

JOSEPH AND THE GIRL

By Gary McKendry and Matt Sherring

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A DOG FIGHTING RING. NEW ORLEANS. NIGHT. -- A RED PIT-BULL is led through a crowd. The dog is battered, scarred, a hardened survivor.

CUT TO:

ANGOLA PRISON. DAY. -- A PRISONER in RED COVERALLS crosses a crowded CELL BLOCK. Lean, hard, he has the pale skin and jailhouse tattoos of a long term con.

CUT TO:

The red pit-bull stares across the ring as a pair of YELLOW PIT-BULLS are unleashed.

CUT TO:

The prisoner watches as a PAIR of YOUNG CONS step in front of him. A PRISON SHIV drops from a SLEEVE into a tattooed hand. And they attack --

CUT TO:

The yellow dogs tear into the red dog. The animals WRITHE in a BLUR of muscle and blood, teeth flashing --

CUT TO:

The shiv flashes as the prisoner tries to block the blows. He's STABBED again and again as the fight goes to ground. The prisoner SMASHES an attacker's head off the concrete --

CUT TO:

The red dog THROWS off one of his opponents and locks onto the other -- The crowd round the ring ROARS as the red dog MAULS a dog on the ground --

CUT TO:

The prisoner brings down the second attacker -- he smashes the young con in the face ignoring the shiv slashing at his arms. GUARDS swarm wielding NIGHTSTICKS and PEPPER SPRAY --

CUT TO:

The red pit-bull is collared and led away bleeding --

CUT TO:

The prisoner is DRAGGED off leaving a Jackson Pollock of blood on the cell block floor. He grins, because somewhere a prisoner is singing the MR. RODGER'S THEME --

PRISONER (SINGING)
*It's a lovely day in the
neighborhood...*

CAPTION -- ANGOLA PRISON. "THE FARM" LOUISIANA

INT. INFIRMARY. ANGOLA PRISON. LOUISIANA. DAY.

A needle slides through skin, sewing up the STAB WOUNDS. The result is ugly but not out of place on JOSEPH SAUDEK (56). He's a survivor, with the scars to prove it. The eyes too.

Across the WARD a couple of OLD CONS lie wasting away. Bedridden shells of the men they were, they know they're gonna die in here. Joseph can smell the fear.

PRISON OFFICIAL 1 (OVER)
What do you have to say Saudek?

JOSEPH (OVER)
It was self defence.

PRISON OFFICIAL 2 (OVER)
It was a broken arm and a serious concussion.

INT. HEARING ROOM. ANGOLA PRISON. DAY.

Joseph sits waiting, picking thread from his stitches. He's escorted into a HEARING. The door swings closed. A PANEL of PRISON OFFICIALS barely look up.

PRISON OFFICIAL 3 (OVER)
Third time this year. You playing bodyguard. Your friend Duplantier's a real shit magnet, huh?

PRISON OFFICIAL 1 (OVER)
What's the fascination?

JOSEPH (OVER)
I don't know.

One man in the panel fixes Joseph with a CALCULATING LOOK as he PICKS AT A SCAB on his wrist. WILLIAM JAMES McEWAN (40), clean cut, well spoken, but with a face that looks like it's been taken apart and reassembled.

PRISON OFFICIAL 3
(correcting Joseph)
SIR.

JOSEPH
I don't know, sir.

PRISON OFFICIAL 2
Our job here is to protect society from people like you.

INT. CELL. ANGOLA PRISON. MORNING.

Joseph stands at the MESHED GLASS window. Outside, the sun is rising. He gently taps a SPIDERS WEB in the corner of the window. A SPIDER scuttles into view.

PRISON OFFICIAL 1 (OVER)
You have two weeks to go on your sentence?

JOSEPH (OVER)
Yes. Sir.

PRISON OFFICIAL 1 (OVER)
Now you got another two months.

BERNARD
I'm sorry.

Joseph shrugs at his Creole CELL MATE and PARTNER in crime BERNARD DUPLANTIER (58). If Joseph is the brawn of the team, Bernard is the brain.

BERNARD
Only a couple of weeks to go.

JOSEPH
For you. I've got a couple of months. If I'm lucky.

BERNARD
What d'you mean?

He lifts his shirt flashing the stitched up stab wounds.

JOSEPH
Bernard, your mouth is gonna get me killed or get me a jolt in here I'll never finish.

He turns back to the tiny, grubby window --

JOSEPH
Right now there are people pissed in traffic, fighting with the wife, freaking over a parking ticket and I'd take it all. I'd crawl over broken glass to get it.
(he can't look at Bernard as he finishes)
From here on out you're on your own. We're done.

EXT. EXERCISE YARD. ANGOLA PRISON. DAY.

Joseph runs monotonous laps round the fence. He passes a BASKETBALL game where no one keeps score. OLD CONS playing a GAME OF CHECKERS that will never end --

JOSEPH'S POV -- HE'S RUNNING DOWN A BLACK SAND BEACH TOWARDS A COTTAGE ON A BLUFF OVER AN AZURE SEA. A BLOND WOMAN STANDS ON THE TERRACE, LAUGHING AS JOSEPH RUNS TOWARD HER...

A CON watches Joseph run by then turns back to the con-trail crossing the sky.

INT. CELL BLOCK. DAY. SAME TIME.

A finger picks at a wrist. Pissed off, persistent, pick, pick, pick. Blood runs down McEwans hand as he's escorted across the CELL BLOCK by a PAIR OF GUARDS.

INT. CELL. CONTINUOUS.

Bernard sits playing chess with a YOUNG CON. They look up as the Warden appears in the door. The YOUNG CON gets the message and slips out of there.

McEwan pulls a piece of WIRE from his wrist. He ponders it. A half inch long, sleeked in blood. McEwan produces a pill bottle and pops a VICODIN, then drops the wire inside the bottle. He flashes Bernard a smile and steps into the cell. A GUARD follows him, shutting the door behind him.

INT. CELL BLOCK. CONTINUOUS.

The Young Con looks back to see the SECOND GUARD take up position outside the closed cell door.

EXT. EXERCISE YARD. MINUTES LATER.

Joseph is still pulling laps as the young Con runs up --

YOUNG CON
Hey Joseph. Bernard has visitors.
You maybe wanna check on him.

Joseph breaks off running and starts toward the cell block. Then he stops --

JOSEPH
Fuck it. I'm not taking that
train. Not this time.

The young Con watches, surprised, as Joseph runs on.

INT. CELL BLOCK. LATER.

Joseph, drenched in sweat, passes through electronic doors and heads back to his cell.

INT. CELL. CONTINUOUS.

Books, chess pieces and papers lie scattered. Bernard looks up from his broken glasses as Joseph walks in.

BERNARD

You missed the show. Warden had some follow-up questions after your hearing.

JOSEPH

About?

BERNARD

What those boys were after when they cut you up.

JOSEPH

And you told him?...

BERNARD

Nothing.

Joseph glances at the trashed cell.

JOSEPH

Went down well, huh?

BERNARD

(a wry grin)

"There's no trust, no faith, no honesty in men."

(off Joseph's look)

Shakespeare.

JOSEPH

Is there a plan Bernard? Huh?

(a searching look)

Or is it all bullshit? A big bluff...

BERNARD

I thought you didn't want to know.

JOSEPH

I don't.

Joseph lifts a PHOTO from the floor. It shows A FISHING VILLAGE ON A BLACK SAND BEACH BY A BRIGHT BLUE SEA. Bernard reaches and takes it from him.

BERNARD

You think it's the same?

JOSEPH

(shrugs)

Everything changes.

BERNARD

Even Joseph Saudek?

JOSEPH
They say he's got a shot. But his
partner?...

He grins. Bernard too.

A drop of blood spatters the photo. Then another. Bernard
wipes his nose. Blood is dripping from one nostril.

BERNARD
Damn.

JOSEPH
Here.

He grabs a rag. He runs it under the tap, squeezes it out
and turns back --

Bernard is sprawled on the bunk convulsing -- eyes rolled
back in his head. Joseph leans over his friend, scared --

JOSEPH
Bernard! Bernard! C'mon man!
(but it's bad)
GUARD! GUARD!
(freaking)
Bernard! Look at me! C'mon. Please!
I'm sorry Bernard! Bernard!

EXT. BURIAL GROUND. ANGOLA PRISON. DAY.

A BLACK CARRIAGE drawn by a pair of WHITE HORSES rattles
toward a group of PRISONERS lined along a road. The OLD
INMATE at the reins tips his TOP HAT as the prisoners fall in
behind the HEARSE. Joseph marches with eyes fixed on the
black COFFIN lying on a bed of planks.

CUT TO:

A PRISON CHOIR sings --

CHOIR (OVER)
"No more chains holding me,
Hallelujah, I am free,"

A PASSENGER VAN pulls up. A PREACHER gets out along with a
GIRL. Creole, early twenties and dressed in defiant red.
She's a lovely thing not from this ugly place.

Joseph watches as she is escorted through a sea of small
WHITE WOODEN CROSSES. Each bears a NAME and a PRISON NUMBER.
The girl catches him staring, he looks away guiltily. Soil
thumps onto the coffin. Joseph jumps --

The girl stares into the grave dry eyed. She wipes her hands
clean and walks away to the sad drumbeat of soil being
shoveled onto Bernard's coffin.

INT. CELL BLOCK. NIGHT.

The lights go out. There's laughter in the darkness.

FADE IN:

INT. CELL. EARLY MORNING.

CAPTION -- TWO MONTHS LATER.

The PICTURE of the town by the azure sea is taken from the wall and folded inside a book. It's set in a PRISON GARBAGE BAG with a CASSETTE PLAYER AND HEADPHONES.

ATKINS (40), a third generation PRISON GUARD, watches Joseph cross to the cell window. He carefully SCOOPS THE SPIDER into a MATCHBOX that goes into the bag too.

INT. PRISONER PROCESSING AREA. MORNING.

Joseph's hands are freed from cuffs. Atkins sets a cardboard box and a bag of clothes on the counter. Joseph picks his wallet from the box -- any cash is long gone.

JOSEPH
There was a wedding ring.

ATKINS
You still married?
(off Joseph's silence)
So you won't be needing the ring.

Joseph signs a form.

EXT. PRISON GATE. MORNING.

Joseph and a LATINO PRISONER climb from a VAN. GUARDS check their names. One offers Joseph his hand.

GUARD
I hope I never see you again,
Joseph.

They shake.

JOSEPH
(smiles)
Yeah. I'm too old for this shit.

GUARD
Devil don't look at birth
certificates. Remember that...

Joseph nods and steps through the gate. He blinks in the hard light. Suddenly there's a chorus of screams. The Latino prisoner is mobbed by FAMILY. There's laughter, tears, balloons and babies.

A small fleet of cars speeds off with horns beeping leaving Joseph alone at the BUS STOP.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY. LATER.

A BUS rolls down a highway.

INT. BUS. CONTINUOUS.

Trees flash by. Joseph drinks in the low horizon and looming sky. FREEDOM.

He looks round a little lost. The clothes, the music on the bus radio, a woman skyp-ing on an i-phone, a kid playing a video game. A whole new world.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

Joseph steps off the bus. It pulls away revealing a spectacular view of the Mississippi river. Joseph turns and walks toward a BAR/MOTEL/SHIT HOLE.

INT. BAR/MOTEL. DAY. LATER.

A beer is set down with change. Joseph eyes the BARTENDER.

BARTENDER

You gave me a ten, right?

JOSEPH

Five bucks for a beer?

BARTENDER

(shrugs)

Where you been?

A LATINO BUSBOY sets a plate loaded with chicken fried steak smothered in the works. Joseph attacks.

CUT TO:

ALLEY OUTSIDE THE BAR. Joseph pukes against a wall. The Busboy is watching him. He nods to the PRISON GARBAGE BAG.

BUSBOY

The food is too rich. That stuff
inside is shit.

Joseph spits. He looks down the alley to the highway and the Mississippi river shining on the other side.

EXT. HIGHWAY/RIVER CONTINUOUS.

Joseph climbs the crash barrier onto the shoulder. He angles across the four lanes of traffic. Dodging cars, ignoring horns, Joseph vaults the barrier and plunges into the water.

He rolls onto his back. Floating. Letting the water wash through his hair, his clothes, soaking away the stink of prison. He stares up at the vast sky. An airplane glints up there, going somewhere. Joseph clambers to his feet and turns to wade to the shore --

WARDEN JAMES MCEWAN is watching from the shore. Behind him an SUV sits on the hard shoulder. ATKINS is at the wheel.

MCEWAN

When I came back from Iraq I
stood in the shower for an hour
trying to get the stink off me.
Didn't work. Won't work for you
either Saudek.

JOSEPH

Why's that?

MCEWAN

There's a badness in you. No
water's gonna get rid of it.

JOSEPH

So you say.

He wades ashore.

MCEWAN

What your record says. You and
Bernard were quite a crew. Real
high line operators. The First
National heist, the Wallach
Museum job, Security Pacific in
Norco California. And then this
big job he was planning.

JOSEPH

Yeah. Well he won't be pulling
that one, will he?

MCEWAN

All he had to do was share.
Stupid.

JOSEPH

And there I was thinking it was
an aneurysm.

MCEWAN

It was a slap. Christ almighty, I
didn't want him dead. I wanted
in. So Plan B.

(pins Joseph with a
look)

You.

JOSEPH

I don't know anything about his damn plan-

MCEWAN

Bullshit. You ran together. You shared a cell your entire clip. You been planning the thing for twelve years.

JOSEPH

Only thing I've been planning is walking away.

McEwan produces a PILL BOTTLE and pops a VICODIN.

MCEWAN

And you can do that. And get a ten percent finders fee. After you bring me my fucking money.

(a sly smile)

You're out on parole. Any kind of violation and you're back inside. And don't think of running. That's a violation too.

Joseph says nothing cause there's nothing to say. He walks away with McEwan's eyes boring holes in his back.

He crosses the highway and heads for the motel. He's almost running as he hurries upstairs and shoulders into his room --

INT. MOTEL ROOM. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph quickly stuffs his gear into the prison garbage bag. He pushes into the bathroom and freezes --

Sitting by his washbag is a TRACING PAPER ENVELOPE. Joseph stares at it. Pinned in place by what he knows is inside. There's a creak as the door is pushed open by DARREL BEAUCHAMP (42), a dead eyed, cross grained, ex-cop --

BEAUCHAMP

Goin' somewhere?

He brushes by Joseph and picks up the envelope.

BEAUCHAMP

That's a schedule one controlled substance. It'll put you back inside for ten years.

JOSEPH

Who the fuck are you?

BEAUCHAMP

Me? I'm your parole officer.

Beauchamp grins and lazily FLASHES A BADGE. He pockets the envelope of CRYSTAL METH. Then hands over a DRIVING LICENSE. Joseph's picture is on it.

BEAUCHAMP

It's fake.

Then a CELL PHONE --

BEAUCHAMP

It's stolen.

Joseph examines the HI-TECH PHONE --

JOSEPH

I don't know how it works.

BEAUCHAMP

When we call you come running.

That's how it works, Dogfood.

Beauchamp rolls out of the room. Joseph steps to the bathroom window. He watches Beauchamp climb in the waiting SUV. McEwan gives a nod and they drive away.

Joseph pokes a hole in the RUSTY WINDOW SCREEN. He pulls the MATCHBOX and carefully TIPS THE SPIDER OUT. It crawls through the hole and scurries away. Joseph stands pondering the sky on the other side of the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. NEW ORLEANS. EVENING.

A big old Antebellum house. A forgotten wedding cake of a thing that's seen better days. Joseph pushes through the overgrown garden. He checks the door. It's locked.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

The door is forced open and Joseph steps inside.

He ghosts from room to silent room. Dusty furniture, half-packed boxes and books. He heads upstairs.

He senses movement -- TWISTS as something HEAVY glances off his head. A FIGURE tries to rush by. Joseph instinctively grabs and throws his attacker to the floor. Steadying himself, he finds he's looking down at the CREOLE GIRL FROM BERNARD'S FUNERAL --

JULIE DUPLANTIER (22). By turns cut-the-bullshit intense and just-fucking-with-you funny, she's scared and trying to hide it as she waves a WRENCH at Joseph.

JOSEPH

Don't move!

He lurches, shaking his head clear. She scuttles backward, presses against the wall..

JOSEPH
Relax, relax. I'm taking an eight
count, ok?

JULIE
Stay away from me! I'll --

JOSEPH
Yeah, yeah. I get it.

He wipes away a smear of blood.

JULIE
What d'you want? Who the hell are
you?

JOSEPH
I'm Joseph. Joseph Saudek.

She looks at him blankly -- then --

JULIE
From the funeral right?

JOSEPH
Yeah. I just got out.

JULIE
And you thought you'd stop by and
help yourself to my old man's
stuff.
(let's cut the crap)
Bernie isn't gonna miss it, right?

JOSEPH
No. It's not like that.

He moves. She lifts the wrench --

JOSEPH
Easy. Easy. Relax.
(squatting opposite her)
We went way back me and your old
man. I remember this place.
Remember you too.
(remembering)
Julie, right?
(she says nothing)
He talked about you a lot.

JULIE
Yeah? We'll isn't talkin' about
me any more is he?

JOSEPH

I thought the place would be empty. He said I was welcome here any time.

JULIE

It's the bank's now. He didn't pay his taxes.

JOSEPH

I'm sorry.

JULIE

It's just a house.

JOSEPH

No. About your dad. He was--

Julie cuts him off --

JULIE

He was dead to me a long time ago!

The words take Joseph aback. Julie enjoys his shock --

JULIE

You want tears? Watch Oprah. Now take your shit and get out.

JOSEPH

I can't.

JULIE

No bars here. You open the door and walk away.

JOSEPH

There's something I need to find first.

JULIE

Everything in this house is mine.

JOSEPH

I thought it was the bank's.
(gets to his feet)
I'll only be a few days.

JULIE

I could call the cops.

He gives a "sure-you-could" grunt. He picks up his bag. She watches as he walks down the dusty stairs.

JULIE

You stay downstairs and outta my way.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. DUSK

A big bare room. High ceilinged with crumbling plaster mouldings. Joseph pins the PHOTO of the VILLAGE BY THE SEA to the wall. Sets his OLD CASSETTE PLAYER and a stack of worn TAPES on a window sill. He pulls a dust cloth off an ANTIQUE SOFA and stretches out.

CUT TO:

NIGHT. Joseph snaps awake. No idea where he is. The ceiling looms high above him, the moonlit walls seem impossibly far away. He grabs the pillows and dust cloth and lurches into the hallway. He stops --

Music is coming from upstairs. The sound of a CHOIR SINGING. It's familiar. He realizes it's the same song sung at Bernard's funeral. Same voices too. He stands listening and the hard lines of his face seem to soften.

He pushes into a cramped, cold, crack-tiled bathroom. It feels like his old prison cell. He arranges the pillows into a bed and settles down.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAWN

A running figure silhouetted against twinkling headlights. Cars wipe by Joseph as he runs the shoulder. Breathing hard, pounding out the last twelve years.

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. LATER

Julie loads a BOX FILLED WITH BOOKS into her beat-up PASSAT.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
Where are you going with those?

Julie is oblivious -- she's listening to music on her I-PHONE. Joseph doesn't see the EAR-BUDS hidden by her hair.

JOSEPH
Hey.

He grabs her arm. She jumps, twisting from his touch, pulling off the ear-buds --

JULIE
Easy with the sneaking up.

Joseph grabs a book. He cracks the spine and fans the pages.

JULIE
Hey c'mon! Who's gonna pay for that now?

He goes to grab another book. She pulls the box away. He takes it anyway and starts roughing through it.

JOSEPH
You sell any others?

JULIE
Why? What is it to you?

JOSEPH
You don't want to know why.

She grabs the box and tosses it in the car. She storms round the drivers side. Joseph reaches in, takes the box and heads back into the house.

JOSEPH
Nothing leaves this house without me checking it.

JULIE
Tired being the inmate? Time to play the guard?--
(a bitter laugh)
Well, knock yourself out. Whatever you're looking for isn't here.

She gets in the Passat and drives off.

EXT. OLD CLUB. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

Julie stands waiting outside the club with its chained doors and boarded windows.

She's on her I-PHONE Googling - JOSEPH SAUDEK. She scrolls through SITES and NEWS STORIES finding out all she can about Joseph's past as --

A tricked out WHITE RANGE ROVER pulls up. A young black guy gets out. Revved up, ready to go, rattling a big set of keys. Meet DEACON WEBSTER, on the move, on the make, cool as hell.

DEACON
You seen MK yet?

JULIE
Nah, I just got here.

DEACON
Forget him. Lemme show you.

He starts undoing locks.

INT. OLD CLUB. CONTINUOUS.

The place is a mess. Light spills through broken skylights. Glass crunches under Deacon's feet as he gives Julie a pumped-up tour.

DEACON

It's gonna be all about the music.
Dance floor here. Bar there. VIP
room. Your booth here.

JULIE

Sounds cool.
(but...)
You hear anything back from
anybody?

DEACON

About what?

JULIE

The CDs I gave you... My tracks.

DEACON

The guys at Fat Possum said they'd
listen...

Julie nods. Deacon gets back to the club --

DEACON

We still need a name. That's your
job.

JULIE

Me?

DEACON

Sure. Something local.

His phone goes. Deacon recognizes the number --

DEACON

MK where you at?

MK (ON PHONE)

I'm not gonna make it Deacon.

DEACON

We can hang a while longer.

MK (ON PHONE)

No Deacon. I'm out of the deal. I'm
sorry, man.

DEACON

The dogs, right? You stupid... How
much?

MK (ON PHONE)

Everything. I had to flip it all.
They asked me to set up a meet.

DEACON

Who?

(no answer)

WHO DID YOU SELL ME OUT TO?!!!!

MK (ON PHONE)

... The Harrerras.

DEACON

WE WERE BUILDING SOMETHING. AND
NOW YOU'RE A MESSAGE BOY FOR A
PACK OF MEXICAN GANG BANGERS!

MK (ON PHONE)

These aren't the guys you owe.

DEACON

SO, RUN. GO ON. HANG UP AND RUN
AWAY. I'M STICKING AROUND! TELL
THEM TO COME BY ANY TIME!

He kills the call. He stands there in the ruins of his
dream. Julie is watching from the other side of the space.

INT. RANGE ROVER. LATER.

Deacon drives. Julie watches the city flash by. Each one
in their own space.

JULIE

I'm sorry about the club...

DEACON

It'll work out.

The silence hangs. An emotional minefield --

JULIE

Can you and Boo Boo come by the
house later?

DEACON

(like he needs this now)
Call the moving guys.

JULIE

Isn't furniture I need moving.
Some old partner of my father's
showed up. Just got out of Angola.

DEACON

And what? He's shackled up with
you?

JULIE

It's not funny Deacon.

DEACON
(laughing anyway)
So tell him to clear out.

JULIE
He's a scary guy. He was the
muscle in my dad's crew. I don't
trust him.

DEACON
Sugar, you don't trust anybody...
Just an old con. Probably got
nowhere else to go.

JULIE
No. He's looking for something.

DEACON
(suddenly interested)
Like what? The place is empty.

JULIE
I don't know. I just want him out.

DEACON
Let him stay.

JULIE
Why?

DEACON
(laying it out for her)
This cat ran with your old man. He
gets out of the Farm and first thing
he does is come to his partner's
crib? Something's in that house.

JULIE
Yeah? Like what?

DEACON
That's my girl.
(a glimmer of hope)
You watch him. Work him. Find out
what he's after.

The Range Rover pulls into the empty parking lot of a CLUB.
LIVE BAIT. An ugly squat thing in the bright daylight.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. DAY.

THE MAIN ROOM. Purged. The shelves and drawers emptied.
Their contents piled in a heap in the middle of the room. We
hear sounds from another room --

CUT TO:

BERNARD'S OFFICE. Joseph pulls drawers and checks their undersides -- He slices the lining of an arm chair -- rips the backing of a picture -- THEN HE STOPS.

HE EYES A BOOK SHELF. DUSTY. EXCEPT FOR THE CLEAN SPACE WHERE A SET OF BOOKS RECENTLY SAT. GONE NOW.

CUT TO:

JOSEPH PACES EMPTY ROOMS SEARCHING FOR THE BOOKS. All he finds is cobwebs and dust. He comes to a LOCKED DOOR. He pulls the FAKE DRIVING LICENSE and works the DOOR LATCH. It POPS and he pushes into --

JULIES ROOM. An Aladdin's Cave of CLOTHES AND TECHNOLOGY. T-shirts, scarves and shoes lie in piles. An old table is loaded with TWO BIG MONITORS and a MIXING DESK. SAMPLERS, MICS, DRIVES, DAT RECORDERS and TURNTABLES are stacked in a corner. And then there are the RECORDS. Old, dog-eared, but carefully filed in packing boxes. Everywhere.

Joseph checks PHOTOS pinned to a wall. Old black guys. Grinning, mugging for the camera, some with beers but most with musical instruments. Not one of the men in the photos is Bernard.

Joseph grunts.

The only book in the room is an OLD COPY of THE VELVETEEN RABBIT lying by the bed. He fans the pages. Nothing.

He sees a PILE OF MATCHBOOKS on a dresser. All for the same club. LIVE BAIT. Joseph checks the ADDRESS.

EXT. LIVE BAIT. NIGHT.

A DOORMAN shadow spars under the CLUB's NEON SIGN. SWEET (30), a so-so middleweight with good technique but small hands, glances at Joseph as he walks up.

SWEET

I still need to see your ID.

Joseph flashes his license. Sweet fixes him a look.

SWEET

You the Saudek that used to fight outta George's Gym on Third.

JOSEPH

Yeah. That was me.

SWEET

You had a title shot right?

JOSEPH

Yeah...

SWEET
 (he gets it)
 George is my uncle. Go on in.

Joseph steps past -- Sweet snaps a fake punch, Joseph's hands come up fast -- The two fighters share a grin. Joseph pushes inside.

INT. LIVE BAIT. CONTINUOUS.

Under a kaleidoscope of lights SUITS flash cash, PRETTY GIRLS drink for free and BOTTLE-GIRLS do whatever it takes to get wallets open even wider.

Joseph pushes through the young crowd feeling older with every step. He grabs a passing BOTTLE-GIRL, BRINI --

JOSEPH
 Hey, I'm looking for Julie.
 (a blank look)
 Julie Duplantier. I'm a friend.

BRINI
 What's your name? I'll make sure
 she knows you're here.

She nods across the room. For a beat all Joseph can see is a mesh of slashing lights then they part to reveal Julie perched high up in a DJ BOOTH.

CUT TO:

DJ BOOTH. Julie works her laptop, adjusting track-lists, controlling the room. EVE, a cute BOTTLE-GIRL, slides up with a tray loaded with empty glasses. She hands Julie a glass of CHAMPAGNE --

EVE
 I am so done with this Bottle-hooker bullshit.

Eve slips across a BLACK AMEX CARD. Julie fits a tiny CARD READER to her I-PHONE. She quickly swipes the card, saves the number and hands it back to Eve. Between the strobing lights and well rehearsed moves no one sees a thing. Julie shoots the champagne --

JULIE
 Here's to 'fuck-you money'.

EVE
 And to BLAMEX.
 (she turns to go, then)
 Oh, Brini says some old guy is
 here to see you. At the bar.

Eve walks off as Julie lifts her big BUG EYED SHADES and scans the crowd. She spots Joseph.

CUT TO:

THE BAR. Julie slides up alongside Joseph.

JULIE
How'd you find me?

Joseph flashes a LIVE BAIT MATCHBOOK.

JULIE
Oh yeah, Master criminal.
(signaling the bartender
for a drink)
You and my dad were quite an act.

He salutes her with his beer.

JULIE
Till you screwed up that bank job
downtown.
(knowing smile)
See while you were inside this
thing called the internet happened.
It's fantastic. In the time you
take for a cigarette you can find
out about anybody.

JOSEPH
We didn't screw up. Somebody gave
us up.

She grunts a sarcastic laugh as her drink arrives.

JULIE
Sure...

JOSEPH
There are books missing from
Bernard's office. They weren't in
your room. You sell them?

JULIE
My room was locked.

JOSEPH
(shrugs)
Hey... Master criminal.

JULIE
That's what you're looking for?
Books?

JOSEPH
There was nothing inside them?

JULIE
What? Like money or something?

JOSEPH
Not money.

JULIE
A clue?... Can I call a friend?
(he looks at her blank)
Who Wants to be a Millionaire?..
Game show... Forget it...

He cuts her off --

JOSEPH
A file maybe. Architectural
drawings, time tables, plans...

JULIE
There was nothing like that.

JOSEPH
Nowhere in the house?

JULIE
He left nothing but wreckage. You
know what happened to my mom? He
tell you how him going away messed
her up? He tell you about the
Valium milk shakes and her running
a red light into a bus? Huh?

JOSEPH
He wasn't proud of that. Wasn't
proud of a lot of things. But, he
still loved you.

JULIE
SHUT UP!!!

SLAP! -- Joseph half turns from the blow, grabbing Julie's
hand. Heads turn. She jerks free as --

Joseph is SLAMMED FROM BEHIND. He staggers into the crowd
like a boxer hitting the ropes. And that's how he comes
back. He spins SWIPING GLASSES OFF THE BAR -- hurling them
blindly at his attackers --

BOO BOO and SIX-ONE FLINCH as they are sprayed with glass.
And in that beat JOSEPH IS ON THEM. As the club's LIGHTS
STROBE we see flashes of PUNCHES, KICKS, HEAD-BUTTS. It's
brutal, instinctive, born of twelve years in hell --

Six-One is ON THE FLOOR, Boo Boo is BACKING AWAY from Joseph
as -- a red PIT BULL lunges from the crowd SNARLING, SPAYING
SPIT. Joseph jumps back as the dog is jerked to heel --

Holding the leash is CARO, a HARD CORE CARTEL REP backed up with his crew of ENFORCERS, ANGEL, SKINNY and EL ROJO.

CARO
Easy. Keep those fists where I can see them, Vato.

Deacon pushes through. He sees Julie cowering in the crowd --

DEACON
Everything okay, Julie?

Julie nods, shocked...

CARO
Careful lady. You're messing with a bad man. Very bad man.
(nods to Joseph's tats)
That's prison ink. Right, Vato?

JOSEPH
(dangerous)
Right... Vato.

DEACON
Yeah, well this isn't prison, fella. Keep your hands to yourself and get the hell outta here.

Deacon glances to his boys. Joseph follows the look --

JOSEPH
Relax. I got it.

He turns and a path opens through the crowd. Deacon signals for Boo Boo and Six-One to follow him.

CARO
A lot of noise Deacon. We don't like noise. Noise is bad for business. C'mon, let's talk.

Julie heads back to her DJ booth.

INT. DEACON'S OFFICE. LIVE BAIT. MINUTES LATER.

A PHOTO. Taken from a rescue copter during HURRICANE KATRINA. A building surrounded by raging floodwater. HELP is painted across the roof in huge white letters. A family crouches in the rotor-wash staring up at the camera as one figure signals desperately for help. It's Deacon.

Deacon sits staring at the photo hung on the wall opposite his desk. Staring at himself.

Caro strokes the red pit bull as he watches Deacon.

CARO

You're a survivor, right? That's good. Cause your partner... he fucked up.

DEACON

How much?

CARO

Basically? You work for us now.

DEACON

No.

CARO

You don't want to work for us?

DEACON

I don't want to work for anybody. That's why I opened this place. What if I buy you out?

CARO

You know who we are?

Deacon nods.

DEACON

I know you don't need my club.

CARO

No. But it's mine. You are too.
(shrugs "what-the-hell")
Okay. Your partner's three hundred thousand, the two-fifty he loaned you, plus fifteen percent per month. Clock's ticking.
(grins at the photo)
Water's rising.

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. EARLY MORNING.

Julie climbs from the PASSAT in her MORNING PROOF SHADES. She grabs her LAPTOP and DRIVES and heads inside --

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS.

She's confronted with rooms that have been stripped. The contents sit piled on the floor. She passes the kitchen. Joseph sits at a table with a TO-GO COFFEE.

JOSEPH

Hey.

JULIE

Hey yourself. Listen. If you're gonna come by the club and cause trouble can you at least look good.

Some of my old man's clothes are in that front room upstairs.

JOSEPH
Wow. You haven't sold them?

JULIE
Not yet.

She lights a cigarette. Very cool, shades still on, she eyes Joseph through the smoke.

JULIE
You find your plans?

JOSEPH
Nope.

JULIE
Told you.

She starts to head upstairs. A strange DIGITAL TONE starts going. Joseph looks round confused -- what the hell is it?

JULIE
It's your phone.

Joseph pulls his phone as it stops ringing. The VOICE MAIL WAITING icon appears.

JOSEPH
How do you work this thing?

JULIE
Are you serious?

She grabs the phone. Works the keys and goes to hit the "PLAY MESSAGE" icon. He stops her before she can listen.

JOSEPH
You can't hear this.

She rolls her eyes and heads slowly upstairs, trying to overhear. Joseph follows her swaying walk as he listens to --

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
Hey Dogfood, where the hell are you? Call me back. Pronto.

Joseph looks at the mess of buttons on the phone -- then calls upstairs to Julie --

JOSEPH
How do I call back on this?

JULIE (O.S.)
What? Are you Amish or something?

CUT TO:

JOSEPH alone in the tiny bathroom. On the cell phone --

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
What's going on? We're dying of
old age here.

JOSEPH
This thing is twelve years old. It
needs updating. That takes time.

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
Well you got forty eight hours.
Then we want to hear details.

The call goes dead. Joseph stands in the cell-like
bathroom looking for a way out.

INT. AUCTION ROOM. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

A GIRL'S FACE. Pale. Her luminous eyes stare from a
PAINTING. Bidding for the painting is in progress. It
stands with a FAT BUSINESSMAN.

FAKE FREDDY (O.S.)
A pig.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
But a rich pig.

Joseph sits at the BACK OF THE ROOM with FAKE FREDDY. 50-
ish with a face people like more than they know why. His
clothes are FRENCH, his jewelry a little bit VOODOO.

FAKE FREDDY
Oh, he'll drop two hundred grand
on a bucket of bolts with a
Porsche logo. But he won't pay
the reserve.
(snorts, disgusted)
That girl's dead four hundred
years but she'll always be alive
here. Look at her. She's
blushing. From something the
artist said? I always wanted a
woman to look at me like that.

JOSEPH
You know it well.

FAKE FREDDY
I should. I've owned it twice.
Couldn't keep it though. Slipped
through my hands.

JOSEPH

So make a bid.

FAKE FREDDY

Joseph, the forgery game doesn't pay what it used to.

JOSEPH

Yeah? What does?

He looks hard at Freddy. Freddy nods, "so now we get to business". He gets up and leaves. Joseph follows.

EXT. STREET. NEW ORLEANS. CONTINUOUS.

FAKE FREDDY

Everything went digital while you were away. The con men have been replaced with Nigerians in cyber-cafes. Million dollar bank jobs are pulled by Russian kids in their bedrooms. Nobody steals actual money anymore. Not unless they are junkies or idiots.

(a sad laugh)

Oh, I heard the rumors coming out of Angola. You know "Bernard has a job". But what it was...

(a shrug)

You want to hear something you don't want to hear? If I were you I'd run.

JOSEPH

Running's expensive. I don't have anything to run with.

FAKE FREDDY

(a humourless smile)

Well, you better find it... Or find the plan.

Joseph nods and walks away. Freddy calls after him --

FAKE FREDDY

We're not what we were. Bernard neither. You ever think that plan of his was just talk? An old guy getting through a long stretch by making himself sound like a Big Shot.

(a beat)

Maybe there is no plan.

The words are eating at Joseph. He feels the Impala tailing him. He walks away faster getting angrier and angrier.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. DAY.

Joseph's had it! Hit the fucking wall! Sick of searching for plans he can't find, for a job he doesn't want to pull, for a bunch of bastards who have him by the balls! He tears down SHELVES and flips FURNITURE -- NOTHING! --

He kicks in WALL PANELS, rips up FLOOR BOARDS -- NOTHING! --

He crowbars a FIREPLACE from a WALL. It slams to the floor in a cloud of dust -- NOTHING! --

Joseph catches his reflection in a big ANTIQUE MIRROR. A BEATEN MAN STANDING IN A RUINED ROOM. He grabs a LAMP and hurls it at himself -- THE MIRROR EXPLODES! -- Glass falls in shards --

There, tucked in a WALL CAVITY behind the mirror is a DUSTY FILE.

THE PLANS!

CUT TO:

A TABLE is swept clear. Joseph breaks open the FILE and lays out DUSTY DOCUMENTS. CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS, ELECTRIC PLANS, a SKETCH OF A VOID, a LIST OF DOLLAR AMOUNTS all round TWO MILLION, a TIMETABLE, PHOTOS OF A DINGHY and finally the last piece of the puzzle -- ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS AND SHOTS OF A RIVERBOAT.

Joseph steps back with a "what-the-hell" look. Cause he's staring at a ready-to-go CASINO HEIST.

EXT. QUAYSIDE. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

Joseph, eyes the CASINO BOATS lining the quay. He pulls the PHOTO and matches it to an OLD-STYLE RIVERBOAT, THE GOLDEN NUGGET.

As he scopes the CROWD he notices activity among the SECURITY PEOPLE. Nervous nods and smiles greet an ANGLO BUSINESSMAN leaving the Casino. DON JORDAN (36), all black briefcase and gray Armani as he crosses to a waiting BMW. The DRIVER is CARO, the CARTEL REP Joseph ran into at DEACON'S CLUB. Joseph turns away nice and easy, staying cool as the BMW drives by.

INT. QUAYSIDE BAR. NEW ORLEANS. LATER.

Joseph sits at a BAR in front of a clutch of EMPTY GLASSES.

HE REMEMBERS ANOTHER LIFE -- THE BLOND WOMAN RUNNING THROUGH TREES. IN THE RAIN. LAUGHING. SHE LOOKS BACK AT --

JOSEPH -- looking at his reflection in the wet bar. He looks up as a COP CAR cruises the line of CASINO BOATS across the street. He checks the time on the CLOCK over the bar.

JOSEPH
(to the barman)
Another.

A noisy SHELL GAME is going down outside the window. As Joseph watches he spots a PICKPOCKET moving through the crowd. Two victims, then three. Then somebody spots the pickpocket and the game dissolves into a FIGHT.

As Joseph enjoys the show a WOMAN slides onto the empty bar stool beside him. ATTRACTIVE, in her thirties...

WOMAN
It's a bad world out there.

JOSEPH
What about in here?

WOMAN
In here we're all saints and angels. Mother Teresa was just here. She had to go out back to smoke some meth.
(she grins. Joseph too)
You look lonely.

JOSEPH
You look thirsty.

WOMAN
What a pair. I'm an angel and you're a psychic.

Joseph smiles again. He signals to the bartender.

INT. LIVE BAIT. NIGHT.

Julie's in the zone laying down a MASH UP SHE'S MADE -- old school blues with dance beats. It's cool as hell! Cooler than the crowd.

Deacon watches as the floor empties. JUICE McCOY, the sharp dressed PRODUCER sitting next to him sees it too --

JUICE
She's good.

DEACON
Really good.

JUICE
Wasted here. She should give me a call.

Deacon reaches for his drink. But not before Juice catches a certain look on his face --

JUICE

Aw, I get it. You want to keep her all to yourself.

(a knowing laugh)

Can't say I blame you. But Deacon, when the cage goes that bird is gonna fly.

DEACON

Nothin's going anywhere! C'mon Juice. I'm offering equal partnership.

JUICE

For half a mil...

DEACON

Look at this place. It's jumpin' four nights a week --

JUICE

(talking over Deacon)

I like you, Deacon. And I like what you built here. But I got my own clubs to worry about. These are tough times, man. I'm real sorry but I can't help you.

He finishes his drink and stands to leave. Juice offers Deacon his hand. Deacon bitterly slaps it away. Juice gets it.

JUICE

At least give this to your girl. I can do something for her, for sure.

He sets his BUSINESS CARD on the table and heads for the door. Deacon picks up the card and SHREDS IT. He eyes Julie up in the DJ booth as she blisses out pumping HER OWN BEATS.

She's beautiful. He's captivated...

And then Eve steps up and slips Julie a CREDIT CARD. Deacon's look hardens as he watches them pull their little "fuck-you" operation.

INT. MOTEL. NEW ORLEANS. DAWN.

The woman lies face down, half asleep as Joseph climbs from bed. He pulls on his gear. She raises a hand in "goodbye" without rolling over. Joseph leaves.

EXT. MOTEL. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph walks away from the motel. A CAB cruises alongside. He flashes empty pockets. The cab pulls off.

INT. RANGE ROVER. DAWN.

Deacon drives fast. Thinking. Somewhere else. Julie sits beside watching the sun come up. She spots a lone figure walking on the shoulder up ahead. It's Joseph.

JULIE
Wo, wo, wo. Pull over...

Deacon obliges. She opens a rear door.

JULIE
Aren't you a bit old for the walk
of shame?

JOSEPH
The Devil doesn't look at birth
certificates.

Joseph eyes Deacon. Then climbs in --

JULIE
You know Deacon.

Joseph nods at Deacon. Deacon doesn't react. He just hits the gas and pulls away fast. The Range Rover races down the highway.

JOSEPH
Stay under the speed limit will
you?

DEACON
Why? You scared?

JOSEPH
No. You're drunk, this car stinks
of weed and I'm on probation.

INT. JOSEPH'S ROOM. BERNARD'S HOUSE. LATER.

Joseph studies Bernard's work as JULIE'S BEATS drift through the open window. He leans back in a chair balanced on its back legs. The yellowed blind bumps gently against the frame in the breeze. A bar of sunlight plays across the PLANS lying in his lap.

Joseph's eyes are on the plans but his mind is on what's going on upstairs.

INT. JULIE'S ROOM. BERNARD'S HOUSE. SAME TIME.

Julie. Not wearing much, lying back smoking a joint.
Deacon is watching.

DEACON
So what's the word on Mister Main-
Event downstairs.

JULIE
He isn't the rapping type.

DEACON
You gotta work him, Sugar.

JULIE
Work him?

DEACON
Man was inside a long time. He's
lying there thinking about you up
here. Listening to you.
(fixing her a look)
Why don't you go down pay him a
visit?

JULIE
Fuck you Deacon.

DEACON
(defensive)
If there *is* a plan it was your old
man's. Any take should be yours.

JULIE
And none of it would go to paying
off what you owe the Mexicans? Huh?

DEACON
So? What's wrong with that?

JULIE
Think you can whore me out?!

Julie flicks the joint. It hits Deacon in the face with a
shower of sparks. He lunges across the bed --

SLAP! --

Julie's head snaps back -- Deacon grabs her by the throat
and kneels over her, wounded, suddenly dangerous --

DEACON
Fuckin' sick of you throwing things
in my face. Don't want to marry me,
don't want to work for me. Gonna
take off with your "fuck-you" money
and leave me in the shit.

Julie flinches.

DEACON

Take me for some kinda fool? I found out all about it from your junkie friend Eve. All about your plans...

JULIE

You're hurting me!

DEACON

This? This is nothing. You find out what he's after. Then you can go wherever the hell you want. Me? I'm stickin' around.

JULIE

You're a bastard.

DEACON

(leaning even closer)
And you're nothing to nobody, Julie. You could wind up a bunch of bones at the side of some freeway and nobody would care. Remember that.

He storms out of there. Julie climbs off the bed and picks up the joint and takes a drag. Her hand is trembling.

CUT TO:

DEACON paces down the stairs into the hall. Joseph sits watching from his room.

INT. JOSEPH'S ROOM. BERNARD'S HOUSE. LATER.

A knock at the door. Joseph opens it to find Julie standing there. Dressed now, wearing the Bono Shades.

JULIE

Can I come in?

JOSEPH

Sure.

She wants something and Joseph knows it. She crosses to where the PHOTO of the FISHING VILLAGE BY THE SEA is pinned on the wall.

JULIE

Nice.

JOSEPH

My view for twelve years.

He watches as she rubs the STAIN on the photo -- HER FATHER'S BLOOD.

JULIE
Where is it?

Joseph shrugs dunno -- not giving anything away. Julie eyes the sofa stripped of its cushions.

JULIE
What's with the whole sleeping in the bathroom thing?

JOSEPH
The room was too big. I felt...
(searching for the word,
giving up)
It takes time getting used to being free.

JULIE
But you're not are you? Free I mean.
(fixes on him)
Those guys on the phone. The one's pressuring you. What will they do when you tell them there are no plans? That it was just a load of old Bernie's bullshit.
(a beat...)
I know where you can get money. A lot of money.

JOSEPH
You want nothing to do with this.

JULIE
I want half.

JOSEPH
Don't go getting--

JULIE
(talking over him)
Deacon's in bed with some Mexicans. The Harreras. They run half the drugs in town since Katrina. They're moving money through all the time. A load of money.

JOSEPH
You want me to rob the Mexican Mob?

JULIE
Why not? Isn't that what thieves do?

JOSEPH
Yeah, if they want a short life.

JULIE
(frustration, anger,
fear colliding)
Look, you need money and I need
to get out of here.

JOSEPH
No.

JULIE
Please. You don't know Deacon...

She pulls off the shades. Joseph stares at the SWOLLEN,
TEAR STREAKED EYE. But he doesn't move. She grunts a
bitter laugh --

JULIE
You're just like your partner.
You don't give a damn.

Joseph crosses to his jacket. He pulls the PLANS and
tosses them to her. She stares at them, confused --

JULIE
You found them. You bastard. When
were you gonna tell me? These are
my father's...

JOSEPH
You mean the loser and
bullshitter?
(putting her straight)
Get dressed. We're going
somewhere.

EXT. TOUR BOAT. MISSISSIPPI. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

Joseph and Julie stand at a railing crowded with tourists.
A line of CASINO BOATS slide by on the opposite riverbank.

JOSEPH
You got a record?

JULIE
What?

JOSEPH
A record... Be straight with me
it's important.

JULIE
No. Only idiots get caught.

JOSEPH
Only idiots get involved.
(nods to one of the
Casino boats)
That's what the plans are for.

JULIE
What? A casino?

JOSEPH
A lot of money. A lot of cameras,
security, moonlighting cops too.
All waiting to red flag anyone
with a record. This is about as
close as I can get to it. So...

JULIE
You want me to be your eyes and
ears.

JOSEPH
No. I don't want it.

JULIE
But-

JOSEPH
I need it. Everybody I know is
either dead or dirty.

JULIE
I can do it.

JOSEPH
This isn't a game.

JULIE
For sure.

JOSEPH
Okay. But that's all you do.
(he fixes on the casino)
I don't know I can pull this off.
But I know this is as involved as
you get.

JULIE
Okay. Okay...
(grins)
A casino. Way to go Danny Ocean.

JOSEPH
Frank Sinatra.

JULIE
George Clooney.

A smile flits between them.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY. LATER.

Julie's Passat speeds down a highway. An Impala pulls onto its tail with RED and BLUE LIGHTS FLASHING.

INT. PASSAT. CONTINUOUS.

Julie glances in the mirror as she pulls over.

JULIE
Shit. Another ticket.

Joseph glances back and sees Atkins and Beauchamp --

JOSEPH
Don't worry about it.

EXT. HIGHWAY. CONTINUOUS.

Cars speed by as Joseph walks to the two "cops".

BEAUCHAMP
Romantic cruise, Dogfood?

Joseph ignores him and hands Atkins the PLANS.

JOSEPH
It's a Casino.

ATKINS
A Casino?

BEAUCHAMP
You know how many successful
casino heists there's been down
here?

JOSEPH
None.

BEAUCHAMP
Right. Nobody robs a Casino these
days.

JOSEPH
Except the guy who did the wiring
on it thirteen years ago.
(now he has their
attention)
Bernard knew casino security is
all about stopping you getting
away with the money. We come in
on boats and hit the counting
room hard. Guns, smoke grenades.
Then we walk away in the panic.

BEAUCHAMP
How do you get the money out?

JOSEPH

We don't. Least not then. We stash the take in a void that Bernard built. Then we come back for it when the heat has died down.

(letting them hang)

The take should be round two, two and a half million.

ATKINS

(impressed)

Be bigger now.

BEAUCHAMP

So, who's the girl?

JOSEPH

Bernard's daughter.

ATKINS

Well they say the apple never falls far from the tree, huh?

BEAUCHAMP

And she fits in how?

JOSEPH

I can't scout the Casino. She can.

ATKINS

Sure you can trust her?

JOSEPH

She's scouting the place tomorrow night if you wanna keep an eye on her.

BEAUCHAMP

Don't be goin' giving us orders.

JOSEPH

Fuck it then. Your show.

He walks away. Beauchamp calls after him --

BEAUCHAMP

Right. Remember that Dogfood. You're ours.

Joseph climbs into the Passat. Julie is watching Atkins and Beauchamp in the mirror.

JOSEPH

My parole officers.

EXT. GARDEN. BERNARD'S HOUSE. DAY.

Julie stands looking at the OVERGROWN GARDEN. She blinks as the door slams behind her and Joseph appears.

JOSEPH

I remember Bernard sitting under
that magnolia with you. Reading.

JULIE

The Velveteen Rabbit.

Joseph shrugs.

JULIE

This toy rabbit wants to be real. A
Horse tells him...

(she quotes)

*"By the time you are Real, most of
your hair has been loved off, and
your eyes drop out you get loose in
the joints and very shabby."*

(she laughs)

Funny huh? That it was our favorite
book.

She notices Joseph is holding a LENGTH OF ROPE. She's glad to change the subject --

JULIE

What's up with that?

JOSEPH

How tall are you?

JULIE

Five-eight.

He drops the rope at her feet.

JOSEPH

Spread your legs.

JULIE

Excuse me?!

JOSEPH

Your legs.

Joseph kneels and ties the rope to her ankles. She looks down at him bemused.

JULIE

Whatever gets you off.

JOSEPH

There. You have eighteen inches of rope. You gotta get used to taking eighteen inch steps.

JULIE

Why's that?

JOSEPH

Bernard's plan is thirteen years old. You're going in to pace out the Casino. We have to be sure-

JULIE

-the measurements are still good.

JOSEPH

Right.

(a small smile)

Go on. Walk.

Julie stumbles forward. She laughs. Joseph smiles --

JOSEPH

Longer steps. It'll be easier.

She trips. He catches her. He takes her hands and gently lifts her to her feet. Julie moves away. But her hand lingers in his for a moment --

JOSEPH

Longer steps. You're a DJ. Think rhythm.

Julie tries again. She masters it.

JOSEPH

Better. Good. Good.

JULIE

You know my Nikes can do this?

JOSEPH

What?

JULIE

Measure out distances.

JOSEPH

Are Nikes in your old man's plan?

She shrugs. She doesn't know. He does --

JOSEPH

So keep going.

EXT. CASINO. NEW ORLEANS. NIGHT.

The PASSAT pulls up opposite the Riverboat. Julie and Joseph watch the Casino.

JOSEPH
You'll do fine. Any problems.
Call me.

JULIE
(getting out of the car)
Relax. Lazay lay bon ton roulay.

She throws a smile as she walks to the Casino with precise EIGHTEEN INCH STEPS. Joseph checks the mirror. Atkins and Beauchamp are following Julie inside --

JOSEPH
Yeah, let the good times roll.

He climbs from the Passat and disappears into the night.

EXT. CINEMA PARKING LOT. LATER.

A PLUNGER slides inside a door panel. It's yanked back and the door pops open. Joseph climbs into somebody else's AUDI. The thing is a PUSH BUTTON ELECTRONIC MARVEL -- and Joseph is completely baffled.

JOSEPH
Where the hell d'you put the key?

He jumps out of the Audi and crosses to an old FORD. It's plunger, steering column, hot-wire and the FORD is gone.

INT. CASINO. NIGHT.

Julie PACES a corridor with careful elegant steps. She records distances in her i-phone, pretending she's texting.

She starts counting the length of another wall. She looks up to see a SECURITY GUARD hurrying her way. She turns and heads towards the exit, trying to stay calm. Suddenly she's knocked from behind! --

She gasps as the guard BARRELS PAST headed for a DISTURBANCE AT A TABLE. She swears under her breath -- steadies herself -- then starts her count all over again.

INT. BODEGA. NEW ORLEANS. NIGHT.

An OLD MAN stands at a barricade of candy and gum topped by a bullet proof screen.

JOSEPH
Gimme four D batteries.

OLD MAN
Duracell ok, Boss?

JOSEPH
Yeah, great. And a pair of socks.

OLD MAN
No socks, Boss. Walmart for socks.

CUT TO:

JOSEPH'S FEET. One is BARE inside the shoe as he walks from the bodega into an ALLEY. Up ahead is the REAR OF LIVE BAIT and DEACON'S RANGE ROVER sitting parked in a POOL OF LIGHT.

Joseph picks up a BRICK and throws it through the WINDSHIELD. As the ALARM STARTS SCREAMING he drops the FOUR D BATTERIES INTO HIS SOCK and steps into the shadows. He stands waiting with the HOMEMADE MACE hanging down his leg.

A door rattles and TWO FIGURES hurry from the CLUB to the Range Rover.

BOO BOO
Aw man! Lookatit!

DEACON
What's with this shit! Have a look
round see if you can see-

Joseph steps into the light --

WHAM!!! The mace slams into Boo Boo's face! He staggers back as Joseph pushes forward to deliver some jailhouse justice --

WHAM!!! Another swing of the mace finishes Boo Boo. He drops to the dirt --

WHAM!!! Deacon takes a blow to the ribs. Then a quick follow up to the head sends him sprawling. Deacon clutches his bust up mouth as Joseph stands over him --

JOSEPH
Touch her again and you're dead.

DEACON
What the fuck do you care?

JOSEPH
I don't. But her father was a
friend of mine.

Deacon's eyes widen as the mace comes up for a final blow --
WHAM!!! The side mirror explodes. And Joseph walks away.

EXT/INT. USED CAR LOT. NIGHT. LATER.

The stolen FORD sits in back of the CAR LOT. It could be a wrecking yard from the quality of the cars.

CUT TO:

THE OFFICE. A CAR DEALER counts off greasy hundreds. Joseph's phone rings. He grabs it thinking it's Julie in trouble. He sees BEAUCHAMP'S NAME and ignores the call. He takes the cash.

JOSEPH
That old Trans Am out there. How good does it run?

The Car Dealer takes back half the bills.

CAR DEALER
Bout that good.

CUT TO:

THE CAR LOT. Joseph guns the FOUR-BARREL V8 and pulls off in the beat up BLACK TRANS AM.

INT. TRANS AM. DRIVING. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph fumbles with the phone, hits the CALL BACK BUTTON --

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
What took you so long Dogfood?

JOSEPH
I told you. I don't know how this damn gizmo works. So? How'd she do?

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
Fine. Lucky for you.

CLICK -- Call ends.

INT. DIVE BAR. NEW ORLEANS. NIGHT. LATER.

Battered tables and chairs surround some battered OLD MUSICIANS. Life has been tough on these guys and it haunts the BLUES they are playing.

Joseph eases past TOUGH LOOKING LOCALS and pulls a chair up to Julie's table. She flashes a grin --

JOSEPH
So?

JULIE
I walked the whole place in tres elegant eighteen inch steps.

(her i-phone)
The distances are in here. I
couldn't get near the counting
room.

JOSEPH
We need to see how they work the
shift changes. You'll have to go
in again.

JULIE
Fine.

JOSEPH
Good. Well...

JULIE
You got somewhere to be? These
guys are great.

She signals for a drink. Joseph's off kilter as the beer
arrives. He picks at the foil round the lip of the bottle
as he watches the old guys do their stuff. He watches
Julie too.

JULIE
So what d'you think?

JOSEPH
They're good.

JULIE
Not them. Us... We're going to pull
this off, right?

JOSEPH
Still a lot of missing pieces.

JULIE
We're gonna pull it off.
(raises her glass)
To us.

JOSEPH
And Bernard.

JULIE
(pulls the glass away)
When I'm somewhere else with my
cut. Till then... To us.

She drinks. Joseph too.

CUT TO:

LATER. Julie hooks her LAP TOP to an AMP as the musicians
take five.

One of the players pulls a chair opposite Joseph. Wiry and gnarled by time he flashes a grin and a lot of gold teeth.

JACKSON
So how d'you know Julie?

JOSEPH
I don't. I knew her old man.

JACKSON
She's a good kid. Got crazy notions. Says she's gonna make us old fools famous.

JOSEPH
That right?

JACKSON
(laughs)
Yessir. She's like bad news Velcro. Attaches herself to anything broken and messed up. That's why we keep an eye out for her.
(a long look)
You bad news?

JOSEPH
Don't worry about me. I'm a reformed man.
(a knowing look)
You?

JACKSON
Reformed. Remixed. Rebooted and revitalized. Look out New York.

Julie walks up.

JULIE
Miami too.

JACKSON
What bout Chicago?

JULIE
Chicago, Moscow, Toyko... But I might need you to kick Deacon's ass first.

JACKSON
No bites yet?

JULIE
(pulls a face)
C'mon JJ. What you say we show the man what the world's missing.

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE. The old guys on guitar and harmonica. Julie in shades and headphones at her laptop, laying down back beats. Joseph sips beer savoring the mash-up of old and new as the crowd hits the floor --

Julie ditches the headphones and pushes through the crowd to Joseph. He tries to resist as she tries to drag him up to dance. It's pointless...

BLUES GUY (OVER)

*I want you to love me or leave me.
Anything you want to do.
Well a strange thing is happening.
It might happen to you.*

Hand shakes and kisses goodbye.

ON THE STREET. Julie walks to her Passat. Joseph to the Trans Am. Julie grins, runs over and climbs in beside him.

IN THE TRANS AM. Joseph drives. Julie closes her eyes and sings along.

BACK AT THE HOUSE. They part on the stairs. Joseph watches as Julie heads slowly upstairs. She knows he's watching.

Julie reaches the head of the stairs, turns and looks down -- But Joseph isn't there.

EXT/INT. DEACON'S HOUSE. DAY.

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD'S birthday party Deacon style. Balloons, bouncy castle and a DJ. Deacon DANCES round the garden with his SON on his shoulders. The CROWD goes nuts. The kid waves to Julie as she walks onto the porch carrying a PRESENT. She waves back --

MAMA (O.S.)

He could've been yours.

Julie turns. She's being watched by DEACON'S MOTHER, MAMA.

MAMA

But he isn't.

(a hard smile)

So don't go encouraging him.

You'll only break his heart like
you broke his daddy's.

(eyeing the present)

You staying for cake or are you
just leaving?

Julie heads into the kitchen with the gift.

Her present joins a stack piled on the table by a FRAMED PHOTO of DEACON AND HER. They look happy. Julie lifts the photo with a swirl of feelings -- then jolts -- like she's been slapped.

Lying under a pile of MAIL is a STACK OF CD'S. HER CD'S.
The samples Deacon told her he had sent to producers.
Unopened. Forgotten.

CUT TO:

LATER. The kids are gone and the music is pumping. Girls
dance on the hoods of SUV's. Guys slam beers and laugh it
up.

Boo Boo mixes SIZZURP, the rappers cocktail of SEVEN UP,
COUGH SYRUP and JOLLY RANCHERS --

BOO BOO

You want?

Julie waves him off as Deacon walks up. He takes a Sizzurp
and shoots a look, challenging Julie to say something about
his BRUISED FACE.

DEACON

Mama says you brought a present
for Lil Deacon. You bring anything
for me?

JULIE

A casino... It's a casino.

DEACON

I said! Boo Boo, didn't I say?
(to Julie)
A cat like that? Runs with a crew
like your old man's? It had to be
a big score. A Casino. Damn! How
much we talking?

JULIE

I don't know.

DEACON

But it's big. For sure.

JULIE

I still don't know what Casino.
Or when.

DEACON

But you'll find out. Whatever
you're doin' you keep doin' it.

JULIE

I gotta get back to the club.

DEACON

You go. And stay real close to
Mr. Main-Event. Don't go trusting
him, Sugar. A snake can shed his
skin but he's still a snake.

JULIE
That's for sure, Deacon.

Julie leaves. Deacon slugs his sizzurp, grabs Boo Boo's and slams it too. Time to celebrate.

DEACON
And when the time's right, that old man's gonna get his.

INT. JOSEPH'S ROOM. BERNARD'S HOUSE. EARLY MORNING.

Joseph is standing over a table with the PLANS spread out along with a her MEASUREMENTS. Julie walks in --

JULIE
Why'd you do that to Deacon?

JOSEPH
You should stay away from him.

JULIE
Nola's a small town.

JOSEPH
So find a bigger one.

JULIE
I was planning to. Getting "fuck-you money" together takes time.

Joseph nods to the plans.

JOSEPH
You sure you kept to eighteen inch steps last night?

JULIE
Yeah. Why?

JOSEPH
These measurements don't match.

JULIE
So it's my screw up?

JOSEPH
I didn't say...

JULIE
A piece of rope? I told you my Nike's could've done it.

Joseph lets it fly.

JOSEPH
We'll need to go back in.

JULIE
We? What about you getting
recognised?

JOSEPH
Let me worry about that.

JULIE
And you let me worry about the
measurements.

He lets that fly too as she stomps off.

INT. MCEWAN'S HOUSE. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

Warden McEwan watches TWO MEDICS carry his unconscious WIFE
to an AMBULANCE. A COP is filling out an incident report.

COP
This the first time she's tried
this?

MCEWAN
No.

COP
And the pills were yours?

McEwan nods blankly.

COP
Why so many?

MCEWAN
I caught an IED.

COP
Iraq?

MCEWAN
Hmm.

COP
Well. Thank God that's over...

The cop walks. McEwan watches his wife being driven away
and he's wondering if it'll ever be over.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM. LATER.

McEwan circles Beauchamp giving him a verbal working over.

MCEWAN
Crazy wife, health insurance
nearly tapped out, a 401K that's
in the shitter. I'm not getting
that, "This is gonna turn out
amazing for you" feeling.

(snorts)
 See the plan was I go back up
 north. Buy a big fuck-off house.
 Get crazy looked after for the rest
 of her life. That okay with you?

BEAUCHAMP
 Yeah... Sure.

MCEWAN
 Well then. Let's cut out the lay up
 bullshit and get out there and slam
 dunk this mother-fucker.

INT. JOSEPH'S ROOM. BERNARD'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

A different Joseph. Clean shaven, hair slicked back, wearing
 dark framed glasses. And then there's the suit, shirt and
 tie. A knock at the door.

JOSEPH
 Yeah. Come in.

Working the knot in his tie, he doesn't turn as Julie enters.
 She sees the sofa, now complete with it's cushions.

JULIE
 You moved your bed back in.

JOSEPH
 I'm tryin'.

He turns. Julie stands there in a little black dress. Super
 hot. He's taken aback. Trying not to show it. She nods to
 his new look.

JULIE
 Wow. *I* nearly didn't recognize
 you.

JOSEPH
 Nobody's gonna be looking at me.

She grins away the compliment --

JULIE
 Can you do me up?

She turns round to reveal a long bare back that ends in a
 TATTOO above a fringe of LACE PANTIES. Joseph can't help
 but stare.

JULIE
 (teasing)
 Start any time you like.

Joseph slowly raises the zipper. His hands follow the curve
 of her back up to her neck.

She shivers as he pushes a strand of hair away and gently snaps the zipper closed. She turns. Their eyes lock. They stand static-close. Both of them knowing where this is heading --

JOSEPH
We better get going.

He walks out of the room. She stands alone for a beat, then follows in his wake.

INT. TRANS AM. NIGHT.

Joseph and Julie drive. Joseph checks the mirror. The IMPALA is tailing them a bunch of cars back.

INT. CASINO. NIGHT. LATER.

The elegant couple breeze past SECURITY. The GUARD'S eyes are glued to Julie. No one even glances at Joseph.

JOSEPH
(under his breath)
Should've done this earlier.

CUT TO:

FLASHING LIGHTS, ringing bells, free food and cheap booze. A BARTENDER passes a couple of drinks to Joseph.

Across the bar an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN catches Joseph's eye. It's the woman he spent the night with. She smiles. Joseph smiles back. Then turns to Julie.

JOSEPH
Old friend.

JULIE
Really old.

JOSEPH
Made me feel young.

Joseph enjoying Julie trying not to show she's jealous.

JULIE
Three o four.

Joseph doesn't get it. Julie types the numbers 3 0 4 into her i-phone. She flips it and smiles sweetly as Joseph reads the letters -- h O E

Now he gets it...

JOSEPH
You ready?

JULIE
Me and Mr. Jobs.

She moves off using her PEDOMETER APP to measure distances.
Beauchamp walks up chowing on a JUMBO SHRIMP COCKTAIL.

BEAUCHAMP
Average American spends a dollar
eighty-five a day feeding his
dog. Costs a dollar forty-three
to feed a prisoner.

JOSEPH
That much?

He helps himself to one of Beauchamp's shrimp.

BEAUCHAMP
Don't go screwing this up,
Dogfood.

He walks off. Joseph signals the bartender for a re-fill.

JOSEPH
Hey Pal, win me fifty bucks here,
will you?

BARTENDER
Whaddya need?

JOSEPH
That guy I was talking to. I just
bet him this was the old Golden
Nugget. Same boat right?

BARTENDER
It's the Nugget alright. But not
the same. Katrina messed her up.
Pushed her a hundred yards up the
bank. Complete re-fit. Took over
six months. Yeah, all changed.
Everything's changed...

The Bartenders voice drops -- all sound drops to a roaring
silence. BECAUSE BERNARD'S PLAN HAS JUST COME APART.

JOSEPH WATCHES JULIE DO HER THING -- BEAUCHAMP HOVERING
ACROSS THE BAR -- ATKIN'S WATCHING FROM A BALCONY -- A
GUARD PROWLING THE TABLES -- AND SUDDENLY HE'S MOVING. HE
PUSHES THROUGH THE CROWD AND SLIDES UP BESIDE JULIE. HE
WHISPERS IN HER EAR.

JOSEPH
Laugh. You're happy.

Julie quickly obliges --

JOSEPH
I gotta get out. Now. That
Security guy over there was a cop
back in the day. Can you do this
on your own?

JULIE
Sure.

JOSEPH
I'll see you back at the house.
Laugh again.

She laughs --

JOSEPH
Now kiss me.

A beat -- But she does it. He walks away. The Guard looks from Joseph to Julie. She holds his look. Then winks at him. The Guard laughs. She gets on with it.

EXT. CASINO. NIGHT. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph hits the night. He loses the glasses and tie, tosses the jacket in back of the TRANS AM.

EXT. HIGHWAY. MINUTES LATER.

The TRANS AM moves through traffic. It dodges between cars and pulls round a BIG-RIG --

INT. TRANS AM. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph checks the mirror and sees a pair of headlights finishing the same move. He hits the gas and pulls away but the headlights stay with him. He reaches for the phone -- wobbles out of lane. Joseph hasn't mastered multitasking.

INT. CASINO. SAME TIME.

Julie's phone rings --

JULIE
Yeah?

JOSEPH (ON PHONE)
Remember the parole officers that
day on the highway? Have a look
around. You see them?

Julie scans the big room, she signals a waiter for a drink. All the while she's searching for her tail. She spots Beauchamp --

JULIE
I got one of them. The big one.

JOSEPH (ON PHONE)
Beauchamp. And the other one?

JULIE
No. He's not here.

INT. TRANS AM. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph hangs up and checks the mirror. The headlights are still there. He judges the oncoming traffic -- drops a gear -- hits the gas and yanks the wheel over --

EXT. HIGHWAY. CONTINUOUS.

The TRANS AM slides sideways across three lanes of TRAFFIC and swerves through a GAS STATION, dodging pumps and parked cars. He guns it onto a cross street --

The IMPALA tries to mirror Joseph's move but the gap has gone. ATKINS screams at cars blocking his way --

INT. IMPALA. CONTINUOUS.

Atkins -- jammed -- looking for the TRANS AM --

ATKINS (INTO PHONE)
I lost him. He made me.

INT. CASINO. SAME TIME.

Julie paces the corridor leading to the COUNTING ROOM -- deftly measuring the distance on her i-phone

BEAUCHAMP (O.S.)
Julie! There you are!

She turns. Beauchamp walks towards her grinning. He wraps her in a fake hug. His grip is hard, his voice low, loaded with menace --

BEAUCHAMP
Where is he?

JULIE
Who?

BEAUCHAMP
Joseph.

JULIE
I don't know a Joseph.

BEAUCHAMP
Ex con. Friend of your old man.
You know, the Joseph Saudek
you're helping rob this Casino.

Julie blinks in surprise -- quickly covering it with anger.

JULIE
Fuck off or I'll call security.

BEAUCHAMP
Sure you will. Where is he?

He tightens his grip on her wrist. She gets the message --

JULIE
I don't know. He just bolted.

Beauchamp stares. Then sniffs her like a hungry dog.

BEAUCHAMP
Careful Sugar. I'm real good at sniffing out bullshit.

He walks away. Julie's shaken, but she quickly TAKES A SHOT OF HIM ON HER I-PHONE.

EXT. BOAT YARD. NEW ORLEANS. NIGHT.

Freddy stands by his YELLOW CORVETTE drinking a coffee. Joseph's coffee goes cold on the hood as he paces the shore.

JOSEPH
You know anything about a re-fit to the old Golden Nugget after Katrina?

FAKE FREDDY
Wouldn't suprise me. All those Casino boats took a hammering. Why?

Joseph says nothing. It tells Freddy everything --

FAKE FREDDY
Ah...

Joseph looks away.

FAKE FREDDY
I don't know who owned it twelve years ago but the Golden Nugget's run by the Mexican mob these days. The Harrera Organization.

JOSEPH
The Harreras...

Joseph remembers what Julie said about the Harreras and their drug operation.

JOSEPH
When did the Mexicans start caring about casinos?

FAKE FREDDY

They don't. It's a way to clean
drug money they don't send back
across the border.

Joseph stands staring at the dark water. Options, angles,
percentages all swirling through his head as --

FAKE FREDDY (OVER)

These guys are whole new heap of
crazy. Believe me, they wouldn't
have let you mess with their
laundry operation. Even with
Bernard's plan.

(another beat)

What are you gonna do Joseph?

Joseph turns. Suddenly focused --

JOSEPH

Tell me everything you know about
these Harreras.

EXT. LATINO NEIGHBORHOOD. NIGHT. LATER.

A part of town lit by billboards for bail bondsmen. The
Trans Am pulls into a street crowded with PARKED CARS all
MEXICAN-ED OUT with spinners and two tone paint jobs.

Joseph climbs from the car. He listens to CRAZED BARKING
coming from a WRECKING YARD at the end of an alley.

EXT. WRECKING YARD. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph drops over a fence. He walks between ROWS OF CAGES
as he heads for a noisy, bright lit SHED.

INT. SHED. WRECKING YARD. CONTINUOUS.

CANNIBALIZED CARS, piles of DOG SHIT and a CROWD packed
round a pit where TWO PIT-BULLS are fighting. Joseph
throws down a TWENTY DOLLAR bet. His eyes slide to a
DOUBLEWIDE TRAILER in the courtyard.

A BOOKIE watches suspiciously as Joseph abandons his TWENTY
and heads into the YARD through a SIDE DOOR. The Bookie
calls to Skinny --

EXT/INT. TRAILER. WRECKING YARD. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph peers round the edge of a window --

Don Jordan, the Anglo Businessman he saw at the Casino Boat
is talking on the phone as cash runs through a COUNTING
MACHINE. The BANDED CASH is tossed into a DUFFEL BAG atop
a pile of OTHER DUFFELS stacked along a wall. Like Julie
said, a lot of money. Joseph hears someone approaching.

Skinny comes round the corner. He sees Joseph PISSING against the trailer --

SKINNY (IN SPANISH)
Hey, go piss somewhere else.

JOSEPH (IN SPANISH)
You seen my dog?

SKINNY (IN SPANISH)
Drunk asshole....

He steps up to grab Joseph, and --

CRACK!!! Joseph hits Skinny with a HEAD BUTT -- Then WHUP!!! he SLAMS the enforcer's head OFF HIS KNEE. GAME OVER.

Joseph drags the unconscious Mexican into the shadows. He rips Skinny's GLOCK away and pockets it -- then freezes as the trailer door opens. Don Jordan walks away into the dark. Joseph sets out after him --

INT. TRANS AM. NIGHT. LATER.

Joseph drives. He's on the tail of Don Jordan's BMW --

EXT. MCMANSION. NIGHT. CONTINUOUS.

The BMW pulls into the drive. Don Jordan gets out. He picks up a kids bike and walks into the house.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
Excuse me.

Don Jordan turns. Joseph walks to the door carrying TWO GAS CANS.

JOSEPH
My car ran out of gas...

Don Jordan opens the door --

And is SMASHED in the face with a gas can. He falls back as Joseph steps into the house and shuts the door behind him. EVA JORDAN runs into the hall. Her mouth a perfect "O" of shock as she stares into Joseph's GLOCK.

INT. KITCHEN. MCMANSION. MINUTES LATER.

The HUSBAND AND WIFE sit ZIP-TIED in chairs at either end of a kitchen. Their eyes are fixed on the TWO CANS OF GASOLINE sitting on the floor -- call them CAN A and CAN B.

EVA JORDAN
Please I know nothing about this.

JOSEPH
But your husband does. And he
looks like a stubborn man.

EVA JORDAN
Please.

JOSEPH
A few answers and I'm gone. I
won't even wake the kids.

He UNSCREWS the caps of the gas cans as he speaks.

JOSEPH
Let's talk about this laundry op
of yours. Money. Security.
Schedule...

He takes CAN A and splashes gas over Don. THE STINK IS
OVERPOWERING as he douses his hair and clothes. Joseph
leaves the accountant choking on fumes as he picks up CAN B
and crosses to his wife. She starts to scream -- Joseph
covers her mouth and nods upstairs.

JOSEPH
Shhhhhh.

He splashes the contents of CAN B over the terrified woman.

EVA JORDAN
Tell him what he wants to know!
Don! Tell him! Please!

Don spits away STINKING GASOLINE. He watches Joseph pull
something from his pocket -- A LIVE BAIT MATCHBOOK --

DON JORDAN
They'll kill me.

JOSEPH
No Don. I'll kill you. But
first...

Joseph rips A MATCH loose and closes the cover. He looks
at Eva.

EVA JORDAN
Don! Tell him! Please!

DON JORDAN
No. He won't do it.

EVA JORDAN
Tell him!

Joseph strikes the match --

EVA JORDAN
Now! Tell him now!

DON JORDAN
He won't --

And Joseph tosses the burning match toward the woman --

EVA/DON
NO!!!!!!!!!!

The match lands a foot short of the pool of gasoline at Eva's feet. They stare at it in shock as it flickers out!

JOSEPH
Lucky.

Eva is white with shock. Don looks like he's shit himself (but who could tell with the smell of the gas). Joseph strikes ANOTHER MATCH and tosses it -- CLOSER --

EVA JORDAN
Please. Don...

Joseph rips ANOTHER MATCH loose and strikes it -- Don stares at the flame --

EVA JORDAN
Tell him.

The match is still burning --

Don's lips move --

Joseph leans close --

Eva watches as Don starts to whisper to Joseph --

The match burning down closer to Joseph's hand --

Don whispers faster --

Joseph listens --

Eva watches the flame almost at Joseph's hand --

EVA JORDAN
Blow it out!

Don finishes --

DON JORDAN
That's all I know. Everything.

Joseph eyes bore into him --

JOSEPH
Okay. I believe you, Don.

EVA JORDAN
Don't burn us up mister.

JOSEPH
(to Eva)
Don't worry.
(he blows out the match
and tosses the matchbook)
His can was gas. Yours was water.

He lifts CAN B and takes a swig of "gasoline". He looks at Don -- nods to the gasoline and CAN A.

JOSEPH
Stinks right?

Is he talking about the gasoline or life?

EXT. MCMANSION. NIGHT.

Joseph climbs into the TRANS AM. He catches his reflection in the rear mirror. He looks away, not liking the guy he sees there. The V8 rumbles --

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. NIGHT. LATER.

Joseph steps inside. Julie, still in her black dress, sits on the stairs drinking wine from the bottle.

JOSEPH
You ok?

JULIE
Sure. I spent all night playing hooker. Then along comes your "parole guy" who knows all about us and our plan to rob the place.

Joseph turns and heads into the bathroom. He's washing gas off his hands when Julie follows him inside --

JULIE
Who the hell is he? What's going on?

JOSEPH
Better you don't know.

JULIE
Better for who? Huh?--

BOOM! -- An explosion of glass in the main room! Joseph pulls Julie down and throws himself over her. He draws the GLOCK. Nothing. He edges into the main room. Broken glass litters the floor... along with a CAN OF DOG FOOD.

JULIE
What is that?

JOSEPH

A message.

EXT. GARDEN. MCEWAN'S HOUSE. DAY.

McEwan rides a mower. He does a turn and sees Beauchamp standing waiting. He kills the motor --

BEAUCHAMP

He's in the car.

INT. IMPALA. MINUTES LATER.

The car sits in the driveway. Beauchamp and Atkins up front. McEwan in back with Joseph.

MCEWAN

You gave Atkins the slip last night. Where were you?

JOSEPH

I didn't know it was you.

ATKINS

Bullshit.

MCEWAN

Beauchamp.

Beauchamp punches Joseph in the face. And again.

JOSEPH

Ok, ok. I was meeting some guys.

McEwan gives some invisible signal. The punches stop.

JOSEPH

I was putting a crew together.
The kind of guys who are allergic
to authority. If they'd seen this
car...

MCEWAN

How you planning to pay this crew?

JOSEPH

A cut of the take.

MCEWAN

That's my money.

JOSEPH

Only when it's out of the Casino.
That means the right guys and the
right gear.

MCEWAN

How much?

JOSEPH

A hundred thousand each. Three
guys plus the girl.

MCEWAN

And the takes two and a half?

JOSEPH

Thirteen years ago. Now? Who
knows?

McEwan says noting. Then he reaches for his pocket.
Joseph stiffens -- but it's just a PHONE.

MCEWAN

Here. Have a look at this.

Joseph is confronted with a PICTURE OF AN ARAB HANGING IN A
CELL. Hooded and messed up. Next picture shows SAME GUY
WITH A DOG TAKING A CHUNK OUT OF HIS LEG --

MCEWAN

Keep scrolling.

A SHOT OF A GUY HANGING HOOKED UP WITH ELECTRODES --

MCEWAN

I did worse. For my country.

(takes back the phone)

But this is personal. I'm doing
this for my wife and my boy.
Great kid Martin. Had his mom's
heart. Loved hockey. It's big up
there at Fort Drum.

(a beat)

Anyway I bought this dog so the
house wouldn't seem so empty
while I was in Iraq. Winter
comes. Dog runs onto the ice and
the dumb shit falls in. Course
Martin goes after him.

(a sigh)

Dog came home and they found
Martin frozen in the lake. I shot
him when I got back. The dog.

Beauchamp and Atkins watch McEwan in awe...

MCEWAN

Sometimes I think I should've
shot her at the same time.

(hard on Joseph)

But I didn't. So I've got to take
care of things. You get that?

Joseph nods.

MCEWAN

Good. Cause if you had any doubts.
 (taking his phone back)
 I could take a few shots of that
 daughter of Bernard's that would
 clear them up.

McEwan gets out of the car and walks to the house. As the car reverses down the drive Joseph glimpses a WOMAN'S PALE FACE watching from an upper window.

INT. SHABBY RECORDING STUDIO. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

FOUR OLD GUYS sit playing together. Julie rides the levels on the MIXING DESK. They finish up. Instruments are set aside. There's stretching and laughing as they head out for a smoke.

Julie plays back the TRACK. She pulls her I-PHONE and HOLDS IT OVER HEAD.

JOSEPH (O.S.)

What are you doing?

She turns. Joseph stands in the door.

JULIE

Grabbing. The name of the song.

JOSEPH

Huh.

JULIE

What d'you want?

JOSEPH

Your help.

JULIE

Go ask your parole officer...

She pulls up the SHOT SHE TOOK OF BEAUCHAMP IN THE CASINO --

JULIE

Darrel Alan Beauchamp. Ex State Trooper. Divorced. Two kids. Behind in his alimony. Restricted visitation cause of the drug problem that got him booted from the Staties.

JOSEPH

How did you-

JULIE

A reverse image search... It's what you do to assholes and pervs who harass you.

JOSEPH
I warned you. It's not a game.

JULIE
He going to be waiting when we
come out of the casino?

JOSEPH
With some pals.

JULIE
And they just walk away with the
haul... This is bullshit.

She pushes past Joseph and walks into the studio. She
begins angrily adjusting mics. Joseph shadows her...

JOSEPH
Listen. You want money? Yes or
no?

JULIE
What d'you think?

JOSEPH
Well, I'll get it. But you're
gonna have to trust me.

JULIE
Trust you?

JOSEPH
Sure... I trust you.

He produces a SLIP of paper, a LIST OF NAMES.

JOSEPH
I can't do this alone. I need a
crew and I need you to help me
find them.
(he nods to her i-phone)
I need somebody who can pull
stuff out of thin air.

JACKSON (O.S.)
Want me to kick his ass?

Jackson stands in the door, guitar in hand, cigarette in
the corner of his mouth, eyes on Joseph.

JULIE
No, J.J. Not just yet.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Julie's face BATHED FLICKERING LIGHT. It looks like she's
in her BOOTH IN THE CLUB --

But we pull back to see she's in HER ROOM sitting in front of the big COMPUTER SCREENS. She's in the zone, mining the net to find the NAMES ON JOSEPH'S LIST --

JOSEPH (OVER)
Jean Aguerra, Dave Morrissey,
Michael Dillon, Danny Pam Pam
Pamlona and Ashley Kulic.

NAMES, FACES, DOBs, PHONE NUMBERS, PARKING TICKETS, CLUB MEMBERSHIPS, AIRLINE TICKETS, flash across the screens at lightning speed. She works everything from INMATE LOCATOR to FACEBOOK. COURT RECORDS, PAROLE APPEARANCES, DMV RECORDS, CREDIT AGENCIES, REVERSE DIRECTORIES and DATING SITES blur across the screens like some weird music video.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SCENES where we see Joseph discuss the job with GUYS WHO WILL MAKE UP HIS CREW. The MEETINGS HAPPEN IN VARIOUS PLACES but we cut them together so they are a SINGLE CONVERSATION. It'll be cool. WE OPEN ON --

INT. LAFITTE DOCKS. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

Joseph watches a SHRIMP BOAT being unloaded. A DECKHAND jumps to the quay and shoulders up beside him. He is JEAN AGUERRA --

AGUERRA
How'd you find me?

JOSEPH
Magic.

AGUERRA
I heard about Bernard. He was a good guy. Deserved better.

JOSEPH
Big boys rules.

AGUERRA
Right. This job you're thinking of pulling...

JOSEPH
Oh, I'm pulling it.

AGUERRA
It's risky.

JOSEPH
If you're having second thoughts...

AGUERRA
You see me goin' anywhere?

JOSEPH
So. What gives you nightmares?

AGUERRA
Fat women in shorts... And the security.

CUT TO:

A PARKED CAR. A different guy. DAVE MORRISSEY --

MORRISSEY
It'll be heavy.

JOSEPH
How heavy?

MORRISSEY
Mexican heavy.

Joseph gives him a "how the hell did you know" look.

MORRISSEY
C'mon. Everybody knows they made this their turf after Katrina. Bad boys. Very bad.

CUT TO:

FAIR GROUNDS HORSE TRACK. Guy three. MICHAEL DILLON --

DILLON
They're ultra tech-ed up.

JOSEPH
How do we deal with that?

DILLON
Scramble the signals. You just gotta hope they think they're getting bad reception. But you got a bigger problem than that.

JOSEPH
Like?

DILLON
GPS trackers. The cash and anything that moves. It will be tagged.

JOSEPH
Can you disable them?

DILLON
I got to find them first. The GPS they'll use will give off 546 to 7654 megahertz oscillations.

I can use a RF detector to find them. But it takes time...

JOSEPH
Can you block the signal while you look for the trackers?

CUT TO:

CITY PARK DRIVING RANGE. Guy four. PAM PAM PAMLONA sends neon yellow golf balls streaking through the night as --

PAM PAM
If we can't that's a problem. Qualifies under game over.

CUT TO:

BEST BUY ELECTRONICS STORE. Guy five is having a smoke break in the loading bay. ASHLEY KULIC --

ASH
Yeah, you don't wanna screw that up.

CUT TO:

AGUERRA
Cause while we're trying to find the GPS somebody's finding us.

CUT TO:

ASH
And these guys are animals.

CUT TO:

BERNARD'S HOUSE --

JULIE
You sure these are the right guys for this? I don't see a boat guy.

JOSEPH
No?...
(bullshit-ing fast)
Aguerra. He can handle that.

JULIE
Okay. So when do we all meet?

JOSEPH
Night of the job. Till then everyone works on their own. This is a need to know operation. And I'm the only one who needs to know.

JULIE
And what about me?

JOSEPH
You'll be nowhere near the job
when it goes down.

JULIE
Come on-

JOSEPH
You know what a job like this
carries?
(off her silence)
Minimum ten, max ninety-nine year
sentence. You know what they call
doin' a stretch like that?
(she obviously doesn't)
Making ghosts. Cause everybody on
the outside is dead to you. All
those friends. All those dreams.
Bernard wouldn't want that.

JULIE
Yeah, right.

JOSEPH
He cared, okay?

JULIE
You know how many letters I got
from him while he was inside?..
None. Not one. So screw him caring
for me. And screw what he wanted.

JOSEPH
(beat)
I don't want it either...

His words silence her. And Joseph looks away remembering
the ghosts he himself made.

EXT. WRECKING YARD. DAY.

Eva Jordan, the woman Joseph threatened with the gas, runs
from the OFFICE clutching a handful of CASH. She climbs
into her car and drives away crying --

CUT TO:

THE OFFICE. Skinny, Angel and El Rojo watch Caro as he
fingers the LIVE BAIT MATCHBOOK Joseph used.

CARO
Make sure she's a widow by
tomorrow.
(off the matchbook)
That night at Deacon's club.

That big guy had the jailhouse
tats she's talking bout. I told
them I didn't want noise.

INT. DEACON'S OFFICE. LIVE BAIT. DAY.

A MACHINE GUN BLASTS A HALLWAY -- A FIGURE CRUMPLES TO
CHEERS as the words "NEW HIGH SCORE" flash on screen.

CUT TO:

SIX-ONE does a victory dance in front of the FLAT SCREEN
playing GRAND THEFT AUTO. Deacon pulls off his SUNGLASSES
and tosses them to his boy.

DEACON
Get you next time, Asshole. Take
good care of 'em.

Six-One slips on Deacon's sunglasses and saunters off
laughing.

EXT. LIVE BAIT/STREET. CONTINUOUS.

Six-One comes out of the club like he owns the place. The
doors open in a CAR across the street. Skinny and El Rojo.

SKINNY
Hey! Deacon!

Six-One turns, about to put them straight as they pull
their guns. Six-One bolts for it --

SKINNY
Where you goin'?

He opens up -- POP!! - POP!! - POP!! --

INT. DEACON'S OFFICE. CONTINUOUS.

Deacon hurries to the window. Down in the street Six-One
goes sprawling --

EXT. LIVE BAIT/STREET. CONTINUOUS.

The SUNGLASSES skid across the street. Six-One clambers to
his feet -- but El Rojo is there -- POP!! - POP!! --

SKINNY (IN SPANISH)
Make sure they get the message.
Closed casket.

El Rojo rolls the dead man over and aims at his face.

EL ROJO (IN SPANISH)
Hey, this isn't Deacon...

SKINNY (IN SPANISH)
Shit! You gotta be...

Bang!! - Bang!! - Bang!! -- The assassins duck as SHOTS whip by. They see Deacon SHOOTING through the 2nd floor window.

MEXICAN
It's him! Deacon!

THREE GUNMEN jump from a car further up the street and run toward the club --

INT/EXT. DEACON'S OFFICE. CONTINUOUS.

Shots CRACK round the office as Deacon ducks into the hall. There's yelling downstairs as the GUN MEN sprint though the club --

Deacon opens up as a Mexican hits the top of the stairs -- BANG! - BANG! - BANG! - CLICK - CLICK -- Deacon tosses his empty gun. He runs and rips the GUN off the wounded Mexican. BANG! - BANG! -- Deacon fires down the stairs, then runs down the hall to the EMERGENCY STAIRS.

El Rojo, Angel and Oso race past their wounded buddy --

EXT. ROOF. LIVE BAIT. CONTINUOUS.

Deacon bursts through EMERGENCY DOORS onto the roof. He slams the door SHUT and runs for the FIRE ESCAPE --

POP! - POP! - POP! -- rounds rattle off the fire escape as a GUN MAN opens up from the alley below. Deacon fires back -- BANG! - BANG! --

The emergency door smashes open --

Deacon turns still firing -- BANG! - BANG! - BANG! -- Oso crumples to the roof. Angel and El Rojo duck back into the stairwell. But Deacon is cornered.

The barren roof, the crumpled figure, Deacon standing trapped -- the scene is weirdly reminiscent of the HURRICANE KATRINA PHOTO on his office wall.

Skinny calls from the cover of the stairwell --

SKINNY
Hey. What you waiting on? You
painting on the roof up there?
(a scared girls voice)
Help! Help! The bad Mexicans are
after me! Help! Help!

Deacon checks his mag --

SKINNY (O.S.)
 We're gonna cut you up Deacon.
 Paint the roof with you, Asshole.

Deacon looks out over his neighborhood and the Mississippi shining in the distance.

DEACON
 It's all good.

He HEARS the SOUND OF FEET on the fire escape. Getting CLOSER. He watches Oso crawl towards his buddies lurking in the stairwell.

DEACON
 Yeah... All good.

BANG! - BANG! -- HE FINISHES OSO -- BANG! - BANG! -- THE GUNMAN ON THE FIRE ESCAPE DUCKS INTO COVER. Deacon FIRES IN BOTH DIRECTIONS as he walks to the edge of the roof --

And JUMPS! --

He plummets through space and --

Smashes into a DUMPSTER full of GARBAGE BAGS and PACKING CASES. He rolls from the dumpster into the ALLEY. A gun CRACKS from the roof as Deacon ROUNDS A CORNER and LIMPS TO SAFETY. Then he staggers and folds to the ground...

EXT. HIGHWAY. DUSK.

Joseph runs along an empty highway. Dripping sweat, breathing hard. A CAR looms behind him. Closing fast. He senses something and turns as the car slows beside him. A LOWERED WINDOW -- a GRINNING FACE -- a FLASH OF METAL!

A BEER CAN hits Joseph!

TEENAGE VOICE
 RUN FOREST! RUN!

The car roars off to howls of DRUNK LAUGHTER. Joseph wipes off the beer. He licks his hand and starts running again.

INT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Joseph sits in the window talking on the phone. He only has his reflection for company.

JOSEPH
 So everything's ready? You're happy?

DILLON (ON PHONE)
 Yeah. Ecstatic. How about everybody else? They happy?

JOSEPH
Like it's their birthday.

DILLON (ON PHONE)
But I have to take your word.

JOSEPH
Right.

He hears someone come into the house.

JOSEPH
The girl's here. I gotta go.

He hangs up. He steps into the hall --

IT'S NOT JULIE.

ANGEL AND EL ROJO STAND THERE, GUNS OUT --

Joseph catches Angel's wrist and plunges back into his room. They sprawl in the dark smashing off furniture, sending piles of books tumbling. Joseph throws Angel into a wall. ANGEL'S GUN goes bouncing --

Joseph kicks the door into El Rojo's face, slams his head off his knee and rips his gun free --

Angel scrambles for his gun --

Joseph flings El Rojo's GUN across the room -- It catches Angel in the ribs dropping him as --

El Rojo trips Joseph and LUNGES with a KNIFE --

Joseph throws a HANDFUL OF PAPERS in his face -- El Rojo slashes -- Joseph grabs a HARDBACK and SWATS the blade away then BACKHANDS the book into El Rojo's throat. The Mexican goes down. Joseph LUNGES for the door as --

TWO more ENFORCERS surge into the room. A blow to the head sends Joseph to the floor -- a kick to face and the last thing he hears is a burst of laughter --

CUT TO:

BLACK.

Then a BLUR OF LIGHTS. They slowly turns into faces. They peer at Joseph as he sits slumped at the BIG DINING TABLE. He's grabbed by the hair and forced to focus on --

CARO
I got you sniffing round one of my places, Vato. I know what you are. I could beat the shit out of you and shoot you in the face but what good would that do?

Just a lot of noise.
 (more laughter)
 No. People need to know I'm the
 biggest dog in this junk yard.

Skinny pulls Joseph's HAND onto the table --

CARO
 They need to know you don't touch
 my stuff.

Skinny holds Joseph's right hand down. El Rojo pushes a
 FOUR INCH NAIL into the back of it. Joseph BUCKS in pain --

CARO
 Easy Vato. Easy.

Caro silences him with a CHOKE HOLD -- Joseph watches the
 hammer rise -- He tries to jerk his hand away as --

BANG! --

The nail goes through his hand into the wood --

BANG! --

The point splinters the underside of the table --

BANG! --

The nail is driven home --

Caro releases the choke hold. Joseph's almost blacking out
 again as he slumps to his knees, face flush with the table.
 He stares at his BUST HAND --

CARO
 I hear you're handy with this
 shit, Vato.

Angel unscrews a CAN OF GASOLINE. He splashes it round the
 room and throws the can into the corner as --

Caro sets a HACKSAW by Joseph's CRUCIFIED HAND. He holds
 up the LIVE BAIT MATCHBOOK and walks to the door. He turns
 with a sly grin and tosses a match to the floor --

The GASOLINE EXPLODES! FLAMES SHOOT ACROSS THE FLOOR AND
 RACE UP THE WALLS LEAVING JOSEPH SURROUNDED BY FIRE --

He pulls at his hand -- A bolt of pain rips through him as
 THE GAS CAN POPS -- FLAMES ROLL ACROSS THE CEILING.

JOSEPH GRABS THE HACKSAW -- HE BRINGS IT TO HIS WRIST AS
 THE FLAMES ROAR CLOSER. HE PRESSES DOWN ON THE BLADE AND --

HE CAN'T DO IT! --

Using his LEFT HAND he tries to BREAK the thin blade on the edge of the table. The table shifts. He screams as the nail rips his hand. He leans on the blade again. It bends. HE LEANS HARDER BITING BACK THE PAIN AS -- THE BLADE SNAPS -- THE TABLE JOLTS -- JOSEPH SCREAMS as the BROKEN BLADE rattles to the burning floor.

He reaches for it -- scrabbling the blade closer -- and now it's in his hand.

HE SLIDES THE BLADE BETWEEN HIS FINGERS. THE TEETH BRUSH THE WEB OF SKIN. HE BREATHEs HARD -- PSYCHING HIMSELF UP FOR WHAT HE'S ABOUT TO DO --

THEN --

HE HACKS BETWEEN HIS FINGERS -- GASPING -- SAWING INTO HIS HAND -- AN INCH -- HE COLLAPSES ON THE TABLE AS IT'S SHEETED IN BLOOD -- HE'S BLACKING OUT AS --

A roll of BURNING WALLPAPER falls across him. HE THROWS IT ASIDE AND STARTS TO SAW AGAIN. HE'S SCREAMING -- THE BLADE IS NEARLY AT THE NAIL -- Suddenly the OLD RUG FLARES round his feet -- WITH A GASP JOSEPH RIPS HIS HAND FREE -- KICKS THE TABLE AWAY -- AND LUNGES FROM THE ROOM! --

He stumbles out the front door and CRUMPLES in the garden. The windows blow out and the house is ENGULFED in flames.

INT/EXT. LIVE BAIT. NIGHT.

The TRANS AM rounds a corner and hits a PARKED CAR. It drives on, coming to a halt at a HALF-ASSED angle.

SWEET

Man, I seen cars abandoned better than that.

(saunters to the window)

Hey, get your drunk ass outta' here, we don't need --

He freezes. Joseph, the seats, all COVERED IN BLOOD.

CUT TO:

SWEET pushes up to the DJ BOOTH. He whispers urgently to Julie. She tosses her HEADPHONES and runs from the booth.

CUT TO:

JULIE races into the alley with Sweet at her heels. Joseph lies sprawled with his hand wrapped in his bloody shirt.

JOSEPH

I can't go to a hospital.

JULIE

What about Uncle George?

SWEET
 (off the blood)
 We're not taking my car.

INT. MAGNOLIA PROJECTS. NEW ORLEANS. LATER.

BOXING TROPHIES crowd a TV. Framed PHOTOS show grinning BOXERS all with the same CORNERMAN -- UNCLE GEORGE (75).

Julie sits staring at the pictures avoiding the scene in the kitchen. Bloody towels cover the floor as Uncle George works on JOSEPH'S HAND under the glare of a bare bulb.

UNCLE GEORGE
 I can stop the bleeding and I can
 take care of the swelling. Bleeding
 and swelling there's nobody better
 in your corner. But the bones in
 your hand are bust up as a dropped
 box of china. You need a hospital.

JOSEPH
 No.

UNCLE GEORGE
 Well then, you can kiss your shot
 at a comeback goodbye.

Joseph winces as the old Cornerman injects his hand.

UNCLE GEORGE
 Gonna hurt a lot more when this
 wears off. Helluva lot more.
 (to Sweet)
 Hold his hand steady, Sweet. He's
 gonna jerk and buck so be ready.
 (to Joseph)
 We got some handiwork to do here.

He grins at his joke, then sets to sewing up Joseph's hand. The chair legs scrape the tile floor. In the other room Julie covers her ears.

EXT. MAGNOLIA PROJECTS. DAWN.

Sweet comes out of an apartment building with a TOYS R US BAG. He hands it to Julie and says something. She nods and walks back to her Passat.

INT. PASSAT. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph sits in the passenger seat. Julie hands him the bag. He checks inside. TWO GUNS and a box of BULLETS.

JOSEPH
 What did he have to say?

JULIE
That I was gonna get myself
killed hanging round you.

EXT. WOODS. LATER.

Joseph and Julie stand in a patch of sunlight surrounded by trees. He hands her a gun --

JOSEPH
All you have to do is pull the
trigger. The gun does the rest.

JULIE
I couldn't.

JOSEPH
Yeah. But you might have to.

He corrects her stance, leaning close and shows her how to aim. He pulls a strand of her hair away. Their faces are almost touching --

JOSEPH
Go on. Shoot.

She fires once. Twice. Both shots miss the tree she's aiming at.

JOSEPH
I should've kept you out of this.

JULIE
It was me who wanted in.
Remember?

She shoots again and misses.

JULIE
Don't worry. I'll be fine.

Joseph takes the gun. He can't even hold it. He fumbles it into his left hand and sights along the barrel --

Beyond the trees CROWS are swirling. There's something at their center -- SOMEONE. THE BLOND WOMAN FROM THE BEACH STANDS SILENTLY STARING AT HIM.

JOSEPH
You see those birds?

JULIE
Yeah.

JOSEPH
You see anything else?

JULIE

Like what?

Joseph doesn't reply. He stares at the BLOND WOMAN. Julie follows his look. There's nothing there. Joseph empties the mag at the tree. Not one shot hits its target.

JULIE

Shit.

EXT. BERNARD'S HOUSE. DAY.

Atkins talks with a FIRE INVESTIGATION TEAM picking over the smoking debris. He crosses to the Impala. Beauchamp is at the wheel, McEwan sits in back picking at his arm --

ATKINS

Vegetarian only.

BEAUCHAMP

Huh?

ATKINS

No meat on the barbeque.

(uneasy)

A pack of Mexicans were hanging round the time of the fire.

BEAUCHAMP

So?

ATKINS

Hell, Beau. Joseph's girl's boyfriend just got bumped by Mex!

MCEWAN

Yeah. It's getting messy.

McEwan pulls a fragment of METAL from his arm.

MCEWAN

Time to reel our boy in.

He tosses the shrapnel from the car, pops a VICODON and nods to Beauchamp to get going.

INT. ROOM 282. BEST WESTERN CHALMETTE. MORNING.

Joseph wakes to his PHONE ringing. He reaches for it and moans from the pain. Checks it lefty. IT'S BEAUCHAMP. He lets it ring as he rolls from the bed. He checking the bloody bandages --

Julie pushes into the room. She dumps coffees and rolls on the table. Coffee spills as she throws down a NEWSPAPER. It shows DEACON'S FACE beside a story on his killing --

JULIE
Was it me?

JOSEPH
What?

JULIE
Was it me? Who got him killed.
It talks about Mexicans...

JOSEPH
So?

JULIE
Mexicans did that to your hand.
The only thing you and Deacon
have in common is me.

JOSEPH
His partner got him in bed with
the Mexicans, not you. C'mon. You
know how it ends for guys like
Deacon. This headline was written
a long time ago.

JULIE
What d'you know? Huh? D'you know
he had a son? And he was good to
him. He was a good father, okay?

JOSEPH
Okay.

JULIE
(breaking down)
What's going to happen to him? To
Lil' Deacon? Who'll give a shit
about him?

Joseph's PHONE rings again. Beauchamp again. He kills it.
The silence is broken by Julie's sobbing --

JOSEPH
Go easy on yourself.

JULIE
No. I was gonna take off with my
cut and leave him... Fuck him and
Lil' Deacon, fuck everybody...

His phone starts ringing again. Joseph grabs it and throws
it against the wall silencing it permanently.

CUT TO:

LATER. A glass is filled with water. Joseph sets it by
the side of the bed. Julie stares blankly at the glass
with eyes puffy from crying.

Joseph crosses to the window and scans the HOTEL CARPARK. It's empty. He checks the time and eyes the carpark as a yellow Corvette pulls in. Joseph glances at Julie lying on the bed. Then he quietly leaves the room.

EXT. CARPARK. BEST WESTERN CHALMETTE. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph crosses to Fake Freddy's CORVETTE.

FAKE FREDDY

What am I doin' all the way out here? We couldn't meet downtown like normal people?

JOSEPH

What would you know about normal Freddy?

INT. ROOM 282. CONTINUOUS.

Julie watches from the window. Her eyes on Joseph, doing his thing. She realizes Freddy is watching her. She quickly drops the curtain.

EXT. CARPARK. CONTINUOUS.

JOSEPH

We all good?

FAKE FREDDY

All excellent. But it took a bit to get Bernard's writing right.

Fake Freddy hands across a PACKAGE. He notices Joseph takes it left handed. He says nothing.

JOSEPH

I'll pay you tomorrow.

FAKE FREDDY

You could just let me in on the job.

JOSEPH

Next time. This one's complicated.

FAKE FREDDY

(nods to the window)
That girl.

JOSEPH

What about her?

FAKE FREDDY

She looks at you the same way that girl looks out of that painting.
(a certain look)
Be careful Joseph.

He starts the Corvette. Joseph checks for anyone watching as he heads back to the room.

INT. ROOM 282. CONTINUOUS.

He steps quietly inside. But Julie has gone.

INT/EXT. CHURCH. NEW ORLEANS. DAY.

A TRUMPETER in BOW TIE AND TAILS shuffles down the aisle of a crowded church. Behind him a SILVER COFFIN is carried by a pack of YOUNG GUYS wearing T SHIRTS with DEACON'S FACE on the front and RIP DEACON on the back.

The MOURNERS surge down the church steps in a mix of BLINGED OUT SUITS and STREET GEAR. Julie's invisible in the crowd in a SAINTS BASEBALL CAP and her BUG EYE SHADES.

She watches DEACON'S MOTHER lift LIL DEACON into a CADILLAC escorting the HEARSE. Across the street is another car. Everything about it is wrong. The MEXICANS inside are scanning the crowd. The one we know as CARO keeps glancing at a photo. Somehow Julie knows the photo is of her --

She spots BOO BOO.

JULIE

Hey, Boo Boo. Can I catch a ride
with you?

CUT TO:

WREATHS spelling out DEACON, SON, BROTHER and DADDY flutter as the hearse ROLLS through the streets. A line of tricked out SUV's and BMW's follow behind, spinners flashing.

CUT TO:

BOO BOO'S ESCALADE. Julie sits squashed in back. She ducks down as the MEXICANS cruise by checking faces.

EXT. GRAVEYARD. NEW ORLEANS. LATER.

A WHITE DOVE trembles in the hands of a PREACHER as he delivers a grave side sermon.

PREACHER

Look up onto the hills from whence
cometh our help, knowing that all
our help cometh from the Father.

Julie peers through MOURNERS and fluttering WHITE BALLOONS. MAMA stands stroking LIL DEACON's head trying to keep the boy's eyes off the coffin. Julie edges closer --

But she's not the only one easing through the crowd. Caro is moving too. Watching faces and whispering --

CARO
 Julie....Julie....Julie...

PREACHER (OVER)
 Release our dear brother in the
 name of the Father and in the name
 of the Son. Release him in the name
 of the Holy Ghost we implore.

Julie glances nervously for the Mexicans. She pushes
 closer to the grave pulling an envelope from her bag.

Caro senses he's close --

CARO (WHISPERING)
 Julie....Julie....

PREACHER
 May this good and faithful servant
 find thy love. Welcome him Lord, to
 thy Kingdom and thy joy. Amen.

MOURNERS
 Amen. Amen.

Julie reaches the grave as the PREACHER RELEASES THE DOVE.
 THE CROWD RELEASE THE WHITE BALLOONS. Julie presses an
 ENVELOPE stuffed with CASH into Mama's hands --

JULIE
 Mama. This is for Lil Deacon. I
 wish it was more but...

As she turns away the boy sees her --

LIL DEACON
 JULIE!

Caro turns at the name. He sees the kid looking after a
 girl in shades and baseball cap --

CARO
 Julie!

She starts to turn... stops herself. Too late. Caro grabs
 for her -- She twists away! -- He grabs again and gets a
 handful of her coat -- Julie shrugs out of it and runs into
 the crowd!

JULIE
 GUN!!! HE'S GOT A GUN!!!

INSTANT CARNAGE. Screaming. Mourners running for cars.
 Ducking for cover. Julie pulls off the baseball cap as
 she runs to an SUV pulling out of the carpark with a
 door hanging open. She leaps inside. She looks back to
 see Caro and his guys looking after the scattered crowd.

INT. ROOM 282. BEST WESTERN CHALMETTE. NIGHT.

Julie steps inside. She stops short. Joseph's aiming a gun her way. Lefty. He lowers it. He looks like he's about to rip her for leaving the room --

JULIE

I had to see about Lil Deacon.

JOSEPH

Your "fuck-you money".

She nods.

JULIE

We're gonna be rich anyway,
right?

She crosses to the crappy hotel radio and tries to get a good station. She gives up.

Joseph unrolls a worn towel to reveal a couple of Uncle George's PRE-LOADED SYRINGES. He tries to inject his right hand using his left.

Julie watches him make a real mess of it. She sits on the bed beside him and gently takes the syringe. She injects him. Delicately. But it still hurts like hell.

He winces. She winces.

She finishes. Then she kisses her finger and touches his hand like you would kiss a "boo-boo" on a kid. He looks up at her, confused. After twelve years in prison there's one thing Joseph doesn't know how to cope with -- tenderness.

Slowly Julie leans forward and kisses him on the lips. He reaches to stop her. She eases his hand away. Then she kisses him again. And now Joseph kisses back.

CUT TO:

MORNING. Joseph and Julie lie folded together. Julie wakes as her phone buzzes. She sleepily checks the text message --

THE WORDS ON THE PHONE: He ran out on your father, he ran out on us, he will run out on you.

Julie blinks shaken. She puts the phone away as Joseph stirs beside her.

No words. Just the sound of trucks growling on the highway outside. He lies staring at the ceiling pondering a crack that runs across the plaster.

JOSEPH

Looks like a border somewhere.

She gets it...

JULIE

Your picture. The town by the sea.
I did a search for it. I found it.

JOSEPH

Yeah?

JULIE

The volcano and the black sand
beach were giveaways. It's in
Guatemala. A town called
Monterrico...

(a long beat)

But you know that.

At first he's silent. Then --

JOSEPH

(remembering)

You don't set out to do bad. It's
just the life. Things get broke.
Family. Wife. You name it. Even
when I tried to walk away things
still got broke. I went down there
with my girl. We got married. She
wanted to stay. I promised her a
new start. You know? Fix up an old
place. Buy a boat. Sail fishing's
great down there...

(feels Julie's eyes on
him)

But Bernard called with a job. She
begged me to stay but I came back.

JULIE

You ran out on her...

(hard)

Like you ran out on my father.

JOSEPH

What are you talking about?

JULIE

You weren't there for him at the
end.

JOSEPH

Where you hear that? Who-

JULIE

WERE YOU?!

JOSEPH

No.

(he can't look at her)

And I wasn't there for her either
in the end... I told you. Even
when I try to walk away things
get broke.

She jumps out of bed and starts pulling on her clothes.

JULIE
Deacon was right about you. He
said I shouldn't trust you.

JOSEPH
Julie, c'mon-

JULIE
Lies and secrets. Always out for
yourself. Just like my old man...

She grabs her keys and heads for the door. Joseph blocks
her way.

JOSEPH
You can't go.

JULIE
Get out of the way!

JOSEPH
I can't let you go.

JULIE
Let me out!

Julie pushes by and pulls the door open -- Joseph SLAMS IT
SHUT with his BANDAGED HAND and shoves her back into the
room. He slumps down the door NURSING his damaged hand.

Julie looks at the BLOOD seeping through the bandages, then
glances to the door. Joseph sees the look --

JOSEPH
Don't.

A wave of nausea washes over him --

JOSEPH
The job's tonight.

JULIE
The Casino? Tonight? When were
you gonna tell me?

JOSEPH
I just did.

JULIE
After you fucked me!

He turns away. Hurt and tired...

JULIE

I'm sorry...

JOSEPH

The Warden's guys. The Mexicans.
They're looking for us. You have
to stay low.

JULIE

What about my stuff at the club?

JOSEPH

Forget it.

JULIE

But my tracks...

JOSEPH

Do new tracks. Buy new stuff. Hell,
after tonight you can buy yourself
a whole damn club. But only if
you're smart. You hear me?

JULIE

Yeah. Okay, okay....

He get's up and stumbles by her into the bathroom. He
stuffs his hand under cold water. He bites back the pain
as the water runs red. He talks to her in the other room --

JOSEPH

When the jobs done I'll call you
and tell you where we'll meet.
Till then stay low. I spent
twelve years in a box way worse
than this. You can last a day.
Okay?... Julie?..
(no response)
Julie?...

He lurches into the bedroom. The door is open. Outside
Julie's Passat speeds across the carpark onto the freeway.

JOSEPH

Damnit!

CUT TO:

LATER. Joseph takes the gun from the bedside table. He
exits the motel room.

CUT TO:

AGUERRA in a DRY CLEANERS. He greases the OWNER and is handed a PAIR of POLICE UNIFORMS wrapped in plastic --

CUT TO:

MORRISSEY in a GARAGE checking a PAIR OF NIGHT VISION GOGGLES. Adjusting the balance, he jerks his head around to make sure they fit --

CUT TO:

DILLON in the TRAILER OF A BIG-RIG. He unwraps rolls of REFLECTIVE FOIL and starts to sheath the trailers walls --

CUT TO:

ASH in a specialist ELECTRONICS STORE. He sets an RF DETECTOR and a pile of cash on the counter --

CUT TO:

PAM PAM in his APARTMENT. He folds up the scope of an M16 and slides the rifle into a GOLF BAG. He walks to his car just another suburban Tiger-Woods-wannabe --

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY. DAY.

Julie parks her Passat behind a dumpster. She slips on the BONO SHADES and SAINTS BASEBALL CAP.

She hurries down the alley and slips into --

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT. CONTINUOUS.

She weaves through the kitchen into the restaurant and out onto the street. She dodges traffic and dips into --

EXT. ANOTHER ALLEY. CONTINUOUS.

Julie eyes the back entrance to LIVE BAIT. It looks all clear --

INT. LIVE BAIT. CONTINUOUS.

Music plays somewhere. Julie appears from behind stacks of beer crates and heads for a CORRIDOR lined with LOCKERS.

She quickly yanks her LOCKER open and grabs her LAP-TOP and DRIVES OF MUSIC. She stuffs them into her BAG, slams the locker door shut and --

THERE IS BEAUCHAMP. He winks at her -- then slams her head off the locker. Julie blinks, stunned as she's shoved down the corridor and out the BACK DOOR. The door swings shut. The lap-top and drives are left lying on the floor...

EXT. WASTE GROUND. NIGHT.

Joseph checks his watch. He flicks a CIGARETTE into the dark. It sails away in a dying comet trail.

Aguerra stands by a FORD EXPLORER adjusting the straps of his FLAK JACKET.

AGUERRA
You don't wanna wear one?

JOSEPH
Never been my thing.

AGUERRA
Old dogs new tricks huh?

Joseph checks his watch again as he toys with the walkie.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPALA. NIGHT.

Beauchamp watches the comings and goings at the CASINO. Beside him, Atkins nervously fidgets with a revolver.

BEAUCHAMP
That safety on? I don't want you shooting anything till they come out that door.

JULIE
But you're working together.

BEAUCHAMP
Were.
(checking his own gun)
Better this way. Tidier.

Julie lunges for the door. She yanks the handle, shoulders the door -- it doesn't budge. But that doesn't stop Julie going nuts trying to open it --

BEAUCHAMP
You calm her down or I will.

Atkins grabs her. Julie gets the message. She slumps back in the seat. She sits with eyes shining wet, willing Joseph not to come out of there.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT.

An extended wheelbase FORD SUBURBAN speeds down an empty highway --

INT. DODGE RAM. CONTINUOUS.

Morrissey tracks the SUBURBAN through NIGHT VISION GOGGLES.

MORRISSEY
It's the stash car.

He starts the DODGE. Beside him, Dillon speaks into a HEADSET --

DILLON (INTO RADIO)
We have eyes on the prize.

Morrissey hits the gas -- still wearing night vision gear.

EXT. SCRUB. CONTINUOUS.

The DODGE explodes from the scrub with HEADLIGHTS OFF. It pulls onto the highway and guns after the SUBURBAN.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTE GROUND. SAME TIME.

Joseph kills the radio.

JOSEPH
We're on. Now we wait for the meet coordinates. The convoy calls when they're an hour out.

AGUERRA
Three car convoy?

JOSEPH
According to my source. Gun car, money car, back-up car.

AGUERRA
You trust him? This source.

JOSEPH
No. But I trust a can of gasoline and a match.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT.

The SUBURBAN's headlights slash the darkness. The DODGE ghosts after it, lights off.

INT. DODGE RAM. CONTINUOUS.

Morrissey concentrates on the SUBURBAN's tail lights. Dillon sits in the glow of a FREQUENCY SCANNER.

DILLON
Signals in and out. We need to
get close.

MORRISSEY
We are close.

DILLON
Well get closer.

Morrissey accelerates. In the green glow of NIGHT VISION the
SUBURBAN grows bigger.

Dillon checks the frequency scanner. The signal is better.

DILLON
We've got him. We're good.

EXT. HIGHWAY. CONTINUOUS.

The SUBURBAN speeds through the night with no idea the
darkened DODGE is on it's ass.

INT. DODGE RAM. CONTINUOUS.

Suddenly the frequency scanner RED LINES! Dillon checks
the lap top --

DILLON (INTO RADIO)
It's the call. It's scrambled.
(working the keys)
Ok. Here we go. Meet coordinates
are 30:04:48 north, 94:07:36 west.

CUT TO:

JOSEPH checking a map --

JOSEPH (INTO RADIO)
That'll be north of Beaumont off
Route 10.

CUT TO:

DILLON checking a LAP-TOP --

DILLON (INTO RADIO)
That matches what I ---

Suddenly he's thrown from his seat as Morrissey jerks the
DODGE off the road. Shit spills everywhere as they bounce
through scrub and skid to a halt --

DILLON
What the hell?!!!

CUT TO:

JOSEPH -- gripping the radio white knuckled --

JOSEPH (INTO RADIO)
What's going on?

MORRISSEY (RADIO/OVER)
He was pulling a one-eighty!

JOSEPH (INTO RADIO)
Did he see you?

DILLON (RADIO/OVER)
I dunno. Maybe.

CUT TO:

DILLON and Morrissey watch the road. The SUBURBAN speeds back the way it came in a blur headlights --

DILLON (INTO RADIO)
We're good. It's all good.

Morrissey slams the DODGE in reverse and roars onto the road. He pulls a 180 and sets off after the SUBURBAN --

DILLON
We got the meet. We can drop back.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASTE GROUND. SAME TIME.

The EXPLORER pulls onto the road. The BIG-RIG follows, belching exhaust as it races through gears to keep up.

INT. EXPLORER. CONTINUOUS.

Aguerra drives fast. Joseph checks a MAP --

JOSEPH
The meet's three miles west of
Route 10.
(tracing a road)
They'll come from the north then
head this way.
(notes a bend)
The road splits. So no traffic
coming the other way. Here. The
road bends so they'll come on us
all of a sudden. It's sharp. Real
sharp.
(looks at Aguerra)
I bet that stretch of guard rail
is beat to shit by drunks and
truckers loaded up on speed.

AGUERRA
 Sounds good to me.
 (eyes still on the road)
 How's that hand?

Deliberately misunderstanding the question, Joseph holds up his LEFT HAND --

JOSEPH
 This hand?... Perfect.

EXT. FARM. NIGHT. LATER.

A lot of activity round a mix of CARS and SUV's. Dillon stands on the roof of the DODGE watching the MEET via NIGHT VISION --

DILLON (INTO RADIO)
 Ok. The money's moving.

JOSEPH (RADIO/OVER)
 Call when they're on the road.

INT. EXPLORER. DRIVING. SAME TIME.

Joseph drops the handset --

AGUERRA
 You win the bet on the guardrail.

The headlights reveal a bend in the highway. The guardrail is beat up, paint streaked. Hub caps litter the shoulder.

JOSEPH
 Perfect. Get us into cover.

EXT. FARM. LATER.

Only THREE SUV's are left. From here on we'll call them GUN SUV, MONEY SUV and BACK-UP SUV.

A clutch of MEXICANS break up. FOUR CARTEL ENFORCERS walk to the GUN SUV. They gun it out of there. The remaining FOUR guys drift towards the TWO remaining SUV's.

DILLON (INTO RADIO)
 The gun SUV is leaving. Silver Land Cruiser, four riders. Other two SUV's are hanging back. Looks like your intel's good.

EXT. HIGHWAY. SAME TIME.

Joseph looks relieved --

JOSEPH

Just hope that gun SUV stays five minutes ahead. We'll need every second of it.

He struggles into a HIGHWAY PATROL jacket. Pam-Pam pulls SAFETY FLARES from a bag. Ash and Aguerra rig a bar of RED AND BLUE LIGHTS on top of the EXPLORER.

EXT. FARM. LATER.

The MONEY SUV and BACK-UP SUV pull out. Dillon checks his watch --

DILLON (INTO RADIO)

Five minutes on the dot. You're golden. And we are outta here. Good doing business with you boys.

Dillon jumps down off the roof as Morrissey starts up --

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT.

The GUN SUV's lights rake the bust up guardrail. Joseph watches from the scrub as the SUV and its crew of GUNMEN speed through the curve and into the night --

JOSEPH

We have five minutes. Let's go.

It's JOB ON, CLOCK TICKING --

Ash pulls the BIG-RIG onto the highway. He angles it across the inside lane and hits the HAZARD LIGHTS. Joseph pulls the EXPLORER round the BIG-RIG so it blocks the outside lane. He flicks on the bar of RED AND BLUE LIGHTS.

JOSEPH (OVER)

Three minutes.

Aguerra pulls on his HIGHWAY PATROL jacket --

Pam-Pam runs down the highway dropping SAFETY FLARES --

Ash scatters SHREDDED TRUCK TIRE across the highway --

JOSEPH (OVER)

Two minutes.

Pam-Pam slides a NIGHT SCOPE on the M-16 and takes position in the scrub --

Aguerra pulls a SIGNAL JAMMER from under the EXPLORER's console. He flicks it on --

Joseph uses his left hand to clumsily slide the safety off the 9mm SIG SAUER --

JOSEPH (OVER)
One minute.

Pam-Pam spots the glow of approaching lights -- TWO SUVs.

PAM-PAM
They're heeeere!

Joseph pulls a FLASH LIGHT.

CUT TO:

MONEY SUV. The DRIVER is confronted with a road BLOCKED BY AN ACCIDENT. A BIG-RIG sits nose against the guardrail, HAZARD LIGHTS flashing. An EXPLORER with POLICE LIGHTS blocks the other lane. The Driver backs off the gas as a COP with a FLASHLIGHT signals them to stop --

CUT TO:

JOSEPH transfers the flashlight to his wounded hand to keep his left hand free --

CUT TO:

MONEY SUV. The Driver looks at his Passenger uncertainly -- the Passenger grabs his CELL PHONE --

CUT TO:

THE SIGNAL JAMMER's readout dances crazily --

AGUERRA
He's trying to call the gun car.
We got it.

CUT TO:

THE TWO SUV's come to a halt.

CUT TO:

PAM-PAM sights up on BACK-UP SUV from the scrub.

CUT TO:

MONEY SUV. The Driver lowers the window. He scopes Joseph uncertainly as the flashlight shines in his face, then the Passenger's. The Driver's eyes settle on the BANDAGED HAND holding the flashlight -- and SOMEHOW HE KNOWS! AND JOSEPH KNOWS HE KNOWS -- The tension explodes in a blur of movement!

The Driver slams the SUV in REVERSE and HITS THE GAS --

Joseph drops the flashlight and GRABS THE STEERING WHEEL --

The MONEY SUV roars backwards dragging Joseph down the road -- his feet trail inches from the screeching tires --

Joseph pulls on the steering wheel. The Driver POUNDS on his messed up hand trying to loosen his grip --

CUT TO:

BACK-UP SUV. The Driver sees the MONEY SUV roaring towards him. He slams the gearshift in reverse and hits the gas --

Pam-Pam fires warning shots into the speeding SUV --

The side windows explode showering the driver in glass. The Driver braking hard and puts his hands on the roof as --

The MONEY SUV slams into his vehicle --

CUT TO:

JOSEPH is JERKED like a rag doll as the MONEY SUV grinds along the BACK-UP SUV. He desperately hangs on as the Driver tries to pry his hand off the steering wheel --

CUT TO:

PAM-PAM tries to sight up on the MONEY SUV but Joseph is blocking his shot --

CUT TO:

The MONEY SUV breaks free and suddenly accelerates. Joseph pulls the SIG left handed -- He fires blindly up through the window -- BAM! - BAM! - BAM! --

The engine revs drop -- Joseph lets go the steering wheel. He sprawls in the road as the MONEY SUV bumps to a stop --

Joseph clambers to his feet and limps to the SUV gun up. The Driver sits in shock with BLOOD pouring from a SHREDDED EAR. The Passenger sits hands high --

CUT TO:

LATER. Ash pulls the BIG-RIG's rear doors open. The entire space is lined with REFLECTIVE FOIL. He slides out a RAMP. It hits the road with a CLANG! --

The FOUR PRISONERS jump! Pam-Pam's gun doesn't as --

Aguerra drives the BACK-UP SUV up the ramp into the rear of the BIG RIG. Joseph comes next in the MONEY SUV. Then the Mexicans are herded inside by Pam-Pam -- Ash slams the BIG-RIG's doors shut. And it's like the TWO SUV's vanished into thin air.

The EXPLORER pulls away playing escort to BIG-RIG and it's precious cargo.

CUT TO:

IN BACK of the BIG-RIG. Pam-Pam pulls GPS BEACONS from the BALES OF CASH. He turns one off and throws it to Joseph --

PAM PAM
Money's clean but the SUV's are
still hot. It's all about Dillon's
Bacofoil now.

CUT TO:

The EXPLORER. Aguerra is driving, watching headlights speed toward them.

AGUERRA (INTO RADIO)
Gun SUV. Right on cue.

CUT TO:

IN BACK of the BIG RIG. Joseph cocks the SIG. Pam-Pam cocks the M-16. The four prisoners swap hopeful looks.

CUT TO:

THE CAB of the BIG RIG. Ash watches the GUN SUV's lights wash past the EXPLORER and speed toward him.

CUT TO:

IN BACK of the BIG RIG. It's tense. Joseph smooths the reflective foil as he eyes the GPS loaded SUV's.

CUT TO:

The GUN SUV. The DRIVER is using a CELL PHONE and getting no answer. The GUN MAN up front is using a GPS SCANNER. He spots the BIG RIG coming towards them. He glances to the GPS SCANNER -- BEEP, BEEP, BEEP --

CUT TO:

IN BACK of the BIG RIG. Joseph waits. Blood drips from his INJURED HAND. It lands on the foil covered floor with a TICK, TICK, TICK --

CUT TO:

The GUN SUV. The Gun man studies the GPS SCANNER as they blast by the BIG RIG -- BEEP, BEEP, BEEP... No change. He signals for the Driver to keep going.

CUT TO:

IN BACK of the BIG RIG. Incredible tension as --

ASH (RADIO/OVER)
We're good!

Aguerra and Pam-Pam go nuts!! Joseph just grins.

EXT. CASINO. NIGHT.

Atkins exits the Casino and makes for the IMPALA.

INT. IMPALA. CONTINUOUS.

He climbs into the car. He looks from Beauchamp and the gun lying in his lap to Julie.

ATKINS

You been played Sweetheart. All normal in there. If he's pulling a job tonight it sure isn't here.

BEAUCHAMP

Maybe she's playing us.

JULIE

No. He said it was tonight.

(trying to convince herself)

I saw the plans. He put a team together.

BEAUCHAMP

But you didn't meet them. Maybe he just used you to keep us busy.

(to Atkins)

I told you nobody robs a fucking Casino.

JULIE

He has to be in there.

And suddenly she's desperate for him to show. She looks up as a PACK OF GUYS hustle out of the Casino --

ATKINS

4am shift change. We're done here.

(starting the car)

Let's go wait for his call.

BEAUCHAMP

You kidding? There isn't gonna be a call. He's long gone.

Julie wilts in the back seat as the IMPALA pulls away.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT.

The Mexicans trot across a field as the tail lights of the BIG-RIG vanish into the night.

INT. ROOM 460. ROYAL SONESTA HOTEL. BATON ROUGE. MORNING

The SIG rests on a toilet tank. A BEER sits on the floor. Joseph lies back in the TUB.

Blood SWIRLS in a red plume as he checks the BLOODY WELTS running from his shoulder, down his hip, along his leg. Then he glances at the CASH stacked in the hall with gear from the heist. He starts to laugh.

Joseph comes into the bedroom wrapped in a bloody towel. He's still laughing as he grabs a phone and dials a number.

DESK CLERK (ON PHONE)
Best Western Chalmette.

JOSEPH
Room 282 please.

He opens the blinds and checks the carpark. All good --

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
Christ Dogfood, I thought I was sitting here getting fleas for nothing.

Joseph shocked --

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
What no smart mouth comeback?

JOSEPH
Where's the girl?

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
C'mon.

JOSEPH
She knows nothing about this.

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
Like it matters.

JOSEPH
It matters to me.

BEAUCHAMP (ON PHONE)
Then be at the old Six Flags off I-510 at noon. And bring everything your crew bagged last night.

Joseph throws the phone. Not enough. He smashes his fist into the plasterboard wall. A bolt of pain shoots through him. He brings his hand to his mouth to stifle the moan. He stands there face marked with plaster and blood. White and red, like clown makeup -- or war paint.

INT. STORAGE SHED. SIX FLAGS. DAY.

MARDI GRAS FLOATS lie piled like trash. VAMPIRES, DEVILS and VOODOO CLOWNS mashed together by Katrina. In the midst of the madness McEwan waits with Atkins. He watches Julie sitting on a float swinging her legs.

ATKINS

I tell you, he's a no show. Why would he come?

MCEWAN

Because he's human and that makes him illogical.

Julie doesn't look up but she's listening --

JULIE

And what are you?

MCEWAN

Desperate.

JULIE

What do you want with me?

MCEWAN

Nothing. You sitting swinging your legs like that should make me empathize. Think of you as a little girl. About how you got screwed over by every single person in your life. I know I should care but...

(a shrug)

You better hope he comes.

Julie sits on her hands so he can't see they're shaking.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY.

The TRANS AM sits on the hard shoulder. The ruined SIX FLAGS THEME PARK sprawls on the horizon.

Joseph punches a set of NUMBERS into a CELL PHONE. He pockets it and checks the SIG. Then he hits the gas.

EXT. SIX FLAGS. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph steers the TRANS AM by RUINED RIDES. The IMPALA lurks under a RUSTING ROLLER COASTER. Beauchamp flashes his lights. Joseph follows the Impala into a big storage shed.

INT. STORAGE SHED. CONTINUOUS.

Joseph eases from the Trans Am tracked by BEAUCHAMP'S GUN -- and the eyes of McEwan, Atkins and Julie.

MCEWAN

Prick.

JOSEPH

You ok, Julie?

She ignores him --

MCEWAN

She's ok. She's just not talking to you.

JULIE

Sure I am.

(to Joseph)

You're a bastard!

MCEWAN

Just don't tell me you were home watching the Saints last night.

JOSEPH

I'm a fights man.

FAKE FREDDY

It's true. He is.

Joseph turns to see Fake Freddy standing in the shadows by his Corvette -- AND NO ONE'S POINTING A GUN AT HIM.

FAKE FREDDY

I warned you. I said I always wanted a girl to look at me like that.

JOSEPH

The painting? You gave us up for a painting?

(man, what a world)

That why you set us up back in 98? You put Bernard onto that job, right?

FAKE FREDDY

Big boys rules, Joseph.

JOSEPH

For a painting?

FAKE FREDDY

Love. Greed. Pick your poison.

(to McEwan)

You can get me my cut after.

JOSEPH

I always liked you Freddy. But I'll see you again someday.

Fake Freddy just gives a tight grin and drives off.

MCEWAN

So, how much?

JOSEPH

I haven't counted yet.

MCEWAN

That much, huh? Atkins?

Atkins opens the TRANS AM's trunk. He pulls away a cheap HOTEL BEDSPREAD to reveal the bails of cash.

ATKINS

Holy shit.

JOSEPH

I want the girl.

MCEWAN

(ignoring him)

What's wrong with you? All you had to do was stick to the damn plan.

JOSEPH

There was no plan. Not after Katrina.

Julie looks at Joseph hard --

MCEWAN

So what? You had a good night at the track?

JOSEPH

I improvised. A stash house.

ATKINS

Are you fucking kidding?

JOSEPH

We hit their convoy.

ATKINS

Mexicans?

MCEWAN

I told you, you were wrong about this guy Beauchamp.

JOSEPH

The money had a bunch of GPS trackers in there. I saved one. I put it in your house an hour ago.

BEAUCHAMP

He's full of crap.

JOSEPH

46 Elysian Fields Avenue. Right?
(pulling his cell phone)
I can turn it off. But only when the girl is in the car and we're driving away from here.

McEwan smiles and shakes his head sadly --

MCEWAN
Can't do it. You're lying.

JOSEPH
You sure?

MCEWAN
I'm sure. What d'you think Julie?
(off her silence)
She thinks you're lying too... No.
You came back for this girl. You
aren't gonna throw my wife to a
Mexican gang.
(rueful)
But this thing is getting out
ahead of us. You haven't left me
many options.

ATKINS
Boss...

Atkins is holding a GPS TRACKER pulled from a bale of cash.

ATKINS
This things still on.

MCEWAN
Well turn it off!

Atkins stomps on the tracker. Julie stares at the pathetic
piece of BUSTED PLASTIC lying on the floor.

JULIE
What? That's your big plan?

McEwan lazily nods. Beauchamp grins as he pulls his GUN. He
aims at Joseph. And then there's the sound of BARKING DOGS.
The barking gets louder... closer. They all turn as --

A PACK OF PIT-BULLS RACE INTO THE SHED.

It's a surreal moment. For a second everyone stands frozen.
THEN some primeval, man v wolf, survival instinct kicks in
and it's TOTAL PANDEMONIUM. MCEWAN BOLTS -- ATKINS CLIMBS
ONTO THE TRANS AM -- BEAUCHAMP TURNS BACK TO JOSEPH BRINGING
HIS GUN UP --

JOSEPH GRABS THE GUN AND JAMS IT INTO BEAUCHAMP'S LEG --

BLAM!! --

BEAUCHAMP CRUMPLES AS JOSEPH SHOVES JULIE BACK AMONGST THE
FLOATS --

A PIT-BULL leaps onto the TRANS AM. Atkins fires. BLAM! -
MISS - BLAM!

-- HE WINGS THE DOG as it locks on his leg and drags him into the bales of money. A SECOND DOG races at Atkins --

Beauchamp grabs his gun and fires from the ground. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! -- DOG DOWN! He turns -- A PIT-BULL is jumping for his throat. He lets the ANIMAL take his left arm and sticks his gun in it's chest -- BLAM!

Joseph drags Julie on into the shed. He looks back. The RED PIT-BULL is behind them -- COMING FAST! Joseph breaks for an old TRUCK half buried in a HUGE PILE OF POSTERS.

SLIPPING and SLIDING, they clamber up the heap of rotting paper -- The dog scrambles after them. Joseph desperately shoves Julie onto the TRUCK'S ROOF -- she pulls herself to safety as he slides backwards --

The dog LUNGES for him -- Joseph KICKS THE PIT-BULL AWAY. It tumbles in an avalanche of posters as he pulls himself onto the truck. He sees Julie running away into the shed.

JOSEPH

Julie!

He drops from the truck and runs after her --

JOSEPH

Wait! Julie!

JULIE

No! You're the same as the rest!
Trust me you said! You used me!
You're a liar!

He grabs her -- She pulls free -- He grabs her again --

JOSEPH

But I came back.
(that stops her)
Please.
(she looks at him)
Let me get you out of here.

CUT TO:

BEAUCHAMP clambers to his feet. Scans the shed for Joseph.

ATKINS (O.S.)

Beau!

Atkins is wrestling the PIT-BULL in a confetti of money -- Beauchamp's shot hurls the dog across the floor. Atkins gets to his feet, looking stunned...

ATKINS

Shit Beau. We gotta --

Suddenly he FOLDS into the floor as he's SHOT IN THE HEAD.

Angel and El Rojo are firing from the SHED DOOR --
 Beauchamp opens up -- Angel goes down as Beauchamp dumps an
 EMPTY CLIP and slaps home his BACK-UP -- fires again. El
 Rojo drops -- Beauchamp runs/limps for the TRANS AM. Shots
 rattle off the car as El Rojo fires from the ground --

Beauchamp starts the car -- He sees his hand is covered in
 BLOOD -- his. A red stain is spreading across his chest.
 He sits stunned as the TRANS AM rolls toward the DOORS.

Caro watches the TRANS AM drive from the shed with
 BEAUCHAMP dead at the wheel. Whatever. He nods to the
 BALES OF MONEY.

CARO

Load it up.

SKINNY

What about the--

CHOLO

You stupid? We're here for the
 money. Hurry it up.

CUT TO:

MCEWAN, in full self-preservation mode. He rounds a corner
 -- A MEX GUNMAN is wrestling a PIT-BULL. Funny thing about
 dogs, they don't know whose side they're on.

BAM! - BAM! Two head shots. McEwan moves on leaving the
 dog and the gunman in a pile. He spots TWO SHADOWS in the
 gloom --

CUT TO:

JOSEPH AND JULIE push between RUSTING FLOATS looking for a
 way out. A SHOT hits a cab. Joseph pulls Julie down as
 more shots crack around them. Searching for the shooter he
 spots a DOOR in a wall...

JOSEPH

Listen Julie. We're gonna run for
 the door. Ok?

JULIE

Ok.

They crawl between the wheels of the floats and run for the
 door. Joseph steps into a space filled with a RUINED MERRY-
 GO-ROUND. He waves Julie forward as --

McEwan steps through a gap in the wall .45 ready --

Joseph's off balance -- pushing Julie back out of the room -
 - aiming the SIG left handed as they both open up. The
 shots trip over each other --

Joseph STAGGERS. It's like a giant fist smashed him in the chest. He stumbles back still firing -- he hits the floor and his world goes sideways.

CUT TO:

JULIE stands outside the room, pressed to the wall as everything goes quiet. Through the OPEN DOOR she can see the SIG on the floor -- and Joseph's hand -- not moving. Tears spill down her face.

CUT TO:

MCEWAN shuffles toward Joseph's body. He checks his SHATTERED ARM and looks up to see Julie. SHE'S HOLDING JOSEPH'S SIG OUT -- not really aiming --

McEwan brings up his .45 --

BAM! - BAM!

Joseph stares at the roof, gasping for breath. A FACE looms over him.... slowly coming into focus --

Julie. Joseph blinks. It's still Julie.

He rips open his shirt to reveal a KEVLAR VEST. A FLATTENED SLUG shines against the BULLET PROOF CLOTH. She throws herself on him nearly suffocating him -- dragging him to his knees -- He sees McEwan sprawled by the merry-go-round. All shot up. Arm, hand and hip.

Joseph eases the SIG from Julie's grip and stumbles to his feet. Julie steadies him. McEwan spits after them --

MCEWAN

Bastard...

CUT TO:

THE TRANS AM rests nose against a fence. Engine still running. Joseph WINCES as he pulls Beauchamp's body from the driver's seat. Julie silently climbs in.

They speed from the park. Up ahead a BULLET POKED YELLOW CORVETTE is crashed against a guard rail. FAKE FREDDY's body lies sprawled next to it.

JOSEPH

Big boys rules...

He drives on.

INT. TRANS AM. DAY. LATER.

Julie watches a plane taking off. She turns. Joseph is watching her.

He looks away, to the road un-spooling in front of them. Now it's Julie's turn to stare. The setting sun behind Joseph frames him in light --

JULIE

Looks like you've got a halo.

Joseph snorts at the idea. He grabs the CENTER CONSOLE and pulls it away. MONEY spills at Julies feet. He rips away the DASH -- more money -- and finally the ROOF LINER. Bundles of hundreds fall around them --

JULIE

Ok. So it's a broken halo.

Now that he can agree with. Joseph grins/grimaces.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY. CONTINUOUS.

The TRANS AM vanishing in a river of traffic flowing to the AIRPORT.

INT. AIRPORT. DUSK.

A swarm of TRAVELLERS all knowing exactly where they're going. Joseph and Julie stands amidst them confused.

JULIE

You gonna be OK, Joseph?

JOSEPH

I think so.

JULIE

So what? You headed south to Monterrico?

JOSEPH

Yeah. I got a promise to keep.

JULIE

Don't tell me you got an old house down there needs fixing.

JOSEPH

(sad smile)

There's plenty in my life needs fixed.

(he looks away)

I got something for you. Here.

He hands her a letter. It's addressed to "JULIE" in her FATHER'S HAND WRITING. (*Remember Fake Freddy's comment about it being tough to match Bernard's hand writing?*)

JOSEPH

He wrote it at the end. In the hospital. I didn't know the right time to give it to you...

She's puzzled. Joseph watches as she opens the letter. AS SHE READS WE HEAR HER FATHER'S VOICE --

BERNARD (V.O.)

Julie, I understand if you tear this up. I hope you don't. When I went away I thought you'd be better off without me, so I didn't write.

Julie walks to a seat oblivious to everything -- transfixed by this note of things unsaid from the past.

BERNARD (V.O.)

I failed you. Then I tried to forget you, and I failed at that as well. The truth is, I remember everything about you.

AND GRADUALLY BERNARD'S VOICE BECOMES JOSEPH'S -- THE REAL WRITER OF THE LETTER.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

But memories can hurt. The past can be a prison. And you can be whoever you want to be Julie.

Julie reads on, emotions swirling --

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Remember your book, the Velveteen Rabbit? That's how you were loved. How you always will be. Till "your joints are loose and shabby and most of your hair is loved off". Remember that Julie. Wherever you go.

Julie smiles. Then looks up.

But Joseph is gone. There's a space where he was that almost takes her breath away.

She turns, looking for him. Then stops. She looks out the big window at the distant horizon and her reflection over it. She carefully folds the letter and places it in her bag. Then crosses to a TICKET DESK.

INT. TRANS AM. DAY.

Joseph drives. Blood drips from the cuff of his jacket. The sun blinding behind him. Almost swallowing him up. His sweat sleeked face shines in the light.

INT. AIRPLANE. DAY.

Julie sits in a window seat. The sky moving behind her. She looks down at the city and the shimmering delta. Receding into the past.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER. DAY.

The Trans Am parked by the river. The door handle is smeared red. Blood drops spatter the dirt in a trail that leads to the edge of the river.

Joseph. Lying back, eyes closed as the water washes over him. The river, the sky, Joseph all shining. One.

We look down on Joseph floating. The river a VAST MIRROR REFLECTING THE SKY and A PLANE UP THERE. The reflection of its CONTRAIL tracks across the surface of the water. It seems to ARROW into Joseph -- hitting him in the heart.

Blood swirls around Joseph -- His eyes SNAP OPEN to --

BLINDING WHITE LIGHT. And a WOMAN'S VOICE calling his name. He rolls and sees the BLOND WOMAN. Smiling. Waiting on a BLACK SAND BEACH. Behind her LUSH GREEN FOREST stretches away to PURPLE MOUNTAINS. PARADISE.

Joseph climbs from the river and wades to her.

THE END