

By Virtue Fall

by

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Vendetta Films

"Some Rise By Sin, Some By Virtue Fall"

-Measure for Measure

DARKNESS

SOUND. Insectile buzzing in your ear. Growing steadily louder. Reaching its acme, as we --

CUT IN:

A mirror. Cracked. A million mosaic-like shards. We find ourselves in a sweaty and claustrophobic BATHROOM.

A light bulb HUMS, dangling like a noose looking for a neck, the walls stained with graffiti and surrender.

DANIEL SLOANE

Stands at the sink. The eyes of a widower or a war veteran, he rattles two white pills from a Vitamin C bottle.

.45 pistol in hand, he uses the handle to crush the pills before sweeping the dust into a McDonald's cup.

He looks up at his reflection: His image distorted into abstract art. Humpty Dumpty after the fall.

And he SLURPS his tainted beverage through a bright red "Happy Meal" straw, as we --

CUT TO:

A HORN. An 18-wheeler blurs by. We find ourselves on a...

EXT. HIGHWAY - - NIGHT (WIDER)

Roadside construction along the periphery (portable toilets close by), Danny dodges traffic, jogging towards a MOTEL on the other side as we PAN UP to take in...

THE CHICAGO SKYLINE

Hovering in the distance. A galaxy away. Providing ample light but little warmth.

SFX: CLICK-CLACK.

CUT TO:

A TITANIUM BRIEFCASE

Atop puke-green bed sheets, croaking open like the mouth of a treasure chest to reveal

TWO GUNS

No, scratch that. Not guns. VAN DOEKKEN LONGBORES. The Cadillac of firearms. Rare as human kindness.

IGGY TILMAN (O.S.)
Fa-la-la-la-la...

TILT UP to see IGGY TILMAN(20)

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

IGGY TILMAN (CONT'D)
 Act now and I'll throw in a coupla'
 ATM hardballers. No charge.

INT. ROOM - - MOTEL - - WIDER

Danny stands on the other side of the bed.

DANNY
 Maybe, a set of Ginsu knives, too?

IGGY TILMAN
 No knives, dawg. Just guns.

Danny chuckles(Iggy has no idea why). Points to the guns:

DANNY
 Those'll do fine.

And heavy hangs the silence as we see DOUG VINSON(30's)and TINA STILES(slim, peroxide blonde)standing behind Iggy.

IGGY TILMAN
 So...we good? Everybody happy?

Danny looks at Vinson. Then Stiles. NODS.

DANNY
 One problem...

With this, Vinson's Glock and Danny's FEDERAL SHIELD are thrust in Iggy's face.

DANNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and - -

IGGY TILMAN (O.S.)
 - - Fuck.

Vinson bounds Iggy's wrists with flex-cuffs, frisking him.

VINSON
 If you got needles, speak up. 'Cus
 I get stuck, you get stuck,
 y'unnerstan'?

He finds a fistful of cash and a CELL PHONE. Pockets the cash. Scrolls through the cell phone "contact list".

VINSON (CONT'D)
...Who you been calling, *dawg*?

IGGY TILMAN
Your moms. But I only hit that shit
late at night.

VINSON
He's got jokes. I love it.

Bam. He hammers Iggy's head into the wall. Opens a gash.
Fells him to his knees. Danny scowls disapproval.

But Vinson's too busy scrolling the cell contact list to
notice. One number gives him pause.

VINSON (CONT'D)
Check this out...

He flips the cell to Danny, who ganders at it, asks Iggy:

DANNY
You work for Trower?

IGGY TILMAN
Ain't saying shit without a lawyer.
Y'all need probable cause...

VINSON
Oliver Wendell *Homey* here...

DANNY
(to Stiles)
Check it out.

Stiles exits the room, punching digits into her BlackBerry,

VINSON
(to Iggy; re: shoes)
Nice kicks. What're you, size nine?

IGGY TILMAN
Fuck you. Eleven.

VINSON
Perfect.

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

VINSON (CONT'D)
What d'ya' know, not all of 'em can
dance...

He forcibly removes the shoes from Iggy's feet.

IGGY TILMAN
 (spits blood)
 Y'all some low-dwelling
 motherfuckers...

Stiles returns, NODDING pointedly to Danny.

DANNY
 Mr. Tilman...
 (tosses Iggy's cell
 onto bed)
 Thanks for your time.

As Danny and crew recede, Iggy realizes:

IGGY TILMAN
 Y'all work for Trower. You can't do
 this...

VINSON
 We're upper management. We can do
 whatever the fuck we want.

He kicks Iggy in the ribs. Before he can inflict real damage --
 Danny grabs him, holds Vinson back.

DANNY
 I got it.
 (off Vinson)
I got it.

As soon as Vinson exits, Danny slaps open a switchblade.
 Iggy recoils before...Danny clips the flex-cuffs off.

And Iggy grapples to his knees, blood dribbling down the
 center of his face as if in absolution.

IGGY TILMAN
 ...What're you, the *good* bad cop?

Danny stares solemnly back, as we PRE-LAP:

MATT (V.O.)
 Here's the thing: Everybody wears
 their cynicism like a badge of honor.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - - MATT'S APARTMENT - - EARLY MORNING

MATTHEW VANETTI. Boyishly handsome, pulsing with pride and
 purpose, lying in bed, shroud in darkness.

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

MATT (V.O.)
I mean, people always say, "nothing
in life goes according to plan"...

He quietly slips out of bed. It's 4:03 a.m.

INT. INDOOR TRACK - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Matt runs hard. Intense. Focused.

MATT (V.O.)
Well, maybe, that's 'cus most of 'em
don't have a plan...

INT. AEROBICS STUDIO - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

The rhapsodic rhythm of Matt jumping rope.

MATT (V.O.)
They drift through life, waiting for
fate, kismet, an act of God or
Congress...

INT. ATF DIVISION - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Briefcase in hand, Matt walks through the bullpen, several
female assistants making goo-goo eyes at him.

MATT (V.O.)
Maybe, I'm idealistic, but I think
what we do makes a difference...

INT. MATT'S CUBICLE - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

Sleeves rolled up, Matt types a report on his computer.

MATT (V.O.)
I think hard work pays off...

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - - MOVING

Hip-hop music blasting, Matt drives.

MATT (V.O.)
But at the end of the day, I guess,
it's pretty simple...

He pulls into a parking lot, turning the engine off, as we - -

PICK UP WITH:

INT. BAR & GRILL - - CONTINUOUS

Matt plays an old-school "Superman" pinball machine (the entire
joint has a retro theme).

MATT
...I just wanna do good.

With that, the pinball promptly finds the gutter. *Game over.*

DANNY - Matt's partner, mentor and friend - playfully nudges him aside. Slips a quarter in. As he begins to play...

MATT (CONT'D)
...You call Dr. Ting?

DANNY
Uh-huh.

MATT
(knows him well)
That was convincing...

DANNY
I'm gonna pay someone to stick needles
in me?

MATT
I'm telling you, Dr. Ting can help
your back.

Danny continues playing without comment, racking up points.

MATT (CONT'D)
How'd the UC go?

DANNY
It didn't. Guy didn't show.

The door chime alerts them to Vinson entering with agent ROB CAUFIELD(20's, nuclear tan, perpetually in sunglasses)...

...So distracted that Danny loses track of the pinball.
Looking back to see it roll past the bumpers. *Game over.*

MATT (O.S.)
Impressive.

Before Danny can retort, he notices a LITTLE BOY standing behind Matt, quarter in hand.

DANNY
My replacement...
(nods to booth)
I'm gonna go talk to Cagney and Lacey.

Matt assists the kid as Danny beelines for the booth. Once he reaches Vinson and Caufield...

DANNY (CONT'D)
You're indoors, Caufield. Take the
fucking sunglasses off.

VINSON
Siddown, Sloanie.

Danny stays standing. Then:

CAUFIELD
You need to talk to your boy...

He gestures to Matt - who holds the little kid up, enabling the lad to play pinball. Laughing(os).

VINSON
Either we cut Vanetti in or - -

DANNY
This doesn't touch him. Okay? Matt's not a part of this.

VINSON
I don't know if you're being noble.
Or greedy.

DANNY
That's 'cus you don't know the difference.

Flaring, Vinson rises, fists balled. Danny steps forward, no back down in his backbone. Before things can escalate - -

MATT'S HAND

Finds Danny's shoulder. Gently coaxing him back.

MATT
Take it easy...let's relax...

Vinson settles belatedly back into the booth.

MATT (CONT'D)
We're all friends here, right?

VINSON
That's right. We're all friends here, Sloanie. One big happy family.

As Danny glares back, we PRE-LAP:

MATT (V.O.)
What was that about?

CUT TO:

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

Buzzed, Danny rides shotgun, studying the passing Chicago streets outside.

DANNY
I'm drunk. He's an asshole. It's
not quantum physics.

Matt's not buying it. Doesn't press.

MATT
Where am I taking you, home?

DANNY
Office. Inebriation improves my
paperwork.
(re: music on stereo)
What is this?

MATT
You like it?

DANNY
The soundtrack to root canal...

Matt turns the music lower as they stop at a light. Wait.

MATT
You don't find it fucked up?

DANNY
I find *everything* fucked up...

Matt resumes driving...

MATT
Firearms. Stolen. From the Bureau
of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.
See where I'm going with this? See
why that might be embarrassing? And
that's not even getting into the
sideways raid of last month - and
then your no-show today...

DANNY
(slumps into seat)
Turn the music back up...

MATT
I'm serious. Trower's got somebody...

DANNY
...Stop.

MATT
...Inside. Somebody working for him - -

DANNY
Stop.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
(sits back up)
You can't throw this shit around,
Matt.

MATT
You think I like saying it? OPR's
gotta be watching us like the Zapruder
film - -

DANNY
You're being paranoid - -

MATT
It's only paranoid if - -

DANNY
You're wrong.

Matt hooks a right, descending into a narrow-walled
subterranean structure. A GARAGE.

MATT
Then how is it Trower's always one
step ahead of us? He's out there -
and we're doing nothing. NOTHING.

DANNY
What do you recommend? Should we
follow him around, harass him?

MATT
I don't "harass" him. We frequent
some of the same establishments.

The truck parks in a reserved slot by the elevators.

DANNY
This is my unit, okay? So when you
talk about agents working for Trower
and...

His voice trails off. Abruptly, he exits. Matt watches Danny
bound through the garage before he exhales and follows...

INT. GARAGE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

On Danny's heels...

MATT
I'm not trying to offend you, Danny...

Danny stops. Exhales. Turns back.

DANNY
I know. I know. I'm sorry. I get
a little...sensitive.

MATT
(a laugh)
Since when?

Danny laughs, too. Then:

MATT (CONT'D)
What's going on, D'?

A car screeches by, startling Danny. Once it's gone, he hits the elevator "UP" button. Turns back to Matt:

DANNY
I don't know if we make any
difference. Not here. Not anywhere.
We try to piece together small
victories...tell ourselves that's
enough. And someday, I dunno, maybe,
it is but...
(catching himself)
Shit. I told you I was drunk...

But Matt sees the pain in his partner's eyes. Extrapolates:

MATT
You and Anna alright?

Danny doesn't answer. Stabs the elevator button again.

MATT (CONT'D)
It's not the first time you guys
have been through the fire...

DANNY
Not everything can be repaired, Matt.
Not everything deserves to be.

PING. The elevator arrives, Danny embarking with...

DANNY (CONT'D)
People change...and not always in
the ways you want them to.

With that, the elevator closes, leaving Matt to stare at his reflection off the shiny silver doors.

CUT TO:

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

Danny slumps at his desk, only the phosphorescent glow of his computer illuminating him.

He stares at the Treasury(ATF)insignia on his screen saver as we notice the dearth of personal items around him.

Not a single photo on his walls or desk. Barren.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Didn't your momma ever tell you not
to read in the dark?

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

GORT
You go blind.

DANNY
I think that's masturbation.

GORT
Shit. What if you masturbate in the
dark?

Gort leans on the cubicle wall. Point blank:

GORT (CONT'D)
OPR wants to talk to you tomorrow.
Voluntarily.

DANNY
..."Voluntarily"?

GORT
Means you come in on your own. Or
they make you.
(off Danny)
They're not looking at you. They
just have some questions.

Danny watches him go in the daunting silence, unnerved. The
chime of his cell startles him. Off caller ID: "HOME".

He sends it to voicemail. Leans back in his chair. Staring
at the ATF logo emblazoned on the wall.

"VIGILANCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY"

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Deep breaths, honey...

CUT TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - - HOSPITAL - - CONTINUOUS

Matt's girlfriend, the stunner we glimpsed earlier, HALEY,
examines a little girl with a stethoscope.

HALEY
...There you go...that's it...
(then)
I'm gonna grab your mom and we're
gonna get you x-rayed. Okay?

The little girl nods. She's terrified.

HALEY (CONT'D)
We're gonna be right there with you,
honey. I promise...

The little girl allows a small nod before Haley exits into THE HALL, yelping when she's grabbed from behind by...Matt.

HALEY (CONT'D)
Asshole!

They laugh. Instantly kiss (Haley pulling back when she notices doctors and nurses looking over at them).

MATT
Sorry, don't mean to tarnish your
reputation...

HALEY
Too late...
(then)
Gimme five minutes.

She continues down the hall, Matt watching her go with an unrepentant smile. Clearly, head over heels in love.

A brash doctor sidles up to him.

DOCTOR
She's something, huh? Can't tell
you how many guys would like to be
in your shoes...

MATT
(only half-kidding)
You know I carry a gun, right?

SFX: Laughter.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTER - - BURGER JOINT - - NIGHT

In jeans and a t-shirt, devouring a burger next to Matt on a stool, she's even more ravishing. When the laughter wanes...

HALEY
...I'm serious. As much as I love
it, sometimes I don't know.

MATT
Come on, I see you with these kids...

HALEY
It's not the kids that bother me.

They've had this conversation before.

MATT

You're gonna be a great mom...

HALEY

Yeah, well, you had a better example than I did...

He takes her hand. Kisses it. A beat. Then:

HALEY (CONT'D)

You get nervous when I talk about being a mom...?

MATT

(no)

Excited.

Mouths half full, they share a messy kiss, giggling, as we --

CUT TO:

A CONCAVE BATHTUB

SLUSH! Two bags of PARTY ICE dumped in running water. COLD water. We're in a BATHROOM.

DANNY

Clad only in boxers, steps gingerly into the ice bath. We note the ghastly scar stretched across his lower back.

He closes his eyes. Settles into numbing nirvana.

CUT TO:

EXT. STRIP MALL - - EVANSTON, ILLINOIS - - MORNING

A tinted Lincoln Towncar idles in front of donut shop.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

What can I get ya', Mr. Trower?

INT. TOWNCAR - - STATIONARY

A CAMERA in his lap, the driver(BLAKE)addresses JERIHCO TROWER. Obese and imperious, Trower inhabits the back seat like a king would his throne.

JERIHCO TROWER

It's okay, Jimmy. I got it.

He pats Blake on the shoulder. Laboriously exits.

INT. DONUT SHOP - - CONTINUOUS

Trower inspects the showcase of donuts with Talmudic intensity, a young CLERK on the other side.

JERIHCO TROWER
 Another dozen of those chocolate
 sprinkles, too, please.
 (orgasmic)
 Ooh, they're still warm...

He looks up. Spots a disheveled YOUNG MOTHER with her little boy. Clearly impoverished, she scours for change.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
 And whatever they'd like.

He peels out a C-note. Places it on the glass as the clerk informs the woman of Trower's benevolence(os).

YOUNG MOTHER
 (to her little boy)
 What do we say to the nice man?

The kid squints at Trower. Sticks his tongue out. And BLOWS.

And while most would take this with good humor, Trower boils. Growing angrier when he hears BELLY LAUGHTER behind him.

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

Matt, in baseball cap and jeans, sidles up to Trower. Looks downright diminutive next to him.

MATT (CONT'D)
 You know, Freud said that charity
 was about making *ourselves* feel
 better. Like you could buy enough
 donuts to make up for all the illegal
 guns you've sold to gang bangers and
 cop killers. Guess contrition comes
 cheap these days.

JERIHCO TROWER
 Not nearly as cheap as federal agents.
 (grabs donuts from
 clerk; winks at Matt)
 Nice seeing you again, agent.

With that, he exits, leaving Matt to consume the nasty glares sent his way via the mother and clerk.

CUT TO:

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

In the tub where we left him, Danny feels nothing. And everything. In his right hand, he holds...

A PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE: "VICODIN SE."

He transfers little white pills into that familiar Vitamin C bottle, inadvertently knocking the Vicodin bottle over, watching as it rolls across the tile, finally stopping.

Unconcerned, he pops pills like Pez.

A KNOCK. Danny looks over to see his lanky son, SCOTT(8) in the doorway. Still young enough to believe in heroes. Still idealistic enough to think his dad's one of 'em.

SCOTT

Mom said to tell you someone's on the phone. Someone from work.

DANNY

Okay.

And Scott's about to exit before he inadvertently kicks THE PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE. Picks it up. Puts it on the sink.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Scott, can I have some fucking privacy?!

Scorned, the boy hastily exits - Danny defusing as soon as the door closes; a man with the good sense to hate himself.

Numb. Not nearly numb enough.

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND FLOOR - - DANNY'S HOME - - CONTINUOUS

Hustling down the hall, Danny's wife, ANNA, thwarts his path. A raven-haired beauty, she's feminine and fierce.

DANNY

Vinson's waiting for me...

ANNA

I don't care if you avoid me, Danny. Truth is, I don't like seeing you that much these days, either. But I'm not gonna let you do that to my son.

DANNY

Our son.

ANNA

Good. That's a start.

(then)

You used to talk about not wanting
to be like your dad, remember that?

DANNY

Nice to see that undergraduate Psych
degree's paying off.

She ignores that. Charges ahead:

ANNA

Scott's Science Fair Fund Raiser is
Friday night.

(before he can speak)

I told you about it last week.

He shimmies into his suit jacket, patience waning fast.

DANNY

You wanna make a war outta' this,
Anna?

ANNA

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

DANNY

(trundling down the
stairs)

You have a nice day.

He exits, slamming the door, Anna continuing down the steps
to see Scott in the kitchen. Working on his science project.
Having heard the whole thing. They trade eyes.

SCOTT

It's okay, mom.

He continues with his project as his mom holds back tears.

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - - MORNING

Danny steps over Scott's bike sprawled on the lawn, angling
for the cherry red Corvette across the street.

He opens the passenger door, folding into the...

INT. CORVETTE - - STATIONARY

Vinson sits behind the wheel, dragging off a cigarette.

DANNY

What's so important you have to come
to my house?

Vinson exhales smoke through his nostrils when he says:

VINSON
We got a problem.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

IGGY TILMAN sits across from Matt.

VINSON (O.S.)
Your boy brought him in an hour ago.
Pinched him trying to sell.

REVERSE to reveal Danny and Vinson watching outside the glass.

DANNY
He give up Trower?

VINSON
That's sweet. You're worried about
Trower.

There are, of course, bigger concerns.

VINSON (CONT'D)
Control your boy. Or I will. The
yo's not talking...not yet.

STAY BEHIND THE GLASS

With Vinson as Danny enters the interrogation room, pulling
Matt aside and conferring with him(os), as we PRE-LAP:

DANNY (V.O.)
What d'you want? - Guy's my CI.

CUT TO:

INT. RECREATION ROOM - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

Danny closes the door, confers privately with Matt.

MATT
He works for Trower - and we just
let him walk. Fuck, we might as
well have given him a ride home.

DANNY
The kid's no use to us carrying
weight. Trower's day will come.

MATT
Yeah. When will ours?

With that, he pushes past Danny, exiting down the HALLWAY.
Danny follows him to the elevators. Wait, then:

DANNY

What're you doing tomorrow night? -
You wanna grab a bite?

MATT

I'm gonna see my dad tomorrow.
What're you doing tonight?

DANNY

Scott's hockey game. Anna's jamming
me up.
(joking)
You're welcome to come...

MATT

Cool.

DANNY

...Yeah?

MATT

Yeah. Just tell me where...

PING. The elevator arrives.

DANNY

I'll text you.

Danny waits until Matt enters the elevator, the doors closing
to hit the "UP button". His body deflates as he straightens
his tie, instantly skittish, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Matt spills from the elevator, marching towards his truck...

CAUFIELD (O.S.)

Vanetti.

AGENT CAUFIELD. Motions Matt over to his silver Mustang.

CAUFIELD (CONT'D)

Check this out...

He flips a MOSSBERG 500 COMBAT RIFLE to Matt.

MATT

Tossing loaded guns...smart...

CAUFIELD

You got good hands.

(then)

I'm going to the shooting range.
Y'interested?

MATT
(hands gun back)
No, thank you.

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

MATT
Isn't that the idea?

Caufield smirks, watching Matt enter his truck, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - OPR - - 28TH FLOOR - - CONTINUOUS

Office of Professional Responsibility. Danny sits in a chair
in the hallway, crossing and uncrossing his legs.

INSPECTOR MARK WYATT enters, prompting Danny to stand.

INSPECTOR WYATT
Sorry to keep you waiting, Agent.
Let's do this down here...my office
is a disaster zone...

Danny follows him into an unfurnished...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - OPR - - CONTINUOUS

Wyatt settles in at the head of the long table...

DANNY
You know you shouldn't leave people
out there like that. In the hallway.
For anybody to see.

Danny sits - but the right rear leg of the rickety chair
breaks off, sending Danny sprawling to the floor.

INSPECTOR WYATT
Shit. I'm sorry.
(helps Danny up)
You okay?

Wyatt pulls another chair over for Danny. As Danny gingerly
sits he notices Wyatt's Garfield tie.

INSPECTOR WYATT (CONT'D)
(re: tie)
My kid's birthday gift to me. Weird
thing is, he's 23.
(Danny stares back)
I'm joking.

Danny doesn't even allow a smile.

INSPECTOR WYATT (CONT'D)
You have a son, right?

Danny doesn't answer. Stares coldly back.

INSPECTOR WYATT (CONT'D)
I just wanted to ask you some
questions about the stolen guns last
month.

Wyatt flips through a file (inside which we see photos of
Danny from his early years; a picture history of decline).

DANNY
I did it.

Wyatt looks up, staring at Danny for an interminable beat
before he starts laughing. Danny belatedly smiles.

INSPECTOR WYATT
Funny.

DANNY
You looking at my unit?

INSPECTOR WYATT
We're being...thorough.

DANNY
Not sure you answered the question.

INSPECTOR WYATT
Not the you wanted me to, at least.
(then)
Look, Agent Sloane, if you have any
information on anyone in or out of
your unit, your name will never be
used. That's a promise.

Danny leans forward, intense. Voice low and conspiratorial:

DANNY
I did hear something. I heard some
OPR agents were taking bribes not to
go after cops. You hear that one?

INSPECTOR WYATT
No. But if you have information
supporting that I'd love to talk
about it...

Conflicted, Danny looks, for a moment, wincingly vulnerable.
Every crack showing in his face. And we think him about to
tell everything before...

DANNY

We done?

INSPECTOR WYATT

We're done.

Danny can't get out of there fast enough.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. HOCKEY RINK - - NIGHT

A junior hockey league, Matt waits for a hot cocoa with Anna. The game underway, Scott skates the ice with difficulty.

MATT

Come on, Scotty! Get back on D!

(off Anna)

Sorry...

ANNA

No, it's nice to see someone excited about it.

Danny's in the stands, on his cell. Oblivious to the game.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What's going on with him, Matt?

MATT

Hmm? Nothing. A lot of pressure at work, you know. We're all feeling it.

A clamor spurs their attention to the ice - where we see Scott take a wild shot and...SCORE.

Matt and Anna cheer. Laughing at themselves and their ebullience as Scott searches the stands for his dad but...

...He's no longer there.

DANNY (O.S.)

I gotta go.

Danny. Behind Matt and Anna. Jacket in hand. To Matt:

DANNY (CONT'D)

...Can you take them home?

MATT

...Where you going?

DANNY

I'm late.

He stalks off...Matt assuring Anna before following after his partner...catching up to him...

MATT
What's going on?

DANNY
I gotta deal with a CI of mine.

MATT
Another one?

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

Matt reluctantly nods. Left to watch Danny hustle off.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMOUR SQUARE - - SOUTH SIDE - - NIGHT

Urban squalor abounds. Radiant with decay. A familiar Towncar prowls past, settling in beside an Audi.

INT. TOWNCAR - - STATIONARY

AN ENVELOPE. Lands on a lap. BOOM UP to Danny - who regards it with palpable dread. TROWER sits beside him.

DANNY
I got OPR calling me in, looking at my unit, doing a high-colonic on us - all thanks to your idiots swiping guns out of evidence.
(hands envelope back)
So thank you but..."no".

Trower puts a finger to his lips. *Shhhh.*

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - - OUTSIDE TOWNCAR - - MOMENTS LATER

Slam! Danny's thrown against a wall and frisked by two of Trower's associates (SEIGFRIED and ROY). Once they're done...

JERIHCO TROWER
I understand. I do. We're all nervous by nature. I hear sirens now and I assume they're coming for me. Not sure if that makes me narcissistic or paranoid.
(beat)
But it helps keep us safe.
(MORE)

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
 It's encoded in our DNA, our survival instinct. And as for these people, these "OPR" people, they're vultures...vultures looking for a fresh carcass to pick. They don't care who's it is. It's my job to make sure it's not you.

DANNY
 You're not listening. I'm done. I don't wanna live like this anymore...

JERIHCO TROWER
 Live like what? *Well? Prosperous?* I mean, how else can you afford Scott's private school? Or the meds you chew like Chicklets. And let's not forget about the information I provide you with.

DANNY
 ...Conveniently eliminating your competition...

JERIHCO TROWER
 You don't benefit from it? Of course, you do. See, our relationship, it's symbiotic. That means - -

DANNY
 I know what it means.

JERIHCO TROWER
 Show me that you do.

Once again, he dangles the envelope, an apple to Eve.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDI - - STATIONARY

Danny sits behind the wheel, the envelope on his lap. He looks up at a billboard above, a car ad with a picture of a grinning man and the word "FREEDOM".

Danny stares at it for a long time.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKWOODS - - ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - - DAY

More green than a golf course, a rental-car snakes through the Edenic acreage, stopping outside a quaint cabin.

An older woman, JANE, exits the edifice as MATT unfolds from his vehicle...

MATT

Where you going, beautiful?

They hug.

JANE

Fifty four years on the planet, three brothers, I know when to leave the boys alone. Your dad's in there...

MATT

Drive safe.

He waves as she drives off, a tubercular COUGH hacking from behind him. Turning to see his dad...

WALT VANETTI

Avuncular, with an ample belly and a crown of silver hair.

MATT (CONT'D)

(re: cough)

That sounds healthy...

WALT VANETTI

Allergies.

MATT

Only thing you're allergic to is medical advice.

Walt hugs and kisses his boy.

MATT (CONT'D)

Jane didn't have to bail...

WALT VANETTI

She was driving me fucking nuts with the marriage thing again.

MATT

Yeah, I mean, you guys have only been going out for, what, fourteen-fifteen years...

WALT VANETTI

Come here, smart mouth...

He gets his son in a playful choke-hold, laughing, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - DAY

Danny enters, body sunken(in solitude, he seems almost stripped of cartilage)walking past the kitchen before he notices Anna at the table, alone. Head bowed.

And he stops. And beholds her. Finally:

ANNA

You know what Scott was looking up
on the computer when I came home?
Vicodin. You know what he asked me:
"Why is dad in so much pain?"
(looks up at him)
I mean, maybe, it's a little early
to tell our 8 year-old son that his
father's addicted to pain killers.

Danny stares back, not sure what to say or do.

Anna wipes at stubborn tears, her voice soft and wounded:

ANNA (CONT'D)

I'm done, Danny.

She goes to him. Gently kisses him on the cheek.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You finally did it...you finally
pushed me all the way out...

She exits, leaving Danny standing there, frozen in place.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - - DAY

Father and son at the table, half-eaten sandwiches on plates.

WALT VANETTI

I was thinkin' a' driving back with
you tomorrow...

MATT

Why...?

WALT VANETTI

"Why?" Work.

MATT

Work? - You said you...

WALT VANETTI

What, *quit*?

MATT

Retired. You're 64 years - -

WALT VANETTI

Fuck you, 63...

MATT

You've had three heart attacks in two years.

WALT VANETTI

They're called "procedures" in the medical community.

Walt smiles. Matt doesn't.

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)

Look, something you're not understanding, Matty. It's not about what's gonna kill me, it's about what's gonna keep me alive. The job's one a' those things...

A glance at the mantle above the fireplace and the surplus of photos of Matt and it's clear what the other one is.

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)

Watching you grow up, the things you done with yourself - the Marines, on the job, after your mother passed...well, you won't fully understand until you have a son of your own.

Not a man given to shows of emotions, he averts his eyes. Finally, recovering with...

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)

So stop bustin' my balls, okay?

MATT

Okay. But I'm heading back tonight...

WALT VANETTI

You just got here...

Suddenly anxious, Matt stands and perambulates...

MATT

I'm gonna ask Haley to marry me, dad.

Walt studies his son, inscrutable. He stands. Goes to a MUSIC BOX from which he pulls...another box. A RING BOX.

WALT VANETTI

This was your mother's...

Matt opens the box to see...a stunning sapphire and diamond WEDDING RING.

MATT

Dad...I couldn't...

WALT VANETTI
It would make me very proud.

And now, despite his best efforts, tears well in Walt's eyes,
Danny hugging him tight, as we - -

CUT TO:

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

Scott's bicycle remains sprawled on the grass as Danny tosses
two duffel bags in his car, closing the trunk, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. AUDI - - STATIONARY (MOMENTS LATER)

Danny stares down at the pill in his hand, deliberating.
Unsure whether to smash or swallow. Before he can decide -

TAP-TAP(OS)

Scott. Outside the car. Danny peels the window down.

SCOTT
- - I won! Somebody bought my project
for more money than anybody else's...

We see the FIRST PLACE SCIENCE FAIR RIBBON on Scott's shirt.

DANNY
That's awesome, pal...awesome...

Behind Scott, Danny sees Anna on the porch, watching.

SCOTT
Mom says you're going on some business
trip or something...

DANNY
Just for a little while.

SCOTT
You can keep this if you want. 'Til
you get back...

Danny takes the first place ribbon from his son, hit with a
wave of emotion as Scott goes into the house, Anna taking
one last glance at Danny before closing the door.

Danny looks down: A pill in one hand. A ribbon in the other.

CUT TO:

INT. WORKOUT ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - NIGHT

The only one here at this hour, Matt sprints on the treadmill. Running harder, faster.

CUT TO:

INT. BULLPEN - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

In sweats, Matt sits at his desk, staring at the computer.

DANNY (O.S.)

What're you nervous about, Matty?

Danny stands behind Matt, "Happy Meal" cup in hand.

MATT

I get that way when people sneak up on me.

DANNY

Entire first year as partners, I thought you were anorexic.

(off Matt)

You overtrain when you're stressed.

Matt chuckles (because it's funny and because it's true). 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

Really? Wow.

MATT

Try to contain your enthusiasm. You sure you're not letting your personal life jade you here?

DANNY

Probably. Anna just threw me out.

(before Matt can

commiserate)

She should'a done it a long time ago. That woman's been through more shit with me...in more foxholes...that's why I married her. And that's what you gotta ask yourself: When the tower shakes, when the walls crumble - and they

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
will - is Haley gonna be there for
 you?

MATT
 Yeah. Yes. Definitely.

Matt pulls KEYS from his desk. Tosses them to Danny.

MATT (CONT'D)
 You can crash on the couch. Just
 not tonight.

DANNY
 You gonna ask her *tonight*?

MATT
 I was supposed to be home a half
 hour ago. Working up the courage...

DANNY
 You deserve all good things, Matty...
 (they hug)
 Congratulations, brother.

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

Matt waits for the elevator, studying his reflection off the
 shiny silver doors when...

PING. The doors open to reveal...VINSON. They trade eyes,
 gunslingers on the draw. Then:

VINSON
 You're going down.

The doors close, Matt looking up to see Vinson's elevator
 stopping on the next floor above.

PING. Another elevator arrives.

INT. ELEVATOR - - 27TH FLOOR - - CONTINUOUS

Matt hits the down button. Ganders at the directory. POV:
 28th floor. Office of Professional Responsibility(OPR).

As he descends, we --

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - - MOTEL - - CONTINUOUS

Ice bags in hand, Danny walks past the puff pastry of a
 MANAGER behind the desk.

MANAGER
 Be considerate of others, alright?

Danny stops. *Excuse me?*

MANAGER (CONT'D)
(points at ice bags)
You're having a party, right?

Danny offers a rueful chuckle before moving on.

CUT TO:

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - - NIGHT

Lights low, Matt enters, tossing his workout bag aside and sliding the ring into his pocket. He takes a look at himself in the mirror, mustering courage before wading into the...

INT. BEDROOM - - CONTINUOUS

Haley. Fast asleep. He looks at her, alternately relieved and disappointed. As he quietly disrobes...

HALEY
(groggy)
Hey...

MATT
You didn't wait up...

HALEY
Early rounds tomorrow...

Ring in hand, he lays beside her. Kisses her back.

MATT
Good day?

HALEY
Baby...I'm exhausted...can we talk
in the morning?

MATT
Sure...
(another kiss)
Sleep well, beautiful.

HALEY
(barely audible)
Love you...

MATT
Love you more.

With that, he reaches over and places the ring in the top drawer of the bedside bureau.

And he leans back, hands propped behind his head on the pillow. Listening to the sound of Haley's breathing.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - - MOTEL - - CONTINUOUS

Danny sits in the tub, staring dead ahead, numb to the ice and cold water enveloping him.

He raises his right hand. Only now do we see the gun in it. He scratches his temple with the barrel.

INT. BEDROOM - - MATT'S APARTMENT - - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Haley entangled in each other, asleep.

INT. BATHROOM - - MOTEL - - CONTINUOUS

Danny studies the gun before placing it in his mouth. Tears trickle down his face, hand steady.

CLOSE ON HIS TRIGGER FINGER, inching closer. And closer. And closer still. Until: It stops.

Just as Danny deflates, unable to do the deed, removing the firearm from his mouth, we --

CRASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - - MATT'S APARTMENT - - CONTINUOUS

The front door. Rocks open.

The lights. Flick on.

Matt's eyes. Bolt awake.

SEVEN HEAVILY-ARMED AGENTS raid through, paramilitary from the MP-5's in their hands to the boots on their feet.

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

AGENTS

FEDERAL AGENTS! ON THE FLOOR! DOWN!
DOWN!

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

Matt's pulled violently off the bed, his foot catching on the leg of the bedside bureau, taking it down with him...

An agent cracks Danny in the head, expediting his descent to the carpet. Where he sees...

THE WEDDING RING

His dad gave him. He reaches for it before an agent's heavy boot stomps on it and - everything goes silent.

MATT POV: *A semiautomatic barrel in our face...boots barreling past...Haley restrained on the bed...Two agents retrieving GUNS from the walk-in closet. One of which is - -*

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

Matt's propped to his feet. Left to watch Haley's muted screams(os)as agents coax her roughly off the bed.

He can't watch. Looks down. Sees a pile of dust.

The residue of his mother's ring.

FADE TO BLACK:

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
(filtered)
In a just developing story...

CUT IN:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - - MORNING

A DM Zone. The TV runs, Danny on the bed, tiny liqueur bottles scattered atop the sheets. A vacant stare.

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
...Firearms stolen from a federal
evidence room here in Chicago have
been recovered.

Instantly sober, Danny sits up, eyes engaged on the...

TELEVISION:

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
...A federal agent with the Bureau
of Alcohol and Firearms is in custody
this morning, accused of stealing
them...

BACK ON DANNY

Off the bed, galvanized, getting dressed, as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. FEDERAL BUILDING - - MORNING

A black SUV lurches to a stop by the front steps, a legion of reporters and cameramen surging forward as a cuffed Matt's shepherded from the van by federal agents.

To the side, smiling...Caufield and Vinson.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MAIN OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

Trower sits at his desk, eyes fixed on a plasma screen and the images of Matt. He can't help but smile.

He rattles two Ketoprofen out of a prescription bottle (for ulcers), gobbling them up, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION AREA - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

Bam! Danny bursts through double doors, blazing past the receptionist, his path thwarted by a Trower "associate".

SEIGFRIED/"ASSOCIATE"
Mr. Trower's not taking visitors
right now - -

He catches Danny's fist. In his face.

DANNY
How 'bout now?

Three more thugs appear from a side office, Danny slugging another in the head before they wrestle him to the ground. It takes all three to restrain Danny as...

...His gaze goes to the doorway now inhabited by Trower.

JERIHCO TROWER
I told you I'd find us a carcass,
kiddo.

CUT TO:

INT. PROCESSING - - FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Fighting back tears, Matt's printed and processed. A line of agents and cops glare at him with white hot hate.

JERIHCO TROWER (V.O.)
Not so smart coming here...

CUT TO:

INT. TROWER'S OFFICE - - CONTINUOUS

Trower sits. Danny paces.

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

JERIHCO TROWER
How? Vanetti doesn't know. He's
not gonna talk - -

DANNY
Well, maybe, I will.

JERIHCO TROWER
While your attack of morality's
admirable...it's a little delinquent.

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

And he's on his way out before...

JERIHCO TROWER
Agent Sloane. Let's assume you do
confess. And you do go away. And,
maybe, you take me with you. There
are other people to consider...

Now he's got Danny's attention.

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

Permanently.

DANNY
(seething)
Don't you do this...

JERIHCO TROWER
Come back in, come on. Let's talk.

Danny stays in the doorway, paralyzed.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
I wanna show you something. An
investment...

He goes to an elegant desktop, his bulbous body obscuring
what's behind it...

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
Honestly, I think I underpaid. But
what do I know? - Science was never
my best subject...

And now we see SCOTT'S SCIENCE PROJECT in Trower's hands.

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

MATT (V.O.)
Where's my dad...?

CUT TO:

INT. ATTORNEY/CLIENT ROOM - - FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER

Matt confers with his nebbish attorney, STEVE LEVITT.

MATT
...I need to see my dad.

LEVITT
I need you to listen to me, Matt.
He's on his way, alright? They barely
let me in to see you.

MATT
And Haley, she's okay?

LEVITT
She's been released. She's fine.

MATT
Did you find Danny? - -

LEVITT
Matt. I need you to understand where
you are right now.

MATT
...Where's that?

LEVITT
Against the wall. The U.S. Attorney's
office has an unnamed witness willing
to testify that you tried to sell - -

MATT
Bullshit. Bullshit.

LEVITT
They have phone records, they have
photos.

ON PHOTO(B&W): Matt confers with Trower in the donut shop.

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

MATT
This is a set-up. Agents in my
division - Doug Vinson, Robert
Caufield - you gonna write this down?

LEVITT

I already have their names. They're listed as witnesses for the prosecution...

Matt buries his head in his hands.

LEVITT (CONT'D)

Matt...if this goes to trial, in this climate, they're gonna go for a life sentence. And based on the evidence, if you plead "not guilty", they'll get it.

On Matt, sinking inside his skin, we PRE-LAP:

INSPECTOR WYATT (V.O.)

Your partner says he was framed. What d'you think?

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - START ON DANNY

At a table, hands before him.

DANNY

I think he's right.

He sits across from two Office of Professional Responsibility(OPR)inspectors Wyatt and KAYHILL.

INSPECTOR WYATT

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

DANNY

Matt wouldn't do that.

INSPECTOR WYATT

Once again: You have no knowledge of - -

DANNY

(snaps)

How could I have knowledge of something that never happened?

(then)

No. I have no knowledge of him being involved with *anything* illegal.

Inspector Kayhill leans closer, asks:

INSPECTOR KAYHILL

Do you have any proof, of any kind, to support your partner's innocence?

A long beat. Danny knowing how he has to answer, we --

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURT - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - NO SOUND

A stern judge, a white lion, settles behind the Leviathan podium, Matt and Levitt sitting as he does.

In the pews behind them, we see Gort, Walt Vanetti and Jane(Walt's girlfriend)as well as Vinson and Caufield.

Over this, we HEAR:

VINSON (V.O.)
You hear the news?

Matt and Levitt stand, addressing the judge(os).

VINSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm talking to you, bro.

Jane cries. Walt shakes.

VINSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your boyfriend entered a "no contest"
plea. Cut a deal.

PICK UP WITH:

INT. HALLS - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Vinson trails after a heedless Danny...

VINSON
Shit, with the evidence they had
against that fucker - -

- Danny spins, grabs a fistful of Vinson's shirt, slamming him against the wall. Breathing fire.

VINSON (CONT'D)
Easy, tough guy...easy...

Vinson leads Danny's gaze down the hall - Inspector Wyatt approaching. Danny relinquishes his grip.

INSPECTOR WYATT
Agent Sloane. Until you're officially
cleared of our investigation, you're
to have no contact with Vanetti - -

DANNY
Where's he doing his fall?

INSPECTOR WYATT
You understand me? No contact.

DANNY
I understand. Where's he doing his
time?

A beat.

INSPECTOR WYATT
Marion.

By the look on Danny's face...that can't be good.

SFX: A hissing sound.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

A running sink. A steamy mirror. Danny. Head bowed, body bereft, he shakes two pills into his palm. Swallows dry.

He studiously avoids his face in the mirror; there aren't enough pills in the world to dull this pain.

WALT VANETTI (V.O.)
I need you to stay strong, pal...

CUT TO:

INT. VISITATION ROOM - - FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER

Matt conceals his wrist and ankle shackles under the table, his dad across from him.

WALT VANETTI
When you get in there, there's a
guard who worked with me, name a'
Kitt. I already sent word you're
coming...

Matt averts his dad's eyes, a deep sense of shame here.

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)
And I put that lawyer on retainer,
Rebeck. We're gonna need him.

MATT
How can you afford that?

WALT VANETTI
Don't worry about that.

MATT
(realizing)
Oh, pop...not the cabin...

WALT VANETTI

(a beat)

I don't need a fucking cabin...

Seeing his son softening, Walt leans closer. Fierce:

WALT VANETTI (CONT'D)

You are strong, Matthew. You hear me? The Marines, the academy, *me*. You been training your whole life for this. This will not break you.

Matt stares back, face a grimace, not so sure.

WALT VANETTI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

"I will walk through the Valley of death but I will fear no evil..."

CUT TO:

INT. GORT'S OFFICE - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

Danny leans in the doorway...

DANNY

I need a favor.

GORT

Uh-oh. What's up?

DANNY

Vanetti's record. I don't want it to mention him being an agent.

GORT

You gotta admit, there's a poetic justice to it.

DANNY

This doesn't have anything to do with justice.

(then)

Can you do it or not?

GORT

I'll see what I can do.

Before Danny can exit - -

GORT (CONT'D)

Hey. You're a good man, Sloane.

Danny looks like he wants to tear his teeth out.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING CELL - - FEDERAL DETENTION CENTER

Matt sits on a slab of granite, encased in glass. A penal cubicle. Outside, a TV plays CNN(os).

And he looks at himself on the television, ferried out of the federal van like a common criminal.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - DAY

Agent Tina Stiles walks from the building - a car HORN grabbing her attention. She turns to see a familiar Audi.

INT. DANNY'S AUDI - - STATIONARY

DANNY. Behind the wheel. Gripping it tight. Sweat percolating. Silence. Then:

DANNY

...I don't know if I can do this.

Stiles sits beside him.

STILES

You don't have a choice. You think I'm not dying here? But I got a little girl, and I will do anything to preserve her health and happiness.

DANNY

That include watching a good man, an innocent man, suffer for what we did?

She puts her hand on the door. Before she goes...

STILES

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

With that, she disgorges, Danny shuddering with the slam of the car door as his gaze goes to the ashtray where...

...We see the APARTMENT KEYS Matt gave him.

CUT TO:

INT. VISITATION ROOM - - DETENTION CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Haley enters the room, avoiding Matt's eyes as she skittishly settles in across from him. She's been crying.

HALEY
(almost a whisper)
Hi...

MATT
I'm sorry you have to see me like
this, Hale...

HALEY
I've been *trying* to see you.

She reaches out to touch him - a guard BANGING on the glass
outside. Shaking his head "no".

MATT
Yeah, they're not big on PDA here.

He forces a laugh. Sounds more like a sniffle.

MATT (CONT'D)
My attorney, he said when all's said
and done, I could end up just serving
three...

HALEY
...Three...?
(months)

Matt's face tells the tale: Three years.

MATT
But we're gonna keep investigating.
I mean, you don't frame somebody and
not leave loose ends...

His voice trails off. Knows how that must sound.

MATT (CONT'D)
I can get through this. With you, I
can. We can. We can - -

HALEY
Matt...

MATT
...Find a way. We can - -

HALEY
Matt.

He stops. She softens:

HALEY (CONT'D)
I can't.

MATT
...What?

HALEY

I can't.

MATT

You can't...?

Tears trickle down her face as she stands...

HALEY

...Be a part of this.

Sobbing, she hastily retreats, Matt watching stoically as she waits to get buzzed out.

Matt just sits there, gobsmacked, staring at the wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANNY'S HOUSE - - NIGHT

Like a zombie, Danny slugs towards his house. Lifts Scott's perpetually felled bicycle. Sets it upright.

And he deposits himself on the front steps, elbows on knees, his body defused of all strength and fortitude.

The porch light clicks on, Anna peeling the drape back to look out. A moment later, we hear bolts being unlocked.

She steps outside, clad only in her nightshirt. And she settles beside him. And they sit for a while before...

DANNY

*Help me...please...you're the only
one that can save me...*

He's quietly crying. Maybe, the first time she's ever seen him do so. And she reaches over. Takes his hand in hers.

And they sit like this, in silence, as we...

FADE TO BLACK:

SOUND: BREATHING. In your ear. Growing heavier...

CUT IN:

ECU ON MATT (LIPSTICK CAMERA), walking unsteadily closer, trying to contain the tsunami within as we WIDEN to see...

...He's in a single-file line, ready to board the prison bus to ferry him to Marion.

His peers, a taxonomy of rage and regret, size him up. An imposter in their ranks.

Intercut the following:

INT. GARAGE - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - DAY

Danny watches as Anna sweeps through the cluttered space, searching for all of his secret narcotic hiding places.

She finds a Vicodin bottle in the back of a high shelf. Tosses it in a garbage bag. Keeps going...

INT. PRISON BUS - - MOVING

Matt sits beside a skinny Latino, staring at the ground as if in search of lost change. But feeling eyes upon him, he looks back up to see a Herculean brother glaring at him.

Dude blows him a kiss.

INT. CUBICLE - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

Danny. Back at work(notice Scott's First Place Ribbon pinned to the wall), unable to focus, gaze shifting to Matt's now vacant work space.

EXT. PRISON BUS - - MARION PRISON - - DAY

Matt steps off the bus, shackled feet shuffling along the dirt until he looks up at...

MARION. A federal fuck you. A hulking grey whale.

INT. BATHTUB - - HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Danny sits in an ice bath, shivering, no more pills to dull the pain. In agony, his eyes are red-rimmed and ruinous.

INT. PROCESSING - - MARION FEDERAL PRISON - - CONTINUOUS

Another line of dregs, Matt steps forward to receive sandals, a towel and an orange jumpsuit.

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

A disaster zone, the contents of the cabinets cleaned out, Danny searches for a tiny white pill.

INT. CELL BLOCK D - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt steps from the light of the corridor into the all-consuming DARKNESS of his cell. End intercuts.

THE CLANG OF THE CLOSED CELL DOOR MORPHS INTO -

INT. HALLWAY - - SECOND FLOOR - - CONTINUOUS

Knock-knock. Scott taps on the bathroom door.

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

Danny sits on the floor, all ashiver, knees pulled to his chest, errant bathroom items sprawled all around him.

No pills left.

He sniffles in emotion. His voice measured when he says:

DANNY
Just give me a minute, Scott...

But he only buries his head between his knees, trying to control his tremulous body.

KITT (V.O.)
You gonna haveta' make a decision...

CUT TO:

INT. MATT'S CELL - - BLOCK D - - CONTINUOUS

CAROL KITT. The prison guard Matt's dad mentioned. A ball of ebony angst, she's as vulnerable as an M-1 tank.

KITT
It's just like the world outside.
You gotta decide who you're gonna be.

Matt listens through the prism of prison bars.

KITT (CONT'D)
And you gotta rid yourself of all
that would do you harm...

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

Danny lifts the lid off the commode, a bottle of Vicodin taped to the inner wall.

KITT (V.O.)
Emotion. Anger. Hope. None of
it'll help you in here...

Danny stares at the bottle, hand atremble. Finally, he empties the pills into the toilet. FLUSHES.

INT. MATT'S CELL - - BLOCK D - - CONTINUOUS

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

Matt's silent, shrinking before our very eyes. And Kitt leans closer, emphatic:

KITT (CONT'D)

Here's the discipline: You do whatever
you have to do to survive. You
understand me? Whatever. You have.
To do.

CUT TO:

INT. MATT'S CELL - - D BLOCK - - NIGHT

Shroud in darkness, on his cot, Matt stares up at the low ceiling, screams and shouts echoing off the walls.

Marion at night. A vulgar lullaby.

A pillow over his head, Matt turns to face the wall, eyes closed tight as fists but...THE SCREAMS WILL NOT CEASE.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - MORNING

Danny's Audi pulls into its reserved spot, a noticeably empty space beside it.

INT. DANNY'S AUDI - - STATIONARY

The engine still running, Danny looks at the name embossed on the wall: AGENT MATTHEW VANETTI.

His gaze goes back to the ashtray: The keys Matt gave him to his apartment still there.

Galvanized, he puts the car in reverse, and we --

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN FLOOR - - NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL - - CONTINUOUS

Danny moves towards the admissions desk.

INT. PEDIATRIC WARD - - HOSPITAL - - CONTINUOUS

Haley walks to the nurses' station, clipboard in hand. She glances down the hall to see Danny get off the elevator. She steps out of view.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Your high school cafeteria. In hell.

Matt shuffles down an assembly-line of indelible delicacies. Snags a rice pudding cup, convening to an empty table...

He studies his food, deliberating as a shadow eclipses him.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Bad decision.

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

DRAG QUEENS

Matt glances at his pudding. Looks back up.

MATT

You thinkin' Jell-O would'a been the
way to go?

The leader, WESTON, leans closer, dark lipstick to match his
obsidian eyes, a baritone burr to belie his long lashes...

WESTON

We'll see how long that sense of
humor lasts, buttercup.

MATT

Sorry. Didn't know there was assigned
seating...

He wisely grabs his tray and looks for another table.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - PEDIATRICS - - CONTINUOUS

Haley leaves room #3, grabbing paperwork before entering...

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM #4 - - PEDIATRICS - - CONTINUOUS

Head bowed in the clipboard(only now seeing the name on the
form), she looks up to see Danny atop the examination table.

HALEY

Dan.

Surprised, she reflexively - if awkwardly - hugs him.

HALEY (CONT'D)

...What're you doing here?

DANNY

Wanted to make sure I saw you.

Meaning: He knew she'd try to avoid him.

HALEY

Well, it's good to see you.

They both know that's a lie.

DANNY
I won't take up your time. I wanted
to give you these...

The apartment keys. In her hands. Danny gauges her reaction.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt. Alone at a table. Acutely aware of the environs. A table of Aryans. Of Muslims. Of Hispanics. More segregation than 1958 Alabama.

An avuncular man, STUART, sits down beside Matt. Nods. Smiles. Looks like your accountant.

CUT TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM #4 - - PEDIATRICS - - CONTINUOUS

The apartment keys in her hand, there's an awkward pause...

HALEY
Thanks for bringing these. I wish we
weren't so - -

DANNY
Busy? No, I get it. I'll get outta'
your way.
(the elephant in the
room)
You been to see him, Haley?

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Stuart HUMS a cheerful tune, Matt glancing over, annoyance masked as amusement. The humming gets progressively louder.

CUT TO:

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM #4 - - PEDIATRICS - - CONTINUOUS

HALEY
Have you been to see him?

DANNY
I can't - not as long as the
investigation's going on.

HALEY
Seeing as how you've always abided
by the rules...

DANNY
What does that mean?

HALEY
Matt thought you walked on water. I
knew better. See, I have ten year-
old's trying to lie to me all day, I
know the signs.
(a beat)
You abandoned him a long time before
I did, Danny.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

And the humming persists, Stuart growing more animated.

MATT
Bro, you gotta do me a favor and - -

WHACK! Stu explodes, swinging his tray across Matt's jaw.
Instantly atavistic, he pounces, reigning blows on Matt.

Blood in the air, INMATES simply watch the beating, laughing
and howling approval. Violent indifference.

PRISON GUARDS crash in, donning riot gear, swinging shields
and truncheons, pulling Stu off the battered Matt.

Curled into a fetal ball, Matt flinches from invisible blows
as guards remove Stu from the hall(he's begun to hum anew).

Inmates look down at Matt, laughing(Weston:"Girlfriend's
gonna need some makeup.")

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

The Audi wheels in, Danny disgorging to see workmen removing
Matt's name from the parking spot pavement beside his.

Danny just stands there, watching as they scrape the last
vestiges of Matthew Vanetti's name away.

CUT TO:

INT. RECREATION ROOM - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

A running TV. A broken down couch. Danny lounges, smoking.
Gort enters. Pours coffee.

GORT
How you holding up?

DANNY

Fine.

He watches a muted daytime soap opera on the TV.

GORT

Maybe, you oughta' take some time.
You've got the days if - -

DANNY

I'm fine.

Gort focuses on the cigarette in Danny's hand - the most benign substitute for his pain killer addiction.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Recently acquired.

Gort pointedly looks at the "NO SMOKING" sign. Danny looks at it, too. Keeps right on smoking.

GORT

I think you need to talk to someone.

DANNY

I talk to people all the time.

GORT

Don't be an idiot. You know what
I'm saying...

Therapy.

DANNY

Not interested.

GORT

Not up to you.

He hands a mandatory Psych Consult Form to Danny.

GORT (CONT'D)

And by the way, OPR cleared you.
Cleared the whole division. Final
ruling is Vanetti acted alone.

Danny takes that in, looking back at the muted TV as a daytime actor unleashes a silent scream, and we --

CUT TO:

INT. INFIRMARY - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

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

KITT

The doctors, they'll keep you here a week. More if you want...

He struggles to lean up. It hurts to breathe.

MATT

Fine by me...

KITT

Thing is...it's ghetto Gomorrah out there. And you, you already made your first impression. You already been tagged a lamb. You seek shelter here, you're reinforcing that impression...

MATT

I cracked three ribs...

Hold on Kitt: Furniture has more empathy.

MATT (CONT'D)

What do I do?

KITT

Make a *second* impression.

Matt infers what that means from the look in her eye.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

How we feelin'?

The elfin doctor steps between Matt and Kitt.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

We'd like to keep you for general observation for another six days or so. How's that sound?

Matt looks at Kitt. Edges gingerly onto his feet, slipping painfully into his shirt before hobbling out of the room.

The doctor turns to Kitt, befuddled. Kitt shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDI - - STATIONARY

Engine idling, Danny sits in his car, gathering himself; trying to summon strength. And we understand why when we PAN OUTSIDE to see...Marion Federal Prison.

CUT TO:

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

Danny hastily spills from the car as if worried he'll change his mind, feet clapping over the asphalt...

INT. VISITORS ENTRANCE - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

A lone check-in station, Danny waits in a modest line, ID tucked into his suit pocket for all to see.

He surveys the scene: The institutional grey walls. The monochromatic monotony. The theoretical made palpable.

This is Matt's home.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Sir.

The processing clerk. Waving him ahead. But Danny's frozen. Can't move. Just wants to bail.

He grabs his cell, a call coming in. Answering with:

DANNY

(into cell)

Sloane...

He gestures to the clerk. *One minute.* Turns and exits...

EXT. PARKING LOT - - MARION - - DAY

Bounding out, cell tucked to his ear, conversing:

DANNY

(into cell)

...okay...yeah...good...

He stops on a dime. Simply slaps the cell closed. And we realize there never was anyone on the other line.

INT. AUDI - - STATIONARY

He triggers the ignition, face contorted with shame. Finally, grimly, he drives away from the prison...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MATT'S CELL - - D BLOCK - - NIGHT

Another night in hell. Screaming. Cat calls. Every vulgarity imaginable. Another sleepless night for Matt.

FADE TO:

EXT. STARBUCKS - - OFFICE BUILDING - - DAY

Danny sits at an outdoor table, sipping coffee. Black. DR. ALAN REBECK(34), specialty drink in hand, approaches.

DR. REBECK

I prefer meeting out here. Have a coffee, look at the pretty girls...

Danny smiles(but not for the reason Rebeck thinks).

DR. REBECK (CONT'D)

I don't ever wanna be one of those doctors who --

DANNY

Does this work?

DR. REBECK

...Pardon me?

DANNY

This *shtick*. The jeans. The hoodie. The fucking frappuccino. I bet you got a 'Lil Wayne T-shirt under there.

Now it's Rebeck's turn to smile.

DR. REBECK

Shtick. That's a word of my people. You're Jewish?

DANNY

Only in spirit.

DR. REBECK

Which part appeals to you? - The chosen people part or the neurotic, guilty part?

DANNY

Take a wild guess.

DR. REBECK

So what's your schtick, agent? - We all have one, right?

Danny takes a sip of coffee. Waits. Then:

DANNY

I'm a con-man. I coast by on a reputation that hasn't been true for a long time. So long that, maybe, it was never true in the first place.

DR. REBECK

And you're comfortable with that?

A beat. Danny nods a terse "no".

DR. REBECK (CONT'D)
You feel guilty about your partner?

Which hits Danny like a two by four until...

DR. REBECK (CONT'D)
Maybe, you think you could'a helped
him more...could'a set him on the
right path...

Danny lets loose with a trenchant laugh.

DANNY
...You got a light, doc?

DR. REBECK
(points to sign)
There's no smoking.

Danny finds a match. Lights the cigarette. Takes a hit.

DANNY
My dad used to say the key to life
was choosing the right vice. 'Course
he died of alcohol poisoning.

DR. REBECK
Maybe, you don't need a vice...

DANNY
Oh yeah, what do I need...?

DR. REBECK
An outlet. Sports. Cooking. *Church.*

DANNY
You ever read the Bible, doctor?

DR. REBECK
Sure.

DANNY
Can you tell me what kind a'
masochistic God murders children so
his followers obey Him? It's there.
Look it up. Abraham. And what's it
say about us when that's our first
lesson of fairness. No wonder we're
fucked...

DR. REBECK
What's your vice then? Smoking?

Danny dumps the cigarette in his cup. Notices two guys,
friends, walking. Reminds him of Matt. Turns him dark.

DANNY

Guilt.

With that, the session over, Danny strides off. Rebeck watches him go, sipping his four dollar Frappuccino, as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. THE YARD - - MARION - - DAY

Cons lift, run, loiter. Matt bench presses. Surprisingly strong for his size, he winces when he racks the weight (broken ribs will do that).

And he sits up, catching his breath. Something grabbing his eye. Or *someone*.

DRAKE. A pony-tailed python, he saunters through like a prison-yard Patton.

ALTERO (O.S.)

You need a spot?

Behind him, ALTERO materializes. Anemic and acne-addled, he speaks with a throaty Cuban accent.

MATT

I'm good, thanks.

ALTERO

Good. 'Cus I don't think I can lift this.

Matt grabs a barbell, all the while clocking Drake as he swaggers about the yard.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

Mi Altero.

MATT

Matt.

ALTERO

You don't mind me saying so, Matt, you look like you're about to do something stupid.

As if in confirmation, Matt stands and walks towards Drake. Altero watches, shaking his head.

And Matt walks up to the fence, ticking glances at Drake - who suddenly walks towards him.

DRAKE

Only two occasions for the look you givin' me, son.

(MORE)

DRAKE (CONT'D)

Either you wanna fuck. Or you wanna fight. And me, I'm not opposed to either.

Matt faces him. Still as stone. Unblinking.

And Drake grins, Matt's weakness emboldening him. He grins right before he...spits in Matt's face.

Altero watches, dread brewing beneath his lids - even more so when Drake jabs Matt in the jugular...

...Matt clutches his throat, bent over, hacking...

Drake cackles. About to club down on Matt's head when - -

- - Matt stands upright, playing possum, giving Drake a five-pound barbell. To the teeth. Iron knuckles.

Drake lurches back in a mist of blood and enamel, struggling to recover but Matt's already barreling towards him, EXPLODING -

And now the cons watch Matt kick the living shit out of Drake, nothing heard but knuckle on bone, until - -

Sirens croon...guards storm...snipers target...

Kitt yanks Matt off the unconscious Drake, holding him back before Matt's body deflates...

And she shepherds him away, whispering:

KITT

You should'a consulted me first...

Matt's dazed, scarlet specs dotting his face and hands; he watches Kitt order another guard, RILEY, to...

KITT (CONT'D)

(re: Drake)

Take him to the Infirmary. Tell 'em he ran into a wall...

As Riley drags Drake, a busted pinata, past Altero...

ALTERO

This wall, how many times he run into it?

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - DAY

Back from a run, drenched in sweat, Danny swigs from a container of orange juice, gandering out the back window.

POV: Scott works on his skills on the asphalt with a tennis ball and hockey stick.

EXT. BACKYARD - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - DAY

Danny skittishly approaches his son - who takes shots on a makeshift goalie. Finally:

DANNY
Can I show you something?

SCOTT
Yeah. Totally.

DANNY
Lemme see how you hold it.
(Scott does)
Okay, shift your left hand down a little lower...yeah, perfect...Try that now...forces you to use your wrist...

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

Anna watches from the second story window as Danny demonstrates how to properly shoot on goal.

And against experience and instinct...she smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. INFIRMARY - - MARION - - MORNING

DRAKE. Splayed on a cot. Broken beyond repair. Jaw wired shut, a ganglia of tubes hooked to his body. REVERSE to see MATT standing outside the glass. Looking in.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Feeling guilty?

A formidable bald man stands behind Matt. This is...

KENDRIX
(offers hand)
Paul.

MATT
(shakes)
Matt.

KENDRIX
Well...?

MATT
Am I guilty?

KENDRIX

Now that's a whole 'nother question.
Do you *feel* guilty?

Matt doesn't answer. Just looks at Drake.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

Guilt won't do you any good in here.
We're sent here to atone for our
sins and all we do is figure out
ways to insulate ourselves from it.
(a chuckle)
Shit. Putting somebody like you in
here? Your background? - Throwing
the henhouse at the rooster.

Matt shifts his gaze back to Kendrix, concerned and curious.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

My daddy told me the most important
part a' the day is the morning paper.
(leans closer)
Don't worry, Agent Vanetti. Your
secret's safe with me.

Matt takes an imperceptible step back.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

But the thing is, you are here, better
or worse. And when in hell...you do
like the demons do. We gotta look
out for each other...

He rolls up his sleeve. Taps his ivory skin.

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

It's us...

He nods to a black man mopping floors outside the infirmary.

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

...Against them.

Only now does Matt notice the tattoo on the back of Kendrix's
hand: A SWASTIKA.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

Drake? - The guy who's gonna be
shitting in a bag the rest of his
life - he's one of us. 'Least he
was...

He leads Matt's gaze down the hall: Five beefy Aryan soldiers
on work detail eye-fuck Matt.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)
 Way I see it: You owe us.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIL ROOM - - ATF DIVISION - - MORNING

Danny snags a pile of memos from his in-box, sifting through with decided disinterest until his gaze goes to...

The in-box beside his. Nameless now, it used to be Matt's. There's an envelope inside. A KODAK ENVELOPE.

Danny removes it, surreptitiously opening it to see...photos: *Matt holding Haley, baseball hat askew, laughing...Matt and Haley at a black-tie gala for the MA...Matt and Danny mock wrestling, mugging for the camera...*

Enough. He can't bear to look at any more. Hastily stuffing the photos back into the envelope, and...

INT. DANNY'S CUBICLE - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

...Putting the envelope in his top desk drawer. Among the pile of papers, pens and assorted items inside, Danny's gaze goes to a BUSINESS CARD.

INSERT CARD: "STANLEY TING. L.Ac LICENSED ACUPUNCTURIST."

Danny takes the card out. Considers it.

CUT TO:

INT. A DARK ROOM - - DAY

We look down on Danny(CEILING POV)on a treatment bed, a million tiny needles in his face, hands, neck and back.

He stares up at us, unblinking, as we PRE-LAP:

DR. TING (V.O.)
 You're Matthew's friend, right?

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - WELLNESS CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands across from DR. TING(40's, fit and fastidious).

DR. TING
 He told me I had to help your back.
 We'll take care of you.
 (off calendar)
 Can you come in on Thursday?

DANNY
 Okay.

Danny removes his wallet, struck by an intense desire to flee. Before he can...

DR. TING
How's he doing?

DANNY
Hmm?

DR. TING
Matthew. Haven't seen him for a while now.

Danny looks at Ting for a beat, weighing options. Finally:

DANNY
He's good. I'll tell him you said "hi".

DR. TING
(slides receipt over)
I gave you a discount since you're Matt's friend.

Which visibly troubles Danny.

DANNY
I'd like the regular rate.

The doctor chuckles. Danny doesn't.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'd like to pay full. Please.

Ting looks at him. Shrugs. Writes up a new receipt.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Tray in hand, Matt moves through with newfound confidence and respect, angling for the table full of drag queens.

WESTON
Look who's back. Cock of the walk.
(cue drag queen laughter)
I help you, handsome?

MATT
I need to borrow some mascara.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - VISITORS GALLEY - - CONTINUOUS

Mascara speckled on his face to conceal the cuts and contusions, Matt bounds through with a synthetic strut (never has a man wearing mascara walked with so much attitude).

He passes a sign (VISITORS GALLEY) and we realize he wears the mascara because he doesn't want his father to see him bruised.

And we stay behind the muted glass as Danny enters the visitor's room to see...JANE (his father's girlfriend).

We don't hear anything. We don't need to. We just see a teary-eyed Jane talking to Matt...and Matt's catatonic, wobbling on his feet, grabbing a chair for balance.

Head bowed, inverted, he unleashes a muted howl, as we...

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. TOWNCAR - - MOVING

Danny, in his best black suit, sits beside Anna - clad in equally funereal garb. And they ride in silence until she reaches over, takes her husband's hand in hers.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - - MOVING

In shackles and an ill-fitting suit, Matt sits between two federal marshals. Shoulders down, head bowed, he's inert. Frozen with despair.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - - EVANSTON - - MORNING

A bright blue day, a mile of mourners - cops, sheriffs and agents - in formal attire, amassed around a headstone: WALTER VINCENT VANETTI. 1939-2009.

Danny and Anna walk through, Danny nodding to familiar faces. Ad-lib salutations/exchanges.

Words expire upon sight of...Matt. Head bowed, flanked by the marshals, trying to conceal his wrist restraints.

Danny and Anna can't take their eyes off him - no one can. With his battered face, sunken posture and bound wrists, Matt looks utterly decimated.

ANNA
(hand over mouth)
Oh, my God...

All at once, Matt looks up, his gaze falling right on...Danny. As if staring into the sun...Danny looks away.

When he looks back up...Matt's moving towards him.

Treading over uncut grass, his truncated gait makes him look both mechanical and monstrous. He reaches his former partner, his former friend. Inches away.

And they stare at each other for what feels like an eternity.

DANNY

I'm sorry...I am so sorry...

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

And Matt stays utterly still, as if frozen, unblinking and void of emotion.

And Danny, not sure what else to do, hugs Matt...an awkward embrace due to Matt's restraints...

One of the marshals intervenes, grabbing Danny's shoulder - -

DANNY (CONT'D)

Don't touch me...don't fucking touch me...

Which draws every eye that wasn't already there. Matt doesn't care. He's focused on Danny.

MATT

You know it's not true, right? You know I'd never do those things, right?

DANNY

I know...I know...

Anna turns her back, lest Matt see the tears in her eyes.

DANNY (CONT'D)

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

But the marshals are tugging Matt back like a caged animal. His eyes never leave Danny when he softly says...

MATT

Bury me next to my father.

Their eyes stay locked as Matt's led away.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - LATE NIGHT

Danny lays on the couch(his temporary bed), burning a hole into the ceiling. Another restive night.

FADE TO:

INT. MATT'S CELL - - D BLOCK - - LATE NIGHT

Matt lays on his cot, bloodshot eyes piercing the darkness as he heeds the customary chorus of screams and cat calls that haunt Marion at night.

Only now, he removes the pillow from his ear and looks up at the ceiling, BELLOWING with barbaric rage, joining in the madness, as we --

SLOW FADE TO:

EXT. MARION FEDERAL PRISON - - MORNING

A grey and gutted wasteland.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Work detail. Matt listlessly folds towel after towel, a doleful, resigned glaze in his eye as Altero approaches...

ALTERO

I'm sorry about your father.

Matt looks at Altero with ice pick eyes, the humanity slowly draining from him.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

Anything you need - -

MATT

I need a razor blade.

A beat.

ALTERO

Now whatchew need that for? You gonna shave your legs, join the faggots?

A prison guard steps pointedly forward, inspiring Matt to return to folding the endless supply of towels.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

...I can't help you.

Matt doesn't react. Just keeps folding towels.

ALTERO (CONT'D)
This razor blade, whatchew planning
to do with it?

MATT
Only thing left to do...

Altero looks at Matt with growing concern.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - MORNING

Anna walks down the stairs, spotting Danny as he stirs awake
from his de-facto bed: the couch.

His back to her, he stretches out. And Anna stops and stares
at the prominent scar on his lower spine.

DANNY
Sneaking up on me?

ANNA
No...no...

DANNY
Kidding...

She can't take her eyes off that scar.

ANNA
Does it still hurt?

DANNY
(turns to face her)
Yeah. But the acupuncture's helping.

ANNA
You miss the pills?

DANNY
Now, I think, maybe, I deserve the
pain...

A beat.

ANNA
You never told me about the day it
happened...

DANNY
I told you...

She looks at him, looks deep. She wants to know. To know
more than he's told her.

Danny goes silent, drifting off before he sits down. Leans forward, elbows to knees. Anna settles in across from him.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Matt was my partner for about six months. It's us and another guy, Lopez. Routine undercover buy. Matt's the buyer. Lopez and I, we're outside. And the thing goes sideways. Lopez wants to charge in, guns blazing. Me, I wanna wait for backup. First time in my life, I'm by-the-book. So Lopez goes in. I stay back. I wait.

(a beat)

I never saw the shooter. One inch lower, I'm paralyzed for life.

(pause)

I figure it was poetic justice, you know? Maybe, I run in...maybe, I help Matt and - -

She stops him. A finger to his lips. On her knees now, she replaces that finger with her lips. And they trade a soulful kiss, growing more passionate, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Outdated periodicals match the outdated furniture. Matt flips through a dog-eared copy of Machiaveli's "The Prince" when an issue of *Sports Illustrated* slides across the table.

KENDRIX

Page twenty-two.

Matt opens the magazine to see...a razor blade. Kendrix moves around the table. Sits down beside Matt.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

You find a Playboy in here and that's real currency. Cons like to tape the centerfold to a guy's back when they're fuckin' 'em. Whatever gets you through, right?

Matt slips the razor blade into his pocket.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)

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

The razor blade, we realize, is intended for "Marcus".

MATT

What about the guards?

Kendrix waves pointedly to Riley - who nods affably back.

KENDRIX

(re: guards)

They pay these motherfuckers 38 G's
a year and they wonder why they're
corrupt. Human nature, *that's* fuckin'
why.

(stands)

Tomorrow. General population.

He struts off, Matt staring at the magazine, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT - - SPORTS CLUB - - CONTINUOUS

From outside the glass, we watch the silent, balletic play
of Gort and Danny. Danny smashes home a winner, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - - SPORTS CLUB - - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Gort sip smoothies post workout.

GORT

I liked playing you better when your
back was messed up...

(off a distracted
Danny)

Dan?

DANNY

(blurts out)

I wanna transfer out.

GORT

What?

Danny just looks back. Gort heard him just fine.

GORT (CONT'D)

Where's this coming from, man?

DANNY

It's been a tough year...

GORT

I get it but...you looking to move
up? Or you looking to move *on*?

DANNY

I just wanna start somewhere new,
you know? Start over...

Gort stares at Danny. Intuits he's serious.

GORT

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

DANNY

Perfect world...I wouldn't need to.

CUT TO:

INT. MATT'S CELL - - D BLOCK - - CONTINUOUS

From behind, we see a shirtless Matt, hands bracing the border
of the sink, staring down at something(os).

ANOTHER ANGLE, we see the apple of his eye: That razor blade.
Perched on the lip of the sink. We see the US MARINES tattoo
emblazoned just above his heart.

Matt stares at the jagged edge with a sense of finality.

And he turns the sink on, picking up that razor blade, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

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

GORT

It's our favorite time of the year,
kids: Sweeps-week. Which means we
get to improve our uc work...

(over groans)

...Alright, alright. We're gonna be
cracking down on convention halls,
pawn-shops, tattoo parlors and other
favored venues of the garden-variety,
gun-running, dirt-bag.

Danny, studious by nature, jots notes down on a legal pad.
He sits apart from the others. In his own ether.

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

Word is M-60's and rocket-launchers
have infiltrated the marketplace in
a big way. It's priority one for
us.

Feeling eyes upon him, Danny looks up to see Caufield staring
at him from behind mirrored sunglasses.

GORT (CONT'D)

Let's crew up: Stiles and Cumonte,
you guys have Armour Circle.

(MORE)

GORT (CONT'D)
Sloane and Vinson you got the Rockport
Convention Center...

Danny shifts his gaze to Vinson - who's chewing gum with
aerobic fervor.

GORT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The hot word, folks, is "Eureka".

The humongous bubble in Vinson's mouth POPS, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. CAVALIER - - MOVING

Danny drives, Vinson riding shotgun, incessantly ejecting
and inserting the clip of his .45.

VINSON
You and me, partners. Pretty great,
huh?

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

VINSON (CONT'D)
Trower's worried.

DANNY
Why? - You not using protection?

VINSON
Funny.
(then)
You're not picking up your monthly
stipend. You put your kid in public
school. Christ, Anna even went back
to work - -

DANNY
Seeing as how you're Trower's errand
boy, you tell him I'm keeping my end
of the deal.

Danny stops at a red light.

VINSON
I think he's gonna need more than
that. I mean, if you can't be loyal
to your buddy, Vanetti, how you gonna
be loyal to --

- - Lighting fast, Danny grabs the .45, shoving it into
Vinson's mouth. His voice low and calm:

DANNY

You mention his name one more time
and I will blow your fucking head
off.

(cocks hammer back)

You understand me?

Vinson's calm for a man fellating a firearm. He nods consent
as a car HONKS behind them. Green light.

Danny pops the clip out of the .45, tossing it back to Vinson
before he resumes driving.

Vinson flips the vanity mirror down. Checks his coifed hair.

VINSON

I remember not so long ago you were
leading the charge, Sloane. You're
no better than any of us. You're
worse. 'Cus ya' think you're better.

CUT TO:

EXT. D BLOCK - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Altero bounds down the empty corridor, cell doors open,
inmates expelled into the yard.

ALTERO

Matthew...recess...

No response. Concerned, he picks up the pace, angling for
Matt's cell at the end of the walkway.

ALTERO (CONT'D)

Matt - -

He stops outside the cell. We don't see what he sees - only
his reaction to it. He's horrified.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. YARD - - GENERAL POPULATION - - MARION - - DAY

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

A hush ripples through. Weights don't lift. Balls don't
bounce. Every eye focused on...

MATT

Barely recognizable with his head shaved to the bone. Due
to the absence of shaving cream, his skull bears many nicks
and cuts, enhancing his monstrous image. And it's clear...

THE TRANSFORMATION HAS BEGUN

He struts past the Aryans - who nod in quiet countenance...past the ROLLING 8'S (comprised of blacks, Hispanics and Samoans) - who are decidedly less impressed.

Matt beelines for the fenced-in walkway leading to...

INT. SHOWER STALLS - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

The incessant drip-drip-drip of showers, Matt paces in concentric circles, his fearsome facade gone.

EXT. YARD - - DAY

The Rolling 8's congregate, sensing something amiss. Twenty strong, they defer to the aforementioned MARCUS - a mountain of muscle and attitude.

INT. SHOWER STALLS - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt bows his head, psyching himself up for what lies ahead.

KENDRIX (O.S.)
Dig the new do, man...

Kendrix enters. More tattoos than flesh, he looks downright diabolical in this light.

KENDRIX (CONT'D)
You know which one's Marcus? Shit,
they all look a' like. He's the
biggest nigger out there.

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

Nigger. Nigger. Nigger.

Matt walks closer, his steps resonating off the walls...

Nigger-Nigger-Nigger.

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

Niggerniggerniggerniggerniggerniggerniggerniggernnigger --

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, he slashes wide across his body, scarlet splattering the once white walls...

Kendrix grabs his throat, gagging, gurgling, gasping. A moment before...blood curtains down his torso and he topples like a felled tree, tumbling to the tile...

Matt stares at the detritus of his deed, looking up to see...

THE ROLLING 8'S

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

CLANG. Matt drops the razor, his body going slack.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKPORT CONVENTION CENTER - - ROCKPORT, ILL. - NIGHT

A marquee informs us: *WELCOME TO THE ROCKPORT GUN CONVENTION*.
A packed parking lot, a familiar Cavalier among the cars.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

A cavernous hall converted into a gun emporium, vendors
hawking wares to firearm enthusiasts.

Vinson's voice registers in Danny's ear as he wades through.

VINSON (V.O.)

What do we got?

DANNY

(into wrist mic.)

Nada...

He stops. Spots something(os).

EXT. CAVALIER - - STATIONARY

Vanity mirror pulled down, Vinson primps.

DANNY (V.O.)

(filtered)

Hang on...

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Danny approaches a bony TWEAKER, selling shotguns.

TWEAKER

How 'bout you, sir? Top of the line
hunting rifle right here.

A Remington 870. Ideal for "hunting" King Kong.

DANNY

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

Wink-wink.

TWEAKER

You got ID?

Danny produces his(fake)ID. The tweaker looks at the driver's license. Looks at Danny. Finally:

TWEAKER (CONT'D)

I may have something for ya'.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKSIDE - - CONVENTION CENTER - - NIGHT

Danny drags off a cigarette, leaning against a tan truck.

DANNY

(into wrist mic.)

Walking towards me now. You got him?

INT. CAVALIER - - STATIONARY

Vinson sits up straight, searching for the gun dealer. When he spots the tweaker, his expression changes.

VINSON

(into walkie-talkie)

Abort, Sloane...

EXT. BACKSIDE - - CONVENTION CENTER - - NIGHT

Danny and the tweaker walk towards a U-Haul van...

VINSON (V.O.)

...Abort. That kid works for Trower.

But they're already at the U-Haul, the back door rolling up, the tweaker vaulting aboard. Turning back to Danny.

TWEAKER

Come on up. You're gonna love this.

Fight or flight for Danny. He waits. Hops into the...

EXT/INT. U-HAUL - - STATIONARY

The tweaker negotiates through a wall of protective boxes, Danny on his heels...

TWEAKER

Wait 'til you see this bad boy...

He goes to a CRATE in the corner, lifting the top to reveal dozen hand-grenades and a rocket launcher.

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

This serious enough for you?

Danny stares down at the arsenal. It's not too late to back down. To flee and say it's a bad buy. But...

INT. CAVALIER - - STATIONARY

Vinson leans forward, expectant, walkie-talkie in his hand when he hears the call sign...

DANNY (V.O.)

Eureka.

VINSON

Fuck.

He pops the glove compartment, removing a .38 --

EXT. VAN - - ROCKPORT CONVENTION HALL - - NIGHT

Back doors slap open, five heavily-armed ATF Tac team agents hopping down and sprinting towards the...

EXT/INT. U-HAUL - - STATIONARY

The tweaker cradles the rocket launcher like a newborn.

TWEAKER

...That's the price, dude. I gotta make some money here...

Danny steps aside, ticking a glance outside the U-Haul just before - - the Tac Agents and Vinson scramble into frame, firearms flexed on the tweaker.

DANNY

(badging him)

ATF! Put your hands where I can see them...

Vinson hops aboard, frisking the tweaker as he gives him a pointed glance. It's clear they know each other.

Danny watches, just catching Vinson slip something into the tweaker's hand: The .38. Before Danny can register it - -

VINSON

GUN! GUN!

Danny pulls his piece, spinning to see Vinson step back, the tweaker passively holding the gun, befuddled --

DANNY

NO - -

Too late. In a split-second, the ATF TAC agents open fire, spraying the tweaker. He shakes, torn to shreds.

Danny takes cover from the fusillade until...the gunfire stops, nothing heard but the clatter of shells hitting the floor. He squints through the smoke to see...

The tweaker's bloody body sprawled on the floor, the .38 still in hand. Vinson stands over him. Looks back to Danny.

VINSON

Y'alright, Sloane? That was close.

Danny catches his breath as agents swarm in.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - DAY

Matt sits with Altero, glancing intermittingly at the Rolling 8's seated at another table.

ALTERO

Where's your food?

MATT

Catered today...

Just then, a heavily-bandaged STUART(the inmate who earlier attacked Matt)delivers Matt's tray...

...Follow Stuart as he retreats past the Aryan Brigade; they stare balefully at Matt.

ALTERO (O.S.)

Just a matter a' time before they get to you, man...

Matt's too focused on the Rolling 8's to care.

MATT

Why aren't they eating?

ALTERO

The Muslims in their crew...whenever there's pork, they - how you say? - Boycott.

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

MATT

Enjoy.

Altero eats the pork chop as Matt walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. STILES' CUBICLE - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

A ringing phone. Eyes emaciated, body thicker than when we saw her last, STILES answers the phone...

STILES

Stiles.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

I have a collect call from Marion
Federal Prison, Matthew Vanetti. Do
you accept?

A tense beat.

STILES

(into phone)

Yes.

Intercut with:

EXT. PHONE BANKS - - YARD - - MARION - - DAY

Matt stands among a row of inmates on pay-phones.

STILES

...Hello.

He says nothing. The silence is *excruciating*.

STILES (CONT'D)

Matt. How are you?

She titters nervously at the stupidity of her question.
Matt jumps right in:

MATT

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

STILES

Of course. Sure...

Matt curls into the booth. This call isn't easy for him,
reminding him of the life he used to lead. Finally:

MATT

How's Danny doing?

SOUND UP.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - - CITY HALL - - CONTINUOUS

The director of the ATF presides behind a podium, a fleet of
agents, spectators and media before him.

ATF DIRECTOR

...His efforts led to the seizure of paramilitary weapons destined for inner city distribution. For this we honor...

Danny. In the front row beside Scott and Anna. Reposed in a sharp blue suit.

ATF DIRECTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...Agent Daniel Sloane.

APPLAUSE thunder as Danny walks to the podium, accepting a silver plaque from the director. He shares the moment with his wife and son, smiling before his gaze goes to...

Vinson. In the back. Clapping loudest of all.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - - MARION - - DAY

Matt and Altero at their table...

ALTERO

They're wondering how you got porky pig taken off the menu...

MATT

See the cook over there...?

He gestures to the Hispanic man behind the serving counter.

ALTERO (O.S.)

Caesar.

MATT

Caesar Juan Ramirez. Former resident of 133 Kings Lane, Apartment 3B - where his wife and three sons still reside.

He waves to Caesar - who looks like he's seen El Diablo.

MATT (CONT'D)

You just have to know how to motivate people, 'Ro...

ALTERO

What happened to the little boy who came here...?

MATT

He grew up.

With that, he struts to the Rolling 8's table, as we HEAR:

STILES (V.O.)
Congratulations...

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S CUBICLE - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

Danny packs the framed photo of himself with Matt (the one he swiped from the Kodak envelope) into a box.

STILES (O.S.)
Nice how everything worked out for
you...

Stiles. In the walkway. Danny packs up his entire office.

STILES (CONT'D)
Big transfer...

DANNY
You need something, agent?

STILES
I have a message for you.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELIPAD - - ROOF - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - MORNING

Snow freckles the pavement as Stiles and Danny confer.

DANNY
I thought Vinson was Trower's errand
boy...

STILES
He's willing to let bygone be bygones.
He says you'll owe him later.

Danny's already moving for the stairwell...

STILES (CONT'D)
...Which is better than the
alternative.

...Owing him now.

STILES (CONT'D)
Vanetti called me.

Danny stops. Remember that snow? You can hear it fall.

STILES (CONT'D)
...He asked about you.

DANNY
How'd he sound?

STILES
Like a convict.

Danny takes that in before exiting, the stairwell door closing behind him as Stiles glances across the snowy horizon.

FADE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - - TRACKING SHOT - - DAY

Soaring over sun-drenched landmarks that need no introduction.

Super: **One Year Later.**

...Moving past the Lincoln Monument...the Old Executive Building...the National History Museum, finally **SETTLING ON:**

EXT/INT. THE SENATE - - SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING - - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands, resplendent in a 3-piece suit and fashionable spectacles. Looks like a venture capitalist. Right hand raised, he's administered an oath...

DANNY
...Swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Be seated, please.

Only when he sits do we see the ATF director beside him, a plaque in front of him: "DEPUTY DIRECTOR DANIEL SLOANE."

DANNY
First off, let me say what an honor it is to come before this committee today...

He continues, a captain's ease in crisis, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - SUBCOMMITTEE ROOM - - CONTINUOUS

Danny spills out, laughing with several senators and aides. The ATF director gives him a quick "thumbs up" before Danny spots someone waiting for him...

Anna. Hair stylishly shorn, body newly toned, the year's been kind to her, too.

ANNA
Hey, big shot...

She slides her arm through his elbow, walking the corridor.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Nice tie.

DANNY

Glad we didn't go with the tan suit.

ANNA

Why's that? - I love that suit.

DANNY

I would've sweat right through it.

He opens his jacket to reveal prominent sweat stains under the arms.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Now where are you taking me to lunch?

They exit through double doors, formidable steps below, a bright and promising D.C. day before them.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARION - - DAY

WIDE SHOT: As vast and dismal as we remember it. Only exacerbated by the torrential rainfall.

CLOSER: A sheriff's transport bus expels new residents, cons disembarking in single file fashion. Orientation day.

Marcus and his Rolling 8's watch from an elevated spot, studying the fresh fish. Matt's nowhere to be found.

INT. D BLOCK - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Altero passes Matt's old cell, now vacant, continuing down the corridor. Sounds of grunting heard.

Altero stops. Outside Matt's new cell. We peek over his shoulder, getting a gander at Matt. One thing clear:

The transformation's complete.

Shaved head. Bushy goatee. Torso tattooed with ink. Ten pounds of additional muscle, he's ripped to shreds.

His cell's been arranged into a monastic lair, every object transformed into a de-facto piece of exercise equipment.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN YARD - - MARION - - DAY

Oblivious to the rain, Matt takes his place beside Marcus, gazing through the mesh fence at the latest arrivals.

MARCUS

Sad bunch...

MATT

Then they'll fit right in.

Someone catches Matt's eye. He leans closer for a better look at the African-American inmate at the end of the line...

A scarecrow with skin, it's IGGY TILMAN.

MARCUS

You see something you like?

Matt stares at Iggy. Points to that doggy in the window.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

A computer screen. E-mail popping up as we WIDEN to see Jericho Trower behind his desk. New suit. Same expression.

He opens the e-mail to see an article forwarded from the Washington Post. *"ATF Promises to Crack Down on Corruption in Senate Testimony."*

And there, in the accompanying photo, we see Danny testifying before the subcommittee next to the ATF director.

Trower zooms in closer, the grainy photo of Danny filling frame. Trower's reflection smiles off the computer screen.

MATT (V.O.)

You remember me?

CUT TO:

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

Iggy sits on a rusty cot, Matt standing over him. Marcus and several of the Rolling 8's behind them.

IGGY TILMAN

No offense but I never seen you before. Trust me, I'd remember...

MATT

People change.
(leans closer)
Take a good look.

And Iggy stares at Matt, the realization gradually washing over him. Matt sees it.

MATT (CONT'D)

There you go...

IGGY TILMAN
 (instantly defensive)
 I didn't have nothing to do with
 that mess...

Matt places a foot on the cot, inches from Iggy.

MATT
 But you know about it, huh?

IGGY TILMAN
 Hey, man, I just wanna do my time in
 peace, you know?

MATT
 That's why you should tell me about
 it.

Iggy looks at the Rolling 8's. Arms akimbo, eyes ablaze.

MATT (CONT'D)
 Trower set me up, that's easy enough.
 But he didn't do it alone. Vinson,
 that's a given. Who else?

IGGY TILMAN
 Everybody.

MATT
 Who's everybody?

IGGY TILMAN
 Everybody. I mean, shit, don't hurt
 when your partner's the ring leader.

MATT
 (heard him just fine)
 What?

IGGY TILMAN
 Why you think Sloane wouldn't let
 you arrest me?

FAVOR MATT as the betrayal sinks in, Iggy still talking.
 Nothing heard but the thump of Matt's heart. Finally, SOUND
 RESUMES with - -

IGGY TILMAN (CONT'D)
 ...So we cool?

He looks up at Matt like Jack beholding the beanstalk. And
 Matt stares back, preparing himself for some untold task.

MATT
 Yeah, we're cool.

Crack! The first punch tags Iggy in the cheek. The next, his right eye. The one after that, his chin. And the blows don't stop, Matt unleashing an avalanche of rage as we PULLBACK and - -

CUT TO:

INT. FORD EXPLORER - - MOVING

Scott plays a violent game on his hand-held PSP, Danny glancing over at him with paternal affection.

DANNY

That the one mom said not to play?

SCOTT

(yes)

No.

Sounds of gunfire and explosions belie the claim.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Come on, dad...please...

DANNY

Just 'til we get to school...

Scott smiles. Blasts more aliens.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. ALBANS - - WASHINGTON, D.C. - - MORNING

A posh private school. Where the blue bloods train. Danny's Explorer idles across the street.

DANNY (V.O.)

You got everything, pal?

INT. FORD EXPLORER - - STATIONARY

Scott inventories his backpack...

DANNY

Lunch? Books?

SCOTT

I got it, dad.

Before he exits, apropos of nothing...

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You don't talk about Uncle Matt anymore...

DANNY

What made you think of that?

SCOTT
I dunno. I just think about him
sometimes. Do you?

DANNY
Yeah, I think about him.

SCOTT
Do you hate him?

DANNY
No. No. I love him. He's my
partner.

SCOTT
Still?

DANNY
Still.

Noticing a cluster of kids waiting for Scott outside, Danny
seizes the opportunity to change the subject...

DANNY (CONT'D)
Now get outta' here before I give
you a kiss and embarrass you in front
of your pals...

SCOTT
See ya', dad.

He watches his son run into the schoolyard. To himself:

DANNY
See ya', pal...

CUT TO:

INT. VISITORS GALLEY - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt sits across from his attorney, STEVE LEVITT. Dressed
casually, he's a little fatter, a lot balder.

MATT
Would it have killed you to wear a
tie, counselor?

LEVITT
What?

MATT
Kidding.

A beat.

LEVITT
You look...healthy.

MATT

(droll)

I guess, rehabilitation suits me.

Levitt can't take his eyes off Matt, incongruous. Snapping out of it, anxious, he busies his hands shuffling paperwork.

LEVITT

I'm glad you reached out, I was actually planning to come down and tell you personally.

(talking faster)

I've taken a spot with Fox, Laudell and Ewing - it's a corporate firm. Pretty prestigious, really, a lot of Pro Bono work and very viable for the partnership track...

(a nervous laugh;

back on track)

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

MATT

Congratulations. That's excellent.

LEVITT

(cautious)

Thank you.

MATT

Seems everybody's moving up in the world.

LEVITT

I don't want you to feel abandoned - -

MATT

You can make it up to me.

LEVITT

What? How can I do that?

MATT

Get me out of here.

LEVITT

Well...you know, we've appealed but, you know, your conduct here disqualified you from early parole. And, you know, you're looking at only six-seven months left...

MATT

My father, God rest his soul, died
to finance your fucking incompetence.

LEVITT

I beg your pardon - -

MATT

Don't beg. Not yet.
(leans closer)
File motions, grease wheels, suck
dick, I don't care...just get me out
of here. You have two days. You
and Julie.

LEVITT

What?

Matt reaches across the table. Taps Levitt's wedding band.

MATT

Let me tell you, Steve, and on this
I consider myself a bit of an
authority...you have no idea how
quickly a man's life can fall apart.

Matt stands and exits, leaving a gut punched Levitt behind.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - ATF DIVISION - - WASHINGTON, D.C.

Danny taps away on his computer when the phone rings. And
rings. Finally:

DANNY

(alters voice)
Daniel Sloane's office...

ANNA (V.O.)

What voice is *that*?

DANNY

(into phone)
I told Chris he could leave early.

ANNA (V.O.)

Are you picking me up? - Or are we
meeting at the restaurant?

DANNY

(into phone)
I'll pick you up. Leaving in ten.

ANNA (V.O.)

Love you.

He hangs up. Goes back to his computer. The phone rings. Again, he hesitates. Finally:

DANNY
This is Sloane...

JERIHCO TROWER (V.O.)
Deputy Director Sloane?

DANNY
(into phone)
Who's this?

Intercut as necessary with:

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

Trower admires the Michigan River from his window.

JERIHCO TROWER
A debt collector.

And we see the realization cross Danny's face...

DANNY
This is an open line...

JERIHCO TROWER
You've gone on to accomplish so many things...I thought we might work together again.

Danny's silent. Trying to figure out how to play this.

JERIHCO TROWER (CONT'D)
I'm calling in my debt, Danny.

DANNY
Don't call here again.

With that, shaken, Danny hangs up.

Trower listens to the apian drone on the other end. Slowly, he puts the phone down, thoughts percolating. PRE-LAP:

LEVITT (V.O.)
I've exhausted every option...

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - - FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Levitt keeps his distance from an unshackled Matt. Outside the glass, we see two courthouse guards.

LEVITT

...I mean, I went over every legal precedent available. To be honest with you, I don't even know how we got this hearing granted.

MATT

Don't finesse me, counselor.

LEVITT

I just want you to have realistic expectations.

MATT

Well, I appreciate that. So what's your expert assessment?

LEVITT

It...doesn't look good.

Matt nods as if processing that. Then:

MATT

Not for any of us, I guess.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - - FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

A parole hearing, Matt and Levitt rise as JUDGE COLEMAN, a distinguished black man, enters. Gets right to it.

JUDGE COLEMAN

Let it be noted that the assembly of this parole hearing is in itself extraordinary. To say nothing of the fact that the applicant...

A pointed and unkind glance Matt's way...

JUDGE COLEMAN (CONT'D)

...Has been anything but a model prisoner for his 21 months of incarceration.

Matt simmers in anticipation, fists balled tight.

JUDGE COLEMAN (CONT'D)

But due to Mr. Vanetti's time served, his former ties to the community and several cogent recommendations...this committee is prepared to recommend the applicant's release.

As Coleman continues(os), we see the look of utter relief cross Levitt's face. Matt looks stoical and determined.

There's work to do.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - - FEDERAL BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

New ATF agents are indoctrinated via oath, Danny watching from the back when his cell vibrates. Off caller ID...

INT. HALLWAY - - OUTSIDE AUDITORIUM - - CONTINUOUS

Exiting the auditorium, he slaps his cell open...

DANNY

Talk to me...

JUDGE COLEMAN (V.O.)

Our debt's paid.

Intercut with:

EXT. COURTYARD - - COURTHOUSE - - DAY

A beleaguered Coleman paces, on his cell:

JUDGE COLEMAN

I don't owe you anymore favors, you hear me?

DANNY

It's done?

JUDGE COLEMAN

Say it, I need to hear you say it.

DANNY

You don't owe me anymore favors, Reggie.

JUDGE COLEMAN

Vanetti's a free man. And let me be the first to thank you for giving me and the rest of society yet another reason to lock our doors at night.

Coleman hangs up, leaving Danny confounded by that last comment. He goes back into the auditorium, APPLAUSE echoing from inside, as we --

CUT TO:

INT. PROCESSING - - MARION - - CONTINUOUS

Matt's reissued his civilian clothes, tearing clear plastic bags open to retrieve jeans, shoes, a jacket, a shirt.

QUICK CUTS: The jeans are three inches too big/The shirt's three inches too tight/He ganders at his Marine ring.

ALTERO (O.S.)
You weren't even going to say
"goodbye"?

Matt slides the ring across the desk to...Altero - who stares at it, hesitant.

MATT
It's yours.

ALTERO
No, I - -

MATT
It's yours.

Altero has the good sense to accept the ring.

ALTERO
This life you had...it's done?
(Matt nods tersely)
There's still redemption out there...

Matt laughs before walking off, his gait stiff due to the ill-fitting clothes. Moving like some sort of monster.

SFX: A wailing alarm.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - MORNING

The alarm clock blares. Danny rousing from bed, grumbling, turning back over as Anna exits the bathroom.

ANNA
Come on...you gotta' get up...

DANNY
Five more minutes, mom.

ANNA
I'm serious.

She turns the alarm off. Danny sits up in the bed. Watching as she gets dressed in the mirror. She's stunning.

DANNY
Matt's getting out today.

ANNA
What?

DANNY
He gets released today.

ANNA
That's the first time you've mentioned
him in a while.

DANNY
I think, maybe, I've been trying to
forget him...

Danny looks at her, wanting to tell her everything, wanting
to purge. But he's silent.

And seeing the pained expression on his face, she goes to
him, sitting on the bed.

ANNA
I love Matt. He was a part of our
family. But things change. People
change. He's got a different path
now. And you don't owe him
anything...

Danny looks at her, not sure he agrees.

CUT TO:

EXT. CICERO STREET - - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - - DAY

Amidst the midday flurry of foot traffic, one man stands
out. Walking against the tide. A Sisyphean stride. Matt.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARBUCKS - - CHICAGO - - DAY

(NOTE: You might recognize this as the same courtyard where
Danny met with the therapist, Rebeck - only now we notice
the hospital across the street.)

Matt sits at a corner table, a bandage covering the fresh
tattoo on his neck. He sips water, standing out like a neon-
glow Waldo with his wrap-around shades and skull-cap.

He watches the sea of people flood in and out of the hospital
until he sits upright, galvanized upon sight of...

HALEY

As she exits in a dress and high heels. Same shapely legs.
Same sassy shake. A newfound bounce to her step.

And the mere sight of her makes Matt removes his shades and
smile, enabling us to see something else.

His humanity.

And he walks to her, picking up the pace with palpable excitement until he tracks Haley into the arms of...

...Another man. Oddly, he even looks a bit like Matt. Or how Matt *used* to look.

Matt watches Haley and her new man walk off, arm-in-arm. And we see how hurt he is. How crushed. And how angry.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - - HOUSE - - DAY

A barbecue in full bloom, among the attendees we see Stiles and Gort - whose cell rumbles to life. Off caller ID:

GORT
(answers cell)
Well, look at this. He remembers
the little people, after all...

Intercut with:

EXT. K STREET - - WASHINGTON, D.C. - - DAY

Danny moves among the suited masses. Goes right to it:

DANNY
I need a favor, Gort.

GORT
I'm the one who's supposed to be
asking you for favors.

Stiles' ears perk up. She realizes it's Danny on the phone.

GORT (CONT'D)
What can I do...?

DANNY
Vanetti got released.

GORT
I know.

Danny stops walking. Ducks under a building awning.

DANNY
I wanna talk to him...

GORT
Oh, Christ, Danny...

DANNY
I wanna see how he's doing.

GORT
 He's been in prison. How you think
 he's doing?
 (then)
 Alright. I'll find out where he is.

DANNY
 Can you also - -

GORT
 Don't worry. I'll do it on the down
 low.

DANNY
 Thanks, Gort.

He slaps the cell off. Blends back in with the multitudes.

CUT TO:

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - - NIGHT

The sound of tattoo drills and heavy metal dominates as Matt enters, blending right in with the clientele. He beelines for the only available...

TATTOO ARTIST
 Hey, brother. What're we doin' today?

MATT
 Not adding, subtracting.

TATTOO ARTIST
 Let's take a look.

Matt peels off his coat, exposing the mosaic of tattoos. And the artist appraises his sleeves until...

TATTOO ARTIST (CONT'D)
 Some nice work. Where'd you serve?

Matt stares back. He's not here for small talk.

TATTOO ARTIST (CONT'D)
 Prison tats, the thing is, the
 needles, the ink - they're harder.
 Thicker.

(the bottom-line)
 This shit's not coming off.

Matt processes that for a long time. Leans back, resigned:

MATT
 Then let's do one more.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - - GROCERY STORE - - NIGHT

Grocery bags in hand, Danny and Anna walk to his Ford Explorer. Anna slides into the passenger-seat as Danny places the bags in the back. About to get on the driver's side - -

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Nice ride, pal.

An old man in a Chicago Cubs cap talks to Danny from inside his idling Stationwagon.

DANNY

Thank you...

OLDER MAN

You get one more chance...

DANNY

What?

OLDER MAN

Trower says you get one more chance.
Or then he's gonna start taking things
from you.

Before Danny can process or respond - the Stationwagon peels out. After a moment, recomposed, he gets into the...

INT. FORD EXPLORER - - STATIONARY

ANNA

What was that about?

DANNY

Nothing. Just asking for
directions...

Danny starts the car, clicking on the radio, hoping to drown out his thoughts.

CUT TO:

EXT. PERSHING ROAD - - CHICAGO - - NIGHT

Suburban serenity shattered by a bass-busting, rap-blaring cherry red Corvette. Tinted windows, gold rims, we've seen this car before. None too surprised when...

...Doug Vinson steps out, cowboy boots pounding the pavement.

INT. LOBBY - - CONDO COMPLEX - - CONTINUOUS

PING. A curvy brunette exits the elevator, none too happy to see Vinson approaching.

VINSON
Where you going, sexy?

She walks right past him, accustomed to his crude entreaties.

VINSON (CONT'D)
(calls after her)
Apartment 4G. I'll make us dinner.
(then; low)
Fucking cunt.

Undeterred, he steps into the...

INT. ELEVATOR - - ASCENDING

Vinson studies his reflection off the elevator's mirrored doors. Primping and preening.

PING. The elevator stops, his mirrored image splitting down the middle, giving way to another image...

Matt. Waiting. Eyes full of fire. Fist full of steel.

MATT
Going down?

Before Vinson can pull his gun - *CRACK* - Matt's fist finds his face, blood spurting from Vinson's busted beak.

Matt reaches a hand around, STOPPING the elevator, the ensuing ALARM giving him no pause. He steps back and - *CHA-CHUNK* - racks his Ithaca pump shotgun.

VINSON
(holding his nose)
I'm a federal agent, you fucking
idiot...yeah, you fucked up now,
didn't you?

He doesn't recognize Matt. And Matt just stares at him, deliberating. He knows there's no turning back from here.

Big. Fucking. Beat.

And just when you think Matt's going to lower the shotgun -

BA-BOOM! Vinson's launched back against the elevator wall, a hole where his stomach used to be.

The elevator alarm persists, howling incessantly as Vinson's wheezing for air...pawing for his firearm until...

...Matt's boot. Stabs at his shoulder holster. And a gravelly voice echoes from above, commanding Vinson to...

MATT (O.S.)
Look at me.

Vinson looks up, only now recognizing the man who will take his life. It gives him little relief.

The next shotgun blast takes us to - -

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - MORNING

Breakfast. Danny and Scott shovel cereal, father reading the paper, son reviewing homework.

DANNY

Test today?

SCOTT

End of the week. History.

DANNY

Wanna go over it?

SCOTT

I'm cool.

The phone rings, Scott hopping up to answer it as Anna enters.

ANNA

You taking him to school today?

DANNY

Sure.

SCOTT

(re: phone)

Dad, it's for you...

(before he can ask)

They didn't say...

DANNY

(to Anna)

Hang on. You may be on driving duty, after all...

(into phone)

Hello...

JERIHCO TROWER (V.O.)

(filtered)

Scott sounds good. What's he, ten, eleven, now?

Danny nearly chokes on his cereal. Gathers himself. Gestures to his wife as he takes the mobile phone into the next room...

DANNY

(into phone)

How'd you get this number?

Intercut with:

INT. STUDY - - HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Trower sits on a burdened couch, two of his goons (Seigfried and Roy) across from him.

JERIHCO TROWER
I'm feeling neglected, Danny. You testing me? - I'm starting to feel like Job here.

DANNY
I gave you a fucking pass, you understand me? You keep pushing, maybe, I come after you.

JERIHCO TROWER
This really how you wanna play this?

DANNY
Leave me alone.

He disconnects the call as...

...Trower calmly places his own phone back in its cradle. He turns to Seigfried and Roy.

JERIHCO TROWER
How do you gentlemen feel about our nation's capital...?

SFX: GUNSHOTS.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - - ROCKPORT, ILL. - - DAY

ROB CAUFIELD, in customary sunglasses, stands sixty-five yards from the target, a .223 Belgian Minimi in hand. Before he can unload - -

- - His target endures a fusillade from somewhere else (os).

Caufield turns to his right to see...MATT. Unrecognizable in ski cap, goggles and headset.

MATT
Oh, shit. Sorry about that...

CAUFIELD
How the fuck you gonna go and miss by *that* much?

MATT
Can I borrow some ammo?

CAUFIELD

Can you...? Borrow some advice: Take shooting lessons.

MATT

Still wearing the sunglasses, huh, Robbie?

CAUFIELD

...What?

Caufield turns to face Matt - who removes his goggles. Lets his former colleague take him in.

CAUFIELD (CONT'D)

Hang on now. Lemme explain - -

MATT

Let me go first.

We see the uzi in Matt's hand before we go to a LONG AND SILENT SHOT. Sparks of gunfire, before we --

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S OFFICE - - ATF DIVISION - - CONTINUOUS

Danny returns emails when he's interrupted by the intercom...

ASSISTANT/CHRIS (V.O.)

Rich Juarez returning. Line two.

He stops typing. Picks up the phone:

DANNY

Thanks for calling me back. I'm trying to locate a parolee of yours, Matthew Vanetti...

PAROLE OFFICER (V.O.)

(filtered)

We're trying to find him, too.

DANNY

(into phone)

He hasn't checked in with you?

PAROLE OFFICER (V.O.)

It's not all that uncommon, actually. That's not the problem...

DANNY

(into phone)

What's the problem?

PAROLE OFFICER (V.O.)
 You worked with Doug Vinson and Robert
 Caufield in Chicago, right?

DANNY
 (into phone)
 That's right.

PAROLE OFFICER (V.O.)
 They were both shot to death
 yesterday.

Off Danny, reacting, we --

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - - SKOKIE, ILLINOIS - - MORNING

Middle class monotony. A row of nearly identical houses, a
 pick-up truck parked in front of one. TINA STILES walks
 towards it from her middling edifice.

REVERSE to see we've been watching from...

INT. MATT'S CAR - - STATIONARY

Matt watches from across the street, jacking a banana clip
 into an MP-5 before disgorging...

EXT. STREET - - MORNING

Automatic rifle hanging by his side, brows furrowed, Matt's
 seventy-five yards away from his target when...

A little girl. Trundles from the house. Stiles' daughter.
 Seven years-old. Borne of pig tails and puppy dogs.

Matt slows, watching as Stiles zips up her daughter's coat
 before helping her into the truck.

And he stops in the middle of the street, immobilized by the
 last vestiges of conscience.

As much as he wants to...he can't. And he stands there,
 watching as Stiles folds into the truck and reverses from
 the driveway...

...coming right towards him.

INT. TRUCK - - MOVING

Stiles glances out the side window to see Matt standing
 stoically in the middle of the street.

A chill runs down her spine as they lock eyes and time freezes
 before...she drives past.

STILES' DAUGHTER (O.S.)
Who was that, mommy...?

STILES
(in the rear-view)
Nobody, honey...nobody...

She knows Matt spared her.

EXT. STREET - - SKOKIE, ILLINOIS - - MORNING

Matt watches the truck diminish in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. DOMESTIC ARRIVALS - - DULLES NATIONAL AIRPORT - - DAY

A mass exodus of travelers move like trained cattle towards the baggage carousel. Two men stand out...

SEIGFRIED AND ROY

Stalking right past and exiting into the Virginia sunlight.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA - - DAY

Danny's Explorer pulls up alongside a Ford Taurus bearing federal plates. Peels down the window.

DANNY
Anything?

Two suited agents inside the Taurus. Watching Anna and Scott.

SURVEILLANCE AGENT #1
No, sir. Nothing. We're all good.

Danny nods. Pulls into the driveway to his home.

CUT TO:

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

Danny enters to find Scott playing his hand-held PSP.

DANNY
Hey, pal...

SCOTT
What're you doing home?

DANNY
Finished up early. How'd the test go?

He goes to the fridge, peeking in as Anna enters...

ANNA
What're you doing home?

DANNY
Jesus. Is it that rare?

ANNA
Yes.

As Danny reaches for a Diet Coke, she notices the .45 in his shoulder holster. She sidles up to him.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(re: Gun)
I thought you didn't wear that anymore...

DANNY
New policy. Mandatory.

She looks at him; can tell when he's lying. To their son:

ANNA
Scott. You can play upstairs...

Scott hustles out.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You gonna tell me what's going on?

DANNY
Everything's fine, okay? I'm just being...cautious.

Before she can push further, his cell vibrates.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(off caller ID)
I gotta take this...

He goes into the LIVING ROOM, slapping the cell open...

DANNY (CONT'D)
Anything?

INT. OFFICE - - ATF DIVISION - - CHICAGO - - CONTINUOUS

Gort sits on his desk, looking outside the glass to see agents in mourning. Several suits interview Stiles.

GORT
Tina saw him. Right outside her house...

INT. LIVING ROOM - - DANNY'S HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

GORT (V.O.)
...She barely recognized him.

DANNY
You get a composite sketch...?

GORT (V.O.)
They're working with her now.

Danny opens the drapes. Looks out at his peaceful neighborhood. His peaceful existence. Feels like a mirage.

GORT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You know him as well as anybody,
Danny - or, at least, you used
to...why's he doing this?

A beat.

DANNY
I dunno.

GORT (V.O.)
We're assuming he's still in Chicago.
But we have no idea where...

Anna enters, staring at Danny, arms akimbo, before we --

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - - MICHIGAN AVENUE - - DAY

STREET ANGLE, we look up at the glass tower, David to its Goliath. Watching Matt ascend in the transparent elevator.

INT. OFFICE - - DAY

A leggy assistant escorts Matt into a cavernous - and familiar - space. TROWER enters from the bathroom, greeting Matt.

JERIHCO TROWER
Don't worry. I washed my hands.

MATT
Nice to see you.

Trower squints. Tries to place the face.

JERIHCO TROWER
...Have me met?

MATT
Maybe, in a past life.

SOUND ADVANCE the inexplicable blare of a car alarm, and --

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. MICHIGAN AVENUE - - CHICAGO - - DAY

Two minutes later. Matt exits the office building through swivel-doors, slipping his wrap-around shades on as he walks down what Chicagoans call "the Magnificent Mile".

BACK TO:

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

CRUNCH. Tower's massive body is flung into a wall, a seething Matt marching closer.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. MICHIGAN AVENUE - - CHICAGO - - DAY

Two minutes twenty seconds later. Matt's further down the block, the car alarm getting louder - -

BACK TO:

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

CRACK. Matt slams a chair over Trower's head, a blur of teeth and testosterone - -

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. MICHIGAN AVENUE - - CHICAGO - - DAY

Two minutes thirty-five seconds later. Matt approaches a crowd assembled around a parked car - its alarm BELLOWING - -

BACK TO:

INT. OFFICE - - TROWER ANTIQUES - - CONTINUOUS

Matt grabs Trower by the lapels, driving him back towards the ambient glass separating gravity from...eternity.

The window gives way, Trower's body plummeting like an oversized paperweight, before we --

CUT TO:

CAR ROOF POV:

Trower falls from 34 floors up...coming closer...and closer...until his body eclipses the screen, sending us to momentary DARKNESS.

A beat of silence before the alarm WAILS anew, and we - -

CUT IN:

EXT. MICHIGAN AVENUE - - CHICAGO - - DAY

Pedestrians and policemen gather around the corpulent clump indenting the car roof as Matt strides past without a glance.

Only the car alarm mourns Trower's passing.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - - HAY ADAMS HOTEL - - MORNING

Danny waits for his breakfast meeting, checking his watch, skittish. Another ATF deputy director approaches.

ATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
They're not here yet?

DANNY
I just got here myself.

The deputy director sits down. Glances at the muted TV running in the bar behind Danny.

ATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
I noticed you're using a coupla' my
guys for surveillance...

DANNY
I'll have 'em back to you soon.
Won't need 'em for much longer.

ATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Everything alright, Dan?

Between Trower's threats and the impending promise of Matt, Danny's perpetually on edge but...

DANNY
Everything's fine.

The deputy director nods. Doesn't believe him.

ATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
(off running TV)
You worked Chicago, right?

DANNY
Uh-huh.

ATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR
You know Jericho Trower?

DANNY
Sure. I knew of him. Why?

The deputy director points to the TV, Danny turning to see CNN coverage of the Trower death.

ATF DEPUTY DIRECTOR (O.S.)
 Somebody threw him out a window.
 And they say there's no justice in
 the world...

Danny cell vibrates. Off caller ID.

DANNY
 (to deputy director)
 You excuse me, Len?

Danny stands. Gravitates closer to the TV.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (answers cell)
 Sloane.

GORT (V.O.)
 You see it...?

DANNY
 (into cell)
 Just now...you need to get an APB
 out with the composite sketch of
 Vanetti...

He stands at the entrance to the restaurant, giving a cursory nod to 2 suits who walk in and convene at his table.

GORT (V.O.)
 We did. We already got a hit.

DANNY
 (into cell)
 Good.

GORT (V.O.)
 Somebody spotted him at O'Hare, Danny.
 He caught a flight to D.C.

Off Danny, reacting, we --

CUT TO:

INT. BMW - - MOVING

Anna drives Scott to school, alternative music on the radio. But we're not there long. We PUSH through the rear windshield and out into the street until, 3 cars behind, we come to...

EXT/INT. TAURUS - - MOVING

The two agents we met outside Danny's house. Trailing Anna and Scott. Surveillance agent #1's on the phone:

SURVEILLANCE AGENT #1
They're fine, sir. Just dropping
your son off at school now...

CUT TO:

INT. EXPLORER - - MOVING

Danny rockets around traffic, blowing through a red light.

DANNY
(into cell)
No! Get to them before that
happens...

INT. TAURUS - - MOVING

DANNY (V.O.)
(filtered)
...I'll call her. Tell her who you
guys are...

SURVEILLANCE AGENT #1
(into cell)
Yes, sir. We're approaching now - -

He doesn't get the rest out because - VROOOOOOOOOOOOM! - A
Yukon truck harpoons the side of the Taurus. A cataclysmic
collision - -

EXT. WISCONSIN AVENUE - - ST. ALBANS SCHOOL - - MORNING

- - The Taurus tumbles on its side like a Tonka toy finally
settling to a stop upside down. Spinning like a top.

Everyone - children and adults - stand in quiet awe. We
hear Danny's disembodied voice shouting over the cell...

INT. EXPLORER - - MOVING

The line instantly cuts out. Danny stabs in new digits.
Punches through a red light.

CUT TO:

EXT. WISCONSIN AVENUE - - ST ALBANS - - MORNING

The Yukon's front grill hangs loose like an appendage, steam
billowing from its hood as...

...Matt spills out, nonplussed. People run past him, angling
for the crushed car. Matt has his eye on something else...

INT. BMW - - STATIONARY

Scott's turned around, looking at the crash through the rear
windshield as Anna's cell chimes to life...

SCOTT
Did you see that?

ANNA
Stay in the car, Scott.

SCOTT
Mom, did you see that?!

ANNA
(frazzled)
...I saw it, Scott!
(answers cell)
There was a horrible accident right
outside the school - -

DANNY (V.O.)
Is Scott with you?

ANNA
(into cell)
He's right here. What's wrong?

Now we see what Scott sees(POV): A beastly creature moving
through the smoke and chaos. Heading right for the car.

EXT. WISCONSIN AVENUE - - ST. ALBANS - - MORNING

Glock by his side, Matt marches towards the idling BMW.

DANNY (V.O.)
(filtered)
You need to get out of there...just
drive...get out of there now.

INT. BMW - - STATIONARY

ANNA
(into cell)
Danny, you're scaring me. Tell me
what's wrong.

CLINK-CLINK. Something bangs against Anna's window.
Startling her. Even before she turns to see...

MATT

The barrel of his Glock pressed against the glass.

DANNY (V.O.)
Anna?... Anna!

Matt smashes the glass, shards spraying before he snatches
the phone from Anna and slides into the back.

MATT
Drive.

Covered in glass, Anna's hands won't stop shaking.

INT. EXPLORER - - MOVING

Danny bellows, laying on the horn as he blasts through a stop sign, narrowly avoiding a collision.

MATT (V.O.)
I need you to stay calm...

INT. BMW - - STATIONARY

Matt glances behind him to see an ambulance and police car arrive on the scene. SIRENS howling.

MATT
Put your hands on the wheel.

His voice is calm, nurturing even. Scott can't take his eyes off him - to Matt's obvious discomfort.

MATT (CONT'D)
Anna. Put your hands on the goddamn wheel.

Her name. She looks into the rear-view. Only now realizing that Matt's the beast in the backseat.

Finally, she puts her hands on the wheel, shifting the car into "drive" as Scott continues to stare at Matt.

MATT (CONT'D)
Turn the fuck around.

Scott obeys, quickly realizing this isn't the Matt he remembers. And Anna pulls from the school, as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. WISCONSIN AVENUE - - ST. ALBANS - - MORNING

Danny vaults from his Explorer, bee-lining for three cops perambulating around the crash. Beyond them, we see the overturned Taurus.

DANNY
The occupants of that vehicle are
ATF agents under my command...

The cops step aside, allowing him entrance...

DANNY (CONT'D)
Who's crime scene is this?

COP
It's not a crime scene, it's an
accident...

DANNY
Then where's the driver?

He points knowingly to the Yukon. Before the cop can retort -
Danny's cell rings. Off caller ID("Anna"), he answers:

DANNY (CONT'D)
Where are you, baby?

MATT (V.O.)
Hey, Danny.

Danny's gut punched. The first time he's heard Matt's voice
in years. Rendered momentarily speechless.

MATT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"Where is she"? - She's in trouble.

The world spinning, Danny finally finds the words:

DANNY
(into cell)
This is about you and me...

Awakened, he's marching back to his car...

INT. BMW - - MOVING

Matt. On Anna's cell:

MATT
I thought so, too. But then I lost
my dad...I lost Haley...I lost
everything...and then it got to be
about a lot more.

He looks at Scott for the first time when he says...

MATT (CONT'D)
(into cell)
Maybe, it's time you lost something,
too, Danny...

EXT. WISCONSIN AVENUE - - ST. ALBANS - - MORNING

A Fire Department van blocks the Explorer in. Danny motions
frantically for it to move...

MATT (V.O.)
Maybe, that's the only way I can
believe in justice again...

Danny folds into the Explorer...

INT. EXPLORER - - STATIONARY

He lays on the HORN before finally, no time to spare, stepping on the gas and...

...Smashing into the Fire van, pushing it aside before continuing down the road. Emboldened. Angry.

DANNY
(into cell)
How 'bout we stop fucking around...

INT. BMW - - MOVING

DANNY (V.O.)
...And you just tell me where to go.

Matt grins. Remembers what he loved about Danny.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - - DAY

Danny's Explorer rockets down the barren road, mountains decorating the periphery, as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN - - ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - - DAY

Matt's father's cabin. Despite the passage of time, it's surprisingly well preserved.

INT. MAIN ROOM - - CABIN - - CONTINUOUS

Shotgun slung over his shoulder, Matt soldiers past Anna and Scott - who are curled in a corner, bodies bound, gags hanging loosely around their necks.

Anna stares at the mantle over the fireplace, photos of Matt. Little League. High school. Becoming a federal agent.

Matt follows her gaze. Suddenly, in a rage, he sweeps all the photos to the floor. Catching his breath.

ANNA
What do you want, Matt...?

He looks expectantly out the window. Foot tapping to a tune only he can hear.

MATT
I wanna know that there's a reason...I
want something to make sense in this
life...

ANNA

Danny loved you...he protected you...

Matt looks at her with white hot hate before erupting in laughter. His hold on sanity growing more and more tenuous.

And he shuffles closer, placing the gag over Anna's mouth, meeting Scott's terrified gaze when he murmurs...

MATT

I'm not the monster here, Scott...

He gently puts the gag over Scott's mouth.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - - ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - - DAY

FOG. Inveterate. Invasive. Headlights pierce the thick veil before Danny's truck drives into view.

INT. EXPLORER - - MOVING

The cabin out of sight, the truck settles to a stop by several hulking trees, the fog blanketing everything.

He pops the clip to his .45, checking ammo - alerted to a loud CRASHING SOUND. He slaps the cartridge home. Exits.

EXT. WOODS - - EXPLORER - - DAY

Headlights on, Danny opens the back trunk, removing the flashlight that sits near Scott's hockey equipment.

He closes the truck, squinting through the patches of fog to see the cabin 100 yards away. A lake to its immediate left.

Flashlight in one hand, .45 in the other, Danny wades closer. Nothing heard but the crunch of grass under foot. Here, now, it's deafening.

He approaches the lake, discovering the source of that crashing sound. Anna's BMW. Ditched in the lake. It's backside protruding like an undetonated missile.

Hustling towards the lake, afraid - heaven forbid - that Scott or Anna might still be inside the car, Danny quivers from more than the cold before...

...He slips on the dirty ice, sent tumbling down the incline, his flashlight rolling into the lake.

On his feet fast, guided only by moonlight, he can see the BMW's empty.

His heartbeat hammering, he grips the .45 with both hands, setting his sight on the pristine cabin before - -

CHA-CHUNK. The indelible sound of a racked shotgun.

MATT (O.S.)
...How's your back, Danny?

A pertinent question considering the barrel of Matt's shotgun finds the small of Danny's spine.

Matt looms behind Danny, his breath visible in the cold air.

MATT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Toss your gun in the lake.

Danny deposits the .45 in the not-so-deep blue sea.

And Matt steps back, allowing his former friend to slowly turn and see what's become of him.

Danny regards him with an amalgamation of terror, guilt and pity. All he can muster is...

DANNY
Oh, Matt...

Matt casts his arms wide. Christ on an invisible cross.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Listen to me, Matt...I need you to
listen to me...I need you to
understand...

MATT
See, that's just it; I'm not an
understanding man. Not anymore.
You made sure of that.

He's calm. Like wet dynamite.

MATT (CONT'D)
I believed in you. I trusted you.

DANNY
Trower was gonna kill Scott and Anna,
okay? He was gonna kill 'em if I
said anything. You don't know what
it did to me...

MATT
Did to you? - yeah, that must've
been hard...

He snorts a derisive laugh. Barely holding it together.

MATT (CONT'D)
But it all worked out in the end,
didn't it?

DANNY

Matt...

MATT

Turn around.

DANNY

Matt, please - -

MATT

TURN THE FUCK AROUND.

Seeing the malevolent glaze in his eye, Danny complies.
Hands raised in symbolic surrender when - -

Crack. Matt slams the shotgun into his back, sending Danny
to his knees in a paroxysm of pain, writhing in the mud.

MATT (CONT'D)

Get up.

When Danny doesn't instantly adhere, Matt yanks him violently
to his feet, shotgun to his temple.

MATT (CONT'D)

We got some people to see.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - - CABIN - - DAY

And while it's still daytime, the fog obscures the light, an
eerie effect as Matt leads Danny through the marsh...

The headlights from Danny's truck pierce the forest like
laser beams, landing right on the cabin...

DANNY

I bought it, the cabin. I bought it
for you. So when you got out you'd
have a place to go...

MATT

Your guilt doesn't absolve you,
Danny...it indicts you. 'Cus you
knew it was wrong...and you did it
anyways.

At the edifice, Matt shoves Danny inside...

INT. CABIN - - CONTINUOUS

Perched against the wall, bound and gagged, we see Scott and
Anna. Danny withers on sight of them.

DANNY

I'm begging you not to do this.
Please. Let them go...

Matt tries to stay focused, eyes glassy, lucidity fading.

MATT

They're all lies, you know that?
"Everything happens for a reason."
That's one of my favorites. Nothing
happens for a reason. There's no
order. There's no architecture.

DANNY

I tried to get them to - -

MATT

"HE WHO DOES NOT SPEAK OUT AGAINST
EVIL, COMMANDS IT TO BE DONE."

A beat.

DANNY

I'm not who I used to be...

MATT

Neither am I...
(then)
I have thoughts now. *Evil* thoughts.
Things that would make you wanna
tear your brain out...

DANNY

It's not too late - -

MATT

To what? Live a normal life? Have
a family? I'm a fucking monster.
This darkness in me...I acknowledge
mine. Can you, Danny? Can you
acknowledge what you've done?

In tears, Scott and Anna shiver in the corner.

DANNY

Then take me, not them. Take me.
(near tears)
Please.

And Matt studies Danny before raising the shotgun. Planting
it firmly against Danny's forehead.

Anna and Scott squirm, protesting desperately.

MATT

You took my life, Danny. You took
everything from me...

Matt closes his eyes, stepping back, anticipating the buckshot kick. Danny closes his eyes, too, waiting...

And we see Matt's jaw trembling, his hand tightening. He wants to pull the trigger...but he can't.

A beat, then:

BRRRRRRRPPPPPPPPP!!! Automatic gunfire rattles the room, spraying everything. Not from Matt. From outside.

Reflexively, Matt yanks Danny down, grabbing for carpet as the fusillade rages...Galvanized, Danny grapples across the floor to get to Scott and Anna...

Matt bear-claws in the other direction, perching under the shattered window, peaking up to see...

POV: Two more headlights next to Danny's truck. Silhouettes outside of it, firearms flexed. SEIGFRIED AND ROY.

Another burst of gunfire rattles the cabin, Trower's cronies
dashing closer...

...Danny shields his wife and son. And Matt sees this,
shotgun still fixed on them.

Danny stares back, defiant, as he blankets Anna and Scott from the relentless blasts tearing the cabin apart.

As soon as the gunfire ceases, Danny unties Anna and Scott - they cling to him like broken magnets.

Danny looks back. Matt's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - - CABIN - - DAY

Matt slashes across frame, taking fire before he dives behind a formidable tree. Seigfried and Roy turn the car headlights off. Smash Danny's headlights. The thick fog pervades.

Matt catches his breath behind a tree, shoving shotguns shells into the barrel.

INT. CABIN - - CONTINUOUS

Danny implores his family to...

DANNY
Find a closet. Stay low.

ANNA
What're you gonna do?

DANNY

Go. Don't move until I come for you.

Danny crawls across the floor, leaning by what remains of the door. Taking stock of himself - no gun, no weapon of any kind. *Fuck it*. He takes a deep breath. Runs out.

EXT. WOODS - - CABIN - - DAY

Darkness lit by reports of gunfire, providing sporadic glimpses before we're plunged back into the fog.

Danny sprints across the field, taking fire before he dives behind several trees. He catches his breath. Looks across the way to see...

Matt. Sixty yards away. On his feet. Shotgun raised. He meets eyes with Danny. NODS.

Before Danny can reciprocate, before he can do anything at all, Matt steps from behind the protective tree and...

...Walks calmly, fearlessly, towards Seigfried and Roy - who squat behind their car. Matt murmurs as he approaches...

MATT

"I shall walk through the valley of death...I shall fear no evil..."

The gunfire's immediate. The first shot tags his shoulder. The next his hip. Neither slows him down.

He moves with measure, purpose and precision.

Racking the shotgun and firing in one fluid motion. It even sounds rhythmic. Cha-cha - boom. Cha-cha - boom.

The windows to the car are instantly ventilated, Seigfried ducking for cover before turning askance and seeing Matt behind him like a murderous moon.

No pithy or parting words here just - cha-cha - boom. Seigfried's blown back, dead.

Danny watches from a distance, his helplessness amplified. But he scampers closer...

...Sees Matt take another bullet to the back, his legs giving out, crumpling to his knees. Roy fires from the inscrutable woods, firing from the veil of fog.

Matt grunts. Gathers himself. Staggers to a stand. Resigned, he turns to face the field. Firing endlessly.

Round after round.

Another shot tags him. In the neck. Right near the bandage previously covering his tattoo.

But still, Matt persists.

Roy fires again, his MR-15 running dry. Frantic, he dumps the clip, grapples for another.

Too late. Matt emerges through the fog like an apparition. Standing over Roy as if ten feet tall.

And, oddly, he looks at peace when he sends Roy to oblivion with successive shotgun blasts.

And he stands there, legs suddenly gelatinous. Staring at Roy's body by his feet.

Danny steps into frame behind him, seeing Matt's state. Moving closer. Wanting to help.

Matt turns to face Danny, shotgun still in hand.

A beat.

He drops the shotgun. Falls to his knees. Barely audible:

MATT (CONT'D)
It's better this way...

Danny runs closer, desperate. *It can't end like this...*

And Matt lays down in the grass, staring up at the just forming stars in the sky.

In death's throes, he's cold. And content.

Only now do we see the blood splattered TATTOO on his neck: A HEADSTONE. With his initials on it.

DANNY
I'm sorry...I'm so sorry...

Like a wayward child lost in a supermarket.

DANNY (CONT'D)
What can I do...? Tell me what I can do...please...

Matt looks up at him, his breaths coming in slow, increasingly distant, puffs of air.

MATT
Bury me...next to my father...

With that, eyes left to stare in endless judgment, his breaths get more spare until...they cease. Matt ceases with them.

And Danny bows his head, sobbing. Racked with regret. And he stays here for what feels like an eternity. Until:

Anna and Scott emerging from the cabin. Settling down beside him. Hugging him. Consoling him.

And still, even in this embrace, Scott can't take his eyes off the deceased Matt.

DANNY

It's okay...we're okay...

He says this. Over and over again. A maddening mantra. A needle caught on a record.

But the more he says it...the less we believe it.

And off this image, Danny unable to look at Matt, Scott unable to look away from him, we...

...TRACK BACK from whence they came, over the grass and tattered terrain until we find ourselves inside the...

INT. CABIN - - CONTINUOUS

MOVING ACROSS the carpet, STOPPING on the framed photos of Matt scattered on the floor. Happy. Young. Full of dreams. And not far from that...a plaque...now broken in two...
"If you can believe it, you can achieve it."

PULLBACK TO:

EXT. CABIN - - WOODS - - EVENING

Slowly ascending from the bullet-pocked edifice, Danny, Scott and Anna still assembled around the fallen Matt...

PULLBACK MORE:

EXT. WOODS - - CABIN - - EVENING

An endless expanse of marsh and muck, the fog ceding to the encroaching nightfall.

The sun's subsumed into the sky, as we slowly...

FADE OUT: