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SNITCH

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SNITCH

(PRE PRODUCTION)

Genre: Action / Thriller

Director: **Ric Roman Waugh** (*Felon, In The Shadows*)

Cast: **Dwayne Johnson** (*Fast Five, Faster, The Other Guys, Tooth Fairy, Race to Witch Mountain, Get Smart, Doom, Walking Tall, The Scorpion King*)

Producer: **David Fanning** (*Frontline*)
EP: Justin Haythe (*Revolutionary Road, The Clearing*)

Screenplay: **Ric Roman Waugh** (*Felon, In The Shadows*)
Justin Haythe (*Revolutionary Road, The Clearing*)

When his estranged teenage son, Jason, is wrongly accused of dealing drugs and sentenced to a mandatory ten-year prison term, ambitious entrepreneur, John Matthew risks everything including his own life to reduce his son's sentence.

John makes a bold deal with a powerful US Attorney and DEA agent – to go undercover to bring down a high-level drug dealer in return for his son's early release. However, with little idea how to infiltrate the narcotics underworld, John coerces one of his young employees, a struggling ex-convict, to become his guide and partner, and uses his trucking business as a front to move the drugs.

With families and lives in jeopardy, the unlikely duo embark on a deadly mission to bring down a local drug kingpin, only to find themselves smack at the center of a Mexican Cartel that is trafficking tens of millions of dollars in drugs into the United States.

Now, their only way to get out... is to go in.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Dwayne Johnson as John Matthew



Our protagonist and middle class businessman, who is forced to become an informant for the DEA to relieve his son, wrongly accused of dealing drugs, of a 10 year mandatory prison sentence. John coerces one of his young employees, an ex-convict, to act as his guide to the local drug scene. John then uses his trucking business as a front to move drugs for a local dealer he hopes to entrap.

Daniel Cruz

An ex-convict trying to make good for the sake of his young family, Daniel is John's most industrious employee, who gets coerced into participating in his boss' informant scheme

Jason Collins

John's estranged teenage son who is wrongly accused of dealing drugs and sentenced to a mandatory ten-year prison term

Analisa Matthews

John's ex-secretary and new wife

Isabelle Matthews

John and Analisa's 8 year old daughter

Vanessa Cruz

Daniel's hardworking wife who struggles with drugs

Anthony Cruz

Daniel's impressionable son who's fascinated by the gang lifestyle his father desperately wants to escape

Malik

A terrifying gangster who enlists John and Daniel to deliver drugs via John's trucks. He is John's "mark" whom he hopes to set up in order to get his son out of prison

Sylvie Collins

John's fragile, estranged ex-wife and Jason's mother

Janet Keeghan

An ambitious US Attorney running for Attorney General who makes a deal with John: his son's early release in exchange for bringing down a high-level drug dealer

Agent Billy Cooper

A tough DEA agent who helps John go undercover

Juan Carlos "El Topo" Pintera

A major player in the Mexican Cartel who runs the Sinaloa Cartel's operations in the area. He was given the name "El Topo" which means "The Mole" since he hides himself so well. Malik is one of his underlings

Inspired by true events...

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT 1

Peaceful. Faint moonlight. Heat seeps from the aging asphalt. We're somewhere, actually anywhere, in middle America.

THUMPING BASS booms from a speeding VW Jetta as its headlights sweep through frame. Its passenger wheels DRIFT off of the shoulder -- SPRAYING rocks and dirt -- rear end nearly smacking a pine tree. Somehow, the Jetta rights itself back onto the road --

2 INT. JETTA - CONTINUOUS 2

All at once, we're inside -- FIVE TEENAGERS drinking beers, LAUGHING -- swept up by the BLARING hip hop music, the speed, the hot summer night hurtling through the open windows.

Not one of them even noticed they nearly ate that tree. And of course, no one wears their seatbelt. A tassel for the class of 2011 swings from the mirror.

If you think your kids would act any different? You're wrong.

3 EXT. DAM - REMOTE AREA - MOMENTS LATER 3

FIFTY OR MORE HIGH-SCHOOLERS surround a RAGING BONFIRE near the edge of a concrete dam. Music SWELLS from vehicles as middle-class kids party with alcohol and shared joints. Others try their version of a fire dance LEAPING over the flames.

4 EXT. BACK OF THE DAM - REMOTE AREA - CONTINUOUS 4

AMANDA (17), long-limbed and beautiful, along with LISA and KATE, strip down to T-shirts and undies, then wade into the black water. All three were passengers in the Jetta. Amanda looks up:

AMANDA
You gonna jump or what?!

5 EXT. TOP OF THE DAM - REMOTE AREA - CONTINUOUS 5

Standing at the edge in their underwear are JASON (18), the good-looking kid who was also passenger in the Jetta, and WALLY (18), the wiry kid who was driving. Both look down -- you can barely see the water. Behind them, a FEW JOCKS strip down, gording them.

ONE OF THE JOCKS
Don't be pussies.

SNICKERS. Out of peer pressure, Jason JUMPS into the abyss -- followed by a SPLASH. Wally sees the jocks looking at him now. He finally lets out a REBEL YELL and JUMPS into the darkness --

6 EXT. BACK OF THE DAM - REMOTE AREA - CONTINUOUS 6

-- Wally HITS the water awkwardly, then surfaces next to Jason. Amanda and the girls bob also. Jason and Wally share mean grins and high-five, just as Amanda's arms wrap around Jason from behind.

7 EXT. GRASSY KNOLL - REMOTE AREA - NIGHT 7

Hidden from the others, Jason and Amanda make love. The shimmering lake beyond. Even in silhouette, they look impossibly young.

8 EXT. GRASSY KNOLL - REMOTE AREA - MOMENTS LATER 8

Amanda lies still in Jason's arms -- staring at the night sky.

AMANDA

I still wanna X and do it.

JASON

Craig said he's hooking me up.

AMANDA

Wonder what it'll be like?

JASON

Couldn't make me want you any more.

AMANDA

Yeah right.

Amanda gets up and adjusts her clothing. Glimpses of white skin in the moonlight. She takes the cigarette from his mouth.

AMANDA

You'll forget all about me next year.

JASON

Probably.

She PUNCHES him. He laughs, then grows serious:

JASON

I don't wanna be with anyone else. So I guess we'll just have to figure out how to make it work.

Amanda beams and lies back down on top of him. Jason holds her, smiling -- his future an endless array of possibilities.

9 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - DAY 9

JOHN MATTHEWS (38); a rugged blue-collar guy wrapped in a white-collar button down, slacks and loafers, paces while on the phone. The athletic build comes from high school and college football. These days it's simply out of determination to beat the aging process. But that steadfast drive is what's made him successful.

JOHN

I want all four rigs, Mike. Less than that, there's no point -- I might as well keep leasing.

Restless, John continues across the office while stiffly swinging a putter in his hand.

JOHN

Yeah, well every year all the haulers get together on a golf course and decide to raise the rates ahead of gas prices and inflation -- because they know they can get away with it.

He goes to the window. His office is perched above a warehouse where WORKERS on forklifts move construction materials. Beyond the loading dock -- an expansive lot with a few aging semi trucks.

WAYNE JENKINS (44), the foreman, appears below and YELLS OUT:

WAYNE

Three O'Clock! Lock it up!!

JOHN

How much more would I have to borrow?

Whatever it is, it's a really big number.

JOHN

Can we move some equity around?

(listens)

No, don't touch the house or our 401(k). But anything related to Matthews Construction is fair game.

(smiles)

Hey, I've spent my life rolling the dice. Might as well do it again.

John hangs up. He sits down, rubs his temples with a sigh.

10 EXT. WAREHOUSE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS

10

John walks across the warehouse. All the workers have scattered. Just Wayne is left as John stops to sign an inventory list.

WAYNE

Figured Analisa would have you putting up ribbon and balloons -- how'd you swing coming in?

JOHN

I'm out still picking up Izzie's cake. Remember that...

Wayne laughs. John heads outside toward his DENALI -- notices a LONE WORKER loading heavy cement bags onto a forklift by himself.

11 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MOMENTS LATER

11

The lone worker is DANIEL CRUZ (early 30s); a Hispanic guy wearing a Matthews Construction t-shirt. He continues to HEAVE cement bags onto the forklift's pallet at a vigorous pace. John pulls up next to him in his shiny new Denali.

JOHN

You know there's no OT unless it's authorized. Especially a Saturday.

Daniel stops for a beat. It's clear he's never met the boss. Simply goes back to lifting bags. Speaks in a respectful manner:

DANIEL
Wasn't looking for OT, sir. Just getting 'em outta the weather -- supposed to rain tonight.

John scrutinizes him, impressed. Gets out.

JOHN
Good heads up.

John rolls back his sleeves and starts TOSSING bags onto the forklift also. Daniel stops, surprised:

DANIEL
Seriously, I got it boss.

JOHN
It's okay, we'll knock it out together.

Daniel nods and grabs another bag. As the two work side by side:

JOHN
I'm John Matthews.

DANIEL
Daniel. Daniel Cruz.

John offers his hand, which throws Daniel for a moment. Doesn't seem used to such pleasantries. Finally shakes John's hand.

JOHN
How long you been working here?

DANIEL
Mean working for you? Three weeks.
(tries a joke)
Why, you givin' me a raise already?

JOHN
Fat chance.

They share a laugh while HEAVING the last of the bags.

CRAIG (O.S.)
You gotta see this. Check your cell --

12 INT. LIVING ROOM - JASON'S HOUSE - DAY

12

Modest, middle class. Jason sits with his lap top, in the midst of a VIDEO SKYPE with his friend CRAIG (21); a white kid with a cocky smirk. On the screen, Craig holds his cell in his hand.

CRAIG
You get it yet?

Jason checks his cell and plays a VIDEO CLIP; TWO FRESHMAN GIRLS, their eyes a reddened mess, smile into camera. As they start to show their breasts "Girls Gone Wild" style -- WE CUT AWAY TO:

JASON
 (a shocked smile)
 How'd you get 'em to flash you?

CRAIG
 We're just partying. Happens all the time up here...

JASON
 Can't wait to get to college, man.

CRAIG
 You know I'll hook you up, too. Just help me move a little candy and I'll put some serious paper in your pocket.

Jason avoids answering. Craig rolls on -- the perfect salesman.

CRAIG
 Speaking of which, I need a solid. I'm bringing home two boats --

JASON
 -- that's like 2000 pills, right?

CRAIG
 Another seven g's for the summer is what it is. Some of it could be yours...

JASON
 Nah, I'm good.

Craig reads his strong reluctance to get involved with selling.

CRAIG
 Look, you don't gotta do anything, alright? Just need to UPS the box to your pad. I can't fly with this stuff.

JASON
 I don't know, man...

CRAIG
 C'mon, it's only for one day until I get there. Can even take a few. You said Amanda's dying to X-out.

Jason's tempted now at the thought of impressing Amanda. He hears keys JINGLE in the front door --

JASON
 I'll talk to ya later about it.

Jason starts to shut the lap top quick, just as Craig BLURTS OUT:

CRAIG
 I'll text you the tracking num --

JASON
 -- no, Craig --

The lap top SHUTS as his mom WALKS in. SYLVIE (40) is in office-style work attire. Through that tough exterior, she's still a pretty woman. Jason covers his nervousness with a smile.

SYLVIE
Who were you talking to?

JASON
Craig.

SYLVIE
He still coming home for the summer?
(OFF Jason's nod)
Bet it'll be nice for you guys to be
at the same school next year.

JASON
Yeah, we're psyched.

Jason casually turns on the TV as she disappears down the hallway -- still sweating what his mom actually heard.

13 EXT. JOHN'S HOME - LATE AFTERNOON 13

An upscale neighborhood. Manicured. Safe. The good life.

14 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS 14

John sets a cake box down onto the center island crowded with trays of glasses and finger food. Grabs a few hors d'oeuvres and walks out into the large yard set for an afternoon barbecue party.

His daughter ISABELLE (8), DRIBBLES a soccer ball between tables -- until she sees her father. Immediately runs into his arms.

ISABELLE
Hi Daddy.

JOHN
Hi, Izzie-bizzy. Ready for your big
birthday bash?

Isabelle nods, then her focus shifts back to that soccer ball. John smiles -- watching her make some more serious moves.

15 INT. MASTER BATHROOM - JOHN'S HOME - LATE AFTERNOON 15

ANALISA (33), a sexy Puerto Rican woman, sits at the vanity putting the finishing touches on her face. She's well put together, with more sophistication than she was born with.

John appears in the doorway behind her. Watches her.

ANALISA
Four hours to pick up a cake?

JOHN
(quick confession)
Had to stop by work for a sec.

ANALISA

And left me doing the rest as usual.

He comes up behind her, runs his hands up her silky arms.

ANALISA

Where's Izzie?

JOHN

I locked her in the yard.

She turns, smiles. He starts to kiss her.

ANALISA

People 'll be here any minute, honey.

JOHN

They know where the booze is.

He reaches under her skirt, but she playfully SWATS his hand away and turns back to her mirror.

ANALISA

Will you make sure the cabana lights are on, and the pool's?

JOHN

Wow. Got the shut down.

ANALISA

(smiles seductively)
You know where to find me later.

JOHN

I've heard that before.

ANALISA

(laughs)
Just go make sure everything's ready.

John laughs back, kisses her shoulder and leaves.

16 EXT. BACKYARD - JOHN'S HOME - EVENING

16

A MIDDLE-AMERICAN CROWD hangs -- happy and overweight, doing better than their parents thought possible. Kids RUN and PLAY, including Isabelle, the birthday girl who's having a blast.

Analisa moves around the party in high hostess mode as John stands with some men listening to a NEIGHBOR finish a bad joke.

NEIGHBOR

And he says to her, "what's it going to be, sex or golf? And she says, "wear a sweater!"

The men LAUGH. John feigns a smile; bored to death.

17 EXT. BACKYARD - JOHN'S HOME - EVENING

17

The party is still going strong. John finds Analisa. TALKS LOW:

JOHN
Have you seen Jason?

ANALISA
(sympathetic)
John, you know he never shows up.

JOHN
Just thought with him leaving for
school, he'd at least come for Izzie.
(covering his hurt)
I'll see if the buffet table needs
restocking...

She holds her husband's arm to stop him. Takes him into a hug.

ANALISA
You're a great father, honey. He
might not show it, but Jason knows.

OFF John's appreciative, yet frustrated smile...

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - JASON'S HOUSE - MORNING

18

Jason sits on the couch, watching TV. When the SQUEAKING of heavy brakes gets his attention. He checks the street outside the living room window -- sees a UPS TRUCK pull up. His heart races -- quickly OPENS the door before the UPS GUY can knock.

UPS GUY
Package for Jason Collins.

A tentative beat, then:

JASON
That's me.

Jason takes the SHOE-BOX SIZED BOX from him. Signs the tracker. As he shuts the door, he hears his mom's voice from the kitchen:

SYLVIE (O.S.)
Who's at the door?

JASON
UPS. Craig, uh, sent me some stuff
from school.

SYLVIE (O.S.)
That was nice of him.

Jason's already on the move to --

19 INT. BEDROOM - JASON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

19

He CLOSES his door, staring at the box. Doesn't want to open it. But his curiosity finally gets the best of him. PEELS back the packing tape. OPENS the lid and can't believe what he sees --

A LARGE BAGGY holds 2000 Ecstasy pills. Jason's heart races even more as he grabs the baggy and holds it up, eyeing the stash.

That's when he notices the SMALL BLACK DEVICE at the bottom of the box. The baggy of pills was resting on top of it. He looks closer -- sees the device has a lid. Reaches down and OPENS it.

Jason's fast-beating heart suddenly stops cold -- under the lid is the business card of a DEA AGENT -- when, BANG-BANG-BANG -- heavy knocks ECHO from the front door.

COMMANDING VOICE

DEA! Open the door!

Jason literally RUNS to his bedroom door, but too late -- he hears his mom open the front door and MULTIPLE DEA AGENTS enter.

SYLVIE (O.S.)

What is going on!?

COMMANDING VOICE (O.S.)

We have a search warrant, ma'am --

Jason freaks -- wants to get as far away from the box of pills as possible. JAMS to his bedroom window and CLIMBS through --

20 EXT. BACKYARD - JASON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

20

Jason hears VOICES behind him, coming through the house and the side gate. He RUNS for the backyard fence and CLIMBS OVER -- LANDS in a back alley and TAKES OFF RUNNING. Behind him, AGGRESSIVE BODIES that mean business VAULT over the fence also.

21 EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

21

A FRENETIC FOOT CHASE ensues through the neighborhood streets.

SERIES OF SHOTS: Jason fleeing for his life --

He finally tries to DART between two houses, but an UNMARKED CAR SCREECHES to a stop and cuts him off. MEN WITH GUNS leap out --

In the lead is DEA AGENT BILLY COOPER (40s), gruff, goatee, arms sleeved in tats. Looks more like a biker than an agent. Because after awhile, a life of undercover work simply becomes life.

COOPER

On the ground! Now!!

Overwhelmed, Jason does as he's told. The HORDE surrounds him.

22 INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - DAY

22

John sits across from TERRY GREEN (40s); a career city official in a suit. They're at the end of a lavish meal. John lays his Visa Platinum on top of the bill. Leaves it there, on purpose. Terry doesn't bat an eye at the gesture. He expected it.

JOHN

All I'm asking for is first crack at the bid. Guarantee nobody'll beat it.

TERRY
 You know I've taken care of you
 before, but I don't control --

John's Blackberry VIBRATES on the table. He checks the CALLER ID. Doesn't take the call. Stays focused on Terry and LAUGHS:

JOHN
 -- come on, Terry...yes you do, you're
the city planner now.

Even though Terry starts to deflect, he can't help but gloat.

TERRY
 I know, but a project this big has to
 have the board's final approval --

JOHN
 -- which you have influence over.

TERRY
 This is becoming an expensive lunch.

JOHN
 (tactful)
 Look, at the end of the day -- you
 know I'll deliver and make you look
 good. That's what counts.

John looks like he's gotten Terry to finally agree, just as his Blackberry VIBRATES again. He glances at it, annoyed.

TERRY
 Wife tracking you down?

JOHN
 "Ex" wife.

TERRY
 Uh oh.

John shakes his head and finally answers.

JOHN
 Hey Sylvie, let me call you back...
 (tenses)
 ...wait, what?

23 INT. WAITING AREA - FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - EVENING

23

Plastic chairs and aggressive lighting. John walks through the crowd and spots Sylvie who's beside herself chain-smoking.

JOHN
 They tell you anything?

SYLVIE
 Just to wait until we're called.

Sylvie starts to break.

SYLVIE
They stormed into the damn house like
he was some major criminal.

John sees how distraught she is and awkwardly hugs her in support. It's the first time they've actually touched in years.

JOHN
Look, we'll straighten this out.

He notices a few CIVIL SERVANTS behind bullet-proof glass.

JOHN
Is he under my last name or yours?

SYLVIE
You know it's Collins, but I already --

Dead set on fixing this, John walks to the glass partition where a crotchety WOMAN looks as if she's been there for decades.

JOHN
Hi, my son, Jason Collins is --

CIVIL SERVANT
-- take a seat. Wait to be called.

JOHN
Can you at least tell me where he is?

She looks up at him blankly, years past caring.

JOHN
Seriously, you've been real helpful.

John grits his teeth and sits down by Sylvie. He looks around at the others waiting also. He and Sylvie stick out like sore thumbs.

JOHN
Have you noticed anything lately?

SYLVIE
(defensive)
Like what?

JOHN
Like who he's been hanging with,
anything out of the ordinary.

SYLVIE
No John, I haven't noticed anything.

John simply shakes his head at her aversive stance. Years of tension have instantly surfaced, as usual.

JOHN
Mike's sending a lawyer.

SYLVIE
You can afford it.

John ignores the dig. Can't help one of his own as she STUBS out her cigarette in a standing ashtray.

JOHN
Thought you quit anyway.

She glares at him. Like ex-spouses everywhere, these two know exactly how to press each other's buttons.

24 INT. WAITING AREA - FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - LATER

24

John and Sylvie have been here for hours and look worn out.

PRICE
Mr. and Mrs. Matthews?

They see JAY PRICE (late 30s), APPROACH in a suit. Nothing slick about him, but he's whip-smart and expensive.

JOHN
Thanks for coming.

SYLVIE
Where's Jason?

PRICE
In a holding cell. They're scheduled to arraign him within the hour, which usually means more like two or three.

JOHN
I'm glad they're holding him in jail -- scare the crap outta him.

PRICE
(beat)
We should sit down.

They hear the gravity in his voice and sit.

PRICE
This is a federal case. The U.S. Attorney's office is involved, and the DEA -- it's a machine. No one's trying to teach your son a lesson.
(has their full attention)
The amount of MDMA, or Ecstasy, they found means they'll charge Jason with distribution of narcotics. According to him, a friend asked to send the Ecstasy to his house --

SYLVIE
-- which friend?

PRICE
(consults his notes)
Kid by the name of Craig Stark.

SYLVIE

They're best friends. They'll be at college next year together. Christ, I've known him since he was little.

PRICE

He was arrested on campus as he was mailing the pills -- and decided to work with the government.

JOHN

What do you mean "work" with them?

PRICE

By helping make further arrests, he reduces the charges against him. Craig told the DEA that Jason agreed to have the drugs sent to him and help sell them over the summer.

SYLVIE

What?!

PRICE

Jason denies both accusations. Do you believe him?

SYLVIE

Of course I do. Jason's never been involved in anything like this.

John hesitates; he just doesn't know.

PRICE

Good. Janet Keeghan's the U.S. Attorney. She'll have an assistant DA in there tonight, but Keeghan's got a good rep. I think she's someone we can deal with. Wish I could say the same about the judge.

John and Sylvie scramble to stay up with their abrupt new reality.

PRICE

There's something else you need to understand -- the federal drug laws are very simple. Jail time depends on the amount of drugs. No mitigating factors. They aren't interested in Jason's age, his home life, his GPA --

JOHN

-- what does that mean?

PRICE

It means Jason's looking at a mandatory sentence of ten years.

The world falls away beneath John, the impact almost physical.

JOHN

Ten years?

SYLVIE

Are you out of your mind?! He's a kid. He's going to college in the fall. John, tell him --

She turns to him, but his face is blank, reeling. It increases her desperation. She turns back to Price.

SYLVIE

Maybe we need a different lawyer.

PRICE

Mrs. Matthews --

SYLVIE

-- it's Collins --

PRICE

(hands up, diplomatic)
Ms. Collins, I'm just explaining the law, not giving an interpretation. You're welcome to confer with other counsel, but for the sake of your son...don't waste any time.

As Price walks away, CAMERA RECEDES with him. John and Sylvie suddenly don't look so different from everyone else around them.

25 INT. COURT ROOM - FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - NIGHT

25

John and Sylvie sit in the court room as another case concludes. Stone-faced family members file out. It's one case after another. The NIGHT JUDGE is a woman with short-cropped hair, glasses and a stern, no-nonsense expression. She slides a file from one side of her desk to the other, looks up, nods, and it begins.

A BAILIFF enters. Behind him comes Jason, shackled in an orange jumpsuit. He suddenly looks younger to us than before.

Sylvie gasps. Whatever she tried to prepare herself for, she wasn't ready to see her son like this. Jason meets eyes with his dad, then looks away, struggling to hold himself together.

BAILIFF

United States versus Jason Collins.

JUDGE

Ms. Kemp?

JANE KEMP, a solid, ambitious young Assistant DA stands up.

JANE KEMP

Your honor, Mr. Collins took into his possession 2000 pills of MDMA, also known as Ecstasy. We have further evidence including a sworn confession from a Mr. Craig Stark who planned on selling the MDMA with Mr. Collins.

(MORE)

JANE KEMP (CONT'D)

(gestures at Jason)

Your honor, Jason Collins has already tried to flee capture once. He has everything to lose. He has a valid passport. He's the biggest flight risk you'll see tonight. The prosecution argues he should be remanded without bail.

John and Sylvie both try to keep up.

PRICE

Your honor, the defense will show the only mistake Jason Collins made was opening the package out of curiosity, then panicking. He never agreed to take the MDMA into possession, or help Mr. Stark sell it. In terms of bail, the DA has already stated our case. Mr. Collins has everything to lose. He's been accepted to college, he has no priors. He's not going anywhere...

(gestures to John and Sylvie)

His parents are here to see to it.

John and Sylvie try to look up to the task. But the judge doesn't even look at them. Just writes something down on the case docket.

ANALISA (O.S.)

How can they deny bail? He's never even been arrested before...

26 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - LATE NIGHT

26

John drains a glass of whiskey, then refills it as Analisa leans against the counter with deep concern.

JOHN

Wanna know the truth? I've been afraid of something like this. Figured if I just got him into college, but no --

(drinks, letting himself go)

Jason's got no idea what real responsibility is -- especially with Sylvie always babying him. And when your own son doesn't want any part of you --

John lets his resentment just hang there.

ANALISA

That's not true, John. It's just hard for kids who go through a divorce.

JOHN

(beyond rationale)

Yeah well, he's not a kid anymore -- not while he's sitting in that cell --

His head turns toward the SOUND of sprinklers spitting outside.

JOHN
-- are the sprinklers on?

ANALISA
What?

JOHN
(stalks outside)
Does everything have to go to shit?

27 EXT. BACKYARD - JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

27

John grapples in the dark with the sprinkler valves -- getting himself SOAKED in the process. Finally SHUTS them off and just stands there -- lost on how to fix his son's dilemma.

ANALISA (O.S.)
John?

John doesn't move.

28 INT. ATTORNEY'S VISITING ROOM - COUNTY JAIL - MORNING

28

Jason sits at a metal table -- his eyes red from crying. Glances at his father pacing behind his mom. There's nothing to say really; just the aching desire to turn back the clock. As Sylvie takes his hand, Price starts to lay it out, plain and simple:

PRICE
If you plead guilty, Jason, you'll get the full ten years. But if you help them make other trafficking arrests, they can reduce it to as low as two years, one suspended.

JASON
I don't know anyone else, just Craig --

JOHN
-- bullshit. Your mom told me she smelled marijuana on you before -- where'd you get that from?

Jason doesn't acknowledge his father at all, only stares at his mom with a look of betrayal -- which infuriates John even more.

SYLVIE
Honey, this is serious. You need to tell us?

PRICE
Who do you buy pot from, Jason?

JASON
(comes clean)
I don't have to. Amanda's dad has his medicinal license and grows it. She sneaks some without him knowing.

John looks at Price to see if that's something to go on, but Price subtly shakes his head.

PRICE
Any other drug dealers you know of,
maybe at school?

JASON
I told you, nobody.

PRICE
What about other kids who do drugs?
Maybe they'd be interested in selling.

Jason looks up at Price, and he begins to get it.

JASON
You mean I set them up? Like Craig
did to me?

PRICE
That's right.

Jason shakes his head -- no way. John leans over the table:

JOHN
You better wake up because this is
really happening. You're going to take
the plea...and you're going to help
them make arrests. Whatever it takes.

It sounds so simple. A long beat and then, the last thing you'd
expect from a frightened 18 year old -- he shakes his head, no.

JASON
I'll take the plea, but I'm not
setting anybody up.

SYLVIE
You don't have a choice, honey.

Jason shakes his head again, but John sees right through the
bravado. Knows how scared his son is, because any of us would be.

JOHN
You have to, son. It's the only way we
can fix this.

Jason shakes his head again.

JOHN
Yes -- you will.

Tears roll down Sylvie's exhausted face. She's about to interject,
but John SLAMS his fist on the table, losing it. Even Jason jumps.

JOHN
Listen to me, damn it! You may think
you know what you're doing -- until you
find yourself in prison for the next
ten years of your life! I am not about
to let that happen, you hear me?!

Jason looks defiantly at his father. He's just a kid, and in real trouble, but he's his father's son, stubborn as they come.

JASON

You're not the one who'd have to do it.

And John's finally found an obstacle he can't push his way past.

29 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - DAY 29

John swings his Denali into his spot and steps out, mind reeling.

WAYNE (O.S.)

They're beauts aren't they?

John turns to see Wayne, like a figure from another life. Then beyond -- parked along the fence: TWO BRAND NEW 18 WHEELERS. With bold blue lettering on the sides: "Matthews Construction."

EMPLOYEES crowd around as Wayne claps John on the back.

WAYNE

Other two will be ready in a month.

John looks at them -- it should be a proud moment. And a day ago it would have been just that. He clocks the faces of his employees gathered around. Including Daniel, who lingers back.

JOHN

I gotta make a call.

Wayne merely nods, sensing his tension as John walks off.

30 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - DAY 30

Stressed, John picks up the phone, dials. A moment, then:

JOHN

Hey Teddy, it's John...doing good, you...yeah, we definitely gotta get out and hit a few...hey I got a question -- do you have an in to Janet Keeghan, the US Attorney downtown?

31 EXT. UNITED STATES FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY 31

A modern ten-story building in the middle of downtown.

32 INT. LOBBY - U.S. FEDERAL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS 32

John, in a suit, clears the metal detector at the security checkpoint in the lobby, then SIGNS the sign-in sheet.

JOHN

I have an appointment with US Attorney Janet Keeghan.

POLICE OFFICER

Use the elevators to the sixth floor.

John proceeds to the elevators, trying to control his nerves.

JANET KEEGHAN scrutinizes an email through her black Prada eyeglasses. She is fit, high-heeled and well-dressed, self-made, a proud conservative, and isn't afraid to use her sex appeal to her advantage. In other words, she's a born politician and one to be reckoned with. And the easel behind her proves it: Keeghan's running for Congress.

John is let in by Keeghan's ASSISTANT. He fidgets nervously, waiting for Keeghan as she continues to look at her computer screen. John knows his son's future is literally in his hands.

KEEGHAN

You sure have a lot of friends in this city, Mr. Matthews. I received three phone calls in a matter of an hour.

JOHN

I'm just trying to help my son.

She finally looks up at him with a sympathetic smile, yet remains all business.

KEEGHAN

Understandably.

Keeghan motions for him to have a seat across from her. As John sits, she subtly sizes him up, then looks down at Jason's file:

KEEGHAN

Eighteen years old -- you must've had him when you were pretty young.

JOHN

My sophomore year of college. His mom and I were high school sweethearts.

KEEGHAN

Still together?

JOHN

No.

Keeghan merely nods and looks out the window. But John has read her disapproval. Doesn't like being judged one bit.

KEEGHAN

Look, you have my sympathy. You do. But you've got to understand that I believe in the mandatory minimum laws. We're fighting a war, and right now, we're losing badly. And for our kids' sakes we better start winning. I know that sounds like a sound bite, but I believe it, heart and soul.

John states the only case he can make. A plea for leniency.

JOHN

My son's not a drug dealer, Ms. Keeghan. Jason's a good kid who just made a really dumb, naive mistake. And he's ready to do whatever it takes to help his situation, but the only drug dealer he knows...well, you already have in custody: Craig Stark.

It seems to pain Keeghan almost as much. She closes Jason's file.

KEEGHAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

JOHN

There must be something I can do...

KEEGHAN

The laws are designed to preclude any special circumstances, so it's real simple -- we need Jason to help us make arrests in order to recommend a sentence reduction. If he's not willing to do that, we can't help him. Now, I'm afraid I gotta be somewhere.

Keeghan gets up from her desk. John doesn't move. He looks at the floor, running out of options.

KEEGHAN

I'm sorry, but I really have another --

JOHN

(blurts out)
-- what if I did it for him? What if I helped you make arrests?

John says it before he's even thought it through and it catches Keeghan off-guard.

KEEGHAN

That's not how it works.

JOHN

I just want to help my son...please.

Keeghan can see how painful this is for him, but it doesn't seem to do any good.

KEEGHAN

I'm sorry. I really am.

OFF John's defeated expression...

34 EXT. COUNTY JAIL - EVENING

34

Down the street, John's Denali is parked alongside the barbed wire fence encompassing the fortified compound.

- 35 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS 35
- John stares solemnly at the detritus of society leaving and entering the jail's entrance. He looks at the forboding barred windows -- as if trying to see which cell his son is in.
- But John can't see anything at all, and it's killing him...
- Unable to hold it in any longer, his eyes start to well. Letting his frustration spill out in private.
- Then anger slowly comes to surface. He finally steels his expression -- not about to accept this fate.
- 36 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - NIGHT 36
- John sits alone at the table. SCROLLING through a Wikipedia page on his iPad: "Illegal Drug Trade." He studies various sections, including "profits" and "the trade of specific drugs."
- Finally CLICKS on another link within a section: "crack cocaine." As the new page comes up, he reads intently. Mind in overdrive.
- 37 INT. MASTER CLOSET - JOHN'S HOME - LATE NIGHT 37
- John quietly grabs a work shirt and baseball hat, then makes his way back through the master bedroom as Analisa sleeps.
- 38 INT. ISABELLE'S ROOM - JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS 38
- John slips inside and watches his daughter sleep for a moment. Kisses her softly on her head, then heads out.
- 39 INT. FOYER - JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS 39
- John opens a closet by the front door -- searches the upper shelves and comes out with a CAMERA BAG.
- 40 EXT. DOWNTOWN AREA - NIGHT 40
- John's Denali heads toward an urban part of downtown that most stay away from. That is, unless their urge outweighs reason.
- 41 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS 41
- John scans the scene. With each passing block, the neighborhood gets worse. Looks out at KIDS too young to be awake.
- He reaches into his duffle bag and positions his CAMCORDER facing the driver's window, then COVERS it with a coat.
- 42 EXT. STREET CORNER - MOMENTS LATER 42
- THREE AFRICAN AMERICAN HOMEBOYS work a corner. As a DRUG CUSTOMER scampers off, the Denali pulls up. John lowers his window, heart pounding. One of the DEALERS (19) in a huge T-shirt steps forward, sizing John up -- doesn't see the CAMCORDER under the coat.

DEALER

Whatcha want?

JOHN
Coke.

DEALER
Crack is wack, Jack. Who you think we
are here?

The corner crew snickers, enjoying the show. It's evident John has never bought drugs before.

JOHN
Look, are you gonna sell to me or what?

DEALER
Tellin' you man, "just say no." Twelve
steps an shit...so start steppin'.

He's playing to his friends now and John's temper rises.

JOHN
There's other guys out here.

The dealer stares at John for a moment. Smiles darkly.

DEALER
Alright then. Money talks.

John nods, produces a \$100 bill. Naively holds it up -- the dealer instantly SNATCHES it from his hand and starts to BOLT --

-- when John reaches out like a Viper and CLUTCHES the dealer's shirt. The dealer STRUGGLES to get away, but John stays locked on and leaps out --

DEALER
Get off me, man!

John throws him up against the Denali -- easily manhandling him. Glances toward the two homeboys on the corner, but they're gone.

JOHN
Looks like your friends lef --

WHUMPP! John's knees buckle as a PIPE hammers into his kidney. Before he can react -- SIX HOMEBOYS RAT-PACK HIM. He attempts to fight back, but with the devastating odds, John's taken to the ground -- they beat the Holy shit out of him -- KICKING and PUNCHING without mercy. The dealer TAKES his wallet --

DEALER
Jack this bitch's ride too --

One of the homeboys starts to get into the Denali, as another takes out a GUN and aims it at the back of John's head -- but SOMEONE WHISTLES LOUD TWICE --

The mob looks toward a rooftop where a SILHOUETTE points -- they instantly SCRAM like rats into the darkness.

TIGHT ON - JOHN

Struggling to his hands and knees. SPITS liquid from his mouth. Face obscured in darkness, until a bright light SHINES on him.

John's bloodshot eyes turn into the spotlight of a COP CAR, nose and mouth oozing blood.

43 EXT. POLICE STATION - NEAR DAWN 43

Exhausted and beaten, John gingerly moves down the steps. Wincing in pain. The street is dark and hopeless.

KEEGHAN (O.S.)

What the hell were you thinking?

44 INT. KEEGHAN'S OFFICE - U.S. FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY 44

John sits with his tail between his legs. Head pounding. His face is cleaned up, but his body aches something fierce. Keeghan leans against her desk -- glaring at him with a stern expression.

JOHN

I'm sorry I threw your name out at the station --

KEEGHAN

(simply cuts him off)

-- I mean showing up down there with a camera of all things? You're lucky those predators didn't just blow your head off, leave you in the street and go play X-Box.

JOHN

This isn't about me.

KEEGHAN

Well, you getting yourself killed... isn't going to help your son either.

John stays silent, knowing the power the U.S. Attorney wields. A moment, then Keeghan softens a bit and sits down.

KEEGHAN

You're a heck of a father, I'll give you that much.

John presses out of desperation:

JOHN

Look, obviously my method didn't work. What would it take?

KEEGHAN

You're not going to stop, are you?

John's look says not a chance. After a long beat, Keeghan finally nods -- seems to have come to a decision. After all, if John's willing to accept the risk, it's really no skin off Keeghan's back.

KEEGHAN

We're just talking hypothetically here.

JOHN

Yes. Hypothetically.

KEEGHAN

To help someone like your son, I'd need an air-tight arrest; someone in possession of narcotics in an amount that constitutes conspiracy to distribute. Nothing smaller.

Keeghan studies him. Sees those wheels turning.

KEEGHAN

Why?

JOHN

I'm in the construction business. We always have ex-cons working on the yard. Maybe someone who knows someone knows someone. Could be my way in.

KEEGHAN

But if you're their boss, why would they trust you?

JOHN

Let me worry about that.

KEEGHAN

(thinking it through)
It does make you uniquely qualified.

John waits with baited breath, until Keeghan locks eyes with him.

KEEGHAN

Just so we're crystal clear? Until we could make an arrest, you'd be on your own. The risk would be all yours.

John can't help a smile and nods. Keeghan extends her hand. There's something furtive about it -- and it's giving John hope.

45 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - DAY

45

John goes through PERSONNEL FILES. Scanning each one with a photo copy of their ID. Several have been convicted of felonies. Basically DUIs, possession of narcotics and/or domestic violence.

John stops now on Daniel Cruz's ID clipped to his application. And there it is under the question: "Were you ever convicted of a felony" -- TWICE CONVICTED OF DISTRIBUTION OF NARCOTICS.

46 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - LATE AFTERNOON

46

The place is bustling with activity as WORKERS go about their tasks. Faces we've seen before and in the personnel files. Most LAUGH and TALK SHIT, making the best of their grueling day.

Then there's Daniel, sticking to himself. Working like a machine. It's as if the others don't exist.

WAYNE (O.S.)
Don't talk much, do you Cruz?

Daniel looks over at Wayne who's moved up next to him.

DANIEL
Just trying to keep my head down, nose clean. Know what I mean?

Wayne glances at the other workers. Some clearly have done prison time also. He smiles at Daniel.

WAYNE
Wish I had more guys like you.

Daniel smiles back as Wayne walks off, then goes back to work.

47 EXT. BUS STOP - DUSK

47

Daniel waits, exhausted and dirty. In his own world. John's Denali ROLLS UP. The window comes down. John nods at Daniel.

JOHN
C'mon, I'll give you a ride home.

DANIEL
I'm good. Thanks though.

JOHN
(jokes)
Forget who I am? Get in the car.

As Daniel laughs and gets up, John's smile fades -- an underlying sense of guilt already setting in.

48 EXT. 24 HR DINER - EVENING

48

The Denali is parked in front of a neon-lit diner in a nondescript neighborhood. Highway traffic BUZZES past.

49 INT. 24 HR DINER - CONTINUOUS

49

It's Daniel's turn to study John -- sees how tense John is as he nervously OVER-STIRS his coffee.

JOHN
So the job working out for you?

DANIEL
Fact I got a job is what's working. Not many opportunities out there... for a guy like me.

JOHN
Guy like you?

Daniel diplomatically avoids the question.

DANIEL
Just trying to say thanks is all.

Daniel seems more and more like a good guy, and that's not sitting well with John. It'd be so much easier if Daniel were an asshole.

JOHN
Gotta be hard for an ex-con. Used to be in the narcotics business, right?

Daniel instinctively scans the crowd around them. Tries to cover his uneasiness with a chuckle.

DANIEL
"Narcotics business?" That why we're here -- talk about my troubled past?

JOHN
Not exactly.

Daniel looks right at him now with laser focus.

DANIEL
Then what exactly?

John shifts uncomfortably, then proceeds, TALKING LOWER:

JOHN
Couple of years ago, I caught two of my drivers transporting...some stuff. They knew cops rarely stop semis. If they do, they sure as hell don't take time to search them. Anyway, it was small time, but for someone with a real connection, someone who knows that world, like you --

DANIEL
-- you accusing me of something?

JOHN
No I'm not.

DANIEL
Then, with all due respect...but what the hell do you want from me?

And this is what it comes down to.

JOHN
An introduction.

DANIEL
You serious?

By the look on John's face, Daniel realizes he's dead serious.

DANIEL
Can't help you.

JOHN
 You put me with the right people, and
 I'll pay you five grand. Something
 comes out of it, I'll pay another five.

Daniel looks around nervously.

JOHN
 That's ten just for an introduction.

DANIEL
 Yeah, I can count...but like I said, I
 can't help you.

JOHN
 Why not?

Daniel's doing his best to stay calm here. Says it with a smile:

DANIEL
 You see, I'm in the middle of getting
 my life in order. For my family.
 Which is why I'm sweating my ass off
 every day in that yard. And this
 conversation right here? Could
 already be seen as conspiracy and land
 me 25 to life -- so let's pretend it
 never happened.
 (gets to his feet)
 See you at work, sir.

Daniel turns away. John's desperation rises.

JOHN
 And what if I said you sold on my yard?

Real anger flashes over Daniel's face. He turns back.

DANIEL
 I'd say you were full of shit.

JOHN
 But the cops would take my word for
 it. With your record and all.

Daniel looks at him with barely contained hatred.

JOHN
 All I'm asking for is an introduction.

Daniel realizes John isn't bluffing. Shakes his head in disgust.

DANIEL
 Go home -- be happy with what you got.

John watches Daniel walk out. Grows even more desperate --
 drops \$20 on the table and gets up fast.

Daniel's halfway across the small parking lot, when:

JOHN (O.S.)
Twenty thousand.

Daniel stops and turns. Can't believe what he's hearing.

JOHN
 I'll double it because of the risk
 you're taking.
 (firm)
 Or don't come to work tomorrow.

OFF the two men fiercely gauging each other. What was starting out as a possible budding friendship has turned to pure tension.

51 EXT. LOW-INCOME NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

51

Mostly Hispanic. Daniel gets off the bus, still fuming. Heads down the block toward his shitty apartment building and sees --

SEVERAL MEXICAN GANGBANGERS hang by a lowrider Impala out front, beats BUMPING. Most are late teens. Tatted. Attitude. Drinking from forties, LAUGHING.

Daniel's eyes narrow on one in particular. A 10-YEAR-OLD BOY, not wearing any gang attire. No tats either. But no question the youngster digs hanging with the older crew.

Daniel approaches, scrutinizing the scene. Face unreadable.

DANIEL
 Anthony, go inside.

We realize the 10-year old is Daniel's son, ANTHONY.

ANTHONY
 C'mon dad...we're just hangin'.

Daniel tries not to make a scene for the sake of his son. Softly, but firmly steers him toward their apartment building.

DANIEL
 Go on, I'll be up in a minute.

Few of the gangbangers nod to Daniel out of respect, but one named, FLACO doesn't seem to know who he is, or care. Puts on a show.

FLACO
 Why you messin' with pee wee, homes?
 Shit, we takin' real good care of 'im.

GANGBANGER #1
 Chill, Flaco.

FLACO
 You chill, ese. He knows what time it
 is. This our barrio.
 (to Daniel)
 Right homes?

Daniel doesn't acknowledge him -- his eyes still on his son. Even though Anthony's embarrassed, he knows to listen and disappears into the building. Daniel looks like a powder keg ready to blow.

FLACO
 (puffs his chest)
 Hey, show some respect and look me in
 the eye when --

Daniel instantly turns and KICKS Flaco in the balls -- then reaches under the punk's baggy shirt and SNAGS his .38 SPECIAL.

The others BACK UP fast as Daniel SNATCHES Flaco by the neck and DRAGS him into the side alley. SLAMS him against a wall. Eyes like lasers. Gun in hand. We're witnessing a side to Daniel we haven't seen before. The seasoned gangster.

DANIEL
 I'm lookin' at you now, "homes."

Flaco sees his crew catching the action -- tries to remain tough. That is until Daniel puts the .38 under his chin. Flaco registers that lethal look in his eyes. Stays totally silent. Body shaking.

DANIEL
 I don't care if you smoke, sling, blow
 holes in each other. You stay away
 from my son.

Daniel stays in his face for a moment. Knows Flaco has gotten the message. He lowers the gun and leaves him standing there. TOSSES the .38 to Gangbanger #1. The homeboy CATCHES it, nods out of respect. Daniel nods back, then disappears inside.

Flaco finally sticks his head out of the side alley, rubbing his reddened neck -- still shaking, embarrassed and pissed.

GANGBANGER #1
 What are you stupid, Flaco? Cruizer's
 a veterano -- straight up OG.

Flaco tries to shrug it off and keep whatever dignity he has left.

FLACO
 How come I ain't seen him around then?

GANGBANGER #1
 Why do you think, ese?

It now dawns on Flaco -- how close he was to really fucking up. A couple crew members can't help a stifled laugh behind his back.

52 INT. LIVING ROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

52

Vanessa (30), a fraught, already fading beauty in a Walgreen's shirt rushes from the bedroom. Glares at Daniel as he walks in.

VANESSA
 Where you been?

DANIEL

Don't ask.

Anthony turns from the window with an embarrassed expression. No question he saw some of what happened out front.

ANTHONY

Dad, why'd you --

Daniel shoots him a look to stay quiet, but Vanessa catches it.

VANESSA

Alright, what happened?

DANIEL

Nothing happened, V. Just father and son stuff.

VANESSA

Uh huh.

Daniel switches gears fast. Moves over and hugs her.

DANIEL

Thought you weren't working nights now?

VANESSA

Me neither, but Larry just told me to be there in an hour.

DANIEL

Sonofabitch can't do that, lemme --

VANESSA

-- he can do whatever he wants, Daniel. That is if I wanna keep my job.

Daniel eases up, seeing how frustrated she already is. Can't help but think of the irony to his own situation.

VANESSA

I'm already late. There's food on the stove for both of you.

DANIEL

Maybe me and Anthony will pop by before bedtime. See our favorite lady.

Vanessa finally lets out a smile.

VANESSA

I'd like that.

After a kiss, she heads out. Daniel sits down on a broken couch in the sparse, dirty apartment that no one has time to clean.

DANIEL

C'mere, Ant.

Anthony does as he's told and sits down next to his dad.

DANIEL

Reason we moved was so you wouldn't have to hang around fools like that?

ANTHONY

There ain't nobody else to hang with.

DANIEL

That's why I'm gettin' us far away from here. So you can make some real friends. Friends with a future.

(looks at his son)

I don't want you to end up like me, Anthony. I want you to be better than me. You are better.

Anthony's still questioning things.

ANTHONY

Why'd they say you were "OG" --

DANIEL

You know what an OG is?

ANTHONY

Original Gangster.

DANIEL

(shakes his head)

It's a sucker. And I ain't a sucker no more. Now go get your homework -- we'll do it together.

Anthony sighs, gets up and heads to his room. Daniel sits there alone -- the weight of the world on his shoulders.

53 INT. COURT ROOM - FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - MORNING

53

JUDGE WILSON, heavy, red-faced looks at a case file.

JUDGE WILSON

Do we have a plea?

Price sits at the defense desk. Jason next to him. Wears a suit. Shoulders slumped.

PRICE

My client pleads no contest, your honor.

John and Sylvie are in the gallery. Amanda too, in tears, sitting with Wally and other friends from school. John can't help but notice his son's deteriorating state.

JUDGE WILSON

Recommendations from the prosecution?

JANE KEMP

No, your honor.

JUDGE WILSON
 (surprised)
 Might I expect a recommendation before
 sentencing?

PRICE
 My client feels he can be of no
 further help to the government.

Wilson removes his glasses. He looks at Jason.

JUDGE WILSON
 Son, you are aware that by law I have
 to sentence you to ten years in prison
 unless the prosecution tells me you're
 willing to help them with further
 arrests?

JASON
 (voice cracking)
 ...yes, your honor...

Agent Cooper, the gruff DEA Agent who lead the bust on Jason sits
 in the courtroom. Seems a bit surprised by this development, but
 nothing more as he gets to his feet -- heading for the exits.

JUDGE WILSON
 And you understand that you will have
 to do the entire sentence?

JASON
 I don't know any drug dealers...well,
 I knew one...but...you already...

His voice BREAKS completely. Wilson looks at him, can clearly
 see Jason isn't some hard case. But it's out of his hands.

JUDGE WILSON
 This court will reconvene in 30 days
 for sentencing.

Wilson taps his gavel. As Jason is led away, he looks at his
 parents. At Amanda who's still crying. Then he's gone.

SYLVIE
 Do something, John...you hear me?
Do something.

OFF John's anguished stare...

54 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - LATE MORNING

54

John's Denali whips in and stops. He jumps out, tense eyes
 scanning the workers. He barrels into the warehouse, sees Wayne.

JOHN
 That guy Cruz come in today?

WAYNE
 No, no call either. He do something?

JOHN
No, he's...it's fine.

Wayne stares at him as John heads up into his office.

55 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MIDDAY 55

John stares into oblivion. Past the smiling pictures of Analisa and Isabelle. The ones of Jason as well. Literally unable to focus on anything work related.

56 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - LATE AFTERNOON 56

Quitting time. John walks out of the warehouse. His body lethargic. When he suddenly stops. OUTSIDE the fence --

-- is Daniel. Staring at him. And as much as John wants to jump for joy and start helping his son...he hates himself for it.

57 EXT. STREET - LOW INCOME NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON 57

The African American side of town. Some OLD FOLKS sit on porches. KIDS ride on bikes -- who lock on the Denali as it turns onto the street and STOPS in front of a dilapidated two-story house.

One NINE-YEAR OLD brings up his cell phone, eyeing the SUV --

58 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS 58

John nervously grips the steering wheel, lost on what to do -- his first drug deal attempt was obviously a colossal mess. He sees Daniel's eyes scrutinizing the passenger-side mirror -- clocking the young lookout TALKING into his cell.

JOHN
You do know this is a black neighborhood?

DANIEL
(biting sarcasm)
No, for reals?

They lock eyes.

DANIEL
Obviously you don't know what the hell is up, or you wouldn't a' come to me.

But Daniel can see John's still questioning this move.

DANIEL
Look if you wanna call it off --

JOHN
-- no. Let's do this.

DANIEL
Okay. I hook you up, then I'm out. And I will collect my money.

JOHN
Deal's a deal.

Daniel starts to get out, then stops --

DANIEL
If Malik sniffs you're even a little
bit full of shit? You won't leave this
block. I can promise you that.

Before John can respond, Daniel steps out and shuts the door.
If that was supposed to be a pep talk, it just backfired.

59 EXT. TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

59

Daniel walks toward the front door. Doesn't like being here one
bit, but he steels his expression and WRAPS on the door.

It literally opens on cue -- a thick thug named, BONES (late
20s) takes up the whole door frame. He nods to the young
lookout who smiles as he RIDES his bike down the street like
it's all a game. Bones shoots Daniel a nod, lets him enter --

60 INT. TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

60

We FOLLOW them down a dark hallway -- into the living room where
BLACK GANGBANGERS puff joints, playing CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS.

The minute they see Daniel, there's instant tension, until Bones
motions it's alright. But the bangers eyes stay on Daniel, who
remains stoic, not about to show any fear and ENTERS --

61 INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

61

MALIK (late 30s), a tatted up muscular bawler sits at the table.
That thousand yard stare says the extra brawn was put on in the
joint. He gets up and BUMPS FISTS with Daniel.

MALIK
What up, Cruizer.

DANIEL
What up, Malik.

Daniel notices Bones discreetly take a position behind him. And
a second gangster named, LAZY (30s); holding vigil back by the
kitchen door. 9MM GLOCK sticking out of his jeans.

MALIK
Been a minute since I seen yo ass.
Which house you in last?

DANIEL
Sandstone.

MALIK
Damn. Cold as hell up there, cuz.

Malik grins, looks at Bones and Lazy as if recalling a fond memory.

MALIK

Man, back in the day me and Cruizer here handled some serious business.

(laughs)

Tradin' product inside like we was the United Nations an' shit. 'cause when it comes makin' paper --

DANIEL

(finishes his sentence)

-- only color that matters is green.

Grins all around. Malik sits back down. Daniel adjacent to him.

MALIK

How long you out, you come see me now?

DANIEL

Can't be associating with known-criminals.

MALIK

See, that's why I stay indoors, homeboy. Two-strikers like us can't walk the streets. Ain't safe.

A moment, then Malik scrutinizes Daniel, suddenly all business.

MALIK

If you back in the game, why you ain't cross town rollin' with your *ese's*?

DANIEL

Ain't there 'cause I ain't back in nothin'. Here to make that intro is all...put a little paper in my pocket.

MALIK

So you figure come to the dark side -- keep things stealth.

DANIEL

I don't need my *clica* gettin' any bright ideas. Them days are over for me, bro. This here's a one-timer.

Malik takes that in. Still poker-faced.

62 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS

62

John grows more anxious by the second. He sees the neighborhood slowly coming alive as PEOPLE take notice of him just sitting there, parked in his shiny black SUV. And they don't like it.

A few of the kids CIRCLE the Denali on their bicycles -- staring right through him, unafraid. Then, John nearly shits himself when someone KNOCKS HARD on the driver's window. It's Bones.

63 INT. TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

63

John takes the same walk Daniel did -- right through the living room. The gangster crew shows him no love either, just cold-hard stares. John keeps his game face on, going over the rehearsed speech in his head for the thousandth time.

64 INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

64

As John enters the kitchen, the slight tension between Daniel and Malik throws him for a minute, until Malik silently motions for John to sit across from him.

John does. Starts to say something to break the ice, when --

Malik brings up a .45 PISTOL and aims it right at John's face! John literally SHRINKS BACK in fear -- certain he's about to die, seeing that cold look in Malik's eyes.

Daniel freezes also -- eyes on Malik, while checking Bones and Lazy. Both bear slight grins. Malik finally grins also:

MALIK

That was the reaction I was lookin' for, playa. Never had iron in your grill, huh? If you the po po...you the biggest pussy pig I ever seen.

John grits his teeth, embarrassed and pissed. But nothing more. He needs this to work -- for the sake of his son.

MALIK

Now...let's have us an honest conversation of why yo ass is sittin' in my crib right now.

John tries hard to recompose himself. What ever small talk he had planned has gone right out the window.

JOHN

I take it you're interested in my proposal?

MALIK

You here, ain't you?

John watches Malik set the .45 on the table and leave it at the ready. All eyes are on John. He's got to make the sale's pitch of a lifetime. Right here, right now.

JOHN

I don't have product, or distribution. But if I know anything about business, I know someone who did could use what I have -- dependable transportation with no risk.

MALIK

Always a risk.

JOHN
My way minimizes it.

MALIK
That's what you say. What I want to know is why a successful "business man" like you wanna take a risk at all.

JOHN
I'm in new construction. But with this economy, it's all gone to shit -- and I don't see a comeback anytime soon. So I'm ready to do whatever it takes to keep things afloat, even if it's extracurricular. I worked too hard to build this business.

MALIK
"Extracurricular." That's funny.

John's not sure if that was meant as an insult. He stays silent.

MALIK
How much product can you move?

JOHN
On a monthly basis, I could add, say, half a ton of extra weight without attracting any attention.

DANIEL
Half a ton?

For a scary tense moment, John wonders if he's overstepped. He bluffs with everything he's got.

JOHN
Why not? I either make enough to help my situation, or it's not worth it.

MALIK
(snorts)
If I was in the thousand pound business? I wouldn't be sittin' in this dump right now.

JOHN
All I'm trying to say is, it won't matter how much you want to move. Not with my trucks.

BONES
They weigh 'em at the state lines though. How you coverin' that?

JOHN
We offset the weight. Count's off all the time. If the cops get lucky, they get the driver. Maybe the guy loading.

DANIEL

Let the honest fools take the fall.

John catches Daniel's underlying dig, but stays on point.

JOHN

That's right. I don't want to be at the loading or unloading. This is simply about transactions for me.

MALIK

He ready for the game, all right. So what fees we talkin', playa?

Daniel gauges Malik -- sees he's actually taking this seriously.

JOHN

Fifteen percent of the wholesale. Cash payments to an account that can't be linked to me.

MALIK

First of all, I don't give nobody more than ten percent.

JOHN

Okay, I know I got something to prove. But if the first run goes good...we leave it open to renegotiate.

John checks with Daniel -- he nods. Adrenaline moves through John's body. He can't believe he's actually pulling it off.

MALIK

You're driving the first load.

John looks up and suddenly all of his confidence is gone.

MALIK

Everybody knows what game I'm in. So we gonna see if you're for real first. Then, maybe we'll go back to talkin'.

JOHN

(beat)
Done.

MALIK

Go chill with the homies. I want a word with Cruizer.

It's the first time John's heard Daniel's street name. Seems reluctant to leave, but he has no choice and heads into --

65 INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

65

The smack-talking BANTER comes to a screeching halt as the gangster crew glares at John.

Malik lights a joint, takes a DEEP HIT and expels thick smoke.

MALIK
You rollin' shotgun with him.

DANIEL
Maybe you misunderstood. I'm just making an introduction --

MALIK
-- I what? I misunderstood?

Daniel notices Bones shift his position slightly against the wall.

MALIK
So you a rookie all of a sudden?
You know how this works.

Daniel just stares back, his stomach tightening more and more. He knew this couldn't have gone that easy.

MALIK
You checked him out, right?

DANIEL
I told you. He's my boss.

MALIK
So he okay then.

DANIEL
Make up your own mind.

MALIK
Hell with that.

Malik picks up his .45 on the table and JABS the barrel down on the tabletop as if it were an extension of his finger.

MALIK
A third strike for me? Is a third strike for you. So you best convince me right now we all good here, or --
(motions to the living room)
-- he's smoked. And we act like all this never happened...since we go back a ways an all. Your call.

Every instinct of self-preservation tells Daniel to cut bait now, but he has no choice unless he wants this to turn into murder.

DANIEL
We're good.

And Daniel just stepped into the abyss. Malik nods, hands Daniel the joint. Daniel looks at it and takes a deep hit.

67 EXT. TWO-STORY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

67

John sucks in fresh air as he EXITS the door -- adrenaline still coursing through his veins. Meanwhile, Daniel's fuming.

68 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS

68

Neither say a word until they're inside.

DANIEL

Drive.

John reads his tension. Gets the SUV moving. Once they leave the block, Daniel starts talking.

DANIEL

This first run? I say how it goes.

JOHN

What do you mean --

DANIEL

-- and I want my money today, so drive my ass to your bank, or rob a store. Don't matter, but I'm getting paid.

John's realizing Daniel got squeezed by Malik, too.

JOHN

You'll have ten grand cash in your hand before four o'clock.

DANIEL

The full twenty.

JOHN

And then you split town, right?
(stalemate)

Look, you're obviously going on this first run...the minute it's done, you'll get your other ten. My word.

Daniel's eyes bore into him. The tension thick.

DANIEL

Your word? Three days ago, I was working a job, staying clean, doing everything I'm supposed to be doing. And now here I am, back in it because of you. What's even worse, I got a pain in my stomach I haven't had in four years. So your word? Don't mean shit to me right now.

John does his best to bury that deep sense of guilt he's feeling for getting Daniel involved.

JOHN

I'm not doing this for some thrill, Daniel.

DANIEL
Just take me to my money.

69 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - AFTERNOON

69

Analisa helps Isabelle with her homework. John appears in slacks and a button up. Overnight bag in hand. Isabelle gets up and hugs him with a smile. John stares at her innocent young face.

ISABELLE
How long are you going away, daddy?

JOHN
Just two days. You know I love you, right Izzie-bizzie?

She nods. Analisa takes notice of the stressed look in his eyes.

ANALISA
Sure you have to go now...I mean, with everything going on?

JOHN
We need the contract. Especially after buying the new trucks.

Analisa finally nods and kisses him.

ANALISA
Knock 'em dead then.

OFF John's guilty smile for not telling her the truth...

70 INT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - NIGHT

70

The gates remain locked. John, now dressed in blue jeans and a long flannel, OPENS the door to one of his new semis and gets in.

71 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

71

From his overnight bag, he pulls out TWO SMALL DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS and slips one into the side pocket of his driver's seat by the door. Without looking down, John PRESSES RECORD.

JOHN
Testing...one, two, three, testing.

John pulls the recorder out of the pocket and PLAYS BACK the test. It's slightly muffled, but his voice is CLEARLY AUDIBLE. He seems satisfied and sticks the recorder back inside the pocket.

John jumps out with the SECOND RECORDER and goes to the back of the enclosed trailer. Unlocks the rear doors and CLIMBS inside --

72 INT. TRAILER - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

72

John hits an interior light -- we see the trailer is filled with construction supplies, including numerous cement bags.

John moves through the stacks of wood, rebar and piping toward the cement bags up front. Finds a discreet place for the second recorder and HIDES it in a position he can easily get to.

DANIEL (O.S.)

You in there?

John looks back and sees Daniel outside the rear doors. Did he see? John's not convinced, but plays it cool and walks back.

JOHN

Wanted to make sure we got enough bags, you know, to hide the pickup.

Daniel nods silently, scrutinizing him as John jumps down.

JOHN

Grab the gates.

Daniel walks toward the gates and SWINGS them open.

73 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

73

John jumps inside and rechecks the first recorder one more time -- PRESSES RECORD, then FIRES UP the semi. Finds first gear.

74 EXT. GATES - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS

74

Daniel watches the semi awkwardly LURCH forward and STALL OUT.

DANIEL

(mutters)
-- kidding me?

75 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

75

John GRUMBLES an obscenity. RESTARTS the rig, sticks it in gear and tries again -- gets the semi MOVING more smoothly this time. He SWINGS the behemoth out of the gates and stops. The passenger door swings open and Daniel jumps inside.

DANIEL

Sure you can drive this thing?

JOHN

Been a few years, but I'll get the hang of it again.

Both are already off to a rocky start.

JOHN

You got the address?
(OFF his nod)
So where we heading?

DANIEL

El Paso. Right by the border.

JOHN

That's close to a thousand miles.

DANIEL
 What -- you think we were going
 around the corner?

John shakes his head. The semi LURCHES forward again and starts down the street into the darkness.

76 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT 76

The duo NAVIGATE through the streets, then onto an interstate in silence. As Daniel looks out the side window, John reaches into the seat pocket and PRESSES STOP on the recorder. Hours pass. Landscapes change. Their tense silence doesn't. Daniel's eyes finally close in the passenger seat. John nervously reaches down and RECHECKS the recorder, knowing its importance.

As the eastern sky starts to turn light purple...

77 EXT. WEIGH STATION - DAWN 77

The Matthews semi sits stationary on the scales. John and Daniel watch as a HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER checks the weight. Signs off and hands John a carbon copy of the weigh-in report.

78 INT. TRUCK STOP BATHROOM - MORNING 78

John rinses his face. Then stares at himself in the scratched, gang grafitti'd mirror. Cold water dripping from his features.

79 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 79

Daniel watches John hover by the gas pump as it rolls past 100 gallons. Then discreetly SEARCHES John's jacket lying on the driver's seat. Checks the pockets. Feels his hands along the lining. Nothing. He puts it back as he found it.

A moment, then John jumps up into his seat and STARTS the truck.

JOHN
 Ever been down this way before?

Daniel shakes his head as John starts toward the interstate.

JOHN
 So you have any kids?

DANIEL
 What, we gonna be friends now?

JOHN
 Just making conversation.

DANIEL
 Don't.

OFF John shaking his head...

80 EXT/INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - EL PASO, TX - DAY 80

As they come over a rise on the 10 FWY, the US/MEXICO BORDER comes into view and the hills of Ciudad Juarez;

ground zero of the Mexican drug war. The sight gives John some serious trepidation of what lies ahead.

81 EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - EL PASO, TX - DAY 81

The semi pulls up in front of the gates to a HUGE SCRAP YARD.

82 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 82

John's stomach tightens further. Doesn't know what to expect. Daniel jumps out and heads toward the gate. The second he's gone, John discreetly reaches down and PRESSES RECORD on the recorder. Keeps watching as Daniel hits a button on a CALL BOX.

A moment, then the shadow of a FIGURE is seen on the opposite side of the faded panel-covered chain-link gate. Daniel SPEAKS with him. The shadow figure nods, then UNLOCKS the gate.

Daniel looks back at John as the gate OPENS. John scans the empty street in his mirrors, then SWINGS the semi through the gate into the scrap yard. Doesn't swing wide enough and SCRAPES the side of the trailer on the fence pole with a LOUD SCREECH.

John checks his side mirror -- sees the LONG SCRATCH halfway down the side of the freshly painted trailer.

JOHN

-- shit --

Daniel JUMPS onto the passenger-side running board -- stares at John with an incredulous look. Shakes his head.

John's eyes shift to the shadow figure who we see is a POT-BELLIED MEXICAN. He scrutinizes John something fierce as John rolls past in the semi, then swings the gate closed behind them.

John checks his side mirror -- watches the gate being RELOCKED. He glances at Daniel still riding along outside the passenger door. Sees that tense vigilant stare in Daniel's eyes now. It doesn't give John any solace as they NAVIGATE through the yard --

UP AHEAD

FOUR ARMED MEXICAN MEN appear from a TWO-STORY WAREHOUSE and motion for him to stop. It could be the hardware they're carrying, but one look at these guys and you can tell they aren't normal street dealers. John takes a deep breath and climbs out --

83 EXT. SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 83

John leaves his driver's door wide open for the recorder to capture the conversation. Instinctively goes to shake one of the Mexican's hand, but the Mexican doesn't reciprocate -- just stares at John, gauging him.

Daniel grits his teeth at the amateur move and takes over.

DANIEL (SPANISH)

We're with Malik.

BENICIO (late 20s), looks to be in charge. His head is shaved, body fit, posture indicating some form of military training.

BENICIO (SPANISH)
What are you putting it in?

DANIEL (SPANISH)
Cement bag.

Benicio nods stoically. John, who obviously doesn't speak Spanish, just follows Daniel to the back of the semi...

84 INT. WAREHOUSE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 84

Up on the second story, a MEXICAN MAN (40) peers through a tinted window. Hidden from view. Watching very closely. We may or may not see him again, but one thing is for sure, we'll never forget his icy stare. His name is JUAN CARLOS.

85 INT. TRAILER - SEMI TRUCK - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 85

Darkness, until the doors SWING OPEN. Daniel starts to jump inside, but John stops him and climbs up first.

JOHN
I'll grab it and hand it down.

Daniel nods as the armed Mexicans hover. John makes his way to the cement bags in front. Bends down to grab one and uses his body as a shield -- secretly HITS RECORD on the hidden recorder, then CARRIES a cement bag back. Hands it down to Daniel.

86 INT. WAREHOUSE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - MOMENTS LATER 86

A razor blade SLICES along the flap of the cement bag. John and Daniel stand aside and watch as one of the Mexicans tilts the bag and POURS OUT half the powdered contents onto the floor.

Benicio appears from another room holding FOUR KILOS wrapped in black plastic and tape. John watches as the cement bag's lid is opened wide, the kilos PLACED INSIDE, then leftover cement powder SCOOPED BACK IN until the cement bag appears full again. The flap is now carefully sealed back up with SUPER GLUE.

87 EXT. SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - MOMENTS LATER 87

Daniel carries the cement bag back toward the semi. John jumps up into the trailer and takes it from him. This time, Daniel jumps up inside as well before John can say anything.

88 INT. TRAILER - SEMI TRUCK - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 88

Behind them, Benicio and the others watch as their product disappears inside the trailer.

JOHN
Lift some bags, we'll sandwich it in.

Daniel quickly REMOVES two layers of bags. John carefully sticks the bag full of kilos toward the back, then helps Daniel put back the others until the kilo bag disappears from view.

TIGHT ON - THE RECORDER: silently RECORDING.

JOHN (O.S.)
Gotta remember which bag it is.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Like we're gonna forget.

John knows he has to stop the recorder until the final exchange to save recording time. But Daniel's right there. He has no choice but to walk back with him. Both jump down.

89 EXT. SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 89

This time, John doesn't even nod a goodbye, let alone shake hands. Locks the back up, climbs into the cab and STARTS the rig. Daniel nods to Benicio and climbs into the passenger side.

90 EXT. GATE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - MOMENTS LATER 90

The main gate OPENS -- revealing the Matthews semi as it starts a wide turn back onto the street and slithers down the road.

91 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - DAY 91

John drives in silence, back on the open highway heading north. Daniel stares straight ahead. Seems concerned.

DANIEL
Malik stepped up his game.

JOHN
What do you mean?

DANIEL
Those dudes were straight-up cartel.

John takes that in.

JOHN
How much street value you think it is?

DANIEL
Why?

JOHN
I'm getting 10% wholesale, remember?

Daniel finally acquiesces.

DANIEL
A gram of uncut coke's about \$100 to \$125 depending on the deal. Thousand ounces in a kilo -- you do the math.

JOHN
Four to five hundred grand.

DANIEL
Step on it 'couple times -- now it's seven figures.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(smirks)

But since your cut's only wholesale,
half your forty g's is mine.

John knows it was a dig on how green he is to this world. Tries to act like the money matters, when his mind's really on Jason.

DANIEL

Don't worry, you can do a hundred runs
after this -- solo.

A moment in thought, then:

JOHN

Thanks...for doing this.

The comment throws Daniel, because he knows John meant it.

92 INT. TRAILER - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 92

TIGHT on the recorder in back. It finally stops...MEMORY FULL.

93 EXT. WEIGH STATION - DUSK 93

As one SEMI leaves, the Matthews rig pulls onto the scales. John SHUTS OFF the motor and jumps out -- tries his best to hide his nerves. Shoots a smile at a different HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER this time and motions to the line of OTHER RIGS waiting for the scales.

JOHN

Busy today, huh?

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER

Always around this time.

The officer checks the scales, glances at the line of semis and simply SIGNS the weigh bill. Hands it to John.

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER

Drive safe.

Relieved, John climbs into the cab with Daniel, and pulls away. Both avoid looking at each other, but can't help a smile.

94 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - NIGHT 94

John pulls up towards Matthews Construction and stops -- TOSSES Daniel the padlock keys. Daniel jumps out, goes to the gates.

The minute he does, John reaches into his seat's pocket and retrieves the first recorder. SLIPS it into his jacket pocket, then steers the rig through the open gates into the lot.

95 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - LATER 95

John and Daniel stand in the pitch dark lot. Haggard.

JOHN

Where the hell is he?

DANIEL
On gangster time. Just relax.

John starts to pace anyway. Until a MERCEDES G-WAGON drives onto the lot and comes to a stop. John's hand discreetly slips into his jacket pocket -- PRESSES RECORD on the recorder, just as --

Malik steps out with Bones, Lazy and another HEAVY GANGSTER. Malik silently scrutinizes John, then shoots a nod to Daniel.

MALIK
Like we back in the yard, huh Cruizer?

DANIEL
Ain't back in nothing.

Malik can't help a thin smirk as he pushes Daniel's buttons.

96 INT. WAREHOUSE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS 96

The semi is parked inside. Malik scans the place filled with shelves of construction supplies piled toward the rafters.

MALIK
Helluva place you got. Must be a few mil lyin' round. You got security?

He says this like a life-long thief.

JOHN
Top of the line.

MALIK
Yeah, I bet.

John doesn't waste another second -- SWINGS OPEN the trailer's doors and jumps up inside. Daniel climbs inside also.

TIGHT ON - MALIK

He subtly motions to his crew. As hands slide down by their waistbands, we catch the glint of cold hard steel.

97 INT. TRAILER - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 97

Daniel LIFTS the top cement bags, until John can grab the bag full of kilos. Daniel doesn't look at him, just speaks LOW:

DANIEL
Don't renegotiate with him here. Just let things happen so he trusts you.

John nods and follows Daniel with the bag.

98 EXT. WAREHOUSE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS 98

Daniel jumps down and takes the bag from him. Sets it on the floor. John jumps down also, watching intently, anxiety going through the roof. It all comes down to this moment.

Bones starts for the bag, but Malik stops him. Takes out a BUCK KNIFE and STABS the bag himself. DIGS his hands through the grey powder and pulls out the four wrapped kilo bricks.

Daniel's about to say his good-byes and get the hell out of there, when he sees Malik SLICE OPEN one of the kilos and POUR the contents onto the floor like it's absolutely worthless.

Daniel and John exchange shocked looks. Malik grins at John:

MALIK

You build beaches too playa?

DANIEL

It's sand?!

The pressure overwhelms John. He literally snaps and steps towards Malik.

JOHN

What do you think this is -- a game?!

In a flash, Malik has the knife up against John's jugular.

MALIK

If that's what I say it is.

John remains frozen, knowing any struggle could end his life. Daniel steps forward to calm things -- but Bones gets in his way.

BONES

Step off, Cruizer.

Daniel catches the crew's hands riding their pistol grips. Grits his teeth in frustration. Meanwhile, John scrambles:

JOHN

Look...I risked a lot doing this --

Malik presses the knife harder, piercing John's skin. He winces as a small amount of blood starts to ooze.

MALIK

-- think I care? Maybe I just bleed you out right here.

Daniel knows he's got to make a move, before it's too late.

DANIEL

Who you kidding, Malik?

Malik swings toward Daniel with pure venom. Gets in his face.

MALIK

What'd you say?

DANIEL

You ain't whackin' nobody -- 'cause he just stepped up your game like a monster and you know it.

MALIK

Oh, so you wantin' a piece now, that it? Be a shame for your brown pride homies to know you down with now.

Daniel stares daggers back at him.

DANIEL

Don't even threaten me with that shit, man. We both know you ain't about to mess this up --

(motions to the semi)

-- you could roll a thousand bricks in that and not break a sweat crossin' state lines.

Malik lets out a grin, eyes locked with Daniel's.

MALIK

Ain't back in nothin', huh?

Daniel doesn't answer him, seething underneath. Meanwhile, John's realizing Daniel might have just saved his life. Chimes in:

JOHN

Look, next time we do this for real... or I'm out, Malik.

Malik's face whips toward John. Maintaining complete control.

MALIK

I'm the one who'll let you know if there's a next time.

A tense moment, then Malik motions to the worthless kilos.

MALIK

A contribution to Matthews Construction.

Malik walks out, followed by his crew. The minute they're gone, Daniel turns and KICKS the opened kilo bag of sand. It EXPLODES.

DANIEL

I'm still gettin' my money, hear me?

John nods, but his mind is in another world -- hoping and praying this was enough to get Keeghan's attention.

99 INT. BATHROOM - JOHN'S HOME - MIDNIGHT

99

Exhausted, John walks in. Hits the lights. Turns on the shower and looks at his weary face in the mirror. Been wearing the same clothes for 48 hours. Glances at that cut on his neck -- a reminder of the dark and violent world he's been navigating.

Analisa comes in, rubbing the sleep out of her eyes.

ANALISA

Didn't hear you come in.

JOHN
 (forces a smile)
 Sorry...I was trying not to wake you.

In her nighty, she goes to hug John, but he softly motions for her to stand clear.

JOHN
 Let me shower first, I'm pretty ripe.

ANALISA
 I don't care.

She hugs him anyway. And John can't stop staring at her. Drinking her in. Smells her hair. Feels her skin.

ANALISA
 (sees the cut on his neck)
 What happened?

JOHN
 Piece of sheet metal sticking out at work. Was just an accident.

Analisa kisses her finger, places it gently on his neck. John's never loved this woman, or life itself, more than this very moment.

JOHN
 I love you, honey.

She senses the raw unfiltered emotions coming from her husband. Leans in and kisses him deeply. Both hold onto each other tightly.

OFF this very personal and intimate moment...

100 EXT. JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

100

Bones drives slowly by in his BLUE SS IMPALA. Scanning the house.

101 INT. LIVING ROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

101

The front door unlocks. Daniel walks in -- sees his son Anthony playing NBA 2K11, glued to the TV.

DANIEL
 Whatcha doing up?

ANTHONY
 Waiting for you. Mom was pretty mad you weren't home before she went to work again.

DANIEL
 I'm in trouble, huh?

ANTHONY
 Big time.

Daniel smiles and sits down close to his son. The fact that Anthony's not on the streets gives Daniel some peace of mind.

DANIEL
C'mon, reset that thing. I'm dunkin'
some hoops on your butt.

Anthony lights up, figuring he was about to be ordered to bed.

ANTHONY
Bring it, fool.

Daniel playfully shoves his son. Picks up the other controller.

102 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - MORNING

102

John's already up, showered and ready. Watches the clock strike 9am exactly. He picks up the phone and dials. Then:

JOHN
Good morning, it's John Matthews...

103 INT. KEEGHAN'S OFFICE - U.S. FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

103

Keeghan is being made-up for a television interview while listening to John's RECORDINGS:

DANIEL'S VOICE
-- you could roll a thousand bricks in
that thing and not break a sweat
crossin' state lines.

MALIK'S VOICE
Ain't back in nothin', huh?

JOHN'S VOICE
Look, next time we do this for real...
or I'm out, Malik.

MALIK'S VOICE
I'm the one who'll let you know if
there's a next time.

The recording STOPS. John crosses into frame.

JOHN
I looked at it from a business point
of view: what do I have they need?

KEEGHAN
(laughs)
He's a natural, isn't he?

DEA Agent Billy Cooper sits in a chair. Tatted arms crossed. That hardened, desensitized stare ever-present.

COOPER
Could've naturally gotten himself
killed, too. Malik's a heavy hitter.

JOHN
Which means he's taking me seriously,
or you're right -- I wouldn't be here.

Cooper merely nods -- can see John might be green and completely out of his element, but he's not naive.

KEEGHAN

Do we know him?

COOPER

Malik Atwater. Earned his stripes on the corner. Did a nickle for ADW. Another three for distribution, but never gave up the game. Word is some junkies robbed his bank last year. Malik tracked 'em down -- bled 'em out with a buck knife.

John remembers Malik's buck knife all too well. But the news has Keeghan's mind working overtime. Sees an opportunity.

KEEGHAN

The fact he has you going directly to a Mexican cartel is big.

(to Cooper)

We know who it is?

COOPER

Not yet.

KEEGHAN

When's your next contact?

JOHN

You heard it on the tape...but I'm positive he'll call.

John waits anxiously for Keeghan's decision, then finally:

KEEGHAN

Alright, I'm signing off. Agent Cooper's my witness. If you arrange another run so we can arrest Mr. Atwater, that'll greatly reduce your son's sentence.

JOHN

How much?

KEEGHAN

I'll cut it to one year.

(John starts to protest)

I can't let him off scot free. But given the time he's already served... Jason could be out in less than six months. That's the best I can offer.

John digests the fact that Jason's going to do some time no matter what, but knows he has to take the deal. Nods in agreement.

COOPER

And do yourself a favor...don't confide in this Daniel Cruz guy.

(MORE)

COOPER (CONT'D)
 There's no such thing as an "ex" con.
 Especially with repeat offenders.

John nods again, just as an AIDE pops in:

AIDE
 They're ready for the announcement.

KEEGHAN
 (gets up from her chair)
 The same rules apply, John. Yes
 you're working with us now, but we
 can't assign protection to you -- so
 the risk is still yours until you can
 get Malik to the sting.

JOHN
 I understand.

Keeghan smiles and shakes his hand. After she exits, John looks
 at Cooper:

JOHN
 Will she keep her word?

COOPER
 Keeghan's the law and order candidate.
 Nine hundred convictions last year.
 Plays like gang busters in the
 suburbs, am I right?
 (gets to his feet)
 By the way, I'm sorry about your son.

JOHN
 Thanks.

COOPER
 Not that I mind a rich kid going down
 for once.

Where John expected to find an ally, he's found none.

COOPER
 And you're lucky the last run wasn't
 real. If we'd have caught you, you
 could be doing ten years too.

JOHN
 (fires right back)
 I wasn't worried -- I'd just snitch
 like my son's friend did to him.

As John leaves, Cooper can't help a small grin.

John waits in line with other VISITORS. Been here for hours. He
 steps through the metal detector, retrieves his keys and wallet.

A HISPANIC FEMALE GUARD (late 20s) motions to sign in. The pen rolls off her sign-in sheet by accident -- she goes to pick it up, but John's already gotten it for her. She offers a smile.

FEMALE GUARD

Thanks.

JOHN

No sweat.

FEMALE GUARD

Who're you here to see?

JOHN

Jason Collins.

She inspects John's driver's license and hands it back.

FEMALE GUARD

Go ahead and wait in Booth 13.

105 INT. VISITATION ROOM - COUNTY JAIL - DAY

105

John sits at a stall waiting. PRISONERS of all ages, much harder than his son, talk to VISITORS via phones, separated by glass.

As Jason appears, John blanches. His son bears a black eye. Lip bruised. Jason glances down the row where a BLACK GANGBANGER (20s) eyeballs him back with a smirk. John catches the exchange -- both pick up their receivers:

JOHN

What happened to you?

JASON

Doesn't matter.

JOHN

Yes it does.

John can see that Jason's in an extremely fragile state.

JOHN

Talk to me, son. Please.

After a despondent moment:

JASON

You remember when somebody kept Tee-Pee'ing and egging your house?

(OFF his dad's nod)

It was me. I would sit around the corner and watch you try to clean it up. And I'd just sit there and laugh.

JOHN

It doesn't matter any more, Jason --

JASON

-- but the last time I did it? I didn't know you were out of town.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

I felt like shit watching Analisa have to do it -- so I pretended like I was just stopping by and helped her.

JOHN

She told me.

JASON

I hated that you got to live in that big house, with your new family, and me and mom were stuck in the old one.

John tries not to grow emotional, listening intently to his son. Even though Jason's resentment hits hard -- the dire circumstances have forced him to open up more to his dad than he has in years.

JOHN

I wanted you to live with me, son. But the court -- and your mom, you know, she needed you.

(OFF Jason's solemn nod)

Christ, you were so young. You probably don't even remember me in that house, do you?

A moment, then uncontrollable tears begin to form in Jason's eyes.

JASON

I should've never took the package -- I knew what was in it.

(it's all coming out now)

Should've just told the UPS guy he had the wrong house, but I didn't... because Amanda and I wanted to try some. But I swear to you I was never going to help sell that stuff. I'm not a drug dealer. You believe me, right?

JOHN

I do, son.

JASON

And I know I should be punished... but not like this. Tell them I wanna make a deal. Okay? Please?

John's heart nearly breaks in two, forced to tell Jason:

JOHN

It's too late for that now.

Jason starts to really break. John glances at the other hardened inmates taking notice, including the black gangbanger.

JOHN

Don't cry, Jason. Not in here. I know you're scared, but you need to stay strong. Look at me, son --

(their eyes lock)

I'm gonna get you out of here.

JASON

How?

JOHN

You just gotta trust me, okay?

Jason manages a nod. John glares at the gangbanger. Desperately wants to bust through the glass and straighten the fucker out.

JOHN

That the guy who hit you?

JASON

(afraid)
Don't -- just forget it.

JOHN

Listen, I know you don't wanna hear this...but if he attacked you before? He'll do it again.

Jason looks at his dad. Can't believe what he's telling him, and at the same time, John can't believe it either. But his gut says it's the right play.

JOHN

Next time he comes at you? Hit him first -- as hard as you can right on the chin, and don't stop swinging until the guards pull you off. You show them that you can stand up for yourself. You have to.

Jason manages a nod, but he's not so sure he can do it.

JOHN

I love you, son.

Jason nods again and wipes away the tears. Hangs up the phone and walks back into the bowels of the jail. John can only watch.

106 INT. OFFICE - LANDAU & AMADOR FINANCIAL - DAY

106

John sits in his accountant's office. MIKE LANDAU (50s) looks through an accounting ledger. Doesn't like what he sees.

MIKE

I honestly don't think you can swing it, John. Between the down payments for the trucks, payroll, normal overhead, attorney fees for Jason and the twenty cash you took out...you're leveraged to the hilt. And you have...
(checks the sheets)
...less than three grand in cash.
Maybe by next month things will --

JOHN

-- next month'll be too late!
(calms himself)
Sorry, Mike. I uh...

MIKE
Don't even sweat it. Is this about Jason? His lawyers need more money?

JOHN
It's better I leave you out of this.

MIKE
I can maybe get an equity loan against the house. But I know you said --

JOHN
-- do it. Whatever it takes, but get me another twenty five cash.

MIKE
When do you need it by?

JOHN
Yesterday.

Mike rubs his temples, gauging the daunting task in front of him.

MIKE
Okay. I'll try and move mountains.

107 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - DAY

107

John paces with a tense look. There's a KNOCK at the door.

JOHN
Come in.

Daniel enters, already apprehensive about being called in.

DANIEL
Just wanted to tell me what a great job I'm doing, right?

JOHN
Sit down. Please.

Daniel reluctantly does. John locks his door, then moves behind his desk, reaches into a drawer and puts a STACK OF \$25,000 CASH onto the desk. Daniel immediately starts shaking his head.

JOHN
Hear me out first.
(motions to the cash)
That's next year's salary -- tax free -- for one more day's work. All I need is for you to go to Malik and get him to guarantee more runs. Real ones. Tell him I'll drive the next one too so he knows I'm serious.

Daniel stares at the money in front of him, and it's so damn enticing. He knows what it could do.

DANIEL
Why do you want this shit so bad?

JOHN

What I told Malik is the truth. I'm leverage to the hilt -- just like everyone else in this country. If I don't come up with some serious cash and fast? You won't have a job -- because no one here will.

Daniel buys the sincere look in his eyes, because it's the truth. OFF the two gauging each other...

108 INT. BATHROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

108

Daniel pulls on a new shirt. Something's really troubling him. It could be that 9MM tucked in his jeans. He stares at his reflection in the mirror. Now he's really back in the game.

He sighs, covers the gun with his shirt. A brief moment, then --

He sees Vanessa appear in the doorway -- holding a wineglass. She's a little tipsy. And he doesn't know how much she saw.

VANESSA

Thought you were working.

DANIEL

I am.

VANESSA

Dressed like that?

DANIEL

My boss wants me to meet some clients.

VANESSA

I got plenty of nice clothes in there. Maybe if you took me out sometime...

She takes a drink and turns away. Daniel sighs, walks after her into the hallway and takes her arm. Speaks gently:

DANIEL

Look, V...this new job...it's letting me put some real money aside so we can finally get the hell outta here. Okay?

In her heart, Vanessa wants to believe him. But she doesn't, because all the world has done is let her down.

VANESSA

Whatever you say, Daniel.

She walks away from Daniel. This time, he lets her.

109 INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY HOUSE - NIGHT

109

Bones lingers back as Daniel sits across from Malik. Both fixed with gangster stares. It seems effortless for Daniel to slip back into this mode, and that is what's troubling him the most.

MALIK

I figured we square 'cause y'all handled business. So be real sure here, homie...

DANIEL

Can't pass up this kinda paper -- neither can you. Was too easy.

Malik's been thinking the same, but postures to maintain control.

MALIK

Tell you right now, y'all ain't coming outta my side, that's for sure.

DANIEL

Won't have to. He's cuttin' me in since he don't know what the hell's up.

MALIK

Which means you his crime partner, not mine. So you know what time it is.

Daniel knows exactly what that means, but keeps his game face on.

DANIEL

He slip up a hiccup, his ass is smoked.

MALIK

Gonna hold you to that.

Daniel nods. As the two bumps fists...

110 INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

110

Malik peers through the shades -- watching Daniel walk away from the house. Bones appears next to Malik.

MALIK

Y'all checked him with the niggas at Sandstone?

BONES

Yeah, they say Cruizer's solid. Was on the mainline with the eses like he said. Soldiering up, puttin' work in.

MALIK

And our playa?

BONES

Got a fat crib with a wife and little girl. He ain't 5-0 that's for sure.

MALIK

Better not be -- 'cause this right here's on us with *El Topo*.

OFF Malik's calculated, yet ambitious stare...

Inside a BUILDING overlooking the Matthews Construction property. John stands by the window, staring at what he built from scratch. Behind him, DEA AGENTS have set up a COMMAND POST. Sophisticated sound equipment. Video feeds from the internal security cameras.

COOPER

(moves next to him)

The wires in the semi are already in place, and we'll do the same to the warehouse once you leave. Just make sure you take the right truck...

John shoots him a look.

COOPER

It was a joke.

JOHN

Yeah, a bad one.

Cooper just smiles. The friction between them hasn't diminished.

COOPER

Look, we know Malik's a serious player, but the Mexicans you described? This is way over his head. Could end up being a much bigger target --

JOHN

(stops him)

-- our deal is Malik. After that, you're on your own.

COOPER

My point is you need to stay on your toes. His ass is on the line now by agreeing to this. So play by his rules and don't do anything to provoke him --

John laughs and shakes his head.

JOHN

-- you're gonna tell me about Malik now? The guy stuck a gun in my face within two seconds of meeting him... and I'm still here. So please, save the speech, coach.

COOPER

(hands up)

Have it your way.

Cooper turns to walk off. John regrets his gruffness -- knows he needs allies right now, not enemies.

JOHN

Agent Cooper...

(Cooper turns)

I'm sorry. All I care about is my son.

Cooper acquiesces as well.

COOPER
Then let's take this guy down.

112 EXT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MOMENTS LATER 112

John sits at his desk, looking at a framed photo of Jason in a Little League uniform. Looks at it in a way he hasn't in years.

113 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - CONTINUOUS 113

Cooper is at the window with NIGHT-VISION BINOS -- watching a LONE FIGURE approaching on the darkened street. It's Daniel.

COOPER
Here we go. Mics up.

As DEA TECHNICIANS go to work --

114 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - NIGHT 114

John is still locked on the picture of Jason.

DANIEL (O.S.)
Where you at?!

John blows out some nerves and heads out --

115 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - NIGHT 115

On the interstate MOVING. Seems like *Deja Vu* -- John behind the wheel, Daniel next to him. Both ride in silence for a moment.

JOHN
If you don't mind me asking, how long were you in prison?

DANIEL
(not proud of it)
Almost a nickel total.

JOHN
Never told me if you have any kids?

DANIEL
Why you so interested in my life?

For some reason, John feels compelled to connect with Daniel, and throws caution to the wind:

JOHN
I got two. A son and a daughter.
Jason's about to go to college...and
Izzie's eight going on eighteen.
(Daniel looks over)
I'm on my second marriage.

Daniel's surprised by his blatant honesty. Finally acquiesces, and stares out into the darkness:

DANIEL

My son's ten. Reason I'm in this truck right now is because of him...

John's guilt worsens significantly, finding out that the ex-con is a father as well.

DANIEL

Minute I get enough money, I'm moving somewhere Anthony's got a chance to grow up normal.

JOHN

Must've been tough away from him -- when you were in.

DANIEL

My girl...his mother, Vanessa...would bring him for visits. Lotta times it just made it worse. You know, that I couldn't reach out and hug him.

John reflects on his own situation.

JOHN

Couldn't even imagine.

DANIEL

You close with your boy?

JOHN

Wish we were. He's lived with his mom since he was really young.

It's Daniel's turn to contemplate things.

DANIEL

I figure you're never too old to change things up. Let the past be the past. Least that's what I'm trying to do.

JOHN

You're doing it, man. Hardest worker I got in the yard. I mean that.

DANIEL

(smirks)

Yet, I'm sitting here next to you.

That guilty pit in John's stomach turns even more.

JOHN

Look, we both do what we gotta do for our families -- and we move on.

DANIEL

(beat)

Just don't try to shake their hands this time, alright?

John can't help a laugh at his own expense.

JOHN
Thought I'd bring 'em flowers.

Daniel grins back at the joke.

116 INT. GATES - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - DAY 116

One of the Mexicans we saw before opens the main gate, REVEALING the Matthews semi as John SWINGS it in without incident this time.

117 EXT. STREET - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 117

SOMEONE'S POV down the street from the scrap yard watches the tail of the semi disappear, then the gate being CLOSED.

118 INT. WAREHOUSE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - MOMENTS LATER 118

Benicio brings out TEN KILOS -- and by the look on his face, these ones are definitely real. John and Daniel stand back as Benicio and crew STUFF five kilos into two separate cement bags.

John watches anxiously as the bags are sealed. Meanwhile, Daniel's radar is up -- watching the armed Mexican crew closely.

119 EXT. WAREHOUSE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - MOMENTS LATER 119

John and Daniel each carry a cement bag. John sets his inside the open trailer of the semi, then climbs up. Daniel next.

120 INT. WAREHOUSE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 120

Behind the tinted second story window as before, Juan Carlos watches closely.

121 INT. TRAILER - SEMI TRUCK - SCRAP YARD - CONTINUOUS 121

Deep in the trailer, John and Daniel PILE normal cement bags on top of the two drug stash ones. Daniel speaks LOW:

DANIEL
We jump down and we leave, okay?

John nods.

122 EXT. SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 122

John and Daniel appear back at the open doors of the trailer and the waiting Mexican crew, when John's eyes catch something -- HEADS BOBBING/RUNNING above rows of scrap metal.

JOHN
-- what the --

Daniel's eyes instantly lock on them too. We expect it to be cops, but what appears concerns Daniel a whole lot more -- MEXICAN GUNMEN, heading right for them.

DANIEL
(points)
Oh shit --

Benicio and crew turn, but -- POP-POP-POP-POP-POP -- BULLETS STRAFE the area around the truck. One of Benicio's crew gets SHOT in the gut. The remaining crew instantly yank out their guns and RETURN FIRE -- trying to hold the ambushers back.

TIGHT ON - JOHN AND DANIEL

Adrenaline gets their legs moving fast as they jump down, leaving the rear doors wide open. Both SCRAMBLE for the cab --

ON THE PASSENGER SIDE

Daniel DUCKS as a few bullets PIERCE the trailer above him, then forces himself to get going again and jumps up into the cab.

AT THE WAREHOUSE

From the shadows of the open bay door, Juan Carlos moves fiercely into the sunlight -- wielding a RUSSIAN PKM (heavy machine gun) and UNLEASHES on the opposition. The heavy 7.62mm rounds PIERCE metal like butter and STRIKE DOWN two of the ambushers.

123 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - SCRAP YARD - CONTINUOUS

123

As raucous gunfire ECHOES, John FIRES UP the rig, JAMS it into gear and starts forward -- but suddenly SLAMS on the brakes --

DANIEL

Get this thing moving, man!

JOHN

We can't!

Daniel now sees what John sees -- through the windshield, a full-on cartel battle is taking place with the DEADLY CROSSFIRE blocking their path to the gate. As the exchange inches closer --

John checks his mirrors and GRINDS the shifter into REVERSE --

JOHN

Check my right!

Daniel cranes his neck out the window as John LURCHES the semi LURCHES backwards --

DANIEL

Whoa, sto --

Too late -- the trailer's rear-end BANGS into the warehouse's wall. John could care less, simply JAMS the shifter into a forward gear and SCANS the scrap yard -- the direct route to the gate is still blocked by gunfire. But John sees another way --

He BARRELS forward, cranking hard left on the wheel -- heading directly for a single row of STACKED CARS -- beyond, a clear shot around the back of the firefight and a way to the gate.

DANIEL

(realizes what he's doing)
Please don't get us stuck.

By the look on John's face, he doesn't intend to -- keeps the accelerator FLOORED, CHANGING gears fast, aiming right for a seam where two stacks of cars meet -- WHAM!! -- the heavy-duty front bumper of the semi RAMS the crunched vehicles out of the way.

124 EXT. WAREHOUSE - SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 124

The added firepower of Juan Carlos' heavy machine gun gives Benicio and his crew the advantage as they go on the offensive -- taking the fight to their foes. Pushing them back --

TIGHT ON - JUAN CARLOS

UNRELENTING with the machine gun. Eyes intense. Clocking the semi -- his product -- BARRELING SAFELY away toward the main gate.

125 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - SCRAP YARD - CONTINUOUS 125

Daniel stays low, eyes trained on his side mirror and the receding mayhem. Meanwhile, John's focused on the closed gate ahead -- no way he's stopping -- he HITS the chain-link gate so hard, it literally RIPS from its hinges and FLINGS away.

As they hit the street, John tries to turn the massive rig, but its momentum FORCES them onto the opposite side of the road -- TAKING OUT 25 yards of chain-link fence in the process, then CENTER-PUNCHING two parked cars, SPINNING them away like toys.

126 EXT. STREET - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 126

As the semi disappears fast -- its rear doors still flapping wide open -- a DEA AGENT slowly lifts his head in a daze from one of the smashed cars. We realize this was the earlier POV.

127 EXT. FREEWAY UNDERPASS - EL PASO, TX - MOMENTS LATER 127

The semi RAILS around a corner and pulls over. Daniel jumps out -- SLAMS the rear trailer doors shut, then jumps back in.

128 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - EL PASO, TX - CONTINUOUS 128

John is still trying to process what just happened.

JOHN

Who the hell was that?!

DANIEL

I ain't waitin' around to find out.
We gotta hide this thing.

JOHN

(puts in into gear)
No, the best place to be is on the interstate -- moving -- hopefully they won't try anything in public.

Daniel looks over at him, then finally nods in agreement.

DANIEL

Forty-five g's ain't worth this.

JOHN
 (keeping his cover)
 What are you bitching about -- you've
 made more money than me so far.

Daniel shakes his head and looks into the side mirror --
 scrutinizing each car behind them. Mind racing.

129 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - SAME TIME

129

Cooper paces something fierce. One of the agents turns to him:

FBI AGENT
 Bledsoe says the semi left the scene,
 immobilizing his vehicle in the
 process. Thinks Matthews was driving.

COOPER
 What do you mean thinks!?

FBI AGENT
 That's all we got so far, other than
 local PD responding to shots fired --

COOPER
 -- tell Bledsoe to supersede. No one
 steps foot in that yard. I don't want
 whoever these Mexicans are tipped off.
 (starts pacing again)
 All we can do now is wait.

130 EXT. SCRAP YARD - EL PASO, TX - DAY

130

Juan Carlos stands deep in the scrap yard. Prepaid cell to his
 ear. A tractor is heard working OFF SCREEN.

MALIK (O.S.)
 (over phone)
 Sorry for your troubles.

Juan Carlos doesn't acknowledge Malik's sympathy. Simply stares
 with lethal satisfaction at the BULLET-RIDDEN BODIES of his
 attackers piled together as a BACKHOE digs a very deep hole.

JUAN CARLOS
 Your driver...he has mettle. Handled
 things very well. We can use that.

MALIK (O.S.)
 Good to hear. I'll hit you up when it
 arrives.

Juan Carlos ENDS the call without another word.

131 INT. MERCEDES G-WAGON - SAME TIME

131

Malik sits shotgun with an intense look. Bones drives.

MALIK

Them eses don't play, boy. Smoked every one of them busters -- already out back diggin' ditches.

BONES

Who tried to jack 'em?

MALIK

Don't matter to me, nigga -- all I care about is *El Topo's* definitely liking this truck. Gonna put our game on a whole new level.

Bones knows damn well something else is going on, but doesn't press. OFF Malik, a million scenarios going through his head...

132 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - NIGHT

132

Heading back north. John and Daniel are exhausted, but keep a vigilant lookout. Suddenly, John sees a HIGHWAY PATROL CRUISER swing in behind.

JOHN

Highway Patrol just got behind us.

DANIEL

(instantly concerned)
The trailer got shot up some.

JOHN

What?!

Just then, the PATROLMAN hits his cruiser's lights. Daniel's shoulders slump -- sure he's going back to prison.

John pulls the rig over onto the shoulder. HITS the air brakes. SHUTS OFF the motor. ROLLS DOWN his windows, then puts his hands on the steering wheel in plain view. Watches the Patrolman's FLASHLIGHT BEAM dance in the pitch black toward them --

DANIEL

You do got a truck license, right?

JOHN

Just relax.

The Patrolman moves up to Daniel's open window -- ten feet back so he can see into the cab. SPEAKS in a calm, direct manner:

PATROLMAN

Why don't you both step out of the cab for me. Bring your registration, license and insurance papers with you.

JOHN

Yes sir.

John and Daniel climb down from the cab as cars whiz by. John walks around the front, steadying his nerves -- until he notices the DAMAGE to the bumper and grill of the rig. He tries his best not to tense up -- and continues to the passenger side where the Patrolman and Daniel stand. Hands over his papers with a smile:

JOHN

Here you go. Was I speeding?

The Patrolman looks at John's identification.

PATROLMAN

Not that I could tell. You have a taillight out on your trailer. I'll be right back.

The Patrolman walks back toward his cruiser, and that's when John sees the faintly lit BULLET HOLES up high on the passenger side of the trailer. The Patrolman literally walks right underneath them -- gets back into his cruiser and talks into his radio.

DANIEL

He sees them holes -- we're done.

JOHN

He's not gonna see them.

A long anxious moment, then the Patrolman gets out. Casually SHINES his light on the taillight area while walking back to them. Stops in his tracks. John and Daniel tense.

PATROLMAN

Actually, the whole area's smashed in.
(scanning with his light)
Looks like you backed into something.

JOHN

Damn it, knew I hit the loading dock earlier. Mind if I take a look?

The Patrolman motions it's okay. John walks back to him -- sees the smashed taillight housing, and the dented rear door panel. Instantly starts shaking his head:

JOHN

This is gonna cost some money.

PATROLMAN

(scrutinizes him)
Noticed your name's on the registration. You normally drive?

JOHN

With the economy the way it is, I'm back doing all the runs myself.
(motions to the damage)
Unfortunately.

PATROLMAN

Know what you mean -- they just cut our days back by fifteen percent.

JOHN

That's BS -- sorry to hear that, man.

PATROLMAN

It is what it is.

Daniel's doing his best to not look at the bullet holes right above them. Stays absolutely quiet -- seeing John in his comfort zone, steering the conversation the way he wants it to go.

JOHN

Yeah, but you guys are the ones keeping us safe.

(jokes)

Ticket or no ticket.

The Patrolman laughs as he hands his ticket book for John to sign.

PATROLMAN

Just a fix-it ticket -- won't cost you anything. But you will have to fix the taillight.

JOHN

(signs)

Of course.

The Patrolman tears off the signed ticket and gives it to him.

PATROLMAN

If you get stopped again, just show 'em that. Have a good night.

JOHN

Thanks, you too...

The Patrolman heads back to his cruiser and gets in. John and Daniel exchange a look of relief.

134 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - NIGHT

134

Cooper looks like he hasn't taken his eyes off the Matthews lot since we last saw him. Then something appears that allows him to breathe again -- John's semi PULLS UP to the lot's gates.

COOPER

Get live.

As agents move --

135 INT. WAREHOUSE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - NIGHT

135

Daniel CLOSES the huge bay door as John brings the semi to a full stop inside. SHUTS DOWN the rig and hops out. Tries to hide his excitement -- knowing how close he is to pulling this off.

Daniel's already dialing. A beat, then:

DANIEL

We're here --

136 INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - SAME TIME

136

Malik sandwiches his cell to his ear while sticking his .45 into his waistband. Motions to Bones and Lazy to get ready to leave --

MALIK

Black Yukon's at Worth and 4th. Put it in homeboy's Denali and follow it.

INTERCUT MALIK AND DANIEL:

DANIEL

You know we didn't have nothin' to do with that shit, right?

MALIK

Just handle business and get there.

WE STAY ON DANIEL -- as he hangs up. John waits in anticipation.

DANIEL

He changed the meet. Said to put it in your Denali.

John's head spins. Digs in his pocket and TOSSES him some keys.

JOHN

Here.

Daniel sees him turn toward the stairs of his office.

DANIEL

Where you going?

JOHN

Take a quick leak.

Daniel doesn't like it, but walks toward the Denali parked in the far corner. He glances up at the glass windows in John's office. Sees the lights FLIP ON. Something bothers him.

137 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS

137

John discreetly watches Daniel get into the Denali and START IT. The minute he does, John picks up the phone --

138 INT. WAREHOUSE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS

138

Daniel waits in the Denali for a beat, then gets out and leaves the motor RUNNING. Glances at a phone on the far wall -- a RED LIGHT on the phone indicates someone's on line one.

Daniel moves to the phone -- softly picks it up, but the light for line one suddenly DISAPPEARS. Nothing but DIAL TONE now.

Daniel's eyes darken.

139 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - CONTINUOUS

139

Cooper hangs up the phone as his crew SCRAMBLES to make the surveillance unit mobile.

COOPER
Tell me we got a wire on the Denali.

DEA AGENT
In the dash and back.

Cooper slaps him proudly on the shoulder, adrenaline pumping.

COOPER
Get air coverage on 'em too --

140 INT. WAREHOUSE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - CONTINUOUS

140

John walks down his office's steps, looking for Daniel. Before he has time to think -- a gun is PRESSED to the back of his head.

DANIEL
Who'd you call?!

John takes a second to register his mistake as Daniel searches him frantically -- YANKS his shirt out, feeling his torso.

JOHN
My wife --

DANIEL
-- turn your head and look at me.

John turns his head slowly until he locks eyes with Daniel -- sees that look of malice in Daniel's furious stare.

DANIEL
If it's gonna be either you or me, I will pull the trigger right now so help me God. Who'd you call?!

JOHN
I told you, my wife!

DANIEL
Bullshit!

The gun to John's head forces all of his anger and fear to come to surface in one dark surge. He LASHES back:

JOHN
It's the truth, damn it! With all these late nights and not calling her, she thinks I'm having an affair now!
(charged)
She told me if I didn't start checking in with her...she'd leave me. And I love her. You love your wife?!

DANIEL

(presses)
Why didn't you use your cell then?!

JOHN

So she'd see the caller ID of the warehouse. I wanted her to believe what I've been telling her -- that I'm working my ass off to save the company.

Daniel stares at him, desperately looking for something he can trust. We see the toll this is taking on him also. He finally takes his gun away from John's head.

141 INT. UNMARKED CAR - NIGHT

141

IDLING. One of the AGENTS sits behind the wheel. Cooper sits shotgun with head phones on, staring at the Matthews warehouse.

COOPER

That's right, John. Let's not get shot before we get there.

142 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

142

The Denali finally appears, pulls out of the lot and drives down the street -- followed a moment later by Cooper's UNMARKED CAR.

143 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS

143

Daniel wears a frustrated expression. Can't wait until this is over. One look at John and you know the feeling's mutual.

Daniel cautiously checks the side mirror. Sees a pair of HEADLIGHTS, two cars back. He doesn't like the look of them.

144 INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

144

Cooper quarterbacks -- eyes on the back of the Denali. His skills instinctual at this point.

COOPER

Lay back.

His driver nods...

145 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS

145

Daniel watches the headlights fade away. He looks forward again, finally satisfied they're not being followed.

John shifts lanes and turns off an exit. Glances subtly out his driver's side window and sees the BLINKING LIGHTS of a helicopter in the distance -- praying that it's following him.

146 INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

146

Sure enough, the NAVIGATOR uses an NV CAMERA to track the Denali.

NAVIGATOR

Vehicle just got off at exit 22-A.

147 INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

147

Cooper's driver passes the off-ramp John exited -- their eyes locked on the Denali as it turns onto a surface street below. Cooper speaks into his RADIO:

COOPER

Copy. All units start parallels.

148 INT. DENALI - CONTINUOUS

148

John and Daniel drive in silence, until Daniel finally speaks.

DANIEL

You asked if I love my wife --

John looks over. Sees Daniel's weighted stare.

DANIEL

While I was inside, she got hooked on some stuff to dull her pain. Hated her for it. Thought she was being weak. Until I realized it was my fault...
(matter of fact)
Doing time doesn't just waste your life...it wastes your family's too.

A solemn beat.

JOHN

She...doing better now?

DANIEL

Clean for six months. Since I got out. Only way I can keep it that way is to get her and Ant away from here.
(beat)
Me and Vanessa -- we're meant to be together. It's all this other crap that gets in the way.

From Daniel's expression, we see it feels good to actually say something true and unguarded. And John is moved by this.

A moment, then they see the BLACK YUKON parked at the corner of Worth and 4th.

DANIEL

Flash your lights.

John does. The Yukon pulls out with the Denali following.

149 EXT. PARK - NIGHT

149

A soft ball game is in session on a brightly lit diamond. Beyond the flood lights, the park is vast and dark. Even in the parking lot where the Yukon DRIVES to the far end with the Denali right behind.

150 EXT. STREETS - PARK - CONTINUOUS 150

A FEW UNMARKED CARS cruise to a stop along the dark outer perimeter areas of the park. We FOCUS on Cooper's --

151 INT. UNMARKED CAR - STREET - CONTINUOUS 151

From his vantage point, Cooper uses NV BINOS, watching the Denali and Yukon. TALKS into his radio:

COOPER
Stand by. We'll take them on their way out.

152 EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS 152

AGENTS fan out across the dimly lit park -- moving in the shadows.

153 INT. DENALI - PARKING LOT - PARK - CONTINUOUS 153

John and Daniel see Lazy behind the wheel of the Yukon, staring them down with a face of stone. Headlights APPROACH --

DANIEL
Let 'em stop before you get out. In case they got other plans.

JOHN
Like what?

DANIEL
Like avoiding having to pay us.

John's anxiety shoots through the roof -- is this what it's coming down to? Getting himself killed at the 11th hour.

Malik's G-Wagon pulls up next to them. Then Malik and Bones get out, along with Lazy from the Yukon.

154 EXT. PARKING LOT - PARK - CONTINUOUS 154

Daniel steps out now, eyes locked on all three. John follows his lead, sees Malik look at him --

MALIK
Heard it was the wild wild west -- shit didn't give you cold feet?

JOHN
I'm here, right?

MALIK
Uh huh. Bones, search his ass.

Bones comes over and frisks John head to toe, because this time it's for real. Then Malik motions to do the same to Daniel.

DANIEL
No need --

Daniel discreetly reveals the gun in his waistline.

MALIK
Thought we was homies?

DANIEL
Old habits.

Tension. Malik motions to Bones and Lazy.

MALIK
Ya'll keep him company.

Bones and Lazy flank Daniel as Malik motions to John:

MALIK
I ain't got all night.

155 INT. UNMARKED CAR - STREET - CONTINUOUS 155

Cooper watches the action in pregnant silence. Sees Malik walk to the rear of the Denali with John. Daniel remains flanked by Bones and Lazy to the front.

156 EXT. PARKING LOT - PARK - CONTINUOUS 156

John lifts the rear hatch and OPENS a side panel where the TEN KILOS are stuffed around the DVD player equipment.

Malik takes out his knife -- FLIPS OPEN one of the bags. DIPS the blade inside and lifts a small bump of moist, pure cocaine. He brings the blade to his nose and SNORTS. Nods.

John glances quickly into the darkness beyond the diamond. No sign of Cooper and the DEA, but he knows what's waiting.

Malik DIPS the blade into the bag again. Offers it up to John.

MALIK
Taste.

JOHN
None for me.

MALIK
I ain't asking.

Anything to get this over with. John SNORTS the coke. It goes to the back of his throat and burns. He RUBS his nose like an amateur. Malik grins, knowing that was his first time.

MALIK
Get up on ya quick, won't it?

DANIEL
(watching from the front)
We done?

MALIK
We just getting started.

John freezes as Malik REACHES into his black leather coat. But instead of a gun, out comes a THICK WRINKLED ENVELOPE. Dangles it in front of John like he's being generous.

MALIK

Ten g's a key. And you're welcome.

John takes the envelope.

MALIK

Someone wants to meet you before the next run. Could mean some serious paper. Real serious.

John acts like he's game, head spinning from the coke. Sure the cavalry is about to come charging in at any moment.

157 INT. UNMARKED CAR - STREET - CONTINUOUS

157

Cooper listens intently -- he's been waiting for this, but there's an indecisive look in his eyes that's troubling.

JOHN (O.S.)

When?

MALIK (O.S.)

When I call you.

DEA AGENT (O.S.)

(over radio)

We have visual confirm of the exchange.

COOPER

(into his radio)

Hold until my signal.

158 EXT. PARKING LOT - PARK - CONTINUOUS

158

Malik turns and walks back to his G-Wagon. Looks at Daniel:

MALIK

Better step -- you in his end, homie.

DANIEL

You see me sweatin' it?

Malik lets out a grin and gets in. John watches as Malik and his crew DRIVE AWAY toward the exit and allows himself the smallest of "fuck you" smiles. Waiting for the big take-down --

159 INT. UNMARKED CAR - STREET - CONTINUOUS

159

Cooper watches the crew make their way out of the parking lot.

DEA AGENT (O.S.)

(over radio)

They're approaching the exit.

160 EXT. PARKING LOT - PARK - CONTINUOUS

160

John watches Malik's brake lights fade into the darkness.
Daniel is as well, happy that they're gone.

DANIEL

We're good, man -- it's over. Just
pay me my cut and I'll be on my way.

John doesn't answer -- still waiting for the flashing lights,
but they're not there. Something is off --

161 INT. UNMARKED CAR - STREET - CONTINUOUS

161

Cooper knows he has a hard decision to make.

DEA AGENT (O.S.)

(over radio)

We got to do this now.

COOPER

(finally, into his radio)

Let 'em go.

DEA AGENT (O.S.)

(over radio)

Repeat?

COOPER

(into his radio)

Let 'em go. Don't touch them.

162 EXT. PARKING LOT - PARK - CONTINUOUS

162

John can't believe what he's seeing -- Malik and his crew drive
away safely into the night. Suddenly, John's dizzy. His heart
beats fast as the drugs pulsate through his body. He's in
danger of being sick. A hand on his shoulder makes him jump.

DANIEL

What's with you?

John takes a breath -- trying to get himself under control and
despite his best efforts, he doesn't look well.

JOHN

...that shit I took...

Daniel stares -- maybe it's the coke, maybe it isn't. But then,
John convulses and THROWS UP on the pavement.

163 EXT. MEGA CHURCH - DAY

163

Keeghan in her Sunday's best shakes hands as WORSHIPERS stream
out of a large, ornate church.

KEEGHAN

Good morning, Janet Keeghan. How are
you? Hi, I'm Janet Keeghan --

TIGHT ON - COOPER

Leaning against a wall drinking a Starbucks. Watching. Then, he notices John angrily get out of his car and head for Keeghan.

COOPER
 Something you should know about our friend Janet.

John stops abruptly, sees Cooper.

COOPER
 She wants to be President. Probably wanted to since she was two years old.

It's not a compliment. John doesn't reply and continues over to Keeghan. Keeghan sees him and smiles sympathetically.

KEEGHAN
 Thanks for meeting me here. They got me on a heck of a schedule. I keep telling them, I got work to do, but apparently, if you don't get the votes, you can't do the work.

164 EXT. PARKING LOT - MEGA CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

164

At the far end in a discreet area. John is almost out of control at this point with wild, bloodshot eyes.

JOHN
 You said all you needed was Malik and the drugs in the same place. What did I miss?

Cooper is infuriatingly calm.

KEEGHAN
 Look, I know it's frustrating.

JOHN
 We had him. I did my part --
 (glares at Cooper)
 -- and he let him go!

COOPER
 (to Keeghan)
 Listen to the recording and you'll see why. Whoever's supplying Malik is gonna be present at the next meet.

JOHN
 We had a deal damn it -- this is my kid's life!

COOPER
 Sorry, but there's more at stake now.

Right at that moment, John's never hated anyone as much. He steps toward him as if he'd like to take a swing at Cooper.

JOHN
Who do you think you are?!

Keeghan sees Cooper's not about to back down. Steps between them.

COOPER
Let him through.

KEEGHAN
Shut up!

Keeghan looks back at the church -- trying not to make a scene.

KEEGHAN
It was Cooper's call and the right thing to do -- get the highest target. I back him on that.

John can't believe what he's hearing. All he can do is just stand there, trying to contain his rage for the sake of his son.

KEEGHAN
Everyone knows the stress you're under, John. Just get through this meeting, that's all we ask.

COOPER
Malik's supplier. You hear a name?

JOHN
No.

COOPER
I want to know who he is --

JOHN
-- go fuck yourself.

John stalks away. His body literally shaking.

KEEGHAN
I think we've lost him.

COOPER
He'll be all right.

Keeghan shoots Cooper a stern, authoritative look.

KEEGHAN
You screwed up. You had Malik Atwater red-handed with ten keys.

Cooper is surprised. To him it is clear: an unwritten rule of law enforcement -- get the biggest fish.

COOPER
It was a judgment call.

KEEGHAN

You chose wrong. Do it again, I'll make one call and have you searching luggage permanently. Understand?

COOPER

Yes.

KEEGHAN

Good for you.

She walks away. Cooper stands there steaming.

165 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - NIGHT

165

John leans against the counter with a glass of scotch. He drinks it down and pours another. This is how he drinks now.

ANALISA

Thought you were coming home for dinner. Where were you?

JOHN

Work.

Analisa sees the dark circles masking his eyes. The tension.

ANALISA

Wayne said you weren't in today.

JOHN

I went to some of the job sites.

Analisa isn't buying it, the elephant in the room getting bigger.

ANALISA

There's no money in the ATM either --

JOHN

-- just use the credit cards, Analisa.

ANALISA

You better tell me what is going on, because I don't know what to think!

John's too exhausted to lie any more.

JOHN

If I help them make arrests they'll reduce Jason's sentence.

She absorbs it.

ANALISA

How? How do you help them?

JOHN

By doing a drug deal.

It's so much worse than she thought.

ANALISA
Are you out of your mind?!

JOHN
You wanted to know.

ANALISA
People get killed for that, John!

He turns away, but she gets in his face.

ANALISA
They get shot and left in the street!

JOHN
This is my son, Analisa --

ANALISA
(explodes)
-- you've got more than one child!

JOHN
(snaps right back)
I would do the same for Izzie -- you
know that!

John puts up his hands in an attempt to calm things -- hates that the conversation has turned into a full screaming match.

JOHN
Every move I make right now, or don't
make -- Jason's gotta live with for
the next ten years.

ANALISA
And what if you don't live, John? Have
you thought about that?

John doesn't have an answer which frustrates her even more. She walks out, leaving him there alone.

166 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MORNING

166

John lies catatonic on the couch. Hung over. Past the point of functioning at home or at work. His cell RINGS. He instantly grabs it -- hoping it's the call he's been waiting for, but he sees the caller ID and shakes his head. ANSWERS:

JOHN
Hey, Sylvie --
(listens)
What?!

167 EXT. YARD - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MOMENTS LATER

167

Daniel MANS a forklift -- happy to be back to the daily grind, when he sees John RACING from the warehouse toward his Denali with a seriously distressed look. It concerns him.

DANIEL
 (shouts to a worker)
 Yo Manny -- lemme borrow your car.

168 EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

168

John parks his Denali across the street and barrels toward the entrance -- just as Daniel appears on the street in an old beat Toyota. Watches John disappear inside.

Daniel can't fully compute what he's seeing.

169 INT. WAITING ROOM - COUNTY JAIL - CONTINUOUS

169

Sylvie paces, chain-smoking. Emotional. There are dark rings under her eyes also. John appears through the small crowd.

SYLVIE
 He's in the infirmary --

JOHN
 -- what happened?

SYLVIE
 (instantly to tears)
 He was assaulted...and needed over 30
 stitches...

Her voice breaks in anguish. John asks this next part delicately:

JOHN
 When they said he was "assaulted" --
 what exactly did they mean?

She shudders, knowing that he's insinuating possible rape.

SYLVIE
 I don't know, John. They just said
 that he'd be in the infirmary for at
 least two more days and that there's
 no way for us to talk to him.

A mixture of fear, anger and guilt vibrates through John's body.

SYLVIE
 I want to talk to this organization.
 They're challenging these laws and
 suing the government on behalf of --

JOHN
 -- he won't last that long!

SYLVIE
 (lashes right back)
 Hey -- you're the one who told him to
 fight back in here! What kind of
 advice was that --

JOHN
 -- he can't even stand up for himself
 because all you've done is pamper him!

SYLVIE

Don't you put that on me -- I've cared
for that child every step he's taken!

JOHN

And I wanted to be there for him, too!
But you just couldn't stand that I got
remarried --

SYLVIE

-- you think I give a crap about your
new perfect little life?!

And this is how they used to fight, down and dirty, almost out
of control. John readies to fire right back, but stops himself.
Sees everyone staring at them.

All at once Sylvie breaks down into uncontrollable sobs.

SYLVIE

...oh God, my baby...

John reaches out and comforts her as she continues to cry.
Sharing the only bond they have left: two parents living this
horrible nightmare. After a moment, she looks him in the eyes.
Pleads with brutal honesty --

SYLVIE

I know I haven't been your greatest
ally...with things. But please...get
our son out of here, John. Please!

JOHN

I'm trying everything I can, Sylvie.
I swear to you.

OFF their desperate looks...

170 EXT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

170

John comes out of the doors, reeling. And stops dead. Daniel
is standing right there.

DANIEL

What's going on?

JOHN

Are you following me?

DANIEL

Who did you just visit?!

John knows he's busted. Scrambles to make Daniel understand:

JOHN

My son. It was a mistake, and they --

It all starts to add up for Daniel.

DANIEL

-- and they made you a deal, right?

A beat of heightened tension. John can't deny it.

DANIEL
(furious)
You know what they'll do to me?!

BYSTANDERS turn and watch. It's becoming a scene, fast.

JOHN
I had to -- for my son.

DANIEL
And what about mine?!

John tenses as Daniel reaches into his pocket. But instead of a gun, he produces something far more deadly -- his cell phone.

DANIEL
You're a dead man.

Daniel storms off before he can respond. John's mind races -- knows the damage Daniel can do with just one phone call.

171 INT. LIVING ROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

171

Daniel barrels in -- sees Anthony playing video games by himself.

DANIEL
Your mom already go to work?

ANTHONY
She's sleeping.

Daniel reads the tension in his voice -- knows something's wrong.

172 INT. BEDROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

172

Vanessa lies on the bed. Her eyes are blazing red, heavy. Staring blankly at something uninteresting on the TV. Daniel enters. One look at her, and he immediately grows angry.

DANIEL
You're stoned?

VANESSA
It's just weed. What do you care?

DANIEL
Excuse me?

She gets up and storms to their closet. Reaches for something, then throws the STACKS OF MONEY Daniel made right in his face.

VANESSA
Is this where you've been every night?!
Can't even watch your own damn son --
'cause you're back slingin'?!
DANIEL

I'm not! I swear to you --

VANESSA

-- bullshit!

Tears form in her reddened eyes.

VANESSA

You made me a promise, Daniel. I stay clean, and you stay away from that life. Remember?

Daniel is unable to look at her now. And she has her answer. He starts PACKING everything they own in frustration.

DANIEL

You and Ant are going to your *abuelas* --

She furiously hits the clothes out of his hand.

VANESSA

-- don't you tell me what to do. Not after lying to me!

Daniel stops himself from boiling over. She sees the look in his eyes and knows the truth is finally about to come.

DANIEL

I'm in trouble, V. For reals. But I can't deal with it until you and Ant are somewhere safe.

Vanessa is completely freaking out now, and it's not the weed.

VANESSA

I can't do this again, Daniel! Can't watch you go back to prison, or wind up dead this time --

Daniel grabs her and holds her tight.

DANIEL

We're gonna spend the rest of our lives together...somewhere we can be a normal family...and that money makes it real. You just gotta trust me.

Vanessa sobs, scared to let go of him.

173 INT. LIVING ROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

173

Daniel comes out, already emotionally spent. Then sees Anthony's solemn expression. No question his son heard everything.

DANIEL

Just because we're fighting don't mean we don't love each other.

ANTHONY

We're going to Grandma Pearl's?

DANIEL

Yeah, but I'll have to meet you there.

Daniel's heart breaks as his son sulks. He sits down in front of Anthony. Looks him in the eyes.

DANIEL

Sometimes as a man, son? You gotta do things you don't want to. Especially when it comes to taking care of your family. That's why I need you to be strong, and watch over your momma. She needs you right now, okay?

Anthony nods. Daniel leans in, rests his forehead on his son's.

DANIEL

What's an OG again?

ANTHONY

A sucker.

DANIEL

And we ain't suckers, are we?

Anthony lets out a thin smile, shakes his head "no."

174 EXT. JOHN'S HOME - AFTERNOON

174

John pulls up and sees a familiar G-Wagon parked in the driveway. Instant terror as he BOLTS for the front door --

175 INT. LIVING ROOM - JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

175

Analisa stands at the sliding glass doors with a frightened look.

JOHN (O.S.)

Analisa?!

John RUSHES UP next to her. Then sees what she does.

ANALISA

Who are they?

Out back, Malik and Bones calmly lounge by the pool.

JOHN

Get Izzie and go to your sister's now.

ANALISA

I'm calling the police.

JOHN

No.

She looks at him. Her worst fears have been realized. John has brought it home and even the police can't help.

JOHN

Please. Do what I tell you.

176 EXT. BACKYARD - JOHN'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

176

John storms across the lawn towards Malik and Bones in deck chairs. Bones makes sure his GUN is visible in his lap.

MALIK

I like your wife.

SCREECHING TIRES as Analisa's car reverses down the driveway.

MALIK

She in a hurry, huh?

John clocks the hardware Bone's is packing, then tensely locks eyes with Malik. Certain Daniel his ratted him out.

JOHN

What are doing here, Malik?

MALIK

Time to go meet that someone.

A tense moment gauging each other, then Malik gets up and walks toward the house like he owns it. Bones in tow.

JOHN

What about Daniel?

Malik turns back. A cold killer's look in his eyes.

MALIK

What about him?

Everything in John tells him to bolt, yet he still follows them.

177 INT. G-WAGON - LATE AFTERNOON

177

Rap BUMPS. Malik drives in a marijuana fog with John riding shotgun. John sneaks an anxious look back at Bones in the rear seat. Malik can't help a smile.

MALIK

Relax partner -- think we'd let your lady walk if we was gonna smoke you?

The rationale make sense but doesn't help John's nerves.

MALIK

People gotta start smokin' more weed, cuz.

Bones laughs and passes the joint. John tries to keep himself in check as more smoke BILLOWS throughout the cab.

178 EXT. BACK ALLEY - INDUSTRIAL AREA - SUNSET

178

A row of small warehouses. The last of the fiery sun casts intense shadows. Lurking in those slivers of darkness are Benicio and other ARMED MEXICAN GANGSTERS. Benicio's radio BARKS:

MEXICAN VOICE (O.S.)
 (over radio)
Están aquí --

Benicio looks toward a rooftop where a SHADOWED FIGURE hovers --

179 EXT. ROOFTOP - INDUSTRIAL AREA - CONTINUOUS 179

The lookout scans with a BARRETT M95 SNIPER RIFLE -- locks on the Mercedes G-Wagon as it turns into the alley and stops.

180 EXT. BACK ALLEY - INDUSTRIAL AREA - SUNSET 180

Malik, Bones and John exit the vehicle. John shoots Benicio a nod. Malik takes note of this -- postures to show his power and grabs John to lead him inside.

MALIK
 C'mon, *El Topo's* waitin' --

Benicio motions for Malik to stop.

BENICIO
 Only him.

Malik doesn't like it, but shrugs it off. Glares at John:

MALIK
 All you, *playa*.

John senses the tension between the two camps. Then watches Benicio hand his cell phone and walkie to an ASSOCIATE, in exchange for a WAND DEVICE and some other ELECTRONIC GADGET.

Benicio motions for John to follow him into a warehouse door.

181 INT. RECEPTION AREA - INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS 181

John and Benicio stop in the grimy empty cubicle. The steel door is closed behind them. Another closed steel door sections off the rest of the warehouse.

BENICIO
 Arms out.

John does. Benicio uses the wand and SCANS John's entire body. Satisfied, he holds up his small electronic gadget next. Aims it at John and FLICKS a switch. John flinches, not knowing what to expect -- but seemingly nothing happens.

BENICIO
 You have a cell phone?

JOHN
 Yes.

BENICIO
 It longer works. Or anything else on you electronic.

John nods -- slipping further and further down the rabbit hole.

182 EXT. BACK ALLEY - INDUSTRIAL AREA - CONTINUOUS

182

Malik stands next to his G-Wagon, still fuming about being disrespected. But with the show of force surrounding he and Bones, fat chance he's doing anything about it.

183 INT. WORK AREA - INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

183

John enters the dark expansive space. Benicio motions him toward the middle. John moves over. Stands there -- feeling vulnerable. A tense moment, then Juan Carlos appears from the darkness.

JUAN CARLOS

I understand your business is in a complicated spot.

Against his best efforts to hide it, John's fear shows.

JOHN

Not easy to make money nowadays.

JUAN CARLOS

It can be.

Juan Carlos pauses, as if he's still deciding John's fate.

JUAN CARLOS

When you work for us? You are treated like family. Including your wife and child...

John nearly shits himself -- thinking that they know about Jason.

JUAN CARLOS

...I hear Isabelle's a beautiful girl. You and Analisa are lucky to have her.

John realizes he's not talking about Jason, but the fact that they know his wife and little girl's names gives him great pause.

JOHN

Thank you.

Juan Carlos gets right to business.

JUAN CARLOS

You will make this next run alone. Start with your truck empty. Once you make the pickup, you will take it into Mexico. We will then reload your truck with construction supplies before you cross back over the border to make everything look legitimate.

(beat)

You will be paid \$250,000. If it goes well, there will be much more.

Before John can balk at the proposal, Juan Carlos smiles.

JUAN CARLOS
 Show us loyalty...and your future will
 be bright, my friend.

John watches Juan Carlos disappear back into the shadows.

184 INT. RECEPTION AREA - INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 184

As John and Benicio reenter the cubicle, a cartel associate from outside comes in and hands Benicio a BLACK PREPAID CELL PHONE, who in return gives it to John:

BENICIO
 I will call day after tomorrow at 10 am
 with an address. Be ready to leave.

JOHN
 What about Malik?

BENICIO
 You work for us now.

185 INT. G-WAGON - NIGHT 185

MOVING -- under a dark sky. John sits shotgun, mind racing. Malik drives, still vexed he wasn't included in the meeting.

MALIK
 So we don't have a misunderstandin'...
 your ass still works for me.

John would love to shove Benicio's words in Malik's face, but at this point, he avoids the confrontation.

JOHN
 Never thought different.

MALIK
 Then handle business, playa -- cause
 ain't nobody messin' with me makin'
 paper, hear me?

John nods. His world growing more complicated by the minute.

186 EXT. JOHN'S HOME - NIGHT 186

The G-Wagon barely comes to a stop as John get out. No pleasantries are exchanged. Malik eyes him hard, then drives away. The minute they're gone, John RACES for the house --

187 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - CONTINUOUS 187

John snatches the cordless phone and dials fast.

188 INT. BMW X5 - CONTINUOUS 188

Analisa drives on the highway, frustrated and spent. Izzie's in the passenger seat, asleep. Her cell rings, she answers quickly:

ANALISA
 John? Are you okay?

INTERCUT JOHN AND ANALISA:

JOHN
Are you at Gabby's yet?

ANALISA
I'm still thirty minutes away.

John closes his eyes -- knows how this is going to go over.

JOHN
You can't go there now.

ANALISA
Why?

JOHN
Can you pull over somewhere so we can talk about this?

ANALISA
(emotional)
No, John. Just tell me what the hell is going on. Is my sister in danger?

JOHN
Not if you don't go there.

Analisa eyes grow wet. The road blurs. She looks over at Izzie, finally decides to pull over onto the shoulder of the highway and stop. John's heart breaks hearing her sob.

JOHN
I swear all this will be over in 48 hours...

ANALISA
I should've just called the police.

JOHN
It wouldn't have helped.

ANALISA
Where...where am I supposed to go?

JOHN
Check into a hotel somewhere with Izzie and stay there until I call you. You'll be 100 percent safe, I promise.

Analisa doesn't respond. Her eyes are flooded with tears now, staring at the glaring headlights streaking by.

JOHN
Analisa...honey, you still there?

ANALISA
I love you.

And that's all she can muster. She hangs up on him.

WE STAY ON JOHN

Alone in his spacious house. It suddenly feels like a prison.

189 INT. KEEGHAN'S OFFICE - U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - MORNING

189

It's Saturday. Keeghan is dressed casually in jeans and a blouse, pacing in front of her desk. John is across from her. Cooper leans against the wall with an unreadable expression.

JOHN

They knew my wife and kid's name, damn it. What if they know about Jason --

COOPER

-- they don't.

JOHN

How the hell can you be so sure?

Keeghan intervenes to ease John's worry.

KEEGHAN

He's right. They don't know about Jason. The minute we started this process, we logged your name and Jason's name separately in the NCI.

JOHN

What's that?

Cooper hates explaining things, but acquiesces.

COOPER

It's a federal data base. Anyone logs into the case file or runs your name or Jason's for a background check, I'm instantly notified. Your name was run at noon yesterday -- that's how they know about your wife and little girl.

JOHN

But not Jason?

KEEGHAN

No, because he's listed under his mother's maiden name, and doesn't live with you.

The news gives John some comfort.

COOPER

The guy you met...what'd he look like?

JOHN

Slender, about five nine. Wavy black hair. Malik called him "El Topo."

A look is exchanged between Keeghan and Cooper, and a major shift happens here. John sees it plain as day, and it worries him.

JOHN

Who is he?

COOPER

Juan Carlos "*El Topo*" Pintera. Runs the Sinaloa Cartel's operations in this region. "*El Topo*" means mole -- because he hides himself so well.

KEEGHAN

Getting Pintera would seriously cripple their operations. What did he say about the run?

JOHN

Just that I'm supposed to start with the truck empty, do a pickup up and take it into Mexico.

The information stirs Keeghan further, her energy level picking up with every step. John gauges her carefully. And so is Cooper.

JOHN

What?

KEEGHAN

You're running their money this time. And the "empty" truck says it's a lot.

Up until now, John never gave the details a second thought.

KEEGHAN

One of the ways we've been fighting the cartels is stopping how they get their profits. It's nearly impossible for them to wire money with all of our electronic security measures now, so they have to physically transport their money across the border. We're talking tens and hundreds of millions in each shipment -- using planes, boats, even trucks like yours. We've barely made a dent trying to stop them, but this could be the break we've been waiting for -- especially if we take down *El Topo* as well.

John's head is swimming, trying to keep up. Grows even more concerned as Cooper addresses Keeghan.

COOPER

Can I talk to you for a moment?

John watches futilely as Keeghan moves with Cooper outside the office and shuts the door.

Cooper talks low, not hiding his extreme apprehension one bit.

COOPER

This is far too risky now. I say we bring in Malik and squeeze 'im for a third strike -- guarantee he'll give up the whole organization. No way *El Topo* will be at the exchange as it is.

KEEGHAN

I'm not missing this opportunity. Even if we don't get *El Topo*...I guarantee you there'll be another major player at the drop off point, especially if it's their cash -- so either way we win.

(selling it)

It's a huge bust for both of us.

COOPER

And a great press release, right?

Keeghan glares back at him hard, not liking the dig. Cooper doesn't relent -- nearly hisses this next part:

COOPER

You and I both know if our guy crosses that border...he's never coming back.

KEEGHAN

If you don't think you're capable of seeing this through? Just let me know.

Cooper can see Keeghan's putting this in play, with or without him.

COOPER

(seething underneath)

We'll need to coordinate with Mexican AFI and make it a joint op.

KEEGHAN

Whatever you need, just get it in play.

Cooper stares daggers at the back of Keeghan's head as the U.S. Attorney walks back into her office.

191 INT. KEEGHAN'S OFFICE - U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

191

John nervously takes in that snake charmer's smile as Keeghan steps forward and puts a hand on his shoulder.

KEEGHAN

We don't have much time, so Agent Cooper's already getting things going.

JOHN

Look, you and I made a deal. I set up Malik, and you reduce my son's sentence to a year. I'd like to stick to that.

KEEGHAN

I'm sorry, but we're beyond Malik now. If we pick him up, it'll tip off the cartel.

JOHN

And if I go to a judge?

Keeghan keeps her cool, because she's holding all the cards.

KEEGHAN

I understand the pressure you're under. I do. But the way these mandatory minimum laws work, a judge has no say about sentences being reduced. Only a federal prosecutor, like me, can sign off on that.

John can't even look at her.

KEEGHAN

This is the last step. You have my word. Your son's coming home soon.

JOHN

Immediately.

KEEGHAN

Excuse me?

JOHN

I go through with this, Jason comes home that instant.

Keeghan's ambition allows John's last ditch effort power play to roll off her shoulder.

KEEGHAN

Okay, I agree it merits the risk you're taking. Second it's over, I'll have the judge start his release. But so we're clear? I need the money and the arrest of a cartel player. Nothing short of that.

JOHN

I understand.

192 INT. ELEVATOR - UNITED STATES FEDERAL BUILDING - MORNING

192

TIGHT ON John's eyes -- in a dark trance. Pent up frustration and anger slowly transforms to calculated determination.

193 EXT. UNITED STATES FEDERAL BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

193

John blasts out the glass doors, still plotting.

COOPER (O.S.)

When are they supposed to call with the pickup address?

John turns and sees Cooper, waiting. A beat, then John instinctively lies. At this point, he doesn't trust any of them.

JOHN

10:30...tomorrow morning.

COOPER

They know Sunday's a heavy traffic day -- means less inspections at the border. They'll also have an officer in their pockets working a lane.

JOHN

(gauging him)

You don't think this is a good idea.

COOPER

You think she cares what I think?

The seasoned agent readies to leave, but his conscience stops him.

COOPER

Have you wondered why they picked you so quick to do this run?

John can't help a nod -- he definitely has.

COOPER

The cartels can't use their own people to carry loads anymore with all the border security -- so they're even recruiting in American high schools now. Luring in middle class kids to carry that "one backpack" full of dope for pockets full of cash. Making it all sound exciting. And once that kid does? They get their hooks in 'em. Threaten to kill their families -- use and abuse them til they end up in a barrel of acid. Gone. Because there's always more mules to find.

(makes his point)

And you're about to carry one serious backpack. You following me here?

JOHN

(beat)

Crystal.

Cooper nods warily and walks off, leaving John with his thoughts.

194 INT. HALLWAY - VISITATION ROOM - COUNTY JAIL - DAY

194

John stands in line, anxious to see Jason. Finally makes it through the metal detector in a familiar way -- sees the same Hispanic female guard from before hovering with the sign-in sheet.

JOHN

(offers a smile)

I'm here to see my son. He's supposed to be out of the infirmary.

She smiles back and checks his driver's license.

FEMALE GUARD

Is he under Matthews?

John hesitates a beat before giving the information this time, then realizes it's too late to turn back any way.

JOHN
Collins. Jason Collins.

She doesn't seem to give it a second thought. Just another visitor on another long day. She hands back his license.

FEMALE GUARD
Wait in Booth 17.

John proceeds forward. The moment he does, the female guard turns and eyes him for a moment, then deals with the next VISITOR.

195 INT. VISITATION ROOM - COUNTY JAIL - DAY

195

John rubs his red eyes, feeling the lack of sleep. But then, he sees Jason who looks a far cry worse. His cheek is swollen. Stitches through an eyebrow. His chin. And even worse -- there's a different look in his eyes. An innocence lost. A coldness.

John tries to hide his devastation as they pick up the receivers.

JOHN
You okay, son?

JASON
I'm fine.

JOHN
Did they say anything about moving you? They can't keep letting this happen.

Jason stoically changes the subject.

JASON
How is everybody? Izzie okay?

John looks at his son for a moment, in a way he hasn't before.

JOHN
I been wanting to tell you something.

Jason stares back at him. There's something different in his father's tone. It's more man to man, than father son.

JOHN
Remember when you got beaned in the head in little league...from that God awful pitcher?

JASON
You remember that?

JOHN
Like it was yesterday. Knocked your helmet clean off -- scared the hell out of me.

JASON
 (thin smirk)
 Me too.

JOHN
 Do you know why I made you stay in the
 game, and finish the season?

JASON
 Teach me not to be afraid and quit I
 guess.

Their eyes remain locked.

JOHN
 I admire the stand you took on this,
 Jason. Fact that you didn't take the
 easy way out and set up one of your
 friends. I don't think I could do it.
 (beat)
 So it looks like you're the one
 teaching me what real strength is.

A sliver of pride washes over Jason's beaten face.

JOHN
 If I gotta tear down these walls brick
 by brick...I swear to God you're
 coming home, son.

JASON
 Kinda starting to like it in here.

John can't help a laugh, staring at this son. He's never been
 more proud to be this young man's father than this very moment.

196 INT. AT&T CELLULAR STORE - EVENING

196

John walks in and moves up to the STORE CLERK.

JOHN
 I want to buy a pre-paid cell.

197 INT. LARGE GUN STORE - EVENING

197

John contemplates the vast array of over-the-counter guns --
 scanning them with unfamiliarity. A SALESMAN moves toward him.

SALESMAN
 Can I help you?

JOHN
 Not sure just yet.

198 EXT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

198

A HOODED FIGURE in a sweatshirt appears from around the corner,
 checks the address on the building's wall, then heads inside.

199 INT. HALLWAY - DANIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

199

We hear families ARGUING, kids CRYING, TV's BLARING, all out of sight behind locked doors. The hooded figure exits the stairwell and approaches Apartment 213. KNOCKS. A stern voice BARKS:

DANIEL (O.S.)
Who is it?

HOODED FIGURE
John.

A moment, then the door is unlocked and opened, revealing Daniel -- gun in hand. A man living in fear. He scans the hallway.

DANIEL
What the hell you doin' here, man?

JOHN
I parked a few blocks away -- in case somebody's watching.
(confesses)
Figured you'd give me up for sure.

Daniel stares at him. Finally shakes his head.

DANIEL
I thought about it, trust me.

200 INT. LIVING ROOM - DANIEL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

200

It's obvious John has told Daniel everything about the new sting.

JOHN
If I don't go through with it, they won't release my son.

Daniel stares down at his gun.

DANIEL
Yeah but the second it does? You might as well put targets on both our family's backs -- 'cause Malik and the cartel will know I set 'em up.

JOHN
Look, I'm the one who put you and your family in danger, and I gotta live with that.
(matter of fact)
But I'm not about to do it again -- or let these assholes dictate our fates.

OFF Daniel gauging him, realizing John has a plan...

201 INT. KITCHEN - JOHN'S HOME - SUNRISE

201

By the looks of it, John still hasn't slept a wink. His trembling hands say the last thing he needs is the coffee he's drinking. The awful silence doesn't give him solace either.

His eyes find the family photos on the fridge. A moment of reflection, then John DOWNS the coffee and grabs TWO CELL PHONES on the counter. One is the black pre-paid cell Benicio gave him. The other is a brand-new silver one.

202 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - MORNING

202

Across from the Matthews lot like before. John meets with Cooper and his DEA team. The wall clock says it's 9:30 am. Cooper looks stressed, the whole thing still not sitting well.

COOPER

The truck's wired live and has a GPS tracker. You won't see us, but I promise we'll be there in two seconds if things get sketchy.

JOHN

How come you look more nervous than me?

Cooper can't help a wry smile.

COOPER

Call still at 10:30?

JOHN

(maintains the lie)

Yes.

COOPER

Tell me you're not carrying a gun.

JOHN

Wish I was, but no.

COOPER

Better you don't. You're just a guy trying to make an extra buck. Don't give 'em any excuse to think otherwise.

John nods, feeling the pressure.

203 INT. WAREHOUSE BATHROOM - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MORNING

203

John waits in the confined area where he knows no DEA wires are hidden. His watch hits 10:02 am, when the black prepaid cell finally VIBRATES.

It's a TEXT MESSAGE. An address. He writes it down on a pad. The black cell VIBRATES again -- a call this time. He ANSWERS:

BENICIO (O.S.)

The address come through?

JOHN

Yeah, I know the area. Should take me about an hour and a half to get there.

BENICIO (O.S.)

The route is only 52 miles west of your warehouse.

John realizes they've done their homework.

JOHN
In a semi that's about 90 minutes.

BENICIO (O.S.)
No longer. We will be waiting.

204 INT. OFFICE - MATTHEWS CONSTRUCTION SUPPLY - MOMENTS LATER 204

John rushes in -- grabs the silver prepaid cell off his desk, and strangely enough, two sets of keys. Speaks LOUDLY:

JOHN
I'm leaving now.

205 EXT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - CONTINUOUS 205

Cooper's LISTENING in with headphones -- watches through his binos as John appears outside the warehouse and heads to a semi. They HEAR the sounds of him getting in and starting it up.

DEA AGENT
Both wires loud and clear.

206 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - MORNING 206

Driving. John checks his watch: 10:30 am. In his lap are both prepaid cells. He pushes SEND on his silver one. Then, the black cell RINGS. He's called himself. As he ANSWERS the fake call:

JOHN
(talks loud)
Yeah...wait, writing it down...4319
Babcock Road...

207 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - CONTINUOUS 207

Cooper still has headphones on, writing down the full address.

COOPER
How far away is that?

A DEA AGENT runs the address, then looks at a GPS TRACKER MAP.

DEA AGENT #1
Ninety miles east. Our guy's en
route, twelve miles out.

Cooper's already moving --

208 INT. CAB - SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 208

John ENDS the fake call -- about to head into a LONG FREEWAY OVERPASS. His vision goes from the bright sun to muted shade as he enters underneath. His eyes adjust, then something odd comes into view: ANOTHER MATTHEWS SEMI. Parked on the shoulder.

John stops behind his other semi and leaves the motor running in the one he's driving. He pockets both prepaid cells, then slowly opens his driver's door -- careful not to make any sounds.

209 EXT. FREEWAY OVERPASS - CONTINUOUS

209

John softly closes the driver's door, then runs to the second semi while digging in his pocket -- produces the second set of keys. He unlocks the second semi and jumps in --

Within seconds, John has it fired up and MOVING.

210 INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

210

Cooper sits shotgun as another DEA Agent drives. Headphones on with his lap top open. The GPS locator BLINKS stationary on the screen. Cooper hears the semi merely IDLING -- looks concerned.

COOPER

He's a half mile ahead. Do a drive by.

As the driver SURGES forward...

211 EXT. FREEWAY OVERPASS - MOMENTS LATER

211

Cooper's unmarked car rolls by the IDLING semi. He motions to stop -- gets out and RUNS over on high alert. OPENS the driver door -- finds the cab empty. He checks for blood, signs of violence but finds nothing.

COOPER

(into his radio)

Anyone hear other voices, a struggle, anything?

DEA AGENT (O.S.)

(over radio)

We checked the last thirty minutes of tape and got nothing but the call.

Cooper looks lost and furious at the same time.

212 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

212

Now that he's ditched the DEA, John hits SEND on the silver cell while navigating onto a highway heading in the opposite direction. We hear RINGING over the silver phone's SPEAKER, then:

DANIEL (O.S.)

What took you so long?

John carefully scans the area around him as he TALKS.

JOHN

Just lost the DEA. We're on. Minute I make the pickup, which should be...

(checks his watch)

...in about an hour, I'll call you.

213 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

213

Daniel tensely holds his cell. 9mm clenched in his other hand.

DANIEL

Sure you can pull this off?

INTERCUT JOHN AND DANIEL:

JOHN
Not without your part.

As Daniel glances out a filthy window, we realize he's across the street from Malik's place...

214 EXT. RURAL AREA - LATE MORNING 214

A cracked asphalt road lined with ranch houses, modest farming and horses. The Matthews semi appears over a rise --

215 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 215

John heads up the road, scanning the addresses on the spread out mailboxes. Finds the one he's looking for.

He swings out and turns the massive rig into the narrow dirt driveway of a RANCH HOUSE sitting in a low-level valley.

216 EXT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 216

Benicio appears from the front door and motions for him to pull around back. John does, then shuts off the rig and jumps down.

Like apparitions, FOUR OTHER MEXICAN GANGSTERS we've seen before appear. John gauges them as Benicio motions to follow.

217 INT. RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 217

They head inside the house where an ELDERLY HISPANIC WOMAN knits on a weathered couch. She smiles at John as her cloudy cataract-stricken eyes struggle to see him. John's too nervous to smile back and merely nods. Continues to follow behind Benicio --

DOWN A SHORT HALLWAY

To a bedroom door. The other Mexicans are right behind John. Benicio opens the door and John can't believe his eyes --

INSIDE THE BEDROOM

The entire 8x10 room is stacked chest high with AMERICAN CURRENCY -- wrinkled dirty drug money straight from the streets. It's more money in one place than John (or any of us) have ever seen.

BENICIO
We've counted every dollar. You will
be responsible for it.

John can only manage a nod.

218 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - SAME TIME 218

Cooper paces like a madman, running various scenarios in his head.

DEA AGENT
We can't triangulate his Blackberry.
Maybe it's off...

COOPER
Why would he ditch us?

219 INT. TRAILER - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - DAY 219

Over half of the trailer's floor is filled with TRASH BAGS full of the bound drug cash. The sight still isn't any less impressive.

John and the Mexicans appear with more trash bags full of money. John sets his inside and wipes the sweat dripping from his face.

JOHN
Never knew carrying cash would be this much work.

Benicio can't help a thin smile.

220 EXT. RANCH HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 220

Benicio watches John lock the rear doors to the trailer.

JOHN
What's the address in Mexico?

BENICIO
Just head to El Paso -- straight to the main border crossing. We only want you in the truck to avoid suspicion -- so we will follow in cars. Once you cross the border, our people in Juarez will direct you to the final stop.

John merely nods, but we can tell his mind is in overdrive.

221 EXT. DIRT DRIVEWAY - RANCH HOUSE - DAY 221

The semi rocks and sways on the pot-holed dirt road of the ranch house. Behind, Benicio and company climb into FOUR VEHICLES.

222 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 222

John eyes his mirror and reaches under his seat -- produces a brand new 12-GAUGE PUMP SHOTGUN with a box of SHELLS. He keeps the weapon low and lies it on the passenger seat, then places the shells in one of the pockets of his driver's seat for easy access.

As he starts PRESSING buttons on his silver cell...

223 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE - SAME TIME 223

Daniel sits against a bare wall, growing seriously impatient. His cell finally gets a TEXT MESSAGE: "WE'RE ON."

DANIEL
(mutters)
Least I know you ain't dead yet.

Daniel gets up, gun in hand. Looks across the way at Malik's two-story house -- psyching himself up with an intense stare.

224 INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY HOUSE - DAY

224

Lazy hooks up TWO ADDICTS, busily setting fire to a pipe. Too busy to see the human missile outside CHARGING right at the back door. Until one of the addicts reacts. Lazy turns, but too late --

RUNNING at full-speed is Daniel, gun in hand -- SLAM! Daniel hits the fucking door so hard it SPLINTERS the jam and SMASHES inward --

Daniel's momentum CARRIES HIM right into Lazy who's reaching for his revolver and TACKLES him to the floor. Lazy's gun SKITTERS across the dingy linoleum as the addicts FLEE for their lives --

Daniel PUMMELS Lazy in the face, then hears footsteps -- when Bones appears from the living room with a SAWED-OFF. Bones starts to pull the trigger, but Daniel beats him to the punch -- BANG! BANG! BANG! Three slugs BLOW HOLES in Bones' chest.

225 INT. BATHROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

225

Malik nearly falls off the porcelain throne in a fierce panic.

226 INT. KITCHEN - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

226

Bones isn't moving. But Lazy CLOCKS Daniel in the skull with an elbow and SCRAMBLES for the sawed-off. He gets to the street-sweeper, pivots and FIRES!

Daniel DIVES LEFT as buckshot SHREDS the wall -- yet a few pellets hit their mark, PIERCING his arm and shoulder. He recoils in pain, FIRES back three times -- all hit their target. Lazy drops dead.

227 INT. BEDROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

227

A meaty hand SNATCHES the .45 on the nightstand. WE MOVE with Malik from his bedroom -- DOWN the hallway -- SNEAKS a look into the living room and CREEPS IN -- sees Bones dead by the kitchen.

He seethes with anger, ready to shoot it out with whoever it is --

DANIEL (O.S.)

What up, Malik.

Malik freezes -- turns his head and sees Daniel standing to his right, shielded by a wall. Knows Daniel has him dead to rights.

MALIK

Like them yard tactics, homie.
Straight up bum rush.

DANIEL

(nods)

Next move's up to you.

Malik gauges him, then drops his .45 in a diplomatic gesture.

MALIK

Here to renegotiate, huh?

DANIEL

Could say that. Where's your cell?

OFF Malik's calculated stare --

228 INT. MODEST NONDESCRIPT HOME - DAY 228

Juan Carlos sits with his SON (8), watching a professional soccer match on TV. TWO of his MEXICAN BODYGUARD/GANGSTERS linger. Juan Carlos' pre-paid cell VIBRATES. He ANSWERS:

MEXICAN VOICE (SPANISH)
(over phone)
We have a problem...

229 EXT. STREET - SAME TIME 229

A MEXICAN CARTEL THUG stands by the FEMALE HISPANIC GUARD from the jail. We can't hear the words coming from the thug's mouth over the traffic, but we don't need to --

230 INT. MODEST NONDESCRIPT HOME - CONTINUOUS 230

As Juan Carlos listens, his eyes go dark.

231 INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 231

Malik sits on his couch -- angry eyes locked on Daniel who keeps his gun trained while searching the names in Malik's cell phone. Daniel's arm and shoulder are a bleeding mess.

DANIEL
Which one's the burner cell he's using?

Malik just stares at him. A tense beat, then Daniel shrugs coldly -- SHOTS Malik in the bicep. Malik HOLLERS in pain, seething.

DANIEL
Still got five and one ready.

Still nothing. BANG! A crimson hole appears in Malik's thigh next. Daniel readies to shoot again, until Malik motions to stop.

MALIK
Sleeper! His number's under Sleeper.

Daniel SCROLLS through the numbers, finds what he's looking for. Can't help a satisfied grin, seeing Malik buckled in pain.

232 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - SAME TIME 232

John gets a TEXT MESSAGE on the silver cell. A phone number. He gets anxiously excited and hits SEND on the black cell --

233 INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE SPACE - DAY 233

Cooper glares out the window. Lost on his next move, until his cell RINGS. He ANSWERS fast:

COOPER
Yeah --

234 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - SAME TIME

234

John checks his mirror and sees the Mexicans still back there.

JOHN
 (into the black phone)
 You and I both know if I cross into
 Mexico, I'm a dead man --

INTERCUT JOHN AND COOPER:

COOPER
 -- so you decided to go it alone?!
 Despite what you may think --
we're your only protection on this!

JOHN
 Maybe so, but after how many times you
 guys changed the game on me, I wanted
 to get some things in play first --

COOPER
 -- what things?!

JOHN
 You know my deal with Keeghan is for
 the money and a bust -- well I'm making
 sure it's on this side of the border.

COOPER
 (beat, wheels spinning)
 I'm listening.

A DEA AGENT suddenly rushes up with a note. Cooper grabs it.

JOHN
 Track the cell number I'm calling you
 from. I'm in one of my other trucks
 and it's filled with their cash --

Cooper becomes alarmed, reading the note --

COOPER
 -- John, listen! We just got a hit on
 the NCI -- someone connected you and
 Jason. I don't know who yet, but --

John desperately wants to know more, but sees Benicio's car
 RACING UP PARALLEL to his driver's window. He quickly sets his
 phone in his lap to hide it and looks down at him --

The cartel enforcer glares right back and points his 9MM,
 motioning to pull over --

At this point, John knows if he stops he's dead. He grits his
 teeth and VEERS right into Benicio's car as an act of defiance --

Benicio's driver AVOIDS the impact, nearly slamming head-on into
 an oncoming car. Benicio's eyes go lethal and FIRES at John!

John's side window EXPLODES -- the bullet barely missing his face! He ducks down and GRABS the shotgun before it slides off the passenger seat -- causing the semi to SWERVE a full lane over to the right -- nearly careens off the steep shoulder!

Meanwhile, Cooper is freaking out on the other end of the call:

COOPER
What's happening?! John!!

John can't hear him as he makes sure the shotgun is off safety and FIRES out the window at Benicio's vehicle -- STRAFING the front fender with DOUBLE OUGHT SHOT -- then scrambles for the black phone between his legs. Finally grabs it and TALKS FAST:

JOHN
They know! Get Jason into protective custody -- they'll have people inside!

COOPER
We will! And we're sending units your way --

BANG! BANG! BANG! More bullets PIERCE through the other side window and door as a SECOND CARTEL CAR emerges in the battle.

John knows he's in serious trouble -- drops the phone in his lap and uses his knees to steer -- RACKS the shotgun, then FIRES WILDLY out the passenger window.

As the second cartel vehicle continues to FIRE BACK, he goes on the offensive and starts SWERVING the semi back and forth. The two cartel cars are nearly hit, both VEERING out of the way.

John quickly brings his cell to his ear --

JOHN
You need to locate a second number --
(frantically reads it off)
-- 517-155-3317! It's *El Topo's*
current cell! Get him, please!!

COOPER
We're on it! Just stay alive!!

The last thing Cooper hears is MORE GUNFIRE as the call ends. Cooper looks like he's about to have a heart attack himself.

COOPER
I need a number locked -- now!

235 EXT. FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

235

Civilian cars shrink out of the way as all four speeding cartel cars CONVERGE on the semi now. One uses the shoulder of the road, then CUTS RIGHT in front, trying to slow John down --

236 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

236

John does the opposite and FLOORS it -- 70, 80, 90 MPH -- RAMS the back of the vehicle.

The huge steel bumper of the semi is no match for the smaller car and CRUNCHES the rear trunk. The car's rear tires start to SMOKE as metal DIGS into rubber.

John YANKS on the steering wheel and sends the cartel car FISH-TAILING straight into the guardrail in a FULL-SPEED IMPACT.

John's eyes lock on the fiery wreck as he speeds by, and it seems to empower him. His eyes become possessed. He grips the wheel and SWERVES into Benicio's car --

237 INT. BENICIO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

237

His driver tries to avoid the collision, but Benicio reels back as the massive truck tire SMACKS into his passenger door!

Benicio instantly FIRES at the cab -- then sees the barrel of John's shotgun stick out the broken window, aimed right at him -- BOOM! -- double ought shot STRAFES his vehicle -- some penetrates through the passenger window, hitting him.

The cartel enforcer CURSES in Spanish -- cheek and arm bleeding from small fresh holes in his flesh -- eyes on fire. He SHOOTS right back at John's door again ---

238 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

238

The bullet RIPS through the metal door and ENTERS John's leg! He reactively STEERS into Benicio's car again -- NAILING it hard -- the vehicle goes SPINNING into the dirt center median --

John fights off the pain, keeping his right foot floored -- sees a POLICE HELICOPTER flying toward him in the distance, but no squad cars yet. His black cell RINGS, he answers fast:

JOHN
Did you get him!?

239 INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

239

As another DEA AGENT drives, Cooper has his cell sandwiched to his ear while stabbing fingers into the keys of his lap top.

COOPER
El Topo's still up here -- not down south! I have a tactical team en route --

INTERCUT JOHN AND COOPER:

That news gives John hope.

JOHN
I'm shot...in the leg.

COOPER
You gotta hang on, John -- I swear to you units are responding.

Cooper checks John's cell phone beacon on the lap top's map.

COOPER

Get off at the next exit. I'll coordinate them to converge there.

John's heart races as he DIGS into the box of shotgun shells and RELOADS the best he can, scanning for the next exit --

240 EXT. FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS 240

Civilian cars get the fuck out of the way as the semi and the two remaining cartel cars BARREL by them, still doing battle.

Then, a third REENTERS the mix as Benicio's vehicle RACES up.

241 INT. BENICIO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS 241

Benicio sees the POLICE CHOPPER tracking them. The side of his face and arm saturated in blood. He makes a decision:

BENICIO (SPANISH)

(into his walkie)

Forget the money -- shoot his tires and kill him.

242 EXT. FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS 242

The other two cartel drivers hear him loud and clear -- the gloves are off. They RACE closer and aim for the semi's tires --

The one on the left wields an AK-47 -- BLASTS the trailer's outside left rear tire -- it BLOWS and instantly starts to SHRED --

The driver on the right side aims his .45, but John sees him and SWERVES HARD into him -- causing his car to get SUCKED UP underneath the massive rear wheels -- the trailer LEAPFROGS over the car like smashing a beer can and SPITS IT OUT behind.

243 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 243

John WRESTLES the steering wheel to maintain control -- the trailer extremely unwieldy after the collision and blown tire. Only the inside tire remains on the left side, until he sees --

The AK-47 cartel thug in the mirror BLAST the left inside tire also -- chunks of rubber FLY -- that side of the trailer is reduced to riding on steel rims in a SHOWER OF SPARKS.

John glances at his blood-soaked leg, knows things look grim --

244 INT. LIVING ROOM - TWO-STORY HOUSE - DAY 244

The tension between Malik and Daniel remains thick. Both bleeding.

MALIK

Ain't too late, Cruizer. Lemme call *El Topo* and tell 'im your boy's acting on his own -- we both walk outta this.

DANIEL

(sarcastic)

Since we go back a ways an all, right?

Malik just glares at him.

DANIEL

You better pray he comes through. Or
the only one walkin' outta this is me.

Malik sees him riding that trigger -- knows Daniel has a plan B.

245 INT. NONDESCRIPT HOME - DAY

245

Juan Carlos exits the bedroom with a leather duffle bag. His son is waiting for him. He steers his boy toward the open garage door where his bodyguards sit in an IDLING silver Escalade.

246 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - DAY

246

John sees Benicio and the AK-47 thug CHARGING their way up again on both sides of his cab. John FIRES at the AK-47 thug's vehicle, RACKS the shotgun and BLASTS another round at Benicio's vehicle through the passenger window, but it's futile -- they're staying far enough away now so the shotgun rounds can't do damage.

With no other choice, John SWERVES back and forth as best he can, but the wounded trailer is wreaking havoc on his steering.

He finally sees the NEXT OFF-RAMP up ahead, then checks his passenger mirror and clocks Benicio STICKING his upper body outside of his vehicle --

247 INT. BENICIO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

247

Benicio SHOOTS a full 9mm clip into the trailer's right side rear tires until they both BLOW -- the entire rear of the trailer is now SPARKING on steel rims!

248 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

248

90, 85, 80 MPH -- John feels his rig SLOWING DOWN even with his foot floored. Looks over and sees Benicio has made it up to the passenger side of the cab. Benicio hangs out of his vehicle -- RELOADS a clip, then FIRES his 9mm at the cab --

Slugs RIP through the interior. John drops the shotgun, MUSCLES the wheel and VEERS toward the shoulder as hard as he can --

249 EXT. FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

249

Benicio's driver tries to retreat, but too late -- the semi SMACKS HARD into his car, sending it CAREENING -- the last we see of Benicio is his bloodied bewildered face as his vehicle SAILS OFF the raised highway and DISAPPEARS into a row of trees.

250 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

250

John checks his driver's side and sees the AK-47 thug readying his assault rifle. All he can do is keep his foot floored -- the rig barely holding 75 MPH. The AK-47 lets out a HAIL OF LEAD!

John SCRUNCHES down as bullets RAKE OVERHEAD through the cab -- he VEERS HARD toward the OFF-RAMP and just makes it! The AK-47 thug disappears from view on the highway and the bullets stop.

He breathes a sigh of relief, until his eyes catch the 25 MPH sign of the off-ramp, then the SEVERE HORSESHOE TURN dead ahead. He's still carrying way too much speed to make the turn!

John braces himself -- desperately trying to steer the sparking beast through the turn, but the rear-end LOSES TRACTION --

JOHN

-- shit --

251 EXT. HORSESHOE OFF-RAMP - CONTINUOUS

251

The semi's trailer JACK-KNIFES HARD and HITS THE OUTER GUARD RAIL SIDEWAYS -- SPILLING the behemoth over and down the STEEP EMBANKMENT beyond --

The entire semi ROLLS VIOLENTLY down the dirt grade -- HAMMERING OPEN the barn doors of the trailer -- bags of cartel money EXPLODE into the air!

252 INT. CAB - SECOND SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

252

John's belts hold him in place -- his entire body SLAMMING AROUND like a rag doll as the rig comes to a HARSH STOP on its passenger side. And all goes eerily quiet for a beat --

-- then a RINGING sound floods his ears. John tries to focus, bleeding, hanging from his seatbelts inside the crashed cab --

He peers through the SHATTERED WINDSHIELD and his heart stops -- sees a pair of LEGS RUNNING right for him. The barrel of a rifle swinging. He tries desperately to reach his shotgun -- but it's out of reach. The legs are nearly there -- and John realizes -- this is how he's going to die. Its written all over his face.

Until, the UNSEEN FIGURE bends down into view -- a glimpse of a BADGE hangs from a neck -- a bullet proof vest -- then the face of one of Cooper's DEA AGENTS peers in through the cracked glass.

And then, the high-pitched ringing in his ears becomes something else -- the sweetest sound ever: SIRENS. A LOT of them.

John Matthews is going to live today.

253 EXT. FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

253

Through the tree-line, the AK-47 Thug futilely watches the law enforcement posse converge on the crash site -- cartel money strewn everywhere.

With nothing left to do, he simply drives off into the horizon.

254 EXT. NONDESCRIPT HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

254

Nothing. Then a TACTICAL TEAM emerges from the ether and silently starts toward the house -- MOVING/CONVERGING --

A BATTERING RAM is used to HAMMER the front door in. MORE AGENTS gain access through the backyard and rear door. Through every orifice possible. SHOUTING commands, fingers riding triggers --

255 INT. NONDESCRIPT HOME - CONTINUOUS

255

-- but, it's empty. Just the prepaid cell on the table remains.

TEAM LEADER
(into his mic)
Clear. The house is empty.

256 INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

256

Cooper drops his radio in frustration as they continue to race to the scene. Knows it's over. And they were so close.

He stares in a daze through the windshield. Barely even clocks the silver Escalade heading in the opposite direction -- until his eyes lock on the TWO HARDENED MEXICAN MEN in front, the SHADOWY FIGURES in back, literally passing right by him --

COOPER
Turn around!!

The DEA Agent driving immediately starts to make a 180.

COOPER
(in his radio)
He's en route. North on Nichols Road.
Lock down the perimeter --

257 INT. ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

257

In back, Juan Carlos' son reads his dad's tension and knows to stay quiet. But the quietness is interrupted by their driver:

BODYGUARD DRIVER
-- *El Topo* --

Juan Carlos looks ahead and sees an UNMARKED PANEL VAN and CROWN VIC screeching to a halt -- BLOCKING the street in front of them. DEA AGENTS in full tactical gear SURGE from the vehicles, SHOUTING, ASSAULT RIFLES at the ready in shooting positions.

The cartel lieutenant looks fast toward the rear and sees more UNMARKED VEHICLES rushing up from behind.

Both bodyguards keep their UZI SUBMACHINE GUNS low and at the ready. Juan Carlos steels his gaze -- not ready to give up, until he locks on his son's scared face --

A tense moment, then Juan Carlos speaks with calm authority:

JUAN CARLOS (SPANISH)
Don't. Not with my son. Raise your hands so they can see them.

Both bodyguards do as they're told. A moment, then Cooper comes into view -- staring right back at Juan Carlos. And it ends how most of the recent cartel captures have. Peacefully.

258 EXT. HORSESHOE OFF-RAMP - DAY

258

PARAMEDICS try to force John to lie down as a horde of MORE POLICE and DEA cordon off the crash site and all that cartel money. ONLOOKERS from the surface street stare in amazement.

JOHN
(he's not)
I'm fine, damn it --

PARAMEDIC
-- you're in shock, sir. You need to lie down so we can work on you.

John's eyes search for Cooper, anybody who can give him answers. A tense moment, then a familiar DEA AGENT RUSHES UP with a cell.

DEA AGENT
Hold off for a minute guys --
(to John)
It's Cooper.

JOHN
(takes the phone fast)
You have him?

259 EXT. NONDESCRIPT HOME - SAME TIME

259

Cooper looks over at Juan Carlos in cuffs, flanked by FOUR DEA AGENTS in tactical gear. The seasoned agent can't help a grin.

COOPER
We got him, John. "El Topo" Pintera is in our custody because of you.

INTERCUT JOHN AND COOPER:

John's mind is still on his son.

JOHN
What about Jason?

COOPER
Sitting in a protective custody cell as we speak. He's safe.

John's feels a major sense of relief, then remembers --

JOHN
-- Daniel --

260 EXT. STREET - DAY

260

TIGHT ON Daniel -- WALKING fast. Concern in his eyes. An ill-fitting long sleeve shirt from Malik's covers his injured arm. His cell RINGS. He checks his surroundings and ANSWERS:

DANIEL
Yeah.

JOHN (O.S.)
I got Agent Cooper on the line. They
know you're holding Malik.

DANIEL
You mean was.

INTERCUT DANIEL WITH JOHN AND COOPER:

We see John being attended to, INTERCUTTING Cooper back in his
car, DRIVING.

COOPER
There's no need to run, Daniel --

DANIEL
-- I put guys down, man. Sorry if I
don't think you'll believe it was in
self-defense...being an ex-con an all.

JOHN
Is Malik dead?

261 INT. TWO-STORY HOUSE - DAY

261

Malik's is eerily silent. Then DEA TACTICAL and LOCAL POLICE
storm the house. The dead bodies of Bones and Lazy remain in
the kitchen. And then, there's Malik --

Alive. Hands and feet BOUND together with the video game player
wires. Limbs saturated in blood. OFF his futile glare...

262 EXT. HORSE-SHOE OFF-RAMP - CONTINUOUS

262

John's about to interject again, when he suddenly sees Cooper get
out of his car and WALK his way --

COOPER
Malik's in our custody as we speak,
Daniel. We know you were instrumental
in this...

INTERCUT JOHN AND COOPER WITH DANIEL:

Daniel stops walking, conflicted. Wants to trust them.

DANIEL
Then you won't care if I go see my
family right now.

COOPER
Of course. All I need is for you to
come in later so I can build my case.

DANIEL
(beat)
I can do that.

JOHN
Hey Daniel?

DANIEL
Yeah --

JOHN
We got 'em.

Daniel can't help a smile.

263 INT. WAREHOUSE - DEA BUILDING - NIGHT

263

Keeghan stands in front of a SEA OF REPORTERS, taking QUESTIONS. Behind her on display is the CARTEL CASH piled high with a sign indicating that it's 83 MILLION DOLLARS. And then there's Juan Carlos "El Topo" Pintera standing in belly-chains, heavily guarded.

OFF TO THE SIDE

John stands on crutches, his leg wrapped. Cooper is next to him.

JOHN
You know she wants to be president.

COOPER
I heard that somewhere.

A shared grin. Keeghan fields the last question, then heads over to John and shakes his hand.

KEEGHAN
(all too familiar)
You did a great thing here, John.
Better we don't show your face on
camera though.

JOHN
Seeing my son free in the morning's
good enough for me.

KEEGHAN
Seven sharp -- it's all set.
(beat, grows serious)
Your wife know about you guys going
into WITSEC yet?

John shakes his head. He's definitely not looking forward to that conversation either.

KEEGHAN
No question it'll be an adjustment.

JOHN
All that matters is my family's safe.

And we can see John means it.

264 EXT. HOUSE - RURAL AREA - NIGHT

264

A TAXI CAB drops off Daniel in front. Arm in a sling. Vanessa and Anthony emerge from the house and run toward him.

Daniel smiles big. Despite his throbbing shoulder and arm, he sweeps them both up into a tight hug.

265 EXT. EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - COUNTY JAIL - MORNING

265

Away from the public's view, and guarded by FEDERAL AGENTS -- John waits anxiously with Analisa and Izzie by his side.

Sylvie is there as well. All show zero animosity toward each other -- simply happy the entire ordeal is coming to an end.

Jason emerges from a door. No words need to be said as they all embrace. Then, Jason stares at his father with deep gratitude.

JASON

Thanks, dad.

John fights back tears...and we're realizing that's the first time Jason has referred to him as "dad."

266 INT. OFFICE - DEA BUILDING - DAY

266

Daniel comes into the DEA office, still convinced he's going to get arrested. But Cooper meets him and shakes his hand.

COOPER

I hear you're refusing WITSEC.

DANIEL

We got plans to get lost on our own.
Ready to get started?

Cooper nods, takes out a LEGAL DOCUMENT.

COOPER

Need you to sign something first.

DANIEL

(dubious)
What is it?

COOPER

Receipt for the reward on Juan Carlos Pintera. \$100,000.

Daniel's knees nearly buckle.

DANIEL

But John --

COOPER

-- he said it's yours. Something about having to lay you off.

Daniel stands in shock, unable to comprehend it just yet.

TITLE CARD: SIX MONTHS LATER

267 EXT. MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSE - DAY

267

We have no idea where. Just somewhere nestled in the fabric of middle America. The mailbox displays the name: LONDON FAMILY.

268 INT. MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

268

A definite step down from his last home, but John seems to not care one bit. He looks over the BLUEPRINTS of a warehouse. Back in it, BLACKBERRY to his ear:

JOHN

As long as we have the shelving in
before the lumber shipment arrives...

(shakes his head)

That much? Jesus. Alright, just buy
what you can then.

Analisa comes up behind him and wraps her arms around him.
WHISPERS in his ear:

ANALISA

Somebody's in need of a goaltender.

JOHN

(nods, then into the phone)

Gotta go...okay, see you then.

269 EXT. BACKYARD - MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

269

Jason and Izzie play keep away with a soccer ball, LAUGHING. John walks outside, takes in the sight of them playing. And it makes it all worthwhile. Jason finally sees him and grins.

JASON

Ready to get drilled?

JOHN

You wish.

As John heads toward them, Analisa steps out and YELLS:

ANALISA

Jason, you staying for dinner?

JASON

Thanks, but I told my mom I'd come
home. Plus I gotta study for
midterms.

JOHN

(playfully shoves him)

Damn right you do.

Jason smiles back at him, but Izzie grows impatient.

IZZIE

Come on, dad. Get in goal already.

John does as he's told and stands between the two set up trash cans. Gets in his best goalie stance.

JOHN
Alright, bring it.

OFF Izzie's impressive shot, heading right for John...

CUT TO BLACK.

END CARD:

Of all the convictions to date falling under the mandatory minimum sentencing drug laws since its implementation in 1986, only 11% were high-level traffickers.

The average sentence for a first time, non-violent drug offender is now longer than the average sentence for rape, child molestation, bank robbery or manslaughter.

A Gallup poll of 350 state and 49 federal judges who belong to the American Bar Association found 90 percent opposed to (and only 8 percent in favor of) the current federal mandatory minimums for drug offenses.

FADE OUT.

EXCLUSIVE FILMS INTERNATIONAL