

*LUKE CAGE*  
*HERO FOR HIRE*

by  
Ben Ramsey

Draft Date 11/01/03

FADE IN:

INT. JEWELRY STORE IN HARLEM - NIGHT

WAPOW!

A rifle butt strikes a SHOP OWNER in the jaw knocking him to the ground. ARMED ASSAILANTS kick him savagely. Lousy bastards are enjoying it.

MOM AND DAUGHTER cower in fear as masked gunmen run amuck through the store smashing cases and stuffing bags with merchandise.

POW! Mom takes a fist to the jaw. And the thugs are outta there.

EXT. JEWELRY STORE IN HARLEM - CONTINUOUS

Outside the store they pile into an SUV laughing in delight. They made out like fat rats. The getaway driver steps on the gas and VRRRRRROOOOM! --

THEY HEAD NOWHERE!

THUG 1

Nigga what?

TIRES SPIN. SMOKING. NO TRACTION. Suddenly --

THE BACK OF THE CAR LIFTS UP AS IF BY POWERFUL HYDRAULICS. They look out the rear window to see --

A FIGURE

Standing behind the SUV holding it up, silhouetted by the street lights.

THUG 1 (CONT'D)

SMOKE THAT FOOL!

BRRRRRRPPPPP! POW! POW! BLAM!

The rear windshield is shattered by automatic gunfire. The mysterious figure has most surely been filled with several rounds of hot lead! That should stop him right?

WRONG!

WHOOOSH! BAM! BAM! BAMBA-BAM!

The SUV IS TOSSED ACROSS THE STREET TUMBLING LIKE A CHILD'S TOY! The robbers are banged bloody inside. They lay there in the wreckage dazed and battered. The awful groan of metal fatigue is heard as --

THE ROOF OF THE SUV IS RIPPED OFF LIKE A TIN CAN!

The figure stands over them in silhouette. Massive, powerful, imposing. Before they can reach their weapons -

WHIP!

He reaches in, snatches them up like children and SWISH-SWOOSH-PAPOW tosses them into a brick wall with bone crunching impact.

EXT. JEWELRY STORE IN HARLEM - LATER

THE STORE OWNER HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER

Stagger out of the store to find an amazing sight. All of the robbers beaten unconscious and bound by --

A METAL STOP SIGN TWISTED AROUND THEM LIKE A PRETZEL

Police sirens approach. The wife looks on amazed. Who could have done this? The young daughter lifts a BUSINESS CARD from the top of the metal pretzel.

WHIP INTO THE CARD! It's legend reads -

LUKE CAGE. HERO FOR HIRE. 1-800-555-CAGE

BAM!

SLAMMIN' OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARLEM ROOFTOP - NIGHT

SUPER: THE PAST

TWO YOUNG CHILDREN, LUCAS (10) and REVA (9) sit on the rooftop of a Harlem tenement building looking at the lights of Midtown.

It's clear Reva has been crying. Lucas attempts to comfort her.

LUCAS

Your mamma with another one a her boyfriends again?

REVA

They ain't boyfriends. They're tricks.

LUCAS

At least you got a mamma.

After a beat.

REVA

I ain't never gonna be like her Lucas,  
never! When I grow up, I'ma go to college  
and be a doctor or a lawyer. If I don't,  
I'll come back here and jump off this  
roof! Cause I'd rather be dead than to be  
like her!

They stare down on the mean streets of Harlem. After a  
beat --

REVA (CONT'D)

Sometimes I wish someone would just take  
me to an island far far away.

LUCAS

I'll do it.

Reva smiles.

REVA

Promise.

LUCAS

Cross my heart, hope to die. Stick a  
needle in my eye.

CLOSE ON

The two youngsters reach out and hold each other's hand.

FWOOSH! FLASH OF WHITE.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

A COUPLE HOLDING HANDS Black. Beautiful.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL LUCAS and REVA now in their early  
twenties. They stroll hand in hand through the park  
clearly in love.

REVA

I can't believe we're really leaving.

LUCAS

I made you a promise.

REVA

Don't make me stick a needle in your eye.

Laughs, kisses.

LUCAS

Meet me on the rooftop tonight. I'm gonna have a surprise for you.

REVA

What kind of surprise?

LUCAS

The best kind.

They kiss.

REVA

I love you Lucas.

LUCAS

I love you too baby.

MOVE IN CLOSE THEN --

FWOOSH! FLASH OF WHITE

INT. DIXIE'S BAR AND GRILL - HARLEM - NIGHT

It is a fairly swank little bar on Lennox Avenue. MEET DIXIE, Asian, street smart and sexy. She strolls up to Lucas who sits in the back by the mirror.

LUCAS

(to Dixie)

You got it?

DIXIE

I got it baby!

She opens up A RING CASE CONTAINING A SPARKLING ENGAGEMENT RING. Lucas hands her a wad of cash and takes the ring. He smiles the biggest smile you'll ever see in this film.

DIXIE (CONT'D)

(feeling his joy)

Shame you ain't givin this to me. Maybe next time huh?

Lucas takes the case and gets up to leave.

LUCAS

Sorry Dix, won't be a next time. Me and Reva are outta here!

Lucas is about to step out the door.

DIXIE

Where ya goin?

LUCAS

To an island far far away.

FWOOSH! FLASH OF WHITE.

EXT. HARLEM ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Reva stands on the same rooftop that she and Lucas stood on as kids. She stares out at the lights of the city twinkling beyond.

FOOTSTEPS BEHIND HER.

She smiles knowingly.

REVA

Lucas.

She turns around to see --

CRUEL EYES. AN UGLY SCAR. A WICKED GOLD TOOTHED SNEER --

MEET WILLIS STRYKER. PUSHER. PIMP. HUSTLER. -- KILLER! He holds in his hand.

A GLEAMING PEARL HANDLED .50 DESSERT EAGLE.

STRYKER

You know the deal baby! You either down -- or you get put down!

POW!

A BLINDING FLASH OF WHITE --

SLOW MOTION

REVA PLUMMETS 10 STORIES. The ground gets closer. Closer. CLOSER THEN --

FWOOSH FLASH OF WHITE

EXT. HARLEM ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Lucas steps out onto the rooftop looking for Reva. He searches. She's not there. He HEARS A COMMOTION coming from the street below.

He walks over to the ledge. He looks down. THERE IS A GUN laying on the ground. He bends over and picks it up.

SIRENS BLARE. GETTING CLOSER. RED AND BLUE LIGHTS flash from below. Lucas walks over to the edge. Gun still in hand. He looks over and sees the worst.

LUCAS  
OH MY GOD! REVA, NOOO!

A POLICE CAR HITS HIM WITH THE SPOTLIGHT. Lucas raises his hands to his eyes blocking the glare, pistol still in hand.

BEHIND HIM

STRYKER

Emerges from the shadows like a vampire then slinks quietly out the exit.

FWOOSH FLASH OF WHITE

EXT. LUCAS'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION

Lucas is handcuffed being led to a squad car. He looks around at the neighbors. THE JEWELER, THE OLD JEWISH COUPLE WHO OWN THE DINER, THE BOSS OF THE CHECK CASHING STORE and many more.

They all turn their backs on him. Curtains close. Doors shut. No one will stand up for him. No one but Dixie who argues profusely with the cops.

Lucas stares sadly at REVA'S BODY, now covered with a white sheet, being loaded into an ambulance. A VOICE IN THE BACKGROUND SOUNDS OUT.

COP'S VOICE

She was a good girl. You're gonna fry for this Lucas.

Lucas is pushed into the backseat of a squad car. He stares sadly out at the world.

PUSH IN CLOSE to his sad haunted eyes as we --

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - LUCAS'S CELL - MORNING

CLOSE ON LUCAS' EYES. Pull back to reveal him sitting on a cot in a tiny closet of a cell. He is older (late 20's). Harder. A man with no future. No past. Just demons.

SUPER: THE PRESENT

Lucas climbs out of bed and looks around at his surroundings. This place is more like a dungeon than a prison. A VOICE RINGS OUT --

VOICE (O.S.)  
DEAD MAN WALKIN'!

Lucas looks out from the bars of his cage to see. THE EXECUTION PROCESSION being practiced. A SKINNY TRUSTEE named GEECH fills in for the condemned.

Geech is flanked by two guards. CAPTAIN RACKHAM and his weasly lackey QUIRT. Rackham stares cruelly at Lucas as he passes the cell.

RACKHAM  
Hey Buckwheat. Your times comin'.

Lucas says nothing. In his eyes he's already dead. Quirt snickers as the procession passes Lucas's cell.

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - NIGHT

AREAL SHOT

Seagate prison sits on an ugly rock of an island in the middle of the Atlantic. It's like Alcatraz, if it were designed by Dracula's architect.

A BOAT

Skips waves as it makes it's way to the The Seagate dock. The boat moors and TWO BUSINESS TYPES get out. They make their way down the dock to the imposing main gate of the prison.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - CONTINUOUS

The two business types make their way down dark cavernous halls. They are WARREN JOHNSON (40's) attorney at law and DR. NOAH BERNSTEIN (50's) a biophysicist. Bars are opened and closed for their passage with resounding CLANGS!

CUT TO:

INT. LUCAS'S CELL - DAY

Lucas has his cot set upright. He uses the mattress as a PUNCHING BAG. He practices the deadly JAILHOUSE ROCK style of fighting.

QUIRT  
Lucas! You got visitors.

Lucas drops the bed back down as Bernstein and Johnson arrive. Chairs are set up for them outside the cell. There is little enthusiasm from Lucas.

WARREN JOHNSON  
Morning Lucas.

LUCAS  
W' sup?

WARREN JOHNSON  
This is Dr. Bernstein.

Lucas looks at Bernstein with total indifference.

WARREN JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Well, as you've probably guessed. Your appeal didn't go through.

LUCAS  
(casual)  
What else is new?

WARREN JOHNSON  
As it stands you have only six days left before your execution. You have one appeal left but... Well, you know your chances, with the violence and repeated escape attempts...

LUCAS  
Then what's there left to talk about?

WARREN JOHNSON  
You have one option left. It's a risky one but the way I see it, it's your last chance.

LUCAS  
Will it get me outta here?

WARREN JOHNSON  
No, but it will save your life.

Lucas doesn't seem enthused.

WARREN JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
I'll let Dr. Bernstein explain further.

DR. BERNSTEIN  
Good morning Lucas. How are you today?

Icy stare.

DR. BERNSTEIN (CONT'D)

Eh, hem. Well I'll just get to the point. I am a biophysicist which means I study...

LUCAS

...You study the mechanics of living organisms. Don't patronize me Doctor, I graduated high school.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Yes you're correct. I apologize. Lucas, I am doing research in human cell regeneration. I would like you to participate in an experiment that if successful, could counter the damages of any disease -- perhaps even aging.

LUCAS

And you want to use me as a guinea pig. Some kinda lab animal. See if I'll die or my nuts explode or my head falls off n'shit.

Lucas's candor throws Bernstein off for a moment.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Well, I uh... I wouldn't necessarily call it...

LUCAS

C'mon doc. Cut the bullshit. You come up to death row to ask a death row inmate to participate in an experiment you're conducting -- as what? A lab assistant? What the hell good is a death row inmate to anyone except to die?

Embarrassed silence. Then --

LUCAS (CONT'D)

So tell me more.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bernstein and Johnson meet with WARDEN STUART 50's. Very businesslike.

WARDEN STUART

So, he went for it?

WARREN JOHNSON

He went for it.

WARDEN STUART

And all the papers are in order.

WARREN JOHNSON

They are. We are 10 percent owners of the patent. If this experiment is successful we could stand to make over three quarters of a billion dollars over the next 5 years. Of course the good doctor here will make -- Well let's say Bill Gates is gonna have a new neighbor.

WARDEN STUART

Excellent.

The warden unlocks a liquor cabinet and pulls out a bottle of rare bourbon. He pours shots for the three of them.

DR. BERNSTEIN

But if this experiment is unsuccessful then, gentlemen, I suggest that what was spoken here today, never leave this room. Because what we are doing is illegal. We're talking about doing unregulated tests of a new drug on a human subject.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - DAY

AREAL SHOT

A BIG SKYCRANE HELICOPTER swooshes into frame carrying a large crate of equipment.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - THE BOWELS - EVENING

The bowels of the prison are like something out of an ALIEN MOVIE, Dirty rusted pipes and ducts line the walls of the cavernous dungeon like the cardiovascular system of some massive beast.

CLEAN HIGH TECH EQUIPMENT sits in the middle of this Gothic/industrial mess.

TECHNICIANS are hard at work hooking power up to the computers and monitors. WHAT LOOKS LIKE A METAL BATHTUB is being filled with a BLOOD RED FLUID.

## INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Lucas is shackled to a gurney set upright (Hannibal Lector style). He is flanked by Quirt and Rackham. They ride the antiquated lift down the darkened shaft. Pulleys and gears squeal and groan. It's like the elevator ride to hell.

## INT. SEAGATE PRISON - THE BOWELS - NIGHT

The two hacks roll the gurney into the lab area. Rackham eyes the expensive equipment.

RACKHAM

Here he is Doc. What's goin' on?

Bernstein is meticulously setting codes on BANKS OF MACHINES.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Nothing. Just routine examination.

Rackham casually leans against one of the machine banks.

RACKHAM

Routine huh?

Bernstein shoo's him away from the machine like he were a pesky child.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Please do not lean against the equipment.

Bernstein sets the codes on the machine Rackham leaned against.

DR. BERNSTEIN (CONT'D)

You may go now.

QUIRT

You sure you wanna be alone with this animal?

DR. BERNSTEIN

I'll be fine.

Bernstein turns his attention to Lucas. HIS BACK IS TO THE GUARDS. He begins to crank the gurney horizontal. Rackham and Quirt turn to leave.

RACKHAM

It's your funeral Doc.

Rackham smirks and silently mocks Bernstein, mouthing "Please do not lean against the equipment." He then PUNCHES TWO OF THE SWITCHES.

A ONE and a ZERO are REVERSED.

BACK TO SCENE.

The two guards turn and leave chuckling at Rackham's childish prank. They're gone.

ON BERNSTEIN AND LUCAS

Bernstein begins to give Lucas an examination, looking into his eyes taking his pulse. He gives Lucas another injection.

LUCAS

So what's this?

DR. BERNSTEIN

It's a cellular mutagen designed to accelerate cell growth.

Bernstein begins to stick what looks like acupuncture needles into Lucas pressure points. He attaches the ends of the needles to tiny fiber-optic cables.

DR. BERNSTEIN (CONT'D)

I apologize for the shackles Lucas, but you do have a reputation for trying to escape.

LUCAS

Why shouldn't I? I'm an innocent man.

DR. BERNSTEIN

That's what they all say. What makes your case different?

LUCAS

I'm not lying.

DR. BERNSTEIN

They found the murder weapon in your possession. Your prints were on the gun. Eyewitnesses saw you at the scene of the crime. If you didn't kill Reva Connors who did?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GHETTO DENTIST OFFICE - NIGHT

THE DENTIST, Dominican, (30's) Slick. Slimy. Arms covered in tats, is hard at work on A PATIENT, WILLIS STRYKER.

His back is to us. The office looks more like a TACKY JEWELRY STORE than a dentist's office.

SEVERAL THUGGED-OUT GANGSTAZ hang around the office waiting, reading old magazines. One, a somewhat nerdy thug in glasses, GADGET (20s) plays a Gameboy Advanced.

One of the thugs is SOUND ASLEEP in a chair with A HAT PULLED OVER HIS FACE. We'll get to him later.

The Dentist is one of those chatty cats who can't seem to shut up.

DENTIST

Yeah, my man Willis Stryker, pimp-daddy, mac-a-docious. You bout to be hooked up baby. You gonna have the million dollar grill in full effect, ya heard me?

The dentist takes A DRILL and goes to work.

DENTIST (CONT'D)

Course you already rock'n the million dollar grill, yo. I swear to God dog, I didn't even recognize you when you came in. Them doctors hooked your face up! Looks natural too.

It's clear everybody in the room is getting tired of the Dentists rambling. The Dentist finishes up.

DENTIST (CONT'D)

Alright Dog, you'ze done.

Stryker gets up from the chair and takes off his white smock. He is dressed in cool hip-hop styled, SNAKE SKIN SUIT.

The Patient heads over to the coat rack to get his jacket.

DENTIST (CONT'D)

(proud of his work)

Yeah, baby, that's gangsta! When people see you they gonna say -- Willis Stryker's da man with the million dolla grill. Courtesy of yours truly of course...

STRYKER

(coolly)

Just one thing.

DENTIST

What's that baby?

STRYKER

Willis Stryker is dead.

The patient grabs his jacket. We see that the inside is LINED WITH THROWING KNIVES.

DENTIST

Straight up, yo. You don't have to tell me twice. I can keep a secret. That's the one thing about me baby, trust. I ain't gonna say a word.

THE PATIENT

I know.

As fast as a striking snake.

SWOOSH! WHACK!

The patient whips one of the throwing knives into the Dentist's throat. The impaled man falls back into the dentist chair and gags to death.

DIAMONDBACK

I thought he'd never shut up.

GADGET

Yeah man he was gettin' a little long in the tooth.

The patient turns and reveals himself for the first time. He is a brutally handsome black man with an evil glint to his eye. Meet the new WILLIS STRYKER AKA DIAMONDBACK.

DIAMONDBACK

Funny.

He walks over to the SLEEPING THUG and pulls the hat off of his head revealing A BULLET HOLE. The guy is dead.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

This guy's records are in order?

GADGET

Most definitely. Medical, dental, arrest records. They can even do a DNA test on this cat and he's gonna come up as you. Willis Stryker is dead, baby.

The crew begins to splash gasoline around the dentist's office. After they're done they head to the door. Diamondback lights a cigar and tosses the match into the office.

EXT. GHETTO DENTIST OFFICE - DAY

Smoke is pouring from the upper floor of the Dentist's office. Diamondback and his crew stroll over to --

A BATTERY OF TRICKED-OUT RICE ROCKETS. They all mount the bikes and Rev-up. Engines scream. Gadget jumps on the back of Diamondback's black Ducati.

GADGET

So if you ain't Stryker no more, what do we call you?

Striker Revs his engine and smiles. Evil. Cold. He reveals A MOUTHFUL of PLATINUM AND DIAMOND STUDED TEETH.

DIAMONDBACK

Diamondback. Just call me Diamondback.

VRRRRRRROOOOOOMMMM! The wolf-pack of bikes tear off down the street doing burn-outs and popping wheelies all the way.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - THE BOWELS - NIGHT

Lucas now looks like a fiber optic porcupine. Hundreds of cabled needles are stuck in his skin all over his body. Bernstein is fastening the last of the fiber optic cables.

DR. BERNSTEIN

So that's what you live for? Revenge?

LUCAS

Man's gotta have a dream.

DR. BERNSTEIN

So, you escape and kill this guy -- then what?

LUCAS

Then I find myself a little private island away from the world and chill.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Sounds kinda shallow to me Lucas.

LUCAS

Well seems like you got the last gig saving the world, doc.

Bernstein smiles then affixes A BREATHING MASK over Lucas's face. He grabs a remote control and activates it.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Okay here we go. Let me warn you, this is gonna be painful

(beat)

Very painful.

Hydraulic lifts raise Lucas's body and moves it to the tank of red goo. Lucas is lowered into the liquid until he is totally submerged.

Bernstein moves over to his computer terminal and begins typing away. A COMPLEX FORMULA OF NUMBERS scroll across the screen.

Turbines whine. Energy surges. A bank of servers hum and click like a thousand termites chewing down a house.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

FOUR WINDOWS POP UP. They read SEQUENCE ONE through FOUR.

Each sequence begins to load as a little blue bar grows longer and longer.

SEQUENCE 1 LOADED. INITIATE SEQUENCE? Y/N

Bernstein hits YES.

THE WHINE GROWS LOUDER.

LUCAS IS JOLTED BY THE SURGE OF ENERGY.

SEQUENCE 2 LOADED. INITIATE SEQUENCE? Y/N

Yes

VRRRREEEEEEEEEENNNN!

LUCAS LURCHES HARDER. Muscles tense. He begins to twitch.

SEQUENCE 3 LOADED. INITIATE SEQUENCE? Y/N

YES!

WHEEEEEENNNNNNNNN!

LUCAS BEGINS TO CONVULSE. IT'S CLEAR HE'S IN A LOT OF PAIN!

SEQUENCE 4 LOADED. INITIATE FINAL SEQUENCE? Y/N

Bernstein initiates the final sequence.

VREEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

Turbines scream as they are pushed to their limit.

LUCAS CONVULSIONS ARE SO INTENSE THAT HE SEEMS TO VIBRATE.

STRONGER

FASTER

MORE INTENSE THEN --

quiet.

ON THE MONITOR

SEQUENCE COMPLETE

Flashes on and off.

Lucas lies unconscious in the liquid goo.

FADE OUT/IN.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - DEATH ROW - NIGHT

Rackham and Quirt drag Lucas's barely conscious body back to his cell.

DR. BERNSTEIN (O.S.)

Gentlemen, I have bad news. Despite my best efforts I'm afraid that the experiment was a failure.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - LUCAS'S CELL - CONTINUOUS

The two guards drag Lucas into his cell and let him flop down on his cot. A white bile dribbles from his mouth. He's in fucked up shape.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - WARDEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

WARDEN STUART

Shit! What does this mean?

WARREN JOHNSON

It means we make this whole thing go away. It never happened. The three of us are the only ones who know what happened here tonight.

DR. BERNSTEIN

And what about Lucas? How do we keep him silent.

WARDEN STUART

He will be executed in six days.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Wait a minute. What about our deal with Lucas?

WARREN JOHNSON

There never was a deal Noah.

Bernstein looks at Warren and Stuart. He looks like he's about to be sick.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - NIGHT

A THUNDERSTORM RAGES. THUNDER CRASHES. LIGHTNING FLASHES.

QUIRT (O.S.)

DEAD MAN WALKIN'!

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - DEATH ROW - NIGHT

Lucas is being escorted down the hall to the chair. Rackham and Quirt flank him. They are joined by several other guards and a PRIEST.

A LARGE BLACK DOOR IS OPENED WITH A RESOUNDING "CA-CHUNK!" And there before them is --

THE ELECTRIC CHAIR.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - DEATH CHAMBER - NIGHT

A smattering of witnesses sit behind glass. The electric chair, an old evil looking thing, sits on a platform in front of them.

Lucas is strapped into the chair. He is stoic. Showing no emotion. The Priest walks over and places a microphone in front of Lucas's mouth.

PRIEST

Do you have any last words son?

LUCAS

Push the goddamn button.

A BLACK SHROUD is placed over his face. A WET SPONGE is placed on his head.

ELECTRODES are screwed into his wrists, ankles and head.

RACKHAM

Carl Lucas, you have been sentenced to death.

(MORE)

RACKHAM (CONT'D)

In accordance to guidelines of procedure 789 of the Florida Penal Code, electricity will be passed through your body until you are dead. May God have mercy on your soul.

All eyes on the clock.

TICK - FIVE SECONDS LEFT

QUIRT

Closes the breaker sending power to the main bus.

LUCAS

Tenses preparing for the inevitable.

FWOOSH!

FLASHBACK

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

A RICH SOCIALITE WOMAN is leaving a charity event at THE APOLLO THEATER. She is dressed head to toe in expensive fur.

She hails a cab, Louis Vuitton bag dangling from her wrist.

SNATCH!

A YOUNG BLACK TEENAGER snatches it and bolts down the street. It's young LUCAS (16). He darts into an alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY IN HARLEM - CONTINUOUS

Then around the corner and -- SMACK, right into AN OLDER KID rushing from the back of an APPLIANCE STORE. In his arms he holds a box full of SONY WALKMEN. THE ALARM BELL BLARES from the looted store.

The two thieves fall to the ground. Lucas jumps to his feet as does the older kid. Meet young WILLIS STRYKER (20).

Stryker, much taller, gets in Lucas face!

STRYKER

Watch where you goin' fool!

Lucas pushes him back.

LUCAS

You watch where you goin, fool!

CLICK! Stryker pulls out a switchblade.

STRYKER

Oh, it's like that, huh?

Lucas doesn't back down. He throws up his dukes.

LUCAS

It's like that!

SUDDENLY! SIREN'S ARE HEARD. GETTING LOUDER!

Stryker looks at Lucas then at the boxes of stolen booty. He makes a decision.

STRYKER

Check it out young buck! I got 38 Walkmen here. There's a box in there with 38 more. You help me get these joints to my fence and I'll cut you in for a third.

LUCAS

Half!

The sirens are getting louder! A FEMALE VOICE RINGS OUT in the distances!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

HE STOLE MY PURSE! HE WENT DOWN THERE!

STRYKER

The deal's for a third. What's it gonna be young buck? Either you're down...

Stryker spins the blade in his hand with mad precision.

STRYKER (CONT'D)

...or you gets put down!

CLOSE ON LUCAS

Lucas thinks about it for a second then --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. OLD WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lucas and Willis "hole-up" in the EMPTY warehouse. The two youths laugh and pull out WADS OF CASH.

STRYKER  
I like you young buck! You got "mad"  
heart! You stick with me an' we gonna  
stack paper, ya heard me?

LUCAS  
That's my word.

STRYKER  
So, what's your name young buck?

LUCAS  
Lucas. Carl Lucas.

STRYKER  
Willis Stryker.

The new partners in crime bump fists.

INTERCUT DEATH CHAMBER AND FLASHBACKS

TICK - FOUR SECONDS LEFT

Lucas's breathing becomes faster and labored.

FLASHBACK

INT. OLD WAREHOUSE - DAY

Lucas and Stryker are in their secret lair. The place is  
now PACKED WITH STOLEN MERCHANDISE.

Lucas works out on a heavy bag. Roy Jones Jr. would be  
scared. Stryker is counting cash with a MONEY COUNTING  
MACHINE.

SCHWOOMP! The metal door slides open. In walks BIG  
SEYMOUR and LITTLE PERCY, two big shots from THE  
SYNDICATE.

LITTLE PERCY  
Ya'll been doin good work for us. It's  
about time for an advancement.

Big Seymour opens up a briefcase. It's packed with kilos  
of Heroine. Stryker smiles a big shit eat'n grin. Lucas  
frowns. He ain't feelin' this. Stryker looks over at  
Lucas concerned.

STRYKER  
Yo, dog, you actin' like you don't wanna  
get this paper with me. What's wrong?  
(beat)  
You ain't down?

LUCAS  
 (shaking his head no)  
 I can't be down with this. This shit  
 killed my mother.

A beat then --

Stryker nods understanding.

STRYKER  
 I feel you, dog.

The two friends exchange a "hug and a pound."

TICK - THREE SECONDS LEFT

QUIRT

Reaches up for the power button.

LUCAS'S

Hands tense on the rests of the chair. His breathing is  
 more and more labored.

WHOOSH!

FLASHBACK

EXT. HARLEM STREET CORNER - DAY

Lucas is selling hot GEORGE FOREMAN GRILLS from the back  
 of his old Acura. A Gleaming Mercedes SL 600 pulls up.  
 Tinted windows roll down. It's STRYKER. BIG BALLIN'.

Lucas walks over. Props are given. They're still tight.

Stryker hands him an invitation.

STRYKER  
 I know we ain't kick'n it like we used  
 to. But youz still my dog. So, come on  
 down an check out my new club.

LUCAS  
 I'll be there.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STRYKER'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's a gaudy tightly packed little bar and grill.  
 Strippers do PG-13 pole dances on stage as a thugged-out  
 crowd dances to Hip Hop music.

Lucas sits at the bar drinking a beer. Suddenly he sees in a booth by the corner --

REVA CONNERS

Beautiful. Statuesque. Classy. All grown up. She turns and sees him and -- TIME STANDS STILL. They greet each other.

REVA

Carl Lucas.

LUCAS

Reva Connors.

BIG LONG HUG.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

What happened girl, I thought you was goin' off to college and never coming back.

REVA

(sadly)

Mamma got sick. I had to drop out, come home and take care of her. How come you never wrote me back.

LUCAS

I figured you was off to a better life. You don't need people like me all up in your new life.

REVA

I'll always have a place for you in my life Lucas.

At that Moment -- STRYKER strolls up to them.

STRYKER

Lucas! What's happenin' baby!

(staring at Reva)

Damn, who's this young sexy? This your girl?

Lucas stares at Reva. She stares back at him waiting for his to answer. Then --

LUCAS

Naw we're just friends.

Reva seems disappointed with his answer. Stryker smiles at her and kisses her hand.

STRYKER

Welcome to Stryker's, Friend. Lemme buy you a drink.

(MORE)

STRYKER (CONT'D)

(to Lucas)

You don't mind if I Show your homegirl my club, do you?

LUCAS

(not totally sincere)

It's cool.

Stryker hooks an arm around Reva and leads her off in full "Mack-daddy" mode. Reva turns back around and catches eye contact with Lucas one last time, then disappears into the crowd.

TICK - TWO SECONDS LEFT

Quirt's finger tenses on the power button.

Lucas's breathing has reached to the point of near hyperventilation.

FWOOSH!

FLASHBACK!

EXT. HARLEM STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Lucas is at his old spot hawkin' kitchen wares when -- STRYKER'S BENZ PULLS UP. Lucas can't see past the TINTED GLASS but he can hear a HEATED ARGUMENT going on.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Why are you making me do this Willis? I thought I was your girl.

STRYKER (O.S.)

BITCH! YOU MY PROPERTY! NOW GET YOUR ASS OUT THERE AND GET MY GODDAMN PAPER! I gots syndicate business to handle tonight.

The door opens up and A HOOKER stumbles out of the car as if being pushed! She is dressed in sleazy hooker attire. The car pulls off into a nearby ally.

Then we see the hooker for the first time.

IT'S REVA OF COURSE.

Lucas sees her. She sees him. She hangs her head in shame.

LUCAS IS SHATTERED.

CA-CHUNK - EIGHT O'CLOCK

QUIRT PRESSES THE BUTTON!

CAMERA moves INTO THE BUTTON. Breakers connect. Energy surges. WE FOLLOW the flow of electricity as it races past the switch down the main cable. Splits into five branches as we follow the flow up the center cable to --

LUCAS'S HEAD!

SZSZSZSZSZSZSZSZSZS!

LUCAS JERKS VIOLENTLY.

CAMERA swoops past the black shroud into Lucas's eye then into HIS CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM. The electricity surges through his nerves sparking at nerve endings then --

CELLS BEGIN TO MULTIPLY BY THE THOUSANDS

THE AUDIENCE

Reacts in shock as --

LUCAS'S MUSCLES BEGIN TO SWELL, bursting at the sleeves. Buttons pop off of his shirt as his pecs swell.

His convulsions are so strong that THE CHAIR STARTS TO TEAR FROM ITS FOUNDATION. Bolts pull out of the floor.

The armrest begins to CRACK AND SPLINTER. The whole chair is about to break to pieces then --

CA-CHUNK!

It's over.

Lucas slumps in his chair. Dead? THE DOCTOR walks and listens to Lucas's heart with a stethoscope. After a moment he looks over at Quirt and Rackham and makes the throat slash motion with his hand.

RUSSIAN MOB BOSS (O.S.)  
(thick Russian accent)  
He's dead.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDISCLOSED WAREHOUSE IN QUEENS - NIGHT

A CRIME SUMMIT is in progress. THE RUSSIAN MAFIA, THE TRIADS, JAMAICAN POSSES, BRITISH YARDIES, COLOMBIANS and the good old fashion ITALIAN MOB are all represented.

They sit at a long table in the middle of the warehouse. The doors are guarded by heavily armed goons.

TWENTY-FIVE METAL DRUMS FILLED WITH HEROIN sit on wooden skids behind them.

ITALIAN MOBSTER

You sure of that Dimitri? They say this guy's got more lives than a friggin' cat.

RUSSIAN MOB BOSS

Absolutely. Willis Stryker burned to death in a dentist office.

TRIAD BOSS

With Stryker out of the way, let's get to the business of distributing this Red Death H. into the Harlem area.

COLUMBIAN MOBSTER

I say we introduce it to the market place cheap and pure. This stuff is 100 percent addictive, so once we have our clientele - - hooked -- then we cut it and raise the price.

VOICE (O.C.)

Brilliant plan. Couldn't have thought of a better one myself.

All the gangsters look to the front entrance to see --

DIAMONDBACK

In full snakeskin splendor, A LARGE SNAKE WRAPPED AROUND HIS SHOULDERS. He stands between TWO BIG GOONS. The two goons fall face forward to the ground, knives sticking out of each of their backs.

The gangsters reach for their weapons.

DIAMONDBACK

Casually shakes his head no and gestures up toward the rafters where --

CLACK! CLICK-CLACK! CLACKITY CLACK!

An ARMY OF GANGSTAZ stand aiming machine-guns at them. The Gangsters wisely lower their weapons.

RUSSIAN MOB BOSS

Who the hell are you?

DIAMONDBACK

As far as you're concerned, I'm the goddamn Anti-Christ!

## ITALIAN MOBSTER

Well, your unholiness, outside of a closed casket funeral, what do you expect to get out of this?

## DIAMONDBACK

I expect to kill you all, steal your product, then corner the marketplace in Red Death H.

Diamondback reaches smoothly behind his coat. AS FAST AS A COBRA he whips out SIX TROWING KNIVES and slings them IN ONE SWEET 180 SPINNING MOVE.

THUNK! THUNK! THUNK! THUNK! THUNK! THUNK!

SIX GANGSTERS FALL DEAD, face first on the table. Diamondback strolls over to the head of the table and pushes the Italian Mob Boss out. He sits in the chair PETTING HIS SNAKE like Marlon Brando did his cat in "The Godfather."

## DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

I like the Columbian guy's ideas on distribution. Whaddaya think? Any objections?

Diamondback acts like he's waiting for a response from a table of dead men.

## DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

None? -- Meeting adjourned. Pleasure doin' business with you all.

DIAMONDBACK'S GANGSTAZ begin to cart out the barrels of Heroin.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - MORGUE - NIGHT

Rackham and Quirt roll Lucas's body into the morgue. A white sheet is draped over it. Thunder crashes. Lightning periodically illuminates the darkened room in brilliant blue/white.

## QUIRT

Jesus, ya ever see anything like that? He plumped like a ballpark frank.

## RACKHAM

I seen lots a crazy stuff. Eyeballs poppin' out. Heads catchin' on fire. But I ain't never seen a guy get buff on the chair before.

For emphasis. Rackham pulls Lucas buffed out arm from under the sheet. He begins to flex the arm.

RACKHAM (CONT'D)

Looks like this spook mutated back to his original gorilla form.

The two guards laugh at Rackham's racist statement when --  
WHAP!

THE ARM COMES TO LIFE AND GRABS RACKHAM BY THE WRIST.  
HARD! CRAACK! BONES BREAK! Rackham SCREAMS IN PAIN!

RACKHAM (CONT'D)

JESUS CHRIST ON A CROSS, QUIRT, HE'S  
STILL ALIVE!

To add emphasis to the last statement, LUCAS RISES from the slab. Dazed, disoriented. He keeps a tight grip on Rackham.

QUIRT

Rushes over, nightstick in hand and CRACKS LUCAS across the head. CR-CRACK THE NIGHTSTICK BREAKS IN TWO.

QUIRT

(shocked)

Ho-lee...

SMACK! Lucas BACKHANDS Quirt, who goes SAILING across the room knocking over FOUR GURNEY'S and smashing into the freezers denting the stainless steel doors.

RACKHAM

Whips out his PISTOL and aims it at Lucas. Before he can get off a shot, LUCAS grabs the pistol hand and SQUEEZES!

RACKHAM

AAAIIIIIIEEEEEE!!!

Rackham screams in horror as THE PISTOL IS WRAPPED LIKE A PRETZEL AROUND HIS HAND.

In Rage, Lucas balls up his fist and rears back to punch.  
WHOOSH! LUCAS SWINGS --

ON QUIRT! A LOOK OF HORROR!

QUIRT

NOOOOOOOO!

ON LUCAS, POST PUNCH.

He stares at his now BLOODY FIST. Shocked frightened by what he did.

QUIRT (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
 YOU KILLED HIM! YOU UNHOLY SON OF A  
 BITCH!

Quirt musters enough strength to pull himself to his feet  
 And HIT THE ALARM!

A DEAFENING WAIL REVERBERATES THROUGH THE PRISON!

MUSIC UP LOUD AND HARD!

PUBLIC ENEMY'S "BLACK STEEL IN THE HOUR OF CHAOS!"

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - CONTROL ROOM - SAME

TWO GUARDS sit behind A BANK OF MONITORS. On two of the  
 monitors WE SEE Lucas rushing across the morgue floor.  
 Guard 1 hollers into the PA SYSTEM!

GUARD 1  
 PRISONER ESCAPE IN THE MORGUE! PRISONER  
 ESCAPE IN THE MORGUE!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - GUARD ROOM - SAME

SCORES OF GUARDS are arming themselves with nightsticks,  
 shotguns and helmets. They're strapped for action. They  
 head out.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - CELL BLOCK - CONTINUOUS

The Guards rush through the cell block. PRISONERS holler  
 and pound on their bars incited by the noise and  
 excitement.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - CORRIDORS - SAME

LUCAS

Rushes through the maze of gloomy limestone corridors.

A LARGE IRON BARRED GATE is slowly closing before him.  
 Lucas turns on the steam and DIVES through the gate at  
 the last minute. CLANG! IT CLOSES SHUT.

Lucas rounds the corner and heads down the next hallway  
 when --

CLANG! A GATE CLOSES BEHIND HIM. He looks back. No turning back. He heads on. Oh, shit! --

A PHALANX OF HEAVILY ARMED GUARDS

Are headed directly for him. Trapped like a rat. Pissed Lucas POUNDS THE WALL in frustration and --

C-CRACK THE LIMESTONE BLOCKS CRACK FROM THE BLOW! Lucas looks at his fist, then the wall like, "did I do that?"

GUARD 2  
GET ON YOUR KNEES LUCAS!

The Guards are getting closer. Lucas's expression says -- "What the hell." He balls his fist. Rears back for a haymaker! And --

PUNCHES THE WALL WITH ALL HIS MIGHT!

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - NIGHT

THE TOWER GUARD TURNS AND LOOKS SHOCKED --

KABOOOOM

A SECTION OF WALL EXPLODES OUTWARDS LIKE IT WAS HIT WITH A C-4 CHARGE!

THUNDER CRASHES LIGHTNING FLASHES dramatically illuminating --

LUCAS

Who stands triumphant in the middle of the enormous hole he punched in the wall. Lucas looks down -- HE'S SIX STORIES ABOVE THE YARD.

INT. SEAGATE PRISON - CORRIDORS - SAME

The guards stare at Lucas shocked in awe. Guard 2 raises his shotgun.

GUARD 2  
OPEN FIRE!

The guards BLAST AT Lucas. He has no choice. LUCAS JUMPS!

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - THE YARD

Lucas falls all six stories and CRASHES INTO A WEIGHT BENCH, Bending the bar into a U, SPLINTERING THE BENCH and CRACKING THE CONCRETE UNDER IT.

Lucas rises from this mess virtually UNSCATHED! He is near giddy with this new found power.

LUCAS  
Oh, HELLLLLL, YES!

Suddenly --

SEARCHLIGHTS! THE POWER FROM THE SKY! FROM THE TOWER SHOTS RING OUT!

MORE GUARDS

Pour into the yard PACKING M16's.

LUCAS TAKES OFF FOR THE FENCE.

IN THE TOWER.

The guard is packing 7.62 MINI-GUN, MOUNTED. The turret spins "WHEEEEEEE!" The torque jerks the guard sideways. He squeezes the trigger. "BRRRRRRRRRRPPPP" FLAME BELCHES FROM THE NOZZLE!

EXPLOSIONS OF DIRT nip at Lucas's heels as he heads for the fence.

GUARDS GIVE CHASE. They open up with M16s.

LUCAS

JUKES AND SPINS LIKE A RUNNING BACK! He hits the fence and RIPS THROUGH IT like it were cotton mesh.

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - WOODS - NIGHT

Lucas rips through the dense underbrush of the island bullets whiz and zing past him like nuclear powered gnats. Lucas sees what he's looking for ahead of him.

A CLIFF. A PRECIPITOUS DROP INTO THE SEA.

GUARDS ARE CLOSING IN.

He's almost there.

THE TOWER GUARD

Switches to INFRARED VISION. Lucas is a RED AND ORANGE BLIP in a sea of blue. HE ZOOMS IN and the blip takes human form. Running like hell.

LUCAS

Is almost there. Arms and legs pump like pistons. He clears the brush. It's open ground fifty yards to the cliff.

THE GUARDS CLEAR THE BRUSH

They got a bead on him. M16's are raised to fire.

THE TOWER GUARD

Has his cross hairs locked on Lucas. The turret WHINES. Mad torque. His finger tightens on the trigger.

LUCAS

Is just yards from the leap. ALMOST THERE... ALMOST THERE...

THE TOWER GUARD

SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER! "BRRRRRRPPPPP"

THE RUNNING GUARDS

OPEN FIRE! "POPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPOPO!"

LUCAS

IS RIDDLED WITH GUNFIRE. EIGHTY-SEVEN BULLETS rip into his body. Lucas jerks and dances like a marionette then --

FALLS OFF THE CLIFF

Leaving behind him -- A BLOODY BULLET RIDDLED SHIRT.

MUSIC FADES OUT! With Chuck D singing "DEATH ROW? W-WHAT A BROTHA KNOW!"

The guards look over the sheer cliff. Two hundred feet down to JAGGED ROCKS AND POUNDING SURF! No sign of Lucas.

FADE OUT/IN.

EXT. SEAGATE PRISON - SHORESIDE - NIGHT

GUARDS search the jagged rocks. BOATS WITH SEARCHLIGHTS bob up and down on the pounding surf. Some of the Guards seem spooked by what happened.

Warden Stuart and Dr. Bernstein are there talking to Quirt, who now has his arm in a sling.

QUIRT

I'm tellin' ya, he rose up off the slab like friggin' Frankenstein or somethin'.

(MORE)

QUIRT (CONT'D)

Damn near put his fist right through  
Rackham.

Guard 2 is near some rocks. He holds up a shard of  
clothing.

GUARD 2

Looks like he hit this rock.

ANOTHER GUARD hands Stuart Lucas's shot-up shirt. Stuart  
holds it up it is riddled with bullet holes.

WARDEN STUART

Well if he wasn't dead before he's dead  
now. Probably got washed out to sea.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Perhaps we should try and find the body  
before...

WARDEN STUART

I have a signed death certificate stating  
that Carl Lucas is dead. There were no  
next of kin to claim the body... He's not  
our problem any more.

(to the Guards)

CALL OFF THE SEARCH!

DR. BERNSTEIN

But Warden, the things he did indicate...

WARDEN STUART

(with finality)

He's not our problem any more.

Bernstein stares off into the open sea.

DR. BERNSTEIN

(thinking out loud)

Let's hope not.

CAMERA sails off to the open sea as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHORE SOMEWHERE IN FLORIDA - NEAR DAWN

Lucas washes ashore like a hunk of driftwood. His body is  
POCK-MARKED WITH SCORES OF BULLET WOUNDS. The only  
clothing left on him are tattered pants.

He lays face down in the sand catching his breath. After  
a moment he crawls weakly up the beach.

EXT. LOVER'S LANE - NEAR DAWN

A TRICKED OUT pick-up truck is parked in a wooded expanse overlooking the beach. TWO TEENAGERS. BILLY RAY a hip-hop redneck (think Bubba Sparxxx) is necking with his girlfriend KELLY.

Billy Ray wears a BIG FAKE PLATINUM CROSS SPANGLED WITH DIAMONDS.

BILLY RAY

(between kisses)

Ya know, they say there's a killer who stalks these woods named Festus. But he ain't no regular killer.

KELLY

Why ain't he no regular killer?

BILLY RAY

Cause he's dead. He's a zombie. Comes out the woods just before dawn to feast on the flesh of the living.

(he points to passenger side window)

LOOK! THERE HE IS NOW!

Kelly looks out her window unimpressed.

KELLY

(smirking)

Ooooo, I'm so scared...

She looks back at Billy Ray then --

KELLY (CONT'D)

AHHHHHHHHHH!

LUCAS IS STARING AT THEM FROM THE DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW!.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. LOVER'S LANE - MOMENTS LATER

Kelly and Billy Ray, now in his underwear, TEAR OFF INTO THE WOODS frightened.

BILLY RAY

Festus stole my truck!

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - MORNING

Lucas steps into the pick-up truck. He now wears Billy Ray's hip-hop gear. He closes the door. SLAM! THE HANDLE RIPS OFF THE DOOR. Lucas stares at it puzzled for a moment.

He drops the handle and reaches for the key sticking out of the ignition. He turns it over and --

THE KEY SNAPS OFF IN HIS FINGERS.

LUCAS

Shit.

The engine is running. Lucas GINGERLY PUTS THE TRUCK INTO GEAR. So far so good. He very lightly touches his toe to the gas and --

SCREEEEEEECH!

THE PEDAL SLAMS TO THE METAL and the truck TEARS OFF DOWN THE ROAD!

EXT/INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - DRIVING - LATER

Lucas looks at the bullet wounds on his arms slowly healing before his eyes.

LUCAS

(talking to himself)

Damn Doc, what did you do to me?

His stomach growls.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Well, I still get hungry. Shoulda eaten that last meal.

He looks around the truck. Nothing. He reaches behind the passenger seat -- A SIX PACK OF BEER.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Bingo!

He pulls the pack up by an empty ring in the plastic holder. He grabs a can. SPLOOSH! IT EXPLODES IN HIS HAND!

LUCAS (CONT'D)

SHIT!

He tries for another one. Very gently. Just two fingers and --SPLOOSH! It explodes.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
SON OF A BITCH!

BEEP.BEEP.BEEP. Warning lights flash. LOW FUEL.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
Sweet Christmas.

He checks the pockets of Billy Ray's baggy jeans and finds \$43.28.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
This isn't gonna get me to New York.

The truck sputters to a stop by a sign that reads, "Buckner County 35 miles." Lucas gets out of the truck and heads off down the lonely road.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUCKNER COUNTY - DAY

Buckner County is the epitome of the small southern town. Mayberry looks like Metropolis compared to this place.

Lucas strolls into town covered in road dust. Downtown Buckner consists, basically of one of those all-purpose Gas station/diner/general store/gift shops.

As Lucas strolls into town we can see him sizing the place up. The citizens of Buckner are sizing him up right back. Not another black face in town. Lucas spots the tell-tale sign of GREYHOUND BUS LINES.

Lucas strolls into the rest stop.

INT. BUCKNER REST STOP - CONTINUOUS

As Lucas strolls in, all eyes turn to him. Country Music plays from a jukebox. Rednecks are everywhere.

Lucas walks over to the counter. THE CLERK, a middle age redneck stares at Lucas with contempt.

CLERK  
Can I help you?

LUCAS  
How much is a one way bus ticket to New York?

The clerk checks his computer.

CLERK  
Sixty five dollars.

Lucas slaps the \$43.28 on the counter.

LUCAS  
That's all I got.

CLERK  
That'll get you as far as Raleigh.

Lucas slaps the fake Platinum cross down on the counter.

LUCAS  
How much would you give me for this?

The clerk picks up the cross and looks at it then hands it back.

CLERK  
Nothing, it's fake. Now, you can get the ticket to Raleigh or step aside, sir.

Lucas leans closer speaking confidentially.

LUCAS  
C'mon man, hook a brotha up. If I don't get to New York City then I may be forced to...

Looks out at the rednecks populating the store.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
...SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN THIS FINE TOWN!

The Clerk reaches out for the cross again.

CLERK  
Lemme see that thing again.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

A BLAST OF HIP-HOP MUSIC. CARS. LIGHTS. TAXI-CABS. PEOPLE MOVING FAST. WELCOME TO THE BIG APPLE.

INT. CLAIR TEMPLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's tastefully decorated and hung with JAY C. BAKARI paintings. Meet CLAIR TEMPLE (late 20's) Beautiful, dignified refined.

She is in an argument with her kid sister HOPE DICKENS (17) bad attitude, midriff out, bellybutton ring, tats, baggy jeans and thong. A young girl growing up too fast too young.

CLAIR

Where do you think you're going this time of night?

HOPE

(attitude)

Out.

CLAIR

Not on a school night.

HOPE

You can't tell me what to do! You're not my mother!

CLAIR

I'm your legal guardian and I can tell you...

HOPE

(cutting her off)

YOU'RE NOT MY MOTHER! SO STOP TRYING TO BE!

Hope storms out of the apartment slamming the door behind her. Clair stares at the closed door hurt and frustrated.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Hope is out with her two HOMEGIRLS SQUEAK and PATTY (17 and 18) One black one Puerto Rican. All dressed too sexy for their age.

SQUEAK

So, what ya'll wanna get into? Ya'll wanna head down to the square?

HOPE

(lighting a cigarette)

Sheeit, I'm down for what-EVA! You hear what I'm say'n -- what-EVA!

PATTY

I hear that.

The girls pound fists. Suddenly --

What-EVA happens! BASS FROM A MONSTER SOUND SYSTEM BOOMS LIKE ARMAGEDDON.

A CADILLAC ESCALADE PULLS UP

It's painted an iridescent purple that seems to change colors with the light. Tinted windows. Tricked out to the nth. 26 inch Chrome spinners make the car look like it's moon-walking. The rear passenger side window rolls down.

A JEWEL ENCRUSTED HAND holding a cigar leans out the window and beckons the girls -- come here. This guy is a BIG BALLER and the girls know it. We don't see his face just hear his voice.

BIG BALLER

Aye shorties! Where ya'll headin' with ya'll fine-ass selves?

Hope and the girls are impressed. But they gotta play the game. They stay hard.

HOPE

(attitude)

None a your business. Where you headin'?

BIG BALLER

Me and my dogs is headed to party on Park Avenue.

The girls are finding it hard to mask their excitement.

HOPE

(still playing)

How I know you goin' to a party at Park Ave?

BIG BALLER

Cause I said so.

(beat)

Of course if you too shook to get down with some real players...

HOPE

(taking the bait)

Who's shook? Me and my girls ain't neva' scared.

The rear passenger side door swings open. We still don't see who the big baller is.

BIG BALLER

Then go on make yo next choice yo best choice, shortie. Jump on in this whip and let's do this damn thing.

The girls climb into the Escalade laughing and grinning. The door slams shut. Music cranks to impossible decibels and the Escalade screeches off revealing --

THE PORT AUTHORITY BUS TERMINAL

In the background.

LUCAS

Strolls out of the terminal. And takes a deep satisfying breath of city air. He heads off into the teeming streets of Manhattan.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARLEM NY - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

The sun rises over Harlem.

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - DAY

Lucas is back in the old neighborhood. It looks like the place has slipped downhill since he was last here. As he strolls the old hood, ghosts of the past haunt him.

ON ONE CORNER

Lucas sees -- The ghostly images of He and Stryker as teenagers stealing a car.

ON ANOTHER CORNER

He sees -- Himself distracting a man in a suit as Stryker picks the man's pocket.

ON YET ANOTHER CORNER.

He sees Stryker in his mid twenties. Slings Rock and pocketing FAT WADS OF CASH!

ACROSS THE STREET

He sees himself in his mid twenties selling stolen kitchen wares pocketing chump change.

A FEMALE VOICE RINGS OUT

FEMALE VOICE  
LUCAS! HELP HIM! THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL  
HIM!

Lucas turns around and --

FLASHBACK

WE ARE COMPLETELY IN THE PAST NOW.

WE ARE AT THE MOMENT WHEN STRYKER FIRST PUT REVA ON THE CORNER TO HOOK! The female voice belongs to REVA.

Reva rushes up to Lucas, frantic and out of breath.

LUCAS  
What's wrong?

REVA  
It's Willis! They're killing him!

That's all Lucas needed to know. He takes off running, Reva leading the way.

EXT. ALLEYWAY IN HARLEM - DAY

STRYKER

Is getting the crap beaten out of him by --

BIG SEYMOUR AND LITTLE PERCY.

He tries to fight. It ain't happenin'. He's getting MOPPED!

LUCAS

Leaps over some dumpsters legs kicking like a long jumper. BOOYAH! HE BUSTS BIG SEYMOUR IN THE HEAD WITH A FLYING ELBOW!

LITTLE PERCY

Turns to Lucas. HE KNUCKLES UP! But Lucas can scrap. He lays into Percy like Roy Jones Jr. on crack! LEFT. RIGHT. LEFT. JAB. PUNCH. UPPERCUT. RIGHT CROSS!

PERCY IS OUTTA THERE.

BIG SEYMOUR IS BACK FOR ANOTHER ROUND.

Bad move. ELBOW! CRUNCH! KNEE! LEFT! ROUNDHOUSE! WHAPPOW! Say good night to Big SEYMOUR.

Lucas and Reva turn to Stryker. He's in bad shape. An UGLY SCAR mares his face. Lucas grabs his old friend in his arms.

LUCAS  
(frantic)  
Get and ambulance! GET AN  
AMBULAANNNNNCCCEEE!

THE WAIL OF AN AMBULANCE IS HEARD AS WE --

SMASH CUT TO:

THE PRESENT

AN AMBULANCE SCREAMS PAST LUCAS snapping him out of his flashback. Lucas continues to stroll through the old neighborhood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - FURTHER UPTOWN - DAY

Lucas's travels take him past HARLEM GENERAL HOSPITAL. Now long closed. A hollowed out shell of a once thriving medical center.

FLASHBACK

INT. HARLEM GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Lucas and Reva stand over Stryker's bed. Stryker is in bad shape. Tubes and machines are hooked up to keep him alive.

Lucas walks over to his bed solemn.

LUCAS

I saved your life Stryker. The way I see it, you owe me one. Reva's comin with me! We're gettin outta here and never comin back. I made a promise to her a long time ago and I'm keepin it.

STRYKER

(weakly through gritted teeth)

You made a promise to ME, Lucas! She's MINE! You can't steal her from me -- SHE'S MINE!

Lucas turns and puts an arm around Reva, they head for the door.

LUCAS

Goodbye Stryker!

STRYKER

YOU'RE BOTH DEAD! DO YOU HEAR ME? DEAD!

SLAM! They're out the door.

INT. HARLEM GENERAL HOSPITAL - OUTSIDE STRYKER'S ROOM -  
CONTINUOUS

Outside of Stryker's room Reva breaks down.

REVA

When he asked me was I your girl why  
didn't you say yes?

LUCAS

Because I made a mistake. I'll never make  
that mistake again. You're my girl.  
You've always been my girl.

He grabs Reva in his arm and kisses her hard.

FWOOSH! FLASH OF WHITE

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Lucas stares sadly at the hospital then moves on.

EXT. LUCAS'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

Lucas strolls down once familiar streets. This is his old  
neighborhood.

The place is A HELL HOLE. JUNKIES AND CRACKHEADS roam the  
street. HOOKERS AND PIMPS ply their trade. A CHILDS VOICE  
RINGS OUT.

CHILD'S VOICE

You alright?

Lucas turns around to see A YOUNG BOY of no more than 10  
years of age. He is dressed in BAGGY CLOTHES. He wears  
gaudy diamond jewelry. The is LIL' BIT. Child dealer.  
Street hustler.

LIL' BIT

What you need playa! Weed, Rock, H, PCP.  
Meth, X?

Lucas stares at the kid like he was from another planet.  
He shakes his head sadly and heads across the street to --

DIXIES'S BAR AND GRILL

This joint slipped down hill quite a bit too. Lucas opens  
the front door and steps in.

INT. DIXIE'S BAR AND GRILL - CONTINUOUS

Lucas enters the bar. It's a straight up dive now. Two old winos populate the place.

LUCAS'S POV

Moves to the back of the bar to a table by the mirrored wall.

FEMALE VOICE

Thought you were a dead man.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Lucas turns around to see -- Dixie in the flesh still hot, a little older, a little harder. A cigarette dangles from her lip.

LUCAS

Thought I was too.

DIXIE

(noticing his size)  
You've changed.

LUCAS

You have no idea.

DIXIE

Lemme buy you a drink.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DIXIE'S BAR AND GRILL - EVENING

It's evening a few more patrons populate the place. Lucas and Dixie sit at the bar talking. Lucas's whole demeanor is deflated. Dixie pours him a shot.

LUCAS

So Stryker's dead.

DIXIE

Yeah, that's what they say. Word has it he was smoked by some new roller named...

Lucas picks up the shot glass to take a drink and CRACK!  
The shot-glass shatters in his grip.

DIXIE (CONT'D)

...Helluva Grip you've developed there  
Lucas. Spend too much time in the  
joint...

She makes the "jerking off" motion with her hand.

LUCAS

You don't wanna know.

DIXIE

Anyway they say some new roller named  
Diamondback smoked him. Shot him in the  
head and burned him to death in a dentist  
office.

Dixie pours another shot. Lucas picks it up gingerly with  
two fingers measuring his grip then downs it. He sets the  
glass down and CRACK. Shatters it again.

DIXIE (CONT'D)

You know that's kinda scary.

LUCAS

(resigned)

Then that's it. I spend the last five  
years of my life dreaming of getting my  
hands on Stryker's bitch ass neck. And  
now...

(beat)

What do I do?

DIXIE

Get yourself a life. You got a second  
chance Lucas.

LUCAS

Doin' what? Hustling kitchenware again?

DIXIE

Naw, game's changed since you've been  
gone. It's all about drugs now and I know  
how you feel about that. All the old crew  
are dead or in the joint. It's all  
newjacks now. Junkies and Crackheads.  
Runnin' wild, jackin' every business left  
standin'. Hell I've been robbed twice  
this month. Red Death floating around  
killin' folks. But they keep buyin' it.

(beat)

But this shouldn't matter to you. You  
were going legit last time I saw you.

LUCAS

I had reason back then.

DIXIE  
So what are you gonna do?

LUCAS  
Right now I gotta get something to eat.  
Can you spot me a little somethin-  
somethin'?

Dixie hands Lucas a twenty.

DIXIE  
Here you go baby. You need a place to  
stay, I got a room upstairs. It ain't  
much but it's a roof over your head.

Lucas takes the money. He gets up to leave. Stops. Turns  
around.

LUCAS  
(sincere)  
Thanks Dixie.

DIXIE  
No big deal, It's just twenty bucks.

LUCAS  
No I mean, thanks for stickin' up for me.  
You were the only one who wasn't afraid  
to testified on my behalf.

DIXIE  
Don't thank me, I've been regrettin' it  
ever since.

To prove her point, Dixie pulls up her skirt to reveal a  
PISTOL strapped to her thigh. Lucas stares wistfully  
around the old bar.

LUCAS  
Ya know what? This was the last place I  
can remember being happy in.

Lucas turns and walks out the door.

EXT. LUCAS'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Lucas strolls the mean streets of Harlem, hungry and  
despondent.

LIL' BIT is still on the corner hustling.

LIL' BIT  
(to passing Junkies)  
What you need? -- You alright?

Lucas stares at the child hustler and shakes his head. He moves on. After a while he sees what he's looking for -- ROSEN'S DINER. Suddenly --

VOICE (O.S.)

Yo, family. You wanna buy a George Foreman grill?

Lucas turns to see A STREET HUSTLER who walks up to him with a big white box.

STREET HUSTLER

George Foreman grill cuz. Twenny dollas.

Lucas stares at the Hustler like he just slapped his mamma. Suddenly --

VOICE (O.C.)

OH MY GOD! SOMEBODY STOP HIM!

The Hustler takes off just as -- A STICK-UP KID BOLTS OUT of the diner carrying A GUN and a bag of cash. He is being followed by --

THE ELDERLY, JEWISH, SHOP OWNER and his WIFE. ED and MINNIE (50's).

LUCAS

Turns around to see what the commotion is and -- SMACK! The Stick-up Kid runs right into him and bounces off of Lucas like he hit a tree.

LUCAS

Watch where you're goin' junior.

The Stick-up Kid jumps up with mad attitude.

STICK-UP KID

Junior?... W'sup nigga, you tryin' to get tossed-up or somethin'?

The Stick-up Kid jams the gun into Lucas stomach and pulls the trigger. POP! This merely annoys Lucas.

LUCAS

Toss this up!

He picks the kid up by the face and TOSSES HIM THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD of a nearby car. The kid is out for the count.

Lucas picks up the bag of money and looks in. Six thousand bucks stare back at him.

The elderly couple rushes up to Lucas.

ED

Oh, thank you! Thank you young man. That bum almost made off with our week's take.

Ed grabs the bag. Lucas seems a little reluctant to let it go. Then Ed recognizes him.

ED (CONT'D)

Hey, aren't you...

WOOOOOOOP!

A POLICE CAR SCREECHES TO A HALT

Lucas lets go of the bag.

TWO OF NEW YORK'S FINEST leap out of the car pointing guns at Lucas.

NEW YORK'S FINEST 1

ALRIGHT! HANDS ON YOUR HEAD! GET ON YOUR KNEES!

Minnie intervenes.

MINNIE

It's okay officer. This young man caught the robber. That's him over there.

She points to the unconscious stick-up kid crumbled in the car window.

ED

Yeah! Where the hell were you guys?

New York's finest #2 pulls the kid from the car window and cuffs him. #1 walks up to Lucas.

NEW YORK'S FINEST 1

You do that?

LUCAS

Yeah.

NEW YORK'S FINEST 1

What's your name?

LUCAS

Luc...

Lucas stops himself. He looks across the street at and old movie theater playing a NICHOLAS CAGE MOVIE.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

...Cage.

## NEW YORK'S FINEST 1

Well Mr. Luke Cage I could run you in for battery and destruction of private property but in this case, I'll have to say... Good work.

MINNIE

Bless your heart son. You're a hero.

The Cops put the Stick-up Kid in the back seat of the squad car. The Ed reaches in and pulls out a few bills. He hands them to Lucas.

ED

I'd just like to show my gratitude.

Lucas looks at the bills in his hand then back at Ed sneering like "Is this all?" An uncomfortable beat then -- Ed doles out a few more bucks.

Lucas nods his approval.

LUCAS

Better.

The elderly couple shuffles back to the diner muttering to themselves.

MINNIE

What's the world coming to? Even the heros cost you an arm and a leg these days.

PUSH IN ON LUCAS'S FACE.

AN IDEA IS BORN.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KINKO'S - DAY

The COPY CLERK hands Lucas a BOX OF BUSINESS CARDS. Lucas pulls one out to check the printing.

INSERT BUSINESS CARD

LUKE CAGE. HERO FOR HIRE. 1-800-555-CAGE

MUSICAL MONTAGE

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - VARIOUS - DAY

We see Lucas strolling from business to business passing out cards.

INT. JAY'S BAR - NIGHT

FOUR SHAKE-DOWN MEN are roughing up the bar owner, JAY ALLEN (40's overweight), extorting cash from him. They turn around just in time to see --

LUCAS

Standing behind them boasting mad attitude.

EXT. JAY'S BAR - NIGHT

FOUR SHAKE-DOWN MEN come FLYING OUT THE WINDOW like they were shot out of a cannon.

INT. JAY'S BAR - NIGHT

Lucas collects a CASH PAYMENT from Jay. Lucas looks at the bar owner like "Is that all?" The Bar Owner shells out a few more bills.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY

Lucas is fitted with a DOPE BLUE AND YELLOW WARM-UP SUIT. On his feet he wears YELLOW TIMBERLANDS. On his face he wears sick-ass OAKLEY WRAP AROUND SHADES. Around his neck he wears A THICK METAL CHAIN tied together with a HEAVY LOCK.

THE LUKE CAGE COSTUME IS COMPLETE!

INT. HAMAD'S JEWELRY STORE - DAY

MASKED STICK-UP MEN are robbing the place blind.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JEWEL THIEVE'S HIDEOUT - DAY

The Stick-up men are counting their loot when --

C' CRASHHHH! LUCAS CRASHES THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT and lands, creating a CRATER in the WOODEN FLOOR.

The Jewel Thieves open fire on Lucas. The Bullets have no effect on him. Lucas LEAPS IN THE AIR. Mad air. 15 feet easy. He lands in the middle of the crowd.

LUCAS OPEN UP ON THEM, JAILHOUSE ROCK STYLE! KNEES AND ELBOWS, MAD FLAVA! Jewel Thieves are sailing through the air and crashing into crates and drums.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Lucas hands the Jeweler, AKIM HAMAD, (30's) back his stolen merchandise. Akim gives Lucas a cash reward. Lucas looks at Akim like "Is this all?" Akim reluctantly doles out more cash.

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It is a small unassuming little hole in the wall located above Dixie's Bar and Grill. It is furnished with just the basics. Bed, table, one chair, small kitchen area. (ALL METAL KITCHENWARE)

Lucas opens the closet to reveal A BIG HEAVY SAFE. Lucas picks up the safe like it were a tinker toy and moves it out of the way revealing --

A SECRET COMPARTMENT ON THE FLOOR.

Lucas opens the compartment. It is FULL OF CASH! Lucas DUMPS TWO FAT STACKS OF CASH into the compartment, closes it then sets the safe back on top of it.

EXT. ABBEY'S CHECK CASHING CENTER - EVENING

It's closing time. Lucas escorts the Boss TONY ABBEY (late 30's black) to his CAR. Abbey carries A DROP SACK with the day's take in it.

Before they can reach Abbey's Mercedes --

BOOOOOM!

IT EXPLODES IN A BALL OF FIRE! The impact knocks the Boss to his ass. When the smoke clears they see --

FOUR JACKERS

Approaching from across the street brandishing automatic weapons. ONE PACKS A GRENADE LAUNCHER.

JACKER  
ANTI-UP BITCH! BEFORE I BLOW YOU, YOUR  
FLUNKY AND YOUR WHOLE GODDAMN STORE UP!

ABBEY  
(to Lucas)  
STOP HIM, CAGE!

Lucas looks back at Abbey.

LUCAS  
(casually)  
Man, Homeboy's got a grenade launcher,  
that's gonna cost you extra.

Abbey can't believe what he's hearing.

ABBEY  
EXTRA? HOW MUCH!

LUCAS  
Ten percent.

ABBEY  
TEN PERCENT? ARE YOU CRAZY?

LUCAS  
Oh, well.

Lucas turns to leave.

CA'CHACK! THE JACKER LOADS ANOTHER GRENADE!

ABBEY  
OKAY! OKAY! TEN PERCENT!

The Jacker aims the launcher.

JACKER  
(ala Scarface)  
Say hello to my Leetle friend!

SLOW MOTION

The Jacker pulls the trigger. PHOOMP! The GRENADE SAILS THROUGH THE AIR just as --

LUCAS

Leaps to action. He leaps into air and INTERCEPTS THE GRENADE A LIKE AN OUTFIELDER. The inertia of his flight lands Lucas RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE surprised JACKERS and --

KABOOOM!

THE GRENADE EXPLODES ENVELOPING THEM IN A BALL OF FLAME.

ABBEY

Stares in utter shock as LUCAS STAGGERS BACK to his side singed and blackened. His outfit hangs off of his body in tatters.

LUCAS  
(casually)  
Throw in an extra \$500 for a new suit.

Lucas collapses to the ground dazed.

FADE OUT/IN:

EXT. LUCAS'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

SUPER: FOUR MONTHS LATER

Lucas strolls through the hood. Things have changed. The place looks brighter. CLEANER. THE JUNKIES AND HOOKERS ARE GONE. CHILDREN PLAY IN THE STREETS.

TELEPHONE POLES ARE PLASTERED WITH FLYERS. Lucas stares at one of the flyers. Yanks it off the pole. It is a picture of HOPE DIKENS looking young and innocent. Beneath the photo the legend reads "MISSING." Lucas is about to read more when --

A CHILD'S VOICE RINGS OUT

CHILD'S VOICE  
Yo, dog. Lookin' to get your head straight?

It's Lil' Bit. He's still holding down his corner tough. Lucas crumples up the flyer and tosses it away. He looks down on the little hustler then --

Grabs him by the back of his trousers, TURNS HIM UPSIDE DOWN AND SHAKES HIM. DRUGS, MONEY AND A GUN tumble out of his pockets onto the ground.

Lucas holds Lil' Bit up face to face.

LUCAS  
Let's get things straight, Shortie. This is my neighborhood now. There ain't no "slingin'" in my neighborhood. So as of today you better think of a career change.

Lil' Bit stays hard.

LIL' BIT  
Fool! What I'm gonna do? I got responsibilities. I got mouths to feed. I gots bills to pay! How a nigga like me gonna find a new career?

LUCAS

You got a dream?

Lil' Bit holds out A DIAMOND SPANGLED WRIST. WATCH. RING. BRACELET. Bling blingin' like a motherfucka!

LIL' BIT

Yeah, fool. To be covered in Ice! Rocks!  
38 karat down! Crazy bling. Know what I'm  
say'n?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HAMAD'S JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Akim is busy polishing some gems when -- WHOOSH! WHAP!  
Lil' Bit is TOSSED INTO HIS CHEST LIKE A MEDICINE BALL.  
Akim stands there holding the child staring at --

LUCAS

Standing by the front door stoic.

LUCAS

(to Akim)

This here is your new employee. Teach him  
the trade and pay him well!

AKIM

I cannot afford to bring another employee  
on I already have...

LUCAS

(with finality)

...Teach him the trade and pay him well!

Akim swallows hard and nods his head yes. Lucas turns to  
leave. Lil' Bit calls out after him.

LIL' BIT

(to Lucas)

Aye, fool!

Cage turns around.

LIL' BIT (CONT'D)

You gotta dream?

After a beat --

LUCAS

Not any more.

Lucas turns and leaves.

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - EMERGENCY ROOM

Clair is on the telephone arguing with a police officer. We can tell by her tone that she is at her wit's end.

CLAIR

What do you mean you're discontinuing the investigation? You never did anything in first damn place!... It's been over four months... You're assuming she's dead? YOU'RE ASSUMING SHE'S DEAD?... WELL I'M NOT! MY SISTER IS OUT THERE AND SHE'S ALIVE!

Suddenly -- The doors fly open and several INTERNS rush in with A PATIENT on a gurney. It appears from his dress that he is GANG BANGER! Clair hangs up the phone and rushes to the patient.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

(to the Intern)  
What's wrong with him?

INTERN

He's got internal bleeding and several crushed bones.

Clair begins to examine the Thug.

CLAIR

Sir, were you in a car accident?

GANG BANGER

(in great pain)  
Naw, it was the Hero, man! The Hero for hire!

The Gang Banger passes out.

CLAIR

(puzzled)  
Hero for hire?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GADGET'S LABORATORY - DAY

DIAMONDBACK

Twirling a blade on his finger tips. The ubiquitous snake is wrapped around his neck. He is standing in --

ANOTHER CONVERTED WAREHOUSE. Only this one looks like A MAD SCIENTIST lives here. And, in a sense, one does. Welcome to Gadget's lair.

Gadget is hard at work mixing chemicals. Behind him Diamondback paces back and forth.

GANGSTAZ are unloading crates marked DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, near the parked RICE ROCKETS.

DIAMONDBACK

Go figure an M.I.T. grad like yourself working in Queens with a gang of thugs.

GADGET

Well after a while, NASA got a little boring. Besides they kinda frowned on that whole -- clinically psychotic thing I had going.

(beat)

Try not to move for a minute.

Diamondback stops moving while Gadget VERY CAREFULLY empties the contents of one beaker into another.

DIAMONDBACK

So what's all this madness I'm hearin' from uptown?

GADGET

Crazy shit Boss. Rumors are floating around about some Hero for Hire calls himself Cage. He's running some kind of protection racket with all the local businesses. They say this guy is strong as a truck. He's taking down whole crews by himself.

DIAMONDBACK

(unimpressed)

Sounds like a real super hero.

GADGET

They also say the guy is bulletproof.

Diamondback spins the knife on his finger like a basketball.

DIAMONDBACK

(sarcastic)

Yeah, right. Guess it's a good thing I don't use bullets, huh?

Gadget snatches the knife off of Diamondbacks finger.

GADGET

And here's the real kicker! They're saying that Cage is really the ghost of Carl Lucas.

Diamondback smirks at the notion.

DIAMONDBACK

Those drugged-out hood-rat fools are always floatin' some ridiculous urban myth. Ghosts, bullet proof men. Pfft! Pure bullshit.

He dips the very tip-top of the blade in. It's coated with a miniscule speck of the solution. He pulls it out and begins to blow it dry.

GADGET

(between blows)

Well, if this new comp-C polymer works out, bullets will be obsolete.

The knife is dry. Gadget hands it back to Diamondback. He gestures to A BULL'S-EYE painted on a CINDER BLOCK wall 50 yards away.

GADGET (CONT'D)

This is a magnesium/titanium alloy. Super sharp. Damn near unbreakable. Will go through concrete like butter. Give it a try.

Diamondback, without even aiming, tosses the knife with deadly accuracy. SWISH!

GADGET (CONT'D)

DUCK!

Gadget ducks down Diamondback doesn't. THUNK! The KNIFE NAILS THE BULL'S-EYE and --

KA-BOOOOOOM!!

A FOUR FOOT CRATER IS BLOWN IN THE CINDER-BLOCK. Diamondback looks at Gadget. A big evil smile cover's his face.

DIAMONDBACK

I LIKES!

Gadget unveils SEVERAL KNIVES. He begins soaking the blades TO THE HILT and hanging them up to dry like laundry.

GADGET

These blades have twenty times the explosive charge of the one you just threw.

DIAMONDBACK

Good, can you rig some with timers?

GADGET

Not a problem.  
(beat)  
So, what about the Hero?

DIAMONDBACK

Small potatoes. Just so long as this --  
ghost -- stays outta my business.

THE DOOR OPENS and in walks some business. A GANGSTA escorts THREE YOUNG GIRLS into the den at gunpoint.

GANGSTA

Yo, Diamondback. I got them bitches you ordered. Courtesy of "Pimpin" Lonnie.

It's HOPE, SQUEAK AND PATTY. They look frightened. It's clear they've been crying. Diamondback inspects the girls like a horse trader would three new ponies.

DIAMONDBACK

Yeah, top flight material here.  
(to the Gangsta)  
Clean 'em up and put 'em in training. I want these ho's on the street in a week!

INT. DIXIE'S BAR AND GRILL - EVENING

Lucas sits at his old table facing the mirror. He counts a fat wad of cash. Laid out on the table before him are a metal shaker filled with Covasier, A METAL SHOT GLASS, and several brochures for PRIVATE ISLANDS.

He leafs through the brochures circling prices. IN HIS MIND'S EAR he hears the past.

REVA (V.O.)

So where are we gonna go, baby?

LUCAS (V.O.)

Maybe we'll get a private Island in the sun and spend the rest of our lives in paradise.

Lucas looks up. In the reflection in the mirror he sees --

SLOW MOTION

REVA

Walking through the front door smiling. She walks up to Lucas and places a hand on his shoulder. Lucas turns around and --

BACK TO REALITY

IT'S NOT REVA. It is an equally stunning young woman.  
It's --

CLAIR TEMPLE.

CLAIR

Excuse me. Are you Luke Cage?

Lucas turns his back on her and continues to browse through his brochures.

LUCAS

Who wants to know?

CLAIR

My name is Clair Temple.

LUCAS

What do you want?

CLAIR

I understand you help people that need it.

LUCAS

Sometimes.

CLAIR

Well, I need help. It's my kid sister. She's been missing for over four months now. No one knows where she is. No one's seen her. It's like she disappeared into thin air.

(beat)

I just... I don't know what else to do.

LUCAS

Call the police.

CLAIR

They did nothing. They stuck her picture on a wall with a thousand other missing kids.

LUCAS

(coldly)

Check the morgue.

Clair stares at Lucas with contempt.

CLAIR

You're a cold, ugly man.

LUCAS

It's a cold, ugly world.

Clair turns and is about to walk away. No. She's gotta let him have it.

CLAIR

(angry)

Ya, know what? They're right what they say about you. You're no hero. You're just a common thug.

Clair takes one of his business cards out of her purse and tosses it in Lucas's face.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

Hero for hire! It should be hired goon. You're supposed to be protecting all the businesses in the neighborhood. All you're doing is running a protection racket.

This catches Lucas's attention. He's never looked at it like that before.

LUCAS

Then why are you coming to me?

CLAIR

(sadly)

I have nowhere else to go.

Lucas looks up at Clair. Could it be -- sympathy.

LUCAS

Alright. You got two minutes. Convince me.

Lucas gestures for her to sit down. She sits to the side of him getting a profile of his stoic face. Slightly better than the back of his head.

She pulls out a HIGH SCHOOL photograph of Hope. It's the same photo from the flyer. Lucas stares at the picture. His face softens, just a little.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

I seen the flyers.

CLAIR

Her name is Hope Dickens. She's my half sister. She's a good girl. Made straight A's. Never got into trouble. She wanted to go to Harvard Law School when she graduated...

In Lucas's Mind's ear WE HEAR

YOUNG REVA

...I'm gonna go to school and become a doctor or a lawyer or an actor...

Young Reva's voice fades.

CLAIR

...After our mother died, she got mixed up with the wrong crowd. Gang Bangers. Drug dealers. I know that kids reach a point when they need to rebel. To make their mistakes and learn from them. But you must know that in this neighborhood, Mr. Cage, one mistake is all it takes.

Lucas stares at the picture for a minute. There is an uncomfortable silence then --

CLAIR (CONT'D)

I can pay you.

Clair places a wad of cash on the table. Lucas picks it up and counts it. Three hundred bucks. Chump change.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

It's all I have for now. I can pay you more later.

Lucas folds the money and pushes it back.

LUCAS

Sorry, I can't help you.

Clair turns and walks away despondent. Lucas goes back to counting his cash.

VOICE (O.S.)

No one's ever gonna accuse you of being too soft are they, Lucas?

It's Dixie. She sits down next to Lucas and lights a cigarette.

LUCAS

I thought you were supposed to screen my clients for me.

DIXIE

I did. So what's wrong with her case?

LUCAS

I ain't in the business of saving wayward children.

DIXIE

And why not?

LUCAS

Cause the last time I did, I got someone killed.

DIXIE

True... true...

(beat)

But you gotta ask yourself, what kind of life would she have had if you didn't?

BAM!

Lucas thinks about it then --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. LUCAS'S OLD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Clair is waiting at the bus stop. The bus pulls up. Clair is about to get on when --

LUCAS (O.S.)

HEY, YOU!

Clair turns to see Lucas strolling up the street toward her.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Gimmie that three hundred.

Clair reaches in her purse and hands Lucas the money. Lucas folds it into his already fat wad of cash.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Eleven A.M. tomorrow. You just bought a day.

Lucas turns and walks away. Clair stares after him like "huh."

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

WHOOSH!

THE SAFE IS MOVED. THE SECRET SPACE REVEAL. It is now STACKED WITH THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. TWO FAT WADS OF CASH are dropped along with THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.

WHOOSH!

THE SAFE IS PUSHED BACK INTO PLACE.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. RUCKER PARK - DAY

Rucker park is the famous street baller's court. You show up here with game or you don't show up at all. A full court game is in progress.

Scores of teens surround the court watching, and socializing. PLAYAZ profile their phat rides nearby.

LUCAS AND CLAIR

Approach the park.

CLAIR

She started hanging out here watching the games. She was always talking about some guy named Egg I think they were dating.

Lucas and Clair walk up to some kids sitting in the bleachers. Lucas strolls up to four YOUNG G's.

LUCAS

Ya'll know Egg?

The G's smell trouble. They turn and walk away without saying a word.

To some YOUNG GIRLS.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Ya'll know Egg?

YOUNG GIRL

Don't nobody know no Egg.

CLAIR

What about Hope Dickens...

The girls get up and Leave.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

(calling after them)

Do you know Hope Dickens?

Kids start to avoid Lucas and Clair like the plague. Suddenly -- WHOOSH!

A BASKETBALL FLIES AT THEM, HARD!

Without even looking, Lucas catches the ball in one hand. He turns and sees. FIVE BALLERS WALKING TOWARD THEM FROM THE COURT.

A SKINNY DREAD-LOCKED KID is in the lead. Meet EGG, basketball hustler small time dealer.

EGG

So who's lookin' for Egg.

LUCAS

Me.

EGG

And who's me?

LUCAS

The mu-fucka that's lookin' for Egg.

EGG

Oh, so it's like that huh?

Egg snaps his fingers. One of his boys runs off the bleachers with a leather BACK PACK IN HIS HAND. He stands behind Egg ready.

EGG (CONT'D)

You just gonna come down on my court, interrupt my game and disrespect me in front of my dogs?

LUCAS

Yep.

CLAIR

Look, we don't mean any disrespect. We're just looking for my little sis...

EGG

Shut up bitch!

Egg pushes Clair out of the way, reaches in his back-pack and pull out A 9MM PISTOL. He aims it at Lucas sideways.

EGG (CONT'D)

Way, I see it son, is -- You come on my court you either get down, or you get put down, ya heard me?

LUCAS

(calm)

Get down, like what? Play basketball?

EGG

That's my word, son. But you gonna play for blood!

Lucas looks at the ball in his hand then at the rim. Then the ball, then the rim. He thinks about it looks like he's lining up a shot and --

POW!

He SQUEEZES THE BALL CAUSING IT TO EXPLODE IN HIS HAND. The ballers are shocked. A TALL BALLER, frightened, leans over and whispers something urgent in Egg's ear.

EGG (CONT'D)

Oh, so you the dude, huh? You the one that's suppose to be bullet-proof?

LUCAS

You wanna find out?

EGG

Yeah, Nucka'!

Egg raises the gun to shoot. Before he can. Lucas SNATCHES THE PISTOL and crunches it in a ball LIKE IT WERE ALUMINUM FOIL.

EGG'S CREW BREAK OUT RUNNING leaving a shocked Egg alone with Lucas and Clair. Lucas grabs Egg by his belt and lifts him in the air like a child, giving him a vicious wedge at the same time.

LUCAS

(to Clair)

Picture.

Clair sticks the picture in Egg's face.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

This girl used to hang out down here. We're looking for her and you're gonna help us.

EGG

(frantic)

Dog, I ain't seen her in months, yo! Last I heard she was kickin' it with Pimpin' Lonnie from...

LUCAS

I know Pimpin' Lonnie.

Lucas looks at the rim one more time.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Now about that game.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE RIM

WHOOSH! SLAM! EGG FLIES, ASS FIRST, INTO THE HOOP AND IS STUCK THERE! Two points.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS NEAR RUCKER PARK - DAY

Lucas and Clair head for the subway station. Clair is still blown away by what she saw.

CLAIR

My God that was... That was...

(searches for word)

...unbelievable.

(beat)

But not very subtle.

LUCAS

I don't do subtle. I tear shit up!

They head down into the subway station.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - LATER

Lucas and Clair are jammed together in a crowded subway train getting bumped and jostled by other passengers.

CLAIR

So, I'm hanging out with a real life superhero?

Lucas looks at her sideways.

LUCAS

(sarcastic)

Should I get a cape?

A WINO bumps into Clair spilling cheap wine on her sleeve.

CLAIR

(disgusted)

Forget the cape. Get yourself a Cage mobile. Who ever heard of a superhero that rides the subway?

LUCAS

Parking's a bitch in New York.

CLAIR

Then maybe you should learn to fly.

EXT. HARLEM - FURTHER UPTOWN - DAY

Lucas and Clair emerge from the subway and head down the street.

LUCAS  
So where are you from?

CLAIR  
Small town in Pennsylvania called  
Scranton.

LUCAS  
No subways there?

CLAIR  
That obvious huh?

LUCAS  
Yeah. So what brings you here?

CLAIR  
Came here to raise my little sister after  
her Mother died.

LUCAS  
What do you do?

CLAIR  
I work at the free clinic.

LUCAS  
Nurse?

CLAIR  
Doctor.

Lucas stops in his tracks.

LUCAS  
You're a doctor?

CLAIR  
Yeah.

LUCAS  
(Pissed)  
Why the hell you gonna pay me a lousy  
three hundred dollars when you pullin'  
down a doctor's salary.

CLAIR  
What part of "free clinic." Didn't you  
hear?

LUCAS  
You tryin to tell me you got a degree in  
medicine and you ain't gettin' paid?

CLAIR  
You wanna check my bank account?

They start walking again.

LUCAS  
That's stupid.

It's Clair's turn to be pissed. She stops in her tracks.

CLAIR  
Stupid!? You think it's stupid to try and  
provide decent health care for people who  
can't afford it?

(beat)  
Do you think it's stupid to give back to  
your community?

LUCAS  
Community ain't gave me nuthin' but  
grief. What it give you?

CLAIR  
It's given me a purpose!

LUCAS  
And what's that?

CLAIR  
To make it better.

LUCAS  
You're a real crusader.

CLAIR  
Well at least I don't have hero written  
on my business card.

Lucas stops her then points across the street at an OLD  
TENEMENT BUILDING. A nattily dressed GANGSTA stands post  
outside the stoop. Parked out front is --

THE TRICKED OUT PURPLE ESCALADE

LUCAS  
That's Pimpin Lonnie's place.

CLAIR  
Can we do this without you "tearin' shit  
up?"

LUCAS  
What, you mean like -- subtle?

CLAIR  
With a little finesse. Can you finesse a situation?

LUCAS  
I can finesse.

CLAIR  
You know, it requires using more than three words at a time.

LUCAS  
Hey don't front! I can spit game.

CLAIR  
I'm sorry but you're kinda giving me this whole -- cave-man/monosyllabic thing.  
(beat)  
Monosyllabic, means...

LUCAS  
(indignant)  
I know what monosyllabic means! So quit being so meretriciously pharisaical and bring your orchidaceous ass into this alley.

Clair's expression is like -- "oops."

Lucas ducks into an alleyway. Clair follows.

EXT. ALLEYWAY UPTOWN - DAY

LUCAS  
Take your bra off!

CLAIR  
(indignant)  
Excuse me!

LUCAS  
Take your bra off. Tie your shirt up beneath your tit... your breasts.

Clair stares at him, hands on hips.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
We're gettin' ready to infiltrate a pimp's lair. I need pimp bait.  
(beat)  
You diggin' me?.

Clair is reluctant.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
Or I could go in there and tear shit up.

CLAIR  
 (cutting him off)  
 Okay, okay. Turn around.

Lucas turns around. Clair opens her business shirt and unfastens her bra. Lucas turns a little bit trying to get a peripheral shot. Clair catches him.

CLAIR (CONT'D)  
 Uh, uh. Back around.

Lucas turns back. Clair removes her bra then ties her shirt up Daisy Duke style.

CLAIR (CONT'D)  
 (a little embarrassed)  
 Okay.

Lucas turns around. Mad cleavage is in full effect. Clair is lookin' kinda HOT! Lucas nods his approval.

LUCAS  
 One last thing.

Before she can protest, Lucas bends over grabs her skirt and rips it up the seam to her hip. A WELL SHAPED THIGH is revealed.

Clair stares at him speechless and, dare I say it, a little turned on.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
 Now we're ready.

EXT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - DAY

Lucas and Clair approach Lonnie's Gangsta. Clair seems a little nervous.

LUCAS  
 (whispering)  
 Attitude.

Clair gets it. She begins to shake her "thang." THE GANGSTA stops them.

GANGSTA  
 What's up playa?

Lucas shifts into "Mack Daddy Mode."

LUCAS  
 (Smooth sing-song voice)  
 What's up? -- Cost of livin' and the price of lovin', baby.  
 (MORE)

LUCAS (CONT'D)

But that ain't no thing if you can rap or sing, know what I'm sayin' But that ain't ME, cause I'm a P.I.M.P. Ya heard me. Go on tell Pimpin' Lonnie that Biggie Lo from Philly's downstairs with a first round draft pick.

GANGSTA

Hold on playa.

The Gangsta pulls out a cell phone and dials. Clair looks at Lucas like "where did that come from?"

GANGSTA (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Yo, got a playa down here says his name is Biggie Lo, from Philly... Uh huh...Uh huh... He got a first round draft pick...

He begins to eye Clair up and down. Clair turns the hoochie up a notch.

GANGSTA (CONT'D)

(on phone)

...Uh huh...Oh yeah, she's tight...okay.

He hangs up.

GANGSTA (CONT'D)

I'ma have to search you.

Lucas and Clair hold their arms out. The gangsta searches them with a metal detector wand then a pat down. Getting much enjoyment from patting down Clair's shapely legs.

CLAIR

You think I got a gun under my skin?

INT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - DAY

The Gangsta leads them up FIVE FLIGHTS OF STAIRS and down a long dimly lit hall. ACTIVITY is heard coming from the apartment doors they pass.

CLAIR

(whispering)

Where did you learn Pimp talk like that?

LUCAS

My father.

A CHEMIST --

In a white lab coat, walks out of one room and FOR AN INSTANT, they see --

POUNDS OF PURE HEROIN

Sitting on a table behind CANISTERS OF ETHER. Lucas and Clair exchange glances.  
They continue down the hall past --

A SURVEILLANCE CAMERA

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA POV  
LUCAS, CLAIR AND THE GANGSTA WALK PAST IN A STROBING  
BLACK AND WHITE IMAGE.

BACK TO SCENE

The Gangsta leads them into a room.

INT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Pimpin' Lonnie is a light skinned, damn near albino brother with blond hair and light blue eyes. He sits at a HUGE OAK DESK surrounded by SEVERAL SCANTILY CLAD HOOCHIES.

One of them is in the process of ROLLING LONNIE'S HAIR IN CURLERS. Lonnie lights a Cuban cigar with a GOLD LIGHTER in the shape of a nude woman.

LUCAS

What's happenin' pimpin'?

LONNIE

What's happenin' pimpin'?

The PIMP-TALK flies rapid fire. You damn near need subtitles to understand what's being said.

LUCAS

You know how it is. Tryin' to keep phat back's on the track. Know what I'm say'n? Try'n to keep my bank account up and these ho's down.

LONNIE

That's my word Lovely! So what brings you and this sexy young starlet to my humble abode?

LUCAS

Ho's gone wild, Pimpin'. I had to put her under Pimp arrest for illegal eyeballin'. Ya heard me. I figured I don't need the Ho, so I'll let Welfare feed the Ho or take her to realist of real, and that's you baby.

LONNIE

Ain't no shame in yo game Lovely. Pimpin Lonnie's the realist, ya heard me.

(MORE)

LONNIE (CONT'D)

I'm internationally known, nationally recognized and locally accepted, "knowwhatI'msayin'?" I gots more flavor than a pack of "Now and Later's." These Ho's better see that I gots a P.H.D. and if you don't know what that means, it means I got a...

LUCAS AND LONNIE

...PIMPIN HO'S DEGREE!

They both start laughing.

Clair is listening to this interchange like a fan at a tennis match. Back and forth. They might as well be speaking Chinese.

LONNIE

(to Clair)

Step on over here Lovely, lemme see what you workin' with?

Clair walks over and does an awkward little spin for Lonnie.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

(approvingly)

Oh, yeah baby! You sweeter than a glass of Kool Aid on a school day. The girl of my dreams. I been lookin' for you in the daylight with a flashlight "seewhatI'msay'n?"

(to Lucas)

What you talkin' bout Pimpin'?

LUCAS

I'm talkin about a trade. She's a first round draft pick who needs some coaching figured I'd trade her for one of your second stringers.

LONNIE

Who you got in mind?

Lucas pulls out the photograph of Hope and shows it to him. Lonnie looks at the picture and then -- HIS WHOLE DEMEANOR CHANGES.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

(turning cold)

Don't know her.

(to the Gangsta)

A.C. You wanna escort these people up outta here.

The Gangsta pulls out an MPK automatic machine gun.

GANGSTA

Let's go!

LUCAS

(trying to play it off)

Awww, Pimpin'. Come on baby. How you gonna act? It's all about stayin' sweet and takin these ho's to the concrete knowwhatI'msayin' It's all about gettin down and... and...

(beat)

Ah, screw this pimp shit!

In one quick move -- Lucas GRABS LONNIE'S OAK DESK and SWAT'S THE GANGSTA LIKE A FLY. SPLAT!

HOOCHIES SCREAM AND RUN OUT OF THE ROOM.

LONNIE pulls out A STRAIGHT RAZOR. SWISH! It may as well have been a butter knife.

LUCAS

Grabs Lonnie's wrist. CRUNCH! BONES BREAK! Lonnie SCREAMS LIKE A WOMAN! Lucas grabs him by his collar and -- CRASH!

SMASHES HIM THROUGH THE WINDOW!

LONNIE

Dangles FIVE STORIES ABOVE the street.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Where's the girl?

LONNIE

YOU KNOW WHO YOU MESSIN WITH? I'M CONNECTED FOOL! YOU MESS WITH ME YOU MESSIN WITH DIAMONDBACK!

LUCAS tosses Lonnie six feet in the air.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

AAAHHHHHHHHH!

SWAP! LUCAS CATCHES HIM ON THE WAY DOWN!

LUCAS

WHERE'S THE GIRL?

LONNIE

(petrified)

I don't know man?

Lucas is about to toss him again.

LONNIE (CONT'D)

WAAAAIIIIIT! I know her. I know her, man.  
Names Hope something or other. Calls  
herself Easy.

Clair rushes over.

CLAIR

WHERE'S SHE AT?

LONNIE

I sold her. I sold her to Diamondback!

This hits Clair like a punch to the gut.

CLAIR

Oh, my God.

LUCAS

What did he do to her?

LONNIE

I don't know! But he's probably gonna  
turn her out. Get her hooked on H' and  
put her on the bricks. That's his M.O.

CLAIR

Where can we find him?

LONNIE

I don't know! I swear to God! If he wants  
girls, he contacts me. I never go to him!

LUCAS

You tellin' me the truth?

LONNIE

If I'm lyin' I'm dyin', Bra!

Lucas pulls him face to face.

LUCAS

I don't know if you're lyin...

LUCAS TOSSES HIM DOWN HARD!

LUCAS (CONT'D)

But you're definitely dyin!

LONNIE

AHHHHHHHHHH!

EXT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - DAY

LONNIE PLUMMETS FIVE STORIES -- SMASH! RIGHT INTO THE ROOF OF HIS PURPLE ESCALADE

INT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S - OFFICE - SAME

Lucas and Clair stare at each other -- faces grim.

LUCAS

Let's go.

INT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lucas and Clair march down the hall with grim determination. They pass the Heroin room.

LUCAS STOPS.

LUCAS

Wait a minute.

Lucas opens the door.

INT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - HEROIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lucas walks into the room.

A SHOTGUN WIELDING GUARD stands post at the door. Before he can react. Lucas GRABS THE BARREL OF THE GUN AND BENDS IT INTO AN L. WHAM! He nails the guard with an elbow to the chest. Say good night.

SEVERAL CHEMISTS in white lab coats are mixing the Heroin. They look up in shock.

LUCAS

Anybody wanna die, stick around.

The Chemists are outta there in a flash.

LUCAS walks up to the line of steel drums containing the ether. He starts to PUNCH HOLES IN EACH CAN WITH HIS FIST.

Liquid Ether begins to flood the floor.

INT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lucas meets Clair in the hallway. Ether is already pouring from under the doorway.

LUCAS

C'mon.

They head downstairs followed by a stream of the flammable liquid. When they reach the bottom of the stairs Lucas pulls out --

LONNIE'S GOLD LIGHTER

He lights it and drops it in the ether. A STREAM OF FIRE races up the ether trail.

EXT. PIMPIN' LONNIE'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Lucas and Clair exit the building. A SMALL CROWD gathers around Lonnie's body, now smashed into his Escalade.

Clair fixes her shirt.

CLAIR

(sadly)

Guess we go check out --

(swallows)

The morgue.

Lucas sadly nods yes. They head off down the street leaving Lonnie's building behind them. The sound of police sirens can be heard approaching from the distance.

SUDDENLY --

KABOOM! THE TOP FLOOR OF THE BUILDING EXPLODES IN A BALL OF FIRE.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

Now you're a hero.

LUCAS

So I guess we find this Diamondback and get your sister.

She breaks down and begins to cry tears of both joy and sadness.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

She HUGS LUCAS holding him tight sobbing into his chest. Lucas puts his arms out. He can't hug her back. He stands there awkward.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DIAMONDBACK'S PENTHOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Donald Trump would be jealous of this place. Opulence to the nth. GANGSTAZ and FAT BOOTY'D SISTAZ are everywhere. It looks like a Rap video. The only difference is --

SNAKES CRAWL ALL OVER THE PLACE.

Diamondback in on the warpath. He paces the room like a caged tiger, A LARGE RATTLER coiled around his shoulder. People avoid his gaze.

DIAMONDBACK

So the Hero thinks he can just roll into one of my establishments and burn -- TEN MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF MY SHIT!

Diamondback KICKS OVER a A GLASS DISPLAY CASE. It shatters on the floor. No one says shit. Diamondback continues to pace and fume.

A BOLD GANGSTA stands up.

BOLD GANGSTA

Yo, Diamondback. I think we needs to go uptown and toss dat fool up!

Diamondback spins around and NAILS THE BOLD GANGSTA WITH A KNIFE TO THE CHEST. The Gangsta flips over the back of a chair dead.

Diamondback marches over and begins to admonish the corpse.

DIAMONDBACK

You think?... You think? You don't think SHIT! You REACT! YOU DO AS I GODDAMN SAY!

He begins to pace the room staring at his frightened minions.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

Anybody else got any thoughts?

Silence.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

Any ideas? Opinions? -- Any reflections... speculations... Nothing you wanna run up the flagpole? Throw against the wall and see if it sticks?  
(looks around)

Nothing? Good 'cause this is what we're gonna do. We're gonna strap-up, then go uptown and toss dat fool up!

He turns to Gadget.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

You got the 411 on this hero?

GADGET

I was able to restore the surveillance video from the hard drive.

Gadget plugs a BURNT, SINGED, HARD DRIVE into a computer terminal. He types in some codes and --

THE BLACK AND WHITE IMAGE APPEARS ON TEN FLAT SCREEN MONITORS placed all over the penthouse.

It's LUCAS, CLAIR and the Gangsta walking down the hall. Gadget freezes the frame and zooms in on Lucas.

CLOSE ON DIAMONDBACK. SLOW PUSH IN.

SHOCKED REVELATION.

DIAMONDBACK

Son of a bitch. He's alive.

GADGET

That's the hero. He kicks-it on Lennox Ave at this bar called Dixie's.

DIAMONDBACK

Dixie's, I know the place. I know it well. I shoulda shut that bitch down a long time ago.

THE DRIVER approaches.

DRIVER

You want me to pull up the limo boss?

DIAMONDBACK

Naw, we gonna saddle up the ponies tonight.

(to Gadget)

Are they ready?

Gadget smiles proudly.

GADGET

Oh, yeah! They're ready.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GADGET'S LABORATORY - EVENING

Diamondback and the posse storm into Gadget's lair. A LARGE GREEN TARP covers something large. Gadget pulls the tarp revealing --

40 TRICKED OUT RICE ROCKETS. Only these have been tricked out with DUEL MOUNTED 50 CALIBER MINI-GUNS mounted on either side of the gas tank.

Diamondback throws on a BULLET PROOF VEST. SOLID BODY ARMOR. He pulls his snake-skin motorcycle jacket over it. He gets on his bike.

DIAMONDBACK

YEAH! Now we gonna see how bullet-proof this hero is!

The posse saddles up. VRRRRRRMMMMM! VRRRRRRMMMMM! The sound of engines revving is deafening.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

Let's go kill us a ghost!

SCREEEEEECH!  
THEY PEEL OFF INTO THE SETTING SUN!

CUT TO:

INT. DIAMONDBACK'S PENTHOUSE - EVENING

CAMERA TRACKS through a bevy of BEAUTIFUL GIRLS primping and preening in the lap of luxury. Cristal sits on ice. Gourmet food sits on trays. Big screen TV's show music videos. Camera tracks over to --

HOPE, SQUEAK AND PATTY. They are being fitted with sexy new designer duds by a group of OLDER GIRLS. Hookers and call girls no doubt. Hope is crying.

OLDER SISTER

What's wrong girl?

HOPE

I wanna go home. I wanna see my sister.

The OLDER SISTER looks at her, face stern, tone serious.

OLDER SISTER

Don't talk like that. Haven't you realized yet? You can't go home. You're Diamondback's property now. Keep your mouth shut and stay alive.

Hope stares out the penthouse window at the city lights beyond. A bird in a gilded cage.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - EVENING

There are very few passengers on this train. Lucas and Clair sit side by side. There is an uncomfortable silence. Then --

CLAIR  
Why didn't you hug me?

LUCAS  
Huh?

CLAIR  
In the morgue. I hugged you. You didn't hug me back. Why?

Lucas stares off into space.

LUCAS  
I can't.

CLAIR  
Why not?

LUCAS  
Because I hurt people.

CLAIR  
I don't understand.

LUCAS  
This -- thing I have. This power. I don't have control over it.  
(beat)  
I break things. Delicate things. Fragile things.

Lucas looks at her.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
I didn't want to hurt you.

CLAIR  
You mean you can never -- hold a woman in your arms? Hold a child?

Lucas shakes his head no.

CLAIR (CONT'D)  
That's so sad.

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

Lucas and Clair emerge from the subway and head down the street to the front of Dixie's --

CLAIR

What are we doing back here?

LUCAS

You're going home.

CLAIR

I thought we were going to find Diamondback?

LUCAS

I'm going to find Diamondback. After that little stunt I just pulled, things are gonna get hot. I don't want you gettin' yourself killed.

CLAIR

I'm not afraid of Diamondback! Bring him on!

SUDDENLY --

A NOISE. THE DRONE OF 40 MOTORCYCLES. Lucas and Clair look down the street. Headlight glare encroaching fast.

CLAIR (CONT'D)

What's that?

LUCAS

I think you got your wish.

ON THE WOLF PACK

The Rice rockets are ripping down the street. Gangstaz are SHOWBOATING like Ruff Ryders. DIAMONDBACK IS IN THE LEAD followed by GADGET.

GADGET

THERE'S THE HERO NOW!

DIAMONDBACK

LET'S SPARK-EM UP!

Diamondback, and the FRONT RIDERS, POP WHEELIES.

WREEEEEEEEEEE!

THE TURRETS OF THE MINI-GUNS START TO ROTATE. THEY LAY THE BIKES BACK DOWN and --

BRRRRRRPPPPPPP!

THEY OPEN FIRE! FLAME AND BULLETS belch from the twin mounted gattling guns. HUNDREDS OF SHELL CASINGS PLING, PLING, PLING, on the ground.

LUCAS

THROWS HIMSELF IN FRONT OF CLAIR. BULLETS RIP INTO HIS BACK! Lucas pushes Clair behind an OLD CAR. He Turns and-

RUNS HEADLONG INTO THE PACK, BULLETS RIPPING INTO HIM!

DIAMONDBACK is shocked

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)  
Goddamn! He is bulletproof.

Diamondback pulls A "STOPPIE" raising his bike to it's front wheel, AS DOES GADGET. THE REST OF THE PACK roars past them MINI-GUNS BLAZING.

DIXIE'S BAR

Is being ripped to shreds by the gunfire.

INT. DIXIE'S BAR AND GRILL

DIXIE AND THE PATRONS HAUL ASS OUT THE BACK DOOR DUCKING BULLETS AS THEY GO.

EXT. DIXIE'S BAR AND GRILL

CLAIR

Covers her head and screams as THE HOOD IS SHREDED OFF the car she hides behind.

LUCAS

Still running forward, jerks and convulses from the bullet hits but he keeps RUNNING. HE GRABS THE FIRST BIKE THAT REACHES HIM by the FORK. And --

SPINS THE BIKE LIKE HE'S DOING A HAMMER TOSS

WHOOSH! HE TOSSES THE BIKE INTO THE PACK. BIKES GO DOWN LIKE BOWLING PINS. B'BOOOOOM! Some of them EXPLODE!

LUCAS

Picks up a downed bike. HE SPARKS UP THE MINI-GUNS. BRRRRRRPPPPP LUCAS USES THE WHOLE BIKE LIKE A MACHINE GUN!

TEN MORE BIKERS GO DOWN! MORE EXPLOSIONS AND FLAMES!

TEN GANGSTAZ

Attack Lucas on foot. Bad Move. Lucas lights into them jailhouse rock style. Gangstaz are getting mopped.

He grabs ONE GANGSTA by the foot SPINS HIM OVER HIS HEAD and TOSSES HIM through the SIXTH FLOOR WINDOW of a tenement house.

IT'S OVER.

LENNOX AVENUE LOOKS LIKE A WAR ZONE.

BODIES. FLAMES. DESTRUCTION.

Lucas strolls through this field of destruction silhouetted by flame. PUMPED! ANGRY! READY FOR MORE! He looks like the grim reaper. Lucas hold his arms out Christ-Like.

LUCAS  
ANYBODY ELSE WANT SOME?

Then -- as if to answer his question.

A BIKE

ROARING TOWARD HIM. Where's it at. Too much smoke and flame. A VOICE RINGS OUT!

DIAMONDBACK (O.S.)  
It's like I said before Lucas! If you ain't down, you get put down.

Lucas is shocked.

LUCAS  
Stryker?

THEN

Something flies at him. Flipping through the air FAST.

FLFLEFLFLEFLFLEFL!

A KNIFE!

THUNK! It lodges into the asphalt at his feet. He looks at it a second then --

KABOOOOM!

It explodes. TREMENDOUS CONCUSSION. Lucas flies backwards into the side of DIXIE'S bar making a LARGE INDENTATION in the brick wall.

WHOA! Lucas tries to get his faculties straight. Then he sees him.

DIAMONDBACK

Emerging from flames like a horseman of the apocalypse. STANDING ON HIS MOTORCYCLE.

LUCAS

Pulls himself painfully to his feet.

DIAMONDBACK'S

ARM LASHES OUT DRAMATICALLY.

FLFLFLFLFLFLFLFLFLFL

EXPLOSIVE KNIVES! THREE OF THEM, Flying right at Lucas.

LUCAS RUNS

It's more like a HOBBLE than a run, Two knives lodge into the wall of Dixie's right behind the running man. THUNK! THUNK! Lucas dives past the doorway and --

SWISH!

The third knife goes --

RIGHT THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR.

BOOM! BOOM! KAAABOOOOOOCOMMM!

THREE TREMENDOUS EXPLOSIONS Blow Dixie's bar TO SMITHEREENS.

CONCUSSION! FLAME! RUBBLE! PUMMEL LUCAS TO THE GROUND!

Then he sees it -- HIS SAFE, sailing through the air followed by --

HUNDREDS OF BURNING BILLS!

HIS MONEY STASH HAS GONE UP IN FLAMES. Hundreds of burning bills rain from the sky.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

NOOOOOOOOOO!

ANOTHER EXPLOSION

BLOWS LUCAS INTO THE AIR. He falls back down, FACE FIRST under A PILE OF RUBBLE. He attempts to pull himself from the pile. He's too weak from the concussion. Then --

VRRRRRRMMMMM

DIAMONDBACK pulls up beside him and kicks him over with his foot. He revels in his victory.

DIAMONDBACK

So, Carl Lucas is back from the dead.  
Well guess what...

He pulls himself FACE TO FACE with Lucas.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

...so am I!

DIAMONDBACK

Stands over Lucas's prone form steaming with hatred.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

I should have finished your bitch ass off on that rooftop with that two timin' ho of yours. But I thought it would be more fun to let you suffer in jail. I guess fate didn't see it that way... I guess fate brought you back so I could finish the job myself.

He pulls out A SPECIAL KNIFE. He SETS A TIMER ON IT TO 2 MINUTES.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

She was MINE Lucas. She was MY PROPERTY!  
She was gonna be the best hooker I ever turned out! AND YOU STOLE HER FROM ME!  
You broke my heart Lucas!

(calms a bit)

So... Since you and that bitch stabbed me right through the heart -- Allow me to return the favor!

With that -- HE PLUNGES THE KNIFE INTO LUCAS'S CHEST. It's like trying to drive a knife through solid OAK! LUCAS GROANS IN PAIN as DIAMONDBACK leans ALL HIS WEIGHT and DRIVES THE KNIFE TO THE HILT!

LUCAS

AAAAAAAHHHHH!

LUCAS

Musters ALL HIS STRENGTH, wich isn't much in this state and PUNCHES DIAMONDBACK IN THE CHEST!

DIAMONDBACK

Sails TWENTY YARDS BACK and lands on the ground coughing blood. Were it not for his body armor he would surely be dead.

LUCAS

Shaking and twitching, attempts to pull the blade from his chest. The time ticks down. It's half way out then --

LONG SHOT

KA-BOOOOOOM

A HUGE EXPLOSION ROCKS THE AREA WHERE LUCAS LIES.

CLAIR

Pulls herself from behind the wrecked car. She is smudged shaken, but okay. She staggers over to the rubble that was Dixie's Bar. She looks down in horror to see --

A BLAST CRATER

FOUR FEET DEEP. Laying in the center of it IS --

LUCAS

Still in one piece. Is he dead? She can't tell! He's in HORRENDOUS CONDITION. Clair climbs in the crater and grabs Lucas in her arms.

CLAIR

HEEELP ME! SOMEBODY HELP ME!

CUT TO:

GADGET

He HELPS DIAMONDBACK TO HIS FEET.

DIAMONDBACK

Let's make sure he's dead. If he's bullet-proof he may be bomb proof.

They walk toward the crater. Diamondback limps. Gadget pulls a pistol. Diamondback pulls HIS LAST KNIFE.

TWO MORE OF DIAMONDBACK'S THUGS rise up. They pull pistols and back up their boss.

CLAIR

Sees the remaining thugs approaching. Lucas is out. The situation looks grim. Then --

DIXIE

Appears from the smoke flame. She's packin' that leg iron of hers. Then JAY ALLEN with a shotgun. Then AKIM with a .44 Magnum followed by LIL' BIT with a baseball bat. Then ABBEY with his own GRENADE LAUNCHER. ED and MINNIE show up WITH HUGE MEAT CLEAVERS.

Before you know it --

MOST OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD TURNS OUT, STRAPPED TO THE TEETH!

DIAMONDBACK AND CREW

Stare at the army amassed against them and make a smart move. THEY GET THE HELL OUTTA THERE!

VRRRRRRRRRMMMMMM!

They're history.

LIL' BIT

Walks over to a FALLEN GANGSTA he snatches an ICED OUT CROSS from the Gangsta's neck, Then pulls out a JEWELER'S EYEPIECE he examines the cross. After a moment He tosses it like it were a piece of trash.

LIL' BIT  
(disgusted)  
Cubic Zirconium.

The sound of SIRENS can be heard approaching. Lucas speaks. His voice barely a croak. Blood spills from his mouth.

LUCAS  
(barely a whisper)  
Get... me... outta... Here! If... Don't  
let police... catch me... They'll make  
me...circus freak...

Lucas passes out. Clair struggles and strains to pull Lucas out of the crater. He's heavy! Unnaturally heavy.

The sirens are getting louder. Clair is making slow progress. Then --

HELPING HANDS

Reach in and help pull Lucas. Clair looks up -- IT'S DIXIE and the NEIGHBORHOOD MERCHANTS. With their help, they all get Lucas out of the crater.

CLAIR

We need to get him to the clinic.

They put him in the back of Dixie's SUV and pull off as --  
CAMERA BOOMS UP to reveal THE TOTAL DEVASTATION OF LENNOX  
AVE.

CUT TO:

INT. DIAMONDBACK'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

AN UNDERWORLD DOCTOR tends to Diamondback. He winces in  
pain his breathing is wet and labored.

UNDERWORLD DOCTOR

I have good news and bad news for you.  
The bad news is you have a fractured rib  
cage, a punctured lung and internal  
bleeding. The good news is -- You're  
still alive. Whatever the hell hit you  
would have went right through you if you  
weren't wearing that vest. Needless to  
say we're gonna have to get you to a  
hospital.

Diamondback motions to Gadget.

DIAMONDBACK

(choking on blood)

Get your ass down to Florida and find out  
what happened to Lucas. Cause whatever  
the hell kinda super power he got -- I  
want.

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

CLAIR IS ALONE WITH LUCAS

She examines his wounds. Many bruises. ONE LARGE  
BLACKENED WOUND IN HIS CHEST.

LATER. Clair does an ultra-sound on Lucas.

NOW AN X-RAY

Clair examines the x-ray. There is A CHUNK OF THE KNIFE  
BLADE still lodged in his chest, right near his heart.

SHE EXAMINES LUCAS'S WOUND again. It is starting to heal,  
rapidly.

CLAIR SCRUBS UP. PREPARES TO OPERATE. SHE PREPARES HER EQUIPMENT.

LUCAS IS READY FOR SURGERY. EKG, OXYGEN MASK. SALINE DRIP -- PROBLEM!

CLAIR CAN'T GET A NEEDLE IN HIS ARM for the saline. "CRACK". They keep breaking on his skin. Clair stares at the arm frustrated then -- A THOUGHT.

SMASH CUT TO:

THE MAINTENANCE CLOSET

CLAIR GRABS A TOOL CASE

BACK IN THE O.R.

Clair uses A SMALL HAND DRILL, with a tiny titanium bit to drill into Lucas's arm. She gets the I.V. in.

SHE TRIES TO OPERATE ON HIM. SCALPEL! She can't make an incision. CRACK! The scalpel breaks. She uses a BONE SAW. ZZZZZOOOT! -- no good.

THEN A POWER-SAW WITH TITANIUM BLADE.

Success.

FADE OUT/IN.

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - LAB - LATER

Clair is analyzing Lucas's meds. She looks at a tissue sample under a microscope. She looks shocked.

CLAIR  
(thinking out loud)  
My God, what did they do to you?

Then as if to answer her question.

QUIRT (V.O.)  
Some kinda Frankenstein experiment...

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILER PARK IN FLORIDA - DAY

It is a quaint little trailer park punctuated by little potted palm trees.

QUIRT and GADGET

Sit outside of Quirt's trailer drinking beer. They both wear colorful Hawaiian shirts.

QUIRT

...turned him into a monster. He put his hand right through my partner's chest.

(spits)

They told us they was doin' a routine examination, but man... You shoulda seen the stuff they had down there right outta of a movie. They took that boy and turned him into something un-holy.

GADGET

Can you tell me the name of the doctor who did this experiment?

Quirt scratches his chin feinting ignorance.

QUIRT

Hmmm, Mmmmm, I don't know. It's been such a long time. I'm having problems reckolectin'

Quirt forks over a FEW HUNDRED BUCKS.

GADGET

This jar your memory?

Quirt takes the money and folds it into an already fat wad of cash.

QUIRT

It's coming to me now.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DR. BERNSTEIN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Dr. Bernstein and HIS FAMILY, WIFE 40's TEENAGE SON and DAUGHTER are at the dinner table preparing for the evening meal.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Gracious Lord, make us truly thankful for the food we are about to receive for the nourishment of our bodies, forever in Christ -- AMEN

FAMILY

AMEN!

VOICE (O.C.)

AAAAAMEN!

WHO WAS THAT? Bernstein and the Family look over to see --

GADGET AND A PACK OF GANGSTAZ storming into their house  
PACKING AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. Gadget takes a seat at the  
head of the table opposite Bernstein.

GADGET

Uh oh! There goes the neighborhood.

DR. BERNSTEIN

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

GANGSTAZ grab Bernstein and stick pistols to his head.

GADGET

We need your expertise on a matter of  
grave importance.

DR. BERNSTEIN

And what if I refuse?

Gangstaz aim weapons at HIS FAMILY.

GADGET

That would just be --  
(thinks of word)  
sad.

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - LUCAS' ROOM - NIGHT

The EKG machine ticks away Lucas's life. Clair monitors  
his vitals. She steps over to a computer and begins  
typing away --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GADGET'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

Gadget is typing away on a computer. PULL BACK to reveal -  
- DR. BERNSTEIN working on a computer next to him. In the  
background we see GANGSTAZ setting up the rest of  
Bernstein's equipment.

A GLASS TANK is being filled with the ubiquitous red  
liquid. Gadget looks at something OFF SCREEN. He smiles --

GADGET

(genuine)

Ya, know Doc, You're a lucky man. You  
really do have a nice family.

CAMERA WHIPS OVER to reveal BERNSTEIN'S FAMILY locked in  
LARGE DOG KENNELS.

BACK TO GADGET

GADGET (CONT'D)

This is brilliant Doc. Just brilliant.  
You are an unadulterated genius!

DR. BERNSTEIN

(containing his loathing)

I'm no genius, I'm a fraud. What I tried  
to do failed. What happened to Carl Lucas  
was an anomaly. We may never be able to  
duplicate.

GADGET

Doc, anomaly is my specialty. If science  
can be perverted, I'm the man who can do  
it.

Gadget's fingers are a blur on the keyboard.

GADGET (CONT'D)

And if I'm not mistaken, the perversion  
is locked -- right -- here on your own  
hard drives.

He leaps out of his chair and raises his arms like he  
just scored a touchdown.

GADGET (CONT'D)

Anomaly revealed! I AM DA MAN!

Gadget turns the monitor toward Bernstein.

GADGET (CONT'D)

You had a glitch doc. A beautiful  
wonderful little glitch. That turned a  
cellular growth accelerator into a super  
mutagen. Now here's where the shit gets  
tricky. The mutagen was too powerful to  
react to normal infirmity. It needed  
something significantly traumatic to  
awaken it. Something like...

Gadget motions to Bernstein like "C'mon you know the  
answer to this."

DR. BERNSTEIN

(sounding sick)

...a Fatal dose of electricity.

GADGET

Exact-a-mundo herre-doktor!

(proudly)

Now -- Who da man?

Bernstein stares at Gadget with contempt. Gadget pulls A  
PISTOL and points it at Bernstein his eyes, crazed.

GADGET (CONT'D)

WHO DA MAN?!

DR. BERNSTEIN

(disgusted mumble)

You... da man.

Gadget puts the gun away and becomes a kid with a new toy.

GADGET

Let's go make us another superman!

CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - LUCAS'S ROOM - DAY

Clair is asleep at her microscope. It's clear that she's been up for a long time. Suddenly --

LUCAS'S

Hand grasps the metal railing AND CRUSHES IT LIKE TIN FOIL!

BEEP BEEP BEEP!

WARNING FROM LUCAS'S EKG. HE'S GOING INTO CARDIAC ARREST.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GADGET'S LABORATORY - DAY

DIAMONDBACK is now sporting the fiber-optic porcupine look. He is being lowered into the red liquid.

Gadget is drawing blood from something BELOW FRAME. Bernstein looks at Gadget shocked.

DR. BERNSTEIN

What the hell are you doing?

GADGET

Diamondback's request. He wanted a little extra punch to his DNA.

Gadget INJECTS THE BLOOD into an I.V. DRIP that runs to DIAMONDBACK'S ARM.

BERNSTEIN

Looks down at what Gadget drew blood from --

A DIAMONDBACK RATTLESNAKE!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - LUCAS'S ROOM

The EKG is beeping like crazy CLAIR rushes to Lucas's bed. SHE INJECTS STREPTOKINASE, TPA into his I.V. drip. Lucas begins to twitch. His hand TWISTS THE METAL into a pretzel --

CLAIR  
Hang in there Lucas.

INT. GADGET'S LABORATORY

Gadget and Bernstein initiate the proper sequence on the computer. Turbines whine. Hard drives click.

Gadget initiates the final sequence. ENERGY SURGES INTO DIAMONDBACK'S BODY. He begins to shake and convulse.

INT. HARLEM FREE CLINIC - LUCAS'S ROOM

BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

LUCAS FLATLINES. His body lays prone. Clair flies into action. She straps a Resuscitator on his face and fires up THE DEFIBRILLATOR.

She smears gel on the paddles, sets them down. As the Defibrillator charges, she PUMP, PUMP PUMPS the resuscitator.

BEEEEEEEEEE

The Defibrillator is charged. She places the paddle on his chest and CA-CHUNK! LUCAS'S BODY JERKS VIOLENTLY!

BOOSH! SZSZSZSZSTTZ!

THE EKG MACHINE EXPLODES FROM A SURGE OF ELECTRICITY

CLAIR  
Holee...

FWOOSH

CAMERA ZOOMS INTO LUCAS'S EYE and right into his subconscious.

DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. APARTMENT IN HARLEM - NIGHT

Lucas lies in bed covered by nothing but a sheet and the sweat of lovemaking. Only this isn't young Lucas, this is Lucas as he is now.

REVA

Stands by the window as nude as we can get away with in a PG-13 movie. A BRIGHT ETHERIAL GLOW emanates from the window creating a HALO around her whole body.

LUCAS  
What's wrong baby?

REVA  
I have to go.

LUCAS  
I know you have to go. You and me together, to that private island in the sun.

REVA  
No, I have to leave you.

She turns and faces Lucas.

REVA (CONT'D)  
And you have to let me go.

Lucas is overcome with emotion.

LUCAS  
You're all I have.

She walks to his side and caresses his face.

REVA  
Had, Lucas, had. There are others for you now. You can't hold on to the past forever, or it will destroy you.

LUCAS  
Then let me be destroyed.

REVA  
I can't do that baby. I love you too much.

Reva bends over and places her head on Lucas's chest as we --

CUT TO:

## THE PRESENT

Clair bends over and places her head on Lucas's chest to listen to his heart beat.

## INTERCUT DREAM SEQUENCE

## REVA

Caresses Lucas's chest with her hand. Lucas, gently wraps his arms around her.

## THE PRESENT

## LUCAS

Reaches up and wraps his arm around Clair.

## CLAIR REACTS IN HORROR

She sees that Lucas is still unconscious. She looks down and sees THE MANGLED GUARD RAIL. She tries to pull back but she is stuck.

## THE DREAM

## LUCAS

Gently pulls Reva face to face with him. He reaches BOTH HANDS up and caresses her face.

## THE PRESENT

## LUCAS

PULLS CLAIR FACE TO FACE. He slides BOTH HANDS UP to caress her face.

CLAIR IS PETRIFIED. His hands are in perfect position to crush her skull. She shuts her eyes fearing the worst -- BUT IT DOESN'T HAPPEN.

His touch is gentle. He pulls her close.

## THE DREAM

## LUCAS

Kisses Reva one last time. Long. Deep. Passionate.

## THE PRESENT

## LUCAS.

Plants that same kiss on Clair. She resists momentarily then -- gives in.

THE DREAM

Reva pulls back from the kiss. Lucas doesn't want to let her go, his hands slip gently down her arms until they are holding her hands. Then the tips of her fingers ---

THE PRESENT

THE SAME ACTION WITH CLAIR

She is surprised at the gentleness of his touch. She pulls herself away, the tips of her fingers slipping softly from Lucas's hands.

THE DREAM

REVA

Walks away toward the bright glow of the window. The glow seems to get brighter the closer she gets to it until she is totally enveloped by the light.

THE PRESENT

LUCAS

OPENS HIS EYES. He stares up from his hospital bed.

LUCAS'S POV

CLAIR

Looks down on him. A BIG OPERATING ROOM LIGHT is behind her head creating an ETHERIAL GLOW around her head.

ON LUCAS

For the first time in a long time --

HE SMILES.

LUCAS

(hoarse voice)

You looked like an angel. For a second there, I thought I was...

CLAIR

For a second there you were.

LUCAS

(casually)

Oh, well, I've been there before. How long was I out?

CLAIR  
Three and a half weeks.

LUCAS  
Jesus! --  
(worried)  
Has anybody else been examining me?

CLAIR  
No, just me. Your secret's safe for the time being. But I have to warn you. Your mutation was triggered by bioelectric stimulus. Another powerful electric shock could accelerate the mutation.

LUCAS  
Then I become stronger.

CLAIR  
Or you explode!

LUCAS  
I always knew I was gonna blow-up some day.  
(beat)  
What's happening with your sister?

CLAIR  
Me and some of the neighbors grabbed one of Diamondback's biker thugs...

LUCAS  
(incredulous)  
The neighbors?

CLAIR  
That's right. I think you instilled a little fighting spirit in them. Anyway, we grabbed one of Diamondback's thugs. It took a little persuasion, but we got him to open up to us.

Lucas stares at Clair with admiration.

LUCAS  
A little persuasion, huh? I'm scared of you. What did he say?

CLAIR  
He told me that they were holding her at Diamondback's. They say he keeps lots of girls up there like a private collection. He holds many of them against their will.

LUCAS  
You call the cops.

CLAIR

No, if the cops went snooping around, he would kill her. I didn't want to risk that.

LUCAS

Then I guess I should go get her.

Lucas rips the IV from his arms and bounds out of bed standing firm and strong -- That is until his KNEES BUCKLE and he COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND.

Clair reaches out to help him. Lucas pulls away.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

C'mon. You know I can't touch you.

Clair smiles a knowing half smile. Lucas is puzzled.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

What's that look?

Clair says nothing. Just that inscrutable smile. Lucas is like -- "Did I miss something?"

LUCAS (CONT'D)

What?

He climbs back onto the bed.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

As soon as I'm strong enough, I'll go get her.

Clair opens up a closet and pulls from it A 12 GAUGE AUTOMATIC SHOTGUN and a BULLET PROOF VEST.

CLAIR

We'll both go and get her.

LUCAS

I can't let you do that.

Clair racks the shotgun.

CLAIR

Try and stop me.

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY

AREAL SHOT

CAMERA SWOOPS DOWN FROM THE SKY over the majestic spires of midtown manhattan. Right up to the gleaming tower that houses Diamondback's lair.

CAMERA SWOOPS RIGHT UP TO THE WINDOW THEN --

INT. DIAMONDBACK'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

WOOSH!

RIGHT INTO THE PENTHOUSE

VIOLENT AGGRESSIVE HIP HOP BLASTS. The penthouse is a den of inequity.

CAMERA GLIDES PAST -- SCANTILY CLAD VIXENS dancing with GUN TOTING GANGSTAZ, PAST tables laden with drugs and alcohol.

SNAKES SLITHER over the table and across the expensive furniture. CAMERA glides right up to --

BERNSTEIN AND HIS FAMILY

Chained to a marble pillar. They are petrified by their surroundings. Their new best friend -- GADGET keeps them company. Gadget drinks Cristal right from the bottle.

GADGET

(drunk out of his mind)

And the number one Mad scientist cliché is... "Fools! They'll rue the day when they mocked me!"

Gadget cracks up at his own joke. CAMERA glide past him right up to --

HOPE DICKENS.

She is dressed in a sexy DIAMOND SPANGLED dress, (Think the cover of Beyonce's new album). Some of the other girls primp and preen her. Hope looks terrified.

OLDER GIRL

Diamondback's gonna turn you out tonight and put you to work. A word of advice. Don't act like your scared, and he probably won't hurt you.

This doesn't help Hope at all. She starts to sob. A tear escapes her eye.

OLDER GIRL (CONT'D)

And for God's sake, don't cry!

SUDDENLY --

The music stops all eyes turn toward --

DIAMONDBACK

He enters the room dramatically through double doors. He is dressed like a ROCK STAR in flamboyant, full length GREEN SNAKE SKIN coat with the HOOD UP. He wears cool, green wrap-around sunglasses.

AN EVEN LARGER SNAKE is wrapped around his neck. Diamondback commands the room. Dramatic. Grandiose. Like Yul Brynner in the "Ten Commandments."

DIAMONDBACK

Ladies, Gentlemen. A new era is upon us. A new time. A new mission. A new purpose. Gone is the time for the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. These things are insignificant to us now. POWER, MIGHT, SUBJUGATION OF THE WEAK is the mission statement of the new order. For this is the very essence of evolution. I have evolved into something beyond you and with the help of our new friend, Dr. Bernstein, we all will evolve. Then there will be TWO ORDERS on this planet. The weak -- and US!

(dramatic pause)

Do ya feel me?

Cheers from the crowd. Diamondback raises his arms Christ-like.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

DO YA FEEEEEEEEEEEL ME!

RAUCUS CHEERING FROM THE AUDIENCE!

VOICE (O.S.)

That's about the dumbest shit I've ever heard in my life.

Who said that? All eyes turn toward the front door where -

LUCAS

Stands in FULL LUKE CAGE SPLENDOR. GANGSTAZ know who he is, they react in fear.

Standing beside him is CLAIR wearing her bullet-proof vest and sporting that twelve gauge auto-loader.

HOPE SEES HER SISTER.

HOPE

CLAIR!

CLAIR

HOPE!

CLACK-CLACK-CLACKITY-CLACK!

Diamondback's men pull out automatic weapons.

LUCAS

Anybody don't wanna die a painful death,  
put your weapons down and get the fuck  
outta here!

CLACK-CLACK-CLACKTY-CLACK

WEAPONS ARE DROPPED WITH THE QUICKNESS. Gangstaz and  
Vixens turn to leave. They are halted by Diamondback.

DIAMONDBACK

(to his posse)

Ya'll ain't goin nowhere.

(to Lucas)

Carl Lucas, aka Luke Cage, Hero for  
Hire.

LUCAS

Willis Stryker, aka the bitch-ass trick,  
about to get his ass kicked.

DIAMONDBACK

There's just no stopping you is there  
Lucas. You got more lives than a cat.

LUCAS

It's gonna take more than some explosive  
knives to stop me.

DIAMONDBACK

Oh, I got more than explosive knives for  
your ass.

With that, Diamondback sheds his coat. And reveals the  
NEW EVOLVED DIAMONDBACK.

He is bald. He now boast HUGE RIPPLING MUSCLES. And most  
significant -- THE SKIN ON HIS BACK, ARMS, NECK UP TO THE  
BACK OF HIS HEAD HAS BEEN MUTATED INTO SNAKE SKIN.

He pulls off his sunglasses to reveal HIDEOUS SNAKE EYES.

EVERYONE REACTS IN HORROR.

LUCAS

Jesus Stryker, what have you done to  
yourself?

DIAMONDBACK

Oh, I got a little work done -- courtesy of your old friend. You remember the good Doctor.

He motions to Bernstein. Lucas and Diamondback start to circle each other. Diamondback is unafraid.

DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

So, what's driving you Lucas? Still pining over lost love? Dark dreams haunting your sleep?

(beat)

Well, now you know what I went through after you stabbed me in the back! SHE WAS MY GIRL!

LUCAS

You lost the right to say that the moment you put her on the street. I loved her. She was just a possession to you.

The circling takes them closer to HOPE now cowering in a corner.

DIAMONDBACK

They're all possessions. Take this one for example.

A FAST AS A STRIKING SNAKE

Diamondback reaches over and SNATCHES HOPE UP BY THE NECK. He holds her in front of him.

LUCAS

LET HER GO!

DIAMONDBACK

I know what this is really about. You're here to save poor little Hope Dickens, aren't you? And you think that if you save poor little Hope, you'll get some kind of closure on that whole Reva thing don't you? It's so pathetically Freudian.

LUCAS

Let her go and you can have me.

DIAMONDBACK

Very noble Lucas. But you always did have sugar in your drawers.

He admires Hope.

## DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

I do see the attraction, though. She does bear a striking resemblance to our Reva doesn't she.

With that A HIDEOUS FORKED TONGUE darts out of Diamondback's mouth and licks Hope in the face. Yeech!

## DIAMONDBACK (CONT'D)

But there'll be no closure for you today Lucas.

Diamondback HURLS HOPE TOWARD ONE OF THE HUGE FLOOR TO CEILING WINDOWS LIKE A PITCHER THROWING A FAST BALL.

SLOW MOTION

LUCAS

RUNS AND DIVES JUST AS --

CRASH

HOPE CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW!

SNATCH!

LUCAS grabs her arm at the last minute. His body is HALFWAY OUT THE WINDOW holding Hope's wrist for dear life.

HOPE

SCREAMS as she dangles 40 STORIES ABOVE THE MANHATTAN STREETS.

DIAMONDBACK'S GANGSTAZ

Take this opportunity to RUN FOR THEIR LIVES. They don't want any part of this super-human mess.

GADGET

Stays loyal. He LEAPS INTO ACTION whipping out TWIN AUTOMATICS.

KABOOM

Gadget is nailed by a SHOTGUN BLAST from --

CLAIR

Who stands ready wielding the automatic weapon. She looks around. Where's Diamondback.

CAMERA WHIPS TO THE CEILING

DIAMONDBACK

Crawls across the ceiling LIKE A BUG. He's right over --

LUCAS

Who is pulling Hope back through the window.

SLAM!

DIAMONDBACK

POUNCES ON LUCAS and begins to PUMMEL HIM IN THE SPINE. The impact from the blows -- SHAKES THE PENTHOUSE LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE.

LUCAS

Grimaces in pain. He can't hold on much longer.

HOPE

Holds on for dear life. She feel Lucas's grip slipping.

FWOOSH!

FLASHBACK!

It's Lucas's worst nightmare. Reva FALLING IN SLOW MOTION TO HER DEATH!

FWOOSH! FLASH OF WHITE

BACK TO SCENE

CLAIR

Rushes into action. She levels the shotgun right up to Diamondback's head.

CHAK-CHAK! BOOM! POINT BLANK IN THE TEMPLE.

This was just an annoyance to --

DIAMONDBACK.

His face looks like he merely caught a bad rash. He BACKHANDS Clair. She goes FLYING across the room crashing painfully into the wet-bar.

This is just the diversion that --

LUCAS

Needs. He BUCKS Diamondback off of his back and Pulls Hope to safety.

HOPE

Runs to Clair's side, hugging her. Helping her up from her fall.

DIAMONDBACK

Eyes the two girls. HE LEAPS AT THEM sailing through the air like a POUNCING TIGER.

LUCAS

Springs into action. He grabs A MARBLE PILAR and swings it like a bat.

WHAP!

He catches Diamondback IN MID AIR!

DIAMONDBACK

RIPS ACROSS THE ROOM and CRASHES THROUGH A WALL LIKE A WRECKING BALL!

LUCAS

Rushes to Clair and Hope's side.

LUCAS

You two get the hell outta here.

CLAIR

Lucas...

LUCAS

NOW!

Hope helps Clair up and they rush out the back door. Lucas moves over to Bernstein and his family.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

You all move! Get outta here!

DR. BERNSTEIN

I'm sorry Lucas. I'm sorry for everything.

LUCAS

(with urgency)

We'll talk about it later. Now GO!

The Bernsteins bolt out of there just as -

CRASH!

DIAMONDBACK

CRASHES BACK INTO THE ROOM HISSING! Tongue darting in and out.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

I don't know whether to kick your ass or call the zoo.

Diamondback is in no mood for witticisms. He circles Lucas in a fighting stance. Lucas drops into his JAILHOUSE ROCK fighting stance.

IT'S ON AN' CRACK'N YA'LL

The two men LASH OUT AT EACH OTHER. Diamondback's SNAKE DNA has made him QUICKER than Lucas.

Lucas's blows hit NOTHING BUT AIR. As Diamondback ducks and weaves like a mutant Roy Jones Jr.

WHAP! PAP! POW!

A THREE PUNCH COMBINATION sends Lucas sailing through the air into A MARBLE PILAR, CRUMBLING IT. Lucas shakes it off --

TOO LATE.

DIAMONDBACK

Grabs Lucas by the ankle and begins to WHIP HIM AROUND LIKE A RAG DOLL! Slamming him into the floor MAKING CRATERS! SMASHING HIM THROUGH BRICK WALLS! Then --

WHOOSH!

HE TOSSES LUCAS through a brick wall into THE KITCHEN.

INT. DIAMONDBACK'S PENTHOUSE - KITCHEN

Diamondback leaps through the hole in the wall into the kitchen to catch --

A REFRIGERATOR TO THE FACE! Diamondback is dazed for a second. WHAM! HE CATCHES ANOTHER BLOW. THEN ANOTHER AND ANOTHER AND ANOTHER! As --

LUCAS

PUMMELS HIM WITH THE FRIDGE! The LAST BLOW --

CRRRRUNCHH!

DIAMONDBACK

RIPS THE REFRIGERATOR IN TWO! AND KICKS LUCAS IN THE HEAD STUNNING HIM. Diamondback pulls out AN EXPLOSIVE KNIFE.

HE PLUNGES THE KNIFE TOWARD'S LUCAS'S HEART and --

WHAP!

LUCAS CATCHES HIS HAND IN MID STROKE!

PAPPOW!

LUCAS PUNCHES THE CAT-WALKIN' SHIT OUT OF DIAMONDBACK!

He sails across the room and --

C' CRAAAASH

RIGHT THROUGH THE WALL TO THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING --

LUCAS

DIVES THROUGH THE HOLE AFTER HIM.

EXT. DIAMONDBACK'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING. The two superhumans plummet from 40 STORIES HIGH.

WHOOOSH!

TWENTY STORIES TO GO THEY'RE FALLING FASTER AND FASTER!

ALMOST TO THE GROUND --

DIAMONDBACK

Is falling horizontally looking up at --

LUCAS

Who GRABS BOTH ANKLES and TUCKS THEM BACK BENEATH HIS BUTT pointing his knees downward --

SMASH!

DIAMONDBACK

CRASHES, BACK FIRST into a parked taxicab FLATTENING IT. A SPLIT SECOND AFTERWARD --

LUCAS

Crashes with BOTH KNEES INTO DIAMONDBACKS CHEST!

THE IMPACT TAKES THEM THROUGH THE STREET INTO --

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

CRAAAASH!

ONTO A SUBWAY PLATFORM.

FRIGHTENED COMMUTERS run for their lives. Both combatants are in pretty banged up shape.

DIAMONDBACK

In the worst. He lurches to his feet spitting GREEN BILE in between tongue flicks.

LUCAS --

Pops to his feet. He lashes into Diamondback JAILHOUSE ROCK STYLE. Knees and elbows fly in wicked combinations. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 VICIOUS, UNANSWERED BLOWS send --

DIAMONDBACK

SPRAWLING ONTO THE TRAIN TRACK just as --

A SUBWAY TRAIN COMES ROARING PAST.

DIAMONDBACK CAN'T REACT IN TIME

CRUUUUUUUNNNNNCCCHHHHH!

THE TRAIN NAILS HIM AND GRINDS HIM INTO THE RAILS

He's done.

The train disappears down the tunnel. Lucas walks over to the edge of the platform and looks over.

A MANGLED HAND

Reaches up and gabs Lucas by the foot. It DRAGS HIM down on to the tracks.

DIAMONDBACK

GRABS LUCAS AROUND HIS LARYNX STRANGLING HIM WITH ALL HIS MIGHT. He pulls out ONE LAST EXPLOSIVE BLADE.

The timer is set to 30 SECONDS.

DIAMONDBACK

There's enough centrex in this blade to level a building. So if I'm going out, you're coming with me partner.

HE LUNGES THE KNIFE TOWARD'S LUCAS'S HEART!

WHAP!

LUCAS

Catches his hand and holds it with one hand, while straining to unwraps Diamondback's grip from his larynx with the other. He's losing breath and failing fast.

THE TIME TICKS DOWN TO 20 SECOND. THEN --

LUCAS SEES IT!

THE ELECTRONIC THIRD RAIL

LUCAS

JAMS A RUBBER-SOLED TIMBERLAND BOOT against Diamondback's neck and PUSHES HIS HEAD INTO THE THIRD RAIL!

SZSZSZSZSZSZSZSZSZSZSTTZ

A POWERFUL CURRENT OF ELECTRICITY

SHOOTS THROUGH DIAMONDBACK'S BODY. HE BEGINS TO JERK AND CONVULSE VIOLENTLY! THEN --

HE BEGINS TO MUTATE

HIS FEATURES BECOME MORE AND MORE SNAKE-LIKE.

A TAIL SPROUTS and begins thrashing around.

HIS FACE ELONGATES

FANGS GROW

HIS MUSCLES EXPAND

BIGGER

BIGGER

BIGGER

THEN --

KABOOOOOOM!

DIAMONDBACK EXPLODES SPLATTERING A DISGUSTING GREEN OOZE all over the subway track.

LUCAS

Grabs the explosive knife. THE TIME TICKS DOWN 3, 2, CLICK. HE FLICKS IT OFF.

Lucas pulls himself back onto the platform. He hears the sound of --

SIRENS

Many of them approaching fast. He can hear COPS rushing down to the platform. Time to make a dramatic escape. Superhero style. Then --

ANOTHER TRAIN ARRIVES

The doors open and COMMUTERS SPILL ONTO THE PLATFORM staring curiously at the rubble and green goo littering the station. Then --

THE COPS ARRIVE

LUCAS --

Ducks in the crowd, losing himself. He casually gets on the train. The doors close and the train heads uptown.

FADE OUT/IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The Cemetery is in Queens on a hill over looking THE TRAIN PLATFORM.

It is a gray drizzling day. Lucas stands before a headstone holding a bouquet of flowers. He places the flower at the grave of --

INSERT HEADSTONE

REVA CONNERS

BACK TO SCENE

LUCAS

It's over baby. I got my revenge. Funny thing about it is -- It doesn't feel any different. I miss you just as much as ever.

(beat)

You know I was never good at this kinda thing, so... I'm movin' on. Guess I'll see you when I get there.

Lucas turns and walks off into the drizzle. A CAR PULLS UP. DIXIE, LIL' BIT, CLAIR, HOPE and DR. BERNSTEIN step out.

DIXIE

(lighting a cigarette)

I thought I might find you up here.

(MORE)

DIXIE (CONT'D)

You kinda disappeared after that whole --  
madness -- went down.

LUCAS

Had to lay low for a while. How you doin'?

DIXIE

I'm gonna make out like a fat-rat from  
the insurance. So look for Dixie's bar  
and grill part 2 comin' soon. Got your  
place reserved right by the mirror, baby.

He turns to Lil' Bit.

LUCAS

How you doin' Lil' Bit?

LIL' BIT

Got me a career, I'm legit. I'm  
surrounded by ice... What can I say? It's  
all good.

Hope walks up to him. She is dressed a bit more  
conservative than when we first met her.

HOPE

I never got a chance to thank you for  
saving my life.

She walks over and hugs Lucas. He HUGS HER BACK.

LUCAS

My pleasure shortie.

Bernstein walks over.

DR. BERNSTEIN

Lucas...

LUCAS

Call me Cage. I'm Luke Cage now.

DR. BERNSTEIN

I'm sorry. Cage I owe you more than you  
can imagine.

LUCAS

Oh, I can imagine a lot.

DR. BERNSTEIN

I guess I have penance to pay for my  
arrogance. So I'm transferring up here to  
work in the Harlem Free Clinic with  
Clair. With a little work maybe we can  
reverse the process and return you to  
normal.

LUCAS

Naw, I'm kinda diggin' it now, you just take care of my peeps in the neighborhood.

DR. BERNSTEIN

I will.

(beat)

You saved the lives of my family Cage. I don't know what I can do to repay you for that.

LUCAS

That's easy Doc. I ain't runnin' no charity.

Lucas sticks his hand out. Bernstein stares at it for a second then -- He gets it. He pulls out his wallet and starts to shell out some cash.

Lucas stares at his hand then at Bernstein like "Is that all?" Bernstein shells out more cash. Satisfied Lucas pockets the cash and hands Bernstein a business card.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

You need some hero work, call me anytime Monday through Friday Ten to Six. Visa and Mastercard accepted. No American Express, no checks.

Lastly he turns to Clair.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

So how you doin'?

CLAIR

I'm doing wonderful. I got my sister back thanks to you.

(beat)

So what's next for you Mr. Hero for Hire?

LUCAS

Make that money. Get paid.

CLAIR

Still gonna buy that private island?

LUCAS

Naw, the way I see it -- I already have one. It's called Manhattan.

Clair smiles. There's hope for this guy after all.

CLAIR

So, can I offer you a ride?

LUCAS

Naw, it's cool, I'm gonna catch the train.

CLAIR

Okay.

She smiles that inscrutable smile again.

LUCAS

There's that smile again. When are you gonna tell me what that's about?

CLAIR

How about over dinner this weekend?

LUCAS

Bet.

Lucas nods real cool, turns and strolls down the road a few paces then --

LIL' BIT

(to Lucas)

Aye, fool. You got a dream yet?

Lucas turns back around. He locks eyes with Clair. Smiles.

LUCAS

Yeah, I got one.

(to Lil' Bit)

But it ain't none of your damn business.

With that he turns and heads off down the hill strutting with mad attitude.

CUE: BADDASS LUKE CAGE THEME! LOUD AND HARD

ON CAGE

He walks right toward us until his body BLACKS THE FRAME

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. EVIL-DOER'S LAIR - DAY

20 EVIL DOERS, are gathered around crates packed with DRUGS, FIREARMS and BOOTLEG DVD's.

EVIL-DOER 1

Where's all this stuff going?

EVIL-DOER 2

It's going to Cottonmouth!

SUDDENLY -- There is a RUMBLE LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE. The Evil-Doers PICK UP machine guns ready for action. Then --

BOOOM

THE BRICK WALL EXPLODES as --

LUKE CAGE crashes through the wall, FIST FIRST, in CLASSIC COMIC BOOK FORM!

FREEZE FRAME!

BAM!

WE'RE OUTTA HERE!

