCHIVIST

There is the rank and file, good  
 sir, for which we all serve. There  
 are the shadows, which you and the  
 few or your ilk treat with kid  
 gloves. And then there is the  
 underworld: where the wild ones  
 roam at the behest of but a few,  
 namely the Commander in Chief.

(MORE)

THE ARCHIVIST (cont'd)  
 Operatives with names like  
 Cerberus, Evinrude... Honeybee...  
 Acolyte...

SECRETARY  
 How do you know this?

THE ARCHIVIST  
 Because...  
 (shrugs)  
 ...I'm the Archivist. Throughout  
 this building, every bit of  
 information -no matter how  
 insignificant- has been digitized.  
 Everything, that is...

The Archivist pauses before a door marked 4474.

THE ARCHIVIST  
 ...save the contents of Room 4474.

The Archivist produces a ring of keys and opens the door.

INT. ROOM 4474 - CONTINUOUS

A small, innocuous room: a table and chair -both stacked high with folders- and shelving units, most of them full. A stack of boxes covered by a tarp rests nearby. The room is in complete disarray.

THE ARCHIVIST  
 Well, now... she's a bit due for a  
 dusting, eh? But then again, I  
 haven't been down here in -oh- four  
 years or so.

SECRETARY  
 Why not?

THE ARCHIVIST  
 I used to get mounds of paperwork  
 earmarked for this room daily, but  
 things slowed to a trickle and then  
 stopped altogether.  
 (motions)  
 There's Acolyte-

The ACOLYTE section is huge: two whole shelves.

THE ARCHIVIST  
 -Cerberus-

The CERBERUS folders take up half of a shelf.

THE ARCHIVIST

-Evinrude-

The EVINRUDE folders take up a full shelf.

THE ARCHIVIST

-Red-

A small stack of folders marked with the name RED rest on the floor.

THE ARCHIVIST

-Hatchet-

The HATCHET folders take up a full shelf and a half.

THE ARCHIVIST

-Icarus-

The ICARUS folders take up two-and-a-half shelves.

THE ARCHIVIST

-Edwin and Benjamin whose monikers  
I always found so odd compared to  
the others-

The EDWIN and BENJAMIN folders share a shelf.

THE ARCHIVIST

...but where's Honeybee?

The Secretary reaches for a folder-

SECRETARY

I'll need to-

-but The Archivist stops him.

THE ARCHIVIST

(interrupting)

I'm sorry, sir. You can look, but  
don't touch. And even then I'd  
recommend you glance and don't  
look.

SECRETARY

I don't understand.

THE ARCHIVIST

To access these files, you'll need  
presidential permission. If he  
doesn't grant it, then work your  
way up.

SECRETARY  
(confused)  
What?

The Archivist reaches into his jacket pocket and removes a small stack of business cards wrapped in a rubber band.

THE ARCHIVIST  
Here.

The Secretary takes the card which has an address etched in pencil upon it.

SECRETARY  
What is this?

THE ARCHIVIST  
Someone who might offer you more than I. Tell them the Archivist sent you.

SECRETARY  
I find this... all of this...  
rather unsettling.

THE ARCHIVIST  
You and me both. Now, if you'll  
excuse me...

The Archivist rolls up his sleeves.

THE ARCHIVIST  
...I best get this old room in  
order.

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - LATER

Westin and Simon sit across the desk from one another, the laptop open between them, playing a sound file.

We hear a gun shot... silence, then-

MCTIEG  
Good luck, kid.  
(mutters)  
And thanks for the fuckin' mess.

-followed by static... and the file ends.

SIMON  
Do we send in a follow-up?

WESTIN

I tried, but executive caught wind  
and... well, let's just say that  
this McTieg fellow is protected  
behind Teflon gates of splendor.

The Secretary enters, tossing Simon the business card.

SIMON

What's this?

SECRETARY

I'm not sure. The Archivist, he...  
(sighs)  
...just... go.

SIMON

Yes, sir.

Simon leaves as the Secretary pours himself a drink.

WESTIN

Anything?

SECRETARY

Damned if I know. That old man  
speaks more riddle than rhyme.  
(sighs)  
And here I thought I knew all there  
was to know about this fucking  
game.

FADE TO:

EXT. A MOTEL - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

SUPER: **BIG STONE GAP, VIRGINIA**

An ill-maintained, forgotten structure a mile or so from the  
highway.

INT. A MOTEL - A ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Robert is putting himself through a rigorous -and punishing-  
routine of push-ups, sit ups, and shadow boxing.

INT. A MOTEL - THE BATHROOM - LATER

Robert takes a painfully hot shower...

INT. A MOTEL - A ROOM - LATER

...gets fully dressed, and lays on top of the bed spread, staring up at the ceiling.

FADE TO:

EXT. A PRISON - ESTABLISHING - DAY

SUPER: **WALLENS RIDGE STATE PRISON**

INT. A PRISON YARD - CONTINUOUS

A horn blares, and -conditioned to the sound- the dozens of inmates scattered throughout the yard head back inside.

INT. A CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

An aging inmate nods to a YOUNG INMATE and motions to someone up ahead: from the back he appears slight... short and skinny.

The young inmate brandishes a small -but deadly- SHIV as he nervously approaches his target.

Just as he is about to lunge, his target spins, grasps the inmate's hand, and shoves the man's own shiv up into his neck, pausing for a half-second, before ripping open the man's throat.

This... is MATTHEW; 30s, lean, mean, and an expert in many, many things, killing among them.

CHAOS as guards and inmates react... but Matthew -staying calm- is lost in the midst...

...but the aging inmate watches as Matthew calmly walks to him...

...and slips the shiv into the man's pocket.

MATTHEW

This time, I hand it back. Next time, it's in your back.

Matthew turns and walks away.

INT. A HALLWAY - DAY

Shackled, Matthew is led into a small room-

INT. A ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-where Robert sits waiting for him.

His arm restraints are removed before he sinks into a chair across from Robert, folding his hands together in front of him, a number of bandages covering his forearms.

ROBERT  
(to the guards)  
Leave us.

The guards leave, shutting the door behind them.

As it clicks shut, Matthew leaps across the table, tackling Robert, the wind knocked out of him.

They fight and wrestle: blow for blow...

...ending with both lying on the floor, exhausted.

ROBERT  
Better?

Matthew stands with a groan, offering Robert a hand.

MATTHEW  
Better.

Robert takes it, standing.

ROBERT  
What was that for anyways?

Matthew glares at him.

ROBERT  
Oh. That.

MATTHEW  
She was my dad's. A '67 Mustang  
named black beauty. A fine ride,  
that... and you drove her off a  
fucking cliff.

They sink into chairs across from one another at the table.

ROBERT  
Yeah... sorry about that.

A strange beat... and Matthew softens with a grin.

MATTHEW  
(a beat, then)  
Been a long time, Acolyte.

ROBERT  
Good to see you, Icarus.

Matthew chuckles with a wave of his hand.

MATTHEW  
Please... let's keep it to Matty,  
shall we? I take it Eddie hooked  
us up with this little visit?

Matthew motions to the cameras which have been turned off.

ROBERT  
That, he did.

MATTHEW  
Good man.  
(sighs)  
I miss the old gang.

ROBERT  
You heard from Red at all?

MATTHEW  
I've kind of been out of the loop  
as of late.

Robert reaches into his sleeve...

ROBERT  
Let's change that.

...and produces a strange looking KEY which he slides across  
to Matthew... who grins.

MATTHEW  
Now, you're talking...

Matthew pulls back one of his bandages and -scratching at a  
still fresh wound- slips the key beneath the flesh.

MATTHEW  
...but nothing comes free, right,  
Ace?

Robert -with some effort- lifts the "box" up onto the table.

ROBERT  
I like a good barter.

MATTHEW

Shit, man... what the fuck'd you do for Edwin to get him to let go of one a' these?

ROBERT

Matty... someone took Helen.

MATTHEW

(instantly serious)

Who?

Robert slides a laptop across to him.

ROBERT

I don't know...

Matthew turns on the laptop and plugs it into the box.

ROBERT

...but they're funded by Homeland. I'm thinkin' a black-bag/shadow-ops sort a' set up.

MATTHEW

Grayer than Gray?

ROBERT

Yeah.

MATTHEW

Do I get anything else to go on?

ROBERT

I heard mention of nine secret prisons.

A light on the box glows red as it hums to life.

MATTHEW

That ain't much...

Matthew's fingers fly across the keyboard.

MATTHEW

...but it's somethin'.

(whistles)

Damn, but this bitch can hum.

(thinking, then)

When was she taken?

On the laptop's monitor, Matthew wades deep into the source code of the NSA and Homeland Security... searching...

ROBERT  
Yesterday. Early evening.

MATTHEW  
(a long beat, typing)  
Two females in nine prisons. One  
held in Honolulu, the other in...  
bingo.

With one final keystroke, Matthew spins the laptop.

MATTHEW  
There's your "x marks the spot"...  
but that spot? Damn, son... she  
may look innocent, but that bitch  
looks to be Fort "fuckin'" Knox,  
man.

Robert studies it for a long moment.

ROBERT  
(mutters with a sigh)  
That she does.

FADE TO:

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Westin pours himself a tall drink and slams it back before  
pouring another.

Behind him, Simon waits, a folder in hand, impatient.

WESTIN  
(a long beat, then)  
Proceed.

Simon removes two pictures from the folder and places them  
before Westin: They are grainy, security pictures of ROBERT  
meeting with EDWIN and MATTHEW.

SIMON  
Our techies just pulled these  
images.

WESTIN  
What do they show?

SIMON  
Some very disturbing things.

Simon points at "the box" Robert carries out of the Pawn Shop with him.

SIMON

Do you know what that is?

WESTIN

No.

SIMON

Sir, it's a... it's a fucking box.

WESTIN

What do you mean?

SIMON

It's a... well... to put it simply, a compact supercomputer. A decryption tool. A hacker's wet dream. DARPA spent an ungodly amount to produce six of them, all of which are accounted for, and yet somehow...

Simon tosses down a close-up of Edwin.

SIMON

...he got one from a man with absolutely no physical or digital footprint. A veritable ghost.

WESTIN

Did he build his own? Box, that is...

SIMON

I'd say that's nigh-on north of impossible, sir, but to infiltrate us in such a way could only be done with such an instrument, so... I don't know what to think. Which - of course- leads us to Inmate 48259- (tossing down a paper) -who -asides from that number- doesn't exist anywhere in the system. It would seem only the Warden knows why the fuck he's there, but upon our formal request for information regarding said inmate, we were issued a "cease and desist" order from a prominent, federal judge.

The next picture shows Robert -carrying THE BOX- as he enters the visitor's room from the hallway.

SIMON

But whoever he is, he's a magician. His credentials were perfectly forged. In fact, during his short little visit there, not only did those cameras in that room fail to record their meeting, but our mainframe got hacked like a rabbit tossed into a fuckin' wood chipper.

Simon is noticeably getting worn down by all of this.

WESTIN

Meaning?

SIMON

Meaning, they -whoever "they" are- found her, sir, and in so doing...  
(a beat, then)  
...found us.

WESTIN

(growls)  
Have we any positive news then?

SIMON

We have protocols, sir. Additional security forces have been summoned should you choose to impose lock down. We also have Agent Dykstra and his crew local, casting a net.

WESTIN

Good.

SIMON

And what would you like us to do with the two individuals who have assisted this man?

WESTIN

I want them questioned... and then I want them killed.

INT. A TORTURE CHAMBER - DAY

Dr. Elliot rolls a medical cart -from which two diodes hang by frayed cords from a modified DEFIBRILLATOR UNIT- is wheeled to the table.

HELEN

Why are you doing this?

Wearing latex gloves, Dr. Elliot plugs the machine into the wall and flicks a switch; the unit comes to life with menacing hum.

DR. ELLIOT

Because I'm quite good at it.

He tenderly takes the diodes in hand...

DR. ELLIOT

Because I enjoy it...

...and lowers them down towards Helen's stomach.

DR. ELLIOT

...and because everyone  
breaks...everyone has a secret to  
tell...

He turns a dial-

HELEN

...no...

DR. ELLIOT

(whispers)  
...even if they don't know it.

-and flicks a switch.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The two guards shudder at the sound of her scream, the lights flickering overhead.

FADE TO:

EXT. A PAWN SHOP - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A dark sedan is parked out on the street.

INT. A CAR - CONTINUOUS

With a cell-phone to his ear, AGENT HALLOWAY glances about the street.

AGENT HALLOWAY

Yes, sir?

WESTIN (O.S.)  
See what he knows... and then kill  
him.

AGENT  
Yes, sir.

INT. A PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

The door opens as Agent Holloway enters-

BOOM!

-and is flung back against the wall by a shotgun blast which almost rips him in two.

Seated within his cage -a fresh hole having been punched through the oak edifice, smoking from a hidden shotgun- Edwin's eyes remain on his comic book.

EDWIN  
(mutters)  
See what he knows and then kill  
him. How very original.

Holding his guts in, Agent Holloway tries to stand, but drops to a knee, gasping.

EDWIN  
I've got eyes and ears for a five  
block radius, g-man. If a cricket  
farts, I'll hear it.

AGENT HALLOWAY  
You... fuck...

EDWIN  
(shrugs)  
Been awhile, but every now and  
then.

Agent Holloway reaches beneath his jacket.

Edwin glances up from his comic book.

EDWIN  
Really?

With a dying cry, Agent Holloway unholsters his pistol-  
-as Edwin's eyes return to his comic book-

-and a shotgun round hits the wounded agent full in the face, BEHEADING him.

The body drops to the floor like a sack of lead.

Edwin sighs; reaching for a phone and dialing.

EDWIN  
(mutters)  
Fuck if I'll be cleaning that up.

EXT. A PRISON - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. A MEDICAL BAY - CONTINUOUS

A private, surgical room with a full bathroom.

AGENT MURPHY sits at a small table as Matthew -shackled- is led into the room.

MATTHEW  
Two visitors in one month. New record.

One guard pulls out a chair, the other pushes Matthew down into it.

MATTHEW  
See, now that's why I stay here:  
the service.  
(holding up his wrists)  
You mind?

AGENT MURPHY  
I'll leave those put, if you don't mind.

MATTHEW  
(lowering his hands  
beneath the table)  
Not at all.

GUARD #2  
You got one hour.

As they leave, Guard #1 unplugs the security camera. They close the door behind them.

MATTHEW  
Should I be worried?

AGENT MURPHY  
(a beat, then)  
Yes.

MATTHEW  
(grins)  
Well, all right then.

Murphy removes a black, satin sheaf from his jacket and places it before him.

AGENT MURPHY  
I need to know...

He unrolls it to reveal a dozen different blades.

AGENT MURPHY  
...who you are...  
(selecting one)  
...and what you know... of Robert.

MATTHEW  
(leaning forward)  
Shit, man. That looks wicked. But  
me?

Matthew reaches out and -in the blink of an eye- slips a blade from the sheaf, his shackles nowhere to be seen.

MATTHEW  
I'd a' chosen this one.

Murphy's face turns to ash, but before he can react, Matthew drives the blade up through the bottom of Murphy's jaw, up into his brain... dead in a blink.

MATTHEW  
(still sitting)  
Yes, sir. That woulda' been the  
one.

Matthew removes a BLOODY KEY from his shackle and slips it back into a wound in his forearm.

Matthew stands, studies the shelves, selecting a number of different bottles...

...mixing various solutions with cleaning supplies underneath the sink...

...and then pausing to take a deep breath as he prepares to pour a small bottle into a large container.

He takes a deep breath, hesitates, exhales, and pours the solution into the container.

MATTHEW

10...

He grabs it and heads for the door-

MATTHEW

...9...

-opening it-

MATTHEW

...8...

-to enter-

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

-the empty hallway-

MATTHEW

...7...

-his walk turning into a slight jog, a thick chemical smoke beginning to pour forth from the container.

MATTHEW

...6... 5... 4...

The jog becomes a sprint.

MATTHEW

...3... 2...

Matthew rounds the corner-

-where three guards hang out in a security booth, the door open.

MATTHEW

...1.

Matthew tosses the container towards them, and it EXPLODES in mid-air, drenching them in a thick mist, knocking them out.

Holding his breath, Matthew enters-

INT. THE SECURITY BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

-where he turns off all of the cameras...

...opens all of the prison cells throughout the building...

...and flips the general alarm.

As the sirens blare, Matthew pulls back a band-aid, reaches beneath his skin, and removes the key Robert had given him, using it to open a locker.

Inside, he removes a tactical suit, helmet, and shotgun, loading it with beanbag rounds.

INT. THE PRISON - THE MAIN HOLDING FACILITY - LATER

A crew of embattled guards find themselves on the verge of being overwhelmed...

...when Matthew drives into their midst, taking down inmate after inmate, swinging the butt of the rifle against an inmates jaw as he moves past the fallen guards, ignoring them.

Matthew opens a door, and disappears, the door slamming shut behind him.

Silence.

GUARD #3

Who the fuck was that?

INT. THE MOTOR POOL - CONTINUOUS

Matthew tosses the shotgun aside, enters a police car-

INT. A POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

-rips open the steering wheel column, and tugs free two wires.

MATTHEW

And away...

He sparks them together, hotwiring the car, the engine roaring.

MATTHEW

...we go.

EXT. THE PRISON - CONTINUOUS

Matthew drives off...

...just as the gate is sealed and cordoned off.

FADE TO:

EXT. A LOFT - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. A LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Sitting before an array of monitors, Hacker scans Robert's picture into the computer, and with a press of a button... begins searching for him.

HACKER  
(mutters)  
Last known location...

On screen, pages of information filter past us; images, data streams, chaos...

HACKER  
(mutters)  
...tapping all available security  
cams...

...but Hacker seems to know what he is looking for.

On his monitors, we watch as Hacker pieces together Robert's journey: leaving the prison, at a gas station, at a street cam... on and on, tapping into every available camera... repeatedly following, losing, and finding Robert.

HACKER  
(mutters)  
...motherfucker knows what he is  
doing...

Behind him, the rest of the crew -Edgewood, Barrio, Dykstra, and Egret- is prepping for the task at hand, selecting weapons and gear.

CUT TO:

EXT. A TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

SUPER: **LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA**

With his gear slung over his back, Robert trudges towards the building.

INT. A TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Having just purchased his ticket, Robert heads towards the train now loading.

He moves with his head down, weaving through the expansive building as he exploits the numerous blind spots.

As he nears the platform, we see a YOUNG BOY standing near the ledge playing with a small ball, his mother obliviously talking to her friend.

A train approaches.

The boy drops the ball which rolls towards the edge.

He runs after it-

-trips near the edge-

MOTHER

BOBBY!

-toppling into the path of the oncoming train, and then-

-SNAGGED in mid-air and wrenched back -screaming with horror- back onto the platform.

Holding the kid by his jacket, Robert glares at him.

ROBERT

You just got me noticed, kid.

WE ZOOM INTO A NEARBY SECURITY CAMERA, THROUGH MILES OF FIBER-OPTIC CABLE, AND COUNTLESS HUBS BEFORE-

CUT TO:

INT. A LOFT - CONTINUOUS

-Hacker taps a button, freezing ROBERT'S face on-screen.

HACKER

(whispers)

Why, hello, hello.

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Westin stubs out another cigarette, the ashtray overflowing. The bottle of scotch is nearing empty.

Simon enters carrying a paper bag. He sinks into a seat with a groan... and removes a bottle of scotch, tossing it to Westin.

WESTIN

What now?

SIMON

Good news or bad?

WESTIN

Keeping in line with today's events? I'd call for bad.

SIMON

Agents Murphy and Halloway have gone missing... as have their targets.

WESTIN

(mutters)

Of course they have.

(a beat, then)

And the good?

SIMON

Dykstra and crew pulled a visual on Robert.

WESTIN

Meaning?

SIMON

Meaning they are chasing a man who is sprinting towards us, so now...

(sighs)

I guess now all we can do is to wait and see who's faster.

EXT. A TRAIN STATION - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

SUPER: **WASHINGTON D.C.**

A train pulls into the station...

INT. A TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

... where Dykstra, Barrio, and Edgewood wait.

When the last of the passengers exit, and the train begins to power down, Barrio enters the train... searching.

EXT. A RAILYARD - CONTINUOUS

Following the tracks, Robert trudges off into a field, having exited the train before it had entered the station.

INT. A TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Barrio exits the train with a shake of his head. Dykstra presses a finger to his earpiece.

DYKSTRA  
Nothing down here, love.

EXT. A TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

A powerful wind whips snow past the huddled form of Egret who stands perched upon the top of the building, scanning the surrounding area through the scope of her rifle.

DYKSTRA (V.O.)  
You?

THROUGH THE SCOPE

Far off in the distance, Egret follows the huddled silhouette of Robert.

EGRET (O.S.)  
I got me a potential.

DYKSTRA (V.O.)  
Can you gimp him?

EGRET (O.S.)  
I'm good, sweetheart, but in this weather? No one's that good.

INT. A CELL - NIGHT

Helen is tossed into the corner, where she scurries -chains rattling- as close to the wall as she can, collapsing to hug her knees to her chest.

Dr. Elliot stands in the doorway, lighting an ebony cigarette.

DR. ELLIOT  
Today... was bad. But tomorrow...  
will be worse. Trust me... if you  
have anything to share... anything  
at all... now is the time.

Helen opens her mouth and tries to say something, but is unable to, choking on the words.

DR. ELLIOT  
(nods)  
Until the morrow, then.

She glances up at the SECURITY CAMERA, lowers her head, and begins to weep.

EXT. A TRUCK STOP - ESTABLISHING - EARLY DAY

EXT. A TRUCK STOP PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Robert ELBOWS open the rear-window of a random car, and tosses his gear inside. He unlocks the front door.

INT. A CAR - CONTINUOUS

Upon entry, he reaches beneath the dash, and hotwires the vehicle, turning the heater on full. Putting the vehicle into drive-

EXT. A ROAD - CONTINUOUS

-he pulls out onto the road... and is VIOLENTLY T-BONED by a LARGE BLACK TRUCK, its lights off.

INT. A CAR - CONTINUOUS

Pushing aside the deployed airbag, Robert -stunned- reaches into his bag, searching for a weapon.

A leather-gloved fist SMASHES through the driver's side window, hands clamping down on him as he is-

EXT. A ROAD - CONTINUOUS

-dragged out onto the road by Dykstra who punches him -hard- in the gut, and then knees him in the face, sending him reeling.

Dykstra removes the blade from his side as Robert leans heavy against the side of his totalled vehicle.

Behind Dykstra, Barrio stands with his weapon at the ready.

Dykstra lunges at Robert who -like a force of nature, a feral beast- expertly swats aside the blade, and drives his left fist into the center of the man's throat, crushing his wind-pipe.

As Dykstra sinks to the ground -choking to death, his face blue- Robert pulls free the man's side-arm and shoots Barrio - twice in the chest, once in the head- at point blank range before scanning his surroundings...

...to find Egret in her perch.

EXT. AN OLD WATER TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Watching the events unfold through the scope of her sniper rifle, Egret screams, and FIRES-

EXT. A TRUCK STOP - CONTINUOUS

-the round grazing his shoulder.

Robert spins and sprints towards the building.

Another shot rings out, SLAMMING into one of gas pumps which erupts in a geyser of flame.

INT. A TRUCK STOP - CONTINUOUS

The ATTENDANT stares out the window, as Robert scurries inside.

ATTENDANT

What the fuck ha-

Robert swings out an arm, knocking the surprised young man out in one motion as-

-silenced, automatic gunfire erupts with a high-pitched WHINE-

-bullets etching the wall where the attendant had just been standing-

-and barely missing Robert who dives into an aisle.

EDGEWOOD -carrying a silenced MP5- keeps firing, the bullets punching through assorted goods as Robert moves low to the ground.

Edgewood pauses to reload.

Robert grabs a can of chili, stands, and HURLS it at Edgewood just as he stands, SHATTERING his nose in a mist of red.

Stunned, Edgewood fires blindly, his shots going wide as Robert moves into another aisle.

He drives his elbow into a display case and removes a oak-hilted, gimmicky-looking BOWIE KNIFE.

Edgewood wipes the blood from his nose, and -glowering- strides towards the rear of the store.

He empties one weapon into the last aisle -obliterating food items- and rounds the corner... to find the aisle empty.

A beat... and as he reloads -through the shattered, bullet-ridden remains of the adjacent aisle- Robert lunges at Edgewood, the blade glancing off his shoulder to rip open his cheek. Robert follows through with his shoulder, sending Edgewood reeling.

He fires his weapon, but Robert moves in close, HEADBUTTING his already bleeding nose.

Edgewood falls, the weapon goes sliding.

Robert reaches for it, but has his legs kicked out from under him.

He rolls and stands, coming face to face with Edgewood whose cheek hangs open, revealing a long line of teeth all the way to his back molars.

Edgewood removes his k-bar knife...

...and the two men circle one another.

They fight... and it's not pretty.

For every slash avoided, a forearm, leg, shoulder, or side is slit open.

Soon, both men are covered in blood... and exhausted.

Edgewood lunges at Robert who catches his knife hand, disarming him, but Edgewood FLIPS Robert, slamming him to the floor, his own knife going spinning.

Edgewood stumbles towards the MP5, but is tackled from behind.

Edgewood kicks Robert in the face, stunning him. He grabs the MP5, turns, and the two men wrestle in close quarters.

Edgewood fires the weapon repeatedly -the hot muzzle searing Robert's cheek- as they roll.

Each manages to stand, but Edgewood has a half-second on Robert, leaping into him as he tackles him-

EXT. A TRUCK STOP - CONTINUOUS

-through the glass door.

A large truck swerves to miss them, and -as it does so- a length of CHAIN tumbles out of it's bed.

Robert flips Edgewood overhead, reaches out, grabs the chain, and wraps it tightly around the struggling man's neck.

Choking, Edgewood -his face red as much from lack of oxygen as it is with rage- HEADBUTTS Robert, sending him reeling...

...just as the chain grows taut.

Edgewood is ripped from the earth with a gurgling cry-

-which is silenced by the brittle sound of his neck snapping, his limp body dragged off into the night.

EXT. AN OLD WATER TOWER - LATER

Egret hasn't moved, her rifle held at the steady.

EGRET  
(whispers)  
Come on... come on...

THROUGH THE SCOPE

Fire and Police personnel are on sight, the flames having been extinguished.

EGRET

(whispers)

Peek out, little prairie dog. Give  
me a little peek-a-

Robert suddenly reaches up from beneath her, grabs the barrel of the rifle -the strap of which is tight around her shoulder- and gives it a tug; dragging Egret off of her perch, and sending her to plummet -screaming- down the side of the water tower.

Robert calmly climbs down the ladder, nonchalantly steps over Egret's broken carcass, and limps off into the darkness.

INT. A LOFT - DAY

Hacker stares at his monitors.

HACKER

Is anyone there?

Silence.

A beat... and Hacker flicks a switch, killing all power to the loft.

Sitting in the dark, Hacker massages his brow.

HACKER

(sighs)

Shit.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE WANDERING MAN'S PUB - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Tucked away on a forgotten street of this nation's capital city, the pub offers little in the way of welcome, instead encouraging patrons to steer clear.

A black van is parked out front.

INT. A VAN - CONTINUOUS

Simon sits in the front seat, staring down at the card the Archivist had given him.

Behind him, four heavily-armed agents await his command.

SIMON  
Fifteen minutes... and then come  
find me.

DRIVER  
Your directions are rather... odd,  
sir.

SIMON  
(exhales)  
Yeah, well...  
(opening the door)  
...it's been a rather odd day.

INT. THE WANDERING MAN'S PUB - DAY

Simon enters, the antique bell above the door announcing his presence.

The pub is relatively small, but nice: ancient hardwood floors, antique bar, a couple of tables, a couple of booths, and an impressive selection of alcohol.

Standing behind the bar -playing sudoku at a casual, yet almost impossible, pace- is CERBERUS- a stunning, Irish woman in her early thirties with deep red hair and a casual lilt in her voice.

On the wall directly above her is a wood carving of a THREE-HEADED DOG; the intimidating creature from mythology for whom she is named.

CERBERUS  
What's your flavor?

Simon slides the business card across to her.

SIMON  
Scotch.

CERBERUS  
How ya' like it?

SIMON  
Clean.

Cerberus casually selects a bottle of MACALLAN 50 YEAR and pours him a generous helping, actually -to his amazement- spilling a bit.

CERBERUS

Straight down the hall, door on  
your left, and you'll find who  
you're looking for.

SIMON

Thank you.

CERBERUS

Earpiece and pistol stays with me.

SIMON

I don't-

CERBERUS

(interrupting)

You do.

A beat... and Simon removes the small two-way from within his  
inner ear as well as his side-arm.

CERBERUS

(winks)

Thanks, love.

Simon nods.

INT. THE BASEMENT - DAY

Simon opens the door to find himself standing at the top of a  
steep staircase.

A strange light dances upon his face as he descends... and  
begins to sweat.

The room is vast, yet relatively empty. The floors and walls  
are cobblestone, the ceiling cracked mahogany. A couple of  
pieces of furniture are scattered about, but the centerpiece  
of the room is a large chair where the shaven head of a black  
man can be seen sitting...

...facing an enormous hearth in which burns an impressive  
fire.

Simon takes a deep pull off of the Scotch and walks across  
the floor, his footsteps rather pronounced... but the man in  
the chair doesn't react... and while Simon sweats, the man in  
the chair does not.

Simon sinks into a chair adjacent to him.

The man in the chair is in his 40s, athletic build, and sporting a perfectly-trimmed goatee. Simon sees only the right half of his face, the man staring into the fire.

This is HATCHET.

HATCHET

What can I do for you?

SIMON

I was... uh... given a card.

HATCHET

From whom?

SIMON

The Archivist.

HATCHET

Ah.

(a beat, then)

What can I do for you then?

Uncomfortable with the heat, Simon takes a gulp of his drink, loosens his tie, and opens the top button of his shirt.

SECRETARY

How can you stand it?

HATCHET

(a beat, then)

I was in Panama doing this... thing. I was captured, I was tortured, and in my escape...

Hatchet turns his face full to Simon, and -in so doing- explains the nature of his name: his left eye is missing, and in its place is a four-inch scar from having been hit with an axe.

HATCHET

...this happened.

(turning to the fire)

Ever since then, the only physical sensation my mind can register is heat. And that, only just slightly.

Simon finishes his drink.

SIMON

Just who exactly are you?

HATCHET

(a beat, then smiles)  
I am a terrible man... who does  
terrible things... to people far  
more terrible than I.

SIMON

Is that a threat?

HATCHET

That... is simply an answer to your  
question, now...

(deadly calm)

...I don't care who you are, but I  
am curious as to why you are here.

SIMON

(hesitating, then)  
We've had a brush with Acolyte.

HATCHET

(amused)

A brush...

SIMON

Yes.

HATCHET

In what way?

SIMON

I'm not at liberty to say, but...

Simon rubs his eyes, weary.

SIMON

Who exactly is... this... Acolyte?

Hatchet grins, his eyes never leaving the fire.

HATCHET

A man like me, I suppose.

A long beat...

...and Simon drops his glass, his body weak, vision fading as  
the POISONED DRINK shuts his body down.

SIMON

What kind... of man?

HATCHET

Oh.  
(smiles)  
You know the kind.

SIMON

(whispers)  
I... do.

Simon's eyes glaze, his breathing slowed... dying beside Hatchet whose eyes never once leave the fire.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE WANDERING MAN'S PUB - CONTINUOUS

The van is empty -the agents nowhere to be seen- and being towed away.

FADE TO:

EXT. A HIGHWAY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A gray vehicle -swerving slightly- enters the city.

EXT. A HOSPITAL - DAY

The gray vehicle pulls into a parking spot.

INT. THE GRAY VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

Robert looks like hell: face pale, clothes soaked with blood, some his own, some not.

He takes a deep breath... and wills himself out of the car.

EXT. A HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Robert stumbles, dropping to a knee.

He places two fingers to his jugular, and glances down at his watch.

ROBERT

...seven minutes...

Robert chuckles to himself as he pulls himself to his feet with a groan.

ROBERT  
 ...lights out in seven...

EXT. A HOSPITAL - THE SERVICE ENTRANCE - DAY

A pair of orderlies emerge for a smoke break.

Before the door closes behind them, Robert slinks inside.

INT. A HOSPITAL - THE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Robert darts past a security guard who is flirting with a nurse, and enters the stairwell.

INT. A HOSPITAL - THE STAIRWELL - DAY

Every step upward is one of sheer anguish and pain.

By now, an expanding trail of blood follows after him.

Tears stream down his cheeks as he grinds his teeth, climbing one step...

...after the next...

INT. A HOSPITAL - AN OFFICE - DAY

Standing before a series of x-ray pictures, RED -50s, thick red beard, bald head, glasses, easily six and a half feet tall, imposing as all hell- studies them carefully...

...as behind him the door opens.

RED  
 I requested not to be disturbed.

ROBERT (O.S.)  
 (gasps)  
 Hey, Red.

Red turns to find Robert standing in the doorway; the very visage of death warmed over.

ROBERT  
 I gotta' favor to...

Robert passes out before he manages to finish his sentence... but Red is there to catch him.

RED  
(mutters)  
Shit, Ace...  
(sighs)  
...what'd you get yourself into  
this time?

CUT TO:

EXT. A HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. A HOSPITAL - THE MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Robert awakes among the covered corpses, his wounded having been tended to with a professional hand.

RED (O.S.)  
That was close, Ace.  
(sighs)  
Real close.

ROBERT  
Yeah...

Robert groans, pushing himself up to a sitting position.

ROBERT  
...I know.

Red stands nearby, sipping a cup of coffee.

Behind him, we can see all of the equipment he smuggled down to work on Robert.

Robert studies himself approvingly.

ROBERT  
Nice work, Red.

RED  
(shrugs)  
It's what I do.

Red motions towards a stack of clothes resting nearby.

RED  
I scrounged you up some clothes.

ROBERT  
Thanks.

Robert starts getting dressed.

ROBERT  
The morgue, huh?

RED  
Yeah, well... it's the only place I  
could get you cleaned up without  
admin poppin' in for a peek.

ROBERT  
Good point.

RED  
(a long beat, then)  
What's this all about then?

ROBERT  
Someone took my wife, Red... so  
I'm off to get her back.

Red bristles at this much like the others.

RED  
I see... and yet you are in no  
shape to do any such thing.

ROBERT  
I'm aware of that, doc.

Red sighs, prepping a syringe.

RED  
You always were the stubborn one.

Red sticks the needle in Robert's arm, depressing the  
plunger.

RED  
(sighs)  
This oughta' buy you some time.

Robert sways a bit, fighting a wave of nausea and  
unconsciousness.

ROBERT  
What'd you do?

RED  
I dulled your pain receptors, but  
come the end of the day, should you  
go through the abuse that I reckon  
you're intending to go through, be  
forewarned...  
(smiles)  
...it'll hurt, mate.

ROBERT  
Thanks, Red.

Robert heads for the door.

ROBERT  
Be seein' you.

RED  
Hey, Ace.

ROBERT  
Yeah?

Red extends his hand. Robert shakes it.

RED  
I sincerely hope so.

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Secretary stands with the phone to his ear.

SECRETARY  
What do you mean the Simon's gone  
missing? His team, too? Shit...  
(thinking, then)  
Lock it down. Code Red. Insulate  
the building.

Westin knocks on the open door.

SECRETARY  
What is it now?

WESTIN  
We pulled footage of Robert  
entering St. Joseph's hospital an  
hour ago, and he hasn't left. It  
would seem that we've got this  
little mongrel of ours finally  
cornered.

EXT. A HOSPITAL - DAY

Two black vans and a SWAT TRUCK (huge, holding ten people in  
the rear) pull up to the building.

More than a dozen men -each armed to the teeth- emerge, and enter the building.

INT. A HOSPITAL - A MORGUE - DAY

Robert searches through the lockers and finds a new set of clothes which fit.

As he ties a pair of hiking boots, he hears the door to the locker room open, and feet move towards him.

Three, body-armored men fan out and converge.

One rounds the corner-

-and is savagely clothes-lined.

The two others converge on the sound...

...and are swiftly dispatched, crumpling to the ground.

Robert strips one of them of his body armor, and as he straps it on, the radio crackles to life.

VOICE (O.S.)

Echo 3, what's your status?

ROBERT

(taking the radio)

This is Echo 3. We have an all clear.

VOICE

(a beat, then)

Come again? Who is thi-

Robert turns off the radio, arms himself, and heads for the door.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Robert -crouching low, moving steady, weapon to his shoulder, moving like fluid- rounds the corner and calmly mows down three gunmen.

As he ejects the clip to reload, another gunman appears and open fires-

-barely missing Robert who ducks into a doorway-

-and then instantly ducks back out to shoot the man and move down the hallway.

He pauses by the man's fallen body to snag another clip when-

-BOOM-

-Robert is hit in the back by a shotgun blast, sending him sprawling, his body armor shredded by the shot, his automatic weapon sliding out of reach.

Another shot grazes his arm as he rolls, raises his pistol, and fires: hitting the man in both knees, and -as he sinks, screaming- fires a round into the man's neck. He falls to the floor, choking on a gurgling cry.

Robert pulls himself to his feet with a groan-

-as a concussion grenade is tossed into the hallway.

Robert turns and leaps for the stairwell as it EXPLODES.

Stunned, Robert topples over the handrail and drops three floors, landing HARD.

He cries out as he stands, his left arm having been pulled from the socket, hanging limply by his side. With a vicious shove, he screams as he pushes it back into place.

Unarmed, bruised, and bleeding -with the sound of approaching footsteps overhead- Robert continues to move.

INT. A HOSPITAL - THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Three gunmen move towards the stairwell-

-where the first is met with a blast of cold from a fire extinguisher.

Robert moves into their midst like a phantom, grabbing a knife from the counter, and slashing each man once to cripple...

...and then once to kill.

A shot rings out, grazing his leg.

GUNMAN  
FREEZE! DON'T-

Robert flings the blade as he drops to the floor, the knife sinking to the hilt in the man's throat.

Gunmen swarm to his location.

Crouching behind the counter, Robert pulls a dead gunman to him, takes his main weapon, his pistol, and a LOCK-BACK KNIFE from his side.

By now, there are a half-dozen gunmen in the kitchen, creating the perfect net.

Robert lowers his weapons; exhausted, cornered, and defeated.

None of the gunmen move.

GUNMAN

Come out with your hands up.

A long beat... and two hands appear...

...as Robert stands.

He looks like a visage of death: covered in blood, his wounds numerous, his face pale, and eyes... unblinking.

A gunman strides forward...

...and KNOCKS HIM OUT with the butt of his rifle.

INT. A TORTURE CHAMBER - DAY

Exhausted and thoroughly broken, Helen -trembling from hunger, dehydration, and the cold- sits in the wooden chair, still dressed only in her bra and panties, wearing full restraints.

Dr. Elliot stands in front of her, lighting a cigarette with a smile.

DR. ELLIOT

I've seen both men and women break for far less, my dear, but you... you have been impressive.

HELEN

(softly)

I don't... know... anything.

DR. ELLIOT

(grins)

And I... don't... believe you. And here's where we shift gears, as they say: it would seem my lab, having processed your blood, stumbled upon a certain... anomaly.

(a beat, then)

(MORE)

DR. ELLIOT (cont'd)  
Congratulations, Helen. You're  
pregnant.

Helen -her wet hair hanging down over her face- slowly lifts  
her head, horror mounting.

HELEN  
What?

DR. ELLIOT  
Which means that you now possess  
something which I can leverage  
against you.  
(grinning)  
But not quite yet. We'll save that  
which grows within for last.

EXT. THE ROAD - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The massive SWAT vehicle roars down the street.

INT. THE SWAT VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

Four men sit in somber silence, glaring at their unconscious  
prisoner who sits with his hands cuffed behind him.

A steel wall to their back separates the rear from the cab.

One of them keeps a weapon trained on him at all times, his  
eyes hard.

ROBERT  
(a long beat, then softly)  
Is she alive?

The gunmen don't respond. In fact, they don't know what he  
is talking about.

GUNMAN  
Shut the fuck up, you piece of  
shit.

Robert takes a breath... and exhales-

-while behind his back we see that he has dislocated his  
thumb, sliding his wrist out of the cuffs, clicking his thumb  
back into place.

INT. THE ARCHIVES - ROOM 4474 - CONTINUOUS

Humming to himself, the Archivist is halfway through cleaning the room, the floor having been swept, the shelves dusted.

He takes a sorted stack of about a dozen folders marked CERBERUS, and slips them alongside others.

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - CONTINUOUS

INT. THE SECRETARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Secretary and Westin watch the vehicle clear security and approach the building.

SECRETARY

Well, I'm glad that's over.

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

As the vehicle turns towards the building...

...a BLACK TRUCK SURGES out of an alley, bearing down on it with-

INT. A BLACK TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

-EDWIN behind the wheel.

EDWIN

(mutters)

How the fuck did I pull this straw?

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The black truck slams into the side of the APV-

INT. A BLACK TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

-instantly causing the airbag to deploy, knocking Edwin out.

INT. THE SWAT VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

As the vehicle SHUDDERS with the impact, the man across from Robert glances away for but a split second-

-as Robert moves into him, landing a vicious right, knocking him out.

Robert is a flurry of movement as he takes out one man after the next.

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - DAY

The Secretary and Westin watch as Robert -now armed to teeth-casually emerges from the vehicle, striding towards the building.

WESTIN

(sighs)

You just had to say that, didn't you?

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A dozen, heavily-armed men emerge from the lobby, but before either Robert or them can fire-

-they are cut down in a brutally-efficient manner, dead before they hit the ground.

Robert glances over his shoulder, raising a hand-

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

-as Benjamin and Cerberus -perched on either end of the rooftop- reload.

BENJAMIN

Six and six... split right down the damn middle...just like old times.

Cerberus grins with a wink, her rifle to her shoulder.

CERBERUS

Feels good to be back, little brutha'.

INT. THE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Robert encounters another wave of men, but as he ducks for cover, pinned...

...HATCHET emerges from a stairwell.

Brandishing an AUTOMATIC SHOTGUN with an extended clip, he walks directly into their midst, cutting them down like dry blades of grass.

Chaos as men scurry about in a panic, confused as to how one man can deal out so much death.

Clips are emptied.

A ricocheted round punches a hole in Robert's side.

Silence.

One gunman is left standing, facing Hatchet who calmly reloads.

Everyone else is either wounded, dead, or dying.

The gunman hesitates...

...drops his weapon, and calmly leaves the building.

HATCHET

Wise man.

Hatchet helps Robert to his feet.

ROBERT

Y'know, last time I saw you, you tried to kill me.

HATCHET

That was a while ago...

(sighs)

...and that was a lot of tequila.

ROBERT

Oh, I recall... somewhat.

HATCHET

(motions)

Head on up. I'll scour, post, and secure.

ROBERT

Will do.

(a beat, then)

And thank you.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

We hear Robert's voice in Benjamin's earpiece.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
All of you.

Benjamin can't help but smile.

INT. A STAIRWELL - DAY

Four guards sprint down the stairwell...

...and four guards are killed by the man standing at the bottom, his pistol now empty.

Robert ejects the spent clip, and inserts a fresh one, pausing to lift a shotgun from one dead security guard, and a silenced Heckler&Koch MP-5 from another.

He stumbles, catches himself, breathing hard... he closes his eyes, teeth clenched...

...takes a deep breath, holds it, exhales...

...and moves on.

INT. A HALLWAY - DAY

Two columns of security guards -each heavily armed- jog towards a pair of double-doors.

Behind them, Robert emerges and empties the silenced-MP5 into their backs, cutting them down.

INT. A TORTURE CHAMBER - DAY

Helen -skin pale, eyes bloodshot, teeth blue- sits limp in her seat.

HELEN  
(pleading, weeping)  
Please... I don't know anything...  
I swear...

Dr. Elliot leans back in his seat, lights a cigarette, and sighs.

DR. ELLIOT  
(a long beat, then)  
I believe you.

HELEN  
Then... let me... go.

The door is opened by one of the guards.

GUARD #1

Sir-

DR. ELLIOT

(glowering)

I gave explicit orders not to be-

GUARD #1

He's here. In the building.

DR. ELLIOT

Who?

GUARD #1

Her husband.

Helen smiles, her tense body relaxing.

DR. ELLIOT

(stunned)

Oh.

(a beat, then)

I see.

INT. A CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

As a guard rounds a corner, Robert drives a knife into his throat, drops to a knee, and takes out four approaching security guards, using the man before him as a shield.

INT. A TORTURE CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The guards have joined them in the room, the door open behind them.

Dr. Elliot reaches into his pocket, and removes a set of keys.

DR. ELLIOT

As you have experienced by now, I follow a rigid regimen. I apply my trade with form and function.

HELEN

(softly)

...please...

Dr. Elliot removes a silenced pistol, keeping it trained on her as he kneels to remove the shackles from her ankles.

DR. ELLIOT  
I want you to stand.

HELEN  
(fading)  
...can't...

The Doctor presses the barrel of the pistol under Helen's chin.

DR. ELLIOT  
Stand.

Helen begins to weep as she stands on unsteady feet.

DR. ELLIOT  
I promise you; it will be quick.  
One in the heart...

Dr. Elliot inserts the key into the shackles which cover her wrists.

DR. ELLIOT  
...and one in the head.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Robert strides down the hallway, shooting a guard -point blank- in the chest with the pump-action shotgun.

He unloads into three others and stumbles, a hand to the side of his throat, where a fresh wound leaks.

At the end of the hallway stands a door.

INT. A LARGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of that door, A DOZEN HEAVILY-ARMED MEN stand waiting, weapons trained... awaiting his entry.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Robert drops the shotgun, grabs a fallen MP5, pulls himself to his feet, struggling to stay conscious.

A beat... and he moves towards the door.

INT. ROOM 4474 - CONTINUOUS

The Archivist slips a file into place and turns back to the table where a thick pile rests.

The paper on top is marked HONEYBEE.

He takes the pile in one hand, and pulls back the cloth tarp, revealing BOXES UPON BOXES MARKED WITH THE WORD **HONEYBEE**.

INT. A TORTURE CHAMBER - FLASHBACK

As the shackle falls from Helen's wrists, we see a tattoo of:

A HONEYBEE.

Helen smiles...

...her body stops shaking...

...and in the blink of an eye, she LUNGES upwards and drives her thumb into the guard's throat, crushing it.

As he sinks to the ground, choking to death, the other guard - in a state of shock- scrambles for his gun, but as he turns to cover her, his outstretched hand is grappled-

-a round is fired, catching Dr. Elliot in the stomach-

-and the guard's arm is snapped, his knee kicked out to buckle, and before he can pull in enough air to scream, his neck snapped...

...all of this having occurred in a matter of seconds.

The cigarette limp between his lips, Dr. Elliot forces a chuckle, both hands on the bullet wound, blood seeping. His eyes, however, convey a sense of mounting dread...

...as Helen grabs a diode and strides towards him.

DR. ELLIOT

(groaning)

How? Who-

HELEN

-am I? What? Didn't you read my file?

(winks)

I'm quite proud of that little piece of fiction. Robert never bothered with writing his backstory. Me?

(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)  
 (grins)  
 I saw it as a hobby.

DR. ELLIOT  
 (groaning)  
 But...  
 (chuckling)  
 ...who are you?

HELEN  
 (smiles)  
 I...

She drives the tip of the diode deep into his wound.

HELEN  
 (winks)  
 ...am the Honeybee.

As his face dawns with realization, Helen twists the power dial to the maximum setting.

INT. A LARGE ROOM - DAY

The lights dim with a muffled scream.

As the assembled gunmen stand with eyes focused upon the door...

...as Helen -having changed back into her clothes- appears behind them with a smile: a knife in one hand, a silenced pistol in the other.

She moves into their midst and cuts them down with brutal efficiency.

It is horrifying how talented she is at simply dealing death.

Their weapons chatter away as they fire, but she is fast and elusive, moving with calculated speed and precision, cutting them down like weeds.

She stabs the last man in the gut, and -as he doubles over and she walks past- rams it into his back, leaving it.

She opens the door-

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

-to find Robert on his knees, trembling, propped up against the MP5, soaked in sweat and blood, surrounded by the dead...

A look of fear crosses Helen's face as she moves to him.

HELEN  
(whispers)  
...Acolyte...

Robert raises his head -face pale, eyes bleary- and smiles.

ROBERT  
(softly)  
There you are.

Each places the other's face in their hands, gazing deep into one another's eyes for a long moment...

...before tenderly kissing... and embracing-  
-which causes Robert to groan.

Helen pulls back with a smile, wiping the tears from her eyes. Helen carefully pulls him up onto his feet.

HELEN  
Do you want me to-

ROBERT  
No, I'm... I'll be fine. You just  
go...  
(grins)  
...and be you.

HELEN  
(kissing him)  
I love you.

ROBERT  
I love you, too...  
(sighs)  
... my little honeybee.

INT. AN ELEVATOR - DAY

Heavily armed and wearing a cocky smirk, Erik stands among five security guards before the doors...

...which open, and yet before any of them can exit, Helen - moving like a banshee escaping hell- enters their midst, firing, bullets ripping open Erik's throat as he sinks to the ground to bleed out.

They return fire -a round clipping her shoulder, which bolsters her resolve, eyes hard, teeth set- but they fail quickly, each dead before they hit the floor.

Helen calmly faces us with a smirk -dirty, grungy, spotted with other men's blood, sexy as all hell- as the doors close.

INT. WESTIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Secretary stands behind Hacker who stares at the monitors, witnessing Helen cutting through their forces as if they were children.

SECRETARY  
(mutters to himself)  
Hell hath no fury...

As if hearing him, Helen kills the last man...

...and glances up at the camera with a smile...

...and a wink.

The Secretary instinctively takes a step back.

SECRETARY  
...shit...

Westin appears in the open doorway.

WESTIN  
(motions)  
Bird on deck.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Covered in both the blood of her victims and that trickling forth from a dozen wounds inflicted, Helen moves like a woman possessed; killing one man after the next, moving forward, never slowing her pace, relentless.

The next one panics, turning to flee, only to have a knife flung into his back.

A fallen pistol is retrieved, calmly lifted, and aimed; three shots, three dead men.

Only five remain, horror filling their eyes: no matter how many rounds they fire, they cannot stop this woman.

Two more go down, each double-tapped to the heart...

...the final three flee -one screaming- but are cut down in short order.

A FEMALE ANALYST sits cowering against the wall, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Helen ejects a clip, and reloads.

HELEN  
(motions)  
You best play dead, miss, 'til this  
plays out.

The Analyst nods, and lies down.

HELEN  
(smirks)  
Good girl.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Westin shoulders open the door -passing a yellow "CAUTION:  
WET" sign on the staircase leading up to the rooftop.

A helicopter lands as he reaches the top of the short  
staircase.

Hacker jogs up the stairs as the Secretary follows, but upon  
reaching the top step, he slips on a puddle, his left ankle  
SNAPPING under him as he falls to the gravel roof with a  
scream.

Hacker glances back, but doesn't slow.

SECRETARY  
WAIT! YOU CAN'T JUST...

Hacker joins Westin in the helicopter.

SECRETARY  
FUCK!

The helicopter takes off as the Secretary pulls himself up  
onto his one good leg.

His eyes turns from the departing chopper-

-to the door: beyond which the sounds of death and chaos  
approach.

INT. A STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

A final kill -the bodies of the dead scattered behind her-  
and Helen opens the door.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Ejecting the spent clip of the silenced M16 VIPER (an intimidating weapon), she slaps a fresh one into it's belly.

Locked and loaded, she climbs the exterior stairs leading to the platform...

...to see the helicopter hovering as it moves towards her...

...and the Secretary standing on the ledge facing her.

Helen drops to a knee, aims, and -as it flies overhead- pulls the trigger, emptying the clip into the helicopter.

INT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

The bullets puncture the floor of the chopper, rendering Westin's legs useless, a round catching Hacker below the chin, killing him instantly.

EXT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

However, the pilot pulls a savage bank, escaping.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Helen stands-

HELEN

Shit.

-and tosses aside the weapon.

HELEN

You got that, Evinrude?

EVI (O.S.)

Yeah...

EXT. AN ADJACENT ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

With a compact ground-to-air MISSILE LAUNCHER balanced upon her shoulder, EVI takes aim-

EVI

...I got that.

-and FIRES.

EXT. THE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

The missile leaps up towards the helicopter, a trail of smoke lingering behind it.

Westin glances down in time to see it a half second-

WESTIN

Shi-

-before it slams into the helicopter's engine, the vehicle consumed by flame-

EXT. THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

-sinking down to crash down upon the cops assembled down below who dive for cover, barely avoiding a fiery death.

EXT. AN ADJACENT ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Evi drops the weapon, and casually walks towards the stairwell, tucking her hands in her pockets.

EVI

Well, now...

(smiles)

...I rather enjoyed that.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Helen walks towards the Secretary with a smile and a wink.

The Secretary takes a deep breath, exhales, and grins.

SECRETARY

Not gonna' give you the pleasure,  
bitch.

Laughing, the Secretary leans backwards...

...and falls off the building.

Without hesitation, Helen sprints, dives, slides, removes a pistol from her lower back, extends her arm, and -as the top half of her body hangs precariously over the ledge-

-aims-

-the Secretary stops laughing-

-and fires-

-hitting him square between the eyes-

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

-a half-second before he SLAMS into the pavement.

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Helen smiles, rolls over onto her back, and stares up into the sky with a sigh.

FADE TO:

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Police vehicles swarm towards the building along with military and medical personnel.

INT. THE LOBBY - DAY

Robert lies on the floor of the lobby, staring up at the ceiling, a cigarette between his lips. He looks dead -face pale, eyes bloodshot, lips blue- as he lies in a puddle of his own blood.

A phalanx of SWAT team members enter, stepping over him.

SWAT

CLEAR!

Robert slowly raises his hand.

SWAT

Fuck! We've got a live one!

MEDIC! MEDIC!

A silhouette approaches, and as it enters the light...

...we see that it is MATTHEW dressed in an EMT uniform.

MATTHEW

(to SWAT)

I've got this.

Matthew kneels down next to Robert-

MATTHEW

(chuckles)

You're mad as a fuckin' hatter, you know that?

-smiles slightly, closes his eyes, and passes out.

Matthew drags him to his feet, stumbling slightly, only to be helped by a SWAT member in full riot gear.

MATTHEW  
It's alright, officer, I've...  
(trails off)

The SWAT member flips up the visor of the helmet to reveal HELEN who winks with a smile before flipping the visor back down.

MATTHEW  
Hey, Bee.

HELEN  
Hey, Matty.

Helen and Matthew carry Robert through the chaos, ignored by all.

MATTHEW  
You two were made for each other.

HELEN  
Thanks.

MATTHEW  
(smirks)  
I'm not sure that's a compliment.

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Matthew and Helen carry Robert towards an ambulance, whose back doors are opened by RED-

INT. AN AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

-who is caring for Edwin, whose unconscious body is strapped to a gurney.

MATTHEW  
(motions)  
How is he?

Red steps down with a second gurney.

RED  
Concussion, but he'll be fine.  
(motions)  
And our boy here?

Helen and Matty place Robert upon the bed, buckling him down.

MATTHEW

Beaten, broken, bloodied, and  
bruised... just like I remember  
him.

RED

He never was the subtle one.  
(to Helen)  
And you?

Helen kisses Red upon the cheek.

HELEN

Alive and well.

Matty pushes Robert up into the ambulance.

RED

And worth it, y'know?

HELEN

As are you...

EXT. A ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

We hear Helen's voice through Cerberus' earpiece.

HELEN (V.O.)

...each of you.

Cerberus smiles, waits for the doors of the ambulance to close, and leaves her perch, following Benjamin to disappear into an adjacent stairwell.

INT. THE AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Matty climbs in front next to Hatchet.

MATTHEW

And away we go.

HATCHET

Aye.

EXT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The ambulance pulls away from the curb, waived through the police blockade as the chaos persists.

INT. AN AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Helen sits next to Robert as Red tends to his wounds.

She smiles slightly, brushing her fingers through his hair, and kisses his cheek.

HELEN  
(whispers)  
I'm pregnant.

A half-smile touches upon Robert's lips as he fades in and out of consciousness.

ROBERT  
(whispers)  
I love you.

Helen lays her head down upon Robert's chest, his hand stroking her hair.

HELEN  
(whispers)  
I love you, too...

FADE TO:

INT. ROOM 4474 - DAY

The Archivist has just about finished cleaning up the room which -by now- is impressively organized.

He steps back with a smile: proud... satisfied.

ARCHIVIST  
There we go.

The Archivist reaches into a desk-

ARCHIVIST  
I know it wasn't enough...

-and removes a framed picture-

CUT TO:

INT. A MALL - THE FOOD COURT - FLASHBACK

Hannah and Mary enter the mall, sharing a smile between them as they clasp hands.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 4474 - CONTINUOUS

-of himself, Hannah, and Mary: HIS DAUGHTER AND GRANDDAUGHTER.

ARCHIVIST

...but it was something... my God,  
but it was something...

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 4474 - FLASHBACK

With the room in complete disarray, the Archivist sits on the floor -his eyes red from sorrow and exhaustion- with a computer in his lap, typing.

On the floor beside him, we see a stack of top secret papers entitled PLAYHOUSE.

Pictures of HELEN and MARY join others along with an image of the aftermath of the mall bombing.

On screen, we see the faces of HELEN and ROBERT.

ARCHIVIST

Oh, the things I've only just  
learned. The methods employed by  
hearts so dark...  
(rubs his eyes)  
They've gone too far. They...

He hesitates-

ARCHIVIST

Please forgive this old man's  
vengeful manipulation.

-and pushes the ENTER BUTTON.

ARCHIVIST

(whispers)  
Show them the way.

CUT TO:

INT. SIMON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sipping his coffee, Simon glances over at a high-end printer which begins to churn out pages.

Simon studies the pages as he slips them into a file folder.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 4474 - CONTINUOUS

The Archivist chuckles as he turns, flicking off the light.

ARCHIVIST  
Everything old...  
(smiles)  
...is new again.

He slams the door shut...

...and turns the lock.

FADE OUT: