

**The Place Beyond The Pines**

Written  
by  
Derek Cianfrance & Ben Coccio

80000035

Producers  
Jamie Patricof  
Lynette Howell  
Alex Orlovsky

8409 Santa Monica Blvd  
West Hollywood, CA 90069  
(323) 654-7800

D27  
04/13/2011

*"He linked the past with the present, and the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed."*

*Jack London,*  
THE CALL OF THE WILD

*"One cannot violate the promptings of one's nature without having that nature recoil upon itself."*

*Jack London,*  
WHITE FANG

80000035

INT. CIRCUS - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

LUKE GLANTON; 28, handsome; hears echoing strains of Bon Jovi's 'Dead or Alive' on the PA mix & a cheering audience. Deep breath. He obsessively touches four little tchotchkes which are arranged perfectly in front of his mirror. OCD.

He zips up a motorcycle jacket over two faded prison tatoos, strides from his trailer through the corridors of the arena, passing other performers on his way to the main ring.

Luke climbs onto his bike, revs the engine. Roadies slap his back, give him high 5's. He is joined by 2 motorcyclists.

                  ANNOUCER OVER P.A.  
                  And now, ladies and gentlemen, boys  
                  and girls, get ready to be rocked  
                  by the motor-cycle mayhem of...

INT. CIRCUS, MAIN RING - CONTINUOUS

A spherical, metal cage sits under the Big-Top. Next to it stands an ornate portico with a red velvet curtain as a door.

                  ANNOUCER OVER P.A.  
                  Luke Glanton and his Rough Riders!

The two motor-cycles ride ahead of Luke through the curtain and into the cage. Luke bursts through, stops, revs his engine and pumps his fist at the roaring crowd.

ROMINA GUTIERREZ, twenty-two, Hispanic; sits in the bleacher seats, watching the spectacle. Enraptured.

Luke drives into the cage where the other riders make long, lazy loops. Luke guns it, guides his bike over the inside walls of the cage. He defies gravity while weaving his way around the other two stunt riders. He makes it look easy. But it isn't. It is a death-defying act of bravado.

The other two drivers leave the cage and Luke performs his finale; a slow inside loop where his bike leaps from one facet of the cage to another. The crowd goes wild.

                  ANNOUCER OVER P.A. (CONT'D)  
                  Let's hear it for Luke Glanton and  
                  his Rough Riders, folks!

LATER. Lights are up. Luke sits on his bike, signing autographs and taking pictures with a gaggle of extremely psyched 8-year old boys. Luke clearly enjoys being the coolest thing in the world to these kids.

Romina walks against the surge of people exiting the arena. Luke catches sight of her; he drops what he's doing.

                  LUKE  
                  Hey!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROMINA  
(shifting, awkward)  
I didn't know if you'd remember...

Luke looks at her like she's crazy. His fans tug on his clothing, vying for his attention. He pushes through them to get closer to Romina. They give each other a little hug, careful not to smush the youngsters all around them.

LUKE  
You wanna go somewhere? You got plans tonight?

ROMINA  
(shrugs)  
I gotta go. I just wanted to see you again.

LUKE  
Can I give you a ride home?

She remembers the thrill riding on the back of Luke's bike.

ROMINA  
I'm fine. I can just take the bus.

EXT. ROUTE 5 - NIGHT

Luke tears away from the Arena. Everything around looks run-down, abandoned. We are in Schenectady; a smaller, upstate-New York version of Detroit. It is 1994.

Romina rides on the back of his bike, her arms holding tight around his abdomen. The wind blows hair into her indecisive face. She really should be on the bus right now. But the air is cold and Luke's body is warm. She buries her face into the back of his leather jacket.

EXT. TWO-FAMILY HOUSE - LATER

Luke pulls up in front of an old, two-family house. Romina gets off, looks over her shoulder; the living room light is ON. She says, "thanks" and gives Luke a peck on the cheek.

LUKE  
That's it? You don't wanna talk, or anything...

ROMINA  
(hiding something)  
I can't. I think about you a lot.

LUKE  
So then lets hang. We pack up after tomorrow night's show and I probably won't be back this way for another year. At least. Wanna get a beer or something?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROMINA  
(comes close, whispers)  
I'm with someone... I just wanted  
to see you again...

She kisses him again quick, wishing she could stay. Then runs away, not looking back, up the steps of her childhood home.

LUKE  
Say 'hi' to your mom.

Luke starts his bike, tears out of the neighborhood, tires squealing smoke, blackening the street.

INT. CIRCUS. MAIN RING

Engine gunning, Luke circles the inside of the steel cage in a rage. He is on the verge of crashing. The audience rapt.

LATER. ROADIES and performers pack up the steel cage. Luke wanders through the activity and ignores the throngs of kids seeking autographs. He searches the arena for Romina. She is nowhere to be found. He mounts his bike.

EXT. ROUTE 5 - NIGHT

Luke drives fast through the night streets.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - LATER.

MALENA, 47, Guatemalan, opens the door in nurse's scrubs. Instantly, she recognizes Luke.

LUKE  
Hello mama.

MALENA  
She's no here.

LUKE  
(sighs, resigned)  
Is the man of the house home?

Luke hears a BABY crying from inside. Malena tries to hide it by closing the door so only her head is visible.

MALENA  
Nobody's home...

Malena is short. And Luke peeks over her into the house. SEES - a few baby toys scattered in the floor. Luke looks down. Malena relents. She can't keep him away from the truth any longer. She opens the door.

INT. TWO-FAMILY HOUSE. BABY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The baby wails in the center of a twin bed surrounded by pillows. Malena comes in, scoops him up, starts to bounce and "shush" him. Luke stands near the door, watching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The baby calms down. Malena brings him CLOSER to Luke.

MALENA  
You wanna hold him? He's yours.

Luke is unsure. He awkwardly, but gently accepts the baby into his arms.

MALENA (CONT'D)  
Hold the neck...

Luke and the baby stare at one another. Tears well in Luke's eyes as he falls in love with his son. Malena smiles.

LUKE  
Romina still work at the diner?

Malena tries to give nothing away.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
(To Jason)  
Is that where momma work? Down at that old greasy spoon?

INT. OLYMPIC DINER - LATER

The middle of a long shift. Romina steps from the kitchen carrying several plates. She drops off the breakfast specials at their destination and sees Luke - slumped in a booth. Romina stares at the back of his head for a while.

MOMENTS LATER. They look at one another over cups of coffee.

LUKE  
You weren't gonna tell me?

ROMINA  
It was just a fling.

LUKE  
Still... It's common courtesy.  
Might even be the law.

ROMINA  
I haven't heard from you in a year.

LUKE  
I know it. It's not 'cause I haven't thought about you...

ROMINA  
I haven't been waiting to hear from you, or anything.

LUKE  
What's his name?

ROMINA  
Jason.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
Marry me.

Romina tries to repress her laughter.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
Why are you laughing? I love you.

ROMINA  
You're corny. You don't even know me.

LUKE  
I know I love my boy. He's definitely my boy, right?

ROMINA  
...Yeah... But you didn't even know he existed until tonight.

LUKE  
...Don't matter.

ROMINA  
You say you want to marry me. You don't mean it. You might think you do. But it's not true. You're just excited...

LUKE  
How can you sit there, and tell me what I do and don't feel? What're you, Carnac? I'm saying "I love you." I'll learn to. Even when you hurt my feelings. And I'm saying, "I love him." That's it. There's nothin' left to say. That's truth.

Luke and Romina sit in silence for a little while.

ROMINA  
I'm going to school nights now.

LUKE  
(quickly)  
Good for you.

ROMINA  
I don't have a lot of time for anything except Jason and school and work. And my boyfriend.

Silence. A challenge.

LUKE  
You like pancakes? I like to make people pancakes. I got a special way with 'em. You wanna know my secret ingredient? Huh? LOVE.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUKE (CONT'D)

They're not the kind of pancakes  
you get at a place like this.  
(pushes his coffee)  
Okay? I'd like to make you and  
Jason some of my special pancakes.  
Would you allow me to do that?

ROMINA

(laughs)  
He's a baby. He eats baby food...  
Pancakes...

LUKE

Don't matter. Put 'em in a blender.  
You'll taste the love I have for  
you in 'em. Then you'll know. Your  
boyfriend can even take a bite. Of  
a small one. Then he'll know too.

Romina laughs, leans across the table.

ROMINA

He's your son. But that don't make  
you his father.

LUKE

He's not mine. I'm his. And that's  
all there is to it.

ROMINA

When do you leave town?

EXT/INT. CIRCUS. TRAILER OFFICE.

The Circus is packed up and ready to leave. Luke wheels his  
bike up to a trailer office.

INSIDE - JACK, weathered, 55, sips coffee & shoots Luke with  
venom from his dilated pupils.

JACK

How many fuckin' times I have to  
tell you? "After the show, help  
everyone dismantle." Then you can  
go get your dick wet & whatever the  
fuck-else you need to do.

LUKE

When's this pay period end? Friday?

JACK

Why?

LUKE

I need whatever's coming to me now.  
You can cut off the next two days.

JACK

I don't give out advances.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
It's not an advance. I quit.

JACK  
You can't quit.

LUKE  
I'm taking the bike too.

JACK  
You can't take the bike.

LUKE  
It's my bike.

Jack sighs. He leans forward and pulls a wad of bills from his back pocket. He peels off some bills.

EXT. TURNPIKE. MORNING. SIDE OF THE ROAD.

Luke sits on his bike watching the Circus drive away.

EXT./INT ESQUIRE MOTEL - AFTERNOON

Luke's bike is parked in front of an old, run-down motel.

INSIDE. Luke sits on his bed, eats McDonald's. The TV is on playing a news report from 1994. He counts his pay-out, folds it, slips it in his boot.

EXT. TWO-FAMILY HOUSE - MORNING

Luke rings the doorbell, a box of Bisquick under his arm. The door opens. Romina's boyfriend KOFI CANKAM - 28, black and bigger than Luke stands on the threshold. Luke smiles.

LUKE  
Is Romina in?  
(beat)  
I'm Luke. I brought breakfast.

KOFI  
I know who you are.

LUKE  
Well you got me at a disadvantage.

KOFI  
Romina doesn't want you around.

LUKE  
I would like to see my son.

KOFI  
She made herself clear, right? Why don't you step off.

Luke and Kofi stare at one another. Luke takes a quick, hard poke at Kofi's face and knocks his head back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kofi, stunned, lurches forward in anger. He and Luke lock together like wrestlers. The two men tumble to the ground. Kofi gets the upper hand and pins Luke to the lawn. Luke continues to struggle against Kofi. Bisquick is everywhere.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
Crazy motherfucker punch me in my girlfriend's house? Huh? Huh?

Romina comes from the house. Kofi pops Luke in the nose. Blood starts to flow. Luke is dazed.

ROMINA  
Leave him alone! What the hell is this shit?

Kofi releases Luke. Luke calms down, looks at Romina.

KOFI  
He started it.

ROMINA  
(To Luke)  
What're you doing? You were supposed to leave town!

LUKE  
Well... I stayed here.

He uses his wrist to dab the blood running from his nose, it pisses him off. He jumps Kofi, knocks him to the ground.

KOFI  
Call the police!

LATER - An ambulance and 2 police cars camp out in front of the home. An EMT dresses Kofi's brow. Luke sits on the curb in cuffs & whistles for Romina to come over. She does so begrudgingly. Kofi glares.

Luke kicks off his boot, dumps out the wad of bills.

LUKE  
Take it. For the boy.

Romina hesitates, then snatches the wad up and puts it in her pocket as quick as you please. A police officer picks up Luke by his arms.

KOFI  
We're gonna be pressing full charges, officer. Full charges.

INT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - LATER

The Police book, fingerprint and photograph Luke.

LATER - IN HOLDING CELL - Luke sits, wearing prison orange, touching each bar in succession firmly with his fore-finger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LATER - A DESK CLERK gives Luke his possessions back - beat-up wallet, \$8, a pocket knife, single key, #2 pencil, book of matches with a girl's phone number on it.

EXT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - DAY

Luke walks into the light of day, squints. He carries a manila envelope with paperwork pertaining to the arrest & upcoming arraignment. He looks at it, chucks it in the trash.

INT. FRIENDLY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

MR. FEINSTEIN, the manager of the restaurant peruses Luke's neatly handwritten resume. He looks up, smiles.

MR. FEINSTEIN  
So why do you want to work at Friendly's, Mr. Glanton?

LUKE  
I don't really want to in particular. I need to. You were the first to get back to me.

MR. FEINSTEIN  
You shouldn't answer like that.

LUKE  
Just being honest, sir.

MR. FEINSTEIN  
An answer like that won't get you the job.

LUKE  
I need this. For my boy.

MR. FEINSTEIN  
Now, see? That's better and you didn't even have to lie.

INT. STOCKROOM, FRIENDLY'S - LATER

Luke sits in front of a television hooked up to a VCR. Mr. Feinstein puts a tape in the machine, presses 'play.'

MR. FEINSTEIN  
This is only a few minutes long. Take a look, then come find me.

Mr. Feinstein leaves the room. VIDEO BEGINS - instructs new employees how to make the various types of sundaes. Everyone in the video is 19 or younger. Everyone smiles.

INT/EXT. FRIENDLY'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Luke strolls briskly out the front door. Feinstein catches him leaving out of the corner of his eye. Watches Luke straddle his bike and roar away.

EXT. PINE BARRENS - DAY

Outside of town, thousands of tall, thin pines stand cheek by jowl. Luke speeds between them with reckless abandon and joy. He catches sight of an ATV through the pines, plotting a parallel course, as if in unspoken friendly competition.

EXT. PARKING AREA OFF THE ROAD NEAR PINE BARRENS - LATER

Luke comes to a parking area adjacent to the main road. Sees - ROBIN VAN DER ZEE, 48, white, working hard to get his ATV onto the trailer behind his pickup. Luke trots up to help.

They roll the ATV onto the trailer, secure it with nylon straps. Robin makes note of Luke's bike.

ROBIN  
Mean machine.

LUKE  
I built it myself. Mostly.

ROBIN  
You handle it like a pro.

LUKE  
Yessir.

ROBIN  
You headed back to town?

LUKE  
I suppose...

ROBIN  
Give you a ride. Save you some gas.

They strap his bike next to the ATV. Robin notices one of Luke's prison tatoos.

EXT. ESQUIRE MOTEL - LATER

Robin pulls up to the Esquire, surveys the run-down motel.

LUKE  
Thank you kindly.

ROBIN  
You're staying *here*?

LUKE  
Temporarily.

ROBIN  
Just passing through, huh?

LUKE  
Naw. I'm transitionin' in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN  
What are you doing for work?

Luke looks around... not many opportunities in his sights.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
You know your way around an engine?

LUKE  
I do.

ROBIN  
I run a little service station back down route 5. I could use a good, you know, American worker like you, you know what I mean? Good people. At least, that's what you seem like. I can put you up, too. Got a little apartment above the garage. It's modest, but its got what you need. Better than this shit-hole.

Luke considers the offer. Robin flashes a wry smile.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Did I catch you at a busy time or something?

EXT. ROBIN VAN DER ZEE'S SERVICE STATION - LATER

They pull up to into a run-down service station. Busted cars crowd the bays. A JUNKYARD DOG named TONY barks at Luke.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Robin opens the door to a tiny studio. A tiny fridge sits next to a tiny stove, next to a twin bed. On the bed sits RUMMY, 27, drunk, he listens to the radio, reads a comic.

ROBIN  
He's outta here today.  
(To Luke)  
We'll take the rent out of your pay, okay?

RUMMY  
This is some bullshit.

ROBIN  
What are you complaining about? You got til the end of the day.

EXT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Robin finds Luke unhitching his bike from the truck.

LUKE  
No thank you. I'm not trying to throw anyone out on the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN  
Don't worry about him. Kid's a  
deadbeat. 3 weeks behind on rent.

LUKE  
All the same.

Robin pulls Luke in close with his arm.

ROBIN  
Hey, listen. You ever been in jail?

Luke has. But he's not about to tell Robin about it.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
You don't have to be coy with me,  
son. See this?

Robin pulls out his top row of teeth. Dentures. Just gums  
remain. He pops the teeth back in.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
I had too many postage stamps.  
Contraband, they said. They tell me  
their gonna put me in solitary for  
a month. Problem is, I had this gum  
infection. Doc ordered 2 weeks of  
antibiotics before they would put  
me in solitary. But the warden...  
he saw no need for postponement. So  
he orders the prison dentist to  
pull all my top teeth. Then put me  
in solitary. Damn near starved to  
death. Mom smuggled in crushed  
penicillin pills.

Robin punctuates his story by clacking his teeth.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Ten years in Attica. Ten years  
probation. I'm clean as a whistle  
now. You ever been in jail?

LUKE  
Yes, sir.

ROBIN  
I knew it when I first saw you.  
Birds of a feather... Wanna flock?

Luke has a mind to knock Robin's block off. Robin starts  
laughing at him, deep belly laughs.

INT. SCHENECTADY COURTHOUSE - DAY

BAILIFF  
All rise.

Luke and his counsel stand. Across the divide, Kofi does as  
well. Romina sits behind him, Jason on her lap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDGE

The court grants the defendant Mr. Kofi Cankam a restraining order against Mr. Luke Glanton.

The judge bangs his gavel.

INT. LOBBY OF COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Luke walks out into the lobby. Kofi and Romina are ahead of him. Luke catches up. Kofi's jaw drops in disbelief.

KOFI

You just hear the judge or what? We in a court house and you breaking the law already?

LUKE

(ignoring Kofi)

I gotta keep away from him. Not you and Jason. Right?

ROMINA

You made me miss a class for this shit. Both of you.

Romina storms out through the front doors with her baby. Kofi glares at Luke, looks over at a police officer.

KOFI

(To Police Officer)

Sir? This man's breaking the law.

Luke retreats as the cop approaches.

INT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - DAY

Luke, covered in grease, works diligently under a 1988 Ford Taurus. He notices Robin's feet approach. Slides out from under. Robin peels a few bills and hands them down to Luke.

ROBIN

Payday, my boy. Less room & board.

Luke counts his poultry sum. Sighs.

INT. OLYMPIC DINER - DARKEST HOUR BEFORE DAWN

Luke sits in his same booth, calls for the check. Romina walks over, sets a fresh pot of coffee down, grabs the check.

LUKE

You know I never knew my dad.

ROMINA

I'm sorry about that. Me neither.

She sets the check, \$1.50 face down, in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
He didn't give a shit about me.

ROMINA  
But you turned out fine, right?

Luke scans the check, looks at Romina, digs in his pocket, pulls out all his money. Places it on the table.

ROMINA (CONT'D)  
You can't pay me off.

LUKE  
It's not for you. It's for him.

Romina takes the wad of money.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
Your boyfriend at home?

ROMINA  
You can't come back with me.

LUKE  
He works mornings, huh?

Romina suppresses a smile.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
Let me take you guys out for ice cream. He's never had it, right?

ROMINA  
It's 6 in the morning!

LUKE  
Don't matter. He can have some chocolate ice cream. Do you remember the first time you ate chocolate ice cream? Remember what it was like? I wanna be there when he first tastes it.

ROMINA  
He don't even eat solid food yet.

LUKE  
It's OK. They have soft ice cream.

Romina doesn't budge.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
You get to have all his firsts. First steps, first words. I want some firsts. I want him to see my face when he tastes chocolate ice cream for the first time. Let me have that.

EXT. STEWART'S CONVIENIENCE STORE. 7 IN THE MORNING.

Luke holds a sugar cone of chocolate ice cream up to Jason's mouth, presses it gently on his lips. Instinctively, the baby licks the ice cream, gets a taste. His eyes light up & he starts "cooing." Excited, he wants more.

Luke is so happy, probably the happiest he has ever been in his whole life. His eyes well up with big, heavy tears. Romina is conflicted, but infected by the joy of the moment.

EXT. PINE BARRENS - DAY

LATER. Luke and Robin sit an old tree stump drinking beer.

ROBIN

All my people were Dutch. This town, the whole area started Dutch.

LUKE

I need to earn more money. Any chance you give me a raise?

ROBIN

Believe me, kid. If I could give anyone a raise, it would be you. You're a real asset. And good company too. The big chains bleed me a little bit more each month. The only regular work I get into the shop is souping up low-riders for niggers and spics.

LUKE

My kid is half spic. Or half something south of the border...

Robin toasts Luke with his beer. They drink.

ROBIN

I like you, boy. You remind me of me. A lo-o-o-o-ong time ago.

LUKE

You ain't so old.

ROBIN

Not so old I'm throwing in the towel. I'm not just gonna sit there and wait around til someone tell's me I'm a dead duck. I have a feeling you're the same way. Right?

LUKE

I don't like waiting around for other people to give me permission to live.

ROBIN

You're like me. You're a chisler.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
I ain't no chisler. What's that,  
anyway?

ROBIN  
You play all the angles... I know  
you've been to jail. More than  
once, right?

Luke puts down his beer and stares at Robin hard.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Course you have. You've stolen  
before.

Luke gets up and starts to walk away.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Now don't be like that. You know  
I'm not judging you. Hell, I admire  
a thief. It takes a man to steal.

LUKE  
You don't know a thing about me.

ROBIN  
Oh, please do pardon me. I  
certainly hope my misjudging you in  
this way didn't hurt your feelings  
too deeply. Tell me you've stolen!

LUKE  
I've stolen.

ROBIN  
But you did it stupid, right? You  
got liquored up and knocked over a  
convenience store or something?

LUKE  
I didn't need to be liquored up.

ROBIN  
Fair enough. But you got caught...  
I know you like you're my own flesh  
and blood. Your problem wasn't your  
lack of courage. It was your lack  
of foresight. Your plan failed you.  
Look, how would you like to do it  
right? With me? What do you say?

LUKE  
I got two things to say. First of  
all, thank you, for considering me.  
Second of all, fuck you. I got a  
kid!

ROBIN  
Well that's why we're talking here,  
isn't it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I never had children, that I know of, but I do watch a lot of TV. Nature shows mostly. Providing for your family, that's something I understand. It's animal. It's instinct. You get a mouth to feed and all of a sudden you got a purpose, you have a goal. And you focus everything you have, everything you are like a laser on that goal, right? You gotta edge out the competition with whatever you have to offer. With whatever talents are at your disposal. And you're a man with some very, very unique talents.

EXT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - LATER

Robin and Luke inspect a beat-to-hell cube truck. It's white and nondescript. The windshield has a crack across it.

ROBIN

Doesn't look like much, but it runs fine. And the back is big enough.

LUKE

You bought this? For this?

ROBIN

You gotta spend \$ to make \$.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - LATER

Robin and Luke sit at the kitchen table. A map is spread out before them. On it - several locations marked with red dots.

ROBIN

These are a few prospects, but I'm sure we could find some more.

Robin places something swaddled in old flannel rags on the table. He pushes it toward Luke.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Don't ask me where I got it from.

Luke slowly unwraps the flannel - a .38 snub-nosed pistol sits on the table.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

We'd split everything fifty-fifty.

LUKE

Seems like I'm taking most of the risk. I should get most of the reward.

ROBIN

I'll just find someone else who will be happy with an even split.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
Really? You're gonna get someone else to *rob a goddamned bank with you*? Okay Robin.

ROBIN  
Come on! Don't get lawyerly on me.  
(beat)  
Sixty-forty.

LUKE  
Seventy-thirty.

ROBIN  
Sixty-five-thirty-five or go to hell.

Luke picks up the pistol.

INT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - NIGHT

Robin clicks the button of a stop-watch.

ROBIN  
Go.

Halfway across the garage bay stands an old bureau. Luke runs up to the bureau and vaults it.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Ten seconds. Let's go.

Luke stands behind the bureau and grabs Monopoly money that had been placed in the bureau's drawers.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
You didn't tell anyone what to do. People are getting panicked.

Luke halfheartedly speaks into the empty garage.

LUKE  
Everyone get down on the floor.

ROBIN  
Aw, Jesus. You sound like you're asking some jerk off for directions. Twenty seconds.

Luke grabs the rest of the money and leaps over the bureau. He runs for the bay's door. Robin clicks his stopwatch.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Pathetic.

Robin places his hand gently on Luke's chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Listen, kid. You're a performer, right? These folks in the bank, they're your audience. They're expecting a show. They want to see a real live bank robber. Give 'em what they want, and you won't get any trouble.

INT. BANK - MORNING

Robin steps up to the young, female TELLER and smiles.

TELLER

How can I help you today?

ROBIN

Hi there, sweetheart. I need to break this hundred. One fifty, two twenties and a ten, please.

Robin watches the teller use a set of keys she has wrapped around her wrist on an elastic band to open up three separate drawers. The drawers contains different bills.

INT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - NIGHT

Robin starts his stopwatch.

ROBIN

Go.

Luke bounds past him into the bay like Gene Kelly.

LUKE

Ladies and Gentlemen! I ask that each and every one of you lay yourselves down on the Goddman floor, if you please!

Luke vaults the 'counter' grabs the money, vaults back and runs to Robin who clicks his stop watch.

ROBIN

You're making me proud.

A bit out of breath, Luke pulls the gun from his waistband.

LUKE

This thing gotta be loaded?

ROBIN

What?

LUKE

Just sayin'. I'm not gonna hurt no one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN  
Well hell's bells. Why don't we  
just get you a squirt gun instead?

Not a bad idea. Luke laughs. Robin doesn't. He grabs the gun.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
You understand fully what we've  
engaged here, correct?

LUKE  
Yeah, I do.

ROBIN  
I don't want anything to happen to  
you. And if God forbid it does, I  
don't want the other guy walking  
away like it's no big deal.

Luke looks down at the ground and smiles, like a kid reacting  
to a compliment from his proud father.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE SERVICE STATION - NIGHT

Luke sits on his bed and inspects the pistol. He swings open  
the cylinder, methodically removes the bullets. He lines them  
up meticulously on his night stand.

INT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION. BAY. NIGHT.

Luke uses a spray gun to paint his bike black.

EXT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - MORNING

Luke and Robin eating breakfast together.

ROBIN  
Good pancakes.

Luke collects his plate, rinses it in the sink. He heads out  
the door for his bike. He climbs on his black bike.

EXT. TURNPIKE - MIDDAY

Luke wears a motorcycle helmet as he bolts down the turnpike;  
an empty child's school backpack on his back.

EXT./INT BANK - LATER

Luke parks, climbs off, leaves his bike running right outside  
the front door of a bank. He checks the time and performs his  
OCD ritual before bursting through the door.

INSIDE - Luke, still wearing his helmet, pulls the pistol  
from his front jacket pocket and points it theatrically into  
the air. He strolls through the bank with measured strides.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE

Ladies and gentleman, listen up.  
This is gonna be the fastest bank  
robbery you've ever witnessed.

Clipped screams of shock echo through the bank.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Now if you'll all please oblige me  
and get on down onto the floor  
there, I'd really appreciate it.

The bank falls silent with fear. Luke runs up to the counter and vaults it, slips off the backpack. 3 female tellers huddle behind the counter. Luke squats down on his haunches and finds the one who served Robin before. He pulls the keys off her wrist and opens the top drawer at her station.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Open up the top two drawers all the  
way along.

Luke tosses his backpack to another teller.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Hold the bag so she can fill it.

They fill the bag with money, hand it to Luke, back away, hands raised. Luke vaults the counter to the other side.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Thank you all kindly for your  
attentive cooperation.

Luke walks out the door calmly and quickly.

EXT. BANK PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Sound of sirens approach. Luke gets on the bike, takes off.

EXT. TURNPIKE - CONTINUOUS

Luke tears down the road, passes cars in front of him, The cops can't catch up.

Luke takes a dangerous and wild right turn onto a small country road. After a few more turns, Luke drives up to Robin's old cube truck which is parked on the side of the road. Its back is open and its loading ramp down.

INT. REAR OF CUBE TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Luke drives into it, hops off, shuts the door. The truck lurches forwards, pulls a U-ey.

EXT. TURNPIKE - CONTINUOUS

Cop cars scream by the truck. Robin drives the other way.

INT. REAR OF CUBE TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Luke turns on a fluorescent camping lamp and secures his bike. He gets thrown around a little bit by Robin's driving. His adrenaline rushes. His breathing heavy. He puts his hands on his knees and pukes all over the truck's floor. Sits down.

EXT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - LATER

Robin pulls into the station, opens up the back of the truck. The stink of warm vomit hits Robin.

ROBIN  
Jesus! Phew!

Luke sits against the wall, dazed and tired, and laughing.

LUKE  
I puked on my boots.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke and Robin lay out the money in neat piles.

ROBIN  
It's not a million dollars or anything. But we do this a few more times...

Robin pushes Luke's cut to him and stands up and walks around the table. He plants a big phoney kiss on Luke's check.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Are you kidding me? We did it!

INT. DUANE'S TOYLAND - DAY

Luke looks at the squirt guns. He pitches 2 in his cart which is filled with every colorful toy, game & book that catches his eye. He rolls by a frazzled YOUNG MOTHER & CHILD.

LUKE  
You got a lively one there.

MOTHER  
Yeah.

LUKE  
Mine too. He's very lively. I suppose they all are. Unless something's wrong with 'em.

EXT. TWO-FAMILY HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Luke stands on Romina's porch, waits. He frequently looks over his shoulder. The door opens and Malena stands there.

LUKE  
She's not home, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALENA

No.

LUKE

What about the man of the house?

Malena shakes her head. Luke turns around, whistles through his fingers. A delivery van pulls up in front of the house.

INT. TWO-FAMILY HOUSE - LATER

Luke sits on the floor of the living room and tries to assemble a crib. Malena helps Jason to sit up.

LUKE

That's right! This is your new crib. I promised I'd get you one. You didn't even know it, but I promised it. I didn't even know it. A little over a year ago, I promised you everything I have to offer. And I didn't even know you existed yet. What I can offer you is one struggle right after the next. I offer you stubbornness and gullibility. I promise you'll be a hopeless romantic. I promise you'll be willfully blind when it suits you. And I promise you'll be loyal.

Jason tips forward and catches himself. He knocks Luke's neatly lined-up tools out of line. Luke slowly puts all the tools back into perfect order, from smallest to largest. He smiles and laughs at his uncontrollable OCD urge.

LUKE (CONT'D)

I promise you this, too. Whatever this is.

The front door OPENS; Romina is home from work.

ROMINA

What's this shit? What is all this?

Malena signals for Romina to speak softly.

ROMINA (CONT'D)

Cálmate? Ve esto?

MALENA

Intentabo ayudar. Él está siendo un buen papi.

Romina grabs Jason and holds him with one arm AWAY from Luke.

ROMINA

No. I told you it's not how it is.

Luke picks up a cigar box closed with a thick rubber band, offers it to Romina. He opens the box; roughly \$5,000 inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROMINA (CONT'D)

I said you could help out with money. Not buy all this shit!

LUKE

It just figures that you'd buy this stuff anyway. He needs it. Christ, he's gonna fall out of the bed!

ROMINA

What am I supposed to say to Kofi when he sees all this shit? You think about that? You have to get this stuff out of here. Now.

LUKE

Look, I'm his dad. I'm responsible for him too. I'm entitled to buy him some things. OK? So just stop now. Stop being crazy.

ROMINA

Responsible? This is my house!

LUKE

Let's not exaggerate. This is your mom's house. You live in her house.

ROMINA

Kofi's gonna come home and bust your white ass again!

LUKE

He's gonna bust my white ass, huh?

ROMINA

Get out! Before I call the police.

Luke kicks the crib and storms out. He still carries the screwdriver he had been working with in his back pocket.

LUKE

I'll bust his ass.

Luke leaves through the front door and throws the screwdriver down on the lawn.

LUKE (CONT'D)

I will, too. I swear to Christ.

ROMINA

Come clean this stuff out! Now!

I/E BANK - DAY

Luke kicks a bank door hard. The patrons, confused, stop what they're doing and take notice. Luke calms his rage, walks in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
Every last one of you get down on  
the Goddamn floor! Right now!!!

Terrified patrons scatter. Luke runs, vaults the counter.

INT. REAR OF CUBE TRUCK - LATER

Luke rides up into the back of the truck and almost crashes into the cab's back wall. Slams the door closed.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke and Robin sort another day's take.

LUKE  
I was thinkin' maybe we could do 2  
in 1 day.

ROBIN  
You know what they say about people  
who rob banks?

LUKE  
Is that us? People who rob banks?

ROBIN  
They say they always do one too  
many. The trick is to know how many  
is too many, and do one less.

EXT. OLYMPIC DINER - DAWN

Luke waits for Romina outside the diner. Romina comes out, sees him.

LUKE  
I'm sorry. I learned my lesson.

Luke hands Romina a sugar bag which is filled with cash.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
It ain't sugar in there.

ROMINA  
We can't do this anymore.

LUKE  
You're not giving me the money back  
I notice.

ROMINA  
I admit it. I want it. And I don't  
want to know where you get it from.  
Don't tell me.

LUKE  
Look. I know why you think so lowly  
of me. I do.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE (CONT'D)

I know you hold it against me that I wasn't there for you when you were going through everything.

ROMINA

I didn't hear from you. Not one word. No letter. No phone call. Zip. What was I supposed to do?

LUKE

I know that. But baby, if I woulda known... I woulda come runnin' back for you and him. But I'm here now. I'm here. I'm a person. And I want you to treat me like a person. Like I'm here. Like I'm not nothing. Like I'm not a piece of shit.

ROMINA

It's too complicated.

LUKE

What's complicated. I love you. It's simple.

Romina suppresses a laugh and unlocks her car door.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Why are you laughing? I love you. I want to be part of your life, I want to be part of HIS life. He needs to know I'm there for him.

ROMINA

(hands Luke the bag)

This is not how you do it...

LUKE

What the fuck am I supposed to do then? You won't even let me see him!

She gets in her car. Starts it up. "Hey!" Luke knocks on her window. "HEY!" She rolls it down.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Listen to me you fucking lunatic. This money, it's not yours. OK? You don't buy yourself anything with this, OK? None of those diamond studded jeans that you wear, no make-up, no jewelry, no perfume. No nothing. Don't buy yourself a thing. You hear me? This money is not for you. It's for Jason. You give every penny to him. OK? He needs it. Say OK.

ROMINA

Sometimes no father is better than the one he got stuck with.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUKE  
Say OK... Say OK!

ROMINA  
...Okay.

He tosses the bag on the passenger's seat, backs away from the car, looks around. She rolls up her window, drives away.

INT. JAMES SLUITER LAW OFFICE - LATER

Luke sits across from JAMES SLUITER, middle-aged, cheap suit.

JAMES SLUITER  
So, you want partial custody.

LUKE  
Yessir.

JAMES SLUITER  
Your son's mother has a restraining order against you?

LUKE  
She don't. Her boyfriend does.

JAMES SLUITER  
This is a tough one. I'm not going to lie to you.

LUKE  
Money's no object.

EXT. BANK PARKING LOT - DAY

Luke runs from a bank with a bag of cash. Another job 1/2 completed. He hops on his bike, peels out onto the main road.

The police are on him quicker this time. He can't shake them. He nears the rendezvous point with Robin, sees the truck waiting patiently up ahead, but a glance back confirms he hasn't lost the heat yet. He makes a slicing gesture across his throat to signal Robin the rendezvous is off. Robin watches Luke take a right turn, leading the cops away from the truck. Robin hops out, closes the rear door, drives off.

The cops try to stay with Luke, but his maneuverability daunts them. Luke cuts onto a lawn. The cops do not follow. He takes a right behind a house and motors through a littered alleyway. He comes to a clearing which leads into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - Luke drives through the tall pines. He goes deep into the woods as fast as he can.

E/I ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Luke comes in - finds Robin sitting at the table, a pack of cigarettes smoulder in the ashtray before him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN  
Get in and close the Goddamn door.

LUKE  
(manic, adrenalized)  
It's okay, I lost em. I'm like the  
fucking Road Runner. BEEP BEEP!

Luke dumps the bag of money on the table, squats down and pets Tony the dog. Tony licks his face. Robin tugs on a smoke, his hands shaking from a combo of nerves and nicotine. He surveys the money, wont touch it.

ROBIN  
You do realize, we're done here.

LUKE  
(gets up, ignoring)  
I need to borrow your truck...

EXT. TWO-FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Luke sits in the pick-up watching Romina's house. A sedan drives up; an OLDER MAN steps out, walks to Romina's door. Romina answers. The man serves her with papers & walks away.

Luke hops out of the pick-up and walks by the man's car as it pulls out of the driveway. Romina puzzles over the summons.

LUKE  
I don't have to take it this far. I  
can drop it all if you wanna be  
reasonable.

ROMINA  
(understands the summons)  
Reasonable?

LUKE  
I'll do whatever I gotta do.

Luke hands Romina a coffee tin. Romina throws it back at his face. The tin bounces off Luke's head, lands on the porch.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
Okay, then.

Romina leans back into the door way and yells to her mother.

ROMINA  
Mama. Llame la policia!

Romina goes to slam the door in Luke's face. He stops her & tries to get into the house. Kofi runs downstairs.

KOFI  
You fucking crazy?

Luke tries to get in. Kofi holds the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 She in there calling the police.  
 You know that, right?

Luke pushes still. Kofi rips the door open, storms the porch. He pushes Luke off his feet. Luke catches himself and lurches forward at Kofi. Struggle ensues.

INSIDE THE HOUSE, Malena yells the address into the receiver. The two men tumble down off the porch.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 I'm not waiting for the police. I'm  
 gonna end this. You understand?

Kofi holds Luke's head down on the ground, pinned. Luke hears the sound of distant sirens. His eyes go wild. He turns into the Tasmanian devil and somehow gets out of Kofi's grip.

Luke runs for the truck, gets in before Kofi can grab him, and takes off. He gets halfway down the block before he finally closes the driver's-side door. He drives by the cops as they head to Romina's house.

INT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - LATER

Drunk, Robin has taken an acetylene torch to Luke's bike and cuts it to pieces. Only the engine is intact. He ponders his next cut when - Luke walks in - can't believe his eyes.

LUKE  
 What the fuck! What're you doing?!

ROBIN  
 We had a good thing going. We kept  
 it up as long as we could, made a  
 nice little score, now it's over.

Luke reacts as if Robin put down his horse. The sound of approaching sirens invades the momentary silence.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
 Oh, what the hell is this you're  
 bringing me?

Three Cruisers drive up into Robin's station. Luke, misty eyed, turns to the cops, raises his hands. He'll go quietly.

INT. VISITING ROOM - DAY

Luke waits in a visiting room at the police station. James Sluiter sits down across from him, looks disapprovingly.

JAMES SLUITER  
 Can you make bail?

LUKE  
 Sure. Just talk to my boss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES SLUITER  
 You know you can kiss joint custody  
 goodbye. We'll be lucky if we can  
 keep you out of jail.

EXT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Luke gets off of a CDTA bus and walks toward Robin's house.

INT. APARTMENT ABOVE SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Luke picks up the bullets from his nightstand, fights against  
 his better judgement, loads the gun.

INT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Robin is bent over the engine of a Toyota Corolla. Luke  
 sticks the barrel of the pistol against the back of his head.

ROBIN  
 You dickhead. I paid your bail, for  
 Christ's sake.

LUKE  
 I'm just asking for enough to  
 replace my bike.

ROBIN  
 Well, I don't have it out here in  
 the garage. It's inside.

LUKE  
 Let's go get it.

They start for the kitchen, Luke's pistol pushing Robin on.

ROBIN  
 Fucking dickhead. This is the  
 thanks I get?!?

LUKE  
 You'll get your cut...

INT. CREST MOTORS - MORNING

Luke and a DEALER stand over a red 1994 Honda Fireblade.

DEALER  
 It's a sport bike. Honda calls it a  
 'super-bike.' It's a racing model  
 with a few changes for the street.

LUKE  
 How's the balance?

DEALER  
 What are you used to riding?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE  
Nevermind. You take cash?

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Luke fills the tank. A pickup truck at the pump next to him blares Bon Jovi's 'Dead or Alive' from its speakers.

INT. PAYPHONE - LATER

Robin, out of breath, runs to a payphone - dials 911.

ROBIN  
I want to make an anonymous report.

INT. 911 CALL CENTER. DAY.

An OPERATOR types the info from Robin into her computer.

"SUSPECTED ROBBERY IN PROGRESS", color-coded RED, comes up on the DISPATCHER'S screen.

INT. SCHENECTADY POLICE CRUISER. DAY.

AVERY CROSS, 28, rookie, patrols the western district.

RADIO DISPATCH (ON RADIO)  
ADAM-22. 211 in progress at Trustco bank at 320 State St.

AVERY (INTO RADIO)  
ADAM-22. Copy that. Enroute.

Avery flips a u-ey. Accelerates toward the bank.

E/I TRUSTCO BANK - CONTINUOUS

Luke gets off his bike. Enters the bank, gun above his head.

LUKE  
Ladies and Gentlemen...

Everyone turns to Luke, he chokes. He sees that the counter has a Lucite window which rises up to the ceiling.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
This is a robbery. I know you might be peeing your pants now. Trembling with fear. Don't be scared. I'm a blessing in your boring, average lives. Just think about the story you are gonna be able to tell.

He takes the empty bag, shoves it through the teller's slot.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
Fill it up and pass it back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TELLER  
We can't open the vault.

LUKE  
From the drawers then! With some  
urgency! Come on!

The teller reluctantly does as she is instructed. Luke looks around to make sure no one is sneaking up on him. The teller finishes, tries to pass the bag through the slot.

TELLER  
It won't fit, sir.

LUKE  
What're you an ignoramus? Take some  
damn money out. I got to think of  
everything?

The teller pulls out some of the cash. She tries to fit the bag back through. Still won't fit. She takes out some more cash. Luke hears sirens. Goddamnit.

He tries to force the bag back through the slot. It opens and most of the money spills out on the teller's side. He is left with an empty bag. Fuck. He bolts out the door.

INSIDE POLICE CAR. Sirens blare. Avery turns the corner, SEES Luke take off, trying to quickly master his unfamiliar bike.

AVERY (INTO RADIO)  
ADAM-22. In pursuit of a possible  
suspect on a motorcycle. ADAM-21  
make contact with the bank.

SCHENECTADY STREETS. Luke has the cruiser on his tail. He blasts through an intersection and a 2nd cruiser joins the chase. He turns hard down a small, residential street, takes his next hard right and instantly loses 1 of the cars. He blasts through two more intersections in the wrong lane; barely avoiding oncoming traffic.

Luke takes another hard right, runs up onto a lawn, and tries to head back to the street. Avery's car runs up onto the lawn and comes to a jarring halt. Luke tries to maneuver but can't keep the bike under him. He ditches further up the road. Luke pushes the wrecked bike off of his scraped up leg, limps away, looking for a way out. Behind him, 3 houses away, Avery pursues on foot.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Luke enters through a screen door, looks around the house for a place to hide. SEES - a MOTHER and her young BOY staring at him wordlessly from the kitchen. They had been making a cake.

LUKE  
Anyone else home?

The mother and her boy barely move. Luke shows them his gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE (CONT'D)  
 Take me upstairs. COME ON! LETS GO!  
 (softens)  
 I won't hurt you. Come on!

Luke corrals the scared family up the stairs to a bedroom. He closes the door behind them, and waves the gun at the bed.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
 Sit down.

The mother and boy sit on the ground in the corner by the bed and bury their faces into each other, making themselves as small as possible. Luke goes to the window, looks down on the street. SEES his bike there, laying near the sidewalk. SEES another cruiser stop 2 houses up. HEARS Avery downstairs calling, "POLICE! DROP YOUR WEAPON!" He is cornered.

LUKE (CONT'D)  
 Aw, hell. Do you have a phone?

The mother nods, tells him it's on the nightstand. He picks it up, dials information.

OPERATOR (OVER THE PHONE)  
 What city and listing please?

LUKE  
 Schenectady. Her name is Romina.

OPERATOR (OVER THE PHONE)  
 Romina. Last name?

LUKE  
 I don't know. It's Mexican or something. Just look for Romina.

OPERATOR (OVER THE PHONE)  
 I can't help you without a last name, I'm sorry.

LUKE  
 (racking his brain.)  
 I don't know... Goddamnit! I need to speak to my son.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. Avery has just heard Luke yelling in the room upstairs. Back to the wall, gun drawn, he slides quietly and carefully up the stairs. He gets outside the door.

AVERY  
 POLICE! Put the weapon down!

IN THE ROOM. Desperate, Luke looks out the window. It would be a long drop to the ground. He opens the window anyway and starts to climb through. Another cruiser pulls in front of the house. His leg is in pain and hard to move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OPERATOR (OVER THE PHONE)  
 Sir, I don't have the ability to  
 look up with only a first name.

LUKE  
 I NEED TO SPEAK WITH MY SON!

Weapon aimed, Avery bursts through the bedroom door, sees Luke with the phone in one hand, the gun in the other, and his body halfway out the window. He shoots. The shot makes a loud, sharp noise. A small cloud of blue smoke rises from the muzzle and floats toward the ceiling.

Luke is hit in the abdomen. Blood spreads across the fabric of his shirt. He collapses to the floor, raises his gun slightly, shoots back and hits Avery in the knee. Avery collapses in pain. He clutches his leg.

The gun falls from Luke's hand. It's hard for him to breathe, in fact, he's not breathing at all. Instead of air, blood comes out of his nose and mouth. We HEAR the operator's voice coming from the phone on the floor.

Officer SCOTT STEVENS appears at the door of the room, out of breath. He points his firearm at Luke.

SCOTT  
 Hands where I can see them! Now!

Luke doesn't lift his arms, looks up, barely conscious.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
 (on radio)  
 ADAM-21. Officer down. Suspect too.  
 Request paramedics at the scene.  
 (to Avery)  
 You OK partner?

Avery tries to get himself up off the floor. He can't. His knee is destroyed. "Fuck!"

AVERY  
 Take the family outta here!

SCOTT  
 Fucking bulls-eye man! You fucking nailed him!

The young mother grabs her son, shielding his eyes from the carnage. Scott helps her hoist him over the bed. He carries the boy, and leads the shaken mother out of the room.

Avery is left alone in the room with Luke. Both men on their backs. The sound of sirens outside gets louder and closer. Avery watches the light slowly fade from Luke's eyes.

INT. ELLIS HOSPITAL - LATER

Avery lies on a moving gurney. His pant-leg is being cut away from his skin. A nurse sedates him. A DOCTOR explains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR  
We're giving you a mild sedative  
now and saline for shock, okay?

LATER - The ER staff rolls Avery into the operating theater. Another team in there already frantically works on Luke.

Avery hears Luke's heart monitor beep erratically. He watches the doctors act more frantically. Finally, the heart monitor emits a flat, even tone.

An INTERN straddles Luke and starts to give him CPR. Luke's head lolls to the side and his gaze meets Avery's. A nurse closes a curtain around Luke.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
Officer? We need to operate now.

Behind the curtain, the other team tries to shock Luke's heart back to life before the SURGEON finally gives up.

SURGEON (O.S.)  
Time of death four thirty-nine.

DOCTOR  
(To Avery)  
Don't be afraid.

An anesthesiologist fits a mask over Avery's mouth and nose.

INT. HOSPITAL RECOVERY ROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.

Balloons, flowers & cards fill Avery's room. CHIEF GORDON WEIRZBOWSKI, 50's, enters the room followed by ASSISTANT DA ARMAND ELLIS 40's. Both men are reverent and respectful.

They greet Avery, who is lying in bed with his baby boy, A.J. on his chest. His wife JENNIFER, 27, sits anxiously by the window. Gordon kisses Jennifer and offers his understanding.

AVERY  
(handing A.J. To Jen)  
Take him back to dad's. You guys  
need to get some rest.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
(to Jennifer)  
Lemme get you a car. First class.

JENNIFER  
No that's okay. Thank you. I'm  
parked in the lot.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
We'll take care of your husband.  
Don't you worry.

Weirzbowski kisses A.J.'s little hand. And then Jennifer's cheek. She says goodbye to Avery and leaves. Gordon pulls up a chair next to Avery's bed. Armand stands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (CONT'D)  
They give you any idea when you  
might get outta here?

AVERY  
Can't be soon enough.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
(to Armand)  
Told ya this kid was ambitious.  
Didn't I? And smart too.

ARMAND  
How's the knee?

AVERY  
Fucked.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
It'll heal. You're young. Young  
body bounces back. I want to  
introduce you to Armand Ellis, our  
beloved assistant DA. Come all the  
way from Albany to see you. He's  
opening an investigation in to the  
incident. Needs to ask you some  
questions. You up for it? Good to  
do it before the paint dries, know-  
whatimean?

AVERY  
So you're effectively putting me on  
trial?

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
Mister sensitive... Don't get your  
panties in a bind. You're gonna be  
our poster boy for police heroics.  
This is a formality. Best get it  
over with.

Weirzbowski puts his hat on, gets up to leave.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (CONT'D)  
I'll leave you two to get to know  
each other. Shouldn't be too hard.  
You're both lawyers.

ELLIPSE. They are deep into Avery's recounting of the events.  
Armand records everything on mini-recorder and jots notes.

ARMAND  
So what happened when you were  
outside the door?

AVERY  
I heard him on the other side,  
screaming some shit about his son.  
I couldn't tell who he was talking  
to. So, I made my presence known.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARMAND  
How'd you do that.

AVERY  
Announced myself. "Police. Drop the  
fucking weapon."

ARMAND  
Then what?

AVERY  
Then I kicked the door open. Saw  
him standing with the gun.

ARMAND  
Where was his gun?

AVERY  
What do you mean, "where was his  
gun?" It was in his fucking hand.

ARMAND  
Was it pointed at anything?

AVERY  
Yeah... At me.

ARMAND  
Then what happened? Who shot first?

AVERY  
Does it matter?

ARMAND  
Just need a clear picture. You're  
the only witness to what exactly  
went on in that room.

AVERY  
What about the hostages?

ARMAND  
(shakes his head)  
Heard 2 shots. But didn't see a  
thing. 'cept maybe the insides of  
their eyelids.

Armand mimics by pressing his palms against closed eyes.

ARMAND (CONT'D)  
So who shot first?

Deep breath.

AVERY  
Him.

INT. AVERY'S FATHER'S HOME - EVENING

ON THE TV: A local NEWS ANCHOR sits at her studio desk.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON T.V.)  
A triumphant moment for a young  
Schenectady Police officer today.  
He left the hospital after  
recovering from gunshot wounds.

ON TV: Footage of the day Avery shot Luke.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON T.V.) (CONT'D)  
Officer Avery Cross hadn't been on  
the force for a full year before he  
ran head-on into the alleged  
MOTOBANDIT. Reporter Ed Dague was  
there as officer Cross left Ellis  
hospital.

ON TV: Avery is wheeled out of the hospital. Dozens of cops  
stand around and cheer him as he rolls past & pumps his fist.

ED DAGUE (V.O.) (ON T.V.)  
Facing the danger and fighting the  
brave fight, Avery Cross accepting  
the praise of his fellow officers  
as he is wheeled through a gauntlet  
of cheers and applause. Turning a  
corner in his recovery, he's  
leaving Ellis hospital, well enough  
to return home - happy to be alive.

ON TV: Cops lift his wheelchair into an ambulance.

AVERY (ON T.V.)  
I'll be back before you know it.

ON TV: File footage from the day of the shooting.

ED DAGUE (V.O.) (ON T.V.)  
This young officer's life flashed  
before him in a flash of gunfire.  
Responding to a bank robbery, Avery  
Cross pursued alleged motor-cycle  
bandit Luke Glanton through the  
streets of Schenectady.

Avery sits on a sofa in his parent's home, his leg elevated  
in a cast. Jennifer sits next to him trying to calm A.J.  
Avery's DAD stands behind them, watching with folded arms.

ED DAGUE (V.O.) (ON T.V.) (CONT'D)  
Glanton then fled into this house,  
took Melissa Majack & her son Gabe  
hostage, & came face to face with  
Officer Cross. Glanton shot Officer  
Cross in the knee before officer  
Cross returned fire, killing the  
suspect and saving the hostages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON TV: DAGUE stands in front of the hospital, holding a mic.

ED DAGUE (ON T.V.) (CONT'D)  
 Officer Cross was rushed here to  
 Ellis hospital and listed in  
 critical condition. He has made a  
 swift recovery, but doctors say the  
 bullet that struck him has caused  
 nerve damage in his leg.

ON TV: Police CHIEF GORDON WEIRZBOWSKI, 50's greying,  
 fireplug, talks to the reporters at the scene.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (ON T.V.)  
 He's a hero. Plain and simple.  
 There's one thing he wants to do  
 more than anything else; that's  
 slide behind the wheel of a radio  
 car and go back out there and do  
 the same thing he was doing that  
 day. Hopefully with better results.

ON TV: Avery sits on the same couch he is sitting on as he  
 watches himself on TV.

AVERY (ON T.V.)  
 I've only ever wanted to be a cop.  
 Ever since I was six.

The baby's cries drown out the TV. Jennifer stands tries to  
 calm him down by bouncing. Jennifer doesn't look so calm  
 herself. Avery turns up the volume.

ED DAGUE (ON T.V.)  
 We talked with Officer Cross for a  
 moment about the high crime rate in  
 Schenectady.

ON TV: Avery stands in front of his car, ready to drive home.

AVERY (ON T.V.)  
 It's an epidemic. And it's up to  
 the police to do the heavy lifting.  
 That's our job. But also something  
 the community has to help with.

ED DAGUE (ON T.V.)  
 We also asked Cross how he feels  
 about ongoing allegations of  
 corruption dogging the police.

AVERY (ON T.V.)  
 Schenectady deserves better.

Avery's dad clucks his tongue and heads into the kitchen.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
 You're missing the wrap up.

ON TV: Luke's mug-shot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ED DAGUE (V.O.) (ON T.V.)  
 Glanton, a drifter and sometime  
 motor-cycle stunt-rider, had a  
 violent history and a long record.  
 Police say he moved here last  
 spring and it only took him a month  
 to start robbing local banks. He  
 leaves behind a infant son. I'm Ed  
 Dague, WNYT, Schenectady.

A commercial begins on TV. A.J. Is wailing. Jennifer can't  
 take any more of it. She retreats to the basement apartment  
 that her and Avery have called home for the last year.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

A.J. sleeps in a crib in the corner of a small bedroom. Avery  
 and Jennifer talk softly, lying in bed next to one another.

JENNIFER  
 Was it scary?

AVERY  
 It happened so fast. Wasn't time to  
 be scared.

JENNIFER  
 It's scary for me.

AVERY  
 I'm okay, (darling buttercup).

He leans over, kisses her cheek. It doesn't help her anxiety.

JENNIFER  
 What would we do if you got killed?

AVERY  
 I'm not gonna get killed.

JENNIFER  
 But you almost did.

Avery sees tears welling in her eyes. He grabs her around the  
 waist, pulls her to him, as she turns from him. Spooning.

AVERY  
 I would never leave you guys. OK?

JENNIFER  
 Then why are you doing this?

Avery knows what she's talking about. She hates the fact that  
 he's a cop. It's the pink elephant in the room, in their  
 relationship.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
 How long do we have to live in your  
 dad's basement?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

Until we get on our feet.

JENNIFER

You could make more money. It wouldn't be hard for you. Or let me go out and earn a living.

AVERY

You knew what I was when you married me.

JENNIFER

A killer?

Silence. Insulted & hurt, Avery turns away from Jennifer.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A DOCTOR saws off Avery's cast. His leg is pale and skinny.

DOCTOR

You're going to be extremely weak on this leg for a while, so don't push too far too fast.

MONTAGE. Physical therapy. Avery literally learns to walk all over again. We HEAR the doctor's prognosis over these images.

AVERY (V.O.)

How long before I'm back to normal?

DOCTOR (V.O.)

I'd rather not give you any unrealistic expectations.

AVERY (V.O.)

That doesn't sound good.

DOCTOR (V.O.)

No, I'm afraid it doesn't.

INT. FIRESIDE BAR - NIGHT

DeLuca raises a glass and the other cops follow.

PAUL DELUCA

To hero boy. Lucky fuck. I been on the force 22 years, only pulled my weapon once. You been on less than 6 months you already got one in the bag. How's that feel?

AVERY

Better him than me, right?

SCOTT

To hero boy! Speedy recovery. And next time, duck!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY  
You mean, "jump!"

Everyone laughs. Avery does as well.

PAUL DELUCA  
(in close to Avery)  
We're gonna pick you up tomorrow.  
For a little police work. Okay?

Avery nods. Everyone cheers. The cops get hammered. Avery notices that two GIRLS at the end of the bar are looking at him. They smile. One of them gets up and walks over to Avery.

GIRL  
I saw you on TV.

The cops around Avery laugh and hoot. The girl smiles.

AVERY  
That's weird. I guess a lot of  
people did.

GIRL  
I wanna buy you a drink.

The Cops hoot.

AVERY  
OK. Shirley Temple.

The girl is charmed. She whispers "you look bigger in real life," into Avery's ear, and rests her hand on his chest.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - EVENING

Avery and Scott ride in the back. DeLuca and Crotty up front.

AVERY  
You are aware I'm not back on  
active duty yet.

PAUL DELUCA  
Yeah, we're aware. This is our gift  
to you.

Nervous laughter.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The 4 plain clothes cops stand on the porch of Romina's house. Malena opens the door. DeLuca flashes his badge.

PAUL DELUCA  
Is Romina Gutierrez at home?

Malena turns her head back into the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALENA  
Romina!

Kofi and Romina come to the door. DeLuca flashes his badge.

PAUL DELUCA  
Good afternoon, ma'am. We're here  
to search the house.

ROMINA  
For what?

PAUL DELUCA  
Evidence.

KOFI  
Evidence for what?

PAUL DELUCA  
We're looking for the money Luke  
Glanton may or may not have given  
to you.

ROMINA  
You supposed to have a warrant or  
something, right?

DeLuca leans in close to Romina.

PAUL DELUCA  
How about you assume I have a  
warrant, and I assume she has a  
green card.

DeLuca nods toward Malena. Romina is out-manoevered. She  
lets them in. DeLuca nods to Scott and Avery to head  
upstairs.

UPSTAIRS. Aided by a cane, Avery follows Scott as he heads  
into the first room on the left. They speak in hushed tones.

AVERY  
I don't think I like this.

SCOTT  
We're safe. Come on.

DOWNSTAIRS. DeLuca and Crotty sit across from Kofi and  
Romina. Malena brings out coffee and Hostess donuts.

PAUL DELUCA  
(to Malena)  
Thank you, ma'am.  
(to Romina)  
Mostly this is just a formality. I  
believe you when you tell me you  
don't have the money, I really do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KOFI  
(To Romina)  
Don't say anything 'til we got a lawyer.

PAUL DELUCA  
Relax, pal. You're not under arrest yet. Nothing you say matters.

ROMINA  
We don't got the money.

PAUL DELUCA  
This guy was a real piker. 10G from this bank, 7 from that one. To them it's peanuts. It's all covered by the FDIC anyways.

ROMINA  
He offered us the money but we never took it.

KOFI  
Romina.

PAUL DELUCA  
It's okay, really. It's my boss see, the chief. He's very concerned about appearances. We gotta harass good people so he looks like he's doing his job. It's all politics.

UPSTAIRS. Scott and Avery search Jason's room quietly. Scott begins to lift the crib mattress.

SCOTT  
Hold the baby.

AVERY  
This is too much.

SCOTT  
Come on. I don't wanna wake it.

Avery picks up Jason, stares at his little, sleeping body and contemplates the fact that he killed this kids father. Meanwhile, Scott lifts the mattress.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Bingo.

He pulls out a stack of cash, shows it to Avery, hides it on his person. Avery rests Jason back into the crib.

DOWNSTAIRS. Avery and Scott come down the stairs. Scott approaches DeLuca, whispers in his ear. DeLuca smiles.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Avery, Scott and Crotty wait in the car, WATCHING. Romina and Kofi see them off from the porch. DeLuca is the last to leave. He lingers for a second on the lawn.

PAUL DELUCA  
I gave you my card, right? If you remember anything regarding that money, you call me first, OK?

KOFI  
Of course. Have a good evening officer.

DeLuca climbs into the car and drives off. Avery watches Romina and Kofi head back inside.

PAUL DELUCA  
So, what's our haul?

Scott produces the money and all the cops except Avery hoot. Scott starts to flip through the bills.

PAUL DELUCA (CONT'D)  
Where'd you find it?

SCOTT  
Under the fucking crib.

PAUL DELUCA  
Ha! Perfect.

SCOTT  
When do you think they'll notice it's missing?

PAUL DELUCA  
They're noticing it right now.

Crotty grabs the bills from Scott.

CROTTY  
You're too young to count.

SCOTT  
It's over fourteen grand!

PAUL DELUCA  
It's not gonna be an even split. The lion's share is going to you.

DeLuca looks at Avery in his rearview mirror.

PAUL DELUCA (CONT'D)  
A little unofficial hazard pay.

Crotty counts out the money. He gives a little of it to Scott and a lot of it to Avery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT

Thank you!

Avery is slow to say something as he is handed the money.

AVERY

Wow.

DeLuca stares at him in the rearview. Avery can't meet his gaze.

CORY (V.O.)

I know you're probably feeling a little disoriented by all that has happened. It's normal.

INT. POLICE STATION. OFFICE. DAY.

CORY GILBEAU, 37 female police psychologist interviews Avery.

CORY

I'm here to just to help out with that and determine if you're ready to go back out on active duty. OK?

"OK." She asks him a wide array of questions & studies his responses, mannerisms: How is your family relationship? Were you raised in a 2 parent household? As a child did you have many friends? How would you describe yourself? Do you anger easily? Did you get into fights as a child? As an adult? How do you feel about shooting someone? How do you feel about firearms? Do you think carrying a firearm places you in authority? How did your family react/interact when you became an Officer? When you became an Officer, did you think that you possess any "special powers?"

Avery answers the questions honestly yet careful not to incriminate himself. He knows how to answer correctly to get his job back.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (V.O.)

We are gathered here today to celebrate a cop who makes other cops proud.

INT. PROCTOR'S THEATER - DAY

Avery, propped up by a cane, is in uniform for the first time in weeks. He stands on stage at Proctor's Theater. His dad, Jennifer and A.J. sit in the audience along with members of the community and reporters. Local news videotapes it. Chief Weirzbowski, in his best dress uniform, grips a podium.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

...Officer Avery Cross. We can all rest a little easier at night now that he's on the path of recovery.

The crowd spontaneously applauds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (CONT'D)  
 Officer Cross is the first member  
 of his family to join the force.  
 And not just any force. He joined  
 the Schenectady Police Department.  
 He said he wanted to go where the  
 action was. Well, careful what you  
 wish for, right?

Gordon beams and the audience laughs. Gordon lumbers over to  
 Avery and officially affixes a decoration on Avery's uniform.

MOMENTS LATER. Photo ops. Avery in center is surrounded by  
 Weirzbowski (beaming), Jennifer (uncertain), A.J. (crying),  
 and Avery's dad (unimpressed).

INT. ELANS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - EVENING

Cops celebrate at a cruddy, two-bit 'Gentlemen's Club.' Avery  
 seems uneasy. His colleagues do not.

PAUL DELUCA  
 Is the entertainment here offending  
 your partner's delicate  
 sensibilities?

AVERY  
 No. I'm fine.

SCOTT  
 He'll be back to normal once the  
 investigation is over.

CROTTY  
 What he needs is an outlet. What's  
 it gonna be? Pussy? Violence; wanna  
 crack a few heads? Liquor?

PAUL DELUCA  
*Lick 'er?* I hardly even *know 'er!*  
 (har har!) Next round is on me.

It's early evening, only one other patron in the joint. An  
 older, black MAN. DeLuca is feeling extravagant.

PAUL DELUCA (CONT'D)  
 Hell, I'll buy the whole house a  
 round!

(To MAN)  
 What are you having, pal?

The man waves off DeLuca's attempt to buy him a drink and  
 turns his attention to the dancing girl.

PAUL DELUCA (CONT'D)  
 What, are you too good for charity?

Annoyed, the man gives DeLuca his full attention.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN

I'm fine here, Officer. All set.

CROTTY

He made us when we walked through the door.

PAUL DELUCA

He doesn't want a free drink from a cop. That's discrimination!

Gut busting laughs! DeLuca heads to the bar to buy a round.

CROTTY

(To Avery)

You're not gonna let that hero bullshit go to your head, right?

Avery wants to tell him "go fuck yourself." He doesn't.

CROTTY (CONT'D)

You think DeLuca is a bad cop? You think I'm a bad cop? Or your partner? Are we all bad cops?

AVERY

I didn't say that.

CROTTY

I'm not talking about what you said. It's the vibe coming outta ya. I feel like I'm being judged.

AVERY

I'm no judge.

CROTTY

Our job is to police this city, right? Keep the peace? And we're supposed to do it by the book, right? Well, let me tell you. In a town like this those are two diametrically opposed concepts. Never the twain shall meet. Get me?

AVERY

With all due disrespect, I disagree.

CROTTY

All due respect. It's obvious you don't respect me. You think you're better than me. Dontcha?

AVERY

Give me a break.

CROTTY

You're a smart, college educated dope. You know that?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CROTTY (CONT'D)

Ever since GE left town, we got no jobs and no tax revenue. Anyone left in this city is poor or stupid or both. You do everything by the book, and this place will tear itself apart. This is the wild west here. We just want to give you the lay of the land OK?

A LOUD CRASH. Avery and Crotty turn to see DeLuca deliberately spilling a drink on the older man. The man stands up quickly and berates DeLuca.

Crotty is up in an instant. He moves to restrain the man. Scott and Avery look at one another. The confrontation escalates. Scott and Avery get up and join in.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - NIGHT

The man sits between Avery and Scott as DeLuca drives out into the pines.

EXT. PINE BARRENS - NIGHT

The 4 cops stand opposite the hand-cuffed man.

PAUL DELUCA

I want you to take this man's shoes.

AVERY

I'm sorry?

PAUL DELUCA

Take his shoes.

Avery slowly limps over the man. He gets in his face.

AVERY

You heard him. Give me your shoes.

MAN

Fuck you.

Avery leans in and whispers.

AVERY

Do you realize what kind of trouble you're in here? Give me your shoes.

MAN

Fuck you, bitch.

The other cops hoot with laughter. Avery is mortified by the man's defiance and the ultimate ghetto insult - no man calls another man a bitch without a fight. Avery slugs him. The man falls onto the ground with a thud. Avery jumps on top of him.

AVERY

I'll eat your fucking teeth out of your face!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He rips the shoes off the man's feet, begins beating him with them. The cops cheer.

E/I AVERY PARENT'S HOUSE - SCHENECTADY SUBURB - LATER

Avery gets home very late. Dishevelled. Drunk. He limps through the door as quietly as he can, heads back to the stairs. A light turns on in the living room. Avery sees that his DAD has been waiting up for him.

AVERY  
I thought I was quiet enough.

AVERY'S DAD  
You didn't wake me up.

AVERY  
You don't have wait up for me.

AVERY'S DAD  
You drive home in that state?

AVERY  
I'm fine.

AVERY'S DAD  
You went out drinking in *uniform*?

AVERY  
I wasn't the only one. It was a cop bar. Guys higher in rank than me.

AVERY'S DAD  
Oh, it was a cop bar. That makes it all better. It's a good thing you went to law school. That way you can defend yourself in a corruption trial. Save some money anyhow.

Avery laughs nervously at his father's insulting joke. His dad gets up and heads for the stairs.

AVERY'S DAD (CONT'D)  
As long as your under our roof, I'd appreciate it if you'd come home before eleven o'clock. We get to bed early here. Now go see your wife. She's frantic.

He turns off the light in the hall leaving Avery in the dark.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Jennifer acts like she's sleeping in bed next to A.J.

AVERY  
Hey, you still awake?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER  
Shhh! I *just* got him down.

Avery sits on the bed and looks over his sleeping son.

AVERY  
How's he doing?

JENNIFER  
Shhh. If you wake him, you're gonna have to deal with him.

Avery moves to kiss her, gently. She smells the booze on him.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
You're drunk?

AVERY  
I had a beer.

He reaches his arm around her and caresses her breasts. She holds her arms tightly to herself, protecting herself from this untimely intimacy.

JENNIFER  
I don't really feel sexy right now.

Avery stops, his feelings bruised.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
You try breast-feeding all day and see how you feel... I need sleep. And he's gonna be up in 3 hours.

She rolls over, away from him.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
I can't live like this. You have to make a change. At least come home for dinner...

Avery touches his boy's cheek, stands up, puts his jacket on.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
Where are you going?

EXT. PINE BARRENS - LATER

Avery drives to where he and the other cops dumped off the man. He gets out of the car and looks around. The man is gone. Avery sits on the hood of his car and listens to the wind in the trees. He chucks the man's shoes into the forest.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (V.O.)  
I received a call today from Armand Ellis - our beloved Assistant DA.

INT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - DAY

Avery slips into the station. Everyone greets him reverently.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (V.O.)  
He wanted me to convey some  
glorious words to you; the state's  
internal investigation into the  
shooting of Luke Glanton by officer  
Avery Cross has been deemed lawful.

INT. OUTSIDE CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI'S OFFICE - LATER

Avery sits outside of the Chief of Police's office.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (V.O.)  
You acted in self defense, saved 2  
hostages, and helped rid the city  
of another useless scum-bag.

INT. CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI'S OFFICE - LATER

Avery sits across from the Chief.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
Congratulations officer. Not that  
it should come as any surprise. You  
knew you did right. We all did.  
Still, any intelligent person must  
second guess themselves after the  
fact. This process either validates  
our actions. Or it ends up making  
us confused. You have been  
validated. Put it behind you and  
let's get back to police work. OK?

AVERY  
OK. That's the question I wanted...

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (V.O.)  
The question is can you go back out  
on patrol anytime soon? And if you  
went out, could you be effective?

AVERY  
No, I know. I can't.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
What do the doctors say? About  
physical therapy and all?

AVERY  
I'll always limp.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
I'm glad you're being clear-eyed  
about this. A lot of guys think  
there's only one way to be a cop.  
You know, out there busting heads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

I've never been interested in that.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

There are a lot of jobs that need to be done around here that in ways, and you know this, in ways are more important than what happens out on the street.

AVERY

I want you to make me a Lieutenant. Put me in charge of special investigations.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

(laughs)

I can't fucking do that.

AVERY

Yes you can. You're the boss.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

You paid too much for your education to act so stupid, kid.

AVERY

I deserve it. But more importantly, I have ideas that could turn that whole division around.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

That's one mighty healthy sense of entitlement you got there Cross. There's guys here who have been waiting 4 or 5 years to make Sergeant. Good cops. You're on the force barely a year, get lucky, & think you deserve to jump steps?

AVERY

I deserve something.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

I see you in the papers *agreeing* with reporters about corruption on our force? How about you trade in your fifteen minutes of fame for a piece of pussy, okay? In the meantime, back here in real life, you got two choices. Retire on mental disability, or reassignment at your current rank.

AVERY

Reassignment?

INT. EVIDENCE ROOM - DAY

Avery works behind the desk at the evidence room. It's in the basement. Behind him are rows of wire-caged shelves. Scott Stevens, in plain-clothes, approaches the desk.

SCOTT  
Hey, man, heard you were down here.

AVERY  
What's with the street clothes?

SCOTT  
You didn't hear? I'm vice now.

AVERY  
No shit?

Fist pound.

SCOTT  
I'm actually paired up with DeLuca.  
Crotty retired last month.

AVERY  
You guys been out to the pines  
lately?

SCOTT  
Nope. Dropping off here.

Scott laughs, hands over a folder with 2 bags of marijuana.

AVERY  
Thanks for the drugs.

SCOTT  
Any time.

Scott leaves. Avery heads back into the lockers. Puts the evidence inside. Once done, He heads deeper into the storage room, stands in front of another locker, opens it up. He takes out a cardboard box, sits on the floor, spreads out evidence: wallet, gun, key to his motorcycle, empty backpack.

INT. OLYMPIC DINER - DAY

Avery sits alone at a booth. Romina approaches.

ROMINA  
What can I get you?

Romina looks up from her pad, notices Avery.

AVERY  
I'm sorry. I didn't realize you  
worked here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Romina tries to hide her contempt for Avery. She looks around for help, but she is the only waitress on duty. Awkward beat.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
How's your boy?

ROMINA  
(beat)  
Do you really care about my boy?  
You care about my family? Or is  
this just small talk?

Avery can't keep eye contact, her eyes full of venom. He looks down, notices that Romina is pregnant.

AVERY  
I'll just take a coffee...

Romina walks back into the kitchen. Avery watches her go. Scott Stevens approaches and sits down. Both men shake hands.

SCOTT  
Thanks for meeting me. You order?  
I'm starving.

Scott puts his hand up and waves for Romina. "Ma'am!"

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
We're dealing with a case, DeLuca  
and me. And it's pretty sensitive.  
I'm hoping this can stay private.

Avery is listening. Romina comes back to the table, trembling. She pours Avery's coffee.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Tuna melt. Large iced tea.

Scott hands her the menu, notices who she is, makes big eyes at Avery. She turns to Avery, waits for his order. Avery can't tell if she is terrified or angry. Probably both.

AVERY  
I'm fine with coffee.

She takes his menu, walks away. Scott looks at Avery like a kid who has just gotten away with something.

SCOTT  
Small fucking world.

AVERY  
What'd you want to talk about?

SCOTT  
Right. I knew I could come to you.  
You could really help us bust this  
thing wide open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AVERY

I don't know what I can do, but I'm here for you.

SCOTT

We have an operation going with these low level pushers. Kids. It could lead to their higher-ups, but we need to convince them we're legitimate. Now, you know how it is. You want to sign out drugs or money for an operation and the list of regulations... It's insane. As long as your arm, right?

Romina returns with the ice tea. Scott adds 4 sugars.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(stirring his drink)

DeLuca and I thought, you know, you're a stand-up guy. If we can arrange something where we can have, you know, temporary access to the evidence room, and we could borrow some stuff.

AVERY

I think I understand. I'm your toy.

SCOTT

Naw man, you're the fucking man. Fighting for justice. We're all fucking pawns in the game, bro. Look, everything we take out is gonna come right back in when we make the bust. No one will know it's missing. The cases that this shit is attached too; Lord knows when they go to trial, right?

AVERY

Right.

Avery's head spins. Scott smiles, puts more sugar in his tea.

EXT. OLYMPIC DINER - LATER

Avery and Scott shake hands. Scott climbs into his cavalier.

SCOTT

I knew I could count on you.

AVERY

Whose got your back?

SCOTT

You me and DeLuca will get together and sort out the details, okay?

Scott drives off. Avery watches him go. Waves.

INT. AVERY'S PARENTS' HOME - DAY

Avery limps up the stairs to his old room. His Dad is on the couch watching JUDGE JUDY, loud.

INT. AVERY'S BOYHOOD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Posters of super-heros and athletes cover the walls of Avery's untouched childhood room. He pulls a box down from a shelf in his closet, sits on the bed, opens it. Under an old year-book is the pile of money he took from Romina's place.

EXT. OLYMPIC DINER - EVENING

Romina gets off of her shift. Avery climbs out of his car as she walks by.

AVERY  
Excuse me. Don't worry. I'm not here as a police officer. I'm here as a man.

Romina is confused. Avery holds out the money for her. Romina won't even touch it.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
I don't judge anything you've done. This is yours, not mine. Please.

ROMINA  
I don't know where that money is from or why you're trying to give it to me. But whatever, it's inappropriate.

Romina walks over to her car and gets in. Avery follows.

AVERY  
I'm not trying to entrap you. Take it. You need it. For the baby.

ROMINA  
(getting courage)  
I know what they call you... they call you 'that hero cop'. But you wanna know what I see when I look in your eyes? I see a limp-dick.

Romina backs out and almost runs over Avery's foot.

INT. AVERY AND JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Avery and Jennifer sit at their cramped kitchen table. Avery feeds A.J. but he is somewhere else in his mind. He isn't paying attention to what he's doing.

JENNIFER  
Let him swallow. Jesus Christ, you are gonna choke him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She comes over and wipes the baby's face with a rag. He starts crying.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
Pay attention!

She picks the baby up, lifts her shirt, breast feeds.

AVERY  
Give me a fucking break.

JENNIFER  
Don't say that. I hate when you say that.

AVERY  
Well, I'm trying to help you. And he's fine. Put him back down. Let me finish feeding him. I'm sorry... I got a lot of things on my mind...

JENNIFER  
Avery, when you're here, you're not here. You should just go to work.

He gets up, curses under his breath, grabs his jacket.

AVERY  
You know I'm trying. I'm trying to be all things to all people. And it's just never enough, is it?

JENNIFER  
It's all about you. You always have to turn it back around on you. Whatdaya think the last year has been like on me?

AVERY  
This isn't some fantasy. This is real life. Things take time. It's gonna be a little tough sometimes.

JENNIFER  
I hate when you act like that!

AVERY  
Like what?

JENNIFER  
Like we're your problems that need to be solved! We're not criminals.

Avery walks out the door. Slams it. Jennifer screams.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)  
We're your family!

INT. FIRESIDE BAR - NIGHT

Avery and DeLuca share a booth. Scott approaches with beers.

SCOTT  
Alright, gentlemen. Here you go.

AVERY  
How do you want this to work?

PAUL DELUCA  
We'll give you a list of what we need and you pull it out for us. We'll use it and then get it or something exactly like it back to as soon as we can.

AVERY  
For this one investigation?

Scott and DeLuca look at one another.

SCOTT  
Well, yeah, for this investigation. But we were hoping this could be like something we're all involved in. Periodically.

AVERY  
Like an open-ended thing?

PAUL DELUCA  
What the hell? Scott told me you wanted to help us do some real police work.

SCOTT  
Take it easy, Paul. Avery is helping. We're just working it out.

Paul smiles. He points to Scott with his thumb.

PAUL DELUCA  
My better half.

AVERY  
What happens if somebody comes up for trial and the evidence isn't there?

PAUL DELUCA  
You just fudge the paper work. We'll give you cover from the DA.

PAUL DELUCA (CONT'D)  
Also, you should file the occasional report about how disorganized the evidence room is. It's a good hedge if something surprises us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

Okay. So what's in it for me?

PAUL DELUCA

What are you saying? You want us to bribe you or something? To do your fucking job?

AVERY

What I'm saying is that I'm the one taking the heat if this shit blows up. No, I don't want your fucking bribes. Just assurances. I want to do what's right, but I need assurances.

PAUL DELUCA

The fuck? You need fucking assurances? I don't even know what that means. Assurance? You get that in law school? Listen, pal, if this blows up we're all fucked. But you, see, you make sure it doesn't blow up. You can walk around all day looking down your self-righteous fucking nose at everybody, but you say you wanna be a cop, and I'm giving you that opportunity. So fuck your assurances, hero. Let's do what's right.

Avery grins at DeLuca. His behavior calculated to obscure his true thoughts - Fuck you DeLuca, I'm taking you to hell.

AVERY

I'm in.

SCOTT

See? Avery is good people.

EXT. AVERY'S PARENTS' HOME - DAY

Scott drives past Avery's parents' house, puts an envelope in the mailbox. Avery comes out his front door, gets it.

INT. EVIDENCE ROOM - LATER

Avery opens the envelope and takes out a list. He heads into the back of the evidence room and starts to take out items from different boxes to fill the 'order.'

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Avery and DeLuca park their cars across from one another. Avery hands DeLuca a back pack.

AVERY

Bring the bag back, okay?

INT. SCHENECTADY COUNTY D.A.'S OFFICE - DAY

Avery, in uniform, sits across from Schenectady's District Attorney BILL KILLCULLEN, mid-40's, angular, well dressed.

Avery holds a small tape-recorder up. Killcullen leans in to listen closer as Avery plays the last moments of his conversation with Scott and DeLuca, which he secretly recorded.

SCOTT (ON TAPE RECORDER)  
See? Avery is good people.

Avery clicks off the tape, hands the recorder to Killcullen.

AVERY  
I have more. Much more.

Killcullen studies the recorder and puts it on his desk.

BILL KILLCULLEN  
Have you shown this to IA?

AVERY  
No way.

BILL KILLCULLEN  
What's that supposed to mean?

AVERY  
I have no interest in being a martyr. I can't give you this whole case on a silver platter.

Killcullen smiles. He presses a button on his intercom. His receptionist STACY answers on the other end.

BILL KILLCULLEN  
Stacy? Is it Christmas?

STACY (OVER THE INTERCOM)  
What?

BILL KILLCULLEN  
Can you check for me and see if it's Christmas?

STACY (OVER THE INTERCOM)  
I'm busy.

The intercom clicks off.

BILL KILLCULLEN  
To the best of my knowledge, it's not Christmas. Therefore, I assume this isn't just a gift you want to give me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

No. I have conditions.

BILL KILLCULLEN

And what are these conditions?

AVERY

First off, you need to give me your word you're going to follow through. Second, I want immunity if you do follow through. And third, whether you follow through or not, I want you to make me an assistant D.A. I have a law degree and I passed the BAR.

BILL KILLCULLEN

I already have an assistant D.A. Two, actually.

AVERY

Make room.

BILL KILLCULLEN

Officer Cross. Avery, right? Can I call you Avery? Avery, you're obviously someone I can be candid with. No bullshit. Well let me ask you straight, just on the face of this proposition, why the hell do you think I'd be willing to reward you for this shit sandwich? I have to work with the guys on this tape. I'm not going to make it my business to screw them.

AVERY

You can say no to me and I'll walk out of here and walk right into the Gazette. Only when I play the tapes for them, they'll be some new material.

Avery pulls another little recorder from his inside coat pocket and shows it to Killcullen. It's recording. Killcullen leans back in his chair and smiles. Avery smiles back.

BILL KILLCULLEN

Wow. You're a real asshole, huh?

AVERY

Act now, and I'm your asshole.

INT. AVERY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Avery and Jennifer watch the local news. A.J. Plays on the floor. Avery picks him up, sets him on his lap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY  
(softly, to A.J.)  
Watch for daddy...

ANCHOR (ON T.V.)  
Drugs, corruption and gangs. It's not an investigation by the Schenectady Police it's an investigation *into* the Schenectady Police. Earlier today, DA William Killcullen announced at a press conference that his office, in conjunction with the F.B.I. would be handing down indictments that may lead to the arrests of Schenectady Police officers. For more we go to Adam Lurie live at the station. Adam?

ON TV: A REPORTER stands in front of the Police station.

REPORTER 2 (ON T.V.)  
The D.A. is making allegations today that Schenectady vice officers acted like the gangs they were supposed to be busting. Officers allegedly stole drugs, money and even guns from the police department's evidence room. With the stolen evidence, officials say, the cops allegedly paid criminals to help set up their rivals which lead to headline grabbing arrests.

ON TV: Killcullen's press conference.

REPORTER 2 (ON T.V.) (CONT'D)  
The D.A. Announced a star witness in the case, hero-cop Avery Cross, who just under a year ago was shot in the line of duty while saving two Schenectady residents from the "motobandit."

AVERY  
(points to the screen)  
See Daddy? That's Daddy on there...

JENNIFER  
Did you find a new job?

INT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - MORNING

Avery walks through the police station. Everyone he passes glares at him. He sits, waits outside the chief's office.

INT. CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI'S OFFICE - LATER

Avery hands Chief Weirzbowski his letter of resignation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY  
I hope your offer of retirement on  
disability still stands.

The chief nurses a silent, stoic rage, & snaps up the letter.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
You'll be lucky to get out of here  
alive.

Avery puts his badge down on the Chief's desk.

INT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION, LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Avery clears out his locker, changes into his street clothes,  
packs everything in a backpack. Scott walks in, devastated.

SCOTT  
What am I supposed to do now?

AVERY  
I thought you and DeLuca had it all  
figured out?

When Scott doesn't look up, Avery softens a little.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
You're a cop, Scott. They don't  
want you. Give 'em what they want.

SCOTT  
I'm not a fucking cop. My *father*  
was a cop. My grandfather was a  
cop. Now I'm the kinda guy they  
wouldn't piss on me if I was on  
fire. What the hell do I say to  
them?

AVERY  
They're your family. They'll be  
there for you.

SCOTT  
Talk to the D.A. Say I wasn't  
involved.

AVERY  
You were involved.

SCOTT  
Like you.

AVERY  
No. Not like me. I built a fucking  
case. I made an arrest. I did what  
a real policeman does. I did the  
right thing. You remember 'the  
right thing'?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT  
Help me.

AVERY  
(walks away)  
Help yourself.

SCOTT  
(calling out, weakly)  
Yeah? Well watch your back, bro.  
You just watch your back.

Echoes of Avery's boots as he walks down the hall. Scott, completely alone, sits down on a bench and begins to sob. We HEAR the sound of Avery's voice amplified by a P.A. system.

AVERY (V.O.)  
Now, you can take it from me: I know.

EXT. DELUCA RESIDENCE - DAY

Federal agents arrest Paul DeLuca at his home and lead him down his sidewalk in cuffs.

AVERY (V.O.)  
I know what it truly means to be tough on crime.

INT. COURT HOUSE - DAY

Stevens, DeLuca and some other officers sit at the Defendant's table. Avery is on the witness stand helping Bill Killcullen explain the case to the jury.

AVERY (V.O.)  
And you've heard that before, right? 'I'm tough on crime!'

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Scott Stevens is put into a cell. The door closes behind him.

INT. SCHENECTADY RAMADA CONVENTION HALL - EVENING

State Senator KEMP BUNDY, a silver-haired political pro, holds a lavish fund-raiser at the Schenectady Ramada. Avery, in a suit and tie is a guest speaker.

AVERY  
You hear it so often, you'd almost think there was such a thing as a pro-crime candidate.

The audience laughs.

INT. AVERY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jennifer watches Avery on TV. She bounces A.J. on her knee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY (ON T.V.)

No one wants crime in our communities. No one wants drugs or gangs or violence. But not everyone has answers. Senator Kemp Bundy has worked with the State Legislature over the last two years and has delivered three crime bills that make sense. He's helped give law enforcement the tools they need to capture and put away criminals. Added to that, he's helped get more good cops out on the street and he's put the bad ones behind bars.

INT. SCHENECTADY RAMADA CONVENTION HALL - EVENING

The audience cheers. SARAH BUNDY, a Senator's daughter, seems particularly intrigued by Avery.

AVERY

And you know what? It's worked. Crime has gone down. Across the board. Across the state. Even right here in Schenectady, crime has gone down.

Avery introduces SENATOR KEMP BUNDY. The audience ROARS.

INT. SAME - LATER

The politicians mingle with donors in the audience. Soft music plays, the murmur of conversation is constant. Avery talks to some men when Senator Bundy interrupts.

KEMP BUNDY

Can I borrow him for a second gentlemen?

Bundy pulls Avery aside.

KEMP BUNDY (CONT'D)

I want to thank you for your endorsement and your speech. It was simply terrific.

AVERY

I'm here to help.

KEMP BUNDY

Rumor is your thinking of taking a run at the city council?

AVERY

That's the rumor.

KEMP BUNDY

Is there anything I can do for you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Avery looks across the room at Sarah, Bundy's daughter. She is gorgeous, several years younger than Avery, and circulating through the room in a charming manner.

AVERY  
Is that your daughter?

Bundy is taken aback by a married man showing interest in his daughter, but with a politician's agility he recovers almost instantly.

KEMP BUNDY  
Who? Sarah? She's a great girl...

Bundy guides Avery through the crowd to Sarah.

KEMP BUNDY (CONT'D)  
Sweetheart, let me just butt in here for a second and introduce Assistant D.A. Avery Cross. Avery, meet my daughter, Sarah.

Avery reaches out his hand and takes Sarah's gently.

AVERY  
Nice to meet you.

SARAH  
Mr. Cross.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Avery and Sarah order 2 whiskeys. Neat.

AVERY  
You old enough to be drinking that?

SARAH  
I'm old enough to know one or two of these helps me stay charming.

AVERY  
That's dangerous thinking. Besides. You don't need that. To be charming.

Avery leaves a tip for the bartender. They walk to a table near a window.

SARAH  
My father tells me you're someone to watch.

AVERY  
Your father is a wise man.

SARAH  
He's a survivor, but that doesn't make him wise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY

My father was a part time pastor at Trinity baptist when I was a kid.

SARAH

My family is very religious too. When the reporters are around.

AVERY

I used to sit there in the pew and listen to the man preach. He was really good. He would go on and on about the power and the glory. I've spent my whole life trying to live up to that.

SARAH

The glory can be very attractive.

AVERY

From now on, I'm gonna concentrate on the power.

Sarah smiles.

SARAH

To the power.

Avery and Sarah toast.

INT. AVERY AND JENNIFER'S APARTMENT, A.J.'S ROOM - NIGHT

Avery comes home late and looks over his sleeping boy.

Avery heads into HIS BEDROOM. Jennifer waits up for him no longer. She is asleep. Avery sits down on the bed, turns on the light. Shakes her a little.

Jennifer sits up and looks over at Avery's back. After a long while, Avery speaks.

AVERY

I'm leaving you.

Jennifer says nothing.

EXT. PINE BARRENS - DAY - 15 YEARS LATER

A.J. now a 16 year-old boy, kneels near a tree. He wears a day-glo orange vest, a green cap and cradles a 20-gauge.

AVERY (O.S.)

A.J. A.J.!

A.J. looks back with annoyance at his father who awkwardly navigates the woods with a cane.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.J.  
(Whispering loudly)  
Quiet, dad! Come on!

AVERY (O.S.)  
Don't get too far.

A.J. ignores his dad, goes deeper into the woods. There in the pines, out in the distance, he spots a five-point buck. A.J. looks back for his dad, but can't see him anymore. He decides to chase the deer.

FURTHER BACK. Avery and Bundy, wearing hunter's orange jackets, sit on an old tree-carcass eating sandwiches. Avery looks ten years older, but he's aged very well; he appears stately. Bundy has gone from being a distinguished man to an old man. Their shot-guns rest unused on their laps.

KEMP BUNDY  
Now is not the time.

AVERY  
Now's the perfect time.

KEMP BUNDY  
You don't want to go out on your own into a primary fight. He's got all the endorsements and all the funding.

AVERY  
I have a great story to tell and a cornerstone issue to run on. The first ex-beat-cop candidate for U.S. Senate from New York State with a real chance of winning will attract a lot of support, and a lot of media.

KEMP BUNDY  
You don't need to sell me. I let you marry my daughter, for Christ's sake. You already got my vote.

AVERY  
We can build a real grass-roots campaign.

KEMP BUNDY  
Ugh. I hate that term. Sounds like some kind of awful folk band.

AVERY  
Come on. Try to see my vision for this thing.

KEMP BUNDY  
Are you that impatient?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AVERY

I'm not like you. I can't be in the State Senate til I retire.

KEMP BUNDY

(laughs)

There's that signature ambition. Your seat's not even warm yet.

AVERY

I'm a better candidate in the general. Endorsements or not, he's gonna crash and burn in November.

KEMP BUNDY

I agree. But if you force your way into the primary, you'll only succeed in giving the coup de grace to a dying man. He'll do everything he can to make you lose the general. Plus, you'll make lots of enemies in the party.

AVERY

So play it safe, huh?

KEMP BUNDY

No. Play it smart. Don't just sit and wait. Run a five year campaign. Turn grass roots into tree roots.

AVERY

My roots are thirsty. They can't wait that long.

Out in the woods a SHOT is fired.

MOMENTS LATER - Bundy and Avery catch up to A.J. who stands over the 5-point buck.

SENATOR BUNDY

Holy crow.

A.J.

Dad, help me clean him!

AVERY

You know you're not supposed to fire unless an adult is present!

A.J.

I know what to do...

Avery looks into the buck's eyes just as the animal breathes his last. Revulsed, Avery steps back and turns away.

AVERY

Grandpa will help you.

Bundy kneels down next to A.J. and smiles at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KEMP BUNDY

Don't worry about him. He's just squeamish. In a dozen years of hunting, he's never so much as used harsh language on a game animal...

Avery limps deeper into the woods. He can't turn back to watch his son and father-in-law clean the carcass. He leans on a tree and stares off into the pines.

INT. AVERY'S CAR - MONTHS LATER. NIGHT

Avery drives through city streets and parks near the Schenectady Police Station. He's a little grayer at the temples, but still in great shape.

AVERY (V.O.)

Where have you got him?

EXT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Avery gets out of his car and walks into the station.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI (V.O.)

Downstairs.

INT. CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chief Wierzbowski sits behind his desk with a little smile on his face. He is now 15 years older and fatter than last we saw him. Avery sits across the desk from the chief.

AVERY

What happened?

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

He was trying to buy two pounds from some Schenectady kid. Possession with intent to distribute. That's one hell of a summer job your boy was working on.

AVERY

Who arrested him?

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

Beat cop. Central district patrol.

AVERY

Anyone see him come in other than those two?

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI

No. I made sure of that.

AVERY

And what about the arresting officers? Stand up guys?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
They'll sit on this. If they hear  
it from me.

Avery does his best to look contrite.

AVERY  
I can't thank you enough for this.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
I'm doing you a favor, plain and  
simple. You owe me.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Avery steps into a small room with a metal table. He sits  
across from A.J. who's dressed like Kanye West.

AVERY  
What do you think you're doing?

A.J. covers his fear with laughter. Avery swats him across  
the head, knocking him to the floor.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
What the fuck's so funny?

A.J.  
(terror, hatred)  
I didn't call you!

AVERY  
You didn't call me. Listen to  
yourself. You think I wasn't going  
to hear about this?

A.J.  
I didn't do anything.

AVERY  
Did you do this to hurt me? Are you  
trying to make me lose the primary?

A.J.  
Everything's about you, right?

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HOLDING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Avery and A.J. are let out of the interrogation room by the  
Chief. Avery takes the Chief aside as A.J. waits sullenly.

AVERY  
What about the other kid? Does he  
know who A.J.'s father is?

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
I don't know. He's just some punk  
from Schenectady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY  
Find out for me, okay? Let me know  
if this gets worse. ...Chief.

Avery shakes Weirzbowski's hand.

CHIEF WEIRZBOWSKI  
You'll be hearing from me.

Avery and A.J. (hoodie pulled over his eyes) are escorted  
down the hall and through the parking garage by the cop.

INT. OTHER INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason sits alone in the interrogation room. He's a 17 YEAR  
OLD kid now. He's beefy, and muscular; looks intimidating.

A COP opens the door and enters the room. The cop takes a  
seat across from Jason.

COP  
Okay. You are under arrest. I'm  
supposed to advise of your rights.  
You have the right to remain  
silent. Anything you say can and  
will be used against you. You have  
the right to an attorney. If you  
can't afford an attorney, one will  
be appointed for you.

Jason swallows hard. His eyes dart around the room.

COP (CONT'D)  
You okay?

Jason nods, rapidly.

COP (CONT'D)  
We're gonna book you now, okay?

JASON  
'kay.

INT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - LATER

Jason is fingerprinted and photographed. His personal  
possessions are taken from him and cataloged.

COP  
Do you want to call someone?

JASON  
I don't know.

COP  
What's not to know?

JASON  
I don't want my mom to find out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COP  
 She's gonna find out anyway. If you  
 don't call someone, you're gonna  
 spend the night in jail.

Jason thinks about it.

INT. HOLDING CELL - LATER

Scared, Jason sits in a holding cell with 1 or 2 DRUNKS.

DRUNK  
 I look where I want to look. I'm  
 looking at you and if you say  
 anything about it, I'll defend  
 myself.

Jason tries to look away. Tries to make himself disappear.

DRUNK (CONT'D)  
 Don't ignore me. Don't you fucking  
 ignore me.

EXT. SCHENECTADY POLICE STATION - MORNING

Jason is released with a folder full of paper work. He walks  
 into the sun and squints.

EXT. SCHENECTADY STREETS - LATER

Jason walks to where he left his bike, unlocks the chain,  
 rides away.

E/I TWO FAMILY HOUSE - LATER

He rides home, parks his bike on the porch, lets himself in.

INSIDE, Romina, Kofi, Malena, (all 15 years older), and  
 Jason's younger sister VANESSA, now almost 15, sit around the  
 kitchen table. Everyone turns to the door when Jason walks  
 in. He looks at his family, knows he's in for it. Romina  
 turns to Kofi and holds her hand up.

ROMINA  
 I don't even want to talk to him.  
 Somebody better get this boy out of  
 my face.

Jason quickly heads upstairs to his room.

INT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE, JASON'S ROOM - LATER

Kofi enters the room.

KOFI  
 Why didn't you call us?

Jason shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 You were afraid we'd be angry?  
 (Beat)  
 Well guess what. We're angry.

Jason hands Kofi his paper work. Kofi sits down on the bed, looks through it.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 What did you do?

JASON  
 I messed up.

KOFI  
 This isn't messing up. Messing up is getting an F. Messing up is coming home past curfew. This is a lot bigger than messing up.

Jason looks away, unable to meet Kofi's gaze.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 You trying to play gangster?

JASON  
 No.

KOFI  
 I sure hope not. First of all, you no good at it.

Kofi gets up with the papers, heads for the door.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 I'll do what I can to keep your mom from killing you.

Jason laughs.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 This ain't funny. Not even a little bit. You need to start acting like you're a part of this family. Not just some guy who lives in the same house. Okay?

Nothing.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
 Say "okay."

JASON  
 Okay.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Kofi, Romina and Jason sit in the gallery of a court house with their PUBLIC DEFENDER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUBLIC DEFENDER  
So, Jason. You got some friends in  
high places?

Jason is visibly confused.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (CONT'D)  
Just lucky, I guess. I'm getting  
some pretty strong signals from the  
prosecutor that if you plead  
guilty, we can bargain this down to  
almost nothing.

ROMINA  
What do you mean? Like it will be  
dismissed?

PUBLIC DEFENDER  
No. If he pleads guilty he'll have  
a record. But if we bargain down  
from possession with intent to  
distribute to just possession we  
can get some time served from the  
night he stayed in jail and at  
worst maybe a fine and some  
probation.

ROMINA  
And we get that if we plead guilty?

PUBLIC DEFENDER  
I'm saying we probably get that. We  
hope we get that. But there are no  
guarantees. Of course, if Jason  
knows anything that could help  
ongoing investigations...

Romina and Kofi look at Jason.

PUBLIC DEFENDER (CONT'D)  
If he can give the city the name of  
whoever he got the drugs from, it  
could be even better for him.

JASON  
But you're saying even if I say  
nothing and plead guilty, it's not  
so bad.

ROMINA  
Jason.

PUBLIC DEFENDER  
If you give them someone bigger to  
go after, they might dismiss the  
whole thing.

Jason shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KOFI

So you were in it all alone, huh?  
You some kind of real criminal  
mastermind, huh? You think your  
friends would be that noble if the  
situation was in reverse?

ROMINA

You tell this man a name and you  
tell it right now.

Jason sighs with exasperation.

JASON

No. I'm not doing it.

The public defender shrugs.

PUBLIC DEFENDER

I'll see what I can do.

INT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Kofi, Jason, Romina and their extended family celebrate Vanessa's Quinceañera at a Hispanic Catholic church. Vanessa is at the altar. A little boy walks down the aisle, carrying a pair of high heels on a pillow. Kofi approaches the altar, takes off Vanessa's flats and puts on the high heels.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - EVENING

THE BACKYARD is transformed into an ad hoc disco, with a sound system, DJ, dancing lights and a make-shift tent. Kofi puts a crown on Vanessa's head & leads her to a throne. Cheers and clapping. Kofi and Vanessa have a solo dance.

Jason notices that a white kid about his age, JARED, is there and staring at him. Jared gestures for Jason to come to the front of the house. He then leaves. Jason follows.

OUT FRONT. A.J., Jared, and some of their friends wait on the front porch. Jason joins them.

A.J.

Jason. How are you? It's Jason,  
right?

JASON

Right...

A.J.

So you're okay? Did you get in a  
lot of trouble? Or what?

JASON

I'm okay. I gotta do like community  
service or some shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.J.  
Alright. Well, good. That's not so bad, right?

Jason looks around. He is surrounded.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
How come we never heard from you?

JASON  
About what?

A.J.  
About, I don't know, picking up where we left off. Or about giving us back our money.

JASON  
I don't have it. The cops took everything.

A.J.  
Is that our problem?

The pack starts to tighten the net around Jason.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
Who's going to pay us back our 5Gs?

JASON  
I don't know.

A.J.  
Take some responsibility... Tell us how you're gonna make it right.

JASON  
I don't have five thousand dollars.

A.J.  
So then go talk to your guy and get some new stuff for us.

JASON  
I'm done with all that.

A.J.  
You're not done until I get my money back.

JASON  
You think he wants to see me after what happened? I'm lucky he's not comin' after me too.

A.J.  
Well then it's on you to give us our refund.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JASON  
I don't got your money.

A.J.  
You don't have it now. But you'll  
have it soon, right?

JASON  
Fuck you.

Jason pushes A.J. hard. He falls backward off the porch into a bush. Jason bolts. Jared takes a wild swing at him and grazes his left ear as he runs down the porch.

Jason makes it to the nearest intersection, dodging traffic to escape. But it's no use. The pack is on him instantly. He turns to face his attackers, fists up, still running backwards. The boys surround him. They are laughing at him and hooting, enjoying it. Jason is scared shit-less.

A SHORT KID comes in and knocks Jason in the side of the head. Jason swings back but his equilibrium is shattered. Jared comes and smashes him in the nose, exploding it. Blood everywhere. Jason covers his face. The kids come at him now, each one wants a piece. All the while traffic passes.

Jason falls to the pavement, curls into the fetal position, tries to cover his body, but fists and feet are everywhere. A.J. shows up, kicks him as hard as he can. Over and over again.

Someone must have called the police, because in the distance - sirens. Kids scatter leaving Jason nearly unconscious. Soon, flashing lights illuminate his coiled body. A bloody mess.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY WAITING ROOM - LATER

Kofi, Romina and Vanessa, still in their dress clothes, wait on stained couches. The TV is on, low, in the corner. A DOCTOR comes out of double doors.

DOCTOR  
Mr. And Mrs. Cankam?

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - LATER

Jason's in bed. His face looks like an eggplant. Tubes come out his nose, IV's in his arms, cables monitor his condition. His mom touches his bruised hand.

KOFI  
Doctor says you're made out of  
rubber.

Jason cracks a hint of a smile followed by a little groan. Smiling hurts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KOFI (CONT'D)  
It ain't funny. The police are out there. They want to know if you know who did this to you.

Jason thinks for moment.

JASON  
I didn't get a good look.

KOFI  
You can't fight the whole world by yourself. Let us help you.

Jason is silent. Kofi sighs. Romina is bitterly disappointed.

ROMINA  
Fine. Have it your way. But apologize to your sister. This was her day. Not yours.

JASON  
(pained)  
Sorry, Vanessa.

VANESSA  
Shhh... It's okay.

JASON  
Sorry I ruined your party.

VANESSA  
Shhhh. Stop talking. The more you talk, the more you bleed.

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Jason, all bandaged up but back on his feet, plays cards with Vanessa in her room. Animal pictures cover every inch of her walls.

VANESSA  
Hey.

JASON  
Hey.

VANESSA  
Why you do stuff like that?

JASON  
Like what?

VANESSA  
Like fight.

Jason shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
You ever think about it?

Jason nods.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
So. What do you think?

JASON  
I don't know. I'm just a fuck up I  
guess.

VANESSA  
That's stupid... Stupid.

JASON  
You better watch who you're calling  
stupid...

VANESSA  
(smiles)  
You are stupid.

Jason reaches out, tenderly puts his whole hand over  
Vanessa's face and makes a downward wiping motion. He laughs.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
Why don't you tell the lawyer about  
those guys?

JASON  
Naw. That wouldn't matter...

VANESSA  
You gotta be careful from now on.  
You need to take care of yourself.  
This whole thing is so scary and  
messed up. I just don't want  
anything to happen to you. Please.

JASON  
Nothing's going to happen to me.

VANESSA  
(tearing up)  
It already did.

JASON  
Okay.

VANESSA  
Okay what?

JASON  
Okay, I'll be good.

Vanessa plays her card.

INT. KOFI'S SUV - DAY

Jason and Vanessa sit in the backseat of Kofi's S.U.V. They pull into the driveway of a small cape-cod house. Romina turns around and looks back at her kids.

ROMINA  
Don't touch anything in there.

INT. CAPE COD STYLE HOME - NISKAYUNA - LATER

While a REALTOR shows Kofi and Romina around the first floor, Jason and Vanessa walk through the empty rooms upstairs.

VANESSA  
It's so quiet here.

JASON  
It's empty.

VANESSA  
No, I mean the neighborhood.

JASON  
Yeah.

In the KITCHEN. Kofi and Romina talk with the realtor.

REALTOR  
It's hard to keep coming up with hits in your price range Mr...

KOFI  
Cankam. Like Can-Can, only it's Cankam. Just call me Kofi.

REALTOR  
I think you could get a good deal here.

ROMINA  
It's in the Niskayuna schools, right? That's all that matters.

REALTOR  
It definitely is.

Kofi and Romina look at one another.

KOFI  
So what comes next?

EXT. TWO FAMILY HOUSE - A FEW WEEKS LATER - NIGHT

Jason, almost healed, stands on his porch and takes a break. He is sweaty and exhausted. Romina and Kofi carry boxes into a U-Haul truck.

EXT. CAPE COD STYLE HOME, JASON'S NEW HOUSE - MORNING

The garage door opens up. Inside, sits Kofi's S.U.V. Jason wheels out his bike. He puts down the kick-stand and parks his bike in the driveway.

Jason walks to the back of the garage where the button is. He gauges how far he'll have to run before the garage door comes down. Jason hits the button and runs like hell for the outdoors.

Once he gets outside to his bike, he has a fairly long wait before the door comes all the way down.

EXT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Jason rides his bike up to the front entrance of Niskayuna High School; a big suburban school.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (O.S.)  
Let's see... Jason Can...?

JASON (O.S.)  
Cankam.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (O.S.)  
Cankam, sorry. Okay let's see where you're headed.

Jason passes by students who drive their own cars.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Just moved in this summer, huh?

Jason locks up his bike out front.

INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Jason sits in front of the guidance counselor's office and waits.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (O.S.)  
Looks like your homeroom teacher is going to be Mrs. Fusco. Here's a schedule.

INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Jason sits across from the GUIDANCE COUNSELOR; a young man, curly hair, moustache. Jason looks over his schedule.

JASON  
I think there's a mistake. It says eleventh grade on here.

Jason shows the counselor the papers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON (CONT'D)  
 (confident)  
 I just finished junior year at my  
 old school.

The guidance counselor takes back the sheet and then compares it with Jason's transfer transcript.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR  
 Hmmmm. Okay. I think I see what's  
 going on here. Did you or your  
 folks get anything in the mail this  
 summer about credits and school  
 requirements?

JASON  
 I didn't get anything.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR  
 Hmmmm. Maybe it got lost in the mail  
 or something. When you get home  
 check with your folks.

JASON  
 What was the thing we were supposed  
 to get?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR  
 Your old school and Niskayuna have  
 some different course requirements  
 that sort of add up differently.

JASON  
 Are you saying I have to repeat my  
 junior year?

The guidance counselor looks at his paper work again. He picks up his phone.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR  
 Hey. Can I speak to Ted please?

The guidance counselor is put on hold.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)  
 (To Jason)  
 Just a sec.

INT. MRS. FUSCO'S HOMEROOM CLASS - LATER

Jason sits down in the front row at the only open desk. He looks around a little, notices A.J. sitting in the back of the class. Mutual recognition, frozen stares. Jason takes his seat. MRS. FUSCO, plump, matronly, introduces herself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. FUSCO  
 Welcome, juniors. I'm Mrs. Fusco. It'll take me a bit to get everyone's name straight, but in the meantime let's make sure you all know each other. We've got a new student at the school here today. Jason, want to stand up and say 'hi?'

Jason barely stands from his chair.

JASON  
 I'm supposed to be in the Senior class, so once they straighten that out, I'll be gone.

He sits down.

MRS. FUSCO  
 Thank you, Jason. Let's do attendance.

After each student is called, they raise their hand.

MRS. FUSCO (CONT'D)  
 Donna Cooper. Steven Cornrich. A.J. Cross.

A.J. raises his hand and clicks his mechanical pencil.

MRS. FUSCO (CONT'D)  
 (Smiling)  
 Jason Cankam is here, but evidently not for long.

EXT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Students eat lunch in a courtyard at picnic tables. A.J. sits with some pretty girls and popular guys, methodically peeling an orange. Next to A.J. is Jared. Both boys eye-fuck Jason.

Jason can't pay attention to them. He is too engrossed in an intense phone conversation with his mom. He holds his cell phone to his ear with urgent intensity.

JASON  
 So, what are you saying?

ROMINA (OVER THE PHONE)  
 I'm saying it's our fault, we screwed up. But yes, you gotta do it.

JASON  
 I gotta do what? Tell me.

ROMINA (OVER THE PHONE)  
 You gotta be a junior again. I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON  
But I'm a senior.

ROMINA (OVER THE PHONE)  
Not at your new school you're not.

Jason holds the phone tight to his ear. He's furious.

JASON  
When they held me back in middle school, you said it would just be that one time.

ROMINA (OVER THE PHONE)  
Baby, this is different. Even if we hadn't messed up with the forms in the mail, and I admit we messed up, you'd still have to do this. We would have just known in July, okay?

Jason notices that Jared is surreptitiously recording him with his iPhone.

ROMINA (OVER THE PHONE) (CONT'D)  
Listen, Jason. I gotta get back to work. I don't have any more time for personal calls today. We can talk about this whole mess tonight at dinner, okay? Okay?

Jason has stopped listening to his mom, instead, he glares at Jared.

JASON  
(To Jared)  
Why you filming me, yo?

JARED  
I'm not filming you.

Jason stands quickly. He hangs up on his mom, pockets his phone, and strides over to Jared.

JARED (CONT'D)  
What's up, faggot?

Jason snatches the iPhone from Jared and tosses it hard onto pavement. Then he jumps on Jared, knocking him to the ground. He pounds him with his fists. Jared starts to cry and yell. Kids try and pull Jason off.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - LATER

Jason sits alone in the principal's office. After a wait, the principal, TED BUCKLEY, enters. He sits down behind his desk.

TED  
This is no way to start your year off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jason doesn't respond.

TED (CONT'D)  
 You're going to be suspended. Two weeks. I'm gonna call your parents. Mom or Dad first?

Jason can't decide.

TED (CONT'D)  
 Your mom it is.

Ted picks up the phone and starts to dial.

JASON  
 Wait. You'll get her in trouble at work. Call Kofi.

TED  
 Got the number handy?

Jason pulls out his cell and finds Kofi's work number.

JASON  
 Ready?

TED  
 Mmm hmm.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - EVENING

CLOSE UP OF POLITICAL AD ON HD TELEVISION SCREEN

ON TV: THE AD STARTS with a slow zoom into Avery Cross's police academy graduation photo.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 In 1994, Avery Cross was a rookie cop. On routine patrol, he came face to face with this man.

ON TV: GRAINY BLACK AND WHITE SECURITY CAMERA IMAGE of Luke's last robbery. The still shows Luke without his helmet on in the act of robbing his last bank.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
 After robbing a bank, he took a young family hostage in their home. Avery Cross stood up to this man, rescued the hostages, was shot and nearly killed.

ON TV: HISTORICAL FOOTAGE that tracks Avery's political career.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Avery Cross never stopped standing up to crime, whether it was the gangs he helped get off the street as a police officer or the crooked cops he helped put behind bars while working in the D.A.'s office.

ON TV: IMAGES of Avery working in the community with people on the street, police officers, and workers on the job.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And as a state senator, Avery Cross has done even more to protect and build our communities, and protect us not just from crime, but from corruption. On election day, send Avery Cross to the United States Senate. Let him do for America what he's done for Schenectady County.

AVERY (ON T.V.)

I'm Avery Cross, and I approve this message.

NARRATOR

Paid for by people for Cross.

ON TV: The AD fades to black. An afternoon talk-show returns.

Jason lays on the couch, facing away from the TV, not paying attention - it keeps him company. He HEARS his parents come in. Romina stands over Jason, picks up remote, flips off TV.

ROMINA

You're going up to your room and you're gonna stay there for the whole time you're not in school.

Jason sits up, emotionless.

ROMINA (CONT'D)

The only reason you leave that room is to go to work. No computer, no Internet, no TV, no phone. No nothing!

JASON

(stands)  
Okay.

ROMINA

Shut up! You're gonna call your classmates and get your homework assignments and you're gonna do them. Junior or no. And, you're gonna pay for that kid's phone!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KOFI  
(softly, interrupts)  
He's got it.

Romina turns to Kofi, mad as hell.

ROMINA  
You better just shut your mouth.

Kofi shuts up. Romina leans toward Jason.

ROMINA (CONT'D)  
You realize what we sacrificed to  
move you away from this kind of  
thing? Do you? Huh?

JASON  
I didn't ask you to do that.

ROMINA  
You didn't ask me? You're a big  
tough man, huh? Funny how I can  
just ground your little ass like  
you still a baby. Now get up there!

Jason stands and trudges up the stairs.

INT. JASON'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Jason sits in his room at his computer. Kofi walks in.

KOFI  
No computer starts now.

Kofi gingerly picks up the computer, a laptop, takes a moment  
to figure out how to unplug it. He closes it awkwardly,  
seeming unsure if he is doing it right. Jason helps.

JASON  
Here.

KOFI  
Thanks.

JASON  
How am I supposed to do my homework  
without my computer?

KOFI  
I did all my homework without a  
computer. Gimmie that phone.

Jason hands Kofi the phone.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
Come on. Let's go for a ride.

INT. KOFI'S SUV - EVENING

Kofi drives and Jason sits in the front seat.

KOFI  
When you're my age, being held back  
won't seem like such a big deal.  
It's just a year's worth of more  
chances to hook up with a  
cheerleader.

Jason doesn't respond.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
We worked hard to get you into a  
better school. To do good by you,  
not to punish you.

EXT. FRIENDLY'S RESTAURANT - PARKING LOT - LATER

Kofi and Jason lean against his SUV. Kofi drinks a shake.  
Jason licks an ice cream cone.

JASON  
Can we drive around?

KOFI  
With ice cream? Come on. I'm trying  
to keep that car nice.

JASON  
(smiles)  
That car is older than you.

Kofi laughs in spite of himself.

KOFI  
Wait til you have your own. Which  
at the rate you're going will be  
never.

Kofi and Jason enjoy their ice cream in silence.

JASON  
How come mom won't tell me anything  
about my real dad?

Another silence. Kofi searches...

KOFI  
(like DARTH VADER)  
I'm your father. Search your  
feelings, you know it to be true.

Jason laughs.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
It's your mom's business to talk  
about or not talk about, you know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON  
Grandma told me some.

KOFI  
Oh yeah? What's she say?

JASON  
(beaming)  
She said he was a bad man. An outlaw or something.

KOFI  
That sound good to you?

JASON  
I don't know. No.

Kofi gets serious.

KOFI  
You should know how your real dad ended up.

JASON  
Is he in jail?

KOFI  
He's dead. Long dead. Shot down in the street.

Jason licks his ice cream and tries to look unmoved.

KOFI (CONT'D)  
He's not your father. Not really. He's some guy who had a baby. I'm your father. I been there since you were born. I love you. I'll always love you. Isn't that being a father?

JASON  
Will you tell me his name?

Kofi considers this request.

INT. STEWART'S CONVIENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Jason works behind the counter at Stewart's, a convenience store and GOOGLES the name 'Luke Glanton' on the store's computer. A list of links to old news articles comes up. Jason clicks on one - sees a Luke's mugshot.

Jason stares at him in awe. The headline above the picture reads, '**Motorcycle Bandit Killed by Sch'dy Cop.**'

The image of his long-dead father is paired with an image of the young, rookie Avery Cross. Jason looks up as A.J. comes in with some of his friends. He does not make the connection yet that this is the son of the man who killed his father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.J. approaches the counter. His friends stack up some beer to buy. It's just him and them in the store. Stand-off. Jason tries not to seem scared.

JASON  
ID?

A.J. shows Jason no ID.

A.J.  
(To his friends)  
You guys wait in the car.

A.J.'s friends leave. A.J. and Jason stare at one another. Jason relents and rings up the beer anyway. A.J. pays.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
Sorta surprised to see you in my  
homeroom.

JASON  
Me too. You and your friends gonna  
wait for me out there? Jump me when  
I get off here?

A.J.  
We don't have to wait in the  
Stewart's parking lot to find you.

JASON  
So where we at?

A.J. winks at Jason and leaves the store.

Jason, alone behind the counter, slowly turns his attention back toward the store's computer. The picture of Luke stares out of the screen at him, grinning.

EXT. STEWART'S CONVIENIENCE STORE - LATER

Jason locks up, glances around, nervous. It's late. Streets are empty. A lone car with tinted windows idles across the road, as if the unseen people inside are waiting for Jason.

Jason hops on his bike and rides off into the shadows. The car starts to follow.

EXT. NISKAYUNA STREETS - NIGHT

Jason rides his bike home fast. He looks back over his shoulder. He's not sure if the car is there or not. Pedals faster. Adrenaline pumping.

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE - LATER

Jason gets home and pulls into his driveway. He jumps off his bike and runs for the door. Out of breath, panting. He can barely hold his keys steady to unlock the door.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, JASON'S ROOM - MORNING

Jason wakes up early and stares at the ceiling.

MALENA  
Nino. Oye, Nino. Despierta.

Jason opens his eyes, sees Malena leaning into his doorway.

MALENA (CONT'D)  
Vamanos.

LATER - Jason plays Monopoly with his grandmother.

JASON  
I gotta go.

MALENA  
You're not going anywhere.

JASON  
To work.

Malena looks at her watch.

MALENA  
It's early for that.

JASON  
I'm covering for someone who called  
in sick.

Malena doesn't believe him, but lets Jason leave.

EXT. SCHENECTADY STREETS - AFTERNOON

Jason, in his work uniform, stands on the porch of a two-family. He knocks on the door.

VOICE BEHIND DOOR  
What's the word?

JASON  
It still peanut?

The door opens.

INT. UPSTAIRS APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jason sits on a couch in the living room of a 'weed spot.'  
BENNY, 22, Jamaican, joins him.

BENNY  
Jay. Been a while. Who the fuck let  
you in here? Was it Devon? Devon,  
I'm gonna fuck you up for letting  
this bitch up in here.

Benny and Jason shake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON  
Sorry I haven't been around.

BENNY  
It's a'right, son. I ain't want you  
around since you started keeping  
company with the police.

JASON  
You ain't mad about the money?

BENNY  
(shouts)  
What money?

JASON  
Why you yelling?

BENNY  
I want your wire to pick that shit  
up.

JASON  
I'm not wearing a wire.

BENNY  
You think I'm dumb? I watch TV.

Jason stands he takes off his shirt. Benny is unimpressed.  
Jason takes off his pants too. Everyone in the spot laughs.

JASON  
I want a gun.

Everyone stops laughing.

BENNY  
Fuck you. You not man enough to be  
in that kind of trouble. Why you  
need a gun?

JASON  
Protection, motherfucker.

BENNY  
(yelling again)  
Even if I had such a device I would  
not sell it illegally to you. That  
would be illegal.  
(leans in whispering)  
Check if the neighborhood gun still  
around. Killer.

JASON  
Neighborhood gun?

EXT. SCHENECTADY CEMETARY - CONTINUOUS

Jason walks through the graves, comes to the edge of the  
cemetery, where he finds 3 large dumpsters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He checks under all three & finds an irregular lump under the last one. He digs at the lump and unearths a metal case. Etched crudely onto the front cover are the words '**Brandywine Ave Burner.**'

Jason opens the box, finds a pistol. He hefts the beat up pistol in his hand. On the bottom of the box is etched a simple request: '**Reload when you done, son**'

Jason flips out the cylinder. Someone has clearly not followed the request; the gun is loaded with only 3 shells. Jason closes the cylinder, tucks the weapon into his book bag and puts the box back into the earth.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - EVENING

Jason and his family eat dinner. It's quiet and tense. Jason won't make eye contact with anyone in his family. Jason stands and takes his plate away to the kitchen.

ROMINA  
What do you think you're doing?

Jason puts his dishes in the sink.

ROMINA (CONT'D)  
You ask to be excused if you wanna get up.

Jason ignores his mother and heads toward the stairs.

ROMINA (CONT'D)  
Where you think you're going?

Kofi Touches Romina's arm and whispers to her.

KOFI  
Come on. Ease up.

Romina turns back to her food, she can hardly eat. She hears Jason's feet pounding up the stairs.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, DEN - CONTINUOUS

Jason sneaks back down the stairs, ducks into the den. Without turning on the light, he sits down at the computer desk, fires up the ancient PC.

Jason leans over and looks through the door, keeps a watchful eye trained on his family, who sit in the dining room. They seem more relaxed, now that he's not there. Vanessa giggles.

Jason turns to the computer, resumes his search for 'Luke Glanton.' He finds the picture of Luke from before, and a picture of Avery as a young, rookie police officer.

He clicks on archived news articles. One catches his eye: AN ARCHIVED PHOTO of ROBIN standing in front of his station with the caption, "Glanton's former boss, Robin Van Der Zee."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jason recognizes the service station.

EXT. NISKAYUNA STREETS/SCHENECTADY STREETS - AFTERNOON

Jason rides away from his house in his Stewart's uniform down Route 5 toward Schenectady.

E/I ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - LATER

Other than the assortment of cars parked out front, not much has changed in the last 15 years. Jason leans his bike against an old pay phone out front.

Jason walks INTO THE FRONT OFFICE. It's empty. He sits down, waits & can see into the busy garage bays from where he sits. He catches sight of Robin, looking much older than he did 15 years ago. Robin works over the engine of a Ford Focus. A MECHANIC walks into the office, startles Jason.

MECHANIC  
Can I help you?

JASON  
(clears throat)  
Yeah. I'd like to talk to Robin Van Der Zee?

MECHANIC  
He's busy right now. What can I do for you?

JASON  
I just need to talk to him. It's not about a car.

MECHANIC  
Alright... Wait here.

The mechanic walks into the bay. Jason watches him.

The mechanic talks to Robin, gestures back to the office. Robin looks at the office, says something that's drowned out by the NOISE. The mechanic shrugs. Robin shakes his head, yells something, returns to work.

Jason checks his watch; 5 to 5. Shit! A CUSTOMER comes in. The mechanic steps back into the office.

CUSTOMER  
Hi. Colyer? You have my Nissan?

MECHANIC  
Yep. All set.

The mechanic takes a key from the behind the counter and prints out a receipt.

JASON  
Hey. Is he coming out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MECHANIC  
(working, annoyed)  
Leave your info, he'll call you.

JASON  
I need to talk to him in person.

MECHANIC  
I can't help you right now.

Jason looks back into the garage. Robin is not there anymore. Jason checks the time. He leaves.

INT. STEWAT'S CONVIENIENCE STORE - AFTERNOON

Frustrated and unsatisfied, Jason walks into Stewart's ready to work. His MANAGER calls to him from the counter.

MANAGER  
You're three minutes late.

JASON  
Sorry.

Jason puts an apron on and goes behind the counter. He stands still. No customers come in just yet. He stares down one of the store's aisles, lost.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - LATER

Jason walks inside. Romina, Vanessa and Kofi watch TV in the living room.

ROMINA  
You're three minutes late.

JASON  
I know.

Jason heads upstairs.

INT. JASON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jason opens his top dresser drawer, moves some clothes out of the way, finds the pistol. He stares at it. Romina knocks on the door, cracks the door open.

ROMINA  
Can I come in?

He hides the gun, sits on the bed. Romina comes in, sits down next to him.

ROMINA (CONT'D)  
Your dad tells me you been asking about your biological father.

Jason can't look her in the face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROMINA (CONT'D)

Look at me. Jason. Look at me.

He does. Their faces are mysteries to each other, full of secrets, fears, & misunderstandings. It's too much to handle. Romina grabs him and hugs as if she would never let go.

ROMINA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, baby. I don't talk about him because I don't want him or what he did to have nothing to do with you. The only good thing he ever did was help make you.

JASON

You hate him?

Romina pulls back, looks at Jason. Tears in her eyes. She shakes her head 'no'. She tries to smile.

ROMINA

You wanna come down and watch some TV with us?

Jason nods. Romina takes him by the hand, leads him downstairs.

LATER. The family sits on the couch, side by side, watching TV. Vanessa leans her head against Jason's shoulder and snuggles up to her big brother.

INT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL, HALLWAY - MORNING

On his first day back, Jason walks down the hall to class. Other students give him sidelong glances.

INT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - LATER

Jason listens to the TEACHER give a lesson about science.

TEACHER

Can someone give me an everyday example where we use evolution?

None of the students raise their hands. The teacher writes on the chalkboard, '**it runs in the family.**'

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Anyone here been to the doctor lately?

JASON

Or the hospital?

The other students laugh.

TEACHER

Sure, the hospital. What did they ask you about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON

You know. What happened to me.  
Where I got hit, how hard. How bad  
it hurt. Uhm. If I had any  
allergies to like medications.

TEACHER

Did they ask you about family  
history?

Jason thinks about this.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Doctor's will often ask you what  
your families health history is.  
They know that if both your  
grandmothers had strokes, than it's  
probably a family trait. It doesn't  
mean you're definitely going to  
have a stroke, it just means maybe  
you should watch how much salt you  
put on your eggs. But don't worry.  
I don't think getting black eyes  
runs in the family.

All the kids laugh. Even Jason.

EXT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Jason eats alone at a table. A.J. is at the popular kid's  
table, peeling an orange. He stares at Jason over sunglasses.

A.J. stands up and approaches Jason. Sits.

A.J.

What's up?

He offers Jason a segment of orange. Jason doesn't take it.

A.J. (CONT'D)

So why did you move here?

JASON

My parents moved us. To keep me out  
of trouble.

A.J.

That worked out well, huh?

JASON

How come I never saw you in court  
after we got arrested?

A.J.

My dad used to be a cop. He pulled  
some strings.

JASON

You get grounded or something like  
that? Was that your punishment?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.J.  
(Laughs)  
My punishment is I can do no wrong.

A.J. offers another segment of orange. Jason takes it.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
I was just sitting over there  
looking at you and I'm like it's  
stupid we're not friends. You know?  
We should go into business  
together.

JASON  
I told you. I'm done with all that.

A.J.  
You'd make a lot more money than at  
Stewart's.

JASON  
How old are you? Like, fifteen?

A.J.  
And a half.

JASON  
What are you trying to be?

A.J.  
(Smiles)  
Be the kingpin.

Jason laughs.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
It's funny, right?

JASON  
It doesn't seem like you need the  
money.

A.J.  
You know, Jared, the kid you beat  
up? My friend? His parents are  
thinking about suing your parents.  
Or at least pressing charges.

JASON  
(pleading)  
I'm on probation!

A.J.  
Son, you broke his nose. He's like,  
scared an' shit. He can barely come  
to school anymore.

JASON  
Do his parents know I'm gonna buy  
him a new phone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A.J.  
Yeah, but, what about his pride, B?

JASON  
Fuck.

A.J.  
I think I could get you guys to  
kiss and make up. You know? If  
you're willing. So you don't get  
sued.

Jason is listening. He'll do what he has to do.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
I'm having a party Friday night at  
my house. He'll be there. Why don't  
you come over? If you guys hang  
out, you know, with some social  
lubricants, it should be fine.

E/I A.J.'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jason rides his bike up to a large, palatial, suburban  
McMansion. Cars are parked all over. Music spills out of the  
windows. Kids are streaming in through the front door.

INSIDE. Jason makes it through the crush dancing bodies,  
finds A.J. at a keg filling a plastic cup with beer.

A.J.  
You made it. Beer?

Jason smiles. A.J. hands him a beverage. Jason drinks it.  
A.J. motions for Jason to follow him.

A.J. and Jason head out to the BACKYARD. There, amongst other  
party-goers, sits Jared, on a deck chair, drinking beer.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
Hey Jared. This is Jason. You guys  
already know each other.

Kids around Jared laugh nervously. He stands up, face still  
bruised.

JASON  
I know it doesn't count for much,  
but I'm sorry about your phone. I'm  
gonna pay for a new one.

JARED  
You're right. It doesn't count for  
much.

JASON  
You got your shots in on me. We  
should be even. So. Sorry.

Jason raises his hand shake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JARED  
You just saying this so my parents  
won't sue?

JASON  
Pretty much.

A.J.  
Come on. It takes a big man to  
apologize.

JARED  
What about our money?

A.J.  
Whatever. We stole it from our  
parents. They'll make more. The  
circle of life continues.

Jared and Jason shake hands. The tension is barely dispelled.

LATER. A.J. leads Jason UPSTAIRS. Jason stumbles a little as  
he walks; as if he is losing his equilibrium.

The kids sit in a circle on the floor of a A.J.'S BEDROOM  
and pass a bong. Jason takes a huge hits, looks extremely  
drowsy. Jared and A.J. watch Jason closely.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
How you doing there, champ?

JASON  
(red eyes)  
This must be pretty strong stuff.

ASHLEY, gorgeous, 17 sits across from Jason. She smiles at  
him. He's about to have a panic attack, so he gets up, leaves  
the room.

HALLWAY. Jason stumbles from the room. The hall is crowded  
with dark figures. Jason can't make out anyone's face, as  
hard as he quints.

He looks down at the floor to try and center himself, but the  
rug is vibrating. Jason steadies himself against the wall.  
The wall is covered with photos. Jason zeroes in on a photo  
of A.J. Then one of A.J.'s sister. Jason follows the pictures  
down the hall. They start to include family portraits with  
Avery and Sarah.

Finally, Jason finds himself at the end of the hall looking  
at Avery's rookie cop photo - the same one paired with Luke  
from Jason's internet search. It all comes together on him.  
It's hard to process in his state, and hard to ignore. Ashley  
walks up behind him.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Is that A.J.'s dad?

Jason doesn't take his eye off the photo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ASHLEY  
Duh... you must be really high...  
are you gonna be okay?

JASON  
I just... This is not how it  
normally feels.

ASHLEY  
Your name is Jason, right?

He nods.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Hi. I'm Ashley.

JASON  
This house is pretty insane. Do you  
live in an insane house?

ASHLEY  
My house is normal.

JASON  
Right.

ASHLEY  
You're a junior?

JASON  
I'm supposed to be a senior.

Jason is getting more and more woozy.

ASHLEY  
That sucks. I'm a senior.

She leans in and gives him a long, deep kiss.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
You taste good.

Jason is really gonna have a panic attack now. Instead, he  
kisses her again. She tastes good. He doesn't ever want it to  
stop.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)  
Not here. Not here.

She leads him down the hall to a bedroom. He can barely walk.

LATER - Jason is asleep on the bed alone. He is under the  
covers and completely naked. A.J. jostles him repeatedly.

A.J.  
Come on. Wake up.

Jason struggles to come back to full consciousness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A.J. (CONT'D)  
Come on. Party's over. Get your clothes on.

Jason takes stock of where he is. The house is very quiet. His clothes are scattered. He reaches for his pants. A.J. WATCHES him get dressed. Jason turns for some privacy.

A.J. (CONT'D)  
Good party, right?

LATER. A.J. sees Jason to the door. They shake hands.

JASON  
I guess you weren't lying. About the truce.

A.J.  
You thought we were just gonna have you over to beat you up?

JASON  
Yeah.

A.J.  
Not in my parent's house. No way.

Jason unsteadily makes his way to his bike.

JASON  
Hey. Can I ask you something?

A.J.  
Shoot.

JASON  
Is your dad famous or something?

A.J.  
Yeah... Something like that. Now you get home safe.

EXT. NISKAYUNA STREETS - LATER

Jason, unable to ride competently, walks his bike home. Behind him, without him realizing it, a police cruiser slowly catches up with him. Once it's nearby, its siren bleats and lights flash. Jason barely notices. He slows to a stop, turns to face the blinding searchlight. 2 COPS climb out.

COP  
Good evening, young man. Why don't you lay the bike down on the lawn there.

Confused, Jason complies slowly. The cop moves in.

COP (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON  
Jason Cankam.

COP  
Have you got any ID on you, Jason?

JASON  
I don't have a driver's licence.

COP  
Where are you headed tonight?

Two other police cruisers approach with their red and blue lights spinning. They park.

JASON  
Home.

COP  
Where's that?

JASON  
1412 Balltown Road.

Four more cops pile out of their cars and walk toward Jason.

COP  
Where are you coming from?

Jason looks around, knows this is no good.

JASON  
A friend's house.

COP  
What's the address of your friend?

JASON  
Not sure. It's on, uh, Myron?

Six officers surround Jason.

COP  
Have you been drinking this evening? Have you been using any illegal drugs?

JASON  
No. I had a beer.

COP  
If I search you, am I going to find any illegal drugs?

JASON  
No.

COP  
Am I gonna find any weapons?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jason shakes his head 'no', and intuitively puts his hands on the back of his head before anyone asks him. A couple of cops laugh at how Jason jumps the gun.

COP 2  
(To his partner)  
Now there's someone who's been processed before.

COP  
Can I search you?

JASON  
Yeah.

COP  
Come on over here.

The cop leans Jason over the hood of the cruiser. Two cops search Jason. In his pockets, they discover a diamond engagement ring and some other nice jewelry.

JASON  
That's not mine.

COP  
Whose is it?

JASON  
I have no idea.

The cops also discover a small-bladed knife. They cuff Jason.

EXT. A.J.'S HOUSE - LATER

The cruiser is parked in the drive-way of A.J.'s house. The two cops present Jason to A.J. who stands on his threshold.

COP  
Is this the kid?

A.J.  
Yup. He pulled, like, a small knife, like one you could fit into your pocket, and he made me show him where my parents keep their jewels and stuff.

COP  
Can you describe any of the stolen items in detail?

A.J.  
There's big ring that used to belong to my mom, with a diamond in it? It's, like, gold with a lot of little sparkles around it.

The cop inspects the ring he found on Jason closely. It matches A.J.'s description.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON  
This is bullshit.

COP  
We're not talking to you right now.

JASON  
This is bullshit!

INT. NISKAYUNA POLICE STATION - LATER

Jason is booked, printed, photographed and put in a cell.

INT. HOLDING CELL - LATER

Jason tries to clear the lingering fogginess in his head.

JASON  
Aw fuck. Aw goddammit! God damn it!

Jason is alone in the Niskayuna holding cell. It looks more like an asylum than a jail.

INT. ROMINA'S CAR - EARLY MORNING

Romina and Jason drive home from the police station.

ROMINA  
(crying)  
It's all my fault. It is.

JASON  
It's not your fault, mom. I didn't do anything.

ROMINA  
Stop that! Stop that! I don't want you to lie to me! Stop it!

JASON  
I know I'm always screwing up. But I didn't do anything this time. I swear. Mom...

ROMINA  
Stop it! I can't trust you!

Jason looks away from his mom, hurt by her words. She's hurt by them too. Jason pulls his hoodie over his head, yanks on the strings until his face disappears into a black hole.

He screams as loud and as long as he can.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, JASON'S ROOM. MORNING.

Jason buries his head in his pillow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 ... The senatorial candidate's son reported the robbery, which allegedly took place during an unsupervised party.

INT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL, HALLWAY - DAY

Jason walks alone as if in a trance. He wears his sweat-shirt hood up, covering his face and carries his backpack.

ANCHOR (V.O.)  
 When asked about whether or not the party involved drinking or drugs, Cross said he was unsure, but then went on to take responsibility if that were the case.

INT. MRS. FUSCO'S HOMEROOM CLASS - DAY

Jason sits at his desk. Other kids file past him. A.J. takes his seat. As Mrs. Fusco starts to take attendance, Jason looks back at A.J. A.J. meets Jason's gaze.

AVERY (ON T.V.) (O.S.)  
 Even if there were no drinking at the party, the fact that it was unsupervised is not acceptable. I take responsibility for this.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jason watches the news with Kofi. The ANCHOR reports on Jason's arrest. The scene on the TV cuts to footage of Avery talking to reporters.

AVERY (ON T.V.)  
 It seems my son made a mistake. But I'm his father. His mother and I take responsibility for what he does.

Jason stares the screen seething with anger. Kofi notices.

KOFI  
 Of all the people for you to get tangled up with.

Romina walks in, shuts off TV.

ROMINA  
 Come on. We're gonna be late.

INT. LAW OFFICE - LATER

Jason, Kofi and Romina sit at a conference table with CLAIRE MULFORD, 40's, attorney.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE

Among the many complications of this case is Jason's prior conviction.

ROMINA

The lawyer at that time told us to plead guilty.

CLAIRE

I'm gonna tell you to do the same.

JASON

No.

KOFI

Quiet.

JASON

I didn't do it.

KOFI

Shut up! No one wants to listen to you right now. You need to shut up and listen to the expert here!

CLAIRE

This is not about right or wrong. It's about what's best for you in the long run. You plead innocent, and take this trial, I guarantee you a conviction for a class E felony.

ROMINA

Can you tell us...

CLAIRE

At least a year in jail. Definitely more.

KOFI

Jesus.

CLAIRE

The Cross's got their jewelry back; they're in the middle of an intense political campaign; they want this to go away as much as you do. If you try a plea-bargain, maybe you get out of this with a couple of months of jail time. If you fight it, Avery Cross will do everything he can to destroy you. Trust me.

Romina starts to cry. Kofi comforts her.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

It's up to you, Jason.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JASON  
I didn't do it.

CLAIRE  
You don't have to decide now. You  
have a week before the arraignment.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - EVENING

The family sits around the table for a family meeting.

ROMINA  
We're gonna move back in with  
Grandma for a little while and put  
the house up on the market.

JASON  
Don't do that.

KOFI  
We have to.

Everyone is silent.

VANESSA  
(To Jason)  
It's because of you! It's always  
because of you! I HATE YOU!!!

Vanessa gets up and starts to leave. Romina calls after her.

ROMINA  
Vanessa!

Vanessa yells back at her mother.

VANESSA  
He's not even one of us!

Vanessa runs upstairs.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - LATER

Vanessa packs. Jason walks in. Vanessa ignores him.

JASON  
I need you to believe me. I really  
didn't do this. I don't even know  
what to say except I'm sorry again,  
and I say that all the time. I'm  
sorry. I know it doesn't help. I  
guess everyone's right about me.  
I'm a fuck up.

VANESSA  
Yeah. You are. You're a fuck up.

Jason is hurt and surprised.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
It's like Abuela says. You got that  
bad blood in you. You are not even  
really my brother...

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, JASON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jason opens his top dresser drawer, takes out the pistol. He  
lays in bed, holds the gun up in the air.

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jason rides off on his bike, book bag on his shoulders.

E/I ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - MORNING

Jason rides up to Robin's service station. He walks into the  
front office, looks around. It's empty. In the bay he sees a  
mechanic working on a car. The mechanic doesn't see Jason.

Jason notices a long hallway leading to the back of the  
station. Jason walks down it slowly, comes to a half open  
door.

Through the door, Jason sees Robin. Robin stares with deep  
concentration at his computer.

JASON  
Mr. Van Der Zee?

Jason walks into the office. Robin looks up.

ROBIN  
You're not allowed in here.

JASON  
I'm not here about a car.

Jason closes the door and stands in front of Robin's desk.

ROBIN  
Do I know you?

JASON  
I was wondering if I could talk to  
you about Luke Glanton.

Robin and Jason are both perfectly still for a moment.

JASON (CONT'D)  
I'm not a cop.

ROBIN  
(laughs)  
Clearly.

JASON  
I just want to talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN  
What are you doing a school report  
or something? Get out.

Jason pulls out the revolver. He doesn't point it at Robin,  
he just shows it to him.

JASON  
I think you better talk to me.

ROBIN  
(raises his hands)  
All right, boy. You've got my  
attention.

JASON  
Tell me about Luke Glanton.

Jason can't bring himself to point the gun at Robin. Robin  
sniffs his weakness.

ROBIN  
Or what? You'll kill me? I don't  
know you, kid. And you sure as hell  
don't know me.

Jason raises the gun at Robin, anxiously squeezes the gun,  
bottom lip trembling.

JASON  
I'm his son.

ROBIN  
(sighs, then shouts)  
Jesus. Luke Glanton? I'll tell you  
something about him. He's dead.

JASON  
How come you're still alive?

ROBIN  
Oh, I get it now. This is where you  
come to settle your old man's  
score. Well, you got the wrong guy.  
I stupidly tried to help that sorry  
sonofabitch. If it weren't for me  
he would've been living in the Y  
and giving blow jobs at the bus  
station for a living.

Robin laughs.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
You need someone to blame for  
making you a bastard, look no  
further than your father.

Jason holds back the urge to cry. He can't stop himself and  
his embarrassment is obvious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
 (disgusted)  
 Chip off the old block, aren't ya?!  
 Another gutless wonder. Only a  
 Glanton would pull a gun on an  
 unarmed fucking man who's minding  
 his own fucking business. Put that  
 away before you hurt yourself.  
 Chickenshit.

Jason lowers the gun, chokes back sobs, almost convulsing. He wishes he never came in here. Robin stands, approaches him.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
 Jesus Christ. You know? I feel  
 sorry for you, I truly do, 'cause,  
 it's not even you're fault. You  
 never really had a chance in this  
 life... Shit breeds shit. You want  
 my advice? Put that gun to good  
 use. Stick the barrel in your  
 mouth, pull the trigger. Kill  
 yourself.

Jason is frozen. His nose drips fat drops of mucous. It disgusts Robin. He swats Jason over the top of his head.

ROBIN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Go on! Do it! Make your dad proud!

Jason scared now. He retreats, down the hall.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
 I don't ever wanna see your ugly  
 fucking face again! Because listen -  
 if you're too pussy to do it... I  
 can certainly arrange a meeting  
 between you and your dad.

EXT. ROBIN'S SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Jason walks to the edge of Robin's property, looks back at Robin who watches him through the front window. Jason puts the gun in his book bag, gets on his bike, pedals off.

EXT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Jason pedals to school on his bike as the rest of the students arrive for the beginning of a school day.

HOMEROOM - Jason sits. He is not listening to his teacher.

INT. NISKAYUNA HIGH SCHOOL, BATHROOM - LATER

Jason sits in a toilet stall and inspects the pistol.

EXT. NISKAYUNA STREETS - AFTERNOON

After the final bell rings, Jason follows A.J. and his friends through the neighborhood as they walk home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The group dwindles in number as each friend goes into their respective houses until all that's left is A.J.

E/I A.J.'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Jason walks down the street with purpose, pulls up his hood. Ahead, A.J. opens his front door and heads inside his house. Jason runs and tackles A.J. in his doorway and slams him up against the wall.

JASON  
Close the door.

A.J.  
Get off me!

Jason knees A.J. in the groin.

JASON  
Close the fucking door.

Jason points the pistol in A.J.'s face. A.J. doesn't move. Jason closes the door himself.

JASON (CONT'D)  
You want someone to rob you? Bitch.  
That what you want, bitch?

A.J.  
You're so fucked. You fucking  
idiot.

JASON  
Shut up!

Jason frog marches A.J. forward & forces him up the stairs.

A.J.'s PARENT'S ROOM. A.J. opens his parents door. Jason motions for him to sit on their bed.

Jason heads to the vanity, picks up a jewelry box, pours out the contents. He picks up anything with a diamond in it. He can't find the ring A.J. planted on him.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Where's the ring, huh? Where is it?

A.J.  
It's evidence, you fuck wit. The  
police have it.

Jason turns and stands in front of A.J. He points the gun at his head. He has to re-evaluate his plan.

JASON  
Here's what I want you to do. I  
want you to call the police right  
now. I want you to tell them the  
truth about what you did to me. You  
tell them that, and I won't kill  
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.J. stares at Jason.

A.J.  
Bullshit.

JASON  
Do it!

A.J.  
No!

JASON  
You wanna die? Is that it? You want  
me to fucking kill you? Huh? Huh?

A.J. starts to whimper. Jason gets further in his face.

JASON (CONT'D)  
I will fucking murder you here on  
your dad's bed. You want that?

A.J.  
That's not even loaded. Is it?

Jason moves the barrel a little closer to A.J.'s forehead.  
He's breathing hard now, and fast. A.J. closes his eyes.

Without even a thought, Jason swings the gun sideways and  
fires a shot into Avery's bed. It tears through the comforter  
and mattress, kicking up a cloud of feathers and smoke. The  
muzzle flash burns A.J.'s face and deafens him. He screams.

EXT. AVERY'S HOUSE, DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Avery is in his car, slowly driving up the driveway. The  
garage door is automatically moving up.

Avery, on the phone, steps out of his car, stares up at his  
house - he thought he just heard a gunshot. He forgets to  
close the car door behind him.

AVERY (INTO PHONE)  
Gotta call you back.

He pockets the phone, deep concern in his eyes. He runs under  
the garage door and opens the door to his house.

INT. A.J.'S PARENT'S ROOM.

Jason hears the garage door opening downstairs. He turns to  
the door, then back to A.J.

JASON  
Who's is it?

A.J. makes a run for the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A.J.  
(screams)  
Dad!

Jason tackles him. Struggle ensues. Jason hits A.J. in the head with the butt of his gun until he stops moving.

INT. AVERY'S HOUSE, STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Avery, cautiously moves up his stairs, the old police training coming back to him. Only now, he's unarmed.

He SEES - The door to his bedroom OPEN - Jason comes out - He's holding a pistol - There is blood on it.

Both stop. Jason levels the gun at Avery. The two stare at one another.

JASON  
Are you alone?

Avery says nothing, confused, shocked.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Are you alone!?

AVERY  
Yes.

JASON  
You're gonna drive me away from here. Now.

AVERY  
What's going on?

JASON  
Turn around. Down the stairs. Now.

AVERY  
What's happened?

JASON  
If you don't start walking, I'll just shoot you in your face.

INT. AVERY'S CAR - LATER

Jason is crouched down in front of the passenger seat with the pistol pointed up at Avery.

JASON  
Go to route 7.

AVERY  
How did you get in without setting off the alarm?

Jason does not respond.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY (CONT'D)  
Did someone let you in?

JASON  
Your son let me in.

AVERY  
Is my son okay?

Jason doesn't answer. Avery is immediately concerned.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
If you don't tell me if my son is  
okay I'll pull over right now. I  
don't care.

JASON  
He's fine.

AVERY  
Where is he?

Jason stares at Avery. He studies his face.

JASON  
Your son is fine.

AVERY  
I don't believe you. I heard a  
shot.

JASON  
You should be more worried about  
yourself.

EXT. PINE BARRENS - EVENING

Avery's car is parked away from the side of the road. Jason  
pushes Avery deep into the woods. Avery limps.

AVERY  
You'll be in jail for the rest of  
your life if you do this. You  
understand that?

JASON  
What do you think I'm going to do?

AVERY  
Tell me about my son. If he's hurt  
let me please call an ambulance.

JASON  
I told you. He's fine.

AVERY  
I'll give you the phone. You can  
call an ambulance.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY (CONT'D)  
That way you don't have to worry  
about me tricking you.

JASON  
Gimmie your phone.

Avery gladly complies. Jason wings the device against the  
nearest pine tree. It shatters into a hundred pieces.

AVERY  
Oh Jesus.

JASON  
Keep going.

Avery continues to limp into the woods, his hands up.

JASON (CONT'D)  
I know who you are, but you don't  
know who I am, do you?

AVERY  
I don't know. I'm sorry. Just  
please let me know if my son is  
okay. Is A.J. okay?

Jason hits Avery in the head with the pistol. He topples  
over.

JASON  
Shut up! I told you! I told you!  
He's fine! Don't you fucking  
listen?

Avery starts to cry. Jason points the pistol at Avery who is  
down on the ground looking up at Jason. Jason starts to cry  
as well.

JASON (CONT'D)  
He's fine.

AVERY  
Oh, my son! My son!

Avery wails. Jason tries to get a hold of himself and the  
situation.

JASON  
Shut up! Stop crying!

Jason puts the muzzle of the pistol against Avery's head.

JASON (CONT'D)  
You're crying for yourself, not  
your son! And who's crying for me,  
huh? No one, that's who! No one's  
crying for me! No one's crying for  
my dad!

Avery stops wailing for moment. He stares at Jason, and with  
a flush of realization, it all come clear to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AVERY

I know who you are. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!

JASON

Stop saying that!

AVERY

I knew this day would come.

JASON

Shut up!!!

Avery becomes lost in his own grief. Jason aims at Avery, prepares for the rapport of his pistol.

AVERY

I deserve it... But not my poor son. My poor son.

Jason lowers the pistol to his side. He can't do it.

AVERY (CONT'D)

My boy. My poor boy. I'm so sorry.

Jason backs away from Avery. Soon, Avery's wails get more and more faint.

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

Oh, my boy. My boy.

INT. AVERY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason climbs into the car and drives off. He drives for a long time, further and further away from Schenectady.

EXT. PINE BARRENS - CONTINUOUS

Avery's wails become slow and more quiet until they transform into a somber moan. Finally, he goes silent. His ashen face expresses grief and bewilderment. He stands and finds himself in the woods. He is alone.

EXT. AVERY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jason drives Avery's car down the wood-lined turnpike.

EXT. TURNPIKE - CONTINUOUS

Avery starts the long walk back to Schenectady.

EXT./INT. AVERY'S HOUSE - LATER

Avery's house is swarming with police cars, blocked off with crime scene tape. He walks toward his home like a ghost. The cops let him through, give him wide birth.

INSIDE. Avery heads up stairs. People talk to him, but he can't hear it. He heads into his bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sitting on the edge of the bed, wrapped in a blanket and absentmindedly holding a bottled water is a dazed and exhausted A.J. His head is bandaged, but he is alive.

Avery is stunned. He thought his son was dead. It all feels like a dream. He runs over to A.J., Gathers his son in his arms. Both of them cry.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
 ...And in a minute we're going to  
 go live to the speech here.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

A reporter stands with his camera crew. Behind them, a crowd stands in front of an empty stage. Loud music and cheering almost drown out the sound of the anchor's voice.

REPORTER  
 It was a tight race for over a year  
 and then came a flurry of  
 unprecedented events over the last  
 month. And now we're getting word  
 that the speech is just about to  
 start.

Up on the stage, Avery walks from the wings with his wife and daughter. He steps up to the podium. The crowd finally stops cheering and let's Avery speak.

AVERY  
 A short while ago Rick Kelleher  
 gave me a call.

The room erupts into cheering and applause. Avery waits them out. The room goes silent. He starts to weep. Holds it back.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
 As you all know, my family and I  
 recently had a close call with a  
 senseless act of criminal violence.

A.J., and Sarah stand behind him.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
 Some said I should drop out of the  
 race. Others told me I should leave  
 public life altogether. They told  
 me my family's suffering was too  
 great and that we needed to heal.  
 They were right.

EXT. FARM ROAD - DAY

Jason walks down a long, straight road surrounded by flat farm land in all directions. It's winter, and his coat is inadequate for the season.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AVERY (V.O.)  
 Our suffering was and is great. But  
 so is the suffering of the people  
 of this great nation. And I and my  
 family do need to heal. But so to  
 does the nation need to be healed.

Behind him in the distance stand the Rocky Mountains. He  
 turns left and heads down a long driveway which leads to a  
 farm house.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jason rings the doorbell. An OLD MAN opens the door, waits.

JASON  
 Hi... We emailed? I told you I'd be  
 coming today?

OLD MAN  
 Oh, right, of course. Wow, you're  
 early.

JASON  
 There's only one bus out this way a  
 day.

INT. FARM HOUSE - LATER

Jason sits at the breakfast table, clutching a coffee cup for  
 warmth, with the old man and his WIFE. There is a TV on in  
 the kitchen.

AVERY (ON T.V.)  
 A.J. Avery Junior. He wants us to  
 carry on. My wife, Sarah, she  
 doesn't want us to give up, or to  
 retreat, or to withdraw from life.  
 She wants us to live and fight and  
 that's exactly what we're gonna do!

Thunderous applause. Jason watches it, detached.  
 Prognosticators fill the space.

OLD MAN  
 You're not from around here, huh?

JASON  
 How do you know that?

OLD MAN  
 I'm as observant as the next guy.  
 You just passing through?

JASON  
 (shrugs)  
 Headed out west I suppose.

OLD MAN  
 A fine destiny for a young man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JASON  
It's warm there. Sunny.

OLD MAN  
That's what I've been lead to believe. Well, you ready? It's down at the barn. We'll go take a look, okay?

EXT. BARN - LATER

Jason and the old man stand over a dirt-bike which is much like Luke's old circus special.

OLD MAN  
Runs great. Gotta a lot of miles on it, but I kept the maintenance up.

JASON  
Can I take it for a test drive?

The old man looks Jason over.

OLD MAN  
Okay. Go on ahead and take 'er down the driveway.

Jason hands the old man a stack of bills.

JASON  
Here. You can hold onto this. For like collateral.

OLD MAN  
That's okay.

JASON  
No, really. It's a little more than what you were asking.

Jason holds out the money until the old man accepts it. He then straddles the bike. He starts it up with confidence.

OLD MAN  
You ever ridden one of these before?

Jason can barely hear the old man over the engine. He does a tight donut and guns the engine as he takes it down the driveway. He turns left at the road and rides with the Rockies at his back.