

WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. AUTO GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

"JOHN GLENN FIRST AMERICAN SPACEMAN" headlines on a "CHICAGO TIMES February 20, 1962" newspaper in a paper-box along train tracks under a bridge.

NICKY (V.O.)

There's lots of ways to get to the top of the world. The problem is, it's hard coming down.

NICKY ZINGARO (11) devilish smile, skull and crossbones bandana, smashes a bat through a junk car window.

He reaches in the busted window. Pulls a spray paint can out. Rattles it.

NICKY

Hey, Dick. Jackpot, Dick!

DICK ZINGARO (7) scrawny, a plastic space helmet on, pushes a shopping cart full of empty pop bottles behind Nicky.

DICK

Nicky. You promised the bottle money for my Space Academy tuition. And broken bottles are no good.

Nicky pulls an empty bottle from under a rusty sedan parked in a factory building loading dock.

NICKY

I ain't no good either. But hey; when I become the crime boss of Chicago, I'll buy you a spaceship.

He notices Dick wave at the moon.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Hey, space ace! What a ya doing?

DICK

Man on the radio said if we look up and wave. The spaceman will wave back. I'll be up there someday.

NICKY

Big deal. What goes up must come down. I can do that now. Blast off!

He flings the bottle.

NICKY
Three, two, one.

The bottle shatters off an overhead door on the loading dock.

DICK
More broken bottles.

Nicky leaps on a rusty sedan's hood. Spray-paints "Nicky Little Gypsy" across the roof.

NICKY (V.O.)
Hey! Crime's one way to get to the top. But it's a business. And like any business; ya gotta make a name for yourself. So ya advertise!

The trunk opens. Smoke rises out. Dick rolls the cart over.

DICK
Jeepers, it's... Uncle Alphonse.

Nicky peeks over the upright trunk lid from behind it.

A bloody, brutally beaten, burn scarred UNCLE ALPHONSE BISCOTTI (35) exhales steam as he stares up at Nicky.

NICKY
Yeah. And the devil's servant can't be too far behind.

SOMEONE flips the cart over. The bottles spill. Dick turns.

That SOMEONE is SWEET DREAMS DEO (29) wiseguy, bowling shirt, thick neck and Chicago accent, slams Dick against the fender.

Nicky jumps off the roof. Busts the bat over Deo's head. Rain falls. Nicky drags Dick off the ground.

NICKY
You okay, Dick?

DICK
Yeah, Nicky, let's--

Deo shakes his bloody head. Runs at them. Seizes Dick.

DEO
I'll skin ya's alive!

Nicky spray-paints Deo's face. Yanks Dick from his grasp.

They run out the gate toward a street. Dick falls behind.

NICKY
Come on! Ya run like a girl!

Deo shuts the trunk. Jumps in the car. Races after them.

DEO
I'll kill you little cock suckers!

STREET

Nicky steps on the curb. Looks both ways.

Wet pavement reflects oncoming headlights. Traffic crisscrosses his path.

He dashes across at the first opening between cars.

NICKY
See ya on the other side, Dick!

DICK (O.S.)
Wait up!

The rusty sedan races after Dick. He hops the curb. Slips. Falters across the pavement. The sedan skids to the curb.

Nicky turns on the sidewalk. Sees Dick stumble through oncoming headlights.

NICKY
Dick! No!

O.S. TIRES SQUEAL. An oncoming car swerves. The bumper swats Dick's back foot.

Dick's gym shoe spins skyward.

Dick flies over the pavement. Nicky backs across the sidewalk. Catches Dick's space helmet.

Dick's head smacks the curb. He rolls headfirst toward Nicky.

Deo swings his arm out the sedan window at the curb.

DEO
Fuckin' A! It could be...!

O.S. THUNDER RUMBLES. Lightning flashes.

Dick somersaults into Nicky. He flies back. Whacks his head into a brick building.

DEO (O.S.)
...A fuckin' seven ten pick up!

NICKY'S FIRST SPACE ODYSSEY BEGINS:

EXT. EARTH'S ORBIT - NIGHT

Nicky lies in a glowing white bed above the atmosphere. A large white AM radio floats next to him in space.

WACKY AM ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Hey, kids, look up in the sky and
 see the silver suited spaceman! And
 hey, don't forget to wave!

A "USA" space capsule floats by. A silver suited spaceman in the window lifts his helmet visor. It's Dick. He waves.

Nicky sits up. Waves back. Dick's gym shoe flops in his lap.

NICKY
 Dick?

NICKY'S FIRST SPACE ODYSSEY ENDS.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky jerks awake in a bedside chair. An ice bag drops between his legs. Dick sleeps in bed. An ice bag on his head.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

JOE ZINGARO (34) muscled, black hair, tailored sharkskin suit, opens the glass entry door. Hurries in.

NICKY (V.O.)
 Our old man's as mean as they come.
 Does he mean well? He's just mean.

The glass door slams on DOROTHY ZINGARO (30) dark skin and eyes, gorgeous, jet black curly hair, clutches her overcoat around her neck.

NICKY (V.O.)
 Mom's a full blooded gypsy. A
 direct descendant of Simon the
 Sorcerer. A Samaritan Magus. Look
 him up. He could fly.

A sudden wind mutes her hair. She coughs. Fogs the glass.

NICKY (V.O.)
 Anyway, she's gifted. I got it from
 her. She's our sword and shield
 against the tyranny that's Dad.

EMERGENCY ROOM

Nicky stands at Dick's bedside and holds the ice bag on Dick's head as he sleeps.

NICKY

God, please make him better so I
can get him to that Space Academy.
I'll never put him in danger again.

Dorothy races to Dick's bedside.

DOROTHY

My baby.

She rubs Nicky's arm. Kisses Dick.

Joe enters. Peers at Nicky.

DOROTHY

Dick! My god!

Dick opens his tearful eyes. Feels his head. Sobs. Dorothy kisses him.

DICK

Mom. Dad. I'm sorry. It's my fault.
I lost my space helmet.

JOE

Forget the stupid helmet. I don't
blame you. It's all Nicky's fault!

DICK

I can't go into space without it--

JOE

-You're never going to space, Dick!

He smacks Nicky. Raises his hand again.

JOE

You've got Dick stealing pop
bottles off porches again!

Nicky throws the ice bag. Smack in Joe's face. Nicky runs out.

EXT. AUSTIN BOWL - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

A neon sign: "AUSTIN BOWL" blinks on the building wall above.

Nicky smiles through the window at Nicky, Dick, Dorothy and Joe having fun bowling inside.

NICKY (V.O.)
 News flash: We had some good times.

Headlights reflect in the glass. White-out the images. Nicky turns. A cop car approaches from the other end of the block.

He ducks around the corner into an --

ALLEY

A Cadillac turns into the alley from the other end.

Nicky dives under a parked car.

The Cadillac backs next to the car Nicky's under.

Deo opens his driver side window. Opera plays on the stereo. He taps a business card in his fist on the window ledge.

NICKY (V.O.)
 Deo listens to opera which means,
 he gets plenty of sleep. Anyway,
 they say Sweet Dreams Deo never
 left the house at night until he
 tucked Mamma Deo in.

SWEET DREAMS BEGINS:

INT. BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

An Italian opera record plays on an old record player.

MAMMA DEO (80) lies in a large oak bed, wrapped in frilly blankets at the heart of a room full of old world antiques.

Deo steps in. Sings along with an opera tenor's solo.

NICKY (V.O.)
 Sweet Dreams, wasn't sleeping well.
 He owed Big Tamale Torres a shit
 load in gambling debts.

MAMMA DEO
 You gamble all my money away and
 starve me in my own room.

Deo slides her up on two pillows. Kisses her.

MAMMA DEO
 Why is my door always locked?

He slips the bottom pillow from under her. Fluffs it.

MAMMA DEO
Are you listening to me?

Deo kisses her. Forces the pillow over her face. Climbs on her. Lays his ear to the pillow.

MAMMA DEO
You will burn in hell!

DEO
Sweet dreams, Mamma.

NICKY (V.O.)
Big Tamale Torres got his cut of
the insurance money. Sweet Dreams,
rest assured, slept like a baby.

SWEET DREAMS ENDS.

Nicky stares out from under the parked car next to the Cadillac. The rear door opens.

Shined Moreschi loafers step out. COCONUTS (35) burly, rugged, drops a red-key. Slides it to Nicky with his loafer.

NICKY (V.O.)
They call him Coconuts, since he
fell for a wahine dancer in the
Hawaiian Luau revue at Shanghai
Lil's Nightclub.

A cop car pulls behind the Cadillac. Corrective shoes with the left heel thicker stumble over. Face the loafers.

Officer ROTY (25) tall, thin, slight limp, chews bubble gum, jabs a revolver in Coconuts' gut.

Coconuts snatches the gun. Headbutts him. Shoves Roty backward over the cop car hood. Pokes the gun in his face.

Deo cocks a .45 aimed at the back of Coconuts' head:

DEO
Joe's going down. I want your book
and ledger with the clients list.
I'll be running things tomorrow.

Coconuts turns. Smiles down the .45 barrel at Deo.

DEO
Get up, Roty! Frisk this jag-off!

Roty searches Coconuts.

ROTY
He got nothing.

COCONUTS
You're a loser again, Deo?

DEO
And you're gonna be dead, Coconuts!

Coconuts stoops. Wipes his loafers with a handkerchief.

COCONUTS
What's a matter, Deo? No more old
ladies to kill for their insurance?

He shifts his eyes to Nicky under the car. Nicky dangles the red-key. Coconuts steps around the corner.

DEO (O.S.)
Joe's going down! You're the jag-
off fucking loser, prick.

He hops in the Cadillac. Slams the door in Roty's face.

The business card lands under the Deo's car door.

A rat hops from under the car. Lands between Roty's shoes.
Its tail tickles Nicky's nose. He blows his breath at it.

The rat jumps on Nicky's head. He jerks his head forward. The
rat flops back between Roty's shoes.

Nicky turns away. Roty stomps the rat. Blood and guts spray.

NICKY (V.O.)
They call him Roty. Stands for
Rookie Of The Year that never was.
A motorcycle accident ended that
dream and began this nightmare.

Roty scrapes the rat off his heel. Deo smirks out the window.

DEO
Stinking jag-off rats.

Nicky reaches for the business card sticking halfway-out from
under Roty's heel.

Deo reaches out the window. Shoves Roty back:

DEO
Outta my way, prick wit' ears!

Nicky jerks his hand back before Roty steps on it.

Roty steps away. Nicky grabs the card stuck to Roty's heel.

Nicky wrinkles his nose at "FBI Agent Talbot 777-6666" on the rat's blood and guts smeared business card. Pockets it.

Roty hops in the cop car. Pulls away. The Cadillac follows.

Nicky climbs from under the car. Palms the red-key.

Coconuts steps around the corner. Grabs him. Whispers:

COCONUTS

Roty's still here, hiding. Go down.

Nicky drops on his ass. Coconuts jabs a finger in his face.

COCONUTS

You run out on your dad and mom.
What's wrong with you. Go on back!

NICKY

Yes, sir!

Coconuts pulls him up. Makes the sign on the cross with his thumb on Nicky's forehead. Shoves him back.

COCONUTS

You're absolved. Go, sin no more.

He steps away. Smiles at the red-key in his hand.

Nicky jogs around the rear of the building. Roty lunges out of a garage's shadow. Seizes Nicky. Shakes him.

ROTY

Hey, Pinocchio!

He throws Nicky against a garage door. Nicky ducks Roty's punch. Stomps on his corrective shoe. Roty hops around.

NICKY

Hee haw!

Roty punches him in the head. Nicky drops on his knees.

ROTY

I'll kick you all the way home.

He grabs Nicky by the hair. Cocks his leg to kick him.

NICKY

Hey, cop, meet my Cuz.

CUZ (22) big, muscular, duck tail hair, leather jacket, boots, grabs Roty's leg back. Spins him to the ground.

NICKY (V.O.)

This is my half-Italian half-Greek cousin. Just call him Cuz. My dad says Greeks and Italians don't mix. Their kids always end up crazy. But I like Cuz just the way he is.

Cuz crumples a \$100 bill. Tosses it in Roty's face.

CUZ

I'll take it from here.

He drags Nicky around the building back to the --

AUSTIN BOWL - SIDEWALK

Cuz straightens Nicky's shirt. Brushes him off.

NICKY

I wanna come work for you, Cuz. I need to start earning. So I can get Dick in the best schools. Space Academy. Teach me the streets, Cuz.

CUZ

Okay. First lesson. You gotta learn when to stop and take your lumps.

He pushes Nicky into the bricks under the "Austin Bowl" sign.

CUZ

I must be crazy backing ya up all the time. Your dad's pissed. Lesson two. Keep what we say between us.

Nicky nods. Smiles. Cuz gets in his face. Nose to nose.

CUZ

You runaway from your parents at the hospital. The fuck's a matter with you?! They ain't worried enough?

NICKY

I'm sorry, Cuz, but that cop--

CUZ

-Hey! I give a flying fuck about that cop. News flash; cops do what they're paid to do by who the fuck pays 'em more.

He squeezes Nicky's face between his hands.

CUZ

Right now that's us. But shit happens. Coups and regime changes lead to rainy days.

NICKY

You pissed at me, Cuz?

CUZ

Some things I gotta do for your own good. Let's get back there so your ma can take her gypsy curse off me.

He pats Nicky on his back and laughs:

CUZ

Then your dad can take his pointy toed shoes out of my ass.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Dick sleeps in the dark. Foot in a cast. Ice bag half off his head on the pillow.

Nicky creeps over to Dick. Straightens the ice bag. Puts the space helmet over the bag on his head.

NICKY

Don't give up your dreams, Dick. You're gonna be a spaceman someday.

He sneaks out. Dick sees him leave. Shuts his eyes. Smiles.

INT./EXT. BOYS ROOM - DAY

Dick and Nicky sit on a bed along an open window playing chess. "Never give up your dreams Dick" signed, "Nicky Little Gypsy" across Dick's cast.

NICKY

Remember. We ain't no rat finks.

DICK

I won't say anything.

"SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN" flashes across a black and white TV on a four-wheel cart between two beds.

INSERT TV SCREEN:

The camera focuses on a CROWD behind the rusty sedan.

The focus turns onto the bloody, disfigured, burn scarred dead body of Uncle Alphonse in the trunk.

The focus shifts onto a "DEAD END" sign on a light-pole.

Then the focus drops onto "Nicky Little Gypsy" spray-painted on the roof.

INSERT ENDS.

Joe enters. Sees "Never give up your dreams Dick, Nicky Little Gypsy" on Dick's cast as Dick backs away on the bed.

Nicky twists the TV knob toward "off". Joe shoves him onto the bed. The TV volume rises to full blast:

NEWSMAN (O.S.)

The only lead the police have is...

Joe swats the TV. It crashes to the floor. The screen cracks. The TV sparks and shimmies across the floor.

Joe slaps the chessboard off the bed. Dick shuts his eyes.

JOE

I told you, fuck this bullshit game. Your ma's at oxygen therapy. She can't save you this time.

Nicky stands. Smiles in Joe's face.

JOE

And, smart guy, when she dies of cancer, everyday will be like this.

He smacks Nicky upside his head. He slams sideways to the floor. Blood fills his mouth.

He gets on his feet. Blinks. Wobbles. Finger combs his hair.

NICKY

That's it. I'm getting out of here.

Joe hems him against the bed frame.

JOE

You gonna go through me?

Nicky jumps over the bed. Ducks out the window. Stands on the second floor ledge. Leans out.

Dick reaches out the window and wraps his arms around Nicky's legs. Holds him back against the window.

DICK
Nicky, don't me leave alone.

Joe knocks on the window and snarls:

JOE
Go on jump. Show me you got hair on
your balls.

Nicky smiles across the street at a violet two story wood
frame house.

BITTY (7) long hair, button nose, waxed-papered coat hangers
as angel wings, leaps off the steps. Dances cross the street.

STARR (15) athletic, blond surfer type, stops mowing Bitty's
lawn. Chases her.

His Converse All Stars squeak to a stop.

Dick looks around Nicky's legs. Bitty smiles. Squints up at
them from the lawn directly under the window.

NICKY
Outta my way, little Bitty.

Starr grabs her. Pulls her back. She kicks him in the shins.

BITTY
Leave me be, mister squeaky Starr.

STARR
Oh, I bet he don't have the nerve
to jumps anyway.

NICKY
I'll take that bet, mister squeaky
Starr. If ya got the balls to take
Bitty's place under me.

STARR
I'm going to knock you off your
high horse someday, asshole.

As he gives Nicky the finger. His BEAT COP DAD (35) appears
behind him and kicks him onto his knees in the street.

Starr crawls away. His Dad swings his nightstick. Misses him.

Starr leaps to his feet. About to escape his Dad.

But JIMMY (11) sandy hair, loud checkered shirt, laughingly
skids his bike into Starr. Knocks him down.

STARR
Fucking, Jimmy--!

Starr's Dad whacks his leg with his nightstick.

STARR
Ow! Dad! All right! All--!

DRUNKEN BEAT COP DAD
-Shut the fuck up. And get home.
You're doing my laundry. That bitch
mom of yours is out whoring again.

Starr sneers at Jimmy as he runs from his stumbling Dad.
Jimmy grinds his fists under his eyes. Like pantomime clowns.
Nicky laughs loudly through cupped hands from the ledge.
Bitty steps under the window. Shakes her head. Facing Nicky.

BITTY
People that jump off ledges don't
get to heaven, Nicky.

NICKY
Just leave. I don't wanna hurt ya.

She jumps up and down. Flaps her arms. Flutters her wings.

BITTY
I can fly you to a better place. We
can get married in the clouds.

Nicky smiles through tears.

NICKY
I would marry you in the clouds but
you're not strong enough to carry
me there. So for now, please move.

BITTY
You have to wait until I grow up.
'Cause I'm never leaving.

NICKY
That a promise?

BITTY
Angels never lie.

Nicky nods. Wipes blood off his lips. Smiles.

Jimmy drops his bike on the lawn. Shoves Bitty down. Laughs.

JIMMY

You see me, man, Nicky--?!

Nicky crash-lands on Jimmy. Slams him to the grass.

INT. BOYS ROOM - NIGHT

Dick lies in bed. Nicky sits on his bed. His back to Dick.

DICK

What are you gonna do?

NICKY

Shh... Quiet... It's a surprise.

Dick crawls to the edge of his bed. Cranes his neck to see.

DICK

What? Like a present?

NICKY

No, a booby trap. Like in the war.

He pours something from his hand into a small envelope.

DICK

Which war?

NICKY

The war Dad just declared on me.

DICK

Who's side am I on?

Dick stands erect. Salutes him. Nicky sits him back in bed.

NICKY

You won't have to choose.

DICK

What's your secret? You always won no matter what game we played in the neighborhood. No matter who's side you were on.

NICKY

Nothing's a game to me, that's why.

He stuffs the small envelope in his back pocket.

BOYS ROOM - LATER

O.S. JOE AND DOROTHY SHOUT INDISTINCTLY IN THE NEXT ROOM.

Nicky and Dick lie under both beds pulled together.

Nicky uses a flashlight to light a chessboard taped to the bed springs with magnetic pieces at play. Some on the floor.

NICKY

Where do you go when you close your eyes and hide?

DICK

I'm floating in space high above the Earth and all our troubles.

NICKY

How do you block out their noise?

DICK

I talk to myself in my head. I yell sometimes until my ears seem to ring. Now tell me what's your plan?

Nicky shines the light in Dick's face.

NICKY

You stop hiding under the bed.

DICK

I only hide when Dad's yelling.

NICKY

(German accent)

Tooter, tooter, tooter, you hide whenever the doorbell rings. Then it's: "Help me, mister wizard, get me outta here!"

He shines the light under his own chin. Scrunches his face.

NICKY

(German accent)

"Twizzle, Twazzle, Twozzle, Twome; time for this one to come home."

DICK

Stop it. Liar.

Dick grabs at the flashlight. Nicky fights him off.

NICKY

(German accent)

"Be just what you is, not what you is not. "Those that do this are the happiest lot."

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Several black and white photos of well dressed ancestors in oval frames adorn the walls.

Nicky sneaks across an ornately furnished dining room.

O.S. THE FLOOR CREAKS. He creeps round the loose floorboards.

PARENTS BEDROOM

He kneels outside the door. Pours ten pins from the small envelope in his hand. Sticks them up from under a throw rug:

NICKY

I hope you get my point, asshole.

He softly puts the throw rug down. Needles up.

DINING ROOM

Nicky creeps round a dining room table. Crawls under a chair.

PARENTS BEDROOM

Darkness fills the open doorway into a pitch black bedroom.

O.S. AN ALARM CLOCK BUZZES THEN STOPS.

Joe steps out of the shadows. Scratches his ass. Smiles.

JOE

Ah! Now I'm ready for anything.

He steps on the throw rug. Bugs his eyes out. Grabs his foot. Loses his balance. Spins halfway around on one foot.

JOE

Cock suck--!

He falls back through the door. Crashes in the darkness.

HALLWAY

Nicky scrambles into his room.

Joe limps out of the bedroom. Hobbles along the wall.

JOE

Ouch. You mother... Fuck!

BOYS ROOM

Joe stares in. Nicky and Dick lie motionless in their beds.

Joe scratches his forehead. Sniffs his hand. Jerks it away.

JOE
Fuck, shit.

He leaves. O.S. FOOTSTEPS CREEK AWAY.

Dick slides his covers over his head. Nicky double "fuck you salutes" the empty doorway.

INT. PARENTS ROOM - DAY

Dorothy coughs in bed. Puts a cigarette out in an ashtray. Spits in a tissue. Drops it in a garbage bin.

Joe paces back and forth past an oxygen tank under the bed.

JOE
I work hard to put a roof over your heads. Dorothy, gimme a cigarette?

She grabs a cigarette pack and flip top lighter off the bed.

DOROTHY
You're never here.

She hands him a cigarette. Lighter.

JOE
I did right. I married you.

He lights the cigarette.

JOE
I'll make my dynamic duo such tough son of a bitches. They'll thank me.

Dorothy coughs in his face.

DOROTHY
You touch either of them ever again and I'll send you away!

JOE
Ya gonna have me arrested?

He shoves her. She sits on the bed. Springs back up. Coughs in his face. He grimaces. Laughs:

JOE
Or maybe put a dying gypsy curse on me? Don't make me--!

She smacks him upside his jaw. His cigarette spins a trail of red hot embers. Explodes off the wall.

DOROTHY
Laugh. Go head.

JOE
Don't play your gypsy rage on me.

He grabs a cigarette from the pack. Lights it.

JOE
You know, with my brains, your toughness and the right connects, there'll be no stopping them.

DOROTHY
They're going to go to college.

She squeezes her hands into fists. Coughs words:

DOROTHY
Don't laugh at me again.

Joe smiles. Scoffs. Walks toward the door.

She flings the ashtray. Joe ducks out. The ashtray just misses his head. Crashes a mirror on the wall next to the --

FRONT DOOR

He smiles in the jagged mirror pieces on the wall. Brushes ash off his suit. Turns the doorknob. The door bursts open.

Two big FBI AGENTS, TALBOT (35) and EBBS (44) storm in. Gang tackle Joe. Wrestle handcuffs on him.

He squirms out of their grips. They stomp on him repeatedly.

AGENT TALBOT
FBI! Agent Talbot and Ebbs. Joe Zingaro. You're under arrest for the murder of Alphonse Biscotti.

Nicky reads "Agent Talbot" on the rat blood and guts smeared "FBI" card that fell from Deo's Cadillac in the alley.

NICKY (V.O.)
Think I could-a maybe helped my old man here? Do the right thing? Fuck that! I take better care of Dick.

He pockets the "FBI" card.

NICKY

(sotto)

I'll get stinky rat Deo myself.

Dorothy jumps on Agent Talbot's back. Dick grabs Agent Ebb's legs. Nicky kicks Joe. They tumble into a screaming pile.

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

An elevated train rumbles over the tracks above the alley behind an asphalt playlot outside a ground level window.

SUPER: 10 YEARS LATER

A gloved finger swipes a bloody X across the "1" on a "JULY 1972" wall calendar.

Sharks swim by an ocean reef in the picture on the folded up calendar page. The caption reads: "MAN EATERS"

The bloody gloved hand waves a match under the calendar. Lights it.

Bed sheets hang pinned to a clothesline across the room. Only shoes show under the sheets.

Roty's corrective shoe limps across the floor.

Starr's converse All Stars squeak around him.

ROTY (O.S.)

Where's your fuckin' book and your cash bank, you... fuck?!

The gloved hand lifts a bloody straight razor over the sheet.

STARR (O.S.)

Strike one. He ain't even blinking.

ROTY (O.S.)

Speak motherfucker.

The bloody razor rises and falls.

STARR (O.S.)

Stry-eeek.

Blood splatters across the sheet.

ROTY (O.S.)

Come on. At least lie to us.

STARR (O.S.)

Just like I said: "Man of steel."

ROTY (O.S.)

Even Superman ducks when you throw
shit at him. Speak now or...

The bloody razor hovers over the clothesline.

STARR (O.S.)

What are ya waitin' for?

ROTY (O.S.)

Fuck you too, Starr. Cock, sucker.

The blade dives behind the blanket.

STARR (O.S.)

Yare out.

Blood sprays the blanket. Splatters on the floor.

STARR (O.S.)

What'd I tell you about this hard
headed guinea bastard? Didn't open
his mouth once. You owe me an extra
fifty for that, Roty.

ROTY (O.S.)

Deo's gonna boil us in olive oil if
we get back empty handed, Starr.

They walk away.

STARR (O.S.)

We're gonna have to keep on killing
guineas 'til we find this stash.

ROTY (O.S.)

This mother... fucker...

STARR (O.S.)

Hang in there, Coconuts.

ROTY

This is it. I'm done making bets
with you ya dumb luck fuck.

O.S. A DOOR SLAMS. The burnt calendar pages flutter to the
floor. The sheets blow back. Two legs form in the fabric.

Coconuts' shined Moreschi loafers dangle below the sheet. The
red-key PINGS to the floor. Blood drips off the loafers.

BASEMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

NICKY ZINGARO (now 21) muscular, ponytail, enters the door. Clicks the flip top lighter open with his leg. Lights it.

NICKY
Coconuts. It's Nicky. You sleeping?

He slips on the bloody floor. Flops on his back.

NICKY
Ow, ya mother--!

He raises the flame. Sees the blood filled Moreschi loafers.

Nicky stands. The light reflects in Coconuts' dead eyes. His neck, chest and arms slashed. Hung from a rope over a beam.

NICKY
I'm sorry Coconuts. I wish I could--

He squeezes Coconuts' arm. Tears up. Makes the sign on the cross with his thumb on Coconuts' forehead.

Nicky waves the lighter to see his way out. Steps across the floor. His shoe taps like a tap-shoe.

He leans on the wall. Holds the light under his shoe. Peels the bloody red-key off his heel. Holds it over the flame.

NICKY
Don't worry, Coconuts. I know what to do. You've taught me well.

SAL (21) dark brown skin, Afro, chubby, bursts through the door. Steps over to Nicky:

SAL
Why are the lights--?

He stops. Grabs the lighter from Nicky. Sal's tearful wide-eyes reflect the flame as he turns the light onto Coconuts.

SAL
Why didn't ya scream, Pops? I'd a came running. I...

He clicks the lighter shut. The skin round the hot lighter smokes in his grasp as he hugs Coconuts. Weeping.

NICKY
That motherfucking Rat Deo...

Sal grabs a bat in the corner. Looks wild-eyed. Face bloody. Points the bat repeatedly at Nicky as he speaks:

SAL

My veins are popping. I'm about to fly! Let's go kill that fucker Deo!

Nicky grabs the bat:

NICKY

I wanted to kill that fucker for years. But we gotta have a plan.

He holds onto the bat as Sal thumps his own chest with it.

SAL

Fuck that. We'll surprise his ass.

NICKY

You're talking checkers. He's playing chess. He's waiting for ya.

SAL

I'm a kamikaze motherfucker I know.

NICKY

We do this together. But I take him on. He can't touch me. My Dad's a made man. I'm the devil's disciple.

INT. HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL BOX - NIGHT

The door opens. A blade of light punctures the darkness.

Nicky kneels. Eyes tearful. Makes the sign of the cross.

FATHER CONFESSOR (45) slides the lattice window open.

NICKY

Bless me Father for I have sinned. Coconuts is dead. I couldn't-- He told me to trust you with this.

He sets the red-key over three \$100 bills on the ledge.

Father Confessor nods. Folds the red-key in the cash.

HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH

Nicky exits the confessional. Steps through the scarcely populated cathedral. Exits the back door.

Father Confessor hurries up the altar steps into the --

SACRISTY

He rushes through a back door. Descends a stairway. Opens an metal door with "KEEP OUT" on it. Enters a --

BOILER ROOM

Father Confessor slaps the red-key on a table. Puts wire through it. Hangs the red-key on the wall behind the furnace.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Rain slick asphalt reflects streetlights.

A truck splashes a newspaper-box: "MOB BOOKIE HUNG OUT TO DIE" the "CHICAGO TIMES" headline in the display window.

EXT./INT. BITTY'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Wooden staircase leads to the violet wood frame house.

BITTY (now 17) cute, short hair, sits on the steps. Her nipples bounce in a halter-top. Long legs in short-shorts.

NICKY (V.O.)

Bitty's as straight as the way to heaven. I know I'll never get there but I can see it in her eyes.

BITTY

I don't care about any of that, mister squeaky Starr.

Detective Sergeant STARR (now 25) still the athletic blond surfer type, in a "Chicago Police Department" windbreaker, his Converse All Stars squeak as he scurries up the steps.

STARR

I just thought you ought to know.

BITTY

Well thanks. But no thanks.

NICKY (V.O.)

I'm not sure which one of us this Casanova wants to fuck more.

Nicky stomps up the stairs.

NICKY

Are we going or what?

BITTY

Hi, Nicky. I'll go get my purse.

She quick-steps to the front door and enters the --

FOYER

Elaborately furnished with a long staircase.

MAGDALEN (45) sharp looking, lets go of sheer curtains over the stained glass door and backpedals as it opens.

Magdalen crosses her arms. Bitty enters.

BITTY

Spy!

MAGDALEN

We've already discussed this.

Bitty steps around her. Magdalen cuts her off. Blocks her from a macrame purse on a drum table.

BITTY

Your disgust with me over my choice of boyfriend, Mother, is not up to debate. It's mine to make.

MAGDALEN

You've chosen a drug dealer?

BITTY

So you called the cops.

MAGDALEN

Starr's a friend.

BITTY

Your friend's a crooked cop.

She backs Magdalen up to the staircase as she speaks:

BITTY

He's more than a friend to you. You like to be cuffed, Magdalen?

Magdalen sits on the stairs. Wipes sweat off her forehead.

MAGDALEN

Where did you get that?

BITTY

I spy too.

She slings her purse over Magdalen's head on her way out. Magdalen slides down the steps. Bumps her head back.

FRONT PORCH

Nicky gets in Starr's face from a step below him.

NICKY

Bitty's been asking you to leave her alone for ten years now. Now I gotta ask: Isn't Bitty's Mother enough for you?

STARR

Today's that someday I knock you off your high horse.

NICKY

You been talkin' shit about me to Bitty and her mother, Magdalen.

Starr pokes Nicky in the chest as he speaks:

STARR

Magdalen wants you away from her daughter too. So I'm gonna show Bitty you're nothing but a thieving gypsy. She deserves better.

NICKY

Got anyone in mind?

STARR

As a matter of fact I do.

NICKY

That's funny... I looked you up in my crystal ball. The name Starr ain't on any list of good citizens. So back the fuck off with your I'm the better act.

Starr grabs his shirt. Bumps heads with him.

STARR

You don't rate, sonny. Your daddy's in the pen. And Cuz, he's a half breed. History lesson, half breeds can't be made men.

NICKY

I got some history for you. Since when is a hog safe in Chicago?

STARR

I'm gonna shove that crystal ball up your ass. Try reading palms.

He slaps Nicky. Nicky scoffs. Wipes blood from his mouth.

NICKY
Can't read hoof.

Bitty rushes out. Pulls Nicky down the stairs. Nicky mouths "fuck you" to Starr back on the porch.

Starr watches Nicky usher Bitty into a pristine '57 Cadillac at the curb. Nicky hops behind the wheel. Peels-out.

Magdalen drags Starr into the --

FOYER

Starr backs her over the stairs. Kisses her.

MAGDALEN
We got 'em. Bitty baby-sits her
sister Anne's daughter June
tomorrow. Their white sedan will be
in Ward's parking lot at noon.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

A slide. Monkey bars. Swings. On a grassy hill above a park.

Nicky spins Bitty on a merry-go-round.

NICKY (V.O.)
I gage people by the music they
like. Bitty's got a poster of the
most honest, nothing to hide people
I know, John and Yoko nude, in her
room. Bitty's my virgin angel.

He jumps on. She wipes blood from the corner of his mouth.

BITTY
Are you okay?

NICKY
My old man's been busting me harder
since I was five. Starr wants you?

BITTY
Don't be... I've known him since I
was little.

Nicky scoffs. Shakes his head.

NICKY
He's been waiting ten years.

BITTY

What makes you think that?

NICKY

We're all looking for an angel.

BITTY

Want to know what song I'm singing?

She bounces in excitement. He kisses her nose.

NICKY

You're *my* angel.

She nods. Hugs. Kisses him.

BITTY

Then let me do my job. Please stop selling drugs. Get a real job. A GED. Go back to school. Marry me.

NICKY

What are you singing?

BITTY

Ave Maria. I'm singing the solo in the church choir Sunday.

She points to the sky.

BITTY

Start coming to church with me. And the stars will light your way to heaven.

NICKY

The stars ain't nothing but carrots hung on celestial sticks. They're there to beat us into submission.

BITTY

You're too smart for your own good. But it's not too late to change. Ya gotta admit you're never happier then when you're with your angel.

NICKY

Okay. I admit it.

She whispers in his ear:

BITTY

Then come fly with me to heaven.

NICKY
My soul is heavy.

He grabs her elbows. Flaps her arms.

BITTY
What are you doing?

NICKY
I'm wondering if your wings are
strong enough to carry both of us.

She hops off the merry-go-round. Runs around. Flaps her arms.

BITTY
I better exercise them.

NICKY
Hey! Don't leave without me.

He leaps off the merry-go-round.

BITTY
I won't leave without you.

She glides into his chest. He falls back onto the merry-go-round. She climbs over him.

BITTY
I love you, Nicky.

She tries to kiss him. He holds her back.

NICKY
Maybe you shouldn't.

BITTY
Are you saying you don't love me?

NICKY
No... I love you too much.

BITTY
Then, what?

NICKY
I'm afraid of...

BITTY
You're afraid of hurting me? Is
that it?

NICKY

I'm afraid of you. Ya make me care.
That leaves me weak and vulnerable.
But I love ya so much, the thought
of being without ya makes me sick.

She yanks his ponytail back. Grabs his balls.

BITTY

I get what you mean. Now kiss me,
and I'll let you fucking keep 'em!

NICKY

Watch out for falling angels.

INT. JERRY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MARCUS (21) big, three inch scar under his crewcut, dress
Army uniform, slaps a cup from the hand of KC (21) chesty
blonde waitress, tight uniform. No panty lines.

The cup shatters to the floor of a greasy spoon. Marcus
storms outs. KC squats. Gathers the shattered pieces.

NICKY (V.O.)

This is KC. K-C stands for Kingdom
Come. Found her outside a Kingdom
Hall. She's one of them you can cum
anywhere but in my mouth types.
She's religious about that.

Roty enters. Sits in a window booth with Starr. KC sets two
coffee cups and two glasses of water down.

KC

What can I do you's for?

STARR

What's with that soldier?

KC

That's Marcus. We dated long ago.
He asked me out. I told him I don't
date baby killers.

NICKY (V.O.)

Kc's right. Marcus likes Alice
Cooper. And Alice sings a song
about... dead babies.

STARR

Just coffee for me.

NICKY (V.O.)
 These cops listen to shit kicking
 country music, need I say more?

Marcus watches from outside the window cross the way as KC
 fills Starr's cup. He shifts his eyes onto Marcus outside.

ROTY
 Coffee please?

KC fills his cup. He licks her arm.

She sets the hot coffee pot on his hand. He jerks his hand
 back. The coffee pot flips on his lap. He jumps up.

The coffee pot shatters on the floor. She wipes her arm on
 her apron. He plunks his hand in the water glass.

ROTY
 Bitch!

KC
 Chauvinist pig.

Starr stands. Applauds. Laughs.

INT./EXT. UNMARKED COP CAR (IDLING) - NIGHT

Roty sneers over the wheel at the restaurant. Starr lies in
 the back. Kicks his feet out the door onto the curb. Laughs.

SIDEWALK

KC exits the restaurant. Sees the unmarked cop car. Hurries
 away. Starr chases her down.

STARR
 If I loan you my gun will you shoot
 him and put me out of my misery?

KC
 Sure.

STARR
 Will you settle for a bribe?

He offers her \$50 folded in his fingers.

KC
 I'd rather shoot him.

STARR
 Take it, please?

KC

I can't, really. I feel sorry for you. Being partners with such an asshole probably gets you killed.

STARR

What if I told you the money comes out of his pocket?

KC

You are definitely not a pig.

STARR

I'll forgive you if you'll accept my act of contrition?

KC

Deal.

She snatches the \$50.

STARR

Listen. You enjoy fucking with pigs so much, why stop? Got a pen?

He hands her a piece of paper. She whips a pen out.

KC

You know how to use it?

STARR

Are we talking about a pen?

KC steps in front of the cop car. He stays on the curb.

KC

I want to give him a good look.

She lays the paper on the hood. Smiles at Roty. He scowls.

STARR

You'll end up a hood ornament.

KC

Misery don't like smiles.

Roty revs the engine. The wheels squeal in reverse. KC stumbles toward the car. Roty peels-out.

Starr pulls her back. The car swerves away. Just misses her.

Starr sits on the curb. KC plops in his lap. They laugh.

KC
You were right the first time.

STARR
Misery loves a crowd.

Marcus ducks in an alley. Just before Roty races by.

EXT. DAVIS PLAYLOT - NIGHT

Fenced in. Inner city playlot. Swings. Slide. Jungle gym.

Basketball court at the rear. Elevated tracks over the alley.

A constant succession of cars pull up to the curb.

Marcus and PAOLO (20) curly haired Italian immigrant, bad English, sell bags of weed, foil squares and pills to CUSTOMERS in the idling cars at the curb.

NICKY (V.O.)
I know. Drugs are bad. But hey,
more than a few of us here got
their minds chewed up in Vietnam.
Anyway, what's a poor boy to do?

Sal swings a bat in one hand. A tall carry out cup in the other.

NICKY (V.O.)
So I hope you don't mind if we
smoke and trip our way through your
waiting rooms. Since there ain't no
better cure for summertime blues.

SAL
Come on lads! Do drop in!

NICKY (V.O.)
Sal runs my drive-in operation. See
the bat? He's a sheer power hitter.
And he's batting a thousand.

Paolo and Marcus drop cash in Sal's cup. Nicky walks by:

NICKY
I got this one, Sal.

A TEENAGE BOY, face hidden by a baseball cap, sits on the curb at the far end of the fence.

BRIAN (18) short hair, male, preppy attire, newsboy cap, looks around and stares down as he gives cash to Marcus.

BRIAN

Two hits of window pane acid.

Nicky races over to Marcus.

Sal swings the bat as he joins Nicky.

Nicky pulls Brian's newsboy cap bill over his face.

NICKY

I see you, Brian?

He drags him by his cap bill down the sidewalk. Throws him against the far end of the fence.

Sal stabs his bat in Brian's chest.

SAL

Don't you ever fucking come back!

Nicky slaps the Teenage Boy sitting on the curb's baseball cap off.

The Teenage Boy is DICK (now 16) regular boys haircut, peach fuzz mustache, jumps up from the curb. Faces Nicky.

NICKY

What'd I tell you 'bout coming here or anywhere looking for drugs?!

DICK

You said that you'd embarrass me.

Nicky throws him in front of an oncoming car. Dick jumps back. The car skids to a halt inches from Dick.

Nicky shoves Dick over the car hood. Yells in his ear:

NICKY

Don't you move, Dick!

The car DRIVER lays on the horn. Nicky catches Sal's bat. Points it through the windshield.

NICKY

You fucking don't move either.

Nicky lifts Dick by the collar. Throws him to the curb.

NICKY

Dick, get home, before I use your balls for batting practice.

Dick and Brian run across the street. Weave through traffic.

Nicky pokes the bat at Marcus. Backs him into the fence.

NICKY
No dope for preppies! Capisci,
Marcus?

MARCUS
Capisco, Nicky.

Nicky takes Sal's money cup. Tosses him the bat.

NICKY
Sal, you see Dick hanging round
here anywhere, kick his ass home.

SAL
Consider it a done deal, Nicky.

Nicky walks down the sidewalk past the end of the fence to --

BARBER SHOP

Two-story building. Apartment above. Next to the playlot.

"MIKE'S HAIRCUTS & STYLES" in red neon across the window.

Nicky sits on the ledge next to a barber's pole.

Poster inside glass: "HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH CARNIVAL -
JULY 1 THRU JULY 8 - WILD RIDES/GAMES OF CHANCE - FIREWORKS
EXTRAVAGANZA ON INDEPENDENCE DAY".

INT. KC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A cat lies with colognes. Empty wine bottles on a dresser.

KC slow-rides Starr in a bed. Both nude. He pinches her tits.

STARR
What about you and Nicky?

KC
What about me, or what about Nicky?
We're not attached.

STARR
Well, I thought ya two had a thing.

KC pushes herself apart from him.

KC
Hold on. If I were Nicky's girl I
wouldn't be slinging hash at
Jerry's Greco grease ball palace.

STARR
Well, you got something there.

KC
You wanna know about Nicky?

He kisses her breasts.

STARR
I'm here for you.

She scoots up. Bites her lip. Pumps faster. He grabs her ass.

KC'S BEDROOM - LATER

KC stands naked combing her hair in a closet door mirror.

KC
The way I figure it you owe me.

Starr sits up naked in bed.

STARR
You want money from a cop for sex?

KC
No, I mean. I helped you piss off misery earlier tonight. Now I want you to do me one.

STARR
It's your karma.

She bounces on the bed. Shakes her tits in his face.

KC
Wanna know what I know about you?

STARR
Lay it on me, baby.

KC
Every time Nicky sees you with his angel Bitty, it's all he talks about. He wants to marry her.

STARR
What exactly is it that pisses him off, baby?

He rubs her between her legs. She squirms. Grunts.

KC

He said you're fucking it up for
him with her mom... drives him...

She stiffens up. Licks her lips. Coos:

KC

...up a wall. I wanna help you
knock Nicky off his high horse.

He massages her crotch with his thumbs. She squeals.

STARR

Sure, baby. What are Nicky and his
pal Sal cooking up... some book?

KC

They got a bookie's ledger. Proves
Deo's skimming money from some
Tamale guy. Stuck it in a comic
book collection Sal's dad had.

Starr lifts her in his arms. Kisses her ass. She coos:

KC

You're my whore now.

INT. OLD CAR (IDLING) - NIGHT

Parked in a large crowded lot. Marcus sits in the backseat
with Nicky.

JIMMY (now 21) sandy hair, now long, still loves loud
checkered shirts, sits in the front seat.

NICKY (V.O.)

Jimmy's still a clown. Not a circus
kind. A harlequin, it means; if you
laugh, you're a fool. He'd sell his
mom's soul to see a Black Sabbath
concert. He'll sell mine next.

JIMMY

Man, how to make money, get laid,
and influence your friends, man.

NICKY

Capitalism's the cornerstone of the
free market society.

He raises two plastic bags with silver foil squares. Red gel
caps. A roll of white tape. A high school class ring.

NICKY

Let's begin your crash course,
Marcus. Bait and switch. These are
pharmaceutical reds.

He pulls a red gel cap out.

NICKY

Window dressing only. Not for sale.
They're hard to get, so they give
credibility to my other products.

He unrolls the tape. Tiny brown squares on the sticky side.

NICKY

Fifty hits of window pane acid on
this tape. Five bucks a piece.

He rolls the tape under the school ring. Slides it on.
Arranges the silver foil squares into two piles in the bag.

NICKY

Give 'em what they want. Angel
dust. This side. THC. Other side.
Brand name loyalties. \$10 a-piece.

He tosses a bag to Marcus. Then Jimmy.

NICKY

We offer quality, so we never Jew
on the price.

JIMMY

Man, there's no ticket for Marcus.

NICKY

It's all taken care of.

He puts the skull and crossbones bandana on. Tosses a
sailor's bucket hat to Marcus.

MARCUS

What's this for?

NICKY

So that Frankenstein head of yours
don't scare away all the customers.

They get out of the car. Walk away.

The backseat backrest slaps onto the seat. Dick climbs out of
the trunk.

EXT. AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

Four story sports arena. A crowd of KIDS fill the sidewalk.

Nicky. Marcus. Jimmy. Stare at four floors of opaque windows:

NICKY

See, Marcus, all my guys have to pass a test. And I never ask anyone to do what I can't.

JIMMY

Man, I don't see Sal at all.

NICKY

He's about to drop me a line.

JIMMY

A message from some flounder, man?

NICKY

In '69 I missed Led Zepplin, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple, the unholy trinity of British hard rock. I'll never miss a concert again!

Sal sticks his head out the fourth floor transit window. His shark teeth and seashell necklace taps against the glass.

He drops an emergency fire hose out the window. The sprayer end stops a few feet off the sidewalk in front of them.

NICKY

Just like basic training, Marcus.

He winks at Marcus. Grabs the hose. Climbs. Marcus follows.

Dick races a cop to the hose. Climbs before the cop gets him.

Nicky sits on the third floor ledge. Marcus climbs up to him.

NICKY

See, Marcus, you just started and already you've working your way up.

MARCUS

What now?

NICKY

Go up a few more feet.

Marcus climbs above him. Dick climbs up. Nicky grabs him.

NICKY
You go back the fuck down!

DICK
There's a cop.

Nicky looks at the cop on the sidewalk waving him down.

NICKY
Both of ya climb up. Gimme room.

Dick and Marcus climb higher.

MARCUS
Where'd you come from, Dick?

Nicky grabs the hose. Pushes off the ledge. Smashes through the glass onto the --

INT. AMPHITHEATER CONCOURSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky lands with the crash of broken glass. O.S. LIVE HEAVY METAL MUSIC ECHOES. Dick enters next. Then Marcus.

DICK
That was so cool!

MARCUS
Fuck, Nicky. You're Batman!

NICKY
Hell no. I'm Errol fucking Flynn.

AMPHITHEATER HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Nicky, Dick and Marcus walk through the crowd. Stop at a men's bathroom. Jimmy leans on the wall next to the door.

JIMMY
Man, that cop on the sidewalk wants your autograph, Nicky.

NICKY
Finally a cop that appreciates me.

Jimmy sees Dick. Musses Dick's hair.

JIMMY
Hey, Dick!

Marcus whispers to Jimmy:

MARCUS
We ain't supposed to talk to Dick.

NICKY
How's showbiz', Jimmy?!

Jimmy spins a high school ring on his finger.

JIMMY
We're on our second supply. I'm on
my way to the car for more. I'm
gonna grab a hot dog on the way.

Nicky whispers to Jimmy. Jimmy laughs at Dick. Jogs away.

Nicky, Dick and Marcus step through the crowd by Sal spinning
his high school ring at another bathroom door. They nod.

Nicky, Dick and Marcus walk to a third bathroom past Paolo
twisting his ring outside the door as they enter the --

THIRD BATHROOM

Several CUSTOMERS line up in front of a closed stall door.

Next in line speaks through the door. Puts cash on the floor.

Someone scoops the money up from inside the stall. Places two
foil squares on the floor. The customer grabs it. Leaves.

Sal steps in. Sorts piles of crumpled bills between sinks.
Nicky collects the money from him. Dick. Marcus. Watch them.

SAL
I'm almost out of product.

NICKY
Jimmy's coming. Marcus stays. See
ya at the seats, Sal. Don't wanna
miss Chicago. They're opening with
"Sing a Mean Tune Kid" like the
Carnegie Hall album. Jerry Kath!

He shoves Dick out the door. Nicky sings on his way out:

NICKY
"It's only the beginning."

AMPHITHEATER STAIRWELL - SECONDS LATER

Nicky shoves Dick against the wall outside the hallway doors.

NICKY
Don't mistake my silence for
weakness. I wanna kick you down the
stairs. I'd a shook you off the
hose if it wouldn't of killed ya.

DICK

I could run supplies from the parking lot to the bathrooms.

NICKY

Gimme a second, Dick.

He opens the hallway door. Hands a rolled paper sandwich bag from his pocket to one of two SECURITY MEN next to Jimmy.

DICK (O.S.)

(sings)

"It's only the beginning."

Two SECURITY MEN swing by Nicky. Drag Dick down the stairs.

NICKY (O.S.)

You'll sit in security lockup 'til I kick your ass all the way home.

JIMMY (O.S.)

See ya, Dick!

EXT. GANGWAY - NIGHT

Four foot wide. Fifty yards long. Between two brick two-story buildings. The only light is at the other end in the alley.

Nicky carries the carry-out cup full of cash. Leads Marcus past a line of several YOUNG MEN outside an unlit doorway.

MARCUS

What am I missing!

NICKY

We're retraining altar boys.

He taps the take-out cup against an apartment building window.

NICKY

Two for the naked puppet show.

The window opens. Jimmy parts the curtains. Stuffs popcorn in his mouth. Takes the cup. Hands Nicky two joints.

JIMMY

Man, Nicky, this is KC's idea. You want me to stop--

NICKY

-Jimmy, my whole life's about giving people what they want.

Two Young Men sit on a couch. Sniff their fingers. KC slow dances nude. Sings to a blues song on a stereo:

KC
 "It's hard to tell, It's hard to
 tell, When all your love's in
 vain".

She shimmies over. Leans out the open window. Kisses Nicky.

KC
 Wanna watch me? It's a freebie.

He kisses her nose. They exchange secret winks. Short smiles.

NICKY
 Unless there's a donkey in there...

Jimmy snickers.

KC
 Fuck you! You too!

She gut punches Jimmy. Marcus just watches. Chews his lip.

NICKY
 They couldn't pay me enough.

KC sticks her tongue out in Nicky's face. He shoves her on her ass. Nicky walks away.

Marcus reaches in the window to KC. She gives him the finger.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Nicky and Sal pitch quarters between two brick garages. In the shadows of a two-story staircase in offset segments.

The stairs lead to a second floor apartment's back porch.

A fence separates the yard from the playlot next door.

NICKY
 Acapulco gold from my stash.

Nicky hits a joint. Offers it. Jimmy takes it. Puffs it. Waves the joint. Marcus snatches it. Smokes some.

NICKY (V.O.)
 I'm not sure about Marcus. And when
 I'm not sure. I go by instinct.

Marcus hands Nicky the joint. Nicky looks at Marcus as he takes a hit:

NICKY

That hair makes you a square peg in
a round hole, Marcus.

Jimmy puts a sucker in his mouth.

JIMMY

Marcus is cool, Nicky. He taught us
Italian so we could give the
teachers shit in grammar school.

NICKY

Shrapnel in the head. Brain salad
surgery. People giving ya shit
about your haircut. Does any of
that bother you, Marcus?

Marcus nods to Nicky. Takes the joint. Takes a hit.

MARCUS

Not if this shit's as good as you
say it is.

Nicky tosses a bag of Acapulco gold. It flutters to Marcus.

NICKY

As Robert Plant says, "The leaves
are falling all around".

Marcus points to the line of Young Men at the unlit doorway.

MARCUS

What's with the altar boy crowd?

NICKY

KC. She figures if she fucks
everyone in the world she'll
eventually get to me.

MARCUS

You ever get some of that?

NICKY

And risk a biblical pestilence.

He scratches his crotch with both hands. Everyone laughs.

JIMMY

Man, I think that square hairdo
makes Marcus here look like one of
those "Rock'em Sock'em Robots".

He seizes the joint from Marcus. Sal steps over.

SAL

I think he looks like a cop.

He grabs the joint from Jimmy. Jimmy reaches for it. Sal hides it behind his back. Jimmy spits the sucker out.

JIMMY

He's a veteran, man. Fuck you, Sal!

SAL

Fuck your momma, Jimmy, man!

JIMMY

Man, fuck yours, Sal--!

Sal feints a punch at Jimmy. Nicky takes the joint from Sal.

NICKY

I think you two should stop fucking each other's mothers.

SAL

Marcus, I can't believe you were stationed in Cali' a year. People don't move back here from Cali'.

MARCUS

I like it here.

SAL

You got your mom or dad here?

MARCUS

Mom's dead two years. No dad.

JIMMY

Man, Sal. He's way cool. You're the one that's not cool, man.

Sal sneers at Marcus. Then gets in Jimmy's face.

SAL

I believe you even less, Jimmy.

NICKY (V.O.)

Sal's the rarest bird. A Sicilian Polynesian. Big and strong. A real ball-buster motherfucker. My loyal best friend here bleeds lava.

Sal leads Nicky and Marcus up the offset staircase.

They creak up the steps toward --

SAL'S PORCH

A rattan umbrella pasted with seashells. Several lawn chairs.

Nicky stops Marcus on the steps. Sal slides a Hawaiian king chair in front of the stairs. Sits in it.

NICKY

This is Sal's domain. You enter
only upon his acceptance of you.
He's a Riddler fanatic. So you have
to riddle to reason with him...

Nicky kneels before Sal. Sal lifts him to his feet.

They go through a ritual of handshakes. Embrace.

SAL

That Jimmy's as crazy as a room
full of motherfuckers.

NICKY

Crazy's not all it's cracked up to
be.

He whispers in Sal's ear. Backs off. Slaps his back.

NICKY

Can you trust crazy?

SAL

Is crazy a choice?

He points to Marcus.

NICKY

Is crazy a choice, Marcus?

MARCUS

Gotta be crazy to trust anybody.

Nicky high-fives him.

NICKY

That I trust.

MARCUS

You shouldn't.

SAL

You are accepted.

He offers his hand. Marcus hesitates. Sal smiles.

SAL
My ancestors were Catholics not
cannibals.

He leads Marcus through a combination of handshakes.

BACKYARD

Jimmy sprints down the gangway into the alley:

JIMMY
Cops, man, cops!

Blue cop car lights flash on the walls. A cop car pulls on the sidewalk in front. Shines a spotlight in the gangway.

Several Young Men jump the fence into the playlot.

A cop car screeches to a halt. Blocks the gangway from the alley. Two Young Men run over the cop car hood to the alley.

INT. SAL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A mix of wood carved Hawaiian figurines and Catholic religious symbols hang on the walls. Around the table.

Sal leads Nicky. Then Marcus in.

SAL
Brother, we gotta...

NICKY
Marcus, you mind sitting out here?

MARCUS
No, go ahead. What's his name, Sal?

He points at a black and white cat under the table. Marcus picks the cat up.

SAL
Marcus, meet Felix the cat. You
want something to drink?

MARCUS
Me and Felix here will have milk.

Sal and Nicky share a smile to themselves. Sal sets a glass and bowl on the table. Pours milk in them.

SAL
Give Felix whatever's left a yours.

Nicky and Sal enter the bedroom. Shut the door.

SAL'S BEDROOM

Comic book and blacklight posters cover the walls.

NICKY (V.O.)

Sal plays the shit out of Deep
Purple's "In Rock" album. Listen...
Sal's my rock.

He plays an album on the stereo turntable. Leads Sal into a --

CLOSET

Books fill the shelves. Chess game diagrams cover the walls.

Nicky sets a wad of bills on a dresser next to a chessboard
with a game in play.

NICKY

Go out and buy those 1940 DC 15
cent variant comics we discussed
yesterday with this cash, Sal.

SAL

Dante's interested in the comics.

NICKY

Sounds curiously out of character.
It worked. We've doubled down the
prize. More players to the game.
Confusion reigns. The slope gets
slippery. More sure-footed is the
offence that knows where it goes.

SAL

What's with this Marcus?

NICKY

He's another radioactive clay
puppet of the Puppet Master's. But--
Show him the prize, he may play for
himself. Let's concentrate on Deo.

SAL

You're walking a tightrope of razor-
wire. We're gaining more enemies.

NICKY

Yugoslav Attack in the Dragon
Variation of the Sicilian Defence.
Then what will totally blind-side a
Lex Luther type megalomaniac like
Deo is sacrifice!

SAL
Chinese Dragon. Soltis Variation.
Dragondorf.

He overlooks the chessboard. Nicky sacrifices a white knight.

NICKY
Magus Smith trap. Give a knight.
Gain a queen. Marcus's gonna need
to hear the rest...

SAL'S KITCHEN

Marcus pours his glass of milk in the bowl on the table.
Spills some. Felix laps up the milk in the bowl.

MARCUS
Trade you my milk for better ears.

He creeps toward the bedroom door.

Felix licks the spilt milk around the bowl. His nose pushes
the bowl toward the table edge.

Marcus presses his ear to the glass against the bedroom door.

SAL'S BEDROOM

Sal and Nicky kneel. Remove the floor heat vent cover. Bangs
loudly on the vent. On purpose.

Sal pulls a wire up with a burlap sack dangling from the
knotted end. Unties it.

He pulls a bag from the sack. Slides thirty comic books from
the bag on the bed.

SAL
I put the ledger pages in this
comic book here. Seems fitting.

He hands Nicky an "Angel of Death" comic book. A hooded angel
in a floor length cape hovers over an inner city alley on the
cover.

His glowing eyes shoot lightning at two pinstripe suited
gangsters in Fedoras firing Thompson machine guns at him.

NICKY
Heroes are immortal in legends.
They may leave this world, but they
light the way for others.

They talk. Noses to the door. Fans Batman #2 summer, 1940. Amazing Fantasy #15. Detective Comics #38. Cross the bed.

SAL

You know my Dad dreamed of selling these comics someday to get me a big house outta this neighborhood.

NICKY

At least one of us will escape this neighborhood for good.

They go through the ritual of handshakes. Embrace.

SAL

Dante says we should toss all the old Action Comics.

NICKY

What a bonehead. Action Comics 1 introduced Superman to the world.

He joins Sal in front of a mirror on the closet door.

They puff their chests out. Strike their best Superman poses.

SAL AND NICKY

Truth Justice and the American way!

Nicky flips through "Angel of Death". Torn-out sheets of ledger paper between the pages. "Money amounts. Names. Dates. Times." Across each line.

NICKY

Where the graft stops only we know.

He pokes his finger in the comic. Stops the turning pages. Points to: "Monsignor Riley Owes \$500.00" in a line entry.

SAL

You think the Pope gets his cut?

NICKY

Does Monsignor wanna get in heaven?

Sal ties a Kamikaze bandana around his Afro. Centers the rising sun emblem on his forehead.

An organ plays juiced-up funk on the stereo leading a guitar, bass and drums into a hard rock song. Like Deep Purple...

NICKY AND SAL

(sing)

"Into the fire".

O.S. THE BOWL CRASHES ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR.

Nicky hands Sal the comic.

NICKY

Stick to the plan, Sal, I'm the
white knight, give me up to them.
You already lost your Dad. It's up
to me to save my brother Dick.

He reenters --

SAL'S KITCHEN

Nicky closes the door. Marcus's right there holding Felix.

NICKY

Are you two busting up the little
grass shack?

MARCUS

Felix broke his bowl. Seems he
can't hold his milk.

The outside door opens. DANTE (26) giant, burly, bully,
Polynesian-Sicilian, permanent scowl, enters.

NICKY (V.O.)

There aren't words enough to
describe this Frankenstein monster.

Nicky nods to Dante.

NICKY

What's up, Dante?

DANTE

Awe, nothing much, Nicky.

He sidesteps Nicky. Leans over Marcus.

DANTE

Give me my motherfucking cat!

Marcus hands Felix to him. He cradles Felix. Kisses him.
Steps down the hallway. Whispers to Felix:

DANTE

Hey, buddy.

MARCUS

Man of few words.

NICKY
Cat gets the tongue.

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dick washes dishes in the sink.

NICKY (V.O.)
Dick's favorite song in July '72,
come on, Rocket Man, what else? And
hey, even if Elton John's no
astronaut, he's got feathers.

Dorothy's ghost materializes. Seated at the table beautifully
made up in a blue Chanel dress.

Nicky grabs a towel off the table. Winks to her.

DICK
Hey, Brother.

NICKY
What were you and Brian doing
buying LSD?

DICK
You wouldn't understand.

NICKY
Try me, and I'll see if I can.

DICK
It was my idea. NASA gives it to
astronauts during their training.

NICKY
Enough said. I understand.

DICK
Thank you for understanding.

NICKY
Now you understand me. Never again.

DICK
Enough said, I understand, never
again.

NICKY
Didn't you tell me you were going
to call your beautiful sweetheart
and bring her to the carnival?

Dick turns to him.

DICK
I didn't even know it started.

NICKY
It's July second, isn't it? Here,
you'll need these.

He folds two \$100 bills around car keys. Hands them to Dick.

DICK
Dad's Cadillac? Are you nuts?

NICKY
It's mine until he's out. Call that
girl. Impress the shit out of her.

He flashes a smile at Dorothy's ghost. Turns back to Dick.

NICKY
Another thing. Girls don't go for
guys with dishpan hands.

He cracks the towel off Dick's butt. Dick snatches the towel.

DICK
I'll tell her I been washing and
waxing up the Cadillac for her.

NICKY
With that bullshit, your new
mustache and a plaid blazer, you
could sell used cars on any lot.

DICK
You think I should shave?

Nicky dabs Dick's upper lip with the towel.

NICKY
It'll probably rub off.

DICK
Good one, Pops.

NICKY
Very funny.

Dick walks down the hallway:

DICK
I gotta get dressed. See ya.

NICKY
Don't do anything I would do.

He sits across from Dorothy's ghost at the table.

DOROTHY
What's wrong?

NICKY
We're on the same wave length
again.

DOROTHY
Our connection is permanent.

NICKY
I love that kid.

He stares out the window.

NICKY
Dad wants him in. He gets out. And
I'm not around...

He turns to her:

NICKY
I can't ever let that happen.

DOROTHY
Then stop him.

NICKY
Does permanent mean eternity?

She nods. Dematerializes. O.S. A DOOR SLAMS DOWN THE HALL.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Paolo walks under the elevated tracks. Sings:

PAOLO
"God bless America, Land that I
love, Stand beside her--"

Jimmy rattles a gate from in a yard. Paolo steps over to him.

JIMMY
Thank God you came, I'm hungry.
Man, you keep singing like that.
They'll send ya back to Italy, man.

He tosses a bag of weed to Paolo.

PAOLO
I'm not going back.

JIMMY
(sotto)
We'll soon see.

An elevated train rumbles above. Paolo freezes. Bag in hand.

PAOLO
God damn!

An unmarked cop car skids toward him. Starr jumps out.
Paolo throws the bag straight up in the air. Sprints away.

STARR
Don't make me--!

He runs over the car hood. Dive-tackles Paolo.
Roty exits the car. Watches the bag fall onto the roof.

ROTY
Infield fly rule.

Starr throws Paolo over the hood. Cuffs him.

STARR
You're gonna steal a girl's heart
for me, and bag Nicky for grand
theft auto.

Paolo sneers at Jimmy. He rattles one hand cuffed on the gate
along with his ankle cuffed to the fence-post.

Roty opens the car door. Starr tosses Paolo in.

EXT. WARDS DEPARTMENT STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Roty and Starr slouch behind the wheel of the unmarked squad
car idling next to a white sedan.

Paolo leans under the sedan's dashboard. Sparks one wire off
a another. Starts the engine.

EXT. BITTY'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

SCHOOL KIDS scream in a school playground across the street.

JUNE (7) adorable, pink jumper, sits next to Bitty on the
bottom stair. They dress a collection of Barbie dolls.

Nicky scrunches between them. Picks a topless Barbie up.

NICKY
She's a doll.

Bitty takes the doll. Her and June shove him off the steps.
He sprawls on the ground. Watches them.

BITTY AND JUNE
No boys allowed!

June squeezes her face between her hands. Sneers at him.

NICKY
You're cute. When is your mother
coming to pick you up?

Bitty hugs her.

BITTY
My sister Anne will be here any
minute. She's dropping the two boys
off. I'm baby sitting for the rest
of the day.

NICKY
I thought maybe your sister would
give you a break.

BITTY
You should stay. The boys love you.
I love you.

NICKY
How much does your sister pay you?

Bitty playfully kicks him.

BITTY
You know she can't afford to pay
me. She's family. Why's everything
with you have to be about money?

NICKY
Money makes all the cents in the
world to me.

Bitty smirks at him. He tickles June. She laughs.

BITTY
Ha ha, funny. How's that working
for you, Rockefeller?

NICKY
Not at all if you work for free.

BITTY
Some things can't be bought.

NICKY

You're right. I could play football
with the boys. I'd love to stay.

He smiles. Bitty jumps into his arms. Smothers him in kisses.

O.S. AN ONCOMING ICE CREAM TRUCK BELL RINGS.

June leaps up. Looks around. Sees the truck down the street.

JUNE

If I had a quarter for ice cream I--

NICKY

-Here's one.

He holds a quarter up. June tries to pry it from his fingers
but fails to get it away from him.

NICKY

Show me your mean face first.

June squints. Breathes in and out through gritted teeth.

NICKY

Now make two fists.

She squeezes her hands into fists at her side.

NICKY

Ya want something: Gotta take it.

June punches him in stomach. Tears the quarter out of his
hand. Skips down the block. Bitty calls after her:

BITTY

Wait at the corner for him to stop!

She smacks the top of Nicky's head.

BITTY

You're such a bad influence.

NICKY

Born under a bad sign.

Paolo honks the white sedan's horn at the curb. Sticks his
head out the shotgun window:

PAOLO

Nicky, I got your money.

NICKY

I gotta talk to this guy, Bitty.

He steps over to the car. Rips the door open.

NICKY
Never miss a drop again, now gimme.

PAOLO
It's at my mama's place. Get in.

NICKY
I'll be right back.

He shoves Paolo over. Climbs into the --

INT./EXT. WHITE SEDAN (IDLING) - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dirty upholstery, ashtray stuffed with cigarettes. Gum wrappers. Several toys scattered over the seats and floor.

Bitty looks through the window at a baby seat in the back.

BITTY
This car looks like my sister's?

Magdalen runs out of the house. Stops at the stairs.

MAGDALEN
Bitty! Bring June in the house!
Your sister Anne's on the phone.
She wants to talk to you!

O.S. THE ICE CREAM TRUCK BELL RINGS.

Paolo stares in the rearview. Nicky sees no keys. Peers over the seat. Follows Paolo's gaze to the end of the block.

Starr and Roty sit in the unmarked cop car at the corner.

They point out the windshield at Nicky. Their mouths move.

The Ice cream truck passes them. Stops. Blocks the street.

June and the School Kids swarm around the ice cream truck.

Nicky grabs Paolo by the neck.

NICKY
You set me up for Starr!

He dives over Paolo. Squeezes behind the wheel.

PAOLO
I'm sorry, Nicky. I can't go back.

Nicky glares through the rear window.

Starr stuffs the ICE CREAM MAN in his truck cab. Roty tries to disperse the School Kids. They won't move.

Nicky crams the shifter in "D". Lays-rubber down the street.

INT./EXT. WHITE SEDAN (MOVING) SECONDS LATER THAT DAY

A beautiful summer day and all the people in it flash by.

Nicky and Paolo speed under elevated tracks past a "CTA Lake Street" sign. Iron I-beam uprights swish to either side.

Paolo leans forward. Makes the sign of the cross.

PAOLO

Oh my God!

Nicky slaps him.

NICKY

Mess up on this, Paolo, and I'll
drag your ass back to Italy
underwater. Now check to my right!

The speedometer needle sweeps across "50 mph".

PAOLO

Clear!

Nicky yanks the wheel right.

They whoosh between uprights into the parking lane.

They pass a line of cars to the left. He jerks the wheel left.

Swoosh. They fishtail between uprights into the center lane.

They race past another line of cars on the left.

PAOLO

Red light!

He covers his eyes. Nicky slams the brakes. They squeal to a halt before PEDESTRIANS in a crosswalk. They gawk at Nicky.

NICKY

I got my side!

The light turns green.

Nicky punches it. A car turns the corner ahead. They swerve. Ride the car's ass.

NICKY
Now, Paolo!

PAOLO
Not now!

NICKY
Come on, Paolo!

PAOLO
Clear!

Nicky muscles the wheel right. Stomps the gas. Races past the lead car. Jerks the wheel left. Whoosh.

They screech into the parking lane past three cars to the left.

He spins the wheel left. Swish.

They screech between uprights into the center lane.

NICKY
Now, Paolo!

A bus pulls into the center lane ahead.

PAOLO
Clear!

Nicky jerks the wheel right. Swoosh.

They just miss an upright. Shimmy into the parking lane.

PAOLO
No!

Another car whips left around the corner just ahead.

NICKY
Shit!

Nicky jams on the brakes. Muscles the wheel left. Whoosh.

The front end swerves. Barely misses the buses' ass.

They squeal across the dividing line toward oncoming cars.

PAOLO
Nicky!

Nicky speeds up. Gains on the bus.

The BUS DRIVER stands on the brakes. Clenches the wheel.

PAOLO

No!?

NICKY

Oh yeah!

He punches it. Oncoming cars fishtail at them. Horns wail.

Nicky jerks the wheel right.

They cross in front of the bus.

Swoosh. Split the uprights. Fishtail into the parking lane.

NICKY

Damn!

A car pulls out of a parking space. Blocks the lane ahead. The bus blocks them from changing lanes.

Paolo covers his face:

PAOLO

Mother of God.

Nicky jerks the wheel right between uprights. Whoosh. Jumps the curb. Thump.

They squeal across the sidewalk. Plow through a vacant lot.

NICKY

You sissy! You missed it!

He and Paolo bounce as the car rattles over debris.

NICKY

That's the last time I give you the ride of your life.

Paolo points forward. Nicky turns to the windshield.

A SMALL BOY. Head down. Pedals a bicycle in the alley ahead. His YOUNG DAD follows him. Sees the car. Dives for the bike.

Nicky twirls the wheel right. Pumps the brakes. Paolo sinks in the seat.

The rear end shimmies left in a cloud of dust.

Nicky wrestles the wheel back. The tires fishtail.

They race between the Small Boy and Young Dad. Missing them.

The sedan burns-rubber down the alley. Screeches left onto another street.

EXT. WARDS STORE PARKING - MINUTES LATER - DAY

The white sedan's parked between cars in the busy lot.

Paolo sits on the rear bumper. Nicky leans against the driver side window.

ANNE (25) pregnant, frazzled, disheveled, sits at the wheel.

SMALL GIRL (3) fidgets on the shotgun seat. Kisses a Barbie.

Two LITTLE BOYS (5) bounce on the backseat. The unmarked cop car halts. Blocks the sedan. Starr jumps out.

STARR

You fucked up this time, assholes!

Paolo rises from the bumper. Starr shoves him onto the trunk.

STARR

I didn't say Simon says.

He steps up to Nicky. Gawks over him at Anne. She tries to light a bent cigarette. Broken match after broken match.

ANNE

Tommy, my little darling son, threw the car lighter out the...

She bites the cigarette filter:

ANNE

...witching window.

STARR

What about your car?

ANNE

Lost a minute ago. Up until Nicky got here and found it for me.

NICKY

Anne, I better get going. I've got some shoplifting to do.

He steps around Starr. Walks back toward Paolo.

Paolo leans against the fender. Avoids Nicky's eyes.

PAOLO

I can't--

Nicky kicks Paolo's feet sideways as he passes him.

NICKY

Simon says, on your ass!

Paolo drops. Bangs his head on the bumper.

INT. CHOP SHOP - NIGHT

A waltz plays through suspended stereo speakers. Shadows shroud the many cars in different stages of repair.

I-beam uprights support the roof. Three five gallon gas cans against the wall.

A ceiling light shines on a SKI MASKED MAN bailing wired to a metal chair. Duct taped mouth.

Deo sets up a game of chess on a chessboard on a metal table under an industrial exhaust fan.

Oxy-acetylene torch set with tall cylinders chained to an I-beam post nearby.

Butch (40) red birthmark around his mouth, speech impediment, he's deaf, hearing aids, lays tools of torture on the table.

NICKY (V.O.)

Butch can scare the paint off walls. People that have seen his work have been known to shit themselves when he enters the room. He don't care for music, he just likes listening to people scream.

Starr and Roty step up. Deo lights a Cuban cigar.

DEO

I wanted Nicky outta the way. Without me involved. Grand theft auto would a done it. But ya fucked that up. Now I'll show ya what happens if ya disappoint me again.

BUTCH

Next time you're mine.

DEO

I know guys like us can't touch cops. But jag-off cops that fuck their own asses, shoot themselves.

Butch holds a snub-nose .38 to the Ski Masked Man's head. He moans. Jerks his head. Butch cocks the gun.

DEO

Or maybe you get depressed with the
miserable life of a cop.

Butch tickles a homemade machete blade under the Man's chin.

DEO

Or maybe they pass out from
drinking too much moonshine.

He pours moonshine from a jar on the Man. He jerks his head.

Deo puffs the cigar. Steps toward Roty and Starr.

DEO

Maybe they think they're safe at
home in their own bed?

The Man's eyes follow the cigar's red-hot tip.

DEO

Or maybe, nowhere's safe.

He tosses the cigar in the Man's lap.

DEO

A cop can be his own worst enemy.

Whoosh. The moonshine ignites in the Man's lap. He spasms as
fire engulfs him. Butch turns on the exhaust fan.

DEO

I want Coconuts' book and his cash.
Can't find it, get me his nigger
son, Sal. Or both of ya's take a
seat. Bedtime story's over kids.

O.S. AN ONCOMING TRAIN WHISTLE SHRIEKS.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A teapot whistles on a stove. Rain pelts a window.

O.S. LIGHTNING CLAPS AND THUNDER RUMBLES.

Nicky pours hot water in a teapot with a tea bag. Sets the
teapot on the table next to a chessboard. Game in play.

Dick leans over the table. Half-smiles. Moves a chess piece.

DICK

Ma used to say, "The angels are bowling again," when there was thunder and lightning. I say: If it's good enough for you...

Nicky takes Dick's queen.

NICKY

You'll never make it on the street. And, Dick, ya ain't so hot at chess either. Checkmate!

Dick tips his king over. Steps down the hallway into the --

PARENTS BEDROOM

Dick lifts a framed photo of Dorothy off the bedside table. Sits on the bed in the dark. Leans the photo on the pillow.

Nicky looks in from the hallway. Lightning flashes outside the window.

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

PARENTS BEDROOM

Nicky looks in from the hallway.

DICK (O.S.)

(echoes in the distance)

It's been ten years since...

Dorothy wheezes in the bed through an oxygen nasal feed from a bedside tank. Her burn-scarred bald head on the pillow.

Rain pelts the window. Lightning flares. Dorothy crashes to the floor alongside the bed.

Nicky (22) outside the door. Watches Nicky (11) run around him. He kneels next to Dorothy. Slides his arms under her.

The oxygen nasal feed hangs off the pillow. She gurgles:

DOROTHY

My dear...

NICKY (11)

Ma, don't try to talk. Your oxygen tank is empty. Breathe slowly.

He lifts her. Falls back down. Tears stream down their faces.

NICKY (11)

Hug me.

DOROTHY

Sss--

He wraps her arms around him. Struggles to his knees. She gasps. Stiffens. Her lungs rattle. She goes limp.

NICKY (11)

No, please! Fucking God!

He stares into her lifeless eyes. O.S. LIGHTNING CRACKLES.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

Dick lies back on the bed. Stares at Dorothy's photo.

DICK

When I'm stuck on a trig' problem I
come in here and fall asleep. I
always wake up with the answer.

Nicky backs out of the doorway. Leans on the wall outside.

NICKY

I describe every date I have with
Bitty to mom soon as I get home.

Dick exits the room. Faces Nicky.

DICK

I want to help you.

Nicky walks down the hallway. Dick follows him into the --

KITCHEN

Dorothy's ghost materializes. Beautiful. Healthy. Seated at the table in her blue Chanel dress. Smiles at Nicky.

NICKY

I remember her at the kitchen
table. In her blue Chanel dress.
All made up for Easter Sunday.

Dick leans on the table. Reaches through Dorothy's ghost. Pulls the towel off the chair behind her. Twists it.

DICK

You're not listening to me again.

NICKY

Listening doesn't change my mind.

Dick throws the towel in his face.

DICK

You've paid my tuition to all the best private schools for most of my life. Now the Academy. Let me help you. I'm tired of being left out!

Nicky folds the towel on the table. Pours tea in two cups.

NICKY

How 'bout left alive?

DICK

I'm not your sister.

NICKY

You ain't me either.

DICK

If you think I'm not tough enough then just tell me to my face.

NICKY

Okay. Ya ain't tough enough. So what. Have some tea. Be an astronaut. Rise above it all.

He offers Dick a cup of tea. He takes it. Flashes a grin.

DICK

You want me under the bed?

He shatters the teacup against the wall.

DICK

Fuck you, Nicky! I'm in! And you're not stopping me anymore!

Nicky leans in his face. Waves him off.

NICKY

Ahhh!

Dick uppercuts his jaw. Nicky hits the wall. Slides down.

DICK

Tough guy, ahhh!

He backhands the air. Walks down the hallway.

Nicky unfolds a "SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION - The President of the United States, To Nicholas Zingaro - on July 04 1972 at 7 A.M."

NICKY

I understand you think you're
right. And you're so fucking wrong.
You don't understand anything.

EXT. MIKE'S BARBERSHOP - NIGHT

Marcus and Jimmy stare up at Sal's second floor apartment
window. Jimmy eats a bag of potato chips.

Nicky sits on the ledge next to the barber's pole.

NICKY

What's up?

O.S. SMACK BOOM SLAP THEN A BODY CRASHES TO THE FLOOR.

SAL (O.S.)

Fuck you, Dante!

They stare in the glass at the "Mike's Barbershop" sign. The
red neon letters color their sullen faces.

JIMMY

Man. Sal sure pissed Dante off.

MARCUS

That's one hell of a beating.

NICKY

How long?

JIMMY

Man, would you believe, ow... About
an hour, man?

NICKY

Fucking piece of shit Dante. You
know none of us know our a dad's
very well cause they're never home.
But we never missed the beatings.

JIMMY

That Sal's damaged goods, man.

MARCUS

What's his damage?

JIMMY

Found his dad in this building's
basement. Hanging with the laundry.

They look up at the apartment.

JIMMY

Coconuts was a bookie and a bagman,
they say he came up short, man.
But, man, they liked him. So they
took it easy on him, man.

MARCUS

Easy?

NICKY

Every so often cops find a car with
a tortured corpse in the trunk.
Face mutilated. Closed casket.

He stoops in front of Marcus.

NICKY

They show it on TV. Like a mob
public warning message. Sal's dad's
face was intact. So we say: he got
off easy? Open casket.

INT. WHITE '69 RIVIERA (MOVING) - NIGHT

Cuz pulls in front of the barbershop. Nicky gets in. Leaves
Jimmy leaning against the barber pole.

NICKY

Hey, Cuz!

CUZ

How's your brother Dick doing?

He spins the wheel. Peels-out. Nicky looks him in the eyes.

NICKY

I need to make more money to pay
Dick's tuition in the Air Force
Academy. Do I need to ask Deo?

CUZ

That's what I wanted to hear. You
can start now. Talk to Deo later.
How 'bout this ride, you like it?

NICKY

You mean the car, right?

CUZ

It's your new company car.

The car bounces. The sun visor drops in Nicky's face.

CUZ
Hey, it ain't new, but--

NICKY AND CUZ
-It's got character!

Nicky pushes the visor up.

INT. CUZ'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Nicky backs the Riviera in. Cuz shuts the door. Sits shotgun.

CUZ
You're moving up from street sales
to quantity deals.

NICKY
Who says?

CUZ
Ask me no questions and I'll tell
you no lies. Reach your fingers
into the defroster vents on your
side and follow my lead.

They lift the top of the dash off. Set it on the backseat.
Seven white plastic jugs full of red gel caps in the channel.

NICKY
There's a fairy tale in there
somewhere.

Cuz hands a jug to Nicky. He reads: "1000 count 1.5 grain
Secobarbital gel caps" on the label. Smiles.

CUZ
You're about to be the star of the
neighborhood. Can you handle it?

NICKY
Success will not spoil me.

CUZ
Stay away from your product.

NICKY
Where in the world of happily ever
after did this come from?

CUZ
Read the label. Got a guy inside.
This shit's hermetic. Sticks to
your hands like they're magnetized.

He counts the jugs:

CUZ

Four go to Hammer Steins. Remaining
three go to The Pour House. Got it?

Nicky boy-scout salutes him.

INT. HAMMER STEINS BAR - NIGHT

Dim lit. Mostly empty rough industrial neighborhood lounge.

Nicky sits at the end of the bar.

A fat BARTENDER steps up.

BARTENDER

Name your poison?

NICKY

Double shot of rock and rye. A
wedge of lime. And a jar of that
moonshine Deo gets for you, hidden
behind there for the yokels!

Bartender pulls a jar of moonshine from under the bar. Pours
a glass. A rock and rye shot. Puts a lime wedge on a napkin.

BARTENDER

What's with the lime?

NICKY

I got a vitamin C deficiency.

BARTENDER

Is that bad for you?

NICKY

It could really fuck you up.

He puts \$10 on the bar. Two big tough guy ball-buster PRICKS
sit. One on each side of him.

PRICK 1

You fucked up, little grease ball?

Nicky chews the lime. Sips rock and rye.

PRICK 2

You're gonna be sipping your next
pizza through a straw, wop!

Nicky spits rock and rye in Prick 2's eyes. He rubs them.

PRICK 2
Little cock sucker!

Nicky grabs the back of Prick 1's head. Busts the shot glass cross his nose with his other hand. Prick 1 drops.

NICKY
Timber!

He ducks Prick 2's punch. Smashes the moonshine glass under his chin. Prick 2 bangs his head on bar. Drops too.

Nicky sits at the bar. Bartender pours another rock and rye. Nicky downs it. Squeezes the lime over the two men.

NICKY
See what I mean about deficiencies.

EXT. DAVIS PLAYLOT - NIGHT

Jimmy kneels behind a garbage can along the alley fence. Eats fries covered in ketchup from a greasy take-out bag. Peers over the can at Sal's porch. Licking ketchup off his lips.

Sal's porch light goes on. O.S. STAIRS CREAK. Roty and Starr rise from the staircase's shadows. Stop before the porch.

Jimmy ducks. Bangs into the can. Drops his bag of fries.

Starr and Roty look toward the playlot. Dante opens the apartment door. Starr and Roty enter.

EXT. MIKE'S BARBERSHOP - SECONDS LATER THAT NIGHT

Jimmy dives into the barbershop doorway.

Dick crosses the street from the idling 57' Cadillac to Jimmy in the doorway.

Sal shouts through the window:

SAL
Get the fuck out of here, Dick!

Roty and Starr smash Sal's head through the glass. Sal spins around. Plows through them.

O.S. FURNITURE SCRAPES CROSS THE FLOOR AND A SCUFFLE BREAKS OUT WITH OVERLAPPING ANGRY SHOUTING.

Dick tries to run from the doorway. Jimmy drags him back.

JIMMY
Stay here.

DICK
I came to help. Gotta let me help.

O.S. A DOOR SLAMS THEN FOOTSTEPS CROSS THE BACK PORCH.

JIMMY
Okay, Dick. Ya can help, man. But
stay here a minute.

Jimmy sprints into the shadowy gangway toward the --

BACKYARD

Starr and Roty creak down from the top of the backstairs.

Sal leaps off the third step from the bottom.

Jimmy darts from the gangway. Ducks. Sal flips over him.
Smacks facedown on the concrete.

Jimmy grabs the "ANGEL OF DEATH COMIC from Sal's back pocket.

JIMMY
Don't need ya no more motherfucker.

MIKE'S BARBERSHOP - SECONDS LATER

Jimmy exits the gangway. Dick runs up to him.

DICK
Where's Sal? I gotta see Sal.

He tries to go around Jimmy. Jimmy stops him.

JIMMY
Sal's okay. Dante helped him. Sal
wants you outta here.

DICK
I fucked up something didn't I?

JIMMY
No, man. He just don't want Nicky
to know you were here, man. I do
got something important for you if
you can keep your mouth shut?

DICK
I won't say anything.

Jimmy takes the comic from his back pocket. Hands it to Dick.

INT./EXT. UNMARKED COP CAR (IDLING) - NIGHT

Roty at the wheel. Starr shotgun. Parked in the shadows under the bridge in the auto graveyard.

O.S. THUMP BOOM BUMP ALONG WITH SOMEONE'S MUFFLED MOANS.

ROTY

I think he wants out.

STARR

Out of a frying pan. Into the fire.

Roty pulls into the loading dock. Starr and Roty exit. Starr opens the trunk.

STARR

Quit squirming.

They lift Sal's body. Ankles and wrists bound in blood soaked duct tape. Mouth. Neck. Tapped separately.

Sal twists. Slips their grips. Flops facedown on the gravel.

ROTY

He sprung a leak.

They frown at their bloody clothes. Kick Sal under the car.

INT. CHOP SHOP - NIGHT

A baritone sings opera on the suspended speakers.

Butch plays solitaire on a metal table. Deo moves a black knight on a chessboard. Game in play. Takes the white queen.

The overhead door rattles. Butch pockets the cards. Lifts the door. Starr and Roty boot Sal under the door into the shop.

BUTCH

It's the rookie of the year and his
Nazi sidekick. What a you waitin'
for, the Star Spangled Banner?

He lowers the door. Deo lights a Cuban cigar.

DEO

Hey, jag-offs, pick that bloody
fucking mess off my floor and toss
it on the table.

BUTCH

I use a butt plug first then the
oxy-acetylene torch to seal it.

(MORE)

BUTCH (CONT'D)

Burning skin smells funny, but it's neat. You guys stink at this.

ROTY

We'll ruin your chess game, Deo?

DEO

Ain't no game. Toss him up there. It's my move.

Starr and Roty flop Sal on the chessboard.

DEO

Speak up, gents.

ROTY

We had a problem.

DEO

Tell me about it.

STARR

Guns don't scare the suicidal.

ROTY

He slit his own throat.

Deo eyeballs Butch by the door. Butch opens the door.

STARR

Want us to go back and finish ripping up his apartment?

DEO

I'm way ahead a ya's. Get out!

Starr and Roty exit. Butch lowers the door:

BUTCH

I'll reserve a butt plug for two with your table.

INT. CUZ'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Cuz closes the overhead door.

Nicky exits the car. Sets two stuffed letter envelopes on the trunk. Cuz grabs them. Nicky looks at him. Cuz avoids him.

NICKY

You missed a ball-buster game, Cuz.

Cuz counts the money from the envelopes as he stuffs it back in them. CUZ TEARS ONE LETTER ENVELOPE IN THE CORNER.

CUZ
You put two pricks on the disabled
list.

NICKY
The man pissed? Is that why we're
going there, Cuz?

Nicky furrows his brow. Cuz opens the overhead door.

CUZ
Nah! Listen. It's time you met the
man, that's all. He's impressed.

He walks out. Nicky approaches him. Cuz waves him away.

CUZ
Drop it!

EXT. LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

The Riviera pulls in. Nicky gets out. Walks around the rear.
Crouches. Stares at a pool of blood under the bumper.

O.S. AN ONCOMING FREIGHT TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS.

Nicky rises. Cuz waves from the chop shop's overhead door.

CUZ (O.S.)
Where'd you go?! Come on!

The train rumbles over the tracks across the yard.

Nicky steps away from the car. Toward the train. Hesitates.

Cuz steps behind him.

CUZ
Going somewhere?

Nicky stuffs his bloody hands in his pockets.

NICKY
Hell bound.

CUZ
Come on. The devil's waiting.

He leads Nicky to the chop shop. Lifts the door.

INT. CHOP SHOP - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

O.S. A FAT LADY SINGS AN ARIA ON THE SPEAKERS INSIDE.

Cuz enters the darkness. Waves Nicky in.

NICKY
Smells like someone died in here.

CUZ
Don't underestimate.

He backs out. Lowers the door. Butch steps from the shadows. Cocks the snub-nose .38 to the side of Nicky's face.

BUTCH
Come on. Your boy's waitin'.

He shoves Nicky over the table. Tosses the .38 to Deo.

Three cables cinched beyond tight split the duct tape around Sal's forehead. Chest. Thighs.

BUTCH
He had his fingers crossed, hopin'
you'd save him.

He lifts Sal's burnt hand with seared-nub fingers.

BUTCH
Can't tell now.

Sal jerks his hand from Butch's grasp.

Nicky punches Butch in the mouth. Butch smiles back.

BUTCH
You're very motivatin'.

Nicky cocks his arm. Deo smacks a bat in Nicky's back. He falls over Sal. Deo whacks Nicky twice more. Nicky grunts.

BUTCH
Well, don't they make a lovely
mixed race couple.

Butch holds Nicky over the table. Sal sees Nicky. Gurgles blood over his broken teeth.

Deo pockets the .38. Takes another .38 from different pocket.

DEO
Your jag-off nigger here slit his
own throat. We saved his life so he
could suffer for the both of ya's.

Deo pistol-whips Nicky with the switched .38. Nicky spits blood. Deo cracks the pistol off the back of Nicky's head.

DEO
Share and share alike.

BUTCH
Oh, he's seein' stars.

NICKY
You'll both get yours.

DEO
You want to be a big boy? Now's the
time to step up.

Butch pulls Nicky upright. Deo slaps the switched .38 on the
table. Nicky wobbles. Wipes blood from his nose.

BUTCH
Nicky, come on, pick it up.

NICKY
Fuck you. There's no bullets in it.

DEO
You think not?

Butch snatches the gun off the table.

BUTCH
Where I come from we...

He points the .38 in Nicky's eye. Sneers down the barrel.

BUTCH
...shoot traitors in their lying
eyes.

He squeezes the trigger. It clicks on empty chambers.

Butch slaps the .38 on the table. Pulls a .45 automatic from
inside his jacket. Points his finger at his own eye.

Deo extends an open palm toward Nicky. A hollow point .38
cartridge crosscuts the lifeline crease in his hand.

DEO
Decide what you're gonna do. Get it
over with and go.

Nicky takes the cartridge. Loads the .38.

Butch trains the .45 on the back of Nicky's head.

Deo swings the light onto Sal's face.

DEO

He ain't even screamed since his
brain leaked out.

Nicky leans over Sal. Dry blood cakes a wide gash in Sal's
hairline. Cuts through his kamikaze bandanna's rising sun.

NICKY

(sotto)

Why didn't you give me up? I'm the
white knight. I didn't want this...

Nicky cries. Sal shuts his eyes and nods.

Nicky bites his lip and wipes his bloody nose. Jams the
barrel to Sal's eyelid and fires.

Sal shudders. Rear skull explodes. Blood and brains spray.

NICKY

It's done.

Butch slaps him on the back. Nicky drops to his knees.

BUTCH

And now you are a man.

Nicky climbs to his feet. Wobbles as he clicks the empty .38
at them.

DEO

You got 24 hours, funny guy. Bring
me Coconuts' ledger and the comic
book it's in. Or go on the table.

Nicky drops the .38. Limpes toward the overhead door.

DEO

The comic book collection of Sal's
now belongs to his brother Dante.
See he gets it, tonight!

Nicky lifts the door. Limpes into the rain. O.S. THUNDERCLAPS.

EXT. HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH - CARNIVAL - NIGHT

"Holy Mother of Ransom Church" chiseled in the stone facade
crowns a stained glass depiction of Christ on the cross.

Stained glass windows reflect the lights. Carnival rides.

A shadowy figure under a gray Fedora leans on the building
below. Smokes a cigarette behind a high striker game.

The high striker game billet dings the round bell. Onlookers cheer. Clap. A SAILOR drops a mallet to the ground.

A CARNY hands a Sailor a cigar. Sailor's BUDDIES cheer.

CARNY

That's how you do it! Boys to men!

Dick leaves his BEAUTIFUL SWEETHEART. Grabs the mallet.

CARNY

Show her what you're made of, son.

DICK

I wish Nicky were here. I'd show him how to swing a hammer.

EXT. SAL'S PORCH - NIGHT

Nicky rises from the shadows on the stairs. Stomps toward the door. Clenches a short handled maul in his gloved hands.

He sidesteps the door. Slings the maul into the lock.

INT. SAL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The door jam explodes into splinters. The door bursts in.

Nicky enters. Trudges through the room.

Dante leaps from the shadows. Nicky ducks a roundhouse right. Slams the maul in Dante's gut. He reels back. Sits his ass.

Nicky wheels the maul over the top of his head. Bashes Dante's skull in. Nicky raises the maul. Rushes into --

SAL'S BEDROOM

Nicky stares through blood splattered eyes at clothes. Dresser. Empty drawers. Thrown on the flipped bed.

He kicks the vent-cover down the empty heat vent.

SAL'S KITCHEN

Nicky dials a wall mounted phone. Felix slurps milk from the bowl on the counter.

NICKY

(into phone)

Got another cat for you, KC.

INT./EXT. BITTY'S HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicky meows as he climbs in the window from the front porch roof. Face shaded. Blocking the only light from the street.

Bitty jumps out of bed. In an oversized peace sign T-shirt.

She goes to hug him. He grabs her. Sits her on the bed as he kneels. Looks down. She sees his bloody hands on her shirt.

BITTY

Oh my god...

NICKY

It's on me. It's not mine.
(breaks down sobbing)
It's... It's Sal...

BITTY

Oh no? No...?

She runs her fingers through his hair. Sees her bloody hands tremble. He faces her teary-eyes with his.

NICKY

You were right. I am too smart for my own good. Now I'm lost. I didn't want to get blood on you. But I had to see you. My love. Forgive me.

BITTY

With all of my heart. I will always forgive you. My love.

NICKY

I wanted to be... My dreams... are a nightmare. You were always too good for my own sake.

BITTY

You have to stop. This has to stop.

NICKY

I'm dead if I stop.

O.S. A SIREN AND TIRES SHRIEK BY. As Nicky hops up. A passing cop car light flashes blue cross his face from the window.

BITTY

I can talk to Starr, maybe--

NICKY

-I killed Sal.

He ducks out the window.

EXT. DAVIS PLAYLOT - DAY

A YOUNG WOMAN supervises a dozen LOUD KIDS at play.

Jimmy eats a beef sandwich on a bench. Nicky hops the fence. Lands next to Jimmy.

JIMMY

Man, I waited for Sal like you
said. Who messed your-- Fuck, man!

Nicky slaps the sandwich from his hand. Drags him across the playlot. Boots Jimmy's ass out the gate into the --

ALLEY

Nicky pins Jimmy against a garage door.

NICKY

Jimmy, where's the "Angel of Death"
comic book Sal gave you last night?

JIMMY

Man, I was hiding out all night.

NICKY

Shut the fuck up and give it to me.

JIMMY

I was freaking out, man, I--

NICKY

-Jimmy, where the fuck is it?

He throws Jimmy against the garage door.

NICKY

Speak?!

JIMMY

Man, I went to your place. Couldn't
find you, man. Your dad's Cadillac
was there, so I rang the bell.

Nicky throws him down.

NICKY

Don't tell me you got Dick
involved.

JIMMY

Man, I didn't know what else to do.
Man. He said he wanted to help you.

NICKY

Then listen, fuck head--

An elevated train roars overhead. Drowns his words out.

He leaves Jimmy. Reenters --

DAVIS PLAYLOT

Nicky crosses the basketball court.

Young Woman leads the Loud Kids out the front gate.

Nicky dodges them on his way around them.

NICKY

You've got your hands full.

YOUNG WOMAN

Your friend's got his hands cuffed.

She points to the --

ALLEY

The unmarked cop car idles. Front doors wide open.

Starr and Roty throw Jimmy in the backseat.

STARR

Jimmy, we missed you this morning.
Your mom's worried about you.

ROTY

We better get you home, right away.

INT. MIKE'S BARBERSHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

MIKE the barber shaves a SENIOR CITIZEN. Nicky enters.

NICKY

Sorry for barging in, Mike, but I
need to use your phone.

MIKE

No problem, Nicky.

Nicky enters the hallway. Dings a coin in a pay phone. Dials.

NICKY
 (into phone)
 Dick, I don't have time, listen!

MIKE'S BARBERSHOP - MINUTES LATER

Mike finishes the Senior Citizen's shave.

Marcus lounges on one in a line of chairs along the wall.

Nicky exits the hallway. Sits with Marcus.

NICKY
 Marcus, what a surprise.

MARCUS
 I noticed you come in so I waited
 for our friends in the alley to go.
 He points his thumb outside. Nicky half-smiles.

NICKY
 I guess there are two kinds of
 friends. What kind are you?

MARCUS
 Timely.

NICKY
 Point well made.

INT. BOYS BEDROOM - DAY

Dick removes the dresser drawer. Sets it on the bed. Rubs his palms together. Twitches his legs.

DICK
 The keys?

He pats his pockets. Then pulls the car keys out.

DICK
 The envelope.

He reaches in where the dresser drawer was. Grabs a folded manila envelope. Sticks it in his back pocket. Enters the --

CLOSET

Dick kneels. Slides a shoebox from under clothes on hangers. Removes the lid. Uncovers a revolver. Shuts his eyes.

DICK

It's time I come back down. Feel
the gravity of Earth. This is how
Nicky feels everyday. I don't
know... Can't let Nicky be right!

He breathes deep. Shakes his head. Sneers.

DICK

Don't be a pussy in the rain! Be a
bad-ass and save Nicky this time.

He snatches the revolver. Stares at it.

INT. PRISTINE '57 CADILLAC (IDLING) - DAY

Dick sits at the wheel. Sets the manila envelope on the seat.

DICK

Now I understand how fucking wrong
I am.

He reaches for the envelope. Jiggles the door handle. O.S.
ONCOMING CAR TIRES SQUEAL CLOSE-BY.

DICK

Shit! They're here!

He fumbles the revolver from his waistband under the shirt
tails. Aims the shaky gun out the window.

DICK

Eat shit!

A mother drives a car full of TEEN GIRLS past. A Teen Girl in
backseat locks eyes on Dick and his gun as she passes.

Dick drops the gun in his lap. Grabs the rearview mirror with
his shaky hand. Studies his shaky reflection.

DICK

Fuck you Nicky. I can do this.

He peels-out past parked cars down the street. Passes a --

INT. SMALL CAR (IDLING) - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Marcus sits behind the wheel. SETS CUZ'S TORN IN THE CORNER
LETTER ENVELOPE ON THE CONSOLE WITH CASH SHOWING IN IT. He
pulls out. Follows Dick.

INT. SMALL CAR (IDLING) - LATER THAT NIGHT

Marcus sits behind the wheel of the vehicle at the curb.

Nicky enters. Sits shotgun with a new short haircut.

NICKY
Head north.

Marcus checks out Nicky's hair.

MARCUS
I hardly recognize you.

NICKY
How well do you know me. We ain't
seen each other for three years
since you went to the Army.

MARCUS
Mostly I know of you.

NICKY
They've probably told you some
stories.

He finger combs his hair.

MARCUS
Your stories are all they talk
about. You're the Thief of Bagdad.

NICKY
I like Douglas Fairbanks. Then you
know why they call me little gypsy?

MARCUS
They think you can see the future.

NICKY
Right now, all I see is darkness.

Marcus pulls over. Wipes his hands on his pants.

MARCUS
My hands sweat when I'm nervous.

NICKY
I get hungry.

MARCUS
What's this all about?

NICKY
Right now... life or death.

MARCUS
What do you need from me?

Nicky pats his shoulder.

NICKY

Call me crazy... but I'm about to trust you.

MARCUS

You shouldn't.

NICKY

In case you didn't notice... there's no one else around?

MARCUS

I guess a person's got to be crazy not to notice that.

Nicky gazes out into the starry sky.

NICKY

It's best to be alone this far out on a limb. All I got is the stars.

MARCUS

What's in them for me?

Nicky creeps a smile across his face.

NICKY

Normally, I'm just your friendly neighborhood drug dealer. But Monty Hall's dead. I'm making the deals.

MARCUS

How much you gonna deal me in for?

NICKY

Two grand if you wait for me in a parking lot. And another grand when you get me where I gotta go after that. It's a criminal activity.

Marcus throws it in gear. Peels-out.

MARCUS

I'm in!

NICKY

You like carnivals?

Marcus revs the engine.

INT./EXT. UNMARKED COP CAR (IDLING) - NIGHT

Starr smokes a joint in the shotgun seat. Stares at a phone booth across the sidewalk.

Roty hits on a doobie at the wheel. Pops a big bubble of gum.

ROTY
Acapulco gold, good shit, Jimmy.

They turn and fling the joints off Jimmy's head. He slumps in the backseat. Face bloody and bruised.

SMITTY's voice squawks over the police radio under the dash:

SMITTY (O.S.)
Starr, you there? Over.

Starr speaks into the microphone:

STARR
I'm here. What's up, Smitty? Over.

SMITTY (O.S.)
Sighted your Cadillac, parked
behind Holy Mother of Ransom. Over.

Jimmy smiles through bloodstained teeth.

STARR
You see our suspects?

SMITTY (O.S.)
Probably went to the carnival.
Every neighborhood kid's there
tonight. Fireworks finale. Over.

STARR
See me tomorrow, Smitty. I'll have
something for you. Ten-four.

ROTY
Smitty's bucking for a raise.

Starr leans over the seat. Faces Jimmy.

STARR
If you want to get out of this in
one piece you've got to do one more
thing for us.

Roty turns on Jimmy.

ROTY

You can't go back now that you're
reborn as my bitch.

He smacks Jimmy's head. Starr grabs Roty's shirtsleeve.

STARR

The kid's had it. Give 'em a sec.

ROTY

What are you, the bitch's bitch?

Starr gets out. Scurries around the vehicle. Yanks Roty's door open. Wrestles Roty onto the sidewalk.

STARR

Take a walk!

He pushes Roty. Roty gets in his face.

STARR

I said, take a walk!

ROTY

Pussy! Fucking touch me again!

Starr shoves him away. Roty grins to himself. Follows Starr.

Starr leaps into the backseat. Knocks on Jimmy's head.

STARR

No deposit no return, Jimmy.

Roty gets in front. Waves a blackjack over the seat at Jimmy.

ROTY

Fuck you, Starr, he's mine.

Starr gets Jimmy in a headlock. Kisses his head.

STARR

Hold up. He's seen the light.

ROTY

Is that right, amigo?

He pries himself free from Starr.

JIMMY

Yeah, fuck the dagos! We're amigos,
man. I'll find Dick on my path of
righteousness, man. Can we go for
some Tacos or something first, man?

The phone in the booth rings. Starr gets out. Sticks his hands down his pants. Feverishly scratches his crotch.

STARR

That bitch! Jehovah's Witness my ass!

He answers the ringing phone.

STARR

(into phone)

Fuck you, Deo. We're gonna grab Nicky. Dick. Get 'em somewhere safe. Come after you. When we show Big Tamale that ledger. He sees you been skimming. We're gonna be heroes. And I'm gonna get the girl--

DEO (O.S.)

-Ya mean Bitty? Butch grabbed her after *choir practice*. Ha-ha...

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

INT. HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH - DAY

O.S. DISCORDANT ORGAN SOUNDS ECHO THROUGH THE CHURCH.

Butch drags Bitty, kicking and screaming out the front doors.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

Starr drops the phone.

O.S. BITTY SCREAMS AND SCREAMS ON THE PHONE.

Deo yells from the phone as it swings:

DEO (O.S.)

Bring me Nicky and his brother Dick. And the ledger. Ya can still get the girl. And be *her* hero.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Trailers, travel lodges and truck cabs line a baseball diamond behind a school. A football field beyond.

Cars parked in a grass lot on the outskirts of square canopies over refreshment booths. Games of chance. Rides.

Dick walks out from behind the cigarette booth game. Stumbles across power cables taped together on the ground.

DICK

Shit. Where the fuck are you Nicky?

He steps up to the game. Pulls his shirttail over the folded manila envelope in his back pocket.

Jimmy, Starr and Roty stop behind Dick. Look the other way.

JIMMY

Let's check out the cigarette game.
We use-to load up one side of the
game with four of us and change
quarters. Dick was our lookout.

STARR

Go with your instincts, kid. We'll
follow your lead.

The cigarette GAME MAN stands in the booth. Patrons slap quarters over multicolored squares on the surrounding counter.

Game Man carries a rounded multicolored cube around a table with matching multicolored holes roped like a boxing ring.

He tosses the cube over the counter. Bounces it off Dick's chest. He clutches the cube before it falls.

GAME MAN

The game's over here, kid. Toss the
cube. Here we go, all money down!

DICK

Sorry I...

GAME MAN

Hey, kid, I don't want to hear it,
just toss the cube.

Dick throws the cube. Looks away. The cube bounces off the ropes. Game Man catches it.

GAME MAN

Hey, you and your friends were
switching quarters on me last year!

He whips the cube at the back of Dick's head. The cube caroms off Dick's head. Hits the back of Jimmy's head.

Dick and Jimmy turn face-to-face.

JIMMY

Dick!

Dick shoves him and runs. Jumps over the power cables.
 Starr grabs for him. Trips on the cables. Hits the ground.

STARR

Fuck!

Roty falls over the cables on top of Starr.
 Jimmy weaves through the crowd in the opposite direction.
 Nicky steps in front of Jimmy. Seizes him.

JIMMY

Man, I been looking for you.

NICKY

Where's Dick?

JIMMY

He ran toward the parking lot, man.

The sky flashes red white and blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.
 Nicky dashes through the crowd.

EXT. HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT
 Dick weaves through a maze of carnival equipment.

DICK

Where the...

The sky flashes red white and blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.
 Dick runs along a line of campers. Turns right down an --
 AISLE OF SEMITRAILERS

Shadowy ten foot wide grassy area between ten parked trailers
 backed across from each other. Doors padlocked.

Dick halts. Starr walks toward Dick from one end of the row.

STARR

Just stay put, Dick, don't run
 anymore. Put your gun away, Roty!

Dick turns. Roty blocks the other end. Aims his gun at Dick.

ROTY

Fuck you, Starr! You should of run,
 Dick. I'm gonna shoot you anyway.

The sky flashes blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle. Roty fires.

The bullet punches Dick's shoulder. He drops next to a trailer. His shirttail half over the manila envelope.

DICK

Shit!

Starr and Roty stand over him.

STARR

Fucking, Roty. I told you not to shoot him.

Roty reaches for the envelope. Dick dives under the trailer.

ROTY

Fucking son of a bitch, kid, said shit!

He straightens up. Starr backhands him in the gut.

STARR

Told you, most people say shit, not fuck or Jesus when they're shot.

ROTY

One person doesn't prove anything.

STARR

Proves you owe me twenty bucks.

ROTY

Fucking, motherfucking, kid!

He squats under the trailer. Dick aims his revolver at Roty.

ROTY

You ain't got the balls to--

The sky flashes white: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Roty clutches his gut. Sits.

ROTY

Shit. I mean fuck...

Starr laughs. The sky flashes blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Starr flops on his back. Blood soaks his shirt over two chest wounds.

STARR

Shh-shit! I'm gonna to have a hard
time collecting from you.

The sky flashes red: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Roty grabs his throat. Blood spurts through his fingers. He
flops sideways to the ground.

ROTY

He shot me again.

The sky flashes red white and blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Nicky steps between Starr and Roty.

The sky flashes red: Hiss. Boom.

They die watching the fireworks fizzle-out.

NICKY

Dick.

DICK

I'm here. Under here.

Nicky crawls under the trailer. Dick sits, revolver in one
hand. Squeezes his bloody shoulder wound with the other.

NICKY

Are you hit bad, Dick?

DICK

No, but-- Brother, does it hurt.

The sky flashes blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Two legs stop next to the trailer. Marcus squats. Faces them.

MARCUS

Looks like I missed something.

NICKY

Give me a hand with Dick?

He and Marcus drag Dick out. Dick screams.

The sky flashes white: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Marcus slips on his ass.

MARCUS

Shh-hit! I thought Dick shot me!

He gets to his feet. Feels his ass.

MARCUS

Okay, let's try that again. Only,
Dick, please hand me the revolver.

NICKY

I'll take it.

Dick hands him his revolver. Marcus and Nicky carry Dick. Sit him against a trailer tire.

MARCUS

What about that comic book?

DICK

It's in my back pocket.

NICKY

Never a doubt.

The sky flashes blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

DICK

I didn't even pull the trigger.

Marcus crouches next to Dick.

Nicky points the revolver at Marcus.

NICKY

Back away from my brother.

Marcus presses a pistol to Dick's temple.

DICK

You shot the cops?

MARCUS

Nicky, toss the fucking revolver or
I make your brother disappear.

Nicky throws the revolver in the grass.

MARCUS

Dick, hand me that comic book!

Dick takes the envelope from his pocket. Offers it to Marcus.

DICK

Why are you gonna kill me?

Marcus looks back and forth at Nicky then Dick. Gun on Dick.

MARCUS

I'm not. Nicky's schemes are.
Selling drugs. Whoring KC. Telling
everyone Dick's going to the
Academy. I's twelve. He gave me
LSD. Dealt for him in eighth grade.

NICKY

Busted selling my dope. Went to the
Army instead of jail.

Marcus nods. Bites his lip. Squints at Nicky.

NICKY

Your mom died alone. You in Nam.

MARCUS

Watch this!

He cocks the gun. Turns to Dick.

Dick flings the envelope into Marcus's face. Grabs the gun.

Marcus fires into the air.

Nicky dives across the grass. Reaches for the revolver.

Marcus twists his pistol from Dick's grasp. Aims for Nicky.

DICK

You're not getting away--

He squeezes his arms around Marcus's knees. He falls. Fires.

MARCUS

Fuck!

The bullet pings off the trailer over Nicky's head. He fires.

The sky flashes red: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle. Three bullets slam
into Marcus's chest. He sits in Dick's lap.

DICK

You got him, Nicky!

Nicky marches toward Dick. Trains the revolver on Marcus.

DICK

He's peeing all over me.

The sky flashes white: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

Nicky pushes Marcus off Dick. Dick coughs blood in his hand.

DICK
Still think I'd never make it on
the streets, Brother?

NICKY
When I got here, little Brother,
you were hiding under that trailer.

He and Dick smile. Nicky snatches the envelope.

NICKY
This we need to--

DEO (O.S.)
-I'll trade ya's!

Deo drags Bitty from the shadows. Pokes the .45 muzzle under her ear. Her face bruised. Her mouth, ankles and wrists duct taped.

Nicky aims the revolver at him.

NICKY
You kill her. I kill you.

DEO
You kids play too rough. I'm gonna
have to take away all your toys.

Cuz steps around the other the side of the trailer. Cocks a .357 against Dick's head.

DICK
Not you, Cuz.

CUZ
You should of stayed home.

He reaches for Nicky's revolver.

CUZ
I'll have that gun. Then the
envelope, Nicky.

Nicky drops the revolver and the envelope.

NICKY
Pick 'em up.

DEO
Let's get this over.

Cuz grabs the revolver and the envelope.

Deo drops Bitty. Takes the envelope. Removes the "Angel of Death" comic book. Fans the notebook lined ledger pages.

DEO
This is overdue.

Deo's Cadillac backs up to them. Butch jumps out. Opens the back door.

Deo drags Bitty into the backseat.

DEO
I'm gonna take my time with this little girl.

Butch shuts the door.

Cuz flicks Nicky's ear with the .357 muzzle.

CUZ
Step on over to the trunk of the Cadillac, Nicky.

Dick sneers at Cuz.

DICK
Cuz, it's Nicky.

CUZ
Shut the fuck up.

He jabs the .357 in Nicky's back.

CUZ
Come on.

He feverishly scratches his crotch.

Butch leans on the hood and laughs.

CUZ
Motherfucking bitch!

NICKY
I was thinking the same thing.

Cuz shoves Nicky over the bumper.

CUZ
Enjoy the finale.

Deo grins from the backseat out the rear window at Nicky as he twists the .45 muzzle under Bitty's chin. She squirms. Sobs.

Nicky sees his reflection and Cuz poking the revolver to the back of his head as the sky flashes red: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

NICKY
Check-fucking-mate, you stinking
jag-off rat!

He presses the rat blood and guts smeared "FBI" card against the window. Fires the .357 three times through the glass.

Deo's face fractures. Blood sprays around three bullet holes in the glass.

The sky flashes red white and blue: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

O.S. CHEERS FROM A CROWD WITH APPLAUSE NEARBY.

Nicky steps around the Cadillac. Winks at Dick.

NICKY
Never a doubt.

Dick sprawls on his back.

DICK
I can't take this shit.

Nicky rips the door open. Carries Bitty out. She whimpers.

He wipes splattered blood off her face with his sleeve. Sets her next to Dick. Peels the tape off her.

NICKY
I love you. I never--

She smothers him in kisses. Sniffles.

BITTY
They grabbed leaving the church
after choir. I fought them.

He takes her in his arms. They kiss.

NICKY
Sorry. We don't have time. We've
all to get to my dad's car behind
the stadium before the finale's
over. We'll talk later. Okay?

BITTY
Yes. Thank God!

He steps away. Bitty kneels next to Dick.

BITTY
Oh my God. Dick?

Dick and Bitty talk indistinctly.

Butch opens the Cadillac's back door. The envelope falls out.

Deo slumps in the backseat. His dead eyes stare down.

Butch scoops the envelope up.

BUTCH
All this fuckin' bother over a
comic book?

Nicky takes the envelope from him. Smirks at Dick and Bitty.

NICKY
Readers are leaders.

BUTCH
I gotta go and clean up this mess
in the car.

He slams the door on Deo and jumps in.

Cuz unlocks a trailer. Opens the doors.

CUZ
Coup de fucking gras.

Nicky pulls two bags of 1000 red gel caps from the trailer.

Cuz closes the doors. Hops in the Cadillac.

Butch drives away. Nicky tears the bags. Pours red gel caps
around Marcus. Stomps on some.

NICKY
"I say God damn that pusher-man"!

He steps next to Dick and Bitty.

BITTY
Nicky, he's bleeding.

NICKY
We're taking Dick to a veterinarian
in River Grove. He'll fix him up.

DICK
You're doing it to me again!
Haven't I proved anything tonight?

NICKY

I'm not gonna argue. You're out!
You hear me?! Go fly space ships.

DICK

Brother, could you just do me a
favor and listen?

Nicky and Bitty help him up.

BITTY

He never listens to me either. He's
too smart for his own good.

NICKY

It's never been about my own good.

DICK

I just saved your life, please
listen.

NICKY

Depends on what you say.

DICK

You were right about me. When the
shit hit the fan I couldn't wait to
crawl under something.

He grabs Nicky's shoulders. Bitty smiles.

DICK

You're the reason I even crawled
out. I owe you. But as of now we're
even and you can deal me out.

Nicky kisses his cheeks.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

CHEERING CROWD stands on the sideline. Backs to the carnival.

The grand finale fills the sky with red, white and blue
flashes: Hiss. Boom. Fizzle.

NICKY (V.O.)

Hey, what's more American than
marching bands, gangsters, and
blowing shit up!

Nicky and Bitty help Dick hobble across the field.

A MARCHING BAND follows them. Plays the Star-Spangled Banner.

NICKY (V.O.)

I know, ya want I should rain on my own parade. An old school morality tale. Dead gangsters in a rain swept gutter, splashed by passing tires. Okay!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A car splashes rain from a puddle onto: "CITY LOSES HEROES IN DRUG BUST SHOOT OUT" on a newspaper headline in a paper-box.

INT. HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH - DAY

Nicky kneels before tiered votive candles along the back wall. Stuffs over a dozen \$100 bills in the cashbox.

He clicks the flip top lighter open with his leg. Lights every candle.

NICKY

These are for Dorothy.

Young Dad drags his crying Small Boy past Nicky. Young Dad raises his hand to hit his Small Boy.

Nicky twists Young Dad's arm back from behind him. Bends him back. Young Dad groans. Releases Small Boy.

NICKY

Someday he'll thank you, right?

He lets him go. Joins a line of people in the aisle to the altar.

He passes the choir box. An organist plays Ave Maria.

Bitty sings Ave Maria. Face bruised. Arm in a cast. Sees Nicky. Rises on her tiptoes. Voice and vigor arise.

Nicky kneels at the altar rail.

Father Confessor raises the wafer. Smiles at him.

FATHER CONFESSOR

The body of Christ.

Nicky stares in his eyes and whispers:

NICKY

Jesus, forgive me.

He accepts the wafer. Walks toward the side doors.

He crumbles the wafer. Exposes the red-key under it in his palm. He slips the red-key in his pocket. Eats the wafer.

Bitty leaves the choir box. Runs into Magdalen's arms.

MAGDALEN

Bitty, no. He promised me he'd stay away.

BITTY

I have to see him.

She shoves Magdalen. Fights her way through the crowd:

BITTY

Excuse me, please?! Please?! Let me through!

She shoves through the side doors into the --

SIDE VESTIBULE

Bitty bursts in:

BITTY

What did my mother say to you?

Nicky backs against the exit doors to the outside.

NICKY

Nothing I didn't agree with.

She presses against him. Lays her cheek on his.

BITTY

All I know is how I feel about you.

NICKY

It's time to say good-bye.

He pushes her back. She reaches for him.

BITTY

I love you.

NICKY

Angels and demons don't fall in love.

BITTY

You told me you loved me.

He turns away. Hides his red eyes. A tear escapes.

NICKY

It was all an act. I'm a great
liar. I never cared about you. I
just wanted to get in your pants.

The exit door opens. KC steps in out of the rain.

KC

Let's go. The car's double parked.

Nicky kisses KC passionately.

NICKY

I'm done here.

Bitty weeps. Tears run her mascara. KC scowls at her:

KC

Is this the virgin angel? What
happened? She break a wing?

NICKY

I let her down. Let's get going. I
got more important things to do.

He slides his arm under KC's. Escorts her out.

EXT. HOLY MOTHER OF RANSOM CHURCH - STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Rain pours. Nicky and KC run to the pristine '57 Cadillac.

KC leans to kiss him. He shoves her against the door.

NICKY

Just get in the car.

She sits shotgun. He stumbles around the car. Dry-heaves.
Opens the door. Throws-up. Climbs in.

Bitty bursts out the exit doors. Trips. Skids on her knees.
Slaps her hands on the sidewalk. Crawls to the curb.

BITTY

I won't leave without you!

EXT./INT. CHOP SHOP - NIGHT

Nicky and Jimmy stand outside in a rainstorm. Jimmy stuffs a
candy bar in his mouth. Tosses the wrapper.

Butch raises the door from the inside.

O.S. SCENE FIVE OF MOZART'S DON GIOVANNI PLAYS ON THE STEREO.

Jimmy and Nicky enter.

Cuz steps out of the shadows. Follows them.

Butch shuts the door.

Jimmy pinches his new black leather coat.

JIMMY

Man, check this out, Cuz. Imported Italian leather.

Cuz smiles. Brushes his hand lightly over the coat.

CUZ

Nice. Step over here. Take it off. Let me check it out in the light.

Jimmy hands him the coat. Cuz holds it under the lamp.

JIMMY

Today's a big day, man. I wanna look good. What do you think, Cuz.

CUZ

A day like this only comes around once.

Butch smiles at Jimmy.

BUTCH

Jimmy, right?

CUZ

Yeah, man. Jimmy.

BUTCH

Well, Jimmy, man, hand me that duct tape on the table.

Jimmy grabs the duct tape. Tosses it to Butch.

JIMMY

Hey, man, you better get used to seeing me around. I'm a good friend of the family.

Cuz steps behind him. Drops the leather jacket.

JIMMY

Man, it's kind of chilly in here.

NICKY
 Shut the fuck up, Jimmy. It's time
 for our mystery guest.

Nicky steps over to a metal door in the shadows along the wall. Slides the dead bolt open. Two people enter.

Joe, tailored suit, lights a cigarette under the gray Fedora.

Dick enters. Shoulder bandaged. Rushes over to Jimmy.

DICK
 You're dead, you fucking rat!

Jimmy stumbles back.

JIMMY
 Man, Sal ratted me out, man. Nicky,
 come on. What is this? It was Sal.

NICKY
 Sal?

Jimmy shakes his head.

Butch tosses the tape to Nicky. He rips a strip off the roll.

NICKY
 Sal never opened his mouth. Not
 once during an hour of torture.

Butch punches Jimmy in the stomach. He doubles over. Grunts.

NICKY
 No more bullshit, Jimmy.

JIMMY
 Man, they were gonna kill me--!

Butch kicks Jimmy's feet out from under him. Jimmy kneels.

Nicky steps in front of him. Jimmy breaks down and pleads:

JIMMY
 Nicky, we grew up together, man. We
 been together since kindergarten...

Butch grabs Jimmy's hands. Jimmy lowers his head. Blubbers:

JIMMY
 Nicky, man, please?! We're friends.
 I'm still a kid. I don't wanna die,
 Nicky, man...

NICKY

I'm not your man anymore.

He wraps the tape around Jimmy's mouth. Binds his wrists behind his back. Cuz places a hand on Nicky's shoulder.

CUZ

You did good.

Nicky drops the tape. Rubs Jimmy's scalp.

NICKY

Be a man, Jimmy.

JOE

Nicky, come on over here.

Nicky steps face-to-face with Joe.

JOE

My prodigal son.

He offers a .44 magnum to Nicky.

JOE

Get it over with.

NICKY

My show, right?

JOE

It's always been your show.

NICKY

Dick's seen enough. I want him out of here.

Joe nods.

JOE

Dick, go on out to the car.

Nicky hands Dick the car keys. He sees Dick crying. Hugs him.

DICK

Thanks, Nicky, I... can't do this.

Dick puts his hand over his mouth as he exits the metal door.

Nicky stands over Jimmy. Jimmy sobs. Nicky grabs him by hair. Places the .44 magnum to his temple.

NICKY

I trusted you.

He fires. Blood erupts from Jimmy's ears. He drops dead.

BUTCH

I told you put one right here.

Butch points his index finger directly into his own eye.

NICKY

That's not my style.

He fires. Butch's knee explodes. He teeters.

BUTCH

You mother-fuck--

NICKY

-Ya ain't got a leg to stand on.

He fires. Butch's other knee explodes. He drops. Nicky kicks him in the face. Steps over to Cuz.

NICKY

I was never told Sal had to die.

CUZ

I had nothing to do with Sal being killed.

NICKY

See these.

He holds his hand out. Sal's seashells and shark teeth from his necklace in Nicky's palm.

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

EXT. LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Nicky stoops behind the '69 Riviera. The seashells and shark teeth spell out "CUZ" in a puddle of blood under the car.

NICKY (O.S.)

They told a different tale.

FLASHBACK CONTINUES:

INT. SAL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jimmy sits on the table. Hands over his eyes. Dante leans against the refrigerator. Pets his cat.

NICKY (O.S.)

Jimmy always had rat stink all over him. He was my divining rod.

Roty cocks his gun at Starr as Starr backs away. Roty forces Sal over the sink. His ankles and wrists bound in duct tape.

NICKY (O.S.)
So, I thought about it.

Cuz grabs Sal by the hair. Slashes his throat with the homemade machete.

NICKY (O.S.).
Cuz, ya cut Sal's vocal chords to keep him from telling Deo you had the comic. But you had Jimmy give it to Dick.

Cuz coils the duct tape tight around Sal's mouth and neck.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

Nicky aims the .44 in Cuz's face. Joe smiles from the table.

NICKY
I figured you didn't want anything to do with killing me or Dick, so you brought Marcus in.

Cuz shakes his head. Smiles.

CUZ
Shit happens, Nicky?

NICKY
Yeah: "coups and regime changes lead to rainy days". Sal sends his warmest regards.

He fires. The bullet smacks into Cuz's forehead. The top of his head peels. He falls on his back in blood and brains.

NICKY
I think that's the last of the traitors, Dad, wouldn't you say?

Joe wraps his arm over Nicky's shoulder. Half-hugs him.

JOE
I always believed in you, Nicky.

NICKY
Mind if I reason the rest out loud.
Stop me if I'm wrong.

Joe rubs his head. Squeezes his shoulder.

JOE
Go head, show off for your old man.

NICKY
Coconuts skimmed the money for you.
To bankroll you after you got out.

Joe sits on the table. Bites on the filter of a cigarette.

Nicky clicks the flip top lighter open with his leg. Lights Joe's cigarette.

NICKY
And the rest is my loyalty test.
You're not stopping me.

JOE
You have definitely exceeded even a
proud father's expectations.

NICKY
I also got the money in my hands.
You still want the money, right?

He backs into the oxy-acetylene torch set chained to the post.

JOE
Of course.

NICKY
I got it. You want it. Make a deal.

JOE
Okay, Nicky.

NICKY
Whoa. You haven't heard it yet.

JOE
Go on.

NICKY
I want Dick out.

Joe shakes his head.

JOE
And spoil my dynamic duo. No. No
way. Today it's your show, I owe
you that. Tomorrow I take over.

Nicky gets in his face.

NICKY

You're not listening to me. Dick doesn't want this.

JOE

No! Fuck that! You did good. I'm proud. We're on our way to the top.

He reaches for Nicky. Nicky ducks away. Joe follows him.

JOE

I'm sure if your Ma were alive she'd want us all together.

Nicky bangs his head on the post with the oxy-acetylene torch set. Clicks the flip top lighter open and shut with his leg.

FLASHBACK BEGINS:

INT. PARENTS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lightning flashes in the window.

Nicky (11) kneels next to Dorothy on the bedside floor. Slides his arms under her. Her nasal feed hangs off the bed.

DOROTHY

(gurgles)
My dear...

NICKY (11)

Ma, don't try to talk. Your oxygen tank is empty. Breathe slowly.

He lifts her. Falls back down. Tears stream down their faces.

DOROTHY

Sss--

He strains. And struggles. But he can't get up. She gasps. Stiffens. Her lungs rattle. She goes limp.

NICKY (11)

No, please! Fucking God!

He stares into her lifeless eyes. O.S. THUNDERCLAPS.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

Nicky clicks the flip top lighter open and shut on his leg faster and faster. Joe pats his back.

NICKY

Together. That's funny.

He jabs the .44 in Joe's face.

NICKY

Where the fuck were you?

Joe grabs the .44 barrel.

JOE

Nicky, we'll rise like fucking
astronauts in orbit over this city.

Nicky jerks the .44 from Joe's grasp. Pistol whips him. Joe spits the cigarette out. Falls over the table.

NICKY

Big fucking deal. What goes up must
come down. I can do that.

He rapid-fires. The bullets rip into the three five gallon gas cans against the wall.

Butch grabs the chain around the oxy-acetylene torch set. Pulls himself halfway up the post.

Gasoline spills across the floor. Pools around Butch's feet.

Nicky clicks the lighter open with his leg. Flings it into the gas pooling around Butch. Whoosh. Flames ignite. Engulf Butch.

He drops in a fiery heap and shrieks. Fire rages around the oxy-acetylene tanks. Joe runs toward the metal door.

NICKY

See you's in orbit! Blast off!

He rapid-fires. The bullets ping holes in the oxy-acetylene torch set cylinders. Oxy-acetylene hisses out.

INT. '69 RIVIERA (IDLING) - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Rain pours. Dick sits shotgun facing the chop shop.

A flock of pigeons fly off the chop shop roof.

The building lows-up. The roof caves in. A fireball rises.

Dick stares in shock at the inferno. A second explosion rocks the car. Cracks the windshield.

The visor drops. The envelope flops in Dick's lap. Across it:
"THE WAR IS OVER".

Dick slips the red-key out. Stares at the undulating light of the fire across the small engraved letters: "AUSTIN BOWL".

EXT. AUSTIN BOWL - NIGHT

Dick stoops at a paper-box. Bitty carries a sealed burial cask of Nicky's ashes next to him.

Dick clicks the half-melted flip top lighter open with his leg. Holds the flame to the display window: "ASHES TO ASHES GANGSTERS TO HELL".

INT. AUSTIN BOWL - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Bitty and Dick walk along a bench between walls of lockers.

O.S. BOWLING BALLS RUMBLE DOWN THE ALLEYS AND CRASH THE PINS.

NICKY (V.O.)

Mom told us lightning and thunder
were just the angels bowling.

Dick turns the red-key. Opens the locker. Unzips a bowling bag on top of the chessboard inside. The pieces to the sides.

NICKY (V.O.)

So the bowling alley was always
heaven to me.

He parts cash bundles in the bag. Thumbs through a stack of vintage comics below. Zips the bag. Puts it on the bench.

He sets the pieces on the board. Bitty stands the cask on the board. Dick stands the flip top lighter on the cask.

Dick and Bitty bow their heads. Make the sign of the cross. Whisper prayers to themselves.

NICKY (V.O.)

I'll never see heaven, but I'm
right next door. And I guarantee
you, that's closer than any of
those other assholes will ever get.

Dick shuts the locker. Locks it. Grabs the bag.

DICK

See you on the other side, Nicky.

Bitty steps ahead. Dick scratches his crotch feverishly. Catches her at the door. Takes her hand. Kisses her cheek.

NICKY (V.O.)

To Whom It May Concern: My whole
life's been a mob public warning
message. Ah, shit happens then ya
die. What are ya gonna do about it?

FADE OUT.

THE END