The Caretaker

by

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INT. THE SAND CASTLE, BAR -- DAY

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

Their names are DOMINICK PUZO and FRANK MARCIANO.

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

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

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

    DOMINICK
    Larry. Now there was a tough one.

    FRANK
    Idiot.

    DOMINICK
    A good man.

    FRANK
    A fucking dolt. What do you care?

    DOMINICK
    Ever really talk to the guy?

    FRANK
    When we were shaving points in Boston.

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

    FRANK
    No choice.

    DOMINICK
    Almost the godfather of my kids.

    FRANK
    You are such a sentimentalist...
DOMINICK
Time can change everything.

Frank slams his hand on the bar.

FRANK
Fucking Jets! Rat bastards!

DOMINICK
You remember who did that?

FRANK
Larry?

DOMINICK
Yeah.

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

DOMINICK
In ’88? I thought--

Frank turns around.

FRANK
Oh, the prince has arrived!

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

VINCENT
How goes the world, Frank?

DOMINICK
Fucked up beyond all recognition.

FRANK
He wasn’t asking you, Dom.

VINCENT
I always appreciate a darker perspective.

Dominick tips his drink toward Vincent.

FRANK
Allow me to ask of your opinion, kid. At what point should a soldier be clipped?
VINCENT
Come on Frank... You know better than me.

FRANK
Let’s see if you learned anything from Carmine.

VINCENT
Carmine isn’t much of a teacher.

FRANK
Let’s see what you’ve learned on your own.

Vincent hesitates.

DOMINICK
Go ahead, Vince. Another perspective, right?

Vincent clears his throat.

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

Dominick and Frank exchange glances.

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

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

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

FRANK
Carmine doesn’t want it that way.

DOMINICK
Even so...
FRANK
And enough about fucking Larry, alright? I shouldn’t have needed Vincent to explain.

DOMINICK
Explain what?

FRANK
Why Larry had to go.

Frank finishes his drink, grimacing.

INT. SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- DAY

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

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

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

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

Vincent grins, approaches the bar, stands opposite Carmine.

CARMINE (CONT’D)
Indulging in Jack these days?

VINCENT
It soothes my stomach.

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

Carmine lifts his shot.

CARMINE
Raise your glass, my young friend.

Vincent does so.
VINCENT
Toasting the occasion?

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

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

VINCENT
Strong stuff.

CARMINE
Real therapeutic. Painting the town tonight?

VINCENT
Heading to Dominion.

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

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

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

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

VINCENT
Not the hair, Carmine, come on!

CARMINE
What did I tell you about the age jokes?

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

CARMINE
Really? Daisy liked it.

Carmine releases Vincent, who steps backward.
VINCENT
Daisy... A stripper name if I ever heard one.

CARMINE
Maybe so.

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

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

Vincent looks down.

VINCENT
True.

Carmine puts the bottle away.

CARMINE
How is he?

VINCENT
Who?

CARMINE
Your father.

VINCENT
Why do you give a shit?

CARMINE
Because I care about you.

VINCENT
He’s alright...

CARMINE
Still has that job?

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

CARMINE
He’s providing.
VINCENT
Frank said you wanted to see me about something.

CARMINE
Those assholes wish you a happy birthday?

VINCENT
Nope.

Carmine sighs.

CARMINE
Typical.

VINCENT
Not a big deal.

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

VINCENT
So?

CARMINE
The Irish kid...

VINCENT
Connor? What about him?

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

VINCENT
Fuck...

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

VINCENT
How long?

CARMINE
Just found out today. Guys like this don’t deserve your loyalty.
VINCENT
He’s my best friend.

CARMINE
He broke a promise.

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

CARMINE
Use judgment.

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

CARMINE
Never let anyone make a joke out of you.

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

JACKIE
Am I interrupting anything?

VINCENT
No, Jack. I was about to leave.

CARMINE
Stick around.

VINCENT
I need to see Connor. Have a talk.

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

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

Vincent pulls away from Jackie, slapping his back.
VINCENT
I appreciate the salutations. See Carmine, somebody pays attention.

CARMINE
And the rank corresponds.

JACKIE
Thanks Cap.

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

INT. INDULGENCE RECORDS -- DAY

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

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

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

Connor is reading a newspaper. He slams it down.

CONNOR
Miserable pieces of fucking shit!

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

VINCENT
What’s troubling you today, Connor?

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

CONNOR
It’s this fucking war! Soldiers dying every day, for no fucking reason. So these assholes in Washington can line their fucking pockets! And this fucking right wing republican rag supports it! You believe that shit?
VINCENT
That’s why I stick to the sports pages.

CONNOR
We still on for tonight?

VINCENT
Absolutely.

CONNOR
Excellent. I told Justine to bring a friend.

VINCENT
Well, I am incredibly lonely.

Connor laughs hysterically.

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

VINCENT
Things just haven’t been working out.

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

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Here... some confetti!

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

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

Vincent laughs. But his expression changes to a frown.

VINCENT
Connor...
CONNOR
What’s up?

Vincent runs his left hand through his hair.

VINCENT
Justine staying clean?

CONNOR
Why you dropping this on me?

VINCENT
Maybe I heard a rumor.

CONNOR
About me or her?

VINCENT
Forget it.

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

Vincent nods.

VINCENT
I always am.

CONNOR
Take my word.

VINCENT
I always have.

Silence.

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

Connor smiles.

CONNOR
Who does it better than us?

They exchange a hand pound. Vincent departs.

Connor sorts through the debris of the newspaper.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Come on... where are the fucking comics?
EXT. VINCENT’S HOUSE, PORCH -- NIGHT

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

Vincent lingers, hand on door knob.

VINCENT
Just get it over with.

Vincent enters his house.

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

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

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

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

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

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

VINCENT
So... you get me a present?

RICHARD
For what?

Vincent laughs.

VINCENT
Nothing.

RICHARD
Oh... it’s your birthday?

VINCENT
Lucky guess, pops.
RICHARD
How about the roof above your head?
That enough of a fucking gift this year?

VINCENT
I would have settled for an
Infinity.

RICHARD
You have a car.

VINCENT
A piece of shit Nova.

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

VINCENT
He already tried. I refused.

RICHARD
Why so?

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

RICHARD
Right.

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

VINCENT
Why did we fall apart?

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

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

RICHARD
Not your business.

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

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

Vincent stands up.

VINCENT
I’m talking to a failure.

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

RICHARD
You are not my fucking son!

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

Richard releases Vincent.

RICHARD
Get out.

He shoves Vincent.

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

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

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

Tears roll down Richard’s face.

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

Vincent wipes away blood, spilling from his lower lip.

VINCENT
Whatever helps you sleep.

Vincent slams the door behind him.
INT. DOMINION, BOOTH -- NIGHT

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

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

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

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

JUSTINE
Connor baby... can’t we go dance?

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

VINCENT
Indeed.

SOPHIA
Men...

JUSTINE
We’re uncomfortable.

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

JUSTINE
It’s a club. People dance. You two are abnormal.

VINCENT
A throwback.

Justine rolls her eyes.
SOPHIA
Come on birthday boy... I’m getting bored.

VINCENT
Later.

CONNOR
Hey, what the fuck happened to your lip?

Vincent’s lower lip is swollen, discolored.

VINCENT
Why? Something wrong?

CONNOR
Lose a fight?

VINCENT
You should see the other guy.

Sophia giggles. Vincent kisses her neck.

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

Sophia playfully pushes him away.

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

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Shit!

CONNOR
There he is. Cool hand Vince.

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

VINCENT
Shut the fuck up, Connor.

SOPHIA
What’s wrong?

CONNOR
Just an abnormality sweetheart. One of those special ticks that make us all unique.
VINCENT
My left hand shakes sometimes. It will pass.

CONNOR
Too much jerking off.

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
But... maybe you could do something about that Sophia... heal him a little bit...

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

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Don’t get mad Vince... Wish I had your Guinea charm.

Connor slides out of the booth.

JUSTINE
Where you going?

CONNOR
The bathroom.

JUSTINE
Why?

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

Vincent takes a bountiful swig from his drink.

VINCENT
I suppose.

INT. DOMINION, BATHROOM -- NIGHT

The rest-room is large and sparkling clean. The stalls are multicolored. There isn’t much space to maneuver, as denizens pour in and out, a parade of spiky hair and silk shirts. Connor is waiting patiently on a long line formed near the sink. Antsy, he cuts, speeding to the front, splashing his face with water from the faucet.
Connor takes a look at himself in the mirror. His pupils are dilated, his nostrils flared, right one leaking blood. He sprays a wad of red mucus from his nose into the sink.

There are murmurs, complaints.

SCOTT WELD steps forward, tapping Connor on the shoulder. Scott is 24. He has a blowout haircut and designer clothes. Connor wheels around.

CONNOR
What the fuck do you want?

SCOTT
You allowed to cut the line?

CONNOR
Apparently.

SCOTT
What’s your problem?

CONNOR
Who said I had one?

SCOTT
I did.

Connor steps in close, nose to nose with Scott.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Well, you better do something. Express yourself.

A few of Scott’s friends pull him away.

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

INT. DOMINION, BOOTH -- NIGHT

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

Sophia is nestled close to Vincent.

JUSTINE
What’s taking him?
Vincent folds his hands.

VINCENT
The place is crowded.

Justine begins rocking back and forth.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Hey...

She turns toward Vincent.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
How goes the career?

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

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

JUSTINE
What?

VINCENT
A dream.

Justine smiles.

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

VINCENT
Either way, a beautiful thing. Keep dancing.

JUSTINE
Why did you drop out of school?

Vincent shrugs.

VINCENT
I thought the homework was beneath me.

Sophia laughs.

JUSTINE
Did you have any grand plans?
VINCENT
Not really. I used to write poetry. That was a lifetime ago.

SOPHIA
You don’t strike me as the literary type.

VINCENT
Suppose I wasn’t.

JUSTINE
Save any of your work?

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

Vincent sips his drink.

JUSTINE
What?

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

JUSTINE
I hear you.

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

VINCENT
Subtle entrance.

CONNOR
That’s my style!

Justine pushes Connor away.

SOPHIA
He’s an animal!

CONNOR
She loves it.

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Are we going to party or what?
JUSTINE
Calm down. You act like a fucking child.

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

Vincent sighs, furrowing his brow, shaking his head.

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

JUSTINE
Prey tell...

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

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

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

SOPHIA
Speak for yourself.

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

Vincent clenches his fist.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Yeah... a nice life. Trapped in Whitestone forever. Move into middle class digs, spit out a few kids, gain a couple hundred pounds, but hey, this is fate. How could I expect you to deviate? Am I asking too much?
JUSTINE
And who the fuck are you? You couldn’t even make it through freshmen fucking year at Nassau because of your attention deficit situation. Think about that before getting all high and mighty with me.

Connor slaps the table, hard.

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

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
What is it?

VINCENT
Come with me.

CONNOR
We’re having an adult discussion.

VINCENT
Shut your fucking mouth and get the fuck up.

Connor relents. He stands up.

CONNOR
No need to get nasty.

Connor stares at Justine.

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

JUSTINE
I hate you. I fucking hate you!

CONNOR
You hate to love me, baby.
Vincent tugs on Connor’s arm, hard. Connor screams in pain. They wade onto the dance floor, toward the bar.

INT. DOMINION, BAR -- NIGHT

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

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

VINCENT
When did you start again?

CONNOR
I have no idea--

VINCENT
Don’t fuck with me.

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

VINCENT
Play games with everyone else. Not me.

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

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

CONNOR
Want my life? You can have it.

Vincent nearly punches Connor, stopping himself.

VINCENT
A girlfriend. Parents still together. And you don’t give a fucking shit. All you care about is getting high. With money you don’t have.
CONNOR
Oh, you well versed in my finances?

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

CONNOR
It’s hard. To stop...

VINCENT
You promised me.

CONNOR
Laying a guilt trip?

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

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

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

CONNOR
Wish I could...

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

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

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

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

VINCENT
What the fuck is this about?
Connor drills Scott with a right-hand, before tackling him to the floor.

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

CONNOR
Vinny! Vinny! Where the fuck are you man?

Connor is thrashing manically about, nearly breaking free.

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

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

EXT. DOMINION, PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

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

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

Connor rushes over, tries helping him up.

VINCENT
Get the fuck off.

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

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

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

CONNOR
Fuck this place. And fuck techno music. We’ll survive.

VINCENT
Your head isn’t on straight.
CONNOR
Where are your balls? You above scrapping? Turning into one of them?

VINCENT
Who?

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

VINCENT
I’m going to bash your fucking head in.

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

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

They are nonplussed.

JUSTINE
Oh my God.

SOPHIA
That’s enough. I want to go home.

Justine walks over to Connor.

JUSTINE
Are you happy?

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

JUSTINE
What’s happening to you?

Connor reaches into his pocket, pulling out car keys.

CONNOR
Kind of unbelievable. I held on to these.

JUSTINE
You aren’t driving.
CONNOR
Is that a fact?

JUSTINE
Vincent!

VINCENT
Give her the keys, Connor.

CONNOR
You the boss of me?

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

CONNOR
Practical advice.

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

JUSTINE
Where are you going?

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

Connor taps on the truck’s hood.

CONNOR
There she is. My beloved.

The group catches up. Sophia lags behind.

JUSTINE
Stop right now.

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

Connor eyes the Jaguar.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Is this vehicle superior to mine? Impossible. I possess the most amazing means of transportation in the universe... that truck solved everything. Cured world hunger. Set me straight. Perish the fucking thought...
Connor unzips his jeans and begins urinating on the Jaguar, setting off the alarm.

JUSTINE
Are you trying to get fucking arrested?

CONNOR
I am making a point!

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

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

Connor steps toward his truck, opening the driver side door.

Vincent blocks him from entering.

VINCENT
Do you really want to go out like this?

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

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

JUSTINE
Listen to him Connor, please!

Justine starts crying.

CONNOR
I’m waiting.

Vincent stands his ground.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Move!

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

VINCENT
You pushed me to this!

Connor knees Vincent in the crotch. Vincent promptly falls to the pavement.
VINCENT (CONT’D)
You dirty mother fucker!

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

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

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

Justine is hysterical. Sophia gives her a hug.

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

Connor’s truck fades into the horizon, gone.

INT. TAXI CAB -- NIGHT

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

Justine is quivering.

Vincent has his arm around her.

JUSTINE
Why does he hate me so much?

VINCENT

JUSTINE
He’s not making it back this time.

VINCENT
He will.

JUSTINE
How do you know that?

Vincent doesn’t answer.

Silence, for a moment.

VINCENT
I guess Sophia won’t be joining us for another night out.
Justine laughs.

JUSTINE
She liked you.

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

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

JUSTINE
Are you OK?

Vincent manages a smile.

JUSTINE (CONT’D)
A smile?

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

Vincent holds Justine’s hand.

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

JUSTINE
Thanks.

VINCENT
I’ll track him down. I promise.

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

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

VINCENT
So many lights...

JUSTINE
My mother. She’s crazy for Christmas.

VINCENT
Your family get together for the holidays?
JUSTINE
Yeah. So boring...

VINCENT
You should appreciate it.

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

VINCENT
Sorry.

JUSTINE
For what?

VINCENT
Sounding like an after school special, or something.

JUSTINE
No. It’s sweet.

Justine presses her hand on Vincent’s lip.

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

VINCENT
I need to go.

JUSTINE
Does it hurt?

VINCENT
It’s numb.

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

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Good night.

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

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

JUSTINE
Good night, Vincent.
INT. TAXI CAB -- NIGHT

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

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

THOMAS
Let me guess. I should see the other guy.

VINCENT
Smart man.

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

VINCENT
I’ve had worse.

THOMAS
You tough?

VINCENT
I’m not sure what that even means anymore.

THOMAS
Me either...

VINCENT
The girl was upset. It gets to me.

THOMAS
She loves you.

VINCENT
What?

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

VINCENT
Eavesdropping?

THOMAS
Listening.

Thomas guffaws.
THOMAS (CONT’D)
All I can say... thank God for the women. Thank God.

Vincent’s cell phone rings, playing a digitized take on “The Godfather” theme.

He answers it.

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

Vincent closes the phone.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Change of plans.

THOMAS
What up blood?

VINCENT
New address. Off the beaten path.

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

A torn cloth is wrapped around his head wound.
Vincent joins him, overcoming a steep incline.
Connor is unaware, focused on the bridge.

VINCENT
Hell of a fucking meeting place.

Connor is startled, momentarily.

CONNOR
Glad you made it.

They exchange a hand pound.

VINCENT
Quite a show earlier.
CONNOR
I come here to think. Beautiful view.

VINCENT
Fit for kings.

CONNOR
When will you give up on me?

VINCENT
All you have to do is die.

CONNOR
Loyalty... your finest characteristic.

VINCENT
That a gift? Reading character?

CONNOR
A skill.

VINCENT
What’s my weakness?

CONNOR
Strength.

Vincent shakes his head.

VINCENT
What now, Connor?

CONNOR
Forget tonight.

VINCENT
Won’t be easy for some people.

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

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

CONNOR
Look at all those cars. On the bridge. Thousands of lives passing each other in the night.
VINCENT
What’s your point?

Connor shrugs.

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

VINCENT
I know it.

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

VINCENT
Faith.

CONNOR
Acceptance. I could never...

VINCENT
Is that your excuse? God?

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

VINCENT
Nice thought.

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

VINCENT
Steal some ashes of our own?

Connor laughs.

CONNOR
I pulled Justine into my fucking pit.

(MORE)
CONNOR (CONT'D)
So I wouldn’t be alone down there.
She quit, yeah. Better now. No
thanks to me.

VINCENT
Maybe you should tell her how you
feel.

CONNOR
She wouldn’t understand.

VINCENT
Do you understand?

CONNOR
I wouldn’t get high if I did.

Connor extends his hand.
.data
Vincent shakes it.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
You’re real, Vincent. And we’re
friends. Aren’t we?

VINCENT
Until the end of time.

Connor hugs Vincent.

They separate.

CONNOR
I say fuck salvation. It takes a
toll.

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

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

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

Justine spins in a circle and theatrically places down the
rag. She begins to sing.
JUSTINE
Want to know a secret? Promise not to tell? We are standing by a wishing well, make a wish into the well, that's all you have to do, and if you hear it echoing, your wish will soon come true!

Edith is not amused.

EDITH
Hey Snow White... you have a customer.

JUSTINE
Is it Prince Charming?

EDITH
If you’re into guidos, sure.

JUSTINE
 Didn’t we talk about making baseless generalizations?

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

Edith makes a dismissive motion with her hand.

Justine cranes her neck.

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

Justine’s eyes widen.

She approaches him.

JUSTINE
A pleasant surprise...

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

Vincent winks at Justine. She blushes.

JUSTINE
What are you having?
VINCENT
Come with me.

JUSTINE
What do you mean?

VINCENT
Take five. Early lunch.

JUSTINE
This isn’t a good time...

VINCENT
Really?

Vincent scans the shop.

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

JUSTINE
Where?

VINCENT
I never think that far ahead.

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

EXT. POND -- DAY

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

There is space between them.

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

JUSTINE
Please Vincent, I couldn’t care less.

VINCENT
Seriously?

JUSTINE
What I say, I mean.
VINCENT
I respect that about you. No ambiguity. Real talk.

JUSTINE
Means nothing without ears to hear.

VINCENT
Does Connor listen?

JUSTINE
To himself.

Vincent breathes out.

VINCENT
What should we make of this?

JUSTINE
Regarding?

VINCENT
Us.

JUSTINE
We had a moment.

VINCENT
Is that all?

JUSTINE
Depends.

VINCENT
On what?

JUSTINE
You.

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

JUSTINE
Same for me.

VINCENT
Want to escape?
JUSTINE
Yeah. But nobody wants to run away alone. And starting over doesn’t guarantee a new experience.

VINCENT
How do you figure?

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

VINCENT
Freedom.

JUSTINE
From what?

VINCENT
Everything... I don’t know... I sound like an idiot.

Vincent cracks his knuckles.

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

VINCENT
You don’t have to talk about this.

JUSTINE
I want to.

VINCENT
Pills...

JUSTINE
Yeah?

VINCENT
Nothing.
JUSTINE
I feel weak, lately. Connor... he drains me.

VINCENT
I’m here for you.

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

VINCENT
It’s real.

Justine smiles.

JUSTINE
Never told me why you dropped school.

Vincent looks away.

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

JUSTINE
What about employment?

VINCENT
I refuse taking orders.

JUSTINE
From anyone?

VINCENT
From people I could never respect.

Vincent stares upward.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Feel that?

JUSTINE
The cold?

VINCENT

Vincent breathes in.

Justine points toward the pond.
JUSTINE
Shame about the ice. No ducks. I could have bought bread.

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

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

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Your heart feels good.

JUSTINE
Tell me about your family.

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

JUSTINE
Your mother?

VINCENT
She died.

JUSTINE
I’m so sorry.

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

JUSTINE
How did it happen?

VINCENT
My mother was stressed. She had made decisions... that complicated her life. One night, after a fight with my father, she drove away. I remember begging her not to leave. They found her car on a curved back road in Utica. Wrapped around a tree. At the time, nobody could figure out what she was doing there. Utica? Made no sense. Never did. They said one day, I might understand. Now, I think I do. (MORE)
Maybe she just wanted to disappear. Be nothing to nobody. Erase the past. I realized this sentiment is shared. By more than a few people...

Vincent scratches his chin.

JUSTINE
Was she going to come back?

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

Vincent’s left hand begins to tremble.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Not this... damn it...

Justine caresses his hand.

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

VINCENT
Where?

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

VINCENT
Where do you need me?

INT. GYMNASIUM -- NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

BILLY (CONT’D)
Thanks for listening.

The group claps.

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

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

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

Nora makes eye contact with Vincent.

NORA (CONT’D)
How about you?

Vincent slumps in his seat.

JUSTINE
He came here with me. Just for support.

NORA
Oh, I see.

Vincent sits up.

VINCENT
No. I can talk.

Justine’s eyes betray surprise.
Vincent stands up.

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

Vincent sits down.
The group claps.
Billy taps his shoulder.

BILLY
It’s OK, man.

Vincent presents his hand to Justine. She takes hold.

NORA
Thanks for sharing, Vincent.

INT. VINCENT’S HOUSE, BATHROOM -- NIGHT

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

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

VINCENT
You knock, dad?

RICHARD
What are you doing in here?

VINCENT
Why do you care?

RICHARD
Going for the pills?
VINCENT

No.

RICHARD

Swear on a bible?

VINCENT

Get off my back.

RICHARD

Just like his mother...

Richard crushes his beer can.

VINCENT

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

RICHARD

She wasn’t a saint, Vince.

VINCENT

Neither are you.

Richard nods.

RICHARD

Fair enough.

VINCENT

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

RICHARD

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

VINCENT

I’m in control.

RICHARD

So am I.

Richard chuckles, then sighs.

RICHARD (CONT’D)

I never wanted to lose her, Vincent.

VINCENT

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

VINCENT
The blame is shared. Between both you.

RICHARD
And Carmine?

Vincent doesn’t answer.

RICHARD (CONT’D)
Was it always bad?

VINCENT
No. There were good times. They never lasted.

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

VINCENT
Sorry.

RICHARD
You have nothing to apologize for.

VINCENT
I do.

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

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

RICHARD
If you want to leave... I won’t stop you.
VINCENT
It’ll only be temporary.

RICHARD
Come here, son.


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

VINCENT
Above what, pop?

RICHARD
I wish I could explain. Explain everything.

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- DAY

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

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

VINCENT
We’re looking for work.

CONNOR
We can be trusted.

CARMINE
Did I say you could talk?

Connor jerks his head, neck cracking.

VINCENT
Carmine... I have no direction.

CONNOR
Same here. The girlfriend... she won’t return my calls. You believe that?
A guttural sound rises out of Carmine.

Vincent stares at Connor.

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

    CARMINE
    Get out of my sight.

Connor eyes Vincent.

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

Connor does as he is told.

    VINCENT
    Could have been a touch more diplomatic.

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

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

    CARMINE (CONT’D)
    Get over here.

Vincent follows. He sits down next to Carmine.

    CARMINE (CONT’D)
    Listen carefully.

Vincent leans forward. Carmine takes hold of his shoulder.

    VINCENT
    You have my full attention.

    CARMINE
    Good. This is not for you.

    VINCENT
    Wait--

    CARMINE
    Quiet. You will not be involved in this business. Ever.
VINCENT
What other options do I have?

CARMINE
This isn’t your nature.

VINCENT
Maybe.

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

Vincent straightens up.

VINCENT
I would appreciate it if you didn’t.

CARMINE
Go back to school.

VINCENT
That ship has sailed.

CARMINE
I could set you up at a restaurant.

VINCENT
I want this.

CARMINE
For what? The respect?

VINCENT
Money.

CARMINE
All you have to do is ask...

VINCENT
I want to earn it. Feel useless otherwise.

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

VINCENT
Don’t do this...
CARMINE
Her son needed someone to watch over him. She confessed to your father. About the affair. Guilty conscience. He went berserk. Helen got in the car and never came back... Richard was drunk that night, tried shooting me outside this very establishment. He dropped the gun in a sewer... His hand was shaking. I let it go.

Carmine wipes his brow.

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

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

VINCENT
She loved me? Is that why she left?

CARMINE
Think she meant to die?

VINCENT
I need to feel like a fucking man, understand?

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

VINCENT
Barbecues and ball games?

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

Vincent stands.

VINCENT
How the fuck can you sit there and lecture me on family values? Give me a fucking break, Carmine. You have any kids?
CARMINE
I do not.

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

CARMINE
Family is everything.

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

Carmine itches his chin.

CARMINE
I can’t take back the past.

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

CARMINE
He was an alcoholic, Vincent.

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

CARMINE
He has a strange way of expressing affection.

VINCENT
That isn’t the point.

CARMINE
What is?

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

Carmine glowers at Vincent.
CARMINE
Duly noted.

VINCENT
Excellent.

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

CARMINE
God help him...

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

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

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

A near depleted bottle of wine sits between them.

A voice rings out from the bar.

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

CARMINE
Night, Earl!

A door shuts.

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

CARMINE
He had an attitude problem.

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

CARMINE
What about it?

JACKIE
I was curious regarding the details.
CARMINE
He wanted work. With us.

Jackie wipes his mouth with a napkin.

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

CARMINE
No.

JACKIE
You tagging him out?

CARMINE
He was never in, Jack.

JACKIE
Allow me to debate.

CARMINE
Save your time.

JACKIE
The ranks are thinning.

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

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

CARMINE
He won’t have to find out.

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

Carmine recoils.

CARMINE
Connor? He is fucked up, royally.

JACKIE
So are most people.

CARMINE
A fucking junkie...
JACKIE

CARMINE
Connor isn’t your guy.

JACKIE
Vincent would be.

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

CARMINE
I don’t want to hear another word about it.

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

JACKIE
Want a bite?

CARMINE
You finish.

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

INT. BASEMENT -- DAY

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

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

CONNOR
What did you dream?

VINCENT
Drowning this time. Couldn’t find the surface.

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

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

Connor leans on the tool table.

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

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

CONNOR
None at all.

VINCENT
Care to share the positivity?

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

VINCENT
Carmine’s second in command.

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

VINCENT
Using what method, exactly?

Connor pulls a black handgun out of his waistband.

CONNOR
Scare tactics.

VINCENT
Let me see.

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

CONNOR
Be careful... With that fucking Parkinson’s twitch of yours.
VINCENT
You one of us now, Irish?

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

Vincent snaps the safety back into place.

VINCENT
I can’t let you testify.

Both of them laugh.

CONNOR
Ride with me tonight. On this.

Vincent gives the gun back to Connor.

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

CONNOR
Never pointed a gun at someone.

VINCENT
Neither have I.

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

VINCENT
Why?

CONNOR
I have to make serious cash.

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

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

Vincent’s face turns sullen, twisting into a scowl.
VINCENT
You mother fucker... this soon?

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

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

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

VINCENT
Your parents?

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

VINCENT
Give me a number.

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

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

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

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

Connor laughs, eyes twitching.

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

Connor nods his head.

CONNOR
I think so.

VINCENT
Coney Island?

CONNOR
How did you know?

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

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

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

INT. CONNOR’S PICK-UP TRUCK -- NIGHT

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

They have parked in a wooded area.

CONNOR
The stars truly are beautiful. Rare night... being this visible. All the fucking pollution...
JUSTINE
Are you still using?

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

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

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

JUSTINE
Wish I could believe you. I really do.

Silence.

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

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

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

JUSTINE
You hear what you want to hear.

Connor’s eyes droop downward.

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

JUSTINE
It’s all I have left for you.

Connor runs his hand over his face.
CONNOR
Think our fate’s written within the celestial bodies? Predestined? There has to be some other explanation. Because in my heart, I never wanted to hurt you.

Justine does not respond.

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

INT. CONNOR’S PICK-UP TRUCK -- NIGHT

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

Both are dressed in black.

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

VINCENT
How considerate.

CONNOR
Check the glove box.

Vincent opens the dashboard compartment in front of his seat. He pulls out a handgun, inspecting it’s design.

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Leave that in the car.

VINCENT
No shit.

CONNOR
Who rang?

Vincent hesitates.

VINCENT
...My father. Fuck him.
EXT. LAUNDROMAT -- NIGHT

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

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

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

EXT. ALLEYWAY -- NIGHT

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

The ladder has been withdrawn.

CONNOR
There. Give me a boost.

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

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

Vincent retrieves the bag and climbs up the ladder.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Don’t drop that fucking bag.

VINCENT
Don’t fall on your fucking face.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE -- NIGHT

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

VINCENT
Now what?

CONNOR
We shimmy across on those beams.
VINCENT
Shimmy? What the fuck? Do I look like Indiana fucking Jones to you?

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

VINCENT
Who drew up the blueprint for this fucking job?

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

VINCENT
I’m jumping.

CONNOR
Fuck that. You fall, we’re done. I die.

VINCENT
I can make it.

CONNOR
If you jump, so do I.

VINCENT
Make your own fucking decision.

CONNOR
I’m jumping.

VINCENT
So we’re both jumping.

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

VINCENT
Three.

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

Vincent motions for him to follow. Connor lingers. Finally, he takes a deep breath, and jumps, barely making it across.
EXT. APPLIANCE STORE ROOF -- NIGHT

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

CONNOR
Fuck!

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

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

CONNOR
(whispering)
I’m fine... I’m fine...

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Let’s go.

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

CONNOR
Fuck you.

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

EXT. LAUNDROMAT ROOF -- NIGHT

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

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

CONNOR
We deal with it.

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

Connor ignites it.

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

CONNOR
Does that sound professional to you?

Vincent shrugs.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
I’m honestly asking.

INT. LAUNDROMAT -- NIGHT

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

Visibility is low.

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

CONNOR
Does it matter?

Connor removes his ski mask.

VINCENT
I know you aren’t this fucking stupid.

CONNOR
Relax. No security cameras on the premises. And not a soul in sight. Fucking mask was chafing me.
Connor stares at Vincent. He starts cracking up.

VINCENT
What the fuck are you laughing at?

CONNOR
You just look like one goofy--

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

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

The store alarm cackles.

Vincent slides behind a washing machine, opposite Connor.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Holy shit!

VINCENT
Fucking guy’s got a shottie!

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

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

Neither are making a move.

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

Connor bangs his head against the dryer.

CONNOR
Fuck it.

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

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

Vincent doesn’t move. He is sweating.
Connor leaps over the desk and tackles Danny, just as he shoots again. The slug rockets through the ceiling, another hole.

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
I want the safe with the dirty money!

DANNY
What are you talking about? I’m a businessman!

CONNOR
I’ll smoke your businessman ass this second!

DANNY
I have a family!

CONNOR
Get the fucking safe!

Danny crawls forward and opens a cabinet under the register. A small metal safe is inside.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Vincent! Get the fuck over here, man!

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Give my associate the safe.

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Tell your fucking hand to hold still!

VINCENT
(shaken)
Watch your mouth.

DANNY
Who sent you?
CONNOR
I’m here to uphold the good name of Carmine Armento. You’ve been very careless.

Danny tries clawing at Connor’s eyes.

DANNY
Where the fuck are the cops?

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

CONNOR
Good question.

Connor looks at Vincent.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
You with me? We need to break the fuck out.

Connor walks out from behind the desk, but pauses. He turns, examining the body of Park.

Connor raises his gun.

VINCENT
No!

Vincent drops the safe and clutches Connor’s arm.

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

VINCENT
This situation is fucked enough without a murder one.

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

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

Connor lowers his gun.

CONNOR
You fucking dropped it?
INT. CONNOR’S PICK-UP TRUCK -- NIGHT

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

VINCENT
We left the blowtorch on the roof.

CONNOR
Wow. Forgot all about it.

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

CONNOR
Incorrect.

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

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

VINCENT
I’m going to Mexico. Permanent vacation.

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

Connor laughs. Vincent’s face is stone.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
You’ll see. These worries are for naught... And I’ve discovered my calling. I mean.... Robbing from scum... That can’t be a sin.
INT. THE SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- DAY

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

Park’s two front teeth are knocked out.

Carmine is smoking a cigar.

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

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

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

CARMINE
They are good for that.

DANNY
I could hit back.

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

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

CARMINE
You overestimate your capabilities.

DANNY
Let’s cut to the fucking chase.

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

Danny eyes the bar.
DANNY
How about a free drink to go along with this ridiculous offer?

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

DANNY
Make it hard liquor.

Carmine strolls over to the bar.

He pours Danny a drink.

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

DANNY
One of them. Up close and personal.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK -- DAY

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

INT. INDULGENCE RECORDS -- DAY

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

From this crowd of bemused onlookers emerges GINO RUGGIANO.

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

Gino claps, stirring Connor from of his malaise.

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

Connor yawns.

GINO
Are you giving me an attitude?

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

Gino is aghast.

GINO
This is the thanks I get?

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

GINO
How about firing you?

CONNOR
Your greatest accomplishment! At last!

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

GINO
Vacate this shop immediately, I will call the police.

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

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

GINO
You’ve lost your mind!

CONNOR
Wrong! Wrong! I have found my fucking mind!

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Just download the albums!
Incompetent fucks!

He exits, the bell above the door ringing.

INT. UNDERPASS -- NIGHT

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

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

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

VINCENT
Hello. Mind?

Charlie doesn’t respond.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
I think the police are after me.
Trying to find a place to hide.

Charlie sneezes, furiously wiping his nose.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Not just the badges, though.
There’s a girl.
(MORE)
Vincent’s phone rings. He checks the caller identification, squinting.

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

Charlie grabs Vincent.

CHARLIE
Be careful. The jungle is alive tonight.

VINCENT
Thanks for the advice.

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

EXT. GOLF COURSE -- NIGHT
Carmine stands atop a snow caked green.
He leans on a pole planted in a hole, denoted with a flag reading: 18.
Vincent appears behind him.
Carmine hears the snow crunching under his feet.

CARMINE
What took so long?

VINCENT
I drove carefully.
Carmine faces Vincent. He eyes him down.

CARMINE
You drunk?

Vincent nods. Carmine sighs.

CARMINE (CONT’D)
Remember how many days we spent on this course?
VINCENT
I was your caddy. Even though I knew jack shit about golf.

CARMINE
And neither did I.

They both laugh.

CARMINE (CONT’D)
Those were good times.

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

CARMINE
Yeah... before that fucking knee surgery.

VINCENT
What are you doing here tonight, anyway?

CARMINE
Reminiscing. Thinking about you.

VINCENT
I see.

CARMINE
Clearly or darkly?

Vincent looks down.

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

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

Carmine laughs.

CARMINE
Pretty cynical...

VINCENT
I can’t help it.
CARMINE
I knew it was wrong. So did she.
But what can I say? I do believe in
destiny. The chance to know someone
that completely...

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

VINCENT
I understand. Maybe more than you
realize.

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

VINCENT
Take it.

CARMINE
No. It takes you.

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

Vincent laughs.

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

VINCENT
What’s wrong with that?

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

(MORE)
This is what I live with. Not even sleep is safe.

VINCENT
That wouldn’t be an adjustment for me.

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

Vincent sighs, shaking his head.

VINCENT
The laundromat. How did you find out?

CARMINE
I know all.

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

CARMINE
There’s been a miscommunication. It will be addressed.

VINCENT
Are you mad?

CARMINE
Worried.

VINCENT
How did you first get involved? In all this?

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

VINCENT
Not enough.

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

CARMINE
There’s always another way. Keep your eyes open.

VINCENT
Could I get put away behind this?

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

Vincent extends his hand to Carmine.

VINCENT
I’m going to turn this around.

Carmine accepts, squeezing Vincent’s hand.

CARMINE
I believe you.

INT. CONNOR’S PICK-UP TRUCK -- DAY

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

CONNOR
Fucking bitch! She’s doing it to me again!

Connor hurls the phone against his dash. It shatters.

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

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

Connor pounds on the steering wheel.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Fuck! Fuck! Fucking bitch! I’m being logical! I’m being logical!
I’m being ignored, this is bull shit! Oh no, I’m fine, I’m fucking fine!

(MORE)
This is a perfectly acceptable, estimable, reasonable fucking response!

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

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

Connor’s nose begins to bleed.

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

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

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

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

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

You almost set, honey?

One second... so close.

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

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

Marc quickly blocks his path.

Connor, what the hell is going on?
CONNOR
Nothing at all, Mr. Reilly, nothing at all! Your daughter just doesn’t have any manners. Any human fucking decency!

MARC
Calm down.

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

Justine emerges from her room, remaining upstairs.

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

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

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

CONNOR
What are you going to do about it?

JUSTINE
Connor, stop!

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

Jessica steps off the ladder.

JESSICA
We’ll call the police!

CONNOR
Stay out of this mother bitch!

Marc wraps his hands around Connor’s neck.

JUSTINE
Oh my God!

JESSICA
Marc, no!
Jessica scrambles over to Marc, tries pulling him off Connor. Marc is enraged. Connor begins head butting him, in a bid to break free. Marc’s glasses snap in two, but his grip is strong.

MARC
I never liked you.

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

Connor gasps for air.

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

Connor turns and scurries up the stair-case.

Jessica pursues him, diving for his legs and missing.

JUSTINE
No! Mom!

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

INT. JUSTINE’S HOUSE, BEDROOM -- DAY

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

Connor locks her door.

JUSTINE
What are you going to do, Connor?

CONNOR
You think I would ever hurt you?

JUSTINE
Yes.

CONNOR
You are mistaken.

JUSTINE
Do you realize what you’ve done?
CONNOR
I deserve an explanation. After all we’ve been through, can you give me that?

JUSTINE
Look in the mirror. Should be obvious.

Connor screams, and hurls the television across the room.
Jessica pounds on the door, desperately turning the knob, calling out to Justine.

Connor pins Justine to the clothes cabinet.

CONNOR
You blame me! You blame me for popping vikes!

JUSTINE
I don’t!

CONNOR
I do! I fucking do!

JUSTINE
It was my choice Connor, my choice.

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

JUSTINE
We can’t go on like this...

Connor’s eyes well up with tears.

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

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

CONNOR
Can’t be true...
JUSTINE
He treats me like a woman. Not with your fucking condescension!

CONNOR
But Vincent...

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

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Stop... don’t cry. Don’t cry.

JUSTINE
Leave! You fucking animal!

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

CONNOR
How could this happen?

EXT. WHARF -- DAY

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

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

Vincent holds Justine close.

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

JUSTINE
Change is good.

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

JUSTINE
Hanging in there. One day at a time. Yourself?
VINCENT
I was online... and...

Vincent blushes.

JUSTINE
Tell me.

VINCENT
I found this hypnosis site. Looked interesting.

JUSTINE
You should definitely try that!

Vincent smiles.

VINCENT
Maybe.

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

VINCENT
Glad I could be of assistance.

JUSTINE
Never figured you had the disease.

VINCENT
My burdens are mine.

JUSTINE
The strong silent type...

VINCENT
I’ve always liked the sound of that.

JUSTINE
The way you look at me...

VINCENT
Yeah?

JUSTINE
I feel clean.

VINCENT
You always were, Justine. It’s this world that’s dirty.
Justine nestles her head into Vincent’s shoulder.

JUSTINE
Now I’m wondering. How we should proceed.

VINCENT
Not sure. Ride the current.

JUSTINE
It won’t be that easy.

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

JUSTINE
Connor visited my house today. Invited himself in.

VINCENT
What happened?

JUSTINE
He and my father got into a fight.

VINCENT
Are you serious?

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

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

JUSTINE
I’m trying to help.
VINCENT
I know.

JUSTINE
Maybe more than you wanted.

Vincent turns Justine toward him.

VINCENT
What do you mean?

JUSTINE
I told him the truth. That we made love.

VINCENT
Jesus Christ...

JUSTINE
I didn’t want you to have a choice.

VINCENT
Between him and you?

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

VINCENT
No... this is all wrong.

Vincent steps away from Justine.

JUSTINE
He doesn’t deserve your loyalty anymore.

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

Justine holds him.

JUSTINE
I need to tell you something.

VINCENT
There’s more?

JUSTINE
I love you.
They kiss, passionately. Vincent looks into her eyes.

VINCENT
I’m sorry. I have to fix this.

Vincent walks away.

Justine watches the sea, ebb and explode.

JUSTINE
Beyond salvation...

EXT. CONNOR’S HOUSE -- DAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

VINCENT
Connor...

CONNOR
Take a look Vincent.

Connor sweeps his hand.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
All these possessions... this is how we fill the emptiness. Quench our thirst. Beautiful country. Flawless system. I’m pretty fucking happy. How about you?
VINCENT
I’ve been better.

Connor laughs.

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

VINCENT
We have to talk. About Justine.

CONNOR
Remember that night on the hilltop? Our dialogue?

VINCENT
Sure I do.

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

VINCENT
I know.

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

VINCENT
You need help, man.

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

VINCENT
Take a fucking police exam, you maniac.
CONNOR
The justice I believe in is incorruptible. You know better...

VINCENT
You’ve gone off the fucking deep end.

Connor picks up the gun, points it upward.

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

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

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

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

CONNOR (CONT’D)
We’re all liars, Vincent. Just depends on the degree.

Vincent motions his left hand in a soothing manner.

VINCENT
Connor... drop the gun.
CONNOR
Why? Worried I’m going to blow my head off? Or yours?

VINCENT
Both.

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

Connor stands. He approaches Vincent.

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

VINCENT
Yes.

CONNOR
Did you try?

VINCENT
I haven’t.

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

VINCENT
Put that gun down. Please.

CONNOR
Are you afraid? That hand shaking?

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

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

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

VINCENT
No!
CONNOR
Pull the fucking trigger you fucking pussy! Can’t you take a life?

VINCENT
No!

Vincent fights, but Connor won’t let go.

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

Vincent tears his arm from Connor.

Connor falls on his back.

Connor begins to sob.

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

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

INT. THE SAND CASTLE, LOUNGE -- NIGHT

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

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

JACKIE
Buy her something. Usually shuts them up.

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

CARMINE
Kid... what’s the matter?

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

Carmine puts his hand on Vincent’s shoulder.
CARMINE
Wait here. I need to handle something, but it’ll only take a minute.

Vincent rubs his watering eyes.

CARMINE (CONT’D)
Vinny... what the hell happened?

Carmine guides Vincent over to the leather couch.

CARMINE (CONT’D)
Relax. Stay here.

Carmine and Jackie move out.

Vincent’s phone rings.

He does not answer.

EXT. THE SAND CASTLE -- NIGHT

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

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

JACKIE
I have the engine running.

CARMINE
Good. We need to talk.

JACKIE
About what?

CARMINE
In the car.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR -- NIGHT

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

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

JACKIE
What’s going on?
CARMINE
Care explaining your play?

JACKIE
Which one?

CARMINE
I expect more, Jackie. Own this.

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

JACKIE
I deserved the opportunity.

CARMINE
You disobeyed me.

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

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

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

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

JACKIE
I wasn’t thinking straight.

CARMINE
Damn right.

JACKIE
I would do the same for you.
CARMINE
What?

JACKIE
Follow you to hell.

The Jeep’s driver side window rolls down.

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

JACKIE
I’m sorry.

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

JACKIE
Carmine.

CARMINE
What?

JACKIE
How long has this fucking light been red?

CARMINE
Fuck it, drive through.

Jackie stares at the Jeep outside the passenger side.

JACKIE
This idiot looking for directions?

Carmine notices too, turning his head.

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

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

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

Heavy smoke filters from the street into the car.
Carmine is slumped over the dash. Jackie, face an unrecognizable, bloody mess, turns Carmine over.

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

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

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

JACKIE (CONT’D)
Help!

A crowd approaches, from up the street.

EXT. THE SAND CASTLE -- NIGHT

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

VINCENT
Move! Get the fuck out of my way!

Dominick emerges from the crowd, holding Vincent back.

DOMINICK
Vince, you don’t want to go down there.

VINCENT
Is it Carmine?

DOMINICK
It’s bad. Stay away.

VINCENT
I need to get through!

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

VINCENT
Alright...

Vincent relaxes, steps backward.

DOMINICK
Take a breath.
Vincent streaks past Dominick, who tries and fails to grab him.

    DOMINICK (CONT’D)
    Vincent, no!

EXT. INTERSECTION -- NIGHT

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

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

    VINCENT
    Jackie! What the fuck happened?

    JACKIE
    Carmine...

Jackie can barely talk, his speech a choked whisper.

    VINCENT
    Where is he?

    JACKIE
    We got hit...

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

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

    JACKIE
    He’s gone. Vincent... he’s gone.

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

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

    JACKIE
    Don’t go in there.

Jackie moves his head back and forth, plasma plastered pieces of glass spilling from his hair.
JACKIE (CONT’D)
Please... Don’t go in there.

Vincent stands.

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

The crowd has no answer.

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

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

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Mother fucker...

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

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

EXT. PARK, PLAYGROUND -- NIGHT

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

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

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

VINCENT
Pretty easy, chasing a man with one leg.

The assassin responds in a foreign language, panicked.

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

The assassin persists.
VINCENT (CONT’D)
Who the fuck sent you?
The assassin answers in his native tongue.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Take off the mask!

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

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

Vincent’s trigger hand begins to shake.

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

VINCENT
What? What the fuck are you saying?

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

Vincent’s hand steadies.

VINCENT
This is America.

Vincent fires a round through the assassin’s head.

EXT. MOONLIGHT HOTEL -- DAY

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

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

Vincent opens the door for Jackie, who enters.

INT. MOONLIGHT HOTEL, ROOM 24 -- DAY

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

Vincent sits down on the corner of the bed closest to the door.
He pulls up a chair for Jackie, who obliges, taking a seat. Vincent is uncouth. His hair is growing, unkempt, and his clothes are stained.

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

VINCENT
Thanks for remembering. Haven’t slept in who knows when...

JACKIE
No problem, Vince.

Jackie lights up a cigarette.

VINCENT
Been weeks since I’ve heard a word.

JACKIE
The heat is off. No witnesses. You’re a natural.

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

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

VINCENT
The triggerman was Korean.

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

VINCENT
Have they been dealt with?

JACKIE
Severely. A blitzkrieg.

VINCENT
Where did they get the fucking balls?

JACKIE
Human beings are irrational creatures.
VINCENT
Carmine...

JACKIE
Terrible fucking thing...

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

VINCENT
Am I back in civilization?

JACKIE
A few more days. Play it safe.

VINCENT
I have nothing.

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

VINCENT
Family...

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

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

They separate.

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

JACKIE
I like it. Reminds me of everyday.

Jackie kisses Vincent on the cheek.

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

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET -- NIGHT

Connor staggers around in a pretty part of town, houses like palaces adorned with kaleidoscopic Christmas lights. He is drinking from a flask. A black cadillac is trailing slowly behind him.
Connor diverts onto the sidewalk, unaware. He is mumbling to himself, incoherently. The flask slides from his hand.

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

    CONNOR
    Jackie. Heard you met with an accident--

    JACKIE
    You’ve become a difficult man to track down.

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

    JACKIE
    That so?

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

    JACKIE (CONT’D)
    You took off your mask, you stupid fuck!

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

    VOICE FROM THE CADILLAC (O.S.)
    Get him Jack! Just like the old days!

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

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

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

Jackie holsters his weapon.
JACKIE
I better never see you in my neighborhood again, or you are fucking dead, understand me? Stupid fucking Mick!

Connor peels the newspaper off his face.

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

JACKIE
I’ll pay?

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

JACKIE
You mother fucker...

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

JACKIE (CONT’D)
You’re pathetic. Not worth a bullet.

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

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

FADE TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB, BAR -- NIGHT

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

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

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

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

Jackie raises his glass.

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

The group, including Vincent, downs the alcohol.

Jackie pulls Vincent close.

   JACKIE (CONT’D)
   I need to see you outside, for a
   minute.

   VINCENT
   What about?

   JACKIE
   A business matter.

Vincent downs his vodka.

EXT. STRIP CLUB -- NIGHT

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

The area is seedy.

   VINCENT
   Time is flying. You’re rising.

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

   VINCENT
   Maybe you should find a new line of
   work.
JACKIE
I’m dangerously unskilled.

Vincent laughs.

VINCENT
Same here... unfortunately.

JACKIE
Remember your old Irish friend?

VINCENT
Connor? What about him?

JACKIE
He’s causing trouble. For us.

VINCENT
How so?

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

Vincent stamps out his cigar.

VINCENT
He has a death wish.

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

VINCENT
Our friendship is severed.

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

VINCENT
It’s personal. He wants my attention.

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

VINCENT
I did...
Jackie exhales a puff of smoke from his cigar.

JACKIE
We all have a past.

VINCENT
Unless we forget.

JACKIE
Come back inside. Time for your birthday present.

INT. STRIP CLUB, CHAMPAGNE ROOM -- NIGHT

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

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

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

VINCENT
Where are you girls from?

ASIA
Heaven.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE -- DAY

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

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

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

TRAVIS, a slender black male, approaches Connor, from a doorway leading into the room. Travis is 20 years old. His bushy haircut peeks out from under a red bandanna. He has a thin mustache.
TRAVIS
C... there’s someone here speaking your name.

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

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

Travis steps into his path.

TRAVIS
Did I give you permission, boy?

CONNOR
Let him pass.

Travis moves aside.

TRAVIS
Let me know if this punk has to get got.

CONNOR
I’ll take it from here, Travis.

Connor waves Travis off.

Travis exits.

VINCENT
Giving orders?

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

VINCENT
Until they aren’t.

CONNOR
Typical capitalist. You’d drown a friend for a buck.

VINCENT
Still judging, even though you’ve settled for bum.

CONNOR
Try Robin Hood. Prince of thieves.
VINCENT
Real romantic.

CONNOR
I’ve never hurt an innocent.

VINCENT
Who appointed you judge and jury?

CONNOR
The seat was vacant.

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

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

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

CONNOR
Should I be scared?

VINCENT
If you value your life.

CONNOR
I value life. Just not mine.

Vincent sets the briefcase down, next to Connor.

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

CONNOR
Am I supposed to be grateful?

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

CONNOR
Are my days growing short?
VINCENT
Now isn’t the time to be proud.
Just survive.

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

VINCENT
I don’t give a fuck how you
rationalize it.

CONNOR
You’ve become glorified slime in a
suit. Disgusts me.

VINCENT
Take the money.

CONNOR
I refuse.

VINCENT
I found you. They will.

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

VINCENT
Wake up!

CONNOR
How’s the sad-eyed lady of the
lowlands?

VINCENT
Justine? I lost touch with her.

CONNOR
After our divorce?

Connor laughs.

CONNOR (CONT’D)
Your personality is so terribly
predictable, Vincent. Contrived.
And I suffered you, all those
wasted years... one of us is dead
already.
VINCENT
Fuck you.

Vincent starts out.

CONNOR
You forgot the case.

Vincent turns.

VINCENT
Keep it. I’m cleansed of you, Connor. Done all I could.

Vincent walks out of the room, making a dismissive motion with his hand.

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

EXT. COFFEE SHOP -- NIGHT

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

VINCENT
How goes the career?

Justine jumps, scared. She circles.

JUSTINE
Vincent?

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

VINCENT
Hey.

JUSTINE
Where have you been?

VINCENT
I’m not sure.

JUSTINE
How could you leave me?

VINCENT
I can’t explain. On the spot.
JUSTINE

Try.

Vincent wipes his nose.

VINCENT

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

JUSTINE

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

VINCENT

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

JUSTINE

Have you seen Connor?

VINCENT

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

JUSTINE

Why do you lie, Vincent?

VINCENT

The truth is painful.

JUSTINE

It’s real.

VINCENT

Were we real?

JUSTINE

As anything I ever felt.

Vincent nods.

VINCENT

Same for me.

JUSTINE

Not a phone call...

VINCENT

Be with me now. Please.
JUSTINE
I met another man.

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

VINCENT
Go on. Walk away.

Justine does, tears in her eyes.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

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

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

FATHER JAMES
What is that?

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

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

JACKIE
Aces high, you rat fucks!

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

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

A crash. The door to the living room flies off its frame.

JACKIE (CONT’D)
What the fuck?

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

CONNOR
Was my invitation lost in the mail?
JACKIE
Son of a bitch...

Connor and Travis hop onto the elevated floor.

CONNOR
Swank apartment...

TRAVIS
I fucking hate it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Connor presses the barrel against Jackie’s lips.

CONNOR
Suck it for me, bitch.

TRAVIS
C...

JACKIE
You better pull that trigger.

CONNOR
I could kill you anytime I want. Embarrassment is priceless.

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

JACKIE  
You are dead... Dead.

TRAVIS  
C!

CONNOR  
You’re pathetic. Not worth a bullet.

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

Connor and Travis sprint out of the apartment.

EXT. VINCENT’S HOUSE, PORCH -- DAY

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

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

RICHARD  
What the fuck are you doing?

VINCENT  
Helping you.

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

VINCENT  
Circumstances changed, dad. Drastically.

RICHARD  
Get off my property.

VINCENT  
Come on...

RICHARD  
You weren’t even coming to visit. Slipping someone cash... you consider that a meaningful relationship? You’ve disgraced our family name, Vincent.
Vincent reaches into the mailbox, takes the money back.

VINCENT
I am disappointed. At your reaction to a favor.

RICHARD
You had such potential. I blame myself.

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

Vincent points toward an Infinity parked across the street.

Richard returns inside, slamming the door.

Vincent is left alone on the stoop.

INT. SHAMROCK BAR -- NIGHT

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

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

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

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

Jackie taps Vincent, who is surprised to see him.

VINCENT
Jack? What brings you to my hideaway?

JACKIE
Ever hear of Mario Esposito?

VINCENT
I can’t recall.

JACKIE
He was a heavy hitter in Carmine’s prime. They called him Marbles. A legend.
VINCENT
What’s he up to these days?

JACKIE
Not much. Died of a drug overdose back in ‘90.

VINCENT
Unfortunate.

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

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

VINCENT
What the fuck are we talking about here?

JACKIE
Are you loyal to this thing?

VINCENT
With all my heart.

JACKIE
You can prove it tonight. Are you prepared?

VINCENT
Yes.

JACKIE
Come with me.

Vincent follows Jackie out of the bar.

INT. CADILLAC -- NIGHT

Vincent sits in the backseat of a black cadillac. Jackie is passenger side. The driver is focused on the road.
VINCENT
Where are we going?

JACKIE
No questions. Take this.

Jackie hands Vincent a black handled hunting knife.

VINCENT
What do I need it for?

JACKIE
You’ll soon find out.

VINCENT
I never used a blade.

JACKIE
This needs to be personal.

EXT. BEACH, PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

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

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

Silhouetted figures are visible near the water.

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

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

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

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

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

The hoods step aside upon seeing Jackie.

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

JACKIE
He has no respect for us.
Vincent stares at Jackie.

JACKIE (CONT’D)
This is what we ask of you. A test of loyalty.

The sea is angry tonight, rampaging.

Vincent walks over to Connor.

He kneels in front of him.

Vincent’s eyes fill with tears.

CONNOR
What’s troubling you today, Vincent?

Vincent wipes his eyes.

VINCENT
I’m sorry Connor...

CONNOR
For what? This feels inevitable.

VINCENT
I don’t want to do this.

CONNOR
But you have to.

VINCENT
Can we find a way out?

CONNOR
Not this time, brother.

VINCENT
No...

Connor begins to cry.

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

They both laugh.

VINCENT
Yeah... yeah...
CONNOR
I had it all...

VINCENT
We had it all...

CONNOR
I love you, Vinny.

VINCENT
I love you too.

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

Blood sprays into Vincent’s face.

Connor reaches for Vincent’s hand.

Vincent takes hold.

Connor dies in Vincent’s arms.

Vincent lets go.

Connor is claimed by the tide.

Vincent stands. Jackie puts his arm around him.

JACKIE
You’ve done a great thing.

EXT. STREET CURB -- MORNING

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

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

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

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

RODNEY
Was it a rough night, junior mafioso?

VINCENT
Fuck off, cop.

DEAN
We’re placing you under arrest.

Dean lifts up Vincent, fastens handcuffs.

VINCENT
For what?

RODNEY
Loitering.

DEAN
And public drunkenness.

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

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

The room is confined, the lighting harshly bright.

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

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

VINCENT
Am I really under arrest?

RODNEY
Not officially.

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

DEAN
We’re about to impart invaluable information.

VINCENT
I don’t give a fuck if you found Bin Laden.
RODNEY
You will. Give a fuck.

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

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

VINCENT
And?

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

Vincent smacks his lips together.

VINCENT
I could use some water.

DEAN
We’ll get on that.

Vincent nods.

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

RODNEY
All available units were summoned to the scene for crowd control. They weren’t able to respond in time when shots were fired at a laundromat later that night.
DEAN
The bandits were damn sloppy too. I mean, leaving behind a God damn blowtorch? Not in my twenty plus years...

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

VINCENT
A rat?

Dean places a cup of water on the table.

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

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

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

Vincent slaps the cup of water.

VINCENT
I’m nobody’s bitch!

RODNEY
You never want to test that theory.

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

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

VINCENT
Who said I was fucking miserable?

DEAN
We didn’t.

Vincent’s eyes droop.

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

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

RODNEY
Our condolences.

VINCENT
Save them.

DEAN
Deep down you know this life has nothing for you.

RODNEY
And we can prove it.

DEAN
Give you a ticket to paradise.

Dean picks up the tape recorder.

DEAN (CONT’D)
Oh, those connections... we placed a wire in Madeline Bruno’s house in 1995. We were suspicious about meetings taking place at her residence. The wire led nowhere. These round table locations change frequently.
VINCENT
We’re always a step ahead of you douche bags.

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

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

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

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

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

VOICE (V.O.)
It’s a solid idea Jack, but the risks of taking out a capo--

JACKIE (V.O.)
These days, everybody has their head up their--

Dean stops the tape.

DEAN
Impressed?

Vincent coughs.

VINCENT
That it?
RODNEY
Give us Jackie. With you, we have a solid case.

DEAN
He killed Carmine.

RODNEY
The guy was practically family. We know.

VINCENT
You know shit!

Silence.

DEAN
Let us slot you in the program.

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

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

DEAN
You can handpick the state.

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

RODNEY
Right... the condo.

DEAN
That you have never paid tax one on.

RODNEY
You will be touched, Vincent. Somehow, someway.

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

VINCENT
There is no way out.
RODNEY
You’re wrong about that.

VINCENT closes his eyes with his thumb and forefinger.

He stands up and exits the room.

RODNEY (CONT’D)
We’ll see if your gamble pays dividends, Dino. Would have never backed this maneuver if we weren’t so stalled.

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

INT. SAND CASTLE, RESTAURANT -- MORNING

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

The Sand Castle is deserted.

VINCENT arrives, measuring up Jackie from across the room.

VINCENT
Mind if I join you?

JACKIE
Oh, the early riser!

VINCENT
Mind if I join you?

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

VINCENT takes a seat, across from him.

VINCENT
Is it a Jewish holiday?
JACKIE
What the fuck are you talking about? We don’t close for--

Jackie points at Vincent, starts laughing.

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

VINCENT
I’ll never stop laughing.

JACKIE
Those bags, though… Trouble sleeping?

VINCENT
Always.

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

Jackie leans back in his seat.

JACKIE
What the fuck is this?

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

JACKIE
They fuck with our heads. Pay no mind.

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

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

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

Jackie looks upward, exhales.
JACKIE
He was in my way Vincent. It wasn’t anything personal. Nothing is...

VINCENT
Power.

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

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

Jackie laughs.

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

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

JACKIE
Patience isn’t a virtue of mine.

VINCENT
I killed for you...

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

VINCENT
Carmine...

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

(MORE)
My flowers at the wake were the finest. The Don kissed my cheek. That’s that.

VINCENT
You never approached me directly.

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

VINCENT
What inspired such confidence?

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

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

Jackie finishes his spaghetti.

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

VINCENT (CONT’D)
What awaits you, Jackie? This a confession? Or your last words?

JACKIE
Oh, you’re no rat. I know that.

Vincent raises the gun.

Jackie reaches into his suit jacket.

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

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

Vincent exits, carrying the glass.

FADE TO:

INT. BALLROOM -- DAY

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

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

He is wearing a suit.

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

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

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

Vincent reaches Justine. She recognizes him immediately.

JUSTINE
Vincent D’Angelo...

VINCENT
Justine Reilly.

Vincent casts a glance on Scott.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Have we met?

SCOTT
I haven’t had the pleasure.

VINCENT
Because I could have sworn--

JUSTINE
Scott is my fiance. Just completed his degree.
VINCENT
Congratulations Scott. What was the concentration?

SCOTT
Law.

VINCENT
Nice.

Silence.

JUSTINE
This is his sister’s wedding party.

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

SCOTT
Is a politician. You’re--

VINCENT
In his debt.

SCOTT
The sentiment is appreciated... I suppose.

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

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

JUSTINE
One dance.

VINCENT
A reasonable request.

Justine stands up. She accompanies Vincent onto the dance floor.

VINCENT (CONT’D)
Not a day goes by without you crossing my mind.
INT. BALLROOM, DANCE FLOOR -- DAY

Vincent takes Justine by the hand.

The orchestra begins to play the Intermezzo from “Cavalleria Rusticana”.

Vincent and Justine come together. They dance.

Slowly.

VINCENT
Still chasing it?

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

VINCENT
What?

JUSTINE
I was above it.

Vincent smiles.

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

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

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

JUSTINE
Are you clean?

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

JUSTINE
You stole my heart, Vincent.

VINCENT
I’m not a thief... just a caretaker.
They look deeply into each other’s eyes.

Justine tries pulling away. Vincent holds her.

JUSTINE
Please... let me go...

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

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

They part.

INT. BALLROOM, JUSTINE’S TABLE -- DAY

Justine sits back down next to Scott.

SCOTT
Change your mind?

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

SCOTT (CONT’D)
Is that a poem?

INT. BALLROOM, VINCENT’S TABLE -- DAY

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

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

The orchestra plays on.

FADE TO BLACK.