"DOWNTURN"

Original Series by
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Episode #1
"Hustle"
EXT. SO. CALI NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

COMBAT BOOTS Bustle down the sidewalk of a lost L.A. suburb. Small trinkets in their path are crushed with each step. Frisbees. Shoes. A squeaky toy. The boots push forward undaunted. -Pace livening with each tread.

MARK (V.O.)
Western culture, with it’s governments and organized dogmas, touts the worth of virtue and morals in everyday life...

THREE SIMILAR PAIR join in. One dwarfs the rest in sheer size.

MARK (V.O.)
It’s a horribly vague, disjointed lecture beginning from infancy, and lasting well... Forever.

At a STAIRCASE, everyone stops.

MARK (V.O.)
The alleged point of which, is for us to have beliefs that make us better. -The golden rule, for example...

ASSORTED GUNS drop into frame. Disembodied hands cock and chamber rounds. -They’re cops.

MARK (V.O.)
Reality, by contrast, teaches a far different, but equally important lesson.

COP #1
Everything tight?

COP #2
Where’s the bag?

It drops in. Pink plastic, ‘Hello Kitty’.

MARK (V.O.)
Namely, that real-time results of our actions, -altruistic or not, are almost never predictable.

(CONTINUED)
COP #2
Okay. On three. One...

The large pair BOLTS early. All follow, except the COUNTER.

MARK (V.O.)
I.E. Patience is not always best.

A CRASH is heard at the top of the steps.

COP #1
Police! Get on the ground, now!

MARK (V.O.)
A stitch in time may actually save nothing...

The COUNTER makes a belated charge into:

AN APARTMENT

Run down. Filthy. A TODDLER squats near a MIX-BREED DOG as it barks piercingly.

MARK (V.O.)
And lastly...

COP #2
Secure that animal!

A SINGLE SHOT ends the barking.

MARK (V.O.)
Others may do unto you, well before your intentions are even known.

One by one, bedraggled adults are shoved to the floor. A SKI-MASKED COP kicks in a bathroom door where a girl flushes DRUGS. He gives the scene a quick once-over and leaves without a word.

IN THE BEDROOM

Cops up-end a bed exposing a CASH-FILLED box-spring.

COP #2
You guys are breaking our hearts!

MARK (V.O.)
So, now what?...
ON THE FLOOR

The TODDLER’S HAND runs through the dead dog’s fur. His other hand cradles a small GLASS PIG.

MARK (V.O.)
What happens when these belief systems fail?...

ON THE LIVING ROOM COUCH

A METH-HEAD is beaten by two masked cops. In the fray, money SPILLS from his pockets.

MARK (V.O.)
...When these imparted virtues cease to work...

Tied up, the occupants are dragged forward. Loose cash is jammed into the now bursting backpack.

MARK (V.O.)
The way I see it, virtues are like tools.

The cops stand at the door. One seems focused on the toddler.

MARK (V.O.)
If a particular set doesn’t work...

He sees the PIG. Full of coins and cash.

MARK (V.O.)
It’s good to keep a different set handy.

He rips it from the child. They leave.

MARK (V.O.)
Any other approach seems well...

Imprudent.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE
EXT/INT. SPEEDING HONDA - DAY

MARK CROSS, (31) clean, corporate-type. Cruises the fast lane to junk eighties rock. A photo of ALLEN GREENSPAN hangs in the spot usually saved for fuzzy dice.

MARK (V.O.)
Took me a while to get here though.

He blows past a wind-swept sign that reads "San Diego City Limit."

MARK (V.O.)
In the beginning I was probably a lot like you. Burdened with overblown expectations, and hope for mankind.

He swerves before rear-ending a PICKUP TRUCK.

MARK (V.O.)
Lucky for me I had help.

He whips around the truck. Livid

MARK
(out of window)
Asshole!

The pickup driver, a PRIEST, (60s) is unmoved.

MARK (V.O.)
Lots of it.

Mark glares at the priest in his rear-view. Inadvertently, he notices something on the back seat.

MARK
Ah, shit.

CUT TO:

INT. FOLLOWING CAR

An UNSEEN DRIVER does his best to keep up.

DRIVER
Dammit, junior! Eyes on the road!

BACK TO:
INT. MARK’S CAR - CONTINUOUS

On the back seat is a freshly dry-cleaned COP UNIFORM.

Mark plucks a hands-free earpiece from his sun visor and puts it on.

RADIO
The Dow plunged to its lowest level in decades today amid fears of rising crude, and layoffs in manufacturing...

Mark grasps the Greenspan pic.

MARK
We need you, man.

RADIO
In local news, Miguel, "Mickey" Cruz escaped capture in an early morning drug sting on the Otay Border.

MARK
(Into earpiece)
Home.

INT/EXT. SPEEDING HONDA - CONTINUOUS

The San Diego skyline as it’s seen from I-5. Starkly beautiful. Cruise ships and high-rises circle the cobalt-blue bay.

MARK
Pickup, pickup...

VOICEMAIL (O.S.)
Hi, you’ve reached Tonya. If you really, need to, leave a message and I will get back.

MARK
Your uniform slept in my ride again. Gimme a buzz and I’ll run it up there..

A beat. Then reluctantly-

MARK
Love you.

He yanks the earpiece.

(CONTINUED)
MARK (V.O.)
For a decade I'd marketed myself as
this Berkeley-educated man-of-the
world. Not wanting to face the
truth. Which was that in my quest
for success, I had achieved only
facelessness.

The car exits full speed to a RED LIGHT. The ensuing
brake-stand makes a HOMLESS GUY shake his head.

MARK (V.O.)
Like an empty billboard waiting for
some kid to bomb graffiti all over
me.

P.O.V. - A series of stoplights all turn RED.

MARK (V.O.)
I blame the system.

THE PRIEST pulls alongside.

MARK (V.O.)
And a very rough upbringing.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD POOL PARTY - CIRCA 1990

Kids, mostly black, lounge in and around a pill-shaped
suburban pool. They look out of place amid the palm fronds
of this ornate cabana. Some sip beers. Others smoke pot.
WEAVING amongst them is a WHITE WOMAN, Karen Cross, (40s),
blonde, curvaceous. Outwardly the standard trophy wife, but
perhaps a bit more. A calm steeliness belies her beauty.
Trash bag in hand, she collects crushed cans and smoldering
butts.

KAREN
Let’s put it in the bag, please!
The patio’s not a dump!

A fat kid cannonballs the pool.

KAREN
That’s it Dante! You’re done for
the year! Out!

VOICE (O.S.)
Mom! We need you!

(CONTINUED)
KAREN
Coming sweetheart!

She makes her way to a large playroom where FOUR BOYS, age ten to twelve, stand at a massive Brunswick pool table. MARK, The shortest, mouths an UNLIT CIGARETTE.

TERELL
That’s bullshit! You can’t use your mom!

MARK
My house. My rules.

CESAR
Yah. Don’t be such a winer.

KAREN
Who’s wining?!

BOYS
No One!

KAREN
Good. I hate winers. What’s up?

CESAR
We were gonna bet that you couldn’t make this shot.

Karen eyes the table.

KAREN
The eight? Which pocket?

MARK
Side.

KAREN
How much?

The boys shift nervously. All eyes turn to Mark.

KAREN
Well...

MARK
Five bucks.

KAREN
Come on guys!

She turns to leave.
MARK
No Wait! Ten!

Mark lights the cigarette. Karen turns, interested.

KAREN
(re: cigarette)
How many is that today?

MARK
Four.

TERELL
Five.

She plucks the fag from his lips, crushes it in an ashtray

KAREN
Alright. On the table.

Mark lays the ten on the wood as Karen grabs a cue. The shot itself, is no feat for a pro. She lines up perfectly,
- shoots straight. The cue ball banks off two rails before striking the eight dead-on. - It rolls to the edge of the pocket and stalls.

CESAR
Shit, that was close!

TERELL
Ha-Ha! Looks like your mom owes you ten bucks.

Karen stares, sick, at the blown shot. Without blinking, she SLAMS the table with a thundering pelvic bump. The ball sinks as the boys stand speechless.

KAREN
Whoa, earthquake. You guys alright?

She tucks the cash in her cleavage. Off screen, a low, mechanical, whirr is heard.

KAREN
Oh, fuck.

EXT. CROSS HOME DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

A cop car drives through the gate surrounding this palatial home. It glides in between two Cadillacs, and parks.
INT. CROSS HOME - CONTINUOUS

A panicked Karen quickly herds the boys out of the playroom.

    KAREN
    Anyone see little Dave?!

EXT. CROSS HOME DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

A tall, slick-haired, cop (40s) exits the squad car. Boots, badge, revolver, all glisten in the sun.

    MARK (V.O.)
    I’m the youngest of two boys. My brother Dave, being the adopted one.

The Sheriff aims a remote at the garage. The door lifts revealing an OLDER BOY (teens) huffing gas from a can. A SECOND BOY bolts away. Unphased, the sheriff closes the garage door.

    MARK (V.O.)
    My Father, a successful developer, started a second career at thirty-six.

EXT. CROSS BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

A MAD scramble. Karen hurries to hide evidence as the boys hustle kids out of the pool.

    KAREN
    Party’s over guys! Grab your shit, and follow me to the door, now!

EXT. CROSS HOME DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Sheriff, Farrell "Big Dave" Cross, scans for life. He undoes his tie, and heads for the patio.

    BIG DAVE
    Honey! -Mark!
    (to himself)
    Where the hell is everyone?!

    MARK (V.O.)
    Law enforcement, he said, was his first love. So, after developing most of Orange, California, he went back to it.
EXT. CROSS BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The kids begrudgingly exit the pool.

KAREN
We gotta move, guys! Let’s go!

KID
But we just got here!

KAREN
Mark, would you please help your friends out of our freakin’ pool!

Arriving on the patio, the sheriff stops, stares disbelieving what he sees.

BIG DAVE
Who’s responsible for this?!

MARK (V.O.)
My father wasn’t what you’d call "open minded".

BIGOT VISION. Big Dave’s mind morphs kids into grotesque caricatures.

MARK (V.O.)
He always had this saying...

CUT TO:

EXT. CROSS BACKYARD - LATER

Big Dave stands with Mark. Guests mill down the driveway.

BIG DAVE
Everybody plays a part, son. People play theirs, and we play ours.

MARK (V.O.)
I never got it.

INT. HONDA - DAY

Honking horns kick Mark into the NOW.

MARK (V.O.)
I mean... Were we not people?

(CONTINUED)
The Honda continues down Front street to a concrete parkade. It pulls into a space marked "INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE ONLY".

MARK (V.O.)
One thing I will credit the old guy with is influencing my job choice.

INT. OFFICE ELEVATOR - DAY

Mark rides with Feds of all branches. Some don badges. A few have guns. Most carry tall lattes.

MARK (V.O.)
Sure, I made stops along the way...

INT. CUBICLE - E-Z CHECK CASH - 2000

MARK (V.O.)
I did tax preparation...

Mark helps a client as ARMED THIEVES burst in. The cashiers run away, leaving Mark and his client with the felons.

MARK (V.O.)
Even tried teaching consumer math to eighth-graders.

INT. SO. CALI CLASSROOM - 2001

Thirty kids in a room built for half that. A young pair MAKE OUT. Others laugh, talk on cellphones. Mark scrawls something on the blackboard and leaves. "GOOD LUCK IN PRISON. ALL OF YOU!" No one notices.

MARK (V.O.)
Though not a nurturer, I still felt driven to serve...

EXT. OPEN AIR JOB FAIR - 2002

Rows of kiosks represent everything from biotech to banking. Mark ambles through the herd of human cattle towards the "LAW ENFORCEMENT" section.

MARK (V.O.)
But who ever heard of a cop with a Masters in finance?

(CONTINUED)
He passes a cardboard cut-out of a cop that resembles Big Dave

MARK (V.O.)
There had to be a way...

Separated from the crowd, he sees it. -Three letters looming large.

MARK (V.O.)
And I knew it the second I saw it.

A man in a gray suit waves him over.

INT. OFFICE ELEVATOR - PRESENT DAY

Third floor. The armed contingent exits leaving Mark, and a few others.

MARK (V.O.)
But getting back to this whole empty billboard thing...

Mark sees a HOT black girl amongst the Feds. She feels the come-on, but could care less.

MARK (V.O.)
It’s actually quite a dangerous thing to be.

Fourth floor. Mark steps off, looks over his shoulder as the elevator shuts on the girl.

MARK (V.O.)
There’s no way of knowing who’s got an eye on you. -Or why.

CUT TO:

INT. I.R.S. SAN DIEGO BRANCH - CONTINUOUS

Busy, as you’d expect. Rows of cubicles manned by the old, young, thin, and morbidly fat. Mark passes them as TODD McCARTHY, (35), and aging jock, falls in stride.

MCCARTHY
following your sick tweets is like speed-reading porn.
MARK
Someone reads porn?

MCCARTHY
Bernanke’s a festering d-bag!
Geithner’s a lolly-licking
boy-lover!

MARK
All said with the best intentions,
I swear.

MCCARTHY
And that stuff about the Clintons?

MARK
Bourgeois scum. But I never cursed.

MCCARTHY
You wanted to.

MARK
Mark these words: when I get up to
their level, –Game over.

MCCARTHY
Yeah. Tony Soprano, but in the
Federal Reserve!

MARK
Gotta have dreams, my friend.

MCCARTHY
Gotta get sleep first. Raych came
by for another all-nighter.

MARK
Again?!

MCCARTHY
Your boy has some ugly needs.

MARK
Ugly ain’t the word!

MCCARTHY
Speaking of ugly, your bro’s been
texting me again.

MARK
What’s he want?

(CONTINUED)
MCCARTHY
No clue. Ever try taking his calls?

MARK
He’s confrontational.

MCCARTHY
He’s family.

MARK
One day you’ll have some shot-out tweeker in your family. Until then, shut up about Dave.

The men turn a corner, walk past a sign that reads "CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS". The carpet’s way nicer here. EPSTEIN, (33) A curly-haired geek-type emerges from a glass-walled office.

EPSTEIN
Stay Back! I caught Swine Flu from my niece!

McCarthy JUMPS behind Mark.

MARK
Again?!

EPSTEIN
No, last time it was Whooping Cough.

MCCARTHY
Where do you live, Epstein, Guatemala?!

MARK
You should go home.

EPSTEIN
(coughing)
I got audits all morning. Unless someone helps?

MARK
I have a nine-thirty.

MCCARTHY
(sighs, reluctant)
Alright, where’s it at?

EPSTEIN
Pacific Beach.
MCCARTHY
Another pot clinic?

EPSTEIN
With a tattoo parlor attached.

MARK
Cha-ching!

EPSTEIN
Been a windfall since they Ok’d medical bud. City gets eight figures a year. Our take is limited to cashiers who make six.

MCCARTHY
Beats starbucks.

Through an open door, Mark sees someone seated in the adjacent office.

MARK
Oh crap!

It’s the priest from the freeway.

EPSTEIN
Tell me that isn’t who I think it is!

MCCARTHY
Father Tom! You’re nailing donate-a-car guy?!

MARK
On books he’s Tom Keene. I never made the connection.

MCCARTHY
Come on! He’s clergy! -And he’s got such cool commercials.

Epstein throws an infectious, hacking, fit. The guys take a GIANT step back

MCCARTHY
Should’nt you be in a quarantine bubble?

EPSTEIN
See if the Father will say a prayer for me!

(CONTINUED)
MARK
I would. But he hasn’t got one to spare.

Mark steps in his office, shuts the door.

MARK
Top of the morning to you, Father.

FATHER TOM
They ex-commem me in o-five. The Frock’s an embellishment.

MARK
Sorry to hear that.

FATHER TOM
You must be Mark.

MARK
Yes.

FATHER TOM
You sound bigger on the phone. Was your old man a cop?

MARK
(surprised)
As a matter of fact, he was.

FATHER TOM
And mom was some sort of accessory. -A model I’m guessing. Probably never held a job in her life.

MARK
She worked at home. Raised me and my brother.

FATHER TOM
Raised? Wanna try that again?

MARK
Excuse me?!

FATHER TOM
Doted, maybe, but raised? Not quite. The old man was a bit of a hard ass, but she spoiled you. Let you grow up thinking the world was yours for the taking.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
I don’t think we’re here to discuss...

FATHER TOM
You basically raised yourself. She may have nurtured, loved you, and gave you things you wanted but somehow it just wasn’t enough...

MARK
You about done?!

FATHER TOM
Pretty ironic, really.

MARK
What are you talking about?!

FATHER TOM
You’re the favorite. Yet in the end you were the one who broke her heart.

MARK
(seething)
ME?! HOW THE FUCK AM I THE ONE!

It’s too late to take it back. Mark gathers himself.

FATHER TOM
Sorry for that. I go off on tangents sometimes.

MARK
Obviously.
(a beat)
Let’s get back to business shall we?

FATHER TOM
By all means.

MARK
You run the largest charity in Southern Cal. Yet you’d risk that by engaging in acts which, to say the least, are provocative.

FATHER TOM
Provocative?! I run two rehabs and a full clinic. Mind you, that’s in addition to the full-time job of (MORE)
FATHER TOM (cont’d)
feeding folks left broke by this recession!

MARK
I’m referring to compliance under article five-o-one of U.S. tax code. Public charity exemption.

FATHER TOM
Look, I’ve been down this road before. I don’t deny that I’m a wide load, but accountants these days do not come cheap.

MARK
This isn’t about your books, Father.

FATHER TOM
Then I’m afraid I don’t know why I’m here.

MARK
Wanna try that again?

FATHER TOM
I’m sorry?!

MARK
There’s proof you helped Assemblyman Joe LaTorno’s campaign out considerably.

FATHER TOM
I’ve never met the guy.

MARK
Your secretary wrote him two checks. Fifty, and forty grand, respectively.

FATHER
Personal checks. Dot’s a big spender.

MARK
By Dot, you mean Dorothy Ann Procter. Two convictions for fraud in ’01.

(CONTINUED)
FATHER TOM
She’s rehabilitated.

MARK
Question is, are you? Joe Latorno sits on the panel that oversees development and zoning.

FATHER TOM
I’m not in real estate.

MARK
There’s a hundred unit complex downtown bearing your name.

FATHER TOM
If you mean the battered women’s home, I’d hardly call that a hot property.

MARK
Last year one of your "Shelters" sold for two million bucks.

FATHER TOM
At fair market! You know what a man like you’s problem is?! You’re completely shut off! -Shut off to the pain of anyone not listed as a guest on your Facebook page!

MARK
Maybe. But there’s one thing men like me can do.

Mark reaches in his desk, grabs a file, hands it to Father Tom.

MARK (CONT’D)
Cover our tracks.

FATHER TOM
What’s this?

MARK
Bank statements. Prior to her donation, Dot wired a hundred grand in church funds to her account.

FATHER TOM
I didn’t know.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
Then she’s an embezzler.

FATHER TOM
Now wait a minute! Whatever Dot did, I asked her to do. You people sit up your fancy high-rises looking down on the rest of us. You don’t stop to think of how regular folks get things done! Eighty percent of my time and a hundred percent of my resources are spent helping those with nothing. So what, if there’s a few perks hidden in the weeds!

MARK
Perk or not, this is your last warning. No campaigns.

FATHER TOM
Is that all?

MARK
Not quite. That stuff you said before... You some kind of clairvoyant?

FATHER TOM
Close. Before my calling, I tended bar.

MARK
That’s It?!

FATHER TOM
Let’s just say driving habits tell a lot about people too.

MARK
Understood.

FATHER TOM
Have a blessed day, kiddo.

The Reverend leaves, nearly colliding with a DARK-SUITED MAN on his way out.

MARK
(to man)
Can I help you find something?
MAN
Nope. I’m good.

An attractive girl in a wheelchair, RACHEL YANG (25), rolls in with a soccer ball.

RACHEL
You down for the cause today, Cross?

MARK
Which one?

The stranger disappears.

RACHEL
The Brazilians. I’m telling you, it’s their day.

MARK
Where’d he go?

RACHEL
Who?!

Mark checks the hallway. —It’s empty.

MARK
He didn’t have a badge.

RACHEL
Neither do you.

MARK
Never seen him around before.

RACHEL
Just a suit. Who cares?

MARK
I care.

RACHEL
Well it looks like he got what he came for and left. I, on the other hand, am still in the market for a mid-fielder. Know anyone?

CUT TO:
EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK - DAY

Shouts of joy and agony float to the buildings around a small green pitch. Mark, now shirtless in shorts, runs down a ball in this pickup soccer game.

Rachel’s high-tech chair hums over the pitch. It’s freakishly fast.

RACHEL
(shouting)
I’m open!

Mark hesitates and is stripped by a young Brazilian.

RACHEL
(shouting)
What was that?!

Mark charges the kid, who eludes him and scores a game-winner.

RACHEL
Shit!

Disgraced, Mark prostrates on the pitch. Abbey grabs her ball, rolls over.

RACHEL
I could easily have them all deported

MARK
Sounds harsh, but okay.

RACHEL
Or you can take what’s left of your pride, and go shake hands.

MARK
(annoyed)
I lost a game, not my mind or my gonads.

He gets up. Starts limping away

RACHEL
Am I wrong for enjoying this?

MARK
This?

(CONTINUED)
RACHEL
Watching you suck at something for once.

MARK
Hey, whatever gets you there.

RACHEL
It’s weird. Ever since the wreck, my life’s been... -I dunno... Illuminated somehow.

MARK
You’re kidding right?

RACHEL
No.

MARK
Because I fail to see how any sort of enlightenment could result in McCarthy.

ABBEY
Um. for your clarification, -Todd, as I like to call him, thinks I’m awesome. Plus, -he totally rocks my world in bed.

MARK
So I’ve heard.

ABBEY
Excuse me?!

MARK
Look. Free advice. When it comes to that guy, -Don’t settle.

RACHEL
And who are you to talk, Mr. loveless relationship?!

MARK
Tonya and I are fine.

RACHEL
If you mean "fine" in the bored, unhappy sense, then I agree.

MARK
I don’t.

(CONTINUED)
RACHEL
So why not "great" Or "amazing"?

MARK
Because it’s smug, overconfident, and generally precedes domestic violence. And what’s with the smack-talk? With our past, you should be glad I’m helping.

ABBEEY
Time out. Since when does a drunken hand-job copped at an office party constitute a "past"?

Mark BLUSHES bright red.

ABBEEY
Hm. Must’ve been good.

MARK
For the record, I’m typically more responsible than that.

ABBEEY
Yah. Well for the record no one put a gun to my head either.

A shared smile. Without warning, She JAMS the ball in his gut.

MARK
Ow!

She rolls away.

MARK
(re: ball)
What do I do with this?

ABBEEY
Practice!

A MAN observes them from a bench. It’s the hallway guy. He lowers his shades as Mark moves closer.

MAN
Hot little number, ain’t she?

MARK
(defensive)
I’m sorry?!
MAN
Like one I used to bang back east.
- With legs, of course.

MARK
(to himself)
Just keep walking... Ignore park wacko...

He turns to leave.

MAN
You’ve been on our radar for years,
Cross. It’s good to finally meet in person.

Mark stops, turns.

MARK
How’d you know my name?!

MAN
Bob Evans. GAO. I recruited you.

MARK
Sure. Unbeknownst to me, of course.
- I’m in no mood for jokes, pal!

EVANS
You’re a man with big aspirations,
Cross. I’m someone who they listen
to at the Federal Reserve.

MARK
Right... One question there, Bob. 
When McCarthy hired you for this,
did he know you were such a bad actor?

Evans shows his badge - It’s real.

MARK
Yeah well, I don’t know who 
collects your intel, but it’s bad.
- I got a job. And I’m not looking
to make any lateral moves.

EVANS
What I’m offering is strictly part
time.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
Doesn’t matter. Not interested.

EVANS
Life is ten percent what happens, kid. Ninety percent how you work it.

MARK
Read my lips, buddy. -No sale.

Mark turns away. The cold, knowing, stare of a lifelong fed drilling through his back.

EVANS
I’ll be around if things change.

INT. EXERCISE ROOM SHOWER - DAY

Mark stands in the shower, hot water streaming down his face and neck.

MARK (V.O.)
Someone once wrote that all rights were purely imagined...

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Evans approaches Mark’s car. A long tool slides from his sleeve. -He pops the hood.

MARK (V.O.)
Myths designed to placate the powerless with illusions of balance... Justice...

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Combat boots marching. Like the first scene, one dwarfs the others.

MARK (V.O.)
While I’m not one for conspiracy theories, I can say this with great certainty...
INT. ABBEY’S CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

A photo of Mark dressed as Santa with Abbey on his knee. She studies it before plucking it off the wall.

MARK (V.O.)
...Every lie needs a taker.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - WALKING

Mark straightens his tie on the way back to work.

MARK (V.O.)
Occasionally, lots of them.

As he turns the corner, he stops short, horrified.

IN HIS OFFICE

Half-open file drawers. A TRASHED desk. Shocked, Mark surveys the room. The only clue left is a series of BOOT SCUFFS on the once pristine carpet.

MARK (V.O.)
If that isn’t written down somewhere, it should be.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MARKS OFFICE - DAY

Entering the room, he notices a BROWN ENVELOPE placed conspicuously on his desk. Slowly, he opens it, empties the contents.

It’s a copy of a his FEDERAL APPLICATION from September of ’02. In red, someone has scrawled "PERSONAL INFO" on the top. Mark turns to that page. -A trip down memory lane.

Page four. Circled in red is question two. "HAVE YOU EVER USED, OR SPONSORED USE OF AN ILLEGAL, OR CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE?" An arrow pointing to the question is anchored by three words. "PERJURY. SEE VIDEO."

A jolt of paranoia makes him look around the room. He sees a FLASH DRIVE taped to the screen of his monitor.

(CONTINUED)
He rips it down and boots up the computer. With one eye on the door, he plugs the drive into a port. It takes time, but a video box appears on screen. Shortly thereafter, -a face. LITTLE DAVE. Much older, but wasted as usual.

LITTLE DAVE
Whooo! Hoo! This is Dave coming to you live from his little bro’s graduation party! Umm. I just wanna say that the class of ninety nine has, by far, the hottest fucking chicks I have ever seen in my life! Let’s see those assets ladies!

The camera pans to a crowd of drunk girls flashing their tits. On a scale of one to INSANE, this party is pure madness. The camera moves through the crowd of twenty-somethings to a place we’ve seen before.

AT THE BILLIARDS TABLE

A slimmer, more buff, Mark stands flanked by hot women.

LITTLE DAVE (O.S.)
Dude, over here! Check it out, it’s my mom!

The camera pans right. KAREN CROSS, fifties now, cruises with a trash bag. She’s aged the way dolls do. -A wonder of modern surgery.

CAMERA MAN
Dude, no way is that your mom!

LITTLE DAVE
Mom!... Mom!... You got any words for the folks out there?

KAREN
Yes. First: Be safe. Second: Have a wonderful time. Third: Clean up after yourselves because your father’s flying home on Tuesday. And oh! -I just want to say congrats to my son Mark, on his degree! You’ve made us all very pr-

LITTLE DAVE
Alright mom, that’ll be all for now. -Let’s get back to the party!

The camera finds Mark making out with Salma Hayek’s twin sister.

(CONTINUED)
LITTLE DAVE
She better be eighteen bro!

GIRL
I’m eighteen.

CAMERA MAN
Holy crap, she speaks English!

MARK
Would you quit with that stupid camera!

LITTLE DAVE
Whoa, Whoa, little bro, you’re way too uptight. You know I got a cure for that, if you wanna partake.

Dave digs into his pocket, pulls out an eighth-ounce of crystal.

MARK
Dude, you are insane!

LITTLE DAVE
C’mon, man. It’s your night. Do a rail with us, come on!

The crowd starts CHANTING simultaneously.

CROWD
Rail! Rail! Rail! Rail!

Dave cuts a line on the edge of the table.

MARK
Turn that camera off!

CROWD
Rail! Rail! Rail!

CAMERA MAN
Alright. It’s off.

The camera pans down until its aimed at the floor. Out of frame, but very much ON.

MARK (O.S.)
Where’s mom?!

LITTLE DAVE (O.S.)
Outside. Hurry up!

ON SCREEN

(CONTINUED)
The sly camera-guy tilts the lens just enough to see Mark chomping down the line. The crowd cheers.

IN THE OFFICE

Mark’s guts have been kicked out. In a fit of rage, he grabs the drive, -ZINGS it across the room, nearly hitting MCCARTHY in the head.

MCCARTHY
Whoa! easy!

MARK
(defensive)
When the fuck did you get here?!

MCCARTHY
Just now. Checked out the pot farm on Mission. Place is insane.

MARK
Um. I’m kinda slammed here.

MCCARTHY
Fair enough. Just came to see if you wanted food.

MARK
Nah. Think I’ll work through lunch, today.

MCCARTHY
(awkward)
Suit yourself.

McCarthy heads out. Before leaving, he intuitively turns to Mark.

MCCARTHY
You in some kind of weird mood?

MARK
I’m fine. Just not hungry.

MCCARTHY
In that case, check out THC ink. They got these buds that--.

MARK
(cuts him off)
I’ll make a note.
As soon as he leaves, Mark DIVES DOWN, combing the floor with his hands. He checks the counter-tops. Under the desk. -All to no avail. -The drive is just gone.

As if on cue, the desk phone rings.

MARK
(answering)
Agent Cross.

EVANS (O.S)
So... Are we ready to be a bit more social?

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK - DAY

Evans sits on his favorite bench watching a far less friendly soccer match among Somali cabbies. From the footpath, a man approaches wearing a ballcap and shades. Evans lets out a chuckle.

EVANS
I Didn’t realize I said incognito.

MARK
How did you get that tape?

EVANS
First you gotta to tell me how you liked your film debut.

MARK
I’m getting a lawyer.

EVANS
Not smart. You see, This is the part where you should say: "Golly gee Mr. Evans. How can I get my perjuring ass out of this sling?"

MARK
Did you say you were with GAO?

EVANS
I did.

MARK
What’s your job?

EVANS
Let’s just say that our mission, at its core, is the safety and well-being of the United States.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
You guys walk bombs through airports.

EVANS
As a test.

MARK
Live devices?!

EVANS
Guess you’d prefer it be some jihadist?! Or some nut next to mom on the flight back from Lauderdale?!

MARK
How do you know-

EVANS
The point is that total security often demands harsh measures.

MARKA
What’ that go to do with me?

EVANS
Before I forget, that drive you "misplaced" landed in the trash. -Only place you didn’t check.

MARK
You put cameras in my office?!

EVANS
Man, I’m starved! You eat yet?

MARK
Why is everyone trying to feed me? I’m not hungry!

EVANS
Fine then. Taco Bell it is.

CUT TO:

EXT. TACO BELL - DAY
Evans’ late model Grand Marquis pulls into the parking lot. At shotgun, Mark looks more hostage than passenger.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
Um. Technically I can’t leave work for taco runs.

EVANS
I’ll write you a note.

MARK
Look. Bob. Can I call you bob? I appreciate whatever you guys are doing here. I really do. but the truth is I’m actually...

EVANS
(to himself)
Drive thru, dining room, drive thru, dining room... Ah, lets do drive thru.

MARK (CONT’D)
...Scared out of my mind right now, and with good reason. I mean, you’ve got me. Totally. I recognize that, and I know you guys recognize my need to stay employed here.

Evans pulls up to the order mic.

EVANS
I’ll take a number four, no sauce, with two Mexican Pizzas.

Evans pulls forward. At the first window, a girl takes his money, and hands him the food. He idles ahead to the next window where a YOUNG MAN (20’s), latino, tats everywhere, hands Evans a cloth sack. Evans drops it in Mark’s lap before pulling away.

MARK
No appetite. Remember?

EVANS
Take a look. Might change your mind.

Mark opens the sack, -shuts it just as fast.

EVANS
Not too bad, huh?!

MARK
Um. There’s... -money in there.

(CONTINUED)
EVANS
Wish I knew how much. Think you can count it for me?

MARK
Who’s is it?

EVANS
Ours.

MARK
Excuse me?

EVANS
Not ours—ours. -The Government’s. Collected from one Miguel Saldana Cruz.

MARK
Mickey Cruz? the Drug lord?!

EVANS
No, the landscaper. Cash miraculously shoots out of his leaf-blower.

He bites into a taco.

MARK
Who’s oversight does this fall under?

EVANS
That would be mine.

MARK
So you’re some kind of rogue fed?

EVANS
Look, I’m not the one with the problem here, You are. I’m just a guy trying to help. You should let me.

MARK
I should let you blackmail me?!

A beat.

EVANS
Think of of it like this taco. Salt. Fat. Heart attack, right? Yet, it effectively solves a short-term problem.
He takes a bite.

   EVANS
   Rather scrumptiously, I might add.

   MARK
   I don’t follow.

   EVANS
   Take your basic street-level deal. Two bills for an eighth ounce of blow. -Peanuts. But say you make twenty a day. Now you’ve got four grand.

   MARK
   That’s a crime.

   EVANS
   Doesn’t mean it’s not taxable. The cartels clock billions a year. That’s billions in cash revenue going un-levied. Why?

   MARK
   Probably because it’s not supposed to be happening.

   EVANS
   Yet it does happen. Thousands of times a day. Our answer? Round up perps. Mandatory four year stretches. Forty grand a year for food, and healthcare. Times that by about a million and you got what? Forty billion of your dollars spent warehousing perfectly useful individuals.

   MARK
   Criminals.

Evans pulls into a supermarket lot, parks in a space.

   EVANS
   The current administration has chosen not to turn it’s back on this potential revenue source.

   MARK
   Drug Money?!
EVANS
Two costly wars. failing Markets. Uncle Sam is in dire need of a new hustle. We need your help.

MARK
For what?!

EVANS
To make sure the scum pays their fair share.

MARK
Let me get this straight. You’re going to audit criminal enterprise?!

EVANS
Tough times require tough moves. A.K.A resourcefulness. Unless you wanna go beg China for another two trillion.

MARK
Say I help. What’s your offer?

EVANS
(laughs)
Zero. —You help us, this little problem of yours goes away.

MARK
And if I don’t?

EVANS
I’d hate for that application to land on the wrong desk.

MARK
I need time.

EVANS
Training starts in six hours.

Evans pulls a pen from his pocket. He writes something on a food wrapper and hands it to Mark.

EVANS
Be here at eight sharp. If for some reason you no-show, I promise I’ll take it the wrong way.

Mark looks at the address, reacts nervously to what he sees.
ACCROSS THE PARKING LOT

A UNIFORMED COP (40s) Latino, watches Evans’ car through binoculars. He speaks into a CELLPHONE on walkie-talkie setting.

UNIFORMED COP
Estoy Aqui. I’m here.

MEXICAN VOICE
Donde? Where?

UNIFORMED COP
Pinche supermercado. A fucking supermarket

MEXICAN VOICE
Que vistes? What do you see?

UNIFORMED COP
El gordo. Con otro wedito. The fat one. With another white guy.

MEXICAN VOICE
Otro? Quien es? Another one?! Who is he?

UNIFORMED COP
No lo conozco. I don’t know him.

MEXICAN VOICE
Investiguelo. Si nos Amenece, -Eliminelo. Check him out. If he’s a threat, eliminate him.

UNIFORMED COP
Bueno.

He flips his phone SHUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN: EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK - DAY

Evans drops Mark off. A farewell HONK startles him onto the footpath.

INT. OFFICE ELEVATOR - DAY

Mark and several others ride silently. He still dons a CAP and SHADES.
INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - WALKING

Completely out of it, he collides with several co-workers as he ambles down the hall.

MARK (V.O.)
Whether or not, I’d been set-up for some unknown reason by the Fed, the tape was, as I saw it, my own fault. It made me the one thing a cash-strapped government can never pass up. -Cheap labor.

INT. MARK’S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mark sits at his desk watching air. After a few seconds, his shirt pocket hums a loud ring tone. Mark lets it ring over and over.

He leans down and grabs the trash can by the desk. The discarded drive sits squarely atop the pile. He grabs the drive, stuffs it in his sock.

A knock on the door startles him. Abbey pokes her head inside

RACHEL
You okay? I could hear that from outside

MARK
I’m fine.

RACHEL
That explains the shades.

He removes them, embarrassed.

Rachel glides in. Shuts the door.

RACHEL
Someone saw you with some guy at the park...

Mark puts an index finger to his lips, motions for them to go outside. THEY LEAVE.

IN THE HALLWAY

Mark shuts the door. The dialogue resumes.

(CONTINUED)
RACHEL
What was that for?!

MARK
I’m in a bit of a situation right now.

RACHEL
Your folks okay?

MARK
They’re fine.

RACHEL
What’d that guy want?

MARK
Nothing. Say Raych, did you notice anyone strange near my office?

RACHEL
Is something missing?

MARK
Sort of.

RACHEL
Now that you mention it, there were some guys here earlier.

MARK
You mean in here?!

RACHEL
They wanted the Director. I sent them to Gomez’s office.

MARK
What’d they look like?

RACHEL
DEA if I remember right.

MARK
Badges?

RACHEL
Jackets. Like they were on some raid.

MARK
Anything else?

(CONTINUED)
RACHEL
The white guy was big. Gigantor-big. Then there was a black guy with a ponytail.

MARK
You’re incredible.

RACHEL
I have a thing for men with ponytails.

MARK
Thanks Raych.

He heads down the hall.

RACHEL
(shouts)
Where are you going?!

INT. MEN’S TOILET STALL - DAY

Pants up, smart-phone in hand, Mark sits on the bowl scrolling features. He selects "PLAY NEW MESSAGES" and waits a few seconds...

MESSAGE
Hey loser, it’s your big bro. Just wanted to-

He skips it.

MESSAGE
Dave again. I’ve called twice! There some reason why you don’t-

He hits DELETE.

The display reads: 1 NEW MESSAGE. Nervously, Mark selects "PLAY NEW MESSAGE."

MESSAGE
Hey boo. Got your call. I’m not out here in my draws, So don’t trip about the uniform, okay...

The message grinds to background noise. Mark exhales, relieved.
INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - DAY

Walking across the expanse, Mark looks aged. More in the last hour, than the last few years. As he nears his car, closing footfalls FREEZE him in his tracks. He spins around to see a fellow worker climbing into a van. Mark smiles politely.

Turning to his car, Mark bobbles his keys. As they fall to the ground, his EYES WIDEN.

ON THE GROUND

BOOT SCUFFS Circle the car like an ant trail. Entranced, Mark follows them to the driveway.

Just then, a van LURCHES to a stop one inch from Mark’s leg. -It’s the coworker.

COWORKER
Whoa! Watch where you’re goin!

MARK
Sorry.

The coworker drives off, annoyed.

From behind, a firm hand grips Mark’s shoulder.

MCCARTHY
You alright?!

MARK
(startled)
Whatthefuck! You trying to gimme a heart attack?!

MCCARTHY
Looked like you were tryin’ to kill yourself anyway.

MARK
I’m fine.

MCCARTHY
If it’s one thing we’ve established, it’s that you’re not fine. And since you won’t say what’s wrong, I’ve got no choice but to assume the worst.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
What’s that?

MCCARTHY
I dunno. Big house for such a young couple. You wouldn’t be the first to struggle, if you know what I mean.

MARK
It’s not the house.

MCCARTHY
You sure? I mean it would explain a lot. Your moods, for starters... And why you’ve been grumbling behind my back with Raych.

MARK
What?!

MCCARTHY
Please. Drop the act. She told me everything.

MARK
Dude, are you serious?! Are we really gonna do this now?!

MCCARTHY
You could wait until the next time you two are alone. Again. 
(a beat, then)
Funny thing is... I really thought you and I were bros.

MARK
Bros?! This is nuts! You’re nuts!

Mark gets in his car, starts it. McCarthy approaches the window.

MCCARTHY
This mean we’re not bro’s anymore?!

Mark reverses, makes zero eye contact as he drives off.

MCCARTHY
Nice. Real nice.
EXT. 5 FREEWAY - DAY

Mark hums along in the fast lane, visibly on edge.

    MARK (V.O.)
    I met Todd McCarthy on day one of orientation...

INT. I.R.S. - CONFERENCE ROOM - 2002

Eight new agents sit at a conference table. Among them is Mark; fresh faced, hopeful. At the head, a veteran, JIM GOMEZ, (50s) spouts doctrine.

    GOMEZ
    First, I’d like to extend a fond welcome, to the next generation of guardians to our great nation’s treasury...

Next to Mark, McCarthy sits EYES CLOSED, half asleep.

    MARK (V.O.)
    I’m pretty sure he was hung over.

EXT. MCCARTHY’S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

    MARK (V.O.)
    He was in a bad marriage.

McCarthy stands under a stream of clothes, food, and electronics falling from an upstairs window. Mark watches patiently from his car.

    MARK (V.O.)
    I was single. And at least in his mind, he was too.

INT. COOTER’S STRIP JOINT - CONTINUOUS

McCarthy ogles a blonde as she grinds on stage. Mark balances a black chick on his knee while kissing her neck. A BOUNCER separates them.

    MARK (V.O.)
    Truth was, we were just plain lonely.
EXT. STRIP JOINT PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Mark stands lookout as the blonde BLOWS McCarthy in the car.

    MARK (V.O.)
    Long story short, I put up with a lot of things I shouldn’t have.

EXT. I-5 - PRESENT DAY

    MARK (V.O.)
    And that is how men become "bros".

Mark spots a BILLIARDS sign off the freeway. He exits.

INT. BILLIARDS HALL - CONTINUOUS

A table to himself, Mark racks the balls and lines up for a break.

A DRUNK GUY comes over from the bar.

    DRUNK GUY
    Play for a beer?

    MARK
    I don’t drink.

    DRUNK GUY
    For fun then.

    MARK
    Actually, I was hoping for some quiet. Clear my head out a little.

    DRUNK GUY
    Boy, are you in the wrong place!

He grabs a cue.

    DRUNK GUY
    Your break.

    MARK
    Look man, I don’t want trouble.

    DRUNK GUY
    Who says I’m trouble?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VOICE (O.S.)
I do.

A man steps from the shadows. The UNIFORMED COP, sans uniform, and binoculars. Meet JUAN CARLOS ORTEGA (40s), Heavy set, well dressed. -Speaks with the slightest of Mexican accents.

ORTEGA
Man said he wants quiet.

DRUNK GUY
Who the hell are you?!

ORTEGA
Someone you don’t want to meet.

Two BURLY THUGS enter behind Ortega. Drunk guy gets the point, scurries off. Ortega now puts his full attention on Mark.

MARK
Thank you. I think.

ORTEGA
De Nada, Senor. A man should be left to play his game.

MARK
Agreed.

ORTEGA
Especially if he’s good at it.

Ortega eyes him intently. Scanning for weakness.

MARK (warily)
Like I said. Thanks. Now, if you don’t mind...

Mark aligns for the break. He draws back, -strikes with authority.

ON THE TABLE

Balls fly in all directions. High ball sinks. As Mark squares for a shot, applause erupts behind him. Ortega hasn’t budged.

(CONTINUED)
ORTEGA
Muy bien, Marcos. Con Sabor!

Mark turns to face him.

MARK
Let me guess... A friend of Bob’s.

ORTEGA
Colleague is perhaps a better term. Me and the man you call "Bob" work in the same uh... field.

The thugs let out a chuckle.

ORTEGA
The question is, Mr. Cross; Where you fit in this equation.

MARK
Fit? I just met him! I don’t know jack about anything he’s talking about.

ORTEGA
Maybe yes, maybe no. Either way, one is judged by his associates. Take a place like this; -bright. Crowded. Here you are safe. But out there... You could be mistaken for something you are not.

MARK
Like...

ORTEGA
It’s late in the day, Mr. Cross. My coworkers and I are tired. Perhaps we will continue our conversation another time.

Him and his thugs turn to leave.

MARK
I didn’t get your name.

ORTEGA
Quite right. You can call me... Joe.

A Chortle from the thugs.

(CONTINUED)
ORTEGA
And easy on the gas, Mr. Cross. My friend Cesar, here hates to speed.

They exit. Mark is left staring after them.

MARK (V.O.)
Fact: After the FBI, The IRS is our toughest tool against organized crime...

CUT TO:

EXT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX - DAY

MARK (V.O.)
Each year, thousands of audits reveal patterns that point out hidden, or ill-gotten gains.

Mark pulls into a spot, checks all sides before getting out.

MARK (V.O.)
Excessive deductions... Gaps in profit and loss statements... All say one thing. -Dig deeper.

While walking, he spots a sedan idling. A man in a tan trenchcoat stands next to it.

MARK (V.O)
Still, for each racket found, a multitude go unnoticed.

Mark DUCKS behind a parked car.

MARK (V.O)
Growing in strength and number until the very pillars of the host society are compromised...

After a while a woman appears with suitcases.

WOMAN
Airport. I’m late.

MARK (V.O)
Making situations like mine inevitable.

Relieved, he resumes walking. Approaching his unit, he clumsily drops his keys in a puddle.

(CONTINUED)
ON THE GROUND

Dark BOOTPRINTS from the puddle to the front door.

Panicked, Mark flies to the door. The yip of a SMALL DOG beckons inside.

MARK
Good girl Maxi! I’m coming!

A flyer on the door knob reads: FATHER TOM’S CHARITIES. -GIVE TO LIVE!

As he struggles with the key, the door opens. A Pomeranian darts out, nips at his shoes.

Standing there is Mark’s fiancee TONYA, (28) Black, sexy. Even in correction officer’s gear she looks regal... Majestic...

TONYA
(crying hysterically)
IT’S IN MY EYE!

MARK
(out of breath)
What is, honey?!

TONYA
SEmen!

Mark looks at the floor. The bootprints are hers.

MARK (V.O.)
You remember Tonya...

CUT TO:

INT. COOTER’S STRIP JOINT - 2003

Tonya sits nude on Mark’s knee.

TONYA
Ready for that dance?

MARK
Sure.
INT. MARK’S HOUSE – PRESENT DAY

MARK
(re: bootprints)
Those get on the carpet?

TONYA
Don’t you wanna know how another man’s sperm got on me?

MARK
Let’s see, you work in a jail, you guard animals. I think I can work out the rest from there.

The dog keeps nipping and barking.

MARK
Is this dog nuts?

TONYA
She went twice on the floor.

MARK
Where?

TONYA
By the kitchen, and...

A pile expands under his shoe.

MARK
SHIT, FUCK, DAMMIT!

TONYA
Right there.

MARK
ARE YOU FUCKING SERIOUS?!

He storms away, Tonya hard on his heels.

TONYA
I was this close to being raped today!

MARK
Wow.

TONYA
That’s it?! –Wow!

(CONTINUED)
MARK
I meant, wow, -Think you’d be used to that by now.

The words hit home. Tonya starts to undress.

MARK
Okay, that was wrong.

TONYA
Mom’s coming tonight.

MARK
I won’t be here.

TONYA
You’re supposed to be.

MARK
It’s work related.

He walks to the bedroom. Tonya follows.

TONYA
Did something happen today?

MARK
Like...?

TONYA
I don’t know, You seem... -Off.

MARK
Been an "off" kind of day.

He falls onto the bed. The dog follows, starts licking him.

TONYA
Did you mean what you said earlier?

MARK
What’d I say?

TONYA
On the phone. That you loved me.

MARK
(meaning it)
Of course!

TONYA
Oh.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
I just hate your job.

TONYA
Me too. But we’ve got plans, right?

MARK
Yup. Ten years.

TONYA
You’ll be Secretary of Treasury!

MARK
Chairman of the Federal Reserve.

TONYA
Right! Chairman of the Federal Reserve.

MARK
(corrects her)
Reserve.

A beat.

TONYA
We’re going to make it, aren’t we?

MARK
Of course.

He pulls her toward him. They kiss.

ON THE BED
The Pomeranian churns a wet turd onto the pillow.

FADE OUT.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. RACHEL’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Rachel sits at her computer scrolling E-mails that are mostly spam. One grabs her eye. The subject reads: YOU FUCKING SLUT! After a brief shock, she flags it and hits DELETE. She clicks EMPTY TRASH, and exhales.
EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET – NIGHT

Mark drives through a dope-ridden neighborhood. Whores, and crack-zombies watch like curious apes. Address in hand, Mark scans the flop-houses for numbers that don’t seem to exist.

Suddenly, BLUE AND RED lights explode in Mark’s rear view. A police loudspeaker barks “CUT THE IGNITION AND REMAIN INSIDE THE CAR” Nervously, Mark complies.

In his side mirror, the silhouette of a cop grows against a blinding floodlight. A second cop approaches passenger side.

VICE COP#1
Problem tonight, sir?

MARK
No, everything’s fine.

VICE COP#2
Then I take it we don’t care much for stop signs.

He winks at his partner.

MARK
No!-I mean, of course,-yes! I care! I’m just passing through.

VICE COP#1
Yah? Score some rock. -A Little tweek, maybe?

MARK
No. Look, I think you guys have-

VICE COP#2
Wait a minute... I know you.

MARK
I don’t think so.

VICE COP#2
Bull-shit, I see perps in my sleep. What’s your thing?

MARK
I’m actually on an errand.

VICE COP#1
I bet.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
Look, I’m in a hurry. So if you’re not ticketing me, could you please just let me go?!

VICE COP#1
Sure.
(a beat, then)
License and registration please.

Angrily, Mark reaches for his wallet

VICE COP#2
Nice and slow.

Mark retrieves the wallet, hands over the I.D.

VICE COP#1
Cross?! You any kin to David Allen?

MARK
Regrettably, yes.

VICE COP#2
Wait! You were at county! Posting bail for that low-life!

MARK
He’s my brother.

The cops look at each other.

VICE COP#1
Well, you’ve got our sympathy.

They return his I.D.

VICE COP#2
You should have said you were after your bro. We could’ve helped.

MARK
Didn’t think it mattered.

VICE COP#2
You find him in one of these flop-houses, you kick his ass, understand!

MARK
No doubt. Just as soon as I find where this is.
He hands them the food wrapper.

EXT. LAY-Z-DAYS MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

A perfect dump. Even by flop-house standards it’s uber-bad. Mark parks the car and gets out. A man approaches. -It’s Evans. In sweats, he’s hardly the man he was earlier.

    EVANS
    You’re late.

    MARK
    I got held up.

    EVANS
    Not by the Twins, I hope.

    MARK
    Who?

    EVANS
    The Wonder Twins. A couple vice cops we fuck with sometimes.

    MARK
    No.

    EVANS
    Good. They’re shmucks.

Evans smiles, thinks for a moment.

    EVANS
    Say, would you mind lifting your shirt.

    MARK
    Excuse me?!

    EVANS
    Lift up your shirt!

    MARK
    This is insane!

He lifts it. Bares his chest.

    EVANS
    One of your preds tried to record us. Sadly, he was terminated shortly after.

(CONTINUED)
MARK
Terminated?

Mark stands exposed. The nature of this strange new relationship starts to sink in.

EVANS
Well don’t just stand there, kiddo. Come on back.

Evans leads Mark through a maze of numbered doors. Rap, fucking, and laughter echo throughout.

At a blank door they stop. Evans knocks. Inside, a Television is switched off.

VOICE INSIDE
It’s open!

EVANS
About the guys... They mean well, but they’re not what you’d consider refined.

He pulls a .45 from his waist.

MARK
Hey! No one said shit about guns!

EVANS
Relax. Your’e a dope man now.

He pushes the door OPEN.

INSIDE THE ROOM

THREE MEN. Two with Glocks trained on the door.

Mark stands shaking, eyes closed.

One of the men, RICKS, (35), Black. Holsters his gun and slaps the T.V. back on.

RICKS
I see you brought the food.

Evans stows his piece.

Mark’s eyes open to a world of AMMO, PORN MAGS, and TRASH.

(CONTINUED)
EVANS
Thought you ordered out.

RICKS
We tried. They won’t deliver.

EVANS
Would you, if you were five foot two and Chinese.
(to mark)
Cross, this is Agent Rudy Ricks.

MARK
Pleased to meet you.

RICKS
(taken aback)
What’d you just say?!

MARK
Pleased to meet you.

RICKS
No "Whats up dog" or "What’s crackin’?"
(to evans, re: Mark)
Sure there’s batteries in this thing?

EVANS
Easy, Ricks.

RICKS
He ain’t fake is all I’m sayin’.
Welch near maimed me wit’ some old nigga hand shake.

EVANS
Moving right along...

A thirty-ish man with an ugly scar on his head steps forward.

EVANS
This is Tom Dwyer. Our techie.

DWYER
Folks call me bud.

Mark tries un-noticing the wound.
DWYER
Pretty breathtaking, huh?

MARK
(caught)
Yeah.

DWYER
Made in Waziristan. Wanna feel?

RICKS
Ignore him man, He’s sick. You’re good people. I can feel it.

DWYER
That so?

EVANS
Guess we’ll see.

A third man, (40s) Asian, sits in an armchair eying Mark like a great bird of prey.

EVANS
(to Mark)
Don’t stare too long. He hypnotizes.

The man rises, extends a hand.

ASIAN MAN
Harry Cho. You must be my replacement.

MARK
Excuse me?

EVANS
Zip it Harry!
(to Ricks)
Where’s Welch?

DWYER
Gettin’ brewskis.

EVANS
For the last time, there is NO drinking between operations, you got it?!

RICKS
How we gonna stay loose?

Evans reaches under the bed, drags out a suit bag.

(CONTINUED)
EVANS
Contrary to your beliefs, we are here to work.

He pulls it open. Inside, STACKS of hundreds.

EVANS
That’s a cool three mil.

CHO
Three point five.

EVANS
Funds taken from people who prey on weakness.

MARK
Bet that makes you a hit with dealers.

CHO
As a matter of fact it does.

EVANS
(pats his gun)
Hence, the hardware.

DWYER
Think of it as collecting unpaid debts.

MARK
For who?

EVANS
Every school-aged kid in this god-forsaken part of town.

The door slams. Everyone with a gun draws. Mark ducks expecting gunfire.

AT THE DOOR

A GARGANTUAN man with a brown paper bag. Meet Tom Welch, (40s), Bald. Easily six-ten or better.

WELCH
No Light. Just regular.

The weapons disappear.
CONTINUED:

RICKS
How the fuck do we not hear
bigfoot?!

DWYER
He was supposed to knock.

WELCH
You fags thirsty or not?!

EVANS
Cross, this is special agent Jack
Welch.

WELCH
(to mark)
So you’re Meth boy.

MARK
That was years ago.

WELCH
You’d better not be a snitch.

CHO
Who would he snitch to?!

WELCH
YOUR’E ON THIN ICE CHINAMAN!

CHO
Ko-re-an, asshole!

WELCH
Got no love for rats. Real men
don’t know how to rat.

MARK
Um. Aren’t we on the same side.

WELCH
Snitch is a snitch.

EVANS
Alright guys, saddle up! It’s the
kids first night, and he’s going in
hot. Cho, You’re gonna show the
rook how to count.

DWYER
It’s nine o’clock.

(CONTINUED)
CHO
Too early.

EVANS
Not where I’m going.

RICKS
Only one spot poppin’ this time.
Twenty-eighth and C.

CHO
(to Mark)
He really is bringing you in hot.

MARK
(to Evans)
You said the job was counting!

EVANS
It is. After tonight.

RICKS
It’s risky. Them cats know us.

Dwyer
They’ll be ready.

EXT. LAY-Z-DAYS MOTEL LOT - NIGHT
The crew stands by a black cargo van. Evans stands at the door.

EVANS
(to Mark)
We may be grunts, kid. But we ride in style

He slides the door open.

Inside it’s a treasure trove of tack gear. Vests, shotguns. Safety harnessed seats line the walls.

RICKS
We call it "the bus".

Dwyer
Last ride some of us ever take.

Mark
Alright, Time out! I’ve done crazy stuff before, but I’m a desk-guy, not a Navy SEAL!
RICKS
You’ll be fine.

CHO
Yeah. If you don’t die tonight, you’ll live to get offed in some other caper.

EVANS
(to Mark)
Tonight you just observe. Whatever happens, just try to relax, and let it all sink in.

MARK
I’m Sorry but I am not getting into this van!

EVANS
Suit yourself.

He gives Welch a nod.

INT. CARGO VAN - CONTINUOUS

Mark sits strapped to a seat as the van rumbles down the road. Directly across, Welch flips through a magazine.

MARK
There anything you guys don’t do by force?

CHO
’Fraid not.

The driver, Ricks, makes a hard left. A S.W.A.T helmet falls from overhead, hits Mark in the face.

MARK
Ow!

The helmet lands near Dwyer, busy on his laptop.

RICKS
Like a dude told me once... Life is ten percent what goes down, -ninety percent how you work it.

Evans pats Ricks on the shoulder.
EVANS (to Mark)
Everyone plays a part, son. People play theirs, -we play ours.

MARK (perks up)
Where’d you hear that?

EVANS
Right here. (points to his head)
The old steel trap.

DWYER
Alright folks, hi-res satellite shows major foot traffic!

RICKS
Spot’s busy.

DWYER
And dangerous.

WELCH
Good. I could use the rush.

DWYER
Might not be the best time for junior, here.

EVANS
Bullshit. You’re ready, aren’t you, Cross?

MARK
No. But that argument seems lost on you people.

DWYER
I got police activity two blocks south! Gonna have to be quick!

EVANS
Entry point?

DWYER
Yard entrance on twenty eighth. Infra-red shows no dog.

EVANS
Take Remy just in case.

Welch grabs a Remington twelve-guage from a compartment.
EVANS
Alright, people! Suited and booted in five!

Cho grabs a kevlar vest, hands it to Mark.

CHO
Your new observation suit.

Frightened, Mark eyes the vest.

MARK (V.O)
And then I heard it... wafting through the air like a gentle hymn. The sound of every vague, disjointed lecture I’d ever endured. The familiar drone of my dad’s dark rationale uttered in the voices of these men. These men who if they had any virtues at all, had traded them for something else. Something more valuable in a world of sinful people, and outdated moral code. Every lie does in fact need a taker. Real time results of actions are truly almost never predictable. I sat there pondering a question older than Western Culture or any of the dogmas it serves. It was the original question. The seminal thought that gave birth and life to them all: “So now what?”

OUTSIDE
A series of stoplights turn GREEN.

A YOUNG TAGGER sprays a blank billboard as the van rolls past.

FADE OUT

END PILOT

(CONTINUED)