American Crime

by

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ACT ONE

OVER BLACK WE HEAR A STARK EXCHANGE BETWEEN A 911 DISPATCHER AND A FEMALE CALLER:

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Nine-One-One. Police, fire or medical?

CALLER (V.O.)
I need help!

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
What's your emergency?

CALLER (V.O.)
They shot Matt. He's dead. He's dead. Oh, my God!

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Where are you calling from?

CALLER (V.O.)
I can't find Lily. I don't know where Lily is.

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Ma'am, are you calling from somewhere safe?

CALLER (V.O.)
They shot him so badly.

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
I need you to be calm. You help me when you're calm. Are you somewhere safe?

CALLER (V.O.)
Just let me breathe.

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Ma'am, are you safe?

CALLER (V.O.)
...Yes...

911 DISPATCHER (V.O.)
What's the address of the shooting?

CALLER (V.O.)
Three-thirty-eight Slauson.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.
Police are on their way.

INT. WALMART - DAY

IN A VERY SHORT SCENE we meet **CHUCK SKOKIE** who's working as a clerk at Walmart, or some other fairly nondescript big box store. The location itself is not as important as the image conveyed: That of a middle aged man working an honest, but average job the same as millions of other Americans.

INT. APPLEBEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Again, the location isn't as essential as the image created: Chuck, with A FEW FRIENDS OF SIMILAR AGE, eating and discussing how the Cardinals haven't been the same since they lost Kurt Warner. AS JUST PREVIOUSLY, THIS IS A VERY SHORT SCENE. It should be just enough to underscore the fact that Chuck's life is the height of normalcy.

INT. APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hours later. We are in the bedroom of a very modest apartment. Chuck is in bed, asleep, when the PHONE RINGS. It rings and rings, and rather than answer it himself, Chuck lets the ANSWERING MACHINE PICK UP.

CHUCK (V.O.)
This is Chuck. I can't come to the phone right now. Please leave a message.

WE HEAR THE TONE FROM THE MACHINE, THEN A VOICE:

PALMER (V.O.)
Mr. Skokie, this is Mike Palmer with the City of Modesto Robbery/Homicide division. I'm going to leave you a number, and sir, if you could please give me a call back as soon--

By this time Chuck has stirred, turned on a light and picked up the phone.

As he speaks WE CAN ONLY HEAR CHUCK'S SIDE OF THE CONVERSATION.

CHUCK
Hello. This is Chuck.
(beat)

Yes.
(beat)
Yes I do.
(beat)
What does that, what does that mean: “you think he’s been--”
(beat)
I would have to fly. I don’t know how soon I can get there.
(beat)
Wait...

Chuck rummages around for a PEN, and some SCRAP PAPER to write on. Back into the phone:

CHUCK (CONT’D)
Okay...

Chuck writes something down.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
I’ll call you when I know.

Chuck hangs up the phone. And then he sits. He just sits.

EXT. MODESTO - DAY

As a means of transition WE SEE EVENING EXTERIOR SHOTS OF THE CITY OF MODESTO. We get a sense of the size of the city, of its modesty relative to its major urban neighbors. OVER THE SHOTS WE HEAR AUDIO FROM NEWS RADIO BROADCASTS. For the most part what we hear is rather innocuous: traffic, weather, a bit of news. It all underscores the rather regular nature of the city.

INT. GUTIÉRREZ HOME - EVENING

WITH THE RADIO NOW PLAYING AS SOURCE, we come in on **JENNY GUTIÉRREZ**, a girl about 17 years old. She sits on the family couch with her boyfriend **CARLOS** who is about 17 or 18 as well. Carlos is dressed in baggies, a hoodie. The guy isn’t necessarily a straight up thug, but he’s also - by appearance - not exactly the guy daddy wants his little girl home alone with. Though, Jenny isn’t exactly alone. As she sits on the couch making out with Carlos - in a very dry “Kids”-like fashion - her brother **TONY**, who’s 16 - sits in the adjoining room doing homework.

There comes the unmistakable sound of KEYS IN A LOCK. Jenny and Carlos straighten up, Jenny more than Carlos who seems to care only vaguely about propriety.

A moment later **ALONZO GUTIÉRREZ** enters. Alonzo is in his early forties. He is the very definition of a middle-class dad. In some ways just another version of Chuck.

The moment Alonzo spots Carlos with Jenny his displeasure becomes evident. Jenny tries to stay casual as Tony, in the other room, remains a witness.

JENNY
Hi, papi.

As he gives a dry look to Carlos:

ALONZO
Hi.

JENNY
Me and Carlos were doing homework.

ALONZO
You're done? You're done, then he can go.

To Jenny, like he really doesn't care one way or the other:

CARLOS
See ya at school, *aiite*?

Alonzo keeps his eye on Carlos long after he's out the door.

JENNY
Why you have to be rude?

ALONZO
You're not supposed to have people over during the week.

JENNY
We were doing homework.

ALONZO
You were doing homework, where are your books?

JENNY
We finished.

ALONZO
No you didn't finish. Don't tell me that. Go get cleaned up. And if you can't follow the rules, then you don't need to go to that party, or whatever you were supposed to this weekend.

JENNY
We weren't even doing anything!

ALONZO
Go get cleaned up.

Jenny heads off. Alonzo turns his attention to Tony.

TONY
Papi.

ALONZO
How was school?

TONY
Good.

ALONZO
Need help?

TONY
I'm almost done.

ALONZO
You know that boy from school, the one your sister was with?

TONY
Not really.

ALONZO
Does he get in trouble a lot?

TONY
I don't know him. He's not in my class.

ALONZO
What was Jenny doing with him?

TONY
They were just doing homework, and then you came in. That's it.

Tony says the previous without giving his father eye contact. Alonzo doesn't comment, nor does he give the impression of taking Tony at his word.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

We are in a concourse, just beyond a jetway door. The door is opened by a GROUND CREW member. PASSENGERS begin coming out of the jetway into the concourse. Among them is Chuck.

As Chuck travels, he's met by **DETECTIVE MIKE PALMER**, a white man in his mid-forties.

PALMER
Mr. Skokie? Mike Palmer.

INT. MODESTO COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Chuck is escorted down a hallway by Palmer. They arrive to the window of a room, the shade drawn from the inside. Palmer gives Chuck instructions.

PALMER
Mr. Skokie, I'm going to tap on the glass. Someone inside the room is going to pull up the blind. You're going to see a table with a body on it. I need you to tell me if the body you see is your son. You let me know when you're ready.

Chuck goes a moment without saying anything.

PALMER (CONT'D)
Mr. Skokie...?

CHUCK
...Okay...

Palmer taps on the glass. THE BLIND IS LIFTED. WE CANNOT SEE INTO THE ROOM. We see all we need to see in Chuck's expression as the emotion drains from him. He says, with a high degree of detachment from the moment:

CHUCK (CONT'D)
That's Matt. That's him.

Palmer gives a signal. THE SHADE IS LOWERED.

PALMER
Let's go back to my office, and I can--

CHUCK
Can I...is there a restroom here?

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

WE MAKE A HARD CUT TO Chuck sitting alone on a toilet. He's weeping profusely, pouring out his soul. There's no more painful sight than a father who's lost his son.

INT. MODESTO PD/ - LATER

Chuck sits with Palmer who walks Chuck through the situation.

PALMER
Dispatch took a 911 call from one of your son's neighbors. Officers responded to your son's home where they found two victims.

Chuck just then realizes:

CHUCK
Lily? Lily's dead?

PALMER
Lily's in critical condition. At this point it's not hopeful, I can say that. We're still investigating what happened, but we haven't been able to locate a wallet, credit cards, ID for your son at the scene. It's possible the motivation was robbery, but we're not ruling anything out. Mr. Skokie, I can't go into specifics, but your son's wife, the position that she was found, the manner that she was found; there are indications she was sexually assaulted.

CHUCK
...Christ... Aw, Christ...

PALMER
We've ordered what's called a rape kit--

CHUCK
Who would do this? Who would do something like this?

PALMER
We have some leads we're following. We have a very strong description of a vehicle of interest that was in the vicinity at the time of the shooting. The driver's IDed as a young, male Hispanic.

Dazed, unaware Palmer has already answered the following:

CHUCK
Is Lily going to be alright?

PALMER
She's in critical condition, Mr. Skokie. I honestly don't know right now. But we want to catch the person who did this. And if you can help us in any way... Did your son ever tell you about anyone that he was--

CHUCK
No. He... I don't--

PALMER
When was the last time you talked to him?

CHUCK
Sunday morning. We talk every... That's when it happened, isn't it? Sunday?
(beat)
Does his mother know? Have you called his mother yet?

PALMER
No, sir. We had your number. We contacted you for a positive ID.

CHUCK
I have to call Barb.

EXT. MODESTO - NIGHT

We again see shots of the city of modesto. Different from the more pastoral shots we previously saw, THESE ARE MORE "URBAN." MUCH ROUGHER. SIMULTANEOUSLY, WE AGAIN TALK RADIO NEWS REPORTS. They focus on rising crime in the city and the link to drug trafficking and addiction.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

WITH THE PREVIOUS AUDIO STILL PLAYING THROUGH, we arrive to a smallish "social club." The joint very much has an "urban" vibe to it. An authentic vibe. This isn't the kind of place where people come to get table service. It's **BROTHERS** checking out **SISTERS**, smoking some blunts and rollin' up on each other. In this space there is a couple who very much stand out from the others. **CARTER NIX**, a black guy in his mid-twenties, and his girl **AUBRY TAYLOR** who clocks in at

right about 20 years old and is very much a white girl. And in that space, her whiteness stands out.

Though Aubry and Carter are very much into each other as they roll, get lit and drop to the House Music, they also catch some serious eye from other patrons. Serious, serious eye from some BLACK GIRLS who clock the bullet Aubry and Carter use to ingest some party favors.

As Aubry gets up to go to the bathroom, surreptitiously followed by the black girls.

INT. CLUB/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aubry is looking in the mirror. Hard to tell if she's looking at what little make up she's got on, or is just lost in her own gaze. She only has a moment to trip on herself. The black girls snake into the space. One stand's next to the door operating as something of a "look out." The other two girls get right up in Aubry's grill. Aubry doesn't bolt, or try to get away. She stands her ground, but moment by moment she cedes emotional territory to the girls.

LEAH
What's up?

AUBRY
Hey.

LEAH
Watcha carrying?

Nervously gripping at the wash basin:

AUBRY
Nothing.

LEAH
Bitch, I am not playing. Bring your Barbie doll ass in here, you better come correct.

Aubry can read plainly in the eyes of the girls they are not playing around. Equally, we should be able to see in Aubry's eyes that she knows she's about to become a victim. The very thought of it, as though she is recalling a very specific memory, is frightening to her.

AUBRY
...Please...

Real quick the Leah smacks Aubry hard across the face.

LEAH
Please, what?!

And with that it's on. The girls lay a VICIOUS, VICIOUS BEAT DOWN ON AUBRY. They go at her with their fists and their feet. They tear flesh and spill blood, ALL THE WHILE HURLING SLURS ABOUT AUBRY BEING A "WHITE BITCH" A "SKANK, TRYING TO GET OFF ON A BROTHER." They literally RIP OFF HER POCKETS to get at the sad little bit of drugs she's carrying. IT'S PLAYED OUT AS A VERY ROUGH SCENE.

INT. CLUB - SIMULTANEOUS

Carter, hazed, perks up enough just as he sees the GIRLS BUSTING FROM THE BATHROOM. He can tell by the way they're hustling that the shit isn't right. CARTER MOVES FOR THE BATHROOM, pushes his way inside and finds Aubry bleeding on the floor. He grabs her up, starts cradling her as blood flows from her nose and a gash around her eye.

Carter screams after the long gone girls:

CARTER
Better run! You better run!

A couple of burly BOUNCERS arrive to the scene offering up assistance to Carter.

CLUB SECURITY
Brah... Brah, get her up. I'ma call the police.

Carter clearly has no desire to involve the police.

CARTER
Get off me.

CLUB SECURITY
Gotta get her to the hospital.

CARTER
Get - off!

CLUB SECURITY
Then get your girl, get her up off my damn floor! Get your black ass out!

AMID THE CHAOS AND CONFUSION WE MAKE A HARD CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

We see Chuck waiting outside of the hotel as a cab pulls up. From the cab steps **BARB SKOKIE,** Chuck's ex-wife. While the CABBIE pulls Barb's luggage from the trunk, Chuck and Barb stand opposite each other. Wordless. Barb seemingly resolute - though regarding what we can't tell. Chuck seems unsure of how to greet her. Finally, Chuck goes to Barb, takes her in arms and holds her. Not very tightly. It's a rather formal hug. Barb puts ONE HAND to Chuck's back. She most assuredly does not fully embrace him. If anything she is just one, cool step removed from completely rejecting him.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

Chuck and Barb sit over coffee as Chuck relates the circumstances. Throughout, Barb remains to-the-point.

CHUCK
I couldn't hardly recognize him. The detective said the gun was probably right in front of his face when he was... They think, maybe, it was a robbery. His wallet, his credit cards are gone...

BARB
What are the police doing?

CHUCK
They have...a description of a car.

BARB
When was Matt Killed? Sunday? All they have is a description of a car? It's Tuesday, and that's all they have?

CHUCK
And they said...they think he might be an Hispanic kid.

BARB
Some illegal?

CHUCK
I... Just Hispanic.

BARB
Jesus... Why did they call you?

CHUCK
They think maybe Lily was raped.

BARB
I don't understand why they called you.

Chuck is just a bit baffled by the question.

CHUCK
I'm his father.

BARB
I don't understand why they called you *first*.

CHUCK
They just...they found my number and they called me.

BARB
What about Mark?

CHUCK
I wanted to talk to you before I--

BARB
You haven't called Mark? Oh, my God, Chuck.

CHUCK
I thought we should call him together.

BARB
I'll call him.

CHUCK
He's my son, too.

BARB
I - will - call - him.

CHUCK
Barb, we need to be a family. For Matt, right now, more than ever, we need to be a family.

Barb gives a short, dismissive laugh.

BARB
Well, you already messed that up.
(beat)
I need to talk to the police. I need to know why they're not doing anything.

At this point, it should be quite clear that Barb's intention is to "run the show" and hold people accountable for what happened to her son.

UP FROM UNDER WE HEAR SOME *NARCOCORRIDO* BEGIN TO PLAY.

INT. RADIO SHACK-TYPE STORE - DAY

With the music still playing, but now as SOURCE we see **HECTOR TONTZ**, a young Hispanic guy in his late twenties. He's got the tats, the baggies... He's got the look of a guy who, if he's not banging, he's for sure into the culture.

Hector's out buying some small electronics. Headphones, Ear buds, iPhone case... Not too much, but a couple of hundred dollars worth of stuff.

Hector takes the items to the check out counter where he's serviced by a DERRICK. Derrick is on the youngish side, clearly not working for much other than the sake of working.

DERRICK
That's it for you?

HECTOR
Yeah.

DERRICK
These are sick, man. Trying to get me a pair of these. It's gonna be two-thirty-five, thirty-five.

Hector hands over a credit card for Derrick to swipe. There's just a moment before the receipt is printed. Derrick puts it before Hector to sign, which Hector does. Derrick gives perfunctory look to the signature, then hands the card back to Hector.

DERRICK (CONT'D)
All right, Mr. Skokie. Enjoy those, man.

Hector takes his items and heads off.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. MODESTO - DAY

WE AGAIN SEE EXTERIOR SHOTS OF MODESTO, AND WE AGAIN HEAR NEWS RADIO. Among what we hear, we get snippets of STRAIGHT REPORTING on a shooting that occurred, what appears to have been a home invasion robbery that has left one dead and one injured.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

It's the kind of joint built way too close to a freeway off ramp. The kind of place where those who are just one step removed from actually being homeless would find themselves.

Despite the rawness of the environment, we come in on a very tender moment. Aubry's in the bathtub, obviously in a very bad way. Carter is washing her, washing the blood from he face as best he can. He puts BAND-AIDS on her cuts which are wholly inappropriate for her wounds. But, he's trying, right? This scene is short, and PURPOSEFULLY WORDLESS. It is meant to be experiential as we observe a moment of unexpected tenderness, affection and the surprisingly caring nature that Carter has for his girl.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

WE MAKE A HARD CUT BACK TO Carter searching feverishly through his and Aubry's meager belongings as Aubry sits on the floor. Having made a hard turn from the previous scene, both he and Aubry are crashing badly and in need of a boost. In the moment we should get a real sense of the manic nature of both their addiction and their relationship. The two literally talk past each other.

AUBRY
Look in my bag. There's a hit in my bag! I know it's in there. You took it! Don't steal from me!

CARTER
There's nothing in your bag. There's nothing. Been feeding you that crap all day. There's nothing left.

CARTER
Why you let those bitches jump you? Huh? Now we've got nothing. Why you let them jump you?

AUBRY
Why'd *you* let them jump me? Why'd *you* let them do it?

That hits a hard pause for Carter.

AUBRY (CONT'D)
Why'd you let them put me on the floor like that? That wasn't me. I was never going to let that happen again, was never going to be somebody's...

A quiet fire starts to roil inside of Carter as he's clearly being made to feel like a failure. Aubry holds her head in pain as she mutters:

AUBRY (CONT'D)
I'm gonna do better, 'k? I'm gonna start helping out more. I'm gonna get us paid.

EXT. ALONZO'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON

It's a street lined with independent auto repair and auto body and consignment auto sale lots. Among them is Alonzo's garage. Among a small group of EMPLOYEES is Tony who works on a car; a burnt orange CROWN VIC.

At the moment Tony is turning over the engine. It runs, but there's a distinct "gurgling" sound coming from the motor.

Also on the lot are THREE GUYS unloading some parts from a truck. One of the two guys who's doing most of the physical work is sporting more than a few tats.

To Tony:

ALONZO
Turn it off. Turn it off.

Tony does as instructed, turning off the engine.

ALONZO (CONT'D)
Tomorrow, I need you to take this out, flush the lines. Okay?

TONY
Okay.

Tony works his way around to saying:

TONY (CONT'D)
You should let Jenny go to her party this weekend.

ALONZO
Your sister wants to go to parties, she can follow rules.

TONY
You always freak out about everything.

Remaining fairly light, but still lecturing his son:

ALONZO
I freak out? I walk in the door, she's sitting on the couch with some guy... And don't tell me they were doing homework. I know you don't believe it, I know you don't, but I used to be a teenager, okay? I know how they think.

One of his WORKERS calls to Alonzo to come sign for the delivery.

WORKER
Alonzo...

ALONZO
One day you're going to have a daughter, and trust me, you're going to be the same way.

TONY
No, 'cause when I have kids I'm not going to freak out all the time about everything.

As Alonzo looks over paperwork with the guy handling the delivery - MIGUEL - he eyes the tattooed worker.

ALONZO
Tell your boss, next time he sends parts, don't send them with "chunts."

MIGUEL
What?

ALONZO
I don't want those gang tattoos around.

MIGUEL
That's not no gang tat.

ALONZO
I don’t want that around my business. I don’t need customers thinking I run a chop shop.

Alonzo hands back the paperwork. As Miguel heads away:

MIGUEL
Estás como una perra blanca.

ALONZO
Tell him that, or tell him I’ll take my business somewhere else.

All the preceding was not lost under Tony’s watchful eye.

INT. BRUNO'S JOINT - DAY

Not much of a joint. A shitty apartment. We’ve got BRUNO, a roughneck at a table, measuring out weed into baggies while DUCK DYNASTY PLAYS ON THE TV IN THE BG. Bruno’s for real, but at the same time he’s one of those dudes who’s such a badass he really doesn’t have to act like a badass ‘cause he knows nobody’s going to fuck with him. Another guy, JONAS, steps into the room.

JONAS
Es Hector. ¿Quieres hablar con él?

Bruno gives a shrug as if to say “Whatever.” Hector enters. He sits at the table. Sets out his merchandise “purchased” from the store. Bruno looks it over, gives a disapproving shake of his head.

BRUNO
Tu no eres nada grande. ¿No estas cansado de ser chiquitito?

HECTOR
Yo vivo bien.

BRUNO
Like a bitch. This something I’m gonna use? Huh?

He picks up a jeweled, sparkley and girly iPhone case, holds it to his ear like he’s using the phone:

BRUNO (CONT’D)
Hey, what’s up? It’s me; I’m a bitch. Who’s this?

Tossing aside the case:

BRUNO (CONT'D)
Cuando quieres hacer dinero real, huh? I'll hook you up with some opportunities.

HECTOR
...Opportunities...

BRUNO
Yeah, Bracero. What the hell you sneak across the border for if you ain't gonna be somebody?

HECTOR
Be like you? Living in a rat-hole rolling other people's weed. Buy some stolen crap 'cause you're too lazy to steal yourself.

Bruno slows his work. For the first time he gives a cool and truly threatening stare to Hector. Friend or not, clearly Hector has said too much. For a beat it's just Duck Dynasty filling and a nasty quiet. Then, making his point very clearly:

BRUNO
This is *my* weed. This is *my* joint. That's *my* bed that I was tusslin' in con mi chica bombón. I own my shit. You better watch your mouth, or I'll own your ass. Fifty for the headphones. Want cash or weed?

HECTOR
Money.

Bruno very easily peels off some cash and tosses it on the table in front of Hector. Bruno tosses the phone at him:

BRUNO
Perra, take your phone!

INT. HOTEL/GUEST ROOM - AFTERNOON

Barb is on the phone with MARK, their other son. WE DO NOT SEE MARK. WE ONLY HEAR HIM IN VOICE OVER. Barb is trying to maintain her managed front. Equally, though Mark tries to remain strong for his mother, moment by moment we can hear emotion begin to crack his voice.

BARB
I haven't seen the body yet. I don't want to see it. I'm not going to remember him like that.

MARK (V.O.)
Remember him how you have to.

BARB
I don't want to be one of those...sit and look through scrap books crying. Now is when Matt needs me. I have always been there for you two when you needed me. Always.

MARK (V.O.)
How's dad taking it?

BARB
And the police are doing *nothing*.

MARK (V.O.)
What's "nothing?"

BARB
Chuck says they're looking for a Mexican. They probably...probably think he's back across the border by now, so why bother trying to catch him?

MARK (V.O.)
How's dad?

BARB
He hasn't fallen apart yet, if that's what you mean. He hasn't run off yet. The police called him first. I know he loves that.

MARK (V.O.)
Well...

BARB
I just...really need you here. I need you to get here, Mark.

MARK (V.O.)
I have to talk to my commanding officer, get a leave worked out... I'll fly back as soon as I can.

BARB
I need somebody else strong here.

Mark, truly starting to break:

MARK (V.O.)
God.... I can't... Aah, Matt...

BARB
I know.

EXT. ALONZO'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Tony's back at his father's garage, alone. He's sits on a box next to the Crown Vic.

MARK (V.O.)
Made it through the whole war. Nothing. Not a scratch. And they do this to him...

BARB
I know, baby. I know. Just, please, get here soon as you can.

MARK (V.O.)
Okay. I love you, mom.

There comes the sound of feet on gravel. It's Hector walking toward the garage. Clearly, Tony is familiar with Hector, and is also wary of him. Hector hands Tony cash, which Tony counts. Satisfied, Tony hands some keys to Hector. Nothing said between the two. Clearly what's going on is routine. Hector gets in the car, and drives off.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOSPITAL/LOBBY - DAY

We come in on Chuck and Barb sitting in the lobby, waiting.

After a moment, Lily's family enters. Her father, **TOM** and her mother **EVE.** They are white, and roughly the same ages as Barb and Chuck. The two look emotionally shattered as they accept hugs from Chuck and Barb. As this happens, WE HEAR IN VOICE OVER:

SURGEON (V.O.)
Lily's assessment is traumatic brain injury with a causation by a single penetrating head trauma. The projectile breached the cranium, but did not exit.

INT. HOSPITAL/RECOVERY - LATER

We see **LILY** in a critical care recovery bed. It is not a pretty sight. She has a bandaged, but clearly traumatic wound to the head. All manner of tubes run from her body to life-sustaining machines.

Tom and Eve are in the room visiting with Lily, if one can call it "visiting." Chuck and Barb are near, but they stand just a bit off giving Lily's family the close proximity to their daughter. WE CONTINUE TO HEAR:

SURGEON (V.O.)
The entrance was on the left occipital region resulting in a skull fracture and a large underlying cerebral contusion. Lily was operated on for debridement of the wound and the fracture, with repair of the dura mater.

We see Eve reach out, give and halting and tentative TOUCH TO HER DAUGHTER'S FINGERS.

INT. HOSPITAL/EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Tom and Eve sit in the room as a SURGEON explains Lily's condition. He indicates to some X-RAYS which are of Lily's skull and her corresponding wound.

SURGEON
In the surgery we were not able to successfully extract all the particles of the projectile. Those remain a source of concern. We have stabilized Lily, but the morbidity and mortality of cranial incursions and PHI remain high. We cannot honestly expect recovery. However, if there is recovery we are unable to predict the severity of neurological damage caused by the wound.
(beat)
Are you alright to continue?

TOM
...Yes...

SURGEON
Okay. We need to discuss your daughter having been sexually assaulted.

INT. HOSPITAL/CAFETERIA - LATER

Among those who sit and eat - both VISITORS and HOSPITAL STAFF - we have Eve and Tom with Chuck and Barb. Tom and Eve are cathartically speaking to their emotional trauma. Eve is tearful. She is the very opposite of the kind of stoic mother Barb is trying to be.

EVE
I didn't think I could do it. I didn't think I could take seeing her like that. I just prayed, God give me strength to walk in that room. That's my baby girl, and she needs you.

Eve starts to really breakdown.

EVE (CONT'D)
Her hand was so warm. There's life in her.

EVE (CONT'D)
I know there's still life in her.

TOM
She's gonna get through. She's gonna survive.

This hangs for a moment.

BARB
There's a reporter who would like to do an interview with us...

Barb takes a CARD from her purse, hands it to Tom.

BARB (CONT'D)
I think we should do it. I think it's very important for people to know who our children were, and what happened to them. And we have to keep what happened present. That's just...that's a reality. And if we don't keep talking about it, in a week or two weeks people will have moved on.

Tom considers the card he's holding.

TOM
We...wouldn't feel comfortable doing that right now.

BARB
All you have to do is talk about her. Eve, just say what you said about holding her hand.

TOM
I think when the...when the time is appropriate we might make a statement, or something. An interview...that's just not something for us right now.

Tom lays the card down on the table as if to signify the finality of his decision. There's an awkward beat of quiet between the two families.

INT. CDSS OFFICE - DAY

We are in an office of the California Department of Social Services. Think DMV, only more depressing. There are a WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE at the end of their respective ropes looking for whatever help they can find.

We see Aubry at a window talking to CDSS OFFICER, a white woman.

CDSS OFFICER
Did you serve in the military during the last 18 months?

AUBRY
No.

CDSS OFFICER
Did you work for an agency of the federal government during the last 18 months?

AUBRY
No.

CDSS OFFICER
Are you currently present in California?

AUBRY
What the hell?

The officer gives a look.

AUBRY (CONT'D)
Yes.

CDSS OFFICER
Have you filed an Unemployment Insurance Claim in California in the last 12 months?

AUBRY
No.

The officer hands over a DE 1101I claim form to Aubry. It's 12 pages long and, as one might expect, rather legalistic and intimidating.

CDSS OFFICER
Fill this out and bring it back.

AUBRY
How long before I would get money?

CDSS OFFICER
You'd get your first check six to eight weeks after your claim is processed. If the claim is approved.

Aubry stares at the paperwork, begins to dip into a haze. She looks back to Carter. Noting Aubry's cuts and bruises, then following her gaze across the space to carter:

CDSS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Do you need me to call the police?

AUBRY
I need money.

CDSS OFFICER
First thing you've gotta do, you've got to fill that out.

Aubry takes the form BACK ACROSS THE SPACE to where Carter is waiting. She sits next to him, starts to go through the paperwork. Moment by moment the task begins to overwhelm her to the point even the concept of potentially getting "free money" isn't enough to keep her going. Aubry sets aside the paperwork. She and Carter make their way from the office.

EXT. MODESTO - DAY

As previously, in TRANSITION, we see images of the city of Modesto.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

We are in a nearly idyllic courtyard on a sunny day. We see a BRIDE and GROOM; a young, handsome man. A girl who is "next door" pretty. Together they are seemingly the personification of Holy matrimony. WE "PULL OUT" FROM THE IMAGE and see a CRAWL and a BUG ON THE SCREEN. We realize the image is HOME VIDEO that is being played during a news broadcast. We hear a NEWS READER describing "new details" in the Sunday night shooting. The names of the vics are IDed, and there's mention of Lily being in critical condition.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

THE AUDIO OF THE NEWS CARRIES US OVER INTO THE SCENE. We come in on Tony driving the Crown Vic. As he drives, a POLICE CAR rolls up behind him, blips the lights and sirens. Tony pulls over. A bit of anxiety creeps into him as TWO OFFICERS approach the car. One takes up a strategic position as the other approaches the driver's side of the car. Tony lowers the window.

PATROL OFFICER
Is this your car?

TONY
It's my dad's. His garage's--

PATROL OFFICER
Can I see your license and registration?

As he hands over his license:

TONY
I don't have registration. My dad just wanted me to drive it some, flush out the--

PATROL OFFICER
This your current address?

TONY
Yes, sir.

PATROL OFFICER
Just stay in your car, please.

Tony sits in the car as the officer returns to his. Tony endures that fairly interminable wait as the officer runs Tony's info. As Tony waits, ANOTHER PATROL CAR PULLS UP and does so with urgency. TWO MORE OFFICERS gets out, and basically stand watch over the waiting Tony. Now Tony starts to edge up.

The first officer heads back to the car.

PATROL OFFICER (CONT'D)
Tony Gutiérrez?

TONY
Yeah.

PATROL OFFICER
We have some other officers who'd like to talk with you. Can we get you to come talk to them?

TONY
Go where?

PATROL OFFICER
They'd like you to come to the PD and speak with them.

TONY
What for?

PATROL OFFICER
They just have some questions they want to ask you. You can leave your car right here. This officer will take care of it. Can you come with us?

Tony hesitates, not sure what he should say.

INT. MODESTO PD/INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Tony sits alone in the space looking very scared.

Palmer enters carrying some paperwork. Palmer is very neutral in his approach. Another Detective's with Palmer; SANDERSON.

PALMER
Tony? I'm Mike Palmer with the Modesto Police Department. This is John Sanderson. He works with me.

Tony kinda mutters a "hi."

PALMER (CONT'D)
Now, Tony, I want you to know your father's already been contacted and he's on his way down here. While we're waiting, I was hoping to ask you a few questions. There are a couple of things we were hoping you could help us with.

TONY
What things?

PALMER
(lightly insistent:)
Is it okay if we ask you a few questions?

TONY
...Yeah...

PALMER
Okay. Great.

Palmer starts to look through the papers he has.

PALMER (CONT'D)
So... The car you were driving when the police pulled over; that's in possession of your father's garage?

TONY
Me and my dad, we work on it. It's like a hobby.

PALMER
Your father owns the car, but it's not currently registered for street legal use.

TONY
I just had to flush out the lines. I know I'm not supposed to be on the road with it.

PALMER
Are you and your father--

TONY
Am I going to get in trouble?

PALMER
Besides the two of you, does anyone else have access to the vehicle?

TONY
No.

PALMER
Nobody else over the last few days?

TONY
No.

PALMER
Sunday night?

TONY
Nobody drove it Sunday.

PALMER
Not even you? Nobody? What did you do Sunday night? Did you watch football? Were you at home?

TONY
I was at home.

PALMER
Was it a good game? Did you watch it with your family?

TONY
It's just my dad and my sister. That's it.

PALMER
You watched the game with them?

TONY
I was at the garage, so I didn't really watch the game.

PALMER
Which was it? Were you at home or were you at the garage?

TONY
I was...I was at the garage.

PALMER
From when to when?

TONY
I don't know for sure.

PALMER
Give me about. From when to when?

TONY
Is my dad coming?

Turning to Sanderson.

PALMER
Do you want to go check on his dad?

Sanderson exits.

PALMER (CONT'D)
As soon as your dad gets here, he's going to let us know. Why don't we keep talking, okay? You're being really helpful.

TONY
Okay.

PALMER
Sunday night you were at the garage. About what time did you get to the garage?

TONY
I said: I don't know.

PALMER
Was it still light outside? Was it dark?

TONY
It was...it was... I don't know.

Palmer lets that sit a moment.

PALMER
You're in school, right?

TONY
Yeah.

PALMER
What kind of friends do you have in school? Who do you hang out with?

TONY
Am I going to be in trouble?

INT. BAR - DAY

It is a dump. It is a dive of a place where people go to get fucked up in the middle of the day. To that end, Aubry and Carter enter. They've got enough cash to buy ONE BEER that they share between them. They take up a booth in back of the joint where they may wallow in a little booze and a lot of darkness.

As they do, Aubry notices a GUY at the bar looking at her, and doing so with straight lasciviousness. Aubry takes Carter's hand, gives it a good squeeze as if to communicate to him that everything's going to be all right. She gets up and goes to the guy, sits... They kinda talk a little. After that, taking the guy's hand, Aubry leads him for the bathroom.

Carter watches knowing full well what's about to go down. He can't do it. He can't let Aubry do it.

Carter rushes to Aubry, pulls her away from the guy and hustles her out of the club.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Carter is pulling Aubry out onto the street. He's not angry with her, but he is protective.

CARTER
Not gonna do it.

AUBRY
It doesn't matter.

CARTER
Uh-uh.

AUBRY
I don't care. He was gonna pay.

CARTER
You think I'm gonna let you do that? Huh? That what you think? Nah. Not gonna happen like that. You ain't doing that.

The reality of just how bad things are start to wash over Aubry. She starts to emotionally collapse on herself. Carter, showing some supreme tenderness, holds onto his girl.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Whatever I gotta do, I'll handle it. Not letting you do that.

We should get the sense, messed up as these two are, what they do have is each other.

The moment is broken up as the bartender - NELSON, a white guy - comes storming out of the bar looking every inch like he means business:

NELSON
Hey! Get off her!

AUBRY
He's not doing anything.

NELSON
Get the hell away from her, or I'm calling the cops!

AUBRY
He's not doing anything asshole. Go the hell back inside!

NELSON
Don't come back, don't bring your pimp back. Stay the hell away from here.

INT. DINER - DAY

Chuck and Barb sit down with GRELL, a local reporter. As they talk, Barb speaks very much from the heart. Whatever coldness she may have previously possessed is not in evidence as she recollects her lost child.

BARB
It's not real to me yet. My phone rings, I expect it to be Matt. It's people giving me condolences, but I can't take them. He's not...I don't feel like Matt's

gone, so I don't know how to take other people's sorrow.

GRELL
Mr. Skokie, when you got the call from the police, what was your first reaction?

CHUCK
They weren't even sure it was him. I had to fly out--

GRELL
You live in Arizona?

CHUCK
In Chandler. That's just outside of Phoenix. But they didn't know it was Matt, so I was just... I was hopeful. Whole trip over, it's just a mistake. That's what I kept telling myself; that it was just...

Chuck gets too choked up to go on.

GRELL
The things I was able to find out about your son, he seemed like a remarkable young man. He was in the military. Is that right?

BARB
He enlisted right after 9/11. He wanted to do his service. He was in Iraq, and he...he did what was right for people. Married a beautiful young girl. Married his sweetheart.

GRELL
She was a beauty queen, right? She was literally.

BARB
Lily was Miss...she was the runner up for Miss Modesto six or seven years ago. After Matt's service, right when they moved out here.

GRELL
Salt of the earth, huh?

Giving a laugh over the stereotypical nature of the phrase:

BARB
"Perfect couple." Matt loved her so much. He would always dote on Lily. That's why she entered the pageant. He would tell her "you're the most beautiful girl in Modesto." He signed her up just to prove it. Lily, she went along with it. Came in second. He would tease her about that. "Well, if you were the *most* beautiful you wouldn't have married me." He cared, and he was happy. Nevermind he didn't have it easy growing up.

GRELL
(tactfully)
You and your husband are separated?

BARB
(bluntly)
We're divorced. We did not have a lot of money when the boys were young. We didn't have *any* money. It was hard for me to provide. But Matt, his brother... Matt's brother, Mark, he's in the military too. He's serving right now. They both grew up knowing they had to be responsible. And for something like this to happen to Matt... It's not fair, it's not right, and they need to catch who did this.

GRELL
What are the police telling you?

BARB
Nothing. And they're not doing much of anything. I say that, what... Off the record, I guess. I know the one person they're looking for is an illegal, or something.

Speaking reasonably, in a manner that would actually garner sympathy:

BARB (CONT'D)
It just sort of...it figures, right? My son goes off to another country to fight. Then he comes home to America and gets killed by somebody from another country.

GRELL
You said you were telling me that "off the record." "Off the record" means you don't want it published. Did you...did you want to tell me that on background?

BARB
What's the difference?

GRELL
On background I won't quote you, but I can print the information.

Barb gives just a moment's consideration.

BARB
Do that one; background.

I/E. CAR - LATER

Chuck drives as Barb rides. Barb has regained her composure. Chuck is a bit agitated.

CHUCK
You don't have to say things like that.

Barb just gives a look to Chuck which begs explanation.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
You didn't have to tell him we're divorced, that you didn't have any money when the boys were young...

BARB
Did I say something that wasn't true?

CHUCK
It's not what you say, Barb. It's how you say things. It's how you--

BARB
I really don't care.

CHUCK
You say it...you say it with happiness.

BARB
I was proud that I was able to survive. That I was able to take care of my children--

CHUCK
Our children. They're--

BARB
That I was able to take care of them when you couldn't. When you *wouldn't*.

CHUCK
...I had problems...

BARB
Say what you did, Chuck. Say what you did. You gambled away everything we had, then you went and stole so you could gamble some more.

CHUCK
I've said as many times, as many ways I know how that I am sorry for-

BARB
Our son is dead, and you're sorry you were off playing nickel slots when he was a boy?

No matter Chuck is still driving, BARB OPENS THE PASSENGER DOOR as if to immediately step from the car. Chuck stops hard. Barb is up and out of the car, and keeps moving.

CHUCK
Barb....

BARB
You weren't there when we needed you.

Chuck gets out of the car and follows.

CHUCK
It was an illness.

BARB
You were off in Vegas or Reno, throwing away our money.

CHUCK
It was an addiction. I got myself help. I'm...I'm recovered.

BARB
We had nothing, Chuck. Raising those boys, by myself in public housing. Do you have any idea what it was like? A single white mother and her two white boys. Do you know what they did to us? Day in, day out, do you know how those people treated my boys? We were the minorities! We were the victims! And one of *them* killed our son!

CHUCK
They don't know if he was--

BARB
Black, Mexican... Does it make a difference? They killed Matt.

CHUCK
Barb--

BARB
And you're worried about what I say to some reporter?

CHUCK
Barb--

BARB
Stop saying my name! Now is easy to be a father, Chuck. It's easy when all you have to do is stand in front of people and be sad.

CHUCK
If you think this is easy for me, you have no idea how hard I worked to earn back the love, the...the trust of our boys. *Our* boys, Barb.

Chuck lets that land, then heading to the car:

CHUCK (CONT'D)
Get in. Or walk if you want. I'm going back to the hotel.

Riding Barb's look of contempt for Chuck we GO TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. MODESTO PD/INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Tony and Palmer remain in place - Tony looking tired, worn out - as Alonzo is walked in by Sanderson. Alonzo is exceptionally deferential to Palmer.

PALMER
Mr. Gutiérrez? Detective Mike Palmer. Have a seat.

Alonzo does as invited.

PALMER (CONT'D)
Mr. Gutiérrez, we appreciate you coming in. Now, your son is not under arrest, okay? Tony agreed to come in and speak with us. And he agreed to answer questions outside of your presence. Okay?

ALONZO
Yes.

PALMER
There're a few more questions we have. Could we get you to help answer a few more questions for us?

ALONZO
Yes, sir.

Sliding a photo over to Alonzo.

PALMER
Now, your son was stopped driving this car. Is that car in the possession of your garage?

ALONZO
I tell him to drive that around the block if he has to, but he knows he's not supposed to be on the street with that.

PALMER
But that car is in the possession of your shop, yes?

ALONZO
Yes.

PALMER
And do you recall personally operating that vehicle outside of your property this past Sunday?

ALONZO
Sunday? No.

PALMER
Are you aware of anyone who could have driven the car on Sunday? Would anyone else have had access to the car?

ALONZO
We have the keys. Nobody else.

Palmer allows the answers to settle as if indicating Alonzo's own words are now officially part of the record.

PALMER
Mr. Gutiérrez, we have a description and partial license plate, matching this car, given to us by a witness on Sunday night.

ALONZO
Witness to what?

PALMER
There was an incident that we're trying to clear up, and we have witnesses who can put your car in the vicinity of the scene. Now, you say you didn't operate the car Sunday. You say nobody else did. Your son says the same thing. So, you see what the problem is?

Alonzo doesn't answer.

PALMER (CONT'D)
Your son also says that he wasn't at home on Sunday night. Do you recall if Tony was home with you?

ALONZO
No.

PALMER
No, you don't remember, or--

ALONZO
He wasn't at home.

PALMER
Where was he?

Alonzo gives a hard, cold stare to Tony.

PALMER (CONT'D)
Mr. Gutiérrez, do you know where your son was?

ALONZO
He told me he was working on the car.

PALMER
Tony, were you working on the car, or were you out driving it around?

Tony says nothing. Turning to Alonzo:

PALMER (CONT'D)
Tony was telling us it's just you at home, is that right? My wife and I, we separated. She's got custody, but I know how hard it is--

ALONZO
It was different. We didn't... Roberta had...

Alonzo can't bring himself to speak it, but puts his right hand near his chest. His point is rather self-evident.

PALMER
I'm very sorry about that. And I know how hard it is; single parent and all. You want to be there for your kids, want to do right by them. And, Tony, I know you want to do right, too. Mr. Gutiérrez, we need your son to tell us what's going on. If he tells us what happened, if he tells us the truth, then that's that. If he lies to us, that's going to be a problem. Because when the prosecutors come in here, then we can't do anything.

TONY
Papi, yo no he hecho nada malo!

ALONZO
Nuh-uh. Not like that. You have something to say, say it. Are you lying? Are you lying to them?

TONY
...No...

ALONZO
That wasn't our car?

TONY
I don't know.

ALONZO
What about everything he's saying? That wasn't our car?

TONY
No hice nada!

ALONZO
Stop it! Stop lying! You want to go to jail? Huh? You want to be another Cholo in jail?

TONY
I want to go home.

ALONZO
Tell the truth. Tell them what happened! What happened?

TONY
I don't know.

ALONZO
What did you do!?

TONY
Nothing! You never *let us* do anything. Never!

ALONZO
You blame me? You're going to blame me? You're sitting in here like a thug and that's my fault?

TONY
I just wanted to make money for myself. I wanted to do something for myself.

ALONZO
Was that our car?

TONY
...Yes...

The truth does nothing to soften Alonzo's edge. To Palmer, partly accusing his own son while he simultaneously excuses himself:

ALONZO
I want you to know, I didn't raise him like this.

PALMER
I understand.

ALONZO
We always told him, we told him and his sister: you stay away from gangs, you stay away from drugs... Me and Roberta, we came to the country the right way. Okay? And we tell our children to do things the right way.

PALMER
Yes, sir.

ALONZO
So, he'll tell you whatever. Whatever he has to, he'll tell you.

EXT. LOT - LATER

It's a deserted lot overgrown with weeds. Carter moves through it with both determination and anxiety. He's constantly looking over his shoulder. Carter finds a spot in the ground and starts digging through the dirt with his hands. In a short bit he pulls out something wrapped in some plastic bags. He unwraps the bags revealing a gun, which he pockets before moving on.

INT. MODESTO PD/INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

As Alonzo watches, Palmer continues interviewing Tony.

TONY
Adam was the first one.

PALMER
Adam is...?

TONY
He's just this kid at school. I'm showing him the car one day. He starts going off: "That's so bad, that's bad. I wanna take a ride in that." I tell him no, you can't drive it. Then he pulls out twenty dollars. Twenty dollars, just to take a ride. I'm like, shoot.

Just take it. And that was like that. Week later, couple of weeks later, he comes around. Another twenty bucks. He's got this girl. He can't take her over to his house, her parents don't want him around. Twenty dollars to take her out riding. So...it just got to be a thing. He had friends and stuff. They would ask about the car. Want to go joyriding. Wasn't a big thing, but I started renting it.

PALMER
Let's talk about Sunday night.

TONY
One time Adam he comes to me, he knows this guy, looking for a car he can have for the night. And he's willing to front fifty dollars. Fifty dollars? I'm cool with that.

ALONZO
What do you need money for? What do you need you don't have?

PALMER
Mr. Gutiérrez...

ALONZO
Were you, were you buying drugs? What were you doing?

PALMER
I want to know about this other guy...

TONY
He shows up, he's for real. Know what I'm saying?

PALMER
He was in a gang or something?

TONY
He was scary, that's all I know. He gave me the money, he took the car. I thought he was going to steal it. But he came back. After that, he started texting me sometimes. Looking for a car. Fifty dollars every time.

PALMER
What's his name?

TONY
Hector. I don't know his last name.

PALMER
You have the phone you were texting him from?

TONY
I erased them.

PALMER
I still need the phone.

Tony takes out the phone, puts it on the table. Palmer hands it off to Sanderson who takes the phone from the room.

PALMER (CONT'D)
You're doing really good, Tony. You want something to eat? You want a sandwich?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A rundown and slightly isolated joint. Carter is knocking on the door. STEVIE, a stringy white guy in his late thirties cautiously opens the door. From inside the house we hear STEVE PERRY'S *OH, SHERRIE* PLAYING.

STEVIE
What?

CARTER
It's Carter. You don't remember? We hung out a few times. Sean brought us around. Me and my girl Aubry? Remember her? Remember you were digging on her?

STEVIE
Yeah. Where she at?

CARTER
She wants to come party some. Later. She's not feeling it right now. Needs a little helping out.

STEVIE
Nah, I got nothing.

CARTER
I don't want nothing for nothing. Just gonna buy a little now, then Aubry wants to come back and get serious.

Stevie remains wary, but the invite to party with Aubry seems to be just enticing enough for him to let down his guard.

INT. STEVIE'S PLACE - MOMENTS LATER

WE MAKE A JUMP CUT inside of the joint. It's a mess. The guy lives like a pack rat. Clearly the shut-in type. *OH, SHERRIE* is coming from a turn table.

STEVIE
You want something to eat? I got pizza rolls in the toaster oven.

CARTER
Just want to do business.

STEVIE
Yeah. Yeah. Hang out for a sec.

As Stevie's off in another room, Carter has himself a quick look around. He leafs through a MAGAZINE, one of many strewn about. Something in it catches his eye. He stares at it for a bit, TEARS OUT THE PAGE

Stevie comes from the other room carrying a small bit of SOMETHING WRAPPED IN FOIL. He goes to the record player, resets the needle. *Oh, Sherri* starts up again.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Love this shit. Had my best lay to that song. High school, volleyball girl. Six feet of perfect skin. Took me all night to get her slick on a six pack. And riiight when she was good'n greased, her head just dropped back, mouth fell open smellin' like cigarettes and Miller beer. Daaaaamn, man. Sixteen. Sex is always gonna smell like beer and cigarettes to me.

CARTER
(lightly dismissive)
Listening to vinyl records, tripping on some girl you had back when you was sixteen.

STEVIE
She was sixteen. Didn't say I was.

Re: the foil:

STEVIE (CONT'D)
This is all I got right now.

CARTER
That's cool.

STEVIE
And Aubry's gonna come back later?

CARTER
You know; if she's feeling it.

STEVIE
'K. It's gonna be forty for this.

CARTER
I'ma bring Aubry back. She wants to party with you.

STEVIE
Yeah. Yeah, man. Still forty.

Carter makes no move to retrieve any money. His lack of action speaks to how things are going to go. Stevie can tell he's about to get ripped off and displays his disgust with the inevitability.

STEVIE (CONT'D)
Damn, man... Seriously?

CARTER
Just give it to me.

STEVIE
You asshole! You gonna do this over forty dollars? Asshole!

Carter doesn't say anything. He reaches into his coat pocket. Maybe he's getting money... Instead he takes out the GUN. Not a particularly big one, but a gun is a gun.

Knowing what's coming next, Stevie starts to bolt. He doesn't get real far before Carter snatches him back. The two struggle for a moment, awkward and inelegantly. In other words, quite realistically. Carter gets the upper hand, then starts to BEAT STEVIE INTO SUBMISSION WITH THE GUN. Carter deals each blow to the rhythm of:

CARTER
White bitch! Why you gotta be a stupid, white bitch!? Gimmie the shit! Give it to me!

The moment playing very real and very brutally. Several blows later, Stevie is left on the floor bloody and moaning. Carter grabs up the drugs and hustles himself out of the space.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

IN A SERIES OF CUTS WE SEE CARTER PREPPING A COUPLE OF BLUNTS WITH A SPRINKLING OF METH. Carter shotguns a hit with Aubry. It's such very, very potent stuff. Both Carter and Aubry sink like Sid and Nancy and ride it out. As they do, Carter takes from his pocket the PAGE HE TOOK FROM THE MAGAZINE. It's an ad pitching some kind of clothing. Think Gap. It's a shot of a good looking mixed race couple arm in arm, striding down a street. Such a good looking pair, and so happy. It's a little hint of aspiration that Carter lays out for him and Aubry to trip on.

OVER THIS WE HEAR AUDIO. IT'S A TALK RADIO HOST WHO'S DELIVERING TO HIS AUDIENCE MORE OPINION THAN NEWS. HE SPEAKS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE MURDERS, ABOUT HOW A WAR VET AND MISS MODESTO COULD BE KILLED IN THEIR OWN HOME, AND WHAT THAT MEANS FOR THE REST OF "US."

INT. STORE - DAY

WITH THE AUDIO NOW PLAYING AS SOURCE, we again see Hector attempting a purchase with Matt's credit card. The clerk - JAY - tries to run the card.

JAY
It's not going through. I'm going to have to call it in.

Jay makes the call, holds on the line... Then, with a bit of forced casualness:

JAY (CONT'D)
Uh...the computer I guess is down, or something. You mind, uh, just waiting for a little bit?

The two wait...wait... Then, fronting some casualness of his own:

HECTOR
I'ma go get my phone real quick.

Hector starts to make his back through the store and OUT INTO THE PARKING LOT.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

As Hector walks on, behind him, we can make out Jay flagging down AN ARRIVING POLICE CAR and pointing toward Hector. The OFFICERS get out of their car, start yelling for Hector to stop where he is. At that point, Hector starts running at a serious clip. Before he can get very far, ONE OF THE OFFICERS FIRES OFF SEVERAL SHOTS. One hits Hector in the thigh. THIS IS A VERY PAINFUL, SERIOUS WOUND THAT DROPS HECTOR TO THE PAVEMENT. He rolls, screams for help. Despite his wailing, the Officers who first arrive to him are clearly far more interested in the act of arresting Hector - “Stay down! Stay down, asshole!” - than they are in aiding him. As far as they care, they have a potential killer on their hands.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

IN A SERIES OF CUTS WE SEE HECTOR'S LEG BEING OPERATED ON. WE SHOULD SEE FOOTAGE FROM A REAL SURGICAL PROCEDURE. TRUE TO LIFE AND JUST *SLIGHTLY* GRAPHIC.

INT. HOSPITAL/RECOVERY - LATER

Hector is in bed, recovering from surgery. He's light headed, but getting his bearings. The door opens. Palmer enters. No matter Hector is wounded, Palmer is looking for some answers. As he sits:

PALMER
You want to talk about things?

HECTOR
You police?

Palmer nods to the affirmative.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
I don't want to talk about nothing.

PALMER
Let me tell you where we are: We've got a witness who can put a car on the scene of a homicide. We've got somebody who can put you in that car. We've got ID and credit card belonging to the Vic in your possession.

HECTOR
I didn't kill nobody.

PALMER
Who did?

HECTOR
Why they gotta shoot me?

PALMER
Who did?

HECTOR
I got nothing to do with nobody getting killed.

PALMER
Then what else you got? You had the car right?

Hector doesn't respond.

PALMER (CONT'D)
What do you care? You didn't kill anybody, you just had the car. So what happened?

Again, Hector says nothing.

PALMER (CONT'D)
We're pulling your jacket. What are we going to find? Some drugs? Robbery? Assault?

HECTOR
I don't do nothing violent.

PALMER
Then there's no problem. What's this car thing about?

HECTOR
Just needed wheels. Needed to be mobile.

PALMER
For what? Some hustling? Deal some drugs?

HECTOR
Maybe. Sometimes.

PALMER
Sometimes, but what?

Hector doesn't respond. Palmer asks again:

PALMER (CONT'D)
It's going on you, or it's going on somebody else. Point the finger, or take the fall. However you want.

HECTOR
There's this dude. Him and his girl; a couple methheads. He's good for some steady. He's always looking to buy. He comes to me Sunday. I get him some, he starts rolling. He wants more, but he's

broke. I tell him I can't do nothing for him. Then he starts getting hyped up, talking about how he's owed. How he needs to settle up a score.

PALMER
What score?

HECTOR
I don't know. Just talking about this white dude that owes him. So he tells me he can go get me paid after.

PALMER
After what?

HECTOR
After shit that don't matter to me. And he's so lit I can't hardly figure him out anyhow.

PALMER
What's his name?

HECTOR
Carter. Black dude.

PALMER
"Black dude," what? What else?

HECTOR
He was just a black dude. That's it.

PALMER
He was going to get you paid?

HECTOR
All I gotta do is run him over to Slauson.

PALMER
What address?

HECTOR
I'm not going anywhere with some methhead I don't know. I'm not stupid like that. I take him over to this mini-mall and hang out. He goes off.

PALMER
On foot?

HECTOR
Yeah. I wait. Dude comes back; cash, cards... I don't know how he got it. I didn't ask.

PALMER
You know where to find him? You know where to find this guy?

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

We come back in on Carter and Aubry chilling, coming down off their high.

Through his haze, Carter hears something at the door. Before he can even react, TAC COPS COME BUSTING INTO THE JOINT - guns at the ready - and arrest both Carter and Aubry in rather spectacular fashion.

INT. MODESTO PD/INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Tony's sitting with his father. Not a word spoken between them. Tony is looking worn to the core. His ordeal has now been stretching on for hours. Alonzo has still got much bitterness that he's hanging onto.

ALONZO
Why did you erase those texts? The one's on your phone. You knew you were doing something wrong? You knew you were--

TONY
I always erase my texts. I know you go through my phone. I know you look.

ALONZO
I'm your father. I want to know what's going on in your life.

TONY
You don't trust me.

ALONZO
No. No, no...

TONY
Me, Jenny; you don't ever trust us. Always checking up on us...

ALONZO
You don't talk to me. You never tell me anything--

Both assertions are broken off as Palmer enters with Sanderson.

PALMER
Tony, can you stand up for me?

TONY
Why?

PALMER
Stand up, put your hands behind your back.

Tony looks to his father, who says nothing. Tony does as instructed.

PALMER (CONT'D)
You're under arrest for party to commit a capital murder.

Real quickly abject fear takes hold of Tony. Alonzo is stunned, at that moment just realizing the magnitude of what his son his facing.

ALONZO
...Murder? Wait...

TONY
I didn't kill anybody.

ALONZO
No, no!

PALMER
You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can be used against you in the court of law--

ALONZO
What did you do...

TONY
Papi... Papi!

ALONZO
Tony, what did you do!?

EXT. MODESTO - DAY

OVER SHOTS OF THE CITY WE HEAR AUDIO FROM TALK RADIO. Where previously we just heard bits of straight reportage, now we're starting to hear OPINION and SPECULATION. The meme that is beginning to creep into the conversation revolves around the reported race of the accused vs. that the victims in what's being called the "PERFECT COUPLE MURDER." A PUNDIT is riffing with his SIDEKICK:

PUNDIT (V.O.)
You know, when a black gets killed by somebody white, first thing they do, they call it a hate crime.

SIDEKICK (V.O.)
Always. Every time.

PUNDIT (V.O.)
If it's a white person who gets killed by a minority: oh, too bad. That's just what happens.

SIDEKICK (V.O.)
Never call it what it is.

INT. HOSPITAL/ER - SIMULTANEOUS

Aubry is sitting on an examining table. A handcuff runs from her wrist to a handle on the table. An ATTENDING NURSE dresses the lacerations on Aubry's face.

As the nurse works, Aubry is questioned by QUINN, a female detective.

QUINN
The charge is going to be conspiracy to commit murder. Even if you didn't pull the trigger, you're looking at a capital crime.
(beat)
You could talk to us. You could help us.

Aubry says nothing. Re: her cuts and bruises:

QUINN (CONT'D)
Did he do that to you?

Aubry continues to maintain her silence.

QUINN (CONT'D)
You don't have to protect him. Not any more. You need to start thinking about yourself, not him.

Aubry gives a bitter smile, and a spiteful shake of her head. This woman doesn't even begin to get it.

INT. MODESTO PD - LATER

Palmer is sitting down with Chuck and Barb.

PALMER
We have four suspects in custody. We have two who facilitated, one who we believe is the shooter. We're going to be transferring him over to holding.

CHUCK
Did he say why he did it?

PALMER
He hasn't admitted to anything. We don't have a motive.

CHUCK
But he did it?

PALMER
A gun was recovered. We're confident. Mr. and Mrs. Skokie, I wanted to sit down with you personally and talk about what happens next. The arrest is just how all this begins. Something I want you to keep in mind; what happened to your son and his wife is very much in the news. With a crime like this, following an arrest there's generally a rush for comment from the press. I would just hope that you would be mindful of anything you say in public. You two represent the victims. You speak for them now, okay?

Chuck gives a nod. He gets it.

PALMER (CONT'D)
The first thing that's going to happen, is there's going to be

what's called an arraignment. Do you know what that is?

CHUCK
No.

PALMER
That's a formal reading of a criminal charges against the--

BARB
I read where, with the appeals and everything, it takes, maybe, twelve years to execute somebody. At least. Is it true?

PALMER
We've got a long way to go before we even get there.

BARB
I want to see him. I want to see who killed my son.

Palmer isn't sure what to say. But by this point he knows that Barb isn't the kind of woman who is easily denied. Before Palmer can respond, we CUT TO:

BLACK

OVER BLACK WE HEAR:

SPOKESMAN (V.O.)
We have...Tom and Eve Harmon are going to make a brief statement. They will not be taking questions after. No questions after.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

From a "pool camera" we see Tom standing before a bank of microphones. Eve, clearly caught up in emotion, stands just behind him. Tom speaks with the halting unease of someone wholly unused to public speaking.

TOM
On behalf of my wife and myself...and our daughter Lily, we would like to thank the City of Modesto police department for their work in apprehending the suspects involved in the attack on our

daughter, and the murder of Matt Skokie.

INT. MODESTO PD/HALLWAY - LATER

WE MAKE A HARD CUT TO: Palmer as he positions Barb in the hallway. He's got her in an innocuous spot waiting for Carter to be escorted for a waiting DOC van.

TOM (V.O.)
Although nothing can undo the horrible events of last Sunday, my wife and I can rest easier knowing that these individuals will soon be facing justice.

Prior to Carter's departure, Sanderson - who stands with another man, DAVE THOMPSON, signals to Palmer. Palmer crosses over, and Thompson presents Palmer with a file which Palmer begins to look through. His expression highlights the curious nature of what he's reading.

There is a bit of a commotion, and then it happens: UNIFORMED OFFICERS escort Carter from a LOCKED ROOM through the hallway and right passed Barb. Strangers to each other, Carter and Barb exchange just a passing look. Though Carter has no idea who Barb is, it's clear from the expression in her eyes that Barb wishes Carter nothing but badness.

EXT. MODESTO PD - CONTINUOUS

Outside the station, Carter is hustled into the DOC van. Seated alone, shackled, the doors of the van are closed dropping Carter into darkness. It is both a punctuation, and a statement on where Carter is headed from here. It is all the badness Barb wished on him.

TOM (V.O.)
We are confident that when presented with the evidence, the courts and the juries will do the right thing and make sure that these people will never be allowed to hurt anyone again.

EXT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Tom continues speaking to the press.

TOM
Our nightmare is a long way from being over. We would ask, in this difficult time, that all of you please respect our privacy, and pray for our daughter. That's all we have to say. Thank you.

Tom steps away from the microphone. Putting an arm around Eve, they head back into the hospital. Clearly caring nothing for his personal plea of respecting their privacy OFF SCREEN REPORTERS yell questions for Tom and Eve about Lily, about her condition, about the suspects... THERE IS ONE REPORTER WHO YELLS A QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT THEY FEEL RACE. IT'S MIXED IN WITH THE OTHER QUESTIONS, BUT RISES ABOVE THE DIN JUST ENOUGH FOR US TO KNOW THE DIRECTION THE SPECULATION IS HEADING.

INT. MODESTO PD/ROOM - LATER

We have Chuck sitting down with Palmer and with Thompson.

PALMER
Mr. Skokie, this is Dave Thompson; one of our investigators. He has a couple of things he'd like to ask you.

CHUCK
Alright.

THOMPSON
Mr. Skokie, you had a good relationship with your son. You talked to him regularly, is that correct?

CHUCK
I had a very good relationship. We talked every Sunday. At least.

THOMPSON
Did he ever discuss aspects of his lifestyle with you? Or, did you ever get the sense that he wasn't always forthcoming; that he was hiding things from you?

CHUCK
Matt never hid anything from me. We talked all the time, we talked about... We talked about his job, I know he was happy with Lily.

THOMPSON
Did you ever get the sense that he was involved with drugs?

CHUCK
Matt? No, no, no. No. I would know if he were on drugs.

THOMPSON
Mr. Skokie--

CHUCK
I would know. If my son was having problems I would know about it.

PALMER
We don't know that your son had personal problems with drugs. What we've found--

THOMPSON
In our search of the crime scene, we've recovered a commercial quantity of crystallized methamphetamine and a trafficable amount of cannabis. The amount we found, the fact that it was securely hidden... That tells us it was not for his own use. It was for distribution.

Chuck can't even begin to process what he's being told. He says again, insists:

CHUCK
We were close. I would know. If there was something wrong, Matt would have told me.

PALMER
Mr. Skokie, would your son have told you if he were a drug dealer?

The expression on Chuck's face says it all: The man has just been gutted.

END ACT FIVE