

ONE SHOT

by

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Based on the novel by Lee Child

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BLACK

The sound of hand tools; metal exerting rhythmic pressure on metal. FADE UP ON:

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

EXTREME CLOSE-UPS: Polished brass, gleaming copper, black sand, mottled wrought-iron painted red.

A GNARLED HAND, thumbnail partially blackened - maybe it was slammed in a car door, hit with a hammer - pulls a lever, driving something home:

KA-SHUNK

EXT. MIDWESTERN CITY - SKYLINE - MORNING

Moving toward a city that could be anywhere. Populated by anybody. Even you. Motionless construction cranes dominate the skyline.

TILT DOWN SLOWLY: Moving over the highway, following traffic into the city.

PUSH IN SLOWLY ON: A VAN - it's always a van - pacing slower than the rest of the morning traffic. No rush.

Cuts are occasionally punctuated with that sound O.S:

KA-SHUNK

INT. VAN - DAY

DRIVER'S P.O.V. of the downtown skyline, dead ahead. Our eyes lock on a traffic camera - the sort you see a thousand times a day but never notice...

INT. VAN/TRAFFIC CAMERAS - INTERCUT

But the Driver notices every one. The cameras, meanwhile, see only the endless flow of traffic, mindlessly logging the mundane until future events will make it critically relevant.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

Those gnarled hands gently tap a ball-peen hammer to an awl. They measure precise amounts of black sand.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - ENTRANCE - DAY

The van pulls in. A camera sees it, doesn't care.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

PUSHING IN SLOWLY, on the back of the OWNER OF THE GNARLED HANDS, hunched over a workbench. His body prevents us from seeing the object of his methodical task. Measuring, tapping, pulling the lever...

KA-SHUNK

INT. PARKING GARAGE - RAMP - DAY

The van spirals upward to the penultimate level - every spot full. The garage is in two sections - one old and packed, the other new and empty - still under construction - cordoned off by yellow tape reading:

CAUTION: DO NOT CROSS

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

E.C.U. ON: A traffic cone, blocking a parking spot for no evident reason. Sheep don't ask why - they park elsewhere. The van just runs over the cone:

KA-SHUNK. The Driver's door opens, crepe-soled shoes step out. A sound of a zipper O.S. The door slams:

KA-SHUNK. Follow the feet leaving faint prints in the dust on the concrete floor. Something metal - long, black, thin - is hidden behind the Driver's leg.

E.C.U. On a quarter dropped in a parking meter.

KA-SHUNK. Thirty minutes.

Tracking those feet again. The Driver bends down to cross from old section to new under the yellow tape:

CAUTION

Now we see his rifle - wood stock, box magazine.

E.C.U. on the Driver's shoulder, clad in a light nylon windbreaker, as it brushes a concrete pylon.

The Driver emerges from the shadows at the edge of the garage, looking out at the world below.

We get a good look at his plain, placid face before he puts on sunglasses to shield his eyes from the glare. He checks his watch, steps back into the shadows, opens the rifle's action: KA-

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY

-SHUNK as the gnarled hands drive that lever home, removing a single, freshly minted .308 caliber rifle-round from a press, placing it in a box of five more.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

-SHUNK as the rifle's action slams the bullet home:

DRIVER'S P.O.V. SUPER WIDE ANGLE looking down on an outdoor mall. Low-lying office buildings, shops, the DMV, a long reflecting pool catching the morning light. People like mice. Like roaches...

The Driver takes a deep breath, lets it out, takes another, lets it out... He shoulders the weapon.

A RIFLE SCOPE invades our P.O.V. and we are transported to the mall below. The nondescript is now the intimate. The reticle wanders, letting people drift through, catching A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN with a valise as she passes the fountain, letting her go.

All we hear now is the Driver's measured breathing; in... out... in...

The reticle settles on a YOUNG WOMAN. She's not trying to look good, but she does - shorts, white shirt, black bra. She eats an ice-cream cone.

The reticle caresses her, ogles her breasts, follows the curve of her back to find a YOUNG GIRL (age 6) holding the Young Woman's hand, eating a push-up. The reticle drifts back up to the Young Woman's head, settles on her temple... leads her a little.

The breathing stops... She's dead.

But then she walks behind a kiosk - gone - a lost opportunity. The breathing patiently resumes... The reticle settles on A BUSINESSMAN seated on a bench, sipping coffee. The breathing stops...

You are made to wait. You are made to watch.

KA-CRACK - The scope jumps, settling on pink mist as the Businessman crumbles out of frame. Half a second later his coffee cup lands behind the bench.

The breathing resumes, the reticle wanders. Some people are still walking. Others look toward the Businessman, momentarily confused.

The scope finds the Middle-Aged Woman again, oblivious to the dead man twenty yards behind her. The breathing stops...

KA-CRACK - The scope jumps, the woman's valise throwing papers into the air. The reticle moves faster now. Smart people are running. Dumber ones - sheep - walk backward in shock.

KA-CRACK/CRACK/CRACK - A flash of white as a bullet gashes the calm of reflecting pool.

The rapidly moving reticle discovers the Pretty Young Woman again, running away, that Little Girl in her arms. The reticle rapidly debates which one to take, finally choosing...

CRACK - The scope comes down, sucking us back to the parking garage. We can make out five splayed bodies - five plumes of blood baking in the sun. A CHILD'S DISTANT SCREAM reaches our ears.

The Driver turns calmly, sees six bullet shells scattered on the floor. As he collects them, one-by-one, we notice his hands are wrapped in latex.

E.C.U. As his gloved hand picks up one shell, his crepe-soled shoe kicks another.

TRACK BACK SWIFTLY as the shell rolls toward a joint between two concrete slabs - one old, one new.

PLUNK - The shell drops into the joint.

CLOSE ON: The Driver, frozen, considering the shell for a moment, then quickly walking away.

CLOSE ON: Those crepe soles climbing in the van.

CLOSE ON: the traffic cone dragging as the van backs toward us, drops into drive and cruises away, leaving the cone behind, crumbled and apparently meaningless.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - RAMP - DAY

The van spirals down, tires squealing. It skids to a halt, nearly hitting an oncoming car. Precious seconds are consumed trying to navigate to the exit.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

The edge of the garage looking down at the mall. We could swear this first victim, the Businessman, is sitting up on the bench again, his head obscured by a blinding red light in our eyes.

EXT. MALL - DAY

Sure enough, the Businessman is sitting on the bench - though still dead. TWO COPS IN SWAT GEAR kneel behind the bench. One Swat Guy props the Businessman up from behind, using his head wound as reference. The other Swat Guy shines a laser pointer at the garage.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

The laser flits like an insect on the ceiling.

The stairwell door burst open. SIX MEN IN SWAT GEAR enter rapidly and fan out. A DETECTIVE (40s) enters behind them, pistol in hand. But his posture quickly slackens when something catches his eye. As the SWAT guys clear the garage, the Detective holsters his weapon and squats by that traffic cone...

His radio chatters. He shuts it off. He shines a flashlight across the floor, follows the arching drag marks in the dust to an empty parking spot.

The same light exposes footprints. Crouching in the parking spot, the Detective follows the prints with his eyes, past the caution tape, past the pillar. Then he glances at:

CLOSE ON: The parking meter. Three minutes on it.

At the ledge where the Driver opened fire now, the Detective looks down at the eerily silent mall. Five bodies are covered in sheets. The reflecting pool is being drained by the FIRE DEPARTMENT. REVEAL:

The garage behind him is now a crime scene - COPS everywhere taking pictures, bagging evidence. New tape all over. What was CAUTION is now POLICE LINE.

The Detective's lips peel back slightly, exposing his teeth, his muted revulsion. It's messy. Even for him.

He turns, his eyes sweeping the garage, unsatisfied.

TIME CUT: BLINDING LIGHT. From inside a tight crevice, we look up at the Detective poking a bent wire into our collective eye.

E.C.U. The wire hooks the open end of a bullet shell, extracting it from between two concrete slabs.

SERIES OF E.C.U.s: A piece of tape collects nylon fibers from the concrete pillar/A piece of tape collects a single strand of off-white hair from a crepe-soled footprint/Gloved hands box up the traffic cone/Empty the parking meter.

The Detective stands, inspects the shell, gently blows a little dust off, shines his light TO REVEAL:

E.C.U.: The trace of a finger-print...

E.C.U.s: Tape pulls the print from the shell/A hot light scans it/Tape lifts prints from the traffic cone/A hot light scans it/Tape lifts a print from a quarter/A hot light scans it.

CLOSE ON: A computer screen scans fingerprints of various shapes and clarity, rapidly comparing them to a massive database. One after another the various prints match like tumblers in a lock, cherries in a slot machine, producing the same name over and over:

JAMES MARK BARR

EXT. BARR RESIDENCE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A MAILBOX bearing the name:

BARR

REVEAL: A two-bedroom ranch - paint neglected but otherwise solid. The blue light of a TV flickers in the front window. A SHADOW passes, slumps on a couch.

REVEAL: The Detective in an unmarked car watching through binoculars. The TV shuts off. The house goes dark. The Detective raises his radio...

INT. BARR RESIDENCE - NIGHT

BA-BOOM - the front and back doors blow in simultaneously. SWAT GUYS rush in - weapon-lights flashing off walls, windows - hard to make anything out. A DOG emerges from the kitchen, barks once:

CRACK - a pistol-shot. A yelp O.S.

INT. BARR RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

BOOM - the door blows in, SWAT guys rapidly fill the tiny space, lights finding the underwear-clad, pale-skinned frame of JAMES BARR - face down on the bed.

They mob him, pin him, zip his hands and feet together with flex cuffs. They stand back and:

Barr snores, out cold. The Detective pushes through a wall of SWAT guys. Beside an up-ended night stand he finds a wallet, a bottle of booze, a bottle of pills.

SWAT GUY

MEDIC. O.D.

The Detective dumps the pills in his latex-gloved hand. The bottle is nearly full, the booze half-gone.

DETECTIVE

No. Just resting after a busy day.

He checks Barr's wallet, holds up the driver's license to the SWAT Guy. The SWAT Guy leans over to look at Barr's face. He nods.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Bag him.

INT. BARR RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Detective emerges from the bedroom to find COPS turning the place over. He trips over a dead dog.

DETECTIVE

(to anyone)

Bag that, too. It's evidence.

Four SWAT Guys carry Barr out like a suckling pig - hog-tied, face-down, still snoring:

INT. BARR RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Total darkness shattered by a shaft of light. The Detective enters as a shadow. Fluorescent lights flicker on, illuminating a beige van - the one we saw in the parking garage. Its front bumper nuzzles:

A reloading bench - the same bench we saw earlier. We get a good look at it now. The red-handled shell press, the jars of black gun powder, unused slugs.

The Detective steps over a pair of crepe-soled shoes by the door, past a blue nylon windbreaker hanging on a hook, a stack of three orange cones in the corner.

He focuses on five spent shells tossed almost casually on the center of the bench, waiting to be reloaded. Re-used. Using a pencil, he picks up one of the shells, smells it. Then he checks his watch.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

It's life or death now, James.

INT. HOLDING ROOM - DAY

Four walls, a door with no knob, a table, two chairs. The Detective - HIS NAME IS EMERSON - lays evidence on a table like cards from a winning hand: Security camera stills of the van, fingerprints, the shoes, the jacket, dog hair, the rifle, the shells.

EMERSON

And by that I mean you're doing one or the other up in Michigan City.

BARR (O.S.)

You got the wrong guy.

CLOSE ON: A pair of cuffed hands opposite Emerson picking absently at a blackened thumbnail.

Emerson smiles, throws a look over his shoulder to A MAN IN A SHARP SUIT (60s) standing by the door, arms folded, waiting. He is:

EMERSON

This here's District Attorney Rodin. Know what he's wondering?

RODIN

Weather you're gonna walk like a man or cry like a pussy when you take your last walk.

EMERSON

The D.A. likes the needle. Whereas me... I like to see a man like you live a long life...

RODIN

With all your teeth knocked out, passed around 'til a brother can't tell your fart from a yawn.

EMERSON

I don't know what kind'a man you are - which of these two fates you'd prefer... But Rodin here's a generous fella. He's willing to let you take your pick.

RODIN

If you save us and this city a long, costly trial, waive your right to counsel... and confess. Right now.

Emerson lays down a sheet of paper and a pen. After a long beat, the hands pick up the pen and start writing. Emerson looks at his watch, satisfied.

RODIN (CONT'D)

Fourteen hours, Detective. Has to be some kind of record.

Mere seconds later, the hands offer the paper to Emerson. Emerson takes it, confused. Scrawled on the paper are just three big words:

GET JACK REACHER

EMERSON

'The hell is this?

The camera comes around to REVEAL: JAMES BARR, (29). His face is a little fleshy, almost boyish. His eyes are empty, but scared. Oh, and one more thing:

He's not the man we saw pull the trigger. Somehow, despite all the evidence, James Barr is innocent.

Emerson hands the "confession" to Rodin. He reads it:

RODIN

Who the hell is Jack Reacher?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

You are lying in a bed, looking through your large, bare feet at a flat screen TV on mute. You have a beer in one hand, remote in the other. You flip through channels, uninterested in everything you see.

Your clothes - khaki pants, sand-colored t-shirt, light jacket - are draped on a nearby chair beside a red dress. Your boat-shoes are by the door next to a pair of red high heels. You sip your beer.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Baby... you weren't just talking.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A WOMAN IN HER 40S so good-looking, so effortlessly sexual we can't begin to imagine her 20s, stands at the mirror in her underwear, running your razor under each arm, talking to you in the other room.

WOMAN

I meet a lot of guys on that boat and they're all talk. That's why I never get involved. Then again, they don't talk with their eyes. Your eyes say everything... and they are *not* just talking... My knees won't stop shaking.

She puts the razor down next to a disposable toothbrush. She considers her hair, looks for a brush, a comb. There's nothing.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Did the cruise lose your luggage?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

You are still flipping channels - past football, past *Girls Gone Wild*, past the attractive FEMALE REPORTER on CNN, past- You stop, go back to CNN.

The titles say her name is Anne Yanni. Police and ambulances fill the frame behind her. The scroll says something about a sniper, five dead.

Then there's a press conference, a podium, a cop named Emerson, a D.A. named Rodin. Back to Anne.

Your eyes focus on her - her lips moving silently,
filled by the voice of the Woman in the bathroom:

WOMAN (O.S.)

Anyway, listen... I hope you
understand this is not the sort of
thing I do... ever. You just seem
like the sort of guy who won't...
well, who wouldn't get attached.
And right now, I don't need
attachments... you know?

Your hand drops the remote. Your big arm puts the
beer down next to half a dozen tattered condom
wrappers. Your eyes focus on the scroll.

...SUSPECT JAMES MARK BARR...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The woman finishes tying her hair in a knot behind
her head, decides it looks good. She's right.

WOMAN

Anyway, the boat leaves early. I
need to get some sleep and I'm
pretty sure that's not gonna happen
if I stay here... So...

She realizes you haven't said a word.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hey... You're not upset, are you?
Aw, baby, listen-

She walks out of the bathroom and into:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

WOMAN

Reacher?

She finds the TV off, her dress laid neatly on the
bed, all trash swept hastily in the bin.

What she doesn't find is you.

You are JACK REACHER.

There is something you have to do.

INT. COUNTY VAN - DAY

James Barr and FIVE OTHER PRISONERS ride in silence on opposite benches. They wear state-issue orange, hands chained. Barr chews his blackened thumbnail nervously. The other five prisoners size him up, sharing furtive glances. Barr happens to make eye contact with A TATTOOED PRISONER across from him. He nods, innocent, respectful. He looks away.

TATTOOS

Whatchu'lookin'at?

Beat. Barr realizes Tattoos is addressing him.

BARR

Me? Nothin'.

TATTOOS

You callin' me nuthin'?

BARR

Wha-

Tattoos' boot snaps up, catching Barr under the chin. Barr is in shock, his tongue half severed, hanging.

TATTOOS

Say sorry, bitch... Say it.

Barr holds up his hands, tries to speak. Can't. Tattoo cocks both his feet and stomps Barr's chest. Barr slumps on the FAT PRISONER next to him.

FAT PRISONER

YOU'RE BLEEDIN' ON ME, BITCH.

The Fat Prisoner elbows Barr. His head snaps back, flinging blood on the other prisoners. Now everyone is after him with boots, elbows, knees.

ANGLE ON: The vent window looking into the cab of the van. TWO CORRECTIONS OFFICERS glance back, ignore it.

EMERSON (PRE-LAP)

Jack Reacher - not John, born Jack,
no middle name - is a ghost...

INT. D.A.'S OFFICE - DAY

Rodin and Emerson talk across the former's desk. Emerson sifts through an impressive heap of paper.

EMERSON

No driver's license - current or expired. No residence, current or former. No credit cards, no credit history. No P.O. box, cell phone, e-mail. Nothing.

RODIN

Can you at least tell me who he is?

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

CLOSE ON Reacher's back - broad shoulders, close cropped hair - as he walks to America's superstore.

EMERSON (V.O.)

I can tell you who he was. Blood military - born and raised on bases abroad - mother was a French national, father in the Corps. His first trip to the U.S. was to attend West Point. Four years later, he ships out again. Served with distinction -

INT. TARGET SUPERSTORE - DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Reacher's large hands pull on a neutral-colored t-shirt, tan chinos, some work-boots, a belt as:

EMERSON (V.O.)

Silver Star, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Defense Superior Service Medal - had to look that one up - and a Purple Heart.

We glimpse the scars on his muscular frame as he pulls on new, cheap duds and collects the tags.

EMERSON (V.O.)

Spent the bulk of his service in Military Police. By all accounts a brilliant investigator. Apparently a troublemaker, too.

INT. TARGET SUPERSTORE - REGISTER - DAY

He hands cash to the PREGNANT, OVER-PIERCED GUM-CHEWING CASHIER (17). She gives him a wanton smile, stuffing his tags in a bag with his old clothes.

EMERSON (V.O.)
 Made Major, demoted to Captain,
 worked his way *back* to Major. Then
 two years ago he musters out. After
 a literal lifetime in the military
 he just up and quits...

EXT. TARGET SUPERSTORE - DAY

Reacher drops the bag in the trash, never looks back.

EMERSON (V.O.)
 For only the second time in his
 life, he enters the United States.
 And simply... disappears.

RODIN (V.O.)
 Dead, maybe?

EXT. SMALL PARKING LOT - DAY

CLOSE ON Reacher's back again, walking through the
 worst part of town toward:

EMERSON (V.O.)
 Not according to social security
 and a bank account in Virginia. His
 pension is deposited monthly and
 someone's making the occasional
 withdrawal. All wire transfers. I
 can't find out where without a
 federal warrant.

INT. PAWN SHOP - WESTERN UNION WINDOW - DAY

A CHAIN-SMOKING CASHIER IN HER 80s counts out two
 grand in hundreds as she gives him a wanton smile.

RODIN (V.O.)
 He can't drive or fly - at least
 not under his own name.

Reacher slaps down a dog-eared passport. We catch a
 glimpse of his shop-worn photo, his given name.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

CLOSE ON his back as he walks down the aisle.

REACHER'S P.O.V. of a WOMAN (late 30s) looking out the window, hoping things will be better where she's headed. She used to look good. Now she's bitter. The seat beside her is empty.

RODIN (V.O.)

Any warrants?

EMERSON (V.O.)

None. His record is clean.

She sees Reacher coming. She doesn't smile. She glances around the full bus, at the empty seat next to her. She grudgingly clears it of her things.

RODIN (V.O.)

Come on. A man this hard to find has to be wanted for something.

EXT. BUS DEPOT - ELSEWHERE - DAY

CLOSE ON Reacher's back, holding that same Bitter Woman in his arms, kissing her deeply. He walks away, leaving her on the bottom step of a Greyhound bus to somewhere else. She manages a smile. She looks good.

INT. RODIN'S OFFICE - DAY

RODIN

So how do we find this Reacher?

EMERSON

Obviously you don't... Unless he wants to be found.

A knock at the door. A SECRETARY ENTERS.

SECRETARY

A Jack Reacher here to see you.

Rodin and Emerson share a surprised glance. Rodin nods to the Secretary. As they stand, Jack Reacher enters, affording us our first real look at the man. Solid. Imposing. Intimidating. Handsome but not pretty. Wise but not old. He is a human wall of calm heralding an unearthly storm.

RODIN

Can I... help you?

REACHER

James Barr.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Reacher looks down at the unconscious, swollen, battered heap of bandages that is James Barr.

RODIN

So you've seen him. How do you know this man?

REACHER

Why wasn't he in protective custody?

EMERSON

That was an oversight.

REACHER

Or maybe some Corrections flunky throwing Barr to the wolves.

EMERSON

That's just as likely. But it's done and we can't undo it.

REACHER

So what happens now?

RODIN

He's in a coma. We try him when he wakes up. *If* he wakes up. Now give, Reacher. Why are you on the defense witness list?

REACHER

That's not possible.

RODIN

Barr asked for you by name.

Icy pause.

REACHER

Did he say why?

EMERSON

No... He just said you got the wrong guy and get Jack Reacher.

REACHER

Any chance I could take a look at your evidence?

RODIN

No way. Not until you answer-

REACHER

Nice meeting you.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Emerson and Rodin follow Reacher into the hallway. We notice TWO UNIFORM COPS guarding Barr's room.

RODIN

Stop right there.
(as Reacher keeps walking)
We had an agreement. I take you to Barr and you tell me what you know.

REACHER

I know you say he shot five people. I know he's in a coma. I know there's a bus station three miles away and I can walk there in twenty-four minutes.

EMERSON

So you're just gonna walk out on your friend?

REACHER

He's not my friend.

RODIN?

Why did he ask for you then?

REACHER

Same reason he shot five people. He's crazy.

RODIN

Now hold on-

Rodin grabs Reacher's arm. Reacher grabs Rodin's pinkie and bends it. Rodin gasps, stands on his toes. Emerson is trying not to laugh.

EMERSON

Mr. Reacher, that's the District Attorney.

REACHER

If he's pressing charges I might as well take the finger.

Reacher tweaks Rodin's pinkie a little harder.

EMERSON

Am I arresting him?

Rodin shakes his head. Reacher lets go.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

This is a new low for both of you.

All turn to find HELEN RODIN, (30s) business suit, blackberry, three inch heels. Emerson smiles again.

EMERSON

Uh oh.

HELEN

You don't talk to my client without me present. You know that.

RODIN

We weren't talking to your client. The man's in a coma, for Chrissakes.

REACHER

(to Helen)

You're his attorney?

EMERSON

Helen Rodin, Jack Reacher.

HELEN

Jack Reacher?

REACHER

Helen Rodin?

EMERSON (CONT'D)

She's the D.A.s daughter. Good story, actually.

REACHER

I'd like to hear it.

HELEN

(to Emerson)

How did you find him-

(to Reacher)

How did they find you?

(to Rodin)

You can't be talking to this man.

Jesus, two strikes in one day.

EMERSON

It's not what it looks like.

RODIN

He came to us.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(to Reacher)

You went to the D.A.?

REACHER

Is there a law against that?

HELEN
None *you're* currently breaking.

EMERSON
(taking Rodin by the arm)
Come on. Before this gets awkward.
(to Helen)
Say "see you in court." For me.

HELEN
Goodbye, Detective.

EMERSON
(to Reacher)
Weird meeting you.

REACHER
Likewise.

They shake hands before Emerson leads an angrily reluctant Rodin away.

HELEN
So *you're* Jack Reacher.

REACHER
So *you're* the D.A.'s daughter.

HELEN
Jesus, please.

REACHER
Is that even legal?

HELEN
Unfortunately.

REACHER
How does that happen?

HELEN
I'll tell you after your deposition.

REACHER
You don't want to depose me.

Reacher starts walking. Helen follows.

HELEN
You're my only defense witness.

REACHER
I'm not a defense witness.

HELEN

Your friend James thinks you are.

REACHER

He's not my friend. Why does everyone assume that?

HELEN

Why else would he ask for you? And why did you come here to help him?

Reacher stops, comes face-to-face with Helen.

REACHER

I didn't come here to help him. I came here to bury him.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

CONCRETE. Tons and tons of liquid concrete pour from a crane-borne hose into a massive foundation. CONSTRUCTION WORKERS in hard hats manage the action.

Walking past them is LINSKY (40s). His brown suit and leather shoes stand out. He approaches a trailer at the edge of the job site, knocks on the door, enters.

A moment later Linksy walks out holding a briefcase.

INT. VOLVO SEDAN - CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Linsky drops the case on the seat and opens it TO REVEAL stacks of hundred dollar bills. He looks at the gusher of concrete, back at the money and smiles.

His cell phone rings. He answers.

LINSKY

Linsky.

(his smile fades)

Who the hell is Jack Reacher?

INT. DINER - DAY

Helen and Reacher sit in a booth - greasy menus, the grill just a few feet away. A single sheet of paper lies on the table between them in Barr's screeed:

GET JACK REACHER

A WAITRESS (50s) places a coffee mug on it and pours while giving Reacher a wanton smile.

HELEN

You know we passed three Starbucks on the way here.

REACHER

(sipping the coffee)
Precisely.

HELEN

So why are you so hard to find?

REACHER

I'm *impossible* to find.

HELEN

Why is that?

REACHER

You could say it started as an exercise and became an addiction.

HELEN

Are you on the run?

REACHER

My bus is leaving. Better hurry.

Helen puts a tape recorder on the table, starts it:

HELEN

How do you know James Barr?

REACHER

Why are you representing him?

HELEN

I'm a lawyer.

REACHER

So's a public defender. With just as much chance of clearing Barr.

HELEN

I'm not trying to clear him - just... keep him off death row.

REACHER

By proving he's insane.

HELEN

That's one option.

REACHER

And stick it to your father because-

HELEN

Not... my father. The Office of the District Attorney.

REACHER

-because *The Office of the District Attorney* never bought you a pony?

HELEN

(getting frustrated)
D.A. Rodin has never lost a capitol case, know why?

REACHER

Impeccable tailoring.

HELEN

Because he never picks a fight he can't win.

REACHER

Worked for the Red Baron.

HELEN

Every murder suspect in this town is given a choice: Confess or face death. Against a D.A. who never loses. My firm has good reason to believe more than one innocent man has gone down without a fight.

REACHER

People that weak are bad for the gene-pool anyway.

HELEN

(angry now)

If I can break Rodin's streak I can damage his aura of invincibility. I can limit his power to intimidate suspects into signing false confessions. I can force him to do his job in open court instead of-

REACHER

Look, it's a noble crusade. But this is not the fight. Trust me. James Barr is guilty.

HELEN

I have no doubt. But is he sane?

REACHER
Saner than he is guilty.

HELEN
You sound just like m-

She stops herself. Reacher smiles.

REACHER
Like the Office of the District
Attorney?

HELEN
You haven't even seen the evidence.

He turns off the recorder, becoming deathly serious.

REACHER
Is this a privileged conversation?

HELEN
It's a client conference. Nothing
we say here can be repeated.

REACHER
There are four types of people who
join the military. For some it's a
family trade. Others are patriots,
eager to serve. Next you have those
who just need a job. Then there's
the kind who want a legal means of
killing other people. James Barr
was one of those.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

PUSH IN SLOWLY on a younger James Barr, fit, cut,
high and tight, dressed in Army drabs. He sits on the
floor, rapidly taking down a rifle.

REACHER (V.O.)
He made sniper, trained hard. Two
thousand rounds a week...

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

QUICK CUTS of Barr honing his skills. E.C.U.s of
trigger, reticle, round, target. A silhouette 300
yards away in front of a wall of earth.

REACHER (V.O.)

With every shot he's taught to
visualize the base of a man's skull
in his reticle - the sweet spot
where the medulla meets the spine.
Visualize that puff of pink mist.

CRACK/CRACK/CRACK - With each shot we move closer to
the target, sinking deeper into Barr's P.O.V.

CRACK/CRACK/CRACK - Bullets hit the paper target,
kicking up clouds of dust behind it, over and over.

REACHER (V.O.)

Two thousand rounds a week. A
quarter *million* rounds in his
career. Not one at a human target.
Finally, he's deployed to Iraq...

CRACK/CRACK/CRACK - The silhouette turns for an
instant into a MAN. A cloud of blood instead of dust.

REACHER (V.O.)

Where he lands just weeks before
the drawdown... The war's over.
Barr is going home.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

PUSH IN SLOWLY on the same James Barr, but different,
distant, cleaning his weapon slowly, assembling it
with a mixture of love and longing. MOVE IN CLOSER,
tighter, until we see Barr's pores, smell his sweat.

REACHER (V.O.)

You've been hungry. You've been
horny. You've had an itch you can't
scratch. Imagine that feeling for
days, weeks, years... Imagine that
feeling times two-hundred thousand,
then fifty thousand more.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

This one in Baghdad - cars caked with dust, tires
flat from dry rot. Barr casts a long shadow with the
sun behind him, his shirt soaked with sweat. He
shoulders his weapon and we're in his P.O.V.

REACHER (V.O.)

Imagine it's one-hundred and thirty degrees on the deck and tomorrow you're going home and you know if you don't scratch that itch now you never will. You need a release...

The reticle scans an empty Baghdad street, looking for targets of opportunity. A door opens, the reticle settles on it, waiting for a clear shot...

REACHER (V.O.)

You need a target. And the who of it never once enters your mind.

FOUR AMERICANS, armed but wearing civvies, emerge from the doorway.

CRACK/CRACK/CRACK/CRACK

BLACK

HELEN (PRE-LAP)

... I don't believe it.

EXT. BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

Reacher and Helen sit on a bench, away from the other WOULD-BE PASSENGERS - a random mix of Americana. A PORTER loads luggage under a Greyhound bus.

REACHER

He covered his tracks well - just like sane people do. Almost got away. But I caught him. And he confessed.

HELEN

Then why didn't he go to prison?

REACHER

Baghdad is a bad place where bad things happen. And a lot of bad things happened during the drawdown. What Barr didn't know was the four non-coms he picked off had just spent the weekend on what they called a rape-rally. Twenty-eight women, ages fifty-four on down to eleven. And that's just the ones we could find before the case was shut down.

The bus doors open. Passengers shuffle to get on. Reacher joins the queue and Helen follows.

REACHER (CONT'D)

See, the deeper we dug, the uglier it got. And after seven years of mission accomplished someone in the corporation just wanted the whole thing to end quietly. They chalked it up to the fog of war... made the murders go away.

HELEN

This is classified information.

REACHER

That's why the privilege.

HELEN

But you were ready to tell the D.A.

REACHER

The last time I saw Barr I made him a promise. When I saw his name on the news I came here to keep it. I know now I don't have to.

HELEN

How can you be sure? You still haven't seen the evidence.

REACHER

But your father has. And he doesn't pick a fight he can't win. Barr's not getting away with murder again.

HELEN

He might.

Reacher stops, faces her.

HELEN (CONT'D)

He's suffered a severe brain injury. In state custody. When he wakes up, if he wakes up, he may not remember the event. He may not remember anything at all. This case won't be about James Barr's guilt or innocence. It'll be about his ability to stand trial.

REACHER

After everything I just told you... You'd still defend him.

HELEN

I'll see he get's a fair trial.
 (off Reacher's reaction)
 You said he confessed in Baghdad.
 He didn't confess this time.

REACHER

This time he knows better.

HELEN

This time he asked for you. I want
 to know why. You want to know why.
 I can see it's eating you. But you
 can't ask Barr. And the D.A. won't
 let you see the evidence.

We can tell she's right. Reacher finally nods.

HELEN (CONT'D)

My lead investigator has complete
 access to the evidence. *All* of it.

REACHER

So where's your lead investigator?

HELEN

About to catch a bus out of town.

REACHER

Why the hell would you want me on
 your side?

HELEN

I've seen your jacket. That file
 shows a man who cares more about
doing right than *looking* right.

REACHER

Thanks for the coffee, counsellor.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Reacher in a seat by the window, knuckles to his
 lips, watching Helen walk away.

PUSH IN SLOWLY as the question nags him: "Why?"

REACHER

Dammit.

He gets up. We stay on his empty seat.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Helen backs out of a spot, drops the car in drive and suddenly slams on the breaks, nearly running over:

Reacher, standing in front of her car. She rolls down the window as he approaches.

REACHER

I'll look at the evidence. On one condition... There's some people you need to talk to. Face-to-face.

EXT. THE MALL - DAY

The scene of the crime. Reacher stands at the edge of the mall thumbing through a thick folder in his hand. Inside we see all of the evidence against Barr - the weapon, the shells, the quarter, the van, etc.

Reacher takes in the whole mall, more like a memorial now. A FEW PEOPLE walk around it, not across. The reflecting pool - drained dry - is surrounded by flowers, handwritten notes, stuffed animals.

P.O.V. of Reacher walking into the mall, looking up at the parking garage. He's being watched.

INT. VOLVO SEDAN - DAY

Linsky, parked across the street, watches Reacher. He has a file like the one we saw in Rodin's office. A file on Reacher.

Anxious, Linsky dials a cell phone, gets no answer, hangs up, frustrated. Meanwhile:

EXT. THE MALL - DAY

Reacher stands in the center of the nearly deserted mall under an eerie silence. He opens the folder again, surveys the aftermath of the crime. He turns his back to the garage, squinting at the morning sun. He looks at the empty pool, a photograph of a pristine bullet recovered there. He calculates. His eyes narrow. Something isn't right.

He looks at the garage again. He is still staring at it when a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN passes behind him and her head explodes. Reacher turns casually as she falls, finding only the faded blood-stains on the concrete.

Behind him, the Businessman lies face down in a pool of his own blood. The reflecting pool is full now, the tributes gone. A bullet hits the water.

The event is happening all around Reacher - or rather behind him. In front of him are all that remains; blood-stains, concrete chipped by bullets. Finally, he walks to the garage leaving five bodies behind.

A gentle knocking takes us to:

EXT. FARRIOR HOME - DAY

A manicured two story in a nice neighborhood, Helen on the porch. The front door opens TO REVEAL one ROB FARRIOR (LATE 50s). He's been crying. For days.

HELEN

Mr. Farrior. I'm Helen Rodin. We spoke on the phone.

FARRIOR

Yes, of course... Come in.

INT. FARRIOR HOME - DAY

Farrior pushes the door open and steps back. Helen enters, noticing immediately the drink in Farrior's hand. He walks slowly into the den. Helen follows.

She notes the family pictures along the wall - FARRIOR, A WIFE, a SINGLE DAUGHTER whom we recognize in later pictures as the pretty young woman from the mall. The one with the ice cream and the little girl.

HELEN

Is your wife home?

FARRIOR

She died. Cancer. Last year.

She winces behind his back. He sits in an easy chair beside the morning paper and a bottle of scotch.

HELEN

First let me say how sorry I am for your loss. I can't imagine what you-

FARRIOR

No... No, you can't.

He takes a long sip from his drink.

FARRIOR (CONT'D)

You said you're defending the man
who killed my daughter.

HELEN

I... represent James Barr. Yes.

FARRIOR

And you had some questions about
Jessie?

HELEN

Yes...

FARRIOR

What for?

HELEN

I'm trying to get a better sense of
who the vic- Who your daughter was.

FARRIOR

That's a bit unusual for someone in
your position, isn't it?

HELEN

Somewhat.

FARRIOR

I would think if you're trying to
defend this guy you'd want to know
as little as possible about the
people he killed.

HELEN

I-

FARRIOR

In cold blood.

(before she can reply)

Have you spoken to the other
families?

HELEN

I... some. The ones that would
speak to me.

In that moment we can see Helen has had a rough day.

FARRIOR

It's all right here.

He picks up the newspaper and offers it. She tenses,
noticing the newspaper was covering a revolver.

FARRIOR (CONT'D)

They did a nice piece on her in The Star. Her obituary does the rest.

She takes the paper, glancing again at the gun.

HELEN

Thank you. I'll--

FARRIOR

Are you a good attorney, Ms. Rodin?

HELEN

That's not for me to--

FARRIOR

Answer the question.

HELEN

I suppose I'm pretty good.

FARRIOR

Good enough to keep that man off death row?

HELEN

You know? Maybe I should go.

But as she moves to stand:

FARRIOR

Stay right where you are.

Helen freezes, glancing at the gun again.

FARRIOR (CONT'D)

Jessica was a nanny. She had a little girl with her.

HELEN

Yes, I know.

FARRIOR

You gonna talk to that child?

HELEN

No. Of course not.

FARRIOR

Why?

HELEN

That would be...

FARRIOR
Inappropriate? Insensitive?

Helen looks at the gun again.

FARRIOR (CONT'D)
That man deserves to die, Ms.
Rodin. Why would you defend him?

HELEN
I can see this was a mistake. I
won't bother you again.

But Helen stands, slowly, carefully. Farrior stands as she turns for the door. Out of the corner of her eye she sees him reaching - for his glass? The gun?

Helen walks faster. The front door seems very far way. The light outside is blinding white...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Reacher squints, shades his eyes with his hand, looking down on the mall, five reddish brown stains. He looks down at the folder, a photo of the quarter, then at the parking meter. As he does so we:

Look out across the mall, past the office buildings beyond, to the freshly constructed highway bypass in the distance... And a van parked on the shoulder.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

PASSING CARS would merely see the van as just another disabled vehicle. But there are no passing cars. This new spur is deserted.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

SNIPER'S P.O.V. out the passenger-side cargo door. A reticle settles on Reacher standing in the parking garage, brightly lit by the morning sun behind us.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

E.C.U.s of the muzzle, a finger on the trigger.

CRACK... CRACK/CRACK/CRACK/CRACK/CRACK

PING/PING/PING/PING/PING - The shells eject one by one, landing inside the van.

CLOSE ON: The Shooter: JAMES BARR, face unblemished. He quickly shuts the van door, jumps in the driver's seat and takes off. The van peels away TO REVEAL:

Reacher, standing on the shoulder, folder in hand, looking at the mall from this new vantage point. He turns, squints into the sun. Something isn't right.

INT. VOLVO - DAY

Driver's P.O.V. of Reacher on the shoulder. REVEAL:

Linsky at the wheel, passing Reacher, watching him in his rearview. He also knows something isn't right. He dials his phone again, getting no answer.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - DAY

Helen slams the door, breath trembling. She glances at Farrior's house, sees him looming behind the screen door, glaring at her.

CLOSE ON her keys jingling as she struggles to steady one into the ignition. She can't do it.

The driver's door rips open. She gasps - too scared to scream - turning to find D.A. Rodin. She could use her father about now.

HELEN

Daddy.

RODIN

What the hell are you doing here?

So much for that.

HELEN

I... What am I- *What?*

RODIN

Is it true you're interviewing the victims families? You? Alone?

Her face goes from fearful to fierce. She pushes the door open and gets out.

HELEN

How do you know that?

RODIN

I'm the Goddamn district attorney.
It's my business to know.

HELEN

That's not an answer. Who talked to
you? And how did you find me here?

RODIN

You're not the only one with crack
investigators, Helen.

(off her look)

Yeah, I know you hired Reacher. You
think it wise to hang your entire
case on the expertise of a *drifter*?

HELEN

Jack Reacher is a-

RODIN

Barr asked for him by name. Don't
you think he had a reason?

HELEN

I can't answer that.

RODIN

Because it's privileged? Or because
it's "classified." Can anything
Reacher told you about his
relationship with Barr be verified?
Corroborated? You don't *know* the
man, Helen. No one does.

Helen is having a "what have I done?" moment.

RODIN (CONT'D)

Listen to me. I'm talking as your
father, now. You can't win this
case. It's going to ruin your
career. And for what?

As she climbs in her car, he tries to take her arm.

HELEN

Get your hand off me.

He lets go as if shocked. Helen starts the car and
speeds away, leaving Rodin in the street.

INT. EVIDENCE LOCKER - DAY

CLOSE ON: A long drawer containing the bagged and tagged rifle. Emerson slams it shut and turns to:

REACHER

Thanks for letting me take a look.

EMERSON

Hey, we love it when friends of the accused tear our work to shreds.

REACHER

He's not my friend.

EMERSON

So you keep saying. Find any holes?

REACHER

You shouldn't have killed his dog. Other than that, damn fine police work. Open and shut.

EMERSON

Well, the scene was a gold mine.

REACHER

Come on. We both know gold's only as good as the man digging.

EMERSON

(smiling humbly)

Yeah, well... Anytime you want to come back and look at this stuff...

REACHER

Don't need to.

EMERSON

You didn't even take notes.

REACHER

(tapping a finger to his head)
Don't need to.

EMERSON

So you were some real hot shit in the Army, huh?

REACHER

I did all right.

EMERSON

What's an Army cop do mostly? Break up bar fights?

REACHER

I did what you do pretty much. With one minor difference.

EMERSON

What's that?

REACHER

Every suspect was a trained killer. Thanks again.

(turns to leave/stops)

Why do you think he paid for parking?

EMERSON

Pardon?

REACHER

He's about to fire six shots into a crowd of strangers and he's worried about the meter maid?

EMERSON

A simple loony won't do it for you?

REACHER

I like to have at least one alternate theory.

EMERSON

Habit. Muscle memory. I don't think he knew he was doing it.

Beat. Something occurs to Reacher. He turns to leave:

REACHER

Like I said. Damn fine work.

EMERSON

Hey, Army. What's the serial number on the rifle?

REACHER

What's the date on the quarter?

Emerson blinks. He has no idea.

REACHER (CONT'D)

1968... Forest for the trees, Detective.

EXT. HIGHWAY SPORTSBAR - NIGHT

Est. Reacher walking across the parking lot of a Chili's-level cholesterol dispensary.

INT. SPORTSBAR - NIGHT

Reacher on the pay phone, Helen's card in his hand. He shouts over loud music, louder CUSTOMERS. Thirty TVs show sports of all kinds.

REACHER

If you get this message, I'll be here for another thirty minutes or so. Otherwise I'll come to your office in the morning.

He hangs up, surveys the restaurant. He hates it here. But he eyes the food going back and forth, not to mention the ATTRACTIVE WAITRESSES carrying it.

INT. SPORTSBAR - MOMENTS LATER

Reacher sits alone in a booth. A YOUNG, PRETTY WAITRESS puts a beer and burger in front of him. He smiles politely, gets no wanton look. Damn.

He sips his beer, chews his burger, thinks...

FLASH - in his mind he sees the crime scene, the parking garage, the overpass, the morning sun.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Can I share your table?

FLASH - Reacher is pulled back to the sportsbar.

A YOUNG WOMAN (BARELY 18) has her hands on the table, leaning in, showing cleavage and navel. The waitress was prettier, but SANDY is hotter. And she knows it.

Reacher says nothing. She sits.

SANDY

I'm Sandy.

REACHER

So was I. Just last week.
(off her confused look)
On a beach. In Florida.

SANDY

What's your name?

REACHER

Jimmy Reese.

Sandy blinks as if surprised, recovers.

SANDY

You don't look like a Jimmy.

REACHER

What do I look like?

SANDY

I dunno. Not a Jimmy. You're new in town, aren't you?

REACHER

Usually.

SANDY

What- It's loud in here. Want to go someplace quieter? I've got a car.

REACHER

You're old enough to drive?

SANDY

I'm old enough to do lots of things.

REACHER

I'm on a budget, Sandy.

SANDY

What?

REACHER

I can't afford you.

SANDY

I'm not a hooker.

REACHER

Then I really can't afford you.

SANDY

Seriously. I work at the auto parts store.

REACHER

What I mean is the cheapest woman tends to be the one you pay for.

She slaps Reacher's face and stands, making a show.

SANDY

I'M NOT A HOOKER.

REACHER

No. A hooker would get the joke.

She grabs his beer to pour it on him. He grabs her wrist and shakes the beer loose. Then a wall of muscle fills the frame behind her. Reacher is looking up at FIVE GUYS, ranging in size from big to massive.

The BIGGEST GUY is JEB (24).

JEB

What's this?

SANDY

He called me a whore.

Reacher stands calmly, measuring eye to eye with Jeb. Jeb is a little surprised, but committed.

JEB

That true?

REACHER

No one said whore. She *inferred* hooker. I *meant* slut.

2ND BIGGEST GUY

That's our *sister*.

REACHER

Is *that* a good kisser?

JEB

Outside.

REACHER

Pay your check, first.

JEB

I'll pay later.

REACHER

You won't be able to.

JEB

You think?

REACHER

All the time. You should try it.

JEB
Outside or right here.

REACHER
(sighs)
Outside.

JEB
Stay here, Sandy.

SANDY
I don't mind the sight of blood.

REACHER
When it means you're not pregnant,
anyway.

Off her stunned expression:

EXT. HIGHWAY SPORTSBAR - NIGHT

The door bursts open and the five guys march out,
then Reacher. Sandy stands by the door.

REACHER
Last chance to walk away.

JEB
You kiddin'? It's five against one.

REACHER
Three against one.

JEB
How do you figure that?

REACHER
After I take out the leader, which
is you, I'll have to contend with
one or two enthusiastic wingmen.
The last two guys always run.

JEB
Oh, you done this before?

REACHER
It's getting late.

Reacher's hands are at his side, calm, casual. He
sports a knowing smile. Jeb's eyes narrow, wondering
about Reacher now. He takes a step, stopping when:

REACHER (CONT'D)

Remember... You wanted this.

Jeb charges, Reacher mixes boxing, Aikido and a school-yard kick to the nuts. Jeb drops, gasping:

JEB

Oh God... Oh God.

Reacher turns, picking a tooth out of his knuckle as he faces the other four. Two step forward. Two step back - fear spreading quickly across their faces.

REACHER

(to Sandy)

Well, now we know who's who.

(to the remaining guys)

Let's get this done.

The two brave ones charge. Reacher looks directly at the two cowards, unblinking, as he savagely takes the brave ones out.

The last blow is the worst. This idiot throws a round-house kick circa 1989. Reacher catches the guy's ankle with his right hand, driving his heel into the guy's supporting knee, snapping it backward. The guy collapses, screaming like a gut-shot animal - a scream that blends with an approaching siren.

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

DRIVER'S P.O.V. racing into the parking lot, nearly hitting the two cowards as they run away. In the headlights we see Reacher standing over three mangled, writhing figures.

EXT. HIGHWAY SPORTSBAR - NIGHT

Reacher turns to confront Sandy, but she's running in the opposite direction. Before he can follow, TWO UNIFORM COPS leap from their cruiser, guns drawn.

1ST COP

ON THE GROUND.

REACHER

Pretty impressive response time, fellas.

2ND COP

DO IT NOW.

Reacher considers Sandy, then the guns aimed at him. He gets down on the ground with his would-be attackers - face-to-face with Jeb as they're cuffed.

REACHER

Who hired you?

Jeb's expression flashes: "How did you know?" But he says nothing.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SIGHT - NIGHT

In a dense forest far from the city, the beginning of some industrial structure occupies a clearing. A backhoe sits dormant by a deep, short trench. A pickup truck idles nearby. Linsky's Volvo wheels in and stops. He gets out with Reacher's file in one hand, the briefcase full of money in the other.

The pickup's lights come on, illuminating Linsky. He squints, glancing back at a pistol on the driver's seat, debating weather to reach for it as:

TWO MEN get out of the pickup. One approaches, revealing himself to be CHARLIE (28) a man we immediately recognize as the real mall shooter.

The other man lingers by the pickup, behind the headlights, A SHADOW.

LINSKY

(handing over the briefcase)

Who's with you?

CHARLIE

What happened?

LINSKY

It's him, isn't it?

(to the Shadow)

Look, I ain't seen you.

CHARLIE

Relax. What happened?

He hands Charlie the file. As Charlie skims it, Linsky steals anxious glances at the Shadow.

LINSKY

Barr's attorney hired an investigator. Name'a Reacher. Some sort'a top-shelf Army cop. He was in the 'Dad same time as Barr.

CHARLIE

So?

LINSKY

So Barr asked for this Soldier by name. He shows up at the mall today. Then up the highway. Almost like he knew something. You said we don't like people asking questions.

CHARLIE

No, we sure don't.

LINSKY

So I took steps.

CHARLIE

You took steps.

LINSKY

Local people. My guys.

CHARLIE

And it blew back on you.

LINSKY

I figured five guys would do it.

CHARLIE

This franchise was yours to *manage*. That's all. Maintenance is *our* thing, understand?

LINSKY

Look, I couldn't reach you.

CHARLIE

That's how this works.

LINSKY

I had to make a decision.

SHADOW

You made the wrong one.

Linsky's blood chills at the sound of The Shadow's voice, his strange accent.

LINSKY

I ain't seen you. I don't want to.

CHARLIE

These locals. I want their names.

LINSKY
It's all in the file.

CHARLIE
Any of 'em know who you are?

LINSKY
Just one. But I took care of it.

CHARLIE
You took-
(realizing)
Where's the body?

LINSKY
Distributed.

Charlie shakes his head in disgust.

LINSKY (CONT'D)
Relax, no one'll find it.

CHARLIE
And suppose we want it found, yeah?

LINSKY
Why the hell would you want it f-

CHARLIE
We have a way of doing things so
they stay done. Clean. A missing
person isn't clean.

LINSKY
'Chrissakes, you only needed to
kill one fucking person, you tapped
five. You call that clean?

CHARLIE
I CALL IT DONE. They're looking at
the shooter. Not the target.

LINSKY
Jesus...

SHADOW
We make things messy now so they
don't get messy later. And we don't
leave questions unanswered. *Ever*.

On cue, the Shadow approaches, we stay CLOSE ON
Linsky. He shuts his eyes tight as:

LINSKY
Arrright, look. I can fix this.

SHADOW (O.S.)
Open your eyes.

LINSKY
I AIN'T SEEN YOU.

SHADOW (O.S.)
That doesn't matter anymore.

As if resigned to his doom, Linsky slowly opens his eyes and takes in a man at once indescribably old and improbably virile. He is missing several fingers on both hands. One iris is milky white. He is THE ZEC.

Charlie has moved behind Linsky, pistol in hand.

LINSKY
I made a mistake. But you can still use me. Just tell me how to fix-

THE ZEC
To survive. Don't say fix it, because you can't. We covered up the one mess, you made another.

LINSKY
Yes. Okay. You're right... Just tell me what I have to do.

THE ZEC
I was in prison in Siberia. I spent my first winter wearing a dead man's coat. A hole in one pocket.
(holding up his left hand)
I chewed these fingers off before the frostbite could turn to gangrene.

(holding up his right)
These I gave up to avoid working in the sulfur mine... That is why I am here. That is how I survived when so many did not. Would you say this kind of man is rare?

(off Linsky's nod)
A man this rare can always be of use... So show me.

(off Linsky's look)
Show me you are rare. Show me you'll do anything to survive.

LINSKY

I... I don't understand.

THE ZEC

The fingers from your left hand.

Linsky glances at Charlie's pistol - then the backhoe and the hole. After a long, dark moment, he nods.

LINSKY

... Have you got a knife?

THE ZEC

Did I have a knife in Siberia?

Linsky realizes with horror what the Zec wants. He contemplates his trembling left hand. He starts with the thumb, putting it in his mouth and then, against all human instinct, he bites down. We play the moment off the Zec and Charlie, listening as Linsky's agonized, slobbering O.S. slackens to a whimper.

ANGLE ON Linsky, his thumb bleeding, but intact - his shirt wet with drool.

LINSKY

I can't... I just can't.

The Zec nods casually. Linsky turns, walks dejectedly to the hole, letting his toes hang over the edge. Charlie taps Linsky's arm with the pistol's grip.

LINSKY (CONT'D)

Can you do me a favor?

But Charlie shakes his head. Linsky takes the pistol and puts the barrel in his mouth as The Zec climbs onto the backhoe.

POP - a muffled gunshot O.S. The Zec sighs:

THE ZEC

Always the bullet... I just don't understand.

CHARLIE

(re: Reacher's file)

What do we do with this Soldier?

THE ZEC

What we always do.

As he starts the backhoe's engine the sound of steel door slamming takes us to:

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

TWO FIGURES step into the foreground, looking at Reacher on a cot - sleeping, we guess. Until:

REACHER

Hey, Helen.

HELEN

Am I wearing too much perfume?

REACHER

Breathing too sternly.

He sits up and smiles, seeing Helen is not alone.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Detective Emerson. Somebody dead?

EMERSON

And if someone is?

REACHER

Then he's dead of shame, because I was being gentle.

EMERSON

I'm starting to understand why you move around a lot, Reacher.

REACHER

So no one's dead.

EMERSON

One guy likely won't ever walk right again.

REACHER

You'd like to charge me.

EMERSON

Very much.

REACHER

But no one's pressing.

EMERSON

(as he turns to walk out)
Sadly, no.

REACHER

Got a key?

EMERSON

Not my department.

REACHER

Hey, Emerson... Four-eight-six-two-six-eight-one.

EMERSON

What's that?

REACHER

The serial number on Barr's rifle.

Emerson scowls, slamming the door behind him.

HELEN

You're working for me. Do you understand? What you do is a *reflection* on my firm. On *me*.

REACHER

I was set up.

HELEN

You're talking to a lawyer.

REACHER

There was a girl, she came on to me, picked a fight.

HELEN

Which *never* happens in a bar.

REACHER

When I said my name she was thrown.

HELEN

She was expecting Marvin Gaye?

REACHER

She wasn't expecting Jimmy Reese. Yankees' second baseman.

HELEN

Why did you say you were a Yankees second baseman?

REACHER

I always use Yankees second basemen. And I didn't say I was a Yankees second baseman, I just said my name was- Look, the point is she was expecting to hear Jack Reacher.

REACHER (CONT'D)

She knew who I was, the cops were rolling before the fight even started and those five guys were her brothers? Come on. Somebody sent those boys to put me down.

HELEN

Who?

REACHER

Most likely the same guy that followed me to the mall today.

HELEN

If someone followed you it was probably a cop. And I highly doubt-

REACHER

Three things cops *never* do: They don't vote democrat, they don't drive Volvos and they *never* use personal vehicles. He *wasn't* a cop.

HELEN

A P.I. then. Or the D.A.'s office.

REACHER

Do you really think your father's office would set me up?

HELEN

Why would *anyone* set you up?

REACHER

How'd it go today?

HELEN

It went exactly the way I think you hoped it would.

REACHER

You asked me to look objectively at a man I know to be a cold-blooded killer. A man you mean to keep off death row. The least you could do is look objectively at his victims.

HELEN

Well I did.

REACHER

And..?

Helen takes a long, shaky breath and we CUT TO:

EXT. MIDWESTERN CITY - SKYLINE - MORNING

Moving toward a city that could be anywhere.
Populated by anybody. Even you. Motionless
construction cranes dominate the skyline.

TILT DOWN SLOWLY: Moving over the highway, following
traffic into the city.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

JESSICA FARRIOR (20s) gently combs the hair of A GIRL
(age 5). They talk, laugh, prepare for the day.

HELEN (V.O.)

Jessica Farrior, was twenty-two - a
nanny, caring for the five-year-old
daughter of family friends. She'd
finally saved enough money for a
trip to China - in fact she should
have left the week before.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Jessica straps the Girl into a car seat, kisses her
forehead, shuts the door and they are on their way.

HELEN (V.O.)

But the girl she cared for asked
Jessica to stay for her fifth
birthday. They went downtown that
day to shop for a party dress.

INT. BEAT-UP MINIVAN - DAY

RITA FERRAEZ (40s) drives while her son MARCOS (15)
diligently does schoolwork in the passenger seat.

HELEN (V.O.)

Rita Ferraez worked as a cleaning
lady at Sampson tower. She was
usually late for work, but she had
a good reason. Since her son Marcos
was nine-years-old, Rita had to
personally drop him at school to
make sure he actually went.

QUICK CUTS of Rita dropping Marcos off, over and
over, day after day. He always kisses her goodbye,
always waves back to her as he runs to school.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Rita walks to her minivan alone, in a hurry. She jumps in and starts the stubborn engine.

HELEN (V.O.)

But her dedication had paid off. Marcos was now an honor student and as such, was on a field trip to Washington D.C... For the first time since her son was nine, Rita would be early for work.

The engine starts and she is on her way.

EXT. WEALTHY SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

Est. a handsome home for a handsome family.

HELEN (V.O.)

Nancy Holt's last words to her husband were a lie.

INT. WEALTHY SUBURBAN HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

A perfect mother, NANCY HOLT (38) kisses her perfect HUSBAND and their TWO PERFECT CHILDREN as they eat breakfast. She grabs her purse and heads out.

HELEN (V.O.)

She told him she was taking her car to be serviced. But in fact she was headed downtown...

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Nancy leans over a glass cabinet filled with gorgeous men's watches, picking just the right one.

MOMENTS LATER the watch is being giftwrapped and she is shelling out cash from a thick wad in her purse.

HELEN (V.O.)

She told the clerk she didn't want the purchase showing up on her credit card. She wanted to surprise her husband for their tenth anniversary. Just a few days away.

She takes the bag and she is on her way.

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - DAY

OLINE ARCHER (50s), the second victim, sits across a partner's desk from her HUSBAND. She is working with an adding machine, he is shouting into a phone.

HELEN (V.O.)
Oline Archer never liked her
husband's contracting business.

Her husband hangs up the phone, puts a hand to his left arm, struggles to breathe. Oline rushes to him.

INT. CONSTRUCTION TRAILER - DAY

Oline at the same desk, broken. THREE LAWYERS sit across from her, handing her page after page to sign.

HELEN (V.O.)
But now that it was hers, she
couldn't bring herself to let it
go. Her husband had given his life
for the company, after all.

CLOSE ON: A legal document titled:

*ARCHER PARTNERS v. MARGRAVE CONSTRUCTION
TERMS OF SETTLEMENT*

HELEN (V.O.)
Until the economy and a costly
lawsuit bled the business dry...

Oline shakes her head bitterly and signs.

EXT. MALL - DAY

HELEN (V.O.)
Oline was on her way to formally
file for bankruptcy. And finally
move on with her life...

Oline walks with purpose, a leather valise under her arm. She passes Rita, then a BUSINESSMAN (50s) on a bench, sipping a coffee. Meet:

HELEN (V.O.)
Darren Ayers was an investment
broker in the same tower where Rita
worked. His wife said he had grown
increasingly distant of late.

INT. AYERS HOME - EARLIER THAT DAY

Darren and his WIFE (late 40s) in the throes of an animated argument as he pulls on his suit jacket.

HELEN (V.O.)

They fought that morning. She can't remember their last words to one another but they weren't kind.

He slams the door behind him. She bursts into tears.

EXT. MALL - DAY

Darren looks up from his coffee and smiles at someone O.S. We notice an object on the bench beside him:

HELEN (V.O.)

His body was found beside a fresh bouquet of roses he'd bought just moments before. Darren's wife takes comfort in the fact that in his last moments, he was most likely thinking of her.

THUNK-CRACK - A bullet punches a perfect hole in Darren's forehead. REVEAL Nancy is walking toward Darren when it happens. She drops the bag in her hand, staring in horror. And in the next six seconds:

CLOSE ON: Oline, ignoring the loud report, keeps walking. A bullet hits her behind the ear - *CRACK*

Her valise spills and she dies in a pile of paperwork that seconds before meant everything.

CLOSE ON: Rita. We're running alongside her. She knows what's happening. But she's slow - *CRACK*

CLOSE ON: Nancy, making the worst choice imaginable, turning to run - right toward the garage - *CRACK*

CLOSE ON: Jessica, running with the little girl in her arms, her face stricken with terror.

JESSICA

(breathless)

We're gonna be okay, we're gonna be okay, we're gonna be o-

CRACK

BLACK...

EXT. TWO-STAR MOTEL - NIGHT

Est. one of those low-lying places you drive past and wonder "who the hell stays there?" Reacher does.

REACHER (V.O.)

So what have you learned?

INT. REACHER MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Reacher washes blood from his shirt in the bathroom sink. Helen sits on the bed, drinking a beer, stealing awkward looks at his muscular frame.

HELEN

You want me to say you were right.
That this isn't the fight. You want
me to say James Barr should die.

REACHER

What I meant was-

HELEN

Maybe he should.

She sips her beer, expressionless. A little cold.

REACHER

I meant... what did you learn about
the victims?

HELEN

What more do you want? They were
five innocent people senselessly
murdered at rand- I'm sorry, can
you put a shirt on?

REACHER

That *is* my shirt.

He wrings out his shirt and hangs it on the heater
before sitting on the dresser.

HELEN

Did you lose your luggage?

REACHER

I don't have luggage.

HELEN

(letting that go)
What was I saying?

REACHER

Five innocent people...

HELEN

Murdered at random. Yes.

Reacher ponders those words, sipping a beer. Then:

REACHER

You know how many American's die every year? Two and a half million. That means every day, roughly sixty-seven hundred average citizens in this country wake up for the last time. Last Friday, five of them converged on a single spot, and died together. Is that random?

HELEN

What else would you call it?

REACHER

Well, take Darren and Nancy. Odds are they were having an affair.

HELEN

Excuse me?

EXT. MALL - DAY

ON DARREN seated on the bench next to those roses.
COME AROUND TO REVEAL Nancy walking toward him.

REACHER (V.O.)

You don't buy roses for your wife on the way to work. You buy them on the way home.

CLOSE ON: The bag in Nancy's hand from the jeweler.

REACHER (V.O.)

And you don't worry about a charge showing up on a credit card when your anniversary is that weekend. Unless it's the *gift* you're hiding.

DARREN'S P.O.V. Nancy Holt, the perfect mother, walks toward him with a loving smile on her face. Through Reacher's eyes, we can see in an instant they know one another. Intimately.

CRACK - Darren dies right in front of Nancy. She drops her bag, stands frozen with terror.

INT. REACHER MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

REACHER

That's why Nancy just stood there.
Long enough to be number four.

HELEN

You can't prove that.

REACHER

(distant/deep in thought)
How hard would it be? Cell phones,
e-mails. All it takes is someone
willing to dig...

HELEN

So what's your point?

REACHER

My point is that two of the victims
weren't there strictly by chance...

HELEN

I... still don't follow.

Reacher shakes off whatever is nagging him:

REACHER

I need a list of Barr's known
associates.

HELEN

There is none. He didn't have any.
He's a classic loner. He didn't
even talk to his neighbors.

REACHER

A quiet man. Never bothered
anybody.

HELEN

Exactly.

REACHER

You have his credit card statement?

HELEN

I can get it. Why?

REACHER

I need a list of places he hung out
Bars, bowling alleys, strips clubs.
Gun ranges. Anywhere someone would
remember him.

HELEN

What do we hope to find?

REACHER

I need some sleep. You too.

Awkward beat. Helen stares at the shirtless Reacher.

HELEN

You don't really think I'm-

He flicks something at her. She drops her beer to catch it. She looks in her palm and finds her keys.

REACHER

Be back to pick me up at eight.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - DAWN

A vast expanse of flat, exposed ground surrounds a mass of conveyer belts serving a central huddle of silos. The concrete factory is far from the main road, far from everything. The place is busy. Cement trucks come and go. The air and the ground both are choked with concrete dust. It looks like the moon.

Charlie drives up in a grey SUV, rapidly turning chalky white. He heads for an office trailer.

INT. CONCRETE FACTORY - OFFICE TRAILER - DAWN

Charlie enters, stops short, surprised to find:

The Zec, his back to the door, looking at the concrete silo churning away outside. He is accompanied by FOUR BALTIC THUGS.

CHARLIE

I thought you were leaving.

THE ZEC

I wanted to see you first.

He turns, studying Charlie with his one good eye. He motions for Charlie to take off his sunglasses. When he does, the Zec studies his eyes.

THE ZEC (CONT'D)

You want to kill the Soldier.

CHARLIE

It's simple math. He has no home, no family. He can drop off the grid at will... He's hard to intimate... But he's easy to make disappear.

THE ZEC

Perhaps. But his trail would end here. Along with too many others already. Very messy.

CHARLIE

What do you remember about being a soldier?

THE ZEC

Siberia took everything. Even my name.

CHARLIE

I imagine you would have been like this one. His kind doesn't let go.

THE ZEC

And what will he find?

CHARLIE

We both know we didn't hide our trail. We only hid where the trail starts. We're too big now. Too spread out. What do we do when he figures out where to dig?

THE ZEC

Then you kill him. Him and the lawyer. But not before.

CHARLIE

It'll be too late then. Who does it serve to have their trail end where ours begins?

The Zec considers. Charlie has a point, but:

THE ZEC

I can't let you kill him. Not yet.

Charlie stifles his frustration until:

THE ZEC (CONT'D)

But find me a way to destroy him.

And Charlie smiles.

EXT. REACHER'S MOTEL - DAY

Helen drives up, Reacher comes out, gets in her car.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - HIGHWAY

As she drops the car in drive, she hands Reacher two folders full of photocopies. In the first one:

HELEN

Barr's credit card statement. No bars, no strip joints, nothing. Pretty much gas and groceries. I'm afraid that's a dead end.

Reacher's P.O.V. The credit card statement shows two items over and over; MARSH SUPERMARKET and EXXON.

REACHER

Eyewitness testimonies?

HELEN

Back seat.

ANGLE ON: A back seat filled with legal file boxes. He turns and rummages through as:

CRACK... CRACK/CRACK/CRACK - Rifle shots split our ears and we are taken to:

EXT. MALL - DAY OF THE SHOOTING

Watching those crucial few seconds from multiple points of view:

A MARINE RECRUITER from inside a recruiting station.

A FEMALE CIVIL SERVANT from inside the DMV.

A BUSINESSWOMAN lying on the pavement behind a kiosk. For a beat we think she's bleeding out. Then we see she's laying in a pool of four spilled ventes.

Each witness tunes into the shooting at a slightly different moment, sees a different victim die. But they all hear the same thing:

CRACK... CRACK/CRACK/CRACK

INT. HELEN'S CAR - HIGHWAY

Reacher closes a thick folder labeled:

EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY

REACHER

I need you to look for gun ranges between a hundred, hundred and fifty miles from here. Limit your search to places longer than three hundred yards.

HELEN

Sure. If you tell me why.

REACHER

(re: credit statement)

Barr consistently filled his tank on Saturday and again on Sunday. He's been taking a long drive almost every weekend.

HELEN

He could be going anywhere.

REACHER

Yes. And if it's a bar, a bowling alley, a strip club, we'll never find it. But a match-level gun range... There might be two. And Barr was a re-loader. That means he shot. A lot. I'm guessing every Saturday. Maybe with a friend.

HELEN

Why's it so important you talk to his friends? Assuming he had any.

REACHER

Drop me at the auto parts store.

HELEN

I- Wait. Which one?

REACHER

She just said the auto parts store.

HELEN

She who-

(giving up)

Reacher, this a city of eight-hundred thousand people. Can you be a little more specific?

REACHER

I didn't say an auto parts store.
Which one stands out in your mind
as the auto parts store?

Helen thinks and we CUT TO:

EXT. FULL AUTO - DAY

A building painted bright red, a massive American
flag flowing in the breeze. Not an. *The*.

HELEN

Want me to wait?

REACHER

No. I'll meet you back at your
office later.

HELEN

How will you get there?

Reacher scans the nearly empty parking lot, noting a
handful of cars parked close together, far from the
front door. He opens the door and gets out.

REACHER

I'll hitch a ride.

He slams the door and walks away, seemingly oblivious
to A SILVER AUDI just entering the lot, A HULKING
SHADOW inside watching Reacher and Helen.

INT. FULL AUTO - DAY

Capacious, brightly lit with long rows of every
conceivable auto accessory known to man. And
deserted. Reacher clearly hates places like this.

EXT. FULL AUTO - CUSTOMER SERVICE DESK - DAY

DING - The sound of the service bell hangs in the air
for an eternity. Reacher rings again.

DING - Finally, A GUY (20s) appears. He's better than
you, knows more, can't afford your car. You want to
smash his fucking face in. His tag reads:

GARY

Can I help you?

REACHER
Sandy work here?

GARY
What's this about?

REACHER
So she *does*. Thanks. I need to
speak with her. Personal matter.

GARY
She's on the clock.

REACHER
Legal personal matter.

GARY
You a cop?

REACHER
Call her out, Gary.

GARY
I need to see some ID.

REACHER
Go get Sandy.

GARY
I need to see something.

REACHER
How about the inside of an
ambulance?

Gary reaches for the phone.

GARY
I'm calling the cops.

Reacher pushes the phone down.

REACHER
Might want to ask Sandy if that's a
good idea first.

Reacher steps around back of the counter.

GARY
You can't- Hey.

INT. FULL AUTO - BACK OFFICE - DAY

Sandy sits behind a desk managing to make her dorky work shirt look hot, sifting through paperwork. She sees Reacher - followed by Gary - and goes white.

SANDY
Shit.

GARY
You know this guy?

REACHER
Tell him.

SANDY
Give us a few, Gary.

Gary reluctantly leaves. Reacher shuts the door, wedges a chair under the knob. Sandy is scared now.

SANDY (CONT'D)
Listen...

REACHER
Okay.

Long silence. Then Sandy spills:

SANDY
It was Jeb.

REACHER
The big guy.

SANDY
Jeb Oliver.

REACHER
That was fast.

SANDY
He lied to me. He said you were a predator. You were supposed to start pawing me. But you didn't.

REACHER
I can do anything I want now.

Beat. Sandy stands, trembling, undoes some buttons.

SANDY
I won't fight. Just don't hurt me.

REACHER

Sit down, Sandy.

She sits like a little kid, all the woman gone.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Where can I find Jeb?

SANDY

Dunno. He didn't come in today.

REACHER

He works here?

SANDY

It's bullshit, though. He cooks crystal.

REACHER

Write down his address.

Sandy grabs a pen and paper, scribbles fast.

SANDY

I'm real sorry, mister. You were supposed to be a predator. And it was an easy hundred bucks.

REACHER

That all?

SANDY

Small town, nothin' to do... Am I in trouble?

REACHER

Not if you lend me your car.

SANDY

I don't have a car.

REACHER

Sure you do. Out front. I'm guessing you're the... El Camino. Gary's the red pick-up, for sure.

SANDY

How did y-

REACHER

Keys?

SANDY

It's Jeb's car.

REACHER

And won't he be mad when I bring it
to his house?

SANDY

Oh, you are bad.

Sandy stands, stretches for her purse showing maximum
ass and flexibility. As she hands over the keys:

SANDY (CONT'D)

Who are you, Mister? Really.

REACHER

Just a guy wants to be left alone.

SANDY

I get off at 6. Maybe we could-

REACHER

Sandy, listen. You seem like a
sweet girl. You're pretty, you're
obviously sharp enough to manage
Gary's books for him. Why are you
letting guys use you?

Sandy shrugs, her smile fading.

SANDY

It's what girls like me do...

REACHER

You have some money?

SANDY

A little.

REACHER

Leave town for a couple days. Think
about your future.

SANDY

Where would I go?

REACHER

Get out of town, Sandy.

The roar of an angry V8 takes us to:

EXT. FULL AUTO - DAY

Reacher behind the wheel of a tricked-out El Camino. Unaccustomed to driving, he drops the car in reverse, grinds the gear, overdoes the gas and break.

ANGLE ON: That Silver Audi parked across the lot.

INT. SILVER AUDI - DAY

Inside we find one of the Zec's thugs. We'll call him VLAD. We notice he's missing a thumb. He watches the El Camino lurch out of the lot. He follows.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD - DAY

The rural outskirts. The El Camino turns off the main road and down a bumpy gravel driveway. A moment later, the Silver Audi comes into view, hanging back.

INT. EL CAMINO - DAY

Reacher takes in a two bedroom rental. AN OLD WOMAN sits in a rocker on the porch, staring into space.

Reacher opens the glove box, finding an envelope with registration, insurance, etc.

EXT. JEB'S HOUSE - DAY

REACHER

Jeb home?

The Old Woman rocks gently, her only reaction. Reacher mounts the porch, flashing the car's registration with it's official-looking state seal.

REACHER (CONT'D)

I have a warrant to search the premises.

She doesn't even look at Reacher. He notices the glass pipe and lighter in the folds of her blanket, her glassy eyes. She's cooked out of her mind.

REACHER (CONT'D)

I see. Well, if you don't mind...

Reacher walks in the house. The Old Woman pulls a cell phone out from under her blanket and dials...

INT. JEB'S HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Reacher enters. The place is a shit-hole. Dishes piled high in the sink, flies buzzing. He heads down the front hall passing a small bathroom. Further on he finds an open door with a heavy hasp on the frame for a padlock. The gear-head booty-centric posters in the room beyond denote a young man's touch. The dresser drawers are all open and empty. The closet contains nothing but a few empty hangers.

INT. SILVER AUDI - DAY

Vlad has his car hunkered in a driveway down the road from Jeb's. His eyes narrow as a primer-coated Chevy drives past and turns down Jeb's driveway...

INT. JEB'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Reacher pulls Helen's card out of his pocket and picks up the phone to dial. Then he stops, hangs up.

CLOSE ON: Reacher's hand, taking the end of his jacket and wiping the phone of fingerprints. He turns, goes back to the bathroom and looks again.

INT. JEB'S BATHROOM - DAY

He notes the shower curtain rod. Except for a few metal rings there's nothing else there...

WHACK - Reacher is struck violently across the back of the head. He pitches forward into the shower, rolling half-dazed to defend himself, seeing:

Not one, but TWO attackers - we'll call them BIG and TALL - cut from the same cloth as Jeb. Big is swinging a pipe with Reacher's blood on it. Tall has a chopped-down baseball bat.

Reacher is fucked - on his back in a tight space, fetal, curled up to protect his head and body, taking brutal hits to his shins, knees and forearms. Then:

Reacher kicks with both feet, hitting Big in the pelvis, sending him into the hallway. He grabs Tall's face, his right thumb squishing into Tall's eye socket. Tall screams and scrambles back like a crab, but Reacher holds on, letting Tall's adrenalized power haul them both to their feet.

Tall hits Reacher with the bat-handle, but the strikes are involuntary, comical, girlie. Reacher pushes Tall backward into the hall as:

Big gets on his feet and swings his pipe. Reacher turns Tall like a shield, the full force of the pipe landing on Tall's shoulder with a sickening crunch.

Reacher pushes Tall into Big, driving hard down the narrow corridor. Big trips and falls. Reacher and Tall land on top of him. Reacher and Big grapple savagely, Tall sandwiched between them, screaming.

Reacher lets go of Big, grabs Tall's head in both hands and drives it like a rock into Big's face over and over until both men are still. He stands, winded, dazed, bleeding from the back of his head. Then:

VOICE (O.S.)

I GOTCHOO FUCKER.

Reacher turns to find A THICK PUNK just a few feet away, aiming a pistol. He is one of Jeb's wingmen from the bar, the one without the shattered leg.

PUNK

Don't move.

REACHER

Tell you what. *When* I move... You pull the trigger-

Before the last word is out of his mouth, Reacher lashes out with his right hand, grabbing the gun firmly, pushing it left as he leans right.

CRACK - the gun goes off into the wall behind Reacher. He spins the gun around, snagging the Punk's finger in the trigger guard. Reacher yanks the gun back with both hands, stripping that trigger finger to the bone. The Punk's scream is cut short when Reacher snatches him by the throat, drives him into the wall and shoves the gun in the Punk's mouth.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Where's Jeb?

PUNK

HE'TH NAH HE-UH.

Reacher pulls the gun out of his mouth.

REACHER

Where can I find him?

PUNK

Jesus, look at MY FUCKIN' HAND.

REACHER

Well, you shouldn't play with guns.
Where is he?

PUNK

You're the one drivin' his car. You
tell me.

REACHER

Hey. Smart-ass. You want me to trim
the other nine nails?

PUNK

Last I saw him we's all leaving
jail. He said he had to see a guy.

REACHER

Which guy? Who?

PUNK

I don't know, I swear. Next I know
his moms woke up from a bender an'
his shit's all gone. Cell's ringing
but he don't answer. Fuck, man. I
think I'm gonna puke.

REACHER

When we're done. Is Jeb the sort to
light out like this?

PUNK

Nah, man. He'd never leave his moms
alone. Shit ain't right.

Reacher thinks on it, then:

REACHER

You got a car?

PUNK

Out back.

REACHER

Keys.

PUNK

In my pocket. My hand, man. I can't-

He digs in the Punk's pocket, comes out with keys.

REACHER

Look at your friends.

The Punk looks at the pulpy heap of Big and Tall.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Am I stealing your car?

PUNK

Use it as long as you like.

REACHER

You're very kind.

INT. SILVER AUDI - DAY

Vlad is slightly confused when Reacher emerges driving the Chevy back toward town. Vlad follows.

REACHER (PRE-LAP)

I think Jeb Oliver is dead.

INT. HELEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The rest of the firm has gone home. Helen sits at her desk covered with photographs from the crime scene - Darren's flowers, Nancy's bag, Oline's valise - all seemingly innocuous, if not for the motionless hand in this corner, the spatter of blood in that one.

HELEN

Who is Jeb Oliver?

REACHER

The guy from the bar.

HELEN

Jesus. How hard did you hit him?

REACHER

What- No. Not *me*. I think he was murdered. But someone tried to make it look like he left town.

HELEN

Or... maybe he just left town.

REACHER

You pack your shower curtain when you travel?

HELEN

This is what you base your
conclusions on?

He moves to look out the window. She sees the clotted
wound on the back of his head, blood on his collar.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Jesus, what's that on your head?

REACHER

Crazy glue. You don't want to know.

She rubs her eyes, shakes her head.

HELEN

You said on the phone you wanted to
submit your findings?

REACHER

James Barr was a sniper. Not the
best, not the worst, but he trained
nonstop for five years. What does
training like that do?

HELEN

What does any training do? Skills
become reflex. Muscle memory. You
do without thinking.

REACHER

It also makes people who aren't
necessarily smart *seem* smart by
beating some tactical awareness
into them. Ninety-nine percent of
the evidence your father has
against Barr didn't *exist* in
Baghdad. Not because he's smart.
But because he was *trained*. So...

HELEN

So... theoretically, a properly
trained idiot could pull off the
perfect crime without even trying.

REACHER

Something James Barr damn near
managed in Baghdad. Something he
would have done here.

HELEN

Would have...

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY OF THE CRIME

Shooter's P.O.V. through the scope, choosing targets:

REACHER (V.O.)

From that garage, the shooter was facing the rising sun, targets moving left and right. Difficult conditions for any sniper.

INT. HELEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

HELEN

But... Baghdad - you said Barr was in a parking garage then.

REACHER

Because in Baghdad that was the right spot.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - BAGHDAD - DAY

Barr walking to the ledge, shouldering his rifle:

REACHER (V.O.)

Sun behind him, targets coming straight ahead, single file.

BARR'S P.O.V. through the scope as those four doomed Americans walks into the line of fire:

REACHER (V.O.)

Ideal conditions for even an average sniper and the exact same conditions he would have had on the highway opposite the mall.

INT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The same place Reacher stood, taking in the mall. Barr shoots from inside his minivan:

CRACK/CRACK/CRACK - the shells landing in back.

REACHER (V.O.)

No cone, no parking meter, no cameras, no trace evidence left behind - never even get out of the van. And his escape is assured.

A beat later, the van is speeding away.

INT. HELEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

REACHER

I'm not saying Barr couldn't have killed those people at the mall. But he wouldn't have. Not that way.

HELEN

So... you're saying... this proves he's crazy.

REACHER

No.

HELEN

What exactly are you saying?

E.C.U.s: Tape pulls the print from the shell/A hot light scans it/Tape lifts prints from the traffic cone/A hot light scans it/Tape lifts a print from a quarter/A hot light scans it as:

REACHER

Any one piece of evidence I would buy, but all of it? Fibers, fingerprints, stray brass. And who would pay for parking? Sane or crazy that just doesn't make sense.

HELEN

Then Barr *wanted* to get caught. And he wanted *you* to catch him.

REACHER

But that would not explain how Barr, an average shooter firing in poor conditions, never missed.

HELEN

He *did* miss. The bullet in the reflecting pool.

EXT. MALL - REFLECTING POOL - DAY OF THE CRIME

A bullet slicing the water, settling to the bottom.

REACHER (V.O.)

A pristine bullet that tied Barr's gun to the killings. Arguably the prosecution's single most important piece of evidence...

INT. HELEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

REACHER

This is what's been bothering me from the git-go. If Barr wanted to get caught, he wasn't capable of such perfection. And if he meant to get away with it... he likely would have. Without even trying.

HELEN

Or maybe he just got lucky. Six shots out of six.

REACHER

That's what I was willing to accept when I called you from the bar... Then those guys took a run at me. Whoever sent them made a mistake.

HELEN

Christ. It was a bar fight.

REACHER

Maybe. Or maybe someone got nervous - tried to run me off. Or put me in a coma right next to their patsy.

HELEN

What do you mean patsy?

INT. BARR'S HOME - DAY

E.C.U.s: A bottle of booze, a bottle of pills, Barr passed out cold - just the way the police found him.

REACHER (V.O.)

It was *such* a great crime scene, no one stopped to think it might be too great...

A PAIR OF GLOVED HANDS presses a quarter to Barr's thumb/A bullet to his finger/A pair of feet squeeze into his crepe soled shoes/Those gloved hands pull on Barr's windbreaker, grab Barr's car keys/Open the door to his minivan.

REACHER (V.O.)

Not Emerson. Not the D.A. Not even Barr's own defense attorney.

INT. HELEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

REACHER

But Barr knew I would. No matter how much I wanted it to be true. That's why he asked for me.

HELEN

Wait. Are you suggesting that...

REACHER

James Barr is innocent.

That takes a moment to sink in, then:

HELEN

God. You should never have retired.

But just as we think he's won her over:

HELEN (CONT'D)

I mean you've really lost it. You can see what this is, can't you? You've got a case in your hands - maybe the last one you'll ever have - and you'll do anything not to hit the bottom of it.

REACHER

Helen, listen-

HELEN

What the hell was I *thinking*? For all I know you were standing at an intersection with a cardboard *sign* three days ago. And I *hired* you. Oh, God... My father was *right*.

REACHER

Your father?

HELEN

It makes total sense now. The way you live - move around. You're not cut out for the real world. Are you afraid you'll end up like Barr? Is that it? What is it that happens to old soldiers again?

REACHER

Helen.

HELEN

What?

REACHER

Turn off the light.

When she doesn't, Reacher turns it off himself.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Look out the window... Humor me.

Helen sighs, turns, looks down at the traffic.

REACHER (CONT'D)

What do you see?

HELEN

The same thing I see every day.

REACHER

Try to imagine you've never seen it. Try to imagine you spent your whole life in other parts of the world - being told every day that you're defending freedom. Meanwhile, every day gives you a new James Barr. Finally you decide you've had enough. It's time to see what you've given up your whole life for - maybe settle down, get some of that freedom for yourself. Now look at it, Helen. Is this still the place you'd call home?

She stares at the chain stores, the banks, the urban blandness of it all. It's purgatory.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Look at the people. Tell me which ones are free. Free from debt, fear, anxiety, stress, failure, indignity, betrayal. How many wish they could've been born knowing what they know now. Ask yourself how many would do things the same way all over again. And how many would live their lives like me?

HELEN

Reacher-

REACHER

Now look at the silver Audi across the street. The one that's been following me all day.

Helen blinks, refocuses, sees the car in question.

HELEN

What does that prove?

Reacher produces Helen's card with a license plate number scrawled on it.

REACHER

Here's the tag number. How long would it take you to run it?

HELEN

If I call in a favor? Five... ten minutes.

REACHER

Do it. Then I'll leave.

Helen studies the card, shakes her head with a sigh.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Come on. Just For fun.

INT. CONCRETE FACTORY - OFFICE - NIGHT

A familiar cellphone answered by claw-like hands.

THE ZEC

When?

The Zec listens, scowls.

THE ZEC (CONT'D)

No, it's my problem now. I'll handle it.

He hangs up, looks across the room at:

Charlie. He reads the Zec's face, pulls on his jacket, grabs his keys as the Zec dials the phone.

THE ZEC (CONT'D)

You're blown. The lawyer is running your license plates.

INT. SILVER AUDI - DAY

Vlad, a cell-phone on the dash on speaker, looks at his remaining thumb and sneers bitterly.

THE ZEC (ON SPEAKER)

Charlie is on his way. Do what he says.

INT. HELEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: the photos on Helen's desk. We look at them a little differently now.

REACHER

You want proof? Just give me time.

HELEN

Proof is not my concern. My job is to present the jury with a convincing, rational alternative scenario. Reasonable doubt. Period.

REACHER

And what about the guys who really did this? What about bringing them to justice? Exposing the truth?

HELEN

Even if I believed you, that's not my job. I'm not a cop. And frankly, neither are you.

His face doesn't change, but the remark stings.

HELEN (CONT'D)

All right. Let's just say Barr didn't do it. Or he did because someone put him up to it... Either way, what have you got?

REACHER

Conspiracy.

HELEN

Exactly. A conspiracy to kill five random people? There's no *motive*.

REACHER

Ridiculous, right?

HELEN

Grassy knoll *ludicrous*.

REACHER

No point in looking any further.

HELEN

Exactly.

REACHER

... Exactly.

Reacher takes a post-it and a pen from her desk and writes something. He folds it and hands it to Helen.

HELEN

What's this?

REACHER

The motive. Just hold onto it.

HELEN

What is this, *Clue*? I don't have any more time for th-

Then the phone rings. Reacher waits. Helen answers.

HELEN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

Hello...

(listens, skeptical)

Give it to me.

She grabs a pen, writes. Her face slackens.

HELEN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

...Thank you...

She hangs up, staring at what she's written. She turns, looks out the window, noting the Audi is gone.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You're sure that car was following you all day?

REACHER

As soon as you picked me up, why?

She rummages through the photographs on the table, finding one in particular and freezing.

HELEN

Because it's registered to a company called Margrave Construction.

She hands Reacher the photograph she is holding. Oline Archer lays face down in a pile of blood-stained legal papers, one of which clearly reads:

ARCHER PARTNERS v. MARGRAVE CONSTRUCTION

TERMS OF SETTLEMENT

REACHER

A conspiracy to kill five random people? That's ridiculous.

HELEN
(thinks/realizes)
Four... *Four* random people. To hide
one specific target.

Reacher says nothing. She unfolds the note. It reads:

OLINE ARCHER

HELEN (CONT'D)
How did you know?

REACHER
The first round is the least
accurate. Sniper's call it a cold
shot. Meanwhile, every eyewitness
described a pause between the first
and second rounds. The only shot
where the killer took his time.

HELEN
And Oline Archer was the second
victim.

REACHER
The one shot that mattered.

They both look at the photograph of Oline in her pile
of papers. Reacher says nothing.

HELEN
Jesus... I can't take this to
court. Even if it were true, I
couldn't prove it.

REACHER
You'd have to throw out all the
evidence and start over.

HELEN
Where?

REACHER
This frame was custom made for
Barr. Whoever chose him knew about
Baghdad. And the only one who could
have told them about Baghdad was
Barr himself. That's not a story
he'd tell some cocktail waitress.
He had at least one friend. A very
close one. You find that friend...
He'll lead you to the real shooter.

Helen thinks about this for a beat, then she writes an address on her pad, tears it off, hands it over.

HELEN

There's a gun range just over the border in Kentucky. Targets out to seven hundred yards. The only range that matched your requirements.

Her hand lingers in his. A pleasantly awkward moment.

REACHER

So you believe me now.

HELEN

I believe I can give you one more day to find your phantom shooter. Meanwhile, I'll go to City Hall and pull up Oline's legal history.

REACHER

Don't do that just yet.

(off her look)

If I'm right, someone killed four random people so no one would look directly at Oline. If I'm right.. just saying her name to the wrong person could get you killed.

(before she can argue)

Helen. City Hall can wait 'til I get back.

HELEN

Are you saying I should be scared?

REACHER

Are you smart?

HELEN

Obviously.

REACHER

Then don't be scared.

INT. SANDY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A pair of succulent, slightly parted lips take the finishing touches of bright red lipstick.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Sandy looking like a million air-brushed bucks. She gives her hair a tease, adjusts her breasts and blows a kiss to the mirror.

EXT. SANDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Follow Sandy's killer heels down the dimly lit walkway. She sees A MAN coming up the sidewalk, thinks nothing of it. He passes her, then:

MAN (O.S.)

Sandy?

She stops, turns and we see it's:

CHARLIE

It is Sandy, isn't it?

SANDY

Do I know you?

CHARLIE

Charlie... Jeb's friend? Come on...
Don't break my heart.

SANDY

I'm sorry... I don't remember.

CHARLIE

We were both pretty wasted.

SANDY

(no idea who he is)

Oh yeah...

CHARLIE

You live here?

SANDY

Just up there.

CHARLIE

No shit. I just moved in around
back. How funny is that?

SANDY

Wild.

CHARLIE

Wow, you look... You look *great*.

SANDY

Thanks.

Long, awkward pause.

CHARLIE

Anyway, don't let me keep you.
Maybe I can buy you a drink
sometime.

SANDY

Maybe.

CHARLIE

How'bout tonight?

She thinks about it... We tense. Don't go. Then:

SANDY

I'm meeting some people... I-

CHARLIE

Some other time, then.

SANDY

Some other time.

CHARLIE

Do it here.

SANDY

What?

A hand grabs her shoulder and spins her around. Sandy comes face-to-chest with Vlad. His massive fist slams her temple, snapping her head sideways-

CRACK

CLOSE ON: Sandy, her neck bent at an impossible angle, her eyes blank at odd angles, a deep blue bruise on the side of her face. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Detective Emerson - meticulous collector of evidence that he is - kneeling by a dumpster with that slightly sickened look on his face. We are:

EXT. ALLEY - DUMPSTER - NIGHT

Sandy's body has been tossed away like trash, position undignified.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: A crime scene - the yellow tape, the idle cop cars, idle COPS. We're behind a motel - one of those low-lying places you pass and wonder "who the hell stays there?" But now you know.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

Reacher behind the wheel on a sleepy, over-lit city street. His eyes narrow, spying something ahead.

REACHER'S P.O.V. A silver Audi, that Audi, parked in an otherwise empty lot on the other side of the concrete divider. No fast way to get there. Reacher slows down, tries to see inside the car.

The Audi's headlights come on and the car suddenly drives away. As Reacher ponders this we go to-

INT. TWO-STAR MOTEL - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

-Emerson, leafing through the registry with the NIGHT MANAGER anxiously looking on.

EMERSON

Which one's the biggest?

NIGHT MANAGER

Pardon?

EMERSON

We're looking for a big guy. He killed that girl with one punch.

NIGHT MANAGER

You want the guy in sixteen.

EMERSON

(looking at registry)

Ernie Johnson?

NIGHT MANAGER

You'll see.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

Reacher sees the flashing red and blue police lights before he sees the motel. He wheels into the parking lot and brings the Chevy to a stop, noting the van marked CORONER, the red hair peeking out from under the sheet in back.

He glances in his rearview and sees that Audi again, creeping past the motel.

INT. SILVER AUDI - NIGHT

Charlie and Vlad slow down to rubberneck. They see Reacher's car in the lot, Emerson emerging from the lobby. Everything is in its proper place.

EXT. TWO-STAR MOTEL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Emerson stops, sees the Chevy. Reacher inside. Reacher and Emerson make eye contact. Time stops. Recognition. Assumption. Conclusion. Action.

Emerson's hand goes for his gun. Reacher drops the car in reverse.

EMERSON

STOP THAT CAR.

Screaming tires. Reacher over-guns the Chevy back into the street as COPS realize a chase is on and run for their cars. Emerson is ahead of them by several seconds - in his car and after Reacher like a shot.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

The car lurches, gears grind. The road in Reacher's rearview gradually fills with red and blue lights. He sees tail lights up ahead and guns it.

(You are reminded; Reacher is not much of a driver.)

INT. SILVER AUDI - NIGHT

Charlie glances in the rearview. Vlad looks back. The Chevy is coming up fast, chased by police. Vlad looks to Charlie. "What do we do?" Charlie guns it.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

Reacher ignores the cops cars on his ass, focusing on the Audi in front. The overpowered Chevy gains until:

Reacher pulls up along side the Audi and looks over. He can just make out two faces looking back at him.

Reacher drops back, cranks the wheel, clipping the Audi's ass as:

INT. SILVER AUDI - NIGHT

Charlie struggles to keep the car on the road.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

Reacher rams the stubborn Audi once, twice, about to ram it a third time when he sees:

Three more squad cars in front of him, closing, covering both lanes. Reacher slams the breaks hard.

But the Audi keeps going, swerving to the shoulder, slamming into the guard-rail, clipping an oncoming cop car and, miraculously, making it through.

The cop car spins out, blocking Reacher's chance of following. He has only a split second to watch the Audi escape. But he has bigger problems. He drops his still-skidding Chevy in reverse and punches the gas.

The Chevy shudders, engulfed in a cloud of rubber smoke, and finally gaining speed going backward as:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Emerson and the three squad cars swerve to avoid slamming into Reacher's Chevy, passing him as:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Seven police cars are suddenly in a tangle - three coming, four going - all trying to follow Reacher.

INT. CHEVY - NIGHT

Meanwhile, Reacher takes the opportunity to make a jerky three point turn, grinding gears, about to start speeding the wrong way up the divided road.

Then he gets an idea.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Reacher gets out of the car and simply walks away. The stunned cops watch from their cars as Reacher jumps over the divider and across the road.

The police cars are suddenly useless. Emerson and A DOZEN COPS bail out and chase after Reacher on foot. Two of them have K-9. But Reacher has a good lead, he has no gun-belt, no body armor. And he's Reacher.

EXT. ALLEYS AND SIDESTREET - VARIOUS - DAY

Low-income suburbs. Boots on pavement, winded men breathing, dogs panting, radios squawking - flashlight beams swinging left and right.

For Reacher its the sort of course a military lifer is made for - dodging obstacles, vaulting fences.

For Emerson and his men it is the weight of the gear on their belts, the coffee in their bellies.

EMERSON

(winded/into radio)

Central, two-one-two. Pursuit is on foot, request air-support.

(to cops)

SPREAD OUT. CUT 'EM LOOSE.

Emerson and the cops fan out as TWO K-9 COPS drop to their knees and snap their leads. Two fine looking GERMAN SHEPHERDS speed ahead of the police.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Reacher hears them coming, the almost playful breathing. Other men would run faster. Reacher stops.

FIRST DOG'S P.O.V. Low and fast, loping across the grass, savage as it rounds a corner to find:

Reacher in a low crouch, hands outstretched. He catches the dog's front legs and spreads them like a wishbone. The dog is instantly helpless, front legs spread, chin on the ground. Reacher pins the dog, pulls its choke collar taught, steps on it. The animal flails, helpless as:

SECOND DOG'S P.O.V. Again, low and fast, rounding the corner to find Reacher throwing a punch. He jams his right fist directly into the dog's mouth, grabbing it by the scruff with the other. The dog can't bite down. And it can't breathe. The animal chokes, flails, and finally makes sounds of surrender.

REACHER

There's a good boy.

EXT. BACKYARD FENCE - NIGHT

Emerson and the TWO K-9 cops vault a fence into the yard and find the two dogs, wheezing and cowering. Their master's snap the leads on and try to continue the chase, but their dogs refuse to follow.

K-9 COP

Jesus... who the hell is this guy?

Emerson doesn't stop to answer. He runs around the corner, gun drawn, but there is no sign of Reacher.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Silence. Emerson and NUMEROUS COPS emerge from behind several houses - converging in a wide circle. All exits were covered. Where the hell did he go?

Emerson looks around the dimly lit neighborhood as a low rumbling grows into a roar and the eye of God seems to illuminate the neighborhood. A police helicopter roars overhead, its blinding spotlight searching relentlessly. But Reacher is gone.

COP

(to Emerson)

Where the hell did he go?

ANGLE ON: the ground at Emerson's feet. He doesn't notice a ragged hole in the grass as he walks away.

INT. SUBURBAN SPLIT-LEVEL - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the back door - the frame split where the knob meets the jamb. COME AROUND to reveal the place is deserted. Not a stick of furniture.

A FOR SALE sign leans against one wall, freshly ripped from the ground outside.

Reacher peers through curtains left behind. He watches the cops beat the bushes, look under cars. He dabs his bloody knuckles on the curtains and waits.

INT. SILVER AUDI - NIGHT

Charlie and Vlad watch from a distance as the police gather at their cars to give up.

THE ZEC (ON SPEAKER)
No matter. He has to run now.

CHARLIE
Yes, but in what direction?

INT. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION/SILVER AUDI - INTERCUT

The Zec with a cell phone in his claws.

THE ZEC
He can't get anything else on us
without exposing himself.

CHARLIE
But the lawyer can...

The Zec thinks, angry. Frustrated. Finally:

THE ZEC
You're sure you want this
responsibility, Chenko?

Charlie looks at Vlad's missing thumb, considers his
own ten healthy fingers. Finally:

CHARLIE
It's the right thing to do.

THE ZEC
It's on you then. Tie it off.

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Helen in her kitchen, dressed in a robe, tired after
a long day. As she turns out the lights she hears a
noise O.S. She pauses, follows it to the door.

E.C.U: The door knob moves ever so slightly. But the
door is locked. Helen backs away, scared now. She
turns for the phone just as it rings. A bright light
blinds her through the sliding glass door in the
kitchen. She lunges for a drawer, grabbing a kitchen
knife. The bright light turns, illuminating:

Emerson with TWO UNIFORM COPS. He has a cell phone to
his ear, shouting through the glass:

EMERSON
HELEN. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

INT. HELEN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

HELEN

I don't believe it.

She sits on the couch, stunned. Emerson and Rodin stand over her.

RODIN

I issued the warrant one hour ago.

EMERSON

According to the victim's boss, he was seen at her place of work this morning.

RODIN

Where he threatening her boss.

EMERSON

The car he was driving tonight belonged to friends of Jeb Oliver.

RODIN

The man he assaulted.

HELEN

Those guys assaulted Reacher. He-

RODIN

Reacher put two more men in the hospital this afternoon. At Jeb Oliver's house.

EMERSON

After arriving in Jeb Oliver's car.

RODIN

And Jeb hasn't been seen since he left the hospital.

All of this hits Helen like a truck.

EMERSON

Helen... If you know where Reacher is, you need to tell us.

HELEN

I have no idea. I haven't seen him since he left my office earlier this evening.

Emerson and Rodin study her. Finally.

RODIN

I think she's telling the truth.

HELEN

You *think*? Hey... Dad? Fuck you.

RODIN

I told you to stay away from him.

The phone rings, but Helen ignores it, standing.
Emerson has to get between her and Rodin.

HELEN

You come into my home, treat me
like some... *accessory*?

EMERSON

Arrright, come on.

The room erupts in cross talk, the ringing phone.
Emerson's voice finally cuts above it.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

ENOUGH.

She walks into the kitchen, picking up the phone.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

(pulling Rodin aside)

Let me take it from here.

RODIN

I'm not done.

HELEN

You're both done. Get out.

As Emerson and Rodin argue in the other room:

HELEN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

This is Helen.

REACHER (ON PHONE)

I'm guessing the police are there.

Helen blanches, recovers, considers her actions very
carefully, stealing a glance at Rodin and Emerson.

HELEN

... Yes.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Reacher on a pay phone.

REACHER (ON PHONE)

And by your response I'm guessing I have about thirty seconds before you hand them the phone.

EXT. GAS STATION/HELEN'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT

HELEN

If that.

REACHER

If you believe someone could frame Barr, you have to believe they could do the same to me.

HELEN

I suppose that's possible.

REACHER

She was a nice girl. Not so bright, but a good kid. They killed her to get at me. They want me to run, but I won't. I'm gonna finish this.

HELEN

That's... not a good idea.

REACHER

So listen. Two things. One, I stole your car.

REVEAL he is standing next to Helen's Lexus. We notice the back passenger window is gone.

REACHER (CONT'D)

If you want to end this. Just hang up the phone and report it missing. I'll understand.

HELEN

Anything else?

REACHER

I thought I'd be pushing it if I mentioned this earlier but now I guess all bets are off... You need to watch what you say to Emerson and your Father. I think one of them is in on it.

She shakes her head. "Typical Reacher."

HELEN

Thanks for calling. I have to go.

REACHER

I was followed from day one. Only three people knew I was here. Emerson, your father and you.

Helen thinks about this, turning slowly, looking at Emerson and Rodin, still talking in the other room.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Ask yourself who has the most to lose if we clear Barr? Who tried to warn you off me? Who has more to lose if something happens to you?

Helen turns slowly, focusing on her father just as her father and Emerson finish their dialogue. They focus on Helen now. Still she says nothing.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Of course, I could be wrong. If you think I am, just hand over the phone. No sense getting any deeper.

EMERSON

(eyes narrowing)

Who's that you're talking to?

Tense pause. Helen suddenly she hangs up the phone.

HELEN

The office. Are we finished?

RODIN

Helen, listen. We need to talk-

HELEN

Goodnight.

Emerson nods and heads for the door. Rodin lingers for a moment, but Helen folds her arms. She's done.

Rodin leaves, shutting the door behind him. Helen lets out a long, trembling breath and sits down.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - DAWN

Reacher's P.O.V. of a sign over the highway:

WELCOME TO KENTUCKY - Unbridled Spirit

HARD CUT to another sign coming up slowly on the side of a rural road:

HINGE CREEK GUN RANGE - Member's Only

EXT. HINGE CREEK GUN RANGE - DAY

Reacher parks between a Hummer and a Ford F-150. Bumper stickers express the single-issue leanings of die-hard 2nd Amendmenters. MEN WHO COULD VERY WELL BE MILITIA linger in the parking lot, giving Reacher the once over when he emerges from a citified Lexus.

INT. HINGE CREEK GUN RANGE - FRONT OFFICE - DAY

Wood paneled walls, spongy plywood floor, guns and ammo for sale. A big window behind the counter overlooks a long rifle range - the land dipping for three hundred yards before gradually sloping upwards to a forest half a mile beyond. A big flag reads:

SEMPER FI

Behind the counter is MARTIN CASH (50s). He cleans a stripped rifle not unlike the weapon used at the mall. He studies Reacher, nods slightly.

Reacher turns to a wall lined with simple 10 x 10 paper targets - concentric circles around a black bull's-eye. All of the targets are used, bearing tight groups of bullet holes in the center. Each target is marked with the range fired - none less than five hundred yards - and all bear the name of the marksman in small, meticulous handwriting.

We notice a few suspicious blank-spots on this otherwise orderly wall of fame.

REACHER

Got some fine shooters here.

CASH

Fine as frog's hair. Rarer, too. Most'a them fellas out there can't shoot worth a damn... Oh, they can hit a steel plate at a'hunny yards, laugh at the sound it makes. But ask'em to put three rounds in the black and they'll suck it.

REACHER
Looking for the owner.

CASH
That'a be me. Martin Cash.

Reacher likes this guy. As they shake hands:

REACHER
Aaron Ward.

CASH
What can I do you for... Mr. Ward.

REACHER
Looking for a friend of mine. We served together in Iraq. Guy just dropped off the grid, you know?

CASH
Happens.

REACHER
Yeah. Anyway, he was a shooter and last I heard he lived around here somewhere, so I thought...

CASH
When'd he get out of the Army?

REACHER
I didn't say he was Army.

CASH
You said you served with him and you're no Jarhead. Man on a flyin' horse could see that.

REACHER
My father was in the Corps if that helps.

CASH
(shrugs)
Makes you half human. Your friend have a name?

REACHER
James Barr.

Cash's face falls. As he reassembles the rifle:

CASH
Never heard of him.

REACHER

I think you have. I think you've been dreading the moment some cop comes in here asking after him.

(pointing out the window)

Because it's for sure some dumb-ass soccer mom on the other side of that wood is more worried about your range than she is about the pool in her backyard or the drain cleaner under her sink. And it wouldn't matter to her that Barr did his killing one hundred miles away. Only that he came here to rehearse. She'd have a case to shut you down. And nothing better to do.

CASH

What do you want?

REACHER

I want to know who Barr's friends were. Friends who could shoot.

CLACK - Cash slaps the last piece of the rifle in place and racks the bolt. Reacher doesn't flinch.

CASH

Them boys out there are awful touchy about their constitutional rights. 'Spose I tell 'em some cop is in here asking after my members?

REACHER

I'm not a cop. I work for Barr's attorney. And we have reason to believe he's innocent.

CASH

The hell you say.

REACHER

Be that as it may, I'm the only one bothered to track him this far. You help me out, I'll be in your debt.

CASH

And if I don't?

REACHER

Maybe you can coach soccer.

Cash thinks for a beat, pulls out a target, writes:

AARON WARD - 700 yds.

He lays three bullets down next to his rifle.

CASH

You put all three in the five and
maybe we'll talk.

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - BACKSTOP - DAY

A chilly wind blows across the desolate landscape. Reacher hangs the target on a wooden backstop. He turns to trek back the seven-hundred yards to the shooter's bench, pausing briefly to consider:

EXT. RIFLE RANGE - BENCH - DAY

Cash, his rifle resting on a simple plywood table. He glances at the gun, then Reacher, alone out there.

CLOSE ON: A pair of hands pick up of the rifle and rack the action. REVEAL:

It's Reacher, back at the bench now - foam plugs in his ears. Cash screws two .45 caliber casings in his. Reacher goes prone, shoulders the rifle.

A RIFLE SCOPE invades our P.O.V. and we are transported to the target. The reticle is a bit shakier than the one at the mall. Reacher breathes in and out, in and out. The reticle slowly settles and:

CRACK... CRACK... CRACK - Reacher stands as Cash raises a pair of binoculars to his eyes.

CASH'S P.O.V. Three shots in the black - one just touching the edge, but still good. Cash lowers his binoculars and studies Reacher with new eyes.

CASH

You're a little rusty, Mr. Reacher.

(off Reacher's look)

Saw a man by that name shoot for
the Wimbledon Cup ten years ago.
And I'm pretty sure you didn't play
second base for the Yankees in
nineteen twenty-five.

(off Reacher's smile)

I'll answer one question.

REACHER

Who's your best shooter?

INT. FRONT OFFICE - DAY

Cash lays down a dozen targets, each featuring a tight group in the center - so close as to make a single ragged hole.

CASH

I pulled these down as soon as I heard about the shooting.

Each target bears a name in the corner:

JAMES BARR

CASH (CONT'D)

Best shot I ever seen this side of civilian life.

REACHER

Suppose I told you he wasn't this good on his best day in the Army.

CASH

I hand out those targets myself. That's my scrawl on every one.

REACHER

You hang them downrange, too?

CASH

You serious?

REACHER

I'm saying it's possible Barr had a friend. One who switched the targets on the range. Maybe Barr let him. Made him feel like King Shit having his name on your wall.

CASH

I been shooting here-by twenny-fi years. I ain't never met a shooter who'd do that for his own mother.

REACHER

Unless he was framing his mother for murder...

(as Cash ponders this)
Barr didn't come alone, did he?

INT. BACK OFFICE - DAY

ANGLE ON: A jury-rigged piece of one-way glass over a ragged hole cut in the wall for a security camera.

ANGLE ON: Cash's desk: a rat's nest of receipts, an old adding machine and a crappy twenty-year old PC covered in grime plays back images captured by a the camera; The faces of Cash's many customers.

REACHER

One of these nuts is likely to kill you if they find that camera there.

CASH

Hell, the camera's there 'cuz one'a these nuts is likely to kill me.

ON THE SCREEN, Barr enters, followed by a MAN IN A BASEBALL CAP, face hard to make out. Until:

REACHER

There.

Cash pauses the playback - blurry, grainy, but enough to identify:

Charlie.

INT. UNIDENTIFIED OFFICE - DAY

Helen answers her ringing cell phone.

HELEN (INTO PHONE)

... Helen Rodin speaking.

INT. BACK OFFICE - DAY

Reacher uses a binder clip like forceps to lift Barr's targets into a trash bag.

REACHER

I have a candidate for our shooter.
Picture and possible prints.

HELEN (ON PHONE)

I can't talk now.

REACHER

Give me three hours to get back.
Then you can report your car
stolen.

INT. UNIDENTIFIED OFFICE - DAY

HELEN

I'll look into that. Thanks.

She hangs up.

COME AROUND SLOWLY as she address someone O.S. REVEAL a large heap of legal files on a desk in front of her. Several of the documents feature the words:

MARGRAVE CONSTRUCTION

HELEN (CONT'D)

This is just what I could pull this morning. Tax records, city and state permit applications, contract bids - a shell corporation in Georgia - that's the one next to Russia, not Florida. They work only one city at a time, arriving just ahead of major civic redevelopment - building bridges no one needs, highways no one uses. They're like cancer - a cell that won't stop growing...

REVEAL: She is sitting in District Attorney Rodin's office, addressing her father.

HELEN (CONT'D)

They've moved twelve times in fifteen years - Atlanta, Albuquerque, Austin, Oklahoma City, Sacramento - always amidst allegations of corruption, coercion, intimidation, fraud. And yet never an investigation. Not even an inquiry. As if Margrave Construction were above reproach.

RODIN

Maybe because these allegations come from the competition. Outbid, bankrupt, bitter. Like Oline Archer.

HELEN

Or maybe Margrave has the cooperation of key officials. Maybe when that cooperation isn't enough, they kill people that won't be intimidated. Like Oline Archer.

RODIN

Helen... Really. How much of this do you honestly believe?

HELEN

It doesn't matter how much I believe. It doesn't even matter how much I can prove. It only matters how much is true.

(re: the papers on desk)

I pulled all of this paper under my own name. If Jack Reacher is right, my life, your daughter's life, is in danger now. Whatever happens to me next is on your head - whether you're involved or not.

RODIN

Do you hear how delusional you sound?

HELEN

You are the *District Attorney* and I have given you compelling evidence to investigate Margrave Construction. Your next move will tell me what side you're on.

RODIN

Helen, you're my daughter and I love you. Obviously I'm not going to turn a blind eye no matter how absurd I might find this whole thing. The first order of business will be to put you in protective custody. Right now.

HELEN

And how safe will I be if you're part of it?

RODIN

Jesus, Helen.

She stands and heads for the door.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Helen emerges from Rodin's office, ignoring THE MAN seated on one of several leather chairs - his face hidden by a newspaper.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors slide open and Helen gets on. The doors are just about closed when a hand catches them. As the doors slide open again.

VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, Hey.

The Man enters, steps into the frame TO REVEAL:

Emerson.

EMERSON

Business meeting or personal?

HELEN

Hard to tell them apart.

EMERSON

I'll bet.

The doors close. The elevator descends. After a few beats Helen has a realization. She does her best to hide that she is suddenly nervous.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

You haven't been to your apartment.

Beat. Helen, thinks fast, pulling the stop button. The elevator lurches to a halt and the alarm sounds. Emerson grabs her, reaches under his jacket.

She screams, kicks, punches. He gets a hand on her throat and:

ZZZZZACK - nails her with the stun-gun he holds in the other. His lips are curled in that slightly sickened sneer. There is no joy in this.

Winded, bleeding from a scratch on his cheek, Emerson pushes the stop button back in. The alarm stops. He quickly pulls keys from his belt and inserts a particularly long one in the hole marked:

FIRE ONLY

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

The elevator opens. Emerson steps out with Helen's limp body over his shoulder. Here he meets:

Vlad and Charlie.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Reacher on a pay phone, Helen's card in his hand, keeping a wary eye as he dials.

MALE VOICE (ON PHONE)

Hello.

Confused, Reacher looks at Helen's card again.

REACHER

Sorry, wrong number.

MALE VOICE

Is this Reacher?

REACHER

Who is this?

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie has Helen's cell phone.

CHARLIE (INTO PHONE)

Is this Reacher?

REACHER (ON PHONE)

You're the guy from the car...

Charlie holds the phone to Helen, seated in a chair with Vlad behind her, hands resting on her shoulders. She's scared but otherwise okay.

HELEN (INTO PHONE)

Reacher? Is it you?

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Reacher shakes his head, pissed.

REACHER

Helen, are you hurt?

But she's gone.

CHARLIE

She's gonna be if you're not here in one hour. Do I have to tell you how this works?

REACHER

You'll bounce me around to make sure I'm not followed. Then you'll walk me into an ambush and kill me.

CHARLIE

You ruined my surprise.

REACHER

I can do better than that. I've been down to the range at Hinge Creek. I have a picture and prints and I'm going to the Feds. The lawyer is all yours.

He hangs up the phone.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is stunned. He looks at Helen, Vlad:

CHARLIE

Get the Zec.

Vlad leaves the room as the phone rings again. Charlie answers, this time on speaker:

REACHER (ON SPEAKER)

On second thought, I'd like to kill you. What say winner take all?

EXT. GAS STATION/DARK ROOM - INTERCUT

CHARLIE

Listen, fucker, I will *kill* this bitch if you're not here in one-

Reacher hangs up.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Shit

Long pause. The phone rings again. He answers.

REACHER

Do you think I'm a hero? I am not a hero. I'm a drifter with nothing to lose and you put me in a frame. I mean to beat you to death and drink your blood from a boot.

Helen is stunned - not sure if he means it.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Now here's how it's gonna work.
Give me the address and I'll be
along when I'm damn good and ready.
If she doesn't answer when I call
this number, if I think you've hurt
her, I disappear... And if you're
smart that scares you. Because I'm
in your blind spot... And I have
nothing better to do.

Charlie looks to the doorway where the Zec is now
lingering. Helen notices him for the first time and
gasps audibly. Charlie covers the phone as:

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Reacher hangs on tenterhooks, listening to a muffled
conversation, praying with his eyes closed. Finally:

CHARLIE

Get a pen.

REACHER

Don't need one.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - VARIOUS - NIGHT

The trucks are gone, the dust has settled. Bright
lights covering the rig make this place look even
more like an alien outpost. Vlad and the other three
Thugs patrol the premises, calm but alert.

INT. CROWS-NEST - TOP OF COMBINE - NIGHT

Charlie occupies the highest point of the compound
atop the silos. He uses a sniper rifle with a night
vision scope to scans the horizon in all directions.

INT. CONCRETE FACTORY - OFFICE TRAILER - NIGHT

The Zec sits in a chair smoking a cigarette. Helen
studies this creature with fascination. Emerson
lingers by the door, waiting for the fight.

HELEN

(to Emerson)

Why did you do it?

EMERSON

You make it sound like there's a choice.

HELEN

There isn't?

EMERSON

You'll see.

HELEN

(to the Zec)

Excuse me... sir?

The Zec does not even react. She turns to Emerson.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I heard them call him The Zec... Is that some term of respect? Is that how I should-

THE ZEC

Zec means prisoner.

He turns to face her now and her blood runs cold.

HELEN

This is all for nothing. I've taken steps. If anything happens to me-

THE ZEC

If anything happens to you, it will happen in front of your father... While he begs for your life.

(off Helen's look)

You should never have involved him. Now you must convince him to forget. For your sake and for his.

(when she doesn't respond)

You say nothing but I see defiance in your eyes. When the soldier comes - when you watch how he dies - it will change you. You will want to forget me then.

She looks to Emerson. That slightly sickened sneer on his face makes her believe him.

HELEN

All this killing... Is it really just so you can... go on building? Sucking money from the system?

THE ZEC

I don't understand?

HELEN

How much money can it really be?
How much is enough?

But the Zec appears genuinely confused.

THE ZEC

Enough? *Enough?* We take what can be
taken. It is what we do.

Helen's cell phone rings, startling her. Emerson
answers, hands it to Helen.

HELEN

Reacher?

REACHER (ON PHONE)

You okay?

HELEN (INTO PHONE)

Don't do this. Not for me.

EXT. SUNKEN DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

A wall of earth five feet high on either side.
Reacher leans against Helen's car in the dark.

REACHER (INTO PHONE)

Don't make a big thing of it.

HELEN (ON PHONE)

They're ready for you.

REACHER

They'd like to think so. Hang in
there.

He hangs up as headlights approach. He tenses as a
pick up truck comes to a stop. THE DRIVER gets out,
walks toward him, holding a rifle, emerging from
behind the headlights TO REVEAL:

CASH

If I had a dollar for every time
the Army called the Corps for help.

REACHER

(re: Cash's rifle)

You bring something for me?

Cash pulls a knife from his jacket and hands it over.

REACHER (CONT'D)

You're kidding me, right?

CASH

Just 'cuz I saw you shoot ten years ago doesn't mean I'm gonna let you kill some asshole with my gun.

REACHER

I told you how serious this was.

CASH

And I showed up, didn't I? So let's get to it.

CRANE UP as Reacher leads Cash to the wall of Earth on one side of the sunken road TO REVEAL:

The Concrete factory a good half mile away, lit up like Christmas. Reacher and Cash peer from a place of perfect cover. Cash pops the scope off his rifle, brings it to his eye like a telescope.

CASH's P.O.V. He spies two of The Zec's Baltic Thugs but nothing else. His scope settles on the shadow at the tops of the central silos.

CASH (CONT'D)

He'll be on top there - kill you just as soon as you stand up.

REACHER

Can you take him out?

CASH

To dinner, you mean? I'm ain't shootin' anybody.

(off Reacher's look)

Look, I don't know what sort of people you normally associate with, but I'm not in the habit of driving out to the boonies at the drop of a hat and picking off total strangers, arrright?

REACHER

(sighs)

Can you keep him pinned down?

CASH

How long?

REACHER

Long enough for me to reach the compound.

CASH

And then what?

REACHER

I have to think of everything?

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

Charlie snaps alert as a car emerges from the sunken road half a mile away and makes an erratic turn. We think the car is driving away from the factory until the back-up lights come on. Charlie can hear the engine whining from here, gunning in reverse.

Charlie aims and CRACK

INT. CONCRETE FACTORY - OFFICE TRAILER - NIGHT

The Zec, Helen and Emerson all prick up at the sound of the shot. The Zec checks his watch and smiles.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - VARIOUS

The Baltic Thugs take cover and get ready, watching the car come.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Reacher lays on the floor, left elbow on the gas, right hand steering. A bullet blows out the back window. Another blasts through the headrest.

The back seat is filled with evidence boxes - the dense reams of paper as good as armor.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

Charlie fires again and again, punching holes in the Lexus as it bounces across open ground, ever closer.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

The Lexus hits a dip, catches air, lands hard - a mass of torn metal and shattered glass. It skids into a ditch, stuck.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Reacher drops the car in drive, reverse, drive again, slamming the gas with his elbow, trying to rock the car free. Bullets pepper the roof.

REACHER

Jesus, Gunny. Where are you?

EXT. SUNKEN ROAD - NIGHT

Cash sights in on the dark recess of the crows nest, drawing a bead on the muzzle flashes and:

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

PING - A bullet hits the trim just inches from Charlie's face. He recoils as the sound of the shot catches up with the bullet. He brings the gun around and scans for the source.

INT. HELEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Reacher realizes there's a break in the shooting. He bails out of the car and runs across open ground as:

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

Charlie sees Reacher, draws a bead on him as:

EXT. SUNKEN ROAD - NIGHT

Cash draws a bead on the darkness where Charlie is hiding:

CRACK

Then he quickly ducks out of sight as:

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

PING-CRACK. Charlie's shot is thrown off by Cash's incoming. He swings his rifle around again to search the darkness for Cash. No luck. He goes back to Reacher, painting his chest with the crosshairs.

PING. Another bullet just misses Charlie. He flinches, tries to ignore it, aiming at Reacher and:

CRACK

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

A bullet hits the ground at Reacher's feet. He runs full speed in a straight line, the sound of snipers duking it out in front and behind.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - NIGHT

Vlad emerges from the shadows and squints, seeing Reacher closing fast across the last hundred yards of open ground. He aims.

EXT. OPEN FIELD

KAKAKAKAKAKAKA - Machine-gun fire. Reacher switches from a dead run to a serpentine.

EXT. SUNKEN ROAD - NIGHT

Cash's scope deviates from the crows nest to the two flashing machine-guns lower down. He aims.

CRACK

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY/CROWS NEST/OPEN FIELD - INTERCUT

A flood light above Vlad explodes, showering him with powdered glass.

Vlad ducks, motions for his Three Thugs to spread out and rush to meet Reacher at the edge of the compound.

Meanwhile, Charlie sees Cash's muzzle flash and draws a bead on his position.

EXT. SUNKEN ROAD - NIGHT

Cash aims at another light by Vlad as:

ZZZZZZMACK - A bullet strikes the ground just inches from his face - throws dirt and gravel in his eyes. Cash drops, blinded.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

Charlie turns his sights back to the field but Reacher is gone.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - EDGE OF COMPOUND - NIGHT

Meanwhile two Thugs round a long row of shipping containers at the edge of the compound, expecting to find Reacher but finding only darkness.

ANGLE ON: A Third Thug lingers on the other side of the shipping container, watching the back door, so to speak. Reacher emerges from the darkness behind him, knife in hand. The Thug turns at the last second and fires as Reacher grabs the muzzle.

EXT. EDGE OF COMPOUND - FAR SIDE OF CONTAINERS - NIGHT

The other Two thugs hear this and run toward it.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - EDGE OF COMPOUND - NIGHT

The rapidly firing gun's muzzle sears Reacher's palm but he holds tight. With his other hand he drives the knife into the Thug's chest, shoving him back into the shipping container. The machine gun continues to fire. Reacher takes the pain, pounding the knife with his elbow until the Thug drops.

His left palm blistering, Reacher grabs the Thug's gun but it is slung to the dead weight of his body. Reacher tries to pull out the knife, but the blade is stuck fast. He brings the sling to the blade instead, slicing it clean through. He has a gun but it's empty. He searches the thug for magazines.

ANGLE ON: The two Thugs rounding the shipping container as:

Reacher finds a magazine, quickly jams it home, charges the weapon as:

The two Thugs appear in time to see Reacher standing and opening fire:

KAKAKAKAKAKAKA - Reacher cuts down the two Thugs before they know what hit them. But:

KAKAKAKAKA - Bullets pepper the shipping container. Reacher hits the ground and returns fire, seeing:

Vlad, ducking for cover. Reacher gets up and presses the attack, firing in short controlled bursts, moving from one position of cover to the next. Vlad is doing the same until finally.

Reacher's gun is empty. Vlad emerges from cover, steps out to get a clear shot and pulls the trigger.

CLICK - Vlad is out, too. He goes for a spare magazine. Reacher doesn't have one. He drops the machine gun and rushes Vlad as the Russian quickly reloads, driving the magazine home, jerking the bolt-

WHAM - Reacher hits him like a train. The two men go down hard, grappling close-in with a loaded machine-gun between their bodies. Vlad has control of the trigger, Reacher the muzzle. Stalemate then:

WHAM - Reacher head-butts Vlad in the nose, buying a few seconds of control. He wrenches the gun clockwise, turning the sling into a tourniquet around Vlad's neck and chest. Vlad punches Reacher, trying to break free. It becomes a fight to see who can stay conscious longer. Vlad loses. He collapses, dead.

Winded, bleeding, Reacher stands, looks toward the silo at the center of the compound. He grabs Vlad's gun and heads toward it.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - SILO STAIRS - NIGHT

Reacher creeps up the metal stairs on the outside of the silo, totally exposed. He reaches the top and finds a steel door. He kicks it open and enters:

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

Reacher dives to one side, expecting to be fired upon. Instead he lands on the floor opposite:

Charlie, bleeding through a hole between his neck and shoulder, gasping for breath.

CHARLIE
Who's that guy out there?

REACHER
Just some Marine.

CHARLIE
Fuckin' Marines.

Reacher stands, picks up Charlie's sniper rifle, steps in his wounded shoulder. Charlie sucks wind.

REACHER
It was you... At the mall.

Charlie almost cries from the pain. He is pathetic now. Crippled.

CLOSE ON Reacher - rage in his eyes, a lust for blood. But then he pushes it away, backs off.

CHARLIE
Can you do me the favor?

Reacher nods checks the rifle. Charlie tips his head back, waits for the shot.

CRACK - Charlie screams. A bullet in his foot.

CRACK - His screams shatter into sobs - a bullet in his other foot.

INT. CONCRETE FACTORY - OFFICE TRAILER - NIGHT

Emerson, Helen and the Zec hear three more shots, mingling with Charlie's howls of agony. Five shots in all. Emerson is scared, close to snapping. The Zec is amazingly calm, smoking a cigarette.

EXT. CONCRETE FACTORY - CROWS NEST - NIGHT

Charlie weeps, bleeding from his knees, elbows, feet.

REACHER
One shot for each of them.

He places the muzzled over Charlie's heart.

REACHER (CONT'D)
And one for Sandy.

CRACK

INT. CONCRETE FACTORY - OFFICE TRAILER - NIGHT

REACHER'S P.O.V. The door creaks open TO REVEAL:

Emerson behind Helen, a gun to her head. A shadow in the corner casually sucks on a glowing cigarette.

EMERSON'S P.O.V. Reacher just outside, Charlie's rifle in his hand.

REACHER

The quarter should've tipped me off. Nobody's that good.

EMERSON

Forest for the trees.

Long pause. Emerson considers his options and makes his move, aiming like lighting at Reacher as:

Reacher shoulders the rifle just as fast and:

CRACK/CRACK

CLOSE ON: Helen. She flinches.

HELEN'S P.O.V. Reacher aiming the smoking rifle.

Emerson's pistol falls in her lap. He collapses behind her - dead.

Reacher enters, aiming the rifle at the shadow in the corner. Helen stands, trembling, holding Emerson's pistol by the barrel. Reacher puts down the rifle, takes the pistol, puts an arm around her.

HELEN

You were wrong... About my father.

REACHER

Don't get all smug about it.

Then he flicks on the light. The Zec flinches slightly, almost like a roach ready to run under the fridge. But he stays calm. Smokes.

REACHER (CONT'D)

Who is he?

HELEN

He's John Doe Number Two... The man on the grassy knoll. They call him the Zec.

REACHER

Prisoner?

The Zec raises an eyebrow, nods, mildly impressed.

REACHER (CONT'D)

What's your real name?

The Zec says nothing. Reacher puts Emerson's pistol to his forehead.

REACHER (CONT'D)

I was born in October. When I get to my birthday I'm gonna pull the trigger. One... Two... Thr-

THE ZEC

Zec Chelovek.

REACHER

Chelovek... Chelovek...

(thinking)

Human? Prisoner Human being? *That's* your name?

THE ZEC

That is all I have left. What came before that was gone long ago.

Reacher studies this pathetic old man and realizes he's telling the truth.

REACHER

Call the police.

As Helen picks up the phone and dials.

HELEN

Were you really going to shoot him?

REACHER

I knew I wouldn't have to. I took one look at this guy and I knew he'd do anything to survive.

(to The Zec)

And you took one look at me and knew I wasn't bluffing.

HELEN (INTO PHONE)

Yes, I have an emergency at-
(listens/sighs)

Yes, I'll hold.

She looks at Reacher: "can you believe this?"

REACHER

We're in no hurry.

(to the Zec)

With a name like yours... You're gonna feel right at home.

THE ZEC

If I go to prison at all.

REACHER

What did you say?

THE ZEC

You heard me, Soldier. I am an old man... In the wrong place at the wrong time. You are a drifter wanted for murder. We will see who goes to prison.

Reacher thinks about this for a second.

REACHER

My bet? Neither one.

CRACK - He shoots the Zec through his milky eye.

Helen drops the phone, too stunned to scream.

HELEN

What... What did you *do*?

REACHER

What's it look like?

He wipes his prints off the weapon and places it in the Zec's dead hand.

HELEN

But he was... That was... What about getting the guys who really did it? What about bringing them to justice? Exposing the truth?

REACHER

... I did.

And he walks out.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

Reacher and Helen walk toward a car covered in gray dust and riddled with bullet holes.

HELEN

And what about clearing Barr? What about clearing you?

REACHER

Like any of these guys were going to confess.

He reaches into the blown-open trunk of the car and pulls out a plastic bag containing targets and a picture of Charlie. He hands it to Helen.

REACHER (CONT'D)

You have what you need, counselor. I'm not saying it'll be easy, but I have faith you'll sort it out.

HELEN

What happens to you in the meantime?

REACHER

I keep moving. Same as always. Makes no difference to me.

Helen looks at the bag for a moment, then realizes:

HELEN

Wait... is this *my* car.

VOICE (O.S.)

Is this the lady?

Cash emerges from the darkness, still trying to get the grit out of his eyes.

REACHER

Helen Rodin, Martin Cash.

CASH

(to Helen)

Pleasure.

(to Reacher)

You look like hell there, Army.

REACHER

(to Helen)

You asked if I was afraid of ending up like Barr? I'm not. I'm afraid I'll end up like this guy.

(to Cash)

Hey, I know you didn't mean to shoot anybody, Gunny, but you missed.

CASH

Shit. Really?

The faint sound of sirens O.S. They notice the first flashing lights from a line of police cars approaching in the distance.

REACHER

Yeah. We should probably go.

As Reacher and Cash turn to leave:

HELEN

Wait... That's it? It's just... over?

REACHER

For you... It's just getting started.

Suddenly Helen looks very small in the midst of this moonscape. Reacher puts his hands on her shoulders.

REACHER (CONT'D)

You're going to be all right, counselor.

HELEN

What if I need you? How will I find you?

REACHER

You don't need me... Not anymore.

He kisses her gently on the cheek. Helen grabs him and kisses him on the lips. They linger too long for Cash's liking. He clears his throat.

Finally, Helen lets go.

HELEN

Good-bye, Reacher.

REACHER

So long, counselor.

Cash and Reacher walk back toward the sunken road, dissolving into the shadows.

We stay with Helen, in the middle of a wide open, bone grey wasteland, sirens getting closer. She takes a deep breath and waits, fearless, as we FADE TO:

WHITE

And a familiar beeping as we FADE IN TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

P.O.V. looking up at the ceiling from a hospital bed.

James Barr - face still slightly swollen, hair matted from recently removed bandages - awaits judgement.

WOMAN'S VOICE O.S.

You're looking much better.

Helen enters, pulls up a chair and sits. She has a note-pad and pen on her lap.

HELEN

I'm Helen Rodin, your attorney.
This conversation is protected by
attorney-client privilege. Do you
understand what that means?

Barr's nods. Then his eyes well up with tears of guilt and shame.

HELEN (CONT'D)

The police didn't talk to you, did they? They can't do that without me here.

He shakes his head.

BARR

How bad was it? How many did I...

HELEN

You don't remember *anything* about the incident.

BARR

No, but I hear the nurses talking to those cops out there... I don't even remember wanting to do it. Guess I must'a just... snapped.

(takes a long shaky breath)

Look, I'm not gonna fight this... If they say I done it I did... I done things before...

She reaches into her valise, pulls out photos of the mall. Generic. All taken before the crime.

HELEN

How well do you know this place?

BARR

Pretty well.

HELEN

James... How do you *think* you would have done it?

Barr takes the pictures, thumbs through them, shrugs.

BARR

Guess... I would'a parked up on the highway... Sun'd be on my back that time'a day. I got a van. I could set up in the back. Wouldn't have to worry about my brass. Get away real clean, too. That sound about right?

Helen nods, quietly amazed.

HELEN

It sounds like you know your stuff.

BARR

I forget your name.

HELEN

Helen. Helen Rodin.

Barr starts to cry.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You'll be all right, James... I'll take care of you.

BARR

You can't protect me. No one can.

HELEN

From what... From who?

BARR

I did something bad. Real bad. A long time ago. And I got away with it. But there's this guy. A kind'a cop. He made me a promise. He said if I ever got in trouble again... he'd be there.

Helen tries her best not to smile at the irony.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

PULL BACK SLOWLY from A YOUNG COUPLE arguing in harsh whispers in the back of the bus. THE GIRL is near tears. The GUY is on the verge of getting physical.

We can't hear what he is saying, but none of it is nice.

As we move backward down the aisle we take in the faces of the OTHER PASSENGERS - a gallery of faces, human faces from all points, brought together by fate to share this uncomfortable experience. They all want the fight to stop. No one wants to get involved.

And this is where we find Reacher - freshly turned out in the latest Target fashion, headed to God knows where. He looks out the window, knuckle to his lips.

PUSH IN SLOWLY as the question nags him: "Why?"

GUY (O.S.)

I said shut your *mouth*.

The sound of a slap, a young woman crying out.

REACHER

Dammit.

He gets up and walks to the back of the bus. We stay on his empty seat.

BLACK

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