

CRAZY DOG

by

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REVISED - 10/05/06

EXT. NEW YORK - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

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Soaring above the city like a bird of prey. The wind HOWLS. Below us we see lower Manhattan, Ground Zero, the Verrazano Bridge. And ahead...

STATEN ISLAND

Small, tidy homes where the city's police officers and firemen live, more than a few displaying American flags. It is an April Sunday, and people are outside, playing ball, seeding lawns. The traditional America in all its ordinary glory.

A touch football game in progress. We descend toward it, through an old maple, a dense snarl of branches and budding leaves...a voice calls:

BEA (O.S.)

All right everybody...

As the family moves toward the house...we glimpse a YOUNG COUPLE, trailing behind, exchange a surreptitious kiss...we go through an open window, into...

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Three generations of FICANTES jockeying for position around a bountiful table. As they settle in, we notice, on the wall:

A PHOTOGRAPH - THE LATE BENJAMIN REDSKY...

An ironworker standing on a girder a thousand feet above Manhattan (reminiscent of the aerial view). Handsome, exotic (black hair, black eyes, copper skin), charming, philandering, fearless. It's all there in the sly smile and the casual stance two inches from death. Below the photo...

AN EMPTY CHAIR - AT THE HEAD OF A LONG TABLE

Beside it is the man's Italian widow, and the other chairs are filled with his children, their spouses, his grandchildren. No one seems quite as grand as the departed patriarch.

END MAIN TITLES.

They bow their heads and say together...

EVERYONE

Dear God, for Your bounty and Your
gracious love, we give our thanks,
now and forever.

With that, they start passing food, eating, laughing,
talking. A happy CACOPHONY...

VOICES

...Dumped him to the 7-7...Ryan, get
that finger out of your nose...Nobody
likes her, you can tell... It's more
interesting on the Coronary Care Unit
...Michelin SX's are the best...

...The CAMERA HAS KEPT MOVING...and now we see where it is
headed: past men, women...toward the couple we saw before:
Benjamin RedSky's youngest son, VIC FICANTE (black hair,
black eyes; quiet, intense) holding hands with his pretty
girlfriend, KAREN. Vic sits at the foot of the table,
opposite the empty chair. Finally the CAMERA STOPS:

ON VIC'S FACE

As if FATE has just selected him -- for what we don't know.
Linger on him as Karen whispers in his ear, and he smiles,
happy, contented...All's well. Or is it? **JUMP CUT TO:**

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE - TWILIGHT

A SOLITARY TREE

pushes up through the concrete. A street lamp casts its
complicated shadow on a nearby wall, the branches and their
more flamboyant shadows swaying hypnotically in the breeze.

Vic standing on a street corner, watching this, lost in
thought or something simpler than thought.

TIRES SQUEAL. Vic looks up at a mud-colored van as:

VOICE

Hey, copper...

The side door flies open. A skinny lunatic with spiky blond-
tipped hair points a Mossberg shotgun at him.

LUNATIC

This is for all my homies you put
away, you white piece of shit....
BOOM!...

He jerks the shotgun upward as if recoiling.

Vic smiles, climbs into the van, the lunatic (KEVIN) giving him a hand up. The van takes off.

EXT. STREET/INT. VAN - DRIVING - NIGHT

Six NYPD detectives, in hip attire: Kevin, ERNESTO (young, Cuban, muscular), STAN (skinny, African-American), LEO (Irish, big, handsome) and RAINO (Polish, vulgar, driving). Everyone greets Vic. Some he gives an extra pat on the arm.

RAINO

Vic, you know Leo, right?

LEO

(greeting Vic)

Hey, Chief.

Vic gives Leo a look.

Ernesto gooses Leo hard enough to get him to jump out of his seat -- in pain, everyone laughing, papers falling off his lap as he moves over to another seat.

Ernesto beckons Vic to slide in, which he does. They greet each other in SPANISH. Vic is close to fluent. Others bitch...

RAINO

Come on, English...English, you homos. This isn't Miami...

As they head uptown (bantering, checking out girls), Vic unrolls what appear to be the floor plans of a large, public building.

RAINO

D-cup at four o'clock...

Everybody checks her out. These guys are young, loud, hormonal; we note not only their pumped muscles and tacky fashions, but the occasional tattoo, body piercing, iPod leaking HIP HOP. Vic seems mature by comparison; he glances at the young woman (not his type), then back at the floor plans.

KEVIN

She looks dirty.

STAN

Good dirty or bad dirty?

LEO
(frowning over his
paperwork)
Hey, Rain, did we go to the Leipzig
Grand Jury on an RDO?

As Raino tries to remember, Kevin frowns at the papers:

KEVIN
Oh, fuck me, is it the fifth already?

STAN
Catch the blond with the dog...

Quick glimpse of a MODEL-TYPE walking a malamute; the guys
offer comments, disparaging, appreciative...

MIKEY
I was gonna do mine yesterday, but --

RAINO
I bet Vic got his in on the first.
Right, Vic?

ERNIE
That's why he's gonna make Captain
and you ain't.

They all seem to recognize that this is true. Vic
appreciates the defense, but gestures to Ernie: let them be.
Ernie just smiles, looks out the window.

Vic's cell rings. He notes the caller i.d., answers in a
warm, private tone:

VIC
Hey...

STAN
(to Kevin, re Vic's call)
Karen?

Kevin nods to Stan as if the phone calls are constant.

VIC
Yeah? You like it...?

KEVIN
(to Stan)
She found another house.

LEO
(eyes on the street)
Oh, man, look at this one...

THEIR POV: A LATIN BEAUTY... A chorus of appreciative groans.

Vic looks, too, this is his type, but then Karen says something...

VIC
No, nothing, I was just...

He looks away, shy, a little guilty. Kevin and Stan notice this and exchange grins.

SOMEONE
(yells out the window)
Hey, baby, sit on my face...

Laughter. Vic covers the mouthpiece, then...

VIC
(into phone)
How much are they asking?

STAN
(re Latin Beauty)
The spics, man. They're the hottest women in the city.

ERNIE
(smiles)
That's right.

Kevin makes a cut sign across his throat: time for Vic to end the call. Vic grins at something Karen says, nods to Kevin:

VIC
(to Karen)
I gotta go, babe. Yeah, me, too.
(low)
I did say it. That's what "Me, too" means.

The guys all listening, grinning.

KEVIN
"That's what 'Me too' means."

Vic clicks off, sees them all watching... Gives them the finger. They laugh, razz him...

LEO

Hey Vic, how come you don't look at the girls? It's not cheating to look, is it?

KEVIN

He looks. He was lookin'.

ERNESTO

He's engaged, man.

STAN

Least his girl isn't already pregnant.

Everyone looks at Ernesto, who laughs infectiously. Vic goes back to the floor plans.

EXT. PARK ROYAL HOTEL - NIGHT

Across the street, Central Park looms: a mass of dark greenery against the lit city. Our guys rendezvous with four cops from another unit, muttered greetings. We meet MIKEY (Italian-Puerto Rican), SID (black), S'CUSE (Italian). A voluble Puerto Rican (HYMIE) comes out of the hotel and joins them.

HYMIE

Stevenson and his crew are ensconced in the bar on the mezzanine. Petrossian's due in about 20.

RAINO

So what's the Rasta doing here? Buying or selling?

HYMIE

Forget Stevenson. Tonight we just want Petrossian.

Hymie (in command) indicates a nearby candy store; everyone heads over.

EXT. CANDY STORE - NIGHT.

The group huddled in the entranceway.

HYMIE

DEA says the Russians are bringing in some kind of new "designer drugs" out of East Asia.

LEO

Only DEA can't find them 'cause they
can't operate their dicks without the
manual.

Laughter.

STAN

So who's this Petrossian? Is he
Brighton or Moscow?

Hymie opens a folder.

HYMIE

There's not much on him. Never been
busted, finger-printed. No reliable
photos. This came off a surveillance
cam in Vienna...

He passes around a blurry blow up. Lots of grumbling.

STAN

He looks like confetti...

ERNESTO

Looks like the TV when nothing's on.

Laughter and more ad libs as the blow-up gets passed around:
"Oh, that narrows it down." etc.

HYMIE

Guys... If it was easy, the big
shots'd be taking the collar.
Vic...?

Vic unrolls the hotel floor plans; everyone crowds around.

VIC

The hotel has entrances on 58th and
59th, service doors here and here.
Two guys go in each entrance. One
stays on the main floor, walks
through and out the other side. One
goes up to the mezzanine, sits at the
bar. Three minutes later, we send
four more, same pattern... Yeah?

They all assent.

HYMIE

Everybody appropriately attired?

They pat their shirts; we hear Kevlar underneath.

EXT. 58TH STREET - NIGHT

Hymie and Vic casing the street. Watching as:
Down the block, Stan and Ernesto enter the hotel.
A moment later, we HEAR VOICES over the radio.

VARIOUS VOICES

...Okay, we are in. All is calm...
all is bright... Nice place, a little
cold to my taste... Lots of expensive
pussy...

Vic checks his watch, nods to someone as:

MORE VOICES (CONT.)

Can we stay after and have a beer...?

VIC

(into lapel mike)
We get him, I'll buy.

VOICE

The beer or the pussy?

VIC

(smiles, checks watch)
Okay, second teams...

He and Raino start toward the hotel...

INT. PARK ROYAL HOTEL - NIGHT

Sleek, modern, mirrored. Raino heads up a railingless
staircase flanked by potted trees. Vic continues along the
first floor, checking faces. OVERLAPPING CONVERSATIONS of
the people he passes form an underlying collage of SOUND...

VIC'S POV -- FACES float past:

SEXY YOUTH, lots of couture...

And lots of MODELS...or are they hookers?...

MEN IN DARK SUITS: lawyers? dealers? movie stars? cops?...

TWO BIG KOREANS (lounging against a mirror that doubles
them), an elegant AFRICAN COUPLE, three SECRETARIES...

Vic assesses them: people meet his gaze, and, after a moment, every one of them looks away, drops his eyes... Vic sees Kevin coming toward him. As they pass...

KEVIN

(very sotto)

Man, I could spend my life here...
Check the sister...Oooo...

As Vic turns toward a BLACK WOMAN, there is a FLASH in his eyes as someone nearby takes her picture. For an instant a migraine-like aura surrounds her and we hear the subtlest imaginable PING.

Vic blinks, his eyes readjusting to the room, and yet, from this moment onward, the hotel seems just slightly brighter, more vivid, than it did previously. He approaches the 56th Street entrance as SEVERAL PEOPLE enter together. Among these is...

A COUPLE

The MAN (32, short hair, expensive suit); the WOMAN holding his arm is younger (a thicket of dark, curly hair cut in bangs, dark lips, and eerie, opalescent eyes): clearly a fabulous, and fabulously expensive, good time.

She meets Vic's gaze. This time, oddly, it is Vic who looks away. ANOTHER COUPLE WIPES her from view and his attention shifts to:

An NFL LINEBACKER with a poodle...TWO LARGE BLACK MEN in suits. Vic watches these last two until he hears:

FIRST BLACK MAN

...Did you see Skip's piece in the
New York Review...?

They keep going; Vic is about to exit onto 56th street when...

He slows. A thought flickers across his face. JUMP BACK to:

TWENTY SECONDS AGO: MOVING toward the YOUNG COUPLE... As before, but now the angle favors the man instead of the woman with bangs, and we see things we didn't notice...

The way his hand smooths the cuff of his shirt...

A slight smile beneath watchful eyes...

The woman's tensed (nervous? guiding?) hand on his arm...

Her red shoes, two inch heels. Above them, a small scar on her calf. PAN to the man's shoe, his trouser cuffs.

Vic curses under his breath:

VIC
(to himself)
Damn it.

He turns. Sees...

...the couple stepping onto an elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR

The man, glancing in the MIRRORED REAR of the car, sees Vic across the lobby. He whispers something. The woman turns, looks...

ACROSS THE LOBBY - VIC

watching them; he speaks into a collar mike.

VIC
...possible i.d., I'm going to check
it out...

He starts toward the elevator, then slows as..

...the man kisses the woman's neck. She arches her back and turns into him... A sexual embrace. Vic hesitates...

Under cover of the embrace, the man REACHES INSIDE HIS COAT.

He looks at Vic.

Their eyes meet.

Vic takes another tentative step forward.

A glint of metal in the man's hand.

Vic stares.

If you weren't looking for it, you'd never see the gun. But Vic does see it. Pointing right at him.

KEVIN'S VOICE
Vic...?

Vic stands there. Not answering. Not moving. ONE TERRIBLE, FROZEN MOMENT...that seems to go on and on... His life is being altered, right here, right now.

KEVIN'S VOICE (CONT.)

Where are you?

The elevator doors start to close.

As if released, Vic lunges -

Hits the button -

Too late. The car has started up. He fumbles frantically for his radio mike:

VIC

He's on the North elevator! Do you copy?? Kevin?! Anybody read this unit?!

After a beat:

KEVIN'S VOICE

(breaking up)

I can't read you. What was...

Vic rushes for the stairs.

VIC (CONT'D)

(into radio, desperate)

He's strapped! Watch out! Watch Stevenson!

INT. HOTEL, MEZZANINE BAR - NIGHT

Hot, loud, crowded. All mirrors and glass. Kevin can't hear, tries to adjust his earpiece...

KEVIN

What'd you say? Stevenson?

Kevin glances toward a table where a powerfully built black man in dreads (STEVENSON) sits with four quietly ominous MEN. Their WAITER is struggling to open a bottle of champagne.

KEVIN

(responding to Vic)

Which elevators...?

He does not see, behind him at a table full of ASIANS: ONE MAN spots something and rises, reaching into his coat.

The champagne cork POPS. And: KEEPS POPPING? Or is that...?

INT. HOTEL, LOBBY LEVEL, STAIRS - NIGHT

Vic has started up the stairs when he hears GUNFIRE above and Kevin's voice through the head-set:

KEVIN'S VOICE

Oh, shit...

VIC

(stops again; into radio)

Kevin, what happened?! KEV...??!

The GUNFIRE overhead multiplies logarithmically. A BODY tumbles down the stairs. Vic vaults it as he races up...

INT. MEZZANINE BAR - NIGHT

A madhouse. Vic emerges, ducks bullets. WAVES of glass break over the well-heeled crowd. Vic spots Stevenson's table: one of his men firing a semi-automatic. Seemingly unrelated BODYGUARDS pull weapons, join the chaos.

The man from downstairs, PETROSSIAN, is shooting at someone. The woman is crawling helplessly across the floor.

A long-haired JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN, bleeding, writhes on the floor in agony.

Guns going off from all angles; people shot, screaming, hiding. Like the apocalypse, like Hieronymous Bosch.

TIGHT ON PETROSSIAN - BEHIND A COLUMN

Firing at someone unseen. He runs out of ammunition. Ejects the clip. Fumbles with another. Forces it in. It jams. He curses, throws it down...

He pulls ANOTHER GUN from AN ANKLE HOLSTER...

Someone FIRING at him...it's Vic... Petrossian is sweating, trapped... Desperate, he runs through the GUNFIRE...

VIC - PURSUING PETROSSIAN

dodging bullets. (His pursuit here -- in contrast to later scenes -- is aggressive yet prudent. The way a real cop should and would proceed.)

As glass and mirrors shatter, the sheetrock behind them is turned into a white fog.

Other cops (Raino, Kevin, Hymie) appear briefly then vanish like specters as if swallowed by a tide of violence so great it cannot abide any individual.

INT. BACK HALL - NIGHT

Vic, chasing Petrossian, races past a TALL SILVER-HAIRED MAN wedged into a corner beside a pay phone, his hand clenched around the handset. Vic runs on, down a stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Going down, exchanging gunfire. Each turn in the stairs is a potential ambush, and Vic moves cautiously.

EXT. 59TH STREET - NIGHT

Vic bangs out the security exit, scuttles across the sidewalk, ducks between two cars and peers out.

The street is empty. Vic: furious, frustrated, appalled...

A VOICE

Vic...

He spins, sees Hymie running up, gasping...

HYMIE (CONT.)

(points up the block)

He had a car waiting.

Vic grimaces, then realizes: the building behind them has fallen ominously silent. As they run back inside, the dark mass of the Park hovers over them...spectral, omnivorous.

INT. MEZZANINE - NIGHT

A chaos of the wounded, dead, traumatized. Among them moves a first wave of PARAMEDICS and responding POLICE.

Vic, worried, looking for his friends, trying to rouse them by radio...finding them one by one...Stan...Raino...Sid...Leo... OVER THIS we hear background VOICES...

VARIOUS COPS

What happened? Who was downstairs?
Where was our fucking heads up...?

KEVIN (O.S.)

Those piece of shit radios...

Leo crouches over the long-haired Japanese businessman, mortally wounded. The man is speaking in Japanese to the tall silver-haired guy in cowboy boots, the one we saw huddled beside the pay phone, imploring, conveying final wishes, it's hard to tell...

Cops are cuffing Stevenson's gunman as:

STEVENSON

Come on, Ganj, they're shooting at us. What you expect us to do, not shoot back? That's a little silly, isn't it?

Further on, S'cuse IS interviewing the dark-haired woman who entered with Petrossian. She's dishevelled, make-up running. Yet Vic is drawn that way, and she sees him coming as she's saying to S'cuse:

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

...I got to the Essex House right at eight. I try to be prompt.

VIC

You knew him? Petrossian?

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

Petrossian? He said his name was Manny. He booked as Manny. I met him three hours ago.

S'CUSE

Katherine Brown. She works for an escort service.

S'cuse smirks. Vic does not share the amusement.

VIC

(to the woman)
Which one?

DARK-HAIRED/KATHERINE BROWN

Pilgrim.
(off his look)
It's on 45th, west of 8th.

She fishes out a card, offers it. He gestures to S'cuse that he'll take the interview from here. S'cuse leaves, Vic takes his chair.

VIC
Tell me what happened, from the start.

KATHERINE BROWN
I just told your...
(gestures after S'cuse
with her chin)
...whatever he is.

VIC
Tell me again.

She sighs, gets out a cigarette and a lighter.

VIC
There's no smoking in-- (here)

KATHERINE BROWN
Yeah, I know.

She continues to play with the lighter and the cigarette as:

KATHERINE BROWN
It was my first date with him. I went to his hotel room. The Essex. He talked on the phone, in Russian. I watched TV...

VIC
How'd you know it was Russian?

KATHERINE BROWN
You get a lot of them. I watched for twenty minutes, half an hour, he got off, we did our thing...

VIC
Tell me about your thing.

KATHERINE BROWN
(shrugs)
I fucked him.

He nods, he knows that...

KATHERINE BROWN
You want details?

VIC
If they're pertinent.

KATHERINE BROWN
(faint irony)
"Pertinent," huh... The Eastern
Europeans, how do I put it, they're
less complicated than Americans --
more "vigorous," you know what I'm
saying?

He nods, looks down to write something on a pad.

FLASHCUT -- THIRTY MINUTES AGO

The first moment he saw her: he looks away...

KATHERINE BROWN (O.S.)
Not so easily intimidated.

BACK TO SCENE: INT. MEZZANINE

He looks up. She's looking right at him. A frozen moment.

HYMIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
Hey Vic -

KATHERINE BROWN
You're bleeding.

Vic looks down, sees...THREE DROPS of WET BLOOD on his shoe
(like menstrual blood).

VIC
No. That must be...

HYMIE'S VOICE
(ominous)
Vic...

VIC
(glances over, sees Hymie)
Excuse me a minute...

He goes over to where...

...HYMIE, KEVIN and others are standing together, all solemn.

VIC
What is it?

He follows their gazes down to...

A BODY on the floor. Blood oozing out of the head. Vic's heart sinks, he looks to the others:

STAN
(quietly)
Ernie...
(clarifying)
Ernesto.

On Vic's face...

FLASHCUT: INT. VAN - NIGHT (SAME)

Ernesto laughing infectiously about his pregnant girlfriend, pushing Vic..

BACK TO SCENE: INT. MEZZANINE BAR - NIGHT

Vic staring at the body, shaken. Can't find any words.

STAN
Christ, he was supposed to be off tonight. He just tagged along 'cause Krankowitz was sick...

With dread, Vic looks from the body to the elevator. Six feet away. The conclusion is inescapable: Petrossian killed Ernie.

Vic's knees buckle. He sags, would fall, but people grab him.

VIC
(wobbly)
It's okay...I'm okay...

KEVIN
You're hit.

VIC
What? No, I'm not.

More blood drips onto Vic's shoe. They both look at it.

Kevin helps Vic into a chair. He's pale, shaken. Kevin sits with him, sees:

KEVIN
(impressed)
It went through the armpit.

VIC
I screwed up, man. I had him -- in
the lobby -- and I...

KEVIN
Come on, it's not your fault, okay?
(looks around)
Where the hell's the paramedic...?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A Paramedic Vehicle is parked in the middle of the dark street. Clouds scudding across the night sky.

INT. PARAMEDIC VEHICLE - NIGHT

Inside, Vic lies on a treatment table. He has pulled his suit jacket, shirt and Kevlar vest off one side of his torso. The other side remains fully clothed. He holds his bare left arm over his head so that the PARAMEDIC (female, tough, short hair, attractive) can stitch up his side. CLOSE ON VIC as...

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - AN HOUR AGO)

Vic moving through the lobby as before, but slower now, with a dreamy inexorability...

PARAMEDIC (V.O.)
This'd be easier back at the E.R.

BACK TO SCENE: INT. PARAMEDIC VAN

Vic comes out of his recollection.

VIC
I'd have to wait for some doctor.

PARAMEDIC
It's too nothing for a doctor to
bother with. They'd let me do it if
you put in a special request...

She's flirting. He recognizes this, but is tongue-tied and preoccupied. She looks away, sensing rejection and not wanting to push it. He wishes he'd handled that better, wants to make conversation, indicates a slug in a stainless steel dish:

VIC
Don't forget to bag that, I've gotta
get it to the lab.

PARAMEDIC
(busy, distant)
I know.

He sees her preparing a hypodermic.

PARAMEDIC
I'm going to give you a broad-based
antibiotic.

She swabs his arm, and he looks up at the ceiling. An almost
imperceptible flinch as she inserts the needle.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK, AN HOUR AGO)

Vic moving dreamily through the lobby, as above...

And here comes the couple again. We pay more attention to
Petrossian this time, a handsome, brutal face, a controlling
hand on the woman's side. Now it seems obvious that he bears
watching, is dangerous, criminal. The woman is barely
glimpsed, as if now recognized as merely a distraction.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - "CONTINUOUS"

Vic going up the stairs again, as before, only something
feels different, and, as we reach...

INT. HOTEL MEZZANINE - "CONTINUOUS" - DAY

We realize what it is: it's day, not night, and Vic
(accompanied by a police CRIMINALIST) rises into the middle
of a remarkable construction. The entire mezzanine has been
transformed into what looks like the biggest cat's cradle in
the world.

Every bullet fired in the gun battle has its path described
by a piece of white, red or black string, like an immense, 3-
dimensional Mondrian. Most of the strings are white, so that
the initial effect is beautiful and somewhat ethereal.

CRIMINALIST
The white strings are misses. Reds
are non-lethal hits. Black are
kills.

Vic wanders dreamily, as if this surreal sight propelled him ever further into another psychological dimension. An eerily slow version of Satie's "Trois Gymnopedies" is playing. We can't tell if it is the hotel Muzak or the film soundtrack. Vic passes:

A BANK OF VIDEO MONITORS. A POLICE TECHNICIAN is reviewing tapes from the hotel's security cameras: the actions of last night repeated simultaneously from multiple angles. On one:

PETROSSIAN and the WOMAN from the escort service approach the exterior of the hotel. The Technician manipulates the tape until he FREEZES on a good view of Petrossian's face.

TECHNICIAN
That's him, right?

Vic nods and goes on, running his hand idly along one string...walking with it for a few yards... Ahead he sees:

THE ELEVATOR

He moves toward it, stepping gingerly among the strings...

Emerging from the elevator is a short black string that seems to lie at the very heart of the cat's cradle. It runs straight to the CHALKED OUTLINE of Ernie's body. Vic stares at it.

INT. ELEVATOR - LAST NIGHT (VIC IMAGINING WHAT HAPPENED)

Petrossian (and the woman) multiplied dozens of times by the mirrored walls. He draws a GUN from inside his coat, pushes her to the back of the car. She's terrified.

The doors open. We don't see the mezzanine, but light from it floods the carriage. We hear the NOISE of the crowd. Petrossian steps out of frame, raising the pistol.

REVERSE ANGLE

ERNESTO turning, seeing Petrossian (who appears reflected in a mirror behind him). The calm dread on Ernesto's face, sudden recognition of his fate.

BACK TO SCENE

Vic, standing precisely where Ernesto was, "caught" in EXTREME SLOW MOTION, just like last night when he hesitated.

We still hear the NOISE from last night, even though there are only a few LAB GUYS working quietly, ONE continuing to lay out string. Over this we can just barely hear the GUNSHOT...

Vic looks down...

AT HIS FEET - ERNESTO

Twitching, blood oozing out of his head.

A PING

breaks the spell. The NOISE from last night vanishes. Vic's gaze follows the black string up to

THE ELEVATOR DOORS

He half expects Petrossian...

...But it's only TWO COPS who get off carrying paper cartons and start to hand out coffee orders...

PULL BACK, leaving Vic amid the strings, staring down at the chalk outline, as if trapped in a maze.

PRELAP SOUND:

HYMIE'S VOICE
(loud, joyous)
So, Ernie, you know what Ernie
does...?

EXT. ERNESTO'S PARENTS' HOME, QUEENS - BACK YARD - AFTERNOON

A lawn, a patio, beer; mourners clustered in small groups but most of them listening to:

HYMIE (CONT.)
...He picks up the chair by the front
legs, like this...

He scoots someone off an old metal patio chair, picks it up by the front legs, holds it over his head.

RAINO
With her in it? How could he do
that?

S'CUSE

The guy was an animal.

HYMIE

He was a fucking animal. He picks it up, carries her out the door onto Northern Boulevard, 8 o'clock on a Saturday night, puts her down, middle of the street, cars whizzing by... walks away and leaves her there...

Everyone laughing, doubled over. Hymie turns to ERNESTO'S FIANCEE...

HYMIE

Isn't that right?

The fiancée (subject of the story) nods, laughing, crying.

KEVIN

So what'd you do?

She's too overcome to answer.

MIKEY

She screamed at him, "Okay, you dumb, spic bastard! I'll marry you! Now get me the hell out of here!" ...Right?

She keeps nodding, laughing, then buries her head on someone's shoulder and sobs. With that, everyone relaxes into laughter and tears, as if the whole point of the story had been to bring them to this.

ON VIC

Sitting apart, with Karen, , listening to the stories, watching the faces. Karen, sensing what's going on inside him, takes his hand.

HYMIE'S WIFE asks the Young Woman:

HYMIE'S WIFE

The wedding was what, September?

ERNESTO'S FIANCEE

(shakes her head,
sniffing)

July. We had to move it up, for obvious reasons...

Touches her swollen belly. People smile, cry. And as she goes on to describe the wedding that will never happen...

ERNESTO'S FIANCEE (CONT.)

We rented that place, Chumley's, out in Port Jeff, on the water...? Vic and Karen are getting married there in August, right?

Karen smiles, nods, knows that Vic doesn't want the attention.

KAREN

Yeah, that's right.

Nods and smiles at Ernesto's fiancée, acknowledging the link.

Vic gets up - no big deal - strolls across the yard.

Karen worries, looks to Kevin. He signals her: it's okay.

VIC, walking, glances over at:

OLDER PEOPLE around a dying barbecue, Ernie's parents and their friends, a quieter conversation, mostly in Spanish. They nod at Vic, go on talking. A subtle awkwardness. They all know Vic was somehow connected to Ernesto's death.

Vic comes to a picnic table on which mementoes of Ernesto are on display: photos of him at various ages, with relatives, friends, taking communion, weight-lifting, graduating from the police Academy, with his fiancée. Trophies he won for marksmanship, for body-building, even (on the ground) a barbell he used to work-out with. A life.

Vic studies several shots of what seems a fishing trip that Ernie, Vic and Kevin took to Florida or the Caribbean.

Kevin appears at Vic's side, lights a cigarette, leans against a wall, enjoying the evening.

He and Vic are close enough that neither has to talk. After a bit, TED DEEGAN, their Captain, comes over...

ALL THREE

Hey, Ted...Ted...Hey...

They're all quiet.

DEEGAN

You can feel Spring in the air, can't you?

They grunt; they can.

KEVIN
Anything on Petrossian?

Deegan shakes his head, then, to their surprise, Vic says:

VIC
He's not Russian.
(off their looks)
It's an Armenian name.

Vic says it as if it's of no importance; he doesn't care.
Kevin glances at Deegan, concerned for Vic.

KEVIN
Lotta Russian Armenians.

DEEGAN
Yeah.
(awkward beat, then:)
You guys remember you got the review
board Monday...

Kevin grunts that he knows. They both watch Vic who belatedly realizes that they're waiting for confirmation from him.

VIC
Yes, sir.

DEEGAN
Nothing to sweat. Nobody did a thing
wrong.

KEVIN
Fucking cereal-box walkie-talkies.
They gave us decent equipment, we
could do our jobs...

He and Deegan watch Vic who doesn't respond.

VOICE
Honey...

They turn: it's Karen, taking Vic's arm. She nods to show him: people are leaving.

They move toward the house. Deegan hangs back with Kevin, who says, quietly...

KEVIN
He'll be okay.

Deegan nods, not so sure. Pops an antacid.

As Vic and Karen approach the house, Ernesto's fiancée takes his hand in hers...

ERNESTO'S FIANCEE

Thank you for coming. I mean that...
I know you did what you could.

Vic nods, tries to smile, can barely meet her gaze.

VIC

I wish it'd been... I wish it'd been
somebody else.

KAREN

Jennel, I'm so sorry...

The women embrace, both crying a little. Vic stares at them, puzzled by these incomprehensibly emotional creatures. PRELAP SOUND:

BRASS #2 (V.O.)

...fired your weapon only in pursuit
of a suspect who was firing at you.

EXT. ONE POLICE PLAZA - DAY

Establishing.

BRASS #2 (V.O., CONT.)

...Three witnesses corroborated this.
There's no contradictory evidence or
testimony...

INT. REVIEW BOARD - DAY

Vic sits facing a panel of three DEPARTMENT BRASS.

BRASS #2 (CONT.)

...so if no one has further
questions...

(looks around; no one has
questions)

Thank you very much.

He smiles: you're dismissed. Strangely, Vic does not get up.

VIC

There's something else.

The brass look at each other: does this guy want trouble?

VIC

The man I fired at, who shot and killed Officer Sandoval, I should have apprehended him in the lobby, before he ever got to the mezzanine, and no one is even --

BRASS #2

That's not the purpose of this inquiry. We're here to determine if the shots fired by police officers during the incident were appropriate and --

BRASS #1

Why do you think you should have stopped him?

VIC

He tipped it... He was strapped.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Vic seeing the couple. His POV moves down the woman's legs to her shoes...then to the man's shoes and his trouser cuffs. One cuff is pulled tight around his leg.

VIC (V.O.)

...One of his trouser cuffs was tight. An ankle holster.

AN ANGLE we haven't seen before: Vic thinking, slowing down...

BRASS #2 (V.O.)

Oh, well, look...

BACK TO SCENE: INT. REVIEW BOARD - DAY

BRASS #2

A tight trouser? I mean, what are you, Sherlock Holmes...

Looks around for confirmation, laughter from his colleagues...

VIC

I knew he was Petrossian when he stepped onto the elevator.

BRASS #1

How?

VIC

(simply)

I knew it.

BRASS #3

(sarcastic, to #2)

He just knew.

BRASS #1

If you knew, why didn't you confront him right there?

Beat.

VIC

I was afraid.

The Brass exchange glances: the dirty secret of police work.

BRASS #3

Because of the gun.

Vic frowns as if this explanation, while perhaps true, feels overly simplistic.

BRASS #2

Look, if we got involved every time a good officer...

VIC

I'm not talking about how we can excuse it. The reasonable man standard.

There is something stubborn, annoying, yet weirdly heroic about Vic's refusal of exoneration.

VIC (CONT'D)

If I'd done what I should have... the elevator would never have left the lobby...

(over their manifest)

impatience

...and Ernesto Sandoval would still be alive. His fiancée would have a husband. His kid would have a...

He trails off, unable to complete the thought. Finally, to change the subject:

BRASS #1
Your report says you were distracted
by a girl.

BRASS #2
(perking up)
What girl?

VIC
A woman. She was with Petrossian.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The woman going by him...her dark, tangled hair shining in
the light...

BACK TO SCENE: INT. REVIEW BOARD - DAY

Brass #2 and #3 smile, exchange knowing looks.

BRASS #2
(grins, sympathetic)
You were checking out the pussy. You
aren't the first.

BRASS #1
Is that why you noticed her?

Vic shakes his head, lost in his own thoughts...

VIC
Her hair, she had dark bangs.
It reminded me of a girl I knew in
kindergarten.

FLASHCUT: EXT. A SANDBOX - DAY

A 5-year-old GIRL, playing industriously, her dark curls
catching the sunlight. The CAMERA moves in on her hair...

BRASS #3 (O.S.)
Kindergarten...?

BACK TO SCENE: INT. REVIEW BOARD - DAY

VIC
(oddly defiant)
Yeah... Kindergarten.

Brass #3 looks at Brass #2: this gets weirder and weirder.

BRASS #1

Officer Ficante, you're a superb officer with an exceptional record. We have every expectation that you will be moving into command positions within the next few--

VIC

(interrupting despite himself)

Yes, sir. Thank you. But three people died there, including a police officer. I could have stopped it. I think it's imperative that the Board recognize my...(responsibility)

SOUND FADES. Vic keeps talking, but we no longer hear him; he no longer hears himself. And the indulgent FACES of the brass make it clear that no one is listening. We hear only a FAINT HUM, like a refrigerator compressor.

INT. ONE POLICE PLAZA - HALL - DAY

Vic, emerging from the Review Board, encounters the other cops from the hotel: Kevin, Hymie, etc...waiting their turn.

A CHORUS

How'd it go?...What'd they say?

VIC

They didn't give a shit.

The others are delighted. Kevin claps him on the shoulder.

KEVIN

Didn't I tell you? Didn't I?

Vic walks away. The others exchange glances.

VOICE

Guillermo Edgar Maldonado...

Hymie goes into the room; Vic keeps walking away from them.

INT. ONE POLICE PLAZA, MEN'S ROOM - ONE MINUTE LATER

Vic at the sink, his shirt unbuttoned. A little fresh blood has leaked from his wound. He touches it; blood oozes through the dressing onto his finger. The HUM is louder.

He stares at the blood on his finger. Sniffs it. Tastes it. Without thinking, he dabs a little on one cheek, then on the other. Looks at himself in the mirror...

FLASHCUTS:

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Vic frozen before the elevator, unable to move -

INT. MEZZANINE - NIGHT

Ernie on the ground, thrashing, dying -

BACK TO SCENE: INT. ONE POLICE PLAZA, MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Vic PUNCHES the metal towel dispenser. It breaks open, all the towels fall to the floor. The HUM stops.

KEVIN

What is it with you...?

He sees Kevin in the mirror, sees the blood still on his own face, washes it off.

KEVIN

If you'd gone for that guy, he'd have shot you dead right there.

Vic grabs towels off the floor, dries his face.

VIC

So he shoots Ernie, instead; that's supposed to be okay?

He throws the towels in the waste can and walks out.

INT. ONE POLICE PLAZA - MAIN LOBBY - DAY

Vic crosses the lobby, passing the "Wall of Heroes," plaques commemorating officers killed in the line of duty.

EXT. CITY STREET. DAY.

Vic walking down the street, invisible, oblivious to his surroundings, all his energy focussed inward.

He passes a window; his reflection ripples like liquid over the glass. He stares blankly at passing cars.

High overhead, unnoticed, strips of clouds race along like a celestial echo of the traffic.

AN APARTMENT BUZZER

Beside it a card that says: STEVENSON.

A finger presses the button. We hear a BUZZING within. No response. The finger presses repeatedly, more BUZZINGS, but no one comes. WIDEN TO...

EXT. BRIGHTON BEACH APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Kevin is pressing the buzzer. Vic is at the curb, paying no attention, gazing toward the boardwalk, a few steps away.

Kevin comes down from the stoop, gazes up at the facade as if suspicious that Stevenson may be inside, but not answering.

Finally he shrugs, beckons; he and Vic stroll toward the boardwalk, Kevin singing a hip-hop song: he knows all the words.

ON THE BOARDWALK

That they have just reached...FIVE MALE RUSSIAN ADOLESCENTS are chatting among themselves in a New York mix of Russian and English. Kevin calls to them...

KEVIN

Hey, guys, isn't this a school day?

The kids quickly discard drug paraphernalia... In what follows, Kevin is aggressive, rude, humorous; Vic seems withdrawn, detached.

KEVIN

(humming the hip-hop song)

Anyone want to off something else
down the gutter?...

(off their muttered
obscenities)

No? Then let's see your pockets.

Despite his casual manner, the scene is tense. The kids are big, muscular, scarred. This could turn violent in a second.

The cops do not have their guns out, but the weapons are part of the equation, as is Kevin's aggressive good cheer. He wonders why Vic isn't helping control the kids.

KEVIN

Vic, you get Peewee and the Green Hornet.

Indicating the shortest kid and one in green. All five are slowly, incompletely, turning their pockets inside out. Kevin wrangles them against the wall as Vic simply watches.

Kevin yanks their pockets fully out, intimidating them with his lack of fear. He finds some seeds.

KEVIN

Come on, ladies, is grass the best you can do? How about something new, designer drugs? You see any of that?

The kids go through the motion of discussing it. They speak English to different degrees...

ONE WITH BEST ENGLISH

No, we didn't see any.

KEVIN

Huh, too bad. You know Stevenson, big shvartze, lives right up here?

They mutter, grudgingly acknowledge that they know him.

KEVIN

What's a Rasta doing out here with you fuckin' Russians?

They smile, appreciate his humor.

BAGGY PANTS

Maybe he feels safe. Safe neighborhood.

KEVIN

As long as you're cool with the Russians...

(off the kid's grin;)

re: his pants

Hey, who you got in there with you?

BAGGIE PANTS

Just your skanky old lady, giving me head.

KEVIN

Really? How'd you talk her into it?
I never can.
(as they can't help
laughing)
You too, sir...

Making sure Vic's two have their pockets fully out. The pockets make them all look ridiculous, as if their pants have ears.

GREEN HORNET

(indicating Vic)
You could get this bitch to do you in
the car, if you want.

Kevin knees the kid in the thigh muscle. It hurts a lot.

KEVIN

(cheerful)
I'm sorry, you all right?

The Green Hornet limps away -

GREEN HORNET

Fuck you, huh? -

KEVIN

Not today, honey. I got to do your
sister and your ma, and I hear
they're very demanding...

As they walk toward their car, Kevin gives Vic a look:

KEVIN

You with me here, Vic?

VIC

(flat)
I'm here.

Vic gets in the car, looks straight ahead. PRELAP SOUND:

STEVENSON (V.O.)

You want Petrossian???

ON VIC. ANOTHER ANGLE. INT: POLICE PRECINCT - DAY.

Staring, same blank expression. He's looking, or ostensibly looking, through a one-way window into an interrogation room where Hymie is questioning Stevenson:

STEVENSON

You had him, dude. I brought him to the Park Royal, like you wanted, and you fucking blew it...

HYMIE

We didn't blow--

STEVENSON

(amused)

You blew it, Hymie! You sent those quote unquote plainclothes assholes in with big, blinking signs on their foreheads: "Hi, I'm a cop." And you wonder why guns go off? And Petrossian runs away...?

HYMIE

Where is he now?

Vic turns away from the window -

STEVENSON

I don't know, man. I swear on the word of Jah... He thinks I set him up, which I did. Which means I can't find him until he comes to cut my heart out and eat it.

Vic is gone.

INT. VIC'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Sunday dinner is over, and the family sits around talking. A happy scene, disturbed only by the fact that the FAINT HUM is back. It makes the talk and laughter seem distant.

Vic's on the floor, playing with his little nieces and nephews, yet a bit withdrawn. The DISTANCE and the HUM seem to be his. JUMP TO:

LATER.

Vic alone in the now empty dining room looking at the photo of his father. As we move across HIS EYES, the photo becomes LIVE ACTION and we see:

EXT. SKYSCRAPER. DAY. (VIC'S FANTASY OR MEMORY)

Vic's Father dances along a girder with the grace of a cat. Lithe, fearless, joking with a friend (EDDIE): he seems confident and sexual in an almost infuriating way.

BACK TO SCENE

As Vic stares at the again frozen photo, Karen watches from the other room, slightly concerned.

EXT. SAME - LATE AFTERNOON

Vic and Karen (now in a nurse's uniform) walking to their car. MOM (graying red hair, light eyes) and Bea watch them go.

BEA

I hope he likes the house.

MOM

What's he want to live out here for?

BEA

Maybe to be near you.

(off her displeasure)

What's wrong with that? You want him like Dad?

MOM

Don't talk against your father.

BEA

(hot)

Come on, Mom, the way he treated you? Running around with every little "bra-chawl" -

MOM

(even hotter)

What do you know about that? What do you know?

Bea flushes. Shuts up. They watch the car drive away...

MOM

They should buy in Brooklyn. More young people.

RAIN - HITTING A WINDOW. WE ARE:

INT. A KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Vic watches the pattern the drops make running down the glass.

KAREN'S VOICE

Vic...

He turns: they are in a house completely empty of furniture with a REALTOR who now leads them into other rooms. Vic follows. The Realtor is TALKING, but we hear only the HUM...

EXT. KINGS' COUNTY HOSPITAL/INT. VIC'S CAR - EARLY EVENING

Still raining. Vic and Karen ride in silence. He pulls up in front of the hospital. They sit a moment. He turns off the engine. The HUM is maddening.

KAREN

Well?...What did you think of it?

He turns to her, smooths the cuff of his shirt the way Petrossian did.

VIC

I don't want to buy a house.

(off her frown)

Karen, I can't...I can't do any of it.

Karen thinks he's kidding, laughs.

VIC

I'm sorry, I just don't...

EXT. CAR - EARLY EVENING

We do not hear the rest. Vic talks, Karen's smile fades. She starts to cry. She shouts at him and we dimly hear:

KAREN

What's the matter with you, huh?

He doesn't answer.

She slaps him.

He doesn't react.

She throws open the door, jumps out, shouts back at him...

KAREN

I gave you three years of my life.
I'm twenty-seven now, you fucking--

She jumps back in the car, hits him again, hops out, slams the door and marches across the street to the hospital. FOUR NURSES, gliding past like swans in their starched uniforms, pretend not to have heard the profanity.

Vic continues to watch for some time after she has gone into the building. Only now does the HUM SUBSIDE...

He smooths the cuff of his shirt just the way Petrossian did, starts his engine and drives off.

RISING INTO A BLUE SKY -

As if up to heaven. The skyline's falling away; we are:

EXT. AN OPEN ELEVATOR - DAY

Vic and a WORKMAN are ascending a skyscraper under construction. The higher they go, the more Vic sweats and furtively clings to the iron cage...

EXT. TOP OF THE SKYSCRAPER. DAY.

A lattice of steel beams with nothing above, the world below. Haphazardly strung guide wires are the only support. As the workman opens the gate, he notices? Vic trembling...

WORKMAN

You okay up here?

Vic manages an unconvincing nod. As he steps off the cage, he tries to appear calm, but he's clinging to the guide wires, moving along the girders like a blind cripple, in contrast to

THE WORKERS

who walk casually along the girders, drinking coffee, eating doughnuts, chatting.

Vic watches them, as if revisiting an almost-forgotten place. A YOUNG MAN strolls over.

He has black hair, black eyes, coppery skin, vaguely reminiscent of Vic's father. He's wearing a Jay Z t-shirt.

YOUNG WORKMAN

Hey, what's up?

VIC

I'm looking for Eddie.
(off their blank looks)
Eddie Miles?

YOUNG WORKMAN

Coyote?

Vic grudgingly acknowledges that they are the same.

OLDER WORKMAN

You missed him. By five years.
Coyote don't come up here no more.
(indicates Vic, trembling)
He went pale face on us...like you.

The others laugh, and we realize they've all been following this from the start. Most have the same black hair and eyes, burnished skin.

OLDER WORKMAN

Who are you? Are you Clarence?

VIC

(startled)
That's my brother. I'm Victor.

OLDER WORKMAN

The little one...
(as Vic nods, to other,
older workers)
Ben Red Sky's boy.

The ones who remember nod, mumble, a certain reverence. A look passes among them, like a secret handshake he doesn't want to acknowledge but can't help performing anyway.

What is unspoken here, yet in a sense the chief point, is that all of these men are Native Americans, not necessarily full-blood, but enough that we see it in their coloring, features and manner -- and, now also in Vic's.

OLDER WORKMAN

What'd you want to see Coyote about?

VIC

I don't know. He was close to my
Dad, and I just...

He stops talking, turns and stumbles back into the open elevator. Presses the button to go down.

INT. POLICE STATION, DETECTIVE BUREAU - DAY

Vic sits in a small room surrounded by the Park Royal case file: forensic photos, interrogation transcripts... We see POLAROIDs of people we glimpsed at the shootout. Witness statements swim past us. We catch individual words, including "pharmaceutical," though no special attention is given to it.

Vic has three TV monitors running security camera video from the Park Royal. Various angles, times: Petrossian, Stevenson, Ernie lying dead, the Japanese businessman... It's as if he lives here, surrounded by images of his cowardice and shame. Again we hear the very slow SATIE MUSIC...

INT. FIRING RANGE - DAY

SILENCE. Vic (wearing ear protectors) firing straight at the camera.

The target comes forward. Vic studies the grouping of his shots: the center is shredded. He turns away. PRELAP LOUD GUNFIRE.

CLOSE ON VIC

sitting, doing nothing, slightly uncomfortable. GUNFIRE ABRUPTLY HALTS. Silence. After a moment, we hear muffled ROOM TONE, TRAFFIC on the street, a faintly TICKING CLOCK, distant MUSIC just at the threshold of our hearing.

Nothing happens for the longest time. It begins to feel strange. Then even stranger. Finally...

VIC

I'm sorry, what did you say?

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Vic sits facing an NYPD PSYCHOLOGIST (30s, sport jacket, beard, glasses).

THERAPIST

You told the Review Board the incident was your fault.

VIC
Responsibility.

The therapist makes a note -

THERAPIST
And yet no one else seems to share
that view.

Vic shrugs.

THERAPIST
You said you were afraid.

VIC
(nods, this is torture)
That's right.

THERAPIST
Afraid of what?

The question irritates Vic, it's so obvious. Yet the moment
he opens his mouth, he hesitates.

THERAPIST
Afraid you'd be killed? Or hurt? Or
might hurt someone else?...

The more he thinks about it, the less idea Vic has what the
answer might be. But the therapist just goes on, leafing
through Vic's file.

THERAPIST
I see your father died when you were
fourteen...?

VIC
nodding, bored)
He was an ironworker. Fell off a
building.

THERAPIST
Red Sky. He was a Native American?

VIC
(hates that term)
Half Crow, half Mohawk.

THERAPIST
The Mohawks did all that high steel
work. They built most of the
skyscrapers--...(in New York)

VIC
(wearily)
Yeah.

Chastened, the therapist returns to the file.

THERAPIST
Ficante. You took your mother's name?

VIC
Look, how long is this gonna take?

The therapist looks up, intrigued, and closes the file.

THERAPIST
Often when a policeman dies, and his
fellow officers feel...responsible,
they can have trouble sleeping, lose
their appetite, find themselves
uninterested in sex, life in
general...

Vic realizes the HUM has begun again.

VIC
I'm eating and sleeping fine.

He notices a FLY moving up the wall, its quick, jerky turns,
its utterly simple life.

THERAPIST (O.S.)
Good. I'd like to give you a mild
anti-depressant. Try it for a couple
of weeks; it'll help you sleep and
just make things a little less...

The HUMMING intensifies, obscuring the therapist's words.

INT. VIC'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAWN

Vic lies in bed, not sleeping. Lights from passing cars slide
across the ceiling. The HUMMING continues over...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Vic is sitting up. He picks up a vial of prescription
medicine, shakes a capsule out into his hand. Studies it.
Instead of swallowing it, he eases the two halves apart.
Scores of tiny pellets (mostly white, some red, a few black)
spill out, bounce off the night table, get caught in the
cracks of the floor boards.

EXT. A DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT

An expensive house, well-fortified. SIX COPS getting ready for a raid, zipping on Kevlar jackets marked POLICE, checking weapons, radios etc. as...

RAINO

This is going to be bad.

Vic looks up...

KEVIN

That's why we're here.

RAINO

"That's why we're here..." What, you want your head blown off?

KEVIN

(smart aleck)

Only if necessary.

Raino's irritated, hates that kind of shit.

HYMIE

Who's taking the door?

Kevin looks to Vic, who looks away. Finally...

KEVIN

All right.

HYMIE

Number two?...

(a hand goes up)

Three?...

Another. As the assignments are given out, Vic hangs back like a kid who doesn't want the teacher to call on him. Last...

HYMIE

(to Vic)

You take the street.

You play right field. The HUM is louder. We stay with Vic as the others deploy toward the gated front of the drug house. We seem to hear not just his heart beat, but his entire body tense and relax. He is in an almost imperceptible crisis.

A soft PING, like an elevator noise. He looks around, realizes the sound is in his head. A car goes by, a flash of light, MUSIC...

Abruptly he turns and comes back toward the others. His eyes look glazed. He catches them as they near the door.

VIC
I'm going first.

HYMIE
Everybody's set. Just do what -

VIC
I got the door.

This violates chain of command, and Hymie's not going to put up with it, but Kevin seems to understand what's at stake and just says:

KEVIN
I'll take the street.

He goes out to where Vic had been.

ON VIC

waiting, terrified. He could piss in his pants or collapse on his feet. The HUM gets louder...

Hymie holds up an OPEN HAND, lowers the fingers one by one in a count down: FIVE...FOUR...

Everyone waits; some focused, gathering themselves, some afraid, hyperventilating. Two with a battering ram...

HYMIE'S HAND: THREE...TWO...

Vic, beyond terrified: already dead, a man who has chosen to die, not from conviction or stoicism, but by an act of will, a wish that his sympathetic nervous system hasn't caught up with yet...

HYMIE'S HAND: ONE...then it becomes a FIST and...

...the battering ram hits the door as...

AMPLIFIED
POLICE!...PUT DOWN YOUR WEAPONS...

The gate and door buckle, but do not fully give. We hear VOICES, SHOUTING, and even before the ram hits it a second time, GUNFIRE rips through the wood, ricocheting off metal bars. Cops duck or fire back (each in his character), all except Vic who stands frozen, unable to hide or respond...The HUM IS MADDENING...

CLOSE ON VIC - INSIDE HIS FEAR

In EXTREME SLOW MOTION, just as when he was frozen in the hotel lobby: caught between two horrors -- death and cowardice. Dimly, behind him, the battering ram hits the door again. The door falls inward, a BLAST of automatic weapon fire scatters cops.

Vic closes his eyes, forces his feet to move, walks through the open doorway firing his gun.

INT. DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT

He barely knows what he is doing, has no expectation of living. All around is a hell of darkness and noise, with brief bursts of MUZZLE FLASH illuminating silhouetted GUNMEN...

We hear his heart HAMMERING, his breath almost surreal in its slowness. Someone FIRES to Vic's left, briefly lighting up a kitchen down a hallway.

Vic charges in that direction, firing as he goes.

We can't tell if he's hit anyone...Something BOUNCES him off a wall ...he FIRES at it...Movement to his right, he wheels that way, BLASTING blindly into the smoky darkness...

He is giving himself to death. His entrance takes eight seconds of real time and twenty of film time, and with it, the battle is turned...The other cops follow Vic, and the remaining gunmen put down their weapons and surrender...

POLICE LIGHTS from outside flood the rooms, and powerful FLASHLIGHTS sweep about. A beam lands on...

KEVIN

Vic...

VIC dazed, looking around. The fabric of his Kevlar vest has six holes, any one of which would have killed him had it gone through. Kevin stares at him in amazement.

VIC

What?

Hymie comes up, looks at Vic's vest.

HYMIE

You know how stupid that was? If one
of those had had Teflon coating...

(trails off, looks at him)

Jesus...

Vic walks past them and out the door...

EXT. DRUG HOUSE - NIGHT

The city seems peaceful and strangely quiet. A fingernail of a moon perches on tops of buildings across the way with Venus balanced above the lower lip. HOLD ON this a moment -- as on the tree by the street lamp, the clouds, the rain: again, we feel the haunting presence of nature within the city...

We realize the HUMMING has stopped.

Vic can smell the air. He feels a deep serenity, as if the whole world has changed.

Ambulances arrive. CREWS rush toward the drug house. Among them is the PARAMEDIC who sewed him up outside the hotel. He greets her...

VIC

Hey...

One syllable, but in it we feel exactly the force he didn't have the last time he was with her. She feels it, too...

FEMALE PARAMEDIC

Hi...

And hurries on, glancing back at him still watching her.

INT. VIC'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Vic and the Female Paramedic are in bed, drenched in sweat. She's spent, exhausted, hair stuck to her face, hearts still pounding from multiple sex acts.

FEMALE PARAMEDIC

(breathless)

Oh, Jesus, God,...What have you been
doing, saving up for the last year?

Vic seems as amazed as she is.

INT. SAME - LATER

The Paramedic sleeps. Vic sits naked at the table digging around under the fabric of his Kevlar vest. Three weirdly innocuous crushed lead slugs roll out. They glint dully in his hand.

He sets them on the window sill by a potted grape ivy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Vic walking the Paramedic to the subway. She gives him a kiss, heads down the stairs.

As he turns from the subway, he spots a REDHEAD, 28. She's surprised by the frankness of his look, but after a moment, she likes it. Smiles at him.

INT. BODEGA - DAY

Vic's neighborhood place. He comes in everyday, but today the ARAB OWNER reacts...

ARAB OWNER
Hey, Dirty Harry...

Mimes firing a gun.

Off Vic's puzzled incomprehension, the owner hands him

THE POST -- HEADLINE: "HERO!"

A PHOTO of the drug house, bodies being brought out. An inset PHOTO of Vic with a blurb: "Cop Wipes Out Drug Den..."

Surprised, Vic scans the story. When he looks up, the owner is handing him his usual coffee.

Vic holds out a dollar, but the owner won't take it.

ARAB OWNER
No, no...

VIC
(embarrassed)
Come on, Ahmed...

The owner holds up both palms, as if insisting would insult him. Vic thanks him and leaves. Ahmed gestures to ANOTHER CUSTOMER who steps forward, proffering money.

EXT. ST. MARK'S PLACE - DAY

Vic walking along, reading the paper, crosses the street, oblivious to the traffic that nearly hits him.

He isn't aware of the street, but it's aware of him. Without anyone recognizing him, he is now given a wider berth. He passes a man walking an Akita: the dog's gaze meets his. Vic stares back: a moment of strange communion.

Then he's distracted by the sound of a DOMESTIC SQUABBLE across the street. NEIGHBORS outside gossiping about it.

Vic continues around the corner and into another building.

INT. THAT BUILDING, THIRD FLOOR LANDING - DAY

Vic's sister Beatrice (her still-unbrushed hair in a dense tangle) greets him at the door, holding her 9-month old.

BEA

You okay?

He takes the baby from her, kisses it, noodles its nose with his nose. His cheerful silliness makes the child smile.

VIC

(eyes on the baby)

Yeah, sure. What's up?

INT. BEATRICE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Beatrice shows him the **Daily News**, another story on him.

BEA

Mom called, six-thirty this morning,
"What's, he trying to be a hero?"

VIC

Come on, it's just the papers...

She sits, starts to feed her three-year-old in a high chair as Vic walks back and forth with the baby.

BEA

When you're married and have kids,
it'll give you a different
perspective.

VIC

I'm not getting married.
I broke up with Karen.

BEA

You broke up with her?! You been
after that girl since Clarence's
wedding, she finally says yes, and
you break up?? What do you, need 'em
hard to get?

Vic's attention is on the little bundle in his arms, its eyes
fluttering closed, moving toward sleep.

VIC

I guess.

BEA

Are you on drugs???

VIC

They gave me an anti-depressant, but
I didn't take it....
(about the baby)
He's asleep.

He sets the baby gently in the cradle.

BEA

(cocks her head)
Are you seeing somebody else?

VIC

That's not the point.

BEA

You been with another girl?? I can't
believe it.

VIC

Why not?

BEA

Because...because you're, you're just
not that kind of...

Trails off, realizing: she doesn't know what kind he is.

BEA (CONT'D)

What are you, trying to be like Dad?

VIC

No.

She waits for him to say more, but he doesn't.

BEA (CONT.)

Then what's going on?

VIC

I don't know.

He gives an uneasy laugh and looks up...right into her eyes. Unexpectedly, his gaze holds hers, and they are frozen like lovers for one unbearable moment.

BEA

(flushes, looks away)

Vic, Jesus...

VIC

(rising to go)

I'll see you later, B. Thanks.

BEA

For what? Where are you going?

VIC

Say hi to George.

Before she can reply, before he even reaches the door, **JUMP CUT TO:**

EXT. STREET - DAY

Vic heading back the way he came. At the tenement where we heard the argument, there's now a police car, a UNIFORMED COP on the radio and a second POLICE CAR is arriving. **JUMP CUT TO:**

Vic cutting recklessly across traffic, approaches the Uniformed, showing his badge...

VIC

What is it?

UNIFORMED COP

(seen a million of them)

Husband and wife. He's got a gun to her head... E.S.U.'s on the way..

INT. TENEMENT - DAY

JUMP CUT: Vic going up the darkened stairwell, finds a SECOND COP crouched on a landing, gun out, watching the floor above.

VIC
(showing his badge)
What's his name?

SECOND UNIFORMED COP
Michael Antonelli. Seems like he's
on something.
(as Vic starts up the
stairs)
Hey, where're you - (going?)

VIC
Just stay here.

SECOND UNIFORMED COP
(reaches for him, misses)
No, hey. Wait. He's got a gun.
He'll kill her. Ah, shit...

INT. FOURTH FLOOR APARTMENT/LANDING - DAY

A hip, East Village pad, lots of Heywood Wakefield furniture. ANTONELLI (36, Prada) has a gun to the head of his WIFE (Diesel jeans, expensive hair color). He hears, then sees, Vic coming up.

ANTONELLI
Who's that? I told no one to --
(as he sees Vic)
Who the hell are you?

VIC
Michael, I'm a cop...
(advancing, showing badge)
)
Give me the gun.

ANTONELLI
I'll kill her. You take one more
step, and I'll...

Vic blithely keeps coming. He seems not even to recognize the danger here, all of his attention on Antonelli, who can't look away from Vic...

WIFE

Go ahead and kill me, Mike. Get it over with.

ANTONELLI

Shut the fuck up.

(to Vic, points gun at him)

I'm telling you...I'll kill you, I swear to God....

Vic keeps coming, unhurried, unfazed, walking right toward the barrel of the gun. Antonelli cocks the hammer, his eyes blazing at Vic who holds his gaze, utterly dominating the man.

ANTONELLI

I'll kill you. I'll kill you.
I'll kill you...

At the last moment, he puts the gun to his own head; Vic grabs his arm before he can pull the trigger. They struggle; as the gun discharges into the ceiling, we hear an oddly calm voice:

TRAPP (V.O.)

You know that domestic disputes are, statistically, the most dangerous situations a police officer faces...

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Vic, in jacket and tie, sits beside Ted Deegan facing ROGER TRAPP, Chief of Detectives. Vic nods at Trapp's spiel, bored and restless.

TRAPP

Yet you waltz in there, we got a hostage negotiation team on the way...

(Vic says nothing)

You could have gotten the wife killed. Or yourself. A neigh--

VIC

I know that.

Cutting off the Chief of Detectives isn't usually done. Trapp and Deegan react, but Vic doesn't seem to have noticed. Yet instead of flaring up, Trapp softens...

TRAPP

Maybe you need some time off.

VIC

No, sir.

TRAPP

A different assignment, get off the streets for a while?

Vic realizes Trapp's "sympathy" is, in fact, a threat.

VIC

I'm fine. Really. Better than ever.

Vic stares at them. They don't believe him, but they'll let it go.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Vic and Deegan leaving the meeting.

DEEGAN

(re: Trapp)

Don't mind him, he's a prick.

VIC

No, he's right. It was stupid.

Deegan looks at Vic who shrugs and walks off toward his desk.

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - TWILIGHT

Vic alone, going through photos of Petrossian. Arrayed around him is the case file: witness lists, forensics, etc. Again we pass over, casually, the word "pharmaceuticals."

Vic keeps switching shots, trying to look into Petrossian's eyes. The face always manages to evade direct gaze.

Gradually he becomes aware of the woman who appears fragmentarily in the photos: her foot, a piece of chin, a glancing view of her dark curls.

He pulls out her witness statement, the Polaroid taken of her that night at the Park Royal. He notes her name, **KATHERINE BROWN**, and EMPLOYER: PILGRIM ESCORT SERVICE...He dials his cell.

VIC

Yeah, I'd like to book an escort...
A specific person, that's right...
An account? No, how do I start one?

INT. DORAL BAR - NIGHT

Gangster gloom. Vic alone in a booth nursing a coke. There's a stillness about him, a weight and command he himself is unaware of. Among the murmurings of the bar, a voice emerges:

WOMAN'S VOICE

I've got something now, how's 11:30?
Yeah, good, leave word on my service.

Clicking off her cell as she reaches him. He looks up at a hot BLONDE with hair in her face: bright, vivid, too upbeat:

BLONDE

Vic? Are you Vic? You booked an hour?

VIC

Yeah, but where's...? I asked for a specific person...

BLONDE

Katherine Brown.

He nods. She makes a theatrical gesture: here I am! She pulls back her hair, and he realizes she is the woman from the hotel.

VIC

Oh, it's your...
(touches his own hair)

KATHERINE BROWN

Most clients prefer blonde... I can change if you want...
(pulls a wig from her bag)

VIC

It doesn't matter.

KATHERINE BROWN

(gets it)
You're a cop.

Pissed and weary, she slides in across from him, then...

KATHERINE BROWN

Oh, it's you. I didn't recognize you without the-- What'd, you shave your moustache or something?

VIC

Something.

Katherine signals a passing waitress.

KATHERINE BROWN

Seven and seven.

She gestures to him: what is it?

VIC

I'm looking for Petrossian.

KATHERINE BROWN

Haven't seen him since that night.

VIC

(nods)

But you're the only one we know who had direct contact with him.

KATHERINE BROWN

(taking that as vulgar)

Unh huh.

VIC

I didn't mean it that way.

KATHERINE BROWN

How did you mean it?

VIC

(hesitates)

There was a way he looked at you...

FLASHCUT: INT PARK ROYAL - NIGHT

As Petrossian and Katherine get on the elevator, he looks at her.

BACK TO SCENE: INT. DORAL

VIC

...an intimacy.

KATHERINE BROWN

We'd fucked, okay?

VIC

Not just that. Anyway, you said the Russians weren't sentimental.

KATHERINE BROWN

Very good.

VIC

So I think you did more than fuck. You talked.

KATHERINE BROWN

You usually talk. It's part of fucking. To make it seem more than just fucking. You know, for fucking's sake.

He smiles.

She's impressed with the smile (he's not a complete square after all) and smiles back. A little warmth between them.

VIC

What'd he say?

KATHERINE BROWN

Nothing. Small talk. I don't remember.

He reaches across the table takes her hand. Gently, but when she tries to pull away, he holds onto it. Gently.

VIC

Yes, you do. You remember things. You pay attention.

That's at once intimate and threatening. She looks at him more carefully, intrigued but wary.

VIC

Tell me what he said. Anything at all that stuck in your mind.

KATHERINE BROWN

(frustrated, impatient)

I don't know. I don't really listen when--...

(trails off))

What did he say?...about Russia...

(that's it)

When he was growing up. By the time he was ten, his whole family had died...

VIC
(startled)
His whole family...? How?

KATHERINE BROWN
Parents, brothers, a sister, - all of
'em. Some from crime, I imagine, but
I think he said mostly disease: I
guess post Soviet Union, the health
care system collapsed, there wasn't
much medicine....

VIC
What happened to him?

KATHERINE BROWN
(shrugs)
He said after that nothing scared
him. He just didn't care. And that's
when he realized he could get
anything he wanted.

Vic thinks about this.

KATHERINE BROWN
He was a smart guy...

FLASHCUT: HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Petrossian and Katherine Brown crossing the lobby again,
passing Vic. As Vic drops his gaze from hers, Petrossian
reacts, hurries her toward the elevator. (A shot we have not
seen before.

KATHERINE BROWN
As soon as he saw you, he knew you
were a cop.

Petrossian in the elevator nuzzling Katherine's neck, gun
hidden, eyes on Vic.

Vic standing frozen, watching them...

KATHERINE BROWN (V.O.)
You were afraid of him.

BACK TO SCENE: INT. DORAL BAR - NIGHT

Vic snaps out of his reverie, but before he can defend
himself, her expression softens into a strange tenderness, as
if she wants to touch him.

KATHERINE BROWN (CONT'D)
Me too. When his gun came out, I was
like, "Whoa, get me out of here..."

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT (DEPICTING KATHERINE'S STORY)

We see things play out silently as she describes them.

KATHERINE BROWN (V.O.)
He goes, "Shut up and stay down."
When the shooting started, I just
crawled away. And, like he said, I
stayed down.

The doors open. Petrossian is immediately engaged in gunplay
(we don't see the people firing); Katherine drops to the
floor and, terrified, half-crawls, half-slithers toward
safety.

BACK TO SCENE: INT. DORAL BAR - NIGHT

Vic and Katherine looking right at each other. He glances
away, signals the passing waitress...

VIC
Check...

WAITRESS
It's been taken care of.
(off his mild surprise)
It's a privilege serving you,
Detective.

She leaves. Vic turns back to Katherine, spreads three \$100
bills on the table. She regards them a beat, picks up one.

KATHERINE BROWN
That's enough for talking...
(smiles)
...but if you want to go for the
other two, we could see how you stack
up against the Russian...

He grimaces: her crude practicality has both spoiled his
memory of her and freed him from it.

Her cell rings. She stares at Vic, not answering the phone,
waiting for him to answer. Then she sees he already has.
She smiles (who cares?), pops up and answers her cell.

KATHERINE BROWN

Hey... No, I'm done here... What's
with that other thing...?

As he watches her go, he sweeps up the other two \$100s bills.
A thought: he leaves one on the table, pockets the other, and
starts across the room when a MAN two booths down says -

VOICE

Vic Ficante?

The man extends a friendly hand:

MAN/BRESLIN

Jimmy Breslin. Got a minute?

Vic slides in across from BRESLIN, who pulls out a reporter's
pad and signals the waitress, who returns. Somehow she's
changed, become sexier, and when she asks:

WAITRESS

So...what would you like?

...it's clear that many things are being offered. Vic can't
help laughing as he contemplates this embarrassment of
riches.

VIC

Uh...

And Jimmy Breslin grins, having seen such good fortune
before.

INT. VIC'S APARTMENT - NEAR DAWN

We're LOOKING down a hallway toward the open door of a
bedroom. We hear SHRIEKING, LAUGHTER...

VIC'S VOICE

Don't you dare!...No! NO!!

Another shriek, and Vic (bottomless) dashes out of the
kitchen, chased by the SEXY WAITRESS from the bar (topless;
we see only her back), squirting Reddi Wip at him. They
streak past the camera, laughing.

More laughter, and with it a subtle change in light, as if,
despite the stationary CAMERA, we're watching events that are
happening over time. Vic comes back into the shot, only now
he's topless and chasing a bottomless DIFFERENT YOUNG WOMAN,
squirting the whip at her. He ducks into a bathroom and...

...a moment later, **with another LIGHT CHANGE**, YET ANOTHER GIRL and Vic emerge, quietly kissing. In the course of caressing him, she feels something under his arm.

YET ANOTHER GIRL
How'd you get this?

He looks: it's the bullet wound he got in the opening scene, healed into a reddish, crescent-shaped scar.

VIC
I was bad.

She laughs. They kiss, then slide out of frame. We hear softer sounds, deepening breath, little groans of pleasure.

The light changes from NIGHT to DAY. Lights go off inside, the sun appears outside, illuminating

A TREE

beyond the window, its leaves a deep, summer green...But as we watch the color pales, the leaves yellow, flutter in the wind. The SOUNDS of lovemaking reach a peak...then subside. As the silence deepens and a few leaves blow away, we realize a TELEPHONE has been ringing, and we hear Vic's husky voice:

VIC (O.S.)
Yeah?

KEVIN'S VOICE
Hey. Guess who just hit our radar.

EXT. THE BRONX - DAY

Telephoto shot: a vast, once elegant apartment building fallen into decrepitude.

TIGHT ON THREE FACES: VIC, KEVIN & HYMIE

scrunched low, watching through binoculars. They shift to get a better view, their faces drifting in and out of focus.

VIC
(dubious)
Petrossian's in there?

KEVIN
(shrugs)
He was last night.

Vic looks up at the sky. A tiny jet crawls across the deep blue stratosphere, leaving a fantail like a snail's trail.

The three cops retreat toward a van. The apartment building looms behind them.

INT. VAN - SAME TIME

OTHER COPS (we've seen some of them before) waiting. One is flipping through a copy of the **New York Post**, page six.

FIRST COP

Look at this bullshit...

He shows his friend a photo of Vic.

At that moment, the door opens and Vic himself comes in, dressed in slightly nicer clothes than we've seen before, followed by Hymie and Kevin.

SECOND COP

Hey, Mr. Style, how's Sheila Green?

(off Vic's blank look)

The newscaster. I mean in the sack.

He shows Vic the article. Vic glances at it without interest.

FIRST COP

It says you left Derek Jeter's party with her. Is that right, Vic?

Vic smiles; neutral, detached. First Cop looks away. Hymie gets down to business:

HYMIE

All right, it may be a drug lab, arms cache, whatever, but we know there are Russians in there, so let's take it slow this time, huh?

VIC

(impatient to get to it)

Everybody ready?

INT. BUILDING - DAY

Moving up the stairs and down wide corridors with windows at either end and decaying plaster that floats in the air like fog in the beautiful sunlight.

They glance into rooms filled with immigrant families, naked children watching TV, drug users, stolen goods... They keep going...up and up...until finally...

INT. TOP FLOOR - DAY

One door -- this is it. Loud rock-n-roll behind it. They are massed outside.

VIC
I got the door.

KEVIN
Fuck you. Why always you?

VIC
Because I'm doing it.

Vic takes his place to go first. Kevin is pissed, but backs off. No one else disputes Vic's claim.

One...two...three...

Hymie kicks open the door, and Vic charges through into...

INT. AN EMPTY SPACE - DAY

Maybe it was a drug lab or an arms cache; but now it's just empty space that had people in it two minutes ago: smoking cigarettes, steaming coffee, a half-eaten burger...

SECOND COP
Shit. Look...

He's at the window. They run over, see:

FIVE PEOPLE reaching the bottom of a fire escape. One, carrying a silver attache, looks like Petrossian.

Two cops go out the window.

HYMIE
(into a radio)
We got five males coming down the
fire escape in back...

Vic and the others are halfway back toward the door when...

KRANKOWITZ
Oh, fuck me...

Everyone follows his gaze to...

...A TIMER ticking down: ...00:34 ...00:33...

KEVIN

Jesus Christ... It was a set up.

HYMIE

Let's get out of here.

He moves toward the door as Vic approaches the device.

VIC

Turn off the music.

Attached to the timer is a fat packet of PLASTIC EXPLOSIVES.
Vic examines it. The music goes off.

Hymie herds the others toward the door.

HYMIE

Move it, guys, move it...

Everyone leaves except Kevin -- and Vic who is patiently
studying the bomb: 00:26...00:25...

KEVIN

Vic, come on... We gotta get
everybody out of the building.

VIC

(tracing the wires with
his eyes; unhurried)
In 22 seconds?

KEVIN

If it isn't that big, maybe it'll
just...

VIC

It looks big.
(beat)
You go.

Kevin wants to, but can't. He looks at the bomb: 00:17...
00:16...

KEVIN

Maybe the red one.

VIC

Maybe.

00:12...00:11... Vic threads his finger through the wires and gets a grip on a white one.

KEVIN
Not the white one.

VIC
No?

Vic looks at Kevin.

Pulls the white one.

The timer KEEPS TICKING DOWN...00:04...00:03...

Kevin becomes aware of his own breath. He moistens his lips...

KEVIN
(already dead)
Ah, Jesus...

He looks desperately for something else to pull, but there's no time, it's too late -

They watch, paralyzed, as...

The timer hits 00:00.

And...nothing happens. They're dead, yet still alive.

The timer continues: -00:01...-00:02... Past zero, and the bomb still hasn't gone off!

KEVIN
You cut the explosives -- and left the timer.

Vic nods, eerily calm. He and Kevin exchange looks as if sharing a secret knowledge...

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Vic and Kevin flying down the stairs, top speed. Both SHRIEKING with delight and release...

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

They come racing out of the building, still roaring. The other cops are waiting.

HYMIE

(shouting)

Auto 3-0-3-1 blocked them off
Bruckner. He says they're coming
back this...(way)

KEVIN

Shit!

A silver Audi speeding right at them. They scatter like ten pins as it shrieks past, trying to hit them. Then they divide into three groups and sprint for their cars.

EXT. I-87 - DAY

Cars speeding in both directions. Suddenly a CAR FLASHES BY northbound, going 30mph faster than prevailing traffic.

INT. THAT CAR - DAY

Vic at the wheel. Kevin shotgun. Cops 1 & 2 in back. They are whipping in and out of traffic at an insane speed, tailgating, nudging other cars out of the way.

COP ONE

(asking him to slow down)

Hey, Vic...

Vic calmly flicks across two lanes, nearly clipping an SUV. Cops One and Two stiffen in terror, grab their arm rests.

COP TWO

Slow down, man, will you...

(panicking as Vic veers
again)

Slow the fuck--...Jesus!

Ignoring him, Vic slams the brake, throws the wheel, the car skids across three lanes -- Cops 1 & 2 shrieking -- bounces off the median, fishtails for a few terrifying seconds, then straightens out.

The cops -- not wearing seatbelts, of course -- bounce around the cabin. Vic barely notices.

COP #2

Look, you want to die, go kill
yourself. But let us out.

Instead of slowing down, Vic knifes between two cars.

VIC
Where's our lead? Raise them on the
air, will you?

Cop #2 pulls a gun. Puts it to Vic's head.

COP #2
Stop the car and let us out.

KEVIN
(trying to grab the gun)
Hey, what the hell are you - !

Vic speeds up. Cop #2 tries to fend Kevin off, cocks the
gun. A dangerous moment as they wrestle -

COP #1
(to #2)
It's okay, it's okay, I'll get 'em...
(into radio)
Hey, where are you?

RADIO VOICE
3-0-3-1, we're on the Saw Mill.

Vic screams back across the lanes, almost clipping a semi,
just makes the exit. #1 and #2 cringe and duck...

VIC
If you'd called when I said, we'd
have made the exit easier.

EXT. SAW MILL - DAY

A beautiful, old, wooded parkway. They see their lead car up
ahead.

COP #1
There's Raino...
(into radio)
We got you.

VIC
Who're we following?

RADIO VOICE
The silver Audi.

VIC
Tell them we've got this.

COP #2	KEVIN	COP #1
No, no. Fuck you.	Hey, shut up,	What're you doin'?! Whattaya think
Enough of this	Mary. Relax,	
shit! He doesn't	huh? It'll turn	you're doing?!
stop the car,	out okay, okay?	"Okay?!" He's out
of I'll put a bullet -		his fucking
mind!		

The three of them wrestle over the gun, slugging each other, knocked around in/by the swerving car as -

Vic pumps the accelerator and they rocket forward, up beside the fleeing Audi. Smoked windows conceal the occupants.

Vic tries to force the Audi onto the shoulder.

The two cars see-saw back and forth, gunfire exchanged.

COP #1	KEVIN	COP #2
You see what I... Jesus Christ, Vic.		Fuck you, man! You
Son-of-a -		think I won't kill
		you?!

They lock bumpers, and now, unable to escape each other, the gunfire becomes serious, severe, dangerous. It's like a wrestling match, both drivers wrenching their wheels...

Vic finally yanks them his way, both cars shear through the metal median, cross oncoming traffic (which scatters crazily), slam through a shoulder barrier...and crash into a liquor store.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Bottles everywhere. Smashed glass. A furiously barking Rottweiler. Vic leaps out his door, through the chaos, and into the other car.

INSIDE CAR

One dead, an open door on the other side of the car...

...TWO FIGURES are fleeing out a rear door of the liquor store. One is Petrossian, with the silver attache...

EXT. REAR OF LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Vic chasing the two men.

Petrossian is in the lead, running alongside the Saw Mill.

A silver Mercedes slows...rear door opens...Petrossian dives inside with the attache. The second guy is too far behind. The car takes off without him.

The other guy keeps running; Vic keeps chasing him.

CHASE SEQUENCE

They cross the Saw Mill (the guy dodging cars, Vic racing through traffic without looking, gaining considerably from his heedlessness), firing at each other as they run.

The guy is fast...but Vic just keeps going. Crashing down a hill through the woods, until his quarry, desperate, flees into a building under construction.

Has to climb the stairs. Stupidly he finds himself going up and up with Vic following. They reach...

EXT. TOP OF BUILDING - MAGIC HOUR

A set of girders twenty stories up. Wind again, but softer. The criminal tries to shoot Vic, but is out of ammo; he throws down his gun. It falls and falls...and smashes below.

VIC

Petrossian...How do I find him?

RUSSIAN GUY

(snide, heavy accent)

Wrong question.

Vic drags the guy out onto a girder, a solitary bar extending into space, two hundred feet up...

VIC

What's the question then? How about the designer drugs Petrossian was selling? Why aren't they on the street?

No response. Vic drags him out to the end of the bar: a wobbly, vertiginous look down. The Russian is shaking, tries to grab the bar; Vic won't let him.

RUSSIAN GUY
You know nothing.

Vic lets him go. He drops, barely manages to grab the girder.

VIC
Yeah. That's why we're having this conversation.

The Russian clutches the bar, shakes his head.

Vic holds onto a vertical piece and jumps on the girder; it vibrates like a piano wire. The Russian clings to the beam as if it were his mother.

RUSSIAN GUY
Fak you, pussyman.

KEVIN (O.S.)
You okay out there?

Vic glances over, sees Kevin.

VIC
No problem. But our friend here won't tell me anything.

KEVIN
Bring him here, I'll talk to him.

VIC
(to the Russian)
You want to talk to Kevin?

The Russian peers over at Kevin. Then up at Vic. Then down at the ground far below.

RUSSIAN GUY
I want cigarette.

VIC
(to Kevin, amused)
He wants a smoke.

Kevin tosses Vic his pack.

Vic barely catches it, shakes out a cigarette, gets the matches tucked in the cellophane. He puts the cigarette between the Russian's lips (his hands are fully occupied). It takes Vic several tries to keep a match lit against the wind.

The Russian gets a light and takes a long, grateful pull, the tip glowing brightly in the gathering twilight.

Suddenly, with one hand, the Russian grabs Vic's leg, seems ready to pull him over.

KEVIN
(pulling his gun)
Hey, fuck this...

VIC
No, it's okay, Kev...
(to the Russian)
Hey, come on, you made a deal.

RUSSIAN
Okay, sure.

He beckons for Vic to lean down.

Vic squats, balanced on his toes, wary of another lunge. His relaxed demeanor seems the strangest thing happening here.

RUSSIAN GUY
You want right question, Pussyman?
(takes another pull on his
cigarette)
It's this.

And the Russian simply lets go of the girder. Vic has an instant of intuition, grabs at the Russian's hand, but it slips free.

Vic and Kevin watch in solemn amazement as the Russian falls two hundred feet and bounces off the construction equipment.

KEVIN
That was impressive...

Vic stares down at the broken body...

KEVIN (CONT.)
He's crazier than you.

Vic nods. He looks at his hand: the Russian's nail has left a SCRATCH along his palm.

KEVIN (CONT.)
I thought you were afraid of heights.

VIC
Yeah, I am.

And yet (like Michael Corleone on the steps of the hospital) he realizes that he isn't afraid. It's a tiny thing, yet his whole manner seems to shift, and his thoughts go far away.

DEPUTY MAYOR'S VOICE
...Had they not risked their lives
to disarm the bomb...

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

A DEPUTY MAYOR presenting citations to Vic and Kevin.

DEPUTY MAYOR
...hundreds of innocent citizens
would have been killed. Therefore,
to the long list of heroes to whom
this city owes an immeasurable debt,
we are today honored to add two more:
Kevin Michael Dougherty and Victor
Alonzo Ficante...

He pins medals on both men to APPLAUSE, a FANFARE OF CAMERA
FLASH and a crowding of press PHOTOGRAPHERS and CAMERAMEN...

OFF TO ONE SIDE: POLICE BRASS

applauding enthusiastically. Among them is Trapp, the CHIEF
OF DETECTIVES who bawled out Vic earlier, clapping warmly as
he says quietly to Brass #3 from the review board:

TRAPP
This Ficante is a problem.

Brass #3, also smiling and applauding, nods that he agrees.

TRAPP
How do we get rid of him?

BRASS #3
Hopefully he'll get himself killed.

TRAPP
As long as it's just him...

ON VIC & KEVIN

The photographers are clamoring for eyelines.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

...Over here, Vic...Kevin, can you
look this way, please...etc.

The two heroes accommodate graciously. Kevin is having the time of his life. Vic enjoys it too, banters with the press, but he's used to it.

INT. NOBU - NIGHT

Vic in a \$3G Italian suit and Kevin celebrate with Hymie, Raino, S'cuse, etc. Lots of lobster, champagne, laughter.

They would be disturbing the other diners except that everyone seems to feel graced by their celebrity. Vic (quiet, watchful, has barely touched his food) is the dominant male, the one to whom others address their remarks. We feel him here at the peak of his power yet somehow no longer able to experience pleasure. Indeed, he seems more interested in idly tracing the scratch in his palm than in the conversation. The scratch is still swollen and rimmed in red.

They've reached the cognac course, and as they talk about where they are going next...

ALL OF THEM

What about Halo?...
Nah, Halo is like -- last year...
Vic what's that new place you were
talking about?...

...A WAITER arrives with the check...

KEVIN

Give me that.

But Vic already has the waiter's eye, gets it. The others murmur their objections, but are, in fact, relieved.

KEVIN

(to Vic, pulling out his
roll)
We'll split it.

Vic, an unlit cigar clenched between his teeth, waves Kevin off, glances at the check -- meaningless numbers -- and scrawls his name across the bottom.

They all rise unsteadily and Vic hands the signed bill to the Waiter.

WAITER

Sir? Sir, we can't accept...

VIC

Don't worry about it.

The Waiter stands there, mouth open, then moves off to consult with the Maitre D' as the cops head for the front door.

A SOFT-SPOKEN MAN, 45, at a table filled with expensive wine and BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE, sticks his hand out:

SOFT-SPOKEN

Vic...Tory Konstanza, we met at
Panther's bachelor party...

(Vic vaguely remembers)

...And you recognize these folks...

He presents a young, glamorous Hollywood COUPLE (20s).

Over at the cloakroom, Vic's friends, getting their coats, look back at Vic talking to the glamorous threesome.

LEO

I think the kid is somebody. I saw
him on Leno. The redhead's Coolie
Waite, isn't she?

No one seems to know or care. As they put their coats on.

HYMIE

How much you think Vic paid for that
suit?

KEVIN

Prada fuckin' gave it to him.

Vic's conversation with the celebrities is finishing.
Business cards are pressed into his hand. He sees again the
scab in his palm. Just as Konstanza is saying...

KONSTANZA

So can I call you Monday? Make you
rich and famous?

Vic's about to say, "Sure, why not?" but his attention
already wandering, he glances across the room and sees...

Katherine Brown. In this chance encounter, their eyes meet
in an unguarded way...and it's as if we can read in both
their minds the identical thought: Oh. It's you.

She's in a booth with a SILVER-HAIRED MAN [[n OLDER MAN]] whose back is to us. She sees Vic; sees Vic start to rise, obviously coming her way.

She says something to the man, then gets up and moves toward the back of the restaurant.

Konstanza and his friends are puzzled by Vic's sudden departure without answering Konstanza's question. But, as if drawn by her gravitational field, he simply walks away, after Katherine...

...past the Maitre D'...who, having witnessed Vic with Konstanza, pockets Vic's bill...

...past the table Katherine left. The Silver-Haired [[Older]] Man (we still can't see his face) is on a cell phone, speaking Russian.

BACK OF THE RESTAURANT

A series of individual powder rooms for either sex. Katherine stands here, as if waiting for a room, smoking a cigarette. He eyes the illegal cigarette, ignores it, gestures back toward her table.

VIC
Another Russian.

KATHERINE BROWN
(breezy)
Word of mouth. It's the key to any business.

VIC
Is he part of the same deal? Maybe he knows Petrossian.

KATHERINE BROWN
(shrugs)
Ask him if you want.

But the personal agenda takes precedence: she looks at him; he looks at her: a challenge and an answer.

A door opens. A person exits one of the powder rooms. As the door swings shut...

...Vic stops it with his foot. Their eyes meet.

KATHERINE BROWN
Oh, you're a bad boy after all...

INT. POWDER ROOM

She is on her feet, folded over the sink, and he is fucking her from behind. Both of them drenched in sweat, gasping, hoarse, grunting like animals.

He comes out of her.

KATHERINE BROWN

No, wait, wait...don't....

He turns her around, pushes her against the wall, enters her from the front. This is even better. She pulls him to her with a shameless urgency. She's pounding into him, wanting something, finding something. She bites him hard. He goes harder, liking the pain, and under his grunts we hear...a tiny sound, a whimper from deep inside her. Her eyes roll back in her head, vibrating in their sockets, and now as she emits a long, trembling cry, like pain, like unbearable sadness, he shouts out his own orgasm, over and over. Her face. His face. Something happening neither expects, rage and communion.

Finally he collapses on her, and they stand there, spent, barely alive, gasping for breath, their lips millimeters apart, arms around each other, loose but holding.

They look in each other's eyes, and then they both look away. Already beginning to straighten her clothing, she murmurs...

KATHERINE BROWN

I've got to get back...

She picks up her panties, puts them in her purse, smooths her dress and hair, and is out the door before he's fully caught his breath.

EXT. NOBU - NIGHT

The other cops are standing around finishing their cigars, peering in the windows of the restaurant looking for Vic as he emerges from the alley and joins them:

FRIENDS

Hey, what happened to you? We went back in and couldn't... What next, Vic? Where you wanna go?

Vic raises his arm, hailing their limo. He notices...

...Raino flick away his lit cigar. It glows in the dark.

FLASHCUT: THE RUSSIAN ON THE GIRDER

His cigarette glows. Then he lets it go, watches it fall.
Then follows it down....

BACK TO SCENE: EXT. NOBU - NIGHT

Vic's eyes: vacant, thinking. The limo pulls up, and Vic
opens the door for his friends. As they pile in...

VIC

You guys go on, I got something.

Over their objections, he closes the door. The limo pulls
away. Vic looks around... **JUMP CUT TO:**

EXT. STEVENSON'S CLUB (HARLEM) - NIGHT

Vic crosses the street, stepping out into traffic. Brakes
squeal, cars almost hit him, drivers curse; he's oblivious.

A neon sign: **The Jamaican Club**. There's a line to get in.
At the door he encounters FOUR LARGE JAMAICAN MEN guarding
the entrance. They shake their heads.

VIC

I have to talk to Stevenson.

BLACK GUARD

He's not here.

VIC

(head gesture)

That's his car.

BLACK GUARD

So go talk to the car.

The others laugh. Vic laughs, too. Which they're not used
to. They all just stand there, not sure what happens next.
And then, without warning or haste, he simply walks through
the door. And the men are left looking at each other: why
didn't you stop him? Well, why didn't you? As if, through
some sly Indian trick, Vic just put them to sleep.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Packed with people in various stages of alcoholic or
pharmaceutical dementia.

Vic moving past bodies, guns, lethal glances, Vodka bottles, a BLACK SINGER in a sheer silk dress. It's too dark to see what's going on, but it can't be moral, legal, or good for you. Vic spots what he's looking for:

A PRIVATE TABLE

Gleaming bodies, colored liquids, fragrant substances. BODYGUARDS spring into action to stop Vic, but at his quiet, unthreatening manner, they soften, confused, and defer to the massive presence of STEVENSON, who has his arm around a DARK BEAUTY. She makes brief eye contact with Vic just as...

STEVENSON

What an honor. A hero in our midst.

Vic pulls up a chair and sits.

STEVENSON (CONT.)

(dry)

Have a seat.

VIC

Tell me something: why would a guy dive off a building just to keep from talking to me?

STEVENSON

You lost me there, brother. Is that a philosophical question?

VIC

I never saw a drug dealer -- a foot solider, a nobody -- bow out like that. They're not usually such purists.

STEVENSON

Don't mind-fuck yourself, Ganj, trying to understand Russians. Guys like you and me, we do things for a reason: we want to kill somebody, get laid, make money. The Russians do it 'cause there's no reason. That's their reason. Have a drink.

He puts a glass in front of Vic, pours vodka. Vic waves it away --

STEVENSON

(to Dark Beauty, re Vic)

Speaking of purists.

Vic slides his chair closer, crowding the big man.

VIC
What really happened at the Park
Royal?

As Stevenson acts elaborately put out, Vic leans, whispers:

VIC
You screwed us.

STEVENSON
Screwed you? You screwed me. I
brought Petrossian, like you said,
you guys couldn't even--(close the
deal).

VIC
You set him up for us, yeah. And set
us up for him. You--(played it both
ways.)

STEVENSON
(over him)
Set you up how? For what? What'd he
get out of it??

VIC
You tell me.

STEVENSON
(helpless, exasperated)
I did tell you! I'm nobody! I don't
know anything!

VIC
Then get me Petrossian. I'll ask him.

STEVENSON
You're even crazier than they say...

Stevenson gets up to go. Vic puts his hand on Stevenson's
arm: gentle but firm. Stevenson looks at the hand,
intrigued.

VIC
You have a useful relationship with
the department. You give us things we
want, we give you breathing room.

STEVENSON
I keep telling you, Sweetheart. I
can't get to Petrossian anymore.

VIC

Then you're no use to us.

As Vic gets up to go, he catches Dark Beauty's gaze. He leans over, kisses her on the mouth, a nice, longish kiss, the audacity of which freezes Stevenson. As their lips part.

VIC

(to Dark Beauty)

I'll see you later, okay?

Then he's gone.

STEVENSON

(to Dark Beauty)

What the fuck was that?

DARK BEAUTY

I don't know. That was him, not me.
Why didn't you stop him?

STEVENSON

No hurry.

He gets up and walks away.

INT. VIC'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

He leans on the window sill, staring out at the street. Beside him, next to the grape ivy, arrayed like runic objects, are the three pieces of lead he found in his Kevlar vest after the drug-house shoot-out, now accompanied by four others, presumably from later actions.

His hands rest in a pool of sunlight, and he sees the scratch on his palm. He stretches his hand, cracking the scab. A small bead of blood wells up.

The phone rings. He doesn't budge. A machine answer: no outgoing message, only a beep.

VOICE THROUGH MACHINE

Vic?...Vic, it's Bea...Are you there?

(beat)

We're out at Mom's, and everyone's asking about you...I actually...I saw Karen yesterday...

As she goes on, Vic watches the shiny drop of blood. PRELAP
SOUND:

DEEGAN'S VOICE

You know about this rookie, out in
the seven-nine...?

INT. DEEGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Deegan is tossing reports at Vic; Vic ignores them -

DEEGAN (CONT'D)

...Tries to play hero in a
conspicuously stupid way, ends up in
a wheelchair. They clear his locker,
it's full of clippings about you.

VIC

(he's heard)

And somehow that's my fault.

DEEGAN

Plus now we got officers asking not
to be assigned with you.

VIC

Who? Krankowitz and Roberts?

FLASHCUT: INT. CAR RACING UP THE SAW MILL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Cop #1 and Cop #2 screaming at the top of their lungs.

BACK TO SCENE

VIC

So fire me.

(as if he'd welcome it)

DEEGAN

(shaking head)

The press'd kill us: punishing
excellence, rewarding mediocrity...
Look, you're famous now -- all those
TV offers; you can cash that check
any way you want.

(quieter)

Plus you're not going anywhere in the
department. Why would you stay?

VIC

Tell them they can fire me if they
want, Ted. I'm not resigning.

DEEGAN

Jesus, Vic, what is this? What happened to you? This can't all be about Ernie.

VIC

Who's Ernie?

(off Deegan's shock)

Oh, Ernesto, right, right...

Vic's cell rings. He look at Deegan and shrugs: so I forgot Ernie; big deal. Vic answers his cell:

VIC

Ficante.

(then, warmly, cheerful)

Mr. Stevenson. Have you been thinking about me?

And he walks out of Deegan's office as if he's completely forgotten him into...

INT. DETECTIVES' BULLPEN - DAY

Full of Vic's friends, busy.

STEVENSON'S VOICE

The Russians have a lab out in Sheepshead Bay.

VIC

Where exact --

INT. STEVENSON'S PLACE - SAME TIME

STEVENSON

...In an old tire factory.

VIC'S VOICE

Where exact -

STEVENSON

...Chill, Ganj, I'm giving it to you.

Across the room, the Dark Beauty looks up from her magazine, meets his gaze. She smells a rat.

INT. DETECTIVES' BULLPEN - SAME TIME

Vic writing down the info.

He clicks off the cell and turns in SEMI-SLOW MOTION, sees COPS and other STAFF go by, eating doughnuts, carrying files, talking with each other, but not to him. PHONES RING, people TALK, someone LAUGHS... He's not part of this tribe anymore.

Vic sees it, knows it, regrets it, but it's all distant now. He's going into himself, down deep inside where he lives. Slowly his hand smooths his cuff. And without warning we are:

INT. A LABORATORY - SHEEPSHEAD BAY - DAY

Insanity. The middle of a gunfight. People firing from all directions, glass breaking, chemicals spilling. We can't tell cops from criminals, and it hardly matters.

We follow...Vic...charging through this chaos with his usual reckless indifference, once again offering himself to death. Cops SHOUTING behind him, Russian VOICES in front. Vic's going for...

A BIG WOODEN DOOR

toward the back, kills a guy in the way and as he charges we... JUMP AHEAD A COUPLE SECONDS and now he's...

...BURSTING THROUGH THE DOOR into...

INT. ANOTHER ROOM - DAY

Abruptly shifting to VERY SLOW MOTION as...

A SHOTGUN is fired...We hear a MUFFLED DISCHARGE and see...

...the SHELL emerge from the barrel...the red casing disintegrate, the double-0 pellets start to spread out...

NORMAL SPEED: Vic diving to his left...

SLOW MOTION: the expanding flock of pellets -- like migrating geese -- goes over Vic's head, but one leg, twisting upward as he falls, intersects the edge of the pellet formation... Holes appear in the fabric of his pants, blood dots the skin of his exposed ankle...

NORMAL SPEED: Vic: rolling, firing. The SHOT-GUNNER dives aside and behind him we see: Petrossian running...

SLOW MOTION: Vic, continuing to roll...HIS ROLLING POV: Petrossian, silver attache in hand, sprinting full out...

Vic lands face-to-face with the staring EYES of a DEAD MAN...

NORMAL SPEED: Vic up and limping fast after Petrossian, fired at from six directions...A flash of RAINY DAYLIGHT as Petrossian bangs through a fire door...

Vic gets there two beats later, slams it open, but instead of charging through, flattens against a wall as...

SLOW MOTION: ...a BLAST of gunfire comes back this way, cuts down the pursuing shot-gunner.

Vic wheels through the opening...and finds himself:

EXT. AN IRON CATWALK - DAY

That runs along the top of a vast warehouse. Petrossian scrambles away along the catwalk. Vic fires once, but can't get off a decent shot through the ironwork.

So he limp/runs after him, his right trouser leg darkening with blood from the knee down.

A PROLONGED CHASE SEQUENCE ALONG THE CATWALK

Both gradually wearying, slowing... Vic, dragging his bad leg like a useless appendage, stumbles, falls, bloodies his mouth, picks himself up, goes on.

Petrossian, grasping for breath, desperately seeking a way out of here, finally reaches a corner of the building, turns, spots to his immense relief...

A FIRE ESCAPE GOING DOWN

Takes the first step, misses it, falls half a flight, and as he gets up finds...

...Vic, above him, gun out. No time to run. And now they are:

FACE TO FACE - DODGE CITY

A confrontation like the one in the hotel lobby all those months ago. Only this time they can barely stand, much less lift their gun arms. Nevertheless...

They FIRE AT THE SAME INSTANT...a burst of five shots. The Russian takes another step, falls face first. The attache slides down a half flight and stops on the landing below.

Gasping for air, Vic stumbles down the steps and turns Petrossian over. The arm tucked under the body holds the gun, and we expect him to fire. But there is a bullet hole at his throat, another at the juncture of his septum and upper lip. His black eyes stare; he is dead.

It's finally over. The MUSIC swells. Vic exhales, relieved, and looks around: a raw afternoon. The fire escape choked with wet leaves. A brief snatch of GANGSTA RAP from a passing car.

He extracts the gun from the dead hand and descends to the next landing. As he bends to pick up the attache, he stops. A SMALL REPETITIVE SOUND echoes in his head. Heels CLICKING on marble. And a faint sound of very slow SATIE. He blinks: half a realization.

He turns slowly, looks to his left. Behind a window...

KATHERINE BROWN -- WITH DARK BANGS AGAIN

pointing a gun at him.

KATHERINE BROWN

Izvini.

The words in Russian alert him to the danger, he starts to raise his gun. But before he can...

She fires.

SLOW MOTION: Vic blown backwards off the landing...

VIC'S POV: As if floating dreamily out into space. Back behind him he sees...

...Katherine's arm reach through the shattered window, pick up the silver attache and draw it back inside.

Now the POV looks down, and Vic sees himself lying in the wet leaves below. We DESCEND toward his upward-gazing eyes...

THE EYES' POV -- a grey sky, the tangled branches of a tree...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A SCHOOLYARD - DAY

May. Trees a rich green, red and pink azaleas. The same 5-year-old GIRL -- dark, curly hair -- we saw earlier in the same sandbox. She looks up, sees a little boy (5-yr-old VIC) staring at her. With her shining bangs and pale eyes, she has the imperious manner of a queen. She says haughtily...

GIRL WITH BANGS

You can't look at my hair.

(the boy simply stares)

Victor, did you hear what I said?

STOP LOOKING AT MY HAIR, OR I'LL KILL
YOU!!

Infuriated at Vic's refusal to drop his gaze, the girl smacks him. He laughs. She keeps hitting, and he keeps laughing.

The CAMERA MOVES in on the rich, dark complexity of her hair, as if all the secrets of life lay hidden there...

DARKNESS FILLS THE SCREEN

Silence. Hold on this until two pale blue circles appear. Like eyes. A face begins to take shape around them. It could be Katherine Brown, but before it fully forms, it dissolves into ordinary objects, the blue circles become lilies in a hospital water pitcher, and someone says...

A WOMAN'S VOICE

You're so cold.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Vic lies in bed. Bea is holding his hand.

BEA

Can you hear me? They say you can
hear me...

His eyes are on her; she assumes he can hear.

BEA

Karen was here.

Vic's gaze moves to the lilies -- Katherine's "blue eyes"...

BEA

Yeah, she brought those. Did you see
her?

He doesn't respond. His eyes take in his circumstances: left leg and right arm in traction, an I.V. in his arm, bandages cover his chest.

BEA

The bullet had a coating; it went through the vest, creased the aorta but didn't penetrate, and missed your spinal column by a couple of millimeters. The doctor says it's like a miracle.

Vic manages the smallest, driest of smiles.

BEA

You know what I said when they told me? I said, 'Thank God, 'cause now he has to stop.'

(off his face)

Right?

Vic's face remains blank. He's not stopping.

BEA

Ah, Jesus, Vic...What are you trying to do? Kill yourself like Dad did?

Vic frowns, puzzled and troubled by this...

FLASHCUT: EXT A SKYSCRAPER - DAY

The late Benjamin RedSky standing on a girder. The same photo we saw at Mom's house, moving again. This time we see the friend (EDDIE) more clearly.

A pigeon flutters by and as it takes our eye, Benjamin drops off the girder. Just vanishes. So fast you hardly notice.

KEVIN'S VOICE

I talked to Deegan...

Ben RedSky, falling, serene, as in a dream...

INT. HOSPITAL - REHAB ROOM - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Outside, rain is falling. Vic, in gym shorts and hooded sweatshirt, works his injured knee, encased in a brace. Kevin, who has come to visit, helps by giving him resistance to work against. Vic's pushing himself as they argue...

KEVIN

He said Health Services put your papers in. They're surveying you out on permanent disability.

VIC

(flat)

Finally found a way to fire me.

KEVIN

Come on, man, insurance'll never clear that knee for duty.

Vic keeps working the knee that insurance will never clear.

KEVIN

Anyway, it's over. You got Ernie's killer. You got Petrossian.

FLASHCUT: INT. PARK ROYAL ELEVATOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Petrossian and Katherine Brown, as before, only now with guns. As the doors open on the mezzanine, they stand waiting, still, confident, ready to do what they do best.

BACK TO SCENE: INT HOSPITAL REHAB ROOM

KEVIN

(looking in notebook)

Actually, his name was...Emmanuel Lasker. I guess "Petrossian" was some kind of alias or...

VIC

Petrossian didn't kill Ernie.

KEVIN

What are you saying? You're saying it was that girl? Okay, it's the girl, we're looking for her. I mean you're the only one saw her there, but...

A passing PHYSICAL THERAPIST sees Vic trembling with the effort of his workout; she immediately intercedes.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

(concerned, likes him?)

I told you not to overdo it...

She makes him stop. He reluctantly sits on bench, towels off. Kevin, watching the therapist leave, grins.

KEVIN
She's hot.

Vic glances up, recognizes the woman's hotness, but it doesn't seem to touch him.

KEVIN
Come on, man, forget the girl. She's probably just in your head...

ON VIC'S HEAD

He's barely hearing this.

KEVIN (V.O.)
...a figment of your whatever. And you're thinking more about her than about Bea, or Karen, any of us. Your own people, man, who love you...

FLASHCUT: EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Katherine Brown in the window holding the gun. She says again:

KATHERINE BROWN
Izvini.

And pulls the trigger. The bullet comes at him SLOWLY, a pearl of light. He reaches out to catch it. But too late.

It hits him in the chest, drives him back off the fire escape.

And he falls. Like his father fell...

EXT. RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE AFTERNOON

Vic motionless, propped on a cane, staring across the street at a decrepit bar.

INT. BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

A perpetual, inebriated twilight: as if we've entered the underworld. A dozen men and four whores occupy the stools and tables, all seeming cut from the same dark, stolid cloth. The raucous laughter does not dispel the gloom, nor does the gloom diminish the laughter. Quite the contrary.

Vic enters, scans the place with the air of someone holding a mildewed jacket at arm's length. He spots what he is looking for and crosses to a booth occupied by three men. We recognize two of them (YOUNG WORKMAN and OLDER WORKMAN) from Vic's visit to the building under construction.

The third man is EDDIE, the guy joking with Vic's father in the "moving photograph," only aged fifteen hard years. He has a single Eagle feather sticking up out of his long, gray hair.

Vic slides into the empty seat. The men, drunk, barely register this minor amendment to their circumstances. Like everyone else in the place, they are American Indians.

Young Workman grins furtively at Vic. He fills a fourth glass, passes it to Vic who pushes back: no thanks. Eddie is watching Vic and slowly drumming his fingers on the table...

EDDIE
How's your Dad?

VIC
Dead. Remember?

EDDIE
Yeah, but how is he?

VIC
You tell me.

EDDIE
Drunk on pussy. Even now.

The other two laugh, and even Vic smiles.

VIC
Eddie...

EDDIE
Coyote.

VIC
Whatever... When my Dad died...what happened exactly?

OLDER WORKMAN
He didn't look where he was going.

More laughter; not disrespect, just a casualness about death.

VIC
You ever think maybe it was a little
careless? On purpose...

The other three exchange looks, shake their heads.

YOUNG WORKMAN
Everybody falls sooner or later.

OLDER WORKMAN
Off the beam, off the wagon -

EDDIE
Anyway, what he did, that ain't what
you're doing.

VIC
(surprised)
What am I doing?

YOUNG WORKMAN
It's in the paper, man. You think we
don't read?

They can't believe Vic doesn't know:

EDDIE
Didn't your Dad ever tell you about
crazy dogs?

Vic cocks his head, enters some weird space, half a memory:

VIC
What's a crazy dog?

EDDIE
It's a chicken.

OLDER WORKMAN
(goofing)
A chicken? I thought it was a dog.

Young Workman laughs, heads for the bar.

EDDIE
No, a chicken. He's gotta *become* a
dog. A wolf-dog, right?

OLDER WORKMAN
(playing along)
Oh...Right.

EDDIE

He disgraced himself, ran away in
battle... So what's he do?

The goofing has segued smoothly into seriousness. Perhaps
we're surprised how well they know what Vic has been through.

EDDIE

He goes into battle again. And
again. Only now he rides at the
front. Probably dies, dies pretty
quick. But then he's a wolf-dog and
can be buried with his people.

OLDER WORKMAN

Ben must've told you this...

Vic frowns, trying to recall --

FLASHCUT:

Ben Redsky with Vic, age 5, on his lap. Ben's telling Vic a
story. Vic lies back against his father's chest, utterly
relaxed, listening with rapt attention.

BACK TO: INT. BAR

VIC

That was what, a myth? A tradition
or -- [something]?

OLDER WORKMAN

A way to atone.

EDDIE

(drunken)
-- Make amends --
(belches)

Young Workman returns with a fresh bottle, fills four
glasses. Clicks the new one against the first one he poured
for Vic. Vic ignores this, too.

VIC

But that was, then; this crazy dog
stuff doesn't go on anymore.

EDDIE

Yeah? Then what are you doing here?
Saying hello?

Laughter. Vic's tone shifts, he lets his confusion show.

VIC
How do I get it to end?

EDDIE
It ends when you die. Or when you're done.

VIC
Done?

OLDER WORKMAN
If you don't know you're a crazy dog,
then you're not really atoning, and
it never ends.

EDDIE
But now he knows.

OLDER WORKMAN
(mocking)
Yeah, now he knows everything.

VIC
(horrified)
You mean...you're saying I have to do
it all over again??

EDDIE
(to Older)
Like you said, he knows everything.

OLDER WORKMAN
(to Vic, muttering)
You better kill the one who killed
you?

VIC
(smiles)
Who killed me...??

YOUNG WORKMAN
You're dead, didn't you know?

They all laugh, even Vic who seems confused, yet at the same
time oddly free, unconstrained.

YOUNG WORKMAN
How did it start, anyway?

An idle question that somehow drives Vic back to:

INT. PARK ROYAL LOBBY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Vic sees Katherine Brown for the first time.

He's transfixed. She looks right at him. He looks away.

YOUNG WORKMAN (O.S.)
I met this Chicataw...

BACK TO SCENE: INT. BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

YOUNG WORKMAN
(pushing Vic's drink back
toward him)
...when I worked at Disney World.
She said how you got in, that's the
way out.

Vic nods soberly.

YOUNG WORKMAN
Of course she was drunk and trying
to find the exit at Disney World.

They all laugh and down their drinks. Including Vic.

Then realizes: he didn't mean to drink. The men laugh as if
they've caught him at something -- or tricked him into it.

And, now, as if accepting what he has always refused, Vic
picks up the second glass and downs it, too.

The men watch this casually, yet attentive. Young Workman
refills all four glasses. Vic sits back, relaxed for the
first time in the movie: he's one of them now. **JUMP TO:**

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - DAY

A NEEDLE. INK. BLOOD. POUNDING MUSIC. Where are we? Thin
HANDS slide across white skin. The ODD TORTURED FACE of the
TATTOO ARTIST hovering over a broad expanse: Vic's back. A
masochistic ritual. We glimpse details of the image:
feathers...a wide soulless EYE... THE MUSIC GROWS LOUDER.
In the back of the frame, an EXIT sign FLASHES...and finally
we MOVE onto Vic's BLANK FACE...

FLASHCUT: EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

Katherine Brown shoots Vic. He's blown back off the fire escape. He falls serenely, as in a dream. **JUMP TO:**

KATHERINE BROWN AS A BLONDE

Not the tacky Doral version, but ghostly, mysterious, like a black-and-white studio still of some '40s ingenue whose name we can't quite place. A dream image...

WOMAN'S VOICE

She's beautiful, isn't she?

Now another: Katherine with dark bangs, as Vic first saw her.

WOMAN'S VOICE

She only worked here a little while.

And others: hair up, down, different wigs, make-up, looks: slutty, virginal, soulful, hard, heroic, blank.. We are:

INT. PILGRIM ESCORT SERVICE - DAY

Vic sits on a Hermann Miller sofa beside the WOMAN (40s, stylish) who handles bookings for the escort service. The walls are lined with 8x10 glossies of other beauties.

The woman gazes, half in love, at Katherine's photo.

BOOKINGS WOMAN

She saw a man shot to death right in front of her.

(shudders at the thought)

After that she went back out a couple times, but... Who can blame her?

He nods, registering: quit right after the shootout. But he only says:

VIC

Her address.

BOOKINGS WOMAN

We don't give those out.

Vic stands. She thinks he's leaving but instead he limps over to her filing cabinets -

BOOKINGS WOMAN

Excuse me, what are you...? Those
are confidential -

He opens a drawer, thumbs through the files -

BOOKINGS WOMAN

We have a relationship with the
police! Detective Krankowitz in the
Midtown -

She tries to push him away and close the drawer, but he pins
her to the wall like a butterfly with one hand and continues
to look for Katherine's file with the other. She claws at his
hand and arm, beats at it, but he doesn't seem to notice...
JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. A DILAPIDATED BROWNSTONE - DAY

Vic stares across the street at the building. JUMP TO:

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

He follows the LANDLADY (early 30s, short, slovenly, carnal)
up the stairs. JUMP TO:

TOP FLOOR, IN FRONT OF AN APARTMENT.

The Landlady locates the key on a large ring. JUMP TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Whoever lived here, left in a hurry. On the floor are
discarded clothing, a slick corporate report for a company
called Krik Pharmaceuticals, a half-empty bottle of expensive
cognac, and a paperback copy of *The Master and Margarita* in
Russian.

Vic stands drinking in Katherine Brown's vanished presence.
On the window sill is an empty glass imprinted with lipstick.

He opens a drawer. In it, he finds an old letter with an
apothecary's symbol and a letterhead for KRIK PHARMA.
Something about "acquiring patents." Under it is a snapshot.
He picks it up; the Landlady looks over his shoulder:

LANDLADY

(Russian accent)
Her family.

Vic looks closer.

INSERT - PHOTO

A large Russian family, outside their dacha. None of them looks like Katherine Brown. Vic points at a 7-year old.

LANDLADY

Yes. Katya.

VIC

"Katya." She's blond.

LANDLADY

Of course.

He registers this, studies the photo of little Katherine.

VIC (CONT'D)

If she's Russian, how come she has no accent?

LANDLADY

She comes over at eight when she is adopted. After her family dies.

VIC

(hears an echo...)

The family died??

LANDLADY

(nodding)

All except her.

Just what Katherine said "Petrossian" told her about himself.

VIC

Died how?

LANDLADY

(how else?)

Some crime possibly, but mostly cholera, typhus... After the Soviet Union collapsed, there was no medicine. The Swiss, Germans, U.S. held all the patents. And we had no money to buy them.

(sardonic)

Of course then we had Western values. Freedom.

VIC
What does Izvini mean?

SLOVENLY
(corrects his
pronunciation)
Izhvini. Is, "Sorry...I'm sorry."

Vic can't help smiling slightly to himself.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - EVENING

A reception area for KRIK PHARMACEUTICAL (chrome letters on a mahogany wall). Vic goes past it down a long hall (the camera stays on the elevator) calling...

VIC
Hello?...Anybody here?...

Far down the hall, he encounters an Hispanic CLEANING WOMAN (short, stout, vivid). They speak in rapid Spanish, untranslated, but we get the idea: Vic's asking where everybody went; the woman is talking animatedly about a big party ("fiesta grande"), Vic wants to know where it is, she doesn't know. But then she has an idea, runs into an office, runs out again, hands him a piece of lavender paper.

He runs back this way, steps onto the elevator where the CAMERA is still waiting, hits the button, and, as he goes down, looks at what we now see is an INVITATION. When he looks closer, something surprises and half-amuses him. He crumples the invitation. He no longer needs it. The entire scene in one shot.

EXT. JAMAICAN CLUB - NIGHT

Vic angling across the dark empty street. Lots of limos outside; something we didn't see the last time.

INT. STEVENSON'S CLUB - NIGHT

Louder, darker and, somehow, much larger than before. The dance floor is packed with a throbbing mass of strobe-lit humanity: Asians, Haitians, Jamaicans, party girls...many of whom seem in a celebratory mood.

Vic squints, makes his way through the dancers - and suddenly finds himself face to face with Stevenson, Dark Beauty as his side.

STEVENSON

You again.

VIC

Where is she?

STEVENSON

Who?

VIC

The girl...the one you set me up to
get shot by.

STEVENSON

Come on, you knew I was setting you
up.

Vic snorts (maybe Stevenson has a point).

STEVENSON

Walk away, Ganj. Go home, pull your
pud. This is not about us.

VIC

This?

STEVENSON

Feed on the droppings, but don't get
trampled. Know what I'm saying?

DARK BEAUTY

(to Stevenson, re Vic)

He doesn't know. He's deaf. And
dumb.

Stevenson looks at Dark Beauty looking at Vic. How does she
know this stuff?

DARK BEAUTY

(to Vic)

She's out there somewhere.

She points at the dance floor.

Vic walks along the tables, looking out at the dancers:
FLYING HAIR, SILK DRESSES, BODIES MOVING with abandon. A
BLOND dances with a good-looking JAPANESE GUY wearing a
Yankees cap. Vic passes three tables littered with caviar,
sushi, Cristal: some kind of celebration. Long-haired
JAPANESE MEN in hip couture. From out of the madness comes:

A VOICE

Mr. Krik?

Vic turns, sees a Silver-Haired Man answer in Russian. For a moment he's just happy to have found the mysterious Mr. Krik. But then he stops, stares harder, remembers... **FLASH TO:**

INT. PARK ROYAL HOTEL - DAY (MONTHS AGO)

Vic chasing Petrossian past a man on a pay phone. Now the CAMERA TILTS TO SHOW: **the same Silver-Haired Man. JUMP TO:**

FLASH IMAGE: INT. PARK ROYAL - MEZZANINE - (MONTHS AGO)

The same man crouching over the dying Japanese businessman. **JUMP TO:**

FLASH IMAGE: INT. NOBU. NIGHT.

Vic passing Katya's table. The back of the Silver-Haired Man's head as he speaks Russian on his cell phone. The same voice.

BACK TO SCENE

Vic is puzzled. The same guy? His gaze follows Krik, who goes over and speaks to the dancing BLOND, then heads on.

Vic is about to follow Krik when he realizes who the Blond is. Her hair is long, blond, rippling - and it's her real hair; we've never seen it before. He walks toward her...

VIC

Katya...

She turns, sees him. But instead of fear or anger, she smiles as if pleased to find him here.

KATYA

(amused)

You know my name.

She comes toward him. It's odd how different she looks, not just the hair and the party dress... she seems younger somehow, happier, as if relaxed for the first time. As if her work is finally done.

She kisses him, lightly but with feeling, a promise. She takes a champagne glass off a passing tray. Her Japanese partner has vanished into the mass of dancing bodies.

VIC
(into her ear)
You killed Ernie.

She sips champagne, laughs, waves to someone across the room.

KATYA
Who's Ernie?

VIC
A cop. My friend. He was right
outside the elevator.

Katya looks back, still smiling, but registering his mood.

FLASHCUT: INT. ELEVATOR - PARK ROYAL - MONTHS AGO

Katya and Lasker guns out, waiting. The doors open. The light from the mezzanine illuminates their faces.

BACK TO SCENE: INT STEVENSON'S

Katya, recalling this, nods to herself.

KATYA
(gently)
Listen, all that's over now. There's
nothing to do.

VIC
What's over?

KATYA
The merger. It went through this
afternoon. That's what we're
celebrating.

VIC
The merger...

KATYA
(assumes he knew)
With Kawabata.

VIC
(rings a bell)
Kawabata...

MOVE IN ON HIM AND JUMP TO:

FLASHCUT: A FORENSIC REPORT

Two photos of Kawabata clipped to the report: one a file photo of a young, long-haired Japanese hotshot; the other a Polaroid of the same man dead on the floor of the Park Royal Mezzanine. We read: "...the wounds to Kawabata's head and chest are consistent with..."

We've seen all this before, but it never registered. Tilt up to: "H. KAWABATA...CEO, KBA MEDICAL BIOTECH....

FLASHCUT: INT. PARK ROYAL - MEZZANINE

The Japanese man, Kawabata, dying in Krik's arms. MOVE IN ON THE PHOTO OF THE DEAD KAWABATA... It fills the screen and BECOMES A LIVE SHOT. WE ARE BACK...

INT. PARK ROYAL MEZZANINE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

After the shootout. Kawabata is dying, again trying to speak to Krik, but now his tone seems angry, accusatory.

Off to one side we see Vic, Kevin and other cops standing over Ernie's body. And in the depth of the shot, yet lit with special vividness, is KATYA, giving her statement to S'cuse...

BACK TO SCENE:

VIC
That's why you were there. To kill
Kawabata. What was he, against the
merger?
(off her silence)
And my friend, Ernie...

FLASHCUT

GUNFIRE. LOUD, SUDDEN, SHOCKING. Lasker firing. Katya's gun is hidden in the folds of her coat but she's shooting too; Ernie's flying backward, crumpling...

VIC (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...He was just something in the way.

BACK TO STEVENSON'S

She's looking right at him.

KATYA
Does it matter?

Vic nods.

KATYA (CONT'D)
All right, then. Yes. He was in the way.

He's surprised by her candor.

VIC
And you, all along you were Petrossian. It was your family that died...

ON HER...reacting, remembering...

FLASHCUT: THAT FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

he saw in her rented room. It fills the screen. A SHUTTER CLICKS, the FIGURES break their poses, begin to move. As they do, their good looks fade. They seem pale; they limp; a hand shakes. A handsome youth of 14 begins to cough. 7-yr-old Katya turns to him, concerned.

KATYA (IN RUSSAIN)
Dmitri? Are you okay?

He tries to speak, but the convulsive cough overcomes him.

BACK TO SCENE: INT. STEVENSON'S

Katya, lost in this recollection, gradually.

VIC
(almost to himself)
So. It wasn't about drugs. It was about drugs.

KATYA
(stares at him)
That's right.
Listen, I'm sorry about your friend.
I know what it's like to lose people.

Knows more about it than he does.

KATYA (CONT'D)
But the dead are dead. The rest of us have to live.

She steps closer, eyes shining, her voice soft, the two of them enclosed in an intimate zone amid the noise.

KATYA (CONT'D)
So why don't we just...go somewhere,
anywhere, the two of us... And live.

The offer of herself, her heart and body, is unmistakable, generous, free, joyous, without strings.

KATYA (CONT'D)
(kisses him)
I like you. You like me.

Her desire for him is so simple, direct, unembarrassed, it seems pure. And irresistible.

But he resists. He gets out handcuffs. She laughs playfully:

KATYA (CONT'D)
I know what we could with those...

VIC
You're under arrest.

KATYA
(laughing)
Come on, we're celebrating. Let's
celebrate.

He snaps one cuff on her.

Only now does her mood darken a little. She looks back over her shoulder at him.

KATYA
You better leave now. Quick.

VIC
You think I'd let you go? (Just
because...)

KATYA
No. I'm letting you go.
(off him)
If you're alive, at least we can
imagine some...alternative future.

Her tone disconcerts him. He snaps on the second cuff.

VIC
There is no other future.

Her face yields. He turns her toward the door as--

HANDS yank him off her -

He's thrown to the floor. SIX BIG RUSSIANS hold him down as VLADIMIR grabs the keys out of Vic's pocket.

He unlocks Katya's handcuffs, as the other six pound Vic. She watches for a moment, then looks away. JUMP TO:

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Darkness. Occasional flashes of light from passing cars. Vic's face rammed into the floor of the limo next to Katya's legs. Stevenson holds a gun to Vic's head. Vic can see Katya pressed against Krik, his hand in her lap...next to another pistol, which she has aimed at Vic.

They ride in silence.

VIC
(trying to look up at
Katya)
Let me ask you something...

KRIK
Shut him up.

Stevenson's foot shoves Vic's mouth back into the limo rug. They ride in silence a moment.

KRIK
(to Katya)
What does he know?

Katya shrugs, gestures vaguely.

KRIK
(untranslated Russian)
He has to die.

She looks away, not agreeing, not arguing. He watches her, both amused and irritated by this attitude.

KRIK
(untranslated Russian)
You're overly involved.

She gives him a look that makes him drop it.

VIC

You think what happened to your family justifies this?

KRIK

To her, it justifies anything.

Katya looks down at Vic for a moment...

KATYA

It must be wonderful living in such a morally clear universe. You add up this, subtract that and know exactly where you stand. This is why everyone envies you Americans.

The limo stops. A white van pulls up behind them. Krik speaks into his cell:

KRIK

Da...da...Anywhere in there.

As the limo idles, the sound seems to blend into something else: **THE HUM**. Faint but unmistakable...like an old friend. They are parked:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CENTRAL PARK NORTH - NIGHT

The limo and van are parked by the park, under trees, in a dark deserted area 50 yards from the park entrance.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Krik opens his door and nods to Stevenson. He drags Vic toward the limo door. **THE HUM GROWS LOUDER**.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK NORTH - NIGHT

Vic is yanked out of the limo and dragged toward the van. **THE HUM BECOMES UNBEARABLY LOUD**. The back of the van is thrown open. Vladimir sticks a GUN in Vic's back -

But before he's thrown into the van, Vic manages to get to his feet; he turns on Vladimir and Stevenson, and asks...

VIC

You guys really think you can kill me?

STEVENSON
We'll see, won't we?

VLADIMIR
(to Vic)
What are you, crazy?

VIC
Yeah. I'm a crazy dog.

THE HUMS STOPS, replaced by a sudden burst of LAUGHTER. A DOZEN TALL GORGEOUS AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN dressed in outrageous finery get out of an SUV at the corner. They look like GODDESSES.

THE RUSSIANS TURN, STUNNED FOR AN INSTANT, both by this interruption and by these almost unearthly creatures...and that gives Vic the moment he needs.

He breaks free, sprints to the wall along the PARK and leaps over it...

The Black Women continue to watch, then one of them makes a joke, the others laugh, and they resume their progress up the block, toward a party we now see spilling onto the street.

Stevenson and Vladimir rush over to the limo and confer with Katya and Krik.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Vic lands softly, in a crouch. He looks around. For a moment he is blinded by the darkness, but as his eyes adjust, the Park emerges: the dense darkness of the foliage, the night sky above, the sharp diminishment of sound.

Then he is up, moving.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK NORTH - NIGHT

The conference at the limo. ORDERS SHOUTED IN RUSSIAN.

Stevenson and Vladimir run to the wall and leap over after Vic. The limo and the van speed into a U-turn and head back up the street and into the park entrance...

INT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

As Vic runs, SOUND begins to intensify: his BREATHING, nearby TRAFFIC, his FOOTSTEPS.

Ahead he hears the PURR of a limo, muttered RUSSIAN. He looks out from behind bushes, sees the limo 40 yards away: too far for him to have heard the engine or the talking inside...

THE RUSSIAN LIMOUSINE

crawls along the road, disgorges TWO MEN with powerful FLASHLIGHTS who plunge into the woods.

Vic turns in another direction, but here too, FLASHLIGHTS fan across the Park, outflanking him.

The only escape is onward, deeper into the Park. He moves that way, staying under trees or in the bushes...until he sees, ahead: one more flashlight cutting off this route.

He stops. Now only his eyes move as he confirms: he's surrounded, trapped. He waits.

A FLASHLIGHT is moving toward him.

He freezes, hoping it will pass, but instead it comes closer.

He crouches to hide, and a TWIG BREAKS under his foot.

The beam swings his way.

He has to move, so he takes off his shoes and creeps forward on his socks. When they slip on the pine needles, he removes them too and goes on, barefoot, silent.

ANOTHER FLASHLIGHT comes at him from a different direction. Stevenson. Vic hunches down, watches as:

Stevenson and a Russian Guard exchange looks, indicating which way each should go. The other Guard heads off -

But Stevenson has taken only a few steps when:

SOMETHING IS LOOPED AROUND HIS NECK -

Vic has his shoes tied together by the laces and is wrapping them around Stevenson's throat -

They struggle, Stevenson tries to shout for The Russian (whose flashlight beam is still close), but he can only get out a tiny SQUEAK.

They fall to the ground. Stevenson bucks like a bull, one hand fighting Vic and the laces, the other going for his gun, finding his gun -

Vic putting all his weight on the laces -

Stevenson fires the gun right past Vic's ear - NO SOUND, it has a silencer - which makes Vic pull all the harder -

The laces snap -

Stevenson whips the gun back again toward Vic and Vic bites his hand. They struggle as:

Vic's other hand claws the dirt, trying to find something, anything, A ROCK!

He smashes the rock into Stevenson's head - again, again, again...finally Stevenson's skull cracks, caving in, in a gush of blood.

He dies. Vic slumps over him, spent.

A flashlight arcs back in their direction as Vic fumbles for Stevenson's gun.

RUSSIAN

Stee?

The RUSSIAN runs toward Vic. ANOTHER FLASHLIGHT is also bouncing this way -

A quick surreal gunfight. Everyone firing silently, flashes of light, bullets spitting around Vic.

One Russian falls in his tracks but the second, also fatally wounded, comes on and on, finally spinning to the ground at Vic's side, blood from an artery spraying all over Vic.

Silence. Both Russians dead. A VOICE crackles from their walkie-talkies.

Vic rises, runs. HAND HELD CAMERA, his POV: trees, bushes, grass; we hear his FRANTIC BREATHING.

He stops in dense underbrush and the CAMERA swings back onto him: wet with blood.

He yanks off his suit jacket (his neck and hands are also stained red), then pulls off his bloody white shirt as well... and now we see the tattoo spread all the way across his back:

A huge eagle, its wings spread, it's beak open in a cry of glory...or pain.

He stops, realizing his skin too now seems awfully white, so, without giving it thought, he smears himself first with the dead Russian's blood, then with dirt that sticks to the wetness. Now he blends back into the darkness of the park.

As he does this, he looks out, sees the limo moving slowly crossing the lawn...

Two more FLASHLIGHTS are moving too, each at some distance... and then in unison they go out. Vic has lost his advantage.

He peers out. Without our noticing it, the Park itself seems to have changed. Perhaps it's a fog that's rolled in, but we no longer see the surrounding buildings. There are no paved paths, and even the conformation of the land appears rougher, wilder; more like a primeval forest than Central Park.

Vic begins to move...quickly, silently, stealthily - like an Indian - in the direction he last saw a flashlight.

Light, shadow, trees, leaves, grass. Vic moving. A silhouette ahead. As Vic gets nearer, we recognize:

Vladimir moving along a ridge, not far from the waiting limo.

Vic moves silently, cutting off Vladimir's angle and then - like an Indian magic trick - he disappears into the woods. SHOCK JUMP CUT ONTO:

Vladimir looking into the woods as Vic manifests in front of him - second half of the magic trick - and violently slices the heel of his hand into Vladimir's neck, below the Adam's apple: instant death.

Vic rifles Vladimir's body, finds his knife as we again hear a walkie-talkie, Vladimir's...and this time we recognize the voice on the other end, speaking Russian: Krik.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Krik talking on the walkie-talkie. Waiting for an answer and not getting it. He peers out at the night and mutters something in Russian.

A thug gets out of the limo, passenger-seat side.

Krik waits, watches.

The thug has a large automatic in his hand.

Silence. Waiting. The Thug takes two steps, three, four...

LOUD NOISES. BULLETS HITTING THE CAR. The Thug is blown back into the windshield, blood splattering over it like a fat bug exploding at 70mph.

Krik sits there. We hear his soft BREATHING. He mutters in Russian to the Driver. The Driver answers. Both watch the man die on the windshield.

The Driver opens his door, cautiously gets out of the limo.

ANGLE ON VIC

Watching the limo. Suddenly he notices something.

He squints...aims...then lowers his gun as he realizes: it's a BEAT COP cautiously approaching the limo.

Since the Beat Cop is behind the Driver, he thinks he has a good angle on him...coming closer...closer...

Vic watches nervously, shaking his head: No.

BEAT COP
Freeze! Police!

The limo driver freezes. Vic hears Arnold's voice growl. The Beat Cop takes another cautious step forward. We hear the fear in his voice, yet he says as forcefully as he can:

BEAT COP
PUT YOUR GUN DOWN! NOW!

The Limo Driver starts to turn and raise his pistol -

Vic fires at the limo driver. CLICK/CLICK/CLICK. Out of bullets --

The limo driver fires, the Beat Cop too -

Both men fall.

Vic watching:

The Limo Driver does not move.

The Beat Cop lies on the ground writhing, calling:

BEAT COP
Help. Please. Somebody...

Vic watches as the back door of the limo opens. He can't see who gets out. He waits.

BEHIND THE LIMO.

Krik moving to the limo driver's body. Picks up his fallen gun. Feels its heft in his hand...like an old friend he once knew on the streets of Kiev.

He moves toward the rear of the limo...and as he does, we see inside: it's empty.

ANGLE ON VIC

Looking out at the fallen Beat Cop. Vic wants to go help him, so he checks the other directions to make sure all is clear...

BEAT COP (O.S.)
No! Please!

Vic spins back to see: Krik crouched over the Beat Cop, a gun to his head. He speaks to the woods, to Vic:

KRIK
That's enough.
Come out.

Vic spots something else out of the corner of his eye:

Thirty yards to his left. Katya in the darkness. With a gun.

If Vic comes out, both Katya and Krik will have a good shooting angle.

Without our emphasizing it, this moment mirrors what happened long ago at the Park Royal elevator: Vic is facing Katya and a Powerful Man...with the life of another Cop at stake.)

Vic takes a deep breath. We hear his HEARTBEAT.

Krik cocks his gun. The beat cop whimpers.

Vic closes his eyes and takes another breath, as if relishing the oxygen in an unexpected way: I'm still alive. **Time slows**. On a tree branch nearby, so close he could almost touch it, a squirrel watches. Vic looks past it, through the branches, and sees a sliver of moon...

KRIK
(calm, factual)
Right now or he dies.

Vic's face changes. Peace enters him, acceptance of death. He tries to wipe the blood off his face, smearing it. Another deep breath, and his HEARTBEAT, though just as loud, becomes stronger, calmer. His knuckles tighten on the knife.

Krik FIRES into the ground. Dirt kicks up next to the Beat Cop's head. He whimpers loudly... As Krik looks up -

VIC RUNS STRAIGHT AT KRIK, SCREAMING -

Here, finally, he seems like the Indian we saw in the opening sequence, shirtless, shoeless, covered in blood and dirt and more blood, leading the tribe into battle, though it is a tribe of one.

Arnold's stunned, Katya too; both raise their pistols and fire, fire again...but Vic's running in and out of shadow, dark to light and light to dark, and he never slows, just keeps on - insane, relentless, hit once, maybe twice, yet he's closing the gap between them until Katya can no longer fire without hitting Krik and Krik raises his gun point blank -

Vic knocks it aside and plunges his knife into Arnold's chest.

Whirls Krik around, slits his throat...and spins to look for Katya as he -

Drops the knife, grabs Arnold's gun; sees:

KATYA moving toward him, calmly reloading her weapon; she's only a few yards away as she finishes, raises her gun -

He fires first, before she can really aim -

Shock on her face, and like a veil dropping, the hardness falls away into something almost forlorn...we glimpse the little girl she was never able to be.

Her gun clatters to the ground.

As Vic approaches her, blood comes to the surface of her clothing like a hidden truth.

Her knees buckle and he catches her, lowers her to the ground.

Blood oozing from her chest. She puts his hand there to stop the bleeding...and leaves her hand on top of his.

Their eyes are on each other too and not letting go.

A long, silent, almost exquisite moment.

KATYA

More. More pressure.

He presses harder against her chest, blood running through his fingers, intimate, sexual.

She nods gratefully and looks up at him with a slight smile. She says again:

KATYA

Izhvini.

I'm sorry it had to be this way.

He nods.

Her eyes flutter and close. She's gone.

He sits in silence with her body. Her blood. The SOUNDS of the forest. It's over. And then he realizes there are OTHER SOUNDS, subtle ones - leaves rustling? Footsteps? More Russians?? He turns his head -

Suddenly he is **BATHED IN LIGHT.**

He looks up, blinking, blinded by a semi-circle of powerful flashlights. They reveal him, half-naked, covered in blood, utterly primeval: a savage holding a gun and knife.

Behind the lights he can dimly make out seven or eight MEN, guns in hand. His hearing, attuned to the forest, can barely distinguish their VOICES from THE WIND, THE TREES, THE CITY...

VERY FAINT VOICES

Don't move, motherfucker!

He leaps up, primed for more violence, and starts toward them, stumbles over Katya's body - sending him spilling forward...

LESS FAINT VOICES

FREEZE! NOW! FREEZE OR WE'LL SHOOT!

We hear the CLICK and SLIDE and COCKING of many weapons.

But Vic continues on and in this terrible moment we realize that this can only end badly:

Facing him in a semi-circle are eight NYPD cops, each with a gun. We see him from their point-of-view...

A cornered animal. Indeed, it is not entirely clear that what they're seeing is a human being. Vic takes another lurching step.

FAINT VOICES

Police! You take one more step...one more and you're dead...you're dead!...Not another step!

But of course Vic takes another step, he can't help it, and it is only as he comes that much nearer that one of the COPS, (a guy we've seen before at Antonelli's) frowns, peers closer, trying to see through the darkness and blood.

ONE COP

Vic...?

This voice seems to pierce Vic's fog. As the Cop repeats his name, he can finally hear, normal volume:

ONE COP

Vic Ficante...??

Vic blinks. He doesn't speak, but something shifts in his posture as if acknowledging (or remembering) the truth of what the cop is saying: I'm Vic Ficante.

And with that the other cops realize: he's right. Which astonishes them even more...

ONE VOICE

Oh, good God...

And as the Cops move forward to tend to him - and to the fallen Beat Cop - we:

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON - VIC'S FACE

A twisting, livid scar runs across his cheek to the corner of his eye: the place where Katya shot him. Other scars creep out from under his hairline or behind his neck. Yet to Vic none of this matters. He is focused on something we can't see, yet with a calm intensity that reminds us of the Vic we have known. PULL BACK to:

A 5-MONTH-OLD INFANT in his arms. We are:

INT. HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

18 MONTHS LATER. SOMEWHERE IN BROOKLYN. Vic sits on the floor, feeding the baby a bottle. He watches the child drink greedily, her eyes locked on her father's. His hand supports her head of curly dark hair ...We hear footsteps and now...

HIS OLD GIRLFRIEND KAREN

pads sleepily into the room, in night clothes. She sits on the floor, kisses him. Both study the baby as if nothing else existed in the world...

VIC

It's good you're up, she's finished the expressed milk.

KAREN

(to the baby)

Here, kid, you want the real thing?

She takes the baby, puts it to her breast. Again, they both watch the baby feed.

VIC

When are we supposed to be at your folks'?

KAREN

(eyes on the baby)

Not 'til twelve or one. I told your Mom, but I'm sure she'll get there early.

Vic nods; he's sure she will, too. He stretches out on the floor, closes his eyes.

Karen watches the baby's eyelids flutter closed, then looks down at her husband contentedly lying there. A thought flickers across her face; eventually she voices it:

KAREN

Honey?

(his eyes open)

I hate to keep bringing this up, but ...those months you were gone...?

He smiles indulgently.

KAREN

All that excitement, those women...

He looks at her a moment, looming above him, his daughter in her arms. He smiles, squeezes her hand.

KAREN

You ever miss that?

He gives the question some thought before responding.

VIC

I barely remember it.

She nods and smiles. This is the answer she wanted, but somehow it doesn't reassure her. She watches as:

He lets go of her hand, stands, and walks past the fireplace, where we see fanned across the wall: three Eagle feathers. And below them...

ON THE MANTEL

...are the various crushed lead slugs he used to keep on the windowsill in his old apartment.

He has gone. Karen is alone with the baby. She seems content, but her eyes move to the open door, through which he left... HOLD ON THE EMPTY DOORWAY...

FADE UP:

IF A CRAZY DOG SURVIVED ONE FULL FIGHTING
SEASON, HIS DISGRACE WAS FORGOTTEN AND HE
BECAME AGAIN AN ORDINARY MEMBER OF THE TRIBE.
IT WAS AS IF NOTHING HAD EVER HAPPENED.