

BLOSSOM THRU THE BRICKS

Written by

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TEASER

OVER BLACK:

The sound of SIRENS are heard.

FLASHING LIGHTS slowly come into focus:

CAPTAIN JUAN MARCOS (V.O.)  
We, the members of the Department  
of Public Safety's Police Division,  
serve the diverse population within  
our jurisdiction with respect,  
fairness and sensitivity. We are  
committed to the protection of life  
and property. We represent the  
varied culture in this city, and  
pledge that through our effort, we  
will establish a new standard of  
excellence in law enforcement and  
service to the city of Newark.

FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE - SOUTH ORANGE, NJ - NIGHT

There is low visibility on the dark, quiet streets which host  
a less-than-normal flow of traffic.

Two black, male TEENAGERS, with black hoodies pulled over  
their heads walk along the roadway under the dim street  
lights.

TEENAGER #1 sets his eyes on a red HONDA CIVIC parked off a  
side street. He signals to his accomplice to follow his lead  
as crosses over to it.

Teenager #1 slides a SLIM JIM out from under his sleeve, as  
TEENAGER #2 follows discreetly, on the lookout.

Teenager #1 places the slim jim between the driver's side  
window and rubber seal of the door, and slides...

CLICK! The lock pop's up and the boisterous CAR ALARM sounds,  
echoing off the nearby buildings.

The teenagers enter the vehicle.

From the driver's seat, Teenager #1 CUTS the ignition wire  
from underneath the steering wheel, and the engine starts,  
silencing the alarm.

Teenager #2 uses a SCREWDRIVER and breaks the ignition key slot, and hands it to his counterpart. TEENAGER #1 pushes the screwdriver into the broken key ignition and the puts the car in drive.

They roar with laughter and drive off, tires screeching into the night.

Nearby, the red light of a SECURITY CAMERA flashes as it records the action from a nearby convenience.

There was a witness to their crime after all.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

A half-burnt out neon sign buzzes on a wall beside tenants, posters and other sports memorabilia --

"CENTRAL PARK SPORTS BAR -- More Beer, More Games, More Fun!"

The aroma of stale ale and searing food set the tone amongst the crowded, socially diverse atmosphere. Patrons take turns yelling at each other over the extreme decibels spilling out from the speakers of the multiple flat-screens blasting various sporting events.

It's a celebration for DANNY POLOVSKI, 21. The All-American white boy with brown eyes, dark hair and a subtle hint of heartthrob has just been selected as one of Newark Police Departments latest recruits.

He sits at a booth with several of his closest, and rowdiest, friends.

The boys watch as WINGS finesse their way to the table on a tray below two healthy breasts tucked into a tight uniform. Another pair holds together MUGS OF BEER being delicately placed down, the foam seeping through the bar-naps and staining the table. The WAITRESSES leave with a smile.

Danny's husky, arrogant, semi-plastered best friend MICHAEL, 21, raises his glass.

MICHAEL

Let's salute to our boy, Danny!

The rest of the boys follow suit.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Congrats on your new position at the Newark Police Department. We're proud of you, brother.

They CLANK their glasses and SWIG.

BOY #1

Danny, don't forget our PBA cards. These Linden cops are no joke.

DANNY  
 (sarcastic)  
 That's all you guys are using me  
 for, huh?

MICHAEL  
 You signed up to be a NARC, bro.  
 Comes with the territory.

DANNY  
 Fuck you, Mike.

BOY #2  
 Hey, I'm sure we're not the only  
 ones looking for favors. Since when  
 do you curse, anyway? They man you  
 up in the academy, or what?

Danny sighs, irritated.

DANNY  
 You guys are pissing me off. My  
 life's the one on the line out  
 there and all you shitheads care  
 about is how you'll benefit.

MICHAEL  
 Aight aight, let him be. D might  
 arrest us for harassment.

The boys all laugh. Danny shakes his head and turns toward  
 the TV.

ON THE TV: A News Report airs. Riots gather in Detroit after  
 a police officer has been shot and is in critical condition.

Michael watches the report, then leans into Danny.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 I hope you's ready for all that, D.  
 You ain't in Linden anymore. Shit  
 is no joke.

DANNY  
 My grandfather was a cop. I'm well  
 aware of the lifestyle.

MICHAEL  
 Times have changed, bro! Especially  
 in Brick City.

Danny looks down at his empty glass of beer. He calls to the  
 waitress.

DANNY

Can we get a round of shots?  
Whiskey.

New beginnings...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - WEEQUAHIC PARK - DAY

A paved court in the middle of a public park.

Uniformed Newark Police Officer, JAMAL WATERS, 25, enjoys a friendly game of ball with neighborhood street kid, DAQUAN HARRIS, 14.

We get the sense Jamal is a mentor of sorts for young Daquan.

Jamal dribbles the ball towards the hoop. He jumps for a lay-up and watches the ball HIT the backboard and SCORE!

He passes the ball to Daquan and runs out in front to guard.

JAMAL

One more point and that's game  
little man. Don't miss this shot or  
you know it's over!

DAQUAN

Haven't you heard? I'm the comeback  
kid. Better shut up and guard me.

Daquan dribbles by Jamal toward the basket.

He runs toward the center of the free throw line, JUMPS back and SHOOTS.

Jamal leaps up to block him, but the ball SWOOSHES through the net. Daquan sticks his tongue out at Jamal and passes him the ball.

JAMAL

I'm about to end this game real  
quick.

Jamal immediately runs past Daquan's guard to the 3-point line and SHOOTS. Daquan misses the block and watches as the ball SWOOSHES into the basket. Gave over.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

You're the comeback kid alright.  
Comeback to practice some more.

DAQUAN

Yeah, yeah.

Shit-talk aside, Jamal and Daquan walk over to a nearby bench just outside of the court.

They sit and watch the view of the park, admiring the kids playing in the playground.

JAMAL

How's your mom been?

DAQUAN

Same old game. She livin' as long as I can afford her medication.

JAMAL

I get it, fam. I know it's hard. So if you ever need anything, call me. You have my math.

A CALL patches through on Jamal's radio, asking for his assistance.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Duty calls!

He hops off the bench and turns to Daquan, hands him a \$20.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Get yourself some food for you and your mom. Especially you since it's exhausting losing all the time!

Daquan chuckles and snatches the money.

Jamal salutes Daquan with two fingers and walks back to his patrol car.

INT. THE CROSBY GASTROPUB - MONTCLAIR, NJ - NIGHT

The fireplace sparkles beside the bar of the local, high-end gastropub. Guests take in the relaxing atmosphere as they partake in an evening of craft-cocktails and quality fare.

Detective VINCE DONATO, 52, the charismatic yet diligent Detective veteran enjoys dinner with his wife, IRENE, 50.

Vince POPS open a bottle of wine, and pours himself and Irene a glass. Irene takes her glass and smiles, leaning in to gaze at her husband before she takes a sip.

IRENE

I'm so proud of you, Vince. And I appreciate the shit outta ya!

Vince grabs Irene's face and pulls her in for a kiss.

VINCE

Did you really fuckin' think I  
wouldn't make sure my family was  
taken care of?

IRENE

Well, you been so busy with these  
cases and all...

VINCE

I don't want to talk about that  
right now. Our baby girl is going  
to be okay.

Irene turns away and starts to tear up, choked up with a little sarcastic laughter. She's trying to hold back her sensitivity, but her facial expression shows differently.

IRENE

It's just not fair...

Vince moves to her side of the table to comfort her.

VINCE

Irene, can we please just have a  
nice dinner? I set this up for us.

IRENE

OK! I'm sorry. Wrong time. Shit.

She wipes her tears and gathers herself. She knocks back her wine, then snags the bottle and takes a swig right out of it.

VINCE

What are you a fuckin' fera? This  
is a nice place.

IRENE

I don't care. I'm stressed out and  
horny. Let's get our shit to go and  
get outta here. I wanna fuck.

VINCE

I could have been with any other  
dirty woman in the world, but I  
chose you.

They share a loving smile.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Let's get da fuck outta here. No  
more fancy shit either.

Vince and Irene embrace in a slobbery kiss.

Their WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

Umm, ready for your check?

Vince slaps a couple large bills on the table. The waitress seems amused.

VINCE

Keep the change.

Vince takes Irene's hand and they get up from the table and make their way toward the exit.

Just then, Vince's CELL buzzes. He checks the screen -- It's a TEXT from Donald:

--DONALD: *"Hey brother, we have to go. It's urgent."*

Vince slumps over, annoyed. He looks to Irene.

IRENE

C'mon, what the fuck. Really, now?

VINCE

Fuck it, we got time. Remember the times I use to park down the block before dropping you off to your father's? We gonna re-enact those scenes.

She giggles with excitement and they hurry off.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NEWARK, NJ - NIGHT

Vince and his long-time partner Detective DONALD JACKSON, black, 52, stand on the rooftop of a low income, residential apartment building.

They hover over the dead body of a BLACK TEEN MALE. The boy's body lays stiff, covered in dried blood with four noticeable gunshot wounds to his chest.

A couple of EMT's examine the body, while a crime scene PHOTOGRAPHER takes pictures and documents his observations.

In the distance, other uniformed OFFICERS are taking witness statements from a black ADULT MALE, various NEIGHBORS, and one HYSTERICAL MOTHER.

Vince steps away to the edge of the roof, watching out over the nightly view of the city. He pulls out a box of Newports from his jacket and slaps the box three times over the palm of his other hand. He pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

Donald observes the body as he takes in the emotions that surround him. He steps back and crosses over to Vince.

VINCE

Remember when Newark use to be a beautiful place, even after the riots? Now it's the same bullshit, over and over. You think you would get use to it by now, but this shit still takes a toll on me.

DONALD

I hear you, brother. City changes every day.

VINCE

We grew up around here, Don. Doesn't matter which block. Now it's cuttin' into my pussy.

Donald nods in agreement. Vince takes a puff from his cigarette.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Go home. We'll go over the details in the morning. I don't feel like talking about this case right now.

DONALD

Thanks a lot, Vince.

Donald turns back to the scene, leaving Vince alone, still looking out over the city with a moment of clarity.

EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Danny pulls his car into the lot, wearing his new academy jumpsuit, ready to take on his first shift and get his hands dirty.

INT. DANNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny watches through the window, observing all the other NEW RECRUITS as they anxiously run inside. No matter what color, shape, size, or mood someone was in, they seemed to have left it behind them as they ran ahead into the unknown.

The building lights shine bright on the employee entrance door, as if God himself is calling Danny to walk through it. But the look on Danny's face tells us there is a whole 'nother animal through that door and beyond these streets, with more problems piled up than the bricks it was made from.

DANNY

You're not in Linden anymore.

He looks down at the THIN GOLD CHAIN around his neck, a Jesus charm attached to it. He grabs the chain, closes his eyes, and says a prayer in silence.

He reaches for his CELL and sends a quick text message to his MOM -- "I love you."

Then, he grabs his duffle bag from the passenger seat and opens the door.

Time to move in...

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Corporal KEYANA NASH, 36, black, second in command of her squad, stern, militant, but attractive, puts on her patrol gear in front her locker.

Keyana's locker is precisely organized. The creases in her hanging uniforms are crisp, and her makeup and hair pins are all organized accordingly on the top shelf.

She adjusts her bullet proof vest in front of the mirror inside the locker door. Beside it are several photos which reflect her life and character -- receiving a military award, promotion ceremony as corporal, and family photos of her daughter, JADE, 6, and husband, DONOVAN, 36.

She gives herself one last look over. Satisfied, she performs one final ritual -- she kisses her hand and touches a photo of her daughter.

Other FEMALE OFFICERS enter, chattering in the background. Their voices echo off the locker room walls. Keyana immediately changes her soft expression as one of the officers addresses her.

FEMALE OFFICER #1

Corporal, great job the other night assisting the gang unit on that arrest.

FEMALE OFFICER #2

Keyana just came in there, hopped on that asshole's back and took him down!

KEYANA

Shit, had no option. Couldn't just let go of his big ass. I'm just glad everyone made it out safe.

She closes her locker door.

KEYANA (CONT'D)

I'll see you ladies upstairs in briefing. Don't be late.

The female officers give her a salute. Keyana exits.

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - BRIEFING ROOM - LATER

Shift change is underway at the department, with the overnight squad gathering in the briefing room.

Patrol Lieutenant, MARCUS GLOVER, black, 55, stands at the podium and shuffles his paperwork in prep for the briefing announcements, over the sounds of officers' conversing.

Danny finds a seat in the back of the room. He anxiously shakes his right leg, waiting to start his training.

Marcus TAPS the podium microphone twice. FEEDBACK from the mic quiets the room.

MARCUS

Before I begin my announcements, I would like to introduce our newest recruit, Danny Polovski. Polovski, introduce yourself.

Danny stands and is met with blank stares. Nervous, he stutters his speech.

DANNY

I'm Danny Polovski. I want to say thank you to the department for accepting me. I'm excited about joining the brotherhood of the Newark PD.

Some of the officers chuckle, quietly mocking Danny's cliché speech.

OFFICER #1  
Sure thing, golden boy.

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - BRIEFING ROOM - LATER

Marcus introduces Danny to the somewhat disheveled Sergeant  
FREDDY MALONE, white, 52.

MARCUS  
Danny, meet Sergeant Freddy Malone.  
I've assigned him as your partner.

DANNY  
Pleased to meet you, Sergeant.

Danny and Freddy shake hands as the other officers start  
clearing the room.

EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT

The OFFICERS of the overnight shift spread out to find their  
designated vehicles. Gear in hand, and game faces on.

Danny and Freddy emerge from the building walking side-by-  
side. Freddy gives a sideways glance to Danny, sizing him up.

FREDDY  
This is your day, Rookie. I hope  
you're ready for this.

DANNY  
I was born ready, Sergeant.

Freddy doesn't even crack a smile. His stern demeanor makes  
Danny nervous, but he does his best to hide it.

They arrive at their assigned patrol vehicle, and Freddy  
climbs in the driver's seat. He adjusts the rearview mirror,  
so he can observe Danny's performance.

Danny doesn't get in. Instead, he walks around the vehicle  
and performs a thorough inspection, ensuring all equipment is  
in place -- shotgun, first aid kit, flares, radio, etc.

With everything good to go, Danny takes his place in the  
passenger seat.

INT./EXT. PATROL CAR/STREETS OF NEWARK - CONTINUOUS

Freddy and Danny ride in uncomfortable silence for several  
moments, before Freddy finally breaks the ice.

FREDDY

I wasn't in the department when your grandfather was here, but I heard he was a sharp cop. You have some shoes to fill, Rookie.

DANNY

He's the reason I pursued a career in law enforcement. He's getting pretty old, doesn't have much time left. But I want to make him proud while he's here.

FREDDY

Lots of people want to be cops, but very few can handle it. We'll see if Newark will make a man out of you.

Danny says nothing.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

What's your background, Russian?

DANNY

Polish, sir.

FREDDY

One of my good friends is Polish. Strong guy. Sobieski. You actually might find him in the glove box.

DANNY

The glove box, sir?

Freddy gestures for Danny to go ahead, so he reaches for the glove compartment and pulls it open.

Inside, a flask slides down with two 1-milliliter bottles of vodka, labeled "Sobieski."

Danny looks at it, stunned.

FREDDY

He's been a very good friend to me!

He laughs. Realizing Danny isn't, his expression turns sour.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

If you tell anyone he rides along in the car with me, you're going to have some fuckin' problems. Sobieski helps me cope.

Danny SLAMS the glove box shut and turns away to look out the window.

DANNY

I don't know what you're talking about, Serge.

Freddy smirks.

FREDDY

Not sure about the bullshit they taught you in the academy, but since you're training under me, follow my motto -- everyone is full of shit until proven otherwise. Everyone lies, even witnesses.

Danny turns back to face him.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Most importantly, cover your ass from all angles. Never know who might try and stick you, including your own. Not everyone in the department is your friend. Remember that.

Danny remains quiet, but acknowledges he understands with a head gesture.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT./EXT. KEYANA'S PATROL CAR/BERGEN STREET - NIGHT

Keyana sits in her parked patrol car, feeling out the neighborhood ambiance, a landscape of a failed system. Conversations are had on apartment stoops and apartment buildings are boarded up, some with burnt bricks serving as scars of previous fires, others covered in murals of graffiti.

Her cell SOUNDS off with a text message. The name on the screen reveals the sender as "Donovan."

--DONOVAN: *"Babe, I won't be able to pick up Jade from school. Meeting got moved earlier. Don't hate me too much."*

Keyana rolls her eyes.

KEYANA

Does this last minute shit every  
damn time!

She lets out some steam with a PUNCH to the steering wheel, then responds to the text:

--KEYANA: *"Don't worry about it. I'll take care of it."*

After a beat, Donovan sends a response -- nothing more than a SAD FACE EMOJI. Keyana exhales and puts the phone down.

EXT. KEYANA'S PATROL CAR - SAME

One of the local city bums, MOUTH, 55, black, waltzes by and notices Keyana in her car. He smiles, flossing his gold plated tooth that glistens off the street light.

He approaches her car with a limp, scattered cotton pieces falling out of his bubble-vest, trailing him with each step.

He knocks on her window. She looks up and rolls down the window.

MOUTH

(raspy)

What's wrong cocoa butter? You look  
frustrated. Donovan acting up  
again?

Keyana smirks and shakes her head.

KEYANA

Well Mouth, let's just say you could be gettin' lucky one of these days after all. How are the streets anyway? They been talkin'?

MOUTH

Slow right now. But shit, he better keep messin' up. Press my luck even closer.

Mouth suddenly starts to pat his vest and pants pockets.

MOUTH (CONT'D)

Say, Key-Key. A brotha would usually treat you to somethin nice, but as you see I misplaced my change. You got a couple dolla's I could borrow?

KEYANA

You know damn well I'm not contributing to your habits. What you want to eat?

MOUTH

A cheeseburger with buns as soft as your booty will do just fine.

Keyana snickers.

KEYANA

OK, Mouth. Got you.

Their conversation gets put to a halt as DISPATCH radios in.

DISPATCH (O.S.)

Unit 267 can you respond to the intersection of Hawthorne Avenue and Chadwick Avenue. There's reports of a motor vehicle accident.

Keyana grabs the radio and answers.

KEYANA

10-4, I'll be in route.

She puts down the mic and looks back to Mouth.

KEYANA (CONT'D)

Gotta take a rain check on that date. Here's \$2. For a cheeseburger.

She eyes him knowingly. Mouth grabs her hand, kisses it, and thanks her.

Keyana rolls up the window and peels out.

INT. ASPEN TEMPLE APARTMENTS - APT. 3B - NIGHT

JUAN, Hispanic, 35, argues with his girlfriend, LYDIA, Hispanic, 32, in the living room of their shared, sparsely decorated apartment.

NOTE -- their interaction is in SPANISH with ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

JUAN

You don't know what you're talking about. I told you she was my cousin!

LYDIA

Stop lying, Juan! I saw you kiss that bitch, and cousin's don't kiss unless you're a sick puto...!!

JUAN

Calm down, Lydia! If you'd stop screaming I could explain!

LYDIA

I don't want to hear any more lies! I already wasted a year of my life with you. I gave you everything! I hate you so much, I want to kill you...!!

The argument takes a turn as Lydia starts getting physical and throwing multiple SLAPS at Juan's face.

Juan takes a hold of Lydia's hands and pushes her into the side table. A giant glass VASE of flowers CRASHES to the floor, SHATTERING into a thousand pieces.

INT. FREDDY/DANNY'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Freddy are on the road, driving, when DISPATCH radios in.

DISPATCH

Officers, can you respond to a noise complaint at 3B Aspen Temple Apartments?

(MORE)

## DISPATCH (CONT'D)

The anonymous caller reported loud screaming and the sound of shattering glass.

Freddy takes the radio mic.

FREDDY

We're on our way.

He replaces it and turns back to Danny.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Sounds like a domestic, but could be nothing. Can't take any chances. You ready for your first arrest kid?

Danny nods, heart racing, palms sweaty, amped up and ready to go.

Freddy initiates the siren and they speed off.

EXT. ASPEN TEMPLE APARTMENTS - MINUTES LATER

Freddy and Danny's patrol car approaches the apartment. The lights and sirens turn off.

They park the car 50 yards away from the entrance and get out, running quietly to the scene.

INT. ASPEN TEMPLE APARTMENTS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Freddy ascend up the stairs to the third floor. SHOUTING can be heard throughout the hall, growing louder as they creep up to the outside of the apartment.

INT. ASPEN TEMPLE APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 3B - CONTINUOUS

Juan is backed into a corner, Lydia raising a KNIFE up over his head.

JUAN

Put it down Lydia! Please! You're fuckin' crazy...!!

That does it. Lydia STABS at Juan with the knife, and it PLUNGES into his shoulder.

Juan SCREAMS in agony and grabs the knife from her hand, as blood trickles down the arm of his shirt.

Just then -- there's a POUND on the door.

FREDDY (O.S.)  
Open up...!! It's the police!

Lydia looks terrified at Juan, who clutches his wound with one hand and the knife with the other.

JUAN  
Open the door, you crazy bitch...!!

But it's too late.

The door is KICKED OPEN -- and Danny and Freddy burst through, GUNS drawn.

FREDDY  
Put the knife the down -- NOW!

Juan looks at the knife in HIS HAND.

JUAN  
It's not what you think, I didn't do anything to her.

LYDIA  
(crying)  
Please take that piece of shit out of here!

FREDDY  
I'm not going to tell you twice.  
Drop the knife down and get on the ground!

DANNY  
And keep your hands where we can see them.

Freddy shoots Danny a look, as if to say -- "I got it."

Juan drops the knife and slides down to his knees, then puts his FACE DOWN, with his hands interlocked behind his head.

FREDDY  
Danny, go cuff him. Ma'am, go into the bedroom and wait until we tell you to come out.

Danny HANDCUFFS Juan, routinely but with a sense of pride.

He helps Juan to his feet, as Freddy goes to the bedroom to check on Lydia.

INT. APARTMENT 3B - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddy puts his gun away and stands over Lydia, who sits on the bed, visibly shaken by the ordeal.

FREDDY  
Ma'am are you OK to tell me what happened?

Lydia nods, sniffing.

LYDIA  
I'm OK. Just hurt.

FREDDY  
Did he touch you or harm you in any way?

LYDIA  
He didn't touch me. He did push me, but that's only because I was slapping him. I got so angry, I grabbed the knife, but I didn't plan to stab him. It just happened!

INT. APARTMENT 3B - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddy steps back into the living room and pulls Danny aside.

FREDDY  
You need to uncuff the gentleman.

DANNY  
Are you serious? She was fighting for her life and he had a knife!

FREDDY  
Are you disobeying my order, Rookie?

Danny says nothing, just clenches his jaw, frustrated. He walks over to Juan and reluctantly uncuffs him.

FREDDY (CONT'D)  
What's your name, sir?

JUAN  
Juan.

FREDDY  
Juan, your girlfriend has confessed to assault with a weapon, so we're going to place her under arrest.  
(MORE)

FREDDY (CONT'D)

As the victim, I need to ask if you would you like to press charges?

JUAN

The punta stabbed me. Of course I'm going to press charges. I'm gonna make her pay for my stitches, too.

Freddy nods and motions for Danny to follow him back into the bedroom.

Juan watches them go. Lydia screams during her arrest.

LYDIA (O.S.)

What the fuck?! This isn't fair...!!

After a moment, Danny and Freddy emerge from the bedroom with Lydia handcuffed between them.

They escort her out of the room towards the front door. Juan smirks at her as they pass.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

You evil piece of shit! You ruined my life and don't even care!

She SPITS at him and it hits him right on the cheek. His eyes blaze, angry, and he calls out as the three of them disappear into the hallway.

JUAN

See you in court, fuckin' punta!

EXT. ASPEN TEMPLE APARTMENTS - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Freddy usher Lydia into the back of the patrol car. Once she's inside, Danny climbs in the passenger side with a passive-aggressive SLAM of the door.

Freddy takes notice. He walks over to Danny's side window and knocks on it. Danny rolls the window down.

FREDDY

Don't you ever fuckin' disobey an order like that again. Especially on scene. You didn't even know the story, shithead. Shut up and listen next time.

Freddy marches back around to the driver's side and gets in.

He reaches into the glove box and grabs the flask. He takes a couple sips, which seem to calm his nerves.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

At least Sobieski never talks back  
to me. Definitely one I can trust.

Danny stares out the window, gazing at the street lights.  
Shadows of discouragement flash over his face of.

EXT. NEWARK CITY HALL - MORNING

The work day has barely begun, and already PHOTOGRAPHERS,  
REPORTERS and JOURNALISTS are gathered around a podium as a  
press conference is underway.

Community PROTESTERS hold various statement signs -- *"STOP  
Gang Violence!" "Safer Streets for Our Children!" "Another  
day, another black teen dead. When will it stop?"*

Newark Public Safety Director, FELICIA BATES, 56, State  
Police Colonel HUGO PEDROSO, 55, and New Jersey Attorney  
General MICHAEL SARRANTINO, 55, stand by the podium, as they  
await questioning.

REPORTER #1

Colonel Pedroso, with gang activity  
on the rise in Newark, is it any  
surprise to you that just last  
night a young boy was murdered on  
an apartment rooftop -- marking the  
12th homicide in the last 2 months?

HUGO PEDROSO

Last night's incident is still  
under investigation. The motive is  
unknown at this time, so I can't  
comment on a correlation between  
gang violence and homicide rates  
until our full investigation is  
completed. However, I can assure  
you, since the NPD has doubled our  
man power the crime rate has in  
fact decreased.

REPORTER #1

Are you concerned with the number  
of homicides?

HUGO PEDROSO

The death toll is a shame and we  
need our community to work with us,  
so we can react before violent  
incidents escalate.

(MORE)

HUGO PEDROSO (CONT'D)  
New Jersey State Police and Newark  
Police are working diligently to  
assure safety.

REPORTER #2  
Director Bates, how can the  
community reduce the level of  
violence themselves in accordance  
to the level of street sweeps  
already run by the Newark Police?

FELICIA BATES  
Unfortunately, we cannot stop every  
shooting or act of violence. These  
things are sporadic. We do have  
plans in the works that will better  
prepare the community to take  
action. We are doing everything in  
our power that we can to keep  
violent crimes at a minimum.

A barrage of hands go up as questions from reporters  
continue.

INT./EXT. WILSON AVENUE - DAY

Vince and Donald cruise down Wilson Avenue in their patrol  
vehicle.

They look out at the block filled with PEDESTRIANS perusing  
small bodega stores and typical mom and pop shops.

VINCE  
You get any leads this morning on  
the rooftop case?

DONALD  
Spoke to the Prosecutor's Office.  
One of the investigators told me  
there was a carjacking earlier in  
the evening in South Orange. A  
street camera picked it up. The  
clothes our victim was wearing  
matched the description from the  
carjacking.

VINCE  
What about the car? Was it  
recovered?

DONALD

Not sure. But the camera did pick up another unidentified male as an accomplice to our victim.

VINCE

My man. Good work. When I get back to the office I'll see what I can dig up.

The vehicle slows as Vince approaches a local PORTUGUESE RESTAURANT on Wilson Avenue. He pulls over and parks.

DONALD

Why you stop here?

VINCE

Like you always say "a brotha's gotta eat."

He laughs.

VINCE (CONT'D)

You don't know real food until you've eaten Portuguese. I can't work on an empty stomach, and the Italian side of me gotta eat or my blood starts to boil like fuckin' Ragu.

DONALD

I'll pass for now. I'm not into that authentic shit.

VINCE

OK, suit yourself. But when you smell the aroma of Coxinha don't come cryin' to me for any.

DONALD

I don't eat cocks anyway. I'm good.

Vince cracks up.

VINCE

It's coxinha's you dick. Rolled-up chicken balls wrapped with bread. Forget about it!

Vince exits the car and heads into the restaurant.

INT. CASA DO PAO DE QUEIJO - CONTINUOUS

One of Newark's coziest ambiances. Various families and couples engage in their large platters, while Brazilian/Portuguese music set the mood.

The owner, ALDO SILVA, 55, sits behind the register, watching as the patrons enjoy themselves.

Aldo notices Vince walk in and welcomes him with open arms. They hug and give the traditional kiss on both cheeks.

ALDO  
(in Portugese)  
You a little early today, no?

VINCE  
I was in the neighborhood, figured I'd stopped by now. Business looks good, as always.

ALDO  
Of course business is good. We make people feel like they in our country without them having to travel there. I'm saving them the trip. Brazil is right here. What are you having, the usual?

VINCE  
You read my mind.

Aldo runs back to the kitchen, while Vince waits by the register.

INT. CASA DO PAO DE QUEIJO - MINUTES LATER

Vince is right where we left him, standing idly by the register.

Aldo steps out from the kitchen with a PAPER BAG and 2 large FOILS of food, walking and placing them in the bag at the same time.

ALDO  
The usual! All set for ya. Since you're here, I figured I'd ask you something...

VINCE  
What is it?

Aldo pulls Vince away from the cash register and guides him into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CASA DO PAO DE QUEIJO - CONTINUOUS

The CHEF keeps cooking while Aldo and Vince whisper in conversation. Sounds of sizzling meat emit in the background.

ALDO

I got a situation over on Norfolk Street. Hernandez Bodega has been interfering with my side business. For the past several months at 1AM, he's been getting extra deliveries. Boxes of donuts. Not to sound out of line, unless there is a major sugar rush going on, there is no way he's moving that much so-called donuts. And who gets deliveries like that at 1 am? I need you to find out what's going on over there. These Puerto Rican's think they're slick.

VINCE

Listen, my partner is in the car, but relax, I'll take care of it.

He leans in closer and speaks in Portugese.

VINCE (CONT'D)

The situation might come off good for both of us, but we'll discuss those perks later. I'll call you.

Vince hugs Aldo and exits the restaurant.

INT. VINCE & DONALD'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Vince enters the car with the bag of freshly cooked coxinhas. The aroma amuses Donald.

DONALD

Judging by the grease on the bag, it's best I didn't partake in the cocks. Trying to stay away from fried food -- shit tastes so damn good!

VINCE

Hey, more for me. We got work to do. I'll eat these back at the station.

INT./EXT. JAMAL'S PATROL VEHICLE - CAR/STREETS - DAY

Jamal patrol's his assigned zone. He parks his patrol vehicle at the corner of West Market Street observing his surroundings and watching over the intersection of Norfolk Street.

A black, tinted out, INFINITI M35 speeds passed him, clearly not abiding the 35 mph speed limit.

Jamal peels out in pursuit of the vehicle.

INT. INFINITI M35 - MOVING - DAY

The mist of WEED permeates the vehicle.

The driver is BLOCK, black, 31. With a tear tattoo under his left eye, he fixes his gaze on the rearview mirror and notices Jamal's patrol car trailing him.

He calls to the other THREE RIDERS in the backseat.

BLOCK

Yo, tuck those fuckin' bags in the seat son. We got Po-Po on us.

He throws his BLUNT under his car seat and tucks his long t-shirt over his GUN.

Two of the other riders, GUTTER and SPADE frantically tear open hidden compartments behind the driver and passenger seats and stash the DRUG PARAPHERNALIA.

GUTTER

Damn son, I told you not to be reckless. We got too much on us.

BLOCK

Just shut up and chill.

Jamal's red and white patrol lights go on.

Block dutifully pulls over on one of the side streets. Jamal's vehicle follows suit.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jamal approaches the Infiniti with caution. A BACKUP VEHICLE arrives on the scene as well.

Jamal signals to the other OFFICER to run the plates as he walks up to the driver's side window.

INT./EXT. INFINITE M35 - CONTINUOUS

Block rolls all the windows down and looks innocently at Jamal. Gutter and Spade are visibly nervous, sweating profusely in the back as WEED SMOKE billows out of the car.

JAMAL

License and registration.

As instructed, Block hands over his license and registration to Jamal.

BLOCK

Is there a problem officer?

JAMAL

You were going 60 mph in a 35 mph zone. Is there a reason you were going so fast, or maybe you just couldn't read the sign due to all smoke?

Block chuckles.

BLOCK

I'm sorry officer. I smoke it for medicinal use.

JAMAL

And you just share with your friends then, too?

BLOCK

Of course, I wouldn't want my friends to experience the same symptoms I have.

Jamal keeps an eye on Gutter and Spade, watching for any irregular movement. He observes their blood shot eyes and stiff composure, as they try and stay calm.

Block notices Jamal's name on his tag -- "OFFICER WATERS."

BLOCK (CONT'D)  
 Officer Waters, do you have a  
 brother named Marlon?

Jamal is alarmed by the question.

JAMAL  
 Let's just say I *had* a brother.  
 He's not my family any more.

BLOCK  
 I'll tell him you miss him. What  
 you in our streets for Union boy?  
 Don't tell me you're tryin' to  
 clean up my city.

JAMAL  
 What if I am? What do you do for  
 it?

BLOCK  
 Don't test me. Trust me that the  
 city is provided for. Don't act  
 like you know bout it, if you not  
 from here.

Jamal and Block stare each other down. No words are spoken,  
 but their hateful energy is immense.

The backup officer appears and pulls Jamal aside.

OFFICER #1  
 This guy has a warrant for child  
 support and a few unpaid parking  
 tickets. He's done time, but  
 nothing in the last 2 years. I  
 doubt he's clean, he just hasn't  
 been caught. What you want to do?

JAMAL  
 We'll see him again. I'll give him  
 a warning for now.

The backup officer shakes his head in disbelief.

OFFICER #1  
 Um, ok. Guess I'll clear. Heard  
 another call come in on the radio  
 anyway.

JAMAL  
 Go ahead, thanks.

Officer #1 heads back to his patrol vehicle and leaves the scene.

Jamal walks back to the Infiniti.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

We'll see each other soon. Drive slower. And next time you don't have your medicinal marijuana card on you and I find out you haven't paid your baby mommas, there won't be a warning. Fair game.

Jamal hands Block back his license and registration.

BLOCK

(sarcastic)

Until next time, Officer Waters.

Jamal walks back to his patrol vehicle with distaste on his face.

Block rolls the windows up and grabs the blunt from under the car seat. He lights the blunt and looks back in his rearview mirror at Jamal -- smiling.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF NEW JERSEY - DAY

Vince enters the hospital through the automatic doors and approaches the reception desk to sign in, walking through a minimal crowd in the waiting area.

The RECEPTIONIST sees Vince and waves, then directs him to his location.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vince rounds the corner into a child's hospital room, where he sees his wife Irene, curled up beside their 7-year-old daughter, MARIA, sleeping peacefully in her hospital bed.

Irene notices Vince, and presses her finger to her mouth, signaling for him to be quiet.

Vince steps carefully over to a chair and adjusts it next to Maria's bed. His hand grazes Maria's soft, bald head. He leans in to kiss her forehead.

Vince then observes Irene, the bags under her eyes reflect the lack of sleep mixed with tears, hope, and desperation.

IRENE

I feel so lost, Vince. This battle has been going on too long.

Vince pulls Irene closer and places her head on his chest.

VINCE

Our family never backs down for no one. Not even sickness. Maria's not fighting this battle alone. Doc even said with a few more treatments she should be stable.

IRENE

I worry we won't have the money to get that far.

VINCE

Babe, don't worry. I've been putting money aside for this situation. I got this, okay?

Irene shakes her head yes, as she leans back on her husband's chest with tears.

Vince's cell phone BEEPS. He grabs his phone from his pocket and sees a TEXT from ALDO:

--ALDO: *"Don't forget to call me as soon as you find out."*

Vince sighs and stands up.

IRENE  
What's wrong?

VINCE  
Nothing, babe. Gotta get back to the office to finish up a case. Make sure you eat and watch over our baby. Love you.

IRENE  
Love you, too.

Vince quietly exits the room.

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Vince takes a seat at his desk in the Detective Bureau office. Donald is busy beside him, presumably working on the rooftop homicide case.

Donald takes a quick breather and turns to Vince.

DONALD  
How did everything go?

VINCE  
Same old. My munchkin hanging in there. She'll be okay, though.

DONALD  
Glad to hear.

He crosses over to Vince's desk with a FOLDER.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
Take a look at this. Speaking with neighbors and other witnesses, our victim, Sean Mack -- aka MONEY, was last seen with a kid named Mike Bailey, who goes by the street name BUNDLES. Bundles is apparently part of a blood set. Looks like stealing the car was part of an initiation process for Mr. Mack.

VINCE  
Then why kill him?

Donald shrugs as Vince sorts through the folder's contents.

DONALD  
Something must have went wrong.  
The same car they used during the  
carjacking was parked outside of  
the apartment building of the  
murder and had bullet holes in it --

Donald points out a PHOTO of the vehicle in question.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
Prosecutor's officer sent me a snip  
off a street cam showing the  
vehicle prior to entering  
Irvington, which is exact Crip  
territory. Definitely looks like a  
retaliation.

Vince nods in agreement as he looks at the before and after  
photos.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
Supposedly, Bundles and Money were  
best friends. I'm guessing Bundles  
thought he could kill Money and  
make it look like a Crip  
retaliation.

VINCE  
You really think he would kill his  
best friend? And how did he get out  
of the building with no witnesses  
after the gun shots?

DONALD  
You do work in this department,  
right? Gun shots are like fireworks  
in Newark. No one's coming out to  
see that. If this was a  
retaliation, Bundles needed a  
scapegoat. I'm sure he was  
targeting someone and used Money as  
a decoy if things went south.

VINCE  
I'll link up with Irvington PD and  
see if they had any shootings  
during that time. This could get  
interesting.

Donald shuffles the pictures back into the folder.

DONALD

There was definitely a third person or second car involved. No way he ran off on foot. Too much traffic, someone would have noticed him after the shots. Crazy how low you'd go to kill your best friend.

VINCE

When it comes to saving ones own life or family, nothing comes as a surprise. Survival is an animal of it's own.

DONALD

That's crazy talk, Vince. I'll pretend I didn't hear that. Anyway, I'll get to it.

Donald walks away with a puzzled look on his face.

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

The office has mostly cleared out, but Donald and Vince are still working diligently on their case loads.

Finally, Donald starts to pack up his files. It's definitely time to go home after a long day of investigations. Donald observes Vince still in the groove.

DONALD

Come on, man! We both have people to go home to. I'm sure you don't want to end up like a homicide.

VINCE

Got jokes, huh? You go on ahead. I'm going to finish up here. We'll meet up in the morning.

DONALD

No problem, brother. See you in the A.M.

Donald exits the office.

Vince gets up from his desk and walks up to the office door. He opens the door slightly. He takes a peak in the hall --

HALLWAY

In the distance, SERGEANT LOU RODRIGUEZ, 47, of the S.W.A.T. Team, talks with another Newark Police officer.

Vince subtly WHISTLES and gestures for Lou to come into the office. Lou ends his conversation with the other officer and walks over.

OFFICE

They both head to Vince's desk and take a seat. Vince in his recliner, Lou on the edge of the desk itself. Judging by Lou's demeanor, this is a routine experience.

LOU

What you got for me, Vince? You got something hot?

VINCE

I got a tip from one of my connects about late deals going on over at Hernandez Bodega off Norfolk. Haven't looked much into it yet, but they've been getting deliveries for at odd times in unusual quantities. My connects profit margin decreased so he sent a couple guys out to investigate and everything leads to that Bodega.

LOU

Hernandez Bodega? I know that spot. Puerto Rican guy owns it. My people. You think this deal will be worth it?

VINCE

My connect is trustworthy. Shit, might be a good case for both of us. Round up some of your guys. This could get interesting.

LOU

This is why I mess with you. You're not even Puerto Rican and you still speak my language, money.

Vince leans in closer, just in case.

VINCE

One more thing. None of this gets to Donald. He's like a brother to me and all, but the guy thinks he's Luke Cage or something.

(MORE)

VINCE (CONT'D)

Always trying to save the city, but never wants to take back what was stolen. Why should we give drug dealer money back to the department to fund the Chiefs or Lieutenant pensions? We all know the system for these thugs. Once they've got a record, any chance of making an honest living is off the table. They're just gonna keep doing the same shit. Fuck that. We can actually use the money. I have a daughter to save.

LOU

I understand you, brother. For your daughter and my boat, let's do this.

They give each other a fist pound in celebration. Lou exits the office. Vince slides back in his chair and grins. He pulls out his CELL and composes a TEXT to ALDO:

*--VINCE: "Everything is a go. I just need another day to get organized, but tonight I'll stake out the area a bit so I can keep my team informed. I'll be in touch."*

INT. DAQUAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daquan's mother, THERESA, mid-30s is busy cooking dinner in the kitchen, while Daquan does his homework on the living room table.

After a moment, he grabs his cell phone and starts playing video games.

THERESA (O.S.)

You better be doing your homework. I'll be sure to check it. Food is almost done.

DAQUAN

(yelling)  
Yes, mom!

Daquan turns off the game and goes to sit at the dining table. He can smell the aroma of his mother's good old home cooked meatloaf. He watches her hard at work and smiles.

The front door OPENS and Theresa's low-life, drunk boyfriend, DAMIEN, 40, steps inside.

He goes to the kitchen, abruptly stopping in front of Daquan and giving him a stare that would burn ones soul.

DAMIEN  
You got a problem boy?

DAQUAN  
No, sir.

Damien continues on to the kitchen. He grabs Theresa's arm.

DAMIEN  
Why isn't there food on the table?  
You know it's my time to eat woman.  
I had a long day and it's not  
ready? Now we have a problem...

THERESA  
It's coming right out, Damien. Nice  
and hot.

Her attempt to reason with him doesn't work. He aggressively THROWS her arm down and grunts, stomping over to the dining table where he takes a seat across from Daquan.

They stare each other down in a silent stand-off as Theresa hurriedly begins placing trays of food around them. Daquan will never have respect for such a man.

Theresa frantically takes a seat, trying her best to cover her nervousness. She prays over the food before they eat.

Damien takes a bite out of the meatloaf, then SLAMS his fist on the table, and spit takes into his napkin, rudely.

DAMIEN  
It's too damn hot, woman. I just  
burnt my tongue! Fuckin' bitch.

Damien GRABS Theresa's head and SLAMS it into the meatloaf tray. The heat from the food scalds her face, but Damien continues to hold her head down. Finally, he lets her go and she lifts her head up. All she can do is look at Daquan for strength.

THERESA (CRYING)  
You're right, it's too hot. I'm  
sorry, I'll cool it down for you.

DAMIEN  
I don't even want it anymore. Your  
face ruined my meal.

Enraged, Daquan runs to the other side of the table and PUNCHES Damien in the face, knocking him off his chair.

Theresa stumbles back from the commotion, holding her face.

Damien recovers and STRIKES Daquan with a hard SLAP to the jaw, knocking him semiconscious to the floor.

Daquan comes to, and with one eye open he can see his mom getting dragged to the kitchen as he lies helpless. He tries to get up, seeing Damien LASHING his mother with a belt. The loud WHIPPING echoing louder and louder.

He finally manages to crawl up to the table where his phone is and sends a quick TEXT for help:

--DAQUAN: *"Come pick me up, fam. I need your help."*

Daquan props himself against the edge of the table as he tries to regain full consciousness. He can still hear his mother's cries as the continuous lashings snap in the air each time the belt makes contact with her skin.

Damien walks out of the kitchen with his belt still in hand and looks maniacally at Daquan.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

You and your mother are going to show me some respect around this house one way or another. After I am done with her, you're next.

Daquan squirms away from the table, and picks himself up and flees out the front door.

EXT. DAQUAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Daquan sits on the curb in front of the house. He places his head down, crying between his knees.

Moments later, a CAR pulls up -- A black INFINITI M35. Daquan's face reflects off the chrome rims.

The tinted window rolls down. It's Block.

BLOCK

What's the problem young blood?

INT. THE LOBBY LOUNGE - NIGHT

An upbeat latin-style lounge in Elizabeth, NJ, just outside Newark Airport.

Jamal and his date, an attractive, classy Dominican, STEPHANIE GONZALEZ, 29, sit at the bar. They are clearly in the midst of an enjoyable conversation.

Jamal calls over the BARTENDER, and points at their EMPTY GLASSES, signaling another round.

The bartender quickly pours up 2 Hennessy's with a splash of cranberry juice and hands them over.

They both grab their glasses and make a toast, before taking a sip of their drink. They watch the crowd vibing to the energy of the hip-hop music playing in the background.

STEPHANIE

How come every time I ask about your family you shy away from the question? We've known each other forever and you're still keeping secrets!

JAMAL

No secrets. I just had a difficult life, that I don't like to discuss much. My mother is good and my father and I are still, ya know, trying to rebuild our relationship after he divorced my mom. He was never really around for me, but was fortunate enough to let me use his address for Newark PD civil service. Now I'm here trying to enjoy my time with you.

STEPHANIE

Okay, okay. I can understand that. I'll fall back from the family questions. What are we going to eat? Tengo hambre, boy. Dominican girl gotta eat!

Jamal laughs. Stephanie picks up the menu and looks it over.

A few tables over, we see Spade, one of the drug dealers Jamal pulled over the other day, looking in Jamal's direction. He recognizes him.

Spade motions to Jamal, alerting the other two THUGS with him of the situation. Wanting to keep a low profile, they calmly observe Jamal and Stephanie from their distance. No need to make a scene or cause for trouble.

But Stephanie notices them looking in their direction...

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Those guys are staring at us. Are they friends of yours?

Jamal looks and notices who it is. He makes eye contact with them and nods his head, making sure they know he sees them.

JAMAL

Just old friends, or something like that. Nothing to worry about.

He turns back to Stephanie.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

After we eat I have to make sure you get home. I'm sure your mom wants to go home and rest after she tucks your daughter in.

STEPHANIE

She'll be fine. She had me at 16, too, so she understands my situation. Plus, I had a rough week at work, and she knows I need a night out. Besides, what's the rush? I like my company.

Jamal blushes and smiles in response.

Later. Jamal settles the bill then he and Stephanie climb down from the bar stools.

JAMAL

Mind if I use the little boy's room before we go?

Stephanie shakes her head and Jamal crosses toward the bathroom. Seeing him, Spade starts to move in Jamal's direction.

Jamal catches Spade out of the corner of his eye trailing him as he rounds the corner into the --

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - THE LOBBY LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

He enters the bathroom, hides behind bathroom door, and places his hand over the handle of his GUN, concealed in the band of his pants.

The bathroom CONCIERGE freezes up in shock, and Jamal flips out his badge and assures him everything is okay and to be quiet.

The door opens.

Spade enters. Jamal rushes into him, pressing him into the wall, and placing his off duty gun to Spade's back.

SPADE

Are you serious, fam? A brother can't use the bathroom. If I file a complaint your department won't be too happy you pulled out a gun on me in public you bitch ass pig.

JAMAL

Shut da fuck up. Why you following me?

SPADE

No one following yo ass. I just wanted to use the bathroom. I did see you with your little cute mami friend at the bar. I was even going to say hi and pay for y'all's meal. You pigs ain't making bread like that. Figured I'd contribute.

JAMAL

Just cause I'm out of uniform, don't mean you want to test me. I'd blow your whole vertebrae out in self defense. Peace, homie.

Jamal pushes off of Spade, letting him go. He fixes his shirt and exits the bathroom.

Spade just laughs and tips the concierge a \$100 bill. The concierge shrugs and pockets the cash.

INT. THE LOBBY LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Jamal meets Stephanie back near the bar. Stephanie senses that he is a little riled up.

STEPHANIE

I saw your boy go into the bathroom with you. You guys catch up?

JAMAL

We sure did. I'm good though, just surprised to see him. Come on, lets get out of here.

EXT. THE LOBBY LOUNGE - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jamal and Stephanie leave the bar and head toward her car. He opens the passenger side door for her and lets her in. From the distance he can see Spade and his boys still seated inside. Spade looks out at Jamal and makes the figure of a gun with his hand, pretending to fire 2 shots. Not amused, Jamal ducks in the driver's seat.

EXT. STEPHANIE'S HOUSE - LATER

Jamal parks in front of Stephanie's house. Her MOTHER looks out the window through the blinds and sees and car in the driveway.

STEPHANIE

My mom is so nosey.

JAMAL

(laughs)

We all have protective mothers. I just hope you had a good time.

Jamal places his hand on Stephanie's lap and leans in for a kiss. She admires the gesture and goes along with it, but momentarily pulls away.

STEPHANIE

I just had an even better time, but you know Agent Carol is watching. If you guys are hiring I am sure she would be an asset to Newark PD. Nothing gets passed her.

JAMAL

I'll look into it for you. Bye mama. Have fun with your baby girl.

Stephanie exits the vehicle and enters her home. Jamal drives off.

In the distance, a black DODGE DURANGO, sits patiently watching. They were definitely being followed...

EXT. CAR/STREETS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Keyana's patrol vehicle fights through traffic, lights and sirens blaring.

It nears the target destination, an apartment building, passing right by Freddy and Danny's patrol vehicle.

EXT. ALEJANDRO'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Now on the scene, Keyana hurries to the door of the building, while EMS TECHNICIANS roll out the MEDICAL BED off the back of the EMS truck.

ALEJANDRO MARQUEZ, 40, short, Hispanic, holds the entrance door to the apartment building and waves everyone in.

INT. ALEJANDRO'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Alejandro leads everyone inside the snug, 1-bedroom unit, where they see SOPHIA, 11, lying innocent and helpless on an area rug in a white t-shirt and jeans. She holds her chest, unresponsive and barely conscious.

An EMS TECHNICIAN throws down a medical bag beside Sophia, who is barely breathing, her face changing color. The Technician places an oxygen mask over her face.

Meanwhile, Keyana starts poking around the space. Getting an angle of the bedroom she can only see a BED and a computer desk with a MOUNTED CAMERA adjacent to it.

Before she can see more, Alejandro steps in front of her.

ALEJANDRO

Nothing there but my work. Can you just help my daughter?

KEYANA

What is it that you do?

ALEJANDRO

I'm a photographer. See?

He pulls out a BUSINESS CARD and hands it over.

KEYANA

Dispatch said an asthma attack was reported. Does your daughter have medication or an inhaler?

ALEJANDRO

I was just about to go to the pharmacy, but before I left this happened. Then I called 9-11.

KEYANA

Where's her mother?

ALEJANDRO

She died a long time ago. Just us.

The Technician calls out, frantic --

TECH #1

She's losing consciousness! I don't have enough air. We gotta take her now --

TECH #2

Keyana, lead us again to the hospital.

Alejandro starts crying.

ALEJANDRO

Is Sophia going to be okay? Please!

KEYANA

Sir, I need you to stay calm. We will take care of this. We gotta go now. You can go to the hospital later.

The Technician's carefully place Sophia onto the stretcher. And quickly roll it out of the apartment.

INT./EXT. FREDDY AND DANNY'S PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Freddy and Danny are on their routine patrol. Danny still in field training, is behind the wheel this time. He scans his surroundings for any unusual activity. The streets are quiet and empty. The full moon casts it light over a dark city. Minimal cars in sight.

Suddenly, in the distance, near an intersection, a RED MUSTANG barrels through the RED LIGHT. Danny immediately swerves around other cars and follows the vehicle.

He keeps a safe distance with the headlights off. The mustang doesn't seem to notice a police car tailgating it and continues driving with moderate speed. Danny reaches for the DISPATCH RADIO.

DANNY

I need a report on a Red Ford Mustang, plate -- "D-O-L-L-R-S."

While he waits for a response, he switches the EMERGENCY WARNING LIGHTS on, and the mustang pulls over on a residential side street.

DISPATCH (O.S.)  
It's clean. No warrants or recent  
traffic violations.

Danny parks the patrol car.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Freddy exit their vehicle, alert. They approach the car and the driver side window ROLLS DOWN.

Danny uses his FLASHLIGHT to see inside the driver's side, while Freddy keeps his light on the rear and passenger side, checking for additional occupants.

Danny greets the white female driver, MELANIE BATES, 24.

DANNY  
How you doing tonight, ma'am?  
License and registration please.

Melanie seems rattled and hands over both, then pulls out a cigarette. The smoke around her face gives her a sensual appearance. Danny tries to keep focused. Freddy, on the other side of the car, notices Danny's attraction.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
The reason I pulled you over, is  
because you ran through that red  
light at the intersection back  
there.

MELANIE  
I am so sorry officer. I'm just  
trying to get home. I just got off  
work and ya know this is not the  
safest area.

DANNY  
Where do you work?

MELANIE  
Marbella Lounge. I'm a bartender.

DANNY  
Hmm, that's not the safest place to  
bartend, either.

MELANIE  
No, it's not the safest place, but  
let's just say drug dealers like to  
spend and I like money.

(MORE)

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I've done the fancy, rich, white parties and they turn out to be the cheapest assholes. I bring something different to the table here and what these guys do is none of my business, but their money is. Is it safe? No. Is it dumb? NO.

Melanie checks her appearance in the rearview mirror.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

I wont be working there long anyway. Saving up for some things.

Freddy signals for Danny to step aside and confer.

FREDDY

What do you want to do?

DANNY

She just wants to get home. I'll let her off with a warning.

FREDDY

Let her off with your number too, rookie.

DANNY

What do you mean?

FREDDY

You know what I mean. Pull out your contact card, write your number on the back and tell her to have a nice night and get home safe. Why are you still standing in front of me? Go!

Danny pulls out his Newark PD contact business card and writes his cell phone number on the back. He walks back over to her car.

DANNY

Here you go, Melanie.

He hands back her license and registration.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm just going to let you off with a warning. My number is on the back of that card if you ever get into trouble while in the area. Get home safe and have a good night, ma'am.

MELANIE

For one, thank you. Two, stop calling me ma'am. I'm probably around the same age as you. One of these days you should come out and see me?

DANNY

I don't usually go out in the places I arrest people.

MELANIE

Maybe we'll meet outside the city, then. I'll let you know. Stay cute.

She winks and rolls up her window. Danny walks back to the patrol car, where Freddy's already sitting inside with the bottle of Sobieski on his lap, laughing and taking a swig.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - MORNING

Keyana drives her patrol vehicle into the department parking lot. Her right hand on the steering wheel, the other hangs out off the window dangling against the breeze. She parks.

INT. KEYANA'S PATROL VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

Keyana mentally debriefs, recollecting images of Sophia and her so called father's apartment. She pulls out her CELL from her left uniform shirt pocket, as other officers arrive, parking their vehicle's for the next shift.

Looking down at her phone, Keyana is blind to their gestures.

Keyana opens her WEB BROWSER APP and types in a search for "Alejandro Marquez Photography."

List shows NO RESULTS. She attempts to type "Alejandro Newark NJ," but there's too many listings. Keyana scrolls through the listings -- none matching the address of the apartment.

KEYANA

He's a sneaky mother fu--

KNOCK, KNOCK. A MALE OFFICER taps her window.

MALE OFFICER #1

Hey Corporal, you want to go home  
or you just gonna keep checking  
your credit score?

KEYANA

Get off my damn car. I'll be right  
there.

EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Keyana does one last vehicle inspection. In her peripheral view, DETECTIVE LISA MANNING, 48, white, blond, assertive, and not much for stilettos, travels across the lot engaged in conversation on her phone.

Keyana with her gear bag in hand, shuts her trunk, and attempts to break Lisa's path.

LISA  
 (into phone)  
 Hold on, hold on.  
 (to Keyana)  
 Hey, I'm on the phone dealing with my son missing the damn bus on purpose so he can skip school, knowing that I can't drive back right now. Unless you have a solution to this problem, I don't want to hear anything.

Keyana hands her a FOLDED NOTE with Alejandro's information.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 This better be instructions on how to beat his little ass.

KEYANA  
 Just run the info for me when you get a chance. I can't find anything on this guy.

Lisa nods her head with a peevish smile, mutters back into the phone, and heads toward the department.

EXT. FREDDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Freddy pulls into his driveway after coming home from a long night shift with Danny. He pulls a swig of alcohol from a flask left in his car. Leans back in his car seat for a moment and admires the morning scenery through the window -- just thinking.

Freddy exits the car and walks to the front door. Takes a deep breath before entering. Can hear his wife's voice through the door trying to get the kids ready for school.

Freddy turns the key and OPENS the door.

INT. FREDDY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Freddy enters the modest, two-story home. His son, MICHAEL, 16, and daughter, RACHEL, 13, are on their way out.

FREDDY  
 Off to school?

RACHEL  
 Yep. Love you!

FREDDY  
Where's my hug?

Rachel and Michael both give him a hug.

MICHAEL  
See ya, Dad.

They exit. Freddy can hear the sounds of dishes and other utensils CLINGING.

Freddy walks through toward the sounds into --

INT. FREDDY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Freddy sees his wife, BIANCA, 48, cleaning. She observes his presence, but just grunts and continues the dishes over the sink in silence.

FREDDY  
Good morning to you, too.

Bianca puts down the sponge and whirls around.

BIANCA  
You smell like shit. I can smell the booze from here. I don't even know how the kids could stand to hug you.

Freddy POUNDS the kitchen counter.

FREDDY  
What is your problem? I come home from a long night at work and right away I have to listen to your shit?

Bianca shakes her head in disappointment.

BIANCA  
It's always the same BS story. I'm tired of the excuses. You blame your drinking on your career, so you can blame your career for the divorce then, too. It's sucked your soul.

FREDDY  
Don't give me that. You've supported my career for twenty years, Bianca. Now, I'm 2 years away from retiring, and suddenly you want out. You're a joke.

BIANCA

I'm exhausted, Freddy! There's no love left. The only reason I stayed as long as I did was for our children. To make sure they were OK. But they're old enough now.

She starts putting dishes away.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

I think you should stay at your mother's until we get this divorce settled.

FREDDY

My mother's? Forget you! I've put my life on the line for this family and the Newark PD. And I cut back on drinking. I was just finishing what I had left, but you didn't give me a chance to explain.

BIANCA

Yeah, yeah whatever. I've heard it all before, Freddy. Just get the hell out of here until things are settled.

Bianca turns her back to Freddy and continues with the dishes. Freddy storms out.

INT. FREDDY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddy charges into the bedroom, furious. He takes a suitcase from the closet and throws it on the bed and starts throwing his clothes in the suitcase.

He grabs family photos from the and tosses them in the suitcase, too.

FREDDY

Ungrateful bitch.

Then he picks up a small framed picture of he and Bianca on their wedding day. He sighs and throws it onto the bed, then pauses, looking around like he doesn't know what to do.

INT. DANNY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Danny enters the house exhausted after work. He yawns. Judging by the bags under his eyes, he's still adjusting to his schedule on the overnight shift.

He sees his mother, MARGARET, 45, and father, JAMES, 47, in the kitchen eating breakfast. As he gets closer, he sees his grandfather, ROBERT POLOVSKI, 67 is also at the table.

A smile fills his face and he crosses over to his grandfather, wrapping him in a hug.

DANNY

Pop-pop! I didn't now you were here!

ROBERT

Danny! So happy to see you. Will you sit with us? I know you just got off, but it'd be great to catch up for a few.

Danny pulls out a chair.

DANNY

I'll sleep when I'm dead.

His grandfather smiles warmly. His mother gets up from the table to fetch him a plate.

MARGARET

Danny, I've got some scrambled eggs here. Would you like some toast?

DANNY

Sure, ma. Thanks.

ROBERT

Tell me, how's life with the Newark PD?

DANNY

I'm still adjusting. It's more than I'd expected so I'm still learning.

JAMES

Your mother and I are still adjusting. We don't even see our own son anymore!

MARGARET

And we worry!

She puts a plate down in front of Danny and rejoins the table.

ROBERT

I'm so proud you've made it this far.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Now all you have to do is be the best you can be. I wasn't the greatest, but I knew the streets and I knew my job. You'll get a sense of just how many assholes there are out there real quick!

Danny smiles in agreement.

DANNY

Oh yeah. That part is already in the works.

Everyone chuckles.

ROBERT

As long as you have that badge people will either hate you or love you. You won't be able to please everyone or save everyone. You'll have to make tough decisions that could mean life or death. Just remember why you signed up for the job, use that to stay motivated.

DANNY

Why did you join the Police Department, Pop-pop?

ROBERT

For the same reason most young men do it! Your grandmother said she loved a man in uniform. I knew the moment I met her I had to have her, so I basically went through hell to get that badge, and then went through hell during our marriage!

JAMES

The things we do for love, huh?

James rubs Margaret's arm lovingly.

ROBERT

You're telling me. It's worth it though. What about you, Danny? I never see you with any girls. You're not gay, are ya?

DANNY

No, Pop-pop, I'm definitely not gay. Actually I have a date coming up.

MARGARET

Oohh! Do we get to meet her?

DANNY

Calm down ma, let me go out with her first.

Robert and James laugh.

The conversation continues on, though Danny turns his attention to some old pictures of Robert in uniform hanging on the wall in front of them. He stares at them, lost in thought...

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU OFFICE - MORNING

Vince, Lou, and two other SWAT OFFICERS gather around Vince's desk in conversation. Donald walks in and sees them, a look of curiosity crosses his face. He casually walks over to his desk and places down his briefcase. As the group is huddled up, no one acknowledges that Donald even walked in.

After a beat, Donald interrupts the hushed conversation.

DONALD

Hello, there's a Negro in the room.

They all turn and nod their heads as a sign of hello.

VINCE

Alright guys, we'll pick this up later. I got work to do.

Lou and his team disperse and wave goodbye.

Vince pulls his chair in closer to his desk and resumes work on his case load. Donald hasn't taken his eyes off of him yet.

DONALD

What was that all about?

VINCE

If your nosey ass really must know, we're planning a surprise party for the Captain. We didn't want the word to spread, but since you're here, now you know. We know how you and the Captain are, so keep this on the hush-hush if you don't mind.

DONALD

His birthday's not for another month.

VINCE

Yeah, but with all that's going on in the city lately, he's under a lot of stress, so we figured we'd plan ahead.

DONALD

Consider my lips sealed.

VINCE

Thanks. I'll be right back, gotta take a leak.

Vince gets up and heads for the restroom.

Donald starts on some paperwork. After he writes a note or two, his pen runs dry. He shakes it and tries again to write with it, but no such luck.

He searches his drawers for an extra pen, but is unsuccessful. Annoyed, he slams his desk drawers, then slides his chair across the aisle over to Vince's desk.

He opens the top two drawers and sees nothing but case folders, packs of gum, and a carton of Newport cigarettes. Donald pulls out the bottom drawer, and inside he sees a brown paper bag stained in grease, and a couple pens. Bingo!

He takes a pen, recoiling at the greasy bag.

DONALD

(sotto)

Don't tell me that's the same old bag of coxinhas from the other day. Nasty motherfucker.

Donald uses the tips of his fingers to peel open the bag to see what's inside -- to his surprise, he finds STACKS OF MONEY wrapped in plastic. In distaste and shame, he immediately closes the bag and shuts the drawer. As he does, Vince walks up with a stern look.

VINCE

What are you doing at my desk?

DONALD

Nothing, just looking for a pen.

VINCE

All the way at my desk?

DONALD

I ran out. Shit. See, I got one.  
Don't worry, I'll give it back.

VINCE

No stress. Keep it.

Each of them returns to work. As Donald continues to write his notes, Vince keeps his eyes on him, certain Donald must have seen something.

After a moment he casually opens his bottom drawer. A look of concern washes over his face when he sees the bag is partially open.

He discreetly peers over his shoulder at Donald. This is going to be a problem...

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. STREETS OF NEWARK - TURNER BLVD - DAY

Jamal walks back to his patrol car, a coffee in one hand and a bagel in the other. He opens the door and ducks in.

INT. JAMAL'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

He places his coffee in the holder and pulls out his CELL. There's a TEXT from Stephanie:

--STEPHANIE: *"I had a really good time the other night."*

Jamal smiles and replies, and they exchange a few texts.

--JAMAL: *"That's my job, boo. Community caretaking at its finest!"*

--STEPHANIE: *"I think my mother likes you more than I do. She said she thinks you're handsome. I told her you were aight."*

--JAMAL: *"I missed everything you said, except the part where you said you like me."*

--STEPHANIE: *"I guess that slipped (wink emoji)."*

--JAMAL: *"We'd better have another date then, huh? I'll call you."*

--STEPHANIE: *"You better."*

Jamal smiles and closes out the message. He scrolls through his message log, thinking. He lands on Daquan's name and sends a quick message --

--JAMAL: *"Hey little man. You still down for a game after school? Haven't heard from you. Hope you're not still hurtin' from that last one, lol."*

He waits for a response momentarily, but none comes. Jamal shakes his head, worried...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. JAMAL'S CHILDHOOD HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Young Jamal, 9, and his older brother MARLON, 13, are tucked up under the sheets of their bunk bed. Jamal on the top bunk, Marlon staring up from the bottom bunk.

They are both silent, listening to their father CHRIS and mother REGINA arguing aggressively in the other room. Their voices echo through the thin walls of their run down apartment.

CHRIS (O.S.)

How dare you disrespect me by saying I'm not pulling my weight around here! I contribute to this household just as much as you do! If you'd let those boys work we'd have a little help. Instead you're teaching them to be lazy and irresponsible.

INT. JAMAL'S CHILDHOOD HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris paces angrily, as Regina sits pleading on the couch.

REGINA

Our boys need to focus on their education, Chris, so they can get the hell out of this city one day. As black parents we have to do everything to ensure our children don't end up like some of the thugs in this city!

CHRIS (O.S.)

When I was their age my father had me slaving and I earned my right to keep living in his household. I work too damn hard to have you come at me with this bullshit.

INT. JAMAL'S CHILDHOOD HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The argument continues accompanied by loud pacing back and forth in the hallway. Finally, a bedroom door SLAMS shut. Nothing, but silence.

Jamal turns over and wrestles with his emotions. He peaks down over the bunk and looks at Marlon.

They whisper in conversation.

JAMAL

Marlon, how would you feel if mom and dad got a divorce?

MARLON

I wouldn't care. I don't need them to take care of me. I make my own money.

JAMAL

What you mean you make your own money? You don't have a job.

Marlon sits up and pulls out a shoe box from underneath the bed. He opens it up and takes out a rolled up wad of hundreds. He stands up and puts the money in Jamal's face.

MARLON

This is what they are arguing about. This paper right here. The same shit our neighborhood fights over.

Marlon kisses the money and admires it.

MARLON (CONT'D)

They want us out of the hood, but nah, I'm too deep in it. One day I'm gonna run it.

JAMAL

So you don't care about mom or me? You're just going to stay here and sell drugs now? Is that it?

MARLON

You two can stay weak and struggle fam. But daddy don't care. He doesn't even ask where the money comes from as long as I slide him some. If I wasn't doing what I do, none of you would eat. You will never be like me. I'm a real goon. A street soldier.

BACK TO:

INT. INFINITI M35 - MOVING - NIGHT

CLICK CLICK. The sound of a Smith and Wesson 9mm handgun. The slide racks with a bullet in the chamber. Block sits in the back seat with Daquan. THUG #1 driving.

Visions of Daquan's mom being violently beaten flash in front of Daquan's eyes, clouding his judgments.

INSERT QUICK FLASH -- WACK WACK. Damien's belt slapping against his mom's skin. She lies there, helpless as Daquan watches.

THUG #1 takes a puff of his marijuana blunt. The smoke emitting from his bud creates a majestic smokey view inside the car.

THUG #1

Yo lil' thug. I remember when my father use to beat my mom's ass.

BLOCK

Shut up. No one wants to hear your story.

THUG #1

Come on fam, let me finish. I was about your age, Daquan. One day I came home and saw my father smack my mom to the floor, and I said fuck dat. Grabbed my baseball bat, and smacked dat mothafuckas knee caps. Shit, I think I busted them whole. I didn't want him to get up, so I ran to the kitchen got me a knife and stabbed his ass in the stomach. First time I ever went to juvy, but it was worth it my G. That was the last time he laid a finger on her even before she left him. Don't let him get away with that shit fam.

Daquan sits quiet, distant. He stares at the GUN beside him as every passing street light reflects off the gun's chrome.

BLOCK

We almost there. You ready to bust that chest open?

Daquan just nods. He grabs the gun.

INT. DAQUAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Damien sits on the couch watching TV and sipping on a bottle of beer. He watches Theresa doing the dishes. She scrubs, distraught with emotions, harder and harder with each scrub until -- a glass SHATTERS in her hand and cuts her finger. The cut does not phase her. Emotionless, she watches as the blood rolls off her finger, dripping into the sink.

Damien runs to go check up on her. He holds her as he rinses the blood off her finger in the sink. He folds a piece of paper towel and wraps it around her finger.

Damien is actually showing a side of affection. A feeling Theresa has not felt in a long time.

INT. INFINITI M-35 - CONTINUOUS

The Infiniti pulls up to Daquan's, the headlights off.

THUG #1

Let's see how much of a man you  
really are young blood.

Daquan runs out of the car to his house door. He doesn't look back. THUG #1 and Block watch from a couple houses down.

INT. DAQUAN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Damien and Theresa lay cuddled on the couch. Theresa still not at ease, but is appreciating the comfort.

Damien rubs her arm and moves her face towards his. He gives her a kiss.

DAMIEN

I'm sorry baby.

The front door suddenly BUSTS open and Daquan enters. The gun lays tucked in the back of his pants. He sees his mother and Damien on the couch, taken by surprise at the situation. Theresa runs toward him crying frantically. She hugs him.

THERESA

Oh my god! Baby where have you  
been? Doesn't matter.

She hugs him tightly. Daquan notices the cut on her finger. This again triggers visions of her being beaten.

Damien stands up and walks towards them.

DAMIEN

Where have you been boy?

Every inch Damien gets closer, builds more anger. Daquan reaches behind his back and grabs his gun. He points it at Damien. His mother still holding him, does not realize he pulled out the gun.

Theresa lets go of him and notices what is about to erupt. But there is nothing but emptiness in Daquan's eyes. Theresa pleads for Daquan to stop and put the gun down.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

Are you crazy, boy? Put that shit away. You must have lost your fucking nerve.

While still pointing his gun at Damien, Daquan looks up at his mother. A tear falls down his right cheek.

DAQUAN

Mom, I'm sorry.

BANG. BANG. Everything goes dark.

INT./EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Danny and Freddy head to their assigned patrol vehicle after briefing. Freddy gets in the car and waits for Danny to handle the vehicle inspection and equipment check. Everything seems in order and Danny enters the vehicle. He hears his cellphone beep. It's Melanie from the other night.

--MELANIE: *"Be safe tonight, Officer Polovski (smile emoji). I'll be at work so you can text me if you get bored."*

Danny smiles and shows Freddy the text.

FREDDY

You're having better luck with women than me. I remember my days as a young fuckin animal.

Freddy looks around to see if anyone is looking in the parking lot and swiftly takes a swig of his vodka.

Danny shakes his head, puts the car in gear, and they head out for duty.

INT./EXT. PATROL CAR/STREETS/NEWARK BUILDINGS - CONTINUOUS

Danny steers the vehicle through the quiet streets.

DANNY

How is family anyway?

FREDDY

Do you really care, rookie?

DANNY

Yes, sir.

FREDDY

I'm not here to make friends, but since you asked, got two kids and they mean the world to me. But my wife is an evil, unappreciative bitch who wants a divorce. I saw it coming, but we've been together so long, the feeling of being apart is really starting to hit me. Aside from the fact she's gonna take half my hard earned pension.

DANNY

Listen, I'm nobody, but if you need help with anything Serge, let me know.

FREDDY

I appreciate that kid. I'm staying at my motha's right now. Makes me feel like a little goomba again.

He chuckles and takes another swig of Sobieski.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Fuck it. Life moves on. She just better not take my kids.

DANNY

I respect your emotional strength, sir.

FREDDY

I appreciate the words, just hope you're not some kinda fag.

DANNY

Definitely not. If I may ask, was your drinking part of the problem?

FREDDY

What are you a fuckin' therapist now? The drinking didn't start until our relationship went South. I was gonna cut back, but now I'm like, nah.

Danny sits quiet with no response.

They turn onto a side street and notice a tinted out, black Volkswagon GTI go through two stop signs.

Freddy signals to Danny to follow him. Danny pulls up closer and turns off his headlights.

As soon as they turn the corner, Danny puts on his lights and siren.

INT. VOLKSWAGON GTI - CONTINUOUS

The driver, CARLOS, Hispanic, 21, removes a blunt from his mouth and tucks it under the seat. He grabs air freshener and sprays it around the interior. He grabs a BAG OF NARCOTICS from the passenger seat next to him and tucks it in between his seat and the center console. He pulls over.

EXT. PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny parks the car behind the Volkswagon and puts the patrol spotlight on the license plate. Danny and Freddy step out and approach the vehicle cautiously, their flashlights out. Danny walks up to the driver side, while Freddy strategically approaches the passenger side.

INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGON GTI

Carlos rolls down the window to face Danny.

DANNY

License and registration please.  
You didn't see the two stop signs  
you missed back there?

Carlos hands him his vehicle credentials. Danny sniffs the potent air.

CARLOS

I'm sorry, Officer. I wasn't paying  
attention. Honestly, I was texting  
and driving.

DANNY

You were doing a little more than  
that. I can smell marijuana and  
your eyes are bloodshot. I need you  
to tell me the truth. Did you smoke  
and do you have anymore on you?

CARLOS

Yes sir, I did smoke, but I have no  
more on me. I smoked it all while  
driving. Was just a small dime.

During Danny's interview with Carlos, Freddy scans the interior with his flashlight. He spots a piece of PLASTIC sticking out from in between the seat and center console.

FREDDY

Carlos, I'm going to need you to step out of the vehicle. Danny keep an eye on him.

Danny guides Carlos away from his vehicle, as Freddy opens the car door to continue his search. He pulls out the plastic bag -- it's filled with bags of weed, cocaine, and color coated ecstasy pills.

Freddy walks to the back of the patrol vehicle and dumps the narcotics on top of the trunk.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

We wanted to go easy on you but you forced our hand. We got ourselves a little runner.

DANNY

Carlos, I asked you to tell the truth and you lied. Now, put your hands behind your back.

Carlos does as he's told. Danny handcuffs him.

FREDDY

This will be a nice arrest for you rookie. Load him in and call in the transport to headquarters.

As Danny escorts Carlos into the back of the patrol car, Freddy starts compiling the narcotics back in the bag. While Danny is not looking, he takes a few small bags of cocaine and slips them in his pocket.

EXT. HERNANDEZ BODEGA - NIGHT

Vince sits in his vehicle about a block away from the bodega. Lou and his team sit in an unmarked WHITE VAN on another block, directly behind the bodega.

A small CARGO TRUCK pulls up to the side of the bodega's drop off garage. FOUR MEN come out of the truck and start unloading. The owner, MARCOS HERNANDEZ, 45, Hispanic, directs the men as to where to put the cargo, while on his cell phone.

INT. WHITE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Lou watches, antsy. He picks up the RADIO and calls Vince.

LOU  
What's the word, papi? We waiting  
on you.

VINCE (O.S.)  
Go ice your balls. It's almost  
time, just be ready.

Lou watches as two of the men close up the truck, and the other two speak with Marcos. Money is exchanged.

VINCE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
MOVE IN, MOVE IN!

EXT. HERNANDEZ BODEGA - CONTINUOUS

Vince exits his vehicle, with his gun at the ready. Lou and his team exit the van and come from around the other end, geared up and moving.

VINCE  
Stay right there! Don't you fucking  
move. Everyone get on the fucking  
wall.

MARCOS  
What's this about?

Lou's men pin Marcos's men up against the wall. Vince takes the money from Marcos hand and pushes him into the truck, still holding onto him, gun in his back.

VINCE  
What's in the truck?

Vince moves in and opens the truck. Loads of PASTRIES and SWEETS are in containers inside.

MARCOS  
Just inventory. Look, the same  
boxes over there that were  
unloaded. I'm getting my orders in  
for the store. That's it.

VINCE  
At 1AM, Candyman? Don't bullshit  
me. I do this for a living.

Vince takes a box of pastries off the truck and opens it. He takes a tasty cake and slams it on the ground, kneels down and observes the crumbs, mixed in with tiny BAGS OF COKE.

VINCE (CONT'D)

I knew something was up. I'm sure there's more where this came from.

Lou SLAMS Marcos against the truck. Vince moves in.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Put your hands behind your fucking back. Oh, and we're keeping the money too.

Lou and Vince start wrapping things up. They escort Marcos and his men into the S.W.A.T. van.

Just then, Patrolman, DEVIN KENNEDY, 35, drives through and happens upon the sting. Confused about what's going, he pulls out his phone and begins composing a text to Donald.

INT. DONALD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In his home office, Donald reviews the rooftop homicide. He shuffles through the photos from the hidden cameras, and sees they show there was a THIRD PERSON on the roof. The clarity of the photo is indistinct, but it looks like a MALE TEENAGER WITH A GUN.

Donald notices his cell phone vibrate. He reads the text from Devin:

--DEVIN: *"What happened at Hernandez Bodega? I saw Vince."*

Donald appears confused. He responds:

--DONALD: *"What do you mean?"*

--DEVIN: *"Vince was there with some of Lou's guys. They had people in custody. Looked like a sting operation."*

--DONALD: *"I'll look into it."*

Donald clenches his jaw, displeased. He puts down his cell phone and pounds the table.

DONALD

Son of a bitch!

INT. MARBELLA LOUNGE - NIGHT

It's closing time at the dingy, rundown bar. Melanie dumps her bucket of tips across the bar and counts her money. Looks like it was a successful night.

After a moment, Melanie pulls out her phone and shoots Danny a text:

--MELANIE: "I'm getting out of work soon. Hope your night was good."

Danny replies quickly.

--DANNY: *"It could be better if I saw you. I'm tied up with a suspect right now, but text me when you get home. Want to make sure you make it there safe."*

Melanie smiles and places the phone down next to the cash register. The new club manager, JOHAN, 36, walks over to the bar and is pleased with her bar sales.

JOHAN

Great job tonight, mama. It must be that booty. I think you starting to have people believe you're Boricua and not white. Just need you to finish closing out your register, so we both can go home on time.

MELANIE

You got it.

EXT. MARBELLA LOUNGE - LATER

Melanie exits the club. She went through the back exit, which leads to the parking lot. The door locks behind her.

Melanie walks to her car and drops her keys. She picks her keys up and in the reflection on the car door, can see two MASKED MEN standing behind her. MASKED MAN #1 has a knife.

Melanie tenses up. She stands up slowly, but does not turn around. Now is her chance to run for help. Melanie runs back to the exit club door, but it's locked. The two men follow behind her. She BANGS on the door frantically. MASKED MAN #2 grabs her and holds her from behind. Masked Man #1 puts a knife to her neck.

MASKED MAN #1

You better be quiet, bitch!

MELANIE

Fuck you! Let me go...!!

Melanie struggles to fight her way out. She SPITS in his face then SCREAMS for help. Masked Man #1 punches her in the stomach. She continuously coughs from the lack of air. Helpless, the two men drag her to a nearby alley.

Masked Man #1 rips her clothes as Masked Man #2 holds her down on the ground. Masked Man #1 starts to put his hands around her neck and choke her as he forcibly penetrates her. Masked Man #2 just watches.

EXT. MARBELLA LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Johan walks to the parking lot and sees Melanie's car is still in the lot. He notices she isn't in the car and her KEYS are outside on the ground. Johan takes his .38 special handgun tucked from his pants.

He creeps around back to the alleyway, cautiously. He can hear voices from around the corner. He sneaks a quick peak, seeing Melanie on the floor covered in blood, motionless, the two men in masks over her.

JOHAN

Get the hell away from her!!

Johan fires two shots. BANG BANG. The two men panic and run. Johan runs towards Melanie and fires again. BANG BANG. One bullet hits one of them in the arm. They continue to run and head into a white cargo van parked nearby. They speed off.

Johan checks to see if Melanie is OK, but she doesn't seem to be breathing. Hysterical, Johan attempts CPR, then he pulls out his cell phone and calls 9-1-1.

INT. MARBELLA LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Melanie's phone RINGS by the register. It's Danny...

INT./EXT. FREDDY'S CAR/FREDDY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Freddy sits in his car across the street from his house. He smokes a cigar. Through the window he can see his kids eating cereal and watching cartoons. He can see Bianca cooking eggs. His face is filled with sadness and regret.

Freddy takes out his usual bottle of vodka and takes a sip. Then, he pulls out the bag of coke he stole from the traffic stop. He lines it up on his dash board and SNORTS it.

He looks in the mirror and wipes his nose. Then, he looks back at his home before he drives off.

Through the window, Bianca looks out to where Freddy's car was parked, wondering if she saw him. But he's gone.

INT. KEYANA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Keyana sits on the couch watching morning cartoons with her daughter. Donovan enters and kisses Keyana and Jade before leaving for work.

Mommy-daughter time exploits laughter as they watch the cartoons. Suddenly, Keyana's phone starts going off from an unknown number. She answers.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Is this Corporal Keyana Nash?

KEYANA  
This is she. Who's calling?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
I'm a nurse from University Hospital. I wanted to see if you've been in contact with Sophia's parents? I have you listed as one of the Officer's on scene when she was transported here.

KEYANA  
I haven't spoken with them. Why?

In the background, Jade still laughs at cartoons.

NURSE (O.S.)  
As Sophia gained consciousness she displayed signs of discomfort on her legs. When the doctor examined her, she had scars on her thighs and bruising on her vaginal area.

Keyana stays quiet in shock. Words frozen.

NURSE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Hello? Ms. Nash?

Keyana fights to hold back tears.

KEYANA  
Yes, I'm here. Sorry. I'll have this reported right away.

Keyana positions herself off the couch and walks to the kitchen table. She puts her head down, then turns her head to observe Jade.

JADE

Mommy? Are you okay?

KEYANA

Yes baby, Mommy is fine. Go back to watching your show, I'll be right over.

Keyana's phone suddenly rings again. It's Detective Lisa Manning. Keyana answers.

LISA (O.S.)

Keyana? I have news about that 'Alejandro Marquez,' guy.

KEYANA

I know. I just got a call from a nurse over at the hospital. That piece of shit's been raping his little girl.

LISA (O.S.)

No, Keyana. He's not that little girl's father and her name is not Sophia. I couldn't find any information on him, so I assumed he was working under an alias. I did some digging and found his real identity. Name is Jonathan Garcia. Garcia kidnapped a little girl 2 years ago from a shopping mall out of Camden. Her real name is Sabrina Rosa. I got guys heading to the hospital now to watch over her, while we put him in the bullpen. I can only imagine what's on his camera.

Keyana says nothing. Instead she just hangs up and walks back to Jade, her face frozen by the news. She holds her daughter tightly, as she loses herself in tears.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE.