Where Angels Die

By

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Adapted From The Novel
"In the Place Where Angels Die"
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FADE IN:

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

A dark green Cavalier idles roughly in front of a neglected three story apartment building. One of the apartment doors facing the street is wrapped in police tape.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

PARKER JODE, 34, stares at the frozen, trash-covered earth of the Detroit ghetto surrounding him. He has a nervous intensity about him and his eyes blink a little too frequently.

He turns his attention to a nearby playground where three little black CHILDREN play amongst broken beer bottles, condom wrappers, syringes, and tin foil crack pipes. The children run and laugh without a care in the world.

Parker cracks a smile and rolls down his window to listen.

CHILD #1
Whatever nigga, my daddy will fuck yo daddy up!

CHILD #2
Nuh-uh, yo daddy ain't shit!

Parker SIGHS and rolls his window up. He turns on his radio, which is tuned into NPR. He lifts his armrest and removes a pill organizer from the cubby.

He takes a metal flask from the breastpocket of his peacoat, unswivels the cap, and takes a quick pull of its contents, cringing slightly as he swallows his medication. He turns the radio up.

NPR ANNOUNCER
... and for all of you insomniacs out there, according to a new British study, eating an ounce of cheese before bed led to better quality sleep and induced vivid dreams in test subjects.

He turns the volume up more.

NPR ANNOUNCER (CONT)
Over a dozen cheeses were tested and blue cheese, which the

NPR ANNOUNCER (CONT)
scientists say contains unusually high levels of the amino-acid tryptophan, induced the most vivid dreams. Test subjects were given journals and...

Parker blinks a mile a minute. A LOUD RUMBLE approaches as the radio transmission GARBLES. Just then a 747 flies low overhead and the entire car GROANS and RATTLES.

Parker frowns and checks his watch. He turns his car off, reaches into his glovebox, and removes a Glock 19.

As he gets out of his car, he lifts the back of his coat and tucks the pistol into his waistband. He locks his car and walks towards the apartment building.

He passes two HOODLUMS walking in the opposite direction. They appear to be in their late teens. As they walk past, one of them snickers.

HOODLUM #1
There goes that bitch.

They LAUGH and gesture. Parker pretends not to notice.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

He walks up two flights of stairs to apartment 205. He KNOCKS on the door. No answer. He KNOCKS louder. He hears a baby CRYING inside. He POUNDS on the door with his fist, the door flexing each time his fist smashes into it.

LITTLE BOY
Who is it?

PARKER
It’s Mr. Jode, Tavarus. Open up please.

The little boy, TAVARUS, 7, opens the door. He wears filthy oversized clothes... hand-me-downs that don’t appear to have ever been washed. His stomach is distended and his plump cheeks are speckled with a blizzard of dry snot.

PARKER (CONT)
Hey buddy. Where’s your dad?

TAVARUS
In his room. I think he’s sick.

PARKER
Why do you think that?

Tavarus SNIFFLES and wipes his nose onto his cheek.

TAVARUS
I told him we had to go to school but he didn’t say nuthin. So I yelled it at him but he still didn’t say nuthin. Are you gonna take him to the doctor?

PARKER
I don’t know; lets go see him.

Parker enters.

INT. APARTMENT 205 - CONTINUOUS

The two walk through the apartment. Parker grimaces and lifts his arm, burying his nose in the crook of his elbow. The floor is littered with fast food wrappers and dirty clothes.

Tavarus’ older sister, JANESSA, 10, is asleep on the couch. The baby, MIETA, is in the other room crying and wailing as if in some kind of horrible pain.

PARKER (CONT)
What’s wrong with your little sister?

TAVARUS
I think she’s hungry but I don’t know what to feed her. I looked but I didn’t see nuthin.

The two walk up to the open door of the master bedroom. Tavarus’ father, JAMES HALEY, 42, is slumped over on his lazyboy. Tavarus begins to lead Parker into the room. Parker grabs his shoulder.

PARKER
Stay here Tavarus.

INT. JAMES’ ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Parker walks up to James as Mieta literally SCREAMS her lungs out in the background. He glances back at Tavarus, who stands in the doorway nervously picking at the door frame.

TAVARUS
Daddy said Aunt Alteria died yesterday.

PARKER
I see... do me a favor buddy, wake your sister up and both of you get dressed okay?

TAVARUS
Okay Mr. Jode.

He turns back to face James, who sits amidst the makings of a heroine escape; the burned spoon, the melted wax stub which used to be a candle, and the needle with the depressed plunger.

Parker walks up to James, who wears sweat pants and a dirty tank top. His eyes stare blankly at the ceiling and a leather belt dangles from the chair's armrest.

Parker feels his neck for a pulse. As he does he stares at James, a storm raging behind his eyes.

He removes a tiny bottle of Purell from his coat pocket, squirts some onto his hands, and vigorously rubs them.

He removes his Samsung and and dials 911. It RINGS twice.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
911, what is your emergency?

PARKER
My name is Parker Jode. I'm a social worker with the city of Detroit. I need the police to come here immediately. One of the families I've been assigned has suffered a death due to what looks like a drug overdose.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Where are you located?

PARKER
I'm at the St. Josephine projects. Apartment 205.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Help is on the way.

Parker hangs up and walks into the baby’s room. He stands there for a moment, frozen, as he stares at the screaming, scraggly-haired infant thrashing about.

Parker reaches into her crib and gently embraces her. Her cries subside as she’s slowly lifted towards him, grasping his thumb with her tiny hand.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

Parker, carrying a large polyester jacket, walks past police cars and various crime scene investigators with ID cards dangling from lanyards.

He walks over to the playground, where Tavarus sits on a rusted swing set dangling over a mound of filth. Tavarus wipes his cheeks.

TAVARUS
(sniffling)
Hey Mr. Jode.

PARKER
Hey buddy. I uh... brought you this. It was your father’s and I... I thought you might like to have it.

Tavarus’ eyes well up.

TAVARUS
I don’t want it.

PARKER
Sure?

Tavarus nods. He glances at the jacket then immediately looks away, as if the mere sight of it physically hurts him. Sensing this, Parker sets it off to the side. He slips his peacoat off.

PARKER (CONT)
Here. Take mine.

Tavarus, shivering, gets up out of the swing and Parker drapes his coat around him and buttons it at the neck. It’s draped around him like a cape.

Tavarus looks over at his father’s coat, which lies crumpled on the ground, and lets out an angry YELL. He picks up a stick and begins beating his father’s jacket as he CRIES.

WHOOMPH! WHOOMPH! WHOOMPH! WHOOPH!

Parker watches silently, shivering. After what seems like forever, Tavarus, with nothing left, turns to face him.

His SOBBING hasn't completely subsided but it's slowing down. He wipes his cheeks with the heel of his hand and stares at Parker with big, glinting eyes. Parker rests a hand on his shoulder.

TAVARUS
(sniffling)
I hate him Mr. Jode. I hate him.

A beat.

PARKER
I know.

TAVARUS
Will it ever go away?

Parker squats so that they're eye level. He hesitates for a moment.

PARKER
It didn't for me. Maybe it will for you.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - NIGHT

Parker, illuminated by the pale glow of grafitti-covered streetlamps, walks towards his car at a brisk clip. His arms are wrapped around himself and he exhales thick plumes of frosty mist.

The two boys that had called him a cracker earlier appear, walking back the same way. One of them holds a car stereo, the other a prybar.

HOODLUM #1
Whatup cracka, we just stole your stereo.

HOODLUM #2
And you ain't gonna do shit you bitch-ass punk.

Parker looks out at his car and sees that the passenger window is shattered. In the blink of an eye he pulls his Glock.

HOODLUM #2
Oh shit!

They turn and make a beeline towards a clutch of nearby pine trees.

PARKER
Stop! Hey!

Parker frantically weaves in between snow-capped pines as he gives chase. The boys drop Parker's stereo as they hop a chain link fence. Parker, WHEEZING, reaches the fence as the boys dissapear past a crack den covered in gang symbols.

He tucks his piece back into his waistband and picks up his stereo. He turns and heads back to his car. He gets in, turns on the heat, and places his stereo atop shattered glass on his passenger seat.

A torrent of freezing air rushes in as he drives off into the darkness, cursing the kids who broke his window.

EXT. PARKER'S HOME - NIGHT

Parker pulls up to a small bungalow in a dimly lit neighborhood. He exits his vehicle clutching a large brown grocery bag.

INT. PARKER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Parker slams the door shut behind him and locks the deadbolt. Shivering like a madman, he turns his attention to the thermostat on the wall beside him. He cranks the heat up to 85 degrees.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Parker slips his shoes off and carefully positions them on the linoleum at a ninety degree angle next to the front door.

Parker, in his socks, glides across the beige carpet like a water lizard so as not to disturb the perfect line pattern left behind by the vacuum. He does not walk on the vacuum streaks, only in between them.

He sets the brown grocery bag on his kitchen counter. He removes a bottle of Cutty Sark and a large tub of crumbled blue cheese, which he puts in the fridge.

In the bathroom he takes a shower. Later, he wipes all of the excess water from the tiles with a squeegee.

He brushes his teeth one tooth at a time then rinses and spits with Listerine. He stares at himself in the mirror while he flosses.

He pours himself a water and scotch. Half water half scotch exactly. He walks over to his bed wearing his pajamas. In one hand is the scotch, in the other is his Glock.

He notices a wrinkle in the duvet cover. He smooths it out so that it lays perfectly flat then fluffs both of the pillows so that they look just right.

He turns around and sets his pistol and whiskey on the carpeted floor and he pulls out a blue sleeping bag and a pillow from under the bed.

He clicks the bedside lamp off and lays down inside the sleeping bag on the floor. He slides his gun a little closer, finishes his scotch, and gazes up into the dark void.

INT. PARKER’S HOME - DAY

Pitch black. We can hear Parker SNORING. His phone RINGS. We hear Parker SNORT LOUDLY and begin RUSTLING AROUND inside his sleeping bag as he gropes around for his phone.

He answers his phone, whose pale screen dimly illumates the side of Parker’s face in the darkness.

PARKER
(groggily)
Hello? Ashley? Ashley Perez? What time is it? Jesus. Why can’t your mother take you? Alright. Yeah, I’ll be there in fifteen.

INT. PARKER’S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker is parked in front of an aging duplex. He HONKS his horn and YAWNS. Moments later ASHLEY PEREZ, 8, gets into his car. She’s very pretty, with golden-green eyes and she wears her brown hair braided.

ASHLEY
Good morning Mr. Jode. Thanks for giving me a ride to school.

Parker nods then YAWNS again as he pulls out of the driveway. He drives off.

ASHLEY (CONT)
What happened to your window?

PARKER
Nothing. Just a couple punks.

She notices the torn wires dangling out of the wiring harness where the stereo should be.

ASHLEY (CONT)
What about your stereo? Did the same people who broke your window take your stereo?

Parker rubs his eyes.

PARKER
Yes they did. You're very perceptive.

The cold wind rushes in through the broken passenger window and assaults Ashley's face and neck. She pulls her scarf up over her nose.

ASHLEY
(slightly muffled)
It's freezing in here. Why don't you get your window fixed?

PARKER
The kids who did it... I'm gonna make them pay to fix it. Was your mother still passed out when you left?

ASHLEY
Uh-huh. She started drinking yesterday after Papi called.

Parker whips his head sideways.

PARKER
Horatio? What did he tell her?

ASHLEY
Something about they might let him out.

PARKER
Out of prison? When?

ASHLEY
I don’t know. I’m nervous, but in a good way. I think Mami is nervous too.

A beat.

ASHLEY (CONT)
Do you think that’s why she was drinking?

Ashley, waiting for a response, looks at Parker. He’s in his own world.

ASHLEY (CONT)
Well?

PARKER
What? Oh. Maybe. I don’t know.

INT. P.V. MCNAMARA FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Parker, sipping a cup of 7-Eleven coffee, sits at his cubicle and surveys his desk. He straightens the pencils and repositions his laptop so that it sits dead center on the desktop.

He sifts through his files, each one representing a family in a desperate situation. He pulls the Perez file and flips it open. Paper-clipped on the inside front cover is a wallet-sized photograph of Ashley.

A co-worker, STU FELDMAN, 30’s, walks up behind him. He’s disheveled in an odd way, like his mom dressed him or he doesn’t grasp the concept of matching clothes.

STU
Hey Parker! Mind if I borrow your stapler?

Parker swivels around in his chair and gives him an icy stare.

PARKER
Can’t you see I’ve just gotten everything arranged on my desk the way it needs to be?

STU
Well... yes.

PARKER
Good. Its good that you comprehend that. We're making progress.

Parker swivels back towards his desk.

STU
But I don't understand what the big deal is.

Parker swivels back around in his chair.

PARKER
The big deal is that tomorrow I've got to run over to the projects to visit a family living in a one bedroom apartment with six people living there! On top of that they are all on drugs of various kinds. You know what drug is real hot right now Stu?

STU
No.

PARKER
Crystal Meth. Do you have any idea what it does to people?

STU
No.

PARKER
Of course you don't. That's because you stay here in your cushy cubicle with your space heater and your vending machines sorting mail all day!

Parker, having lost his train of thought, swivels back around in his chair.

STU
So what does it do to people?

Parker swivels around in his chair so hard he almost falls over.

PARKER
It makes them paranoid and crazy Stu! And guess what my job is? I've got to go over there and try and talk some sense into a

PARKER
bunch of people high on crystal meth paranoid as hell that some government person is inspecting their house and talking to their children. But here's the problem, I'm not going to be thinking about the god-damned family jacked up on angel dust, I'm going to be thinking about where my stapler is and where did Stu put it when he was finished and all kinds of other shit and I've been telling you since you started working here that I've got medical reasons for this shit and every day you come over here and ask to borrow my stuff when you know damned well the supply closet is right over there by Allison's desk!

Parker, his face bright crimson, swivels back around in his chair.

STU
Sorry Parker.

PARKER
Yeah you say that every day too. You're sorry every day.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Parker, carrying a briefcase, walks towards the front door to The Pussycat Lounge. He walks up to the bouncer, BLOW-POP.

Blow-pop is in his mid thirties. Black. Built short and sturdy, like a pitbull. True to his namesake, he's sucking on a grape flavored Blow-pop and his tongue is stained purple.

BLOW-POP
Whoa Park, what's in the briefcase?

PARKER
You know what it is. It's my work. It's always my work, what else could it be?

BLOW-POP
Where’s the piece?

PARKER
I left it in the glove box.

BLOW-POP
You sure?

PARKER
What do you mean am I sure of course I’m sure.

BLOW-POP
Seriously Parker. Are you sure-sure?

PARKER
I don’t have patience for this right now.

BLOW-POP
It’s just you know we can’t have another incident like last month.

PARKER
I’m well aware.

BLOW-POP
I know it was completely justified and that’s why the owner said you could come back.

PARKER
You tell me that every time I come here.

BLOW-POP
I know. The boss said I have to.

PARKER
Well you don’t. It’s annoying as shit.

Blow-Pop looks amused. His lips curl into a mischievous grin.

BLOW-POP
So when you gonna ask her out?

Parker swallows the lump in his throat.

PARKER
Who?

BLOW-POP
Everybody knows man.

A beat.

PARKER
Fuck you Blow-pop.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Parker walks past throttling BOOTY MUSIC, through a plume of cigarette smoke, towards a corner booth as far away from the stripper stage as possible.

He brushes the seat off. He removes a bottle of Purell and some travel tissues from his briefcase.

He squirts down the tabletop, wipes it clean, then squirts and vigorously rubs Purell onto his hands.

He looks up and locks eyes with Ashley's mother, DAHLIA PEREZ, 27, the stripper dancing on stage. Dahlia is gorgeous beyond belief, with soft curves and firm edges in all the right places.

She flashes him a nervous smile. He breaks eye contact and removes stacks of paperwork from his briefcase.

The paperwork is sorted into different stacks. There are police reports, social services investigations, financial reports from the county, client files, and various memos.

He pulls a small spray bottle of Febreeze out of his bag, sprays it onto the booth, then sits down.

The cocktail waitress, LETICIA WILLIAMS, 22, saunters over wearing a Cheshire grin.

LETICIA
You're so funny with your spray bottle baby. You come to see me?

PARKER
Actually, I came to see you and Dahlia. Leticia I need to speak with you about this police report I have here.

LETICIA
Police report?

PARKER
Yes. The report says that your three-year-old was found at four in the morning more than two blocks away from your home.

Leticia’s grin vanishes.

PARKER (CONT)
Well? Is this true?

She defiantly clicks her tongue.

LETICIA
Sometimes little Juantavius gets out. Ain’t shit I can do about that.

Parker holds the report up.

PARKER
This will never happen again. The government is going to take him away next time. Do I make myself clear?

A beat.

LETICIA
We clear.

PARKER
Good.

A beat.

LETICIA
So you just gonna sit there and lecture me or you gonna order somethin’? I got other customers you know.

PARKER
I’ll have a scotch. Neat.

LETICIA
Two drink minimum.

PARKER
Make it a double. And tell Dahlia I need to speak with her when she’s finished with her set.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

We TRACK Parker as Leticia leads him through the club to a private dressing room in the back.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE STRIPPER DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They enter the dressing room where Dahlia is freshening up.

LETICIA
(to Dahlia)
He wanna to talk to you.

Dahlia’s back is to us but her reflection stares directly at Parker. It blushes a bit.

DAHLIA
Alright. Thanks L.

Leticia nods and leaves. Dahlia swivels around in her makeup chair. She’s draped in a red kimono and her leopard-print bra and panties peek through.

Parker GULPS as she blows her bangs aside.

DAHLIA (CONT)
Mr. Jode. It’s nice to see you.

PARKER
Likewise Mrs. Perez. How have things been since my last visit?

She looks down.

DAHLIA
I... they haven’t been the best. Ashley told me you drove her to school this morning. I’m really sorry I put you in that situa-

PARKER
It’s fine. I told her to contact me if she needs anything, and I like to keep my word. Just try not to let it happen again.

She looks up and flashes a faint, fleeting smile.

DAHLIA
It won’t.

PARKER
She’s very bright. You’re very lucky.

DAHLIA
I know. She’s a great kid.

PARKER
Ashley mentioned something about Horatio getting out. I thought he wasn’t supposed to be released for a long time.

The color drains from her face and she looks down at the floor again.

DAHLIA
Me too. His lawyer proved the DNA evidence had been tampered with or something. His conviction got thrown out. I’m picking him up tomorrow morning.

PARKER
Is there anything I can do?

She stares at him with soft, vulnerable eyes.

DAHLIA
I don’t think so.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Parker walks out the front door where Blow-pop is smoking a cigarette and playing a game on his phone.

PARKER
Later Blow-pop.

BLOW-POP
Later Parker. Leave your piece in the car next time.

PARKER
How many times do I have to tell you I don’t have it on me.

Blow-pop looks up from his phone as he exhales a billow of smoke from each of his nostrils. He motions with his chin towards the back of Parker’s waist with an amused half-smile.

BLOW-POP
You should wear baggier clothes if you’re gonna carry. See how your Glock is printing through your fleece?

Parker looks down. The imprint of his pistol’s handle is indeed visible.

PARKER
Whatever.

BLOW-POP
(chuckling)
Yeah. Whatever.

EXT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Parker parks across the street from a modest brownstone, next to a large, leafless hickory. A single upstairs window is illuminated and CLASSICAL MUSIC can be faintly heard.

Parker turns his car off. He gets out and takes a few steps so he’s standing in the middle of the quiet street. He removes his flask, takes a large swig, then lowers it.

He stares up at the illuminated window, his whiskey-laced breath condensing as it rolls off his lips.

Two curious circles peek through the window drape. They are shimmering spectacles framed by a thin, shadowed visage. *We will never see the man’s face clearly.*

Parker and the man stare daggers into each other.

INT. P.V. MCNAMARA FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

Parker walks past a bunch of cubicles and arrives at his desk. He takes his coat off and places it on the back of his chair. Something on his desk immediately grabs his attention.

His laptop is clearly crooked. He adjusts it then scans the room to see if he can tell who tampered with it.

Just then Stu walks up, his arm outstretched. In his hand is Parker’s stapler.

STU
Here’s your stapler back.

Parker stares tractor beams at him.

PARKER
What the hell Stu?! Are you for real?

STU
Huh?

PARKER
What the fuck did I say?

STU
Say about what?

PARKER
Did I or did I not say you could go to the supply closet to get a new stapler if you needed one?

STU
You did?

PARKER
Yes! I did! I said that! I made it perfectly clear!

STU
I guess I’m sorry then.

PARKER
You guess you’re sorry?!?

STU
I didn’t mean it.

Stu’s arm still dangles in front of him holding the stapler.

PARKER
Look Stu. You’re not as dumb as you like to let on. You know perfectly well what you’re doing and you use this whole Asperger’s shroud to go around and do whatever the fuck you want!

Stu stares blankly at Parker as he gets up out of his swivel chair.

PARKER (CONT)
I’m going to make something very clear and you’d better listen very carefully. Don’t *ever* touch anything on my desk ever again! Do you understand? Say "Yes I understand you Parker" if you understand.

STU
Yes but...

PARKER
NO BUTS!

Parker snatches the stapler and beams it across the room with a violent overhand throw. It makes a loud "CLANK" as it bursts into pieces against the wall. Everyone in the office stares in stunned silence.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Parker stands in front of the sink. He turns the water on. His hands trembling, he removes a few little blue pills from a small travel-sized pill container and tosses them into his mouth.

He scoops up a handful of faucet water and swallows his medication. He tears some paper towel out of the machine, sets it on the counter, then leans over and splashes some water onto his face.

His boss, DOUG MULLINS, 42, with a weak chin and limp, blonde hair, walks into the bathroom just as Parker is patting his face dry.

PARKER
Doug, I’m sorry. I’ve had a hell of a week and, well.... I’m sorry. It won’t happen again.

DOUG
Listen, Parker, you do good work here and it’s clear to all of us that you care a lot about what you do.

PARKER
Thank you sir. Like I said, this won’t happen again. Now if you’ll excuse me I’ve got a bunch of work to catch up on.

Parker starts to walk towards the door but Doug rests his hand on his shoulder.

DOUG
The thing is Parker, you're expected to behave like a professional.

PARKER
Damnit Doug! How many times have I asked him not to take things off my desk? You know I've got a condition I'm trying to deal with and he doesn't listen no matter how many times I ask nicely!

DOUG
I know Parker, I know. But we both know he's got... special circumstances of his own. Hiring people like Stu is the result of Governor Brenneman's effort to give people like him a chance at a productive life.

PARKER
Right. I know Doug. Like I said, I'm sorry.

DOUG
And I know about your deal too, okay? I'm just trying to satisfy both parties the best I can here.

PARKER
Are you going to talk with him too? About touching my stuff?

DOUG
I will, but listen Parker, I know first hand how this job can get under people's skin. Now I think you're getting a touch burned out and when that happens we need to rest or things will only get worse.

PARKER
What are you saying?

DOUG
I'm saying I'm going to have to suspend you for two weeks for-

PARKER
Please don’t do that Doug listen I’ll go apologize to him right now alright? There’s really no need to do this I can fix this.

DOUG
I’m sorry but my hands are tied Parker, this is company policy. You’re being suspended for two weeks with pay for your outburst. Thank god you didn’t hit anyone with that stapler or I’d be terminating you right now.

PARKER
Please don’t do this to me.

DOUG
It’s only two weeks Parker.

PARKER
I have a medical condition. You know this. I can get a doctor’s note verifying everything. I can apologize in front of everyone.

DOUG
Look at this as a much needed vacation. I know you don’t want to take time off but you’ll come back re-energized and focused. Now how about we go get your things?

EXT. P.V. MCNAMARA BUILDING PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Parker walks around the passenger side of his Cavalier. He chucks his briefcase and a small cardboard box through the broken window.

In the cardboard box are some travel-sized bottles of Purell, Lysol, Febreeze, a box of Clorox Wet Wipes, and his broken stapler.

PLINK! Parker kicks his passenger door as hard as he can, denting it. CLANK! PLINK! CLANK! PLINK! PLUNK!

PARKER
(breathing heavily)
OWW FUCK!

He bends over and rubs his foot for a few seconds. The passenger door is pockmarked to hell. He limps around to the drivers side, opens the door, gets in, SLAMS it shut, turns the ignition over, backs out, then speeds off.

INT. PARKER'S HOME - DAY

SPED-UP SHIT/SHOWER/SHAVE MONTAGE:

Parker takes a shit. The toilet FLUSHES.

Parker drinks from a bottle of Cutty Sark as he showers. Columns of steam billow up and engulf him.

Parker, wearing a towel, wipes the condensation from his bathroom mirror. He shaves. The green and yellow bottle of Cutty Sark sits half-empty within arms reach.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker, wearing a tweed suit and burgundy tie, sits at a light. The inside of his passenger window has been haphazardly covered over with cardboard and duct tape.

He dials a number on his phone. The light goes green. Parker drives, steering his car with one arm and holding his phone with the other as wind BEATS and HOWLS against his makeshift window.

The phone goes to voicemail.

PARKER
Mrs. Perez, this is Parker Jode, Ashley's social worker. I'm going to pay you a visit later to meet Horatio and take a look at the living conditions.

Parker hangs up.

INT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - DAY

The spectacled man sits on a wood chair, staring out from his second story window, watching. Always watching. *His back is to us*. He wears a fitted tuxedo and his silvery hair is slicked back with oil.

Propped against an end table adjacent the window is a black Benelli M3 12-gauge shotgun.

On top of the end table is a bottle of brandy and a snifter with a few fingers left in it. A record player plays CLASSICAL MUSIC.

Outside, we hear rusted calipers CLAMP onto SQUEALING, worn brake rotors.

EXT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

Parker puts his Cavalier in park. He stares up at the spectacled man. He removes his flask and takes a pull then walks out into the middle of the quiet street, exhaling mist.

Parker opens his arms and turns around 360 degrees. He cups his hands around his mouth and YELLS up to the window.

PARKER
Well! What do you think?

He motions to his tweed suit, his dark red tie.

PARKER (CONT)
Do you like it?

Nothing.

PARKER (CONT)
(seething)
I SAID DO YOU FUCKING LIKE IT!

INT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

The spectacled man doesn’t move a muscle. We hear Parker’s car door SLAM outside. The engine ROARS to life and the car SQEALS down the road. After a few moments, all we hear is soft CLASSICAL MUSIC.

INT. PEREZ HOME - DAY

There’s a KNOCK at the front door. We TRACK Dahlia, who wears jeans and a polka-dot sweater, as she walks towards the front door.

She opens it and looks petrified.

DAHLIA
Umm, hi.

PARKER (O.S.)
May I come in?

DAHLIA
Sure... I guess.

Parker enters frame. He straightens his tie.

PARKER
I won't keep you long Mrs. Perez. How is everything?

A beat. Dahlia looks like she was caught completely off guard. Parker senses this.

PARKER (CONT)
You didn't get the voice mail? I left a message.

DAHLIA
No I'm sorry. I've been so busy trying to get the house ready for... for-

PARKER
Horatio.

Dahlia swallows her fear.

DAHLIA
Yes.

PARKER
Where is he?

DAHLIA
Out back. On the phone with his brother. Maybe you should come back another time though because we're about to sit down to lunch and-

PARKER
I can't come back later, I'm sorry. On the voicemail I said I'd be dropping by. I need to inspect the living conditions and meet Horatio.

DAHLIA
I just don't know if it's the best idea... I mean he just got here an hour ago.

PARKER
I’m sorry. I won’t be long, I promise. Is Ashley here?

DAHLIA
Yes. In her room.

PARKER
Can you get her for me?

Dahlia nods. She walks down the hallway. As she does Parker stares through the sliding glass door into the backyard. A large figure sits smoking a cigarette on a painted wicker chair facing away from us.

ASHLEY
Mr. Jode!

Parker does an about face and Ashley’s face lights up. Parker smiles back.

PARKER
Hey you. Wow, look how pretty you look. Can you twirl around for me like a ballerina?

Ashley giggles and does her best ballerina twirl. She wears lipstick, a bright pink dress with white stockings, and shiny red Dorothy shoes.

PARKER (CONT)
Aren’t you gorgeous. I bet that-

HORATIO
You like little girls?

Parker whips around. Standing in front of him is HORATIO PEREZ, 36.

He’s tall, statuesque. A smirking light-skinned man (for being hispanic) with aquiline features and long, sandy brown hair tied into a bun. Everything about the way he moves exudes strength and control.

PARKER
Excuse me?

Parker blinks rapidly.

HORATIO
Little girls. You’re into them. You kept saying how pretty and gorgeous my daughter was just now.

PARKER
I was just being pol-

Horatio interrupts Parker with a high-pitched LAUGH... he’s one of those people who laughs with their whole body.

HORATIO
(laughing)
I’m just toying with you man. Fucking with your mind. Lighten up eh?

PARKER
You must be Horatio.

Horatio slithers towards him.

HORATIO
Guilty as charged. And you’re the man who’s been looking after my daughter... and *taking care* of my wife.

A beat.

PARKER
Just your daughter. I’ve been assigned by the city of Detroit to look after Ashley.

HORATIO
You sure?

PARKER
Am I sure...?

HORATIO
Sure you haven’t been taking care of my wife too?

DAHLIA
Horatio por favor no-

Translation: Horatio please don’t-

HORATIO
(to Dahlia)
Silencio pinche cabrona!

Translation: Shut the fuck up dumb cunt!

Horatio rests a hand on Parker’s shoulder. Parker does his best not to squirm.

HORATIO
(to Parker)
I’m just joking with you. I hate hate hate hate HATE people who can’t take a joke.

Parker breathes heavily. Dahlia grabs Ashley’s hand. Horatio SNIFFS loudly. He gets within inches of Parker’s face, continuing to SNIFF in an exaggerated fashion.

HORATIO (CONT)
Que es eso que me huele? No me diga que tenemos un boracho adentro nuestra casa!

Translation: What’s that I smell? Don’t tell me you’ve brought a drunk into our home.

Parker takes a step back.

PARKER
What are you doing. Back up.

HORATIO
Is that whiskey I smell on your breath? Huh government man?

PARKER
(flustered)
No. It’s probably mouthwash.

Horatio smiles ear-to-ear and turns to face Dahlia and Ashley. He gestures in dramatic fashion.

HORATIO
Mouthwash. He says it’s probably mouthwash.

Horatio smacks himself on the forehead... "stupid me". He bursts out with his high-pitched LAUGH again, thoroughly amused. He winks at Parker.

HORATIO (CONT)
Alright eagle scout. If you say so.

Horatio saunters over to the kitchen table and coils onto one of the chairs.

HORATIO (CONT)
Ashley, sientate princesa. Dahlia, traigame mi medicina y hagale el payaso un cafecito.

Translation: Ashley, come sit down princess. Dahlia, bring me my meds and make this clown a coffee.

Dahlia nods and dissapears down the hallway and into the master bedroom. Horatio looks at Parker.

HORATIO (CONT)
Take a seat my friend. My beautiful wife is going to make you a coffee...

He kisses his fingers, gesturing "it’s delicious".

HORATIO (CONT)
Pura Colombiana... it’ll sober you right up.

Horatio winks, LAUGHS.

PARKER
That won’t be necessary. I can’t stay long.

Ashley sits quietly, uncomfortably. She nervously twirls her hair. Dahlia returns with four large prescription pill bottles.

She rushes to the sink, fills a glass half way with water, then goes over to the freezer and PLOPS a few ice cubes into it. She sets the glass down in front of Horatio.

HORATIO
(calmly, to Dahlia)
You trying to fucking kill me, eh?

DAHLIA
(frightened)
What’s wrong baby?

HORATIO
I don’t see my Combivir here. Where’s my Combivir? Do you see it? There’s supposed to be five bottles. I only count four, see: One, two, three, four. No five. No Combivir.

DAHLIA
I’m sorry I must of left it I’ll get it right now.

Dahlia runs off back to the bedroom. Parker can't hide his contempt at this point. He and Horatio stare tractor beams at each other as Horatio unscrews each pill bottle, removes a pill, sets it down, then moves onto the next bottle.

ASHLEY
What are all those pills for Papi?

Dahlia returns, sets the fifth bottle down in front of Horatio. He unscrews the top and removes a pill as Dahlia catches her breath and wipes her brow.

HORATIO
They're for Papi's AIDS princesa.

ASHLEY
What's AIDS? Is that like the flu?

Horatio's lips curl upwards. He swallows a few pills.

HORATIO
No baby. It's not as bad as the flu.

Horatio grins at Parker, downs the rest of his meds. Parker looks like he's in the twilight zone.

DAHLIA
Do you like cream with your coffee Mr. Jode?

He snaps out of it.

PARKER
I... I'm sorry, I need to get going.

HORATIO
So soon?

Parker turns to Ashley.

PARKER
I'll see you in two weeks alright Ashley? Call me if...

He glances at Horatio.

PARKER (CONT)
...if anything happens.

HORATIO
Don’t be a stranger eagle scout. I like playing with you.

Horatio can’t hide his amusement. Parker hastily turns to leave. Dahlia follows him to the door. She peeks her head out from the doorframe.

HORATIO
(to Dahlia)
Where the fuck you going?

She looks back at him.

DAHLIA
I’m just saying goodbye.

PARKER
(whisper, standing just outside of the doorway)
Listen Mrs. Perez this is insane I’m going to call my supervisor and tell him-

DAHLIA
(hushed)
Don’t come around for awhile Mr. Jode. Please! He’s bipolar and you have *no idea* how dangerous he is.

HORATIO (O.S.)
Cabrona! Come make my lunch! I’m not supposed to take these on an empty stomach!

DAHLIA
(to Parker, hushed)
I need to go. Please! Don’t come by anymore!

She SHUTS the door.

EXT. DETROIT HIGHWAY - DAY

Parker’s car careens down the highway. Behind it, the sun descends, kissing the horizon.

INT. PARKER’S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker drives, his phone pressed against his ear.

PARKER
(to himself)
C’mon... C’mon... Pick up. Pick up god damnit.

INT. P.V. MCNAMARA FEDERAL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

DOUG’S OFFICE

Parker’s supervisor, Doug, nods off in his chair. His phone RINGS. His eyes shoot open and he sits straight up. He answers.

DOUG
(rubbing his face)
Mullins speaking.

INT. PARKER’S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker punches his armrest in excitment.

PARKER
Yes! Thank god! I was worried you had left the office.

DOUG (V.O)
(filtered)
Parker?

PARKER
Doug, listen, we need to remove Ashley Perez from her home immediately. I’m talking STAT. Go to my desk and grab the Perez file so I can show you-

DOUG (V.O)
(filtered)
Did you visit them? What the hell Parker! You’re not supposed to be working! You’re on a leave of absence!

PARKER
Listen this is way more important than me being suspended. Now her father, one Horatio Perez, is a

PARKER
felon with a rap sheet that reads like Al Capone’s. Apparently he was let out early for a technicality. The guy is mentally unstable and HIV positive and I went over there today and I’m telling you Doug Ashley is *not* safe. Doug? Are you listening? Are you there?

DOUG (V.O)
(filtered)
Are you done?

PARKER
Yes. Just please tell me you’ll send someone over there immediately... preferably escorted by a black-and-white.

DOUG (V.O)
(filtered)
I’m only going to say this once, so listen closely. Are you listening?

PARKER
Please Doug.

DOUG (V.O)
(filtered)
You are not to make contact with any of your clients. Not for the next two weeks. Do you hear me?

PARKER
I hear you and I will comply but you need to promise me that you’ll-

DOUG (V.O)
(filtered)
I don’t need to promise you anything! I’ll have Linda look into it... and if I find out you made contact with any of your clients after this conversation I will terminate you on the spot.

CLICK. Doug hangs up. Parker still has his phone to his ear.

PARKER
Doug. Doug. Are you there? Doug! FUCK!

He begins smashing his phone into his steering wheel, making the horn go off each time. HONK! HONK! HONK! HONK! He tosses his phone onto the passenger seat.

Parker drives for a few moments CURSING to himself. As he drives past a Citgo, he notices something out of the corner of his eye.

He turns into the gas station sharply and drives past the pumps to a small empty lot filled with litter off to the side. He throws the car in park and exits the vehicle with his Glock in hand and both arms outstretched towards the sky.

EXT. CITGO GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The two hoodlums who broke his window are caught completely off guard.

PARKER
Put your goddamn hands up right now!

One of them drops the brown bagged forty he was drinking and puts his hands up. The other puffs his chest out.

HOODLUM #1
What the fuck is you crazy!

PARKER
Put your fucking hands up!

He relents. The gas station attendant FRANKIE, an old black man, comes out as Parker shakes them down.

FRANKIE
What the hell you doin’ man?

PARKER
They owe me money! Go back inside!

FRANKIE
You gonna scare away my customers!

Parker keeps his gun trained on them.

PARKER
You don’t have any customers! Now go back inside!

FRANKIE
I’m callin’ the cops!

HOODLUM #2
(to Frankie)
Naw! Naw we cool Frankie! No need for dat!

Frankie, muttering profanities, reluctantly goes back inside.

PARKER
At least one of you has half a brain. Alright, step the fuck back! Both of you!

They take a few steps back.

PARKER (CONT)
I want you to empty your pockets and put all of your money and drugs on the ground one at a time.

He motions at one of them with his pistol.

PARKER (CONT)
You first.

HOODLUM #1
Man fuck you!

HOODLUM #2
Is you a cop or somethin’?

PARKER
I’m a social worker.

HOODLUM #2
A what?

PARKER
Listen who gives a shit. Now empty your fucking pockets or I’ll call the cops and tell them how you broke my window and stole my stereo. You can spend the night locked up or we can settle up now.

HOODLUM #2
(to his friend)
Man let’s just do dis I ain’t tryna get locked up.

HOODLUM #1
This be some bullshit right here.

The hoodlum begins emptying his pockets on the sidewalk.

PARKER
Flip your pockets inside out when you’re done.

He does. Parker turns his attention the other one.

PARKER (CONT)
Your turn.

The boy rifles through his pockets and flips them inside out. Parker holds a bead and takes a step forward.

PARKER (CONT)
Alright back it up.

They backpedal a bit. On the ground in front of Parker is two wallets, a quarter bag of weed, a vial of crack, and a hair pick.

Parker goes for the drugs first. He puts the weed in his back pocket and shakes the vial of crack so the rocks RATTLE.

PARKER (CONT)
I’m guessing you were going to smoke the weed and sell the crack. At least I hope you weren’t going to smoke the crack.

HOODLUM #2
Naw man, we don’t smoke that shit.

HOODLUM #1
We ain’t no crackheads bitch!

Parker pops the lid off the vial and flicks it so that the crack jettisons out into the snow covered lot. The boys stare daggers at him.

Parker tosses the empty vial aside. He bends down and grabs the wallets. He rifles through them, removing the cash and the ID cards, before tossing them aside.

He counts the cash, stuffs it into his pocket, and examines the ID cards. He the looks at the first boy.

PARKER
Jamal Washington.

He looks at the second boy.

PARKER (CONT)
Tavian Lewis.

He puts their ID’s in his pocket.

PARKER (CONT)
Well, the good news is that you boys made the right decision. The bad news is that there’s only $83 bucks here, which isn’t nearly enough to cover my window or my stereo. That means I’ll have to come back and see you until I have enough to cover my expenses.

JAMAL
Give our ID’s back man.

PARKER
No. I’m holding on to those as collateral.

TAVIAN
Man, we sorry okay? Aight? We even now so leave us the fuck alone.

PARKER
Not until I have enough to cover my window. Now beat it.

Tavian turns to go but Jamal lingers.

PARKER (CONT)
(to Jamal)
What are you deaf? I said kick rocks. Let’s go!

Jamal picks up the hair pick and turns to leave.

JAMAL
(over his shoulder, gesturing pulling a trigger)
Ima barbecue your wig one of these days cracka.

INT. CITGO CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Parker seems pleased with how relatively smoothly the shakedown went and has calmed down.

He walks up to the counter with $40 of his newly confiscated money. He grabs a Payday and tosses it on the counter.

KATY PERRY or some other POPPY RADIO TRASH plays through the store's P.A.

PARKER
This candy bar and put the rest on pump one.

Frankie stares at him like he's insane.

FRANKIE
Is you for real?

Parker COUGHS. Looks at him totally straight-faced. Unwraps the Payday and takes a big bite.

PARKER
(chewing)
Yeah. I'm outta gas.

FRANKIE
This one of them hidden camera shows?

Parker slides the $40 over to Frankie's side of the counter and turns to leave.

PARKER
(over his shoulder)
Pump one.

EXT. CITGO GAS STATION - DAY

Parker puts the gas nozzle back onto the pump.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Inside the confiscated baggie of weed is rolling paper. Parker, shivering, turns his car heater all the way up and rolls a joint, licking the paper methodically and smoothing it out with his mouth.

He lights the joint and holds each puff of smoke in for a long time before exhaling. He almost immediately seems more relaxed.

EXT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - NIGHT

The street is pretty much deserted. Parker walks towards the Music Center and takes a hefty pull from his flask. He cringes as he puts it back into his coat.

He approaches the ticket window and buys a ticket from the TICKET CLERK, a heavyset black woman. Parker walks inside.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - CONTINUOUS

We can hear the Detroit Symphony as Parker walks into the concert hall.

INT. PEREZ HOME - NIGHT

Horatio wakes up. He had fallen asleep on the living room couch. He walks over to the kitchen, opens the fridge, and grabs the last Corona.

HORATIO
Dahlia!

No response.

INT. ASHLEY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON Ashley. She lies awake in her bed facing away from the door. Her breathing is rapid.

HORATIO (CONT)
(muffled, through door)
Dahlia, we're out of beer! Dahlia!

We hear him close the fridge and lumber towards us. Ashley takes a deep breath and closes her eyes just as Horatio opens her door. His tall, dark silhouette fills up most of the doorway. Moments later the door closes.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Horatio walks into the master bedroom.

HORATIO
Dahlia!

She's gone.

HORATIO (CONT)
(sotto)
Pinche fucking cabrona. She wants to up and leave without telling me?

He stews. Ponders for a moment.

HORATIO (CONT)
(sotto)
Okay. Okay.

He goes for his cellphone, starts dialing, then decides against it.

He walks over to Dahlia’s closet and begins rummaging through it.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

CLOSE ON tightly laced black Doc Martens walking along the sidewalk at a brisk clip.

EXT. LIQUOUR STORE - NIGHT

The liquor store’s neon sign BUZZES loudly. A payphone sits in the foreground. In the background, the figure wearing the Doc Martens walks towards us.

It appears to be a very tall woman wearing a charcoal trench coat with long, dark red hair. She wears sunglasses and has blood red lipstick on.

The tall woman continues towards us and enters the phone booth.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The woman, her back to us, puts some quarters into the payphone.

INSERT:

Her bright purple fingernails dial a phone number.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The woman turns to face us. We can see her clearly now. *It's not a tall woman. It's Horatio in drag, wearing a red wig.* He talks into the phone.

HORATIO
Con Hector. Gracias.

Translation: With Hector. Thank you.

Horatio inspects his freshly painted nails while he waits. He blows on them delicately.

HORATIO (CONT)
It's me. Yeah. I need a ride. No. In front of the liquor store. The one by my house. Alright. Andale.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - NIGHT

It's dark. Parker sits in the very last row of the packed concert hall, cloaked in shadows. He sees everyone, but nobody sees him.

On stage, brass, strings, woodwind, and percussion blend beautifully. The rich, velvety MUSIC spills out into the auditorium, where everyone sits completely still, enraptured by pure auditory bliss.

Everyone that is, except for Parker.

INT. HECTOR'S TOYOTA LAND CRUISER - NIGHT

The car pulls into The Pussycat Lounge parking lot. Horatio flips down the passenger sun-visor mirror, removes his sunglasses, and puckers his lips, inspecting his make-up. Satisfied, he flicks the sunglasses back on and turns to his brother HECTOR who sits in the driver's seat.

HECTOR, 22, looks and acts much more mature than his age. He's darker-skinned than Horatio, with a shaved head and covered in high-gauge scars.

He wears a fedora and there's an ornate tattoo of the Virgin Mary, probably a prison tattoo, spilling out from the top of his hounds-tooth vest and stopping just below his Adam's apple.

Horatio turns to face Hector, who has just removed a blunt from his vest pocket and is busy lighting it. Surprisingly, he doesn't seem the least bit fazed by the fact that Horatio is in drag.

HORATIO
Wait here.

Hector nods and pops his blunt's cherry.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Horatio exits the vehicle. He's holding a large red leather clutch that perfectly matches his dark red wig.

He walks up to the front entrance where Blow-pop, playing his cell phone games, looks up and see's him. He looks intrigued, amused, and attracted all at once.

Blow-pop goes to open the front door and pulls the lollipop out from his mouth.

BLOW-POP
Damn Baby, where you been all my life?

Horatio blows him a kiss and walks inside.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Horatio looks around. He walks past the stripper stage. A STRIPPER well past her prime is pole-dancing for a couple of REGULARS. There's no sign of Dahlia. He walks over to Leticia, who is clearing a table.

HORATIO
Dahlia. Where is she.

LETICIA
Givin' a lap dance. In the private room.

Horatio walks to the back of the club and through velvet curtains.

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - SIMULTANEOUS

Parker fidgets, watching as the orchestra builds to a crescendo. Violin wands dart back and forth in unison, chanting frantic melodies over booming cello's and haunting harpsichords.

The percussion section picks up, ratcheting up the intensity of the building crescendo. On-stage, we notice *the spectacled man* as he walks forward, taking front and center.

PARKERS POV:

Even now, the lighting is such that the bottom half of the spectacled man's face is cloaked in shadows and his eyes hide behind two shimmering glass discs. He's holding two enormous golden cymbals that cast off a prism of bright orange light.

Parker leans forward in his seat as the spectacled man, wearing an immaculate-fitting tuxedo, cocks his cymbals. He's as rigid as a porcelain nutcracker figurine. He tenses up and-

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE PRIVATE ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

We TRACK Horatio into the back room where a topless Dahlia is giving a lap dance to a white, heavyset, off-duty COP. The cop, who is still in uniform, notices him.

COP
Who the fuck are you?

Dahlia, straddling the officer, turns and see's Horatio. She doesn't recognize him until-

HORATIO
Shut the fuck up Twinkie!

He removes his sunglasses and slips them into his trench coat pocket. Dahlia, recognizing him now, jumps off of the cop's lap. She grabs her top from off the floor and backpedals into the corner farthest from Horatio.

HORATIO (CONT)
(to Dahlia)
What did I tell you about giving lap dances? Didn't I say they weren't allowed?

DAHLIA
(putting her top on)
Horatio! I'm sorry please don't do anything-

The cop goes to stand. Horatio reaches into his large leather clutch and-

COP
I don't know who the fuck you think you are but I paid for a lap dance and I'll be damned if-

BOOOOM! In a single fluid motion, before the officer can react, Horatio removes an enormous, stainless steel Taurus .454 Casull Revolver from his leather clutch, nestles the tip of the barrel into the officer's cheek, cocks the hammer, and shoots him point-blank in the face.

The 250 grain bullet, the size of a AA battery, vaporizes the upper two-thirds of the officer's head into a pink mist.

Brain-jelly explodes out of the grapefruit-sized exit wound like confetti, instantly turning the wall behind it into a grotesque Jackson Pollock mural.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ORCHESTRA HALL/MAX M. FISHER MUSIC CENTER - SIMULTANEOUS

CRASH!

SPECTACLED MAN'S POV:

The symphony has reached a fever pitch. We stare out at the packed auditorium as he CRASHES his cymbals together.

CRASH! CRASH!

Every time the cymbals smash together and open up, the intense sound waves distort the audience's faces so that they melt and reform like floating wax inside a lava lamp.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE PRIVATE ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Horatio, bits of brain matted to his wig and forehead, leans over the remains of the dead officer. He grabs the officer's service pistol, a 9mm Beretta.

He turns to Dahlia, the entire side of her face covered in bone marrow and chunks of gristle.

HORATIO
No te mueves.

Translation: Don’t move a muscle.

He ducks out into the main lounge.

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Three of the regular patrons are ducked, cowering, and a fourth runs for the front entrance. Horatio, wielding the mammoth Casull revolver in one hand and the Beretta 9mm in the other, takes aim and-

BANG! He opens fire with the 9mm, hitting the fleeing man in the leg, causing it to buckle. As the victim struggles to upright himself Horatio draws a bead with the Casull and-

BOOOOM! He eviscerates the man’s chest, leaving a cantaloupe-sized void where his ticker used to be. The body lurches forward from the impact and ragdolls a few feet before sliding to a stop by the front door.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Just outside the front entrance, Blow-pop pulls his piece, a .40 Smith and Wesson. He draws a bead on Horatio through the clear glass door but before he can squeeze one off -

BBBRRROP! BBBRRROP-POPP-POPP! Hector flanks from behind, opens fire with an MP5 submachine gun, and Blow-pop takes a dirt nap. We follow Hector inside where-

INT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Horatio is busy killing all of the witnesses, switching off between the Casull and the Beretta. Hector comes in spraying and joins the fun.

In under a minute, the lounge looks like a Confederate trench at Gettysburg. Bodies are everywhere. Leticia, the bartender, the patrons, Blow-pop, the older stripper, the cop... all slaughtered.

HORATIO
(to Hector)
Pull the car up.

Hector nods and leaves. Horatio disappears into the back room. A moment later he emerges with Dahlia, dragging her by the hair. She's SCREAMING.

DAHLIA
Please! Horatio! Stop! Horatio!

HORATIO
Where do they keep the surveillance tapes?

DAHLIA
Behind the bar! Behind the bar!

Horatio drops her and we follow him behind the bar. In the far corner, nestled in a nook under the bar, is a small video monitor and a bunch of wiring. Next to it is a large hard drive.

Horatio rips the cables out from the back of the hard drive and snatches it. He goes back over to Dahlia, who's crumpled on the ground SOBBING, picks her up by the arm, and drags her outside.

EXT. PUSSYCAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Hector pulls up in his Land Cruiser. Horatio throws Dahlia into the back seat, gets into the passenger side, and Hector drives off.

INT. HECTOR'S TOYOTA LAND CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Dahlia SOBS in the back seat. Horatio removes the bloody wig, turns, and tosses it at her. He wears a shit eating grin.

HORATIO
Think I ruined your wig. Sorry.

He bursts out LAUGHING. Hector smirks.

HORATIO (CONT)
You see what happens when you disobey me? I tell you not to give other men lapdances like a fucking WHORE!... but you do it anyway.

Horatio turns to Hector.

HORATIO (CONT)
Can you believe this puta was lapdancing a pig?

HECTOR
For real?

HORATIO
Yeah, until I kissed him with the cuete de elefante.

Translation: Yeah, until I kissed him with the elephant gun.

Hector LAUGHS. Horatio glares at Dahlia.

DAHLIA
I'm sorry baby. I'm so sorry. I was just trying to make some extra money-

HORATIO
What the fuck did I tell you about money! What did I say!

A beat.

DAHLIA
(cowering)
Not to worry about it.

HORATIO
You don't think I'm man enough to provide for my family?

Dahlia whimpers and wipes her mess of a face.

HORATIO (CONT)
I wonder what the cops will do when they find porky with his cabeza blown off. I bet they'll be asking a lot of questions, que no? They'll probably want to speak with you, seeing as how you miraculously survived.

Dahlia is white as a ghost with her eyeliner running down her face.

DAHLIA
(sniffling)
I survived because I was at home.

HORATIO
You were?

DAHLIA
Yes. With you and Ashley. It was my night off.

HORATIO
You were at home? With me and Ashley?

DAHLIA
Uh-huh. After I put Ashley to bed I had trouble sleeping so I stayed up reading one of my books and... and you were in bed with me the whole night, asleep.

Horatio looks at Hector.

HORATIO
What do you think? Are you convinced?

HECTOR
Mas o menos.

Translation: Pretty much.

HORATIO
(to Dahlia)
What book were you reading?

A beat.

DAHLIA
Twilight.

Horatio turns to Hector.

HORATIO
Twilight? Que es Twilight?

Translation: Twilight? What's Twilight?

HECTOR
I think it's that piece of shit vampire book.

INT. FEDEX STORE - DAY

Parker walks in eating an Egg McMuffin and carrying a small cardboard box. He walks up to the service counter where the shipping CLERK, a young white kid wearing a purple visor, greets him.

A wall-mounted flatscreen T.V. plays in the background. It’s tuned into the local news station.

CLERK
Need help?

Parker places the small box, its top flaps hanging open, on the countertop.

PARKER
(chewing, swallows)
Yeah I’d like to overnight this.

The clerk looks inside the box.

INSERT:

Parker’s old stapler. He’s duct-taped and super-glued it back together.

The clerk looks up at Parker.

CLERK
You want to mail this to someone.

PARKER
Yeah.

CLERK
Overnight.

PARKER
Uh-huh.

CLERK
You know that shipping this overnight is gonna cost at least ten bucks... I mean, the person you’re sending this to could buy two brand new staplers for that.

PARKER
I know but I want him to have this stapler... it needs to be this one.

A beat.

CLERK
You know if there’s drugs inside it the cops’ll find out and-

PARKER
I’m not smuggling drugs! Jesus Christ.

The clerk shakes his head and goes to type the information into the label generator.

CLERK
Who’s it going to?

PARKER
Stu Feldman. First name S-T-U. Last name F-E-L-D-M-A-N.

Parker finishes his Egg McMuffin. He hands the crumpled wrapper to the clerk.

PARKER (CONT)
Throw that away will you.

The clerk does.

CLERK
Where’s it going?

Parker hands him one of his business cards. Something on the T.V. grabs his attention.

PARKER
The address is on that business card. Turn the volume up will you?

The clerk grabs the remote and turns it up.

T.V. REPORTER
...and now for a breaking story out of Detroit, according to authorities there has been a mass shooting at The Pussycat Lounge gentlemen’s club off of Grand Blvd. and Jefferson Ave.

PARKER
The fuck...

Parker and the clerk both watch.

T.V. REPORTER
The shooting occurred late last night and authorities have yet to identify any suspects, however a person who witnessed the event from the parking lot across the street has ID’ed one of the shooters as a very tall, light-skinned, redheaded female. Forensic artists have completed a rough composite of the woman which is being dispayed... yes, I’m told it is being displayed onscreen now. If you or anyone you know has any information that may be of assistance to authorities, please-

PARKER
I gotta go. Keep the change.

He slaps a twenty dollar bill onto the counter and flies out the door. The clerk yells after him.

CLERK
Sir! We’re not allowed to accept tips!

Parker’s tires CHIRP as his car barrels out of the parking lot.

INT. PARKER’S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker dials Dahlia as he fishtails out of the parking lot. The phone rings a few times and she picks up.

PARKER
Dahlia?

DAHLIA (O.S.)
Mr. Jode... now’s not a good time.

PARKER
I heard about the shooting and... thank god you’re okay.

DAHLIA (O.S.)
Yes... but... I’m at the police station so I can’t talk now.

PARKER
Fine just tell me is Leticia alright?

DAHLIA (O.S.)
I have to go. I’m sorry.

PARKER
Is she okay? Dahlia?

CLICK.

MATCH CUT:

INT. METRO DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Dahlia hangs up. She sits on a bench inside the main lobby of the police department. Her eyes and lips quiver. She looks like she hasn’t slept in a week.

A SECRETARY walks past with a steaming mug of coffee. We TRACK her into a nearby interrogation room.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The secretary places the coffee in front of Horatio. Across from him sits DETECTIVE TONY BRIGGS, 44, lead homicide detective for Detroit PD.

Briggs is black, an ox of a man with a square jaw and squarer shoulders. A man of silent power.

Briggs, who already has a coffee, takes a sip from his own mug. Horatio gestures at his coffee.

HORATIO
(to secretary)
Thanks linda.

SECRETARY
My name’s not Linda but you’re welcome.

DET. BRIGGS
(to secretary)
"Linda"... means "pretty" in Spanish. Hold all my calls until I’m done.

She nods and leaves. Horatio winks at her then grabs his coffee and takes a protracted SLUUURRRPPP.

DET. BRIGGS (CONT)
Let’s get down to business, shall we?

HORATIO
Oh my. Oh my.

DET. BRIGGS
Coffee good?

A beat.

HORATIO
It’s atrocious.

Horatio takes another long, loud SLUUUURRRPP.

HORATIO (CONT)
Wow. That is absolutely rank.

A beat. Briggs isn’t amused.

DET. BRIGGS
Can’t be worse than the shit they serve in the booty house. Speaking of the booty house, how’s life on the outside? Must be nice not grabbing ankle.

A beat.

HORATIO
I wouldn’t know.

Horatio takes another overly dramatic SLUUURRRRPPP of coffee and contorts his face. Det. Briggs ignores the antics.

DET. BRIGGS
Your wife says you were home, asleep in bed all last night.

HORATIO
Guilty as charged.

Horatio’s lips curl into his trademark shit-eating grin.

DET. BRIGGS
Ever cross-dressed Horatio?

HORATIO
Why? Want a private show?

DET. BRIGGS
Answer the question.

HORATIO
Then... no.

DET. BRIGGS
No?

HORATIO
Wait... okay nevermind yes.

DET. BRIGGS
Yes? You have?

Horatio takes another SLUUURRRPP. Grimaces. Ponders. All very dramatic.

HORATIO
Wait... no. No I don’t think so.

The veins in Briggs’ neck bulge. He does his best to hide his frustration.

A beat.

DET. BRIGGS
Nice nails.

HORATIO
Huh? Oh.

Horatio see’s what Briggs is referring to. His nails are still painted purple. *He forgot to remove his nail polish.* He’s shaken for the tiniest sliver of an instant, just long enough for a seasoned vet like Briggs to pick up on.

HORATIO (CONT)
My 8-year old, she likes to paint them.

DET. BRIGGS
You let your daughter paint your nails?

HORATIO
I know. Father-of-the-year right?

Horatio takes another SLUUURRPPP of coffee.

HORATIO (CONT)
BLECH! Oh my god...

EXT. METRO DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Det. Briggs stands on the steps just outside the front entrance.

DET. BRIGGS POV:

Dahlia pulls her gold Ford Ranger out of her parking spot and drives past.

As they roll past in SLOW MOTION, Horatio glares out of the passenger window, eye-fucking Briggs. He smirks, touches his brightly painted fingers to his mouth, and blows Briggs a kiss before breaking out in histerical LAUGHTER.

Briggs whips his phone out, dials a number. He wears an expression carved from granite.

BRIGGS
He’s lying. Yeah. I don’t give a shit. Keep eyes on him anyways. Yeah, around the clock. He’ll slip up, sooner or later.

Briggs hangs up. He raises his coffee mug to his lips. Takes a sip. Lets the liquid swirl around his palate. His face scrunches up a bit and he gives the coffee a quick SNIFF.

INT. DAHLIA’S FORD RANGER - CONTINUOUS

Horatio turns to Dahlia and his smirk disappears. He rests his hand under her chin as she white-knuckles her steering wheel.

HORATIO
You did very good today my worthless little whore.

Dahlia stares straight ahead while Horatio scrutinizes her.

DAHLIA
I’ll do whatever you want.

HORATIO
That’s good.

A beat. His lips curl into a sinister grin.

HORATIO (CONT)
Because you know what would happen if you went to the police, right?

He brushes one of her bangs behind her ear. She steels herself.

HORATIO (CONT)
ANSWER ME!

A beat.

DAHLIA
Yes.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

Parker KNOCKS on an apartment door. It’s on the second floor. A skinny MAN with a Newport dangling from his mouth opens the door. He’s black, with track marks.

NEWPORT MAN
Can I help you cracker?

PARKER
I’m a social worker. Leticia and Juantavius are my clients. I heard about the shooting and I came as quickly as I could.

NEWPORT MAN
Well you too late. Leticia dead.

Leticia’s niece, AKEVIA, 19, pushes Newport man aside. She’s holding Leticia’s three-year-old son, JUANTAVIUS, a beautiful little boy. He’s stark naked and SUCKING his thumb. He smiles at Parker.

AKEVIA
You Leticia’s social worker?

Parker stares at the little boy. His eyes fill with sadness and well up.

PARKER
Yes.

AKEVIA
So who gonna take care of Juantavius now?

Parker CLEARS his throat.

PARKER
Well, the first choice would be immediate family. There's government grants to help with the financial burden but uh...

His eyes drift back to the child for a beat.

PARKER (CONT)
...but if that's not an option then the government will put him in foster care.

AKEVIA
You know about who shot Leticia?

PARKER
No, but I can assure you I'm going to do my very best to find out.

NEWPORT MAN (O.S.)
(from inside apartment)
Whitey say he gon' do his very bess! Oh shit! Watch out now!

EXT. PEREZ HOME - DAY

A sunny day. Horatio walks out his front door. He's wearing pajamas. His slippers CRUNCH on the melting snow.

HORATIO'S POV:

Across the street, an undercover OFFICER sits, blatantly watching Horatio from inside an unmarked navy blue Ford Crown Vic. He's a younger white guy.

Horatio grins and waves with his whole arm as he walks up to his mailbox.

HORATIO
Hello officer! Hola! Hi! Bonjour! Ciao! Guten tag!

He LAUGHS. He opens his mailbox and removes his mail.

INSERT:

A cheap "burner" cell phone has been placed in Horatio's mailbox.

As Horatio removes his mail, he folds the junk mail ads around the burner phone, hiding it from view.

INT. PEREZ HOME - DAY

Ashley, all dressed for school, eats cereal. Her hot pink Dora the Explorer backpack sits on the chair next to her.

We hear the SHOWER ON in the background. Horatio appears from the master bedroom. He carries something wrapped in butcher paper and twine and sealed over with clear plastic wrap.

The package is roughly the size of a hardcover encyclopedia.

HORATIO
How’s my little princesa?

ASHLEY
Hi Papi. Want some Trix?

HORATIO
I already ate two bowls mijita.

He walks over and kisses the top of her head.

HORATIO (CONT)
Think you can do a me big, huge, gigantic favor? Huh?

ASHLEY
(giggles)
Maybe.

HORATIO
(dramatic)
Maybe?!?

He LAUGHS and gives her a little tickle attack. She squirms and LAUGHS. He grabs her Dora backpack, unzips it, and inspects the inside.

HORATIO (CONT)
(sotto)
Plenty of room.

ASHLEY
What are you doing Papi?

He begins shoving the package into the back of her backpack, behind her coloring books.

HORATIO
Papi needs you to take something to school for him. Uncle Hector is

HORATIO
going to pick it up during recess. Know what?

ASHLEY
What?

HORATIO
If you do this Papi will buy you anything you want.

He zips her backpack up and holds it up for her.

DAHLIA (O.S.)
(from master bedroom)
Ashley sweetheart be ready to leave in five minutes!

Ashley slips her arms through the strap holes and Horatio lets go.

HORATIO
Well?

ASHLEY
It’s heavy Papi.

HORATIO
Yes but you’re a big girl right princesa?

ASHLEY
Yes.

HORATIO
Now here’s the most important thing... this is our little secret okay? Mami can’t find out.

ASHLEY
Why not?

He lifts her chin so that she looks him in the eyes.

HORATIO
Because Papi says so. Remember, any toy you want okay? Our secret.

ASHLEY
Okay.

HORATIO
Muy bien princesa.

Translation: Very good my little princess.

INT. PEREZ HOME - DAY

Horatio peeks through his front window blinds. He dials a number into the burner phone and presses it to his ear.

HORATIO'S POV:

Through the window, we see Dahlia and Ashley load into Dahlia's Ford Ranger. A moment later they drive off, giving us a clear line of sight to the undercover cop parked across the street.

HORATIO
(into phone)
It's me.

Horatio lets go of the blinds and turns to face us.

HORATIO (CONT)
There's been a small change of plans.

INT. DAHLIA'S FORD RANGER - DAY

Dahlia, a trembling, nervous wreck, watches Ashley walk towards her elementary school's front entrance. Ashley turns and waves. Dahlia puts on a brave smile, waves back, and blows Ashley a kiss.

EXT. ST. JOSEPHINE PROJECTS - DAY

Parker, his back to us, beats Jamal and Tavian with a large branch. WHACK! WOOMPH! WHACK! WOOMPH!

They cower and roll around on the ground trying to shield themselves. Parker turns his face sideways and spits out an ungodly amount of blood.

HOODLUM'S POV:

Parker wipes his face with his sleeve. His nose and mouth are literally blood-drenched, like a vampire who's just fed.

PARKER
(breathing heavily)
You little fuckers think you can jump me?

WHACK!

PARKER
Huh?

WHACK!

JAMAL
Motherfucker wait ’til we get our boys! We gonna lay you the fuck out whiteness!

TAVIAN
We ain’t got no more money man! You took it all! We broke nigga!

Parker tosses the branch aside. Spits out another mouthful of blood. Wipes his face. He pulls his Glock on them then GROANS and clutches his ribs as he lowers himself.

He sits on the ground across from them. Keeping his gun trained, he removes his flask, unscrews the cap one-handed, and takes a long pull, EXHALING loudly.

He pinches the bridge of his nose, turns, and fires a monstrous snot rocket out into the bleakness. He puts his flask back in his coat.

PARKER
Sit up.

A beat. He motions with his gun-hand.

PARKER (CONT)
Go ahead sit up.

They slowly, warily sit.

PARKER (CONT)
(breathing heavily)
I need some information. You tell me what I need, we’ll call it even.

A beat. The two look at each other then back at Parker.

PARKER (CONT)
Well?

TAVIAN
What you wanna know?

PARKER
You heard about Leticia? About the shooting?

JAMAL
Man who hasn’t.

PARKER
Know who did it?

A beat.

TAVIAN
PSSHHH. Hell no.

JAMAL
We don’t know shit and even if we did we ain’t snitches mothafucka!

Parker goes to get up. GROANS again.

PARKER
Sure?

JAMAL
Man we don’t know jack-shit!

Parker SIGHS.

PARKER
Alright. You know the drill. Empty your pockets.

TAVIAN
I told you we broke man.

Parker’s Samsung RINGS. He fishes it out of his pocket and looks at the caller’s ID through the cracked touchscreen.

PARKER
Hello? Hey. You crying? You okay? Oh.

He glances at the hoodlums.

PARKER (CONT)
Nothing. No that's fine. Where are you? Alright wait right there.

He turns to leave in a hurry.

JAMAL
You can suck a dick, Casper! You can suck a mothafuckin di-

BANG! Parker whips around and fires a shot skyward. The instant the gun goes off, the boys both cower and YELL like girls.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker parks in a half-deserted strip mall across from a Rite Aid. He parks two spots over from Dahlia's Ford Ranger.

He's wiped most of the blood from his face and a wad of tissue pokes out from one of his nostrils.

Dahlia exits her truck, walks up to his passenger door, and gets in.

PARKER
Hey.

Her face is puffy, like she's been crying non-stop.

DAHLIA
Hi. Oh!

PARKER
I know. I look like shit.

DAHLIA
What happened?

PARKER
Nothing. Couple of punks jumped me when I tried to take their money.

A beat. Dahlia looks confused.

PARKER (CONT)
(realizing)
They owe me money. I was trying to collect, but they jumped me.

DAHLIA
Oh. I think I get it.

A beat.

DAHLIA (CONT)
Well, if it makes you feel better, I've seen you in worse shape. Several times,actually.

A beat.

PARKER
Thanks?

Dahlia lowers her gaze, fiddles with her cuticle.

PARKER (CONT)
So is everything-

In the blink of an eye, Dahlia makes a beeline for his face and latches onto his mouth. They make-out for a split second but she pulls away.

DAHLIA
I'm sorry. I'm sorry that was completely unprofession-

This time Parker goes for it. They begin making out passionately. Kissing is accompanied by heavy petting and Parker crawls over to the passenger side of the car. Dahlia is more than happy to make room.

She twists and flips her body so that she's on top of him. She reaches down south and fiddles with his pants. He does the same.

Straddling him, she reaches down, grabs something, and steadies herself for-

PARKER
(breathing heavily)
Wait.

DAHLIA
(breathing heavily)
I don't have AIDS. He doesn't fuck me.

A beat.

PARKER
Okay.

A beat.

Dahlia’s eyes roll back and she PURRRS.

PARKER (CONT)
Oh... my god.

He EXHALES LOUDLY. As Dahlia starts to grinding up and down, she instinctively gropes around for something to ballast herself.

EXT. PARKER’S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

OVERHEAD VIEW of Parker’s Cavalier rocking back and forth rapidly. We hear MOANING and SEX NOISES as Dahlia’s arm shoots out through the makeshift cardboard window and latches onto the exterior B pillar.

INT. PARKER’S CAVALIER - DAY

Parker settles back into the drivers seat and zips his pants up. Dahlia wiggles her shirt back down. Parker stares out his window with an uber-relaxed gaze. He takes long, deep, slow BREATHS.

He fiddles with his nose-tissue for a second then fishes around for his flask. We hear QUIET SOBBING. Parker looks over at Dahlia as she buries her face in her hands and SOBS HARDER.

A beat as the SOBBING continues. Parker is at a loss.

PARKER
... Was it *that* bad?

She shakes her head "no". Parker hands her a tissue. She turns to him, a storm raging behind her eyes.

DAHLIA
Horatio killed everyone. It was Horatio.

Parker goes wide-eyed and ashen-faced.

DAHLIA (CONT)
It’s only a matter of time before he does something to me and Ashley.

PARKER
Where is she now?

DAHLIA
At school, but-

PARKER
Buckle up!

He jams his keys in the ignition, starts the car, and stomps on the gas. CHIRP-CHHIIIRRRRPPPP-SQUEAAAL!

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker throttles it down a side road and the car pitches and sways.

PARKER
As soon as we get there you grab her and I'll call the cops.

DAHLIA
If we go to the cops he'll kill all of us! He'll die before he goes back to jail!

Parker shoots her a frenzied glance.

PARKER
I think we're crossing the whole "He'll-kill-us-if-he-finds-out" bridge either way, don't you?!?

DAHLIA
He specifically said if I went to the police he'd kill us both.

A beat.

PARKER
Maybe I can find you a temporary safe-house. There's a whole database of foster homes and some are way off-the-grid.

INT. HECTOR'S TOYOTA LAND CRUISER - DAY

Hector cases Ashley's elementary school. A half-smoked blunt dangles from his mouth. Hector takes a hit and passes it to DUKE, 20, a brute of a young man in chinos and a tucked-in wife beater. He's Hector's right-hand-man, his main "wet-worker".

Hector adjusts his fedora as Duke hits the blunt and passes it back to "MAGO" and "BRUJA", late thirties. (*Translation: "Mage" and "Witch"*) They're hardened husband-and-wife ex-gangbangers who specialize in trafficking weapons and contraband.

Hector peers out through the driver's side window. We FOLLOW his gaze and RACK FOCUS on a bunch of children running, playing, and LAUGHING on an unfenced playground adjacent the elementary school.

Ashley sits on a bench off to the side with a little black GIRL playing patty-cake. She LAUGHS, blows her hair aside, then reaches into her backpack, which sits by her feet, and removes a coloring book and a box of crayons.

HECTOR (O.S.)
Watch my back eh? Looks pretty hairy out there.

Duke, Mago, and Bruja YUCK IT UP as Hector flashes his teeth and goes to exit the vehicle.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - CONTINUOUS

SCCREEEECHHH!

Parker's Cavalier barrels into view. He GNASHES on the brakes and his car DRIFTS then SKIDS a good five feet before lurching to stop in front of the playground.

Hector darts back into his Land Cruiser, his eyes glued to the playground.

Dahlia runs up to Ashley. Although we can't hear what she's saying, her frantic body language tells us everything we need to know.

Ashley stuffs her coloring book and crayons in her backpack, zips it up, and scampers behind Dahlia to Parker's Cavalier. They barely have time to shut their doors before Parker high-tails it.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker knuckles it down a sidestreet and fishtails onto the freeway on-ramp.

PARKER
St. Mary's Sacred Heart, it's an all-girls boarding school on the

PARKER
outskirts of Detroit. They take in foster kids and I know the head nun.

He glances at Dahlia.

PARKER (CONT)
She'll be safe there until we figure out our next move.

Parker checks his rearview mirror and notices a black Toyota Land Cruiser bearing down on him. He checks his speedometer.

INSERT:

Parker's vibrating gauge cluster. The needle on his speedometer is at 85 mph and climbing.

He looks back into his rearview mirror. The Land Cruiser weaves in-between cars, growing larger by the second.

ASHLEY
Why did you take me out of school Mami?

DAHLIA
We're going on a little field trip baby... you, me, and Mr. Jode.

Dahlia notices Parker's panicked expression as he continues checking his rearview mirror.

DAHLIA (CONT)
(to Parker)
What is it?

PARKER
We're being followed... it's a black SUV.

DAHLIA
Are you sure?

PARKER
Yeah. I'm definitely sure.

DAHLIA
Can you lose them?

He looks at her.

PARKER
Have you *seen* the car we’re in?

DAHLIA
I don’t understand how anyone could have known-

PARKER
Did you tell anyone else beside me?

Dahlia shakes her head and rubs her temples.

DAHLIA
No. I don’t understand...

ASHLEY
Maybe it’s uncle Hector.

Dahlia whips her head around.

DAHLIA
What makes you say that?

ASHLEY
(frightened)
I’m not supposed to tell... Papi said its a secret.

DAHLIA
Sweetheart if you don’t tell me we could all be hurt very badly. You don’t want that to happen do you?

ASHLEY
No.

DAHLIA
Me neither. Now go ahead and tell me baby.

ASHLEY
... This morning when you were showering Papi put something in my backpack. He said uncle Hector was going to pick it up at recess and he said not to tell anyone.

The Land Cruiser bears down directly behind them, gobbling up asphalt at a startling pace. Parker checks his gauge cluster as he flies down the interstate.

INSERT:

The speedometer reads 117 mph. Next to it, the tach needle approaches redline. We hear the engine WHINE loudly as Parker tests its limits.

The duct tape on the outside corner of the passenger cardboard window peels and the entire flap RIPS off. Dahlia barely notices as icy wind stampedes into the cabin, blowing her hair all over the place.

DAHLIA
Give your bag to Mami baby.

Ashley does. Wind ROARS through the car. Dahlia puts the backpack on her lap, unzips it, and rifles through it. Loose papers are sucked out through the broken window. Dahlia stops and stares, slackjawed. Parker steals a peek.

INSERT:

Dahlia removes the plastic-wrapped bundle of contraband, unsure of whether she should open it.

Before she can make a decision, PHHOOOOOMMMM!

A bullet shatters Parker's back window, WHISTLES past, and EXPLODES out through his windshield, spiderwebbing it. Parker jerks. The car swerves and almost spins out.

PARKER
FUCK!

Dahlia and Ashley SCREAM and the package falls into Dahlia's lap. POP! POP-POP-POP! Cherry-hot slugs rip through the car.

PARKER
STAY DOWN!

Parker tears onto the exit ramp towards the Detroit River. The back end of his car drifts out from under him as he knuckles a hairpin turn at 45 mph and careens towards Ambassador Bridge, which links Detroit, Michigan with Windsor, Canada.

ASHLEY
MAMI! MAMI!

Parker checks his rearview mirror to see if he's lost Hector. No dice.

PARKER
Stay down Ashley!

DAHLIA
What are you doing?!? You're headed for the Ambassador Bridge!

PARKER
The Border Agents, they're armed! They can help!

DAHLIA
How do you know they'll protect us!

Parker looks into his rearview and steals a glance at Ashley, who cowers and CRIES.

PARKER
I just do!

PHHOOOOMMMM! A bullet takes out Parker's right side mirror. Parker flies through a green light and onto the bridge, SHEARING his fender on the steep incline.

PARKER (CONT)
Get my gun it's in the glove box!

Dahlia does. Parker takes it and shoves it into his front waistband.

PARKER (CONT)
C'mon! C'mon!

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

OVERHEAD VIEW. There's been an accident on the bridge, creating an impasse. Cars and trucks bottleneck into a single open lane as a tow truck HONKS and tries to reach the wreckage.

INT. PARKER'S CAVALIER - CONTINUOUS

Parker and Dahlia notice the fast-approaching wall of bumpers.

PARKER
You've gotta be kidding!

DAHLIA
What are we gonna do?!?

Rivulets of cold sweat trickle down Parker's face.

PARKER
We’re gonna make a run for it!

DAHLIA
What!?!

PARKER
You heard me! Hold on!

He SLAMS on the brakes and yanks his steering wheel all the way to the right. The wheels lock and the car spins and drifts for about sixty feet. By the time it SCREECHES to a stop, it has spun 180 degrees and faces the opposite direction.

PARKER (CONT)
Let’s go!

Dahlia’s frozen. Ashley SCREAMS.

PARKER (CONT)
Dahlia! Get Ashley we have to go!

She shakes out the cobwebs and nods. She darts out of the car and grabs Ashley from the back seat. Meanwhile, Parker hastily shoves the package back into Ashley’s backpack, zips it, and snatches it as he jumps out.

ASHLEY
Mami!

DAHLIA
It’s okay! C’mon baby!

PARKER
RUN!

He puts the backpack on and draws his gun, taking aim at Hector’s Land Cruiser, which hurtles towards them. Dahlia and Ashley run up the bridge towards the border, weaving in between lanes of traffic.

BANG! BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG! Parker lets his Glock sing and one of the bullets shatters Hector’s windshield.

INT. HECTOR’S TOYOTA LAND CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Hector is unfazed by the incoming gunfire.

HECTOR
(sotto)
Puta mierda.

Translation: Fucking bitch.

Duke wraps a meaty arm around an AR15 and leans out the passenger window, opening fire on Parker.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

BROP-POP-POP-POP-POP! BRRROPP-POP-POP! Hollowpoints slice through the air all around him. Parker, outgunned, turns and huffs it up the bridge. He's not far behind Ashley and Dahlia.

EXT. HECTOR'S LAND CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Hector's Land Cruiser skids to a stop and he and his crew jump out. Duke, who's already armed, makes a beeline for Parker while Hector, Mago, and Bruja run to the back of the SUV.

Hector unlatches the cargo hold, which contains half a dozen or so assault rifles and submachine guns.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Parker has caught up to Dahlia and Ashley. The border crossing is about a mile and a half away and swarms with BORDER AGENTS.

PARKER
I can see the border! We have to run faster!

Ashley and Dahlia struggle to keep up.

BRROPPP! BROPPP-POP! BRROPPP-PPOPPP!

Duke, running at almost full clip, riddles a nearby RV and minivan with his AR15.

PEOPLE stuck in traffic around them SCREAM and take cover.

Duke quickly gains ground, and Hector and Company aren't far behind. Parker looks at Dahlia.

PARKER
C'mon! Faster!

DAHLIA
We can't!

PARKER
You have to!

DAHLIA
We’re trying!

Parker, in an effort to put some pavement between him and his pursuers, turns and opens fire on Duke.

BANG! BANG! BANG-BANG! BANG-BANG-BANG!

Duke raises the AR15 to his chin and answers with a vicious barrage.

BRRROPPPP-PPPOPPP-PPPOPPP-PPOPPP! BROP-POP-POP-POP-POP! BRRROPP-POP-POP!

Parker dives behind a pickup as the full-metal-jacket ordnance shreds everything around him. He reaches up over the hood of the pickup and returns fire.

BANG! CLICK.

The Glock’s slide is racked open. No more ammo.

PARKER
SHIT! SHIT!

He turns and runs, taking massive strides, using every ounce of adrenalin. He then becomes aware of the fact that he doesn’t see Dahlia or Ashley up ahead.

He turns and spots them and his heart almost jumps out of his chest. Dahlia and Ashley are cowering behind a car a few spots over from where he was shooting at Duke.

PARKER (CONT)
(cups his mouth)
DAHLIA! ASHLEY!

It’s too late. Duke reaches them. He yanks Dahlia out into the open by the scruff of her jacket.

ASHLEY
MAMI! Don’t hurt my Mami!

Duke turns and WHISTLES, signaling to Hector that he’s found them. Practically frothing at the mouth, he tosses Dahlia back onto the pavement, turns, and makes a beeline for Parker.

PARKER
(breathing heavily)
Jesus Christ.

A grim look of realization falls over him. He turns to flee.

Hector, Mago, and Bruja reach Dahlia and Ashley. Although we can't hear him, we can tell by Hector's body language that he's giving Mago and Bruja an order. Mago nods and he and Bruja grab Dahlia and Ashley, turn around, and head back towards the Land Cruiser.

Hector takes off after Duke and Parker.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT. Parker runs for dear life. Duke is about two hundred feet back and gaining, with Hector another eight or so car lengths back. The border crossing is almost a mile away.

EXT. AMBASSADOR BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON Parker, who's running on fumes. *He's out of ammo and there's no way he can outrun them.* He makes a sharp turn towards the bridge's outer support and slides across the hood of a car.

DRIVER
What the hell!

He climbs over a waist-high concrete slab, past a suspension cable that disappears into the sky like a giant beanstalk, and onto a girder which runs over a mammoth, rusted support beam.

BRRROPPPP-PPPOPPP-PPPOPPP-PPOPPP!

Duke bears down on Parker, holding a bead with his AR15.

BROP-POP-POP-POP-POP!

PARKER
FUCK!

Slugs RAKE the edge of a buttress near Parker's head and bits of pulverized concrete go flying.

PARKER'S POV:

Parker stares down into the icy, choppy water of the Detroit River roughly 150 below.

He takes one look back at Duke and Hector. Duke lines up a kill shot just as-

Parker flings the backpack off the side of the girder, tosses his empty Glock aside and-

PARKER
Fuck it!

He jumps, his arms and legs flailing the whole way down until-

EXT. DETROIT RIVER - CONTINUOUS

SPLAAASSSHHHHH!

PARKER
Ahhhhh! Ahhhhhh! Aaaaaahhhhhhhh!

Parker thrashes about in the freezing water. He spots the backpack about thirty feet ahead of him and swims over to it. He grabs it and peers up onto the bridge.

PARKER’S POV:

Hector and Duke stand on the girder he jumped from. Duke raises his assault rifle and draws a bead but lowers it a few seconds later... Parker is too far away. Parker treads water as he flips them the double-bird.

PARKER (CONT)
(teeth chattering)
Fffuck You! Ha! FFFUCK YOU! Ah Ha!!!

We see Hector say something to Duke, who nods as Hector gives him a hearty SLAP on the back. Duke hands his AR15 to Hector and Parker stares wild-eyed as-

PARKER (CONT)
What... the... fff-ffuckkk.

Duke jumps, flies through the air, and SMASHES into the river like a giant canon ball.

SPLAAASSSSSHHHHHHHH!

A terrible look of realization racks Parker's face. Treading water, he hastily unzips the backpack, removes the plastic-wrapped contraband, turns, and launches it one-handed.

The package lands with a SPLASH about twenty five feet away in the direction of the shore, which is roughly 40 yards away.

Duke's head breaks surface as the water froths all around him. He wastes no time and immediately begins swiming towards Parker.

OVERHEAD VIEW:

Parker swims as fast as he can towards the floating package as Duke gives chase. Parker is a faster swimmer but upon reaching the package he stops, grabs it, winds up, and launches shoreward. Once again, it flies roughly twenty five feet ahead of him and SPLASHES into the river.

Each time he stops to throw the package, Duke chips away at his lead. After the third time Parker reaches the package, he winds up and flings it, but instead of splashing into the water, it lands onto the litter-strewn banks of the Detroit River with a THUD.

Parker turns and sees Duke, who's only about six yards behind him and closing. He turns and, using his last ounce of strength, makes a beeline for the shore.

EXT. DETROIT RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

Parker crawls ashore sopping wet and GASPING for air. He stumbles over to the package, wraps an arm around it, and starts huffing it up the riverbank towards the road.

Running against the wind, a thin sheen of ice forms as arctic gusts plow into his dripping wet clothes. His teeth CHATTER loudly and his lips are bright blue.

Duke breaks shore just as Parker reaches the road. He's not as winded and begins sprinting towards Parker with a kind of psychotic determination.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DETROIT - CONTINOUS

As Duke runs, he pulls out a razor-sharp Spiderco knife which was clipped inside his pocket. He flicks it open with a CLICK and darts across the street.

Parker, carrying the package like a football, zig zags through the streets and sidewalk. Every time he looks over his shoulder, Duke is five feet closer. Parker turns a corner and sprints through an intersection as the light turns green.

Duke, smelling blood, rounds the corner and, seeing Parker only fifteen feet away, bolts into the street after him.

THUNK!... WHOOMPH!

A red Honda civic PLOWS into Duke, sweeping his legs out from under him. He SMASHES into the windshield and tumbles up and over the roof before ragdolling onto the street and rolling to a stop.

Parker turns and stares as the Civic swerves and CRASHES into a parking meter, causing the airbag to deploy. Blinking rapidly, he catches his breath for a moment and watches slackjawed as Duke slowly begins coming to.

Parker, in a wild fit, SCREAMS as he sprints back into the street towards Duke, who’s just resumed standing, albeit on very wobbly legs.

Duke, waiting for the stars to settle, looks up just as Parker tosses the package square at his chest. He instinctively catches it as Parker lowers his shoulder and-

WHHUUUMMMPPP!

Parker SLAMS into him like a battering ram. The package goes flying and the men careen onto the sidewalk, SMASHING into it with a THUD.

Both men squirm and roll around on the ground but Duke, who got the wind knocked out of him two times in rapid succession, is clearly in worse shape.

Parker sees the Spiderco a few feet away. He monkey-crawls over to it, grabs it, stands up, and limps over to Duke, who’s still rolling around MOANING.

Parker hunches over him as Duke reaches up and weakly grabs him by the scruff of his shirt. Parker pushes his arm aside, mounts him, raises the knife high above his head, and snaps it down like bolt of lightning.

CRUUNNCCHHH!

DUKE
ARRGGGHH!

He stabs Duke in the sternum and the knife slices through his costochondral cartilage, which connects the rib cage to the breastbone.

Parker rips the knife back out and clamps his hand around Duke’s jaw as he struggles to squirm free, blood bubbling up from his freshly punctured lung.

Parker raises the now glistening knife, bears down on Duke’s jaw to keep his head from moving, takes aim, and-

DUKE (CONT)
AAARRRRRRGGGGGHHHHHH!

With a swift, forceful motion, he jackhammers the blade into Duke’s eyesocket, puncturing his eye like a beachball.

The faint, airy WHISTLE of his eyeball deflating directly precedes his horrific, earth-shattering SCREAMS as gobs of bright red jelly pour out of his eye and an arc of thin, watery blood spurts out of his tear duct like a scarlet geyser.

Parker turns to get up as Duke flails about and paws at his freshly mutilated eye, blood spurting everywhere. Parker, shivering, grabs the package and wipes the knife off on his shirt before folding it shut and putting it in his pocket.

Duke’s CRIES grow more and more distant as Parker limps away.

INT. DESOLATE PHONEBOOTH - DAY

Parker, his teeth CHATTERING and his whole body trembling uncontrollably, dials a number collect.

INT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS

A telephone RING cuts through the soothing sound of CLASSICAL MUSIC. The spectacled man, always in his tuxedo, glides past. We RIDE his coat tails as he walks over to a cordless phone sitting on a kitchen couter.

CLOSE ON the back of his head as he presses the phone to his ear. We hear a MUFFLED VOICE for a brief moment.

A long beat.

SPECTACLED MAN
I accept the charges.

A beat, then we hear what sounds like Parker’s GARBLED VOICE through the phone receiver.

The spectacled man slowly turns around and *we see his face clearly for the very first time.*

A long beat.

SPECTACLED MAN (CONT)
(into phone)
Yes. This is Marcus Jode.

INT. UNMARKED CROWN VICTORIA - DAY

The officer parked across from Horatio’s house is startled awake by car doors SLAMMING. He sits up, rubs his eyes, and looks out his window.

OFFICER’S POV:

We see Mago and Bruja shove Dahlia and Ashley out of Hector’s Landcruiser. Although we can’t hear them, we can tell by their body language that they’re both CRYING. Dahlia, a terrified expression on her face, locks eyes with the officer.

His eyes go wide and he reaches for his rover. Before he can radio for help, however, a dark form takes shape behind him, just outside his passenger window.

Sensing something just outside his periphery, he cranes his neck in SLOW MOTION and sees Hector, who’s just finished screwing a silencer onto his MP5. Hector, wearing a smile that could cut glass, lights him up.

PSSHHH-PSHHH-PSSHHHH. PSSHHH-PSHHH-PSSHHHH.

The officer looks like he’s having a seizure as dozens of cherry-hot slugs shatter the window and burrow into him.

INT. MARCUS’ OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - DAY

Marcus pulls up across the street from the phone booth where Parker is. Even sitting we can tell he’s tall and sinewy, with prominent cheekbones and a pencil-thin mustache. He tightens his black scarf, which drapes down over his tux.

The passenger door flies open and Parker literally dives in. He slams the door, tosses Horatio's package at his feet, curls into a ball, and shivers violently. His skin has a purplish hue.

Marcus inspects him for a long beat, noticing the blood stains and ripped clothing. He turns the heat all the way up then exits the vehicle. Parker is too weak and hypothermic to notice or care.

INT. OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS TRUNK - CONTINUOUS

TRUNK SHOT:

Marcus opens his trunk.

MARCUS POV:

In his trunk is a spare tire with a jack and tire iron and an emergency roadside kit.

He opens the kit, which contains various flares, first aid items, a flashlight, water, and one of those reflective silver NASA space blankets.

INT. MARCUS' OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

Marcus opens the passenger door. He unfolds the space blanket and drapes it around Parker, who tries saying something but is unable to.

He closes Parker's door and walks around to the driver's side. He gets in, puts the car in gear, and drives off. He presses a button on the CD player and soft CLASSICAL MUSIC wafts into the cabin.

EXT. MARCUS' OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - CONTINUOUS

As they drive, dark clouds gallop past as day turns to night.

INT. SMALL BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Parker exits the bathroom, a towel wrapped around his waist. Marcus sits at his kitchen table meticulously cleaning and oiling his Benelli M3. A half empty bottle of brandy sits next to him.

PARKER
Is there something I can wear?

A beat. Marcus, polishing the shotgun’s breach, doesn’t take his eyes off his work.

MARCUS
Should be.

INT. MARCUS’ CLOSET - NIGHT

Pitch black. The door swings open and Parker turns the light on.

CLOSE ON Parker’s speechless expression.

PARKER’S POV:

The entire closet is filled top-to-bottom with tuxedo shirts, pants, and jackets.

INT. MARCUS’ KITCHEN - NIGHT

Parker enters wearing one of Marcus’ tuxedos. It fits well given their similar height and build. Parker sits across from Marcus, who’s begun feeding shells into his Benelli.

In the middle of the table is Horatio’s package, which has been cut open along the middle, revealing its contents: compressed bundles of hundred dollar bills.

PARKER
I had no one else to call.

Marcus thumbs shells into his shotgun. He doesn’t look up.

PARKER (CONT)
I appreciate your help.

Marcus grabs the bottle of brandy and takes a manly pull. He slides it across the table to Parker, who pushes it aside. Marcus shrugs and begins wiping down the barrel of his gun.

PARKER (CONT)
You know I fantasized about killing you... pretty much all the time. I’d go to the symphony and I’d tell myself "Today’s the day. This’ll be the day I kill that sorry son-of-a-bitch."

Marcus looks up and stares at him with a detached, emotionless gaze.

A beat.

PARKER (CONT)
Aren’t you gonna say something?

A long beat.

MARCUS
I smashed your head to bits with my cymbals. Every time you came to watch me. Popped your head like a coconut.

Another long beat.

A smile, razor-thin, curls the corner of Marcus’ lip. Parker’s at a loss for a moment. Then, slowly, he smiles and lets out a CHUCKLE at the absurdity of it all.

He grabs the brandy and takes a pull. Cringes. Wipes his mouth. Looks down into his lap for a long moment. When he looks back at Marcus, his eyes are on fire.

PARKER
A little girl and her mother need my help.

Marcus nods. Parker stands.

PARKER (CONT)
Can I borrow your shotgun?

Marcus stands, cocks the shotgun, and grabs his car keys from the tabletop.

MARCUS
No.

Marcus goes to leave. As he walks out the front door-

PARKER
Hey! Hey wait up!

INT. FORD CROWN VIC - NIGHT

We stare at Horatio’s front door from inside the shot-up Ford Crown Vic parked across the street, the officer’s blood-covered body slumped in the immediate foreground.

We PULL BACK to REVEAL Marcus reclined in the passenger seat, hidden from view, his shotgun lying across his chest.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - NIGHT

Parker walks into frame. He walks up to the front door, straightens his tuxedo jacket, and KNOCKS.

Moments later the door flies open and Parker is forcefully pulled inside.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Hector THROWS Parker hard against the wall and frisks him. Mago and Bruja, both armed, hold a bead. Horatio, Dahlia, and Ashley sit at the kitchen table.

Hector finds the Spiderco knife but no gun. He shoves Parker into the kitchen, where Horatio motions for him to have a seat.

Parker pulls the chair out directly across from Horatio, who’s going through his AIDS medicine ritual. He opens a bottle, takes a pill out and sets it in front of him, closes the bottle, then moves on to the next one.

Once all five pills are lined up in front of him, he looks up at Parker.

HORATIO
(to Dahlia, doesn’t look at her)
Go get me a glass of water whore.

Dahlia, trembling, does as instructed.

HORATIO (CONT)
(to Hector)
No weapons?

Hector walks over and hands him the Spiderco knife. Horatio flicks it open and runs his thumb along its serrated blade.

HECTOR
It’s Duke’s.

PARKER
I don’t think he’ll be needing it anymore.

Dahlia sets a glass of ice water in front of Horatio.

DAHLIA
(whisper)
Horatio-

HORATIO
(to Dahlia)
SIT THE FUCK DOWN!

He swallows the first pill. He takes the other four pills, one by one, while he converses with Parker.

HORATIO
You came alone Eagle Scout?

PARKER
Yes.

Hector motions to Mago and Bruja with his chin. Mago peers out the front window and Bruja peers into the backyard through the sliding glass door. They scan the area then turn and nod.

HECTOR
Looks like it.

HORATIO
You're either very brave or very stupid. Maybe both.

PARKER
I have your money. You let them go, right now, and I'll take you to where it is.

HORATIO
Or I could kill them while you watch. Then, afterwards, I could kill you too.

Ashley starts CRYING.

DAHLIA
(lips quivering)
No te llores, corazon, todo va a estar bien.

Translation: Don't cry sweetheart, everything is going to be okay.

PARKER
I suppose you could, but you'd be out a couple hundred grand. See I figure you were planning on buying

PARKER
meth with that fifty grand. You buy bulk from a local lab, sneak it into Canada, and flip it for a very nice profit.

A beat as Horatio studies Parker.

PARKER (CONT)
Sound about right?

Horatio smirks. He swallows the last of his medication and turns his attention to Ashley, who's sniveling, trying her hardest to be brave. He takes her hand and she steels herself.

HORATIO
(to Parker)
My god, just look at those eyes.

Parker looks at Ashley, gives her an almost imperceptible reassuring nod.

HORATIO (CONT)
Such beautiful green eyes... they sparkle like emeralds, que no? You know it's funny, nobody on either side of the family has green eyes. Hector here used to say all the time he didn't think she belonged to me. I mean, how could she be my daughter and have eyes like that?

DAHLIA
Horatio, you know I would never-

HORATIO
SILENCE!

Dahlia bites her lip as her eyes well up.

HORATIO (CONT)
I never used to let it get to me, you know? But the more I thought about it, the more I realized it would absolutely shatter my heart if it turned out I'd been lied to. I was there for her birth. I raised her as my own, I gave her everything... I even sent money every week when I was locked up.

PARKER
If only all children were so lucky.

Horatio, staring daggers at Ashley, ignores Parker and flicks the knife open.

HORATIO
But now, every time I look into those big green eyes, it feels like I’m staring at a lie.

A long beat. Horatio looks surprisingly choked up.

PARKER
Horatio... please just put the knife away and let me take you to your money.

Horatio is in his own world. He reaches over and grabs Ashley’s hand. She bursts out SOBBING. Parker goes to reach for Ashley but Hector digs his silenced MP5 into the nook below Parker’s ear.

DAHLIA
Horatio!

Dahlia goes to stand but Bruja comes up from behind and forcefully shoves her into her chair. Mago stands by the front door and holds a bead.

Horatio presses the knife’s blade against Ashley’s index finger.

HORATIO
(to Ashley)
It’s okay princesa, you’ll barely feel a thing...

PARKER
Damnit Horatio!

DAHLIA
(sobbing)
Por favor...

Translation: Please...

With a flick of his wrist, Horatio slices the tip of Ashley’s finger open. She SCREAMS and WHIMPERS.

PARKER
No!

DAHLIA
Horatio!

Blood trickles out of the cut and pools into the middle of the table as Ashley grabs her hand, CRYING.

HORATIO
But I think I've found a way to put my mind at ease. To reassure myself that her and I are bound by blood, like father and daughter ought to be.

Dahlia SOBS quietly. We can see the gears turning in Parker's head as rivulets of sweat bead up along his brow.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - SIMULTANEOUS

CLOSE ON a tuxedoed arm stuffing a rag into the gas tank of Hector's Land Cruiser. The arm reaches into a jacket pocket and removes a Zippo. It flicks the lighter open.

INT. PEREZ HOME - SIMULTANEOUS

Horatio presses the blade against his own thumb and slowly cuts it open, watching the blood ooze out with a fascinated expression. He locks eyes with Ashley, who holds her finger and SOBS.

HORATIO
Ever played blood brothers princesa?

Parker goes to stand but Hector once again shoves him down into his chair and burrows his gun into Parker's neck.

PARKER
You do this and the deal is off you sick motherfucker!

Horatio looks at Parker, a detached, psychotic twinkle in his eye. He grabs Ashley's delicate wrist with his bleeding hand and-

KABOOOOOOM!

A massive explosion RIPS through the living room, blowing the front door clean off its hinges and shattering the windows. Mago, who was standing in the breezeway, is blown to smithereens.

Everyone else, who was in the kitchen, is spared. Horatio pulls his Taurus Casull from under the table and aims it at Parker. Dahlia, bleeding from her ears, reaches across the table and grabs onto Ashley’s hand as they both SOB and cower.

Parker looks around, blinking excessively, trying to shake his head clear. He also bleeds from one of his ears.

HORATIO
(to Hector and Bruja)
See what that was!

They nod and Bruja follows Hector out the front door.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Hector and Bruja walk out the front door and see Hector’s Land Cruiser engulfed in flames.

MARCUS’ POV:

Marcus lies in wait behind the side of the house. He sees Hector walk out, tiptoes a few steps towards Hector’s outer flank, draws a bead with his Benelli and-

BOOOOM!

Two for one. As Marcus flanks Hector, Bruja walks out and into Marcus’ killbox. He squeezes the trigger and sizzling hot buckshot shreds through Hector and Bruja like they were made of Play-Doh.

They both fly forward onto their stomachs. Marcus racks his M3 and a mammoth shell is jettisoned from its breach. Hector goes to turn around but-

BOOOOM!

His face explodes into chunks of ground beef. Marcus pumps the M3 again and draws a bead on Bruja, who lies on the ground writhing and MOANING.

BOOOOM!

Her body lurches as her lower back explodes wide open and her gallbladder, small intestines, and abdominal viscera pop out like a jack-in-the-box.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Horatio shoots up out of his chair, backs up against the wall, and aims his Casull at the front door.

HORATIO
Hector! Bruja!

Marcus' silhouette glides into the open doorway, his shotgun raised. Realizing there's no way to single out Horatio without possibly hitting Parker, Ashley, or Dahlia, he lowers his gun.

Horatio draws a bead on Marcus and just as he's about to pop one off Parker grabs the edge of the table and lunges at him, overturning it and SLAMMING into him, pancaking him against the wall.

BOOOM! Horatio fires as he's slammed into the wall.

EXT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Marcus is hit in the shoulder and goes flying backwards, landing just outside the doorway.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Parker grabs Horatio's wrist and starts SLAMMING it against the wall in an effort to make him drop his gun. Dahlia cowers in the corner, holding Ashley tightly. They CRY and YELL.

PARKER
(to Dahlia and Ashley)
RUN GOD DAMNIT!

EXT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Marcus slowly sits up. A chunk of his shoulder is blown off. He straightens his glasses and starts crawling over to his shotgun.

INT. PEREZ HOME - CONTINUOUS

Dahlia and Ashley are frozen in fear.

PARKER
RUN!

As Parker struggles to keep Horatio pinned against the wall with the upturned kitchen table, Horatio snaps one of the table legs off and-

WHACK!

He wallops Parker across the head with it. Parker's legs buckle and Horatio heaves the table off himself, sending both Parker and the table flying.

WHOOOMPH!

Parker flies clear across the kitchen, slamming into the wall behind him and collapsing into a heap as the table lands flat on top of him with a heavy THUD.

Parker uses his legs to slowly slide up and out from behind table. Horatio draws a bead and Parker, staring down the barrel of the Casull, locks eyes with him. Horatio cocks the massive hammer and-

PARKER
You're gonna rot in hell for all eternity you sick, twisted-

BOOM! BANG!

These happen literally a millisecond apart:

Horatio pulls the trigger, blowing a giant hole through the section of table resting against Parker's chest. The wood BURSTS and SPLINTERS and Parker's innards blast through the opening like mortarfire.

Marcus kisses Horatio with the Benelli. Horatio is lifted clear off his feet, flying through the air and SMASHING through the sliding glass door. Only his ankles and feet remain IN FRAME.

Marcus, the muzzle of his shotgun still smoking, and bleeding badly from his shoulder, walks over to Parker. Dahlia and Ashley follow suit. Dahlia wraps her hands around Parker's face and Ashley grabs his limp wrist.

ASHLEY
Mr. Jode! Wake up! Mr. Jode!

EXT. PEREZ HOME - NIGHT

We slowly PULL BACK during a TIMELAPSE:

Ambulance lights. Police cars arrive and secure the scene. The coroner arrives. Corpses are wheeled out in body bags.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ASHLEY'S SCHOOL - DAY

It's spring in Detroit. Sweltering heat radiates off the asphalt.

Marcus, clutching a chainlink fence, watches from a distance as Dahlia picks Ashley up from school. Ashley runs over to her mother and jumps into her arms, knocking her over.

Dahlia, LAUGHING hysterically, grabs Ashley and begins tickling her and they collapse onto the grass. Both look so happy and carefree.

Marcus watches. After awhile, he turns to face us and his lips curl into an almost imperceptible smile. We FOLLOW him as he crosses the street, unbuttoning and removing his tuxedo jacket.

He walks around to the back of his Oldsmobile Cutlass, pops the trunk open, and places his neatly folded jacket into it.

MARCUS POV:

In the trunk is Marcus' Benelli, a pair of orchestra cymbals, and a bottle of brandy. He grabs the brandy, walks around to the front of the car, and gets in.

We watch as his Cutlass ROARS to life and drives off, dissapearing back into the grimy underbelly of the Motor City.

FADE OUT.