

ACTS OF CRIME

"Fuck Tha Police"

by
Sam Esmail

Over the OPENING CARDS:

LOUIS GAETZ (V.O.)

"Crime. An action or omission that constitutes an offense that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law." Now that's the textbook definition, but what's it really mean? I know, I know, you're all asking yourself, what kind of dipshittery is this? We're on the last day of the semester in a Criminal Justice class and we're just now getting to the definition of the word "Crime"?

LAUGHTER as we SMASH TIGHT to a chalkboard as the word "CRIME" gets quickly and violently written.

INT. RUTGERS UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

We pull out to reveal a large lecture hall at Rutgers University. PROFESSOR LOUIS GAETZ, a tough Irishman in a suit way too expensive for a professor, turns from the board and looks over at the packed house of UNDERGRAD FRESHMEN of his popular criminology class. Still built like he can go out on the beat tomorrow, Gaetz's confident stature is born out of a decades-long life in law enforcement.

LOUIS GAETZ

All quips aside, let's try reverse engineering this together, shall we? Once a criminal act has taken place, two forces quickly go to work. One force tries to erase the act as much as he or she can. They trash evidence, make up alibis, maybe even frame others. "It had to be the crooked police that bashed in the head of that annoying, sweetpea wife of mine, I swear!"

(laughter)

Then there's the other force. A force that has to make out what exactly happened in that brief moment in space and time. A moment broken up into puzzle pieces and buried in the hearts and minds of those that knew the victims and the criminals, waiting for someone to put those pieces together.

(MORE)

LOUIS GAETZ (CONT'D)

Now about half of the time, these whodunnits are pretty elementary. But it's the other half I wanna talk about, because it's those times where you'll have nothing to go on but the most unreliable of truths: people. Misleading witnesses, bad testimonies, false suspects will be all you get. So, what do you do? Well, it's simple: you'll have to conjure the dead, see into the past and the future, you'll have to read minds. In short, you'll have to be miracle workers. And while you perform these miracles, you'll be shot at, lied to, and spat on by a submoronic citizenry that wants your head on a stake. Take it from someone who worked the roughest streets known to man, this is not about the pursuit of a truth that any pencilneck can find, it's about seeing a truth that you can only hope to ever barely make out. And it is within that fog of uncertainty where you'll get the chance to glimpse the ephemeral, true nature of crime.

(off their rapt looks)

I thank you all for putting up with my braggadocio these last few months. Have a good Christmas, and I mean that secularly for any of you wiseasses that wanna get cute about it.

More laughter as the class shuffles out. Gaetz eyes one white student, JIMMY RUSSO (18), as he's about to leave.

LOUIS GAETZ (CONT'D)

Mr. Russo? Need a word with you about that last exam.

Jimmy's Eminem-esque demeanor evaporates instantly. He waits by the stairs as the rest of the class heads out. We splash over him the TITLE CARD:

ACT ONE
THE VICTIM

INT./EXT. RUSSO SEDAN (MOVING) - DAY

TIGHT ON: gunfire mayhem. CUT WIDE to reveal Jimmy's little brother, DARRYL, sitting in the back playing *Call of Duty* on his phone. Jimmy sits in the passenger seat, staring out the window. His all business mother, MELISSA, vapes as she road rages, HONKING and shaking her head at a nearby car as she switches lanes. She looks in the rearview and is immediately annoyed at the big garbage bag blocking her view.

MELISSA

Darryl, hon, can you move that, I can't see over that thing.

(to Jimmy)

What's in there, anyhow? Laundry?
What, they didn't have washing machines at the dorms?

Jimmy half-nods, not really paying attention. His phone BUZZES with a text from Kathy: "DUDE! when are you back??" Jimmy smiles and responds "pick me up in a couple of hours??"

JIMMY

Mah, I'mma hang with Kat tonight.

Disappointed, Melissa forces a smile and vapes.

MELISSA

Remember we have church in the morning, and I'm afraid I'm gonna have to insist on that.

He doesn't respond, too fixated on his phone. Kathy texts back: "you better be there or u a dead man [knife emojis]" as her mother HONKS up a storm at another car.

EXT. JACKSON MALL - NIGHT

A decrepit, vandalized picture of Andrew Jackson with a mischievous grin lords over the rundown mall. A few SKATEBOARDERS crash off the stairwell leading to the entrance. Nearby, Jimmy and KATHY, an eighteen year old with proud South Jersey bluster, sit up on top of a bench as they pass a fat joint back and forth. She takes a selfie of the both of them, then inspects the picture.

JIMMY

It's cold as shit out here. Why can't we just go to your place--

KATHY

Negative. Mom's boyfriend is over and, yes, he's still a dick, so...

Kathy opens up her jacket to show some cleavage as she tries to take a solo selfie with the joint in her mouth.

JIMMY

Can't believe she's still with him.

KATHY

Just cuz you changed, don't mean the rest of us did.

Unsatisfied with the pic, she does a second take of the selfie, more cleavage. Jimmy shoots her a look.

KATHY (CONT'D)

What? First one wasn't good enough, trust. I kinda know what I'm doing. I have like fifteen thousand followers and I'm barely flexing.

JIMMY

Kat, why are you doing this? You scored perfect on your SATs, you're too smart to be subjecting yourself to this insta-model schtick.

KATHY

You ask me, making a lot of money by doing very little is not only smart, but the unofficial creed of the American dream, kid.

(third take, tongue out)

'Sides, who's gonna bail out my broke-ass mom before we end up back in the projects. It's been dire straits as of late. 'Course, you'd know that if you hadn't ghosted me these last three months.

JIMMY

Don't say it like that, you know I didn't mean to. The pre-law track is no joke, takes up a lot of time.

KATHY

(shakes her head)

Jimmy Russo, from stoner comrade to social justice warrior. Still can't believe your ass is gonna be a lawyer.

JIMMY

(playful smile)

You hate to see it.

KATHY

I do. Especially cuz I thought the special bond we shared was based on our mutual hatred of this sham democracy we live in and the corruptive system therein.

JIMMY

Well, maybe this is just my way of gaming that system.

KATHY

Except if history's taught us anything, only thing that's gonna get gamed in that equation is you.

JIMMY

Yeah, well, history's gonna change.

KATHY

(off his curious smile)
Hold up-- I know that smile. This isn't about any "gaming the system" malarkey, you're doin' all this cuz of a girl! *You met someone.*

(off his guilty look)
Holy shit, I'm right! Asshole! Ok, let's have it, who's the cooz?

JIMMY

Let's just say... she's someone very special.

KATHY

(bittersweet)
I'm happy for you. Really. But tell me you'll end things if she turns out to be some sort of Scalia disciple, cuz at some point I gotta hang with this chick and I can't be having idiotic convos about her originalism leanings.

JIMMY

No Scalia, I promise.
(smiles, then...)
Kat, I gotta talk to you about something. Serious this time--

KHALID (O.S.)

Yo, Russo! Let me holler at you real quick!

Jimmy looks over to the skateboarders across the way and spots a black kid he was friends with in high school, KHALID.

KATHY

Shit, isn't that... Khalid?

JIMMY

(concerned)

Stay here.

He walks over to Khalid and they immediately start getting into a heated exchange that we can't hear from Kathy's POV. She nervously smokes her joint and waits when she spots something curious in the parking lot: A GREEN SUV with what looks like the SILHOUETTE OF A MAN in the driver's seat. The lights are all off as he just sits there, staring.

A PUSH! by Khalid on Jimmy Snaps Kathy's attention back as the exchange between them has turned ugly. Kathy puts the joint out and cautiously walks over to the heated standoff.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I told you, I don't even know what this is about--

KHALID

Stop runnin' your mouth, that's what this is about. So either you gonna heed this warning or we gonna have to kick this up to another level, feel me?

(off his indignant look)

Fine then, homie, let's go!

Khalid steps up to Jimmy's face. They're now inches apart.

KHALID (CONT'D)

Let's do this thing, right now.

Jimmy sees the hurt behind his anger.

KATHY

Jim. Don't. Let's just go. Please.

But the face off continues, neither one backing down.

KHALID

Bring it dog, bring it.

A tense moment. Finally, Jimmy breaks off the stare and backs away. Disappointed but somewhat satisfied, Khalid looks on as his boys SNICKER and LAUGH.

INT. RUSSO HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

TIGHT ON: *Miracle on 34th St* playing on TV. Melissa watches from the couch in the living room. Jimmy walks in and lets out a huge shiver from the cold. He takes off his coat, kicks off his shoes and sits on the couch with his mom.

JIMMY

What're you watching?

She knows what he's really asking and hands over the remote:

MELISSA

Yes, you can put on something else.
Don't stay up too late, we're
getting up at seven.

She heads upstairs as Jimmy sprawls on the couch and starts flipping through the channels. He lands on 1974's "Black Christmas." After a few seconds, he hears the faint VIBRATE of his phone. He goes for his pocket, but it's not there--

He goes to the closet and digs his cell out of his coat. He eyes the caller ID: "PRIVATE". He shakes his head, answers:

JIMMY (INTO THE PHONE)

Khalid, I don't care what you say,
I didn't do what you think I did--

He makes his way back to the couch and sits on the edge.

JIMMY (INTO THE PHONE) (CONT'D)

You don't need to apologize, I get
it, we're all good... Yeah, that's
not too far from me... Me? This has
nothing to do with me. What would I
even do? ... I guess I could come.

He hangs up and eyes the phone with hesitation. Then a hopeful smile grows on his face. He walks to the closet and grabs his coat. He grabs the car keys from the hook, opens the front door, then pauses. He walks into a nearby study. He opens a closet and finds a safe on the top shelf. He unlocks it, opens it and PULLS OUT A GUN.

He stuffs the gun into his jacket pocket and leaves. We stay on the door from the inside as we hear his car pull out of the driveway and take off down the road. A loud, blood-curdling scream from "Black Christmas" overwhelms the track.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. VIVIEN'S HOUSE - JEROME'S BEDROOM - DAWN**

VIVIEN LAMONTE, a tatted black female detective, lies in her son's twin bed, wearing basketball shorts and an Iverson jersey. She hasn't slept a wink. Her son's bedroom is decked out like one: posters, sneakers, video games. Vivien looks at her phone: a text exchange with her 15 year old son, JEROME: "you've been gone for a week now, you gotta come home" "i know youre mad, but you cant stay at your friends forever" "please dont ignore me" She types "i miss you" No response.

INT. VIVIEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

SERIES OF TIGHT SHOTS: shirt covering her tattoos, Timberland boots being laced up, diamonds on her gold watch sparkle as it slips on her wrist, a gun going into her holster.

Now dressed for the day, Vivien looks in the mirror and stares herself down. She starts taking deep, long breaths, like she's psyching herself up for something. The breaths get deeper and faster until finally-- SHE WHIPS HER GUN OUT, COCKS IT, PRESSES IT TO HER HEAD AND SHUTS HER EYES. After a brief, tense moment-- She pulls the gun away. Shaking off the shame as she slowly holsters the gun. She grabs her keys and wallet as the TITLE CARD splashes on:

**ACT TWO
THE DETECTIVE****EXT. ROAD - DAY**

A NJ State Police billboard lords over a road. It shows a picture of a young woman with "WHO KILLED ME?" in bold letters next to her. A police-issued Ford Taurus drives by.

INT./EXT. FORD TAURUS (MOVING) - DAY

A spry rookie detective named TODD LEVINE drives as Vivien scrolls through Twitter with a scoff:

VIVIEN
This world is broke.
(off his look)
You see this shit that came out on
UFOs? It's not even really
trending.

(MORE)

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

Pentagon releases all this evidence, and aside from a few eggs cracking wise, no one can be bothered with it. I guess an alien invasion pales in comparison to the shit we already dealin' with here.

(shakes her head)

This world is broke.

TODD

(awkward beat)

I'm Todd, by the way. Todd Levine. Your new partner. I was trying to introduce myself earlier when I picked you up, but you were on your phone...

(she still is)

Anyway, I figured we'd get to know each other a bit before we--

VIVIEN

Name's Vivien Lamonte. All my years on the beat and homicide, I never killed no one or seen anyone get killed, and I aim to keep it that way. As far as I go, that's all you need to know about me.

Todd accepts her curt response and looks on.

EXT. ABANDONED GAS STATION - MORNING

The station has turned into a crime scene with yellow tape, PHOTOGRAPHERS, and COPS roaming around. The Russo car sits in the now defunct parking lot. Todd and Vivien's car pulls up. They get out and head towards the scene. Vivien bumps into a TALL MAN wearing a MAROON SLICKER, who brushes past her in a hurry. A cheery old-timer, DEPUTY DALLAS, approaches:

DEPUTY DALLAS

Merry Christmas Detective Lamonte.

VIVIEN

(re: maroon slicker)

Deputy Dallas, let's make sure we do a better job of locking this scene up. I want no strays walkin' around here.

DEPUTY DALLAS

Of course, ma'am, will do.

(looks at his notes)

So, ummm...

(MORE)

DEPUTY DALLAS (CONT'D)
we got a phone call, 2:45 AM, this morning, mother stated that her son had been missing, left without telling her nothing and took her car. Uhh... we responded, and quickly found the car. That's this right here.

(points to the car)
We did a quick perimeter search around the location, and that's when we discovered the body.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

The DEAD BODY OF JIMMY lays in the leaves. Vivien paces around the body as she dons medical gloves, then kneels down to examine the black and blue marks all around his neck.

DEPUTY DALLAS
As you can see by the trail, looks like he was dragged here from the parking lot. Footprints suggest a skinny, lean build. It looks like the cause of death was strangulation, but still need the medical examiner's two cents on that. Unfortunately, no fingerprints.

VIVIEN
What about his wallet, cell?

DEPUTY DALLAS
No ma'am, not on him at least.

Vivien puts on reading glasses as she continues to inspect the body. She notices stray hairs along Jimmy's wool coat.

VIVIEN
You talk to the mother?

DEPUTY DALLAS
Just some prelims. We haven't notified her about the body yet.

VIVIEN
Do they have a dog?

DEPUTY DALLAS
(looks at his notes)
Ummm... they... I believe they did not have a dog ma'am, but I will have to confirm that with her.

VIVIEN
Detective Levine, you ever read
Maya Angelou?

TODD
Uhh... haven't brushed up on it,
recently, no. Maybe in like... high
school?

VIVIEN
She's got this quote that comes to
mind whenever I'm on a crime scene:
"When someone shows you who they
are, believe them the first time."
(eyeing the stray hairs)
Need to pick up all these stray
hairs off this wool coat here.
Could be his dog's, could be his
boyfriend's dog, girlfriend's,
neighbor's, check 'em all.

Vivien goes to stand when she notices Jimmy's shirt was
buttoned incorrectly. Curious, she unbuttons one and notices
dried blood underneath. Todd and Deputy Dallas exchange looks
as she continues to unbutton the entire shirt and pulls it
apart, revealing an EERIE FACE CARVED INTO HIS CHEST.

DEPUTY DALLAS
Woops! Well, this just got weird.

He WHISTLES over to the PHOTOGRAPHERS. Eyeing the creepy
face, Todd offers up:

TODD
N-P-C. Non-player Character. It's
from video games, but it became a
popular meme. Mostly used to troll
people online, accusing them of not
thinking for themselves.

Vivien takes in Todd's words with interest as she looks back
down at the unusual carving.

VIVIEN
Not a lot of blood, must have
coagulated before they pulled their
li'l knife trick. They waited hours
after he was dead to do this.

As photographers arrive, Vivien takes off her glasses and
stands to let them do their work.

DEPUTY DALLAS

Detective Lamonte, the mother's still up at the house. She still doesn't know about the body. Want me to send her down to the station?

VIVIEN

No need, Deputy, Todd here will break the news to her.

EXT. RUSSO HOUSE - DAY

From outside the Russo house, we hear the SCREAMS of Melissa as Todd breaks the news to her about her son's murder.

INT./EXT. FORD TAURUS - DAY

Vivien sits in the car, listening to a radio news report on UFOs, while refreshing her son's instagram. The latest posts are of Jerome showing off an "ACAB" shirt while hanging with his friends. The mother's SCREAMS are starting to get to her, she turns up the news broadcast to drown it out.

As she does this, she notices Khalid down the street, standing outside of his apartment complex holding a garbage bag, and staring at the house. Curious, Vivien steps out.

EXT. RUSSO HOUSE - DAY

She discreetly eyes Khalid while playing it off by lighting a Philly Blunt. The SCREAMS get momentarily louder as the front door swings open and Todd walks out of the house. Khalid catches Vivien looking at him, nervously throws out the garbage, puts up his hoodie and skateboards away. Shaken from delivering the brutal news, Todd looks at his notepad:

TODD

The mother said he was with a friend until 11 PM on the dot. She saw the clock turn as he walked in. Friend is a Kathy Mills. Got her address. She also said when he left the second time, he took her gun--
(more SCREAMS, looks down)
His little brother... must have been 9 or 10. I don't think I'll ever forget the look on his face--

She ignores him as she puts out the end of the blunt with her fingers, pockets it and gets into the car. Todd begrudgingly gets in the driver's side.

INT. KATHY'S DUPLEX - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A Christmas tree sits in the messy living room. SUSAN, Kathy's mom, smokes a cigarette and watches *Fox & Friends* in the corner, seemingly uninterested in what's going on. She sneaks glares at Vivien, who sits on a couch next to Todd. Kathy sits on a couch across from them. We pick up after the news of Jimmy's death has been dropped. Kathy's all cried out, her eyes and cheeks still wet from tears.

TODD

So, Kathy, we know this is difficult, but we just need to ask some questions, if that's okay?

Todd pulls out his notepad. Distraught, Kathy can't respond.

VIVIEN

Jimmy's mom said you saw him last night? Is that correct?

KATHY

Umm... last night, yeah. We went to the mall. Out by the high school. Maybe 9, 9:30? It wasn't that late.

VIVIEN

Can you tell us a little bit about what you two were doing?

KATHY

Um, nothing, just hanging out...

VIVIEN

Anything out of the ordinary happen while you two were there?

KATHY

Um, well, there was a guy there... Khalid... he went to school with us. Anyway, Jimmy and him kinda got into it, I guess.

TODD

What's Khalid's last name?

KATHY

I forget, but it shouldn't be hard to look up. He was in our year.

TODD

What does he look like?

KATHY
(looks away from Vivien)
Um, he's... black.

TODD
Anything else you can tell us about
him?

KATHY
He was into art, he liked to draw?

Todd writes this down as he looks over at Vivien.

VIVIEN
What exactly was this beef between
the two of them?

KATHY
Last summer Khalid kissed Jimmy,
but-- you know, Jimmy's straight.
Khalid got embarrassed or whatever
and tried to play it off because
he's not out and doesn't want to
be. When rumors started going
around, I guess he thought Jimmy
outed him.

VIVIEN
Tell us more about this altercation
at the mall.

KATHY
They just pushed each other around
is all. After that, I drove Jimmy
home. He didn't wanna talk about
it. I remember we were at that long
light right by there, you know the
one that takes forever? And it was
just... silence. It was so awkward,
I just went on my phone.

VIVIEN
What'd you do on your phone?

KATHY
Posted a pic I took at the mall.

VIVIEN
And when you got back to his house?

KATHY
(looks down curiously)
Nothing, he just went in... Wait, I
forgot. Something else happened.

(MORE)

KATHY (CONT'D)

In the mall parking lot, someone was sitting in a green SUV. Their lights were all off and it looked like they were just staring at us.

TODD

Did you get a look at their face?

KATHY

No, it was too dark. But... I could have sworn it was my ex, Jason Martin. He drives a green SUV that looked exactly the same.

TODD

Can you give us his address?

EXT. THE MARTIN'S HOUSE - DAY

A Christmas Wreath on the door with a sign reading "WELCOME TO THE MARTINS." Todd knocks. Dog Barks. Todd knocks again. No one seems to be home. As Todd does this, Vivien walks by the windows and looks into the kitchen. She wanders over to the driveway and notices stacks of unopened newspapers.

VIVIEN

You can save it. They haven't been home for a few days.

TODD

What about the dog?

VIVIEN

You see one? No food or water bowl either. Probably just an alarm.
(he peeks into the window)
When you grow up as a li'l troublemaker in Camden, you're taught to scope these things out.

Todd's phone rings. As he takes the call, Vivien walks back to the car while lighting her blunt. Unlike Kathy and Jimmy's neighborhood, this is an upper class development full of McMansions. A couple of WHITE MOMS walk by, side-eyeing Vivien with suspicion. She puts her hand on her hip, moving her jacket away to show the badge on her belt. Embarrassed, they look away and keep walking. Todd approaches Vivien:

TODD

Lab came back on those hairs. Most likely a yellow lab. Also, patrol spotted our guy, Khalid. They're bringing him to the station.

VIVIEN
(concerned pause)
They tell you who picked him up?

TODD
Officer Lux. Why?

She doesn't respond and gets in the car. Todd does the same.

INT./EXT. FORD TAURUS (MOVING) - DAY

Vivien's back on Twitter. Todd looks over.

TODD
You really just gonna be on Twitter
all day?

VIVIEN
You wanna talk, propose a subject.

TODD
Okay, fine. Um... how about why you
wanted to be police?
(off her incredulous look)
It's just a way to start
conversation, man.

VIVIEN
I ain't no man.

TODD
Never mind.

Wanting to get this over with, Vivien puts her phone down:

VIVIEN
Fine, let's get this over with. You
first.

TODD
Uh... okay, well, one day in law
school, I went to my wife Jane--

VIVIEN
Your wife is for real named Jane?

TODD
Yeah, why?

VIVIEN
I don't know, Todd and Jane? Sounds
pretty white to me.

TODD

Jane's actually Filipino.

VIVIEN

(impressed)

Damn Todd. Okay. I stand corrected. Looks like you and I have the same type. So go on. You were telling your Filipino wife, Jane?

TODD

I told her I wanted to do something good for the world, but I didn't think being a lawyer was it. I'm not a paper pusher like that, you know? I need to see the results first hand, on the street, solving crimes, catching the--

He stops himself out of embarrassment. Vivien looks over:

VIVIEN

Were you about to say catching the bad guys, Todd?

TODD

That's what we do, don't we? As an officer, I caught all sorts of criminals, and after every single apprehension, I felt... heroic. Sue me for saying that, but it's true.
(off her skeptical look)

You don't think we catch bad guys?

VIVIEN

(considers)

Guess it all depends on who you think the bad guys are. It changes over time, you know? Back in the early 20th century it was the Nazis, right? Most everybody hated them. Yeah, they seemed to have the bad guy routine down pat. Then came the cold war and it shifted to the commie Soviets. They were so bad it even justified an entire Rocky movie. Then 9/11 happened, and it was all the Freedom Fries you ever wanted if you could kill a towel head. But after that, the pandemic came, and the new enemy was the bat-eating, job stealing Chinese.

(MORE)

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

Yeah, we had a lot of different bad guys over the years, but if I were to really put my thinking cap on-- us black folks seem to be the one constant that's stood the test of time. Never really got why though. I mean, we didn't start no world war, or build a nuclear arsenal or slam planes into buildings. Nope, all we guilty of is being subservient for four hundred years. It wasn't until I joined the force that I got it. Police's primary reason for existing is to be the hired muscle that protects private property. And back in the day, that meant catching runaway slaves, not bad guys. But as time went on, the distinction between the two was never made all that clear, perhaps intentionally so. And now... well, we may have swapped enslavement for incarceration, but shit is otherwise pretty much the same.

TODD

If that's how you see it, then why are you still a cop?

VIVIEN

Like I was tryna say earlier, I was a street soldier up in Camden. So, gang life is all I've ever known.

TODD

I don't follow.

VIVIEN

We may be sanctioned by the government, don't mean that flashing a badge is any different than flashing a gang sign. You wanna feel heroic about what we do? Fine by me. But don't ever forget what we hired to do. We ain't heroes, we're thugs.

(lets out a deep exhale)

You were right. I feel better now. I'm glad we did this.

She goes back to Twitter. Todd looks ahead and drives.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. KHALID'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN**

Wearing only underwear, Khalid checks himself out in a mirror, his whole body tatted up with beautiful designs of imaginary superheroes. He starts getting dressed as he looks over at his bed where last night's date, ANTONIO, lies naked.

KHALID

My man, let's go, you gotta get up--

Antonio rolls over, not wanting to. Khalid playfully jumps on top of him and turns him over. Khalid puts his hand down his body and slowly strokes Antonio's dick. Antonio likes it.

KHALID (CONT'D)

You awake now?

They kiss. After a few moments, Khalid pulls away and says:

KHALID (CONT'D)

Let's get a move on before my pops wakes up.

INT. KHALID'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Khalid and Antonio walk out of the bedroom and into the small living room and kitchen. Khalid's stern Sudanese father, OMAR, is planted on the couch, eating cereal while staring at the weather channel. Surprised by his father being up so early, Khalid puts on a deeper voice:

KHALID

Hi dad. My friend, we were up late playing Xbox and he slept over--

Omar goes to the kitchen and puts his bowl in the sink.

OMAR (IN ARABIC, SUBTITLES)

Make sure you do the dishes and don't let the trash pile up like this.

He goes back to the couch and continues watching TV.

EXT. KHALID'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - COURTYARD - DAY

Garbage bag in one hand, skateboard in the other, Khalid leads Antonio downstairs to the courtyard.

KHALID

Go out the side gate and remember--
what happened last night, stays
between us. No talkin' to no one
about what we did or where we was
or you gonna be hurtin' real bad.

(off his scared nod)

Go on then.

Antonio leaves out the side gate. Khalid heads the opposite direction to the front.

EXT. KHALID'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - STREET - DAY

Khalid walks out and heads to the dumpster when he hears a continuous, faint SCREAM coming from down the street. He looks over and realizes it's coming from the Russo residence. A look of concern grows on Khalid's face as he considers the implications. That's when he sees Vivien standing by her vehicle and locking eyes with him, playing out the scene we saw earlier in front of Jimmy's house, but from Khalid's POV.

Khalid nervously breaks the stare and throws out the garbage. He puts his hoodie up, Beats headphones on, plays a trendy Trap song and skateboards down the street the opposite way. We splash the TITLE CARD:

**ACT THREE
THE SUSPECT**

INT. DOUGHBOY COMICS - LATER

The NERDS check out the latest editions of all the popular comics, but Khalid is in an aisle containing the more obscure, artier graphic novels. One in particular he's reading is called "THE O-DOG CHRONICLES." The STORE OWNER walks up behind him. Khalid pulls his headphones down.

STORE OWNER

We do this every week. You know you can't be just reading them without making a purchase.

KHALID

Damn man, why am I so special?
Don't see you talkin' to no one
else--

STORE OWNER

That's because everyone else in here buys them, you don't. Come on, put it away. Let's go.

Angry, Khalid shakes his head and slowly puts the book back.

STORE OWNER (CONT'D)

Let's move it, out you go--

KHALID

I'm gucci dude, chill!

He knocks over all the books on the shelf on his way out, then flips him off.

EXT. STREETS - LATER

Khalid, hoodie up, skateboards down the streets when he hears the familiar SIREN of a POLICE CRUISER. He rolls his eyes as he looks over to see the CRUISER pulling up beside him. He lets out a resigned sigh as he gets off his board. He turns around, hands up. OFFICER BRAD LUX gets out and approaches with a BlueLivesMatter swagger, alongside his PARTNER.

KHALID

My hands are up, officers, I am not resisting, I repeat, my hands are up, I am not resisting--

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. PITMAN POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Khalid sits in the interrogation room with a BLACK EYE and BADLY BRUISED FACE. His hoodie now gone, he's only wearing his white tank top. The door opens and in walks Todd and Vivien. Khalid doesn't look up or acknowledge them. Todd eyes Khalid's bruises and looks over at the unflinching Vivien who says nothing and sits down across from him. Todd follows suit. Vivien opens up a file and reads from it.

VIVIEN

Are you Khalid Coffy?

KHALID

(still looking away)

Yuh.

VIVIEN

It's cold out today, don't you have a coat or anything?

KHALID

Had one, until your officer ripped it off of me.

VIVIEN
You wanna blanket or anything--

KHALID
Nah, just wanna get this over with.

VIVIEN
(takes a moment)
Mr. Coffy, you know why you here?

KHALID
(shrugs)
Not really, I mean the--

VIVIEN
Look at me please.

KHALID
Some shit about a fight I allegedly partook in last night, not sure I got more than that before the cop was bangin' my head with his stick.

VIVIEN
(looks down at the file)
The arresting officer said you were resisting and exhibiting hostile behavior--

KHALID
(laughs)
Right. Yeah, that's a good one.

VIVIEN
(takes another moment)
Do you know Jimmy Russo, Mr. Coffy?

KHALID
Yeah, so what? His bitch ass spreadin' rumors about me, I just had to straighten shit out, that's all, I didn't know he was gonna be a punk and call the cops on me--

VIVIEN
Whatchu mean by straighten shit out? What'd you do to him exactly?

KHALID
(scoffs)
You already know, I stepped to him at the mall, and he ran away like the bitch he is, don't know what that got to do with y'all.

(MORE)

KHALID (CONT'D)

He can't be pressin' charges for that, I had a right to tell him not to talk shit about me, slander and whatnot, ain't that a right of mine?

VIVIEN

After you left the mall, where'd you go?

KHALID

(hesitates)

Ain't gonna tell you that.

VIVIEN

And why not?

KHALID

It's my business, that's why not.

Todd puts a regular picture of the NPC face on the table.

TODD

Have you seen this picture before?

Vivien inspects Khalid's genuine confusion.

KHALID

(laughs)

No. Did Jimmy do that? Art was not his forte, I coulda told you that--

TODD

Mr. Coffy, we need you to take this more seriously, there was a crime committed last night.

KHALID

You can clap back all you want, homie, all I did was push the li'l bitch, that don't make no crime--

TODD

Jimmy Russo was found murdered this morning.

A shocked and confused look flashes across Khalid's face.

KHALID

Murdered?

TODD

Time of death puts it around 11:30 PM. Now, we need to know what you were doing around that time--

VIVIEN

(eyes on Khalid)
Detective, give me and Khalid here a few moments to ourselves.

Todd looks over to Vivien wondering what the hell she's pulling. But she doesn't look back. He begrudgingly leaves the room. Khalid looks down, the shock and sadness of the news hitting him more than worrying him.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

Khalid. You seem like a smart kid. Gotta ask. Why didn't you lawyer up when they brought you in?

KHALID

(full of emotion)
Last night I went to a club and picked up a dude, but I can't swear on that shit to nobody because my pops would hang me--
(his voice cracks)
Someone really killed Jimmy?

VIVIEN

Yes. You know anyone who would wanna do that to him?

KHALID

Jimmy? No dude. He was the sweetest. No way. He was--

His voice cracks again as he puts his head down.

VIVIEN

Khalid. How old are you?

KHALID

Eighteen.

VIVIEN

You finish school?

KHALID

Barely.

VIVIEN

You have a job?

KHALID

No. Tryna get into comics.

VIVIEN

(eyes his tattoos)

You designed all that ink on you?

KHALID

(skeptical)

What's this got to do with anything? Y'all tryna tell me I killed Jimmy, no way I would do that, no way, no way--

He puts his head down and this time cries into his shirt. Vivien lets him have a moment.

VIVIEN

You own a dog or around one a lot?

KHALID

No. They gimme bad allergies, can't be near 'em.

Vivien slowly nods. She believes him. A silence as Khalid processes the upsetting news and dries his eyes.

VIVIEN

You know, when I was your age, I got dragged into this interrogation room, this very one. Wasn't as innocent as you, but I'm glad I got brought in nonetheless. This place showed me a path forward in life.

KHALID

(scoffs)

Path forward?

VIVIEN

Yeah. It saved me, actually.

(off his look)

Now I know you don't wanna be no police, but we do need part-time sketch artists. It'd be an easy gig that would lead to some easy cash.

Khalid wipes his tears as he laughs.

KHALID

Hold up. You offering me a job now?

VIVIEN

Yeah, I am.

KHALID

Why is that? You feel sorry for me?

VIVIEN

I have a son, around your age. Gotta feeling he hates police just as much as you do probably. But cuz his mom's one, that can cause some issues between us, most of 'em my bad. But he deals with it with the same apathy you do. And I get it, I get apathetic too, doing what I do. But that's the trap we all in, right? Show too little emotion, they think you're cold, too much, they call you angry. And when they don't give you any other option, you feel like you might as well comply with one or the other. But Khalid, I'm tellin' you, you gotta find a way to fight for more, cuz the fight is all we got if we wanna make a difference from within.

Khalid leans back in his chair and considers Vivien's proposal. Then, he slowly leans in:

KHALID

You know, I may be a closeted queen, but I ain't never gonna be no Aunt Jemima like you sis. Fuck tha police with the freest of speech this divided states of embarrassment will allow me to have.

(off her rejected look)

Now why don't you look past all that drip on your watch and tell me when I can get up outta here?

INT. PITMAN POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

Todd is on the phone at his desk. He sees Vivien storming through the bullpen. He hangs up and sees she's about to blow past him and towards the back of the office where OFFICER LUX is laughing with some of his FELLOW OFFICERS. He stops her:

TODD

You were right. Kathy's ex, Jason Martin, has been in Vermont since last Friday on a skiing trip with his family. Good news is though, we gotta hit on the Russo phone.

INT. PITMAN POLICE STATION - CST OFFICE - DAY

A spunky crime scene tech named JUANITA FLORES, chews gum and sits behind a computer showing a map of the New Brunswick area, highlighting the three towers the cell was pinged.

FLORES

Pinged this morning around 9:33 AM
in New Brunswick.

VIVIEN

(puts on reading glasses)
Damn Flores, how we just now
getting this?

FLORES

Same reason as last time, Verizon
don't give shit about you. There
was also a call to his phone at
11:04 pm last night, but it's not
gonna help you. IMEI number on the
caller's phone shows a cheapo
model, usually means burners.

TODD

(re: map, to Vivien)
This is right by the Rutgers
campus. We gotta head up there.

Vivien makes her way to the window to think. Through the window, Vivien sees Khalid in the parking lot, getting ready to skateboard home. He takes a selfie with the precinct in the background and a middle finger up in the air. He looks back and makes eye contact with Vivien before he leaves. An idea sparks in Vivien, causing her to pull up her Instagram.

TODD (CONT'D)

I'll call the mom and ask for
everyone he knew, roommates,
classmates, friends--

VIVIEN

What time did you say the mother
saw Jimmy come home again?

TODD

11 PM--

VIVIEN

On the dot... And how long would
you say it takes to get from the
mall to the Russo residence?

TODD

Ten, fifteen minutes tops. Why?

Vivien eyes Kathy's instagram post, the same pic we saw her take at the mall.

VIVIEN

Gotta hunch Kathy ain't been on the up-and-up with us.

INT. PITMAN POLICE STATION - TODD'S DESK - DAY

Even though Vivien isn't at her desk, her presence is felt: a picture of her and her son, as well as other family members. Kathy takes all of this in as she waits at Todd's desk. Todd finally arrives and sits across from her.

TODD

Thank you Kathy for coming back here. We had a break in the case, Mr. Russo's phone was pinged up in New Brunswick. That's up by the Rutgers, where he went to school.

(off Kathy's curious look)

Unfortunately, we don't have much to go on past that, which is why you're here. Before, when my partner and I left your house--

KATHY

Is she coming?

TODD

No, she can't make it.

(off her relieved look)

But as I was saying, before we left you told us that you drove Jimmy straight home from the mall--

(pulls up Kathy's Insta)

You said you posted that pic at the intersection with the long light?

(off her reluctant nod)

We looked up the timestamp and saw this was posted at 10:23 PM.

KATHY

Okay?

TODD

Jimmy's mom said he didn't walk in the door until 11 sharp.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

Now it only takes fifteen minutes at most to get from that intersection to his house, and I'm guessing for someone like you who grew up around here, you'd make it there even faster.

(off Kathy's guilty look)

Kathy... what am I missing here? What else happened that night?

Kathy looks over at Vivien's empty desk, then musters the courage to look back at Todd to answer--

INT./EXT. KATHY'S CAR - RUSSO HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Kathy's car pulls up in front of the Russo house. Jimmy opens the door and goes to get out--

KATHY

You were gonna tell me something back at the mall. What was it?

Jimmy stops and looks over, considering whether to tell her. He sits back in the car and shuts the door.

JIMMY

My professor... I guess he has a friend named Jacob Russo, and... I don't know, he must have mixed me up with him and put me on a group email I shouldn't have been on.

He shows her on his phone. She reads with shock and disgust.

KATHY

Holy shit. Who jokes like this?
(then)

Okay, so your teacher and his friends are a bunch of racists? Just report them.

JIMMY

That's the thing, I don't think they're just jokes. Look at the rest of the thread.

(pointing out in emails)

That's the executive director of the housing authority, that's the state treasurer. They're talking about which vendors the state programs should be using.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

When I looked up those vendors online, there was hardly anything on them-- a website under construction, a P.O. Box for an address, phone numbers that go to voicemail. They're fakes. They're not real companies.

(off her look)

Kat, I think they're using them to rip off low-income housing projects from across the entire state. We're talking millions of dollars.

KATHY

(takes this all in)

Jesus Christ... Are you sure?

JIMMY

Yeah. I'm pretty sure. I know you never got why I wanted to go into law, but this is why: so I can stand up to corrupt assholes like this. This guy used to be a big deal police commissioner in New York too. He's considered like a hero around here. When I report this... it's gonna be huge.

INT. POLICE STATION - VIVIEN'S DESK - DAY

TODD

You remember the professor's name?

KATHY

No, I don't... it all happened so fast.

(then)

You really think he'd... kill Jimmy over this?

TODD

That's what we're gonna find out.

(off her nod, measured)

Kathy, I need to ask you one last thing. For the report. Why didn't you tell us about this before?

KATHY

I guess... I thought it had to be Khalid, right? After what he did, at the mall... you know?

TODD

Yeah, but... why not tell us the whole story anyway? Let us work out who it had to be?

KATHY

(emotional, looks down)
I... loved him, you know? I was just tryna protect him...

TODD

(curious)
Not sure I get what you're saying.

Kathy takes a look at Vivien's desk, before responding:

KATHY

What I did next wasn't my proudest moment... and I guess I just couldn't come out and say it in front of her.

INT./EXT. KATHY'S CAR - RUSSO HOUSE (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Kathy is rapidly SWIPING and PRESSING BUTTONS on Jimmy's phone. With his head back, Jimmy doesn't notice right away. When he looks over, he sits up and grabs his phone back.

JIMMY

What'd you do?
(looks through his phone)
You deleted them?

He swipes to his trash--

KATHY

I emptied your trash too. They're all gone.
(off his pissed look)
I get it. You wanna do the right thing, but you can't blow up your life, you just can't. I'll take the hit, I'll be the bad guy for you--

JIMMY

Are you kidding me, Kat?! You just deleted it all without asking me--

KATHY

If I asked you, you would have stopped me.

JIMMY

Of course I woulda stopped you! Did you not read what they were saying in those emails--

KATHY

It's awful what they said. I get it. But it's not worth it.

(off his look)

I know that's a shitty thing for me to say, but it's true. Think about what would happen if you turned that in. The law is like one big buddy system, it's all about watching each other's back. You do this, you'd be done, your career would be over before it started and I'm sorry, but you're too good to go out like that.

Angry, Jimmy gets out of the car and looks back:

JIMMY

It was you, you know. You're the girl.

(off her look)

You're the smartest person I know and I hate that you're stuck here doing nothing with it. And I know you're just gonna blame all that on the world sucking, and it does-- but that's not what's holding you back. It's that you don't think anything will change. I was just tryna show you that it can.

He shuts the door and leaves. Guilt-ridden, Kathy looks on. After taking a moment to collect herself, she drives off. In the distance, parked on the side of the street, we see the same Green SUV we saw before.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

NOTE: This entire act will be filmed in one realtime shot.

EXT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A GREEN SUV sits in the driveway as we see Vivien and Todd's car pulls up. They get out and start walking to the door.

TODD

There's our Green SUV. Only professor that had one registered.

VIVIEN

He's definitely our guy.

TODD

Why are you so sure?

VIVIEN

(shows her phone)

Cuz he's also the only one with a yellow lab all over his Facebook.

(off Todd's look up)

Toldja to brush up on your Maya.

TODD

(hands phone back)

What about the thing back at the station with Kathy? How'd you know she'd talk without you there?

VIVIEN

Same reason why I always ask for a white partner.

At the door, Vivien knocks. Gaetz opens the door.

TODD

Mr. Louis Gaetz, I'm Detective Levine, this is Detective Lamonte. We're wondering if we can talk.

LOUIS GAETZ

Regarding?

TODD

It's best if we did that inside.

LOUIS GAETZ

I'm on a call, just need to get off of it first. Give me a minute.

Nervous but hiding it, he goes back in and shuts the door.

VIVIEN

Something's not adding up. He's built like a mack truck. Footprints on the scene won't match his.

TODD

Let's see what he's got to say.
(off her nod, pause)
Jane-- my wife, she wanted me to invite you over for dinner.

VIVIEN

Dinner with Jane? Hells yeah, I'm down for that, but you gonna have to watch your back, cus.

TODD

Come on now, that's not funny--

BANG! BANG! Shots from the second story window of the house go right through Todd's chest, dropping him to the ground. Vivien swiftly pulls her gun and hides behind her car as GUN SHOTS keep going off. BANG! BANG! BANG! She looks over at Todd, his eyes still. He looks dead. She pulls out her phone as more GUN SHOTS ring out. BANG! BANG! BANG! The camera pulls away from her as we hear her on the phone:

VIVIEN

Code eight, shots fired, officer down. 4278 Douglas. I repeat, this is a code eight, officer is down--

The camera goes through the bedroom window and into--

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Where we push in on the face of LOUIS GAETZ, the professor we met from the first scene. TITLE CARD splashes over his face:

ACT FOUR THE CRIMINAL

Gaetz wraps his rifle around his chest and loads a hand pistol. He puts on a Patriots hat, bill low on his face and storms out of the room with the urgency of a skilled soldier.

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Pistol aimed, he cautiously and swiftly walks down the stairs, eyeing the front door.

Just as he crosses it, it BANGS open and with lightning fast reflexes, GAETZ fires through the doorway as Vivien can be seen ducking out of the way. Gaetz speeds up his pace as he runs through the kitchen and out the back door.

EXT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

DOGS BARK as Gaetz crouches and creeps through his backyard, passing the pool and his kids' swing set. Making sure he's not being tailed, he continues to hop over his fence and into the neighbor's yard.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Gaetz easily clears the fence and creeps through the yard, moving like a quiet cat burglar. He moves down the driveway and to the front yard of the house...

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Gaetz beelines it to the street and rounds a corner. So far, no one in sight.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Gaetz walking down the quiet street, he keeps his head down, gun low. In the distance, he hears SIRENS. He quietly kneels behind a parked car on the street and waits.

SQUAD CARS whiz by him as they round the corner in a hurry to Gaetz's house. With the coast clear, Gaetz stands and takes a few more steps, eyeing an older car across the street. He trots over swiftly. He whips out a tool and picks the lock in no time, then slides into the car.

Given that it is an older model, he's able to pull apart the ignition compartment and hot wire it quickly. He drives off.

INT./EXT. CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Taking a moment to exhale, he checks his rearview, driving with some speed, but keeping it responsible until he's able to turn off the neighborhood into a wooded street.

He checks the rearview again, making sure he hasn't been followed and takes off his hat, running his hands through his hair, letting himself relax a little bit.

Suddenly, VIVIEN'S FORD TAURUS pulls onto his road behind him. Gaetz doesn't let himself panic at first, staying calm, when all of a sudden-- Vivien speeds up. Gaetz knows he's in trouble. He hits the pedal and guns it, but Vivien stays close, BUMPING him from behind.

Gaetz loses control as the car skids. He tries to swing the steering wheel, but it's too late-- it SMASHES right into a tree. BOOM! Windshield CRACKS, the AIR BAGS GO OFF and Gaetz is out of it. After a few seconds... Gaetz regains consciousness enough to drag himself out of the car--

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

VIVIEN (O.S.)

Freeze, put the gun down. Put the gun down! Put the gun down!

Still out of it, Gaetz turns around, gun swinging in the air and BOOM! BOOM! He's shot twice in the chest. He goes down.

Shaky, Vivien walks up to Gaetz's body. She kicks the gun away and checks his pulse. He's DEAD. SIRENS are heard as PATROL CARS descend on the action. Vivien instinctively throws away her gun, grabs her badge and throws her hands up.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

I'm police! I'm police!

COPS jump out screaming "FREEZE! NOW!" Vivien repeats:

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

I'm police! I'm police! I'm the one that called it in! I'm police!

A COP with a gun on her, walks up cautiously, eyeing the badge. He puts his gun away, gestures to the rest she's good.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

(re: Gaetz)

This our guy here. Fired at me and my partner at his house before he took chase--

(voice cracking)

I need a minute, okay? Need a minute.

Cops let her have it as they start to cordon off the scene. Vivien walks away and sits on the ground. She puts her head down and takes some deep breaths as the emotion hits her.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY**

We are back in our opening scene in the lecture hall at Rutgers University.

LOUIS GAETZ

Have a good Christmas, and I mean that secularly for any of you wiseasses that wanna get cute about it.

The class laughs and begins to shuffle out. Gaetz eyes Jimmy as he's about to walk out--

LOUIS GAETZ (CONT'D)

Mr. Russo? Need a word with you about that last exam.

INT. LECTURE HALL - LATER

Now alone, Jimmy stands in front of Gaetz.

LOUIS GAETZ

Look, I think you know me by now, I'm a guy who likes all his cards on the table, so, let's get them out there. You accidentally got on an email you shouldn't have and perhaps read something you shouldn't have read--

JIMMY

I didn't. Read it, that is. The minute I realized it wasn't for me, I deleted the whole chain. I wouldn't go through your emails like that, Mr. Gaetz.

LOUIS GAETZ

(a sigh of relief)

Well, color me surprised. I'm so relieved to hear that, Jimmy. Takes a man of unimpeachable integrity to respect someone's privacy like that, especially in this scurrilous climate we're all living in. Thank you. Well, that's all I had for you. You're a free man. Any plans for the holiday?

JIMMY

Just going home to Pitman.

LOUIS GAETZ

Oh sure, yeah. Been down there a handful. Some good pubs in your town-- for when you're old enough, that is. Heading past there, myself, on the way to Delaware. We do Christmases with the wife's family--

BRIAN, one of Jimmy's black friends, walks in.

BRIAN

Jim-- thought we were hittin' the courts before they closed.

JIMMY

(nervous look to Gaetz)
Uhh... I think we're done, right?

LOUIS GAETZ

(notes his nerves)
Sure are. Have a good break.

As Jimmy exits with Brian, we stay on Gaetz's concerned face.

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Underneath the HAPPY FAMILY PICTURES of his WIFE and TWO DAUGHTERS on the wall, Gaetz speaks softly into the phone.

LOUIS GAETZ

Why can't you just hack his account, find out what's in his emails that way? ... What would I need for you to do that? ... His phone? How am I supposed to get his Goddamn phone? ... No, this can't wait, every day I wait, I take the risk that he might send it to someone-- This needs to happen tonight. If this got out, it'd be lights out for me, I'd go straight to jail, I'd lose everything... Fine, if I get the phone, you'll be able to scrub the emails off the servers, the cloud? ... Not gonna get into all that, just tell me you can... I'll get it done then.

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Gaetz dons a snowcap and winter gloves, then grabs his keys. His YELLOW LAB wakes up to greet him, shedding fur against Gaetz's pants as he exits.

INT./EXT. GAETZ'S GREEN SUV - RUSSO HOUSE - NIGHT

Gaetz, parked down the street, spies on Jimmy and Kathy as they embrace in the front lawn. They head to Kathy's car.

INT./EXT. GAETZ'S GREEN SUV (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gaetz drives through the night, following Kathy's car.

INT./EXT. GAETZ'S GREEN SUV - JACKSON MALL - NIGHT

Gaetz sits in his car and spies on the scene we saw earlier, Jimmy and Khalid push each other, then Jimmy charges to their car with Kathy behind. Gaetz starts up his car and follows.

INT./EXT. GAETZ'S GREEN SUV - RUSSO HOUSE - LATER

Gaetz watches as Jimmy gets out of Kathy's car and walks into the house. After Kathy's car takes off, he goes to the passenger seat and takes a burner phone out of its box.

MOMENTS LATER

Gaetz calls Jimmy on the phone.

JIMMY (ON THE PHONE)

Khalid, I don't care what you say,
I didn't do what you think I did--

LOUIS GAETZ (INTO THE PHONE)

Hey Jimmy. It's actually your
professor, Mr. Gaetz. I know this
is weird calling you up like this,
but just wanted to apologize again
for everything I put you through.

JIMMY (ON THE PHONE)

You don't need to apologize, I get
it, we're all good.

LOUIS GAETZ (INTO THE PHONE)

I was on my way to Delaware to meet up with the family, like I told you, and sure enough I found myself at that bar I was talking about, O'Conner's. You know the one?

JIMMY (ON THE PHONE)

Yeah, that's not too far from me.

LOUIS GAETZ (INTO THE PHONE)

Thought if you were free, I'd buy you a drink. Bartender's a pal, so he'll look the other way on the ID.

He laughs, trying to keep things playful. Hearing no response from Jimmy, Gaetz continues on:

LOUIS GAETZ (INTO THE PHONE) (CONT'D)

Look, I'll come clean. Real reason for this call is I know what happened... I know you read the emails... and I'm willing to wager you didn't like what you saw? Well, neither do I. This was a big wake up call for me, Jimmy. I don't know, call it a crisis of conscience, but my dirty little infraction being exposed like this has opened my eyes. And that introspection has led me to a big decision: I'm going to the press with it and I want you to do it with me, be a part of the story.

JIMMY (ON THE PHONE)

Me? This has nothing to do with me. What would I even do?

LOUIS GAETZ

Well, that's why I wanted to meet up, so we can go over it together. All I know is, you're the reason, Jimmy. This whole thing made me think about what my family would have thought of me if they had seen the ugliness you witnessed. And that really changed me. And I think if we told this story, it could make some real changes out there too. What do you say?

JIMMY (ON THE PHONE)
 (coming around)
 I guess I could come.

LOUIS GAETZ
 Great. You get any trouble at the
 door, just drop my name.

Gaetz gets off the phone. He starts to break the burner into pieces as he eyes Jimmy coming out of the house and into his mom's sedan. A TITLE CARD SPLASHES OVER HIM:

**ACT FIVE
 THE CRIME**

INT./EXT. GAETZ'S GREEN SUV (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gaetz drives slowly behind the Russo car as they both turn down an isolated, wooded road. Gaetz grabs a siren from the dash, puts it on the roof and flashes the lights. Jimmy slows down and pulls into the abandoned gas station. Gaetz pulls in after him, parks and gets out with a flashlight.

EXT. GAETZ'S GREEN SUV - ABANDONED GAS STATION - NIGHT

Gaetz walks towards Jimmy's car and knocks on the door. He flashes a light in Jimmy's eyes and gestures for him to get out. Jimmy does, eyeing him curiously:

JIMMY
 Mr. Gaetz?

LOUIS GAETZ
 Turn around... Turn around!

He forcibly flips him around and pushes him against the car. He pats him down, finds his wallet and throws it on the ground. Jimmy puts his hand in his pocket where his gun is.

JIMMY
 Yo, dude, are you serious right
 now? What's going on--

LOUIS GAETZ
 What's going on is you're a lying
 piece of shit. Do as I say and
 we'll both get through this
 shortly. Now where's your phone?

JIMMY
 There's nothing on my phone dude--

LOUIS GAETZ
Where's the Goddamn phone?!

JIMMY
I said, there's nothing on it--

Jimmy pulls his gun out of his pocket and tries to turn on him. Gaetz grabs his arm away and knocks the gun out. This quickly devolves into a sloppy brawl. Gaetz tackles him down to the ground. Jimmy fights back, as Gaetz starts to CHOKe HIM HARD. Jimmy struggles, punching him as much as he can. But Gaetz is good at this and overpowers him. Finally, Jimmy stops fighting. He's still. Horrified by what's happened, Gaetz stands and backs away, tripping to the ground.

He takes a moment to collect himself, stands and checks Jimmy's pulse. JIMMY IS DEAD. Trying not to panic, Gaetz stays on mission and searches the car. He finds Jimmy's phone, then runs back to his car and goes to get in only to then realize-- he has Jimmy's DNA all over him.

He pops open the trunk and pulls out a garbage bag. He strips all the way down to his boxers. Shivering from the cold, he stuffs his clothes and shoes in the bag. He grabs Jimmy's wallet and gun and also throws it into the bag, then throws the bag into the trunk. He gets in his car and drives away.

We stay and push in on Jimmy's lifeless body. After a moment, we hear FOOTSTEPS of an EAVESDROPPER in the woods. His dirty boots walk up next to Jimmy's still face. We boom up to reveal the MAROON SLICKER of the TALL MAN we saw earlier.

EXT. DUMP - NIGHT

Gaetz, only in his boxers, lights the garbage bag on fire and watches it burn Jimmy's DNA into flames.

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Gaetz, still in his boxers and freezing, walks in as quietly as he can. He takes a moment to warm himself. He eyes Jimmy's phone in his hand, hoping it was all worth it.

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

He crawls back into bed. His wife, MEREDITH, is out. He looks up, processing the horrific murder he just committed. He tries not to think about it, rolls over and shuts his eyes.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Sunlight breaks through the trees as Jimmy's body gets dragged into the woods by the EAVESDROPPER. It's so dark we can't see what he looks like. Winded, he finally lets go of the body. He unbuttons Jimmy's shirt and opens it to his flesh. He pulls out a hunting knife. His breathing becomes shallower as the knife slowly inches towards Jimmy's chest--

INT. GAETZ'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

The BUZZ of Gaetz's electric toothbrush as he brushes his teeth. Meredith, donning her bathrobe, runs the shower.

MEREDITH

I'm so glad we're leaving today,
the kids are going stir crazy. Even
the dog was lookin' at me sideways.

LOUIS GAETZ

Yeah, it'll be good to get away. I
only have the one morning class,
we'll hit the road before lunch--

His eyes widen as he sees her powering on Jimmy's phone. He snatches it from her and fumbles with it as he smashes the power button to shut it down.

LOUIS GAETZ (CONT'D)

Where'd you get this?

MEREDITH

Oh, I thought it was mine.

LOUIS GAETZ

But it was in my night stand.

MEREDITH

(scoffs)

You know I always put mine down in
the weirdest places. Sorry, didn't
know it was yours. They all look
like the same black rectangle to
me. Mine's probably downstairs.

As she exits, a stunned Gaetz looks down at the phone.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

The EAVESDROPPER's shaking hands wipes the dry blood off his hunting knife. He tries to collect himself. This is the first time he's ever done anything like this.

His shoulders tense as he hears CARS PULLING INTO THE GAS STATION. He quickly and haphazardly buttons Jimmy's shirt back up, then takes off.

LOUIS GAETZ (V.O.)
I'm sorry hon, but I just can't go
with you and the kids...

INT. GAETZ'S OFFICE - DAY

Gaetz's luxurious office adorned with awards and medals for honor, bravery, and valor across an impressive, accomplished career. Gaetz sits at his desk, the nervous look now turned into an all out panic. Finally, he lets out a scream and knocks everything off his desk with pent-up desperation.

LOUIS GAETZ (V.O.)
No, no... Go ahead without me, I'm
just gonna need some time here...

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

The same desperate look is plastered on Gaetz's face as he sits in his lecture hall. He's on the phone with his wife:

LOUIS GAETZ (INTO THE PHONE)
I-- forgot-- okay? There was an
afternoon class on my schedule, so
I need you to go without me! Sorry
for yelling, I'm just... under a
lot of stress and I wasn't prepared
for this, so.. I have to come up...
with some kind of... plan now...
you see? This just took me by
surprise and I need to figure
out... another plan... So, I need
to go... do that... right now...
(chokes up)
Call you later... Love you too.

He hangs up and tries to keep from crying. His face is red with panic and fear. He looks up and sees that the chalkboard from yesterday hasn't been erased. He grabs the eraser and does a once over, but can't seem to get it all completely. This angers him. And he releases all that anger by furiously erasing. And erasing. And erasing. But despite his angriest efforts, it's not completely gone.

Finally, we see what he sees: the word CRIME is still faintly there. And on that image we--

CUT TO BLACK.