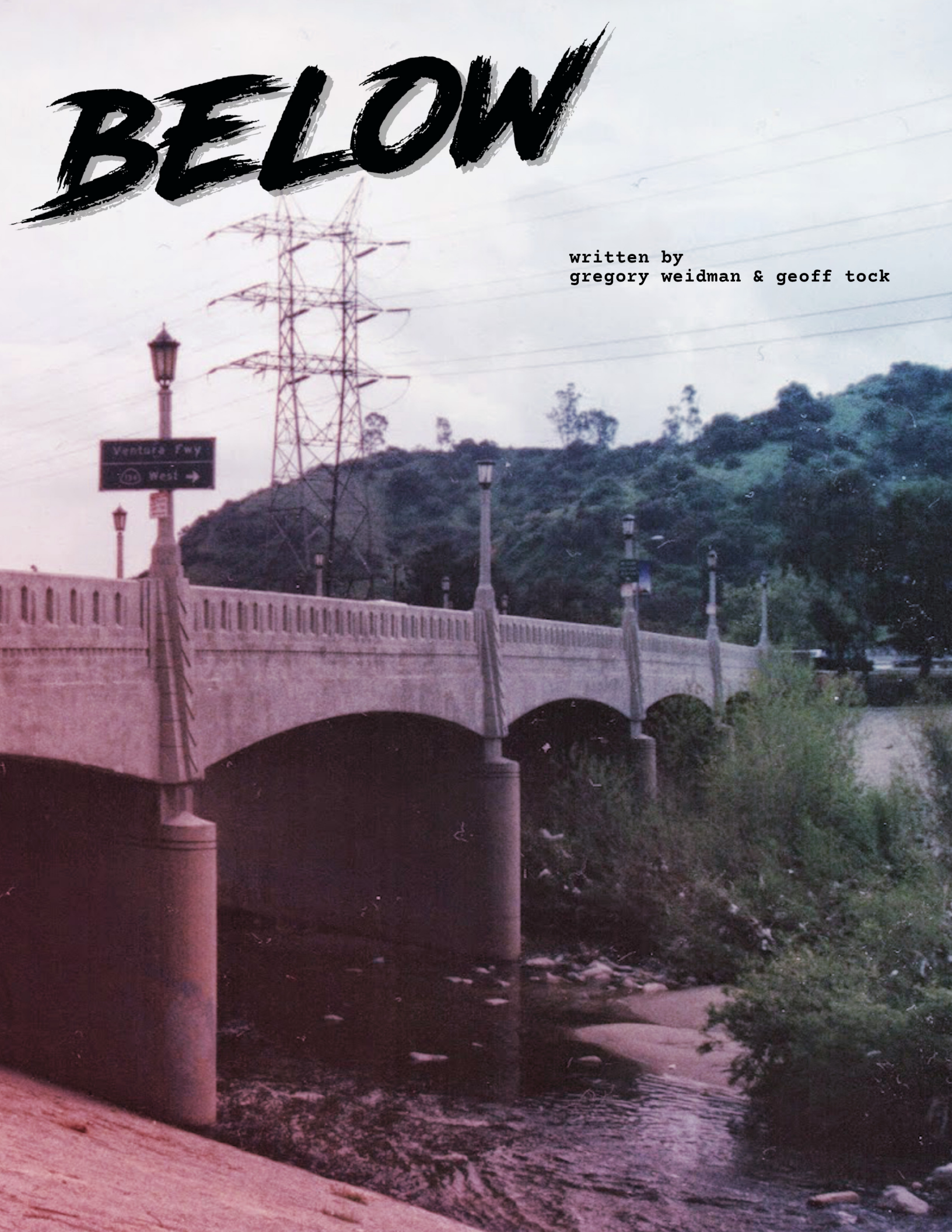


BELOW

written by
gregory weidman & geoff tock



BLACK

Dial tone.
A series of beeps.

PHONE RECORDING
Operator: 67 dash G...

CRAMPED APARTMENT

Shitty and spartan.
Moving through.
Past various items:

A small fish tank on a shelf.
Angelfish swims inside.
Discarded cans of NOS energy drink.
Half-eaten box of In-N-Out.
As the recording continues.

PHONE RECORDING
Opportunities for: Thursday
evening.
Target is a year: 3.
Price set at: 2 1/2 percent over
standard rate.

Moving past: the back of a man doing pull-ups.
Uses the "as seen on TV" door frame bar.
Then finally settle on...

A sawed-off shotgun.
Raw edges on the barrel.
Wood grip wrapped in tape.
Serious shit.

The man comes into frame.
Picks up the shotgun.

Cut to:

METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES

Dead of night.
An aerial view of the sprawling city.
From mountain to ocean.
Alluring.
Yet menacing.
Driving along down below is a...

1991 DODGE DAKOTA

Shitty red paint job.
Rust spots over the wheel wells.

Truck bed filled with gardening tools.
Sloppy stencil on the door:
"ALL AMERICAN LANDSCAPE"

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

A cracked iPhone on the seat.
Playing from its tinny speakers:
A "financial bro" podcast.

PODCAST HOST

*--on Broke to Billionaire we like
to say: the world is yours, all you
have to do is work for it...*

On the dash:
A chunky readout device.
Curly power cord.
Plugged into the cigarette lighter.
This is the Tracker.

Displays a simple radar grid.
Single yellow dot pulses in the center.
Blip.
Blip.
Hmmm what's this for?

And driving the truck is:
The man from the apartment.
LA born and raised.
Wears a work jacket over a hoodie.
Neck tattoos peek out from the collar.
This is **Our Man** (30s, loner by choice).

PODCAST HOST

*Do the work, put that cash
together, level up, and start your
own thing--*

SERIES OF SHOTS

Hollywood hills.
Dotted with upscale homes.
Glitter in the dark.
Distant and unreachable.

PODCAST HOST

*--you're going to serve somebody in
your life, but you have a choice.
You can serve them, or you can
serve yourself--*

And way down below is the...

Gower 101 overpass.

Cement walls covered in graffiti.
 Homeless tents crowd the sidewalk.
 Piss and filth in the gutters.
 Sleeping man on the pavement.
 Or is it a dying man on the pavement.

PODCAST HOST

--no handouts. You don't want
 favors. You want a career--

Ventura Boulevard.

Half the shops boarded up.
 Some with door signs:
 "No one wants to work anymore."
 Graffiti on others:
 "Eat the rich"

PODCAST HOST

--because wealth means freedom, but
 building that wealth requires
 sacrifice, doing jobs you don't
 want to do--

SHELL GAS STATION

Our Man fuels up his truck.
 Sees nearby:
 A homeless man picks through the trash.
 Puts cans in his shopping cart.
 Observes him with remove.

VOICE (O.S.)

City is going to hell.

Our Man looks to the pump across from him:
 A **Suburbanite** fuels up his Mercedes.
 Shakes his head at the homeless man.

SUBURBANITE

Used to be a place you could raise
 a family. Now it's just junkies
 everywhere. Bottom feeders.

Our Man nods along.
 Does he agree?
 Suburbanite looks at Our Man's truck.
 Sees the All-American Landscaping stencil.

SUBURBANITE

But you get it. You're not like
 them. You're a small business
 owner. Folks like you made this
 city great.

(MORE)

SUBURBANITE (CONT'D)
 (climbs in his car)
 Keep on keeping on, brother.

Speeds off.

Our Man watches him go.
 Then gets in his truck.
 Blip-blip-blip.
 Tracker working overtime.
 He pulls out of the gas station.

Follows the Mercedes.

HIGH ABOVE SOUTH LAKE STREET

As the Dakota cruises along.

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man takes a turn.
 Guided by that pulsing dot on the Tracker.
 Podcast plays indistinct in the background.

He's now a few car lengths behind the Mercedes.
 It takes a left.
 And so does Our Man.
 But--

Woop-woop.
 Flashing cherry lights in the rearview.
 Our Man stiffens.
 Then.

The LAPD squad car dashes past him.
 Terrorizing someone else tonight.
 Our Man breathes easy.

But he's lost sight of the Mercedes.
 Shit.

But he trusts the Tracker.
 Keeps following the pulsing dot.

RIVERSIDE DRIVE BRIDGE

Art deco design.
 Aged white concrete.
 Tall skinny lampposts.

That Mercedes parked at one end.

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man drives across the bridge.

Past the Mercedes.
Sees nobody's inside.

Parks the truck.
Checks his Tracker.
He's right on top of the yellow dot.

Reaches over his shoulder.
Slides open the cab's rear window.
Accesses the truck bed.
Pulls in his duffel bag.
Unzips it to reveal:

- Two machetes.
- Snubnosed .32 caliber revolver.
- That sawed-off shotgun.
- Box of ammo

Damn.
He means business.

He takes out an ammo box.
Opens it to reveal:
Shotgun shells with odd red and black stripes.

Our Man drops two shells into the shotgun.
Puts the remaining in his pocket.
But something feels off.
Checks the last shell.

It's leaking a red fluid.
Some of it already hardened.
Like calcified battery acid.
Our Man's frustrated.
This is no good.

OUR MAN

Shit.

Puts the leaky shell back in the bag.

OUTSIDE THE DAKOTA/BRIDGE

Door swings open.
Work boots step onto the pavement.

Our Man opens his jacket.
Slides one of the machetes up his side.
Shunk.
Into a makeshift sheath.
With his jacket on it's invisible.
Slips his sawed-off into his hoodie pocket.
Smooth and practiced move.
Shotgun perfectly hidden.

Our Man quietly sneaks down to the...

RIVERBED/UNDERNEATH THE BRIDGE

Concrete foundation.
 Covered with silt and shrubs and trees.
 A piece of overlooked wilderness.
 Hidden beneath the city street.
 Our Man stalks ahead.
 Eyes searching.
 Then.
 AN AWFUL SOUND.
 Like a baby goat in a blender.
 Physically painful to hear.
But it doesn't faze him at all.

He spots the source.
 A homeless tent.
 Well-used and threadbare.
 Tucked next to a bridge pillar.

Silhouettes inside the tent:
 Nightmarish writhing shadows.
 Long and spindly and disturbing.
 Moving at impossible angles.
All enveloping the outline of a man.

Muffled screams of terror.
 Wet splatter of fluid.
 Shatter of bone.
 Then silence.

Our Man moves forward.
 Eyes glued to the tent.
 Hand in his hoodie pocket.
 Grips the sawed off.

A figure exits the tent.
 It's that Suburbanite.
 Clothes disheveled.
 Breathes hard.
 Sees Our Man.

A strange moment between them.
 Both aware of what's really going on.
 But the Suburbanite tries anyway.

SUBURBANITE

Just doing a wellness check on a
 friend of mine--
 (recognizes him)
 Oh, hey. Gas station right--?
 (realizing)
 Wait--

Our Man whips out his shotgun and fires--
KABOOM.

The report sounds like a thunderclap.
Exploding out from the sawed-off:
A jagged line of red energy.
Like thin chain lightning.
Those striped shells are special.

The pulse hits the Suburbanite.
Splits him in two.
A spray of blood and viscera.
Holy shit.

But the Suburbanite isn't dead.
The blast has revealed what's underneath his skin:

Squirming tentacles.
Thick and disgusting.
Coated in white mucus.
Partially melted from the red energy.
What the fuck.
Whatever this Suburbanite is...
It's not human.
But some kind of otherworldly creature.
This abomination is a **Dreg**.

It scrambles away.
Tentacles writhing.
A half man/half horror.
Its human "torso" still intact.
Flopping human "legs" trail behind.
Still attached.

They're hollow.
Loose and baggy.
Soaked in white mucus.
The Dreg is like a wounded snake.
Dragging its recently shed skin.

The Suburbanite form is only a biological husk.
A soft carapace.
Grown over the Dreg.

Our Man takes another shot.
KABOOM.
But he misses.
A smoking divot in the concrete.

The Dreg rapidly skitters away.
Slips into the shadowy foliage.

OUR MAN
(under his breath)
Fuck.

He ejects the casings.
 Reloads.
 Pushes ahead into the...

PATCHY UNDERGROWTH

Our Man moves through.
 Shotgun up.
 Only sound is moving water.
 Looks for his prey.
 Doesn't see anything.
 The Dreg is hiding from him.

He continues forward.
 Sweat on his face.
 Then.
 A flash of movement.
 He whips to it.

But it's only a wild BROWN MUTT.
 Skin and bones and mange.

Lowers his shotgun.
 Takes a breather.
 Turns away and--

THE DREG IS RIGHT THERE.

The tattered remains of its human "torso" slide away.
 Reveals terrifying massive jaws.
 Crooked serrated teeth.

It lunges toward his face.
 About to consume him.
 But at the last second--
 KABOOM.
 Another flash of red.
 Direct hit.

Mucus splatters.
 As the Dreg falls to the ground.
This time it's dead.

Our Man exhales.
 That was close.
 He crouches by the carcass.
 There's not much left.
 Shreds of "human" skin.
 Tendrils of Dreg flesh.

They all rapidly disintegrate.
 Like cotton candy in water.
 Leaving only one thing behind:

THE DREG SKULL.
 Curved mandibles.
 Thick orbital bones.
 Teeth on teeth on teeth.
 Like a deep sea creature.

Our Man grasps its lower jaw and--
 Krik.
 Krak.
 Pulls it free.
 Drops the jaw into an opaque ziploc.
 Seals it shut.

Then Our Man stomps the skull.
 Shatters it into pieces.
 At a glance it could be broken concrete.

After all that...
It's as if nothing happened here.

UNDERNEATH THE BRIDGE

Our Man heads up to his truck.
 Settle on...
 THE HOMELESS TENT.
 Now empty of its previous occupant.

All that remains:
 A few overturned prayer candles by the wall.
 Unfinished artwork.
 Single couch cushion.
 Remnants of a life.

Next to these lies...
 THAT SAME BROWN MUTT.
 He whimpers.
 Missing his dead friend.

Title:

~ b e l o w ~

GLENDALE & BROADWAY - LATER

Karaoke bar on the corner.
 Red neon sign:
 "DAVE'S"

SINGING VOICE (O.S.)
*I will buy you a garden, where your
 flowers can bloom.*

INSIDE DAVE'S

Karaoke stage.
Pool tables.
Thin weeknight crowd.

Reveal OUR MAN.
Sings on stage with eyes closed.
I Will Buy You A New Life by Everclear.
He's not half bad.
Performs with zero irony.
His version of therapy.

OUR MAN

*I will buy you a new car, perfect
shiny and new. I will buy you that
big house, way up in the west
hills--*

AT THE BAR - LATER

Other patrons chat in groups.
But Our Man drinks alone.
Even in a crowd he's by himself.
And he feels it.

The **Bartender** (20s, pink hair) greets him.
Friendly because she's getting paid.
Our Man doesn't pick up on it.

BARTENDER

Haven't seen you in a bit, how ya
been?

Our Man perks up.
Happy for the slightest connection.

OUR MAN

Good. Just finished a work thing.

BARTENDER

What do you do again?

OUR MAN

Freelance gig. Lots of driving,
meeting with clients. One big job a
month, that kinda stuff.

BARTENDER

I could never do freelance. Too
lonely, y'know?

OUR MAN
 (echoing the podcast)
 It takes sacrifice to get where we
 want to be. And I'm *this* close to
 leveling up.

BARTENDER
 Wow, okay.

She's only being polite.
 Our Man interprets it as genuine interest.

OUR MAN
 Yeah. Always wanted to have
 something that's just... mine,
 y'know? Never really had that--

Another Patron comes up the bar.
 She shifts her attention immediately.
 Greets the new Patron with the same line:

BARTENDER
 (to Patron)
 Hey, haven't seen you in a bit, how
 ya been?

Our Man watches Bartender and Patron.
 Sharing a laugh without him.
 Our Man looks down at his drink.
Once again alone.

THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man drives home.

PODCAST HOST
*The path to success is lonely. But
 anything worth it always will be.*

He tries to take this to heart.

OUTSIDE KOREATOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX

Faded tropical facade over old concrete.
 Tags on the sidewalk.

Our Man walks up.
 Duffle over his shoulder.
 Somebody waits at the callbox.
 Wears hospital scrubs.
 This is **His Ex**.
 Surprised she's here.

HIS EX

Hey.

OUR MAN

Hey.

Air thick between them.
A shared past.

HIS EX

Haven't seen you since you got out.

OUR MAN

Yeah, it's been a minute.

HIS EX

Tried to call. Guess you changed
your number. Your people didn't
have it either.

OUR MAN

Ain't "my people" anymore. They got
me locked up in the first place.

HIS EX

Yeah you were just an innocent
bystander.

OUR MAN

I'm not the one who snitched--
(pivoting)
Look, I wanted a fresh start. I got
a new thing going now.

HIS EX

What is it?

OUR MAN

...freelance.

HIS EX

So back on your bullshit.

OUR MAN

No, it's not like that--

HIS EX

You know what, it's fine, not my
business--

He interrupts.
Desperate to make her understand.

OUR MAN

My truck? It's worth less than the gas I put in it. That shoebox apartment up there? Just like every place I've ever lived, I pay somebody else for the right to live there. I had hand-me-downs with somebody else's name on the tags till I was 16. But with my new job, I finally have the chance to own something significant in this world.

Our Man realizes how vulnerable he's being.
Falls back into podcast language.

OUR MAN

And I'm not gonna let your negativity bring me down.

His Ex goes quiet for a moment.

HIS EX

I didn't come here to argue. Just wanted to give you this back.

She puts something in his hand.
A tiny box.
He opens it to reveal:
An engagement ring.
Fuck.
That cuts deep.

HIS EX

Say hi to Sammy for me.

Our Man watches her leave.
Tries to bury the pain.

KOREATOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - MINUTES LATER

Three levels of apartments.
Surround a shitty concrete courtyard.
Swimming pool half full of dirty water.

Our Man walks along the second floor balcony.

KOREATOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - LEVEL 2

Our Man at his door.
Duffel over his shoulder.
Busy with three separate locks on his door.
He's serious about security.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hey you.

Turns to see his **Wrinkled Neighbor**.
 Armenian.
 Angry she's still alive.

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR

You come in and out, in and out.
 All hours of the night, with all
 these fancy locks, and you think I
 don't know what you're doing?

Our Man pauses.
Does she know?

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR

You're a drug dealer.

OUR MAN

Don't worry. Won't be here much
 longer.

OUR MAN'S APARTMENT

Seeing it full now.
 One room.
 Twin mattress rests on a shitty frame.
 Poor excuse for a kitchenette.
 No TV.
 Blue glow from that small fish tank.
 Not exactly glamorous.

He locks a series of door latches.

Flip - click - clack.
 Lowers a metal bar for added security.
 Thunk.

At the fish tank.

Our Man feeds his fish, Sammy.
 Talks to him.
 His only friend.

OUR MAN

Khalia says hi.
 (then)
 ...no I didn't tell her about my
 job. You know the rules.
 (then)
 I'm fine by the way, thanks for
 asking.

Sammy gulps down fish food.

Our Man looks back at his barren apartment.
Feeling acute loneliness.

A trio of protruding nails.

In the wall above his pillow.
Places his sawed off on the nails.
It fits snugly.
Points toward the door.
Easy access for emergencies.

Our Man gets in bed.

Turns on the podcast.
A low comforting drone.
Closes his eyes.

Cut to:

THE OPAQUE ZIPLOC BAG

On the passenger seat of the Dakota.
Morning light through the windshield.
Our Man drives somewhere.

SUNSET & SCHRADER

Shitty apartment buildings.
Some abandoned or demolished.
New luxury apartments under construction.
An area trending up and down simultaneously.
Stuck in the middle is the **Money Mart**.
Check cashing for the masses.

Our Man walks to the security door.
Opaque ziploc in his hand.
Presses a call button.
Waits.
Glances up at the security camera.
Holds up the ziploc.
Then the door buzzes.
Pulls it open.

MONEY MART

Cheap fluorescent lighting.
Scuffed linoleum floors.

Our Man approaches the counter.
There's a bulletproof divider.
Scratched with old gang signs.

On the other side:
A scarecrow of a man.
Sunken eyes.
This is **Stick** (50s, got sober too late).

Behind him:
 A grimy computer monitor.
 Plays a pirated Dodger game.

STICK
 Hey there, amigo.

He and Our Man have a familiarity.
 Not necessarily a friendship.
 Our Man spots:
 A plate of homemade cupcakes.
 But they're smushed in on top.
 Accompanied by a note with drawn hearts:
 "LOVE YOU, SUGAR"

OUR MAN
 Cupcakes look rough.

STICK
 LAPD was on the train this morning.
 Made sure I got some extra
 "protection."

OUR MAN
 Fuck em.

Our Man puts the opaque ziploc in a metal tray.
 Passes it through a slot in the glass.

STICK
 Say it again.

Stick takes the bag.
 Doesn't open it.
 Doesn't know what's in it.
 Or doesn't want to.
 Sets it down on a device.
 Similar to a chunky digital scale.
 After a moment--
 Ding.
 A light on the scale blinks green.

STICK
 Green means go.

Stick sets the bag under the counter.
 Comes back up with:
 Wads of cash.
 Counts out bills to make a new stack.
 Sets it in the tray.
 Slides it back through to Our Man.

STICK
 Standard rate plus 2 1/2.

Our Man takes it.
Counts the bills.

STICK
I've never shorted you.

OUR MAN
I know. Because I always count it.

A slight smile from Stick.

STICK
Shotgun shells still good?

Our Man nods.

Stick pulls up a box of shells.
Slides it through the glass.

STICK
Here's your re-up.

Our Man checks the ammo.
Holds up one of the shells.
Leaky like the one from last night.

OUR MAN
Stop giving me these leaky ones.
They're unstable. Drop it or hit it
with something and they explode.

Puts the shell back in the tray.
Slides it through.

OUR MAN
See what happens if I load one on
accident.

Holds up his hand.
Nasty burn scar across it.
Stick only grunts by way of apology.
Our Man shoves the box in his pocket.

Stick checks a clipboard on the desk.

STICK
Oh wait. Almost forgot, got new
marching orders today...

Pulls up a second ammo box.
Slides it through the glass.

Our Man clocks the pair of boxes.

OUR MAN

Why am I getting double now?
Something going on?

STICK

There's things we're paid to know.
And things we're paid to not know.

OUR MAN

Look. I'm only a few bags away from
a better life. And surprises make
that harder.

STICK

You do your job. I'll do mine.

Our Man grumbles.
Pockets the box of shells.
Heads out.

STICK

See you in a coupla weeks, amigo.

Our Man waves without looking back.

Settle on...
That computer monitor.
Plays the Dodgers game.

ANNOUNCER VOICE

*--and that's why I love the new
owner. He's not gonna be an over
the top Steinbrenner type--*

Cuts to a:
Press conference with a round-faced man.

ANNOUNCER VOICE

--he knows his place.

OUR MAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

He sits on the bed.
Pulls out a tin box hidden underneath.
Labeled with sharpie on masking tape:
"NIGHT MOVES"
Hmmm what's that mean?

Pops the tin.
Thick stash of cash inside.
Adds the money from his pocket.
Closes the tin.
Puts it back in its hiding spot.
Then--

Buzz.
 Buzz.
 Looks to his phone.
 On the display:
 "WORK"

His eyes are slits of apprehension.
 This is weird.
 Picks it up.
 Listens to a recording.

RECORDING
dial tone* *blep blep blip
Operator 67 dash G...
Opportunities for: Friday
evening... Target is a year: 4.
Price set at: 5 percent over
standard rate.

Our Man looks to Sammy.
 Apprehensive.

OUR MAN
 2 jobs in 2 days? That's a first.

The recording continues.

RECORDING
Be advised, as of this assignment
you will be joined by your new
partner. All future payments will
be split 50/50.

Can't contain his anger.

OUR MAN
 What?! I'm not splitting shit!
 Hello? Is anybody there? Hello--!

The line goes dead.
 Clenches his fist.
 Knuckles go white.

Talks to Sammy as if he said something.

OUR MAN
 No partner. I'm doing this job
 alone.

QUIK PAINT AUTO - LATER

Our Man watches a:
 Worker in a breather mask.
 Uses an industrial sprayer.

Gives the Dodge a new paint job.
Blue this time.

ROOF OF KOREATOWN PARKING GARAGE - LATER

Our Man holds a white spray paint can.
Listens to the podcast with headphones.
Puts a stencil against his truck's door.
Quick douse of white spray paint.
Removes the stencil to reveal the new label:
"A-PLUS MAINTENANCE"

MOMENTS LATER

Uses a screwdriver.
Switches out his license plate.

*PODCAST HOST (V.O.)
Broke to Billionaire Rule 23.
Forget the past. It holds you back
from your full potential.*

PAWN SHOP - LATER

Our Man with a Pawnbroker.
Holds that engagement ring box.
Tries to be cool about this.
Hands over the ring box.

*OUR MAN
Forget the past, right?*

Pawnbroker just puts it in a pile of other shit.
Hands over a wad of cash.

OUTSIDE THE PAWN SHOP

Our Man walks out.
Still processing.
Buzz.
Answers his phone:

*RECORDING
Operator: 67 dash G. You are
scheduled to meet your new partner
tonight on the corner of--*

Immediately hangs up.
No time for this shit.

HIGH ABOVE 8TH STREET - LATER

Night.
The Dakota heads north.

ECHO PARK**Taco Trucks.**

Workers close up for the night.

Outside the Echoplex.

Vendors sell their last street dogs.
Hassled by cops.

Echo Park Lake.

Empty yet fenced in.
A squad car patrols the park.

QUICK SHOTS:**The Dakota.**

Parked on Sgt. Place.

Thick blood trail.

Near a homeless camp.

Our Man's work boots hitting the asphalt.

Wump wump wump wump.

OUR MAN

Sprints.
Sweaty.
Out of breath.

Chases a Dreg.
With a Real Estate Agent carapace.
Injured "arm" dangles from its body.
An empty bag of skin dripping mucus.

Our Man's sawed-off in one hand.
Pulls a shell out with the other.
Tries to reload as he goes.
Pursues the Dreg to the--

LAVETA TERRACE STEPS

Steep.
Heavily tagged.
The Dreg barrels down the sharp incline.
Our Man not far behind.

OUR MAN GIVES CHASE

Through an alley.

Across a trash filled median.

Past a skate park.

But then.
The Dreg slips out of sight into the--

LEVETA TERRACE TUNNEL

Narrow concrete passageway under the 101.
Tagged top to bottom with spray paint.

Our Man hesitates.
Stares into the tunnel's inky black mouth.
Perfect place for an ambush.
But still he heads--

INSIDE THE TUNNEL

Our Man edges forward.
The drip-drip of water leaking.
Hears movement.
Whips backward to see--

A Junkie.
With a cleft lip.
Hugs the wall.

OUR MAN
Get outta here, man. It's not safe.

JUNKIE
This is my home.

OUR MAN
Walk a block and get a new one.

JUNKIE
Fuck off.

Our Man moves ahead.
Doesn't give a shit.

OTHER END OF THE TUNNEL

Our Man pops out.
Quickly checks either side.
Clear.
Then hears a noise.
Checks behind him.
Spots the Dreg above.
It climbs the grassy embankment.
Back over the tunnel toward the freeway.

Our Man takes aim.
KABOOM.
Red energy crackles through the air and--

THE DREG EXPLODES.
Flesh and bone fly in a mucus spray.

Grim satisfaction on Our Man's face.

ON THE EMBANKMENT

Our Man reaches the carcass.
Traffic speeds by in the background.
Crouches.
Inspects the mess.
But there's no jawbone.

Only skull fragments and melted flesh.

He looks to the road.
Sees more viscera on the highway.
And scattered in the tall grass.
Must be somewhere out there.

OUR MAN
...goddammit.

SIDE OF THE 101 - LATER

Narrow space between road and wall.
Cars roar past.

Our Man searches with his phone light.
Rummages through garbage.
Beer bottles.
Fast food containers.
Underwear.
But there's no jawbone.
More he searches the more he's frustrated.

OUR MAN
Fuck. *Fuck.*

But then.
What's that?
Retrieves something.
Holds it up.

It's an orbital bone.
A half-melted Dreg eye still attached.
Nerves dangling.
He grits his teeth.
This will have to do.
Drops it into another opaque ziploc.

But then.
WOOP WOOP.
Sound of approaching police.

Our Man whips to it.
And his sawed-off slips from his hoodie.
 Falls to the ground.
 Fuck.

Just as the--
 LAPD squad car slides to a stop.
 Our Man acts quick.
 Uses his foot and--
 Pushes his shotgun into the brush.
 It's still poking out a bit.
 But it's all he can manage before--

A young Officer (major power trip) exits the squad car.
 Points his maglite.
 The lawman a vague silhouette.
 Our Man squints against the bright.
 Thinks on his feet.

POWER TRIP OFFICER

Evening.

OUR MAN

Evening.

POWER TRIP OFFICER

Can't be walking on the highway.

OUR MAN

Yeah, sorry-- was driving with the
 wife, we got into it, and she
 tossed the house keys out the
 window, so... you know how it is.

Tense silence.

POWER TRIP OFFICER

What you got there.

Our Man swallows.
 Thinks he means the shotgun.

OUR MAN

...got where.

POWER TRIP OFFICER

In your hand.

Realizes he means the ziploc.
 Then sees it's leaking.
 Mucus tinged with blood.
 Drip drip drip.
 Shit.

OUR MAN
Oh-- leftovers. Carnitas.

POWER TRIP OFFICER
Lotta blood for leftovers.

Our Man tries to remain calm.
But now Power Trip has his excuse to keep going.

OUR MAN
Sir, I just want to find my keys--

Power Trip puts his hand on his sidearm.

POWER TRIP OFFICER
Place the bag on the ground. Put
your hands in the air, clasp your
fingers on the back of your head.

Our Man doesn't move.

POWER TRIP OFFICER
Now.

Our Man slowly puts the bag on the ground.
But his eyes flick to his shotgun.
Could he get to it in time?

OUR MAN
Sir--

Power Trip draws his glock.

POWER TRIP OFFICER
DOWN ON THE GROUND NOW.

Our Man's fingers twitch.
About to reach for his shotgun.

Tension rises.
Seconds away from getting real ugly.
But then--

An Acura rolls by.
Window down.
A Coked Out Teen leans out:

COKED OUT TEEN
Yo, pig! ACAB, bitch!

Throws a bulging bag.
Hits the hood of the squad car.
A spray of yellow liquid.
Coked Out Teen cackles.

Acura speeds away.

Power Trip inspects the hood.
Getting irate.

POWER TRIP OFFICER

(sniffs)

...motherfucker threw piss at me.

(starts back to his car)

Get the hell off the highway.

Jumps in his squad car.
Flashers and siren on.
Speeds away.
Our Man retrieves his shotgun.
Slips it back in his pocket.
Stares down the 101.
Relieved.

BACK IN THE TUNNEL - MINUTES LATER

Our Man walks through again.
Dejected.
Dripping ziploc in hand.
Not a good night.
He exits the tunnel to the--

STREET

And he's caught off guard by--

AN AMBUSHING DREG.

Already halfway out of its carapace.
Must have been waiting for him.

Tendrils instantly wrap around Our Man.
Choke him.

He pulls up his sawed-off but--
Clik.
Out of ammo.
Tries to reload but--
Snap.
Tentacles swipe.
Shotgun clatters to the street.
The Dreg tightens its grip.
Our Man losing oxygen.

In a last ditch effort:
Reaches back.
Draws his hidden machete and--

Slice.
Chops the tentacles in half.

With nothing holding him up he--
 Falls backward.
 Takes a misstep off the curb--
 Crack.
 Lands bad on his ankle.
 Cries out in pain.
 Meanwhile--

The Dreg lifts its sliced tentacles.
 Wlrp-erp-flrp.
They grow back.
 The machete just bought some time.
 Only one thing will stop it.
 Our Man grabs his shotgun.
 Needs to reload.
 Fumbles with a shell.

The Dreg charges him.
 Our Man's sweaty hands make it hard.

Dreg gets closer.

Our Man's almost got it loaded.

The Dreg nearly to him when--

Blam blam blam blam.
 Four blue (wtf?!) energy bolts.
 Smaller lightning strikes.
 Our Man dives out of the way.
 The bolts barely miss him.

Two of them tag the Dreg.
 Take a chunk of its body.
 Shrieks in pain.
 Crumples.
 Our Man is stunned.
Where did that blue energy come from?
 Hears someone behind him.
 Whips around.
 Aims his sawed-off.
 Looming over him is...

A woman with short cropped hair.
 Older than him.
 Has a touch of kleptomania.
 Wears tactical pants and a bomber jacket.
 Wields twin Ruger GP-100 revolvers.
 This is **Boxer**.

BOXER

Howdy, partner. Sorry I'm late.
 Traffic was a bear.

(MORE)

BOXER (CONT'D)
 (re: his ziploc)
 So there was 2 of em, eh? Strange.

Then he sees her Tracker.
 Similar to his.
 Hangs from her belt.
 Jerry-rigged with a battery pack.
 Smart.
This must be his new partner.

OUR MAN
 Look, I don't know what they told
 you, but...
 (re: the Dreg)
 This one's mine.

BOXER
Ours. This one's *ours*. Y'know, us
 being partners and all.

OUR MAN
 No.

A sickening moan.
 From the Dreg.
 It's not dead.
 Lumbers away.

BOXER
 Sucker's still kickin.

Takes a couple more shots.
 Blam blam.
 Misses.
 Blue energy singes the grass.

Boxer runs off.
 Pursues the injured creature.

OUR MAN
 HEY! COME ON!

Boxer calls over her shoulder.

BOXER
 Back in a flash!

Our Man grits his teeth.
 Struggles to his feet.
 His ankle is killing him.
 He grumbles.
 He's not waiting around for shit.
 Slips the shotgun into his hoodie pocket.
 Hobbles off.

MONEY MART - LATER

Our Man.
 Angry and bloody.
 Favoring his ankle.
 Stands at the glass divider.

On the other side:
 Stick holds the aberrant bag.
 About to put it on the odd scale.

Behind him:
 His monitor plays a Dodgers pre-game show.

Our Man eyes the ziploc.
 Unnerved.
 Looks for how to make conversation.
 Sees more homemade baked goods behind the glass.
 Brownies this time.
 With another sweet note from Stick's girl.

OUR MAN
 Brownies look good.

Stick just sets the bag on the scale.
 Errr.
Light on the scale blinks red.
 No good.

STICK
 No dice, amigo.

OUR MAN
 Come on. I'm so fucking close. Just
 let it slide this once, just a few
 more jobs and I won't be your
 problem anymore--

STICK
 Rules is rules.

OUR MAN
 This wasn't my fault. It got real
 heavy out there tonight. And if you
 knew what I had to go through--

STICK
 Knowing's the last thing I want.

OUR MAN
 I got ambushed, now this new
 partner is up in my shit, shooting
 at me, and I almost got fucking
 arrested--

STICK

Listen.

(he softens)

I don't know exactly what you do
out there to bring these back, and
I know it ain't easy...

Our Man gives him a look.
No shit asshole.

STICK

...and I'm sorry you had LAPD up
your ass, trust me... but this is
the best job I ever had in my life.
I'm paid to sit, catch up on my
baseball, call my old lady at
lunch, and the checks clear.
Whoever's on the other end of those
phone calls is my guardian angel.

(then)

I'm happy you're gonna move on to
bigger and better. But I want this
job to be the last one I ever have.
And I'm not gonna fuck that up. Not
for you.

OUR MAN

It's one time.

STICK

You know and I know, the game is
rigged. And we always lose. So fair
or not...

(then)

Rules is rules.

Our Man seethes.
But knows Stick is right.

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man drives home.

PODCAST HOST

*--be smart, work hard, see the
results. Trust the process--*

He turns it off in anger.

OUR MAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

A bag of frozen potatoes.
Taped to Our Man's sore ankle.

He gently sets his foot on the floor.
Still tender.

But then.
Footsteps outside.
Shadows in the light under his door.

Our Man jumps up.
Ignores the pain.
Pulls up the shotgun.
Aims at the door.

There's a light knock.

Our Man hobbles over.
Puts the sawed-off to the door.
Ready to blow away anything behind it.
Puts his eye to the peephole.
Sees it's...

Boxer.
Fuck.

Intercut:

OUTSIDE THE DOOR

She knocks again.

BOXER

I can see you peeking. Open up.

OUR MAN

Why.

BOXER

Professional courtesy.

OUR MAN

Your "professional courtesy" almost
blew my head off.

BOXER

Don't be so sensitive. Wasn't even
close.

(silence)

Okay, it wasn't *that* close.

(silence)

But fair's fair. I got your 50
percent right here, partner.

Holds up a wad of cash.

Our Man eyes the money.
 Knows he needs it.
 Grumbles.

Then unlatches the door.
 Click-clack.

LATER

Our Man sits on the bed.
 Counts the money.

Boxer stands nearby.
 Apartment seems very cramped now.
 Not meant for two.
 She takes in the sparseness.

BOXER

Cozy.

Boxer's sunny.
 Folksy.
 Sharp contrast to Our Man.

BOXER

But I'm not sure you're maximizing
 the space. Feng Shui is a little
 off. Your bed should really be on
 that wall--

OUR MAN

(still counting)
 I like it how it is.

BOXER

I'm Boxer by the way. Normally
 Operate outta Phoenix.
 (then)
 It is weird, right? Never got
 called to another city before, or
 had a partner. And I've never had
 one ambush me before. You think
 maybe something's going on? I think
 something's going on.

Our Man finishes counting.
 Sighs.
 Goddamn she talks a lot.

BOXER

But no chance our "mysterious
 employers" will fill us in, right?
 (off his look)
 (MORE)

BOXER (CONT'D)

Don't you ever wonder who's on the other end of the phone?

Our Man shrugs.

OUR MAN

I don't know...the government?

BOXER

You need to expand your horizons, partner...

(then)

You and me, we're like rat catchers. Paid by the tail. Except our rats aren't exactly typical. So it stands to reason our employers aren't exactly typical either.

Our Man raises an eyebrow.
Where is she going with this...?

BOXER

I do a lot of my own research, and I'm thinking it's like an escaped sentient A.I., or a higher form of interstellar intelligence, or maybe our deep sea ancestors guiding us telepathically--

Like listening to a crazy uncle.
Our Man can't take her seriously.

OUR MAN

Right. Appreciate the cash. Be seeing you.

Stands.
Guides her to the door.

BOXER

Whoa, hold your horses, shouldn't we kinda work out a system here? Make a game plan?
(of his look)
Since we're partners now and all.

OUR MAN

We're not partners.

BOXER

Yes we are.

OUR MAN

I don't do partners.

BOXER

Lemme guess, your last group
project went south?

Our Man darkens.

BOXER

It did didn't it.

He's uncomfortable.
Steers away from his past:

OUR MAN

I'm not gonna split my money. I
have goals I'm working toward.

She glances to the floor.
Poking out from under the bed:
That hidden tin.
Reads the label.

BOXER

By any chance is your goal a 'Night
Moves?'

Our Man looks down.
Sees the tin is visible.
Feels vulnerable.
Hates that she saw it.
Kicks it back under the bed.

BOXER

So what's a 'Night Moves'.

OUR MAN

Time to go. Don't get in my way
again.

BOXER

I get it, I'm on your turf. Change
is hard. But at the very least,
take my number--

She scribbles in her tiny notepad.
Tears the page and offers it.
He's not interested.
She puts the paper on the table.

BOXER

By the looks of it, I've been on
the job a bit longer than you. If
you ever want to talk about the job
or even just swap war stories,
gimme a ring--

Our Man ushers her out.
Shuts the door.
Finally alone again.

BOXER (THROUGH THE DOOR)
If you prefer text that also works.

Our Man looks to Sammy in his tank.

OUR MAN
Shut the fuck up, she did not seem nice.

DAVE'S ON BROADWAY - LATER

Our Man sings the same song again.
I Will Buy You A New Life by Everclear.
But this time his heart's not in it.

OUR MAN
...*I will buy you a garden...*
...*perfect shiny and new...*
...*I will buy you...*
...*new life...*

Trails off as his mind churns.
Gaze in the middle distance.

BARTENDER (PRE-LAP)
You alright?

AT THE BAR - LATER

Drink in his hand.
Bartender stares at him.
He snaps out of it.

OUR MAN
Oh, uh-- sorry, what?

BARTENDER
I said, are you alright?

Our Man thinks on how to phrase it.

OUR MAN
New person at work. Kinda fucked things up. Throwing me off.

BARTENDER
Thought you worked alone?

OUR MAN
...yeah me too.

Pre-lap:
 Buzz.
 Buzz.

OUR MAN'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Our Man opens his eyes to see:

His vibrating cell.
 On the display:
 "WORK"

He's surprised.
 Picks up.

RECORDING

**dial tone* *blep blep blip*
 Operator: 67 dash G.
 Operator: 23 dash J.
 Opportunities for: Saturday
 evening.*

Looks at that scrap of paper.
 With Boxer's number.
 Talks to Sammy the fish.

OUR MAN

Don't look at me like that.
 (then)
 No I'm not gonna call her.

Pockets the scrap of paper.

OUTSIDE OUR MAN'S APARTMENT - LATER

He locks up to leave.
 Wrinkled Neighbor pipes up again.

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR

I heard you last night.

Our Man doesn't respond.

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR

It's good for you to have a woman.

OUR MAN

No, she's not--

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR

Good women make good men.

SERIES OF SHOTS**The Dakota gets repainted.**

White this time.

Our Man waits outside.

Tries to listen to his podcast.
But gets distracted by a billboard.
For suicide prevention:
"YOU ARE NOT ALONE"

Switches out his license plate.

He's preoccupied and--
Slips.
Screwdriver slices his hand.
Curses under his breath.

Cut to:

THE TRACKER

A yellow dot.
Pulses on the screen.
Blip.
Blip.
Blip.

Through the windshield:
Out of focus.
Our Man forges ahead.

NEAR ALLESANDRO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Underneath the 5 and the 2 highways.
Massive concrete pillars.
Vines hang down.
Like an immense green curtain.

OUR MAN

Approaches.
Hears disturbing sounds.
Dreg sounds.
From the other side of the leafy curtain.

Reaches the vines.
Leads with his sawed-off.
And slowly pushes his way...

THROUGH THE VINES

Sees nothing but an empty street.
But then.

Something tumbles down the embankment.
 Thud.
 Lands on the pavement 20 feet away.

It's a captured vagabond.
 Hog tied with rope.
 Gag in his mouth.
 Terror in his eyes.

Our Man halts in confusion.
The hell is going on?

Then from above--
 Wam.
 A Dreg lands next to the vagabond.

Uses a single tentacle.
 Drags the vagabond across the pavement.
 To a nearby parked Audi.
 Our Man watches in disturbed fascination.
 Eyebrows furrowed.
Never seen them do that before.

THE DREG

Pops the trunk.
 Easily lifts the vagabond.
 No regard for his well-being.
 Tosses him in the trunk.
 Slams it shut.

INSIDE THE AUDI

The Dreg slides behind the wheel.
 Tentacle slips beneath its human carapace.
 About to turn the key--

KABLAM.
 Glass shatters.
 Its head explodes.
 Flesh melts into the seat.
 Reveal:
 Our Man stands outside the car.
 Shotgun smoking.

Cut to:

DREG JAWBONE

Dropped into an opaque ziploc.

AUDI TRUNK

Click.

Our Man opens it.
 Reveal the captured vagabond.
 Scared shitless.
 Our Man removes the gag.
 Cuts him loose.
 Pulls him out.

OUR MAN
 What happened, why did it take you?

But the freed vagabond is still shaken.
 Shoves Our Man away.
 Tries to make a run for it.
 But Our Man grabs him.
 Harder than he needs to.

OUR MAN
 Why did it take you--?

Vagabond elbows him in the mouth.
 Scrambles away into the dark.

OUR MAN
 Wait--!

But the vagabond is halfway down the street.

Our Man grits his teeth.
 Shit.

MINUTES LATER

Our Man holds that scrap of paper.
 With Boxer's number.
 Phone to his ear.

OUR MAN
 Saw another strange thing. Never
 seen it before.
 (then)
 So... call me back or whatever--

BOXER (O.S)
 Hiya.

He whips around to see:
 Boxer sits on the curb.

OUR MAN
 Have you just been sitting there
 watching me?

BOXER

What, you said stay out of your way.

(then)

You hungry? I'm hungry.

ECHO PARK VON'S - PARKING LOT - LATER

A modest line for a tiny food truck.
Sign on the side made of blue tape:
"TACO ZONE"

Our Man and Boxer sit on his truck's tailgate.
Eat street tacos and sip horchata.

BOXER

It didn't eat him?

OUR MAN

No. Just tied him up and threw him in the trunk.

BOXER

Weird... So what're you thinking?

OUR MAN

You're the vet, thought you'd know.

BOXER

I've seen a lot. But I've never seen anything like that. Job frequency is up, we get assigned as partners, and now they're taking hostages? Something is going on.

(then)

We gotta get to the bottom of it.

OUR MAN

Give it a rest with this "we" shit.

Boxer spots a shiny Mercedes hood ornament.
On a nearby parked car.
She checks over her shoulder.
Then rips out the hood ornament.
Stuffs it in her pocket.
Our Man raises an eyebrow.

BOXER

Old habits. Live off the land and all that. Never know when something could come in handy.

He thinks she's ridiculous.
Then he spots a mean scar up her arm.

OUR MAN
Leaky bullet?

BOXER
That one's on my leg. This one's from an exploded tire. I was hauling freight over the border, caught a spool of razor wire and dispatch wouldn't send help so I fixed it myself. But it blew from the heat, caught me right there.
(then)
Got fired, insurance wouldn't cover it, so I ended up owing an extra 8k to the caring doctors at Our Lady of Eternal Bills.

OUR MAN
Assholes.

BOXER
So before rat catching, what were you doing?

OUR MAN
Time.
(off her look)
As in prison.

Oh.
She processes.

OUR MAN
I was loyal to my people. But they weren't loyal to me.
(then)
Everybody serves somebody. But I picked the wrong somebody. And I lost everything...

Boxer chews on this.
And her taco.
This is heavy.

BOXER
(re: the taco truck)
So is this like... your spot.

OUR MAN
No. Just a neutral spot.

BOXER
Neutral spot? This isn't the cold war. And we're on the same side.

Our Man almost laughs.

OUR MAN

Okay.

BOXER

But it does raise the question: guy like you... what is "your spot"?

Our Man considers...

DAVE'S ON BROADWAY - LATER

A drunk lady sings karaoke.

Over at a corner booth is:
Boxer and Our Man.
Whiskey coke/gin and tonic.
A few drinks in.
Both a little more comfortable now.

BOXER

...see this is what I'm saying,
they choose people like us for this
job for a reason.

OUR MAN

What? Because we're special?

BOXER

Because we don't have much choice.

No arguments there.

BOXER

Perfect deniability for our
employers too. Who would ever
believe people like us?

OUR MAN

Hey, it's steady work that pays.

BOXER

Well, that... and it's nice to do a
little good in the world, y'know?

Our Man doesn't think like that.

OUR MAN

Yeah. Sure...

Boxer laughs.

BOXER

Saving lives doesn't do it for you?

OUR MAN

I get paid by the corpse.

BOXER

Guess that's one way of looking at it. If you ask me, our "rats" go after the most vulnerable. People who can't fight back. And I take that personal.

OUR MAN

Why?

BOXER

Because a few years back, I was right there myself.

(off his look)

Spent three months in a Walmart parking lot. I was lucky enough to get out.

OUR MAN

Not luck. Hard work.

BOXER

Do you have a manual you're quoting from or something...?

Our Man decides not to press it.

Spots the Bartender.

Motions for another round.

Bartender nods and smiles.

Boxer notices the interaction.

BOXER

Yeah, this is your spot, alright.

OUR MAN

Meaning.

BOXER

Here you're not so jumpy. It's nice.

(suddenly clicks)

That's it! Your piggy bank. "Night Moves". You're saving up for your own karaoke place, aren't you?

Our Man is embarrassed.

Tries to cover.

OUR MAN

Being an owner/operator of a bar is
a solid business plan and a viable
path to financial security--

BOXER

Come on. It's not just that. You
own a bar, and all the new friends
will come to you. Right?

Our Man won't admit it.
Looks down at his drink.
Embarrassed because she's right.

BOXER

I get it. I don't have a ton of
friends either.

A quiet moment between them.
Boxer smiles.

BOXER

So really, is **this** all that bad?
Talkin shop, goin for tacos, having
drinks? At least *think* about a
partnership.

He grunts.

BOXER

Hey, that's not a "no".

Then her hand slinks out.
Snatches the glass salt shaker.
Slips it in her pocket.

OUR MAN

Wait, did you already steal the
pepper?

She bangs on the table.
Abruptly changes the subject.

BOXER

So. Am I picking or are you
picking.
(off his confusion)
First song.

He darkens.
Not a chance.

Cut to:

BOXER

On the karaoke stage.
Sings *Friends in Low Places* by Garth Brooks.
Her free spirit makes up for lack of skill.

BOXER

*Blame it all on my roots
I showed up in boots
And ruined your black tie affair
The last one to know
The last one to show
I was the last one
You thought you'd see there*

Our Man watches from the booth.

BOXER

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry,
but I'm not sure I can go any
further without a little help from
my new friend.

She points out Our Man.
He shakes his head "no".

BOXER

C'mon, partner, I can't do it
alone.

She steps down off the stage.
Works the crowd.

BOXER

You know him, you love him, make
some noise, people.
(they clap and cheer)
C'mon, you can do better, he's a
shy one!

They clap and cheer louder.
Boxer makes it over to Our Man.
Sings at him.
Coaxing him to join in.

BOXER

*And I toasted you
Said, honey, we may be through
But you'll never hear me complain!*

She pulls him up by the arm.
He finally gives in and stands up.

BOXER

Yes! There we go!

She holds out the mic.
And they both launch into the chorus.

BOXER & OUR MAN

*'Cause I've got friends in low
places
Where the whiskey drowns
And the beer chases my blues away
And I'll be okay*

The song continues over--

SHOTS

Our Man and Boxer sing more.

Drink more.

Laugh with each other.

Get drunk with each other.

But they don't notice:

A Stranger stares at them.
From across the bar.
High and tight haircut.
Polo shirt under a blue windbreaker.

AT THE BAR - LATER

Our Man takes a break.
Gets another drink from the Bartender.

Watches Boxer onstage.
Singing *Listen To Your Heart* by Roxette.

BARTENDER

Your new friend seems nice.

OUR MAN

She's... something.

BARTENDER

Somebody else thinks so too.

The Bartender motions.
Our Man glances over to see:

The Stranger.
Stares right at Boxer.

BARTENDER

Been staring at you guys since he
came in.

Our Man thinks.
This can't be good.

AT THE BATHROOM DOOR - LATER

Our Man with Boxer.
His alarm bells are ringing.
But she's still a little drunk.

BOXER

He's not the first guy to stare at
me in a bar.

OUR MAN

This is something else.

BOXER

Like what something else?

OUR MAN

There's a lot of bad answers to
that question.

She sobers.
Begins to understand.

OUR MAN

Let's split. I'll go out the back,
you take the front. Meet up...
later.

She nods.

BEHIND DAVE'S ON BROADWAY/STREET - MINUTES LATER

Our Man walks.
Almost to his truck.
Then.
Spots the Stranger.
Across the street.
They make eye contact.

And the Stranger grins.
Then charges.
Comes directly for him.

Our Man dashes for his truck.
He needs his weapons.
Or else he's toast.

Stranger nearly to him.

Our Man reaches his truck.
But it's too late.

The Stranger leaps.
And just as a tentacle bursts from its carapace--

Wam.
Stranger is blindsided by--
A Geo Metro driven by Boxer.
Stranger flips.
Hits the pavement hard.
Limbs bent the wrong way.
Raspy breaths.
Still alive but down for the count.

The Geo skids into a fire hydrant.
Crumples the hood.
Hydrant bursts.
Fwoosh.
Water sprays up in a geyser.
Droplets fall like a mini rain storm.

Boxer gets out.

BOXER
That's twice I've saved you.

Our Man retrieves his sawed-off.

OUR MAN
Twice you've almost killed me.

BOXER
Eh, six of one.

Our Man walks to the prone Dreg.
Stands over it and--
KABLAM.
Delivers the kill shot.

Dreg flesh melts away.
A soupy mush of skin and hair and teeth.
Like a napalm victim.

Our Man crouches.
Reaches out to retrieve the Dreg jaw bone.
But then.
Sees something in the goopy mess.
Something that makes his blood run cold.

It's a badge.
An LAPD badge.

They've just killed a cop.

Our Man goes white.
Peers up at Boxer.
She sees the badge too.

BOXER

I think that's our cue...

But then.
Clinkety-clink.
Our Man whips toward the sound.
Sees the Bartender.
In the midst of taking out the trash.
Frozen in fear.
Dropped glass bottles at her feet.

Fuck.
She saw the whole thing.
The shooting.
The blood.
All of it.
She stares right at Our Man.
Aghast.
Any affection for him totally erased.

He grits his teeth.
His life burning away one piece at a time.

IN THE DODGE [MOVING] - MINUTES LATER

Our Man drives fast.
Boxer in the passenger seat.
Panic in the air.
He's pissed.

OUR MAN

They tracked you.

BOXER

Me? That's *your* spot!

OUR MAN

Never had any problems before you
showed up.

BOXER

(realizing)
This is it, all the weird stuff,
they must be escalating--

OUR MAN

--never shoulda done this--

BOXER

--could finally be the start of
their plot to take over the world--
(off his glare)
Okay maybe a plot to take over the
city.

OUR MAN

Who gives a fuck. We're cop killers
now. LAPD is coming hard. And who
knows how many of them aren't
human?

(then)

The Bartender is probably giving us
up right now.

BOXER

C'mon, pink-hair wouldn't rat you
out, she's your friend, right?

OUR MAN

She was.

He regrets bringing her into his world.

Boxer pulls up her phone.

BOXER

Okay, okay, I got an app for the
police band. I'm sure we're fine,
but now we can double check, okay?

Presses the screen.

They hear police chatter.

POLICE BAND (THROUGH HER PHONE)

*...can we get a K-9 unit over to
4th and Grand...
...no, we're code 5 over here, no
assistance necessary...*

BOXER

See? Everything's a-okay--

POLICE BAND (THROUGH HER PHONE)

*Officer down, we have an officer
down, East Broadway and Glendale--
perps are one male, one female,
driving a white Dodge Dakota,
license plate 6ERJ837--*

Our Man grips the wheel tight.
Goddammit.

BOXER

Alright, maybe we're in trouble.

But then.

Our Man realizes something else.

OUR MAN

Oh fuck. *Fuck*. FUCK.

Hits the steering wheel.

Again and again.

BOXER

What what--?!

OUR MAN

If they can track me to the bar...

(then)

My apartment...

Oh shit.

BOXER

No. Don't go back.

OUR MAN

That box under my bed is everything
I have. My whole life.

BOXER

And you're gonna lose your life
going back for it.

Stares hard at her.

OUR MAN

I'm going. You don't have to come
with me.

She thinks.

Doesn't like this.

But doesn't want to leave him alone either.

OUTSIDE KOREATOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

Dodge rumbles up.

Idles.

IN THE DAKOTA

Our Man peers through the window.

Sees the desolate apartment courtyard.

Half-empty swimming pool.

Looks safe... for now.

BOXER

Friendly reminder: you don't have
to do this.

He doesn't respond.
Just cocks his sawed-off.
Gets out.

KOREATOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - COURTYARD - LATER

Our Man slinks through the front gate.
Shotgun out.
Rrrrk.
Gate creaks behind him.
Shit.
He freezes.
But doesn't hear any other movement.

Continues on.
Quietly sneaks past the pool.
Eyes dart.
Checks every corner.

Makes it to the...

STAIRWELL

Our Man slowly makes his way up.
Dark and wet.

He's as silent as possible.

So far so good.
Meanwhile--

IN THE DAKOTA

Boxer in the driver's seat.
Engine idles.

One hand on the steering wheel.
The other grips her revolver.
On high alert.
Eyes on any and all passersby.

OUR MAN

Reaches the second floor.
His floor.

Looks down the landing.
Only shadows and silence.

He continues along the balcony.

Toward his front door.

Courtyard and pool visible below.
But still no sign of any danger...

IN THE DAKOTA

Boxer keeps watch.
But then.
Hears something strange.
A dull THUMP-THUMP.

Looks around for the source.
Spots a parked Lincoln Navigator.
The thump-thumps are coming from the vehicle.
Now accompanied by muffled shouts.

Her eyes narrow.
What's going on?

She exits the truck to investigate...

OUR MAN'S APARTMENT

Clickety-clack.
The door swings open.
Our Man silhouetted at the entrance.

Checks all the corners.

The bathroom.
All clear.

Goes to his bed.
Takes a knee.
Reaches underneath.
Pulls out his "NIGHT MOVES" tin.

He opens it.
Sees the cash is still there.
Sigh of relief...

AT THE NAVIGATOR

Boxer approaches.
Revolver in hand.
Thump-thumps get louder as she gets closer.

Checks the driver's side.
Nobody at the wheel.

Goes to the trunk.
Leans in close.

BOXER

...hello...?

Muffled shouts.
Desperation.
She checks the trunk.
It's unlocked.
Swings up to reveal...

THREE BOUND VAGABONDS.
Rope rubbing their wrists raw.

Gags in their mouths.
Pleading eyes.

Boxer looks at them with horror.
Realizes what this means...

OUR MAN'S APARTMENT

Our Man closes the tin.
Shoves it in his hoodie pocket.
Heads for the door.

Buzz.
Our Man gets a text:
get out now

Shit.
Stuffs the tin in his hoodie.
Looks to his fish tank.
He can't leave Sammy behind.

BOXER

Removes gags.
Cuts ropes.
Sets the captured men free.

SAMMY

Swimming happily.
REVEAL that he's in:
A DRINKING GLASS.

Held by Our Man.
Who hurries out to the--

BALCONY

Where a shadow falls over him.
A dash of movement.

He whips around.
Aims the sawed-off at--

His Wrinkled Neighbor.
Her face red with rage.

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR
You bring a GUN here? To our HOME?

Our Man grits his teeth.
Hisses.

OUR MAN
Quiet. There are bad people here--

WRINKLED NEIGHBOR
You are the bad people--!

OUR MAN
Quiet!

But then suddenly--
She gasps for breath.
Something unseen blocking her air.
Her eyes bulge.
Gagging.

Our Man goes to her.
But it's too late.
Crack.
Her body violently contorts.
She's dead.

From underneath her coat...
A tentacle slithers out.
Her body falls.
Revealing:

A Dreg behind her.
Emerges from its human carapace.

Time slows:
--disgusting tentacles spread--
--Our Man aims his shotgun--
--drops Sammy's glass--
--it shatters on the ground--

BOXER

Helps the captives escape the trunk.
Interrupted by--
A thunderclap report.
Flash of red above the apartment complex.
Knows what that means.

BOXER

Run!

The captives sprint off down the street.

She hurries back to the Dakota.

ON THE BALCONY

Our Man struggles with the Dreg.
Tentacles wrapped around his body.
Keep the shotgun at bay.

Our Man sees Sammy the fish on the ground.
Gills flapping.
Gasping for breath.

Our Man's anger grows.
They got his fucking fish.
He struggles harder.
And the shotgun goes off.
Takes a chunk out of the ceiling.
Debris crumbles onto the Dreg.
Pushes the pair toward the railing.
Momentum takes them--
Over the edge.

The man and the monster.
Fall together.

Splash into the--

HALF-FILLED SWIMMING POOL

Dreg doesn't do well in the water.
Thrashes in the soiled liquid.
Jaws rip into Our Man's torso.
Not fatal but painful.
Blood mixes with the dirty pool.
Our Man tries to wriggle free.
Fights slippery tentacles.
And against the water.
Like a nightmare.

Our Man manages to wrestle out of its grip.
Climbs the ladder.
Gets the the ledge.

Turns back.
Aims the sawed-off.
Click.
Nothing.

Shit.
Too waterlogged.

Dreg sloshes toward him.

Our Man checks the chamber.
Puts his mouth to it.
Whoosh.
Blows out the wet.

Aims again.
Dreg almost to him--

KABLAM.

Crackling red energy connects with the water.
Charges it.
Energy coursing into the Dreg.
Melts it into a sludgy mess.
Becomes one with the nasty water.
Long inky strands of flesh float on the surface.

OUTSIDE THE KOREATOWN APARTMENT/STREET

Our Man dashes out from the gate.
Soaking wet.
Hand to his bleeding side.
Makes it to the curb as--

The Dakota screeches to a halt.
Right in front of him.
Hops in.

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man grits his teeth.
In a lot of pain.

OUR MAN

Go go go!

Boxer floors it.
Tires screeching.

But then just as sudden--
The Dakota comes to a skidding halt.
Because ahead of them are...

Three squad cars.
Lights flash.
Block the street.
Six cops stand with guns drawn.

OUR MAN

Shit--!

Blam-blam-blam.
Cops open fire.

Boxer throws it in reverse.
Stomps on the gas.
Speeds backward down the street.

Our Man grips the chicken handle.
Holds on for dear life.

Pow-pow-pow.
Bullets punch holes through the windshield.

Boxer executes a whip-turn.

Tires squeal on the pavement.

The Dakota spins 180 degrees.
Zips away from the cops.

Who jump in their squad cars.
And pursue them through--

KOREATOWN STREETS

Narrow.
Lined with parked vehicles.

Squad cars are fast.

But Boxer can really drive.
She careens around a corner.
Pushes the Dakota to its limit.

Gets far enough ahead.

Drifts into an alleyway.
Slides to a stop.
Behind a dumpster.
Kills the engine.
The headlights.

Checks the rear view.
Three sets of cherry lights.
Shoot on by.

She looks to her shoulder.
Blood.
Bone.
A fresh bullet wound.
She was hit.

BOXER
 (frustrated)
 First time for everything.
 (then)
 Hope the piggy bank was worth it.

OUR MAN
 Nobody made you come along--

They talk over each other:

BOXER
 Oh I'm sorry, I can't hear you over
 the sound of me saving you--!

OUR MAN
 Maybe I wouldn't need saving if you
 had stayed the fuck in Phoenix--!

BOXER
 Think you could handle a full on
 SWAT team alone--?!

OUR MAN
 Wasn't a SWAT team--!

BOXER
 Seems to me like you need all the
 help you can get--!

OUR MAN
 I never asked for your help! And
 now, my fucking fish is dead!

They quiet down.
 Both breathe hard.
 In pain.
 Hold their respective injuries.
 Bleed all over the seats.

BOXER
 We can argue later. I need a
 hospital.

OUR MAN
 Hospitals have questions. And cops.

BOXER
 I'm gonna leave a very bad stain on
 your very nice truck, unless you
 have a better idea.

Our Man thinks.
 Only one answer.

Cut to:

A DODGERS GAME

Bottom of the fourth.
All tied up.
Plays on that grimy monitor.

Watched by Stick.
Toothpick in his mouth.
He's at his post in the--

MONEY MART

Brrr.
The door buzzer.
His eyes stay on the game.
Presses the button.
Clunk.
The door flies open.
Stick still doesn't look.

STICK
Evening, amigo--

But the next sound he hears is unusual:
Two people trudging through the door.
He turns.
Sees--

Our Man and Boxer.
Look even worse now.
Blood drips onto the linoleum.

STICK
Whoa whoa, what the hell man--?!

OUR MAN
We need your help--

STICK
Well you ain't getting it--

OUR MAN
We have nowhere else to go--

STICK
That sounds like a you problem.

OUR MAN
C'mon, man, she's shot, just need
to patch her up, lay low for the
night--

STICK

This isn't supposed to be
complicated: no coming here if
you're in trouble, no coming here
if you're hurt, you come in here
for one thing and one thing only.
Them's the rules. And you know how
I feel about the rules--

Interrupted by:
Roar of helicopter blades.
Search light outside.
Strobes across the pavement.

Our Man and Boxer reflexively duck further in.
Stick notices.
Puts 2 and 2 together.

STICK

How bad is it, amigo...?

OUR MAN

As bad as you think.

Squad cars outside speed past.
Red and blue flickers across their faces.

Stick's face scrunches up.
Hates what he's about to do.

STICK

You got 20 minutes.

Hits another button.
Clunk.
Door to the back room unlocks.

Cut to:

BOXER'S BULLET WOUND

She pinches it shut.
Applies a line of glue.
She's inside the--

BACK ROOM

Shelves of supplies.
Few spare Trackers.

Our Man nearby.
Tapes a wad of gauze on his abdomen.
Blood blooms through the bandage.
But it'll do for now.

He and Boxer share a look.
 Know their time together is at an end.

BOXER
 So I guess that's it then.

OUR MAN
 I can give you a lift to the bus
 station.

BOXER
 What about you?

OUR MAN
 I'm headed up to Palmdale for a
 while. Keep my head down.

She nods.
 Understands.

BOXER
 For what's it's worth... I had fun.

Our Man gives the tiniest laugh.
 What a ridiculous thing to say.
 But then.

Buzz.
 Our Man's phone.
 "WORK"

They share a look.
 He puts it on speaker.

RECORDING
dial tone* *blep blep blip
Operator: 67 dash G.
Operator: 23 dash J.
Opportunities for: Sunday evening.
Target is a year: undetermined.

Our Man and Boxer stare at each other.
 Holy shit.

RECORDING
*...price set at: 700 percent over
 standard rate.*

Our Man can't believe it.

OUR MAN
 700 percent...?!

Boxer lost in thought.

BOXER

This is it. This is why I got called in from Phoenix... why they're taking people, why they're escalating... The plot to take over the city.

They both quiet for a moment.
Then.
Boxer turns to Our Man.

BOXER

I mean, it's 700 percent. What do you say? One last job for all the marbles?

He thinks.
What the hell.

OUR MAN

Let's do it.

But then.

RECORDING

Caution...

Our Man and Boxer share a look.
They've never heard a "Caution" before.

RECORDING

...target is immune to standard tracking methods and will not appear on your scope. Please use alternative means.

OUR MAN

Alternative means...?

Our Man processes.
This will be a challenge.

BOXER

Wait. I heard about this. From my--
(points to the front desk)
--"that guy" back home.

OUR MAN

You're allowed talk about work...?

BOXER

I think he's a little sweet on me.
But he heard that if an older one arrives in town, the younger ones
(MORE)

BOXER (CONT'D)
 have to come and pay their
 respects...

OUR MAN
 That's it... that's why they've
 been taking people alive.

BOXER
 (catching on)
 They're paying tribute. Everybody's
 gotta serve somebody, right?

OUR MAN
 We just gotta find their somebody.

BOXER
 That's the easy part.
 (off his look)
 We just follow the ants back to the
 hill.

Now he gets it.

STREET - LATER

Our Man kneels by a parked Tesla Model S.
 Boxer hands him a screwdriver.
 He unscrews the license plate.

THE DAKOTA [PARKED]

Our Man attaches the Tesla plate to the bumper.

Meanwhile Boxer holds a stencil to the door.
 Uses a red spray can.
 Now the truck has a new label:
 "GARDEN BROS. LANDSCAPING"

Rough.
 But it's all they got.

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man drives.
 Boxer rides shotgun.

Accidentally hits his phone and--

PODCAST HOST
 --Rule 24: don't be a victim. If
 things aren't going your way,
 that's on you--

Looks at Boxer.
 Embarrassed.
 Weird hearing it with somebody else in the car.
 He turns it off.

BOXER
 Guy must be real fun at parties.

Damn is this how he sounds?

THE DAKOTA

Drives through NELA.
 City lights reflected on the windshield.
 Takes the Rampart onramp.
 Now heads north on the 101.

THE TRACKER

Three dots pulse.

Match cut to:

Three distant Dreg.
 In golf polos.
 Walking on the--

SEPULVEDA DAM

They're tiny against the vast structure.
 A concrete behemoth looming above.
 Massive curved pillars.

Each Dreg drags a captive.
 Gagged and hog tied.
 Head toward a parked Chevy Suburban.
 All being watched by--

OUR MAN & BOXER

Share binoculars.
 Stand on the--

SHOULDER OF THE 101 NORTH

Truck parked at the guard rail.
 Boxer disgusted at what she sees.

BOXER
 Imagine. You're sleeping on
 sidewalk, thinking this is the
 lowest you're ever gonna get. And
 then one night you get a visit from
 (MORE)

BOXER (CONT'D)

them. And the last thing you see is
some square in a suit. Eating you.

(then)

Could have just as easily been me
on that sidewalk... instead of the
one holding the gun.

OUR MAN

Come on, you're not like them...

BOXER

You can rationalize all you want,
but a different roll of the dice
and it could've been either of us.

Our Man considers.

OUR MAN

Yeah... maybe.

Looks through the binoculars.

OUR MAN

C'mon. They're on the move.

VARIOUS STREETS - LATER

The Dakota follows that Chevy.

Back toward Hollywood.

Trails the Chevy onto Laurel Canyon.

HOLLYWOOD HILLS

Dakota winds through the labyrinthine neighborhood.

Narrow streets.

Steep hills.

Wrought iron gates.

Protect imposing houses.

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

Our Man and Boxer.

Uncomfortable.

This is not their world.

Then.

They take a turn...

But they've lost sight of the Chevy.

At a literal crossroads.

Left or right.

OUR MAN

Shit.

He picks left.

FROM ABOVE

Winding their way up even further...

IN THE DAKOTA [MOVING]

No sign of the Chevy.

Pass a side street.
Boxer notices something.

BOXER

Wait... go back...

Our Man backs up.

Goes down the side street.

They're now on...

PALO VISTA DRIVE

Our Man spots what Boxer saw:

A lineup of cars in the distance.
At the cul-de-sac at end of the block.
The Chevy among them.

OUR MAN

Parks the truck.

They both peer out at the cars.

BOXER

Never been to a party with a police
check point. That an LA thing?

OUR MAN

Not my part of LA.

She's right.
The cars are waiting at a police checkpoint.
Two squad cars and three cops.
Barricades.

They watch as--
A car is cleared by the police and heads up to...

The House.

Most impressive on the block.

Cleared vehicle then backs into the garage.
 Movement as two Dreg unload the trunk.
 Obscured views of a bound captive.

BOXER

My money's on tied up folks in
 every one of these cars.

OUR MAN

Yup.
 (then)
 Oh shit.

Points at the Tracker.

A huge cluster of yellow dots.
At least two dozen Dreg.
 Exactly where The House is.

BOXER

I'd say we found the boss man.

But Our Man eyes the squad cars.
 Eyes all the yellow dots.
 Can't believe it.

OUR MAN

I wasn't expecting so many... and
 all in one place...

As his unease grows--
 Rap-rap-rap.
 Someone taps on his window.

It's a cop.
 Hand on his sidearm.

Our Man and Boxer freeze.
 Oh fuck oh fuck.
 A tense beat.
 How will they get out of this?

Cop motions.
Roll down your window.

Our Man does so.
 Meanwhile Boxer grips her revolver.
 Uncertainty lingers until...

SHAVED HEAD COP

It's 1 in the morning, no one needs
a weed wacker.

OUR MAN

Yessir.

SHAVED HEAD COP

Now get the fuck outta here.

IN THE DODGE [MOVING] - LATER

Back down in the city now.

Our Man and Boxer mid-conversation.

BOXER

It'll be tough, but we found em,
the hard part is done-- okay maybe
not the *hardest* part, which will be
killing them all, but a hard part
is done. Now we just need a plan to
get past that police checkpoint--

OUR MAN

Boxer...

BOXER

But I do have a few ideas for those
leaky bullets--

OUR MAN

You're talking like we don't have a
choice.

(off her look)

I get a call, I do a job. Sure, a
risky job. But we kill them one at
a time. And there's a helluva lot
more than one in that house. Going
in there isn't a risk, it's certain
death.

Boxer starts to get angry.

BOXER

So that's it, you're giving up?

OUR MAN

We got real lucky with that last
cop. You think that luck will last?

(then)

I got my money. Betting you got a
stash back in Phoenix. We can
just... go our separate ways.

BOXER

Sure, cash out, go to Palmdale,
open your karaoke bar. But know
that life is only possible because
you let all those innocent people
die begging and screaming as
they're fucking eaten. They don't
deserve that.

Our Man sits with this.
Then.
There's chatter on her police band app.
Muffled in her pocket.
Our Man suddenly pays attention.

OUR MAN

What did that say?

She pulls her phone out.

POLICE BAND (THROUGH HER PHONE)

*...repeat, we have a possible break
in at the Money Mart on Sunset and
Schrader, car 151 are you in the
area...?*

Boxer looks to Our Man.
Face filled with concern.

BOXER

Is that--? You don't think--?

Our Man realizes.

OUR MAN

Oh no...

He guns it.

OUTSIDE MONEY MART - LATER

Our Man and Boxer approach.
Then see:
The security door is ajar.

They exchange a look.
Pull out their guns.

MONEY MART

The shitty monitor plays the Dodgers game.

ANNOUNCERS (ON TV)
*What a great win! Mookie Betts with
 a walkoff homer!*

Our Man and Boxer come in.
 Cautious.

OUR MAN
 Hey! Amigo! You here?

No answer.
 They slide in.
 Weapons up.

They see Stick in his chair.
 Back to them.
 Watches the game.

Our Man and Boxer head toward him.

OUR MAN
 Hey!

Stick still doesn't answer.

Our Man sees:
 An open door.
 Allows access behind the front desk.

They go through.

OUR MAN
 ...amigo?

Puts a hand on Stick's chair.

Spins it around to reveal...

Stick.
 Eyes lifeless.
 Mouth hangs open.
 He's dead.
Bottom half missing.
Because he was ripped in half.
 Entrails dangle from his torso.

ANNOUNCERS (ON TV)
*It doesn't get much better than
 this does it, folks!*

Our Man recoils.
 Devastated.

Boxer puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

BOXER

I am so sorry...

OUR MAN

He broke the rules for us. And this
is what he got.

BOXER

They must have trailed us to this
spot. Same way we did them.

He rests in the horror.
The blood.
The carnage.
All because of him.

His eyes fall to the desk.
That plate of homemade brownies.
Half-eaten.
A sweet note from Boxer's girl:
"CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU TONIGHT, SUGAR"

OUR MAN

Until you showed up, this was the
guy I talked to the most... and I
never even knew his name.

(then)

Nobody deserves this...

Anger builds behind Our Man's eyes.
Makes a decision.

OUR MAN

Grab all the ammo you can carry.

BOXER

Wait. We're gonna do it?

OUR MAN

Let's get moving, partner.

She perks up.
That's the first time he's used that word.

Police sirens rise in the background.
Time to go.

CENTRAL PLAZA PARKING GARAGE - ROOFTOP - LATER

Downtown LA skyline in the background.

Dakota parked in the middle.

Our Man and Boxer stand by the tailgate.

Resting on it:

- A cinderblock.
- Rope.
- Boxes and boxes of ammunition.
- 2 machetes.
- Blowtorch.
- A 3 inch plastic tub filled with water.

Boxer holds up a shotgun shell.

Opens to top.

Dumps the red powder into the tub of water.

Powder dissolves.

BOXER

I always wanted to try this.

Repeats the process with one of her bullets.

The red and blue creates a purple solution.

OUR MAN

You've never tried it...?

BOXER

Nope.

Uses the blowtorch.

Heats the metal of a machete.

OUR MAN

So you don't know if it works.

BOXER

We're certainly gonna find out.

Plunges the machete into the solution.

Steam rises.

Waits for it to set.

Pulls it out.

Examines her creation.

Metal slightly purple.

Does a few practice swings.

Machete crackles with purple energy.

BOXER

Don't know how long they'll last
before they run outta juice...

(then)

And we'll have to be in close.

OUR MAN

Oh we're gonna be in close.

SHOTS

They repeat the machete/solution process.

Load ammunition into all their weapons:

The sawed-off.

Boxer's twin revolvers.

Our Man attaches an ankle holster.

Loads his snubnosed revolver.

Slips it into the ankle holster.

Grab supplies:

Our Man with the cinderblock.

Boxer with the rope.

Slide machetes into sheathes on their backs.

They're ready.

But Boxer hesitates.

BOXER

Before we do this... is there
anyone you should call?

Our Man thinks for a moment.

But knows the truth.

OUR MAN

No.

BOXER

Yeah. Me neither.

Close on: Ammo box with one last bullet.

A leaky bullet.

Blue oxidization.

Boxer grabs it.

She must not have noticed.

Uh oh.

MOVING OVER THE HOLLYWOOD HILLS - LATER

Imposing homes built into the steep incline.

Like a series of mini fortresses.

And speeding between them is...

The Dakota.

Engine loud.

PALO VISTA CUL-DE-SAC

The same place as before.

No more lineup of cars.
But the police barricade remains.

One parked squad car on guard.
Two cops inside.

IN THE SQUAD CAR [PARKED]

Each cop with cups of coffee.
Mustache Cop checks his watch.

MUSTACHE COP
Aaaand we just hit double overtime.

SHAVED HEAD COP
Nothing brings me joy like
protecting and serving the fair
taxpayers of Los Angeles.

They cheers their coffee cups.
In the distance:
The Dakota crests over a rise.
But they don't see its approach.

After a moment Shaved Head notices.
Shields his eyes at the headlights.

SHAVED HEAD COP
Good Lord, dim those brights, bud.

INSIDE THE DODGE [MOVING]

There's no driver or passenger.
That rope keeps the wheel at dead center.
That cinderblock is on the gas pedal.
Holds it down at full tilt.

INSIDE SQUAD CAR [PARKED]

Cops realize...
The Dakota isn't slowing down.
It's headed right for them.

MUSTACHE COP
...oh fuck.

They scramble for the doors.
But it's too late.
Can't escape before--

C R A S H

Dakota rams into the squad car.
Shattered glass and twisted metal.

A constant blaring horn.
 The cops now bloodied.
 Struggle to get out.

But Mustache is pinned.
 And Shaved Head can't open his door.
 Frame is too bent.

SHAVED HEAD
 Gotta be shittin me!

And as they're immobilized--
 Emerging from the shadows:
 Our Man and Boxer.
 Waltz up to the squad car.
 Weapons raised.

Cops realize they're fucked.
 Try to reach for their weapons.
 But it's too late.

KABOOM.
 Blam-blam-blam.
 Bright flashes of red and blue.

PALO VISTA HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Midcentury modern.
 Wide and squat rectangular construction.
 Steel and glass and exposed timber.
 Our Man and Boxer approach.
 Stride through the front door.

And as they enter...

Holding on the front of the home.
 Muffled thunderclap reports from inside.
 Flashes of red and blue light.

Arcing over the home.
 Sounds of the firefight continue below.

Coming down the rear of the home.
 A 3 story facade built into the hilltop.
 Tall glass panels allow glimpses of:

Our Man and Boxer.
 Working their way down through the house.
 A level at a time.

Take out Dreg after Dreg.
 Illuminated only when they fire their weapons.

KABOOM.

Flash of red.
Our Man backpedals as he fires.

Blam-blam-blam.
Flashes of blue.
Boxer yells with anger.

Red.
 Red.
 Red.

Dreg viscera coats the window.

 Blue.
 Blue.
Blue.

A Dreg smashes through glass.
Disintegrates as it falls.

BACK IN THE WRECKED DODGE

The Tracker on the dash still active.
Displays that same sea of yellow dots.
But one-by-one they disappear.
Blip.
Blip.
Blip.

They're killing a lot of Dreg.

INSIDE THE PALO VISTA HOUSE - HALLWAYS

Flashes of red and blue energy.
Thunderclap reports of their weapons.
As Dreg are taken out.

Our Man and Boxer breathe heavy.
Sweaty.
Speckled in layers of Dreg viscera.

OUR MAN

KABOOM.
Shoots off a host of tentacles.

Reloads.
KABOOM.
KABOOM.

Kills another at point blank range
Walls redecorated with decomposing Dreg.

BOXER

Brutal with her revolvers.

Blam. Blam. Blam.

Dreg melting.
Left and right.

She stands over a felled creature.
And after one last kill shot--
Blam.

THEY REGROUP

A brief moment of respite.
All the nearby Dreg have been dealt with.
Boxer walks to a mantel.
Inspects a tiny decorative crystal.
Mmm nice.
Slips it into her pocket.

Our Man looks at her: *Really?*

She raises a finger to her lips.
Shhhh.

Our Man moves on.
Checks around a corner.
Eyes widen in horror.

OUR MAN

In here...

Boxer follows him into a--

UNFURNISHED BEDROOM

Where they find:

A half-dozen homeless men.
Bound with nylon rope.
Trussed up like pigs.
Gags in their mouths.
Terror in their eyes.

And next to them is a disemboweled corpse.
Like a picked over turkey carcass.
As if it was eaten right here.
Piece-by-piece.

Our Man recognizes one of the men.
It's the Junkie with the cleft lip.

BOXER

Alright, boys, time to go.

She and Our Man untie the men.
He moves to the Junkie.

OUR MAN

We're gonna get you back home.

A moment of connection between them.
Our Man now sees him in a new way.

Once they're all untied:

BOXER

(points)

Go that way, up the back steps,
straight ahead, out the front gate.

(then)

And don't stop running.

The men are about to go for it--
But then.
They hear it:

More Dreg are coming.
And they'll be here soon.

BOXER

Go.

The freed men take off.

Our Man and Boxer stay.
Aim to protect the escaping men.
They turn.
Take their positions in the--

HALLWAY

From deeper in the house:
Gurgling and writhing.
Sounds of the oncoming Dreg.

Our Man checks his shotgun.
Then his pockets.

OUR MAN

(re: his ammo)

I'm out.

BOXER

...me too.

Holster their guns.

Face the darkness at the other end of the hall.
Clamoring sound of approaching Dreg.
Then.

They draw their machetes.

The edges of the blades glow purple.
Red and blue together.

A trio of Dreg appear.
But they look different.
Their human carapaces translucent.
Because they're not fully formed yet.
Tentacles can be seen writhing underneath.

They rush toward our Our Man and Boxer.
And our heroes leap into them.
Hacking.
Slashing.

The blades glimmer with energy.
Melting Dreg tissue with each slice.
No limb regrowth this time.

Dreg scream in pain as they crumple.
Disintegrate into mush.

ABOVE THE PALO VISTA HOUSE

As the newly freed men rush out.
Bound down the street.
Traumatized but alive.

INSIDE THE HOUSE - HALLWAY

Our Man and Boxer.

Doing the best they can.

But with each slice...
The machetes lose their energy.
Purple spark fading.

Dreg limbs start growing back.
The blades now ineffective.
They share a look.
Oh shit.

There's a lot of Dreg.
And they just.
Keep.
Coming.

They'll soon be overwhelmed.

And suddenly.
There's too many Dreg to deal with and--

The machetes are snatched from their hands.

Our Man gets wrapped up in tentacles.
So does Boxer.
No way to escape.
But then.

She takes that stolen crystal from her pocket.
Stabs the Dreg in the eye.
Barely escapes the morass of mucus covered limbs.

Takes out that stolen salt shaker.
Stabs the Dreg holding Our Man.
Right in the eye.
Over and over until it lets him go.

She and Our Man run for it.
Just ahead of the Dreg.

Through dim hallways.

Right.
Left.
Eventually make it to a--

THICK DOOR.
Our Man reaches it first.

OUR MAN

Quick!

Boxer rushes in.
Our Man shuts the door behind him.
THUNK.
And just in time as--
Wam-wam-wam.
Ravenous Dreg slam into the other side.
The door is all that keeps them at bay.

Our Man holds it closed.
Boxer aids him.
Giving it all they've got.

KASHINK.
Our Man looks down.
The door has locked itself.

Our Man is confused.

OUR MAN
Did you lock the--?

Boxer taps his shoulder.
He turns around.
Sees they're now inside a--

BASEMENT DEN

Wall-to-wall mahogany.
Beautiful shelving and cabinetry.
Hand-crafted desk and matching chair.
Classy sports memorabilia displayed here and there.
Mostly golf.

And in the center of the room:
A small portable putting green.
Where stands...

A middle-aged man.
Tall.
Portly.
Round-faced.
Wears an open-collar suit.
Air of a man in charge.
This is **The Old One**.

Seen previously on Stick's monitor.
He's the new Dodgers owner.

Currently practices his short game with a putter.
Doesn't even look up.

THE OLD ONE
Welcome to my home.
(then)
Shame you both made it this far,
only to run out of ammunition.

Sinks his putt.
The Old One retrieves his golf ball.
Stands.
Finally looks at them.
With a good natured grin.

THE OLD ONE
But you have nothing to fear, I
only want to talk.

Our Man's eyes flick down.
To his ankle holster.
Still has bullets in his snubnosed revolver.
And it's out of The Old One's sight.

The Old One orates as he plays.

THE OLD ONE

I must admit, I'm curious what you think of the place. I spent nearly a year remodeling for my arrival.

He putts the ball.
Easily sinks it.

THE OLD ONE

Well, I say "I", but that's an oddity of language. I didn't lift a finger. But regardless, you're the first to see it. What do you think?

He motions around.
The opulence.

No response from Our Man or Boxer.
The Old One reads the room.

THE OLD ONE

Alright then, to the heart of it.

Stops golfing.
Gestures with his putter as he talks.

THE OLD ONE

I know what you're assuming. You must think me and my kind have some grand plan. Some masterstroke to "take over the world!" And you think by killing me you'll save the planet.

(chuckles)

But nothing could be further from the truth.

Our Man narrows his eyes.
Boxer remains stoic.

THE OLD ONE

I want the world to remain *exactly how it is*.

Wait what?

THE OLD ONE

There's so much beauty here. The exquisite taste of Salmon Tartare Cornets. The intricate design of a Bernhard Lederer watch. The vast expanse of the Hong Kong skyline.

(MORE)

THE OLD ONE (CONT'D)

And my modest ownership stakes in
your institutions allow me the
luxury to consume... *everything*.

(then)

And all these delights are achieved
with such efficiency, there's
people left over. Unnecessary for
society to function and so left on
the streets like so much unwanted
furniture after moving day.
Available for anyone who strolls
by. In other words... paradise.

(then)

And I want it to stay a paradise.

Our Man looks at him in horror.
What a terrible thing to say.

THE OLD ONE

And thus, my proposition. To keep
the world moving as it is, I need
only for you both to do one thing.

He takes a dramatic pause.

THE OLD ONE

Absolutely nothing.

What the fuck?
He motions with his putter.
To an attache case on his desk.

THE OLD ONE

Go on. Open it.

Our Man does so.
His eyes widen.
It's filled with STACKS OF CASH.

THE OLD ONE

You could use your special little
ziplocs to collect every jawbone in
this house twice over, including
mine... and it wouldn't even come
close to that amount.

(then)

And all you have to do to earn
it...

Points behind him with his putter.
There's a back exit.
A metal security door with no handle.

THE OLD ONE
... is walk out that door.

They think.

The Old One sets his putter against the wall.
Pulls something from his pocket:

THE OLD ONE
Otherwise, I'll be forced to use
this...

It's a small REMOTE.
With two red buttons.

THE OLD ONE
And open the door behind you. And
you can take your chances with my
subordinates.

Our Man and Boxer consider.
The hungry Dreg still audible behind them.
But neither of them respond.

THE OLD ONE
Nothing? Not even from her? I
thought she was supposed to be the
talkative one.

Boxer shrugs.
Hmm she's being weird.

OUR MAN
Seems like we have two bad options.

THE OLD ONE
You both must come to understand...
you are merely pieces in a game
that is so much larger than you
could ever understand. One that has
been played since before life on
this planet emerged from the muck.
So please, don't entertain the idea
that your employers have any
righteous intent. Their interests
are opposed to ours, that's all.
You perform a service and they pay
you. And if you perform this
service for me, instead it'll be me
who pays you.

(then)

And at the end of the day, when
there's money in your hand, what's
the difference?

Our Man thinks.
 So does Boxer.
 The Old One does have a point.
 But can they actually just walk away?

There's a tension.
 Is one of them going to defect?
 Or will their partnership stand?

THE OLD ONE

Come now... while my patience is
 considerable, it does have its
 limits.

(then)

So, please, do we have a deal...?

Silence.
 Our Man and Boxer share a glance.
Ready?
Fuckin ready.
 Then.

OUR MAN

Only one question.

The Old One arches an eyebrow.

OUR MAN

Any last words?

The Old One chuckles.

Our Man finally makes his move.
Draws his pistol from his ankle holster.

But the ancient creature is far too fast.
 Before Our Man can even aim his pistol--

The Old One bursts from his "human" carapace.
 In a flash--
 Disgusting tentacles swallow up the tiny pistol.

THE OLD ONE

I was so generous. But you and your
 morality. It's a disease. A
 hindrance.

Wam.
 A thick mass of tentacles hit Our Man.
 Like a tree trunk made of writhing limbs.
 Covered in boils and oozing pustules.

He's now pinned against the wall.

THE OLD ONE

It keeps you down. This was your
 chance at a way up, a better life.

Another mass of tentacles ruptures out.
 Collides with Boxer.
 Slams her against the floor.

The Old One's "human" torso remains.
 Suspended between his two massive Dreg arms.

THE OLD ONE

And you choose violence? Against
 me? I have culled a thousand
 generations of your kind.

Our Man struggles.
 Growls with exertion.
 But there's no way he's getting free.
 The Old One is too strong.

THE OLD ONE

And they're all forgotten.

The Old One's "human" mouth opens wide.
 Upsettingly wide.
 Wider and wider until--
 Its "human" mouth splits apart.
 The skin of its "face" peeling back to reveal:
 An enormous Dreg mouth.

Boxer can only watch in horror.
 As the terrifying jaws open.
 Rows of long serrated fangs
 Slide into place.

Descend toward Boxer.
 The Old One is moments from consuming her.
 And Our Man is next.
 But then.

Boxer parts her lips.
 Reveals something held between her front teeth.

It's a leaky bullet.
The ones that are highly volatile.

It's been hiding in her mouth this whole time.
 And--

Pthwef.
 She spits the bullet.
Right into The Old One's gaping maw.
 The ancient creature chokes on it.

Tries to catch its breath.
 But the bullet is good and stuck.
 The Old One's momentarily stunned.
 Causing it to loosen its grip on--

OUR MAN

Who wriggles free.

Grabs that nearby putter.
 And with all his might--

Swings it at The Old One's throat.

The impact causes the lodged bullet to--

E X P L O D E

A huge blue fireball erupts.
 Rips through the room.
 Vaporizes The Old One.
 The remote drops.
 Activating the hall door.
 And the hungry Dreg clamor through.
 But they're immediately met with--
The screaming blue blaze of the explosion.
 It consumes them.
 Their skin popping and melting.
 And the walls catch fire.
 Our Man and Boxer get to their feet.
 Coughing.
 Faces toasted from the blast.
 The room now in flames.
 And it gets worse by the second.

BOXER

Let's go!

But Our Man looks over to the case of money.
 It's still there.
 Calls out to him.

BOXER

Now!

Then.
 A fiery chunk of ceiling collapses.
 They barely dive out of the way.
 Make it to the back exit.
 But.
 The security door is locked.
 Bang on it.
 But it's no use.

They're trapped.
Between a wall of flames and the door.

BOXER

No--!
(realizes)
The remote!

Our Man looks back.
Sees that remote on the floor.
And without hesitation--
Heads back toward the fire.

Hides his mouth in his sleeve.
To avoid breathing smoke.

Dodges ever growing flames.

Makes it to the remote.
Picks it up.
Presses the button and--
The exit door slides open.
But just a crack.
Stuck on its track.

Boxer has to push it the rest of the way.
But it's hard.

BOXER

Get over here, gimme a hand!

Our Man is about to do just that.
But then.
Sees that case of money.

He could still get to it.
But it would cost precious seconds.
Time they don't have.

He's frozen with indecision.

BOXER

C'mon, partner, it's time to split!

Our Man thinks.
Decides.

Fuck the money.

Heads to the exit.
Helps Boxer.
Both exert all their strength.

And they push.
 The.
 Door.
 Open.

And dash through the exit.

Just as another ball of fire tears through the room.

And finally settling on...
 Those stacks of cash.
 As they burn to ash in the blue fire.

BACK OF THE PALO VISTA HOUSE

Our Man and Boxer make their way down the hill.
 The home in flames behind them.
 Fire engine sirens in the distance.
 But they'll be too late to save the house.

SUNRISE OVER LOS ANGELES - HOURS LATER

The inverse of the opening shots.
 The morning light bathes the city.
 Looking new.
 Almost hopeful.

Gower 101 overpass.

Homeless tents line the sidewalk.
 Cement walls covered in graffiti.
 But one says:
 "never give up"

Passing by shops and restaurants.

Half of them boarded up.
 But the other half open.
 A sign:
 "NOW HIRING 20/hr"

NOHO DINER - EARLY MORNING

A no frills 24/7 eatery in the Valley.
 Greasy food with charm.
 Daily special written on a sandwich board.
 Old celebrity photos cover the walls.

Our Man and Boxer sit at a booth.
 Haggard from the night's exploits.
 Dirt and sweat.
 Scrapes and bruises.
 Eyebrows singed.
 Then.
 An elderly server brings two big plates of breakfast.
 Sets them in front of Our Man and Boxer.

Huge pancakes.
 Fried eggs.
 Crispy bacon.
 Hashbrowns.
 Toast with jam.
 Fresh orange juice.
 Our Man and Boxer immediately start prepping.
 Butter.
 Salt and pepper.
 Our Man holds out his hand.
 Without a word Boxer passes the hot sauce.
 Boxer holds out her hand.
 Without a word Our Man passes the syrup.

They dig in.
 Ravenous.

Only sounds are the clink of silverware.
 The chewing of pancakes.
 Gulps of orange juice.

Enjoy the silence.

Enjoy each others' company.
 Then--

Buzz.
 Buzz.

Both their phones ring:
 "WORK"

They glance at each other.
 Our Man picks it up.
 Puts it on speaker.

OUR MAN
 ...hello?

A new voice answers.
 Female with a strange accent.
 They've never heard her before.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE (THROUGH THE PHONE)
*Hello! This is your employer
 speaking. It's so good to finally
 hear your voices.*

Holy shit.
A live person is on the line.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE (THROUGH THE PHONE)
*Congratulations on your successful
partnership! We have a lot to talk
about.*

And as this new possibility swells...

Cut to black.

THE END