

Genie

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: 34 years ago

Caught in a nonstop downpour. A church bell tolls lugubriously, then is replaced by a bowling alley of thunder as fulgurations of lightning punish the tarry sky.

Through all this we hear a woman's muffled scream. We widen to reveal mud-slicked pools of shimmering rainwater drenching the landscape, illuminated by an occasional bolt of lightning.

A car sits by the curb, a small boy in back peering through the blurry window, able to see it all.

The screaming stops, the rain, thunder and lightning unabated. A woman's body drops down like a ragged doll on the grass only feet away.

A shadowy man in a dark raincoat stands over the corpse, puts something in his pocket and turns to the car, throwing an indelible glare at the boy, the only witness to the crime.

The only *human* witness ...

The cathedral. Gigantic. Godlike. Painted ivory by random flashes of light and trounced by thunder, this ancient monster, dark and ominous, its eyelike windows watching ...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A young woman strolls alone. A car coasts alongside her. The window on the front passenger's side opens and ...

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Her corpse is sprawled out on the pavement, face to the sky.

A NEWSPAPER PAGE APPEARS

- filling almost the entire screen. The head says: Second woman found strangled in two days.

EXT. ANOTHER ALLEY

A woman's corpse lies plopped on a jumbo garbage can ...

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A woman's body lies spread-eagle on the stairway ...

EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT

A woman waits on a bench as someone sneaks up behind her and wraps a cord around her fragile neck. She struggles as her life is squeezed from her ...

ANOTHER NEWSPAPER PAGE APPEARS

- again taking up nearly the entire screen. Its headline reads: Five women found strangled in seven days.

EXT/INT. CITY - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Several more women are strangled in various places, both indoors and out, as a NEWSCASTER speaks:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

In three months, ten women in the Chapel Hill area have been found strangled ...

EXT. FRONT OF JOEL CRISWELL'S HOUSE, CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA - DAY - END OF MONTAGE

A huge cadre of uniformed police officers descends on the one-story affair from the front like cougars closing in on their prey, handguns unholstered ...

Some carefully check the Mercedes parked in the driveway as:

NEWSCASTER #2 (V.O.)

After nearly a dozen strangulation deaths of women in the Chapel Hill area, police have determined the killer to be Joel Criswell ...

EXT. STAIRWAY IN REAR OF HOUSE - DAY

A contingent of police officers make their way up as:

NEWSCASTER #2 (V.O.)
... professor of psychology at the
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Clouds hover above this already dimly lit corridor. JOEL CRISWELL, unassuming, early thirties, proffers a handful of bills to a HOOD, who could be dead ringer for Joel. Same age, same race, height ...

The Hood nods, takes the cash ...

INT. JOEL'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

The Hood drives down a lonely thoroughfare. Joel's name is on the dash. Also on the dash is a clock, which says 11:10 ...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The vehicle accelerates.

THE CAR

bolts down the road, winding to the right. To its left is a grassy embankment.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

The Hood steps on the brakes. Nothing. He tries again. Harder. Again and again. Shit ...

The car moves unabated, like a roller coaster gone amuck.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The car veers inexplicably to the left. Nearly smacking another car on the opposite lane heading right for him ...

The Hood's car continues on toward the embankment, having lost all control. Tires squealing. Skidding off onto the:
EMBANKMENT

-- tumbling like an acrobat down the endless incline.
BOTTOM OF THE EMBANKMENT

A field flanked by shrubbery to the right. The car tumbles to a halt.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sporadic vehicles dot the road. A car travels among them, taking the same route as the Hood, a good half a mile behind.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Joel at the wheel. Driving behind where the Hood had taken the tumble. He slows down. Looks straight ahead about half a mile down to his left. Seconds later he comes upon the spot where the Hood had lost control and turned left.

He doesn't have much time -- he speeds up. Stops at the next light a couple of blocks down, then hangs a left.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE EMBANKMENT/CAR - NIGHT

The car sits on a path, which, running parallel to the street right above the embankment, leads to the road a couple of blocks down that Joel had just turned left on.

Joel comes driving down the path approaching the fallen vehicle, doing a good 35 m.p.h.

He soon stops, flings his door open and springs out. Looks urgently to his left at the street just above the embankment.

He reaches in his car, grabs a can of gasoline, goes around and douses the entire vehicle. He opens the front door, sees the Hood barely conscious.

INT. CAR/EXT. BOTTOM OF THE EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

Joel reaches for the Hood's back pocket, extracts from it a wallet, then replaces it with his own.

He then splashes some gasoline on the Hood's face, and then the rest of his body. He closes the front door.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE EMBANKMENT/CAR - NIGHT

He tosses some lit matches into the area, then runs back to his car as the other vehicle bursts into flames. He hops in and drives away as the flames tower to the sky.

A NEWSPAPER PAGE APPEARS

On it the headline reads: Car explodes, Chapel Hill Strangler presumed dead.

The subhead reads: Driver burned beyond recognition.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

We move with a plateau of rolling clouds. Camera speeds up to signal the long passage of time. We hear a baby crying over relentless booms of thunder.

EXT. BAR, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: Present day

The bar is smack dab in the inner city, glazed by a bright, neon sign out front and a symmetrical flow of streetlights.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Packed with people from all sectors of life. Businesspeople. Artists. Factory workers. Hustlers. Playboys. Et al.

The aisle lies sandwiched between a bar on the left and a cluster of tables to our right, slicing its way to a small flight of steps leading to a pool table over which hovers a lamp globe, the bar's only major source of light.

Farther yet is a dance floor where bodies bob vivaciously to a contemporary pop song.

Two men sit pounding beers at the bar. One wears an expensive suit, like some CEO out of his element, and the other a black leather jacket and black pants, perhaps too hip for this crowd.

The CEO guy slides an envelope in the other's hand. He takes it, folds it then places it in his shirt pocket.

The bar becomes busier by the minute. We see:

- the peopled bar, tables to the right, filled with singles and moonstruck couples -

- down to the pool tables, surrounded by whiskered pool sharks, wild women and whiskey raw faces -

- the dance floor, with couples heaving madly to the pop tune.

Back to the bar, where we find the two men. The one in leather gets up and makes for the door, then strides out.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

The leather dude leaves, then strolls into the radiant night. His name is GENE CRISWELL, 35, handsome and brooding. Right out of GQ. Alone, anonymous. With purpose.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gene enters a well-kept abode. He passes through the living room into his:

BEDROOM

Also clean. Bed made. Furniture, including TV, dusted, in order. Walls lined with bookshelves filled with the classics, modern literature, books about guns, marksmanship, etc.

And a special shelf devoted to movies, particularly old ones.

Stuck to one of the walls his degree in English Literature from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In the back of his room, right by his bed, a broad pine desk with a computer on top.

Gene heads for the desk, opens a drawer, takes out a long box. Gets from it an unassembled AK-47 assault rifle.

Studies the gun as if it were his own baby, and begins cleaning each part with a rag.

EXT. ROOFTOP - MORNING

Overlooking the vast city. Gene is crouched low, senses keen, rifle at his side.

He turns his eyes to the left. Sees the sun pinned to a cottontail sky miles above the horizon, a cosmic voyeur scorching the world with a ubiquitous stare.

Gene feverishly starts assembling the gun -- sight, scope, silencer, et al.

Timing is crucial -

The wind blows softly. Ever so softly ...

Gene goes about his work methodically. He's such a master. One would think he has been doing this all his life.

EXT. BUILDING ACROSS STREET - MORNING

A huge, downtown office building, some twenty stories high. A man steps out and begins his descent down a long flight of steps leading to the sidewalk.

EXT. ROOFTOP - MORNING

Gene aims his rifle squarely at the man. Keeps it poised, his concentration at its peak. He looks through the scope, sees the man ambling down the stairs, unsuspecting.

Seconds seem like eons. Gene calculates the distance, time needed for the kill. Has time for only one bullet. The fatal bullet.

The longer he waits ...

He takes another look through the scope, where he sees the man descending, right on target.

Gene pulls the trigger ...

The sun brightens, taking it all in.

EXT. BUILDING ACROSS STREET - MORNING

The man is plopped on the stairs, face on the bottom one. A passing car stops. Two people hop out and dash over to the corpse, then flip it over. One of them nudges the other, points at Gene's rooftop. His companion acknowledges.

More cars stop. People from everywhere rush to the body, hesitating lest they become next on the killer's list.

EXT. ROOFTOP - MORNING

Gene hunches down and looks around. Literally seconds to pack gear, bolt. He disassembles his gun, places it neatly in the gun case, then jogs, stooped low, toward a metal ladder jutting through the roof.

He reaches it, then begins climbing down the tiny orifice.

INT. SHAFT IN ROOFTOP - MORNING

Gene marches down the ladder through the narrow opening, which could easily precipitate claustrophobia in the vulnerable. He finds the bottom rung, which leads to an:

AIR VENT

Gene gets down and proceeds with his gun across this tubular passage, crawling like a soldier through enemy terrain. We move with him before he reaches the end.

There he happens upon a small door in the floor. Which he opens. Peers down through it, where he sees another ladder extending down into an office.

He begins climbing it.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

A large desk, mimeograph machine, several filing cabinets. Gene reaches the floor, then scoots the ladder up. The ceiling door snaps shut. Gene then makes for the office door.

INT. HALL - MORNING

Insulated from all outside noise. Gene leaves the office, makes a beeline down the hall. Reaches a fire escape at the far end, pushes the door open.

INT. FIRE ESCAPE - MORNING

A spiral staircase leading to an abyss. Gene scampers down the stairs.

BOTTOM OF STAIRS

He reaches it, opens the door an inch. Peers outside, opens it more, and pokes his head out.

EXT. BUILDING/STREET - MORNING

Gene has his head out, looking in all directions. The door opens some more and he slips outside.

Gene races to the sidewalk and approaches a car. He opens the back door, then tosses the gun in.

The city, meanwhile, is just coming to life. Cars cruise by as Gene, unnoticed, swings around the front and hops in.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Gene revs the motor and bolts away.

EXT. REAR OF APARTMENT COMPLEX, HIGHLAND PARK - DAY

A three-story affair with an outdoor walkway on each floor, much like a motel. Flanked by scattered trees, and fronted by a parking lot.

Gene rolls in, finds a space and parks. Hops out, heads for the building.

Gene mounts the nearest stairway up to the third floor, takes the walkway to his room. Then enters.

INT. GENE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gene marches through with his briefcase, heads for the:

KITCHEN

Takes some linguini, pasta sauce from one of the cupboards. Then a frying pan, olive oil, an onion from the refrig....

DINING AREA

- annexed to the living room. His place is already set. Plate, silverware. A glass to the right of his plate. A bottle of Merlot and a loaf of wheat bread in the middle of the table.

Gene comes out with a salad plate and bowl of salad. Sets them down as he sings a line from "Singin' in the Rain":

GENE (singing)
Singin' in the rain. Just
singin' in the rain ...

He heads back into the:

KITCHEN

He takes the pot of boiling linguini, dumps it into a colander, then empties it into a bowl.

DINING AREA - MINUTES LATER

He marches over to the TV only feet away in the living room. The clock on top says 6:02. He flicks it on, returns to the table where a dinner of linguini, salad and Merlot awaits him.

He digs in as a female NEWS ANCHOR delivers the news:

NEWS ANCHOR

The F.B.I. discovered today that a woman found strangled two days ago in her L.A. apartment was apparently murdered by a serial killer active in Chapel Hill, North Carolina more than thirty years ago. Forensic scientists unearthed fingerprints at the L.A. murder scene that have now been determined to belong to Joel

Criswell, once dubbed the Chapel
Hill Strangler ...

Suddenly someone in the apartment above starts blasting the
place with a dose of Heavy Metal. He races back to the:

KITCHEN

Runs to a space by the refrig., grabs a broom, and races
back to the:

DINING AREA

Rams the ceiling with it several times - BOOM BOOM BOOM!!!

GENE
(shouting at the ceiling)
SHUT THE FUCK UP!

No use. He rams the ceiling again.

GENE
(shouting at the ceiling)
I SAID -

Silence. Except for the TV, which shows the bottom of the
embankment where Joel Criswell's car had erupted in flames.
Pathologists, police officers analyze the site:

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Charlotte police and the F.B.I. are
revisiting the place where Criswell
was alleged to have met his death ...

Gene is watching it all, his eyes wide open, face flushed.
God damn ...

EXT. REAR OF APARTMENT COMPLEX, HIGHLAND PARK - DUSK

Gene hustles to his car, the fresh breeze jostling his hair
and clothing. He finds his car, hops in, and pulls out.

INT. CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Gene pilots his car down a side street. To his left stands
a carnival. A Ferris wheel in eternal gyration. A Tilt-a-
Whirl. Other rides. Games, refreshments. Happy families,
children cavorting, laughing, playing with their parents.

Gene looks to his left as he slows to a mere five m.p.h. He stops for a moment ...

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT - FLASHBACK (34 YEARS AGO)

Thunder, lightning unabated. Pounding the world, this ancient cathedral as a baby cries (O.S.). A woman's body plopped by the curb. Coruscations of lightning assail the windows, those eyelike windows forever watching ...

A car horn honks (prelap).

EXT. SIDE STREET - DUSK - END OF FLASHBACK

The car behind him continues to honk its horn. Gene looks behind. Some guy wants him to move his carcass - NOW.

He comes to in a flash. Then moves on.

EXT. BANANA CREAM STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A place for players couched in a string of nightclubs and eateries flanked by Corvettes and Harleys -- a badge of style, wherewithal. A billboard at the top advertises it in loud, iridescent neon.

Gene rolls his car over by the curb a block away. Stops. Then hops out. Strolls down the street before arriving at the nightclub. Then steps inside.

INT. BANANA CREAM STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Dimly lit. People trickle in. The evening hasn't begun yet, though we can see the place will be packed soon given the gals trickling in ready to put on a show.

The place is spacious. It could easily accommodate a few hundred people at a time.

Gene strides in, heads toward a:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

- where he passes a couple of bathrooms, proceeding onward toward a:

SHORT STAIRWAY

- which he descends.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Gene reaches the bottom, hangs a left, marches a good twenty feet down before arriving at a room. He knocks.

ALFONSO (O.S.)

Who is it?

GENE

Criswell.

ALFONSO (O.S.)

Ah Gene, Come in.

Gene obeys.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Nothing outlandish. Desk. Bookcase with a few books, a computer, phone. Looks like the office of a fly-by-night businessman.

ALFONSO MORETTI sits at the desk. Early sixties, portly, good-natured. And boss of a powerful crime family.

He rises, smiles, holds out an envelope for Gene. He's clearly happy to see him, like a father greeting his favorite son.

Gene takes the money.

ALFONSO

Nice to see you, Gene. Sit. Please.

Gene takes a seat by the desk across from Alfonso.

ALFONSO

Thanks for whacking him. A trusted capo. About to sing to the feds. When one of my people flip, I flip.

(re: the money)

You can count it.

Gene pulls out a wad of bills from the envelope and fans them out. As Gene does a quick count:

ALFONSO

Gene, "Genie." Has a certain ring to it.

GENE

It should. You want someone dead, you call me, your personal genie.

Alfonso chuckles. Gene finishes counting the money, slips it back in the envelope, which he then places in his shirt pocket.

ALFONSO

I know you watch the news. I know I do. Now. Your father, I understand, may still be alive. You know that?

Gene sighs.

GENE

Yep. I heard it on the news.

ALFONSO

Look at all these advances in forensics. DNA for instance. Spit in the wrong place, and the cops could come bangin' on your door.

Gene chuckles. Alfonso then clears his throat.

ALFONSO

Look. I don't blame you for hating your ol' man for what he did.

He reaches for a nearby bottle of wine. We suddenly hear a man screaming from a nearby room.

ALFONSO

(ignoring it)
Care for some wine?

GENE

No thanks.

As Alfonso pours himself a glass:

ALFONSO

(re: the man being tortured)
Just some guy, didn't pay us on time.
Trying to reason with him. But ...
some people can't be reasoned with.

He takes a sip.

ANFONSO

Personally, I think torture is
tasteless. Don't you?

As Gene nods:

ALFONSO

If we let someone slide, steal
from us, we'd have no business,
would we?

GENE

Of course not.

Alfonso swirls his wine around, observing its sugary glide
down the glass.

ALFONSO

Delicious Chablis.

He takes a whiff of it.

ALFONSO

Mmmm. Friend owns a winery in Paso
Robles. Out there in Wine Country.
Steinbeck's turf. I hear you've read
Steinbeck.

GENE

I've read his books.

ALFONSO

Smart guy. Smart enough to realize
that in this business you gotta
relegate your emotions to the back
burner.

He takes a few sips.

ALFONSO

You know what I mean?

GENE

Certainly.

ALFONSO

But do you *really* know what I mean?

GENE

Yeah. You're worried that I might come after my father.

ALFONSO

Well ...

Another scream. Alfonso dismisses it like before. And Gene pretends to ignore it in adherence to mob protocol.

ALFONSO

Look, we know your father's one of those mass murderer types. He kills women. And for what? Look ...

Alfonso rubs his chin. Contemplates for a moment. Then raises his voice:

ALFONSO

You think I'd be here if I had calamari for brains?! You think I could survive this shindig if I didn't keep on top of things?!

He calms down.

ALFONSO

Of course I know what your ol' man does.

(emphatically)

But I don't want you to go soft on me. Your ol' man is an s.o.b. But don't you become some avenging angel. You gotta keep a clear head. If your ol' man goes east, I'm afraid you might follow. And then, where would that leave me?

More screaming from the other room. It seems as if it'll continue endlessly ...

ALFONSO

You can go.

Gene gets up. Alfonso considers him with suspicion as he heads for the door.

Then -- two gunshots. The man's screaming stops.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Gene steps out from Alfonso's office. The place is eerily quiet. A door to his right at the far end of the hall opens. Out emerges a mob enforcer, FABIANO.

FABIANO

Hey Gene, come here.

Gene's curious. He approaches Fabiano, who leads him into a:

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

-- where a man sits on a chair barely conscious, battered and bloodied. Hands, feet bound. Head lolling on his chest. Blood oozing from two bullet holes in the stomach.

Another goon, RICO, hovers over their victim, gun in hand. He's flanked by two other goons, TYRANO and PAULIE. Tyrano wears shades, chews gum. The Prince of Cool. As Paulie wipes his silencer-tipped revolver spic and span.

FABIANO

Gene, two new guys. Tyrano and Paulie.

Gene just nods. The other two nod back. Not particularly eager to make a new friend. Fabiano indicates the guy on the chair.

FABIANO

(to Gene)

Finish him off? Got two nice ones in the gut. Bastard still won't die.

GENE

Who is he?

FABIANO

Some school teacher. Didn't pay on time. Go on, he's all yours.

Gene sneers with revulsion.

GENE

Sorry. Got this taboo against killing civilians.

FABIANO

Too bad. 'cause I got this taboo, see, against lettin' schmucks like this think they can run all over us. Always got a sob story.

Fabiano coldly points his gun an inch from the guy's head, and fires. Once is all it takes. Tyrano and Paulie are loving it.

As Gene turns heads for the door:

GENE

Good job, Fabiano. I'll tell the boss to give you a cookie.

Fabiano hurls him a crazed look. The look of a born killer.

EXT. BANANA CREAM STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Gene steps outside. He's sleek, cool in his leather jacket, collar turned up. He does a quick scan of the neighboring businesses, the flow of cars as they promenade by.

He then spots some PUNK checking out his car up close. He calls out:

GENE

HEY YOU!

The Punk sees him, darts across the street as -

Gene sprints to his car. Sees the Punk running down the intersecting street. The two men leap into their vehicles.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene guns the motor, makes a sharp U-turn, then hangs a right in pursuit of the Punk, whom he can make out a good hundred yards down driving a used car in need of a good wash ...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A busy thoroughfare. Gene chases the Punk, almost scraping a few cars ...

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene slows down - but not by much ...

EXT. STREET/INTERSECTION - NIGHT

The Punk runs a red light. Gene, right behind, stops. He has no choice, really ...

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene curses under his breath, watching helplessly as the Punk disappears from view. But then --

We suddenly hear a siren. Gene looks in the rearview. Sees a black-and-white behind him. It then passes, running right through the red light.

MINUTES LATER - MOVING

Gene sees not far down the same cop car parked behind the Punk's Toyota. Cherry light on. A cop writing the Punk a ticket, his partner standing watch by the passenger side.

EXT. PARKING LOT BY SHOPPING CENTER - NIGHT

Gene parked in a secluded area close to the mouth of the parking lot. Watching the show transpire to the right of the intersection.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene waits patiently, munching on a piece of licorice.

EXT. STREET/INTERSECTION - NIGHT

The black-and-white leaves. A second later Gene bulldozes through the exit, ready to pounce as the Punk drives on.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene follows the Punk. Who then stops. Flicks on his right turn signal ...

The Punk hangs a right into a small parking lot. Gene follows.

EXT. SMALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The Punk parks. And surprise -- so does Gene, right beside him. The Punk hops out.

Gene springs out of his car and accosts him.

GENE

Hey fucker. Recognize me?

The hapless Punk looks for a way out. Gene grabs him by the scruff of the neck. The Punk cowers.

PUNK

Don't hit me, please.

Gene has a tight grip on the Punk, leaving him powerless.

GENE

What the fuck were you doing
near my car?!

PUNK

He told me you were going to be
there around now.

Gene maintains a tighter grip.

GENE

Who's *he*?

PUNK

Um ...

GENE

I don't have all day. And
neither do you.

PUNK

I can't really tell you.

Gene takes out a wad of bills, selects a few. Folds them,
puts the bills in the Punk's shirt pocket.

GENE

A hundred bucks says you can.

PUNK

Just don't tell him I told you ...

GENE

I'm not gonna tell him anything.

Gene raises his voice. A few people - they look harmless -
stop to watch.

GENE

You got five seconds.

PUNK

I don't know his name but, um ... he's
gonna be at Priscilla's tonight. You
know, dude's gotta pay me.

GENE

Okay. You're doing good. Now, what time?

PUNK

Um, I'm supposed to meet him there at eleven.

INT. GENE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gene sets his laptop down, flips it open, then downloads a website featuring age progression software. The face of a man, late twenties, fills the computer screen.

Gene turns the software on. The face begins its morphing process. Wrinkles. Hair greying. Middle age becoming an unwanted reality. In seconds the face has aged by more than thirty years.

Gene clicks on PRINT, then scoots over to a nearby printer where the face comes oozing out. He takes the printout, examines it. It's a picture of his father, what he looks like now. Early sixties.

INT. PRISCILLAS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A smoke-filled den. Hazy like a Turkish bath. And ultra-crowded, with barely enough room to walk through.

A rock band at the far end competes with the din of the gabbing crowd as it blasts the air with a song rendered incomprehensible by the club's acoustics.

Gene enters, cool, emotionless, managing a synthetic smile. We follow him as he coasts through the colored menagerie of people clotting the aisles, tables, bar.

He stops in the center of the aisle, suffocated in a shroud of anonymity, and takes a moment to consider the band. There's much to consider, so he looks around for a moment, then returns his eyes to:

THE BAND

-- shouting, jamming, strutting their stuff. A coterie of frenzied groupies has gravitated to the edge of this tiny, makeshift stage. Many look as if they could jump onstage any minute and tear their clothes off.

Gene looks elsewhere -- to the right of the stage, where he sees more people, including groupies. A dizzying throng, so multitudinous it's hard to keep track of their assorted faces.

But wait a minute. He thinks he recognizes something -- or someone -- through all the commotion. He continues on.

He shifts his eyes a tad to the right. At a secluded table where two men discuss business. Gene's father, JOEL CRISWELL, sits opposite the Punk, whose back is toward Gene.

It seems Gene has found what he has come here for. He takes out his computer-generated picture, checks it to be sure. It's him for sure. Gene slowly approaches, like a cat creeping up on its prey.

Sidles between some tables, threading his way through unsuspecting partyers who are laughing, chatting -- so focused on each other they don't notice Gene silently knifing his way through them.

Joel notices Gene, starts to poke his head up as:

Gene slowly moves in, in mute calculus, a robot in the cloak of gregarious humanity ...

Joel hurries toward the door, brushing past people, many drunk, all still oblivious to Gene -- so far. The Punk is behind -- probably still at the table.

Gene follows Joel, his eyes on one thing only -- his quarry, the chain-smoking frequenter of loud nightclubs ...

EXT. PRISCILLA'S NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Joel scurries out into the congested parking lot out front. It's nice and peaceful out. Great night for a walk out.

As Joel reaches an endless column of cars:

Gene emerges from the door, more relaxed than his quarry, but still anxious to finish this. He extracts a silencer-tipped pistol from his jacket pocket, brandishes it, aims ...

Joel looks back, terrified. Veers to the left between two cars as:

Gene fires three times.

Joel runs. Gene misses. The shots nail a few cars around and behind Joel.

Gene moves in, firing several times at:

Joel, who still runs, narrowly dodging the gunfire as bullets zing everywhere.

Gene stops firing, looks around at the few people who are witness to this ambush, but unable to identify him because of the darkness.

We move with him as he slithers toward Joel, who finds sanctuary in the dark parking lot.

He continues on through the hodgepodge of vehicles, then spots Joel's car in the distance trying to squeeze out of a parking space. Gene races to his own vehicle parked a few spaces away.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene bolts toward the fleeing car in the b.g. Speeds up, careful not to hit anyone.

Gene has his sights on his quarry as he hangs a left onto the nearest street. And continues to follow him ...

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

A two-story motel tucked behind a parking lot that rests by a highway in a remote section of town. It's flanked by a few stores and a restaurant.

Gene's car crawls into the parking lot, then parks across from the motel.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene at the wheel. He looks all around for any sign of danger. Nada. He then focuses his eyes on the motel, not taking them off even for one second.

EXT. MOTEL - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

An older man emerges, then locks the door.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene reaches for his pocket, then sees some people pour out of a store adjacent to the motel. Fuck it, he can wait. He scoots down, knees on the floor. Barely able to see through the closed window by the steering wheel.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

The man we saw leave the room, and whose face we still cannot see, has just climbed down a flight of stairs from the second floor. He takes a few steps to his car. Gets inside, cranks on the motor.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT

Gene moves his head up, sees the other car back out of the parking space then bolt away. He turns his head to the left, observing the car as it speeds toward the mouth of the parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The car stops at the highway, then turns.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT

Gene stays down a moment, waiting until he thinks it's safe. He then decides it is. He looks back toward the highway, takes another look around. He slowly opens the door, and steps out.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gene hurries up the steps to the room he saw the man leave, takes out a screwdriver and fits it into the keyhole. Fiddles with it some. The lock gives. He opens the door, steps in.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gene closes the door behind him and turns on the light. He rushes to the desk, opens it drawer by drawer until he comes upon a journal.

He flips through it before selecting a few pages. On one of the pages is mentioned a planned trip to Charlotte, North Carolina tomorrow.

He takes his cell phone attached to a mini scanner from his pocket, and scans the chosen pages. Checks his cell phone to make sure the data is intact. Then replaces the journal.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gene leaves the room, having locked it, dashes over to the stairs. Hightails it down the steps, trots over to his car. He gets in, then drives away, the full moon shedding an ubiquitous glow on his car.

INT. GENE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gene sits back on his sofa, perfectly at home, watching "Singing in the Rain" when his cell goes off. He answers.

GENE (into cell)

Yeah.

ALFONSO (V.O.)

Looks like our talk didn't do much good, uh?

GENE (into cell)

Hello? Hello? I can't hear you.

He kills the cell, then opens his laptop beside him. Next, Gene downloads a website belonging to Fields Real Estate. Clicks on "Contact," then types an email:

Bonnie:

I know you don't want to see me ...

EXT. HOUSE ON SLEEPY SIDE STREET, CHARLOTTE - DAY

BONNIE FIELDS, 33, decked in a business suit and matching skirt, leaves her one-story house to grab a newspaper from the manicured lawn that lies only inches from the sidewalk.

The headline reads: Is Chapel Hill Strangler Still Alive?

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - DAY

Bonnie enters, closes the door as she glances at the front page. Her husband, GREG, also in business attire, sits at the small table wolfing down a Danish, moistening his mouthfuls with intermittent sips of coffee.

She sets the paper on the table, nibbles on an English muffin as she reads. Then:

BONNIE

I'm showing the same house to three people today.

GREG

Start a bidding war, babe. Supply and demand. The one who wants it the most is bound to pay the most. Make sense?

She rolls her eyes up.

BONNIE

Obviously. By the way, I just got an email from - I bet you can guess who.

GREG

That Criswell guy?

BONNIE

I think he's coming to Charlotte.

GREG

Oh? ...

BONNIE

Don't start. Anyway -

At that moment their ten-year-old son, EDDIE, enters from a nearby hall with a few books in hand.

EDDIE

Hi Mom and Dad.

BONNIE

Hi Eddie.

GREG

Eddie, have a bowl of cereal before you go.

He looks at his watch.

GREG

You still have time. I can take you to school.

BONNIE

Listen to your father.

EDDIE

Can I get a Danish instead?

GREG

You sure can.

EDDIE

And coffee?

He smiles like a kid wanting kudos from his teacher.

BONNIE

No, no. For you it's OJ.

GREG

I'll get it.

She flips a glance at her watch, then springs up.

BONNIE

I gotta run. Love ya.

She kisses Eddie then Greg on the cheek.

EDDIE

Bye, Mom.

He reciprocates.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Bonnie leaves, takes out her cell. Punches in an email:
You're right, I don't want to see you ...

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gene on the sofa reading the email that Bonnie had sent the night before, surrounded by suitcases. He closes his laptop, packs it in one of his suitcases ...

INT. LANDLORD'S OFFICE - DAY

The landlord, LEONARD ROTH, 58, wears Gucci glasses, stands five foot two, looks up at Gene, who hands him his lease.

ROTH

You sure about this?

GENE

Yeah. Gotta do it. Family emergency. You know how it is.

ROTH

No, I don't know how it is. Why don't you tell me?

GENE

Simple. My family needs me. And I need them. Dig?

ROTH

You're being an asshole ...

GENE

Of course. *That* is one of my better traits. *Ciao*.

Gene hurries out.

EXT. BANK, DOWNTOWN L.A. - DAY

Located in the midst of a thriving business district. Gene parks his car right, hops out, then makes for the bank.

INT. BANK - DAY

Gene blazes in and heads directly for a BANK OFFICER who is seated at his desk in the open. He notices Gene, motions to the chair in front of his desk.

BANK OFFICER

Have a seat, please.

Gene does just that.

BANK OFFICER

So how may I assist you today?

GENE

I'd like to close my two accounts,
checking and savings.

Gene hands him two withdrawal slips. The Bank Officer's eyes bulge.

BANK OFFICER

That's a lot of money. How would
you like it back?

GENE

Put it all on one cashier's check.

BANK OFFICER

All one million?

GENE

You got it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gene marches to his car parked half a block from a children's charity. Two nuns stand by the doorway looking yearningly at him, like two schoolgirls in love.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ONRAMP TO 110 FREEWAY - DAY

Gene eases his way up to:

EXT. 110 FREEWAY/ON RAMP - DAY

And stops. Waits for a break in the traffic. Then merges with it, smooth and easy.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene cruises down a northbound lane at a brisk 70 through a steady flow of traffic. Unimpeded, free as the wind. A piece of licorice dangling from his mouth. Then -

We hear a helicopter hovering above ...

EXT. 110 FREEWAY - DAY

An F.B.I. chopper, having materialized from nowhere, lingers almost directly above Gene's car.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

It's still business as usual. What can he do but drive on?

EXT. 110/101 INTERCHANGE - DAY

Gene's car makes a left onto the 101 freeway.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

As he makes the turn. After a moment, he can still hear the whirring above.

He's sweating ...

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

Gene's car glides through Beverly Hills, the chopper overhead.

The freeway winds to the left. A sign to the right says the I-405 is just ahead ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER - MOVING

Gene moves to the far right, ready for the 101/405 Interchange ahead.

EXT. 101/405 INTERCHANGE - DAY

Gene hangs a right onto the 405.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene sails through the San Fernando Valley ...

EXT. 405 FREEWAY - DAY

The chopper has drawn back ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER - MOVING

A sign coasts by: the 5 freeway is just ahead. The sound of the chopper's blades, meanwhile, has diminished.

EXT. 405/5 INTERCHANGE - DAY

Gene makes a slight left onto the 5. The chopper has withdrawn to a couple of city blocks behind Gene's car.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

We can barely hear the chopper. Just the rock tune on the radio. Maybe the helicopter wasn't meant for him after all.

EXT. 5 FREEWAY - AN HOUR LATER

The chopper can no longer be seen or heard, thank God. Now it's just a routine day on the I-5 ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

The radio is still on. This time he has an R&B tune on. The ride is hypnotic. And then:

MAN (V.O. through bullhorn)
You there, this is the F.B.I. Pull your
vehicle over - now!

Gene feels like crapping in his pants ...

He continues on, looking both ways.

EXT. 5 FREEWAY - DAY

An F.B.I. chopper dangles a hundred feet to Gene's right. There are two men inside. The one not driving calls out through his bullhorn again:

MAN (through bullhorn)
Once again, pull your car over. Now!

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene swerves into the far right lane toward the nearest off-ramp.

EXT. 5 FREEWAY/OFF-RAMP - DAY

Gene's car heads toward the off-ramp, then swooshes right past it.

The helicopter continues its pursuit, soaring over the off-ramp.

Gene hopes to outpace the chopper. He gains speed, passing the other vehicles.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene barrels down the freeway. A sign ahead says:
BAKERSFIELD, NEXT EXIT

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY - MOVING

Spectators remain on the shoulder of the road, transfixed to the chase like a roadside audience at the Indy 500.

Gene swerves his car to the right. As he approaches the shoulder, many of the onlookers become visibly agitated - could he end up hitting them?

Gene's car bolts down the freeway and onto the:

EXT. OFF-RAMP - DAY

We move with it as it descends in solitude.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene flips a glance at his rearview ...

EXT. OFF-RAMP/5 FREEWAY - DAY

Right behind Gene, a car turns onto the off-ramp, then is accosted by a black-and-white and an F.B.I. car from behind.

The chopper makes a graceful descent almost on top of the car.

Another black-and-white materializes in front, blocking all egress.

It's useless. The car swerves over to the right and stops. Four UNIFORMS, two F.B.I. AGENTS spring out of the other two vehicles. Guns out, trained on the two men inside.

AGENT

Get out of the car!

A tense moment as the six officers remain frozen, their guns at the ready. The two doors on the front side then open. Two men emerge, hands in the air. Those two are Tyrano and Paulie!

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY

Parked several hundred feet down the off-ramp. Gene looks back at the arrest. All along the Feds were after those two clowns, not him.

Gene breathes easier. He moves on ...

EXT. MEADOWS FIELD, BAKERSFIELD - DAY

Ensnconced in the middle of nowhere. Has a couple of runways, a parking lot.

A taxi pulls into the lot. Finds a space. A back door opens, and out steps Gene with his briefcase and suitcase. He pays the driver, surveys the place for a moment.

The taxi backs out, then drives away. Gene heads for the main hangar.

INT. MAIN HANGAR - DAY

A male CLERK, 30ish, stands at the counter when Gene enters.

GENE

My name is Gene Criswell.

The Clerk flips through his book.

CLERK

You called this morning.

GENE

Yes.

CLERK

We have a plane headed to
Charlotte-Douglas Airport -

He looks at his watch.

CLERK

-- in five minutes.

Gene fetches a piece of paper from his pocket, thrusts it in front of the Clerk.

GENE

You haven't by any chance seen
this guy, have you?

The Clerk studies it, hands it back.

CLERK

Nope. Sorry.

INT. SMALL PLANE - DAY

Gene and about seven other passengers board. They make themselves comfortable.

EXT. AIRFIELD, MEADOWS FIELD - DAY

The plane makes a graceful take-off.

EXT. USED CAR LOT, CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA - DAY

A panoply of cars. Everywhere the place is festooned with red flags alerting prospective buyers. Salespeople are scattered everywhere pitching customers.

Gene walks onto the lot and is greeted by a young, perky SALESMAN.

SALESMAN

So, what kind of car were you looking for?

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene navigates his car through a sprawling section of Charlotte. Then to his right he sees a large, two-story building. A sign out front says: ARCADIA ORPHANAGE.

A bevy of small children storm out of the front door, headed for a bus out front, flanked by two priests and two female teachers.

Gene parks his car a few spaces behind the bus, then hops out.

EXT. SIDE STREET/ARCADIA ORPHANAGE - DAY

Gene saunters over toward the orphanage, stops at the sidewalk and observes the children boarding the bus. The two women follow the kids.

One of the priests, FATHER WOLNIAK, plods down the long flight of steps before reaching the sidewalk.

The children and the two teachers finish boarding. The bus closes its doors, then shoves off. Father Wolniak gazes after it as the other priest near the top of the stairs looks on.

Father Wolniak and Gene notice each other. Father Wolniak is practically bowled over.

FATHER WOLNIAK

Gene. What are you doing here?

The two greet each other. It's been ages ...

GENE

Hello Father Wolniak.

He holds out his hand. Father Wolniak hesitates, then shakes it.

FATHER WOLNIAK

The parish appreciates your help over the years.

GENE

I just hope it's enough.

Father Wolniak leads the way toward the stairs.

FATHER WOLNIAK

Yes, yes. But I'm afraid we have to stop taking the money.

Gene stops at the foot of the steps. He's taken aback ...

GENE

Why?

FATHER WOLNIAK

Why?

He looks around.

FATHER WOLNIAK

This is a Catholic orphanage. Not some Mafia-run charity.

He produces an envelope.

FATHER WOLNIAK

This is your last payment.

He holds it up to Gene.

FATHER WOLNIAK

If you notice, the check's still inside. Take it now, or I toss it.

Gene reluctantly takes it, still aback.

FATHER WOLNIAK

I was expecting you to come back.
After I heard on the news -

GENE

About my father?

FATHER WOLNIAK

Yes. You know the Church's stand:
every life is sacred.

GENE

Even a serial killer's ...

FATHER WOLNIAK

Every life.

Gene chuckles ...

GENE

I believe some guy confessed to you
once that he, well, killed a kid -

FATHER WOLNIAK

Yes but -

GENE

And you helped the police catch
him I believe.

FATHER WOLNIAK

Look -

He then looks around, suddenly uncomfortable.

GENE

You still violated the oath of the
confessional.

Father Wolniak looks around again. He clearly doesn't want
anyone around hearing this ...

FATHER WOLNIAK

(in a lower voice)

Look, I avoided being excommunicated
by -

He visualizes this with his thumb and forefinger:

FATHER WOLNIAK

- this much.

Gene is speechless - he can't believe it ...

FATHER WOLNIAK

Go. Remember, the confessional
is always open.

They part ways. There's no more said - Father Wolniak resumes his march up the stairs as Gene heads back down.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gene reaches the sidewalk, takes a wistful scan of his boyhood surroundings. Sees a couple of teenage boys head his way and then mount the stairs, oblivious of him.

Children trickle from various directions toward the orphanage. Some start up the steps, others proceed up the grassy incline leading to the building.

Gene ambles back to his car, then gets in.

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

Gene parks his rental car out front, then surreptitiously hops out. Hurries to the front door.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - DUSK

Gene makes for the front desk. The MANAGER, Asian, late fifties, limited English ability, emerges from behind the counter.

MANAGER

Can I get you room?

EXT. MOTEL - SECOND FLOOR WALKWAY - NIGHT

Gene leaves his room, locks the door, trots down the flight of stairs ...

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gene ambles over to his car and hops in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene locks his door and makes himself snug. Turns on the ceiling light, takes out his cell, opens a page of data. It reads: Buster's. He closes his cell and drives off.

EXT. BUSTER'S BAR, DOWNTOWN CHARLOTTE - NIGHT

A small fixture in a seedier part of town, lodged in a valley of neon. Gene stops by the curb, hops out then moseys on down to the bar.

INT. BUSTER'S BAR - NIGHT

Crowded. Gene is lucky to find a stool. Takes it before someone else does. Then flags the bartender, a raven-haired Latina. Her name tag identifies her as ESTELLA.

Two a-holes bombard her with orders. She snags a couple of beers, slams them down before our beloved a-holes. They pay then mosey away like mollified children. Some GUY calls out:

GUY

Hey honey.

Estella ignores him as she sashays over to Gene.

ESTELLA

Yeah sweetie.

GENE

A Corona.

Estella bolts over to the cooler, snatches a bottle of Corona, opens it, and hurries back to Gene. He slaps a ten on the counter.

GENE

Keep it.

She smiles. As she pockets the bill:

GENE

You from around here?

She looks surprised someone would ask her that.

ESTELLA

No, I'm from Ecuador originally.
But I've been living here for seven
years now. Why?

GENE

You have a nice accent, that's
all. My name's Gene.

He holds his hand out. She shakes it.

ESTELLA

No time now. Maybe we can talk
later. Meantime ...

She glances both ways, then moves in closer, flashing a
naughty grin.

ESTALLA

Let's exchange numbers.

GENE

Sounds good.

He reaches in his shirt pocket, takes out a pen and piece
of paper, jots something down, hands her the paper. She
does the same. As Gene slips her number in his pocket:

GENE

We'll be in touch.

ESTELLA

We sure will.

She winks at him, then sashays over to another customer.
Gene gulps down some of his refreshing brew, then takes a
casual look around. He returns his eyes to the counter, and
takes another sip. He relaxes over his beer. And then:

MAN (O.S.)

Don't try anything.

That jars Gene. He looks to his right, and sees a goon,
MARCO.

GENE

So. Marco Langela. Gigliotti's
personal enforcer.

MARCO

Consiglierre now. Thought we'd forget
after five years, uh? Boss wants to
see you.

GENE

Well I don't wanna see him.

Marco bites his lip.

MARCO

Six of us, Genie. You got no
choice.

Gene turns to his left, sees some thugs crammed in the
doorway.

MARCO

Ain't worth it.

Marco looks around, prepared for anything. The guy is on
edge. Anything can happen ...

MARCO

Get up. Slowly.

Gene rises. Takes his beer, pads over to the door.

EXT. BUSTER'S - NIGHT

Gene, Marco and the other goons step outside.

MARCO

Dump the beer.

Gene dumps his beer right on Marco's shoe. Marco clocks him
once in the face, but before Gene can react, Marco pummels
him twice in the gut. As Gene gets up, two goons hold his
arms as Marco beats the fuck out of him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene in the middle of the backseat, sandwiched in between Marco to his right, and another goon to his left. A thug at the wheel, another beside him. The rest of Gigliotti's boys in the car just ahead.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

The two cars roll down into the bowels of the garage, forging their way through a maze of cars. They then park side by side. The men hop out at about the same time, the goons forming an aegis around Gene.

They head toward the building's elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Marco and the other seven thugs wait solemnly along with Gene as the elevator makes its way up.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

The elevator releases the nine men. Marco leads them, with Gene at his side. A moment of strained silence. Then Marco breaks it:

MARCO

How much did the boss give you?
Two hundred and fifty thousand?

GENE

Guy he wanted me to kill was a
civvy. You know my policy.

Marco throws him a menacing look.

They arrive at a door to their left. Marco enters, the others right behind ...

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

PAUL GIGLIOTTI, early fifties, sits back at his desk. Pockmarked face. Somber by nature. Marco and his seven goons march in with Gene.

MARCO

Boss, we got the Genie.

Gigliotti throws Gene a strained, two-second smile.

GIGLIOTTI

If it ain't the Genie himself.

He rises, approaches Gene. Who stands still. Gigliotti motions to one of the thugs, who then yanks a chair toward Gene.

GIGLIOTTI

Sit. Please.

Marco and another thug force Gene into the seat. The room is full of goons, with Gigliotti in front leaning on his desk.

GIGLIOTTI

I'm happy. You know why I'm happy?

GENE

You ate Marcos' sausage?

Marco and the thug at Gene's other side take turns whacking him in the face. Gene starts to get up, but is held down by another thug in back. Gigliotti nods to Marco. The beating stops. Gene's mouth is bleeding, almost profusely. Then -

GENE

Marco ate your sausage?

Marco doesn't need a signal from Gigliotti, as he thrashes into Gene all by his lonesome. The only help he gets is from the thug holding his head down. Gene stomps on Marco's foot. Marco feels it ...

MARCO

Bastard!!

Marco pretends Gene's face is a punching bag. Left, right, left, right ...

Gigliotti smiles. He likes this ...

GIGLIOTTI

Okay Marco, you can stop.

Marco obeys, steps back as two more thugs restrain Gene. Who tries desperately to get up.

GIGLIOTTI

You can have your fun later.

(to Gene)

See, I'm happy 'cause I sense the tooth fairy is near. You believe in tooth fairies? You should. After we finish with you, we'll have you believin' in tooth fairies and gnomes and goblins and elves and all those other little things that prance about in the night. Or, maybe we'll have you hopin' God don't mind how bad your shit stinks.

Gigliotti takes a whiff, as if he's enjoying some aroma coming from the kitchen.

GIGLIOTTI

I can smell it. My half mil right in your pocket.

GENE

It's only a quarter of a mil.

GIGLIOTTI

Interest, Gene. There's a recession. Guy's gotta make do.

He holds out his hand.

GIGLIOTTI

You can give it to me now. Hundreds'll do.

Gene still struggles. Gigliotti's smile dissolves into a frown.

GIGLIOTTI

That's why you came to Charlotte, isn't it?

Gigliotti stops, stares at Gene, then smiles. The same strained, two-second smile. He raises his voice:

GIGLIOTTI

Answer me!! Why did you come back
to this town?

GENE

I give up. Why?

Gigliotti gives Marco another nod. Marco immediately responds. Whacks Gene again in the mouth as two thugs hold him down. Gene stomps on Marco's foot. Marco kicks him in the stomach. Gene doubles over, smarted. Appears paralyzed by the pain.

GIGLIOTTI

Get up!!

Gene stays down, then slowly rolls off his chair. Marco slams him in the face with his fist as another thug takes him from behind. But Gene still has a firm grip on his stomach, the pain is that great ...

Gene falls all the way down, and in seconds grabs Marco's shin, flips him on his back. Slides the chair back into one of the goons, then lunges over at Gigliotti.

Marco slips out a handgun from his pocket. Gene kicks it out of his hand, then reaches for it as it flies up. Marco knocks him away as the gun falls within inches of Gene's foot. Marco reaches for it, but Gene kicks it away.

Other thugs go for their weapons. Gene darts over to the gun as Marco tries to knock him away. He grabs it, plugs Marco once, but only in the shoulder, then shoots four rounds at the seven thugs. Four fall, three are still up.

When Gene's gun runs out of shells ...

Gigliotti trains his gun on him. Gene scampers behind the desk, ducking low as Gigliotti manages a few shots. Ggliotti misses, hitting his desk and computer terminal instead.

Marco may sense something - he sprints out of the room. Gene is too preoccupied with the others ...

The other three thugs fire their revolvers at Gene. Who throws the big chair behind the desk at them. It hits Gigliotti. As the three thugs move in on Gene.

But Gene crawls under the desk, and emerges in front, taking the thugs by surprise. He hurls the chair at them, bowling them over. Takes a gun from one of them, as they lie immobile, and discharges it at them.

He then goes over to Gigliotti, who's shitting his pants by now. Aims it at his head. Smiles. And fires once in the temple. Then - after Gigliotti's corpse has fallen -

GENE

Now I'm happy.

He surveys the room. Eight are dead. One's escaped ...

GENE

Well, almost.

Gene bolts out of the room.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Gene dashes back toward the elevator he had taken here. He looks back, sees Marco a couple hundred feet behind, pressing his wounded shoulder. Lifting his gun up, ready to fire.

Gene lifts his gun as Marco retreats into a nearby aisle.

Gene fires once. Then once again ...

He reaches the elevator, pushes the button. He's in the open now. Vulnerable as fuck. He quickly lies face down, shoots three more times at Marco.

He throws a glance at the elevator. Just when the door opens. He jumps to his feet. Hops inside, dodging a couple more of Marco's bullets ...

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

Gene emerges in the darkness, dashes over to the car that took him here. Kicks the window in, then hops inside.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Just as Gene gets in, he sees a figure approaching in the b.g. He fits a key in the ignition. Turns on the motor.

He backs out when -

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

The approaching figure becomes visible. It is Marco, hand pressed against his shoulder, glaring at Gene with unremitting hatred ...

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene sees Marco as he backs out.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

Marco levels his revolver at Gene. Fires -

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

A bullet slams into one of the back windows.

Gene stops the car, puts it in drive, then speeds away. Marco shoots again. This time a volley of lead nearly smashes the entire rear windshield. As Gene catapults the car toward the entrance straight ahead ...

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene driving cautiously. Finds a place by the curb across the street from Buster's half a block away. Then parks.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Gene hops out. Sees two CRACK HEADS relaxing on his car hitting the pipe. One seated on the hood, the other leaning against the side. As he races across the street toward his car:

GENE
(calling out)
Hey you!!

He reaches the other side. The two Crack Heads dismiss him
- they care more about their pipe.

Gene reaches his car ...

GENE

Hey fuckheads, I said get away
from my car!

CRACK HEAD

This yo car?

GENE

I said it is.

The Crack Head nudges his partner on the hood. Crack Head
#2 sees Gene. They both get off, grumbling to each other.
Gene ignores them as he walks around to the driver's door.

GENE

(muttering)
Assholes!

The Crack Heads heard him. They turn back.

CRACK HEAD #2

Think he own the world ...

Gene takes a look at Buster's. The place appears closed.
But to be sure, he trots over to the front door, gives it a
tug. It's closed all right. He hurries back to his car and
gets in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene rolls his window down as he revs the motor. Starts to
say something to the Crack Heads, but changes his mind. He
flips a piece of licorice in his mouth, then barrels away.
He stops at the next street over, about to turn right when
-

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A car squeals to a halt behind the vehicle Gene was just
driving. Marco and three other goons spring out, dash over
to it, quickly spot Gene, and commence firing -

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene racing away. Winces as the back windshield is shattered by a hail of bullets -

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Marco and company stop firing - it's useless now that Gene is long gone. They rush back into their car.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene looks in his rearview. Sees a car catching up to him, raking his auto with machinegun fire nonstop -

EXT. SECOND STREET - NIGHT

The other car nearly scrapes a few vehicles as it tries to catch up to Gene ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene speeds up, careful to avoid oncoming traffic ...

EXT. SECOND STREET - NIGHT

The two cars speed like missiles. Gene's nemesis is almost parallel to him. But then -

It scrapes another car going the opposite direction. Both autos start spinning. The other bursts into flames as -

Marco's vehicle stops, blocking almost the entire width of the lane it's on. He limps away before his vehicle, too, erupts in flames. Marco barely manages to escape ...

INT. GENES' CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene slows down, hangs a sharp right onto a side street. Looks in his rearview. Clear so far.

EXT. BACK OF BUSTER'S - NIGHT

A parking lot lit in a few places by sporadically scattered lamp posts, it now has only a few cars. People leave by the numbers.

Estella, the raven-haired bartender who had served Gene, leaves the building, strolls toward a solitary car sitting in the darkest area of the parking lot just fifty feet away.

She reaches it, rifles through her purse for her car key, and finally retrieves it. She unlocks the car door and hops in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Estella makes herself comfortable, fastens her seatbelt. Just as she puts her key in the ignition, a shadow leaps from the back, throws a garrote around her neck, squeezes ...

She struggles, pounding vehemently, kicking the dash, the horn.

He decides to end it in a few seconds, taking careful hold of her head, like a butcher at work on a chicken, and breaks her neck, leaving her a wide-eyed mannequin.

The horn blares into eternity ...

EXT. BACK OF BUSTER'S - NIGHT

The killer slips out of Estella's car, a shadowy figure. He scampers to the end of the parking lot, then dashes into an:

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

He races to a car parked a hundred feet away, then gets in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The killer is Joel, Gene's father. He starts the motor as he gets on his cell:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gene is in his underwear ready to turn in when his cell goes off. He answers it.

GENE (into cell)

Hello?

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Joel takes a leisurely drive through the alley as he talks on his cell:

JOEL (into cell)
You know who this is.

INTERCUT: GENE & JOEL

GENE (into cell)
How did you get my number?

He gets up, sits on his bed.

JOEL (into cell)
C'mon, Gene. Must we play games?
I got it tonight. And she wasn't
exactly ... willing, if you know what
I mean.

Gene closes his eyes, imagining the worst ...

GENE (into cell)
You bastard!

JOEL (into cell)
I believe her name was ... Estella.

GENE (into cell)
(nearly speechless)
How?

JOEL (into cell)
The old way.

GENE (into cell)
You piece of garbage -

JOEL (into cell)
And now, I believe there is a
certain Bonnie Fields -

GENE (into cell)
You stay the fuck away from
her!! You got it?!

EXT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - MORNING - END OF INTERCUT

Bonnie hurries out eating a Danish, a cup of coffee in her other hand. She puts the coffee on the roof of the car as she unlocks the driver's door. She flings it open, then hops in. She backs out then bolts away.

INT. CAR ACROSS THE STREET FROM BONNIE'S HOUSE - MORNING - SOMEONE'S P.O.V.

Someone is watching the house very intently. That person then drives away.

INT. GENE'S CAR - MORNING - MOVING

Tailing the above car.

GENE
(muttering)
What in the hell are you doing
following her?

The car ahead accelerates. It must have spotted him ...

Gene pounds on the gas, but doesn't go too fast since they're still in a residential neighborhood ...

A little girl and her mother wait at the crosswalk ahead. Gene stops and lets them cross.

The vehicle Gene was tailing disappears in the horizon.

EXT. SCHOOL/PLAYGROUND - LATER THAT DAY

Children play on the equipment - swings, horizontal ladder, merry-go-round. Children being children. Bonnie stands in front, waiting, glancing anxiously at her watch.

GENE (O.S.)
I'm getting him something nice for
his birthday.

Startled, Bonnie takes a quick look to her right, sees Gene only a few feet from her.

BONNIE
How long have you been here?

GENE

A few minutes.

BONNIE

Well, his birthday was last week.
His real father got him something
nice.

She sighs.

BONNIE

What do you want?

GENE

You know.

BONNIE

You missed your chance.

GENE

I never, ever had a chance to
see my son.

BONNIE

Whose fault is that? You left
shortly before he was born. And
that was ten years ago.

Gene sighs.

GENE

Look, no one can change the past.
But -

BONNIE

You move around so friggin' much.
Charlotte. Chicago. Then L.A.
You just can't seem to settle down.

BOY (O.S.)

(from afar)

Mommy!

Gene and Bonnie see Eddie in the playground running toward
them. He runs into his mother's arms, then turns to Gene.

EDDIE

Who are you?

GENE

I'm -

She takes her son's hand.

BONNIE

C'mon, Eddie.

As she and Eddie start to leave:

GENE

I just wanted to see how my little
buddy is.

She takes Gene over to the side:

BONNIE

He's not your little buddy!

She turns back to Eddie, takes his hand.

BONNIE

C'mon, you. Dinner is pretty soon.

Gene stands there alone as Bonnie leads Eddie away, Eddie taking a periodic glance at that stranger claiming to be his buddy.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DUSK

Gene's car pulls over by the curb on this sleepy side street, a bastion of Middle America. To Gene's right stands a hedgerow. Bonnie's home, its lights on, is four houses down.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DUSK

Gene guardedly relaxed. He looks around. The clock on the dash says 8:05.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Joel Criswell drives through one of Charlotte's busier streets.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT

Gene still waits, bored but still alert for the unexpected. The clock on the dash now says 11:20.

He then sees something ahead -- a speck inching its way toward him. He takes out his binoculars, looks through them. It's no longer a speck - it becomes increasingly visible ...

The driver then comes into view. It's his father. Though it doesn't appear the recognition is mutual. As he comes closer. And closer ...

Until he passes Gene. Gene turns the motor on. His father is a few blocks down and counting ...

Gene makes a U-turn. Flicks on his headlights. The other car is a good distance away.

EXT. INTERSECTION/TWO SIDE STREETS - NIGHT

The car stops. Fifty feet behind, Gene puts on the brakes, pulling over by the curb.

A tense one-minute wait. Both cars remain frozen in time until ...

The light turns green. Both cars resume speed.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene nears an intersection as he sees his father, not too far ahead, turn left into a motel parking lot.

He waits for a few cars to pass, then pulls into the:

EXT. MOTEL/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Gene's quarry parks his car at the foot of the motel while Gene stashes his vehicle in a parking space in a far-off corner. You could hardly see Gene's car -- the place is enshrouded in darkness.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT

The motor is off. Gene sees the other guy, his father, hop out of his car and head for his first floor room. Waits patiently, watching as the guy fetches a key from his pocket before stepping inside.

Gene waits a long moment. The light in the room he saw the guy slip into is turned off. Gene produces a pistol, takes out a silencer then screws it into place. Then -

A police car waltzes into the parking lot from the left. Glides past the motel at five m.p.h.

Gene scoots down as the cop car floats by. Seconds become hours. He waits. And waits.

Gene can only guess. He moves his head up a few inches, then all the way up. Looks to his right at the vanishing cop car.

Notes its tail lights as they come on - the car has stopped.

Gene shits bricks ...

Then the tail lights go off, and the cop car continues on. Until it is completely out of sight.

LATER

Clock on the dash now says 1:28. It's time.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Gene hops out of his car, looks around. Hesitates, thinking. He can still hear some voices, so he has to make it quick.

He hurries over to his father's motel room. Peers inside. Checks the door. Locked. Then scampers over to his father's vehicle parked only feet away, and plants a GPS device under it.

He bolts back to his car. Hops in, then drives away.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gene on his bed with his GPS device waiting for his father to move. He has no choice but to remain patient.

EXT. OTHER MOTEL - NIGHT

Joel Criswell leaves his room and heads for his car. Then gets in. Fires up the motor, and takes off.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gene studies the GPS device, hurries to the door.

EXT. GENE'S MOTEL - NIGHT

Gene scrambles outside, sprints along the walkway, and runs downstairs toward his car. He looks at the GPS. We see his father's movements. Gene can't waste any more time ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT

Flying down a thoroughfare. He glances at the GPS. His father makes a steady move down the road ...

INT. CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Joel races down the road. He then coasts, hangs a right into a half-filled parking lot. Makes a sharp left into a parking space. The motor on, he hurries outside.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Joel feels underneath his car. He finds it -- a GPS device. He unfastens it from the bottom of his car, scans the vicinity. Sees no one around. But he does notice a car a few spaces down.

He hurries over to it, then attaches the GPS device to the base of the vehicle.

He then scurries back to his car and takes off.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene follows the same route his father had. He rolls into the same parking lot. Stops in a parking space. Checks the GPS. It stops right here. He gets out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

He holds his GPS gizmo out, looking for the source of its activity. Ah-ah - according to this thing, his destination stopped at the car a few spaces down.

He looks around, jogs over to that space, checks the car's belly for the device. Finds it, unfastens the thing. But as he takes it out, he hears some GUY call out:

GUY (O.S.)
Hey you, that's my car!

Gene sprints over to his car, cranks the motor and drives off. The Guy bolts over to his own car. It's all good. But he looks at Gene's departing car carefully. Maybe he has the license plate number ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene drives, looking for his father ...

GENE
(muttering)
Where are you?!

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A WOMAN pulls her car up by the curb then stops. She springs out all slutted up in short shorts and a low cut top. It looks like she'd been dancing. She enters, happy to be home ...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - VESTIBULE - NIGHT

Dimly lit. A bank of mailboxes to the right, a flight of steps directly ahead. The Woman enters, slams the door shut, then mounts the stairs to the:

SECOND FLOOR

A narrow corridor also buried in shadow. A light flickers above one of the doors as the Woman reaches the floor and begins her stride through the hall.

Someone sneaks up behind her (O.S.) and wraps a piece of piano wire around her neck. We then see it is Joel, squeezing tighter ... and tighter. We hear her in her death throes -- gasping, choking.

Until - a door only a few feet away opens. An OLD LADY, short, feisty, appears in the doorway.

OLD LADY
Get away from her!

Joel shrinks back as she bolts back inside. The Woman tries to run, but Joel grabs her, resumes strangling her. But --

Two seconds later the Old Lady re-emerges, this time armed with a broom. She comes right up to him, waving the thing up and down. Hits him a few times as:

OLD LADY
Pick on someone your own size.

SWAT! SWAT! ...

OLD LADY
Pick on me why don't ya.

She swats him again before screaming out:

OLD LADY
Help!! Help!!

A tenant down the hall flings his door open. Some old guy in tank top and boxer shorts, who pops his head out as Joel scoots away, then closes it as he vanishes around the corner.

The Woman breathes heavily as the Old Lady rushes to her aid.

OLD LADY
Are you okay?

The Woman nods.

WOMAN
(sobbing)
I think so. Thanks.

She relaxes, feeling her throat. Gasps a few times. Finally realizes it's over ...

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A black-and-white, its cherry light on, steals by. Another black-and-white passes by in the opposite direction. Both on patrol, sirens off.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

The killer, face unseen, bolts down the stairs ...

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Adjacent to the building. A few slivers of light from the outside. Otherwise, very dark. A shadowed form slithers its way through a corridor, looking for a car.

He finds one, jimmies his way in ...

INT. FRONT SEAT OF CAR - NIGHT

A pair of hands reaches under the dash.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The car glides into the aisle, makes its way toward the exit ...

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Right after the two black-and-whites pass each other, the killer rolls his car out of the garage, and waits for another one to pass. It then hangs a right.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Gene lies on his bed watching the news. A NEWS ANCHOR delivers the news:

NEWS ANCHOR

Last night a car chase on North
Tryon resulted in seven fatalities.

We then segue to the same street where Marco had pursued Gene the previous evening.

A tableau of rotating cherry lights. A few police cars, a fire truck, an ambulance. Residual smoke floating up from the charred skeletons of a couple of cars.

All this amid a row of businesses, neon lights still glimmering as if nothing had happened.

Yellow tape has been strapped around the crime area.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

A car chasing another vehicle
collided into a third car, killing
a family of four. Three people in
the other car were killed ...

Gene looks aghast. He goes to his desk, opens his laptop. Enters Bonnie's business website. Sends her an email: I at least would like to see Eddie again. He pushes SEND.

His cell then rings, and he gets it.

GENE (into cell)

Hello?

JOEL (V.O.)

I found another one last night.
But this one got away.

GENE (into cell)

Good for her.

JOEL (V.O.)

Some stripper I'd been following.
I'm losing my touch.

GENE (into cell)
 Good. Maybe you'll switch careers.
 Go into something like real estate.

JOEL (V.O.)
 No, I'm *really* losing my touch.

GENE (into cell)
 Why are you telling me this?

JOEL (V.O.)
 You and I were woven from the same
 fabric.

GENE (into cell)
 How so?

JOEL (V.O.)
 We both kill people.

GENE (into cell)
 It's not that simple. You know it.

We then hear a thump on the other end. A pause. Then -

JOEL (V.O.)
 Phone just dropped. I'm getting
 clumsy ... Been to the doctor about
 it. Doesn't look good -

Suddenly - the line goes dead.

EXT. FIELDS REAL ESTATE - DAY

A modest affair with several cars parked out front. Bonnie swings her car into place by the curb, then jumps out. Already she's geared up for work. She dashes into the office.

INT. FIELDS REAL ESTATE - DAY

A mid-sized, bustling affair. Bonnie rushes in, marches by the cute receptionist, PATRICIA.

PATRICIA
 Hi Missus Fields.

BONNIE

Hi Patricia.

As Bonnie flits by ...

Into an aisle, on both sides of which real estate agents talk to prospective clients on the phone. She races to the far side, then enters:

INT. BONNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bonnie hurries to her computer, turns it on, then goes to her inbox. Finds the email Gene sent: At least I would like to see Eddie again.

BONNIE

(under her breath)

Dammit!

She emails her reply: Not on your life.

EXT. PLAYGROUND BY SCHOOL - DAY

Gene is seated on a bench when Bonnie approaches from behind. A flat box lies beside him.

BONNIE

You don't give up I see.

He looks over his shoulder, his eye still on the playground.

GENE

It's not easy for a father to give up on his son.

She sighs.

BONNIE

You gave up years ago - before he was born.

She sits down, keeping ample space between them.

GENE

But he *is* my son.

Bonnie sighs.

BONNIE

By DNA only. I assure you, he knows his real father.

GENE

All those times -- they never meant anything to you?

BONNIE

They were fun while they lasted. But ... you ran off.

He shows her the box.

GENE

I believe you like these.

She eyes the box.

GENE

Chocolate covered cherries. You couldn't resist 'em, remember?

He brings them closer to her.

GENE

Here. I got these for you. I certainly don't want 'em. My thing is licorice.

She changes her tone. She reaches for it, but then withdraws.

BONNIE

What exactly do you want?

GENE

I told you -

BONNIE

No. Really.

GENE

I want you to know that the past has finally caught up to you.

She slowly takes the box of candy, Gene's peace offering.

BONNIE

You make it sound like I was
guilty of something.

GENE

The past has definitely caught up
to me.

She slowly opens it.

BONNIE

You think you can walk up to me
like this and just bribe your way
back into my heart?

Gene smiles.

GENE

It's worked before.

At that moment Eddie comes running to her.

GENE

You think he'd like an ice cream
cone?

Eddie heard that. He looks over to his mother for
permission. She breathes a sigh of reluctance.

BONNIE

Just one.

EXT. ICE CREAM STAND - MINUTES LATER

Gene has his son by his side as the girl at the counter
hands him his two cones. He gives one to Eddie. Bonnie
waits at a table several yards away watching all this
transpire.

Gene steers himself and Eddie toward a nearby picnic table
as they start on their ice cream.

Eddie suddenly turns to his mother.

EDDIE

Mom, you want some?

BONNIE

No. Go on. Enjoy yourselves.

GENE

So, Eddie, you have ice cream often?

EDDIE

Sometimes.

GENE

How's school?

EDDIE

A fireman came over today. We got to ride around in his fire truck.

GENE

So you enjoyed yourself, uh?

EDDIE

Yeah. I think I wanna be a fireman when I grow up.

Bonnie remains standing, observing how beautifully father and son interact. She then comes to, looks at her watch. After a moment:

BONNIE

We'd better get going soon.

EDDIE

Okay.

He hurries on his cone ...

INT. STUDY - DUSK

Bonnie on her computer. Checks her email. It's from Gene:
Well?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gene sits on his bed reading Bonnie's email on his laptop. He smiles, ponders a moment.

Then goes to his desk and takes out a portfolio of pictures. Spreads some out on his desk. The photos show Gene and Bonnie together during happier times.

One features the two in their hiking clothes, arms around each other as they pose for the camera on a hilltop in the wilds.

Another shows Gene and Bonnie kayaking with some friends, laughing as the water splashes on them.

Still another photo portrays the two lovebirds snuggled in front of a fireplace.

In another picture we see Gene and Bonnie horseback riding through a field framed by woods and mountains. Riding separate horses, they both smile and wave to the camera.

Gene takes a studied view of the four pictures, his portfolio filled with many more.

He wipes away a newly formed tear from right below his eye.

GENE

(under his breath)

Damn damn damn I fucked up!

He clenches his fist, feels like beating himself, then relaxes it. He sits back down at his desk and contemplates.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Bonnie sits at her computer reading Gene's email. She responds: Well what? You want me to affirm what should be the obvious? She presses SEND.

Then her husband Greg innocently troops in, kisses her on the cheek.

GREG

Checkin' your emails I see.

BONNIE

Yeah. I'll be in shortly.

GREG

Looks like it's from that Criswell
guy.

BONNIE

Yeah. He saw Eddie.

GREG

Oh? What happened?

BONNIE

Nothing. I think he's trying to
revive something that never was.

GREG

I hope he knows it just ain't
gonna ever happen.

She looks up at him, throws him a smile of reassurance.

BONNIE

He knows.

She takes him by the hand, tries to reassure him.

BONNIE

He just wants to get acquainted
with Eddie, that's all.

GREG

And not with you, either?

She looks up, smiles. A cue:

BONNIE & GREG

It just ain't gonna ever happen.

She giggles. That, too, is a cue. He bends down, kisses her
on the cheek.

GREG

Okay. See ya soon.

BONNIE

Yeah. See ya in five.

She smiles as he ambles away. She turns back to the email. Frowns. A worried look suddenly washes over her.

INT. CAR - DAY - MOVING

One of the bigger thoroughfares in downtown Charlotte. Gene makes a leisurely glide as he talks on his cell:

GENE (into cell)

About this morning.

JOEL (V.O.)

What about this morning?

GENE (into cell)

Are you sick? Or what?

JOEL (V.O.)

I appreciate your concern but -

GENE (into cell)

When I was little kids would ask, "What does your dad do?" What could I say? My dad is a serial killer?

We hear a chuckle on the other end.

GENE (into cell)

When I was ten, I told this one kid, one of our friendly neighborhood bullies - a Zeke something - that my ol' man was like those D.A.s from "L.A. Law." And I would be a cop and arrest his ass one day.

JOEL (V.O.)

You told kids you were gonna be a cop?

GENE (into cell)

Oh yeah. And a fireman. And a lawyer. Little did they know, uh?

JOEL (V.O.)

You saw "L.A. Law" at that age?

GENE (into cell)

Couple of the priests did. That age, kids are proud of their dads. But me? Well, I was doomed. From day one.

Gene closes his cell as he pulls into the right lane and coasts behind a row of cars that queue up to a red light.

INT. JOEL'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Joel relaxes as he tours around the city's downtown business district.

Trolling ...

He slows down, his eye riveted to his right on a brunette BUSINESSWOMAN slithering along. She passes an underground parking garage, then enters a coffee shop feet away.

Joel stops, then hangs a right into the garage.

EXT. STREET - DAY - LATER

The Businesswoman leaves the coffee shop sipping on a java. She turns left, enters the:

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - DAY

She struts down the winding lane into the subterranean darkness through the multi-level garage, reaches the bottom, then wends her way through the maze of cars.

She then sees something 25 feet ahead. It's Joel's car, and in the front seat he's strangling a woman.

The Businesswoman screams. Joel looks back at her as his victim remains unconscious. Caught dead in the act.

He quickly backs out, almost hitting her, then barrels away. She takes out her cell phone, punches in the license plate number.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Joel's car squeals to a halt. He pitches out his victim, a charcoal-haired woman as lifeless as a ventriloquist's dummy, from the front passenger seat. The body lands by an overflowing garbage can.

The car then speeds away.

INT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT - DAY

Moderately crowded. Gene sits chowing down on a plate of sushi with chopsticks. He checks his cell phone. Sees a news bit. Which says: Murdered woman found in alley. The headline is flanked by: 28 minutes ago.

His cell then rings. He looks around.

GENE (into cell)

Yeah?

JOEL (V.O.)

It's me again.

Gene manages to talk between bites ...

GENE (into cell)

That's your handiwork in the alley?

JOEL (V.O.)

Soon I will own the city's alleys.

GENE (into cell)

Good for you.

He then spots through the front windows Marco and two thugs strolling by as:

JOEL (V.O.)

And before long --

Marco and company stop at the front door -

JOEL (V.O.)

-- I'll own the minds and souls --

Gene gets up, takes out some bills, slaps them on the table
-

JOEL (V.O.)
- of all the men in Charlotte.

Marco and the two thugs casually step in -

JOEL (V.O.)
Can you imagine --

As Gene hurries for the aisle leading to the back, his cell
still by his ear:

JOEL (V.O.)
- the men scared shitless-

AISLE

Gene runs for the men's john to his left -

JOEL (V.O.)
- that I will emasculate them -

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Gene makes for the window -

JOEL (V.O.)
- by taking from them their women.

He closes his cell, pockets it, then takes out a roll of
black masking tape. He tears off a strip and places it on
the window diagonally from top to bottom -

Then does likewise with another piece and crosses it over
the first, making a big X. He smashes the window with his
elbow, then puts his foot on the window sill ...

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND RESTAURANT - DAY

On the other side stands a cluster of buildings, big and
small. Gene is halfway out the window ...

INT. AISLE IN RESTAURANT - DAY

Marco and the two thugs enter the bathroom ...

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND RESTAURANT - DAY

As Gene makes it out through the window, he quickly eyes the surrounding rooftops, sees two thugs hovering over him a couple hundred feet above. Their guns trained on him -

He does a quick somersault to the other side as he surprises them with a couple of shots -

They fall, one to the ground, the other on the roof. Gene scurries toward one end of the alley. But -

A car squeals to a halt at the other end, then squeezes its way through, trapping Gene. But -

He backs into a doorway, firing relentlessly at the approaching car.

Which stops. The horn blaring, the dead driver resting on the wheel ...

Gene sprints toward the opposite end of the alley, looking back periodically as -

Figures begin to appear on rooftops ...

Gene senses it. Looks up and around. Then -

He spins into a niche in a building. Shoots upward, and continues shooting as he darts over to the end of the alley, only a hundred feet away.

Two thugs fall like dummies, hitting the ground. *Thump ... thump ...*

Marco emerges from the car, levels his gun at Gene. Who spots him. Fires. And misses.

As Marco shrinks back inside, flings the dead driver outside, climbs into the driver's seat.

Gene runs toward the mouth of the alley, but is too late. Marco thrusts the car forward. Gene spins around, and in an instant finds himself balancing both hands on the hood. In sit-up fashion brings himself up then forward onto the car.

As the car speeds like a rocket ...

Gene smashes the windshield with his elbow. Then - as the car leaves the alley -

EXT. ALLEY/SIDE STREET - DAY

-- it hangs an abrupt right, tires squealing. Gene flies off the car, shooting at it as it speeds away.

Marco turns right onto the next street down ...

Gene turns around, notices some thugs on the rooftops. He nails a couple with his piece. They drop to the ground as he sprints to his car a hundred feet down by the restaurant.

He jumps in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gene revs the motor, then barrels forward to the next street over. Stops. Then hangs a sharp right. Into a thoroughfare where traffic is moderate.

No sign of Marco. Anywhere.

Gene keeps moving, looking around. Hoping. He stops at an intersection. Then -

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

As cars wait to turn, another car comes skidding down the cross street toward Gene -

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY

Gene looks to his right. At the oncoming car ...

He yanks his vehicle into the intersection, nearly sideswiping another car. He takes out his cell ...

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

The oncoming vehicle skids past Gene, T-bones a car to his left -

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

The car that accosted him suddenly bursts into flames, turning the center of the intersection into one big fireball.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene slides into the right lane. As we hear sirens in the distance ...

He then makes a sharp right. Continues going through a mixed business-residential area ...

He looks back. Nothing. And then ... a police car, cherry top gyrating, hangs a right onto the street, half a mile behind Gene.

Who suddenly turns right. The area now is purely residential ...

EXT. INTERSECTION/TWO SIDE STREETS - DAY

Gene barrels to the intersection, hangs a quick left ...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

ANTHONY MALDERAS, late fifties, boss of the Malderas crime family in Chicago, sits behind a large oaken desk sucking a foot-long stogie. Vintage Cuban. He's a human chimney.

His consigliere, GIUSEPPE, sits across from him. He's about twenty years younger. Looks like he could be an A.D.A from "Law and Order."

MALDERAS

(gleefully)

Just got the word. The Genie's
in Charlotte.

He rubs his hands.

MALDERAS

Owes me a couple hundred big ones.
Must think Chicago's a soft town.

GUISEPPE

Send some guys down. Blow him
away?

MALDERAS

Let's try to reason with him first.

GUISEPPE

Gotcha.

MALDERAS

Then we'll blow him away.

EXT. MOTEL/PARKING LOT - DAY

Gene rolls into the parking lot, finds a space then parks.
Hops out. Heads for the front door when -

Two THUGS in sunglasses materialize from nowhere, accosting
Gene at gunpoint. They look around. They have only seconds

...

THUG

Genie?

Gene spins around. He has no time to react ...

THUG

(urgently)

Come with us.

INT. CAR - DAY - MOVING

The two Thugs in front escorting Gene, who sits in back, a
black bag over his head.

EXT. FLIPPER'S FISH & CHIPS/PARKING LOT - DAY

The Thugs roll into the parking lot, park, then hurry out.
Thug #2 races out from the front passenger side, opens the
door for Gene.

THUG #2

Get out.

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE - DAY

The boss of the Romano family, GEORGE ROMANO, seated at his desk, flanked by a small coterie of men. The mood is somber. The two Thugs bring Gene in, make him sit. Then take the bag off his head.

GEORGE

Well, well, if it ain't the Genie.
Your reputation becomes you. What
I hear, you're quite the hustler.
Took Malderas in Chicago, Moretti
in L.A., Gigliotti in Charlotte.
Took 'em to the cleaners, uh?

He starts to laugh, but holds it in.

GEORGE

Word travels fast. What is this, you
whacked Gigliotti? What'd he do, try
to collect? And then you -

He chuckles.

GEORGE

You put his lights out.

Gene fidgets.

GEORGE

Don't try to collect from the
Genie, uh? Hey, any enemy of my
enemies can't be no enemy of mine,
uh? Problem is, his man Marco - he's
still breathin'.

As he pounds his desk a few times, yelling:

GEORGE

And I don't like it when one of my
archenemies is breathin'!!

Back to his normal voice:

GEORGE

If you're gonna do a hit for me for
free, you'd better do it right.

GENE

Bust my chops like that, me and Marco might do a little business. Call it détente. A truce.

GEORGE

Call it nothing. I can bust your chops whenever, because I know I can. And you ain't gonna do nothin', because as you'll see, I ain't the enemy. You did what was right. Now, down to business. I hear you think your ol' man is a serial killer?

GENE

That's right.

GEORGE

So what does that have to do with me?

GENE

Well, havin' a serial killer in the area could prove bad for business. Wait for the police to start bustin' a few heads, throwin' people in the slammer, just because of some creep who goes around killing women. You got a wife, a daughter?

GEORGE

You got guts, askin' me if I got a wife or daughter. Ain't no business of yours. But yes, I've got both - a wife and daughter. What're you tryin' to do, anyways? See, Charlotte ain't big on the Mafia. Gigliotti was from New York. Five families gave him the boot.

He snags a mint from the mint tray, pops it in his mouth.

GEORGE

Only thing keepin' him here was business with some remnant of a cartel. He tried to muscle in on me. Thank God I've got an angel lookin' after me. My personal genie, uh? Anyhows, I know you don't wanna hear some lecture.

He leans back as he considers Gene. His disposition changes in an instant:

GEORGE

You can go. You need some work, you know where to find me.

GENE

That's it?

GEORGE

You want me to shake your hand, offer you some wine, a ticket to the opera? Get outa here.

EXT. FLIPPER'S FISH AND CHIPS - DUSK

Gene emerges, glad to breathe the fresh air again. He gets on his cell:

GENE (into cell)

Hello, send a cab ...

INT. CAB - DUSK - MOVING

Gene rides in back. The drive is leisurely, an apparent respite from the world's madness. Then - his cell goes off.

GENE (into cell)

Yeah?

JOEL (V.O.)

So, what happened at that restaurant? You cut me off.

GENE (into cell)

I had no choice.

JOEL (V.O.)

You like Japanese food, I see.

GENE (into cell)

Of course. I wouldn't have eaten there otherwise.

Joel chuckles.

JOEL (into cell)
 I like it, too.
 (beat)
 My favorite Asian fare, though,
 is Chinese.

GENE (V.O.)
 What's a good Chinese restaurant?

JOEL (V.O.)
 I go to Liang's. Ever hear of
 it?

GENE (into cell)
 Should I?

JOEL (V.O.)
 So, you studied English Literature.

GENE (into cell)
 So ...

JOEL (V.O.)
 You might've read "Don't Go Gentle
 into that Good Night."

GENE (into cell)
 Yes. Why?

JOEL (V.O.)
 Why? Let me refresh your memory.
 It was written by that Welsh
 writer ... uh ...

GENE (into cell)
 Dylan Thomas. Go on.

JOEL (V.O.)
 It's an anthem to a dying old man.
 Of course, we know the speaker is
 delivering it to his father. The
 poem is saying, No matter how old
 you are, you must resist death.

Joel coughs a few times.

JOEL (V.O.)

Never let death take you quietly.
You must fight it to the very end.
Leave this world screaming. Telling
death, I will not go quietly. But
in the end, death will always win.

Both men pause in a moment of shared contemplation.

JOEL (V.O.)

I'm an old man. Things ... have been
happening to my mind and body.
Things -

GENE (into cell)

You're a serial killer who murdered
my mother!!!

The cab stops at a red light. The CABBIE looks back, clears
his throat. He's probably Indian or Pakistani.

CABBIE

You okay?

GENE

Yeah. I'm just rehearsing for a
play.

The Cabbie throws him a disbelieving look, then returns his
eyes to the road. Just get this guy to his destination ...
Gene is listening carefully.

JOEL (V.O.)

I have, uh ... oh God, I ... it's
it's ... it's happening again ...

The line goes dead.

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

The cab rolls into the parking lot, and Gene steps out. As
the cab whizzes away, he strolls toward the nearest
stairway ...

EXT. DOUGLAS AIRPORT, CHARLOTTE - DUSK

A plane descends ...

INT. AIRPORT - DUSK

Four GANGSTERS in sunglasses and sleek hair and black gangster garb strut through the concourse, eager to finish their job. SILVANO checks his watch.

SILVANO

(to a couple of Gangsters)
We do this ASAP, then go back to
Chicago in three days. Got that?

The others nod and grunt in assent.

EXT. GENE'S MOTEL - DUSK

Gene flies down the stairs, heads for his car, gets in and drives away.

EXT. OTHER MOTEL - DUSK

The same one where Joel Criswell is staying. Gene rolls into the parking lot, finds a space sandwiched in between two other cars. Then gets out with his GPS device. Heads for the motel.

Takes a thorough look around - he needs to be especially vigilant. He speeds up his pace ...

He arrives at his father's room. Takes out a screwdriver, fits it neatly into the keyhole, then turns it around until -

It gives. He looks around again to be sure ...

INT. MOTEL ROOM PROPER - DUSK

He locks the door, hurries over to the desk. Opens it, then hears footsteps coming closer. He scurries over to the bathroom as -

The footsteps stop. Something is placed in the keyhole. We hear jiggling, inaudible talking between those trying to break in -

INT. BATHROOM - DUSK

Gene turns off the light, steps into the bathtub, then closes the plastic curtain. Takes out his Glock from his belt, checks the cartridge. Makes sure the silencer is screwed into place ...

INT. MOTEL ROOM PROPER - DUSK

The door opens, and in comes Marco followed by another THUG, closing the door behind them. Their guns drawn, they cautiously proceed forward.

THUG

He may not be home.

INT. BATHROOM - DUSK

Gene listens intently.

MARCO (O.S.)

I was hopin' to catch 'em both
in one swoop.

INT. MOTEL ROOM PROPER - DAY

Marco checks under the bed as the Thug checks the closet.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Gene still listens. Glock out, as ready as ever ...

MARCO (O.S.)

Check the bathroom.

THUG (O.S.)

Right.

Footsteps coming closer. The door then opens (O.S.) and the light is flicked on.

A pause. Long, intense. This could be the end. Then -

The Thug throws the curtain open. For a split second he looks at Gene in terror -

Before Gene plants a few slugs in his brain. The Thug's corpse falls back as Gene scurries out of the tub. Steps over the body, then opens the door. He then steps into the:

INT. MOTEL ROOM PROPER - DUSK

Where he sees Marco leaving through the front door. Shoots at him but -

The door closes. Marco is outside ...

He sprints over to the door, locks it, then returns to the desk. Checks the top drawer. Then the other drawers. Finds nothing.

GENE

(under his breath)

Damn!

He runs to the curtain, opens it slightly. Sees nothing unusual ...

He then darts back to the door, opens it, peers outside. Looks at the parking lot, sees his car. Then looks all around. Spots

Marco approaching. Suddenly, as Gene points his gun at him, he whips out his piece, flies down on his stomach as -

Gene fires. Misses -- barely. Marco, still on his belly, fires back. Gene closes the door.

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

Marco runs to the side of the motel as -

Gene springs out, firing at Marco, narrowly missing. Marco then shoots a few rounds, scooting back as a few of his rounds nick the door. Marco then gets it in the shoulder.

He presses hard on his wound, giving Gene a chance to go for his car -

Which Gene does, sprinting, looking to his right, at Marco licking his wounds. No gunfire is traded during this brief moment. And then -

Two cars roll into the parking lot, stopping by Marco, who mutters something to one of the drivers.

Gene is able to squeeze out a few more rounds, nailing one of the drivers in the head, before leaping into his auto. Marco fires back as -

INT. CAR - DUSK

Gene pumps on the gas -

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

As Gene flies out of the parking space, Marco and the other thugs fire at him nonstop, drawing him into a full-fledged skirmish.

He ducks as the car barrels forward, almost ramming into the motel.

Two thugs jump out of the car whose driver bought it and fire relentlessly at Gene.

Gene dispatches both thugs effortlessly as he wheels his auto at five m.p.h. to the left, making a graceful turn between the motel and the other two cars, even though he's ducked down -

Two thugs spring out of the car with the dead driver as four others ease out of the other vehicle. Marco joins them, shooting at Gene from behind the car with the live driver.

INT. CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Gene continues on, firing at his assailants -

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

Gene makes it past the two cars. Then -

INT. CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Gene reaches for a shotgun beneath the seat. Checks the cartridge. A-OK. He carefully scoots up. Stops the car and fires outside the window, careful to make each shot count ...

He blows away one thug. Then another. Both fly back like mannequins as Gene drives away. He rolls into the mouth of the parking lot, then hangs a sharp right, almost clipping another car as it flies by on the road ...

EXT. MOTEL - DUSK

Marco and another thug manage their way through the parking lot, past bodies of other thugs. Marco throws the departing car a vindictive glare ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Flying down a thoroughfare through pinball traffic. Passing green lights at intersections, weaving through a sporadic flow of cars ...

EXT. LIANG'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A small, quaint affair. A few people enter and leave. Gene's car squeals to a halt, and Gene hops out. He rushes inside.

MR. LIANG stands at the counter ready to take Gene's order. Gene approaches, shows him a picture of his father.

GENE

Have you seen this man?

MR. LIANG

I think so. Let me see this.

Gene hands him the picture.

MR. LIANG

Be right back.

Mr. Liang skedaddles into the back, returns seconds later with a pencil. He sketches a quick beard on Joel Criswell's face.

MR. LIANG

That's him. Past few days, he'd be here at the same time.

GENE

(rushed)

Which is?

MR. LIANG

Why, after lunch rush.

GENE

What time? Like -

MR. LIANG

Two ... o'clock. Same time. He tells me day before what he wants. Today he says, "Give me shrimp lo mein tomorrow." So .. we give him shrimp lo mein tomorrow. He gave me his card.

He takes out a small card from his pocket, hands it to Gene.

MR. LIANG

Here it is. I don't think that's his name, though. Must've given me wrong card by accident.

Gene looks at the card with amazement.

GENE

You're right. It's not his name.

On the card it says: *Felix Reich, M.D. Neurologist. Specialist in movement disorders.* Gene pensively puts the card in his pocket.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gene is on his laptop. He downloads a website - one belonging to Felix Reich, M.D. A neurologist doing research on Huntington's Disease. The site says there is a 50/50 chance that a parent will pass it on to his/her child.

Gene looks in space, dumbfounded.

EXT. STREET - DAY

One of the busier streets in downtown Charlotte. Gene swerves his car over by the curb and hops out. He checks a piece of paper in his hand. Walks straight ahead. Vigilant. His senses keen, aware of all around him.

Half a block down, he finds it. His destination. A clinic, its glass door half open, filled with patients. And understaffed. Gene checks the slip again. This is definitely it. He steps into the:

INT. CLINIC - DAY

A large waiting area to the left. In front of it is the nurse's station. Nurses take turns calling out numbers and names. To Gene's right is a row of doors, and straight ahead is a hall leading to various doctor's offices.

He turns to a NURSE. Frazzled. 30 going on 50. Before he can say anything, he shows her a picture.

GENE

Have you seen this man?

She looks at the picture, then throws him a suspicious look.

NURSE

What's it to ya?

GENE

He's my long lost father. I heard he comes here.

NURSE

Name?

GENE

Joel Criswell.

NURSE

Just a sec.

She deftly attacks her computer, retrieves some data in only seconds.

NURSE

Yes. There's a Joel Criswell. Just had an appointment ... let's see. Wednesday. That was yesterday.

GENE

I have to see him. I ...

He pretends to check his pockets, feigning embarrassment ...

GENE

... I seem to have lost his address and phone number.

NURSE

(suspiciously)

Uh-uh. Tell you what.

NURSE #2, also at the counter, is dealing with a couple of people who appear to have lost someone. Harried, she turns to the Nurse:

NURSE #2

You think you can take care of these people. I'm wanted in room fourteen.

The Nurse has to hurry with Gene:

NURSE

Tell you what, you look honest. Besides, he's gonna need as much family as he can muster up. I can only give you his phone number.

GENE

Okay.

NURSE

Ready?

Gene already has a pad of paper and pen ready ...

GENE

Shoot.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gene emerges from the clinic, pad of paper still in hand. He bolts over to his car amid the many passersby. He hops in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gene quickly pulls away from the curb into the thick of traffic. He gets on his cell. Then:

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Information.

GENE
I need a reverse ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene coasts to a halt before a one-story in the midst of a string of scattered homes in one of Charlotte's poorer areas. A short field separates it from the house to the left.

A light is on. Gene looks around just to be sure. He makes a call on his cell. Then:

JOEL (V.O.)
Hello?

GENE (into cell)
Look out your window.

The light goes off. Gene hits the gas. Someone takes a shot at the window on the right passenger's side. SEEMASH!!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Gene's car barrels a good hundred feet before stopping on a dime. Gene hops out, crouches behind the car.

Looks at the house a couple of spaces down. Its lights are off. Gene decides to chance it. He considers both houses. There's no car in the other home's driveway. So ...

He makes a run for it. Someone takes a few more potshots at him.

He reaches the:

EXT. FIELD BETWEEN BOTH HOUSES - NIGHT

Gene runs straight ahead toward the end of the field, which widens behind both houses. He now confronts an enormous field. He ducks down as he proceeds to his right - toward the back yard of his father's house.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Gene reaches his destination, produces his silencer-tipped pistol. Turns right. Plods toward the house through grass up to his ankles. A light wind, meanwhile, blows.

He arrives at the short flight of steps leading to the back porch. Mounts it, reaches the back door, peers into its window. Nothing. He smashes it. Reaches his hand inside, feels around, then unlocks the door. Opens it. And enters.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gene steps in, cautiously. Silhouetted pots, pans hanging on the wall ahead above a stove. To the left a counter top, shelves. Straight ahead a hall leading to the living room, whose large curtained window is the only source of light.

He trudges straight ahead, through the short hall, into the:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gene continues on. Joel could be anywhere ...

Anywhere -

Then - a sound in the kitchen. A pan banging. The door opening and -

Gene spins around. Sees Joel in the open doorway. Shoots at him. The door slams shut. One of the bullets hits the window on the door. Then -

Gene dashes over into the:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Makes for the door. Opens it. Looks to his left. Sees Joel in the neighbor's back yard just standing, looking at him. As if daring him ...

Gene aims, as Joel darts over toward the front. Gene hurries outside.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Gene leaps off the back porch, runs through the back yard into the back yard. He continues to run before reaching the:

EXT. FIELD BETWEEN BOTH HOUSES - NIGHT

Where Gene bolts like a gazelle to the street. Sees Joel across the street running into someone's yard. Gene scampers to his car, with half an eye on the absconding silhouette ...

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gene jumps into his car, guns the motor, then takes off. Barrels straight ahead, looking to his left ...

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

Gene hangs a sharp left. A car whizzes by in the other direction. Gene slams on the brakes. Does a quick U-turn. Just as the other car hangs a quick right, nearly flipping over.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene hangs a quick right. Resumes pursuit of his father. Does fifty down the next block. Then stops. Sees, hears nothing around. It's hopeless ...

He makes a call on his cell:

JOEL (V.O.)

(answering machine)

This is Joel Criswell. I'm sorry I can't take your call right now. But at the tone, if you'll please leave your name, message, and time of the call, I'll be sure to call you back as soon as possible. Thank you very much, and have a good day.

He kills the cell, then leans back.

GENE

(under his breath)

God damn!

EXT. SCHOOL/PLAYGROUND - DAY

It's recess. Children are scattered everywhere playing on the equipment. Eddie and a few others do the monkey bars.

A TEACHER sits on the other side of the monkey bars only yards away from the school. Reading a newspaper, she occasionally glances up to see that the children are doing fine, then returns to her paper.

It's just an ordinary day ...

INT. CAR - DAY - MOVING

Joel at the wheel. Time on the dash says 2:10. He pats his sweaty forehead as his arms, shoulders twitch ...

He stops at an intersection, waiting for the light to turn green. To his right just ahead is the playground where Eddie and his playmates enjoy the outdoors ...

The light turns green. He slowly crosses, watches the playground closely as he coasts alongside the curb and ...

EXT. SCHOOL/PLAYGROUND - DAY

Eddie finishes walking his hands down the ladder of monkey bars, then drops down to ...

Joel, right beneath the bars, who folds one arm around his waist then scampers away with him.

EDDIE
HELP! HELP!

Joel makes it to his car with the boy. Opens the driver's door, shoves Eddie in, hurries inside.

The Teacher is shocked to her senses, scurries frantically after the boy. Is half-way there when the car bolts away, nearly ramming into another car.

She takes a good look at the license plate, writes down the number.

EXT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT, CHARLOTTE - DAY

Gene steps out when his cell rings. He answers it as he proceeds toward his car:

GENE (into cell)
Hello?

JOEL (V.O.)
Are you eating?

GENE (into cell)
Just had some Mexican. So, do you have it?

JOEL (V.O.)
Have what?

GENE (into cell)
Huntington's.

JOEL (V.O.)
Huntington's what? Huntington's softball? Huntington's Mercedes? You must be ... be ... spe-spec-ific --

GENE (into cell)
There. You're starting to stutter. Your voice has been changing.

JOEL (V.O.)
Don't ... don't ... interrupt me. I'll tell what I do have. I have your son. I just took him from his school.

GENE (into cell)
What?! Why?

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY

As Gene cranks the motor:

 JOEL (V.O.)
Give me Bonnie, and I'll return
your son on a silver platter.

He backs up, then drives away.

 GENE (into cell)
Why is she important to you?

 JOEL (V.O.)
She reminds me so much of your
mother, that one link between us.

 GENE (into cell)
So, all your other victims - they
were incarnations of my mother?

No answer.

 GENE (into cell)
You wanna kill Bonnie because
you're dying, right? You have
nothing left. Is this your swan
song, your *coup de grace*, before
you cash everything in?

Again, no answer.

 GENE (into cell)
You chose psychology so you could
understand yourself better, right?

 JOEL (V.O.)
Wrong. I knew ... I could never ...
understand myself.

 GENE (into cell)
Well, for whatever reason, you've
become a monster. And now, either
my son or Bonnie will die, right?

JOEL (V.O.)

Enough of this. I want you to deliver her to Holy Name Cathedral in Chapel Hill by midnight tonight. Or your son is history.

Gene makes the turn ...

GENE (V.O.)

Where in the cathedral?

JOEL (into cell)

Bring her to the east chapel.

The line goes dead. Gene veers into the parking lot of a small line of stores, parks. He goes on his cell and dials.

GENE (into cell)

Bonnie, did you hear about Eddie?

Bonnie tries to dampen her hysteria:

BONNIE (V.O.)

Yes I did. Who would do that? He's ... such a sweet kid.

Gene closes his eyes for a moment, the pain is so unbearable.

GENE (into cell)

Yes, I know.

BONNIE (V.O.)

How did you find out? I-I -

GENE (into cell)

News spreads fast.

BONNIE (V.O.)

Police came over. But the kidnappers never called --

GENE (into cell)

The police know what they're doing -

BONNIE (V.O.)

What do they want?

GREG (into cell)
Are you home now?

BONNIE (V.O.)
Yeah, I took the rest of the
day off. What could -

GENE (into cell)
I'll get to the bottom of this.

BONNIE (V.O.)
What could you do? I really -

GENE (into cell)
Don't worry. I'll call you back.

He kills his cell. Everything is quiet. Gene quickly looks around. A-OK. He then sees Rico, Fabiano and a few of Moretti's other goons parked in a car across the lot, waiting for him to move.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Gene fires up his motor, inches his way toward the mouth of the parking lot. Seeing this, Fabiano suddenly revs his engine, does sixty toward Gene. Stops. He and Rico then bolt outside and start blasting away with shotguns -

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene does seventy straight toward them, barely missing Fabiano but hitting Rico, who flies in the air -

Two goons spring out of their car, start spraying Gene's car with machine gun fire but --

Fabiano is caught off guard, looks at his friend, who lies dead in a pool of blood -

He takes careful aim, blasting Gene's car as -

Gene drives away.

Fabiano runs back into his car and goes after him -

Who now is at the parking lot exit waiting for a chance to turn. Just as Fabiano reaches the exit right behind Gene -

Gene hangs a right -

And Fabiano follows ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene looks in his rearview. He's lost Fabiano - for now.

GENE (into cell)
Father Wolniak, I need your help.

INT. ORPHANGE CAFETERIA - DAY

Lunch is over. A handful of people sit sporadically, enjoying a coffee or soda pop. Gene and Father Wolniak are seated in a faroff corner. Father Wolniak has a stack of papers in front of him. He's somewhat uncomfortable.

FATHER WOLNIAK
The only reason I'd ever consider this is that a child's life is at stake.

GENE
Like last time.

FATHER WOLNIAK
I know. The mother and her two children. I suppose I can't be a hypocrite, can I?

GENE
Not when it comes to a child.

FATHER WOLNIAK
But you must promise not to kill your father.

GENE
Unless it's in self-defense.

Father Wolniak knows better, but he has no choice ...

FATHER WOLNIAK
Yeah, right.

He lifts the top sheet, a map, spreads it out, and points to a diagram.

FATHER WOLNIAK

Okay, the east chapel is here. As soon as you get in through the side, you'll see an aisle. You'll see a door to your left. Open it, and there'll be another aisle. Straight ahead you'll see the door to the east chapel. Whatever you do, don't shoot any of the icons or artwork.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene coasts before Joel's house. His cell rings. Before he can answer:

JOEL (V.O.)

Aren't you going the wrong way?

Gene stops the car, looks around ...

GENE (into cell)

I don't think so.

JOEL (V.O.)

But I do. Things aren't always the way they seem, you know.

GENE (into cell)

You told me to meet you in the chapel.

JOEL (V.O.)

Does this look like the chapel?

GENE (into cell)

Evidently not, uh?

He looks carefully at Joel's house. Sees nothing unusual.

GENE (into cell)

Where are you?

Joel is having fun ...

JOEL (V.O.)

I could be anywhere. I could
be -

EXT. STREET BY JOEL'S HOUSE - DAY

An older man is walking his dog across the street.

JOEL (V.O.)

- that man walking his dog
across the street.

Someone is just getting out of their car a block down.

JOEL (V.O.)

- or that guy leaving his car.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY

Gene is still on his cell.

JOEL (V.O.)

Tisk tisk, you're wasting time.

Gene makes a U-turn and heads back ...

JOEL (V.O.)

You can't make up for lost time.

Gene picks up speed ...

JOEL (V.O.)

Hurry up, Gene. The clock is
ticking.

EXT. FLIPPER'S FISH & CHIPS - DAY

Gen pulls into the parking lot. Then hops out and makes for
the eatery.

INT. FLIPPER'S FISH & CHIPS - DAY

Moderately crowded. Gene ambles between rows of booths
where people chow down on a late lunch.

At the far end George Romano sits eating with four other GOONS. George looks at Gene warily as he approaches.

GEORGE

Here so soon?

GENE

I won't keep you long ...

GEORGE

I was hoping you would ...

GENE

I have a proposition. I can whack Marco for you. But you'll have to do something for me.

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

The same garage where Marco had taken Gene. Whose car rolls in then parks. Gene hops out, marches over to the building.

INT. BUILDING ELEVATOR - DAY

He rides up. And then - the door opens. Marco is about to get in -

In a flash Marco disappears along the side, reaches for his gun as -

Gene produces his piece, fires three times. Then -

INT. ELEVATOR/HALL - DAY

Gene jumps into the hall, turns to his left, gun out, but -

Nothing.

He scampers to a doorway right across the hall. Peers into another hall, one that T-bones this one, directly across from him. Still nothing.

He looks both ways. Marco is around. But where?

Gene trots down the hall. Then - a bullet ricochets off the wall nearest him. He takes cover in a doorway, then fires toward the elevator, where the bullet came from.

GENE

I know where you are, Marco.

Silence. Then -

We hear a door slam near the elevator, but can't see anything. Gene darts across the hall, then heads back toward the elevator. Then -

The stairway door by the elevator bursts open. Just as -

Gene reaches the hallway that T-bones the hall this side of the elevator. He fires at the open door. Hangs a right, slips into the:

INT. OTHER HALL - DAY

Just as Marco appears at the end of the first hall by the elevator. Gene spins around, and in a split-second fires several times. Marco, however, is gone.

Gene looks straight, amazed. Darts over to the hall by the elevator.

INT. FIRST HALL - DAY

He reaches it, but sees no sign of Marco. He dashes over to the stairway door, opens it.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Gene steps inside, hears someone scurrying below. He dashes down the winding stairway after him ...

He keeps running. He reaches a landing. But keeps going ...

The guy down below opens a door (O.S.) ...

Three seconds later Gene reaches the first floor. The door is closed. He tugs at it. It opens. He then goes into the:

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

Marco bolts some 75 feet away down the main corridor. Gene gives chase. As he levels his gun about to fire -

Marco hangs a sudden left, threading his way through the dense panoply of cars ...

Gene sprints over to his car, hops in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Gene sees Marco from afar hop in his car, then cranks on the motor and backs out.

Looks around. Sees a woman an aisle down sashaying to her car, seemingly oblivious to all this.

He returns his eyes to the front, at Marco making a clean getaway. He then pulls out, rocketing toward the exit.

He hangs a sharp left and goes after Marco, who's about a hundred feet ahead. Then fifty ...

As Marco waits to turn ...

Twenty-five ...

Marco turns right. And Gene follows, almost hitting another car. The speedometer rises - thirty-five, forty-five, fifty ...

Cars clear the way to let these two titans of the road through ...

EXT. STREET - DAY

Gene in desperate pursuit of Marco. As they squeal down the road, nearly scraping a few cars ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene produces his gun, takes careful aim, fires three times.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Marco's car begins wobbling, then returns to normal.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene fires again ...

EXT. STREET - DAY

This time the window shatters. One of the back wheels is hit. Yet Marco keeps going ...

A railroad lies just ahead. A train announces itself with its horn. Loud. Unmistakable.

The crossing guard puts down its arm as its two red lights go on, blinking in turns.

Marco races to the tracks ...

He's almost there -

As the train comes nearer ... and nearer ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene speeds up. He can practically smell his prey from here.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The train comes closer ...

Marco speeds up, anxious to outrun that asshole behind him.

Almost there ...

As the train accelerates ...

Marco's almost there. Almost. Almost ...

Then -

INT. MARCO'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Ten feet from the track. You could hear the train gaining like a tidal wave. The noise too close.

Marco's speedometer reading seventy ... eighty ...

Too close. And then -

EXT. STREET/RAILROAD TRACK - DAY

The train sweeps Marco's car off the track in one sudden SWOOSH, tossing it aside. Poor Marco.

As the train keeps going ...

And now the car is a hunk of scrap metal. It bursts into flames, turning the scene into combustible chaos. The fiery metal flipping over in one continuous rhythm. Over and over.

Before stopping by the side of the tracks. Still one big jumbled fireball.

The train whizzes by ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY - MOVING

Gene's sees it all. Stops by the side of the road about a hundred feet away. He takes out his cell.

 GENE (into cell)
 Romano. It's done.

INT. GEORGE ROMANO'S OFFICE - DAY

George is on the phone.

 GEORGE (into phone)
 Gee, I'd like to help. But you
 didn't whack him.

He chuckles.

 GEORGE (into phone)
 The train whacked him.

INT. GENE'S CAR - DAY

Alone in a parking lot. Gene kills his cell.

 GENE
 (under his breath)
 Asshole!

INT. CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Silvano sits beside the DRIVER, two other gangsters in back. They're on I-85, headed toward Charlotte. A mammoth freight truck roars only a hundred feet ahead.

The Driver pulls over into the right lane, then speeds up, gaining on the truck. He then goes daredevil, speeding up to a fanatical 90, then passing it.

EXT. I-85 - DUSK

Silvano and his crew speed up as the truck they had just passed blasts its horn several times ...

INT. CAR - DUSK - MOVING

The car finally makes it a good ten, fifteen, twenty feet ahead of the truck, still keeping to the right. The road ahead is clear. The Driver floors it.

The car veers to the left lane in front of the truck.

EXT. I-85 - DUSK

The car has made it. Barely ...

And it keeps going across the four southbound lanes, nearly striking a few cars ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Headed north. Sees Silvano's car speeding right toward him ...

EXT. I-85 - DUSK

Silvano's vehicle swerves to the left, racing toward Gene's car, nearly smashing into it. A northbound car almost T-bones Silvano's vehicle, skidding, barely hitting it. As -

INT. CAR/I-85 - DUSK

Silvano pokes his semiautomatic out the window, quickly blasting the rear of Gene's fleeing automobile -

INT. GENE'S CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Gene's rear window is caved in, littering the backseat with a sea of glass -

EXT. I-85 - DUSK

Another car slides into the rear of Silvano's vehicle, then moves on, partly disabled. Silvano's car recovers, makes a sharp left, resuming its course on the freeway, this time headed north. Behind Gene ...

INT. GENE'S CAR - DUSK - MOVING

Gene does a cool 60. Looks in the rearview. It's that pain in the ass Silvano and company again. A few hundred feet behind. And gaining. Fuck it - he pounds on his brakes. Tires squeal as -

EXT. I-85 - DUSK

Gene's car makes a 180-degree spin to the left. Careening, almost flipping over. But not quite. As -

Silvano and company skid to a halt. And -

Gene kicks his door open, rushing toward them with a shotgun. Firing endlessly. Shattering the front windshield. Careful to avoid passing motorists ...

Who speed away in fear. Not wanting to get involved -

Gene moves on, brazenly. Continues to fire. Then stops, ambles over to the driver's side. Observes the mangled bodies in the car, including Silvano's -- the place is like a gravesite.

He pumps more lead in, then hustles back to his car.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

Gene drives guardedly, peering into the rearview, looking over his shoulders. Taking a quick scan of the environment. But nothing. Seems like a reprieve - however momentary.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Gene arrives at the intersection where the cathedral sits cattycorner. The area is quiet. Gene's car is the only one here, except for a few that occasionally dart by.

INT. GENE'S CAR - NIGHT

Gene waits for a car, then crosses the street. Drives along the length of the cathedral, stops at the next street down. And turns left.

Goes another block before reaching the cathedral's nearly deserted parking lot to his left. Then turns.

He checks the clock on the dash, which reads 10:15.

EXT. PARKING LOT/WEST SIDE OF CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Gene parks his car, then jumps out with his gun case. Jogs over to the door. Enters.

EXT. REAR OF CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

A shady car hangs a left, takes the same route as Gene toward the parking lot ...

INT. WEST AISLE - NIGHT

Gene stands looking both ways down an aisle that stretches north-south. To Gene's left a trail of dead priests and altar boys who had been shot and stabbed extends a good 20 feet down.

Gene hears something - muffled voices. Sees a door a few feet ahead. Moves closer. Indeed, the voices are coming from behind that door.

He decides to chance it - he opens the door an inch. Then all the way. He enters the:

INT. WEST CHAPEL - NIGHT

A miniature church. Small, dome-shaped. Stained glass windows conveying various Biblical themes embellish the ceiling and walls. Angels, apostles, images of Christ everywhere.

Gene enters, gun case in one hand, a shotgun in the other. He blazes through, all the way to the other side, before entering the:

INT. CENTRAL AISLE - NIGHT

Gene pads his way through the silent murk ...

INT. EAST CHAPEL - NIGHT

A replica of the west chapel. Gene's father, Joel, sits against the front, his wrists shaking slightly. Little Eddie sits feet away in the lotus position, his torso and wrists tied. A gag over his mouth.

We hear footsteps. Coming closer from afar. Joel's eyes widen, but otherwise he doesn't react. His eyes then shrink back, becoming heavy. He seems tired, sluggish.

Gene appears at the back of the church. He has a perfect shot, but doesn't take it. As he slowly approaches, apparently unarmed.

Joel quickly puts his gun to Eddie's head. Eddie freezes in fear, but keeps eating.

JOEL

What did I say?!

GENE

You don't wanna do that.

JOEL

You're right, I don't. Where is she?

GENE

Put the gun down. You don't wanna be remembered as a child killer, do you?

Joel's face begins twitching. Massively. Uncontrollably.

GENE

I know you're dying.

JOEL

It's not fair.

GENE

Killing innocent people isn't fair,
either.

Joel coughs. He looks increasingly tired. Dying for some
shuteye.

JOEL

So Huntington's is my punishment?

GENE

And perhaps mine, too.

JOEL

Perhaps. Perhaps not. Do you
like to gamble? It's fifty-fifty,
Gene. Fifty percent you'll get
it, fifty percent you won't.

He looks above for a moment.

JOEL

The Lord above? Damn Him. He
may look more favorably on you.

GENE

I've made it this far ...

JOEL

I was never a father to you. Now
you have a chance to be a father
to him.

He coughs again.

JOEL

I'm old and dying.

The atmosphere takes a two-second breather. Then:

JOEL

Your future is uncertain, just like the fathomless night. Dark, incomprehensible. I'm sure Dylan Thomas would agree.

Joel puts his gun away.

JOEL

Do what you want.

GENE

Not in front of my son.

Several shots ring out. Gene spins around, sees George flanked by a few of his goons, all with guns drawn.

He returns to his father, his body caked with bullet wounds from forehead to torso. Dead. Eyes closed. His face warring with itself, as if his spirit at this very moment were on its way to Hell.

As Gene hurries over to Eddie he looks to his left and sees George and his goons approach, then begins untying his son:

GEORGE

Had second thoughts. Couldn't stand thinkin' what it might be like if my wife or daughter ended up in a casket because of that fuckin' nutcase.

He puts away his gun as Gene finishes untying Eddie.

GEORGE

\sides ...

With a smile:

GEORGE

I don't want you to come lookin' for me one day.

GENE

Why would I do that?

GEORGE

Oh, I don't know. Anyways, I know I said this before, but you ever need work, you know where I am.

As Gene takes Eddie.

GENE

Right ...

EXT. PARKING LOT/WEST SIDE OF CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Gene emerges with Eddie from the cathedral, then guides him to his car.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Gene's car WOOSHES by beneath a mantle of stars toward the moonlit horizon.

GENE (V.O.)

Well, little buddy. We gotta get you home. Your parents are worried.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Where are you going?

GENE (V.O.)

Wherever the night takes me, I guess.

The car moves on - slowly, slowly. And is gobbled up by the uncertain night.

FADE OUT