

By Virtue Fall

By
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April 19th, 2004

Updated Draft

DARKNESS

SFX: An ominous HUM.

"Some Rise By Sin, Some By Virtue Fall"

A stark BOOM brings us to - -

CUT IN:

INT. EVIDENCE ROOM - - BATF - - OVERHEAD SHOT

CEILING POV: We look down upon A MAN. On the floor. On his back. Staring up at us with unblinking eyes.

Meet DANIEL SLOANE

Hands crossed over his belly like King Tut, he's motionless. And we take note of the items enveloping him...

GUNS.

In boxes. In crates. Exposed. Concealed.

An unsettling image, Danny's solemn gaze indicting us, as we - -

FADE TO BLACK:

INSERT TITLE CARD: ***"By Virtue Fall"***

CUT IN:

CLOSE ON EYES

The eyes of a widow or a war veteran, flitting left to right.

CLOSE ON A HAND

Scarred fingers strumming over a steering-wheel.

CLOSE ON A 7-11 BIG GULP CUP

As it goes from a lap to lips, and - -

INT. LINCOLN TOWN-CAR - - WIDER VIEW (STATIONARY)

SLUUUUURRRRRPPPP!

As Danny drinks, several things happen fast: 1/A prescription bottle RATTLES. 2/ PUSH IN ON prescription bottle: "VICODIN". 2/The bottle's STAMPED on a counter. 3/ 5 white pills TAP onto a table. 4/ The same pills are SMASHED to dust. 5/ The same dust is SWEPT into...

THE BIG GULP CUP

(Note: These shots should posses an infectious rhythm.)

Danny drains his balm, slurping the last bits down, before - -
CLUNK-CLUNK(OS)

Knuckles on the passenger-side glass. A FACE ducking into frame. Meet DOUG VINSON, a ball of testosterone and terror.

He gestures for Danny to exit the car. As Vinson stands up straight, we see a FIREARM handle jutting from his belt.

Danny recomposes(if he wore a tie, he'd straighten it). Fixing focus on himself in the REAR-VIEW(POV).

The eyes of a stranger staring back.

SFX: CLICK-CLACK.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON A TITANIUM BRIEF-CASE

atop homely bed-sheets. Moaning open like the mouth of an ancient treasure chest before the case is spun to reveal - -

TWO GUNS

No, scratch that - not guns. VAN DOEKKEN LONGBORES. The Cadillac of the gun-world. As rare as human kindness.

VOICE (O.S.)

Fa-la-la-la-la.

TILT UP to see IGGY TILMAN(20's)

Donning a Santa Clause cap and a skeletal smile, he's skinny as an IV tube(and not nearly as helpful).

IGGY

Act now, and I'll throw in a coupla'
AMT hardballers.

INT. SUITE - - MOTEL - - WIDER VIEW

DANNY (O.S.)

I want charity, I'll go to a soup
kitchen.

DANNY. Leans casually against a wall. Nods to the firearms.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Just those.

Behind Iggy, see VINSON and TINA STILES(slim, bottle blonde).

IGGY

So you happy?

DANNY
(dead-pan)
Don't I look happy?
(then; steps closer)
One problem. Actually, three...

Before Iggy can hazard a guess - CAMERA SPINS AROUND THE ROOM like a frenetic ferris-wheel as we see - -

VINSON
"A" as in alcohol.

STILES
"T" as in tobacco.

DANNY
"F" as in - -

IGGY
Fuck.

For you see, in a flash, Vinson and Stiles plug Glocks to Iggy's temples...Danny's ID in his face.

CLOSE ON DANNY'S BADGE

AGENT DANIEL SLOANE. *Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms.* But we're most drawn to the ID photo. Little resemblance to the man we now see. An emaciated echo of his former self.

Vinson slips flex-cuffs on Iggy. Jacks him against the wall.

VINSON
If you got needles, speak up - 'cuz
I get stuck, you get stuck, got it?

He finds a fist of cash, a box of *Altoids*, a *PAGER*. He pockets the cash. Pops an *Altoid*. Hands the pager to - -

DANNY
Who's been calling you, pal...?

CLOSE ON 2-WAY PAGER

As we scroll down several numbers. Stopping on one in particular. A familiar name to Danny.

DANNY (CONT'D)
You work for Trower?

Iggy glares back in defiant silence. Danny steps closer.

STOMP. STOMP.

Danny's boots. On Iggy's loafers. Iggy hops. Iggy howls.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 And here I was under the impression
 all you guys had rhythm.
 (hands pager to Stiles)
 Check it out.

Stiles is already punching digits into her cell...

IGGY
 (re: scuffed shoes)
 Motherfucker...these are Prada's...

VINSON
 (interested)
 What size...?

IGGY
 Big enough to fit...up your ass...

CLICK. Vinson cocks the Glock. Slips it into Iggy's ear.

IGGY (CONT'D)
 11...they 11's...

DANNY
 (to Vinson)
 He's right, Doug; they are big enough
 to fit up your ass.

Vinson assaults Danny with his eyes, no love loss here...

Stiles slaps the cell off. NODS pointedly to Danny.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 Mr. Tilman. Thanks for your time.

He turns to go, leaving an enlightened Iggy behind.

IGGY
 You motherfuckers are on Trower's
 pay-roll...

VINSON
 (an admmissive laugh)
 Wanna know the best part - -? I get
 to do this - -

WHOMP. Kidney-shot. Iggy flops. Iggy folds. But before
 Vinson can turn Iggy into a human pinata - -

- - Danny pulls him away. And snaps open a switch-blade.

Approaching Iggy - who inches back on instinct before Danny
 cuts the flex-cuffs OFF.

Leaves Iggy on his knees. No shoes. No money. No pride.

And Danny exits last, stopping for one last gander at Iggy.

IGGY

So what, you the *good* bad cop?

Danny looks solemnly back, as we HEAR:

MATT (V.O.)

Everybody wears their cynicism like
a badge of honor now, you know?

CUT IN:

INT. BEDROOM - - MATT'S APARTMENT - - CEILING POV

MEET MATT VANETTI. Boyishly handsome, he's pulsing with pride and purpose. Lying in bed, shroud in darkness.

He turns to his girlfriend, HALEY, entangled in silk sheets and sweet dreams. He kisses her shoulder.

STAY ON HALEY as Matt edges quietly out of bed(os)...

MATT (V.O.)

People always say nothing in life
goes according to plan...

SEE THE BED-SIDE ALARM-CLOCK. *It's 3:57 a.m.*

INT. INDOOR TRACK - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

A VAUNTED VIEW: Matt sprints in circles.

MATT (V.O.)

Well, that's 'cuz most of 'em don't
have a plan.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON A MIRROR before we see MATT ascend into frame, grunting through a set of leg squats.

MATT (V.O.)

Maybe I'm idealistic, I dunno, but I
think hard-work pays off...

SFX: Thump. Thump. Thump.

INT. AEROBICS STUDIO - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Matt POUNDS a heavy-bag with a barrage of blows.

MATT (V.O.)

...I think what we do makes a
difference...

INT. SHOWER-STALL - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Eyes-closed, Matt lets the warm water baptize him...

MATT (V.O.)

But at the end of the day, it's pretty simple...

He shuts the shower off, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. BAR & GRILL - - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON A "SUPERMAN" PIN-BALL MACHINE as we PAN DOWN to see...MATT wiggling away. Playing energetically.

MATT

...I just wanna do good.

With that, his ball promptly goes in the gutter. Game over.

DANNY

Step aside, son. This so happens to be my game of choice.

He slips a quarter in. Trades places with his protege.

MATT

So how'd it go?

(off Danny)

The undercover op?

DANNY

(plays pin-ball)

It didn't. Seller was a no-show.

MATT

And that doesn't bother you?

DANNY

(tics a glance at Matt)

Not apparently as much as you...

Indeed, Matt does look vexed...and Danny looks - -

ACROSS THE ROOM(POV)

Where we see VINSON in a booth beside a slick agent, CAUFIELD. Nursing beers and bad-attitudes. Glaring back at us.

DANNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Shit.

Distracted, Danny loses track of his ball. Game over.

MATT
Seems the wizard's lost his magic...

Before Danny can retort, A LITTLE BOY wanders over. Peering up at Matt with enormous eyes.

DANNY
I'll leave you two alone...

FOLLOW DANNY

As he ambles over to the booth on ginger feet, telling Vinson:

DANNY (CONT'D)
Relax, I'm gonna go back to the office, file the report...

VINSON
Not the report we're worried about.

Caufield gestures to Matt - who now holds the little boy up, enabling the lad to play pin-ball.

CAUFIELD
You need to talk to your boy.

VINSON
Either we cut him in or - -

DANNY
Matt stays out of it.

VINSON
Can't tell if you're being noble.
Or greedy.

DANNY
That's 'cuz you can't tell the difference.

Vinson rises, flaring. Fists balled, lids narrow.

Danny, no back down in him, steps forward without a hint of hesitation. About to engage before - -

MATT'S HAND

Grabs his shoulder. Negotiates his partner back. Placating:

MATT
Hey...we're all friends here...

And he shepherds Danny out as Vinson taunts:

VINSON
Yeah, Danny, we're all friends here...

INT. MATT'S PICK-UP TRUCK - - MOVING

Slightly buzzed, Danny rides shotgun. SILENCE, before - -

MATT

...You don't find it fucked up?

DANNY

(overlapping)

I find everything fucked up...

MATT

...Firearms stolen from evidence.
Firearms. Stolen. From the *Bureau
of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms?*
'See where I'm going with this? And
that's not even mentioning the busted
raid last month - and now, today,
yours.

DANNY

Stop.

MATT

It's pretty obvious that...

DANNY

Stop...

MATT

...Trower's got somebody inside
working for him - -

DANNY

Stop.

And Matt quiets. And Danny calms.

MATT

All I'm saying is, Internal Affairs
has gotta be watching us like the
Zapruder film...

DANNY

You're being paranoid - -

MATT

Hey, it's only paranoid if - -

DANNY

You're wrong.

The truck descends into a subterranean stratosphere. A GARAGE

MATT

Trower's out there, hiding in plain sight. And we're doing nothing. NOTHING. Let's shake the tree.

DANNY

By what, following him around? Harassing him?

MATT

I don't "harass" him. We just happen to frequent some of the same venues.

DANNY

Stay away from him, Matty. You're not careful Trower'll file a restraining order.

The car settles to a stop, Danny's hand already on the door.

DANNY (CONT'D)

G'night.

And Matt watches Danny disgorge, concerned, before...

INT. GARAGE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - MOMENTS LATER

...Matt hustles to catch up to Danny...

MATT

Danny, wait up...Dan.

He lets Matt fall in beside him, still averting his eyes.

MATT (CONT'D)

Everything okay?

DANNY

Hunky-dory.

MATT

Heather and Scott okay, everybody good?

DANNY

(terse)

Everybody's fine.

MATT

Sloanie, come on, you can talk to me about anything...

And Danny whirls, about to flare. Before turning passive:

DANNY

I know that.

They halt by the ELEVATOR. Danny waiting, then:

DANNY (CONT'D)
 You ever do something wrong - -?
 (remembering who he's
 talking to)
 Pretend you did something wrong...and
 you know it's wrong, you know it.
 But still...

His voice trails off, Matt extrapolating:

MATT
 You and Heather...?

No, but Matt's silence is interpreted as confirmation...

MATT (CONT'D)
 If you love each other, it's pretty
 simple - -

DANNY
 It's not simple, nothing's simple.
 We're conditioned to think it is, to
 think the good guys wear white, and
 the bad guys hate their mothers,
 but...the world, the real world,
 exists somewhere in between.

PING. The elevator arrives, Danny embarking with - -

DANNY (CONT'D)
 People change, Matt...and not always
 the way we want 'em to.

The doors close, leaving Matt to stare at his reflection.

INT. DANNY'S CUBICLE - - ATF DIVISION - - FEDERAL BUILDING

Articulated only by the iridescent hue of his computer, Danny
 pecks at the keyboard...

VOICE (O.S.)
 Didn't your momma ever tell you about
 working in the dark...?

LES GORTOWSKI (GORT) in the doorway. A southern bear of a
 man, he's Danny's boss and friend.

GORT
 Makes you go blind.

DANNY
 You're thinking of masturbation...

GORT
(removes his glasses)
That actually makes sense.

DANNY
I'm hearing things...

GORT
Like what, voices?

DANNY
Things. Like Internal Affairs, like
they're lookin' at our unit...

GORT
Off the record?

DANNY
That mean, I gotta turn the tape-
recorder off?
(Gort's silent and
serious)
Come on, Gort...

CU ON GORT. He NODS in pointed affirmation.

GORT
(exits)
G'night, Danny...

DANNY
Who they lookin' at? Gort...?

Only the silence answers...

Danny sighs. Sags. The bray of his CELL jarring him - -

He checks the caller ID: "Home".

And sends it to voice-mail, his eyes falling on A PHOTO atop
his desk. Danny with his beautiful wife and son.

ON DANNY. It feels like a lifetime ago.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - - PLAZA SQUARE - - NIGHT

Matt's girlfriend, the stunner we glimpsed earlier, HALEY,
exits the edifice. Striding across the cobble-stone.

Late night, it's eerily empty, save the sounds of her heels.
And someone else's.

She stops. Looks back.

UNKNOWN POV. We watch her resume. We follow.

When she halts again, nervous - - we grab her, and REVERSE ANGLE to see Matt - who devours her with a deep kiss.

She playfully swats at him. Giggles:

HALEY

Asshole!

They disengage, Haley glaring at him, arms akimbo.

MATT

What, it was a joke...

HALEY

Can't decide if I wanna fuck or fight.

MATT

Who says we can't do both?

He grabs her. Carries her over his shoulder like the catch of the day.

VAUNTED VIEW: All we hear is LAUGHTER.

FADE TO:

EXT. STRIP-MAL - - OUTSKIRTS OF CHICAGO - - MORNING

A Lincoln Towncar idles in front of a DUNKIN DONUT SHOP.

VOICE (O.S.)

What would you like, Mr. Trower?

INT. TOWN-CAR - - STATIONARY

FAVOR JERICHO TROWER, an immense and imperious man. Sitting like a king upon a throne in the back-seat.

JERIHCO TROWER

S'okay, Jimmy, I got it...

He pats Jimmy, his driver, on the shoulder. Exits.

VOICE (O.S.)

(pre-lap)

You got two left, sir...

CUT TO:

A SHOW-CASE OF PASTRIES

Trower's image reflected off the glass.

INT. DUNKIN DONUTS - - WIDER VIEW

A young CLERK tends to Trower's epicurean needs...

JERIHCO TROWER
Chocolate sprinkles, please.

He glances over. Spots a disheveled MOTHER and her little boy. Clearly impoverished, she scours for change.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
And a dozen for the young lady,
too...on me.

He slaps a C-note from a ball of cash on the counter as the clerk informs the mother of Trower's generosity(OS).

And the mother beams, prodding her 5 year old son with:

MOTHER
What d'you say to the nice man?

The kid faces Trower. Sticks his tongue out. And BLOWS.

And while most would take it with good humor, Trower boils. Growing angrier when he hears - -

LAUGHTER ECHOING BEHIND HIM(OS)

VOICE (O.S.)
Kids, they got great instincts, don't
they?

MATT. In baseball cap and sweats. Sidles up to Trower.

MATT
You know Freud, he said that charity
was about making ourselves feel
better. Like, I dunno, say if a
gunrunner - a gunrunner who sells to
gang-bangers and cop-killers - were
to buy a baker's dozen for a member
of the lower class. Bravo.
(claps loudly)
I guess, contrition comes cheap these
days...

Trower tics a glance at the acronym on Matt's cap: A.T.F.

JERIHCO TROWER
Not nearly as cheap as federal agents.
(then)
So in this cute little world you
live in, agent, someone stops selling,
and, what, people stop buying?

Matt stares back at Trower. Tempted to engage. But instead
wryly, and chivalrously, tips his hat, exiting with - -

MATT
Good talking to you. See you soon.

Trower watches him go, eyes like embers. Brought back by - -

CLERK

(chirpy)

How 'bout some of our scrumptious
apple-fritters for the road?

EXT. DUNKIN DONUTS - - UNKNOWN POV

ELEVATED ANGLE: Through a CAMERA LENS, Matt returns to his
pick-up as we hear the shudder of a camera...

Someone's watching.

CUT TO:

A CONCAVE BATH-TUB

SLUSH! - 2 bags of PARTY-ICE dumped in. Followed by - -

TWO BARE FEET

FROM BEHIND: Danny stands in the tub. Clad only in Boxers,
we note the ghastly SCAR stretched across his lower-back.

INT. BATHROOM - - ANOTHER ANGLE

Danny sits in the tub, feeling nothing. And everything. In
his right hand, we notice...

A PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE: VICODIN ES.

He rattles 2 chalk-white pills into his pruned palm. Pops
them like Pez. Gulp. Gulp.

Eyes closed, he settles into this numbing Nirvana, before - -

A KNOCK(OS)

Rivets him up, knocking the prescription-bottle over. Left
to watch it roll across the linoleum, straight for THE DOOR.

Where his son, SCOTT(8), now stands. A lanky lad, he's still
young enough to believe in heroes. Still idealistic enough
to think his dad's one of 'em.

DANNY

(snaps)

Scott, I'm in here, get out.

And, no, Danny's not a candidate for father of the year.

SCOTT

You got a page. 9-1-1.

That got Danny's attention, but - -

DANNY

Okay. Go.

A sagging Scott exits, but not before his foot hits something - -
THE PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE

He scoops it up, placing it on the sink as his dad roars:

DANNY (CONT'D)

Can I have some privacy, goddamnit.

ON DANNY as the door CLICKS closed. Head bowed. Eyes inverted. A man with the good sense to hate himself.

Numb. Not nearly numb enough.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - - DANNY'S HOME - - MOMENTS LATER

Clad in a suit and tie for work, Danny hustles down the hall - halted by the diaphanous woman ascending the steps...

This is HEATHER, Danny's wife, a raven-haired beauty.

And one look between husband and wife, and it's clear: All's not well in Mudville.

DANNY

I slept in the office last night.

Before she retorts - SCOTT exits his room, a SCIENCE PROJECT in hand. In the victory of hope over experience, he asks:

SCOTT

Dad, you comin' tonight?

He's stumped, caught in the glare of his boy's earnest eyes.

HEATHER

The fund-raiser, Dan, the school science fund raiser.

DANNY

Is that tonight?

HEATHER

Scott, go downstairs, sweetie.

Scott complies...Danny knows what's coming - -

DANNY

You wanna make a war outta' this?

HEATHER

This isn't war, this is *surrender*.

(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)

(then)

You haven't been to one of his games all year. Not one game, not one function. Nothing.

DANNY

I'll make it up to him.

But he's already trundling downstairs...

HEATHER

First you have to talk to him.

Only the SLAM of the front-door responds.

EXT. FRONT-LAWN - - DANNY'S HOME - - MORNING

Danny stalks past, nearly oblivious to his son - who takes swings on a t-ball contraption...

Just as Danny takes note of his son, given pause - -

A HORN HONKS(OS)

ACROSS THE STREET - - A CHERRY RED CORVETTE

The tinted glass peels down to reveal - -

VINSON

'Morning.

INT. CORVETTE - - STATIONARY

Danny sits beside Vinson, none too comfortable. In the BG, through the glass, we see Scott on the lawn.

VINSON

Beautiful house...beautiful
kid...bangin' wife...s'like a fucking
Hallmark card come to life - -

DANNY

(flaring)

I recommend a different tactic.

Vinson nods. Smiles his churlish smile. Going serious with:

VINSON

We got a problem.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING

CLOSE ON IGGY TILMAN(UNKNOWN POV), seated across from Matt.

DANNY AND VINSON

Step into frame, watching from behind the glass.

VINSON

The golden-boy boy brought him in.
He's not talking...not yet, at least.

Danny exits, as we - -

STAY WITH VINSON

Watching as Danny enters the interrogation room. Pulling
Matt aside and gesturing to Iggy, as we pre-lap:

DANNY (O.S.)

What d'you want, the guy's my CI...

INT. GARAGE - - FEDERAL BUILDINGS - - LATER

Danny and Matt stride towards their respective vehicles...

DANNY

...I gotta keep him on the street.

MATT

What do I want? How 'bout some
communication?

DANNY

Do I have to explain what the "C" in
CI means?

MATT

You have to explain why we're putting
somebody back on the street who works
for Trower...

DANNY

Matty, the grunt doesn't get you to
the general. Okay? That kid's gotta
better shot of generating leads out
there, than in here.

Danny unlocks his Volvo. Calls back to Matt:

DANNY (CONT'D)

Don't go away mad, Matty...What're
you doing for the weekend?

And Matt does look mad. And intense. Finally:

MATT

I'm gonna visit my dad at the cabin.

DANNY

Oh, yeah? - Give the Sheriff my
love...

MATT

Next time, we'll all go up; you'll
bring Heather and Scott...

Danny debates whether to ask the following. Finally:

DANNY

What're you, uh, doin' tonight?

MATT

What's up?

DANNY

Scotty. He's got a Little League
game. No big deal, I just thought - -

MATT

Hell, yeah. Let's go. I'm in.
Tell me where.

Danny appreciates his friend's instant enthusiasm. Then:

DANNY

7:30. Harris Park.

Danny ducks into his car, driving off as we PICK-UP ON MATT -
about to enter his truck, before - -

CAUFIELD (O.S.)

Vanetti.

ROB CAUFIELD. Motions Matt over towards his Mustang.

CAUFIELD (CONT'D)

Check this shit out.

He tosses a MOSSBERG 500 COMBAT 12 GAUGE to Matt - who snags
it. Checks the barrel.

MATT

Tossing loaded guns, that's smart...

CAUFIELD

(a shrug)

You got good hands...

(then)

Going to the shooting-range, you
interested?

MATT

No, thanks.

Here's the thing: As the conversation continues, Matt
disassembles the rifle. In 10 seconds flat. Blindly.

CAUFIELD

Vanetti, you're the only agent I
know who hates guns...

MATT

Wouldn't you rather have an ATF agent
who hates guns than loves 'em?

Matt hands the weapon back. In pieces.

A chafed Caufield watches as Matt recedes, and we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. HARRIS PARK - - BASEBALL FIELD - - NIGHT - - LONG-SHOT

Smell the fresh-cut grass, HEAR the crack of the bat.

EXT. FIELD - - MARGINS - - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Heather wait by a hot-dog vending cart, casting
glances at the game underway. Scott on the bench.

Matt hands Heather a pretzel and diet-soda.

HEATHER

Thanks for coming.

MATT

Are you kidding me? I love this
stuff.

(shouts to field)

Hey, batter-batter...

(to Heather)

Sorry...old habits.

HEATHER

Don't apologize. Nice to see someone
excited about it.

She nods pointedly to Danny in the stands. On his cell.
Oblivious to the game and those around him.

HEATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What's going on with him, Matt?

Matt's torn between his concern for Danny...and his loyalty
to him. Finally:

MATT

He's fine. Just...cycles, you know.
Sometimes you do the job, sometimes
it does you.

Heather's clearly unsatisfied with that answer.

MATT (CONT'D)
 Look, he's here, right? That's goat
 be a good thing, right?

Before she can respond, Matt CLAPS and - -

MATT (CONT'D)
 Yeah, Scotty. Get a good cut, buddy!

Scott, slight and slumped, has come to the plate. Heather
 and Matt cling to the fence. CHEERING him on.

Scott lunges awkwardly at the 1st pitch, the ball popping
 back to the pitcher - who makes the grab. Tosses him out.

Scott, head slumped, shuffles back to the dug-out...

MATT (CONT'D)
 (clapping)
 S'okay, pal, short memory...

DANNY (O.S.)
 I gotta go.

Danny. Behind Matt and Heather. Jacket in hand.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (to Matt)
 Can you take them home?

MATT
 What're you doin'? Where - -?

DANNY
 I gotta go.

And he moves off, Scott watching his father go from behind
 the chain-fence...

Matt nods assurance to Heather, goes after his partner.

MATT
 Hey, what's up?

DANNY
 I gotta deal with one a' my CI's...

MATT
 One a' your CI's? You fucking kidding
 me?

DANNY
 (petulant)
 Can you take them home or not?

He whirls back. Locks eyes with Matt - who nods in reluctant
 compliance. Watching Danny vanish from view. Calling out:

MATT

The question is, why can't you?

Matt turns. Trading empathetic eyes with Heather, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH SIDE - - NIGHT

Urban squalor abounds. Radiant with decay.

A familiar Town-Car prowls past, halting beside a Volvo.

INT. TOWN-CAR - - STATIONARY

Danny sits beside Trower - who plops an ENVELOPE on his lap. Danny regards it as if it contained Anthrax. Then:

DANNY

I'm done.
(hands envelope back)
I got IAD doing a high-colonic on me -
no thanks to your idiots swiping
guns outta' evidence.

Trower silences Danny with a stumpy index finger. *Shhhh.*

EXT. TOWN-CAR - - MOMENTS LATER

SLAM! Danny's thrown against the car and frisked by two of Trower's thugs, SEIGFRIED AND ROY.

Danny stares at Trower through the window.

JERIHCO TROWER (O.S.)

Sorry.

BACK INSIDE - - MOMENTS LATER

A ruffled Danny tries to press his suit straight...

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)

See, I get worried, too, sometimes...
(then)

I've already taken steps to insulate you, Daniel. The best way to take heat off is to put it somewhere else. They're vultures, these people...and vultures, they crave one thing: Meat.

DANNY

I...can't keep living like this.

JERIHCO TROWER

Like what? - Well? Prosperous?
I'm thinking of you here, Daniel.
(MORE)

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
 I mean, how else you gonna afford
 Scott's private schooling? Or your
 inevitable alimony payments? Or
 those meds you chew like Chickletts.
 And let's not forget about the
 information I provide you with.

DANNY
 Conveniently eliminating your
 competition...

JERIHCO TROWER
 And earning you, what, 3
 commendations? 2 promotions? See,
 our relationship? - It's symbiotic.
 (translating)
 It means - -

DANNY
 I know what it means...

JERIHCO TROWER
 Show me that you do.

And once again, he dangles the envelope. An apple to Eve.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
 Take the money, Daniel. Make both
 of us feel better.

OUTSIDE - - NIGHT

The Town-Car recedes as Danny turns to find a NEON-SIGN
 blinking atop a ransacked church. "JESUS SAVES."

Danny looks down at the ENVELOPE in his hand. Looks up at
 the church.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK-WOODS - - ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - - DAY

More green than a golf-course, a rental-car snakes through
 Edenic acreage, halting upon sight of - -

A CABIN

Fastidious. Pristine. Vibrant.

ANGLE ON MATT

as he beholds the sight. Inspired.

He unfolds from the rental, moving towards his father...

WALT VANETTI

An avuncular man with an ample belly, a shiny crown of silver hair and a tubercular COUGH.

MATT
(re: Cough)
Gee, that sounds healthy...

WALT VANETTI
Allergies.

MATT
Yeah, if you're allergic to medical advice...

They exchange a warm hug, Walt planting a kiss on his son.

WALT VANETTI
Just in time for lunch.

MATT
What're we havin'?

WALT VANETTI
(with a wink)
Let's go find out.

Matt notes the HUNTING RIFLE in his father's grip.

EXT. DANNY'S HOME - - DAY

Danny ambles towards his abode, head low as if in search of lost change. Glancing up to see - -

HEATHER. Waiting for him. A tsunami in heels.

DANNY
(droll)
Honey, you don't have to greet me at the door - -

HEATHER
You know what Scott was researching on the Internet when I got home?

DANNY
He's a boy, he's gonna - -

HEATHER
Vicodin. You know what he asked me, what our eight year old son asked me? - *"Why is daddy in so much pain?"*
(then)
You're addicted.

Danny can't deny it. Hell, he can barely speak at all.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
 Why are you in so much pain? - And
 I'm not talking about your goddamn
 back, Danny.

He finds his voice, instantly aware of the world around him.

DANNY
 Can we not play this out on the front-
 lawn?

HEATHER
 (wiping tears; soft)
 I'm done playing, Danny...

And she leaves Danny there, alone. Returning to the house
 as a dark cumulus cloud engulfs Danny and his world, and we - -

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - - DAY

Father and son enter...

MATT
 Place looks good.

WALT VANETTI
 Took me a while, but I got in shape.

He carefully perches the hunting rifle above the fireplace.

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)
 I was thinking I'd drive back with
 ya' tomorrow...

MATT
 What for?

WALT VANETTI
 (duh)
 Work.

MATT
 Work - - ? I figured you - -

WALT VANETTI
 What, quit?

MATT
 "Retired". There's a difference, you
 know. You're 64 - -

WALT VANETTI
 Fuck you, 63...

MATT

You've had 3 procedures in 2 years.

WALT VANETTI

Procedures? Call it what it is: A
fucking heart attack.

But he softens upon sight of his son's concerned face.

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)

I'm fine, okay?

MATT

All I'm sayin' is, you got the cabin
now - enjoy it.

WALT VANETTI

You're not understanding something.
It's not about what's gonna kill me,
it's about what's gonna keep me alive.

(beat)

The job's one a the two things...

MATT

Okay, I'll bite. What's the other?

Walt reflexively glances over at the mantle. Above the
fireplace. A shelf full of family PHOTOS. Matt in all.

WALT VANETTI

(an emotional beat)

Watching you grow up, do the things
you done - in the Marines, on the
job...after your mother's passing,
well, you won't fully understand it
'til you got a son of your own.

He looks away for fear of breaking down. Recovering with:

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)

So stop bustin' balls, okay?

MATT

I still gotta go back tonight.

(beat)

I'm gonna ask Haley to marry me.

Walt stares at his son, emotions inscrutable as he stands.
Marches over to a MUSIC BOX from which he pulls A RING BOX.

Popping it open to reveal...a stunning sapphire WEDDING RING.

WALT VANETTI

This was your mother's...

MATT

Dad, I - -

WALT VANETTI

It would make me very proud.

Walt elbows at stubborn tears, Matt joining in the lachrymose union as he accepts the ring. And hugs his old man. HOLD.

INT. GARAGE - - DANNY'S HOME

ANGLE ON THE IDLING VOLVO

INT. VOLVO - - STATIONARY

Danny looks at the ashen pill in his hand. Unsure whether to smash or swallow. Before he can decide - -

KNOCK KNOCK(OS)

Scott. Outside the car. Exuberant. Danny downs the window.

SCOTT

- - You hear? Did you hear? I won the Science Fair auction. Somebody bought my project for, like, a hundred bucks.

He dangles THE FIRST PLACE RIBBON in testament...

DANNY

That's awesome, pal...that's awesome.

And there's a disquieting SILENCE, before - -

SCOTT

Mom says you're going away? On a trip?

DANNY

(soft)

Yeah. For a little while.

SCOTT

Keep this 'til you get back.

THE FIRST PLACE RIBBON

Now resides in Danny's palm as Scott scurries off...

The ribbon in one hand. The pill in the other. HOLD.

Danny pops the pill.

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - - TO ESTABLISH

INT. ATF DIVISION - - 27TH FLOOR - - CONTINUOUS

LONG: Matt, clad in sweats, treks past the vacant confines.

INT. MATT'S CUBICLE - - LATER

Matt checks his E-mail. Clicks the computer OFF.

DANNY (O.S.)

What're ya' nervous about, pal?

Danny. In the doorway. With red-rimmed eyes.

MATT

I get that way when people sneak up on me.

DANNY

When you're nervous, you work out.
Entire first year as partners I was
convinced you were anorexic or bulimic
or something...

Matt concedes with a smirk. These two know each other as only the best of friends can.

And Matt wrestles THE RING from his pocket. Holds it out.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Matt. I love you...but I'm not in
love with you.

MATT

Funny. I'm gonna ask Haley to marry
me.

DANNY

Seriously? Why?

MATT

(a forced laugh)

"Why?"

(then)

You letting your personal experiences
jade you here?

DANNY

That's what personal experiences do.

(then)

Heather kicked me out.

MATT

You guys'll work it out, you always
do.

(pulls something from
his workout bag)

Until you do...

He tosses APARTMENT KEYS to Danny...

MATT (CONT'D)

You're on your own tonight, though.
Me proposing wouldn't be quite as
romantic with you crashed on the
couch.

Danny nods in soulful appreciation, collecting thoughts before - -

DANNY

When I proposed to Heather, it was
like if I didn't, if I didn't get
the words out right there, right
then, I was gonna die. Physically
die. 'Cuz I knew she was the one, I
knew she'd be in the fox-hole with
me come hell, come high-water.

MATT

(a bit defensive)
What're you saying, Dan?

He's saying, of course, that Haley doesn't qualify. But - -

DANNY

I'm saying...congratulations.

They exchange a manly half-hug, as we...

INT. ELEVATOR - - 27TH FLOOR - - MOMENTS LATER

Matt studies himself in the gilded doors, mustering courage
for the task ahead, until - -

We stop on the 24th floor. Doors opening to reveal...VINSON.

They trade eyes. Gunslingers on the draw. Then:

VINSON

You're going down.

And, for some reason, we suspect he's not talking about the
elevator, the doors closing on his smarmy grin.

Matt glances up at the floor directory. POV: 24th floor:
Internal Affairs Division.

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - - LATER

Matt enters. Tossing his workout bag aside and sliding the
ring into his pocket. Turning to see - - HALEY.

HALEY

(purring)
You're late...
(gives him a deep
kiss)
How's your father?

MATT

He's good, he's real good.

(then)

What'd I miss?

HALEY

I had the day from hell. 3 new cases
plopped right in my lap...

FAVOR MATT as she rambles on(OS), and we - -

FADE TO:

INT. BATHROOM - - MATT'S APARTMENT - - LATER

Matt beholds his mirrored reflection, ring in hand as he
goes over the cue cards in his head.

Consuming one deep breath, before calling out:

MATT

I'll be out in a second, babe...

And he summons courage, the ring behind his back as he exits
the bathroom, deflating before we REVERSE ANGLE to reveal - -

HALEY. In bed. Fast asleep.

Matt. Composes a bittersweet smile. Kisses her gently on
the forehead. Placing the ring on the night-stand. Tomorrow.

He slips under the sheets. Clicks the night-light OFF,
bathing us in **DARKNESS**.

HOLD ON THE SILENCE. Then:

A ripple. A rumble. A ROAR.

CRASH CUT IN:

The front door. Rocks open.

The lights. Flick ON.

Matt's eyes. Bolt awake.

TEN HEAVILY-ARMED MEN RAID THROUGH. Para-military from the
MP-5's in their hands to the boots on their feet.

Matt squirms, discerning the FBI and ATF insignias emblazoned
on their flak-jackets. Only now heeding(SOUND UP) - -

AGENTS

ON THE FLOOR! DOWN! DOWN!

Haley's ear-splitting scream doesn't help matters...

MATT instinctively claws for the wedding RING, before - -

WHACK! An agent cracks his cranium. Fells him to the floor.

Matt. On the carpet.

The wedding ring. Out of reach.

An agent's heavy-boot crushing it under foot as once again - -

EVERYTHING GOES SILENT

MATT POV(HAND-HELD) - *Semiautomatic barrel in our face...boots barreling past...Haley restrained on the bed... 2 agents retrieving GUNS from the walk-in closet. One of which is - -*

A MOSSBERG 12 GAUGE. The same gun Caufield showed Matt.

Matt's coaxed. Cuffed. Cajoled. Propped to his feet. Left only to stare at Haley's hollow screams...

He looks away. Looks down. Sees a pile of rubble.

The residue of his mother's ring.

FADE TO BLACK:

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

(filtered)

In a just developing story...

CUT IN:

INT. RESTAURANT BOOTH - - MORNING

CLOSE ON DANNY, looking errantly OS as he chews stale toast.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

...Several guns recently stolen from a federal evidence room have been recovered...

Danny stops chewing. Stops breathing. Only able to see - -

TIGHT ON TELEVISION(DANNY POV)

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

...Allegedly in the possession of a federal agent.

MATT'S PHOTO appears in the upper-right corner.

BACK TO RESTAURANT BOOTH

Danny's gone. Only a gnarled piece of toast left behind.

SLAM CUT TO:

BAM! - DANNY BURSTS THROUGH DOUBLE-DOORS --

INT. RECEPTION AREA - - TROWER ANTIQUITIES - - WIDER VIEW

Blazing past a receptionist, his path thwarted by 2 BURLY MEN. Shark suits. Shark eyes.

BURLY MAN #1
Mr. Trower's not taking visitors
right now - -

Burly catches Danny's fist. In his face.

DANNY
How 'bout now?

Before Burly #2 can engage - -

JERIHCO TROWER (O.S.)
We're typically by appointment only.

Trower inhabits the doorway. Nonplussed.

INT. TROWER'S OFFICE - - MOMENTS LATER

Trower sits. Danny paces.

JERIHCO TROWER
Not so smart coming here, Daniel.

DANNY
I don't give a fuck - they're gonna
find out my involvement anyways.

JERIHCO TROWER
Vanetti thinks you're a boy-scout.
No reason he'll talk now - -

DANNY
But I will.

JERIHCO TROWER
Did Danny go and grow a conscience?
Little late for that, don't you think?

DANNY
We'll find out, won't we?

And he begins to retreat, Trower content to let him go, until - -

JERIHCO TROWER
(soft; polite)
Daniel?
(Danny stops)
Let's assume you do confess to the
good folks at the ATF. And you go
away. And maybe I go away...
(MORE)

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
(purposeful pause)
There are other people to consider...

And now he's really got Danny's strict attention.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
And maybe they'll go away, too.

Permanently.

DANNY
Don't you do this...

JERIHCO TROWER
(stands)
Lemme show you something...
(reaches under desk)
...Sort of an investment. Honestly,
I think I overpaid.

Danny's eyes explode on sight of...SCOTT'S SCIENCE PROJECT.

Off Danny, caught in a hell of his own creation, we...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - FEDERAL HOLDING CELL - - LATER

Matt addresses STEVE LEVITT - his nebbish attorney.

MATT
I need to see my father...

STEVE LEVITT
They barely let me in to see you.

Matt fidgets. Trying to hold it together.

MATT
Where's my partner, where's Danny?

STEVE LEVITT
Matt. Let's talk about where you
are right now, okay?

MATT
Which is where?

STEVE LEVITT
Against the wall.
(then)
The US Attorney's office has an
unnamed witness willing to testify
that you attempted to sell him guns - -

MATT
Bullshit. Bullshit.

STEVE LEVITT
Be that as it may...they got phone
records, they got photos.

ON PHOTO: Matt Conferring with Trower in the Donut shop.

And Matt leans back, overwhelmed.

STEVE LEVITT (CONT'D)
And that's not even mentioning the
guns found in your apartment. With
your prints on them.

MATT
I'm being set up...

But it rings hollow in this venue...

MATT (CONT'D)
I'm telling you - agents in my
division - Doug Vinson, Rob Caufield.

STEVE LEVITT
They've both filed as witnesses for
the prosecution.

MATT
Of course they did!

He tries to calm himself, coming undone.

STEVE LEVITT
You need to know, Matt...this goes
to trail? - They're recommending
the maximum penalty: 25 to life.

HOLD ON MATT, marinating in the moment, as we HEAR:

VOICE (O.S.)
Your partner contends he was framed.
What d'you think?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING

Stiff men in stiff suits question Danny. Subtle as Stalin.

DANNY
I think he's right.

INSPECTOR WYATT
So you had no knowledge of Vanetti's
involvement with the theft or sale
of illicit arms?

DANNY
Matt wouldn't do that.

Wyatt shifts the AUDIO-RECORDER closer to Danny.

INSPECTOR WYATT

Once again: You had no knowledge - -

DANNY

How could I have knowledge of something that never happened?

(then; calming)

No. No, I did not.

INSPECTOR WYATT

One last question, agent: Do you have any proof, of any kind, to support your partner's assertions of innocence?

TIGHT ON DANNY'S HAND beneath the table: Squeezing Scott's first place ribbon as it were Trower's neck.

DANNY

No...No, I do not.

INT. FEDERAL COURT - - JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - - NO SOUND

Matt stands beside Levitt. Listening to a JUDGE speak(os).

VINSON (O.S.)

Sloane, you hear?

INT. HALLS - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - NIGHT

An exhausted Danny trudges down the hall, Vinson on his heels.

VINSON

...Vanetti pled "no contest". Cut a deal.

That stops Danny like a two-ton anvil to the head.

VINSON (CONT'D)

Shit, with the evidence they had - -

- - Danny grabs a fistful of Vinson. Slams him against the wall. Breathing bile and bad intentions.

VINSON (CONT'D)

Easy now...easy...

INSPECTOR WYATT (O.S.)

Agent Sloane.

Danny relinquishes his grip. Turns to see Wyatt behind him.

INSPECTOR WYATT (CONT'D)
 Until you're officially cleared of
 our investigation, you're prohibited
 from speaking to or visiting your
 former partner. Understood - -?

DANNY
 Where's he doing his time?
 (Wyatt hesitates)
Where?

INSPECTOR WYATT
 Marion.

And that can't be good because, we - -

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - MOMENTS LATER

FROM BEHIND Danny hacks into the sink. Head bowed, body
 bent, he lifts his gaze to meet

THE MIRROR

Repulsed by what stares back.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - - FEDERAL HOLDING FACILITY

Matt conceals his wrist and ankle manacles under the table,
 his father across from him.

WALT VANETTI
 When you get in there, there's a
 guard used to work for me, name a'
 Kitt. Good people. I already sent
 word you're coming...
 (Matt averts his eyes)
 This lawyer, I put 'im on retainer,
 doin' the appeal and what not.

MATT
 How can you afford that?

WALT VANETTI
 Don't worry about that, I can afford
 it fine.
 (then)
 The cabin, I sold the cabin...

MATT
 (crushed)
 No...

Matt fights back tears - his father turning intense:

WALT VANETTI

You are strong, Matthew James Vanetti.
You got your grandfather's blood in
you. The Marines, the academy, me -
you been training your whole life
for this. This will not break you.

So fierce and fiery are his words that, for a moment, Matt
actually believe him...

...But, alas, only for a moment.

INT. GORT'S OFFICE - - FEDERAL BUILDING

Danny leans in the doorway, ill-at-ease.

DANNY

I need a favor.

GORT

Shoot.

DANNY

You gotta make sure Vanetti's jacket
doesn't mention him having been a
federal agent...

GORT

Still looking out for the kid, huh?
Don't know that he deserves it,
but...I'll see what I can do.

Danny nods. About to exit, before - -

GORT (CONT'D)

Sloane.

(Danny stops)

You're a good man.

Danny looks like an ice-pick's been driven into his skull.

EXT. PARKING LOT - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - DAY

Stiles stalks through, until - A HORN grabs her attention.
She turns to see a familiar Volvo.

INT. DANNY'S VOLVO - - STATIONARY

DANNY. Distraught. Disheveled.

STILES

Listen to me, listen: There's nothing
you can do. Nothing. You think I'm
not tearing my teeth out? I mean,
the guilt was bad enough before...

(MORE)

STILES (CONT'D)

(suddenly determined)

But I got a little girl at home, and
I will do whatever it takes to give
her health and happiness.

DANNY

That include watching a good man, an
innocent man, suffer for our sins?

STILES

You keep your mouth shut, Danny, and
you go home and you hug your kid...and
you thank your personal god it's
Vanetti and not you.

And she exits, leaving Danny with his misery. His eyes
falling on the ash-tray where THE KEYS Matt gave him are.

Everything reminding him of what he did, and didn't, do.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON MATT,

Face fixed into an unlikely smile. Imbued with hope.

HALEY (O.S.)

Hey.

INT. VISITATION ROOM - - HOLDING FACILITY - - WIDER VIEW

Haley sits across from Matt. SILENCE, before - -

MATT

It's good to see you...see your
face...

She stares back, brittle and bereaved.

MATT (CONT'D)

My attorney, he tells me, chances
are when all's said and done I could
end up just serving 3...

HALEY

(beyond hopeful)

3? 3 months?

Matt's face tells the tale. 3. 3 years.

And Haley's hand shoots to her mouth as if to stifle a scream.

MATT

- - But we're gonna keep
investigating.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

I mean, you don't frame somebody and
not leave loose ends...

His voice trails off, aware of how he must sound.

MATT (CONT'D)

Wanna hear something crazy?
Before...before this, I was gonna
ask you to marry me. And now, I
mean, I know it's crazy, but I still
think - -

HALEY

(overlapping)

Matthew...

MATT

- - Find a way to - -

HALEY

Matthew.

He stops. And Haley softens:

HALEY (CONT'D)

I can't.

MATT

...You can't?

HALEY

Be a part of this...

She stands, unable to meet his gaze...

MATT

A part of what...?

HALEY

(soft)

A part of you.

HOLD ON MATT as she retreats(os), his once flat face ceding
to belly-LAUGHTER.

The on-duty guard squints over, unaccustomed to levity in
these parts. Until the sound becomes more familiar.

More hideous.

For you see, Matt's not laughing; he's CRYING.

CAMERA RETRACTS, watching Matt sink into his skin.

MUSIC UP: Peter Gabriel's lugubrious "Here Comes the Flood".

EXT. DANNY'S HOME - - NIGHT - - ELEVATED ANGLE - - MUSIC UP

Danny ambles across the front-lawn...every step, every inch, divining Herculean strength...

And the front-door moans open, HEATHER there. Waiting.

And they behold each other, husband and wife, for what seems an eternity. Then:

DANNY

Please...please forgive me...

And the music fades as he crumples into her arms, his head buried in her shoulder, as we - -

FADE TO BLACK:

SFX: Heavy breathing.

CUT IN:

CLOSE ON MATT, trying to suppress the riot inside as we **WIDEN** to see him aboard the bus taking him to Marion.

Convicts trade shifty eyes, sizing one another up. Everyone noticing Matt most of all, an impostor among them.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

(NOTE: Each image will be proceeded by a shuddering SLAM.)

- DANNY. Watching as Heather sweeps the garage. Discovering all his Vicodin hiding places.

- MATT. Whisked off the bus. Gandering up at the federal fuck you known as MARION. It seems enormous.

- DANNY. Back at work. Unable to focus, his gaze drifts to the empty cubicle down the hall; Matt's former desk.

- MATT. Issued a towel, sandals, an orange jump-suit.

- DANNY. At home. Under the bathroom sink. Rummaging through until he finds a VICODIN BOTTLE. *Hallelujah.*

- MATT. Stepping from the light of a narrow corridor...into the overwhelming DARKNESS of his cell.

And the CLANG of the closed cell-door MORPHS into - -

KNOCK-KNOCK(OS)

INT. HALLWAY - - OUTSIDE BATHROOM - - DANNY'S HOUSE

A pajama-clad Scott knuckles the wood...

INSIDE THE BATHROOM - - SAME TIME

Danny stares at the door. Stares at the pill in his palm.

KITT (O.S.)

You gonna haveta' make a decision...

FADE TO:

CLOSE ON CAROL KITT - - CAMERA POV

The prison guard Matt's dad referred to. A ball of ebony angst, her eyes singe with the intensity of a Georgia sun.

KITT

...Decide who you gonna be in here...

INT. OUTSIDE MATT'S CELL - - WIDER VIEW

Matt listens through the prism of prison bars...

KITT

My advice...?

INT. BATHROOM - - DANNY'S HOME - - CONTINUOUS

Scott KNOCKS again(os). And Danny deliberates.

KITT (O.S.)

Rid yourself of all that would do
you harm: Emotion. Expectation.
Comfort.

Danny dumps the pills in the commode. FLUSHES.

INT. MATT'S CELL - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

And for the first time, we FEEL the claustrophobic confines;
HEAR the incessant DRIP-DRIP echoing off unseen pipes.

KITT

Your father's a good man, and I'll
do what I can. But you oughta'
know...there ain't much I can do.

And she leaves Matt with that, as we RETURN to - -

INT. HALLWAY - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Danny opens the bathroom door to find Scott waiting.

DANNY

All yours, pal.

Scott stays still. Squints up at his daddy.

SCOTT
You stay here last night?
(Danny nods)
In your room?

DANNY
The couch.

Scott shrugs. Plods into the bathroom with - -

SCOTT (O.S.)
It's a start.

Danny allows himself a small smile.

INT. MESS-HALL - - MARION - - MORNING

Your high-school cafeteria. In hell.

Matt slides down an assembly-line of inedible delicacies.
Menacing men abound, a sea of tics and tattoos.

Matt snags a rice-pudding cup, convening to

AN EMPTY TABLE

Eclipsed in SHADOW as soon as he settles in.

VOICE (O.S.)
Bad decision.

He glances up to see a crew of well-muscled and well-manicured

DRAG QUEENS

And Matt looks at his pudding. Looks back up.

MATT
You think Jell-o would'a been the
way to go?

The leader, RAINY, leans closer, dark lip-stick to match his
dark eyes. Baritone burr belying his long lashes.

RAINY
We'll see how long that sense of
humor lasts, butter-cup.

MATT
My bad. Didn't know there was
assigned seating.

He wisely grabs his tray, and skitters off...

MATT POV: See a table of Aryans. Of Muslims. Of weathered white cons. More segregation here than 1940 Alabama.

Finally we fix focus on a docile man, STUART, at an empty table. Save the prison digs, he could be your accountant.

And Matt sits across from Stuart, chowing in silence before Stu begins to HUM. Loudly.

Matt glances over, annoyance masked as amusement.

And the humming STOPS just before - -

WHACK! Stu explodes, smacking his tray across Matt's jaw - sending Matt across the floor like a puck to ice.

Instantly barbaric, Stu pounces on Matt. Reigning blows.

Even worse, the scent of blood in the air, INMATES join in the savagery. Bashing. Mauling. Kicking.

And seconds pass, time rendered interminable, before - -

PRISON GUARDS crash in, donning riot-gear, swinging shields and truncheons...compelling the animals to disperse.

OVERHEAD SHOT: Matt, curled in a fetal-ball, left behind. Flinching from invisible blows like Pavlov's dog. HOLD.

GORT (O.S.)

How you holding up?

INT. GORTOWSKI'S OFFICE - - FEDERAL BUILDING

DANNY sits across from Gort, guilt haunting his hollow eyes.

DANNY

I'm good.

GORT

You and Vanetti were friends, I know...so you gotta be feeling a certain sense of betrayal; guy letting you down like that.

(Danny's silent)

You talk to anybody?

DANNY

We're talking now.

(then)

As in therapy?

GORT

As in conversation.

(off Danny)

You're going to.

(MORE)

GORT (CONT'D)
 (before Danny can
 speak)
 Not a suggestion, Danny.

He slides a BUSINESS-CARD across the desk, as we HEAR:

KITT (O.S.)
 Y'understand, I can't do nuthin' but
 advise you, yeah?

INT. INFIRMARY - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt, a human bruise, lies on a gurney. Kitt close by.

KITT
 ...The doctors, they can keep you
 here a week, maybe more.

Matt struggles to lean up. It hurts to breath.

MATT
But.

KITT
 It's ghetto Gomorrah out there. And
 you, you already been marked soft on
 accounta' this. You stay here, you're
 re-enforcing that theory. You either
 a lamb or a lion at Marion - ain't
 no in between.

MATT
 I cracked 3 ribs...

ON KITT: Furniture has more empathy. Then:

MATT (CONT'D)
 What do I do?

KITT
 Straight up? - Find the meanest
 motherfucker...and introduce yourself.

A soft and civil voice interrupts - -

DOCTOR (O.S.)
 So how we doin'?

Matt acknowledges the elfin DOCTOR.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 (off clipboard)
 We'd like to keep you here another 6
 days off or so, Matthew...

Matt looks at Kitt. Edges gingerly onto his feet. And hobbles out of the room without another word.

The doctor faces Kitt, confounded. She shrugs.

VOICE (O.S.)

Why are you telling me the dictates
of my job...?

INT. DR. REBECK'S OFFICE - - MORNING

Danny sits across from DR. REBECK, an impish oaf of a man.

DANNY

I'm reminding you. Whatever I say
stays here, right?

DR. REBECK

(a nod)

Patient-client privilege.

Danny leans forward, elbows to knees. Newly emboldened.

DANNY

This is the only time we're gonna
meet, doc...so don't get too attached.

DR. REBECK

Why only once?

DANNY

I'm here to rid myself of something,
not revel in it...

DR. REBECK

Why not talk to a friend, a colleague?

DANNY

(a beat)

There's nobody to talk to.

(leans back in his
chair)

You got a light?

Rebeck eyes a "No Smoking" plaque on his desk.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(finds a match)

Recently acquired habit. My dad
used to say the key to life is
choosing the right vice...

He sucks a drag. Hacks a cough.

DR. REBECK

So what's yours? - Smoking?

A beat. Danny breathes cigarette smoke through his nose.

DANNY

Guilt.

EXT. THE YARD - - MARION - - DAY - - WIDE SHOT

Under Coca-Cola colored skies, cons lift, run, sit.

ON MATT - - CLOSER

On the bench-press. Surprisingly strong for his size. He stirs straight, ready for another set, before - -

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey.

Behind him, ALTERO materializes. Skinny but far from slight, he speaks in a throaty Cuban voice.

ALTERO

Strong. Chew lookin' for some Jews, maybe...?

MATT

"Jews"?

ALTERO

Jews. Jews.

He makes the universal "flex" sign. Not jews...juice.

Note: Steroids for the uninitiated.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

Winstrol V. Deca-Durabolin. Anavar.

MATT

No, thanks.

Matt's distracted by the pony-tailed python who saunters across the yard like a prison-yard Patton. This is DRAKE.

ALTERO

I'm Altero.

MATT

Matt.

ALTERO

Matthew. You don't mind me saying, you look like you gonna do something stupid.

As if in confirmation, Matt stands. Stops. Stares at Drake. And begins to walk closer to the king Cretan.

DRAKE

Only two occasions for the look you
givin' me, boy. Either you wanna
fuck. Or you wanna fight.

Matt's still as stone. Unblinking. Catatonic.

Drake shoves Matt down, sprawled to the asphalt.

And a crowd forms, salivating. Sharks to chum.

Matt grapples to his feet, already breathing hard as he stalks
back to Drake. David to Goliath.

Altero watches, wondering who this loco man is.

DRAKE (CONT'D)

Tell you what? - After I fight you,
then I'll fuck you.

And Drake strips his prison-issued denim shirt off - providing
Matt with the perfect opportunity to - -

CRACK! Give Drake a 5 pound barbell. In the teeth. A mist
of blood and enamel infect the air as the crowd CHEERS.

And Drake struggles to recover...but Matt's already barreling
towards him, EXPLODING - -

And everyone watches MATT KICK THE LIVING SHIT OUT OF DRAKE,
nothing heard but the sound of knuckle on bone, until - -

KITT YANKS DANNY AWAY FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS DRAKE

Guards storm...sirens croon...snipers target...

But Kitt waves them off, ushering Matt away with:

KITT

You should'a consulted me before you
chose...

Matt's unsure what that mean, dazed as he watches Kitt bark
orders to a colleague, RILEY.

KITT (CONT'D)

(re: Drake)

Take him to the infirmary...And Riley:
Tell 'em he ran into a wall...

As Riley drags Drake past Altero - -

ALTERO

This wall, how many times he run
into it?

But our attention's on Matt - who inhabits the grounds with newfound respect. No one taking notice as much as the ARYANS.

Matt beholds his crimson-stained paws, as we...

INT. MAIL ROOM - - ATF DIVISION - - DAY

Danny snags a sheaf of letters and memos from his "in-box", sifting through with decided disinterest, until - -

His eyes drift to the box beside his: "VANETTI."

Danny notices the clump of unretrieved mail stuffed inside. He hurriedly snags the mail, flipping through...

Internal memo...memo...memo...and then - - A KODAK ENVELOPE.

INSIDE: Developed photos. Matt with Haley...Matt, hat askew, laughing...Matt and Danny, arms intertwined, after a game of hoops...Matt and Haley, Danny and Heather, out to dinner.

Footsteps pitter from down the hall(os)...breaking Danny from his trance...

YOUNG AGENT

Anything good?

Dan chucks Matt's mail in the trash by way of answer. EXITS

INT. MATT'S CELL - - MARION - - CEILING POV

DARKNESS save Matt's blood-shot eyes. On his cot, screams and shouts echo off the corridors. A vulgar lullaby.

Matt turns to face the brick wall, hand over his ear. BUT THE SOUNDS WILL NOT CEASE.

INT. KITCHEN - - DANNY'S HOME

Danny, back from a run, swigs from an orange-juice. Peering out the window(OS). Struck by what he sees.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - - DANNY'S HOME - - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON SCOTT as he works on his t-ball set, swinging away.

DANNY (O.S.)

Can I show you something?

Scott stops immediately. So stunned he's speechless.

Danny awkwardly takes the undersized bat from his boy.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You wanna hold it tight in here, let your hips lead you into the ball...like this...

Danny demonstrates a flawless swing...

SCOTT
You played, right? In college?

DANNY
(nods)
Minor league for a year.

SCOTT
I don't think I'm very good.

DANNY
Well, let's do something about that.

He starts adjusting the contraption, as we...

INT. KITCHEN - - DANNY'S HOME - - LATER

Heather enters frame, reaching for the phone when she catches sight of something. Something unprecedented.

POV - Father and son engage in the most elementary rite of passage: Throwing the baseball.

BACK ON HEATHER: Touched by the sight.

INT. INFIRMARY - - MARION

CLOSE ON DRAKE - - UNKNOWN POV

Splayed on a cot. Broken beyond repair. His jaw wired shut, a ganglia of tubes tied to his body.

VOICE (O.S.)
Feeling guilty?

Matt turns to see a BALD WHITE MAN beside him. This is - -

KENDRIX
(offers hands)
Paul.

MATT
(a beat; offers hand)
Matt.

KENDRIX
Good to meet ya'.
(then)
Well...?

MATT
Am I guilty?

KENDRIX
(a hearty guffaw)
Now that's a whole 'nother question...
(then)
Do you feel guilty?

Matt doesn't answer, his gaze going back to the glass.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)
My experience? - Guilt's a useless
emotion in here. Fucking ironic,
huh? We're sent here to atone for
our sins, only to figure out ways to
insulate ourselves from 'em.
(a chuckle)
Shit, you shouldn't even be in here
to begin with...

MATT
What? - You know me?

KENDRIX
My daddy told me the most important
part a' the day is the morning paper.
(leans closer; a
whisper)
Don't worry. I won't tell nobody.
Secret agent man.

Matt takes a reflexive step back...

KENDRIX (CONT'D)
But regardless, you are here. And
when in hell...do like the demons.
(grabs Matt's arm)
In here, we gotta look out for each
other.

Kendrix releases his grip. Rolls up his sleeve. Taps his
ivory white skin.

KENDRIX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's us...

He nods to a BLACK MAN working inside the infirmary.

KENDRIX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...Versus them.

Matt notices the tattoo on Kendrix's palm: A SWASTIKA.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)
And Drake - the guy you made a
vegetable a' there - he's one of us.
'Least he was...

He leads Matt's gaze down the hall - where we see several ARYAN MEN on work detail. Glaring back.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

Way I see it, you owe us...
(a clap on the back)
We'll be talking real soon...

And Matt watches him exit, rattled to the core.

INT. KITCHEN - - DANNY'S HOME - - NIGHT

Danny and Scott enter, still awkward again without baseball to hide behind.

And the gulf between them widens yet again, until - -

SCOTT

Thanks, dad.

And we see it in Danny's face: That meant something. Something more profound than he's felt in a long time.

Before he can speak - Scott HUGS his waist. Clinging tight, his head against his father's belly.

And Danny's not sure what to do, discomfited.

DANNY

Okay, um...I'm gonna go change.
Um...good job.

Nothing can wipe the smile from Scott's face as Danny recedes.

INT. BEDROOM - - DANNY'S HOME - - MOMENTS LATER

Trying to recompose, to get a handle on unfamiliar emotions, Danny enters. Unaware of the presence behind him - -

HEATHER (O.S.)

What's wrong?

DANNY

(turns to see her;
low)

Nothing...nothing's wrong.
Everything's right...

And she stares at him. As if seeing him for the first time.

HEATHER

I remember you used to tell Scott
you couldn't play with him 'cuz of
your back...

(then; a thought)

You're not still...?

(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)
(taking pain-killers)

DANNY
...No.

HEATHER
It doesn't hurt anymore?

She touches the small of his back when she asks this.

DANNY
(with a laugh)
Hurts like hell.
(then; low)
Only difference is now, I think maybe
I deserve the pain.

He bows his head, unable to meet the heat of her gaze.

HEATHER
Promise me something...?

And she moves closer. And this time Danny doesn't look away.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
...You'll share the pain.

And she weaves her hand into his, clutching tight. An oddly intimate moment between two people who haven't been intimate in a long time.

DANNY
You're shaking...

Indeed, her hand tremors slightly...

HEATHER
I'm scared.

DANNY
Me, too.

And Heather moves in, kissing him, devouring him, their long dormant passion overwhelming them, as we...

INT. MESS-HALL - - MARION - - DAY

TRACK WITH MATT as he moves through the packed confines, slowly acclimating to the environs...

Tray in hand, he stops by Rainy and his fashionable cronies.

RAINY
Oh, look who's back. I help you
handsome?

MATT
I need to borrow some make-up.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON MATT - - TRACKING SHOT

Bounding through with a synthetic strut. And we see he's donned MASCARA to conceal the abundant bruises beneath.

We understand why when he passes a sign: **"VISITOR'S GALLEY"**

STAY BEHIND as Matt enters(os)the visitor's room. And here we remain a serene beat, until - -

A WRENCHING SCREAM(OS)ECHOES

A hideous howl borne of tragedy and terror, as we

PUSH IN ON - -

INT. VISITOR'S GALLEY WINDOW - - CAMERA POV

And we see Matt on his knees, wailing without end as KITT stands over him. Trying to comfort, to console.

FADE TO BLACK:

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - - DAY - - LONG SHOT

An appropriately gloomy day, mourners gather around a HEADSTONE. A FUNERAL underway.

"Walter Vincent Vanetti. 1939-2004."

A taxonomy of cops and agents in funereal garb, amassed in solemn tribute as a PRIEST drones on(OS)...

DANNY AND HEATHER

Stand among the masses, heads collectively bowed.

HEATHER

(low)

It's his father...how could they not let him out - -?

Her words expire when she glances up to see - -

MATT VANETTI

In the flesh. Escorted by two federal marshals.

Danny's eyes go wide, his brows furrowed...and Heather can't take her eyes off Matt - who, in an ill-fitting suit, with his battered face and manacled hands, looks utterly DECIMATED.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Look what they've done to him...

Danny and Matt. Lock eyes. HOLD.

Shame eating away at him, Danny averts his gaze...but when he looks back up, Matt's moving towards him.

Treading over uncut grass, marshals in tow...closer...and closer. Gaining momentum, until he reaches his former partner. His former friend. HOLD.

DANNY

I'm so sorry...

He's offering condolences, yes...and so much more.

And Matt stays still, unblinking and emotionless - until HE GRABS DANNY'S NECK - and pulls him in for a hearty embrace.

MATT

(a soulful whisper)

Thank you...

(pulls back)

You know it's not true, right, you know I'd never - -

DANNY

I know, I know...

Heather's in tears now, shielding her face from Matt as - -

DANNY (CONT'D)

Tell me what I can do...anything...

And Matt turns pensive, jaw clenched before - -

MATT

Bury me next to my father.

Guards separate the men...but they can't separate their eyes - which remains interlocked as Matt's led away, and we - -

SLOW FADE TO:

DANNY

Laying in bed. Heather softly aslumber on his chest as he bores a hole into the ceiling. Another restive night.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

MATT

Laying in his rickety cot, eyes bleeding into the darkness.
Enduring the cacophony of calls and screams which haunt Marion
at night. SOUNDS OF MADNESS.

Except this time, Matt turns away from the wall. Facing up
towards the ceiling. Not renouncing the calls...JOINING IN.

BELLOWING WITH BARBARIC RAGE, as we - -

FADE TO:

EXT. MARION FEDERAL PRISON - - LONG SHOT - - THE NEXT MORNING

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt mechanically folds towels, a doleful glaze in his eye
as Altero approaches.

ALTERO

I heard of your loss, your father.
I lost mine a decade ago. I'm sorry.

Matt stares back with ice-pick eyes, vestiges of humanity
and hope slowly draining from him.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

Anything you need - -

MATT

I need a razor-blade.

A beat. Not a good sign.

ALTERO

Now whatchew need that for? You
going to shave your legs, join the
drag queens?

He laughs. Matt doesn't.

MATT

Can you get it for me or not?

ALTERO

I can. I won't.
(Matt continues folding)
Whatchew plan on doing with this
razor, my friend?

MATT

(low)
The only thing left to do.

CUT TO:

GORT SLAMMING INTO A WALL!

In futile pursuit of an energetic little ball. Leaving a trail of sweat and frustration on the glass of - -

INT. RACQUET BALL COURT - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - WIDER VIEW

LONG-SHOT: Danny, looking fitter than ever, whips Gort with ease and alacrity, as we - -

FADE TO:

INT. WORK-OUT FACILITY - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - LATER

Federal employees pass as Gort and Danny confer post-workout over smoothies and health bars.

GORT

Christ, I liked playing you better
when your back was fucked up...

(off silence)

Dan? - -

DANNY

(blurts out)

I'm thinking about transferring out.

GORT

Wha - - ? Why the hell'd you do that?

DANNY

I got enough years in, you can't
stop it.

GORT

That's an argument, not an answer.

And Danny masters the art of understatement when he says:

DANNY

It's been a tough year.

GORT

No doubt. I understand that, I do.
But you looking to get away? Or run
away?

DANNY

Same thing, Gort. One just leaves
you tired.

Gort absorbs the news, caught off guard. Then:

GORT

And Heather, she down with this plan?

DANNY

She'll sign off. We had some tough years...maybe we start somewhere new, somewhere fresh.

GORT

You're serious here?

Danny answers with his eyes.

GORT (CONT'D)

Okay. It'll take some doing but, perfect world, where would you wanna go?

Danny stands. Tosses a few bills on the table.

DANNY

Perfect world, I wouldn't need to.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON AN ISSUE OF "WORLD TRAVELER"

As it's shoved across the table inside - -

INT. LIBRARY - - MARION - - WIDER VIEW

Outdated periodicals match the outdated furniture. KENDRIX hovers over Matt, his tattooed hand atop the magazine.

KENDRIX

Page 23.

He removes his hand, enabling Matt to open the mag and find - -

A RAZOR-BLADE

Sharp. Shiny. Full of promise and peril.

And only now does Kendrix settle in across from Matt.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

The leader of the Rolling 8's is a big porch monkey name a' Marcus.

(nods to razor)

That's for him.

MATT

...And if I don't?

KENDRIX

(a shrug)

Then maybe it's for somebody else.

Kendrix's murderous mug leaves little doubt who that is.

MATT

What about the guards?

Kendrix grins. And waves to Riley - who nods affably back.

KENDRIX

(re: guards)

Pay these motherfuckers 28g's a year
and they wonder why they're corrupt.
Human nature, that's why.

Matt eyes the razor. Can't take his eyes off it.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

Tomorrow. General population.

And he struts off, Matt still staring at that razor, as we...

EXT. HIGHWAY - - ILLINOIS - - DAY

Danny's Volvo rockets past a sign: "MARION PRISON. NEXT RIGHT"

EXT. PARKING LOT - - MARION FEDERAL PRISON - - LATER

The idling Volvo's dwarfed by the institutional grey edifice.

IN THE CAR

Danny's hand rests on the door-knob.

As hard as he tries, Danny Sloane can't bring himself to exit the vehicle. Seeing where Matt spends his days. The unfathomable made tangible.

His breathy heavy, his lids heavier, Danny's hand trembles slightly as it goes back to the ignition.

Triggering the car. And driving off.

CUT TO:

THE RAZOR

In Matt's hand. In Matt's Cell. TILT UP to reveal - -

MATT. Staring at its jagged-edge with a sense of finality. His torso bare, we notice the US MARINES tattoo emblazoned just above his heart; a snarling bull-dog not far above it.

CLOSE ON MATT'S EYES. Red-rimmed and ruinous.

CLOSE ON MATT'S WRISTS. Veins translucent and beckoning.

CLOSE ON THE RAZOR, all aglint with peril and promise.

And Matt beholds himself in the cracked MIRROR. Ready to do what must be done.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - - ATF - - FEDERAL BUILDING

Gort presides over a dozen casually-clad agents - Danny, Vinson, Caufield and Stiles among their ranks.

GORT

...It's that favorite time of year we like to call sweeps-week. Which means we're gonna be cracking down on conventions, pawn-shops and other favored venues for illicit arm sales.

Audible MOANS of protest as Danny jots notes on a legal-pad.

GORT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Intel tells us that M-60's and rocket-launchers have infiltrated the marketplace in a big way.

Danny glances up, meeting eyes with VINSON - who stares at him from across the room. Chewing gum with aerobic fervor.

GORT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...Agents Sloane and Vinson'll be covering the Rockport Convention. The hot word, folks, is EUREKA.

Danny scribbles the data down. Looking back up to see the humongous bubble in Vinson's mouth POP, taking us to - -

INT. CAVALIER - - MOVING

Danny drives, Vinson incessantly ejecting and inserting the clip of his .45. To Danny's obvious annoyance.

VINSON

Kinda' cool, huh? You and me, partners...

He jacks the cartridge in with one final WHACK, leaving the barrel fixed on Danny when he says:

VINSON (CONT'D)

Trower's worried. You're not picking up your monthly stipend...you put your kid in public school...Christ, you even had the little lady go back to work. Maybe, we oughta' stop by a soup kitchen on the way, feed the fucking homeless...

DANNY

Seeing as how you're Trower's errand boy...you tell him I'm keeping my part a' the deal.

VINSON

I think he's gonna need a little
more than that...

Danny stays silent, jaw clenched tight as a fist.

VINSON (CONT'D)

After all, if you can't be loyal to
your buddy Vanetti how you gonna be - -

- - Danny slams on the brakes, wrenching the firearm from
Vinson's grip and shoving it into his already ajar mouth.

DANNY

You mention his name one more time
and I will ventilate your fucking
skull.

Vinson's fairly chill for a man fellating a firearm.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(cocks hammer back)
We clear?

Vinson bobs his head before Danny removes the pistol, popping
the clip OUT and flipping it back to Vinson.

And Danny resumes driving as Vinson checks himself in the
vanity mirror. Straightening his already straight tie.

VINSON

I got news for you, Sloane: I remember
not so long ago you were leading the
charge. You're no better than any
of us. You're worse. 'Cuz you think
you're better.

INT. CELL-BLOCK D - - MARION

MOVE WITH ALTERO as he bounds through the vacant corridor.

ALTERO

Matthew...Hey, Vanetti...recess.

No response. Altero walks faster, concerned.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

Matthew - -

- - He halts OUTSIDE MATT'S CELL, our view of what's
inside(os)obscured. We only see Altero's reaction.

Utterly aghast.

EXT. THE YARD - - GENERAL POPULATION - - MARION

Cons loiter about, filling the gap between birth and eternity.

A HUSH RIPPLES THROUGH

Weights don't pump. Balls don't bounce. Feet don't move.
Fingers point. Eyes dart. Brows furrow.

Everyone focused in the general direction of - -

MATTHEW VANETTI

At least, we think it's Matt; barely recognizable with his head-shaved completely bald. And due to the absence of shaving cream, his skull bears several cuts and scratches, enhancing his already monstrous image. And it's clear...

THE TRANSFORMATION HAS BEGUN.

He struts past the ARYANS - who nod in quiet countenance...

...Continuing past the ROLLING 8'S - comprised of blacks, Samoans and Hispanics, they're decidedly less reverent.

And Matt beelines for a fenced-in walk-way leading to the - -

INT. SHOWER STALLS - - MARION - - MOMENTS LATER

Matt paces in concentric circles, his fearless facade fading.

EXT. THE YARD - - CONTINUOUS

The Rolling 8's congregate, sensing something amiss. 20 strong, they defer to MARCUS - a brawny brother with thick specs and thicker forearms. Not to be fucked with.

INT. SHOWER-STALLS - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Lids clenched tight, Matt keeps his head bowed beneath a stream of shower water. Eyes bolting open when he hears:

KENDRIX (O.S.)

Dig the new dew, man...

Kendrix enters, a light socket PULSING eerily over his veiny skull. More tattoos than flesh, he looks diabolical.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

Now I know they all look alike, but
you know which one's Marcus?

MATT. Sucks in a deep breath - as if oxygen equaled courage.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

(an evil chuckle)

He's the big nigger.

That word, the most hideous in the human lexicon, echoes inside this place, inside Matt's cranium...

Nigger. Nigger. Nigger.

And Matt's moving closer, steps sounding off the walls...

Nigger-Nigger-Nigger.

See the glint of the razor, fixed firmly in Matt's fingers.

Niggerniggerniggerniggerniggerniggernigger - -

And Matt's trembling. Muttering. Seething.

MATT

*I don't belong here...I don't belong
here. I. Don't. Belong. Here.*

In a brutal blur - Matt slashes wide across his body, scarlet streaks splattering the once white walls...

And Kendrix grabs his throat. Gagging. Gurgling. Gasping. A BEAT before a geyser of blood curtains down his torso.

And Kendrix topples like a felled tree, tumbling into Matt - who shrieks back, made suddenly squeamish.

Agog, he stares at the detritus of his deed, looking like he belongs all too well. He glances up to see

THE ROLLING 8'S

In the doorway. MARCUS looks down at Kendrix's carcass. Looks up at Matt.

CLANK. Matt drops the razor, his body going slack, as we - -

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON MARQUEE: "ROCKPORT GUN CONVENTION"

EXT. ELSO ARENA - - ROCKPORT, ILL. - - NIGHT

A packed parking lot outside a mid-sized arena.

VINSON (O.S.)

What d'we got?

INT. ELSO ARENA - - SAME TIME

A cavernous convention sight, it's been converted into a gun emporium. Vendors hawking their wares to firearm enthusiasts.

Danny walks among them, Vinson's voice in his ear-piece.

DANNY

(into wrist mic.)

Coming up empty.

INT. CAVALIER - - STATIONARY

Vinson, boots propped on the dash, chews on licorice.

DANNY (O.S.)
(filtered)
Wait a second...

INT. ELSO ARENA - - CONTINUOUS

Danny approaches an anemic TWEAKER, selling shotguns.

TWEAKER
How 'bout you, sir? Hunting rifle?

He offers a REMINGTON 870. Ideal for "hunting" King Kong.

DANNY
I was looking for something a bit
more...serious.

They lock eyes, a wealth of information conveyed. WINK-WINK.

TWEAKER
I may have just the thing.

EXT. ELSO ARENA - - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

CLOSE ON CIGARETTE as Danny puts it to his lip, taking a pull as we WIDEN to see he leans against a TAN TRUCK.

DANNY
(into wrist mic.)
He's here...

INT. CAVALIER - - STATIONARY - - SAME TIME

Vinson sits up straight upon sight of the tweaker. Shit.

EXT. ELSO ARENA - - CONTINUOUS

Danny and the tweaker stride towards a U-Haul van, an urgent voice in Danny's ear - -

VINSON (O.S.)
(filtered)
Abort, Sloan, abort.

But they're already at the U-Haul by the time Danny hears:

VINSON (CONT'D)
That kid works for Trower.

SLUSH! The U-Haul's door rolls up like a tongue, the tweaker vaulting aboard. Turning back to Danny.

TWEAKER

You comin'?

And Danny ponders before...embarking onto the - -

INT. U-HAUL - - STATIONARY

The tweaker negotiates through a wall of protective boxes.

TWEAKER

You know I seen this show once, said
that cops gotta say they're cops or
it's internment or some shit.

DANNY

(flat)

I'm a cop.

A beat. The tweaker yelps with LAUGHTER. Danny joins in.

TWEAKER

(waves Danny over)

Check this out...

He slides the top from a crate, exposing - -

DOZENS OF LIVE HAND-GRENADES AND A ROCKET LAUNCHER

And Danny acknowledges what he sees, declaring:

DANNY

Eureka.

INT. CAVALIER - - STATIONARY

The CALL-SIGN resonates over Vinson's walkie-talkie, leaving him no choice but to disgorge from the car, gun drawn...

INT. U-HAUL - - STATIONARY

The tweaker holds the rocket-launcher like a newborn baby.

TWEAKER

Ain't she beautiful?

- - On cue, the back door flutters open, revealing - -

5 HEAVILY-ARMED TAC TEAM AGENTS,

MP-5's targeting the tweaker. HOLD.

He looks at Danny. Looks at the agents. Ready to surrender - -

VINSON APPEARS

A second of mutual recognition between Vinson and the tweaker.

VINSON

GUN, GUN!

DANNY

NOOOOOO!

THE TAC TEAM OPENS FIRE

Danny dives to the floor, bullets whizzing overhead, twisting the tweaker's torso in an obscene death dance, until - -

THE GUNFIRE CEASES. Nothing heard but the CLICK-CLACK of shells hitting the floor. Danny squinting through the smoke -

POV - Vinson looms over us, grinning.

VINSON

You alright, sweetheart?

Danny turns to see the tweaker taking his last breath. Empty eyes staring back at him. HOLD.

INT. MESS-HALL - - MARION - - DAY

Matt, at a table with Altero, tics intermittent glances at the Rolling 8's as they sit in silence across the way.

ALTERO

Where's your food?

MATT

(a nod OC)

It's on its way.

And just then, a HEAVILY-BANDAGED STUART (the inmate who earlier pounced on Matt) delivers his tray...

FOLLOW STUART as he hustles past - -

THE ARYAN BRIGADE - who gander balefully at Matt.

ALTERO (O.S.)

Jus' a matter of time 'fore they
find out for sure it was you killed
Kendrix...

But the Rolling 8's pique Matt's interest most...

MATT

Why aren't they eating?

ALTERO

I was you, I'd worry less about their
eating habits and more about
(nods to Aryans)
Theirs.

(MORE)

ALTERO (CONT'D)

(then; answers)

A couple Muslims in their
crew...whenever there's pork, they
protestate.

Matt studies the pork-chop on his plate, an idea taking root.
And he slides the plate over to Altero. Stands.

MATT

Enjoy.

Altero watches him go. Shrugs. Takes a bite of the chop.

INT. STILES CUBICLE - - FEDERAL BUILDING

Heavier than when we saw her last, her eyes emaciated, STILES
answer the phone - -

STILES

This is Stiles.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Will you accept a collect call from
Marion Federal Prison, a Matthew
Vanetti?

Stiles tenses on instinct. Looks left. Looks right. Then:

STILES

Yes...yes, I will.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PHONE BANKS - - THE YARD - - DAY

FAVOR MATT among a row of inmates on pay-phones...

MATT

Tina.

FAT. FUCKING. BEAT.

STILES

Matt...?

She's discomforted to the point of paralysis but manages - -

STILES (CONT'D)

How are you...?

MATT

(ignores the question)

I need a favor. Some basic info on
an inmate. Can you do that for me?

STILES
Of course. Anything, anything you
need...

MATT'S HAND like a vice around the phone.

MATT
You can tell me what you know for
starters.

STILES
(a beat)
...Excuse me?

MATT
About the people who put me here.

STILES
I'm not following, Matt...

MATT
(a beat)
My mistake...

And there's another bout of tense silence, Stiles eager to
get off this call, before - -

MATT (CONT'D)
One more thing: Danny, how's he doing?

SOUND UP, before we - -

CUT TO:

ATF DIRECTOR FLEMING

Presides behind a well-polished podium.

DIRECTOR FLEMING
- - His efforts led to the seizure
of paramilitary equipment destined
for inner-city distribution. For
this, we honor - -

FAVOR DANNY

Reposed in a natty suit, seated beside Scott and Heather.

DIRECTOR FLEMING (O.S.) (CONT'D)
- - Agent Daniel Sloane.

APPLAUSE THUNDER as Danny rises to a stand, and - -

INT. AUDITORIUM - - CITY HALL - - WIDER VIEW

A phalanx of friends and co-workers watch Danny accept a
silver plaque, a reserved but proud moment.

Danny pumps hands with the director before advancing to the stage, soaking in the adulation.

He shares the moment with his wife and son, grinning before...he spots VINSON in the back of the hall.

CLAPPING loudest of all.

SAME SCENE - - LATER

Patrons filter out, Gort lingering last with Danny...

GORT

That transfer's starting to look like a promotion, pal...

His burly bravado subsides as he shepherds Danny aside...

GORT (CONT'D)

So you know; you having to overcome the stigma of a corrupt partner and what not - and still doin' what you did?... Well, you oughta' be proud a' yourself. 'Cuz I am.

They trade a manly half-hug, Danny looking less than elated. And, then, inappropriate as it may be...

DANNY

I went to visit him, you know...

GORT

Sorry?

DANNY

Matt. I went to visit him in prison. I couldn't even get out of the car.

Gort's not sure how to respond. Finally...

GORT

Danny. You got nothing to feel guilty about, nothing. Vanetti strayed...and then he paid. Doesn't happen all that often...but I believe that's what we in the profession like to call justice.

Danny simply stares back with empty eyes before walking away.

ALTERO (O.S.)

They wonderin' how you done it?

INT. MESS-HALL - - MARION - - DAY

Altero and Matt reside at their usual table.

MATT

"Done" what?

ALTERO

No more porky pig on the menu.

MATT

What can I say, I'm a chicken-man.

(then)

See the cook over there?

SEE a Hispanic man in a shower-cap behind the serving-counter.

ALTERO (O.S.)

Caesar...

MATT

Thas' right, Caesar Ramirez. Former resident of 138 Walpert Way - where his son, Sam, and his wife, Angel, still reside...

ALTERO

(squinty face)

How you know this...?

MATT

It's not what I know...it's what Caesar knows.

He waves to Caesar - who looks as if he's just seen El Diablo. And Altero examines Matt through narrow lids, wondering:

ALTERO

What happened to the little boy who checked into this place...?

Matt stands. Exhales.

MATT

He grew up.

And with that, Matt swaggers over to THE ROLLING 8's table. Settling in beside Marcus, as we HEAR:

STILES (O.S.)

I guess, congratulations are in order.

INT. DANNY'S CUBICLE - - ATF DIVISION

STILES looms in the doorway, watching Danny stack boxes.

STILES

Maybe everything does work out in the end...

That comment triggers something in Danny, snarling:

DANNY

No offense, but I don't want anything
to do with you or this fucking place.

STILES

So this magical land you're going
to, they got mirrors there?

DANNY

(petulant)

I need to pack.

He ducks his head down, chin to his chest, before - -

STILES

Dan.

And he looks up, caught off guard by her tender voice - -

STILES (CONT'D)

We need to talk.

EXT. ROOF-TOP - - ATF BUILDING - - DAY

Snow freckles the horizon, more than one chill in the air...

STILES

...Trower says he's willing to let
bygones be bygones...

Danny stares out over the landscape...

DANNY

If.

STILES

No if's.

DANNY

There's always an "if"...

STILES

(a beat)

He says you'll owe him later. Which
is better than the alternative...

DANNY

(knowingly)

...Owing him now.

She nods, moving onto equally unsettling business...

STILES

Also: Vanetti called me.

SILENCE. Remember that snow? You can hear it fall.

STILES (CONT'D)

He asked about you, how you were doing and all...

DANNY

How'd he sound...?

STILES

Different. I mean, I dunno...different. But, I guess, if that doesn't change someone...

Her words trail off, realizing she's opened scar-tissue. Awkwardly shifting gears with - -

STILES (CONT'D)

So where are they sending you?

Danny allows the ghost of a grin, before we - -

DISSOLVE TO:

WASHINGTON, D.C - - TRACKING SHOT

Soaring over the hallowed and history-laden landmarks...

INSERT LEGEND: **ONE YEAR LATER**

Gaining ground, we sail over the Supreme Court...the Lincoln Monument...the Old Executive Building...STOPPING ON - -

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - - K. STREET - - DAY

47 floors of dark steel and mirrored indifference, as we - -

PUSH IN ON - -

INT. 27TH FLOOR - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON DOOR: *DEPUTY DIRECTOR DANIEL SLOANE.*

And there's Danny, empaneled behind an imperious desk, finishing up a phone call...

Trim, tan and telegenic, he cuts a striking figure.

DANNY

(into phone)

Yes, sir, I'll personally see to it.
Not a problem.

He hangs up. Stabs the intercom:

DANNY (CONT'D)

Chris, schedule a tour for Senator Grant. And make sure I'm conveniently unavailable for it.

CHRIS/ASSISTANT (O.S.)
 (over intercom)
 Done.

Danny leans back in his leather-chair examining THE VIEW(POV).
 Always a measure of a bureaucrat's power, this one's stunning.

ON THE WALLS

See FRAMED PHOTOS of Danny with the weathered and well-to-do

Danny breaks from the reverie, his eyes drifting to a corner photo. Visible only to the occupant of the desk.

ON PHOTO: MATT AND DANNY. Eons ago. On a fishing trip.
 Arms intertwined. Smiles sincere.

HEATHER (O.S.)
 So this is what you do all day.

Heather, her hair stylishly shorn, her figure gym-toned,
 enters. The year's been kind to her, too.

DANNY
 Well, don't forget I also surf the
 net for porn...
 (into intercom)
 Chris, I'm out to lunch...

CHRIS/ASSISTANT (O.S.)
 (shouts from outside)
 Tell me something I don't know...

DANNY
 Clever.
 (stands; to Heather)
 Hey, beautiful...

They share a sweet kiss, Danny whisking his wife to the door - -

DANNY (CONT'D)
 How's sushi sound?

SFX: The CRACK of thunder.

EXT. MARION FEDERAL PRISON - - DAY

As hulking and horrific as we left it, steady RAN-FALL lends
 to the ambiance...

VOICE (O.S.)
 Lookit' these sorry ass motherfuckers.

EXT. SECOND FLOOR TIER - - PRISON - - CONTINUOUS

Marcus and the Rolling 8's peer down into the yard where - -

A SHERIFF'S TRANSPORT BUS IDLES

Expelling Marion's newest residents. Cons disembark in single-file fashion. Heads bowed, manacled feet shuffling along.

INT. CELL BLOCK D - - MARION - - MOMENTS LATER

MOVE WITH ALTERO as we HEAR the rain tap the hard-walls...past Matt's former cell - now vacant.

Up ahead, hear the sounds of metal music thrashing, mixed with halting GRUNTS and GROANS.

And it's difficult to tell if they're moans of pain or pleasure as Altero proceeds closer to MATT'S NEW CELL.

ALTERO
(calls ahead)
You decent...?

CAMERA MOVES PAST ALTERO

Peeking over his shoulder to see Matt, and - holy shit -

THE TRANSFORMATION IS COMPLETE

Shaved head. Bushy goatee. Torso tattooed with ink. And, oh yeah, 25 additional pounds of steroid-induced muscle.

We take note of his cell, arranged into a monastic dungeon, every object's transformed into a piece of exercise equipment.

A pull-up bar. A squat rack. A dip-bar.

Matt completes a rigorous set of chin-ups, as we go - -

TIGHT ON HIS STOMACH TATTOO: Might Makes Right.

TIGHT ON HEART TATTOO: The snarling Marine bull-dog has been turned into Chinese characters of indeterminate meaning.

TIGHT ON BACK: A crude and enormous Christ on the cross.

And Matt stops. Barely out of breath. Turning to face us - -

MATT
I haven't been decent in a long
time...

He stalks past us, blurring the camera, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTER SQUARE - - MARION - - DAY

Oblivious to the incessant RAIN dripping down his bare skull, Matt takes his place beside Marcus and the Rolling 8's.

Gazing through the metallic-mesh fence at the latest arrivals.

MARCUS
Sad fucking bunch...

MATT
(low)
Then they'll fit right in...

And just as Matt's ready to recede, someone catches his eye - -

A NEW INMATE (MATT POV)

Fresh off the bus. A scarecrow with skin, he turns to face us as we recognize...IGGY TILMAN.

MARCUS (O.S.)
See anything you like...?

BACK ON MATT. Jaw tight, eyes enormous, he points to Tilman like a little girl spotting a doggy in the window.

That one.

CUT TO:

A FAX AS IT'S BERTHED FROM A MACHINE...

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUITIES - - WIDER VIEW

- - RIP! Trower tears the fax out, stamping it on his fastidious desk to see a Washington Post Article.

"ATF OFFICIAL LOBBIES CONGRESS"

And look who's seated beside Director Fleming in the B&W photo...DANIEL SLOANE.

Trower smiles like a proud poppa.

JERIHCO TROWER
(sotto)
Look who's moving up in the world...

INT. MATT'S OLD CELL - - MARION

Matt sits atop a crate. Across from a petrified Iggy.

MATT
Just like old times, huh? A whole
'nother kind of interrogation in
here.

Iggy stares back, blank and befuddled. Matt realizes:

MATT (CONT'D)
You don't remember me...

IGGY
Brother, no offense, but I don't
think I'd forget.

MATT
It was under different circumstances.

He locks eyes with Iggy, not letting go. Finally:

IGGY
Oh, shit...
(on instant alert)
Hey, I didn't have nothing to do
with what was done to you...

And Matt inches forward. And Iggy inches back.

MATT
But you knew about it...

IGGY
Hey. Hey, man...I just wanna do my
time in peace, y'understand?

MATT
That's why you should tell me what
you know...

He thumbs back to his cohorts. Arms akimbo. Eyes ablaze.

And Matt stands, towering over Iggy, eclipsing him in shadow.

MATT (CONT'D)
Trower set me up, that's easy enough.
But he had help, didn't he? Vinson
that's a given, who else?

A BEAT. Iggy ponders his odds. Wisely says:

IGGY
Shit, don't hurt havin' the
motherfuckin' ring-leader as your
partner...

And it's Matt's turn to look stunned, teeth in his testicles.

IGGY (CONT'D)
Aw, shit...you didn't know? For
real?
(then)
Why you think Sloane wouldn't let
you arrest me...? How you think those
guns got stolen outta' evidence to
begin with...?

ON MATT, the betrayal stinging his soul. And for a moment
Matt looks on the verge of tears. But only for a moment.

Soon enough, the sadness goes south, transmogrifying...

And Iggy keeps talking(os), his voice growing fainter and fainter as Matt's skin grows redder and redder...

And Iggy stops. Goes gulp. Staring up at Matt like Jack beholding the beanstalk.

IGGY (CONT'D)
(scoots chair back)
That's all I know...for real...please.

Matt catches his breath. Nods slow countenance.

IGGY (CONT'D)
You, uh, gonna take care a' me...?

MATT
(sotto)
Oh, yeah...

CRACK! - Matt wallops Iggy across the jaw, sending him splattering across the floor, as we slowly PULL-BACK...

Watching as Matt proceeds to pummel Iggy with a cauldron of unharnessed hate. Beating the messenger, as we mercifully - -

CUT TO:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - - WASHINGTON, D.C - - MORNING

Danny holds Scott's hand, escorting him towards - -

ST. ALBAN'S ACADEMY

A posh private school. Where the blue bloods train.

SCOTT
Dad...

He gazes pointedly at his father's hand.

DANNY
Oops. Sorry, pal.
(relinquishes hand;
teases)
How 'bout a kiss...?

SCOTT
Dad.

DANNY
Okay, okay...A hug? A manly hug?

And Scott ganders at yonder school-yard before giving his dad a quick HUG, his reputation safely in-tack.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Dad? How come you don't talk about Matt anymore?

DANNY (CONT'D)

I...Matt's in a place that makes me sad.

SCOTT

Was he bad?

MATT

No. He wasn't bad, buddy. He was...unlucky.

SCOTT

I miss him.

DANNY

Me, too. Me, too, pal.

(then)

I love you.

Scott stops. Hustles back to his dad. Whispering:

SCOTT

I love you, too.

STAY ON DANNY as he watches his son enter the school-yard.

SFX: A belligerent BUZZ bellows.

INT. VISITOR'S GALLEY - - MARION

THROUGH THE WINDOW where we last saw Matt receiving word of his father's death, we discern STEVE LEVITT. Matt's attorney.

MATT (O.S.)

Would it have killed you to wear a tie?

INSIDE - - MOMENTS LATER

Levitt's dressed casually. A little fatter, a lot balder, he looks like he's applying for country club membership.

And he glances up to see...Matt. A sleeveless shirt advertises his bulging, ink-stained, biceps.

STEVE LEVITT

You're looking...healthy.

Matt sits. Levitt follows suit. And Matt stares at him for an eternity, predator to prey. The art of intimidation.

Steve fumbles with paperwork, trying to busy his hands.

STEVE LEVITT (CONT'D)

(rat-a-tat-tat)

I wanted to come down and tell you personally, Matt...I've taken a private position with McIntock, Myers and Weldman - a corporate firm downtown. Private practice. I...

(rambling now)

...Pretty prestigious really, and I think, you know, very viable for the partnership track...

(self conscience
chuckle)

I don't know why I'm telling you this...

(clears throat; back
on track)

The point being...I don't want you to feel neglected. I...I've filed the appropriate paperwork for new council, and I'm sure, you know, a very capable attorney will be appointed.

MATT

Congratulations.

(off Levitt)

On the new job, I'm saying...that's great.

STEVE LEVITT

(overlapping)

Thank you, thanks.

MATT

Seems everybody's moving up in the world...

STEVE LEVITT

I don't want you to feel abandoned.

MATT

No, no... 'Course not.

(then)

You can make it up to me, though.

STEVE LEVITT

(a nervous laugh)

Okay...Tell me how.

MATT

Get me outta' here.

STEVE LEVITT

Get you - -? What're we talking, a nail-file in the cake kind of thing?

Levitt laughs. He's the only one. Turns serious fast.

STEVE LEVITT (CONT'D)

(flips through file)

Well, er, okay...see...

(glances up)

Good news is you've got only 7 months until you're eligible for parole.

(off Matt)

6 and a half, six and a half months...

Matt inches closer with ever increasing intensity...

MATT

My father - God rest his soul - had to sell his cabin, had to leverage his dream, to finance your fucking incompetence.

STEVE LEVITT

I beg your - -

MATT

NO. Don't beg. Not yet, at least.

(then; fierce)

File motions, grease wheels, suck cock - I don't care how you fucking do it, just...get. It. Done.

(beat)

You got two days. You and Julie.

And he reaches across the table, a surprisingly gentle gesture, a tap to Levitt's WEDDING BAND.

MATT (CONT'D)

I may be in prison...but my reach is long.

(then)

Trust me, Steve, you have no idea how quickly a man's life can fall apart.

And Levitt's aghast, a civilian placed in the line of fire. Wanting to speak, to scream...barely able to breath.

Matt claps him amiably on the back, exiting, as we...

INT. OFFICE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - NIGHT

Danny rolls calls with his assistant, CHRIS.

DANNY

Keep 'em comin', what else we got?

CHRIS

(off pad)

Rich Juarez. Prison Bureau. Called
this morning.

DANNY

Regarding?

CHRIS

(off pad)

A...Matthew Vanetti. I guess, he's
up for parole - you were listed on
his contact sheet.

(then)

Somebody you busted?

DANNY

What? Yeah, exactly.

(a cursory glance at
the his watch)

You know what? - I got it from here.

(before Chris can
speak)

Really, I'm good.

And Chris shuffles out, leaving Danny to stare at the phone.
Just as he's about to snatch the phone - A BEEP precedes - -

CHRIS (O.S.)

(over intercom)

Sorry, boss...line two. An old
friend. Wouldn't give his name.
Says it's important.

Danny pauses. Ponders. Thinking, perhaps, it's Matt - -

DANNY

(intercom)

Put it through.

And he gulps a gargantuan breath, before - -

DANNY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Sloane.

VOICE (O.S.)

Deputy Director Sloane?

DANNY

Who's this?

VOICE (O.S.)

A man calling in a debt.

And, yes, folks - like you didn't know it was coming - -

JERICHO TROWER

Empaneled at his desk, overlooking the Michigan River.
INTERCUT the conversation from here...

JERIHCO TROWER

You've gone on to accomplish so many
wonderful things...I thought we could
work together again.

DANNY

(teeth-grit)

I've paid my debt to you.

JERIHCO TROWER

Not quite. There's still the matter
of a certain betrayal perpetrated by
you in Chicago. We all gotta pay,
Daniel. Some later than others.

Danny stands. Paces. Sweats.

DANNY

Don't call here again.

JERIHCO TROWER

Think about what you're doing, Daniel.
Think. I don't wanna have to refresh
your memory...

DANNY

I haven't forgotten.

Enraged, Danny HANGS UP.

BACK ON TROWER

The apian drone of the phone-line buzzes in his ear.

JERIHCO TROWER

(incongruous)

He hung up on me...

He BEEPS the phone OFF. Bows his head as if truly hurt.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen...

And you'd think he was talking to himself, until we - -

RACK FOCUS TO - SEIGFRIED AND ROY. Trower's proverbial
"heavies". Seated stiffly on the couch.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)

...How d'you feel about Washington?

SFX: An incessant WHACKING.

INT. OUTSIDE MATT'S CELL - - MARION

SLOWLY PUSH PAST the bars which contain him...

Matt's back muscles ripple as we MOVE CLOSER, the whacking sound growing louder, before - -

THE CAMERA CIRCLES to reveal - -

Matt pounding his fists into a mattress propped up against the wall. An effective punching bag.

BAM. BAM. BAM.

A bad storm brewing...

FADE TO BLACK:

STEVE LEVITT (O.S.)

Matt...you gotta know, I've checked every legal precedent - -

HARD CUT IN:

MATT - - CAMERA POV

MATT

What're you telling me?

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM - - WIDER VIEW

Levitt stands across from an unshackled Matt.

STEVE LEVITT

I'm telling you it took every bit of maneuvering to even get this hearing granted.

MATT

Don't fucking finesse me.

STEVE LEVITT

I'm saying...it doesn't look good.

Matt bores a hole into Levitt's skull when he says:

MATT

Not for any of us, I guess.

He leaves Levitt with that to chew on, as we...

INT. PAROLE HEARING - - LATER

Matt and Levitt rise as COLEMAN, a distinguished black man, enters the room. Presiding over the proceedings...

3 STOIC SUITS are already assembled across from Matt.

COLEMAN

It should be noted that the premature assembly of this board is itself extraordinary...

(stares at Matt)

To say nothing of the fact that the applicant has been anything but a model prisoner for his 27 months of incarceration.

Matt's brows furrow, his fists ball...

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

But due to Mr. Vanetti's time-served, his previous ties to the community, and several cogent recommendations...

(hurts to say)

...This committee has agreed to expedite the applicant's release.

(inhale)

Effective immediately.

And no one's more shocked - or thankful - than Levitt.

Matt stands. Not happy. Not content. Determined.

There's work to be done...

INT. AUDITORIUM - - FEDERAL BUILDING

An assembly of new agents take the oath, DANNY watching from the back of the room, when his cell CHIMES - -

He checks the caller ID, snagging the call - -

OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM - - SAME TIME

DANNY

(answers cell)

Sloane.

VOICE (O.S.)

Our debt's paid up.

And lest you think it Trower...

INTERCUT WITH:

OFFICE - - TIGHT ON COLEMAN

COLEMAN

I don't owe you anymore favors, Sloane, you hear me?

DANNY

He's out? - It's done?

COLEMAN

Say it...I wanna hear you say it.

DANNY

You don't owe me anymore favors.

COLEMAN

It's done.

(wry)

And lemme be the first to thank you
for providing my wife with yet another
reason to carry mace and lock the
door at night.

CLICK. He hangs up, repulsed with himself and what he's done.

BACK ON DANNY

Confounded by Coleman's last comment, he slaps the cell OFF.
Satisfied with his "good deed". Oblivious to its consequences.

EXT. MARION FEDERAL PRISON - - DAY

Gaunt. Gloomy. Grim.

INT. MATT'S OLD CELL - - CONTINUOUS

And there sits Matt, hunched over on the back bench, head
bowed as Altero enters.

ALTERO

You fight for early release, then
you stay...?

Matt says nothing. Stares at his hands.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

This life you had, it's done...?

MATT

It's done.

ALTERO

There's still redemption out there
for you...

MATT

This isn't redemption...this is
resurrection.

And with that, he stands. Every muscle in his body flexed.

ALTERO

I don't know your plans...

MATT
(overlapping)
You don't want to...

ALTERO
...But what you've lost...you can't
"resurrect". You can't bring back
the dead.

MATT
No. But you can make more of 'em.

CAMERA POV - Matt beelines straight for you, a bulldozer
with arms, his body blurring the screen, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. DOMESTIC ARRIVALS - - DULLES AIRPORT - - DAY

VAULTED VIEW: A mass exodus of weary travelers move like
trained cattle from respective arrival gates...

Among the multitudes, SIEGFRIED AND ROY stand out.

INT. PROCESSING - - MARION FEDERAL PRISON

Baring only boxer-briefs, Matt's civilian clothes are returned
to him by a desk guard.

He buttons his jeans. 3 inches too big.

He shimmies into his flannel shirt. 3 inches too tight.

Still, he tries to button it up. No dice.

Finally, he removes the shirt. Settles for a zip-up jacket.

And he strides off in disjointed fashion, out of whack.

EXT. BACKYARD - - HOME - - DAY

Reposed in casual-wear, Danny sits on a swing-set. Rocking
back and forth, embroiled in thought.

HEATHER (O.S.)
Hey.

He looks up. Forces a smile for his wife - who settles in
beside him.

And Danny glances at his yard. His house. His life.

DANNY
We've done okay, huh...

HEATHER

Yeah. And you know what? - We deserve it.

Danny's not so sure, his gaze drifting downward when he says:

DANNY

I heard from Matt the other-day.
From his parole officer...
(off her look)
What?

HEATHER

It's the first time you've talked about him since the funeral...

DANNY

He's getting released.

That and all it implies hangs in the ether an eternity.

HEATHER

I love Matt, you know that...but he's a reminder of a life we used to have, a life we left behind. There are people, places, that you just...move past.

DANNY

And what if you can't...?

He says this so low that - -

HEATHER

What?

DANNY

What if you can't move past it?

She puts her hand on his. Leans over to tenderly kiss him.

HEATHER

That's Matt's journey, not yours.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - - DOWNTOWN - - MORNING

ELEVATED ANGLE: Caught in the flurry of early morning foot traffic, everyone in a hurry to go nowhere, we see

MATT

Walking in the opposite direction, away from the tide of tweed. A Sisyphean hike. A boat adrift at sea.

SFX: The incessant HUM of a drill.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - - DOWNTOWN - - MORNING

The predictable assortment of dregs and degenerates, teens and tourists. Tattoo drills and heavy-metal blare as

MATT

Enters. Now donning a skull-cap that only enhances his already intimidating appearance.

Indeed, every eye goes to him as he beelines for an available - -

TATTOO ARTIST

S'up, my man? What're we doin' today?

MATT

Not adding. Subtracting.

TATTOO ARTIST

Laser surgery, huh. I hear ya'.
'Lotta people makin' those late night
mistakes, you knowwhati'msayin'?

Matt removes his jacket, exposing his torso and all the "mistakes" that desecrate it.

And the artist rises for a closer look. Circling his subject like an art appraiser might examine a painting.

TATTOO ARTIST (CONT'D)

Here's the thing:

(stops in front of

Matt; voice lowers)

Prison work - the needles, the ink -
they're harder. Thicker. Indelible.
(the bottom-line)

The shit ain't coming off.

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - - DAY

Matt. Seated at a corner table, alone. Sipping water. Given view of the courtyard through his wrap-around shades.

Watching the sea of suits floating past. And here, now, nearly everyone looks alike. Same suits. Same faces.

Matt standing out like a neon-glow *Waldo*.

But suddenly he shifts up straight. A reflexive excitement to him when he spots - -

HALEY (POV)

As she disgorges from the office-tower. Same shapely legs. Same sassy shake. A newfound bounce to her step.

BACK ON MATT

And he can't help himself, he has to smile. Removing his dark specs to see something we haven't seen for sometime...

Humanity.

A spark that wanes when he tracks Haley into the arms of...

A MAN.

Who looks a bit like Matt. Or how Matt used to look.

STAY ON MATT. Crushed. And caustic. Getting his anger on.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONDO COMPLEX - - ILLINOIS - - NIGHT

Suburban serenity shattered by RAP blasting from bass-busting speakers(os). Announcing the arrival of - -

A CHERRY-RED CORVETTE

Lurching to a haphazard halt, the music truncates along with the ignition.

With darkly tinted windows and gaudy gold-rims, we're not exactly surprised to see

DOUG VINSON EMERGE

Cowboy boots stamping the pavement like a zooty sheriff. A grocery bag in hand, he fishes for house-keys before entering - -

INT. LOBBY - - CONDO COMPLEX - - MOMENTS LATER

A fellow resident, an attractive WOMAN, emerges from the elevator, none too happy to see VINSON...

In her path. Inches away. Thwarting her movement.

VINSON

Where you going, doll?

(gestures to groceries)

I got us dinner.

WOMAN

(terse)

No thank you.

She squeeze anxiously past him, head down as Vinson howls - -

VINSON

Apartment 5b. Anytime. Don't even need to call first.

(then; to himself)

Cunt.

INT. ELEVATOR - - ASCENDING

VINSON'S MIRRORED IMAGE reflected off the shiny steel doors. He flirts with himself. Primping. Posing. Preening.

PING. The elevator stops, our mirrored view of Vinson parting down the middle. Giving way to - -

MATT VANETTI

Eyes full of fire. Fist full of steel.

VINSON

Stares back, arms occupied, firearm out of immediate reach.

Dead. To. Rights.

MATT

Going down?

WHUMP. A fist to the face(HAND-HELD)slams Vinson into the back wall, blood spurting from his busted beak.

CHA-CHUNK. Matt racks his Ithaca pump shotgun, before - -

BA-BOOM!

And Vinson's propelled against the wall as if launched from a circus cannon, a hole where his stomach used to be...

Canned-goods...produce...a wine-bottle CRASH to the floor along with Vinson's convulsive body...

And he's wheezing for air...clawing at the tile-floor...pawing for his firearm, until - -

A BOOT

Stabs at his shoulder-holster. Obstructing the effort.

And a gravelly voice echoes from above. As if God Himself were commanding Vinson to - -

MATT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Look at me.

And only now does Vinson gaze asunder. Only now does he recognize the man, the beast, who will send him to his grave.

VINSON

Va...net-ti...

Matt steps closer, glass CRUNCHING under heavy-heels.

VINSON POV - The shotgun stares at us.

CHA-CHUNK. Cocked.

BA-BOOM. Rocked.

CUT TO:

A CARD-BOARD TARGET

In the shape of a burglar. BAM! BAM! Holes for eyes.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - - ROCKPORT, ILL. - - WIDER VIEW

In Winter's throes, it's an excursion suitable for only the die-hard and the dead.

ROB CAUFIELD stands 65 yards from the target, a .223 Belgian Minimi in hand. Before he can unload - -

His target endures a fusillade from somewhere else(os)...

VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, Christ...I'm sorry about that.

Caufield turns to his right to see...MATT. Unrecognizable in a snow-cap, goggles and head-set.

CAUFIELD

How the fuck you gonna go and miss by that much?

MATT

Can I borrow some ammo?

CAUFIELD

Can you - - ? Borrow some fucking advice: Take shooting lessons.

MATT

See, without ammo, I can't use this.

He gestures to a GLOCK 19...

CAUFIELD

Go fuck yourself.

FAVOR CAUFIELD as he adjusts his goggles. Clocks the target.

MATT (O.S.)

...Then I gotta use *this*.

His voice is closer. Fiercer. Spurring Caufield to see - -

MATT - - CAUFIELD POV

An Uzi trained on us.

MATT (CONT'D)
Remember me?

CAUFIELD
Oh, God...Lemme explain - -

The Uzi inches closer. Pressed against his forehead.

MATT
Lemme go first.

LONG-SHOT(SILENT): Darkness punctured by sparks of gunfire.

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - - TO ESTABLISH - - MORNING

INT. DANNY'S OFFICE - - CONTINUOUS

Danny taps on computer keys, interrupted by the intercom - -

CHRIS (O.S.)
Rich Juarez returning your call.
Line two.

Danny stops typing.

SAME SCENE - - MOMENTS LATER

Danny. On the phone. Parachuting in:

DANNY
...No, I was just wondering if there's
a way to get in touch with him...

INTERCUT WITH:

RICH JUAREZ, a lean Latino with a buzz cut...

JUAREZ
We were wondering the same thing.
Vanetti's required by law to check-
in within 18 hours of his release...

DANNY
He hasn't?

JUAREZ
No, sir, he has not.

Phone nestled in his ear, Juarez flips through paperwork.

JUAREZ (CONT'D)
You worked with Vanetti, right?

DANNY
That's right.

JUAREZ

And with Doug Vinson and Robert
Caufield...?

DANNY

Uh-huh - what's this about?

JUAREZ

(a beat)

Agents Vinson and Caufield were shot
to death yesterday.

Off Danny, reacting, we...

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - - CHICAGO - - MORNING

UNKNOWN POV - A colony of nearly identical houses. Modest.
Focused on one in particular, a Rusty station-wagon parked
out front. A woman beside it.

TILA STILES.

INT. MATT'S RENTAL-CAR - - REVERSE ANGLE - - ACROSS THE STREET

Matt rummages through a duffel-bag, retrieving a MP-5.
Jacking a banana-clip in. Ready to exit when - -

A LITTLE GIRL

Trundles from the house. Stiles' daughter. An angelic bundle
of pig-tails and puppy-dogs...

And Matt's frozen, his steel-toe stuck on the pavement.

And he studies Stiles. Studies his EYES in the rear-view.

HOLD.

Matt pulls his leg back.

INT. RENTAL-CAR - - MOVING

POV(through the windshield): We prow1 past the mother and
daughter at play. Never knowing how close they came...

LONG-SHOT - The rental-car exits like an unholy apparition.

INT. KITCHEN - - DANNY'S HOME

Scott shovels cereal in his mouth as Heather enters, kissing
her son's forehead before bee-lining for the coffee-pot.

HEATHER

So what's doing, honey?

Before Scott can answer - Danny enters, muttering morning
salutations as he reaches for a cup.

Exposing the .45 tucked into his shoulder-holster.

Husband and wife lock eyes, thoughts conveyed without sound.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

(low; Re: Gun)

I thought you didn't bring that to work anymore...

DANNY

Not like I'm a federal agent or anything...

HEATHER

What's going on - - ?

Before Danny can deny or admit - -

SCOTT

Who's taking me to school?

HEATHER

(eyes still on Danny)

I am, baby.

Danny buttons his coat. Tries to sound casual when he says:

DANNY

Be careful, okay?

HEATHER

What?

DANNY

Be careful.

HEATHER

(probing)

...Is there a reason I should be?

He inches closer to her, his voice sibilant when he says:

DANNY

Yeah. Because I love you.

And he kisses her tenderly on the lips, before - - HIS CELL PHONE BECKONS. On the kitchen table. Next to Scott.

SCOTT

I got it, dad - -

Before Danny can object - Scott answers with an officious:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Agent Sloane's cell-phone...

(listens)

This is his son, Scott...

Danny and Heather trade smiles, so proud of their boy - who giggles from whatever's said on the other-line(os). Then:

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(cups phone)
Dad, it's for you.

DANNY
Thanks, buddy...
(to Heather and Scott)
I'll see you guys later, okay? Have
a good day, pal...

Heather ushers Scott up, ready to bail as we TRACK WITH DANNY.
Entering the LIVING ROOM. Searching for his brief-case.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(into cell)
Hey, this is Danny.

JERIHCO TROWER (O.S.)
Scott sounds good. What's he 10, 11
now?

Danny stops in his tracks, feeling instantly violated.

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUITIES - - INTERCUT

DANNY
Do not call me.

JERIHCO TROWER
Daniel, I'm a firm believer in second
chances...I thought we might try
again.

DANNY
How did you get this number?

JERIHCO TROWER
I'm a resourceful man when I need to
be.

DANNY
Then find another goddamn resource.

And Danny slaps the cell OFF, trying to recompose, as we - -

RETURN TO TROWER

At his desk. Resigned as he picks up the phone and declares:

JERIHCO TROWER
Go with God, gentlemen. It seems
Agent Sloane needs some persuasion.

He HANGS UP. Sucks his teeth. A BEEP. Then - -

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
(over intercom)
Mr. Trower, your 12 o'clock's here.

CUT TO:

TRACK WITH TROWER

The CAMERA perched over his shoulder as he goes to greet someone(os), and we RISE UP to see...

MATT VANETTI

The cap and P-coat unable to mask his penal pedigree.

MATT
(offers hands)
Good to see you.

He pumps Matt's hand as he stares at him through narrow lids

JERIHCO TROWER
Have we met? - You look very familiar
to me...

MATT
Maybe in a past life.

SFX: The shrill SHRIEK of a car-alarm.

EXT. OFFICE TOWER - - FRONT ENTRANCE - - DAY

Matt exits through swivel-doors, slipping into wrap-around shades as the car alarm sound grows LOUDER, and we - -

HARD CUT BACK TO:

CRASH! - TROWER'S FLUNG INTO A WALL (HAND-HELD)

As a seething Matt stalks closer, and we - -

CUT TO:

MATT

Further down the block, the car-alarm LOUDER still, as we - -

CUT BACK TO:

SMASH! - A CHAIR CRASHED OVER TROWER'S HEAD (HAND-HELD)

Matt hovering over us(Trower POV) like a murderous moon. A blur of teeth and testosterone, as we - -

CUT TO:

MATT

Strutting further along, the car-alarm CROONING, as we - -

CUT BACK TO:

WHAP! - MATT KICKS TROWER (HAND-HELD)

Again. And again. And again. Body battered by blows.

CUT TO:

MATT

Treading past a sizable crowd, forming an informal circle around a parked car. With a CLUMP atop it.

Matt moves past, the alarm BELLOWING, as we - -

CUT BACK TO:

TROWER

Flung across his ravaged office, angling for the ambient glass separating him from...gravity. And eternity.

CUT TO:

MATT

Passing the clump atop the car-roof, only now revealed to be the body of - -

CUT BACK TO:

JERICO TROWER

Just as he breaks through the glass, plummeting like an oversized paper-weight, before we - -

CUT TO:

CAR-ROOF POV - - TROWER

Flying inexorably closer to us, before - SLAM! The Camera wobbles, the screen goes momentarily BLACK, and we - -

PICK UP ON:

Trower. Atop the car.

Pedestrians gasp. Matt grins.

And only the car-alarm mourns Trower's passing, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S AUDI - - MOVING

Danny settles to a stop. Red-light. Instinctively, as if feeling eyes upon him, he glances to his right...

OUTSIDE THE GLASS (POV)

To see a transient. On the sidewalk. His haunted eyes staring back at us. A dog-eared sign in his hand reads: "REPENT FOR YOUR SINS."

BACK ON DANNY, staring at those. In a daze.

A CAR HORN wakes him from his reverie. GREEN-LIGHT.

INT. PHONE-BOOTH - - ON MATT

He white-knuckles the phone...

MATT
(into phone)
Levitt. I need that information.

He jots said data down on a bar-napkin. HANGS UP without a word. Stepping from the booth and enabling us to see

CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT. DEPARTURE TERMINAL.

We watch as Matt wanders into the masses, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - DAY

MOVE WITH DANNY, several aides on his hip as he goes, before - -

VOICE (O.S.)
Danny...

A young agent emerges from a nearby cubicle...

DANNY
Agent Donahue...

YOUNG AGENT
Did you know Jericho Trower when you worked Chicago...?

DANNY
...I knew of him.
(then)
Why?

YOUNG AGENT
You'll enjoy this...

He points to a suspended television set. CNN.

YOUNG AGENT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Somebody tossed him out an office
 window this morning...

TILT BACK DOWN to Danny, watching the newscast, mouth agape.

YOUNG AGENT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Who says there's no justice in the
 world...

Off Danny, we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. ALBAN'S ACADEMY - - DAY

UNKNOWN POV - A mass exodus of uniformed youngsters flood
 the streets. Greeted by moms, dads, nannies.

HEATHER moves to greet Scott from across the street, before -
 SCREECH! A Honda brakes to a sudden stop.

Heather rushes to Scott, yelling at the contrite driver.
 And she kisses her son - who seems generally unfazed.

Heather grips his hand tight. Carefully crosses the street.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - - DANNY'S OFFICE - - CONTINUOUS

Danny hurriedly slides into his suit-jacket, hustling past
 CHRIS with an urgency bordering on panic...

DANNY
 Keep trying Heather...Patch me through
 when you get her.

Before Chris can ask - - DANNY'S GONE.

EXT. SCHOOL-YARD - - ST. ALBAN'S - - DAY

KIDS. Laugh. Loiter. Linger.

Until, all at once, their voices expire, eyes agog.

And a SHADOW falls over them, eclipsing all signs of light.

CLOSE ON A LITTLE BOY. Glancing asunder, all ashiver.

LITTLE BOY POV - MATT glances down at us, before we - -

REVERSE ANGLE to see the asphalt's empty. Nothing save the
 sounds of scurrying feet and fleeting shadows.

BACK ON MATT, reminded who he is. And who he'll never be.

INT. HEATHER'S SUV - - MOVING

Scott peruses the stereo dial as Heather mans the wheel...

HEATHER

Scott, just pick one station, please.

He smirks. Takes note of his mom's cell phone on the dash.

SCOTT

Somebody's been trying to call you.

Like a lot.

(off cell display)

"15 missed calls."

HEATHER

I turned the volume off. Have you
heard how loud that thing is?

She reaches over to check messages, eyes off the road when - -

SCOTT

- - MOM - -

SCREEECH. Brakes applied, the SUV taps the back of a just
materialized truck. A familiar truck. A NAVIGATOR.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

HEATHER

(admonishing)

Scott.

She's already searching the glove-compartment for registration - -

SCOTT

Fuck.

Heather pops back up to see - -

SEIGFRIED AND ROY

Exit the truck, donning sunglasses and submachine guns.

And we're in a remote alley-way, not a soul in sight, until - -

- - A car blind-sides the Navigator, the heavy truck spinning
into Roy and launching him across the road.

Distracted from Heather and Scott, Seigfried fixes focus on - -

MATT

Who dangles outside the car window. GLOCK in hand.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

Seigfried's chest inverts. Again. And again. And again.
Out of commission. Forever.

HEATHER

Recoils, blanketing her boy's body as she peers through the cracked front-windshield to see - -

MATT VANETTI

Stalking towards her. Part savior. Part executioner.
But a rattled Heather only sees the former, murmuring:

HEATHER

Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou...

She exits the car, inches from Matt - whom she doesn't recognize in shades and skull-cap.

MATT

Don't thank me.

CLICK(OS)

She glances down to the GLOCK pressed to her belly.

From the fire. Into the inferno.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. AUDI - - MOVING (FAST)

On the cell, Danny tries Heather yet again, letting the car slow by Scott's school, sirens sounding.

POLICE CARS

Coming into view, splayed all about.

DANNY

Goes gulp, torturous thoughts crystallizing, as we HEAR:

MATT (O.S.)

Don't be afraid...

INT. HEATHER'S SUV - - MOVING

And Matt resides in the back, his firearm pressed into the leather of the driver's side-seat. He addresses Scott:

MATT

...Fear's a useless emotion. Someone taught me that in prison.

And it occurs to mother and son who their captor is...

SCOTT
(cranes back)
Matt...?

HEATHER
(through the rear-
view mirror)
Why are you doing this to us? Danny
loves you...
(off silence)
Don't blame him for whatever you
did...

MATT
It's not what I *did*; it's what I'm
gonna do.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - - DAY

Danny vaults from the car, flashing his ID for the throng of
cops who circle the bodies of Seigfried and Roy.

Close by we see Matt's abandoned rental and the smashed
Navigator as Danny bounds towards an impish looking COP...

DANNY
What happened?

COP
(squints at badge)
ATF...? What're you - -?

DANNY
What the fuck happened?!

Before the cop can recover or retort - Danny's cell CHIMES.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(answers)
Heather - -

HEATHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Danny - -

DANNY
Where are you - -?

But it's not Heather's voice that responds...

MATT (O.S.)
(filtered)
Where is she? She's in trouble,
Danny.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SUV - - MOVING

Matt. On Heather's cell. Nothing but static and silence from the other end(os)...

MATT

Come on, Danny...say something...anything...Or you gonna abandon your family the way you abandoned me?

DANNY

This is about you and me...

MATT

I thought so, too. But then I lost my freedom...I lost my father...I lost my friend. And then it got to be about a lot more.

Danny's running back to his car, stumbling, gasping...

MATT (CONT'D)

I dunno, maybe it's about time you lost something, too.

DANNY'S EYES shutter tight, flickering in horror.

MATT (CONT'D)

How bout we skip all the well-worn clichés and get right down to business?

DANNY. Back in his car. Between a grovel and a growl:

DANNY

Tell me where to go.

Before Matt can answer, we...

EXT. HIGHWAY - - OVERHEAD SHOT - - NIGHT

Danny's Audi blasts down the barren road...

HEATHER (O.S.)

What d'you want...?

The Audi screams past, as we - -

CROSS CUT TO:

MATT

Shotgun slung over his shoulder like Huck fucking Finn. WIDEN to see Heather and Scott curled into a corner. Bodies bound. Gags hanging loosely around necks.

Matt doesn't answer Heather, gazing solemnly back...

HEATHER
(exploding)
What do you want?!

Icy cool, Matt's the epitome of equanimity.

MATT
What do I want? The things I want,
I can't have. They're gone. Taken.
So what I want really isn't relevant.
It's about what I can give back.
(fixes shotgun on her)
Give to you, give to Danny...

HEATHER
What's happened to you, Matt...? You
were part of our family...

That seems to take residence in Matt. Spurring him to stand.
And move closer to his captives...

MATT
Enough talk.

He slips the gags over their mouths, locking eyes with Scott -
who stares at him. In horror.

MATT (CONT'D)
(soft)
I'm not the only monster here...

EXT. BACK-WOOD - - ALEXANDRIA, VA. - - NIGHT

Audi HEADLIGHTS pierce the FOG, slicing through the verdant
brush, coming to a halt upon sight of a familiar edifice...

THE CABIN

And amazingly, inexplicably, it's preserved - nearly pristine -
despite the passage of time.

INSIDE THE CAR

Danny turns the motor OFF, checking the clip of his .45 when
he HEARS a CRASHING SOUND.

He discerns a faint light emanating from inside the cabin.
Casting an eery green glow through the forest.

EXT. BACK-WOODS - - NIGHT

Firearm by his side, Danny jiggles the car-trunk open to
remove a FLASH-LIGHT. Closing the trunk, to see

THE LAKE IN THE DISTANCE (POV)

More notable is what resides in it - the source of the crashing noise...

HEATHER'S SUV

Protruding from the shallow lake like an undetonated missile. An image made all the horrific by the possibility that someone's still inside the vehicle.

DANNY

Hustles towards the lake, his breath heavy. Quivering from more than the cold.

He carefully negotiates down the clearing, his dress-shoes SCRUNCHING dirty ice, until - -

DANNY SLIPS

Sent scaling down the hill, his flash-light rolling into the lake before he gains control...

IN THE DARK AGAIN

Only the scant moon to articulate his way. Danny recovers, a jail-break in his heart. Ready to move closer, until - -

CHA-CHUNK(OS)

The indelible sound of a shotgun.

MATT (O.S.)

How's the back doing, Danny?

A pertinent question considering the barrel of Matt's shotgun spheres the small of Danny's spine.

MATT'S SCARY SILHOUETTE

Looms over Danny's shoulder, his breath visible.

MATT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Toss your piece in the lake.

Danny deposits the .45 in the not-so-deep blue sea...

And Matt steps back, allowing his former partner, his former friend, to slowly turn. And take him in.

DANNY. Somewhere between absolute pity. And absolute fear.

And Matt casts his arms wide. As if proud. As if Christ on an invisible cross. And all Danny can say is...

DANNY

Oh, Matty...

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

(then)

Please, listen, *please*. You need to understand - -

MATT

That's just it; I'm not an understanding man. Not anymore. You saw to that.

He's calm. Like wet dynamite.

MATT (CONT'D)

All that time I believed in you, trusted you...*Defended* you.

DANNY

I kept you away from all that, Matt...you don't know what it did to me...how it ate at me...

MATT

What it did to you?

He snorts a pain-induced laugh. Growing into his rage.

MATT (CONT'D)

I guess it all worked out for you, though, huh?

(then; fierce)

Turn around.

DANNY

Matt...

MATT

Turn the fuck around.

Danny complies, hands raised in symbolic surrender, before - -

CRACK! - The shotgun's stabbed into his lower back, sending him to his knees in a mist of pain.

MATT (CONT'D)

THERE'S YOUR FUCKING JUSTICE, DANNY!

And Danny writhes, hacking blood and bile. On all fours.

MATT (CONT'D)

Get up.

For extra-incentive he embeds the shotgun into Danny's temple.

MATT (CONT'D)

We got some people to see.

SFX: The CREAK of a door.

A trapezoid of light cast into the - -

INT. CABIN - - MOMENTS LATER

- - Danny and Matt spill in with the light...

DANNY

Matt...Listen to me: Trower was gonna kill them if I talked...

MATT

Well, now they're gonna die if you don't.

The tip of the shotgun leads Danny deeper into the

BEDROOM - - CONTINUOUS

Heather and Scott. Bound and gagged.

MATT (CONT'D)

You're gonna tell them what you did...you're gonna tell them what you *didn't* do...

And Danny's spirit cracks upon sight of his family and the terror he's brought upon them...

DANNY

This place, how d'you think it stayed this way? Huh, Matt? How?

Indeed, the cabin is nearly pristine.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I bought it. And I came up every month. Cleaned it. Swept it. To make sure you had somewhere to go when you got out...

MATT

That's just it, Danny, I don't have anywhere to go...

And seeing that look, that tarnished look, in Matt's eye...

DANNY

There doesn't have to be a bad guy...

MATT

There already *is*.

He leaves that particular party unidentified...

MATT (CONT'D)

I want you to tell your son about life, about the way life is.

And by accident or intent, he targets Scott with the shotgun.

MATT (CONT'D)

Tell him all the things he's taught
in school are lies. Tell him that
life *isn't* fair. That hard work
doesn't pay off...that integrity
fails.

And now Danny, too, is coming undone; the image of his son,
his baby boy, under the gun...too much to bear.

DANNY

I fucked up, Matt...and maybe I should
pay...maybe that makes all this
right.. But please don't take
them...please don't take my family
away...

And he's nearly weeping, the love of his family overwhelming.
And Matt stares at Danny, this broken man before him.

MATT

You wanna make it right?

Scott and Heather squirm, bucking with muted screams as
Danny's led into the - -

LIVING ROOM - - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

I'm not who I was, Matt...

MATT

(low)

None of us are...

Matt looks at the FRAMED PHOTOS left on the mantle. Hard to
say if it emboldens him. Or undercuts his anger.

He maneuvers Danny over to the fireplace.

MATT (CONT'D)

I have thoughts now...evil
thoughts...things you couldn't
imagine.

DANNY

It's not too late - -

MATT

To what? - to live a normal life?
Look at me: I'm a fucking monster.

(then)

My darkness, I acknowledge it. Can
you?

And the shotgun shakes beneath his grip as he nods towards the HUNTING RIFLE perched on the wall. Exactly where his father left it last we saw.

MATT (CONT'D)

They gave that to my dad when he made detective. Read the inscription.

(Danny stays still)

READ IT!

Danny struggles to remove the rifle. Reading:

DANNY

"May you find what you seek; may you get what you deserve."

And now tears trickle from Matt's lids...

MATT

Y'ever read "Frankenstein"? In it, only the doctor who created the monster could destroy it.

DANNY

I am so sorry, Matt...

MATT

Me, too...

Guns in both their hands. Tears in both their eyes.

MATT (CONT'D)

God forgive me for what I've done...for what I'm about to do...

He targets the shotgun on Danny - who instinctively fixes the hunting rifle back on Matt. HOLD.

And in the blink of an eye:

MATT RACKS THE SHOTGUN - -

AND SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER - -

Click. Empty.

On pure reflex, eyes clenched shut, Danny pulls - -

BOOM! The hunting-rifle belching buck-shot - -

BLASTING MATT OFF HIS FEET

Clumping him to the floor. Heaving. Hissing. Hacking.

And Danny's screaming...

And Matt's smiling...

MATT (CONT'D)

Thank you...

Danny drops the shotgun as if hot to the touch...drops to his knees...crawls to his friend's side...

But Matt's in death's clutches. Cold. And oddly content.

He stutters. Stammers. Shakes.

Forcing Danny to lean closer, sullied with Matt's blood. His ear to his friend's mouth, crying sticky tears.

DANNY

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry...

(then)

What can I do...tell me what to do...please.

MATT

Bury me...next to...my father...

And with that, Matt dies, his lidless eyes condemned to stare in endless and impassive judgment.

And Danny lays Matt gently to rest, grappling to his feet...

CLOSE ON DANNY'S SHOES

As they plod past, and we STAY ON THE FLOOR

Where among the refuse and residue we find a FRAMED PHOTO. Under a cracked frame. Hear the MUSIC BOX crow close by...

ON PHOTO: Matt. A boy of 10. On the broad shoulders of his daddy. A little league uniform on his body, a shiny trophy in his hand, a world of possibility in his eye.

And we read the inscription above it...

"If you can conceive it, you can achieve it."

The Vanetti family slogan. Gone to seed.

INT. BEDROOM - - CABIN - - SAME TIME

Danny's stark image ushered in with a blade of light...

Blood daises his shirt as he ambles forward...

DANNY

It's okay...I'm okay...

He drops to his knees, desperately removing the rope which contains his wife and son...

The same words tumbling from his lips. Over and over again.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry...

A maddening mantra. A needle caught on a record.

Limbs unharnessed, gags removed, Heather and Scott cling to Danny. Their hero.

On their knees. In a singular hug. A family reunion.

But Scott's head lifts from his father's shoulder, his lids dry of tears. Staring up at his dad with enormous eyes.

SCOTT
Dad.

And so flat, so matter-of-fact, is his voice that Danny shudders straight. Squints down at his boy.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
What did you do to Matt...?

And we're not sure if he means just now. Or years before. And to Danny, the distinction's of little import.

Father surveys son. And son surveys father. HOLD.

Danny's eyes finally, painfully, BLINK, as we - -

PULL-BACK TO:

EXT. CABIN - - BACK-WOODS - - MORNING

The sunrise brings much light but little warmth to the endless expanse of marsh and muck, as we - -

FADE TO:

TRACKING SHOT

Over a distant field, imbued with sunlight...revealed to be A CEMETERY. If you look closely you'll see two plots.

Side-by-side. Father and son.

TRACKING PAST

Until we come upon a baseball diamond. HARRIS FIELD. Staying high above like an indifferent angel.

And if you listen closely, you can HEAR the sounds of a father cheering his son on, before we slowly...

FADE OUT: