

MALAVITA

Written by

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Black screen.

A gruff voice begins to speak.

A voice with a slight but unmistakable Italian accent.

A voice that's lived life.

VOICE

The only real question we should ask ourselves during our time here on earth is, How much is a man's life worth? What price a life? Knowing what you're worth is like knowing what day you're gonna die.

(beat)

Me? I'm worth twenty million dollars, and I'd hand over every last buck... to get my old life back.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

MAGGIE

Sweetie? Wake up, we're here.

Slumped against the door, FRED emerges from his dream. Sixty years old; salt-and-pepper hair; rugged, lived-in face.

MAGGIE is driving. 45 years old, a natural Sicilian beauty. The headlights offer glimpses of a residential neighborhood. In the back, WARREN, 14, stretches.

WARREN

Fuck! About time, too!

MAGGIE

Warren! Language.

WARREN

(automatically)

Sorry.

BELLE, 18, lives up to her name. Beautiful, long blonde hair. Sitting bolt upright as if she hasn't moved all journey.

Fred quickly rubs his eyes and sits up.

MAGGIE

(to Fred)

Look for number ten.

FRED

(glimpses an "8")

Next one.

The car pulls up outside some rusty gates. Not very welcoming.

MAGGIE

There's no number.

FRED

Yeah, Quintiliani said. This is it.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Fred pushes open the recalcitrant front door. Flicks a switch. Nothing.

MAGGIE

No electricity?

FRED

(flicks on a flashlight)

There is, but they must have turned it off.

While Fred heads off to find the electrical panel, Maggie stamps on the floor.

WARREN

What're you doing, mom?

MAGGIE

Scaring the rats away.

BELLE

There are rats?

MAGGIE

Who knows. Just in case...

BELLE

I'm warning you, I'm not living in this house if it has rats!

MAGGIE

(wearily)

Belle, don't start, please. Anyway, your father can't stand them either. Give him twenty-four hours and he'll have killed every single rodent in the place.

Fred finds the panel and turns the circuit breaker on.

A few dim lights come on. Maggie sighs in relief.

The children head straight upstairs.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(consults a note)

Belle, you're down the hallway on the left. Warren, opposite your sister.

Belle enters her room: three boxes on the floor, bed, dresser, small desk. Spartan.

Belle opens a window and gazes at the stars over some woods that are vaguely discernible at the far end of the back yard.

She shoves the bed round to be facing the window.

Warren couldn't give a damn about his room's furnishings. He yanks open his boxes to check nothing's been forgotten.

Maggie checks out the kitchen; Fred pokes about in the cellar.

Belle strikes languorous poses in front of the bathroom mirror. Warren checks his laser gun is still working.

One by one, Maggie removes the dust sheets covering the chairs in the living room. Fred lobs framed prints he finds on the walls into the fire.

The near-full moon shines a pale blue light on the house as it comes to life.

Fred brings in the last suitcases and dumps them at the bottom of the stairs.

Belle and Warren come down and everybody flops on the couch in the living room.

They all seem dazed by the journey and moving in late at night.

WARREN

Idiots forgot the TV again.

MAGGIE

Tomorrow, they said.

FRED

Tomorrow's their favorite word. I bet you the TV isn't all they forgot.

MAGGIE

Hey, you two... Don't bawl me out whenever anything's missing. Go see tell them yourselves!

WARREN

Mom, the TV isn't "anything." It's our link to the world, the only thing that can make us forget this rathole you're gonna force us to live in for years. The TV is all that connects us to real life, home, everything we left behind.

Fred and Maggie glance guiltily at each other.

Belle shatters the awkward silence.

BELLE

Does this town have a name?

FRED

Cholong-sur-Avre. Normandy.

MAGGIE

The Avre part's a river.

WARREN

Besides our troops landing here in '44, what's Normandy famous for?

Long silence.

Eventually, Fred ventures:

FRED

Camembert, I guess.

BELLE

The Riviera had camembert, too. And sunshine.

WARREN

Yeah, and Paris had camembert. And it was Paris!

FRED

(irritably)

Right. And now we live where they make it, so you better get used to the real deal, okay?

Another silence.

FRED (CONT'D)

(suddenly)

Anybody see the dog?

Everybody jumps up and starts looking all over.

The kids out in the back yard. Maggie on the patio.

EVERYBODY

Malavita?

Fred heads into the cellar and finds Malavita lying near the boiler. An Australian cattle dog. Three feet tall at the shoulder.

Fred sits on the steps and smiles.

FRED

Already found your spot, huh? Good... Tomorrow, I'll try to find mine.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The sun appears over the forest and begins to burn off wreathes of low-hanging mist. In the distance, dogs and roosters converse.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The family sits having breakfast.

Everybody's dressed, except Fred who's still in his robe.

MAGGIE

No cereals, no toast, no peanut butter this morning. You'll have to make do with the apple croissant I got from the bakery this morning.

BELLE

(reassuring)

It's fine, mom, don't worry.

Warren unenthusiastically reaches for a donut.

WARREN

If the French are so good at pastries, how come they don't get the concept of the donut? How hard can it be to put a hole in it?

FRED

(snaps)

Because the hole makes it taste better?

MAGGIE

(to wrap it up)

I'll make you donuts on Sunday, okay?

Warren bites limply into his apple donut.

FRED

Do we know where the school is?

MAGGIE

I've drawn them a map.

FRED

Don't you want to take them? On their first day?

WARREN

Nah, it's cool, dad. Anywhere in the world, you head out into the street at eight in the morning, see shadowy figures with backpacks on, all shuffling in the same direction, and a little voice pipes up in your head saying, It's that way. Don't go there whatever you do!

BELLE

(smiles)

And eventually, the flow of mesmerized kids stumbles into some kind of dark mouth that wastes no time eating their brains!

FRED

Do us a favor, try being so imaginative in class!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Parents and children hug on the steps.

Fred slips a 20-euro bill into his son's hand.

FRED

(murmurs)

Just in case. Don't spend it.

WARREN

Sure.

The children set off, while their parents watch them go with a hint of apprehension.

Instinctively, Fred glances up and down the street.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Fred grabs his ristretto coffee from the machine.

Maggie arrives in the kitchen with her shopping basket.

MAGGIE

I'm going to check out the town and get some groceries.

FRED

Okay.

MAGGIE

Try not to slob around all day in your bath robe.

FRED

Because of the neighbors?

MAGGIE

No, for your morale.

FRED

My morale is good, Maggie. Don't worry, I'm just a bit dazed. I've always needed more time to adapt than you.

MAGGIE

What do we say if we run into the neighbors?

FRED

Let me give it some thought. For now, just smile. That'll buy us some time to come up with something.

MAGGIE

Quintiliani asked us not to mention the Riviera. I explained that to the kids.

FRED

Where have we come from then?

MAGGIE

The States, sweetie.

Maggie exits the kitchen, leaving her slightly bewildered husband standing there.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Maggie comes through the gate into the street lined with houses from all different periods. She gazes insistently at the house opposite, whose shutters are half closed.

CUT TO:

Inside the house, somebody watches Maggie through the shutters.

Outside, Maggie sighs, then heads left toward the town center.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Fred tosses a picture onto the fire for a little warmth.

Running out of paintings, he heads into the yard, spots an old heap of logs and grabs two. He glances at the sunroom, which looks like a wart on the side of the house.

Inside, Fred lobs the logs onto the fire, then goes back to the verandah and muscles the door open.

The sun shines through the glass, warming the room and its tangled piles of broken or useless objects.

Fred scans the heaps of junk with no idea where to start.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Belle and Warren share a glance as they stand on the edge of the bewildering tumult like two strangers, which of course they are.

BELLE

It's not looking good.

WARREN

Yeah, we're playing in the minor league now.

They scan the faces of people passing by.

BELLE

We'll debrief at lunch.

WARREN

Okay.

The bell rings and they head toward their respective classes.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

Maggie reaches the village square: café, hair salon, smoke shop, a few stores and a jeweler's specializing in identity bracelets.

Maggie unfolds her town map. Her heart drops when she realizes this is all there is. She heaves a long sigh.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

An old TV flies through the glass double doors and lands on the gravel driveway.

FRED

Kaput!

An old microwave follows.

FRED (CONT'D)

Broken!

Fred is cleaning house. Cool, calm and in a hurry to be done.

Malavita sits in the garden watching objects fly past, like a cow watching trains go by.

INT. BELLE'S CLASS - DAY

The students hurry to take their usual seats.

Everybody stops to watch Belle. The girls glance at her with disdain; the boys stare at her with lust.

Finally, she takes a seat that appears to be free.

MADAME MANGIN, the history and geography teacher, takes her books out of her bag and arranges them neatly on her desk.

She adjusts the bun in her hair and opens the class register.

MADAME MANGIN

Okay... Today, we welcome a new student who's from America but speaks French. I want everybody to help her fit in because it won't be easy for her, especially more than halfway through the school year.

All eyes turn to Belle once more.

She basks in the attention, like a star in the spotlights.

MADAME MANGIN (CONT'D)

Her name is Miss Blake. Unfortunately, I don't have your first name.

Miss Blake flutters her eyelashes, pauses for effect to ensure everybody is watching her, then murmurs huskily like a young Marilyn:

BELLE

Belle.

Shivers run down the spines of all the boys.

The girls' jaws drop, revealing their braces.

Madame Mangin wishes she were 18 again.

INT. HALLWAY, SCHOOL - DAY

Two things make MADAME ARNAUD, the principal, an imposing woman: her glasses and her derrière.

MADAME ARNAUD

Warren Blake, I'm sorry, but your first class isn't until ten. You can wait in the student lounge, down the hall on the left, or in the yard.

WARREN

Can I use the bathroom first?

MADAME ARNAUD

Yes, of course. At the end of the hallway on the right. If you don't mind, I'll be going.

WARREN

Sure, I'll be fine, no problem.

Madame Arnaud smiles and scurries away, leaving Warren alone in the empty hallway.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred has cleared half the junk. He can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

He tosses out a series of half-rotten folding chairs, then grabs the handle of a light-gray case.

Intrigued, he places it on the ping-pong table, clicks open the rusty latches and raises the lid.

Black metal, pearly keys. European keyboard. Automatic carriage return.

A little metal plate reads: Brother 900, 1964 model.

It's the first time Frederick Blake has held a typewriter in his hands. His curiosity, emotion even, is palpable. He feels its weight, observes its lines and raises the hammers one by one, trying to recognize the letters.

Fred grabs a chair and sits down at the machine.

He strokes it, checks the ribbon, then types a letter at random, then another and another.

With two, then four, then--thrillingly--all ten fingers! Faster and faster, until the hammers get tangled.

Fred calms down, untangles the hammers, then strokes the typewriter again. Sunshine fills the room.

Fred sits there, robe open, hands on the metal, gradually overwhelmed by an emotion he has never felt before.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Warren sits on the toilet, calmly finishing his cigarette, his mind miles away.

He gets up, flicks the butt into the bowl and flushes.

MONTAGE WITH WARREN:

In the hallway, Warren peers at a class through the window high in the door, watching what the kids get up to behind the teacher's back.

One guy hassles a girl, another cheats, another sleeps, another hits on his neighbor...

CUT TO:

Warren observes a music class: total chaos.

CUT TO:

Warren peers through a round window into the kitchens.

Potatoes on one side, ground beef on the other--shepherd's pie for lunch apparently.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

Maggie sits alone outside the café sipping her coffee and poring over The Cholong Gazette. It contains photos of work in progress to build a traffic circle on the road out of town, pictures of the priest flanked by his choristers, forecasts for a local horse-racing meet and for the weather on the beaches.

Maggie scours every page looking for news from back home. In vain.

She sighs when she reaches the last page, which carries a big photo of the junior team that reached the final in the regional girls' basketball championships.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

It could be the same team playing in the school gym. Reds versus blues. It's a terrible game.

High in the stands, Warren is in despair. Having been raised on the Lakers and Bulls, this is painful to watch.

Down below, a few boys leers at the female players.

Four bigger, older boys suddenly surround Warren, like crows around a pigeon.

ANDRÉ

You're the American?

ANDRÉ, 15, is the leader of the pack, no doubt about it.

Warren shoots them a nasty look. He may not be as bulky as these lunkheads, but his strength lies elsewhere.

WARREN

(tinged with contempt)

Whaddy a want?

André is taken aback. He's gonna have to show this kid who's boss.

ANDRÉ

If you're American, you must be rich.

Warren's heard it all before. They're playing into his hands.

WARREN

You must be spending a lot of time in the fiction section of the library.

André racks his brains but has no comeback.

ANDRÉ

What do your folks do?

WARREN

What is it to you?

ANDRÉ

You gonna act the smartass with us, are you?

WARREN

(sighs)

Okay, can we just cut to the chase? Is the game
Bullying, protection, or straight shakedown? And
once you score what do you do with the dough?
Spend it on candy and sneakers and shit? Or do you
reinvest it and let it work for you?

André looks at him as if Warren is speaking double Dutch.

INT. BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Warren's on the floor. The three lunkheads kick and punch him until he stops moving.

André catches his breath and smiles smugly. Everything's right with the world once more.

He leans over Warren and digs in his pockets, swiping the 20 euros that Fred gave his son that morning.

ANDRÉ

Welcome to Cholong... Yankee!

André pockets the cash and leads his gang out, leaving Warren sprawled on the floor.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

A hammer leaves a huge "G" on the white page, followed by an "i."

Fred scours the keyboard for the next letter, hits the key very deliberately... "o" then "v."
Soon, the word "Giovanni" appears.

Fred tugs the page out and gazes at it with satisfaction and emotion, as if he'd just typed the first of the ten commandments.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

MANAGER

Do we have any what?

Maggie stands there awkwardly, clutching her red plastic supermarket basket.

MAGGIE

Beurre de cacahuète... Peanut butter.

MANAGER

(sneers)

I heard you first time, but we don't stock stuff like that, lady.

He glances at three regular customers for support.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

It's like the other day, somebody asked for tequila and buffalo milk mozzarella! In Normandy!

The locals snicker. Maggie forces herself to smile.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

If I bought all the weird produce people ask for, it'd rot in the stockroom. No thank you very much!

MAGGIE

(squirms)

I was only asking. I'm sorry... And the pasta?

MANAGER

Far end, on the right. After the tinned food.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

She smiles awkwardly and walks off.

The conversation continues behind her.

MANAGER

(rolls his eyes)

Peanut butter!

CUSTOMER #1

No wonder twenty per cent of Americans are obese.

CUSTOMER #2

It's Coca Cola that's to blame! It's the worst, nothing but gas and sugar!

Maggie feels herself tearing up. She hasn't been so humiliated, mortified, in a long time.

She slips into the first aisle, stops, her back against boxes of cereals, and tries to gather her wits, while continuing to eavesdrop on the locals' conversation.

MANAGER

I've nothing against them, but they always act like they own the place.

CUSTOMER #1

Sure, they led the Landings, but since then we've been overrun!

CUSTOMER #2

That's the least of it! My kids dress like them, listen to the same music, watch the same TV series...

MANAGER

And if you listen to them, they'd be eating McDonald's morning, noon and night!

Everybody laughs.

CUSTOMER #1

That's right. They have no taste!

CUSTOMER #2

They're so ignorant!

Maggie is terribly hurt. She wipes away a tear and heads toward the far end of the store.

CUT TO:

Maggie fills her cart with various types of pasta.

Farther on, she lobs two bottles of methylated spirits into her cart.

CUT TO:

Near the stockroom, Maggie empties the bottles of methylated spirits over a pile of boxes waiting to be trashed.

CUT TO:

At the checkout, the Manager scans Maggie's articles--pasta, cereals, meat, vegetables...

In silence.

MANAGER

That makes 96.80 euros.

Maggie takes out a hundred and places it on the conveyor belt.

MAGGIE

(tense smile)

Keep the change.

MANAGER

(stunned)

Oh! Thanks.

The Manager shares a quick glance with the other two customers. The Americans have no taste or talent, but maybe they make up for that with their generosity.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

See you soon, I hope.

MAGGIE

(phony smile)

You sure will!

While she bags up her purchases, Customer #1 looks up.

CUSTOMER #1

Say, Raymond? What's that funny smell?

Raymond sniffs the air like a spaniel.

CUSTOMER #2

She's right. Something's burning!

Raymond sees thick smoke coming from the far end of the store.

MANAGER

Holy shit!

He rushes toward the fire.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Maggie opens the trunk of her car and begins loading it up.

The fire alarm sounds.

Behind her, smoke billows from the supermarket. Customers scamper out like rats leaving a sinking ship.

The Manager runs past carrying an extinguisher.

INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

As Maggie cruises away, a Cholong-sur-Avre fire truck hurtles the other way, sirens wailing.

Maggie can't help grinning.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred types a sentence on his typewriter.

FRED (V.O.)

an enemy cashing in his chips is sweeter than
making a new friend. Who needs new friends?

Fred sits back in his chair with a satisfied smile.

He reaches for the ristretto he's likely just made, and savors it.

His new status as a writer seems to bring him greater happiness than he's ever known.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The cafeteria is buzzing. Students stand in line at the self-service counters.

Belle leans forward to check out the food on offer. Every time she moves, her top slips off her shoulder revealing a satin bra strap. And every time, Belle quickly covers it up, but not before a group of 12th graders gets a glimpse of her underwear.

They nudge each other, in anticipation of the next glimpse.

STUDENT #1

You'll see! It's every ten seconds.

Belle's top falls off her shoulder again, revealing her bra.

STUDENT #1 (CONT'D)

See?

STUDENT #2

(gawks)

She's fucking horny!

STUDENT #3

She's doing it on purpose! American chicks are total freaks.

Belle walks past with her tray.

JP, the student with the most nerve but not the least pimples, calls over.

JP

Hey, pull up a chair if you want.

BELLE

Thanks, but I'm going to sit with my little brother.

Her top falls off her shoulder again.

The boys' eyes bulge.

BELLE (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Tomorrow maybe?

JP

(clumsy)

Yeah, anytime.

Belle smiles and walks away, leaving the pimply teens in a hot flush.

STUDENT #3

She's dripping for it!

JP

Yeah, and she's all mine. Hands off!

STUDENT #2

What if she wants to share? It's her call.

JP

We'll see.

Belle puts her tray down and sits opposite Warren.

BELLE

Is it any good?

WARREN

Edible.

BELLE

We're not far from the house. We could go home for lunch.

WARREN

To see mom with her head in the refrigerator wondering what she can make for us? And dad in his pajamas vegetating in front of the TV. No, thanks. Not my idea of a good time.

Belle lets it go and delicately nibbles at slices of cucumber.

BELLE

(calmly)

How's the recce going?

WARREN

Fine.

BELLE

Shoot.

WARREN

The four jerks hitting on you are in 12th grade. They organize the summer prom.

BELLE

Remind me not to attend.

Warren scans the cafeteria nodding toward various students.

WARREN

The kid with the limp, his father's a mechanic working in the body shop owned by the dad of the kid in front of him, who's in class 9C. He's gonna get kicked out but he doesn't know it yet.

BELLE

Why?

WARREN

He's already repeated a year and he still can't keep up. The big guy in the red sweater is the soccer team captain. He'd do anything to get good grades in math. He's friends with the skinny kid from 10A, who's in love with the girl with the pink ribbon in her hair. She runs the school black market on cigarettes.

One by one, the camera introduces us to the characters Warren describes. They rarely seem to have any dress sense.

WARREN (CONT'D)

The girl with the glasses next to her is her best friend and sister of the sonofabitch at the end of the table with the check sweater.

The "sonofabitch" is André.

BELLE

(calmly, between mouthfuls of
cucumber)

Did he give you that?

Points to the bruise over Warren's eye.

WARREN

(sheepish)

Yeah. But what goes around comes around. I already know his weak point.

BELLE

Which is?

WARREN

He needs a sound system for his party the Saturday after next. There's only one guy who has the kind of gear he needs--the engineer's son over there, sitting on his own.

A puny boy eats his shepherd's pie with a book open in front of him.

BELLE

(wry smile)

You didn't waste any time.

WARREN

I never do.

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

Maggie chomps on a "Royal Deluxe." A group of students gathered around a pile of fries watches in amusement.

Maggie grabs her Coke and slurps noisily on it, swishing the straw around the ice cubes.

Appalled by her lack of manners, the students go back to their studies.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred sits at his typewriter, typing more confidently now with two fingers.

FRED (V.O.)

In 1931, my grandfather, Mario Manzoni, drove one of the two hundred Cadillacs hired by the legendary Vito Gerovese for his wife's funeral cortege. In 1957, my father, Cesare Manzoni, was one of the 107 capi from all over the country invited to the Appalachin Convention, which ended in a manhunt. Can you picture me Giovanni Manzoni punching a timecard at some factory? Or killing time till retirement in a shoe store? Like some guys I know, I could have rebelled and gone straight to annoy my father. But that was never going to happen. I took over the family business of my own free will. Nobody forced me. Even if I've now got the best hitmen in the world on my tail, looking to pick up the twenty million price on my head, I don't have a single regret. Knowing the top pros in the business are on my ass, waiting to clip me, should keep me awake all night and give me agita all day, but it don't. Tell you the truth, deep down, I'm flattered.

Fred takes the page out of the typewriter and gazes at it in satisfaction.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Still in his pajamas, Fred steps out into the back yard and stretches. He needs it after nearly six hours hunched over his typewriter.

Snap. The noise startles Fred, but it's just the NEIGHBOR pruning his roses.

The two men gaze at each other. The Neighbor looks like a model pensioner from some retirement fund brochure.

NEIGHBOR

Roses need constant love and attention.

FRED

Ah?

He tries to look glad to have learned something new.

NEIGHBOR

You've just moved in?

FRED

Yes. Yesterday.

NEIGHBOR

American?

FRED

Yes.

The Neighbor nods inscrutably.

FRED (CONT'D)

(tries a joke)

Is that good or bad?

NEIGHBOR

You know, France is a favorite destination for foreigners, so I'm hardly surprised.

FRED

Yes, France is a beautiful country.

NEIGHBOR

Are you staying long?

FRED

We never stay anywhere long. We move around a lot. Because of my work.

NEIGHBOR

Ah? What do you do?

Instead of evacuating the problem, Fred has dropped himself in it.

FRED

(beat)

I'm a writer.

He says it like it's obvious, with a hint of pride.

Fred savors the moment. Unfortunately, it doesn't last.

NEIGHBOR

(impressed)

A writer? How fascinating! And does the Normandy countryside inspire you?

FRED

(smiles)

Very much, yes.

NEIGHBOR

What are you? A novelist?

FRED

(caught slightly off guard)

No, no... One day, maybe.

Not talking about his line of work might seem suspicious, so he has to improvise.

FRED (CONT'D)

For now, it's history. The Landings. A commission. Which is why we're here.

NEIGHBOR

The Landings! That's a huge subject!

FRED

(flagging already)

Yeah!

NEIGHBOR

We were some way from the theater of operations,
here in Cholong.

FRED

(laughs)

True. But when you read about it you'll think you
were right there on the beach.

NEIGHBOR

I look forward to it. What's your take on it?

FRED

(without thinking)

The marines. It'll be a book of tributes.

NEIGHBOR

The marines? I thought there were only GI's
involved in the Landings.

FRED

Yeah, but... I'm going to discuss every corps in the
army, starting with the fleet. Before the Landings,
there had to be boardings.

The Neighbor smiles at his new friend's wordplay.

NEIGHBOR

Sure. I guess you'll be devoting a chapter to
Operation Overlord.

Fred will be rumbled if he tries to hold out for even one more question.

FRED

Oh, I'm not sure a single chapter will cover it.

He glances at his watch before the Neighbor can respond.

FRED (CONT'D)

Jeez, four o'clock already! I'd better be going. The kids'll be home soon.

NEIGHBOR

It was nice meeting you.

FRED

It's mutual.

Fred hurries back toward the sunroom.

FRED (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Fuck! Why the hell didn't I say I was a novelist?

Fred slams the sunroom door.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Small groups form and light cigarettes. Other students jostle to board the school bus. Scooters are shown off, girls giggle, younger kids play tag--the usual stuff at a school out in the country.

Belle cuts a swathe through the crowd, throwing out "See you tomorrow" here and there without waiting for a reply.

She heads down the street toward the center of town.

The four pimply students watch her go, lust in their eyes.

To one side, Warren chats animatedly with MARTIN, the engineer's son.

WARREN

No way! That's amazing! I'm a collector, too,!

MARTIN

Really?

WARREN

Yeah! I mean, nothing like you. I only started three months ago.

MARTIN

I've got the last five seasons.

WARREN

Wow! The full set for each one?

MARTIN

Almost. This season, the only one I'm missing is Marseille's goalkeeper.

WARREN

I'll have to check, but I think I may be able to help you out.

MARTIN

(wide-eyed)

No! Seriously?

WARREN

I'm not 100% sure, but I think my cousin has him.

MARTIN

In duplicate?

WARREN

No, I'd be surprised if he has two.

MARTIN

Forget it then. He'll never agree to swap.

WARREN

... Everything's negotiable.

MARTIN

(a glimmer of hope)

If ever you get me it, I swear you can ask me for anything you want.

WARREN

(deadpan)

Hey, being your friend is enough for me.

Martin thrusts out his hand for a virile shake.

MARTIN

You're already my friend.

Checkmate. Warren has won.

He smiles and shakes his new buddy's hand.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Belle heads up the empty street, nose in the air as usual. The horizon is always more beautiful than the sidewalk.

An old Renault 5 draws up alongside.

The four pimply students in their lovemobile.

JP

(out the window)

Hey! You want a ride?

BELLE

No thanks, guys. I've been sitting all day. I need a walk.

JP

But a ride's a good way to get to know each other.

STUDENT #1

And show you round town.

STUDENT #2

It won't take long.

Belle smiles, amused at being hit on after only one day at school.

BELLE

(playful)

But If I see everything the first day, I won't have anything left to explore.

JP

Sure, you will! There's the bowling alley a couple of kilometers away.

STUDENT #1

And a nightclub on the Alençon road.

STUDENT #2

C'mon, Miss America! Just a quick ride to welcome you to town.

Belle can't help laughing at them.

She reaches an intersection and hesitates.

JP

Lost?

BELLE

I think I should have taken a turning back there.

JP

Where do you live?

BELLE

Rue des Favorites.

STUDENTS

Ouch! That's miles away. It'll be dark before you get home. Luckily, we're at your service here!

Belle laughs. JP pushes open the door.

Belle hesitates.

BELLE

Okay, but just a quick ride.

JP

You're the boss.

Belle climbs into the back. The car pulls smoothly away.

INT. CAR - DAY

The car drives down a street. The gaps between houses get bigger and bigger.

BELLE

We're leaving town ...

JP

You have to see the leisure park, where everybody meets up at the weekend.

STUDENT #1

There's a motocross course.

STUDENT #2

And a swimming pool. It opens on May 1. Do you like swimming?

BELLE

Sure.

STUDENT #1

I get the feeling Miss America's gonna knock 'em dead at the pool.

The boys snicker. Belle smiles along with them.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The car parks up alongside a kiddies' amusement park near the forest.

Everybody spills out. JP flips the trunk and pulls out a blanket that he spreads on the grass.

BELLE

What are you doing, guys?

JP

Just taking a little break.

One of the boys dumps a pack of beer on one corner of the blanket.

They share a little grin. Belle isn't fooled.

BELLE

Look, I should be getting back.

Two students sprawl on the blanket while JP comes over.

JP

(seductive smile)

Relax. Just five minutes to get to know each other better.

JP slowly rubs the swelling in the front of his jeans.

The guy who was driving comes over and stands next to Belle. With one finger, he flicks her top off her shoulder.

DRIVER

(smartass smile)

Ooops!

Belle sighs. She is more appalled than worried by their antics.

BELLE

(calmly)

I think I get what's going on here.

JP

(evil smile)

She learns fast.

While the boys snicker, Belle turns toward the open trunk and leans over. The boys share a triumphant glance.

Belle finds a tennis racket in the trunk, grasps it, spins round and, with a superb forehand action, smashes the frame of the racket onto JP's nose. He immediately keels over.

The two guys on the blanket choke on their beers. The guy who was driving bolts out of range. Belle whacks JP around the head until the racket breaks.

She catches her breath and stares at the terrified pair on the blanket.

BELLE

Boys, if that's your approach to women, you'll never get anywhere. A girl isn't just a toy you fuck in some park. Your future will depend on women. Doesn't the future interest you?

The two idiots nod.

BELLE (CONT'D)

So take care of them or you won't have one.

Belle hops into the car and drives off. The bemused Driver is too far away to stop her.

DRIVER

My car!

EXT. RUE DES FAVORITES - DAY

Belle swings the car up onto the curb and abandons it there, covering the last fifty yards to the house on foot.

Warren is unloading groceries from his mother's car. Belle goes over to help.

WARREN

Mom bought supplies for a whole year!

BELLE

Did she find any peanut butter?

WARREN

You're joking.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Malavita looks on as Fred spoons food into the dog bowl.

FRED

There... It's chicken. You like chicken, don't you?

The dog gazes at him in dismay.

Fred is flustered, as if he feels the dog judging him. The case for his defense isn't very strong: Giovanni Manzoni in his pajamas, kneeling on the gravel, spooning dog food into a bowl.

Fred heaves a sigh.

FRED (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that, please. It's not nice. You know, I've killed men for less?

The dogs gazes blankly at him.

Eventually, Fred smiles and pats its head.

FRED (CONT'D)

You're right! It's better not to rise to the bait.
Keeps you out of trouble.

We hear noises inside the house. The rest of the family's back. Fred strokes his dog's head one last time and goes inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fred enters in time to witness the to-ing and fro-ing of his wife and children with grocery bags.

He heads to the kitchen where they are putting the food away in the cupboards.

Fred's happy to see them even if nobody pays any attention to him.

FRED

Hi, everybody!

WARREN & BELLE

Hey , dad.

MAGGIE

Hi, honey .

The supplies begin to fill the cupboards.

Fred remains standing in the doorway .

FRED

(beat)

Well? How did your day go?

Suddenly, all the activity stops.

The other three look at each other out of the corner of their eyes to see who'll go first. In the end, they reply almost in unison.

MAGGIE, WARREN & BELLE

Fine.

They go back to stockpiling the groceries in silence.

Fred wishes somebody would ask him how his day went, so he could tell them about his newfound passion for writing, his new profession. But it seems like bad timing, so he heads back to the living room.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The family sits at the table tucking into tagliolini alla genovese.

WARREN

(mops up the sauce with bread)

Fuck! That was good!

MAGGIE

Warren, can you please avoid using the word “fuck” in every sentence ?

WARREN

(automatically)

Sorry, mom.

MAGGIE

We’re not in Queens anymore!

FRED

Your mother’s right. We’re not in Queens anymore. In fact, we’re a long, long way from Queens. I don’t think anywhere’s further from Queens than this rathole. However, it is fair to say that this tagliolini alla genovese was fucking good!

The children laugh. Maggie rolls her eyes.

FRED (CONT’D)

I’m sorry, Maggie, but where we come from it’s the only expression worthy of describing how amazing your pasta is. It’s the ultimate compliment.

MAGGIE

(without missing a beat)

If that’s the only way you have of expressing your amazement. I’d happily do without your fucking compliments.

Everybody bursts out laughing again.

The doorbell rings. The laughter dies down, replaced by anxious silence.

FRED

I’ll get it. Help your mother clear the table.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Fred opens the door to a sixty-year-old man wearing a black raincoat.

TOMASO QUINTILIANI is well-built, with a ruddy face and thick lips that clearly don't often crack a smile.

Quintiliani walks straight in. Fred hurriedly closes the door.

Quintiliani takes off his hat and turns to Fred.

The two men gaze into each other's eyes. No doubt about it, they have history.

QUINTILIANI

How did the first day go?

FRED

Pretty good.

QUINTILIANI

Nothing to report?

FRED

Nothing special.

QUINTILIANI

The children? School?

FRED

You know, they always adapt faster than us. They never seem to have a problem integrating.

QUINTILIANI

I hear you already met the neighbor.

FRED

The guy on the right, yeah.

QUINTILIANI

What did you talk about?

FRED

Roses, mostly.

QUINTILIANI

Good. Roses are nice. You can talk for hours about roses.

FRED

Yeah. Say, I've been thinking... What do you say to this as a job: writer?

QUINTILIANI

(pauses for thought)

Writer's good. Sounds good.

FRED

Writer it is.

QUINTILIANI

But steer clear of complicated subjects. Stick to airport novels or kiddies' books.

FRED

(scrambles)

Okay... A war novel, maybe?

QUINTILIANI

Why not. Anything else?

FRED

They forgot the TV. And five boxes.

QUINTILIANI

I know. The mover put his truck into a ditch coming off the highway. We've ordered you another, bigger one. It'll be delivered this week.

FRED

That's nice.

QUINTILIANI

Try to integrate this time. The higher-ups are sick of finding you a new place to live every three months. Can I count on you to try?

FRED

As long as I can count on you, sure.

The two men briefly face off.

QUINTILIANI

I'm going to Paris. I'll be back soon. I'm leaving you Di Cicco and Caputo, just in case.

FRED

(sarcastic)

I can sleep soundly then.

QUINTILIANI

Say hi to Maggie for me.

FRED

Sure.

Quintiliani opens the front door and disappears into the night.

Fred shuts the door behind him, frowning.

INT. PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie's already in bed.

FRED

Are the kids in bed?

MAGGIE

Yes. Was that Quintiliani?

FRED

Yes.

MAGGIE

What'd he want?

FRED

Nothing. The standard bullshit.

MAGGIE

His bullshit has kept us alive so far, sweetie, so maybe you should have a little more respect when you talk about him.

FRED

Maggie, the man's a cop.

MAGGIE

So? Cop's not a curse word, is it? Anyway, did he force you to turn state's evidence? You did it of your own free will, didn't you?

FRED

If I hadn't, I'd be pushing up the daisies right now.
Or rotting in jail after some asshole ratted me out.

MAGGIE

OK. If that's what you have to work with, make
the most of it! Enjoy the privilege of watching your
children grow up and your wife grow old.

Fred smiles and strokes her cheek.

FRED

You never get a day older, Maggie. You're as
beautiful as the day I met you.

MAGGIE

(chuckles)

I love when you lie to me!

Fred smiles, lies down next to his wife and takes her in his arms.

FRED

I don't know what I'd do without you.

MAGGIE

Only stuff you'd regret.

She flicks the light off.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Warren's hunched over his computer, surfing on eBay.

He seems to have found what he was looking for. A trading card comes up with
Marseille's goalkeeper on it.

WARREN

(to himself)

You beauty!

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Belle's half-naked in the dark, but the moon peers in through the open window.

Belle adjusts her headphones and activates her CD player. The music starts up and Belle dances slowly, gracefully, enchantingly. It's time she found herself a man.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

The music continues.

Late 90'. A sunny late afternoon in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

The old Italian song plays on a boogie-box set up outside.

Smoke from a barbecue whirls around the guests.

It could be a simple neighborhood barbecue, but the guests are goodfellas and their names belie their family-man appearances--FAT WILLY, TONY THE DENTIST, BILLY THE BUG, THE PASTRONE BROTHERS, JOSEPH AMATO aka BLACK JACK, JAMES DeMORA aka MACHINE GUN, BOZZO THE RAT...

The scene will foul of little details on each of them... Even the capo di tutti capi is there. An old man with blue eyes, DON MIMINO sits rooted to his chair.

The host is Giovanni Manzoni, early 50s, hair slicked back. Nothing like the shambling Fred we know, Giovanni bounces with energy and his face is radiant. Behind the barbecue, he seems in complete control as he proudly gazes at his "family," which only he could bring together without the evening finishing as a bloodbath.

Her hair wrapped in a scarf, Maggie brings another plate of carpaccio out of the kitchen, cutting through the crowd with grace and agility. She's a beautiful woman and Giovanni wouldn't leave her for anything in the world.

Giovanni glances at Bella, 10. His stunningly beautiful little princess is sitting on Fat Willy's lap.

FAT WILLY

(grins)

You, when you grow up, are gonna give your old man some big headaches!

The mobsters around him snicker.

Fat Willy catches Giovanni's eye. They exchange a warm smile.

Lying devotedly at his master's feet, showing no interest in the hunks of meat is Malavita, an Australian cattle dog puppy.

Giovanni smiles at the dog and tosses him a piece of meat.

GIOVANNI

Tell me what you think of it.

Warren, 6, stands next to old Don Mimino, listening to his stories in fascination.

Giovanni smiles to himself. Seeing them all here is proof that he is universally respected and proof of his success. He has no reason to hide his satisfaction. Even so, there's a flicker of regret in his eyes, the expression of a man admiring a sand castle in the knowledge that one day soon it will be washed away.

The camera closes in on Giovanni's face as his eyes close.

INT. PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

The music cuts out.

Fred wakes with a start and switches the light on.

A nightmare, apparently.

MAGGIE

(half asleep)

What's wrong, honey?

FRED

Nothing. It's nothing. Just... A bad dream. We were in the yard in Brooklyn.

MAGGIE

Don't think about it or you won't get a wink of sleep.

Fred takes a sip of water, sighs and turns the light off.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The rising sun caresses the crest of the tiled roof. It's going to be a beautiful day.

Superimpose: One week later

Belle and Warren, bags over their shoulders, leave home to walk to school.

Through the shutters of the house across the street, a lens follows them.

FRED (V.O.)

If the story I'm going to tell you hadn't happened
to me, I would never have been able to make it up.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred's already at his typewriter.

He looks more comfortable now and a few pages lie in a pile to one side.

FRED (V.O.)

Of the version Quintiliani sold everybody, I alone
know what's true and what isn't. Besides the two
of us, there are no other witnesses. But he's gotta
keep his mouth shut in the line of duty. It's
different for me. Screw the line of duty. All I want
is for the truth, the whole truth, to be told just once,
to say what really happened. Even if nobody ever
reads these words.

(louder)

Maggie?

At his feet, Malavita looks up, startled.

FRED

Sorry, friend.

Maggie? Can you make me some tea?

No answer.

Maggie is slumped on the couch facing the brand new TV.

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

Maggie, can you hear me?

Maggie can hear him just fine, but the soap she's watching takes precedence.

Fred resigns himself to getting up, even if it means losing his inspiration.

He crosses the yard and stands facing his wife.

FRED (CONT'D)

(macho man)

Maggie? Didn't you hear me calling?

MAGGIE

Drop the Italian stallion act, will you?

FRED

(abashed)

But... I'm working, sweetie.

Maggie looks him straight in the eye. Mutes the TV.

MAGGIE

Might we know what you're up to on that typewriter?

FRED

(as if it's obvious)

I'm writing!

MAGGIE

Giovanni. Honey. Save your bullshit for the neighbors, but spare me, please. Me and the kids.

FRED

(ticked off)

I AM writing!

MAGGIE

You can hardly read and you're gonna drop a book on us about the Normandy Landings? You have no idea who Eisenhower even was.

FRED

Screw the Normandy Landings! That's just a decoy. I'm writing something else.

Maggie pauses, fearing the worst.

MAGGIE

What are you writing?

FRED

My memoirs.

MAGGIE

I knew it.

FRED

Quintiliani thinks it's a good idea.

MAGGIE

(angry)

I think it's a good idea, too. As a cover. Not for you to actually write your fucking memoirs! Do you realize the shitstorm you'll land us in?

FRED

I didn't say I was going to publish them!

MAGGIE

I should hope not! With your photo on the back. The one and only Giovanni Manzoni!

FRED

(snaps)

It does me good to write. I need it to come out, you know? I need to write the truth, even if I'm the only person that reads it. I need to know who I really am. Not in the eyes of the Mafia or the Feds, but in my own eyes. I need that to find peace.

MAGGIE

(calms down)

I understand, honey, but you could have come up with something else. Being an author's wife isn't exactly glamorous. It sounds too much like "trophy wife." You could have come up with something else, or consulted me, at least.

FRED

You came up with architect when we were in Cagnes, remember? So the whole neighborhood dropped in to ask me to build them swimming pools and pizza ovens.

Maggie sighs and rubs the bridge of her nose.

MAGGIE

Never mind that... Anyway, if you could be a plumber for five minutes, I'd appreciate it. The water in the kitchen comes out brown.

Maggie gets up and goes into the kitchen. Fred stops in the doorway behind her.

Maggie smooths down the aluminum foil on a Pyrex dish.

FRED

Did you call a guy?

MAGGIE

Twice. Each time, he gave me an appointment and never showed.

She hands Fred the local plumber's card and heads out.

FRED

Where are you going now?

MAGGIE

Working for you.

Maggie leaves the house with the Pyrex dish.

Fred goes over to the sink and turns the faucet. Dirty brown water comes out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Maggie hurries across the road, trying to avoid being seen. She goes through the gate of the house opposite, from which people observe her family through the half-open shutters.

Maggie rings the doorbell. DI CICCIO opens up. Forty years old, bushy eyebrows, the complete Fed.

CAPUTO, his almost identical but younger colleague, appears behind him.

DI CICCIO

Hey, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Hi, guys.

Di Cicco lets her in and glances diligently up and down the street before closing it after her.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

Fred turns a light on and tracks the pipes running along the cellar ceiling. He follows the main water pipe until it disappears into the wall nearest the street.

Fred's at a loss. This is way out of his plumbing league.

INT. KITCHEN, FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

Maggie peels the aluminum foil off the Pyrex dish.

MAGGIE

Roasted peppers in olive oil, just the way you like them, with lots of garlic.

The two Feds have tears in their eyes. Homesick, most likely.

DI CICCO

This is really sweet of you, Maggie.

CAPUTO

Just the smell takes you back home.

MAGGIE

You have some bread left?

DI CICCO

Yes.

MAGGIE

Go on, what are you waiting for?

The two men don't need to be told twice. They sit and start eating in almost religious silence.

Maggie smiles as they stuff their faces like two grown-up kids.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Fred's on the phone, with the plumber most likely.

FRED

(calmly)

You can't cancel two appointments like that with no warning. It's not only unprofessional, it's downright rude. My wife is a very busy lady and she can't spend all day waiting on you. You were supposed to be here at nine this morning, and it's noon already! ...

You're sure this time?

Okay. I'm not going anywhere, but don't keep me waiting.

Okay, okay. See you then.

INT. KITCHEN, FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

The two Feds are savoring the peppers.

MAGGIE

Did Quintiliani tell you about the barbecue?

DI CICCIO

(mouth full)

Yes.

MAGGIE

I don't know where Fred came up with the idea, but he's pretty set on it.

CAPUTO

The boss thinks it's a good idea, to help you make some friends in the neighborhood.

DI CICCIO

We should have done it in Cagnes. Get all the busybodies together and out of our hair once and for all.

MAGGIE

(puffs on her cigarette)

Yes. We should have.

Caputo mops up the sauce in the dish with his bread.

CAPUTO

Is the oil the same as usual? You find it round here?

Maggie smiles at the delicacy of the heavily set agent.

MAGGIE

No, I kept a small drum of it from the Italian deli in Antibes.

CAPUTO

If anybody had told me that one day I'd be living in the land of cream...

DI CICCIO

At the restaurant we ate at last night, there was cream in the soup, on the veal and in the apple pie.

MAGGIE

Not to mention the butter.

CAPUTO

Mamma mia! The butter is even worse! They put it in everything!

MAGGIE

Yes, and it's not even natural.

CAPUTO

Sorry?

MAGGIE

(smoking)

The human body was not designed to combat saturated fat like that. Butter impregnates the tissues, then hardens and settles like silt. It makes your aorta stiffer than a hockey stick.

The two Feds wince.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Whereas olive oil caresses your insides leaving behind it nothing but its scent.

CAPUTO

That's right. Oil's in the bible.

All three of them nod.

MAGGIE

Don't worry, I'll be here to look after you with some good home-cooking. We'll stand and fight their cream and butter!

DI CICCIO & CAPUTO

(grinning)

You bet! We're right behind you!

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The cook ladles cream onto Belle's veal cutlet.

Belle takes her tray and sits down at a table. She scrapes the cream off the cutlet with her knife.

She sees JP, face battered and bruised, arm in a sling. A friend has to cut his meat. The sight makes Belle smile.

Warren sits down opposite her.

WARREN

Why don't you ask them to hold the sauce, rather than scrape it off?

BELLE

We're supposed to be integrating, aren't we?

WARREN

Sure, but there are limits. Dad's barbecue can't come fast enough. At least, we'll get to eat some decent food for once.

BELLE

How was your morning?

WARREN

Busy.

CUT TO:

Warren hands three soccer trading cards to his friend Martin.

MARTIN

Awesome! You're so cool!

CUT TO:

Warren's with another boy, who hands him a document.

WARREN

I'll take care of your math homework, but can I rely on you when the time comes?

OTHER BOY

(sincere)

Sure. You have my word.

CUT TO:

Warren hands the document to a GIRL who's been crying.

WARREN

Here's the report on your little business. I had a word with the supervisor. Your folks won't ever know.

GIRL

(amazed)

Are you sure?

WARREN

(acts offended)

Hey, would I lie to you?

CUT TO:

Warren's with a tall, well-built kid.

WARREN (CONT'D)

She's agreed to meet you. 6 p.m. behind the church.

BIG KID

You're the man! What can I do for you in return?

WARREN

I'll tell you...

BACK TO SCENE:

WARREN (CONT'D)

(to Belle)

What about you? Good day?

BELLE

Somebody stole my favorite pencil case.

WARREN

You're kidding? You know who did it?

CUT TO:

Belle straddles a girl in one corner of the locker room, beating her to a pulp.

BACK TO THE CAFETERIA:

BELLE

It took me a while.

WARREN

Good.

Belle's attention is drawn to a young guy, 25, stubble, small glasses--the handsome intellectual type who has all the teenage girls swooning over him.

Belle's right in that age-range. Her eyes twinkle.

BELLE

(juts her chin toward the guy)

Know who he is?

WARREN

Yup. He's the new student supervisor, replacing the Whale during her maternity leave. He started yesterday. All the senior skanks are on the case. You're gonna have your work cut out. On top of that, he's obsessive about math. He's studying for some really tough exam.

The young man eats with one hand while reading a math book that he holds with the other.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Math geeks are a pain in the ass. Get yourself a jock instead. They think less.

BELLE

No, thanks. I don't want to be part of the training program.

WARREN

Okay, what do you notice first about a guy?

Belle thinks it over.

The young guy removes his glasses and rubs his eyes.

Suddenly, Belle makes eye contact. She feels his blue eyes delve into her soul.

BELLE

His eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM, FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

Hidden behind the half-closed shutters, Maggie peers through binoculars.

Di Cicco carefully pours oak-aged grappa into three shot glasses.

Nearby, automatic rifles stand on a rack.

Maggie watches a couple in their living room.

MAGGIE

The family at number 12, what are they like?

DI CICCO

The mother's a klepto. She's been banned from the mall in Evreux. The father had a heart bypass last year. Besides that, nothing special.

CAPUTO

Except the boy being held back in seventh grade.

MAGGIE

I never meet them out. I wonder if they'll come to the barbecue.

DI CICCIO

Don't worry, everybody will be there. They're all desperately curious.

CAPUTO

It's the weekend's main event.

Suddenly, Maggie trains the binoculars on the plumber's van that's just pulled up outside her house.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred's back at his typewriter.

FRED (V.O.)

Seeing an enemy cash in his chips is sweeter than making a new friend. Who needs new friends?

The doorbell jolts him out of his musings.

CUT TO:

Fred opens the door to find the PLUMBER standing there with a broad smile, in blue overalls, bag over his shoulder.

PLUMBER

Desmarais, the plumber.

FRED

Ah! You said five minutes. And that was forty-five minutes ago.

PLUMBER

You know what we say round these parts... Better late than never!

He plays for a smile. In vain.

Fred ushers him in and slams the door.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The plumber watches brown water run from the faucet.

PLUMBER

Ah! I see.

FRED

I'm glad.

PLUMBER

You're not the only one around here, I can tell you that.

FRED

What's wrong with it?

PLUMBER

It's a real problem. Some people have had it for nearly a year now.

FRED

What's wrong with it?

PLUMBER

Can we take a look in the cellar?

Fred decides to stay calm.

INT. CELLAR - DAY

The Plumber drops his bag and peers at the maze of pipes.

PLUMBER

Lordy lord... Have you seen the state of your pipes, sir?

He taps one. Rust flakes off.

PLUMBER (CONT'D)

They must be at least a hundred years old.

FRED

So that would explain the color of the water?

PLUMBER

(engaging smile)

I didn't say that, now did I?

FRED

(unreceptive)

So, what are you saying?

PLUMBER

I'm saying it could be the pipes, but it could be an external issue.

FRED

External?

PLUMBER

Sure. The mains. But you'd have to take that up with the mayor's office.

FRED

(perplexed)

What do we do about the pipes then?

PLUMBER

For now, nothing. I just stopped by to take a look because your little lady was in such a panic, but we can't treat it as an emergency. I'm already working on two different sites, as well as a flooded kitchen in Villers. I can't be everywhere at once. I wish I could. I'd be able to retire in a few years!

Only he laughs at his jokes that are as creaky as the plumbing.

FRED

If it's a money problem, maybe we can reach an arrangement?

PLUMBER

Money doesn't solve everything, my dear sir. Mind you, it's lucky you've got money because renovating your plumbing will cost you an arm and a leg, as we say round these parts. If not both arms and both legs.

He chuckles away again.

FRED

So... What do you think I should do?

PLUMBER

Simple. You call my wife and you make an appointment. She handles the schedule. My son's learning the trade at college in Alençon. We're a family of plumbers. Father and son, for four generations!

FRED

Congratulations.

PLUMBER

And you, what's your line of work?

FRED

(calmly)

Let me show you...

Fred turns toward the door, rummages in a box and pulls out a baseball bat.

FREEZE FRAME.

FRED (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Al Capone always said, Asking polite with a gun in your hand is better than just asking polite.

Fred pummels the Plumber with the baseball bat.

The guy crawls for the steps but blows rain down on him until he stops moving.

Fred pauses to catch his breath.

He takes a hammer from the Plumber's bag.

FRED (CONT'D)

The plumbing will cost me an arm and a leg? Your arrogance will cost you your legs!

INT. LIVING ROOM, FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

Maggie is still watching the street through the binoculars.

She is horrified to see her husband drag the Plumber's body to his van.

DI CICCIO

Thanks for everything, Maggie.

CAPUTO

(picks up the Pyrex dish)

Should I wash the dish?

MAGGIE

No, leave it. I'll do it. I wash dishes all day long.

I'm used to it. But you could get me a little

ristretto. Our coffee machine broke during the move.

DI CICCIO

Coming right up.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

Maggie raises the binoculars again in time to see her husband toss the inert body of the Plumber in the back of the van, jump in and drive off.

Maggie can't believe her eyes.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

The bell signals the end of the last period of the day. Excitable teens surge into the hallways like horses released into a field.

In her empty classroom, Belle goes over to the handsome supervisor, who's packing away his things.

BELLE

(charming smile)

Hi there.

HENRI, the math post-grad, is blown away. Belle has that effect on people.

HENRI

(stammers)

Hi.

BELLE

(irresistible)

I need private lessons.

She exudes such charm that even a compass would go into a spin.

HENRI

Private lessons? In math?

BELLE

(dazzling smile)

Yes. Unless you have other specialties?

HENRI

(befuddled)

Er... No, no, I... I only do math.

BELLE

Good.

HENRI

What level are you at?

BELLE

What's more important? A good level or motivation?

HENRI

Motivation.

BELLE

(smiles)

Excellent. That's all I have.

EXT. SMALL PARK - DAY

André and his gang enter a small park behind the village hall. Carrying a note, he walks over to Martin, Warren's new best friend, who's sitting on a bench.

ANDRÉ

(brandishes the note)

What's the hell's this stupid meeting? Where's your hi-fi?

MARTIN

At home. My dad doesn't want me to lend it out.

ANDRÉ

(furious)

You dragged me across town to tell me that?

WARREN

No, to give you this.

A fist smacks him in the face. Warren and his guys leap out and swarm all over André, punching and kicking him.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A young DOCTOR peers at an X-ray. Fred stands facing him.

The Plumber lies in a bed, both legs in plaster, face swollen and bruised, a tube in his mouth to help him breathe. He whimpers. Maybe in pain, maybe because the man who did this to him is standing there.

Fred gives him a reassuring wink. The Plumber whimpers even louder.

DOCTOR

(perplexed)

What I don't understand is how he could break his legs like this by falling down the steps.

FRED

They're stone steps and pretty steep.

DOCTOR

Sure, but there aren't two hundred of them, are there? The patient has as many fractures as a man who might have fallen down three flights of stairs.

FRED

He had his bag on his shoulder. Maybe the hammer...

DOCTOR

That might explain one or two... But twelve? Twelve fractures? How do you explain that?

FRED

I don't know. I'm not a doctor, I'm a writer.

EXT. SMALL PARK - DAY

André's on the ground, bleeding from facial wounds.

His two buddies are puking, from fear most likely.

Warren leans over André, who sobs like a child.

He digs into his victim's pockets and swipes maybe 100 euros that he stuffs into his own pocket.

WARREN

(tough guy)

Tomorrow morning, you're here at eight with one hundred euros. It doubles every day you're late. Got it?

ANDRÉ

(sobbing)

Yes.

WARREN

From now on, I'm running the show here.

ANDRÉ

Okay.

WARREN

We're not fucking around. I'm going to need people. Guys I can rely on.

ANDRÉ

You... You can rely on me.

WARREN

(satisfied)

See you tomorrow at eight.

Warren and his gang take off, leaving his former enemies on the ground.

INT. SUNROOM - NIGHT

Fred's hard at work on his Brother 900.

FRED (V.O.)

In the ensuing chapters, I'll show myself to be one of the nastiest bastards ever to walk the earth. I won't spare myself. I'll tell as much of the story as I can without trying to make myself look good. You can decide for yourself which category of scum I belong to. But in this chapter, I'll do the opposite and demonstrate to you that, if you take a closer look, I'm a good guy. I'll prove it to you in ten points, a bit like one of Letterman's Late Show top ten lists. So here we go... Number ten, I'm always front up. Always.

CUT TO:

In the street, Giovanni shoots at two Chinese guys.

FRED

Number nine, I never look for a scapegoat.

CUT TO:

Two men hold Giovanni while a third man beats the crap out of him.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number eight, if you give me a job, I'll always see it through.

CUT TO:

Using a saw, Giovanni dismembers a body. His buddy throws up.

CUT TO:

On a porch, Giovanni hands a package (part of the corpse, most likely) to a grieving widow at the door.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number seven, I never betrayed the guy who gave me my first gun.

CUT TO:

Fat Willy hands Giovanni, 13, a gun.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number six, I never wished any harm on anybody.

CUT TO:

Facing a group of cops chatting among themselves, Giovanni lights a cigarette.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number five, I never showed contempt for people who feared me.

CUT TO:

In court, Giovanni stands in the dock while the D.A. delivers an impassioned speech.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number four, I lived outside the law but only outlaws didn't judge me.

CUT TO:

A bunch of mobsters hug and slap backs during a barbecue.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number three, anybody who doesn't contradict me can expect nothing but good things from me.

CUT TO:

Giovanni puts a wad of cash down in front of man tied to a chair and bleeding profusely.

FRED (CONT'D)

Number two, on my territory, when I was running it, there was never a single robbery on the street. No assaults. People lived and slept easy.

CUT TO:

Giovanni strolls down a street in New York. Passers-by wave to him.

FRED (CONT'D)

And number one, of the top ten reasons why I'm a good guy, I don't like to cause pain for no reason. All my sadistic urges are satisfied when I cause pain for a good reason.

CUT TO:

Fred smashes the Plumber's legs with the hammer.

BACK TO THE SUNROOM:

Fred leans over his chair and seems very satisfied with his demonstration.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Lying on his bed, Warren counts 20-euro bills--his profits from a day's racketeering.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Headphones on, Belle dances in front of the mirror.

She is completely naked.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie brings the joint she's just rolled to her lips and lights it.

She takes a big drag, exhales and settles back on the couch.

Fred arrives from the sunroom.

FRED

(surprised)

I thought you'd quit.

MAGGIE

I had. It's just one. I need it.

FRED

What's wrong, angel?

MAGGIE

Nothing much. Just the prospect of packing up and moving when they find out you killed the plumber.

FRED

I didn't kill him! I even took him to the hospital.

MAGGIE

So why'd you beat him to a pulp? He's the only plumber within a radius of twenty miles!

FRED

(squirms)

He disrespected us by making you wait on him.

MAGGIE

Good grief! I survived!

FRED

And he tried to rip me off by getting me to change all the pipes without guaranteeing that it would solve the problem. What would you have done in my shoes?

MAGGIE

(annoyed)

I don't know! But I definitely wouldn't have beaten him up! Who's going to fix the pipes now?

FRED

(losing his temper)

And who's going to rebuild the supermarket that burned down the day we arrived? Huh? Weird, all these supermarkets going up in smoke wherever we go!

Maggie takes on her joint. She has no answer to that.

Fred calms down.

FRED (CONT'D)

The plumber told me it could be the mains. I'll go see the mayor tomorrow.

MAGGIE

You're going to whack the mayor now?

FRED

(snaps)

No, I'm gonna take care of the plumbing issues. And I give you my word they will be resolved as soon as is humanly possible. That's what you want, isn't it?

MAGGIE

Yes.

FRED

(calmer)

Good. Now put that out, please. You know I don't like you smoking in the house. It sets a bad example to the kids.

Maggie stands and goes upstairs.

Fred heaves a sigh. It's been a long day.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The sun has burned off the morning mist.

Lying in the grass, Malavita basks in the sunshine.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maggie grates parmesan cheese.

Belle decoratively folds towels.

MAGGIE

Say, who's this Henri you've invited?

BELLE

(surprised)

Who told you about him?

MAGGIE

He called to ask what time the barbecue's at.

BELLE

He's a math teacher. Well, not a teacher yet. He's got his exams soon. He gives me private lessons.

MAGGIE

Private lessons?

BELLE

Math lessons, mom.

MAGGIE

Fine. You have condoms, right?

Belle stops peeling apples.

BELLE

Mom!

MAGGIE

What?

BELLE

We do the lessons at school, in study hall.

MAGGIE

So? You know, desire sneaks up on you. It never waits for the right time or place. Take your father, for example. The first time he jumped me was in church, the very last place I expected to lose my virginity!

Belle is stunned, but goes back to slicing the apples.

BELLE

It's going to be different for me. I'll chose the time and place, and it will be with the love of my life.

MAGGIE

(smiles)

You sound like your father.

BELLE

He made you happy, didn't he?

MAGGIE

(nostalgically)

Sure... Sometimes.

Warren enters with two packs of Coke.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You could have got something else besides Coke.

WARREN

No way, mom! This is what they expect from us.

MAGGIE

What? Coke?

WARREN

No, American slop. Fatty, greasy Yankee chow!
That's what they expect, pornographic food.

Maggie stops grating the cheese.

MAGGIE

(slightly shocked)

Warren! Don't even think about using that
vocabulary in front of your father!

BELLE

Mom, I don't think your son is using the word in
the way you're interpreting it.

WARREN

The French are sick of healthy eating and
macrobiotic, steamed vegetables and seaweed. What
they expect from us is color, noise and excess! They
want rodeo and two-pound steaks.

MAGGIE

(apprehensive)

Are you sure?

WARREN

Trust me, mom. They're going to be queuing out the
door like it's a whorehouse!

Maggie is speechless.

EXT/INT. FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

Di Cicco stands with the binoculars watching a throng of neighbors at the Blakes' gates.

DI CICCO

They're a hit.

CAPUTO

(apprehensive)

Yeah. It feels like the whole town's coming through.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Maggie and her two children walk to the gates to welcome their guests.

MAGGIE

(nervously)

I'm relying on you two. Don't mess this up. Polite, ordinary, nothing eccentric. Okay?

WARREN & BELLE

Okay, mom.

MAGGIE

Warren, did you call your father?

WARREN

He said he'd be right along as soon as he finished his chapter.

MAGGIE

(rolls her eyes)

Oh my god!

WARREN

What does he mean, finished his chapter?

MAGGIE

I've no idea! But for the survival of the species, it's better if the whole world doesn't find out!

Maggie suddenly smiles broadly and welcomes the first guests with open arms.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming! Welcome!

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred is at his typewriter, but for once he's dressed.

FRED (O.S.)

In the movies, audiences like the use of force to serve the cause of justice, not for justice's sake but because they like force.

(MORE)

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

People always pick a story about revenge over one about forgiveness because they have a passion for punishment. Seeing the good guy dishing up the knuckle sandwiches creates no sense of guilt. In fact, it's the only type of violence that has never scared me.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Maggie pops a champagne cork and happily sprays it all over.

The yard is now packed with women in their best summer dresses and men in polo shirts.

MONTAGE OF VARIOUS GUESTS QUESTIONING BELLE AND WARREN:

MALE GUEST #1

What does "a home run" mean exactly?

FEMALE GUEST #1

Do you really roast marshmallows over an open fire?

MALE GUEST #2

What position does quarterback play?

FEMALE GUEST #2

I don't understand the expression, Trick or Treat...

MALE GUEST #3

But with the spread of civilization, can you still find wide-open plains to gallop across all day long, like in the old Westerns?

MAGGIE

(answers a guest's question)

Why, of course! I did a lot of charity work in New York. I'll give you my numbers.

MALE GUEST #1

I know New York really well. I ran the marathon there twice.

MALE GUEST #2

I sit down in the little oyster bar in Grand Central station, I order and they bring me oysters as big as steaks!

MAGGIE

(to a woman)

No way! That's dreadful! I hope you sued?

MALE GUEST #4

I confess I'm curious to taste a real hamburger made by real Americans.

WARREN

In less than ten minutes, your wish will be fulfilled!

Maggie grasps her daughter's arm.

MAGGIE

(whispers)

Go see what your fucking father is doing. Tell him that if he hasn't lit his barbecue within five minutes, I'll burn the house down!

Belle shows hardly any surprise.

She knows what her mother is capable of.

BELLE

(to the guests)

Please excuse me.

Belle cuts through the crowd, headed for the sunroom.

INT. FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

Belle is watched through the binoculars by Di Cicco.

CAPUTO

A-ha! The fox is about to leave his lair!

Di Cicco's mobile phone rings.

DI CICCO

Yes, boss.

QUINTILIANI

How's it going?

DI CICCO

Pretty good.

QUINTILIANI

I'll be there in thirty.

DI CICCO

Okay.

QUINTILIANI

Meantime, go join the party.

DI CICCO

(surprised)

Are you sure?

QUINTILIANI

You're neighbors, too, aren't you?

DI CICCO

Yeah.

QUINTILIANI

So, get over there.

Di Cicco hangs up.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Belle enters the sunroom.

BELLE

Dad? Everybody's waiting in the yard and you have to light the barbecue.

Fred emerges from his reverie.

FRED

Yeah, sure.

He gets up and comes over.

FRED (CONT'D)

Come here, you.

He takes Belle in his arms and hugs her tight, as if suddenly afraid of losing her.

BELLE

What's going on?

FRED

Nothing. It's just that sometimes writing is pretty overwhelming. I feel like I've spent all day staring at myself in the mirror, and I'm not used to it.

Belle smiles. She's used to mirrors.

BELLE

(affectionate)

Will you be okay?

FRED

(touched)

Sure. I'll be fine.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Beaming, Fred walks out into the yard with his arm round his proud daughter.

Heads turn. Pressing the flesh and apologizing for his late show, Fred takes his place behind the barbecue. He is handed a glass of Bordeaux. From afar, Maggie glances reproachfully at him. Fred raises his glass and flashes her a disarming smile.

At the gate, Di Cicco and Caputo discreetly join the party.

MALE GUEST #5

(to Warren)

So the guy says, Our pizzas come in three sizes--small, medium and large.

Seeing as I haven't eaten since that morning, I order a large. And the guy says, How many of you are there?

Just me, I answer. He bursts out laughing and, five minutes later, brings me a pizza the size of a truck wheel!

His small audience laughs. Warren smiles.

Belle comes over and whispers in his ear.

BELLE

(savors the word)

Pornography.

She gives him a peck on the cheek and moves on.

Maggie joins the Feds, who've washed up at the buffet table.

MAGGIE

Okay, boys?

DI CICCIO

Sure. Your pasta is the best, Maggie.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

CAPUTO

(laughs)

You'll give yourself away with pasta like this.

Everybody'll realize you're actual Italians!

MAGGIE

I added a little cream to throw people off the scent.

All three laugh.

In his haste to make up for lost time, Fred can't get the barbecue going.

Five guests huddle around, watching his every move, heaping on the pressure.

MALE GUEST #1

That's not how you do it, Mr. Blake. You have to use more kindling. You put too much charcoal on too soon.

FRED

(irritable smile)

You know, this isn't the first time I've prepared a barbecue.

A SKINNY GUY with a shapeless cotton sunhat on his head speaks up.

SKINNY GUY

I don't use charcoal. I build a wood fire. It takes longer but the quality is so much better.

LOCAL BIGWIG

And you used firelighters. That's cheating. And they don't even work. Look!

Fred rubs his temples to keep his composure and stop Giovanni taking over. He takes a slug of wine.

MALE GUEST #5

Your charcoal isn't good quality. You have to get it from Froment on the south side of town. Only he stocks good stuff.

MALE GUEST #1

Or some very dry wood. I have some in my garage if you want.

SKINNY GUY

You'll never get it started. You should empty it out and start over. It'll be quicker.

Fred's eyes light up. It's the final straw.

CUT TO:

Fred grabs the Skinny Guy's head and presses it against the red-hot grill.

CUT TO:

Fred removes Male Guest #1's head from a tub of ice.

CUT TO:

One foot on Male Guest #2's head, Fred squirts lighter fluid on him and strikes a match.

CUT TO:

Fred grabs Male Guest #5 by the hair and rams a skewer through his eye.

LOCAL BIGWIG

(smiles)

Ah, Monsieur Blake! One cannot possess every talent! The talent to write beautiful words and the talent to light fires.

The huddled guests chuckle. Fred's about to blow.

CUT TO:

The LOCAL BIGWIG screams. His head is stuck in a vise in a dark cellar. Fred steps forward, holding a glowing ember in long tongs.

He inserts the ember into the Bigwig's mouth. The Bigwig squirms and squeals like a pig being slaughtered.

A hand on his shoulder jerks Fred out of his sweet dream.

QUINTILIANI

Pour me a drink, Fred?

Quint's voice is reassuring, friendly almost. Fred immediately calms down.

FRED

Give me five minutes to get this baby rocking and
I'll meet you at the bar.

QUINTILIANI

Take your time.

Quintiliani walks away.

Fred rearranges the charcoal, inserts a piece of pine wood. The fire catches.

FRED

(to his audience)

Gentlemen, in fifteen minutes, your burgers will be
sizzling and cooked to perfection!

Everybody cheers, unaware that they only just escaped a massacre.

Fred joins Quintiliani, who hands him a glass of Bordeaux.

QUINTILIANI

Congratulations, Fred. It's a huge success.

FRED

Yes. But it's lacking a certain something.

QUINTILIANI

A swathe of wiseguys per square foot, you mean?

FRED

A little respect, Quint. Those guys were my family.
Even if I snitched on them, they're still my family
and those were the best times of my life.

Quintiliani sips his wine.

QUINTILIANI

Wahlberg asked after you.

FRED

Wahlberg? Nice to know he's concerned about me.

Quintiliani dials a number.

QUINTILIANI

As ever. He'd have liked to be here. Do you mind if I put you on?

FRED

Here?

QUINTILIANI

Why not?

FRED

(hesitates)

Okay.

QUINTILIANI

(into the phone)

I'll put him on, sir.

Fred takes the phone.

FRED

Hello?

WAHLBERG

Hello, Frederick.

The voice is that of a composed, refined elderly gentleman.

FRED

Hello, Mr. Wahlberg. Congratulations on your election. I followed it from across the pond. The senate was the dream of a lifetime for you, wasn't it?

WAHLBERG

I'd given up on it. That's when the best things happen, most likely.

FRED

Maybe so. I hear you're also a special advisor to the President.

WAHLBERG

I get an occasional invitation to the White House but only for the cocktail parties! But tell me how you're doing, Frederick. How's France?

FRED

It has its good sides, but I don't feel like I belong. There's no place like home.

WAHLBERG

What do you do all day?

FRED

Not much. A little plumbing.

WAHLBERG

I hear you've taken up writing

Fred's expression hardens. Quint watches his reaction.

FRED

Just to pass the time.

WAHLBERG

And this talk of memoirs?

FRED

Exaggerated.

WAHLBERG

I think it's a good idea, Frederick. I feel you're ready and able. How's it coming along?

FRED

I've got a few pages down. Random stuff.

WAHLBERG

And you tell the whole story?

FRED

How could anybody tell the "whole" story? If I want people to believe me, I better tone it down or they'll think I'm making it all up.

WAHLBERG

So you want people to read it?

FRED

At this stage, that would be pretentious.

WAHLBERG

Frederick, this conversation leaves me a little uneasy.

FRED

Rest assured, sir. The only guys I name are dead, and I've shifted the location of the episode with the Pan Am freight and the refrigerated trucks. You can sleep easy.

WAHLBERG

Unfortunately, I've never been a very sound sleeper.

FRED

I don't want to lose the only friends I have left, Mr. Wahlberg. As long as the FBI looks after me and my family, why would I go looking for trouble?

WAHLBERG

I understand.

FRED

If ever you're in the delegation of veterans that comes over for some memorial event or other on Omaha Beach, I hope you'll stop by to shake mitts.

WAHLBERG

Good idea.

FRED

See you soon, sir.

WAHLBERG

See you soon, Frederick.

Fred hangs up and lobs Quint the phone.

QUINTILIANI

What's so funny?

FRED

Nobody's read a line of my book and my fame as a writer has already spread to the White House!

Fred heads back to the grill, leaving Quintiliani scowling.

EXT. BACK YARD - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun sinks toward the horizon, silhouetting the tall cypress trees like black ink drawings.

The last guests are leaving.

SKINNY GUY

(grins)

Congratulations once more for the barbecue. The meat was excellent even if the fire didn't take right away.

FRED

Everything comes to he who waits.

The two men slap each other on the back.

Warren throws paper plates in a huge garbage bag while Belle glances mournfully at the gate.

Maggie comes over and puts her arm round her.

MAGGIE

He didn't come?

BELLE

(hint of sadness)

No. But he only said "maybe." His exam's in a few weeks.

Maggie hugs her.

MAGGIE

I don't know the boy, but you have to be a bit of a dork to prefer math to a beautiful girl, don't you think?

They smile at each other.

BELLE

Give me another week and he won't even remember
how to count with his fingers!

MAGGIE

Attagirl! That's the spirit! Keep fighting! C'mon,
help me clear up.

The last ray of sunshine flickers and dies, leaving the earth to get some rest.

INT. PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

On TV, a couple share an affectionate kiss. The words "The End" come up.

Fred and Maggie are in bed. Fred's eyes are brimming with tears.

FRED

(to himself)

Fuck!

He turns to share his emotion with Maggie, but she's sound asleep.

Fred smiles, extricates his arm and gets up.

INT. SUNROOM - NIGHT

Fred types manically on his Brother 900, inspired by so much emotion.

Malavita gazes at him and, with a sigh, resigns himself to a long night.

EXT. BLAKES' HOUSE - NIGHT

The house shimmers in the moonlight.

From afar, we hear the clickety-click of the old typewriter keys.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Belle and Warren come out into the street, backpacks on.

WARREN

Have you ever noticed the number of things dad is
capable of expressing just with the word "fuck"?

BELLE

(rolls her eyes)

Warren! Are you saying dad's illiterate?

WARREN

No, but he's a good ol' boy. He talks to make himself understood, not to sound good. From him, a "fuck" can mean, "Holy shit, what did I get myself into!" Or, "Great pasta!" Or "I'll get that guy for that!" So why does a guy like that need to stay up all night writing when he already expresses almost the whole range of human emotions with a single word?

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Fred reads through a report, watched by the MAYOR, sitting at his desk.

FRED

(under his breath)

Fuck!

The Mayor nods.

MAYOR

You see, as I told you, the tests show the water's fine. And those ones were done barely six months ago.

FRED

Sure, but the water's brown when it comes out of my faucet.

MAYOR

Perhaps your plumbing is a little on the old side.

FRED

Fifteen of us in the neighborhood have rusty pipes, you think?

MAYOR

Why not? That's the only logical explanation, as far as I can see.

FRED

What about the sewage plant I heard about.

MAYOR

It's almost brand new. Go and see for yourself.

The Mayor rises, in a hurry to see the back of this inquisitive citizen.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Well, Mr. Blake... I'm sorry I can't do any more. I know the mayor's office is always the perfect scapegoat, but for once, we didn't do anything!

He chuckles.

Fred isn't buying it.

FRED

(calmly)

You know, sometimes "not doing anything" makes you as guilty as if you'd done all kinds of stuff. Some of my neighbors complain of having headaches and allergic reactions. I even heard that a petition was sent to the Minister of the Environment.

MAYOR

(impatient)

I know. I personally brought this to the attention of the regional government and ordered three sets of analyses in a single year. What more can I do?

FRED

File a complaint. In that case, there'd be a proper investigation.

The Mayor stiffens, as if offended by Fred's vocabulary.

MAYOR

(beat)

Listen, Monsieur Blake. I have nothing against foreigners, but you have only just moved here. Please let us resolve our difficulties in our own way. True, it can drag on, but we always find a solution in the end.

This reeks of corruption. Fred would bet his last dollar on it. The Mayor has no idea he's dealing with an expert.

Fred nods slowly and cracks a little smile. Giovanni is back.

He grabs the Mayor by the hair and smashes his head on the desk, tugs the drawer open, puts the Mayor's hands on the edge of the desk and rams the drawer closed on his fingers.

The Mayor screams blue murder.

CUT TO:

The Mayor thrusts out his hand to Fred.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

(smiles)

It was a pleasure to meet you.

Fred shakes his hand.

FRED

Same here, Mr. Mayor.

Fred leaves the office, taking in every detail, just in case he has to come back.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Maggie sits on a pew and prays to Jesus on his cross.

MAGGIE

We could really do with a little help right now,
Jesus. My family's cracking at the seams. I need
you to be benevolent. You know that, deep down,
they're not bad people. They just need you to guide
them and I'm relying on you, because I can't do it
all on my own.

She makes the sign of the cross.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Amen.

She stands and turns to go. The PRIEST is standing there.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(startled)

Father, you gave me a fright!

PRIEST

American?

MAGGIE

Yes.

PRIEST

(smiles)

If there's one place where you shouldn't be frightened, it's in a church.

MAGGIE

(smiles back)

Yes, you're right. Sorry.

PRIEST

You're forgiven. By the way, this isn't the first time I see you here during the day. We don't get many visitors.

MAGGIE

I come whenever I can.

PRIEST

That's good. You know, the first Thursday of every month, we organize an event for the destitute. They come to us for clothing, books, games and, sadly, food. Would you be interested in giving us a hand? We're short of volunteers.

MAGGIE

(caught off guard)

Thursdays? Yes... why not... I'll mention it to... to my husband.

PRIEST

No pressure. You can tell me next time your drop by.

MAGGIE

Okay.

PRIEST

(glances at his watch)

I was expecting a parishioner, who apparently won't be coming. Would you like to take confession?

MAGGIE

Er... I must confess it's been years since I went to confession.

PRIEST

(smiles)

So that's one thing at least that you need to ask forgiveness for.

The Priest enters the box and pulls the curtain across.

Maggie hesitates. She knows she'll have to lie.

Eventually, she drags herself into the box.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Warren sits on a step in a remote corner of the yard.

Two big guys are sitting behind him.

A CHUBBY-CHEEKED 13-year-old leans toward Warren and talks to him as if he's in the confessional box.

CHUBBY-CHEEKED BOY

(emotional)

I don't know what he has against me. I must remind him of someone. I even asked him one day because I wanted to sort things out, but he punished me! Twenty exercises to do over the weekend! My mother went to see him to ask why, but he turned her against me, the bastard. He acted like he had no idea what she was talking about. And who's my mother going to believe, me or a teacher? So, I shut up and worked harder than everybody else for two terms. And what happened? At the end of the year, he recommended that I be held back a year.

(chokes with emotion)

I don't want to repeat ninth grade because of that jerkwad.

Warren glances at the line of kids apparently waiting for an audience and checks nobody can overhear them.

WARREN

I can see you're telling the truth, but I can't see what I can do for you. What do you want exactly?

CHUBBY-CHEEKED BOY

For him to change his mind and not hold me back. That's all I'm asking. It's so unfair. Anyway, if I have to repeat the year, I'll kill myself.

WARREN

Easy now... You realize what you're asking?

CHUBBY-CHEEKED BOY

Yes. I demand justice. I'll do anything for you if you help me. Anything you want!

The Boy grabs Warren's hand and bows low over it in a sign of allegiance.

WARREN

(smiles)

Stay out of trouble for a few days and I'll take care of the rest.

The Boy clasps Warren's hands.

CHUBBY-CHEEKED BOY

(moved)

Thank you! Thank you, Warren! I'll never forget this!

He walks away.

Warren glances at the line.

WARREN

Next!

KEVIN, twelve years old, glasses, shuffles forward.

WARREN (CONT'D)

What's your name?

KEVIN

Kevin. Class 5B.

WARREN

You wanted to see me?

KEVIN

Somebody stole some cash from my mother's closet and my dad's convinced it was me. But it wasn't me!

WARREN

Do you know who it was?

Kevin nods.

EXT. SEWAGE PLANT - DAY

PLANT MANAGER

(angrily)

It's nothing to do with me. I already told you.

Fred stands on the edge of sedimentation tank facing the PLANT MANAGER.

PLANT MANAGER (CONT'D)

We're tested every month. Believe me, the testers are persnickety bastards. Anyway, the water's brown when it reaches us. We're at the end of the chain. Everybody dumps their crap in the water and we're there to clean it all up, that's all! Why does everybody give us shit about this? Huh? Tests, investigations, articles in the press--we're always getting dumped on. Why don't you go see who's really responsible?

Fred senses progress.

FRED

I'd be delighted to. Just give me a name.

The Plant Manager realizes he said too much.

PLANT MANAGER

Ah... Screw you!

Giovanni smiles at him.

From a distance, we see Giovanni shoving the guy into the sedimentation tank. The man struggles and splashes, but Giovanni watches him slowly sink.

CUT TO:

The man stands facing Fred.

FRED

I'm only trying to help. Give me a clue and I promise that nobody will ever pester you again.

PLANT MANAGER

(long hesitation)

Chemical fertilizers turn the water brown. And there aren't fifty factories producing fertilizer around here!

FRED

(smiles)

Sorry to have bothered you.

Fred walks away, leaving the man on the edge of the sedimentation tank.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

A large clock on the wall reads 5:05 p.m.

At this time, the school never takes long to empty.
No student wants to hang around after lessons.

Except for Belle.

She sits in an empty classroom next to her handsome math tutor.

He corrects her homework. She gazes at the nape of his neck.

HENRI

Very good. You've really improved.

BELLE

Because I have a good teacher.

HENRI

Perhaps, but soon you won't need him anymore.

BELLE

I seriously doubt that. When's your exam?

HENRI

Next week.

BELLE

What happens if you pass?

HENRI

Well... I guess I'll have to go to Paris to study for a couple of entrance exams.

BELLE

So, if you pass this exam, you earn the right to take another exam?

HENRI

(smiles)

Something like that.

BELLE

And if you fail?

HENRI

If I fail, I expect I'll start looking for a job.

BELLE

Locally?

HENRI

Why not?

He doesn't seem to understand what she's getting at.

He gives her another exercise to do.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Okay, let's crank it up a notch. This one's a toughie. I'd be very surprised if you can do it, but let's give it a try.

BELLE

(playful)

If I get it right, what do I win?

HENRI

(bemused)

The pleasure of being right.

BELLE

(purrs)

If pleasure's involved, that's good enough for me.

Henri is bewildered.

INT. SUNROOM - DAY

Fred charges into the sunroom, pulling his jacket on.

Malavita wonders what's going on.

FRED

C'mon, let's go for a walk. It'll do you good!

The dog gets up, showing no great enthusiasm.

Fred sneaks out the back door, making sure nobody notices him.

INT. FEDS' HOUSE - DAY

Di Cicco and Caputo are playing chess.

While one considers his next move, the other glances through the binoculars.

He picks out a hazy figure sitting in the sunroom.

CAPUTO

Jesus, he sits with his ass on that chair all day long.

I wonder how many pages he churns out in an hour.

DI CICCO

You really want to know? One. Per week. He spends all his time checking in the dictionary how to spell words.

The cops snicker.

CUT TO:

In the sunroom, books are piled on Fred's chair and covered with a cardigan to give them a vaguely human form.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Fred and Malavita leave the house behind them and enter the forest.

They walk through the woods, across a river, past a deserted farm and finally reach a clearing bordered by a high barbed wire fence. Beyond it is the Chimex factory, producing all kinds of fertilizers.

Fred prowls round the fence, scanning the site, slips through a hole and heads toward the factory.

He sees that water is pumped from the river into the factory. It's hard to know what happens inside, but Fred spots huge pipes coming out the northern side and leading to rusty tanks that are clearly leaking chemical products.

Fred senses that he's finally found his culprit.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

In class, Warren is busy counting his money under the table.

MRS. LANTIER, the English teacher, catches him.

MRS. LANTIER

Warren? Your homework?

WARREN

(coming back to earth)

My homework?

MRS. LANTIER

The assignment I gave you for the last edition of the school newspaper. A short story in English with wordplay and double-meanings.

WARREN

Oh, that one.

MRS. LANTIER

Warren, it goes off to the printers tonight, so don't tell me you haven't done it.

WARREN

Of course I did it!

MRS. LANTIER

Wonderful. Can I have it?

Warren puts his forefinger to his temple.

WARREN

It's in there. Give me five minutes to get you a hard copy.

Mrs. Lantier adjusts her glasses and sighs.

MRS. LANTIER

Five minutes and not one second more.

WARREN

More than enough!

He pulls out a pen and piece of paper. Furrows his brow.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Wordplay... In English...

He racks his brains.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Back to the barbecue in the small back yard with the goodfellas.

Younger Fred is beaming as meat sizzles on the grill. Maggie juggles with plates. Belle jigs up and down on Fat Willy's lap.

6-year-old Warren observes this microcosm.

He joins the small group gathered around Don Mimino. The old capo di tutti capi sees him and takes him in his arms--a front row seat on their grown-up conversation.

DON MIMINO

What's on at the Opera right now?

PASTRONE BROTHERS

(loud for the old man)

You wouldn't like it, Don Mimino. They're doing "Boris Godunov." It was written by a Russky.

DON MIMINO

(grins)

Why wouldn't I like it? If it's "Godunov" for you, it's "good enough" for me.

Everybody bursts out laughing.

Little Warren's eyes light up. He's just heard his first goodfella joke. From the mouth of Don Mimino himself.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Back to Warren in English class.

WARREN

(under his breath)

If that ain't the mother of all puns, may hellfire and
damnation await me!

He starts writing.

Automatically, the words come out in printed letters.

CUT TO:

The text with the byline "Warren Blake" is cut and pasted onto a page.

CUT TO:

Hundreds of copies of the newspaper roll off the presses.

CUT TO:

Piles of The Jules Vallès Gazette stand in the school entrance hall. Students grab copies.

CUT TO:

A SALESMAN stands on his porch. His WIFE kisses him and hands him the Gazette.

WIFE

Here, for the journey. They've published your
son's poem.

SALESMAN

(proudly)

Seriously? I'll read it on the plane.

CUT TO:

The man is asleep on the plane, the Gazette on his chest.

CUT TO:

The plane lands in New York.

CUT TO:

The cleanup crew gets busy on the plane.

A woman scoops up all the newspapers, including the Gazette.

CUT TO:

Bundles of paper in a recycling plant.

GARY, a young black guy, reads an old Playboy.

BOSS

Gary! Can you do five minutes' work a day? Just for me!

GARY

I'm on my break, boss.

BOSS

(snaps)

Move your ass before I kick it!

Gary heaves a sigh and slips the Playboy into the Jules Vallès Gazette to camouflage the cover.

CUT TO:

VINCENZE, an Italian in a wife-beater, makes coffee liqueur.

Sitting at the table, Gary flicks through his Playboy.

GARY

(eyes gleaming)

Vincenze, I think I'm in love.

Vincenze pours the liqueur into a Thermos flask.

VINCENZE

Who's the lucky girl?

GARY

She's called Miss April.

VINCENZE

(grins)

You gotta treat that addiction to poontang Gary,
you know that?

GARY

No way! I'm a connoisseur! Look at those curves.
That's not poontang, that's a work of art.

Vincenze stoppers the Thermos, grabs the Gazette and rolls the flask in it.

CUT TO:

MORALES, a guard at Rikers Island, NYC's largest jail, knocks on a cell door.

A ginger IRISHMAN, early 40s, opens the door.

GUARD

I have a package for the boss.

The Irishman opens the door wider and ushers the guard to a table where an old man with clear blue eyes is standing. It's Don Mimino.

DON MIMINO

Ah, Morales! How's the knee?

MORALES

Better, Don Mimino. Thank you.

DON MIMINO

Good.

People always think that the hand or foot is the most important, but the knee is the one to watch out for. Whatever you do in life, whatever movement you make, you need your knees at some point. The best proof of all is that when you want to neutralize or humiliate someone, whaddy a say?

MORALES

"On your knees"?

DON MIMINO

Exactly.

Morales puts the package down in front of him.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

Ah! It's from my nephew. My coffee. You gotta taste this, Morales.

MORALES

I'd love to, but we have a situation in C Block. I better get down there.

DON MIMINO

(undoes the package)

I'll keep some for you.

MORALES

(headed out)

Thanks.

Don Mimino takes two shot glasses and fills them with liqueur.

DON MIMINO

We'll miss that guy when he retires.

IRISHMAN

Yeah. Is this a specialty from back home?

DON MIMINO

No, it was a guy from Milan, who spent some time here, who introduced me to this. It's not as creamy as Irish coffee but less sickly. You'll see. Salute.

The two men clink glasses and sip their drinks.

The Irishman burns his lips and moves the Gazette to put his glass down.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

Well?

IRISHMAN

Very nice. I'll just leave it to cool down a bit.

DON MIMINO

You're right, it's very hot.

The Irishman glances at the Gazette.

IRISHMAN

Is this in French?

DON MIMINO

Let me see.

He puts his glasses on and grabs the Gazette.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

I've learned four languages in my time here and started Chinese lessons recently. I butchered them for decades in Chinatown without ever understanding a damn word they said. I thought I owed them that much, at least. And curiosity comes with age.

IRISHMAN

I heard it's the hardest language to learn.

DON MIMINO

(smiles)

True. But I think I have plenty of time on my hands now.

He flicks through the Gazette.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

Yes, it's French. Hmm, "Poem of the Year..."

He reads a few lines in silence.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

Okay, I'll spare you the translation--it sucks. Let's see if there's anything better...

He comes across an article in English.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

"If it's 'Godunov' for you, it's 'good enough' for me."

Don Mimino's face contorts.

He glances at the byline. "Warren Blake."

IRISHMAN

(anxious)

What's wrong?

DON MIMINO

(coldly)

Go get Morales.

The Irishman goes to the door.

Don Mimino re-reads the article closely. His eyes blaze with anger.

DON MIMINO (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Giovanni Manzoni!

INT. OFFICE, CHIMEX FACTORY - DAY

The same Giovanni Manzoni, aka Frederick Blake, sits in a small waiting room.

A SECRETARY enters.

SECRETARY

Please follow me. Monsieur Chambard will see you now.

FRED

(stands)

Thanks.

He follows her into a spacious office. The large windows give onto the factory.

CHAMBARD

(packing things into his briefcase)

Mr. Blake, I agreed to see you because you have been very persistent, and I don't want to seem rude, but I don't have much time. I have a plane to catch.

FRED

(sees a helmet)

You're a biker?

CHAMBARD

Yes, always have been. You too?

FRED

No. I'm a walker.

CHAMBARD

Quite right, too. Much safer! What can I do for you? I hope you're not here about this brown water business, too?

FRED

(smiles)

I'm afraid so.

CHAMBARD

If only we could put a stop to this archaic way of thinking "chemicals equal pollution." Chemicals are everywhere, you know, and save thousands of lives every day.

FRED

You're preaching to the converted, believe me. But when I turn the tap on in my kitchen, I don't want my water brown, I want it crystal --

CHAMBARD

Buy bottled water then.

Fred looks at him. Giovanni likewise.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Fred's Volvo station wagon enters shot and suddenly screeches to a halt. Fred gets out, flips the trunk and hurls a 250cc motorcycle onto the asphalt. Then he follows the rope that is attached to the car's tow hook.

Twenty yards behind the car, the factory boss lies bleeding on the road, the rope tied round his feet. Fred must have dragged him a couple miles at least.

Fred hunkers down next to the red-rav executive.

FRED

I don't like being interrupted, so I'm going to repeat my sentence and I advise you to pay close attention. When I turn the tap on in my kitchen, I don't want my water brown, I want it crystal-clear. So what can you do for me?

CHAMBARD

(feebly)

The tur... bine...

FRED

The turbine?

CHAMBARD

Yes. It powers... the pumps. You... have... to stop it.

FRED

Where is this turbine?

CHAMBARD

The northern side... next to... tank... number three.

FRED

Fine.

Fred unfolds his pocket knife.

CHAMBARD

(whimpers)

No! I'm begging you... I have children!

Fred slices through the rope around his feet.

FRED

Open your big mouth about this and you won't have children anymore!

Chambard shakes his head in terror.

Fred returns to the car, gathering the rope as he goes. He climbs in and drives away, abandoning the poor crashed biker.

A bell rings.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

It's the end of another day's lessons.

Belle stands outside a classroom.

She breathes deeply, eyes closed, concentrating harder than ever. She looks so pretty in her little summer dress, as if she were about to take communion.

She opens her eyes, slaps her cheeks and opens the door.

Henri sits at the desk, his nose in a math book.

HENRI

Ah, Belle! Take a seat.

Belle smiles at him and sits down.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Today is a special day for me.

BELLE

I know. Your exam is tomorrow.

HENRI

(surprised)

Yes. My train's at 8:15 this evening, so if you don't mind, we won't do any exercises tonight.

BELLE

I didn't intend to.

Belle's voice comes out in a feral purr. There is something feline about her that leaves Henri completely bemused.

But he can't help feeling the irresistible heat, the desire in the air and in Belle's flashing eyes.

HENRI

I... I put together some exercises... for you... to do at home. They're equations.

BELLE

I have an equation for you to solve now.

She slips a red handkerchief, scrunched into a ball, into the top pocket of his jacket and gets up.

BELLE (CONT'D)

What is more beautiful than the day, devours your insides, makes you laugh and cry all day, and can make you do pretty much anything..

She slowly heads over to the door and locks it.

BELLE (CONT'D)

Anywhere...

She leans back against the door.

BELLE (CONT'D)

At anytime?

In awe, Henri pulls the handkerchief from his top pocket.

It's a pair of panties.

Belle smiles at him, tears brimming in her eyes.

The young man timidly comes over and stands facing her, torn between his duty and desire.

HENRI

Belle...

He tries to find a way to say no. It's going to be tricky.

BELLE

And the answer is?

HENRI

(sighs)

Love.

Belle slides her arms round his neck, like a snake encircling a mouse.

She kisses him on the lips.

Henri can't take any more and lets passion sweep him away.

Belle gives herself to him, their hands reach out, fumble with their clothes. Their breath mingles.

They make love standing there against the door with the passion of two bodies that have denied each other too long.

Belle and her lover climax together.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Fred purrs with pleasure, his mouth full of pasta.

FRED

Honey, I don't know how you do it, but it's as good as when we were in New York.

Sitting around the kitchen table, the family devours a pasta dish.

Belle is radiant. Warren is quiet, concentrating on something.

MAGGIE

Your memory's playing tricks on you, honey. The tomatoes come from Spain. They have no flavor whatsoever.

WARREN

(jokes)

Alzheimer's coming to get you, dad!

BELLE

(poetic)

No, nostalgia compensates for the lack of taste and stimulates your brain into recreating the missing flavors.

FRED

(irritably)

I try to pay your mother a compliment and that's all I get from you kids? What's wrong with this family?

The phone rings. Belle runs to answer it.

FRED (CONT'D)

(to Maggie)

What is this? She can leave the table in the middle of dinner now?

MAGGIE

I think she has a little crush on someone.

WARREN

A geek.

FRED

A crush? And I'm the last to find out?

MAGGIE

It's not gone past first base so far, I don't think.

FRED

(outraged)

I'm glad to hear it! And he thinks he can just call at any time of the day or night?

MAGGIE

(soothing)

Gio... It's fine.

FRED

Whaddy a mean, it's fine? It's nearly ten o'clock in the evening. Is that a decent hour to call someone?

Belle comes back with a long face.

BELLE

Dad, it's for you.

The others stifle their laughter.

Fred wipes his mouth with his napkin and goes into the living room.

FRED

(into the phone)

Yes?

LEMERCIER

Good evening, this is Mr. Lemercier. We met a few weeks ago at your barbecue. I'm the retired English teacher.

LEMERCIER is sitting in the living room of his small one-bedroom apartment.

FRED

Right, I got you now. Sorry.

LEMERCIER

No, I'm sorry. I wasn't sure when would be a good time to call. But it appears that writers generally write in the morning, so I thought it would be better to call you in the evening.

Fred puffs his chest out slightly.

FRED

You thought right. What can I do for you?

LEMERCIER

Well, I don't know if you know, but I've run the Cholong Film Society for nearly five years now. On a voluntary basis, of course.

FRED

No, I didn't know.

LEMERCIER

We meet one Sunday a month for a film, usually followed by a debate. I try to invite somebody who can shed some light on the film for us. Last month, we showed Chariots of Fire, that marvelous movie about Olympic runners, and I managed to get the Malian Salif Kotouré, who was a finalist at Salt Lake City, to join us. He lives locally now.

From the expression on Fred's face, Lemercier might as well be talking Chinese.

FRED

Ah?

LEMERCIER

I must say the arrival of an American writer in Cholong seems like the perfect opportunity to revisit some American classics and I thought of a film that would suit you wonderfully.

FRED

(apprehensive)

Which one?

LEMERCIER

Some Came Running by Vincente Minnelli.

FRED

That rings a bell. Is that with Sinatra or Dean Martin?

LEMERCIER

Both.

The fish circles the bait.

FRED

What's the story again?

LEMERCIER

A writer who's an army veteran goes back home with an unfinished novel. Everybody thinks he's wasting his time, except for one woman who encourages him.

FRED

Frank plays the writer?

LEMERCIER

Yes.

FRED

(troubled)

Look, let me think it over. I'll call you back.

LEMERCIER

Very gracious of you. Goodnight, Mr. Blake.

FRED

Thanks. You too.

Fred hangs up, but lingers by the phone as if expecting it to ring again. It does.

VOICE

Hey, Fred?

FRED

Who is it? Pluto or Dingo?

DI CICCIO

It's Di Cicco. What do you mean, "Let me think it over"? Are you nuts?

FRED

I don't talk to the flunkies. Play the tape to Quint and tell him to call me.

Fred slams the phone down. It rings again.

INT. PARENTS' ROOM/AIRPORT - NIGHT

Sitting in his pajamas on the edge of the bed, Fred answers the phone.

FRED

Hello?

Quint's talking on his cellphone in the middle of an airport terminal.

QUINTILIANI

It's me, Fred. Are you out of your mind?

Fred squirms.

FRED

Look, you wanted me to integrate. I'm doing my best. He seemed like a nice guy. I didn't want to upset him and take the risk of becoming unpopular.

QUINTILIANI

Unpopular? Nobody asked you to be popular. Just "integrated," "discreet," "nondescript." What the hell are you gonna do at a debate on American movie classics? It's not at all like you.

FRED

The subject interests me.

QUINTILIANI

The cursed actor, is that it? You're not a writer, Fred. It's just a cover. You're nothing but a mean sonofabitch who managed to save his skin. Never forget that.

FRED

(angrily)

I saved my skin to make something of my life, Quint, not to live like a zombie. I paid dearly to earn that right. The right to live decently, physically and intellectually. So I'm gonna watch a video of the movie, think of some interesting stuff to say and you're gonna come with me to this damn debate! In return, I promise to give you a good write-up in my memoirs.

Quintiliani is speechless. He bursts out laughing.

QUINTILIANI

You're totally nuts, Fred.

FRED

(smiles)

I know. See you at the debate.

QUINTILIANI

(wearily)

See you soon.

Fred hangs up. He can hardly conceal a triumphant little smile.

MAGGIE

(in bed)

Don't expect me to come to your debate.

FRED

(smugly)

That's up to you.

Maggie goes back to the book she's reading. Fred gets comfortable to sleep, a satisfied smile on his lips.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

A few students hang around in the hallway, as if they're in a doctor's waiting-room.

BOY

(anxious, to Warren)

You're sure this'll work?

WARREN

Chill. With what I dropped him, there'll be no problem.

BOY

(relieved)

If I make it, my mom will be so proud of me.

WARREN

Tonight, you're a hero. You'll see.

A TEACHER opens the classroom door and lets the previous student out.

TEACHER

Warren Blake!

Warren enters.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The teachers sit in a semi-circle for the end-of-year teachers' conference. Warren sits in the middle facing them.

The PRINCIPAL takes Warren's file off a pile and heaves a sigh.

PRINCIPAL

Warren Blake. There's not much to say about your grades. 15/20 right across the board. No problem there...

The serious expressions of the teachers worry Warren.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Now, let's talk about your conduct...

He brandishes a stack of notes.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

... and the 22 complaints I have received about you.

WARREN

(trying to keep his cool)

Complaints? What about?

PRINCIPAL

Take your pick. Assault, corruption, bullying, threatening students and adults... Where do you want to start?

Warren stiffens. A somber gleam appears in his eye. Just like his dad.

WARREN

(seriously)

I want to see my lawyer.

The teachers are speechless.

EXT. CHIMEX FACTORY - DAY

Fred dumps his backpack down next to the turbine near Tank #3.

He glances round to check the coast is clear, then begins unpacking plastic explosives, homemade dynamite, wires and a timer.

He swiftly assembles the device and puts it in place. It's clearly not the first time he's done this.

He sets the timer for midnight, pulls his backpack on and hurries away as discreetly as he arrived.

The detonator reads 7:00 p.m.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Same time on the living room clock.

Belle chews nervously on an old teddy bear and paces up and down.

Eventually, the phone rings. She dives for it.

BELLE

Hello?

HENRI (O.S.)

Belle? It's me.

BELLE

Yes, I know, sweetheart. Well, how did it go?

HENRI (O.S.)

Fine. All the stuff I had studied for came up. I had a quick check afterwards and I think I got pretty much everything right.

Belle is simultaneously delighted and dejected.

BELLE

Awesome! I'm proud of you. You're catching the train home this evening?

HENRI (O.S.)

No. I'm going to stay in Paris for a few days. My father's in town. And I have to start looking for an apartment.

Belle tries to fight back her suffocating anxiety.

BELLE

(light)

Nothing too small, and make sure it has a bathtub.

HENRI

On my budget, it won't be much bigger than a shoebox.

BELLE

A shoebox is fine. As long as it has a bed.

HENRI

(ill at ease)

Belle... You're a wonderful person. Amazing, even.
And it was an unforgettable experience.

BELLE

(wrinkles her nose)

An experience?

HENRI

Yeah, I mean... A fabulous moment.

BELLE

I gave you my heart and soul, my whole being, like
I've never given them to anyone before, and you call
that "a fabulous moment"?

HENRI

(struggling)

Yes, you're right. It was more than that but...

Tears run down Belle's cheeks.

BELLE

It was much more than that. I chose you--you!--to
be my first and last love. I gave you everything and
I belong to you for life. That's real love--the one
you dream of your whole life long. The love that
only a few people have the privilege or courage to
live out.

HENRI

Belle, I'm not ready for that. I've spent five years
working toward this exam. My family doesn't have
much money and they're relying on me. I can't drop
everything just like that for...

His voice tails off as he realizes he's boxed himself in.

BELLE

(coldly)

For...?

HENRI

Belle, try to understand.

Belle starts crying again.

BELLE

Do you have any idea what it's like for a girl? The trust and love she needs to feel to let herself be penetrated standing up against a door?

HENRI

I enjoyed it, too, and I'd never done it like that but... Look, let's give it a few weeks and maybe we can meet up now and then.

BELLE

(coldly)

Against a door here and there?

HENRI

(sighs)

Belle...

BELLE

Love is the only pure thing I had left in my crappy life, in my crazy family. It was my only hope. Finding that. You've just shattered my only dream.

Belle hangs up and sits down, staring into space.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Fred sneaks back to the house through the woods and the back yard, staying out of sight of the Feds' binoculars.

He dumps his empty backpack in the sunroom and heads inside the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Belle hears her father enter and hastily wipes away her tears.

Fred is surprised to find her sitting there on the couch.

FRED

Hi, Belle. Have you seen your mother?

BELLE

She's in Evreux.

FRED

What the hell's she doing in Evreux?

BELLE

Helping a priest hand out free food and clothing.

FRED

(taken aback)

Do they know about this across the street?

BELLE

Yeah. Quint had no problem with it.

FRED

Why am I always the last person to know in this house? What about your brother? Where's he?

BELLE

Not home yet.

Fred paces.

FRED

Right... I'm going to the debate at the film society.

BELLE

Okay.

FRED

Don't you want to come?

BELLE

No, thanks.

FRED

(disappointed)

It could be interesting

BELLE

I don't feel well, dad.

Fred suddenly realizes she doesn't look too good.

FRED

Ah? It's that time of the month?

BELLE

I'm on my period, you mean, yes.

FRED

(uncomfortable)

Right. Okay. If you see your mother, tell her I've gone to the movie and I'd like it if she came along.

BELLE

Okay.

The doorbell rings.

Fred goes to answer it.

EXT. BLAKES' HOUSE - EVENING

Quint is there in his smart cop raincoat.

QUINTILIANI

I'm warning you, Fred. One word out of line, just one, and I'll lock you up in this house for a year!

FRED

Relax, Quint. We're not going to shake down Brownsville, we're going to see a movie in Cholong-sur-Avre, okay?

Quint reserves his reply.

FRED (CONT'D)

You want to walk?

QUINTILIANI

No, we'll go in my car.

FRED

Shame. A relaxing little stroll would do you good.

They head toward Quint's small rental car.

QUINTILIANI

I guess you have to be a "writer" to appreciate long walks in the forest.

FRED

(smiles)

My son, Warren, showed me a quote the other day.
Unfortunately, I've forgotten who said it. It goes,
"Writers' wives will never understand that when
their husbands gaze out the window, they're
working"

Fred smiles. Quint frowns.

QUINTILIANI

So stay at your damn window all day long. That'd
suit me fine.

They get into the car, watched through the binoculars by Di Cicco.

DI CICCICO

You ever see a movie called Some Came Running?

CAPUTO

Never heard of it.

The car starts up and pulls away.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - EVENING

The town's former Corn Exchange has become a temple to the cinematic arts for one night
only.

The poster of Minnelli's film has been stuck to the glass door and a big crowd is
gathering.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - EVENING

A young woman ushers Fred and Quint to the front of the theater.

QUINTILIANI

Maybe we'd be better in the back?

USHERESS

(smiles)

Mr. Lemercier reserved seats in the front for you.
That's where we usually put the guests of honor.

FRED

We don't wanna go insulting anyone if that's the
way things are done here. Gotta blend in.

QUINTILIANI

(grudgingly)

Okay.

The two men take their seats in the third row.

Fred glances around the half-full hall.

FRED

(excited)

A good crowd, huh?

QUINTILIANI

(sardonic)

If they'd put your photo up outside, it'd be a sell-out.

FRED

Are you gonna grouse all night? Can't you relax and enjoy it? In our long friendship, this is our first ever guys' night out.

QUINTILIANI

(shocked)

Friendship?

FRED

Quint, you're probably the person I hate the most in the whole world, but we've known each other nearly two years now. My freedom is conditional on the respect I have for you.

QUINTILIANI

Explain how that works. How can we have a friendship if you hate me?

FRED

It works just fine. Look at all my best friends... I killed 'em.

Quint is speechless.

FRED (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Just kidding.

Quint is appalled by the "joke."

QUINTILIANI

You really are insane.

Mr. Lemercier trots onto the stage, a little out of breath.

LEMERCIER

My dear friends, apologies for the delay due to certain technical issues. First of all, I'd like to thank Mr. Blake, an American writer who recently settled in Cholong, who will do us the honor of leading the debate.

Polite applause. Fred waves a timid thank-you.

LEMERCIER (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, as has happened on two previous occasions, the West France Cinematheque has sent us the wrong film!

The audience groans.

LEMERCIER (CONT'D)

We will not be able, therefore, to show Minnelli's marvelous movie.

Quint smiles and reaches for his coat.

QUINTILIANI

That's one problem solved. Can I buy you a drink?

Fred is very disappointed.

LEMERCIER

But! The saving grace of this unfortunate mix-up is that we received another American film with subtitles, also set in New York. I'm sure that Mr. Blake, as a New Yorker, will be able to confirm or otherwise the veracity, the authenticity, of the film's setting. If, of course, he does us the honor of staying...?

Lemercier's tone hardly gives Fred any choice.

FRED

I'll do my best.

Fred isn't displeased to stay. Quint puts his coat back down.

LEMERCIER

Thank you, Mr. Blake. And thanks to you all, my dear friends, for staying for this other film, which is also a masterpiece, one of the very best by the famous director Martin Scorsese. Ladies and gentlemen... Goodfellas!

The audience buzzes excitedly.

QUINTILIANI

(grabs his coat)

We're outta here!

FRED

(grabs him)

Quint, don't be an idiot! We'll draw ten times more attention to ourselves by walking out now. Everybody will wonder what we're running from, what our problem is.

Lemercier leaves the stage. The lights dim.

QUINTILIANI

I can't spend two hours watching you go into raptures over your family's home videos, Fred. It's more than I can take.

FRED

It's one hell of a movie, Quint! Gangsters all over the screen, that's gotta be a turn-on for a cop. I'm sure it's your favorite secret jerk-off movie.

Quint has no comeback.

The lights go out completely. The studio's logo appears.

INT. BELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Belle has donned her most beautiful white dress.

She stands facing the full-length mirror, slowly combing her long blond hair.

Her make-up has run and is smeared all over her face.

She hears a noise in the hallway. Someone's in a hurry.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Warren frantically stuffs things into his backpack. T-shirts, socks, cash, watches...

Suddenly, the door opens, startling him. It's Belle.

WARREN

Jesus! You scared the crap out of me!

BELLE

What are you doing?

WARREN

I got into a bit of trouble at school and I don't want the Feds punishing you all for what I did. I'm gonna bail and head for Paris. Anyway, I'm fourteen. It's time I started out in the business. Dad started when he was thirteen.

BELLE

(empty)

I'm leaving, too.

Warren notices his sister's white dress.

WARREN

(taken aback)

Where are you going?

BELLE

(glumly)

To be with the man I love.

Warren isn't sure he understands.

WARREN

Cool.

Applause rings out.

EXT/INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The applause can be heard under the crackling neon lights outside the theater.

Inside, the end credits finish and the lights come up.

Fred is dazed and confused. He's just spent two hours in his personal dreamland.

Quint mops the sweat on his brow.

Lemercier bounces onto the stage with two chairs and a mic.

LEMERCIER

What a beautiful movie, my friends! Now, I'm going to ask Mr. Blake to join me for a little debate, totally unprepared, of course, but there is so much to say about this film and the world in which it is set. Mr. Blake?

Still dazed, Fred stands and joins Lemercier on stage. A few people applaud.

Fred sits down next to Lemercier. Quint rubs his face.

LEMERCIER (CONT'D)

Now, I have a question for you, Mr. Blake... When one lives in New York, does one sense quite so vividly the presence of the Mafia, as it is represented in movies?

Fred is still in shock, as if his memory had gone for a spin in the dryer.

FRED

The presence of the Mafia?

People raise their eyebrows.

Thinking his guest is a little overawed, Lemercier tries again:

LEMERCIER

Might one bump into men like the three gangsters in the film in the street?

FRED

In the street?

There's a tangible sense of awkwardness. Quint looks down and sucks in his breath.

Beat.

FRED (CONT'D)

At the start of the movie, the first scene in the bar, a guy crosses the room with a drink in his hand. We don't know his name. He's wearing a gray vest over a yellow shirt with rolled-up sleeves. That guy really existed. His name is Vinnie Caprese. You'd find him every morning in a coffee shop on Hester called Caffè Trombetta, sipping a very dark espresso, like the one his ma used to make for him before school ever since he was eight years old. She packed him off to school like that with just a quick coffee in his belly, no bread or nothing, except on days when it was really cold, she'd add a drop of Marsala to warm his blood. I always thought it was details like those that made a man become an enforcer...

The audience is enthralled. Quint closes his eyes.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Warren sits on a bench on the platform, his backpack on, like a samurai warrior waiting for the train.

P.A. ANNOUNCER

Train 712 from Paris, destination Lisieux, will arrive on platform 1.

The old country train creaks to a halt.

Warren just sits there watching a few passengers get off.

Suddenly, a huge guy appears with a strange-looking briefcase.

He may only be 14, but Warren learned to recognize a goodfella, even from a distance, at least ten years ago.

And even if there were any doubt in his mind, it would have evaporated when a second gangster, then a third--with two heavy suitcases--then a fourth--looking distinctly Italian--get off the train, and so on until there are eight scowling hitmen standing on the platform. The real deal, mean, nasty, short and stocky. In a word, the best.

There's only one reason for them to be in Cholong-sur-Avre, and it isn't to join the Film Society debate.

Rooted to the spot, Warren concentrates hard to stop himself peeing his pants.

INSERT

The barbecue, ten years earlier.

The faces are much younger, but Warren recognizes them one by one.

EXT. PARKING LOT, TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

The silent killers exit the deserted station, head into the long-stay parking lot and steal two cars.

Warren watches them from a very safe distance.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Fred is on a roll and Quint can scowl all he likes, nothing will stop him now.

FRED

Bill Clunan learned Italian to become a gangster. Imagine a pure-bred Irishman learning Italian slang by heart from books, eating every day at Spagho's and practicing curse words, even though he was a practicing Catholic. That must have really stung his lips, to blaspheme like an Italian, calling the Virgin Mary a whore, but what can you do if you choose to join Fat Willy's boys over an Irish gang? If you go down Mellow Boulevard in Brooklyn, around seven in the evening, you'll see him maybe with his long gray hair brushed back and his prescription Ray-Bans, playing scopa with his buddies who still call him Paddy the Irishman.

The audience laughs.

EXT/INT. CAR - NIGHT

The two cars filled with hitmen drive slowly through town.

HITMAN #2

Where do we start?

HITMAN #1

We check out the town to get a feel for the atmosphere.

In the main square, the cars drive past Belle, still wearing her pretty white dress.

The camera latches onto Belle. She runs into a FRIEND from school.

FRIEND

(teasing)

Oh, hey, Belle? Wow, what's with the dress?

BELLE

Can you lend me your cell, please?

FRIEND

You don't lend your phone to people. It's too personal.

Belle slaps the girl, knocking her to the ground.

Belle straddles her and punches the girl in the face until she loses consciousness. Only then does Belle rummage through her friend's pockets until she finds her phone.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Warren is in the station phone booth.

WARREN

(nervous)

Fuck it! Pick up!

INT/EXT. BLAKES' HOUSE - NIGHT

The phone rings in the empty house.

CUT TO:

Seeing the red light flashing, Di Cicco signals that the telephone is ringing in the Blakes' house.

DI CICCO

Why don't they answer it? The kids are home, aren't they?

CAPUTO

Yes.

He sees the Volvo station wagon pull up outside.

CAPUTO (CONT'D)

It's okay, Maggie's back.

Maggie parks up, gets out and heads inside.

She goes to the ringing phone and picks up.

MAGGIE

Hello?

But Warren has hung up a fraction of a second earlier.

Panic-stricken, he is sprinting into town.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

She cradles the receiver.

EXT. CHOLONG-SUR-AVRE - NIGHT

Belle reaches the 13th century church, the town's architectural pride and joy.

She peers apprehensively at the building as if about to go on stage.

She climbs the steps and pushes the door open.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

A small group of people enters and sits down in the theater.

Somebody must have told them that the debate was worth a visit.

WOMAN AUDIENCE MEMBER

What I'd like to know, Mr. Blake, is who this Fat Willy is that you keep mentioning.

"Not Fat Willy," thinks Quint almost out loud.

FRED

Aah... Fat Willy... He was a capo. A bit like the character of Paulie in the movie. His position in the hierarchy didn't really matter. He was the go-to guy whenever a decision had to be made about what was fair or not.

(MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

He was the point of reference, the scales of justice. He never left his house--never left his chair, in fact. He delegated everything to his right-hand man, Rocco, a young guy from Milan with a nasty scar on his face that meant he never smiled. Rocco was quiet but absolutely lethal, one of the best hitmen in town. One day, in a movie theater like this one, he had managed to eliminate a guy with an ice-axe without anyone noticing.

A collective shiver runs through the audience.

Quint types a text on his Blackberry.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Recognizable by the scar that Fred has just described, ROCCO sits in the passenger seat of the car driving past the movie theater.

ROCCO

It looks nice and quiet.

He dials a number on his cellphone.

In the passenger seat of the car behind, BILLY THE BUG picks up.

BILLY THE BUG

Yes?

ROCCO

You take care of the firehouse and meet us outside the town hall. We'll handle the police.

INT. FEDS' HOUSE - NIGHT

In the living room, Di Cicco reads a text on his Blackberry.

DI CICCO

Oh shit!

CAPUTO

What?

DI CICCO

Fred's uncorked his storytelling genie.

CAPUTO

Quint wants us to go over?

DI CICCIO

Not just yet.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Belle finishes dialling a number.

A gentle breeze ruffles her hair.

HENRI (O.S.)

Hello?

BELLE

It's Belle.

Belle is calm and gentle, as if in some timeless place, elsewhere...

HENRI

(taken aback)

Hey. I can't really talk. I'm having dinner with my father.

BELLE

I won't keep you long. I just wanted to say I loved you.

HENRI

(ill at ease)

Belle...

BELLE

I wanted to kiss you before I leave.

HENRI

You're leaving Cholong?

BELLE

Yes.

HENRI

And... where are you going?

The camera tracks around Belle, then cranes up over her to reveal that she is standing on the low wall round the walkway at the top of the church's bell tower. Her feet are on the edge of the drop. Her white dress flutters in the breeze.

BELLE

To be with you.

HENRI

(with a hint of exasperation)

Belle, we already talked about this. For now, it's better if we give each other some space.

While he spouts platitudes, Belle's attention is drawn to a car that parks up outside the police station opposite the church.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Rocco and his three henchmen enter.

A freshfaced YOUNG COP is at the desk.

YOUNG COP

Gentlemen? How can I help you?

Rocco's only answer is to put a bullet between the cop's eyes with a silenced pistol.

The other hitmen fan out in different directions.

Within thirty seconds, five cops lie dead.

Routine for the hitmen. A record for Cholong-sur-Avre.

A hitman sits at a computer and types in "Warren Blake." An address comes up almost immediately.

CUT TO:

With her phone to her ear, Belle sees the group come out of the police station.

One of the hitmen adjusts his coat to cover the weapon he's just tucked into his waistband.

Belle immediately recognizes the gesture, having seen it performed hundreds of times.

BELLE

(tense)

I'll call you back.

She abruptly ends the call and jumps down onto the walkway.

EXT. CHOLONG-SUR-AVRE - NIGHT

Warren sprints through the streets and sees the second car pull up outside the firehouse.

INT. FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

The four hitmen enter. A young VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER is at the desk.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER

Yes?

BILLY THE BUG

I have a question for you.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER

(intrigued)

Yes?

BILLY THE BUG

If a large fire broke out in town, how many men could you dispatch to fight it?

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER

Around forty.

BILLY THE BUG

(impressed)

Around forty? There's around forty of you in this firehouse?

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER

No! Most would be volunteers. Actually, right now, I'm here on my own. If someone raises the alarm, I call the others.

BILLY THE BUG

(satisfied)

That's what I thought.

Billy pulls out his silenced pistol and plugs the firefighter three times at point blank range.

The other three hitmen take out their switchblades and methodically slash the tires of every vehicle in the firehouse.

INT. FEDS' HOUSE - NIGHT

The doorbell rings.

Caputo opens up and lets Maggie in.

MAGGIE

Say, did you see the kids go out? They're not in their rooms.

The two Feds glance at each other.

CAPUTO

No, we thought they were home.

MAGGIE

(reassuring)

They must have snuck out. Kids their age do that, don't they?

DI CICCIO

(awkwardly)

Maggie, you have to tell them to stop that. We have to make a note of everybody that goes in and out and when.

MAGGIE

I know, I know, but I can't keep them cooped up around the clock. They're 14 and 17! The age when you start acting up? Speaking of which, has my husband finished acting up?

DI CICCIO

(glances at his Blackberry)

As we speak.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Applause and cheers that end in a standing ovation.

Moved by so much acclaim, Fred gives a shy wave.

Lemercier pumps his hand.

LEMERCIER

Believe me, this debate will go down in the annals of
the Film Society!

It's a double-edged compliment for Fred. Behind this moment of pleasure, trouble looms.

Quint hastily pulls on his coat.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

In a bar, the eight hitmen sit hunched over a town map.

ROCCO

Paulo and Albert at the intersection. Bernie and
Tommy on the street there, watching for the Feds.
They must have a hideout with a view of the house.
Fast and Furious, you cut off the back exit, if they
try to run that way. Billy and me, we take care of
the rest. Everybody happy?

The hitmen nod.

BERNIE

We synchronize our watches for what time?

ROCCO

What time is it now? Who's got French time?

PAULO

(points to his watch)

Me. It'll be midnight... in ten seconds.

The clock behind the bar confirms he's right.

CUT TO:

The detonator on Fred's homemade bomb likewise.

CUT TO:

Fred glances at his watch and the second hand scurrying toward midnight.

CUT TO:

The turbine explodes, taking the tank with it, in a gigantic blast.

CUT TO:

The reverberations make the movie theater walls shake.

FRED

(impressed)

Fuck!

CUT TO:

The hitmen reach for their guns.

CUT TO:

In the Feds' house, the chandelier tinkles pleasantly.

MAGGIE

What was that?

Di Cicco dials a number.

CUT TO:

Every phone in the police station is ringing, but none of the corpses pick up.

CUT TO:

Red alert in the empty firehouse.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Panic sweeps across the audience.

Quint grabs Fred by the sleeve.

QUINTILIANI

(angrily)

C'mon, let's go! Show's over!

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Phone pressed to his ear, Quint drives at top speed.

QUINTILIANI

Jesus, the police switchboard is down.

FRED

What's going on?

QUINTILIANI

(snaps)

I've no idea! But if I find out that you are remotely involved in any of this, you can kiss your protection program goodbye!

FRED

Quint, calm down. I was with you all evening.

QUINTILIANI

That's the problem. Your alibi is too solid.

Quint screeches to a halt outside the Blakes' house.

QUINTILIANI (CONT'D)

I forbid you to leave that house. Is that clear?

FRED

(sarcastic)

Yes, boss.

Maggie sees her husband get out of the car and races for the door.

MAGGIE

(to Caputo)

It's okay, my husband's home. He just got back.

The phone rings. Di Cicco picks up.

DI CICCO

Yes?

QUINTILIANI

(in his car)

I'm gonna swing by the police station to see what's going on. I want the whole family in the house. Keep your eyes peeled, this stinks!

DI CICCO

Okay.

(to Maggie)

Don't you have any idea where your kids might be?

MAGGIE

(curt)

If you'd let them have cellphones, we could find out!

Fred enters the empty house, thinking his family is sleeping peacefully.

He goes into the kitchen, turns on the faucet and lets the water run. It's still brown.

Meanwhile, in four groups, the hitmen move into position.

Maggie slips out of the Feds' house, but stops when she sees a man walking slowly down the street.

She watches him, then keeps going.

The man seems harmless, until he turns and gestures to another man at the far end of the street.

Her heart in her mouth, Maggie charges back into the Feds' house.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(panic-stricken)

It's them!

DI CICCIO

Who?

MAGGIE

They've found us! I don't know how, but the street's crawling with them!

Caputo discreetly glances out the window. She's right.

CUT TO:

ROCCO

(into his cellphone)

Anything on the Feds?

In the street, Bernie checks out all the house around the Blakes'.

BERNIE

Nothing yet.

CUT TO:

Quint enters the police station and sees dead officers everywhere. He dials a number.

DI CICCIO

Yes?

QUINTILIANI

It's a cleanup operation. Get the family out of there!

DI CICCIO

Maggie's with us and the kids have gone walkabout. There's only Fred in the house.

CUT TO:

Fred watches the water run out of the faucet, getting gradually clearer until it becomes transparent.

His face lights up, overwhelmed with a buzz of satisfaction like never before.

FRED

(smiles)

Fuck!

Malavita comes over. On edge.

FRED (CONT'D)

See that, Malavita?

The dog barks and prowls round the kitchen.

FRED (CONT'D)

What's up?

CUT TO:

Billy the Bug opens the flight case in the trunk of the car. He takes out a bazooka and preps it.

CUT TO:

The dog's constant barking worries Fred.

FRED (CONT'D)

What's wrong? Do you want to go out?

CUT TO:

Billy the Bug props the bazooka on his shoulder and the roof of the car.

CUT TO:

Watching from the Feds' living room, Maggie screams:

MAGGIE

Jesus! They're gonna blow up the house!

She dives for the phone, while the Feds grab their automatic machine guns.

CUT TO:

BERNIE

(into his cellphone)

I think I've spotted something.

ROCCO

(into his cellphone)

We'll deal with it afterwards.

CUT TO:

Fred watches his dog bound into the back yard. The phone rings.

Fred hesitates between following the dog and answering the phone.

Maggie is in tears.

MAGGIE

Pick up! Please! For God's sake!

Fred hesitates.

Billy the Bug doesn't. He pulls the trigger.

The RPG crosses the street and blows out the downstairs of the house in a huge explosion made bigger when it impacts with the methane gas tank.

CUT TO:

Maggie screams. Di Cicco restrains her.

CUT TO:

From the corner of the street, Warren sees the house go up in flames.

CUT TO:

Belle watches the explosion from one block further down.

CUT TO:

Quint sees it up ahead, through the windshield of his car.

CUT TO:

In the back yard, on the edge of the woods, surrounded by debris, Fred picks himself up.

FRED

(pissed)

Fuck!

CUT TO:

ROCCO

(into his cellphone)

Go through the house with a fine tooth comb. I want a fingertip, a toe, anything that proves the bastard is dead. Bernie, take care of the Feds.

BERNIE

Okay.

CUT TO:

The two Feds nervously prepare to evacuate through the back door.

DI CICCIO

Maggie, we're going out the back, okay? You wait a few seconds and when we give you the signal, you join us, okay?

Maggie nods.

Caputo slowly opens the door. It is immediately riddled with bullets from a Kalashnikov. 100 rounds a minute.

The two Feds are blown apart. Their corpses lie smoking on the floor.

CUT TO:

Leading with their guns, the hitmen head for the smoking wreckage of the house.

A NEIGHBOR comes out onto his porch in his pajamas.

NEIGHBOR

(appalled)

Oh my god! What happened?

Tommy takes him out from twenty yards away with a single bullet to his heart.

Warren has seen it all from not far behind the car abandoned by Rocco.

He sees Furious head back to the other car to replace a defective weapon.

FURIOUS

(seething)

Fucking French crap!

He rummages in his bag in the back of the car, pulls out an Israeli Desert Eagle and grins. When he turns round, a tire jack thwacks into his face.

Belle has put all her weight into the shot. Her forehead's improving.

Furious totters back and, despite his 250 pounds, collapses.

Belle grabs his gun and motions to her brother across the intersection to do the same.

Warren understands and helps himself in the trunk of the other car: a pistol in each pocket and an Uzi in his hands.

CUT TO:

The hitmen search the ruins. The children creep forward.

CUT TO:

Maggie cowers in the living room, gasping for breath.

Bernie's silhouette slips into the room and calmly comes over.

BERNIE

(calmly)

Hey, Maggie.

MAGGIE

(frantic)

Hey, Bernie.

BERNIE

(sincere)

It's great to see you again.

MAGGIE

(breaks down in tears)

The feeling's not mutual, Bernie.

BERNIE

I'd love to make it a clean kill, Maggie, but you know the rule. After what your husband did, I have to dirty you first.

MAGGIE

(beseechingly)

Bernie...

BERNIE

If you don't put up a fight, it won't hurt so much.

Maggie nods vaguely.

Bernie starts unbuttoning his pants.

CUT TO:

In the wreckage, Albert sees Malavita lying in the debris, a nasty gash on one leg

ALBERT

Hey! I've found the dog! What do we do with it?

ROCCO

Don Mimino said everybody.

ALBERT

Yeah, but the dog won't ever snitch on anyone.

ROCCO

(snaps)

Everybody, Albert! That means everybody, including you if you don't obey orders.

ALBERT

Okay, but if Fat Willy was still with us, I'm sure he'd spare the dog!

ROCCO

(incensed)

Albert!

ALBERT

Okay, okay.

Albert cocks his gun and takes aim at the prostrate dog.

CUT TO:

Bernie forces Maggie to spread her legs, then lowers his pants.

Just then, Fred appears out of nowhere, whips Bernie's belt out of the loops and wraps it round his neck.

Hanging off Bernie's back, Fred slowly strangles him.

CUT TO:

Albert stands over Malavita.

A gunshot rings out, but the dog is still alive. Albert, however, has a gaping bullet wound in his neck. Belle has shot him.

Albert spins round and is about to shoot her when Warren opens fire with his Uzi.

WARREN

Noooo!!!

Warren sprays bullets all around the ruins while Fred uses all his might to strangle Bernie.

Fast and Tommy are hit and go down as bullets fly everywhere.

Overcome with emotion, Warren topples backwards and knocks himself out.

Paulo tries to sneak round them, but Belle empties a clip into his head from point-blank range.

Billy the Bug hunkers down to reload. All he sees when he looks up his Malavita.

Despite the pain, the dog looms over his prey.

He sinks his fangs into Billy's face and isn't about to let go.

CUT TO:

Fred clings to Bernie's back, pulling on the belt, but Bernie has no intention of dying even though less and less oxygen is getting through.

Maggie crawls out of the living room.

Belle sees that she's out of ammo. She hurries back to the car where all the weapons are stored, but Rocco cuts her off, leveling his gun on her.

Belle stops in her tracks.

ROCCO

You've not a little girl anymore, Belle.

BELLE

Fuck you!

ROCCO

That's exactly what I'm gonna do, just after I kill you.

Rocco grins and fires. Click. The clip's empty.

Belle bolts. Rocco takes off after her.

CUT TO:

Fred is flat on his back, maintaining his stranglehold, but Bernie is trying to crush him with his considerable weight.

Maggie reappears with a kitchen knife in one hand.

CUT TO:

Belle is fast, but Rocco gradually catches her.

He flicks open his switchblade.

Belle hears the click of the knife and sprints even harder, but Rocco is gaining inexorably.

CUT TO:

Maggie straddles Bernie while Fred holds him firmly. Clasp ing the knife in both hands, she raises it over her head.

CUT TO:

Rocco's knife is poised barely a few yards behind Belle.

CUT TO:

With a loud grunt, Maggie rams the knife into Bernie's chest with all her might.

CUT TO:

Quint's car hurtles out of the darkness from the right and slams into Rocco, who flies a couple dozen yards in the air.

Belle slows. Out of breath. Just like her mother.

Fred wriggles out from under Bernie.

Warren comes round and rubs his head.

Quint gets out of the car, his gun in one hand.

Furious slowly regains consciousness and rubs the back of his neck. Quint immediately puts him back to sleep with a bullet to the head.

The intersection falls silent once more. Nothing and nobody moves.

Albert lies in the ruins, a bullet between the eyes.

Tommy is unrecognizable.

Fast is in a similar state.

The blood has drained out of Paulo.

Bernie's mouth is agape.

Billy the Bug's face has been chewed off.

Rocco lies in a disjointed heap on the road.

Belle slumps to her knees, gasping for breath.

Warren comes over and hunkers down next to her, hugging her tight.

Quint heaves a sigh and holsters his gun.

QUINTILIANI

Fuck!

INT/EXT. VOLVO/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Volvo station wagon drives along.

Maggie is at the wheel, with her husband at her side.

The two children are in the back, faces lost in the night whizzing past the window. Malavita is in the trunk, wrapped in bandages.

A deathly silence reigns in the car.

FRED

Do you think he'll pull through?

MAGGIE

Who?

FRED

The dog Malavita.

Maggie glances at him with a hint of reproach in her eyes. Most likely, she'd have liked another answer.

Fred senses that he's gaffed and looks down.

Maggie focuses once more on the road.

The silence descends once more on the Volvo as it races through the night toward a new life.

END