BLANCO

"PIlot"

written by
Mark Rosner

Revised
November 16, 2013

BLANCO

FADE IN:

EXT. AUDUBON AVE - DAY

RUBEN FONSECA, 30, street edge, Mediterranean good looks, cat-burglar cool, turns the corner onto the avenue and looks up and down the avenue.

P.O.V. - ACROSS THE STREET

Where FREDDY GARCIA, 30s, would-be kingpin, plenty of gold, and two of his muscle boys, call them SHAVED HEAD and MUSTACHE, are hanging by Freddy's white Mercedes S600, watching the apartment building entrance.

RUBEN

Ducks back into the side street. Jumps up and grabs the fire escape. Climbs to the second floor. RAPS at the window. After a moment, it slides open.

INT. SECOND FLOOR APARTMENT

Ruben climbs in, nods at ALBERTO, 14, who opened his bedroom window --

RUBEN
Thanks, bro.

ALBERTO
Wassup Ruben?

RUBEN
All good.

Albert goes back to his homework. Ruben continues through the apartment, past the kitchen where Alberto's *ABUELA* is stirring something on the stove.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
(polite)
Buenos dias. *Huele bien!*

He waves and sticks his head out the door into the --

HALLWAY

No one there. Ruben hurries to the stairs and runs up two flights to the --

FOURTH FLOOR LANDING *

Where he looks cautiously down the hall. The coast is clear. *
Ruben heads to the last apartment, MUFFLED SHOUTS GROWING *
LOUDER until he reaches -- *

APARTMENT DOOR *

Ruben KNOCKS. After a beat the door opens. VERONICA, 25, *
cute, sassy, but buggin', looks at Ruben with relief. *

VERONICA *
Thank God. Your brother is a fucking *
psycho, you know that? *

RUBEN *
(he does) *
Where is he? *

LIVING ROOM *

It's dark, shades pulled down. JESUS kneels by the window. *
He's a raging bull, older, darker and heavier than Ruben. *
Tats cover more of his body than his clothes. *

He SLAMS a clip into an assault rifle. RACKS the slide. *
Raises the shade a few inches.

RUBEN *
Get away from the window, man. *

JESUS *
I'ma kill Freddy and every one a his
mothafuckers.

RUBEN
Or get your brains splashed all over
the carpet. They're outside. *

Jesus peers out the window. Shoulders his rifle. *

JESUS
Not for long. *

RUBEN
Hey! Look around. Nobody left but *
you and me.

JESUS
So? You sayin' lay down?

RUBEN
I'm sayin' get away from the fucking window. We live to fight another day.

JESUS
With what? Freddy took our spots, ran off our crew --

RUBEN
I'ma get us a lifeline. Sit down with Ortiz.

JESUS
Nah, I'ma smoke that nigga today.

Jesus peers out the window again.

P.O.V. JESUS - DAY

Freddy and his crew are gone.

BACK TO SCENE

Jesus blinks, tries to focus, process --

JESUS
Get the car, bring it 'round back. Motor running and shit, aight?

RUBEN
Jesus. Give me one hour --

JESUS
Shut your fucking hole and let the shot-caller call the motherfucking shots!

Veronica comes in from the kitchen -

VERONICA
Loco cabron, your son in the next room, one stray bullet --

JESUS
(*Spanish*)
Get back inside.

VERONICA
I'm talking to you, caveman. Put that shit away!

JESUS
Bitch, take your sloppy ass out the room now, before I bust a knuckle on you!

He takes a step towards her. She gives him the finger and splits.

RUBEN
Are you high?

JESUS
I'm cool. Let's roll.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS - DAY *

Streets full of hustle and flow, near the GW Bridge.

INT. BENZ - DAY

Rolling up Broadway, Ruben at the wheel. Jesus pushes buttons on the climate control screen. A *clavo* (secret hydraulic "trap") opens, revealing a Glock. * *

JESUS
Freddy shows, I'm a spread his *tripas* all over the pavement. *

Jesus removes the pistol, checks the clip.

RUBEN
You're buggin', man. This is no time for a drive by. *

JESUS *
It's wolf time. We at war. Freddy * run off our connect, no money coming * in -- *

RUBEN *
We can do business with Ortiz. Move * the shit to my boys in Jersey. Stay * alive, stay in the game. *

JESUS *
Ortiz, that *mamahuevo*? Fat nigga * got no heart.

Holding the piece between his legs as they ride -- *

RUBEN
Ortiz is my homie. He got a trust level with me. *

JESUS
You tellin' me to fuck off, *Blanco*? *

RUBEN
You're the shot-caller, man. But I'm the one knows how to get to yes.

Jesus looks hard at Ruben, shakes his head. *

CUT TO:

FLAMES ON A GRILL

Sear two T-bone steaks. A long-handled fork lifts each steak onto a platter loaded up with rice and beans.

INT. DOMINICAN RESTAURANT

Ruben at a table with ORTIZ, a big man, blinged-out, with carefully trimmed facial hair. They sip from beaded-cold bottles of Presidente beer. A couple of Ortiz' LIEUTENANTS slouch at a nearby table. * *

RUBEN
I'm saying it's business as usual.

ORTIZ
(*drinks*)
If it was, you don't need to say it.

CURVY *NEGRITA* WAITRESS brings over their steak platters. Ortiz looks her up and down, but she smiles at Ruben.

WAITRESS
Let me know if you need anything else.

As she sashays away --

ORTIZ
(shakes his head)
Papi shampoo. Like your own force field - one look and their legs part like the Red Sea.

In this neighborhood they speak English for privacy.

RUBEN
Ten kilos, *papi*. That's all I'm askin' you to front me. Just enough to stay alive.

ORTIZ
You went to war with Freddy Garcia and you lost. I cross him, maybe I catch a bullet too.

RUBEN
We put Freddy in business. Now that *hijo de puta* try and jump past us and claim everything we got?

ORTIZ
You took your corners from Angel Rivera. Jumped past Canelo and his crew, too.

RUBEN
Hey, we put in our ten thousand hours. We earned the right to be masters.

ORTIZ
Freddy got that same lean cuisine and hungry look Jesus used to have. And Jesus drop enough bodies for his own cemetery.

RUBEN
Be real. You the wholesaler with the Juarez connection. Freddy won't muss a hair on your head.

Ortiz makes a "who knows" gesture. Drinks beer.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
I'm asking you as a brother. Closer than my real --

Door SWINGS OPEN and Jesus swaggers in like John Dillinger. All eyes on Jesus as he crosses to their table and DRAGS a chair over.

Ortiz' guys react but sit tight. They don't want any part of Jesus.

JESUS
Wassup.

Ruben eyeballs his brother - what the fuck? Ortiz looks from Jesus to Ruben.

ORTIZ
It's all good.

JESUS
(*smiles*)
It's all good.

RUBEN
We was just talking --

JESUS
No more talking. Time to load up the car.

Ortiz looks at Ruben.

ORTIZ
Freddy ain't playin', *papi*.

JESUS
(leans in)
Motherfucker, look at me.

As he leans closer he shows Ortiz the Glock in his waistband.

JESUS (CONT'D)
I ain't playin' neither. And I'm sitting a lot closer to your fat ass than he is.

OFF Ortiz, every eyeball in the place glued to him -- and he knows it.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Ortiz' lieutenants load plastic-wrapped kilos of cocaine into secret compartments, beneath the trunk of Ruben's Benz. Jesus stands nearby, keeping an eye on them. Ruben walks up.

RUBEN
Asshole.

JESUS
(smirks)
Dass how I get to yes.

As the workers SLAM the trunk shut --

JESUS (CONT'D) *
Let's get this shit to Jersey and *
make some fucking money. *

CUT TO: *

INT. BENZ - MOVING - DAY

They drive in silence for a beat.

JESUS
You gonna pout like a bitch all day?

Ruben makes a sharp left turn in front of oncoming traffic.

JESUS (CONT'D)
Chingada!

RUBEN
We got a white 600 on our ass since we left.

JESUS
Freddy.

Presses the buttons for the *clavo* -

JESUS (CONT'D)
Puta can get his right now.

Jesus grabs the Glock and swivels around as --

PICKUP TRUCK

EXPLODES from the cul-de-sac and T-BONES Ruben's Benz, SLAMMING IT up onto the sidewalk and along the side of an apartment building --

JESUS

Is tossed like a rag doll and loses the gun --

BENZ

SCRAPES off the wall and spins out onto the street in a SHUDDERING 180 stop.

Ruben's head bounces off the wheel.

TWO FREDDY GARCIA SHOOTERS

Scramble out of the truck, strapped -- Mustache has a TEC 9 * machine pistol. Shaved Head RACKS THE SLIDE on a .40 semi- * auto.

RUBEN

Blinks blood from his eyes. Jesus crawls to the back looking for his piece --

SHAVED HEAD AND MUSTACHE *

Run at the Benz -- *

JESUS *

Finds the Glock, spins around behind Ruben, and pushes him down to get a clear shot -- * *

SHOOTERS

OPEN FIRE. Windshield SHATTERS.

BENZ

Ruben drops onto the passenger-side mat beneath showers of glass --

But Jesus is HIT in the back. He sprawls across the rear seat.

Ruben flat on his back, reaching desperately towards his shoe, stretching his fingers --

As Mustache yanks the driver's door open -

Ruben closes his hand around the Walther PK .380 in his ankle holster. Pulls and FIRES.

Mustache spasms and flails for his neck. The machine pistol BUCKS.

Passenger window BLOWS OUT and SHAVED HEAD takes a THREE-ROUND BURST to the chest and drops to the pavement.

WHITE MERCEDES S600

CAREENS into a SKIDDING-ASS STOP.

FREDDY GARCIA

slides out, wielding twin .45s. *

FREDDY
Fuck you both and your whore of a mother!

He raises up BLASTING with both guns --

RUBEN

Rolls out of the car onto the crumpled body of Mustache. Grabs the Tec 9 off the ground and FIRES --

Freddy spins around and falls to one knee. Drops one gun and clutches his side, hit. *

FREDDY
Putamadre!

He steadies the other .45 with both hands --

Ruben SQUEEZES OFF ANOTHER BURST. Freddy pancakes to the pavement.

RUBEN
Jesus! Talk to me!

But Jesus is incoherent, BABBLING IN SPANISH...

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Hold on hold on...

Ruben drops back into the driver's seat and gets his car STARTED --

WIDER - STREET

Ruben SLALOMS AND SLAMS the Benz through the jammed-up vehicles and THUMPS <u>right over Freddy's body</u> as the first SIRENS FILL THE AIR -- *

CUT TO:

EXT. APT BUILDING - DAY

A livery cab is parked in front. FELIPE, 50, the driver, is helping an ELDERLY WOMAN to the door. *

Ruben's shot-up Benz rounds the corner and Ruben jumps out.

RUBEN
Felipe, give me a hand!

Ruben flings the back door open.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Jesus needs a ride.

Felipe hustles down to Ruben. He sees Jesus, crumpled and bloody, in the back seat.

Felipe crosses himself, backs away. Ruben grabs his arm. *

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Take him to the hospital.

FELIPE
No, no, I can't --

RUBEN
Do me this favor and save my brother's life. Or I find someone else to bring you both in. *Claro?*

Felipe manages a nod.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Get his legs.

They wrestle Jesus, MOANING, into the back of the livery cab. Ruben reaches into his pocket, pulls out a wad of * cash and stuffs it into Felipe's shirt pocket.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Gimme your jacket. Come on.

Felipe shrugs the leather coat off as fast as he can.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
I was never here. Go!

Felipe scrambles into his cab and DRIVES OFF.

CUT TO:

EXT. DYCKMAN BOAT PIER - NIGHT

Ruben throws his handguns and the TEC 9, wrapped in his bloody shirt, into the river.

EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Benz is parked behind a concrete stanchion. Ruben loads the kilos into a duffel bag. His shoulder and pants leg are dark with blood. He stuffs an oily rag into the gas tank. Lights it and hobbles away with the duffel bag.

Behind him, the gas tank IGNITES. Benz EXPLODES.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTIST OFFICE - NIGHT

Ruben in the chair, shirt off. DR. ALVAREZ, 50s, cleans the shoulder wound. *

RUBEN
I appreciate this, doc. I really do.

The duffel bag sits a few feet away.

DR. ALVAREZ
You always looked out for Bruno in school. So I do what I can...

He taps his syringe. Finds a vein and injects Ruben. Ruben's body relaxes. Dr. Alvarez looks through his instruments.

DR. ALVAREZ (CONT'D)
I need to get another clamp. One moment.

He goes to the door. Turns back to Ruben --

DR. ALVAREZ (CONT'D)
You also looked out for Bruno's sister, didn't you?

RUBEN
(woozy)
What?

DR. ALVAREZ
She was fourteen.

He walks out. After a moment, DETECTIVE GEMMA DAWKINS, 35, military bearing, athlete's body, walks in, gold shield in one hand, 9MM at her side ...followed by an older detective, MARTINEZ, and TWO UNIFORMS. All with guns in their hands.

GEMMA
Easy, now. You know who we are. Keep your hands where I can see them.

Ruben blinks at her, woozy from his injection.

Martinez gets Ruben on his feet and pats him down. Cuffs him behind his back.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
(looks him over)
One round in the shoulder, maybe some fragments in the calf? You're a lucky man. I haven't seen carnage like that since Baghdad.

She opens the duffel bag. Smiles.

MARTINEZ
Jackpot?

She holds up one of the plastic-wrapped kilos.

GEMMA
Something you want to tell us, Ruben?

Ruben's eyes close and his head lolls forward. Martinez grabs him.

CUT TO:

INT. UNMARKED CAR -- NIGHT

Speeding through the streets of Manhattan. Ruben is nodding off in the back seat. Gemma leans over from the front.

GEMMA
Hey. Ruben.

Nothing. She slaps him. His eyes open.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Who's your connect? Give me a name.

RUBEN
What?

RUBEN'S POV

Gemma blurring in and out of focus...her words LOUDER and SOFTER...

GEMMA
Ten keys in the duffel.

RUBEN
Not mine.

GEMMA
He's confused.

MARTINEZ *
Maybe that's why he's at the dentist *
2 AM for a GSW.

The lights of the city flaring past Ruben's eyes... *

GEMMA *
Hey, Ruben. Did you think it was a *
toothache?

CUT TO: *

INT. HOSPITAL ER - NIGHT

NURSE finishes bandaging Ruben's shoulder. Martinez YAWNS. Gemma is on the phone as she walks back in with a coffee tray --

GEMMA
(phone) *
Thanks, Donny. Tell those Narco *
rangers I owe them a round.
(to Ruben)
Starbucks?

RUBEN
Thanks.

She hands him one. He sips.

GEMMA
You're no virgin, Ruben, so why bullshit? In the system since you were fourteen, got caught twice for drugs and weapons, you and your brother have been wild cowboys in *
Washington Heights for years. You're the brains, he's the muscle.

MARTINEZ
El Abusador, si?
(for Gemma) *
The bully. *

Ruben says nothing. Sips coffee. The nurse finishes her * work.

NURSE
All set.

RUBEN
(smiles)
Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

She walks out, shooting Gemma a reproachful look.

GEMMA
But Jesus is laid up in ICU with a bullet in his spine and your whole operation was decimated by Freddy Garcia's crew.

RUBEN
Is that, like, decaffeinated?

MARTINEZ
Now Freddy's dead. That's what I said.

Earning him a look from Gemma -- *

GEMMA *
Taking Freddy Garcia out was what we call a PSK. *

MARTINEZ
Public service killing.

GEMMA
Especially if it was self-defense. *
We're all ears. *

Ruben looks at her.

RUBEN *
Couple precinct detectives, stepped in shit when the dentist dimed me out. No thanks. * * *

Gemma looks at Martinez. *

GEMMA *
He's right. A kingpin like him, we need to bring in the big guns. * *

She shows Ruben her phone. *

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Manhattan North Narcotics? Federal Task Force? I've got their numbers right here. * * *

RUBEN
You wanna make a call? Call my fucking lawyer.

CUT TO:

INT. 34 PRECINCT - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Ruben's attorney ANDY SILVER, 60, with a certain shabby-chic grandeur, sits with him. *

ANDY
Michelle signed us up for salsa classes. I blame you. *

RUBEN
Me?

ANDY
You tripped the light fantastic with her at the office party. She's been on my case ever since.

RUBEN
How much time until my next dance?

ANDY
With a woman? Ten kilos is Federal weight. Mandatory Minimums. *

Ruben looks at him.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Twenty years. If they can tie you to the bodies, it's life.

Ruben takes a moment to process this. *

RUBEN *
Fed time. No parole. *

ANDY *
Before you go all Samuel Beckett on me? Federal weight means a hungry young AUSA, looking to make his bones. You and your ten kilos? Just a drop in the ocean. *

Ruben looks at Andy. *

ANDY (CONT'D) *
But if he can dismantle violent criminal organizations? End their reign of terror on our community? *

The darkness starting to recede for Ruben -- *

RUBEN *
That's how he gets to be Giuliani. *

ANDY
They'll make you give up everything you ever did and everybody you did it with. Including Jesus, if he pulls through. *

RUBEN
Fuck that. Not my brother.

Andy leans back in his chair.

ANDY
Did you ever read about Br'er Rabbit when you were a kid?

RUBEN
Who?

ANDY
Br'er Rabbit is this trickster type of character, a hustler with a line of patter who can talk his way out of any jam. Remind you of anybody? *

He leans back, laces his hands behind his head.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Anyway, ol' Br'er Rabbit gets himself grabbed by Br'er Fox. Says whatever you do, kill me, cook me, eat me, please don't toss me into the briarpatch. Which looks thorny and twisted and gnarly...but that's where the rabbit was raised. He knew every inch of the terrain - the hiding places, the escape routes.

RUBEN
(grins)
The fox tosses him and he lams?

ANDY
(nods)
The genius was making the fox think it was his idea all along.

CUT TO:

INT. US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - SOUTHERN DISTRICT - DAY

AUSA JENSEN PARK, 30, Korean, Harvard Law, glasses, stares at Ruben. * *

RUBEN
No way am I going back on the street to snitch for you motherfuckers. *

Park sitting next to Gemma -- *

GEMMA *
Have you thought this through? *

PARK
Everybody hollers 'stop snitchin', but seven out of ten defendants in the Federal system talk to us. *
(beat)
And the rest? Rot in their cells *
and wish they had.

RUBEN
'Bitches talk shit and snitches get killed.' I'ma do my time like a *
man.

CUT TO:

INT. MCC - VISITING ROOM - DAY

A long, LOUD room filled with INMATES and VISITORS. Ruben, in a tan prison jumpsuit, waits in a plastic chair as VERONICA pushes Jesus in a wheelchair. It's a heavy moment for both * brothers.

RUBEN
Hey. Thanks for coming.

He leans over to embrace Jesus, who turns away.

VERONICA
Hi Ruben.

Doing his best to be upbeat -- *

RUBEN
(smiles)
Lookin' fly, V.

Ruben and Veronica hug. He sits facing Jesus.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
How you makin' out?

JESUS
Half of me dead and the other half on fire. *Pendejo* doctors took me off the morphine. What are you lookin' at? *

RUBEN
Feds are hangin' twenty over me.

VERONICA
Twenty years!

The brothers look at each other.

JESUS
Go get a soda or something.

Veronica glares at Jesus but does as he says. *

JESUS (CONT'D)
You dyin' to hit that, ain't you? * Now I'm in this chair.

RUBEN
Don't be an asshole. What do the doctors say?

JESUS
Bullet hit my spine, I'm a T-8. Never walk again.

RUBEN
They don't know that.

JESUS
You know better?

Ruben struggles for words.

RUBEN
At least...Freddy got paid in full.

Jesus looks at Ruben.

JESUS
You put me in this fucking chair as much as Freddy Garcia.

RUBEN
How you figure that?

JESUS
Ortiz was your idea. You don't drag me over there, this never happens. *

Ruben stares at Jesus. Veronica returns with supplies from the vending machines.

VERONICA
I got sodas and chips --

JESUS
We out.

VERONICA
You need another Vicodin, baby?

JESUS
Don't backtalk me. *We out*.

She looks helplessly at Ruben. Sets down the sodas.

JESUS (CONT'D)
Twenty years? I caught a motherfuckin' life sentence. It's on you, *Blanco*. *

Veronica waves goodbye to Ruben. Wheels Jesus away. OFF Ruben --

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY *

Gemma catches up with Jensen Park. He is wheeling a roller bag full of evidence down the marble corridor. *

GEMMA *
Hey Jensen -- *

PARK *
On my way to court -- *

GEMMA *
But you read my Fonseca memo? *

PARK *
(edgy) *
Like I said, I'm on trial now -- *

GEMMA *
I think we could really be onto *
something, he's an outsider but he *
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA (CONT'D)
goes everywhere, a Puerto Rican in a Dominican culture, plus he's got serious Mob connections from his time at Green Haven --

Park stops and drills her with a look --

PARK
This is the Southern District. We do international-level cases, like the one I'm late for right now. Your guy is a street thug.

GEMMA
My guy has ties to Victor Ortiz. Major wholesaler who buys direct from the Juarez Cartel.
(beat)
That's across the border. In Mexico.

PARK
Where did you get this?

GEMMA
Mike Florio at REDRUM.

PARK
You know Mike?

GEMMA
Since I was twelve. My dad broke him in, up in the four-six.

PARK
(considers; then)
Fonseca already told us to go fuck ourselves. Let him sit down in Atlanta for a few years and get his mind right.

Walking again, away from Gemma into --

FEDERAL COURTROOM

As grand a stage as it implies. Park goes to the Government table, takes folders from his bag, and is surprised to find Gemma standing there.

GEMMA
When you were undergrad at Harvard, I was in Iraq.
(MORE)

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Third Battalion, Fourth Marines. *
When you moved on to Harvard Law, I *
deployed to Helmand Province. *
Afghanistan. Interdicting opium *
warlords. How's that for international *
level? *

Park looks at her. *

PARK *
What do you want from me, Dawkins? *

CUT TO: *

INT. MCC - DAY

TWO US MARSHALS lead Ruben, cuffed, down the corridor.

PARK (O.S.)
We're prepared to take your brother
off the table.

CONFERENCE ROOM

Ruben and Andy Silver sit across from Gemma and Park -- *

GEMMA
But you go back on the street. You're
my new C.I.

PARK
You have one week until your trial
date. This is your only offer.

RUBEN
You expect me to rat out my friends, *
so you can make partner at some white
shoe firm?

PARK
No, I expect you to be stupid and go *
to prison for twenty years. *

GEMMA *
Ruben, look at me. How long do you
think your brother will last, with
you inside? Stuck in that chair,
surrounded by his enemies...

UNDER THE TABLE *

Andy taps Ruben's jailhouse slipper with his Oxford lace-up. *

Ruben lurches to his feet, KNOCKING OVER his chair. His eyes blaze with hate.

RUBEN
Fuck you! All you motherfuckers! *

ANDY
Shut up.
(to Park)
Guys, please. Can I have a word with my client?

PARK
I'll give you sixty seconds.

Andy looks stern until Park and Gemma walk out.

RUBEN
Over the top?

ANDY
Like a young Pacino. Wait ten seconds, then punch the table.

P.O.V. GEMMA

Through the glass in the door: Ruben does as he's told BAM. Andy rests a fatherly hand on his shoulder, talks in his ear. Ruben slumps back down into his chair.

IN THE ROOM

Park and Gemma come back in.

RUBEN
(defeated)
Okay.

Park stands there, arms folded.

PARK
Okay what?

RUBEN
I sign on, but my brother never does a day inside.

PARK
He's on a hook, which we yank the minute you stop producing.

GEMMA
You've got to put your heart and soul into it. No going through the motions.

RUBEN
Then what?

PARK
You make cases until you work off your time. The day comes, we write a 5K letter to the Judge. He's satisfied, we say our tearful farewells.

Ruben looks to Andy, who nods. Ruben picks up a pen. *

RUBEN *
So I'm playing for the good guys *
now. *

FADE TO BLACK *

SLOW FADE UP: A rhythmic BANGING...a man's GRUNTS...a woman's MOANS, LONGER AND LOUDER...

INT. APT ABOVE POOL HALL - DAY

MAGDALENA, voluptuous *Dominicana*, with half her clothes off and busting out of the rest, is grinding her magnificent ass against Ruben's crotch, reaching back to run her nails through his hair...

MAGDA
Sucio, no, no, no...you are so bad...don't make me...you can't make me...

She has him backed against the wall, practically impaled --

RUBEN
What? Make you what?

He's cupping her breasts trying to hold his own --

MAGDA
Lie and sneak around and cheat on my man.

RUBEN
You called me.

She turns and tears at his clothes...shirt buttons pop, her hands plunge down his pants...

MAGDA
You are evil, no no no...

She pulls his belt off and hands it to him.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Punish me.

RUBEN
What?

MAGDA
I'm a bad girl...

She assumes the position on the bed.

RUBEN
It's not my thing...

MAGDA
Now!

He hits her lightly with the belt.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Harder *maricon* you hit like a little bitch!

He smacks her half-heartedly with the belt, then she rolls over and grabs him --

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Now right now.

He drops his pants and gets to it. Her ankles lock up around his neck and her nails across his back and they have wall-shaking sex --

APARTMENT - LATER

Ruben lounges in bed. Magda comes out of the bathroom and lights a cigarette. She starts to dress, as cool and distant now as she was hot and bothered before.

MAGDA
I haven't had no Grade A dick in weeks. It makes me crazy.

RUBEN
I didn't notice.

MAGDA
A woman has her needs. You assholes think it's just you.

RUBEN
(smiles)
Maybe Cabeza been laying up with the wife. Puttin' in family time.

MAGDA
(a look)
Cabeza wouldn't fuck that cow with your *polla*. No, he always this way before a score.

RUBEN
(casual)
That right?

MAGDA
Won't touch me for nothin'.

RUBEN
But then he takes care of you, right?

Magda wriggles her fingers, showing off her rings --

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You're a lucky girl.

MAGDA
You're a lucky boy.

She gives his crotch a playful squeeze.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
But not after tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIRWAY MARKET LOT - DAY

Right on the Hudson. Ruben climbs into Gemma's Jeep.

GEMMA
It's on for tonight?

RUBEN
That's what his girl says.

GEMMA *
Why does Cabeza keep moving that car in front of the building?

CUT TO: *

EXT. APT BUILDING - DAY *

CABEZA, (street-named for his big head), walks to a beat-up Buick parked in front of the tall, yellow-brick apartment house. *

Climbs into the car and swings a u-ie, parking it directly across the street from where he was parked before. Locks it up and walks away. *

RUBEN (O.S.) *
Alternate side of the street parking. *

GEMMA (O.S.) *
But he doesn't live there. *

RUBEN

Is watching from down the block. *

RUBEN (O.S.) *
That's the arsenal. They show up, grab the guns from the trunk, and crash the spot. *

CUT TO: *

JEEP - FAIRWAY LOT *

Around them, shoppers wheel carts piled high with groceries. *

GEMMA *
Is Ortiz the target? *

RUBEN *
Cabeza don't even tell his own crew who the target is. Not till they pop that trunk. *

GEMMA *
You said they were looking for a million in cash or drugs. *

RUBEN *
That's a target-rich environment, that building. Multiple apartments could be holding that much. *

GEMMA
We'll be ready. Locked and loaded.

Ruben looks at her.

RUBEN
First time we met, you said something about Baghdad. You was a soldier?

GEMMA
I was a Marine officer.

RUBEN
I see that. How you carry yourself.

GEMMA
The military was my career.

RUBEN
How come you left?

GEMMA
They wouldn't let me lead Marines into combat.

RUBEN
You might see some action tonight. Cabeza won't go easy.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT

Chaser lights dance up and down the blazing sign, a big cocktail-glass V that holds a 40s-era bombshell, her long golden legs spilling out into the night sky.

INT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT

A dark room full of dangerous men, drinking in TWO GROUPS on either side of the horseshoe-shaped bar. Dominican *bachata* music THROBS on the sound system.

Cabeza is the shot caller for the *hodedores* (hoodlums) on the left. As Ruben enters--

CABEZA
Hola, Ruben.

RUBEN
Cabeza, que onda?

CABEZA *
Ruben, how come your brother don't *
come around no more? *

Two men pretending to be friendly, who haven't liked each other since the second grade. *

RUBEN *
(shrugs) *
Not wheelchair accessible. *

CABEZA *
That's right, I forgot. He ain't *
the king of the jungle no more, is *
he? You on your own. *

Ruben looks at him. *

RUBEN *
I'll tell Jesus you asked for him. *

He crosses the room to the other side of the bar, where the DEALERS - a little older, a little more prosperous -- do their drinking. *

Ruben catches the eyes of the young, statuesque BARTENDER. She smiles at him.

ORTIZ
Oh no, not this time, *papi* shampoo.

Ortiz looming above him, pulling Ruben into a big *abrazo*.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Lolo! This useless cabron is drinking
with me.

As she pours Ruben a glass from Ortiz' bottle of Armand de Brignac -- *

ORTIZ (CONT'D) *
(sotto) *
Carne fresca, just up from the DR. *
Hands off.

BARTENDER *
I'm Lolo. Nice to meet you. *

Ruben smiles and raises his glass to her. *

ORTIZ
Why you lose my number, papi?

RUBEN
Everything went sideways. I got grabbed, couldn't pay you for the goods --

Ortiz drapes his arm around Ruben and lowers his voice --

ORTIZ
Forget about that. Freddy and his click dead or locked up, streets is wide open again.

RUBEN
I'm retired, *papi*.

ORTIZ
Spare me this bullshit. It takes longer to count the money than to move the product.

Eyeing Cabeza and his boys --

RUBEN
I never understood why you heavyweights let those home invaders drink in your bar.

ORTIZ
Todos los gatos son negros. Better to keep the eye on them.

RUBEN
While they rip off half the dealers in the Heights?

ORTIZ
They travel in packs now. You want to take on eight *chorros* with guns?

RUBEN
Me? I'm the playboy, remember?

The *hodedores* are starting to drift out, two plus two plus three...Cabeza is the last one out.

ORTIZ
Papi shampoo.

Ruben smiles and sends a text.

CUT TO:

GEMMA *

In vest and raid jacket, looks down at Ruben's text: ON THE MOVE. 8. *

GEMMA *
It's on. *

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT *

She is crouched against the wall next to SGT MIKE FLORIO, 40, gunslinger with a badge...among a GROUP OF MEN IN VESTS AND RAID JACKETS. *

FLORIO *
We've got it. Stay here. *

CUT TO: *

EXT. RIVIERA APT BUILDING - NIGHT *

Doors SLAM as Cabeza and his crew emerge from two cars. They go straight to the blue Buick, parked across from the building.

Pop the trunk and pull out the arsenal they have stashed: handguns, chopped-down shotguns, .223 semi-automatic carbine, grenades. Pass out the weapons, Cabeza taking the rifle for himself, holding it close to his body as he leads seven armed-to-the-teeth robbers across the street.

FRONT ENTRANCE

Is set back from the street between brick walls, forming a narrow alley from the street to the doors.

ON THE ROOF *

ESU SNIPERS with night-vision goggles squint through their scopes as Cabeza leads the home invaders up to the -- *

DOORS

Which BANG OPEN as Florio steps out leveling a Mossberg 590 pump shotgun, backed by ESU SHOOTERS in full riot gear, wielding M4 assault rifles. *

SGT. FLORIO
Police, motherfuckers! Drop your weapons! Hands in the air!

Cabeza and his men freeze as --

ESU TRUCK

Closes off the alley, DET. PHIL NEARY, 45, jumps out leading DETECTIVES and AGENTS in TASK FORCE raid jackets, packing HP-5 submachine guns and shotguns --

NEARY
Put 'em down! Onna ground now!

Cabeza whiplashes from Neary back to Florio -- eyeballs him for a looooooong second - as

GEMMA

pushes out past the row of ESU cops, leveling her H&K machine gun --

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT

Ruben at the bar with Ortiz and Lolo...Ortiz is talking, Ruben nodding, but he doesn't register a word. Looks down at his watch --

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVIERA APT BUILDING - NIGHT

Cabeza raises his rifle and --

Florio FIRES -- Gemma FIRES --

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE as REDRUM and ESU OPEN UP --

Cabeza is BLOWN OFF HIS FEET --

-- the FOOL behind Cabeza is cut down, a gun in each hand -- others drop their weapons and run -- or hit their knees.

It's a crazed, bloody inferno out on the street --

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ruben splashes water on his face. Stares at himself in the mirror. Bracing himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

Ruben rolls up in his glossy carbon-black X5, tosses the keys to one of the teenage WANNABES hanging outside. *

INT. POOL HALL

This is Ruben's place. Everybody looks sharp when the boss shows up. Ruben bee-lines past the tables to the register.

NANDO *
Hey boss.

NANDO, 25, tatted, sideways Yankees cap, desperate to be Ruben, hands him a zip-bag full of cash and the night's receipts...Ruben gives it a quick glance. * * *

RUBEN *
My brother take another 'loan' from the register? *

NANDO *
Ah... *

RUBEN *
What I tell you to do, he puts his hand in again? *

NANDO *
Shoot him. But you was joking...right? *

RUBEN *
He decimates our cash flow, I can't pay your sorry ass. *

Nando has no idea what he's talking about. Takes out his phone. * *

NANDO *
Ruben, yo, you ain't believe this. *

RUBEN *
What? *

NANDO *
My *primo* says Five O blew up some motherfuckers over at the Riv. * *

He passes Ruben his phone. *

NANDO (CONT'D) *
Cabeza dead on the ground, bro. *

(CONTINUED)

Ruben stares at the grisly photo. The finality of the events he set in motion hitting home. Handing the phone back to Nando --

RUBEN
Jesus say where he was headed?

NANDO
No, but you know where he go, he got paper in his pocket.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. BODEGA - NIGHT

Ruben enters, nods at GUY behind the counter, continues to --

BACK ROOM

Where Jesus, in his wheelchair, is playing dominoes with ALVARO, an older man in a cap. Bottle of Bacardi on the table. Jesus pulls on a blunt, Alvaro puffs a fat hand-rolled cigar.

ALVARO
(*gleefuly*)
Why you play that when you know I have the six-three, Jesus?

He takes money off the table. Jesus pours himself more Bacardi.

RUBEN
How much you lose so far?

Jesus waves him off.

JESUS
What the fuck you care?

RUBEN
You're playing with my money.

He takes hold of Jesus' chair.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Come on. I'll take you home.

JESUS
Mamahuevo I'll cut you...

Flashing a nasty-ass blade. Ruben steps back.

ALVARO
Where you going? I'm winning!

RUBEN
He's tapped out.

Ruben tosses him a hundred and a stern look. Alvaro pockets the cash, stands.

ALVARO
Next time then.

He reaches for the bottle but Jesus grabs it first.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS AVE - NIGHT *

Ruben walks alongside Jesus, who propels himself in his chair.

RUBEN
Stay out the fucking register, man.
You need dough come to me.

JESUS
I got to beg you? Like some cripple
in the street?

RUBEN
You got to beg me for the rent every
month?

JESUS
I was the shot caller. You did what
I told you.

RUBEN
(weary)
Here we go...

Jesus swigs on the bottle of rum.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You mixin' rum and Oxy again?

JESUS
Straight Oxy don't do shit. Pain I
got, puddle you up like a little *
bitch. *

A sector car CRUISES past them --

RUBEN
At least put it in a fucking bag. *

JESUS
Chingada!

Jesus tosses the bottle INTO THE STREET, but the police car is already gone.

They are silent for a beat, the chair's wheels scraping rhythmically along the sidewalk.

JESUS (CONT'D)
One year. Dass all you done. *

RUBEN
Andy Silver is a good lawyer. Got the drugs tossed for improper search.

JESUS
Plenty motherfuckers got Jew lawyers. They still caged up. You a free man.

Ruben walks around in front of Jesus. Stops the chair.

RUBEN
You got something to say to me? *

JESUS
Anybody else, I know he's a fucking *chiba*. But you, *blanco*? You just a lucky motherfucker.

RUBEN
That's right. I got you in my life.

He turns and walks back the way they came. Jesus watches him go, eyes blazing. *

CUT TO: *

EXT. BMW X5 - MOVING *

Cruising down the West Side Highway, twin turbo-6s GROWLING, Ruben doing his best to cool down, he's got the window open, night air blowing in his face...dials his phone. *

LESLEE *
(speaker) *
Hello? *

RUBEN *
Hey. I'm on my way down. *

Her answer makes him smile. *

CUT TO: *

EXT. GREENWICH STREET - NIGHT

Ruben turns onto the cobblestone street, sees a spot. He pulls forward to parallel park.

A Lexus knifes in behind him, stealing the spot. Ruben stops his car and gets out. His hands flex.

YOUNG MISTER WALL STREET and his DATE are tumbling out of the Lexus. Clueless.

RUBEN
Maybe you don't see me parking.

YOUNG MISTER
You snooze you lose, bro. Survival of the fittest.

He's a linebacker to Ruben's middleweight.

RUBEN
That's you? The fittest?

Ruben hasn't moved.

DATE
Kevin?

Now that he's been confronted in front of his date, Young has to try and swag it off --

YOUNG MISTER
I don't see your name on this spot, *
dipshit. So back off. *

He tries to push past Ruben. Ruben HITS HIM FIVE TIMES really fast, doubling him over.

DATE
Kevin!

RUBEN
My name?

He grabs Young by his collar and SLAMS him face-first into the window, the door, the fender. Young drops to the concrete, bloody and prone.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
It's down there somewhere. Keep looking.

Date is fumbling with her phone, drops it. Ruben picks it up.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
A man like that, with no manners? You need to lean out.

He drops her phone back on the pavement and STOMPS it under his heel.

CUT TO: *

INT. REDRUM OFFICE - NIGHT *

It's a beehive of activity. REDRUM Detectives have the four surviving home invaders (two more in the hospital, Cabeza and Fool in the morgue)separated into four different rooms for debriefing. *

Detectives flow in and out of the rooms to compare notes; WE FOLLOW Florio as he carrieds two coffees to a desk where Gemma is typing her report. Her fingers fly over the old keyboard. *

FLORIO *
Look at you, like Liberace on that thing. *

GEMMA *
Is that a compliment or sexual harassment? *

FLORIO *
Ho, you give me attitude? After that stunt you pulled tonight? *

He puts a coffee down for her. Gemma keeps typing. *

GEMMA *
After I hand you the biggest takedown of the year? I'm not even in REDRUM. *

FLORIO *
I'll explain that to your old man when he rips my lungs out for letting you catch a bullet. The fuck were you thinking? *

Gemma keeps typing. *

GEMMA *
Exhale, squeeze, put a burst in his *
ten-ring. *

FLORIO *
I told you stay back. *

GEMMA *
I've been told that my whole life. *

Still typing. *

GEMMA (CONT'D) *
I'm on the grid, Mike. First Grade. *

FLORIO *
I heard you had a great C.I. That *
was the first time I saw what you
could deliver.

GEMMA *
That's just the beginning. REDRUM's *
the best squad on the Job and I want *
in. *

FLORIO *
You just made the Task Force, for *
chrissake. Show some patience. *

GEMMA *
That's the other thing I've been *
told. Never listened to that either. *

FLORIO *
(shrugs) *
No way Donovan lets you transfer out *
of his Group. *

GEMMA *
We had this talk, remember, what's *
it take to work for you? One of the *
best C.I.s in the city. Check. And *
a hook in the P.C.s office. *

FLORIO *
With both your dad and uncle retired *
now...

GEMMA *
(smiles) *
I guess you didn't hear about my *
brother Danny? He just got assigned
to the Commissioner's security detail.

FLORIO
Maybe down the road, but right now? When you got something for us, give a holler.

Gemma hits PRINT. The ancient printer SPUTTERS TO LIFE. Gemma gets to her feet.

GEMMA
Free trial is up, Mike. Do the right thing or watch someone else get the gravy.

She walks off as the pages of her report come tumbling out.

CUT TO:

INT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's closing time, just a few CUSTOMERS finishing up. Ruben walks in like the joint's best customer, greets several STAFF MEMBERS by their first names --

RUBEN
Hey Mary... T, what up?

Ruben is just at home in this swank setting as he was in the pool hall uptown.

He finds LESLEE, the restaurant's owner, sipping wine at the bar. She is a stunning woman in her early 40s.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Hey. Tough night?

LESLEE
120 covers, way overbooked, I've been on my feet since three in four-inch Manolos...

He leans in to give her a kiss --

RUBEN
Why so early?

LESLEE
We started serving afternoon tea.

She melts as soon as Ruben slips off her heels and expertly massages her feet.

LESLEE (CONT'D)
Ohhhhh...You haven't lost your touch...

He smiles as he kneads her feet.

RUBEN
You make money off tea?

LESLEE
Fixed costs are so high we've got to maximize revenue...the tables are here, the kitchen is here...You hungry?

RUBEN
Starving.

LESLEE
We have some duck confit left, your favorite.

RUBEN
Can I get it to go?

Off her knowing smile --

CUT TO:

INT. TRIBECA LOFT - NIGHT

Ruben continues Leslee's massage in front of the fireplace, but he's using his whole body now, and hers, too. Ruben and Leslee make passionate, sophisticated love by the flames...

LATER

Leslee, wrapped in something silky, pours two glasses of champagne. Ruben is eating duck from the to-go container.

LESLEE
Do you know what day this is?

RUBEN
Uh...

LESLEE
It's our two-month anniversary.

RUBEN
A milestone. *Salut*.

They clink and drink.

LESLEE
And I don't know anything about you. Except you're a great dancer...and not bad at this, either.

RUBEN
I don't know so much about you.

LESLEE
You know where I live. You know I own a restaurant, you know I have a daughter in college, one ex-husband --

RUBEN
One mad fool.

And he reaches for her but she pushes away.

LESLEE
No. Tonight we talk.

RUBEN
Three words that strike fear in the heart of every man.

His grammar and diction are very different with Leslee than in his world uptown.

LESLEE
Baby, a fling is a fling. But if you want to get to month three...

RUBEN
Just me and my brother, Jesus. That's the family tree.

LESLEE
You lost both your parents?

Ruben nods. Leslee folds her arms, clearly not satisfied with his response.

RUBEN
Fonseca was Jesus' pops, not mine. He was a cop in San Juan. Handed out more beatings at home than on the job. So moms took my brother and ran to Nueva York.

LESLEE
And then what? The stork delivered you?

RUBEN
Yeah, but a lot paler than Jesus, or Fonseca. There was this housing cop who came around, Mancini. I guess moms had a thing for men in uniform.

He takes a drink of champagne.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Jesus and his boys, they called me *cerdito*. Piglet. *

LESLEE *
Kids can be really mean. *

RUBEN *
But they had to fight when they said that...at the park, on the street, in school, all we did was throw down. So we called a truce around *blanco*. *

LESLEE *
Blanco. *

RUBEN *
They did me a favor. Taught me to make my own name. *

Leslee looks at him. *

LESLEE *
So it's a story of self-empowerment. *

RUBEN *
That's the only kind. Nobody hands it to you. *

LESLEE *
I wish somebody had told me that years ago. *

RUBEN *
Let's make up for lost time. *

Reaching for her but she fends him off -- *

LESLEE *
Down boy. Where was Mancini in all this? *

RUBEN
With his wife and kids on Long Island.
(MORE)

RUBEN (CONT'D)
When he stopped coming around with groceries, moms went on the hustle. Left us pretty much to raise each other.

LESLEE
Are you still close to your brother?

RUBEN
Like Siamese twins. I'm stuck with him.

CUT TO: *

INT. POOL HALL - DAY *

Jesus is running a table when Ruben enters -- *

JESUS *
Yo, *Blanco*. *

RUBEN *
(a look) *
Espera. *

Jesus glares as Ruben continues to Nando at the counter. *

RUBEN (CONT'D) *
We still slow from like, three to six during the week?

NANDO *
Mad slow, sometimes. *

RUBEN *
Drop the table price and cut the beverages in half, too. Like a Happy Hour.

NANDO *
But we don't sell no booze. *

RUBEN *
The tables are here, the sodas are here. Fixed costs are high and we need to max out our revenue stream.

NANDO *
What? *

Out of the corner of his eye Ruben sees -- *

MAGDA *

Approaching, dressed head to toe in skin-tight black. Dark glasses cover her eyes. *

RUBEN *
Que onda, Magdalena? *

MAGDA *
They slaughtered my man like a pig at Easter... *

She falls into his arms, a little theatrically. Ruben looks around, uneasy at this spectacle. * *

RUBEN *
I'm sorry. *

Leaning back to look at him -- *

MAGDA *
It's not your fault... *

RUBEN *
No... *

But of course it is. *

MAGDA *
Ruben, I got nothing to wear to the funeral. *

RUBEN *
His wife gonna be at the funeral. *

MAGDA *
And my rent? Cabeza took care of that, but now... *

Ruben pulls out his roll. Counts out bills and hands them to her. Then a couple more. *

RUBEN *
Nobody's putting you out in the street, okay? *

MAGDA *
Gracias, papi. *

She puts her arms around his neck. *

RUBEN *
This is a sad time and I want to *
help. But you need to start
empowering yourself.

She looks at him, what? He frees himself. *

RUBEN (CONT'D) *
Like you said, going behind Cabeza's *
back was wrong --

MAGDA *
It ain't behind his back no more *
cause his ass is dead --

Reaching for him again but he takes hold of her arms. *

RUBEN *
I think it's better if we move on. *

MAGDA *
Better for who? *
(then) *
What's your *puta's* name? I'll cut *
her fucking eyes out.

RUBEN *
You look good, baby. That glutton- *
free diet makes a big difference.

Moving her aside -- *

MAGDA *
I'm serious Ruben! You know I'm one *
crazy bitch.

RUBEN *
Yes, I do. *

Ruben turns away and heads over to Jesus. Magda puts her *
dark glasses back on. Re-assumes the role of mourning *
"widow."

RUBEN (CONT'D) *
I'm all ears. *

JESUS *
You need to cut that bitch loose. *

RUBEN *
I just tried. *

JESUS *
Cabeza was a piece of shit, but he *
had friends, yo. I hear they bringing *
up a *sicario* from the DR. *

RUBEN *
A shooter? *

JESUS *
Somebody ratted Cabeza out. *Sicario* *
got the contract to smoke that *chiba*. *

Ruben looks at Jesus. *

RUBEN *
They know who it was? *

JESUS *
Only a matter of time, bro. You *
steppin' out with Cabeza's bitch, *
that don't look good. Niggas could *
get the wrong idea about you. *

OFF Ruben -- *

CUT TO: *

EXT. RED HOOK DOCKS - DAY *

Ruben walks down the old pier. Gulls fly overhead. Tugboats * motor past.

Gemma Dawkins is waiting. She hands Ruben a cup of coffee. * He looks around. Nobody seems to be watching them. *

GEMMA *
It's time to quit stalling on Ortiz. *

RUBEN *
I told you. Ortiz like a brother to *
me.

GEMMA *
The deal was for your real brother. *
Not 'like a brother'.

RUBEN *
So you can shoot him down in the *
street like Cabeza?

GEMMA *
That would defeat its own purpose. *
Dead men don't open doors.

Ruben sips coffee, considers. *

RUBEN *
What doors? *

GEMMA *
Ortiz punches our ticket into REDRUM. *

RUBEN *
You been blowin' smoke up my ass about REDRUM since day one.

GEMMA *
We go in as a team. You go on the Federal payroll, make six figures a year, legit. Doing the same work, risking your life, that you're doing now. For nothing. *

Ruben tosses his coffee in the trash. *

RUBEN *
What happens if I say no? *

GEMMA *
Actions have consequences. Yours is 20 years. *

RUBEN *
Meanwhile you made out like a fat rat. Federal status, making grade -- *

GEMMA *
You know what? You're worse than my boyfriend. *

RUBEN *
Next time he complains you got no time for him? Tell him you're too busy fucking me.

He turns to go but -- *

GEMMA *
Ruben, pull your head out of your ass. Ortiz put your brother in a wheelchair and set you up to die.

RUBEN *
The fuck you talking about? *

GEMMA *
Freddy Garcia's phone. We recovered it at the scene.

Ruben waits. *

GEMMA (CONT'D) *
His last call was from Ortiz. Five minutes before the shooting started.

Ruben processes this -- *

RUBEN *
That don't mean...they could have talked about anything. Or nothing.

GEMMA *
(laughs) *
Really? *

Ruben looks at her. *

GEMMA (CONT'D) *
Good as you are at lying to other people? You're better at lying to yourself. *

SOUND PRELAP: WHOMP WHOMP WHOMP! *

CUT TO: *

INT. POOL HALL - DAY *

Ruben POUNDS focus mitts held by Nando, LEFT RIGHT LEFT RIGHT LEFT, the fingerless UFC gloves THUDDING into the mitts with every roll of his shoulder and snap of his elbow. *

They work beneath posters of Puerto Rican greats Jose Torres, Macho Camacho and Miguel Cotto... and a Golden Gloves poster featuring a young Ruben "Blanco" Fonseca. * *

ANDY (O.S.) *
She's right about REDRUM. *

CUT TO: *

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY *

Ruben across from Andy Silver, who is eating takeout Chinese from containers. He is a master with chop sticks. * *

ANDY *
The money and everything else. That's *
where you want to be. *

RUBEN *
She'd throw her moms under the bus *
to get there. *

ANDY *
"Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps *
itself." *

RUBEN *
Not today, my head already exploding. *

Andy pauses with the chop sticks. *

ANDY *
Remember Whitey Bulger? *

RUBEN *
That OG, he got grabbed in LA after *
lammin' for like twenty years? *

ANDY *
And before that, twenty years as an *
FBI snitch, and he ran the Boston *
underworld the whole time. *

RUBEN *
Killed anybody who tried to blow the *
whistle on him...And the Feebs helped
him do it. Right? *

Andy beams at Ruben, professor to prize student. *

ANDY *
Because all his handlers cared about *
were their promotions...and Whitey
was the goose who laid the golden
eggs.

RUBEN *
Like me. *
(grins) *
Me amo Blanco. *

ANDY *
The Chinese believe a man's name is *
his destiny.
(MORE)

ANDY (CONT'D)
(beat.) *
Or maybe that was the Cherokee...the *
better you make your new friends *
look? The more they protect you *
from your enemies. Or look the other *
way when you protect yourself. *

Attacking a new container -- *

ANDY (CONT'D) *
Spicy crab? *

CUT TO: *

INT. CLUB VARGAS - DAY *

Ortiz glares across the booth at Ruben.

ORTIZ
You know how to take a motherfucker's
head off.

RUBEN
That's what we tryin' to avoid.

ORTIZ *
Why the fuck that *sicario* looking at *
me? *

RUBEN *
Cabeza took you for a million two *
last year. *

ORTIZ *
Cost of doing business. *

RUBEN *
Try and explain that to a paid killer. *

ORTIZ *
Putamadre. *

Ortiz gulps the rest of his drink. Signals to Lolo, the foxy bartender, for another bottle of Armand de Brignac.

RUBEN
You want to sweep her off her feet?
Bring her down to the island.

ORTIZ
Not now, *papi*. Bad timing.

RUBEN
Put her ass on a plane tonight. Get into Santo Domingo early. Breathe the tropical air, *comer papaya* for breakfast...

Ortiz drinks.

ORTIZ
I got business.

RUBEN
With the Mexicans?

ORTIZ
When that shit goes down it goes down fast. Five hundred kilos, maybe a thousand. Pickup, then distribution. Otherwise I'm a target for those *mamahuevasos* like Cabeza.

Meaning the home invaders at the bar.

RUBEN
Let me stand in for you. You know I know the moves.

ORTIZ
That's beautiful, *papi*, you would show me that love. But those fuckers from Juarez...they don't want to know nobody they don't know.

RUBEN
You ain't no use to no one in a casket, *papi*.

ORTIZ
You sure about that?

Ruben looks at him.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
I make the introduction, then you jump my place in line? Deal direct with the Mexicans? Is that your big comeback, you been schemin' on all this time?

Ruben looks at Ortiz. Then rises slowly.

RUBEN
Who you see across from you, papi? *
Me, or Freddy Garcia? *

Ruben turns and walks out, just as Lolo arrives with the next bottle.

CUT TO: *

EXT. COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - DAY *

Ruben walks past a row of parked cars. Scans the street, looks back over his shoulder...he's being more careful now. * *

He stops at a Prius with MD plates.

INT. LEXUS - MOMENTS LATER *

DR. PATEL hands Ruben a paper bag. Ruben hands Dr. Patel a wad of cash. *

CUT TO: *

INT. JESUS' APT - DAY *

TONY, 8, is playing Grand Theft Auto with Jesus looking over his shoulder. *

JESUS *
Smoke him. Smoke that pig. Booyah! *

Doorbell BUZZES. *

VERONICA *

Comes out of the kitchen to answer the door. It's Ruben, with flowers and a bottle of wine. She smiles. *

VERONICA *
It's about time your skinny white * ass walked through that door, stranger.

RUBEN *
Querida. *

They hug happily. For maybe a beat too long. Then -- *

RUBEN (CONT'D) *
Something smells great. *

VERONICA *
Pernil, *idiota*. Don't I always make it for you? *

He sets down the wine and hands her the flowers. *

VERONICA (CONT'D) *
I'll put these in water. *

RUBEN *
He inside? *

VERONICA *
El Hombre's teaching Tony how to steal cars and shoot people. *

Ruben hands her an envelope as well. *

RUBEN *
Rent and groceries. Put it someplace safe. *

On the move before she can hug him again -- *

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER *

Ruben finds Jesus and Tony absorbed in their game. *

RUBEN *
Que onda, dudes? *

TONY *
Tio Ruben! *

He runs over to give Ruben a hug. Ruben produces a baseball from his pocket. *

RUBEN *
You know anybody could use a Robinson Cano ball? *

Tony's eyes get wide -- *

TONY *
No lie? *

RUBEN *
No lie. Go show your mom. *

Tony runs off and Ruben sits next to Jesus, who has picked up the controller. *

JESUS *
Papi Noel. You make me small to my family. *

RUBEN *
I got something for you, too. *

He dumps the doctor's samples out of the paper bag. *

RUBEN (CONT'D) *
Seroquel, lithium, clanazapan. You take them in a cocktail to help you sleep. The doc says it chills out the pain. *

Jesus looks at the pills. *

JESUS *
How much these go for on the street? *

RUBEN *
Not this time. Not if you got the pain 24-7. *

JESUS *
Dass forever, bro. *
(playing) *
Puta! My *sucia* is a Fed! *

RUBEN *
Doc said the pain in your legs? Means there's hope. A chance you could walk again. *

JESUS *
Hope? That fuck up a cripple worse than a bullet. *Gracias por nada.* *

Ruben's phone BUZZES. He checks it out. *

CUT TO: *

EXT. APT BUILDING - NIGHT *

Ruben enters through the back door.

INT. HALLWAY - RUBEN

RAPS on door. BEAT. Ortiz checks him out through the peephole, lets Ruben in.

ORTIZ APT

Suitcases lined up, things strewn about...

ORTIZ
Didn't think you was comin'. Just about to walk out the door...

He finds a briefcase among other bags, hands it to Ruben.

RUBEN
What's this?

ORTIZ
There's two sixty in there. Take twenty for your trouble. Bring the rest to the phone store on St. Nick and 172. Ask for Chivo.

RUBEN
You trust me with this?

ORTIZ
Money? I owe you my life.

They look at each other.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
He's from Juarez, Chivo.

RUBEN
(gets it)
Changed your mind. You really walkin' away?

ORTIZ
I'm in the wind, *mi hermano*.

He crosses to his bags.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Time to sit on my moms' porch, watch the kids play on the beach.

RUBEN
You sure you don't got to call somebody, soon as my ass is through that door?

Ortiz turns back to Ruben. Ruben shows him the phone Nando got for him.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
I grabbed this off Freddy's dead-ass body. Check out the last call on his log.

Ortiz looks at the phone like it might bite him.

ORTIZ
Papi? Somebody been...

He trails off when he sees the automatic in Ruben's hand.

RUBEN
Don't you fucking lie to me. Or your name on this phone will be the last thing you see.

ORTIZ
Please...I just handed you the keys to the kingdom. Don't do this...

RUBEN
Tell. Me. Why.

ORTIZ
When Jesus got up in my face like that, everybody watchin'....I...make a mistake. It was never about you... *

Ruben exhales slowly.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Now Freddy rotting in the ground and we survivors, big-time.

Ruben lowers the gun, sticks it in the small of his back. Ortiz suddenly pulls Ruben into a big *abrazo*.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Thank you, papi, you won't regret this.

His powerful arms wrap around Ruben's wiry frame. Ortiz reaches for Ruben's gun. Then he buckles and GASPS. Ruben has a six-inch blade plunged deep into Ortiz' guts.

Ortiz' shirt darkens. His eyes go wide as Ruben "runs the gears" up and over to Ortiz' heart. He tries to talk, gurgles blood instead.

Ruben steps back. He screws a silencer on his pistol.

RUBEN
Motherfucker don't you watch TV?
Only one survivor.

FIRES POP POP --

CUT TO: *

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT *

Water BLASTING out of the nozzle, streaming all over Ruben...and Magda, wound tight around him...going at it full tilt, hands and legs braced against the tile

MAGDA
Don't stop don't stop...

BEDROOM

Magda, stretched out across the bed, smokes while Ruben dresses.

MAGDA
Hey superman...what lit your fuse? *

He looks at her, shakes his head.

RUBEN
I was here all night.

He shows her a sheaf of bills. Lays the money on the night table.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
With you.

CUT TO:

EXT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ruben climbs out of the cab. Scans the street carefully, * eyeballing the passersby...anybody watching from across the * street? *

INT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT

Ruben finds Gemma sitting at the bar with Leslee. He covers his surprise.

RUBEN
You two look thick as thieves.

GEMMA
I waited for you to introduce us?
I'd never have tasted this... *

LESLEE
It's Ruben's favorite. *

GEMMA *
Amazing. *

Leslee gives Ruben a searching look. *

LESLEE
I'll send out some more food and let
you two catch up. So nice to meet a *
friend of his, Gemma. *

She heads off and Ruben sits next to Gemma.

RUBEN
This place is off limits.

GEMMA
No place is off-limits. Nothing you
do is off-limits. I thought you got
that by now.

Bartender brings Gemma another Diet Coke and a glass of wine for Ruben.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Somebody hit Ortiz tonight.

Checking out Ruben's reaction, which is...subdued.

RUBEN
Didn't think it would go down that
fast.

He drinks some wine.

GEMMA
When's the last time you saw him?

RUBEN
Yesterday.

GEMMA
Not tonight?

Ruben shakes his head.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
You had better be a hell of a lot more convincing when Homicide puts it to you.

RUBEN
You told me about the call. What did you think would happen?

GEMMA
No. You do not use me to settle scores.

RUBEN
We use each other. That's the deal we both made.

GEMMA
No way.

RUBEN
Who's lying to herself now?

Gemma gulps some Coke.

GEMMA
Tell me you've got a stone-cold fucking alibi.

RUBEN
It's a delicate situation.
(beat)
You could get me in trouble with Leslee.

GEMMA
I could put you in a cage for the rest of your scheming, two-faced life.

Ruben sips some wine.

RUBEN
I don't think so. You already cashed in your chips on one career.
(beat)
And I got an introduction. Juarez Cartel.

Leslee is smiling at Ruben from the open kitchen. He smiles back.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You want them? Don't come back here. She means a lot to me.

Gemma lets this settle. Then --

GEMMA
Look at me.

Ruben does.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
You do not have a Double O Snitch license to kill. This never happens again.

She tosses money on the bar. Waves goodbye to Leslee.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
A woman like that, she'll see right through you. I won't have to lift a finger.

Putting words to Ruben's secret fear. Gemma walks out. Leslee returns with food.

LESLEE
She's a cop.
(Ruben nods)
Are you in trouble?

He cups her chin with his hand and brings her close. *

RUBEN
Way over my head. *

CUT TO: *

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT *

Ruben spins Leslee into the hottest *merengue* in town...turning the other DANCERS' heads on the jam-packed dance floor -- *

He's a natural and she's game and it seems for the moment that they could sway and move and glide forever -- * *

Then Ruben sees A MAN, in looks and dress "island," moving through the tables with a purpose, toward the dance floor...ignoring the people around him, ignoring the dancers...arm at his side... * * * * *

Ruben takes Leslee's hand and tries to flee...but the dance floor is crowded, they push and push but can't get anywhere... * *

Meanwhile the SICARIO is moving towards them, implacable, inexorable as The Terminator...

Raising his arm and Ruben sees the machine pistol pointing right at him -- sees the barrel SPIT FLAME --

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Ruben wrenches awake. Blinks the dream away. Leslee sleeps peacefully beside him. But Ruben will sleep with one eye open from now on.

FADE OUT: