

# **PRETENSE**

By

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FADE IN

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

An artist's palette, a dab of red paint, a smear of white. A small brush mixes the red and white to create brown.

The brush belongs to a cigarette smoking, gray-afro ARTIST who dabs some paint and goes to work on a man's ASS.

FALSON (O.S.)  
It has to look like the Yucatan peninsula.

ARTIST  
Right out of the fuckin' atlas.

To one side in this cheap room, chewing gum, DIRK FALSON, 40s, handsome, styled hair, casually well-dressed. Doesn't look gritty enough to be a private investigator.

Next to Falson a gorgeous MODEL in a short robe.

Having his ass painted, an overweight, paunchy, middle-aged MAN, naked on the bed.

Beyond them, a PHOTOGRAPHER, fiddling with a camera lens.

FALSON  
In this lifetime, folks. Let's do it.

The Artist moves away.

The Model slips off the robe-Yowza! She crawls on the bed, and the Male climbs on top.

FALSON  
Action, folks, give me some heat.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Faces?

FALSON  
Not his. Hers, and get that damn ass. But make it fuzzy.

The Photographer steps around and snaps photos. He focuses on the BIRTHMARK.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

BIRTHMARK

On the Man's ass in a grainy photograph.

BELLE MICA, 30s, 25 lbs. overweight and growing, a neglected woman, stares at the photo.

BELLE  
It isn't him.

Falson, dressed shabbily, stands across from her in an upper middle class house.

FALSON  
Take a good look

As Belle studies the photo, Falson surreptitiously attaches a bug under the table by the phone.

BELLE  
Not a chance.

FALSON  
Your husband's dead, I know. So,  
it can't be him having all that  
fun.

She glares, photo shaking in her hands.

FALSON  
Look, I take the photo to the  
insurance company, and I score a  
few thousand. You offer ten  
percent of the death benefit, and  
who's the wiser?

BELLE  
You're disgusting.

FALSON  
Yeah, like hubby isn't?

BELLE  
He's dead.

FALSON  
The babe in that pic doesn't think  
so.

BELLE  
Get out!

Falson starts out.

FALSON  
 You have twenty-four hours. Want  
 your husband to stay dead, call me.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Falson exits the house and hustles down the sidewalk to a van. He opens the rear door and climbs in.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Loaded with surveillance equipment, the latest in spy gadgetry. Also, WIRED, 20s, Falson's eavesdropping wizard, a guy who gets off on technology and spying.

FALSON  
 Gimmee.

Wired holds up one finger as he punches a button. Taps a switch. Belle's VOICE fills van.

BELLE  
 (on speaker)  
 You sonofabitch!

MAN  
 (on speaker)  
 You were to never call this number.

BELLE  
 Why, busy screwing some bimbo?

MAN  
 What? What's got into you?

BELLE  
 They found you, asshole. They took pictures. You couldn't keep it in your pants?!

MAN  
 I'm hanging up!

Falson slaps Wired on the back. Success.

INT. GINA'S OFFICE - DAY

Small office of GINA, 30s, insurance adjuster, Italian, overweight, could pass for Mexican.

She pushes a check across the desk to Falson.

GINA  
 How did you know?

FALSON

Too big a death benefit, an overseas death certificate, and cremation.

GINA

No, the birthmark, how did you know?

FALSON

Listed on the death certificate. How many Pakistani doctors know squat about the Yucatan?

INT. FALSON'S CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A large, comfortable conference room.

At the polished table sit Falson, well dressed, with two associates, NEEDHAM, 20s, butchy female, GORDO, 40s, heavy, trying to hide his baldness with a comb over.

Across the table glows DOMINICA BANE, 30s, brunette, extremely sexual without extreme beauty. A gold bird on a gold chain around her neck.

FALSON

As I explained, I don't do missing persons.

DOMINICA

He's not missing. He's dead.

FALSON

Not until they find his body. But my associates will be happy-

DOMINICA

I don't want your associates.

Falson looks at his associates. They're no help.

FALSON

My associates are extremely competent. They will be happy to start a search.

DOMINICA

I'll pay whatever it takes. I want you.

FALSON

Mrs. Bane, I-

DOMINICA

I understand you're the best.

They lock eyes, and her heat infects him. Every man wants this woman.

FALSON

Fine. I'll need a list of friends, business associates, relatives, anyone he might contact.

DOMINICA

He disappeared in California.

FALSON

You'll be charged per diem for travel. We'll have a contract ready by the end of the day.

(pointing)

The bird, what is it?

DOMINICA

A phoenix. You know, the bird that-

FALSON

Is reborn from its own ashes.

She smiles, toying with him.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Falson, in golf togs, strides for the first tee. Needham trails.

NEEDHAM

Nothing from his employees. He hasn't contacted anyone. And they're not happy. Seems his wife doesn't practice the same management philosophy.

FALSON

Business accounts?

NEEDHAM

Nada. No credit card, no draws. He's not living on the business.

FALSON

Audit?

NEEDHAM

Books balance as far as Gordo can tell.

FALSON  
 You know the drill. Personal  
 accounts. He's no fern. He can't  
 live on air.

Needham stops and watches as Falson smiles his way onto the  
 tee and greets his three PARTNERS.

PARTNER 1  
 What's the wager?

PARTNER 2  
 Skins for three of us.

PARTNER 1  
 Three?

FALSON  
 I don't gamble.

PARTNER 1  
 Not even on a golf course?

FALSON  
 Not even on a dare.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

Exclusive booth. A Latina STYLIST dyes Falson's hair.  
 Expensive dye, expensive procedure, lush hair.

Gordo sits on a stool, refers to notes.

GORDO  
 The policy yields five million.  
 She hasn't filed a claim.

FALSON  
 (to stylist)  
 Skip the henna rinse?  
 (to Gordo)  
 For five mil, I'd want a body too.

EXT. MADDY'S HOUSE - POOL - DAY

A dry, private pool behind a large, expensive house. At the  
 bottom, an Hispanic WORKER patches the wall.

On the deck, MADDY STOUCH, 40, trim but still a mother,  
 oversees the work. Maddy is dowdy compared to Dominica.  
 Falson watches with her.

MADDY

This is the second time they've patched that wall. They faked it the first time.

FALSON

You haven't heard from your brother?

MADDY

He's dead, Mr. Falson. The sooner you prove that, the better.

FALSON

Excuse me. I've been in this business a while. When a sister wants her brother dead, I start to wonder.

MADDY

His death activates the will and the pre-nup. She keeps the insurance. I get the business.

FALSON

And the business is worth-

MADDY

A helluva lot more than the insurance.

FALSON

If you hear from him-

MADDY

I'll tell him to get his dead ass back here.

(to worker)

Fill it good, comprende? NO MORE LEAKS!

INT. DOMINICA'S OFFICE - DAY

Wood paneled walls but not a single window. Affluent but closed in.

Falson sits in front of an antique desk.

Dominica, with that unmistakable sexuality and the phoenix, pushes a large envelope to him. Behind her is a travel poster of Vancouver.

DOMINICA

Photos, itineraries from his trips, credit card receipts, everything you asked for.

FALSON

What if he doesn't want to come home?

DOMINICA

When you find the body, I receive five million dollars. I don't intend to wait seven years to collect.

FALSON

What were his favorite haunts in California?

DOMINICA

He had one haunt, San Diego. Been there?

FALSON

Why San Diego?

DOMINICA

My husband had...appetites.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson flies first class, and he's handsome enough to merit a smile from the Hispanic ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT

We'll be landing in a few minutes. Will there be anything else?

FALSON

Coffee.

ATTENDANT

Have to stay awake for a meeting?

FALSON

Keeps me off tequila.

ATTENDANT

Is coffee the secret?

FALSON

Ever been to Mexico?

ATTENDANT

I was born in Tijuana.

FALSON

Want to go in my place?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

High in a downtown hotel, Falson enters, drops his bags, and goes to windows.

Through the glass stretches the bay, Coronado bridge, sail boats, and in the distance, Coronado.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

RUIZ, 30s, Hispanic detective, a man who doesn't like amateurs, tosses a file across a steel table.

Falson catches the file. The room is small, overused, dirty.

RUIZ

He checked into the La Hacienda on Shelter Island. Met a blonde and left. Mexico probably. Never came back.

Falson starts through the file.

RUIZ

If this Bane wasn't a millionaire, he'd be forgotten in a week. Leave the file when you're done.

Ruiz leaves. Falson reads.

EXT. LA HACIENDA MOTEL - DAY

Falson parks a convertible by the fountain in front of an upscale motel.

Climbing out, he has the bay on one side, a marina full of boats on the other.

INT. LA HACIENDA - CONTINUOUS

Falson talks to an Hispanic desk CLERK and shows a photo.

Clerk nods and gestures.

INT. LA HACIENDA MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Falson shows photo and talks to a Latina MAID who clutches towels and nods.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

A small place of tile, bright colors, margaritas, and WAITRESSES in peasant skirts.

On a stool, Falson nurses a beer while eating chips and salsa.

Needham slides onto the next stool. Harried, she's harder than ever.

NEEDHAM

Sorry I'm late. Storms in San Antonio.

Hispanic BARTENDER arrives.

NEEDHAM

(to bartender)  
Margarita on the rocks, no salt.

Bartender moves off. Needham helps herself to salsa.

FALSON

Best salsa in San Diego. I ate here all the time when I was in under the flag.

NEEDHAM

You lived here?

FALSON

In the dark ages. Mexican consul?

NEEDHAM

Bane entered Mexico, but he didn't leave. At least, not officially. You?

FALSON

Bane stayed at La Hacienda. He met a blonde woman. As soon as she arrived they left.

NEEDHAM

Mexico?

FALSON

A clerk remembers a phone call to Cabo San Lucas...or maybe Guadalajara.

NEEDHAM

He always flew home from San Diego?

Bartender delivers margarita and more chips.

FALSON  
He didn't fly home the last time.  
(raises glass)  
Semper Fi.

She looks at him as if he's nuts. She clinks glasses and sips.

INT. GUALALAHARA AIRPORT - DAY

Falson and Needham, carrying small bags, weave through a crowded, hot, sweaty airport, past SECURITY armed with automatic weapons.

Needham appears apprehensive. Falson pays no attention.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Needham hangs back as Falson books rooms. A nice hotel. At the desk, Falson flashes Bane's photo.

Clerk shakes his head.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alone, Needham walks a hot, empty sidewalk. At midday, few people are out. She ducks into a jewelry store.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Needham approaches the counter where an OLD MAN sits on a stool and fans himself. She pulls out Bane's photo.

INT. BAR - DAY

Dark, dim, smoky, a hard place for hard Mexican MEN with nasty habits. Half full, murmuring, dangerous.

Sweat soaked, Falson steps in from brilliant heat. He pauses long enough to take off his glasses and survey the crowd.

He moves to the bar. He slaps down a bill and Bane's photo in front of a young, sweaty, FEMALE BARTENDER whose scarred face betrays nothing.

She takes the bill and shakes her head.

When Falson turns, two burly Mexican THUGS block his way. This is not a place for gringos. Falson produces another bill and slides it on the bar.

FALSON  
 (waving his hand)  
 Tequila, por todos.

One Thug moves off to claim his drink. The other stares daggers.

FALSON  
 In five seconds, I'm going to take my right hand and break your nose. Then, I'm going to grab your head, jerk it back, and break your spine with my knee. And like fate, there's nothing you can do about it.

Does Thug understand? Doesn't matter. He breaks off and moves down the bar to join the other drinkers.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Needham and Falson at a table. Worn, beat, she sips a margarita. He has beer.

FALSON  
 He didn't come to Guadalajara.

NEEDHAM  
 Cabo San Lucas?

FALSON  
 We fly out in the morning.

Waiter arrives with dinner, huge plates of rice, beans, and enchiladas.

NEEDHAM  
 You think he's dead?

FALSON  
 He has to be. I don't do missing persons.

NEEDHAM  
 The blonde woman?

FALSON  
 When I served, the marines had a name for Mexican women-L.B.F.M.

NEEDHAM  
 What?

FALSON  
Little brown fucking machines.

She stares and then frowns.

NEEDHAM  
Disgusting.

He laughs.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Late, dark.

Falson sits up in bed. In boxers, he slips out of bed and pads to the window.

Streaming moonlight betrays sweat on his face. He stares into the night, licking his lips.

In the dark, a dog HOWLS.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson and Needham fly. Falson looks out window.

Below Cabo San Lucas, beauty on a blue ocean.

EXT. CABO SAN LUCAS STREET - DAY

A taxi drops Falson and Needham at a hotel on the beach.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Falson moves through the room, automatically checking closet and bathroom. He slides open the door, and steps onto the balcony.

Below, simmering beach and waves.

EXT. CABO SAN LUCAS STREET - DAY

Heat rises in waves.

Falson, confident, cocky, walks a street off limits to tourists. Natives gaze from trashy houses and cramped bodegas. Falson stops and gazes up an alley.

Water and piss stream in the gutter. A mongrel warily passes, leery of Falson.

A grin crosses his face as he walks up the alley.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Needham steps inside. A YOUNG MAN in sleeveless shirt doesn't leave his stool. She speaks and shows Bane's photo.

Young man nods. He recognizes the face.

INT. WAREHOUSE BOXING RING - DAY

A small boxing ring with a dirt floor. Bleachers on all sides. Most of the seats are occupied by Mexicans. But one side holds ITALIANS and GREEKS, CREW from cruise ships, some in ship uniform.

And a knot of MARINES, buzz haircuts, drunk, wonderfully toned and young.

Spectators bet, WAVING money and YELLING wagers. Mexican BOSSES take bets and write numbers.

To the side of the Marines stands Falson. A Boss reaches Falson and asks with his eyes.

Falson holds out a bill. When the Boss reaches, Falson shows Bane's photo.

The Boss looks at photo and nods. Si, Bane has been here.

The Boss grabs Falson's bill and turns to the bleachers where the crowd CLAMORS.

Into the ring step two petite, Mexican WOMEN. Shorts, sports bras, hair tied back, hands taped, bare feet, they stand in opposite corners as Bosses work the crowd.

As the crowd goes NUTS, the Women flex and shadow box. As lean and tough as beef jerky, their skills show.

Falson watches, mesmerized.

As last bets are taken, a bell CLANGS. The Women rush to center.

No gloves, no headgear, fists fly, tagging each other. Thudding blows drowned out by screaming MEN, banshee MARINES.

Falson watches, hands curling into fists.

In the ring, one Boxer smashes the other's nose.

Blood flows.

BEDLAM.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A small Mexican place away from hotels. Few tourists, mostly Mexicans. Falson and Needham eat dinner.

NEEDHAM  
He was here last month.

FALSON  
I know.

NEEDHAM  
He's not dead.

FALSON  
I know.

NEEDHAM  
So what, we find him?

A WAITRESS arrives with a shot of tequila, lime, and a beer that she sets in front of Falson.

FALSON  
Missing persons.

He downs the shot, and bites lime before he goes for the beer. Needham watches, surprised.

NEEDHAM  
Bueno?

FALSON  
Excellent.

NEEDHAM  
Where do we start?

FALSON  
Not we. You. I don't do missing persons.

NEEDHAM  
But-

FALSON  
Look for the blonde. She's the key.

Falson grabs the empty shot glass and waves it at the Waitress.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Falson knocks back a shot of tequila and sips a beer. Onto the stool next to him slides a beautiful LATINA, a high class hooker. Her accent is heavy.

LATINA  
Buenos noches.

FALSON  
The answer is no.

LATINA  
I haven't asked.

FALSON  
You're not my type.

LATINA  
Your type would be?

Bartender refills Falson's glass with tequila and leaves a bowl of lime slices.

FALSON  
L.B.F.M.

LATINA  
I am not familiar.

Falson toys with the tequila.

LATINA  
Boys, girls, animals, groups,  
whips, leather, role play, what are  
you looking for?

He reaches over and touches her lips with his finger, red-ripe lips.

FALSON  
The grieving widow.

LATINA  
Que?

He leans close as if to kiss her but doesn't. Instead, he downs the tequila and chortles.

INT. WAREHOUSE BOXING RING - DAY

A large MARINE, hard, muscled, hands taped, stares across the ring at a smaller MEXICAN, taped hands, lean body, face scarred from battles.

Around them, bleachers filled with CHANTING, YELLING  
 Mexicans, cruise ship Personnel, Marines, placing bets.

BELL.

The Marine and Mexican wade to the center of the ring. While  
 the Marine is larger, the Mexican is professional. Despite  
 taking a hard punch, the Mexican delivers devastating blows,  
 so quick it's incredible.

The Marine absorbs the damage and smashes back. A  
 donnybrook.

SCREAMS AND YELLS.

In the center of the Marine contingent, Falson waves money  
 and smokes a cigar. He's into this.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

On the bed, Needham reads her notes, talking to Falson in the  
 bathroom.

NEEDHAM

He didn't use his real name. He  
 paid cash. No phone calls from the  
 motel. Address is phony.

From the bathroom comes Falson. Gone are the flowing locks.  
 He sports a buzz, Khakis, and white T-shirt, regular recruit.

He sits in a chair and slips on black, GI boots, spit  
 polished to a perfect gleam.

Needham gapes.

NEEDHAM

What the hell?

FALSON

Like?

NEEDHAM

You look fucking serious.

FALSON

Anything on the blonde?

NEEDHAM

Nada. She wasn't with him last  
 month.

FALSON  
Hookers, taxi drivers, staff who  
might have steered him to a whore?

NEEDHAM  
Nothing. He was an altar boy.

FALSON  
Car?

NEEDHAM  
Didn't rent one.

Falson stands and looks at himself in the mirror. Needham notices.

FALSON  
Banks, western union, any place he  
might get money.

He starts out of the room.

NEEDHAM  
Where will I find you?

FALSON  
Leave a message.

He's gone. She wonders what the hell happened.

INT. WAREHOUSE BOXING RING - DAY

Bleachers are the same, but the boxers have changed.

Falson stands in one corner, hands taped, buzz haircut, stripped to waist. Stares across the ring at a smaller, older Mexican FIGHTER. Both have done this before.

Marines SCREAM and bet.

Mexicans SCREAM and bet.

BELL

Falson slips across ring, hands ready, face determined. First punches are exchanged. Both men land hard body shots before they step back.

Falson smiles and feints before he wades in again.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Falson sits on the bed. Shirt and pants bloody, face bruised and scabbed, a bandage on one cheek.

On the phone, he studies his swollen hand.

FALSON  
That's right, alive. He was here  
last month.

DOMINICA  
(on phone)  
You will find him?

FALSON  
I don't do missing persons. My  
associates will find him.

DOMINICA  
(on phone)  
Where is he?

FALSON  
We don't know. You grew up in  
California, didn't you?

Silence on the other end before...

DOMINICA  
Yes.

FALSON  
Family still there?

DOMINICA  
My sister.

FALSON  
Have you talked to her?

DOMINICA  
She doesn't know anything. If  
you're not working the case-

FALSON  
Don't worry, I'm off the clock.  
You won't be charged.

DOMINICA  
When you find him, call me.

Line clicks dead.

Falson cradles the receiver and painfully rises. Moving toward the bathroom, he snatches a bottle of tequila off the dresser.

INT. NACHO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A ring bedecked hand pours tequila into two water glasses.

Hand and tequila belong to NACHO, 50, obese Mexican in a flowery shirt and sharkskin pants. He finishes and steps around his desk to face

Falson, face cleaner but still beaten.

NACHO  
¡Salud, pesetas y amor y tiempo  
para gozarlos.

FALSON  
I'll settle for tequila.

They sip in an office of a local thug.

NACHO  
It has been a long time.

FALSON  
I have not forgotten.

NACHO  
The unpleasantness, you fixed it?

FALSON  
I moved east. They drink vodka.

NACHO  
What brings you to Cabo, the  
fights?

FALSON  
Vacation.

NACHO  
(laughing)  
Bueno, bueno.

INT. NACHO'S CASINO - NIGHT

Falson plays blackjack in Nacho's smoky, illegal, small casino. Half a dozen tables are filled with Foreigners, cruise ship Crew, and Marines.

He sips tequila and motions for a hit. Dealer deals a card-Queen of spades.

Busted.

Falson shrugs and smiles.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Drunk, exhausted, Falson stumbles into the room. On the table lies a note. Ignoring the note, he collapses on the bed.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Falson, wrapped in a towel exits the bathroom. Body displays dark bruises, face punchy. He stops at the table, grabs the note, and reads.

NEEDHAM (V.O.)

Our boy slipped up. Credit card issued to Sledge Jones. Traced to San Diego. I'm following up. Check voice mail.

Falson drops the note and looks around.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Falson flies first class. Sips coffee.

EXT. SLEDGE BUNGALOW - EVENING

Falson slides out of a rental car in front a California bungalow. In this light, the house doesn't look half bad.

He walks to the door and knocks. Door is opened by SLEDGE JONES, 30s, wannabe actor and handsome to a fault.

FALSON

Sledge Jones?

SLEDGE

Yeah, so?

FALSON

You were in Cabo San Lucas last month?

Sledge doesn't answer.

FALSON

Want to tell me why you pretended to be Charles Bane?

SLEDGE

I don't know any Charles Bane.

Falson flashes Bane's photo.

FALSON  
Try again.

SLEDGE  
Are you a cop?

FALSON  
Private investigator.

SLEDGE  
I don't have to talk to you.

FALSON  
Bane is dead. If the police find a  
body, you're going to need a  
lawyer.

SLEDGE  
That's what she said.

FALSON  
Who?

SLEDGE  
The woman who was here earlier.

FALSON  
Needham?

SLEDGE  
You know that butch?

FALSON  
She works for me.

SLEDGE  
Come inside.

INT. SLEDGE BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

Nothing outstanding. Second-hand but serviceable.

Sledge sips a beer. Falson stands by the unused fireplace,  
his arm on the mantle.

SLEDGE  
Like I told the butch, my agent  
called it a gig. Gave me a photo  
and cash and told me to spend a  
week in Cabo.

FALSON  
You didn't find that odd?

SLEDGE  
This is California. I figured some  
guy wanted an alibi because of some  
ball-buster wife.

FALSON  
Who's your agent?

SLEDGE  
Jimmy Martinez, agent to the stars.  
I told the butch.

EXT. MARTINEZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Falson parks behind a rental car parked behind a Mercedes.  
He walks past both, to the front door of a large house.  
Falson rings bell.

No answer.

He steps back and looks around. Lights.

He rings again.

No answer.

He tries the door.

Unlocked. With a frown, he pushes into the house.

INT. MARTINEZ HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Entry is marble and a huge chandelier.

FALSON  
Mr. Martinez?! Needham?!

No answer.

He pushes deeper into a far-too-quiet house.

INT. MARTINEZ HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Falson enters and stops.

On the floor with a neat hole in his eye socket, lies JIMMY  
MARTINEZ, former agent to the stars.

Falson feels for a pulse. Useless. Pulling out his cell  
phone, he dials 911 as he heads out.

FALSON  
Listen carefully. There's been a  
murder...

EXT. MARTINEZ HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Falson runs to his car, jumps in, and backs like hell down the drive.

EXT. SLEDGE BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Falson screeches to a stop, jumps out, and races to the bungalow. He knocks, and door swings open.

A hesitation before he plunges inside.

INT. SLEDGE BUNGALOW - CONTINUOUS

Falson takes two steps and stops.

On the floor, a neat bullet hole in an eye socket, Sledge.

Falson feels for a pulse-nada.

SOUND of a DRIP

Frowning, he turns.

On the hearth, a small pool of blood, blood dripping from mantle.

Color drains from his face.

On top the mantle, separated from her body, the head of Needham.

Falson sits, too stunned to move.

A wounded CRY escapes him, and he scrambles, scrabbling across the floor like a beetle, until he finds his feet and lunges out of the room.

EXT. SLEDGE BUNGALOW - BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Fenced, small.

Falson lurches out the back door, takes two quick steps and stops.

In the grass lies Needham's naked, headless body.

Falson collapses, sitting on the grass, staring.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Falson sips coffee. Across from him, Ruiz taps a file folder.

RUIZ

Sledge goes to Cabo looking like Bane, like it's a role. When you guys get onto it, everyone dies. I don't get it.

FALSON

Darla Riggs.

RUIZ

Who?

FALSON

Bane killed them, right?

RUIZ

What?

FALSON

He's off doing something nasty, so he hires Sledge for an alibi in case he needs one. When Needham gets close...

RUIZ

Todos?

Door opens, and an older detective, AL, fatter, more bitter, jaded, steps into the room. Moves to shake hands.

AL

Falson, what are you doing here?

FALSON

Slumming, Al, how goes it?

AL

Looks like you been slippin' across the border again.

FALSON

(touching face)

I won.

AL

(laughs)

Yeah, right.

RUIZ

Family reunion?

AL

Falson started his detective career here.

(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)

Used to shadow hubbies who slipped  
across the border for  
extracurriculars.

FALSON

L.B.F.M.

AL

Yeah, hey, right, L.B.F.M. I'd  
forgotten.

RUIZ

L.B.F.M.?

AL

Remember Screwy Lewy?

Falson nods.

RUIZ

Screwy Lewy?

AL

Lewy went across the border for  
strange. He was showing off with a  
revolver. Fired a blank into his  
temple, trying to impress la  
senorita. Blank killed him.

Al breaks out laughing, slain by the joke. Heads for door.

AL

La senorita takes the money and  
runs. Mexi police think Lewy had a  
heart attack. Would have bought  
heart attack if Falson hadn't saved  
everything on video.

Al's gone, leaving Ruiz and Falson.

RUIZ

I like what you've done with your  
hair.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Falson sits at a table. A half-empty bottle of tequila and a  
half full glass. He's doing some heavy lifting.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

Falson jogs. Hung over, sweating, he plows a downtown  
sidewalk. Agony but necessary.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Falson eats and reads the paper. Dominica slides into a chair. She exudes sexuality as if it's sweat. Wears the phoenix.

DOMINICA

I came after your associate called.

Falson lowers the paper and looks at her.

DOMINICA

You found him?

FALSON

Did someone tell you we had?

DOMINICA

What did you do to your hair?

FALSON

My associate is dead. She was a good associate.

DOMINICA

Dead? How? Is Charles involved?

FALSON

Have you had lunch?

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

Brilliant San Diego sunshine, a row of small shops, gulls overhead, blue bay beyond.

Dominica and Falson stroll past shops and Hispanic kids rollerblading.

DOMINICA

I'm sorry about your associate.

FALSON

I hate losing people. It's a personal thing. How long has your husband been stealing from the company?

DOMINICA

He hasn't-

FALSON

Unless the blonde is footing the tab, he needs money, lots of it. How much did he take?

DOMINICA  
Charles doesn't have a blonde.

FALSON  
This is California. Everyone has a blonde.

Several young men with buzz haircuts jog past.

DOMINICA  
Marines?

FALSON  
Swabbies...Navy.

DOMINICA  
If I knew how much he took, I wouldn't think he was dead, would I?

FALSON  
You grew up out here. Where?

DOMINICA  
Not far, La Jolla.

Falson glances at her.

DOMINICA  
La Jolla wasn't all millionaires back then. My father owned a small grocery. I was a cashier.

FALSON  
What interest does your husband have in Cabo San Lucas?

DOMINICA  
I don't know.

FALSON  
Drugs, illegal immigrants, whores what pays the bills but can't be known?

DOMINICA  
I don't know.

He grabs her and spins her, pulling her close. Sunglasses hide her eyes and any fear that might reside there.

FALSON

She was beheaded. I swore that would never happen again. Tell me what you know about Cabo!

DOMINICA

He...he bought an interest in some fishing boats that double as whale watchers during the tourist season.

FALSON

Smuggling? Drugs? I'm going to find out.

DOMINICA

You're hurting me.

FALSON

She was BEHEADED!!

DOMINICA

Drugs, yes, no, maybe. I don't know. But yes, something.

She rips away and steps back.

DOMINICA

If you ever hurt me again-

FALSON

You'll kill me?

They stare, locked in a titanic struggle.

She breaks and walks away.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson, first class, flying.

INT. CABO MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Same motel room as earlier. Falson unpacks.

A KNOCK.

Falson answers, and a bellhop hands over a bottle of tequila. Falson tips and sets the bottle on the table.

EXT. DOCK - EVENING

Falson comes to a fishing boat, and hammers the hull.

Mexican CAPTAIN appears.

Falson holds out a bill and Bane's photo.

Captain takes bill but shakes his head.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

At the bar, Gordo nurses a beer, eats chips and salsa, and watches soccer on TV. Since announcers speak Spanish, Gordo understands nothing.

Falson slips onto the next stool and waves at the bartender. Gordo takes a look and starts to turn away before he recognizes Falson.

GORDO

Boss? Jesus, boss.

FALSON

Don't ask. Did you find anything?

GORDO

(referring to notes)

Dominica is not her real name. Born Carol Jarvis, older daughter of Ben and Joyce Jarvis who owned the Pay-Less Mart in La Jolla. Younger sister named Bonnie. Carol moved east, changed her name to Dominica. Moved around a bit before she met Bane. Quick romance, quick wedding, but with her you have to figure that.

FALSON

What happened to Bonnie?

Bartender delivers a shot of tequila with a beer chaser. Gordo notes the drink but says nothing.

GORDO

Took the deaths of her parents hard and dropped out of school. Still lives in the family house. Doesn't answer the phone.

FALSON

Find her.

GORDO

I thought you wanted help here.

FALSON

I'll make you a bet.

Falson knocks down tequila.

GORDO  
You never bet.

FALSON  
I bet she's blonde.

GORDO  
Blonde?

FALSON  
If she's not, I'll give you an  
extra week of vacation.

GORDO  
You're on.

They seal the bet by clinking beers.

GORDO  
Say, boss, about Needham. Her, her  
significant other, took it pretty  
hard. I mean, the...

FALSON  
That's why we have to find Bane.

GORDO  
We don't have to turn him over to  
the cops, do we?

FALSON  
Not if we find him in Mexico.

GORDO  
Good, I mean, I liked Needham, even  
if she was...

FALSON  
Especially because she was.

INT. PACO'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

MANACLE-MAN, 30s, naked, lies spread-eagled on a concrete  
floor, chained in place. On top, a naked WOMAN writhes in  
sex.

In a balcony, Mexican COUPLES, well-heeled, sophisticated,  
pay little attention to the sex. They chat and sip brightly  
colored drinks.

At the back, a small man, 40, laden with gold chains and gold  
front teeth, PACO, talks to Falson.

PACO  
Senor Bane has not come in long  
time.

FALSON  
He was a regular?

PACO  
He like the show.

FALSON  
It used to be more lively.

PACO  
This is the teaser. Stick around,  
real show about to start.

Paco takes a beeper from his pocket and presses a button.

PACO  
Remember the smell of a woman?

On the floor, the Woman stops, climbs off, and walks away as  
Manacle-Man YELLS Spanish.

From the side, a MEXICAN rushes forward with a wire cage. He  
kneels and places the cage around the Manacle-Man's head.  
Manacle-Man YELLS and SPITS, struggling.

YELLING draws spectators to the railing.

Conversations die.

Faces anticipate.

Eagerness grips.

Cage snaps shut around Manacle-Man's neck, protecting his  
head.

Falson watches.

Paco grins.

Lights dim.

First Yelp sounds far away, faint.

The room becomes even more quiet if possible.

Pursed lips.

A bead of sweat on a woman's cheek.

Louder YELP.

What is coming sounds too awful for words.

Manacle-Man HOWLS and rattles his chains.

Spectators jockey for viewing angles, leaning over the railing.

BARKING!!

Dramatic spots light up Manacle-Man.

Paco turns to Falson

PACO  
He cannot hide.

Falson turns to the floor. A door pops open.

The first dog arrives, slipping out. It is followed by half a dozen more. Lean, hungry dogs.

A dog sniffs the Manacle-Man's genitals who YELLS and WIGGLES. The dog backs off.

But not for long.

It moves in to lick the genitals, tasting as a second dog joins in. The dogs growl as another comes over.

Then, the first bite.

Manacle-Man SCREAMS.

Dogs GROWL and BITE in earnest.

Some spectators wince, but all watch.

Manacle-Man SCREAMS as the dogs rip into him.

Falson doesn't turn away.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson flies first class.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A small neighborhood park in La Jolla. Grass, playground crowded with KIDS, NANNIES, and JOGGERS. Southern California perfect weather.

On a bench sit Gordo and Falson. Gordo eats popcorn.

GORDO  
Over there, third house from the  
corner.

Across street, a row of small, well-kept houses.

GORDO  
No one's seen her in three months.  
Before that, infrequently. She  
would disappear for weeks at a  
time. Reclusive.

FALSON  
Car?

GORDO  
Garage on the alley. I'm guessing  
the car starts but doesn't see many  
miles.

FALSON  
What else?

GORDO  
Ten years ago, the family grocery  
lit up the sky. Ma and Pa roasted.

FALSON  
Sisters?

GORDO  
Home. They alibied each other.

FALSON  
Insurance?

GORDO  
Paid off debts and buried the folks  
but not much more. Bonnie dropped  
out of school and turtled.

FALSON  
Dominica?

GORDO  
Moved east and hooked up with Bane.

FALSON  
You haven't told me everything.

GORDO  
I haven't?

Falson stands and walks toward the house.

FALSON  
You didn't tell me Bonnie was  
blonde.

GORDO  
You already knew.

EXT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Falson raps on the door.

GORDO  
Don't you think I tried that?

Falson tries knob. Locked. He starts around house.

GORDO  
Locked down. No deliveries.

FALSON  
(trying windows)  
Who gets the mail?

GORDO  
Post office box. A woman picks it  
up once a week.

FALSON  
Bonnie?

GORDO  
I don't think so, but if we leave  
now, we might catch her.

Falson stops and frowns.

GORDO  
You want to meet the mail  
retriever, right?

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

A busy place. Sitting in the rental, Gordo watches traffic.

INT. POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Falson stands at the bulletin board, thumbing through wanted  
posters.

An OLD WOMAN pauses next to Falson.

OLD WOMAN  
I'll split with you.

FALSON

What?

OLD WOMAN

(pointing at a pic)  
He lives next door, and if you help  
me catch him, we'll claim the  
reward.

Before Falson can answer, a woman, 20, SKATER, in  
rollerblades, biker shorts, halter, backpack, and ponytail  
clacks across the floor to the boxes. Athletic and pretty.

OLD WOMAN

Gonna help?

Skater loads mail into her knapsack, slings it on her back,  
and clacks out.

FALSON

Excuse me.

Falson follows Skater.

OLD WOMAN

When he kills again, it will be on  
your head!

EXT. POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gordo watches Skater clack down steps and skate off.

Falson comes out and points at Skater.

Gordo starts, pauses long enough to load Falson, and follows  
Skater.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Skater rolls the sidewalk, damn fetching.

Car follows.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Skater comes to a stop sign and rolls through.

Gordo stops and follows.

A park looms ahead. Skater zips off the sidewalk and into  
the park.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

FALSON  
Shit! Stop!

Car stops, and Falson climbs out.

FALSON  
Circle. I'll follow her.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Falson slams car door and jogs after Skater.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Skater skates past JOGGERS, WALKERS, FAMILIES. Oblivious to everything.

Falson jogs, and his recent dissipation pains him.

Skater takes a fork and glides on.

Falson lugs. How did he get out of shape so fast?

A child on a bike intercepts Falson.

He tries to dodge and tumbles. Rolls, and jumps to his feet.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Skater leaves park and rolls the sidewalk. Falson follows. Breathing hard. He can't lose her.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gordo flies around a corner. Ahead, Skater and Falson

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Skater jumps a step, skates a sidewalk, up two more steps, and onto a porch.

Falson slows and stops, gasping.

Gordo pulls to the curb.

On the porch, Skater empties knapsack and hands contents to an old man in shorts and wife-beater undershirt, SHARPSHOOTER.

INT. SHARPSHOOTER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sharpshooter sorts the mail at his dining room table. He uses a magnifying glass to read each envelope. One side is junk, other is kept.

KNOCK

Sharpshooter frowns at the front door.

INT. SHARPSHOOTER'S LIVING ROOM - 5 MINUTES LATER

Sharpshooter sits on couch, Gordo next to him. Falson roams the small room.

SHARPSHOOTER  
I'm not doing anything illegal.

GORDO  
We know. We're trying to find her.

SHARPSHOOTER  
I used to go myself, but it's a long walk. I can't drive...my eyes.

GORDO  
What do you do with her mail?

SHARPSHOOTER  
Box it and ship it.

Falson stops in front of a photo-what could be a young Sharpshooter with a rifle and a trophy.

GORDO  
Where?

SHARPSHOOTER  
Mexico.

GORDO  
Where in Mexico?

SHARPSHOOTER  
Cabo San Lucas.

FALSON  
This you?

SHARPSHOOTER  
What?

FALSON  
With the rifle and trophy.

SHARPSHOOTER  
First place, sharpshooter.

INT. CAR - DAY

Falson and Gordo.

GORDO  
Back to Cabo?

FALSON  
She sends him cash.

GORDO  
From Mexico.

FALSON  
Sharpshooter, damn.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Blazing sun bakes Cabo San Lucas post office.

On the corner, in shade, lolls Falson. Sweating, he watches the office open for business.

EXT. POST OFFICE - EVENING

Shade has shifted to opposite side of the street. In shade, Gordo watches the door being locked.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Falson knocks back a shot of tequila and reaches for a beer. Gordo perches on next stool, knocking down beer with chips and salsa.

GORDO  
I don't get it. Five days and no hits.

FALSON  
She's not coming.

GORDO  
What?

FALSON  
Sharpshooter.

EXT. SHARPSHOOTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Falson and Gordo move to front porch. Uncollected newspapers litter the concrete.

Falson knocks.

No answer.

GORDO  
No one home.

FALSON  
Where would he go?

Falson steps back and kicks the door, shattering the jamb.

GORDO  
Jesus, boss, that's B-and-E.

INT. SHARPSHOOTER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Falson leads Gordo into the living room. Both stop.

On the couch, rifle in one hand, trophy in other, bullet hole in his eye—a dead Sharpshooter.

GORDO  
Jesus.

Falson smiles and shakes his head. Then, he starts to laugh.

GORDO  
Boss?

Falson laughs harder. Gordo wonders if tequila has fried too many brain cells.

EXT. SHARPSHOOTER'S HOUSE - LATER

A POLICEMAN wraps yellow crime tape around the house. To one side, Falson eats an ice cream cone.

Ruiz exits the house and comes to Falson.

RUIZ  
How did you know he was dead?

FALSON  
I didn't.

RUIZ  
You just broke in anyway?

FALSON  
He was shot in the eye, like  
Martinez.

RUIZ  
Yeah, I noticed. And you think  
Bane, verdad?

FALSON  
Bane is dead.

RUIZ  
You're free to go.

EXT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gordo and Falson slink along the side of the house.

GORDO  
Twice in one day?

Falson doesn't answer but tries window. Won't budge.

EXT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

They reach the back door. Locked.

GORDO  
Tell me you won't.

Falson kicks in the door. CRASH!!

GORDO  
Three minutes, three minutes max.

INT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Falson enters and flips on a light.

GORDO  
Are you insane?!

Falson looks around. He moves out.

INT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Falson enters. Light goes on. He attacks the bureau,  
opening drawers and tossing clothes.

Gordo tackles the closet.

GORDO  
Mind telling me what we're looking  
for?

FALSON  
L.B.F.M.

GORDO  
Right. Two minutes.

INT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Light flicks on. Falson immediately ransacks drawers. Gordo pulls cushions off couch.

GORDO  
Four minutes. We're toast.

Falson pulls a drawer from a small table and flips it over. Taped to the bottom—a key.

Gordo picks up several envelopes by the door.

FALSON  
Bingo.

GORDO  
What?

Falson flashes key.

FALSON  
Locker key.

GORDO  
Seven minutes.

In the distance, the WAIL of SIRENS.

GORDO  
What are the chances?

Gordo unlocks the front door and runs. Falson takes one last look and follows.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Gordo drives. Falson plays with the key.

GORDO  
Have any idea how many storage lockers there are?

FALSON  
Might take a while to find the right one.

GORDO  
I gotta go home sooner or later.  
Claudia thinks I found a Senorita  
out here.

FALSON  
What's inside the locker?

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Gordo and Falson at the bar. Falson on phone. Gordo sipping beer, eating nachos, and looking at envelopes.

FALSON  
(on phone)  
New discoveries. We have a locker  
to find.

Gordo flashes an envelope at Falson and tucks it in his pocket.

FALSON  
Did your sister rent a personal  
storage space? No? No reason,  
just a thought. Yes, I have to go.

Falson kills the connection.

GORDO  
You just admitted we ransacked  
Bonnie's house.

FALSON  
(grabbing shot of tequila)  
Semper Fi.

Falson knocks back shot and grins.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Phone rings. Twice.

A hands claws across table and grabs the handset.

FALSON  
Yeah?

WOMAN  
(on phone)  
I understand you're looking for me.

FALSON  
What?

WOMAN  
 What you did to my house was  
 shameful.

Light goes on. Falson is all business.

FALSON  
 Are you with Bane?

WOMAN  
 Come to the point. One hour. You  
 won't get another chance.

Phone clicks dead. Falson stares at it a moment.

FALSON  
 Shit!

He slams the phone and scrambles out of bed.

EXT. POINT - NIGHT

Falson stands on the point, 40' above the surf below. Alone  
 and cold, a mist envelops him.

Out of the mist steps a FIGURE. Mannish except for long,  
 blonde hair. In this light, it's hard to see.

FALSON  
 Bonnie?

Figure produces an automatic pistol. The mist doesn't hide  
 the deadly firearm. The Figure possesses a man's voice.

FIGURE  
 The key.

FALSON  
 I have to know if you're with Bane.

FIGURE  
 The key, you fucking blackmailer!

From the mist steps Gordo, poking his revolver in the  
 Figure's ear.

GORDO  
 You shouldn't point weapons. It's  
 not nice.

Gordo takes the automatic. Falson steps forward and rips off  
 a blonde wig, exposing a Man.

FALSON  
Where is she?

WOMAN  
Here.

Out of the mist steps another BLONDE, but this one is all woman.

Without hesitation, she sticks a gun in Gordo's back and blasts a hole in him.

As Gordo collapses, Falson turns and runs along the cliff.

Another SHOT.

The bullet PUNCHES Falson over the edge.

EXT. OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Falson falls through the mist and SPLASHES in the sea. He surfaces, grimacing, a hole in his shoulder. Above, another GUNSHOT.

One more SHOT.

Falson struggles to swim. With one arm, it's difficult.

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

A SURFER in wetsuit and toting a board hustles toward the water.

Ahead, half out of the waves, Falson.

Surfer drops his board and rushes up.

SURFER  
Wipe out.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Falson in bed. Bandaged, banged up, he looks and feels like hell. With him, Ruiz.

RUIZ  
She shot your associate, then you,  
then Moogan.

FALSON  
Who's Moogan.

RUIZ

Another private investigator, but not so successful as you, amigo.

FALSON

The shooter is my client's sister.

RUIZ

You know, we didn't find a blonde wig. Your associate was killed with Moogan's weapon. Moogan with your associate's. Are you sure there was a sister?

FALSON

When you find Bonnie, be careful. She doesn't give warnings.

RUIZ

When you get out of here, go home. We don't want you around.

Ruiz leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness except for light spilling from hall.

A NURSE, long blond hair, enters. In the dark, she moves to check IV. She reaches for tubing.

Falson's hand CLAMPS on her arm. A small GASP escapes her as Falson flips on the light.

FALSON

What are you doing?

NURSE

Checking the flow. Why aren't you asleep?

FALSON

I'll watch.

Under his watchful eye, she checks drip.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Falson wakes, looks around, and stops. Across the room stands Dominica.

DOMINICA

When I heard, I felt I should...well, I got you into this.

FALSON  
He ran off with her.

DOMINICA  
Who?

FALSON  
Your husband, Charles ran off with  
Bonnie.

DOMINICA  
I assure you, he didn't.

FALSON  
It happens more often than you  
think. Same genes, same  
attractions. Men find it  
irresistible.

DOMINICA  
He's dead, Mr. Falson. Your job is  
to find the body.

(beat)  
Not right now, after you heal.  
Anything I can do for you?

FALSON  
Tell me a story.

Her eyebrows rise.

FALSON  
A sexy story.

DOMINICA  
I'm no good at stories.

FALSON  
Try.

DOMINICA  
When I was in college, I spent a  
summer in Vancouver. I met Juan.  
He had the sexiest legs I've ever  
seen.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Falson walks out the front door, and straight to a  
convertible driven by Dominica.

INT. CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Dominica drives.

DOMINICA  
I can't believe she shot you.

FALSON  
Where are Charles and Bonnie?

DOMINICA  
He's dead, but let's not open that door. I don't want to argue.

FALSON  
Why did you move east?

DOMINICA  
Why did you?

He studies her.

FALSON  
Ever hear of Darla Riggs?

DOMINICA  
Why would I?

FALSON  
When Darla turned fourteen, she ran away. Her father hired a private investigator to bring her home. She was 'missing'.

DOMINICA  
That was you?

FALSON  
Darla crossed into Mexico, met some people in Puerto Vallarta. Not what you think. She was actually making it. Living on her own. Doing OK.

DOMINICA  
You found her.

FALSON  
She begged. Said her dad had promised to kill her if she ever ran away.

DOMINICA  
Kids lie.

FALSON  
I delivered her, collected my fee.  
The next morning they found her  
headless corpse on the front lawn.

DOMINICA  
I...you...

FALSON  
The police found her head on the  
mantle-after they shot dad. He put  
up a fight.

DOMINICA  
How horrible.

FALSON  
Darla thought so too.

INT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The ransacking has been put to rights. Falson plops on the  
couch, drained. Dominica enters with a glass of water.

FALSON  
Thanks.

DOMINICA  
I don't know why you wanted to come  
here.

FALSON  
You're not close to Bonnie, are you

DOMINICA  
After our parents died, she became  
reclusive. That's why she couldn't  
be with Charles. She can't stand  
to be away from home.

FALSON  
I think she's overcome her phobia.

EXT. CAFÉ - DAY

Falson and Dominica at a table on the cliffs, overlooking the  
ocean. No tequila, no lime, just a beer and her wine.

DOMINICA  
I have to go back tomorrow.

FALSON  
I'm going back too.

DOMINICA

I am truly sorry about your associates.

FALSON

I used to tell them the job was boring. Most days, it is.

DOMINICA

You're not quitting, are you?

FALSON

He's dead, I'll prove it.

DOMINICA

You don't do missing persons.

He smiles.

INT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT - DAY

Falson limps toward a jetway.

RUIZ (O.S.)

FALSON!

He turns as Ruiz comes up, an overnight delivery box in hand.

RUIZ

Here. Save the taxpayers a few bucks.

Falson looks.

RUIZ

Gordon's personal effects.

Falson takes the box.

RUIZ

You don't have to come back, you know. We'll catch her eventually.

INT. FALSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Glass, modern, as slick as Teflon. Falson stands by the windows, dressed to the nines. His hair has grown an inch.

He turns from the window and grabs the delivery box off the desk.

INT. CLAUDIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Falson on the couch, faces CLAUDIA, 40s, Gordon's wife. Claudia hasn't slept well. Will be pretty once she's past grief. Between them, the delivery box. A middle class room in and middle class house

FALSON  
Insurance company sent the check?

CLAUDIA  
Without a murmur. Thank you.

FALSON  
Enough?

CLAUDIA  
Generous.

That awkward moment when neither knows what to say.

FALSON  
I better go.

CLAUDIA  
Not yet. Can you stay while I open it?

FALSON  
Absolutely.

She grabs the box, and her hands shake.

Falson watches, hoping his shoulder won't be needed.

Box opens, and she carefully slides out Gordo's effects-wallet, watch, some bills in a money clip, nail clippers. Lip balm, key ring-and envelope, the one taken from Bonnie's house.

Claudia grabs the envelope first.

CLAUDIA  
Bonnie Jarvis? Isn't she-

FALSON  
(takes envelopes)  
I forgot Gordo had this.

As Falson pockets the envelope, Claudia touches what remains of her husband. Precious little. Tears fall unbidden.

INT. FALSON'S OFFICE - EVENING

City lights pop on against violet hues of dusk.

Seated at his desk, Falson sips vodka from a crystal tumbler. On the desk, two items-locker key and the envelope, now open, letter next to it.

Phone RINGS. He grabs it.

FALSON  
Yes? Yes, tomorrow.

EXT. MADDY'S HOUSE - POOL - DAY

Maddy's pool, filled, her CHILDREN frolicking, splashing, noisy.

To one side, Falson and Maddy

MADDY  
She's milking it. I don't know how many millions, but more than five.

FALSON  
How do you know?

MADDY  
My brother's friends are my friends.

FALSON  
And you think?

MADDY  
My advice? Collect your fee before she disappears.

FALSON  
Pool leak fixed?

MADDY  
For the moment. Find his body, Mr. Falson.

INT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The richly appointed dining room of a millionaire who flaunts money. At one end of the table, Dominica. At the other, Falson. Dinner over. Wine and talk.

FALSON  
My compliments to your chef.

DOMINICA

My meals are catered. A different restaurant every night.

FALSON

My compliments to your caterer.

DOMINICA

You didn't come for the fajitas and cabernet.

FALSON

Your sister-in-law thinks you're draining the company.

She smiles, a Cheshire grin no one can read.

DOMINICA

We play a game. Her spies seek information. I feed them lies.

FALSON

You're not skimming?

DOMINICA

The auditors will come next month. Let's talk on the porch.

EXT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Moon, stars, a panoramic view of the river. Not a car or house in sight. Wide open yet intimate.

Falson and Dominica at the railing.

FALSON

What would you do if he came back?

DOMINICA

He's dead.

He looks at her, smells her, wants her amidst stars and crickets. He turns her to face him. He touches the phoenix resting on her skin.

DOMINICA

I plan to be a merry widow.

He kisses her, as he's wanted to kiss this sexy woman since the first time he saw her.

Better, she kisses back.

INT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Silhouettes in the dark. She on top, that perfect, feminine outline, riding him for a delicious moment before collapsing on his chest.

INT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - BEDROOM - DAWN

Falson ties his shoe and stands. He looks at the sleeping Dominica and leaves.

In bed, her eyes open.

EXT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - DAWN

Falson walks from the front door to his sports car.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson flies. On his tray table, a tumbler of vodka, locker key, and letter.

INT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT - DAY

Falson waits by a luggage carousel. Further down, young MARINES, buzz haircuts and attitude.

EXT. RENTAL CAR AGENCY - DAY

A convertible stops in front of Falson. A Hispanic DRIVER climbs out grinning.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Falson stands on the cliff where Gordo was killed. He looks at the ocean and then at this hand.

THE LOCKER KEY.

He rears back and hurls the key into the sea.

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Falson sits at the bar. In front, a shot of tequila, lime, and beer. He stares as the Hispanic BARTENDER arrives.

BARTENDER

You stare at that drink for 30 minutes. Something wrong?

FALSON

Ever hold back an orgasm to savor the need?

BARTENDER  
Es loco. Go ahead and shoot and  
get it up again.

FALSON  
Exactly.

He slaps a bill on the bar, slips off the stool, and marches  
out. Bartender watches a moment before downing the tequila.

INT. RENTAL OFFICE - DAY

Dirty, hot, smelly office of a personal storage rental.  
Behind the counter, a beautiful LATINA rifles through a file  
cabinet.

At the counter, Falson.

LATINA  
My boss say no one yell at me  
because I'm pretty. Hah! They  
yell plenty.

She pulls out a folder and lays it on the counter.

LATINA  
Si, she rent here but no more.

FALSON  
May I?

He turns the file.

FALSON  
It doesn't say where she went.

LATINA  
Sorry.

FALSON  
You didn't see her leave?

LATINA  
No, but I know her car wouldn't  
start.

FALSON  
Car?

LATINA  
The one she store.

FALSON  
Here?

LATINA  
Si, here. I call mi cousin to  
start it.

FALSON  
Think he knows where she went?

LATINA  
I can call him.

FALSON  
(taking out a bill)  
Por favor.

INT. RENTAL OFFICE - DAY

Another storage place, slightly upgraded. FATMAN at the  
counter.

FATMAN  
Still here. Unit thirty-two.

FALSON  
I want to see.

FATMAN  
Sorry, I can't do that.

Falson lays \$100 on the counter.

FALSON  
What can a new lock cost?

FatMan grins.

EXT. STORAGE UNIT - DAY

FatMan uses bolt cutters to snip the lock. Falson grabs the  
door and raises it. Inside is EMPTY.

FATMAN  
She put a convertible in here. I  
would swear to that.

EXT. BONNIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Falson bypasses the porch and heads for the back yard.

EXT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Falson looks through dirty windows at a Late model hard top.  
He tries the door. Locked.

Heads around the side, to a window. Falson grabs a rock and smashes the glass. Reaches in and opens window.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Falson crawls through the window, into a dirty, dusty garage. Opens the car door and slips into the car.

Sits behind the wheel and looks around. Nothing. Pops glove compartment and pulls registration and owner's manual. Nothing more.

Pulls down visors.

Feels under seats.

Pops hood and trunk and climbs out.

Checks engine. Nothing to see.

Checks trunk. Spare tire, nothing more.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Yellow pages on bed. Falson on the phone.

FALSON

(on phone)

That's right, last thirty days.  
OK, thanks anyway.

Hangs up the phone and punches yellow pages off the bed. A fruitless search.

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Low lights. Hot, pulsing salsa MUSIC from an Hispanic band. Small tables crowded with Hispanic COUPLES, SINGLES.

Large dance floor where couples dance in skimpy outfits, putting on a show. By and for Hispanics.

A table to himself, Ruiz, tequila in front, watches the dancers. Falson slides into a seat.

RUIZ

Go away.

FALSON

You dance?

RUIZ

In case you haven't noticed, you're not welcome.

FALSON  
How many cars did Bonnie own?

RUIZ  
Say adios, Falson.

FALSON  
Come on, I know you checked. How many?

RUIZ  
If I tell you, will you vamos?

FALSON  
I never could dance.

RUIZ  
One, she owned one car, and it's parked in her garage.

FALSON  
The convertible Bane rented, ever find it?

RUIZ  
You're supposed to leave.

FALSON  
You didn't, did you?

RUIZ  
A car crosses the border and disappears. As common as bad salsa.

FALSON  
(looking around)  
How do you keep out the jarheads?

RUIZ  
We ask them to leave.

FALSON  
If they decline?

RUIZ  
I show them my badge.

Falson smiles, takes Ruiz's tequila, and downs it. Tossing some bills on the table, Falson leaves.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

Falson faces coffee and eggs.

At the next table, a YOUNG MAN reads want ads.

Falson looks at YOUNG MAN, slaps a bill on the table, and leaves.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

A WOMAN fills out a form in front of Falson.

WOMAN  
Just the ads?

FALSON  
Yes.

WOMAN  
For these dates?

FALSON  
I'm kinda in a hurry.

She smiles.

WOMAN  
Guys always are.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Pages of ads, many X'd through. Falson on phone.

FALSON  
She did? That's terrific! Yes,  
Point Loma.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

Falson and a tiny, Mexican woman, ROSA, in front of a detached garage. She wears a lanyard with WWJD embroidered on it. On the lanyard is a beeper of some sort. She holds Falson's card.

Falson wields bolt cutters.

ROSA  
Are you sure?

FALSON  
My sister needs something from the  
car, and she has the key with her.

ROSA  
It's a new lock.

FALSON  
(snipping lock)  
I'll buy another one.

ROSA  
I'm going inside.

FALSON  
I'll let you know when I leave.

As Rosa leaves, Falson opens the door and reveals a late model convertible.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Falson steps around the dusty car. Slips forward and opens the driver's door.

Several long, blonde wigs litter the front seat.

In the back seat, a file folder that Falson snatches. He lays it on the hood and pops trunk.

Falson raises the trunk lid.

Curled up in the trunk is a corpse, an old corpse, skin and bones and

LONG, BLONDE HAIR.

Falson reaches in and touches the hair.

EXT. GARAGE - LATER

Falson snaps a new lock in place and pockets the key.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rosa watches TV. Falson appears at screen door and knocks.

FALSON  
I'm leaving now.

ROSA  
Find what you wanted?

FALSON  
(waves file)  
Yes.

ROSA  
She said someone would come.

FALSON

What?

ROSA

Before she left. She said un  
hombre with short hair would come.

FALSON

And you were to do what?

ROSA

Nada.

FALSON

That's right, nothing.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson reads the file.

EXT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - NIGHT

Falson's sports car skids to a stop in front of a dark  
mansion.

He climbs out, looks at the house, and walks on. Reaches the  
door and RINGS.

Nothing.

KNOCKS.

Nothing.

EXT. DOMINICA'S HOUSE - PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Falson walks along the porch, overlooking that vista. He's  
looking inside, through doors, into darkness.

No light.

Nothing moves.

He picks up a patio chair and shatters a glass door.

INT. DOMINICA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Falson strides through the house.

DINING ROOM.

LIVING ROOM

UP THE STAIRS.

BEDROOM

He enters, flips on the light, and flings open the closet door.

Dominica's clothes are there.

Falson goes to dresser and opens A jewelry box.

Full of sparkling diamonds and gold. Only thing missing is the Phoenix.

EXT. DOMINICA'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Falson exits the front door and is bathed by spotlights.

POLICEMAN (O.S.)  
PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR AND  
KNEEL!

Falson smiles sardonically as he raises his hands and kneels.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Maddy drives. Falson rides.

FALSON  
Thanks for getting me out.

MADDY  
If you had called first, I would  
have told you she was gone.

FALSON  
The company?

MADDY  
Dry. Not arid but dry. She left  
sooner than she wanted. I suppose  
I have you to thank for that.

FALSON  
She didn't take her stuff. It's  
all in the house.

MADDY  
Not the money.

FALSON  
How much?

MADDY  
Fifty, give or take.

FALSON  
Traceable?

MADDY  
Only by god.

FALSON  
Where did she go?

MADDY  
California. I thought she ran away  
with you.

Falson looks over.

MADDY  
She has that effect on men.

FALSON  
Effect?

MADDY  
The blood says adios to their  
brains.

INT. FALSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Falson holds the file folder from the garage. Stamped on the folder tab.

INFO QUEST. COLUMBUS, OHIO

INT. COLUMBUS AIRPORT - DAY

Falson passes through the airport.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Falson climbs out of a rental car parked in front of your typical, upper-middle-class, burb house. He walks to the door. Rings BELL.

Door is opened by a TEEN, 15, pimply, nerd.

FALSON  
Info Quest?

TEEN  
Sorry, I don't do walk-ups.

FALSON  
I'm interested in one you've  
already done.

TEEN  
My work is confidential.

FALSON  
Wanna get confidential with murder?

TEEN  
How people use information is not  
my concern. Bluff some kid who  
doesn't know better.

Teen starts to close door. Falson holds it open.

FALSON  
How much you want to bet that your  
data violates the privacy act? Not  
to mention illegal hacking. Want  
that kind of heat?

Teen stares at Falson.

FALSON  
Gonna bluff?

INT. TEEN'S ROOM - DAY

A nerd's room with computers, printers, screens. Teen sits  
at the computer. Falson reads over his shoulder.

TEEN  
Name?

FALSON  
Dominica Bane.

Teen types. The computer TALKS back.

COMPUTER  
File not found.

FALSON  
Bonnie Jarvis

COMPUTER  
File not found.

FALSON  
Dominica Jarvis.

COMPUTER  
File not found.

Falson frowns.

FALSON  
Dirk Falson.

COMPUTER  
(plays flourish)  
SCORE!

FALSON  
I didn't order anything.

TEEN  
(typing)  
Not the requestor, the subject.

FALSON  
Subject?

TEEN  
(reading screen)  
Now, I remember. Odd request, all  
the subjects were private  
investigators.

FALSON  
Who paid for it?

TEEN  
E-mail request followed by a money  
order. HotSenorita, Maddy Stouch.

FALSON  
HotSenorita?

TEEN  
Screen name.

FALSON  
Print me a copy.

Teen looks up.

FALSON  
I'll pay the fee.

TEEN  
(typing)  
If you want information about  
anyone, I'm the oracle.

FALSON  
Need a social security number?

TEEN

Helps, but I can do it with a name  
and address.

FALSON

Dominica Bane.

EXT. MADDY'S YARD - DAY

A blindfolded child tries to bash a piñata with a baseball bat. Not having much luck as other children SCREAM. A birthday party.

To one side, watching, Falson and Maddy.

MADDY

I assure you, I didn't order a  
background report on you or any  
other private investigator.

FALSON

You're not HotSenorita?

MADDY

What?

FALSON

Ever hear of Darla Riggs?

MADDY

No. Fifty million dollars is  
missing, and you ask about Senorita  
Darlene Riggs?!

FALSON

Darla, her name was Darla.

MADDY

Find Dominica and get my damn money  
back.

Maddy turns and marches away.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson reads the thick file the Teen printed.

INT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT - DAY

Falson heads toward baggage. From the side comes Ruiz,  
falling in step.

RUIZ  
I would have preferred dealing with  
you long distance.

FALSON  
Oh?

RUIZ  
You are bad luck, muy malo.  
Remember the garage in Point Loma?

FALSON  
Rosa?

RUIZ  
Her neighbor found her. Guess how  
she died.

FALSON  
Beheading?

RUIZ  
You are evil. Someone shot her in  
the eye.

FALSON  
You found what?

RUIZ  
The convertible, the corpse, your  
card.

They reach the luggage carousel.

FALSON  
I'll bet you...Bonnie Jarvis.

RUIZ  
That was my guess too, but it's her  
sister Carol.

Falson stares. Can that be true?

RUIZ  
So I'm looking for Bonnie. Where  
is she?

FALSON  
Where does 50 million dollars hide?

Ruiz's eyes widen.

RUIZ  
 You want to see Rosa's house, don't  
 you?

INT. ROSA'S HOUSE - DAY

Falson and Ruiz stand in a dowdy living room, a place of  
 doilies and dust.

RUIZ  
 (holding up beeper)  
 Know what this is?

FALSON  
 Should I?

RUIZ  
 Heart monitor. When the heart  
 stops, it sends a signal to the  
 phone which dials 911. We know  
 precisely when Rosa died—eight  
 seventeen PM.

FALSON  
 This is going where?

RUIZ  
 Someone used her phone at eight  
 nineteen.

FALSON  
 Wasn't her.

RUIZ  
 Someone called Air Canada. No way  
 of knowing what was said, but—

FALSON  
 You think Bonnie went to Canada?

RUIZ  
 She went back to Canada.

Ruiz takes a plastic baggy from his pocket and tosses it to  
 Falson.

RUIZ  
 We found that in the sink trap.

Falson looks at a FRAGMENT of a boarding pass, burned but  
 enough to make out the carrier—Air Canada and flight number.

RUIZ  
 Vancouver.

FALSON

The royal cannucks are looking for her?

RUIZ

As we speak. So, you are not needed here. Pack a rain coat.

Falson hands back the baggy.

RUIZ

I hear Vancouver is rainy this time of year.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Falson flies, staring out the window.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Sipping coffee, Falson opens the curtain and looks out on the familiar city of Cabo San Lucas.

EXT. CABO SAN LUCAS STREET - DAY

Falson strides past KIDS and BEGGARS. Bright sun and heat.

INT. PACO'S WAREHOUSE DAY

Balcony holds a few STRAGGLERS.

Below, two WOMEN and four MEN engage in desultory group sex. Going through the motions.

In back, Paco and Falson.

PACO

You see how it is. Sex means nothing. They want blood.

FALSON

When they were here, she liked it as much as him, right?

PACO

She like different things, animals.

FALSON

Any new competition in town?

PACO

One, but it will soon be out of business.

FALSON  
Other cities?

PACO  
I hear of one in Puerto.

FALSON  
Vallarta?

PACO  
Si, you been there?

FALSON  
I found a girl there once.

PACO  
Maybe you find something better  
this time.

Paco laughs as if he made a big joke.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A car rolls a hot, lonely highway.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Falson drives.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Falson walks to the front desk, and a sign --

WELCOME TO PUERTO VALLARTA

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

In chaise lounges, two Marines, BUZZ and HIT. Young,  
haircuts, booze, they're hard to miss.

Falson sidles up, beer in hand.

FALSON  
Semper fi.

BUZZ AND HIT TOGETHER  
HOO-RAH!

Buzz and Hit take a drink.

FALSON  
Buy you jarheads a drink?

BUZZ  
Yes, sir, that would be neighborly.

Falson pulls up a chair and signals for a waiter.

FALSON  
What brings you to PV?

HIT  
L.B.F.M.

FALSON  
How are the machines?

HIT  
Friendly-as long as you got dinero.

BUZZ  
Energizer whores, sir. They keep coming and coming.

Hit and Buzz laugh and high five as Falson orders a round.

FALSON  
I heard there's a new place, different. I figure if anybody's familiar with it, it's America's finest.

HIT  
We are talking illegal activities, right, sir?

BUZZ  
Damn illegal.

FALSON  
Something with animals? Horses, ponies, dogs, snakes?

BUZZ  
Machines will screw anything, sir.

HIT  
Not snakes, the snakes are for-

BUZZ  
We can take you, sir.

FALSON  
(raising drink)  
HOO-RAH!

BUZZ AND HIT  
SEMPER FI!

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Buzz, Hit, and Falson, armed with drinks, edge past a row of cruise ship CREW who wave money and scream at Bosses.

At the bottom of the bleachers, Bosses take bets, accept money.

Beyond the Bosses, a circular ring surrounded by a fence and filled with sand.

Into the ring steps a WOMAN, naked except for a g-string. She carries a football helmet and a whip. Cracks whip expertly.

Crowd ERUPTS.

Falson looks over the crowd, searching.

Above them a small balcony. Choice seats for the special PEOPLE who crowd the railing.

Into the ring steps a second WOMAN, similarly dressed. Her whip dances.

Crowd goes CRAZY. People SCREAM bets.

With orchestrated dance, the Women circle, strapping on helmets, snapping nasty whips. Scars are testimony to their experience.

Falson scans the crowd, the balcony.

There she is-Dominica. Her hair is red, but the gold phoenix sways. She's intent on the battle.

Lights dim.

Dominica fades from view.

Spotlights douse ring.

Whips sing.

One Gladiator's arm shows a mark and seeps blood.

Crowd EXPLODES.

Another CRACK.

Other Gladiator's leg opens up, bleeding.

Whips crack faster, as Women scourge each other.

Falson watches, Dominica forgotten.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dominica emerges from the warehouse and heads to a Mercedes convertible.

As she rolls away, Falson emerges from a doorway and hustles to his rental.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Falson drives. Ahead, red tail lights of the Mercedes.

EXT. DOMINICA'S ESTATE - NIGHT

A gate opens to a long drive. Mercedes rolls through. Gate closes.

Falson's car rolls past and stops.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Falson watches the Mercedes wind up the hill to a cliff-top mansion.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Falson stands at his window in the dark. He turns, grabs phone, and dials. As he waits for a connection, he sips beer.

FALSON

Wired, it's me. Yes, I know how late it is. Grab the next flight to Puerto Vallarta.

(beat)

Don't bother. You can buy what you need here.

(beat)

No, morning is not soon enough.

He hangs up and turns to the window.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

Buzz, Hit, and Falson by the pool, clinking drinks.

FALSON

Are you two up for some action?

HIT  
Taking on some Mexis, sir?

FALSON  
More like protecting my back.

BUZZ  
To protect and serve.

HIT  
HOO-RAH!

FALSON AND BUZZ  
SEMPER FI!

EXT. DOMINICA'S ESTATE - DAY

Gate opens. Dominica drives the Mercedes and roars away.

From behind a rock steps Falson. He scales the gate and heads up drive.

INT. DOMINICA'S ESTATE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Falson enters a marble and stone architect's dream, a beautiful view in all directions. He immediately goes to a table and plants a listening device.

EXT. DOMINICA'S ESTATE - LATER

Dominica's Mercedes returns.

INT. DOMINICA'S ESTATE - DAY

Dominica enters through the front door, tosses keys on a table.

INT. DOMINICA'S ESTATE - GREAT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Starts across.

FALSON (O.S.)  
Buenos dias, Dominica.

She whirls to where Falson sits on a couch.

FALSON  
Or is it Bonnie?

DOMINICA  
I prefer Dominica. Why aren't you  
in Vancouver?

FALSON  
Did you have to cut off Needham's  
head?

DOMINICA  
Drink?

She moves to bar and pours drinks.

DOMINICA  
Tequila, right?

FALSON  
Beer, if you have it.

She glances over her shoulder. What other surprises does he  
have for her?

FALSON  
You didn't have to target me, you  
know.

She turns with a beer and walks to him.

DOMINICA  
No one else fit.

FALSON  
Charles?

She turns back to the bar.

DOMINICA  
Scattered across the desert. I  
told you he was dead.

FALSON  
Carol?

DOMINICA  
There wasn't enough insurance  
money.

FALSON  
But you kept her alive.

DOMINICA  
Can you imagine what would have  
happened if she had died?

FALSON  
You tried to kill me on the cliff.

DOMINICA  
You rattled me.

She turns from the bar, drink in one hand, pistol in the other.

DOMINICA  
You understand what I have to do.

FALSON  
I've been here most of the day.  
What are the chances that your gun  
is loaded?

She pulls trigger.

CLICK.

FALSON  
I'm not looking for justice. I  
don't much care that you shot me-  
although I should. What I care  
about is money.

DOMINICA  
I should share?

FALSON  
From what Maddy says, you have  
plenty. I'm looking for, say, ten  
million.

Her eyebrows rise.

FALSON  
You could try to run, but I don't  
think you'd make it.

DOMINICA  
If I don't agree?

FALSON  
You'll agree. It's easier than  
trying to kill me.

DOMINICA  
I'm greedy, but you know that.

FALSON  
You like blood too, but I don't  
care. I want money.

Falson sets down beer.

DOMINICA  
The psychiatric report was wrong  
about you twice.

FALSON  
Oh?

DOMINICA  
It said you would never return to  
Puerto Vallarta.

FALSON  
And?

DOMINICA  
It said you were basically honest.

FALSON  
(leaving)  
Ten million is basically a lot of  
money.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A nondescript van parked on the side of the road.

INT. FALSON'S CAR - DAY

He sees the van ahead.

As he passes, he looks into van.

Headset on, Wired grins and waves.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Falson strolls toward the entrance.

From nowhere appear two big Mexicans, CARLOS and JUAN.  
Carlos grabs Falson's arm. Juan shoves a gun barrel into  
Falson's side.

CARLOS  
Senor Falson, someone wishes to  
speak with you.

FALSON  
L.B.F.M?

CARLOS  
What?

FALSON  
I never argue with senor Colt.

They turn Falson away from hotel and to a waiting car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Falson sits between Carlos and Juan as the car rolls.

FALSON  
What, no blindfold?

JUAN  
Shut up.

FALSON  
What kind of chickenshit outfit is  
this?

Juan slaps Falson.

JUAN  
Shut up!

FALSON  
I'm going to remember that, taco.

Falson laughs, a crazy laugh. Carlos shakes his head.

INT. DIEGO'S OFFICE - DAY

Windowless office of red, black, iron, and velvet, perhaps the worst of the motif.

Behind a desk, DIEGO, 35, thin, lean, in pastel colors and gold, effeminate.

In front, Falson. Behind stand Juan and Carlos.

DIEGO  
You see how it is. She is my  
partner.

FALSON  
She has no partners, only victims.

DIEGO  
Before, I had chickens. Hombres  
with evil breath and no teeth  
betting on chickens. Look what I  
have now.

FALSON  
Free me. I won't make a fuss.

DIEGO  
She would not like that. She has  
plans.

FALSON  
Plans?

Juan steps up and smashes his weapon against Falson's head.  
Falson collapses.

INT. DIEGO'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Falson's eyes pop open.

Kneeling naked beside him is Dominica.

Naked, Falson is tied spread-eagled on the sand. Light is  
subdued, soft. A fence surrounds them, keeps them from the  
bleachers all around.

In the background, polite crowd NOISE, nothing special.

DOMINICA  
Awake? Good. Enjoy this.

FALSON  
Don't do it.

She kisses his chest and shoulders, using one hand to arouse  
him.

DOMINICA  
Disappoint me and I'll make them  
use the cage. You'll watch them  
eat your cojones.

In the bleachers, watching, stand Wired, Buzz, and Hit.

Inside the fence, Dominica mounts Falson and begins to hump.

DOMINICA  
Treat me nice, and I'll help you  
get off--one last time.

She moves faster, rubbing, milking.

FALSON  
If I don't?

DOMINICA  
You won't get another chance.

Harder, into it, she gyrates.



FALSON

NOOO!

Confusion.

More SHOTS.

GUESTS and THUGS rush about in panic.

Falson launches himself, crashing into Juan. They roll on the floor. Juan comes up with his knife flashing.

Falson shows no respect for the knife. He wades in, avoids Juan's first slash, grabbing Juan's arm and snapping the elbow.

Juan HOWLS.

As the knife clatters on the floor, Falson snaps Juan's neck as neatly as a toothpick.

BUZZ (O.S.)

COME ON!

Falson turns.

Buzz drapes Wired over his shoulder.

Hit fires indiscriminately into the warehouse.

Falson grabs the pistol from Hit.

FALSON

Get out of here.

HIT

Sir?

FALSON

Get Wired to a hospital.

Buzz, Hit rush out.

Falson turns and runs down a

CORRIDOR.

He turns a corner.

Ahead, Carlos, armed with an Uzi, steps from a room.

FALSON

Drop it!

Carlos fires.

Falson drops flat and snaps off two SHOTS.

Carlos takes both bullets and goes down.

Falson is up, running.

He snatches the Uzi from Carlos' lifeless hands.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Buzz carries Wired toward the van. Hit jumps behind wheel as Buzz climbs in back with Wired.

HIT

On board?

BUZZ

Aye, aye. Hit it!

Van roars into the night.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Falson peeks around a corner.

Ahead, Diego.

FALSON

Stop!

Diego takes one look and runs.

Falson charges.

FALSON

Stop!

Diego disappears through a door.

Falson follows, popping the door and rushing into the

PIT

He spins as door bangs shut behind him.

A round arena, one door, smooth walls, a balcony above, Falson is trapped, along with a cowering Diego.

Falson rushes to the door and jerks.

Locked.

He spins on Diego.

FALSON  
Where is she?

DOMINICA (O.S.)  
Here.

He looks up.

Dominica smiles from the balcony.

DOMINICA  
Hello, darling.

Falson jerks up the Uzi.

FALSON  
Unlock the door.

DOMINICA  
Shhhhh...

Dominica looks crazy and beautiful and sexy.

FALSON  
Open-

DOMINICA  
Hush, shhhh, listen, listen.

Hunkered in a corner, Diego sobs.

DOMINICA  
SHUT UP!

Diego muffles his cries in his sleeve.

Falson pants, waiting.

Dominica cocks her head to one side. A smile of pure sexual pleasure graces her face.

Falson hears.

Squeals.

Far away?

Or just on the other side of the wall?

SQUEALS.

Diego SCREAMS!

Falson swings back to the balcony.

She's gone!

He fires a burst that rips through the seats.

DOMINICA (O.S.)  
Save your bullets. You'll need  
them.

She LAUGHS.

CLICK

A hidden door swings open.

RATS, big, ugly, hungry RATS.

THOUSANDS.

Diego scrambles to the opposite wall.

The first, brave rats edge toward the door.

Falson fires a burst into the opening.

Rats SQUEAL as bullets find bodies-then the teeth of other  
rats.

FALSON  
How do we get out?

Diego blubbers.

FALSON  
I'll shoot you and leave you for  
them.

DIEGO  
Si! Yes! Kill me! Do not let  
them get me!

Rats jump into the room.

Falson fires another burst.

Rats DIE.

Rats EAT.

Rats smell blood and grow insanely hungry.

Rats surge into the room.

Falson fires again.

CLICK

The Uzi is empty.

Diego SCREAMS.

Falson is about to toss the Uzi at the rats when he notices the open door.

FALSON  
Come on!

DIEGO  
I can't.

FALSON  
Damn you, move!

Falson grabs Diego and propels him toward the door.

DIEGO  
No! I beg, please!

A rat leaps and bites Diego's pants. He screams.

Falson shoots the rat with his pistol, and rat falls off.

A dozen rats converge on the bleeding rodent.

FALSON  
The door.

Rats circle.

FALSON  
Get on the door and brace against  
the wall. NOW!

A rat bites Falson's leg.

He shoots it.

Grabs Diego and boosts him into place.

Rats swirl, jumping, nipping, trying to get Falson's bare toes.

Falson shoots the closest rat.

Pistol jams empty.

He hurls the pistol at a rat and scrambles up beside Diego.

They have escaped the rats for the moment, but not long.

Without a word, Falson climbs Diego's back, all the way to his shoulders. Like gymnastic partners, he perches on the braced Diego.

But the door wants to swing and topple them.

And Diego's legs shake.

And the rats leap, biting at Diego's shoes and pants.

And despite his stretch, Falson can't reach the balcony.

He grabs the Uzi, extends the stock, and tries to hook the ledge.

Inches short.

Squealing, ravenous rats race up the wall, leap across Diego's quivering legs.

Falson does the only thing he can. He leaps.

The Uzi stock hooks and

Catches.

Falson dangles, clinging to the Uzi for all he's worth.

With a CRY, Falson pulls up and loops an arm on the ledge.

He scrambles into the balcony.

Reverses, leans over, and extends the Uzi to Diego.

As if knowing they're being cheated, the RATS SCURRY, LEAP, BITE.

Diego screams as he reaches for the lifeline.

His fingers brush the barrel but can't grasp.

FALSON

Jump!

Diego leaps off the door as two rats latch onto his pants.

He catches the Uzi and holds, grinning.

A rat scampers up the wall, jumps, and bites deeply into Diego's balls.

Diego SCREAMS.

His grip fails, and he falls into a roiling sea of rats.

Rats converge despite Diego's flailing.

Falson watches a moment. He takes Uzi and hurls it as hard as he can.

Uzi misses Diego's head but hammers a rat. Diego's SCREAMS fade.

Falson whirls and runs.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Falson runs along and comes to a window. Stops.

Below, Dominica slides into her Mercedes convertible.

INT. MERCEDES CONVERTIBLE - CONTINUOUS

Dominica frowns as a cascade of glass showers her windshield and hood.

A heartbeat later, a body smashes into her windshield, spidering it with fractures even as the body rolls off the hood.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dominica climbs out of her Mercedes and walks around.

Falson lies on the pavement, ribs cracked, cut, bleeding, wheezing.

DOMINICA  
You should have stayed away from  
Vallarta.

His hand snakes out and grabs her ankle.

She calmly stomps his arm with her free foot until he releases her.

INT. MERCEDES CONVERTIBLE - CONTINUOUS

Dominica slides behind the wheel.

The windshield sags, impossible to see through, but she doesn't care. She starts and revs the engine.

Drops the car in gear.

REVS HARDER.

Foot on brake.

As car lunges forward, Falson's body crashes into the windshield a second time.

Entire frame breaks. Windshield folds down over the steering wheel.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Falson rolls off the hood as the convertible lunges over a curb and crashes into a wall.

From the pavement, he stares at red lights and steaming engine.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Wired lies in bed. Buzz perches on the edge. Hit takes three beers from a bag, opens them, and hands them out.

HIT  
SEMPER FI!

BUZZ AND WIRED  
HOO-RAH!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A battered and bruised Dominica lies in bed. Bright sunshine illuminates the room.

Falson, bandaged, uncaps a beer and hands it to her.

DOMINICA  
Thanks.

FALSON  
Where's the money?

Dominica shakes her leg. The chain that binds her to the bed RATTLES.

DOMINICA  
Turn me loose, and I might tell you.

FALSON  
You're going away for a long time. The money won't do you any good.

DOMINICA

I doubt they'll ever send me back  
to the states. Money speaks  
Spanish.

FALSON

The locals will bleed you till  
you're dry, and then, they'll ship  
you back. By then, you'll be poor  
Bonnie again.

She shrugs.

FALSON

I have to go.

DOMINICA

You don't have to pretend you like  
me.

FALSON

Who's pretending?

He leans over, and eyes open, kisses her cheek. She grabs  
his head and kisses him hard.

DOMINICA

Help me.

He pulls back.

FALSON

Where's the money?

INT. PLANE - DAY

Falson, in first class, sips vodka.

FADE OUT.

THE END