

MESSAGE FROM THE KING

written
by

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EXT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT - DAY

LAX on a sweltering day. Heat haze under a brown sky.

INT. TOM BRADLEY TERMINAL, ARRIVAL GATES - DAY

Long lines at the immigration gates. Children are crying and tempers rising. At the edge of the concourse is an UNMARKED DOOR with a peephole.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - SAME

Soda fizzes up around ice in a glass. A DHS OFFICER - Hispanic, in her 40s - takes a long drink.

DHS OFFICER
Let's go over these questions
again, Mr. King.

A second DHS OFFICER adds:

DHS OFFICER #2
All of them.

He looks up. The man across from him nods. Black, short dreadlocks; he's a good height, with long, fine hands and slow, watchful eyes. JACOB KING. There's a small tattoo under his forearm -- of a monkey covering its mouth.

DHS OFFICER #1
You're here from Jamaica for two
weeks?

KING
Twelve days. My return flight to
Kingston's on the 5th. It's there
on the ticket, ma'am.

A distinct Jamaican lilt. His tone is even, gracious; but there's iron in it.

DHS OFFICER #1
Four hundred dollars for twelve
days in L.A.? No credit cards?

KING
I'll make it last.

DHS OFFICER #2
Make it last? That's your idea of
a vacation is it, Mr. King?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

Took me three months to put aside
that money. I don't make much.

DHS OFFICER #1

Driving a cab, in Jamestown...

KING

That's right.

DHS OFFICER #1

But you'll be able to save quicker
in the U.S. -- with what you'll be
earning.

KING

I have no intention of staying or
working, and that's the truth.

A beat.

DHS OFFICER #2

Do you use marijuana, Mr. King?

KING

No, sir.

DHS OFFICER #2

It's not part of your religion or
something like that?

KING

This is just how my hair grows,
sir.

Another beat. The immigration officers exchange a look.

EXT. TOM BRADLEY TERMINAL, ARRIVALS - DAY

The roar of cabs and buses. Carrying a worn duffle bag,
King edges to the front of the crowd, says something to a
uniformed COORDINATOR with a walkie-talkie.

COORDINATOR

Whaddidya say?

KING

I need a bus to town.

COORDINATOR

Sorry pal, I didn't catch that.

King cups his hand:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

I need to get a bus into town.

COORDINATOR

I'm courtesy rides only. Where are you staying? You hiring a car?

EXT. CENTURY BOULEVARD - DAY

Exhaust and noise from passing traffic. King talks to an old lady at a bus stop. Waits with her in the heat.

I/E. BUS/LOS ANGELES - DAY

King watches the southern stretch of La Cienega roll by.

I/E. BUS/BOYLE HEIGHTS - DAY

A yelling BAG LADY tries to board the bus, gets into a fight with the driver. Outside, oil donkeys nod like metronomes on the parched hillside.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - LATER IN THE DAY

King steps off the bus. Music pours from the entrances of cheap boutiques. Tourists, store-pimps and derelicts.

EXT. FRANKLIN AVENUE, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

King asks a Goth for directions, shows her a written address. The girl points up the block.

EXT. 1249 MARIPOSA STREET - DAY

King checks the number, looks up at a dowdy set of duplexes. He climbs the stairs.

TWO DOORS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRWELL

King arrives at '1249 A'. Puts down his bag. Gathers himself. He knocks. Hears somebody inside. He knocks again, looks at the peep hole lens.

A voice from behind the door:

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

Whaddya want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

My name's Jacob King. I'm looking
for my sister, Bianca -- Bianca
Zagosin.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

She ain't here.

KING

Do you know when she'll be back?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

No.

KING

But she lives here?

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

Who?

KING

Bianca Zagodin.

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

Never heard of her.

KING

Excuse me, lady, do you mind me
asking how long you've--

OLD WOMAN (O.S.)

If you don't go away, I'm calling
the cops.

A beat. King exhales.

Another voice. Behind him.

TRISH (O.S.)

Hello? Can I help you?

King turns. A girl with punkish blonde hair is at the door
of the apartment opposite. TRISH.

TRISH (CONT'D)

Who are you looking for?

KING

Bianca Zagodin. You know her?

Trish studies him for a beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRISH
And you are... ?

KING
Her brother.

Trish's eyes relax. She smiles.

TRISH
Oh, right... Jacob. Yeah, I've
seen pictures of you. Come on in.

A beat. King picks up his bag. Trish holds the door open
for him. King notices pierced nipples under her T-shirt.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Trish hands King a glass of iced water.

KING
Thank you... Six weeks? You sure
about that?

TRISH
The day before my birthday. She
just bugged out. Didn't even say
goodbye. No forwarding address,
nothing, I asked the landlords.

KING
They both moved out?

TRISH
Yeah. Her and Armand.

KING
You mean Alex.

TRISH
No, Armand. Alex has been gone for
a while.

KING
Who's Armand?

TRISH
Their boy.

King looks at her.

KING
Boy? Bianca had a child?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRISH

Not hers. He's Alex's kid. Nice kid, she's crazy about him.

She smiles, confused.

TRISH (CONT'D)

How come you don't know any of this? You said she wrote.

KING

Every month for four years. Lot of words, but never said much. Then two months ago the letters just stopped. That's why I'm here.

TRISH

You were worried?

KING

She's my little sister.

He sips his water. Trish sits opposite him.

KING (CONT'D)

So where did Alex go?

Trish shrugs.

TRISH

She told me they'd had a fight. Didn't say what about.

KING

So he just left her with his kid...

He shakes his head: it figures.

TRISH

You don't like Alex?

KING

He picked Bianca up in Jamaica. Filled her head with idiot dreams.

The rattle of a key in the lock. BILL comes through the door -- twenties, same neo-Bohemian thing going as Trish; good-looking in a weak sort way. He's hot and bothered.

He reacts to the sight of Jacob in his living room.

BILL

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRISH
Honey, this is Jacob. Bianca's
brother.

BILL
Oh.

He doesn't shake hands. Goes into the kitchen.

TRISH
How'd it go?

Bill doesn't respond. Movements from the kitchen.

TRISH (CONT'D)
How'd it go, honey?

BILL (O.S.)
Great.

His movements are becoming angry. The clatter of plates.

TRISH
So when's the callback?

No response. King senses the tension. Asks quietly:

KING
Tell me more about the boy.

But before Trish can reply:

BILL (O.S.)
Don't tell me you've used up all
the fucking ice. Jesus.

Trish gets up. Says to King:

TRISH
She left some stuff behind. I'll
get it for you.

She goes into the kitchen. Lowered voices... the sound of
a door being closed. A moment later, Trish reappears with
a plastic shopping bag, hands it to King. Trish hesitates.

TRISH (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about --

KING
It's all right. Thank you.
(beat, afterthought)
Your landlords, where can I find
them?

EXT. LANDLORD'S APARTMENT - DAY

MRS. LAZLO - 65, jet black hair and tough as an alligator - looks King over through a screen door. Behind her, drawn curtains and shelves filled with china animals.

MRS. LAZLO

Excuse me for saying this, but your sister's a cheap bitch. There wasn't one month I got her rent on time. It was always a fight. Good thing they moved her out when they did, because I was about to throw her out.

KING

Who moved her out?

MRS. LAZLO

That pal of her old man's -- slicked back hair, mustache, you know. Asshole. Mediterranean. Didn't expect the check to clear.

KING

Bianca owes you money?

MRS. LAZLO

No, he squared up on everything. God knows how she pulled that one. Didn't even gripe about losing the deposit, guess he knew what a slob she was.

KING

You see her before she went?

MRS. LAZLO

Last time I saw her her, sonny, she called me an old cunt, spit at me. Sorry, but that's how she was.

King takes in what she's said. Picks up his bag. Pauses.

KING

This friend... I don't know him. If she owes him I want to pay him back. Do you know his name?

Mrs. Lazlo shakes her head.

KING (CONT'D)

Do you still have his check?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A long beat. Mrs. Lazlo looks at him shrewdly. She locks the screen door and disappears inside. Moments later, she reappears, a bank-cleared check in her hands.

MRS. LAZLO
It's a business. Restaurant.
Can't pronounce the name. It
cleared, that's all I care.

Mrs. Lazlo shoves the check up against the inside of the screen. '*Karaboudjian Restaurant*'. King's eyes hardly have time to move before she whips it down again.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

One of the area's many 'residential' motels. Through a window, we see King at the reception desk.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - SAME

The owner, KEEGAN - cropped grey hair and a gut - counts King's money.

KING
Everyone has to pay in advance?

KEEGAN
That's correct. Till they become a
trusted customer.

KING
And that happens when they change
color, I'm guessing.

Keegan ignores the barb, reaches for a key. Sets it on the desk.

KEEGAN
No hookers, queers, parties, crap
games, junk, weed, meth, crack or
loud music... not that you seem the
type, Mr. King.

King takes the key, unruffled.

KING
There goes my holiday.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

King unlocks a door on the second floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A young woman emerges two doors down. Honey-colored hair and brown eyes. She smiles at King as she passes.

WOMAN

Hi.

King nods back to her.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He steps through the door, looks around. Sagging Queen size bed. Carpet dotted with burns. Dingy bathroom. Peeling formica. He closes the door behind him.

He crosses to the window, glances down into the alley outside. Inspects the bed, checks out the TV ('Adult Movies - Closed Circuit'), opens and closes drawers.

He bolts and chains the door, sits down on the edge of the bed. Opens his duffle, takes out a sports sock and two large bars of Ivory soap. He slips the soap bars inside the sock and stashes the arrangement under the bed.

Next, he opens the bag Trish gave him. Takes out each item, inspects it, lays it out.

Unopened mail -- mostly past-due bills; a crumpled business card: '*Dr. Charles Wentworth DDS*'; a half-smoked pack of Marlboro; a T-shirt, some panties; a child's crucifix; a coke spoon on a neck chain.

King leafs through a small black book. A diary. Three and four digit figures entered by dates. 'Dentist - 2.30'... two days later 'Dentist - 4.15'. More figures, more dental appointments. He closes it and sets it aside.

Some dog-eared photographs, wrapped in another bag:-

Bianca on a beach in Jamaica. Can't be older than seventeen. A luminescent smile. Dazzling, hopeful eyes. Coltishly unaware of her own loveliness.

Bianca in a Vegas wedding chapel. Her hair has been straightened. She's accompanied by two men. The groom: dark, handsome in a ferrety way -- Alex. Beside him is a black-haired man with a mustache and a thin smile.

A casting headshot of Bianca. Overlit and over made-up, her skin subtly bleached out.

A picture of King himself: ten years younger, outside a bar in Kingston -- long dreads, heavy attitude.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One arm slung around Bianca, still just a kid. His other arm around a YOUNGER MAN, also with dreadlocks.

Then a Polaroid, of a BOY of about twelve. Olive skinned, with piercing green eyes. This must be Alex's son, Armand. The boy is beautiful, but odd-looking, almost otherworldly.

King notices that the bag wrapping the photos is from the same store as the bag containing the rest of Bianca's stuff: *'Yung Du Korean Market - 11748 Bronson Ave.'*

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

King steps outside, locks his door. He takes out a scrap of paper and folds it into a small square. Discreetly wedges it into the crack between the door and the jamb.

INT. YUNG DU KOREAN MARKET - DAY

A well-stocked convenience store. King waits in line at the counter where MRS. YUNG, a middle-aged Korean woman, serves a young white girl, then an Asian customer. King is the only black person in the store.

King steps up to the counter, empty-handed.

KING

Excuse me, but can I ask you a question?

MRS. YUNG

What you buy?

KING

I'm not buying anything, ma'am. I just want to know if--

He reaches in his pocket. Panic on Mrs. Yung's face...

MRS. YUNG

What you buy? What you buy?

... which recedes a little when King's hand reappears with a photo of Bianca.

KING

This woman, does she shop in your store?

Mrs. Yung shakes her head firmly.

MRS. YUNG

No. I don't know. I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King tries to show her the picture of Armand. But Mrs. Yung just waves him off.

MRS. YUNG (CONT'D)

No, no. You buy or go. Buy or go.

VOICE (O.S.)

What's the problem, Mom?

A Korean teenager appears at a bead curtain. Behind him, security monitors and boxes of electronic equipment. His mother speaks to him in Korean. The boy checks King out. Comes forward.

KOREAN KID

Let me take a look.

He takes the pictures from King as his mother continues to jabber excitedly.

KOREAN KID (CONT'D)

Chill out will you, Mom.

(to King)

You're not from around here, are you?

KING

Jamaica. Visiting.

KOREAN KID

I told her you were cool.

He says something to his mother. She gives King a look, nods tersely. The Korean kid studies the pictures.

KOREAN KID (CONT'D)

Don't remember her, but I've seen this kid in here. For sure.

KING

When was the last time?

KOREAN KID

Not recently... few weeks ago, maybe. Who are they?

KING

My sister and her boy. I'm looking for them. Nobody knows where they are.

Mrs. Yung asks her son a question in Korean. He shows her the photographs as he explains King's predicament. The woman looks to King, mutters something in Korean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KING (CONT'D)

What did she say?

The Korean boy looks edgy. Doesn't answer.

KING (CONT'D)

What did she say?

A beat. The Korean boy looks down.

KOREAN KID

She asked if you've checked the
morgue.

King's eyes, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. CORONER'S BUILDING, DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

A squat Fifties blockhouse opposite the Federal building.

INT. LOS ANGELES CITY MORGUE - DAY

King negotiates with the DESK CLERK, an obtuse Russian.

CLERK

Okay, rastaman, I explain in a
simple one-two-three. One, you
don't just get to dance in here off
of the street, you have to file a
missing person's report with the
police and make an appointment.
Two, you haven't done this, so,
therefore, three, you don't get to
go look at the stiffs and beat off
over them or whatever it is you
have in mind.

King exhales, looks at his hands. Asks quietly:

KING

When you came here. To this
country. Were things easy?

CLERK

What are you talking about?

KING

Speaking the language... finding
somewhere to live... finding work?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLERK

Course it wasn't easy, what the fuck you think?

KING

Consider this. My little sister is missing. I have a week to find her. I've never been to this place before, and if I don't find her, I don't have enough money to come back and look again. She's just gone.

A long beat. The clerk rubs his chin. Dials an extension number on his phone.

CLERK

Waylon, get up here.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

WAYLON, the morgue attendant, is African American. He leafs through a clipboard as they walk.

WAYLON

We have accession numbers for exactly... seven sistas in the last 120 days. Three claimed... two partially claimed -- that means someone thinks they might be somebody they know, but can't tell 'cause they're too fucked up -- and three Jane Does.

They push through a set of swing doors.

INT. MORGUE ROOM - DAY

Waylon partially opens a drawer. Checks the toe tag on an ulcerated leg. Refers back to the clipboard.

WAYLON

Case number 4372, female, African American, found in a dumpster on Manchester, cause of death an OD of prescribed psychiatric medication. Seems the dumpster was her home. This has to be an improvement, honey, least you got central air.

King pulls the drawer right out. Looks unflinchingly at the face. A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

Not her.

ANOTHER BODY SLIDES OUT ON A DRAWER

This time, encased in a semi-transparent plastic sac.
Waylon checks her tag, shakes his head.

WAYLON

Mm-mm. Wrong demographic. Seventy
three, dead in her bed for a month.
Blew up like a whoopee cushion.
(re the clipboard)
Okay... 4410.

He yanks open another drawer. She's young. One of her
feet is missing. Beneath cropped, gold-bleached hair the
eyes have been gouged out. Even Waylon flinches.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Ooh, I remember you, baby. Found
in a stolen vehicle on West
Olympic. Cause of death, blood
loss. Made the Channel Four news.
There was one just like her couple
years ago. Gang stuff.
(beat)
Gangs these days.

King looks closely at the girl's face and hands. A tiny
tattoo on the underside of her forearm: a monkey covering
its eyes. King's face is lanced with shock. His eyes
close, open again, misting over in pain.

Waylon glances up from his clipboard, sees that King hasn't
moved.

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Oh, bro, please don't say it's her.

KING

It's not her.

WAYLON

Jah be praised. Or you into Allah?

KING

Neither.

WAYLON

I'm with you. Found my salvation
by inviting the Lord Jesus Christ
into my heart. He didn't like it.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WAYLON (CONT'D)

Moved out after a week. Okay.
Last, but not least, number 4417.
I gotta say, you are one icy
nigger. Most everybody's in the
john by now, talking on the great
white telephone.

EXT. MORGUE BUILDING, DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

King exits the building. The heat hits him like a wall.
He reaches the sidewalk. Puts his hands on his knees,
vomits into the gutter. He catches his breath. Retches
again, his eyes watering with each heave.

His left hand clasps his right wrist. He turns it,
trembling, looks down at the tattoo on his forearm: the
monkey with its hands covering its mouth.

King gradually straightens. Downtown traffic streams past.
Clouds of diesel smoke from the trucks and RTD buses. A
little girl waves at King from the back of a school bus.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL - DAY

King approaches his room. Stops. The fold of paper lies
on the floor beside the door. King steps closer. Muffled
voices from inside the room. He slides the key silently
into the lock. BURSTS IN... to find --

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- a man getting blown on the bed to the strains of a porno
playing on the TV.

MAN

What the fuck!

A half naked female disengages from his crotch in surprise.
It's the young woman from two doors down. King hesitates a
moment, scans the room.

KING

Where are my things?

MAN

How the fuck do I know? Fuck off.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - DAY

King watches as Keegan puts his duffle on the desk. King
unzips it, checks the contents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEEGAN

It's the only room with the porno
working so I need it free. You're
in 22 now.

He holds out a key. A beat. King takes it. As he exits:

KEEGAN (CONT'D)

Sorry for the inconvenience, Mr.
King.

King pauses, looks at Keegan, then closes the door.

INT. KING'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Pretty much the same dingy room. King sits on the bed with
Bianca's things, staring at the picture of him and Bianca
and the other man in the Kingston bar.

He shifts his attention to the rest of the pictures. Stops
at the Vegas wedding photo. Holds it close, studies it.

EXT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

King rounds the head of the stairs. The apartment door is
open. A beat later:

TRISH (O.S.)

Jacob...

Trish and Bill come up the stairs behind him, laden with
shopping. She puts her bags down.

TRISH (CONT'D)

Any luck with Bianca?

Jacob shakes his head. Bill pushes past them.

BILL

Excuse me.

TRISH

We're having some friends over
tonight. Why don't you come along?
We've told everybody eight-thirty,
but things won't heat up till about
ten. It'll be a scene.

KING

Appreciate it. Tell me, do you
know a friend of Bianca's -- dark
hair, mustache?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The faintest reaction in Trish's eyes.

TRISH

Friend of Alex's, you mean. His
name was... Ziek... Zico...
Something like that.

KING

Who is he?

TRISH

Just some guy used to party with
them. Only met him a couple times.
Seemed okay. Why?

KING

You think he'll know where she is?

TRISH

Might do. Don't know how to find
him, though. Like I said, I didn't
really know the dude.
(beat, smiles)
So, you gonna make it tonight?

KING

I'll try.

EXT. YALE AVE - EVENING

Armenian store fronts. King approaches the entrance to a
restaurant 'Karaboudjian'. Glances inside as he passes.

INT. KARABOUDJIAN RESTAURANT - SAME

Less a restaurant than a café. Linoleum, striplights and
smoke. Men in tight fitting suit jackets and flared pants
play dominoes and tric-trac.

The focal point is a table occupied by six men, cigarettes
drooping from their lips as they arrange the cards in their
hands, cash tucked under their coffee cups. Cards are
slapped face up one at a time; each trick taken or lost
with an expletive.

We recognize ZICO immediately from the Vegas wedding photo.
Groomed mustache, eyes as black as sloes. The alpha male;
a big and unpleasant fish in a small neighborhood sea.

Zico slams a card down in triumph, pulls in the trick, then
tosses down the rest of his hand. He has the others dead.
He laughs, slaps another player's head tauntingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING (O.S.)

Excuse me.

All six look up. King is standing at their table.

KING (CONT'D)

Excuse me. I'm looking for Zico.

They regard King impassively, exchange sentences in Armenian; Zico's presence unacknowledged. The man next to Zico - PIOTR - smiles at King, responds in an accent:

PIOTR

I'm sorry, there's nobody here called Zico.

KING

I was told he comes here every day.

PIOTR

Who told you?

No answer. A beat. Piotr has an exchange with one of the other men. Turns back to King.

PIOTR (CONT'D)

He says he knows a Zico who drinks in here sometimes, but he's not here today. What's this about?

KING

I'm looking for my sister, Bianca. Bianca Zagodin. Zico knows her. I think he might be able to help me find her.

A long beat. Piotr 'translates' for the others. They respond with shrugs and headshakes. Piotr looks to King.

PIOTR

Sorry. We can't help you.

A beat. King just stands there, surveying the café. His gaze finally returns to the men at the table.

Another beat.

King turns and leaves.

Zico growls in Armenian. Piotr hastens to the door.

Zico flips open his cell phone. Jabs in a number.

INT. RESTAURANT/EXT. YALE AVE - CONTINUOUS

Piotr looks up and down the street. King is gone.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE RESTAURANT - SAME

King scouts the alley behind the building. He notices a stripped-down motorbike, rear wheel off, chain hanging loose. The owner is busy rummaging in his lock-up.

INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

Zico paces the café, conducting a hissed conversation on the phone. He hangs up. Dials another number.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

King buys some items at the tobacco counter. Pockets them.

INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

Zico resumes his place at the table, still agitated. He raps his hand for the others to resume the game. Piotr starts dealing the cards.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Nobody sees King re-enter the café. He heads straight toward them.

AT THE TABLE

As they look up, astonished...

... King KICKS the table into their faces. Cards fly.

EVERYTHING HAPPENS FAST

King grabs Zico by the hair, yanks him over in his chair onto the floor. Head meets concrete with a crack.

The flash of a blade in Piotr's hand. But before he can move, his wrist is thrashed by a length of bike chain. King locks his arm and breaks it. Piotr cries out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King whips the chain to the right, to the left, shattering the jaw of one man, sending another sprawling onto the lino. There's an economy and a brutal grace to his movements. This is more than just a streetfighter.

The man on the floor makes a grab for Piotr's knife. But King gets there first, sweeps it across his chest. The man backs away, gasping, blood beading under his gashed shirt.

An aproned server charges from the bar, windmilling a baseball bat. King deflects it with the bike chain, steps into him, punctures his gut with a jab from the knife -- a stroke intended to maim rather than kill. The man doubles up, screaming.

King grabs the stunned Zico by the hair. Quickly drags him toward a door in back of the room. He shoves it open.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

King finds a broom, snaps the handle under his foot. Rams the pointed ends under the door, wedging it firmly.

He kneels over Zico's groaning figure.

KING

You killed my sister.

Zico shakes his head.

KING (CONT'D)

I found her body. You moved out
her things, you paid her debts.
You killed her. Why?

Zico spits the words out:

ZICO

Fuck you... spook.

King breaks his nose with a sharp chop. Zico yells, thrashes with the pain. His phone falls from his pocket. King picks it up.

INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

The server moans in spreading puddle of blood. Piotr and one of the card players lie unconscious.

Two other men look around, open-mouthed. This can't be happening. The man in the bloodsoaked shirt yells an order at them.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - SAME

Shouts. Hammering on the door. It shudders at an IMPACT.

KING
Why did you kill her?

Zico shakes his head, eyes screwed shut with pain. King rams the heel of his hand into his shattered nose.

KING (CONT'D)
Why?

He repeats the blow.

KING (CONT'D)
Why?

Zico sobs:

ZICO
They told me to... shit...

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - SAME

The men from the café pop open the trunk of a Mercedes. Inside are baseball bats and shotguns.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - SAME

KING
You tortured her. The people you work for, they wanted something. What did they want from her?

Another IMPACT at the door. A beat. Then, BOOM! The door splinters with BUCKSHOT.

King stands, looks down at Zico.

KING (CONT'D)
Where's the boy?

Zico rallies at the shots.

ZICO
Go fuck yourself.

King pulls a can of lighter fluid from his jacket. Opens it. Dumps the contents over Zico's lower body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZICO (CONT'D)

Hey, no... No!

He tries to scramble away. King flattens him with a kick.

A second shotgun BLAST peppers the door...

King calmly lights a rag with a Bic, tosses it onto Zico as he heads for the transom window in the corner.

Zico FLARES UP. Screaming. Slapping at his body.

King pulls a chair under the window, looks back.

KING

Whoever you work for -- tell them
this was a message from the King.

INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

Men crowd around the door. Screams from inside. Somebody grabs the shotgun off the current wielder, empties two shells into the door's hinges. KICKS it away.

The look on their faces as they see Zico and the room.

EXT. BRONSON - DUSK

King turns onto Bronson. Face drawn, focused. His pace doesn't change at the the wail of approaching sirens.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

'Having some friends over' has evolved into a full-on party. People fill the ledge above the stairs -- mostly Bo-bo thespians like Trish and Bill, plus a harder core -- borderline street sceners. They make Bill nervous, but Trish likes the edge. Plus, she's amped on toot and booze.

She slinks through her guests to the music, pauses to refill her glass. A girl beckons her, points a finger behind her. Trish acknowledges the signal.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lit by candles. Trish and the girl, BECCA, slip inside, lock the door. Becca opens the sink closet, carefully extracts a mirror covered in fat lines.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRISH

Dude, that's almost the whole eight ball.

BECCA

Took me hours. Please don't make me put it back.

They both giggle. A noise from behind them. A beat. Trish lifts aside the shower curtain. An overweight guy in black is passed out in the tub.

Trish puts her finger to her lips as Becca starts in on the lines. She passes the mirror to Trish, who does a couple, rubs the residue on her gums.

TRISH

That's good.

BECCA

Mmm.

A beat. Trish touches Becca's face. Becca smiles, a little weirded out, but turned on.

TRISH

You're so cute.

She kisses Becca on the mouth.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill knocks on the bathroom door.

BILL

Trish. Trish, are you in there?

He knocks again. No answer.

BILL (CONT'D)

For Christ's sake, people need to piss.

He returns to the fray. A tall figure cuts toward him through the dancers. King.

Bill greets him without enthusiasm.

BILL (CONT'D)

You made it.

KING

Where's your girlfriend?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL
Listen, pal, I'd really appreciate
it you left Trish al--

He makes to stand in the way. King moves him aside gently.
Bill stares after him, powerless.

King runs into Trish and Becca emerging from the bathroom,
glassy-eyed.

TRISH
Hey, you made it.

She kisses King on the cheek.

TRISH (CONT'D)
Becca, this is Jacob, Bianca's
brother.

BECCA
Oh, wow. Hi.

She makes eye contact with Trish. King notices it.

TRISH
Won't be a minute.

She gives King her glass to hold. Slides away.

BECCA
(to King)
So, how long are you in town for?

King is tracking Trish's whereabouts.

KING
Few days...

A pause, which Becca is too wired to find awkward. She
sways to the music. Trish returns with a tumbler of
bourbon, which she gives to King...

TRISH
You seem a little tense. You okay?

... and a joint, which she lights, passes to Becca.

As King belts his drink:

TRISH (CONT'D)
All-riiight. Elevator going down.

BECCA
Ding. Going right up again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She offers King the joint. King declines. He takes a cigarette from an open packet left on a table. He lights it up. Trish watches him, smiles insinuatingly.

TRISH
Like sister, like brother.

KING
We need to talk.

TRISH
Sure.

ACROSS THE PARTY

Bill notices Trish slipping into the bathroom again.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS
Trish stands before King in the candlelight.

TRISH
So. What do you want to talk about?

Silence. King clocks the comatose figure in the tub.
Trish steps up to him. King doesn't move.
She kisses him on the lips. Breaks off. Tastes him.

TRISH (CONT'D)
Don't move.

She kneels. Opens the doors under the sink. Gingerly removes the mirror with its remaining lines.

TRISH (CONT'D)
Got us a party bag. Here.

King kneels beside her. Trish toots a line with a straw, passes it to King.

KING
You do this with my sister?

A beat. Trish nods.

TRISH
Yeah.

Another beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

You do other things with her?

She doesn't respond. Tilts her eyes away.

KING (CONT'D)

Is that why he hates her? Your
boyfriend?

Trish still doesn't meet his gaze.

TRISH

I liked her. She liked me.

(beat)

I like you.

King lets her kiss him again. She moves closer, lets her
breasts rub against him. Puts a hand under his shirt.

KING

She do a lot of blow?

Trish looks at him, put out by the questions.

TRISH

Yeah. But it's always good stuff.

King glances at the lines left on the mirror.

KING

She score this for you?

TRISH

Uh-uh, she turned me on to Zico's
guy, Pink Dot... deals on wheels.

A beat. Trish kisses King again. His ears and neck. King
puts down the straw, unused.

KING

What's his name?

She ignores him. Guides his hand to her crotch.

KING (CONT'D)

What's his name?

TRISH

Huh?

KING

Pink Dot.

She sits back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRISH

For fuck's sake, Jacob, what's your problem?

Sudden BANGING on the door.

BILL (O.S.)

Out! Out of there! Now!

TRISH

Shit...

Trish quickly snorts the last lines, dabs her nose clean.

KING

What's his name?

TRISH

I don't know his fucking name.

KING

Do you have a number?

TRISH

Fuck you, Jacob. Jesus.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Trish comes out of the bathroom. Bill pushes past her. Sees King. He rounds on Trish, goes after her.

BILL

You slut. You fucking slut.

TRISH

Leave me alone.

Partygoers back away, but keep watching. Behind them, King moves unnoticed into...

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He scouts the room. Finds what he wants: Trish's cell phone in its charger.

He pulls up 'address book' on the menu. Scrolls. No Pink Dot... but a listing for 'P.D.' King presses dial.

A ringing tone, then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RECORDED VOICE (V.O.)
(through phone)
Alphacom Numerical Paging. Please
enter your callback number now.

King checks the number on the bedside phone, enters it.

He hangs up. Waits.

Sure enough, the phone RINGS. King picks up immediately.
A faint male voice, British:

PINK DOT (V.O.)
(through phone)
Hello?... T?... that you, T?

King walks to the door. Leaving the phone on, he sets it
down on a table, letting it absorb the noise of the party.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The party is audible in the background. The buzz of a
Japanese motorcycle. Getting nearer.

A bike and RIDER pull up. The bike is top-of-the-line and
immaculate, as are the rider's racing leathers.

He swings off the pillion and heads toward the apartment,
pulling off his helmet and shaking out long hair.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The music's still up but the guests have thinned out.
Trish is in a corner, remonstrating with two of her
girlfriends about Bill, who can be heard yelling.

A guy appears from the bedroom.

GUY
Trish, come and talk to him before
he destroys the place.

TRISH
I don't fucking care.

A voice from the front door - Pink Dot (aka FRANKIE). An
affected English working-class/Cockney accent:

FRANKIE (O.S.)
I thought this was a party.

Trish looks up, eyes red-rimmed. Asks neutrally:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRISH

Why are you here?

Frankie looks her over with an indulgent smile.

FRANKIE

You know what, love, maybe you should be calling it a night.

TRISH

I didn't ask for your opinion.

FRANKIE

I didn't think that was why you invited me.

TRISH

I didn't. Drinks are over there.

Frankie brushes his hair from his face, pissed.

FRANKIE

Excuse us, ladies.

He cups Trish's arm, takes her aside.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Listen, darling, this is my busy time. I just made a big hole in my schedule to accommodate you.

TRISH

What are you talking about?

FRANKIE

You called me.

TRISH

I didn't call you.

A beat. Frankie leans in closer.

FRANKIE

I like you, Patricia. You've got a good sense of fun. But you've had so much fun tonight, dear, your brain's growing holes, and I won't be fucked around like a waiter in some restaurant. I'm past that, understand? You're on a list, a very select list, because that's how I keep the bullshit to a minimum.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

If you're going to abuse the
privilege of being on that list,
I'll just take you off it. Is that
understood?

KING (O.S.)

How much is an eight ball?

Frankie turns. Stares at King.

FRANKIE

Sorry?

KING

You heard.

FRANKIE

I don't know what you're talking
about, mate.

(to Trish)

Does he think I'm dealing or
something?

KING

That's what I've been told.

FRANKIE

Patricia, who is this guy?

TRISH

Bianca's brother.

A beat. Frankie's eyes flash: Oh, shit.

FRANKIE

Really? Pleased to meet you, mate.

He sticks out his hand. King gives it a limp shake.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

So, what brings you to this neck of
the woods?

KING

I'm looking for Bianca.

A beat. The statement hangs in the air.

FRANKIE

Right... yeah... haven't seen her
in a while, I'm afraid. It's like
everyone in this fucking place.
Here one minute... next, they're
gone... fucking nomadic culture,
you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KING

Yeah. But I have to wonder why she'd lose touch with her dealer, with her coke problem and all.

FRANKIE

Keep your fucking voice down, will you. That's not cool, okay, not fucking cool at all...

KING

You get to cursing when you're nervous, you know that?

FRANKIE

'Course I'm fucking nervous... you go around shouting--

KING

-- it's a reasonable question. You're her dealer, you probably know where she is. Do you?

Frankie grabs his helmet, jabs a finger at Trish.

FRANKIE

You're off, okay. You're off the fucking list. Jesus Christ.

And he storms out of the apartment. King waits a beat. Exits the apartment after him.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We follow Frankie out to the curb. He's scared and steaming. He swings onto his bike, pulls out his phone.

But before he can dial, King has him by the hair. Eases his head back, whispers:

KING

You didn't answer my question.

Frankie's hand drops out of sight. King drags him off the bike by his hair. A knife clatters onto the sidewalk.

King snatches up Frankie's helmet by the chin-strap, whacks him over the skull with it.

KING (CONT'D)

See, these things don't protect your head at all.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill enters the sitting room, announces to the party:

BILL

Okay. Party's over. Go home.

TRISH

Oh, don't be an asshole. Nobody's going anywhere.

Nobody moves. A figure passes by, shuffling toward the door: the black-clad dude who was crashed out in the tub.

DUDE IN BLACK

'Night, guys... thanks...

He opens the front door. Frankie EXPLODES past him, collapses on his hands and knees on the living room carpet.

BECCA

Oh, my God!

King strides across the room after Frankie. Kicks him in the ribs. And again. Trish screams:

TRISH

What are you doing!

She rushes at him. King shoves her into a chair. Turns to the others, absolute:

KING

Go home.

This time, people move. Quickly.

Once they're gone, King looks to Bill and Trish.

KING (CONT'D)

Go to your room. Don't call anybody. You understand me?

Bill nods, in shock. Grabs Trish by the arm, pulls her into the bedroom.

King hauls Frankie to a chair. He props him up like a mannequin. Grips his cheeks, looks him in the eye.

KING (CONT'D)

My message got around, huh?

Frankie nods. He's shaking all over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING (CONT'D)
Why did they kill Bianca?

FRANKIE
I... don't know.

King puts his face right into Frankie's. Frankie flinches. Whimpers in suddenly very upper-middle class British tones:

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
I swear, I don't know why, the exact reason, I mean... she pissed them off somehow... someone said she was holding out on them... I don't know what, I swear, I just don't know... please.

Tears roll down his cheeks.

KING
Pissed who off?

FRANKIE
The guys above Zico. I don't know them, I swear... I don't know who they are. I just deal their gear.

KING
The boy, Armand, is he still alive?

FRANKIE
I don't know... I think so. He's just a kid for fuck's sake... I haven't seen him since Bianca--

King suddenly thrusts his hand inside Frankie's jacket. Frankie's eyes bulge with terror.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
What are... Please... Oh, God...

A pattering sound. Urine pours on the carpet from the cuff of his designer leathers.

King feels around, finds what he wants. Two Ziploc bags. One duct-taped; the other stuffed with eight balls of coke.

He steps back. Looks down at the puddle.

KING
You don't have the stomach for this work. Do something else.

Frankie nods wretchedly.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD - NIGHT

King tries to walk off his frustration. Another dead-end. He opens and closes his hands to stop them trembling.

WIDEN on the streets around him. Hollywood's shadow world. Hustlers; white-collar johns; runaways on skateboards; men smoking together under the store lights.

In the distance, a huge illuminated billboard advertises the upcoming '*77th Academy Awards*'. King turns up Bronson.

INT. VONS - SAME

The NIGHT STAFF clean and stock shelves. We recognize one of the stockers coming off her shift -- the young woman who was giving the blowjob in King's hotel room. KELLY.

She spots King passing the store outside, headed toward the 24 Hour Coffee Shop across the street.

INT. ALL NIGHT COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Busy with night-shifters: cabbies, garbage men, street cleaners. King sits in a corner booth. Bianca's photos and paperwork are laid out on the table. King scrolls through the menu on Zico's cell-phone. Writes down the final number under '*outgoing calls*'. Numerous other calls have been made to the same number.

A movement makes him look up. Kelly slides into the seat opposite his. She smiles. King doesn't. A beat.

KELLY

Okay, let's see now...

She spins around the photo of King outside the bar...

KELLY (CONT'D)

... that's... you. Wow, you look great. You were, what, about my age, nineteen, twenty? Hardass. Most definitely a hardass. Jamaica? Trinidad?

Kings says nothing. Undeterred, she goes on. Fast, bright-eyed, probably speeding. She picks up the picture of Bianca on the beach, whistles, impressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLY (CONT'D)

... look at her there. She's all that. This is most definitely not your honey because she has so got your cheekbones. I'm putting my money on your sister...

She moves on through the photos...

KELLY (CONT'D)

... who got married to this dude in Vegas... hmm, don't like his eyes, can't tell where the pupil stops and the iris starts... woah, that's their boy? Not hers, for sure. His, from a starter marriage...

She reads the dentist's business card. Whistles again.

KELLY (CONT'D)

High-end oral detailing... somebody's sinking a grand or fifteen into their smile... Sis? ... Nah, look at those teeth, they're perfect... You? Mm-mm. Okay, leave that one. Oh...

She points to the coke spoon. Tut-tuts.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Naughty girl.

KING

How do you know it's not mine?

KELLY

Only hookers and fags use those. Jesus, I'm sorry, I didn't--

King shrugs. He returns the items to their bag. Beat.

KELLY (CONT'D)

About this afternoon...

KING

Rent's got to be paid.

Kelly sighs, leans back. She holds up callused hands.

KELLY

See those? Two full rows. Condiments, sauces and pickles. Canned fruit and vegetables.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KELLY (CONT'D)

Six nights a week. The blowjobs
are a sideline. I don't fuck them.

KING

So where does the prick in
reception fit in?

KELLY

Him. He's my father-in-law.

King looks at her, cocks his head.

KELLY (CONT'D)

We're kind of a dysfunctional
family.

She smiles. So does King. A beat.

KELLY (CONT'D)

"Speak no evil."

She's looking at the monkey tattoo. King withdraws his
arm. Takes a drink of coffee.

KING

Like one?

She shakes her head.

KELLY

I've got to get back.

(beat, then:)

You're looking for her? The girl
in the picture?

KING

Yes.

He doesn't expand. Kelly decides not to push.

KELLY

Everybody's looking for something
in this shithole. You come here
looking for the one thing in the
whole world you know's gonna make
you happy. Give it a few years,
you just want out.

(beat)

You seen this place in the rain?
It's like rotting cardboard... same
smell. Until the rain clears and
the sun shines again and the air's
full of jasmine and orange, and you
think maybe it's not so bad, maybe
I'll stay and give it another shot.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KELLY (CONT'D)

Then what you thought was a heap of trash gets up and starts pushing a cart full of cans. Hands filthy. Shit under the nails. Can you imagine that? Not even being able to wash your hands?

King says nothing.

KELLY (CONT'D)

You're quite a talker, you know that?

KING

Nothing wrong with a little peace and quiet.

She smiles, gets up.

KELLY

I can take a hint.

(beat)

I'm Kelly.

KING

Jacob.

KELLY

Pleased to meet you, Jacob.

She shakes his hand with mock formality. Turns and heads past the other booths, pushes on out through the door.

KING'S P.O.V. -- THROUGH THE WINDOW

Kelly trots across the street, back toward Vons. She passes a huddle of runaway teens. An SUV pulls up at the curb. A man driving, an empty child seat in the back.

One of the teens breaks from the huddle, could be boy or a girl, saunters to the car window. A brief negotiation. He/she gets in. The SUV pulls away.

King's eyes shift, looking up. The massive illuminated billboard glistens incongruously above the boulevard. A shining golden Oscar. '77th Academy Awards'.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - PRESTON MANSION - DAY

The THWHACK of racket against ball. A stunning private tennis court in stunning private grounds

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We're high in the hills overlooking West Los Angeles. You can see downtown, Century City, all the way out to Catalina.

FOUR MEN play early morning power doubles. Dazzling whites, perfect tans. Grunts and groans as they zing the ball back and forth across the net.

A team of gardeners toils nearby. The noise of their weed-whackers gets louder.

RAY PRESTON - 50-something features nipped and tucked; discreet blonde highlights in his silver hair - misses his shot, breaks away with a curse. He storms over to the wire fence, shouts at the gardeners:

PRESTON

Hey. Hey!

The weed-whackers are turned off.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Get the fuck out of here till we're finished. All of you.

The gardeners move out. Preston returns to the other players: PAUL WENTWORTH - ten years younger, easy good looks, unruffled charm. JOHN SARAFIAN - a politician's smile, with a physicality that bespeaks the tracks he crossed a long time ago. DAN WATTS - a younger producer-type, grateful for the invite, networking hard.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

I lose another fucking set, none of you are invited next week.

The others laugh.

ICE CLINKS INTO GLASSES

The four tennis players drink fresh lemonade at a breakfast buffet laid out in the shade of a Palladian mansion. A young man with bland Mid-Western good looks pokes his head out from a French door. Preston's assistant, SCOTT.

SCOTT

I've just had Todd Melville's guy on. He's going to the Vanity Fair party. Apparently Graydon's a pal.

PRESTON

Melville doesn't have any pals. Well, fuck him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

He's not invited next year, you tell him that. You tell him that, today, okay. Now. Call his office right back.

Scott nods, withdraws.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Don't know why I bother.

WATTS

(compelled to flatter)

Maybe because it's the only private Oscar party everyone wants to go to.

PRESTON

Except Melville, that fucking tap-dancing faggot. Every year... I must be out of my fucking mind. The valet parking's a nightmare and it pisses off my neighbors.

WENTWORTH

You could try inviting them, Ray.

Preston looks at him like he's insane.

PRESTON

Security's a fucking headache, too.
(to Sarafian)
How many of your boys have you got for me this year?

SARAFIAN

24 off-duties, ten uniforms. If you're still short I'll make up the numbers and sign some overtime sheets.

PRESTON

Talk to Scott.

INT. STEAM ROOM AND SHOWERS/CHANGING ROOM - DAY

Two men still visible in the steam room as Preston steps out. He towels off while Wentworth finishes dressing: elegant casuals, handmade shoes.

Wentworth dips into a pocket, hands Preston something -- a brown five-by-seven office envelope.

WENTWORTH

A little memento of last week.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat. Preston looks at the envelope, then at Wentworth.

PRESTON
Doesn't anyone listen to me
anymore?

WENTWORTH
I thought you liked souvenirs.

PRESTON
Like? You stupid fuck, you know
what I'd like.

Wentworth's face tightens.

WENTWORTH
I told you, Ray. It's being
handled.

PRESTON
How long have I worked in this
town? "It's being handled" means
it isn't being handled, so get it
handled. This was your fuck-up.
It isn't here till it's here, in...

Preston stops mid-sentence as Watts and Sarafian step out
of the steam room. Wentworth smiles, jovial.

WENTWORTH
Jesus, Ray, that's some shade of
red. You shouldn't spend so long
in the steam.

Sarafian and Watts glance at the flushed Preston.

Wentworth hoists his tennis bag, heads for the door.

WATTS
That his doctor speaking?

Wentworth laughs, light:

WENTWORTH
No, his dentist. Oh, and I'll have
what you want by your party, Ray.
Good game, guys. Thanks.

EXT. PRESTON MANSION - DAY

Wentworth breezes by a stone fountain ringed with Rodins.
He slings his bag into a convertible Mercedes. The car
hums, sweeps around the forecourt and toward the gates.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

Wentworth eases the Mercedes through traffic on Little Santa Monica. A world in total contrast to King's.

EXT. CAMDEN DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

A neo-Bauhaus medical building: white concrete and smoked glass. Wentworth swings into an underground parking lot.

INT. MEDICAL BUILDING (4TH FLOOR) - DAY

Wentworth exits the elevator. Backlit plexi-glass beside brushed steel doors: *Dr. Paul Wentworth, D.D.S.*

INT. WENTWORTH'S DENTAL OFFICES - DAY

A receptionist looks up as Wentworth enters. He clocks the middle-aged Beverly Hills woman on a leather couch flipping through Architectural Digest, avoiding eye contact with...

... three men opposite. One of them Zico. A huge bruise extends from his nose across both eyes, which are dull with painkillers. Beside him is a younger man -- compact, athletic, VRIONI. Talking to them in low tones is DUCMAJIAN (DUKE) -- older, shrewd-eyed. The man.

The receptionist leans forward, says quietly:

RECEPTIONIST

Emergency appointment. He was in a car accident last night.

Wentworth looks over, catches Ducmajian's eye. No reaction on either face.

WENTWORTH

Why don't I see him first.

He smiles to the middle-aged woman.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Lily, I'll be right with you.

She smiles back, charmed. Wentworth looks to the others:

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Mr. Jay, if you'd like to come in.

Ducmajian nods. He and Vrioni help Zico to his feet.

INT. WENTWORTH'S SURGERY - DAY

Muted Vivaldi accompanies a fiber-optic camera wand as it explores Zico's shattered mouth. Wentworth glances at the macro-image on a video monitor.

WENTWORTH

Have to wait for the swelling to go down. A week, maybe two. After that, we can start on implants.

He pulls out the cotton wedges holding Zico's jaws open, oblivious to the groan of pain each time.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I must say, I've never seen an air-bag impact this bad before.

He snaps off his gloves. Takes the memory card from the camera. He writes something on it, hands it to his nurse.

When she's out of the room:

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Plastic air-bags don't leave steel splinters in the gums. Patching your boys up after bar brawls isn't part of our deal, Duke.

DUCMAJIAN

It was more than that. Look at his face. There are second degree burns down both his legs. Piotr has a broken arm. Yanik's jaw is shattered. I've one man with forty stitches on his chest, another with a punctured intestine.

WENTWORTH

Duke, your battlefield statistics really don't interest me.

DUCMAJIAN

They might interest you when you become one.

Wentworth tilts his head quizzically. Was that a threat? He moves calmly to the wash basin. Then:

DUCMAJIAN (CONT'D)

The nigger. She's got a brother.

Again, barely a flicker on Wentworth's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He soaps his hands, starts to wash them. Almost incidental:

WENTWORTH

Why don't you come back in after lunch, Duke. We should talk.

INT. TRISH AND BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

In panties and stained T shirt, Trish picks through the party wreckage with a trash bag. She pauses to swallow some pills down with bottled water -- Xanax parachutes for a coke hangover. Bill is noticeably absent.

A movement by the open front door. She looks up unsteadily. It's King.

TRISH

What the fuck do you want?

KING

I want you to tell me about Bianca. Everything you haven't told me.

Her face creases with spite.

TRISH

She was beautiful... She was beautiful, I dug her, I fucked her. What more do you want to know? How she got freaky on me, I haven't told you that. Like I haven't told you how she came on to Bill and fucked both the guys downstairs and fucked Frankie for coke. Frankie who you half killed at my party, you asshole, at the party I invited you to... my party... my... fucking... party.

She flies at him. Slaps clumsily. King barely moves. Trish's rage is goaded by his inertia. She swings a fist at his face. He catches it. Grips it. Bodies together, face to face, Trish's eyes shut tight like an enraged child's. She struggles to pull away. He holds her fast.

Anger abruptly gives way to self-pity. Sobs rack her body.

King holds her upright, indifferent to the snot and tears.

He waits until things slowly subside. Then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

What happened to Alex? Why did he
leave Bianca with his kid?

He relaxes his grip.

Trish steps away, eyes down, spent. She sinks into a
chair.

A long beat. She shakes her head. Says in a small voice:

TRISH

They fought all the time, I could
hear them. One day he just wasn't
there anymore. It was weird.

KING

Why was it weird?

TRISH

Bianca said they'd had a big fight,
but she didn't seem mad... just
scared. And all Alex's stuff was
still there. He didn't take
anything with him.

KING

What happened after that?

TRISH

She got into all kinds of shit.
Zico was always around. Coke...
crystal... she was never straight.
Out every night... changed her
hair... made herself look awful.
The kid was never around. Right
before she left, she came to see
me... gave me the bag with her
stuff in it. Asked me to hang on
it. She was really wigged out
about something.

KING

Any idea what?

Trish shakes her head. Another beat.

KING (CONT'D)

Was Bianca getting her teeth fixed?

She looks at him sardonically, half laughs:

TRISH

She wasn't getting anything fixed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

King nods slowly. He turns to leave.

TRISH (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

King stops. Looks back, his voice almost a monotone.

KING

I found Bianca at the morgue. She was tortured. They blinded her, cut off one of her feet. She died badly.

Trish looks at him, incredulous.

King walks out the door.

Trish puts her head in her hands and dissolves.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The curtains are drawn, a chair wedged under the door handle. The barely audible drone of the TV, Inside Edition promotes next week's Oscar coverage.

King sits on the bed, sifts through Bianca's things: the cigarettes, scraps of paper, the photos, the panties...

He pauses at the dentist's card, reaches for the diary. Leafs through the pages: week after week, the series of dental appointments, the little numbers in the margins.

He picks up the dentist's card again, studies it. Pulls out Zico's cell-phone and scrolls through the calls dialed and received.

No matches.

King pauses, thinking.

He takes out the two Ziploc bags he got from Frankie. Sets aside the one containing the eight-balls of coke, pulls the duct tape off the other. A thick roll of cash.

EXT. CAMDEN DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

A slow, constant stream of traffic. King waits by a bus stop across from Wentworth's building, as invisible as the smog, dog-shit and trash. High-end cars come and go from the underground parking. Time passes...

King almost looks asleep. Then his eyes move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

P.O.V. ACROSS THE STREET -- A BLACK MERCEDES

with tinted windows and chrome trim parks near Wentworth's building. Ducmajian and two thick-set men get out. They head toward the building. A driver remains in the car.

BACK TO SCENE -- KING'S HACKLES RISE

The car, the muscle, their hair, the cut of their suits. Zico's people.

King walks down the street to the next bus stop, keeping a clear line of sight on the Mercedes. He takes out Zico's cell, scrolls to the last number on '*Outgoing Calls*'. Then he waits.

EXT. THE MEDICAL BUILDING -- A WHILE LATER

The doors open. Ducmajian and his minders head out of the building toward the Mercedes. Ducmajian feels his cell-phone ring. Glances at the ID, flips it open.

DUCMAJIAN

Zico... Hello?

BACK TO SCENE -- KING WITH ZICO'S CELL PHONE

Watching Ducmajian as he listens. An RTD Bus approaches.

DUCMAJIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(through the phone)

Hello...?

King hangs up. He gets on the bus. The doors close.

EXT. SUNSET PLAZA - DAY

King drops money into a pay-phone. He dials the number from the dentist's card. A woman's voice greets him. King speaks in genteel Anglo-African tones:

KING

Hello... yes, I'd like to make an appointment with Dr. Wentworth... tomorrow, if that's possible.

(beat)

I realize that, but I'm in a great deal of pain, and the doctor was recommended to me personally.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING (CONT'D)

(beat)

If you could, I'd be extremely grateful, thank you.

(off a nearby store sign)

Lawenda. Philip Lawenda...

(beat)

That's fine, I'll hold...

EXT. USED CAR LOT, HOLLYWOOD AND GOWER - DAY

A chain link fence. A battered sign: '*Cars For Cash.*' King stands with a salesman beside a tan 95 Camry, counting off C-notes from Frankie's roll. The sky is darker.

As King drives the car off the lot, rain begins to POUR.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL - NIGHT

Rain hammers off the street. The tan Camry is parked in the motel lot. The glimmer of televisions behind curtains.

INT. KING'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

King finishes packing his duffel. He pulls a couple of hundreds off Frankie's diminished roll, stuffs the rest of the money, the coke he took from Frankie and Zico's cell-phone into the bag. Zips it up.

Only one thing still left on the bed: the photo of Armand. King picks it up, studies the boy's face a moment, then slides the photo in his pocket.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL, WALKWAY - NIGHT

Water spatters from a blocked gutter onto the concrete.

King knocks on the door of Room 212. A beat. The door opens on the chain. Kelly peeks through. Cartoon sounds behind her. She smiles, surprised.

KELLY

Hey, Jacob.

King holds up the bag.

KING

Would you mind keeping this for me?
I have to go out in the morning. I
don't want to leave it in the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLY

Sure. Who knows, you might come
back to find someone getting a
blowjob on your bed.
(off his smile)
Want to come in?

She opens the door a little. A six year old CHILD sits
cross-legged on the floor watching the Cartoon Network.
Doesn't even look around.

KING

No, it's all right. Thank you.

He turns and heads back to his room. He pauses, watches
the rain come down in rods in the courtyard. Trash bobs in
a puddle growing in the emptied swimming pool below.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD. - THE NEXT MORNING

Pools of rainwater on the asphalt. Vapor rises under a
blue sky. King pulls off the road into an open lot, '*All
Day Parking.*'

EXT. CAMDEN DRIVE - DAY

A bus stops at the intersection with Camden Drive. On its
side: "*Oscar is 77 this year, join us for his birthday on
Entertainment Tonight - Full Coverage, March 22nd.*"

The doors open. King steps out onto the sidewalk.

INT. WENTWORTH'S DENTAL OFFICES - DAY

The RECEPTIONIST looks up as the door opens, tries to mask
her reaction to the sight of a tall black man with
dreadlocks.

King smiles. In velvet colonial Anglo-African:

KING

Mr. Lawenda. Eleven thirty.

RECEPTIONIST

Of course.
(off her computer)
You haven't seen Dr. Wentworth
before, have you, Mr. Lawenda?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

No, but I have seen his work.

The receptionist's smile reveals a set of super-white teeth. She hands King a form on a clipboard.

RECEPTIONIST

If you could take a seat and fill out this information for us, Mr. Lawenda. Dr. Wentworth will be with you in just a moment. Do you have insurance?

KING

I don't.

RECEPTIONIST

Well, after your consultation, Stacy in our business office will be available to discuss the cost and payment options for any treatment Dr. Wentworth recommends.

KING

Very good.

He takes a seat. Sets the clipboard and pen aside, untouched. Surveys the room and adjoining entrances. The receptionist gives him a curious look.

King picks up a copy of *'Los Angeles'* magazine. Flips through it. Not really taking in the pictures and schematics of the familiar Palladian mansion... *'Inside Preston's Palace'*... and the subheads: *'Personal Art Collection'*... *'The Place To Be On Oscar Night'*

He pauses at a photograph: Ray Preston in a crush of revellers at a party, arms around a group of people. It's not the photo but the CAPTION that catches King's eye: *'Left to right: Will Smith, Jada Pinkett Smith, Ray Preston and friend, Dr. Paul Wentworth...'*

A door opens. A high-end Soccer Mom and her daughter re-enter reception. A NURSE ushers King from the door.

NURSE

Mr. Lawenda? Thank you so much for waiting.

INT. WENTWORTH'S CONSULTING ROOM - DAY

The nurse clips a bib onto a chain. King squints up from the chair as she adjusts the light over his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat. The rattle of steel as tools are set out on a metal tray and it's swung into place by King's neck.

NURSE

He'll be in in just a minute.

She steps outside. King's eyes track around him: framed degrees, diplomas and certifications; the fiber-optic camera; a laser 'decay analyzer'; an X-ray machine. Family photos: a perfect wife, two blonde kids.

The door opens. Wentworth comes in, studying the blank form on the clipboard. He closes the door behind him.

WENTWORTH

Mr. Lawenda. A man after my own heart: you don't like filling in forms. No problem, I'll get everything as we go along.

Wentworth sets down the clipboard and puts on some gloves. He sits on a stool, pushes himself across the room with practised ease.

When he sees King's face he pauses for an instant, but there's not the slightest hint of recognition. He adjusts the light, selects a probe and a mirror, eases King's mouth open with gloved fingers and leans in close.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

So, the notes say you're in pain. Let's take a look at those top molars, shall we.

He works the probe and mirror around King's upper mouth.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Hmm, nothing immediately apparent. I'll need to get some X-rays.

A beat. He sits back. Consults his appointments sheet.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I see your sister referred you. I don't know if I remember her.

King looks at him, says flatly:

KING

Bianca.

Wentworth nods, unfazed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WENTWORTH

Bianca. Of course.

Another beat. King makes his gambit.

KING

She gave me your name. She also gave me something else that I'm looking after for her. Something I think you want.

Wentworth looks at him, nonplussed.

WENTWORTH

I can't imagine what that would be. Are you talking about money?

King says nothing. Wentworth puts down his instruments. Exhales.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I'm afraid there wasn't much Bianca had that anyone in their right mind would want. Except her looks, of course. Yes, I helped her out, but I never expected to be repaid, if that's what you're suggesting.

KING

This isn't about money.

WENTWORTH

It nearly always is, let's face it.

He slides back in the stool, peels off his gloves.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

You know, part of me was wondering if someone would come looking for her. Hoping, in fact. I hated the idea that she was just another orphan about to sink without trace. I always meant to ask her if she had any family.

He seems genuinely rueful. A superb, nuanced performance. More than just plausible: empathetic, likeable. He looks at his watch.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

You're my last appointment this morning. Let me buy you lunch. I'll tell you everything I know.

INT. THE IVY - DAY

The bustle of West side money and manners. Wentworth sits opposite King at his favorite corner table. His eyes work the room. He smiles, half-waves at everyone he recognizes.

King's eyes, by contrast, almost never leave Wentworth, who's doing the talking between mouthfuls of salad:

WENTWORTH

... twenty-eight adult teeth in our mouth, thirty-two if we keep our wisdom teeth, and maybe more of us should given the way the world's going. The average middle-class American spends almost a thousand bucks on each of those teeth in their lifetime. Multiply that by four or five in a place like this.

(beat)

My point is, I have a very good reputation, a very good practice, and, all in all, a very good life. There would be little sense in my jeopardizing that.

King nods, his expression neutral.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I just don't want a rush to judgement, that's all. This town can be hard to understand.

Wentworth takes a last mouthful of salad, puts down his fork, wipes his mouth. Gestures around them.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Look at them. Half of them are my patients. Some are terrified when they get in that chair. Others, it's the only time they get to relax. Seriously.

(beat)

Let me tell you something: dentists are for men what gynecologists are for women. Once they're open wide and you've got your hand inside them, their sense of shame just drops away -- you become trusted with confidences. Inevitably, some of them come in the form of requests... needs, desires.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Sometimes you send them home with a prescription that's a little more fun than the 'problem' requires. Other times, well... if you can help out more substantively, and nobody's going to get hurt, then why not help out?

KING

Somebody did get hurt. My sister's dead.

WENTWORTH

Dead? We don't know that. Bianca could be anywhere. She could be sitting in Starbucks around the corner, for all we know. She's always disappearing. And always turns up again, needless to say.

KING

So... was she a 'problem'?

WENTWORTH

Bianca? She's never a problem. Not like some of the others.

KING

Others?

A beat. As Wentworth considers his response, he gestures to the waiter for the check. He leans closer.

WENTWORTH

Some of the most respected and revered women in this town have at some point or another done what Bianca did. Your sister isn't a whore. But she would sleep with people if the price and the circumstances were right. We met at a party. She had a lot going for her. I know people. She asked me to make some introductions. I helped her out.

KING

Did you sleep with her?

WENTWORTH

I'm a married man. And no, as a matter-of-fact, I didn't.

King stares at him. A long silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not apologizing for it.
She needed the money, and she never
did anything she didn't want to do.

KING

That include disappearing?

(beat)

Why did somebody she hardly knew
move out her things? Pay all her
debts?

WENTWORTH

I'm not the one to ask, I'm afraid.
All I know, and this is just rumor,
is that her husband got into
trouble. I'm sure we agree on one
thing -- that guy was a prick. All
that horseshit about being her
manager, getting her deals. Well,
besides fucking around on her, he
liked to run with gangster types,
it gave him a hard-on. Evidently,
he messed up. Made somebody angry.
Money again. Rumor is he wound up
in a ditch somewhere.

He quiets as the check arrives. He doesn't bother looking,
hands it back to the waiter along with a black Amex card.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

After he was gone, Bianca got
strung out, started doing stuff she
shouldn't have been doing. And she
had his kid to look after. What I
heard was that she tried to pull
something, on her late husband's
pals. That's all I know. These
aren't people you want to mess
with. If she has any sense, she's
got the hell out of Dodge. And
that's most likely what she did.

The waiter returns with the credit card and slip. King
waits while Wentworth calculates the tip.

KING

Where's the boy?

WENTWORTH

I'm not sure. Bianca told me she
wanted to get him out of LA. There
were some in-laws in Chicago he
could stay with. I helped out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KING

Helped out?

WENTWORTH

With the air fare. That was the last time I spoke to her. It must be nearly two months ago now.

Long beat. King stares at Wentworth. His act is seamless.

Wentworth signs the credit card slip. Pulls on his jacket.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I have to get back.

EXT. THE IVY - DAY

Wentworth hands his ticket to a valet. Turns to King.

WENTWORTH

Can I give you a lift anywhere?

KING

No, thank you.

Wentworth extends a hand.

WENTWORTH

Goodbye then Mr. ... I suppose it must be King. Mr. King.

King's eyes meet Wentworth's.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

That was Bianca's maiden name, right? She told me. Bianca King.

KING

(a beat)

That's right.

King shakes his hand.

WENTWORTH

I'm sorry I wasn't more help. You'll find her, I'm sure. Bianca's a survivor. If there's anything else I can do, just call.

He pats King's shoulder, gets into the Mercedes. Waves as he pulls away into traffic. King stands for a moment, watching him go. His eyes harden.

I/E. WENTWORTH'S MERCEDES/ROBERTSON BLVD. - DAY

Wentworth talks on the car's hands-free cell.

WENTWORTH

He's angry, frustrated, and he's smart. But right now he knows nothing. He made a crude play, pretended to have what we want. But it was a bluff...

INT. DUCMAJIAN HOUSE - DAY

Cottage cheese ceilings, ornate Orthodox crucifix, headshots of teenage boys and girls pinned to a cork board.

Ducmajian sits on a couch crouched over the speaker phone. A pale adolescent girl in shorts and a halter top pours coffee into small cups. Shoulder holsters exposed, Vrioni and his fellow muscle lounge around the room.

DUCMAJIAN

You can't be sure he was bluffing.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

Precisely, we can't be one hundred percent sure, which is why for the moment we leave him be.

DUCMAJIAN

No fucking way. That spook's dead.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

We leave him be, Duke.

DUCMAJIAN

Fuck you.

Wentworth's tone hardens just a fraction.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

We leave him be. Every avenue he pursues will be a dead end. He'll be out of town by the end of the week. Just watch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUCMAJIAN

You watch. You saw what he did.
He'll rip off your dumb faggot head
and shit down your neck.

I/E. WENTWORTH'S MERCEDES/ROBERTSON BLVD. - DAY

Wentworth sighs.

WENTWORTH

You handle the goods, I handle the
clientele. That's the partnership,
Duke. I'm tired of having these
fights. I'm really tired of them.

He thumbs a button, hangs up. Speed dials another number.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

(through phone)
Wentworth dental offices.

WENTWORTH

It's Paul. Is my two o'clock there
yet?

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD./HOLLYWOOD - DAY

King's tan Camry pulls out of the all-day parking lot.

I/E. CAMRY/STREET BEHIND WENTWORTH'S BUILDING - DAY

King turns down the residential street behind the medical
building. He checks the sightline in his mirror.

INT. WENTWORTH'S SURGERY - SAME

Wentworth studies a set of X-rays on a light box. About to
turn back to his patient, he glances out of the window.

HIS P.O.V. -- THROUGH WINDOW

A tan Toyota Camry - no driver visible - eases down the
street below... slows... drives on.

BACK TO SCENE

Wentworth hesitates. He sits on his stool, glides toward a
ten year old boy in the chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WENTWORTH

Okay, Tommy. Just lift your finger
if you feel any pain whatsoever.

I/E. CAMRY/STREET BEHIND WENTWORTH'S BUILDING - DAY

King pulls into a spot. Adjusts the mirrors to get a clear
view of the building. Settles back in his seat.

INT. WENTWORTH'S DENTAL OFFICES - DAY

Later. Wentworth sees an elderly female patient out into
the reception area.

WENTWORTH

You know the routine Mrs.
Firestone. The anesthetic'll take
three or four hours to wear off,
nothing to eat or drink until then.
And we'll see you back next week.

The old lady smiles. Braces top and bottom. A full metal
jacket. As she makes her way out, Wentworth casually
checks through a window.

HIS P.O.V. -- THE TAN TOYOTA

parked some distance down on the left. The passenger-side
rear-view mirror catches a bright shaft of reflected sun-
light as someone adjusts it inside the car.

PRE-LAPPING: a cell phone RINGS in a...

I/E. BLACK BMW/CENTURY CITY - DAY

Scott, Ray Preston's assistant, drives alone. He picks up.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

It's Paul. Is he there?

SCOTT

Oh, hi Dr. Wentworth. Ray's in a
meeting. Can I take a message?

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

We need to talk. Tell him to be at
home tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wentworth hangs up without waiting for an answer.

I/E. CAMRY/STREET BEHIND WENTWORTH'S BUILDING - DAY

King sits low, watching. Glances up. A YOUNG WOMAN passes by on foot, holding a cardboard tray of coffees, dialling on a cell phone. An office worker on a break.

King watches her in the mirror, talking animatedly. She walks past the medical building, turns onto Wilshire Blvd.

As soon as she's out of King's sight, the woman cuts left.

INT. WENTWORTH'S CONSULTING ROOM - DAY

A knock on the door. The young woman we just saw enters.

STACY

Soy latte.

WENTWORTH

Thank you so much, Stacy.

She sets down the cardboard tray with a conspiratorial smile. The cell phone is in the hole beside Wentworth's coffee.

On the phone's display -- a DIGITAL IMAGE of the Camry. Wentworth uses the key-pad to zoom in. The license plate. A glimpse of dreadlocks through the head rest.

Wentworth takes a deep breath, exhales.

I/E. CAMRY/STREET BEHIND WENTWORTH'S BUILDING - EVENING

King sits up. Up ahead, Wentworth's silver Mercedes pulls out of the underground parking lot.

I/E. WENTWORTH'S MERCEDES/BEVERLY HILLS - EVENING

Wentworth negotiates heavy evening traffic. A glimpse of the Camry several cars behind. Wentworth dials a number.

EXT. SCHOOL HALL - EVENING

John Sarafian - the robust third man from the tennis game - negotiates on the phone. Class flyers pasted on the hall doors. Laughter and applause, the sounds of a Fifth Grade school performance from inside the building behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAFIAN

No, two. For what you're asking
it's gotta be business as usual, so
my guys can cover their asses,
otherwise it's no deal.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

How much?

SARAFIAN

A quarter each.

Wentworth laughs.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

Fifty grand? Are you serious?

SARAFIAN

Absolutely fucking serious.

(sotto)

Listen, I don't know what this is
about and I don't need to know.
But if you're seriously considering
this route, you better know that
this is grown-up shit, and you
don't nickel and dime me on it.

A beat.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)

(through phone)

Okay. Fifty it is.

SARAFIAN

Tonight.

He hangs up. Quietly eases back into the school hall.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD/WEST L.A. - EVENING

Wentworth's Mercedes cuts through Sunset's curves, makes a
right.

Two beats later, the Camry follows. Winds up the road into
the hills.

EXT. SKYLINE DRIVE - NIGHT

Wentworth pulls up at the gate. A little wave at a boxy
man in a suit, reciprocated. The gates hum open.

EXT. PRESTON MANSION - NIGHT

Wentworth heads up the pillared steps toward the door. A maid greets him. Wentworth speaks in Spanish. The maid giggles, shows him her teeth. She ushers him inside.

EXT. SKYLINE DRIVE - NIGHT

King follows the perimeter fence surrounding Preston's mansion compound. The city's lights twinkle below.

He rustles through a curtain of rhododendron, sees where the fence joins with a tall stone wall. The branches of a walnut tree press down on a neglected length of razor wire, breaking it in several places.

King finds a toehold in the wall, hauls himself up.

EXT. PRESTON COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

King drops to the ground softly. Moves through the foliage to the edge of the lawn. The sound of a COUGH nearby.

Beat. A thick-set man SECURITY MAN ambles into view. He lights a cigarette. Watches the house.

King stays put. Watches with him.

KING'S P.O.V. -- PRESTON'S MANSION

The flicker of a TV from behind a downstairs window, accompanied by the faint sounds of a video-game. RAISED VOICES from elsewhere in the house.

INT. PRESTON MANSION - NIGHT

Wentworth's leather heels click on the marble. Greek statues, modern art, life-size monsters from Preston's movies inside glass cases. The house is devoid of soul, almost eerily so.

He passes a side hallway. The fleeting figure of another member of uniformed staff. Drifting hip-hop music... mingled with the furious thud-thud of video-game combat. Preston's familiar nasal scream becomes audible through a huge oak door ahead.

INT. PRESTON'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Preston makes passes around his desk, expostulating into a head-set phone. He lifts a hand as Wentworth comes in.

PRESTON

(into phone)

Yeah, well, do it, Mike. Do it.
Just once in your fucking life
accept advice from somebody who
knows better than you.

He punches off the phone.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

This isn't working, Paul.

WENTWORTH

I'm sorry?

PRESTON

This isn't working. The director's
not listening, I've got a hundred
and twenty million dollar negative
that I've re-cut ten times and
still can't get above an eighty and
we're testing again tomorrow, and
my dentist, my fucking dentist,
tells me to meet him in my house
and then won't pick up his fucking
phone the rest of the day.

He looks to Wentworth, spoiling for a fight.

Instead, all he sees is bad news.

His mouth goes dry.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

What is it?

WENTWORTH

Not good, I'm afraid. It's Bianca.
She has a brother. He's in town,
he has what we need, and he's a
psychopath. He's already put five
people in hospital. He's out of
control, Ray. It's not good.

His anxiety is infectious. It's a brilliant turn.

Preston sinks into a chair, skewered with worry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON

But you said... Bianca wasn't a problem anymore. That all we needed was to find...

WENTWORTH

Bianca isn't a problem anymore.
(beat)
I'm afraid that's his problem.

It dawns on Preston what Wentworth means. He's appalled.

PRESTON

Oh, Jesus. You sleazeball. You crazy fucking sleazy sonofabitch.

WENTWORTH

Cause and effect, Ray. You made a request, we carried it out. What did you expect?

Preston's chest begins to heave. He gets up.

PRESTON

What does he want?

Wentworth doesn't blink.

WENTWORTH

He wants seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Preston reddens. A total apoplectic shift:

PRESTON

Seven hundred and fifty... three quarters of a million bucks! Is he fucking nuts?

WENTWORTH

Yes.

Preston tries to gather himself. Opens and closes his hands. Thinks hard.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Sorry, Ray. That's what he wants. I'm just the messenger.

But Ray Preston isn't who he is for nothing:

PRESTON

Yeah, well give him this fucking message, messenger boy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

He gives me what I want back, then
maybe, just maybe, I'll toss his
Third World minstrel cocksucker ass
a dime. You tell him that.

He KICKS at the waste bin. It bounces across the room and
slams into a display case.

EXT. PRESTON COMPOUND - NIGHT

Distant voices, movements behind the office window. King
continues watching. The security man smokes, close by.
The sound of an approaching car shifts King's attention.

KING'S P.O.V.

A black BMW swings into the staff parking area. Preston's
assistant, Scott, gets out. He opens the trunk and grabs
two laden shopping bags -- one from Sports Chalet, the
other from FAO Schwarz. He heads for the door. Curses as
he nearly trips over something on the gravel. He picks it
up - a kid's BMX bike - and rests it against a balustrade.

BACK TO SCENE -- KING MOVES TO GET A BETTER LOOK

A twig snaps beneath his foot.

The security man in front of him swings around, peers into
the bushes. A long beat.

King ducks silently out of sight. Too late. A sudden
RUSTLE, the security man has seen him. Charges:

SECURITY MAN

Motherfucker...

King dodges, kicks the man's ankle away. He falls flat.
Before he can react, King has a knee on his back. Hooks
his arm around his neck in a sleeper hold. A few seconds
pressure, the man sags, unconscious. King steps back.
Listens for anybody else. Nothing.

INT. PRESTON'S HOME OFFICE - SAME

Preston chugs Evian. Irritated by everything Wentworth's
saying in his even, reasonable tones.

WENTWORTH

This isn't negotiable, Ray. You've
no leverage.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

And I've seen what this guy can do.
He's not like his sister.

PRESTON

Sounds to me he's just like his
fucking sister.

WENTWORTH

His teeth...

Preston turns around.

PRESTON

His teeth?

WENTWORTH

They're not like hers. Compound
fillings. A recent bridge. This
guy takes care of himself, Ray.

PRESTON

You're kidding me? You've seen the
guy's fucking teeth?

WENTWORTH

You can tell a lot from a person's
teeth.

PRESTON

Like what?

WENTWORTH

Like, he's not going to go away.
Like, he's not going to screw up.
(beat)
You have to deal with him, Ray.

PRESTON

Seven-fifty. No fucking way. No.

He means it. A beat. Wentworth drums his fingers on his
chair.

WENTWORTH

Okay. There is an alternative.
But you probably won't consider it.

PRESTON

Try me.

WENTWORTH

I spoke to Sarafian. He's willing
to get involved.

Preston rounds on him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON

What the fuck are you saying? I thought the whole fucking point was not to get Sarafian involved. If he finds out he's on there too, we're all fucking dead.

WENTWORTH

He knows nothing. Everything's fine. It's just another deal.

Ray shakes his head, sick at the prospect. A long beat. Then, strangled:

PRESTON

How much?

WENTWORTH

A hundred grand. Cash. Tonight.

Preston stares at him. Wentworth doesn't give an inch.

Abruptly, Preston heads to the far end of the room, opens the door to a walk-in closet full of file cabinets. He shifts one aside. Punches in numbers on a key pad. A wall safe opens. Bricks of cash. A nickel plated pistol.

Preston counts out a bundle of cash. He shuts the safe door, moves back the cabinet, slams the closet behind him and tosses the money on his desk.

Wentworth walks over. Divides the money between the two side pockets of his sports jacket. Preston's eyes burn into him.

PRESTON

You fucking little shit. Walk in here and rob me. Fix our teeth, suck our dicks, then suck our blood, you fucking tick, you fucking nobody fucking dentist.

Wentworth blinks. A flash of anger. He doesn't make eye contact. Until:

WENTWORTH

That seven hundred and fifty grand. I'm still going to need it.

PRESTON

I just gave you a hundred. What the fuck are you talking about? You said--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WENTWORTH

Not for him, Ray. For me.

Beat. Preston is incredulous.

PRESTON

You're squeezing me? You're
squeezing me?

(laughs)

What kind of dumbass move is that?
We were at the same party.

Wentworth's voice is toneless.

WENTWORTH

You're the producer, Ray, with your
famous eye for detail. I'm there.
But I'm not in the same room. And
I'm not doing what you're doing.
Worst I get is a red face. But
you'll be gone, Ray. Out. Finito.

Preston is stunned.

Wentworth heads for the door. As he leaves:

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I'll pick it up at the party.

Preston screams at him, crimson:

PRESTON

You're not coming to my fucking
party!

INT. PRESTON MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Wentworth passes Scott in the hallway. The sound of Ray
yelling and breaking things.

Wentworth rolls his eyes. Scott nods wearily.

EXT. SKYLINE DRIVE - NIGHT

King sees Wentworth's car exit the gate below. He takes a
last look at the Preston compound before heading for the
Camry, which is parked further up in the shadows.

I/E. CAMRY/WEST L.A. - NIGHT

King drives, lost in thought. The city and its lights blur past the windows. Beverly Hills gives way to the pulse of the Sunset Strip.

King crosses Fairfax, into the edge of Hollywood. Darkened store fronts, faceless apartment buildings.

The WHOOP of a police siren jolts King back to the present.

He looks up. Blue and red lights in the mirror. An amplified voice booms from a loudspeaker:

COP (O.S.)
(through speaker)
Pull over to the side of the road.
Pull over to the side of the road.

King tenses. Pulls the car over. The cops pull up behind him. King flinches as their spotlight fills the mirror.

COP (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(through speaker)
Put your hands on the wheel and
remain where you are.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD/HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

The burble of a despatch. Two POLICE OFFICERS, one older, one younger, get out of their cruiser, unclip holster straps, slide night-sticks and tazers into their belts.

The younger cop, OFFICER MERRICK, holds back as his older partner, OFFICER RICE shines a flashlight onto King's face. Rice taps on the window. King winds it down.

RICE
Can I see your drivers license and
registration, sir.

King slowly opens the glove box, hands over some papers. The cop leafs through them. Looks to King.

RICE (CONT'D)
Are you aware, sir, that this
registration is out of date?

KING
I just bought the car today,
officer. That's the temporary
registration right there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The cop glances at the windshield.

OFFICER RICE

I'd like to see your insurance and
license, please, sir.

KING

My wallet's at my hotel, officer.

RICE

You're required by law to have your
license with you whenever you
drive.

King nods.

RICE (CONT'D)

What about insurance?

A beat. King knows he's screwed up.

KING

I don't have insurance, officer.

The cop leafs through the paperwork, sighs.

RICE

Wait right here, sir.

The cop walks to the back of the Camry, then to the
cruiser, where he enters information into a keypad.

I/E. CAMRY/SUNSET BLVD. - SAME

King adjusts the mirror to redirect the glare of the
spotlight. Traffic passes, barely slowing to rubberneck.
Cops and another black guy. Business as usual.

Officer Rice is back at the window.

RICE

Would you get out of the car, sir.

KING

Look, officer --

RICE

Would you get out of the car, sir.

The cop stands back, braced. A beat. King slowly opens
the door and gets out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICE (CONT'D)

Turn around, legs apart, put your
hands on the roof of the car.

King shakes his head, resigned. He does as instructed.

Rice shoves King's feet further apart with his boot. His
partner covers him while he frisks King down.

Rice finds King's money, a couple of hundreds. Slips them
into his own pocket. Also finds the picture of Armand, and
King's room key: *Jacaranda Motel*. Tosses it to Merrick.

A sudden single move: Rice grabs King's hands, swings them
behind his back, while Merrick loops a nylon zipper-tag
around his wrists and jerks it tight sharply. King hisses
with pain. The cops spin him around to face them.

RICE (CONT'D)

I'm going to have to ask you to
come down to the station, sir.

KING

What's the charge?

RICE

Registration is out of date, no
insurance, no license. What's your
name, boy?

KING

King...

RICE

(a small smile)
Not 'Rodney' by any chance?

KING

Jacob.

RICE

That's okay then.

They take King by the arms, walk him to the cruiser. Push
him by the head down into the back. Slam the door shut.

I/E. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

The patrol car pulls out onto Sunset. King lies on frayed
vinyl. Looks up at the discolored plexiglass between him
and the front. Wrestles himself upright.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DESPATCH (O.S.)
(through RADIO)
Calling all units. Sunset and
Gardner. We have a possible 4-80
in progress. Repeat, we have a
possible 4-80...

Officer Rice reaches over and clicks off the radio.
Merrick studies the motel keys under the map light.
He takes out a cell phone. Dials. It rings once...

MERRICK
It's the Jacaranda Motel...
(from the key ring)
1723 Argyle. Room 24.

He hangs up, glances back toward King. Doesn't meet his
eye. Realization hits King. He's dead.

IN THE BACK WITH KING

Chest tightening. Mind racing. The back of the cruiser is
stripped down. Bulletproof plexi. Windows sealed. No
handles on the locked doors.

The cops drive on in silence. Cars pass by outside.

The cops make a left onto Highland. Head north.

The car slows down. Up ahead, a lane has been coned off
for road works.

The cruiser brakes. Idles.

Outside, people in their cars.

King sees them. Sees his chance.

... and EXPLODES...

He bucks his entire body. SLAMS his FEET and HEAD against
the windows. SCREAMS like a maniac.

IN THE FRONT

Both cops jump a mile.

RICE
What the fuck?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The SCREAMS and BLOWS get HARDER, FASTER, LOUDER...

MERRICK

What wrong with him?

He yells behind him:

MERRICK (CONT'D)

Shut up, just shut up!

But King doesn't stop. That's when the older cop sees
HEADS TURNING outside.

ON KING

Smashing his scalp so hard against the windows that blood
is smearing across the glass...

BACK ON THE COPS

Some teenage GIRLS in the car beside theirs are pointing in
consternation. One screams.

RICE

Oh, shit...

He slaps on the SIREN. Jams on his HORN. Tries to clear a
path. He nudges the cruiser's nose toward the right lane.

The younger cop is freaking out at King:

MERRICK

You're a dead nigger, okay. You're
a dead fucking nigger!

Rice pulls Merrick around, SLAPS his face. Jams his foot
down on the accelerator.

With a screech of rubber, the cruiser fishtails a right
onto Franklin, King's SCREAMS and BLOWS still audible.

Another screech as they pull up abruptly behind jammed cars
trying to detour the roadworks.

King hasn't let up. Once again, heads are turning outside.

RICE

Jesus Christ.

MERRICK

What are we gonna do? What are we
gonna do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

REVVING furiously, Rice wheels the car ninety degrees across the opposing lane.

They shoot up an alley. Jump a stop sign. Reach a stretch of shadows and windowless buildings. Jerk to a halt.

WE FOLLOW Rice out of the car...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BACK STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Rice reaches for the rear door. Opens it.

THE INSTANT HE DOES SO...

King's feet SLAM FULL FORCE against the inside of the door, hurling the older cop onto the pavement.

King dives out, half-rolls to his feet and SPRINTS AWAY, hands still tied behind his back.

Merrick springs from the car. His partner is back on his feet, cursing. They take off after King.

WITH KING, RUNNING FULL-OUT

He looks behind him. The two cops are gaining, nightsticks drawn.

King cuts into another alley. Low wall on one side, a cyclone fence on the other. He tries to mount the wall, totters back, unable to balance with his pinned arms.

Another glance back. He cuts left. Dodges between some dumpsters. Leaps over heaps of junk and trash.

Cyclone fence on both sides now.

King slides to a stop.

Cyclone fence in front of him, too.

King turns on his heels, doubles back.

Almost at the dumpsters again, when...

... the TWO COPS appear in front of him.

King doesn't even slow. HITS the younger cop shoulder-down in the chest. But Rice catches King's head with an arcing sideswipe. The crack of baton on bone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King and Merrick hit the ground, King's knee in the cop's chest as he pushes away into a roll, head pouring blood. He scrambles to his feet.

ZZZZT... 40,000 volts of TAZER arc through the small of his back. He staggers. A nightstick to his diaphragm doubles him up.

Followed by a RAIN OF BLOWS. The cops snarl and curse, teeth bared.

King hits the dirt, curls into a fetal ball. The blows keep coming and coming and coming. Only slowing as the cops lose their breath.

They step away, panting, sweat dripping.

Rice shines a flashlight over King's body. His face is unrecognizable. Blood pools around his head.

Rice kicks him. A low moan. King's leg moves. Rice nods to Merrick.

Merrick reaches into a pocket. Take out a ligature of steel cable. He kneels by King. Loosens the ligature. Hesitates.

MERRICK

If we do it here, we've gotta haul him all the way back to the car.

RICE

And if we don't, he's gonna get up and walk?

MERRICK

How about we forget the car? Dump him here?

RICE

They said the river. The river it is.

Merrick nods uneasily, lifts King's head by his dreadlocks. He takes care to avoid the blood as he slips on the noose.

MERRICK

Maybe we should look for something to put him in. Trash bag or tarp or something. There's gotta be something over there, in those...

RICE

Just hurry the fuck up, will you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A beat. The younger cop looks at him.

He can't do it.

RICE (CONT'D)
Oh, Jesus Christ.

Rice pushes Merrick aside. Kneels. Tests the loop. He puts a knee on King's back. Starts to apply pressure.

King spasms. But the older man holds steady.

King's eyes roll. A hissing rattle escapes his mouth.

Then:

The GROWL of engines.

HEADLIGHTS flood the lot behind the cyclone fence.

The BEEP of a 'vehicle reversing' signal. Shouts.

Rice motions Merrick to freeze.

A HEAVY TRUCK rolls into view, backs around. A GUY in coveralls hooks winch chains onto a dumpster. He beckons to the truck driver, stands aside, glances in our direction. Stares. A beat.

GARBAGE MAN
Hey. Hey, you over there. What are you doing?

A beat. The man starts to walk toward us.

GARBAGE MAN (CONT'D)
What's going on over there?

Rice tucks the noose out of sight, stands coolly, ready to face the situation down.

A noise. Rice turns, sees Merrick RUNNING LIKE A MOTHER-FUCKER from the scene. Through the lights...

GARBAGE MAN (CONT'D)
You guys cops? Hey!

The man starts to trot.

That's it. Game over. Rice edges back, into the shadows. Takes off.

The garbage man reaches the fence. Sees King.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GARBAGE MAN (CONT'D)

Holy fuck...

He turns on his heel, runs back toward the truck, waving.

GARBAGE MAN (CONT'D)

Darren! Darren! Get over here!

He reaches the truck. The cab door opens. The driver gets out with a flashlight, leaves the vehicle idling.

The two men hurry back to the fence.

GARBAGE MAN (CONT'D)

He was over there. Right there.

The driver fans the flashlight over the ground. Finds the dark patch of blood on the gravel.

King is gone.

BEHIND A WALL

... King's feet push his trembling body into the space between a building and some palettes. His face is swollen and bleeding, eyes barely able to open. In deep pain, he wedges himself into the shadows. Waits.

Eventually, voices are cut off by the clunk of doors. The sound of the truck's engine recedes into the night.

King starts pushing himself forward, inch by agonizing inch. The steel noose dangles from his neck.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL, NORTH HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Two black Mercedes with chrome hubs pull up outside. Men in tight suits pile out -- Ducmajian and his cohorts, including Zico. Keegan sticks his head out of the office.

KEEGAN

Where do you think you're going?

One of the heavies peels off, pushes Keegan back into his office, closes the door.

INT. KING'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The door BURSTS open. Zico and the others hit the place like a whirlwind -- throw open drawers, flip the mattress, slash pillows, upend the TV, stomp open the cable box...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ducmajian arrives at the door to watch.

His fox's eyes scan the room. Except for King's toiletries, it looks all but unoccupied. Ducmajian knows they're wasting their time. He barks an order.

Zico and the others turn to look at him. Down from the pillows falls onto their suits like snow.

Ducmajian picks up the remains of a chair and HURLS it at the shattered TV.

EXT. FRANKLIN AVE, HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

King drags himself out of the alley. Props his back against a wall, panting. Cars pass by.

He shuffles toward some broken bottles. Rolls onto his side with a grunt of pain, wriggles backward. He tickles a shard of glass into his fingers. Tries to bring it to bear on the zipper-tag. But it's no good, he's too weak. The glass slips away with a tinkle.

A patrol car passes... slows... carries on.

INT. VONS - NIGHT

Migrainous fluorescent light. The sound of a polishing machine. KELLY manoeuvres an electric flatbed in front of some shelves. Starts loading them with shampoos and conditioners, discreetly pockets a pack of kids' hair ties.

She checks her watch. Ten minutes before five.

EXT. VONS PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Kelly says goodbye to her nightshift coworkers. She heads toward a rusty VW Rabbit, rooting in her bag for her keys.

A noise behind her. Sounded like a moan. She looks back.

Something is moving among the trash bags piled near the service doors. A brief moment's light as another worker leaves the building... the shape is human. Lying face down.

Kelly checks that there are still people in the parking lot. She approaches the prone figure.

KELLY

Are you okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Another moan. She switches on the mini-Maglite on her key chain. Gets closer. Looks down the beam. Winces.

KELLY (CONT'D)

No, you're not. Jesus.

The pinned hands, the bleeding furrows under the zipper-tags, the noose, the dreadlocks matted with dirt and blood.

The dreadlocks...

Kelly crouches, examines the grotesquely swollen features. An intake of breath:

KELLY (CONT'D)

Jacob... Oh, fuck.

King groans, mumbles. Kelly loosens the ligature, draws it gently over his head. Throws it into the shadows.

KELLY (CONT'D)

I'm calling an ambulance.

A grunt: a barely audible "no"...

A beat. Kelly thinks. She looks around. Sees that everyone else has left.

KELLY BACKS THE VW WILDLY ACROSS THE LOT

Squeals to a stop beside the garbage bags. She jumps out. Opens the passenger door. Grabs King by an arm. King tries to help as Kelly half lifts, half rolls him inside.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL - NIGHT

Kelly pulls the VW into the spot nearest the stairs. She checks the office. The light is on, but Keegan isn't behind the desk.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL, STAIRS/WALKWAY - CONTINUOUS

His arm over her shoulder, Kelly inches King's dead weight up the stairs step by step. She has to rest, winded.

They reach the top, almost fall, SLAM against the wall.

A beat. Keegan appears at the door of King's old room, a dustpan in his hand. Kelly spins King back against the wall, smothering him with an embrace, her hand also smothering his groan of pain. Keegan looks at them:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEEGAN

They don't stay over.

KELLY

Stay over? It's five-thirty.

She sees the broken glass and debris outside King's room.

KELLY (CONT'D)

What happened?

KEEGAN

What do you care?

He goes back inside. The sound of a vacuum cleaner. Kelly lets King fall toward her, drags him the last few steps to her door.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Cartoon Network on TV. Kelly's little girl, BOOT, is curled up on the bed, fully dressed. She looks up blearily as Kelly stumbles in with King.

Boot climbs off, makes way for them. Just another of Mommy's 'friends' -- until Boot sees King's injuries. She backs away, starts crying. Kelly hushes her frantically.

KELLY

Shh, honey, it's all right, it's all right. You gotta be quiet.

She manages to calm her. Sets her in front of the TV.

CLOSE ON KING

His head resting on a towel. Kelly snips off the nylon cuffs, grimaces as she peels his ravaged wrists apart.

SERIES OF SHOTS: she cuts away his shirt, revealing terrible contusions; pulls off his shoes and pants; bathes his wounds in warm water from a Spongebob cereal bowl. King flinches, eyes moving under swollen lids.

KING'S BLURRED P.O.V.

Kelly reaching toward him with the washcloth. Cartoon voices. Light from the TV playing on the ceiling.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - DAY

The store fronts in bright sunshine.

INT. BULGARI - DAY

A pretty store assistant hands Wentworth a wrapped box.

ASSISTANT

That's a lovely choice, sir.
She'll be very pleased.

WENTWORTH

You'd have chosen that one?

She nods. Wentworth smiles at her teasingly. She rises:

ASSISTANT

I mean it. It's the only watch
here I'd buy for myself. That's if
I had a spare, you know...

WENTWORTH

... six thousand dollars?

She nods, embarrassed. Wentworth laughs it off charmingly.
He opens his wallet, hands her a business card.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Give me a call next week.

(off her face)

I'm not hitting on you, I swear.
It's just that you're such a great
sales person -- you're open,
honest, and I'm always bumping
into people looking for your kind
of...

He's interrupted by his phone. Checks the display.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Do excuse me.

INT. PRESTON MANSION - SAME

Preston paces the hallway in his robe. Pauses to kick
aside a Frisbee. Growls into the phone:

PRESTON

So how big an idiot am I for
letting you rip me off that buck?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRESTON (CONT'D)
One of my guys just turned up in
the bushes with a serious fucking
cricked neck and it wasn't from
Pilates.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)
(through phone)
I've had confirmation. You made a
sound investment. Problem's gone.

Preston processes the information. A beat.

PRESTON
Not from where I see it. There's
still you.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)
(through phone)
Oh, I'm no problem, Ray. You know
exactly what it'll take for me to
go away.

PRESTON
You're just a cheap fucking
blackmailer.

WENTWORTH (O.S.)
(through phone)
And what are you, Ray?

A click. He's hung up.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - DAY/NIGHT

A SERIES OF SHORT SCENES: a stateless, dream-like feel to
them...

DAYLIGHT SEEPS THROUGH THE DRAPES

King curled naked on the bed, semi-conscious, his wounds
livid and weeping. He trembles with a fever. Boot sits by
his feet, watching Tom & Jerry on TV.

More LIGHT as the door opens. Kelly comes in with a bag of
groceries and clothes from the Goodwill.

LATE AT NIGHT

King, clothed, remains curled on the bed. His fever has
lessened, but he's still shaking, the frozen hours melting
through his nervous system. Boot lies next to him, asleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Across the room, Kelly unself-consciously packs a glass pipe with crystal meth. Lights it. Takes long hits of clean white smoke.

She taps the pipe out. Gets up. Pulls on her Vons jacket.

DAYTIME

Boot, her hair festooned with the stolen ties, munches Cheerios from the box, watching daytime talk. Oprah is interrupted by a promo for the network's Oscar coverage.

Kelly, in her Vons clothes, sits on the bed beside King, attempts to feed him Pot-Ramen with a spoon. King is only half awake. Noodles dribble from his mouth.

NIGHT

The TV glimmers silently. Through half-opened eyes, King sees Kelly slip back into the room. She strips out of her work gear, creeps into the bathroom, leaving the door ajar. In panties and vest, she looks young and vulnerable. Scars from self-inflicted cuts adorn her forearms.

She sits down in front of the TV, checks her watch, reaches for her pipe and baggie.

EXT. LOS FELIZ HILLS ROAD/DUCMAJIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Wentworth's silver Mercedes pulls up outside the steel gates to a large 1970s 'Taco Bell Spanish' house. A high fence around the yard; steel bars on all the windows.

INT. DUCMAJIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ducmajian pours coffee into small cups. Zico and the others lounge sullenly, their eyes never leaving Wentworth.

DUCMAJIAN

We checked with the morgue. Nobody pulled out of the river all week. No black John Does either. They've all got names. And King's not one of them.

Wentworth shrugs.

WENTWORTH

He'll be halfway out to sea by now. Crab food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZICO

He knew we were coming. His room was cleaned out.

WENTWORTH

So he hid it, and now he's dead. That's if he ever had it in the first place.

ZICO

He's alive, I know it.

Wentworth reaches into his pocket, puts something on the table: King's room key, and the tattered picture of Armand.

ZICO (CONT'D)

That doesn't mean anything. Those fuckheads screwed up.

Which brings Ducmajian to his point:

DUCMAJIAN

Why the cops, Paul? We could have handled him.

WENTWORTH

(a glance at Zico)
Like you guys handled him last time?

The room bristles.

DUCMAJIAN

What did you pay them?

WENTWORTH

Preston paid. Fifty.

Ducmajian searches Wentworth's eyes. He knows full well he's being fucked. He sets down his cup.

DUCMAJIAN

We're partners. We have an agreement. You fuck me again like that, I'm gonna to cut off that high class dick of yours and feed it to you piece by piece.

Wentworth all but rolls his eyes. A beat.

WENTWORTH

It doesn't help things, you getting all Balkan on me. It doesn't oil the wheels.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I thrive on a smooth operation.
It's got to tick over, or it's no
use.

DUCMAJIAN

So it's no fucking use, so what?

Wentworth gets up to leave. All eyes on him.

WENTWORTH

You go your way and I go mine. I
can always find myself another
pimp, Duke. It's really up to you.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

King sits propped up on the bed; weak, but on the mend.

Boot watches TV. Kelly is in the kitchenette.

There's sudden KNOCKING on the door. King tenses. A
muffled male voice. Kelly recognizes it. So does King.

Another knock, louder. Kelly responds:

KELLY

Just a minute.

Kelly's eyes meet King's. She helps him off the bed.
Eases him into the bathroom. The knocking continues.

Kelly answers the door. Keegan. He steps past her.

INT. KELLY'S BATHROOM - SAME

King sits on the toilet. Muffled voices. Keegan's tone
impatient.

Suddenly, the bathroom door OPENS. Keegan's ARM shoves
Boot inside. Shuts the door behind her.

A beat. Boot looks to King. She settles on the edge of
the tub. Next door, the TV is switched off.

More muffled conversation. Insistence. Protests. The
sound of a slap. King looks up. Boot is fighting back
tears.

A moment's silence. Then rhythmic male grunting. Urgent,
coarse. The grunts build.

Boot steps across the bathroom, climbs onto King's lap,
clings onto him like a limpet.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - THE SMALL HOURS

King lies awake on the bed. The door opens. Kelly comes in, off of her shift. Her eyes are ringed. Crashing from fatigue and the speed.

She sees King's awake. She reaches into a bag, hands him a bunch of old magazines.

KELLY

Got these for you.

KING

Thank you.

He sees her kiss the sleeping Boot, hang up her coat, take her pipe and meth from her purse. She knows he's watching.

KELLY

You know how it is. I know you do.

She doesn't bother going to the bathroom to change. Strips down to her T and panties. Switches off the light. Gets in the other side of the bed.

A beat. She can still feel King's eyes.

KELLY (CONT'D)

You don't want to touch me. You don't know where I've been.

King doesn't say anything. Reaches out, takes her hand. Holds it. Gentle strength.

Kelly squeezes back. Stares at the muted TV.

A long beat. She looks down at his long fingers enveloping hers. Sees the monkey tattoo in the neon half-light.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Where are the other two? "See no evil"? "Hear no evil"?

KING

Dead.

A long beat. No answer to that.

KING (CONT'D)

I was "speak no", my brother Des was "hear no", Bianca was "see no". We were the Three Kings...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING (CONT'D)

though Bianca wasn't really a King,
her name was McLaren, she was my
half sister.

Another silence. Kelly asks drowsily:

KELLY

What happened?

KING

After mother died, my brother ran
with the gangs in Jamestown...
Yardies. Wouldn't take my advice.

KELLY

And your sister?

KING

All she ever wanted to do was get
out. She'd trust anyone. And it
always cost her.

(beat)

Bianca never could see evil.

King reflects.

He looks across at Kelly. She's asleep.

King withdraws his hand, reaches under the bed and pulls
out his duffle bag. He roots among Bianca's things, finds
the half-smoked Marlboros. Lights one up. Inhales deeply.

He picks up one of the periodicals: *'Los Angeles'* magazine.
Leafs through it in the half light. Pauses. The same
piece he read in the dentist's office: *'Inside Preston's
Palace'...* *'The Place To Be On Oscar Night.'* And the
picture *'... Preston... and friend, Dr. Paul Wentworth'*

HOURS LATER

Daytime. Kelly is out. Boot watches TV.

King sits on the floor. He's been there for some time.
Arranged around him are the contents of Bianca's bag. He
lights up another cigarette. Examines each item in turn:
the unpaid bills, the diary, the pictures...

He studies another photograph of Armand -- the boy's
strange, ethereal face. Sets it aside.

King takes out Zico's phone. Scrolls through the menu.
He shakes his head, not getting anywhere. Grinds out his
cigarette, sick of them now. Crushes the remaining pack,
chucks it in the trash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He flips through the diary. Starts totalling up the numbers written in the margins.

Boot has retrieved the Marlboro pack from the trash.

BOOT

There are still some in here.

KING

Leave them.

BOOT

Mommy'll smoke them.

She begins to pull the pack apart. Paper and tobacco fall on the floor.

As does something else. A small, rectangular object. Boot picks it up. Gives it to King.

BOOT (CONT'D)

What's this?

King holds it up to his eye. It's a tiny 1 GB memory card.

INT. YUNG DU KOREAN MARKET - DAY

The Korean teenager who helped King earlier examines the memory card. His mother hovers in the background, uneasy at the sight of King's injuries.

KOREAN KID

Stores pictures or video. Anything you want. One gig. Haven't seen one this big.

KING

Can you look at what's on it?

KOREAN KID

I can try.

He says something to his mother. They have a short conversation. The boy looks to King.

KOREAN KID (CONT'D)

I told her you'd been in a car accident. This way.

He lifts the counter, leads King through the bead curtain.

INT. BACK ROOM, KOREAN STORE - CONTINUOUS

A combination security-room and tech-den. The kid hooks up a Lexar Multi-card reader to his computer, slips in the card. Studies the monitor.

KOREAN KID
It's a Quicktime file. Video.
Looks like it's locked.

A window on screen: *'Authorized User Only. User Password?'*

KOREAN KID (CONT'D)
You know the password?

King shakes his head. The Korean kid thinks.

KOREAN KID (CONT'D)
Maybe I can get at the audio.

He tickles the keyboard; drags and clicks. An import clock starts to count down on screen. The kid smiles.

KOREAN KID (CONT'D)
Here we go.

'Unnamed File' appears on the iTunes play-list. He clicks again, turns up the volume.

Voices, male and female. Some familiar... Wentworth, Preston, other males. Laughter, music. A woman speaks... the same West Indian lilt as King's. Her voice suddenly clear:

BIANCA (O.S)
(on the speakers)
Where are you going, Ray?

A muffled answer. Shuffling footsteps. A door opens and closes. Suddenly quieter. Indistinct dialogue: a much younger voice, on the edge of breaking. A boy. The faint sound of kissing. Gentle slapping. Encouragement. A moment's silence. Then more serious focus. Grunting, rhythmic, building... then the recording stops.

A long beat. King's face is drawn tight. The Korean kid pops out the card. Uneasy, trying to make light:

KOREAN KID
I don't know, man. Sounds like
some kind of porno.

He holds out the memory card. Slowly, King takes it.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - AFTERNOON

The Oscar billboard we saw before. King walks down the street, still hurting in places. Cuts across the traffic.

INT. PEP BOYS - EVENING

King dumps a NASCAR sports bag in his cart, pushes it down the aisle. Adds a six-volt motorcycle battery, some wire clippers, duct tape, a box of emergency road flares, a pepper spray keychain...

EXT. STREET/JACARANDA MOTEL - NIGHT

Carrying his purchases, King turns off the street half a block before the motel. He slips in the back of the parking lot, out of sight of the office. Heads upstairs.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

King comes through the door. Boot is in her usual position at the TV. Kelly stands up from the bed. Goes off at him:

KELLY

Where the fuck have you been?! You didn't tell her where you were going. You didn't even tell her if you were coming back. The poor kid's been in here, by herself all day, crying her fucking eyes out. What are you trying to do to us?!

As she yells, Boot turns up the TV. The din reaches a crescendo, interrupted by POUNDING on the wall.

Kelly stops, breathless. Tears streaking her face. King is about to say something...

KELLY (CONT'D)

Don't. Don't say a fucking word.

She snatches up her Vons jacket, shoulders past him, into the night. Boot doesn't look up from the TV.

KING SITS AT THE TABLE IN THE KITCHENETTE

It's two in the morning. He looks over to check on Boot asleep in front of the TV, which glares silently with promos for tomorrow's Oscar ceremony and party coverage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King gets back to work...

SERIES OF SHOTS:

He cuts several sets of wires of differing lengths, strips each one precisely.

He pries the ends off the road flares. Pours the phosphorous into a cardboard mailer tube.

He lines the jaws of a clothes pin with foil. Slips a strip of plastic card between them, attached to some cord.

He arranges the tube, wires, battery and clothes pin device on the floor of the Nascar bag. Duct tapes them down.

He sweeps the tools and leftovers into the trash. Zips up the bag, puts it under the sink.

THE NEXT DAY -- LATE AFTERNOON

Drapes are still drawn; Boot watches TV. Kelly has only just woken. She gets up without a word to King. Pads over to the table, starts eating Cheerios out of the packet.

Kelly's focus shifts to what's on TV. She checks the time. Suddenly, hyper:

KELLY (CONT'D)

Hey, it's Oscar night. What the hell are we doing? We've got to have a party. Okay, here's the deal, you guys stay right where you are. I'm gonna get chips, ice cream, some beers... Jesus, we nearly missed the whole shebang.

King smiles distantly as Kelly rushes around, dressing. Pulls on her shoes. Grabs her bag.

KELLY (CONT'D)

What d'you like, Bud or Miller? Or I could get Coors, Coors is on sale right now. What about you, honey? Mint chip or cookie dough?

BOOT

(over her shoulder)
Cookie dough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KELLY

Cookie dough it is. I'll be right
back.

She hurries to the door. Stops to peck King on the cheek
before she flies out.

King waits a few beats to let her go. Then he gets up.

He looks to Boot. Boot turns. Looks him in the eye. Then
turns back to the TV... where there's wild APPLAUSE as
Chris Rock steps out to host the 77th Academy Awards.

The sound of the door opening and closing. Boot doesn't
look back.

CUT TO:

EXT. KARABOUDJIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Two black Mercedes outside the restaurant. Heavy-set men
lounge on the hoods of the cars. Music from inside.

INT. KARABOUDJIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Duke, Zico, Vrioni and the others play cards at a table.

EXT. PRESTON COMPOUND - NIGHT

Last minute prep for the Oscar party. Waiters detail place
settings. Valets, off-duty cops and plain-clothes security
hover at the gates. Preston fusses around some techs
working on lighting the fountain.

INT. SARAFIAN HOUSE, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sarafian adjusts his tie. His wife details her lipstick,
downs a vodka. Their fifteen year old daughter ambles past
behind them. On the wall, framed photos of Sarafian with
the Police Chief, the Mayor, the Governor.

INT. WENTWORTH APARTMENT - NIGHT

An open plan Westwood high-rise. Dressed only in shorts,
Wentworth shells pistachios as he watches the Oscars.

A door opens, the sound of a shower. The girl from Bulgari
steps out, naked. Fetches a bag and steps back in. She
glances at Wentworth. He doesn't look around.

INT. HOLLYWOOD COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

King picks at some onion rings, Nascar bag beside him. The waitress refills his coffee and sets down the check. King looks at his watch, then at the TV above the counter.

APPLAUSE, MUSIC: Best Picture has just been announced.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD SIDE STREET - NIGHT

King crosses the street toward a parked 90s Honda Civic. He pauses by the driver's side, glances around. He slips a filed-down screwdriver into the lock, and twists.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD - NIGHT

King drives the Honda Civic. He turns right, heads up into the hills.

EXT. SKYLINE DRIVE - NIGHT

Off-duty cops supervise the vehicles inching uphill toward Preston's compound. King pulls onto a side street.

EXT. PRESTON'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

Guests stream through the main gates onto the grounds.

AT THE GATES

Paparazzi and a TV crew are held back behind ropes. Security men check everybody's invitations.

A black Cadillac Escalade - tinted windows, heart-pounding bass - pulls to the front of the line. Doors open. A surge of flashes and camera lights as an African-American RAP STAR debarkes, along with his POSSE.

The posse closes around their man. Ignoring formalities, they muscle through the entrance.

King steps out from behind the Escalade and joins their rear, unnoticed. A guard points to the Nascar bag.

GUARD

Sir? Sir, I need to see what's in that bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King gives him a withering fuck-you stare. The guard backs off, nods him through with the others...

INTO THE COMPOUND

The hip-hop posse merges with the guests hanging outside with their drinks, party inside in full swing. King hangs back, heads up toward the house.

IN THE SECURITY CONTROL ROOM

The HEAD OF SECURITY scans his monitors. Views of the gates and grounds. He hits the talkback.

SECURITY BOSS

I need two more by the marquee.
Rice, it's filling up in the house
and I've got no cameras in there.
I want you inside.

NEAR THE FOUNTAIN

A man in a cheap suit surveys the guests... it's Rice, the older cop who beat up King. He clicks on his wire-mike:

RICE

Copy that, Mike. I'm there.

OUTSIDE THE MANSION

King eases his way through. He takes a glass, keeps moving. People glance. A starlet grins at him.

STARLET

Hey, what've you got in that bag?

But King's attention is elsewhere. Looking out --

ACROSS THE LAWN

Near the marquee, a group of execs, actors and hangers-on cluster around their host... Ray Preston.

Preston's focus abruptly shifts from their conversation to something he's noticed behind them.

INSIDE THE MANSION

Scott, harried, checks the arrival lists. His phone RINGS. He glances at the caller ID, answers quickly.

SCOTT

Ray...

IN THE MARQUEE

Preston moves away from the group, kicks at a one of the many flower arrangements. Hisses into his phone.

PRESTON

I said fucking Azaleas. These are lilies! What's the fucking deal?

INSIDE THE MANSION

King steps into the noisy, overcrowded lobby. Pulsing music and strobe lights. King moves forward. Glimpses --

ACROSS THE ROOM

Scott on his cell, easing his way out of the crush.

OUTSIDE THE MAIN GATES

A Lincoln Town car pulls up. A valet opens the door. Sarafian and his wife get out.

INSIDE THE MANSION

King moves steadily through the pulsing noise and lights. His eyes never lose sight of Scott.

WITH SCOTT

Cradling his cell, heading into the atrium/corridor.

SCOTT

I don't care how much. Azaleas. Just send over anything you've got.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Rice pushes in, scans the pulsing confusion of people.

OUTSIDE THE MANSION

Sarafian and his wife drift across the lawn. She takes another glass of champagne off a passing tray, giddy with the whole scene. Sarafian whispers:

SARAFIAN

You watch how you go on those.

PRESTON (O.S.)

Commissioner!

Preston sweeps Sarafian and his wife into his circle.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

This is Commissioner Sarafian.
Suck up to him while you can. You
want to kick the winos off the
beach, close the 101, or piss off
your neighbors by throwing the
party of the year, this is the guy.

INSIDE THE MANSION

King moves into the atrium corridor. Much quieter. The occasional guest. Serving staff heading back and forth.

At the far end of the corridor, Scott disappears through a door. King heads in his direction.

King pauses, listening. From somewhere deep within the house, the faint thud-thud of video game combat. He keeps going. The sound gets closer. King cuts left into --

A BEDROOM CORRIDOR

King pauses again. Video game sounds mix with groans from behind a door. King reaches for the handle. Opens it.

A SMALL UTILITY ROOM

A half-clad exec humps a wanna-be Cameron Diaz on the dryer, her skirt hiked up. They look round, breathless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING CLOSES THE DOOR

He listens again. Moves on down the corridor. The BOOM of video explosions getting louder. He reaches the last door. Tries the handle. It's locked.

King stands back, runs his hand along the sill. Finds a key. Slips it into the lock. Opens the door into --

A CHILD'S BEDROOM

A designer catalog kid's room, strewn with half-opened shopping bags, clothes and discarded packaging for games and platforms. A 60" TV screen dominates one wall.

In the center, a pre-teen boy in boxers and tank-top lies on his front, engrossed by the game.

King enters behind him, unheard. A long beat.

KING

Armand?

Without stopping the game, ARMAND looks around.

He's more striking in the flesh. Stunning even, as he stares at King. His eyes golden, but empty.

ARMAND

Yeah?

Beat. King says nothing. Armand shrugs, turns back to his game. King takes a breath. Steps quietly back out into --

THE BEDROOM CORRIDOR

King locks the door, drops the key in his pocket. He heads slowly back. Another pause. Hears a door open, a VOICE...

IN THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

Scott comes out of Preston's office, closes the door.

SCOTT

(into cell phone)

Will do, will do.

He hangs up, finally. Shakes his head, sets down the phone and clipboard on a side-table and slips into --

A DESIGNER BATHROOM

Scott locks the door. Sighs. Pulls a baggie of coke from his pocket. Starts setting out lines.

IN THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

King scoops up Scott's phone. Moves on.

AROUND THE POOL

Guests are getting raucous. Somebody pushes a girl into the water. She clambers out, clothes clinging to her body. Preston is with another group, laughing.

IN THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

King scrolls through the menu on Scott's cell.

BESIDE THE POOL

Preston's phone vibrates. He steps away from the group.

RAY

What the fuck is it now, Scott?

IN THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

King holds the cell phone to his ear.

KING

My name's King. I'm Bianca's brother.

BESIDE THE POOL

An appalled beat. Preston pales. Hisses:

PRESTON

How the fuck did you... Look, I...
I can't deal with this now, I got a
party going on here... I can't
leave my house!

IN THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

King steps through the door into Preston's office. Quiet.

KING

You don't have to. I'm in your
office. I have what you want.

BESIDE THE POOL

Preston slowly lowers the phone.

PARTY GUEST

You okay, Ray? You don't look so
good.

No answer. Preston hurries toward the house.

INT. PRESTON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

King moves with predatory economy. Checks the 'Personal
Assault' alarm button, the conference phone, the bathroom,
no other exits...

He sets the Nascar bag on the table, takes out a roll of
duct tape, pulls the window drapes shut.

A click behind him. King turns.

Preston enters the room. Flushed, trembling, but holding
it together. Just.

King doesn't move.

A long beat. Face to face.

Preston suddenly impatient, flustered:

PRESTON

So where is it? There's a party
going on. I don't have much time.

King opens his hand. The memory card.

Preston stares at it. Looks to King.

King slowly holds the memory card out toward him.

Preston hesitates, then takes it. He pulls open the wall
doors to a media center, revealing a large plasma screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slips the memory card into a reader. Types his password into a computer key-board. Mutes the sound.

SILENT IMAGES ON THE PLASMA SCREEN

Grainy hand-held home-video footage. Short, jerky cuts. Preston's mansion... Wentworth frolics on a couch with a half-dressed woman... an undulating tangle of naked bodies, a glimpse of another familiar face. Cuts again...

Topless, Bianca twirls for the camera. She reaches out. Takes hold of somebody. Camera swings away from her.

BACK TO SCENE -- KING WATCHES

His eyes close. Slowly open again.

SILENT IMAGES ON THE PLASMA SCREEN

Camera tracks into another room. The door closes. The camera finds a figure sitting on a bed. Armand. He turns, looks in our direction, sultry. The image stabilizes as the camera is set down. Positioned.

Preston walks into frame and sits beside Armand. He loosens the cord of his robe. Reaches over, starts to unzip Armand's jacket.

BACK TO SCENE

King watches Preston staring at the silent images, neutral, matter-of-fact. He sighs. Finally... he's got it back.

KING

Bianca was holding on to this till
you gave her back the boy?

Preston looks at him. Says with contempt.

PRESTON

Too fucking right she was. Can you
fucking believe it? Less than a
month after we'd made the deal.

A beat. King stares at Preston.

KING

My sister... sold you her kid?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PRESTON

He wasn't 'her' kid. He belonged to that idiot husband, the one who got himself offed. Bianca was pissed as fuck at him. That's why they were pimping her, to get the money back he owed them. She sold the kid to pay off the debt, then went and changed her fucking mind.

King's eyes bore into Preston's. He's not lying. For the first time, King looks caught off balance.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

We had a deal. I told her: Armand's happy here. I've given him a home, not some fucking shithole off Vine. He was on the streets, for Christ's sake. We get on great, he can have anything he wants. Everything was just fine till she started putting our nuts in a vice. Did she honestly think the boy wanted to go back? To her? She had to be fucking kidding.

King doesn't say anything, just stares at him. Preston shakes his head with righteous indignation.

SILENT IMAGES ON PLASMA SCREEN

A moment's pause. A static burst... then the grainy home-video footage starts over again on a loop.

KING STANDS, SILENT

Preston is anxious to finish business.

PRESTON

Okay, let's wind this up. Seventy, wasn't it?

King doesn't even blink. Just grunts.

Preston scurries past him. Opens the walk-in closet, slides the file cabinet to one side to access the safe. Says over his shoulder:

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Cheap at the fucking price, if you ask me. Jesus, what a couple of months.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He starts sorting bricks of cash.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
You know, the irony is. You've
turned out to be the only straight-
shooter in this whole fucking mess.

Preston steps back from the safe and swings around... the
nickel plated pistol - a .25 Beretta - pointed at King.

King doesn't move. Preston steps closer.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Okay, time out. Let's think about
this. No way am I doing a Phil
Spector at my own fucking party...

Sudden simultaneous move: King grabs the gun with his left
hand, SMASHES his right forearm across Preston's face.

Preston reels back into his chair, stunned. Spits out a
broken tooth, blood pouring from his mouth.

PRESTON (CONT'D)
Oh, Jesus Christ.

The DOOR OPENS behind King...

It's Scott. Wired.

SCOTT
Did I leave my cell...?

A beat as he takes in the scene. He suddenly darts for the
Personal Attack Alarm button. King grabs him. SLAMS him
face-first into the wall. Minimum force, maximum effect.
Scott staggers. Slides to the floor, clutching his
bleeding nose.

King moves fast: locks the door, grabs the duct tape.
Shoves the stunned Preston into the chair, tapes his hands,
seals his mouth.

Preston mumbles frantically. King slaps him once, hard.
Preston stops mumbling, tears welling.

King moves to Scott. Tapes his hands to his ankles.

KING
Don't say a word.

Scott nods, terrified. King keeps moving, focused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He opens the Nascar bag, arranges enough bricks of cash from the safe to cover Frankie's bag of coke. He makes a final adjustment inside the bag, zips it shut.

He finds a nylon laptop case, empties it. Loads it with the rest of the money from the safe.

He sets the gun on the desk, leans over Preston. He rips the tape off Preston's mouth. Preston gasps air.

King shows him a piece of paper with a number on it.

KING (CONT'D)

You're going to make a phone call.

INT. KARABOUDJIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A haze of smoke. Intense late night gambling. Ducmajian's phone rings. He picks up. Listens.

DUCMAJIAN

(into the phone)

Mr. Preston? I... how did you get hold of me?

INT. PRESTON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

King jams the phone against Preston's ear. Preston looks up at him. Sweating with fear. Goes for it:

PRESTON

Never mind... I thought you might like to know how we're both getting shaken down like a pair of assholes. Your fucking partner, that fuckface dentist, he's in this with that King guy.

(beat)

Yeah, Bianca's so-called brother.

(beat)

No. No, he's not fucking dead. He's not dead at all. They just put the squeeze on me for three-quarters of a big one. They're on the way here now to pick it up.

INT. WENTWORTH APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wentworth dozes by the TV in his shorts. The phone rings. He comes to. Picks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT (O.S.)
(through phone))
Paul? It's Scott.

Wentworth glances at his watch. Alert.

WENTWORTH
Scott. Are you all right?

INT. PRESTON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

King's hand on his back, Scott leans over the conference phone, blood trickling from his nose. His voice quavers:

SCOTT
No. I'm not. I just walked into Ray's office. He's killed himself. Blown his brains out. There's all this money, Paul... I don't know what's going on. You're the only person I could think of calling.

Behind them, we see Preston, his face cocooned in duct tape. He thrashes in his chair, eyes bulging. King leans past Scott, clicks off the speakerphone...

EXT. PRESTON MANSION - NIGHT

In the marquee, Sarafian and a line of other guests load their plates from the buffet.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Armand reaches another level of Metal Gear Solid.

INT. PRESTON MANSION - NIGHT

The deafening party rages in the lobby, lights pulsing to the music. Rice eases through, watchful.

INT. PRESTON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Silent images still move on the plasma screen: Bianca, topless, twirls for the camera, smiling and laughing.

King lifts Preston's gun off the desk.

Scott watches, horrified.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Preston howls through his duct tape gag.

PRESTON

I gign't hill her... I gign't hill
her! Peeeze...

His eyes are wide, pleading. A long beat. King looks down at him, gun in his hand. Picks up a Kilim pillow.

Another piteous howl, King jams the pillow into Preston's face. Presses the gun deep into it.

A MUFFLED SHOT. Blood sprays the wall behind him as Preston's body jerks back in the chair.

King steps back. Calmly wipes off the gun, puts it on the desk. He closes the media center doors, obscuring the looping silent images. Crosses the room.

Scott whimpers as King frisks him, finds his car keys. He sets the Nascar bag on the table. Looks to Scott:

KING

I'm coming back for this.

He swings the laptop case onto his shoulder and exits...

OUTSIDE THE GATES

Guests still arriving. Wentworth cuts to the front of the line, waves at his friendly security guard.

INSIDE THE MANSION

Rice edges out of the crush into the long atrium corridor. He suddenly notices something at the --

FAR END OF THE CORRIDOR

A black man with dreadlocks, carrying a laptop case. He disappears around a corner.

Rice stops dead. It can't be. He reaches for his wire-mike intercom... thinks better of it.

He looks around. Strides forward. Breaks into a trot.

Rounds the corner...

The PFFFT of a pepper spray. Rice recoils, stumbles...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A straight arm CLOTHESLINES him across his throat.

Rice reels, choking in spasms. King grabs his shoulders, RAMS a knee hard up right into Rice's groin. Rice passes out, dropping like a sack.

Footsteps. King hauls Rice's body out of sight, squeezes against the wall. Peeks around.

IN THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

A familiar figure heads for Preston's office. Wentworth.

BACK IN THE BEDROOM CORRIDOR

King drags Rice by the collar. Reaches the last door. Puts the key in the lock. Opens the door into --

ARMAND'S BEDROOM

The boy looks up as King dumps Rice on the floor. Rice groans. King silences him another kick. He picks up some sweat pants from the bed, tosses them to the boy.

KING

We're leaving. I'm Jacob.
Bianca's brother.

Armand says nothing. Starts to pull on the sweat pants.

INSIDE PRESTON'S OFFICE

Wentworth comes through the door. He takes in the scene: Preston dead in the chair. The Nascar bag on the table. Scott, hog-tied with duct tape, his face bloody.

SCOTT

He was here. King. He's coming
back for the bag...

Wentworth goes to the bag. Unzips it. Sees the cash. Zips it shut, picks it up and heads for the door.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Paul... Help me... Paul...

Wentworth turns, looks at Scott. A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He puts down the bag, goes to Scott's side. A click. His hand reappears with a folding knife. Scott sees it, moves his duct-taped hands closer to the blade.

Wentworth thinks for a moment. Then, with surgical neatness, he pulls the serrated edge across Scott's throat.

THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ARMAND'S ROOM

King locks the door, snaps the key off. A Game Cube box tucked under his arm, Armand follows King --

TOWARD THE ATRIUM CORRIDOR

Footsteps. Too late to hide. King freezes.

Wentworth walks right by them. The Nascar bag in hand. His eyes firmly ahead of him. A beat. King hurries Armand across the corridor into the servants' area.

OUTSIDE THE GATES

Two black Mercedes draw up on the hill below the valet line. Doors open. Vrioni, Zico and four others pile out.

THE SERVANT'S AREA

King navigates Armand through the utility corridors. They slip quickly past the entrance to the staff kitchen. Keep moving. King looking for a service exit.

THE FRONT LOBBY

Wentworth moves through the party. Nods and waves of recognition from some of the guests. The same drunk starlet notices the passing Nascar bag.

STARLET

What's with these bags? I've got to get one.

OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND

Vrioni, Zico and four men head up toward the house and grounds. Split into two groups.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE SERVANT'S AREA

King leads Armand around a corner. A push-bar door at the end. King tries it. Locked. He takes the boy's arm and doubles back. Armand shakes his head: adults.

IN ARMAND'S BEDROOM

Rice groans in pain as he comes round.

THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

Wentworth quickens his pace. Down the sweeping steps. He looks out over the lawn. Hesitates, as he sees...

ACROSS THE LAWN

Zico and two heavies emerge near the marquee.

BACK ON THE STEPS

Wentworth turns on his heel. Stops. Vrioni is standing right in front of him. Wentworth forces a smile.

WENTWORTH

Vrioni. What are you doing here?

A hand on his arm. Two more Armenians, one on each side. Vrioni lifts the Nascar bag out of his hand.

IN ARMAND'S BEDROOM

Rice hauls himself across the floor, toward his walkie.

THE SERVANT'S AREA

King leads Armand around another corner. Relief. Long utility corridor. They follow it. Find themselves at the head of some steps into a CELLAR. Another dead end.

IN THE MARQUEE

Sarafian and his wife load up again at the buffet. Behind them, Zico and his team spread out, still searching.

IN THE KITCHENS

King walks Armand back past, trying to attract minimum attention from the overworked cooks and servers. He feels a breeze. Looks around to see a kitchen porter holding a door open as he puts out a cigarette and steps inside.

BEHIND THE MANSION

The service door opens. King leads Armand quickly out into the darkened staff parking lot. He walks them along the rank of cars, pulls out Scott's keys, presses the remote button. Lights blink on a parked BMW.

King puts Armand in the car, gets in. Just as he shuts the doors, LIGHT SPILLS from the door they just came through. Voices. King's eyes flick to the mirror, to...

FOUR MEN CROSSING THE PARKING LOT

... directly toward them. Vrioni and the other two Armenians, marching Wentworth out.

INSIDE THE BMW

King looks to Armand: stay still. The group approaches, then passes. Heading for the rear compound access.

OUTSIDE THE MAIN GATES

Vrioni and his men escort Wentworth to the second Mercedes.

They bundle him in, oblivious to the curious glances of party guests. Vrioni leans inside, hands Ducmajian the Nascar bag. A brief exchange in Armenian. Vrioni steps back and closes the car door.

INSIDE THE BLACK MERCEDES

Tense silence. Wentworth smiles as best he can.

WENTWORTH

Duke...

Ducmajian's jaw clenches. His face is cold with fury.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

Preston's dead, Duke. Scott called me at home. Said there was money everywhere...

DUCMAJIAN

Sure, he just ups and dies at his own fucking party and leaves a bunch of cash lying around for you to pick up. How did he die?

A beat. There's no way around it.

WENTWORTH

King...

DUCMAJIAN

Of course. King, who you told me was dead. King, who's had the jump on us every step of the way. Is he even Bianca's brother, or is that more of your fucking bullshit?

WENTWORTH

I don't understand.

Ducmajian unzips the Nascar bag. Sees the cash.

WENTWORTH (CONT'D)

I was going to split it...

Ducmajian says nothing. He picks up a brick of hundreds. Studies it. Dips back inside the bag.

DUCMAJIAN

I was wondering where this was.

He pulls out Frankie's big bag of coke...

There's some cord attached to it. Duke tugs it free.

A faint snapping sound from inside the bag. Duke looks...

INTO THE NASCAR BAG

Wiring; motor-bike battery; cardboard mailer tube...

INSIDE THE CAR

A moment's horrified realization. Then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A THUD! A BLINDING FLASH OF WHITE HEAT AS THE PHOSPHORUS BOMB EXPLODES.

INSIDE THE GATES

Guests scream, scramble back. Valets scatter. Paparazzi, the TV crew and Vrioni spinning around as the --

-- Mercedes doors BURST OPEN. Wentworth and Duke roll out. Their clothes, the car on fire. Phosphorous burns through their flesh and eyes. They drop to the pavement, writhing.

IN THE BMW

King listens. Screams and shouting. He reaches forward and starts the car.

IN THE MARQUEE

People rush out to see what's happened. Zico among them.

OUTSIDE THE GATES

Vrioni charges back toward the car with a yell. One of his guys grabs him, pulls him back just in time as --

KABOOM! The burning Mercedes' gas tank blows. Ducmajian and Wentworth are engulfed by the fireball, which roils up into the night sky in a column of smoke.

IN THE SECURITY ROOM

The security boss is totally overwhelmed. A blast of STATIC on his speaker. He checks his board:

SECURITY BOSS

Rice? Rice-- ?!

OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND

... as suddenly every emergency alarm on the property starts to WAIL --

Pandemonium as attention abruptly shifts away from the blazing car. The gate security men race up toward the house, paparazzi and TV crew following.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Below them, King swings the BMW out of the staff exit onto the perimeter road. Passing the main gates...

INSIDE THE BMW

Armand gazes back at the burning Mercedes, charred bodies on the ground. He looks almost impressed. Metal Gear Solid, dude.

Emergency vehicles BLARE uphill toward them. King pulls over to let them past.

INSIDE THE GATES

Vrioni breaks free of the heavies still restraining him, fights his way forward and falls on his knees beside Ducmajian's body, devastated.

Zico appears behind him, sees the mayhem, mind racing. He hears the approaching SIRENS. Instinctively turns --

OUTSIDE THE GATES

-- past the lights of the oncoming fire-trucks, Zico sees the black BMW heading smoothly down the hill.

INSIDE THE MANSION

Alarms CLANGING. The Head of Security rushes down the corridor, pushing through the people crowded around the door to Preston's office. A beat later, Sarafian follows.

SARAFIAN

Let me through, let me through.

He shoulders his way past, into:

PRESTON'S OFFICE

Filled with uniformed officers, off-duty cops and shaken guests. Sarafian sees Preston and Scott. He stops short, pales. Realizes that the room has fallen quiet. He looks up. Everyone's staring at him.

Sarafian's eyes shift toward the blue light flickering at far end of the room...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON THE PLASMA SCREEN

Silent home-video still playing: Wentworth frolics on a couch with a half-clad young women. Naked, undulating bodies. One of them is turned toward us, his face suddenly very familiar. It's Sarafian.

CUT TO:

I/E. BMW/SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

King drives in silence. Armand flicks on the car radio and turns up the volume. He starts pressing buttons, dialing through the stations.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL - NIGHT

The BMW pulls into the lot.

King leads Armand up the stairs toward Kelly's room.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Boot sits alone in front of the TV. Looks up as King comes in with Armand.

She studies Armand with curiosity as he wordlessly takes a seat beside her to watch cartoons.

King glances out the window. Pulls the drapes.

IN THE BATHROOM

King stands on the toilet, reaches into the cistern.

He pulls out a sealed bag containing his passport and wallet. Quickly puts them in his pocket.

He gets down, steps back out into the

LIVING AREA

WHAM! A baseball bat SLAMS into King's gut.

King doubles over.

Zico swings again, trying for the skull. Catches King on the shoulder, knocking him into the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Boot screams. Armand backs away, toward the door.

Zico tries to get another shot at King's head, but King ducks into the swing, hooks an arm around Zico's chest and brings them both crashing onto the floor by the bed.

Zico manages to scramble away, gets to one knee. He raises the bat double-handed.

King's hand fumbles frantically under the bed. Blurs upward. CLONK! Two bars of Ivory soap in a sock impact with Zico's temple.

Zico reels. King whacks him with the sock mace again. Zico goes down, hands flailing, trying to grab on.

King snatches up the baseball bat. All self-control gone. He bludgeons Zico until there's no movement at all. Blood sprays the walls.

King straightens, winded. Boot cries in the corner.

Armand is no longer in the room.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL/HOLLYWOOD - CONTINUOUS

King races down the stairs, across the parking lot and out onto the street. The boy could be anywhere.

He dashes around the corner, along a series of dark, trash-strewn alleys. Lights up ahead.

Suddenly, he's on Hollywood Boulevard. He looks up and down, decides to head west. Keeps going.

He slows. Then stops, breathless. He looks around him. Traffic passing. Teen runaways and hustlers in the doorway of an abandoned hotel.

The boy has gone.

EXT. JACARANDA MOTEL - NIGHT

King walks back into the lot.

I/E. JACARANDA MOTEL, WALKWAY/KELLY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As King approaches, he sees a figure outside Kelly's room, BANGING on the door, which is held by the chain. Keegan.

Lights are on. People watch from their doors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEEGAN

Take the chain off you little fuck!
I wanna know what's going on in
there!

He looks around. Sees King. His face darkens.

KEEGAN (CONT'D)

You?

King heads toward him.

KEEGAN (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing?

KING

Checking out.

WHACK! King connects with a vicious head butt. Keegan staggers, collapses. King looks up at the rubbernecks. One by one they retreat into their rooms.

INT. KELLY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Boot weeps in the corner. Cartoons still flicker. King turns off the TV and gently lifts Boot into his arms.

INT. VONS - NIGHT

The night shift. Kelly manoeuvres her cart down an aisle of cans. She looks outside. Stops dead.

KELLY'S P.O.V. -- THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW

King stands in the parking lot. Duffle over his shoulder. Laptop case in one hand, Boot in the other.

CAMERA P.O.V. -- THROUGH THE WINDOW

Kelly runs out into the parking lot. She stops in front of King. A beat. Some words are spoken. King passes her Boot. Then hands her the laptop case.

Another beat. He turns and starts walking away.

EXT. VONS PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Frowning, Kelly opens the laptop case. It's filled with bricks of hundred dollar bills. She looks up, stunned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KELLY

King! What the hell is this?

He calls back to her:

KING

Whatever you want it to be.

A beat. Kelly shakes her head in disbelief.

King keeps on walking.

KELLY

Where are you going?

King stops. Turns.

KING

Home.

Kelly smiles.

KELLY

You're such a talker.

Another beat. King smiles too. He looks tired. He raises his hand in a final farewell. Turns to leave.

Kelly watches as he keeps walking. Crosses the traffic onto the far side of the street. A bus blocks her view, a network ad for the Oscars covering its side.

The bus passes. And King is gone.

INT. AIR JAMAICA BOEING 757 - DAY

King sits in a window seat. Stewards move through the cabin, checking seat belts. The captain announces their final approach.

INT. KINGSTON AIRPORT - DAY

A long line at 'Passport Control'. King reaches the front. An immigration officer flips open his passport. He studies King's face, then hands it back and nods him through.

King picks his duffle off the carousel, walks through customs line and heads for the terminal exit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING'S P.O.V. -- THROUGH THE GLASS DOORS AHEAD

Three POLICE CARS parked right outside the terminal.

BACK TO SCENE -- KING REGISTERS THEM

... but he keeps going, steady.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

A group of Jamaican cops smoke and talk. One of them gets a message on his walkie. Nods to the others. They stub out their cigarettes, straighten up.

King steps out into the sunlight. He looks around, sees the cops... and walks steadily in their direction.

The cops see King coming. Two of them start moving briskly toward him. Getting closer. One of the cops takes King's bag. The other shakes his hand. A warm smile.

JAMAICAN COP

Inspector King. Welcome back, sir.
Did you have a good holiday?

I/E. POLICE CAR/KINGSTON - DAY

The police cars head into the city. King's driver glances at him in the mirror.

JAMAICAN COP

Your sister, Inspector? Did you
get to see her?

A beat. King nods.

KING

Yes, yes I did.
(a beat)
She's doing fine.

King turns away, looks out the window at the streets of Kingston: their ramshackle charm, and their danger.

He's home.

FADE OUT.