

THE CROW: LAZARUS

Screenplay by

James Gibson

based on a character created by James O'Barr

DIRECTOR: JOSEPH KAHN

2nd DRAFT

EDWARD R. PRESSMAN FILM CORP.

12.20.2000

"...for the great day of his wrath has
come, and who shall be able to stand?"

-- **Revelation** (6:17)

EXT. UNSPECIFIED URBAN METROPOLIS -- NIGHT

CREDITS BEGIN as CAMERA SWOOPS down through CLOUDS revealing a stark, stylized, imposing picture of urban decay.

A CACOPHONY OF STREET SOUNDS becomes audible as we approach: sirens, alarms, thumping bass, snatches of conversation.

CLUSTERS of people, ant-like, doing their thing, become more visible as we move LOWER over streets and continue to wind our way through the city:

-- HOMELESS PEOPLE encamped on the sidewalks.

-- DRUG DEALERS and WORKING GIRLS plying their trade down on the corner.

-- WHITE COPS giving a critical beatdown to some BLACK YOUTHS lined up against the wall of a liquor store.

-- BILLBOARDS targeted to the black community -- malt liquor, menthol cigarettes, fried chicken -- freshly defaced with Sambo caricatures and cynical commentary: "how come u don't see diz shit in da suburbs?"

-- A CREW OF YOUNG TAGGERS deface a billboard advertising rapper PAPA SMURF and his BLUE-BOY RECORDS empire. Blackened-in teeth, mustache. "Blue Boy suckz dick, Brimstone rules!"

The TAGGERS run for cover as a SPOTLIGHT from a rumbling police HELICOPTER illuminates them.

Nearby, another HUGE BILLBOARD, a headshot of a stern, intense face: LAZARUS -- DEAD MAN WALKING -- 4x PLATINUM -- IN STORES NOW -- FROM BRIMSTONE RECORDS. Unsullied by graffiti, save for a small, respectful "da man!" in day-glo paint.

And under this, in a deep, gravelly voice:

LAZARUS (V.O.)
Once upon a time back in the day, folks
used to believe that when someone died, a
crow would carry that person's soul to
the land of the dead....

AHEAD IN THE DISTANCE

KLIEG-LIGHTS moving back and forth through the sky, like something out of a Hollywood premiere. Lines of CARS -- jeeps, G-rides, limos -- stacked up in traffic, all heading towards...

A SHINY, OPULENT SPORTS ARENA, standing out like a sore thumb in the midst of an otherwise neglected downtown.

A HUGE COMPUTERIZED DISPLAY reads: BRIMSTONE RECORDS 5TH ANNIVERSARY JAM -- SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY LAZARUS

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We continue MOVING OVERHEAD as BOUNCERS contain FANS behind barricades down below...

TEENAGE GIRL FAN

...I'll do anything for a ticket...

BOUNCER

...No head, no backstage pass. Now step the fuck off...

...past rows of NEWS TRUCKS, their satellite poles poking up right towards us...

FEMALE REPORTER

...No word yet when Lazarus is scheduled to take the stage, but we'll have my exclusive interview after the next...

MALE REPORTER

...this shit is off the mu-fuckin' hook!
(realizes)
-- am I allowed to say that?

...over the ARENA ENTRANCE, where FANS and macked-out V.I.P.s are patted down before being admitted.

A METAL DETECTOR SOUNDS as it's waved in front of a MAN in a PIMP-FUR COAT. He pulls out a GUN, then a ANOTHER GUN, then a KNIFE, then a pair of BRASS KNUCKLES, empties them into a bowl. A SECURITY DOG BARKS. A GUARD reaches into the man's coat, pulls out a huge BAG OF WEED.

PIMP-FUR COAT

...the weapons, I understand. But have a heart -- don't take a brother's cheebah!

CAMERA CONTINUES THROUGH A SKYBOX, INTO...

INT. ARENA -- OVERHEAD SHOT

Bedlam. Restless FANS all chant the same thing:

CROWD

We want Lazarus! We want Lazarus!

FLOAT OVER THE ELABORATE STAGE-SET, revealing:

Catwalks, hydraulic platforms, a suspended CAGE, backdrop with the distinctive circular "B" Brimstone Records LOGO; then MOVE BACKSTAGE, revealing FLATS, RIGGING behind set and then:

THE BACKSTAGE HOSPITALITY AREA

Pure decadence. A DRUG DEALER sells BINDLES, stamped with the Brimstone "B" logo. VIPS assault the open bar. One VIP holds out two bottles of CRISTAL, badgers a BARTENDER...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIP

Yo, pour me some of that grape fizzily
shit in these here tallboys...

CONTINUE THROUGH a thick haze of smoke to another corner of the room, where more people snort, shoot and smoke every drug imaginable and scantily-clad HOOCHIE-MAMAS give lap dances.

REVEAL: BRAD BRATWURST (white, late 20s), better known as "Brat," consigliere and CFO in the Brimstone Records camp. Pudgy, decked out in a leather "Shaft" coat and Kangol hat. He has two GIRLS writhing in his lap, a CELPHONE to his ear in one hand and a MOTOROLA TWO-WAY MESSENGER in the other.

BRAT

....yo, it's all about the after-party,
know wha' I'm sayin'? 'Erbody's gonna be
there -- Mariah, Janet -- I talked to 'em
my own self. Yo hold up...

(clicks call waiting; coos)

Brat's Pleasure Palace, your wish is my --

(loud gulp; voice "white" now)

-- No, I thought you were...Shit. Okay.
I'm on it.

FOLLOW BRAT as he bursts up from his couch, knocking the two GIRLS off his lap, and marches down a CORRIDOR, suddenly all business. MOVE IN on his TWO-WAY as he types: "BRING LOTION," hits send, snaps it shut and sticks it in his pocket.

As Brat walks, he passes a TV MONITOR, featuring TASHA, the female reporter we caught a glimpse of earlier outside.

TASHA (ON TV)

...We're back. This is Tash, with Global
Music News' live coverage of the Brimstone
Jam. And stay tuned for more of my
exclusive interview with...

CONTINUE ON BRAT...

frantic as he approaches APPLES -- a security guard decked out Secret Service-style (albeit in SNEAKERS), gun visible through jacket, munching on an APPLE while effortlessly holding FANS, HANGERS-ON at bay with his free arm -- standing sentry...

OUTSIDE LAZARUS' DRESSING ROOM

Denoted by a GOLD STAR on the door which reads: LAZARUS. A hotel-style "DO NOT DISTURB" sign hangs off the doorknob.

BRAT

Fuck's he waiting for!? Stone's pulling
up this very second and it's going to rain
hellfire from his ass if he finds out the
show hasn't started yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

APPLES

Man don't want to be disturbed.

BRAT

(pounding on door; to Lazarus)

Quit fucking around. I know you're there.

We hear a bottle smash against other side of door and a gruff, muffled: "Fuck off" from within. Brat storms off in a huff:

BRAT

We'll see who's the bigshot...

As Apples takes another bite from his apple, CONTINUE FOLLOWING BRAT as he maneuvers past various WORKMEN and UNDERLINGS, barking orders, and opens the door OUTSIDE to...

EXT. VIP LOADING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

FOLLOW BRAT down a RED CARPET, past THRONGS OF JOURNALISTS as he approaches a waiting WHITE STRETCH MERCEDES LIMO.

The DOOR OPENS. LOUD MUSIC blares from inside and a waft of smoke escapes out the passenger cabin. IKE -- an ultra-stylish Brit, half badass and half dandy -- steps out, adjusts lapels of his très expensive suit, slicks his hair with a COMB, before flexing into "bodyguard" stance.

He's followed by his female counterpart, EVA -- an athletic black woman with close-cropped hair in a ninja-like leather catsuit. Hard to say which one's tougher.

Eva gives a "taxi whistle," clicks her heel on the curb, raises her hands in middle-finger salute, crosses them, then flexes palms outward and sideways as if to signal: "make way."

The THRONGS step back, like the parting of the Red Sea...

IKE

Good with them fingas, girl.

Eva gives a proud nod. And then STONE, co-founder with Lazarus and CEO of Brimstone Records, makes his entrance....

...or more precisely, Stone's WHITE GUCCI LOAFER and WHITE SILK SUITPANTS LEG make an entrance, stubbing out a BLUNT on the red carpet...

LAZARUS (V.O.)

...but sometimes, when something bad happens --

...before we can see his face, CAMERA MOVES INTO THE LIMO now and UP THE LENGTH OF STONE'S BODY from behind as he steps out. As we get to the back of Stone's head, "B" logo tattooed on the rear of his shaved dome...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...CAMERA burrows quickly within his skull: A RAPID-FIRE BARRAGE of neurons, synapses, images and chaotic sounds representing his thoughts, which are pretty fucking scary...

LAZARUS (V.O.)

...When something bad happens...

...and we go OUT THROUGH two stereoscopic EYE HOLES, before finally shifting perspective to...

STONE'S P.O.V. as he walks down the red carpet. Ike and Eva keep his path clear. A frantic Brat enters frame, whispers:

BRAT

We have a fucking crisis: million people watching at home on pay per view and the cocksucker wants to play primadonna --

STONE (O.S.)

-- How many times I gotta tell you:
pissed-off Stone equals unphotogenic
Stone. Tell me later -- you're fuckin' up
my entrance...

Brat sheepishly exits frame, replaced by a blinding glare of FLASHBULBS and NEWS MIKES as Stone approaches the STAGE DOOR.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Stone...?

STONE (O.S.)

-- just Stone. One word.

REPORTER #1

Uh...any thoughts on Brimstone's future?

STONE (O.S.)

It's been, what, five years since Laz and I put this joint together? Niggas keep on hatin', but ain't nobody slowed us down yet. So the future...?

(scoffs)

It's whatever the hell I want it to be.

REPORTER #2

Any comments on your rivalry with Papa Smurf and alleged death threats from the Blue Boy camp?

STONE (O.S.)

That's life, y'know? Just like my nigga Frank Sinatra liked to say...

REPORTER #3

What about the recent criminal indictments filed against you...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly, ALL ACTIVITY STOPS. DEAD SILENCE, like somebody just farted in church...

STONE'S HAND enters frame, fingers snapping. Ike and Eva bum-rush the hapless Reporter, whisk him out of frame. MOVEMENT, ACTIVITY CONTINUE as before.

BRAT (O.S.)

No more questions!

As Brat holds the door open for Stone, Stone catches the eye of TASHA, standing before him with her mike.

STONE (O.S.)

Hey sweet thing. How come you're not inside with big sis?

TASHA

Working, you know. Besides, I hooked up with her and Laz earlier.

STONE (O.S.)

Catch your lusciousness later at the after-party?

TASHA

(blushes)

You know it.

(excited)

Hey... so whaddaya think about the news?

STONE (O.S.)

News...?

TASHA

(realizing she's spoken prematurely)

Uh... nothing. I'll let them tell you...

CONTINUE TO FOLLOW STONE'S POV as Ike and Eva re-join the conga line and escort Stone THROUGH the STAGE DOOR and down the BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR toward Lazarus's DRESSING ROOM. Employees scurry, stand at attention as he approaches.

STONE (O.S.)

What the hell's that bitch talking about: news?

BRAT

Not a clue. All I know is we're an hour behind and the crowd's going apeshit.

STONE (O.S.)

Anything else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BRAT

Shipment got delayed. Our suppliers have demanded a meeting with you tonight.

STONE (O.S.)

Tonight? Shit... don't those scungili-head goombas know I got a party to go to?

(to Apples; annoyed)

What the fuck's that nigga doin' in there, countin' dominoes?

APPLES

He left explicit directions that --

STONE (O.S.)

-- Get one thing straight, you I-Mac munchin' motherfucker. You work for me. If I say open the door, you best open the motherfuckin' door. Understand?

Apples knocks on the door. Stone turns, catches a glimpse of himself in a MIRROR. It's the first time we've seen his face: hard features; total intensity in his eyes.

STONE

(pounding his fist into mirror)

Can somebody please give a nigga a break 'round here!?!

The MIRROR SHATTERS, splintering our view of Stone into a kaleidoscopic haze. Ike removes a silk HANDKERCHIEF, hands it to Stone, who wraps it around his bloody fist, takes a breath:

STONE

Feel better now. Thank you.

As Stone steps away, we may or may not notice an oddly familiar crow-like shape in the broken glass.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS'S DRESSING ROOM -- SAME

Smooth R&B playing in the background: Al Green's *Strong as Death, Sweet as Love*.

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS'S FACE. Eyes closed, serene.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: His head is pressed against the bare stomach of his beautiful fiancée MARY.

LAZARUS

For real?

Mary nods. Lazarus gently lifts his hand up beside his head, feels her belly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS

Am I crazy or can I feel him kicking? You got Jackie Chan in there? Nah, it's too early, right?

MARY

Three months. You still gonna love me — when I get all big and round?

LAZARUS

Big and round sounds good. But not too big...

She gives him a playful slap, only to be interrupted by MORE POUNDING ON THE DOOR FROM OUTSIDE.

LAZARUS

(agitated)

Will you give me a minute!?!

Visibly frustrated, he reaches for a BLUNT in the ashtray, takes a toke to calm down.

MARY

(snatching blunt from him)

You trying to give our little man a contact high?

Mary stubs the blunt out in the ashtray, then strokes Lazarus' cheek, consoling him. We notice a DISTINCTIVE ENGAGEMENT RING on her finger.

MARY

Now go on. Got a show to do, after all.

LAZARUS

Last one.

MARY

Only if that's what you want. I wouldn't make that kind of demand on you...

LAZARUS

Think I don't know that? Nah... this is a young man's game. Time to move on, get out when I'm on top. Leave the playin' gangsta and all that other seedy roughhouse shit to Stone.

MORE POUNDING ON THE DOOR.

BRAT (O.S.)

We're not fucking around here...!

Lazarus ignores the interruption.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY

You tell him yet?

LAZARUS

Didn't get the chance. He'll find out soon enough, though...

(noticing Tasha on the TV)
...like right now.

ON TV: TASHA'S PRE-RECORDED INTERVIEW with Lazarus and Mary.

TASHA (ON TV)

...As you all may know, this is my sister, Mary -- hi Mary -- and her man, the one and only Lazarus. And they have a surprise announcement to make...

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE DOOR -- CONTINUOUS

We can hear the hallway TV in the background, tuned to the same interview.

BRAT grabs a GUN from Apples, points it toward the doorknob.

BRAT

I'll get that motherfucker out of his room.

APPLES

Wouldn't do that if I were you...

BLAM! Brat shoots the handle off the door, kicks it down.

INSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM

Mary screams. In a flash, Lazarus jumps in front of her protectively, hurls an ASHTRAY across the room, connecting with Brat's forehead, sending him down...

Lightning fast, Lazarus is on Brat, snatching the GUN from him before Brat can even hit the ground.

LAZARUS

You out of your mind, white boy?

Lazarus quickly, expertly, takes apart the gun, reloads the clip, puts it back together and holds it to Brat's head.

Apples, Ike and Eve surround, try to defuse the situation.

APPLES

Now calm down...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS

No I will not calm down. There's a pregnant woman in here and this punk-ass wannabe starts firing off his gat? Well how you like it now motherfucker, huh?

BRAT

I...uh....I...uh...

LAZARUS

You hear me? Pregnant. Carrying my baby. You trying to kill my baby? Maybe I ought to fix it so you can't have no babies...

With that he jams the gun into Brat's crotch. Brat starts screaming, sweating bullets.

IKE

(to Mary; pleadingly)

Perhaps you could reason with him. I'd hate to get teste stains all over me new finery...

As Mary gives him a "your problem, not mine" look, Apples turns to her, ignoring Brat's howls.

APPLES

You're pregnant...?
(off her satisfied nod)
Cool.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

STONE glares as he watches the interview on the hallway TV.

ON TV: Lazarus hugs Mary, who shows off her "sparkler."

LAZARUS (ON TV)

We're getting married, gonna raise a family, leave this rap game behind...

Stone's face hardens. Move in on his EYES and...

FLASHBACK: EXT. GHETTO STREET -- TWELVE YEARS AGO -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: SAME HARD EYES.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: that they're surrounded by Jheri-curled locks, a wool ski cap with an Oakland Raiders logo, gold tooth-cap, dookie-gold neck chain and a prison-blue matching denim ensemble -- this is Stone as a teenager.

A MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD. street sign is reflected in the window glass of Stone's PURPLE SUZUKI SAMURAI, parked at a curb with engine running. Whodini's "Friends" booms on the stereo, as Stone loads a clip into a 9mm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEENAGED STONE

Say hello to my leetle friend...!

A FEMALE VOICE interrupts him.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Antoine, is that you?

ON THE SIDEWALK, REVEAL: A TEENAGED MARY, beautiful even then: big hair, bigger earrings, in an acid-washed Guess jacket. An innocent pre-teen TASHA beside her, in pigtails.

TEENAGED STONE

(rolls down window; trying to
act all tough)

I done told you not to call me Antoine no
more, Mary. Name's MC Stone now.

TEENAGED MARY

Yeah, whatever nigga. What the hell's
your activator-drippin' ass doing 'round
here? Trying to get innocent people
killed? Wildin' drive-by niggas like you
the reason this neighborhood's gone to
seed.

TEENAGED STONE

You talk shit now, but wait 'til I make my
first mil in the rock trade, parlay it
into frontin' my very own rap label.
You'll be buggin' to get on this jock.

TEENAGED MARY

Nigga, I wouldn't go near that puny pebble
of yours for all the duckets in Fort
Knox... And the only label you be fronting
is the "Fruit of the Loom" on your Aquaman
underoos. Stone...? Shit. Should call
yourself "Marshmallow"...

A LIGHT goes on in a HOUSE in the b.g. Stone turns away from
Mary, fires SHOTS toward the house. SIRENS in the distance,
O.S. A familiar voice cries out from the passenger seat:

TEENAGED LAZARUS (O.S.)

Yo, Stone, man... we gotta jet. 5-0...

REVEAL: Lazarus, reloading his GUN. Looks cool, even for
back then: shaved head, wife-beater shirt.

TEENAGED LAZARUS

Yo, who this?

TEENAGED STONE

(annoyed)

Lazarus? Mary. Mary? Lazarus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lazarus reaches his hand through the window, clearly smitten. Mary takes it -- sparkle in her eye, flustered -- clearly smitten, too. Interrupted by RETURN FIRE from the house...

TEENAGED LAZARUS

Excuse me for a sec --

Lazarus swings around, fires more shots with Stone, then returns his attention to Mary...

TEENAGED LAZARUS

-- How do you do, Mary?

TEENAGED MARY

Wonderful...

CLOSE ON: STONE'S REACTION -- the same hard look we've seen before. **FREEZE FRAME.**

SUPER OVER HIS FACE, in flashing red letters: **REJECTED!**

MOVE IN: ON HIS EYES...and MATCH CUT BACK TO:

STONE'S EYES -- PRESENT DAY

Watching TV. PULL BACK as he massages his temples, soaks in what he's just heard. Takes a deep breath, heads toward...

THE DRESSING ROOM

where Lazarus has Brat pinned to the floor, gun to his balls.

LAZARUS

Apologize to the lady!

BRAT

I'm sorry...

LAZARUS

(re-cocks gun)

What? I can't hear you.

BRAT

I'M SORRY!!

LAZARUS

Now that's more like it.

Stone enters. Can't believe what he's seeing.

STONE

What the... nigga don't be getting all S&M and shit up in here!

BRAT

He's fucking crazy, boss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

STONE

Is it true?

LAZARUS

(grins; returns gun to Apples)
Shit, I'm the craziest motherfucker out there. You should know better than anyone...

STONE

No, no... About you and Mary.

Mary nods, smiles. Stone reacts icily, somewhat snide.

STONE

Wish I could have heard it from the two of you directly, instead of on the TV --

MARY

-- Well take a number. Laz's been trying to call your ass all day, but you didn't see fit to ring back.

Eva gestures toward Mary, like a tennis judge signalling "Point: Mary." Stone is stung -- Mary's got him there. He composes himself, warms, reaches his hand toward her belly.

STONE

May I?

(Mary assents; he presses his palm against her flesh)
Hell... Al Pacino ain't shit. I get to be a godfather for real.
(kisses Mary's cheek)
Congratulations

Stone puts his arm around Lazarus, leads him out of room.

STONE

C'mon, you crazy motherfuck. We got a show to do.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA -- A MINUTE LATER

Stone walks Lazarus to the rigging area, stands by as STAGEHANDS rig Lazarus into his platform cage. The vibe suggests boxer and manager in the seconds before first bell.

STONE

You sure about this?

LAZARUS

Going out on top, like we always used to talk about.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE

We been partners a long time, since you
and me and Mary was all shorties and shit.
Will you at least sleep on it. For me?

LAZARUS

I'll think about it.

STAGEHAND

You ready to go?

LAZARUS

I was born ready, dog.

Stagehand signals, and with that, Lazarus is hoisted up into the air and over the other side of the catwalk and curtain.

CHEERS AUDIBLE O.S. from the other side of the stage as INTRO MUSIC STARTS and anticipation builds. BRAT enters frame behind Stone.

BRAT

If that no-good rat-shit scumbag walks out on us, this enterprise and all our plans for expansion are in serious jeopardy. Do you realize that?

STONE

That "no-good rat-shit scumbag" you're talking about is my best friend --

BRAT

-- Some friend, leaving you holding the bag and probably taking all our other artists with him. Not to mention all the dirt he has on you about some of our...
(finger quotes)
...extracurricular activities. Wise up.
This is business.

STONE

I got it under control.
(Stone's cel rings; to Brat)
'Scuse me a minute...

INTERCUT -- ONSTAGE

Dry-ice smoke, flashing lights as Lazarus makes a spectacular entrance, lowered down from the rafters in his CAGE.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Who'd y'all come to see?

CROWD

Lazarus!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Who...?

INTERCUT -- BACKSTAGE

Stone answers his cellular phone.

STONE

Hello...?

INTERCUT -- MACKED-OUT BACHELOR PAD -- SAME

Welcome to the crib of PAPA SMURF, arch-rival of Stone and the Brimstone crew. Processed page-boy flip, Jackie-O sunglasses, diamond-studded tooth caps. He's in a hot-tub, on his CEL, jungle-motif decor in the b.g. TWO BIKINI-CLAD GIRLS on either side of him: one giving him a manicure, the other keeping her hands below radar.

Papa Smurf lets out a YELP as the manicurist draws blood.

PAPA SMURF

Bitch! Careful with the cuticle!

INTERCUT -- BACKSTAGE

STONE

Who the fuck you callin' bitch, bitch?

INTERCUT -- PAPA SMURF'S CRIB

PAPA SMURF

Don't get your pink Hello Kitty panties in a bunch over it, Stone. I didn't mean you. But now that you mention it...

INTERCUT -- ONSTAGE

Lazarus descending, radio mic in his hand.

LAZARUS

Are y'all ready to tear some shit up!?!

A huge roar. The DJ works the CROWD into a frenzy.

INTERCUT -- PAPA SMURF'S CRIB

PAPA SMURF

(rapid fire delivery)

What'sa matter? Catch you at a bad time? Silly me, of course I did. I was just watching the video music whatchamacallit and damned if I didn't hear some amazing shit! Something about your boy departing for greener acres or something...?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PAPA SMURF (cont'd)

Oh yeah: and how a once mighty music conglomerization's developed a big-dicked Dirk Diggler-sized Achilles' heel and is 'bout to go the way of the dodo bird while this here blue boy and his crew getting ready to go straight-up Jur-ass-kick Park on your tan hide. Must be a hell of a celebration.

(ala Bootsy Collins)

Yabba-dabba-dooza-baby-bubbah...

(to hand-job girl)

Oooh...right there, baby --

INTERCUT -- BACKSTAGE

STONE

-- Damn lucky for you you're not here, spoutin' off like that, else you'd be shittin' those sparkly diamond teeth of yours out your periwinkle Depends-wearin' ass for last supper, you little chain-snatchin' small-timer...

SPLIT SCREEN -- STONE AND PAPA SMURF

Seething rage on Stone's face, glee on Papa Smurf's as Papa's taunts continue:

PAPA SMURF

Au contraire, Stone, au contraire. That's French by the way, you chucklehead. Wish I could be there for your crowning moment of Gloria Gaynor and whatnot, but I got some bizness rendezvouslery scheduled with some I-ti cats said you stood them up -- something 'bout them needing a new distributor or something? Can't remember. But you know how it is: booty calls....

INTERCUT -- ONSTAGE

As Lazarus launches full-tilt into his number, PAPA SMURF'S V.O. continues under.

PAPA SMURF (O.S.)

...But I hates to be the kinda nigga who RSVPs no for a wedding and is too cheap to spring for a gift, so I sent y'all up a little surprise --

In the CROWD, we notice some OMINOUS MEN, rushing the stage, pulling something down over their heads.

INTERCUT -- BACKSTAGE

STONE looks around, spots TWO SUSPICIOUS MEN, backs turned, by the hospitality bar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PAPA SMURF (O.S.)

-- In fact, I'd reckon you can expect it
right about...uh....

The TWO MEN TURN, pull down BLUE RUBBER SMURF FACE MASKS, pull
out some heavy artillery.

PAPA SMURF (O.S.)

...now. Toodle-oo.

SLOW MOTION NOW: As Stone drops the phone, reaches for a GUN.
The Smurf goons OPEN FIRE.

Chaos as GUARDS, ASSORTED GUESTS all reach for guns, start
firing back. BODIES SLAM into the behind-stage rigging.

ONSTAGE

The STAGE FLATS start wobbling and toppling. As soon as the
crowd hears/sees the gunplay backstage, chaos erupts.

LAZARUS is stuck in the cage, which swings back and forth.

THE OMINOUS STAGE RUSHERS, now also wearing SMURF MASKS, fire
wildly into the air, causing more mass panic.

BULLETS ping past Lazarus, who leaps out of the cage into a
tuck-and-roll on the stage, lifting some in-the-process-of-
being-crushed FANS up over the stage barricade to safety.

BACKSTAGE -- More crossfire as Ike and Apples herd Lazarus
toward a safe exit. Lazarus searches for Mary, breaks away.

GREEN ROOM -- Mary cowers in a corner by the door, terrified.
Lazarus rushes in to save her.

LAZARUS

You okay?

As Mary nods through tears, Lazarus lifts her up, shelters her
with his body.

LAZARUS

I'll never let anything happen to you,
understand?

CORRIDOR -- Apples finds Lazarus and Mary, races them to a
safe exit.

APPLES

C'mon, c'mon...

EXT. SPORTS ARENA -- CONTINUOUS

Mass hysteria. O.S. SFX: POLICE SIRENS, CHOPPER BLADES in
the distance. Fans running for cover.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Several Brimstone LIMOS double-parked by the entrance, waiting to get Stone and crew away safely.

TASHA, trying to report the event with a NEWS CREW, spots Lazarus and Mary as they burst through the stage door.

Mary hugs her sister, glad to see her alive.

LAZARUS

(to Tasha)

Better get the hell out of Dodge. Shit's hot in there. Smurf and the Blue Boy crew set us up.

TASHA

(re: Mary)

Take care of her?

LAZARUS

Always.

And just like that, Lazarus and Mary are whisked into limos, reluctantly separated in the chaos by the bodyguards.

Lazarus is rushed into Stone's BENZ LIMO, with Stone, Apples and Ike. Mary's shuttled into a TOWN CAR, with EVA and BRAT.

OVERHEAD SHOT

THE MOTORCADE, seemingly en route to safety, as a squadron of POLICE CARS heads toward arena in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR LIMO -- MOVING -- MOMENTS LATER

Mary, Eva, Brat in back, now many blocks away from skirmish.

MARY

What sorta mess does that trigger-happy fool have us wrapped up in now!?!

BRAT

(insincere "soothing" tones)

I understand if you need to vent. It's okay. Believe me, we're all a little bit shaken up right now...

(starts to massage her arm)

Try to relax...

MARY

(forcefully removing his hand)

Keep your pudgy little hands off. You're not man enough to touch me.

EVA can't help but break her cool facade with a wicked SMILE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRAT
(under his breath)
Bitch.

MARY
Excuse me?

BRAT
I didn't say nothin'...

MARY
(brandishing CAN from purse)
One more word out of you and I'll pepper
spray your ass.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. STONE'S BENZ LIMO -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

Apples, Ike ride shotgun; Stone and a fuming Lazarus in back.

LAZARUS
Wanna know why I'm getting out? That's
why -- that shit back there. We're
fucking musicians, dog, not bangers. Why
you gotta stir shit up like that, get us
mixed up with all your hoodlum nonsense?

STONE
So now this is my fault? It's my fault
those candy-colored cockmunchers started
blasting up the joint? Well they won't
get away with it. Rest assured: mother-
fuckers got some full-scale nuclear
armaggedon type shit comin' their way
right about now.

LAZARUS
(sarcastic)
Sounds like a great plan. It's worked
wonders for us so far...

STONE
Don't get all high-and-mighty Mahatma
Gandhi on my ass. You think you're better
than me, Mr. Artist? You're name Prince
now all of a sudden motherfucker? Wasn't
that long ago you used to sling rocks,
bang your share of heads with me. Fastest
gun in the West 120s, you used to call
yourself -- deadliest nigga alive -- or
did you forget all that?

LAZARUS
We got success now, don't need to do that
shit no more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE

Don't tell me what I need to do. I'm building up a diversified business and I gotta protect my interests -- which are half yours, I might add -- by any means necessary, as the brothers in the bow-ties like to say. May not be pretty, but it's like that. So don't forget who's dirtying his nails doing all the street level nigga work, getting you paid while you're out toolin' round in the suburbs --

LAZARUS

-- You asked me to sleep on it. I'll save you some time: I'm out. It's over. Arrivederci and all that other fine stuff. Good luck and God bless.

STONE

(ala Regis)

That your...final answer?

Lazarus stays silent.

STONE

So...what: you and Mary and the young'un gonna live out a little storybook dream of love, happiness and all that other boogie white picket nursery school bizness?

LAZARUS

Something like that.

STONE

Kinda ironical, seeing as how I introduced the two of y'all and everything, remember? When we was kids? I saw her first...

LAZARUS

And you'll be best man at our wedding. You're still my dog, bro. Always.

STONE

(to front seat)

Can we get some music up in this motherfucker?

IN THE FRONT SEAT

Ike gives Apples a look. Apples turns on the CD player, blaring a CLASSICAL ARIA. Ike hits ENTER on a Motorola TWO-WAY, sending a message which reads: NOW.

IN THE BACK

Stone turns to Lazarus:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STONE
 Pretty soothing, don't you think? Most
 beautiful form of relaxation known to man.
 (pause)
 ...'cept for "happy finish," of course.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Stone's limo, in the lead with the other right behind, stops
 for a RED LIGHT at a four-way intersection. The light turns
 GREEN, but the limo doesn't move.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

Mary looks troubled.

MARY
 What's going on?

BRAT
 Can't really say.

Mary turns, sees HEADLIGHTS approaching.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. STONE'S BENZ LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

Music still blaring. Through thick tinted glass, we notice a
 CAR pulling up alongside, but the music is loud enough to mask
 the sounds of its engine.

LAZARUS
 We still headin' to the after-party?

STONE
 That's a nice name for it. Yeah, dog,
 you're headin' to the after-party all
 right. Just a few seconds more...
 (to front seat)
 Can we get some fresh air? It's hotter
 than Jennifer Lopez's ass up in here...

LAZARUS' PASSENGER WINDOW, and only Lazarus's window, rolls
 down, revealing...

ARMED GUNMEN standing up in a '64 convertible IMPALA, heavy
 artillery aimed directly at Lazarus' head.

As STONE ducks in his seat, MOVE IN ON: LAZARUS' EYES, head
 turning SLOW MOTION as he realizes fate about to befall him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE (O.S.)
Always said you wanted to go out on top.
Now you get your wish.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Mary sees what's happening, becomes frantic. Tugs at her door handle. Won't open. Brat flips a MASTER LOCK switch.

MARY
Let me out!

BRAT
(restraining her)
It's got nothing to do with you. Just business.

MARY
(squirts pepper spray into his eyes)
MOTHERFUCKER!!!!

As Brat cringes in agony, Mary SMASHES her window with elbow, reaches out and unbolts her door, runs away from the vehicle.

BRAT
Fucking cunt, she'll ruin everything.

Eva gets out, dispatches the LIMO DRIVER with a neck chop, dumps him out into the street and starts the vehicle, while a flailing Brat reaches for a GUN, pokes it through the broken glass, starts firing wildly.

INTERCUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

UNDER CONTINUING CLASSICAL ARIA ON SOUNDTRACK

The IMPALA GUNMEN open fire, their bullets ricocheting off the Benz Limo body and other windows, all bulletproofed, but hitting their target of Lazarus in the backseat.

MARY runs toward the Benz trying to save her beloved.

MARY
Lazarus!!!

IN THE BACKSEAT -- LAZARUS

tries rolling up his window, to no avail. Attempting to duck for cover, he turns, sees Mary, cries out:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS

Get down!

Just then...MARY catches one in the back from Brat. Another bullet goes wide.

ONE OF THE IMPALA GUNMEN, sensing oncoming fire, turns, opens fire with a machine-gun.

MARY goes down in a crumple of red.

As LAZARUS reacts in horror...

EVA pulls up alongside driver's side of Benz, opens door, lets out her trademark "taxi whistle," starts transfer of Stone, Ike and Apples to safety into what is now the getaway car.

APPLES stops chewing on his trademark apple long enough to pull out his GUN, point it through the open driver's side passenger door. IKE follows suit.

IKE

Sorry mate. Orders is orders.

They fire off a couple rounds, hop into the TOWN CAR with Stone, which then speeds off.

Lazarus, blood gaping from numerous holes in his body, somehow finds the strength to push his door open, knocking one of the IMPALA GUNMEN off balance.

He exits the Benz, is on the FALLEN GUNMAN like a shot, taking the gunman's UZI and blowing his head off.

The IMPALA starts to speed off...

LAZARUS sprays wildly with Uzi, dispatches GUNMEN standing up in the back, who drop like flies.

The IMPALA SMASHES into a STREETPOLE, the DRIVER's head smashing against the front windshield like a squashed melon.

ONE LONE GUNMAN -- the one (unbeknownst to Lazarus) who shot Mary: a GREASY-LOOKING Vincent Gallo-type with distinctive facial tattoo and Hawaiian shirt -- runs out, gets away.

LAZARUS opens fire, runs out of bullets, watches the man recede into the darkness.

Coast now clear, he limps over to attend to Mary, cradles her in his arms. Bullet holes in her stomach, blood gurgles out of her mouth.

Mary reaches up weakly, tenderly lifts her hand to one of Lazarus's many wounds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY

Look at you: you're not going to make it.

LAZARUS

Save your strength. Don't worry about me.

MARY

I love you...

LAZARUS

I love you, too. Forever.

SIRENS now audible in the b.g. as Mary goes into convulsions.

LAZARUS

Don't die on me now. Help's almost here.

Mary looks into Lazarus' eyes, then puts her hand to her blood-smeared BELLY. Tears well in her EYES...

...which then go blank. She falls limp in his arms, dead.

Lazarus closes her eyelids with his fingertips, crosses himself, then strains to get up, fighting back tears. He knows what he must do.

He walks over to the IMPALA, removes a GUN from the body of the dead DRIVER, cocks it. Locked and loaded.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR -- MOVING -- A MINUTE LATER

Eva behind the wheel, driving slowly on deserted streets. Ike beside her; Apples, Brat, Stone in back. Stone against the broken passenger window, where Mary sat. Doesn't look happy.

STONE

Mary wasn't part of the deal, Brat.

BRAT

I locked her in. Bitch decided to play hero --

STONE

-- We'll take it up later. But I don't never wanna hear you talk about that woman like that again. Understood?

BRAT

Yes sir.

(relaxes)

Look on the bright side: pigs'll probably pin ol' Smurphy-boy for the whole enchilada. Your hands are clean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stone doesn't seem entirely convinced. He hears the O.S. SIRENS, calls out to Eva:

STONE

Hang a left over here, lose the heat.

As she does...suddenly, THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD POV...

THE LIGHTS OF AN ONCOMING CAR

It's the Benz. Seemingly no one behind the wheel.

SMASH. It plows right into them.

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

On impact, we see Lazarus do a tuck-and-roll out of the open driver door...

INT. TOWNCAR -- CONTINUOUS

Eva shifts into reverse, starts pulling backwards, when suddenly, like a shot...

...LAZARUS appears in the rear-right passenger window, gets a struggling STONE gripped into a head-lock.

BRAT

(frantic)

Do something!

Eva speeds up, dragging Lazarus right along with them...

Lazarus grapples with the door handle, manages to pull a struggling Stone tumbling out with him onto the pavement.

Henchmen look at one another: what the hell should we do?

BRAT

Executive decision: get the fuck out of here now!

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

The Town Car speeds away. MORE SIRENS audible in the b.g.

LAZARUS AND STONE wrestle on the ground, exchange blows. Miraculously, the seriously weakened Lazarus seems to have the upper hand as he pounds Stone's head to the pavement.

LAZARUS

"...and the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...." Book of Revelation. Chapter 20, verse 10.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stone breaks free, scrambles up, draws a gun...

STONE

Save it for church. Your ass gonna be buried there soon enough.

...only to find that LAZARUS is already up, his gun drawn.

Stone backs away slowly, toward the mouth of the ALLEY, keeping a bead on Lazarus, who also backs away. Mexican standoff time.

LAZARUS

This is gonna be like one of those chop-socky flicks we used to watch as kids, only a little different: two go in, no one comes out.

STONE

Some real Channel 11 shit, huh? Bring it on.

And with that, the kamikaze gunfight begins: they run toward each other, guns blazing. Lazarus takes several more hits. Stone recoils, but shows surprisingly little signs of damage.

They pause a beat. Lazarus reacts, puzzled...

Stone pulls down his shirt, revealing a KEVLAR VEST.

STONE

Keep 'em coming, nigga. That's why God invented Kevlar.

But before he can even crack a grin...

A BULLET rips right through one side of STONE'S face, tearing his cheek apart.

Lazarus fires again, with expert aim, taking out Stone's kneecap and then, as Stone comes down, the coup de grace: a shot right through Stone's EYE.

FOLLOW THE BULLET: As it enters, lodges in Stone's head...

A RAPID-FIRE VISUAL/AURAL BARRAGE of the neurons, thoughts and sounds in Stone's head -- similar to the one earlier in the limo, only this time travelling the opposite direction.

RESUME SCENE:

Stone slumps to the ground, getting off some last final rounds into Lazarus on his way down.

Lazarus staggers for a minute, then finally collapses. Long overdo, given the brutal damage done to his body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As Stone lies, gurgling his last breaths, blood pouring from his mouth and head...

Lazarus nobly attempts to steady himself with his gun. Tries to stay alive long enough to make sure he can watch his betrayer die. Very samurai.

Stone's head finally falls limp -- the last image Lazarus sees before his body gives out, too.

Total stillness now. The BLOOD from their wounds flows in SEPARATE POOLS, slowly coming together.

CLOSE ON: THE BLOOD POOLS...as Lazarus' blood -- slightly, but discernibly, darker -- mixes in with Stone's and rivulets around the area near Stone's head wounds...

...Could it possibly be flowing into Stone?

CUT TO:

A FEW BLOCKS AWAY -- OVERHEAD SHOT -- SAME

CAMERA MOVES Laterally OVER BUILDING TOPS...

GHOSTLY SILENCE as we survey the carnage left in the wake of the last few minutes.

MARY lies dead on the pavement, a sheet is draped over her face and she's carted away on a gurney by PARAMEDICS.

The LIMO DRIVER lies face down, a few yards away from her.

The IMPALA remains crashed into the pole further up the road, its scattered DEAD OCCUPANTS strewn all over the street.

CONTINUE OVER MORE BUILDING TOPS

...until we see the CRASHED MERCEDES LIMO, engine still sputtering, car alarm faintly beeping...

AND OVER TO THE ALLEY, where the POOL OF BLOOD now spreads AWAY from the bodies of Lazarus and Stone in its center...

...slowly forming before our eyes into: THE SHAPE OF THE CROW SILHOUETTE.

This quiet moment of odd beauty is suddenly jolted by the sound of SIRENS, SQUEALING BRAKES and LOUD STATIC-FILLED EMERGENCY RADIOS. As PARAMEDICS enter the alley, we hear:

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

We have a Code 502, two males. EMT team coming in, over...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AMBULANCE -- MOVING -- MINUTES LATER

TWO SHEET-DRAPED BODIES on GURNEYS, IVs attached -- obviously Lazarus and Stone, but we can't tell which is which.

A TEAM OF PARAMEDICS attends to them. A DEFIBRILLATOR is applied to one of the bodies.

PARAMEDIC

Clear!

A jolt, but no response. PARAMEDIC #2 tries the other body.

PARAMEDIC #2

Clear!

Same negative result. MOVE IN ON: A PAIR OF IDENTICAL EKG MONITORS -- both showing "flatline" readings.

PARAMEDIC #2 (O.S.)

Try again...

Beat.

PARAMEDICS #1 & #2 (O.S.)

Clear!

Both MONITORS show a "spike" at initial electrical jolt...

FLASH TO: A SUPER-QUICK, INTENSE, SUBLIMINAL BARRAGE OF IMAGERY -- pieces of Stone's and Lazarus' lives intertwined -- as the defibrillators are applied...

AND **RESUME** ON: THE MONITORS, both going back to flatline.

PARAMEDIC #1 (O.S.)

No go. Let's call 'em. Time of death: midnight exactly. Creepy.

A beat. Then sudden slight movement on ONE of the monitors.

PARAMEDIC #2 (O.S.)

Wait... I've got something on unit 2...

MOVE IN FURTHER ON: THE "LIVE" MONITOR, as its moving white readout line fills the frame in a phosphorescent blur and its "PINGING" SOUNDS throb louder and louder in echoed distortion on the soundtrack...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A STERILE WHITE ROOM -- DAY

Overexposed. It takes us a moment to realize that we are in a PRIVATE HOSPITAL ROOM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOVE PAST: FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS, BALLOONS, A TABLOID HEADLINE that reads: HIP-HOP MURDERS: PAPA SMURF STILL AT LARGE.

A FIGURE sleeps peacefully under covers in a BED in the center of the room, hooked to IVs and an EKG.

MOVE IN SLOWLY: ON THE BED. The figure comes to, jolts upward, as if from a nightmare.

IT'S STONE. Huge gauze EYEPATCH over his right eye, BANDAGES on one side of his face, his leg in traction.

He looks around slowly, takes in the scenery, sunlight streaming through a side window...

STONE'S POV: IN THE WINDOW -- AN ALBINO BIRD

...halo of backlit sunlight around it, flutters its wings, perches in the white sill. A surreal, almost heavenly image.

The bird "caws," cranes its head directly at Stone.

Stone looks on, transfixed, as the bird flies into the room and finally settles directly on the edge of his bed.

As Stone breaks into a demonic grin...

FADE TO BLACK.

CONTINUE TOTAL BLACKNESS

But we hear a sound: stirring, clawing...? And now we can barely make out a PAIR OF HANDS -- black hands -- digging through earth. Crumbling dirt, insects coming towards us now as the hands continue to burrow. And then: light. We are...

EXT. CEMETERY -- NIGHT

Looking up, GRAVE POV: A ring of CANDLELIGHT in the periphery, a full moon backlighting STORM CLOUDS above. RAIN pouring down. Towering SPIRES, a huge CROSS, a CHIMING CLOCKTOWER with hands pointed to midnight, all visible.

And then... A BLACK CROW enters frame, talons extended, wings flapping, filling the frame as it comes right toward us.

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

ANGLE -- OUTSIDE THE GRAVE

...As the Crow perches atop a HEADSTONE. AN ARM suddenly bursts to the surface, feeling its way around. And then ANOTHER ARM. The HANDS push down into the mud and grass, getting leverage...

...and then LAZARUS emerges from the grave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's clearly disoriented, has no idea where he is. Looks down, sees the remnants of a makeshift SHRINE, consisting of offerings left by fans: FLOWERS, tipped-over fluttering CANDLES starting to set fire to dried petals, PHOTOS, NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS. Lazarus turns, sees...

THE CROW on his headstone. More importantly, looks down and sees...

HIS NAME inscribed below the bird: LAZARUS RIDER 1974-2001.

FLASH INSERT -- LAZARUS' MIND'S EYE POV:

ON LAZARUS: in his last dying seconds in the alley, watching Stone die, then dying himself. **FREEZE FRAME.**

SUPER GRAPHIC: **EXPIRED!** like a rubber stamp across image.

RESUME SCENE

Lazarus picks up a smoldering NEWSPAPER PHOTO of himself with Mary, examines it. As the photo disintegrates in his hands, something else becomes visible behind it a few feet away, within Lazarus' field of view...

REVEAL: MARY'S HEADSTONE, beside Lazarus' own.

Lazarus lets out a harrowing CRY OF RAGE, starts pounding his fists against his gravestone. Harder, harder...

WITH EACH THUMP OF IMPACT --

We see a DISCONNECTED SUBLIMINAL FLASH of Lazarus and Mary; eventually a RUSH OF IMAGES, from teenage years to present.

CLOSE ON LAZARUS' FISTS

turning into BLOODY STUMPS, their seemingly superhuman strength cracking limestone headstone, pulverizing it into chunks and dust...

And when Lazarus looks at his hands, the stigmata-like wounds and blood begin to disappear, healing up in front of his disbelieving eyes.

THE CROW lets out a caw, cranes its neck, peers directly into Lazarus' eyes, starts fluttering its wings.

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS, a dawning sense of realization taking hold.

He steps back from the grave, brushes his foot against something, picks it up...

It's a LAZARUS ACTION FIGURE, in a box sealed with plastic wrapping. A label on the box reads: BRIMSTONE TOYS, A DIVISION OF BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES, replete with the "B" logo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lazarus pulls a string on the back; the doll starts rapping a snippet of one of Lazarus' songs.

THE SOUND BECOMES DEAFENING -- every little detail: the song, the string winding back, the plastic wrapping crackling.... We're hearing it from Lazarus' "aural" p.o.v., our first indication that he has super-attenuated CROW-HEARING, on top of his regenerative and CROW-VISION powers.

Lazarus drops the box, looks up and around...

This cemetery is in the midst of a highly developed urban area. We see a stylized, animé view of the surrounding skyline and cityscape from our groundlevel POV.

BILLBOARDS, NEON, indications of COMMERCIALIZATION everywhere. The whole flavor of the city has changed in the ensuing year.

A PARTICULARLY HUGE BILLBOARD looms: LAZARUS -- R.I.P. -- IN STORES NOW -- FROM BRIMSTONE RECORDS, THE WORLD'S #1 LABEL.

PULL BACK: away from Lazarus' stunned expression, into the night sky, revealing more of the cityscape.

THE CROW flies towards us. Lazarus instinctively starts to run after it.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF INTER-CONNECTED SHOTS

LAZARUS following in the bird's wake -- running, leaping across ROOFTOPS, taking in more of the city:

NEON SIGNS with the "B" logo; BILLBOARDS advertising BRIMSTONE CLOTHING LINES and LIFESTYLE ACCESSORIES. An ugly nightmare of consumerism and exploitation run amok.

And he can "hear" the sounds of the city below. Snatches of his SONGS playing on the radio...COMMERCIAL SPOTS....As he passes a rooftop AERIAL ANTENNA, he can even hear snippets of a TV NEWS REPORT:

TASHA (O.S.)

...Fans around the globe paid tribute on this, the one-year anniversary of the death of legendary slain rap star Laza...

The "CROW-ENHANCED" SOUNDS become an intense cacophony. As Lazarus continues following the bird...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

The same area where Lazarus and Mary were gunned down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Now immortalized with more FAN OFFERINGS: candles, flowers. The CROW perches on the pavement. As Lazarus stoops down, touches his hand to the ground...

FLASH TO: MARY dying in his arms. **FREEZE FRAME.**

LAZARUS' STYLIZED IMPRESSIONISTIC FLASHBACK POV: —

TEXT GRAPHICS APPEAR over the image -- almost a warped-parody of the listings of features we're accustomed to seeing in toy commercials: MARY: ANGEL...LOVE...

AN ARROW points to her DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING: FLOSS: 15 LARGE. Another ARROW points to her STOMACH: BABY: N/A.

And then the frame is stamped with: BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED.

RESUME, without GRAPHICS. Mary slumps dead in Lazarus' arms, her BLOOD staining his HANDS and FOREARMS.

MATCH TO: PRESENT -- DESERTED STREET

Where Mary's bloodstains once were, CORROSIVE MARKINGS are now tattooed on Lazarus' arms: physical manifestations of painful psychic memories.

Lazarus approaches the spot where he was first shot.

FLASH TO: THE MERCEDES LIMO, being riddled with gunfire by the adjoining hitmen in the IMPALA. The GUNMAN WHO GOT AWAY is training his UZI towards us (i.e. towards Mary), while his other cohorts blast away. **FREEZE FRAME.**

An ARROW points to the LIMO: BENZO: 100 G'S. Another denotes the gunman's Uzi: UZI: 5 BENJAMINS (BLACK MARKET), and yet another the GUNMAN himself: HIRED MUSCLE: FREELANCE...STATUS: AT LARGE. And then the whole frame is stamped: SET UP!

BACK TO SCENE. From ANOTHER ANGLE of the deserted street...

FLASH TO: EVA, getting out of the TOWN CAR, signalling with her fingers. **FREEZE FRAME.**

MORE GRAPHICS: EVA: STONE COLD BITCH...HANDLE WITH CAUTION

ANOTHER FLASH TO: APPLES and IKE, this time from Lazarus' POV inside the limo as they're firing at him. **FREEZE FRAME.**

IKE: BADASS. PRADA SUIT: £2000 (RETAIL) APPLES: VICIOUS... LETHAL. GRANNY SMITH APPLE: 39¢/lb.

BETRAYAL!

RESUME and REVERSE ANGLE ON: LAZARUS getting pumped full of lead in the backseat. BULLET HOLES, BLOOD spreading across his neck and torso.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MATCH TO: PRESENT

Lazarus convulses, relives the attack. Memories of wounds and blood stains morph into more MARKINGS on his flesh.

EXT. ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

Lazarus follows Crow to scene of final shootout with Stone.

FLASH TO: STONE, revealing his Kevlar vest, grinning, pointing his GUN directly at Lazarus (and us). **FREEZE FRAME.**

STONE: JUDAS

RESUME. Stone's face ripped apart by Lazarus' expert marksmanship. He goes down, out of frame.

FLASH TO: STONE on the pavement, in a pool of blood, gurgling his last breaths -- the final image Lazarus saw while still alive. Stone stiffens, dead. **FREEZE FRAME.**

DEAD MOTHERFUCKER. GAME OVER.

BACK TO SCENE -- PRESENT

LAZARUS reacts, seemingly comforted by the memory (albeit faulty) of his nemesis dying.

FLASH TO: LAZARUS sprawled on the pavement, steadying himself, lying in a pool of his own blood. The last image we saw of him alive. His body gives out, his face slumps down.

BACK TO SCENE -- PRESENT

LAZARUS in a crouching position, still "feeling" the sense memories from the concrete...

Only the top of his head is visible as his neck is craned down between his knees. But then...

LAZARUS gets up -- slowly, dramatically -- lifts his head toward CAMERA, revealing his FACE to us...

...it's now covered with the CORROSIVE MARKINGS. Tears of rage well from fierce, determined eyes, also leaving STAINS.

Lazarus' transformation into "THE CROW" is now complete. A CRACK OF THUNDER rumbles from the skies, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY -- NIGHT

A SOARING, AERIAL VIEW of the city and its changed animé-like landscape. A broader perspective than we've seen before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOLLOW: CROW as it swoops through sky, descending down to STREET LEVEL. As the bird careens down a boulevard:

Fleeting glimpses of wild-posted ADS for Lazarus and other Brimstone artists...STOREFRONTS -- among them a BRIMSTONE GEAR clothing store with circular "B" logo NEON SIGN -- and PEDESTRIANS, many decked out in odd, angularly designed Tommy Hilfiger-esque SPORTSWEAR emblazoned with the "B" logo.

The CROW finally rests, perching on a PARKING METER.

WHIP PAN TO: LAZARUS -- FOLLOW as he roams disoriented down the sidewalk in the bird's wake, taking it all in, lowering his head when he passes pedestrians to avert their glances.

Lazarus catches up to bird, looks ACROSS THE STREET, sees...

A TRIO OF YOUTHS, huddled on the corner, wearing big, billowing hooded nylon PARKAS with the "B" logo on the back.

The CROW caws, cranes its head the other way. Lazarus turns around, shifting his gaze to what the bird is looking at...

PULL BACK AND REVEAL: LAZARUS standing in front of A BANK OF TV SETS, no sound, in the window of an ELECTRONICS SHOP.

ON THE MONITORS: TASHA, doing a studio broadcast, the GLOBAL MUSIC NEWS LOGO visible behind her. Lazarus reaches his hand up to the glass, in recognition...

FLASH TO: TASHA hugging MARY in the aftermath of the concert, looking over Mary's shoulder at Lazarus (and us).

TASHA

Take care of her?

LAZARUS (O.S.)

Always.

FREEZE FRAME. TASHA: LIL' SIS...INNOCENT.

RESUME SCENE

As Lazarus removes his hand, THE MONITOR IMAGE cuts to a snippet of one of his MUSIC VIDEOS, Lazarus' present-day reaction reflected over image in the shopglass...

ACROSS THE STREET -- SAME

Reveal the PARKA YOUTHS to be drug dealers, trying to be incognito while peddling their wares to passing pedestrians.

PARKA YOUTH #1

Yo...smoke? Powder? E? What'choo need?

We got it all....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A CRACKED-OUT LOOKING DERELICT approaches. Takes a sip from a FORTY BOTTLE, bearing the familiar "B" logo on the label.

DERELICT
Yo...gimme an eighth...

PARKA YOUTH #2
Twenty-five, my man...

The Derelict reaches into his pocket, pulls out CHANGE, WRINKLED SCOTCH-TAPED SINGLES and FOOD STAMPS.

PARKA YOUTH #3
This ain't no welfare line, motherfucka.
Man said: twenty-five!

DERELICT
(pulls out crisp bills)
Okay...okay...

PARKA YOUTH #3
That's more like it.

CLOSE ON: HANDS making the exchange. The DIME BAG is embossed with the "B" logo.

The Derelict turns, stares off into space...

DERELICT'S POV: A LONG SHOT of Lazarus across the street, turned quarter-profile, watching his video on the monitors.

DERELICT
Check out the wacked-out lookin' brother over there. Kinda looks like that dead nigga on the TV...

PARKA YOUTH #1
(incredulous; rolls eyes)
Lazarus!?! Hell...keep talkin' crazy shit like that, we'll have to cut your ass off.

The Derelict continues to stare, transfixed. Steps off the curb, approaches, while the dealers go back to business.

ACROSS THE STREET -- BACK ON LAZARUS

Eyes on TV, senses he's being watched, whips around...

...just missing as MONITORS display a quick glimpse of STONE: wearing SUNGLASSES, giving an interview, name CHYRONED under him on the TV screen.

NOTE: We only see Stone for a second; as Lazarus steps away in the foreground, TV monitors in b.g. go soft-focus.

MOVE IN ON: LAZARUS' EYES -- hardened, intense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE DERELICT -- locking eyes with Lazarus -- gets scared shitless, drops his 40 BOTTLE, which SMASHES on the concrete.

LAZARUS averts the derelict's gaze, EXITS frame as the Stone interview continues in the b.g. The CROW follows suit.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: THE BACK OF A TV SET

Where we now hear the interview in progress:

STONE (O.S.)

Coming back from a near-death experience like I did -- scratch that, did I say near-death...? Doctors told me I actually was dead, for something like twenty seconds. Can you dig that? Miracle man, they called me...

MOVE SLOWLY INTO: BACK OF TV as broadcast continues, INTO its cabinet -- through the circuitry, transistors, scan lines...

STONE (O.S.)

Anyway, it's a humbling experience. Makes a man realize just how precious life is, how much we take for granted. That's why you see us spreading our wings and blowing up bling-bling on such a geo-global scale now -- the curse of my tragedy was really a blessing in disguise. Gave me the presence of mind to really achieve my dreams. I talk about that in the home-study course tapes, by the way: that Tony Robbins shit is for pussies -- he just talk the talk; I walked through that dark valley for real, baby, believe 'dat...

...and OUT through the PICTURE TUBE, REVEALING...

PAPA SMURF, jaw dropped, watching incredulous. We are...

INT. PAPA SMURF'S MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

A far cry from his glory days of a year ago. A real roach pit: torn wallpaper, tacky furnishings, trash strewn about.

Papa Smurf sits on a tattered couch, looks like shit: hair all frizzed out and nappy, dark circles under his eyes, ratty clothes, teeth stained, a few of them missing.

HOLD ON HIM as he takes a hit off a CRACK PIPE, continues watching...

NOTE: WE NEVER SEE STONE'S FACE DURING THE INTERVIEW.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TASHA (O.S.)

...You say you died. Did you see a bright light or the face of God -- anything of that sort...?

PAPA SMURF

(scoffs to TV)

Awwwwww shit...

(wicked cough as he exhales)

...more like Lucifer, Prince of Darkness, and all that other ragin' hellfire Beelzebizzness: that's where that high-postin' nigga deserves to end up!

Papa Smurf fires up another rock. Physical hijinx as it falls out of the pipe, scorching his lap, then sets couch on fire. Interview continues as he frantically puts fire out.

STONE (O.S.)

...No, Tasha, nothing like that. But I do believe there is some kind of Divine spirit, y'know, lookin' out for me and mine -- how else to explain all the good fortune with which I been bestowed. And I pray that He --

TASHA (O.S.)

(playful)

-- now, now...let's not be sexist and rule out the possibility of our Maker being a She...

STONE (O.S.)

-- whatever...I just hope He's takin' care of my boy Lazarus up there -- I miss you, dog -- and your dear sweet sister Mary. Watchin' over them, you know? And I'm sure Laz would be sportin' a big ol' grin if he could see how all our years of hard work have finally paid off so mad large. After all, Brimstone was half his, too...

A KNOCK on the DOOR.

PAPA SMURF

Hold your motherfuckin' Clydesdales -- I'm coming, baby...

As Papa Smurf gets up off the couch and EXITS FRAME to answer the door, MOVE IN...

ON THE TV: TASHA back behind the newsdesk.

TASHA

And what has become of the other controversial figure in this tragic saga?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ON THE TV: A humiliating POLICE MUG-SHOT PHOTO of PAPA SMURF

TASHA (O.S.)

Though never officially implicated in the murders, angry fans turned on Papa Smurf as rumors spread in the weeks that followed and authorities were able to — convict him on lesser, unrelated charges. He's currently serving two years' house arrest in an undisclosed location...

ANGLE -- CLOSE ON: A BEEPING "HOUSE ARREST" BRACELET strapped above a nasty PINK FUZZY RABBIT SLIPPED FOOT.

MOVE UP THE LEG, REVEALING: PAPA SMURF at the DOOR, in the middle of a drug transaction with a SHADY DEALER.

PAPA SMURF

Shit...gotta ring my probation officer.
How much you say it was again?

DEALER

Fi-ty.

PAPA SMURF

Fifty dollars!?! You take Diner's Club?
(stonefaced response from
dealer)
Okay...hold up a sec...

FOLLOW PAPA SMURF as he walks into the BATHROOM, smiles wide before a GRIMY MIRROR and pries a DIAMOND STUD from one of his few remaining teeth with a RUSTY PAIR OF PLIERS.

ANGLE -- FRONT DOOR

PAPA SMURF gives the DIAMOND to the dealer. The dealer pulls out a JEWELER'S LOUP to inspect it.

CLOSE ON: THE DIAMOND, dripping spittle and blood.

DEALER

What the hell is this?

PAPA SMURF

Fourteen karats, baby. Go on... take it.
Before I change my mind.

Dealer reluctantly pockets diamond, hands Papa Smurf a VIAL.

PAPA SMURF

Damn skippy! We're back in action!

He closes the door, plants himself down on the couch, puts his feet up on the coffee table, ANKLE BRACELET visible. Opens the vial, prepares to fire up another rock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PAPA SMURF

Come to Papa...

ANOTHER KNOCK on the door. Startled, Papa Smurf TWITCHES, drops the glowing CRACK PIPE again...

PAPA SMURF

God-damn...!!

(to door)

Fuck the fuck off, fucka! I done paid
your ass already!

BLAM! The DOOR is KICKED open, revealing...

IKE, EVA, and APPLES. A LOUD CRUNCH as Apples munches away.

PAPA SMURF

What the...!!

IKE

Stone requests the pleasure of your
company. Asked us to escort you back to
H-Q, A-S-A-P.

PAPA SMURF

Well T-U-F-S-H-I-shit. I can't go
nowhere --

(indicating ankle bracelet)

-- don't you fools watch TV? My ass is
under house arrest.

APPLES

(tossing apple core away)

Not a problem.

And with that, EVA silently produces a HUGE CHAINSAW, fires it
up. It's LOUD. Off Papa Smurf's wide-eyed reaction...

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK -- MOVING -- NIGHT

We're ground level, FOLLOWING marching FEET:

First, a pair of BLACK LEATHER, THIGH-HIGH STILETTO BOOTS...
then a pair of ULTRA-PRICY HAND-MADE BRITISH LOAFERS...then a
pair of CRAZY SPACEBOOT STYLE SNEAKERS bearing the "B" logo...

SFX: KA-KLUMP, KA-KLUMP. The bottom of a pair of CRUTCHES
enters frame. Then a PINK FUZZY RABBIT SLIPPER, followed by a
GHASTLY-LOOKING WOODEN FOOT, SURGICALLY TAPED to an ankle.

REVEAL: EVA, IKE, APPLES and a dour-faced PAPA SMURF entering
AN OFFICE BUILDING REVOLVING GLASS DOOR (not an easy task for
Papa Smurf, as we comically witness). As they disappear
through the FOYER, TILT UP TO REVEAL:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A WIDE ANGLE, VERTIGINOUS VIEW of an ULTRA-MODERN SKYSCRAPER with a FLASHING RED NEON "B" on top. Beneath the neon, a sign reads: BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- SAME

Ike, Eva, Apples and Papa Smurf step out of an ELEVATOR, a MUZAK version of one of Lazarus' hits piping away in the b.g.

FOLLOW as they march down a long CORRIDOR, walls lined with PLATINUM RECORDS and TV MONITORS, all displaying Lazarus' latest posthumous video, before entering...

A BOARDROOM

Sterile, imposing, done up in all-Plexiglass furnishings. BRAT holds the door open to greet them.

BRAT

Welcome.

ACROSS A LONG CONFERENCE TABLE, we see the BACK OF STONE'S HEAD, popping up over the back of a TRANSLUCENT SWIVEL CHAIR. The ALBINO BIRD is visible, perched on his shoulder.

PAPA SMURF

What's with the parakeet? Y'all trying to be Baretta up in this motherfucker?
(sings)

"Don't do the crime, if you don't got --

EVA delivers a vicious KICK to his shin, right on his bandage. Papa Smurf emits a blood-curdling HOWL.

STONE'S SWIVEL CHAIR turns slowly, finally giving us our first good look at STONE post-shootout -- he's scary-looking:

Glazed-over sickly blue cataracted "BAD" EYE; DARK MAKEUP (visibly darker than his skintone) covering up skin-graft SCARS on one side of his face; PLATINUM TEETH CROWN UPPERS on the same side of his mouth where Lazarus' bullet tore his cheek and jaw apart. As before, he sports an impeccably tailored ALL-WHITE SILK SUIT.

STONE

Mock me, if you wish. But RESPECT THE BIRD, at all times. This fine feathered fella here's my good luck charm --

(baby-talk to bird)

-- Isn't that right, you fluffy lil' snow white beauty, you...

The ALBINO BIRD coos and purrs as Stone gives it a kiss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAPA SMURF

(gestures to henchmen)

Who the hell these niggas, then: your seven dwarves?

WHACK! Eva kicks him again. Another HOWL of pain.

STONE

Here. A little token of my good will...

He SLIDES an ENVELOPE down the length of the table. Papa Smurf opens it: A COUNTERFEIT HANDICAPPED PARKING PLACARD.

STONE

For your ride. Know how hard it is to find a decent parking space in this motherfucker. Figure you can use all the chump-change you save on tickets, meters and whatnot to feed that nasty little habit of yours.

PAPA SMURF

Thanks...!

(realizes)

Wait a sec...how the hell am I supposed to use this from six feet down under? You did bring me here to kill me...didn't you?

Stone snaps his fingers, spins back around in his chair, tends to his bird, while Brat launches into sales-pitch mode:

BRAT

(producing a sheaf of papers)

We'd like to offer you a chance at a comeback...

PAPA SMURF

What's that...a recording contract? I already got my own label.

BRAT

Yes, as we're well aware. Brimstone Industries would like to acquire your label. Along with all assets -- merchandising licenses, master recordings, artist commitments, etc. -- currently under copyright control of Blue Boy Records, a limited liability corporation.

PAPA SMURF

What the hell you want with my label? You Machiavellian motherfucks done practically driven it into the poorhouse already...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- FLASHBACK INSERT -- DAY

A long line of PEOPLE stretching around the block. At the FRONT of the line, BLACK MARKET VENDORS in Brimstone gear hawk BOOTLEG CDs with Papa Smurf's picture on the cover.

VENDOR

Yo, yo, yo... I got your Blue Boy Greatest Hits, volumes one through ten, right here. Get 'em while they're hot!

BUYER

How much?

VENDOR

Better than cheap, it's free! And since you're one of our first five hundred thousand customers and shit, we got a special little added bonus for y'all...

REVEAL: A GLASSINE DRUG PACKET, taped to the front of the CD, stamped with the omnipresent "B" logo.

BUYER

Thanks!

BACK TO SCENE

INT. BOARDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Papa Smurf examines the CONTRACT.

PAPA SMURF

How much y'all offering?

EVA gestures with her fingers: A BIG GOOSE EGG.

PAPA SMURF

So this is one of those hostility-type takeovers and shit, huh? Do I get any kind of, y'know, choice in the matter?

Brat and Henchmen all shake their heads "no" in unison.

PAPA SMURF

(resigned)

Where do I sign?

Brat points to a spot on the contract, watches as Papa Smurf reluctantly scribbles his name.

PAPA SMURF

So what now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRAT

Now? Now you're going to get back into the studio and start producing those phat funky-fresh tracks that used to be your hallmark, dissing Stone and all that he stands for. Oh yeah...you're also to resume making frequent violent threats and high-profile attempts on his life.

PAPA SMURF

Why in hell would you want me to do that?

BRAT

It's good for business.
(to henchmen)
Get him out of here.

Ike, Eva and Apples scurry Papa Smurf out of the boardroom. As the door shuts, Stone spins back around in his chair.

STONE

Next item on the agenda?

BRAT

We've got two more albums of unreleased Lazarus tracks in the can awaiting shipment: pre-orders of five million units each already.

STONE

Sounds good...

BRAT

-- Yes, but we seem to have scraped the bottom of the barrel. Can't locate any other existing recordings. I realize this is going out on a limb, but I know you guys were friends once -- do you have, say, any personal voice mails or answering machine messages lying around that our engineers could, you know, slap over some new backing tracks with Pro-Tools?

STONE

I'll check into it. Anything else?

BRAT

Big meeting in our ad agency division, Thursday at six: CEOs of ten Fortune 500 companies. Want to get your expertise on marketing products to the black community. Should help us big-time in the credibility department, score us major brownie points for the upcoming MediaCorp merger. The bankers are already guesstimating our buyout value at 2 bil.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STONE

They think they buying us, but 'fore long we'll be controlling their lily-white Wall Street asses. Beautiful. We done now...?

BRAT

Uh, one more thing: little matter of a-- competing club -- a gambling parlor -- operating in our sector. Spoke to our friends in the police department about it, but they've been slow to respond.

STONE

Send the team. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to go home, get a little shut-eye. Haven't been sleeping too well lately. Nightmares...

BRAT

Need some Roofies? I've got a prescription.

STONE

That will be all, Brat.

As Brat EXITS, Stone strokes the plumage of the ALBINO BIRD.

It seems to comfort him, like a pacifier. Looks into the Bird's eye, shudders slightly. MOVE IN ON: THE ALBINO BIRD'S EYE and...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

A SPINNING ROULETTE WHEEL. PULL BACK. We are...

INT. SEEDY AFTER HOURS JOINT -- NIGHT

A low-rent place. CAMERA FLOATS through the club, capturing the decadent, illegal activities within:

A MAKESHIFT CASINO OPERATION with Roulette, 21 and Craps...HOOKERS AND JOHNS sneaking off into BATHROOMS...THICK WAFTS OF SMOKE from omnipresent BLUNT-SMOKERS...A SMALL R&B HOUSE BAND plays on an ELEVATED PLATFORM...lots of BUMPING AND GRINDING on a SMALL DANCEFLOOR...brisk trade at the BAR, where a crotchety BARTENDER mixes DRINKS...

Among the patrons, we notice TWO OFF-DUTY POLICE OFFICERS.

CAMERA RESTS ON: THE FRONT DOOR

as IKE, EVA and APPLES enter. SILENCE. BAND stops playing, all heads turn toward them for a beat. The deadly three give friendly nods. On cue, the POLICE OFFICERS leave, while other PATRONS to go back to their business. Music resumes as Ike, Apples and Eva split up, scope place out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IKE -- strolls over toward the BAR.

IKE
(to Bartender)
Shot of single malt, neat, if you'd be so
kind: Lagavulan.

BARTENDER
(ala Jay-Z)
Laga-what? Laga-who? Only one kinda
whiskey in this joint, Queen 'Lizabeth --

Bartender SLAMS a familiar PURPLE VELVET BAG down on the bar.

BARTENDER
-- Crown Roval.

Ike reacts with a disappointed pouty frown.

EVA -- makes her way onto the dancefloor, looking ultra-fine
in her black leather. A DRUNK PLAYER-WANNABE grabs her ass...

PLAYER-WANNABE
Hey baby, let's say you and me take this
Soul Train express upstairs and do the
horizontal mambo --

...Like a flash, Eva twists his arm backwards, resulting in a
loud, painful SNAP of broken bones. She strolls right on by
as he HOWLS in the distance.

APPLES -- scopes around, quietly munching away on his
trademark APPLE. Interrupted by:

BARTENDER
Hey! Golden Delicious! There's no
outside food allowed in this muthafucker!
You too cheap to cough up for appetizers,
there's a soup kitchen down the block.
Drag your deadbeat ass on over there...

APPLES
Is that right? Well ain't that a bitch.
My apologies. I'm on it...

BARTENDER
Damn straight, you're on it. This is my
house. Nobody fucks with me round here.

Apples tosses the apple up into the air, out of frame...and
instantly produces two AUTOMATICS, blasting away!

BOTTLES shatter, PATRONS are hit, BARTENDER eats lead.

Apples holsters one of the guns, catches the APPLE mid-air on
its way down, takes a bite, keeps firing with his other hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ON CUE: IKE and EVA also spring into action...

EVA starts taking out bodies on the dance floor with MARTIAL ARTS moves -- scissor kicks, flying elbows -- disarming and rendering unconscious several THUGS who point GUNS her way.

IKE grabs CROWN ROYAL BAG by its YELLOW STRING, brandishes it like a MACE, taking out all comers with awe-inspiring deadly moves of his own. Brushes lapel with free hand while busting skulls, making sure to keep his threads clean, calls out:

IKE

Yo, Apples, mate... give the drummer some.

APPLES fires away toward the BANDSTAND, ripping holes through the BASS DRUM and all around it. TOTAL CHAOS. Terrified PATRONS flee for the exit. A hushed silence spreads in the wake of the hit squad's human tornado.

APPLES

Listen up! Y'all on Brimstone turf.
Consider this an eviction notice.

EVA jumps behind the bar, makes a makeshift MOLOTOV COCKTAIL out of a BOTTLE OF BRANDY and a BAR RAG. Tosses it to IKE, who lights it with a FANCY DUNHILL LIGHTER, fires up a CUBAN CIGAR before tossing the bomb...

CUT TO:

EXT. SEEDY AFTER-HOURS JOINT -- CONTINUOUS

Ike, Apples and Eva stroll out casually, wiping their hands as we hear an EXPLOSION and see FLAMES spread in the b.g. MOVE IN ON THE FLAMES. SFX: A DISTINCTIVE CLICK and...

MATCH CUT TO:

E.C.U.: THE FLAME OF A ZIPPO LIGHTER...

...rising to meet the TIP OF AN UNLIT CIGARETTE.

ALBRECHT (O.S.)

Mind if I smoke...?

SGT. TARKIN (O.S.)

No, I don't mind --

We are... INT. POLICE STATION -- CHIEF'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

OFFICER ALBRECHT, *from the first film*, (50s), black, about to light what, from his expression, looks like a very badly needed smoke. He seems tired around the eyes, weary, as if he's had his soul sucked out of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He brings the Zippo close, about to light cig, when he's interrupted by his superior: stern-looking CHIEF TARKIN (60s), white, OPEN FILE FOLDER spread out before him.

CHIEF TARKIN

-- but the law says that smoking in a place of official public business is illegal. And as an officer of the law, it's your responsibility to abide by it and set a good example for others.

Albrecht dejectedly snaps his Zippo shut, pockets his cig.

CHIEF TARKIN

Glad we got that cleared up.
(indicating Zippo)
May I...?

CLOSE ON: THE ZIPPO BODY, as Albrecht hands it over: antique sterling silver, bearing the engraving: FOREVER.

CHIEF TARKIN

Real beaut.

ALBRECHT

Gift from my wife. For our anniversary.

Tarkin grins, impressed, then proceeds to pull a CIGAR out of his pocket. Lights it with Zippo, defiantly takes a drag, blows a PUFF OF SMOKE in Albrecht's face. Returns lighter.

CHIEF TARKIN

Thanks. So how many years you two --

ALBRECHT

-- my wife passed away. Month after I reconciled with her.

This stops Tarkin in his tracks. He stubs out cigar, flips through FOLDER. QUICK INSERTS of key written words from file: TRANSFER, DISINTEREST, PROBLEM WITH AUTHORITY, as well as PHOTOS of a younger, happier Albrecht.

CHIEF TARKIN

...Bounced around a lot: six departments in as many years...

ALBRECHT

Haven't found what I'm searching for.

CHIEF TARKIN

And what's that?

ALBRECHT

Peace of mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CHIEF TARKIN

Well you sure picked a helluva precinct --

ALBRECHT

-- not many other opportunities out there
for a man my age.

CHIEF TARKIN

Says here you went on mental disability in
Detroit several years back: something
about seeing ghosts...?

ALBRECHT

I don't like to talk about that.

CHIEF TARKIN

Hey...don't bother me none. Glad to have
you aboard -- always willing to give a
shot to someone who's had it so rough --
and having you here definitely helps me in
the quota department, if you don't mind my
saying. Besides, we've got plenty of
crazy fucks 'round here...

(looks up past Albrecht)

...isn't that so, Officer Furleigh?

FURLEIGH (30s), white, stocky -- a real "I could give a fuck"
type -- ENTERS.

FURLEIGH

Wanted to see me, Chief?

CHIEF TARKIN

Meet your new partner: Officer Albrecht.

FURLEIGH

(shaking Albrecht's hand)

Max Furleigh. Pleasure. Friends call me
Max, but you can call me...

(offensive tone)

...Massuh Furleigh.

As Furleigh and Tarkin start laughing...

HOLD ON Albrecht's tongue-biting reaction. **FREEZE FRAME.**

OFFICER ALBRECHT: ONE GOOD COP....WEEKS UNTIL RETIREMENT:
NOT SOON ENOUGH.

RESUME, on:

CHIEF TARKIN

He's just fucking with you.

Albrecht doesn't seem entirely convinced.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Furleigh gives him a "football player"-type pat on the shoulder, GRINS and we...

CUT TO:

A COMEDIA DEL ARTE "LAUGHING FACE" MASK. On the face of a MAN in a LEATHER TRENCHCOAT. We are...

EXT. CLUB "B" NIGHTCLUB -- NIGHT

WIDER SHOT: THE CROW flutters into frame, perches on a car, watches as the MAN hands money to a DOORMAN, also wearing a mask, ENTERS club. REVEAL: A NEON Brimstone "B" logo atop a MARQUEE which reads: **PLAYAS COSTUME BALL.**

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB "B" NIGHTCLUB -- SAME

CAMERA CIRCLES THROUGH UPSCALE CLUB. In terms of decadent goings-on, it makes the after-hours joint that Ike, Eva and Apples busted up in earlier scene look like a day in church:

COCKTAIL WAITRESSES walk through the place holding SILVER TRAYS piled-high with COKE...MASKED BIGSHOTS scoop spoonfuls off the tray, snort away in PLUSH BOOTHS stocked with BOTTLES OF CRISTAL, MASKED TOPLESS GIRLS sitting next to them...OTHER MASKED PATRONS decked out in PIMP FINERY watch STRIPPERS do pole dances, raunchy lap dances. The whole vibe suggests an odd cross between The Mack and Eyes Wide Shut.

CAMERA ARRIVES BACK ON: THE ENTRANCE, as LAZARUS makes his way INSIDE...

No one pays him any mind as he brushes past SRO crowd -- with his dramatic markings and look, he appears to fit right in.

LAZARUS' POV: Glimpses of activity as he's led toward back corner of the club, emblazoned with a NEON SIGN reading: CHAMPAGNE ROOM.

CHAMPAGNE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Lazarus enters through beaded curtains, sees the MAN WITH THE LAUGHING MASK on a couch, a STRIPPER going down on him. Laughing Mask gazes up at Lazarus, annoyed:

LAUGHING MASK
...Fuck you lookin' at, faggot?

LAZARUS CROWVISION POV: MOVE IN RAPIDLY ON THE MASK, as we now see through it in a SUPERIMPOSED X-RAY EFFECT, revealing: the DRIVE-BY GUNMAN, distinctive FACE TATTOO now visible.

FLASH TO: FACE-TATTOOED DRIVE-BY GUNMAN as he fires his Uzi at Mary. MOVE IN RAPIDLY ON HIS FACE and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATCH DISSOLVE TO: PRESENT-DAY CROWVISION X-RAY CLOSE UP, which then rapidly DISSOLVES back to NORMAL POV.

The STRIPPER, now startled, turns. Lazarus picks up her DRESS, which is lying on the floor, tosses it to her.

LAZARUS

Put your clothes back on, get the hell out of here. This is 'bout to get ugly.

Stripper takes him at his word, hauls ass out of there.

LAUGHING MASK

Worst thing you can do to a man: givin' him a case of blue balls...

(pulls up mask)

...looks like I'll have to get my rocks off a different way.

He reaches up to pull the MASK off his head...

...then whips arm down quickly, producing a THROWING KNIFE out of sleeve which he flings lightning-fast in the same motion.

FOLLOW THE KNIFE as it plunges deep into Lazarus' abdomen.

LAUGHING MASK

Nothing but net...!

LAZARUS staggers for a second, then slowly, deliberately removes the KNIFE, lifting it up to his mouth and licking off the blood before tossing it over his shoulder.

LAZARUS'S STOMACH WOUND heals spontaneously -- SUTURE-LIKE PATTERNS forming and stitching themselves up -- right in front of his attacker's disbelieving eyes...

LAUGHING MASK bolts up off the couch, high-tails it through a SIDE DOOR as Lazarus starts after him, slowly.

FOLLOW LAUGHING MASK, as he runs frantically through the club, bowling over all in his path. He makes his way into...

THE KITCHEN

knocking over COOKS, scattering pots and pans, runs to a back corner, straight toward...

A LARGE WALK-IN "MEAT LOCKER" FREEZER

...only to find LAZARUS there already, holding the door open for him. Lazarus sticks out a forearm, like a tripwire, painfully catches Laughing Mask in the Adam's apple:

LAZARUS

Goaltending!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lazarus brutally shoves his prey into FREEZER, ENTERS after, closing HEAVY STEEL-DOOR behind him with a LOUD CLANG.

INT. FREEZER -- CONTINUOUS

HANGING SLABS OF MEAT all around, dimly lit by stark ULTRAVIOLET FLUORESCENT. Markings on Lazarus' face glow, making him look even more intense. Laughing Mask, shivering, breathes heavy FROST as Lazarus pins him up against a shelf.

LAZARUS

Wise man once said: to live is to suffer..
Since you're still breathing -- for the
moment at least -- maybe you can tell me.

LAUGHING MASK

(struggling)
...Who the fuck are --

Lazarus leans in close, giving Laughing Mask a clearer look. Lighting now appears to make Lazarus' eyes glow, as well.

LAUGHING MASK

(realizing)
-- You....!

As Lazarus grabs Laughing Mask, hurls him out of frame...

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

FOLLOW BLOW-JOB STRIPPER, now dressed, and a tough-looking HEADSET SECURITY GUARD, gun drawn, as they make their way toward the freezer, COOKS pointing out the way. Suddenly...

THUMP! A BODY-SHAPED INDENTATION bursts outward from the STEEL DOOR. Guard, Stripper, Cooks react, stunned, haul ass outta there.

RESUME -- INSIDE THE FREEZER

Laughing Mask is now literally pressed into the door -- trembling, hyperventilating -- as Lazarus grips his throat.

LAUGHING MASK

...I don't know who! Whole thing was set
up through a middleman. Some white guy.
Talked all business-like. A real brat...

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS' FACE. Dawning realization...

FLASH TO: BRAT, firing the gun out the smashed car window...

FREEZE FRAME. BRAD BRATWURST aka "BRAT": DEVIOUS PUNK-ASS
WANNABE...KANGOL CAP: \$39.99...MOTOROLA TWO-WAY: \$400...

CURRENT STATUS: DEAD MAN WALKING!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RESUME as Lazarus loosens his grip on Laughing Mask. **MOVE IN ON:** Laughing Mask's mouth, breathing more **HEAVY STEAM FROST...**

LAUGHING MASK

So now what...?

As the **STEAM FROST** fills the **FRAME...**

MATCH CUT TO:

A **PLUME OF CIGARETTE SMOKE** wafting in the night air...

FURLEIGH (O.S.)

...Still pissed 'bout that "Massuh" crack
back in Sarge's office?

ALBRECHT (O.S.)

No. I understand --

MOVE DOWN TO REVEAL it's coming from a crack in the partially
rolled down **WINDOW** of...

INT./EXT. PARKED SQUAD CAR -- NIGHT

RAIN DROPS pouring down on **WINDOWS** and slick streets as we
TRACK AROUND CAR and move **INSIDE, REVEALING...**

FURLEIGH and **ALBRECHT** on break. Albrecht finally enjoying his
CIG and a **COFFEE**; Furleigh munching on a **DONUT**. **NEON CLUB "B"**
MARQUEE visible across the street in b.g.

ALBRECHT (CONT.)

-- you're just busting my balls, me being
a newby and all.

FURLEIGH

Exactly. So now that we understand each
other, let me ask you a question: how
come you black guys only have two names
for us -- *honky*, *cracker* -- but we have a
million for you? What is that?

ALBRECHT

(warily)

How do you mean?

FURLEIGH

Forget *nigger*, that's too easy. But
burrhead, *sambo*, *jungle bunny*, *spear-*
chucker, *tar baby*, *eggplant*, *jigaboo...*
now that's a weird one -- I mean, I get
jig: you people, y'know, like to dance
and shit. But what's with the *boo* part?
Is it 'cause you're scary? Is it somehow
tied in with *spook*? Hey, that's another
one: *spook....*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Albrecht, silent, looks at Furleigh with total disbelief.

FURLEIGH

I'm just asking -- it's a legitimate question...

(pause)

Are you upset? Want me to go out, get you a glass of Kool Aid? Would that make you feel bet--

A LOUD THUD on the ROOF of the squadcar.

FURLIEGH

-- What the...?

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, REVEAL:

THE CROW, fluttering and perching on the HOOD. Seems to be looking right at Albrecht, then cranes its neck.

As Furleigh blasts his "SQUWAK" SIREN and flips the WINDSHIELD WIPERS, Albrecht follows the bird's gaze, sees...

A FLEETING IMAGE of LAZARUS, looking Albrecht's way, as he exits the club.

CLOSE ON: ALBRECHT'S COFFEE, spilling in his lap. He jumps.

THE BIRD flies off the car, out of WINDSHIELD FRAME FANGE...

ALBRECHT

You see that?

FURLEIGH

Fuckin' winged vermin --

On cue, BIRDSHIT plops down on the wet windshield.

FURLEIGH

-- Great. Black bird, white shit. Who'd figure? Probably'll come back with a squeegee now, hit me up for five bucks...

ALBRECHT

(pointing)

No. Over there...

ANGLE -- THROUGH ALBRECHT'S WINDOW: No one there.

FURLEIGH

(takes Albrecht's cig)

This thing laced? You holding out on me?

Albrecht continues staring, unnerved, JOLTED by...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

POLICE RADIO (O.S.)
(loud feedback)
Unit thirteen, investigate a disturbance
at Club Brimstone, over.

Furleigh reaches back for his SHOTGUN, cocks it, excited.

FURLEIGH
Hot damn! Our first case!

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB "B" NIGHTCLUB -- ONE MINUTE LATER

The action noticeably less lively now. Crowd clearing out

Albrecht and Furleigh, FLASHLIGHT mounted on his shotgun, are
led through the club by SECURITY PERSONNEL.

ALBRECHT'S POV -- MOVING -- PAN BACK AND FORTH: Remaining
BOOTH PATRONS attempt to hide their DRUGS as he walks past.

ALBRECHT
(reacting)
Shouldn't we be doing something about --

FURLEIGH
-- You wanna make a drug bust in one of
Stone's clubs!?! Sounds like you're the
one needs to lay off the glass dick there,
pal. Let it slide -- doesn't concern us.

FOLLOW THEM -- THROUGH THE KITCHEN and...

STOP when they reach OPEN DOOR of FREEZER. Before we see
what's inside, Furleigh's eyes go wide:

FURLEIGH
-- fuck my daughter and name the baby
after me!

REVEAL: LAUGHING MASK, frozen solid, hanging impaled on a
MEAT HOOK. ICICLES OF DRIPPED BLOOD cascade off his body.

Albrecht gets up close to inspect, while Furleigh questions
potential WITNESSES. FOLLOW ALBRECHT'S GAZE from victim's
head to toe...and down to the FLOOR, revealing:

A FROZEN POOL OF BLOOD, in the distinct shape of the "Crow"
silhouette.

Albrecht steps back, shaken -- this is some bad *deja vu*.

FURLEIGH
(notices)
What's wrong? Squeamish?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBRECHT

No...no...

FURLEIGH

(calling out)

Hey, you...come here...

THE BLOW-JOB STRIPPER steps forward, seemingly freaked.

FURLEIGH

Foxy Brown...? Meet Superfly. Tell him what you just told me.

BLOW-JOB STRIPPER

...I know this is going to sound totally weird, but there was this scary guy --

ALBRECHT

-- go on. It's okay...

BLOW-JOB STRIPPER

-- he looked just like...Lazarus.

As Albrecht soaks this in, **QUICK FLASH TO:**

LAZARUS, fleetingly locking eyes with Albrecht outside club.

RESUME.

Furleigh turns so only Albrecht can see him, stifles laughter. He points at Stripper, mimes smoking crack, then makes a "she's nuts" gesture with twirling index finger.

HOLD ON: ALBRECHT, not nearly so convinced.

CUT TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- NIGHT

MOVE PAST: LIGHTING EQUIPMENT, CREW MEMBERS while we hear a SONG that sounds like one of Lazarus' own -- similar gruff staccato delivery and a definitely recognizable looped gruff refrain of "Uh-huh" on the backing track.

STOP ON: STONE, on his cellphone. Doesn't look pleased.

STONE

...What!?! In one of my clubs!?! Only I can do that -- find out who's responsible and wax the motherfucker.

FOLLOW STONE as he disconnects, walks towards the shoot in progress, REVEALING:

BLONDIE, a seemingly tough looking MC with platinum blonde hair, lip-syncing to playback in front of a GREEN SCREEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's definitely a Lazarus wannabe -- apart from the hair, he has Lazarus' whole look and style of dress down pat.

PLAYBACK ends. Blondie stops, looks around bewildered, wondering what to do next. Gestures to CAMERA OPERATOR.

REVEAL: CAMERA OPERATOR, looking up from his eyepiece, craning his neck, glaring at someone unseen and letting out a "taxi" whistle.

REVEAL: BRAT, in a DIRECTOR'S CHAIR, behind a VIDEO ASSIST MONITOR, distracted, chatting away on his CELPHONE. Looks up, realizes that all eyes are on him.

BRAT

Hold on a sec --
(picks up bullhorn)
Cut...?
(into phone again)
-- so where were we?

STAGE BELL RINGS. Activity, as CREW prepares for next shot.

BLONDIE holds out his arms, as WARDROBE GIRLS remove his tough-looking outfit, drape a FRILLY PINK ROBE over his shoulders. Notices someone out of corner of his eye, waves:

BLONDIE

Yoo-hoo...over here...!

Blondie's tough growl has disappeared -- he now sounds more like, well, Liberace. STONE enters frame, approaches:

STONE

What can I do you for?

BLONDIE

Stone, honey, this shit just ain't gonna play. Blondie's tired of being second banana: duet after duet, compilation after compilation. You promised me my own album, and that was over a year ago! This little butterfly needs to spread her wings! I've talked to my attorney about it and he said I should ask if the word "breach" means anything to you --

STONE

(egging him on)
-- He did, did he?

BLONDIE

Yes he did. Now I've given it a lot of thought and I think there's only one fair solution: you should let me out of my contract. It's the right thing to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STONE

No problem.

A beat, and then Stone whips out a GUN and fires several shots into Blondie's head. Blondie drops like a rock.

STONE

Breach that, polesmoker. Consider your ass officially null and voidified.

(turns to an A.D.)

Take care of it.

As Stone walks away, the A.D. grabs his WALKIE-TALKIE.

A.D.

Janitorial to Stage 8. Janitorial, Stage 8. Thank you.

MOVE DOWN TO: A.D.'s FEET, clad in BRIMSTONE BRAND SNEAKERS. As Blondie's BLOOD pools next to them...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: BLOODY HANDS, rinsing clean in a stream of WATER.

LAZARUS (O.S.)

One down, four to go.

We are...

EXT. DARKENED TRASH-STREWN ALLEY -- NIGHT

Lazarus crouches near the base of a RAIN PIPE, washing his hands. The CROW perches nearby, atop a DUMPSTER. LOUD BARKING audible.

REVEAL: A SNAPPING PITBULL -- scarred, looking like he's seen some dogfight action -- behind a CHAIN LINK FENCE.

LAZARUS turns, locks eyes with the PITBULL. The PITBULL whimpers, scurries through a hole in fence, kneels beside Lazarus obediently. Lazarus pats dog's head:

LAZARUS

Good boy. Can tell you're a lost soul -- just like me.

The Pitbull licks Lazarus, affectionately.

BACK TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- SAME

BRAT confers with the A.D., in front of the VIDEO ASSIST MONITOR. Stone visible, in the foreground ON MONITOR and in the background, on set, in front of GREEN SCREEN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.D.

I don't understand how we're going to get the rest of our set-ups...

BRAT

Hey...he's the one paying for the video. If he says he wants to take over, it's his prerogative.

RACK FOCUS ON: STONE, in front of green screen, audible through LOUDSPEAKERS as he talks into a clip-on radio mic.

STONE

Nothin' to it -- I used to do my fair share of freestyling back in the day.

RACK BACK ON: BRAT AND A.D. Brat gives the A.D. a "see what I mean?" look. Then Brat's CELPHONE rings:

BRAT

Hello...? Warren, my main man!
(turns to A.D.; whispers)
Think you can handle this?

A.D. nods. Brat gives him a "thumbs up," goes back to chatting on the cel, EXITS. As Brat's gossip conversation recedes into the distance O.S, the A.D. snaps into action, picks up a BULLHORN:

A.D.

Playback! Rhythm track only.

OVER LOUDSPEAKERS, we hear the RHYTHM TRACK, punctuated by the familiar gruff looped "uh-huh" vocal refrain.

CLOSE ON: STONE GREEN SCREEN MONITOR, then TRACK OVER TO:

ANOTHER MONITOR BESIDE IT -- featuring a loop of LAZARUS, bad video splice visible, bobbing his head and saying: "Uh-huh" -- obviously manufactured out of a three second snippet of pre-existing footage. The jerkiness of his head movement makes it look like he has a bad nervous tic.

A.D. (O.S.)

Roll camera and...action.

TRACK OVER TO: A THIRD MONITOR, showing a rough composite of the STONE GREEN SCREEN and LAZARUS FOOTAGE -- made to look (albeit very cheesily) like they're performing a duet.

As Stone begins to freestyle, OVERLAP O.S. SFX OF CAWING CROW and...

INTERCUT -- EXT. ALLEY -- SIMULTANEOUS

Lazarus, still with pitbull, reacts to the CROW'S CAW.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS
(turns head, unnerved)
What is it?

FOLLOW THE CROW as it flies off the dumpster and into the NIGHT SKY. As it continues soaring, MOVE IN ON ITS EYE...

BACK ON -- LAZARUS

rising, snapping into attention, total fixed concentration. A possessed look on his face. MOVE IN ON HIS EYES...

QUICK FLASH TO: DISTORTED "CROWVISION" OVERHEAD SHOT of BRAT, cellphone to his ear, walking outside the SOUNDSTAGE toward his SILVER AIRSTREAM TRAILER...

INTERCUT -- SOUNDSTAGE -- SIMULTANEOUS

CLOSE ON: STONE'S EYES, WIDENING TO REVEAL: an unnerved look on his face. He freezes up as PLAYBACK continues over loudspeakers, calls out:

STONE
...Where's Brat?

A.D. (O.S.)
Cut!

WIDER ANGLE as PLAYBACK STOPS and the A.D. approaches Stone.

A.D.
(covering for Brat)
Uh...I think he's in the bathroom...

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT -- SIMULTANEOUS

FOLLOW BRAT as he approaches his TRAILER, still on phone.

BRAT
...hold on a sec: call waiting.
(hits flash)
Hello...? You're at the gate already?
What are you wearing? Yummy. Okay, see you in a few.
(hits flash; climbs steps)
Warren? Gotta jet. Exactly. Yes, I promise: all the juicy details. Late.

Brat disconnects, opens the door, enters...

INT. BRAT'S TRAILER -- CONTINUOUS

Brat hurriedly prepares the place for his rendezvous:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pulls up the sheets on bed, opens a drawer, extracts a PACK OF CONDOMS, grabs a BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE from a mini-fridge, dims the lights, puts some MARVIN GAYE on his CD PLAYER, fires up some CANDLES, and, finally, slaps a VIDEOTAPE into his VCR.

CLOSE ON -- THE VIDEO LABEL: it reads "PIMPS UP, HO'S DOWN."

We hear a soft THUD. Brad turns, sees...

THE CROW, perched outside the trailer WINDOW.

BRAT draws BLINDS, cutting off outside view, pleased with himself:

BRAT
Perfect.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

BRAT
One second...

BRAT checks himself out in the mirror one last time, fixes his hair, sprays a blast of Binaca. Heads toward the door.

BRAT
(to himself)
Ladies and Gentlemen: it's Showtime at the Apollo...
(calls out)
Come in...

CLOSE ON: BRAT'S FACE as we hear the door swing open. His smug grin turns to a look of terror. Eyes widen.

MOVE QUICKLY DOWN TO: HIS LEG, as a PISS STAIN forms, SPREADS DOWN HIS PANTS, and...

BACK TO:

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- SIMULTANEOUS

FOLLOW STONE as he walks toward IKE, EVA and APPLES, huddled in a corner of the stage.

STONE
Come with me. Goin' on a search party.

EXT. STUDIO LOT -- CONTINUOUS

FOLLOW STONE and HENCHMEN as they exit SOUNDSTAGE, Stone leading the way, and head toward BRAT'S TRAILER.

APPLES draws his gun. IKE one-ups Apples, drawing his gun with an elaborate "Old West"-style twirl...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVA takes Ike's gun, flings her wrist and tosses it upwards, where it does a 720° mid-air spin before coming back down and being caught by Eva behind her back. She returns GUN back to Ike, who nods, impressed. As soon as they reach the TRAILER:

Stone freezes in his tracks, stunned. WHIP PAN TO REVEAL:

INT. TRAILER -- CONTINUOUS

"PIMPS UP, HO'S DOWN" on the TV. Signs of a struggle inside. Candles knocked over, starting a fire. Most menacingly: the MIRROR is SHATTERED, the cracked shards of glass making the familiar CROW-SHAPED PATTERN

We see the BACKS of the foursome and their distorted FACES in MIRROR as they step inside to investigate. Suddenly...

A KNOCK on the DOOR. STONE and HENCHMEN spin around, Ike and Apple with their guns trained.

WHIP-PAN TO REVEAL: A slutty looking MODEL-ACTRESS-WHATEVER, dressed in a WHITE LEATHER NURSE'S OUTFIT, latex SURGICAL GLOVE on one hand. Terrified out of her wits:

M-A-W

Uh...do you know where I can find Brat?

Fury, discomfort on Stone's face as he marches away. Ike and Apples lower their guns, follow.

Eva eyeballs M-A-W, licks her lips. Off M-A-W's coy smile...

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. CRUMBLING, ABANDONED BUILDING

In a desolate stretch of the city. Walls partially knocked down, CROW perched upon a cinderblock. MOVE INSIDE, REVEAL: BRAT, unconscious, tied to a CHAIR. WATER from leaking roof DRIPS on him, stirs him awake.

LAZARUS (O.S.)

Top of the morning to ya...

BLAM! LAZARUS' forearm ENTERS FRAME, delivers a devastating backhanded BLOW to Brat's face.

BRAT'S POV: Through BLEARY EYES, recovering from the blow, LAZARUS'S FACE slowly snaps into FOCUS, water dripping UPWARD off Lazarus' brow and forehead.

BRAT (O.S.)

...Impossible --

LAZARUS

-- Never too late to become a believer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IMAGE REVOLVES 180°, THEN PULLS BACK, REVEALING: LAZARUS hanging by his ankles from RAFTERS, looming over Brat.

He DISENGAGES, rights himself with an acrobatic flip, leans in menacingly after landing.

LAZARUS

You and Stone set me up. Can't speak for the dead, but I for one ain't too pleased with what you've done to our business.

BRAT

What are you talking about...?

LAZARUS

Stone. I smoked his Judas ass. Died with me. Made sure of it. Only a few more loose ends to tie up after I get through with you.

BRAT

Then maybe you need to have that zombie brain of yours examined, because I was with Stone not less than an hour ago...

Lazarus' first impulse is to smack Brat again, but he's so stunned by the news that he steps back.

MOVE IN ON: LAZARUS' DEVASTATED EXPRESSION...

QUICK SILENT FLASHES OF:

STONE slumping dead in the alley; then STONE'S EKG MONITOR showing signs of life. We hear a BEEPING SOUND O.S....

RESUME SCENE.

...BEEPING is emanating from the Brat's jacket.

BRAT

Uh...would you mind getting that for me?
(indicating bound hands)
...I can't really reach it.

LAZARUS, still in a daze, moves in on BRAT. BRAT SQUIRMS as Lazarus' hand draws near. Tension dissipates as Lazarus' hand reaches into Brat's pocket, extracting...

BRAT'S MOTOROLA TWO-WAY PAGER. Lazarus regards the device with puzzlement, slowly remembering what it is.

BRAT

One more thing, and I won't trouble you any further. Could you mind reading it to me? I kinda have a thing about missing pages...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAZARUS

"Missed you at studio. Who's your sexy friend? She rocked my world. Becca."

As Brat mutters "Shit," dawning realization in Lazarus' eyes:

LAZARUS

You can reach Stone with this thing?

BRAT

Of course. Why wouldn't --
 (as Lazarus pockets two-way)
 -- Hey! That's mine!

LAZARUS

Gotta jet, run a few errands. Don't bother trying to escape -- one of my dogz'll be keeping an eye on you...

REVEAL: THE PITBULL, emerging from the SHADOWS. Gets within inches of Brat's crotch, growls viciously. Brat tries backing away in chair, finds himself trapped against a wall.

Lazarus pats pitbull's head as it continues to growl at Brat.

LAZARUS

Good doggie.

****BEGIN INTERCONNECTED "LAZARUS ON THE TRAIL"/"THREADS CONVERGING" BOLERO SEQUENCE:** Entire sequence is musically underscored by RAVEL'S BOLERO, in traditional arrangement and with modern touches added.

As the initial strains of Bolero kick in...

SWISH PAN TO:

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Brat's WHIMPERS, Pitbull's GROWLS audible in b.g. FOLLOW Lazarus walking from building, Crow on shoulder, as he types a message on the TWO-WAY. MOVE IN ON: MOTOROLA SCREEN and...

SWISH PAN TO:

MATCHING C.U. ON: ANOTHER MOTOROLA TWO-WAY PAGER SCREEN

Displaying a MESSAGE: YOU ARE GOING TO DIE. PULL BACK TO REVEAL we are...

INT. STONE'S LIMO -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

Stone in back, ALBINO BIRD on shoulder. Bolero plays on the stereo. He reads message, reacts in fury. On cue, his face is bathed in RED from reflected NEON outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOVE TOWARDS: FLASHING RED REFLECTION IN CAR GLASS, blurring, and...

SWISH PAN TO:

CLOSE ON: FLASHING RED/BLUE POLICE BUBBLE LIGHT. We are...

EXT- STUDIO LOT -- BRAT'S TRAILER -- SIMULTANEOUS

ALBRECHT and FURLEIGH's CRUISER parked outside, area roped off with POLICE TAPE as the duo investigate. A CROWD gathers, including most of the CREW MEMBERS we saw earlier.

Trailer DOOR IS OPEN. Albrecht surveys Lazarus' MIRROR handiwork from outside, visible discomfort on his face, while Furleigh takes a statement from the A.D.

FURLEIGH

...what about possible motive? Anybody to your knowledge that the missing party might've pissed off, who could have a reason to wish him bodily harm?

On cue, A.D. and CREW MEMBERS look at one another knowingly, stifled laughter. MOVE IN ON: "B" LOGO on a crew jacket and...

SWISH PAN TO:

MATCHING C.U. on a "B" LOGO SIGN. PULL BACK TO REVEAL A PAINTED SIGN beneath it reading: CHECKS CASHED. We are...

EXT./INT. -- BRIMSTONE CHECK CASHING CENTER -- NIGHT

MOVE DOWN ON: AN ARRAY OF DOWN-ON-THEIR-LUCK TYPES lined up on the sidewalk, spilling out of the storefront ENTRANCE.

LAZARUS ENTERS FRAME. FOLLOW as he marches determinedly INSIDE. REVEAL: A BANNER above the BULLET-PROOF DOUBLE-GLASS CASHIER CAGE reading: PAYDAY ADVANCES -- SPECIAL LOW 50% INTEREST.

CASHIER reaches for the PHONE, scared shitless, as Lazarus approaches, SMASHES HIS FIST through the unbreakable glass, rips phone away from Cashier and grabs him by the throat.

LAZARUS

Your account's just been closed.

WHIP AROUND TO: OUTSIDE -- SECONDS LATER

Lazarus marching out, same way he came in, EXITS FRAME.

In his wake, a STACKS OF BILLS is tossed over his shoulder. As PATRONS scramble for money, MOVE IN ON A \$100 BILL and...

SWISH PAN TO:

INT. CIGAR BAR/EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A \$100 BILL being peeled off of a MONEY CLIP.

REVEAL: IKE, as he BUYS an EXPENSIVE CIGAR, cuts end with a SOLID GOLD CUTTER, sticks unlit cigar in mouth, EXITS.

FOLLOW IKE OUTSIDE --

...where his ultra-stylish VINTAGE TRIUMPH MOTORCYCLE is parked, engine running, on the sidewalk out front. Sees the CROW perched atop one of the handlebars, shoos it away.

IKE
Go on. Move it...

The Crow flies out of frame. As Ike polishes the handlebars with a HANDKERCHIEF, TILT DOWN to...

...THE GAS TANK -- a small HOLE has been pecked into it.
GASOLINE trickles out.

TILT BACK UP TO: IKE, hopping on bike. Pulls out a DUNHILL LIGHTER, flicks it, then sniffs something, looks down, notices hole. Oh shit. Unlit CIGAR drops as his jaw goes slack...

With nervous, but steady, hands, he extinguishes lighter, kills engine, breathes a huge sigh of relief. Beat.

LAZARUS (O.S.)
How does it feel: cheating death? I'm
curious...

Ike jumps off bike, turns, can only make out AN APPROACHING SHAPE OBSCURED BY STEAM FROM A SUBWAY GRATE. Reaches for a length of CHAIN wrapped around back of the motorcycle, uncoils it in one motion like a bullwhip, menacingly swings it back and forth with expert dexterity...

IKE
Too bad you're not going to find out --

LOUD CLANG as Ike makes contact, grins. Then smile fades:

LAZARUS (O.S.)
-- Neither will you.

REVEAL: LAZARUS now visible, unscathed, as STEAM CLEARS.

A furious, dizzyingly choreographed battle ensues:

...Ike charging with the swinging chain, Lazarus dodging the assault with lightning speed...

IKE loops the chain around Lazarus' ARM, pulls with great force as he twists it around at an uncomfortable angle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IKE

Got you now, mate...

...then LAZARUS raises his arm upward, yanking the chain free from Ike's grasp and, with one swift movement, grabs end of chain in FIST, LASSOS it around Ike's neck, reels him in with a lightning-fast WRIST FLICK...

IKE'S FACE, speeding toward us, connects with Lazarus' FIST.

Ouch. Down for the count.

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

EXT. STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: IKE'S BATTERED FACE...

...eyes opening out of unconsciousness. As he tilts his neck forward, we realize he is SPRAWLED HORIZONTAL ON PAVEMENT.

MOVE DOWN LENGTH OF HIS BODY, REVEALING: THE CHAIN, bound around his ANKLES...

...and UP THE LENGTH OF CHAIN, REVEALING: it's attached to the back of the MOTORCYCLE.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: LAZARUS ON BIKE from behind, CROW ON HIS SHOULDER. He bears down on KICK STARTER, REVS ENGINE.

TERROR on Ike's face as he struggles in vain:

IKE

Please...no...what is it you want!?!

LAZARUS

-- just popped into town for a visit: how 'bout directions? Scream once for a right turn, twice for a left.

LAZARUS guns motor, shifts into gear. No remorse.

BEHIND the MOVING bike, CLOSE ON: THE CHAIN, pulling taut. Grisly SCREAMS, THUMPS and DRAGGING NOISES audible O.S.

SWISH PAN TO:

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING -- NIGHT

TIGHT C.U. ON: LAZARUS' FIST (denoted by tell-tale CORROSIVE STREAKS) clutching ANOTHER LENGTH OF CHAIN, PULLING TAUT.... FOLLOW RAPIDLY down chain, REVEALING:

THE PITBULL on a CHOKE COLLAR, mid-air, jaws snapping millimeters away from terrified BRAT'S FACE, then drawing back, EXITING FRAME.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS (O.S.)
Keep talking --

BRAT
-- the storage warehouse. That's where
the processing facility is...

MOVE IN ON: THE WHITES OF BRAT'S TERRIFIED EYES and...

SWISH PAN TO:

WHITE FRAME. WIDEN TO REVEAL: A MOUND OF COCAINE, being
weighed on a METRIC SCALE. We are...

INT. DRUG PROCESSING FACILITY -- NIGHT

In a converted HANGAR. CAMERA MOVES THROUGH ROOM, REVEALING:

A SWEATSHOP/ASSEMBLY LINE OPERATION: WORKERS in WHITE SMOCKS
bearing the "B" logo, handling, measuring drugs. GLASSINE
PACKETS MOVING on a CONVEYOR BELT, going through a PRINTING
PRESS, then coming out with the "B" LOGO STAMP for filling.

HEADS TURN at the SOUND of a ROARING ENGINE and...

LAZARUS, on IKE'S MOTORCYCLE, comes barrelling through a METAL
WALL, mid-air. He reaches up, grabs on to a RAFTER, hoists
himself OUT OF FRAME with a gymnast's move...

...then we FOLLOW THE EMPTY MOTORCYCLE -- gas visibly leaking
out of tank and CHAIN towing a BRITISH LOAFER CLAD PAIR OF
ANKLE STUMPS -- as it SMASHES into PROCESSING MACHINERY,
EXPLODES on impact. WHITE POWDER sprays everywhere...

As WORKERS run for cover, MOVE IN ON: THE CLOUD OF SUSPENDED
WHITE CRYSTALS, tumbling down like snowflakes and...

SWISH PAN TO:

E.C.U. OF: WHITE CRYSTALS, now flowing upward... WIDEN
SLIGHTLY TO REVEAL: they're rising out of a PLATINUM COKE
SPOON into a NOSTRIL. We are...

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- EXECUTIVE WASHROOM

STARK WHITE MARBLE, PLATINUM FIXTURES, MIRRORED WALLS. The
nostrils belong to a visibly agitated STONE, spoon now
dangling on neck chain, talking on a CEL. Bolero piped in
over washroom sound-system.

STONE
-- No, I'm still here. You heard me:
terminate the niggas. With extreme
motherfucking prejudice.

FOLLOW STONE FROM BEHIND, as he hangs up, OPENS DOOR, enters:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE BOARDROOM -- Bodies visible, grouped around the CONFERENCE TABLE.

STONE

I apologize for the interruption...

MOVE PAST STONE AND DOWN LENGTH OF TABLE as Stone continues.

We now see the attendees of the meeting: CONSERVATIVELY DRESSED WHITE CEOS and WALL STREET TYPES.

STONE (O.S.)

...A little emergency in one of my divisions. V.P. in charge required my expert counsel. All in a day's work for gentlemen like yourselves, I'm sure...

An uncomfortable silence. THE CEOS all have skeptical looks on their faces as they PEER INTO CAMERA toward Stone.

REVERSE ANGLE: ON STONE. We now see what they're reacting to: THE COKE SPOON, embarrassingly exposed, POWDER RESIDUE around his nose. Stone realizes, quickly "cleans up".

C.E.O. #1

Mr. Bratwurst isn't going to be joining us today...?

STONE

He's, uh...tied up. Where were we again?

C.E.O. #2

Misperceptions about our corporate image in the African-American community --

STONE

-- Right.

(beat; circling table now)

As you may know, there are some crazy-ass rumors spreading like wildfire among the brothers out there about y'all and your corporate practices --

Stone leans in, puts each CEO on the spot with direct eye-contact as he discusses that company's particular product:

STONE

-- Vicious, unfounded rumors, I'm sure: like genetically-altered, six-legged mutants used to produce the "so-called" meat for your chain of fried chicken huts, saving you mad loot on the real thing...

CHICKEN CEO

We categorically deny any allegations about the quality of our chickens!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STONE

-- Chemicals added to the menthol in your smokes, stronger than nicotine even, to make 'em that much more addictive...

TOBACCO CEO

How could you say such a thing: everyone knows nicotine's not addictive!

STONE

-- Ya-yo added to certain brands of soda pop...

SODA CEO

We do use artificial flavorings sometimes, particularly in our grape and orange brands, but that's where it ends.

STONE

Whatever...

Nervous glances among CEOs, like deer caught in headlights -- where's he going with this? Is this a shakedown?

STONE (CONT.)

So what now, then? Does this pose a potential p.r. problem? Should we be worried about charges of racial exploitation...?

(dramatic pause)

...Hell no! These are brilliant fuckin' business strategies! I say: keep on keepin' on --

(singling out another C.E.O.)

-- I'd lay off the carcinogens and sterilization agents in that fruity punch shit, though. Why wipe out your most loyal customer base?

Stone returns to the head of the table, sits down.

STONE

So tell me honestly -- we're all on the same page here: this stuff's standard operating procedure for y'all, right?

A nervous beat. Then the CEOs all LAUGH, NOD their heads.

STONE

(grins)

That's what I thought.

(snaps his fingers; calls out)

You get that on tape, baby?

REVEAL: EVA, entering with a VIDEOTAPE. Hands it to Stone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CHICKEN CEO

Are you trying to blackmail us?

STONE

Nawww...I just wanna get in on the good thing y'all got going. Say, ten percent of the stock in each of your companies? I'd never rat out my partners...

CHICKEN CEO

(indignant)

And what makes you think we'll give you ten percent?

Stone snaps his fingers. As EVA heads toward CHICKEN CEO...

SWISH PAN TO:

EXT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- SIMULTANEOUS

A LUXURY SEDAN is parked out front, bearing a LICENSE PLATE that reads: DEEPFRY 1. Suddenly...

CHICKEN CEO ENTERS FRAME, SMASHES through the roof from several stories up. AIRBAGS inflate, burst out side windows.

MOVE RAPIDLY UP SIDE OF BUILDING, THROUGH BROKEN GLASS INTO...

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- BOARDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Eva wipes her hands, winks at Stone, who smiles a wicked grin:

STONE

Any more questions?

Off the REMAINING CEOs' SHOCKED EXPRESSIONS...

SWISH PAN TO:

EXT/INT. DRUG PROCESSING PLANT -- NIGHT

C.U.: MATCHING EXPRESSIONS on ALBRECHT and FURLEIGH's FACES:

FURLEIGH

Rival gang...? Or is this one of those flashy logos you people like to sport: like Kango-Roo or whatever you call it...

Albrecht is too freaked to offer a response. PULL BACK INTO HANGAR, REVEALING:

Debris, carnage...and A CROW SHAPED HOLE IN THE WALL where Lazarus burst through on the motorcycle....

SWISH PAN AND MATCH TO:

EXT. SKY -- NIGHT

OVERHEAD SHOT FOLLOWING: THE CROW, wings spread in flight, tops of BUILDINGS visible beneath bird.

BRAT (V.O.)
-- the brothel. That's where he always hangs when he's not on duty...

MOVE DOWN, THROUGH ROOFTOP OF ONE OF BUILDINGS, into...

INT. BRIMSTONE BROTHEL -- CONTINUOUS

OVERHEAD TRACK ACROSS: VARIOUS ROOMS of a HIGH-CLASS BORDELLO OPERATION. Plush RED VELVET everywhere, CALL-GIRLS getting down with JOHNS on CIRCULAR BEDS, billowing RED BEDSPREADS emblazoned with the "B" LOGO...

Unseen CHAOS, SCREAMS audible behind us O.S. as we DESCEND:

INTO A BACK ROOM, where APPLES is getting down with THREE HONEYS. One of them teasingly dangles an APPLE over his mouth from the stem, like grapes being fed to a Roman Emperor.

O.S. SFX: THE DOOR BEING KICKED OPEN. Then we hear:

LAZARUS (O.S.)
Ho's leave. Now.

As the NAKED GIRLS scurry out of frame, Apples grabs a GUN from beneath a pillow, FIRES SHOTS OFF "HONG KONG"-STYLE: arm outstretched, gun held sideways...

WHIP OVER TO: LAZARUS, bullets whizzing wildly past him.

LAZARUS
Where'd you learn to shoot like that, Apples? Watching TV? The recoil: it'll fuck you every time. Hold the gun upright. Use the other hand to brace your wrist --

BACK ON: APPLES, freaked, but nevertheless repositioning according to Lazarus' instructions.

APPLES
-- You're fucking crazy...

LAZARUS
Go on. It's okay...

APPLES unloads "the right way" -- two slugs to Lazarus' chest. Lazarus looks down, smiles as the wounds "stitch up" and heal.

LAZARUS
Excellent. Now it's my turn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Lazarus starts toward Apples, MOVE IN ON: THE APPLE and...

SWISH, MATCH AND PULL BACK ON:

C.U.: THE APPLE, now on top of Apples' head. We are..

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

where Apples is tied to a telephone pole, William Tell-style.

— LAZARUS (O.S.)

Don't worry. I'm the one taught you how
to shoot, remember?

APPLES' POV: LAZARUS with the gun trained on him "the right
way." A beat, then Lazarus removes the hand bracing his
wrist, turns gun sideways and lowers his aim a few inches...

CLOSE ON: GUN BARREL. As POWDER FLARE and SMOKE fill frame:

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

E.C.U. THE GLOWING TIP OF A CIGAR. We are...

INT. ELEVATOR -- BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES

Cigar in the mouth of an INVESTMENT BANKER, who we saw earlier
in the boardroom. Stone beside him in the elevator (*Bolero*
piped in Muzak-style in b.g.), grinning while holding a stack
of SIGNED CONTRACTS from the extorted CEOs.

INVESTMENT BANKER

You're a tough negotiator --

STONE

-- Well, you gotta be sometimes.

INVESTMENT BANKER

Quite a portfolio you've amassed there.
What do you intend to do with it?

STONE

Sit tight 'til I get my billions from
MediaCorp, then sell it all and launch a
hostile takeover on their Gordon Gekko-
playin' asses.

(leans in; menacing)

That's between us, of course.

INVESTMENT BANKER

Of course. Can't wait for tomorrow night.

STONE

Neither can I. Shellin' out two mil on
the damn thing, just to seal the deal.
Always be closin', know wha' I'm sayin'?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Investment Banker nods, STONE'S TWO-WAY starts BEEPING:

STONE
Excuse me for a sec...

He flips open TWO-WAY, is visibly upset by what he sees.

MOVE IN ON: TWO-WAY SCREEN: AND THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH
SHALL WEEP AND MOURN -- REVELATION (18:11)

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS' HANDS, flipping Brat's TWO-WAY closed.

BRAT (O.S.)
So what now? I've told you everything you
want to know --

REVEAL: BRAT, still tied to the chair, looking significantly
worse for the wear -- sweat-soaked, dark eye circles. SHADOWS
OF LAZARUS and PITBULL visible, casting over him.

LAZARUS (O.S.)
You and me still got unfinished business.

BRAT
Maybe we can work something out. Stone's
the one you're really after, right? Want
me to have him knocked off for you? No
prob. I've got connections -- I'm from
Miami. Anything you want. Just don't
kill me, please...?

WHIP AROUND TO: LAZARUS, taking a beat to think about it.

LAZARUS
Okay. It's a deal. I won't kill you.

BRAT
Really!?!

LAZARUS
I give you my word.

BRAT
Thank you...thank you...

And then, Lazarus looks down at the pitbull, gives command:

LAZARUS
Yo dog -- chomp this piece of shit...!

CLOSE ON: PITBULL, growling, showing teeth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he leaps toward the CAMERA...

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

CLOSE ON: TEETH, munching a DONUT. We are...

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

FURLEIGH (donut belongs to him) and ALBRECHT investigating the aftermath of Apples' death.

FURLEIGH

Well that's what I call one dead coon...

REVEAL: APPLES, still tied to the TELEPHONE POLE, bullet hole in his forehead, apple stuck in his mouth like a roast pig.

Albrecht removes the APPLE, looks at it...

REVEAL: BITEMARKS in the shape of the CROW-PATTERN.

Furleigh kneels down, investigates Apples' hi-tech Brimstone logo SNEAKERS, squeezes them.

ALBRECHT

What are you doing?

FURLEIGH

Checking for leaks. What is it with you people and the pump-up shoes, anyway...?

As Albrecht bites his tongue, MOVE IN ON: THE FLASHING RED SIREN OF AN APPROACHING CORONER'S TRUCK and...

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

C.U.: FLASHING RED LIGHTS on a VU METER. We are...

INT. RECORDING STUDIO -- NIGHT

PAPA SMURF, looking much better than when we last saw him, visible behind GLASS of a VOCAL BOOTH, rapping into a mic.

PAPA SMURF

"...only good Brimstone nigga is a dead
Brimstone nigga..."

(notices something)

-- Stop tape...

IN THE GLASS: LAZARUS' FACE visible, reflected over the image of Papa Smurf. Papa Smurf calls out to him over MONITORS.

PAPA SMURF

Yo, Marilyn-Manson-McCoo...what's with the
makeup and eyeshadow -- you one of them
bitch puta drag queens?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS

Nice mouth. You suck your mama's dick
with that mouth?

PAPA SMURF

(realizing)

LAZARUS!?!

And with that, Papa promptly faints. A PHONE RINGS, emits
high-pitched tones. WHIP AROUND as Lazarus turns, sees...

AN INCOMING FAX, spilling out of a FAX MACHINE.

MOVE IN ON: FAX, on Brimstone LETTERHEAD: ITINERARY FOR PAPA
SMURF -- THURSDAY. 8:00 -- STAGED DRIVE-BY ON STONE, 5411
10th AVE.

FOLLOW LAZARUS as he grabs the fax, enters the vocal booth,
kicks Papa Smurf awake.

PAPA SMURF

(delirious; opening eyes)

Lil' Kim...is that you...?

PAPA SMURF'S POV: LAZARUS STANDS OVER HIM, HOLDING THE FAX.

LAZARUS

Wake your ass up. We're going for a ride.

Lazarus drops the fax. As it flutters toward camera...

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

A FAST-FOOD WRAPPER as it's dropped out of a CAR WINDOW.

MOVE INTO -- INT. STONE'S LIMO -- MOVING -- NIGHT

Stone -- ALBINO BIRD on shoulder -- eats a burger, listens to
Bolero on stereo. A TV in limo displays his "DUET" VIDEO with
Lazarus, without sound. MOVE IN ON: MONITOR and...

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

CLOSE ON: SAME VIDEO ON ANOTHER TV...

This time with sound. Bolero fits smoothly with track.
LAZARUS and his "uh-huh's" composited with STONE (ALBINO BIRD
on shoulder) and his wack, treacly rapping:

STONE

"...tears from my eyes, rolling out like
Sevens/'cuz my best friend has died and-a
gone up to Heaven..."

We are...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EXT. STOREFRONT -- SIMULTANEOUS

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: ALBRECHT watching/listening through outside window of a RECORD STORE. His uneasy face suggests that he's made a mental connection. He turns, sees...

A PIMPED-OUT PERIWINKLE BLUE CAR whizzing past, a CRUMPLED-UP SHEET OF PAPER tossed out the window.

THE CROW flutters into frame, picks paper up in beak, seems to make eye-contact with Albrecht.

Albrecht rushes over, grabs PAPER, reads it, alarmed. Sees the CROW fly away, then runs into SQUAD CAR, starts engine.

FURLEIGH runs out of a DELI next door, spills a cup of coffee.

FURLEIGH

What the fuck are you doing?

ALBRECHT

Get in.

As we hear Furleigh enter police car, ALBRECHT looks at his watch: 7:58. MOVE IN ON WATCH and...

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

INT. PAPA SMURF'S CAR -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

C.U. ON: PAPA SMURF'S WATCH, also reading: 7:58.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: LAZARUS riding shotgun, Papa Smurf behind the wheel. HANDICAP PLACARD hangs from rearview mirror. An arsenal of GUNS is visible in the back seat.

PAPA SMURF

...Motherfucker's a publicity whore is what he is -- loves playing martyr, built a whole career on it. Actually pays me to fake drive-bys, shit like that.

LAZARUS

(loading a weapon)

Well this time, we gonna be keepin' it real.

A loud GULP from Papa Smurf. He jams on the brakes.

PAPA SMURF

Can I get out here...?

LAZARUS jams Papa Smurf's knee back down onto accelerator.

LAZARUS

Drive!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOVE IN ON: ACCELERATOR PEDAL and...

SWISH AND MATCH TO:

C.U.: DIFFERENT FOOT, EASING OFF AN ACCELERATOR. We are...

INT. STONE'S LIMO -- PARKING -- SIMULTANEOUS.

STONE'S LIMO DRIVER in the front, a NEW ARMED GUARD beside him. THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD POV: we see the car pull into a CURBSIDE PARKING SPACE. Another TOWN CAR, obviously part of a Stone motorcade, does the same in front. THROUGH THE ROLLED-DOWN DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW, we see the SMURFMOBILE APPROACH...

BACK OF LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

TINTED SEPARATOR SCREEN slides down. LIMO DRIVER cranes his head toward back.

LIMO DRIVER

Your 8:00 appointment is pulling up, sir.

REVEAL STONE, with the ALBINO BIRD.

STONE

Right on time. Thank you.

SEPARATOR slides up. Stone reaches for door, turns to bird.

STONE

You wait here. This won't take but a minute.

Bird begins to flutter nervously. Looks into Stone's eye.

STONE

(unnerved)

What is it...?

Stone turns, THROUGH HIS WINDOW SEES: the SMURFMOBILE, idling, then backing away.

Then his focus is drawn toward LAZARUS' VIDEO IMAGE ON THE SILENT TV MONITOR. Bolero builds in intensity on soundtrack as Stone speaks into DRIVER INTERCOM:

STONE

Move it. Now.

MOVE UP THROUGH ROOF AND WHIP AROUND FACING REAR, REVEALING:

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

A LONG ROW OF CAR ROOFTOPS, stretched out like a horizon line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We hear HORNS HONKING, CAR ALARMS. Then a THUMPING, which gets progressively louder...

RACE DOWN LINE OF ROOFTOPS, until we see A PAIR OF FEET, running on top of them...

MOVE UP TO REVEAL: LAZARUS, racing toward STONE'S LIMO...

INT. TAXICAB -- CONTINUOUS

A NAPPING CABBIE jumps, startled by A LOUD THUMP AND HIS ROOF CAVING IN. THROUGH HIS FRONT WINDSHIELD: we see Lazarus take a flying leap off the rear TOWN CAR IN STONE'S MOTORCADE toward STONE'S LIMO, now pulling out of its parking space...

EXT. STONE'S LIMO -- ROOFTOP -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

LAZARUS lands on top of the limo, crouches down into cross-legged position, whips out TWO GUNS. He brings them down, tips touching roof, begins FIRING AWAY...

INT. STONE'S LIMO -- PASSENGER COMPARTMENT -- SIMULTANEOUS

ALBINO BIRD flutters around in a flurry. STONE instinctively zig-zags, dodging the descending bullets. Reaches into jacket for GUNS, cocks them...

MOVE THROUGH DIVIDER, INTO...

DRIVER'S COMPARTMENT -- LIMO DRIVER swerves, JAMS BRAKES to avoid hitting FRONT TOWN CAR, visible through WINDSHIELD...

EXT. STONE'S LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

LAZARUS tumbles forward from inertia, somersaults down front of limo as it starts moving again...

INT. LIMO -- DRIVER'S COMPARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD:

LAZARUS face down on hood, guns trained at DRIVER and GUARD.

BLAM BLAM!! BULLETPROOF GLASS cracks, but doesn't shatter as Lazarus fires away...

BODYGUARD rolls down side window, leans out, aims at Lazarus.

BLAM!! Without even looking, Lazarus arcs his left arm, blows bodyguard away -- one shot to the forehead. Bodyguard slumps limply out side window, dead...

Then Lazarus PUNCHES his gun-filled FIST into WINDSHIELD...

...breaking a hole through it with his superhuman strength.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he reaches his arm INSIDE, starts blasting INTO vehicle..

INTERCUT TO:

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

Albrecht behind the wheel, SIRENS BLAZING, easily doing 100 MPH. CROW visible THROUGH WINDSHIELD flying ahead. Furleigh rides shotgun, freaked:

FURLEIGH

What's with the Mario Andretti shit: there a Kwanza sale at T.J. Maxx or something?

ALBRECHT

-- Shut up.

Furleigh doesn't know how to react, doesn't. Silence broken by POLICE RADIO:

DISPATCHER (O.S.)

All units in vicinity 5000 block 10th Avenue: please respond to situation in progress. Perp armed and dangerous, over.

Albrecht gives Furleigh a pointed "that's where we're going look," keeps driving.

BACK TO:

INT./EXT. STONE'S LIMO -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

NOTE: ALL OF WHAT FOLLOWS HAPPENS INCREDIBLY FAST...

Lazarus still on the hood: one arm inside, through windshield, fires at bulletproof DIVIDER GLASS; other arm fires behind him at UZI-FIRING BODYGUARDS leaning out OPEN REAR DOORS of MOVING TOWN CAR in front of limo.

Uzi bullets spray Limo front, doing no damage to Lazarus, but SHATTERING WINDSHIELD, killing LIMO DRIVER, causing limo to speed up, veer out of control to left...

UZI GUARD ON LEFT is struck, killed instantly as Limo sideswipes TOWN CAR, crushing guard and sheering off Town Car's rear left door...

As Limo overtakes TOWN CAR, Lazarus fires a shot through open LEFT REAR DOOR HOLE, takes out RIGHT UZI GUARD, who tumbles out of car. Then, milliseconds later...

Lazarus fires another shot through DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW, taking out LEAD TOWN CAR DRIVER...

TOWN CAR JERKS TO RIGHT, CRASHING into parked cars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIMO, veering left, surges ahead, toward INTERSECTION...

LAZARUS retracts arm from inside, springs back into crouching position on hood and leaps up over TOP of limo, firing down in mid-air as limo moves beneath him...

INT. LIMO -- PASSENGER COMPARTMENT -- SIMULTANEOUS

Stone dodges descending bullets which travel towards rear. Fires upward with one hand, rolls down TINTED DIVIDER with other. Sees carnage up front, then ONCOMING STREETLAMP through SMASHED WINDSHIELD. ALBINO BIRD flies through DIVIDER, out FRONT COMPARTMENT.

EXT. LIMO -- SIMULTANEOUS

LAZARUS, dodging bullets shooting upward through roof, lands, spins, slides backwards on his ass, knees tucked, down REAR WINDOW onto TRUNK. Fires into BACK GLASS, bullets deflected by bulletproofing. He rears back his feet, prepares to kick in in, when...

LIMO SMASHES into STREETLAMP. On impact:

DEAD TORSOS OF DRIVER AND GUARD jackknife through windshield, smash against hood. ON OTHER SIDE of limo...

...Inertia sends LAZARUS feet-first through back glass into...

INT. LIMO -- STONE'S COMPARTMENT -- SIMULTANEOUS

STONE is smashed against divider wall, as LAZARUS' FEET break through, hitting divider inches from Stone's head.

Reverse force from tail-end of inertia springs LAZARUS backward into sitting position in back seat.

The half-second it takes him to regain his bearings and train his guns on Stone is just enough time for Stone to OPEN PASSENGER DOOR, tumble out and disappear out of FRAME.

As LAZARUS starts after him, MOVE IN RAPIDLY ON HIS FACE...

We now hear his AUGMENTED HEARING: loud movement beneath vehicle, scrape of gun metal on chassis. As his EYES point downward...

RAPIDLY PULL BACK, REVEAL: LAZARUS SQUATTING ON FLOOR, guns pointed down, firing through bottom of limo.

EXT. LIMO -- UNDERSIDE -- SIMULTANEOUS

STONE, hiding beneath chassis, jerks his head as a BULLET comes down into pavement, missing him by millimeters. He trains his guns upward starts firing into limo...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSIDE/BENEATH LIMO -- INTERCUT -- CONTINUOUS

Lightning-fast choreographed movements as Lazarus and Stone, divided by bottom of limo, dodge each other's shots, as if they each anticipate them milliseconds before they come...

Lazarus exits limo, crawls under to fire at Stone, who escapes from other side, gets into limo, trading places with Lazarus and continuing ultra-rapid-fire attack. Then they trade positions again, all in a flurry of movement...

INTERCUT -- OVERHEAD SHOT -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

THE CROW hones in -- past the REAR TOWN CAR, which stays parked in its original position -- over carnage of CRASHED FRONT TOWN CAR and towards LIMO.

From street level, we can hear firing continue within and below. Then it suddenly stops...

INT. LIMO -- CONTINUOUS

Click. Lazarus, back inside, runs out of bullets. Quickly reaches through divider, takes a GUN from body of DEAD PASSENGER SEAT BODYGUARD, cocks it...

EXT. LIMO -- UNDERNEATH -- SIMULTANEOUS

Click. Stone's gun is also out of bullets. He cranes head, sees a GUN on pavement, jarred loose from LIMO DRIVER on impact, reaches for it, cocks it...

INT. LIMO -- INTERCUT

Through LAZARUS' EARS, we hear: SFX: EXTRA-LOUD COCKING SOUND from Stone. Lazarus trains gun toward source of noise. Tense beat, as he prepares to fire...

MOVE THROUGH FLOOR OF LIMO, revealing...

EXT. LIMO -- UNDERNEATH

Stone, also preparing to fire, gun trained in exact same spot, barrels practically touching, if not for chassis between them. Then he slowly pulls his gun back...

FOLLOW STONE'S POV, GUNHAND VISIBLE IN FOREGROUND:

As he turns slightly, touches tip of gun to LIMO GAS TANK.

CLOSE ON: STONE'S FACE as he closes eyes, takes a deep breath, then...

INTERCUT TO:

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

THROUGH WINDSHIELD, OVER SHOULDERS: we see Albrecht and Furleigh slow down, approach scene cautiously, passing LEAD TOWN CAR aftermath. LIMO is in their sights, about 50 yards away when...

KABOOM!!! LIMO EXPLODES in burst of flames, a FIGURE visible, tossed out from within...

Albrecht JAMS on the BRAKES...

EXT. STREET -- SIMULTANEOUS

WIDER SHOT OF FIREBALL, still in progress: LAZARUS rockets backwards from force of explosion, SMASHES against hood and windshield of Albrecht/Furleigh's police cruiser...

INT. POLICE CRUISER -- SIMULTANEOUS

ALBRECHT and FURLEIGH jump back, startled, at sight of body flung against their windshield...

They become even more startled when LAZARUS leans forward, brushes himself off, turns head, making eye contact with them. Then Lazarus picks himself up off of car, marches towards BURNING LIMO...

FURLEIGH

Turn this fucking thing around right now!

Albrecht reaches for the door handle, resolute:

ALBRECHT

No.

FURLEIGH

Then enjoy the barbeque, 'cause I'm staying in the car.

As Albrecht exits cruiser...

EXT. STREET -- CONTINUOUS

LAZARUS marches determinedly toward FLAMES; CROW flutters into frame, perches on his shoulder as he walks. Then he sees...

STONE emerge from the fireball, also walking determinedly. ALBINO BIRD flutters up behind flames over Stone's shoulder.

STONE

(drawing GUN)

Ali-Frazier. The rematch...

LAZARUS reaches for his GUN, starts running toward him now...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE runs toward LAZARUS, as well -- it's like a replay of their kamikaze gun battle in beginning of picture.

SFX: SIRENS IN THE DISTANCE as we hear MORE POLICE APPROACH.

THE CROW AND THE ALBINO BIRD follow their respective masters, move toward each other in ascent.

CLOSE ON: ALBRECHT, now watching from street, open-mouthed. Can't believe what he's witnessing. We hear the FIRST SHOTS, then WHIP PAN OVER TO:

LAZARUS and STONE opening fire on each other, stopping about twenty feet apart when they both run out of bullets.

STONE'S POV: LAZARUS' wounds healing.

STONE

Nice trick -- must come in handy at parties.

THEN SPLIT SCREEN, REVEAL: LAZARUS' POV OF AND REACTION TO:

STONE'S WOUNDS healing miraculously, as well. Lazarus dumbfounded as Stone smiles, taunts him, ripping open his white shirt ala Superman:

STONE

Don't need no Kevlar no more, nigga.

As we see RESPECTIVE BIRDS fluttering behind them in respective frames, FOUR-WAY SPLIT SCREEN NOW:

LAZARUS'S POV: STONE grinning demonically.

STONE'S POV: LAZARUS in total speechless shock.

ALBINO BIRD and CROW POVS: Fluttering OVERHEAD SHOTS -- each bird sometimes visible in the other's POV -- both moving in simultaneously from different angles toward:

TWO UZIS, scattered on pavement from DEAD TOWN CAR GUNMEN...

BACK TO TWO-WAY SPLIT SCREEN: LAZARUS AND STONE

...as they run toward UZIS, each grabbing one at the same time, start blasting away wildly. They run, duck, dodge through traffic, sometimes taking hits, which appear to have no effect their ability to keep firing.

OPEN UP TO THREE-WAY WITH ALBINO BIRD POV: (denoted by occasional flashes of CROW in frame) -- as Lazarus and Stone's gun battle continues, we see REAR TOWN CAR inch INTO FRAME. TWO ARMED GUARDS get out, produce GUNS, preparing to train them on Lazarus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OPEN UP TO FOUR-WAY AGAIN W/ CROW POV: OTHER POLICE CARS approach as ALBRECHT runs toward fray, fires gun into air.

ALBRECHT
STOP!!!!!!!

****END BOLERO ON SOUNDTRACK****

Shooting stops. Silence. POVS IN OTHER THREE SPLIT-SCREENS TURN TOWARD ALBRECHT, then SCREENS "UNSPLIT" into:

NORMAL "SINGLE SCREEN" SHOT OF ALBRECHT...

gun arm extended. WIDEN to reveal him training it back and forth between REAR TOWN CAR ARMED GUARDS, LAZARUS and STONE, attempting to hold them all at bay. He cranes head back toward FURLEIGH and OTHER POLICE CARS, calls out:

ALBRECHT
Can I get some help here?!?

ALBRECHT'S POV: 180° PAN, starting on Furleigh, of all the other officers staying in their cars silent, doing nothing.

BACK ON: ALBRECHT, gun trained, pivoting back and forth, returning his focus to situation at hand.

ALBRECHT
Fucking punks, running around like this is the Wild West. Ever occur to you these are public streets with innocent women and children moving about? If you cowboys have so little respect for life that you can't resist the urge to play shoot-em-up and kill each other off, then go ahead: do us all a favor. But not here. Not on my beat.

Lazarus drops his gun, backs away, shell-shocked, still overwhelmed by enormity of what he's witnessed with Stone.

Stone drops his gun, starts CLAPPING, smug:

STONE
Bravo. Hope they remember you come Oscar time.

ARMED GUARD #1
(gun half out of holster)
Want me to smoke this pig for you, boss?

ALBRECHT
(gun already on Guard)
Like to see you try...

ARMED GUARD #2 starts for his gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Stone stops him, gestures to GUARD #1 to lower his, too.

STONE
It's okay. Just doing his job.
(to Albrecht)
Thank you, Officer...?

ALBRECHT
-- Albrecht.

STONE
(pointed)
Got it. Do you think you could see it in
your heart to let us off with just a
warning this time?

ALBRECHT
Get the fuck out of here. You've got ten
seconds. Otherwise I'm liable to change
my mind, haul your thugly ass downtown.

Stone lets out a whoop, can't believe the cajones on this guy.
Then turns, raises arms, snapping his fingers.

The GUARDS rush over, open door of the REAR TOWN CAR for him.

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS, fury in his eyes, about to make a break
toward Stone when his expression changes.... TOTAL SILENCE.

LAZARUS' POV -- SLOW MOTION: GUARDS step away from the door,
revealing TASHA with a BABY on her lap; A NANNY to her right.
ALBINO BIRD flutters into frame, lands on Stone's shoulder.
Stone turns, winks at Lazarus, gets in. TASHA turns head,
makes only the most fleeting eye-contact with Lazarus before
Stone blocks her view, closes door.

INT. TOWN CAR -- SIMULTANEOUS

SAME MOMENT FROM TASHA'S POV -- NORMAL SPEED, WITH SOUND:
CRYING BABY in TASHA'S ARMS, TASHA'S HAND stroking it...

STONE (O.S.)
S'all good, baby. Just glad you're okay.

AS HER HEAD TURNS, REVEAL: STONE entering car, gives CAMERA a
peck on the cheek. As he leans back: fleeting glimpse of
LAZARUS before door closes, blocks view. TASHA'S POV cranes,
trying in vain to get another look as CAR PULLS AWAY...

BACK TO:

EXT. STREET -- SIMULTANEOUS

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS, really looking hit below the belt now, as
he watches car drive off. Contemplative beat interrupted by:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURLEIGH (O.S.)
Hands behind you head. Don't make a
fucking move!

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Furleigh, now in "cop" mode, GUN pointed
at Lazarus' head. Albrecht runs toward him:

ALBRECHT
Now you get out of the car!?!

INTERCUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

CLOSE ON: BABY, giggling now, as fingers tickle his nose.

STONE (O.S.)
How's my little man...? You excited for
Daddy's big party tonight?

TILT UP TO REVEAL: TASHA, totally freaked by what she's just
seen and by Stone's incomprehensibly oblivious demeanor. She
starts to say something, can't begin to find the words. RACK
FOCUS ON: ALBINO BIRD, PURRING on seatback behind her.

MATCH CUT BACK TO:

EXT. STREET -- SAME

CLOSE ON: THE CROW, perched on SIREN BUBBLE of Albrecht and
Furleigh's CRUISER.

FURLEIGH (O.S.)
...You have the right to remain silent,
anything you --

WHIP PAN TO REVEAL: FURLEIGH, gun still trained at back of
Lazarus' head. Lazarus stands calmly, back turned to CAMERA.
Albrecht looks on in enraged disbelief.

-ALBRECHT
What the hell are --

FURLEIGH
-- I'm doing my goddamn job! Your buddy
Michael Jackson here's a one-man fucking
killing machine --
(to Lazarus; frantic)
-- behind your head now, or I'll blow that
psycho brain of yours clear to Never-
neverland, I swear to fucking God!

LAZARUS raises his arms outward, in a Christ pose, bends
elbows in toward head. Then suddenly WHIPS AROUND, snatches
Furleigh's GUN away lightning-fast, glares at him defiantly as
he presses the gun to his own temple. FIRES without flinching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS as he drops gun, turns, BLOODY TEMPLE WOUND instantaneously stitching shut. He spits a SLUG onto pavement, then a CURL OF SMOKE rises from his lips French-inhale style. As he EXITS FRAME, we hear his FOOTSTEPS and...

PAN BACK: PAST a stunned looking Albrecht and ONTO FURLEIGH, breathless, bugged-eyed and trembling. Face starts turning red, as if he's choking...

...then he lowers his jaw and CHUNKS OF VOMIT spill out, dribble down his chin.

ALBRECHT'S POV: As Furleigh embarrassedly scurries out of CORNER OF FRAME in EXTREME FOREGROUND, LAZARUS recedes into distance, seemingly disappearing as he walks into BILLOWING CLOUD OF STEAM rising up from a MANHOLE COVER....

TILT UP: as steam dissipates, REVEALING: THE CROW, flying off into the night sky.

CLOSE ON: ALBRECHT, as he stares off into distance, and...

CUT TO:

DARKNESS. Then buzz, flicker from COOL WHITE OVERHEAD FLUORESCENTS, taking a beat to kick in, before illuminating:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- EXECUTIVE WASHROOM -- NIGHT

IN THE MIRROR we see...

STONE, in front of RUNNING SINK -- freshens up, rinses BLOOD off his hands. ALBINO BIRD visible in b.g. on WHITE PERCH.

Stone brings FINGERS up to his face, examines it. Lifts one side of UPPER LIP with one hand, revealing his PLATINUM UPPER CROWN. Wiggles CROWN with other hand, as if checking for loose tooth, then YANKS it out, drops it into basin...

TEETH slowly regenerate in his mouth before our eyes. He taps on them -- solid -- grins. Beat. Then he rubs eyebrow, separates thumb and forefinger of one hand to retract lid of CATARACTED BAD EYE. No white of eye visible, all scarred sickly blue EYEBALL and THIN RED BLOODSHOT CAPILLARIES...

He lifts free hand to EYEBALL and YANKS IT OUT...

Holds it in hand (very gross), looks at it with good eye. Then lets it plop into basin while EMPTY BLOODY EYESOCKET MORPHS and a NEW EYEBALL REGENERATES: a healthy, piercing, bluer-than-Frank Sinatra BLUE EYE.

RACK FOCUS INTO MIRROR AND MOVE IN ON REFLECTION OF: ALBINO BIRD, staring at Stone's mirrored image and...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- NIGHT -- SIMULTANEOUS

THE CROW, perched atop a GRAVE MARKER.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: LAZARUS, head hung low, kneeling at MARY'S GRAVE. As he crosses himself, presses his PALM to MARKER...

FLASH TO: LAZARUS in the CONCERT GREEN ROOM, head pressed against Mary's belly -- the first image we saw of him in the picture.

RESUME SCENE

Lazarus strokes the marker, weakly mutters:

LAZARUS
...I've failed you.

MOVE IN ON HIS HAND and...

MATCH BACK TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- WASHROOM -- SIMULTANEOUS

STONE'S HANDS draping a STEAMING WET WASHCLOTH OVER HIS FACE, Rivulets of his DARK MAKEUP drip off into basin.

When he pulls cloth away, REVEAL: HIS FACIAL SCARS, no longer covered with makeup, MORPHING into healthy skin, albeit in ALBINO-WHITE VITILIGO-LIKE PATCHES (ala Michael Jackson).

Stone smiles, impressed with his new look, straightens up his white suit, opens door, back turned to camera...

IN THE MIRRORED WALLS, we can see TASHA, in an EVENING GOWN, as she reacts with alarm to Stone's new look.

STONE (O.S.)
Are you ready...?

CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- ELEVATOR -- A MINUTE LATER

Stone, Tasha and Nanny with Baby in her arms, descend. Muzak plays in b.g. Stone is oblivious to Tasha's increasing discomfort, checking himself out in the platinum-plated surfaces of the elevator car. The Elevator stops, DOORS OPENING OUT INTO...

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

Where the entire ATRIUM has been redecorated for Stone's HUGE UPSCALE MERGER RECEPTION, in progress:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUGE BANNERS display: *MEDIACORP AND BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- CONTENT FOR THE FUTURE -- FROM Y'ALLS STREET TO WALL STREET.*

ON VAST BANKS OF TV MONITORS: MUSIC VIDEOS of Brimstone artists, as well as an INDUSTRIAL VIDEO extolling the two companies' diversified profiles and "legitimate" expansion plans. WHITE-TUXEDOED CATERERS tote PLATINUM TRAYS of CHAMPAGNE. A "B" LOGO ICE SCULPTURE serves as the centerpiece for an elaborate FOOD spread, with CAVIAR, other upscale items. A STRING QUARTET plays CLASSICAL MUSIC. The whole thing is like a white-washed Martha Stewart version of the vibe at Stone's Club "B" stripclub.

GUESTS, most of them white, all dressed in WHITE TIE, mingle about: WALL STREET TYPES, SOME OF THE CEOS we saw earlier, VARIOUS DIGNITARIES, POLICE CHIEF TARKIN, ETC.

FOLLOW STONE, with TASHA, NANNY and BABY as he exits ELEVATOR, works the room, gladhanding:

STONE

How do you do...? Good to see you....
Welcome....

As Stone makes his way through crowd, REVEAL: UNCOMFORTABLE REACTIONS on faces of guests at Stone's bizarre appearance.

A WOMAN (20s) with wild hair and an oddly-designed "power suit" approaches, greets Stone -- she's the MAYOR.

MAYOR

Thanks again for your generous contribution. Extremely generous...

STONE

My pleasure, your Mayor-ness. Been takin' an interest in politics lately.

MAYOR

Your interests are my interests...

(turns to Tasha)

Oh, what a lovely little boy. How old?

TASHA

(uncomfortable)

Three months.

ACROSS THE ROOM -- EVA exits from ELEVATOR, signals to STONE. RACK FOCUS BACK TO: STONE, mid-conversation.

STONE

If you'll excuse me for a moment. There's someone I have to --

MAYOR

By all means. Network away...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As STONE EXITS, the MAYOR excuses herself, beelines toward some of the CEOS. Tasha grabs a CHAMPAGNE, slugs it down.

Then her eyes are drawn to: A TV MONITOR, displaying one of LAZARUS' VIDEOS. She reacts in shock...

CLOSE ON: THE CHAMPAGNE GLASS, SMASHING TO THE FLOOR.

Tasha, unnerved, takes the NANNY into a conspiratorial huddle.

— TASHA
Come with me....

CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- BOARDROOM -- SIMULTANEOUS

TWO DOCTORS IN LABCOATS, looking like they've been roused out of bed, wait with EVA as Stone ENTERS.

STONE
Gentlemen -- I know our appointment wasn't scheduled 'til next week, but this is an emergency so I 'preciate your being able to make a house call on such short notice.

EVA winks -- clearly the doctors had no choice in the matter.

DOCTOR #1
What seems to be the trouble?

STONE
My condition has advanced a little more rapidly than anticipated.

DOCTOR #2
How so?

Stone reaches into his pocket, pulls out a balled-up HANDKERCHIEF, tosses it onto the table. The Doctors open it up, revealing: STONE'S TORN-OUT "BAD" EYEBALL. Off the Doctors' reactions...

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- NIGHT

Lazarus still weeping in front of Mary's grave. The CROW "caws," cranes its head. Lazarus turns, follows bird's gaze, sees: HEADLIGHTS APPROACHING, cutting through fog.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- BATHROOM -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: ALBINO BIRD'S EYES, seemingly sensing something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FOLLOW BIRD as it flutters off perch, flies through billowing white CURTAINS OUT WINDOW. HOLD ON CURTAINS and...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON: BILLOWING HEM of a gown. REVEAL AND FOLLOW: TASHA -- BABY in her arms -- walking alongside NANNY on grounds of the cemetery. As they approach MARY'S GRAVE, Tasha gives a guided tour to the infant:

TASHA

This is your Aunt Mary's resting place.
She's watching over you, even though you
can't see her...

As they get closer, Tasha's expression changes to one of concern when she sees HANDPRINT on the marker and INDENTATIONS in ground beneath it. She tries to brush it off, continues:

TASHA

...and over here is your Uncle Laza--

Tasha stops in her tracks at sight of Lazarus' disturbed grave: headstone smashed, ground torn up.

TASHA

(to Nanny; edge in her voice)
-- Take the baby.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- BOARDROOM -- SIMULTANEOUS

Stone's meeting with doctors in progress.

STONE

You examined my samples: yes?

DOCTOR #1

Like nothing we've ever seen before...

He produces A LARGE TRANSPARENCY OF RED BLOOD CELLS UNDER A MICROSCOPE.

DOCTOR #1

These are normal red blood cells. Note
the shape of the platelets.

DOCTOR #2

And these... are your cells...

DOCTOR #2 produces ANOTHER TRANSPARENCY -- BLACK CELLS in the familiar CROW SHAPE surrounding "normal" red ones...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR #2

The host cells are under attack by their much stronger intruders. Like a virus, if you will. Eventually...

He produces YET ANOTHER TRANSPARENCY, bearing the label: PROJECTED RESULT -- it's all CROW cells.

DOCTOR #1

...Again, unprecedented in the annals of medicine -- a hyper-metamorphic-condition.

STONE

Let's skip all the hypodermic mitochloridian shit and cut to the chase: how do I stop it?

DOCTORS 1&2

(in unison; flustered)

Wh..why w-would you wan --

STONE

-- I have my reasons. Now: I'm paying you fellas up the ying-yang, mad loot. So I'ma ask you one more time: is this condition reversible?

DOCTOR #1

Yes.

Doctor #2 produces a TEST-TUBE of GLOWING LIQUID, places it on the table. Stone lifts the tube up to light, examines it...

DOCTOR #2

A complex formulation: antibodies, genetically isolated from the attacking bird-shaped cells, chemically fused with this...

DOCTOR #1 SLAMS a BLACK CARDBOARD BOX down on the table. On the box: A HUGE SKULL AND CROSSBONES LOGO beneath a label that reads: BIRD POISON.

MOVE IN ON: THE SKULL AND CROSSBONES and...

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- SIMULTANEOUS

Tasha kneels down in front of Lazarus' grave, investigates. Picks up dirt in her hands, realizes it's fresh.

LAZARUS (O.S.)

Find what you're looking for?

Tasha turns, SCREAMS, finds herself face-to-face with Lazarus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TASHA
(trembling)
It was you...I thought I --

LAZARUS
(ice cold)
-- Must really love your sister a lot:
leaping into the arms of her betrayer.
Don't see a ring on your finger, so maybe
you're just another one of his baby-mamas.
Not a bad little arrangement -- pays
better than working TV, I'm sure...

Stung, Tasha starts crying. Through tears:

TASHA
How can you say that? He was...he was
there for me...

FLASHBACK TO: GRAVEYARD -- ONE YEAR EARLIER -- DAY

First time we've seen daylight the entire picture. Lazarus and Mary's FUNERALS in progress. As PRIEST gives a sermon and MOURNERS gather in receiving line, REVEAL: bandaged STONE, in a wheelchair, clutching hand of a black-veil clad Tasha.

TASHA (V.O.)
...After you and Mary passed, he was the
only family I had left. That night, we...
(trails off)
And now I don't know what to --

MOVE IN ON: TASHA'S CRYING FACE and MATCH CUT BACK TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- PRESENT

CLOSE ON: TASHA, shaking, in tears.

LAZARUS (O.S.)
-- Save your tears for some real pain:
like the truth...

Lazarus' HAND enters FRAME, presses against her forehead...

FLASH TO: A SUPER-INTENSE RAPID-FIRE SUBLIMINAL BARRAGE OF KEY IMAGES FROM THE MURDERS OF LAZARUS AND MARY as Lazarus psychically transmits the painful memories to Tasha.

RESUME SCENE

Lazarus pulls his hand away. Tasha's expression is now one of total devastation and fear. She tries to speak, can't.

PULL AWAY FROM THE GRAVESIDE TABLEAU of Tasha and Lazarus, widening to REVEAL: NANNY with BABY at edge of frame, Lazarus obscured from their view by the crest of a knoll.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PULL BACK FURTHER, INTO A TREE, REVEALING: THE ALBINO BIRD, watching the whole thing.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- ELEVATOR -- SIMULTANEOUS

STONE with Eva, smug satisfaction on his face. Then an alarmed expression takes hold...

FLASH TO: ALBINO BIRD'S GRAVEYARD POV of Tasha and Lazarus.

RESUME. MOVE IN ON STONE'S EYES and...

MATCH CUT TO:

E.C.U. ON: A PAIR OF EYES, distorted, on a computer MONITOR, individual PIXELS visible. We are...

INT. POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: ALBRECHT at the computer, Lazarus' image on the screen. He sifts through as much information as possible about Lazarus' life and death. PHOTOS, POLICE FILES, NEWSPAPER ARTICLES scroll by on screen.

FURLEIGH walks by, bitterness on Furleigh's face as OTHER COPS AD LIB INSULTS, making fun of the vomiting incident: "Hey HURL-leigh, blow any good chunks lately?"...etc.

CLOSE ON THE MONITOR: LAST KNOWN ADDRESS: 7704 _____ BLVD.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: A PHOTO OF MARY, dusty, draped in cobwebs. We are:

INT. LAZARUS' ABANDONED LOFT -- NIGHT

No electricity. Illuminated only by a lone BURNING CANDLE. Remnants, artifacts of Lazarus' life with Mary everywhere. FOLLOW THE CROW as it ENTERS through a broken window, REVEAL:

LAZARUS, slumped in a dusty, cracked leather EASY CHAIR. A picture of Mary on his lap. In his hand, a RUSTY KNIFE. He draws the blade across his wrist, watches as it heals up again, repeats -- can only let out anguished laugh.

The CROW perches nearby, locks eyes with him. Then both heads turn at the sound of a KNOCK ON THE DOOR. REVEAL: Albrecht, opening door, poking his head in:

ALBRECHT

Hello...?

CUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- LOBBY -- SIMULTANEOUS

Stone wanders through the crowd, looking in vain for Tasha, is stopped by the INVESTMENT BANKER.

INVESTMENT BANKER

There you are -- you've got a presentation to make. Crowd's getting antsy. Not the kind of people you want to disappoint, believe me...

STONE

Five minutes.

INVESTMENT BANKER

Fine.

(pause)

You okay? Frankly, you seem a little, how do you say...weird...

STONE

Nerves. This is a big night --

INVESTMENT BANKER

-- Well, make like a rubber band and snap out of it...

(frat boy pat on back)

Go get 'em Tiger.

Stone removes Banker's hand, rolls his eyes as Banker EXITS. Beat. Then he goes into another one of his "states" again...

SUBLIMINAL FLASH TO CROWVISION POV:

LAZARUS in the apartment -- Stone is now sharing imagery from both birds...

RESUME SCENE

Stone spots CAPTAIN TARKIN, in the middle of a conversation, pulls him away. Stone whispers in his ear. We don't hear what they say, but Tarkin nods, then Stone hands him a cellphone. As Tarkin EXITS FRAME...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION -- SAME

CLOSE ON: A TELEPHONE

COMMANDER (O.S.)

Right away.

A HAND, POLICE INSIGNIA LINKS visible on surrounding UNIFORM CUFF, hangs it up. Beat. Then over a LOUDSPEAKER we hear:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMMANDER (O.S.)
Tactical unit, we have a situation: 7704
_____ Blvd., suspect armed and dangerous.

CUT TO:

INT. LAZARUS' ABANDONED LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

Albrecht now talking with Lazarus, still in his chair.

— LAZARUS
-- I didn't choose this.

ALBRECHT
No one does. But you've been chosen...

INTERCUT TO:

INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- LOBBY -- SIMULTANEOUS

Stone beside INVESTMENT BANKER, who's behind PODIUM, giving an intro for Stone to guests. MOVE THROUGH ROOM as he speaks...

INVESTMENT BANKER (O.S.)
...one of the most successful
entrepreneurs of our time, a man who has
fought against all odds, even death
itself, to realize his dreams...

...and REVEAL: TASHA and the NANNY, BABY in arms, as they try to make an inconspicuous entrance, slip into crowd. Behind Tasha: ALBINO BIRD flutters in, as if to rat her out.

CLOSE ON STONE: Poker-faced, notices, locks eyes with Tasha.

INTERCUT TO:

EXT./INT. SWAT VAN -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

OPEN on A TRIO OF OMINOUS BLACK VANS, travelling fast in a convoy. MOVE INSIDE ONE OF THEM, REVEALING...

A HIT SQUAD OF POLICE OFFICERS, dressed in black -- Furleigh among them -- meticulously loading an awesome arsenal of weapons. As Furleigh cocks a shotgun...

INTERCUT -- INT. LAZARUS' LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

Albrecht and Lazarus continue...

ALBRECHT
You're not the only one.

LAZARUS
I know that now: Stone...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBRECHT

No. There've been others before you.
A friend of mine, for one -- back in
Detroit...

INTERCUT -- INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- LOBBY -- SIMULTANEOUS

Investment Banker continues...

INVESTMENT BANKER

And without further ado, please welcome
the newest member of the MediaCorp family!

Stone turns to him, whispers:

STONE

'Scuse me a sec...

...then makes his way through crowd to Tasha, feigns concern:

STONE

I was worried, looked all over for you...

Off Tasha's uneasy reaction...

INTERCUT -- EXT. STREET -- NIGHT -- SIMULTANEOUS

The black HIT SQUAD VANS getting closer...

INTERCUT -- INT. LAZARUS' LOFT -- NIGHT

Albrecht and Lazarus' conversation continues:

LAZARUS

But why...? Why was your friend brought
back? Why would I be brought back?

ALBRECHT

Same reasons, motives: love, justice....
The power you've been given is a blessing:
a chance to undo the wrong, set things
right...

(looks at his own wedding ring)
...luckier than most of us.

LAZARUS

And what about evil, deceit, betrayal...?
Why would someone with these motives be
blessed?

Before Albrecht can answer...

INTERCUT -- INT. BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- LOBBY -- SIMULTANEOUS

HEADS TURNING toward Stone now, curious as to why he's not up
onstage. Investment Banker forced to ad lib, stall for time:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INVESTMENT BANKER (O.S.)
...did I mention his work as a
motivational speaker, helping thousands...

Stone icily glares at Tasha, Albino Bird now on his shoulder.

The Nanny, holding baby, chimes in: —

NANNY
It was stuffy in here. He needed some
fresh air.

STONE
(re: baby)
Can I hold him?

Nervous beat between Tasha and Nanny; then Nanny puts baby
into Stone's outstretched hands. Stone cradles his son with
one arm, against chest, kisses the top of the baby's head.

STONE
(baby-talk)
My little man okay? Get enough airy-air?

Then...Stone whips out a GUN, blasts Nanny between the eyes.

STONE
(to Nanny)
You're fired!

Chaos now in crowd -- people turn toward source of gunshot,
see: dead Nanny, Stone holding gun, blood splattered all over
his white suit as he cradles crying baby.

STONE
What the fuck you all looking at?!?

The INVESTMENT BANKER, standing with wide-eyed CEOS, looks
like he's going to have a heart attack, runs back to podium.

-INVESTMENT BANKER
Ladies and gentlemen: this concludes the
evening's festivities. Thank you...

Tasha tries to make a break for it, runs through horde of
scurrying GUESTS, smacks straight into EVA, who restrains her.

As Stone approaches with baby and GUN...

INTERCUT -- LAZARUS' LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

Albrecht and Lazarus continue.

LAZARUS
I feel like I brought this on. Me and
Stone, we're two sides of the same coin.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS (cont'd)

Did some bad things in my youth, just like him. Looked the other way when his evil grew, didn't stop him when I could have...

ALBRECHT

But you turned your life around, embraced something greater than yourself: love.

LAZARUS

Doesn't matter. Maybe his being here is my way of being punished. A curse...

ALBRECHT

...Or maybe it's a challenge.

(pause)

We like to believe -- need to believe -- that there's an order to our Universe. And yet, look around: life generally isn't fair. Nor death for that matter...

MOVE IN ON: LAZARUS as he absorbs Albrecht's words.

ALBRECHT (CONT.)

-- But like I said: my friend was brought back for a reason. He had a mission. Maybe it's your mission, too: to set the wrong things right.

Then suddenly... RED LASER-TARGETING SPOTS appear -- on the walls, Lazarus -- emanating from outside. The CROW CAWS, turns its head, just as...A FUSILLADE OF BULLETS rips through windows, walls, Lazarus...

LAZARUS

Get down!

As the CANDLE is snuffed out by a whizzing bullet, SWITCH TO:

INFRA-RED NIGHTVISION BINOCULAR POV: LAZARUS' SILHOUETTE

Slumped in the easy chair, no heat reading off it. We are...

EXT. LAZARUS' ABANDONED BUILDING -- NIGHT -- CONTINUOUS

REVEAL: FURLEIGH, on an opposite rooftop, lifting goggles, giving an arm signal to SQUADRON MEMBERS around him.

WIDEN, PAN TO REVEAL: MORE SQUAD MEMBERS storming into building from street, rappelling down side of from above.

INTERCUT TO:

EXT. STREET/BRIMSTONE INDUSTRIES -- SIMULTANEOUS

Stone pushes through stunned onlookers, drags a terrified Tasha menacingly by the arm, toward waiting TOWN CAR.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE

Try to get away from me? Huh, Mary? No
one leaves me.

He opens door, shoves her INSIDE.

THROUGH OPEN DOOR, REVEAL: EVA behind the wheel, giving a wicked smile, BABY in BASSINET in front seat next to her.

Stone jumps in after her, slams door as CAR speeds off. As the car runs a red light, a GUN is tossed out the window.

INT. TOWN CAR -- MOVING -- CONTINUOUS

Stone clutches Tasha's arm in backseat as Eva drives wildly.

TASHA

(trembling)

You called me Mary...

MOVE IN ON: STONE'S FACE, thinking. If the cat wasn't out of the bag before, it is now. He calls out to front seat:

STONE

Can we get some music up in this
motherfucker?

CLOSE ON: EVA'S BLACK GLOVED HAND turning on STEREO.

As the same CLASSICAL ARIA from the night of Lazarus' murder blares over the system, CONTINUE MUSIC INTO NEXT SCENE and...

INTERCUT -- INT. LAZARUS' LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

Illuminated only by moonlight and flare from infra-reds now.

CLOSE ON: A WHITE HAND HOLDING A BLOOD-STAINED GLOVE, dropping it onto floor.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: FURLEIGH, at lead of team entering through doorway. Pulls a TEAR-GAS GRENADE from vest, tosses it inside. FOLLOW as he LOWERS GAS MASK, switches on FLASHLIGHT attached to SHOTGUN, sweeps through loft. We hear a COUGH...

BEAM ILLUMINATES: ALBRECHT, hiding beside a dresser.

FURLEIGH

Holy shit -- this your crackhouse we're
busting up? Been leading a secret life
we don't know about?

ALBRECHT

Apparently you have --

Furleigh cocks his SHOTGUN mid-air with one hand, grins:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURLEIGH

-- Only one sure way to keep a secret.

THE CROW CAWS. Furleigh swings beam toward source of noise, sees... LAZARUS in CHAIR, staring right at him.

Furleigh backs away in terror, drops shotgun, which fires right into his chest, rocketing him back into doorway and exploding TEAR GAS CANNISTERS. BLAST, SHRAPNEL take out several of men entering through doorway.

Albrecht grabs Furleigh's shotgun, cocks it again, gets back into hiding position.

Outside BULLETS rip through loft now. As FEET KICK THROUGH GLASS and rappelling SQUADRON MEMBERS burst inside, firing...

MOVE IN ON: CROW -- flying, dodging bullets. MOVE IN FURTHER ON ITS EYE and...

MATCH INTERCUT -- INT. LIMO -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

E.C.U. on: STONE'S BLUE EYE, twitching slightly. For a brief second, we can faintly see the CROW'S PERSPECTIVE of the loft fire fight reflected on the surface of his eyeball. Then it fades as we PULL BACK ON...

STONE, entranced by MUSIC, smile forming.

STONE

(softly to self)

Won't be long now...

INTERCUT -- INT. LAZARUS'S LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

TIGHT, SIMILAR COMPOSITION ON: LAZARUS in chair.

LAZARUS

Go ahead. Put me out of my misery.

PULL RAPIDLY BACK as bullets rip into him, REVEALING SQUADRON MEMBERS CIRCLING HIM FROM DISTANCE, blasting away.

As the CROW flutters over them...

INTERCUT -- INT. TOWN CAR -- MOVING

The ALBINO BIRD flutters about the car, as BABY cries in front seat and a terrified Tasha cries in back. MOVE IN ON BIRD'S EYE and...

MATCH INTERCUT -- INT. LAZARUS' LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

E.C.U. ON LAZARUS'S EYES -- At first clenched shut as bullets bombard his body, then suddenly OPENING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As before, we see similar faint reflection of BIRD POV on eyeballs, this time: images of Tasha and Baby's suffering.

Images fade as we pull back into WIDER SHOT of Lazarus, now rising out of the chair.

ALBRECHT -- from hiding position -- sees Lazarus get up, slides his SHOTGUN across floor. FOLLOW SHOTGUN, as it slides through legs of SQUADRON MEMBERS, arriving at LAZARUS' FOOT.

LAZARUS' FOOT gives the SHOTGUN a sideways upward "hacky sack" style kick... —

SLOW MOTION: FOLLOW SHOTGUN as it rises, is caught mid-air by Lazarus with one hand at gun butt. Lazarus flicks his wrist -- A SHELL rises up out of gun, arcs, is scooped back into loading position in ascending chamber, as Lazarus' other hand pulls back on the bolt, cocks shotgun, prepares to fire.

END SLO-MO: FIRING FROM SQUADRON STOPS. We hear a VOICE:

SQUADRON LEADER (O.S.)

Drop your weapon.

MOVE UP LAZARUS' BODY TO HIS FACE...

LAZARUS

How 'bout I offer you a deal: leave now
and you all get to go home in one piece.
If not, well...don't say I never did
nothin' for you.

SQUADRON LEADER (O.S.)

Resume fire!

MOVE IN ON LAZARUS' EYES as we hear the SQUADRON OPEN FIRE AGAIN, only this time through Lazarus' augmented "CROW-HEARING" -- 360° SLOWED-DOWN SPACIOUS SURROUND SOUND, giving us a sense of where each shot is coming from.

LAZARUS' HEAD NEVER MOVES, but his EYES shift back and forth, up and down. As they do, we hear the DISTINCTIVE COCKING and FIRING of his shotgun, front and center in the aural field.

RESUME NORMAL SOUND. PULL BACK TO REVEAL: LAZARUS, never moving his head, instinctively taking out all the gunmen around him with shotgun in a flurry of lightning-fast speed and precision.

PULL BACK FURTHER as Lazarus runs out of ammo, empties last spent shell onto floor with another wrist flick, REVEALING:

A CIRCLE OF DEAD GUNMEN, spread out around him.

Off Albrecht's astonished expression...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LIMO -- MOVING -- SIMULTANEOUS

Similar ASTONISHED expression on TASHA'S FACE, reflected in glass of her PASSENGER WINDOW.

RACK FOCUS ONTO: HER POV OUT THE WINDOW -- Approaching the GRAVEYARD; TOWERING CHURCH on grounds visible in distance.

TASHA (O.S.)
Where are we...?

REVEAL: STONE, maniacal grin on his face.

STONE
-- Shhhh. Don't ruin the surprise.

TILT DOWN to Stone's lap, REVEAL he's fingering a SPARKLING DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING. As we move in on ring, we recognize it as MARY'S. MOVE IN FURTHER ON RING -- blood specks visible on gem and band -- until FRAME IS FILLED with PRISMATIC, KALEIDOSCOPIC E.C.U. ON THE DIAMOND, blurring out of focus.

OVERLAP O.S. SFX: OF BREAKING GLASS and...

MATCH CUT TO:

A SIMILAR BLURRED KALEIDOSCOPIC PATTERN...

Only this time in shades of GREEN. We are...

INT. LAZARUS' LOFT -- SIMULTANEOUS

FOCUS TO REVEAL: AN INFRA-RED NIGHTVISION GOGGLE POV, moving in through window toward Lazarus' SILHOUETTE in apartment.

SPLIT SCREEN: REVEAL ANOTHER GOGGLE POV FROM DIFFERENT ANGLE, then CONTINUE SPLIT SCREENING until we see MULTIPLE GOGGLE POV PANELS IN A CHECKERBOARD PATTERN, all roving apartment, moving in towards LAZARUS. THEN WE HEAR SHOTS EXCHANGED...

CENTER SPLIT SCREEN PANEL CUTS TO: LAZARUS, assault rifle in each hand, firing away...

With each gunman Lazarus takes out: INDIVIDUAL GUNMEN POV PANELS BLACK OUT ON SCREEN. When LAZARUS SPLIT SCREEN PANEL is the only one remaining, ENLARGE to full frame, as...

LAZARUS blows smoke off the rifle tips, drops the weapons.

LAZARUS
Coast is clear now.

REVEAL: Albrecht, crawling out from his hiding place.

ALBRECHT
Thank you. You saved my life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAZARUS

No. You saved mine.

THE CROW CAWS, cranes head out window. Lazarus follows its gaze, sees: CEMETERY CHURCH TOWER looming in the distance.

He removes some HANDGUNS from the bodies of the slain GUNMEN, pockets them, heads toward the window.

ALBRECHT

So what now?

LAZARUS

Final destination.

The CROW flies out through the window. Lazarus follows suit, disappearing into the darkness.

OUTSIDE -- CONTINUOUS

CRANE AWAY FROM WINDOW as Albrecht stares out into distance, until window is a mere pinprick on horizon, eventually
SETTLING ON THE CROW: Soaring through the night sky.

CROWVISION POV: THE CHURCH TOWER, looming ahead.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY GROUNDS -- CHURCH ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

The same cemetery where Lazarus and Mary were/are buried. Stone, ALBINO BIRD fluttering around him, forcefully leads Tasha by arm toward CHURCH FRONT DOOR, shoves her inside. Eva following behind, with BABY in her arms. Stone turns to her:

STONE

When this is all over, remind me to buy
this motherfucker, tear it down, pave it
over so I can build me a new strip joint.

Eva grins, taps finger to temple, as if to say "noted." As they enter...

TILT UP TO: A VERTIGINOUS WIDE ANGLE VIEW OF THE CHURCH (similar to the first time we saw the Brimstone building): SPIRES, STAINED GLASS, bell TOWER, a large CRUCIFIX looming, MOONLIT STORMCLOUDS hover above.

We're looking straight up now, as the CROW ENTERS FRAME, WINGS SPREAD, PERCHES ATOP CRUCIFIX.

CUT TO:

E.C.U.: CANDLE FLAME, WAX MELTING AROUND IT. We are...

INT. CHURCH -- CONTINUOUS

As we hear SOUNDS of FEET CLIMBING STAIRS, TASHA struggling, BABY crying, echoing and receding into distance...

WIDEN SLIGHTLY TO REVEAL: STONE'S HAND, holding the candle, dripping wax onto the TIP OF A BULLET.

PULL BACK, REVEAL: STONE seated in pew, ritualistically making "CROWKILLER" BULLETS:

...He runs the bullets along edge of a ANTIQUE SWORD, carving X-shaped grooves on tips to hollow them out, pours GLOWING LIQUID FROM TEST-TUBE into gaps, seals tips with wax. When finished, he rests SWORD in an upright position leaning against pew, then loads BULLETS into CHAMBER of a REVOLVER.

Then he kisses barrel, pockets gun, grins:

STONE

Amen.

CRANE UP NOW, past fluttering ALBINO BIRD, revealing that the SWORD has been removed from a WALL-MOUNTED COAT OF ARMS display. CONTINUE UP TO A STAINED GLASS WINDOW.

We see a SHADOW behind it and then...

LAZARUS EMERGES, leaping through the glass, CROW FOLLOWING in his wake. As they descend, EXITING FRAME, we hear glass rain down and Lazarus land with a THUD on the floor.

STONE (O.S.)

Nice of you to drop in.

CONTINUE MOVING UP INTO: THE CHURCH TOWER

Where Tasha is bound and gagged to a chair...

REVEAL CHAIR precariously balanced atop a BALCONY RAILING, looking down upon the church floor below.

MOVE AROUND CHAIR, REVEALING that it is being held by a CORD tied to chairback. FOLLOW CORD, REVEALING that it's being held taut by EVA'S BLACK LEATHER BOOT. MOVE UP EVA'S BODY, REVEAL that she's cradling the BASSINET with BABY INSIDE.

As Tasha struggles, Eva gives her a "naughty, naughty" look, goes back to rocking baby.

BACK TO -- CHURCH FLOOR -- CONTINUOUS

LAZARUS RISES from his landing position, GUN DRAWN.

STONE, stands across pew aisle from Lazarus, also with GUN DRAWN. Echoes of Mexican Standoffs past.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE

We don't really need these, do we?
Already know they ain't gonna do us no
good and I don't want to mess up my
threads any more than I have to. Blood
washes out, but bullet holes...? Those
are a bitch to sew up.

Lazarus tosses his gun over shoulder.

LAZARUS

Beatdown time.

Stone tosses his gun over shoulder, grins.

STONE

We'll see.

And with that, they leap toward one another, getting into an
amazingly choreographed *mano a mano* brawl, enhanced by their
Crow powers --

It's like the fastest, most awe-inspiring bare-knuckle
kickboxing match you've ever seen: all amazing defense, as
they seemingly anticipate each other's moves, dodging blows,
leaping away with their superhuman speed and strength.

Battle is interrupted by the LOUD CHIME of the CHURCH BELL.

INT. CHURCH -- TOWER -- SIMULTANEOUS

The BELL startles Eva, BOOT momentarily stepping off the CORD.
Tasha's CHAIR tips forward, even more precariously, STOPS when
Eva STOMPS down on the moving cord, keeping Tasha from falling
to her death.

Tasha glares back at Eva. Eva gives her an "oops" shrug.

INTERCUT TO:

EXT. LAZARUS' LOFT BUILDING -- SIMULTANEOUS

Albrecht, still shaken by previous events, heads toward his
car, hears CHURCH BELL in the distance. Turns, sees CHURCH
TOWER in skyline, has a sudden realization. Hops into his
car, starts driving toward GRAVEYARD.

BACK TO:

INT. CHURCH -- CHURCH FLOOR -- SIMULTANEOUS

The bell stops ringing. Stone and Lazarus pause.

STONE

I'd call that a 10-10 round. How 'bout
you...?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STONE (cont'd)

Good thing I didn't bite your ear off, get myself disqualified...

LAZARUS

This ain't going to no cards. Your ass is going down, six feet deep. No coming back for you this time.

STONE

That right? Then maybe we should go back to plan one --

Stone pulls out his REVOLVER

STONE

-- I ain't no pussy or nothing, but I just feel more comfortable with a nice piece of cold steel in my hand.

As Lazarus reaches for his gun...

BLAM!! STONE fires a shot into Lazarus' abdomen, with one of the HOLLOW-POINT "CROWKILLER" BULLETS.

The shot staggers Lazarus. He drops his gun, looks down at his wound: A GAPING HOLE, ringed by GLOWING ANTIDOTE SERUM. Not healing this time. He looks up with questioning eyes.

STONE

I know what you're thinking: how do you kill someone who can't be killed? Good thing I'm wealthy, can afford the best doctors in the world. Cheap-ass HMO motherfuckers would never prescribe me a miracle cure like this...

And with that, he gleefully displays the TEST-TUBE.

STONE

-- Shall we continue with round two?

Lazarus tries to leap toward him, but BLAM! Another BULLET HIT sends him tumbling back to the floor, another gaping GLOWING hole in his body. He's dying, in extreme agony.

STONE

Knockdown! That's a two point round! Unless, of course, you don't get up for the count...

Stone fires MORE BULLETS, mimicking a ring referee's count with each blast.

STONE

Three (BLAM), Four (BLAM), Five (BLAM), Six (BLAM) Seven...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLICK. He's out of bullets.

STONE

Damn, knew I shoulda loaded a bigger clip.

(tossing gun aside)

-- Doesn't really matter, I guess. You're
ass is all canvas now...

ANGLE ON: LAZARUS, on the floor, six holes in his chest,
suffering unbearably, blood beginning to seep through his
clothes.

The Crow perches atop Lazarus, looks him in the eye, appears
to be trying to tell him something...

FOLLOW LAZARUS'S POV as it follows CROW'S CRANING NECK,
REVEALING: LAZARUS' GUN, just out of reach on the floor...

Lazarus strains for GUN, tries to reach it as the CROW
flutters off of his body.

Stone, ALBINO BIRD fluttering behind him, notices, rips gun
away from Lazarus' reach.

STONE

You want this? Okay...I'll let you go
down fighting, if it'll make you feel
better about yourself and all. Obviously
had a lot of unresolved issues with that
shit last time around. Here --

Stone places the GUN in Lazarus' hands, even helps him wrap
his weakend fingers around the trigger. Both birds fluttering
behind Stone's back now.

LAZARUS' POV: LOOKING UP FROM FLOOR.

Stone steps back, opens his jacket, giving Lazarus a perfect
target. As the CROW lets out a caw, RACK FOCUS behind Stone,
following the CROW zig-zagging back and forth...

Lazarus' POV shifts over a few inches and we notice that the
ALBINO BIRD is doing the same thing, mimicking the BLACK
CROW's movements in perfect unison, as if they are linked.

POV shifts back to CROW, cawing again, locking in on Lazarus'
eyes as it moves back and forth.

CLOSE ON: Lazarus' EYES, dawning realization taking hold.

ANGLE -- STONE, birds still zig-zagging in unison behind him,
starts to get annoyed.

STONE

C'mon, already nigga -- ain't got all day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Lazarus trains the gun on Stone...

STONE
That's more like it...

...then raises his aim up an inch, FIRES A SHOT INTO THE CROW.

THE CROW sinks like a rock, and as it does...

The ALBINO BIRD, not even hit, tumbles down along with it.

Stone reacts with alarm, tends to fallen ALBINO BIRD.

STONE
(shaking head)
Fucking with a man's pet. Cold...

CLOSE ON: STONE'S HANDS holding bird. The BIRD disintegrates into feathers. Then we see a TOOTH fall to the floor.

REVEAL: STONE'S FACE, as another TOOTH falls from his mouth, then another. Then his SCARS start to re-form, now oozing blood. Then his BLUE EYE disintegrates, blood trickling from open socket... STONE HAS REVERTED TO HIS MORTAL STATE.

As he lets out a harrowing SCREAM...

INTERCUT TO:

TOWER BALCONY -- CONTINUOUS

Eva reacts to the SCREAM, dropping BASSINET, runs forward toward railing to see what has happened to Stone.

THE CORD, no longer held down by her boot, slides across floor, pulled by...

TASHA'S CHAIR, tipping forward, about to fall. She tries to balance as Eva approaches, but Eva spills into her...

The CHAIR FALLS, but Tasha manages to break free, gripping balcony with one hand, as chair drops out from under her...

THE CORD catches on a BRACELET on her OTHER WRIST, suspending dangling chair beneath her, exacerbating Tasha's efforts to keep her grip on balcony above.

EVA looks down, snarls as she STOMPS on Tasha's hand. TASHA SCREAMS in pain, struggles to retain her grip.

CHURCH FLOOR -- SIMULTANEOUS

LAZARUS reacts to scream, looks up, attempts to lift himself, finds it difficult -- he is now in mortal state, too: on top of the "CROWKILLER BULLET" wounds, his original wounds start opening up -- unstitching -- as well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The CORROSIVE MARKINGS on his face and body dissipate, dripping off like sweat.

STONE reacts, too, devilish grin on his face a truly ghastly sight -- he now looks even worse: skin peeling off his face where Lazarus' bullet tore through his cheek a year earlier, limping with once-again shattered kneecap.

Just then...

ALBRECHT bursts through the door. Sees Lazarus and Stone, then looks up, sees Tasha's precarious position above.

STONE

Go on, Deputy Fife, it's okay -- we got our hands full down here.

As ALBRECHT rushes UPSTAIRS, Stone turns to Lazarus:

STONE

Right where we left off a year ago --

LAZARUS

-- But this time, I get to see you die for real.

STONE

Not if I kill you first...

And with that, Stone leaps upon Lazarus and they go into a hard-scrabble wrestling brawl, severely slowed down by their weakened states. Rough, agonizing -- we feel every blow as they tumble around on the floor, their open wounds making each contact that much more painful.

TOWER BALCONY -- SIMULTANEOUS

ALBRECHT struggles with EVA, while Tasha hangs on for dear life.

THE BABY, now out of the bassinet, crawls toward Tasha's hand, in danger of slipping through railing...

EVA delivers a devastating ELBOW to Albrecht's ribs, knocking him back, prepares to stomp on Tasha's hand again...

TASHA grabs the cord tangled in her bracelet, whips arm upward, lassoing chair and cord around Eva's neck. Yanks hard, sending Eva tumbling off balcony...

TASHA

Never, ever, ever try to come between a mother and her baby.

As ALBRECHT lifts baby to safety, grabs Tasha's wrist...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHURCH FLOOR -- SIMULTANEOUS

EVA lands with a thud, impaling herself on UPRIGHT SWORD IN PEW, as STONE and LAZARUS continue fighting.

STONE gets within reach of the SWORD handle, protruding upward into Eva's back, grabs it with all of his might...

STONE

Sorry, baby, but I need this.

CONVULSING EVA, draped across pews, dies from exit wound as the SWORD is YANKED out of her. --

STONE uses what little strength he has left to slash the sword across Lazarus' torso...

LAZARUS rolls backward in agony as...

STONE drops sword, manages to use the leverage of his arms against the pews to lift himself into sitting position. Watches as Lazarus draws his dying breaths.

STONE

Checkmate, nigga.

Just SLOWING HEARTBEAT, WEAKENED BREATHING SFX ON SOUNDTRACK as we follow --

LAZARUS' DYING POV: MOVING SLOWLY IN AND OUT OF FOCUS... --

DOWN Stone's seated body, ONTO his feet, ACROSS bloodstains on floor, PAST white FEATHERS, PAST DEAD CROW, and ONTO...

MARY'S ENGAGEMENT RING -- knocked loose from Stone's pocket during their tussle. Lazarus reaches toward it.

QUICK FLASH OF: MARY, ring visible on HAND, tenderly stroking Lazarus' cheek in GREEN ROOM, night of concert.

BACK TO SCENE -- RESUME NORMAL SOUND

STONE reacts, fury in his eyes, but unable to move out of pew.

STONE

Don't touch that...!

LAZARUS

You stole her ring? Out of her casket?
After having her killed?

FROM THE BALCONY -- TASHA

clutching Albrecht's wrist, hears exchange, almost releases her grip from shock. Albrecht valiantly manages to hold on....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BACK TO -- CHURCH FLOOR

Tears from Stone's lone "good eye" now, mixing with blood. A grisly sight.

STONE

She wasn't supposed to die...it was an accident...

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS' HAND, within grasp of the ring now...

LAZARUS

So you didn't betray me just for money.
What'd you think: that she'd up and run
off with you once I was outta the picture?

STONE

(straining to get up)
I...I loved her...

LAZARUS

Love doesn't work like that...

And with that, Lazarus slips the RING onto his finger, now somehow finds the strength to lift himself up. He moves in toward Stone, limping, hurls himself onto him.

As they tussle, Stone gets Lazarus into a headlock, reaches for a GUN, presses it to Lazarus' temple...

STONE

Don't matter now. We're both dead anyway.

...Then Stone looks up...

STONE'S POV: TASHA being lifted to safety by Albrecht.
Stone's GUNHAND enters frame, gets a bead on them...

STONE

Shit...might as well make it a party...

As Stone's hand tightens on the trigger...

LAZARUS, leaning back against Stone, choking under Stone's headlock, sees the SWORD, manages to get a grip on it...

LAZARUS

After you, bitch...

And with that, Lazarus PLUNGES the sword through his own belly, INTO STONE...

STONE drops the gun. Lazarus leans back with all his might, wriggling, lifts himself again and pile-drives down even harder into Stone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

As Stone gurgles his last breaths, Lazarus cranes his neck, watches Stone's face as he finally dies. Victory.

Lazarus pulls the SWORD out, tosses it to floor, tumbles forward beside it, separates himself from his dead nemesis.

ALBRECHT, TASHA AND BABY emerge from STAIRS, see Lazarus.

LAZARUS

Help me....

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD -- CHURCH -- NIGHT

Albrecht carries a now delirious Lazarus out of Church in his arms, Tasha walking alongside, holding baby.

LAZARUS

...Mary...I need to get back..

ALBRECHT

You're almost with her --

LAZARUS

-- No...I need...to get back...

Albrecht looks at his friend's plaintive look, sees that he has mere seconds to live, realizes what he means. Starts running as fast as he can...

TASHA

What are you --

ALBRECHT

-- the grave. Before his body gives out. Otherwise he'll be trapped here.

WIDE SHOT ACROSS KNOLL: SILHOUETTE of Albrecht running with Lazarus in his arms, backlit by approaching magic hour before sunrise. He slows, the load too much for a man of his age. Tasha lags behind, with baby.

SEVERAL YARDS FROM GRAVESIDE -- CONTINUOUS

Lazarus frees himself from winded Albrecht, starts crawling toward the GRAVE MARKERS, as Albrecht catches his breath:

ALBRECHT

I've really got to stop smoking...

CLOSE ON: LAZARUS' GRAVE

We hear gurgling, labored breathing, then LAZARUS enters frame, touches hallowed ground. As he does, he's suddenly bathed in a SHIMMERING LIGHT He looks up...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REVEAL: LAZARUS' POV -- MARY appears before him, extends her arms. The image of her is theatrical, stylized, as opposed to ghostly...

ALBRECHT catches up to the grave, starts toward Lazarus.

ALBRECHT'S POV: LAZARUS reaches up toward what appears to be thin air, spreads his arms in embrace...

CLOSE ON: ALBRECHT'S FACE

We don't see what he sees after this, but can tell from his face that it's extraordinary, even by his standards.

TASHA (O.S.)
Lazarus...?

TASHA enters frame behind Albrecht, who gestures toward grave:

PAN SLOWLY TO REVEAL: LAZARUS' GRAVE MARKER, now whole, the ground beneath it undisturbed.

ALBRECHT, TASHA and BABY ENTER FRAME beside grave. Tasha, stunned, hands baby to Albrecht.

TASHA
Would you mind?

ALBRECHT
Not at all.

CLOSE ON: BABY'S FACE, smiling as Albrecht tickles his nose.

TASHA kneels before Lazarus' grave, kisses her palm, presses it against the gravestone. Looks down, sees...

THE ENGAGEMENT RING on top of the fresh, unsullied grass. Picks it up, slips it on her finger.

ALBRECHT (O.S.)
We haven't officially met.

Tasha turns, faces Albrecht, holding her son, heartened by how comfortable the baby seems in the older man's arms.

TASHA
I'm Tasha. Thanks for saving my --

ALBRECHT
-- My pleasure.
(extends hand beneath baby)
Albrecht.
(noticing ring)
Pretty ring. Getting married soon...?

She shakes her head "no":

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TASHA

This belonged to someone very dear to me.
I want to keep her memory alive...

An understanding glance between the two of them. Albrecht hands BABY back to Tasha.

ALBRECHT

He's beautiful. What's his name?

TASHA

His name...?

(pause)

His name is Lazarus.

PULL BACK SLOWLY, as they leave together, SILHOUETTED BEFORE
SUN RISING ORANGE THROUGH BILLOWING CLOUDS BEHIND THEM.

LAZARUS (V.O.)

-- Once upon a time back in the day,
folks used to believe that when someone
died, a crow would carry that person's
soul to the land of the dead...

CONTINUE PULLING BACK, OVER CITY, BACKLIT BY THE SUNRISE...

LAZARUS (V.O.)

...but sometimes, when something bad
happens, a terrible sadness is carried
with it and the soul can't rest --

MOVE UP SLOWLY, until there's nothing but ILLUMINATED CLOUDS
AND ORANGE SKIES now, as MARY'S VOICE takes over:

MARY (V.O.)

-- but sometimes, just sometimes, the
crow can bring that soul back. And put
the wrong things right.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

END.