

NICKY BATS

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FADE IN:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

NICKY BATAGLIA, a handsome Italian in his early 30's, sitting in the back corner at the top row in a darkened theater eating from a bucket of popcorn.

ASSHOLE TONY MASSELLE, Mafia thug, is at the other end of the row near the aisle. Theater is empty. Nicky stuffs some popcorn in his mouth.

NICKY (V.O.)

I love movies. I've always loved movies.
Great movies.

On screen, the opening title credit for the movie "Gigli".

NICKY (V.O.)

Not so great movies.

Asshole Tony's GIRLFRIEND in a mini-skirt walks up aisle struggling to carry popcorn, drinks and candy.

NICKY (V.O.)

(chomping on popcorn)

Ever since I was a kid, I've always gone to the movies alone. Movies were my best friend. My only friend. And as I grew older, my refuge. I could slip into a darkened theater, and the rest of the world could just go to hell.

ASSHOLE TONY

(to his girlfriend)

'Bout fuckin' time! Where were ya?
Did you grow the M&M's yourself?

NICKY (V.O.)

I've always preferred going to the movies alone.

ASSHOLE TONY

I said no peanuts. M&M's no peanuts.
One's a brown box the other's yellow.
I like the brown. No peanuts.

Tony's Girlfriend gets back up, yanks the yellow M&M's box from Tony and starts back down the aisle.

NICKY (V.O.)
Well, time to go to work.

Nicky gets up and walks towards end of aisle.

NICKY
(to Tony)
Excuse me.

Asshole Tony SLAMS his feet off the headrest so Nicky can get by.

As Nicky passes in front of him, he pumps 2 MUFFLED GUNSHOTS into Asshole Tony. Then he exits down the stairs.

INT. THEATER LOBBY

Nicky passes Tony's girlfriend. She is nervously examining a box of M&M's.

Nicky exits the theater and enters the mall. He flips open his cell which has been vibrating silently. It's his girlfriend Lisa.

NICKY
Hey Lisa.
(listens)
No, I just got off of work. What's up?

He stops dead in his tracks.

NICKY
A convention? How long are you going to be gone?
(listens)
Oh, he's going, too? I know Glenn's your colleague. I'm just saying.
(listens)
No, of course I trust...Ok.
(listens)
Ok. I'm sorry. I love...
(call clicks off)
...you. Hello?

Closes cell. Looks at it. Notices hand holding cell is shaking. Flips open cell and dials.

NICKY

Hey Frankie. Umm. By any chance, did I get any mail?

TITLE - OPENING CREDITS

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Nicky and his cousin FRANKIE ROMA, an Italian in his early 30's, are sitting in a booth having lunch. Frankie, deeply engrossed in his plate of burger and fries, animatedly lectures Nicky. Nicky's plate is untouched.

FRANKIE

And this Glenn fuck is a co-worker?

NICKY

Yup.

FRANKIE

And they're going where?

NICKY

A convention.

FRANKIE

And where's this convention?

NICKY

In Hawaii.

FRANKIE

Ok. To summarize...

Nicky knows that Frankie's seen this before from him: being screwed with by yet another woman. Frankie continues the lecture.

NICKY (V.O.)

He may sound like an asshole. And if he was anyone but my cousin, I'd have to drill him right in this booth.

FRANKIE

...another in a long line of selfish, cheating whores. Capital W. Capital 'hore's. (Beat) When are you gonna learn? Huh? When you're staring down the barrel of your own piece? Ready to paint your walls a nice shade of Nicky?

NICKY (V.O.)

But the guy is making too much sense. As usual. I can't really afford to be mad at him. He's the only real family I got.

FRANKIE

And to answer your question, yes. You got another job. And no, it's not that ungrateful, cheating skank you call your girlfriend..

Frankie continues his lecture O.S. A smile begins to spread across Nicky's face.

NICKY (V.O.)

Another job. Which in my case means someone's going to die. (BEAT) I'm a hit man. I won't rob you. I won't extort money from you. But I will kill you. As the saying goes, nothing personal. Just business.

In one motion, Frankie slides a copy of Playboy across the table to Nicky while reaching for the bottle of ketchup. Nicky flips thru the pages until he finds a picture of his next target: FREDDIE DEMARCO.

As Nicky closes the magazine, his hand isn't shaking anymore.

EXT. A STRIP MALL - NIGHT

TEJERO'S CAR AUDIO is located at the end of a strip mall. A portable awning is set up next to Tejero's as a temporary garage.

An early model Ford Mustang is pulling away with the stereo at FULL BLAST. The rest of the stores in the strip mall have been closed for at least an hour.

FREDDIE DEMARCO, the owner and former mob member, has just finished the last job of the night and is preparing to close up shop.

Demarco walks across the small parking lot to where his pimped-out Cadillac SUV is sitting.

NICKY (V.O.)

Why would she cheat on me? I trust her.
I mean, as much as you can trust
someone that you've known for a year.
Frankie is way off base this time.

Demarco takes a rag from his back pocket and bends over to polish one of the huge, shiny rims on the SUV. Satisfied with the shine, he heads into the shop, locking the front door.

NICKY (V.O.)

It's not like I haven't been cheated on
before. I should be able to spot a cheater
by now. You'd think I would.

In the backroom, Demarco takes a half-eaten sandwich out of the microwave, looks at it then dumps it in the trash.

NICKY (V.O.)

If I don't trust her, I can't expect her
to trust me. That's how it works. To get
100%, you have to trust 100%.

Demarco locks the backdoor to the shop and is heading down the employee hallway. He's carrying a garbage bag to throw away in the outside dumpster.

NICKY (V.O.)

But I always trust 100%. And I always get
burned. Well, it only takes one girl to
get it right.

Demarco puts the trash bag down and heaves the lid of the dumpster open. Then he turns to pick up the bag.

Nicky SPRINGS up from inside the dumpster and GARROTES (strangles) Demarco from behind as he stands upright. He tightens the rope around Demarco's NECK and leans back into the dumpster until Demarco's FEET are off the ground.

NICKY (V.O.)

And that Glenn guy is too old for her anyway. He's not even her type.

Demarco's FEET stop struggling. Nicky pulls him into the dumpster. The dumpster lid SLAMS shut.

NICKY (V.O.)

What kind of boyfriend am I, if I can't trust my girlfriend to go on a business trip with a colleague? (BEAT) In Hawaii. (BEAT) Beautiful, romantic Hawaii. Yeah, Frankie is way off base. Way off base.

The dumpster area is now deathly QUIET again.

INT. MOVIE VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

A film projector is running in a darkened viewing room. Cigar smoke fills the air. Two heads are visible silhouetted against the screen.

DON SALVATORE "TURI" ROMA, head of one of the last standing Mafia crime families in New York, is one.

RONNIE DERATA, a capo in his family is seated next to the Don.

The Don's trusty bodyguard SMITTY is running the projector.

The image on the screen is of an outside BBQ party during the early 70's.

DON ROMA

The good old days? Fuckin' great old days!
Eh, Ronnie? The best days.

Children run around a pool on the screen.

DON ROMA

Smitty, who's birthday...?

SMITTY(O.S.)

Frankie's.

DON ROMA

That's right. The Beatles just broke up. I was the only one from the neighborhood into the Fab Four. You can have your, your fuckin' Pavarotti and mandolins. John. Paul. George. Fucking Ringo. See this...

Holds up hand in front of screen. Shows pinky with a huge ring on it.

DON ROMA

This is from Ringo himself.

SMITTY(O.S.)

No shit, Boss?

DON ROMA

No shit, Smitty. Not that Ronnie here wanted to go backstage. It was like pulling teeth trying to get him to even go to the concert.

(to Ronnie)

But all them skirts changed your mind, didn't it?

Image on screen shows a younger DON ROMA in a party hat.

DON ROMA

(turns slightly)

Were you with us yet?

SMITTY(V.O.)

At the concert?

The Don turns his head completely around towards the projector.

DON ROMA

Naw..."with us" with us.

SMITTY(V.O.)

Not officially. I was bagging for, uh...I was bagging for Paolo.

DON ROMA

(wistfully)

Paolo. Boy could he pull the trigger.
As cold as they came. BAM! Just like
that. Then go back and finish his eggs
and peppers. Just like that.

Image on screen is of a younger Don and PAOLO. The Don's
arm is draped around Paolo shoulder, their bond evident.

A YOUNG GIRL is sitting next to Paolo, gazing up at him.

DON ROMA

(whispering at screen)

Where are you? (BEAT) Fucking guy. You
two must be related, Ronnie.

Finally out of the darkness, Don Roma, a lean, silver-
haired 60-ish man, stands into the light of the projector
and buttons his jacket.

DON ROMA

(to Ronnie)

All of you fuckers belong to the
same rat family.

Roma looks down and spits at Ronnie. Ronnie, staring
lifeless at the screen, has his throat slit from ear to
ear. The Don walks towards the projector.

DON ROMA (O.S.)

(to Ronnie)

Oh, don't forget to turn off the
projector, you fuck. (Beat) C'mon Smitty...

The door SLAMS as the Don and Smitty leave.

EXT. IAH HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

INT. GATE 8

A middle-aged, dapper Italian man is getting off the
incoming flight from Turkey. He's wheeling a single piece
of luggage behind him while carrying a duffle bag slung
over his shoulder.

The man is PAOLO, the same guy on the projector screen. At he curb, he hails a cab.

INT. CAB

They pass a huge sign: WELCOME TO HOUSTON: THE 4TH LARGEST CITY IN AMERICA.

PAOLO
(heavy Italian accent)
Best Western, please.

Paolo settles back into his seat and pats the DUFFLE BAG. He looks out of the window with weary anticipation.

INT. BARNES & NOBLE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Nicky is sitting in an oversized chair at the bottom of the short steps leading up to the coffee shop in the Barnes & Noble bookstore. He's leafing through a copy of The Blind Watchmaker by Richard Dawkins. A vanilla soda bottle is next to his cell phone on the small table.

Nicky looks at the clock on his cell: 4:05pm.

NICKY (V.O.)
She's late.

JANET LORENZO, a stunning, exotic-looking girl in her early 20's rushes by Nicky up the mini-stairs. She's carrying her purse and a bag full of school books.

DENNIS the coffee shop manager is standing by the register with his arms folded.

DENNIS
Janet, you're late. Again.

JANET
You're right. That's twice in the last 6 months. Should I clean out my desk? Oh wait, I don't have a desk. Just an apron.

(charmingly)
Good afternoon, Dennis.

DENNIS

Don't think you can just waltz in here,
smile and think everything's going to
be fine.

Janet is struggling to put her apron on. It's backwards at first.

She glances over at Nicky who's been watching the whole episode. Caught, he quickly looks away. Then realizing he has a book in his hands, he pretends to read it. Janet grins at his awkward shyness.

Janet bats her eyes at Dennis and pouts her lips.

DENNIS

Ok. Maybe you can. But these cappuccinos
aren't going to make themselves, you know.

JANET

Actually, Dennis, these machines do most
of the work for you.

Nicky, not taking his eyes off his book, chuckles at her quick wittedness.

NICKY(V.O.)

An angel. A beautiful angel. With a
quick, devilish tongue. What a perfect
combination. What a girl.

Just as he's stealing a glance at Janet wiping a table, his cell phone loudly RINGS.

Janet turns to look in the direction of the ring and catches Nicky staring at her again.

Nicky, caught off guard, almost drops the cell as he fumbles to answer it. The book falls off his lap onto the floor.

NICKY

(quickly into the cell)
Yeah? Hello?

FRANKIE(O.S.)

You got mail, buddy.

NICKY

Uh huh. Umm...ok. Yes, very interesting.

Janet is giggling as she sees a nervous Nicky.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

And when your legs stop shaking, get that tail out from between your legs and ask her out.

NICKY

You don't know me. And I don't think...
(forgetfully)

Umm...uh...

FRANKIE (O.S.)

Lisa.

NICKY

Yes, her. She wouldn't appreciate it if I did that. (BEAT) I'll meet you at the place.

Nicky closes the cell then bends down to pick up the book he dropped.

Sitting back up, as he reaches to grab his soda, his hand covers Janet's HAND who also reached for the empty bottle. Startled, Nicky flinches.

JANET

(smiling playfully)
Are you taking this with you?

NICKY

This? Oh, the bottle? Yeah.
(notices that it's empty)
Well, no. Not now. I mean...

JANET

Yes?

NICKY

(picking up the bottle and handing it to her)
I...I guess you can...here you go.

JANET

Now that wasn't so hard, was it?

Nicky shyly smiles and gets up to leave.

JANET

Wait!

Nicky turns with a look of anticipation on his face.

JANET

You forgot your book.

(looks at cover)

Impressive.

(hands it to Nicky)

I'm Janet.

NICKY

Thanks. (BEAT) Dominic. Nicky.

JANET

See you later, Nicky.

Nicky hopes she can't see his legs shaking as he leaves.

INT. STAPLES CENTER - LATER

A longtime Los Angeles Laker fan, Nicky meets Frankie at the game. They are standing in line at the concession stand.

FRANKIE

How you ever got any girl to go out with you in the first place is beyond me. How is the coffee broad any different?

NICKY

Because she is different. It's not just her looks.

FRANKIE

I heard that before.

NICKY

It's behind the looks. Like she's actually earned the right to be that beautiful. She makes me nervous.

FRANKIE

And that FBI agent you were nailing.
She didn't make you nervous?

NICKY

Why would I be nervous? I wasn't the one
under surveillance. And it's not like
I knew she was a Fed when I met her.

NICKY

(at the counter)

2 Coors Lights, please.

FRANKIE

And 4 polish dogs.

NICKY

Why don't you just have her inject them
right into your arteries.

FRANKIE

Because the mustard would sting.

Walking to their seats...

FRANKIE

Why don't you just talk to her, you big fag.
See, that's why I'll never get you. You
got no problems doing - what you do. But
making chit chat with the cappuccino girl,
that makes you weak in the knees?

NICKY

At least I'm armed when I'm working.

FRANKIE

Fine. I'll slip you a blade the next
time you go to Barnes & Noble.

NICKY

And all of that is besides the point.
I have a girlfriend. (BEAT) Lisa.

FRANKIE

Oh, you do, do you? Someone forgot to
tell her that.

INT. AT THEIR SEATS

The Laker faithful are CHEERING wildly as their team is in full swing. Frankie is wearing a #33 New York Knick jersey.

FRANKIE

Fucking Lakers!

(to Nicky)

I'll never understand you. We're from Brooklyn and you cheer for these guys.

Frankie hands him a Laker program. Nicky leafs through it until he lands on the picture of GINO SANTELLI, his name typed on the back of the picture with a short bio.

NICKY

(studying the bio)

I've lived here since I was 10 and you've been back and forth here for as long as that.

(looking at Frankie's Jersey)

We're not even playing the Knicks.

FRANKIE

Pop wanted to make sure you didn't go sissyboy out here.

NICKY

(stuffs program into jacket)

How is your dad by the way?

FRANKIE

Old and cranky. Lately it's "Fuckin' rat this" and "Fuckin' stoolie" that. Our thing is falling apart around him and it's driving him nuts.

NICKY

He should just retire. It's not like he has to wait for social security.

FRANKIE

It's not that. It's the fact that the Feds are turning all of our people into crying, little girls. Prison time has

(MORE)

FRANKIE (cont)

always been more like paid time off for wiseguys. Our own food. Booze. Showers. Hookers every so often.

NICKY

If he wants, I can go back East...

Frankie bristles. There's no way he can tell Nicky that he can never do that.

FRANKIE

You? Joe Hollywood back East? Nah, he'd appreciate that. Charlie's got that side covered.

The crowd goes WILD off of a Kobe Bryant dunk.

NICKY

How can you not like this team? Kobe Bryant is not even human.

FRANKIE

(munching his popcorn)

Ewing would've blocked it up into the hot dog vendor.

NICKY

Has he heard anything? You know. About my dad.

Frankie tries to avoid the subject of Nicky's dad at all costs. There's nothing he can really tell his cousin that would soothe his conscience.

FRANKIE

Nicky, maybe you should stop asking. If anyone knew anything, you'd a heard it.

(exasperated)

Look, you got a good life out here. Enjoy it. Fuck New York. Fuck the past. Fuck all Of that shit. (BEAT)But most of all, fuck the Lakers!

Fans around them start BOOING Frankie.

FRANKIE

Yeah, what do you know, ya morons. You're lucky Ewing retired.

Nicky, despondent, looks at Frankie.

NICKY (V.O.)

How am I supposed to forget my past?
I barely know my past. My family's history has always been an a big secret. I can't tell if I'm being protected or if "family" just doesn't mean the same thing it used to.

FRANKIE

(to the crowd)

Yeah, go sit in your tanning beds.

NICKY

The Lakers aren't all bad.

FRANKIE

Aside from the Laker Broads, name one good thing about 'em.

NICKY

If it wasn't for Sweet Lou losing his paycheck betting on them, your life wouldn't be as exciting as it is.

FRANKIE

(a memory registers)

Ohhh yeah. (BEAT) You mean YOUR life wouldn't be as exciting.

INT. FRANKIE'S CAR - DAY - A FEW YEARS AGO

Nicky and Frankie are on their way to see 'Sweet' Lou Fuller, a degenerate gambler in hock to Frankie.

FRANKIE

Now Sweet Lou doesn't always play with a full deck, but he's not entirely crazy neither. He knows that I'm not a guy you can pop off. But how much can you ever trust a junkie?

NICKY

Which is why I'm here.

FRANKIE

Which is why you're here. He wouldn't shoot me but he really wouldn't try anything stupid with someone else there.

NICKY

So if something does happen - do I kill him with my smile? Or how about a good joke and then he can die laughing.

FRANKIE

You're not getting a gun.

NICKY

And why not?

FRANKIE

Because you might shoot me by mistake. I don't usually carry one but this guy's been a bit edgier than normal.

NICKY

Serves him right for betting against the Lakers.

They reach a squalid apartment complex. Sweet Lou's apartment is on the 2nd floor.

Before they knock, Frankie feels for his .45 AUTOMATIC that's in the front waistband of his pants.

SWEET LOU

(from inside)

Yo! It's open man!

Frankie and Nicky enter the apartment which is sparsely furnished. SWEET LOU FULLER is laying on his couch eating Cup O'Noodles.

SWEET LOU

Come on in, fellas. Sorry...

Sweet Lou sits up and starts to clear the newspapers off a battered recliner next to him.

SWEET LOU

I gave the maid the day off.

FRANKIE

Forget it. We're not staying.

SWEET LOU

Right, right, right. (BEAT) You sure?
I could get some more noodles up and...

FRANKIE

Lou, I'm not here for noodles. Quit
fucking around.

SWEET LOU

Right, right, right. Look man, about that.
You know, um, my cousin John John. See
John John was supposed to...

Nicky notices a BULGE under the cushion. As he's putting
down the noodles with one hand, Sweet Lou starts to reach
for the bulge with the other hand.

SWEET LOU

(a little louder)

John John's a car salesman and...

Nicky pushes Frankie to the ground just as Sweet Lou pulls
a .38 REVOLVER from under the couch and FIRES at them.

Ducking from the shots, Frankie fumbles then drops his gun.

In one motion Nicky dives for it, picks it up and FIRES 2
shots at Sweet Lou, one hitting his shoulder the other
hitting him square in his left eye.

Behind them, the bathroom DOOR starts to open.

FRANKIE

Nicky!

Nicky swivels and BLASTS John John, Sweet Lou's cousin, in
the chest with 3 shots. He had been hiding in the bathroom
to ambush them. John John falls in a heap without getting a
single shot off.

They get up off the ground. Frankie is stunned but not as surprised as Nicky is by his instinctive reaction.

Frankie takes the gun from Nicky.

FRANKIE

Thanks for not shooting me.

As he takes the gun, Frankie notices that Nicky's hand is calm.

NICKY

No problem.

FRANKIE

I doubt there's any money here, but let's make a quick check for my money then vamoose.

NICKY

(still slightly stunned)

Yeah. That sounds like a plan.

INT. FRANKIE'S CAR - LATER

Frankie is dropping Nicky off at his apartment.

FRANKIE

You sure you're ok?

NICKY

Yeah. I shouldn't be. But - yeah, I am. I'm good. Call you later.

Nicky goes up the walkway to his apartment.

Frankie, a big smile on his face, shakes his head in disbelief.

He flips his cell open and punches in a number.

FRANKIE

Hey pop. You're never gonna guess what just happened. (listening) Nah, I gotta fly out there for this one. Let's just say I think I solved our West Coast problem.

INT. DISNEYLAND MONORAIL - MORNING - STILL IN THE PAST

Nicky is riding the monorail that shuttles passengers between the hotel and the park. It's entering the Disneyland Hotel area. Most of the tourists exit.

Don Roma boards with his niece, MELANIE and her 3 children. As he's putting the kids in their seats he sees Nicky and waves him over.

DON ROMA

There he is!

Nicky embraces Don Roma.

DON ROMA

You look good, my boy.

NICKY

(to Melanie)

Melanie? Is that you? What were we, like, 9, the last time I saw you?

(hugs her)

And who's these little monsters?

MELANIE

It's my boys. Their daddy's overseas. We hope it's his last tour.

DON ROMA

Infantryman. Kicking some Iraqi tail.

(motions to back of cabin)

Mel, we're gonna be...

MELANIE

Don't worry. (BEAT) You got your tickets, right?

Roma and Nicky get a 2-seater away from the crowd.

DON ROMA

I try to come here once a year. Clear my mind. The happiest place on Earth.

(huddles closer)

Frankie told me what happened. Stuff like

(MORE)

DON ROMA (cont)

that. You can never tell when it's gonna happen. Business never goes as planned. They get greedy. They forget about their commitments. Whatever.

Melanie's children start to SCREAM as they approach Disneyland. The Don smiles at them and points to the Matterhorn.

DON ROMA

It takes a certain kind of individual who can handle things if the situation gets out of hand. No cowboy shit. Someone who can think 3, 4, 5 steps ahead. And not have to cry in the pillow afterwards.

The Don excitedly looks off in the distance.

DON ROMA

You really surprised us, Nicky.

The monorail SCREECHES to a halt.

DON ROMA

It's time. Kids! Happiest place on Earth!

EXT. DISNEYLAND MAINSTREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Melanie and the kids are walking ahead of the Don and Nicky.

DON ROMA

Mel! We'll meet you by the Matterhorn for lunch! (BEAT) And don't ride the Tea Cups without me! Uncle Nicky and me are gonna catch up.

NICKY

Uncle Nicky?

DON ROMA

(catching his slip of the tongue)

A sign of respect.

Don Roma isn't sure if Nicky knows exactly how he is related, so he changes the subject.

DON ROMA

Did you know that they got the best security system in America right here?

NICKY

Really?

(looks up at security ball hidden in a tree)

DON ROMA

Your cousin found out the hard way.

NICKY

Who? Frankie? Oh, this I gotta hear.

DON ROMA

Numbskull cousin of yours tried boosting a lollipop. A Mickey Mouse one...

(opens hands apart)

...this fucking big! Ears were sticking out of his pants. Embarrassing.

NICKY

Pinched in Disneyland.

DON ROMA

I heard they had the Unhappiest Jail on Earth.

They board the train and, again, sit away from the crowd.

DON ROMA

You got plans? For the future I mean.

NICKY

I might go back to UCLA. I couldn't afford to finish the second year. Working nights and classes in the daytime wasn't as fun as advertised.

DON ROMA

I don't know if your mom told you, but I offered to pick up the tab many times. Tuition over here can't be cheap.

NICKY

No. She didn't. Honestly, I don't think she gives a shit one way or another.

Both the Don and Nicky seem uncomfortable at this.

NICKY

It's not just the tuition. I couldn't decide what to major in. I dunno. College just didn't feel right.

DON ROMA

We are who we are going to be regardless of the plaque hanging on the wall. (BEAT) Do you know what I do?

NICKY

Whatever it is, I know you didn't go to NYU for it.

DON ROMA

What I do is keep the balance in New York. I make it possible for certain types of people to do their jobs without harassment from anyone else. Now some guys can't keep their mouth shut about things and that affect us. And what affects New York, affects the rest of the country. I've already got a guy who helps me out East. I need someone capable out here. Someone that I can trust to help keep the balance.

NICKY

Uncle Turi, I haven't seen you since I was, like 8 years old. How do you know you can trust me with something like that?

DON ROMA

Blood, my dear Dominic, means everything to me. Blood brings a level loyalty that you just can't buy. Frankie, he's a genius at calculating odds in both sports and human behavior. His eye is keen but unfortunately his hand is not so steady.

NICKY

And mine is?

DON ROMA

From what Frankie says, yes. (BEAT) Unless you'd rather cram for exams and flip burgers. I mean, I'm sure the drive-thrus of America would be honored having you man their windows...

Nicky smiles and looks at the Matterhorn in the distance.

The Don puts his arm around Nicky's shoulders.

DON ROMA

Happiest place on Earth.

NICKY (V.O.)

(looking at the Don)

I used to be so scared of him growing up. I didn't know what the Mafia was or what it meant. I just knew that this guy scared the shit out of me. Now I know why.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

CHARLIE ROMA, early 30's Italian, is sitting in a church pew reading THE GOD DELUSION by Richard Dawkins. The book is fanned up for all to see.

Nicky walks in, sees his cousin then sits next to him.

An OLD LADY in the pew in front of him gets up from kneeling, glances back at Charlie and frowns. Charlie winks at her as she quickly gives herself the sign of the cross.

NICKY

I see you still have a way with ladies.

CHARLIE

Oh, they fuckin' love old Charlie.

(to the old lady)

Don'tcha hon?

The old lady gets up and leaves, giving herself the sign of the cross.

NICKY

I'm no believer either, but aren't you pushing it?

CHARLIE

The Feds would never bug a church. Mosques, yes, but never a church. (BEAT) So I hear you wanna learn the ways of the wicked? When I got the word, I thought the Old Man was kidding. Early Alzheimer's or something.

Nicky bristles.

CHARLIE

Hold on, cousin. I'm not saying you're a fruit loop or anything. I dunno. I guess it's the quiet ones that's the most dangerous.

NICKY

Quiet ones? Yeah, you should try that sometime.

CHARLIE

Forget I said anything.

Charlie looks around to make sure they're alone.

CHARLIE

Don't get all bent outta shape but I gotta ask you something. How did you feel after your first?

NICKY

How did I feel? Who are you: Dr.Phil?
(sees Charlie's dead serious)
Sorry. I guess I didn't really feel anything. He screwed up the situation so I took care of it. If he didn't do what he did, he'd still be, I dunno, breathing.

CHARLIE

(nods approvingly)

Good. Don't enjoy it and don't hate it. Ok, maybe enjoy it a little because, after all, who wants to dread getting up to go to work everyday, am I right? My point is that as long as you don't look at your mark as a little puppy, you'll

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont)

do fine. He did whatever he did. You just make sure he doesn't do it anymore. Then you cash your paycheck and go jerk off or whatever it is you do to unwind.

NICKY

A little puppy?

CHARLIE

Yeah. I hate the little bastards. So needy. "Pet me, please pet me". The only thing puppies are good for is target practice. Speaking of which, we need to stop by the pet store after this.

NICKY

You're truly a sick fuck, you know that?

Charlie grins. They get up and start to walk out. A priest is standing by the exit.

PRIEST

Goodbye my sons. Have a blessed day. Be sure to join us on Sunday.

CHARLIE

(hands the priest the book)

Sunday? Only if you include this in your next sermon.

The priest looks at the book in astonishment then gives himself the sign of the cross.

NICKY (V.O.)

And so began training for my new career. One you won't find in the classifieds.

INT. STARBUCKS IN BARNES & NOBLE - PRESENT DAY

Nicky and Lisa are sitting at a table. Nicky appears to have been just hit in the gut.

LISA

It's not you. You're wonderful. I just
(MORE)

LISA (cont)
need some, some space. You know, I have
to find myself.

NICKY
It's not me? I'm wonderful.

LISA
Yeah, why would it be you?

NICKY
Because you're breaking up with me?

LISA
No. I swear. It's all me. I just need to
be by myself. You understand, right?

Nicky smiles sardonically.

Janet is behind the counter trying to make a cappuccino.
She's distracted by trying to figure out what's going on at
Nicky's table.

LISA
And it's not another guy, if that's what
you're thinking.

NICKY
I wasn't thinking that. I am now.

In his hand, the vanilla soda is shaking. The Tremors are
back.

Nicky regains his composure when he sees Janet behind the
counter. He struggles with a smile.

Much to Janet's surprise, her sympathy for Nicky is
balanced with a loathing for that bitch who just broke his
heart.

EXT. MOTEL 8 PARKING LOT - PRESENT NIGHT

Nicky, on a stakeout in his car, is fiddling with a bottled
water. His stare hasn't moved from the motel door.

NICKY (V.O.)

Nailing your mark is not just a fly by the seat of your pants thing. There's a lot of preparation that goes into it. You don't just walk up to a guys car and shoot him in the head. That's T.V. You get to know him better than he knows himself. First you figure out his patterns.

EXT. BAKERY - MORNING

GINO SANTELLI walks out of a bakery carrying a coffee and a donut.

NICKY (V.O.)

Does he need his coffee and donut to get the day started?

EXT. JAMBA JUICE - MORNING

Gino leaving a Jamba Juice holding a paper and a large cup of Jamba Juice.

NICKY (V.O.)

Or is he an over-priced juice guy who likes to read the Wall Street Journal before work?

Nicky follows Gino in his Cadillac.

NICKY (V.O.)

Know his routes to work. Where does he park? How late does he usually work?

Gino pulls into a secured parking lot. Moments later he emerges and walks down the street and opens up a barber shop.

NICKY (V.O.)

If anyone else was paying the kind of attention that I am, they'd wonder how a guy who cuts hair can drive a shiny, new Cadillac.

EXT. ACROSS FROM PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Nicky is sitting in his car waiting for Gino to finish work.

Gino locks up the barber shop and heads to the parking garage. Moments later the gate rises and Gino's Cadillac comes out.

NICKY (V.O.)

Thursday. That means girlfriend #2. How he finds time for girlfriend #1 and his wife of 28 years is beyond me. Viagra. It has to be Viagra. Or Cialis.

Nicky follows Gino's Cadillac.

Gino parks across the street from a Best Western. He's almost skipping across the street. He disappears into a motel room on the ground floor.

Nicky, seeing Gino go in, drives past the motel. He looks at the time on his cell.

NICKY (V.O.)

I won't have to wait that long. Girlfriend #2 has to get back to her husband and kids.

EXT. BEST WESTERN MOTEL - 2 HOURS LATER

An attractive blonde woman comes out of the motel room. She heads to a brand new BMW. Her blinking headlights silently signal that her car alarm is off. She gets in and drives off.

A minute later, Gino languidly leaves the motel room though without the same bounce he went in with. He pauses and takes a trained look around to see if he notices anything suspicious.

Then he heads across the street to his Cadillac. The CHIRP of his car alarm breaks the early morning silence.

NICKY (O.S.)

Hey Gino!

As Gino looks up towards the DARK ALLEY adjacent to his car, two MUFFLED SHOTS send his head flying back. Gino is dead before he hits the pavement.

A smoking .38 REVOLVER WITH SILENCER is dropped out of the dark alley, its handle and silencer taped to prevent identification.

NICKY (V.O.)

Yeah, those cheating fucks are my favorite.
Their rendezvous' make my job easier.
Cheaters always need to hide.

EXT. BACK TO MOTEL 8 - PRESENT MORNING

Nicky's slouching against the door, barely awake from the overnight grind.

He bolts up when he sees an OLDER MAN coming out of the motel room putting on his jacket.

A voice from inside the motel room calls to him. He turns and gives a shapely Latina looking girl a kiss. The man is GLENN, Lisa's co-worker. No surprise, the girl inside is Nicky's girlfriend, Lisa.

Glenn gets into his Jaguar and speeds away.

Angrily, Nicky turns on his engine and reaches to make sure his .45 is in his inside jacket pocket.

As he turns to make sure traffic is clear, he sees Lisa still standing by the door looking at the Jaguar that's just left. She's smiling.

Dejected, he turns off the engine and slides the gun back under the seat. He drops his head back onto the head rest in disgust.

NICKY (V.O.)

Yeah. Those cheating fucks are the worse.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Hip-Hop music is BLARING. Sweaty, sexy early 20-somethings' are dancing and grinding to the music.

Nicky and Frankie are sitting at a little round table near the dance floor. Nicky is visibly depressed.

A camera crew for Real Clubbing, a new reality series, is filming a few over-acting, drama-addicted 'actors'.

FRANKIE

Reality T.V. Realistic my ass. These kids should go back to their day jobs at the mall.

NICKY

It's good eye candy.

FRANKIE

(pointing to 2 girls writhing against each other on the dance floor)

That's good eye candy. Reality T.V. is just crap. Even the one with Tyra Banks.

NICKY

America's Top Model?

FRANKIE

(incredulously)

I should kick your ass for even knowing the name of it. Anyway, I wouldn't be able to get a good stiff one without putting it on mute. Fucking drama queens. That's why you won't catch me banging one of those model-types.

NICKY

Oh. Is that why?

FRANKIE

It's all about the looks with you. And you wonder why they cheat on you. They think the world revolves around them.

NICKY

It should for the perfect one. And it's not all about the looks. I just want the whole package.

FRANKIE

No such thing as the perfect girl.

NICKY

Yeah there is. The perfect one for me.

FRANKIE

Ya know what's perfect for me? IHoP. Let's get outta here. If I gotta watch you be such a sourpuss, I want to have at least 6 different syrups to choose from while I do it.

They get up and snake their way through the crowd.

EXT. THE NIGHTCLUB'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Frankie lights up a cigarette on the way to the car.

There's a commotion on the opposite aisle of cars they approach Frankie's car.

A short GUY (RON) in a leather jacket is roughly holding the arm of a stunning girl, who Nicky recognizes right away.

RON

Why you gotta be such a bitch?

JANET

Maybe it's because I don't like being called a bitch? I didn't even want to go out tonight. I have 2 exams tomorrow...

Nicky and Frankie look at each other.

FRANKIE

Don't even think about it.

Nicky takes off towards the couple.

FRANKIE

He thought about it.

RON

I make my first arrest today and you don't want to celebrate with me?

(sniffs some cocaine off his sleeve)

At least the guys know how important it is.

JANET

Oh great. A night of CSI wannabe's who can't handle their BullBlasters. (BEAT) Why'd you arrest the guy anyway? That's one less cousin at your next family reunion.

Ron SLAPS Janet with a backhand. She goes flying against the car door then slumps down holding her cheek.

RON

(standing above her,
screaming)

Don't you ever talk about my family!

Out of nowhere, Nicky grabs RON by the back of the head and in one motion SLAMS him face first onto the car hood.

Nicky holds him up for a second, looks at him, and then lets him unceremoniously fall to the ground. He extends a hand to Janet.

NICKY

I guess it's time to study.

Janet hesitates before taking his hand. Then she recognizes him. Nicky helps her up.

JANET

My hero. Actually, I don't think I can go home now. Once he comes to, that's the first place he'll come looking for me.

NICKY

I know one place he won't look for you.
(BEAT) Can I interest you in some pancakes?

Frankie, observing the situation, rolls his eyes then shakes his head.

INT. IHOP - AN HOUR LATER

Nicky and Janet are in a booth. Frankie is conspicuously absent.

JANET

So your friend doesn't like pancakes?

NICKY

Oh no. He's a big fan of the pancakes. And I'll be hearing about it tomorrow.

JANET

Because he doesn't approve of his friend aiding a damsel in distress?

Nicky smiles as he sops up his pancakes with syrup.

JANET

And that's a bad thing why?

NICKY

Long story. And not enough syrup. (BEAT)
So that guy in the parking lot...

JANET

Yeah, I should tell you. That guy you played handball with is a cop. Well, a rookie cop. The way he talks, most of his families' either in prison or on parole. (BEAT) What a great second date this turned out to be.

Nicky smirks and shakes his head.

JANET

And what's so funny?

NICKY

No way. I'm not touching this one.

Nicky starts to reach for more syrup in the syrup tray.
Janet grabs his hand.

JANET

No more syrup until you let me in on the joke.

Nicky looks deep into her eyes.

NICKY

(softly)

Fine. No syrup.

She smirks back.

He suddenly realizes that they're holding HANDS. Nicky nervously grabs for the syrup.

NICKY

What is it with bad boys that drive you girls so crazy? That's probably the greatest mystery in history.

He tries to pour, but the syrup is empty.

Janet grabs another syrup container and opens the top. She sniffs it.

JANET

Boisenberry?

NICKY

Please.

Nicky is expecting Janet to just hand him the syrup when she starts to pour some on his plate. The intimacy surprises him. He can't tell if he's blushing or smiling uncontrollably.

JANET

I didn't really know he was a jerk until tonight. Well, he is a cop so that should've been a hint. Ah well, at least there'll be no third date.

NICKY

Wow. I'm impressed.

(sarcastically)

Don't you want to change him? Help to suppress his inner Jerkoff?

JANET

I'm no one's punching bag or therapist. I'm gone at the first sign of drama. I don't need that in my life.

NICKY

How'd he manage to get a first date, anyway?

JANET

Funny thing is I didn't really want to
(MORE)

JANET (cont)

go out with him to begin with. Typical cop: His ego couldn't take a 'no'. He and his badge buddies cornered me at work 'til I gave in.

Nicky winces at the mention of the cop tainting the coffee shop. After all, that's where he sits and admires her.

JANET

Even though we're in Barnes & Noble, I don't remember him ever buying a book. Unlike you. You've always got a stack.

NICKY

It helps me pass the time.

JANET

Between saving damsels in distress?

NICKY

Are you gonna hog the boysenberry all night?

EXT. BEACH - SUNRISE - LATER

Nicky and Janet are sitting on a bench near a rock-walled beach entrance. The sun is just coming up.

NICKY

Lorenzo? You're last name is Lorenzo?

JANET

Yes.

NICKY

Janet Lorenzo.

JANET

I still don't see the joke.

NICKY

You're J-Lo.

JANET

Cute.

NICKY

You're not from around here are you?

JANET

How can you tell?

NICKY

The way you're looking at the sunrise. Like you've never seen it before.

JANET

Good eye. I've never seen it rising from the ocean. I just moved from Houston a few months ago. I'm a military brat so we used to move every 4 years or so. My dad got a position with NASA but I wasn't feeling Texas. Dad met mom in Hawaii but I was too young to be up at the crack of dawn to see the sunrise. (BEAT) You don't seem to be a native Californian either.

NICKY

Is it my lack of a tan that gives it away? We're from New York.

JANET

We?

NICKY

My mom and I. We moved here when I was 10. Around 10. Give or take a few years.

JANET

New York to California. Now that's a culture shock. And your dad?

A raw nerve seems to have been touched with Nicky.

NICKY

I don't know. I think mom just wanted a new start or something. Or maybe something less dramatic than that. I, uh, I really don't know.

JANET

I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to - I didn't realize...

NICKY

Don't worry about it. I'm just not used to women asking such deep questions. It's usually "So do you know any good clubs?"

JANET

So...

NICKY

So?

JANET

So do you know any good clubs?

Nicky bursts out laughing at her ability to effortlessly break the tension. He could definitely fall for this one.

JANET

You're really good at this, you know? I mean, now that you're not hiding behind a book. (BEAT) So why didn't you ever ask me out?

NICKY

Girlfriend.

JANET

Ah ha.

NICKY

Oh no, not anymore. She cheated on me. But didn't you...I mean, you were there.

JANET

Yeah, I was kinda wondering what the story was behind that. (BEAT) She didn't look right for you anyway.

Nicky starts to smile uncontrollably at Janet's seemingly overprotective stance on the situation.

JANET

Ron's probably passed out someplace by now.

NICKY

We'll pass by your place a few times to make
(MORE)

NICKY (cont)

sure everything's ok. And I'm not driving off until I see you wave from the window to let me know that you're safe.

JANET

You've already done so much. I can't ask you to...

NICKY

You don't have to.

INT. GUILIANO'S RESTAURANT - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Don Roma is having dinner in a secluded booth with DON JIMMY IAGO, head of the Medici Crime Family in New York. Don Iago dresses more like a conservative banker than a killer of men.

Both are intensely eating their meals.

DON ROMA

You can't get clams this time of year. No matter where you go in New York, but here.

(slurps a clam)

DON IAGO

They must love you here.

DON ROMA

Love's got nothing to do with it. I'm fucking charming.

DON IAGO

Not to mention you're a wonderful dancer.

DON ROMA

Yeah, that too. (BEAT) So where is he?

DON IAGO

(motions to waitress)

Hey Hon, can we get another bottle?

(leans closer)

Portland. That area. Maybe Washington.

(MORE)

DON IAGO (cont)

(pauses from eating)

I still can't believe it. My own fucking nephew. Discrazzia!

DON ROMA

I got a guy out that way. He'll take care of it.

DON IAGO

Blood. That's the worse. The fucking worse. I mean, it's one thing that you groom a guy, bring him up through the ranks and whatnot. (BEAT) But your own blood.

Too late, Don Iago remembers the Don's own betrayal.

DON IAGO

Oh shit. I'm sorry, Turi, I forgot. I didn't mean...

DON ROMA

Forget about it.

DON IAGO

Did they ever, ya know. He ever surface?

Roma shrugs and keeps on eating.

DON IAGO

(changing the subject)

How's Nina?

DON ROMA

She's good. Her I shoulda married first. She woulda been 4-years old at the time, but you know...

DON IAGO

What is she, Japanese?

DON ROMA

Filipino. Can she cook. Now, I mean. That Filipino food she used to cook would stink up the kitchen something fierce. As if fish didn't already stink...

Don Iago almost chokes on his wine from LAUGHING.

DON ROMA

I had to teach her gravy from scratch.
You wouldn't believe what they'd use tomatoes
for over there. But I'd still smile and make
all the yummy noises. (BEAT) It's worth it.
Filipino broads fuck like their life
depends on it.

Don Iago toasts Don Roma with his glass then turns back to
his plate.

DON IAGO

So your guy's solid.

DON ROMA

He's like Tylenol. Cures all of my headaches.

INT. WAL-MART - AFTER MIDNIGHT

Both dressed from a night of dancing, Nicky and Janet are
doing some last minute shopping.

JANET

Seriously, I think I have a spare.

NICKY

Seriously, what kind of impression am I
going to make if I don't bring my own
toothbrush the very first time I stay at
your place?

JANET

For one thing it shows that you weren't
expecting to spend the night.

NICKY

(looking for the toiletry aisle)
That's me. A true gentleman.

JANET

Well, I wouldn't go that far.

Nicky stops cold. He stares at a DVD RACK. Janet, not
appearing to notice him, keeps walking ahead.

JANET

I mean, a true gentleman wouldn't have dragged me into the men's room at the club.

She finally realizes she's talking to herself. She turns and sees Nicky staring transfixed at the DVD rack.

JANET

Nicky? I was kidding...I...what is it?

He picks up the DVD: IT'S A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS.

NICKY

(staring at the DVD)

I really hate this time of year.

INT. DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT - MANY YEARS AGO

Christmas lights, BLINKING from outside the window, light up the falling snow.

Nicky, 8 years old, is lying in bed, staring at the lights.

DAD (O.S.)

(heavy Italian accent)

So you gonna stay in bed all night?

Nicky turns to see a SILHOUETTE of his father in the door frame. Nicky jumps out of bed and rushes to him.

Nicky runs into the living room where his mother is waiting by the Christmas tree in her robe.

NICKY (V.O.)

The only memories I have of my childhood was during Christmas. That's the only time I can remember my mom and dad in the same room. A regular family.

Little Nicky RIPS open a present to reveal a "Star Wars" toy: the Millennium Falcon.

Nicky, ecstatic, hugs his mother and turns towards his dad and smiles.

His father (his back towards us) is sitting on the floor putting the ripped up wrappings into a trash bag.

Nicky puts down the Millennium Falcon and starts on another present.

NICKY (V.O.)

No zoo memories. No memories of eating at the dinner table. Picnics. Nothing.

EXT. BACK TO WAL-MART PARKING LOT

Nick is sitting on the hood of his car. Janet is leaning next to him.

NICKY

Not one other memory. Only Christmas.
(BEAT) They had to go and ruin that too.

JANET

They? Both of your parents?

NICKY

I don't know which one's to blame. They both brought me into this world. And they both left me alone in this world.

Janet looks around. Nicky looks up and looks around, confused because he doesn't know what she's looking for.

JANET

You don't look alone to me.
(moves between his legs and
puts her arms around his waist)
I don't think you'll have that problem again.

Nicky searches her eyes for the sincerity he hopes is true.

JANET

Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown.

INT. HOUSTON HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Paolo is on the balcony, wine glass in hand. He takes a sip then walks back into the room.

He picks up a MAP OF CALIFORNIA and studies it. He puts it down next to a MAP OF NEW YORK. Grabs a magic marker and circles an area on the California map.

He downs the glass of wine and refills it, picking up his cell with the other hand and dials.

PAOLO

Yes, I need to rent a car.

(listening)

Pick up tomorrow yes.

(BEAT) No, no, no. A few weeks.

(BEAT) Yes. Maybe more.

(picks up picture: Don Roma)

Drop off destination? Maybe Los Angeles airport.

(picks up another picture:

Nicky and his mom)

Yes, Los Angeles.

He puts the picture next to a .45 SMITH & WESSON. BULLETS are lined up neatly next to a SILENCER and BULLET CLIP. Gun cleaning utensils are set up on the table as well.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Sitting in his car across the street from an upper-class house, Nicky is watching a FATHER and DAUGHTER who are putting up Christmas decorations.

The father is hanging lights on the rim of the roof while his daughter is adjusting a lawn reindeer.

Nicky starts up in his seat as the front door opens. A middle-aged Italian looking WOMAN walks out with her little 6 year old SON in tow.

The son goes to help his sister adjust the reindeer, but Nicky is watching the woman. She is his mother, VICTORIA, and this is her new family.

As the little girl turns away, her son starts to fall under the weight of one of the reindeers. He yells for his mom who was watching the scene with her husband. She goes over, picks him up and hugs him.

Nicky stares blankly at this mundane holiday portrait.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT - 19 YEARS AGO

Nicky, 11 years old, is on the floor in a squalid 2-bedroom apartment playing video games on an Atari console.

Victoria walks in from the bedroom putting on one heel. She's dressed up for a night on the town.

VICTORIA

Where the hell did I put the other...?
Nicky? Mom's gonna step out for a bit, ok?
I'm gonna lock the door, so you don't open
it for anyone.

Little Nicky continues to stare at the T.V. screen, engaged in the game.

VICTORIA

My little man has all of his games?

A car horn HONKS twice outside at street level.
Nicky's eyes dart to the WINDOW then back to the TV screen.

VICTORIA

Did you see mommy's other heel by any
chance? Nicky?

Nicky continues to play and ignores her.

VICTORIA

Ok, I took the Salisbury steak dinner out
of the freezer. You remember how mommy
taught you about the oven and the timer?

Horn BLARES impatiently from the street again.

VICTORIA

Of course you do. You're my little man.
I'll be back, baby! Don't stay up too late!

Victoria rushes out the door, neglecting to lock it.

Nicky looks at the DOOR. He puts down the joystick and goes to the door to lock it.

Then he goes to the window. Nicky sees his mother head towards a Chevy Camaro.

A MAN in a leather jacket is standing outside of the car gesturing at his watch. She gets in and he squeals the tires as they leave.

Nicky turns the video game off and stares at the blank T.V. screen. Alone, he sits on the couch, staring at the window.

EXT. NICKY'S CAR - BACK TO PRESENT

Nicky's had enough. He reaches to start the ignition but his hand is shaking.

He grabs the WHEEL to steady his hand, feeling as if he can tear the steering wheel right off.

Calming down, Nicky turns on the ignition and drives off.

INT. MALL - DAY

Nicky and Frankie are sitting on a bench across from Forever 21, a young woman's clothing store.

Three non-black teenagers walk by them clad in athletic jerseys, baggy jeans and bling-bling.

FRANKIE

(pointing at the 3 guys)
Why do they do that? And one of 'em is Chinese for chrissakes. You see the bulges?

NICKY

I guess they're gangsters.

FRANKIE

Tell me you weren't in front of your mom's house last night.

NICKY

I wasn't in front of my mom's house last night.

FRANKIE

Why don't you just call her? "Hey ma,
Merry Christmas!"

NICKY

She's busy with her new family.

FRANKIE

You gotta cut that shit out.

NICKY

If she wanted to, she'd call. I'm the son.
The mom is supposed to have some
responsibility, right?

FRANKIE

Look, you're an adult now. All I'm saying
is that...

NICKY

Me being older is supposed to undo things?
(BEAT) I thought you were supposed to be
cheering me up, you fuck?

Frankie hands his cousin a copy of Rolling Stone.

FRANKIE

I'm sorry, Nicky. I know how hard it must
have been...

NICKY

Oh do you? I don't recall the Don leaving
you and your mom.

Nicky opens it a little and sees a manila folder hidden in
it. His agitation is starting to build.

NICKY

You can pick up the phone any time, 'Hey
pop, how're you doing? The picket fence
still white?' (BEAT) I have no fucking
concept of that.

Frankie notices that Nicky's hands are starting to shake as
he's rifling thru the manila folder.

FRANKIE

(looking around)

Jeez, whattaya doing? Not here.

NICKY

And it's not like anyone even knows where that piece of shit father of mine is! Or I don't know, maybe they do. Maybe they don't. Who knows? I don't. That's for damned sure!

Nicky is bordering on the hysterical as Frankie tries to close up the magazine holding the manila folder. He begins to wrestle with it. Nicky seems to be in a trance.

NICKY

(staring at Frankie)

Why? Why isn't anyone saying, Frankie?

Frankie takes the magazine from Nicky. He's never seen Nicky in this shape before.

FRANKIE

Our family has more secrets than we should. If the Don felt you should know, he'd tell you.

Nicky catches himself and starts to regain his composure.

NICKY

Would he, Frankie?

FRANKIE

(sighing)

I dunno. I really don't.

Nicky points to the magazine holding his next job.

NICKY

Anyone I know?

FRANKIE

Not yet.

EXT. FLORIDA EVERGLADES - DAY

Driving a fan boat through the swamps of the Everglades, Charlie Roma, dressed in cargo shorts, a bright Hawaiian shirt and Texas longhorn cap is smoking a cigar and appears to be singing.

SCOTTISH STEVE, an associate of the Roma crime family, is tied up and lying at the foot of the captain's tower that Charlie's sitting atop. He's not in a pleasant mood.

SCOTTISH STEVE

(thick Scottish accent)

Holy shit! Slow down! Slow dow - watch out for the...AAAH!

CHARLIE

(yelling above the motor)

Scream all you want, ya prick. Nobody ever comes out to this part of the 'Glades. I think it may be because of the 'gators. Yes, I think that's it.

Charlie stops the boat. Jumps down and squats next to Steve. He throws a BUCKET of fish parts into the water. 2 alligators SNAP violently out of the water for the chum.

The Scot yells his head off as Charlie pulls him towards the front of the boat, still puffing his cigar.

CHARLIE

I'll tell you what. If you can out-swim these guys, I'll let ya go back to being the FBI's bitch. How's that sound to you?

Another alligator enters the water.

SCOTTISH STEVE

I'm sorry, I'm fucking sorry! Wait! Wait, wait, wait! Please. I got something for the Don.

CHARLIE

What do you have? More betrayal, Steve?

SCOTTISH STEVE

The Zip! The fucking Zip! From back East!

CHARLIE

Zip? I don't know nothing about no Zip.

Charlie drags him towards the boat's edge. His HEAD is almost hanging over. Then Charlie pauses.

CHARLIE

Zip. You mean a Sicilian?

SCOTTISH STEVE

(almost in tears)

Yeah! Yeah, a Sicilian! That cutesy fuck that used to run with the Don back in the day!

CHARLIE

(pondering)

Nope. Never heard of him.

Charlie picks up a piece of FISH that had dropped into the boat and flings it to the already excited alligators.

SCOTTISH STEVE

The Don does! Ask him! Just fuckin' ask him! Please, oh please, just ask him!

Charlie pauses. This might be important. He takes out his cell and stands up.

CHARLIE

Better hope T-Mobile catches out here, prick.

He texts a message into the phone: CUTSEY ZIP FROM BACK IN THE DAY?

INT. SMITTY'S BAR - DAY

A YOUNG GANGSTER, sitting at the bar, reaches into his inside jacket pocket and takes out his cell and flips it open.

He walks over to Smitty who's playing cards with 4 other guys at a table in the middle of the bar and hands him the cell.

YOUNG GANGSTER

Charlie.

Smitty looks at the screen.

SMITTY

Holy shit. Tell him "ok".

The young gangster who texts the response to Charlie. Smitty is frozen in his chair.

SMITTY

(to the Young Gangster)

Change the calendar. Christmas is coming early this year.

EXT. BACK TO EVERGLADES

Charlie, sitting on a stool in the boat has his legs up on Scottish Steve.

CHARLIE

You don't sound Scottish to me. You sound Irish. I thought Scottish is like Mel Gibson in Braveheart? You ever see Braveheart?

Charlie cell phone rings (ringtone: DeeLite's Groove is in the Heart). He reads the text message.

CHARLIE

Well, whatever the fuck you are, you can add lucky to your resume'. You must be Irish.

Charlie kicks Steve in the balls.

SCOTTISH STEVE

Argh! What the fuck was that for?

CHARLIE

For making me drag you out to this mosquito-infested shit hole. Why didn't you mention the Zip when I snatched you outta church?

Charlie scales back up to the top of the driver's tower, guns the motor, makes a U-turn and spins away.

INT. MALL FOOD COURT - NIGHT

Nicky and Janet are enjoying a meal during her break.

NICKY

It's not really Chinese food.

JANET

(sarcastically)

Really?

NICKY

They sell the same exact stuff at the Cajun place right next to it. I think they use the same type of cat meat.

JANET

See, now that's just gross.

NICKY

If you put the right sauce on anything you can call it French and charge \$75 bucks a plate.

JANET

(giggling in revulsion)

Ahh...I get it now. You're a chef. I was wondering what you do for a living. (BEAT)
See, I had to guess.

Nicky smiles and stuffs a bunch of stir fried noodles in his mouth.

JANET

So the mystery continues.

NICKY

It's no mystery. Ok, I'll tell you.
(leans in close)
I'm a shepard.

Janet folds her arms and raises an eyebrow in mock disgust.

JANET

You're a jerk is what you are.

NICKY

I'm serious! But it's not, uh, sheep season.
So I'm off for a while.

JANET

Oh, you're off alright.
(looks at cell)
Break's almost over.

NICKY

It's nothing really. It's actually kinda
boring. I negotiate problems between a
private firm and it's clients.

JANET

You're right. It does sound boring. You
should look into that shepard thing instead.

NICKY (V.O.)

I didn't exactly lie. In fact, every word was
true. Our thing is a private firm. But the
negotiating is pretty one-sided.

Nicky smiles. He picks up their trays and dumps them. He
grabs her hand, kisses it then walks her back to work.

INT. PAOLO'S CAR - DAY

Having picked up his rental car, Paolo is headed up the
East coast.

RADIO DJ

(on air)

It's going to be another balmy Friday
night. But it won't matter as our Tar
Heels take the court against the
Hoyas of Georgetown. (BEAT) Get there
early in your powder blues!

Paolo scans the MAP OF NEW YORK.

RADIO DJ

Tonight is clapper night. The first 5,000
fans through the door get a free clapper.
The clap is brought to you by Ratcliffe's
(MORE)

RADIO DJ (cont)

Dry Cleaners. No one does underwear like
Ratcliffe's.

Paolo puts down the map. A HIGHWAY SIGN signals that he's
leaving North Carolina.

INT. DON ROMA'S STUDY - NIGHT

Don Roma is sitting on a couch in his dimly lit study.

Standing in front of him is a very nervous Scottish Steve.

Flanking behind the Scotsman are Smitty and Charlie, a
\$1000.00 Hugo Boss suit covering his bright Hawaiian shirt.

SCOTTISH STEVE

(to the Don)

I wasn't even supposed to be in Houston.
I was there just to see my ex - ye
remember Sheila, right?

Seeing that Don Roma doesn't care...

SCOTTISH STEVE

Anyway, I was in the john and I heard
him on the phone. I think he was confirming
his hotel room or something.

DON ROMA

You're sure? I mean, it has to have been
years since you seen him.

SCOTTISH STEVE

He gave the name 'Paul Battle' but it was
definitely him. I thought it was strange
hearing that name in that accent. I mean,
that's why I peeked out of the stall to
begin with.

The Don studies the Scotsman.

SCOTTISH STEVE

And I never forgot the way this guy would
dress. Like he's a movie star or something.
Very chic.

Now the Don bores a stare into Scottish Steve.

SCOTTISH STEVE

I mean...not that you don't dress well.
You've always been, I mean, you know,
um, dapper?

The Don glances at Smitty who steps forward and grabs Steve by the arm.

SMITTY

Alright. That's it.

SCOTTISH STEVE

Thank you, Don Roma. I'm sorry for
all of the inconvenience. I never meant...
(the door closes on him)

CHARLIE

What do you think, Uncle Turi?

DON ROMA

I think he doesn't want to be fed to the
alligators. But if this is him...I'll have
Smitty poke around. Let me know if you
turn up anything else.

CHARLIE

And what about...
(nods towards the door)

DON ROMA

Don't forget to thank him for this information
before you finish the job.

INT. BELLA SERA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nicky and Janet are sitting at the bar. Janet is admiring
the fashionable décor.

JANET

This place looks expensive. The only
Italian cuisine I know is pizza and spaghetti.

NICKY

Good. So you'll be a cheap date. I hear the tiramisu alone is worth it.

JANET

I think I saw a Domino's down the street.

MAITRE'D

Signore, your table is ready.

As the MAITRE'D sits them, an ACCORDIAN and MANDOLINS play in the background. The romantic ambiance is palatable.

NICKY

Can we start with a bottle of Valpolicello?

MAITRE'D

Very good, signore.

JANET

You know your wine.

NICKY

Well, I know what I like.

JANET

And what about what I like.

NICKY

I was hoping you liked me. Or at least be a little impressed with my knowledge of wine.

JANET

Yes, your knowledge of wine is very impressive to someone who would be fine with a meat-lovers from Dominos. You know your wine, but you should know your audience first.

NICKY

Hey, give me a break. I'm pulling out all the stops here. But now that you mentioned the pizza, I dunno. You think we could get the wine to go?

JANET

(scanning the menu)

Too late. Now I want the tiramisu.

The maitre'd interrupts to display the wine. Nicky sips the sample then the maitre'd pours two glasses.

JANET

Seriously, I can't figure out how you got cheated on as much as you say you did.

NICKY

No exaggeration. 96% of my girlfriends cheated on me.

JANET

96%? You calculated it?

NICKY

Maybe they're just not into guys who calculate the amount of girls who've cheated on them.

(sips wine)

JANET

Or maybe they're into Bad Boys.

Nicky chokes a bit on the wine.

NICKY

Excuse me?

JANET

Maybe they're into Bad Boys. And you're not a Bad Boy.

NICKY

I'm guessing that you have a theory on this.

JANET

As a matter of fact I do.

(smiles at MAITRE'D
hovering near the table)

Women are insecure by nature. It's easier on their ego to be with a Bad Boy. See, that way if a Bad Boy cheats on her, disrespects her or leaves her, well that's expected: He's Bad. That's no reflection on her or her character.

NICKY

Wow. Just how many cops have you dated?

JANET

But if she comes across a Good Guy, that scares her. A Good Guy who'll treat her right. That loves her and treats her how she deserves to be treated.

NICKY

And this is bad because...?

JANET

Because if for some reason the relationship ends and he leaves her, then it must have been her fault. It blows her self-esteem to bits because Good Guys are supposed to stay. Bad Boys are less of a gamble because they're more predictable. They're less of a gamble with her heart and fragile ego.

NICKY

I'm curious. How bad does this Bad Boy have to be?

JANET

Well, not Charles Manson, serial-killer bad. But bad enough.

NICKY

And I'm not bad enough?

JANET

Not even close.

Nicky smiles knowingly.

The ambiance is broken when arguing can be heard by the kitchen.

Then he notices the OWNER berating the maitre'd.

MAITRE'D

But sir, they just called 5 minutes ago. We stopped taking reservations hours...

OWNER (JERRY TRESCA)

I don't care if you have to give them foot massages at the bar while they wait for a table. You don't turn away anyone! You want us to go tits up before we even get started?

MAITRE'D

I'm sorry, signore.

OWNER

Shove sorry up your Zip ass!

(storms away)

Fuckin' Sicilians!

(muttering to himself)

'Hire authentic Italians' she says. 'It'll lend credibility' she says.

The owner walks past Nicky's table and into the kitchen. Nicky's gaze follows him.

JANET

Nicky? Nicky!

NICKY

Hmm? Oh, sorry. Bad Boys. Yes.

JANET

I said you're not a Bad Boy. A.D.D. maybe but not bad.

Tresca BURSTS through kitchen doors. He's putting on his coat and heading for the front door.

NICKY

(getting up quickly)

I wonder where the - did you see where the bathroom was?

Janet looks at Nicky inquisitively.

Nicky follows Tresca. He stops at he bar area as he sees the owner go out to the parking lot.

Nicky watches from a window in the waiting area.

EXT. Parking lot

OWNER

I said 2 bills on the Giants. 2 bills you moron!

Jerry's Cadillac's alarm CHIRPS.

Nicky takes note of the license plate. The maitre'd comes up behind him.

What Nicky doesn't see is a curious Janet who followed him. She considers walking up to Nicky, but thinks better of it and goes back to their table.

MAITRE'D

Signore? You're not pleased with the Valpolicello?

NICKY

I was just looking for the restroom.

Nicky is deep in thought as he goes back to the booth.

JANET

Everything come out ok? (BEAT) Nicky?

NICKY

Hmm? Oh, yes. Do you like the wine?

JANET

Is everything ok?

NICKY

Yeah, of course.

(picks up menu)

Do you like the wine?

Janet wonders the rest of dinner about Nicky's curious behavior, but doesn't bring it up. He's relatively quiet the rest of the evening.

INT. NICKY'S CAR - AFTER DINNER

The drive home is in silence. Still in deep thought, Nicky doesn't notice that Janet, arms folded and staring out the window, is upset.

Nicky stops in front of her house. Janet storms out of the car without looking at him and SLAMS the door.

NICKY

(to himself)

I guess I'm moving up on that Bad Boy list.

Speeding off, Nicky flips open his cell and dials.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

You're interrupting my date with
Tera Patrick.

NICKY

I got a plate number. Get me a residence.
BDR722.

Nicky hangs up and dials again. He gets Janet's voicemail.
Hits redial but again gets her voicemail.

NICKY

(into cell)

Jan, I sorry. I can't really explain. It's
not that I don't want to. I just...I don't
...I don't want you to worry. I can't. I'm
sorry. You really mean the world to me.
What I'm trying to say...

Cell BEEPS: an incoming call from Frankie.

NICKY

(switching lines)

You got it?

FRANKIE

You know the Highland's area? Remember where
we seen that one-legged hooker?

NICKY

Get on with it, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Jeez. Greenbriar Condo's.

Nicky abruptly closes the cell and hits the gas.

NICKY

Oh shit! No!

Realizing he was in the middle leaving Janet a voicemail, he flips the cell back open.

Distracted, he runs the stop sign and almost hits a Honda who SCREECHES to a halt and HONKS his horn.

NICKY

Shit! Shit! Shit!

(into cell)

Hello? Hello?

Nicky considers redialing. He decides against it and dejectedly closes the cell. Then he BANGS the steering wheel.

EXT. SONIC'S ORDERING STALL - DAY

Nicky and Frankie are in Frankie's car. Frankie pushes the button to order.

SONIC GIRL

(over the intercom)

Welcome to Sonic. Would you like to try our new Jumbo Popcorn Chicken?

FRANKIE

(into the intercom)

How jumbo is it? Never mind. I'll take 2. And some jumbo fries and a jumbo coke.

SONIC GIRL

I'm sorry sir but we don't have a jumbo size for those items. Just the chicken.

FRANKIE

Whatever the largest size is, that's the one I want.

SONIC GIRL

We have small, medium and large sizes for our French fries and drinks. Sir.

FRANKIE

(to Nicky)

This fuckin' broad is killing me.

(to the intercom)

I said whatever the largest size is just give it to me!

SONIC GIRL

Will that complete your order, Sir?

FRANKIE

(to Nicky)

You want anything?

NICKY

Hell no. At this rate she's spitting in your jumbo popcorn chicken, large fries and large coke.

FRANKIE

(to the intercom)

That's it.

(to Nicky)

So how goes it with you and Ms. Cappuccino?

NICKY

Great. She's a little mad at me, though. After making Tresca in the restaurant, I got into the zone. I just blocked her out. I didn't mean to.

FRANKIE

It's not like you could explain it to her. 'Sorry, honey, what were you saying? I was too distracted by that guy I have to whack.'

NICKY

So why can't I tell her.

Frankie looks at Nicky as if to say "Don't you dare".

NICKY

I'm serious. She's pretty open-minded. (BEAT) Maybe she's that one girl that would understand my career.

FRANKIE

I dunno, kid. That's why I stay single.
I figure once I hit 40, I'll go back to
the old country, get off the plane,
grab me a nice old-fashioned Italian
broad who don't ask too many questions.

NICKY

(staring at Frankie)

You're not 40 yet? (BEAT) I almost feel
like pouring every last thought I have to
her and trust her with it.

FRANKIE

Then we'll have to sick Charlie on you.
(BEAT) I hear what you're saying. Look,
no one wants you to be happier more than
me, you miserable prick. But you can't
be stupid about it. And the ship can't
sail forward if it's still anchored to
the past.

Nicky looks out the window, knowing what Frankie's about to
say.

FRANKIE

Your mom. Your dad. Fuck 'em. That's your
past. Your mom's moved on and started over.
And your father, well, who knows. This girl.
She's your future. If you do it right.

Frankie slips out a folded piece of paper and gives it to
Nicky.

FRANKIE

And I found something a little extra.

NICKY

(reading the paper)

You're kidding me.

FRANKIE

I shit you not. Every Tuesday and Thursday.

EXT. ST.ANTHONY'S CHURCH - TUESDAY NIGHT

An ELDERLY WOMAN has a bag full of coins and a look of excitement on her face as she goes into an auditorium next to the church.

More elderly people file into the auditorium.

NICKY (V.O.)

Addiction is the lowest form of human weakness. Drugs. Booze. Porn. Whatever. You get your fix at all costs. No matter the consequences.

From a park bench across the church, Nicky sees a familiar Cadillac pull in. Jerry Tresca gets out and heads into the auditorium.

NICKY (V.O)

Follow the addiction and you'll find the addict.

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM - A FEW HOURS LATER

Nicky peeks into the hall. The docile elderly men and women who he seen go in has transformed into a rowdy, cut-throat bunch of bingo players, getting rowdier with each number called.

Nicky spots Tresca in the crowd. His relative youth stands out in the geriatric crowd.

He has what appears to be a brand new blender beside him. He pulls the blender to him as the woman next to him eyes the appliance.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - A FEW HOURS LATER

Jerry is walking to his car, blender under one arm and talking on his cell.

JERRY

(into the cell)

Mort? How long you gonna be at the Tavern?

(BEAT) Well, you wait til I get there.

(BEAT) I don't give a fuck. It lasted

(MORE)

JERRY (cont)
 longer than...yeah...some old broad was
 disputing a number. Look, the 49ers won
 straight out and I'll be there for
 my 2 G's. (BEAT) I dunno. Just wait!

Jerry gets into his car and drives off.

INT. NICKY'S CAR

Nicky watches as Jerry pulls away. He starts his engine.

NICKY (V.O.)
 You might as well flush your money down
 the toilet.

EXT. THE TAVERN PARKING LOT - EARLY MORNING

Jerry is in his car. Half of his head has been blown away.
 The BLENDER is beside him.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF BARNES & NOBLE - DUSK

Nicky, sitting on a bench, is waiting for Janet to finish
 work.

He's considering how to apologize for ruining their dinner
 at Bella Sera when...

FATHER
 Nicky!

Nicky jolts up at the sound of his name. He turns to see a
 FATHER calling out to his SON who's running a head of him.

The boy stops in his tracks while his father catches up to
 him.

FATHER
 Remember what I said about crossing
 the street?

LITTLE BOY
 Not to do it without you?

FATHER

(chuckling)

That too. What else, son?

LITTLE BOY

Look both ways. Only cross when it's clear.

The father bends down and gives the boy a high five. Then he kisses him on the top of his head.

Nicky sits, riveted. His heart is swelling at this seemingly mundane scene.

FATHER

That's my boy. That's my Nicky.

The boy reaches up, grabs his father's hand. They cross and head to their car.

Janet, who's been watching the scene from near the store's exit, sees the look of longing that has overcome Nicky. At once, she understands the hole in his heart.

Janet sits down next to Nicky, breaking his trance.

NICKY

(startled)

Jan! I'm sorry, I was waiting, I wanted to tell you. I mean, the other night I...

Janet cuts him off with a hug that lets him know all is forgiven then a passionate kiss to seal the deal.

INT. JANET'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Janet's apartment reflects a nomadic childhood spent as a child in a military family. Adorning the apartment are souvenirs from the different places she's lived.

Nicky and Janet are in bed. Janet is wearing a University of Hawaii tank-top.

JANET

They say it's nothing like the cartoon. The parts where they transform into large robots are not cheesy. We should check it out.

NICKY

I seen it yesterday. Your co-workers are right: the actual transforming robots aren't cheesy at all. Turturro, on the other hand...

Janet sits up and stares at Nicky.

JANET

You already seen it?

NICKY

The other day.

JANET

And you didn't think to ask me if I wanted to see it?

NICKY

I don't go to the movies with anyone.

JANET

That's going to need a longer explanation.

NICKY

Movies are - well, they're my private place. No offense, but I never take girlfriends to movies. I can't concentrate fully and they just end up wanting to make out.

JANET

Well, that is a longer explanation.

Nicky points up at a little porcelain statue of a cat that's on her bookshelf.

NICKY

And where's that little kitty cat from? I think he's waving at me.

JANET

That's a good luck cat from Japan. You can't go into a single Japanese house without seeing at least one in every room.

NICKY

(pointing at another shelf)

And I suppose those are authentic samurai swords from some 15th century shogun.

Janet looks impressively at Nicky.

JANET

Wow. Somebody knows their ancient oriental weaponry.

NICKY

History Channel. I can't get enough of it. Want to know a few fun facts about Hitler?

JANET

No thanks. I've had my fill of the military and military history for one life.

NICKY

I'd say. The Philippines. Texas. Japan...

JANET

(tugs at her top)

Hawaii.

NICKY

Yes, Hawaii. Thank you. (BEAT) What was your dad like?

JANET

The master sergeant? From what I heard, his men were all scared of him. Big hero in Vietnam. Killed many VC soldiers with his bare hands. But at home, my mom outranked him. He was hopelessly in love with her. He knew he was whipped but didn't care. By the time I came along he was an emotional bowl of Jello. But in a good way.

Nicky takes her hand and brings it to his lips.

NICKY

And which of these delicious little fingers did you have him wrapped around?

JANET

The same ones that you are.

Nicky bites her finger.

JANET

Ow!

(giggles)

He gave me and my mom that power over him. He knew we would never abuse that power. Never hurt him. He could've laid down the law at anytime. But he knew he was safe with us.

NICKY

Sounds like a good place to grow up.

JANET

As far as the roving gypsy life goes, it wasn't too bad. Don't get me wrong. He'd be gone for long periods of time on missions or training. He never really told us any details so we'd worry ourselves silly until he walked through that door. But when he did, he was all ours.

NICKY

Must've been nice.

JANET

Oh, Nicky, I'm sorry. I...

NICKY

Next on Oprah: Latch Key Kids and the Women Who Love Them.

Janet hits him with a pillow

JANET

I'm serious! It's just, once I start talking about my dad...

NICKY

Don't be sorry. You can't miss something that you never really had. Your relatively ordinary life amazes me.

JANET

What amazes me is that you're not living at the bottom of a bottle or living at the end of a needle in some alley.

NICKY

Out of sight. Out of mind.

Nicky sits up when he notices that Janet is staring intently at him. He's suddenly very self-conscious.

NICKY

That may not be the right way to handle it. But it's the only way I knew how. Unfortunately he's never completely out of mind.

Nicky stares back at her.

NICKY

And you better not be trying to analyze me.

JANET

I'm not! It's just that whenever I'd see you at the coffee shop, sitting by yourself, I...

NICKY

What? You feel sorry for the lonely boy?

JANET

It's not that. When you're by yourself, you look oddly comfortable. A lot of people are self-conscious about being alone. But you seem very used to it.

NICKY

Practice. Makes. Perfect.

Nicky lifts the sheet and smiles devilishly at Janet.

NICKY

(looks under the sheet)

I've got something for you to analyze, Doctor.

Janet slides under the sheet until she's lying on him. She gives him a gentle kiss on the lips. Then she lays her head on his chest.

JANET

My poor lonely boy.

The devilish grin is gone from Nicky. She has a way of stripping away his armor and looking into his soul.

EXT. TOMMY'S ITALIAN SAUSAGE STAND - NEW JERSEY - DAY

Paolo is at the counter ordering lunch.

COUNTER GUY

Yes sir, hardest working man in the sausage biz. Can I help you?

PAOLO

Italian sausage. Peppers. Onions.

COUNTER GUY

It's your lucky day. For another \$1.00, you can get one more.

Paolo scowls at the counter guy.

COUNTER GUY

Or just the one. Nevermind.

Paolo continues to study his MAP OF NEW YORK.

INT. BACK IN JANET'S APARTMENT

After a nap, Nicky finds Janet in the kitchen making coffee. He comes up behind her and kisses her neck.

NICKY

You really know how to put a smile on a guy's face, you know.

JANET

That's the idea. (BEAT) Coffee?

NICKY

Yeah, no. I've been meaning to tell you I hate coffee. No big fan of cappuccino either.

JANET

No offense taken. It pays the bills. Vanilla soda is on the bottom shelf.

Nicky is taken aback that she remembers what he drinks. He takes out a bottle of vanilla soda from the fridge.

NICKY

A guy could really fall for you.

JANET

So will you?

He gets closer to her. His eyes search hers for the indication he badly needs.

He brushes her hair back.

NICKY

You really are an angel.

He kisses her. She goes to sit at the table with her cup of coffee while Nicky grabs his keys off the counter.

NICKY

I have to take Frankie to the airport. What time is your class?

JANET

1 o'clock. (BEAT) So when do I get to meet your cousin Frank.

Nicky stands over her as she dips her head back.

NICKY

Frankie. Maybe when he gets back (BEAT) See you later?

JANET

Later tater.

He kisses her forehead then heads out the door.

JANET

Nicky! Can you grab the...

Nicky pops back in and tosses her the morning paper along with a grin.

JANET

(to herself)

You sure know how to make a girl smile.

She undoes the rubber band holding the paper then scans the front page, coffee in hand.

At the bottom of the page, she sees a SMALL ARTICLE: LOCAL RESTAURANTEUR FOUND SHOT IN CAR.

She recognizes the picture next to it as the owner she saw during her dinner with Nicky at Bella Sera.

The same owner Nicky was focused on.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

The Garden is packed to the rafters with SCREAMING wrestling fans, some dressed as their favorite wrestlers or face-painted to show their support.

Don Roma and Frankie are sitting in the front row. The wrestler, THE UNDERTAKER, is in the middle of the ring, glaring towards the dressing rooms.

Smitty, carrying popcorn, hotdogs and a tray of drinks, nudges his way down the aisle avoiding the rowdy fans to get to the Don who seems just as jubilant as the kids who are standing on their seats.

DON ROMA

You got the extra mustard?

SMITTY

I got the extra mustard.

FRANKIE

Pop, you gotta watch your health. Those things'll kill you.

DON ROMA

Hot dogs? (BEAT) Not in our business.

RING ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now the challenger. The Legend.

(crowd erupts)

From Hollywood, California.

EXPLODING fireworks line the top of the long ramp leading to the ring.

DON ROMA

Here he comes!

More fireworks EXPLODE around a large, SILHOUETTED FIGURE behind a screen. He's flexing one bicep while his other fist is on his hip. The crowd goes extra CRAZY as the screen starts to rise.

In the middle of the ring, the announcer gears up for the final surge while the referee holds back the Undertaker.

RING ANNOUNCER

Hulk! Hogan!

Don Roma stands and is cheering like a teenager.

HULK HOGAN starts walking down the ramp. He's high fiving and pointing at his fans as he makes way to the ring.

DON ROMA

Hulkster! Don't take no shit, Hulk!

Frankie looks at the impressionable, little kid sitting on the other side of Smitty.

FRANKIE

Pop!

Hulk Hogan reaches the ring and climbs in.

DON ROMA

I fuckin' love this part.

Frankie looks at kid and shrugs. The kid shrugs back.

Hogan rips off his shirt and throws it into the crowd who swallows it up.

DON ROMA

(sitting)

Remember when you caught the shirt, Frankie?

FRANKIE

It was the headband, Pop.

DON ROMA

Hulk stomped the shit outta that fat fuck King Kong Bundy. Less fireworks, more ass-kicking.

SMITTY

Less with the drama, too.

DON ROMA

Then why do you come?

SMITTY

You buy the popcorn.

FRANKIE

Why did I come, Pop?

DON ROMA

You love wrestling.

FRANKIE

No, you love wrestling, pop.

DON ROMA

Your cousin. After this job, he can go his own way. If he wants.

FRANKIE

Go? What do you mean? Relocate?

DON ROMA

Naw. Whatever he wants to do, he can. Career change. Whatever. He has my blessings. (BEAT) After this job.

FRANKIE

Why now? The Feds aren't exactly lacking informants these days. Hell, you'd think the government's giving away free blowjobs for every made guy they help put away.

DON ROMA

(yelling at wrestlers)

Aww. Slam him! Body slam! (BEAT)
I sent Charlie to the other side. We got a cousin outside of Palermo that is an up and comer. (BEAT) And it looks like our quality control techniques are finally working.

SMITTY

Ricky Masselle from the Medici's all of a sudden remembered his oath. It caused him to gain temporary laryngitis. But it only seems to affect him in the presence of someone wearing a badge.

FRANKIE

But you still wanna cut Nicky loose?

DON ROMA

He's one of the best I've ever seen.
(BEAT) But, the life, it's not him. It never was.

The Don, sensing that Frankie's not understanding, pulls Frankie closer.

DON ROMA

That's not everything. I owe Nicky this.

FRANKIE

You owe Nicky? What do you owe? I don't...

Don Roma stares at Frankie.

DON ROMA

I owe your cousin. I'm paying someone else's debt, but I owe him, too.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

A quintet is on the small stage playing Miles Davis' "So What". The intimate club has scattered clouds of smoke.

Nicky and Janet are sitting at a table against the wall.

JANET

I never would've picked you for a jazz buff.
You look good for 65 years old.

NICKY

Back in New York, my Uncle Turi owned a deli right next to a jazz club. I'd go to the deli after school and wait for my mom to pick me up. Deli's are pretty boring and I'd go next door and listen to the bands rehearsing.

JANET

(quizzically)

And they let a little kid hang out in a jazz club? You must've had one helluva fake I.D.

NICKY

My Uncle Turi knew the owners. Come to think of it, I think he may have been one of the owners. I barely remember New York. But I remember this music.

JANET

Sounds like your uncle was quite an entrepreneur.

NICKY

Salvatore Roma. Entrepreneur. I don't think he's ever been accused of that, but close enough.

JANET

And he's your mother's brother?

Nicky freezes for a second, unsure how to answer when...

FRANKIE (O.S.)

I forgot how much it sucks trying to find parking for this hole in the wall.

Frankie walks up to their table. Nicky stands and hugs him.

NICKY

(to Janet)

This is my cousin Frankie.

JANET

(extending her hand)

Ahh, the famous Frankie. I've heard a lot about you.

Frankie looks at Nicky in amazement.

JANET

Just kidding.

FRANKIE

(to Nicky)

Funny girl you got.

(sits)

However, I've heard everything about you. This guy just won't shut up. He still can't believe you're actually going out with him.

NICKY

This is true.

JANET

That explains why he thanks me every morning.

FRANKIE

I like this girl!

An hour passes and their 3rd bottle of wine is being poured. Nicky is in the bathroom.

JANET

So what do you do? For a living that is.

FRANKIE

Family business. I'm a representative for my father. He has interests all over and he doesn't like to travel, so I'm his liaison.

JANET

The same business Nicky works for?

FRANKIE

My pop's a big supporter of nepotism.

JANET

I was just asking Nicky...

Nicky walks up behind her and sits down.

NICKY

Asking Nicky what?

JANET

I was just wondering how you 2 are related.

Nicky and Frankie look at each other; a loss for words. It's as if one is waiting for the other to answer.

FRANKIE

We're from a big Italian family. After a while, you forget the details and just assume everyone is related.

JANET

But how do you keep from dating your own cousins.

NICKY

Frankie's not my type.

FRANKIE

And our other cousins aren't lookers. Kind of on the mannish side if you ask me.

NICKY

(changing the subject)

Speaking of which, how's your dad?

FRANKIE

The Do...

(catches himself)

Pop's doing great. In fact, he has another client he needs you to see. I'll fill you in later.

Frankie smiles uneasily at Janet who seems to be dissecting every nuance of the conversation.

NICKY

I got that guy who likes to fish tomorrow,
but I'll call you after.

EXT. CHARTERED FISHING BOAT - MORNING

Nicky is freezing on a charter boat just taking off for the morning run. About 20 people are scattered around the sides of the boat.

An over-zealous CHARTER DECKHAND is giving a how-to to any novice that will listen.

Nicky could care less. He's bundled up, trying to fight off the chill of the saltwater.

DECKHAND

(yelling above the roar of the boat)
Once you've secured the bait, you're
good to go. Just make sure you keep a
good distance between you and the next
fisherman. We don't want you catching
any human game.

Nicky is leaning against the cabin trying to keep warm.

NICKY (V.O.)

I hate fishing. I hate everything about
it. I'm cold. I'm wet. And at the end
of the day, I'm going to smell like
tuna.

Nicky casts a line off the side of the boat. He looks down the rail. Past a little boy and his father is a portly, Italian man: MARIO RICCI.

NICKY (V.O.)

His clients know him as Marvin Richey.
But to the neighborhood back in BedStuy
and more importantly, to the Feds that
he's talking to, he's Mario Ricci.

Ricci casts off and takes a pull on his cigar.

NICKY (V.O.)

According to Frankie he got busted for pushing heroin. Back in the day, old Mario here was a rumrunner and would sit on the Brooklyn docks watching as cases of illegal hooch would come in from Canada. Then in the 70's, he sit on those same docks as his heroin sailed in from France.

Ricci puffs on his cigar and reaches into his tackle box. He pulls out a whiskey flask and takes a swig.

NICKY (V.O.)

Rumrunner in the 30's. Heroin smuggler in the 70's. Rat in the new millennium.

Nicky sees the father and son head toward him.

FATHER

You mind looking out for our poles?
My son isn't feeling too good. First time on the boat and all.

NICKY

Sure. You might want to try some 7-Up.

The father takes his son into the lounge area.

Nicky looks up and down the aisle. The only 2 left on this side of the ship are him and Ricci. He walks toward Ricci, feigning trouble with his pole.

NICKY

(to Ricci)

Excuse me. I'm all tangled up. You have a knife I can borrow so I can cut this mess off of my pole?

RICCI

(irritated)

Yeah, hold on. Uhh...let me see...

Ricci puts down his pole and looks through his tackle box.

Nicky double checks that the coast is clear up and down the aisle way.

RICCI

(handing Nicky the knife)

I just sharpened it this morning so make sure you don't...

In one motion, Nicky takes the knife and stabs him in the gut. Then he turns Ricci towards the edge and, standing in back of him, stabs him a few times in the lungs. Then he pushes him into the water.

He sees Ricci's pole bending. He picks it up and fights the fish. He kicks the tackle box over the edge.

By the time the deckhand is rounding the corner, Nicky has the fish on board. Acting the novice, Nicky is trying to remove the hook by ripping the mouth of the fish. Blood is everywhere.

DECKHAND

What the hell was that? You ok? I heard a splash.

NICKY

Shit, look at this baby! I guess I got too excited. I kicked my tackle box over the side trying to bring this sucker up!

The deckhand starts to look over the side...

NICKY

Yeehaw!

Startled, the deckhand looks back up at Nicky.

NICKY

The fuck ya doin'? Get me a net or something! I'm not holding this thing the whole way back!

The deckhand runs off.

Looks down at the fish blood that's mixed with Ricci's. Nicky peers over the side of the railing.

NICKY

Rumrunner. Heroin smuggler. Government
rat. Fish food. Goodbye Marvin.

EXT. DANA WHARF PIER - LATER

Having docked, Nicky is walking back to his car. He's
lugging his fishing pole when his cell rings.

NICKY

Yo Frankie.

(listening)

I almost forgot how much I hate fishing.

I'm just glad I'm done for the day.

(listening)

Really? He said that? But what about
Charlie...?

As he shuts his trunk, Nicky, sees a bench by the edge of
the pier. The bench reminds him of something..

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY - 20 YEARS AGO

Paolo and a 9-year old Nicky are sitting on a bench looking
out towards the harbor.

PAOLO

(baiting the hook)

Make'a sure the sardine is nice and stuck
on the hook. He can't get loose or you'll
just have the hook out there.

LITTLE NICKY

But the big fish are gonna eat the sardine.

PAOLO

That's how it is. The big'a fish eat the
small fish. Then we eat the big'a fish.

Paolo's not thinking about the bait anymore.

PAOLO

Dominic, I gotta tell you something.
I gotta leave. I can'ta tell you why.
But you gotta take'a care a' your mama.
You gotta be the man'a the house.

LITTLE NICKY

(starting to cry)

But why? I don't understand.

PAOLO

You cry right now. But after today, you no cry no more. Like I said, you're the man now and your mama, she needs'a you to be a man. (BEAT) One day, you'a understand.

(pats Nicky on the chest)

You watch'a your mama. Capisce?

Little Nicky, wiping his tears, nods in agreement.

PAOLO

One day. Maybe I can come back. But you cry no more. It's easier that way. For you. Trust me. No more tears.

Paolo wipes his cheeks dry. He looks at the rod and reel he brought with him. He knows Nicky doesn't feel like fishing right anymore.

EXT. BACK TO PRESENT

Nicky's forgotten he's still talking to Frankie.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

(on the cell)

Hey, knucklehead!

NICKY

Sorry, Frankie. I'll call you later.

Nicky can't take his eyes off of the bench.

INT. COLLEGE LECTURE HALL - MORNING

Janet is attending a lecture for her course in criminal psychology.

PROFESSOR BLAKE ABREU is in front of a moderately-filled, theater-type class. To his right, a GENTLEMAN in an obvious government-issued suit is looking on to his right.

PROFESSOR ABREU

The modern day gangster, specifically, any criminal who is part of an organization - be it the Mafia, Yakuza, Chinese Triad, Columbian Cartels - maintain order within their ranks by their own code of honor. In a twisted sense of morals, to kill or rob from another human being is business as usual. But to break their own honor code is the ultimate sin.

(motioning to his right)

To elaborate, may I introduce Special Agent Joel Coughlin of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He's an instructor at Quantico with a Master's in Criminal Psychology. And my roommate for my first 2 years at Loyola Maramont. Joel?

Applause fills the room as S.A.COUGHLIN shakes the Professor's hand.

S.A.COUGHLIN

(turning to the Professor)

I think I still owe you for that last case of Ramen you bought freshman year.

The class laughs.

S.A.COUGHLIN

For those of you future psychiatrists, looking for insight on the criminal mind, there is no better model than the American Mafia. They're born, not made, to be in the Mafia. Most gangsters have an automatic abhorrence of any authority that isn't themselves. Extremely anti-establishment.

He fiddles with a laptop set up in front of him.

S.A.COUGHLIN

But beneath that rebelliousness, a natural insecurity drives them to join up with other like-minded thugs.(BEAT) Yes. Ironic indeed.

Another chuckle from the class.

S.A.COUGHLIN

So they get mobbed up, if you will. And in doing so pledge an oath to each other. A pledge of loyalty. A loyalty enforced on the pain of death.(BEAT)But the modern-day gangster is less concerned with loyalty or old traditions than they are with avoiding a life sentence behind bars. Like American cars, they just don't make 'em like they used to.

An overhead monitor shines on the screen behind him.

S.A.COUGHLIN

Being able to turn mobster into a cooperating witness is the single best tactic law enforcement has at it's disposal.

The photo on the screen: SALVATORE "SAMMY THE BULL" GRAVANO.

S.A.COUGHLIN

Sammy the Bull here, former Underboss of the Gambino crime family, was highest ranking La Cosa Nostra member to ever inform on his organization. His testimony helped to put away most of the hierarchy of the New York mob.

The photo changes to that of JOHN GOTTI.

S.A.COUGHLIN

His betrayal signaled a major shift in attitude that trickled on down the ranks: If management doesn't care about honor, why should we? Rats started to abandon ship in droves.

Stares up lovingly at the photo.

Janet doesn't appear to be as into this lecture as the agent is. She's fidgeting, not expecting her psychology class to go down Mafia memory lane.

S.A.COUGHLIN

Thank you Sammy Gravano. (BEAT) The hierarchy of the Mafia started to fall like dominoes.

Janet is grudgingly taking notes, but just wants the lecture to end.

S.A.COUGHLIN

But lately a shift has occurred. And it may have nothing to do with a yearning for the good old days when the term Men of Honor stood for something. Potential and existing informants have been turning up dead or missing too often to be coincidence.

Janet, glancing at her cell, notices she's going to be late for work.

S.A.COUGHLIN

Loose lips are tightening up And this man may be to blame..

Janet starts to pack up her pad, books and pen. She has to leave now if she's going to be on time for work.

The screen changes to a photo of DON ROMA.

S.A.COUGHLIN

Don Salvatore Roma, or Turi as he's known, is the head of one of the major Mafia crime families based out of New York.

Janet freezes at the mention of the Don's name. She stares at the screen.

S.A.COUGHLIN

As old-school as you can get, he not only believes in the oath he took, he employees nothing but blood family members, assuring that betrayal is almost non-existent. He's alleged to be killing off all associates who violate their code of silence. He's single-handedly reinvigorating the almost dead American Mafia. Informing on the mob will not guarantee you a life in the Witness Protection Program. It'll assure that you end up stuffed in a trunk.

Now sitting on the edge of her seat, Janet drops her BAG. She's hanging on the agent's every word.

S.A.COUGHLIN

Don Roma seems hell bent on re-instilling Honor to the Mafia even if he has to kill every one of it's members to do so.(BEAT) With his hitman family members pulling the trigger.

Janet is frozen. She's staring up at the picture of Don Roma. The last comment makes her sick to her stomach.

EXT. CONDOMINIUM STAIRWELL - DAY

Charlie, hiking up the 3 flights up to his condo, is carrying a McDonald's package in one hand and a coke in the other.

He enters his condo. A typical bachelor pad, it's lined with posters of bikini models and his hometown New York Giants.

He stops right before entering the living room, drops his McDonald's lunch and in one motion draws his GUN from his jacket. He's still sipping his Coke as he aims into the living room.

Smitty is sitting on his couch reading one of Charlie's Playboy's while the Don is perusing his bookshelf.

DON ROMA

You seem to be in love with this Richard Dawkins guy.

Charlie holsters his gun then picks up his lunch.

CHARLIE

Geez, Uncle Turi. You coulda left me a message. Be a shame to shoot you guys.

SMITTY

And miss that look on your face?

DON ROMA

Charlie, sit down. We couldn't do this the normal way. You need to know from me the importance of this job.

Charlie sits down, suddenly nervous. The Don NEVER assigns jobs himself.

DON ROMA

Remember the guy - from the Scotsman?

Charlie nods, still apprehensive.

DON ROMA

I'm putting your cousin on him..

(looks at Smitty)

And I'm putting you on your cousin. One way or another, this job gets done.

CHARLIE

Wait. What am I: back-up? Nicky's a pro, I don't see why...

DON ROMA

Yes. Yes he is. But this is his last job. And there might be...complications.

CHARLIE

(still confused)

You saying Nicky might not pull the trigger? (BEAT) If he doesn't then I tag the mark. (BEAT) And what about Nicky?

The Don stares at Charlie in a way that chills Charlie to the bone.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Nicky, en route to New York, is staring out the window of the airplane, deep in thought.

EXT. NICKY'S BALCONY - 2 DAY'S AGO

Frankie is on the balcony of Nicky's apartment.

FRANKIE

Pop needs you to take care of this one.

NICKY

Charlie's on vacation?

FRANKIE

Nah, he's busy.

(sips wine)

This guy, your guy, we don't know why he's back and the Don doesn't wanna sit around and find out. Evidently he was bad news when he was here and Pop needs him to be old news.

NICKY

That important, huh? (BEAT) The Don really said I can go my own way after this? No strings, nothing? One last job. In New York.

JANET (V.O.)

What's in New York?

INT. JANET'S APARTMENT - LAST NIGHT

Nicky, his overnight bag in hand, is having a hard goodbye.

JANET

Don Salvatore Roma? Boss of New York?

EXT. DON ROMA'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Embedded on a bronze PLACARD strewn with vines is the address: 1411 Pearl Lane. A keypad and entry voicebox are located right outside the gate.

A Lincoln Towncar drives through the gate and stops in front of the mansion. The driver gets out and looks around. Smitty does the same then opens the Don's door.

JANET (V.O.)

Uncle Turi? Is that what's in New York?

Don Roma gets out and they make their way into the mansion.

INT. BACK IN JANET'S ROOM

NICKY

Jan...it's not like that. You don't...

JANET

It's not like what? How do you know what I'm thinking if I don't know what to think. (BEAT) That my boyfriend is not only related to Don Corleone but is one of his hitmen?

NICKY

Jan, please. I can't explain...I mean I want to but - see, what I do...

JANET

What you do? You told me what you do. You solve problems. Like that guy from the restaurant. Was he a problem you solved?

Nicky stares up at Janet, helpless to explain her fears away.

INT. BACK IN THE AIRPLANE

Nicky's hand is shaking. He downs the rest of his vodka cranberry.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

Go to Smitty's place. One of his guys will have info and tools for you.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Nicky finds the un-named bar he was looking for and goes in.

Nicky sits at the bar and stares up at the T.V. He orders a vodka cranberry, letting his mind drift.

INT. BACK AT JANET'S ROOM

NICKY

This is it. This is the last one. I promise you. I can go my own way after this. We can start our own life. We can move away if you want to. But after this last job, I'm done. No obligation.

JANET

No obligation? I've seen the movies.
You're obligated, alright.

NICKY

That's the movies, Janet. (BEAT) One way
or another, this is it, Jan.

JANET

That's what I'm afraid of.

INT. BACK AT SMITTY'S BAR

Smittys young mobster assistant sits near Nicky. He puts a
DUFFLE BAG on the chair between them. Without acknowledging
Nicky, he gets up and walks away, leaving the bag.

EXT. FAB FOUR POOL HALL - NIGHT

Paolo walks into a pool hall and goes directly to the back
office. He barges in on TONY TERRY, the owner and former
bagman for the Don.

TONY

Holy shit! Fuck, Paolo? Is that you?

Tony gets up to give him a hug but Paolo sucker-punches him
in the gut.

PAOLO

What do you think? 15 years enough to make'a
me lose my mind? Make'a me forget?

Paolo grabs a cue stick and breaks it in half. He holds the
jagged edge up to Tony's throat as he lifts his head by his
hair.

PAOLO

You the first one in Turi's ear. Tell
him about me and his daughter.

TONY

What the fuck? I didn't say fuck all!
Vicky told her dad about you two. About
what you did to her!

Paolo slams his face on the desk.

PAOLO

You stick your nose in my business. I see the way you look at Victoria. You make'a up lies to get me killed!

TONY

Lies? Fuck you, lies!

Paolo reverses the stick and whacks Tony in the gut.

PAOLO

You owe me. Now you pay. Where is he? Where's the Don?

INT. NICKY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Nicky's on the bed. He opens the DUFFLE BAG. Takes out a .45 AUTOMATIC, a SILENCER, a KNIFE and a GARROTE. Then he takes out a PIECE OF PAPER.

NICKY

(reading the paper)

Hmm. Tall, dark, Italian male. Very original. I'm going to need a better look. (BEAT) Monarch Hotel. Room 2907.

INT. DON ROMA'S LIVING ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Don Roma is sitting on the couch staring at the T.V. almost zombie-like. His hand is out with the remote channel surfing.

Smitty is sitting at the opposite end. His cell phone rings.

SMITTY

Yeah? (BEAT) Good.

(closes cell)

He's in country.

DON ROMA

We knew that, didn't we?

SMITTY

No, I mean, he's real close. He went to play pool

DON ROMA
 (still glued to the T.V.)
 Terry Tony has a big mouth. Always has.

SMITTY
 Nicky got in today. Charlie too.

DON ROMA
 Good. My boys are in town.

INT. MONARCH HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

In the elevator, Nicky looks down at the paper: 2907. Looks at the lit button: 30.

INT. BACK IN JANET'S ROOM - 2 NIGHTS AGO

JANET
 Do you have to go? Is this one of those times that if you don't go, they're going to...

NICKY
 No! Janet, how can you...? (BEAT) It's not like that. Yes, I'm obligated. But to do this one last thing. I'm the only one that can handle it.

JANET
 And then what? What's your life after this?

NICKY
 Whatever it is, I want to be with you. A new life with you. (BEAT) I've always wanted to learn the trumpet.

JANET
 Nicky!

NICKY
 I'm serious. I love jazz. I love the trumpet. Maybe I'll start my own band.

JANET
 (shaking her head)
 I don't get it. How you can be so calm
 (MORE)

JANET (cont)
about this. What you do for a living...

NICKY
...is not who I am. It's just what I do.

JANET
Really? (BEAT) I thought what we do is
what makes us who we are.

NICKY
It's never that simple, Jan.

INT. BACK TO THE MONARCH HOTEL

Nicky is walking down the stairwell down to the 29th floor. He peers out of the stairwell door down the hall. He flips open his cell and dials.

ROOM SERVICE (O.S.)
Room service, how can I help you?

NICKY
Evening. I'm almost back to my room and
need to celebrate. Can you have a bottle
of your best champagne waiting for me?
(listening)
Yes. Room 2907. Thanks.

Twenty minutes later, a ROOM SERVICE ATTENDANT wheeling a beverage cart down the hall, stops at room 2907 and knocks.

Paolo, who had been showering answers the door. He seems to be arguing with the attendant.

PAOLO
No, I would'a remembered ordering champagne
because I don't drink champagne. You got the
wrong room.

Nicky, peeking through the stairwell door, gets a good look at his mark's face.

INT. MONARCH HOTEL LOBBY - AN HOUR LATER

Nicky, on the couch in the lobby is pretending to be engrossed in a conversation on his cell phone.

As Paolo comes out of the elevator, Nicky gets up, cell phone glued to his ear and follows him.

EXT. VALET AREA

Paolo is waiting for the valet to get his car.

Passing him, Nicky turns left onto the sidewalk and gets into his parked rental car.

Paolo drives away from the hotel. He pulls the New York map out of his coat. He checks the route and address that Tony Terry gave him: 1411 PEARL LANE.

Satisfied with the directions, Paolo puts the map down. He feels inside his coat. Gun on the left. Blade on the right.

INT. NICKY'S CAR

Nicky is following Paolo 3 car lengths behind. He checks his inner coat pocket. Gun on the left. Blade on the right.

INT. BACK IN JANET'S ROOM

NICKY

When I'm there, I'm going to ask my Uncle if he knows anything about my father. I've never asked him, but he might know something.

JANET

And if he doesn't? Will this...I mean, will you be ok with whatever the answer is?

NICKY

I need this. I need something.

INT. BACK IN NICKY'S CAR

Nicky is focused on Paolo's car as it weaves through traffic.

EXT. BACK ON NICKY'S BALCONY

FRANKIE

I don't know what to tell you. Even if
(MORE)

FRANKIE (cont)
my dad knows anything - Nicky, you ever
consider - maybe you don't want to know
who your father really is?

That's the question Nicky's been afraid of. He stares into
his empty wine glass.

INT. BACK IN NICKY'S CAR

Nicky watches as Paolo turns into a wharf area. He turns
off his headlights as he follows Paolo through the pier.

Paolo parks near the end of the pier. He gets out and walks
to a bench and sits down.

Nicky parks at a distance, studying Paolo.

Charlie, who's been following behind on a motorcycle pulls
in after Nicky parks. He gets off the bike and blends into
the shadows.

NICKY
(whispering)
What the hell is he doing? Something's
not right.

Nicky looks around the area, checking for an ambush.

Nicky slinks out of his car. He follows the shadows to get
a closer look at Paolo who seems to be just sitting and
staring out at the ocean. Confident they are alone...

Nicky stealthily comes from behind and sits on the opposite
end of the bench, arms folded.

Not used to being caught off-guard, Paolo stiffens. His
hands are in his side pockets, away from his gun and knife.

Paolo starts to pull his hands out but reconsiders and
leaves them in his pockets. He waits.

NICKY
(to Paolo)
Evening.

Paolo nods.

NICKY

Lovely night out.

(looks up)

Not a cloud in the sky. (BEAT) It's funny. I don't remember much as a kid. But this pier. Something...familiar about it.

PAOLO

You musta liked fishing. This is a good place for fishing. Lots of boats. See, the small fish, they eat'a the barnacles off the boats. And the big fish...

NICKY

(softly)

...the big fish eat the small fish. Then we eat the big fish.

Paolo tenses up at this. He starts to slide his hands from his pockets.

NICKY

I hate fishing.

In one swift motion, Nicky's right arm slides out from his coat and sticks his gun into Paolo's ribcage.

Paolo cautiously puts his hands back into his pockets.

NICKY

Why does the Don want you dead?

Charlie moves closer in the shadows towards them.

PAOLO

Ah, the Don sent you. You. Turi was always twisted that way, Dominico.

Nicky bristles slightly at hearing his birth name.

PAOLO

I assume you usually don't ask your mark questions.

NICKY

They never hear my voice.

PAOLO

Yes, I heard you're good. Your cousin Charlie taught you, no? I hear you're Turi's best. Better than Charlie even. Better than me.

NICKY

You worked for the Don? Only family are...

PAOLO

Yes. Only family. Family. Like how the Don is your family.

Nicky's hand starts to tremble.

PAOLO

Oh. You don't know do you? Maybe if you know, you don't take this job. Maybe you do.

Stealthily moving closer to the bench, Charlie stays in the shadows.

CHARLIE

(under his breath)

Come on Nicky. Quit fucking around.

PAOLO

The family of Salvatore Roma is not one to sit around and swap stories of the good old days, is it? (BEAT) The Don. What do you call him?

NICKY

(perplexed)

Uncle. Uncle Turi.

PAOLO

(pondering)

In a way, I guess that's correct. But since Victoria is the Don's daughter...

Nicky's hand shakes more. He's starting to lose focus on the hit.

NICKY

What the hell...? My mom is not. I mean, why would you say that my mom is the Don's daughter?

Starting to fill with confusion, Nicky fights to focus by shoving the gun deeper into Paolo's side.

NICKY

You! Who are you? Who are you!

CHARLIE

That's it, Nicky. Come on, man.

NICKY

Answer me! Who the fuck are you?

PAOLO

I loved your mom. I really did. That's what Turi never understood. I loved your mom and I loved you. But your grandfather, The Honorable Don. So set in his ways. Honor? Where's the honor in banishing your daughter and grandson in shame to the opposite coast? He tried for a few years, but he could never face the truth.

NICKY

Grandson. (BEAT) And your honor? You abandoned us. You abandoned me!

PAOLO

If I stayed here, the Don couldn't allow that. I'm a shame he could bury once and for all. And then you'd be talking to a gravestone.

NICKY

All these years, I might as well have.

PAOLO

So much you don't understand. I always thought, 'Maybe, one day, I could come back. Make things right.'

NICKY

Why does he want you dead? Who are you?
What did you do...?

PAOLO

Dominico. Nicky. I'm back. I'm here now.
To ask - to beg for your forgiveness.

NICKY

(quizzical)

You're in New York, not in California.
I'm only here to take you out.

PAOLO

I wouldn't have made it to California.
Not without getting the Don out of the
way first.

NICKY

I can go to him. I can talk to him.
I...I just don't understand...

CHARLIE

Oh, shit. Just do it. Do it. Do it.

Charlie draws his gun and spins on the silencer.

PAOLO

Don Roma doesn't let reason interfere with
honor. (BEAT) My brother never has.

At first Nicky looks confused. Then: an epiphany. All at
once, his world is explained and his world ends.

PAOLO

I've made mistakes.

Paolo, slowly standing takes his hands out of his pockets.
They are empty. He spreads his arms wide open.

PAOLO

What can I do?

Nicky stands, his gun still aimed at Paolo. He's waiting
his whole life to be standing in front of his father.

And then...

Nicky embraces Paolo hard.

Charlie raises his gun and aims.

CHARLIE

Aw, Nicky.

A single SHOT rings out over the empty pier.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Nicky and Janet are sitting at a table staring at each other intensely. He has a vanilla soda in front of him; her, a mocha Frappuccino. Their gaze never leaves each other.

NICKY

You still mad at me?

JANET

You still a Mafia hitman?

NICKY

No.

JANET

Then no.

NICKY

You sure you won't change your mind about this?

JANET

Are you going to be a Mafia hitman again?

NICKY

No.

JANET

Then, no.

NICKY

Good. (BEAT) I have to use the bathroom.

As Nicky gets up, Janet never takes her eyes off of him.

INT. BATHROOM

Nicky is using the middle of 3 urinals.

Frankie and Charlie walk up from behind and use the stalls on either side of him.

CHARLIE

Security sucks. Did we learn nothing from 911?

Charlie pulls out a .45 AUTOMATIC from his jacket. Then he slides it atop Nicky's urinal.

NICKY

I won't need that. Not anymore.

Nicky zips up and goes to wash his hands.

FRANKIE

(to Charlie)

He's going to learn the trumpet. Start a jazz band.

Charlie, still at the urinal, looks at Frankie in disbelief.

CHARLIE

Kill me. Kill me now.

Nicky, leaning on the sink with both hands, is staring at himself in the mirror.

FRANKIE

You're always welcomed back, ya know.

NICKY

Not back. Forward, Frankie. (BEAT)
Back is bad. Forward, good.

Frankie drops his head and smiles.

INT. BACK AT STARBUCKS

A voice blares over the intercom:

INTERCOM

Now boarding: Flight 89 to New Orleans
now boarding.

Janet is sipping on her Frappacino and staring at Nicky's
vanilla soda bottle. She takes it in her hand. She smiles.

NICKY (O.S.)

(from behind)

Shall we?

Nicky extends his hand to Janet. It's not shaking. She
takes it and they head to their gate.

As they leave Starbucks, a CNN report comes on the
widescreen in the coffee shop.

REPORTER

And this just out of New York. The body
fished out of New York harbor has been
identified as Paolo Roma...

PHOTO of Paolo flashes on the screen.

REPORTER

...a.k.a. Paolo Battaglia, younger brother
of Salvatore "Turi" Roma, head of the 2nd
largest organized crime family in New York.

PHOTO of Don Roma flashes on the screen.

REPORTER

F.B.I. officials are baffled as to why
Pauly Bats, as he was known in the
underworld, who had all but disappeared
from their radar over 15 years ago, suddenly
turned up dead in New York. Whatever the
reason, his welcome home committee
consisted of a single bullet to the heart.
(BEAT) And on Wallstreet...

Nicky and Janet are walking hand in hand towards their
gate.

NICKY

So I was thinking, how'd you like to
see a movie with me?

JANET
Only if we get to make out.

FADE OUT

THE END