

The Caretaker

by
Matt Waters

E-Mail

Mw2828@aol.com

FADE IN:

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, BAR -- DAY

Two impeccably dressed old men share drinks. They are sitting on stools, in front of a fully equipped bar. Their eyes are fixed on a football game, visible on a high definition television perched above rows of liquor bottles.

Their names are DOMINICK PUZO and FRANK MARCIANO.

Dominick, 65 years of age, is short and squat, overweight. His skin is crusty. His thinning hair is slicked back, scalp visible, shiny. He is wearing a suit.

Frank, 68, is clothed in a pale blue Cashmere sweater, hair a silver shade of grey.

The Sand Castle is an upscale establishment. A few feet opposite of Dominick and Frank is a lavish dining area, empty at the moment.

DOMINICK

Larry. Now there was a tough one.

FRANK

Idiot.

DOMINICK

A good man.

FRANK

A fucking dolt. What do you care?

DOMINICK

Ever really talk to the guy?

FRANK

When we were shaving points in Boston.

DOMINICK

So you didn't know him well. He was my friend. And I sat back.

FRANK

No choice.

DOMINICK

Almost the godfather of my kids.

FRANK

You are such a sentimentalist...

DOMINICK
Time can change everything.

Frank slams his hand on the bar.

FRANK
Fucking Jets! Rat bastards!

DOMINICK
You remember who did that?

FRANK
Larry?

DOMINICK
Yeah.

FRANK
Can't say I do. I was in Miami
then, remember?

DOMINICK
In '88? I thought--

Frank turns around.

FRANK
Oh, the prince has arrived!

VINCENT D'ANGELO, twenty-one, strides into the bar from the dining area. Vincent is tall, pale, wearing stylish jeans and a red fleece. His hair is black, combed upward. Deep creases are indented under his green eyes, evidence of endless nights. He smiles upon seeing Frank, shaking his hand.

VINCENT
How goes the world, Frank?

DOMINICK
Fucked up beyond all recognition.

FRANK
He wasn't asking you, Dom.

VINCENT
I always appreciate a darker
perspective.

Dominick tips his drink toward Vincent.

FRANK
Allow me to ask of your opinion,
kid. At what point should a soldier
be clipped?

VINCENT

Come on Frank... You know better than me.

FRANK

Let's see if you learned anything from Carmine.

VINCENT

Carmine isn't much of a teacher.

FRANK

Let's see what you've learned on your own.

Vincent hesitates.

DOMINICK

Go ahead, Vince. Another perspective, right?

Vincent clears his throat.

VINCENT

When should a man be killed... I guess at the point where he no longer has any friends, and his enemies have accumulated to the point where the real executioner is inevitability. Button just pulls the trigger. He's not responsible for the rest. Reap what you sow.

Dominick and Frank exchange glances.

FRANK

Very good, Vincent... you're a regular philosopher. Skip wants to see you. In back.

Vincent nods, walking toward a narrow hallway adjacent to the bar.

DOMINICK

We'll be working for him if we live long enough.

FRANK

Carmine doesn't want it that way.

DOMINICK

Even so...

FRANK

And enough about fucking Larry,
alright? I shouldn't have needed
Vincent to explain.

DOMINICK

Explain what?

FRANK

Why Larry had to go.

Frank finishes his drink, grimacing.

INT. SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- DAY

Vincent enters the spacious back-room through a set of wooden double doors. Dinginess is obscured by excess. The floor is filthy. But an enormous flat screen television hangs in the far left corner, accompanied by a leather couch, which rests on a fine foreign carpet. Assorted gangster movie posters and paraphernalia partially conceal dripping drainage pipes protruding from wide cracks in the wall tile.

To the right is a miniature bar. CARMINE ARMENTO stands behind it, cupping two shot glasses in his right hand.

Carmine is 55, appearing shorter than his medium height due to slouching, slumped shoulders. He has curly brown hair, wearing a form fitting leather jacket, simple black button down underneath. He is muscular, the owner of a bulky frame.

CARMINE

There you are Vincent. Come here.
Have a drink.

Vincent grins, approaches the bar, stands opposite Carmine.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Indulging in Jack these days?

VINCENT

It soothes my stomach.

Carmine reaches underneath the bar and produces a bottle of Jack Daniels. He pours a pair of shots, slides one to Vincent.

Carmine lifts his shot.

CARMINE

Raise your glass, my young friend.

Vincent does so.

VINCENT
Toasting the occasion?

CARMINE
Absolutely. To Vincent D'Angelo...
on his twenty-first birthday. Many
blessings. May your cup overflow.

They tap each other's glasses, and drink. Vincent's face
reddens, contorts. Carmine barely reacts.

VINCENT
Strong stuff.

CARMINE
Real therapeutic. Painting the town
tonight?

VINCENT
Heading to Dominion.

CARMINE
That used to be Diver's Cove. Back
in my prime.

VINCENT
In the thirties right? When you
were bootlegging booze across state
lines?

Carmine reaches over the bar and puts Vincent in a headlock,
tapping on his head.

CARMINE
Where did that wit come from? I'm
going to dig it out!

VINCENT
Not the hair, Carmine, come on!

CARMINE
What did I tell you about the age
jokes?

VINCENT
Alright, I'm sorry, just let go.
Your fucking cologne is deadly!

CARMINE
Really? Daisy liked it.

Carmine releases Vincent, who steps backward.

VINCENT

Daisy... A stripper name if I ever heard one.

CARMINE

Maybe so.

VINCENT

When are you going to settle down with someone special, my man?

CARMINE

Hell of a question coming from you. Besides, I already had someone special.

Vincent looks down.

VINCENT

True.

Carmine puts the bottle away.

CARMINE

How is he?

VINCENT

Who?

CARMINE

Your father.

VINCENT

Why do you give a shit?

CARMINE

Because I care about you.

VINCENT

He's alright...

CARMINE

Still has that job?

VINCENT

Yeah. But he never stops complaining. I have to fucking hear about it.

CARMINE

He's providing.

VINCENT

Frank said you wanted to see me about something.

CARMINE

Those assholes wish you a happy birthday?

VINCENT

Nope.

Carmine sighs.

CARMINE

Typical.

VINCENT

Not a big deal.

CARMINE

I told them. They don't fucking listen. What happened to this thing...

VINCENT

So?

CARMINE

The Irish kid...

VINCENT

Connor? What about him?

CARMINE

He's buying coke again. From a dealer operating out of Coney Island.

VINCENT

Fuck...

CARMINE

Your boy is crafty. Knew he was being watched in this neighborhood. But I have eyes everywhere.

VINCENT

How long?

CARMINE

Just found out today. Guys like this don't deserve your loyalty.

VINCENT
He's my best friend.

CARMINE
He broke a promise.

VINCENT
What the fuck should I do now?
After all the dramatics. The
intervention. Rehab. Back at square
fucking one.

CARMINE
Use judgment.

VINCENT
His girl pops vicodin. Or used to.
She supposedly quit too, when he
kicked coke. They've probably been
getting high together for months,
laughing at everyone.

CARMINE
Never let anyone make a joke out of
you.

JACKIE BALDELLI enters the room. Jackie is 38. He has a deep tan, black hair. He is wearing an impressive suit, perfectly tailored. Several rings adorn his fingers. His shoes are polished to the point of being reflective. He remains near the door upon spotting Vincent.

JACKIE
Am I interrupting anything?

VINCENT
No, Jack. I was about to leave.

CARMINE
Stick around.

VINCENT
I need to see Connor. Have a talk.

Jackie ambles toward the bar. He shakes Vincent's hand, before pulling him in for a hug.

JACKIE
Happy birthday, Vinny. Christ, I
remember when you were a fucking
toddler. Time flies.

Vincent pulls away from Jackie, slapping his back.

VINCENT

I appreciate the salutations. See Carmine, somebody pays attention.

CARMINE

And the rank corresponds.

JACKIE

Thanks Cap.

Vincent heads toward the doors. Just before letting himself out, he steals a peak at Carmine and Jackie, now discussing something behind the bar.

INT. INDULGENCE RECORDS -- DAY

CONNOR O'ROURKE is manning the cash register at this cramped record store.

Connor is twenty, diminutive. Traces of blonde hair are visible on his shaved head. His outfit is simple, a black hooded sweat-shirt and jeans. Block Japanese symbols are tattooed onto the left side of his neck. He has pale blue eyes.

The store has an underground look, prominently promoting punk rock artists. It is empty.

Connor is reading a newspaper. He slams it down.

CONNOR

Miserable pieces of fucking shit!

Vincent walks into the store, a bell ringing above the door, signalling the arrival of a customer.

VINCENT

What's troubling you today, Connor?

Connor rips the newspaper into pieces, torn shards flying all over.

CONNOR

It's this fucking war! Soldiers dying every day, for no fucking reason. So these assholes in Washington can line their fucking pockets! And this fucking right wing republican rag supports it! You believe that shit?

VINCENT

That's why I stick to the sports pages.

CONNOR

We still on for tonight?

VINCENT

Absolutely.

CONNOR

Excellent. I told Justine to bring a friend.

VINCENT

Well, I am incredibly lonely.

Connor laughs hysterically.

CONNOR

Certainly. You are in desperate need of some pussy. Must be having withdrawal.

VINCENT

Things just haven't been working out.

CONNOR

Cheer the fuck up. It's a special day. Comes but once a year.

Connor throws a few pieces of the shredded newspaper into the air.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Here... some confetti!

VINCENT

What's your boss going to say, you fucking psycho?

CONNOR

Fuck Gino. He leaves the store to me most days. Goes home and drinks. I hope he fucking hangs himself. It'd be a Christmas miracle.

Vincent laughs. But his expression changes to a frown.

VINCENT

Connor...

CONNOR
What's up?

Vincent runs his left hand through his hair.

VINCENT
Justine staying clean?

CONNOR
Why you dropping this on me?

VINCENT
Maybe I heard a rumor.

CONNOR
About me or her?

VINCENT
Forget it.

CONNOR
Fuck that. Who told you? Because
it's bullshit. She's been sober for
months. Same for me, in case you're
curious.

Vincent nods.

VINCENT
I always am.

CONNOR
Take my word.

VINCENT
I always have.

Silence.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
We're tearing it up tonight.

Connor smiles.

CONNOR
Who does it better than us?

They exchange a hand pound. Vincent departs.

Connor sorts through the debris of the newspaper.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Come on... where are the fucking
comics?

EXT. VINCENT'S HOUSE, PORCH -- NIGHT

Vincent glides up the three step stoop leading to his front door. His house, located dead center in suburbia, is two stories. Flimsy blue paneling decorates the exterior, along with a few barely flickering Christmas lights. There's a front lawn, accompanied by a garden, both snow dusted and vacant. The front door is wooden, featuring a peeling white paint job.

Vincent lingers, hand on door knob.

VINCENT
Just get it over with.

Vincent enters his house.

INT. VINCENT'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Vincent's father, RICHARD D'ANGELO, is eating a bowl of pasta in front of a dusty television. He sits in a torn, brown easy chair, leaning backward, taking absolutely zero notice upon hearing Vincent enter.

Richard is 48. His hair is a deep shade of black, identical to his son. It is not combed. He has a five o'clock shadow lining his face. His eyes are sunken, tired. He is wearing a robe, dirty white tee shirt underneath.

Vincent sits down next to his father, on a ratty brown couch beside the easy chair.

The room is dark, television glow the sole source of light.

The two share a silence. Richard shovels pasta into his mouth.

VINCENT
So... you get me a present?

RICHARD
For what?

Vincent laughs.

VINCENT
Nothing.

RICHARD
Oh... it's your birthday?

VINCENT
Lucky guess, pops.

RICHARD
How about the roof above your head?
That enough of a fucking gift this
year?

VINCENT
I would have settled for an
Infinity.

RICHARD
You have a car.

VINCENT
A piece of shit Nova.

RICHARD
Want a new ride? Ask that cock
sucker Carmine.

VINCENT
He already tried. I refused.

RICHARD
Why so?

VINCENT
Misplaced loyalty to my blood. But
I'm coming around. Maybe next year.

RICHARD
Right.

Richard has finished his meal. He fires his fork into the
empty bowl.

VINCENT
Why did we fall apart?

Richard doesn't respond. He bites his lower lip.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
You miss work again today?

RICHARD
Not your business.

VINCENT
Carmine handed you that job as a
favor to me. He went out of his way-

-

Richard slaps Vincent in the face.

RICHARD
That son of a bitch stole your
mother from me. He took everything!
Who the fuck are you talking too?

Vincent stands up.

VINCENT
I'm talking to a failure.

Richard lunges at Vincent, grabbing his collar, slamming him
into the far wall.

RICHARD
You are not my fucking son!

VINCENT
You want to do this? Do I need to
fuck you up again, like last time?

Richard releases Vincent.

RICHARD
Get out.

He shoves Vincent.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Get the fuck out of my house!

Vincent obliges his father, stomping to the front door,
swinging it open.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Every time you look at him,
Vincent, every single time... I
hope you realize he's the reason
your mother, my wife, is dead.

Tears roll down Richard's face.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I hope you fucking realize that.

Vincent wipes away blood, spilling from his lower lip.

VINCENT
Whatever helps you sleep.

Vincent slams the door behind him.

INT. DOMINION, BOOTH -- NIGHT

Dominion is a rollicking night club, vibrant, the dance floor absolutely packed. Vincent is seated in a minute booth within this frenetic gathering, a haven for those worn out by dancing and drinking. He has company, joined by Connor and his girlfriend, JUSTINE REILLY, along with her acquittance, SOPHIA GERMAINE.

Justine is 20 years old. She is tall and pale, sporting wavy red hair that slopes beneath her shoulders. Her eyes are wide, emeralds. She is wearing a red dress.

Sophia is 19 years old. She is petite, with a tanned complexion and hazel hair. Her eyes are shadowed with powder blue makeup. She has golden hooped earrings, wearing a black dress.

The two couples occupy opposite sides, parted by a small table, jammed tightly together in the booth. Connor is drinking a beer, Vincent a jack and coke.

JUSTINE

Connor baby... can't we go dance?

CONNOR

Not right now. I need a little more liquid courage before taking that plunge.

VINCENT

Indeed.

SOPHIA

Men...

JUSTINE

We're uncomfortable.

CONNOR

And you'd be more at ease with a hundred sweaty hands pawing at your tits?

JUSTINE

It's a club. People dance. You two are abnormal.

VINCENT

A throwback.

Justine rolls her eyes.

SOPHIA
Come on birthday boy... I'm getting bored.

VINCENT
Later.

CONNOR
Hey, what the fuck happened to your lip?

Vincent's lower lip is swollen, discolored.

VINCENT
Why? Something wrong?

CONNOR
Lose a fight?

VINCENT
You should see the other guy.

Sophia giggles. Vincent kisses her neck.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Maybe you could do something about it Sophia... heal me a little bit.

Sophia playfully pushes him away.

Vincent returns to his drink, nearly dropping it on the table.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Shit!

CONNOR
There he is. Cool hand Vince.

Vincent's left hand is shaking. He hides it under the table.

VINCENT
Shut the fuck up, Connor.

SOPHIA
What's wrong?

CONNOR
Just an abnormality sweetheart. One of those special ticks that make us all unique.

VINCENT

My left hand shakes sometimes. It will pass.

CONNOR

Too much jerking off.

Connor moves in on Justine, kissing her on the neck, imitating Vincent's voice and mannerisms.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

But... maybe you could do something about that Sophia... heal him a little bit...

The whole table laughs, including Vincent, who reaches into his drink, and pulls out an ice-cube. He wings it at Connor's head, scoring a direct hit.

Connor reacts as if he'd been shot, drawing more laughter.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Don't get mad Vince... Wish I had your Guinea charm.

Connor slides out of the booth.

JUSTINE

Where you going?

CONNOR

The bathroom.

JUSTINE

Why?

CONNOR

Nature calls, Justine. I'll be back to bust a move. Vinny? Game?

Vincent takes a bountiful swig from his drink.

VINCENT

I suppose.

INT. DOMINION, BATHROOM -- NIGHT

The rest-room is large and sparkling clean. The stalls are multicolored. There isn't much space to maneuver, as denizens pour in and out, a parade of spiky hair and silk shirts. Connor is waiting patiently on a long line formed near the sink. Antsy, he cuts, speeding to the front, splashing his face with water from the faucet.

Connor takes a look at himself in the mirror. His pupils are dilated, his nostrils flared, right one leaking blood. He sprays a wad of red mucus from his nose into the sink.

There are murmurs, complaints.

SCOTT WELD steps forward, tapping Connor on the shoulder.

Scott is 24. He has a blowout haircut and designer clothes.

Connor wheels around.

CONNOR
What the fuck do you want?

SCOTT
You allowed to cut the line?

CONNOR
Apparently.

SCOTT
What's your problem?

CONNOR
Who said I had one?

SCOTT
I did.

Connor steps in close, nose to nose with Scott.

CONNOR
Well, you better do something.
Express yourself.

A few of Scott's friends pull him away.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Yeah, that's what I thought. That's
what I fucking thought! Couldn't
risk the haircut, right? I'll take
on any of you!

INT. DOMINION, BOOTH -- NIGHT

Justine peers out across the dance floor, an expression of concern etching her face.

Sophia is nestled close to Vincent.

JUSTINE
What's taking him?

Vincent folds his hands.

VINCENT
The place is crowded.

Justine begins rocking back and forth.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Hey...

She turns toward Vincent.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
How goes the career?

JUSTINE
Not bad. There's a recital next
week. You should come.

VINCENT
I'll try. It's good you have that.

JUSTINE
What?

VINCENT
A dream.

Justine smiles.

JUSTINE
Not a dream. Just who I am. Makes
me feel free.

VINCENT
Either way, a beautiful thing. Keep
dancing.

JUSTINE
Why did you drop out of school?

Vincent shrugs.

VINCENT
I thought the homework was beneath
me.

Sophia laughs.

JUSTINE
Did you have any grand plans?

VINCENT

Not really. I used to write poetry.
That was a lifetime ago.

SOPHIA

You don't strike me as the literary
type.

VINCENT

Suppose I wasn't.

JUSTINE

Save any of your work?

VINCENT

No. Those notebooks are lost
forever. Isn't important, anyway. I
just enjoyed...

Vincent sips his drink.

JUSTINE

What?

VINCENT

A rhyme... sounds right. Makes
sense, you know?

JUSTINE

I hear you.

Connor flies into the booth, tackling Justine and suffocating
her with kisses.

VINCENT

Subtle entrance.

CONNOR

That's my style!

Justine pushes Connor away.

SOPHIA

He's an animal!

CONNOR

She loves it.

Connor bangs on the table repeatedly. His nose is washed
clean, but his eyes remain wild.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Are we going to party or what?

JUSTINE

Calm down. You act like a fucking child.

Vincent glares at Connor. Connor can't make eye contact, glancing away.

Vincent sighs, furrowing his brow, shaking his head.

CONNOR

What am I always telling you? You are a great gal, but this is your primary weakness. Disgusts me.

JUSTINE

Prey tell...

CONNOR

How you care what other people think. It's pitiful, the reason you're destined for an average existence. Want to be like everyone else? You will be. I guarantee it.

JUSTINE

How could you talk to me this way? In front of people?

CONNOR

This is a conversation. They can handle it, trust me.

SOPHIA

Speak for yourself.

CONNOR

Oh, happy now Justine, Sophia here thinks I'm an asshole. Should I be offended?

Vincent clenches his fist.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Yeah... a nice life. Trapped in Whitestone forever. Move into middle class digs, spit out a few kids, gain a couple hundred pounds, but hey, this is fate. How could I expect you to deviate? Am I asking too much?

JUSTINE

And who the fuck are you? You couldn't even make it through freshmen fucking year at Nassau because of your attention deficit situation. Think about that before getting all high and mighty with me.

Connor slaps the table, hard.

CONNOR

We aren't talking about... I can't believe you just bought that up... you amazing fucking bitch...

Vincent stands up and steps beside Connor, grabbing him by the arm. Connor ignores, but Vincent persists, almost lifting him out of his seat.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

What is it?

VINCENT

Come with me.

CONNOR

We're having an adult discussion.

VINCENT

Shut your fucking mouth and get the fuck up.

Connor relents. He stands up.

CONNOR

No need to get nasty.

Connor stares at Justine.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Know what? I liked you better doped up. Do me a favor and down a couple of vikes before I get back. It made you sufferable.

JUSTINE

I hate you. I fucking hate you!

CONNOR

You hate to love me, baby.

Vincent tugs on Connor's arm, hard. Connor screams in pain.
They wade onto the dance floor, toward the bar.

INT. DOMINION, BAR -- NIGHT

Connor and Vincent have found a quiet pocket near the bar where they can have a talk.

Vincent is staring directly into Connor's eyes. Connor is fidgety, adjusting his shirt sleeves, doing anything not to look at Vincent.

VINCENT

When did you start again?

CONNOR

I have no idea--

VINCENT

Don't fuck with me.

CONNOR

I'm not fucking with you. You're the one freaking out. Acting paranoid.

VINCENT

Play games with everyone else. Not me.

CONNOR

Vince... it just... helps me get by...

VINCENT

You fucking idiot. You stupid bastard. How many chances are they going to give you? Your family? Justine? Ever consider what you have to lose?

CONNOR

Want my life? You can have it.

Vincent nearly punches Connor, stopping himself.

VINCENT

A girlfriend. Parents still together. And you don't give a fucking shit. All you care about is getting high. With money you don't have.

CONNOR
Oh, you well versed in my finances?

VINCENT
Coke costs coin. You'll never keep
up with the addiction.

CONNOR
It's hard. To stop...

VINCENT
You promised me.

CONNOR
Laying a guilt trip?

VINCENT
The truth. And your fucking dad.
What he paid for rehab. We thought
you were better. We actually
believed it.

CONNOR
I'm not going to be copacetic just
because it's convenient for you.
Alright? You don't even give a
fuck...

VINCENT
I don't give a fuck? I fucking love
you. Like a brother. I'd lay down
my life. We're in this together.
That's why it hurts. Look at me!

CONNOR
Wish I could...

Somebody brushes in front of Vincent, roughly, knocking him
off balance.

Connor grabs the offender, spinning him around. It's Scott
Weld.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Oh, you've got to be fucking
kidding me.

SCOTT
You again? You were lucky my
friends gave you a pass. Don't push
me.

VINCENT
What the fuck is this about?

Connor drills Scott with a right-hand, before tackling him to the floor.

Bouncers and Scott's friends rush the scene, causing a melee. Bodies are flying all over, punches wildly thrown. Vincent is put into a headlock by a gigantic member of the security team. Connor is firing haymakers at everyone in his path. It takes three bouncers to ensnare him. They carry him by his arms and legs.

CONNOR

Vinny! Vinny! Where the fuck are you man?

Connor is thrashing manically about, nearly breaking free.

The bouncers arrive upon an opened door beyond the dance floor. They toss Connor outside, into the parking lot.

Connor lands on his face. The bouncers slam the door.

EXT. DOMINION, PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Connor staggers to a standing position. He has a nasty gash above his left eye.

Vincent is felled, on his back, a few feet away.

Connor rushes over, tries helping him up.

VINCENT

Get the fuck off.

Vincent rises to his feet, batting Connor's hands away. His lip is now completely busted open.

CONNOR

That piece of garbage had it coming. He insulted me.

VINCENT

Well, I hope it was worth it. We're definitely in the black book.

CONNOR

Fuck this place. And fuck techno music. We'll survive.

VINCENT

Your head isn't on straight.

CONNOR

Where are your balls? You above scrapping? Turning into one of them?

VINCENT

Who?

CONNOR

Obsessed with perception. Might as well buy a pinky ring.

VINCENT

I'm going to bash your fucking head in.

CONNOR

Good! I'm dying to see some heart out of you!

Justine and Sophia enter the parking lot, both wearing jackets.

They are nonplussed.

JUSTINE

Oh my God.

SOPHIA

That's enough. I want to go home.

Justine walks over to Connor.

JUSTINE

Are you happy?

CONNOR

I'll be happy when that mother fucker is dead. And he will be. On my word.

JUSTINE

What's happening to you?

Connor reaches into his pocket, pulling out car keys.

CONNOR

Kind of unbelievable. I held on to these.

JUSTINE

You aren't driving.

CONNOR
Is that a fact?

JUSTINE
Vincent!

VINCENT
Give her the keys, Connor.

CONNOR
You the boss of me?

VINCENT
No. I just don't want to see you
get scraped off some highway with a
spatula.

CONNOR
Practical advice.

Connor walks across the lot, quickening his pace with every
step.

JUSTINE
Where are you going?

Connor ignores. He reaches a brown pick-up truck, parked
between a Jaguar and a Corvette. The truck is top flight, a
recent model.

Connor taps on the truck's hood.

CONNOR
There she is. My beloved.

The group catches up. Sophia lags behind.

JUSTINE
Stop right now.

CONNOR
I've driven in this condition
before. Superbly.

Connor eyes the Jaguar.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Is this vehicle superior to mine?
Impossible. I possess the most
amazing means of transportation in
the universe... that truck solved
everything. Cured world hunger. Set
me straight. Perish the fucking
thought...

Connor unzips his jeans and begins urinating on the Jaguar, setting off the alarm.

JUSTINE
Are you trying to get fucking
arrested?

CONNOR
I am making a point!

Connor finishes, zipping his fly, taking a step back to admire his craftsmanship.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Can any of you see my initials?

Connor steps toward his truck, opening the driver side door.
Vincent blocks him from entering.

VINCENT
Do you really want to go out like
this?

CONNOR
I want to vanish into oblivion.
This will have to do.

VINCENT
There are people here that care
about you. You are fucking killing
us.

JUSTINE
Listen to him Connor, please!

Justine starts crying.

CONNOR
I'm waiting.

Vincent stands his ground.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Move!

Vincent punches Connor in the throat. He backs him into the Corvette, throwing body blows.

VINCENT
You pushed me to this!

Connor knees Vincent in the crotch. Vincent promptly falls to the pavement.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 You dirty mother fucker!

Connor again tries climbing in the truck. Justine tries stopping him. He shoves her down.

Connor shuts the door, starts the ignition, and drives out of the parking lot. Vincent stumbles behind in vain.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 You piece of shit! You piece of
 fucking shit!

Justine is hysterical. Sophia gives her a hug.

SOPHIA
 It's alright, it's going to be
 alright...

Connor's truck fades into the horizon, gone.

INT. TAXI CAB -- NIGHT

Justine and Vincent sit together in the backseat of a yellow cab.

Justine is quivering.

Vincent has his arm around her.

JUSTINE
 Why does he hate me so much?

VINCENT
 Connor hates himself. That's his
 problem. Not yours.

JUSTINE
 He's not making it back this time.

VINCENT
 He will.

JUSTINE
 How do you know that?

Vincent doesn't answer.

Silence, for a moment.

VINCENT
 I guess Sophia won't be joining us
 for another night out.

Justine laughs.

JUSTINE
She liked you.

VINCENT
Not enough to kiss a guy with a
busted lip.

Vincent's lip has swelled further. It is unsightly.

JUSTINE
Are you OK?

Vincent manages a smile.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
A smile?

VINCENT
I was just thinking... nobody's
asked me that in awhile.

Vincent holds Justine's hand.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
You are a special person. Never
think different. Connor should
recognize what he has.

JUSTINE
Thanks.

VINCENT
I'll track him down. I promise.

EXT. FRONT PORCH, JUSTINE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Vincent and Justine stand together on the porch preceding her residence. The house is a quaint, two story residence enveloped in Christmas decoration.

VINCENT
So many lights...

JUSTINE
My mother. She's crazy for
Christmas.

VINCENT
Your family get together for the
holidays?

JUSTINE
Yeah. So boring...

VINCENT
You should appreciate it.

JUSTINE
I know. I wasn't trying to be insensitive.

VINCENT
Sorry.

JUSTINE
For what?

VINCENT
Sounding like an after school special, or something.

JUSTINE
No. It's sweet.

Justine presses her hand on Vincent's lip.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
We should ice that down.

VINCENT
I need to go.

JUSTINE
Does it hurt?

VINCENT
It's numb.

Justine lowers her hand. She kisses Vincent. He reciprocates, briefly, before stopping himself.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Good night.

He walks back toward the cab, waiting by the curb.

Justine watches him climb in, and the cab peel away.

JUSTINE
Good night, Vincent.

INT. TAXI CAB -- NIGHT

Vincent is alone, now. The cab driver, THOMAS WALTERS, adjusts his rearview mirror, spying his passenger.

Thomas is thirty one, black. He's a skinny man, rail thin, clothes hanging off his body, loose and baggy. He's chewing on a toothpick.

THOMAS

Let me guess. I should see the other guy.

VINCENT

Smart man.

THOMAS

At least you got a woman. Helps after a beating.

VINCENT

I've had worse.

THOMAS

You tough?

VINCENT

I'm not sure what that even means anymore.

THOMAS

Me either...

VINCENT

The girl was upset. It gets to me.

THOMAS

She loves you.

VINCENT

What?

THOMAS

Saw it in her eyes. There somebody else? Caught pieces of that conversation...

VINCENT

Eavesdropping?

THOMAS

Listening.

Thomas guffaws.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

All I can say... thank God for the women. Thank God.

Vincent's cell phone rings, playing a digitized take on "The Godfather" theme.

He answers it.

VINCENT

Hello? Yeah. Right. Near the bridge? I'm not the one you should be apologizing to... Shut the fuck up.

Vincent closes the phone.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Change of plans.

THOMAS

What up blood?

VINCENT

New address. Off the beaten path.

EXT. HILLTOP -- NIGHT

Connor waits at the summit of a frozen hill top, ice chips painting the terrain. A bridge towers in the distance, luminous. Connor gazes upon it, watching the headlights pour through.

A torn cloth is wrapped around his head wound.

Vincent joins him, overcoming a steep incline.

Connor is unaware, focused on the bridge.

VINCENT

Hell of a fucking meeting place.

Connor is startled, momentarily.

CONNOR

Glad you made it.

They exchange a hand pound.

VINCENT

Quite a show earlier.

CONNOR

I come here to think. Beautiful view.

VINCENT

Fit for kings.

CONNOR

When will you give up on me?

VINCENT

All you have to do is die.

CONNOR

Loyalty... your finest characteristic.

VINCENT

That a gift? Reading character?

CONNOR

A skill.

VINCENT

What's my weakness?

CONNOR

Strength.

Vincent shakes his head.

VINCENT

What now, Connor?

CONNOR

Forget tonight.

VINCENT

Won't be easy for some people.

CONNOR

Do you think I'm a good person, Vince? I feel this emptiness.

VINCENT

You care about things in the world. More than me. Like the war.

CONNOR

Look at all those cars. On the bridge. Thousands of lives passing each other in the night.

VINCENT
What's your point?

Connor shrugs.

CONNOR
What does it matter? Morality? Who
the fuck do we have to answer to?
Besides some abstract idea... My
father's a religious man.

VINCENT
I know it.

CONNOR
One fine day, he was awoken to
Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
He believes unconditionally.

VINCENT
Faith.

CONNOR
Acceptance. I could never...

VINCENT
Is that your excuse? God?

CONNOR
My father says God has a plan for
all of us. So long we don't stray
from a righteous path.

VINCENT
Nice thought.

CONNOR
Starving children in these third
world countries, fuck, in America,
they never had a choice. I ask you,
where did they stray? They die
whether or not we're law abiding
citizens. So what's stopping us? We
should grab what we can before the
whole fucking building burns.

VINCENT
Steal some ashes of our own?

Connor laughs.

CONNOR
I pulled Justine into my fucking
pit.

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

So I wouldn't be alone down there.
She quit, yeah. Better now. No
thanks to me.

VINCENT

Maybe you should tell her how you
feel.

CONNOR

She wouldn't understand.

VINCENT

Do you understand?

CONNOR

I wouldn't get high if I did.

Connor extends his hand.

Vincent shakes it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You're real, Vincent. And we're
friends. Aren't we?

VINCENT

Until the end of time.

Connor hugs Vincent.

They separate.

CONNOR

I say fuck salvation. It takes a
toll.

VINCENT

I'll set a sit down with Carmine.
We'll discuss the future.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Justine is wiping down a table with a rag, inside a meager, empty coffee shop. Finished with her task, she walks toward a glass encased cabinet housing a variety of pastries. An older woman, EDITH BARTON, sits behind it. Edith is 55. She is rotund, her hair white and teeth yellow.

Justine spins in a circle and theatrically places down the rag. She begins to sing.

JUSTINE

Want to know a secret? Promise not to tell? We are standing by a wishing well, make a wish into the well, that's all you have to do, and if you hear it echoing, your wish will soon come true!

Edith is not amused.

EDITH

Hey Snow White... you have a customer.

JUSTINE

Is it Prince Charming?

EDITH

If you're into guidos, sure.

JUSTINE

Didn't we talk about making baseless generalizations?

EDITH

I should take advice from you? Can't even remember being this young...

Edith makes a dismissive motion with her hand.

Justine cranes her neck.

Vincent is taking a seat, by himself, at a table near the entrance. He's wearing a leather jacket, his lip slightly healed, but still discolored.

Justine's eyes widen.

She approaches him.

JUSTINE

A pleasant surprise...

VINCENT

Shouldn't flatter yourself. I heard this place makes amazing cappuccino.

Vincent winks at Justine. She blushes.

JUSTINE

What are you having?

VINCENT
Come with me.

JUSTINE
What do you mean?

VINCENT
Take five. Early lunch.

JUSTINE
This isn't a good time...

VINCENT
Really?

Vincent scans the shop.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
I'm customer number one with a
bullet. Seems ideal.

JUSTINE
Where?

VINCENT
I never think that far ahead.

Justine giggles. She turns toward Edith, holding up five fingers. Edith nods.

EXT. POND -- DAY

The weather is overcast, sun camouflaged by a veil of grey clouds. Vincent and Justine sit together on a bench overlooking a frozen pond.

There is space between them.

VINCENT
My apologies. For the car. I'll
have a new one soon enough.

JUSTINE
Please Vincent, I couldn't care
less.

VINCENT
Seriously?

JUSTINE
What I say, I mean.

VINCENT
I respect that about you. No
ambiguity. Real talk.

JUSTINE
Means nothing without ears to hear.

VINCENT
Does Connor listen?

JUSTINE
To himself.

Vincent breathes out.

VINCENT
What should we make of this?

JUSTINE
Regarding?

VINCENT
Us.

JUSTINE
We had a moment.

VINCENT
Is that all?

JUSTINE
Depends.

VINCENT
On what?

JUSTINE
You.

VINCENT
Connor is my friend. Hard to
find... especially in this
neighborhood. I lived here my whole
life. I know.

JUSTINE
Same for me.

VINCENT
Want to escape?

JUSTINE

Yeah. But nobody wants to run away alone. And starting over doesn't guarantee a new experience.

VINCENT

How do you figure?

JUSTINE

Everything is state of mind. What's escaping mean to you?

VINCENT

Freedom.

JUSTINE

From what?

VINCENT

Everything... I don't know... I sound like an idiot.

Vincent cracks his knuckles.

JUSTINE

You do not. Escaping to me... it's being on stage. Losing myself in a performance. Becoming art. I had my first show in front of an audience at ten. The feeling when the curtains opened... indescribable. You grow up. People disappoint you. The colors of life become muted. I lost the purity. Couldn't find it on stage anymore. The pills worked. Duplicated that high for awhile. It doesn't last. I still chase it.

VINCENT

You don't have to talk about this.

JUSTINE

I want to.

VINCENT

Pills...

JUSTINE

Yeah?

VINCENT

Nothing.

JUSTINE
I feel weak, lately. Connor... he
drains me.

VINCENT
I'm here for you.

JUSTINE
Thanks. Real uplifting
conversation, I know...

VINCENT
It's real.

Justine smiles.

JUSTINE
Never told me why you dropped
school.

Vincent looks away.

VINCENT
There wasn't much of a reason, to
be honest. The decision feels
final, though.

JUSTINE
What about employment?

VINCENT
I refuse taking orders.

JUSTINE
From anyone?

VINCENT
From people I could never respect.

Vincent stares upward.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Feel that?

JUSTINE
The cold?

VINCENT
The quiet. Never found it a sound.
More of a sensation. Calm.

Vincent breathes in.

Justine points toward the pond.

JUSTINE

Shame about the ice. No ducks. I could have bought bread.

VINCENT

You've had problems, Justine. Everyone does. But you're still... you. Nothing could ever take that away.

Vincent wraps his arm around Justine, holds her close. He kisses her forehead.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Your heart feels good.

JUSTINE

Tell me about your family.

VINCENT

Short story. No brothers or sisters. Just me and my father.

JUSTINE

Your mother?

VINCENT

She died.

JUSTINE

I'm so sorry.

VINCENT

Passed when I was twelve. I've received enough condolences to last a lifetime. Though I appreciate yours.

JUSTINE

How did it happen?

VINCENT

My mother was stressed. She had made decisions... that complicated her life. One night, after a fight with my father, she drove away. I remember begging her not to leave. They found her car on a curved back road in Utica. Wrapped around a tree. At the time, nobody could figure out what she was doing there. Utica? Made no sense. Never did. They said one day, I might understand. Now, I think I do.

(MORE)

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Maybe she just wanted to disappear.
Be nothing to nobody. Erase the
past. I realized this sentiment is
shared. By more than a few
people...

Vincent scratches his chin.

JUSTINE

Was she going to come back?

VINCENT

I like to think so... nobody wants
to run away alone, right?

Vincent's left hand begins to tremble.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Not this... damn it...

Justine caresses his hand.

JUSTINE

It's alright. Would you come
somewhere with me tonight?

VINCENT

Where?

JUSTINE

I can't take Connor... he gets that
look. Ashamed. Thinks he's above
it. And I hate going by myself.

VINCENT

Where do you need me?

INT. GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

A group of twelve is seated in a circle, tightly bunched
together, positioned dead center on a hardwood basketball
court.

Vincent and Justine sit together, among the gathering. A man
named BILLY stands up, next to Vincent. All eyes focus in his
direction.

Billy is 24 years of age. He is tall, has shaggy blonde hair.
He is wearing torn jeans and a flannel shirt.

Billy tussles his hair compulsively as he speaks.

BILLY

My name's Billy. I don't know why I started using heroin. My family treated me fine. My father and I were close. My siblings were supportive. I just... everything came so easy. I thought I could handle it. One day, I wake up homeless. My family moved. I don't even know where they live. And... I was always troubled by the meaning of life.

Billy clears his throat. He squints around the room, before sitting down.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Thanks for listening.

The group claps.

Opposite Vincent and Justine, on the other side of the circle, sits NORA WAGNER. Nora is black, fifty years of age. Her hair is cut short. She wears glasses, and a long red dress emblazoned with yellow flowers.

NORA

We appreciate it, Billy. Would someone else like to share?

The group is diverse, a combination of different nationalities and genders. Nobody speaks up.

Nora makes eye contact with Vincent.

NORA (CONT'D)

How about you?

Vincent slumps in his seat.

JUSTINE

He came here with me. Just for support.

NORA

Oh, I see.

Vincent sits up.

VINCENT

No. I can talk.

Justine's eyes betray surprise.

Vincent stands up.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

My name is Vincent. I find sleeping an impossible task, personally. Started on these pills. Couple months ago. They helped. For awhile. Not anymore. This seems to be a pattern... among most us. I still try. Amplify the dosage. Searching for that... Comfort. Some days I'm just... not there. Life feels unreal. A dream... A nightmare... I feel like I can't live without these pills.

Vincent sits down.

The group claps.

Billy taps his shoulder.

BILLY

It's OK, man.

Vincent presents his hand to Justine. She takes hold.

NORA

Thanks for sharing, Vincent.

INT. VINCENT'S HOUSE, BATHROOM -- NIGHT

The bathroom is extremely narrow, and especially grimy. Vincent rifles through the medicine cabinet, located behind a mirror hanging over an unwashed sink. Vincent discovers what he is searching for, pocketing a small pill box.

The door to the bathroom swings open. Richard walks in, wearing his robe, holding a can of beer. He closes the door, leans against it, nearly falling over.

VINCENT

You knock, dad?

RICHARD

What are you doing in here?

VINCENT

Why do you care?

RICHARD

Going for the pills?

VINCENT

No.

RICHARD

Swear on a bible?

VINCENT

Get off my back.

RICHARD

Just like his mother...

Richard crushes his beer can.

VINCENT

Watch what you say. About her. Show some respect.

RICHARD

She wasn't a saint, Vince.

VINCENT

Neither are you.

Richard nods.

RICHARD

Fair enough.

VINCENT

Look, I can't sleep lately. Tossing and turning. Thinking about the past, can't get it out of my head. The pills knock me out. At least they used to..

RICHARD

If you have a problem, we can talk about it.

VINCENT

I'm in control.

RICHARD

So am I.

Richard chuckles, then sighs.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I never wanted to lose her, Vincent.

VINCENT

Dad...

RICHARD

She was my life. A true soulmate. You have a fight, one night. And you just want to forget. It spills over. Once a month. Once a week. Before long, it's a daily occurrence. A virus undiagnosed. I should have stepped up. Fixed it. I wanted a happy life for you. Normal, the way I never had it. Do you blame me?

VINCENT

The blame is shared. Between both you.

RICHARD

And Carmine?

Vincent doesn't answer.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Was it always bad?

VINCENT

No. There were good times. They never lasted.

RICHARD

Lately, I see you... and I see her.

VINCENT

Sorry.

RICHARD

You have nothing to apologize for.

VINCENT

I do.

RICHARD

We need to make this better. I don't want to lose you, too.

VINCENT

Maybe I should split for awhile. We take a breather, revisit the situation after some time passes.

RICHARD

If you want to leave... I won't stop you.

VINCENT
It'll only be temporary.

RICHARD
Come here, son.

Vincent approaches Richard. Richard hugs him, holds him tightly.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Remember. You are above it.

VINCENT
Above what, pop?

RICHARD
I wish I could explain. Explain everything.

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- DAY

Three chairs and a wooden table, covered with a spotless white cloth, have been arranged next to the bar. Vincent and Connor occupy one side, while Carmine sits on the other, displaying a concerned expression.

CARMINE
I don't respond well to this cloak and dagger bull shit. Now, stop fucking around and state your intentions. Plainly. Why take valuable time out of my day for this rendezvous? Vincent? Care to speak?

VINCENT
We're looking for work.

CONNOR
We can be trusted.

CARMINE
Did I say you could talk?

Connor jerks his head, neck cracking.

VINCENT
Carmine... I have no direction.

CONNOR
Same here. The girlfriend... she won't return my calls. You believe that?

A guttural sound rises out of Carmine.

Vincent stares at Connor.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Not another word from me. You have
my assurances.

CARMINE
Get out of my sight.

Connor eyes Vincent.

CARMINE (CONT'D)
Don't you fucking look at him.
Leave. Close the door.

Connor does as he is told.

VINCENT
Could have been a touch more
diplomatic.

CARMINE
That coke head will be the end of
you. Smarten up.

Carmine stands. He walks over to the leather couch facing the
flat screen, takes a seat.

CARMINE (CONT'D)
Get over here.

Vincent follows. He sits down next to Carmine.

CARMINE (CONT'D)
Listen carefully.

Vincent leans forward. Carmine takes hold of his shoulder.

VINCENT
You have my full attention.

CARMINE
Good. This is not for you.

VINCENT
Wait--

CARMINE
Quiet. You will not be involved in
this business. Ever.

VINCENT

What other options do I have?

CARMINE

This isn't your nature.

VINCENT

Maybe.

CARMINE

Hey. Do I need to slap you in the
fucking mouth?

Vincent straightens up.

VINCENT

I would appreciate it if you
didn't.

CARMINE

Go back to school.

VINCENT

That ship has sailed.

CARMINE

I could set you up at a restaurant.

VINCENT

I want this.

CARMINE

For what? The respect?

VINCENT

Money.

CARMINE

All you have to do is ask...

VINCENT

I want to earn it. Feel useless
otherwise.

CARMINE

Your mother was the only girl I
ever loved... Her husband was no
bargain. Her son--

VINCENT

Don't do this...

CARMINE

Her son needed someone to watch over him. She confessed to your father. About the affair. Guilty conscience. He went berserk. Helen got in the car and never came back... Richard was drunk that night, tried shooting me outside this very establishment. He dropped the gun in a sewer... His hand was shaking. I let it go.

Carmine wipes his brow.

VINCENT

What are you saying? I can't handle this? That I'm soft?

CARMINE

I'm saying your mother loved you. And I need to take care of you.

VINCENT

She loved me? Is that why she left?

CARMINE

Think she meant to die?

VINCENT

I need to feel like a fucking man, understand?

CARMINE

In one week you will have a different vision for your future, Vincent. You fail to grasp that being a gangster wasn't a choice for me. You have one. An opportunity to live a real life.

VINCENT

Barbecues and ball games?

CARMINE

A son of your own. Who can be proud of his father.

Vincent stands.

VINCENT

How the fuck can you sit there and lecture me on family values? Give me a fucking break, Carmine. You have any kids?

CARMINE

I do not.

VINCENT

How about this? Do you have any respect for what family even is?

CARMINE

Family is everything.

VINCENT

Really? Did that thought cross your mind once when you stole my mother from my father? Do you know what that did to him?

Carmine itches his chin.

CARMINE

I can't take back the past.

VINCENT

You can't. So maybe you should save these empty fucking gestures. Asking me how my dad is. Setting him up with that shit job. You think that makes the pain go away?

CARMINE

He was an alcoholic, Vincent.

VINCENT

I know! He still is... A total fuck up, my dear old dad. But he did love her. He loves me, Carmine. Life gets in the way.

CARMINE

He has a strange way of expressing affection.

VINCENT

That isn't the point.

CARMINE

What is?

VINCENT

That you are way out of line giving me a dissertation on fucking ethics. I'll be whoever the fuck I want to be. Understand?

Carmine glowers at Vincent.

CARMINE
Duly noted.

VINCENT
Excellent.

Vincent gets up, angry, slamming the door hard upon leaving.

CARMINE
God help him...

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Jackie and Carmine share a meal in the Sand Castle's deserted dining area. The two occupy a corner table, a faux Mona Lisa hung up above. A circular, chrome plated clock fastened beside the painting places the time at 3:15 AM.

Jackie is tearing into a steak, Carmine helping himself to some late night lasagna.

A near depleted bottle of wine sits between them.

A voice rings out from the bar.

VOICE (O.S.)
Closing up, Carmine!

CARMINE
Night, Earl!

A door shuts.

JACKIE
This steak is excellent. You made the right call, firing that chef.

CARMINE
He had an attitude problem.

JACKIE
Used too much seasoning. This afternoon... the meeting with Vincent...

CARMINE
What about it?

JACKIE
I was curious regarding the details.

CARMINE
He wanted work. With us.

Jackie wipes his mouth with a napkin.

JACKIE
Been waiting for this day. Sharp
kid. Could be a real asset.

CARMINE
No.

JACKIE
You tagging him out?

CARMINE
He was never in, Jack.

JACKIE
Allow me to debate.

CARMINE
Save your time.

JACKIE
The ranks are thinning.

CARMINE
Vincent won't ever resort to this
lifestyle. I'll see to it.

JACKIE
All due respect cap... what's the
problem with this lifestyle?

CARMINE
He won't have to find out.

JACKIE
Strange. I never had any second
thoughts. What about his buddy?

Carmine recoils.

CARMINE
Connor? He is fucked up, royally.

JACKIE
So are most people.

CARMINE
A fucking junkie...

JACKIE

Even better. He's motivated. And expendable. I'm looking for a prospect here, Carmine. Nothing major. Real remedial tasks. Collections. Risk free robberies. Like sending a message to our Korean friend in Bayside.

CARMINE

Connor isn't your guy.

JACKIE

Vincent would be.

Carmine pounds his fist into the table. Jackie jumps in his chair.

CARMINE

I don't want to hear another word about it.

A single slab of steak remains on Jackie's dish. He points it out to Carmine.

JACKIE

Want a bite?

CARMINE

You finish.

Jackie pours himself a glass of wine. He sips it, and sighs.

INT. BASEMENT -- DAY

Vincent rolls over and awakes with a start, crawling out of a sleeping bag planted on a cement floor. Early morning light sneaks through a tiny, rectangular window above a tool station.

Vincent peers around, as if unaware of his surroundings. He relaxes upon seeing Connor, laying down, on a staircase straight ahead.

CONNOR

What did you dream?

VINCENT

Drowning this time. Couldn't find the surface.

CONNOR

Sounds familiar.

Connor leaps down the staircase, landing on his feet. He hops around for a moment, nursing his left ankle.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Fuck! I really can't do that anymore...

Connor leans on the tool table.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I come carrying good news.

VINCENT
Do your parents have any issues?
With me staying down here?

CONNOR
None at all.

VINCENT
Care to share the positivity?

CONNOR
Yeah... I was contacted. Guy goes by Jackie Baldelli. Seems legit.

VINCENT
Carmine's second in command.

CONNOR
It's a collection. A laundromat owner delinquent on payments. Into all sorts of sordid shit... drugs and prostitution. Pockets got fat. But providing a kick somehow slipped his mind. I need to straighten him out.

VINCENT
Using what method, exactly?

Connor pulls a black handgun out of his waistband.

CONNOR
Scare tactics.

VINCENT
Let me see.

Connor hands him the gun. Vincent snaps the safety off.

CONNOR
Be careful... With that fucking Parkinson's twitch of yours.

VINCENT
You one of us now, Irish?

CONNOR
I find that blanket statement
offensive. Fuck, I might call the
anti-defamation league.

Vincent snaps the safety back into place.

VINCENT
I can't let you testify.

Both of them laugh.

CONNOR
Ride with me tonight. On this.

Vincent gives the gun back to Connor.

VINCENT
Carmin would not approve. In fact,
he could cut me off. Cite
disobedience. He's old school.

CONNOR
Never pointed a gun at someone.

VINCENT
Neither have I.

CONNOR
But it's different, now. No choice.
I'm backed into a corner.

VINCENT
Why?

CONNOR
I have to make serious cash.

VINCENT
Listen to this fucking hypocrite.
Thought money and materialism
didn't appeal to your finer tastes?

CONNOR
You don't understand. The cash
isn't a luxury. And the record
store checks can't cover the cost.
Not even close.

Vincent's face turns sullen, twisting into a scowl.

VINCENT

You mother fucker... this soon?

CONNOR

It got ugly, quick. I swear, I haven't done a line since Dominion. But by then, it was already too late. Necessitated this course of action.

VINCENT

Why didn't you ask me for help? I could have lied to Carmine, said I caught a cold streak gambling. It would have stung. But I'd gladly take that hit for you. Without hesitation.

CONNOR

Christ Vinny... Maybe I didn't want to seem pathetic, a fucking beggar with my hand out. The plan was for us to go in together, remember? You were never supposed to know about this fucked up situation. But Carmine shot that to hell. This is my last play.

VINCENT

Your parents?

CONNOR

I'd rather be six feet under than break my father's heart again. Ignorance is bliss.

VINCENT

Give me a number.

CONNOR

I empty my account at the bank, combine it with the cut Jackie promised... and I'll be fine.

VINCENT

Cut? We talking robbery now? What happened to scare tactics?

CONNOR

Sorry for fucking lying. I was trying to soften it. So you'd come along easier... There's a safe under the register. I do this job, and I'm fine, Vince.

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Could just walk away. It's a blessing, really. Thought we'd be on an allowance with Carmine. Would have only been able to take small bites out of this debt. But this deal with Jackie is one and done. Problem solved. Where do I get all this luck?

Connor laughs, eyes twitching.

VINCENT

You tell me. We talking about your fucking life, here, Connor?

Connor nods his head.

CONNOR

I think so.

VINCENT

Coney Island?

CONNOR

How did you know?

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Vincent walks across a wide lawn, carrying a bouquet of flowers, approaching a white headstone. He kneels down, kisses his right hand, and touches the grave, eyes closed. He sets down the flowers, reflecting.

Vincent notices another mourner, across the way, a frail old woman, doffing her eyes with a handkerchief. The two make eye contact. They wave.

INT. CONNOR'S PICK-UP TRUCK -- NIGHT

Justine sits passenger side as Connor reclines in the driver seat, taking in the view beyond the windshield, stars shining bright in the night sky. The truck's interior is filthy, cans of beer on the dash, old newspapers and magazines strewn about.

They have parked in a wooded area.

CONNOR

The stars truly are beautiful. Rare night... being this visible. All the fucking pollution...

JUSTINE
Are you still using?

CONNOR
Can't we just talk? The way we used
to? I miss that so much.

JUSTINE
Because it's all a lie, unless you
can answer that simple question.

CONNOR
I had a momentary lapse in
judgment. Is it going to haunt me
forever?

JUSTINE
Wish I could believe you. I really
do.

Silence.

CONNOR
Hard to believe we've reached this
point. Everything goes to shit.

JUSTINE
I'll never understand why you
insist on destroying yourself.

CONNOR
How about Miss Clean over here?
Must feel good having someone to
judge. I remember when you were
comfortably numb, sweetheart. This
fire and brimstone is getting old
out of you.

JUSTINE
You hear what you want to hear.

Connor's eyes droop downward.

CONNOR
Been tougher to reach than the
president. And you finally see me
again, for this?

JUSTINE
It's all I have left for you.

Connor runs his hand over his face.

CONNOR

Think our fate's written within the
celestial bodies? Predestined?
There has to be some other
explanation. Because in my heart, I
never wanted to hurt you.

Justine does not respond.

Connor reaches out for her shoulder, before pulling back. He starts the ignition.

INT. CONNOR'S PICK-UP TRUCK -- NIGHT

Connor is speeding along on a highway, foot pressed against the gas. Vincent has joined him, seat belt tightly fastened.

Both are dressed in black.

CONNOR

I bought an extra heater. You
should take advantage. Just in
case.

VINCENT

How considerate.

CONNOR

Check the glove box.

Vincent opens the dashboard compartment in front of his seat.

He pulls out a handgun, inspecting it's design.

Vincent's cell phone rings. He checks the caller ID, decides not to answer.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Leave that in the car.

VINCENT

No shit.

CONNOR

Who rang?

Vincent hesitates.

VINCENT

...My father. Fuck him.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT -- NIGHT

The laundromat is tucked into a chain of stores on a vacant boulevard. Steam rises from an open sewer vent near the entrance. A green neon sign reading "Closed" flashes through the front window. The interior lights are turned off.

A digital clock, visible within the appliance store next door, reads: 2:27 AM.

Vincent and Connor, now wearing ski masks and gloves, creep down the block, bypassing the laundromat completely, instead walking into an alleyway next to the appliance store. Vincent is carrying a woolen bag.

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- NIGHT

The two enter the alleyway. Connor points to a fire escape up ahead, about seven feet off the ground.

The ladder has been withdrawn.

CONNOR

There. Give me a boost.

Vincent drops the bag and lifts Connor, who is able to lower the ladder.

A fire truck, accompanied by a convoy of police cars, roars by the street past the alley, sirens blaring. Connor and Vincent freeze as the authorities pass.

Vincent retrieves the bag and climbs up the ladder.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Don't drop that fucking bag.

VINCENT

Don't fall on your fucking face.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE -- NIGHT

The ledge is rickety, without guard rails and corroding, connected to the appliance store by two three foot beams.

VINCENT

Now what?

CONNOR

We shimmy across on those beams.

VINCENT

Shimmy? What the fuck? Do I look like Indiana fucking Jones to you?

CONNOR

Thank God you came. I wouldn't have been able to get the ladder down.

VINCENT

Who drew up the blueprint for this fucking job?

CONNOR

It was all Jackie. He said they used to hit this place when it was a supermarket.

VINCENT

I'm jumping.

CONNOR

Fuck that. You fall, we're done. I die.

VINCENT

I can make it.

CONNOR

If you jump, so do I.

VINCENT

Make your own fucking decision.

CONNOR

I'm jumping.

VINCENT

So we're both jumping.

CONNOR

On three. Alright... one... two...

VINCENT

Three.

Vincent tosses the bag onto the roof, and, after crossing himself, leaps from the fire escape onto the appliance store, landing with a thud. Connor has not moved.

Vincent motions for him to follow. Connor lingers. Finally, he takes a deep breath, and jumps, barely making it across.

EXT. APPLIANCE STORE ROOF -- NIGHT

The roof's surface is gravel. Vincent grabs the bag and hustles over to Connor, who is writhing in pain, grabbing his left ankle.

CONNOR

Fuck!

Connor's expletive echoes. Vincent puts him in a choke hold.

VINCENT

Quiet... cops come now, and they have a ton of probable cause.

CONNOR

(whispering)

I'm fine... I'm fine...

Vincent backs off Connor. Connor limps up, walking in circles, attempting to alleviate the pain. Satisfied, he turns toward Vincent.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Let's go.

VINCENT

Sure you don't want me to call an ambulance sweetheart?

CONNOR

Fuck you.

The two jog across the rooftop, leaping over a concrete divider.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT ROOF -- NIGHT

Connor rushes over to the middle of the roof, crouching down and swatting aside gravel.

CONNOR

This is the spot. We burn a hole and drop right in. Guy on the inside says the boss stays late and either counts his money or fucks a whore. He's posted all fucking hours of the night. If we see him, we knock him out. If we don't, who gives a fuck? Either way, it's all about the safe under the register. Hand me the torch.

VINCENT
What if he puts up a fight?

CONNOR
We deal with it.

Vincent removes a blowtorch from the bag, and flips it to Connor.

Connor ignites it.

VINCENT
We should of just broke through the front fucking door. Saved ourselves the time and effort.

CONNOR
Does that sound professional to you?

Vincent shrugs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I'm honestly asking.

INT. LAUNDROMAT -- NIGHT

Vincent and Connor stealthily drop through the hole, burnt at the front of the laundromat. It's a small establishment, washers and dryers lined up in rows on opposite sides, cheap, torn carpeting covering the floor. There is a desk propped up against the back wall, a cash register on it's edge.

Visibility is low.

VINCENT
I thought we were supposed to land next to the register?

CONNOR
Does it matter?

Connor removes his ski mask.

VINCENT
I know you aren't this fucking stupid.

CONNOR
Relax. No security cameras on the premises. And not a soul in sight. Fucking mask was chafing me.

Connor stares at Vincent. He starts cracking up.

VINCENT

What the fuck are you laughing at?

CONNOR

You just look like one goofy--

An explosion accompanies the rise of a figure from behind the desk. This is DANNY PARK, wielding a twelve gauge shotgun. He is slightly built, no taller than 5'5, 38 years of age.

He is nearly blown off his feet after firing the round at Connor, who dives behind a dryer. The bullet is errant, absolutely obliterating the glass front door.

The store alarm cackles.

Vincent slides behind a washing machine, opposite Connor.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Holy shit!

VINCENT

Fucking guy's got a shottie!

DANNY

You try robbing me? Too sloppy! I'm not a citizen! I'll kill you pieces of shit!

Connor and Vincent lock eyes from across the aisle. A second shot rings out, deafening.

Neither are making a move.

Another thunderous clap. A segment of the washing machine serving as Vincent's cover is ripped off.

Connor bangs his head against the dryer.

CONNOR

Fuck it.

Connor springs from his concealment and charges toward Danny, unloading a barrage of wild, misfired shots.

Danny is caught off guard, pumping the shotgun and missing an opportunity of his own.

Vincent doesn't move. He is sweating.

Connor leaps over the desk and tackles Danny, just as he shoots again. The slug rockets through the ceiling, another hole.

Connor kicks the shotgun away from Danny. He kneels, ramming his weapon into Park's head. Danny falls flat on his stomach.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I want the safe with the dirty money!

DANNY

What are you talking about? I'm a businessman!

CONNOR

I'll smoke your businessman ass this second!

DANNY

I have a family!

CONNOR

Get the fucking safe!

Danny crawls forward and opens a cabinet under the register.

A small metal safe is inside.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Vincent! Get the fuck over here, man!

Vincent snaps into action, running in front of the desk.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Give my associate the safe.

Danny plunks the safe onto the desk. Vincent crams his gun into his waistband and grabs the prize, nearly losing grip.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Tell your fucking hand to hold still!

VINCENT

(shaken)

Watch your mouth.

DANNY

Who sent you?

CONNOR

I'm here to uphold the good name of Carmine Armento. You've been very careless.

Danny tries clawing at Connor's eyes.

DANNY

Where the fuck are the cops?

Connor drills Danny in the back of his head with the gun handle, his face smacking against the floor, rendering him unconscious.

CONNOR

Good question.

Connor looks at Vincent.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You with me? We need to break the fuck out.

Connor walks out from behind the desk, but pauses.

He turns, examining the body of Park.

Connor raises his gun.

VINCENT

No!

Vincent drops the safe and clutches Connor's arm.

CONNOR

Why not? Let me finish it. Who the fuck will miss him?

VINCENT

This situation is fucked enough without a murder one.

CONNOR

Fuck this two bit pimp. This is what he deserves.

VINCENT

Think Connor. Think. It's about the money, remember? I have the safe.

Connor lowers his gun.

CONNOR

You fucking dropped it?

INT. CONNOR'S PICK-UP TRUCK -- NIGHT

The two are silent, driving back across the highway. Connor is suppressing a smile.

VINCENT

We left the blowtorch on the roof.

CONNOR

Wow. Forgot all about it.

VINCENT

That was a fucking mess. We're spending the rest of our lives in jail.

CONNOR

Incorrect.

VINCENT

How the fuck do you figure? It's a miracle we didn't get picked up at the scene.

CONNOR

Contemplate. We didn't just rob the fucking make-a-wish foundation. Think those dollars were going to be accounted for on a tax return? That piece of shit has nowhere to go, and he knows it. Wild west rules, son. Our hands got dirty. It happens. And there aren't any prints on the torch.

VINCENT

I'm going to Mexico. Permanent vacation.

CONNOR

Did you see his face when I charged? Fucking guy couldn't believe it. Some Matrix shit, kid.

Connor laughs. Vincent's face is stone.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You'll see. These worries are for naught... And I've discovered my calling. I mean.... Robbing from scum... That can't be a sin.

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- DAY

Another meeting. This time it's Danny Park having a discussion with Carmine.

Park's two front teeth are knocked out.

Carmine is smoking a cigar.

DANNY

This is how your crew operates? No warnings? Threats?

CARMINE

I apologize for the lack of tact. I play checkers not chess.

DANNY

How do you think this makes me look in the community? I had to lie to the police. Blame it on the blacks--

CARMINE

They are good for that.

DANNY

I could hit back.

CARMINE

You could commit suicide, sure. Still a free country, last I checked.

DANNY

My friends are stronger than you realize. You underestimate your enemies.

CARMINE

You overestimate your capabilities.

DANNY

Let's cut to the fucking chase.

CARMINE

Of course. The number from Manhattan is twenty percent. If you had shown proper respect, it may have been fifteen.

Danny eyes the bar.

DANNY

How about a free drink to go along with this ridiculous offer?

CARMINE

Sure. One on the house for a new friend of ours. But make no mistake, Mr. Park. This is not an offer. It's an ultimatum.

DANNY

Make it hard liquor.

Carmine strolls over to the bar.

He pours Danny a drink.

CARMINE

Oh, and just out of curiosity, did you happen to identify either of these alleged crooks?

DANNY

One of them. Up close and personal.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK -- DAY

Connor, his face shrouded under a black hood, traverses the boardwalk, alley games and stores shuttered shut for winter.

INT. INDULGENCE RECORDS -- DAY

Connor is sleeping on the job, though he manages to stand upright while dozing. There is a deluge of customers milling around the store. Some whisper to each other, laughing, pointing toward Connor, who is oblivious to it all.

From this crowd of bemused onlookers emerges GINO RUGGIANO.

Gino is a wide man, aged 48. He sports a thick black mustache, and wispy, greasy hair of the same color. His style of attire, tight jeans and a tee shirt, accentuate his girth.

Gino claps, stirring Connor from of his malaise.

GINO

Wake the fuck up! Customers equal cash, need a cashier to count it. Do your job before I find someone else.

CONNOR

Hey boss...

Connor yawns.

GINO

Are you giving me an attitude?

CONNOR

Why don't you answer one of your own fucking questions for once? Consider these simple suggestions: Am I fat? Am I ugly? Do I have disgusting hair? Does my mustache make me look like Super fucking Mario? Have I been laid since the Milwaukee Brewers last appeared in a World Series? Brood on those and hit me back later.

Gino is aghast.

GINO

This is the thanks I get?

CONNOR

For what? Paying your taxes? Taking up valuable air that could have gone to a far worthier individual? Tell me! What the fuck do you deserve credit for?

GINO

How about firing you?

CONNOR

Your greatest accomplishment! At last!

The customers' reactions range from shocked, appalled, and hysterical.

GINO

Vacate this shop immediately, I will call the police.

CONNOR

For what? Telling the truth? That about sums it up...

GINO

I'm warning you...

CONNOR

You think I need this fucking job?
I'm a real fucking man. Not another
spineless turd like you, oozing
down the sinkhole of what used to
be America!

GINO

You've lost your mind!

CONNOR

Wrong! Wrong! I have found my
fucking mind!

Connor grabs his newspaper and heads toward the exit. Opening the door, he stares at the customers.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Just download the albums!
Incompetent fucks!

He exits, the bell above the door ringing.

INT. UNDERPASS -- NIGHT

CHARLIE BORROWS sits against a slimy, graffiti covered wall within this cylindrical underpass.

Charlie is struggling to stay awake, an empty bottle of beer in his hand. He has a white, stringy beard, his eyebrows bushy. He is wearing a green military jacket and beret. Both are dirty. Other street urchins occupy the tunnel, quiet, occasionally coughing.

Charlie eases into sleep, the bottle slipping from his hand. He is quickly revived, startled, as Vincent takes a seat next to him. Vincent has a bottle of wine in hand, swigging from it liberally.

VINCENT

Hello. Mind?

Charlie doesn't respond.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

I think the police are after me.
Trying to find a place to hide.

Charlie sneezes, furiously wiping his nose.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Not just the badges, though.
There's a girl.
(MORE)

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Calling me constantly. She has the
 wrong impression. Actually believes
 there's blood in my veins.

Vincent's phone rings. He checks the caller identification,
 squinting.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Carmine... what do you think?
 Should I dignify him with a
 response?

Charlie grabs Vincent.

CHARLIE
 Be careful. The jungle is alive
 tonight.

VINCENT
 Thanks for the advice.

Vincent stands. He hands Charlie the wine. His phone
 continues to ring.

EXT. GOLF COURSE -- NIGHT

Carmine stands atop a snow caked green.

He leans on a pole planted in a hole, denoted with a flag
 reading: 18.

Vincent appears behind him.

Carmine hears the snow crunching under his feet.

CARMINE
 What took so long?

VINCENT
 I drove carefully.

Carmine faces Vincent. He eyes him down.

CARMINE
 You drunk?

Vincent nods. Carmine sighs.

CARMINE (CONT'D)
 Remember how many days we spent on
 this course?

VINCENT

I was your caddy. Even though I
knew jack shit about golf.

CARMINE

And neither did I.

They both laugh.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Those were good times.

VINCENT

All I ever did was search the
woods. For your par fucking four.

CARMINE

Yeah... before that fucking knee
surgery.

VINCENT

What are you doing here tonight,
anyway?

CARMINE

Reminiscing. Thinking about you.

VINCENT

I see.

CARMINE

Clearly or darkly?

Vincent looks down.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

I met Helen here. Sunny day. She
was wearing a visor. Eyes
squinting. She looked perfect. Do
you believe in destiny, Vincent?

VINCENT

Always thought it was an invention.
Concocted by people who find free
will a burden.

Carmine laughs.

CARMINE

Pretty cynical...

VINCENT

I can't help it.

CARMINE

I knew it was wrong. So did she.
But what can I say? I do believe in
destiny. The chance to know someone
that completely...

Vincent walks over to Carmine, slaps him on the back.

VINCENT

I understand. Maybe more than you
realize.

CARMINE

Bottom line, Vincent, at the end of
the day, all people want is
happiness. You get older, your ego
waned. You worry about ever finding
something... real. All of the
sudden, the end justifies the
means. You find what's missing, and
you--

VINCENT

Take it.

CARMINE

No. It takes you.

VINCENT

Funny how perception shifts. I
can't even remember who I used to
be. Getting good grades in grammar
school...

Vincent laughs.

CARMINE

Common affliction. Some of us
acquire amnesia for our own good.
You want to be like me?

VINCENT

What's wrong with that?

CARMINE

I wake up in the middle of the
night and see Joey Black standing
by my bedside. He fought me for my
gun, so I caved in his skull with a
hammer. My first. He visits me.
Just this formless shadow. But I
know it's him. I know. He watches
me, Vincent. And I can't move.

(MORE)

CARMINE (CONT'D)

This is what I live with. Not even sleep is safe.

VINCENT

That wouldn't be an adjustment for me.

CARMINE

If the cops bagged you last night... your path is sealed. Destiny. She gave you a second chance.

Vincent sighs, shaking his head.

VINCENT

The laundromat. How did you find out?

CARMINE

I know all.

VINCENT

I shouldn't even bother asking... but you didn't authorize the move... did you?

CARMINE

There's been a miscommunication. It will be addressed.

VINCENT

Are you mad?

CARMINE

Worried.

VINCENT

How did you first get involved? In all this?

CARMINE

It was the only thing that made sense. Because I was stupid. You aren't like that. Think about my question?

VINCENT

Not enough.

CARMINE

Evidently.

VINCENT

Connor needed my help. He was in deep. By the time he told me, there was no other way.

CARMINE

There's always another way. Keep your eyes open.

VINCENT

Could I get put away behind this?

CARMINE

No. Dodged this bullet. If you ever loved me Vincent... promise there won't be another one.

Vincent extends his hand to Carmine.

VINCENT

I'm going to turn this around.

Carmine accepts, squeezing Vincent's hand.

CARMINE

I believe you.

INT. CONNOR'S PICK-UP TRUCK -- DAY

Connor is speeding along on a side-street, cell phone pressed against his ear.

CONNOR

Fucking bitch! She's doing it to me again!

Connor hurls the phone against his dash. It shatters.

He reaches under the seat, barely keeping his eyes on the road, pulling out a mirror lined with cocaine. Two rails remain.

Connor takes two quick sniffs. His head snaps backward. He drops the mirror.

Connor pounds on the steering wheel.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Fuck! Fuck! Fucking bitch! I'm being logical! I'm being logical! I'm being ignored, this is bull shit! Oh no, I'm fine, I'm fucking fine!

(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

This is a perfectly acceptable,
estimable, reasonable fucking
response!

He bashes the steering wheel again, twisting in his seat.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Not this time! I will not be
played! I'm the player, players
don't get played because then holy
shit it's game over mother fucker
and that's not me! That is not me!

Connor's nose begins to bleed.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Hey! Hey! Learn how to fucking
drive! God damn people can't
drive... fucking useless people
can't drive!

INT. JUSTINE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

JESSICA REILLY is a gorgeous woman, 40 years of age. She is short, with neatly trimmed blonde hair. She stands on a step-ladder, attempting to hang a Cross on a wall in her living room.

This is a modest home, but it is extremely well kept. A wooden staircase opposite the living room leads upstairs.

Jessica's husband, MARC REILLY, holds the stepladder still. Marc is 44, pudgy, wearing a yellow sweater-vest and scholarly glasses.

MARC

You almost set, honey?

JESSICA

One second... so close.

The front door is kicked in. Jessica nearly stumbles off the ladder. The cross drops out of her hand.

Connor storms into the house, immediately trying to get upstairs.

Marc quickly blocks his path.

MARC

Connor, what the hell is going on?

CONNOR

Nothing at all, Mr. Reilly, nothing at all! Your daughter just doesn't have any manners. Any human fucking decency!

MARC

Calm down.

CONNOR

I am calm! I need to talk with her. Air my grievances.

Justine emerges from her room, remaining upstairs.

JUSTINE

I don't want to see you, Connor. It's over!

CONNOR

And this is how you tell me! By cutting me off? You heartless cunt!

MARC

How dare you talk to my daughter like that? In my house?

CONNOR

What are you going to do about it?

JUSTINE

Connor, stop!

CONNOR

Take a swing, you wash out... You neutered pig.

Jessica steps off the ladder.

JESSICA

We'll call the police!

CONNOR

Stay out of this mother bitch!

Marc wraps his hands around Connor's neck.

JUSTINE

Oh my God!

JESSICA

Marc, no!

Jessica scrambles over to Marc, tries pulling him off Connor. Marc is enraged. Connor begins head butting him, in a bid to break free. Marc's glasses snap in two, but his grip is strong.

MARC
I never liked you.

Connor resorts to a low blow, a knee to Marc's groin. Marc doubles over, and Connor pushes him down, knocking over Jessica in the process.

Connor gasps for air.

CONNOR
Didn't know he had it in him...

Connor turns and scurries up the stair-case.

Jessica pursues him, diving for his legs and missing.

JUSTINE
No! Mom!

Justine shuts her door, but Connor closes too fast, sneaking his arm into the frame. He bulls his way inside.

INT. JUSTINE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- DAY

Justine has a small room. The floorboards are wood. Her walls are bare, save for a poster above her bed displaying a rainbow colored peace symbol. A small television sits atop a clothes cabinet.

Connor locks her door.

JUSTINE
What are you going to do, Connor?

CONNOR
You think I would ever hurt you?

JUSTINE
Yes.

CONNOR
You are mistaken.

JUSTINE
Do you realize what you've done?

CONNOR

I deserve an explanation. After all we've been through, can you give me that?

JUSTINE

Look in the mirror. Should be obvious.

Connor screams, and hurls the television across the room.

Jessica pounds on the door, desperately turning the knob, calling out to Justine.

Connor pins Justine to the clothes cabinet.

CONNOR

You blame me! You blame me for popping vikes!

JUSTINE

I don't!

CONNOR

I do! I fucking do!

JUSTINE

It was my choice Connor, my choice.

CONNOR

You want an apology? I'm sorry! I'm fucking sorry for everything! Now give me a reason! A fucking reason for this! A fucking reason that makes fucking sense!

JUSTINE

We can't go on like this...

Connor's eyes well up with tears.

CONNOR

Stop lying to me! Tell me the truth! Tell me the fucking truth!

JUSTINE

I'm in love with Vincent! And we made love! Is that good enough? Is that fucking good enough?

CONNOR

Can't be true...

JUSTINE

He treats me like a woman. Not with
your fucking condescension!

CONNOR

But Vincent...

Connor tries to leave, swinging open the locked door. Jessica storms in, going after Connor, punching him.

Justine reels in her enraged mother. They both fall to the floor and begin to cry.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Stop... don't cry. Don't cry.

JUSTINE

Leave! You fucking animal!

Connor places his hands on his head, wearing a dumbfounded expression.

CONNOR

How could this happen?

EXT. WHARF -- DAY

Vincent and Justine stand together on a frozen pier, icicles hanging from the hand railings and pilings underneath.

They stare out into the violent sea, waves cascading and colliding.

Vincent holds Justine close.

VINCENT

Sorry for being shady lately. My life... it's just riding off the rails... watching this guy who isn't me, doing things I never wanted to do. I need to find another way.

JUSTINE

Change is good.

VINCENT

How you been lately... with... you know?

JUSTINE

Hanging in there. One day at a time. Yourself?

VINCENT
I was online... and...

Vincent blushes.

JUSTINE
Tell me.

VINCENT
I found this hypnosis site. Looked interesting.

JUSTINE
You should definitely try that!

Vincent smiles.

VINCENT
Maybe.

JUSTINE
You coming with to that AA meeting... it meant the world. Really helped me through that week.

VINCENT
Glad I could be of assistance.

JUSTINE
Never figured you had the disease.

VINCENT
My burdens are mine.

JUSTINE
The strong silent type...

VINCENT
I've always liked the sound of that.

JUSTINE
The way you look at me...

VINCENT
Yeah?

JUSTINE
I feel clean.

VINCENT
You always were, Justine. It's this world that's dirty.

Justine nestles her head into Vincent's shoulder.

JUSTINE

Now I'm wondering. How we should proceed.

VINCENT

Not sure. Ride the current.

JUSTINE

It won't be that easy.

VINCENT

Neither is anything worthwhile. Look... the situation with Connor is complicated. There's a voice in my head telling me to turn back. Stunted me. But it's like a distorted signal on the radio... drifting away. Everything I ever learned... So what did it ever mean? Things are changing. I can sense it. I'm at peace.

JUSTINE

Connor visited my house today. Invited himself in.

VINCENT

What happened?

JUSTINE

He and my father got into a fight.

VINCENT

Are you serious?

JUSTINE

He was coked up. Nostrils all flared... Fried. His eyes were empty. There is no going back, Vincent. The drugs... they mutated him. You need to accept that. I have.

VINCENT

I can't help thinking... If Connor doesn't have me to lean on... what's stopping him from completely destroying himself?

JUSTINE

I'm trying to help.

VINCENT

I know.

JUSTINE

Maybe more than you wanted.

Vincent turns Justine toward him.

VINCENT

What do you mean?

JUSTINE

I told him the truth. That we made love.

VINCENT

Jesus Christ...

JUSTINE

I didn't want you to have a choice.

VINCENT

Between him and you?

JUSTINE

You deserve happiness, Vincent. Connor can't be saved. Shouldn't die trying...

VINCENT

No... this is all wrong.

Vincent steps away from Justine.

JUSTINE

He doesn't deserve your loyalty anymore.

VINCENT

You aren't the first person to tell me that. And nobody fucking gets it... he's my friend. It's my choice. Not yours.

Justine holds him.

JUSTINE

I need to tell you something.

VINCENT

There's more?

JUSTINE

I love you.

They kiss, passionately. Vincent looks into her eyes.

VINCENT

I'm sorry. I have to fix this.

Vincent walks away.

Justine watches the sea, ebb and explode.

JUSTINE

Beyond salvation...

EXT. CONNOR'S HOUSE -- DAY

Connor's house is three stories, brown stones forming it's exterior. Two white balconies hang from the second floor, a fountain, partially covered by a tarp, is the centerpiece of an expansive, but barren garden. A granite stairway leads to the white marble, stain glassed front door.

Vincent hurries up the stairs. Afternoon is descending into night.

The front door is slightly ajar. Vincent pokes his head into the house, before stepping in.

INT. CONNOR'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Vincent finds Connor in the living room. He is sitting on a plush velvet couch, staring at a blank big screen television, hand-gun in his lap.

The interior of Connor's house is high grade. Fine ceramic plates line shelves which stretch throughout the first floor. Abstract paintings are hung on the walls. The big screen television is part of a cabinet set which includes a stereo system and hundreds of ancient cardboard albums.

VINCENT

Connor...

CONNOR

Take a look Vincent.

Connor sweeps his hand.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

All these possessions... this is how we fill the emptiness. Quench our thirst. Beautiful country. Flawless system. I'm pretty fucking happy. How about you?

VINCENT
I've been better.

Connor laughs.

CONNOR
Haven't we all? Before birth. After death.

VINCENT
We have to talk. About Justine.

CONNOR
Remember that night on the hilltop?
Our dialogue?

VINCENT
Sure I do.

CONNOR
The conversation was about control.
Couldn't express it then, but I
realize it now. Everything in this
life is so beyond our control.
People die. Close to us. We get to
feeling powerless.

VINCENT
I know.

CONNOR
I realized that the majority is
comprised of two groups. There are
those who accept this earthbound
incarceration. They are innocent.
Because they are ignorant. And then
there are those who exploit the
enslaved. They are guilty. I'm not
like them. Couldn't even pretend to
be.

VINCENT
You need help, man.

CONNOR
Our friend at the laundromat. A
lowlife. Yet, somehow, royalty in
our society. Where is the justice?

VINCENT
Take a fucking police exam, you
maniac.

CONNOR

The justice I believe in is
incorruptible. You know better...

VINCENT

You've gone off the fucking deep
end.

Connor picks up the gun, points it upward.

CONNOR

I pointed this exquisite piece of
machinery at that piece of shit's
head... How many lives do you think
he's ruined? It felt so... Right.
Holding the hammer of God. I
finally understood. My place. I'm a
wildcard, Vincent. I live to defy
kings.

VINCENT

Know something, Connor? Justine was
there for you to love. And all this
bitching and crying about society
and scum bags doesn't excuse how
you treated her. Or how you treat
me. Or how you treat your fucking
family. Justine's a great girl, and
you threw away a life with her. For
what? Your anger? Your grief over
ghosts you never fucking met?
You're undisciplined. This world is
out of fucking control. Fine, I
agree. But we're supposed to be
men. We're supposed to control
ourselves. Take some personal
fucking responsibility. You're a
God damn hypocrite.

CONNOR

And fucking my girlfriend... was
that an exercise in self-control?

Connor shoots at the television screen. It splinters. Vincent
turns his head, covers his ears.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

We're all liars, Vincent. Just
depends on the degree.

Vincent motions his left hand in a soothing manner.

VINCENT

Connor... drop the gun.

CONNOR
 Why? Worried I'm going to blow my
 head off? Or yours?

VINCENT
 Both.

CONNOR
 Hopeless narcissist like me,
 Vince... I'm incapable of suicide.

Connor stands. He approaches Vincent.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 Ever consider ending it all?

VINCENT
 Yes.

CONNOR
 Did you try?

VINCENT
 I haven't.

CONNOR
 Another failed pursuit, I'm afraid.
 Could never get past the abyss.
 What if there really is nothing?

VINCENT
 Put that gun down. Please.

CONNOR
 Are you afraid? That hand shaking?

Connor shoves the gun into Vincent's left hand. Vincent resists, but Connor takes advantage of his surprise and elevates his arm into firing position. The gun is now pointing directly at Connor's head.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 Do it! Do it! Pull the fucking
 trigger!

Connor pulls on Vincent's arm. The gun digs deeper into his forehead.

VINCENT
 No!

CONNOR
 Pull the fucking trigger you
 fucking pussy! Can't you take a
 life?

VINCENT
 No!

Vincent fights, but Connor won't let go.

CONNOR
 You stole my girl! You may as well
 end me!

Vincent tears his arm from Connor.

Connor falls on his back.

Connor begins to sob.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 You little fucking bitch... why
 couldn't you do it? Fucking
 pussy... fucking pussy...

Vincent is stunned. After glancing about, he shoves the gun
 into his waistband and departs the house.

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Carmine and Jackie shuffle toward the lounge's exit,
 accompanied by Jackie.

CARMINE
 This must be expedient. I have to
 get home. Daisy's busting balls.

JACKIE
 Buy her something. Usually shuts
 them up.

Vincent enters, face ghostly pale, eyes reddened at the
 corners.

CARMINE
 Kid... what's the matter?

VINCENT
 I didn't know where to go. I need
 someone... I fucked up.

Carmine puts his hand on Vincent's shoulder.

CARMINE

Wait here. I need to handle something, but it'll only take a minute.

Vincent rubs his watering eyes.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Vinny... what the hell happened?

Carmine guides Vincent over to the leather couch.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Relax. Stay here.

Carmine and Jackie move out.

Vincent's phone rings.

He does not answer.

EXT. THE SAND CASTLE -- NIGHT

Jackie and Carmine proceed toward a waiting Lincoln Town Car, steps away from the Sand Castle's entrance.

They walk under a yellow canopy with white lettering etched across: The Sand Castle.

JACKIE

I have the engine running.

CARMINE

Good. We need to talk.

JACKIE

About what?

CARMINE

In the car.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR -- NIGHT

Jackie's eyes are focused on the road as he rolls toward a stop light, The Sand Castle's yellow canopy still in view, but fading fast.

Jackie brakes, Town Car reaching a completely stop, the sole vehicle on a quiet avenue.

JACKIE

What's going on?

CARMINE
Care explaining your play?

JACKIE
Which one?

CARMINE
I expect more, Jackie. Own this.

Jackie wipes his mouth. A black Jeep, windows tinted, pulls up alongside the town car, on Carmine's side.

JACKIE
I deserved the opportunity.

CARMINE
You disobeyed me.

JACKIE
Just needed to see a move through.
I operate on the streets. Protect
our interests daily. New problems,
every day. I hardly complain.

CARMINE
He took off his mask. Spoke my
name. And he had a partner. Who the
fuck do you think it was?

JACKIE
I authorized Connor to rob the
place. Your boy wasn't supposed to
participate.

CARMINE
Vincent could have been killed. We
already talked. I reminded him
again, of the life he needs to
lead. The life his mother would
have wanted. The life he can have
if people like us stay the fuck out
of his way. Vincent would follow
Connor to hell. You had to realize
he'd get involved.

JACKIE
I wasn't thinking straight.

CARMINE
Damn right.

JACKIE
I would do the same for you.

CARMINE

What?

JACKIE

Follow you to hell.

The Jeep's driver side window rolls down.

CARMINE

Pocket the sympathy card, Jack. You're facing a major financial penalty. And if it happens again, I would hate to do what needs to be done. So help me.

JACKIE

I'm sorry.

CARMINE

You feel under-utilized, well, that's my fucking fault, too. We need to talk. Understand? That's how problems get avoided. You--

JACKIE

Carmine.

CARMINE

What?

JACKIE

How long has this fucking light been red?

CARMINE

Fuck it, drive through.

Jackie stares at the Jeep outside the passenger side.

JACKIE

This idiot looking for directions?

Carmine notices too, turning his head.

An orange flash emanates from the Jeep, accompanied by an eruption.

Carmine's window is destroyed, the flying glass fragments slicing Jackie's face.

Jackie screams, covers his face with his hands, blood spilling through the cracks between his fingers.

Heavy smoke filters from the street into the car.

Carmine is slumped over the dash. Jackie, face an unrecognizable, bloody mess, turns Carmine over.

Carmine's head is split open. Blood is pouring from the wound. He is dead.

The Jeep speeds into the intersection beyond the light, where it is promptly smashed by a red Corvette. Both cars are demolished.

Jackie stumbles out of the Lincoln, crawling on the pavement.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Help!

A crowd approaches, from up the street.

EXT. THE SAND CASTLE -- NIGHT

Vincent is trying to push through a throng near the entrance, bystanders staring out toward the scene down the street, where another congregation is forming.

VINCENT

Move! Get the fuck out of my way!

Dominick emerges from the crowd, holding Vincent back.

DOMINICK

Vince, you don't want to go down there.

VINCENT

Is it Carmine?

DOMINICK

It's bad. Stay away.

VINCENT

I need to get through!

DOMINICK

Just listen to me, please. There's nothing we can do.

VINCENT

Alright...

Vincent relaxes, steps backward.

DOMINICK

Take a breath.

Vincent streaks past Dominick, who tries and fails to grab him.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)
Vincent, no!

EXT. INTERSECTION -- NIGHT

The crowd is less centralized here, dispersed around the crime scene, groups forming circles near the Town Car, smashed Corvette, and wrecked Jeep respectively.

Vincent, sprinting, slides beside Jackie, laying flat under the Lincoln's open driver side door. Tiny glass triangles are planted throughout his mangled face. A couple of strangers attend to him, but Jackie waves them away upon seeing Vincent.

VINCENT
Jackie! What the fuck happened?

JACKIE
Carmine...

Jackie can barely talk, his speech a choked whisper.

VINCENT
Where is he?

JACKIE
We got hit...

Vincent peers into the Town Car. He sees Carmine's body.

VINCENT
Jackie...is he... is he...

JACKIE
He's gone. Vincent... he's gone.

VINCENT
No. He can't be dead. He can't be
fucking dead.

Vincent tries getting up, moving toward the Town Car. Jackie grabs his shoulder.

JACKIE
Don't go in there.

Jackie moves his head back and forth, plasma plastered pieces of glass spilling from his hair.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Please... Don't go in there.

Vincent stands.

VINCENT
Who the fuck did this? I want to
know who the fuck did this!

The crowd has no answer.

Vincent scopes the intersection, peering into the horizon. He notices a silhouetted figure in the distance, limping towards a public park.

Vincent turns his attention to the Jeep, examining the scene. A corpse sits on the passenger side, head resting on the dashboard, a position similar to Carmine. The driver side is empty, the door open, a trail of blood leading away from the car.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Mother fucker...

Vincent takes another look at Carmine's body. He turns away.

He takes out Connor's gun, starts running towards the park.

EXT. PARK, PLAYGROUND -- NIGHT

The assassin is a runty individual, face hidden by a ski mask. He is unarmed, limping toward an empty jungle gym. He crumbles near a winding slide, barely able to pull himself back up.

He stumbles into a playground pillar, bearing back against the pole, inspecting his right knee.

The assassin turns his gaze forward, finding Vincent, pointing a handgun toward him.

VINCENT
Pretty easy, chasing a man with one
leg.

The assassin responds in a foreign language, panicked.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Shut the fuck up. Shut the fuck up!

The assassin persists.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Who the fuck sent you?

The assassin answers in his native tongue.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Take off the mask!

Vincent motions with his hand for the assassin to remove his mask. The assassin understands, exposing his face.

The assassin is Korean. He falls to his knees, praying, pleading with Vincent.

Vincent's trigger hand begins to shake.

ASSASSIN
(straining)
This is America. Please, this is America.

VINCENT
What? What the fuck are you saying?

ASSASSIN
This... is... America... please...
this... is... America...

Vincent's hand steadies.

VINCENT
This is America.

Vincent fires a round through the assassin's head.

EXT. MOONLIGHT HOTEL -- DAY

Jackie walks across a balcony on the second floor of this run down inn. He stops and knocks on a door marked with the number "2".

Jackie's face is lined with small, jagged scars.

Vincent opens the door for Jackie, who enters.

INT. MOONLIGHT HOTEL, ROOM 24 -- DAY

The room features the bare essentials. Two parallel beds and a television, plus a bathroom.

Vincent sits down on the corner of the bed closest to the door.

He pulls up a chair for Jackie, who obliges, taking a seat. Vincent is uncouth. His hair is growing, unkempt, and his clothes are stained.

Jackie is attired with usual flair. He reaches into his pocket and hands Vincent a pill box.

VINCENT

Thanks for remembering. Haven't slept in who knows when...

JACKIE

No problem, Vince.

Jackie lights up a cigarette.

VINCENT

Been weeks since I've heard a word.

JACKIE

The heat is off. No witnesses. You're a natural.

VINCENT

I figured. Park was empty. Nobody at the restaurant will rat.

JACKIE

Or the neighborhood. Even still, laying low was the right call.

VINCENT

The triggerman was Korean.

JACKIE

It was them. Assorted underworld enterprises. Payback for the laundromat. Along with other things...

VINCENT

Have they been dealt with?

JACKIE

Severely. A blitzkrieg.

VINCENT

Where did they get the fucking balls?

JACKIE

Human beings are irrational creatures.

VINCENT
Carmine...

JACKIE
Terrible fucking thing...

Vincent pops a pair of pills, chewing them before swallowing.

VINCENT
Am I back in civilization?

JACKIE
A few more days. Play it safe.

VINCENT
I have nothing.

JACKIE
You were Carmine's boy. You are family.

VINCENT
Family...

Jackie shakes Vincent's hand, before giving him a hug.

JACKIE
You are the future, Vincent. We will accomplish great things together.

They separate.

VINCENT
Christ Jackie. Look what they did to your fucking face.

JACKIE
I like it. Reminds me of everyday.

Jackie kisses Vincent on the cheek.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
This is the price we pay.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- NIGHT

Connor staggers around in a pretty part of town, houses like palaces adorned with kaleidoscopic Christmas lights. He is drinking from a flask. A black cadillac is trailing slowly behind him.

Connor diverts onto the sidewalk, unaware. He is mumbling to himself, incoherently. The flask slides from his hand.

The Cadillac stops beside him, and Jackie steps out from the passenger side.

CONNOR

Jackie. Heard you met with an accident--

JACKIE

You've become a difficult man to track down.

CONNOR

I switched residences. Off the reservation. And how the fuck does it concern you? Our business is finished.

JACKIE

That so?

Jackie rocks Connor in the jaw. Connor is launched from the sidewalk to a lawn.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You took off your mask, you stupid fuck!

Jackie begins to kick Connor, so relentlessly that he nearly slips.

VOICE FROM THE CADILLAC (O.S.)

Get him Jack! Just like the old days!

Jackie picks up a nearby garbage can and dumps the contents on Connor. A soggy newspaper lands squarely on Connor's face.

CONNOR

I did what you told me! You said there weren't any fucking security cameras, so I lost the mask! What's the big deal?

Jackie reaches into his pocket and pulls out a gun. He glances around the block, notices concerned citizens pouring onto their porches, curious about the commotion.

Jackie holsters his weapon.

JACKIE

I better never see you in my neighborhood again, or you are fucking dead, understand me? Stupid fucking Mick!

Connor peels the newspaper off his face.

CONNOR

You'll pay for this, you wannabe Goodfella piece of shit!

JACKIE

I'll pay?

CONNOR

If you see Vincent... send him a message. We are enemies. And I'm glad his surrogate gangland daddy got torched. Guess old Carmine found out karma's a killer.

JACKIE

You mother fucker...

Jackie reaches for his gun again, but takes another look at his surroundings, deciding against it.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You're pathetic. Not worth a bullet.

Jackie walks back to the Cadillac, climbs in. It speeds away.

Connor is left writhing on the lawn. He begins laughing.

FADE TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB, BAR -- NIGHT

Scantly clad women dance on an elevated platform, strobe lights bouncing off their nubile bodies. The depravity is everywhere, mirrors surrounding the club, impossible to escape the nakedness.

Jackie and Vincent take in the show from a bar facing the platform, both drinking vodka straight, wearing designer suits. Vincent's appearance has changed. His hair hangs beneath his shoulder blades. He has a thin, well groomed beard.

Jackie's face is still pocked by scars.

A group encircles Jackie and Vincent. Some faces are familiar, like Dominick and Frank, while others are unknown, all men sharply dressed.

A sexy bartender brings over an entire plate of shots, which are promptly divvied up.

Jackie raises his glass.

JACKIE

To our brilliant friend Vincent
D'Angelo, on his twenty second
birthday. We all enjoy busting his
balls, but the fact is, he'll be
giving us orders one day. So
salute, Vincent!

The group, including Vincent, downs the alcohol.

Jackie pulls Vincent close.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I need to see you outside, for a
minute.

VINCENT

What about?

JACKIE

A business matter.

Vincent downs his vodka.

EXT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

Jackie and Vincent each smoke a cigar, peering out at a busy avenue outside the club.

The area is seedy.

VINCENT

Time is flying. You're rising.

JACKIE

Supposedly. Hierarchy moves like
the fucking Catholic Church. What
else do I need to prove?

VINCENT

Maybe you should find a new line of
work.

JACKIE
I'm dangerously unskilled.

Vincent laughs.

VINCENT
Same here... unfortunately.

JACKIE
Remember your old Irish friend?

VINCENT
Connor? What about him?

JACKIE
He's causing trouble. For us.

VINCENT
How so?

JACKIE
Hijacking routes. Targeting our
businesses. He has a vendetta.

Vincent stamps out his cigar.

VINCENT
He has a death wish.

JACKIE
It's granted. We find him, and his
pulse stops. Hiding out in the
projects. With blacks and 'Ricans.
Uncivilized. He shames you.

VINCENT
Our friendship is severed.

JACKIE
The contract is down. Vigilantes
become very fallible with a price
on their head.

VINCENT
It's personal. He wants my
attention.

JACKIE
He breathes on borrowed time. I
tell you this out of respect. You
had a relationship with the prick.

VINCENT
I did...

Jackie exhales a puff of smoke from his cigar.

JACKIE
We all have a past.

VINCENT
Unless we forget.

JACKIE
Come back inside. Time for your
birthday present.

INT. STRIP CLUB, CHAMPAGNE ROOM -- NIGHT

Vincent sits on a bench in a room covered with curtains. Two dancers, one white, AMANDA, one black, ASIA, strip bare for him. He watches, removing a packet from his pocket.

Amanda lays across his lap, Asia pressing her breasts against his face. Vincent empties the packet onto Amanda's back. Cocaine. He sniffs it up, kisses Asia.

The two women envelop him, pressing their bodies against his. He stares straight ahead, a techno beat droning on.

VINCENT
Where are you girls from?

ASIA
Heaven.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE -- DAY

Connor leans back on a rocking chair, a blanket pulled over his legs, shotgun in his hands. His appearance has not changed.

This is a run down building, water dripping from the ceiling, divots forming in the cheap wall fixtures. A single light bulb illuminates the room, hanging by multiple strands of frayed and tangled wire.

A window behind Connor is boarded up, decorated with a message written in red spray paint: FIGHT THE POWER.

TRAVIS, a slender black male, approaches Connor, from a doorway leading into the room. Travis is 20 years old. His bushy haircut peeks out from under a red bandanna. He has a thin mustache.

TRAVIS

C... there's someone here speaking
your name.

CONNOR

Thought I made myself clear. No
visitors from the world.

Vincent strides in. He's wearing a black overcoat, carrying a
steel briefcase.

Travis steps into his path.

TRAVIS

Did I give you permission, boy?

CONNOR

Let him pass.

Travis moves aside.

TRAVIS

Let me know if this punk has to get
got.

CONNOR

I'll take it from here, Travis.

Connor waves Travis off.

Travis exits.

VINCENT

Giving orders?

CONNOR

Nobody is boss. We are all the
same. They are my people.

VINCENT

Until they aren't.

CONNOR

Typical capitalist. You'd drown a
friend for a buck.

VINCENT

Still judging, even though you've
settled for bum.

CONNOR

Try Robin Hood. Prince of thieves.

VINCENT
Real romantic.

CONNOR
I've never hurt an innocent.

VINCENT
Who appointed you judge and jury?

CONNOR
The seat was vacant.

Vincent walks toward Connor. Connor cocks the shotgun toward him.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
No sudden movements. I know the company you keep.

VINCENT
If they knew your location, it wouldn't be me doing the hit. No... someone far more qualified. You wouldn't have time for a rebuttal. Game over.

CONNOR
Should I be scared?

VINCENT
If you value your life.

CONNOR
I value life. Just not mine.

Vincent sets the briefcase down, next to Connor.

VINCENT
That's a lease. For starting over. Thirty thousand.

CONNOR
Am I supposed to be grateful?

VINCENT
Leave Whitestone. Like you always wanted. We were brothers, once. I owe you this.

CONNOR
Are my days growing short?

VINCENT

Now isn't the time to be proud.
Just survive.

CONNOR

And every second I have, from this
point forward, will be a product of
your providence?

VINCENT

I don't give a fuck how you
rationalize it.

CONNOR

You've become glorified slime in a
suit. Disgusts me.

VINCENT

Take the money.

CONNOR

I refuse.

VINCENT

I found you. They will.

CONNOR

Let them. I'll go down shooting. A
true outlaw. And what are you? A
sell out. I have a code.

VINCENT

Wake up!

CONNOR

How's the sad-eyed lady of the
lowlands?

VINCENT

Justine? I lost touch with her.

CONNOR

After our divorce?

Connor laughs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Your personality is so terribly
predictable, Vincent. Contrived.
And I suffered you, all those
wasted years... one of us is dead
already.

VINCENT

Fuck you.

Vincent starts out.

CONNOR

You forgot the case.

Vincent turns.

VINCENT

Keep it. I'm cleansed of you,
Connor. Done all I could.Vincent walks out of the room, making a dismissive motion
with his hand.

CONNOR

I don't accept money from people
like you, Vince. I steal it!

EXT. COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

Justine is getting off work, exiting the shop, crossing the
street. She doesn't notice Vincent, following close behind
her.

VINCENT

How goes the career?

Justine jumps, scared. She circles.

JUSTINE

Vincent?

Vincent is hunched over, hands tucked into his leather
jacket, self-conscious.

VINCENT

Hey.

JUSTINE

Where have you been?

VINCENT

I'm not sure.

JUSTINE

How could you leave me?

VINCENT

I can't explain. On the spot.

JUSTINE

Try.

Vincent wipes his nose.

VINCENT

I was wondering if we could turn the page. I think we go good together. Without all the complications. Just two people...

JUSTINE

This past year has been hell. I needed someone. You weren't there.

VINCENT

I'm here. From now on. I promise you that.

JUSTINE

Have you seen Connor?

VINCENT

Can't find him. He may have disintegrated. Fulfilled his every ambition.

JUSTINE

Why do you lie, Vincent?

VINCENT

The truth is painful.

JUSTINE

Its real.

VINCENT

Were we real?

JUSTINE

As anything I ever felt.

Vincent nods.

VINCENT

Same for me.

JUSTINE

Not a phone call...

VINCENT

Be with me now. Please.

JUSTINE
I met another man.

Vincent turns west. He clears his throat, looks down.

VINCENT
Go on. Walk away.

Justine does, tears in her eyes.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

FATHER JAMES PETERSON, an elderly priest, is cleaning up after a long night. He's wiping down a bench row preceding the church's altar.

Finished with the work, Father James genuflects before the Sacrament. Something catches his eye. Placed on the altar, next to the bible, is a steel briefcase.

FATHER JAMES
What is that?

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A spirited card game is taking place between an assorted collection of hoods. Jackie sits at the head of the menagerie, reeling in a bevy of poker chips.

JACKIE
Aces high, you rat fucks!

The rest of the table, running eight deep, lets out a universal groan.

The apartment is upscale. The card game is carried out on an elevated, tiled floor, raised over a spacious living room. Opposite the living room are an arrangement of panelled windows, which offer a breathtaking view of downtown New York City.

A crash. The door to the living room flies off it's frame.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
What the fuck?

Connor and Travis stroll into the apartment. Travis is wielding two Desert Eagle hand guns. Connor is carrying his shot-gun, wearing a black baseball cap, backward.

CONNOR
Was my invitation lost in the mail?

JACKIE
Son of a bitch...

Connor and Travis hop onto the elevated floor.

CONNOR
Swank apartment...

TRAVIS
I fucking hate it.

Travis shoves one of his guns into his jeans, taking a brown sack out of his back-pocket. He tosses the sack onto the table.

CONNOR
Empty all valuables, shit birds...
That includes cash. I'm not about
spending legal tender... but I do
love robbing it from you miserable
fucks.

The table does as ordered, the sack left overflowing. Travis claims it.

JACKIE
You have balls, I'll give you that
much...

Connor walks over to Jackie, smiling. He directs the barrel of his shotgun toward Jackie's face.

CONNOR
How does it feel, the fear... How
does it feel?

TRAVIS
Yo, C, let's book. We got what we
need.

Connor presses the barrel against Jackie's lips.

CONNOR
Suck it for me, bitch.

TRAVIS
C...

JACKIE
You better pull that trigger.

CONNOR
I could kill you anytime I want.
Embarrassment is priceless.
(MORE)

CONNOR (CONT'D)
So, are you deaf? Slurp on that barrel. Nice and slow. Before I make you swallow a bullet.

JACKIE
You are dead... Dead.

TRAVIS
C!

CONNOR
You're pathetic. Not worth a bullet.

Connor winks at Jackie, before smashing his face with the shotgun barrel. Jackie tumbles out of his chair.

Connor and Travis sprint out of the apartment.

EXT. VINCENT'S HOUSE, PORCH -- DAY

Vincent stands on the stoop, slipping money into his house's mailbox, expensive sunglasses shielding his eyes.

Richard steps out from the front door, wearing his robe.

RICHARD
What the fuck are you doing?

VINCENT
Helping you.

RICHARD
Look what you've become. After you never came back.

VINCENT
Circumstances changed, dad. Drastically.

RICHARD
Get off my property.

VINCENT
Come on...

RICHARD
You weren't even coming to visit. Slipping someone cash... you consider that a meaningful relationship? You've disgraced our family name, Vincent.

Vincent reaches into the mailbox, takes the money back.

VINCENT

I am disappointed. At your reaction
to a favor.

RICHARD

You had such potential. I blame
myself.

VINCENT

What's so bad about my status? I've
done good. Check out the new ride.

Vincent points toward an Infinity parked across the street.

Richard returns inside, slamming the door.

Vincent is left alone on the stoop.

INT. SHAMROCK BAR -- NIGHT

The Shamrock is a dive. Downtrodden drunks lay their heads on
the bar, incapacitated. Smoke hangs heavy in the air.
Graffiti tags line the floorboards and walls.

Vincent sits next to an old fashioned jukebox in the back,
analyzing the scene. He is amused as a wino drops from his
seat.

Vincent stands and approaches the bar, money in hand. He
claims the wino's empty chair, waiting for service.

Jackie sidles up next to him, in a covert manner.

Jackie taps Vincent, who is surprised to see him.

VINCENT

Jack? What brings you to my
hideaway?

JACKIE

Ever hear of Mario Esposito?

VINCENT

I can't recall.

JACKIE

He was a heavy hitter in Carmine's
prime. They called him Marbles. A
legend.

VINCENT

What's he up to these days?

JACKIE

Not much. Died of a drug overdose
back in '90.

VINCENT

Unfortunate.

JACKIE

Mario always had a chip on his
shoulder, on the count that he was
made at such a young age. He
received that honor at twenty
three. My generation idolized him.
The establishment waited for him to
fail. Losers bitch and moan about
life not handing them a break. You
have to take it. Mario did. At some
point, a choice is made. It defines
us.

The bartender puts a drink down for Vincent. He pays no mind.

VINCENT

What the fuck are we talking about
here?

JACKIE

Are you loyal to this thing?

VINCENT

With all my heart.

JACKIE

You can prove it tonight. Are you
prepared?

VINCENT

Yes.

JACKIE

Come with me.

Vincent follows Jackie out of the bar.

INT. CADILLAC -- NIGHT

Vincent sits in the backseat of a black cadillac. Jackie is
passenger side. The driver is focused on the road.

VINCENT
Where are we going?

JACKIE
No questions. Take this.

Jackie hands Vincent a black handled hunting knife.

VINCENT
What do I need it for?

JACKIE
You'll soon find out.

VINCENT
I never used a blade.

JACKIE
This needs to be personal.

EXT. BEACH, PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

The cadillac pulls into an empty parking lot facing an icy shoreline.

Jackie and Vincent step out. Vincent carries the knife in his left hand.

Silhouetted figures are visible near the water.

JACKIE
Come along, Vincent. Now we see if
you are ready.

Jackie and Vincent cross over the parking lot onto the beach, toward the silhouettes.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

As Jackie and Vincent draw closer, the shadowy faces begin to become clear.

Three hoods are holding Connor to his knees, close enough for the waves to touch.

The hoods step aside upon seeing Jackie.

Jackie halts, ten yards from Connor. Vincent does so as well.

JACKIE
He has no respect for us.

Vincent stares at Jackie.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

This is what we ask of you. A test
of loyalty.

The sea is angry tonight, rampaging.

Vincent walks over to Connor.

He kneels in front of him.

Vincent's eyes fill with tears.

CONNOR

What's troubling you today,
Vincent?

Vincent wipes his eyes.

VINCENT

I'm sorry Connor...

CONNOR

For what? This feels inevitable.

VINCENT

I don't want to do this.

CONNOR

But you have to.

VINCENT

Can we find a way out?

CONNOR

Not this time, brother.

VINCENT

No...

Connor begins to cry.

CONNOR

Christ Vince... remember that night
when we were fourteen? Broke into
your father's liquor cabinet then
stole his car? He chased after us
in his fucking underwear?

They both laugh.

VINCENT

Yeah... yeah...

CONNOR
I had it all...

VINCENT
We had it all...

CONNOR
I love you, Vinny.

VINCENT
I love you too.

Vincent stabs Connor in the chest, screaming as he does it. He leaves the knife in.

Blood sprays into Vincent's face.

Connor reaches for Vincent's hand.

Vincent takes hold.

Connor dies in Vincent's arms.

Vincent lets go.

Connor is claimed by the tide.

Vincent stands. Jackie puts his arm around him.

JACKIE
You've done a great thing.

EXT. STREET CURB -- MORNING

The sun is emerging from night, though the clouds remain dark. Vincent is sitting on a curb, empty bottle of Black House in his hand. He has changed his clothes, wearing jeans and a black winter jacket.

A red Saturn pulls up beside him, two men in brown overcoats stepping out. They are DEAN COOPER and RODNEY POOLE.

Dean is white, 55. He has greying hair, which retains a slight glint of auburn brown. He is tall, wearing a button-down shirt and suspenders under his jacket. He has a thick mustache.

Rodney is black, 48. He is also tall, head completely shaved. Twin gun holsters are visible under his jacket, along with two sizable golden chains, one with a badge attached, the other with a crucifix affixed.

DEAN
What do we have here?

RODNEY
Was it a rough night, junior
mafioso?

VINCENT
Fuck off, cop.

DEAN
We're placing you under arrest.

Dean lifts up Vincent, fastens handcuffs.

VINCENT
For what?

RODNEY
Loitering.

DEAN
And public drunkenness.

Vincent doesn't fight them. He enters the backseat of their car without complaint.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

The room is confined, the lighting harshly bright.

Vincent sits in a plastic chair in front of a metal table, joined by Detectives Cooper and Poole.

The table is bare, save for a miniature tape recorder.

VINCENT
Am I really under arrest?

RODNEY
Not officially.

VINCENT
I'm walking out of here. You picked
the wrong time for this shit.

DEAN
We're about to impart invaluable
information.

VINCENT
I don't give a fuck if you found
Bin Laden.

RODNEY

You will. Give a fuck.

VINCENT

Get on with it, then. Stop wasting my time.

DEAN

Funny you should mention that phrase... one discovers on this job that nothing is truly a waste. Everything is connected. In these worlds we inhabit.

VINCENT

And?

RODNEY

Last December. Little kid in Bayside decides to play with matches. Burns his house down. Family has a giant oak tree planted on their front lawn. Neighbors begged them to cut it down. They refused. It caught. Fell down. Fucked up the whole block.

Vincent smacks his lips together.

VINCENT

I could use some water.

DEAN

We'll get on that.

Vincent nods.

VINCENT

Excellent service. The entertainment isn't really grabbing me, though. Why the fuck should I care about a fire from last December? This an allegory?

RODNEY

All available units were summoned to the scene for crowd control. They weren't able to respond in time when shots were fired at a laundromat later that night.

DEAN

The bandits were damn sloppy too. I mean, leaving behind a God damn blowtorch? Not in my twenty plus years...

RODNEY

Shady owner blamed it on blacks, but it didn't jive. Not with me. Confidential informant fingered a rising star in the Columbus crime family.

VINCENT

A rat?

Dean places a cup of water on the table.

RODNEY

The chances for prosecution seem remote, however. This informant is our sole link to the suspect. And he's unreliable.

VINCENT

Spoiled returns from the scum of the earth. I'm shocked. You have shit. Or else I'd be behind bars already. What the fuck is this really about?

DEAN

We're merely pointing out your incredible fortune. Hell, if it weren't for a fucking tree, you'd be someone's bitch right now.

Vincent slaps the cup of water.

VINCENT

I'm nobody's bitch!

RODNEY

You never want to test that theory.

DEAN

I've read your file D'Angelo. You haven't had it easy. Mother's deceased. Father is a fuck up with three priors for drunk driving. Was he like my old man? Apt to throw hands after one too many?

VINCENT

Trying to relate? Fuck you.

DEAN

There's still time for you. You are a young man. I know it's impossible to believe, but the future could be better.

VINCENT

Who said I was fucking miserable?

DEAN

We didn't.

Vincent's eyes droop.

VINCENT

I'm asking for the last fucking time. Why the fuck am I here?

DEAN

Carmine watched over you. Losing him must have been heart breaking.

RODNEY

Our condolences.

VINCENT

Save them.

DEAN

Deep down you know this life has nothing for you.

RODNEY

And we can prove it.

DEAN

Give you a ticket to paradise.

Dean picks up the tape recorder.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Oh, those connections... we placed a wire in Madeline Bruno's house in 1995. We were suspicious about meetings taking place at her residence. The wire led nowhere. These round table locations change frequently.

VINCENT

We're always a step ahead of you
douche bags.

DEAN

Not quite. Jackie Baldelli began
utilizing the Bruno house for these
exact purposes last year. Jackie's
a copy cat. Reads old playbooks. We
took a re-up on the wire.

VINCENT

Again with last year... you guys
into any current events?

DEAN

This is your new superior, Jackie
Baldelli. Talking shop.

Dean presses play on the tape recorder. Jackie's voice
cackles through.

JACKIE (V.O.)

The main thing is making sure
Carmine is finally out of the
fucking picture. I have a deal in
place with the Koreans, cut down on
their dues if they take care of the
hit. And mother fuck the old
timer's uptown. Those wrinkly sacks
of shit won't even know the
difference... They aren't on the
fucking street... its set up
perfect so I'm in the car with him.
That way, we avoid the questions,
and the natural order plays out.

VOICE (V.O.)

It's a solid idea Jack, but the
risks of taking out a capo--

JACKIE (V.O.)

These days, everybody has their
head up their--

Dean stops the tape.

DEAN

Impressed?

Vincent coughs.

VINCENT

That it?

RODNEY

Give us Jackie. With you, we have a solid case.

DEAN

He killed Carmine.

RODNEY

The guy was practically family. We know.

VINCENT

You know shit!

Silence.

DEAN

Let us slot you in the program.

RODNEY

A whole new lifetime. Come on Vincent... do the right thing. For you and the world.

VINCENT

The world? Fuck the world. Am I charged with anything?

DEAN

You can handpick the state.

VINCENT

I'm going home. And you can't fucking stop me.

RODNEY

Right... the condo.

DEAN

That you have never paid tax one on.

RODNEY

You will be touched, Vincent. Somehow, someday.

DEAN

We're offering you a way out. At least think about it.

VINCENT

There is no way out.

RODNEY

You're wrong about that.

Vincent closes his eyes with his thumb and forefinger.

He stands up and exits the room.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

We'll see if your gamble pays dividends, Dino. Would have never backed this maneuver if we weren't so stalled.

DEAN

Nothing else has worked. I have a real good feeling he flips.

INT. SAND CASTLE, RESTAURANT -- MORNING

Jackie eats a bowl of spaghetti at the corner table, Mona Lisa gazing down impassively upon him. He wipes his face with a napkin, drinks from a glass of water.

The Sand Castle is deserted.

Vincent, wearing the same clothes, arrives, measuring up Jackie from across the room.

Jackie glances up and sees him.

JACKIE

Oh, the early riser!

VINCENT

Mind if I join you?

JACKIE

Be my guest. Dominick called me for a meeting, and the stupid son of a bitch didn't show up. And where the fuck is everyone else? Shouldn't the waiters be coming in? I had to grab this spaghetti from the damn ice box. And the seasoning isn't right...

Vincent takes a seat, across from him.

VINCENT

Is it a Jewish holiday?

JACKIE
What the fuck are you talking
about? We don't close for--

Jackie points at Vincent, starts laughing.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Nicely done. Glad to see you
haven't lost your sense of humor.
Especially after last night.

VINCENT
I'll never stop laughing.

JACKIE
Those bags, though... Trouble
sleeping?

VINCENT
Always.

Vincent places a tape recorder and a handgun on the table,
side by side.

Jackie leans back in his seat.

JACKIE
What the fuck is this?

VINCENT
Cops tried flipping me, Jack.
Played a tape.

JACKIE
They fuck with our heads. Pay no
mind.

VINCENT
I have options. Could make this
whole fake world come crumbling
down. I weigh that against watching
you die. Tough call.

JACKIE
Thought your mind was stronger than
this. Those lies only trick the
weak.

VINCENT
Don't fuck with me! You ordered the
hit on Carmine. Admit the truth.

Jackie looks upward, exhales.

JACKIE

He was in my way Vincent. It wasn't anything personal. Nothing is...

VINCENT

Power.

JACKIE

These scars on my mug weren't part of the plan. Hard to account for all the variables... added a touch of realism though. Did it not?

VINCENT

You were burned by a wire. At the Bruno house.

Jackie laughs.

JACKIE

That right? What am I always telling you about details, kid? Take note.

VINCENT

You would have had a chance. To take over. It was a matter of time.

JACKIE

Patience isn't a virtue of mine.

VINCENT

I killed for you...

JACKIE

Of course. That is your nature. I could always see it. The rage hiding under those calm eyes. You were mine to mold.

VINCENT

Carmine...

JACKIE

I ignored a direct order, trying to exploit your potential... wanted to sever those puppet strings just once... one time. But my opinions didn't matter. On you, or anything else. Carmine's negligence taught me a valuable lesson. There are no allegiances. There is no order. Only manifest destiny. And I took it. Without regret, remorse.

(MORE)

JACKIE (CONT'D)

My flowers at the wake were the finest. The Don kissed my cheek. That's that.

VINCENT

You never approached me directly.

JACKIE

We operate in shadows. Your naiveté is refreshing. I knew Connor would ask for help. Because he was weak. And I knew you would accept.

VINCENT

What inspired such confidence?

JACKIE

You couldn't resist. That sexy green... It always starts with helping a friend. Or repaying a debt. But once you get a taste, you fall in line. Don't kid yourself, with Carmine's delusions. With your ego. You aren't any better than the next hungry young pup willing to kill for the right people. Fate isn't a factor, Vincent. Simple evolution.

VINCENT

The laundromat wasn't for the money. Loyalty. It was my finest characteristic.

Jackie finishes his spaghetti.

Vincent sweeps his left hand over the gun and tape recorder.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

What awaits you, Jackie? This a confession? Or your last words?

JACKIE

Oh, you're no rat. I know that.

Vincent raises the gun.

Jackie reaches into his suit jacket.

Vincent shoots him in the face. Jackie's head slumps into the empty dish.

VINCENT

The truth hurts.

Vincent pockets the recorder and gun, sliding them both into his jacket, completely collected. He stands, taking a sip of Jackie's water, left hand perfectly still.

Vincent exits, carrying the glass.

FADE TO:

INT. BALLROOM -- DAY

The expansive ballroom is exquisite, wood floors shimmering, reflecting the golden light of a chandelier above. An instrumental orchestra appears to be settling in position for a song, couples crowding the dance floor, joined together.

Vincent D'Angelo, 25, has not changed drastically. His hair is shorter, his beard rougher.

He is wearing a suit.

He pushes his way through the mob, attempting to reach a circular table positioned near the catering.

Justine Reilly, 24, is joined at the table by Scott Weld, 28. Justine has dyed her hair black. She is wearing a red dress.

Scott no longer has a blowout haircut, his mane neatly slicked back.

Vincent reaches Justine. She recognizes him immediately.

JUSTINE
Vincent D'Angelo...

VINCENT
Justine Reilly.

Vincent casts a glance on Scott.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Have we met?

SCOTT
I haven't had the pleasure.

VINCENT
Because I could have sworn--

JUSTINE
Scott is my fiance. Just completed his degree.

VINCENT
 Congratulations Scott. What was the
 concentration?

SCOTT
 Law.

VINCENT
 Nice.

Silence.

JUSTINE
 This is his sister's wedding party.

VINCENT
 I am aware. Mr. Weld's father--

SCOTT
 Is a politician. You're--

VINCENT
 In his debt.

SCOTT
 The sentiment is appreciated... I
 suppose.

VINCENT
 I ask of a dance. With Justine. For
 old time's sake. You wouldn't mind,
 Scott?

Scott squeezes the tablecloth. Justine whispers in his ear.
 He releases.

JUSTINE
 One dance.

VINCENT
 A reasonable request.

Justine stands up.

She accompanies Vincent onto the dance floor.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Not a day goes by without you
 crossing my mind.

INT. BALLROOM, DANCE FLOOR -- DAY

Vincent takes Justine by the hand.

The orchestra begins to play the Intermezzo from "Cavalleria Rusticana".

Vincent and Justine come together. They dance.

Slowly.

VINCENT
Still chasing it?

JUSTINE
No. Took a long time for me to understand.

VINCENT
What?

JUSTINE
I was above it.

Vincent smiles.

VINCENT
I'm so proud of you. Done right by yourself.

JUSTINE
Never could have worked with Scott if I were using. It was harsh... all those years ago. You helped. And then you were a ghost.

VINCENT
Remember when you said I deserved happiness? You do. Always did.

JUSTINE
Are you clean?

VINCENT
I was never clean, Justine. Except the times we were together.

JUSTINE
You stole my heart, Vincent.

VINCENT
I'm not a thief... just a caretaker.

They look deeply into each other's eyes.

Justine tries pulling away. Vincent holds her.

JUSTINE
Please... let me go...

Vincent removes a piece of paper from his pocket, folded at four corners. He hands it to her.

VINCENT
I want you to have this... the only
one I could ever find. That was
escaping to me.

They part.

INT. BALLROOM, JUSTINE'S TABLE -- DAY

Justine sits back down next to Scott.

SCOTT
Change your mind?

Justine unfolds the paper, reading the text written on it.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Is that a poem?

INT. BALLROOM, VINCENT'S TABLE -- DAY

Vincent has a seat at the head of a circular table. He is alone, joined by two empty chairs.

The table is littered with white, plastic plates. The plates are filled with bones.

The orchestra plays on.

FADE TO BLACK.

