

FADE IN.

INT. SAN QUENTIN PRISON - DAY.

A cavernous room has a single, dirty old skylight allowing sun to shine on one, large work-table, where there are various, well-cared-for potted plants. One larger plant is transferred into a larger pot; rich soil is expertly added around it by large but agile hands with dirt under the nails. The hands then clip a leaf here and there off the plant, decisive but gentle. A powder solution is added to water and the water fed to the plant like one would nurse a pet.

The hands belong to the tall, lean but sturdy body of ANDERSON PRANE; his African-American face is intelligent and handsome but not pretty; focused but not humorless. He is fifty but looks older, thanks to prison life. He wears an orange prison jumper, smeared with dirt on the front, stenciled with a number on the back:

55-50-07

TITLE comes up on screen:

SAN QUENTIN PRISON, NORTH CALIFORNIA, 2022.

A prison GUARD, also black, about half his age, approaches; seems friendly.

GUARD

Anders - you are wanted in the  
administrations building.

PRANE

Oh, am I now?  
(smiles at Guard)  
It's nice to be wanted.

Prane places the re-potted plant next to others, puts down his cutters, heads with Guard toward the door, while wiping his hands on a rag.

INT. SAN QUENTIN ADMINISTRATIONS OFFICE - DAY.

The same Guard sits with Prane in a sort of holding room outside a much larger room marked:

PAROLE & ADMINISTRATIONS OFFICE

PRANE

Do you know what this is about?

GUARD

They don't tell me nothin'.

PRANE  
Well, that's not fair.

GUARD  
(giggling)  
Ma-Maybe they's confusing you with  
someone who's up for parole.

PRANE  
C'mon now, that would just be cruel.  
(looks down at his clothes)  
I know what it is-

GUARD  
Hmm?

PRANE  
It's casual Friday and here I am all  
gussied up.

Prane tries to clean himself up with a rag. The GUARD AT DOOR  
signals this Guard.

GUARD  
(to Prane)  
You're in for it now.

Guard escorts Prane in, figures out this is where he leaves,  
nods to Prane and does so. GUARD AT DOOR keeps one hand on  
Prane's shoulder, refers to a clipboard.

GUARD AT DOOR  
Entering the Hearing Room, prisoner  
number five-five-dash-five-zero-dash-  
zero-seven, Anderson Daniel Prane.

PRANE  
Ohh, this is about that test I took-

GUARD AT DOOR  
Shh. Sit.

Guard seats Prane at the immediate table, next to the woman  
in the nice suit and expensive shoes; steps away. The woman  
is, LILIAN FOSTER: mid-forties, attractive; comes across as  
smart but not haughty. She chews gum, smiles warmly.

LILIAN  
Well, if it isn't the Plant Man of  
San Quentin. You've gotten sort of  
famous-

PRANE  
Hey, Ms Foster...

Prane seems unused to the bright but environmentally-friendly  
lights. She gives his hand a firm shake.

LILIAN

*Lilian*, please. You look like you just woke up.

PRANE

Well, maybe I did...What is all this?

LILIAN

I do not know, Anders. Anderson? But I don't think you did anything wrong.

PRANE

That never stopped 'em before...

LILIAN

Do you remember that test they did on you a few months ago, with the injection?

PRANE

Yeah...fun...

The SECRETARY-BAILIFF hands Lilian several papers, which she examines, with growing astonishment. Prane looks around as he drinks water from the glass in front of him, pours some more.

There is an elevated bench as in court, nearly the width of the room, with names on placards lined up and sitting behind them several males and females in business suits, the man in the center in judge's robes.

There are two men seated at a table between Lilian, Prane and the bench. Neither looks happy to be there. DELLIOT HUTSHING fifty-four, looks younger; the epitome of a wealthy but soulless cad who may live forever. DREW SARKER is an Asian-American man of sixty but looks older, haggard with a paunch.

There are several other people present along the walls: guards, prison and administrative personnel.

PRANE

(eyes Hutshing, Sarker)  
Hello darkness, my old friend...

LILIAN

(still reading)  
This. Is. Wow. Unbelievable-

PRANE

Unbelievable good or unbelievable not-so-much?

SECRETARY-BAILIFF

All stand for the Honorable Judge Rossiter Wentz.

Everyone seated in the room stands. ROSSITER WENTZ enters.

Wentz is black, seemingly blind; authoritative without being pompous; looks sixty or so.

WENTZ

Sit please. I will waste no time with superfluties. As the current head of the parole board it seems I am now, if only for now, also the chief administrator of the new Even Stevens release program.

Everone sits. Prane giggles, even after Lilian's hand goes to his mouth. Wentz stops, "looks" in Prane's direction.

WENTZ (cont.)

Mr. Prane-

PRANE

Yes, your Honor.

WENTZ

Have I given you anything to laugh about yet?

PRANE

No. No, your Honor. - It's just that I - I could'a used you before I ended up here twenty-two years, six months and three days ago.

WENTZ

(addressing entire room)

Some of you may recognize the gentlemen seated over here as the former D.A. of Oakland, Delliot Hutshing and the lead detective on the Anderson prane case, Drew Sarker. They, like my colleagues up here, are here to listen and bear witness - but not to otherwise participate.

Prane gives them a cockeyed smile until Lilian slides a pen and pad of paper toward him, things he might need.

WENTZ (cont.)

What this is a type of Emancipation Hearing - but the likes of which have not existed before today.

PRANE

(mutters)

Emancipation.

WENTZ

We are the Restitution Council, the purpose of which, I believe, will prove forthcoming.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

WENTZ (cont.)

The Even Steven Doctrine is named after Senator, Augusta Stevens, who worked hard to get it made into law. It is administered by us, the RC. - Okay. Mr. Prane, do you recall being given a blood-test procedure several months ago?

PRANE

Yes. Yes, I do, Judge.

WENTZ

That procedure was the first step in a new process called M.C.M., Memory-Capture Mindprinting with which the State will be, if all goes well, routinely reviewing the cases of convicted felons within its penal system. The details of M.C.M. are spelled out in the literature your council has been given.

Lilian nods. The panel-member next to Wentz tells him this. He goes on. Lilian shows Prane that she has those papers.

WENTZ (cont.)

The results of that process are in. Let the transcript show: Anderson Daniel Prane is hereby pronounced innocent of the crime for which he was convicted in 2000, his record is wiped clean and he shall be released from the San Quentin State Penitentiary immediately following the finish of this hearing.

There is buzzing among everyone not on the panel, even the guards. Wentz makes it clear he will only continue upon their silence, relaxes. They shut up. Prane just started to write.

WENTZ (cont.)

I haven't gotten to best part yet: The Attorney General of North California has seen fit to make this the first case to which it applies the new Even Steven Doctrine. Therefore, Mr. Prane, because the State does not have the funds with which to compensate you for your wrongful incarceration, it is hereby issuing you a Dispatch Sanction, the period of which begins tomorrow. This Dispatch Sanction means that you have sixty days in which you may, legally and without threat of prosecution or arrest, take the life of another human being. It's all spelled out there in the literature.

The room is stunned silent. Prane, dazed, looks at Lilian.

LILIAN

(whispering)

I didn't know the test results 'til  
just now and I didn't tell you more  
'cause I didn't want to get your  
hopes up.

WENTZ

Let me go over a bit of terminology,  
since this is new to everyone: Mr.  
Prane, you are now what's known as a  
*restitute*, being the recipient of the  
Dispatch Sanction. A restitute cannot  
choose a member of the court or penal  
system as his target, also referred  
to as his quarry. Also, a Restitute  
cannot choose an individual who pays  
the State of North California in excess  
of 10 million dollars in taxes annually.  
We need that revenue...

(senses Prane is overwhelmed)

Mr. Prane, before I go on are there  
any questions?

Prane snaps out of his daze, looks to Lilian, looks back up  
at Wentz, nearly breaking pen in hand.

PRANE

Yeah - uhmm, am I now a "destitute"?

WENTZ

No. The word used is "restitute".

(checks notes)

Furthermore...the violation of any  
of these conditions will mean the  
agreement between the State and the  
Restitute is vitiating...

Prane pulls a paperback dictionary from the pocket of his  
jumper, looks up *vitiate* as Wentz's voice fades into the  
background.

PRANE

(reading)

*viciate*: verb; 1. to spoil, corrupt,  
pervert; 2. to invalidate a contract,  
etc. 'Thought so...

Lilian looks concerned that Prane is being disruptive.

LILIAN

Anders, I'll go over all this with  
you a.s.a.p.

Prane begins to zone out again; it is all too much.

WENTZ

In conclusion - yes, there is a conclusion - you have been assigned a transitional assistant, also known as a Retinue-

PRANE

A *retin-what*, now?

WENTZ

-to help give you the best chance of a satisfactory reintroduction to society - one Dr. Hardy Mikkler.

Wentz gestures to the man seated between him and Prane, who stands, nods. He, DR. HARDY MIKKLER, is white, in his late forties; wiry, alert; seems buttoned-up only for the hearing; wears bifocals and an easy-going smile.

WENTZ (cont.)

Now Mr. Prane, believe me when I say I don't ever want to see you in here again. Unless you actually did something wrong.

(slams gavel joyfully)

This hearing is hereby finished.

Everyone begins to disperse as they yak. Lilian, elated, sees Prane's eyes narrowed on Hutshing and Sarker as they exit.

LILIAN

The days of them hurting you are over. Forget the cunts.

PRANE

Easier said...

Hardy joins them, smiling, a modest briefcase in hand.

HARDY

(shakes Prane's hand)

Well, if it isn't Citizen Prane himself.

Prane smiles knowingly.

PRANE

Oh-uh, Doctor, I have this thing in my lower back that's bothering me...

HARDY

Hardy Mikkler. Mr. Prane-

PRANE

I like that with the "Mr." in front it, yeah...

HARDY

Anders. If you like, think of me as your director of chaos or the next-

PRANE

So, there will be chaos?

HARDY

Not if we do our job, me and this-

LILIAN

(shaking Hardy's hand)

Doctor. It's been a while.

(to Prane)

Hardy's a good guy. You're lucky to have him. Get him to my office tomorrow at four?

HARDY

Will do.

PRANE

No you won't. Not if I-

HARDY

Will try my best.

Lilian gives them both a punch on the shoulder, exits. They size each other up. Prane indicates Hardy's glasses.

PRANE

What's with the...

HARDY

Bifocals. They make me look more important-

PRANE

No, they don't.

(as if to snatch them)

Even I know what fucking century this is.

HARDY

Moving on...The first stop is the Discharge Department, yes?

PRANE

Without a guard to accompany us?

HARDY

Not unless you think I need guarding.

Prane isn't touching that. He exits the room tentatively but like everyone else, Hardy right behind.

INT. SAN QUENTIN CORRIDORS. DAY.

Prane and Hardy make their way through the many corridors of the prison. Prane looks more serious, now that it's just the two of them.

PRANE

So...am I your bitch, now?

HARDY

We can play it that way. I like games.

PRANE

No, c'mon - don't sulk...

(sigh)

You can call me Anders instead of Mr. Prane. How's that? Unless you're mad at me. Then, like with my Ma, it's *Anderson Daniel Prane!*

Hardy almost cracks a smile. They approach a counter marked:

DISCHARGE DEPT.

HARDY

We're getting there, buddy.

Hardy hands one of them papers from his breifcase. Prane suddenly has his sense of humor back.

PRANE

H'lo, is this the emancipation window?

Hardy and the personnel behind the counter all laugh, except the one white guy with the red neck.

DISCHARGE GUY

This is the *Get Me the Fuck Outta Here* window.

Prane smirks but then looks a bit out of it again.

DISCHARGE GUY

(skimming paperwork)

Anderson Daniel Prane. Date of birth?

PRANE

Uhhh - March 23, 1972.

Discharge Guy's voice fades out as Prane a has:

FLASHBACK TO

INT. SAN QUENTIN CORRIDORS - DAY (2000).

Prane is still standing before the Discharge Dept. counter in

an orange jumper only he's accompanied by two guards, looks twenty-some years younger and is being checked in. Visibly shaking with horror, his arms-to-legs shackles rattling as he hands over the few possessions he was allowed in county jail.

INTAKE GUY

You will have to earn these back with good behavior. Prane? Understood?

PRANE

Yep...

INTAKE GUY

Not yep. Yes, sir.

PRANE

Yes. Sir.

INTAKE GUY

Now, considerin' you killed a child I think you'll do all right. Just play up the part about him being white and Catholic.

Prane looks unsure he needed to hear that.

RETURN TO

INT. SAN QUENTIN CORRIDORS. DAY. (2022)

DISCHARGE GUY

(to Hardy and Prane)

You know, before the California Screamin' Riots and Reforms San Quentin prison was known as "God's butthole."

Prane has no reaction; may still be stuck in the past.

DISCHARGE GUY (cont.)

Mr. Prane...?

HARDY

Anderson can't believe his seven and a half minutes of fame have finally begun.

The Discharge Guys snigger. Hardy looks at Prane.

HARDY (cont.)

He'll be okay though.

Discharge Guy gives Hardy some papers back. Hardy winks, takes Prane by the shoulder, leads him on down the hall.

INT. SAN QUENTIN GENERAL POPULATION. DAY.

Holding a box of items, Hardy watches from the door of Prane's cell as he gathers his few belongings, mostly books, into a larger box. He leaves a few items, including several small potted plants. His CELLMATE lies sleepily on his cot.

PRANE

Take what you want before they come get it.

CELLMATE

'Kay.

PRANE

I told 'em you're the one to take over my greenhouse.

CELLMATE

Beats the hell out of cleaning toilets.

Prane sees Cellmate is fast asleep; stands at entrance to the cell one last time, nods to Hardy, who nods back. They walk off as a guard slides the gate shut.

INT. SAN QUENTIN CORRIDORS - RESTROOM. DAY.

Hardy and Prane walk swiftly through the corridor with the boxes, Hardy's briefcase under one arm. Prane is cheering up.

PRANE

This is called a quick-before-they-change-their-minds jog we're doing.

Hardy smiles, checks his wee cellphone.

PRANE (cont.)

Lemme see that.

Hardy hands cell to Prane reluctantly.

PRANE (cont.)

I've seen these in the visitor's room...Will you look at that...

Prane gives it back. They pass a closed door marked:

RESTROOM

PRANE

You know, I need to stop.

HARDY

You aren't planning to attempt an escape on me are you?

After a moment they both smirk, Hardy pointing playfully.

PRANE

You got me.

Hardy sets down his box and case along the wall. Prane puts his near them, still hesitating.

HARDY

Take your time then.

Prane enters restroom, finds it empty, splashes water on face, looks in the mirror, throws water at it, paces, blindly grabs stall door, mistake what's beyond it for a cell...

FLASHBACK TO

INT. SAN QUENTIN GENERAL POPULATION (2000)

Prane steps into cell, his folded bedding in his arms.

ORIGINAL CELLMATE

(approaching him)

Hi, I'm Callum. You are-

PRANE

No, no. No need for names. I don't plan on being here very long. Not very long at all.

ORIGINAL CELLMATE

Me neither, brother! I hear 'ya. But just in case...

Cellmate tosses a thick paperback onto Prane's cot; it's a paperback dictionary, the one Prane just had at the hearing.

ORIGINAL CELLMATE (cont.)

(cackles with glee)

...there's a real page-turner for you to pass the time with.

INT. SAN QUENTIN VISITORS ROOM (2007).

Prane is in a heated discussion with REESE ST. JEROME: early to mid-fifties white guy in a high-end suit and Rolex; grey distinguishes the temples. Is much more at ease than Prane.

PRANE

I realize the appeals process can take a long time but-

ST. JEROME

I know, Anders, I know. Five years must feel like an eternity when you're-

PRANE

Five years? Try seven, you bastard!

Prane follows St. Jerome's eyes to a curvaceous female visitor and lurches at him, hands around his neck...

RETURN TO

INT. SAN QUENTIN CORRIDORS, RESTROOM - DAY.

Prane has collapsed on his butt against the wall by the sink, face buried in one arm, the other hand gripping the sink's pipe so hard it bends.

PRANE

This shouldn't've...twenty-two years,  
six months, three days...twenty-two  
years, six months, three days...

Prane opens his eyes, releases the pipe, gets his breathing back to almost normal, stands. Hardy knocks, sticks his head in, a change of clothes in hand.

HARDY

Why don't you change while you're at it?

Prane rinses, dries his hands, grabs the clothes.

INT. EXT. SAN QUENTIN MAIN ENTRANCE - PARKING LOT. DAY.

Hardy and Prane walk in silence through the corridor leading to the main entrance, briefcase and boxes in arms. Prane's shirt and pants are new if not tailored.

HARDY

A lot of memories, I bet.

PRANE

(scoffs, looks at him)  
Oh, yeah - good times... Let's just  
say I'm blocking out the other ninety-  
nine percent and leave it at that.

HARDY

Let's do that.

Prane and Hardy reach the area separately marked:

MAIN ENTRANCE / MAIN EXIT

There is an EXIT GUARD in a booth people (mostly visitors) check in with before they leave. Hardy shows him the release papers; GUARD waves them through, then has to catch up with them on the other side of the turnstiles.

EXIT GUARD

Mr. Prane? Anderson Prane...!

Prane and Hardy stop dead in their tracks. Prane cannot hide his alarm.

EXIT GUARD (cont.)

There's a phone call for you.

PRANE

Tell 'em I stepped out...Do you know-?

EXIT GUARD

(grinning)

Some news outlet asking if you have a statement.

HARDY

And so it begins.

PRANE

Do I have a statement?

(ponders)

Tell them I don't know if I have a statement but I had a sentence - a sentence for over twenty-two years and now I get to put a motherfucking period at the end of it.

EXIT GUARD

Will do, Mr. Prane!

Guard returns to booth. Prane and Hardy proceed out the doors to the parking lot. Prane can barely talk.

PRANE

El...Elvis has left the building...

HARDY

I'm over here.

They approach Hardy's car, a once-sporty but old hybrid number. Prane pretends to balk.

HARDY (cont.)

What?

PRANE

Where's your hover-craft?

HARDY

In the shop. Would you like I should call a mother-fuckin' hover taxi...?

They flash smiles. Hardy pulls out his keys, presses the button they are attached to twice; the four doors pop open, startling Prane a bit. They put the boxes and briefcase in the back seat and get in.

Hardy drives to the front gate, again shows release papers. The gate opens. Hardy proceeds, turns, takes off down the road. He removes his bifocals, puts them in breast pocket. Prane tries not to smirk. They drive out of sight.

EXT. HIGHWAYS OF NORTH CALIFORNIA - DAY.

Hardy's car: he's still driving. Prane looks up from his dictionary at the East Bay traffic: mostly tiny cars the occasional larger truck. Prane returns to the dictionary.

PRANE

Here it is: edict - noun; a public order or decree.

(thinks)

I could become addicted to edicts...

Hardy veers onto an exit ramp marked:

OAKLAND

PRANE

Oakland. There still no there there?

HARDY

(laughs, shrugs)

You let me know, as an outsider looking in...

Prane nods, takes a swig of his eco-safe bottle of water.

PRANE

I know we're going over a bunch of literature tomorrow but care to fill me in on how this thing works - this Dispatch Sanction?

HARDY

If you want. Uhhmm...July first, this July first - keep that date in mind. You have until then to use the D.S.

PRANE

Almost like a coupon.

HARDY

Midnight.

PRANE

Now that's a deadline.

HARDY

Yes. It is. Uhh - you will contact me if or when you've decided to use the D.S. and on whom. Firstly, you don't want to be endangering anyone else-

PRANE  
(nodding)  
Any innocent bystanders. Naturally.

HARDY  
So no blowing something up-

PRANE  
No releasing the ebola virus.

HARDY  
You are, however, allowed to do this  
with spectators.

PRANE  
(smirking in disbelief)  
Can I sell tickets?

HARDY  
I don't know. Will get back to you on  
that one...

Hardy gives Prane a chance to process as he watches traffic.

PRANE  
Hello, tiny cars...Basically this  
needs to be a premeditated er' -  
killing even though  
(air quotes)  
*premeditated* used to mean the crime  
was worse.

HARDY  
Y'got that right. It's a new world.  
Save the receipt. Ummm, what else?  
You cannot just wound someone and re-  
name someone else as your quarry.

PRANE  
No takesie-backsies. Got it.

HARDY  
You'll be fine. No one's expecting  
the first to not make any mistakes-

PRANE  
But I don't want to spoil it for the  
licenced killers who follow me...

Hardy nods, smiles. Prane is quiet; closes his eyes.

PRANE (cont.)  
Ain't that the damndest thing...?

They pass a large billboard that reads:

WELCOME TO OAKLAND, NORTH CALIFORNIA

HARDY

So what'd you learn in prison,  
anything worth while?

PRANE

Anything worth twenty-two years, six  
months and three days?

HARDY

Sorry. You don't know how many hours?

PRANE

(lets that one go)  
Did find myself the recipient of a  
prison-warming gift-  
(the dictionary)  
-and found myself looking up words  
more and more and then couldn't stop.

HARDY

Intriguing. What was the very first  
word, do you remember?

PRANE

Sure do. It was *penitent*.

HARDY

Penitent.

PRANE

*Penitent*: adjective; sorry for having  
done wrong and willing to atone. Comes  
from the word *penitent*. So's *penance*-

HARDY

You don't fucking say. - So I suppose  
you read a lot too.

PRANE

I guess.

HARDY

What kinds of books?

PRANE

Paper ones.

HARDY

Funny. So the Kimbles and such-?

PRANE

Still considered security risks.

They just drive in silence a moment. Prane drinks.

HARDY

So what did you miss most while in  
there - family, friends?

PRANE

Things that grow.

HARDY

Things that grow? But you had all  
your plants-

PRANE

They just survive. Nothing grows in  
the pen. Except resentment.

EXT. INT. PRANE'S HOUSE, OAKLAND - DAY.

Hardy pulls onto a street and slows to a crawl, looking at the middle class, middle-aged houses and yards. Then, behind a police barriade, there is a small crowd of media people and protestors with signs like:

EVEN STEVEN LAW IS VIGILANTISM!

and:

LEGALIZED MURDER IS STILL MURDER!

HARDY

We must be close.

PRANE

Oh, yeah...rubberneckers...

HARDY

They're not allowed any closer than  
that right now, so once we get you  
inside...

Prane nods. Two reporters break free of the herd, trotting right up to Hardy's car with their cordless microphones.

REPORTER #1

Mr. Prane, Mr. Prane, is it true that  
your using the "freebie" is not a  
question of if but when-?

REPORTER #2

Do you know who did commit the murder  
for which you were incarcerated?

HARDY

(to Prane)

Don't answer. Rogue reporters - like  
they don't know about the official  
press conference tomorrow.

Police let Hardy past the barricade; Prane points to the first house on the left. Hardy pulls up the driveway.

HARDY (cont.)

You recognize the house?

PRANE  
(snickering)  
Or not. We shall see.

The fair-sized two-story house could use a paint-job at the very least. The yard needs lots of work. Hardy shuts off the car. They both take a moment to breathe.

HARDY  
Why don't we leave your stuff for the moment?

PRANE  
Yeah, I may need you to drive me back from wence I came.

They get out, go up the front porch steps. The porch door flies open and IDELLA PRANE charges at Prane like hell on wheels in an apron; seems way less than eighty; petite but sturdy, dressed in her nicest clothes. The corsage is new.

IDELLA  
There he is! There he is! Lord God Almighty in heaven...!

PRANE  
Hey, Ma...!

Idella and Prane embrace, smiling ear-to-ear then she stops and gestures them in. They enter ahead of her.

IDELLA  
C'mon now before the neighbors get wind.

HARDY  
Thank you.

The roomy but cluttered livingroom and diningroom are decorated with crepe paper and a homemade sign:

WELCOME HOME ANDERS/DAD!

A buffet table has enough food to feed a small army.

PRANE  
This is my mother, Idella... Ma, this is Hardy. He's my - my - my ride...

HARDY  
(shaking her hand)  
Pleasure, Mrs. Prane.

IDELLA  
Hardly-

PRANE  
Hardy, Ma. He's the - what they call a *retinue* assigned to me now that I'm out.

IDELLA

A re-ti-nue...

HARDY

Transitional assistant.

IDELLA

Why didn't you say so. Okay, this over here is Graden. He wasn't assigned to me. I just like having him around now and then. Graden...?

GRADEN is well beyond eighty, keeps to himself, seems glued to the chair he's in, just inside the diningroom; focused on the finger-food he's knoshing. Idella removes her apron.

PRANE

Graden, you taking good care of my Mother? Huh?

IDELLA

(smacks Prane with apron)  
Anders, don't be vulgar!

Graden doesn't even achknowledge him or Hardy.

PRANE

(looking around)  
So I see you're holding down the fort pretty well-

IDELLA

Well, seeing ain't always believin'. Let's just say we need to talk and leave it at that.

PRANE

Okay.  
(to Hardy)  
Ma moved in with Maribelle and Eloise when I went away-

IDELLA

And then Eloise moved out - moved in with- Well, I'll let her tell you.

Prane looks surprised.

HARDY

(to Prane)  
So you own the house.

PRANE

Yep. You should know that. - In this town they didn't dare try taking my house too, not with a wife and baby.

Idella circles Prane, takes her own damn time.

IDELLA  
Well lemme get a look at you.  
(hems, haws)  
Your posture has improved.

PRANE  
It must be the Chi Gung, Ma.

IDELLA  
Well, keep eating lots of it then.

MARIBELLE, a plump but pretty, well-groomed woman in her mid-twenties with a sweet, genuine smile enters from the kitchen.

PRANE  
There she is...My darling daughter...

Prane and Maribelle embrace.

MARIBELLE  
Hi, Dad...

PRANE  
Guess who made it home.

MARIBELLE  
I must be hallucinating...

PRANE  
Did you do the decorations? They're terrific.

MARIBELLE  
(nodding)  
Thanks. Didn't have much time.

PRANE  
I know, I know. It all happened really fast.

Hardy puts out his hand. Maribelle shakes it.

PRANE  
Hardy, this is Maribelle. Maribelle - my uhmm - new best friend?

MARIBELLE  
Hey.

HARDY  
So you're the ace college student I've heard about.

Maribelle is clearly embarrassed.

PRANE  
She sure is!

IDELLA

(to Hardy)

Looks like we got too much food. Come have some.

HARDY

Will do, Mrs. Prane

Hardy and Idella go into diningroom. Prane can't take his eyes off Maribelle.

PRANE

My-my-my-my-my...

MARIBELLE

You're acting like you haven't seen me in years and years.

PRANE

But it's seemed like years and years so what's the difference?

Maribelle grabs a small, wrapped gift which she hands to him.

MARIBELLE

Didn't think you'd have one of these yet-

PRANE

What's this?

MARIBELLE

A little welcome home present.

Prane unwraps a new hand-held cell-phone, delighted.

PRANE

Belle, what did you do-?

MARIBELLE

It has all the numbers I can think of right now already programmed into it.

PRANE

Oh good, like the welfare office, unemployment office, pawn shop-

Maribelle holds up her wrist on which is a cell-phone the shape and size of a chunky bracelet.

MARIBELLE

I got the old fashioned kind instead of one of these because you're old and you'd just get pissed off trying to-

PRANE

Thank you, sweetheart.

(hugs her)

I'm old - is that what you said-?

MARIBELLE

Wait 'til you hear the ring-tone.

PRANE

This sounds ominous. Why don't you call me and we'll get this over with-

MARIBELLE

No, no. Bad luck. Your first call should be a real one.

PRANE

Okay...School must be paying better than I remember-

MARIBELLE

(finger raised to say hush)

Also bad luck, Dad.

Prane pretends to lock his lips shut; hugs her again. Idella and Hardy return from diningroom, Hardy shoveling food off a plate, into his mouth. Idella looks out to the driveway.

HARDY

Hmm-mmm, Anders! You gotta try these.

PRANE

But once I start I won't stop.

IDELLA

There's Eloise.

PRANE

Everybody hide!

Maribelle is amused. Idella barely hears.

PRANE

(to Hardy)

Kidding.

IDELLA

(to Hardy)

Now, Eloise is the wife who divorced him ten years ago while he was in prison.

PRANE

Is there more than one wife, Ma?

IDELLA

I don't know, Mr. Smart-mouth. Is there?

Maribelle opens the front door for ELOISE, a violently thin, sharply-dressed, ironed hair black woman of forty-five, but hanging onto her thirties with all she's got.

MARIBELLE

'Sup, Mom?

ELOISE

I would've been here a lot sooner if  
not for that media mob out there.  
Jesus Hollingsworth Christ.

Eloise and Prane step awkwardly to each other for a cursory  
hug, then step away.

PRANE

Eloise.

ELOISE

Anders. I hate you. You look good.  
Considering...

HARDY

Anders, I wish I had this many women  
in my life.

Hardy puts out his hand to shake Eloise's. She instead lights  
a cigarette from her purse, sets purse on couch.

PRANE

Hardy here is- What am I calling you  
again?

ELOISE

Your chaperone?

They all chuckle, Hardy only to fit in.

HARDY

Just making sure he doesn't do anything  
he may regret in the morning.

PRANE

I bet you never thought you'd see me  
again-

ELOISE

What about visiting days?

PRANE

What about visiting days? You didn't  
seem to know about visiting days-

ELOISE

I was there. I drove Maribelle 'til  
she could drive herself.

PRANE

And then you stopped.

ELOISE

I had to move on, Anders.

PRANE

You never explained that to me-

ELOISE

You never explained to me you were innocent.

PRANE

You never asked!

IDELLA

Eloise? Food?

ELOISE

No, thanks. I'm okay, 'Della.

(to Prane)

You know what? I saw more of you than you know-

PRANE

You saw me-

ELOISE

On that TV horticulture thing, "Plant Man of San Quentin" or whatever-

IDELLA

I assumed *horticulture* was prison code for something else and turned off the TV.

PRANE

That saved my sanity, being able to raise plants, show other guys how to.

ELOISE

So now you're something called a *resti-restitute-*

PRANE

Resitute.

IDELLA

Oh, dear Lord - 'sounds like a-a lazy prositute.

Hardy, Eloise and Prane laugh.

HARDY

You're right, it does.

(points at Idella)

Very clever lady is what you are.

MARIBELLE

So *restitute* is a real word?

PRANE

It's a real word, sweetheart. But I prefer *guy with a license to kill*.

Hardy winces. Awkward silence. Eloise is stressing.

ELOISE

You know, 'Della, I could eat some'in.

Eloise steps into diningroom. Idella puts arms around Prane's waist, squeezes.

IDELLA

I for one am over the moon to have my boy back. For starters the garden is a shambles.

Idella follows Eloise. Prane looks out the window.

HARDY

You *are* expecting someone else.

PRANE

What? Can't a man look out his own window once his black ass is allowed to return to his own damn abode?

Hardy and Maribelle are the only ones who hear.

HARDY

How long you been holding that one in-?

PRANE

Since Vallejo.

MARIBELLE

Dad, we invited everyone we could think of - besides, you know...

PRANE

Sully.

HARDY

Ahh, Sully Ziegler, the ex-best friend who could've provided you with an alibi but chose not to...

(shrugs, chews)

It's in your file.

PRANE

Belle, you did good not inviting him. He probably doesn't have the nerve-

Hardy's laugh stops Prane in his tracks.

PRANE (cont.)

What's so fucking funny?

MARIBELLE

(hand out)

Ah! You owe me a dollar - swear word.

Prane gives her a dollar from his wallet, eyes on Hardy.

HARDY

Just the headline: Prane uses D.S. on former best friend six hours after release from prison.

PRANE

You know what's also funny? Cancer.

HARDY

(sees Idella returning)  
Oh-oh, here we go.

Idella has a tray of punch in cups, makes sure everyone has one. Graden drinks. Eloise enters nibbling, cigarette gone.

IDELLA

Everybody, thank you for being here. I'd like to propose a toast to the day no one in their right mind ever thought would come - including me.

PRANE

Now, Ma...

IDELLA

To Anderson and what's left of his life. May he make up for lost time.

EVERYONE

To Anderson...Cheers...

Everyone raises his/her cup, drinks.

PRANE

And here's to not drinking the Kool-Aid.

Everyone seems amused, drinks. Prane waits a moment:

PRANE (cont.)

Hey, anyone know where Roger is?

Eloise spits up in her cup. Prane looks only curious.

IDELLA

Yes. Where is that Roger, anyhow?

Maribelle shrugs. Eyes fall on Eloise, who is uneasy.

IDELLA (cont.)

Eloise, have you seen him, have you seen Roger lately?

ELOISE

Well, you might as well know right now, your brother and I have been seeing each other-

IDELLA

And shacking up.

ELOISE

I moved in with him couple of years ago-

IDELLA

Three.

ELOISE

And he's not here because we decided  
it best if I told you myself.

Everyone anxiously awaits Prane's response. He has none.

PRANE

So, again, why isn't he here?

MARIBELLE

I was going to tell you but I had no  
idea you were - y'know, gettin' out-

PRANE

I know, angel face, I know...  
(big sigh)

So it's official then: My brother  
really is an imbecile.

Reactions vary. Eloise steps carefully closer.

ELOISE

This mean you're not angry?

PRANE

Since when do you care whether or not  
I'm angry about something?

ELOISE

Since I heard about this...since  
you've been given this-this thing-

PRANE

You mean the Dispatch Sanction? Are  
you worried I'm going to use the  
Dispatch Sanction on one of you?

ELOISE

I don't know. Should I be?

PRANE

I don't know. What have you done that  
you're not telling me about?

ELOISE

Nothing.

PRANE

And the imbecile?

ELOISE

If Roger is an imbecile then - well  
then - even Texas knows you can't  
execute a mentally disabled-

IDELLA

Oh, for heaven's sake...!

Prane looks to Hardy for his input. Maribelle does the same.  
Hardy is at a loss for words.

HARDY

I cannot intervene in any way in-in...

Prane cracks up laughing so hard everyone just waits:

PRANE

(to Eloise)

I sat in prison for twenty-two years  
and now for the first time, against  
all odds, I see you are scared of me.

ELOISE

Meaning?

PRANE

Meaning it might just've been worth it!

Prane laughs some more. Hardy and Idella try not to.  
Eloise grabs her purse, heads for the front door. Idella  
brings her small plate of cake and plastic fork:

IDELLA

Here, bring Roger some cake.

ELOISE

'Della, he's not along with.

Idella doubts her. Prane darts out to Eloise's car. Idella  
gives the cake to Hardy, who eats it. Maribelle sips a *Red  
Bull for Ladies*. Prane returns, shrugging.

PRANE

Not there.

Eloise marches out, yanking the door shut, gets in her car  
and speeds off as Prane and Hardy watch from the window.

HARDY

You're going to milk this for all  
it's worth, aren't you?

Prane just smiles. Idella steps back into diningroom.

IDELLA

Graden? Cake!

GRADEN

(groggily)

I want Kool-Aid!

INT. EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Prane has the TV news on in the livingroom as he unpacks his boxes, including small gardening tools and the dictionary.

ANCHORMAN

Well, it has happened: The state that many now call *Can't Afford-Ya'* - or make that *North Can't-Afford-Ya'* - has stopped giving monetary restitution to it's inmates found innocent through the latest DNA testing. The state is too deeply in debt...

Prane steps closer to the TV to listen clearly.

ANCHORMAN (cont.)

Thus the whole country - make that the entire globe - is watching intently as North California implements what is called the Even Steven Doctrine, a first-of-its-kind law that will give it's beneficiary, one Anderson Daniel Prane, the right to take the life of one other human being. Prane had been convicted of murdering ten-year old Finney Keller and had done twenty-two years in San Quentin. Whoops.

PRANE

Twenty-two years, six months and three days, motherfucker!

ANCHORMAN

So, do the wrongly convicted have special rights? Has

(air quotes)

"convicted child-killer Prane" become "Citizen Prane"...?

PRANE

Oh, yeah...here we go...

Prane is about to hit OFF on the remote; instead browses the room as if everything is unfamiliar, framed pictures, etc.

ANCHORMAN (cont.)

We have Senator Stevens himself standing by to discuss with us some of these ramifications. Senator, are you there?

STATE SENATOR STEVENS is a dapper, charismatic mid-forties man, who expertly switches from lightness to seriousness as called-for. His name has a (D) next to it on the screen.

STEVENS

I'm here, Johnny.

ANCHORMAN

Senator, first of all, is it true that you changed your middle name to "Even" as a sign of your dedication to this bill?

STEVENS

Indeed I did, Johnny. I'm proud of this new law and...

PRANE

My God, even the good guys are out of their minds.

Prane tries in vain to turn off TV by pushing buttons.

PRANE (cont.)

Shut off! Now!

The TV shuts off. Prane simmers down. Curious, he tries a verbal command into the remote only.

PRANE (cont.)

TV on.

The TV comes on.

PRANE (cont.)

Off! Off for the love of...

The TV goes off again. Prane puts the remote down.

PRANE (cont.)

Hmm. Cool.

Startling him, his new cell-phone next to it rings with "Colonel Bogie's March" from "Bridge on the River Kwai". He picks it up like something toxic as it rings again:

DA-DAH, DA-DAH-DA-DUH-DUH-DUH...

Prane nearly panics as he tries to answer it. Fails. After the third ring, the answering machine on the counter in the diningroom goes CLICK. Prane steps in, watches its blinking red light; a synthetic male voice answers the call:

ANSWERING MACHINE

Anderson Prane is not able to come to the phone at this moment. Leave your contact info and he will get back to you.

Beep. A friendly-sounding but business-like man is heard:

ORINTHAL MANNING (V.O.)  
Anderson Prane, This is Orinthal Manning.  
Hello. I am a senior representative for  
the Chin-Strap Books publishing house...

PRANE  
Stop! Answering machine stop.

Machine goes silent. Prane is impressed. He sees a little  
light on the answering machine (still) blinking.

PRANE (cont.)  
Answering machine, on. - I command  
thee, on now.

The same synthetic voice is heard:

ANSWERING MACHINE  
This is E.A.S., your Electronic Answering  
Service. You have three messages.

PRANE  
Uhm, identify message one...

ANSWERING MACHINE  
Message one is from business: Chip-  
Strap Books; Orinthal Manning speaking.  
Authenticity has been verified.

PRANE  
*Verified.* But how did you get my number?

ANSWERING MACHINE  
Please repeat question-

PRANE  
Not you, answering machine. Erase  
message one. Give me message two.

ANSWERING MACHINE  
Message one erased. Message two is  
from individual, Sully Ziegler-

PRANE  
Skip message two for Christ's sake.  
Message three?

ANSWERING MACHINE  
Skipping message two. Message three is  
from business: Associated Text news  
wire. Authenticity has been varified.

PRANE  
A.T. Damn reporters got my number too.  
Answering machine, erase message three.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Message three erased.

PRANE

Thank you. Now go the fuck to sleep...

Prane stops short as Idella comes in the front door; is still gussied up but with a hat, coat and purse added.

PRANE (cont.)

Hey, Ma. Your raiment looks nice this evening.

IDELLA

Thanks. I think.

Idella hangs up her coat and hat.

PRANE

How's Graden?

IDELLA

Breathing. So you getting yourself settled, reacquainted, what-have-you?

PRANE

Yeah, just fighting with the latest technology-

IDELLA

You never were one for gadgets and such. Help me with this...

Idella goes to Prane, sets purse down, indicates her corsage, which Prane unpins from her dress. She puts it back in its carton, toddles to kitchen, puts it in fridge. Prane follows.

IDELLA

Maribelle upstairs studying?

PRANE

Or napping. Haven't heard a sound out of her in some time.

IDELLA

That girl is awake at some strange hours...just a heads up...

Idella starts back out the kitchen, turns to Prane.

IDELLA (cont.)

I'm going to take a bath and get to bed early. Tommorow or the next day, when you're not busy, we will have a nice, long talk about, you know...

PRANE

About?

IDELLA

About all these n'er do wells you've  
been stuck with, your brother, your  
ex-best friend. But right now, I want  
you to relax yourself already.

PRANE

Okay, Ma.

Idella cups his cheek, goes upstairs. Prane follows as far as  
the diningroom, scans the liquor cabinet, grabs an ominous  
bottle of orange liquid, heads for the patio (back door).

DOORBELL RINGS.

Prane pauses, does an about face, sets bottle down, checks  
the time, heads for the front door, calls up the stairs:

PRANE

I got it, Ma.

DOORBELL RINGS again.

Prane can't see who it is through the door's little windows;  
opens door. Standing there is SULLY ZIEGLER, a timid, roly-  
poly, disheveled black guy in his late forties; pensive with  
one lazy eye. He holds an unopened bottle in a brown paper  
bag. Prane takes a moment to recognize him.

PRANE (cont.)

Oh...Sully Ziegler. H'lo. Long time.

SULLY

Anders. I come in peace.

PRANE

(caught-off-guard)

Well - you better come in then.

Prane lets Sully step in, closes the door. Awkard silence.

SULLY

I-I didn't show up at your homecoming  
today 'cause I didn't want to cause a  
commotion on such a important occasion.

PRANE

Plus, you weren't invited.

SULLY

No.

PRANE

That's considerate.

SULLY

I did call first

PRANE

So you got that going for you.

SULLY

(handing him the bottle)

Oh, this is for you, a little welcome home, slash, congratulations thing.

Prane looks at what is a bottle of scotch.

PRANE

You know what? I was just thinking about having my own damn self a drink.

SULLY

Really?

PRANE

Yes, so thank you. Join me?

Sully nods. Prane grabs glasses from the liquor cabinet. Sully gazes at a large photo of Maribelle on the wall. Prane heads out the back door, flipping on the patio light.

PRANE

Why don't we go out back?

SULLY

Okay. It's a nice night.

The the light over a table, chairs also reveals part of the yard and surrounding garden. There's a tool shed in the far corner; property line is a row of tall trees. Prane holds the bottle like a hammer, scans yard, mindful of his breathing.

PRANE

Haven't been out here yet... Looks pretty good at night.

(grins)

Maybe I'll just come out at night.

Sully sits as Prane joins him at the table, pours two shots, slides one to Sully; also sits. Sully downs the shot, winces.

PRANE

Your poison never was the liquid kind.

SULLY

Yeah, heh-heh, you still got me pegged, Anders - Anderson...

PRANE

You still doin' the meth?

SULLY

(shaking his head)

Nah. Meth is so - so two-thousand and fifteen. I've taken a liking to NDE.

PRANE

Careful there, Sul', they don't call it Near Death Exerience for nothing.

SULLY

So, you heard of it?

PRANE

Pleassse...I was in the pen, the Gray Bar Hotel. You heard of that?

Prane sits forward, tries for eye contact. Sully grows itchy.

PRANE (cont.)

You never came to visit me, Sul'. Never once.

SULLY

I was - I was ashamed...

PRANE

Ashamed? Ashamed of what?

SULLY

That I - that I let down my friend... let him down real bad.

PRANE

Go on.

SULLY

(sniffles)

I should'a vouched for you, Anders. I should'a told the police you couldn't've done that murder 'cause you was with me that whole time.

Long silence, Sully looking down, Prane staring at him.

PRANE

Sul', I didn't just lose my freedom, I lost my best friend. Now, only time will tell what I need t'do about that.

SULLY

I-I understand.

PRANE

I hope so. I might be in touch. I might not.

Sully stands. Prane stands.

SULLY

Yeah, okay, good seeing you. Bye, Anders...I-I'll just go this way.

Sully meanders through the yard along the house back to the street, fading from sight. Maribelle watches from a second story window, though neither of them sees her. Prane, alone at last, downs the shot of the scotch; makes a face.

PRANE

Shit supposed to get better with age.

Prane looks like he may be sick; sits again facing the yard, bent forward; eyes fall on the big oak tree, moving up, up, up to the top, like he'd never seen something so tall.

PRANE (cont.)

Damn...! Things that grow...

FLASHBACK TO

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - DAY (1999).

Prane looks twenty-some years younger; is in the same back yard planting the tree, now an eight-foot tall sapling; makes sure it's straight, shovels in the last dirt as he hums the song, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon". A three-year old version of Maribelle stands nearby, holding a yellow ribbon.

PRANE

Now, oak trees will live two-hundred years or more and are deciduous.

3-YEAR OLD MARIBELLE

Acorns!

PRANE

This one here won't start producing acorns for at least eighteen, twenty years one out of ten thousand of which will become trees.

3-YEAR OLD MARIBELLE

I wanna name it.

PRANE

You want to name the tree, sweetheart? Sounds like you already have a name-

3-YEAR OLD MARIBELLE

Annie!

PRANE

Annie? Why Annie?

3 YEAR-OLD MARIBELLE

Like Annie Oakley. Get it, Dad?

PRANE

Yep! Then Annie Oakley it is.

She hands the ribbon to Prane and he ties it around the tree at her height.

RETURN TO

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (2022).

Prane is now at the tree, on his knees, his hands realizing how much bigger it's gotten. Grown-up Maribelle has appeared over his shoulder, looking like she got out of bed.

MARIBELLE

She may still be growing. What d'you think?

Prane stands; seems both disoriented and somehow rejuvenated.

PRANE

Uhhh, Belle, sure - yeah, you're not old yet, are you, Annie?  
(slaps the tree)  
You're just getting started, aren't you?

MARIBELLE

You okay, Dad?

PRANE

Why?

MARIBELLE

'Cause I'm checkin' up on you. I know what post-traumatic stress disorder looks like...

Their eyes meet. She flinches first, giggles, steps to him.

MARIBELLE (cont.)

I'm messin' with you.

PRANE

Yep...Hey, you just missed Sully.

MARIBELLE

(feigns disappointment)  
No, say it ain't so. And was he with my favorite Uncle Roger too?

PRANE

No, he came a grovelin' alone.

They stand admiring the tree, arm around one another.

MARIBELLE

Promise me, Dad, that whatever you do with the Sanction it won't happen here in our home.

PRANE

To you, young lady, I can absolutely guarantee that.

There is silence except for the crickets. Prane smirks.

PRANE

You got anyone who needs killin'? - Maybe a boy that broke your heart...?

MARIBELLE

Uhhh...there's a dry cleaners that screwed up my laundry.

PRANE

Listen to you. You play hardball, girl.  
(takes his time)  
Hey, the theme from "Bridge on the River Kwai" as my ring-tone is much appreciated.

MARIBELLE

Oh? Good. - Actually that particular piece is called, "Colonel Bogey March".

PRANE

I knew that.

MARIBELLE

No, you didn't.

PRANE

No, I didn't.

Their voices fade as the full length of the tree goes by.

INT. PRANE'S HOUSE - MORNING.

Title comes up on screen:

DAY 1.

Prane is in bed on his back, as if it were only a narrow cot; body jerks; eyes open wearily. He looks around, taking a moment to be sure he's not back in prison; sits up, smiles, relieved. He goes to the door, gingerly opens it as if it might be locked; it's not. He sticks his head out: no one in the hall; steps out, steps back in, out, in; laughs.

PRANE

I'm stepping out for a moment. Nope, changed my mind. Hey, me again...!

Leaves the door ajar, goes to the closet, sees something orange: a t-shirt; finds another orange item, a jacket. Yanks the several orange items out, finds more in the bureau.

PRANE (cont.)

No. Not wearing orange...never again...  
Anything but orange, that's my new motto.  
(goes to the door)  
Anybody know where the nearest Goodwill  
is? Hello?

No answer. Prane grabs the orange flowers in the vase too.

EXT. INT. PRANE'S HOUSE - DAY.

From the kitchen sink Maribelle watches Prane doing a set of Tai Chi on the grass, near the patio. She washes down some pills, then pours and takes two cups of coffee out to the patio steps, sits. Prane finishes the set.

MARIBELLE

Morning, Dad.

PRANE

Morning, sweets. What you've got there?

Maribelle gives him a cup. He drinks. She sips.

PRANE (cont.)

Mmm, thanks.

MARIBELLE

What do you want for breakfast?

PRANE

Yes, thanks.

MARIBELLE

Didn't ask you if you wanted breakfast.  
I asked what you want for breakfast.

Prane is amused. He ponders as he grabs his gardening gloves.

PRANE

Well, let's see - I haven't had Eggs  
Benedict in about twenty years.

MARIBELLE

Neither have I. I'll make waffles.

Maribelle stands, takes his empty cup, goes in. Prane goes to work on the garden, pulling weeds and clipping tall grass.

INT. PRANE'S HOUSE. MORNING.

Maribelle watches Prane clean his plate, guardedly as he works on some sort of list on the back of a yellow business envelope. He sees her waiting for a verdict.

MARIBELLE

You writin' a four-star review, or what?

PRANE

Review...ahhhhh, yes. I am, actually.

MARIBELLE

And?

PRANE

Mmm, well, it's not as good as what I'm used to in the joint but it's okay-

Maribelle swats him with a pot holder, goes to the sink.

PRANE (cont.)

Do we have a daily paper delivered?

MARIBELLE

You mean to the doorstep? Dad, newspapers are only delivered on-line now.

PRANE

I knew that. We just saw dog-eared print-outs that got passed around-

MARIBELLE

Would you like me to print out some of the paper for you? Here...

Maribelle goes to work at the lap-top across the table.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH)

Prane, amused and startled, grabs the phone, still not sure how to work it. Maribelle is about to show him.

PRANE

I got this...

MARIBELLE

Uh-huh.

Prane doesn't have it.

MARIBELLE (cont.)

See who it is first.

She gets up, shows him. Prane is grateful.

CELL-PHONE RINGS again.

Prane answers, talks to Hardy:

PRANE

H'lo, Hardy. Good news or bad-?

HARDY (V.O.)

Well, it's a good thing we're due at your lawyer's office.

PRANE

We are? Oh, right-

HARDY (V.O.)

One o'clock. The L.A. Times wrote this thing and every other source's picking it up but - Lilian will make it fine.

PRANE

So, we're okay-

HARDY (V.O.)

Sure. Will be there shortly.

Click. Maribelle dusts comical amounts of dust off the out-dated printer across the room. It starts to spew news pages.

INT. HARDY'S CAR, DOWNTOWN OAKLAND - DAY.

Hardy still drives. Prane skims through the printed L.A. Times story with consternation.

PRANE

(reads)

Mr. Prane is liable to find himself treated like a paroled sex offender with everyone and their neighbor claiming an entitlement to know how close he lives to...

(skims)

This would be unfair. This would be illogical. So, it'll probably happen...

HARDY

I guess he's on your side.

PRANE

Except when he's got his facts wrong.

(reads)

Prane's original lawyer, Reese St. Jerome, had to retire due to alcoholism.

(stops reading)

No! I fired his ass due to alcoholism.

Hardy nods, smirks.

PRANE (cont.)

Gives lawyers a bad name.

HARDY

Lawyers give lawyers a bad name.

Prane puts away the papers. Watches the scenery.

HARDY (cont.)

So how'd you sleep your first night home?

PRANE

Not well. I had a logistical nightmare.

HARDY

Funny. How'd your evening go after I left? Maribelle's sweet by the by.

PRANE

Let's see...I found out I hold my liquor 'bout as well as an Amish school marm.

HARDY

Aw, c'mon, getting drunk's like riding a bicycle. Trust me.

PRANE

Oh, and my former best friend Sully stopped by.

HARDY

And? - You two best friends again?

Prane stares at him long enough to wipe smile off his face.

PRANE

I think I feel more sorry for him now - more sorry than angry.

Hardy listens. Prane shrugs; nothing else to say.

HARDY

So after Lilian's, we see about a car for you and maybe a job-?

PRANE

Unless I can sell my Sanction for a tidy profit.

HARDY

No. No can do.

PRANE

(showing him a check from wallet)

Ooo, I also need to open a bank account for my twenty-two years, six months and three days worth of prison earnings - all \$294.00 of them-

HARDY

Oh, that's right - you weren't even earning a wage after the first few year-

PRANE

Six, to be exact.

HARDY

It was *exactly* six years?

PRANE

Fuck you.

INT. LILIAN'S LAW OFFICE, OAKLAND - DAY.

Lilian's office is part of a downtown shopping mall, situated in a single-level building with other businesses, surrounded by parking lot with an eye-catching sign out front:

LILIAN FOSTER, ATTORNEY AT LAW

Lilian sits at her desk, speed-reading the L.A. Times story and chewing gum. Prane and Hardy sit in front of her, large windows behind them. Lilian slaps the paper down on one of two equal stacks. Prane stares at Hardy's bifocals until he removes and slips them into his breast pocket.

PRANE

What are those?

LILIAN

(indicating left stack)

These are the copies of the news stories that get that you're an innocent man with or without the Dispatch Sanction. These

(right stack)

are the mindless fucks who think you got what you deserved and are furious that you are not only free but have a license to kill. As you can see, the media people are pretty much split.

HARDY

And do journalists represent the public at large?

LILIAN

Your guess. Anders, you needn't pay any attention unless you have reason to believe someone's making shit up. Then let me know.

Prane nods, brain trying to keep everything in perspective. Lilian hands him a water from her mini-fridge; he drinks.

PRANE

Okay...about my assets. I-I don't have any except the house, right?

LILIAN

Right. Its ownership has reverted back to you and it's worth quite a lot more now than it was in 1999.

HARDY

You thinking about selling, Anders?

PRANE

Not as long as at least one of us wants to live there - me, Maribelle, my Mom.

LILIAN

Now, the offers so far include everything from print interviews and Internet talk shows to book offers-

PRANE

I got one of those on my answering machine. I didn't write down the info-

LILIAN

Next time, do. None of them should be calling you at home. What else...?

(opening a folder)

Oakland school system wants you to go around giving talks to teenage kids telling them your story and...

PRANE

And?

LILIAN

It says, "and the lessons learned."

PRANE

Right, kids. Remember always, being in the wrong place at the wrong time will ruin your life - especially if you work for whitey and whitey happens to be the Catholic Church!

All three laugh. Lilian notes the parking lot and time.

LILIAN

Ah, look! The circus is in town.

They watch the vans and media trucks pulling into the parking lot, fighting for the closest spaces. A helicopter hovers.

LILIAN

Ignore them. They're early.

HARDY

I don't think we can...

PRANE

I'm ready to get this over with.

Media people appear at her door with and without cameras, microphones. Lilian, Hardy and Prane get to their feet.

LILIAN

Here we go. If this gets ugly we do have mall security not too far away-

Prane's not sure she's serious. Lilian goes to the door, turns, faces Prane, fixes his collar. He breathes deep,

LILIAN

The doorway is as far as you go.

Prane nods. Lilian opens the door wide. Prane steps forward. Cameras click; everyone points something at Prane, buzzing.

VARIOUS REPORTERS

Mr. Prane, Mr. Prane...!

Prane raises his hands until they simmer down; points to one.

EURO-NET NEWS-COR

Did you agree not to sue the state in exchange for the freebie?

PRANE

The what?

EURO-NET NEWS COR

The freebie, the Dispatch Sanction.

PRANE

Freebie...good one. Well now, you can't get blood from a rock, can you-

LILIAN

The signed agreement does include a "no law suit" clause.

Prane points to another reporter.

BERKELEY BLOG

Mr. Prane, with the whole country - for that matter, the whole world - watching this first test case, do you or do you not plan to use the Sanction?

PRANE

Well, somebody's got to pay, right? Even if it's an innocent party-

Prane and Hardy are the only ones laughing.

BERKELEY BLOG

Will you use it on a member of the media?

PRANE

And kill the messenger?

OAKLAND OBIT

All cavalier attitude aside, what's your opinion of the Even Steven Doctrine?

PRANE

That it feels like a "We sorry" to those who have been wasting away in prison for something they didn't do.

SAN FRANCISCO BLEEDER

Have you found any upside to having been locked up for the past - what, over two decades?

PRANE

Twenty-two years, six months, three days. Yes, I've learned how to count.

LILIAN

We need to wind this up. My client wishes to make his feelings about using the D.S. clear, don't you, Anders?

PRANE

(nods, scans the herd)

I was not in prison for any act of violence I committed, nor do I have any history of violence. What I am is overwealmed by my stroke of luck and damned if I know what I'm going to do when I come to my senses.

TV REP

Is Reese St. Jerome on your list of possible-?

LILIAN

No more speculative questions like-

PRANE

You happen to have his current address?

Prane smiles wickedly. Clumsy silence except for cameras clicking, the chopper. Prane and Lilian look at each other.

PRANE (cont.)

I-I shouldn't've said that. My bad.

LILIAN

Keep in mind that any of you showing up on Mr. Prane's doorstep will not be invited to the next press conference-

TV REP

And when will that be?

LILIAN

Not when. If. Thank you.

She, Prane and Hardy step back into the office; Lilian slams shut the door and bolts it. The media clamor in protest

EXT. DOWNTOWN OAKLAND - DAY.

Hardy's car, with him driving. Prane browses the folder of business offers Lilian has given him.

HARDY

Okay, Lilian's, DMV...Bank is next?

Prane nods. Hardy spots another strip-mall: a Bank of North America branch is prominently situated in front. He points.

HARDY

You know you wouldn't even need a weapon.

PRANE

Come again?

HARDY

To rob the bank. Everyone seems to be assuming you're packing heat anyway. You could just walk in and say, *gimme all your cash, God damn it.*

PRANE

I know, why don't you go in, tell 'em I'm waiting in the car and I'll sit here browsing legitimmate money-making schemes?

HARDY

Well, now you're just being silly.

INT. BANK OF NORTH AMERICA - DAY.

Prane and Hardy walk in. There's chatter amongst the employees and other customers, fingers wagging as they get in line. A guy with a MANAGER name-tag approaches them uneasily.

MANAGER

Good afternoon, gentlemen. How may I be of assistance to you today?

Prane fumbles for words.

PRANE

H'lo there...

HARDY

He would like to open an account. Re-open actually.

Prane reaches into his inside breast pocket. The Manager flinches. Prane pulls out an old tattered bank book and other paper-work, gives them to Manager, who skims them.

MANAGER

Alright, let's see what we have here.  
Looks like you had an account with us  
twenty-two years ago?

PRANE

Yeah, I had to go away.

MANAGER

Did you...? Well, welcome back and let  
me hand you over to one of our tellers  
to assist you in re-opening that account.

PRANE

Thank you.

Manager leads them to the next available teller, a nervous little thing who recognizes Prane and avoids eye-contact.

MANAGER

Sandra Beth, would you help Mr. Prane  
with his business transactions?

SANDRA BETH

Yes...

Manager walks away. Prane spreads his papers on the counter before Sandra Beth who backs up a bit.

PRANE

H'lo, Sandra Beth. My previous account  
info is on this page and...Well, how  
you gonna read this if you back away?

SANDRA BETH

I'm sorry.

HARDY

You're sorry, what?

Prane's not at all sure what Hardy is doing.

SANDRA BETH

I'm sorry, Mr. Prane?

HARDY

That's better.

PRANE

Hardy.  
(smiles at her)  
Please read this.

SANDRA BETH  
(pushes at the papers)  
Is this the stick-up note? Don't hurt  
me! Here! Take whatever take it all...!

Hardy and Prane look at each other with disbelief. The  
Manager's already heading back in their direction.

EXT. BANK OF NORTH AMERICA - DAY.

Parking lot: Hardy and Prane emerge from the Bank as if from  
combat, at a loss for words momentarily.

PRANE  
I should've taken it just to teach them  
a lesson...

HARDY  
This is new to all of us. They were  
afraid of you...

Both shut up as they reach Hardy's car: a stout METER MAID is  
checking out the way it has been parked, writing a ticket.

METER MAID  
Gentlemen, who is the driver of-?

She recognizes Prane, backs away, almost drop her book.

HARDY  
What seems to be the problem here,  
Ma'am?

METER MAID  
Your front wheels are too far out into  
the line of traffic...  
(eyes back on Prane)  
You're that guy they just released from  
prison - gave you a license to kill.

PRANE  
Guilty.

METER MAID  
You're all over the TV.

PRANE  
Do you want my autograph or something?

METER MAID  
Why, do you want to give it to me?

PRANE  
Frankly, no. Listen, darling, why don't  
we call it even?

METER MAID

(squeezes back into cart)  
Why don't we? You gentlemen have a nice  
day and mind your parking-  
(as she speeds away)  
-or don't mind it. I don't care...

PRANE

See, it doesn't have to all be fear and  
unpleasantness...

Hardy rolls his eyes as they get back in his car; drives off.

PRANE (cont.)

...Like I'm going to waste a perfectly  
good Dispatch Sanction on a golfcart-  
driving-cop. Dang...

EXT. INT. CAR DEALER - DAY.

Prane and Hardy pull up to the curb in front of a car dealer;  
they get out. A middle-aged, Mediterranean man is walking  
along; recognizes Prane, walks with them.

MEDITERRANEAN MAN

Hey-hey-hey, you're that Anderson Prane  
guy they let go.

PRANE

Who now?

MEDITERRANEAN MAN

Listen, I got this cousin who lives in  
Chicago I would gladly reimburse you  
for - y'know, taking care of-

HARDY

Listen, buddy, solicitations are not-

Prane stops. They stop. Prane looks Man in the eye.

PRANE

My Ma put you up to this, didn't she?

MEDITERRANEAN MAN

Your Ma...? No. How is your Ma-?

PRANE

Sorry, my man. Like Hardy said, plus it  
has to be in the state of N. California-

MEDITERRANEAN MAN

I'll bring him here! He hates Chicago.

Prane and Hardy head into the car dealer's showroom. Hardy raises a hand with authority. The Man doesn't dare follow. A SALESMAN smiles broadly at them near the door, ignoring the third guy. Doesn't seem to recognize Prane.

SALESMAN

Good afternoon, gentlemen. How may I help you?

PRANE

First of all, are you hiring?

SALESMAN

Are we hiring? No - not at the moment.

PRANE

Probably just as well. Second: I need a car. Nothing fancy, but dependable and I need it for a good price.

SALESMAN

You're killing me, Mr. Prane.

PRANE

Excuse me?

SALESMAN

(shakes his hand)

I'm Noah Goodman - *and I know a good man when I see one.*

PRANE

You're on TV.

SALESMAN

I'm not the only one. Listen, one celebrity to another, I think we can work something out here.

PRANE

And you're not afraid I'm going to come back and kill you?

SALESMAN

Oh, please. I'm a car dealer. If I had a nickel for every time...

Salesman wanders off to show them some cars. Hardy and Prane aren't sure they want to follow.

EXT. STREETS OF OAKLAND, ST. BARBARA'S PARISH - DAY.

Hardy and Prane driving along again, mostly silent. Prane browses that list of his on the back of the yellow envelope.

PRANE

I think I like it better when they're afraid of me.

HARDY

So, you wanna hold off on the car thing?

PRANE

I wanna hold off on the not asking for trouble thing.

(sits forward)

Hey, slow down here, would you?

Hardy stops at the curb in front of St. Barbara's sprawling parish: a once-majestic stone church and several smaller buildings, hedge-lined gardens, foot-paths with benches.

PRANE

I need to get out here.

HARDY

You sure? St. Barbara's-?

PRANE

I know where we are, Hardy.

HARDY

Do you think Father Voss is still around?

PRANE

Oh, yeah. They made him fucking pastor twelve years ago...and by fucking pastor I hope he's too old to still be fucking little boys-

HARDY

You need closure. I get it.

PRANE

I'm glad because I'm not sure I get it. I can walk home. Thanks, man.

Prane gets out, stands looking the church up and down. Hardy waits, almost says something, drives off. Prane approaches the steps at the front of the church.

FLASHBACK TO

EXT. ST. BARBARA'S PARISH - DAY (1999).

A ten-year old boy runs from the church, chased by a priest in black cassock and collar. They run right past Prane, twenty-some years younger, working on the flowers near the foot of the steps. Prane watches with concern before returning to his own business.

RETURN TO

EXT. INT. ST. BARBARA'S CHURCH - DAY (2022).

Prane goes up the steps to the closed, front doors of the church. Starts back down. Someone exits, goes on her way.

Prane enters tentatively, looks around, walks down center aisle. Quiet. Just three separate people in prayer, a young woman at the back, a kneeling old lady halfway from the altar and a very old, decrepit man, with an overcoat on, sitting in obvious pain in the front pew on the far side. Prane slips into a pew, hesitates, kneels.

FLASHBACK TO

EXT. ST. BARBARA'S PARISH - DAY. (1999)

A younger-looking Prane is pruning some bushes in a corner of the parish grounds. He hears the boy and priest arguing, leans forward, watches through the tall hedges. The priest calls the boy FINNEY, the boy calls the priest FATHER VOSS.

VOSS

Why do you run, Finney?

FINNEY

Father Voss...I don't wanna - I don't wanna be an altar boy anymore.

VOSS

I think I understand. Why don't we go back inside and talk about this further-

FINNEY

NO!

(fumbles)

I'm sorry, Father Voss, b-but I-I'm late for dinner!

Finney runs off in the direction of the street. Voss stays put, tormented, finally heads back into the church. Prane tries to go back to what he was doing.

RETURN TO

INT. EXT. ST. BARBARA'S CHURCH - DAY (2022).

Prane blinks to as if he were sleeping; has to get out of there; stumbles past the old man to the side-door and out onto the sidewalk of the courtyard.

Prane takes in fresh air; He sees the rectory before him, steps toward it, then up the stoop; rings the doorbell; a second time. A thirty-something PRIEST answers the door.

PRIEST

Yes, may I help you?

PRANE

H'lo. I understand Father Abbott Voss is now the pastor of this parish.

PRIEST

That is correct. Do you need to speak with him?

Prane suddenly doesn't know, looks around the courtyard.

PRIEST (cont.)

Sir...?

Prane steps haltingly down to the walk.

PRIEST (cont.)

Whom may I say is in need of his-

PRANE

No, no, he's probably indisposed. I shouldn't've...

PRIEST

Not at all. I know for a fact the pastor is alone, taking a moment for himself.

The Priest indicates the church. Prane realizes the decrepit old man in church is Voss, forces a smile, faces the Priest.

PRANE

I think I just need to...to come back...Thank you, Father...

Prane retreats down a circuitous pathway through the gardens, toward the street. Priest goes back inside. Prane turns into a secluded area; stops, eyes fixed on a spot between some tall hedges and a stone wall; eases himself onto a bench.

FLASHBACK TO

EXT. ST. BARBARA'S PARISH - NIGHT (1999).

The wind howls as the younger Prane finishes up for the day, between the hedges and wall. Has a battery-operated lantern nearby. Digging with a trowel he uncovers first a small hand and arm, then whole body of a boy dressed in a black cassock.

Prane gets enough dirt off the face to see it is Finney. He checks the mouth for breath, the neck for a pulse; Finney is dead. Sits there bewildered, trowel falling out of his hand.

Squad car lights appear without sirens. Two Oakland police officers appear and shine their flashlights on Prane and the boy's body. They pull and aim their weapons.

1ST OFFICER

Oakland Police Department! Don't move.  
Hands in the air where we can see 'em-

PRANE

(hands in the air)

My name is Anderson Prane. I work  
here. I take care of-

2ND OFFICER

Would you know why we were called  
about a prowler on church grounds?

PRANE

I was just about to call you myself. I  
am the parish's gardener. I was-

1ST OFFICER

I need you to lie down on the ground.  
Now!

Prane does as he's told. 1st Officer slaps cuffs on his  
wrists behind his back. 2nd Officer checks the boy's body,  
brushing off more dirt, feeling for a pulse.

2ND OFFICER

(calling it in)

We have what appears to be a male,  
deceased. I'd say ten years old. Time  
since death unknown. God, a day or two.

1ST OFFICER

What 'cha doin' there, buddy? Gettin'  
rid of the evidence-?

PRANE

Like I said, I take care of the church's-

1ST OFFICER

At seven in the evening? In the dark?

PRANE

I was just about to go home-

1ST OFFICER

Right, just as soon as you revisit the  
body of this little boy you buried-!

PRANE

Unburied-

1ST OFFICER

Huh?!

PRANE

Unburied, officer. Do you honestly  
think I'm out here burying a little  
kid in the garden-?

1ST OFFICER

Somebody did. Somebody dumped this boy out here like a bag of trash and threw dirt on top of him-

2ND OFFICER

(examining Finney's face)

Ted, this could be that boy that went missing over the weekend, Keller-

1ST OFFICER

Finney Joseph Keller. Jesus God...!

2ND OFFICER

Get up!

1ST OFFICER

(as they yank Prane to his feet)

Anderson Prane, you have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you...

PRANE

I think I know who did this, who you need to question...

The Officers aren't listening. They throw Prane in the back of their car and drive off, lights and siren going.

RETURN TO

EXT. ST. BARBARA'S PARISH - DAY (2022).

Prane "returns" in a near-fetal position. As his vision clears up, Pastor Voss hobbles out the side door of the church, with a cane, a hunchbacked shadow of his former self.

Prane looks away, forcing himself upright; takes a deep breath, stands, heads for the street to walk home.

EXT. STREETS OF OAKLAND - DUSK.

Prane is still walking home, lost in thought, trying to hide behind his jacket collar; Barely notices the HOMELESS WOMAN who starts walking with him.

HOMELESS WOMAN

I know who you are...I don't remember your name but I know who you are...

PRANE

I don't remember your name either-

HOMELESS WOMAN

It's something like praying: *Pain...*

PRANE

And you're not afraid of me?

HOMELESS WOMAN

I ain't afraid of nobody and if I was why would I be afraid of you?

PRANE

Because I have the legal authority to kill you.

The Woman laughs herself into a hacking fit; barely keeps up.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Answer to my prayers, that's what you are, darlin'! Now I know you don't want to go and take another's life. I know people. But what if someone wanted you to use that - that au-thor-ity of yours on them...? Huh?

Prane shakes his head, contemplates. She waits patiently.

PRANE

You mean help someone commit suicide?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Yeah, someone who ain't got no interest in livin' on no more, who'd like most to just get started with his or her next life...You? You sleep like a baby.

They stop walking. Prane looks down at her with compassion.

PRANE

I have to decline your offer, ma'am, But I wish you the best of luck with that and I thank you.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Thank me? Why?

PRANE

For your interest in my conscience.

Prane walks on. Woman's voice fades as he does so.

HOMELESS WOMAN

But what do I get for my interest...?

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Prane is reclining on his patio with a light beer, scanning the sky. His gardening gloves and tools piled next to two potted plants and his cell on the table. Maribelle steps out.

MARIBELLE

Dad, I thought we went over this: You sleep at night, garden during the day.

PRANE

If only I were getting one or the other accomplished.

MARIBELLE

(sitting)

Lots to think about?

PRANE

Yep...

MARIBELLE

You know, I can give you something to help with that-

PRANE

I know you can, sweetheart. I'm okay.

MARIBELLE

You still trying to start drinking?

PRANE

'Thought I'd start slow this time.

(sips)

Don't worry, I won't drink and garden.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH)

PRANE (cont.)

(checking the I.D.)

It's Hardy.

Maribelle signals him to take it and goes back inside. Prane does, talks to Hardy:

PRANE (cont.)

Hardy. 'Sup?

HARDY (V.O.)

Were you kidnapped on your way home?

PRANE

No. Were you?

HARDY (V.O.)

How'd it go?

PRANE

I saw Voss.

HARDY (V.O.)

Voss. Oh, Father Voss, the priest at St. Barbara's-

PRANE

It's Pastor Voss now. I can't keep the clusterfuck on the list.

HARDY (V.O.)

You mean *that* list?

PRANE

What other?

HARDY (V.O.)

Because-

PRANE

Because he looks like he's in a lot of pain, getting what's coming to him and I wouldn't wanna put him out of his misery.

HARDY (V.O.)

But if he were still fucking with altar boys?

PRANE

That would be different.

(grumbles)

I'm going to try and sleep again.

HARDY (V.O.)

So have at it then.

Click. Prane hangs up, looks at the sky: clouds have come in.

INT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Prane is in bed, on his back diagonally, still not sleeping, fondling a cordless blow-dryer like a heavy-duty gun.

PRANE

You reap what you sow motherfuckers.  
Pow! Yeah, karma's a bitch. She's my  
bitch! Pow-pow...

He looks more stressed than ever.

INT. EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - MORNING.

Title comes up on screen:

DAY 2.

Sun is shining. Prane is still in bed, finally asleep; blow-dryer is on the floor.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH).

Prane wakes up under protest, answers cell, talks to Idella:

PRANE

What...?

IDELLA (V.O.)

Huh? Anders, that the way you answer-?

PRANE

Oh hey, Ma...

IDELLA (V.O.)

I left early. 'Didn't want to bother you. How'd you sleep?

PRANE

Not well. I had a logistical nightmare.

IDELLA (V.O.)

You what, now? - Anders, I'm not going to pretend to know what you must be going through but you're still my boy-

PRANE

I'm going to be okay, Ma.

IDELLA

I'll believe it when I see it. Now, let's have dinner this evening, just the two of us. I'm not asking, I'm telling.

Prane is about to answer when the line goes dead. He sets cell aside, looks like he will try sleeping some more.

INT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Prane sits at the diningroom table, nicely set with utensils, beverages. Idella enters from the kitchen with two plates of food; puts one in front of Prane, one at the other end of the table, where she sits.

IDELLA

Now, I put all the cans of spam 'n hash 'n beans we had in a box for the poor so's I won't be accidentally making any of that stuff for you-

PRANE

Ma, you didn't have to do that. It's just that I had those things so much-

IDELLA

No, no, no, I understand and Maribelle does too. All right then...

They begin eating, Prane enthusiastically.

PRANE

You know, we grew a few vegetables in the joint. I truly believe my gardening privileges are what kept me sane.

IDELLA

Along with praying.

PRANE

Yes, no...I learned to meditate. Loads of time for that.

IDELLA

And when you die too 'cause it'll be too late for praying.

Prane bites his tongue while also enjoying the food.

PRANE

Mm-mmm, this is good, Ma.

IDELLA

Reverand Wilkes asks about 'cha.

PRANE

Reverand Wilkes, now that I'm out? Because when I was in, he was convinced that my itinerary was too goddamned full for him to come pay a visit!

Prane immediately looks sorry. Idella puts down her fork, sips her beverage.

IDELLA

I see prison time's made you profane.

PRANE

Prison's made me... I'm sorry, Ma...

IDELLA

Tell me that you, at least read the good Book on occasion - for guidance.

PRANE

The good book I got guidance from was the dictionary.

IDELLA

Anderson Daniel Prane...!

PRANE

Ma, the dictionary gave me things I could share with others like the Bible somehow never did. Words...

IDELLA

You give people words?

PRANE

I share words with them, yeah. There's one that came to mind I will share with you: dissembling.

IDELLA

Dis-sem-bling.

PRANE

Dissembling: making a false show of; pretending to have. What do you think? Good word, huh?

IDELLA

I think we need to agree never to discuss religion again.

Prane starts eating again, as does Idella.

PRANE

All right...Looks like Hardy'll be driving me around for the time being.

IDELLA

That Hardy seems like he was raised by hippies-

PRANE

That Hardy is a good guy-

IDELLA

That his idea droppin' you off at St. Barbara's Ca-tho-lic Church?

PRANE

That was my idea. - I just needed to go back there, walk around-

IDELLA

Why? To track down that child-murdering priest?

PRANE

No. Yes. Father Voss was there...

IDELLA

Anderson, you have been given a gift, a privilege - and I shudder to think you are even considering wasting it on-

PRANE

Ma, the Church didn't even reassign him to another parish like they do the non-murdering pedophiles-

IDELLA

The good Lord will take care of such vermin soon enough.

Prane chews, drinks trying to figure her out. Idella grabs a box and her checkbook off the china cabinet, sits back down.

PRANE

Oh, God. I don't like where this's going.

IDELLA

Now, there are those individuals who seem like they may just go on living and living until they've worked everyone's last nerve.

PRANE

You have someone you want me to use the Dispatch Sanction on?

IDELLA

Someone I've wanted dead for a long time. No one you would care about.

Idella opens her checkbook, begins writing. Prane gets up, sits nearby, putting his hand on top of hers.

PRANE

Ma, no. No, Ma - I don't want to know any more.

IDELLA

I can pay you a decent fee.

PRANE

That's not allowed, first of all. Second of all: where'd this money come from?

IDELLA

I had some tucked away.

PRANE

Tucked away for what?

IDELLA

For your legal fund.

Prane stands, paces, fumes.

PRANE

My legal fund...You had money to use on my defense...? Why didn't you say so?

IDELLA

I didn't think you was innocent.

Prane stops, speechless, unable to look at her, tears forming. Idella remains nonchalant.

IDELLA (cont.)

Anders, mistakes were made.

Idella opens what once was a chocolates box: inside, wrapped in tissue, is a hand-gun. Prane looks at it despite himself.

IDELLA (cont.)

Now, don't ask me where I got it but I figured you'd have a dickens of a time obtaining one being fresh outta prison-

PRANE

No, there is a procedure for...

IDELLA

I'm saying just in case you decide to, you know, on the spur of the moment - it's here and you just say the word.

PRANE

I will keep in mind my Ma's packin'.

IDELLA

That's all I'm asking.

Prane paces listlessly. Idella puts the gun and box away.

IDELLA (cont.)

Sit now and let's talk about your brother and your ex-wife.

PRANE

Who...?

Prane sits back down where he was, tries to eat. Idella is done eating; finishes her beverage.

IDELLA

Well, the garden's already looking better. What else you up to when you're not readin' the encyclopedia?

PRANE

Dictionary. - Uh, I'm trying my darndest to become an alcoholic. You know - drown my troubles in booze.

IDELLA

Oh, Anderson, you always were a wuss when it came to vices.

INT. OAKLAND PARKS & REC DEPT. - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 12.

Prane walks up to the reception desk with his folder, hands resume' to the distracted RECEPTIONIST, who bares glances it.

PRANE

H'lo. Someone told me to just show up,  
that it was better than trying to call  
for an appointment.

RECEPTIONIST

We have no employment opportunities at  
this time-

Receptionist stops cold, recognizing Prane.

RECEPTIONIST (cont.)

Oh, uhm, I don't know, I mean okay-

PRANE

I am willing to take any job even if  
it doesn't involve working with plants.

RECEPTIONIST

The director of hiring has stepped out  
but I can call, tell him to come back-

PRANE

No, no. No need for that. There's my  
resume. If you could just get it to him.

RECEPTIONIST

(dialing)

I'll call him right now.

PRANE

What would you normally do?

RECEPTIONIST

Hmm?

PRANE

If I wasn't an ex-convict with a  
license to blow someone's head off,  
you'd wait 'til the end of the day -  
then maybe, if you're not in a hurry,  
give him my resume, depending on what  
kind of mood he was in. Am I right?

Receptionist gulps, not sure what to say or do.

PRANE (cont.)

I'm sorry. I am not a violent person.  
I am letting things get the best of me  
and am angry right now, yes.

Prane points to the security guard approaching from behind  
her. She turns in that direction, relieved. The guard reaches  
her, confused. She turns back: Prane has vanished.

EXT. STREETS OF OAKLAND, OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY.

Prane is literally pounding the pavement, so visibly angry, people move out of his way. He passes by a FLORIST arranging flowers outside his shop.

PRANE

Hey, I'm really good with plants. Will you give me a job??

FLORIST

Huh?

PRANE

(speaking for the Florist)  
*Of course not! Who wants to know?*

Prane passes a WAITOR at an outdoor cafe's table.

PRANE (cont.)

Hey, waiter, tell me, are you guys hiring?

The Waiter shrieks at Prane with recognition, backs away, holding up his tray as a shield.

PRANE (cont.)

*That depends: If we say no will ya'll kill us? - Hey, what's that made of?*

WAITER

Wha-what, this?

PRANE

Yeah, your tray.

(feels it)

It's plastic. You think a plastic tray is going to stop a fucking bullet should I decide to shoot you? Huh?!

Prane pushes waiter into customers, marches on. Some IDIOT goes by in his tiny pick-up, laughing, yelling.

PICKUP IDIOT

Hey, you! Flower boy! why don't you go back to prison and tend to your precious flowers? Your daisies are wilting!

The Idiot speeds away. Prane charges after, then just walks.

INT. EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Prane is sitting on his bed, a makeshift bar set up on his night-table: juice, soda, hard liquors. Is drinking some sort of concoction. Bedroom door is shut. He scratches something off the mystery list on the yellow envelope. Is woozy.

PRANE

Consider that a reprieve, asshole...!

The wind blows hard, bangs the oak tree against his bedroom wall, annoying him. Prane wobbles into the hall with his drink, sees one bedroom with its light off but the door ajar; staggers to it, setting drink on the small table there.

PRANE

Ma, you awake? I need to...

He flicks on the light. No Idella; bed hasn't been slept in. He goes to Maribelle's room; her light is on. She is slumped over her homework, asleep. He retrieves and downs his drink.

He goes downstairs into the kitchen; finds his cell-phone on the table, starts to dial, changes his mind, drops cell into pocket, grabs a (real) beer from the fridge, u-turns back to the blinking answering machine bashes it with the beer can, then staggers through the kitchen and out the back door to the patio. The wind is blowing so hard he drops the beer.

PRANE (cont.)

SHUT-UUUUP!

Prane gets on all fours, nauseated, kicking off his sandals, letting his bare feet enjoy the grass, does a little weeding.

PRANE (cont.)

Things that blow...things that grow...

Prane steadies his breathing, gets to his feet, very gingerly starts a set of Tai Chi, murmuring a sort of mantra.

PRANE (cont.)

Things that grow...things that don't...

From inside his pants:.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH)

Prane tries to ignore it; it persists. He takes cell from pocket, tosses it. His throat tightens. He stumbles to the flower-bed, vomits until the phone stops ringing.

Exhausted, he collapses into a fetal position, eyes dilated.

FLASHBACK TO

INT. OAKLAND CITY COURTHOUSE CELL - DAY (2000).

Prane, looking at least twenty years younger, is in a holding cell, wearing an orange jumpsuit, vomiting into its toilet. Two uniformed men show up, open the cage, step in and escort Prane out, giving him no time to clean himself up.

INT. OAKLAND CITY COURTROOM - DAY (2000).

Prane has been seated at the defendant's table, hands cuffed; is tense. Reese St. Jerome, the same lawyer visiting Prane in prison, shows up with briefcase as he glances his free hand where he's written: *Prane*. He then shakes Prane's hand.

ST. JEROME

Reese St. Jerome. You must be Mr. Prane.

INT. OAKLAND CITY (COURTHOUSE) CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (2000).

Hutshing and his paralegal sit on one side of a table in the plain, windowless room, Prane and St. Jerome on the other.

HUTSHING

Mr. St. Jerome - Reese - no other witnesses have come forward, no other suspects have emerged. Now I need to put my best offer on the table-

PRANE

A plea bargain?

HUTSHING

Second degree murder, thirty years max.

ST. JEROME

And you can't turn around and ask for the death penalty if there's a trial-

HUTSHING

Off the table. Acknowledged.

St. Jerome looks optimistic. Prane is in a panic, trying to make eye contact with St. Jerome who acts like he's not there.

PRANE

No! No, no, no...they're supposed to find who did this, the real culprit and put him on trial and let me go! That's how it's supposed to work! It's all been a misunderstanding...!

St. Jerome pulls Prane to his feet with some effort.

ST. JEROME

Let's go in here and put things in perspective-

PRANE

No! I won't pretend to be guilty of something I'm not!

HUTSHING

Take all the time you need.

ST. JEROME

You didn't think you'd get away with  
no prison time whatsoever, did you?  
Did you? Answer me, boy!

Prane is shaking too violently to say anything.

INT. OAKLAND CITY COURTROOM - DAY (2000).

JUDGE WENDY PANNENBERG, as the nameplate in front of her says, is seated on the bench, is tired, homely, grouchy. Standing before her are Prane, St. Jerome, Hutshing, his assistant and Sarker behind the bannister. Among the dozen people in the gallery are Eloise, Idella, and a scrawny, fidgety black man a few years Prane's junior, probably brother ROGER. Prane looks back at them a moment too long.

PANNENBERG

Over here, Mr. Prane.

Prane faces the bench.

PANNENBERG (cont.)

Mr. Prane, you have been charged with  
first degree murder. Am I to understand  
that you have turned down a deal to  
plead guilty of second degree...

Prane's hearing becomes as affected as his sight, the Judge's words fading in and out. He turns to St. Jerome helplessly.

PANNENBERG (cont.)

How do you plead? Mr. Prane?

St. Jerome has to nudge him to attention.

PRANE

Not guilty, your honor.

PANNENBERG

Not guilty. Then it looks like we have  
a trial. I will alert the taxpayers.

INT. OAKLAND CITY COURTROOM - DAY (2000).

The jury is in place. It is made up of half women, half non-blacks. Courtroom is full of spectators and media, cameras clicking. Hutshing, paces slowly before the jury as he gives his opening statement, making genuine each contact with each.

HUTSHING

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you  
will hear arguments from the defense.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

HUTSHING (cont.)

The defense will argue that the defendant, Anderson Daniel Prane, did not murder Finney Keller because he had no motive to do so. But that would be the definition of a senseless murder, wouldn't it? No one has suggested this was one of those  
(air quotes)  
sensible murders...

INT. OAKLAND CITY COURTROOM - DAY (2000).

St. Jerome, gives his opening statement mostly from his table, with little acknowledgement of the jury. Looks like he needs a nap like his suit needs a dry-cleaning.

ST. JEROME

People of the jury, I'm not going to bore you with logisticss or forensics, though they do suggest my client is innocent of this heinous crime. What I do want to impress upon you is Anderson Prane's character. Like me, like you he is a common family man incapable of doing this deed, as well as having no motivation. Oh, that's right. Mr. Hutshing already mentioned that: no motivation.

St. Jerome steps behind Prane, hands patting his shoulders. Pennerberg sits there sighing and checking her watch.

ST. JEROME (cont.)

But you don't need to take my word for it. Or his. You'll see a shovel presented in evidence that naturally has the defendant's prints on it. It was a shovel he used in his groundskeeping. But that shovel was not even the murder weapon. No, the coroner has determined that the cause of death was strangulation.

St. Jerome holds up his hands in front of him for the jury.

ST. JEROME (cont)

These were the murder weapon. Not mine of course - and not his either.

(points at Prane)

But someone put their hands around that poor boy's throat and squeezed until he lost consciousness and died. And that someone needs to pay.

St. Jerome sits down! Murmurs erupt in the room. Prane turns to him with bewilderment bordering on panic.

INT. OAKLAND CITY COURTROOM - DAY (2000).

Courtroom is jam-packed. Idella is seated next to Eloise, who has three-year old Maribelle in her lap; no Roger. Pannenberg reads over the verdict in the form of an electronic text, hands the device to the bailiff who hands it to the JURY FOREPERSON, who stands.

PANNENBERG

Jury Foreperson: you will now read the verdict and the courtroom will remain orderly. Go ahead.

JURY FOREPERSON

(reading verdict)

On the single count of murder in the first degree the jury finds defendant, Anderson Daniel Prane, guilty.

Prane crumples over to a standing fetal position, hearing, seeing little more. The courtroom erupts. St. Jerome keeps Prane from toppling over. Pannenberg raps her gavel; again.

PANNENBERG

I hereby sentence you, Anderson Daniel Prane, to spend the rest of your life in prison with no chance of parole. Mr. Prane, I believe - sooner or later - you'll wish, you had received the death penalty. This trial is now concluded.

As Idella and Eloise look on, Prane is taken away in cuffs. Only Idella is weeping but Maribelle knows something's wrong.

RETURN TO

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (2022).

Back in the present, Prane is still in something of a fetal position on the ground, as it turns out, at the base of the oak tree; seems to think his hands are still cuffed together.

He then realizes he's lying on acorns, jumps to his feet as if burned, stumbles half-blind to the tool shed, grabs an axe and returns to the tree, looking it up and down.

PRANE

It's too soon for acorns you son of a bitch! It's too soon!

Prane starts chopping down the oak tree, mumbling with mantra-like repetition.

PRANE (cont.)

Twenty-two years, six months, three days, twenty-two years, six months...

The next-door neighbors' lights come on. Somewhere a dog barks. A light upstairs in Prane's house goes on.

PRANE (cont.)

Twenty-two years, six months, three days, twenty-two years, six months...!

Prane makes remarkable progress; the sweat flows; finally starts to tire, pauses, looks around, at the tree, realizes what he's done. He steps to the tree, placing his hands on its wounds. The tree makes a long, woeful moan. Again.

Then it falls over! It crashes loudly, precariously on the neighbors' car in their driveway, setting off its alarm. Prane backs away, the axe falling loosely out of his hand.

Post-yuppie neighbor, MR. DARRAH, dashes out of the house in robe and slippers and blind rage; switches off alarm.

MR. DARRAH

WHAT IN THE FUCK, MAN...?!

Mr. Darrah realizes it's Prane that is responsible: Whoops.

PRANE

Mr. Darrah, I am...I am so sorry...

MR. DARRAH

Mr. Prane - it's you.

PRANE

I'm an idiot I wasn't thinking I dunno...

MR. DARRAH

Uhhm, you're doing some yard work I see-

PRANE

I will pay whatever the damages. I am so sorry.

MR. DARRAH

No you won't. - I-I mean, it's not a bid deal. Old car. Well-covered.

MRS. DARRAH shows up at husband's side, also sees it's Prane:

MRS.DARRAH

You goddamned moron!

Prane thinks she means him.

MRS. DARRAH (cont.)

Not you!

(to husband)

Him! I told you to stop parking the car under that tree. It messes it up with acorns and shit-

MR. DARRAH  
You were right. When will I listen?

MRS. DARRAH  
Look! How's he supposed to cut it into  
pieces with your car in the way...?  
(to Prane)  
Can you just work around it?

Prane nods in a daze, going to the fallen tree, hand on it.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH). Again.

MR. DARRAH  
What is that, "Stars & Stripes"?  
(to Mrs. Darrah)  
Da-duh. Da-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh...

PRANE  
(taking out cell)  
"Colonel Bogey March".

MR. DARRAH  
(nodding to the beat)  
Ahh, "A Bridge Too Far." - You go  
ahead, take that.

PRANE  
But...

MR. DARRAH  
We're good here, Mr. Prane.

Mr. Darrah pulls Mrs. Darrah toward the curb where they  
continue their discussion. Prane glances at cell, answers.

PRANE  
Hardy? I need an adult-

HARDY (V.O.)  
At last. Where are you?

PRANE  
*Fine, sweetheart. How are you?*

HARDY (V.O.)  
Oh-oh. What exactly is going on?

PRANE  
Tell me - do I look like a monster?

HARDY (V.O.)  
Not sure what you mean, buddy. Did  
this monster hurt somebody?

PRANE  
I killed Annie...

HARDY (V.O.)  
Tell me Annie is a pet animal or-

PRANE  
It's a tree. Annie Oakley.

HARDY (V.O.)  
A tree.

PRANE  
Yep. Only twenty-two years old too...  
Police sirens in the distance grow closer.

HARDY (V.O.)  
Are those sirens I hear?

PRANE  
Yep. Someone called the cops. I would.

HARDY (V.O.)  
I'm coming over.

PRANE  
Don't, Hardy. I need to deal with this  
myself. Thanks, though...

HARDY (V.O.)  
Well have at it then, Anders.

Click. Prane hangs up, drops cell in pocket. The siren is replaced by flashing lights as they near. Prane tosses the axe into the weeds. An Oakland Police car pulls in Prane's driveway, two COPS get out, seeing the tree, the car. One of the Cops steps toward the Darrahs. Idella appears on the porch in her robe and slippers, upset, surprising Prane.

COP #1  
Sir, we are responding to a  
disturbance call - something about a  
man cutting down a tree with an axe-

IDELLA  
I come home and he's having some sort of  
Jack-and-the-beanstalk episode. I dunno!

PRANE  
Ma, d'you make the call-?

IDELLA  
You was scarin' me, Anderson. When you  
like this I'm all outta my depths.

COP #1  
Anderson Prane? You're Anderson Prane?

PRANE  
Yes. Yes I am-

COP #2

Caller said this man was on parole...

PRANE

Ma, I am not on parole. I am free, I am a free man!

The Cops converse in private; one is doing a laptop search; Prane's mug-shot comes up.

IDELLA

Not when you act like that you ain't. You're a prisoner in your own troubled mind, Anders...

Prane steps toward Idella, "breathes", turns toward the Cops.

COP #2

(to Cop #1)

Why don't you axe him, I mean ask him?

COP #1

(to Cop #2)

He's not, I tell you. Not with this Even Steven malarkey. He's had his record wiped clean-

COP #2

(to Cop #1)

Like my ass.

COP #1

(to Cop #2)

-like he never committed any crime. Don't you read the updates-?

PRANE

As a matter of fact, officer, I did not commit any crime - not any for which I was in prison-

COP #2

Hey, I'm talkin' here!

COP #1

(mumbles to Cop #2)

Don't wanna make him mad, Bobbie. He has a license to kill.

Cop #2 needs a moment to grasp this. Cop #1 gets the Darrahs to head back to their house. They go as far as their porch.

COP #2

Uhh, Mr. Prane, you will get this tree chopped up, cleared away tommorrow?

PRANE

First thing, officer.

COP #2

Well, any time tomorrow will - will do.

COP #1

Mr. Prane I hope the Oakland Police Department is the one you'll call when, if, you choose to employ that Dispatch Sanction you have been blessed with.

PRANE

I will certainly keep you guys in mind.

A second Oakland Police car pulls up. Cop #2 let's them know there's no need.

COP #1

We'll have a car around, make sure the - y'know - riffraff leave you alone.

PRANE

'Preciate it, Officer. Maybe you could assign Drew Sarker to that.

COP #2

Drew Sarker. You mean former precinct detective Drew Sarker?

Prane nods. The three have a knowing chuckle together, pointing at each other. Cop #1 pretends to shoot his head.

COP #2 (cont)

Have a good night sir.

The Cops all get back in their cars and drive off. Prane sees Idella has been joined by Maribelle, so in shock over the fallen tree she drops her can of Red Bull.

PRANE

I'm sorry, sweetheart. I'm...

MARIBELLE

Tell Annie.

Maribelle follows Idella back inside. As most of the house goes dark, Prane retrieves the axe from the bushes, sits on the top porch step. A van pulls up; three idiots with cameras jump out, snap pictures, jumps back in, pull away. Prane does not even seem to care; leans against the pillar, cries a bit.

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Prane has shifted to a lotus position in the center of the porch, axe at his side; may be meditating. Residual camera clicking in his head turns to crickets chirping and he looks more at peace.

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - MORNING.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 13.

Prane, stripped down to a wife-beater, has gotten the tree off of the Darrahs' car with a chainsaw. A news chopper hovers above. Lilian drives up in a tiny convertible barely big enough for two, chews gum, looks Prane up and down until he notices her and shuts the chainsaw off.

LILIAN

Good morning, Ax Man!

Prane looks her car over, almost smiles.

PRANE

I'm not sure how good it is. Want some kindling?

LILIAN

Heard about this on the news  
(looks up at chopper)  
though you seem to be keeping them at  
arm's length so far.

Lilian stands up, takes her own cell-phone pictures of the chopper. It flies away. Quiet. Prane is impressed.

PRANE

You're kind'a scary.

LILIAN

(looks at fallen tree)  
Me?! George Fuckin' Washington didn't  
do this, did he?

PRANE

Was he an angry ex-convict too?

LILIAN

Hey, I talked to Hardy-

PRANE

He call you?

LILIAN

I called him. I thought your Retinue  
could use the day off, Plus I have a  
lead on a couple places.

PRANE

Places? Am I moving?

LILIAN

-in San Francisco.

PRANE

Where's that?

LILIAN

You said the only good things to ever come out of Oakland are Tom Hanks, the Pointer Sisters and maybe the Raiders and then I said cleverly, I didn't know Tom Hanks sang with the Pointer Sisters.

PRANE

And these places don't mind the whole - y'know - would-be vigilante thing?

LILIAN

Let's find out. Get in.

PRANE

Shouldn't I change-?

LILIAN

Nah, I'll buy you some clothes. My treat.

PRANE

As my lawyer?

LILIAN

No, no, no...As your pimp.

Prane grabs his other shirt, squeezes into passenger seat. Lilian pulls out and zips off down the road.

EXT. RUNNING WITH SCISSORS HAIR SALON, OAKLAND - DAY.

Lilian parks her tiny car in front. She and Prane get out. He is now dressed in better, sharper clothes but focused on a store across the street called, *Rylance Sporting & Camping Equipment*, as if a black cloud hangs over it. Lilian pulls Prane into the salon.

INT. RUNNING WITH SCISSORS HAIR SALON - DAY.

Prane is in the chair nearest the window, being worked on by DEXTER, a take-charge "beauty technician" has given him a haircut; is shaving his face, nervous that one wrong move might make him the object of Prane's wrath.

Prane still has his eyes on the *Rylance* store-front across the street. Lilian, seated nearby with a magazine, sees this.

LILIAN

Looking good, there, Anders. Anders? What's the deal with that store...?

No answer. Dexter, Lilian both shrug. Prane sits up.

DEXTER  
Whoa-whoa there, big guy-

LILIAN  
What is it-?

PRANE  
*It. It is Jeremy Rylance...*

JEREMY RYLANCE is unloading a truck at the curb into the store, going in and out. He's a big, ugly fuck of a guy in his forties, whose size is exceeded only by his excessive body-hair fighting for space with lesion-like tattoos.

PRANE (cont.)  
Look at him walking around, free as a...

LILIAN  
Who is Jeremy Rylance?

PRANE  
Only the worst individual I've ever met. In or out of prison. 'Was paroled several years ago. God knows how.

LILIAN  
Good for you. Bad for society.

FLASHBACK TO

INT. SAN QUENTIN, CAFETERIA - DAY (2016).

Prane continues talking. Prane and Rylance, both twenty-some years younger, are at the same table, Prane minding his own business. Rylance happily slides closer.

PRANE (V.O.)  
I did something I promised myself I wouldn't: I let the asshole get the best of me. One day in the cafeteria he started talking smack to me about how he'd been having conjugal visits with my daughter on the days after she got through visiting me.

Rylance yammers, smiles maniacally. Prane just tries to eat.

PRANE (V.O. cont.)  
I figured, okay, he'd seen us and just assumed that was my daughter. But then he says her name - Maribelle - and that did it. I just lost it.

Prane jumps across the table onto Rylance and starts to beat the crap out of him. Other inmates gather around, cheering.

PRANE (V.O. cont.)

I pulverized the cumwad until he lost consciousness and then some, realizing after that this was his goal all along. I got thirty days solitary.

RETURN TO

INT. EXT. RUNNING WITH SCISSORS HAIR SALON - DAY.

Dexter, Lilian listen intently as Prane finishes the story:

PRANE (cont.)

The worst part of was I couldn't tend to my plants. A guard was sadistic enough to put one of the plants, called a snowdrop, outside the door where I could see it but not do anything to take care of it.

Lilian looks moved. Dexter is in tears.

DEXTER

Oh, my God, what if he comes in here?

LILIAN

Dexter...

Prane gets out of the chair, steps out onto the walk, eyes glued. Rylance, done unloading, disappears into the store.

PRANE

Just keep looking over your shoulder you sorry excuse for a...

Prane steadies his breathing, returns to the chair. Dexter starts the finishing touches. Prane's eyes meet Lilian's.

EXT. S.F./OAKLAND BAY BRIDGE - DAY.

Lilian's tiny convertible: Lilian and Prane cross the Bay Bridge. Prane, all spruced up, can't help checking himself out in the rear-view mirror. They pass a big sign:

WELCOME TO SAN FRANCISCO

Under that is a no smoking symbol; under that is the silhouette of a gas-guzzling vehicle circled and crossed-out.

PRANE

Is it true you can now light up a joint in a public place in San Francisco, but not a cigarette?

LILIAN

Yep. - Yessiree...

Lilian puts gum in her mouth, offers Prane some. He declines.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY.

Lilian's tiny convertible: She's still driving, glancing at her GPS, over at Prane, who's enjoying the ride.

LILIAN  
Almost there, I think.

PRANE  
Lil', I appreciate this, however it goes.

LILIAN  
Oh, please... I thought we'd start with the best possibility first. And by "best" I mean I have no idea except the price is within your range. I think.

PRANE  
My range? More like my aim. Get out!  
(pretends to shoot a revolver)  
I'm going to live here now! Pow! Pow!

Prane laughs; Lilian laughs but only to be polite.

INT. FIRST APARTMENT, S.F. - DAY.

Prane and Lilian wander from the other rooms of the apartment into the main (living)room, checking everything out as an Asian man (the LANDLORD) waits, obviously afraid of Prane.

LILIAN  
Anderson, what do you think?

PRANE  
I don't know. I was hoping for a second bedroom or a room I could use as a-

LANDLORD  
This wall here - we put a door in it-

PRANE  
But isn't that someone else's apart-?

LANDLORD  
Too bad! They leave! We make second bedroom for you. Please don't hurt me. I have family!

Lilian gets face-to-face with Prane; they whisper.

LILIAN  
Not bad for the first one, right?

PRANE

But why des he want me to move in if  
he's afraid of me?

LILIAN

You're a celebrity. Celebrity trumps all.

They step toward the Landlord, smiling.

PRANE (cont.)

It's going to be a *no* to the apartment,  
Mr. Tong. Thanks. But I am going to let  
you live.

INT. SECOND APARTMENT, S.F. - DAY.

Prane and Lilian are on the second floor of a two-story, four-unit building; neither old nor new; a clean-looking place, fairly roomy with lots of windows.

They walk from room to room, trailed by C'EST LA VIE, a large, no-nonsense black woman in satin overalls, smoking a "cigarette" that changes colors. She likes Prane's butt. Prane has forms in hand, Lilian a pen and small notebook.

LILIAN

It's already bigger than the first one-

PRANE

That's what she said.

LILIAN

Mrs. Kraut? Is that spelled K-r-a-?

C'EST

Oh, just call me C'est la Vie. It's prettier without the Kraut part.

PRANE

Much.

LILIAN

You had a lot of interested parties?

C'EST

I do okay.

(inhale, exhale)

Oh you mean for the apartment? Sure.

PRANE

(to Lilian)

I'll know it when I see it.

Prane then steps into an unusually large kitchen with a skylight and narrow, metal staircase up. He is obviously sold. Lilian joins him, also impressed.

LILIAN  
So this is the roof?

C'EST  
Well, when you're inside it's called  
the ceiling.

Only C'est laughs. She nods approval and Prane steps up,  
peeks his head out the hatch, then let's Lilian go up.

PRANE  
And you do know who I am?

C'EST  
I know who you is. And seeing as how  
you brought it up, lemme just say that  
whoever moves in, I will not tolerate  
blood spills that ain't immediately  
cleaned up and any bullet holes in the  
walls - they come outta your deposit.

PRANE  
Seems only fair.

LILIAN  
Absolutely.

C'EST  
Just so we clear.

Prane tastes water from the kitchen sink with his hand: fine.  
C'est wanders back toward the front door. Prane and Lilian  
follow, Prane handing C'est the forms as they step out.

C'EST (cont.)  
Alright then.

LILIAN  
Okay. Good. We can show ourselves out?

C'est nods, winks at Prane, catches one more look at his  
backside as they go down the hall.

C'EST  
Yeah, hang onto him now...

Lilian and Prane go downstairs, passing a tenant off the  
front lobby, peering out from a crack in her chained door.

C'EST (V.O.)  
Leave 'em be, Mrs. Conlin.

EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 16.

Prane is out in the garden making noticeable improvements. He uses an old, pointy toothbrush to loosen the soil around smaller plants. Hardy is seated on the step of the patio, watching, drinking a (real) beer.

HARDY

Is that a shiv you're using?

PRANE

What? This?

They look over at Maribelle, at the patio table, studying, drinking a Red Bull. Prane's beer and cell are next to it.

PRANE (cont.)

Are you an ex-con and I don't know it?

HARDY

Everyone knows a shiv is a weapon fashioned in prison for-

PRANE

For loosening the soil after you put a plant in it. That's what I use it for.

HARDY

Okay-okay, don't shank me.

Prane tries to smile at Maribelle but she's buried in her books. Hardy wanders over to the stump and an ungainly pile of "firewood" where the oak tree used to be.

HARDY (cont.)

Wow. I had no idea it was so big.

PRANE

What, the tree or the pile of wood?

HARDY

Both. Couldn't you have just shot the tree?

PRANE

Not without clearing it with you first, then waiting for you to bring over a gun!

Hardy almost laughs, not sure Prane's serious. Prane sighs.

PRANE (cont.)

Okay, we both know that chopping down the tree didn't solve any problem-

HARDY

Or it solved a problem and you just don't know what one it is.

Prane marches past Hardy to the patio table, gulps his beer.

PRANE

Can you believe this joker, angel face?

MARIBELLE

(not looking up)

Hmm? Oh, uhm - don't take any smack  
from anyone, Dad.

PRANE

You used to tell me that but sounded  
like you meant it. What is up with you?  
- You used to love to watch me garden.

MARIBELLE

I'm sitting here, aren't I?

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH)

HARDY

You think it's her?

MARIBELLE

Her?

PRANE

A landlady named C'est La Vie-

MARIBELLE

C'est La-what?

HARDY

You *did* hit it off.

PRANE

(answers cell)

H'lo. How may I help you?

(listens)

May I ask who's calling?

(listens)

Oh, hi, C'est La Vie. Sorry, I'm trying  
not to talk to just anyone, the media.  
You know. But I'll talk to you...

(listens - brightens)

Yes, yes I am. Okay, great. And that'll  
be first, last and deposit...

(grabs pen, does the math)

One of us will get that to you straight  
away. Thanks. C'est. C'est la vie. Bye.

Prane hangs up cell, smiles at Hardy and Maribelle. Idella  
returns home, appearing at the patio door, setting down bags,  
removing her hat; only acknowledges Maribelle and Prane.

IDELLA

Hello, you two. I'm home.

HARDY

Mrs. Prane. Pleasure...

Idella unpacks grocery items at the kitchen counter.

PRANE

Ma. You're just in time. I just found out I got the place in San Francisco I told you about.

IDELLA

You mean that Que Sera Sera woman-?

PRANE

C'est La Vie.

HARDY

Now he stands a better chance of getting a job - the kind he wants.

IDELLA

Working for white people in Frisco.

No one speaks, no one moves. Idella let's them off the hook, smiles, kissing Prane on the cheek. Maribelle fumes.

IDELLA (cont.)

I'm kidding. Can't I be a kidder too? For pity's sake. I know not to call it Frisco.

MARIBELLE

When?

PRANE

Oh, I'll wait a couple weeks for sure-

MARIBELLE

Don't wait on my account-

IDELLA

Maribelle Aisha Prane!  
(puts a pack of Ritz in  
front of Hardy)  
Cracker?

MARIBELLE

I'm sorry, Dad...I'm happy for you.

Maribelle pretends to study. Prane believes her, dials Lilian's phone number (her face appears), leans in to Hardy.

PRANE

The money, I got. Not sure about check-writing capabilities. Lil' will know.

HARDY

Money-deposit if not a check...

Prane nods. Idella returns, looking ready to whallop Prane!

IDELLA

Anderson...  
(waits)

ANDERSON!

Idella resorts to hanging up Prane's cell-phone; finally has his attention:

IDELLA (cont.)

What's going to become of the fucking garden?!

INT. EXT. PRANE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Prane is in the livingroom, packing with the TV (news) on; happens across his dictionary, which he browses. A computer-generated news-anchor with his name on-screen distracts him.

DAVIS VAN DAVIS

-Although he himself would not grant us an interview, Anderson "Dispatch Sanction" Prane is moving to San Francisco. There's speculation that Prane has chosen his quarry and that that unfortunate soul lives in San Fran. In a related story, Reese St. Jerome has been ailing lately with side effects of diabetes run amok...

They cut to footage of a present-day Reese St. Jerome looking much frailer than his sixty-three years, on his way into a hospital with a second party. His voice is a laboring rasp.

DAVIS (V.O., cont.)

When we cornered the retired lawyer and asked if he's afraid Prane will use the Sanction on him for getting him a life sentence, Mr. St. Jerome, smelling of sweat and desperation, was only able to garble what we translated as: Mistakes were made...forgive me, blah-blah-blah.

They cut back to Davis:

DAVIS (cont.)

Perhaps Mr. St. Jerome can catch a break and Prane will be content to merely chop down one of his favorite trees.

PRANE

Or maybe one of yours, motherfucker!

Prane jumps to his feet, throws the dictionary at the TV (shutting it off) and stares at it. He takes the last box and a crate of plants out to the small U-Haul in the driveway.

EXT. INT. PRANE'S NEW APARTMENT, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 28.

Prane pulls the last item out of the U-Haul, shuts the door, follows Hardy, with the second-last item, to the front doors of the building. They pause, look up at second story windows.

HARDY

That everything?

PRANE

Yep.

Hardy and Prane enter the lobby, having propped the door open, and head for the stairs. The paranoid neighbor, Mrs. Conlin, is again peering out from behind her door.

PRANE (cont.)

Hello, Mrs. Conlin.

She ducks back inside. Hardy, Prane smile, head upstairs.

HARDY

Lilian didn't want to help after getting you to move in the first place?

PRANE

She did but her four-inch heels refused.  
(catches breath)  
Don't worry. Maribelle's coming over.

HARDY

Not what I was aiming at but...

INT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - DAY.

Prane opens two beers in his kitchen, hands one to Hardy. They drink amongst the plants bathing under the skylight.

HARDY

To new things.

PRANE

To drinking again. Hopefully.

They knock bottles, drink again, wander into the livingroom. Prane has stacks of things still unpacked and the door wide open. A well-dressed man, PERRY ADDGATE, appears at the door.

PERRY

Hope I'm not interrupting. I'm your neighbor up here.

Prane and Hardy look at Perry, shake his hand, notice the flourescent rainbow flag tattooed to his forearm.

PERRY (cont.)

Perry Addgate.

HARDY

Hardy Mikkler.

PRANE

Anderson Prane.

PERRY

I know. I heard. I saw. It's a pleasure, really.

(to Prane)

It's a pity you only got sixty days to decide - thirty of which are almost up.

PRANE

What, now...?

PERRY

I'm sorry. Bad segue. I'm talking about your Dispatch Sanction. Hey, if you find yourself running out of time and you definitely don't want to waste it: give your neighbor a hollar-

PRANE

I should use it on you?

PERRY

(nudges Prane's shoulder)

No...! Me. I have the perfect cadidate in mind. No one will miss him. You'd be doing society a solid. Win, win and win.

Hardy and Prane look at each other as Perry scans the place.

PERRY

Love all the *flora et foliage*. Is it from Tree-mendous?

PRANE

Tree-what now?

PERRY

Only the best plant shop around. Over in the Excelsior. - I know. The name is total kitsch...

Prane grabs pen and paper, jots these things down.

HARDY

He needs a job. Badly.

PERRY  
(returning to apartment)  
I'm not even going to ask what kind...

EXT. INT. TREE-MENDOUS NURSERY, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 40.

Prane is in a suit and tie, passing by a plot of marijuana plants behind wire fencing. He reaches a plant shop/nursery called TREE-MENDOUS, steadies his breathing, straightens tie, steps inside the sunny, charming shop full of various plants.

There are customers browsing. A middle-aged woman works near the front counter. She is slender but obvious cares little about cosmetics; face is weathered but friendly; hair is long, greying and rubber-banded. Her name is HARRIET.

PRANE  
Oh, good, this is that kind of nursery.

HARRIET  
(making eye-contact)  
This is *that* kind of nursery. Not a day-care.

Both chuckle as he goes to her, waits until she has a free hand, and offers his; they shake.

PRANE  
Daniel. H'lo. I have an appointment.

HARRIET  
Harriet. Proud owner. Be with you in a sec', Daniel. Lemme just...

As Harriet finishes what she's doing, one of the customers recognizes Prane and marches out. Another customer follows.

PRANE  
Now that I've cleared out your store for you... Nice space, by the way.

HARRIET  
Thanks. Should I know who you are?

PRANE  
No. Yes. You really don't know who I am?

HARRIET  
Sorry. I don't own a TV-

PRANE  
So, you're the one. Don't be sorry.

Harriet yelps a little with recognition. Prane frowns.

HARRIET

No, no - it's okay. But you must be getting sick of it, the celebrity - celebrity for that reason.

PRANE

It doesn't make looking for a job easier. I just try to focus on what I'm good at.

HARRIET

Which is horticulture, right? So let us focus on that, shall we?

Harriet wipes her hands clean as she glides through the store vaguely pointing. Prane tags along.

HARRIET (cont.)

So this is the indoor part of it with the covered garden area out back and about three acres we grow our bulk crops on.

PRANE

All those marijuana plants out there-

HARRIET

Yes. Those keep my business going - not afraid to say. Thank you, Tom Ammiano!

Harriet grabs a large jar of translucent white mineral and shows Prane, who grabs a pinch of it, smells it, tastes it.

HARRIET

And you had access to things like this?

PRANE

I wish. That - is - gypsum. It's good for treating soil.

A librarian-like female CUSTOMER enters, holding a small potted plant. Seems to have no idea who Prane is.

CUSTOMER

Hello-

HARRIET

Hi, there.

CUSTOMER

I think my ficus is peaked. Should I put coffee grounds in the soil?

Prane looks at Harriet, who wants him help her.

PRANE

No, that'll just keep it up at night.

CUSTOMER

Oh, my...

PRANE

What you want to do is re-plant this in a pot about twice as big and I think you'll see the spathe-

CUSTOMER

The spathe?

PRANE

(touching leaf-like part)  
-this part here will open up, releasing its spadix...

(before she can ask)  
...a little spike of flowers.

CUSTOMER

Oh, that'll be lovely. I'll do that. Thank you.

PRANE

You're welcome.

The woman gives Prane an amorous smile and goes out.

HARRIET

Well, well, she'll be back. Mr. Prane, you're hired - that is if you promise to keep the mayhem stuff away from here.

PRANE

Oh, that. It's a deal. Except...

HARRIET

What?

PRANE

I would prefer to work out of sight of the customers when it's possible.

HARRIET

I get that. Deal - at least 'til you're career of infamy is over.

Prane and Harriet shake dirt-smearred hands.

INT. EXT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 45.

Prane and Hardy are in the kitchen drinking just-opened beers and looking around self-satisfied. Prane's Wandering Jew is

already winding its way up the narrow staircase, through the open, hatch to the roof.

HARDY

Place is coming along. In fact, I think it has come.

PRANE

Thanks to Maribelle.

HARDY

Okay, be that way. I am sorry I missed her. - You want to...?

Hardy mimics smoking a joint. Prane shakes his head. Hardy starts up to the roof.

DOORBELL RINGS.

They both laugh at the uncanny timing.

PRANE

That's Lilian.

HARDY

Tell her I'm sorry I missed her...

Hardy disappears. Prane jaunts down to lobby, opens front door. Lilian stands there in her usual high heels, chewing gum, but otherwise looking like a lawyer, briefcase in tow.

LILIAN

Anderson.

PRANE

Lilian. Come in, tell me how you are.

They hug lightly, exchange pecks on the cheek. Lilian steps in, looks around. MR. CHIKIRIS steps out of his apartment with his little daughter, RITA (6), who glares at Lilian.

LILIAN

Well, hello, little girl.

The adults nod courteously at each other.

PRANE

Mr. Chikiris. Hey, Rita-

MR. CHIKIRIS

Mr. Prane. Ma'am. - Rita, come on.

As her Dad pulls her by the hand out the door:

RITA

Daddy, why did they give Mr. Prane a frisbee when he got out of jail?

Lilian waits until the two are gone to crack up, hand on Prane's arm, shoulder. She and Prane ascend the stairs.

LILIAN  
Frisbee? Let me guess, she heard your Dispatch Sanction called a *free-be-*

PRANE  
Yeah, I got that. Ma'am.

As they enter Prane's apartment:

LILIAN  
Hey, congrats on the new nursery job, before I forget.

PRANE  
Thanks.

LILIAN  
Just don't let slip about the tree you, uhhm...chopped down.

PRANE  
Put out of its misery. That's what allows me to sleep at night. Beer?

LILIAN  
Sure. Me - I'm not one for working out of doors there with all the crops-

HARDY (V.O.)  
But if you did that would make you a Lily of the field.

Hardy descends the stairs from the roof, has a casual hug with Lilian, who detects a certain smell from the hatch or him.

LILIAN  
Yes, it would. Now I need a beer.

Prane opens a third beer, gives it to her, grabs his own. They go back into livingroom and sit, Lilian looking around.

LILIAN  
So. I told you I had two reasons for stopping by-

HARDY  
Number one: to see me.

PRANE  
But seriously.

LILIAN  
Second reason first - the news flash: Reese St. Jerome keeled over from a heart attack last night.

PRANE

No fucking shit.

LILIAN

No fucking shit.

HARDY

What do you call a room full of lawyers  
dropping dead from heart attacks?

PRANE

A bad joke-

Lilian "punches" Hardy. They wait for Prane to get a grip.

PRANE

Well...I uhm...I'm conflicted, to say  
the least...Wow...When, exactly?

LILIAN

About two this morning.

PRANE

Well - at least I have an alibi, right?

All three try not to laugh.

HARDY

So, Saint St. Jerome gets crossed off  
that list of yours.

PRANE

No, because he wasn't on it.

LILIAN

So there *is* a list?

Prane shrugs, drinks. Hardy and Lilian know not to push it.

PRANE

You had another reason for stopping by?

LILIAN

Well, this would go under the category  
of Intriguing Offers, I think-

PRANE

Someone made a book offer?

LILIAN

No, but if you wrote a book this would  
have to go in it. Our pal, former D.A.  
Delliot Hutshing says he would like very  
much to meet with you, to paraphrase, *now  
that you've had a chance to settle in-*

PRANE

Very funny.

LILIAN

-at an undisclosed location, man-to-man. See? He's concerned about your relationship with the media too. Ha.

HARDY

And apparently isn't afraid of retaliation?

PRANE

Why does he want to meet with me?

LILIAN

That he would not disclose.

Prane's head is spinning.

HARDY

Could this be an apology? Is *he* dying too?

PRANE

I don't know if I can be in the same room with the man most responsible for my being in prison for twenty-two and a half years...no matter what reason...!

Hardy paces frantically. Lilian and Hardy know to let him.

PRANE (cont.)

He can't do anything more to me. Can he?

LILIAN

Anders, no. He cannot.

HARDY

Except mess with your head. Don't let him.

PRANE

Things that grow...Things that...

HARDY

Hmm...? What'd you say...?

Prane doesn't hear; seems to be getting his breathing right.

LILIAN

(eyeing her cell)

I need to make a call and I'm not getting very good-

HARDY

(pointing)

Go up to the roof.

LILIAN

Oh...

Lilian disappears up the narrow stairs to the roof, her legs not lost on Hardy. Prane stands staring out the window.

EXT. INT. DOWNTOWN S.F. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 49.

Lilian's car: she drives; Prane is in passenger seat. Roof is up. He smokes a "cigarette" from her pack between them. Her eyes bounce between the dashboard's guidance panel and Prane.

PRANE

These things aren't bad - for not being bad for you.

LILIAN

I know. I still do 'em in emergencies.

PRANE

Am I an emergency?

LILIAN

You're an accident waiting to happen.  
(smiles, hand to his shoulder)  
Now, I won't be allowed to accompany you inside.

Prane nods. Breathes.

LILIAN (cont.)

And your name for the duration is Mr. Moxness. Don't ask me why.

PRANE

Mr. Moxness?

Lilian turns down a business alley, double-checks the number, parks along the curb. Prane takes one last drag, puts it out.

LILIAN

Okay, this is the place.  
(eye contact)  
Anderson, go in. Find out what he wants. Come out and tell me just how low this fucker's balls hang.

PRANE

You mean before I kicked them up his ass?

Lilian nods. They exchange pensive smiles. Prane gets out, looks at the unassuming building, then enters through a single door, into a small lobby. A beefy SECURITY GUARD casually awaits him.

PRANE (cont.)

H'lo, I'm Mr. Moxness, here to see-

SECURITY GUARD

Mr. Moxness, right this way, please.

Guard escorts Prane to a ground floor suite: windowless and minimalist but comfortable with small tables, sofas, chairs and what looks like a well-stocked bar. Prane glances around.

SECURITY GUARD (cont.)

It'll be a moment. Sit or stand. Help yourself to a beverage.

Prane politely declines, still nervous. Delliot Hutshing, the man at Prane's hearing next to Sarker, enters as if right on time; seems genuinely pleased to have Prane show up.

HUTSHING

Hey, hey, hey if this isn't a sight for sore eyes. Weren't you that fella I saw at that thing, that wha'chamacallit a few weeks ago? Not a parole hearing-

PRANE

You mean the surprise party.

This cracks Hutshing up. He signals to the Guard, who steps out, shakes Prane's hand, then gestures to all the chairs.

HUTSHING

Mr. Prane - please, can we sit?

Prane chooses a chair at the larger table. To his dismay Hutshing pulls the closest chair right up to him, sits.

HUTSHING (cont.)

Good, that's good. Lemme ask you first, why do you suppose you're here...?

Prane shrugs.

HUTSHING (cont.)

...Why do you suppose that son of a bitch Delliot Hutshing has urged you here today?

PRANE

Because you have some sort of a proposition to make me.

HUTSHING

Oh. A proposition. Maybe we should get a room.

PRANE

This'll do.

Hutshing is so amused he stands, turns his chair around and sits on it backward.

HUTSHING

Now, believe it or nod, Anderson- May I call you Anderson?

PRANE

Not while I'm listening.

HUTSHING

Believe it or not I, truth be told, I think I know what sort of predicament you are in. Hear me out: You don't want to use the Sanction. You're afraid you'll regret it if you do. But you're also afraid you'll be haunted by not using it - asking yourself, what if, what if, what if? You're damned if you do, damned if you don't. But I - I have a way that you could use the Sanction guilt free-

PRANE

Wait. You came out against the whole Even Steven thing.

HUTSHING

Yes, yes I did. Most individuals aren't equipped to handle the responsibility of taking another life. Under any circumstances.

PRANE

And you think I'm one of them?

HUTSHING

Uh-huh. That's a good thing. That makes you a better person-

PRANE

A person you put away for something he didn't do!

HUTSHING

Exactly. That's not you. But here's what I think you will find you can live with-

PRANE

I can't stop you from telling me but I can leave as soon as you do.

Hutshing, undeterred, leans in closer.

HUTSHING

You pull the plug on someone who's already in a coma with no chance of regaining consciousness.

Prane is stunned; gets to his feet.

PRANE

A coma patient?

HUTSHING

I won't be coy. I have someone in mind,  
of course.

Prane circles the table slowly, eyes Hutshing in disbelief.

HUTSHING (cont.)

You want details: It's a very elderly  
blood relative who owes me a great deal  
of money but because of the ancient  
laws which still exist in the state of  
North California, I am not allowed to  
do what I need to make that money mine.

PRANE

You will inherit a fortune when this  
relative of yours gets around to dying.  
Why not just say that?

HUTSHING

I am not an ambulance chaser. I like to  
think of myself as a man of-

PRANE

You're the miscreant piece of work who  
put me in prison for twenty-two years,  
six months and three days for something  
I didn't do. You're barely a man!

HUTSHING

Can we let bygones be bygones...? For  
the sake of this transaction...?

Prane, nauseated, cannot find the words but tries:

PRANE

I shouldn't've...I...Am I on You-Tube  
or something here...?!  
(looks around, at Hutshing)  
This is bye-bye and now I'm gone!

Prane walks out, leaving Hutshing diabolically amused.

EXT. INT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 53.

Prane, on the roof of his apartment, surrounded by plants,  
finishes a set of Tai Chi; goes back down into his kitchen,

squeezes lemon into water, then chugs it. He hears car doors, goes to front window: Eloise has gotten out of the driver's seat, Maribelle from the back, same side of the car.

DOORBELL RINGS.

Prane buzzes them up, opens apartment door, returns to the kitchen, rubs lemon wedge about his neck and armpits, returns to the door as Eloise appears. Maribelle is behind her.

PRANE

Heyyyy...you made it!

Prane gives Eloise a cursory hug, Maribelle, a real one as they enter. Eloise looks around. Maribelle removes her coat.

ELOISE

Anders.

MARIBELLE

Hey, Dad.

PRANE

Belle, I got a six pack of Red Bull sitting in the fridge-

MARIBELLE

I'm good, thanks.

ELOISE

Anders, if you and Maribelle find you need something to talk about you might discuss the fact that she's about to lose her scholarship due to bad grades.

PRANE

So, no tour of apartment?

MARIBELLE

Aren't you and Roger going shopping?

Whoops. Prane is literally caught between them as they stare each other down, Eloise trying to play it cool.

PRANE

Roger's with you?

ELOISE

No. I told him I didn't know how long I'd be and he should start walking toward the mall.

Maribelle scoffs loudly. Eloise exits, heads down the hall.

PRANE

But Roger hates the mall.  
(follows Eloise)  
And he hates walking!

Eloise heads down stairs, Prane just behind her.

PRANE

I just want a word with him-

ELOISE

Well, he doesn't want a word with you!

In the driveway, they reach the passenger side of Eloise's car. Roger Prane, now in his mid-forties, is sitting there slouched down. He sees Prane; his whole body flinches. As Prane reaches the car Roger tries to roll up the window. Prane effortlessly keeps it from moving but remains calm.

PRANE

Roger? How are you? Comer on, bro'...

Roger jumps out on the driver's side, stands a few feet from Prane, who is smiling. Maribelle has joined Eloise.

ROGER

*Wha'doyouwant...?!*

PRANE

I want to know how you are.

ROGER

Good...Okay...Been better. Yourself?

Prane turns toward Maribelle as he reaches into the pocket of his sweat pants. Roger squeals like a girl and takes off running. Prane rolls his eyes, tackles Roger on the grassy knoll next door and flips him onto his back. Roger screams. Prane punches him in the face.

PRANE

Shut up! Why you running?

ROGER

'Cause you're gonna kill me!

PRANE

Why am I going to kill you?

ROGER

Uhh - uhm, 'cause you can?!

Maribelle and Eloise step closer, look on helplessly.

ELOISE

He's not going to kill him is he?

MARIBELLE

Not that I've been informed.

Prane, dismounts Roger in one smooth move, calm again. He helps Roger to his feet. Eloise lights a cigarette.

PRANE

Do not run, Roger. Do. Not. I'm not going to kill you. Not now, not ever! You're my little brother, man...my little piss-hole of a brother! I mean, you're a mendacious fuck but - I love you, man.

Prane steps to Roger, who stands trembling and afraid to move. Prane embraces him fully, one eye on Eloise.

PRANE (cont.)

(in Roger's ear)

You have my deepest sympathies.

Prane releases Roger, stepping back. Roger, in total bewilderment, goes back to the car, gets in. Eloise gets in.

ELOISE

See you in a few.

MARIBELLE

No hurry.

As they pull out of sight:

ELOISE

I told you you should've hidden in the trunk!

ROGER

What the fuck does *mendacious* mean?

Prane ambles back into building, oddly satisfied. Maribelle follows. They pass by Mrs. Conlin's door cracked open.

PRANE

Show's over, Mrs. Conlin.

Prane and Maribelle continue up the stairs.

INT. PRANE'S NEW APT. DAY.

Martibelle is on the couch, browsing a magazine, ignoring an opened Red Bull in front of her. Prane is at the kitchen counter, assembling appetizers, one eye on her.

PRANE

Put on what music you want, angel face.

No answer. Perplexed, Prane joins her, snacks in front of them on the coffee-table, sits in the chair nearest her.

PRANE (cont.)

Listen...I shouldn't've attacked Roger like that. Not in front of your mother.  
- Not in front of you anyway.

Maribelle puts the magazine aside, barely notices the food.

MARIBELLE

Sorry for not just telling you Roger was along. Mom said what you don't know-

PRANE

No worries, angel face. But I noticed you didn't put your hand out to collect the swearing fine when I called him names.

Maribelle almost giggles. Prane remains serious.

PRANE

Oh-oh, she smiled. - Will you tell me?

MARIBELLE

Do I have to...?

PRANE

I can't make you.

Maribelle leans forward, puts her hands over her face for a moment to hide tears. Cannot look Prane in the eye.

MARIBELLE

Three years ago...on my twenty-second birthday, after my party, after I thought everyone had left, I was raped.

Prane stops breathing, pulls away inadvertently.

PRANE

You mean *assaulted*? Who assaulted you-?

MARIBELLE

Raped, Dad - and I'm not ready to tell you that. This is stressful enough-

PRANE

And you reported it to the...?

MARIBELLE

No one. Was going to tell Mom if she ever stopped moving long enough...

Prane leans in for a hug. Maribelle hesitates, then hugs him but lets go first. He's still waiting.

PRANE

Belle...will you think about telling me and see if that isn't something you want to do - more than not telling me?

Maribelle sighs again, starts drinking the Red Bull, nods.

MARIBELLE

I know it would be the healthy thing.

PRANE

When you're ready. And your Mother has no knowledge of any of this whatsoever?

Maribelle shakes her head, starts munching on the appetizers.

MARIBELLE

Oh, and just for the record, Dad, Uncle Roger *is* a little prick.

They both laugh finally.

EXT. TREE-MENDOUS - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 54.

Prane is sweating out in the field, but not getting much work done. Mostly sits there, obsessing. Hardy appears in the direction of the shop, jacket and bottle of water in hand.

HARDY

They really let ex-cons work in the middle of all this marijuana?

Hardy reaches Prane who just tries to look busy. Hardy ties jacket around his waist, drinks water, offers Prane some. Not interested. Hardy crouches so they are eye-to-eye.

HARDY (cont.)

My jocularitas isn't helping, is it...  
Sorry. What is on your mind?

PRANE

It's fucking Roger.

HARDY

Your brother?

PRANE

No, Roger Moore -the least interesting of all the 007's!

HARDY

You think Roger because you and Maribelle had just been talking about him?

PRANE

Yeah and because, well - he's Roger!

HARDY

But is he capable of doing that to Maribelle, his niece?

Prane stops cold, like the very words cripple him.

HARDY (cont.)

Alright, alright. Let's just say it is unequivocally Roger-

PRANE

Let's just say.

HARDY

Can you know for sure how you would feel using the Sanction on your own sibling-?

PRANE

It's not like we're best of buds or something.

HARDY

Said Able of his brother Cain.

PRANE

Hardy - this may come as a shock but my moral compass doesn't always point north, you know.

Prane resumes the sniping and digging. Hardy knows to wait.

HARDY

You did the right thing not pressuring Maribelle on this. Good work.

PRANE

She's been through enough as it is.

HARDY

Then there's the question of Eloise-

PRANE

Bitch has no say in this!

HARDY

But if it does turn out to be Roger-?

PRANE

She'll pull the trigger her own damn self!

Prane grabs Hardy's water, drinks, almost chokes.

HARDY

You have seven days left of the Period of Dispatch Sanction. Think about how you want those seven days to go?

BEEEEEP...

They realize the noise is from inside Prane's toolbox. Baffled, he takes his cell-phone out by two muddy fingers.

PRANE

Why is it beeping instead of ringing-?

HARDY

That means there's a text message, not a call.

Prane looks at the little 3-D screen.

PRANE

It's a message from Sully.

HARDY

Sully? You two even on speaking terms-?

PRANE

No. I made it clear, I'll be the one to contact him if or when I decide...

Prane's face drops. Hardy takes the cell, examines it.

HARDY

Lemme see... No. Anders, it's a message from Maribelle.

PRANE

And the message is?

HARDY

*Sully*. The message is *Sully*.

PRANE

Sully...

Prane and Hardy look at each other, saying nothing for an eternity. Prane's whole body goes limp.

HARDY

God. Damn.

Prane hacks at some of the plants with the trowel, then jumps to his feet and heads for the shop. Hardy drops the cell and stands in his way, hands on Prane's shoulders.

HARDY (cont.)

Where're you going? You gonna kill him with a trowel? Do you even know where to find him?

PRANE

I'll ask around. I'll follow the stench.

HARDY

Anders, I hear you, I understand you need to do something right now, but there is a right way and a wrong way to use this Sanction-

PRANE

I don't care about any goddamned right way, wrong way or Sanction-!

Prane steps back from Hardy, straightens his posture, makes his breathing level out. Hardy sets the trowel in tool-box.

HARDY

As your adviser I'm advising you to talk this over with Maribelle before you decide anything.

PRANE

You're right. I will. Harriet's coming.

Hardy and Prane look toward the shop, from which Harriet is coming. She waves. They wave.

HARDY

Oh, yeah. We're taking you out for a drink. Especially now after all this-

PRANE

What? I don't think-

HARDY

One drink. We'll talk. Come on...

Hardy retrieves Prane's phone. Prane grudgingly gathers his tools and box. They head in Harriet's direction.

HARDY (cont.)

Besides, you don't want her to see what you did to the plants.

INT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 55.

Prane is face-down on his bed, in the same clothes, as if he got home, collapsed there and fell into a coma. Aspirin is spilled on the nightstand. Blinds keep out the sun.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH) and RINGS...

Prane groans. His answering machine across the room picks up:

PRANE (V.O.)

Hi, it's Anders. Either I'm unable to answer right now or I'm back in prison. Say your peace and pray it's the former.

Click. Hardy groans too, then leaves a message:

HARDY (V.O.)  
Heyyy...it's me. I'm conscious. You  
conscious? Call me when you are...

Click. Prane manages to peek at the clock by his bed: 4:35  
p.m. He seems startled but collapses back to sleep again.

INT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - MORNING.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 56.

Prane wakes up with a start, looks at the clock: 8:35 a.m.

PRANE  
Oh god...Belle...

Looking more or less recovered but in the same clothes, Prane  
swings into a sitting position on the bed then pauses just to  
be sure; dials his cell, kicks shoes off. Maribelle answers.

MARIBELLE (V.O.)  
First of all, are you okay?

PRANE (cont.)  
Maribelle, hey. Yes, I am now. Those  
guys, Hardy and Harriet took me out for  
a drink and that turned into-

MARIBELLE (V.O.)  
You've been recovering from a hangover?

PRANE  
Uh, yes, Dad has been seriously  
incapacitated... Did you call? I haven't  
checked my messages yet.

MARIBELLE (V.O.)  
I called but didn't leave a message.

PRANE  
Listen, I have to get myself over to  
work so today's going to be tough for us  
to get together-

MARIBELLE (V.O.)  
It is?

PRANE  
Yeah, but why don't I call you tomorrow  
after I see how things are looking-?

MARIBELLE (V.O.)  
Don't go rearranging your schedule on my  
account. I got nothin' that won't keep.

Click. Maribelle has hung up. Prane is stunned. He snaps to, puts down the phone and limps off toward the bathroom as he removes clothing.

EXT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - NIGHT.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 57.

Prane's face looks serene; eyes are closed; body is relaxed in a lotus position. He is repeating a mantra, of sorts:

PRANE

Things that grow...

There is a candle burning before him. It flickers. The wind has picked up. He is on his roof, surrounded by flowering plants. It is a rare starry San Francisco night.

PRANE

...things that don't...

INT. PRANE'S HOUSE, OAKLAND - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 58.

Maribelle paces the livingroom, looking at her cell-phone. On the GlobalNet News (TV, volume low) there is a graphic of Prane next to reporter, UPTON CHYLD. Idella hobbles from the kitchen with a snack to the couch; turns up volume on remote.

IDELLA

Oh, I want to catch this...

UPTON CHYLD

...So, with less than forty-eight hours to go the wagering on whether or not Prane will let the P. D. S. run out, heats up to a feverish pitch...

IDELLA

No more wagering for me - uh-uhhh.

MARIBELLE

Dad is turning off his phone at work and in the evening, like he's avoiding me...

IDELLA

He probably out huggin' trees or some shit.

MARIBELLE

Or meditating. Who meditates that much...?

IDELLA

Remember what your Grandma always say: A watched phone never rings.

Maribelle grumbles and punches her speed-dial: Prane's smiling face comes up on her screen; after a beep a Computer-Generated Voice comes on the line:

C.G. VOICE

I'm sorry but this phone has been voluntarily shut off. Do not panic. Please try again later.

Maribelle hangs up in a huff; Prane's face fades from cell. A new, obviously fake graphic of Prane aiming a hand-gun at the camera comes up on the TV. They both watch.

UPTON CHYLD

Will he or won't he? The state, the nation and indeed the world awaits. One way or another Anderson Daniel Prane's seven and a half minutes of fame are almost up. This has been GlobalNet News/U.K. News so late-breaking it hasn't happened yet!

EXT. INT. PRANE'S HOUSE - DAY.

TITLE comes up on screen:

DAY 59.

Maribelle paces some more, now on the patio. Looks sleep-deprived; downs two pills with Red Bull; then grabs her cell-phone as she yanks the nearest flowers out of the ground.

MARIBELLE

Let's get this motherfuckin' show on the road already.

She dials. Sully's image appears on the screen. She sits. Sully answers the phone, sounding cheerful.

SULLY (V.O.)

Hey. Tell me who you need and I'll tell you if I'm him-

MARIBELLE

Guess who, Mr. Ziegler.

Sully not so cheerful now. Maribelle paces, feigns sweetness.

SULLY (V.O.)

I know who...What you want, Maribelle?

MARIBELLE

I need a favor. I guess you could call it that, and I wouldn't even ask except-

SULLY (V.O.)

Except that your Daddy's out of the slammer now and you're going to go running to him and telling him shit...!

Maribelle looks around, up at the balcony (no one there), becomes paranoid, steps back inside, slides door shut.

MARIBELLE

I'll only be telling him what happened, what you did to me. And it won't matter that it was three years ago. To him it'll be like it was yesterday.

Long pause, heavy sigh by Sully.

SULLY (V.O.)

One favor. You're not going to keep pulling this on me-

MARIBELLE

Where are you staying right now? I'll come-

SULLY (V.O.)

No, no, no, no, no...! I don't have an address for a reason.

MARIBELLE

Well, this ain't a transaction I'm gonna make in public. You'll have to come here.

SULLY (V.O.)

Anders lives in Frisco now, right?

MARIBELLE

Yes, but don't call it *Frisco*. Grandma still lives here but she won't be around-

SULLY (V.O.)

Around when? Okay, I can't possibly get over there 'til this evening.

MARIBELLE

She won't be back 'til late. Seven o'clock sound do-able?

SULLY (V.O.)

Seven...I'll be there around then.

After some silence sounds like Sully hangs up. Maribelle hangs up, checks her watch, looks at the flowers she just killed.

EXT. TREE-MENDOUS - DUSK.

Prane, in the field, looks like he's finishing up for the day with the sun just about set. He puts his tools in his box.

PRANE'S PHONE RINGS (COLONEL BOGEY MARCH)

Prane sees it's Maribelle's image on his cell. He answers.

PRANE

H'lo, angel face. How are you?

MARIBELLE (V.O.)

Not to good, Dad. Sully called me all drunk-sounding and angry and he seems to think that that Dispatch thing-

PRANE

The Dispatch Sanction, yeah-

MARIBELLE (V.O.)

He's under the impression that it's run out, that you can no longer kill someone without gettin' in trouble-

PRANE

Well, that's wrong! Can't he count-?

MARIBELLE (V.O.)

Or he's getting his information from Fox News. He says he's on his way over.

PRANE

Over there?

MARIBELLE (V.O.)

Over here. I don't wanna be alone with him again, Daddy! Please don't let him-!

PRANE

Belle, I'm on my way! Locks all the doors! Don't let him in!

MARIBELLE (V.O.)

Hurry. I'm scared!

PRANE

I'm on my way. I'm going to hang up now to call Hardy. You call me if he shows!

Prane hangs up, then re-dials as he picks up his tool-box and briskly heads toward the shop. He talks to Hardy.

PRANE (cont.)

Hardy, we need to get over to Oakland. I may be using the Sanction after all.

(listens)

Bring it!

EXT. INT. PRANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Hardy pulls up to the curb just out of sight of the house, turns off the car. Looks over at Prane. Shaking, Hardy takes a hand-gun from his briefcase and places it in Prane's hands.

HARDY

Loaded and court-approved - like I wish  
I was right now.

Prane and Hardy get out, scoot around to the back yard, Prane two steps ahead of Hardy. They find the patio door open but no one around and no lights on. They enter.

Moving through the kitchen they see light from the livingroom and step into the diningroom. There, across the livingroom a disheveled Maribelle appears to be struggling to break free of Sully. He has her by the wrists and looks confused.

SULLY

What're you doing...?!

MARIBELLE

I said get out! I'm calling the cops!

Sully and Maribelle see and Prane and Hardy simultaneously.

MARIBELLE (cont.)

Daddy!

SULLY

Anderson? Wassup, my friend...!

Prane aims the gun at Sully's head and is NOT messing around. Sully releases Maribelle, who takes two steps away from him.

PRANE

Put your hands up, put 'em up now!

Sully does so, bewildered.

PRANE (cont.)

You okay, sweets?

Maribelle manages a nod through sniffles as she steps past Prane to Hardy's comforting arms.

SULLY

(eyeing the gun)  
Oooo...is that still goin' on?

PRANE

Yes, it's still going on, idiot.  
(one step closer)  
How'd you even get in?

SULLY

How'd I get...? She let me-

PRANE

It's a rhetorical question. You know what rhetorical means?

SULLY

No? - Yes?

PRANE

I shouldn't've ever made you my friend.

SULLY

No, don't say that...Anders...kill me if you have to but don't that...

PRANE

Shut up! You shut your fetid mouth!

Hardy dials his cell-phone, perplexed.

HARDY

Fetid? - Anders, I'm calling the police to let them know this is going down. They know it's now or never, after all-

PRANE

Yeah, you're just now calling them to give me more time to reconsider what I'm about to do.

HARDY

Perhaps.

PRANE

Okay...Have at it then.

Someone picks up on the other end and Hardy steps away. Eyes glued to Sully, Prane grabs a chair from the diningroom, puts it in the middle of the livingroom, indicating Sully should sit. Sully sits, hands resting in his lap.

PRANE (cont.)

Belle, where's Ma?

MARIBELLE

(air quotes)

Asleep.

PRANE

What does that mean?

MARIBELLE

That she took the nightcap I gave her and I don't reckon she'll be waking up any time very soon.

PRANE

Good.

SULLY

Maybe you should wake her, maybe you should ask her what you should do. She's your Ma after all-

PRANE

This is Idella Prane we're talking about? If she knew what you did to her grand-daughter you'd already be dead, you sorry son of a bitch.

A car goes by out front, backfiring. Already trembling, Sully mistakes it for a gun going off and soils himself, cringing.

PRANE

Oops. Why the face all of a sudden...?

Maribelle laughs until she suddenly smells it, whispers in Prane's ear; then he smells it.

PRANE (cont.)

Sully...! You didn't...you didn't *sully* yourself, did you?

Sully just hangs his head, sniveling. Maribelle wanders off toward the back. Hardy sees two Oakland squad cars pull up, no sirens or lights; opens the front door. Four Cops emerge; the two in front, #3 and 4, meet Hardy on the front porch.

HARDY

I'm Anderson Prane's parole officer-

COP #3

Don't you mean *Retinue*?

HARDY

Yeah, but I've gotten so tired of explaining what that is.

Cop #3 nods. Hardy has them step inside ahead of him. They draw their weapons at the sight of Prane's gun.

COP #4

Which one are you?

PRANE

Prane, Anderson Daniel-

HARDY

That's Prane. This is Sully Ziegler.

COP #3

(aiming at Sully)

Hands across North America, cumwad!

Sully raises his hands from his lap. While Cop #4 guards him, Cop #3 handcuffs his wrists. Prane tucks his gun in the front of his pants. Prane, Hardy and Cop #3 exchange hand-shakes.

COP #3 (cont.)

What the fuck is that smell?

HARDY

Karma. The rape suspect's under duress-

PRANE

He's scared shitless, is what he is!

Prane smirks, pointing but not looking at Sully.

SULLY

So? What now? Now a Oakland police officer's gonna shoot me?

COP #4

Only if you try and run-

SULLY

But if I hang around I get shot. If I run I get shot. This doesn't seem right-

PRANE

You should'a thought of that before you raped my daughter, shouldn't you 'ave!

Prane is about to punch Sully's face. Cop #3 stops Prane, pulling him into the diningroom. Hardy follows.

COP #3

Come on. In here.

PRANE

Okay, sorry...I'm just...This is hard.

COP #3

I know. But this does bring up an interesting point: Are we authorized to treat a what'cha-call-it - quarry - as though he's under arrest, slash, resisting, slash, evading arrest and can therefore use whatever force we deem necessary...?

Prane thinks, shrugs, looks to Hardy, whose head hurts.

PRANE

I don't know. Is he guilty if I say he's guilty?

Hardy's phone begins ringing in his hand.

HARDY

(to Cop)

You're needed here to keep the peace. That much we know at this time.

(answers cell)

Mikkler. Time is of the essence. Yes?

Hardy steps away again. Prane let's him, turns to Cop #3:

PRANE

Being the first ones in this situation  
we're learning as we go-

COP #3

I get that. Same here-

PRANE

So, you if you guys can buy us some  
time to figure out what's the right  
way to go about things-

COP #3

Of course. Taking the life of another  
human being should not be treated  
lightly under any circumstances...

PRANE

I concur.

Hardy is back, but still on the phone.

HARDY

The Restitution Council is saying we  
need to have a medical doctor present-

PRANE

A doctor?

HARDY

To confirm if and when the quarry is in  
fact dead.

Prane, then Hardy, then Cop #3 peer in at Sully, who weeps.

PRANE

Shutup!

Maribelle enters from kitchen, pours a (blood-red) Red Bull  
over ice, loses the can, adds a straw. Hardy ends his call.

MARIBELLE

They aware we're running short of time?

HARDY

They are aware and confirm a paramedic  
will suffice. And be quicker, I'd think.

PRANE

(to Cop #3)

But quicker if we call 9-1-1 or if you  
make the call-?

COP #3

Quicker if Hardy calls 9-1-1 but tells  
them the name Prane. They'll fly over.

Cop #3 and Prane head back into the livingroom so Hardy can make the call, Prane glancing back at him.

COP #3 (cont.)

There's always details to iron out when you're the first one doing something.

PRANE

It's a new world. Save the receipt.

Hardy dials, waits. An assertive female OPERATOR answers:

HARDY

Hello. We need an ambulance A.S.A.P.-

OPERATOR (V.O.)

What is the nature of your emergency-?

HARDY

I am Anderson Prane's retin- His parole off- This is Anderson Prane. Do you know who I am?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

I sure do, sugar.

HARDY

Well, I think I may be about to use my Dispatch Sanction-

OPERATOR (V.O.)

You gonna use it? You like to cut things close, don't you? May I ask on who?

HARDY

On my daughter's rapist-

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Oh! Lord have mercy!

HARDY

And we - my people and I - we're trying to do it by the book which means we need to have a doctor or paramedic here to confirm that the victim, er' quarry-

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Rapist?

HARDY

Yes - is in fact dead.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

So you're saying you have shot someone?

HARDY

No. I am getting ready to but cannot until there is a paramedic present.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

So the paramedics are not needed to save anyone's life but rather to determine that someone's life has been terminated?

HARDY

That is correct.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

And what happens is this sucka's still breathing? The poor paramedics are gonna have to step back while y'all plug a couple more shots in the son of a-?

HARDY

I'm sorry, I know how crazy this all-

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Oh, no need to apologize, Mr. Prane. I just wish the fuck I could be there! Oh and the paramedics are on their way. You take careful aim and go with God now.

HARDY

I will. Thanks.

Hardy hangs up. In the livingroom, Prane, Maribelle and the Cops stand before Sully. Behind them, Idella appears on the stairs in robe and slippers, clearly just woken up.

IDELLA

What in Jesus' holy name! Anderson...!

PRANE

Ma, you're up...

Idella eyes the gun tucked in his pants, sighs, rolls eyes.

IDELLA

You were always a day late and a dollar short, son.

(glowers at Maribelle)

And you young lady I will talk to after I'm through with your Father.

PRANE

Ma, you can't talk me out of this-

IDELLA

I'm not gonna try and talk you outta anything. I just need you take it outside so my nice things don't get shot up. Plus someone stinks to high heaven!

PRANE

Sorry, Ma...

Prane signals the Cops they are relocating, opens front door.

COP #3

All right everyone, you heard the lady -  
outside.

(to Cop #4, Sully)

You two first, we'll follow.

Cop #4, gun still on Sully, motions him to stand; he does so.  
Idella steps up to Sully, forcing eye contact.

IDELLA

I don't know what you did and I don't  
wanna know but I hope this'll learn you  
a lesson.

Then she slaps Sully across the face, not even breaking a  
sweat, but stunning everyone else. Cop #4 escorts Sully out  
the door and down the porch steps. Prane grabs the same  
diningroom chair. Idella stops him.

IDELLA (cont.)

Not one of my good chairs. Take one from  
the porch.

Prane takes one of the old porch chairs, places it on the  
sidewalk about dead-center (between curb and porch). Cop #4  
signals Sully to sit; Sully does so. The chair creaks. Hardy  
appears from the house, goes up to Prane tentatively.

PRANE

I'm thinking maybe Lilian should be  
here. I mean she is my lawyer-

HARDY

I'm so glad you said that. - I already  
called her. En route as we speak.

Prane looks relieved.

HARDY (cont.)

I filled her in on, you know, the whole  
sad situation-

PRANE

Angel face.

HARDY

Angel face.

Hardy, Prane and everyone else outside watches as a series of  
vehicles (mostly TV mini-vans) fill the street and sidewalks,  
cameras already in position, spot-lights coming on.

PRANE

Oh hey look: The media. Tah-dah.

Hardy just shakes his head. Prane also sees neighbors, Mr.  
and Mrs. Darrah, rubber-necking from their front yard.

PRANE (cont.)

Who do you think called them?

HARDY

The media? My money's on...

COP #3

Don't look at me.

Cop #3 directs COPS #5 and 6 (from the second car) in putting up police tape from one side of the yard to the other, across the sidewalk, keeping all spectators at a distance.

MEDIA MEMBER #1

Ewww, what is that smell?!

COP #5

Didn't notice it 'til you showed up.

There is also a vendor with T-shirts on display:

I SURVIVED ENCOUNTER WITH ANDERS PRANE!

and

EVEN STEVEN DOCTRINE IS  
STATE SANCTIONED MURDER!

Lilian shows up on foot, in her heels, past the Darrahs, who are selling souvenir oak logs from the fallen tree. She hobbles through the growing crowd, sees the vendor.

LILIAN

Hey, t-shirt guy! You got a license for those?

Lilian spots Hardy who signals Cop #5 to let her through the police tape. Lilian joins him, Prane, Cop #3 and 4 standing in close proximity before Sully, who she can't look at.

HARDY

Lilian. Hey.

PRANE

Welcome to my block party. Thanks for coming. Did you drive?

LILIAN

(pointing far away)

Yeah and I'm parked about two blocks that'a way.

HARDY

The hordes just showed up-

LILIAN

The *whores*?

(checks her watch)

Hey, are we all synched up on time?

Lilian shows them her watch to compare and they nod, except for Hardy who adjusts his.

SULLY

My watch is fast-

LILIAN

Shut up!

Prane and Hardy are glad she showed. Maribelle comes outside.

MARIBELLE

Anyone need anything?

HARDY

I'm good, thanks.

LILIAN

Maybe later, sweetie. How you doing?

MARIBELLE

It's a bit more than I bargained for.

PRANE

Belle, I don't want you here for this.

Maribelle's look tells him she's staying! Only Cop #3 looks up and sees Idella watching from the front balcony, eating popcorn. An ambulance's siren and lights are seen and heard but then it can't get close. Hardy looks at his ringing cell.

HARDY

That's the ambulance.

(into cell)

Mikkler...

(listens)

They may not be able to get any closer.

(into cell)

Do what you can. 'Kay then.

Hardy puts away his phone.

LILIAN

Does mean what I think it means?

Hardy nods, looks at Cop #3, who nods. Prane shudders, then steadies himself; but still can't/won't look at Sully.

LILIAN

(paces, addresses the crowd)

Alright people, it's showtime: time for you to turn off your cell-phones.

The crowd seems to do as it's told, gets quiet. Prane positions himself on the sidewalk in front of Sully, waving everyone to the side or behind him, hands ending up on hips. Cop #4 steps aside, holsters his gun tentatively.

PRANE  
(to Sully)  
I-I-I need you to stand.

Sully manages to get to his wobbly feet, cuffed hands in front of him. Prane and Hardy converse in each other's ear.

PRANE (cont.)  
You sure?

HARDY  
Just a thought.

PRANE  
(to Sully)  
I'm sorry, man...I need you to kneel.

The crowd quietly gasps. Sully just looks at him, quivering.

PRANE (cont.)  
Get on your knees, motherfucker!

Sully, with some difficulty, kneels down on the sidewalk.

PRANE (cont.)  
Sully Ziegler, did you or did you not rape my daughter, Maribelle Prane?

Sully is not sure how to answer.

PRANE (cont.)  
Sully Ziegler, did you or did you not rape my daughter, Maribelle Prane?

SULLY  
Yes. Yes, I did, I'm sorry, I was out of my mind on meth and...!

Prane removes the gun from his waistband, keeps it pointed at the ground. The crowd gasps again.

PRANE  
I don't have any use for apologies from you. If you have any other last words speak your peace at this time.

Sully's sniveling tapers off. He looks at the gun, at Prane, voice returning, resignation across his face.

SULLY  
I-I-I've...

PRANE  
Today, Sully.

SULLY  
(looking Maribelle up down)  
I-I-I've had better.

PRANE

WHAT?!!

SULLY

I've. Had. Better. Your angel face of a daughter is kind of a skank, you know, Anders-?

Prane pistol-whips Sully across the face so hard he tumbles over onto the grass, almost unconscious!

PRANE

You mendacious son of a whore!

Cops #3 and 4 get Sully off the ground but he's too limp to kneel. They put him back in the chair, then back away. Prane steps up, points the gun inches away from Sully's head.

Sully's eyes finally open, see the gun as Prane cocks it. Everyone waits for the shot to ring out. Lilian and Hardy subtly look away. Maribelle moves in for a closer look, lips dripping with Red Bull.

MARIBELLE

Daddy, pull the damn trigger!

Prane, shoves the barrel of the gun right up against Sully's head, shaking, sweating. He then pulls away, gun dangling out to the side, and drops it on the grass. Prane buries his face in his hands and collapses to his knees, sobbing.

PRANE

I can't...I can't...!

Hardy steps up to Prane, ear to his mouth.

HARDY

You can't what, Anders?

PRANE

I can't...I can't kill...can't kill him!

HARDY

You mean you can't kill Sully in particular? Is there someone else here you think you could kill?

PRANE

(shakes head)

No...no, I don't know else to end this...

HARDY

End what?

PRANE

Being treated like a killer. First for a murder I did not commit.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PRANE (cont.)

Then, twenty-two years later, the minute I'm declared innocent I am treated as someone who's going to take a human life just because some new law says I'm allowed to...that it's okay...But it's not okay because I am not a murderer. Not now. Not ever.

The crowd is very quiet, then erupts in a mix of boo's and cheers. Countless seen and unseen cameras and cell-phones click. As Hardy helps Prane to his feet, Idella's popcorn rains down from above, followed by the bag.

The crowd looks up: she has disappeared. Prane looks Maribelle in the eyes. She's angry, about to speak, but stomps off into the house instead. Sully looks at the gun in the grass. Cop #4 sees him, picks up and holds onto the gun.

COP #3

Mr. Prane, I have to ask, are you sure-?

HARDY

Give him a moment, would you?

Hardy and Lilian huddle with Prane, who looks down at his still shaking hands; his breathing becomes more normal.

HARDY (cont)

Anders, you take your time now.

Prane, about ready to speak. Idella makes it outside, down the stoop, walks right up to Prane, punches him in the chest.

IDELLA

Anderson Daniel Prane...! Wha'd I ever do to you to deserve such humiliation? Our Lord God Almighty did not give you a gift like this-this despot-

PRANE

Dispatch Sanction.

IDELLA

-for you to take and squander it to kingdom come! The good Book wants us to avenge our enemies. It's called an eye for an eye-

PRANE

I'm not going to debate with you what the Bible got right and what it got wrong, Ma.

IDELLA

Wrong...wrong?!

Idella turns away, turns back but can no longer look at him, just swats at him.

IDELLA (cont.)

I don't know who this man is but he's breaking his Mother's heart...

Idella marches back into the house. Prane waits a moment.

PRANE

Did I let her have the last word?

LILIAN

You did let her have the last word.

(checking her watch)

Seriously. It is now: four, three, two, one, midnight. Mr. Prane you are no longer legally permitted to take another human life.

Lilian steps up real close to Prane, smiling.

HARDY

(to Cop #3)

It's official, isn't it?

Cop #3 checks his watch, nods. Hardy announces:

HARDY (cont.)

It's official. Anderson Prane has let the P.D.S. run out!

Hardy, Lilian cheer, patting Prane on the back. He hangs his head with a long exhale of relief, eyes closed for a moment. Though still seated and cuffed, Sully starts to hopeful. The crowd mostly boo's; a few cheer and whistle. The loudest members of the media have the dumbest questions:

MEDIA MEMBER #2

Anderson Prane, what're you going to do now that your claim to fame has ended?

MEDIA MEMBER #3

Does this mean you condone rape?

Prane ignores them. Cops #3, 4 stand by Sully, look at Prane.

COP #3

What do we do with him, boss?

PRANE

(for all to hear)

What choice do we have but to let Sully Ziegler go?

THE CROWD

No! Make him pay! Make him pay...!

Prane senses trouble from the maddening crowd as he scans it, emotions in check; sees the Darrahs next door watching.

PRANE

(for Hardy and Lilian)

We may want to slip away before somebody remembers how pissed off they are at me.

Lilian laughs a little. Hardy is not so calm.

THE CROWD

Rapist! Rapist! *(etc.)*

INT. ELOISE & ROGER'S PLACE - NIGHT.

Eloise is sitting on the front of their bed, anxiously watching the TV coverage; Roger is behind her on the bed, trying to get her in the mood with kisses about the neck.

On the news: Lilian loops her arms around Prane's neck. He looks at her as if for the first time. They kiss but only after she removes her gum. He finds this delightful.

ELOISE

Roger, knock it off!

Cops #3 and 4 escort Prane and Lilian through the crowd in the direction she said her car is parked. Hardy trails behind them. The news camera does not follow them but pans back to Sully on the sidewalk as the chanting crowd closes in. He stands up on the chair, looking for who will come to his aid.

THE CROWD

Not in our city! Rapists must pay! *(etc.)*

Sully's face fills with absolute dread as he is knocked off the chair and buried in the mob. He cries out. Some are beating him, some are capturing it all on camera/cell-phones.

Eloise can't take her eyes off the carnage and murky images of rape. Roger joins her on the edge of the bed, watching.

ROGER

What is it-? Whoa...

ELOISE

Oh, my word!

When one of the TV's images becomes blood splattered another one, from a different camera, takes its place.

EXT. PRANE'S NEW APT. - DAY.

Prane is on the roof of his apartment, facing north; finishes up a set of Tai Chi. Looks more serene than we've ever seen him. San Francisco his majestic backdrop. Lilian watches from the little picnic they have set up near the hatch. She has traded in her suit and high heels for a summer ensemble and flip-flops. She chews carrot sticks instead of gum.

Prane finishes methodically with a bow; goes over to Lilian, returns her smile, sits. Surrounded by his plants they kiss. She puts a pickle in his mouth, giggling. He chews.

LILIAN

All better?

PRANE

All better.

Prane drinks some sort of water from an eco-friendly bottle, then waters the nearby plants with it. Lilian lights up a joint, shares it with him.

LILIAN

Nice day.

PRANE

Nice day. But I wouldn't turn my back on it.

They laugh. Prane crawls to the roof edge, looks down at the people by the trees beyond the parking lot. C'est La Vie is among them. Harriet is there, showing them how to plant a sapling. She sees Prane, waves. Prane and Lilian wave back.

LILIAN

Things that grow...  
(smiles, waits)  
What's the rest of it?

Prane looks at her, back at the tree-planting.

PRANE

Things that grow. Things that don't. How li'l time I have for things that won't.

Lilian likes it; kisses him again. Then, as he straddles her the sapling is stood up in its hole. The joint is finished later.

FADE OUT.

RESTITUTION

A screenplay  
by  
Anthony Rhody

