

PURE

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. HARLEM - 160TH STREET - NIGHT

A rundown apartment building on a desolate block.

EXT. SIXTH-FLOOR WINDOW - NIGHT

TEN-YEAR-OLD JESUS sits in the window, bouncing a WHITE SUPERBALL on the narrow ledge as he surveys the street below.

He spies a half-dozen RAG-TAG BROTHERS playing speed chess in a small, fenced-in park across the street. A few more brothers spectate, waiting on next game.

Jesus watches a late-model BLACK LEXUS with tinted windows round the corner and pull smoothly to the curb below.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - NIGHT

RAMON, 35, snazzy shirt, a ladies' man, sings softly along to the Chilean love song on the radio. He waits out the final notes, then kills the engine. Drags on his cigarette; grimaces out at the derelict block; gets out of the car.

As he walks to the building, he glances up at Jesus in the window. He reaches the door and hits the buzzer.

INTERCOM VOICE (O.S.)

Hola.

RAMON

Hola.

The BUZZER sounds. Ramon walks through the door and disappears down the dark hallway.

ACROSS THE STREET...

The speed chess continues. Only two spectators now, though. Weren't there three just a moment ago?

BACK TO SCENE

Ramon steps out of the building, looks around, and walks to the Lexus, sing-whispering the Chilean love song. Just as he reaches the car...

A BLACKJACK cracks against his head.

Ramon goes down hard. A lithe MUGGER in dark burglar's garb and WOOL SKI MASK rolls him over, pats him down, and steals something from his jacket. When the mugger sees what he's stolen, his EYES GO WIDE.

As he tucks the packet into his vest and stands...

A white superball bounces towards him. He catches it and looks around: Nobody. He tosses it away and runs off.

CLOSE ON the passed-out Ramon, face up in the gutter. The superball rolls off the curb and comes to rest on his chest.

CUT TO BLACK:

LEGEND: "BRETT"

FADE IN:

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY - DUSK

A posh cul de sac lined with trees and fine homes. Streetlights switch on in unison as afternoon melts into another tranquil suburban evening.

The EVERETT HOME is beautiful and ultra-modern. A Porsche and a Mercedes Station Wagon grace the driveway. The lawn sprinklers CLICK off. Newly-mown grass glistens.

We see LIGHT through a second-floor window. We CLOSE IN.

INT. EVERETT HOUSE - BABY'S ROOM

BRETT HAYES, 22-year-old NANNY, diapers one-year-old BENJAMIN EVERETT on a changing table. She wears red U. OF NEBRASKA sweats and her hair is up, but no drab clothes can hide her Midwestern beauty. What we notice is her graceful calm.

She loves this baby and speaks to him as to an equal.

BRETT
Tomorrow you're going to walk, Benji. I
know you're ready. You'll let go and
there'll be no stopping you.

She zips up his sleeper and carries him to the crib. She flips the switch on a CD PLAYER. Baby Mozart starts up as she lays him down. He plays with his toes and smiles up at her.

BRETT
(whispering)
Wish me luck, little man.

Brett walks out of the room...

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

...to the staircase. She looks over the railing down into the LIVING ROOM, where RON and JEANIE EVERETT, 30s, domestically attractive, read in comfortable lounge chairs.

BRETT
(warm smile)
Benji's down, Jeanie.

JEANIE

Without one cry. You're a marvel, Brett.
Be up in a minute.

RON

(to Brett)

Same time tonight?

BRETT

Yep. The eight-thirteen. Thanks.

Brett disappears and Jeanie and Ron return to their books. The quiet is broken by the sound of the UPSTAIRS SHOWER. Ron glances up; Jeanie notices. Ron goes back to his book.

INT. BRETT'S BATHROOM - LATER

The SOUND OF THE SHOWER. Red sweatpants, a red sweatshirt land on white tile. Steam rises around Brett as she lets the water pound a full week of nannying right out of her.

INT. BRETT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

We PAN ACROSS...

The array of PHOTOS in cheap, earnest frames that grace the top of Brett's neat dresser.

First up: A HANDSOME MAN, maybe 30. Strong and tall, with tired eyes. We can clearly see Brett in his features.

Next comes a BEAUTIFUL GIRL. Late teens, sexy, and dressed to show it. Smiling vivaciously, looking up at the sky. We can see Brett in her face, too.

Now come photos of Brett. From elementary school -- a small head shot of her amongst other 6th GRADERS. Junior high -- Brett and her basketball teammates. And finally, her HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION PHOTO.

Look closely and you'll notice the bright light in Brett's eyes dimming with each passing photo.

The real Brett stands at the mirror, that light a little dimmer still. She wears a PINK DRESS, a PURPLE SWEATER over it, and a black hair-band.

She steps to the dresser. On it are TWO CELL PHONES... WHITE CLOTH GLOVES... an unopened ENVELOPE... and a paperback book -
- HEMINGWAY'S THE SUN ALSO RISES.

She slips the envelope between the pages of the novel -- a bookmark. She drops the book and gloves into her handbag. She adds in one of the two cell phones... and a set of keys with a small commercial cannister of MACE attached.

She puts on an inexpensive but stylish jacket...slips the second cell phone into an INNER POCKET... checks another INNER POCKET for a second MACE - got it... and walks out.

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - STREET - NIGHT

Ron Everett's PORSCHE accelerates through a yellow light and flies down the empty street.

INT. PORSCHE - SAME: MOVING

Ron drives, Brett beside him. Her golden calves are crossed. She's every guy's cornsilk fantasy.

RON
Meeting your girlfriends?

BRETT
Mm-hmm.

RON
Then what? Look for boys?

BRETT
I don't know. Maybe.

Ron shifts gears violently and speeds through another yellow.

RON
Boys are jackals.

BRETT
There are some nice ones.

Ron brakes for a red light.

RON
I was a nice boy, Brett, and I can tell you -- there's no such thing.

BRETT
I'll bet you were very nice, Ron.

He smiles and shrugs. Hits the gas.

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - COMMUTER TRAIN STATION - LATER

The Porsche glides through the PARKING LOT to stop at the station stairs. We can see the 8:13 pulling in. Brett starts from the car...

BRETT
Thanks.

She closes the door and leans into the open window. The CLATTERING OF CICADAS can be heard behind her.

BRETT
Tell Jeanie not to wait up.

RON
You know she will anyway.

BRETT
I know.

She smiles vivaciously -- like her mom in that dresser photo -
- strides past a TAXI STAND... starts up the stairs to the
train platform. Great legs. Great walk.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - NEW JERSEY-NEW YORK - NIGHT: MOVING

Brett sits by the window, a dark mood shift in her eyes.

As GUYS shoot appreciative glances her way, she takes the
Hemingway paperback from her bag... removes the envelope from
it... gazes at the hand-scrawled addresses:

**BRETT HAYES, P.O. BOX 5348, UPPER Montclair, NJ. 07043. The
return address: P.O. BOX 1944, STA. #16 - LINCOLN, NB. 68516.**

She opens the envelope to pull out a letter... starts to
unfold it, but stops. Not now. She opens Hemingway.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - PENN STATION - COMMUTER PLATFORM - NIGHT

Brett walks off the train.

EXT. NYC - PENN STATION - 34TH STREET/8TH AVENUE - NIGHT

The ESCALATOR carries her up into the teeming street, which
seems to swallow her whole. A minnow in shark waters.

EXT. NYC - MURRAY HILL - E38TH STREET - NIGHT

She walks the buzzing sidewalks... stops at a bar window. Her
P.O.V. through the glass: 10 or 12 PATRONS -- a dead night.

She walks on... checking through more bar windows... finally
coming to a stop in front of...

LAST LICKS. A crowded sports bar. Her eyes fill with purpose.

FADE TO BLACK:

LEGEND: "RORY"

FADE IN:

EXT. NYC -- CCNY W138TH STREET/AMSTERDAM AVENUE - NIGHT

A majestic cluster of century-old buildings.

INT. CCNY - CLASSROOM BUILDING - HALLWAY - SAME

Taped to the door of a classroom is a cardboard sign that reads "Modern American History -- Final Exam."

INT. CLASSROOM - SAME

THIRTY STUDENTS sit in neat rows, all bent over their exams.

PROFESSOR (O.S.)
Fifteen minutes.

A TEST PAPER: The final page of a multiple choice exam.

Which American statesman championed the policy of containment?

- A. George C. Marshall
- B. Henry Kissinger
- C. George F. Kennan
- D. George Schultz

A pencil fills in the circle next to "C".

RORY O'CONNELL, 26, blows the shavings off the pencil. He's streetwise, a scrapper, with soulful eyes that belie his young face. He wears a blue NY Yankees jacket.

Rory stands and walks past envious TEST-TAKERS to the front of the room. He turns in his test.

PROFESSOR
The grades will be posted tomorrow. I think you know yours, Mr. O'Connell.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Rory sets down his worn, cool black shoulder bag... drops to a knee... and pumps his fist.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - W138TH STREET/BROADWAY - NIGHT

Rory feels the breeze as a 4 TRAIN roars into the station.

INT. SUBWAY 4 TRAIN - BRONX BOUND - MOMENTS LATER

He takes a seat. He slips on his iPod earphones and takes out a book. "PASSING THE NEW YORK STATE TEACHER'S EXAM."

SERIES OF SHOTS: SEVERAL TRAIN STOPS... HEADING UPTOWN...

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
One forty-ninth street-Lenox Avenue...
One fifty-sixth Street-Grand Concourse...

The passengers, mostly white, clear out.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
One eightieth street-Jerome Avenue...
Jerome Avenue-Fordham Road.

Rory's stop.

EXT. BRONX - JEROME AVENUE/FORDHAM ROAD -NIGHT

His bag on his shoulder, Rory comes up the stairs onto a block crackling with street-life. The neighborhood is a rich mix of low-income white, black, and Hispanic.

Rory's known here. Greetings between him and those he passes... until he glances across the street... slows his pace...

RORY
Shit.

EXT. W187TH STREET/JEROME AVENUE - BODEGA - CONTINUOUS

CHIVAS, Hispanic, dressed to fit in, but still sleek enough to scream "Dealer." He stands in front of the CORNER BODEGA... his sharp eyes scanning for DRIVE-BY CUSTOMERS.

But it's not the sight of Chivas that bothers Rory; it's the YOUNG TEENAGE BOY beside him. As Rory crosses the street... Chivas gives the kid two bills and sends him into the bodega.

CHIVAS
(spots Rory coming)
'Sup, Ro?

With a dismissive look, Rory strides past him into the store.

INT. BODEGA - MOMENTS LATER

13-year-old DWIGHT, black, at the counter, paying for a beer.

RORY
(to Clerk)
You gonna let him buy that?

The CLERK is already shaking out a small brown bag to put the can in. He puts the bag away. Dwight sees Rory and groans.

DWIGHT
Aw, man...

EXT. BODEGA - W187TH STREET - SAME

Chivas eyes a pack of TEENS walking by. One teen nods... and Chivas signals to a RUNNER on a stoop down the block. The teens head over to him.

Rory and Dwight walk out of the bodega. Dwight's drinking a Mountain Dew. Rory shoots a "*Fuck you*" look at Chivas. He deftly flips the drink change to Chivas... who catches it.

As Rory and Dwight walk away...

CHIVAS
(challenging Rory)
See you tomorrow, Dwight.

RORY
(ignoring that, to Dwight)
What the hell are you doin', hangin' with him? Huh?

Dwight shrugs and looks away. As they continue walking along 187th Street... the growing SOUND of RAP blaring from somewhere down the TENEMENT-lined block fills the night air.

RORY
I should tell your mom. See how fast she impounds your ass.
(beat)
Who was our thirty-fifth president?

DWIGHT
Lyndon B. Johnson.

RORY
Thirty-eighth?

DWIGHT
Jimmy Carter.

RORY
That's what I'm talkin' about.

Dwight slows a bit at spotting FOUR TEEN buddies hanging on a TENEMENT STOOP. Their BOOMBOX is the source of the rap.

RORY
Tell him, guys -- what's the formula for getting off this block?

ALL THE BOYS
(rolling their eyes, in chorus)
Stayin' in school.

RORY
That's right. Remember, Yankee tickets for whoever shows me the best report card.

KID
They gonna be box seats this time?

RORY

Listen to you -- box seats. They'll be dugout seats, okay? You can sit next to Jeter and give him tips on his swing.

The kids laugh, loving it. Rory and Dwight walk on.

DWIGHT

My mom says you're leavin'.

RORY

Yeah. Found a place closer to work.

(beat)

But I'll be back to check on all a' you. And if I catch you with Chivas, I'll kick your ass. Got it?

Dwight nods. They reach their TENEMENT. Rory slaps his head affectionately as they climb the steps. Dwight hesitates... looks up at him.

DWIGHT

Chivas said you used to have a corner, too. Is that true?

Pain in Rory's eyes. Dwight, watching him intently, sees it.

RORY

It's not where you've been, Dwight. It's where you're going.

Dwight nods -- he gets it. Rory unlocks the door.

RORY

Say goodnight to your mom for me.

FADE TO BLACK:

LEGEND: "THE BOYS"

FADE IN.

INT. LAST LICKS BAR - NIGHT

The raucous sports bar we saw earlier.

CLOSE ON A METAL BUCKET filled with crushed ice. THREE EMPTY BEER BOTTLES are plunged face-down into it; THREE FULL ONES are plucked out.

The bottles are raised and clinked together by three young Princeton grads: RYAN, LYLE, AND SLIDE. They sit in a wooden booth, one of twenty lining the walls.

RYAN is handsome, relaxed and easygoing. Naive, a dreamer. He wears a shirt with a PRINCETON CREST on the pocket.

LYLE is harder; a smiler concealing a fount of repressed anger.

SLIDE is the runt of this litter. Slight build, eyeglasses. Nerd city, you think... until you notice his steely gaze, his self-possession.

Slide lays a cell phone on the table.

SLIDE

You guys remember Lisa Noll? She was our year. Pre-law.

RYAN

Lissome Lisa. She was the reason I voted for coed bathrooms.

LYLE

Remember her yearbook photo? On that white sand beach, in that black thong? Christ, she was a piece.

SLIDE

Still is.
(beat)
From two hours ago.

He switches his cell phone to speaker and hits a button.

LISA NOLL (O.S.)

Hi, Slide, it's Lisa. I can't wait til next Friday. Call me... tell me what I should wear. Bye.

Ryan and Lyle stare at Slide in disbelief.

LYLE

That was Lisa Noll?

RYAN

With all due respect, Slide...

LYLE

Why the hell is she going out with you?

Slide pulls a SMALL BLACK BOOK from his pocket.

CLOSE ON THE BOOK. Gold lettering reads "NIETZSCHE," and embossed into the black leather, also in gold, is the stern face of the German master philosopher.

SLIDE

Friedrich Nietzsche. German philosopher.

Lyle eyes Ryan sarcastically -- 'No shit.'

LYLE

We took Intro Philo, too, Slide. And if I remember correctly, the dude's been dead a hundred years.

SLIDE

A hundred ten. But his ideas live on. No one understood power more deeply.

RYAN

You're telling us Lisa Noll's going out with you because of Friedrich Nietzsche?

Slide nods and sips his beer.

LYLE

Right. And I'm Ron Jeremy.

Ryan laughs. Slide smiles smugly, unperturbed.

SLIDE

I ran into her at the Princeton Club. You know the competition there -- money boys, jocks. I watched three of them strike out with her; then I walked up. She didn't remember me; could not have been less interested. In two minutes I had her number.

(beat)

Five words did the trick: "I don't like your dress."

RYAN

You told her you didn't like her dress?

SLIDE

That's right. She asked, "Why?" I told her that red dimmed her complexion, and that slit skirts were for whores.

LYLE

Bullshit.

RYAN

I don't get it.

SLIDE

That's because you don't understand power. Tell a beauty she's beautiful, and her eyes glaze over; she's heard it a million times. But show a beauty that you'll judge her... really judge her... that she can't resist.

LYLE

When's the last time you got laid, Slide?

SLIDE

I'll tell you the next time: Lisa Noll.

They roll their eyes, not convinced. Slide sees a SMOKING HOT WAITRESS headed their way.

SLIDE

Videre est credere, right? Seeing is believing?

The waitress arrives. She wears a sexy ref's uniform: black shorts, black-and-white striped belly tee. A whistle on her neck. Knee boots, too, and hip holsters loaded with bottles of alcohol. Her name-tag says CANDY.

CANDY

So... do we have men at this table, ready for shots -- or just boys and beers?

Ryan and Lyle look at Slide -- *Show us what you got.*

SLIDE

Men. And when these men are ready for shots, we'll let you know.

Slide turns his attention back to his friends as Candy stays by the table, uncertain.

SLIDE

You're still here? Say something, Candy. Anything.

CANDY

How're you boys doin' tonight?

SLIDE

That soft twang -- Kentucky?

CANDY

Tennessee.

SLIDE

Tennessee. Lemme give you a few words of advice. That southern Barbie act is gonna work at every other table in this place. But not this one. Okay?

She nods, stung. Ryan and Lyle stare at their buddy, who sits back... slowly taking in the entire bar scene.

SLIDE

It's one powerful economic system you're a part of in here, isn't it?

He nods at a bar booth across the room, where...

FOUR DRUNK YUPPIES are getting the full treatment from their holstered WAITRESS.

They kneel on the floor in front of the table, heads tilted back onto its edge. She wipes a gloved hand across their foreheads, then whips a bottle of booze from each holster.

SLIDE (O.S.)

Roving hotties, with enticing legs and bellies, your boots and holsters hinting at dominance. Sent out into a sea of drunk lads, challenging them to affirm their manhood with high-priced shots.

WAITRESS

Open wide, boys.

She begins pouring shots into each. They fall to all fours, whooping and recovering. They press money into her hands.

SLIDE

And you've got the attributes the system demands. The legs; the belly; that twang.

CANDY

I graduated fifth in my class at Vanderbilt.

SLIDE

I don't doubt it. Quit a real job to work here, right?

(off her nod)

And you're pulling down... five bills a night?

CANDY

Six.

SLIDE

Good for you. You give guys what they want, don't you, Candy?

CANDY

Some of it.

SLIDE

Some of it. And then in the back, with the other waitresses -- you laugh at us.

CANDY

No.

SLIDE

The truth, Juicy Fruit.

She's stung again. She shouldn't take this from anyone, least of all this runt. But somehow she can't walk away.

CANDY

Yes.

SLIDE

Good girl. So tell us: Is it worth it?

CANDY

Worth it?

SLIDE

Calling yourself Candy, dressing up like a wild west whore, and cunting yourself to fifty guys a night.

She stares at him. Broken, speechless, her saucy veneer dead and gone. She turns away, but instantly, and gently...

SLIDE

Hey. What's your real name?

CANDY

Beth Anne.

SLIDE

We'll take the shots, Beth Anne.

(beat)

It's a powerful system -- even when you can see through it. Come back in five minutes, okay?

She nods and walks away, shaken. Ryan and Lyle stare in awe at their heretofore mild-mannered friend.

LYLE

Goddamn, Slide.

They all look down at the black book. Nietzsche is a fourth presence in the booth now.

SLIDE

"The will to power," gentlemen.

The first grating notes of Taylor Swift's *"Dear John"* start up. The boys stare up at the offending SPEAKER on the wall.

RYAN

I'll get it.

He walks to the jukebox and yanks out the plug. The music cuts off. He plugs it back in and flips through the CD LIST. Punches in a selection, and turns to survey the room.

At the bar he sees a SET OF LEGS, crossed at the ankles. We MOVE UP those legs to a PINK DRESS... PURPLE SWEATER...

Brett.

She sits on a corner stool, reading her book. Her jacket draped over the next stool, as if she's waiting for someone.

Ryan's in deep lust, sliding towards love. As his song -- the Stones' "Red Rooster" -- kicks in, he walks to the bar. Brett doesn't look up from her book.

CLOSE ON the back cover. HEMINGWAY'S FACE stares at Ryan, challenging him to make a move.

From their booth, Slide and Lyle are keying into Ryan's play.

RYAN
(to the bartender)
Bucket of beers, please.

As he gets them, Ryan glances at Brett, who doesn't look up. Ryan looks down at the bar... closes his eyes in artful concentration... and begins reciting.

RYAN
*Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing
champion of Princeton.*
(beat)
*Do not think that I am very much
impressed by that as a boxing title, but
it meant a lot to Cohn.*

Brett lowers her book. Ryan keeps his eyes on the bar.

RYAN
*He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he
disliked it, but he learned it painfully
and thoroughly to counteract the feeling
of inferiority and shyness he had felt on
being treated as a Jew at Princeton.*

Brett flips back to the beginning of the novel. Ryan has nailed the opening word for word.

RYAN
*There was a certain inner comfort in
knowing that he could knock down anyone
who was snooty to him, although, being
very shy and a thoroughly nice boy, he
never fought except in the gym.*

Ryan looks at her... smiles. She flashes hers. He's a goner.

BRETT
How long can you keep it up?

RYAN
As long as I need to.

He glances down at Brett's jacket on the stool.

RYAN
You waiting for someone?

BRETT
(eyeing Ryan - deciding)
No. Just buys me a little space.

RYAN
What are you drinking?

BRETT
Seven-Up.

Ryan taps her glass and nods to the bartender...

RYAN
For Ms. Hemingway here.

He refills her glass.

BRETT
Thanks.

RYAN
My pleasure. I'm Ryan.

BRETT
I'm Brett.

RYAN
Why don't you come join our booth?

BRETT
I'm reading.

She raises her book again. Ryan smiles... soaks her in for a second... then, with a friendly nod, walks away. She watches him over her book. Candy appears at the service well.

CANDY
(to bartender)
Two MGDs and two screwdrivers.

Candy looks across the floor at Slide. She pours a shot from a bottle in her holster... throws it back. To Brett...

CANDY
Men.

BOY'S BOOTH -

LYLE
Debbie came back for her things last night.

SLIDE
What'd you do?

LYLE
Helped her take them to the car.

SLIDE
So she could move in with her boss.

LYLE
What the hell was I supposed to do?

SLIDE
What you wanted to do.

LYLE
If I'd done what I wanted to do I'd be in jail. So I did the right thing. It's called conscience, Slide.

SLIDE
It's called weakness.

Ryan slides back into the booth. The others see him looking back to the bar at Brett.

LYLE
I'd buy that for a dollar.

SLIDE
What's she reading?

RYAN
(dreamily)
Hemingway.

Candy appears again, trying hard to keep her eyes off Slide.

CANDY
Are you men ready for me?

The boys slide out of the booth and kneel in front of it, tilting their heads back onto the edge of the table. Candy wipes a gloved hand across their foreheads, her bosom in their faces. She pulls a bottle from each holster.

BAR -

From across the room, Brett watches Candy and the boys. She marks her page with the envelope bookmark... drops it into her bag...

BRETT
(to bartender)
One more, please.

BOOTH -

Candy pours double shots into Ryan, then into Lyle. They swallow, gasp, and recover. Slide looks her in the eye.

SLIDE
Go hard on me, Candy.

She double-barrels him with alcohol for a good four seconds. Slide swallows calmly and gets back in the booth. Candy is mesmerized. Ryan and Lyle hand her ten-dollar bills. Slide gives her nothing.

SLIDE
What's your number, Beth Anne?

CANDY
917-834-3131.

LYLE
(skeptical)
Right.

Candy takes the CELL PHONE from Lyle's shirt pocket and hands it to Slide. He dials. The CELL PHONE on Candy's hip RINGS.

CANDY
I'm off Tuesday and Wednesday.

Slide nods. Candy walks away. They all watch Candy walk away.

RYAN
Jesus.

SLIDE
No. Nietzsche.

BRETT (O.S.)
The invitation still good?

And there is Brett, standing... her Seven-up in hand. She smiles at Ryan.

RYAN
Good as gold. Guys; Brett.

She slides in next to a stoked Ryan... sets down her jacket and handbag.

LYLE
I'm Lyle.

Slide looks her over without a word. He discreetly slides "Nietzsche" off the table.

LYLE
That's Slide.

A charming smile from her: 'Hi.' A curt nod from him.

At the next booth, another HOT WAITRESS is purring and pouring. Lyle leans out for a better view of her ass.

BRETT
You like girls like that?

LYLE
What's not to like?

RYAN
Forgive Lyle his tension. His girl just
walked out on him.

LYLE
She said we'd grown apart. You're a girl -
- you want to tell me what that means?

BRETT
I don't know.

LYLE
You've never said that to a guy?

BRETT
I've never had a boyfriend.

This info rouses the hunter in each of them. The change in
mood is palpable. Brett sips her drink and pushes up the
sleeves of her sweater. The boys take in her golden arms.

LYLE
I'm going to the bar.
(to Brett)
What are you drinking?

RYAN
Seven-Up.

Brett smiles at him... and Ryan fights back a blush. Lyle
heads for the bar.

SLIDE
So, you like Hemingway.
(she nods)
Why?

BRETT
What's not to like?

SLIDE
You tell us.

Brett studies him.

BRETT
His characters try to live honorably.
Each by a code. I like that.

RYAN
Sometimes they break their codes.

BRETT
True. But when they do, they suffer.

Slide stares intently at her. Brett looks to Ryan...

RYAN
He's a semiotics buff.
(off her puzzled look)
The study of hidden meanings. Go ahead,
Slide, break her down.

We STAY ON Brett's face as Slide talks.

SLIDE (O.S.)
Connecticut -- no, that's no debutante
sweater. Farther west. Ohio...
Michigan... Iowa. Those flat Midwest
syllables, those open Plains features.
Concealing... what?

BAR -

The bartender hands Lyle a glass of soda.

LYLE
Put a little Seagram's in there, will
you?

The bartender shoots a knowing grin across at Brett.

LYLE
See what she's made of.

Lyle slips him a \$5. The bartender pours in a healthy shot.

BOOTH -

SLIDE
Come hither, says the dress. Not so fast,
says the sweater. Bare legs crossed at
the ankles -- Lolita. On the other hand,
deep in a book in a corner seat.
Hemingway. A desire for experience, for
excitement. For danger. All in all, not
the usual Friday night barfly.

Lyle returns with drinks. They all clink glasses.

RYAN
To experience.

SLIDE
To danger.

Brett can smell the Seagrams in her drink. She looks at Lyle.

LYLE
Live a little.

Brett sips. As she and the boys settle in... WE DRIFT UP to the ceiling and look down on the whole bar through the graceful blades of a CEILING FAN. The FAN BLADES spin faster and faster until all we see is a TIGHT BLUR.

They slow down again, revealing the now nearly empty bar. A few SEXY REF WAITRESSES count out their night's take in a back booth. BUSBOYS clean and carry.

A lone booth still has customers... our friends. We DRIFT DOWN to it.

The boys are pretty far along now. Brett seems to be, as well, but she's still clear-eyed. As the last notes of a ROCK SONG fade away, the four of them stare up at the black speaker on the wall.

RYAN

(to the speaker)

Just something decent; that's all we ask.

SLIDE

"Without music, life would be a mistake."

(off everyone's stare)

Nietzsche.

Van Morrison's *"Into The Mystic"* starts to play, its ethereal notes striking deep into everyone. Brett and Ryan close their eyes and listen for a few moments in bonding silence. Slide's eyes never leave Brett.

SLIDE

You like this song?

BRETT

I love it.

Ryan and Lyle glance at Slide. Here comes the play.

SLIDE

You know what Monitor Audios are?

Brett shakes her head. Lyle takes over.

LYLE

Stereo speakers. The best on this planet. You hear a song through MA speakers... that's it. Van Morrison, through MA speakers and even a decent receiver? It's like he's purring in your ear.

(beat)

Ryan has a pair. And a five-grand Yamaha receiver.

Brett looks at Ryan. He nods.

SLIDE

His apartment is five blocks away.

Brett smiles down at her drink. Van Morrison sings on.

BRETT
We'll have to go there next then.

EXT. MURRAY HILL - 3RD AVENUE - NIGHT

The boys and Brett walk along. The night air, invigorating.
Brett shivers... pulls her jacket collar tight.

RYAN
It's the alcohol. Lowers your body
temperature.

Brett smiles sarcastically over at Lyle. '*Thanks.*'

LYLE
Anytime.

INT. MURRAY HILL - RYAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They enter a smart one-bedroom. Brett looks around
appreciatively.

BRETT
Not bad... for a guy. You get the music,
I'll get the drinks?
(looking back at Lyle)
Make sure I know what I'm getting.

Lyle grins and shrugs.

RYAN
There are frosted mugs in the freezer.

As Brett heads for the kitchen, Slide locks the dead bolt and
sets the chain.

LIVING ROOM -

Ryan moves to the STEREO to put on Van Morrison's "Astral
Weeks"... then joins the others on an L-shaped couch. He
sits... allowing an open space next to him.

KITCHEN -

Brett finds three frosted PRINCETON MUGS and three bottles of
beer from the fridge. Finds a Seven-Up in there, too.

LIVING ROOM -

From the kitchen comes the POP... POP... POP of bottle caps.
They look at each other; uncharted waters.

LYLE
What would Nietzsche say to this?

SLIDE

Three of us; one of her.

Lyle smiles. Ryan looks uneasy.

Brett walks in and hands a beer mug to each of them. She sips her Seven-Up and smiles at the music that surrounds her.

They watch, mesmerized, as she circles the room. More precisely, she flows... slipping out of her shoes... swaying gently, sensually to the music.

She trails the back of her hands across the titles in the bookcase and caresses the soft leaves of Ryan's hanging plants. She glides to the stereo... transfixed by the equalizer's PULSING LIGHTS.

She lets the song's last mystical notes wash over her... before slipping off her jacket... to sit next to Ryan.

LYLE

Not too many girls would go back to an apartment with one guy they just met. Forget three.

BRETT

You boys don't look dangerous. Are you?

SLIDE

You never know. People are unpredictable, don't you think?

BRETT

Raise your hand if your ATM code is your birthday.

Ryan and Lyle raise their hands.

BRETT

I think people are very predictable.

She looks at Slide, the only one who didn't raise his hand.

SLIDE

Pi. Taken out to five digits.

RYAN

That's why we call him Slide.

LYLE

Kind of a nerd thing. It's short for slide rule, which is an old math instru--

BRETT

I know what it is.

Slide smiles. Everyone sips their drinks. A beat.

LYLE
So, we're predictable, huh? Wait here.

He walks out of the room. Ryan glances nervously after him.

SLIDE
What do you do when you're not reading
books in bars?

BRETT
I'm a nanny.

RYAN
You like babies?

BRETT
I love them.

Lyle returns, both hands behind his back. He shows one hand:
FOUR RED PLASTIC CUPS. He sets them on the coffee table.

LYLE
Everyone take one.

They do. Lyle brings out a closed fist. He opens it. EIGHT
DICE of all sizes and colors clatter onto the table.

LYLE
Two apiece.

BRETT
What are we playing for?

LYLE
Drinks for us. Clothes for you.

Brett smiles. A beat. She picks up two dice and rolls them
slowly in her palm.

BRETT
What do I have to gain?

SLIDE
Our respect.

She drops the dice into her plastic cup... eyes the boys...
shakes the cup. They shake theirs.

The escalating rattle of the dice and now everyone SLAMS
THEIR CUPS down onto the coffee table. They lift them away.

Brett's 5 is the lowest total. She lifts off her sweater. The
boys stare in rapture at her pink dress.

She scoops up her dice. Another shake and slam. Her 4 is
again the lowest.

LYLE
(reverently)
What are the odds?

As the boys eye that dress... Brett pulls the black hair-band from her hair and lays it on the coffee table... smiles...

SLIDE
Can you say tease?

Now she really is down to that pink dress. The boys can't take their eyes off her, even as they gather their dice. Lyle's eyes are feral. Everyone shakes and slams.

The boys all have 6s. Brett has a 7. The boys chug their beers. Lyle wipes his mouth, his eyes on Brett.

BRETT
This is the last roll.

LYLE
No way.

RYAN
(shooting Lyle a look)
Fair enough.

They lift their cups a final time; shake; slam.

SLIDE
One at a time.

Slide: a 7. Lyle: a 10. Ryan: a 4. The boys stare at Brett's cup. She lifts it away: 3.

Shock all around. Brett looks to Ryan; will he call it off? Slide and Lyle look at him, too. Ryan says nothing.

LYLE
Hold on -- I need another beer for this.
Guys?

They nod. Lyle smiles and wobbles for the kitchen.

LYLE
We're going to do this nice and slow.

Brett rubs her arms nervously. A beat. They hear the POP of an opened beer bottle.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Slide starts to laugh. He laughs harder and harder, his whole body shaking. He falls back into the couch pillows, still laughing. Only when he covers his face do we realize that something is wrong with him.

Ryan too is becoming disoriented... staring into his mug... to SEE a trace of SEDIMENT at the bottom. His eyes snap to Brett before, from the kitchen... a loud CRASH.

RYAN
(in a croaking whisper)
Lyle?

He moans, twitches, slumps forward onto the table... still. Behind him Slide writhes on the couch... clutching Brett's sweater to his face... babbling nonsensically.

SLIDE
Oh, the bitch. The sweet bitch. The
sweet, ruthless little bitch.

As "Astral Weeks" ends, Brett looks calmly at her victims, and walks to the kitchen.

KITCHEN -

A dazed Lyle sits on the floor, surrounded by broken glass. His bleeding hand clutches the handle of the shattered mug.

LYLE
(weakly)
Guys.

LYLE POV: BRETT is a pink blur, coming in and out of focus.

LYLE
Pink, pink. Inside and out.

He holds the broken mug out to her... settles onto one elbow... then onto his back. His eyes close.

SLIDE (O.S.)
Heel, honey, heel. That's it; that's it.
The backbeat narrow and hard to master.

LIVING ROOM -

Brett steps in... her focus on Slide... until he quiets. An eerie stillness fills the room. Brett closes her eyes... takes a deep breath, when...

RYAN LUNGES AT HER, jolting the coffee table, scattering the mugs, dice cups, and dice. He catches her knees... spinning her down... her bag flying off her shoulder... its contents spilling everywhere.

He keeps desperately grabbing for her, but she crab-walks just out of reach.... backing against the stereo cabinet, trapped. He reaches again... before dropping onto his side, dazed, his eyes focused on a SMALL VIAL spinning on the floor inches from his face... stopping... rolling under the stereo shelving. The label reads GHB.

He now lies still... helpless... eyes open. Brett finds her white gloves in the mess... puts them on... then eases his wallet from his pants. She removes his cash... ATM card... driver's license: RYAN DEMPSTER.

She sets the license on the coffee table... proceeds to rob Slide exactly the same way... setting his license: SEAN BYSTROM -- next to Ryan's. She slips on her shoes and walks into the...

KITCHEN -

Brett looks down at Lyle, out cold, his hand bleeding badly. She wraps a gloved hand in a dish-towel... pulls a big SHARD OF GLASS from his palm... wraps the towel around his hand...

And now robs him as she did the others. He is: LYLE JONSTON. With a towel, she deftly wipes down the refrigerator door handle... bottle opener... anywhere, anything she touched.

LIVING ROOM -

CLOSE ON a SLIP OF PAPER. Still wearing gloves, Brett has copied the boys' birth dates... is dividing two into seven, working out 'pi' to get Slide's ATM code.

She wipes clean the beer mugs... her dice cup, dice... Seven-Up can... gathers all her spilled items into her purse...

She looks down at the unconscious Ryan -- his eyes closed, his mouth curled into a hint of a smile.

She pulls her sweater from Slide's grasp... With a gloved hand, she unlocks the chain... pulls back the dead bolt... opens the door... walks out of the apartment.

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN - NASSAU STREET/MAIDEN AVENUE - NIGHT

An empty street in the financial district.

P.O.V. BLACK-AND-WHITE SURVEILLANCE CAMERA: A disheveled HOMELESS MAN, his face down. He lifts a SPRAY CAN up to the camera. The lens clouds and darkens.

The man steps away from an ATM to a stone pillar, where Brett waits. She hands him a twenty... he walks away. Holding a glove in one hand... the slip of paper in the other... she steps to the ATM... slides in Ryan's card... punches: **81778**.

The screen reads INVALID CODE. She punches: **081778**, brings up MAIN MENU. She punches: GET CASH, brings up "How Much Would You Like?" She types: **\$500**. The machine spits out \$20 BILLS. She pulls out Slide and Lyle's ATM cards... continues...

INT. PENN STATION - COMMUTER TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Brett steps into the New Jersey-bound train...

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY - NIGHT: MOVING

She sits by a window. She pulls the envelope from the Hemingway paperback... opens it... takes out the letter inside. As she reads it, We STAY ON her face, but HEAR...

ART HAYES (V.O.)
*Brett, thanks for the money. I wish I
 could tell you I didn't need it. I wish I
 could tell you a lot of things. But I can
 tell you this: You're a better daughter
 than I deserve.*

She looks out the window. Her face, reflected in it... a mix of sorrow, confusion, and anger. Which leads to a...

FLASHBACK: BRETT - SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS - OBJECTIVE

*The photo from the dresser: Her father, with his tired eyes.
 And PHOTOS of the two of them, OVER TIME. A 'STEINBECK'
 quality to these. The love between them is clear and strong.*

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - COMMUTER TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Brett steps off the train with a few other late-night COMMUTERS... walks towards the staircase to the parking lot.

A CACOPHONY of CICADAS now fills the night air from dense foliage on either side of the stairs to the taxi stand.

EXT. COMMUTER STATION - TAXI STAND/PARKING LOT - LATER

A few idling MIDNITE CAB CO. TAXIS. She gets in one.

INT. EVERETT HOUSE - NIGHT

Brett enters quietly through the kitchen. She steps into the living room and sees...

Jeanie Everett reading in her chair. Waiting up for her.

JEANIE
 So arrest me, Brett. I can't help it.

Brett laughs as she walks to the stairs.

JEANIE
 Meet any Romeos?

BRETT
 Nope. Still not looking.

JEANIE
 That's when they strike.

Brett smiles again and starts up the stairs.

BRETT
 Good night, Jeanie.

INT. BRETT'S BEDROOM - LATER

Brett kneels by her bed, as if to pray. Instead she reaches beneath it... pulls out a CARDBOARD STORAGE BIN... removes a pile of sweaters... takes out a WOODEN CIGAR BOX... opens it.

She pulls out a neat stack of papers... MONEY ORDER RECEIPTS... made out to ARTHUR HAYES. She puts tonight's cash in the box... adding it to a stack of \$20 bills... lays the money-order receipts on top.

She reaches into her handbag, but freezes... begins searching anxiously through it... mutters: "Oh fuck!" She takes a breath, calming herself: 'What's done is done.'

She scoops up the boys' ATM CARDS and drops them into the box on top of DOZENS OF OTHERS... folds in the gloves... replaces the sweaters... closes the box... slides it under the bed.

She glances to a bedroom window into the night and at the FULL MOON beyond...

... then lets her eyes fall to dwell on PHOTOS on the sill. One of Brett, 10, and her Dad, grinning at the camera. She's on his lap, pretending to drive a cherried, 'tuck'n rolled,' Hurst-linked, '4-on-the floor,' maroon '57 CHEVY.

FLASHBACK: BRETT - DIRT COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - SUBJECTIVE

BRETT POV: Out the front windshield of the Chevy as it speeds along the bumpy road. WE SEE HER HANDS on the steering wheel... and in the REAR-VIEW MIRROR... the laughing faces of she and her father.

SUDDENLY... their eyes flick to see that they're HEADING STRAIGHT FOR A TREE. Her POV jerks just as her father's hands GRAB THE WHEEL... whip the car sideways to a skidding stop.

PRESENT: BRETT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She fixes on a SECOND PHOTO. She and her dad, standing next to that tree... laughing themselves silly... pointing at the SIX INCHES between the tree and the passenger-side door. She smiles wistfully at the memory... looks away to the MOON. Her eyes are soft... a glint of moisture in the corners.

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE - NIGHT

The MOON again, shining down on the quiet Hudson River.

INT. NYC - MURRAY HILL - RYAN'S APARTMENT - SAME

The SAME MOON, through a window. It's light falls across Ryan, unconscious on the floor. He wears the same strange smile we saw earlier. The reason for it... beneath the radiator... in a slice of light... the last thing he saw before he passed out -- a DRY-CLEANING STUB.

It reads: **KANG'S CLEANERS; 214 SOWELL ROAD; Upper Montclair,**
 NJ. CUSTOMER: BRETT HAYES (Her name is handwritten)
 WILL BE READY: 5:00 TUESDAY

INT. BRONX - W187TH STREET - RORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rory O'Connell in his small studio apartment. The place is primed for the movers -- boxes stacked along two walls.

Rory sips a beer and packs up a bookcase. With his jacket off, we can see IRISH GANG TATTOOS on his upper arms. He boxes every book but one -- a battered, dog-eared copy of HEMINGWAY'S A Moveable Feast. This one's special.

A pensive look on his face as he thumbs through it...

THE DOORBELL BUZZES

Rory looks through the peephole at a distorted mass of yellow. As it's pulled back it becomes a 60-oz. party bottle of OLDE ENGLISH 800 MALT LIQUOR.

The bottle lowers to reveal FLY, a thin black man Rory's age. Grinning wide. Rory smiles and opens the door.

RORY
 Fly. Goddamn, bro.

FLY
 You was gonna sneak off without a party.

They hug warmly, but a little awkwardly... an odd distance between them. Fly steps in... opens the Olde English... and walks along the rows of boxes. He stops at a double-stack marked "BOOKS."

FLY
 All them really books?
 (off Rory's nod)
 You read 'em all?

RORY
 Just about.

Fly shakes his head and sits down on the couch. Rory pulls over a hard-backed chair, and a box to serve as a table.

Fly takes out a pack of cigarettes. Lights up. He tosses the pack, and his cell phone, onto the box. Hands the Olde English bottle across the box to Rory.

FLY
 Where's the new crib?

RORY
 Tri-Be-Ca.

Fly whistles appreciatively.

FLY
How you payin' for Tribeca?

Rory pulls a BUSINESS CARD from his wallet and hands it over.
Fly's eyes say it all: *Working for the man.*

RORY
Next month I get my degree, Fly. Then I
can teach.

FLY
You did it.

RORY
I did it.

FLY
Have you told Mama?
(off Rory's nod)
Bet she lit up. Least one of her boys is
makin' it.

RORY
You know it's not like that.

Fly shrugs. Yeah it is.

RORY
How've you been? Workin'?

FLY
Some. You know how it is.

RORY
(leaving it alone)
You still the speed chess king?

FLY
King, queen, and motherfuckin' knight. I
own those tables.

Rory smiles -- same old bro. A beat.

Fly stubs out his cigarette and walks to the window. He looks
down at the street. Sees Chivas, plying his trade through a
stopped car window.

FLY
You ever miss the street, Ro?

Rory takes a long swig of O.E.

RORY
I took a test tonight -- one hundred
questions. Never even had to guess.
All that shit we thought was cool, Fly?
Knowledge is cool. There's nothing like
it.

(MORE)

RORY (CONT'D)
 (nods at the window)
 Not out there, anyway.

FLY
 You always had a mind on you. Every one
 on the block could see that.
 (beat)
 How much they payin' teachers?

RORY
 (eyes narrowing)
 Why?

Fly keeps looking out the window. War in his eyes. He decides.

FLY
 Suppose you could start your new life in
 style?

Rory eyes him warily as Fly walks back to the couch... takes a long swig from the bottle... launches in.

FLY
 Three months ago, I'm playin' speed
 chess, right? My usual spot -- One-
 Sixtieth.

FLASHBACK: FLY - OBJECTIVE

EXT. HARLEM - FENCED IN PARK - 160TH STREET - NIGHT

The same 'speed chess' area from our opening scene. Fly and a half-dozen ragtag brothers playing.

Fly makes a move and punches the timer. His OPPONENT looks up, defeated, tips over his king, and pays up under the table. As a NEW PLAYER sits, Fly looks out across the street.

FLY (V.O.)
 I'm chillin' after a win, gazin' out
 across the avenue, and I see a sweet
 black Lexus pull up to a sorry-ass
 building. Door opens, Ricky fuckin'
 Martin gets out.

We see the BLACK LEXUS from before. RAMON, our Latino loverboy, gets out and walks into the building.

FLY (V.O.)
 He goes into the sorry-ass building.
 Three minutes later he comes out and
 drives away. That's it. Not even worth
 rememberin', right? Okay. One month
 later, same scene.

FLASHBACK: FLY - SAME PARK - NIGHT - MONTH LATER - OBJECTIVE

Fly makes a move and punches the timer.

FLY (V.O.)
I make a move, look up, there she is --
the same sweet black Lexus.

From Fly's POV we see the Lexus pull up again. Ramon steps out and walks into the building.

FLY (V.O.)
Same Casanova.

Fly's OPPONENT makes a move and punches the timer. He snaps his fingers at Fly, who's still watching the Lexus. Fly makes a hurried move. His opponent grins -- Fly's lapse just cost him the game.

Fly pounds his leg in frustration, tips over his king, pays up under the table, surrenders his seat, and walks to the chain-link fence that surrounds the park. He stares across the street, where...

Ramon steps out of the building.

FLY (V.O.)
I don't like Joses anyway, and now this m.f. just cost me some cash. That's two times in two months I seen him, and I'm wonderin' -- what's bringing Jose outta Jose-land, to this sorry-ass crib in the hood? It ain't something wet and warm -- he's only up there three minutes. Even the Joses can hold their nut longer than that.

Ramon gets into the Lexus.

FLY (V.O.)
And then the wind kicks up, and the motherfuckin' mystery is solved.
(beat)
What's bringin' Jose to the hood?

As the Lexus pulls away... a THICK PUFF OF SMOKE floats out the window... the last wisps of it reaching Fly.

FLY (V.O.)
Northern Lights. And then it all starts linin' up for me. Three months ago, the brothers were sellin' Northern Lights at sixty a quarter. Now, none of the brothers got any. Only the Joses got it, and they're playing the supply/demand game like they invented it. Eighty a quarter; ninety to a brother. Well, I figure it's time I got a little reparations. Little street discount. I check the date: The fourteenth.
(MORE)

FLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 This month, come the fourteenth -- no
 speed chess for me.

FLASHBACK: FLY - OBJECTIVE - ALLEY - 160TH ST - NIGHT

He crouches near the mouth of the alley, nearly invisible in black garb. A black wool ski-mask over his face... hoodie up.

FLY (V.O.)
 Next to the sorry-ass building is an
 alley. I'm waitin' in it, covered head to
 toe like fuckin' Spiderfly.

Fly watches the Lexus pull to the curb. ANOTHER Chilean love song on the radio. Ramon exits... walks into the building.

FLY (V.O.)
 My man goes inside. It takes him three
 minutes, and in that three minutes I got
 it all going -- dry mouth, sweats. He
 come out, I come out.

Fly closes in on Ramon, who's sing-whispering his love song.
 He BLACKJACKS him.

FLY (V.O.)
 One hit and he's down.

Fly rolls Ramon over and takes something from his suit pocket. His EYES GO WIDE at the sight of it.

FLY (V.O.)
 I roll him, and I'm away. Clean as your
 Grandmama's pussy.

PRESENT: RORY'S APARTMENT - W187TH STREET - NIGHT

Fly stares at Rory across the box.

FLY
 Perfect fuckin' crime, right? There's
 just one thing, Ro -- Jose wasn't holdin'
 Northern Lights.

Fly pulls out a SMALL, perfectly CELLOPHANE WRAPPED SNOW - WHITE BRICK of sparkling COCAINE.

He sets it down on the box. Rory stares at him. Max tension in his eyes... and in his tone.

RORY
 Damn, Fly.
 (beat)
 Never saw you gettin' into the game.

FLY
Never wanted in. This is a one-time
fluke.

Rory lifts the brick... steels himself... and turns it over,
afraid of what he might see. Nothing at first. He eyes Fly...
and takes a small pocket knife from his bag.

Surgically, he nicks open a corner of the cellophane wrap...
folds back an edge of the cellophane...

And there it is: A TINY LOGO stamped inside one corner of the
plastic: A PAIR OF BLACK BULL'S HORNS.

Rory stares hard at Fly, who goes ashen.

RORY
Anybody see you come here?

Fly shakes his head.

RORY
I mean it! Anybody?

FLY
No, Ro, I swear.

Rory stands, furious. Fighting to stay calm. A beat.

RORY
You'd be dead already if he knew. You
know what those bulls' horns mean?

Fly nods... somewhat shamefully.

RORY
Then why are you here?

Fly takes a swig... lights a cigarette to gather himself. He
looks at Rory, his eyes steady.

FLY
I'm here because I got somethin' worth a
lot of money, Ro. Somethin' that can
change my low-rent life.

Rory fumes, but Fly puts up a hand -- 'Hear me out.'

FLY
I knew that brick might be his. And I
know you went up against him... and lost.
(beat)
You never told me what really happened
that night. I always respected that -- it
was your business, not mine. But now I
gotta know.
(beat)
I gotta know what I'm up against.

Rory stares at Fly... and now at the brick. And now at those black bull's horns. WE CLOSE IN ON THEM, and now...

FADE TO BLACK:

LEGEND: "BOLAR"

FADE IN:

FLASHBACK: RORY - OBJECTIVE

INT. HARLEM - DRUG APARTMENT - 165TH STREET - NIGHT

A cozy drug den. Blinds drawn, walls covered with POSTERS of NY YANKEE GREATS and DEAD RAPPERS: Tupac, Biggie Smalls, Ol' Dirty Bastard. A SMOOTH GROOVE pours out of the STEREO.

TWO-POUND BAGS OF WEED line the floor next to a black leather couch, two leather lounge chairs, and a coffee table.

A MOUND OF UNCUT COCAINE is piled on a plastic plate on a dinette table. A plate of BAKING SODA beside it.

A YOUNGER Rory, long hair, same tattoos, dressed kind of raggedy, is clearly the boss here. He sits at the table, deftly mixing the coke with baking soda... carefully spooning the resulting powder into a small plastic funnel for...

TAZ, black, his second-in-command. Sleek, ripped, wearing street gear, he packs the finished product into one-gram bottles... caps them... divvies them into five piles.

POSSUM, white, small, baby-faced, expertly sorts a mountain of weed on the coffee table. He de-seeds the BUDS... weighs them... seals them in nickel, dime, quarter-ounce zip-lock BAGGIES.

FAT BOY, black, 300 pounds, dark shades, guards the door.

A smooth operation -- these guys know what they're doing. As they work, they're also jonesing to the underground STREET HOOPS VIDEO playing SILENTLY on a big-ass TV.

ON TV: Playground legends ALIMOE and SKIP-TO-MY-LOU bust impossible moves. Taz and Possum leap to their feet, whooping.

POSSUM
That motherfucker had moves.

Taz, wielding a BLACK REMOTE, rewinds the video and now hits pause, freezing Alimoe in mid-air.

RORY
Come on, Fat Boy, tell us how you used to stone Alimoe back in the day.

Fat Boy drops into a crouch, shuffles nimbly, then swats an imaginary shot away, showcasing his half-inch vertical leap.

FAT BOY
Alimoe knew better than to bring that
shit down my lane.

As the guys crack up...

TEESHA glides in from the kitchen. She's lovely, with honey brown, long braided cornrows, and the sweetest face in the projects. She sets sodas in front of the boys, then moves behind her man, Taz, and rubs Tiger Balm into his shoulders.

TEESHA
How's this, baby?

TAZ
Mmmm.

Possum reaches for a BONG, but Rory pulls it away.

RORY
Not tonight, Poss. Listen up...
(beat)
This is the best stuff we've ever scored -
- powder and smoke. So stay sharp out
there. And remember: No sellin' above One-
Seventieth.

Everyone in the room stares accusingly at Possum.

POSSUM
What? It was one sale, man.

Rory takes FOUR GRAM VIALS of coke... and FOUR baggies of weed... from Possum's pile and adds them to the other piles.

POSSUM
C'mon, man!

RORY
I mean it. Don't cross One-Seventieth.

Possum sighs. Pouting, he eyes the bong again.

POSSUM
Got it. Promise.
(nods at the bong)
C'mon Ro; just a taste. What kind of
salesman don't know his own product?

TAZ
Boy's hittin' you with logic, Ro.

A beat. Rory holds the bong out to Teesha.

RORY
Take a taste and tell Possum all about
it.

Rory looks over at Fat Boy.

RORY
Call Zo. Tell him we're ready to go. If
his ass ain't up here in five mi--

THE BUZZER SOUNDS. FAT BOY talks into it.

FAT BOY
Death row...

The password comes back.

ZO'S VOICE ON INTERCOM
What a brother know.

Fat Boy buzzes him up.

Teesha lights the bong and draws. CLOSE ON the BURNING BUD:
Deep green, streaked with purple: Primo shit. Teesha holds in
the smoke, her buzz kicking in before she even exhales.

RORY
Did I tell you?

Teesha sways sensually to the smooth groove. She swings her
braids sweetly, feeling it all now, the high and the music.
Her silver belly ring sparkles in the light.

She dances, enchanting the room.

POSSUM
Yo, I can do that.

Everyone laughs. Teesha's laugh is like flowing water. She
settles onto Taz' lap.

A SHARP KNOCK. Fat Boy checks the peephole... slides back the
three deadbolts... pulls open the door.

ZO is pushed into the apartment. He looks back in terror to
see the bullet that blows half his head off. Instantly...

FIVE CHILEAN HENCHMEN command the room, guns (with silencers)
drawn. Taz instinctively grabs Teesha... wrapping his arms
around her protectively. Rory and the others freeze, as...

CACERO, a massive brute, with PYTHON TATTOOS on both arms,
slams Fat Boy in the Adam's apple... crushing his windpipe...
dropping him to his knees... mute. He clamps Fat Boy's head
in his hands... brutally torques his neck... drops him face
first to the floor... still alive... twitching.

Five seconds: Two bodies. Rory's crew stares in shock at the Chileans, who are: CACERO...

RAMON, whom we've met.

DIAZ, 25, an ambitious but dim-witted foot soldier.

CONCEPCION, a gum-cracking teen, high on meth and itching to shoot up the place.

EDGARDO, 30, the crew leader. Wiry, pockmarked, a cunning capo and vicious sadist, with a thirst for power.

(Throughout the screenplay... all Spanish spoken when any of the gang addresses another - to be SUBTITLED - except when a meaning is clear.)

EDGARDO

Which one?

Concepcion glances at Rory... then at Taz. His eyes settle on Possum, who cowers in his chair. Before he can finger him...

RORY

It was me. I sold the gram.

Edgardo levels his gun at Rory.

CONCEPCION

No.

He nods at Possum. Edgardo shoots Possum IN THE HEAD. He slams back against the chair, dead, blood splashing onto the Tupac poster. Three bodies.

Hellish gurgling from the twitching Fat Boy. A beat. Edgardo's gaze falls on Teesha.

At that, Rory coils, desperate for an opening to act. With Cacero focused on him... there is none.

EDGARDO

Crawl to me, puta.

Taz grips her tighter. Edgardo shoots him in the knee. Taz screams and writhes in agony, sending Teesha to the floor.

EDGARDO

Crawl.

Traumatized, eyes blank, Teesha rolls to her hands and knees.

TAZ

No, Teesh!

She hesitates.

EDGARDO
Lesgo-lesgo-lesgo, Puta!

She doesn't move, so... Edgardo shoots Taz's other knee. Taz arches and goes silent, beyond pain.

Teesha crawls slowly, sobbing. HARD RAP serenades her now, warning about the costs of the thug life. She crawls past the VIDEO: *Skip-To-My-Lou*, airborne in beautiful slo-mo.

Teesha reaches Edgardo. He lifts her chin with the silencer until she's level with his belt. A beat. He grabs her braids and controls her by them, turning her to face Taz. Then he forces a GUMBALL-SIZED ROCK OF COCAINE into her mouth.

EDGARDO
Spit it out and he dies.
(to his men)
Get everything.

Diaz starts stuffing the bags of pot into a gym bag. Concepcion sweeps the gram bottles of coke into a backpack.

Teesha sits still as a deer, trying to keep the poisonous rock from dissolving fast enough to kill her.

Rory looks around for any opening. Guns stare back at him.

Diaz bags the last of the pot. But Edgardo's having too much fun to leave now. He nods at the bong.

EDGARDO
Take a taste.

Diaz fires up a bong hit.

Teesha whimpers. Edgardo's free hand roams beneath her shirt. She begins to froth from her mouth and convulse.

EDGARDO
Not too sexy, puta.

TAZ
Spit it out, baby!

She won't do it. Taz closes his eyes... makes his peace... and whips out the BLACK REMOTE, pointing it at Edgardo.

Concepcion BLOWS TAZ AWAY. He dies, clutching the remote in his hand. Four bodies.

Teesha spits out the coke and rushes to him. She pounds on Taz' chest.

TEESHA
NO!

Edgardo walks to her and presses the silencer to her head.

RORY
Don't do it. She's not part of this.

Teesha curls into Taz's chest, waiting to die.

BOLAR (O.S.)
Do you want to save her?

ERNESTO BOLAR stands by the door. He's a bull of a man with a warlord's presence. His own men flinch at his voice.

RORY
Yes.

BOLAR
Then she comes with us. Cacero...

Cacero picks her up and hoists her over his shoulder.

Bolar looks at Rory. A beat. He walks to the window and opens the blinds just enough to shine a small LASER POINTER into the DARKENED WINDOW of the APARTMENT across the street. A GREEN POINTER BEAM answers.

BOLAR
That will flash every five minutes.
You'll signal back.
(he tosses Rory the LASER)
If you leave the couch, or fall asleep,
or miss a signal...

Bolar lets the threat hang in the air. He drops on the couch a GRAM BOTTLE OF COKE... marked with tiny BLACK BULL'S HORNS.

BOLAR
To keep you awake.
(beat)
These are Bolar's streets now. Tell everyone.

He walks out, closing the door behind him. Rory sits in shock, too far gone to notice the SOFT THUMP that sounds against the door.

He stares absently at the TV screen, where Alimoe and Skip-To-My-Lou defy gravity again.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

FLASHBACK: RORY - OBJECTIVE - DRUG APARTMENT - MORNING

A GREEN BEAM reflects off the TV screen... the hoops video cycling on behind it.

Rory slumped on the couch, haggard, haunted... the dead bodies of his crew strewn about the blood drenched... torn-apart room. The empty COKE VIAL beside him.

Rory raises his own laser pointer and signals back out the window. He sees the BLINDS SNAP SHUT in the apartment across the street. The message -- he's now free to move.

Rory stumbles to the door, choking on the stench. He starts to open it... and the door opens in all the way. Teesha's tortured body falls at his feet.

Her eyes are open, but moist. Rory drops to his knees in horror... puts an ear to her face, listening for a breath.

PRESENT: - RORY'S APARTMENT - W187TH STREET - NIGHT

Fly stares at Rory... his mind completely blown. A seemingly endless pause... the brick between them pulsing with menace.

FLY

What did you do, Ro?

A beat. Rory's exhausted from reliving the nightmare.

FLASHBACK: RORY - OBJECTIVE

EXT. HARLEM - 165TH STREET/LENOX AVENUE - NIGHT

RORY (V.O.)

I called the police on a pay phone, then got a room at a motel. I cleaned up. I found out the name of the bar in Spanish Harlem where they said Bolar finished off every night. 110th and 3rd.

(beat)

I waited 'til dark... and hit the street with my gun. Just started walkin'... If I take a cab that night, I do it. Just go in there shootin'. But all those blocks... and all that air... gave me time to see what I shoulda seen day one: That the game only ever ends one way.

EXT. SPANISH HARLEM - 116TH ST/FDR/EAST RIVER - NIGHT

RORY (V.O.)

So, I walked over to the river. For the first time in my life, I got on my knees. I said prayers for Teesha... Taz... Zo... Fat Boy... Possum. And then I threw that fuckin' gun in the river.

PRESENT: RORY'S APT. - W187TH STREET - NIGHT

Rory nods at the brick.

RORY

Which is where you're gonna throw this.

Fly clutches the malt liquor bottle. A long beat.

FLY

I can't, Ro. It's my ticket.

RORY

Your ticket? You never sold a joint, Fly. Bolar's crew is out there combing the streets for this brick, and you're gonna move it?

FLY

Maybe he wrote it off.

RORY

Wrote it off? You're a fuckin' idiot.

He picks up the brick... gauging its weight... taps a taste onto a finger... tries it... gestures: '*Good shit.*' And while expertly taping the cellophane back together...

RORY

This is a kilo of top grade blow, Fly.

He picks up his business card... writes on the back.

RORY

Two point two pounds in a kilo... sixteen ounces in a pound...

He writes: "2.2 X 16 = 35.2."

RORY

Twenty-eight grams in an ounce...

He writes: "35.2 x 28 = 985.6."

RORY

Hundred dollars a gram...

He writes: "985.6 X 100 = 98,560."

He looks up at Fly... then adds the dollar sign: "\$98,560."

RORY

That's uncut. Street value -- we're talkin' a half-million, easy. Bolar ain't writin' it off.

FLY

You know people in that college from all over. California... Texas... France. We sell this outta the hood, there's no risk, Ro.

Rory's not budging. Fly snatches up the card... frustrated.

FLY

It's worth a half-million? I'll take
fifty grand for it. Twenty-five for me;
twenty-five for you.

RORY

In the river, Fly.

Fly paces. He stops at seeing a FRAMED PICTURE of two Little League teammates, arm-in-arm... Fly and Rory.

FLY

I got a dream too, Ro, like you got
yours... and it ain't speed chess. Got a
friend in Queens who calls himself
Beatmaster Supreme. You know what he's
got locked up in his basement? Ten beats.
Roar, they's like nothing you ever heard.
Smooth as malt liquor, hard as a
jackhammer. Only thing missing are the
words.

(rapping now)

*The slang from the gang/ the goods from
the hood/ a revolution of elocution...*

(points to his chest)

Those Fly's lyrics. He's put out the
word; first one can pay for the demo gets
to rap on the record. Twenty-five grand,
Ro; we'll mix us a fine-ass demo and
never look back.

RORY

No.

Fly stares at him... nods grimly.

FLY

I understand if you won't help me. But
you gotta understand too. How many shots
does a brother get? This is mine, and I'm
takin' it.

(beat)

With or without you... I'm takin' it.

Fly slips the brick into his jacket and walks out.

Rory stares at the empty Olde English bottle. A beat. He
walks to the window and looks down on the street.

RORY'S POV - Fly walks past Chivas. They exchange street
gestures and inaudible greetings. Fly pauses for a beat...
and now walks on.

BACK ON RORY... deep worry in his eyes.

EXT. NEW JERSEY SWAMPLAND - ABANDONED JUNK YARD - NIGHT

The late-model BLACK LEXUS from the opening scene bumps down a rutted dirt road.

INT. LEXUS - SAME: MOVING

Four of Bolar's Chilean henchman. EDGARDO drives.

RAMON, the playboy that Fly robbed of Bolar's cocaine, sits in the passenger seat, his forehead damp with sweat. His hands dig into the knees of his trousers.

DIAZ sits behind him, idly slapping the magazine of his Beretta in and out. Beside Diaz, CONCEPCION snaps the wire on a lethal-looking CHOKE-WIRE.

The Lexus pulls to a stop... the HEADLIGHTS illuminating a single HARD-BACKED CHAIR sitting on the dirt in the middle of an amphitheater of junk.

The men step out. Ramon stares warily at the chair. Handcuffs dangle from each chair leg. A SET lays on the seat. A STEEL STAKE has been driven into the ground five feet away.

EDGARDO

Have a seat.

Ramon walks to the chair and sits, terrified but stoic. Diaz cuffs his hands... then his feet. Ramon looks down at the discolored earth beneath the chair: the blood of others.

Suddenly, high beams from a SECOND CAR flash on. The sound of car doors opening and now...

BOLAR steps out. Beside him is CACERO, the brute with the python tattoos. He's holding a fierce PRESA CANARIO DOG on a choke chain.

With a nod from Bolar... Cacero clips the chain to the steel stake. A signal... the dog sits... eyeing Ramon. Bolar steps to stand over him... his stare sending fresh rivulets of sweat down Ramon's face.

BOLAR

Tell me what happened.

RAMON

I made the One-Sixtieth street drop, like always. I was walking back to the car... and I got hit from behind.

(beat)

I saw nothing.

Bolar stares hard at him.

BOLAR

There were no witnesses?

RAMON

There was a boy in a window. I will find him.

(beat)

I'll get it back, Senor. I promise.

BOLAR

Unless you sold it.

Ramon shakes his head. Never. A beat. Bolar nods at Cacero... who signals the dog...

Who lunges at Ramon's throat. The steel leash snaps him back at the last instant. Just a few links too short. Cacero signals him to sit, and the dog obeys. He's played this game before -- he can wait.

Ramon, white with fear, watches Cacero loosen the steel chain. Next time it will be long enough.

BOLAR

Hire men from El Calera, my father told me. They are stupid, but they are honest.

The coiled dog waits for the kill signal. Ramon crosses himself, bracing for death. Closes his eyes. Then, BAM!

The cuffs on Ramon's feet are blown apart. He falls to his knees, vomits... looks up to see Bolar's gun trickling smoke.

BOLAR

Find that boy.

INT. RORY'S APT. - W187TH STREET - NIGHT

Rory lies on his mattress. Wide awake. Hasn't slept. Holding his cell phone on his chest. CELL PHONE SCREEN: 3:22 A.M.

He dials Fly. Two rings, and then...

FLY

Ro.

RORY

You didn't throw it in the river, did you?

FLY

No.

RORY

It's gonna get you killed, Fly -- can't you see that?

FLY

Yeah, Ro. That's why I need you.

Rory closes the phone... sighs... stares hard at the wall.

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - STREET/BANK - MORNING

Brett, driving the Everett's SUV, pulls up in front of the bank. She gets out... opens the back door... and lifts out Benjamin, the Everett baby.

She deftly snaps a little flex-stroller into shape with one hand while holding Benji with the other. A routine.

INT. MONTCLAIR BANK - DAY

She waits in line as the CUSTOMER in front of her finishes up. She pushes the stroller to the teller window.

SARAH, 55, the flinty-eyed TELLER, smiles at them both.

SARAH
Mornin', you two.

BRETT
Mornin' Sarah. Fifteen hundred on the money order today, please.

SARAH
You got it.

Brett hands her a DEPOSIT SLIP -- for \$2,420 -- and an envelope full of cash. Sarah hands Brett a MONEY ORDER. It's clear these two have done this before.

As Sarah handles the deposit... Brett fills out the money order. She takes an ENVELOPE from her handbag. Addressed to: **Arthur Hayes - P.O. BOX 1944, Sta. 16, Lincoln, NB 68516.**

As Brett seals the money order in the envelope, Sarah smiles down at the baby.

SARAH
How's my little guy today?

BRETT
Still the boss.

INT. MONTCLAIR POST OFFICE - DAY

Brett pushes the stroller to the Out-of-Town mail slot... and drops in the letter.

She steps to a P.O Box... kneels to open it... finds a LETTER. Another one addressed to her from her father.

Brett's face falls.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A beautiful PLAYGROUND. A grass lawn surrounds a sand-pit studded with slides and swings. MOMS and TODDLERS mill about.

Brett and Benji are in the pit. She plants him on his feet, holding onto his hands.

BRETT

Show me what you got, little man.

She lets go... he wobbles... takes a step... plunks on his butt with a look of tearful distress... then laughter as Brett plunks on her butt, too. Oops. She high-fives him.

BRETT

You're a natural.

Nearby moms smile in admiration.

MOM

You're amazing with him.

Brett smiles. "Thanks." Still watching Benji, she sits down on a nearby bench. She opens the letter and starts to read.

ART HAYES (V.O.)

Everything's real clear now -- like a lake at dawn. All the stuff I kept trying to teach you.... I shoulda kept it real simple: Don't cross the wrong people. But I got peace, Brett. Even now. Because you got out. That's all that matters.

She puts the letter away, upset. She manages a game smile for Benji in the sand pit. She takes out her cell phone.

She summons her courage... and dials.

BRETT

Dad, it's Brett... Hi... Don't talk. Please. If you talk, I'll hang up. I mean it. Just listen, Dad. I've blocked Caller ID, so you can't call back. I'm sorry, and I love you, but this is how we have to do things now.

(beat)

I only want one answer from you, Dad, and then I'm going to hang up. Just one answer.

She lowers the phone... takes a breath to relax... raises it.

BRETT

How much do you owe them?

She listens... squeezes her eyes shut... closes the phone. Hollow-eyed, she watches Benji, still trying to stand.

EXT. SPANISH HARLEM - TITO'S BAR - 110TH STREET - DAY

A sports bar. A Mexican flag flying above the entrance.

INT. TITO'S BAR - DAY

ROWDY FANS in green Mexico jerseys line the horseshoe-shaped bar. Their eyes are glued to the soccer match on TV: Mexico-USA. Beer and tequila flow freely.

Cacero sits near the door. He's serving as lookout for...

Bolar, who sits across the bar. He has one eye on the soccer game, and the other on the door. And now he sees...

A MAN walk in. 35, fit, nondescript, in a sweatshirt and ball cap. The only white guy in the place.

Bolar glances at Cacero... and carries his beer to an empty table in the back. The Man walks over and sits down across from him. An edgy familiarity between these two. The Man nods at the sea of green jerseys surrounding them.

MAN

If Mexico loses, what are my chances of getting out alive?

BOLAR

Depends how much you're willing to spend.

MAN

(smiling grimly)

Lucky for me we suck at *futbol*.

A sudden roar from the crowd... turns to a groan as Mexico blows a prime scoring chance. The Man smiles ruefully. Bolar stares hard in return. '*Enough small talk.*'

MAN

If an indictment's coming down, it's coming soon. But you should be prepared for... anything.

BOLAR

I want three days' notice.

MAN

I can't guaran--

BOLAR

Three days.

Bolar's stare could cut steel.

MAN

Understood.

(beat)

You have something for me?

BOLAR
I pay for information... not rumors.

A stare-down. The man's pissed... but he wilts in the face of Bolar's glare. Suddenly, an ANGRY GROAN erupts from the crowd as the U.S. team slams home a goal.

Bolar smiles and nods at the front door.

BOLAR
Get out while you still can.

EXT. HARLEM - MALCOM X BOULEVARD - GARVEY'S - NIGHT

Rory walks up the street to GARVEY'S -- a battered DIVE. At the door, he turns and scans the street. All clear.

INT. GARVEY'S - CONTINUOUS

Rory steps in. Early LL COOL J plays. SAD SACKS drink along the bar. Rory spots Fly sitting alone in the corner, drinking an Olde English. There's one for Rory, too.

Rory walks over and sits down. Fly smiles.

FLY
Remember sneaking in here back in the day?
(mimicking his teen self)
I'll have a Hennessy and Coke.

RORY
And make that Coke a classic.

They laugh softly. A beat. Fly pulls the brick -- now wrapped in newspaper -- from his jacket. Rory takes it and slips it into his own jacket.

Fly sighs -- a huge weight off his soul.

FLY
I been holed up with that sucker. Some tense shit.

RORY
You're through with it now.
(beat)
I'll call you when it's done.

FLY
But soon, right?

RORY
This needs to be done right, Fly. You hear what I'm sayin'?

FLY
 I hear you... and you're lookin' at
 Mister Fuckin' Patience himself. I swear.
 (beat)
 But soon, right?

He smiles. Rory can't stop a half-smile in return.

FLY
 I knew you'd come through for me, Ro.
 Thanks.

He raises his bottle. Rory, hiding his worry... taps it.

ON A COMPUTER SCREEN - 10:01 PM

ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S WHITE BEARDED FACE fills the screen. His searching gaze is directed out into cyberspace. His VOICE comes from small speakers to either side of the laptop.

HEMINGWAY (V.O.)
*There are some things which cannot be
 learned quickly and time, which is all we
 have, must be paid heavily for their
 acquiring. They are the very simplest
 things, and because it takes a man's life
 to know them the little new that each man
 gets from life is very costly, and the
 only heritage he has to leave.*

INT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - BRETT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ON BRETT - Listening, eyes closed. Here in the darkness there is true communion. She wears a white nightie and is effervescent in the glow from the screen.

She opens her eyes. She watches Hemingway's face shrink to one-third size. A CAPTION appears: "TODAY'S TOPIC: *HEMINGWAY AND DEATH.*"

A SCROLL BOX lists the screen names of everyone present. Brett scrolls down it, searching. Sighs, disappointed.

The rest of the screen is given over to typed conversation.

HemLeader: He understood that only when faced with death are we truly alive. Death how? How do you think?

PapaOne: A bullfight.

GloryRead: War.

Lit Crit: The angry sea.

HemLeader: Yes. And a few more we'll talk about. All in his realm of obsessions. But you face it -- that's what counts.

A new screen name, **HISTORYBUFF**, pops up in the scroll box. Brett's face lights up at the sight of it.

HistoryBuff: Sorry gang. Stuck at work.

HemLeader: Not a problem. Welcome.

HistoryBuff: Thanks. Good to be here.

Brett eyes the screen. She weighs a decision... then her fingers work the keyboard.

Silk: History. Can we talk? Private?

HistoryBuff: Sure. Now?

Silk: Yes.

Brett engages the INSTANT MESSAGE BOX, which pops up with its trademark musical flourish.

She enlarges the IM Box, crowding out the Hemingway talk. She and HistoryBuff are one-on-one now.

HistoryBuff: Hey... you okay?

Silk: Remember when I said there was hope? Not anymore.

HistoryBuff: Your father again?

Silk: Yes.

She stares at the screen. Hemingway stares back at her, his soulful eyes taking her measure.

Silk: Can I ask you a question?

HistoryBuff: Any time.

Silk: Would you do a bad thing for a good cause?

Brett stares at the screen. A long beat.

Silk: You there, History?

HistoryBuff: I'm here. Big question.

Silk: I know.

Another long beat. Finally...

HistoryBuff: I think it's time we meet. What do you say?

CLOSE ON BRETT'S FACE. Hope... and fear in her eyes. A beat. She reaches for the keyboard...

AND WE CUT TO:

A DIFFERENT COMPUTER SCREEN

As HistoryBuff's offer pulses on the screen... we widen to reveal:

RORY. Sitting at the kitchen table in his Bronx apartment. Waiting on Silk's answer... with hope in his eyes.

INT. NYC - DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A room packed with law enforcement troops. DEA AGENTS... DEA SWAT TEAM... NYPD DRUG UNIT... HOMELAND SECURITY PERSONNEL.

WE SEE them from behind, seated in rows, their eyes on the front of the room, where RENFRO, 45, the DEA agent in charge, stands at a cork board that is a monument to Ernesto Bolar.

Bolar's photo sits atop an INVESTIGATION PYRAMID. Below it, lines trace different aspects of his Chile-to-New York cocaine operation. There are photos of Bolar's crew: Cacero... Edgardo... Diaz... Concepcion... Ramon.

UNDER, we hear the recorded sounds of a man and woman engulfed in hot sex. Renfro lets the men listen, then...

RENFRO
Bolar and his wife. She's a former Miss Chile. Hotter than hot.

The woman's cries ease off into sweet, playful laughter. Renfro STOPS a CD player... looks over the room... and we see the faces of the law enforcement guys for the first time.

RENFRO
This is a man with a lot to lose, gentlemen. Remember that.

WE PAN ACROSS THE TROOPS... and see the MAN that Bolar met in Tito's bar: DEA AGENT, COLE DIEHL. We STAY ON him.

As we STAY ON Diehl...

RENFRO (O.S.)
Bolar and his crew won't go easy.

EXT. HARLEM - 160TH STREET - TENEMENT BACK ALLEY - DAY

Where a PACK OF LATINO KIDS play soccer.

Ramon walks into the game and CATCHES THE BALL. Game over. He kneels among the kids.

RAMON
Who plays with these?

He holds up the WHITE SUPERBALL that landed on his chest the night he was mugged. The kids stare at the ground.

Ramon pulls out a TWENTY. They all want it, but stay mum. Tough kids. Ramon waves the closest KID over... and pulls a gun from his belt. The kids stay quiet.

Ramon clicks off the safety...

JESUS (O.S.)
That's my ball.

Jesus, the goalie, stands between two milk-crate goalposts. As he walks slowly to Ramon, the rest of the kids scatter. Ramon hands him the superball.

RAMON
Your name?

JESUS
Jesus.

RAMON
You recognize me, Jesus?

A long beat. Jesus eyes the gun. He nods.

RAMON
Did you see the man who robbed me?
(nods again)
Do you know his name?

Jesus shakes his head, 'No.'

RAMON
But you'd know his face?

JESUS
He had a mask.

RAMON
But you might recognize him anyway?

Jesus nods. Ramon takes out a BURNER CELL PHONE...

RAMON
You know how these work?

JESUS
Yes.

RAMON
Good. There's only one number in it. You see him again, you call me.

Jesus nods. Ramon stuffs the burner phone and twenty into his pocket. He touches the gun barrel to Jesus' cheek.

RAMON
Call soon.

EXT. AUDIO EXCELLENCE - W79TH STREET/COLUMBUS AVENUE - DUSK

The pulsing neon facade of a Manhattan electronics store.

INT. - AUDIO EXCELLENCE - SPEAKER ROOM - SAME

Primo speakers of all sizes ring the glassed-in walls of this soundproof listening room. Rory stands with a customer, a WHITE TEEN in baggy jeans, do-rag, and sideways Yankee cap.

WHITE BOY
Turn it up, man.

Rory eases up the volume on a rap song. White Boy grooves along the speakers, staring intensely at each new set as Rory activates them with a hand-held remote.

WHITE BOY
It's the bass line gets the bitches.

RORY
You want bass?

He activates a new set. As White Boy stares hard into them...

Rory, sensing something, looks up and sees...

BRETT. Standing on the sidewalk outside the store. She hasn't seen him yet. He steps to the door of the speaker room... watches her walk in... look around... spot him.

A beat as they eye each other. Rory taps a nearby CLERK... nods at White Boy in the speaker room.

RORY
Close Eminem for me?

CLERK
You got it.

He walks to Brett.

RORY
Silk?

BRETT
History Buff.

A beat. Instant chemistry. Finally...

BRETT
Looks like I cost you a sale.

She nods at the speaker room... where the clerk is handing a sales ticket to White Boy.

RORY
It's okay, I'll make it up on the next one. He'll come in to buy an I-Pod, and he'll walk out with a home theater.

Brett smiles. A rich beat.

RORY
There's a place around the corner. It's a good place to talk.

She smiles... and nods.

INT. TRUE NOTE BAR - DUSK

They sit in a corner booth in a small jazz bar. Miles Davis blows slow and hot from unseen speakers.

A WAITRESS sets down two tiny bottles. They look like bottles of cologne.

RORY
Reposado tequila. They age it in a barrel, like wine, then serve it cold, like sake. Two of these and you're ready to run with the bulls.

WAITRESS
Wears down a girl's defenses like that.
(snaps her fingers)

BRETT
Thanks. I'll be careful.

The waitress leaves. They eye each other. A beat.

RORY
You're not what I pictured.

BRETT
You either.

He smiles. They sip their drinks. Brett knows the ball's in her court. But where to start?

RORY
So... that "bad thing for a good cause..."

BRETT
Yeah...

She looks into his eyes... and takes the leap of faith.

BRETT
I've told you about my dad's gambling. This time he owes money he can't pay. A lot of money.

Rory eyes her. A beat.

RORY
This is gonna sound hard... but it's his
debt. Not yours.

Her eyes flash. A beat.

BRETT
Growing up... it was just us. No one
else.
(beat)
I know it's hard to believe, but he
always protected me, no matter what.
He...

She looks at him. A beat. She can't do this.

BRETT
This wasn't a good idea. I'm sorry.
I don't think it's something you can
understand.

She takes money from her purse and puts it on the table. She
starts to stand... but Rory touches her hand.

RORY
Hey.
(beat)
We don't have to talk about your dad,
okay? We'll just finish our drinks.

She eyes him... and sits back down. Fingers her glass.

RORY
I never knew my Dad. He was out of the
picture from day one. My mom...
(beat)
She ran a laundromat. One of those coin
places you see every other block. You
probably passed three of them on your way
here.

Brett sips her drink.

RORY
She worked every day. She used to say
that God had it easy - kicking back on
that seventh day.

He smiles at the memory.

RORY
When crack took over the neighborhood,
the hop-heads would come into her
laundry. They'd sit by the dryers to get
warm.
(beat)
(MORE)

RORY (CONT'D)

She never had the heart to kick 'em out.
She'd sit and talk with 'em instead. That
was Mom -- she could talk to anybody.

(beat)

One night, one of them offers her a hit
off his pipe. One little hit. What's the
harm, right?

(beat)

Four months later, she was dead.

Brett stares at him, shocked.

BRETT

I'm sorry. What happened to you?

RORY

A friend of mine's family took me in.
Saved me from the state.

Rory looks into his drink. A beat.

RORY

How much does your father owe?

BRETT

Eighty thousand dollars. He has a week to
pay it.

Rory whistles softly and shakes his head. The waitress brings
two more Reposados.

RORY

Do you remember what I told you the first
night in that chat room?

BRETT

That Hemingway saved you.

Rory reaches into his bag and takes out a battered, dog-eared
paperback. Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. Scotch tape all
along the binding.

He opens it and shows Brett the inside cover. A handwritten
note: "The sky's the limit, Rory."

RORY

My ninth-grade teacher gave me this... on
the last day of school. She probably
hoped it would keep me off the streets.

BRETT

Did it?

RORY

No.

(beat)

I didn't read it for years. When I
finally did, I'd hit rock bottom.

He rubs the binding with his thumb.

RORY

Those damn sentences. Crystal clear. Rock hard. They cut through all my bullshit. I couldn't con myself anymore, y'know?

Brett nods. She knows.

BRETT

You have honor or you don't. No excuses. I love that.

Rory nods. A beat.

RORY

I did everything I could to save her. My mom, I mean. I even paid the lookouts at the crack dens. If she showed up, they'd call me, and I'd go get her.

(beat)

So she started stealing money from my wallet and paying them not to call me.

(beat)

They can love you... and still not stop.

Brett bites her lip. She knows it's the truth.

RORY

That's what you don't get over. And it's why you should walk away. Your dad made his choices; you get to make yours.

BRETT

Did you walk away?

RORY

(beat)

No. She was all I had.

Brett nods, resting her case. They sip in silence for a few moments. These two get each other now. All the way.

BRETT

You asked to meet, Rory. Is it because you can help me?

Rory's turn to study Brett now. To wonder how far he can trust her. A beat.

RORY

I've got something that's worth more than your father owes. Something his "creditors" would know what to do with.

She eyes him, her gaze steady.

RORY

You're not going to ask me if it's legal?

Brett shakes her head. A beat. Her cell phone beeps. The alarm, not the ringer. She turns it off.

BRETT

Sorry. I have to catch the last train to Jersey.

Rory signals the waitress for the check.

BRETT

It's okay -- I still have a few minutes.

(beat)

What do you have that can help him, Rory?

He studies her. A beat.

RORY

Look, this isn't something we're gonna decide tonight. Okay?

(beat)

You'd be crossing a line, Brett. A big one.

She eyes him. A beat. Rory slides her money back to her... and pays the check.

RORY

Let's get you to that train.

INT. TAXICAB - NIGHT: DRIVING

An ARAB CABBIE. A Moroccan chanteuse sings softly on the stereo. Rory and Brett sit in the back seat. She looks out the window at Times Square. Tourists, hookers, hustlers. She catches Rory looking at her.

RORY

There's something I want to show you.

(to cabbie)

Cut over to Sixth, will you?

EXT. NYC - 42ND & 6TH AVENUE - NIGHT

The cabbie turns the corner onto 6th Avenue.

RORY

Pull over. Just for a sec.

He does... and Rory nods out the window at the majestic NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. White and regal. Her beautiful Roman columns. The awesome stone lions that guard her entrance.

Rory sees the wonder in Brett's eyes.

BRETT
It's beautiful.

RORY
The lions have names. Patience and
Fortitude.
(beat)
I studied here every day for three years.
Got my life back on track in there. It's
funny -- the place is a thirty-second
walk from every vice on the planet. But
it's like none of that can touch her, you
know? She's pure.

Brett nods. He almost takes her hand... but checks himself.

RORY
I'm sorry it took your Dad to bring you
into the city.

BRETT
Me, too.

He nods at the cabbie, who pulls away.

EXT. PENN STATION - NIGHT

The cab pulls up. Rory and Brett step out. They pause by a
low wall near the station steps.

BRETT
Thanks for the drink. And the advice. And
the lions.
(beat)
I don't need to think it over, Rory. I'm
in if you are.

She smiles... and walks away. At the stairs she turns and
waves again. Rory watches her disappear.

RORY
(hooked)
Damn.

INT. PENN STATION - JERSEY-BOUND - COMMUTER TRAIN PLATFORM

Brett walks along the empty platform. Just the sound of her
footsteps. She stops, turns, and looks behind her: nothing.
She steps onto the waiting train.

INT. JERSEY COMMUTER TRAIN CAR - NIGHT: MOVING

Brett sits by herself. Just a few other COMMUTERS in the car.
She takes out her Blackberry and starts to TEXT.

ON SCREEN: "Rory, I meant what I--"

No. Better to play it cool. She kills the text and puts away the Blackberry. Takes out her Hemingway book and begins to read.

INT. BRONX - W187TH STREET - RORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rory sits in his kitchen. Sipping a beer, staring pensively at... the snow-white brick, alone on the kitchen table.

INT. UPPER MONTCLAIRE - KANG'S DRY CLEANERS - MORNING

Brett walks in, pushing the stroller. A KOREAN COUPLE works behind the counter. As Brett searches her purse for her ticket, the wife coos at Benji.

HUSBAND

I remember. Blue dress. Tiny, tiny.

He lifts a BLUE DRESS and BRIGHT YELLOW SWEATER off the movable rack. The baby smiles at the bright colors.

BRETT

You like those?

HUSBAND

He boy, he like.

His wife snaps at him in Korean. He stops smiling.

EXT. KANG'S DRY CLEANERS - MOMENTS LATER

Brett walks out to the Everett SUV.

ACROSS THE STREET... In a PARKED CAR: Slide, Lyle and Ryan watch her load the baby in and get behind the wheel.

EXT. CUL DE SAC - EVERETT HOME - DAY

Brett pulls the Everett SUV into the driveway.

A HALF BLOCK BACK... Ryan's car pulls to the curb. They watch her get out and open the back door to fetch the baby.

SLIDE

If we do this, guys, we do it. No mercy.

LYLE

Amen. We fuck with her like she fucked with us.

Ryan, eyes day-dreamy, watches Brett carry the baby to the house and disappear inside. Slide eyes him.

SLIDE

You with us, Ry?

RYAN
Sure thing.

EXT. NYC - LITTLE ITALY - MULBERRY STREET - AFTERNOON

The area is roaring. The annual SAN GENNARO STREET FESTIVAL has transformed this quaint slice of the city into a riot of music, food-stalls, dancing, and arcade games.

WE PICK UP on the back of A MAN in a ratty windbreaker and a FAMILIAR BALL CAP, moving with purpose through the crowd.

He steps off the curb and crosses the street towards a small restaurant.

EXT. NYC - PENN STATION - 34TH STREET - AFTERNOON

Brett pops up the stairs onto 34th Street. She wears a colorful summer dress, carries her jacket with her purse.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - MULBERRY STREET - AFTERNOON

A packed eatery. Rushing waiters, clinking plates.

Bolar sits alone at a back table, drinking red wine from a water glass. A second glass of wine sits beside the first.

Across the room sits Cacero. Sipping a soda. On lookout. He sees...

COLE DIEHL, Bolar's FBI mole, step in. Diehl walks to Bolar's table and sits down. Bolar slides a menu across to him. Diehl opens it... and sees the fat cash envelope inside.

He fingers it... nods, satisfied... pockets it... leans in.

DIEHL
We're coming for you Monday. Early. The boss wants to pull you outta bed and drag you buck naked through your front yard. He said, "Imagine the YouTube hits."

Bolar's eyes bore into Diehl's. He slides the second glass of wine across the table.

DIEHL
It's a thirty-count indictment... Hey, it was fun while it lasted, huh? It'll be like losing the Yankees. New York will never be the same.

BOLAR
Your badge. Take it out.

DIEHL
Why?

Bolar stares at him. Diehl buckles, fishing out his DEA badge and handing it over. Bolar studies the gleaming metal.

BOLAR
You still polish it.

Diehl grabs it back, chapped.

DIEHL
You're lecturing me on honor? Save it for your crew, Bolar. They're history, too.

Diehl lifts his glass and downs the rest of his wine. A sputtering cough... and he spits something into his hand:

A WEDDING RING. As he stares at it, stunned...

BOLAR
Call her cell.

Diehl whips out his cell phone... dials.

CHILEAN VOICE ON CELL PHONE
Hola.

Diehl stares at his phone in shock. Bolar rises.

BOLAR
When I land in Santiago, you get her back.

DIEHL
No! Jesus, Bolar! Please! Bolar...!

But he's headed for the door. Diehl starts up after him, only to hit a brick wall -- Cacero. He sits back down, horrified.

EXT. STREET FESTIVAL - ITALIAN RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Bolar exits into the festival's teeming street. Cacero trails him at a watchful distance.

EXT. - LITTLE ITALY - GRAND STREET - AFTERNOON

Brett walks towards the festival... scanning the raucous crowd of New Yorkers... lights up at the sight of...

Rory, waiting for her on the corner of Grand and Mulberry -- the entrance to the festival. He holds out a hand. She shakes it. He nods at the party.

RORY
Just like back in Lincoln, right?

BRETT
Oh, yeah. Exactly.

They smile and head into the fray, Rory's hand on her back.

OVER THEIR BACKS... we follow them making their way past
whirling PUERTO RICAN BREAK DANCERS... past JUGGLERS...

They reach a DUNKING BOOTH. The mean-faced COMIC in the
dunking chair is taunting the YOUNG TURK trying to nail him.

COMIC
Nice arm, Turd.

The young turk fires his last ball... misses... and slinks
away with his DATE. The comic's eyes scan the crowd... and
lock onto Rory's.

COMIC
Let's see what you got, scrub.

Rory's eyes narrow. He pays... takes only ONE ball... pushes
away the other two... and fires. BOOM! SPLASH!

Brett smiles. *Not bad.* Rory shrugs.

NEARBY...

A PUPPET SHOW delights a few dozen KIDS in a makeshift
outdoor theater.

A HISPANIC BOY, five, strikingly handsome, stands on a
plastic chair in the BACK ROW. HIS MOTHER -- gorgeous, and
very pregnant -- stands next to him.

Bolar steps into the puppet-show clearing. He moves along the
same row... and now lifts his giggling son high in the air.
He nuzzles him... and sets him back down on the chair.

He smiles at his wife... rubs her neck. A perfect little
family. Bolar casually looks about, spotting Cacero slipping
through the crowd to stand guard ten yards away.

NEARBY...

Brett and Rory head for the same clearing. As they near it...

WE SEE THE BOYS -- Slide, Ryan, Lyle. They're mixed in with
the crowd... and they're tracking Brett as... she and Rory
reach the clearing.

They watch a STREET ARTIST sketch a jiffy caricature of a
YOUNG COUPLE. The artist nods at them: 'You two next?' Brett
shakes her head - 'No thanks.'

Rory, sensing something, turns to see...

CACERO STARING RIGHT AT HIM. A beat. As Cacero looks over at
Bolar, trying to get his attention...

Rory follows Cacero's eyes... and now his heart skips a beat. He takes an involuntary step back...

BRETT
What is it?

He keeps staring. She follows his eyes to take in -- Bolar... his wife... their kid... and Cacero.

BRETT
Rory, what's wrong? Do you know them?

He takes her elbow and steers her into the crowd... the boys continuing to track them.

Bolar looks where Cacero points. But Rory and Brett are GONE.

EXT. LITTLE ITALY - HESTER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Rory leads Brett around a corner away from the puppet show area. Safe... for now. He flashes two fingers at a BEER VENDOR... who sets out two beers. He pays...

BRETT
What happened back there?

RORY
Nothing.

She's not buying it... but this girl respects secrets. Beat.

RORY
I didn't just bring you down here for the festival, Brett.
(beat)
If you're serious about wanting my help, there's someone you need to meet.

BRETT
I'm serious.

He studies her.

RORY
Okay. We're walkin'. It's not far.

And they start walking away from the festival.

BEHIND THEM... The boys, standing together, watch them go.

LYLE
Think he's a mark?

SLIDE
Not our problem. But it could be his.

They turn back towards the crowd... almost bumping into Cacero... who's also watching Rory and Brett. They gawk at his tattoos... his massive girth. As they step around him...

SLIDE

Hola.

Ryan and Lyle grin at their buddy's nerve. Cacero smiles thinly... sizing them up as they head back for the festival.

EXT. LITTLE ITALY - MOTT STREET - TENEMENT - EVENING

Rory and Brett reach an old, well-kept tenement building.

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - EVENING

Rory knocks at an apartment door. GWEN, 65, black, old beyond her years, but proud and dignified, opens it. She lights up at seeing Rory, who gives her a hug and a kiss.

RORY

Gwen, this is Brett.

BRETT/GWEN

Hi.

Gwen nods kindly. Gospel music plays softly from another room.

GWEN

I'll make us some tea.

Gwen walks into the kitchen. Brett notices Rory take a cash envelope from his pocket... set it on a credenza. On it are FAMILY PHOTOS; one familiar - Little Leaguers Rory and Fly.

BRETT

She's the one who took you in?

RORY

Yeah.

He eyes the vinyl record collection beneath the credenza. All jazz. Lots of Coltrane and Miles Davis. He smiles wistfully.

Rory leads Brett to a bedroom. She stops in the doorway, looking at...

A YOUNG WOMAN lying in bed. Brett stares, transfixed.

RORY

It's okay.

Rory leads her over. He sits down in the chair by the bed.

RORY

This is Teesha.

We recognize her as the casualty from the night of hell in Rory's old drug den.

She looks beautiful. Her hair cut very short, her nails done. She could be sleeping... except for the tube running from under the blankets to the machine that's keeping her in this monitored coma.

GWEN
(from the doorway)
I call her Sleeping Beauty.

Gwen walks to Rory and puts her hand on his shoulder. She glances warmly at Brett. There is love in this room.

GWEN
She loves visitors.

Brett eases closer... gazing at Teesha... while eyeing Rory with growing regard.

EXT. TENEMENT - MOTT STREET - EVENING

In the distance, the SOUNDS of the festival.

Rory steps out onto the stoop in the warm evening air to find Brett sitting on the stairs. He sits beside her... his leg touching hers. A beat.

BRETT
How long has she been like that?

RORY
Five years.

BRETT
What happened to her?

Rory watches a lone cab rumble by.

RORY
Not here.

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - RESTAURANT PATIO - NIGHT

Rory and Brett sit with drinks on the patio of a stylish restaurant. They can see through the window into the bar.

RORY
A drug dealer named Bolar put Teesha into her coma.
(beat)
I was there. I couldn't stop it.

Brett looks at him. A beat.

RORY

A few days ago, a friend of mine stole a brick of Bolar's cocaine.

BRETT

That's what you have that can save my father?

Rory nods. Lets Brett absorb this.

RORY

If my friend tries to sell it on the street, he'll get himself killed. But if the brick leaves the city...

BRETT

Everybody wins.

RORY

Except Bolar.

(beat)

Which means that if we do this, Brett, you're gone. And you can't come back. I mean it.

BRETT

(beat)

I understand.

Rory sighs under his breath. Brett sees his soul sag.

RORY

I guess I hoped it'd be a tougher choice.

BRETT

Sorry.

The word comes out colder than she meant. A beat.

RORY

Let's say you save your dad. Then what? You start all over someplace new?

BRETT

I've done it before.

RORY

You ever dealt coke before?

His tone is hard now. She looks at him.

BRETT

No.

RORY

But you're going to start now, huh? How are you going to get the brick to Lincoln? How are you going to set up your buy?

BRETT

Those are my problems, Rory.

RORY

No, they're mine too. This ain't some book, Brett. And it ain't Silk and HistoryBuff in a chat room. This shit is real. That brick could get us put away... or worse.

(beat)

If I'm gonna help you, I gotta know you can handle it.

Brett's eyes flash. A beat. She stands.

BRETT

Let me show you what I can handle.

She walks through the door into the bar. Rory lays down a twenty to cover the bill and follows.

INT. BAR/RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Brett finds an empty seat along the lively bar. A beat.

BRETT

If you weren't here...

(beat)

I'd put a sweater on the seat beside me. As if I'm saving it for a friend, right?

Brett nods at a SHARP-DRESSED GUY down the bar.

BRETT

Someone like him would send over a drink. I'd let him have the seat. Just till my friend comes, of course.

(beat)

He'd buy me a few more. Then he'd ask me back to his place. I'd say no.

(beat)

And then he'd sweeten the pot.

A long beat.

RORY

And then?

Brett stares into his eyes. She reaches into her purse and takes out: THE VIAL OF GHB. Rory stares at it, floored. He looks at Brett as if seeing her for the first time.

RORY
That's how you've been helping your
father?

She nods. A beat.

BRETT
You said I'd be crossing a line. I
crossed it a long time ago, Rory.

RORY
I guess you did.

She's stung by his tone. By the look in his eyes.

BRETT
I didn't lie to you.

RORY
You didn't come clean, either.
(beat)
"You have honor or you don't." Your
words, not mine.

Brett bites her lip, wounded. Pulls herself together.

BRETT
Thanks anyway, Rory.

She kisses his cheek and walks out. As he watches her through
the window hail a cab... he raises his hand for a beer.

INT. PENN STATION COMMUTER TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Brett hurries through the sparse crowd to board the waiting
train. She doesn't see...

LYLE behind a pillar... watching her take a seat. He punches
his cell phone button.

INT. RESTAURANT BAR - LATER

Deep in thought, nursing another beer... Rory studies the
SHARP-DRESSED GUY talking up an ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMAN.

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - COMMUTER TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Brett, deep in her own thoughts. She joins several other
commuters descending to the TAXI STAND and waiting CABS and
parked cars.

INT. TRIBECA - RORY'S APARTMENT - THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Rory steps into his new digs. Hardwood floors, high ceilings -
- a big step up from his Bronx pad. He weaves through
unpacked boxes to a makeshift desk by a window.

He opens his laptop... turns it on.

EXT. TRIBECA - CHAMBERS/CHURCH STREETS - BUILDING - SAME

An APARTMENT building. OLD. ELEGANT. From across the street, WE SEE Rory framed in the window... looking out at MASHER'S DELI, where several NYPD SQUAD CARS are parked illegally on both sides of the corner.

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - EVERETT HOME - NIGHT

Brett exits a Midnite Cab... starts across the lawn, when... her Blackberry DINGS.

A text: HistoryBuff: "I'm sorry. And I'm in." She closes her eyes in sweet relief.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

LEGEND: "THE DEAL"

INT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - BANK - DAY

Brett, with Benji, at the teller window.

SARAH
The usual, Brett?

BRETT
Just a withdrawal today, Sarah. Thanks.

She fills out a slip and slides it over to Sarah, who eyes it... surprised... checks her computer screen.

SARAH
That's everything in your account.

Brett nods... shrugs. A tense beat, until...

SARAH
(to Benji)
She clear this with you, young man?

Brett smiles, relieved.

INT. NYC - MURRAY HILL - RYAN'S APT. - BATHROOM - EVENING

Ryan shaves at the sink, Van Morrison playing softly in the background. He searches his eyes in the mirror.

INT. NYC - WEST VILLAGE - LYLE'S APT. - BEDROOM - EVENING

A dark bedroom, the blinds drawn. Lyle lies on a weight bench, drenched in sweat. He does one last bench press and replaces the bar.

His cell phone sits on his chest. He hits a button.

GIRL'S VOICE

Lyle, stop calling me. What do you want
me to say? I don't love you anymore.
I'm... not sure I ever did.

He starts powering through another set, blood soaking through
his bandaged hand.

INT. BROOKLYN - PARK SLOPE - SLIDE'S HOME - SAME

Very modest. Steaming hot water is poured into a mug. A
WIZENED, MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, dips a tea bag into it.

Slide sits in a FRONT ROOM window seat... half reading
"Nietzsche"... absently gazing at a well-kept garden. His
mother hands him the tea.

MOM

Here you are. Careful, it's hot.

SLIDE

Thanks, Mom.

As she walks away, we hear in Nietzsche's German accent...

NIETZSCHE VOICE (O.S.)

*"When you look into the darkness of the
abyss, the abyss looks into you."*

INT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - EVERETT HOME - BABY'S ROOM - EVENING

Brett, dressed to kill in the blue dress and yellow sweater,
gazes lovingly at Benji... peaceful in his crib. Jeanie walks
in as she tucks his foot into his powder blue sleeper.

BRETT

Sleep well, little man.

JEANIE

You're off the clock now... and the
city's waiting.

BRETT

Thanks.

She smiles and walks out, closing the door behind her.

EXT. HARLEM - FENCED-IN PARK - 160TH STREET - NIGHT

The 'speed chess' PARK. Several games in progress.

Fly plays one of them. He's relaxed, sipping an Olde English
800. Doing what he loves again. He makes a move and punches
the timer. His OPPONENT scowls... tips over his king in
defeat... and pays up under the table.

Fly smiles. He sizes up the NEW PLAYER sitting down: IT'S
DIAZ, Bolar's henchman. Smiling casually.

FLY

You better have Bobby damn Fischer on speed dial.

Fly makes his opening move and punches the clock. As he takes another sip of O.E.... Diaz stares at him, his smile gone.

A WHITE SUPERBALL bumps over Fly's shoe. He looks down at it. His heart racing, he looks up to see...

10-year-old JESUS. The kid eyes him strangely. Fly's eyes flick back to Diaz, now staring at him with Menace.

Fear setting in, Fly picks up the superball. He flips it to Jesus, who catches it while glancing across the street at...

A shadow of a man near a BLACK LEXUS that's parked in front of the rundown tenement. Exactly where it was parked the night Fly mugged Ramon.

Fighting sheer panic, Fly makes a chess move... punches the clock... and now rises slowly.

DIAZ

Hey, buddy, where ya goin'?

Fly scurries to the gate of the chain-link fence that surrounds the clearing. But as he reaches it...

RAMON steps into a street light. He and Fly lock eyes. Fly freezes. He turns to see Diaz moving towards him. He starts running along the fence... only to see CONCEPCION coming the other way. Trapped.

Fly spins back toward the gate... and comes face-to-face with EDGARDO -- a gleaming blade held close to his chest.

INT. AUDIO EXCELLENCE - NIGHT

Brett walks into the store. Nearly empty. A YOUNG STORE CLERK... a few browsing AUDIOPHILES... and Rory. He smiles.

RORY

(to the clerk)
You got the floor.

INT. SPEAKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He leads her in... locks the door. He carefully pulls the fabric cover off a speaker. Inside is the BRICK. He sets it on a counter top. She gazes at it... fascinated.

She picks it up... feels its weight... touches a SMALL BAGGIE taped to its side. There are TINY PATCHES inside.

BRETT

It's almost beautiful.

RORY
 Yeah. Almost.
 (beat)
 Any buyer's gonna want to test it.

He takes a pin and pokes a hole in the brick's cellophane package. He squeezes out a dab of coke... tastes it... and now covers the hole with a patch. Good as new.

Brett slides the MONEY BOX across the table. Rory opens the lid and looks at the stacks of bills inside.

BRETT
 Twenty-five thousand. It's all I have.

RORY
 It's fine.

Brett smiles, respect in her eyes. Rory closes the lid and puts the box into his shoulder bag.

BRETT
 I hope it helps your friend.

RORY
 I'll make sure it does.
 (beat)
 I've said all I'm gonna say about your dad -- except this: He better make this chance count.

BRETT
 I'll make sure he does.

A beat. Brett stands and puts the brick into her bag.

RORY
 This is for you, too.

He hands her a small box. An iPod. And a business card.

RORY
 I never got a chance to try to sell you one.
 (re the card)
 And if you ever need a home theater...

Brett touches his face. She kisses him. He carefully responds. A beat. She smiles sadly... and walks out.

EXT. HARLEM - 160TH STREET - NIGHT

Jesus sits in his sixth-floor window, bouncing his WHITE SUPERBALL again.

We leave him and MOVE UP the building, past dark window after dark window. The sounds of street life give way to the harsh sound of a vicious beating.

EXT. TENEMENT - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

The ragged tar rooftop. As Edgardo looks on... Concepcion and Diaz hold Fly between them. He's barely conscious... his face pulp. Ramon stands in front of him, his bloody BRASS KNUCKLES gleaming in the night. He wipes them on Fly's shirt.

EDGARDO

Last chance, mi negro. Where is it?

No answer. Ramon smashes his face again... teeth bursting from his mouth to the tar... followed by his body collapsing on them... a small, white card falling out of a shirt pocket.

With the last of his strength, Fly grabs it back... stuffs it in his mouth... chews... tries to swallow. But Edgardo grips him by the throat... forces his mouth open for the card... wipes it on his pants... holds it up in the moonlight.

RORY'S BUSINESS CARD: **Audio Excellence. Rory O'Connell. Salesman. Store address. Hours.**

Edgardo turns it over... studies the cocaine calculations on the back: at the bottom, the circled conclusion: **\$98,650.**

FLY

No.

Edgardo smiles.

EDGARDO

Let's see if he can fly.

They lift him to his feet. Through bloodied eyes, Fly sees his fate: the dark Harlem sky beyond the roof as he's rushed to the edge and hurled off...

EXT. HARLEM - 160TH STREET - BELOW - CONTINUOUS

FLY'S BODY SLAMS TO THE GROUND. On impact, SOMETHING blows from his pocket to the curb.

Jesus stares in shock from his window ledge.

INT. AUDIO EXCELLENCE SPEAKER ROOM - NIGHT

Rory sits alone, decompressing. Coltrane and Miles Davis' mournful "*Round Midnight*" fills the room.

He takes out Brett's MONEY BOX and looks at the cash again. He dials on his cell phone. Listens.

RORY

Fly, it's done. I'll be home all night.

He dims the lights... starts to open the door... stops... lays his head against it... lets Coltrane play out.

INT. PENN STATION - COMMUTER TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Brett stands back from the few commuters awaiting a train.

INT. AUDIO EXCELLENCE - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

Rory, slows at the front counter to ask the clerk...

RORY

Close up? Owe you one.

He passes a browsing MAN... face partly concealed... wearing a BROWN JACKET.

CLERK

You got it. See you tomorrow.

(to the store)

Five minutes, folks!

EXT. AUDIO EXCELLENCE - W79TH STREET/COLUMBUS AVENUE - LATER

Rory walks the busy sidewalk. He looks across the traffic to the subway entrance. A FENDER BENDER, BLASTING HORNS snarling traffic distract him as he steps into the street. He takes only casual note of a double-parked BLACK LEXUS.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - SAME

Diaz at the wheel, Edgardo next to him. Concepcion in back.

EDGARDO

That's him.

EXT. W79 STREET/BROADWAY - SUBWAY ENTRANCE - SAME

As Rory crosses through the pedestrians, the brown-jacketed Man, face unseen, slips up behind him... makes a lightning quick move to attach an OBJECT to Rory's bag.

But hindered by JOSTLING PEDESTRIANS... he misses by a fraction of an inch... losing his grip on a TINY METAL TRACER, which CLINKS to the pavement... where it's kicked about by passersby. The Man scrambles after it... pushing people out of the way... sees it... grabs it up.

Rory walks past the Lexus... idly glancing inside... to see FACES turned away... obscured by reflections.

The Man has gotten to his feet, but Rory is just a bobbing head in the crowd. He rushes down the stairs in pursuit.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - TURNSTILE - MOMENTS LATER

Rory, slowed by the crowd, 'scans' his METRO-CARD... starts through the turnstile, when... a HAND thrusts out between moving people... attaches the tracer to his bag.

Sensing something, Rory wheels around... catching but a slice of a face he can't quite place... RAMON.

INT. PENN STATION - COMMUTER TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Brett steps onto the train.

INT. SUBWAY STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT

Rory steps onto the Columbus Avenue/Downtown local train.

EXT. W79TH STREET/BROADWAY - NIGHT

Ramon sits into the Lexus.

RAMON

Done.

Concepcion hands him a GPS device. He turns it on to see a *PULSING RED DOT*... TRACING the subway train's route. Trailing the *Red Dot*... a *PULSING GREEN DOT*... the Lexus.

RAMON

Got him. Straight on Broadway.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT: MOVING

Rory takes a seat, New York NIGHT WORKERS sitting around him. He fishes his iPhone from his bag... just missing the tracer attached to it. He checks for texts... e-mails... voice mails. Nothing. He sits back, bummed... his eyes close... then snap open... a MEMORY hitting him...

FLASHBACKS: RORY - SUBJECTIVE

Ramon at the subway turnstile...

Ramon idling near the Audio Excellence shelves...

PRESENT: - SUBWAY TRAIN

Rory tries to shake it off... but the math has started.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Sixty-sixth-Broadway-Lincoln Center...
59th Street-Columbus Circle...

EXT./INT. BLACK LEXUS - COLUMBUS AVE/BROADWAY - NIGHT: MOVING

The Lexus glides down Broadway... just beating a string of green lights... passing subway entrances... Ramon fixed on the *Red Dot*... now well ahead of the *Green Dot*...

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY - NIGHT

Brett sits by a window. She turns over Rory's business card to read: 'Brett, *You're gonna make it.*' Rory. She opens the box: a SILVER IPOD.

The screen reads: "TOTAL SONGS: ONE." She pops in the earbuds... listens: Miles Davis' "Blue In Green" song from the bar. A wistful smile sweeps across her face.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - COLUMBUS CIRCLE/8TH AVENUE - NIGHT

Rory walks across the platform to the arriving EXPRESS.

EXT./INT. BLACK LEXUS - DRIVING

The Red Dot has stopped... then starts again... faster than before... pulling farther ahead of the Green Dot.

RAMON

He's on the downtown express. Eighth Avenue.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

Rory sits lost in his thoughts. Hypnotized by the lights flying by... the CLICKETY CLACK of steel wheels on tracks...

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Eighth Avenue-Varick Street...Varick Street-Canal Street... West Broadway-Chambers Street.

Rory's stop.

INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - NIGHT

Brett, engrossed in the music. The train stops... the doors open. PASSENGERS exit.

Past her shoulder, through the window, WE SEE a FIGURE moving along the platform to... as the doors close, shoulder his way in. For a chilling instant, we are sure it's one of the boys. But no. The doors close.

EXT. TRIBECA - CHURCH STREET/W BROADWAY - SUBWAY EXIT - NIGHT

Rory steps up onto the street towards MASHER'S DELI... checks his phone... Nothing incoming. Stops... dials Fly again.

EXT. HARLEM - 160TH STREET - TENEMENT SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Inches from a sewer grate... Fly's cell phone vibrates.

EXT./INT. BLACK LEXUS - NIGHT: MOVING

The *Red Dot* stops. The *Green Dot* keeps moving... closing the gap. Then, the *Red Dot* starts again... slowly.

RAMON
Walking. Chambers towards Church.

INT. UPPER MONTCLAIR - COMMUTER TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

The train doors gasp open... Brett steps out... slows to tuck the iPod and buds in her purse... trails the few other COMMUTERS toward the stairway to the parking lot... to see a cab pulling away from the stand... no others in sight.

In tonight's air, the CLATTERING CICADAS ARE DEAFENING.

EXT. TRIBECA - MASHERS DELI - CHAMBERS/CHURCH STREETS - NIGHT

Rory walking towards the deli... SEES NYPD SQUADS parked illegally on either side of the corner.

EXT. UPPER MONTCLAIR COMMUTER STATION - TAXI STAND - NIGHT

Brett watches the last of the commuters' cars pull out of the parking lot. She searches the distance for a taxi. None.

She scrolls her Blackberry to "MIDNITE CAB." As she starts to dial... a TAXI enters the far end of the lot. She closes her cell as it comes to a stop.

The CABBIE wears a baseball cap pulled low.

BRETT
Hi.

CABBIE
Hey there.

She reaches for the rear door, when... she's startled by the trunk popping open -- and a hand rips her purse from her shoulder. She whirls to see...

SLIDE
Remember me?

WHAM! She is flipped into the trunk.

STUNNED, Brett glares up at the BOYS... the menace in Slide's eyes... the glee in Lyle's. But Ryan, spooked by her terror, cannot meet hers... steps away.

Lyle slams the trunk lid. Ryan jumps behind the wheel... yanks a power cord from the cigarette outlet... the others pop suction cups... shove the roof sign in the back seat.

Slide sits into the passenger seat... Lyle wedges in back. They take off... fast in the FORD CONTOUR.

INT. FORD - CAR TRUNK - NIGHT: MOVING

BLACK. Brett in a ball... in shock and fear... HEARING muffled voices and laughter from up front.

LYLE (O.S.)
We did it! We fucking did it. She's ours.

INT. TRIBECA - MASHER'S DELI - NIGHT

Rory walks in... nods greetings to the friendly cops.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT: DRIVING

Ramon clicks the GPS a couple of times.

RAMON
Chambers and Church. Masher's Deli.

EXT./INT. FORD - UPPER MONTCLAIR - NIGHT: DRIVING

Ryan whips from the lot into light traffic... as Slide rummages through Brett's purse...

SLIDE
Cell phone... keys and MACE... iPod...
Wallet, with ATM card... paperback...
Fuck me dead...

The BRICK... unwrapped from the scarf...

RYAN
Is that?...

SLIDE
It ain't Sweet 'n' Low.

Lyle leans in to look, but... SEES...

LYLE
Red light!

Ryan slams the brakes and the car skids to a stop... five feet over the white walkway stripes.

LYLE
Cop!

INT. FORD - TRUNK - NIGHT: MOVING

Brett's body whacks against the front of the trunk.

INT./EXT. FORD - SAME

As Slide drops the brick, and Brett's purse, to the floor and back-heels them under the seat...

And Ryan very carefully backs up over his skid marks until he's legal again...

An UPPER MONTCLAIR SQUAD CAR coasts to a stop alongside them.

RYAN
(under his breath)
Shit, shit, shit.

TWO COPS eye the boys. Ryan makes a 'Sorry, my bad,' gesture. A beat. The passenger-side cop nods. *Okay.*

An intense... interminable wait. Finally, the light switches to GREEN... Ryan eases away... watching the rearview mirror as the cops wait a few beats... and turn onto a cross street.

RYAN
Jesus!

Slide retrieves the purse and brick. They stare at it.

LYLE
What the hell's she doing with all this?

SLIDE
Girl likes a party. And we're going to give her one.

INT. FORD - TRUNK - SAME

PITCH BLACK. A small SQUARE OF LIGHT clicks on from a CELL PHONE SCREEN that Brett had tucked in her jacket. She examines her prison... thick with smothering duct-taped furniture pads. Then, the light glances off a BAG OF "WINE SPECTATOR" magazines. She grabs one out to see an ADDRESS:

**Arnold Dempster
215 Willow Road
Maplewood, NJ 07452**

Brett checks more magazines: Same address. 'Okay.' 'Good.' She starts TEXTING...

EXT. TRIBECA - MASHER'S DELI - NIGHT

Rory exits the deli... steps between the squads... dodges traffic across the street... jogs for his apartment building.

INT. FORD - TRUNK - UPPER MONTCLAIR - NIGHT: MOVING

ON Brett's cell phone screen: *"Mugged. In fake taxi trunk. 215 Willow Road, Maplewood, NJ."* She hits "SEND." Several beats... then, 'Searching'... then, 'No service. Try again'

And it gets worse -- The screen battery indicator now shows a SINGLE BAR of power. She scrolls to: "COMPOSE MAIL"

EXT./INT. TRIBECA - CHAMBERS STREET - APARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

As Rory checks his cell, he keys the lock to the stylishly wrought-ironed, heavy glass door... enters... starts up the MARBLE STAIRCASE. The cell... Nothing new.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - BROADWAY/HOUSTON - SOHO - NIGHT: MOVING

The *Red Dot* has settled again.

RAMON
Six-Twenty Church Street. A building.

Edgardo, who's been stone-faced the whole ride, smiles now.

EXT./INT. MAPLEWOOD, NJ - FORD - NIGHT: MOVING

Eyes shining, minds racing, the boys pass into Maplewood.

LYLE
Blow and a babe. Hello nirvana.

INT. FORD - TRUNK - NIGHT: MOVING

Brett's cell. TO: HISTORYBUFF@GMAIL.COM: *"Mugged. Fake taxi. In trunk. 215 Willow Road, Maplewood, NJ. She hits SEND: "No Service." Again: "Cannot Activate." She wants to scream, then... as the lone power bar flickers... she hits RESEND: holds her breath... TO SEE...*

"SENDING" -- the cell goes DARK... the BATTERY DEAD.

INT. TRIBECA - RORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

He walks in... steps to the desk... glances out across the street... noting the squad cars still parked by the deli.

He lifts his laptop from his shoulder bag... powers it up... takes out the money box... looks in... sets it back in... slips off his jacket... steps to the kitchen... grabs a beer from the fridge... steps back to the desk... logs on-line.

The screen: The HEMINGWAY CHAT ROOM. The iconic face stares back at Rory.

RORY
How's your night goin'? I been better.

He whips through the scroll box... checking to see if Brett's on-line. Nope. He sighs... reads the ongoing patter...

HemLeader: Tonight we close with this, from *"The Old Man and The Sea"*: *"Man was not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed, but not defeated."*

Rory ponders this... toasts the screen with his beer.

RORY
Amen to that.

One more scan for 'Brett.' He glances out the window to see... the BLACK LEXUS, parked where the squads had been.

FLASHBACKS: RORY - SUBJECTIVE - NIGHT

The black Lexus double-parked outside Audio Excellence...

Through the Lexus' front window... indistinguishable men...

PRESENT: RORY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

His heart racing... when, PING!... the EMAIL icon flashes.

He clicks on his email... STARES IN MIND BLOWING SHOCK.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - CHAMBERS/CHURCH STREETS - NIGHT

Edgardo on his cell phone.

EDGARDO
El Toro. We found him.

Edgardo listens... and now hangs up. His smile gone.

EDGARDO
He wants him brought to the swamp. Alive.

INT. RORY'S APARTMENT - SAME

Rory's eyes flick between the e-mail and the Lexus. Trying to appear casual, he slips on his jacket... his shoulder bag... powers off the laptop... turns from the window... takes a step to get out of sight... runs to the door... and out.

INT. BLACK LEXUS - SAME

Ramon sees the Red Dot start to move.

RAMON
He's moving!

EDGARDO
He made us.

All four leap from the car and run across the street. Edgardo heads for the front door... the others fan out.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR STAIRWAY/FOYER - NIGHT

Rory barrels down the stairway into the foyer, to SEE Edgardo trying to get in. They stare fiercely at each other...

FLASHBACK: RORY - HARLEM - 165TH ST. - DRUG APT. - SUBJECTIVE

Edgardo's face, hideous, as Teesha crawls to him...

PRESENT: RORY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Rory bolts up the stairs, when... a GUNSHOT. SHATTERED GLASS.

Edgardo bursts in over the glass-strewn floor up the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rory disappears through a utility stairway door just as Edgardo rounds a corner to see it close.

INT. UTILITY STAIRWAY/BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

He dashes down two floors and through a door into the basement... barreling to the REAR EXIT DOOR... ducking behind HEATING A/C UNITS, just as Edgardo emerges into the basement.

Rory opens his leather bag... takes out the money box... stashes it behind a retaining wall... peers around a corner to see Edgardo on the move. Judging the risk... Rory bolts for the exit door... through it. Edgardo fires... misses.

EXT. RORY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ALLEY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Running furiously, Rory looks back to see Edgardo blowing out the door... and the crew hard on the chase. He dodges down the alley for...

EXT. TRIBECA - WARREN STREET - CONTINUOUS

He tears through pedestrian and car traffic... frantically waves down a TAXI... jumps in, as the crew bursts onto the street. They can't shoot -- too many people.

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS: MOVING

RORY
Holland Tunnel! Go! Go!

The taxi goes, as Rory holds up a C-note. The CABBIE wheels off of Warren Street onto Broadway... heading north.

RORY
Maplewood, New Jersey. This is your tip -- minus a buck for every minute it takes to get there.

CABBIE
Yes, sir.

Rory breathes... calms... tries Brett's cell phone. No answer.

EXT. MAPLEWOOD, NJ - WILLOW ROAD - DEMPSTER HOME - NIGHT

An idyllic neighborhood. Ryan's Ford slows.... climbs the driveway to the elegant, old money ESTATE.

EXT. DEMPSTER HOME - NIGHT

The IRON GATE opens. The car moves through a courtyard with a COUPLE OF CARS towards an opening GARAGE DOOR.

EXT./INT. TAXI - BROADWAY/WORTH STREET - NIGHT

The cabbie accelerates off Worth Street onto VARICK STREET. Rory looks out the back window for the Lexus. Not there.

EXT./INT. CHAMBERS/CHURCH STREETS - NIGHT

Bolar's men jump into the Lexus. Ramon grabs the GPS... turns it on: *'Come on, come on.'* "Beep"... Red Dot - Green Dot.

RAMON
Still got him.

Diaz guns the car from the curb.

RAMON
North on Broadway. Left on Worth.

CONCEPCION
What if he ditched the dope?

EDGARDO
Let him tell that to Bolar.

EXT./INT. TAXI - VARICK STREET - NIGHT: MOVING

The cabbie takes the corner hard towards CANAL STREET.

Rory tries calling Brett again. Nothing. Starts TEXTING.

INT. MAPLEWOOD - DEMPSTER GARAGE - NIGHT

Ryan kills the engine. Slide checks his buddies.

SLIDE
We all good?

'Yep.' They get out... step to the trunk. Lyle opens it. They stare at Brett... lying in a fetal ball... traumatized.

RYAN
Hey. C'mon... It's okay. Take my hand.

Brett slowly uncurls... reaches up a hand. He takes it... lifts her out. She gains her feet, and suddenly, her left hand jets up to SPRAY MACE into Lyle's eyes.

As he falls screaming to the floor... she scores glancing hits to Ryan and Slide... staggering them... Slide dropping her purse.

She bolts to punch the garage door button... losing the MACE, which bounces to roll on the floor. The door slowly starts to rise. Too slowly. She wheels for the side door. But Lyle, flailing blindly... blocks the way... forcing her back for the now halfway open garage door.

She spots her purse on the floor... calculates her chances... lunges off her knees for it... spins again for the door, when... Slide and Ryan grab her... wrestle her down. Lyle punches the button... stopping the door halfway up.

SLIDE
Take her inside.

Lyle and Ryan muscle Brett out the side door towards the house... leaving him alone. He repacks Brett's purse... pockets the brick in his jacket... then sits on a ladder rung... pulls 'Nietzsche' from another pocket... finds what he's looking for. His eyes go far away, as he reads...

NIETZSCHE (V.O.)
The doer alone learneth.

EXT./INT. LEXUS - NIGHT: MOVING

Heading up Hudson. Ramon watches the *Red Dot*.

RAMON
Right on Varick. Left on Canal. He's heading for the Holland Tunnel.

EXT./INT. TAXI - CANAL STREET - NIGHT

The taxi barrels into the Holland Tunnel. Rory checks again out the back window -- all clear. He pulls out his cell phone... speed dials... listens.

JESUS (O.S.)
Hola.

RORY
Fly?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. HARLEM - 160TH STREET - NIGHT

Jesus... behind a parked squad car... Fly's cell phone to his ear... is watching a coroner examine the broken body.

JESUS
Fly is dead.

RORY
What? Who is this?

But the call is gone. Rory re-dials. Nothing. He slams the back seat with a fist: '*This isn't happening!*'

EXT./INT. LEXUS - CANAL STREET - NIGHT: MOVING

RAMON
Holland Tunnel.

INT. DEMPSTER HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

A plush suburban fun room stocked with all the amenities of upper-middle-class relaxation: Home theater, complete with surround sound; sleek bar; posh billiards setup.

The boys sit at a deluxe POKER TABLE. On it lies the brick of cocaine... and three BROWN LEATHER DICE CUPS.

Lyle's eyes are still red and swollen from the MACE. He presses a cold beer can to them.

LYLE
To payback.

Ten feet away... an OPEN DOOR, PANELLED to blend into the surrounding walls. No knob -- just a KEY in the DEAD LOCK.

Inside this door is a SECOND, GLASS DOOR, also OPEN.

From their chairs, each of the boys can see into a...

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Beautifully crafted, temperature-controlled wine cellar. Mr. Dempster's pride and joy. Deep in the back, obscured in shadows, is a figure strapped to a chair... BRETT.

NYLON CORDS bind her wrists behind her, to where the rear legs meet the chair-back. Her ankles are tied to each of the front legs, forcing her knees apart.

She's scared, angry, glistening with sweat. She works her wrists against the binds... but her eyes watch the open door. She can hear every word the boys are saying. And her mind is churning.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Slide fiddles with his cup and dice.

SLIDE
Let's go low this time.

LYLE

Sure.

RYAN

Hold on. Don't we need some rules here?

LYLE

There's only one rule -- the first two leave enough of her for the third guy.

RYAN

C'mon, Lyle. I'm serious. We've already scared the shit out of her.

LYLE

Are you saying you've gotten your money's worth?

RYAN

No. It's just...

A beat. Lyle glances over at Slide.

LYLE

Somebody's got a crush on our girl.

RYAN

Up yours.

LYLE

I could see it back at Last Licks. Your eyes going all gaga. Hey, Ry, you can always head back to the city. We'll text you all about it.

RYAN

I just want to know the rules, that's all.

SLIDE

It's a fair question. Let's discuss it.

Slide steps to the bar while speaking to Ryan...

SLIDE

You took *Ethics* with Stevenson, right? Remember all his droning on about free will -- all those scenarios he used to give us?

Ryan nods... works his beer, uneasy.

SLIDE

Your free will means something tonight, Ryan. It means more than it ever will again. Ninety-nine percent of the people on this planet never operate from free will; they just accept their fate.

(MORE)

SLIDE (CONT'D)

They go through their whole lives and never find out what they're capable of. Are they good people, or are they just weak? Tonight you get to find out. What are the rules? Whatever you say they are. You can do anything you want to her, Ry. Anything.

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Brett in her chair. CLOSE ON her face as she listens.

SLIDE (O.S.)

What are you capable of? What cruelty, what perversion, what grace? You can find out tonight... or you can spend the rest of your life wondering.

EXT./INT. TAXI - JERSEY TURNPIKE - NIGHT: MOVING

It hits the turnpike. Rory calls Brett's cell again... No answer. He texts her... Nothing.

THE RATTLING OF DICE (OS)

INT. DEMPSTER HOME - WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

Brett working against the bindings... those around one foot beginning to fray.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BASEMENT -

The boys slam their cups on the table... lift them away.

Lyle's 4 is the low winner.

LYLE

Yes! Karma, baby!

He pumps his bandaged fist... gazes into the darkness of the cellar. Moment of truth.

He finds the spot on the cellophane wrapped brick where Rory patched the hole. He reopens it with a pocketknife. A small amount of COKE spills onto the table. He cuts a line... rolls a dollar bill... snorts... is staggered.

LYLE

Jesus Mother Mary. This girl doesn't fuck around.

He offers the bill to Ryan... who scarfs a line: "Wow!" Slide's turn. He shakes his head.

SLIDE

Crystal clarity for me, thanks.

Lyle shrugs. He takes the bill and snorts one more line.
Breathing fire now... he stands...

LYLE
Let's do this.

INT. WINE CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

They step inside... close the heavy door behind them. Slide locks the knob from inside. They step through the glass door... close it... and drink in Brett.

Lyle sets a small bench before her... sits.

Ryan hangs back by the door. As he and Slide look on... Lyle touches Brett's soft cheek with his bandaged hand... grips her slender throat... squeezes. She can't breathe... but her eyes hold his. Impressed, he relaxes his grip. She gulps air.

LYLE
Predictable, huh? What am I going to do next?

BRETT
(steading)
Lose your nerve.

LYLE
Think so?

He searches her purse... pulls out her ATM CARD... touches it to her cheek... runs it down her neck... lingers at her cleavage.

LYLE
What's your ATM code?

No response. He slides the card down the front of her dress to her bare knee...

LYLE
Your code?

Again, nothing. He begins guiding it up her inner thigh... coming close... his thumb roaming... searching... there...

BRETT
Three two one six.

Lyle smiles... withdraws his hand and card...

LYLE
You're going to pay us tonight, honey.
How does it feel?

She glares at him. He looks at his buddies.

LYLE

I'll be fast. She's all yours, Ry.

And he steps for the door.

SLIDE

Lock it. Just in case.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lyle closes the cellar door. He locks it... pulls out the key... and stashes it in a bar drawer.

He steps to the poker table and sits down. He's shaking. He pours out a line of coke... scarfs it... runs up the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He scurries through the kitchen out the door... locks it... not setting the alarm.

EXT. DEMPSTER CARPORT - NIGHT

He jumps into a parked car... speeds for the opening gate.

INT. TAXI - NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE - NIGHT: MOVING

Rory... still trying to reach Brett. As the cab heads for the Turnpike exit ramp... the Millburn/Maplewood sign flashes by.

INT. LEXUS - NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE - NIGHT: MOVING

RAMON

The Millburn/Maplewood Exit. Two miles.

INT. DEMPSTER WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

Ryan is on the bench... riven by the sight of Brett. The crush of his lifetime... his for the taking. Excitement... and hesitation in his eyes.

He finishes off his beer and sets it on the floor. As Slide watches... he kisses her lips. Electric. He's stoked... until he sees her eyes... the anxiety in them.

BRETT

Is this what you wanted -- when you saw me in the bar?

(beat)

I would've gone out with you.

Slide smiles: *'Girl's got game.'*

RYAN

You drugged and robbed me.

BRETT

When I saw you were just like them.

More than a flicker of hesitation in Ryan's eyes: *'What now?'*

Slide's cell phone rings. He checks the screen. Hits a key...

SLIDE

We're busy.

As he listens, Brett looks deep into Ryan's eyes. Her face blocked from Slide's view, she mouths: *"Help me?"* Startled... suddenly off stride... Ryan stares back at her.

SLIDE

How 'bout that, Lyle. Thanks.

He disconnects... looks at Ryan and Brett...

SLIDE

Twenty-four dollars in her bank account.
Looks like she spent all of our dough.
Still think she's sweetness and light,
Ry?

Ryan looks at Brett, his resolve returning. He tries to kiss her again. She turns her cheek away. A flash of anger in his eyes. He slaps her hard. But instantly, involuntarily, he recoils at his violence... slumps... remorseful... confused...

SLIDE

(how pathetic)
Are you done?

Ryan doesn't answer. He doesn't have the stomach for this. He watches Brett, immobilized. Wanting her. Hating himself. Her plea still messing with his head.

SLIDE

Going once... going twice...

EXT./INT. TAXI - MAPLEWOOD - WILLOW ROAD - NIGHT

The taxi turns onto the Dempster block. Rory spots the address on the exterior wall. The cabbie slows.

RORY

Go up the block... Right here.

The cabbie stops a half-block past the house. Rory hands him the hundred... hops from the taxi... starts for the house.

INT. DEMPSTER WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

Slide's turn on the bench. He nods at the paperback in Brett's open handbag. Ryan watches from a corner.

SLIDE

You believe in his codes -- honor above
all? Protecting the innocent?

She meets his cold stare. He pulls 'Nietzsche' from a pocket.

SLIDE

Those eyes worked on the others. You
think they'll work on me. You think I
have empathy; limits. That I'll reach a
line inside of me that I won't cross.

EXT. DEMPSTER HOME - NIGHT

Rory climbs the closed driveway gate... drops to the
pavement... crouches... surveys the property.

He spots a glow from below the top of a stone staircase to a
BASEMENT DOOR. It comes from two frosted glass basement
windows. He tip-toes down... tries it: Locked.

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Slide... studying Brett... a hard read.

SLIDE

How many were there? How many marks?

BRETT

I lost count.

He smiles in appreciation.

SLIDE

They all saw the cornsilk and had to have
it. They didn't see the steel underneath,
did they?

EXT. DEMPSTER GARAGE - NIGHT

Rory reaches the garage door... sees it isn't fully closed...
stuck on the MACE cannister from Brett's purse.

INT. DEMPSTER - WINE CELLAR - SAME

SLIDE

I saw it. In Ryan's pad, just before I
went under. Your icy, perfect, absolute
control. It was beautiful.

(beat)

But you're afraid that steel is who you
are now. That that's all you are. That
all those marks, all those dirty bargains
you made with yourself... that they've
ruined you.

Brett stares at him... absorbed in spite of herself.

SLIDE
They haven't.

BRETT
As if you'd know.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Rory steps in the side door. He sees the car... the fake taxi sign stuffed in the back. He pops the trunk to see the magazines with the Dempster address on them... closes it... notes the MACE canister on the floor... steps out the door... stares at the quiet house.

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

SLIDE
Here's what I do know, Brett. I know you wrapped Lyle's bleeding hand before you walked out that night. Why? I know you only stole five hundred from our accounts, when our limits were a thousand. Why? Why cut three dirty-minded frat boys a break?

She shrugs: *'Don't know.'*

SLIDE
I do. You read Hemingway, and try to live by his codes. I know why you do that too.

She nods: *'Tell me.'*

SLIDE
Because there's still something precious and innocent trapped under that steel. The little girl's still in there, isn't she? The one who believes in people; who thinks the world is good. You locked her away, but you couldn't kill her.
(beat)
I want to see her, Brett.

Brett's shaken now, his insight a violation. Silence. Then...

BRETT
Good luck.

Slide pulls out the vial of GHB that she had lost in the apartment struggle. She shrugs: There it is. No surprise.

SLIDE
You've seen a few drops of this turn men to jelly. Now it's your turn.

He holds up the vial -- half full of clear liquid.

SLIDE

This big a dose will strip you bare,
Brett. Melt away all that steel. You'll
babble... cry... wet yourself. And when
you wake up, in a cheap motel off the
Turnpike... fully-dressed, untouched,
fighting to remember what happened... the
one thing you'll know for sure is that I
own a part of you that no one else will
ever touch.

EXT. KITCHEN PATIO - NIGHT

Rory, under a patio ARBOR, at the GLASS-PANED KITCHEN DOOR:
Locked. He balls his fist in his jacket sleeve... punches out
the small pane closest to the handle... listens: Quiet.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He steps in... notes a STAIRWAY down along a wall. He steps
to it... looks down... listens for any SOUND: Nothing. He
glances up at the ceiling.

INT. FOYER - SECOND FLOOR STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

He walks into the front alcove... looks... listens: Nothing.
He starts up the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING/HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

He opens the door before him... looks into the MASTER
BEDROOM: Dark. Empty.

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Slide uncaps the vial. Brett flicks a glance at Ryan... still
watching from the corner. He's hardly breathing.

Slide raises the vial and puts it to her lips... but she
clamps her mouth shut and jerks her head, trying to jar it
from his fingers: No go. She glares back at him, drops of the
GHB liquid running down her cheek.

SLIDE

I knew you'd fight this, too. So I came
prepared.

He sets the vial down on the bench beside him... pulls a
small, spring-trigger FIRE-STARTER from a pocket...

RYAN (O.C.)

Jesus, Slide.

SLIDE

You're still here? Watch and learn, Ry.

Slide puts the vial to Brett's lips again. She won't drink. He grips the fire-starter and pulls the trigger, clicking on the flame.

RYAN
Fuck, Slide!

SLIDE
(whirling)
You made your rules, chicken shit. I make mine.

Ryan shrinks back... Slide turns to Brett... the flame on.

SLIDE
Let's try this again.

He raises the vial to her lips. Still shut tight.

RYAN
Brett... he'll use that thing.

BRETT
No he won't.
(beat)
Will you, Slide?

Slide stares at her. A beat.

BRETT
(to Ryan)
Let's see if I know Slide as well as he knows me.
(to Slide now)
Runt of the litter. Drunk on Nietzsche. But at the end of the day... All talk. No walk.
(beat)
How'd I do?

SLIDE
Two out of three.

He eyes the thin shoulder strap of her dress... clicks the flame off... touches the starter's red-hot tip to the strap. The delicate fabric darkens and frays... hangs by a thread.

Slide waves the vial before her eyes... which stay on his.

SLIDE
Last chance.

BRETT
No thanks.
(beat)
Go on. Show Ryan what you're capable of.

He takes the challenge... clicks the flame on... waits for the tip to go red-hot again... touches the thread.

Ryan is torn... desperate to stop what's going on. Brett sees his agitation.

Suddenly, she dips her shoulder, forcing the metal to hit her skin. She arches... crying out in pain. Slide reacts, scoots back on the bench... then...

CRACK! A wine bottle is smashed on Slide's head. He tumbles unconscious to the floor... red wine pooling with blood from a gash in his scalp... the last of the GHB spilling from the vial... vanishing in the crimson mix.

Ryan, holding the neck of the shattered bottle... nauseous at the sight of what he's done... backs slowly into a corner... his knees giving way...

RYAN'S LOOK TO BRETT - HAUNTED - BRETT'S TO RYAN - GRATEFUL

BRETT

Thank you. Okay--

But he shakes his head. Glances at Slide... looks away.

RYAN

Don't talk to me. If you talk, I'll leave.

He's on his knees... rocking back and forth.

INT. FOYER - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Rory steps off the stairs for... the kitchen...

INT. KITCHEN - KITCHEN STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

He starts down... listens at the BASEMENT DOOR... opens it carefully and steps into...

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The posh, empty basement.

He sees the brick of cocaine, sitting unguarded on the poker table. Gashed open, leaking powder. He walks over, the exterior light casting a muted glow through the basement's frosted windows.

The gash is too big to patch, so Rory steps to the bar... searches a cupboard under the sink... and finds a BAGGIE.

He tucks the brick into the baggie. While placing the baggie into his leather bag, his hand brushes against the... GPS TRACER. He stares at it in shock. 'Oh, fuck!'

FLASHBACK: RORY'S - SUBJECTIVE

INT. SUBWAY STATION - TURNSTILE - NIGHT

Ramon's face... after he attached the tracer to Rory's bag.

PRESENT: BASEMENT

Rory clicks off the tracer... drops it into his bag... starts sweeping the remaining coke dust off the table, when...

MOVEMENT outside the frosted windows casts the SHADOW OF A FIGURE across the rug. Just as there is...

A NOISE from the DRIVEWAY DOOR... SOMEONE trying to get in.

Rory's survival instincts kick in hard. He switches the baggie from his bag to a jacket pocket... grabs Lyle's knife... moves quietly for the stairway up to the kitchen.

INT. CELLAR - SAME

Brett, sweating, grinding a cord against a sharp chair leg. She looks at Ryan, who's still rocking back and forth. Tries to read him. Can she risk it?

BRETT

Ryan... Ry...

He shakes his head and rocks more violently.

INT. STAIRWAY/KITCHEN - SAME

Rory is to the level of the kitchen floor, when... the CLINK of a single glass shard hitting the floor stops him. He looks across the floor through the glass paneled door at Edgardo.

EXT. KITCHEN/PATIO - SAME

A SERIES OF SHOTS: RAMON keeping lookout near the front door... DIAZ steps up the stone staircase... CONCEPCION moves along the side of the house... to arrive at the kitchen door... and Edgardo eyeing the busted window pane.

EDGARDO

He's here.

INT. KITCHEN/KITCHEN STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Edgardo reaches through the broken pane... opens the door...

Rory, edging down the stairs... HEARS...

EDGARDO

Kill anyone else. Bring O'Connell to me.

As the crew starts to disperse... A FAINT CELL PHONE VIBRATING. He clicks on his cell... waves his men to halt...

EDGARDO
Ramon. Car.

The crew crouches. Through the kitchen windows they see HEADLIGHTS wash over the garage... pull to a stop.

EXT. DEMPSTER CARPORT - NIGHT

Lyle kills the engine... hops out... heads for the kitchen door... stops cold at seeing the broken glass... starts to back up... feels a gun barrel to his head.

EDGARDO
Open the door, puta.

Lyle can't breathe. Frozen in place. He sees Edgardo's cruel face reflected in a door pane before he's WHACKED on his head with a gun. Bloodied... scared shitless... he opens the door... is shoved in... trips... lands on his knees.

INT. KITCHEN/KITCHEN STAIRS - NIGHT

Diaz grabs him... stands him up... spins him to face Edgardo.

EDGARDO
Where's O'Connell?

LYLE
Who?

Edgardo CRACKS his head... collapsing him to the floor.

Rory edging back up the stairs... to better listen...

EDGARDO
O'Connell. And our cocaine.

LYLE
Your coke? Oh...

Edgardo cracks him again. Lyle sobs... bleeding... hands up to ward off the next blow.

LYLE
Stop! Please! Don't hit me! The basement!
It's there. On a table.

HEARING that, Rory quickly moves for the basement door... through it... bumping it... causing a SOUND.

At that, Diaz, Concepcion, Ramon dash for the staircase.

EDGARDO
Ramon! Stay here! Watch!

Edgardo gives Lyle a vicious shove... catapulting him down the stairs.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Rory is through the driveway door... a split second before Concepcion reaches the basement... Diaz close behind. They SEE the driveway door close.

DIAZ
HE'S HERE!

Lyle splats to the floor... barely conscious... terrified.

EXT. STONE STAIRWAY/DRIVEWAY - SAME

Rory, moving fast, dumps his shoulder bag behind a bush.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Edgardo blows in... sees Concepcion is out the door to the driveway... Diaz on his tail...

EDGARDO
Diaz! No! Watch this one!

Edgardo bolts back up the kitchen stairway... calling out...

EDGARDO
RAMON! COVER THE FRONT!

Diaz steps back into the basement to stand over Lyle.

EXT. STONE STAIRWAY/DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Concepcion scans the driveway... from gate to garage: No Rory.

INT./EXT. KITCHEN/PATIO - ARBOR - NIGHT

Edgardo runs past Ramon heading for the foyer... keeps going out onto the patio... ranging out into the backyard... scanning everywhere: Nothing.

Concepcion strides from the driveway/carport signalling: Nothing. Edgardo is one pissed off Chilean thug.

They begin walking back to the house... beneath the ARBOR... where, buried in the vine foliage... is RORY... watching all.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

EDGARDO
(to Concepcion)
Stay here.

Edgardo starts downstairs.

EXT. ARBOR/ROOF - NIGHT

Rory lies motionless on the arbor... looking down on Concepcion, who's standing watch from the kitchen doorway.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Edgardo kicks Lyle up onto his knees.

EDGARDO
Where is it?

LYLE
That poker table...

SEEING there is nothing on it, he gawks in astonishment.

LYLE
It was there! I swear to God!

EDGARDO
I don't think so.

He gestures to a couch pillow. Diaz tosses it to him. He puts the pillow over Lyle's face... presses his gun to his head.

LYLE
(muffled screams)
I know who has it! I know who has it!

Lyle sobs... hating himself.

INT. WINE CELLAR

Ryan in his corner. Slide still out on the floor.

BRETT
It's over, Ryan.

He eyes her warily -- afraid of getting played.

BRETT
All of us got what we deserved. Can you see that?

Ryan thinks it over... and nods.

BRETT
So it's over. It has to be.

Past his shoulder, she can see Slide starting to stir.

BRETT
Free me?

Ryan nods. He walks over. As he starts to undo her binds...

EDGARDO (O.S.)
Stand up.

He spins to see... EDGARDO IN THE DOORWAY. Ryan's too shocked to do as he's told, until...

A BULLET explodes into a wooden wine crate right beside him. He stares at the bullet hole... at the smoke curling from Edgardo's gun. He scrambles to his feet.

EDGARDO
(nodding at Slide)
Drag him out.

Ryan seizes Slide under the arms and drags him to the door. Slide moans, coming to. Pissed as hell.

SLIDE
You fucking--

But now he's staring at a scene out of a nightmare: Armed strangers in the basement, standing over the bloody Lyle.

LYLE
(sobbing)
I had to. I had to. Give 'em the coke.
You have it, right? Tell me you guys have
the coke.

They just stare at him. A beat.

EDGARDO
(to his men)
Tie all of them.

They begin to plant the boys onto the poker table chairs...

EXT. ARBOR/ROOF - NIGHT

Rory carefully climbs from the arbor up onto the roof. He works his way to a window: Locked. To the next one: Unlatched... but stuck shut by paint.

He goes to work on it with Lyle's pocket knife.

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Edgardo steps back in... walks to Brett. He sees her sweater, jacket, and purse piled on the floor. He sets his gun down, snatches up the purse... dumps out the contents.

The "Hemingway" book and letter fall half over his gun. He sees the iPod Rory gave her. And the business card, with the

note: "You're going to make it. Rory." Edgardo smiles, the puzzle pieces falling into place.

EDGARDO
Your boyfriend came here for you.

Brett's eyes flash for an instant: *'Rory's here.'*

Edgardo drops her purse back on the floor. It lands on the paperback... obscuring his gun.

EDGARDO
You're going to get him back here. His
cell number?

She stares back at him: *'Not a chance.'* Edgardo smiles.

EDGARDO
Good. We'll do it the hard way.

He walks to the door.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The boys wallets, keys, iPods, cell phones are strewn on the
poker table.

Edgardo steps in. Diaz, gun in hand, pulls a string of
CHRISTMAS LIGHTS from a closet.

EDGARDO
She's O'Connell's girl.
(nodding at the boys)
Stay with them. I'll guard the prize.

Diaz looks past Edgardo into the cellar... to an eyeful of
Brett.

DIAZ
I want a turn with her.

EDGARDO
If there's anything left.

INT. CELLAR - CONTINUOUS

Edgardo leaves the door open a few inches so that Diaz can
hear what's to come. He walks to Brett... sits down... his
eyes gleaming with sadistic fervor.

She stares back at him, determined to hide her fear.

Edgardo pulls his hunting knife from an ankle holster... puts
the flat side of the blade under Brett's chin... lifts it up
until their eyes lock.

EDGARDO
We're going to do this nice and slow.

He sets the knife down near his shoe... slides his hands under Brett's blue dress. THROUGH HER DRESS we see them climb higher and higher.

He watches her face, relishing her torment. Suddenly, he yanks down... pulling out her panties. Despite her resolve, she gasps. He dangles them before his eyes, a crazed haze coming over him. He then lets them slip through his fingers.

He eyes the frayed shoulder strap of her dress -- the one that Slide burned nearly through. He lifts the hunting knife and slices the strap free, revealing the strapless bra underneath. Tantalizing. His breath shortens.

He eases the blade beneath the other strap... flicks it... and watches the top of her dress fall to her waist. He drinks her in.

EDGARDO

Beg me.

EXT. DEMPSTER ROOF - NIGHT

Rory has pried open the window, only to see... bottles of shampoo, rinse, and oils on the window ledge of a glass-enclosed shower stall.

He looks for a place to move them... spots a small flat area on the roof. Gingerly, he starts moving the bottles there.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

A pissed Diaz paces in front of the bound boys. Still eyeing the cellar door, still jonesing for his crack at Brett.

Lyle watches him... then...

LYLE

Our fathers have a lot of money.
Mis Papas... mucho dinero.

DIAZ

Not enough.

EXT. ROOF - SAME

Rory moves the last bottle off the ledge... gathers himself... begins slowly to climb through the window. But his movements create just enough of a vibration that...

A BOTTLE TIPS OVER, knocking over two more: '*Fuck!*' He watches helplessly as they roll down the slanted roof...

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Concepcion, hearing the rolling bottles, steps out the door... looks up... LOCKS EYES WITH Rory... now halfway through the window. He dashes back into the kitchen...

RAMON
Got him! Second-floor bathroom! Go!

INT. FIRST-FLOOR ALCOVE - SAME

Ramon bolts up the stairs.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Diaz pivots around... looks up... and heads that way.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gun out, Ramon carefully pushes open the bathroom door. No one. He sees the open window. He backs out into the hall...

And Rory pounces, clamping a hand over his mouth, jamming the knife into his gut. He rips upward, opening Ramon's chest to the bone. He drags him into the master bedroom... keeps him quiet to bleed out and die. One body.

Working fast, Rory takes his gun... searches his jacket pockets... finds something...

CONCEPCION (O.S.)
Gun down. Hands up. Turn around.

He stands in the doorway. Rory drops the gun and raises his hands. But he doesn't turn around. He stays squatted, his eyes fixed on the shadow Concepcion casts over Ramon's body.

As the shadow nears, Rory palms the choke-wire from Ramon's pocket... and now, lightning quick... he spins into Concepcion's knees... knocking him off balance... then drives his shoulder into his chest, launching them both out the bedroom door into the hallway. Concepcion loses his gun, which skids along the floor... over the landing... crashing to the hallway floor below...

Rory desperately fights to wrap the choke-wire around Concepcion's neck. He gets it across his eyeballs... wrenches it tighter. Concepcion screams in agony, blood spurting from his sliced eyes.

They careen towards the stairway to crash into Diaz racing up... blowing him back. Like a gathering snowball... they hurtle down to hit the stone flooring, Concepcion's head splitting open from the impact. His sliced and bloody eyes fixed open: Dead. Two bodies.

Diaz struggles to free himself from the death tangle. But as he does, his hand comes in contact with something in Rory's jacket pocket.

In the instant it takes Diaz to make a decision, the dazed Rory is yanked off the floor by CACERO. A rude party-crasher. He rips the choke-wire away from Concepcion's face.

His eyes lock with Diaz's for the moment it takes Diaz to shake off the crash-landing and struggle to stand up.

CACERO
The others. Show me.

INT. HALLWAY/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As Diaz leads Cacero, still gripping Rory by the neck, towards the kitchen... A SHADOWY FIGURE near the front door, follows them... picking up Concepcion's gun from the floor.

INT. KITCHEN STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

The group descends the stairs to the basement. Rory knows better than to struggle against Cacero's grip.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The men walk in. Cacero grunts a laugh at the sight of the boys; three pathetic fuckheads, lit up like human Christmas trees. The boys stare at Rory, recognizing him from the street festival. And Cacero, too. He gives them a curt nod. Then... to Diaz.

CACERO
Light up this one, too.

As Diaz starts to shove Rory to the floor...

VOICE (O.S.)
Hola, Rory O'Connell.

There stands ERNESTO BOLAR. Rory stares, chilled to the bone... bottomless hatred in his eyes... not lost on Bolar.

BOLAR
Five years ago I gave you life. And look
what you've done with it.

He scans the room, taking in everything. The boys stare at him, his quiet menace jacking their fear through the ceiling.

BOLAR
Where is Edgardo?

Diaz points at the closed wine cellar door... nods at Rory.

DIAZ
In there. With his girl.

Rory shuts his eyes. Now he knows. No end to this nightmare.

Bolar steps to the poker table. He eyes the pile of stuff... picks up Slide's 'Nietzsche' book... turns it over... studies the face on the back cover. Those piercing eyes.

BOLAR
This belongs to?...

A beat... until Slide summons the nerve to look at Bolar. And finally he understands what it means to "...look into the abyss, and have the abyss look into you." Pure evil.

Bolar tosses the book back onto the poker table. His eyes sweep over the boys one more time.

LYLE
(blurting)
We didn't take your coke. I swear. She had it. We took it from her purse. We didn't even want it.

Bolar can't hide his contempt for their cowardice.

BOLAR
Raised by their mothers.

He looks at Rory... the wine cellar door... back to Rory.

BOLAR
Do you think Edgardo's had enough time alone with her?

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Brett gazes at Edgardo, fighting to stay calm.

EDGARDO
I like tough girls. They break so sweet.

She steels herself as he touches the sharp blade to her skin... and draws a razor-thin line above her breasts. Blood trickles over and around her bra.

He gazes at his handiwork, the knife point moving side-to-side below his chin in a kind of distracted meditation...

WHEN SUDDENLY, BRUTALLY...

BRETT'S KNEE ROCKETS UP and RAMS THE KNIFE UP through his chin into his skull. He falls backward in his chair... eyes fixed... dead before he hits the floor. Three bodies.

Brett stares at him, shaking violently... hyperventilating.

BOLAR (O.S.)
That was impressive, Senorita.

Bolar in the doorway... astonished at the sight before him.

BOLAR
He was one of my best.

BRETT
 (gathering herself)
 He hurt me.

BOLAR
 And paid the price.

He closes the door behind him and walks to her.

BOLAR
 You are?

BRETT
 Brett.

BOLAR
 Is that all? Brett?

BRETT
 Brett Hayes.

BOLAR
 I am Ernesto Bolar.

He shoves Edgardo's body with his foot, rolling it out of the way. He scans the articles on the floor by Brett, pausing at the sight of the 'Hemingway' paperback.

He steps closer, taking her in. Intrigued.

BOLAR
 You know of me?

BRETT
 (truth is best here)
 Yes.

BOLAR
 (not a question)
 From Rory O'Connell.

BRETT
 Yes.

BOLAR
 Then you know our history.
 (she nods)
 He stole my product for you. Why?

BRETT
 So I could save my father's life.

Bolar digests this.

BOLAR
 I don't like his chances now.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Spooky quiet. Extreme tension in the air.

Cacero sits on the bottom step of the staircase, watching Diaz nervously pace the room.

Ryan and Lyle are sick with fear. Slide is imploding... his eyes closed, whispering to himself.

Rory sits on the floor, his hands tied behind him with Ramon's chokewire. His feet are bound by Christmas lights... knees tucked up under his chin.

Deep pain and sweat mark his face. Then we see why - he's working his wrists against the harsh wire... sawing through his own skin. Blood pools on the floor beneath him.

INT. WINE CELLAR - SAME

Bolar sits down on the bench. He focuses on the 'Hemingway' paperback. He picks it up... riffles the pages.

BOLAR

He's famous in my country. The man understood that this world breaks everyone.

Bolar finds the bookmark -- the envelope from Brett's father. He looks inside it and sees the letter.

BRETT

Don't. Please.

So, of course he does. Brett burns red -- yet another violation. She closes her eyes as Bolar reads...

ART HAYES (V.O.)

But I got peace, Brett. Even now. Because you got out. That's all that matters.

Bolar slips the letter back between the pages and lays the book on the floor. He takes out his gun. Brett eyes it.

BRETT

Will you tell your son what happened here tonight?

Bolar's eyes flash.

BRETT

I saw him at San Gennaro. And your wife. In her maternity dress. Someday you'll tell them all about this?

BOLAR

They are in Chile now. Tomorrow I'll join them -- forever.

(MORE)

BOLAR (CONT'D)

(beat)

I shield my family from my world, Miss Brett. Too bad your father didn't do the same.

This truth cuts deep into her. As Bolar readies his gun...

BRETT

What will happen to the others?

BOLAR

Your Rory O'Connell will learn how slowly a man can die. And the cowards...

This focuses her attention on him even more intensely.

BRETT

The boys didn't know about your brick. They're only here because of me.

Respect in Bolar's eyes now.

BOLAR

Then they will die quickly.

BRETT

How can you kill innocent people?

BOLAR

Because I can... Close your eyes, Miss Brett.

Bolar raises the gun. But Brett doesn't close her eyes. She stares into his. Bolar takes her hair in his fist and twists, forcing her gaze onto the floor. The gun to her temple.

She waits for the bullet. Not a whimper. Bolar's impressed again. He eyes her. He eyes Edgardo's body... and now the paperback on the floor.

Hemingway stares back at Bolar from the book's back cover. Taking the measure of yet another soul tonight.

A long beat.

BOLAR

You have courage.

He lifts her face to his.

BOLAR

What if you could walk out of this house... Save your father... Live. What price would you pay for that chance?

BRETT

Any price.

Bolar's eyes shine. The answer he wanted.

BOLAR
We'll see.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Cacero stands at the bar, pouring tequila into a shot glass. He pushes it along the bar to Diaz. He takes it -- hesitantly -- but he can't meet Cacero's gaze.

Cacero pours his own shot and raises it; a toast to good work. Diaz downs his. Cacero appears to do the same, but covers the shot glass with his hand and sets it down behind the bottle - Full.

Rory, in silent agony, keeps working his wrists against the brutal wire. More blood pooling.

INT. WINE CELLAR

Brett stares at Bolar in shock. Whatever he's just told her has shaken her to the core.

BOLAR
I need your answer.

A long beat.

BRETT
I'll do it.

Bolar nods. He begins to undo her bindings.

As she stands, her tattered dress starts to slip off. She clutches it to her chest... looks at her sweater and jacket on the floor...

BRETT
Can I?...

BOLAR
Of course. Just one. And leave the purse.

She turns slightly away... reaches to touch her sweater... but decides on her jacket. She puts it on... turns to him.

BOLAR
The door.

She steps past him... pushes it open... he trails... his gun relaxed by his side.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Brett steps out, ravishing in her disarray. Everyone stares, transfixed, each imagining what others have done to her.

In return, she barely glances at Rory... the boys...
Cacero... Diaz.

Bolar appears behind her... guides her to the bar... where
she leans for support... wrapping her arms around her
protectively... closing her jacket for modesty.

Rory stares at Bolar with molten hatred.

BOLAR
Edgardo was careless; Miss Brett was not.
She killed him with his own blade.

As everyone absorbs this stunner, Bolar notes the widening
pool of blood beneath Rory.

BOLAR
(to Cacero)
Check his bindings.

RORY'S SLICED WRISTS: Blood gurgles down his hands, dripping
to the floor.

BOLAR
(to Rory)
She's a steady one. I've come to like
her.

Cacero reaches down to check the tension of the wire. Tight.

BOLAR
(to Diaz)
You searched him for the brick?

DIAZ
Yes.

BOLAR
(a disarming smile)
Search him again, my friend. Before we
have to get serious.

DIAZ
But...

Instantly, Bolar's eyes harden. Diaz pales.

DIAZ
Yes.

BOLAR
Put your gun on the table and search him
again.

Popping sweat, Diaz lays down his gun... steps to Rory...
searches his pockets... shrugs: *'Nothing.'*

Bolar gives Cacero the barest nod. To Diaz...

BOLAR (CONT'D)
Now search yourself, my friend.

Terror streaks across Diaz's eyes. Cacero slowly inches closer... until he's nearly behind him.

DIAZ
El Toro... Please...

Bolar's eyes are now marbles. Diaz eyes his gun on the table - too far away. He hesitantly, awkwardly... pats himself down... finally slipping a hand into a pocket... and, for an excruciating moment... then brings it out... Empty.

His eyes down... he starts trembling uncontrollably... piss staining his pants leg, when lightning fast, Cacero grips his head... torques it with a sickening CRACK. He opens his hands... lets Diaz drop to the floor... writhing in death... like a snake with its head cut off. Four bodies.

Rory, Brett, and the boys stare in shocked revulsion.

BOLAR
See how quiet that was? No need to disturb the neighbors.

Cacero pulls the brick from Diaz's pocket... tosses it to Bolar, who drops it in his pocket as if it were just a wallet. Satisfied... he turns his attention to the boys.

BOLAR
I left your fates up to Miss Brett. As it should be, no?

The boys look to Brett... her face an eerie blank.

RORY'S HANDS: The wire has cut to the bone... exposing blood smeared white. The pain, inhuman, but he's created enough slack to free one hand, which he slips behind his back... begins to free the other.

BOLAR
(re the boys)
Cacero...

He starts towards the boys. Ryan and Lyle buck in their chairs, freaking. Slide seems to have stopped breathing.

LYLE/RYAN
(overlapping, frenzied)
What?! WAIT!!...
But we-- FUCK!!--

BOLAR
(to Slide)
Now you understand power.

Slide drops his head... shaking badly. Cacero reaches Lyle's chair... his huge hands enveloping Lyle's frantically wiggling head. When...

BOLAR

No.

Cacero smiles... knows the game... lifts his hands away. A frozen moment. Bolar grins wickedly... taps the wallets on the table... pockets them.

BOLAR

Never forget, I can find you. I can find your families. And I will. Understood?

Ryan and Slide slump in relief... start to sob. Lyle tries to say, "Yes," but can only spit up.

Slide looks at Brett... dips his head in gratitude... shame. She returns the gesture... her face unreadable.

BOLAR

Cut them free.

As each one is freed, he scrambles to the driveway door... up the stone stairs... out into the night.

Bolar shakes his head in contempt: 'Cowards.' He turns his focus to Rory, staying fixed on him...

BOLAR

I've done my part, Miss Brett. Now it's your turn.

For the first time, Rory is confused. But then Bolar pulls Ramon's gun from his belt... empties the magazine of all but one bullet. And now Rory understands the endgame.

BOLAR

She drove a hard bargain. Their lives... her father's... and her own.

Rory gazes softly at Brett... seeing an odd struggle in her eyes. His mind spinning: 'What's this?' A long moment... a nod of understanding... then...

RORY

It's okay, Silk. It was the only way.

Bolar holds the gun to Brett, barrel first. Awkwardly, she turns it around in her grip. Bolar eases down the barrel so that it points to the floor. Keeps his focus on Rory.

RORY

(with attitude)
A girl to do this, Bolar?

Bolar regards him with contempt, when... Rory brings his sliced-to-the-bone bloody wrists and hands from behind his back... rests them on his knees. Brett gasps...

Cacero's gun comes out. Bolar raises a hand to settle him... eyes Rory with new respect.

BOLAR

Five years ago I let a punk live. Tonight
you'll die a man.

He nods at Brett: 'Now.'

But something has changed in her... a subtle shift in demeanor... a certain steeliness has set in. She glances at Cacero... his gun now relaxed... looks at Bolar.

She steps to Rory... her back to the others... her eyes coming alive. She flicks them downward. He registers this... lowers his eyes for an instant... slowly raises them to meet hers... edges his hands closer together between his knees.

Brett steps to the side... allowing Bolar and Cacero to see her place the gun to Rory's temple.

Rory stares hard at Bolar. This is how he'll go out... destroyed... but not defeated.

Suddenly, Brett aims at the floor and pulls the trigger. BAM! She drops the gun... raises her hands.

Stunned for a beat, Bolar and Cacero instantly recover their wits. But...

IN A BLINK, Rory pushes Brett aside for Cacero to see that HE HAS A GUN POINTED AT HIM. Cacero aims... squeezes the trigger, but not before Rory fires a bullet through his eye... collapsing him dead to the floor. Five bodies.

He swings the gun to Bolar, who is reaching for his gun. He stops.

A STILL AS DEATH TABLEAU - RORY - BRETT - BOLAR

RORY

By the barrel. Drop it on the floor.

Bolar drops it.

RORY (CONT'D)

Kick it over.

He does... as Rory keeps the gun on him and frees his Christmas bindings with his other hand...

Bolar smiles grimly.

BOLAR
(to both of them)
Well done. With Edgardo's gun. Seems I
was careless too.

BRETT
And it cost you.

BOLAR
(resigned)
I have something for you, Miss Brett.
Something you've paid for.

He opens his hands for Rory, as if to say, "No tricks." He slowly slips one hand into his jacket pocket and brings out the brick. He bends... sets it on the rug... and slides it to her. The brick stops at Brett's bare feet.

She looks down at it. She looks at the bodies of Cacero and Diaz. At the blood on the floor. A long beat as she counts the cost of that pure white brick...

And pushes it back to Bolar with her foot. He looks at her in surprise.

BOLAR
Your father?

BRETT
I'll send him a bus ticket.

Bolar stares at her. Rory does too, respect in his eyes.

The abandoned brick lies alone. Blood nearing it... reaching it... staining it red.

BOLAR
(to Rory)
Your move.

Rory rises, his gun on Bolar. He steps towards him, barely controlling his rage. It's all flooding back: Teesha... his crew... Fly...

Rory cracks the gun across Bolar's cheek, knocking him down. Bolar tastes his own blood... but rises to a knee. He stares right down the barrel of Rory's gun.

Rory grips the gun with both hands... fingers the trigger...

BRETT
He's leaving, Rory. Out of the country
tomorrow. Gone for good.

Rory pauses. Sweat runs down his face. Bolar's eyes lock onto his. Daring him to shoot.

As Rory's finger tenses on that trigger...

BRETT
There'd be no hope for us, Rory.

A long beat, and...

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN - MURRAY HILL - EVENING: AERIAL

A glittering, gorgeous, Indian Summer evening. The CAMERA drops down to a familiar street.

INT. LAST LICKS BAR - SAME

ON a tray of three ice cold beers as they're carried across the crowded bar to a booth where...

RYAN, LYLE, and SLIDE sit quietly. They've been called here tonight for a reason. They're waiting to find out what it is.

The waitress arrives. A BULKY ENVELOPE sits on the beer tray. At the sight of it, the boys look around the bar.

Slide takes the envelope. He opens it and pulls out a small bundle of \$20 BILLS, bound by a rubber band and topped by RYAN'S ATM CARD. He hands it to Ryan.

He pulls out a second bundle, this one topped by Lyle's ATM card. He hands it to Lyle. He reaches back into the envelope again... to find money and his card.

The boys all turn and scan the bar now. And they glimpse...

The PROFILE of a striking beauty with a great walk and great legs, slipping off a bar stool... working her way through the crowd... and striding for the door and out.

EXT. LAST LICKS BAR - NIGHT: CONTINUOUS

BRETT - Exiting the bar and glancing OS with a tight smile and nod, she starts walking down a sidewalk thick with people going about their evening lives.

RORY - Leaning against a car, watching her until she begins to disappear into the crowd... starts after her.

Brett slows as Rory slips through the people and falls in step with her. She eases her arm into his.

As they walk on... The CAMERA lifts off the pavement and gracefully drifts higher and higher into the night, leaving Brett and Rory further and further below until they are swallowed whole by the city lights.

DONE.