

ART OF MAKING MONEY

By Frank Baldwin

10/29/07

SUPER THE LEGEND: "CHICAGO, 1985"

FADE IN.

CLOSE ON a TEN-DOLLAR BILL. Alexander Hamilton's face, dashing and regal, stares back at us.

ART (V.O.)
I'll give Dad this -- he loved
spending quality time with his kid.

INT. BEATEN-UP OLDS - DAY

ART WILLIAMS SR., 35, greased hair, chewing a toothpick -- holds the ten-dollar-bill out to 12-year-old ART, a bright-eyed kid in a White Sox cap.

ART SR.
You up for this? Attaboy.

Art Sr. nods out the car window at a diner.

ART SR.
Sit at the counter, where I can see
you. Look for a guy in a Butkus
jersey. When he walks to the
bathroom, take off your cap and put
it on the counter. Got all that? A
Butkus jersey.

ART
How do you know he's gonna walk to
the bathroom?

ART SR.
Girls ask questions. Guys give
orders. Go.

INT. DINER - DAY

Art walks to the counter. He lays down the ten-spot and studies the menu like a veteran, charming the JADED WAITRESS.

ART
What's good today?

She smiles.

WAITRESS
The chocolate milkshakes.

Art nods and closes the menu. He looks around and sees...

A HEFTY GUY in a BUTKUS JERSEY sitting in a wall-booth. No chance the guy will spot Art, because he's busy staring at a HOOKER in RED LEATHER PANTS who sits by the window.

The HOOKER smiles back. She walks to his booth, pauses, then heads toward the bathroom. Butkus follows her.

Art stares after them, fascinated, then remembers his mission and LAYS HIS WHITE SOX CAP on the counter.

ART'S POV through the window: His dad gets out of the car... walks up the block to a PADLOCKED MOVING TRUCK...

... and SMASHES the driver's window with an elbow. He opens the door and climbs in.

INT. MOVING TRUCK - DAY

Art. Sr. pries open the steering column with a screwdriver and expertly hot-wires the ignition.

INT. DINER - DAY

Art watches the truck drive away. He doesn't even see the waitress return with his shake. She raps the counter.

 WAITRESS
Your milkshake, sir.

 ART
Thanks.

He slides her a two-dollar tip. She loves this kid.

EXT. TAYLOR STREET - DUSK

Art walks down the street. He steps to the window of the BENT ELBOW, a no-frills, South-side neighborhood bar.

ART'S POV: His father at the bar, drinking and laughing.

INT. BENT ELBOW BAR - DUSK

The crowd is a crackling mix of small-time hoods and blue-collar locals. And since this is Chicago, throw in a cop and a priest.

Art and his father stand at the bar.

 ART SR.
You were a pro today. I'm proud of
you, kid.

He gives Art a sip of his beer. Art's in heaven.

 ART SR.
Attaboy. Go play Skittlebowl.

He gives Art some quarters. Art walks to the skittlebowl machine. He glances back in time to see...

PAULINE, a young waitress with a blue-chip ass, smile at Art Sr., who sneaks a hand through her slit skirt and squeezes that ass. She loves it.

Art stares, heartbroken.

MAN (O.S.)
Knowledge is power, kid. Don't tell
him you know.

ANSON STOLIN, 44, stands beside him. Hard-eyed and craven, the toughest Polack in the city that invented tough Polacks.

Stolin walks to the bar. People smile, nod, or get out of his way.

Art Sr., feeling his oats, clinks his drink against Stolin's.

ART SR.
Hey, Stolin. Not a bad haul, huh?

Stolin's look stops him cold. He examines the lit end of his cigarette.

STOLIN
Don't say something stupid that'll
make me put this out in your eye.
Don't say a truckload of TVs makes
us square.
(beat)
Two more jobs. By the weekend. And
if you're late paying off your next
bad bet....

Stolin nods at ROMO, 35, huge, carrying a TV in the back.

STOLIN
Romo's gonna make sure you're
eatin' and shittin' out of the same
tube.

Pauline tries to slip away, but Stolin pulls her back by her skirt. He looks her up and down.

STOLIN
Stop by my office after you count
out tonight.

She nods nervously. He keeps hold of her. Something he wants her to see.

Stolin grinds out his CIGARETTE in Art Sr.'s scotch. He looks over to see little Art watching from the skittlebowl machine. He waves him over.

STOLIN
 And the next time you bring your
 boy in here...
 (he flicks Art's cap)
 I'm gonna put him to work.

He clinks his glass against Art Sr.'s. and drinks.

Art Sr. stares at the cigarette butt in his scotch as his boy
 and his mistress look on.

INT. WILLIAMS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Art walks in. His mother CLAIRE, 33, blonde, bitter, a faded
 Texas beauty, drinks gin and leafs through a magazine.

CLAIRE
 Where's your father?

ART
 He... had some stuff to do. He gave
 me pizza money.

Art hands her a twenty-dollar bill.

CLAIRE
 Did he now?
 (beat)
 Who is she?

ART
 What do you mean?

CLAIRE
 (smoothing his hair)
 It's good to know you can look
 right into my eyes and lie. Just
 like your father.

She TEARS THE TWENTY-DOLLAR BILL into pieces.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art walks in, carrying the torn pieces of the bill.

The walls are awash with COMIC BOOK COVERS. Most feature
 superheroes: CONAN, GREEN LANTERN, the HUMAN TORCH.

Taped beside each cover is A FELT PEN DRAWING OF THE SAME
 COVER. Art's "copies" are awesome -- this kid can draw.

Art sits at his desk and scotch tapes the bill back together.
 It's a hell of a tape job.

He studies the bill under the lamp. ANDREW JACKSON'S FACE...
 THE FLYING EAGLE... THE WHITE HOUSE.

He's mesmerized, feeling the magic pull of money, the power and promise locked inside that green paper.

He hits the SALE button on an ANTIQUE REGISTER. The drawer slides open -- there's real money inside. Art adds the 20.

He picks up a felt pen and starts drawing the cover of a HAWKMAN COMIC BOOK. His strokes are graceful and true.

Art hears the front door open. He hurries into the living room to see Art Sr. walk in. Drunk but controlled. Chewing his toothpick.

ART SR.
Hey, Kid.
(he wrinkles his nose)
What the hell's that?

Art smells it too. From down the hall. He freezes, nervous.

Art Sr. follows the scent to his bedroom door. Art trots behind him, full of dread. They look in to see:

Claire sitting on the bed. Her husband's SHIRTS are laid out neatly on the covers. She's POURING PERFUME on them.

CLAIRE
Let her smell my perfume on you.
Just once. I think that's fair,
don't you?

ART SR.
Goddammit! Give me that!

He grabs the bottle away from her. She pulls out another one and finishes the job.

Art Sr. rushes to the closet and opens it. His suits and ties are drenched. Ruined. To the dresser now. T-shirt and underwear drawer -- soaked.

ART SR.
You bitch.

Claire sits serenely on the bed.

ART SR.
You think it's the perfume? She's a
real woman, Claire. Kiss her and
she likes it. Lie on her and she
moves.

Claire squirts perfume in his face. He drops to his knees, blinded. She empties the bottle over his head. But he's laughing now. He staggers to the vanity sink and rinses his eyes. Into the mirror:

ART SR.
Free, baby. Fuckin' free.

He walks out and through the living room, Art running behind.

ART
Dad... Dad.

Art blocks the door. His father kneels and hugs him tightly.

ART SR.
This ain't your fault, kid.

Art, desperate, takes off his WHITE SOX CAP and hands it to him. Art Sr. doesn't want it, but Art won't take it back.

ART
You're coming back, Dad. Right?

ART SR.
Yeah. Real soon. There's just this
one job I gotta take care of.

Art Sr. gives him a last mighty hug. He walks out.

Art stares at the door. Claire comes up behind him.

CLAIRE
Ready for that pizza?

EXT. BENT ELBOW BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Romo sits on an empty keg, smoking a joint and digging the Springsteen song playing out the bar's open door.

The stolen moving truck sits in the alley. Suddenly, it ROARS TO LIFE.

ROMO
What the fuck? Hey!

INT. MOVING TRUCK - NIGHT

Art Sr. at the wheel, putting her in gear. In the SIDEVIEW MIRROR, he sees Romo running toward him. He flips him the bird out the window as he drives away.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Art and Claire at the table. Art hasn't touched his pizza.

CLAIRE
Don't worry. He always comes back.

INT. MOVING TRUCK - NIGHT

Art Sr., his boy's WHITE SOX CAP beside him, speeds down a street of brownstones.

Pauline runs out of a brownstone. Art Sr. pulls over. As she climbs up into the cab, she knocks ART'S CAP into the street.

They kiss hard, giddy. Bonnie and Clyde.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The truck speeds off, its back wheel crushing Art's cap. The white cap lies broken in the dark street.

EXT. ART'S FRONT STOOP - DAY

Art sits on the stoop, pounding a baseball into a glove and staring sadly up the empty street.

ART (V.O.)
But not this time. This time, Dad
was gone for good...

EXT. ST. RITA'S SCHOOL - DAY

The white Catholic spires and golden gates of St. Rita's shine in the sun.

Art pedals his bike to a bikerack.

INT. PRINTING ROOM - DAY

Sunlight filters through stain-glass windows, bathing a beautiful HEIDELBERG PRESS in stunning light.

Art helps a HOT GIRL work the press. She smiles at him. Art looks up to see the PRINCIPAL FROWNING IN THE DOORWAY.

ART (V.O.)
And he took a lot more with him
than he ever knew.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Art stares bitterly out the window.

PRINCIPAL
Your mother didn't tell you?
(beat)
(MORE)

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)
We gave her as long as we could,
Art. She hasn't paid the tuition in
months.

EXT. ST. RITA'S - DAY

Art on his bike, taking a last look back at the golden gates.

EXT. WILLIAMS APT. - DAY

As the SUPER tapes an EVICTION NOTICE on the door...

Art opens it from the inside. He sees the notice.

SUPER
Sorry, Kid.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM -- DAY

A glum Art pulls his COMIC BOOK COVER DRAWINGS off the wall.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Art helps Claire pack up the kitchen.

CLAIRE
It'll be a new start. Right?

ART
Sure, Mom.

Art looks under the sink: A DOZEN EMPTY GIN BOTTLES.

INT. U-HAUL -- DAY

Art stares at his old home as Claire drives away.

EXT. PROJECT HOUSING - DUSK

A long row of sorry-ass one-level brick buildings. Each grim unit shares a pitiful patch of brown grass with its neighbor.

The U-Haul pulls up. As Art climbs down, he sees the BENT ELBOW BAR squatting on the corner, less than a block away.

INT. NEW APT. - DAY

They walk into a dump. Puke yellow walls, warped floorboards. Art steps on a squishy ROACH MOTEL. He looks at Claire.

CLAIRE
You think I wanted this?

INT. ART'S ROOM - NIGHT

Art lies on his bed, absently pressing the SALE BUTTON on his ANCIENT CASH REGISTER. The drawer slides in and out, in and out. There's no money in it anymore.

The walls are bare. No comic book covers.

EXT. KELLY HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Art walks through the parking lot of his new school. The place has all the charm of a state prison.

Art passes: A hoop court with busted rims... a flagpole with a torn flag... a sign banning firearms from the school.

TWO KIDS sit on a car hood, sharing a joint before homeroom.

Art walks to the lockers, which are outside. Jaded WHITE KIDS surround a beatbox, digging Grandmaster Flash.

As Art spins his combo lock...

A GIRL slams another GIRL into the locker beside Art's. They hit the ground, fighting. Kids crowd around, egging them on.

Art backs up, shaking his head.

CASEY (O.S.)
Welcome to Kelly, Homes.

Art turns to see the two kids who were sharing the early-morning joint.

CASEY is a hot-tempered redhead in AIR JORDAN sneakers and JORDAN JERSEY. We'll never see him dressed in anything else.

DON, short and slight, wears a MARINE CORPS SWEATSHIRT.

EXT. SMALL CITY PARK - DAY

Art, Don, and Casey lounge on the park's steel railing. COMISKEY PARK, home of the White Sox, looms behind them.

DON
Kelly's not so bad.

ART
Unless you want to learn anything.

The guys shrug -- they never thought of that. A PRETTY TEEN walks by, a bookbag on her shoulder.

CASEY
Need a tutor, baby?

Don takes a HYPODERMIC NEEDLE out of a small kit. Art stares at him, freaking out.

CASEY
He just needs a little hit to face
Mom and Dad.

Don rolls up his pant leg.

ART
Hey. Don't fuckin' do that.

Don shoots up and sighs. As Art starts to hurry away, Don and Casey bust out laughing.

CASEY
Insulin, Homes. He's diabetic.

What an icebreaker. Casey holds up a hand. Art slaps it. Friends.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Art stands by the meat section. He looks around, then slips a PACKAGED STEAK under his winter coat.

AT THE CHECKOUT STAND

Art hands a PACK OF BASEBALL CARDS to a GRIZZLED CLERK in a Bears' jersey. He eyes Art suspiciously. Art smiles.

ART
How 'bout those Bears?

CLERK
(relaxing)
On fire. Three in a row.

A drop of red meat juice drips onto the floor. Art covers it with a sneaker.

ART
I'm going on Sunday. My Dad's got
season tickets.

INT. SHOP CLASS - DAY

Art sits at a workbench, bent over a sheet of metal.

ART (V.O.)
Kelly High didn't even have an art
class. Just shop.

Art is fashioning the metal into some kind of pronged tool.

CASEY
No fuckin' way it'll work, Homes.

ART
Bet me a beer.

CASEY
A six-pack. Of Busch.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

As Casey and a nervous Don stand lookout, Art works on a PARKING METER with his new tool. He jiggles and pries.

DON
Let's get out of here, Artie.

Suddenly the face of the meter pops open. A mountain of quarters spill into the street. Art looks up, triumphant.

CASEY
Fuck me.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Art empties parking meters... packs quarters into coin rolls at his desk... walks into a supermarket, head high.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Art comes in, loaded down with groceries. Claire sits at the table, gin in hand, still wearing her drab pink waitress outfit from work. The open oven door heats the room.

CLAIRE
My son the provider.

She starts putting away the groceries.

CLAIRE
A letter came from school today.
They miss you.
(beat)
I told them you transferred. That way, they won't report you to the state.

She smiles. Quid pro quo.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

ART, SIXTEEN NOW, a hard glint in his eye, walks along the sidewalk with Casey. They're sizing up cars.

ART (V.O.)
 The American dream is to go farther
 than your father, right? Dad had a
 tenth grade education. I made it
 through half of eleventh.
 (beat)
 Hey -- nobody was paying me to sit
 in class.

Art BASHES IN A CAR WINDOW with his elbow. As the car alarm
 blares, he removes the STEREO from the dash.

He sees Casey about to do the same to a FIRE RED TRANS AM.

ART
 Not that one.

Art walks over and admires the car. Too perfect to mess up.

ART
 I'm gonna buy me one of those.

So Casey smashes the window of a Mazda and grabs the stereo.
 They run to an alley, where Don waits with a duffel bag. They
 load the stereos in.

DON
 We're drinking Michelob tonight.

As they walk through the alley, Don trips and drops the
 duffel bag. The CRUNCH of breaking stereos.

CASEY
 That's comin' outta your cut.

As they reach the mouth of the alley, Stolin's thug Romo
 appears. Huge and menacing.

The guys look back at the far end of the alley -- TWO MORE
 THUGS. No escape.

ROMO
 If I gotta chase you, you'll pay.

INT. BENT ELBOW'S BACK ROOM - DAY

A private audience with Stolin and Romo. Art, Casey, and a
 terrified Don sit at a table. Stolin pours shots of vodka.

STOLIN
 Art Williams Junior. I shouda
 known. You boys drink?

ART
 Does the Pope shit in the woods?

Romo backhands Art hard, knocking him to the floor. He pours
 the shot of vodka over him.

ROMO
Know who you're talkin' to.

STOLIN
It's real simple. You operate on my
turf, you pay street tax.

Stolin poaches half the stereos from the duffel bag. He leaves the broken ones for the boys.

Casey helps Art up. The boys head for the door.

STOLIN
If you hear from your Dad, Art,
tell him he owes me a waitress.

INT. ART'S KITCHEN - DUSK

Art guzzles O.J. at the fridge.

He sees a POSTCARD on the table. It's a tacky tourist card from SAN ANTONIO. A picture of the Alamo. Art flips it over.

ON CARD: In a drunken scrawl: "Happy Birthday. Attaboy. Dad."

Art rips the card in half. He sits down and tapes it back together. He sees Claire in the doorway. She smiles sadly.

CLAIRE
Check would've been nice.

INT. BENT ELBOW BAR - NIGHT

A rowdy Friday night crowd packs the place. The usual suspects, drinking through their paychecks.

Stolin roams the room, sharp-eyed, missing nothing.

ART (V.O.)
Mom appreciated my hustle -- but
she kept her eyes open for a better
provider.

Claire, looking fine in a low-cut blouse, drinks with a GIRLFRIEND at the bar.

BARTENDER
(setting down a beer)
From the guy with the beanie.

Claire and her friend look down the bar at...

TONY PEZZI, a.k.a DAVINCI, 40, a pint-sized guy wearing a sharp Italian suit and a black leather beanie.

GIRLFRIEND
It's not your night.

Claire sees that a corner of her beer bottle label has come loose. She peels off the whole label and turns it over.

CLOSE ON LABEL: A dynamite PENCIL SKETCH OF CLAIRE. DaVinci has drawn her busty and vivacious, a blouse button undone. Claire loves it. She smiles at him. He walks over.

DAVINCI
Tony. But call me DaVinci.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art looks out his window to see DaVinci walking Claire up the front steps. He jumps up, pissed.

EXT. APARTMENT STEPS - NIGHT

Art opens the door, glaring. DaVinci offers his hand.

DAVINCI
I hear you draw.

ART
Used to.

INT. ART'S ROOM - DAY

DaVinci smokes a short cigar and looks through a bin of Art's old comic book cover drawings. No b.s. -- he's impressed. He holds up the HAWKMAN COVER. Wow.

DAVINCI
Why'd you stop?

A beat. Art wants to confide in him... but the wound's too raw. He just shrugs.

EXT. WILLIAMS APT. - DAY

Art sits on his front steps as DaVinci pulls up in a sweet BLACK FIAT. Impeccably dressed, as usual.

Claire walks out the front door. Art can't believe it -- his mother is a woman transformed. New hair, new dress, new stockings. She's damn near beautiful.

She reaches the car. DaVinci glances back at Art. Claire gets the hint and sighs.

CLAIRE
(to Art)
Wanna come?

INT. GIBSON'S - NIGHT

Chicago's landmark steakhouse is packed. Art watches DaVinci slip a TWENTY to the MAITRE'D.

IN A PRIMO BOOTH

Art wolfs down the biggest steak he's ever seen... and stares at the WAD OF CASH in DaVinci's wallet as he pays the bill.

He leans close to Claire and whispers.

ART
What's he do, Ma?

CLAIRE
None of our business.

EXT. COMISKEY PARK - DAY

Art and DaVinci watch the White Sox from box seats right behind the dugout.

DAVINCI
So school's not your thing. Ever
think about using your talent?

ART
Like someone's gonna pay me to
draw.

DaVinci sips his beer, eyes pensive.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Art, wearing grease monkey coveralls, pumps gas.

ART (V.O.)
When the corner station was hiring,
I pumped gas. When they weren't...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A tough streetcorner in the hood. A black, long-necked DRUG DEALER plies his trade.

INT. ART'S CROWN VIC - NIGHT

Art and his buddies -- Casey, Don, and JOEY -- a quiet 300-pounder -- watch the dealer close a crack sale.

DON
What if he's packing?

ART
Some Marine you'd make. Rig that
light, Case.

Casey plugs a cord into the cigarette lighter and mounts a
RED POLICE LIGHT on the roof.

STREETCORNER

A sunken-eyed TEENAGE GIRL begs the dealer for a baggie. He
slaps her. She doesn't give up. He leads her into an alley.
She drops to her knees.

The Crown Vic speeds to the alley, police light flashing.
Everyone jumps out.

Art, Casey, and Joey charge into the alley.

ART
Police! Freeze!

The DEALER sees three "Narcs" rushing hard, sees the flashing
POLICE LIGHT behind them. He kicks the girl away. He tries to
run, but trips on his lowered pants. He starts dumping crack
bags into a puddle and stomping on them.

Art tackles him. He cuffs the dealer's hands behind him. He
pulls off the guy's pants and tosses them to Joey.

Don's back at the car -- the lookout. But he's watching the
action in the alley, and oblivious to...

The REAL COP CRUISER, just turning onto the block.

ALLEY

The dealer sits on the ground, in his underwear. He watches
Joey take out his wallet and poach a fat stack of bills.

DEALER
You ain't no fuckin' cops.

ART
We gotta get you on *Jeopardy*.

INT. CROWN VIC - NIGHT

As Art and the guys get back in the car...

Art sees the COP CRUISER down the block. He yanks the FAKE
LIGHT off the hood.

Too late. The cruiser taps its siren and heads their way.

ART
Shit.

Art floors it. He gets a little separation, then turns into a narrow street bounded on the left by the freeway wall. It's a quarter-mile straightaway, with streets dead-ending into it.

ART
Hold on.

Art blasts down the straightaway. The NEEDLE HITS 100.

Casey whoops, loving it. Stoic Joey. Ashen Don.

ART
First rule of life, guys...

Art checks the rearview. No cruiser yet. So he...

Brakes hard and turns into a side-street... pulls into a driveway... and cuts the engine.

ART
Always have an escape route.

JOEY
Are you nuts? You can't stop here.

Art taps the horn.

TRACEN, 13, runs out of the house, grabs the TWENTY Art holds out the window, and pulls a CAR COVER over the Crown Vic.

EXT. STRAIGHTAWAY - NIGHT

The COP CRUISER slows. The cops look down the street Art turned onto. Nothing. They move on.

INT. CROWN VIC - NIGHT

Pitch darkness.

CASEY
That was the balls, Homes.

A LIGHTER clicks on, illuminating the guys.

As Joey divvies up the cash, Casey slaps Don's head.

CASEY
Next time we'll draw a picture of a fuckin' cop car, so you know what you're lookin' out for.

DON
Speed Racer here had us covered.

Don lights a joint and hands it to Art. Just as Art takes a hit...

The CAR COVER IS WHISKED OFF. Bright POLICE LIGHTS shine in.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Art stands in the docket before a JUDGE. In the gallery, a red-eyed Claire leans on DaVinci's shoulder.

JUDGE
Thirty days in Juvie. Next.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER BUNK ROOM - DAY

Art sits on his metal bunk, reading a car magazine.

A TEEN THUG walks over. Art stares him down. A DOZEN JUVIES gather round, smelling action.

The thug rips the magazine out of Art's hand.

ART
(nodding at the crowd)
Which one of them's gonna read it
to you?

The boys laugh. The thug turns red. A beat. Art flies off the bunk and tackles him. They go at it, fists flying.

EXT. JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - DAY

Art walks out. He sees DaVinci waiting in his Fiat. Art heads over, scowling to hide his shame.

ART
Can you drive me to Pebble?

DAVINCI
You don't want to see your mom
first?

ART
I'll see her later.

INT. FIAT - DAY - DRIVING

Art's anger fills the car.

DAVINCI
Do any thinking in there?

ART
About what?

DAVINCI
About what you wanna do with your
life.

ART
Get rich.

DAVINCI
Boosting street dealers?

ART
What's it to you?

DAVINCI
I'm not your father, Art. Your beef
with him is with him, not me.
(beat)
If you're gonna break the law, at
least do it right. I could teach
you something. A skill you might be
good at.

Art looks out the window instead of answering. Tough guy.

EXT. "PEBBLE BEACH" - DAY

DaVinci pulls up to a patch of gravel beside a highway
overpass. YOUNG TURKS and BABES lounge on car hoods. Coolers,
joints, and boomboxes abound. A half-capped fire hydrant
shoots a geyser of cooling spray.

Art gets out of DaVinci's car.

DAVINCI
Think about it.

Art walks toward Casey, Don, and Joey, who are pounding beers
on the hood of Don's car.

CASEY
Look who's back.

ART
Bend over, Joey, and I'll tell you
about the showers.

Joey tosses Art a beer. Don hugs him.

DON
Semper Fi, man.

Casey, manning the hydrant, soaks the tight t-shirt of a
nearby BABE. Art smiles.

Casey pulls out a CAR KEY.

CASEY
You're just in time, Homes.
See this? Opens any Corvette. I got
a guy in Chinatown who'll pay us a
hundred a car.

Art looks back for DaVinci. He's gone.

EXT. TAYLOR STREET - MORNING

DaVinci sits at an outdoor cafe, finishing up a charcoal sketch of the street scene around him: Kids playing hockey, a pretty girl leaning out a window. Art walks up.

DAVINCI
You're in my light.

ART
I wanna learn that skill.

EXT. 39TH STREET - DAY

The meat-packing district, hard by the Chicago stockyards. DaVinci parks his car.

He leads Art down SLAUGHTERHOUSE ROW. A hellacious din and stench. Art, gagging, pulls his shirt over his nose.

A truck dumps a load of doomed, squealing pigs into the slaughterhouse dock. Art can't believe he signed up for this. But he follows DaVinci to an abandoned warehouse...

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

... through double-dock doors... into an old-ass service elevator. DaVinci closes the gate. They head down...

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

... into the basement. Cool and quiet. Art can breathe again. DaVinci leads him down a hall to a door.

DAVINCI
You're about to cross a line. A pretty big one.

Art's up for it. DaVinci opens the door and flips on the switch. Fluorescent lights flicker on, revealing:

A huge, immaculate room full of well-organized equipment. Everything in here is clean and in its place.

Art stares at a big PRINTING PRESS and long tables. A PROCESS CAMERA on a stand. Assorted other machines.

He parts two heavy black drapes and looks into a DARKROOM. He's thinking hard, but he hasn't figured it out yet.

Then he sees two HALF-GALLON JARS OF INK. "FOREST GREEN." "CHARCOAL BLACK." The magical truth hits Art.

DaVinci hands him a crisp new TWENTY-DOLLAR BILL.

DAVINCI
Now that's art.

ART
You fuckin' make money.

DaVinci smiles and nods at a bar stool. Art sits down.

DAVINCI
What I do in this room, my father
taught me. His father taught him.
You understand? This goes back
generations. Back to Italy.
(beat)
Today, all you're gonna do is
watch.

DaVinci changes into a pair of coveralls. He steps to an old
radio and turns it on. CLASSICAL MUSIC.

He steps to a sink and washes his hands.

DAVINCI
Never make money with dirty hands.
It's bad luck.

He lays down the TWENTY and points the PROCESS CAMERA at it.
He works the contrast knobs. Fingers the button. FLASH!

AND WE'RE OFF, Art watching in awe and wonder as...

INT. DARKROOM

DaVinci lifts the NEGATIVE SHEET from the chemical tray. He
breathes onto it. ANDREW JACKSON'S FACE shimmers to life.

DaVinci inspects the NEGATIVES on a light table... selects
TWO FRONTS and a BACK.

He razors off the SERIAL NUMBERS and "tweezers" in new ones.

INT. DUNGEON

DaVinci lays the negatives onto a plate burner. A SIZZLING
FLASH as the master images are seared onto aluminum plates.

DaVinci lays the four plates side-by-side. Separate ones for
the BILL FACE, the BACK, the SERIAL NUMBERS, and THE SEALS.

BACH plays now, clean and clear, as DaVinci gently washes the
plates until just the raised images remain. He works quickly
and precisely -- no wasted movement, no mistakes.

Art watches intently, completely absorbed.

DaVinci dumps GOOEY GREEN INK onto cardboard and cuts it with WHITE INK. Using a spatula, he lathers the ink onto the rollers of the press.

He fires up the press. And now the really cool part:

DaVinci "builds up" the bills by loading the different metal plates on the press and then sending the same sheets of paper through again and again.

Art watches, mesmerized, as the "money" comes to life, element by element. FIRST:

BLANK SHEETS of MONEY-GREEN PAPER roll off the press.

The next time through, ANDREW JACKSON'S PORTRAIT and the BORDERS OF THE BILLS appear... then the FEDERAL RESERVE SEALS... then the SERIAL NUMBERS...

DaVinci slides the last metal plate onto the press. He looks into Art's eyes and pulls the lever.

CLOSE ON ART, staring transfixed as the sheets of finished bill-fronts roll off the press.

ART (V.O.)
It was like watching Christmas
cookies come out of an oven.
(beat)
No. It was better.

Art stares at the sheets of bills. Beautiful. Endless.

ART (V.O.)
It was like sex.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art sits on his bed, looking out the window. He pulls out a 20-dollar bill and stares hard at it.

INT. DAVINCI'S DUNGEON - DAY

Art and DaVinci wear old work clothes. DaVinci holds out a piece of cream-colored, ROYAL LINEN PAPER.

DAVINCI
People touch money before they see
it. You gotta fool their fingers
first.

Art rubs the paper between his fingers. He smiles, amazed.

ART'S LEARNING MONTAGE

DaVinci stands beside Art, letting the kid do all the work.

DAVINCI (V.O.)
 Every bill you make can get you
 sent away -- or worse. Don't lose
 focus. Don't get sloppy.

Art makes every mistake in the book. Overexposes the
 negatives... slices them up while cutting out serial
 numbers... mixes too much white ink into the green.

DAVINCI (V.O.)
 Keep your operation small. Print
 enough to live well on, but don't
 get greedy.

INT. DUNGEON DARKROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Art and DaVinci side-by-side again. Art works with confidence
 now, getting the hang of this.

He breathes onto a NEGATIVE, bringing Andrew Jackson to
 ghostly life. A perfect exposure.

He expertly tweezers in a new line of serial numbers... burns
 an aluminum plate on the plate burner.

DAVINCI (V.O.)
 Trust no one. Money changes people.
 Don't learn that the hard way.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

DaVinci puts the finishing touches on a counterfeit 20. She's
 beautiful. He snaps her -- she crackles. He hands her to Art.

DAVINCI
 Most important -- never forget why
 you're printing.

ART
 To buy whatever I want.

DAVINCI
 You think money buys you happiness,
 don't you? That's what everyone
 thinks.

ART
 You're gonna tell me it doesn't?

DAVINCI
 It buys you freedom. There's a
 difference.

INT. ART'S CROWN VIC - NIGHT

Art, wearing a White Sox cap, rolls with Casey, Don, and big Joey. Don reads a military mag.

DON
Every marine in boot camp does a
thousand pushups a day.

Casey salutes this news with a deep hit off a joint.

JOEY
That's nine-hundred ninety-eight
more than my personal best.

At a red light, a COP CRUISER pulls up beside them.

ART
Kill that J.

Casey turns red trying to hold in the smoke from his hit.

Art glances over and sees a HOT GIRL in the back seat of the cruiser. KAREN MAGERS, 22. Short black hair, creamy skin, big eyes. She smiles at Art -- and that's all she wrote.

The LIGHT TURNS GREEN. The cop car turns left. Art cuts across a lane of traffic to follow it.

DON
What are you doin'?

Casey drops to the floor and hacks out his smoke.

ART
Did you see that girl, Joey?

JOEY
The one in the back seat of a
fuckin' cop car?

CASEY
Pull him over, Homes!

The cop cruiser turns into a convenience store parking lot. Art pulls hard to the curb... cutting off a MUSCLE CAR, which blasts its horn, then pulls in right behind him.

Art jumps out. ART'S POV: A cop opens the cruiser's back door and lets Karen out. She starts walking away.

TWO TOUGH ITALIANS jump out of the muscle car.

CASEY
We got this, Homes. Go get her.

As Art takes off after Karen...

TOUGH GUY
What the fuck?

Both TOUGH GUYS start toward Casey... until 300-pound Joey steps out of the car. No thanks. They retreat. Casey pounds the hood of their car as they drive away.

CASEY
That's the fuck, Homes.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Art sees Karen at a BRAT STAND. He takes off his White Sox cap. As he reaches the stand, she's laying down a TWENTY. He lays one down beside hers.

ART
(to the BRAT GUY)
I got that.

KAREN
No he doesn't. Sorry. Not from a stranger.

Art puts on the White Sox cap. She smiles, recognizing him.

KAREN
Mister Crown Vic.

The JADED BRAT GUY eyes the side-by-side twenties.

BRAT GUY
I'm dyin' here.

Karen points to Art's twenty.

EXT. BRAT STAND - NIGHT

Art and Karen stand at the counter, four empty beer bottles in front of them. A STREET GUITARIST plays something bluesy.

KAREN
You haven't asked me what I was doing in the back of a cop car.

ART
Hey, I know that drill. They drive you around the block, talk tough, warn ya, then let you go.
(sees her laughing)
What?

KAREN
It's called a ride-along, dummy.
I'm in the police academy.
(Art's in shock)
Want your money back?

INT. DAVINCI'S DUNGEON - DAY

A stoked Art watches his first batch of sheets roll off the press. DaVinci sits on the barstool, puffing his short cigar.

Art cuts the notes to size on a paper-cutter... sprays acrylic glue onto the note-front... presses the note-front and note-back together.

ART (V.O.)
 She tells me flat out she's a cop --
 and all I wanted to do was make
 enough money to take her out.

Rows of TWENTIES dry on a rack, each clipped to a taut line of fishing wire. A glowing space heater speeds the process.

Art, proud as hell, unclips a BILL and hands it to DaVinci.

DaVinci snaps the bill AND IT PEELS APART. Art can't believe it. Back to the drawing board.

DISSOLVE TO:

Art hands another bill to DaVinci, who lays it under a lamp. He points to the muddy, blurry FEDERAL SEAL. He touches his cigar to the bill, burning it to ashes.

EXT. CHICAGO RIVER WALKWAY - SUNSET

Art and Karen walk across the Clark Street footbridge. They step to the rail and watch the red sun sink into the water.

Art carries a beer in a paper bag. He opens it and offers Karen a sip. She hesitates.

ART
 Live a little. You're not a cop
 yet.

She laughs and takes a small sip.

ART
 What made you want to become one,
 anyway?

She's about to tell him, but stops herself.

KAREN
 It's silly.

ART
 Tell me.

KAREN
 Something my Dad said to me once.
 "If you want to make the world a
 better place, start with your own
 block."

Art tucks a strand of her hair behind her ear. He kisses her.

INT. ART'S CROWN VIC - NIGHT

Art and Karen are parked by Lake Michigan. They're hot and heavy in the front seat as U2 plays on the radio. Art goes for her jeans. She stones him.

KAREN
 I want it to be special. Don't you?

INT. DAVINCI'S DUNGEON - NIGHT

Art hands DaVinci yet another bill. He snaps it -- fine. Studies it under the lamp -- fine. Art's eyes are shining.

DAVINCI
 One last test.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Art and DaVinci step outside.

DAVINCI
 Sunlight is the only true light. If
 a bill looks good in the sun, it'll
 look good anywhere.

Art holds up his bill. Shit. His great creation looks like crap, its color dull and lifeless.

Art rips it to pieces. He stares down slaughterhouse row.

EXT. POLICE ACADEMY - DAY

Karen walks down the steps of the police academy building. She's surprised to see Art's Crown Vic at the curb.

ART
 Come on.

She climbs in.

KAREN
 Where are we going?

ART
 Someplace special.

EXT. PENINSULA HOTEL - DAY

Art pulls up to the five-star Peninsula Hotel. A natty VALET opens the door for a bewildered Karen.

KAREN
Art?

ART
Not too shabby, huh?

Art walks her into...

INT. PENINSULA HOTEL - DAY

The gorgeous lobby. Karen looks around, awestruck.

INT. ELEVATOR

The two of them ride alone. Art hits the button for the eighth floor.

ART
Check-out time is noon, right?

He checks his watch: **12:15.**

ART
Check-in time is three...

The elevator doors open, revealing...

A MEXICAN MAID, standing with her cleaning cart by a hotel room door. She smiles at Art -- she's been expecting him.

ART
Leaving a nice little window for a
maid to turn a profit.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Art and Karen walk in. Plush carpeting. Lake Michigan out the window. King-size bed. Karen is in heaven.

ART
Special enough for you?

He lays her down on the bed.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

The maid walks away, tucking fifty bucks into her uniform.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Karen lies in bed, silk sheets pulled up. Dreamy and sated.

Art stands at the window in his boxers. This high up, he can see for miles. Lake Michigan and beyond.

ART
There's a whole big world out
there. I'm gonna give it to you.

KAREN
I like the world in here. We still
have twenty minutes.

INT. WAREHOUSE SERVICE ELEVATOR - DAY

Art and DaVinci ride up. A steely, hard-won confidence in Art's eyes.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

They step out into the sun. Art holds his latest bill up to the light. It's perfect.

He's done it. He hugs DaVinci. Awkwardly, then tight.

INT. DAVINCI'S DUNGEON - MINUTES LATER

A jubilant Art pulls COUNTERFEIT TWENTIES off the drying rack and piles them on a table.

ART
Let's go spend these babies.

DAVINCI
Whoa.

DaVinci opens a LOCKBOX and takes out a stack of cash. He hands it to Art.

DAVINCI
I'll pay you two grand per print
run.

He hands Art a KEY TO THE DUNGEON. Art waves at all the counterfeit bills.

ART
But what about?...

DAVINCI
I still got all my limbs for one
reason: I never pass my bills on
the street.

ART
What do you do with them?

A beat. DaVinci stares hard at Art.

DAVINCI
I sell 'em in bulk. Gimme a hand
here.

DaVinci shows Art how to shrink-wrap stacks of counterfeit bills. They work side-by-side.

DAVINCI
I drive to Cincinnati every three
months. Stolin's got a connection
there. He pays me twenty cents on
the dollar.

Art's not impressed.

ART
Twenty cents?

DAVINCI
It adds up.

They keep shrink-wrapping. Art stares at his two-grand cut...
then at the mountains of counterfeit bills. Frustration in
his eyes.

EXT. TAYLOR STREET - NIGHT

Art and DaVinci walk together.

DAVINCI
I cut Stolin in for his ten
percent, and I live my life.

DaVinci leads Art into...

INT. BEAUX ARTS CAFE - NIGHT

A hip little consignment cafe. Three of DaVinci's CHARCOAL
STREET SKETCHES hang on the wall.

DaVinci stares glumly at the painting beside them, an
indecipherable mess of lines boasting a "SOLD" STICKER.

DAVINCI
You believe someone paid money for
that shit?

They take a seat. DaVinci signals a WAITRESS. Art's itching
to say something.

DAVINCI
What?

ART
 I don't get it. You could buy any
 painting you want. You could buy a
 house in Oak Park. Two Ferraris.
 You can print more money than God.
 (beat)
 But you don't have the guts to
 spend it.

There -- it's out. The waitress arrives. DaVinci waves her
 off. He's pissed now. A beat.

DAVINCI
 You're right, Art -- you don't get
 it. It's not about guts. It's about
 smarts.

INT. KAREN'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Art and Karen, both nervous as hell, sit at the kitchen
 table. An UPSIDE-DOWN BOWL sits between them. U2 plays from a
 boombox -- Bono is going to get them through this. Art takes
 Karen's hand. She reaches for the bowl.

ART
 Wait... Marry me.

KAREN
 What? You don't mean it.

Art slips a RING BOX in front of her. She opens it -- A RING.
 Karen can't believe it.

KAREN
 Yes.

They laugh. Then get serious again. Eyes back on the BOWL.

ART
 What are we looking for?

KAREN
 Blue.

Art lifts up the bowl. A PREGNANCY INDICATOR lies on a paper
 towel. They stare into its window: A DARK BLUE LINE.

Karen stares at the BLUE LINE... at Art... at her ring.
 Engaged. Pregnant. All in 30 seconds.

KAREN
 I'm gonna faint.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

Art and Karen, newly married, rush down the steps and climb
 into Art's Crown Vic.

INT. CROWN VIC - DAY: DRIVING

Don serves as chauffeur. Casey rides shotgun.

CASEY
There's a case of Busch in the trunk. From all of us.

DON
Some wedding night, huh? You don't gotta worry about protection...
(Art and Karen stare)
I mean, since you guys already took care of that part... by, y'know...

KAREN
Shut up, Don.

DON
Yes Ma'am.

EXT. PENINSULA HOTEL - NIGHT

Don pulls up to the awning. Karen's face lights up -- they're back where it all began.

KAREN
Art. It's too expensive.

ART
What the hell, huh?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The wedding dress is thrown over a chair. Art and Karen are in bed, face to face. On the brink.

ART
This time we got all night.

INT. ART'S KITCHEN - DAY

Karen feeds one-year-old Mikey in his high chair. He wears a Chicago White Sox onesie.

Karen slides a POLICE MANUAL across the table to Art.

KAREN
Quiz me?

Art opens to a random page and reads.

ART
You observe a motorist driving erratically.
(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)
 After pulling him over, you then...
 A: Call in his license plate... B:
 Approach the driver's-side
 window... C: Blow the jagoff's
 brains out.

KAREN
 (laughing)
 Art... this is serious.

Art nods at Mikey.

ART
 Mom's gonna watch him tonight.

KAREN
 Three hours alone together. Can you
 believe it?

ART
 (to Mikey)
 You know what your mom and I are
 gonna do tonight?

Art whispers into Mikey's ear. Under the table, he tickles
 Mikey's foot. Mikey laughs, seemingly at Art's words.

ART
 That's right. Hey, how do you think
you got here, buddy?

Karen laughs. Love in the room. The phone rings. Art answers.

ART
 Hello? What's wrong, Mom? Slow
 down.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Art rushes into the kitchen to see...

Claire sitting on the floor, her back against the fridge,
 staring blankly. She's all cried out. Off the wagon, too,
 judging from the empty glass in her hand and the gin bottle
 on the table.

Art kneels and holds her. She starts to cry again.

INT. ALL SOULS' FUNERAL HOME - DAY

DaVinci lies in state in his coffin. He wears his beanie and
 looks dapper, even in death.

ART (V.O.)
 He was shot in a Cincinnati motel
 room. No suspects.

Art, devastated, looks down at him. He lays one of DaVinci's
 CHARCOAL STREET SKETCHES beside him.

Art watches the Bent-Elbow crowd mill around the parlor. He STARES BULLETS AT STOLIN.

Romo notices.

ROMO
Good of him to pay for the wake,
huh?

LATER

Art watches Stolin approach Claire at the bar. By the time Art gets there, he has an arm around her.

STOLIN
I know this is a tough time. If I
can help in any way...

He opens his suit jacket, revealing a FAT CASH ENVELOPE. Claire can't help reaching for it. Stolin closes his jacket.

STOLIN
... just come by the bar.

Art grabs Claire and leads her away. Stolin smiles at him.

STOLIN
Keeping out of trouble, boy?

EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Art drinks a beer on the steps. He looks up the block to see Claire walk out of the Bent Elbow. She's smoothing her hair and blouse.

Art puts two and two together. Pain and anger in his eyes.

Claire sees him as she crosses the street. They stare at each other. She flushes with shame.

INT. ART & KAREN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Art walks in, spent. He's holding a box of DaVinci's charcoal street sketches.

Karen hands him a beer.

ART
Thanks.

Art sits down and starts sifting through the sketches.

Karen watches him from the couch, where she's rocking Mikey to sleep. She lays him down and walks to Art. She doesn't want to say what she's about to say.

KAREN
 Art, I ran a check at the station.
 DaVinci served two years in prison.
 For forgery and embezzlement.

ART
 Everybody makes mistakes.

KAREN
 He was murdered in a motel room.
 That's a pretty big mistake.

ART
 What do you want from me, Karen?
 The guy taught me a lot.

KAREN
 About what?

ART
Life. Okay?
 (beat)
 You gotta pick tonight to do this?

KAREN
 I'm sorry, Art. But the extra money
 you bring in sometimes... I know
 you're not mowing lawns for it.
 That has to end.

ART
 Or what?

KAREN
 Or we'll be on different sides.

Art starts to pace. They can hear the neighbor's TV through
 the wall. WHEEL OF FORTUNE -- Pat Sajak thanking Vanna White.

ART
 You want Mikey growing up in this
 dump?

KAREN
 I don't want to get the call Claire
 got. That you're dead in some
 motel.
 (Beat)
You know what it's like to grow up
 without a father.

ART
 That was different. He ran off. I'd
 never do that to Mikey.
 (beat)
 But he... both of you... deserve
 better than this.

Art KICKS THE RADIATOR. It hisses reluctantly to life.

KAREN

C'mere.

He kneels in front of her. She rubs his head.

KAREN

I don't care how much money we
have. You know why? Because
everything I need is in this room.

She takes Art's hand and leads him to the couch. They look
down at Mikey, sleeping like an angel.

KAREN

Promise me he'll have an honest
father.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Art pulls into a small, grim gas station. Four lonely pumps
and a one-man payment booth.

GUS, 55, stands by the booth.

GUS

You're three minutes late.

ART

I was talking to my broker.

Humor isn't Gus' strong suit. He tosses Art a rag.

INT. ART'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Art walks in, still wearing his coveralls. Bumming. He turns
on the light to see...

Karen on the couch, holding two beers. Proud of him. Wearing
a soft teddy. She smiles.

KAREN

Guess who's asleep?

INT. POLICE ACADEMY - DAY

Art holds little Mikey and watches Karen cross the stage to
accept her BADGE. Art looks around nervously -- too many cops
here for his taste.

ART (V.O.)

At least one of us was happy.

GAS STATION MONTAGE

Art scrapes ice off a TRUCKER'S windshield... busts a knuckle on a lug nut... shivers on a ladder in the rain as he changes the digits on the gas price sign.

Art stares at his PAYCHECK: \$212.50.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE ROW - DAWN

Art sits in his car in the pre-dawn light, staring at DaVinci's warehouse.

INT. ART'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Art lays two-year-old Mikey on the changing table. Mikey points at the toothpick in Art's mouth. Art holds it between Mikey's lips. Like father, like son.

In the b.g., LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS plays on the TV. Multimillion-dollar homes and sparkling yachts.

Suddenly a table leg SNAPS and the changing table collapses. Art catches Mikey by the ankle. He kicks the table in anger.

ART
Cheap piece of...
(gathering himself)
How 'bout some baseball?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Art and Mikey sit on the floor. Art sips a beer. NINE WHITE SOX BASEBALL CARDS are laid out, arranged by position.

ART
Okay. Where's Ozzie Guillen?

Mikey picks out the card of the White Sox shortstop.

ART
Thattaboy.
(Mikey chews the card)
Hey, you're eating an All-Star.

Art stares through the open bedroom door at the broken changing table. He's still shaken.

INT. GAS STATION PAYMENT BOOTH - NIGHT

Art sits alone, smoking a cigarette and listening to the Bulls' game on the radio. SFX: A CAR HORN BLAST.

A shiny RED CORVETTE sits at the full-service pump.

Art walks over. The HOT SHOT DRIVER is digging a hand between the knees of a TRIM BLONDE. He doesn't even look at Art.

HOT SHOT
Fill 'er up.

Art pumps gas, admiring the car's sleek body and gleaming rims. He runs his fingers along the raised emblem.

HOT SHOT
Watch that.

ART
V-six?

HOT SHOT
(indulgently)
Yeah -- V-six. Three-point-eight liter. Turbo. You gonna pull a little overtime and buy one?

His babe can't stifle a laugh. Anger flashes in Art's eyes. He jams the pump back into the stand.

ART
Twelve forty-five.

HOT SHOT
Tell you what -- I'll show you her zero-to-sixty.

Hot Shot floors it, tossing a TWENTY out the window as he peels away. The bill lands in a frozen grease puddle.

Art stares after the Corvette, furious and humiliated.

ART (V.O.)
Every guy's got his breaking point.

INT. DAVINCI'S DUNGEON - NIGHT

Art pushes open the door and stares at DaVinci's equipment. It's all there.

He washes his hands and changes into coveralls. He steps to the work table and lays down a CRISP TWENTY. He stares at it, then shoves it back in his pocket and lays down a pristine HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILL.

BEN FRANKLIN smiles up at him. *Your move, Ace.*

Art turns his back on the table. He squats. Takes a breath. Can he really do this?

He walks to his boombox and presses the button. Classical? No chance. PINK FLOYD'S "MONEY."

The killer guitar riff rocks the room, giving Art the kick he needs. He picks up the process camera and points her straight down at Old Ben. FLASH!

DISSOLVE TO:

Art, laying his first FAKE C-NOTE beside the real one. It's a joke -- Art's bill isn't even green. It's a sickly purple.

DISSOLVE TO:

Art laying down another FAKE. Better, but still a long way off. Ben Franklin looks like a bloated balloon.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAWN

A bleary-eyed Art walks to his car in the snow.

ART (V.O.)
I started closing up the gas
station two hours early. Since
Karen didn't wake up 'til seven,
that gave me six hours a night.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

INTERCUT between Art mixing inks, making plates, masking out serial numbers -- and DISSOLVE SHOTS of FAKE BILLS laid beside the original C-Note.

Each bill is a little better than the last - the color richer, the details crisper, the definition sharper.

ART (V.O.)
DaVinci settled for twenty percent
of the dream.
(beat)
I wanted it all.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Art puts the finishing touches on a FAKE NOTE. This one's special.

ART (V.O.)
That meant my bills had to be
perfect.

He lays the fake beside a real one. Identical. He breaks out a magnifying glass and goes over it inch by inch. The colors, the portrait, the seals -- perfect.

He shuffles the bills, then lays them down. He can't tell which is which.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAWN

It's SPRING NOW -- the snow gone, green leaves on the trees. Art holds up the C-Note. It passes the sun test. Art drops to his knees -- he's done it.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Art lies in bed, one eye open, watching Karen put on her uniform. She grabs her POLICE RADIO... HER BADGE... HER GUN.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Art sits in his car, holding his fake C-Note in his lap. He hears his old mentor's voice in his head.

DAVINCI (V.O.)
If you ever want to cut your own
throat, try passing a counterfeit
bill to an Arab.

Art stares through the liquor store window at the ARAB CLERK.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Art carries a case of Busch to the counter.

CLOSE ON THE FAKE C-NOTE as Art hands it over. The clerk holds it up to the light. A beat. He glares at Art.

CLERK
What do I look like?
(beat)
ID.

A relieved Art shows him his driver's license. The clerk bags the beer. As Art heads for the door...

CLERK
Hey!

Art turns. The clerk is holding out his change. Change! Free money. What a concept.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - NIGHT

Art sits on the hood of his car, his back to the dark lake. Chicago's skyline glitters in front of him. Waiting.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Art blacks out serial numbers... pulls fresh sheets of C-Notes off the press... hits bills with hardening spray.

ART (V.O.)
Karen thought I was making ten
bucks an hour. I was printing
twenty grand a night.

Art's beautiful fakes dry all around him. Art stares at a CAR MAGAZINE. ON PAGE: A fire-red Trans Am rules the road.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Art's Crown Vic pulls up to a WALMART.

ART (V.O.)
Then came the tough part. Grinding.
Turning counterfeit dollars into
true, honest green.

INT. WALMART - NIGHT

Art pushes a cart down the baby aisle. But wait -- is it Art? He wears thick glasses, slicked-back hair, and a goatee.

CHECKOUT COUNTER

Art in line. There's a DIAPER-CHANGING TABLE (the sturdy, steel kind) in his cart.

GRIZZLED CLERK
Next.

Art lets the OLD WOMAN behind him go ahead. Art wants the other clerk, a TEENAGE GIRL. She frees up.

As she rings up his purchase...

ART
Cool earrings.

TEEN CLERK
(giggling)
That'll be forty-two thirty-nine.

Still blushing, she banks the C-Note without looking at it.

CLOSE ON the CRISP TWENTIES as she slaps them down.

TEEN CLERK
Fifty-seven sixty-one is your
change. Have a good night.

INT. ART'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Art changes into his gas station coveralls. Karen, playing with Mikey, looks over and smiles.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Art tosses down his coveralls and changes into a sharp suit.

"GRINDING" MONTAGE

DISSOLVE SHOTS of stores throughout the city. Bodegas... liquor stores... greasy spoon restaurants... 7-11s...

DISSOLVE SHOTS of ART in different disguises, passing his C-Notes. He's a SUAVE GENT in Armani... a CONSTRUCTION WORKER in hardhat and boots... a BIKER in black leather riding pants and wife-beater, press-on snake tattoos on each shoulder...

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

Art at his MONEY TABLE, counting out a mountain of cash.

INT. CAR SHOWROOM - DAY

Art walks a slow circle around a FIRE RED TRANS AM. A DOUR SALESMAN comes up.

SALESMAN
I ran your credit. It's not gonna cut it.

Art pulls out a silver money clip.

ART
Fuck my credit.

EXT. PEBBLE BEACH - DAY

Art pulls up in his Trans Am, kickass stereo blaring. Casey, Don, and Joey lounge on folding chairs, drinking beers. They jump up to check out Art's new wheels.

ART
C'mon, Jagoffs. Tonight's on me.

INT. TRANS AM - NIGHT: DRIVING

Art opens her up. Doing eighty, nice and easy.

JOEY
The payments gotta be killin' you.

EXT. COMISKEY PARK CONCOURSE - NIGHT

Art leads his buddies to the door of a luxury skybox. The USHER looks them over -- no way these bums can afford this.

USHER
I don't think so, guys.

ART
There goes your tip.

Art flashes his tickets and leads the guys in. The skybox is plush and roomy. Art smiles at a HOT WAITRESS.

ART
How 'bout four beers? And eight hot dogs.

JOEY
What are you guys gonna eat?

She smiles and leaves. The guys look around in awe.

ART
Not bad, huh?

DON
This has gotta be runnin' you three bills. Just for the tickets.

CASEY
You got something goin' we don't know about, Homes?

ART
Yeah.
(the guys lean in)
I put a grand on Thunder Gulch in the Derby. She came in six-to-one.

A FOUL BALL heads toward the skybox.

DON
I got it! I got it!

Don leans too far out and starts to fall. Art and Joey grab his ankles and pull him back in. The guys crack up. They're having a ball.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Casey, Don, and Joey sit on a girder. Smoke break. Casey looks hard at the others.

CASEY
Derby winner my ass.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE ROW - NIGHT

Art pulls up in the Trans Am and gets out. A POLICE SIREN blares. Art jumps back in. Too late -- a cop cruiser slams up. Art is dead meat. Until he sees...

HIS BUDDIES. The cop cruiser is actually Casey's Grand Am, with the trusty police siren mounted on top.

Casey, Don, and Joey get out and stare bullets at Art. He sighs, beaten.

ART
If you guys tell a fuckin' soul...

INT. WAREHOUSE SERVICE ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The four of them ride down.

CASEY
Case of beer says it's a crystal meth lab.

DON
It's a harem.

JOEY
What the fuck's a harem?

DON
Sex slaves.

INT. WAREHOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Art opens the door and hits the lights. The guys walk in. Art's equipment lines the walls, but all they see is a TABLE PILED HIGH WITH CASH. They walk to it, awestruck.

CASEY
Homes.

Don checks out the printing press. Looks around at the setup.

DON
Semper fuckin' Fi. Counterfeit?

Art nods. Casey is transfixed by the bills.

JOEY
You mean this money ain't real?

CASEY
The fuck it ain't. Is it?

ART
Paper and ink.

The guys stare at the bills, the full measure of their buddy's achievement sinking in.

Art soaks in their awe. He's waited all his life for this much validation.

Don starts playing with the stacks of counterfeit.

DON
You can buy anything you want,
Artie. Anything. Damn.
(beat)
I'd get a penthouse pad on Rush
Street. Put a hot tub out on the
balcony. Just sit in that thing,
all day and all night.

Joey starts handling the stacks.

JOEY
I'd buy the Hungry Hound beef
stand. Put my picture right on the
front.

CASEY
I'd get a live-in nurse for Ma.
(beat)
And a fuckin' harem.

Everyone laughs.

ART
It's not that simple. You can't
just take this stuff to the bank.
You gotta be real careful with it.

CASEY
Show us, Homes.

DON
Yeah, Artie. Let us spend some.

JOEY
We'd do it for you.

A beat. Art's head and his heart are battling it out.

ART
One fuckin' night only. I mean it.
And you guys are gonna earn your
keep.
(he tosses them each a
stack of C-Notes)
Counterfeit in your left pocket.
Real money in your right.
You spend it where I tell you.
Nowhere else. Got it?

They got it. And man, they're stoked.

As Art leads them out of the room, Don hangs back and GRABS AN EXTRA STACK OF COUNTERFEIT. He shoves it into his pocket.

EXT. RUSH STREET - NIGHT

Chicago's famous party strip pulses with Friday-night energy.

Art and the guys, walking like *playas*, cross the street towards P.S. CHICAGO, a hip nightclub. A huge line snakes down the block. Thirty-minute wait, minimum.

Screw that. Art heads right for the door.

The BOUNCER nods at the long line.

BOUNCER
You got eyes?

ART
Yeah. You?

Art flashes a FAKE C-NOTE. The bouncer palms it and lifts the rope, wincing at their cheap sneaks and blue-collar duds.

INT. P.S. CHICAGO - NIGHT

A killer playland the size of an aircraft hangar. Art stares in awe at all the BABES. They line the bar, rock the dance floor, grace the booths.

CASEY
Last one to score buys breakfast.

Casey and Joey head for the bar. Art taps Don and points to a sweet PAIR OF HOTTIES -- one REDHEAD, one INDIAN -- sitting alone in a booth. Don is flustered, nervous.

DON
Artie, I can't talk to those girls.
Look at 'em.

ART
Yesterday you couldn't. Today...
(he flags a waitress)
Send them a bottle of Dom.

WAITRESS
Dom? Dom Perignon? It's three
hundred dollars a bottle.

ART
Is it? In that case, send two.

AT THE BAR

Casey walks up as three BABES finish off their frozen margaritas. The STUD BARTENDER smiles at them.

BARTENDER
Another round?

CASEY
It's on me. But make it with that.

Casey points to a bottle of PATRON GOLD sitting alone on the top shelf.

BARTENDER
It's gonna cost you.

Casey drops one, two, three C-NOTES onto the bar.

CASEY
Start blending, Homes.
(to the Babes)
Casey. With a "C."

DOWN THE BAR, Joey stands with a CHUNKY LATINA. A bartender sets down two AMSTEL LIGHTS.

BARTENDER
Sixteen dollars.

JOEY
For two fuckin' beers? What are we,
on Mars?
(to the girl)
You like soda?

INT. ART'S BOOTH - LATER

Art sits with VAI, the Indian girl, and Don with the redhead HOLLY. The Perignon has worked its usual magic -- these girls are tipsy and smitten.

HOLLY
So, what do you guys do?

DON
Make money.

ART
(shooting Don a look)
I work for a printer.

VAI
Do you like it? Or do you just do
it for the money?

Art and Don laugh. Vai is mystified.

ART

Both.

Don, drunk now, can't contain himself. He lays a C-NOTE on the table.

DON

Check this out--

Art snatches the C-Note, pissed. He calms. He pats Don's Marine Corps sweatshirt and looks at Holly.

ART

Ignore him. He leaves for Basic in a week -- unless someone can change his mind.

Holly's up for trying. She leads Don onto the dance floor.

ART'S POV: Casey at the bar, buying another round for his babes and pocketing the change... Joey, kissing his chunky honey while flashing twenties at Art.

Art's the Godfather of good times... but he can't get over Don's gaffe. He stares hard at him.

Don, oblivious, squeezes Holly's ass as they slow dance.

Vai rubs Art's leg.

VAI

This is when you say "Your place or mine?"
(fingers his ring)
Looks like mine.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Art lies on his back, naked. She rides him slow and hard... finishes... and collapses onto his chest.

Art lifts her chin and we see -- it's Karen. Art is home, in his marriage bed. Karen is breathless, radiant.

KAREN

What's gotten into you?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

CLOSE ON the FACE of singer BOB MARLEY. He's a SCREENSAVER, staring out from a computer monitor.

NINA KIMM, 29, half-Asian, pretty, sits at her desk, sipping Starbucks and examining a C-NOTE under a magnifying glass.

We're in a cubicle at the SECRET SERVICE'S bustling Chicago field office.

Nina lowers the glass, impressed. She nods at Bob Marley.

NINA
Kid's got game.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Nina fiddles with a laptop, which is projecting an IMAGE OF THE C-NOTE onto a flat-panel screen.

DALE JERROD, 45, Nina's boss, strides in. He's a gruff Cajun with long hair and alligator boots.

DALE
New printer on the streets?

NINA
Yeah. A batch of these just hit the banks. I checked with C.I.D. -- no match on record.

DALE
Source?

NINA
Nightclubs and strip bars.

DALE
My kinda counterfeiter.

ON SCREEN: Nina zeroes in on different sections of the C-Note: SEAL... PORTRAIT... DIGITS. All flawless.

DALE
A pro.

Dale takes the mouse and zeroes in on the bottom left corner of the C-Note. There's a SMALL DIAGONAL SLASH.

NINA
Yeah, the slash. It's on every one.

DALE
Which tells you...

NINA
It's on the plates.

DALE
Which tells you...

NINA
(struggling)
He's sloppy. Except he isn't. So...
he put it there on purpose...
(truth dawning)
... so he can tell his fake bills
from his real ones.

DALE
 Which tells you...
 (she's at a loss)
 We better nail this jagoff before
 he figures out how good he is and
 starts aiming higher than strip
 clubs.

NINA
 Yes sir.

She walks away. Dale stares at her crisp ass. What a waste.

INT. CROWN VIC - DAY: DRIVING

Art in the driver's seat, Karen beside him. Suburbia out the window.

ART
 Where the hell is this place?

KAREN
 Elgin. We're almost there.

EXT. SMALL-TOWN MALL - DAY

The Crown Vic pulls into the mall parking lot.

INT. MALL - DAY

Art and Karen walk in, pushing Mikey in a stroller.

KAREN
 Mervyn's is having a half-off sale.
 We can get Mikey a year's worth of
 clothes. Stuff he can grow into.

Art stops. Karen is still talking, but he can't hear her.

ART'S POV: A SEA OF STORES stretch in every direction... ONE
 PODUNK SECURITY GUARD sips a Big Gulp... EXIT SIGNS (ESCAPE
 ROUTES) IN EVERY CORNER. It's a grinder's paradise.

KAREN (O.S)
 Art?

ART
 Right. Half off.

INT. BENT ELBOW - DAY

Don drinks at the bar, which is lined with CHICAGO BEARS
 FANS. All are nervously watching the TV as...

ON TV: The OPPOSING KICKER drills a GAME-WINNING FIELD GOAL and leaps into the arms of his teammates.

Don kicks the bar in disgust. Romo walks over.

ROMO
Five hundred.

Don sighs and pays him off.

INT. SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Nina Kimm at her desk. Dale Jerrod stands behind her chair. He can see the RED BRA beneath her open-necked blouse. Jesus.

NINA
Our boy Slash has graduated to malls. Check out his targets.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: A MAP of Chicago-area MALLS. Nina clicks her mouse and three of them GLOW RED.

DALE
Small-town oldies. No cameras.

NINA
He hits them on the weekends. The bills don't wash up till Monday.

Dale stares at Nina. She's on the spot. She types in a command. Two more MALLS pop up on-screen.

NINA
He's been working west of the city. I figure these two fit his profile.

DALE
There goes your hot weekend.
(walking away)
This guy's only gonna give you one shot. Don't miss him.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A COP PICNIC. Art plays football with Karen's FELLOW OFFICERS. He hauls in a pass and outruns two cops to paydirt.

ART (V.O.)
I had two lives going. It was crazy.

A COP collects money in a ballcap.

COP
Beer run. Don't be shy.

Art sticks in TWO TWENTIES. Karen watches, eyes narrowing.

INT. ART'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Art and Mikey watch from the window as Karen drives away.

ART
Ready for some fun?

SERIES OF SHOTS

Art belts Mikey into a car seat in the NEW TRANS AM... plays videogames with him at CHUCK E. CHEESE... treats him to a White Sox game at Comiskey.

INT. GARAGE - DUSK

Art lifts Mikey out of the car seat. They high-five.

ART
I'd call that a hell of a day.

INT. ART'S APT. - DUSK

Art, wearing his grease monkey coveralls, kisses Karen goodbye and walks out the door. She walks to the window.

KAREN'S POV: Art walking jauntily to the car, all smiles. This is a guy headed for a night shift at a gas station?

INT. CHICAGO BULLS ARENA - NIGHT

Art and his buddies sit court-side, watching JORDAN DUNK.

INTERCUTTING BETWEEN ART AND KAREN

Art and his posse cruise Rush Street in the Trans Am. HOTTIES smile... wave... pile into the Trans Am.

Karen gives Mikey a bath... reads him a book... tucks him in.

INT. FANCY STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

A midnight meal. Art and his crew in high spirits.

WAITRESS
Would you like that rare?

ART
Just wipe its ass and walk it by the stove.

She looks at Joey.

JOEY
No steak's worth forty bucks. Gimme
a burger.

The others laugh at him. Casey raises his glass to Art.

CASEY
To Mister Money.

Art's eyes shine. They clink and drink.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Art lies in bed, dead to the world, Mikey asleep beside him. Karen, dressed for work, sees Art's jeans on the floor.

She kneels and searches them. She pulls out the CHICAGO BULLS' TICKET STUB. COURTSIDE SEATS. \$200.

She finds two C-NOTES in his pocket. Deep hurt in her eyes.

INT. BANK - MORNING

Romo steps to the TELLER, a 60-year-old grandmother.

ROMO
I wanna make a deposit. Two
thousand.

He slaps down a PILE OF C-NOTES. The teller starts to count them. Midway through her count, she pauses...

CLOSE ON THE TELLER'S FINGERS.

She glances at Romo, then coolly finishes her count. She makes subtle eye contact with a BANK MANAGER.

INT. SANGERTOWN MALL - DUSK

A bushed Nina Kimm stands at the second-floor railing, sipping Starbucks and surveying the crowds.

NINA'S POV: Scores of shoppers walk out of stores, ride the escalators, stroll the hallways. She focuses on the ones with multiple bags. Most are women.

But wait: Down on the first floor, here's a MAN, 35, carrying three shopping bags and heading into the Game Emporium.

NINA
(into her mic)
Sully...

INT. SANGERTOWN MALL FIRST FLOOR - DAY

BRIAN SULLY, 32, Boston accent, sits in a rest island, pretending to read the *Sporting News*. He's pissed to be here, and more pissed to be taking orders from Nina.

SULLY
(into mic)
Way ahead of you. Blue jacket. Game Emporium.

Sully watches through the store window as the suspect approaches the counter and pulls out... a credit card.

SULLY
Credit card. That's a wrap, Kimm -- eight hours. Me, I would've staked out Stevens Mall. More guy stores.

INT. SECOND FLOOR RAILING - DAY

Nina watches Sully unclip his mic and walk away.

NINA
Thanks... asshole.

She drains her Starbucks and drops into a coin-operated MASSAGE CHAIR. She glances over to see...

ART, relaxing in the next chair. He wears CERULEAN BLUE CONTACT LENSES. A SLEW OF SHOPPING BAGS at his feet.

NINA
Not quite the real thing, huh?

ART
I'll take what I can get.

NINA
Early Christmas shopping?

ART
Man's gotta provide.

Nina closes her eyes. Art reaches over and drops a coin in her slot as he gets up. Her massage starts up, surprising her. She looks over toward Art -- but he's gone.

She relaxes into the deep-tissue rollers.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DUSK

Art stuffs his bags into the trunk of the Trans Am. He tosses in two SILVER MONEY CLIPS bulging with cash.

INT. SANGERTOWN MALL - DUSK

Nina's back at her railing, sipping a fresh Starbucks. She stretches, then stares, coming to life at the sight of...

ART walking back into the mall. Wait a second -- he's empty-handed. He steps into a SAM GOODY music store.

NINA'S POV: Art walks out of the Sam Goody, bag in hand, and into the B. DALTON BOOKSTORE.

Nina's eyes narrow. She watches Art walk into a FOOT LOCKER. She starts to walk along the railing.

INTERCUTTING between Nina, tracking Art along the railing...

... and Art down below, passing bills at FOOT LOCKER...
SPENCER'S GIFTS... RADIO SHACK.

Art walks into VICTORIA'S SECRET.

Nina rides down the ESCALATOR. HER POV: Art flirts with a TWIGGY SALESCLERK as he pays. He glances up. Nina ducks down. Did he see her?

Nina hits the first floor and hides behind a RED MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE -- grand prize in a mall raffle.

Art walks out of Victoria's Secret and heads for MACY'S.

INT. VICTORIA'S SECRET - DAY

Nina flashes her badge at the Salesclerk.

NINA
Secret Service. Show me the bill
your last customer paid with.

She opens the register and finds the C-NOTE.

SALESCLERK
Secret Service? Ohmigod. Tell me
Bill Clinton is in the mall.

Nina studies the note. Bingo -- the telltale SLASH.

INT. MACY'S - DAY

Nina scans the floor and... spots Art in sportswear. He's carrying three SWEATSUITS toward the fitting rooms.

Nina tracks him. At the PERFUME COUNTER, she takes out her cell phone and dials. Listens.

NINA
Pick up, Sully. Come on.

Not happening. She hurries to the area outside the fitting rooms. She draws a small .45 from an ankle holster and...

Rounds the corner. Three of the four fitting rooms are empty. The fourth is occupied. Art's SHOPPING BAGS sit outside.

Nina takes a breath, steadies her .45, and kicks in the door.

NINA
Secret Service! Freeze!

A FAT GUY in a Bears sweatshirt cowers against the wall.

FAT GUY
Don't shoot! Don't shoot! He paid
me to lose his wife!

Fat Guy holds up a C-NOTE.

Nina races through a door into a storage room. The FIRE BELL is ringing. Nina spots the source -- a DOOR marked "FIRE EXIT. USE ONLY IN EMERGENCY." She runs through it.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Nina watches Art's Trans Am gun out of the parking lot into the street. She whips out a small pair of field binoculars.

BINOCULAR POV: The TRANS AM'S LICENSE PLATE, visible for just a split second before the car turns down a side street.

NINA
Gotcha.

EXT. NEARBY STREET - NIGHT

Art pulls the car over, jumps out, and unscrews the LICENSE PLATES. The REAL PLATES lie beneath. He drops the fake ones down a sewer grate.

He takes a deep breath. He's shaking.

INT. SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

Nina walks in, flushed with excitement.

DALE JERROD
Ran that plate. Junkyard special.

Nina slumps into a chair, despondent. She fires her Starbucks cup at the trashcan. It hits the wall behind it and explodes.

INT. WAREHOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Art steps off the service elevator, loaded down with the night's haul. He starts down the hallway. Suddenly he drops to a crouch, staring...

... at the DUNGEON'S OPEN DOOR. He slowly backs away, and then he hears it: U2's "ONE," playing from the dungeon.

Art closes his eyes. A beat. He walks to the door, knowing what he'll see. And there's Karen, sitting on the bar stool.

ART
How did you...?

KAREN
I'm a cop. Remember?

She walks along his equipment. Stares at the mighty press. She stops at the money table.

KAREN
You swore to me. In front of Mikey.

ART
I wanted to share this with you. I couldn't. Karen, hear me out.
(beat)
Imagine what we could do with this. A house. Private school for Mikey. Vacations. We could have a life, Karen.

She can see it. For one electric beat, Karen can see it all.

KAREN
We have a life. Getting up. Going to work. Making love. Watching our baby grow. That's a life, Art. I thought it was a pretty good one. But you want this.

She's crying now, and furious that she can't stop.

ART
Who am I hurting, huh? Tell me that.

KAREN
Everyone you give this... stupid paper to. What do you think happens when they take it to the bank?
(beat)
Get rid of all this. Or I'll turn you in.

ART
Karen...

She starts knocking stacks to the floor.

ART
Don't do that. Stop it!

She won't stop. He pushes her up against the wall.

ART
Do you how know fuckin' hard it was
to make that money?

He holds a COUNTERFEIT C-NOTE to her face.

ART
Look at it.
(she won't)
Look at it! I could hand this bill
to the chairman of the Fed and he'd
take it right to the bank. I'm not
some hack printer, Karen. I'm the
fuckin' best!

KAREN
Is that what I tell Mikey when
you're dead? Or in prison? That his
father was the best?

Art slams his palm into the wall by her face, denting the
plaster, scaring them both. Karen slides down to the floor
and sits there, back to the wall. Art starts pacing.

ART
You think I'm gonna pump gas
forever? Change oil, fetch
cigarettes, take shit all night for
eight bucks an hour?
(beat)
My Dad took shit all his life. From
Stolin; from my mom; from everyone.
That's why he ran out. He couldn't
swallow one more spoonful. That's
not gonna be me. No more taking
shit. No more scraping by.
(he pats the money)
This is our ticket, Karen.

KAREN
Our ticket to what?

ART
Freedom.

KAREN
How free is DaVinci?

A beat. Art has no answer. Karen walks to the door.

KAREN
I'm changing the locks.

She walks out. Art knocks over the MONEY TABLE. The cash flies everywhere. He kicks it, furious. He sinks to his knees, lost.

INT. TRANS AM - NIGHT

Art is parked across from his apartment. HIS POV through the apartment window: Karen paces the living room, holding MIKEY.

Art opens the gym bag beside him -- it's full of the cash from the dungeon. He looks at the cash... at his family.

Suddenly: An EXPLOSION OF GLASS as the driver's side window SHATTERS. A BIG HAND smashes Art's face into the steering wheel, then pulls him out of the car.

Art, dazed, stares at ROMO, who doubles him over with a savage punch. TWO THUGS force Art into the Trans Am's back seat as Romo gets behind the wheel.

ROMO
Nice ride.

He opens the gym bag and sees the cash. He smiles.

Art struggles to catch his breath in the back seat. The thugs on either side of him press guns into his ribs.

ART
What the hell's going on?

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Romo pulls into the alley behind the Bent Elbow. Stolin's thugs haul Art out. He sees...

Don on his belly, cut up and bleeding, kicking futilely as a THUG holds his face in a mud puddle. He finally lets go. Don gasps and gulps air. He sees Art.

DON
I'm sorry, Artie.

Romo slips three ROLLS OF QUARTERS into a GLOVE, then puts his fist in the glove.

ART (V.O.)
Fuckin' Don. The guy hands bad bills to the only guy in the Outfit dumb enough to keep his money in the bank.
(beat)
No counterfeit detector on earth can match a teller's fingers. They touch money all day, every day.

Two thugs hold Art still. Romo punches him in the face.

ROMO
 That's for the fuckin' night in
 jail.
 (hits him in the gut)
 That's for the fuckin' judge we
 gotta buy...
 (and again)
 And that's for the fuckin' Bears
 missin' the playoffs.

Art drops to his knees, gasping, ribs broken.

ART
 You forgot one. For your mother.

SFX: The CLICK of a GUN CLIP. Art squints through bloody eyes
 to see ANSON STOLIN standing over him, holding a .45.

STOLIN
 You got more guts than your dad.
 Less brains, but more guts.

Art stares down the barrel. His final seconds.

CLOSE ON BARREL: BOOM. FLASH.

Art flinches. A BULLET HOLE in the mud, inches from his ear.

BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. BANG. Stolin empties the round into
 the frozen mud. Art cringes in the fetal position.

STOLIN
 Your street tax is five grand a
 week. Startin' tomorrow.

Art, spitting blood, rolls to his knees to see Romo driving
 away in his Trans Am. U2 floats out the broken window: "*I
 still haven't found what I'm lookin' for.*"

INT. DON'S CAR - NIGHT

Art and Don, battered and bleeding, parked beneath the
 highway overpass at Pebble Beach. Art is furious.

ART
 You steal my counterfeit? Then you
 pass it to fuckin' Romo?

DON
 I didn't know anyone could spot it,
 Artie. Your bills are fuckin'
 perfect. They're like the real
 thing.

Don pulls a counterfeit c-note out of his left pocket.

DON
 Look at it--

ART
Jesus. Gimme that!

Art snatches the bill. He starts to rock back and forth.

DON
I'll make it up to you, Artie. I
swear.

But Art isn't listening. He's rocking, and staring numbly through the windshield. Searching his brain for that elusive escape route.

ART
I'm fucked, Donnie. If I don't
print money for Stolin, I'm dead.
If I do -- Karen's gone for good.
(beat)
Fucked.

He punches the dash.

EXT. GRACE LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL - DAY

Art sits in a humble TOYOTA with rental car plates. His face is a swollen mess. He watches Karen drive away.

The preschool's back door opens and a pack of wild TODDLERS run into the grassy yard. Art walks over to the fence.

ART
Mikey!

Mikey runs over. Art takes a WHITE SOX CAP out of his pocket. He puts the cap on Mikey.

ART
I gotta go away for a little while.

MIKEY
Why?

ART
I just gotta do a job--

Art stops. He's giving Mikey the same line his own dad used the night he ran out. Mikey stares at him.

A TEACHER, suspicious, heads over.

TEACHER
(to Mikey)
Is everything all right?

Both Art and Mikey ignore her.

ART
I'm coming back real soon, I
promise.

Art hugs Mikey tight, then hurries to his car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

Art drives the open road, pressing an icepack to his cheek.

He rolls past belching factories... past frostbitten farms.
His face matches the landscape -- desolate.

EXT./INT. ART & KAREN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Karen opens the door to see Don. A beat as he works up the
guts to give her the bad news.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Art rolls through Arkansas. Flat and lonely. Nothing to see,
and nothing to keep you from seeing it.

INT. HIGHWAY GAS STATION - NIGHT

Art buys chips and sodas.

CLERK
Plus twelve for the gas. Comes to
fourteen thirty-five.

Art instinctively reaches in his LEFT POCKET. Nothing there.

He pulls out his wallet. We see the WORN SAN ANTONIO POSTCARD
tucked behind his cash.

INT. SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Dale Jerrod walks past Nina's desk. She's staring blankly at
her Bob Marley screensaver.

Dale knows who she's day-dreaming about.

DALE JERROD
Chin up, Kimm. If the streets don't
get him...

He nods at a HUGE CUTOUT of a C-NOTE. But it's no ordinary C-
Note. This baby's been radically redesigned. Ben Franklin's
head is huge, his features exaggerated. The numbers, the
background -- everything about this bill is different.

DALE JERROD
... the New Note will.

INT. BUREAU OF ENGRAVING AND PRINTING - - WASHINGTON - DAY
Massive sheets of NEW NOTES roll off monster presses.

MATCH CUT TO:

NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGES rolling off printing presses.

THE NEW YORK POST: "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BENJAMINS"... THE
CHICAGO TRIBUNE: "SHOW ME THE MONEY"... THE L.A. TIMES:
"SEEING GREEN"

REACTION SHOTS of EVERYDAY AMERICANS as the NEW NOTE hits the
streets. STOCKBROKERS... FLORISTS... TAXI DRIVERS...
everyone's jonesing on these cool new Benjamins.

We see NEW NOTES passing from HAND-TO-HAND. In banks and
ritzy nightclubs... tire shops and back alleys. From white
hand to black hand to yellow hand. Sea to shining sea.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STATION - DAWN

Art sleeps in his car, bundled under thin blankets.

CLOSE ON TV SCREEN: A CNN ANCHOR at her desk.

ANCHOR
If you're looking twice at your
money these days, you're not alone.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SUNSET

Art drives past the "WELCOME TO TEXAS" SIGN. Past sprawling
cattle ranches... lonely oil fields.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
But Ben Franklin's radical facelift
is not entirely cosmetic.

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A violent WINDSTORM. Art struggles to keep the car between
the white lines. CITY LIGHTS twinkle in the distance.

A SAN ANTONIO EXIT SIGN. Art pulls off the highway.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
From security threads, to secret
watermarks, to color-shifting ink,
many of the New Note's features
have a purpose that might surprise
you: to thwart counterfeiters.

EXT. VAGABOND INN - NIGHT

Art pulls up to a dive motel. Bugs slam against a sputtering neon vacancy sign.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

An agitated Art holds the phone.

ART
I'm gonna make things right, Karen.
Just give me a little time.

KAREN
If you call again, I'll change the
number.

ART
Karen--

He's talking to a DIAL TONE.

EXT. PEPSI PLANT - DAY

A bustling plant. Art and JUAN SANTANA, 25, haul a 500-pound VENDING MACHINE up a truck ramp. Art is soaked in sweat.

INT. PEPSI PLANT - DUSK

A bone-weary Art punches out on the time clock.

INT. PAYDAY EXPRESS - DUSK

A TELLER cashes Art's meager paycheck.

TELLER
Two eighty-seven thirty-four. Large
bills okay?

She slaps down two NEW NOTES -- the redesigned C-Note. Art stares, transfixed -- it's the first time he's ever seen one.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APARTMENTS - NIGHT

A squat little apartment complex in San Antonio's rough-and-tumble Fort St. Houston section.

On the corner, FOUR CHICANO KIDS whack at a lamppost pinata.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Art soaks in the tub. He's holding a NEW NOTE. Staring hard at its intricacies. This baby is a piece of work.

His finger traces the SECURITY THREAD -- a razor-thin, barely visible strip embedded INSIDE THE PAPER. It's tiny lettering reads "100 USA, 100 USA, 100 USA."

Art holds the bill to the light, summoning the WATERMARK -- a faint, ghostly portrait of Ben Franklin himself.

And for the coup de grace: The "100" in the lower right corner. The digits are GREEN -- until Art tilts the bill. Then the color-shifting ink CHANGES TO BLACK.

Art lays the bill on the windowsill -- this sucker is impregnable. He sips his beer and soaks.

Sitting on the toilet beside the tub is an ENVELOPE WITH Karen's RETURN ADDRESS. DIVORCE PAPERS peek out.

INT. SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - CHICAGO - DAY

Dale Jerrod stands in front of a roomful of FIELD AGENTS. Monday morning briefing.

DALE JERROD
Our good city's bad bill count...
(pauses for effect)
... is eighteen thousand.

Cheers and fist-pumps from the agents.

DALE JERROD
Twenty-year low. How 'bout that
fuckin' New Note?

Nina Kimm, sitting in the back row, flips through her field notebook to a SKETCH OF ART WILLIAMS. She can't let it go. Taped beneath the sketch is one of Art's FAKE C-NOTES.

FELLOW AGENT
Soon we'll all be back on Lewinsky
duty.

The agents all laugh.

INT. PEPSI PLANT - DAY

Juan tosses 12-pack boxes to Art, who loads them into a Pepsi truck. Toss and load. Toss and load.

Suddenly Art stops loading. He walks to a nearby fence and stares through it at a shiny pickup truck.

ART
 Juan. Your pickup. Is it red or orange?

JUAN
 Depends on the light. Pretty cool, huh?

Art stares at the truck. A revelation.

INT. PAINT STORE - DAY

Art, holding a New Note, stares up at...

A HUGE WALL OF ACRYLIC PAINTS. Hundreds of bottles -- dozens of shades for every color. Art sighs -- he's got no chance.

STORE CLERK (O.S.)
 Can I help you?

INT. ALAMO ARMS KITCHEN - DUSK

Art drinks a beer at the table, which is covered with half-finished sketches of the New Note. Frustrated, he walks out...

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APT. - DUSK

... onto the tiny balcony. He watches some KIDS kick a dusty soccer ball in the street below.

A DUMPY MEXICAN WOMAN is making tamales at her corner stand.

She slaps down a flour tortilla, lays in a strip of jalapenos, folds the tortilla closed, then pounds it flat with a quick blow of the fist.

Art watches her. Casually at first, then intently.

She's fast and rhythmic: lay in the jalapenos... fold... pound. Jalapenos... fold... pound.

Art is transfixed. A CAR HORN breaks his reverie. It's Juan, pulling up in his shiny pickup truck.

JUAN
 Ready for a Texas happy hour?

INT. JUAN'S TRUCK - DUSK

Juan floors it. Art reaches for a seatbelt. There isn't one.

JUAN
 Texas.
 (beat)
 So how you like the plant, Amigo?

ART
 It's work.

JUAN
 It's good work. In two months
 they'll raise you to ten an hour.
 In a year you'll be making twelve.

EXT. S-KICKERS BAR - NIGHT

Establishing shot. A down-home Texas roadhouse.

INT. S-KICKERS - NIGHT

Juan and Art at the bar. Photos of country music greats line the walls. Antique farm equipment hangs from the ceiling.

The half-acre wide dance floor is packed with people engaged in a Texas specialty -- LINE DANCING. Blue-jeaned cowboys and cowgirls of all shapes and sizes step in time to the music.

Art stares in amazement.

JUAN
 You don't got line dancing in
 Chicago?

ART
 If a guy danced like that in
 Chicago they'd never find his body.

Juan eyes a MEXICALI BABE across the room. She smiles back.

JUAN
 See ya Monday, Amigo.

Juan heads over to her. Art watches the line dancers.

Soon he's mesmerized by a TRIM BEAUTY in a white dress. Doe eyes and long brown hair. Wow. Her innocent line-dancing is sexy as hell. She offers up a sweet leg, then takes it back. Hands on hips. Dip a shoulder on the turn.

She catches Art staring and smiles. He holds up his beer -- does she want one? She points to the HUNK dancing beside her. *Sorry, I'm with him.*

Art buys her a beer anyway. On her next pass, he holds it up.

The BIG HUNK walks the girl over to Art.

HUNK
I hope that beer's for me. Because
if it's for her, we got a problem.

ART
If it's for you, I'm a fag. That's
not a problem?

A long beat. The Hunk laughs and offers his hand.

HUNK
Clem. And Natalie -- my little sis.

ART
Art.

Natalie shakes Art's hand and accepts his beer. She pokes
Clem and nods across the room at a HUGE-BREASTED BLONDE.

NATALIE
Go dance with Miss Store-bought --
you've been eying her all night. I
can handle myself.

Clem tips his Stetson at Art and heads for the blonde.

ART
You always hit the bars with your
brother?

NATALIE
It cuts down on the jackals.

Natalie's silver, heart-shaped necklace sparkles in the
light. Art touches it.

NATALIE
It's called an Eternity necklace.
It's a Mormon thing.

ART
Mormons can drink beer?

NATALIE
Sometimes I stray.

He touches her bare knee. She smiles. Heat. As they watch the
line dancers, Natalie reaches behind Art's back for his beer,
which sits on the bar. She's about to do something to it, but
stops. She can't go through with it.

She OPENS HER HAND, showing Art a SMALL VIAL OF LIQUID.

NATALIE
I'm supposed to pour this in your
beer. So that Clem can rob you.

ART
Tough town.

Art closes his eyes and holds his beer out to Natalie. A long beat. Eyes still closed, he drinks it down.

He takes Natalie's closed hand in his. He opens it -- the VIAL IS STILL THERE. Still full.

THEIR POV: Clem and Miss Store-bought, stepping lively.

Clem sneaks a glance over at Art and Natalie.

ART
He's not your brother, is he?

INT. S-KICKERS - LATER

Clem is passed out in a chair in a corner, his Stetson over his face. Art pockets his wallet and truck keys.

INT. CLEM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Natalie sits on Art's lap, kissing him hungrily. He's her whole world. Art slips a hand under her shirt. She stops him.

NATALIE
You promised me dinner.

INT. CHILI HUT RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Art and Natalie sit at a table. A WAITRESS clears their plates away. Art eyes Natalie's legs. He wants her bad.

ART
Why did you show me that vial?

NATALIE
I don't know.

Her eyes say it all -- she took a leap of faith.

ART
Come home with me.

She smiles like an angel... and shakes her head no. Art can't believe it.

NATALIE
Guys don't respect what they don't
earn. Don't you listen to Doctor
Laura?

A beat. Art stares at her. He's at a crossroads. Does he play his ace card? Finally...

He reaches into his wallet and pulls out one of his old FAKE C-NOTES. He lays it on the table.

ART
I made that.

NATALIE
Good for you.

ART
No, I made it. It's counterfeit.

Natalie picks up the C-Note and stares at it in the dim candlelight. She starts to tremble. She walks out of the bar.

Art sighs. He can't believe it -- he's lost her.

ART'S POV THROUGH THE WINDOW: Natalie stands under a bright streetlight, staring at the C-Note. She walks back inside.

BARTENDER
What do you need, sweetheart?

NATALIE
A round for the bar.

The BAR PATRONS cheer. Natalie hands the bartender the C-Note. He holds it up to the light, flicks it with a finger, and rings up the sale.

Natalie stares into Art's eyes. Soulmates.

INT. ART'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art and Natalie make wild love. She clutches his back, tears streaming down her face. They finish. He holds her.

ART
Don't worry. I won't tell Doctor Laura.

LATER

Art wakes up, alone. Natalie sits by the window, staring at the fake C-Note in the moonlight. She walks to Art.

NATALIE
When I was a girl in Utah a stallion broke loose from the neighbor's ranch and ran through our yard. He was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. Until you showed me this.
(beat)
Just think what we could do, baby. The places we could go.

ART
Whoa.
(he takes the C-Note)
This is an old bill, Natalie. They're headed out of circulation.

He pulls a NEW NOTE from his wallet.

ART
The New Note. First guy to break
this sucker is gonna get real rich,
real fast.

Natalie's eyes shine. Art holds up a hand -- here comes the catch. He brings the New Note close to the lamp. The bright light pours through it.

ART
See this security thread? Embedded
inside the paper. Over here?
Watermark.

CLOSE ON the faint, ghostly watermark of Ben Franklin's face.

ART
And these numbers? Green, right?

He tilts the bill. Now they're BLACK.

Art looks at Natalie, expecting her to be daunted. Her beautiful eyes are wide and trusting.

NATALIE
You can do it, right?

Art smiles. He has no idea, but he can't say no to those eyes. He nods.

NATALIE
I'll help you.

INT. BARRIO HOUSE - DAY

A small house in the barrio. A MEXICAN LANDLORD walks Art and Natalie through the kitchen.

LANDLORD
Lots of cabinets. You like to cook?

NATALIE
Yes Ma'am.

Art opens the basement door and walks down a few steps. Big, dark, and quiet. Perfect. Art closes his eyes.

INT. BARRIO HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

Art stands on the basement stairs again. But now Natalie stands behind him, her hands over his eyes. She pulls them away and Art stares in wonder at...

An OFFSET PRINTING PRESS, wrapped up in a BIG RED BOW. Art looks at Natalie, incredibly moved.

ART
Baby?

NATALIE
I spent everything I had.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - DAY

The basement wall is covered with dozens of FELT-TIP SKETCHES OF THE NEW NOTE. It reminds us of Art's old comic-book cover wall, except now it's all about the Benjamins.

Art sits in front of a COMPUTER SCREEN. It's filled with thin vertical columns reading "USA 100, USA 100, USA 100." (The text printed on the New Note's security thread.)

Art prints the text out onto SUPER-THIN VELLUM PAPER.

Using ruler and razor, Art cuts a tiny strip off the vellum. He grips the strip with tweezers, and stares down at the BACK of a COUNTERFEIT NEW NOTE.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS - DUSK: FLASHBACK

We're back with Art on the second-floor landing. He's staring down at the MEXICAN TAMALES WOMAN at her corner stand.

INTERCUTTING BETWEEN THE TAMALES WOMAN AND ART'S BASEMENT

The TAMALES WOMAN lays a strip of jalapenos on her tortilla...

ART lays a vellum strip onto the Note-Back...

The TAMALES WOMAN folds her tortilla closed...

Art presses the Note-Front onto the Note-back, trapping the vellum strip in between...

The TAMALES WOMAN pounds the tortilla flat with a hard blow from her fist...

Art lays the bill on the CORKSCREW PRESS and hits it with five hundred pounds of pressure.

BACK TO SCENE: BARRIO BASEMENT - DAY

Art peels the bill off the press and holds it up. Voila -- a beautiful, embedded security thread. Natalie hugs his neck.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - NIGHT

Art opens a box marked "ACRYLIC CAR PAINTS." Twenty small bottles inside. He dips a paintbrush into a bottle.

Art touches up the "100" on the bill's lower right corner with green acrylic paint. He holds it up to the light: GREEN. He tilts the bill: STILL GREEN.

He opens a new paint bottle. Natalie brings him coffee.

LATER

All twenty paint bottles are scattered about. Art's ashtray is full, his coffee mug empty. Natalie refills it.

ART
I'm gonna try mixing 'em.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - ANOTHER NIGHT

Art's still at his table. Three-day growth of beard. Dishes of mixed paint lie around, cigarette butts stubbed out in them. Natalie sleeps on a small sofa.

Art sighs. He mixes two shades of green paint with a dollop of black. He dips in the brush, then touches up the "100."

He holds it up: GREEN. He tilts it: BLACK. Victory. He shakes Natalie awake and shows her the bill. She kisses him.

ART
Just the watermark left, baby.
Piece of cake.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - NIGHT

A confident Art scratches a portrait of BEN FRANKLIN onto a NOTE-BACK.

He lifts the finished note off the corkscrew press and holds it up: no watermark is visible.

He tries to STEAM THE PORTRAIT onto a note. He lifts it off the press: nothing but a messy blur.

He tries inserting a piece of paper with a drawing of Ben Franklin. He lifts it off the press: Too thick.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Art paces the room. He's burnt out, miserable. Natalie sits on the counter, red-eyed, smoking a cigarette.

ART
I can't fuckin' do it.

NATALIE
There's gotta be a way, baby. The government does it.

ART
 With million-dollar machines. I got
 spit and tissue paper.

Art stares at her. Revelation.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - NIGHT

Art sketches a portrait of Ben Franklin onto a TISSUE. He cuts out the portrait... glues the fragile tissue paper onto a NEW NOTE BACK... presses on the FRONT.

Art lays the bill on the hydraulic press. He hits the button. Natalie takes his hand. This is it -- all or nothing.

Art lifts the cover. He holds the bill up to the window.

Dawn's early light pours through the bill. BEN FRANKLIN'S FACE, ghostly and beautiful, stares back at them. A perfect WATERMARK.

Art lifts Natalie off her feet. Presses her against the wall.

ART
 You ready to get rich, baby?

INT. ALAMO ARMS KITCHEN - MORNING

Natalie paints her toenails on the kitchen table.

NATALIE
 Are you sure we need them?

ART
 Trust me. Things are gonna get
 wild.

SFX: HONKING FROM OUTSIDE. Art looks out the window. Smiles.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS - MORNING

Joey climbs out of a VAN. He's up to 350 pounds now, easy. Art pats his belly.

ART
 No Slim-Fast for you, huh?
 (beat)
 Can't believe you jagoffs found
 Texas.

JOEY
 Just hung a right at Missouri.

Don gets out the passenger side. He's wearing the same Marine Corps sweatshirt we remember from Chicago.

Art glares at him... then at Joey. Clearly, Don wasn't invited.

JOEY
(sheepish)
What are you gonna do?

Don shuffles his feet, hangdog.

DON
I'll drive right back home, Artie.
Alone. Just say the word. You need
the van? I'll hitch.

A beat. Art sighs. What are you gonna do?

Joey opens the back of the van. Casey pops out. He hugs Art.

CASEY
Fuckin' Lone Star State, Homes.
What took you so long?

ART
You'll see. Did you bring it?

Casey smiles. Art climbs into the van. He pulls a blanket off a HYDRAULIC PRESSURE PRESS. Industrial strength. Art smiles.

ART
Just what the doctor ordered.

A SLEEPY BLONDE sits up in the back of the van.

BLONDE
Are we in California yet?

INT. ART'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Drunken reunion. Empty beer cans, burnt blunts. Art pours shots of Cuervo as Natalie rubs his shoulders.

ART
So... wanna see what I dragged you
cross-country for?

Art pulls out a COUNTERFEIT NEW NOTE and passes it around. The guys are in awe. Even amateurs can see its magic.

JOEY
Holy shit.

DON
It's fuckin' beautiful, Artie.

ART
 Welcome to the big-time. Everybody
 else is still printing the old
 hundreds. When this baby hits the
 market... move over Bill Gates.

The guys are hooked.

ART
 I'm gonna need a crew. Casey...
 you're my point man. Joey, you're
 muscle. Don...
 (a long beat. Don's in
 agony)
 You're gonna drive.
 (Don's face lights up)
 Any questions?

CASEY
 (to Natalie)
 You got a sister?

EXT. VAGABOND INN - DAY

ART (V.O.)
 I put the guys up in style.

INT. VAGABOND INN MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

A cramped pigsty. Don and Casey sleep in one bed; Joey snores
 in the other. Clothes, beer cans, pizza boxes all around.

EXT. THE ALAMO - DAY

Establishing shot of San Antonio's famous fortress. Tourists
 mill about the beautiful limestone walls.

ART (V.O.)
 While Don learned the streets...

Don, DRIVING A CAB, drops off three Asian sightseers.

ART (V.O.)
 And Joey stayed strong...

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

Joey sits down. THREE DOUBLE WHOPPERS on his tray.

ART (V.O.)
 Casey scouted out the local action.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Casey shoots pool in a ROUGHNECK DIVE... drinks with OUTLAWS in a biker bar... shares a joint with LOWLIFES outside a strip club.

INT. BARRIO HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

ART (V.O.)
My job was to print my ass off.

Art stares at stacks and stacks of beautiful counterfeit.

INT. DURTY NELLY'S - NIGHT

Casey leads Art into a dive bar. A BABE in a red, white, and blue bikini top works the taps. A hundred bras hang from the ceiling.

Casey points to the back, where HILLY, 45, gaunt and scruffy, drinks alone at a small table. They head over.

CASEY
Guy's a fuckin' jagoff, but he's got the town wired.

Hilly looks them over as they sit down.

CASEY
This is Art, the guy--

Hilly rubs his fingers together. So much for small talk. Art hands him two twenties. Casey seethes.

HILLY
The king of the counterfeit jungle is a guy named Nosa. Nigerian. Badass. Runs a crew out of Dallas.

ART
How do I find him?

HILLY
You don't. Nosa finds you.

ART
I got the best paper he'll ever see.

HILLY
Yeah? Then put it out on the street. If it's any good, he'll hear.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

The *Fiesta* rages. Revelers cruise the streets, drinks in hand. Fireworks light up the San Antonio River.

INT. DINER - DUSK

Art and Natalie in a booth. Casey walks in, sporting a black eye. He joins them.

NATALIE
What happened to you?

CASEY
Cost a' doing business. Got a
buyer, Homes. He wants a hundred
grand a week from Friday.

Art sees that Casey is nervous.

ART
What?

CASEY
He's Russian mafia. The word is,
these guys don't fuck around. Your
paper better be as good as you say.

ART
Don't worry about my paper.

EXT. CITY STREET - DUSK

Art & Natalie walk down the raucous street, dodging the **cascarones** -- confetti eggs -- that Mexican kids toss off the rooftops.

Art pulls her into a doorway beside a liquor store. He brushes the confetti from her hair. He kisses her.

ART
What's the first thing you want me
to buy you?

NATALIE
Everything.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Art & Natalie grab a bottle of champagne and head for the counter. Three DRUNK AIR FORCE CADETS are buying condoms.

The CLERK takes a cadet's TWENTY and marks it with a STRANGE BLACK PEN. He rings up the sale. The cadets head out.

DRUNK CADET
(doing Terminator)
I'll be back.

Art steps to the counter, his eyes locked on the PEN.

ART
What is that?

The clerk swipes the pen across a COUNTERFEIT TWENTY taped to the register. A BLACK MARK appears on the bill.

CLERK
Real bills show yellow. See?

He swipes Art's TWENTY -- a YELLOW MARK appears.

CLERK
Just the champagne?

Art and Natalie are in shock.

ART
Pack of Newport Lights.

As the clerk turns to grab the cigarettes, Art swipes the PEN off the counter. He and Natalie hurry out.

EXT. BARRIO HOUSE BACK YARD - DAY

Art and Natalie stand beside a burning compost heap. Art dumps counterfeit bills out of a garbage bag into the fire.

They watch the beautiful bills burn down to ash. Art pulls out a cell phone.

INT. VAGABOND INN - DAY

Casey holds the phone. He's agitated.

CASEY
Fuck that, Homes -- these guys
won't wait for the Pope. We do this
buy or we get the hell outta here.

INT. PAPER STORE - DAY

Natalie, in jean skirt and white halter top, pages through a booklet of binder samples with a YOUNG COUNTER CLERK. He's beyond smitten, which distracts him from...

ART IN THE PAPER AISLE, swiping the counterfeit pen across every sample sheet. They all MARK BLACK.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

A POSTAL CLERK hands Art a slew of envelopes. Art rips them open: PAPER SAMPLES. He starts marking them right there. BLACK, BLACK, AND MORE BLACK.

INT. ALAMO ARMS APT. KITCHEN - DUSK

It's hot as hell. Art and Natalie sit at the table, sweating. PAPER SAMPLES cover the counter. Art talks on the phone.

ART
I need to order a sample. Number
two-two-seven-eight.

Natalie closes her eyes. She's barely holding it together. She glances into the living room, at...

Casey, Don, and Joey. They've clearly moved in, their stuff strewn everywhere. Joey eats potato chips out of a bag. Casey smokes a joint. Don gives himself an insulin injection.

Art is dialing again. Natalie grabs the receiver from him and hangs it up. He picks it up again and dials.

ART
Hi. I need some...

Natalie pulls the jack out of the phone, killing the call. She starts to cry. She grabs the ANTI-COUNTERFEIT PEN.

NATALIE
You broke the New Note. Broke it.
And it doesn't matter.

Art plugs the jack back into the phone.

NATALIE
The paper's not out there! Can't
you see that?

She starts slashing the pen across every piece of paper she can find. A napkin. A calendar. The wallpaper. BLACK.

NATALIE
Nothing works!

She marks a dixie cup. A paper plate. *The San Antonio Times*. BLACK. She's working herself up into a frenzy.

Joey walks in, headed for the fridge. Natalie even grabs his *USA TODAY* sports page and marks that. EVERYTHING STOPS.

YELLOW. Art and Natalie stare at the newspaper in shock.

ART
Do it again.

She marks it again. YELLOW. They're afraid to breathe. Casey and Don stand in the doorway.

CASEY
Homes?

Art holds up the newspaper. Pandemonium.

EXT. **USA TODAY** BUILDING - DAY

The loading docks behind the building. TWO WORKERS toss bundles of papers into a delivery truck. They look up to see a PRIEST and a YOUNG LADY.

It's Art and Natalie. Art wears a black robe and starched white clerical collar. Natalie wears a demure blouse and black skirt, with a crucifix on her neck.

Propped against a garbage dumpster are a half-dozen thick, four-foot high COB ROLLS. The rolls are used, destined for the recycling plant, but each has enough paper left on it to print a lot of bills.

WORKER
What do you need, father?

Art pats one of the cob rolls.

ART
We're on a very tight budget at Saint Aquinas. A few of these would keep Mrs. Callahan's fourth-grade class in coloring paper all year.

Natalie fingers the crucifix and flashes a smile.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

THREE WORKERS eye Natalie as they load the heavy cob rolls into the back of Art's rented flatbed pickup.

WORKER
She can keep me after school any day.

INT. FLATBED PICKUP - DAY

Natalie puts her Mormon Eternity Necklace back on.

NATALIE
It felt like a sin to take it off.

ART
We'll cut the Mormons in for ten percent.

She laughs and kisses him.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

A MEXICAN JANITOR drops his mop and crosses himself. HIS POV:
A priest kissing a hot babe in a pickup truck.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A dark, quiet lot. A dozen parked cars.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Don and Casey sit up front, Art and Joey in the back. Art checks his watch: **9:58**. High tension.

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN pushes a shopping cart to his SUV. He unloads his groceries. And now he starts toward the guys.

CASEY
What the fuck?

The man flashes a LEATHER CASE from beneath his jacket.

Joey gets out and the man slides in next to Art. He's slight and wears bi-focals, but he has an unmistakable presence.

MAN
Arthur. I'm Dmitri.

Art opens his duffel bag. Dmitri examines a counterfeit note under a jeweler's light. Marks it with a PEN. YELLOW.

DMITRI
Outstanding.

Art is moved by the man's respect. Dmitri hands over the cash. As Art counts it, Dmitri stares at the supermarket.

DMITRI
You think it was Reagan who won the Cold War. It was your supermarkets. Fifty kinds of cereal; twenty face creams. We had no chance.

Art nods at the money -- it's all there. They shake hands.

DMITRI
You have more of this?

ART
Whatever you can buy, I can print.
Tell that to the boys in Moscow.
(as Dmitri gets out)
You got balls comin' alone.

Dmitri walks to his SUV. He opens the door, revealing: FOUR THUGS, armed to the teeth. The guy's hardly alone. He smiles back at Art.

INT. NATALIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Art walks in, empty-handed. Natalie is alarmed -- what happened? Art opens his shirt and dumps STACKS OF CASH onto the table. She screams in joy.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - DAY

Art hunches over his work-table. Natalie dips a cloth in ice water and cools his neck. Garbage bags stuffed with fake New Notes cover the floor.

ART (V.O.)
I couldn't print those babies fast enough.

EXT. TITO'S STRIP CLUB - DAY

Establishing shot. DON is parked out front.

ART (V.O.)
I told Casey I wanted foreign buyers. If the bills left the country, so would the heat.

INT. TITO'S - DAY

Art and Joey sit in a booth. Casey, supposedly standing lookout, watches a lithe stripper twirl down a pole.

A wiry MEXICAN slides in across from Art. They exchange bags beneath the table.

The Mexican examines Art's bills on the seat beside him. Wow.

ART
Forty cents on the dollar.

MEXICAN
Si.

INT. NATALIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Natalie opens her mirrored closet door. She grabs all her clothes and tosses them on the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

Natalie opens the same closet door, revealing a WHOLE NEW WARDROBE. She smiles at Art.

INT. TITO'S - DAY

A KOREAN BUYER sits across from Art.

ART
Forty-two cents.

INT. NATALIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

TWO WORKERS haul away Natalie's old sofa... and carry in a fancy new one... and a fancy loveseat... and an armoire.

Art's still smiling, but not quite as wide.

INT. TITO'S - DAY

A GERMAN BUYER this time.

ART
Forty-five.

GERMAN BUYER
Deal.

INT. NATALIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A WORKER mounts a huge, framed painting of a white stallion. Another WORKER installs special art lighting beneath it.

Art takes a big hit off his beer.

INT. CHICAGO SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - DAY

NINA KIMM stands in the conference room, hooking her laptop to a flat LCD screen. DALE JERROD walks in. TWO BULLS TICKETS peek out of his shirt pocket.

DALE
Shaq's in town, Kimm. Make it fast.

NINA
The DEA hit a drug buy in San Antonio. Some Mexicans paid counterfeit for crystal meth.

ON SCREEN: A COUNTERFEIT NEW NOTE. Incredible quality. Nina zooms in on the IMMACULATE SEALS. WATERMARK. SECURITY THREAD.

DALE
Looks like a Super Note.

NINA
Except for this.

She zooms in on the upper right of the note: A BLACK DOT.

NINA
Same mark on every bill.

ON SCREEN: One of ART'S OLD C-NOTES appears beneath the NEW NOTE. Nina zooms in on the trademark DIAGONAL SLASH.

NINA
Remember Slash? Made bills so good
he had to put flaws in them?

ON SCREEN: A RULED GRID appears along the side of the screen.

NINA
Here's his old mark: One inch in
from the left; one inch up.
(beat)
This new dot: One inch in from the
right; one inch **down**. Let's say
he's using a razor and ruler...

ON SCREEN: Nina rotates Art's old C-Note until it's upside down. She lays it just above the New Note. The marks are in precisely the same location.

DALE
Christ.
(beat)
You're telling me our punk holes up
for six months and breaks the
fuckin' New Note?

NINA
He's always been a step ahead of
us.

Dale lights a cigarette, despite all the NO SMOKING SIGNS.

DALE
Tell forensics to send over
everything they got. Call Interpol,
too. If he's selling to Mexicans,
who knows who else he's selling to.

Dale feeds his BULLS TICKETS into a paper shredder.

DALE
And pack your spurs, Kimm.

INT. WESTERN UNION - DAY

Art at the counter. He holds an envelope ADDRESSED TO KAREN. He slips a PACKET OF BASEBALL CARDS inside.

ART
I need a money order.

INT. CASEY/JOEY/DON'S NEW PAD - NIGHT

Casey ushers in Art and Natalie. The decor is Nouveau gangster -- black leather couch, speed bag, big-screen TV. The lone item on the bookshelf is the GODFATHER BOXED SET.

CASEY
You gotta see this, Homes.

Casey opens a closet: Two dozen pairs of JORDAN HIGH-TOPS line the shelf. Beneath them, on hangers, an entire row of JORDAN SHIRTS. Not just Bulls' jerseys, either. Powder-blue dress shirts tastefully adorned with the Jordan logo.

JOEY
The jagoff gets 'em dry-cleaned.

CASEY
I'm a jagoff? Show Natalie the fridge.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joey opens the fridge. All the shelves have been removed to make room for a KEG OF BUSCH. Natalie pats Joey's shoulder.

NATALIE
Where's Don?

JOEY
Out buyin' a six-month CD. Guy thinks he's Donald Trump.

EXT. CASEY'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Art & Casey, twenty floors up.

CASEY
Called my Ma today. Six fuckin' degrees in Chicago.

They clink beers. Casey points to a balcony ten floors below. A golden-skinned BABE suns herself in a backless bikini.

CASEY
She looks even better in bed.

ART
The high life's sweet, ain't it?

CASEY
It's about to get sweeter.
(beat)
Nosa.

Art smiles, eyes shining. The day he's been waiting for.

CASEY
He wants a quarter million, Homes.
Who's your daddy?

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APARTMENT - DUSK

Art takes a LETTER FROM Karen out of the mailbox. He tears it open. A PHOTO OF MIKEY in a baseball uniform. And Art's WESTERN UNION MONEY ORDER, ripped into little pieces.

Art slams his palm into the mailbox, denting it.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Art stands on the steps, agitated, talking into his cell.

ART
Fine. Don't spend a dime on
yourself. Just use it for Mikey.

Art listens, fighting to keep his temper in check.

ART
Listen, Karen. I want to come for
Mikey's birthday.

INTERCUT KAREN IN HER KITCHEN

KAREN
Send me a pay stub.

ART
A what?

KAREN
A pay stub. From your job. One with
your name on it. Then you can come.
(beat)
That's what I thought. Don't make
this harder than it is, Art.

Art sits down on the steps, defeated.

INT. CAR - NIGHT: DRIVING

The Guys on the highway, Don driving. The DALLAS SKYLINE looms up ahead.

CASEY
Fuckin' midnight buy, Homes. Big
leagues.

DON
Artie, when you give these guys the
bills, do it with your right hand.

ART
What?

DON
I looked up some stuff on
Nigerians. They think it's rude to
hand things over left-handed.

The guys crack up.

EXT. SKYLARK MOTEL - NIGHT

Art pulls up to a drab, quiet motel. Cuts the engine. A beat.

ART
Ready?

DON
I shouldn't a' watched *Scarface*
last night.

Art leads the guys down the outside hallway to the last door:
Room 39. It's so quiet they can hear the ICEMAKER.

JOEY
(whispering to Don)
Which hand do they wipe with?

Art knocks. The door opens.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Art and his crew step in and stare at FOUR NIGERIANS, all
dressed in impeccable suits.

NOSA, 35, is the leader. Sharp eyes and a blinding gold
Rolex. His henchmen form a solid wall in front of him.

KENNY, 30, a black American in a sweatsuit, sits on the bed.

A SMALL DESK WITH TWO CHAIRS commands the middle of the room.
On it are a LAMP and a MAGNIFYING GLASS.

The two crews eye each other -- Nosa's stylish Nigerians, and
Art's ragtag, jeans-and t-shirt crew.

NOSA
Is this a joke?

ART
You tell me.

Art sits down at the desk and unzips the duffel bag. A
skeptical Nosa sits down across from him.

KENNY is clearly on something -- staring straight ahead,
rocking back and forth on the bed.

Nosa pulls a stack of counterfeit from Art's duffel bag. He tests it with an anti-counterfeit pen. YELLOW.

Nosa lays a COUNTERFEIT NOTE down beside a REAL C-NOTE. He studies the bills under a magnifying glass. He snorts.

NOSA
I couldn't pass this shit in Lagos.

CASEY
Fuck you. Art makes the best.

A henchman steps toward Casey. They bump chests.

ART
Hey!

Casey backs off. Maximum tension in the room.

Art picks up the two bills -- COUNTERFEIT and REAL -- shuffles them behind his back, and lays them down.

ART
Which one's real?

CLOSE ON THE BILLS. There's no telling them apart. Nosa smiles, conceding his bluff.

NOSA
What's your secret?

ART
Kinko's.

Everyone laughs, breaking the tension. Everyone except Kenny. He's still rocking back and forth on the bed.

NOSA
I'll pay you forty cents on the dollar.

ART
Forty-five.

A staredown. Kenny rocks faster and faster.

ART
Your guy's making me nervous.

Nosa pulls out a gun with a silencer and SHOTS KENNY THROUGH THE FOREHEAD. He falls back on the covers, dead.

Art stares in shock. Before anyone in his posse can move a muscle, the Nigerians whip out SEMIAUTOMATICS.

A stunned beat. Don looks down -- he's pissed himself.

CASEY
Fuckin' spearchuckers.

Nosa milks the moment... then puts his gun away. He nods to his men, who pocket theirs.

Art breathes again. He rips his gaze off Kenny's corpse.

ART
Forty-three.

NOSA
Done.

Nosa opens an AIRLINE BAG filled with cash. He removes several stacks.

NOSA
I would've gone to forty-five.

He hands over the bag -- LEFT HANDED. Art cuts Don a look.

One of Nosa's henchmen pulls a big GOLF TRAVEL BAG out of the closet. He wraps Kenny's corpse in the bed blanket, then stuffs it into the golf bag.

NOSA
I'll want a million next month. Can you do it?

Art nods. They shake hands. As Art heads for the door...

NOSA
You're forgetting something. My old supplier.

Art and his crew stare at the golf body bag. No way. Way.

EXT. TEXAS WILDERNESS - NIGHT

A hill of tangled scrub brush. Joey and Casey, nervous as hell, dig with shovels, working hard. Art watches the nearby road for headlights.

Don, a wreck, paces back and forth.

DON
Fuck, fuck, fuck.

The guys toss the golf body bag into the hole. As Joey and Casey start piling dirt on it, Art walks over to Don.

ART
Don. He would've killed him anyway. He did it in there to make a point.

DON
Yeah, well point fuckin' taken.

A coyote howls somewhere in the darkness.

DON
 What the fuck was that?
 (Beat)
 We came down to print a little
 money, have some fun. We're burying
 a fuckin' corpse. It's over. Right,
 guys?

EXT. DON, CASEY, AND JOEY'S BUILDING - DAY

Don tosses his bag into a RENTAL CAR. He hugs the guys and gets in. He waves Art over to the window.

DON
 Remember what you told us -- always
 have an escape route? How's this
 gonna end, Artie?

ART
 With us on top, livin' large. Stay.

DON
 (shaking his head)
 Look, I finally got a little dough -
 - thanks to you. Enough to start
 something, maybe.

ART
 Like what?

DON
 I don't know. Something.
 (beat)
 Artie, the rest of us jagoffs got
 nobody. But you got Mikey.

Art looks down -- not what he wanted to hear. Don drives off.

CASEY
 More for us, Homes.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS - NIGHT

Art, still troubled, walks to his door. As he reaches for the handle, Natalie pulls it open from inside, revealing...

Plush, luxurious, SNOW-WHITE CARPET. Four inches thick.

ART
 Jesus. What did it cost?

NATALIE
 That's not the question. The
 question is...

She takes Art's shirt off and lays him down on the carpet.

NATALIE
How does it feel?

Pretty damn good. She climbs on top of him.

NATALIE
You can buy a girl anything she
wants. Do you have any idea how
sexy that is?

ART
(unbuttoning her blouse)
Show me.

She kisses his neck. She starts kissing down his chest.

NATALIE
Tomorrow they do the bedroom.

Art stares at the ceiling. Jesus. She moves lower. Jesus.

INT. TOWER OF THE AMERICAS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Art and Natalie sit in a spinning restaurant 600 feet above
San Antonio. Stunning sunset views out the window.

Natalie is sexy and radiant. Living the life she dreamed. Men
at other tables check her out. Art slides her the wine list.

ART
You pick.

A WAITER sets down two glasses of champagne.

ART
What's this?

The waiter nods at the bar. DMITRI -- the Russian from the
parking lot buy -- lifts his glass. Art's shocked to see him.

ART
I'll be right back.

Art walks to the bar. Dmitri is paying his tab with a C-
NOTE. Art eyes the note warily.

DMITRI
Don't worry, Arthur. Your bills are
in Chechnya by now.
(beat)
I've been authorized to make you an
offer. You'd live in a villa on the
Black Sea. Print one week a month.
On the best equipment. Complete
security. Your salary--

ART
No thanks. I work for myself.

DMITRI
We'd pay ten times what you could
make here. With no risk, Arthur.

ART
And no freedom.

DMITRI
Freedom is tricky. You're my third
supplier in eighteen months. The
others retired... to Leavenworth
and Lompoc. Your government catches
all the good ones.

ART
And yours doesn't?

DMITRI
Mine can be bought.

Dmitri hands Art a card with just a PHONE NUMBER on it. He
nods towards Natalie.

DMITRI
She's beautiful. It's amazing what
money can buy.

Art's not sure how to take this. He stays quiet.

DMITRI
I can have you and Natalie out of
the country in an hour.

Art stares at him, stunned that he knows her name. Dmitri
smiles and walks away.

INT. SAN ANTONIO SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Nina Kimm sits with DANNY MUNOZ. 35, rugged, slicked-back
hair. He can't keep his eyes off Nina's bare knees.

DANNY
So, you've seen our boy up close.

He wheels his chair to a file cabinet, grabs a folder marked
INTERPOL, and wheels back.

DANNY
His bills are getting around.
Europe, Asia, Africa. Drugs, the
sex trade. Even dirty diamonds.

NINA
That's globalization for you. But
nothing local?

DANNY
Nada. He'll slip up, though -- they
always do.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
 Buy himself a hooker, or a big
 screen TV. You want in on the bust?
 Stick close to me.

She takes the Interpol folder. As she leafs through it,
 Danny's eyes go back to her knees.

Nina looks up, nailing him cold. He smiles, unashamed.

INT. ALAMO ARMS - MORNING

Art and Natalie sleep twined together. The PHONE RINGS.

INT. KAREN'S APARTMENT - CHICAGO - DAY: INTERCUTTING

Karen holds the phone. Mikey looks up at her with big eyes.

KAREN
 There's only one thing in the world
 your son wants for his birthday.
 And I can't talk him out of it.

Art's face lights up. He can't believe it. He mouths a silent
 "Thank you."

NATALIE
 Who is it, baby?

EXT. ALAMO ARMS BALCONY - DAY

Art and a pouting Natalie. She stares out over the railing.

ART
 It's my kid, Natalie.

NATALIE
 And your Ex.

He wraps his arms around her from behind. Kisses her neck.

ART
 Hey. As soon as I get back, we're
 gonna take a little day-trip. Out
 to the sticks.

He pulls out a fake New Note. He waggles it in front of her.

ART
 I'm gonna let you in on the fun.
 It's time.

NATALIE
 (lighting up)
 You mean it, baby?

She hugs him tight. Then worry floods her eyes.

NATALIE
Promise me you're coming back.

ART
Baby.

EXT. O'HARE AIRPORT - NIGHT

Art's plane touches down.

EXT. ART'S OLD BLOCK - NIGHT

Art sits in a cab in front of his old apartment. Emotion in his face as the memories hit him. He can see the Bent Elbow on the corner.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A bushed Nina stops at the CONCIERGE DESK. EMI is on duty. She's 28. French, stylish, creamy. Instant chemistry.

NINA
I need a Starbucks.

EMI
Just two blocks down, Miss Kimm.
But they close at nine.

NINA
Damn. I'm an addict.

EMI
I'll send a coffee-maker to your
room. And a choice of blends.

Emi eyes Nina's gun, visible beneath her open jacket. It excites her. She fights to keep her voice professional.

EMI
I'm on till midnight. But if you
ever need anything after that...

Emi writes a number on her card. Their eyes meet.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY BLOCK - MORNING

Art knocks on the door of a brownstone. For Art, he's dressed to the nines -- a smart sportcoat over his jeans, and new brown loafers.

Karen opens the door. A beat. They want to hug, but don't.

ART
Hey.

KAREN

Hey.

What else to say. An awkward beat, until...

Mikey runs up. He's four now. A boy, not a baby. Art hugs him tight, breathing him in. Overcome.

ART

Happy birthday, Mikey. Wait -- what the hell is this?

Mikey wears a CHICAGO CUBS' cap and jersey.

INT. BIG FIVE SPORTING GOODS - DAY

Art and Mikey stand at the counter. Mikey is now dressed in a WHITE SOX CAP AND JERSEY.

Art slides the offending Cubs' gear across the counter.

ART

Toss that, will you? You're a *Sox* fan, Mikey. That's for life. Cubs fans are losers.

The clerk rings up the sale.

CLERK

Sixty-five forty.

Art looks in his wallet. A couple twenties, and that beat-up postcard. He doesn't have enough money.

He reaches into his left pocket and starts to pull out a COUNTERFEIT C-NOTE. But he sees Mikey. And he realizes.

ART

(to the clerk)

Tell you what. Let's just do the cap.

(to Mikey)

Sorry, buddy.

MIKEY

That's okay.

Mikey takes off his jersey and hands it back. No sweat. He happily creases the bill of his new cap.

Art smiles at his kid.

CLERK

Fourteen thirty-nine.

Art pays with honest cash.

Mikey grabs Art's hand as they walk out of the store.

EXT. COMISKEY PARK - DAY

Art and Mikey in box seats. They rise at the CRACK OF THE BAT and high-five as a White Sox hitter legs out a double.

INT. GO-CART PALACE - DAY

Art, Mikey strapped in beside him, zips down a straightaway and corners hard around a bale of hay. Mikey's in heaven.

EXT. KAREN'S BLOCK - DUSK

Art buys Mikey a Sno-Cone from an ice cream truck. Karen waits in the doorway. They walk over.

ART
Go wash up.

Mikey runs inside. Karen and Art sit down on the stoop. She shares her beer with him.

ART
You're looking good.

He touches her knee. She weakens, but only for a second.

KAREN
What's her name?

ART
Natalie.

KAREN
She knows what you do?
(he nods)
You gonna marry her?

ART
Jesus, you are a cop.

Art hands Karen an ENVELOPE stuffed with cash.

KAREN
I don't want your money, Art. How many times do I have to tell you?

ART
My money just showed our boy the time of his life. Go ask him.

KAREN
You didn't have to spend a dime on him today. He just wanted his daddy back. Are these even real?

ART
Of course they're real. Jesus,
Karen. You think I'd...

KAREN
I don't know. I don't know what's
real to you anymore. I thought
being a father was real. I thought
it meant something.

ART
Hey, I'm here.

KAREN
Today. And when he wakes up
tomorrow and you're gone? What do I
do -- give him this?

She stuffs the money envelope back into Art's pocket.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

A desolate Art sits in first class, drink in hand. He pulls
out the money envelope and stares glumly at the bills inside.
Was it worth it?

He wags his empty glass at the stewardess.

INT. SAN ANTONIO AIRPORT - DAY

Art walks through the terminal gate. Resolve in his eyes.
Things are going to start changing, and soon. He sees:

Natalie at the baggage carousel, wearing a KILLER RED DRESS
and holding a placard: "MR. WILLIAMS."

She's so damn hot, and so full of excitement, that Art can't
help but smile.

ART
That's a hell of a dress.

NATALIE
Buy me a car to match it?

INT. AIRPORT PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Natalie leads Art to a RED CONVERTIBLE. Art stares, shocked.

NATALIE
Relax, it's just a rental. I want
today to be special.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY: DRIVING

Art and Natalie blow down the open road. Art chews on a toothpick. Natalie opens her purse, showing Art a huge stack of cash.

NATALIE
I brought fifteen thousand in
counterfeit.

ART
What? I said three thousand.

NATALIE
I didn't want to run out.

Art can only shake his head.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

They pull into the parking lot of a faceless Texas mall.

Art, nervous now, pulls a bag from his suitcase. He takes out THREE WIGS - RED, BLONDE, BLACK. Natalie picks the red one.

ART
Okay. Now, the whole key is to act
normal. They're gonna stare at the
bill -- that's fine. If they--

She's already out of the car.

INT. MALL - DAY

Art sits on a bench with a newspaper, trying to look like a bored husband. But his leg taps nervously as he looks into...

INT. BED, BATH, AND BEYOND - DAY

... where Natalie lays scented candles on the counter. She hands over a C-Note. The CLERK marks it with a PEN. YELLOW.

CLERK
Seventy-eight nineteen's your
change. Let's get you a bag.

Natalie smiles at Art. She walks out of the store and to him.

ART
You're a natural.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Natalie passes C-Notes at: Pottery Barn... Books-A-Million...
a hip boutique.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

A dazed Art stuffs more bags into the car's packed trunk.

ART
Forget natural. You're a machine.

NATALIE
Just a few more stores. *Please.*

Art's had his fill. But the look in her eyes... she's got him. He sighs and nods.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - DUSK

Nina Kimm splashes water on her face. She's flushed and trembling. Her CELL PHONE RINGS.

NINA
Kimm.

INT. SAN ANTONIO FIELD OFFICE - DUSK: INTERCUTTING

Danny Munoz stands with one boot on his desk.

DANNY
We got an address.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nina hangs up. We can hear a stereo playing. Nina walks out of the bathroom.

Emi, the concierge, sits on the bed, her shirt unbuttoned.

NINA
I have to go.

INT. NINA'S CAR - DRIVING

Danny Munoz holds a counterfeit New Note.

DANNY
An illegal tried to take it to the bank. The guy's a carpet-layer.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
 Claims he laid a six-thousand-dollar shag at a lady's apartment, and she tipped him with the note.

NINA
 Sure she did. Or he took it off her dresser.

DANNY
 Right. Still, a six-grand shag in a one-bedroom? Worth a look.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APT. - NIGHT

Nina and Danny knock on the door. No answer. The LANDLORD lets them in. They enter carefully and start searching.

INT. RED CONVERTIBLE - DUSK - DRIVING

Art can see the San Antonio skyline. Almost home.

Natalie rides sans seatbelt. She's bouncing up and down, flying high on adrenaline.

NATALIE
 You never told me how much fun it is. When they take that bill, baby. When they give you change. It's magic. Let's do it again tomorrow.

ART
 Whoa. One shot, remember? Believe me, you made the most of it.

INT. ALAMO ARMS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nina stands at the counter. Danny walks in.

DANNY
 Nada. You?

Nina, eyes shining, holds up an ANTI-COUNTERFEITING PEN.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - CHICAGO: NIGHT

Dale Jerrod sits on his couch, eating ice cream and watching the Bulls on TV. He talks into the phone.

DALE
 Stake out the place, but don't bring 'em in. If we can hit a buy, or track him to his equipment, we can put him away for good.

INT. RED CONVERTIBLE - DUSK - DRIVING

NATALIE
Take this exit, baby.

ART
But it's not ours.

NATALIE
Just take it.
(he does)
Didn't I say today would be
special?

EXT. RIVERWALK HOTEL - DUSK

Art pulls up to a Four-Star hotel. He can't believe it. The valet opens the door for him. He reluctantly steps out.

NATALIE
I got us the penthouse.

She heads for the lobby. Art tosses down his toothpick, his patience wearing thin. He follows her.

INT. RIVERWALK HOTEL LOBBY - DUSK

Art and Natalie sneak a peek into the rocking bar as they walk past. Texas-sized good times going on. A KARAOKE COWGIRL belts out David Allan Coe's redneck anthem...

KARAOKE COWGIRL
If that ain't country...

... then holds the mic out to the crowd.

CROWD
... I'll kiss your ass.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

They walk in. A deluxe room, beautiful and spacious.

NATALIE
Do you like it?

Art doesn't answer. He takes out the stacks of counterfeit and looks for a hiding place.

He opens the closet. On the shelf is a ROLLED QUILT. He hides the stacks under the quilt's folds.

Natalie takes Art by the hand and pushes him onto the bed.

NATALIE
I missed you.

She reaches for his belt. He stops her. He's not into it.

NATALIE
What's wrong, baby?
(beat)
It's your Ex, isn't it? She's been
giving you guilt.

ART
No, it's not my Ex, Natalie. You
wanna know what it is? It's this
hotel. And that dress. And the
fuckin' convertible.
(anger rising)
And the rugs, and the paintings,
and the restaurants. It's you
burning through cash like there's
no tomorrow. Christ, I'm gonna need
another press just to keep you in
clothes.
(beat)
We can't keep going like this. We
need a plan.

NATALIE
C'mere.

She leads him out onto the balcony. The nearby highway is a
snarl of bumper-to-bumper traffic.

NATALIE
Look at 'em. Trapped. We'll never
have to live like that, baby. We
can go anywhere. Do anything. We're
free.

ART
You're free. I got a kid, Natalie.

NATALIE
So send him money. You can always
make more.

Art slaps her face hard. A stunned beat.

Natalie backs into the room and sits down on the bed. She
bites her lip, trembling.

NATALIE
I'm going down to the bar.

ART
Dressed like that?

NATALIE
It's who I am. Who are you, Art?

She walks out of the room. Art goes straight to the liquor cabinet.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A BLACK MAN in a white Stetson growls ZZ TOP'S *LA GRANGE* into the karaoke microphone.

Natalie, upset, steps to the bar.

NATALIE
A shot of Cuervo. And a margarita.

He pours the shot and starts mixing the margarita.

BARTENDER
Eight-fifty.

NATALI
Dammit! I forgot my purse.

BARTENDER
You can charge it to your room.
(beat)
You okay?

She nods and downs her shot.

Natalie moves through the packed crowd, margarita in hand. No seats anywhere. Except...

TEX MATHIS, 45, wearing a bright pink Armani shirt, shares a booth with two BABES. He gestures to Natalie -- there's room for one more.

She ignores him and keeps searching... but there really isn't a single free seat in the place. She slides into Tex's booth - any port in a storm. He smiles at her.

Natalie nods blankly, but she's not up for company. She downs half her margarita and watches the BLACK COWBOY rock ZZ TOP.

BLACK COWBOY
Have Mercy. A haw haw haw haw.

DISSOLVE SHOTS as the BLACK COWBOY becomes a FAT WOMAN singing *DESPERADO*... and then a FEY GENT singing *STAYING ALIVE*... and finally a HIP CHICK singing *MONEY*.

SINGER
*They say the best things in life
are free/But you can give them to
the birds and bees/I want money...*

BOOTH

Two margaritas later. Natalie watches the front door, hoping Art will walk through it. Tex nods at one of his Babes, who shows Natalie a BULLET OF COCAINE.

BABE
This'll cheer you up.

Natalie glances at the door -- still no Art. She does a hit.

AT THE BAR

The BARTENDER sees Natalie hit off the bullet.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

Art stands at the railing, holding one of his beautiful fakes. He's searching BEN FRANKLIN'S SMILE for an answer.

Art looks down at the street. A LONE HARLEY, bold and free, zooms up the on-ramp and blasts away down the dark highway.

There's Art's answer. He walks off the balcony...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

... and to the elevators. The doors open: Natalie. Crying. Beautiful. She runs into his arms.

NATALIE
I'm sorry, baby. I'll be so good.
You'll see. Mikey can come out this
summer. He'll have a blast.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The BARTENDER talks with two PLAINCLOTHES COPS. He points toward Tex's booth... but Tex and his entourage are gone.

The bartender shows the cops a BAR CHECK: NATALIE'S SIGNATURE. ROOM 427.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Art lies on the bed. Natalie pulls off his jeans. She steps out of her dress.

She walks to the closet.... grabs a wig... and comes to him as a redhead, wearing just bra and panties.

The PHONE RINGS. Simultaneously: a KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

Art answers the phone: Just a DIAL TONE.

ART
Natalie -- don't!

Too late. She opens the door a crack.

TWO COPS rush in, guns drawn. LANNOM, 30, sunburnt and wiry.
HINZ, 28, short and thick.

LANNOM
On the floor! Both of you!

Art and Natalie get on the floor.

ART
Let her put something on.

LANNOM
I don't remember deputizing you.
Tell you what -- give us the coke,
and she can cover her assets.

ART
Coke? You got the wrong room, guys.

LANNOM
Sure we do. That's why she's down
there tootin' with Tex Mathis.

Art stares at Natalie. Tears in her eyes, her heart breaking.

Hinz starts pulling out dresser drawers. He looks under the
bed. Dumps out Natalie's purse. Checks their clothes.

Lannom's eyes roam over Natalie.

Hinz walks to the closet. He tosses out all of Natalie's
clothes. He holds up the blond and black wigs.

LANNOM
Which one matches the carpet?

The closet is empty now. Except for that quilt on the shelf.
Hinz reaches up. Feels underneath it.

Art can't watch. He stares at the floor. A SHARP WHISTLE.

HINZ
Looks like we got sellers, not
buyers.

Hinz tosses the stacks of money onto the bed. Natalie is
hyperventilating. Art squeezes her hand.

ART
Listen. You guys came for drugs.
There's no drugs.
(beat)
I didn't... put... any... money...
in that closet. So there shouldn't
be any in there when you leave.

Lannom looks at Hinz. Free dough, no paperwork. Pretty tempting. He lifts Natalie's chin.

LANNOM
He's done his part, honey. What are
you gonna do for us?

Natalie, trembling, starts to slip off her bra, but Art wraps a shirt around her.

ART
No way.

Lannom smiles and turns to go. Hinz is staring at a C-note. He rubs it. Stares some more.

HINZ
Something's not right. With this
money.

Lannom holds the C-Note up to a lamp. Security strip. Watermark. Color-shifting ink.

LANNOM
That's a fuckin' C-Note. Let's go.

HINZ
No. It doesn't feel right. I put
myself through school as a teller.

Hinz sits on the bed, studying the bills.

HINZ
Fuckin' A.

He lays two bills side by-side. Their SERIAL NUMBERS ARE IDENTICAL.

Art looks at Natalie. Armageddon.

INT. HOLDING TANK - EARLY MORNING

Art sits on a stone bench in a killer-bright room. An incessant, metallic clanging sounds from somewhere. Art is completely fried -- busted, hungover, sleep-deprived.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING

Art sits alone at a table. Nina Kimm walks in.

NINA
How are you doing, Art?

ART
I could use a massage chair.

NINA
 Not many of those where you're
 going.
 (she hands him a
 cigarette)
 What was the best part? The money?
 The power? What was it, Art?

INT. CHICAGO SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Dale Jerrod, cigar in hand, stands in front of his agents.
 ART'S MUG SHOT is projected on the wall behind him.

DALE
 Mister Art Williams. Apprehended.

The room cheers.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Art sits in his cell. He's reading a POLICE REPORT.

INT. HOLDING ROOM - DAY

Art sits with his attorney, GRACE LINDE, 41. She's a 90-
 pound, no-b.s. rottweiler.

ART
 This arrest report is a crock.
 She stares at him. *Yeah, right.*

INT. HOTEL DALLAS HALLWAY - DAY

A MAID cleans Room 427. Grace Linde steps into the open
 doorway and SNAPS A PHOTO.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Art sits at the defense table, hope in his eyes. He
 watches...

Grace Linde pace slowly in front of the JUDGE.

GRACE
 In his arrest report, Officer
 Lannom said that when Miss Clark
 opened the door, they could see a
 huge stack of bills on the
 nightstand. That was their probable
 cause for barging in.

Grace hands PAPERS to the JUDGE.

GRACE
People's Exhibit A.

CLOSE ON LEGAL DOCUMENT: The PHOTO of Room 427.

GRACE
It's a pretty good lie... except
you can't see the nightstand from
the door.

The disgusted judge glares at the nervous PROSECUTION LAWYER.

JUDGE
Tell me you have an answer for
this.

LAWYER
Your honor...

His face says it all. Screwed, blued, and tattooed.

JUDGE
Case dismissed.

DEFENDANT'S TABLE

Art smiles and shakes Grace's hand. She smiles wryly at him.

GRACE
I'll take a check.

Art laughs. He hugs Natalie. High-fives Casey and Joey.

Nina Kimm looks on from the gallery. On his way to the door,
Art stops beside her.

ART
The best part was the freedom.

Nina smiles sadly. Art looks wistful, uncertain. Was he ever
really free?

INT. CHICAGO SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

Dale Jerrod slams down his phone and fires his keys across
the room. He stares out the window at the gray Chicago River.

EXT. AZTEC GRILL - SAN ANTONIO - NIGHT

Art, Natalie, Casey, & Joey celebrate beside the Riverwalk.

BY THE DOOR

Nina and Danny Munoz.

Danny intercepts a WAITER carrying a tray of drinks.

DANNY
Federal agent. I'll take that.

He carries the tray to Art's table. He slams it down, splashing beer all over Casey. Casey starts up.

CASEY
What the fuck, Homes?

Danny shoves him down. He sticks his badge in Art's face.

DANNY
Every second 'til you're dead or in jail there's gonna be a Fed close enough to hand you the Charmin.

Nina nods at Art from the door.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APT. - DAY

ART (V.O.)
He wasn't kidding.

Art and Natalie walk to their car. Nina is parked behind it.

INT. 7-11 - NIGHT

Art buys a six-pack. Danny Munoz waits by the door.

EXT. BARRIO HOUSE - DAY

The house sits quietly.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - DAY

Art's equipment lies idle. A BAG OF CASH sits on the floor.

ART (V.O.)
I couldn't go near my equipment. Or even send the guys for my stash.

EXT. CASEY'S BALCONY - DAY

Casey and Joey watch MOVERS haul boxes into the apartment next door. A BUZZCUT GUY steps out onto the balcony.

MAN
Hiya, neighbors. Federal Agent Cox.

EXT. ALAMO - DAY

Casey and Joey stand outside the historic fort.

JOEY
Five bucks says you can't tell me
what happened here.

CASEY
Patton got his ass kicked by the
Mexicans.

Art walks up. The trio sits down, their backs to the Alamo.
Across the street, TWO AGENTS watch from a parked car.

JOEY
Fuckin' jagoffs are everywhere.

ART
Yeah. No phone calls, right? Don't
say shit in your apartment. Or in
your cars. We gotta lie low.

CASEY
I got bills, Homes.

ART
Think I don't? I can't print, and I
can't grind.
(beat)
They'll give up.

SUPER THE LEGEND: "TWO MONTHS LATER"

EXT. ALAMO ARMS FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

A frazzled Art, beer in hand, looks down at TWO AGENTS parked
on the street. Behind him, inside, a worn-out Natalie smokes
at the kitchen table.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Natalie pushes her cart to the checkout line. The MAN in
front of her -- the buzzcut AGENT COX -- waves her ahead.

NATALIE
Thanks.

AGENT COX
Sure thing. No lemon frozen yogurt
today?

Shaken, she rushes out of the store without her groceries.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Art and Natalie stand together in the shower, steaming water pouring over them. Natalie is sobbing.

NATALIE
They know what we eat. Where we go.
We can't even make love.

She slides down the wall, sobbing. Art holds her.

NATALIE
We're broke, Art.

ART
We gotta hang in there. I'm working
on it. I swear.

NATALIE
How? It's impossible.

ART
You trust me, baby?

A beat. She nods.

INT. PEPSI PLANT - MORNING

Art punches the time clock. His old buddy Juan smiles.

JUAN
Look who's back.

INT. CAR - DAY

Nina and Danny Munoz, parked by the plant, watch through a fence as Art -- wearing a GRAY, HOODED SWEATSHIRT -- loads cases of soda onto a truck.

DANNY
Doesn't the real world suck?
He's going for the Eminem look.

NINA
Now there's a guy who's printing
money.

INT. PEPSI PLANT - DUSK

Art punches out on the time clock.

EXT. PEPSI PLANT GATE - DUSK

Natalie drives up in a car. Art gets in and they drive off.
TWO NEW AGENTS follow them.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Art pumps gas, then walks into the payment shack.

INT. PAYMENT SHACK - NIGHT

ART
Bathroom?

CLERK
In the back.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Art walks out of the payment shack and slides into the
passenger seat. Natalie drives off. The agents follow.

EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE-THRU - NIGHT

Natalie pulls up to the drive-thru window. Art gets out and
walks back to the Secret Service car.

AGENT
What's this?

Art lifts his sweatshirt hood. IT'S NOT ART. IT'S CASEY.

CASEY
Fuck both of youse, Homes.

He flips the agents the double bird.

Natalie watches from the car. She holds a BRAND-NEW CELL
PHONE.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Art walks out of the payment shack, wearing one of Casey's
powder-blue Jordan dress shirts. He walks to a RENTAL CAR
parked nearby. He holds a BRAND-NEW CELL PHONE.

INT. SAN ANTONIO SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

Nina and Danny. Dale Jerrod talks from a speaker phone.

DALE JERROD (O.S.)
He's either printing, or he's
running.

NINA
He's not running. Not without her.

INT. ALAMO ARMS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nina and Natalie sit at the table. A red-faced, furious Danny Munoz stands by the window.

NATALIE
The second I hear from him...

DANNY
(slamming his fist)
You thought we were up your ass
before...

INT. ART'S CAR - NIGHT

Art is parked on the street. He talks on his cell phone.

ART
Put it in motion.

Art stares at the highway on-ramp up the street. War in his eyes. He drives up the ramp.

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

The San Antonio Missions play a game under the lights. Casey and Joey sit in box seats, drinking beers.

Casey stands. An AGENT follows him up the stairs...

... to the door of the bathroom.

CASEY
Come on in, jagoff. You can hold it
for me.

The agent waits outside.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Casey steps to the urinal. He unzips and looks to his right. Nosa, the Nigerian, stands at the next urinal.

CASEY
Five million in paper. Forty cents
on the dollar. Yes or no, Homes?

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT: DRIVING

Art grips the wheel as he drives. He's nervous.

ART (V.O.)
 One monster print run, to set me up
 for life. I was either gettin'
 away, or goin' away.
 (beat)
 But there was one trip I had to
 make first.

Art passes a town sign: SEEVERS, TEXAS. POP. 1,392.

He parks on a residential block and stares at a small house.

ART (V.O.)
 I got the address from the Bureau
 of Prisons.

Art walks to the door and rings the bell.

PAULINE opens the door. A beat as Art realizes who he's
 staring at -- the sexy waitress his father left town with all
 those years ago. She's haggard now.

PAULINE
 Yes?

Art Sr. appears behind her. The years have been rough on him,
 too. He stares at his son.

ART SR.
 (to Pauline)
 Put on some food, will you?

Art hugs his Dad.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Art and his father sit at the table. Art Sr. pours tall shots
 of Scotch. They clink and drink.

A long, awkward beat. What to say? Art Sr. lights a cigarette
 and pours two more shots. Pauline flits around nervously.

ART SR.
 I knew this day would come.

PAULINE
 He did. He kept saying "One day..."

A beat. Still awkward as hell. They down their shots again.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Half the Scotch bottle is gone. Beers on the table now too. Art and his Dad are laughing.

ART SR.
Ain't that the truth.
(beat)
So, what do you do? For money?
(Art looks away)
Hey, I ain't exactly the fuckin'
Pope. You can tell me.

Art sips his beer. He's waited half his life for this moment.

ART
I make money.

A long beat. Art Sr. gets it. He smiles.

ART SR.
No shit. You do all right?

ART
Yeah. I do okay.

ART SR.
A counterfeiter. Attaboy.

Art soaks it in. He sips his beer to hide a smile.

ART SR.
Got any on you?

A beat. Finally, Art holds all the cards.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A steel lunchpail sits on the table. Inside is a PORTABLE COUNTERFEITING KIT. Separate baggies for the New Note fronts, the backs, the watermarks, and the security threads.

Art sits at the table, making his father a New Note. He's almost done -- just the SECURITY THREAD left. He holds it with tweezers.

ART
(pointing to his head)
Actually, most of counterfeiting's
up here, Dad. Lotta figuring.

ART SR.
Are you seein' this, Pauline? The
kid fuckin' makes money.

Art is proud as hell to be showing off his craft. And Art Sr. is mesmerized. He's also loaded.

ART
This is called a security thread. I
did it on a computer.

Art holds it up. Art Sr. leans in, swaying. His cigarette
TOUCHES THE SECURITY THREAD AND BURNS IT TO A CRISP.

ART SR.
Whoops. Fire in the hole.
(he laughs)
Sorry.

Art leaves out the security thread and just glues the front
to the back.

ART SR.
I shoudda thought of this. Here I
am, bustin' my balls for every
dollar, and you're gluing the stuff
together. Shortcut.

ART
Actually, it's really hard. The
shit you gotta know, Dad...

Art wraps the note in a napkin. He's screwed a C-CLAMP to the
counter to serve as a crude press.

He slides the bill between its jaws and tightens the clamp.

ART
It takes a little while to dry.

They face each other across the table. Art Sr. crushes out
his cigarette and lights another. Pounds his beer.

ART
Dad, listen...

Art Sr. raises a hand, cutting him off. A beat.

ART SR.
Hey, I got no excuse. Okay? But...
it's like I had to kill off a part
of me so the rest of me could live.

Art stares at his father. That's all he's gonna get.

ART SR.
But hey, look at you. Big-time
fuckin' counterfeiter.

ART
Yeah.

Art loosens the clamp and unwraps the note. He hands it to
his father, who stares at it, amazed. The awesome, primal
power of money.

He sits down and rocks back and forth, staring at the bill.

ART SR.
 My fuckin' kid. Just like that.
 Attaboy.

Art fights back tears. Everything he's waited for.

ART
 See Dad, it--

But Art Sr. is snoring. Passed out. Pauline takes the cigarette from his hand.

PAULINE
 When he goes, he goes fast.
 I'll fix up a room for you.

She leaves. Art stares at his Dad -- eyes closed, mouth open, stinking drunk. Clutching the counterfeit note.

Art walks out of the kitchen. He pauses in the living room. He can hear Pauline upstairs, getting that room ready. He walks out the front door.

INT. ART'S CAR - NIGHT

Art sits at the wheel. He takes out the old San Antonio postcard, crumples it up, and tosses it out the window.

He stares at a PHOTO OF MIKEY. A decision to make.

INT. CAR - DAY: DRIVING

Art on the highway. His cell phone rings. He listens.

ART
 Don't worry. I'll be there.

He gives it gas.

INT. SAN ANTONIO SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

Nina, sipping her Starbucks, burns the midnight oil. She pages through a volume of COUNTERFEIT NOTES. It's full of cheap knockoffs. Copy-machine jobs... Ink-jet specials... Dollar bills with the "ONES" bleached off.

Nina looks over at ART'S SKETCH on the wall.

NINA
 Wannabes.

INT. BARRIO HOUSE - NIGHT

Art opens the door to the basement. All his equipment is sitting there. Waiting.

LATER

Art works feverishly, making bills. He's fast and steady, walking the length of his work table, affixing SECURITY THREADS and WATERMARKS to a long row of NOTE-BACKS.

All the machines are running full-bore. The PRINTING PRESS churns out green sheets of bills. The HYDRAULIC PRESS flattens finished notes. The DRYER tumbles them dry.

EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

A rowdy crowd roars as a pack of thoroughbreds thunder down the back stretch and hit the finish line.

Art's father groans and rips up his betting ticket. He looks up at the betting windows, weighing a decision.

EXT. BETTING WINDOWS - DAY

ART SR.
A hundred on Number Two to win.

CLERK
Hundred to win on Two.

Art Sr. hands him a C-NOTE. The clerk holds it up.

CLOSE ON C-NOTE: THERE'S NO SECURITY THREAD.

The clerk doesn't flinch. He accepts the bill, but discreetly nods to a COP stationed nearby.

CLERK
Just a sec, guy. Printer's jammed.

A beat. Art Sr. looks at the printer... at the clerk... then makes a run for it. Too late. The cop tackles him. Art Sr. lets out a strangled cry and pounds the ground.

INT. ART'S BASEMENT - DAY

Art, with a three-day beard, lies on his back on the floor, surrounded by an ocean of green. Counterfeit everywhere.

He's exhausted, loopy, triumphant. He's done it. He starts laughing and flips the double-bird up at the gods.

INT. SECRET SERVICE FIELD OFFICE - DAY

An AGENT lays Art Sr.'s counterfeit note on a scanner.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: "SEARCHING DATABASE... MATCH FOUND."

ART'S MUG SHOT appears on the screen.

AGENT
Bing-fucking-o.

INT. CHICAGO FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Dale Jerrod picks up the phone. He listens, eyes gleaming.

INT. HOLDING TANK - DAY

TWO SECRET SERVICE AGENTS grill a terrified Art Sr.

AGENT #1
Fifteen years for passing one lousy
bill. You'd think we're in Iran,
right? But that's the statute.

AGENT #2
Or you can watch the World Series
at home, with a beer.
(beat)
Where is he?

Art Sr. twists his hands, desperate. Tears in his eyes.

ART SR.
Please.... It's my boy.

The agents stare back, unmoved.

AGENT #1
C'mon, Art. We're gonna get him
either way.

INT. ART'S BASEMENT - DAY

Art stares down at two briefcases packed to the gills with
counterfeit notes. A cool five million in paper.

Art pulls up TWO DUMMY FLOORBOARDS and hides the briefcases
beneath them.

He walks up the basement stairs. At the top, he freezes.
ART'S POV: A SHADOW under the door. He puts his ear to it.

A FIST smashes through the cheap wood and sends Art sprawling
down the stairs.

Romo and CARNEY, a thick Stolin thug, burst down the stairs.

ROMO
How the hell you been? Some jagoffs
never fuckin' learn.

Romo slams Art into the long table, then into the printing press. Carney slams him into the dryer.

Art grabs a paint roller and hits Carney in the face, striping his eyes money-green, blinding him.

Carney staggers backward, steps hard on the dummy floorboard, and crashes through it, EXPOSING THE BRIEFCASES.

As Art stares in horror at the briefcases, Romo knocks him to his knees with a gut shot, then out cold with an uppercut.

INT. BARRIO BASEMENT - LATER

Romo slaps Art awake.

ART'S BLURRY POV: Carney sits at the long table. The counterfeit bills are on the table, stacked and counted.

Romo holds a cell phone to Art's ear.

INT. BENT ELBOW BACK ROOM - NIGHT: INTERCUTTING

Stolin sips vodka. Don, pale and sweating, in the first stages of insulin shock, is cuffed to the leg of the pool table. His KIT lies out of reach on the green felt.

Stolin holds the phone up to Don.

DON
Artie, I fucked up. I'm sorry.

Stolin takes back the phone.

STOLIN
Your three fuck buddies disappear
six months after I run you out of
town. All of a sudden Donny Boy
comes back with enough money to buy
out his uncle's cab, and Casey's
old bitch mom can pay a live-in
nurse to wipe her ass for her. I
was born at night, but not last
night.
(beat)
Your boy needs his insulin. But
healthcare costs are skyrocketing.
(beat)
You're holding five million in
paper. When's the deal?

ART
Four a.m.

STOLIN
Twelve hours -- that's two shots of
insulin.

(MORE)

STOLIN (CONT'D)
 Add in a year's worth of unpaid
 street tax.... Let's call tonight's
 co-pay an even million.

ART
 Fuck--

STOLIN
 No, fuck you. If Romo calls me at
 four-fifteen, with the money, your
 boy gets his meds.

EXT. CRUSHING YARD - DAY

Art's rental car hauls a small trailer into the yard. A 30-foot-high CRUSHER stands like a metal dinosaur.

The YARD OPERATOR eyes Art dubiously. Black eye, swollen cheek, pained breathing. *What the hell happened to you?*

ART
 Rodeo.

The operator peers into the trailer. All of Art's counterfeit equipment is wrapped in heavy blankets.

YARD OPERATOR
 The blankets gotta come off.

ART
 They can't come off.

YARD OPERATOR
 We keep a record of everything we
 crush.

Art holds up three crisp C-Notes.

YARD OPERATOR
 'Cept on Tuesdays.

INT. ART'S CAR - DAY

Art, agitated, his mind working, watches the monstrous crusher turn his machines into sheet metal.

His CELL PHONE RINGS.

ART
 Hello? Dad.
 (beat)
 What do you mean?

Art listens. He lowers the phone in shock. We can hear Art Sr.'s broken voice.

ART SR. (O.S.)
 I told 'em nuthin', I swear. Say
 something, boy...

Art kills the call. He punches the dashboard over and over.
 It's all going to shit.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APT. - NIGHT

Nina sits in her car, watching Art's apartment. Music on the
 radio. Her cell phone rings.

NINA
 Kimm.

DALE JERROD (O.S.)
 Go to work on her.

INT. ALAMO ARMS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Natalie and Nina at the table. Natalie smokes a cigarette.
 Her tanktop strap slips off her shoulder. Nina looks away.

NINA
 We took a thumbprint off the bill
 Art made for his father. He's going
 to prison, Natalie. You are too if
 you don't help us.
 (beat)
 I've seen your closets. Prison
 gray's not your color.

Natalie's CELL PHONE RINGS from the counter. A beat. They
 both know who's calling. Natalie walks to the counter.

She stares at the ringing cell phone. Desperation in her
 eyes. She doesn't answer. It stops ringing.

NATALIE
 The buy is at the Motel Six out on
 Stanyan. Room Eleven. Four a.m.

NINA
 How much?

NATALIE
 A lot. But if he doesn't see me in
 the parking lot, he won't go
 through with it. And he'll have a
 lookout. If you follow me, he'll
 know.

NINA
 We'll handle everything.

INT. NATALIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Natalie lies in bed, eyes open, clutching her cell phone. It vibrates. She stares at it.

INT. VAGABOND INN OFFICE - NIGHT

Art walks in. The manager looks him over.

ART
I need a room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Art sits on the bed, the SUITCASES open beside him. He stares at his money. He takes out a notebook and starts to sketch.

INT. SAN ANTONIO FIELD OFFICE - NIGHT

DEREK, 36, a technician, works at a desk as Nina and Danny watch. He's removing a stone from Natalie's ETERNITY NECKLACE. In its place, he installs a GPS TRACKING CHIP.

DANNY
That's what you get for banging a Mormon.

INT. VAGABOND INN - NIGHT

Art dozes, the notebook on his chest. A KILLER SKETCH OF MIKEY on the page. White Sox cap and all.

THE ALARM SOUNDS: 3:30 A.M. Art opens his eyes.

EXT. ALAMO ARMS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Natalie walks down the steps. She opens the mailbox. The Eternity Necklace lies inside. She slips it on.

She walks toward a waiting YELLOW CAB.

EXT. MOTEL SIX - NIGHT

Establishing shot. A quiet night like a million others.

INT. ROOM 11 - NIGHT

NOSA and his five henchmen wait, armed to the teeth.

Nosa looks in his AIRPORT BAG. Instead of CASH, this time it's full of SHREDDED NEWSPAPER.

A Henchman checks the clip in his gun. He nods at Nosa.

NOSA
Let him look in the bag first. A
man should know his fate.

EXT. ROOM 10 - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the ROOM NEXT DOOR.

INT. ROOM 10 - NIGHT

SIX ARMED SECRET SERVICE AGENTS in bullet-proof vests wait quietly. Nina, Danny, and Agent Cox are among them. They whisper when they speak.

Derek, the technician, monitors a GPS SCREEN on his laptop.
ON GPS SCREEN: A RED, MOVING DOT.

DEREK
She's on her way.

NINA
(holding a cell phone)
She'll call us when she sees him.

EXT. MOTEL SIX PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Romo and Carney sit in their rental car, watching the door to Room 11. Carney screws a silencer onto his gun.

CARNEY
Back of the head?

ROMO
Temple. Let him see it coming.

INT. ART'S CAR - DRIVING

Art drives, the briefcases beside him. He stabs the radio buttons. A U2 song. He smiles.

EXT. MOTEL SIX PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Natalie's Yellow Cab pulls into the parking lot.

INT. ROMO'S CAR - NIGHT

Romo checks his watch: 4:03. He's antsy.

INT. ROOM 11 - NIGHT

Nosa checks his watch: 4:03. He and his men are on edge.

INT. ROOM 10 - NIGHT

The agents wait tensely. Nina's CELL PHONE VIBRATES. She nods at the agents, who all move to the door.

INT. ROOM 11 - NIGHT

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. Nosa's henchman opens the door on...

Romo and Carney. They stare at a roomful of armed, bad-ass Nigerians. They draw their guns.

Nosa's men whip out theirs. A standoff.

ROMO
Who the fuck are you?

DANNY (O.S.)
Freeze! Drop your weapons!

The Secret Service, guns drawn, quickly fan out in shooting formation behind Romo and Carney.

DANNY
I mean it! On the fuckin' floor!

A long beat. Nosa nods to his men, who drop their guns and lie down. Romo and Carney do the same.

The agents move in. Nina races into the bathroom. No Art. As her fellow agents cuff everyone, she walks out the door.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Nina sees the YELLOW CAB. She walks over. The CABBIE leans out the window.

CABBIE
You Nina?

He hands her Natalie's Eternity Necklace.

CABBIE
She paid me a c-note to bring it here. Said you'd understand.

EXT. ALAMO - NIGHT

Art sits on the low wall in front of the Alamo. The briefcases are beside him. He's holding the CARD WITH A PHONE NUMBER that Dmitri gave him weeks ago.

DMITRI (V.O.)
You understand this is permanent,
Arthur. There's no coming back.

A BLACK LINCOLN TOWN CAR pulls to the curb.

The car door opens -- Natalie. She shakes out her hair and smiles. Ravishing.

The driver's window rolls down -- Casey. Joey sits beside him. Art walks toward the Town Car.

DMITRI (V.O.)
You made the right choice. You're
the best in the world -- now you'll
be paid like it. Life's too short
to worry about money.

INT. BLACK TOWN CAR - NIGHT: DRIVING

Art and Natalie sit side by side. She opens the briefcase and stares in wonder at the stacks of counterfeit.

CASEY
What about Don?

Art looks out the window.

INT. BENT ELBOW BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Stolin stares down at his cell phone. It ain't ringing. Don, pale and stricken, is still cuffed to the pool table.

STOLIN
You were dead either way.

Stolin smashes Don's insulin kit with a cue ball and heads for the door. As he opens it...

Three CHICAGO POLICE burst in, led by Art's ex-wife Karen.

STOLIN
What the fuck?...

Karen pushes him against the wall. She holds up a slew of BETTING SLIPS.

KAREN
 Illegal bookmaking.
 (nods at Don)
 And now kidnapping.

Stolin can't believe it.

DON
 He married a cop, jagoff. Suck on
 that.

Karen cuffs him. Stolin, enraged, punches the wall.

KAREN
 I know. He just makes you want to
 kill him, doesn't he?

EXT. MOTEL SIX - NIGHT

Nina watches the other agents load all the night's perps into vans. She squats and stares at the ground, her mind working.

A plane flies by overhead. Nina looks up at it. She hears Art's voice in her head.

ART (V.O.)
 The best part was the freedom.

NINA
 Danny -- has this town got a
 private airport?

EXT. SMALL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Art's black Town Car drives out onto the tarmac. A PRIVATE PLANE sits waiting. DMITRI stands in front of it.

INT. DMITRI'S PLANE - NIGHT

Art and Natalie sit together in the back.

ART
 London first, or Paris?

NATALIE
 Rome, baby. I need clothes.

Art kisses her hard. He pats one of the briefcases.

ART
 I got a little business to wrap up.

He walks through a curtain into the plane's front section. He sits down beside Dmitri. He hands over the briefcases.

Dmitri opens the top one. What a sight.

ART
Five million in paper. All yours.

Dmitri stares at him, surprised.

DMITRI
And your terms?

A beat. The moment of truth. Art looks up to see Natalie watching from the curtain. They stare into each other's eyes. She knows.

EXT. TARMAC - NIGHT

The plane takes off into the dark sky. Beneath it, we see a MAN STANDING ON THE TARMAC.

PUSH IN TO REVEAL ART WILLIAMS, standing alone, watching his freedom ride disappear.

Art pulls out one last FAKE C-NOTE. He holds it up in the moonlight. He sets fire to the bottom corner.

HEADLIGHTS AND SIRENS hit the tarmac and speed towards Art.

He ignores them. He watches the flame consume his creation. The COLOR-SHIFTING INK... WATERMARK... FEDERAL SEAL.

The cars pull up. Nina and Danny jump out of the lead car. Nina waves Danny back and walks to Art alone, gun drawn.

Art watches the flame reach BEN FRANKLIN'S PORTRAIT. Old Ben smiles sadly at Art as he burns.

NINA
That's gotta hurt. Your bills were the best.

Art watches the hot ashes blow away.

ART
It's only paper.

He offers his wrists to Nina. She cuffs them.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

A WHITE BASEBALL flies through the air and thuds into a GLOVE. Art is playing catch with a FELLOW CONVICT.

ART (V.O.)
I got three years, four months.
Nuthin', really.
(beat)
Dad got eight years. For not ratting me out.

INT. VISITING ROOM - DAY

Art sits in a chair, stunned, staring across at...

Claire. Bad news written all over her face.

ART (V.O.)
He died a year into it. A heart
attack in his cell.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Art stands at the sink. His cell wall is covered with PHOTOS of MIKEY. Art washes his hands.

ART (V.O.)
Dad took the hard road. For his
boy.

Art stares at one of Mikey's photos. Resolve in Art's eyes.

INT. PRISON KITCHEN - DAY

Art washes dishes.

ART (V.O.)
As for the guys...

EXT. JOEY'S BEEF STAND - NIGHT

Chicago's tiniest beef stand is wedged between a bodega and a locksmith. Don's cab is parked out front.

INT. JOEY'S BEEF STAND - NIGHT

Joey works the counter in a white apron. Casey, wearing construction gear, and Don take up two of the three stools.

TWO COPS walk in. They look for someplace to sit. Joey glares at his buddies -- *you're costing me money*. They don't budge.

The cops shake their heads and leave.

CASEY
Fuck 'em, Homes. Let's eat.

ART (V.O.)
... they're still the guys.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

Art stands at the fence, staring out at barren farmland.

ART (V.O.)
I never heard from Natalie.
Something tells me she's doing
okay.

INT. MONACO CASINO - NIGHT

Natalie, a cocktail waitress, carries a tray of drinks to the craps table. She serves a RICH GENT just as the CROUPIER is handing him the TABLE DICE.

He holds the dice out to Natalie. She blows on them.

HE ROLLS CRAPS. The table erupts in cheers. The rich gent looks at Natalie. She smiles. He's hooked.

INT. PRISON BASEMENT - DAY

Checkout day. A GUARD hands Art his personal effects.

GUARD
... and two hundred thirty-one
dollars in cash.
(holding up a C-note)
I gotta ask, Art. Is this real?

ART
If you gotta ask...

EXT. PRISON GATES - DAY

Art walks out the gates. A COP CAR is waiting for him. Art's face falls... until he sees Karen step out. And Mikey too.

Mikey runs to Art. Art hugs him tight.

MIKEY
I got a baseball game tomorrow. You
gonna be there?

ART
I'll be there. I'll be there for
all of them.

He looks over Mikey's shoulder at Karen. They smile at each other.

Fade Out.