

SINKING SPRING

Written by

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Based on the novel Dope Thief by Dennis Tafoya

Episode 1 "Jolly
Ranchers"

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INT/EXT. UNMARKED VAN - BRISTOL, PA - DAY

Light snow flurries dust a dirty windshield.

THROUGH BINOCULARS, someone watches a TEENAGE BOY on the stoop of a run-down CORNER HOUSE. He's eating candy from a bag, talking to two people as they pause at the door. One wears a skull and crossbones Covid mask, the other's breath steams in the air. It's the winter of 2021.

MAN'S VOICE

I can't tell, shit. You think you
could squeegee this windshield once in
a while?

WE'RE IN:

INT. UNMARKED VAN - ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

Two men sit in the front, listless from hours of surveillance. One is MANNY CESPEDES (29), clean-cut, Dominican; and the other, staring through binos, is RAY DRISCOLL (33).

MANNY

Why does it matter so much?

RAY

'cause it's driving me crazy.

They watch the visitors hand something to the kid, then pass into the house. Ray raises the binoculars again.

THROUGH BINOS and the dirty, snow-flecked windshield -- RAY focuses on the kid's BAG OF CANDY.

RAY (CONT'D)

Sno-Caps? Werthers? The fuck is it?

More people emerge, blurring across his view.

MANNY

I count six inside now.

RAY

It's some kind of off-brand dentist
office shit.

MANNY

Check this kid up on your left. Did he
make us?

BINOS scan barred rowhouses to a kid in a WINDOW. A lookout? He pulls the blinds and vanishes.

Ray shakes his head, eyes back on the kid guarding the door with his unknown candy.

RAY
We're okay.
(a beat)
Maybe they're Jujufruits. Every bite
takes this kid an hour.

Ray sees two WHITE GIRLS come up the steps, uncombed hair,
ashen faces. They cross another group leaving. Ray and Manny
watch the transaction through a thicker dusting of snow.

RAY (CONT'D)
What do you think?

MANNY
Man, I don't know what he's eating.

RAY
No. What do you think about going in?

MANNY
Now?

RAY
Yeah. Now.

Manny looks back at the house and nods, mouth downturned.

MANNY
I don't want to bust them just so you
can see what kind of candy that is.

RAY
No, I'm off that already. I promise.

A long beat. Manny is deep in thought.

MANNY
Okay. Let's do this. Get amped.

Manny brings out windbreakers. As they maneuver to climb into
them in the tight space, the letters become visible: "DEA" in
bright yellow letters.

From the glove compartment, Ray takes out a GLOCK with an
extra-capacity clip. Businesslike, they saddle up.

There's a lull as they wait for two buyers to leave.

RAY
You know it's my birthday today.

MANNY
Aw, shit. I forgot all about that. I'm
sorry.

They watch the buyers exit the house and pass the van...

RAY
I forgive you.

...and trail off down the street. Ray and Manny burst out.

HANDHELD

They're out and moving fast, Ray with BOLT CUTTERS, Manny with a SHORT BARRELED SHOTGUN. Ray yanks HIS DEA BADGE out of his clothes and lets it dangle on a chain. He gestures. They stalk along the side of the house through weak snow flurries. With an almost telepathic nod, they split up.

-- Ray ducks behind the house, pressing against the wall to the basement door. He puts the bolt cutters on the chain, and looks at his watch.

-- Manny runs to the front of the house and swings over the fence. He puts his shotgun against CANDY KID'S face.

MANNY

What's your name, kid?

JEROME

Jerome.

MANNY

Got enough for everyone, Jerome?

Trying to see the barrel of the gun out of the corner of his eye, Jerome swallows.

MANNY (CONT'D)

Let's go inside.

Jerome stands and turns awkwardly, the gun glued to the side of his face. He's taller than Manny when he stands, so he bends down, politely keeping the gun to his head.

Manny grabs the BAG OF CANDY and slides it into his windbreaker pocket. He moves the gun down to Jerome's side, and keeps out of view of the peephole in the door.

MANNY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Knock twice and wait, tell them you gotta take a piss.

EXT. BACK DOOR - ON RAY - CONTINUOUS

Ray cuts the chain. He hits the door hard with his body - and it gives slightly. He backs off, gets some momentum, and puts his shoulder into it. The door pops open onto:

THE BASEMENT

Ray enters, GLOCK up. The only light comes down the stairs from the first floor, where he hears Manny yell --

MANNY (O.S.)
Down! Down! Down! Federal agents!

As Ray bolts upstairs, a TEENAGE GIRL is at the top step. Ray points the Glock at her side.

RAY
Hands on your head, honey.

The girl shrieks and falls back into the kitchen, knocking into a BULKED-UP KID with a diamond earring, an ALLEN IVERSON JERSEY, his arms full of plastic bags.

Ray pulls them apart and pushes them toward the front room.

MANNY (O.S.)
Lie flat. *Flat.*

The girl starts crying.

RAY
Don't be scared. You're doing great.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Manny has two tall kids stretched out on the floor. The living room is neat, with photos of a smiling graduate in a cap and gown. There are doilies under knickknacks.

There's a METAL BOX by a DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN with the stock cut down.

RAY
On the floor, get on the floor.

Iverson and the girl lie flat. Ray opens his jacket and pulls out flex cuffs.

RAY (CONT'D)
Let's have those hands.

CLOSE: He zips wrists together behind IVERSON'S BACK.

MANNY
(pointing down)
This one's Jerome.

Ray steps over Jerome and zips his wrists.

RAY
So how are we going to do this today,
Jerome?

There's a loud CRASH upstairs and Ray and Manny flinch, pointing guns at the ceiling.

MANNY
Damn. I didn't count somebody.

Without looking away from the door, Ray calls out:

RAY
Jerome? Who else is in this house?

JEROME
No one.

RAY
Don't lie to me. You got a two-hundred
pound cat? Misunderstandings get
people hurt. Now who's upstairs?

After a spooked silence, the girl murmurs something.

RAY (CONT'D)
What did she say?

JEROME
She said Ronald maybe.

RAY
Ronald Maybe. How come she's helping
the authorities and you're not,
Jerome? I'm getting frustrated with
you, son. Who else is here?

JEROME
Maybe Ronald.

RAY
Jerome, when you are standing tall
before the judge, I am going to be
your only friend. Do you understand
that? What am I going to tell the
judge? That you lied to us? Or that
you helped resolve this situation?

JEROME	RAY (CONT'D)
(muffled by carpet)	What's that?
I don't know.	

JEROME (CONT'D)
I don't know.

RAY
You want me to tell the judge you were
a hero and not a dirtbag. You know the
difference?

JEROME
(a long silence)
Not really.

IVERSON JERSEY
"Heroes" get a beat down.

RAY
Don't listen to Iverson. He's got a
bad attitude.

As Ray cuffs the girl, Manny yanks Jerome awkwardly to his feet.

MANNY

Talk to him. Tell him to come down here with nothing in his hands.

He moves Jerome to the base of the stairs. There, Jerome leans against the wall, hands cuffed behind him, eyes closed.

JEROME

Yo, Ronald.

Ray waggles his eyebrows at Manny.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Ronald. Come down here with your hands up, a'ight?

Manny keeps Jerome between himself and the stairs, using him as a shield.

RAY

Are you asking him or telling him?

JEROME

Ronald!

VOICE

(from upstairs)

What?

MANNY

Don't "what" me! Get your ass down here. You know what's going on.

Another silence. Ray trains his pistol on the stairs.

VOICE

How do I know you won't shoot?

RAY

You know how much paperwork there is if we shoot you? Come down slowly. Soon as we see those empty hands, you're clear.

After a moment, AIR JORDANS appear at the top of the stairs. RONALD slowly descends into the frame... sagging pants, to oversized red jacket, to gold chains, to his hands up, to a face that looks about twelve years-old.

His youth takes the wind out of Ray. He leans against the wall and closes his eyes for a moment, as if losing faith in the process.

When Ronald reaches the bottom step, Manny lays him down next to the others.

Recovering, Ray takes out more flex-cuffs.

IVERSON JERSEY

Punk.

Ray flicks the back of his head with the plastic cuffs.

RAY

Shut your mouth.

He ratchets the cuffs onto Ronald's skinny arms. As Manny stays in the living room... FOLLOW RAY TO --

INT. BACK KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ray searches cabinets until he finds PLASTIC BAGS. He inspects one: TINY VIALS, each with rocks of BLUE-WHITE CRYSTAL. He shoves the baggies into a larger trash bag.

JUMP CUTS: He looks in the freezer, oven, dishwasher. In a drawer he finds a .32 automatic. He pockets it.

INT. FRONT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Manny pats down the kids on the floor and throws out the contents of their pockets: phones, rolls of bills.

As Ray emerges from the kitchen, he piles cash into the TRASH BAG. He heads for the front door and retrieves the METAL CASH BOX, open onto STACKS OF FIVES AND TENS. He dumps the money into the bag with the vials. He picks up the shotgun and breaks it open, throwing shells, tucking it under his arm.

His eyes return to the picture on the wall: A light-skinned black woman in a cap and gown, captured at a high point in life. Ray looks hurt by the optimism in the picture.

RAY

Jerome, where's the rest of the money
and the stash?

Silence. IVERSON shifts, glaring at Jerome.

RAY (CONT'D)

Unless you're taking Venmo, there's
more cash. Don't look at Iverson, look
at me. Is he going to take care of
your Mom while you do ten years?

Manny pulls Jerome to his feet by his cuffed hands and propels him into the kitchen. Ray follows --

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

-- keeping the pistol up. Ray stands in the doorway and sees Manny put his head close to Jerome's and whisper.

Jerome looks over his shoulder to the front room, where the others are laid out, heads down. Then he whispers something back.

Manny grins.

Then he bangs his hand on the kitchen table theatrically.

MANNY
Goddamn it, kid! Tell me something!

Ray smiles at the game: Manny letting the kid off the hook in front of the others. Ray picks up his part, leading Jerome back into the FRONT ROOM, while --

-- MANNY ducks into the BATHROOM off the kitchen.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ray makes an angry show of marching Jerome over to his friends and laying him back down on the floor.

RAY
Really stupid. Looks like Jerome wants to go upstate for a while. See his uncle out at Camp Hill.

Ray picks up the trash bag.

RAY (CONT'D)
Nobody move now.

He backs into the kitchen again and pivots to see --

-- MANNY, holding up two WET PLASTIC BAGS. One is filled with VIALS, the other with CASH.

Ray pulls the bag from his shoulder and hands it to Manny, who moves silently down the stairs.

Ray sticks his head in the doorway and looks over the prone bodies. He hears the girl ask Jerome:

GIRL
How does he know your uncle?

RAY
Since Jerome isn't telling us what we need to know, we're going to have to search this whole place. Everybody take a nice little nap.

He ducks into the kitchen and follows Manny downstairs --

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

-- through the basement --

EXT. STREET - BRISTOL, PA - CONTINUOUS

-- and out onto the street. After a few steps into the flurries, RAY takes off his BADGE.

INT. UNMARKED VAN - MOMENTS LATER

Manny starts the van. Ray throws the double-barreled gun under the seat, jumps in and slams the door.

Manny drives, Ray beside him. It's a long, odd, almost superstitious silence -- as they *flee the scene*.

Ray spins in his seat to look behind them. Then he opens a GYM BAG and drops the pistol in. He takes the badge from around Manny's neck, then grabs the wheel, steadying it as Manny awkwardly climbs out of his DEA WINDBREAKER.

As Manny drives, Ray takes out the plastic bag and begins counting the money.

RAY
It's always in the toilet.

MANNY
Toilet or fridge. How'd we do?

RAY
Hold on.
(counting to himself)
We can't have people wandering loose.
That was messed up.

MANNY
I know.

RAY
Not safe for us, not safe for them.

MANNY
When it's a bigger house, you need a
THIRD.

RAY
We don't need another guy, we just
need to control the situation.
(a beat)
We should take a break anyway. Word
could be getting around.

MANNY
I don't know, man. I got a couple big
bills coming.

Ray tries to keep track of his counting.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Gotta admit, I love seeing you pull
out that "help the police" shit.

RAY
The Command Voice.

MANNY
You got the gift.

RAY
It's the "authority bias." Even
Iverson wants to believe somebody's in
charge. Even now. Stay firm, project
confidence, don't give 'em a choice.
That's how you control the criminal
element.

They pass a ROADSIDE SHRINE, someone killed in a wreck. Teddy
bears, votary candles, and flowers surround a PICTURE in the
center. Ray darkens as they pass.

MANNY (O.S.)
Criminal element.

*A FLASH: The JAWS OF LIFE cut through a mangled car, sparking
their way inward toward a BLOODY HAND.*

MANNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Those were children.

RESUME SCENE. Ray is momentarily lost in a dark memory.

MANNY (CONT'D)
That reminds me.

Manny rifles in the pocket of his removed WINDBREAKER. He
pulls out JEROME'S CANDY. JOLLY RANCHERS.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Candy from babies.

Ray smiles, slowly emerging from his mood as he sees the
candy he couldn't identify.

RAY
Jolly Ranchers. You shouldn't have.

MANNY
Happy birthday, motherfucker. What'd
we net?

RAY
I lost count again.

BEGIN CREDIT SEQUENCE

MUG SHOTS of RAY AND MANNY as YOUNG TEENAGERS *grow from children to teenagers to adults*, maturing in rapid time-lapse, like the most advanced FBI AGE-ENHANCEMENT SOFTWARE.

Slowly ROLLING FORWARD, this DEVICE spills over onto an entire PHILLY NEIGHBORHOOD, its glacial evolution reduced to seconds. GRAFFITI washes over the buildings, whitewashed and returning, a tide of squalor and gentrification and squalor again; TENNIS SHOES on phone lines multiply like stubborn weeds; humble lawns struggle to outgrow their plots, trimmed back; while fresh coats of paint on rowhouses blister and turn brittle.

Gang Graffiti spreads across culverts and bridges, reaching out into rural, PA; as groves of trees cycle through seasons beside eroding FARMHOUSES out in deep "Pennsylvtuckey."

In the SLOW PUSH through this transforming landscape, we've been FOLLOWING A CHILD ON HIS PAPER ROUTE THROUGH THE PHILLY BADLANDS. He gains enough speed that we're on his back. He hurls NEWSPAPERS at the changing houses, which crumble to dust as they land. As he pedals, all we see is his black HOOD, a young Grim Reaper, doling out the news. As he turns a last corner...

...he's facing A SUBURBAN HOUSE in cold rain. The GARAGE DOOR is raised and a CURTAIN OF RUNOFF spills over it from stuffed gutters and thawing snow. Taking off the hood, it's YOUNG RAY. He approaches the waterfall at the opening, passing through it like a thin membrane between time frames.

INT. GARAGE - THERESA'S HOUSE - ESSINGTON - CONTINUOUS

As YOUNG RAY passes through the WATERFALL, he's a grown man on his 33rd birthday. END CREDIT SEQUENCE ON --

TITLE CARD

INT. GARAGE - THERESA'S HOUSE - ESSINGTON - MOMENTS LATER

Ray watches the mix of rain and sleet come down. After a contemplative moment, he crosses through it, finding an unlocked backdoor and entering:

INT. THERESA'S HOUSE - ESSINGTON - DAY

THERESA (mid-60s) sits at the kitchen table, chewing sunflower seeds, watching an ancient TV. In front of her is a coffee cup and a game of solitaire. She startles as she sees him come in.

THERESA

Christ, I thought it was a murderer.

RAY

Then why do you leave that door open?

At her feet, AN ANCIENT WHITE DOG perks up and watches Ray.

THERESA
You look like you fell through the
ice.

He heads straight for the kitchen.

RAY
It's raining, snowing. Can't make up
its mind out there.

At the sink, he dries himself with a dish towel. Out the window, he notices a 747 in its landing approach, shaking the china on hooks.

THERESA
(calling)
God forbid you could have the sense to
have an *umbrella*.

He glances at her across the kitchen island as she becomes rapt at the TV. The daily lotto drawing. She grabs a pencil and lottery tickets from the table.

RAY
Gonna be your lucky day, Ma, I can
feel it.

She shushes him, leaning toward the TV, eyes flicking from the screen to her tickets.

He checks her fridge: almost empty.

RAY (CONT'D)
What are you living on?

BILLS cover the counter, from QUEST and other diagnostic services. Ray glances through quickly, concerned, looking back at her across the island.

RAY (CONT'D)
What are all these bills?

THERESA
(filling out numbers)
Shush. That's none of your beeswax.

RAY
MRI, PET Scan, what's wrong with you?
What do all these tests say?

THERESA
They say I'm an old bag.

As Ray drifts down a hall, she frets at her loss.

INT. RAY'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM/ATTIC - THERESA'S HOUSE - CONT.

Atop narrow stairs that Theresa never climbs, under a gambrel roof so low that Ray can't stand fully, he goes through the preserved remnants of his childhood. Hidden past trophies, abandoned posters, and milk crates of albums and CDs, he finds an OLIVE GREEN DUFFEL.

THERESA (O.S.)
(from below)
Raymond? You want coffee?

He unzips the bag onto stacks of rumpled bills. He takes stacks of TENS and TWENTIES out of his pockets and drops them in the bag. Then he rummages under the cash...

RAY
Nah! Stay put.

...finding his COLT .45. He lays it on a milk crate full of old clothes. He fishes around the bag some more and comes out with TWO EMPTY CLIPS. Then he grabs a stack of twenties, snaps off the rubber band, and counts from one hand to another.

RAY (CONT'D)
I gotta go, I'm still working.

He works the slide on the pistol -- then sticks it in his waistband, pocketing the clips.

RAY (CONT'D)
Manny's picking me up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THERESA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ray emerges from the stairs and pauses in front of her.

THERESA
(under her breath)
Degenerate.

RAY
Are you sick? You need money?

She stares back at him a while, afraid to answer.

So he drops a stack of cash onto the table. She glances at it, tightens her mouth, then looks back at him.

RAY (CONT'D)
There's a G. That enough?

THERESA
I can't pay a hospital with an envelope full of cash.

RAY

You need more? Say the word.

THERESA

No, no. This is nothing to worry yourself about.

RAY

What do I work so hard for? Say it.
What do you need?

THERESA

I need ten grand.

RAY

(taken aback)

What the hell you need ten G for?

THERESA

That's why I don't want to discuss it.
I don't expect you to have that kind
of money --

RAY

I can figure it out.

Her eyes search him.

THERESA

How you painting so many houses in
this weather?

RAY

Interiors.

(a beat)

You got anything else you want to say
to me today? Anything?

THERESA

(a long pause)

Can you walk Shermie for me? He's been
cooped up all day.

Irrked that she's forgotten his birthday, Ray pulls the leash
from a peg on the wall.

The dog sighs like an old man and rises stiffly.

THERESA (CONT'D)

Don't forget to pick up his shit.

Ray grabs a plastic bag from a coffee can

EXT. FRONT YARD - THERESA'S HOUSE - DAY

The temperature has dropped and -- amid flurries -- the dog
squats in a clearing of low trees. Ray notices the dog
looking up at him.

RAY

What?

He hears the sub-woofer, then turns and sees Manny's 4Runner approaching on damp streets.

He hooks the leash onto a low branch beside a statue of the VIRGIN MARY and heads over to Manny as he pulls up.

Ray rolls his eyes at the person in the SHOTGUN SEAT: RICK STALEY (36), long hair and a tattoo of a clock on his bicep, cheap blue sunglasses even on a dim midwinter day.

MANNY

Yo. Look who I found.

Rick licks his lips nervously and nods.

RICK STALEY

Wassup, Ray.

A FLASH

Under greasy overhead lights, Ray has got Rick Staley pinned to the concrete. As he's beating his face to a pulp, Ray's voice -- in real time -- is oddly friendly.

RAY (O.S.)

They let you out, convict?

RESUMING -- Ray eyes Rick's scarred, asymmetrical face, tattoos now on his neck.

RICK STALEY

Three weeks ago. From Chester. I was at Graterford before that.

RAY

You say hey to Harlan for me?

RICK STALEY

Yeah, he's coming, too.

(a beat)

Psych, naw. That's a whole jaw. Harlan tried to burn some guy in segregation.

RAY

Damn.

RICK STALEY

He got his cellie to smuggle gas in from the lawn mower. Sprayed it through the bean chute and was trying to light up this dude when the CO comes up. So Harlan, being Harlan, you know Harlan?

RAY
Yeah, I know Harlan.

RICK STALEY
He tries to light up the CO, too.
(laughs)
By the time he gets out there'll be,
like, robot whores and shit.

MANNY
Kill me if I ever need a robot whore.

Manny nods to the door where Theresa has come out.

MANNY (CONT'D)
How you doing there, Theresa?

THERESA
Just peachy, shitbird.

She points at the dog with her lacquered nail.

THERESA (CONT'D)
Bring Shermie in before he gets away.

Ray nods to her then turns back to them, voice lowered.

RAY
Get away? He's a fossil.

THERESA
You pick up the shit, Raymond?

MANNY
Yeah, Raymond. Pick up the shit.

Ray watches the dog finish on the lawn, wincing. He palms the bag, and as he goes after it --

FLASH: A YOUNGER RAY spits on the dirt on his hands.

He and a few other PRISONERS dig graves out in a frosty field in winter, COFFINS stacked nearby. The COs sit in warm idling D.O.C. CARS, guarding them through steamed windows. As Ray digs, we hear a familiar voice:

RICK STALEY (O.S.)
Which one?

Eight years ago, Rick looked even trashier, with long spidery hair and a scruffy goatee.

RICK STALEY (CONT'D)
(to the coffins)
Which one of 'em died of AIDS?

His breath steams in the cold. His recent tattoo looks angry and infected on his pale arm.

RICK STALEY (CONT'D)

We need to know that, bro. That's something we gotta know. I don't wanna get AIDS.

RAY

You gonna fuck him?

Ray keeps trying to dig into the frozen ground.

RICK STALEY

What you just say to me?

The others are scratching a trough in the frozen ground with backhoes. As they keep going, Ray and Rick eye each other across the hard earth.

RAY

You must wanna get in that coffin and fuck him. 'Cause that's the only way you're gonna get AIDS. You in-bred piece of --

Rick hits Ray with the SHOVEL.

The BORED GUARDS open their car doors, fumbling out with their RIFLES... but with no urgency. As they approach...

Ray lies bleeding on the ground. They step over him, peering down at his blood-smeared face.

GUARD

What happened?

Ray climbs back to his feet, blood running down his chin.

RAY

I get bloody noses. The cold air.

GUARD

Jimmy? You got a towel or something?

EXT/INT. THERESA'S HOUSE - CLOSE ON RAY - DAY

Returning to RAY, it's easier to notice the BROKEN RIDGE at the top of his nose. He carries a full bag of shit, throwing it into the trash by the garage.

Heading back into the house with the geriatric dog, he smirks with amusement as he sees something inside:

Theresa has put a CANDLE in a CUPCAKE and tied up balloons around the cramped front room.

THERESA

You thought I forgot, asshole.

She hands him an ENVELOPE.

RAY
You didn't have to do this.

He opens the envelope onto a CARD. A SLICE OF PIZZA reads, "No matter how you slice it, there's no topping you." When he opens it, it plays *Party Rock* by LMFAO.

ON THE INSCRIPTION: "To my boy, Raymond. 33! I thank god for you. And I will always love you like my own son."

A FLASH

Scored to the vapid song, YOUNG RAY (10) sits with YOUNGER THERESA, a poker pot full of pennies. She pours Peppermint Schnapps into her soda. YOUNG RAY holds his cards close, showing her worried eyes.

THERESA (YOUNGER)
*Sometimes you gotta play the hand
you're dealt, kid. Your father ain't
coming home. Okay? For how long, I
don't know. But you stick with me
here, you'll be okay. Now let's see
those cards.*

RESUMING - For a moment, Ray remains a CHILD, standing across from her in the present dilapidated house, as if memory and his life bleed together like colors in the wash.

As he closes the card, he's an adult again. There's a HONK. Theresa taps her cheek. He kisses her on it.

THERESA (CONT'D)
Happy birthday, you piece of shit.

INT. MANNY'S 4RUNNER - MOMENTS LATER

As Manny drives, Rick leans in from the backseat to give an oddly formal-sounding "job interview."

RICK STALEY
Then, you know, I did some dealing,
some B and E. Passed some checks. I
never done any strong-arm, but like I
said, I'm willing to learn.

Manny notices the BIG BRUISE on the inside of Rick's arm.

RAY
(eyeing Manny, irked)
Manny told you what we do?

RICK STALEY
Just that youse needed muscle.

RAY
It's not about muscle. It's about
being smart.

Ray glowers at Manny.

MANNY
So you and Ray were tight on the
inside, huh, Rick?

A FLASH - GRATERFORD PENITENTIARY

A guard goes by for LOCKDOWN, PASSES RICK'S DOOR. Rick is wondering why he doesn't stop and watches him go.

RICK STALEY (O.S.)
I mean... not at first.

RAY pops into his door, a SAWED-OFF PIECE OF STEEL BED FRAME in his fist. Returning to the earlier flash in more detail, Ray beats Rick down to oblivion on the ground. His rage is terrifying. We won't see it again for a long time, but once you've seen it, you can't forget...

RAY (O.S.)
We came to a mutual respect.

Rick tries to smile with blood all over his mouth.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S ROAST PORK - PRESENT DAY - A HALF-HOUR LATER

Rick wipes KETCHUP from all over his mouth, and keeps digging into his slathered onion rings.

RICK STALEY Graterford, bro.
Anything goes.

RAY
Yeah. So anything goes here, too.

Ray waits. He's authoritative in the way he pauses.

RAY (CONT'D)
The Philly dope business is a free-for-all.

RICK STALEY
How you mean?

MANNY
Dominicans, Biker clubs, street gangs.
There's nobody in charge.

RAY
But maybe there's a hundred, a hundred-fifty groups, block to block, town to town, fighting over a few feet of turf.

MANNY

Once in a while you get a club from somewhere else making noise, and they get beaten back real fast.

RAY

Or we put 'em out of business.

RICK STALEY

So you guys kind of... like...?

RAY

You're getting it. We take our cut. From the chaos. And we serve a purpose, too. We cull the herd. Like when there get to be too many deer, you need hunters to trim the population. Otherwise they eat all the crops, they wander into the road.

RICK STALEY

So you guys are like wild deer?

RAY

We're the hunters, bro.

RICK STALEY

Right.

RAY

We keep the natural order.

MANNY

Just take the weak ones.

RAY

Enough to pay your nut for a coupla' weeks. Main thing is, they're not the kind of people who can do anything about it.

(leaning in to Rick)

But there's a right way to do this. By the book. Just because we're not real DEA doesn't mean we're not professional.

EXT. OUTSIDE DRUG HOUSE - HARROWGATE - N. PHILLY - FLASH

As THREE TEENAGERS leave through the steel cage over the rowhouse door... they pass...

RAY (O.S.)

The key is preparation. By the time we go in, I already scoped the place out.

...Ray, at the bus stop like a homeless man, hoodie raised, surveilling. A DRUMROLL rises in the background from the PREAMBLE to ALICE COOPER'S "BLACK JUJU."

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Once we go in, the trick's to control
the situation. Be calm. Let it play
out: they all know what to do in a
bust.

MANNY (O.S.)
They all gotta pay a Karma tax.

CLOSE ON A COMPUTER SCREEN: Manny scrolls down DEA APPAREL.

RAY (O.S.)
It's not force. There's an attitude
that comes with the badge. Certainty.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - NEW HANOVER, NJ - FLASH SEQUENCE

Manny inspects a TABLE OF DEA AND ATF BADGES...

RAY (O.S.)
Real authority. People don't respect
law enforcement like they used to...

MATCH CUT OFF THE BADGE TO --

-- THE SAME BADGE dangling on a lanyard as --

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...so we gotta sell it even harder.

-- RAY KICKS THROUGH THE BACK DOOR.

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Powerful, not crazy.

*HANDHELD -- RAY AND MANNY CONVERGE, GLOCKS RAISED. Their
muted shouts are intense, but we only hear the audio of the
conversation and the RISING DRUMS of the song.*

MANNY (O.S.)	RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A scary motherfucker...	...but disciplined. Take the decision out of their hands.

*ON CLASPED HANDS, a row of different races from white to
Puerto Rican to black. ZIP TIES GO AROUND WRISTS --*

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's for THEIR safety. Calm them down.
Nobody wants to get tagged, and only a
moron goes at a Fed.

MANNY searches through KIDS' CEREAL BOXES in the kitchen.

MANNY (O.S.)
Most people in the game expect to get
pinched.

RAY (O.S.)
 And if they haven't been yet, they go
 to sleep imagining it. So the show has
 to be impeccable.

Manny finds a bag stuffed with powder-blue FENTANYL.

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D) Keep
 everything moving fast, they don't
 realize until they've been on the
 floor a while.

TRACK over DEALERS AND BUYERS face-down on dirty carpet --

MANNY (O.S.)
 If you're good, they don't even
 remember you.

RAY (O.S.)
 They remember the badge.

MANNY (O.S.)
 It also helps to grow a goatee. Like
 the "stepdad" goatee.

-- TO RAY in a cramped BATHROOM as he finds CASH in a TAMPON BOX. DRUMS surge, joined by an EERIE CHURCH ORGAN.

RAY (O.S.)
 And if they freak out...

A WOMAN ON THE FLOOR is writhing with hands bound, but muted here by the story and song intro.

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ...either I give them the good cop
 speech, the what-are-you-doing-with-
 your-life speech...

Ray starts to condescend to the woman on the floor.

MANNY (O.S.)
 Or I go Dominican on their ass.

Manny interrupts Ray to shout at the woman, still muted.

MANNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Ray's got the worse temper.

RAY (O.S.)
 I got no brakes once I'm going.

PAN OFF MANNY to a KITCHEN of METH COOKING SUPPLIES --

MANNY (O.S.)
 These people, man, they deserve worse.
 They're poisoning their own kids in
 the next room...

-- PAST A WINDOW onto TOYS scattered in the yard.

RAY (O.S.)
We get every type.

AS FAST AS RAY CAN LIST THEM, WE SEE STILL SHOTS OF EACH:

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Kensington smack dealers, Mad hatters
cutting everything with fentanyl.
Mexican coke mules with shitty
Scarface posters on the wall, tweakers
with meth mouth. Fat-ass bikers with
Harleys and diabetes. When they're in
the cuffs, they all start crying to
Jesus.

ALICE COOPER'S ENDLESS PREAMBLE simmers in the background,
while now a subliminally FAST SLIDESHOW of TATTOOS flickers
past, skulls, flames, cobwebs...

RAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Tattoos all say Born to Lose or Born
to Die.

MANNY (O.S.)
They got realistic goals, papá.

RICK STALEY (O.S.)
Wait, wait. Turn this shit up.

INT. MANNY'S 4RUNNER - DAY - END SEQUENCE

The debriefing has taken them back to the car, but now Ray
and Manny glower at Rick Staley in the backseat.

RICK STALEY
I'm listening. Just turn this up.

Manny turns up the song at the first scream. Rick Staley bobs
his head along.

RICK STALEY (CONT'D) Bro.
I know a house that's fucking
perfect. Ottsville. Bumfuck nowhere.
Full of crank, no security.

As the music surges, Ray and Manny stare ahead, chewing on
this. Then there's an abrupt cut to --

EXT. MANNY'S 4RUNNER - BEST BUY - WILLOW GROVE

Silence. They watch Rick walk away toward the boulevard.

RAY
I don't know.

MANNY
He's got a jones.

RAY
That bruise on his arm.

MANNY
Maybe he walked into something.

RAY
Vein first.
(a beat)
I don't care about his habit. You can
control a junkie. For them it's all
Point A to Point B. And he's just
gotta stand by the door anyway.

MANNY
He's a little too excited, right?

RAY
It's hard when you're first out,
trying to get back on track. He just
needs some kind of structure.

MANNY
If you feel weird about it...

Ray exhales, staring off, shaking his head.

MANNY (CONT'D)
What?

RAY
Theresa needs ten grand. I think she's
sick.

MANNY
So talk to Ho about this house he
knows in Ottsville.

Ray is deep in thought.

MANNY (CONT'D)
You fucked with Rick on the inside,
right?

RAY
We were in the recidivism program
together.

Manny nods. Snow begins erasing their view in the windshield.

MANNY
So you know, I asked Sherry to move
in.
(a beat, no response)
She's having a housewarming party
tomorrow night.

RAY
A housewarming party. You already live there, it's already warm.

MANNY
You think I'm making a mistake?

RAY
You know I love Sherry.

MANNY
But?

RAY
We should be out of this shit first. Get a little more bank. Then maybe...

MANNY
This is a side hustle, bro. I ain't letting it, like, determine my life.

RAY
It's not a side hustle when it's your only source of income. She know where the money's coming from?

MANNY
She knows I ain't a housepainter.

Ray takes the dig with a deep breath.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Look, man, she obviously gets it. She gave me this.

Manny pulls a MEDALLION from inside his shirt.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Saint Jesús Malverde. The patron saint of drug traffic.

RAY
Get the fuck out.

MANNY
Also the patron saint of meth cookers.

RAY
Well, that's a beautiful gesture.

Manny exhales and let's the sarcasm sit, waiting for his irritation to burn off. For a moment they stare ahead, tense as an old married couple.

MANNY
It's for real, bro. Remember my ex-wife's cousin, Isabella?

RAY
The hot one.

MANNY
She was dating that guy, you know,
Jacques or Jocko, some shit.

RAY
Right.

MANNY
So when she moves in and finds out
he's dealing, she goes to the priest
and asks what she should do.

RAY
Imagine that conversation.

MANNY
The priest pulls out Saint Jesús
Malverde.

RAY
So he's the Patron Saint of domestic
violence, too?

MANNY
That was after she turned him in.

RAY
I'm sorry I lectured. I hope you and
Sherry are very happy. I'll walk you
down the aisle. But what about Rick?
What are we doing about this?

Manny pauses, thinking.

MANNY
What's wrong with Theresa?

RAY
She's embarrassed. Female shit maybe.

Manny winces.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'll get the address from Rick, you
wear the medallion. I can ask Ho and
do some recon. Let's see if it's worth
the drive.

CUT TO:

THROUGH A CAGE DOOR

Breath steaming in cold air, Ray stands at the rusted bars of
a SECURITY DOOR, holding a fern.

From ahead of him comes the steady thump of Reggaetón rap, with a few mingling voices in English and Spanish. He stands a long time, until finally the cage opens and --

SHERRY (O.S.)
Ooooooh, I love it, Ramón!

-- REVERSE ON SHERRY ALARCÓN (25), an attractive, well-kept Dominican woman with fake eyelashes and lacquered talons for nails. She takes the plant, careful to protect her nails, then she leans over the bushy top to give Ray a kiss.

RAY
Supposedly it thrives in the bathroom.

As she leads Ray inside, it's clear the party is mostly her friends and sisters drinking from plastic cups, while --

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - MANNY'S PLACE - FAIRHILL - NIGHT

-- Manny is still putting together an IKEA HUTCH in a room already amid transformation. Ray is now helping Manny hold up a side while trying to align the holes and WOODEN DOWELS.

They've been trying for a while, and they're both already frustrated.

RAY
You know how much I hate the Swedes
right now?

MANNY
Coño, why does it not line up?

RAY
You need to get that address from
Rick, dude.

MANNY
Shhhh, shut up. I have it. Shut up
about that here.
(realizing)
Oh fuck, I think this one is
backwards.

Far in the background, Sherry welcomes more people:

SHERRY
Pasa, pasa, pasa.

EXT. MANNY'S PLACE - ALLEY - FAIRHILL - NIGHT

Ray has just stuffed boxes into the RECYCLING BIN. He now stands beside them in the darkness, scrolling on his PHONE. A few light snowflakes, like afterthoughts, land on his screen.

ON HIS PHONE: Ray is searching the SATELLITE IMAGES ON GOOGLE MAPS around OTTSVILLE, PA, honing in through overgrown farmland far outside the city.

As he blows off snow, he hears:

SHERRY
Ramón, honey, what can I get you?
Manny says you're not drinking. I feel
bad. What can you have? 7-up?

Ray looks up, his face glowing in the light of his phone.

RAY
I promise I'm fine, Sherry. Thanks.

SHERRY
Shirley Temple?

RAY
I'm good, I promise.

She makes a noise and he watches her return, past bars over windows, to the party in the main room, where she leans against Manny. They look happy and at ease together. Ray watches with a lonely face until --

-- the light goes off on his phone and returns him to a shadow.

INT. RAY'S BEDROOM - WILLOW GROVE - LATE NIGHT

Ray bolts upright in bed, heart racing. He wipes his eyes, finds them wet. He puts his palm to his chest. He sits for a while, overwhelmed by anxiety. He can't even think of going back to sleep. He finds the remote.

ON THE TV: He clicks through infomercials, landing on a black and white movie. A couple of carnival sharpshooters, a man and a woman, flirting. As he dozes off, he hears the OLD MOVIE over flickers of his dream:

He's in the bleachers with his friends, Ray is his PRESENT ADULT AGE, but the boys are how he remembers them in High School. They smoke weed off a dented Mr. Pibb can, watching --

-- A GIRLS' GYMNASTICS MEET. One pretty mixed-race GIRL does her run-up the vault. MARLETTA. She begins the approach, does the vault, sticks the landing with her eyes right on Ray.

The audio from the movie plays, noirish banter with gunplay.

RAY
Marletta. Marletta.

OFF THE GUNFIRE --

AUDIO MATCH CUT
TO:

EXT. METH HOUSE - OTTSVILLE, PA - DAY

A WOMAN shoots a PISTOL at cans on a fence.

Call her KRISTY LYNNE. She's earned her face at 45, hard and irritable. She warms her fingers on the gun and takes another shot, eyes on the cans like separate vendettas. The image is so dreamy, this woman shooting, ankle deep in dirty snow, a warped sound with each shot, it's like we're in someone else's dream.

An OLD MAN with a PONY TAIL tromps out in galoshes and rubber gloves. He's RANDY (50s.) He says something to her across twenty feet of tracked snow, his words all buried by wind and echoing shots.

But this isn't a POV SHIFT. The DISTANT VIEW jiggles, then focuses. We're watching through BINOCULARS.

PULL BACK TO:

RAY -- in a faraway copse of evergreen trees, so far off there's a split-second delay between the echoing shots and the puffs of smoke from the woman's fists.

Randy keeps talking. She listens with drooping surly posture, gun at her side.

Ray looks up for a minute at this strange barren landscape of dried, snow-flecked farms. A dog bellows.

RAY (V.O.) (PRE-LAP)
Name's Ray.

VOICES (PRE-LAP)
Hi, Ray.

THROUGH FOGGING BINOS: Ray scans across pines, over a FARMHOUSE to the DOG tied to a stake, barking non-stop.

RAY (PRE-LAP)
I been clean for 28 days.

There's a FORD PICKUP collapsing in on itself, a kids' swing set of hanging chains. A BARN with rotting doors.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
But time doesn't feel like it's moving
straight anymore.

Ray then finds RANDY, returning to the house. He kicks the dog. The dog cowers, ears back. Randy passes a MOTORCYCLE by the sagging porch and re-enters the house.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
It's going sideways.

As Kristy climbs into the PICKUP, the LENSES FOG OVER
entirely to end our view.

EXT. EDGE OF PROPERTY - OTTSVILLE, PA - DAY

Ray returns down the hill, backtracking in his own footprints
in the snow.

RAY (PRE-LAP)
Backwards.

He gets to his car on the side of the highway, hidden behind
pines. He reaches it just as --

-- the PICKUP soars past.

INT. RAY'S CAR - DAY

Ray tails her in his late-70s compact car, which takes
hipsterism to the point of stubborn impracticality. He stays
far back as Kristy drives over a bridge.

RAY (PRE-LAP)
Skipping ahead.

EXT. HIGHWAY 422 - DAY

He stays on the pickup through thickening traffic.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - READING, PA - DAY

Across a junkyard, through barbed wire, Ray watches KRISTY
trundle PROPANE TANKS. A fat man offers help.

RAY
Today I saw this woman and it was like
I knew her. Or I *will* know her. We all
start as strangers, right?

But Kristy is determined to carry them all on her own.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
What makes us know anybody?

The man heads over to a LARGER TANK and connects a hose.
They're having a conversation.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
The lady who raised me, who I call my
mother, she was just my Dad's woman.
Took me in when he went under. Anyway,
she's sick now, I think --

Kristy keeps lining up a huge line of propane tanks, then starts paying in CASH.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
-- maybe that's getting to me.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - READING, PA - HALF-HOUR LATER

Ray repositions for a better angle on the drivers' seat of the PICKUP. Kristy gets back in, and sits behind the wheel. She's finished with her errands, but she's not moving.

RAY (PRE-LAP)
Today I missed it. I missed getting fucked-up.

Ray stares ahead, worried. Did she see him?

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
Just the way it turns the lights off,
keeps your head down.

Then Kristy starts crying, pounding on the wheel. It's not a weak cry, it's like rage erupting, leaking mascara down her cheeks like she's struck oil.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
Sobriety is terrifying, man. A bright
fucking light. You see everything. Not
just ahead of you, but on all sides,
behind you, around corners --

For a split second, YOUNG RAY sits beside Kristy, looking scared of her emotion as she sobs.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
I watched this tweaker today like I'd
known her all my life. I saw the trap,
I just felt the cage she was in. I
knew it by heart.

As Kristy twists the rear view mirror and tries to touch herself up, the image fades away.

RAY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
My Dad used to lock me up like that.

She's sobbing uncontrollably, but now Ray begins to harden as he watches.

INT. AA MEETING - CHURCH MEETING ROOM

Ray stands up in front of the group, scattered amid foldout chairs.

RAY

I remembered today he used to lock me in the closet so he could get high without me watching. First time I was scared. Second time I was furious. But after a while, I started to *prefer* it in there.

(a beat)

Like a dog in his kennel.

Despite the darkness, they all laugh. OFF THE LAUGH --

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - WILLOW GROVE - NIGHT

-- there's AUDIENCE LAUGHTER to the "MATCH GAME" on the TV, a vintage game show channel. "Though Sam was eighty years old, he still liked to _____."

Ray is on his computer. He clicks on TOR (the dark net) -- and we watch him navigate to "ONION MESSENGER," an untraceable site.

He checks his account and sees his message to someone we'll meet later, HO DINH. There are a few pictures of the HOUSE IN OTTSVILLE: "Know anything about this place?"

Ho responds: "Termite food."

Ray smirks and types: "Any other red flags?"

Ho responds immediately: "I don't know it. Trust your instincts."

Ray stares ahead, his TV playing, the undertow of his mood getting the better of him.

He rises and flips through a massive collection of vinyl. *This is where his money goes.*

Desperate to change his mood, he puts on a record that was probably bought ironically: The Bee Gee's 1968 album "Idea."

INT. RAY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

As Robin Gibb trills, "*I started a joke, which started the whole world crying...*" Ray lifts the PORCELAIN COVER on his TOILET... to find A HIDDEN STASH taped up.

He exhales, with the deep gloom of giving in to relapse. "*I started to cry...*"

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

"...which started the whole world laughing." Wavering, Ray lies back on the couch and drifts. As he looks up with dreamy eyes --

-- MARLETTA perches over him, her fingers touching his forehead. He drifts on the couch, the music going. "Oh if only I'd seen that the joke was on me." As he rolls over, high as a kite, he's TEENAGE RAY (17).

MARLETTA (O.S.)
I hate this song. It's so self-pitying. This guy thinks he's the center of the universe.

TEENAGE RAY sits up on the couch to find himself beside 18 year-old MARLETTA.

RAY
You gotta analyze everything. You're gonna be a lawyer someday.

MARLETTA
That's what my Dad says.

RAY (extremely high)
Your Dad's a cop.

MARLETTA
You okay there, Ray?

RAY
You know what cops do? They call you by your full formal name. "How are you doing over there, Raymond?" "How's the homework coming, Marletta?"

MARLETTA
My dad calls me Mars.

RAY
God of War.

MARLETTA
And a candy bar...

With his childlike, exaggerated intoxication, Ray grows suddenly worried about something.

RAY
Jolly Ranchers. Oh, that kid. He was a baby. I couldn't tell what kinda candy it was, but...

MARLETTA
You're too messed up, Ray.

As headlights pass through RAY'S APARTMENT, ROTATE to the window. HEADLIGHTS now pass steadily, the setting transformed TO A MOVING CAR...

MARLETTA (CONT'D) *You were staying clean. You're throwing away almost a month of hard work.*

RAY
I'm throwing away more than that.

As a light passes, it reveals his hand now under her CATHOLIC SCHOOL KILT.

MARLETTA
Why you need to get so messed up, Ray. Ain't I enough for you?

"I looked at the skies running my hands over my eyes."

RAY
You're too much. I need to be high to stand it. Being close to you is like --

In flashes from PASSING HEADLIGHTS, we now see he's fingering her while he drives. "And I fell out of bed hurting my head from things that I'd said."

RAY (CONT'D)
-- being too close to the sun. It burns. I get a sunburn being next to--

A HORN -- A SLAM -- BLACK SCREEN

FADE IN ON:

THE SAME FLASH FROM THE START

THE JAWS OF LIFE CUT INTO A CAR ACCIDENT. This time we glimpse Ray's desperate eyes in the twisted metal, Marletta beside him. Audible behind sirens and screams, the song still plays: "Till I finally died, which started the whole world living." It's a couple of harrowing seconds, broken by --

A FLARE OF HEADLIGHTS

EXT. RAY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - WILLOW GROVE - NIGHT

The HEADLIGHTS illuminate falling snow as Ray leaps into --

INT. UNMARKED VAN - NIGHT

Manny drives while Ray loads the GLOCKS. The windshield wipers keep the beat to the thudding bass of EST GEE.

RICK STALEY
Turn this shit down, I hate this shit.

Manny turns up the song. The wipers sway over melting snow, while Ray reads a map on his phone.

RAY
I got no bars. It's like Amish country
already.

MANNY
Left or right?

RICK STALEY
Bro, I have no idea.

RAY
(a sigh)
It's alright, I got it. Go right here.

They turn down a small side street.

RAY (CONT'D)
Keep going, I recognize all this.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A picturesque blanket of snowfall settles on the pine needles. Suddenly the van's headlights appear over a crest and descend down along the tattered fence and frosted trees.

It finally pulls over along the side of the road.

Manny and Ray climb into the rear. Ray pulls a duffel bag out of the back and plops it onto the rear seat. He opens it and pulls out the DEA WINDBREAKERS and MANNY'S PUMP GUN, handing them over.

They climb into the DEA WINDBREAKERS.

CUT TO:

Ray brings up a MAP ON HIS IPHONE, showing it to them as their steaming breath fogs up the screen.

RAY
This side's me. I'm moving up from the
street along these trees.

He wipes the screen.

RAY (CONT'D)
You're on this side and we're both
moving parallel to the driveway. You
come to the side door here. I'm going
to the front. If the dog's tied up,
don't worry about him. The thing barks
nonstop anyway, so nobody listens.

He enlarges the map and zooms in on the side.

RAY (CONT'D)

When you get to the side door here,
key the button ON YOUR RADIO a couple
of times. Don't say anything, just key
the button.

He keys it so they can hear the corresponding CLICK-CLICK on
the other walkie-talkie.

RAY (CONT'D)

I key you back. THAT'S THE SIGN. We
all go in at once.

Loading his shotgun, Manny gives a thumbs-up. Ray points at
Rick.

RAY (CONT'D)

If you're clear when you get to the
door, make sure they can see the DEA
jacket.

Next comes a box of shells and a big COLT PYTHON. Ray holds
the gun out to Rick, opening the cylinder and spinning it to
show him it's loaded.

RICK STALEY

Got it, yeah. Got it.

RAY

This is for show or worst case. Do not
fire. These are cookers. The house is
full of acetone and ether and Christ
knows-what-all. One shot and this
whole place could go up like some
hillbilly Chernobyl.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PROPERTY - OTTSVILLE, PA - NIGHT

Ray sticks his GLOCK in his windbreaker and makes his way
uphill in darkness.

FARTHER UPHILL: He's panting steam like a locomotive in the
chilly night. He crests the hill and drops to a knee in thin
snow to catch his breath. He faces the lights of the house,
one on upstairs in the barn. He goes into his bag.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS: He tries to scope the bright barn,
but the lenses are steamed.

He thrashes downhill through dead and dried undergrowth.

CLOSER TO PROPERTY

He crouches behind the BLUE VAN. He blows into his hands but
can't seem to get his fingers warm. He moves around the van
and walks fast to --

THE BARN

-- keeping to the side of it. He can see the caved-in doors are open. He crosses in front of them, then edges around the building, pulling out the GLOCK. When he comes to the stairs leading up inside, he waits, listening.

Silence. There's only the thin sound of wind through conifer trees. Then comes a HISS-CLICK from the walkie-talkie.

He jumps, almost pulls the trigger. He rushes to:

THE SIDE OF THE MAIN HOUSE

Keeping low, he inches to the front, ducking under a dark window to reach the porch.

He pulls the walkie-talkie out of his bag, drops the bag on the porch and points his Glock at the door. He keys the mic TWICE and puts the walkie-talkie down --

-- then he kicks the door in with a steel-toed boot.

INT. METH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The hallway is dark, walls and ceiling stained with weeks of ammonium gas. He hears MANNY shouting --

MANNY (O.S.)
Federal Agents!

RAY
Federal Agents! DEA!

Ray stalks ahead, wheeling left and right with the pistol. Somewhere in the house the DOG barks. There are dark and empty rooms on either side and stairs. He hurries up toward --

RAY (CONT'D)
Down on the ground! Get down!

He turns right and sees MANNY standing over RANDY, who's on his knees with his hands behind his head.

RANDY		RAY (CONT'D)
This is a travesty of justice.	Cuff him.	

Rick sticks his pistol in his jeans and pulls a wire wrap from his belt. He pushes RANDY on the floor and jerks his hands behind him, fumbling with the wire wrap.

RICK STALEY
Hold still.

Randy growls in pain into the floor:

RANDY
You cannot violate my rights with a no-
knock search-and-seizure, and you
cannot put your hands on me --

RICK STALEY
What? Do I like need to read him his
rights or something?

[illegible]

Rick pulls the pistol out of his belt and smacks the barrel against the back of the tweker's skull.

RICK STALEY
Shut up, you piney fuck.

There's a piercing scream from the doorway and KRISTY appears with a LONG-BARRELED SHOTGUN.

Rick jumps up as Manny and Ray aim their guns at her. The dog is going insane behind a door somewhere.

Drop the gun! MANNY RAY
Federal Agents!

She swivels the gun at Ray and Manny in turn, eyes wild.

KRISTY LYNNE
You ain't Feds! Get the fuck off him.

Ray points his pistol at the floor and holds his hand out.

RAY
Calm down, for Christ's sake.

Randy tries to raise his head. The dog is going wild. Rick is ashen.

RANDY
I need to see a signed search warrant.
You men are not entitled to run
roughshod over my civil liberties!

RICK STALEY RANDY (CONT'D)
Shut the fuck up! Kristy, get Jack!

RAY
Jack?

RANDY MANNY
I want badge numbers, I want LADY, DROP THE GUN!
all pertinent information
because this officer busted
my nose --

Rick pushes his cold gun into Randy's pony tail.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Call Jack! JACK!

RICK STALEY
Drop that shit! I said drop --

BOOM! Rick's gun goes off RIGHT THROUGH RANDY'S HEAD.

For a moment there's total silence, only the ringing of ears. Until sound suddenly returns with...

...BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Shotgun blasts fired from down the hallway. A SHOTGUN BLAST sprays RICK with buckshot.

Who the fuck is this? It's "JACK," an unexpected third -- coming down the hallway, BLOWING ONE WILD SHOT AFTER ANOTHER, ripping the walls apart.

RICK empties out his COLT, firing wild, bringing down JACK with a lucky headshot --

-- as RAY is clipped across the arm.

KRISTY LYNNE aims high, blasting through the ceiling --- while RICK turns and BLOWS A SHOT THROUGH HER, ripping the doorjamb and throwing her back.

Ray is gasping, astonished, meeting eyes with Manny.

Rick howls on the floor, rolling in what looks like milk leaking from a half-dozen little holes in the fridge.

Ray wobbles ahead and sees JACK, bleeding out on a filthy carpet runner. The dog barks non-stop, claws scratching at the back side of a door.

Manny steps out the kitchen door.

Ray hears him vomiting out onto the snow.

Then Ray holds up his cold pistol and creeps ahead, into the room off the kitchen where Kristy fell back.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

METH EQUIPMENT sits amid HOARDED STACKS OF NEWSPAPERS. The murky air has been disrupted at one end, dust swimming in angled light.

BOOM! A STACK OF NEWSPAPERS explodes. Ray drops to his chest. He checks himself: he's not hit. The shot punctured a year of PHILADELPHIA INQUIRERS and sprayed confetti.

Ray creeps ahead through the maze, hearing -- CLICK-CLICK -- another shell chambered. He drops. The dog is losing his mind. As Ray slides ahead -- BOOM! -- another shot rips through the papers, filling the room like a snow globe with papers and dust.

Ears ringing, Ray hears the SHELL CASING hit the floor and roll. She's empty. He comes ahead, slowly, hearing Rick moaning in the other room.

He reaches an opening amid the stacks to see a TRAIL OF BLOOD under dissipating smoke. He follows it, crawling on his knees and one hand, Glock up. He reaches a turn in the maze to see -
-

-- KRISTY LYNNE lying on her back, EYES open and motionless, facing the drip-stained ceiling.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ray finds Rick crying on the carpet runner, Manny sitting on a dry spot on the floor, staring at him in disbelief.

RAY
Okay-okay-okay.

Ray pulls out a chair and sits. Dog claws scratch on a nearby door.

RAY (CONT'D)
What do we do?

There's a CRACK as the dog busts through the door, a rush of paws and fingernails as --

-- THE DOG rushes into the room. Ray fumbles for his gun as the dog rushes over Manny's lap, SKIDDING ON THE MILK AND WET LINOLEUM, leaving a trail of paw prints as it keeps running down the hall and out the door.

MANNY
Smartest one here.

Bleeding from his chest, Rick crawls ahead, then sits against the kitchen wall where blood and milk converge on the floor.

RICK STALEY
Bro? Hey, bro?

RAY
We gotta get you to a hospital.

RICK STALEY
Did I fuck up?

Ray looks at him with pure sadness.

RAY
Yeah, buddy. You kind of did.

Rick's eyes roll back white and he faints, slumping back into the corner. Urine darkens his pant legs -- as he breathes one last, terrible breath.

The dog's barking dwindles as it disappears across the snow.

RAY (CONT'D)
We need to go.

MANNY
I'm not doing all this for free.

RAY
Look at Rick.

MANNY
We can pray for his ass later. Get the money.

Ray holds his hand up.

RAY
Okay. I'll look. Let me look. You find something to clean up this mess with.

Manny scans the disaster.

MANNY
Like Windex, motherfucker?

RAY
Whatever you can find!

They stand there for a minute and then Manny puts the shotgun on his shoulder and walks out into the cold.

Ray gets up and walks back out through the hallway, trying not to look at the dead bodies.

He heads upstairs.

INT. METH HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - QUICK CUTS

Ray checks his shoulder and sees that buckshot has singed through his windbreaker. He moves room to room down a hall, finding each one empty.

-- A wet, reeking BATHROOM, tiles peeling from the wall.

-- Empty bedrooms, old bedsteads furred with black dust.

-- IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, a box of surgical masks.

UNDER THE MATTRESS -- a paper bag with a few hundred bucks. He jams it into the pocket of the windbreaker.

THE CLOSET, FROM INSIDE -- He pushes open the closet doors, shines the light, blinding us.

FLARE OUT TO:

A PADLOCKED DOOR

Ray kicks it twice, hard. The cleats give way in the rotted wood and the door swings back on rusted hinges. He finds the light switch. A FAINT ORANGE LIGHT comes on to reveal --

A ROOM FOR A LITTLE GIRL. White furniture, a pink plaid ruffle around a sagging bed. Everything with a patina of gray dust. A brush, a Mariah Carey poster. His single step unleashes a lunar swirl of new dust. He turns off the light, and backs out.

QUICK CUTS AGAIN:

-- He kicks over a low desk, dumps out drawers.

-- IN THE HALLWAY, he finds the scratched up door to the room where the dog was kept. He steps in, seeing --

-- PILES OF DOG SHIT. A cracked window, claw marks on the sill.

ON A TABLE, above piles of discarded cans of ACETONE and emptied pots and pans, sit HUNDREDS OF BOTTLES FILLED WITH A YELLOWISH LIQUID. Ray picks one up and looks at the label:

"Aloe Vera Sunburn Gel."

Confused, he dumps it out: watching the syrup puddle on the table. *It must be something.*

He looks for a bag to carry the bottles.

On the floor is a DUFFEL. He grabs it, hurrying, not quite thinking, as he pulls it open and... freezes.

INSIDE THE DUFFEL, there are BUNDLES OF CASH. TENS, TWENTIES AND HUNDREDS, held together with rubber bands.

He finds a TRASH BAG and fills it with the SUNBURN LOTIONS. Carrying both, he hustles out the door.

EXT. PORCH - METH HOUSE - NIGHT

He drags the DUFFEL out the front door and drops it. Manny appears near the porch carrying another can of acetone. He and Ray go back into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

They drag the bodies down the hallway.

INT. FRONT ROOM - METH HOUSE - NIGHT

They lay THREE BODIES together.

RAY
(out of breath)
I gotta get the lady. Get the van.

Manny runs off, vaulting off the porch and heading down the drive.

Ray bends over Rick. He puts a finger to his neck, knowing it's ridiculous.

Ray looks into his empty pupils. He closes his eyes and lets a stab of regret pass through him.

With his eyes closed, he slowly talks himself into something, face becoming more resolute.

Finally he grabs Rick's jacket and drags him down the hall, leaving a nasty trail. He hears tires coming up the drive and grabs Manny's SHOTGUN.

EXT. PORCH - METH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ray takes position behind the blue van in the driveway.

When he hears a door close, Ray steps out from behind the van and shows himself. Manny jumps out of his skin.

MANNY
You scared the shit out of me.

RAY
I got worried it wasn't really you.

MANNY
Why wouldn't it really be me?

RAY
I don't know, man. I don't know.

He hands Manny the gun and drags the duffel bumping down the stairs. Manny comes over to help him lift it.

MANNY
This can't be cash. It's too heavy.

RAY
It's *cash*.

Manny gapes in shock.

RAY (CONT'D)
We still got a lot of work to do.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Ray uncaps the ACETONE. He splashes it onto JACK, RANDY and RICK lined up on the floor. He coughs at the stink.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

He returns to where KRISTY fell, finding only BLOOD amid crumpled up papers. He can't find her.

His eyes dart around in panic. Finally, he just splashes the acetone all over the newspapers like kindling.

EXT. PORCH - METH HOUSE - NIGHT

Ray dumps the last acetone onto a snapped-off piece of DOWEL ROD on the porch and lights it. He watches the fire take for a moment, an intensifying torch in his fist.

Then he tosses the stick into the house.

There's a rush of air and thump and the front room glows blue, then flashes over white and orange. As Ray is backing down the steps --

-- CRACK, the windows blow out. He watches it burn. Then he runs over and jumps in the shotgun seat of the van.

INT. UNMARKED VAN - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Lights off, Manny guns the engine, throwing gravel and rocking over icy ruts.

INT. UNMARKED VAN - THE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

As they crest the hill, they both see HEADLIGHTS turning into the driveway ahead of them.

RAY
What the *fuuuuck*?

Manny jams on the brakes.

MANNY	RAY (CONT'D)
You got to be kidding.	Swing right. Up on the grass.
	Go.

Manny spins the wheel and the van fishtails, moving off road over a knoll. With the cold river rushing ahead of them, Ray tries to see behind them. But whatever is going on at the house is out of sight behind the evergreens and the hill.

RAY (CONT'D)
I think he saw us.

The car moves toward them into view -- an OLD DODGE CHARGER.

Lights off, they wait. Ray catches a brief glimpse of a GUY behind the wheel, long hair and goatee, a dark figure beside him.

The CHARGER disappears as it rounds the house.

There's an ORANGE GLOW -- and Ray begins to see RED LIGHT reflected on the tops of pines.

Manny restarts the van, hits the gas, and spins the wheel to straighten out. Down the driveway, he picks up speed as they hit the last bumps and skid onto the street.

INTERCUTTING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE VAN

They shoot down the road as the Charger's headlights disappear over the rise, where Ray can now see flames.

RAY (CONT'D)
Oh, Jesus.

They're almost out of sight of the driveway when the DODGE HEADLIGHTS appear. Ray can see the car fishtailing and almost leaving the road -- but the driver gets it under control and guns it toward them.

RAY (CONT'D)
Go-go-go-go-go-go-go.

Lights off, they soar into darkness.

They lose sight of THE HEADLIGHTS around a corner and slope.

ON THE WINDSHIELD

They ride in spooked silence, nothing but the roar of the engine and the drone of the wipers across thawing snowflakes. Ray nods to Manny, then climbs across the van, grabbing the SHOTGUN and crouching by the back window.

He keeps watching for the TRAILING HEADLIGHTS in the snow flurries. Over a ridge he sees a GLINT in the distance, then darkness.

He jacks more shells into the breech and holds the seatbelt strap, surfing as the van banks another curve.

MANNY
Did we lose them or not?!

RAY
Don't think so.

ON THE TIRES

They skid across ice and catch pavement again.

INT. UNMARKED VAN - NIGHT

Ray drops back into the passenger seat, staring ahead.

There are no lights anywhere, just snowflakes ahead like stars in hyperspace. They're passing the creek alongside the road.

SUDDENLY --

-- A CLICKING HISS fills the van and Ray nearly jumps from his seat.

MANNY
The fuck was that?

Ray searches around, hearing STATIC. A broken-up, distant voice broadcasts:

VOICE
Ten-four there, buddy.

Ray gapes at Manny. Manny's eyes fall to the floor where they both see --

-- THE WALKIE-TALKIE.

RAY
I dropped the other walkie-talkie.

MANNY
That piece of shit only carries a mile.

RAY
Then they're still behind us.

MANNY
What the fuck, Ray?

VOICE
(through static)
Man, you throw a real party.

Ray turns up the radio and puts it onto the dashboard.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Let's slow down and talk. The roads ain't so hot tonight.

MANNY
Throw that thing out the window.

Ray waits. There's something terrifying about the heavy New England *burr*: overly confident. Almost amused.

VOICE
I figured you left this behind 'cause you wanted to resolve this situation.

"Re-saw!ve." Ray clicks the key twice, then after a beat, twice again.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Okay. So you speak morse code.

Mawse code.

VOICE (CONT'D)

I'm trying to give you the benefit of the doubt, buddy. Old Randy, his brain was fried. Maybe things got out of hand? You were just going over there to score. Randy starts in with the conspiracy shit? It's always the end of the world with that guy. Warmer or colder?

The voice is so calm, it exudes power. Manny keeps gunning ahead, nothing but deep dark countryside.

MANNY

Maybe they can home in on us.

RAY

They're not the NSA, man.

VOICE

I guess there are two problems with that scenario. One is this here radio. Which I can't figure unless you were cops. And this thing is not police issue. The other thing, and this is where things get complicated, the other thing is you stole our money and dope, you piece of shit.

The dark landscape soars past. Manny leans in to listen as he drives; Ray is pitched forward right at the radio.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Those tweakers can rot in hell. I am only thinking about what's ours. So here's a way out for everyone. You tell me where you are, you drop the bags out the door and drive away. Then this becomes a funny story to your grandkids about how you almost got blowtorched to death...

ON THE SPEEDOMETER: It's touching 100 MPH.

VOICE (CONT'D)

(more static)

... 'stead of a sad story in the paper about two bodies in the woods, raped with shotguns and blown in half.

RAY

This guy's calm *and* threatening. That's the command voice.

VOICE

You think you'd be tough to find? In your Scooby Doo van?

RAY

The bad jokes, the threats. He's got it all.

The black forest flies past.

Manny's eyes are on him as they speed ahead, nothing in the world but their weak headlights. As static increases, it sounds like they're getting further away.

Ray returns to the back window, eyes on the undulating road behind them. The walkie-talkie hisses.

VOICE

[STATIC]...still make this right. You still have a choice.

The voice degenerates into an eerie squeal just as --

DOLLY ZOOM -- TWO GLOWING YELLOW EYES APPEAR ON THE ROAD.

Manny stands on the brakes; Ray flies; the van skids --

-- CLIPPING something, cracking the windshield.

Silence. They idle. As Ray climbs up from the floor --

RAY

What the fuck?

MANNY

A deer! I hit a deer!

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Ray and Manny spring out from opposite sides of the van, passing the destroyed front grill, coming ahead to the deer, alive, staggering as it struggles toward the pine forest. It makes it a few feet then falls again.

MANNY

Stupid thing. What's it doing here?

RAY

It lives here.

They watch it tragically limp toward the roadside.

RAY (CONT'D)

We gotta go. They're a mile back.

MANNY

We can't just leave this thing.

Inside the WALKIE TALKIE squelches, clarifying.

VOICE
You ain't much for conversation.

Ray's eyes move off the deer -- *to the sound of TRICKLING STREAM* -- across the highway in eddying flurries to --

-- a DARK CLEARING in the wall of the forest. *AN ACCESS ROAD.*

Along the UNDULATING STRAIGHTAWAY behind them, HEADLIGHTS appearing at the farthest hill back, glinting for just a moment before vanishing down the next drop in the road.

RAY
I'll get the deer. You get the van off
the road -- down there, down that
trail as far as you can go.

EXT. DIRT ROAD, EDGE OF FOREST - NIGHT

Ray follows the limping deer between pine and chestnut stands.

In pure DARKNESS, hearing only the CRACKLING of the radio and the increasing wind, creaking through the pines. As eyes adjust, Ray sees the van on the unmarked road, Manny stepping out. The deer drops to the ground.

MANNY
(whispering)
We can't just leave it to die. We
gotta put it out of its misery.

RAY
(whispering back)
What the fuck you want me to do?

Growing clearer and louder, the radio plays from the van:

VOICE
Listen, pal. I'm a patient man...

Manny grows enraged and searches for the radio.

VOICE (CONT'D)
(getting louder)
...but you gotta start dealing with
this situation.

As Ray stares down the deer, Manny returns with the Walkie Talkie.

VOICE (CONT'D)
I need that money. Do the wise thing.

Ray looks up from beside the wounded deer, down in a recessed patch of forest.

RAY
What should we do?

MANNY
(whispering)
You gotta kill it. It's cruel not to.

RAY
I mean about the fucking money!

Suddenly HEADLIGHTS begin bending clockwise across the stands of trees, brightening, igniting Ray and Manny in a moving pattern. The light keeps strengthening as they gape at each other in horror.

Then Ray, turns and his face glows red.

FROM BEHIND RAY, A SILHOUETTE: DOZENS OF POLICE AND FIRE ENGINE SIRENS gust past. Ray is a shadow holding a pistol, silhouetted against the flickering red strobe lights through the spaced trees.

When at last they've passed, leaving again only the sound of the ice-rimmed stream, Ray looks back at Manny, shell-shocked.

No one saw them in this alcove.

Ray lowers the gun at the suffering deer, closes his eyes and -- OFF THE FLASH AND BANG --

CUT TO:

INT. UNMARKED VAN - NIGHT

Silence. Driving with the lights off, lit only by the glow of the console, Manny and Ray rock ahead over a rutted road.

RAY
Stay on this, as far as it goes.

MANNY
What if it doesn't go anywhere?

Ray looks over at Manny, his face raw from snow and sweat.

RAY
We gotta assume the cops didn't grab those guys in the Charger.

MANNY
I'm way out ahead on that. I'm thinking they're already at my house with a blowtorch.

RAY
How are they going to find us? They saw the van, so what?
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Plates are from the junkyard. We dump the thing tonight.

MANNY

Can they ID Rick? Tie him to you?

Ray is silent for a moment of fleeting grief.

RAY

Who else knows our business?

MANNY

Ho.

RAY

Yeah. And Ho has as much to lose as we do. If word got out he was selling the stuff we took off other dealers...

MANNY

Some biker sticks a gun in his kid's mouth, he's going to talk fast.

There's another squelch on the Walkie-Talkie, but just garbled static, like a lost broadcast from deep space. Ray can't take it anymore and -- HURLS IT OUT THE WINDOW.

RAY

Whatever's in that bag, we earned it.

DARKNESS

The moment of darkness is broken by the long BEAMS OF SEARCHLIGHTS, passing through long-dead weeds that poke through patchy snow. PAN TO --

EXT. METH HOUSE - OTTSVILLE, PA - NIGHT

As the FLASHLIGHTS fan outward, FIREFIGHTERS surround the torched frame of the house, embers still blazing, a portion of a nearby tree still ablaze.

As firefighters work in HAZMAT gear. Other unmarked cars pull up along the gravel.

RAY (POST-LAP)

This wasn't just some meth lab.

RISE AND TURN, until we're facing the glowing Eastern horizon, the sun just a half-hour away from rising. What looks like lightning is --

-- THE FLASH of a FORENSIC PHOTOGRAPHER, rapid shots of the DESTROYED FARMHOUSE.

-- RANDY'S BODY, burnt beyond recognition.

-- JACK CRAIN, face down.

-- The HOUSE, gutted with fire, just a smoldering skeleton against the near-dawn sky, burning newspaper pages still drifting in the wind like fireflies.

FOLLOW ONE FLASHLIGHT over the debris of discarded propane tanks, rubber tubing, cooking supplies, over a matted-down trail in the filthy snow. TWO FLASHLIGHTS converge on --

"KRISTY LYNNE," face down, blackened with soot, blood under her torn nails, still and lifeless in the grass.

A GLOVED FORENSIC HAND reaches down to her, amid a few FLASHES. The hands turn her over. Her battered face faces upward as a few more flashes go off. Suddenly --

-- HER EYES FLIP OPEN.

INT. NO NAME MOTEL - BATHROOM - CLEARFIELD, PA - NEAR DAWN

Painfully, Ray peels off his shirt to check his shoulder.

CLOSER -- A single buckshot pellet has scraped across the thickest part of his deltoid.

Wincing, Ray goes about trying to rinse it clean. It's too painful.

INT. NO NAME MOTEL - CLEARFIELD, PA - NEAR DAWN

Ray pulls shut the curtains and turns back to the room. Manny dumps the bag onto the bed --

-- MASSIVE SEALED STACKS OF CASH.

Manny reaches into the BAG of LOTION BOTTLES, rearing back.

RAY

What?

MANNY

That.

CLOSE ON: A SPIDER crawls off the SUNBURN GEL onto the floor.

Towel over his shoulder, Ray grabs a tissue and tries to pick the spider up without killing it.

He pulls open the window, then tries to shake the spider off outside. But it falls below the window AC unit. Ray watches the spider emerge on a CORD. FOLLOW THE CORD UPWARD to --

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

-- A HOSPITAL BED, RISING TO AN INTUBATED PATIENT, surrounded by monitors and equipment, an EKG beeping.

FOLLOW THE CORD to where "KRISTY LYNNE" lies on the gurney, staring past tubing that runs down her throat into her collapsed lung. Her face is battered and singed.

Nurses and doctors move among a CADRE OF FEDS, BADGES on lanyards. We glimpse one badge: this is the *REAL DEA*. Supervisory Special Agent, PAVEL BARTOK (50s).

BARTOK
Randy Williamson is dead. We haven't
IDed the other two.

Kristy begins reaching out frantically. Bartok stares, almost in disbelief, at her fluttering hand.

SPECIAL AGENT, JOHN MARCHETTI, puts away his phone.

MARCHETTI
What's she doing?

Kristy pantomimes writing on the air.

BARTOK
Your pad. She wants your note pad.

With a sigh, Marchetti hands over his PAD and PEN. Kristy props it against tubing and scrawls.

BARTOK (CONT'D)
Let's clear the room, please. We need
to question the witness.

NURSE
I am sorry but we are going to have to
start prepping her for surgery.

BARTOK
We need this information.

Bartok moves closer to read what she's writing:

BARTOK (CONT'D)
(reading)
"If I die -- don't fuck this up."

MARCHETTI
She must know who the other two guys
were.

Bartok reads for a moment, flinching.

BARTOK
Check out Jack Crain... from Sinking
Spring, PA. Pagans MC.

ON THE PAD: She's written this in a chicken-scratch that only a dear friend could understand. Bartok studies her under the equipment. A touch of affection passes over his eyes.

He waits to make sure the nurses and doctors are out of earshot.

BARTOK (CONT'D)
(whispering)
You did good, Florez. Now your job's just to stay alive.

"Kristy-Lynne" is SPECIAL AGENT MINA FLOREZ (40s), now a woman without her voice box, awaiting surgery, communicating only with one hand and furious eyes.

Her EKG races faster as she writes. She goes so fast she jostles the IV in her wrist: "SAID -- THEY -- WERE -- DEA."

BARTOK (CONT'D)
There's no way. You were the only one we had in there.

"COVER -- NOT -- BLOWN."

BARTOK (CONT'D) Florez: we need to listen to the doctors. I'm not putting that on your tombstone.

But Kristy (aka Agent Florez) is shaking like she's about to burst, EKG racing faster and faster. Bartok looks terrified as he reads over her tube:

BARTOK (CONT'D)
(reading)
"So f-word close... if I f-ing die..."

MARCHETTI
Is she taking the time to write out every f-bomb?

BARTOK
(reading)
"3 groups were coming. I only knew 1. I don't know who f-worded us."

CLOSE ON THE PAD: "This will be WAR --"

Bartok glances back up at Marchetti, pale.

MARCHETTI
What?

The EKG is now as fast as a bomb timer; her scrawl is racing: "ALL-OUT WAR."

Bartok reads along as she writes in BOLD the last sentence:

BARTOK
Check the door? Where's the nurse?

MARCHETTI
(checking)
Coming back. What? Quick? What?

Bartok looks hard at Marchetti, then back down at KRISTY'S PAD: "KEEP - MY - COVER."

As soon as she sees he's read it, she begins SCRATCHING OUT THE WORDS.

MARCHETTI (CONT'D)
What?

An incommensurate LAUGH TRACK rises up.

INT. NO NAME MOTEL - CLEARFIELD, PA - NEAR DAWN

The laughter follows the patter between *Fred Sanford and Lamont* on TV. The money is piled across the bed.

MANNY
Want to get that shoulder looked at?

RAY
I looked at it.

Ray has a STATIONARY PAD and he's been keeping track as he sorts. Manny comes out of the shower.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm fried. I can't count anymore.

MANNY
Where are we?

RAY
Right now, I'm at...

He looks at the column of figures on the pad.

RAY (CONT'D)
Four hundred twenty seven thousand,
six hundred fourteen. Not counting
whatever this sunburn gel is. And
there's still all this shit.

He picks up another massive pile of loose bills and lets it drop. Manny sits into a chair, wrapped in the towel.

MANNY
How do you figure those crackers were
sitting on this?

Ray just shakes his head.

MANNY (CONT'D)
Those guys in the charger? Who the
hell are they?

RAY
I don't know. My head hurts. What's
the most we ever took before?

MANNY
Twenty-two Gs.

RAY
(a slight nod)
Off that Salvadoran in Bensalem.

Manny notices the DEA WINDBREAKERS thawing out on a chair.

MANNY
What do we do? This is too much. These
dudes are coming, Ray.

RAY
We could run. We could stay lost for a
long time with this...

MANNY
But?

RAY
But Theresa. *Sherry*. All they gotta do
is get ahold of someone we know. We
need to figure out a way to deal with
this.

MANNY
We weren't killers, Ray. We took candy
from babies.

Ray lies down beside the money, stacks spilling onto him.

RAY
I'm gonna stop counting. Who cares how
much, it's *too much*.
(thinking)
These guys, they weren't from here.
You heard his voice. All that "Larry
bih-rd, "Havliceck-stole-the-ball"
shit.

MANNY
Boston?

RAY
Could be in a club from up north.

MANNY
Could'a moved here twenty years ago
and kept the accent. I think we gotta
face this, Ray: Your recon work sucks.

RAY
(eyes closed)
I gotta sleep for an hour. Get my head
straight.

MANNY

You hear me, man. Rick. He paid the price. Not just for being an asshole, but for being with us. We put on those jackets, we started thinking they meant something.

RAY

What are you saying?

MANNY

We started thinking we really had the right...

Ray lies amid the money, dozing off. He hears the sound of the highway, the low resonant rumble of passing trucks.

MANNY (CONT'D)

We ain't real cops, motherfucker. And we ain't real dealers. We ain't *shit*. Nothing in our whole damn lives ever been real.

RAY

'Til now.

MANNY

Right. 'Til now.

...as peaceful guitars rise, playing gently over their sullen, terrified faces. *"I started a joke, which started the whole world crying..."*

BLACK SCREEN

"But I didn't see, that the joke was on me."

ROLL CREDITS