

CLOCKERS

ONE MILLIONTH DRAFT
September 1, 1993

Richard Price
212-605-2852

**FOR EDUCATIONAL
PURPOSES ONLY**

INT: NO NAME BAR - 6:00 P.M.
CLOSE ON CAKE

being carried out of the kitchen, carried by two plainclothes COPS.

Cake reads "Rocco Klein -- 20 IN" and is decorated by a pair of handcuffs made out of blue icing.

WE TRACK the journey of the cake through a parting sea of COPS: uniformed, plainclothes, jacket and tie detectives, and ZERO IN ON its destination -- A round table, the circumference of which is edged with a perfect wheel of maybe one hundred shot glasses alternately filled with vodka (clear) and scotch (dark).

ROCCO KLEIN, 44, red-faced, slightly boozed in jacket and tie, sits at that table and as the cake ZOOMS IN he opens his mouth wide as if to take a bite before it lands inside the rim of shot glasses.

We hear scattered applause.

ANGLE - THE BAR

Everyone facing Rocco, who stands over the cake with a raised shot glass.

ROCCO

Gentlemen ... to God ... because the guy had to been a fuckin' genius to invent this Job. It's been a twenty-year ticket to the greatest show on earth ... May He grant me the lungs and legs for another five ...

Everybody throws back a shot, Rocco lifts a second shot glass, belches into his fist.

ROCCO (contd)

And to God's Clowns, the Yamortz ...

EXT: HOUSING PROJECTS BENCH - SAME TIME
CLOSE ON FIVE BLACK TEENAGERS

perched or draped on the bench as we hear the rest of Rocco's toast in voice-over:

ROCCO (VO)

... they do make my day ...

ANGLE

1) A white kid in construction boots, heavy metal t-shirt, comes up to a black kid (HORACE) on the sidewalk and extends twenty dollars.

2) Horace looks to another black kid perched on the top of the bench (STRIKE) who looks to third kid on the corner (PEANUT), the lookout. Peanut reverses the chain of glances so that Strike nods OK and the money is taken, Horace turning to an apartment building and yelling out "2-0!"

3) The dope-mule, STAN, emerges from a building, drops a crumpled paper bag in a garbage can.

4) The white kid snatches the bag and splits.

5) Peanut, the lookout, wheels to the bench, hisses "5-0!" as a beat up Plymouth Fury screeches up, plainclothes cops (knockos) saunter out.

6) The white customer walking away, oblivious to his close call.

7) The bench. The kids sitting there impassive as the knockos casually descend on the bench.

8) STRIKE'S POV

A) A set of empty windows in one of the apartment buildings.

B) A 12-year-old boy, TYRONE, gawking at him from a loop of chain near the benches.

C) BIG CHIEF, the head knocko, towering over him, throwing him in shadow.

BIG CHIEF
(casual growl)
Gimme that dope ...

Strike (nineteen, skinny, fretful, cleanly-dressed) wearily, routinely, rises from his perch, holding a Yoo-Hoo and extending his arms for yet another frisk.

BIG CHIEF (contd)
(doing a pat-down)
Gimme them vials ...

FUTON

(Strike's lieutenant, getting frisked by another knocker, THUMPER)
Cold, Thumper, cold, cold ... uh-oh!
Gettin' warm now, warmer ...

BIG CHIEF

Open your mouth there, Strike ...

Strike does as he's told as Big Chief searches his skull for hidden dope.

STRIKE'S POV

WE SEE SLOW MOTION an orange Cadillac roll by with Garfields suckered onto the windows. The driver is 35, black, gold shades, relaxed hair, athletic. This is RODNEY, Strike's boss. As the Cadillac rolls by, Rodney shakes his head in disgust, moves on.

OLDER MAN

(projects resident)
You checking that boy's teeth like a slave owner.

BIG CHIEF

(barely acknowledging)
Shut the fuck up ...
(to Strike)
OK, drop your drawers there, Strike, dicky check.

Strike, livid, ashamed, powerless, unzips.

THUMPER

What's a matter, Strike? You look depressed. Are you depressed?

Strike ignores him as Big Chief checks inside his BVD's.

ANGLE - STRIKE'S POV

Those windows again -- this time there's an older woman looking down.

THUMPER

(mock-sincere)
Strike, can I ask you something?
Do you think I'm an effective deterrent in the war on drugs?

Strike looks away while zipping up, sees that 12-year-old Tyrone is gawking at him again.

THUMPER (contd)
Or do you think I'm just a big
asshole ...

STRIKE
(barely controlled rage)
You gotta do what you gotta do.

THUMPER
Yeah? You think that?

BIG CHIEF
(thrusting his hand down Stan
the dope-mule's pants and
grabbing vials)
Ho!

STAN
(getting cuffed)
That ain't mine!

THUMPER
Awright, hon ...
(he gives Strike a hard
proprietary pat on his cheek,
almost a slap)
I'll call you from work ... Have a
nice day.

THUMPER'S POV

A paranoid SCAN of the windows and terraces. Some
hostile or at least unreadable faces looking down to the
scene.

Thumper hoists a FOUR-YEAR-OLD on his shoulders (a human
shield against thrown objects) and heads for the car.

THUMPER
(to the kid)
Walk me, yo ...

CLOSE ON STRIKE - ALONE ON THE BENCH

seething with rage, slightly rocking.

ANGLE - ROCCO AND MAZILLI

exiting from their car at the scene of the raid. Rocco
is holding the uneaten half of his cake, his name still
intact on the icing.

THUMPER
(with kid on his shoulders)
Hey ... how was the party?

ROCCO
(slightly drunk, wearing
sunglasses at 7:00 P.M.)
Good ... You want some cake?

THUMPER
I just ate.

ROCCO
(to kid on Thumper's
shoulders)
Whath up, B?

The kid just stares at him.

ROCCO (contd)
(to Big Chief, coming up with
Stan in cuffs)
Donny ... you want some cake?

BIG CHIEF
No, thanks. How was the party?

ROCCO
Good. Hey! It's Stan the Man.
Goin' in to see your brother? Tell
him Rocco says hello.

ROCCO'S POV

Strike on the bench about thirty feet away.

ROCCO
(to Strike)
Hey, yo ...

Rocco starts to offer him cake, then thinks better of it.
Strike ignores him anyhow.

ROCCO'S POV

A gaggle of little kids, big-eyed, inching forward.

ROCCO
(holding it out to them)
Y'all want some cake?

The kids want some, but they're scared by the loud cop in
shades. They stay put.

ROCCO (contd)
(enticing sing-song)
Come and get it ...

Rocco holds the cake over a wire trash can.

ROCCO (contd)
C'mon ... going ... going ...

The kids stay where they are.

CLOSE ON CAKE

ROCCO (VO)
(disappointed growl)
Ahhh ...

The cake is dropped into the trash.

EXT: BENCHES - FIVE MINUTES LATER
CLOSE ON RODNEY'S IMPASSIVE FACE

framed by his car window as he listens to Strike.

STRIKE (OS)
(ranting)
I mean I just don't give a fuck no
more. I can't take it no more, I
don't got the stomach no more,

RODNEY'S POV - STRIKE

swigging his Yoo-Hoo.

STRIKE
I don't got the heart no more ... so --

Rodney cuts Strike off.

RODNEY
(to a girl, sliding shyly
alongside his car)
What you lookin' at?

GIRL
I like them Gag-fields.

RODNEY
Oh yeah? What's your name?

GIRL
Charise.

RODNEY
Charise? How you spell that?

Strike, disgusted, despairing, walks back to the benches.

RODNEY (contd)
(calling out)
Where you going?

STRIKE

(walking backwards, hand on gut)
I can't take it no more.

RODNEY

(with coy significance)
Maybe you don't have to take it no more.

Strike stands there waiting for more. Rodney rolls off.

EXT: STREETS OF DEMPSEY - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Rocco pulls up to the front of Mazilli-Klein Deli-Liquors, a funky storefront on a funky street.

Rocco and Mazilli exit the car. There's a BLACK TEEN on a pay phone in front of the store, two others flanking him.

Rocco, still wearing sunglasses, marches up to him, grabs the receiver and hangs it up. The kids starts to beef, sees it's Rocco and backs away.

ROCCO

(in his face)
Hey! What I tell you about working this corner ...

KID

I ain't workin'!
(turns his pockets inside out)
I'm calling my girlfriend, man!

ROCCO

(backing him up still)
Fuck your girlfriend, you E.F.-lookin' motherfucker. I told you. This is my corner. You want to hustle your shit? Over there ...
(Rocco points to the corner across the street)
That's your corner. Stay there ...

Rocco and Mazilli march up the steps to the store.

KID

(muttering, semi-defiant)
Ain't no phone over there ...

Rocco stops, turns on the steps.

ROCCO

Oh yeah?

Rocco walks towards them. They're braced to bolt but he heads past them right to the pay phone which he violently rips right off its mounting.

ROCCO (contd)
(heading back to the store)
Ain't no phone here, neither.

INT: "MAZILLI-KLEIN DELI-LIQUORS"

It's an old general store that sells booze on one side and cold cuts on the other -- The clientele is from the neighborhood -- poor, non-white.

One black kid is behind the liquor counter and another is behind the deli counter making a sandwich. There's four black teenagers waiting for their food, along with two white cops waiting for theirs.

Without a word, Mazilli and Rocco take off their jackets and move behind opposing counters.

MAZILLI
(from the liquor counter)
Who's next ...

ROCCO
(from deli counter)
Who's next ...

INT: RODNEY'S PLACE (CANDY STORE) - SAME TIME

Strike enters.

Very small. Candy counter with cash register, Super Mario game and a smaller than regulation pool table.

The store is full-up with younger teenagers (13-15) dressed poorly. Loud, childish, the vibes more like a rec room in a boys' club than a place of business. The stock on the shelves is skimpy and seemingly random.

STRIKE
(to overweight girl
behind the counter)
Where's he at? ...

The girl shrugs, staring past Strike.

Rodney enters the store carrying two cases of soda in a sweaty duck-walk and abruptly the store explodes with his presence, every kid in there jerking towards him like the father-surrogate that he is.

Rodney drops the sodas by a refrigerator and as they bellow in his ear he briskly unloads the cans as if he's working a speed bag.

KID #1
(holding a tipless cue stick)
Yo, Rodney! Rodney! Darron say
Chuckie could kill Freddy, man.

KID #2
Gah-damn Chuckie fuck Freddy up,
Rodney, he just fuck him up!

KID #3
Yo, Rodney, Jason be the baddest,
right? 'Cause Jason be dead already,
so you can't kill him, right?

KID #2
(bellowing)
Freddy dead too! Freddy dead too!

RODNEY
(wincing, straightening up
from his chore)
Yeah well, I tell you who the baddest
is. The baddest is me 'cause I'm for
real ... So why don't y'all go out to
the van and get the rest a them sodas
before I drop some heavy violence on
your ass.

The kids spill out the door to do Rodney's bidding.

STRIKE
(in the sudden quiet)
What do you mean maybe I don't have
to take it no more?

EXT: JFK BOULEVARD - NIGHTTIME

Main drag of Dempsey - 8:30 P.M.

It's funky, raucous and bubbling with neon: bodegas,
smoke shops, video stores and bars.

INT: RODNEY'S CADILLAC

Strike in the shotgun seat.

RODNEY'S POV

Rodney pulls up the Boulevard. Half-dozen teenagers on a
corner hail him, yell out banter. One of his other dope
crews. He's like a general reviewing his troops.

ANGLE

Rodney pulling into the parking lot of Ahab's, a fast-food drive-through dominated by a thirty-foot-high revolving plaster AHAB complete with harpoon.

Rodney parks in a way that they have a clear view of the people inside.

CLOSE ON STRIKE

sitting in the car watching the restaurant manager through the glass, a tall gangly kid in a tricot jersey.

RODNEY

You know what you looking at?

STRIKE

(shrugging)

Yeah ... Darryl.

RODNEY

(looking angry, but calm)

You looking at the portrait of a thief ...

Strike says nothing.

RODNEY (contd)

(growing livid)

That boy do nothing but lay back, pass some Baggies, rake in the dough. Nice indoor work, clean, safe ...

STRIKE

(shocked, jealous)

You got Darryl sellin' ounces? How come you picked him, man? How come you didn't pick me for this ... ?

RODNEY

'Cause you're like my son, man.

STRIKE

I'm your son? So how come you got me on the street?

RODNEY

I had this dream last night? I was in the desert and I had all the kids, my biology kids and all the kids from the store? They was all laid out in front of me like a army and God came up, man, and he pointed to you, and he said to me,

(MORE)

RODNEY (contd)

"This one's gonna be your sword.
This one's gonna be your staff."
God said that ... pointed right at you.
(beat)
Darryl wasn't even in that dream
'cause the nigger's a thief, so ...

Strike stares at Rodney. Rodney stares at Darryl.

STRIKE

(after a stunned beat)
Why don't you get Errol for this?

RODNEY

(miming shooting a needle in
his arm, whispering)
Errol done gave himself the Virus.

Strike winces in horror.

RODNEY (contd)

Besides, can you see Errol in there
selling ounces? He can't deal with
the public.

EXT: AHAB'S LOT - 10:00 P.M.

Strike is in the parking lot, pacing muttering pumping
himself up. He's freaked -- can he do it? Should he do
it?

STRIKE'S POV

The interior of Ahab's fluorescently lit like a glowing
stage, Darryl moving in and out of Strike's view. No
customers, just Darryl.

Strike talking to himself, going out of his mind. He
turns as if to go through with it, turns again to flee,
to Ahab's, to flee, spinning, spinning, what to do ...

STRIKE'S POV

Across the lot is a strip of take-out joints, bars and
mini-marts, including Rudy's (in neon).

INT: RUDY'S BAR

Strike enters into a reddish dampness, not many patrons,
those that are there are slumped on their stools like
their spines have melted.

Strike looks tentative -- he's not a bar person and if he
was, this place is too depressing and hospital-like.

STRIKE
 (to the bartender)
 You got Yog-Hoo here?

BARTENDER
 (squinting, incredulous)
 Got what?

Some people at the bar stare at him -- older, harmless people scoping him out, expressionlessly.

VOICE (OS)
 Hey-y.

Strike turns and sees VICTOR, one of the lumps at the bar, black kid, 21 years old.

STRIKE
 (to himself, aggrieved)
 Gand-damn.
 (to Victor, weakly)
 Hey ...

They clasp hands. Victor's not that drunk, just at the dreamy, shiny-eyed stage. He's dressed in street clothes; a hooded sweatshirt like Strike. On the bar is a gym bag, the bright orange polyester of a fast-food uniform peeking out. He's doodling on a wet cocktail napkin.

STRIKE (contd)
 (halfheartedly)
 Yeah, I was just thinking about you.

VICTOR
 Yeah? Me too.

STRIKE
 (anxious, wired)
 Yeah? Good, good.

Victor looks up at him, he's picked up on Strike's vibes. Strike stares at him helplessly for a second, then blurts out:

STRIKE (contd)
 You know that Ahab's there --
 (points across the street)

VICTOR
 (doodling on his napkin, wry)
 Yeah, that's the competition.

STRIKE
You know that guy Darryl in there?

VICTOR
Darryl?

STRIKE
He's some bad people.

BARTENDER
(pops a can of Coco Lopez mix)
Try this ... it's sweet.

VICTOR
(mild)
Oh yeah? Bad people how?

Strike ponders saying more, his mouth working for a beat as he eyes the other barflies.

VICTOR (contd)
(cool, doodling, downing a shot)
Bad people how?

STRIKE
(blurty, desperate bullshit)
He -- he beat up this girl Charise, man. This girl come in for a job interview. He took her into the back office, he told her if she want the job she got to give it up an' she wouldn't so he beat her up, man. She's like fourteen, thirteen and like she don't got no father or brother or nobody to, you know ... so I don't know, he's just some bad people.

VICTOR
(wry, like he knows Strike's lying)
A woman-beater.

STRIKE
(helpless)
I guess so.

VICTOR
(fucking with him)
A dope-dealing woman-beater.

STRIKE
(paranoid, freaked)
I don't know nothin' about that.

VICTOR
(like he can see through Strike)
A woman-beatin' dope-dealer.

STRIKE
(sweating, not knowing what
he's doing or saying now)
Her mother's all worked-up, man. She --
she'd like to see him dead, man.

VICTOR
(ironic, pounding his fist in
mock-indignation)
Got to be got.

STRIKE
(squirming)
Yeah, well ...

VICTOR
(mockingly)
Gon' peel his cap ...

Strike stands there squirming, fuming.

VICTOR (contd)
(in same tone)
Buckshot to the dome!

STRIKE
(growing more annoyed
than tense)
Man, why you talking this shit?

VICTOR
(as in A-K 47)
A to the motherfuckin' K!

STRIKE
(growing angry, frustrated;
low hiss)
I'm tryin' to talk to you about
something.

VICTOR
(soberly)
Yeah? What's that?

Strike balks. It's a good question.

STRIKE
(fed-up, wiping the slate
clean)
Nothin' ... I got to go.

VICTOR
 (distant, an announcement)
 Davishing ...

STRIKE
 (thrown)
 What?

VICTOR
 I was workin' in New York today? I do security in this ladies' clothing store? I got this other job too, now, so I was standing there and this lady, she just come out of the dressing room wearing nothing but this shorty kimono. She come up to me, she says, "How do I look?" You know what I said? I got all flustered so I said, "Davishing."

Victor shakes his head in disgusted amazement at himself.

ANGLE - CLOSE ON STRIKE

staring at Victor -- absorbing his sodden, self-pitying state.

STRIKE
 (more gentle)
 I got to go.

VICTOR
 (out of the blue)
 I miss my kids, man.

STRIKE
 (tight, grin)
 So go home, then ...

Strike heads out of the bar.

HOLD ON Victor -- downing another shot and doodling.

VICTOR
 (after a beat)
 Davishing ...

EXT: RUDY'S BAR

Strike exits bar, heads across the street towards Ahab's. He puts his hood up, hunches down, hands in sweatshirt muff --

CLOSE ON STRIKE

gripping a .25 auto in the muff of his sweatshirt.

INT: AHAB'S

Greasy blinding overheads in a white and chrome interior.

Strike trying to be invisible, hands deep in the muff of his sweatshirt. He's all eyes under his hood.

VOICE (OS)

What's up, money?

Strike wheels to see Darryl beaming at him from behind the counter.

DARRYL

(friendly)

What you doin' here, black?

(giving him the up and down)

I thought you din't eat this shit ...

CLOSE ON STRIKE

Speechless, moving for the side exit.

INT: MAZILLI-KLEIN DELI-LIQUORS - 11:00 P.M.

CLOSE ON BLACK TEEN

at Mazilli's counter, struggling for breath, Rocco's forearm wrapped around his throat.

MAZILLI

(building two heros)

What the fuck ...

ROCCO

(pulling out six chapsticks
from the kid's pocket)

Hey-y, it's Susy Chapstick!

MAZILLI

(slapping the kid with a slice
of bologna)

Schvainhundt!

KID

This ain't even my pants!

Rocco then digs out a dozen crack vials and a bundle of heroin packets.

ROCCO
 (to Mazilli)
 Look at this ...
 (to kid)
 You're even dumber than me ...

KID
 (strangling)
 This ain't even my pants!

The door jingles and in walks a uniformed COP for a sandwich.

ROCCO
 Hey-y! Perfect timing!

COP
 (reading the situation,
 backing out)
 Hey, fuck you ... no way, Rocco, no
way.

Mazilli and Rocco whine and curse after him, then, realizing that they would have to process the arrest themselves, they exchange disgusted shrugs, settle for frontier justice. Rocco releases his chokehold.

ROCCO
 (to the kid)
 I ever see your face in here again
 I'll fuckin' laminete you, you
 understand me?

Rocco gives the kid a brutal, abrupt two-handed shove in his chest, which knocks him halfway out the front door.

Suddenly Rocco's beeper goes off.

MAZILLI
 (gesturing to the untouched
 heroes)
 Aw please ...

ROCCO
 (peering at the number coming
 up on his hip)
 Shit ...

INT/EXT: ROCCO'S PLYMOUTH - TEN MINUTES LATER

They're rolling along JFK Boulevard, both of them eating big hero sandwiches.

MAZILLI

(bitching)

It's probably a fuckin' triple header outdoors in the mud, sixty casings spread around and a big herd of moulies steppin' all over everything. Tell me I'm wrong.

WE SEE coming up, towering over the low-rise buildings of the Boulevard, the revolving harpoon-wielding plaster Ahab statue beckoning, like an Angel of Death.

ROCCO

Thar' she blows.

EXT: REAR OF CROWD THROINGING AHAB'S

It's a real block party. Everybody looking forward, craning necks, squinting, shouting to friends, laughing, etc.

WE SEE Mazilli split to the perimeter and Rocco slide into the rear of the crowd, craning his neck and acting as open-mouthed dopey as everybody else.

ROCCO (contd)

(talking to nobody in particular)

What the fuck happened?

KID

(not looking at Rocco,

answering by reflex)

That ol' boy got shot up, man ...

ROCCO

(not looking at kid)

Who did ...

The kid turns to Rocco, makes him as a cop.

KID

Yeah, well I don't want to cast out no false criticisms per se, you know?

ROCCO

(still not making eye contact, fighting down a grin -- it's another of God's Clowns)

Hey, I wouldn't want you to ...

CLOSE ON ROCCO

He slips the kid his card down low at hip level.

YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE

ringing the building, keeping the crowd from something bloody under a sheet by the side door.

Rocco breaks through the crowd, slips under the tape. He's holding a steel forensics suitcase.

BARTUCCI

Hey-y, Rocco's Rocketship.

ROCCO

Vinny B. What you got? ...

BARTUCCI

(checking his notes)

We got us a male dead man, Darryl Adams, twenty-one-two, night manager. The kid was out here by the door talking to a male in a hooded sweatshirt, pop pop peppity pop, Adams goes down, shooter's in the wind running south. You got four casings by the body and that's, more or less, all she wrote.

ROCCO

So what do you think, robbery?

BARTUCCI

Too fast.

ROCCO

Drugs?

Bartucci shrugs.

ROCCO (cont'd)

(nodding to the body)

Was he a scumbag?

BARTUCCI

I never heard of him.

CLOSE ON A RING OF EXPRESSIONLESS COP FACES

sport jackets and uniforms, all looking down at something, the whirling Ahab over their heads.

CLOSE ON ROCCO

in a squat, gingerly sliding off the bloody sheet, introducing Darryl Adams to the boys.

CLOSE ON DARRYL'S EYES

half-open, melancholy, contemplative gaze.

ANGLE

Rocco slips on a pair of rubber gloves, and pops a few rubber bands in his mouth (a nervous ritual for him), noisily crunching them as he begins to process the body.

ROCCO

(gently sliding one eyelid all the way open)

Hello dere ...

Rocco touches a bullet dent on a gold medallion still hanging around the kid's neck, then traces an invisible path with a delicately extended pinkie from the ruined medallion to the small entry wound under the kid's chin, then indicates a bud of brains sprouting from Darryl's head -- the exit wound.

ROCCO (contd)

Ricochet Rabbit ...

DETECTIVE #1 (OS)

Good thing he wore that medallion.

DETECTIVE #2 (OS)

I still think it was the food here.

Rocco opens the kid's zippered running suit, finds an entry wound on the solar plexus, a little welt ...

ROCCO

Door number two ...

He picks up the kid's hand, displays an entry wound in the center of his palm.

DETECTIVE #3 (OS)

Maybe it's just stigmata ...

DETECTIVE #4 (OS)

Who's the shooter, Annie Oakley?

ROCCO

(smiling at the voice)

Hey, Mike, my man, we need blood and prints off this door here.

MIKE

Fuck me ... we'll get half the yo's in the city off that door.

ROCCO

Thank you.

Rocco continues his probe of the body. He conducts a rude penetrating scalp massage with all ten fingers, pulls down the kid's pants, probes groin, armpits, printing up the kid with bloody coins.

ROCCO (contd)

(muttering, crunching rubber bands)

Where's the fourth entrance? ...

Grabbing the clothes, Rocco rolls over the body face down, pulls up the back of the shirt, notes gaping wound.

ROCCO (contd)

That's an exit -- but, where's that ...

(he probes the buttocks,
the calves)

C'mon, motherfucker, where you at?

Shit ...

Rocco abruptly spits out the rubber bands; a vaguely hostile gesture, then rises, wincing. His knees pop, his back is killing him.

Mazilli comes in from the shadows.

ROCCO (contd)

(holding his bloody-gloved hands
away from his sports jacket)

What the drums say?

MAZILLI

We keeps our ears to the grindstone
-- was he a scumbag?

ROCCO shrugs neutrally.

MAZILLI (contd)

You do the pockets?

Mazilli rolls the body over with his foot, the face staring up at him.

MAZILLI (contd)

Hey, that's Darryl Adams ...

ROCCO

Who's that?

MAZILLI

He used to work in Rodney's candy store last year. I used to see him all the time in there.

ROCCO
Working for Rodney ... was he
clocking?

MAZILLI
(mildly)
Probably ...

Mazilli straddles the body and does the pockets, pulls
out a fat wad of cash.

MAZILLI (contd)
... definitely.

AMBULANCE ATTENDANT
(he's got a bright orange body
bag like a serape on his
shoulder, smokes a cigarette)
You guys finished?

MAZILLI
Ho!

Rocco looks down at the body. Mazilli has squeezed the
cheeks to expose the teeth. There's a bullet trapped in
the gums. Entry wound #4.

MAZILLI (contd)
Marvallo the Magician. Catch a
bullet with his teeth.

ANGLE

Rocco, forensics case in hand, is heading for the yellow
tape again.

ROCCO'S POV

A hysterical young black woman is being held at bay by a
young cop.

WOMAN
(sounding both reasonable and
crazed, trying to wriggle
free of the cops' grasp)
I just want to see my brother ...

COP
(uncomfortable)
No you don't.

WOMAN
Why can't I see my brother?

COP
'Cause you can't.

WOMAN
(bellowing)
Dar-ryl!

COP
Lady, please ...

WOMAN
(reasonable-sounding again)
I'm OK, I just ...

Suddenly she vomits all over the cop, then drops to her knees, sobbing.

WOMAN (contd)
(heartbroken bellow)
Dar-ryl!

COP
(shaking out his shirt)
Motherfucker!

The crowd laughs at the cop.

ROCCO
(heading out -- indicating the
sobbing woman to Bartucci)
Vinny ... get her down to me, OK?

BARTUCCI
So Rocco, how was your party?

ROCCO
(ducking under the tape)
Good. The dancer? She said to
tell you the test came out ...

Walking backwards, he bumps into Strike who stands before him as if in shock.

ROCCO (contd)
(not really seeing Strike)
Beep-beep ...

Rocco tries to get past Strike but every time Rocco shifts, Strike shifts. It's almost comic, or maybe it's Strike unconsciously blocking his way out. Strike looks stunned.

ROCCO (contd)
(still not really even looking at him)
C'mon, kid.

Rocco finally breaks through.

CLOSE ON STRIKE

He stands at the tape. He sees Darryl's body getting zipped into the orange body bag. Hears Darryl's sister's heartbroken cawing.

SISTER

Dar-ryl!

Strike quickly wheels and walks away from the crowd.

SISTER (OS)

Dar-ryl!

Clear of the crowd, hiding himself in the shadows, Strike takes out his Yoo-Hoo, takes a quick swig, wipes his mouth.

SISTER (OS contd)

Dar-ryl!

Strike suddenly jackknifes in pain. Drop to one knee clutching his gut.

STRIKE

(stunned whisper)

God ...

SISTER (OS)

Dar-ryl!

EXT: RODNEY'S PLACE - 1:30 A.M.

Strike exits his car. He's looking bad -- ragged and buggy.

MALE VOICE (VO)

(flat murmur)

Give me forty dollar ...

Spooked, Strike turns to see ERROL BARNES leaning against Strike's car. Errol isn't even looking at him, just standing there, arms folded, scowling at the sidewalk.

Errol is scrawny but his face is dead, all slits, no mercy. The butt of a pistol is peeking up from behind his belt buckle.

Strike, thinking he's imagining things, turns back to Rodney's store.

ERROL (VO contd)

You heard me ...

Strike freezes.

INT: RODNEY'S PLACE

Rodney is lecturing three rapt teenagers who sit thigh to thigh on Rodney's fucked up pool table. Rodney holds a cue stick as a visual aid/pointer.

Strike enters the store looking freaked. Rodney ignores him.

RODNEY

Charles, man, how many pair sneakers you got?

CHARLES

(hesitating)

Six ...

STRIKE

Rodney!

RODNEY

Six ... Now how many feet you got, see what I'm sayin'? You all just throw the money away. Make ten dollars go out and buy a ten-dollar ring. Nigger does that wakes up broke every day of his life. Every day of his got-damn life. Now, if y'all come work for me ...

STRIKE

(wild-eyed)

Rodney!

Rodney wheels and glares at Strike.

EXT: STREET CORNER OUTSIDE RODNEY'S PLACE

Strike and Rodney calmly watching the nighttime street dealing, fighting, bullshitting along the boulevard.

STRIKE

So you hear about it, right?

RODNEY

I ain't heard nothin' about nothin'.

STRIKE

Aw man, you ...

RODNEY

(drowning him out)

All's I hear is that Ahab's? They
lookin' for a new night manager.

Strike falls silent, disoriented, miserable.

RODNEY (contd)

Yeah, we're gonna wait a week or
two, let shit die down a little,
work out of the candy store for
now, keep you on the benches, but
Ahab's is the place, because this
thing we got pulls in a lot of
traffic and this way it blends in
with the food traffic, see? If I
ran this full-time out of my store?
we're talking white people, black
people, all kinds of people, out of
state license plates, anybody
standing across the street for
thirty minutes and half a brain,
they're gonna dial 911. And me with
MY jacket? I got to be free of this.
I got to have me a front up front.

Strike stares at him.

RODNEY (contd)

(shouting across the street)

Hey, Davis! Keep your hands off her!

(laughing)

She's a lady, motherfucker!

EXT: SUBURBAN/RURAL STREET - 12:30 A.M.

Rocco rolls into his ranch house driveway.

INT: ROCCO'S HOUSE

Comfortable, slightly claustrophobic decor. TV on.

MARISSA, a pre-pubescent 12-13, is working a Nintendo
joystick, eyes transfixed on the TV.

MARISSA

(Flat)

Hi, Daddy.

ROCCO

(heading for a wet bar, his
back to Marissa)

Don't you got a game tomorrow?

MARISSA

Sunday.

As Rocco fixes a little cocktail for himself we hear a toilet flush and see a 12-year-old black kid, BRIAN, emerge from the john. Both he and Rocco stop in their tracks on seeing each other, but just for a split-second.

BRIAN

(shyly)

Hi ...

Brian gingerly moves to the couch, picks up a second joystick and joins in on the game.

Rocco, unsmiling but quiet, fusses with his drink, his back to the couch, then ...

ROCCO

(squinting at his watch)

What is it, 12:30? or 1:30?

BRIAN

(to Rocco's back)

12:30.

(then after a beat)

Can I call my brother to come pick me up?

ROCCO

(finally turning, affable)

Hey, don't bother, I'll drive you home. What's your name?

BRIAN

Brian.

ROCCO

Brian. Where you live, in the ...

BRIAN

On Dover Street? Near Michelle Avenue?

ROCCO

Dover? Oh great, that's like, that's like, two minutes from here ... good ... good ...

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - NEXT AFTERNOON
CLOSE ON STRIKE'S FACE

Haggard, distant, taut.

All the other kids are milling around, looking at catalogues; F.A.O. Schwarz, Hold Everything, Hammacher

Schlemmer ... They're poring over them, open-mouthed, like sex books. Even Strike has one in his lap, although he's in too bad a mood to lose himself.

STRIKE'S POV

That damn kid Tyrone is still staring at him.

STRIKE
(casual nasty)
Who you lookin' at ...

Suddenly Strike is grabbed from behind in an anonymous bear hug.

DEEP VOICE (VO)
5-0 say freeze!

Strike squawks in panic, splashing himself with his Yoo-Hoo.

All the kids look up and laugh as Strike springs to his feet with knotted fists and turns to stare at **ANDRÉ THE GIANT**, a big goateed knocko who is full of good cheer at the panic he's caused.

ANDRÉ
... What you up to, mastermind?

André leans across the top of the bench and finger-walks Strike's clothes in a casual frisk.

Strike's beeper goes off and André briskly clips it, reads the number coming in.

ANDRÉ (contd)
(tight, dry)
Who's that, your boss?

STRIKE
(familiar, weary)
You tell me.

ANDRÉ
(returning to his frisk of Strike)
Y'all hear about Darryl?

A chorus of sad noises.

ANDRÉ (contd)
Yeah, I had to tell his gran'ma last night. She liked to die on me right in the doorway.
(MORE)

ANDRÉ (contd)
 (wincing)
 Makin' notifications ... I hate
 that more'n anything, man.

FUTON
 (wincing in empathy)
 Man, I couldn't do that.

André steps back from his frisk: Strike's clean as
 always.

ANDRÉ
 (turning to Tyrone on the chain)
 Little Man ... what you doin' down
 here with these knuckleheads ...
 (to the others)
 I'm watching all you ...

CLOSE ON STRIKE

imploding.

INT: MAZILLI-KLEIN DELI-LIQUOR STORE - SAME TIME

Rocco is ringing up a can of beer at the liquor counter.

Mazilli is smoking a cigarette behind the deli counter.

As the customer exits with his beer, Rodney barges into
 the store, counting bills off a fat roll of cash. He's
 limping.

RODNEY
 Hey, fellas, how you fixed for
 Tampax? I'm all out by me.

ROCCO
 What's wrong with your leg?

RODNEY
 (wincing)
Rain's comin'.

ROCCO
 Oh yeah? For a minute I thought
 Errol Barnes winged one at you, too.

RODNEY
 Say what?

MAZILLI
 Yeah, last night we go to bring in
 Clarky Lovejoy for a talk on that
 (MORE)

MAZILLI (contd)

Ahab's shooting? The kid's got the best alibi in the world. He's layin' up in Christ the King with a slug in his thigh.

RODNEY

(mock-wincing -- counting his money)
That must hurt ...

MAZILLI

Yeah, you best put a leash on that fucking psycho.

RODNEY

(shrugging)
It's a free country, last I hear.

ROCCO

Not if you're in County, it ain't.

RODNEY

I hear that, too.

MAZILLI

(moving to the stockroom)
Tampax?

RODNEY

(shouting after him)
An' some Chore Boys ... two cases if you got it.

(to Rocco)

I hate this rain shit.

ROCCO

Makes you kinda blue, huh?

Mazilli comes back, lugging cases of Chore Boy and Tampax.

MAZILLI

So Rodney, what do you hear about Ahab's?

RODNEY

What, you mean that boy that got shot up?

ROCCO

He used to work for you, no? In the store?

RODNEY
(a little uncomfortable)
Yeah, Darryl, he was OK.

MAZILLI
He was OK, huh?

RODNEY
(antsy)
Yeah ...

ROCCO
We found like twenty-five hundred
dollars on him.

RODNEY
(now in a crossfire between
the two counters)
Maybe they was wanting to take him
off with the store receipts.
(beat)
Then they panicked.

MAZILLI
You think so?

RODNEY
(turning in a gimpy pirouette)
You got me.

ROCCO
(double-edged)
We got you?

The store is quiet for a beat, Rodney caught in a
crossfire of stares, unconsciously spinning, doing a
bongo riff on the cartons.

ROCCO (contd)
(calmly)
Can you work on it for me?

RODNEY
(dropping his cash, gathering up
his cartons)
Yeah, alright, I'll get my people
on it. Gimme a day or two.

MAZILLI
(sweetly)
You need a hand with that?

Rodney doesn't answer, just exits fast.

ROCCO
 (to the banging door)
 'Bye, now.

Rocco and Mazilli exchange a glance -- they got a live one.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - ONE HOUR LATER

Strike is alone, rubbing his aching gut.

STRIKE'S POV

WE SEE Tyrone, still perched on his slump of chain as Strike is perched on his bench slat.

CLOSE ON TYRONE

tingling with self-consciousness.

Strike, towering over him now, plucks a nappy clump of his ragged haircut.

STRIKE
 What the fuck is this ... What's
 your name, Buckwheat?

INT: BARBER SHOP - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Fake wood panelling -- funky neighborhood place.

ANGLE - TYRONE'S MIRRORED IMAGE

He stares at himself in the barber chair as the barber adjusts the neck-cuff. Strike hovers over the action.

STRIKE
 (plucking Tyrone's nap)
 Get all that out of there ... bring
 it down like this.

Strike pats his own tightly groomed crop. Fluffs it with an Afro pik.

VARIOUS ANGLES:

- 1) ELECTRIC SHEARS grooming the edges of his hairline.
- 2) FINER SHEARS shaving a diagonal 3-inch slice-part in his crop.

INTERCUT with Tyrone's big-eyed stare flicking from himself to Strike to himself via the mirror.

The barber moves for the hair gel but Strike stays his hand.

STRIKE
(to the barber)
You're done.

CLOSE ON TYRONE

Frozen, with his new haircut.

Suddenly his face is illuminated by the flash of a camera, a booming "POP."

REVERSE ANGLE - TYRONE'S PICTURE

ejecting into his lap from the barber's hand-held Instamatic.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

developing on his tricot-covered lap. The new Tyrone emerges; solemn, handsome -- new.

CLOSE ON BLACK HANDS

lifting the photo and push-pinning it into place among the gallery of flat-faced profiling customers.

EXT: DRIVEWAY IN FRONT OF AN OLD LADY'S HOUSE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Strike parking.

INT: THE CAR

Strike turning off the ignition. They sit for a beat in total silence.

STRIKE
Damn, don't you ever say thank you?

TYRONE
(looking at Strike with thunder struck yet mute emotion -- the words coming out in a strangled self-conscious mutter)
Thank you.

Strike takes his own Afro pik, sticks it in the muff of Tyrone's sweatshirt.

STRIKE
(half disgusted, half gentle)
Awright, get on out the car.

Strike alone, watching Tyrone walk away via the REAR VIEW mirror, the kid half turning every five feet on his way back to the benches as if he can't bear the idea of Strike being out of his sight.

EXT: THE SKY AT DUSK

Storm clouds gathering, a menacing rumble is heard.
(Rodney's limp was a true barometer.)

EXT: THE BENCH - FIVE MINUTES AFTER STRIKE IN CAR
STRIKE'S POV

Futon, Peanut and the others busy clocking, pumping bottles to customers. People seem hyped by the impending storm.

STRIKE'S POV

He scans the action, sees Tyrone back on his chain perch.
He walks past Tyrone.

TYRONE

(almost a whisper)

Hi.

Strike purposefully ignores him.

Suddenly there's a thunderous crack and it starts to pour.

Everybody on the benches makes a dash for a nearby breezeway.

Strike is running too but then stops as he sees through the steaming rain across the projects, a lone figure, visible primarily because whoever it is is wearing bright orange.

The figure is walking quickly to a parked car.

STRIKE

shifting gears, running now in the direction of the orange figure, crashing into Tyrone who was following him into the shelter, knocking Tyrone into a puddle and, oblivious, charging on towards the man in orange.

ANGLE - VICTOR

wearing a brown and orange Hambones uniform, shoulders hunched against the rain, is walking around to the driver's side of his car.

VICTOR'S POV

WE SEE Strike sprinting towards him, screeching to a stop on the passenger side of the car.

STRIKE

(desperate)

I got to talk to you about something.

VICTOR

(shivering, dripping, distracted)

I'm late.

STRIKE

(freaked, angry, but also supplicating)

I said, I got to talk to you.

VICTOR

(distracted, fumbling with the car keys)

I'm late ...

Victor unlocks the driver's door, slides in and ignoring Strike, revs up the engine.

VICTOR'S POV - STRIKE'S FACE

looming in the rain-streaked passenger's window, a palm pressed to the glass.

STRIKE

(muffled by the window)

What you think, I'm playin' here?

Strike yanks open the passenger door just as Victor starts to peel out.

The abruptly opened door smashes into a street pole and Victor reflexively slams on the brakes.

VICTOR

What you do to my car!

Strike takes advantage of the momentary halt to jump into the passenger seat and close the dented door behind him.

OVERHEAD VIEW - THE CAR

sticking out of the parking space like a broken bone, the rain beating down. We are not privy to the conversation within.

EXT: PROJECTS OVERVIEW - SUNDAY MORNING - 11:00 A.M.

Projects is lifeless, still, almost deserted. Sunny day.

CLOSE ON IRIS

Tyrone's mother. She's heavy-set, furious-looking. She's holding Tyrone by a clump of his new haircut and glaring at ...

REVERSE ANGLE - STRIKE AND THE BOYS

Sullen and immobile on the bench.

IRIS

Who did this ... Who gave my kid
this damn haircut ...

Tyrone looks suicidally embarrassed.

The wall of silence remains -- no one even dares make a
derisive face -- this lady is scary.

IRIS (contd)

You all a bunch a' no good death-
dealin' rubbish and if I ever find
out who's been messin' with my son
I'm gonna cut your fuckin' head off.

(beat)

I'm gonna find me Andre ...

She steams off into the projects dragging Tyrone with
her. At the last minute, Tyrone twists free of her,
stands his ground. She marches on alone.

EXT: SUBURBAN SOCCER FIELD - SAME TIME

Rocco and his wife, KIM, are on the sidelines with all
the parents watching. Although the girls' league game is
directly in front of them, their unsmiling attention is
mostly on FOUR BLACK MALE TEENS about thirty yards down
the sidelines.

Rocco emerges from the parents' group, strolls down the
sidelines to confront the kids.

ROCCO

(friendly, but with an
undercurrent of complete
control and power)

Hey, fellas ... you guys soccer fans?

TALLEST KID
 (not fooled by Rocco's
 cheeriness -- sounding
 slightly muttery -- insulted)
 We just watching our sister.

ROCCO
 (leaning forward, making a big
 show of cupping his ear, a
 physically intimidating
 gesture)
 Excuse me?

TALLEST KID
 I said, we're watching our sister ...

ROCCO'S POV - THE FIELD

WE SEE one black girl playing.

ROCCO
 Who ... Margo? You're Margo's brothers?
 They stare at him, resentful at this affable beating
 they're getting.

BRIAN
 (the youngest brother --
 sounding wounded and
 bewildered -- not as savvy
 and subtle as his older sibs)
 I was just in your house! You
 drove me home!

ROCCO
 (squinting)
 Brian? Brian, right? Hey ...
 there you are ...
 (then, completely relaxed)
 Well great, why don't you guys come
 down to the others, you can't see
 nothin' from this angle ... join us ...

OLDEST BROTHER
 (tight)
 That's OK ...

ROCCO
 You sure?

OLDEST BROTHER
 (flat)
 Thanks ...

As Rocco walks back to the parents nodding to them that everything is OK, we hear:

BRIAN (VO)

I was just in his house!

ANGLE

LARRY THE COACH, chewing out Marissa on the sidelines.

LARRY

Marissa! What did we practice all week, huh? What did we put hours into, all week. All of us ...

MARISSA

(holding back tears)

I was trying to ...

LARRY

Hours! Hours! Hours!

ROCCO

(getting in the coach's face, gently pushing him backwards, speaking softly)

Larry ... what are you yellin' at her for ... it's a game ... it's bullshit ... they're little kids ... let them play the game.

LARRY

(apoplectic)

Rocco ... you don't know the hours ...

ROCCO

It's a game, you fucking maniac.

MARISSA

(teary)

I hate my life.

ROCCO

(undertoned, making her walk backwards, out of earshot of the others)

What? You what? What are you, kidding me? How'd you like to live in the projects, huh? How'd you like a drug addict for a parent? You want something to cry about? Come into work with me, I'll show you lots to cry about. You hate your life? You don't know, Marissa ...

KIM
 (from the sidelines)
 Will you lay off with that?

ROCCO
 (pointing, louder)
 You're another one. Nobody here's
 got nothin' to cry about.

KIM
 (heard it all before)
 Bullshit ...

MARISSA
 Why does everything happen to me ...
 At which point Rocco's beeper goes off.

ROCCO
 (checking the number coming
 up, scowling, to himself)
 Motherfucker ...
 (to Marissa)
 No ... no ... everything doesn't happen
 to you ... everything happens to me.

INT: FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - 1:00 P.M.
 WIDE SHOT

It's a vast, white chalet style interior -- airy and
 clean.

The church is deserted, save for three black men sitting
 bunched together way down in the front blonde-wood pew,
 their backs to us.

CLOSE ON THE THREE MEN,

their backs to us.

REVERSE ANGLE

Rocco looking down at them, the minister and an ex-cop
 parishioner flanking Victor, who's sporting church-going
 slacks and sweater, slumped between the other two older
 bigger men like a human comma of despair.

ROCCO
 So, Victor ...
 (beaming down at him, friendly)
 you want to take a-ride?

The Reverend stands up as if to intercept Rocco's offer.

REVEREND
 (anguished)
 Can I talk to you?

ANGLE - ROCCO AND THE REVEREND

strolling around the church, speaking in whispers.

REVEREND
 That boy got two jobs, two kids,
 comin' into church every Sunday for
 a year, never been in no trouble
 ... you hear what I'm sayin'? This
 don't make no sense at all ...

ROCCO'S POV - MAZILLI

is coming up the aisle towards them, escorting Victor,
 then passes them heading for the door.

ROCCO
 (walking backwards, talking shit)
 Look, there's probably an explanation,
 you know a predicament or something
 ... I'll do what I can, OK?

EX-COP PARISHIONER
 (spiffed for church in 3-piece
 suit, chest hanky, extending
 a triangular wedge of silver
 foil to Rocco)
 Don't forget this ...

Rocco, momentarily confused by the offering, unpeels the
 foil. It's a .25 automatic.

REVEREND
 (anguished)
 No sense at all ...

INT/EXT: ROCCO'S CAR

Rocco driving, Mazilli and Victor in the back.

ROCCO
 (looking at Victor via the
 rear view mirror)
 Victor, you ever been arrested
 before?

VICTOR
 (sullenly staring out the
 window)
 It got thrown out.

ROCCO
Good. What was the charge?

VICTOR
Eye-contact.

ROCCO
(grinning)
That's a new one ...

VICTOR
(muttering)
It's an old one ...

Rocco shrugs. They'll get into it later.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - SAME TIME

Tyrone on his slump of chain, holding a Yoo-Hoo just like Strike.

TYRONE'S POV - ANDRÉ

looming over him, gently touching his hair, smiling.

ANDRÉ
I like that haircut, Little Man.
Where'd you get that haircut?

Tyrone stares straight ahead.

ANDRÉ (contd)
(turning to the boys on the bench)
Where'd this boy get his haircut?

A wall of silence.

André turns back to Tyrone, reaches down, takes the vanilla Yoo-Hoo from him ... That's all the evidence he needs.

André turns and glares at Strike.

EXT: HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE INTERROGATION ROOM IN THE
HOMICIDE OFFICE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

CLOSE ON VICTOR

SEEN THROUGH a wire mesh window set in the door of the
interrogation room. He's alone at a bare desk.

ANGLE - ROCCO

pulling away from the window, speaking low to Mazilli,
and flicking a twenty dollar bill.

ROCCO

A twenty says I wrap this up in an hour ...

CLOSE ON MAZILLI'S WATCH

1:30 P.M.

MAZILLI

Go.

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM

Rocco and Victor sit across from each other in a tiny room -- hard chairs, card table, out of date calendar on the wall featuring two kittens wrestling with a ball of yarn; nothing else.

ROCCO

(writing)

So where'd you get the gun?

VICTOR

(heavily)

I found it under a chair in the restaurant one night when we was cleaning up.

ROCCO

Did you always carry it?

VICTOR

Yeah, it made me feel safe.

ANGLE - ROCCO'S POV

The wall clock reads 1:35.

ROCCO

So tell me what happened ...

VICTOR

(eyes averted, playing with his sock lint)

Well, like I said, I had a few drinks at Rudy's, you know, the bar, like I always do ...

ROCCO

A few ...

VICTOR

Like three, maybe two.

ROCCO
Like you always do ...

VICTOR
I go in there after work most
nights.

ROCCO
How long were you in there, from
when to when?

VICTOR
'Bout eight-thirty to about ten ...
see, my shift at the Hambone don't
end till ten usually, but I wasn't
feeling good so I left early that
night.

ROCCO
You weren't feeling good so you
went to a bar?

VICTOR
It wasn't like a going home type of
not feeling good.

ROCCO
What was it, an argument? A
headache?

VICTOR
(long pause)
Just, you know, tired ...

ROCCO
(after a beat)
G'head. So ...

VICTOR
So after the bar, I was like
walking home, shortcutting through
the Ahab's lot and the guy like ...
(Victor crunches his face)
like ... he like jumped at me and
I got scared and I, you know, I
like ...

Victor becomes enmeshed again in extracting lint balls
off his sock.

VICTOR (contd)
Like ... shot him ...

HOLD FOR A BEAT ON Rocco staring expressionless at
Victor, who avoids Rocco's eyes.

ANGLE - ROCCO'S POV

The wall clock reads 1:55.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES AREA - SAME TIME
CLOSE ON YOO-HOO BOTTLE

slowly being whacked against a bench slat like a metronome; the bottle held by a thick finger plugged into the mouth.

PULL BACK TO SEE André nose to nose with Strike. Strike sits on his bench top and André leans into him, his hands gripping the top slat on either side of Strike's hips. André has him boxed in.

ANDRÉ

You used to have a good head on you.

STRIKE

(defiant, off-balance)

I still do.

André says nothing, just eyeballs him for a beat.

STRIKE (contd)

(unsteadily)

I still do.

ANDRÉ

Ronnie? I had my hand out to you since you was a little boy. You didn't want to take it, that's your prerogative. But I'm gonna tell you something ... if I ever see you so much as look at that kid Tyrone? I'm gonna fuck you up so bad you gonna wish I just threw you back in jail. Do we understand each other?

André remains nose-to-nose, head cocked, waiting for Strike's confirmation.

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME
CLOSE ON WALL CLOCK - 2:15 P.M.

VICTOR

(eyes averted; nervous and angry)

I told you already ... The guy came out at me and I wasn't even thinking. Just, you know, BAM. Then I got scared and ran.

ROCCO
You mean BAM BAM BAM BAM.

VICTOR
Huh?

ROCCO
There were four bullets in his
body.

Victor goes back to playing with his sock.

ROCCO (contd)
(shifting gears)
The gun, where were you carrying it?

VICTOR
In my gym bag.

ROCCO
What else do you carry in your gym
bag?

VICTOR
My Hambones uniform ... sometimes
like a sandwich from home ... I
can't eat that ...

ROCCO
(cutting him off)
OK ... the guy jumped at you, so
you stepped back, fished around in
your gym bag with the uniform, the
sandwiches, found the gun, aimed it
and shot him four times. That's
what I'm getting from you so far.
Is that correct?

Rocco waits on Victor

VICTOR? ROCCO (contd)

Victor is unravelling his socks, furiously avoiding
Rocco's expectant eyes.

ROCCO'S POV

The wall clock reads 2:35.

ROCCO'S POV

Mazilli grinning in the wire mesh window, rubbing his
fingers together to signal that he just won twenty bucks.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - SAME TIME

Strike's crew has returned, the kids deep into horseplay and slap-boxing, no blatant business going on. Strike on his perch seems withdrawn, still brooding on his encounter with André.

Suddenly the Fury pulls up for another raid but the boys are clean and as Thumper and company rise from the car, instead of going dead pan, Strike's crew breaks into a good-natured spontaneous chant.

THE BOYS

5-Q! 5-Q! 5-Q!

The cops join in, while simultaneously frisking the kids (the whole thing's a fucking joke anyhow), Thumper gesticulating like the conductor of a choir.

KIDS AND COPS

5-Q! 5-Q! 5-Q!

Strike is the only one not playing, and as the chant gets louder WE ZOOM IN ON his trouble-streaked face.

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME

ROCCO

(sullen at losing twenty dollars, tired)

OK ... So when was the last time you were in Ahab's?

Victor throws him a death's-head smirk.

ROCCO (contd)

(grimly, acknowledging the dumb question)

Before that ...

VICTOR

Never.

ROCCO

Never? You live so close, you never walked by on a hot day with your kids and just stopped in there for a soda?

VICTOR

(eye contact, finally, ignition on)

With my kids? I never see my damn kids! I'm always working. Then I

(MORE)

VICTOR (contd)

get home, I'm so tired I'm always sleepin'. My kids ... Hell, I'm gonna take my kids for a soda, I'll take 'em to my own damn restaurant. I say to my wife, "Bring the kids to the restaurant," she says "You can see the kids at home." I say, "I come home, I'm like exhausted to death."

(addressing Rocco directly
now, beseechingly)

You know that feeling you get sometimes, you come home, you so damn tired it's like the sound of your own kids is like this horror sound?

Rocco keeps a neutral face, letting Victor run this out, see where he's heading.

VICTOR (contd)

I try to tell her that, she says, "So quit a job, you got two." See, she don't understand, man, you know, I'm trying to get us out of the projects and where you gonna go if you don't got it saved up? I mean, you got to make it while you can, while you able, because ...

ROCCO

(cutting him off)

Victor, Victor ... OK ... OK.
Listen to me, listen to me.

Rocco slides around the table, goes knee to knee, fingers on Victor's leg, boxing him in; a tactic.

ROCCO (contd)

Listen to me ... You're a good, decent, hard-working kid, and if you pulled the trigger you must've had some damn good reason other than that man jumping out at you unexpectedly, because I have to ask myself why -- why did that man ... it wasn't to rob you ... why would the manager try to rob someone in his own parking lot? So I have to think it was something personal that went down. I have to think ...

VICTOR
 (cutting him off)
 I never seen that guy before in my
 life! He just ...

ROCCO
 (cutting him off)
 He just jumped you. And you shot
 him. He didn't ...

VICTOR
 (cutting him off)
 I don't want to talk to you no more.

ROCCO
 (calming)
 Victor ...

VICTOR
 I don't want to talk to you no more
 ... I gave you the gun, so ...

ROCCO
 (getting ever physically closer)
 Victor ... if this man did something
 to you, to your family, if he threatened
 you ... if he in any way made your
 life miserable, this helps you.

Victor gasps for air, eyes bulging. Rocco is almost on
 top of him.

ROCCO (contd)
 You could have been beside yourself
 with rage, you could have been unable
 to sleep, to eat. This all helps you.
 In court. C'mon, Victor, help me help
 you. What did that prick do to you?

Rocco is almost embracing Victor now, Victor twisting his
 head away, almost in tears. Rocco is alert, waiting,
 here it comes ...

VICTOR
 (mouth working like a fish,
 grasping at something, then ...)
 It was self-defense.

Victor seems as disappointed in his own words as Rocco.

Sighing, Rocco pulls open a small drawer in the desk and
 takes out a barber's hand mirror.

ROCCO
 Self-defense, huh?

Remaining seated, he crab-walks his chair on its casters over to Victor's side of the table.

ROCCO (contd)

(lightly)

I want to see what you see ...

Rocco puts his arm around Victor and leans his head so that they're cheek to cheek.

He holds out the mirror so that his own face is centered in its oval.

ANGLE - ROCCO IN THE MIRROR

ROCCO

You know something? I disagree. I don't think I do look that fucking stupid ...

EXT: DRIVE-DOWN RAMP HEADING INTO THE INTAKE CENTER OF THE COUNTY JAIL - TWO HOURS LATER

Rocco is waiting for the gate to roll up as he sits behind the wheel of his Plymouth, frowning at his nails.

CLOSE ON VICTOR

in the back seat with Mazilli.

The gate rises, the Plymouth descends ... and Victor is swallowed up by the system.

INT: HALLWAY IN MUNICIPAL COURT - NOON - NEXT DAY

Bustling with cops, lawyers, bad guys, etc. Rocco in the hallway talking to a group of cops including the Fury.

MALE (OS)

Rocco!

Rocco turns to see FRANK DiNARDO, the county prosecutor, wave him over.. DiNardo is very short, with a neat beard and a Napoleonic don't fuck with me manner. He's ten years Rocco's junior.

DiNARDO

(holding up the transcript of Victor's confession)

What the fuck is this ... "he jumped out at me so I shot him"?

ROCCO

(cavalier)

Frank, I did everything but stick my tongue down his throat.

(winks to the other cops)

The kid wouldn't budge. So fuck him.

DINARDO

You mean fuck me, 'cause when a useless piece of shit like this lands on my desk I couldn't get a conviction on Hitler.

ROCCO

(slightly angry, embarrassed)

C'mon, I was like all day with him.

DINARDO

What a waste of a nice Sunday, huh? You know what "havin' it made" means, Rocco? It means getting paid for doing next to nothing.

ROCCO

(so livid he can't even address Frank -- he addresses his friends, the walls, etc.)

Who the fuck is he talking to?

DINARDO

I'm talking to you.

ROCCO

Hey! Do you have any idea how many good confessions I got for this office? I was locking people up when you were still ...

DINARDO

(crossing his arms)

Oh what ... you're gonna tell me war stories now? Great. Another twenty-year cop with war stories. C'mon, tell me some war stories. It's not like I can prepare for a trial.

(holding up the confession) or nothin', so what the fuck, let's hear some war stories.

Rocco is red-faced, mute with humiliation and rage.

DINARDO (contd)

(finger-stabbing)

You knew the kid was throwing you a line of shit and you let it go ... you said fuck it, and let me tell you ... with investigators like you, these mutts don't even need lawyers.

(turns and walks off)

Thanks for the help.

Rocco is left there among his friends. He's caught between laughing and barking like a dog. He keeps making short aimless movements as if he's about to storm off or punch a wall but he's been nailed and can't do shit about it.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCH - TWO HOURS LATER
CLOSE ON NEWSPAPER ARTICLE - "DEMPSEY MAN HELD IN FAST FOOD SLAYING"

PULL BACK TO SEE Strike reading the bad news.

HORACE

Victor din't do this, man. This is bullshit. That ol' boy got like three jobs, right?

PEANUT

Yeah, I heard it was like a frame-up.

STRIKE

(hot, in his face)

Frame-up! You ain't heard shit about no frame-up. Where the fuck you hear that ...

PEANUT

I can't say.

STRIKE

(agitated)

You can't say ... You gossip more than a fuckin' bitch, you pretzel-eared motherfucker.

FUTON

(hot)

What you call me?

HORACE

(looking out to the street)

No, lookit ...

They all look.

REVERSE ANGLE

WE SEE ROCCO and Mazilli getting out of the Plymouth.

ANGLE - THE BENCH

They all stare silently at the approaching cops. Strike has vanished.

ANGLE - HALLWAY OF BUILDING WHERE STRIKE IS HIDING
CLOSE ON TYRONE,

standing rigid, looking out to the bench. Strike hides behind him. WE SEE from

THEIR POV - ROCCO AND MAZILLI

head into the projects.

STRIKE

(whispering, his chin over
Tyrone's shoulder)

Tell me where they go.

Tyrone stands frozen for a beat.

STRIKE (contd)

GO!

Tyrone flies out of the building on his first mission.

INT: ANOTHER BUILDING HALLWAY - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Rocco, Mazilli and Tyrone stand waiting for the elevator.

ANGLE - INSIDE THE ELEVATOR - SLOWLY RISING

The three of them in silence.

Rocco, suspicious, studies Tyrone, who in turn studies the floor.

ROCCO

Where you going, B?

TYRONE

(hoarse, whispering)

My friend's house.

ROCCO

You didn't push his floor.

Tyrone hesitates, sees "11" lit up on the board, and pushes "10."

INT: VICTOR'S APARTMENT

Rocco and Mazilli sitting at a tiny dining table in a furniture-crowded living room.

Two kids are asleep in an opened convertible sofa.

SHA RON, Victor's wife, sits in a velour chair staring at the TV.

Victor's MOTHER stands in the archway to the tiny kitchen with her back to the living room. She's ironing.

Everybody is acting like the two homicide cops aren't there.

ROCCO
(addressing the room)
Did you know he had a gun?

Sha Ron shrugs, eyes on TV.

ROCCO (contd)
Did he have a drinking problem?

SHA RON
He only drank at night.

ROCCO
Oh yeah? Me, too ... How about drugs?

Sha Ron shrugs, eyes on TV.

ROCCO (contd)
Did he have any new friends recently?
You know, hang out with new people?

Sha Ron barely shrugs, the mother keeps ironing.

Mazilli gives Rocco a look, as in -- Let's go.

Rocco rises, wanders over to the window.

ROCCO'S POV - THE BENCHES, AND STRIKE'S CREW

This is the window Strike is always looking up to.

ROCCO
(turning to the room)
Look, I'm trying to help here. You got to understand as far as the Prosecutor's Office is concerned the case is closed. But I'm sitting here, I see he's got a nice home. Kids ...

MOTHER
 (still not facing them, still ironing)
 He has a stomach condition.

ROCCO
 (expectant)
 Yeah?

MOTHER
 (back still turned)
 They gonna give him his medicine in there?

ROCCO
 (rolling his eyes at Mazilli)
 I'm sure if he told them, they'll take care of it.

Rocco finally rises, fed up, to leave.

ROCCO (contd)
 OK, then ...

Rocco pauses at an etagere, eyes family photos, picks up one of a male teenager in a two-toned dinner jacket.

ROCCO (contd)
 (to Sha Ron)
 Can I borrow this picture? I got to go around, retrace his steps the other night, I'd rather not show people this, you know what I mean?

Rocco shows Sha Ron a mug shot of Victor. Sharon flinches, then nods to the photo on the etagere.

SHA RON
 Why you want that one?

ROCCO
 'Cause it looks like the nice guy I know he is.

SHA RON
 Who is? ... that ain't Victor, that's Strike ...

Mazilli leans in, squints at the picture.

ROCCO
 (pocketing Strike's picture)
 Strike? Who's ...

SHA RON
Ronald, His brother.

ROCCO
 Oh yeah? This Ronald, is he
 around?

SHA RON
 He don't live here no more.

MOTHER (VO)
Tagamet ...

ROCCO'S POV

WE SEE the mother's face for the first time in this
 scene.

She stands at the ironing board like she's defending it
 from attack. Her eyes are glassy with tears.

MOTHER
 He got to have his Tagamet.

INT: ELEVATOR - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Rocco and Mazilli descending.

ROCCO
 (derisive)
 "Tagamet."

MAZILLI
 Strike ...

ROCCO
 (holding the picture)
 You know him?

MAZILLI
 He used to work in Rodney's store
 last year, same as Darryl. Now he
 runs that crew down by where we
 left the car.

ROCCO
 (pecking up)
 He worked with Darryl for Rodney?
 If we see this Strike out there, I
 want to bring him in.

MAZILLI
 What for? The Victor kid gave it
ME, do you want to talk to his
uncle, too? He came in on it, OK?

ROCCO

You know what I want to do? I wanna grab one of those yoms out there, beat the living shit out of him, find out what really happened on this job, take the fucking transcript and shove it right up DiNardo's ass.

MAZILLI

Aw-w, he broke your balls, so now you're gonna break mine?

ROCCO

(gone)

Right up there.

INT: HALLWAY WHERE STRIKE IS HIDING
CLOSE ON TYRONE

staring out at Rocco and Mazilli walking back to car.

Tyrone stares out at the benches, Strike pacing in the shadows behind him.

TYRONE

Forty Dumont, the eleventh floor.

STRIKE

Shit! Did they say anything to you?

TYRONE

Unh-uh.

STRIKE

You sure?

Tyrone doesn't answer, just stares straight ahead, self-conscious, excited, scared.

STRIKE (contd)

(relenting)

Awright, get out of here. Go play or something.

Tyrone hesitates, lingering near his idol, then runs out of the hallway, past the now deserted benches.

Strike stands there for a beat, when WHOMP! A heavy hand is laid on his shoulder and he spins, gasping, and faces André.

ANDRÉ

What y'all so jumpy for?

STRIKE
 (clutching his stomach)
 Please, André ... I didn't ...

ANDRÉ
 How you feel about your brother?

STRIKE
 (tense)
 Hey, I don't know nothin' about
 that.

ANDRÉ
 (squinty)
 I didn't ask if you knew somethin',
 I asked how you felt.

STRIKE
 (looking at Futon)
 It's ... I dunno ... it's beat.

Strike walks off, André studying him.

INT: RUDY'S BAR - 10:30 P.M.
 OVERHEAD SHOT OF ALL THE PEOPLE

leaning in to study a photo on the bar.

ANGLE - ROCCO FACING BARTENDER

across the bar.

BARTENDER
 (squinting at the photo)
 Yeah ... he was in here once.

ROCCO
 (thrown -- Victor was a regular)
Once?

The bartender passes the picture to the regulars who all
 squint and nod.

BARTENDER (contd)
Friday, he was in here Friday ...
 he had like one drink, din't even
 sit down.

ROCCO
 (Victor said he had a few)
One drink? So he wasn't drunk or
 anything?

BARTENDER
 Nope ...

ROCCO
Was he with anybody?

BARTENDER
He came in by hisself ... he might have held conversation but I can't swear to it.

ROCCO
You remember that shooting across the street?

BARTENDER
Hell, yeah ... who you think called the police?

BARFLY
(pointing to the bartender)
He did ... called on that phone right there.

BARTENDER
(face lightening)
Hub ... that's who you lookin' for?

ROCCO
Would you happen to remember if the kid was in here before or after that ...

BARFLY
He was in here before. You know how I know? 'Cause I was watchin' him all the time 'cause I never saw him before in here an' he was so jumpy -- like I thought he was getting pumped up to rob us or something, so I was real glad when he left.

The barfly spins the picture across the bar so that it lands in front of Rocco.

BARTENDER
(looking down at the picture)
So this the guy ...

Rocco follows the bartender's eyes to the bar and for the first time looks at the picture he's offered.

CLOSE ON ROCCO

ROCCO
(whispering)
Jesus Christ ...

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

It's Strike. Rocco tossed down the wrong picture. He's asked all the right questions about the wrong suspect.

ROCCO
(in epiphanic shock, fumbling
with Victor's mug shot)
How about this kid?

CLOSE ON BOTH STRIKE AND VICTOR ON THE BAR,
looking up at us.

BARTENDER (VO)
(mild)
Oh yeah, him. He's in here all the
time. What he do?

INT: RODNEY'S CAR - SAME TIME

Strike in front with Rodney. Errol in the rear, leaning
over the headrest.

RODNEY
How come you din't tell me your
brother did it?

STRIKE
(eyes forward, evasive)
You said you din't want to know
nothin' about it.

RODNEY
Is he gonna keep his mouth shut?

STRIKE
(eyes forward, flat sing-song)
I don't know ...

Rodney takes Strike by the jaw in a light but firm grip,
and turns his head so that they're eye to eye.

RODNEY
I'm gonna ask that again ... Is he
gonna keep his mouth shut?

INT: BUREAU OF CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION - THIRTY MINUTES
LATER

Gloomy, 75-year-old, pre-computer era document center in
the basement of a court building.

Rocco approaches the waist-high wainscoted counter, hails
the cop on duty who's eating a sandwich.

ROCCO

Mister Bobby ... give me a look-up
on a ...

(checking his notes)

Ronald Durham.

COP

(finger-walking the wooden file
boxes as he continues to eat)

Moniker?

ROCCO

Strike ...

TNT: HOMICIDE OFFICE - 11:30 P.M.
Look at VICTOR AND STRIKE'S PHOTOS

laid out on a desk.

Rocco covers Victor's mug shot with his palm, leaving
Strike staring up at them.

ROCCO (VO)

(talking about Strike)

Came in one time only on the night
of the shooting, extremely jumpy,
never sat down, left before the
shooting, left sober. Kid's got a
three-year jacket-possession,
possession with intent, possession
of an unlicensed firearm, and assault ...

WE SEE Mazilli's hand lift Rocco's palm off Victor's
picture and place it on Strike's picture, which leaves
Victor looking up at us now.

MAZILLI (VO)

(talking about Victor)

Has a few schnorts over his limit,
gets his brain all red, walks out
of the bar with that gun in the gym
bag, pops the first guy who steps on
his foot. Comes in on it and we got
a closed by arrest. Finito. And by
the way -- don't forget his sheet.

ROCCO

(waving it off)

He got into a shoving match with
Thumper last year. Big fuckin'
deal. They all do.

(shifting gears)

Don't you see what they're trying
to pull, these two? This Victor

(MORE)

ROCCO (contd)
 kid says he's the shooter, walks in here with no record, two jobs, deep roots in the community ... and he says it was self-defense. Who's to say no? The other brother, this strike? If he tried that? He's a known scumbag. They'd throw away the key. No wonder that confession sounded like horseshit. This Victor kid wasn't even there. He's just taking the weight for his brother.

MAZILLI
 (exasperated, laughing)
 Out of what ... brotherly love? Fear? For money?

ROCCO
 (amazed, outraged, but also pumped)
 They ran a game on me, these two, 'cause this cocksucker
 (Rocco taps Victor's picture)
 is an innocent man.

MAZILLI
 (talking to a crazy man)
 Listen, I found out what was going on with DiNardo. He's in deep shit with the I.R.S. His job's hanging by a thread. He was just taking it out on you this morning.

ROCCO
 (transported by the hunt -- DiNardo is irrelevant -- to the photos)
 See, but what I wanna know is, where the fuck did these two moulies get the balls big enough to even think they could get this one past me.

MAZILLI
 (calmly)
 Did you hear what I just said about DiNardo?

ROCCO
 You want to play games, mother-fuckers? Let's play some games ...

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - NEXT NIGHT

Strike and company on the bench.

FUTON

Yeah, I heard it was like a hit,
like a professional thing, 'cause
Darryl had all this money on him
and they didn't touch it, so like ...

STRIKE

(rising, grinning, enraged,
paranoid)
See, there you go again. How come
you always talk about shit like you
actually know something?

FUTON

(rising, in Strike's face)
'Cause maybe I do ...

PEANUT

C'mon, man, y'all friends so why don't ...

Peanut stops talking, as all eyes turn to someone
approaching.

CLOSE ON STRIKE

He's got oh-shit eyes.

REVERSE ANGLE - ROCCO

abruptly (bang!) standing before them.

ROCCO

(amiable, hands in pockets)
How ya doin', fellas?
(beat, zeroing in on Strike)
Hey, are you Ronnie Dunham?

STRIKE

(tense)
Ronald ...

ANGLE - ROCCO AND STRIKE

about twenty feet from the bench.

ROCCO

(confidential, intimate)
Listen, I'm working the Darryl
Adams job and ah ... how's your
brother doing in there?

STRIKE

(tense)
I haven't seen him yet.

ROCCO

Yeah?

(wincing)

That's a rough joint, County. You ever been in there?

STRIKE

Just overnight on a confusion.

Strike's eyes focus on someone over Rocco's shoulder and Rocco turns to see ERROL BARNES, leaning against a car, holding a package.

ROCCO

(waving)

How you doing?

Errol just stares.

ROCCO (contd)

He waitin' for you?

STRIKE

No.

(beat)

I don't know.

ROCCO

This'll be a minute ... I just got to tell you I'm not too happy about the arrest, you know? I mean he gave it up, Victor, but, ah, you know what he told us?

STRIKE

How would I know? I wasn't there.

ROCCO

Wasn't where?

STRIKE

(contemptuous of the game)

Where he told you.

ROCCO

Well, let me ask you ... What do you think happened?

STRIKE

I don't know ...

ROCCO

You think there was something between him and Darryl Adams?

STRIKE
Whatever he told you ...

ROCCO
Do you know Darryl Adams?

STRIKE'S POV - ERROL ON THE CAR

STRIKE
No.

ROCCO
(spinning in a slow circle --
lie #1)
You didn't know Darryl Adams?

STRIKE
(trapped -- knowing he just
fucked up)
Unh-unh.

ROCCO
When was the last time you saw your
brother?

STRIKE
Not like, not for a while.

ROCCO
A week? A month? Two months?

STRIKE
Yeah.

ROCCO
What?

STRIKE
Two months.

ROCCO
(spinning casually, lie #2)
Two months.

A beeper sounds.

ROCCO (contd)
(smirking)
You wanna get that?

STRIKE
(smirking)
It ain't mine.

Rocco looks down on his hip -- it's his.

ROCCO

(grinning)

How 'bout that ... OK ... look, I just thought there was some insight you could give me on this ... because ... he's got those little kids and all ...

STRIKE

(stricken, bluntly)

Maybe the guy was like a basehead.

ROCCO

(attentive)

Who ... Darryl? Where'd you hear this?

STRIKE

Nowhere ... I mean, you know, I'm sayin' like maybe ... but you know ... I don't know.

ROCCO

Huh ... OK, look ... here's my card ... you think of something, you hear something.

STRIKE

(quickly)

Yeah, awright.

ROCCO

(watching him twist)

OK ... good.

(beat)

I'll be seeing you, Ronnie.

Rocco walks away.

ROCCO (contd)

(to Errol, still on the car)

Heyy ... how you been keepin' yourself?

Errol ignores the question, looks at Strike.

ERROL'S POV - STRIKE

standing alone, writhing and knotted.

STRIKE'S POV - ROCCO IN HIS CAR

Rocco drives off, throws Strike a wave.

ERROL

What he want?

STRIKE

Nothing ... it's about my brother
n' shit.

ERROL

(handing Strike the package
he was holding)
This from Rodney ... he say whack it up
for ounces, he'll bang you on it later.

INT: NARCOTICS UNIT SQUAD ROOM - ONE HOUR LATER

They're processing a half dozen drug arrests. -- petty
shit.

ANGLE - SERGEANT OF THE UNIT (JO-JO) AT HIS DESK, ROCCO
IN A CHAIR ALONGSIDE

ROCCO

You know Rodney Little?

JO-JO

(squat, Santa-looking with
white full beard, red face,
Hawaiian shirt)

Sure ...

ROCCO

He's got this kid, Strike ...

JO-JO

Skinny little prick? Looks like he
hasn't shit in a week?

ROCCO

I'm working on something and I need
this kid to talk to me ...

(Rocco takes out a few more
business cards)

do you think you can lay a card on
him for me?

Jo-Jo peers down at the card on his desk.

ROCCO (contd)

I just need him a little stressed
out now.

JO-JO

(playful)

What are you gonna do for me?

ROCCO

Nothin' you couldn't do for
yourself ...

INT: COUNTY JAIL - LATER THAT DAY
CLOSE ON STRIKE,

tense-faced, a corrections officer has him gripped by the bicep.

STRIKE'S POV - THE BUSY VISITORS' ROOM IN COUNTY

He's standing in the doorway looking across the room to a corresponding doorway where another corrections officer holds Victor in the same grip.

STRIKE'S CORRECTIONS OFFICER

Chair six ...

ANGLE - VICTOR AND STRIKE

staring at each other over a chest-high divider.

Victor looks fucked up -- nappy-haired, wild. He's got a cut on the side of his mouth and he's wearing what looks like a pajama top.

VICTOR

(wincing)

Somebody burned my elbow with a lighter.

STRIKE

(awkward, distracted)

How you doin' in here ...

VICTOR

(angry)

I just told you! Somebody burned my elbow with a lighter.

STRIKE

(stupidly, helplessly,
guiltily)

You can't let them do that, man ...

VICTOR

(laughing, angry)

Yeah, OK ...

STRIKE

So what's your bail ...

VICTOR

Fifty thousand.

STRIKE

Damn ... no cash option?

VICTOR
My lawyer says next week they're
gonna give me the ten percent thing ...

STRIKE
So it'll be five thousand, right?
(beat)
Did mommy come see you?

VICTOR
Yeah, but I don't want her to come
no more, her asthma gets all backed
up and shit ...

STRIKE
(latching onto a righteous
tone)
What you worried about her for,
man? You the one in jail.

VICTOR
(staring right at him, in a
tremulous sing-song)
That's right ...

STRIKE
(miserable, evasive)
You be out soon.
(begging)
Just hang in, awright?

CLOSE ON VICTOR

looking like he's about to cry.

VICTOR
I ain't built for this, Ronnie ...

HOLD ON Victor as we hear OS:

ROCCO (VO)
Victor Dunham, you remember him?
You locked him up last year for
assault on an officer.

EXT: REAR ENTRANCE TO MUNICIPAL COURT/BUREAU OF
IDENTIFICATION BUILDING - SAME TIME

Rocco is lounging there talking to Thumper as a sporadic
parade of arrestees are herded into the building.

THUMPER
(smoking)
What about him?

ROCCO

What happened with that ... I'm
tryin' to put this kid together.

THUMPER

(shrugging)
Ah ... that was fucked up.

FLASHBACK

EXT: PROJECTS DRUG BENCHES - CREW AND LOOKOUT REACTING
AS THUMPER'S SQUAD DOES A ROLL-UP - ONE YEAR AGO

THUMPER (VO)

Between me and you? That was
fucked up ... we were doing a roll-
up on the benches and first, the
regular raiser does a 5-0 ...

WE SEE a kid make a quick warning gesture to the crew,
furtive and discreet.

THUMPER (VO contd)

But then, this Dunham kid does it
too ...

WE SEE Victor in his orange uniform next to the real
raiser. Victor imitates his gesture.

VICTOR

(looking directly at Thumper)
5-0!

Thumper jumps out of the car, walks Victor backwards to
the fence.

THUMPER (VO)

... Right in my fuckin' face ...

THUMPER

(to Victor while doing a rough
pat-down)
You raisin' up on me?

VICTOR

(stunned)
What?
(laughing)
Naw, man, I was geofin' ...

THUMPER

(angry)
Unzip your pants.

THUMPER (VO)
I mean, Rocco, right in my face, no
fear, no respect ...

VICTOR
(outraged, unzipping)
I got to get to work!

Thumper does a dicky check, makes Victor take off his
shoes, shakes out his socks.

THUMPER
You drop something? What you drop?
Don't fuckin' move.

Thumper shoves Victor flat against the fence then goes
down on all fours looking for ditched drugs.

VICTOR
(angry, unbelieving)
This is bullshit, man. I got to
get to work!

THUMPER (VO)
Meanwhile, the peoples be startin'
to come around ...

A crowd forms, curious, angry, bored.

VOICES
(cautious)
Yo Thumper, that's Victor, man ...
He's a workin' man, Thumper ...
Thumper, this ain't right ...

CLOSE ON VICTOR

VICTOR
(getting panicked)
I'm gonna be late!

THUMPER (VO)
I'm tellin' you, Rocco, it was like
an oven that day, right? And like,
I'm on all fours in the garbage, in
the grass. I'm humid, I'm sweating,
I got a whole suckin' moulie chair
on my hands, and then like out of
the blue ...

WE SEE Victor in his bare feet, muttering to himself,
just walk off.

Thumper jumps to his feet and pulls him back into the
fence.

THUMPER
 (nose to nose)
 You fuckin' move again, you're
dead.

Thumper goes back to his search.

THUMPER (VO)
 I mean, I got a fuckin' audience on
 my hands and this nigger's walkin'
 on me?

CHORUS
 (angrier)
 Thumper -- that's fucked up!
 He got a job, Thumper!
 Victor's all right, Thumper!

VICTOR
 I'm gonna be late!

THUMPER'S POV

Victor, in a daze, just starts walking away again, going
 off to work in his bare feet.

THUMPER (VO)
 It got bughouse real quick ... I
 didn't like, hit him, alls I did
 was ...

Thumper comes up behind Victor and swats the back of his
 head.

THUMPER (VO contd)
 Just a little headslap, you know,
 to get his attention? But then,
 like ...

Victor, frustrated, enraged, wheels around and gives
 Thumper a shove. Victor's teeth are clenched and he has
 tears in his eyes.

Thumper's reaction is brutal and swift. He snaps
 Victor's head back in a flat-handed upthrust to the chin
 and whacks him behind the knees with a lead and leather
 sap.

In a blink, Victor is down on his stomach, Thumper
 sitting on his back and pulling his head up by grabbing
 his hair. The rest of Thumper's squad comes flying in,
 protecting Thumper and securing the prisoner as the crowd
 goes crazy.

CHORUS
 (riot-level)
 Leave him alone, motherfucker!
Pig motherfucker!
 You're dead, Thumper!

CLOSE ON VICTOR

at the bottom of a police pileup -- enraged, crying,
 handcuffed.

VICTOR
 I got to get to work!

Thumper and the other cops hoist up the prisoner and
 hustle him to their car, the crowd following, Victor's
 socks and shoes abandoned by the fence as we hear ...

THUMPER (VO)
 I don't know, the kid was legit, I
 guess ... but what could I do?

EXT: ROCCO AND THUMPER IN THE PRESENT

THUMPER
 I had six hundred niggers watching
 me like a hawk ... Right or wrong,
 if I cut that kid some slack after
 what he put me through? I'm busted.
 There wouldn't be a brain-dead
 moulie in all the projects who
 would ever respect me again.
 (beat)
 So what else is new, right?

EXT: BENCHES - NIGHT
 CLOSE ON - WHAM - STRIKE'S FACE

mashed into a brick wall -- Held there by Jo-Jo as he
 begins a pat-down from the rear, bear hug style.

JO-JO
 (in Strike's ear)
 What's up, Strike? What's happenin'?

STRIKE
 (stunned, confused)
 Nothin', sir.

JO-JO
 Call me Jo-Jo.

STRIKE
 Jo-Jo.

JO-JO

Strike, the reason I come by I just wanted to tell you tomorrow night's Knock night. We're gonna come down on the projects like a fuckin' broom, OK? So if I was you I'd take my boys, say nine o'clock? Take 'em out for some Yoo-Hoos, come back eleven, eleven-thirty, OK?

STRIKE

OK.

(beat)

Thank you.

JO-JO'S HENCHMAN

(to a few curious people)

Get the fuck outa here.

JO-JO

(in Strike's ear still)

From now on I'll tell you when shit's comin' down, OK? Week in week out.

STRIKE

Yeah, OK.

JO-JO

I'm your friend.

STRIKE

Thank you.

JO-JO

Are you my friend?

STRIKE

(hesitating)

Yeah, uh-huh.

JO-JO

(heard in Strike's ear)

What are you gonna do for me?

STRIKE

(face still mashed into brick)

Five hundred?

JO-JO

That's beautiful, Strike, that's flawless. I'm gonna send somebody back here in about an hour to collect, OK?

STRIKE

Yeah, OK.

JO-JO

Week in week out, friends for
friends, man ...

STRIKE

Awwright.

Jo-Jo finally steps back, pats Strike on the shoulder.
Strike removes himself from the wall, shakes himself out.

JO-JO

You OK?

STRIKE

(muttering, stunned)

I'm OK.

JO-JO

(warm)

Good ... me too.

Jo-Jo bends down, picks up a calling card.

JO-JO (contd)

I think you dropped this.

Strike takes the card without looking at it.

Jo-Jo retreats with his boys to their van.

JO-JO (contd)

Be well.

Strike, vibrating, livid, looks down at the card in his
hand.

CLOSE ON THE CARD: ROCCO KLEIN
DEMPSEY COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Strike looks up.

The van rolls off.

Another car across the street starts up, pulls out,
drives off -- Rocco at the wheel -- not looking at Strike
but making little effort to conceal himself.

EXT: STRIP OF STORES - COLUMBUS AVENUE - SAME TIME

Centered by Japanese bric-a-brac shop, "To Bind An Egg."

INT: TO BIND AN EGG
CLOSE ON VICTOR

standing at parade rest, framed by kimonos and kites.
He's wearing a jacket and tie.

STOREOWNER (KIKI) (VO)
We got this public high school like
two blocks from here? The kids,
they got these sticky fingers, so I
hired Victor, put in the buzzers.

We hear the insistent buzzer.

CLOSE ON BLACK TEENAGER

at the door.

CLOSE ON KIKI

Petite, perky, nodding "no way."

CLOSE ON VICTOR

coming out of parade rest posture.

KIKI (VO)
Victor was my screener. It's not
an easy job, there's so much --
(beat)
"sensitivity" out there ... like,
one time ...

VICTOR
(opening the door but standing
in the doorway. Calm, implacable)
What you want ...

BLACK TEEN
(defiant, a little off-balance)
I want to come in ... what the fuck
you think I want.

VICTOR
(Mount Rushmore!)
What you wanna buy?

TEEN
what?

VICTOR
'Cause maybe we don't have it.

The teenager steps back, outraged.

TEEN

Who the fuck are you, the security
nigger?

QUICK ANGLE - KIKI IN THE SHADOWS OF THE STORE

tense, watching Victor do her dirty work.

VICTOR

(unprovoked)

I'm just tryin' to save you some time.

TEEN

Fuck my time.

They stand almost nose to nose, until the kid finally
steps back, reaches in his pocket, pulls out a hundred
dollar bill, snaps it crisp and flat, then crumples it up
in a tight ball.

TEEN (contd)

This is what I think of you.

He flicks it in Victor's face. The money bounces off
Victor's nose, rolls in the street.

TEEN (contd)

(walking backwards)

There's your salary, nigger.

(walks further -- shouts now)

Next time I come back I'm gonna put
a hole in your chest ... and my
word is bond.

CLOSE ON CRUMPLED BILL IN THE STREET

KIKI (VO)

A hundred dollars ... What was
that, his allowance?

ANGLE - VICTOR

at parade rest in the store, stone-faced. Kiki behind
her counter, stressed but silent.

KIKI (VO)

Victor wouldn't even look at it ...
two days pay just laying in the
street ... It lay there for an
hour.

WE SEE TWO KIDS high-fiving through the glass door as
they discover the money.

CLOSE ON VICTOR

casting a peripheral glance at the celebration outside the door.

KIKI (VO)

When somebody finally picked it up ...

WE SEE Victor. His body seems to hold its height, yet slump at the same time. He vigorously rubs an eye with a stiff finger as if he's trying to poke a hole in his head, then comes back to his self-possessed natural state.

WE SEE Rocco, Mazilli and Kiki in the PRESENT.

ROCCO

You ever see that kid again?

KIKI

It was just talk ...

ANGLE - VICTOR'S REPLACEMENT

Stone-faced Hispanic kid in the identical jacket and tie.

ROCCO

(studying the new guard)

So you never had any ... he was a good worker, Victor?

KIKI

The best ...

EXT: STOREFRONT

Mazilli and Rocco on Columbus.

ROCCO

See? What did I tell you?

MAZILLI

(shrugging)

So what ...

ROCCO

You know sometimes you got this ... this jaded thing in you ... it goes all the way around to naive again.

MAZILLI

I'm naive? You think just because a guy's got a job and a bank book he can't be a shooter? Who's fuckin' naive here, Rocco? Me or you?

INT: STRIKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Tyrone watches as Strike weighs out an ounce of coke, then spoons in laxative from a brown bottle, mixing it onto a triple-beam scale.

STRIKE
(eyes on his operation)
The profit's in the cut ... always
remember that.

Tyrone looks big-eyed, uptight.

STRIKE (contd)
I ever see you play with this? Put
it up your nose? Or in a pipe?

Strike reaches under the bed mattress, pulls a small .25 automatic, shows it to Tyrone in an unthreatening way.

STRIKE (contd)
Shit, I'll kill you my damn self.

Strike chops up some rocks to make another ounce, puts the gun between them.

STRIKE (contd)
You probably asking yourself, how
come he sellin' it then?

Strike waits, Tyrone is riveted by the gun.

STRIKE (contd)
'Cause me not sellin' it, ain't
gonna stop nothin' out there but my
own personal cash flow.

(beat)
Let me ask you something ... put
you to the test ... My boss buys
him a ki for twenty-two that
bottles up into thirty-five hundred
ten-dollar bottles. He takes sixty
percent of the seventeen thousand
profit, leaves us seven thousand
dollars, fifty percent of which is
mine, is how much money for me? --
let me see how smart you are ...

TYRONE
(staring at the gun)
Thirty-five hundred.

STRIKE

Yeah, that's right -- are you good in school? I bet you good in school ... I best not ever see you playin' hookey ...

Tyrone doesn't answer. He's transfixed by the gun.

STRIKE (contd)

You ever shoot a gun before?

Strike places the gun in Tyrone's palm.

Tyrone stares at it, frightened, fascinated.

STRIKE (contd)

(going back to bagging and cutting)
Yeah, I got me cash longer'n train smoke but this here dope? Me and my boss gonna be sellin' this by the ounce. This gonna make me a millionaire, what you think of that?

Tyrone is still staring at the gun in his palm. He doesn't even hear the question.

STRIKE (contd)

What you think of that? Huh?

EXT: STREET OUTSIDE RODNEY'S STORE - NEXT AFTERNOON
CLOSE ON STRIKE

dropping dope in a garbage can and passing four white teens as he heads to Rodney's store across the street.

INT: RODNEY'S STORE

WE SEE the white kids retrieve the dope, get in their car and peel out VIA RODNEY'S FRONT WINDOW.

Strike and Rodney are watching a small TV that's propped on top of the cash register -- the reception is awful.

RODNEY is holding his INFANT SON against his shoulder.

RODNEY

(to the TV)

Errol told me you talked to that Homicide cop.

(beat)

How'd that go?

STRIKE

(sipping Yoo-Hoo, looking pained)

He just wanted to know about my brother'n shit.

RODNEY

Oh yeah? What else ...

STRIKE

(staring at TV)

Nothin'.

RODNEY

(gives Strike a long stare, shifts gears)

I ever tell you about the first time I killed somebody? Errol made me do it, 'cause it was three guys burned us on some dope and he already done killed the other two, and we got this third guy, beggin' and shit, and Errol he turns to me says, "You got to cap him or I'm gonna cap you" ... See, Errol didn't want me walkin' around knowin' what he done, without nothin' personal hangin' over my head too, otherwise I might give him up someday, you understand?

STRIKE

(eyes burning into the TV)

Uh-huh.

RODNEY

See, that's why I wanted you a little bloody on the Darryl thing.

STRIKE

(staring at the TV)

Uh-huh..

RODNEY

Yeah, ol' Errol
(Rodney draws a bead on Strike)
had this 30' sawed-off right in my
face ... my best friend, too.

Strike burps, presses his fist to his mouth.

CLOSE ON STRIKE'S FACE

He's burped up some blood.

RODNEY
(smelling the kid's shitty
diapers, to son)
You a baby or a elephant?
(to Strike, coolly)
You OK?

EXT: PROJECTS SIDEWALK - ONE HOUR LATER

Strike steaming for the benches in a heads-down muttering
funk, counting the money.

STRIKE
(to himself, mocking Rodney)
You OK? You OK? You OK?

BOOM -- he's crashed into someone, then falls back on his
ass.

STRIKE'S POV

He's in front of the benches.

Looking up, he sees Rocco, grinning and offering his
hand.

ROCCO
You OK?

ANGLE - ROCCO AND STRIKE

in the same spot twenty yards from the bench as their
last conversation.

ROCCO
Well, it's just, remember you said
to me that Darryl had like a drug
problem? So like, I ran with that,
you know? And ... you know what?
Everybody I asked said the same
damn thing ... Darryl? He was
clean, he was pure, his body was
the temple, everybody ... But you
said the guy was a basehead.

STRIKE
(clutching his stomach)
I was just, like speculating.

ROCCO
Yeah, well that's some nasty-ass
speculating.

STRIKE

(burps some more blood into
the side of his fist)
Naw ... like ... I was just
thinking on my feet, you know?

ROCCO

(circling him now like André did)
Yeah? Are you sure you didn't know
this guy?

STRIKE

(jumpy -- eyeing the bench,
which is eyeing him)
Naw ... well yeah, but just by eye ...

ROCCO

(smelling blood, pumped
but restrained)
Just by eye. So you never had a
beef with him.

STRIKE

(wheeling to follow Rocco's
circling)
No.

ROCCO

So there's no way that Victor could
have been cutting through that lot
in the dark and Darryl would've
mistook him for you, like, there's
that motherfucker Strike ...

STRIKE

No.

ROCCO

'Cause you and your brother in the
dark, you guys probably look like two
peas in a pod, you know that, right?

STRIKE

(dry)
So what you tryin' to say, it's
hard to tell black people apart in
the nighttime?

ROCCO

(grinning)
Hey, I can't even tell you guys
apart in the daylight.

Strike finds himself laughing at Rocco's candidness.

ROCCO (contd)
 (going with the laughter)
 So anyways, are you guys close?

STRIKE
 (staring at Tyrone)
 Not really.

ROCCO
 Yeah, I forgot. You guys haven't
 seen each other in a long time,
 right? How long has it been?

STRIKE
 (hesitating)
 A month.

ROCCO
 A month? Gee, last time we talked
 I thought you said two months.

STRIKE
 (flashing fire, drawing focus)
 If you remembered that, how come
 you asked me then?

ROCCO
 (grinning)
 You know what Alzheimer's is?

STRIKE
 (strong contempt)
 Some kind of beer?

There's a heat flash in Rocco's face at this dig, but he
 reins it in -- too much to lose by getting
 confrontational.

ROCCO
 (shifting gears)
 You get to visit your brother yet?

STRIKE
 (stomach wince)
 Yeah, uh-huh...

ROCCO
 Can I tell you something? Me to
 you? He's claiming self-defense.
 (Rocco winces)
 He goes to trial with that? Those
 kids of his? By the time he gets
 out, they'll be goin' in.

STRIKE

(stricken)
You ever think maybe he didn't do
it?

Rocco goes slightly rigid with alertness, like a hunting
dog.

ROCCO

(fake mildness)
What do you mean?

STRIKE

(shrugging, trapped, wiping a
little blood from his lips)
Maybe somebody else did it.

ROCCO

Oh yeah?
(tense beat)
Like who?

Strike doubles over, clutching his stomach, views the
boys on the bench at a crazy angle.

ROCCO (contd)

Like who, Ronnie?

STRIKE

(trying to straighten up)
I'm just sayin', but I don't know ...

ROCCO

You OK?

STRIKE

(sinking to one knee as if
Rocco is going to knight him)
Yeah ... but, but I got to go.

ROCCO

(mildly)
OK ... here's my card.

STRIKE

(not taking it, rising again)
Yeah, I already got two.

ROCCO

Two? Jesus, it must be that Alzheimer's
beer, I guess.
(Rocco sticks his card in
Strike's sweatshirt muff)
Take care of yourself, Ronnie. I'll be
seeing you ...

Rocco walks off, Strike doubles over again, then looks up to see the crew and Tyrone staring at him with fascination.

STRIKE

The fuck you lookin' at.

Strike stands up straight for a second then crumples to the ground like a puppet with cut strings.

STRIKE'S POV - SHUFFLING FEET

He hears a tussling confused chorus standing over him.

VOICES (OS)

What the fuck?

No shit ...

VOICE (OS)

(harsh, interrogatory)

What's the matter with you? You pipe up today? Huh? You hit the peace pipe?

CLOSE ON RUBBER GLOVED HANDS

grasping his shoulders. Strike screams in pain as he's rolled over and put on a stretcher.

INT: AMBULANCE

Tight, claustrophobic.

TWO MEDICS working over Strike with a stooped, brisk manner under the low ceiling.

MEDIC #1

(putting on b.p. cuff)

You pipe up today? Mama told you not to do them drugs, right? Now look where you're at ...

MEDIC #2

Where do you live?

STRIKE

Please ...

MEDIC #1

Eighty palp.

MEDIC #2

Get the pressure pants ...
(to Strike)
Where's it hurt?

MEDIC #1
Talk to me, yo ... where you live.

ANDRÉ (VO)
(to the medic)
I'll give you all that.

STRIKE'S POV - WE SEE ANDRÉ

leaning into the ambulance, looking at Strike with a mixture of reproach and concern.

STRIKE
(pleading whisper)
André ...

MEDIC #1
Straighten out, homes.

The medic forces Strike's legs straight and Strike screams.

INT: ROCCO'S CAR - SAME TIME

Rocco driving, teeth clenched, pumped, muttering to himself.

ROCCO
Like who? Like who, Ronnie? Like
who, motherfucker ...

There's an insistent honking from behind Rocco's car.

ROCCO'S POV - THE REAR VIEW

A car pulls out from behind him and comes abreast. It's Frank DiNardo.

ANGLE

Rocco in his parked car, DiNardo hunched over his driver's side window.

DiNARDO
Look ... I been having some problems,
nothing with you, and ... I was out
of line ... way out of line.

ROCCO
(grinning)
Hey, I been there me-self, many a time ...

DiNARDO
Rocco, you're a good man, and ...

ROCCO
 (hands up)
 C'mon ... I don't know anybody
 doesn't need a good smack now and
 then. You said what had to be
 said. That's why you're the man.

DINARDO
 (offers his hand)
 Would you shake my hand?

ROCCO
 (heartily)
 If you insist ...

EXT: AHAB'S PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

Under the rotating harpoonist, the four white kids who
 bought the dope are scarfing down fresh burgers in their
 tricked out car -- horse-laughing, etc.

CLOSE ON REAR LICENSE PLATE - "DELAWARE"

ANGLE - JO-JO AND TWO OF HIS GUYS

standing behind the car smiling at the out-of-state
 plates, then strolling around the car making admiring
 noises.

ANGLE - INSIDE THE CAR

the kids getting uh-oh eyes.

Jo-Jo leans in the window, nods to the car phone.

JO-JO
 Nice ...

CLOSE ON EYE CONTACT BETWEEN THE KIDS

They know they're fucked.

INT: HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - 7:00 A.M.

Sickly yellow light of a hallway which is lined with
 gurneys; beds for which there were no rooms.

Strike lies in one of these roomless gurney beds. He's
 been there all night.

STRIKE'S POV

He looks up into the face of a stern Indian doctor.

DOCTOR
 You know how much blood we took out
 of your stomach?

Strike doesn't answer. Stares at the drip bag hanging
 over his head.

DOCTOR (contd)
 Two liters.

STRIKE
 What's a liter?

DOCTOR
 Do you know what a perforated ulcer
 is? Do you have any idea what's
 been going on inside you?

STRIKE
 (dazed)
 Ulcer?

EXT: HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - 10:00 A.M.

Strike, shaky, weak, exits the hospital into the harsh
 sunlight. He holds a bag of medicine and is still
 wearing the plastic hospital I.D. bracelet.

As he steps off the curb, Rodney's Cadillac screeches out
 of nowhere, rocks to a stop. Rodney leans over, and
 opens the passenger door.

INT: RODNEY DRIVING, STRIKE IN THE PASSENGER SEAT

Rodney drives with one hand, rifles Strike's medicine bag
 with the other. He takes one of Strike's medications and
 throws it in his glove compartment.

STRIKE
 (nervous)
 Was you waitin' out there all night?

RODNEY
 Hey, you're like my son, don't you
 know that? Didn't I tell you to see
 my doctor? Get yourself all boiled
 up on that bench top, worryin' about
 this, worryin' about that, suckin'
 on that Yoo-Hoo shit ... You a smart
 kid, but you stupid, too ... Hey ...
 I heard that Homicide came back on
 you yesterday.

Strike shrugs noncommittally.

RODNEY (contd)
 (with oblique menace)
 What's he ... like your boyfriend, now?

INT: HALLWAY OUTSIDE STRIKE'S DOOR

Strike stands there as Tyrone struggles with Strike's keys.

STRIKE
 Naw ... that's the car key ... It's the gold one.

INT: STRIKE'S BEDROOM
 CLOSE ON STRIKE

opening the bottom dresser drawer. It's filled with color-coded baggies. Tyrone is all eyes.

STRIKE
 Don't forget what color I ask you for. An like when you leave? You best lock the door, you remember that? And don't run nowhere ... and don't mess up my house ... just in an' out ... like efficient.

Tyrone flops on to Strike's bed.

STRIKE (contd)
 And don't jump on my damn bed ...

Strike takes Tyrone by the wrist, pulls him to his feet, lifts the mattress to show the kid the gun hidden underneath.

STRIKE (contd)
 'Lest you want to get shot in the ass.

INT: RODNEY'S STORE - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Rodney horse-laughing with a FAT WHITE GUY. Strike silent at his side.

Rodney nods to Strike, who exits.

EXT: SIDE STREET NEAR STORE

Strike coming up on Tyrone, who's sitting on the fender of Strike's car.

STRIKE

Man, don't be sitting on the car.

(beat)

Awright, two blue ...

The kid tears off.

STRIKE (contd)

I said don't run ... Jesus ...

Strike stares after the kid, his face twisting with remorse as we hear in VO ...

HECTOR (VO)

You see these antique car prints here? The plants? The old-time style ceiling fans?

INT: HAMBONES RESTAURANT (WHERE VICTOR WORKED) - AN HOUR LATER

The restaurant is full-up with PEOPLE -- clamorous, smoky, a chaotic mess.

Through this chaos WE SEE in SLOW MOTION, Victor walking, holding a tray with three jumbo sodas. His face is grim, intent, solemn -- his gait in this slo-mo seems both ceremonial and determined. WE WATCH Victor's journey through the room as we hear ...

HECTOR (VICTOR'S PARTNER) (VO)

That's all Victor's ideas. He said we got to make this place feel like somebody's home, like people are comin' into somebody's home ... See, he treated everybody with respect -- the kids in the kitchen, the customers, shit, even the clockers ... Like, OK, you asked me about last Friday night?

ANGLE - A TABLE ACROSS THE ROOM

THREE YOUNG CLOCKERS sitting there.

HECTOR (VO)

We got these three motherfuckers trying to set up shop out there -- I'm goin' for my fucking hat, but Victor, he's like "Yo Hector, wait up, wait up."

Victor approaches with the sodas, puts the tray in front of them, takes a seat as we hear ...

HECTOR (VO contd)
 He sits down, says like, "Yo
 brothers, y'all ain't clockin' in
 here, are you? 'Cause this is like
 a family place, you know?"

Victor hands out the sodas. WE SEE the clockers having
 an eye conference. Victor crosses his legs, clasps his
 hands on the table, digging in to say what he has to say
 to them.

VICTOR
 And I'd appreciate it if you'd do
 your business off the property ...

ANGLE - HECTOR

The narrator -- 30, beefy, Hispanic -- watching from the
 counter area. His face is mottled with fury. He's got a
 baseball bat partially hidden.

HECTOR (VO)
 See, usually that's all it takes but ...

ANGLE - THE TABLE

CLOSE ON KID'S HAND

going into a pocket -- moment of menace -- gun? Knife?

The kid pulls out a wad of cash.

HECTOR (VO)
 This ol' boy pulls out this roll, says
 "my boss says he'll pay you three hundred
 dollars a week if you let us set up."

CLOSE ON VICTOR'S FACE

FREEZE on him -- angry, constricted, controlled.

ROCCO (VO)
 (on Victor's face)
 What he say?

HECTOR (VO)
 (ironic, bitter)
 See, Victor puts please and thank you
 in every sentence around here because
 he says "courtesy breeds teamwork,"
 so it was either "no, please, thank
 you" or it was "please, no thank you."

INT: HUGE STEAMY KITCHEN OF HAMBONES - THE PRESENT

It's a sea of clatter and grease. Rocco is talking to Hector. Mazilli a silent presence.

ROCCO

So was that why he left early Friday night? He told me he wasn't feeling well.

HECTOR

(nasty laugh)

Wasn't feeling well? Yeah, well, let me tell you, for what we're gettin' paid in here? That shit can get to you, man.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCH AREA - MIDNIGHT
CLOSE ON STRIKE'S FACE

Set in cement.

HECTOR (VO)

That shit can make you sick ...

PULL BACK TO SEE Strike leaning into the bench at a 45° angle, enduring a close quarters body-search by Thumper. Strike's pants are down by his ankles. There's a crowd, some giggling.

THUMPER

(slightly drunk)

All done ...

Strike, enraged, slowly pulls up his pants.

THUMPER (contd)

Hey, Strike?

Thumper extends his arms, his hands clenched.

THUMPER (contd)

Pick a hand ... any hand ...

Thumper opens both palms to reveal two of Rocco's business cards.

THUMPER (VO)

You best talk to that man ...

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - NEXT MORNING

Strike and the crew hanging out, some low key sales going on.

Strike is on his perch, holding a new bottle of Mylanta

STRIKE'S POV

WE SEE Tyrone walking towards him. He's holding a small brown paper bag.

TYRONE
(tiny voiced)
Strike.

STRIKE
(side of mouth)
Get out of here.

TYRONE
But ...

STRIKE
(side of mouth)
I ain't doin' that shit with you no more, so just get yourself some kiddy-friends.

TYRONE
But ...

TYRONE'S POV

WE SEE Strike sit up, eyes widening, then leaping free of the bench as Iris comes barreling through, swinging and missing him by a mile.

In shock, Strike dances like a boxer, but keeps his distance.

IRIS
You stay the fuck away from my son!

A CROWD instantly forms.

CLOSE ON TYRONE

has a heart-attack of embarrassment.

STRIKE
(stunned)
Don't you ever put your hands on my face!

IRIS
I'll put my goddamn hands anywhere I want! You stay away from him!

Tyrone runs back to his building, horrified.

Iris and Strike are surrounded -- it's a verbal cockfight.

STRIKE

I don't even know what the fuck you talking' about, you crazy bitch!
Get out my fuckin' face!

IRIS

Yeah, I'll get out. I'll get me Andre get you out, you stringy-
assed dope-dealin' faggot!

Iris lunges for Strike, misses and keeps moving in the direction that Andre always comes from.

STRIKE

(calling after her)
Yeah, you get anybody you want.
Maybe I'll call the police too, get
you locked up for assault.

CLOSE ON STRIKE

as he turns from saying this, wheeling, then jumping, as WE SEE Rocco right in his face.

ROCCO

(stony -- hiding behind sunglasses)
Hey Ronnie ... have I been a hard-
on to you out here?

STRIKE

What?

ROCCO

Have I not treated you like a man
out here? Talked to you with
respect? With courtesy?

Strike looks to the boys on the bench staring at this, the crowd is still there, too.

ROCCO (contd)

Huh?

STRIKE

(flinching)

What?

ROCCO

So why are you trying to make a
fucking fool out of me?

STRIKE

What are you talking about?

Strike eyes the immediate world of the projects as if from a merry-go-round; a half-mad vision whirling, circling around him.

ROCCO

What am I talking about? You told me you didn't know Darryl Adams. I'm running around like a horse's ass on that, and now I find out not only did you know the guy, but you worked like a whole year with him in Rodney's grocery store. Why the fuck didn't you tell me that?

STRIKE

(eyebrows doing jumping jacks)
Yeah, no, see, I got confused. I thought you meant another guy ... this other Darryl I know.

ROCCO

What other Darryl? And if you knew some other Darryl, you still should've said "yeah, I know him," right? I don't get it.

STRIKE

(eyes the crowd)
Well, I only know that other Darryl by name so ...

ROCCO

(cutting him off)
Explain something else to me. You said you didn't see your brother in two months, got all kinds of pissed off at me, because I didn't remember you said that, right? I go into Rudy's, the bar where your brother was drinking before the shooting? Guess what ... the bartender I.D.'ed you in there that night ... He even remembered the drink he made for you. Piña colada straight out of the can. Does this ring a bell?

Strike is speechless, looks up to his mother's windows.

ROCCO (contd)

Why'd you lie to me, Ronnie?

STRIKE

It's my brother.

ROCCO

What's your brother, your brother made you lie?

STRIKE

No ... I'm just ... you know, I'm tryin' to help him.

ROCCO

I don't get it. Explain to me how lying to me, helps him. I mean, he's locked up, so who are you helping? I don't get it ...

Strike, eyes fluttering, can't answer.

ROCCO (contd)

Talk to me, Ronnie.

STRIKE

What are you saying, I did it?

ROCCO

I didn't say that. You said that. I just asked you why you were throwing me a line of shit.
(narrow-eyed beat)
Why'd you say that?

STRIKE

I didn't say that. I just said ...
(winded beat as Strike tries to unscramble his brains)
You got me saying shit in a knot, man. You twisting me up.

ROCCO

(touching his own chest)

Me?

(laughing with disbelief)
who's twisting who here, Ronnie?
Alls I'm asking is why did you play me like such a jerk on this.
What's in it for you?

Strike scans the crowd, takes a slug of Mylanta.

STRIKE

(more in control)

Hey look, why don't you stop fuckin' with me, OK? You want to arrest me?

Strike puts out his hands as if for handcuffs.

ROCCO

(eyeing the crowd)
Ronnie, I just want to know what
you know ...

STRIKE

Am I under arrest or what ...

ROCCO

Hey, Ronnie, I just want to know
what ...

STRIKE

Am I under arrest or WHAT!

PAN of crowd CUT with Rocco's growing nervousness CUT
with Strike's freaked out resolve, his hands still
extended for cuffs.

ROCCO

Fuck, no ... If I arrest you I
can't talk to you.

STRIKE

Then I ain't goin' nowhere with you.

ROCCO

Fine. You don't have to do shit. But
if you want to continue to do business
out here without Jo-Jo, without Thumper,
without anybody else I can think of,
puttin' a hand in your pocket every two
seconds, I would really think about
taking a ride, right fucking now.

Strike, pacing, the crowd getting hotter, people glaring
at Rocco, glaring at Strike.

ROCCO (contd)

(ready to split with or
without him)

Are you comin' or what?

STRIKE

(dead cold)

No.

STRIKE'S POV

He sees André and Iris steaming towards the bench from
the interior of the projects. André looks pissed.

Strike looks from Rocco to André to Rocco to André to Rocco.

EXT/INT: ROCCO'S CAR - TEN MINUTES LATER

Rocco driving, Strike in the passenger seat.

Rocco pulls into parking lot of the Prosecutor's Office.

ROCCO

You want a sandwich or something?

Strike, mute, stoney, then ...

STRIKE

(staring at the building)
I ain't goin' in there ...

ROCCO

(swallowing rage)
No?

STRIKE

I ain't got nothin' to say to you.

ROCCO

(shifting gears)
Gee, that's too bad ... I was hoping you could help me out here because to tell you the truth, I've come completely around to YOUR way of thinking on this, you know that?

STRIKE

(paranoid)
What's my way of thinking?

Rocco just stares.

STRIKE (contd)

What's my way of thinking?

ROCCO

Hey, I know your brother is an innocent man, just like you do. And if he was my brother? And I know what you know? Every day of my life would be a living hell.

Strike, stunned, half-levitates out of the car.

ROCCO (contd)

(leaving the car too)
Do you think there's anything we could do about that, Ronnie?

STRIKE

(talking across the car roof)

What ...

ROCCO

Hey ... me, you, your brother, we all know who shot Darryl Adams.

STRIKE

Who ...

ROCCO

Who do you think, Ronnie?

Strike stays mute, riveted.

ROCCO (contd)

(completely losing it, screaming)

You. You did it, you little fuck! I know it, you know it, your brother knows it. What was the theory behind this, he'd get off on self-defense because he's got no record? Well, his life is over, and I know it's rough out there, but you're the fucking King Snake, you're a cold-blooded evil junkyard nigger like I never seen in my life ... What you do, offer him money? Who the fuck are you kidding? You're not the Mafia, you're not even Rodney Little ... you're a skinny ass snake motherfucker, nobody to nothing piece of street shit.

STRIKE

You don't know nothin' about it! You just a pig-faced motherfuckin' po-lice who don't know nothin' about what's out there, nothin' about me and nothing about what happened!

ROCCO

(rushing around the car, nose to nose)

So tell me!

Strike presses his palms into his eyes as if to soothe or heal or staunch tears. Rocco waits breathlessly ...

STRIKE

(sounding dead)

You want to talk to me you get me a lawyer.

ROCCO

(kissing close -- picking his words with seething distinctiveness)
 Listen to me ... I talked to all your brother's people and you know what? He's one of the decent ones. And probably, in his deluded decency, he thinks he's doing a noble thing with you here, but you know what else? I don't give a shit about him. I don't give a shit about you. I don't even give a shit about Darryl Adams ...

(beat)

But you and Victor playing me for a patsy? Using me?

(passionate controlled fury)

I read you like a fuckin' billboard. I been inside your head since before you were born ... twenty fuckin' years ...

(bellowing)

You don't play me! I play you!

Rocco steps back and flips his card at Strike's feet.

ROCCO (contd)

I'll be seeing you, my man ...

EXT: ROAD LEADING AWAY FROM PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE - TWO MINUTES LATER
 ROCCO'S POV

WE SEE, about a hundred yards down the pot-holed road, Strike loping furiously away from his interrogation.

WE SEE Rodney's Cadillac roll down from the opposite direction, pull up alongside him.

CLOSE ON ROCCO

watching this through squinting eyes.

ROCCO'S POV

WE SEE Strike's first reaction upon seeing Rodney come unannounced to pick him up -- an involuntary backing away from the Cadillac.

WE SEE Rodney pop out on the driver's side -- say something, gesture to Strike to get in.

MAZILLI (VO)

You want to make yourself crazy
goin' after somebody else on this,
there's your man ...

WE SEE Strike hesitate for a second, then do what he's
told.

ROCCO (VO)

Fuck Rodney, This kid thinks he can
outsmart me? He's goin' down ...

WE SEE the Cadillac roll off.

EXT/INT: RODNEY'S CAR - SAME TIME

Rodney driving, Strike in the shotgun seat.

RODNEY

You was supposed to be by my store
an hour ago.

STRIKE

Yeah, well, what was I supposed to
do, tell this cop I had to bag ounces?

RODNEY

Did he arrest you?

STRIKE

No.

RODNEY

Then you shoulda told him to go
fuck himself.

(beat)

What he want?

STRIKE

Nothin'.

RODNEY

Did he ask about me?

STRIKE

Unh-uh.

RODNEY

'Cause I never said nothin' to you
about shootin' nobody. Alls I said
is if you want Darryl's job you got
to go get it yourself and shit, I
didn't even say that ...

Strike stares at Rodney, incredulously -- the balls on him.

STRIKE
(dry-mouthed laugh, shaking
his head)
Fuck you, Rodney.

Rodney reaches out, grabs Strike by the hair and yanks his head down into his crotch so that Strike's POV is looking straight up at the steering wheel and Rodney's nostril-flaring, enraged face.

STRIKE'S POV - RODNEY

driving one-handed pulls the car off the road and as if by magic Rodney's .38 is pressed against Strike's nose, Rodney's bulging eyes blazing down at him.

ANGLE - STRIKE

laid out on the seat, head in Rodney's lap, sneakers flat on the passenger's side window.

STRIKE'S POV - RODNEY'S EYES OVER THE GUN

RODNEY
Who you talking to like that. Who
... I ain't one of your little crew
boys, motherfucker. You watch your
fuckin' mouth or I'll peel your
fuckin' cap, you understand? Huh?

Strike manages to nod.

RODNEY (contd)
And I'm gonna tell you something
else. If I ever hear about you
talking to that Homicide one more
time, if I ever hear my name come
up on this at all, I'm gonna know
you said it an' I'll kill you before
you can blink. I swear before God,
any po-lice come up on me for this?
I'm gonna know it was you, and you
are killed, you understand?

Strike nods.

RODNEY (contd)
Word is word on this, you got that? -

EXT: AERIAL SHOT OF HIGHWAY

Rodney's Cadillac pulled over at a crazy angle.

WE SEE the car pull back into the traffic, disappear into the slipstream.

INT: JO-JO'S SQUAD ROOM - SAME TIME

The four white kids from Delaware stand in the center of the room. Jo-Jo and three of his men stare at them.

Jo-Jo takes an envelope out of his drawer. He extracts a fat wad of bills. Jo-Jo hands the phone to one of the kids but does the dialing himself.

JO-JO

Tell him you want five ounces.

KID

(scared)

Is Rodney there?

(looking at Jo-Jo)

Who's this, Errol?

EXT: STRIKE'S DRIVEWAY - THIRTY MINUTES LATER
CLOSE ON ERROL'S FACE

looming down -- death's head with eye slits.

REVERSE ANGLE - TYRONE

terrified, bent backwards over the rear of Strike's car, Errol leaning over him.

Tyrone is still holding that brown paper bag.

Rodney rolls up across the street.

RODNEY

What's this, now ...

Tyrone slides away, out of his car-and-Errol sandwich and runs away down the block.

CLOSE ON STRIKE

looking pained, confused.

ANGLE - STRIKE

sitting in his own car in the driveway. Rodney and Errol talking alongside the car, Rodney's Cadillac parked behind Strike's rear.

WE SEE Errol take a package out of his jacket, hand it to Rodney.

Rodney leans in Strike's passenger window, drops the package on the seat.

RODNEY

So you got a half there. I want you to whack up like five ounces with a three cut on it, bring it down to the store, awright?

Strike nods, eyes straight ahead.

RODNEY (contd)

And listen.

(beat)

You best lose that little boy Tyrone.

STRIKE

(firm)

I ain't even talkin' to him no more.

RODNEY

Yeah.

(almost laughing)

You best lose him before his momma tear you a new asshole ...

STRIKE'S BEDROOM - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

PAN of all cutting and weighing apparatus laid out to step on Rodney's five ounces.

Strike, sitting on the floor, stares in disbelief at his bed. The mattress is upturned. The gun is gone.

STRIKE

What the fuck ...

INT: RODNEY'S STORE

Rodney and Strike behind the counter. There's a whole bunch of young TEENAGERS bellowing around the pool table.

The door jangles open and in walk the four white kids from Delaware.

RODNEY

(bellowing)

Uh-oh! Uh-oh! Gangster Time!

The four kids throw him seassick grins, do high-fives.

RODNEY (contd)
 (distracted by all the ruckus
 in his candy store)
 What you guys got down there, a
franchise?

They all explode in laughter that's too quick, too
 fluttery.

And soon as Rodney turns his head, the Delaware boys lose
 their smiles.

CLOSE ON STRIKE

watching them -- Something stinks, but ...

EXT/INT: ROCCO DRIVING ALONG JFK BOULEVARD

Gliding past rubble-strewn lot in which six black kids
 are lined up on their knees, hands clasped behind their
 necks. Jo-Jo's squad's got them covered. Mood is
 casual.

ROCCO
 (rolling up)
 What's this, the Mekong Delta?

JO-JO
 (coming to the car window)
 Good enough for the Cong, good
 enough for them. How you doin'
 with your boy?

ROCCO
 Comin' along.

JO-JO
 The kid could be unemployed soon.
 I got his boss selling weight to an
 undercover.

Jo-Jo show Rocco an arrest warrant for Rodney, which
 Rocco briefly scans.

ROCCO
 (after a thoughtful beat)
 Jo-Jo, would you permit me to do
 you a favor here?

EXT: STREET ACROSS FROM RODNEY'S STORE - TWENTY MINUTES
 LATER

Strike drops an ounce of coke in a garbage can, heads
 across the street to the store.

As Strike hits the curb, Mazilli and Rocco pull up, almost running him over.

Strike steps back, as Rocco struggles out of the car.

ROCCO

Hey! Look who's here ...

Strike, not knowing whether it's better to split or go into the store, opts, after a little dancing, to split.

ROCCO (contd)

(calling after him)

See you around, Ronnie.

INT: RODNEY'S STORE

Deserted, save for Rodney and his baby son. Rodney's got the kid on a bar stool behind the counter. Rodney's holding a comb and scissors, ready to give the kid a haircut. Mazilli and Rocco enter.

RODNEY

Hey, Rocco, what you need?

ROCCO

I needs you, brother.

RODNEY

(starting to snip away)

What for?

ROCCO

I gets me a warrant.

RODNEY

(casual)

Search?

ROCCO

Arrest.

RODNEY

Arrest for what.

ROCCO

You must have sold to an undercover, you dopey bastard. What are you, so desperate you're selling it yourself?

RODNEY

(his face going dark and dangerous)

Who set me up?

ROCCO
 (affable, pro to pro)
 C'mon, I can't tell you that ...

INT: STRIKE'S BEDROOM - THIRTY MINUTES LATER
 PAN OF THE ROOM

-- dresser drawer has been emptied of all dope paraphernalia and the safe is empty. On the floor is a thirty-nine gallon hefty bag filled with scales, laxative, tapes, all the shit. There's an envelope filled with money, addressed to Strike's mother on top of the dresser and another stack of money next to that.

Strike enters, stuffs the money in his pocket, takes the envelope, yanks the garbage bag over his shoulder and leaves the room.

After a beat he re-enters the room, pulls up the mattress and scowls, thinking of the missing gun.

STRIKE
 (dropping the mattress)
 Fuck it.

He leaves the room again, intending to leave this life.

INT: BUREAU OF CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION

Mazilli, Rocco and Rodney are at the fingerprinting station.

Rocco holds Rodney's infant son as Rodney fingerprints himself.

CLOSE ON RODNEY

rolling his own fingers on an I.D. card.

RODNEY
 (muttering)
 Who served me up, Mazilli.

Mazilli shrugs.

ROCCO
 (speaking to the baby)
 Alls I know is, your mommy best show in the next five minutes or you be goin' over to Family Services.

RODNEY
 Yeah, you best not tell me. Save me from a homicide charge.

ROCCO

Hey, don't tell us in advance. It takes all the fun out of the investigation.

EXT: STREET - SAME TIME

Strike is heading for his car. He passes an open garbage can and drops in the hefty bag.

INT: MUNICIPAL STAIRWELL - TEN MINUTES LATER

Wiping his inky fingers with a Baby Wipe, Rodney leads Rocco and Mazilli (still holding the baby) down the stairs.

A WHITE WOMAN with teased metallic hair and a pissed off face is coming up the stairs.

WOMAN

I'm Carol Iacone from Youth Services ... this the kid?

RODNEY

(grinding his teeth)
Shit ...

Suddenly, at the base of the stairs is the kid's mother, DAWN, 22, chunky.

RODNEY (contd)

Where the fuck were you!

Dawn, glaring at Rodney, marches up the stairs, purposefully shouldering the very pissed off social worker who shoulders her right back.

The two women face off, Rocco still holding out the baby.

DAWN

(grabs her kid, speaks to Rodney)
Yeah, you best go to jail.

Dawn marches out of the building.

RODNEY

(bellowing after her)
Yeah, I'll go to jail. I'll go anywhere, get away from you.

The procession proceeds down the stairs, Rodney ranting and raving bloody oaths against one and all.

EXT: PROJECTS - PLAYGROUND AREA - TEN MINUTES LATER

WE SEE basketball courts, handball courts.

Sha Ron, Victor's wife, is playing catch against the wall by herself. Her youngest is in a stroller watching his mother play in her clumsy heavy way. There's something terribly lonely and sad in Sha Ron's silent awkwardness.

STRIKE (VO)

Sha Ron.

Sha Ron stops playing, turns to the voice.

WE SEE Strike, who's watching through a chain link fence around the court.

Sha Ron approaches, mute and expressionless.

STRIKE

(eyeing the stroller with a pained remorseful look)

Who's that, Ivan?

SHA RON

Mark.

STRIKE

Victor get his bail down yet?

SHA RON

Yeah, uh-huh.

STRIKE

Five thousand?

Sha Ron nods.

Looking furtively around the playground, Strike squeezes the envelope through the fence.

STRIKE (contd)

You give this to my mother, awright? Get Victor out.

Sha Ron takes the envelope, stares at him in her depressed expressionless way.

STRIKE (contd)

Tell my mother I'm not clockin' no more ... Tell her I'm sorry.

They stare at each other for another beat.

SHA RON

What about me?

INT: COUNTY JAIL INTAKE CENTER - TEN MINUTES LATER

Crowded, stinky, glazed tile room centered by long intake desk. Cater-corner from each other are two bullpens; overnight holding cells, jam-packed with prisoners.

ANGLE - CELL DOOR OPENING

Rodney ushered in. Door closing.

Rodney turns to see Mazilli and Rocco standing outside the bars.

RODNEY

(black death in his eyes)

Who served me up, Mazilli?

MAZILLI

Sorry, chief ...

Rocco waits for Mazilli to leave then leans into the bars, beckons Rodney close enough to kiss.

ROCCO

(intimate)

Who do you think, you dumb shit ...

Rodney steps back, Strike's name coming into his eyes.

ROCCO (contd)

Kid's under a rock ... you know how it is ...

EXT: PROJECTS BENCH - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

Strike approaching the benches. All his crew sit there motionless, staring at him.

STRIKE

(uneasy)

What you sittin' around for?

FUTON

They ain't no dope. Rodney got locked up.

STRIKE

(freaked)

What he get locked up for?

No one answers.

STRIKE'S POV

He sees Tyrone, pacing behind the bench area, patting his gut as if the gesture is some kind of signal, as he desperately tries to catch Strike's eye.

STRIKE

(wincing)

Rodney's in jail?

WE SEE Tyrone throw up his hands in frustration, march into his building.

ROCCO (VO)

Hey, Ronnie ...

Strike turns to face Rocco, who's got a big happy grin on his puss.

Rocco extends his hand.

ROCCO

(warmly)

Hey, Ronnie, man ...

Off-balance, Strike accepts Rocco's handshake.

CLOSE ON THE HANDSHAKE

then up to Strike's face, wincing, trapped.

ROCCO

(low and nasty)

So ... you wanna fuck with me? Let me show you what fucking's all about.

STRIKE

What? What are you talking about ...

ROCCO

Nothing ... just ... you know ... we tossed your boss in County last night and I just came by to thank you for your help on that ...

STRIKE

(eyeing his craw on the bench)

Hey, fuck you, man. I don't know nothin' about that.

Strike struggles to free his hand.

ROCCO
 (not letting go)
 Oh, no? Yeah well, let me tell
 you. Rodney? He makes bail
 tomorrow? Gets back out on the
 street, people start gassin' up his
 head?

STRIKE'S POV

Scare of the canyon walls of Roosevelt, millions of
 windows, people watching here and there.

ROCCO (VO)
 I wouldn't know what the fuck I'd
 do if I was you. Probably the best
 thing? I'd run down to the
 Prosecutor's Office to-night, work
 something out to get my ass
 protected. I mean, if you're half
 as smart as you think you are.

STRIKE
 (pleading, thrashing)
 Man, I ain't even dealin' no more ...

ROCCO
 (steamrolling)
 Get yourself in a room with me,
 tell me what really happened on
 that Ahab's thing, how Rodney
 pressured you into capping that
 guy...

Strike doubles over with an attack of cramps, but Rocco
 still won't let go.

ROCCO (contd)
 I mean nobody wants you on this.
 You had no choice, everybody knows
 that. Rodney had you scared to
 death, right? Right?

Rocco moves his head to keep up eye contact with Strike.

STRIKE
 (suddenly calm -- full of
 hate and despair)
 Man, you just got me killed over
nothin' 'cause you don't even know
 what the fuck you falkin' about.

Rocco lets go of Strike's hand, stands there giving the
 buildings the up-and-down.

ROCCO

When I was your age? I used to have a girlfriend lived in this projects. Kathy Doogan. She's a doctor now. This used to be a pretty decent place to live ... you know, back then.

Rocco stuffs yet another card into Strike's sweatshirt.

ROCCO (contd)

Watch your back, now ...

Rocco walks off. Strike turns, faces the hanging judges on the bench.

STRIKE

Yo listen up, I din't say nothin' to that ...

FUTON

(mocking)

Yo listen up ...

Strike moves to face off with Futon, Futon rises and they instantly embrace in a violent rollaround. People come running to ring the action.

ANGLE

Rocco in his car, double-parked, watching the fight.

EXT: COUNTY JAIL - 4:00 A.M.

Deathly still street under pre-dawn lighting.

INT: BULLPEN AREA

Deathly still save for two guards, one reading a book.

ANGLE - DEEP INTO ONE BULLPEN

ZOOMING past twenty prisoners sleeping on prison-issue pallets, WE SEE Rodney sitting up against the rear wall.

CLOSE ON RODNEY'S SMOULDERING EXPRESSION

ANGLE - FIVE MINUTES LATER - TWENTY DOLLAR BILL

dangling from Rodney's fingers through the bars.

CLOSE ON A GUARD

eyeing the money over the top of his book.

ANGLE - RODNEY

on a pay phone in a corner of the intake center.

RODNEY
(soft, low)
Errol ...

INT: ROCCO'S SUBURBAN BACK YARD - SAME TIME

Rocco, drink in hand, is kicking around his daughter's soccer ball, humming something.

RODNEY (VO)
Errol ...

INT: STRIKE'S BEDROOM - SAME PRE-DAWN TIME

Strike, wide awake, laying on his bed, staring at the moving bars of car lights traversing his walls.

RODNEY (VO)
Errol ... It's me.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCH - 2:00 P.M. - NEXT DAY

Strike, red-eyed, comes upon the bench, only Peanut there.

STRIKE
Man, this shit is fucked up.

PEANUT
(coldly)
Errol find you yet?

STRIKE
(blood-drained)
Errol?

PEANUT
Yeah, he come by asking where you was.

STRIKE
What for?

ANGLE - TYRONE

coming out of his building. Still holding that brown paper bag, he marches straight to Strike, bag extended.

STRIKE
(to Peanut, repeating)
What for?

Before Peanut can answer, Strike abruptly wheels on Tyrone, hunches down and yells in his face.

STRIKE (contd)

Will you please get out my mother fuckin' face? Please. Gah-damn!

Stunned, Tyrone staggers backwards, trots away.

Strike turns to Peanut, not giving Tyrone another thought.

PEANUT

(in a cold sing-song)

I don't know what for. I guess you'll find out when he finds you, right?

ANGLE - STRIKE

marching off in his crazed funk.

He's heading down the street to the old ladies' driveway where his car is parked.

STRIKE'S POV

From fifty yards off he sees his car. Errol Barnes is leaning against the door, that big gun-butt of his sticking up out of his waist as if he just doesn't give a shit who sees it.

Strike ducks down behind a parked car, hissing his panic.

STRIKE'S POV

Marching from the benches and heading towards Strike's car is Tyrone, unawares that Errol is there instead. He's still gripping that wrinkled brown paper bag.

TYRONE

(imitating his mother)

... If every time I try to earn some money I have to worry about you lyin' to me about where you was, lyin' to me, to your gran'mother, to everybody who loves you in this world, and I just want to know what kind of boy you are ...

Tyrone marches out of earshot, eyes to the ground.

STRIKE'S POV

Strike watches as Tyrone almost walks chest-first into Errol, then steps back in fear. Errol takes two steps

towards the boy, reaching out, then suddenly a SHOT is heard.

Errol and Tyrone stand there staring at each other for a beat, then ...

STRIKE

Oh God.

WE SEE Errol collapse. Tyrone, in shock, starts turning in absent circles. He is holding Strike's missing gun.

We hear the old lady in the window above the car scream for Jesus.

STRIKE (contd)

Oh God.

Tyrone continues to wander about the driveway, dazed, stepping on Errol's corpse as the lady keeps calling for Jesus.

EXT: JUVENILE ANNEX - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the rear entrance of one of the local precinct houses -- overhead sign, "JUVENILE ANNEX."

INT: JUVENILE HALL

Gloomy wooden room with two cages and three detective's desks.

There's TWO TEENAGERS in the cage and ONE DETECTIVE typing behind his desk.

ROCCO'S POV

WE SEE on a bench running along a far wall, Iris, tear-streaked, sitting with Tyrone.

Tyrone is curled on his side as if cold, his head in his mother's lap.

Rocco stops in his tracks as he recognizes both the kid and the mother.

Suddenly André comes up alongside Rocco.

ROCCO

Hey, André, what's up?

André shows Rocco a small brown bag.

ANGLE - INSIDE WE SEE THE GUN

A .25 auto.

ANDRÉ

Can I talk to you?

ANGLE - TIGHT CORNER OF THE JUVENILE HALL

André speaks to Rocco in a cracked whisper, no-bullshit tone.

ANDRÉ

I just want to tell you that that boy in there, Tyrone? I know him since he was a baby. I know his whole family, they all decent people and like, whatever happened it must've been some serious mistake because that boy never been in trouble ever. I mean he's in something like the eighty-fifth percentile on this national education test they give? And you know, whatever happens from now on in, that kid's life is ruined but what I'm sayin' is, is that I would appreciate it if you would help him on his statement, you know what I'm sayin'?

Rocco shrugs -- no problem.

ANGLE - THE BENCH

Tyrone, in shock, stares straight ahead.

IRIS

(weepy, terrified)

He goin' to jail?

Rocco squats down to be on eye-level with her.

ROCCO

(gently)

Look, I got to find out what happened. Would you permit me to talk with him?

CLOSE ON ANDRÉ

nodding his reassurance to Iris.

IRIS

(with a wild hopelessness)

If he talks to you, can I take him home? Does he have to go to jail?

CLOSE ON ROCCO

staring at her kindly, offering her nothing.

INT: INTERVIEW CUBICLE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Rocco sits facing Iris and Tyrone. Tyrone still has his head on his mother's lap. André loiters outside, half-visible.

ROCCO

(gently)

Tyrone, you know what you did,
don't you?

Tyrone doesn't respond, his mother caressing the side of his head in her lap.

IRIS

He knows.

ROCCO

You know that it was wrong?

IRIS

He knows.

ROCCO

OK ... now ... you know what you
did was wrong, but you couldn't
help it. You were scared, right?

Tyrone nods, eyes unfocused.

IRIS

Oh, he was scared, he was.

ROCCO

Look, Tyrone, you're a good kid, but
you got all these people around, rough
tough kids, drugs, everybody putting
pressure on you, coming down on you
for not being like them, and all
you want to do is go to school, be
with your family, protect your family.
So you get yourself a gun -- but
not to hurt anybody, just for
protection, just for protection ...

Rocco hesitates -- this scenario he's building sounds to
him like Victor.

Iris, rapt, nodding yes, yes, yes.

ROCCO (contd)

Did you know that man you shot?

Tyrone stares at him, not answering but at least his eyes are focusing on the speaker now.

ROCCO (contd)

That was Errol Barnes. He was a stone killer, did you know that?

(beat)

Well, you know that now, right?

IRIS

(nodding avidly)

Yes, Lord ...

ROCCO

OK ... so ... there you were, just walking down the street minding your own business, you got a gun that you're not supposed to have, but you're not bothering anybody either ...

Tyrone finally rises from his mother's lap, his head on her shoulder now.

ROCCO (contd)

All of a sudden there's Errol Barnes coming up right in your face, coming right at you.

Rocco's really getting into it now, his audience leaning slightly forward.

ROCCO (contd)

And he's got this horrible look in his eyes and you see him going for that thirty-eight in his waist and you know he's gonna hurt you, maybe even kill you, and who would protect your mother if you were in the hospital? Or in the grave?

Both mother and son are unconsciously nodding in agreement, eyes on Rocco.

ROCCO (contd)

And you never fired that gun before but Errol had you so scared that you started seeing stars.

Tyrone makes a guttural noise.

ROCCO (contd)

(with relish)

You were so scared that you didn't even know where you were, but that face, it's coming at you, coming at you, you don't even know why, you don't even know what you did, just coming at you, coming at you, and the next thing you know ... BOOM! ...

Iris and Tyrone almost levitate out of their seats.

ROCCO (contd)

(calmer, softer; a coda)

And you don't even know how the damn thing got into your hand.

Tyrone bursts into tears, hugs his mother across her shoulders, and utters his first words since the murder.

TYRONE

(shivering, wild-eyed)

Mommy, that's what happened.

IRIS

(sobbing)

Praise Jesus.

Rocco leans back, satisfied, throws André a quick wink.

ROCCO

That's what happened ... And when I ask you about it with the tape recorder going? That's what you're going to tell me, right? And you're going to tell me that because it's the truth.

Both mother and son nod avidly.

ROCCO (contd)

Now ... there's one last thing we need to go over, and on this, Tyrone, I want you to answer me direct ... Where'd you get the gun?

TYRONE

(heads down, lying)

I found it.

Rocco and André exchange glances.

ROCCO

(grim, now)

Where?

TYRONE
In the bushes.

ROCCO
What bushes?

TYRONE
By my house.

Rocco leans back, sighing. The kid can't meet his eyes.

Rocco looks significantly at Iris, asking her help.

Iris firmly pushes Tyrone away from her so she could see his eyes. Tyrone tries to bury his chin in his chest.

IRIS
(in a scary, no-nonsense tone)
Give it ...

TYRONE
(muttering, ashamed)
I borrowed it by accident from Strike.

ANDRÉ (VO)
Motherfucker!!

All turn as André punches the wall and stomps out of the Juvie hall.

ROCCO
(be still my beating heart)
Strike? No kidding ... From the benches?

TYRONE
(teary, wretched)
I was trying to give it back to him,
but he won't talk to me no more ...
I tried lots of times.

EXT: STRIKE ON A PAY PHONE - SAME TIME

In the foreground WE SEE Strike's car, Errol's blood and fingerprint powder clearly visible on the quarter panel.

STRIKE
(into the phone)
Mommy ... it's Ronald ...
(sad, scared)
I'm leavin' for a while ... can I
come up? I want to say goodbye to
you ... awright ... awright ...
awright.

EXT: PROJECTS BENCHES - TEN MINUTES LATER
 STRIKE'S POV

goes from the stony hanging judges on the bench to the eleventh floor windows of his mother's apartment.

Strike starts the long walk from his car past the benches to the building.

Right as he comes closest to his former crew, he sees everybody's eyes go big, staring at something, someone coming up behind him.

Strike turns to see Rodney jump out of his Cadillac. He's got a baseball bat down one leg and he moves towards Strike with a skippy brisk stutter-walk. He brings up the bat and ...

With the bat cocked, Rodney's eyes travel over Strike's shoulder and what he sees makes him bring the bat down to his leg again and briskly return to his car.

STRIKE

(in a daze)

Hey Rod ...

suddenly WE SEE Strike raised off the ground by a hand between his legs.

STRIKE'S POV

WE SEE the buildings and people around him tilt and careen, then SEE the ground come rushing up, exploding into a momentary blackness.

ANGLE - WE SEE STRIKE

face down on the cement, André, livid, adrenalized, standing over him. They are surrounded by an open-mouthed, riveted crowd.

André lifts Strike by the back of his shirt and runs him into the bench; his own bench, his own throne. Strike's nose is broken.

STRIKE'S POV - THE MUTE CROWD

staring at him, the buildings still tilting slightly.

We hear Strike make gagging noises -- André is pushing his throat into the top bench slat via a huge hand on the back of Strike's head.

ANDRÉ

(lips in Strike's ear)
 You are gone from here, gone from
 these houses, gone from these
streets, gone from this city ...

STRIKE'S POV

Through a reddish veil he looks up at his mother's
 windows and sees her, looking down.

ANDRÉ (contd)

(in a whisper)
 I ever see you again, I'm gonna
kill you, I'll kill you and put a
 gun in your hand, say you threw
 down on me for this beating you
 just got. You understand that?

STRIKE

(gagging)
 Yo -- Ah - André.

VOICE IN THE CROWD

Yo, André, ease up, man, ease up.

OTHER VOICE

Nah, kill his ass ...

ANDRÉ

(whispering)
 You ruined that little boy's life,
 and now you are gone from here.

ANGLE - ANDRÉ

yanks Strike up off the bench slat, then holding him by
 the back of his shirt and the nape of his neck, races him
 through the crowd and rams him into the door of his own
 car. We hear a sharp crack -- Strike's knee hitting the
 car-door. A group wincing sound is heard cut with
 laughter.

Strike on the ground, looks up to his car. Parked right
 behind him is Rodney in his Cadillac, his face stony --
 waiting for his turn at Strike.

EXT/INT: STRIKE DRIVING - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Strike's nose is swollen. He looks in his rear view
 mirror -- there's Rodney's Cadillac, Rodney's eyes
 meeting his in the mirror -- "Whither thou goest ..."
 Strike is now the Flying Dutchman -- hope he doesn't run
 out of gas.

INT: HOMICIDE OFFICE - SAME TIME
CLOSE ON WARRANT

being typed by Rocco.

WE SEE Strike's name. WE SEE the charges -- Illegal Possession of a Firearm.

WE SEE the name of the complaining officer -- Rocco Klein.

Rocco yanks the warrant from the typewriter, marches through the office heading for the street to get a judge's signature.

ANGLE - ROCCO AT THE GLASS DOORS OF THE BUILDING ENTRANCE

Rocco pushing through warrant in hand, crashes into Strike coming into the building to seek out Rocco and sanctuary.

ROCCO
(not missing a beat)
Hey-y -- look who's here.
(flourishing the warrant)
I was just coming to get you.

Rocco notices Strike's face, his limp.

ROCCO (cont'd)
The fuck happened to you?

Without answering, Strike almost pushes Rocco out of the way in his anxiousness to get inside.

ROCCO'S POV

WE SEE in the parking lot about twenty-thirty yards away Rodney standing there, arms crossed over his chest, glaring at Strike.

ROCCO
(waving, friendly)
How's it hangin'?

Rodney doesn't move.

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM

Strike is holding his knee and rocking in his seat -- he is alone.

PULL BACK TO SEE Mazilli looking at him through the small grilled door-window.

Rocco paces like an expectant father behind Mazilli.

MAZILLI
What the hell's he doin' here?

ROCCO
Sittin' in the crosshairs.

MAZILLI
(disgusted)
The crosshairs ...

ROCCO
(focused on Strike)
We got the wrong brother.

MAZILLI
(walking off)
The fuck we do.

INT: INTERROGATION ROOM - TWO MINUTES LATER

Now it's Rocco versus Strike across the table against the barren backdrop of the bare walls.

Strike holds his head in a brace of fingertips.

STRIKE
(remorseful)
What he do it for?

ROCCO
Tyrone?
(shrugging)
My guess? He was protecting you.
Rodney's not gonna get blood on his hands. He sent Errol after you, and this poor kid stepped into the breach like David and Goliath and now he's a twelve-year-old murderer. Way to go, Strike ...

STRIKE
(angry, freaked)
Don't you lay that shit on me.

ROCCO
(acid)
Don't lay it on you, huh?

STRIKE
(rapid burst, angry, pleading)
Why'd you have to come up and shake my hand in front of the people like
(MORE)

STRIKE (contd)
that for ... None of this woulda
happened, man, I told you ...

ROCCO
(exploding, realizing his
part in this)
And I told you not to play me! Did
I not tell you that?

STRIKE
(shaking his head in refusal,
almost talking to himself)
I ain't taking the weight for this.

Rocco looks away, nailed, trying to shift gears and move
on.

ROCCO
Nah, why should you, you're a hell
of a guy, look at all the people
that went down trying to protect
you, your brother, Tyrone ... a
hell of guy ... But you know what?
They all went down protecting you
from the same guy ... and he's
still out there.
(beat)
Except you got one ally left.

Rocco solemnly points to himself.

ROCCO (contd)
(beat)
Now, you tell me how Rodney pressured
you into doing Darryl Adams, we'll
work out some kind of deal for you
and drop Rodney down a hole.
(beat)
Alls you got to do is tell me the
truth ... right now.

Strike massages his knee, rocks. Rocco takes a deep,
shuddery breath, praying that he successfully deceived
Strike into confession.

ROCCO (contd)
So, let me just ask you, just to
get it out of the way.
(beat)
Did you shoot Darryl Adams ...

STRIKE
(after a beat)
Unh-uh ... No.

Rocco slowly bares his teeth, tries to control his rage.

ROCCO
OK ... who did ...

STRIKE
(after a beat)
Victor ...

ROCCO
(nodding, his face curdling
with anger)
Victor ...

Rocco, from total stillness, suddenly flies at Strike and begins to drag him off his chair to the door.

STRIKE
What you doin'?

ROCCO
(bughouse)
I'll fuckin' hand-feed you to Rodney
myself, you motherfucker, you fuckin' ...

Strike and Rocco struggle. Strike pushes himself away from Rocco's grasp, staggering backwards into a corner. He's come up with Rocco's gun which he points at Rocco with a trembling hand.

Strike is on the verge of tears. Rocco stands his ground, struggling with his fear.

ROCCO (contd)
(hoarse)
Ronnie ... whoa.

STRIKE
(with desperation and rage)
You motherfucker ... nigger says he
didn't do nothin' you don't believe
him. Nigger says he did it, you
still don't believe him! My
brother did it. He told you that.
I didn't! What the fuck I got to
do to get you on to that!

ROCCO'S POV

The small door-window. No one there. No one knows
Strike's got his gun.

ROCCO
(gently)
OK ... OK ... Just tell me ...

STRIKE

(cutting him off)

Tell you what ... you got him in County. What you want me to say, "Yeah, he did it, OK ... "

ROCCO

(hands up, palms out)

OK ... OK ...

STRIKE

What ... you think I'm tryin' to let him go down for me? You think I'm afraid of jail?

Strike puts the gun to his own head, tapping his temple with the muzzle.

STRIKE (contd)

You think this ain't like jail up in here? You think you know me? You don't. I didn't kill nobody!

Rocco moves forward a step, eyes on his gun still at Strike's temple.

STRIKE (contd)

(going off)

I didn't have the heart ... Victor's all like, "got to be got," "peel his cap." He was drunk, talking some drunk ballshuck in that bar. I didn't even know he was strapped.

FLASHBACK

CLOSE ON GYM BAG

at Victor's feet in Rudy's.

BACK TO ROCCO AND STRIKE

ROCCO

(gingerly)

Ronnie ... you're gettin' in pretty deep here ...

STRIKE

(ignoring him)

How was I supposed to know?

ROCCO

(saying anything)

Hey, you couldn't ... Why don't you give me the gun?

Strike reacts to this by pointing the gun at Rocco again.

STRIKE

(bitter)

say "I don't know you."

ROCCO

(humoring him)

OK ... I don't know you.

STRIKE

(angrier)

You don't know shit!

ROCCO

(gently but alert)

Ok ... I don't ...

(suddenly caught up in his mission again-slightly shifting gears)

What don't I know, Ronnie? ...

C'mon ...

(tilting his chin to the gun)

You're the man ... what don't I know ...

(soothing but insistent)

what don't I know ...

CLOSE ON STRIKE

faltering, overwhelmed by his own half-knowledge of things -- it's time.

ROCCO (VO)

Tell me ...

FLASHBACK

EXT: OVERHEAD VIEW OF RAIN-BATTERED CAR

the day after the shooting.

INT: VICTOR AND STRIKE IN THE CAR

Both dripping, shivering.

Victor silent in his orange uniform, staring at his own hands on the steering wheel.

STRIKE

(punching Victor blindly in his exasperation)

What the fuck did you do! I didn't say for you ...

VICTOR
 (calm, dazed)
 Ronnie ... it was like a dream ...

FLASHBACK - VICTOR SHOOTING DARRYL

VICTOR (VO)
 He went down so hard.

Victor firing blindly at Darryl. Four shots. Darryl "catching" a bullet in his palm, jerking back, floating down, then Victor's tranced-out shocked face, staring down at Darryl. Victor fleeing.

BACK TO VICTOR AND STRIKE IN THE CAR

ROCCO (VO)
Why?

VICTOR
 (to Strike, calmly)
 I couldn't take it no more ... I couldn't ...
 (directly to Strike)
 Somebody had to pay.

STRIKE
 (to Victor)
 For what?

BACK TO STRIKE IN THE PRESENT

gesticulating with the gun.

STRIKE
 (to Rocco, beseechingly)
 Pay for what ...

CLOSE ON ROCCO,

torn between absorbing Strike's testimony and concentration on the gun.

FLASHBACK

Victor as security guard having the crumpled hundred dollar bill thrown in his face. The action is in excruciating SLOW-MOTION, the money moving towards his face like floating space debris.

STRIKE (VO)
 What he do it for?

FLASHBACK

VICTOR ON HIS STOMACH

getting cuffed by Thumper, his head pulled up by the hair, chin to the sky, his throat bowed out in a painful arc.

BACK TO ROCCO

ROCCO

(eyes on the gun, gently)
Maybe he was fed-up with things ...

STRIKE

(bitter, distraught)
Fed-up with things, huh? Naw ...
this ... is fed-up with things ...

Strike puts the gun to his temple again, eyelids fluttering.

Rocco makes his move, grabbing for the gun as Strike fires. Strike gets shouldered into the wall, then drops to the floor as Rocco stands over him, shaken, freaked, the gun in his hand.

The interrogation door gets kicked in, three cops sweeping the room in shooters' crouches.

ROCCO

(hands high, gun at the ceiling)
Ho! Easy! Easy!

The cops nervously, tentatively, stand down.

ROCCO (contd)

(grinning, shrugging)
My fault, my fault ...

They stare at Strike on the floor then back to Rocco.

ROCCO (contd)

(winking)
I was giving him a hearing test ...
he passed ...

The cops hesitate.

ROCCO (contd)

(hands up)
It's OK ... it's OK.

DETECTIVE

Jesus, Rocco ...

They retreat.

ANGLE

ROCCO
(struggling for a casual tone
-- standing over Strike)
C'mon, get up ...

STRIKE
(near tears, on the floor)
Victor didn't know what he was doin'
... He din't ... you gotta know him,
man ... He never did nothin' ...
but it's just like you said ...
(Strike points to a wall
signifying Rodney outside)
Rodney's behind it all. So why don't
you just snatch him up, just ...

ROCCO
(casual, not looking at
Strike)
Get up ...

As Strike rises to his feet, Rocco without warning
backhands him across the room.

EXT: STEPS LEADING OUT OF THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Strike, limping and swollen, descends, Rocco behind him.
Suddenly Strike stops.

STRIKE
(hissing in fear and awe)
Gahd ...

WE SEE Strike's car -- Rodney has done a major job on it
-- the front window is shattered, there's gouges, dents
... it's like it was hit by a meteor.

Rocco massages Strike's shoulders as he talks low in his
ear.

ROCCO
Let me ask you ... Do you think
Rodney's thinking, "Now we're
even?" Or do you think he's
thinking -- "This is just a taste."

STRIKE
Gahd.

ROCCO

So, what do you think we should do
about this, Ronnie? What ...

Abruptly, in a blur of violent speed, Rodney bulls into them separating them and then WE SEE a flash of silver as Rodney swings his aluminum softball bat at Strike, missing as Strike falls on his ass.

Rocco, recovering, shoves Rodney backwards and plants himself between Rodney and the cowering Strike.

RODNEY

(cocking the bat)

Get the fuck out my way!

Rocco stands there, moving parallel to Rodney, blocking him. He flips out his Prosecutor's Office badge so that it hangs over his chest like an amulet.

RODNEY (contd)

Get the fuck ...

ROCCO

(tapping the symbol of his job)

You street smart ... how smart are
you ...

RODNEY

(bug-eyed, cocking the bat)

I'll take you out, too, motherfucker.

ROCCO

How smart are you ...

Rodney stands there livid, trying to ignore Rocco, see his way to Strike.

ROCCO (contd)

How smart are you?

Rodney looks like he's going to take off Rocco's head but Rocco doesn't budge, chanting ...

ROCCO (contd)

(gesturing to the sky,

to freedom)

You like it out here? Add it up.

Add it up ...

Rodney, although still brandishing the bat, still seeking Strike behind the human shield, seems to slightly subside, to hear Rocco's chant.

Still bug-eyed, he lowers the bat ignoring Rocco, finding Strike's eyes.

ROCCO (contd)

Add it up.

Defeated by his own survival instincts, Rodney in a last gesture of menace points the bat at Strike as if to say "next time."

As Rodney finally turns, giving Strike and Rocco his back, WE SEE Mazilli on the prosecutor's steps, calmly aiming his .38 at Rodney, the implication being that all Rodney would have had to do a minute ago is swing at Rocco, and Mazilli would have shot him.

RODNEY

(snearing at the gun)

Fuck you too, Mazilli.

Rodney dismisses all three of them with a wave and walks to his car.

EXT/INT: ROCCO'S CAR - HOLLAND TUNNEL

STRIKE

(cautiously)

Where you takin' me?

ROCCO

Your brother's pleading self-defense. Somebody gets ahold of you, Victor's gonna have a big problem with that.

(looking at Strike)

You understand what I'm saying?

Strike steals a peek into his front pocket.

WE SEE the edge of his stake. That fat wad of cash -- \$5,000, not a hell of a lot to start a new life, but it's something.

STRIKE

Tyrone, does he got a bail?

ROCCO

There's no bail on juveniles. His mother's got him until the trial.

STRIKE

(outburst)

I can't carry the weight for that man, I just can't.

ROCCO
 (freaked)
 Shut up!

Strike bows his head to his knees, half antsiness, half prayer.

EXT: N.Y. EXIT OF THE HOLLAND TUNNEL

Rocco's car ejecting into the Manhattan traffic.

EXT: PORT AUTHORITY - EIGHTH AVENUE ENTRANCE - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Rocco's car pulls up to the curb.

ROCCO
 (hard)
 You got enough money for a ticket
 somewheres?

STRIKE
 I guess.

ROCCO
 Hey, Darryl Adams ... remember him
 layin' there in all that blood and
 brains?

Strike says nothing.

ROCCO (contd)
 That could've been you ... your
 brother could've just as easily
 peeled your fuckin' cap that night.
 (beat)
 You know that, right?

Strike turns his head away.

ROCCO (contd)
 If I ever see you again, I'll book
 you for criminal solicitation and
 conspiracy to commit murder. I'll
 pick up Rodney on the same charges
 and I'll make sure you two draw the
 same tier. same fucking bed. you
 understand me?

Strike nods mutely.

A beeper goes off in the car.

STRIKE
 It ain't mine ...

Rocco peers at the number coming up on his hip. he looks up -- Strike is out of the car and halfway towards the terminal.

ROCCO
(muttering to himself)
You're welcome, motherfucker ...

INT: PORT AUTHORITY

Strike at the Trailway ticket window, looking up at a map of America lined with bus routes.

STRIKE
Washington, D.C.

He drops some cash on the counter, and the clerk moves to his console.

STRIKE (contd)
No ... no ... wait up, wait up ...
Philadelphia ... Philadelphia.

The clerk pauses, gives him a look.

CLERK
You sure?

STRIKE
Yeah ... no ... hold it ... hold it.

Strike looks up at the map, lips moving, hand out over his money.

STRIKE (contd)
Give me a second here, just one
more second ...

EXT: JERSEY EXIT OF THE HOLLAND TUNNEL - FIFTEEN MINUTES
LATER

INT: ROCCO'S CAR

Rocco driving. His beeper goes off again. Rocco keeps his eyes on the road.

FLASHBACK

Victor trance-walking to the dope dealers inside Hambones. He's carrying that tray with Cokes. Rocco's beeper provides the soundtrack for this moment.

INT: ROCCO'S CAR

Rocco, coming off this vision, checks the number display on his beeper, rubs his face, drives on.

INT: TRAILWAY BUS - IN THE BUS BAY

Strike in his seat looking out his window at the people burdened with bags who are toddling onto the bus.

CLOSE ON STRIKE'S HAND

He holds a fistful of bus tickets -- the See America package, a half dozen cities held like a fan.

The bus jerks into reverse, backing out of its bay.

Strike closes his eyes, holds the tickets to his forehead.

STRIKE

(like a whispered prayer)

Help me ...

EXT: ANOTHER CRIME SCENE - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

WE SEE a street party ringing a shot-up male body on the sidewalk bordered by yellow tape.

WE SEE Mazilli and another detective process the scene.

WE SEE Rodney in the crowd, laughing, putting the moves on some girl.

WE SEE the other detective ring the body in a series of flash pops.

ANGLE - ROCCO IN HIS CAR

watching all this. Rocco hesitates as if pondering his options, then, with great effort, he opens the car door, rises to his feet.

ANGLE - TOWARDS THE BACK OF THE RAUCOUS CROWD

WE SEE Rocco in his customary starting position -- just one of the rubbernecks.

ROCCO

(to no one)

He was a nice guy, right?

(beat)

Who would've shot him?

No one answers, and in slow-motion WE SEE Rocco work his way through the crowd and head for the yellow tape.

WE SEE him lift the tape and enter the inner sanctum of yet another urban tragedy -- which is his job, his life.

EXT: OPEN HIGHWAY AT TWILIGHT

The Trailway bus shooting West, or South, or North.

We hear Strike in a voice-over as the bus rockets him to a new destiny.

STRIKE (VO)
(like a prayer)
Help me ...

THE END