

STONED  
1X01: STORMS COMING

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - NIGHT

The city buzzes with chaos-siren wails, car horns blaring, and the distant hum of a city that never sleeps. Steam rises from the cracked pavement as hot air from the sewers collides with the stifling heat above. Neon lights flicker in the mist, casting eerie glows over a restless crowd.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO.

The stage is tense. The spotlight shines down on the PRIME MINISTER, his hands trembling slightly as he sips water. Across from him, LAURA STANCE, sharp and unyielding, takes no mercy.

LAURA STANCE  
(leans forward, tone cold)  
Prime Minister, isn't it true that  
illegal immigration has spiked  
under your watch?

The Prime Minister half smiles, he remains calm -

PRIME MINISTER  
Laura, there has been an increase,  
yes. But we're on top of it. We're  
working hard to address the issue.  
(beat)  
Our task force is pulling its  
weight. Trust me.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT.

The streets pulse with energy. A BLACK TRUCK screeches to a halt outside a run-down CHINESE RESTAURANT. The truck's massive doors fly open with a harsh squeal.

A group of HEAVILY ARMED AGENTS storm out-balaclavas, combat gear, weapons drawn. They move like predators, swift and coordinated.

IMMIGRATION AGENT  
(yelling)  
THIS IS A RAID! EVERYONE FREEZE!  
NOW!

CUT TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO.

Laura snaps back, she's not letting this go -

LAURA STANCE

Yes, the numbers look better than previous administrations, but raiding restaurants and nail bars won't fix the root of the problem. What's being done about the criminals smuggling these people in?

The Prime Minister remains confident.

PRIME MINISTER

We have ongoing investigations into these criminal rings. We're tracking them down.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

The interview plays on a small television in the corner of the room. DRIESDEN, a burly man with a thick beard and fur coat, watches through binoculars. His lips curl into a dark smile.

LAURA STANCE

And how many have you brought in?  
In the last 12 months.

PRIME MINISTER

Like I said, it's ongoing. I cannot comment.

He lowers the binoculars and glances back at the screen.

DRIESDEN

(muttering)

"Ongoing investigations" huh?

Driesden goes back to looking through the binoculars.

DRIESDEN (CONT'D)

(disappointed)

Real shame. I really liked that restaurant.

ON THE TELEVISION:

LAURA STANCE  
(pressing on)  
And why hire Kevin Anderson, a  
government outsider, to your  
office?

The PRIME MINISTER takes a measured sip of water, his demeanor calm and collected.

PRIME MINISTER  
Kevin's a brilliant man. He brings  
fresh perspective. A true centrist.

LAURA STANCE  
But hasn't he been investigated in  
the past to election interference?

PRIME MINISTER  
Something he was found innocent--

CUT TO:

The TV SCREEN flickers off.

At a nearby table, sit a man and a woman behind them six bodyguards, all at attention. The woman, MIRANDA, dressed in an immaculate business suit, leans forward, her expression calculating.

MIRANDA  
(assuringly)  
I wouldn't worry Dresden. Tomorrow  
we will bring in more workers. New  
Management and ownership.

DRIESDEN  
(eyeing her)  
Even so. Won't be the same chef  
will it?

the man, dressed in sharp, bikers attire CAPLAN, leans in, he is not happy at all.

CAPLAN  
(gritted teeth)  
Why are we here, Miranda? You know  
we don't meet in the same place  
unless the "Network" has given the  
word.

MIRANDA  
(flatly)  
Edison contacted me.  
(MORE)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)  
They told me to bring everyone and  
their shipments here. That's it.

DRIESEN  
(raising an eyebrow)  
And that doesn't strike you as odd?

MIRANDA  
(sighs)  
I just do as Edison asks. As we all  
do.

DRIESEN  
What even is this place?

Dresden goes back to looking through his binoculars.

MIRANDA  
It's the office to a shell company  
that went "broke" two months ago.  
It's just sat in limbo.

DRIESEN  
Well, the more they drive the  
prices up the more empty it will  
be.

MIRANDA  
And you don't think they have  
reason for that? The Network  
haven't spent years organizing this  
machine to not have a plan.

CAPLAN  
(stands, irritated)  
Well, I'm sick of waiting.

He gives a sharp nod to his BODYGUARDS.

CAPLAN (CONT'D)  
Time to leave boys, we're taking  
our shipment with us.

Suddenly, the lights flicker-then BLACKOUT.

PANIC. Shadows dart across the room as tension rises.  
BODYGUARDS scramble, pulling their guns from holsters. The  
room falls into chaos.

DRIESEN  
(shouts)  
What the hell is going on?

MIRANDA  
(stands, confused)  
I don't know.

She moves toward the door but-

BANG.

A bullet shatters the glass next to DRIESDEN, sending shards flying. He stumbles back, clutching his bleeding shoulder.

DRIESDEN  
(grimacing in pain)  
Argh!

His BODYGUARDS rush to his aid, but-

PFT.

A second bullet strikes MIRANDA right between the eyes. Her body crumples to the floor with a sickening thud.

PANIC ERUPTS.

DRIESDEN stumbles, blood dripping from his wound. He staggers, frantic, eyes wild.

DRIESDEN (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Everyone out. It's a trap.

PFT.

A third bullet tears through one of DRIESDEN'S BODYGUARDS. The room fills with gunfire.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CAPLAN and his BODYGUARDS rush down the corridor, low and fast. Their eyes flick to every shadow as they move.

At the end of the hallway, the elevator doors stand slightly ajar, the red light still glowing.

CAPLAN  
(breathless shouting)  
Move! Get to the elevator!

They push the button. The doors DING and open.

CAPLAN and his guards rush inside, weapons drawn, hearts pounding. The doors close just as DRIESDEN and his last bodyguard make it to the lift.

DRIESDEN  
(angry, shouts)  
WHAT THE FUCK CAPLAN?

INT. ELEVATOR - MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Inside the lift, CAPLAN crouches behind his guards, wide-eyed and panicked.

CAPLAN  
(panicking)  
What the fuck is going on?

Suddenly, the lights flicker. The ELEVATOR DISPLAY flickers between a smiley face emoji and an angry one.

OUTSIDE THE ELEVATOR:

A SMALL DETONATION rips through the brakes with a deafening BOOM. The cable snaps, sending the elevator into freefall.

SNAP!

The elevator plunges downward. BOOM.

INT. OFFICE - MAIN ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

An LOUD BANG, a cloud of dust spills from the crack of the closed elevator doors, blood trickles from under the bottom.

INT. OFFICE - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

DRIESDEN and his bodyguard struggle to stay on their feet. They exchange a look of sheer panic.

DRIESDEN  
(urgently)  
We need to head to the garage. NOW!

They sprint down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The garage is dimly lit, filled with shadows. DRIESDEN and his bodyguard bolt toward a waiting truck.

Suddenly-

PFT.

A EXPLOSION tears through the bodyguard's chest, sending him flying. DRIESDEN is thrown into a panic. He grabs his fallen guard's gun, wild-eyed, pointing it at the darkness.

DRIESDEN  
(yelling)  
You fucking coward! Come out!

PUNCH.

A brutal FIST strikes DRIESDEN in the face. He crashes backward, dropping the gun.

Out of the shadows steps a man dressed in all black, with an all white mask hiding his features. They stand tall, unfazed, as they aim a SILENCED PISTOL directly at DRIESDEN'S HEAD.

DRIESDEN (CONT'D)  
Look, c'mon, you don't have to --

PFT.

A single bullet ends it. DRIESDEN crumples to the ground.

the masked man kneels, placing an ENVELOPE inside his jacket. As they rise, a loud BANG erupts from the truck behind them.

He turns, unfazed, and strides back toward the truck.

INT. TRUCK - CONTAINER.

In the dark, the faintest light spills over the faces of IMMIGRANTS, weak and near-death, crammed into the container. They squint, terrified, as the doors swing open.

EXT. OFFICE./ UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT.

The immigrants begin to spill out, confused, disoriented. They are lost in a city they don't know. The CITY STREETS stretch before them, dark and empty.

IMMIGRATION AGENTS finish loading the last of the immigrants into their van. One agent turns, his eyes widening in shock.

An agent turns and sees the imprisoned immigrants escaping from the carpark.

IMMIGRATION AGENT  
(to self)  
Oh shit.  
(beat, then quickly)  
Uh, we have a situation!

FADE OUT:

MAIN TITLES:

STONED.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE CITY - MORNING

The sun rises over a sprawling metropolis. Glass towers stretch skyward, reflecting the morning light. A commercial jet rumbles low in the sky. In the distance, older buildings remain in the shadows of luxury high-rises.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

RICK STONE (30s, scruffy, rough around the edges) stirs in bed. He reaches out—an instinct—but the other side is empty. Reality sets in. He sighs, glancing at a downturned photo on the bedside table.

He exhales, rubs his face, and swings his legs over the bed.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - BATHROOM.

Rick steps into the bathroom. He flicks on the light—his reflection stares back at him. He grimaces, running a hand over his unshaven face. Steam fills the space as he turns on the shower.

RICK STONE  
(to self)  
Another day, another dick!

He smirks—half amused, half resigned.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - KITCHEN.

Dressed now in a polo shirt-khaki combo, Rick sits at the counter, eating cereal. A comic book is splayed open in front of him. He chuckles, nearly choking on his food, washing it down with coffee.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY.

Rick steps out of his apartment, earbuds in. As he locks the door, the elevator PINGS behind him. The doors slide open, revealing ANNIE (early 30s, effortlessly attractive), struggling with heavy boxes.

Rick pulls out an earbud and steps forward.

RICK STONE  
Ah hey, let me help you with that.

He grabs a box before she can object. Annie exhales in relief.

ANNIE  
Thanks. I appreciate it.

RICK STONE  
Moving in day?

ANNIE  
Yeah. Studying. Needed a fresh start.

she shifts the weight of a box, extends a hand

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
I'm Annie.

RICK STONE  
I'm Rick, I live down the hall.

ANNIE  
The penthouse?

RICK STONE  
Guilty.

They start down the hall.

ANNIE  
Gotta admit, didn't expect-

RICK STONE  
(cuts in)  
A guy who lives in a penthouse to  
look like a bum?

ANNIE  
I was gonna say "be so helpful."

Rick smirks, scratching the back of his neck.

RICK STONE  
Yeah, well... I don't usually get  
to chat with pretty women all that  
much.

ANNIE  
Could've fooled me.

RICK STONE  
(smirks)  
Probably the confidence booster I  
needed today.

ANNIE  
You're welcome.

They reach Annie's door.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
Well, this is me. Seriously-thanks  
for the help.

RICK STONE  
Anytime. I'm just a knock away.

ANNIE  
I'll keep that in mind-Rick, right?

RICK STONE  
That's me. Rick Stone. Be seeing  
you, Annie.

Rick heads back toward the elevator. Annie watches him go, a  
small smile playing on her lips. She unlocks her door and  
steps inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Rick Stone pedals fast down the busy street. He spots a growing crowd ahead—phones up, cameras rolling, voices buzzing. He slows, dismounts, weaving through the sea of bodies.

RICK STONE  
What's going on here then?

A BYSTANDER, eyes fixed forward, barely spares him a glance.

BYSTANDER  
Something crazy, there's cops  
everywhere.

Rick pushes forward, craning his neck.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CROWD:

A crime scene—locked down, sterile, yet chaotic. Forensics swarm the barricaded entrance of an OFFICE BUILDING. Cops hold back the prying eyes of the city.

Near the underground parking garage, two detectives stand—

DETECTIVE MANN, mid-40s, weathered, a man who's seen hell and shook its hand. Beside him, DETECTIVE LOUIS, younger, nervous, trying not to let the stench of death get to him.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
Well, this is a mess guv.

Mann's jaw tightens. He exhales, eyes scanning the mess.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Talk to me.

They move towards the building's entrance.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
Three crime bosses dead. Muscle dead. And three trucks, they were containing illegals, but the ones that survived the journey either got rounded up or fled last night.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
What were they all doing here?

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
We're not sure. But there's bodies upstairs, like a meet and handoff, but gone wrong.  
(MORE)

DETECTIVE. LOUIS (CONT'D)  
Forensics have bullet casings, but  
first impressions are they are  
custom made. There's a mess in the  
lift, we can't figure out who is  
what. They only know it's Caplan  
cause they identified his head.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Reckon it could be a turf thing?

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
Let's hope not huh. I thought those  
days had long passed.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Yeah, me too.

Paramedics roll a gurney past them. A sheet covers the corpse  
beneath.

Mann pulls it back.

DRIESDEN. Dead. A man who's dodged prison, bullets, and  
morality his entire life.

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
Driesden.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
King of the scumbags. Racketeering,  
Prostitution, trafficking. Always  
found the loophole.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Not this time.

Mann drops the sheet. The paramedics wheel Dresden away.

Mann's gaze shifts—something across the street.

Rick Stone pushing his bike into a comic book store.

"DR. KRONIC'S COMICS."

The sight stops Mann cold.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
You alright guv? look like you've  
seen a ghost.

Mann blinks, shakes it off.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Yeah. What's the deal with that  
comic shop over the road?

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
I dunno, it's been here bout 10  
years I think, ugly as hell. Why?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Doesn't matter. I'm tired and  
getting older and cases like these,  
always seem to remind us no matter  
what, we always make the same  
mistakes.

Louis nods, pulls an evidence bag from his coat.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
They found this on Driesden.

Inside—a letter, sealed, yellowed. Mann rips it open.

THE NOTE READS:

"STORMS COMING"

Mann's stomach knots. He seals the note back in the bag and  
hands it to Louis.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
This is fucked.

They push through the entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. COMIC BOOK STORE – THE SAME TIME.

The bell above the door DINGS as the old glass door creaks  
open.

DAMIEN (mid 20's,) enters, he looks back outside, uneasy at  
the crime scene investigation unfolding.

Rick sits behind the counter, he sips a coffee reading a  
book, unbothered.

DAMIEN  
Mornin' boss.

RICK STONE  
Alright.

Damien makes his way to the open door of the back room behind Rick, he takes off his jacket and hangs it.

DAMIEN  
What's the deal outside?

RICK STONE  
Apparently some people died last night.

DAMIEN  
In that empty ass old office block?

Rick looks up over his comic book.

RICK STONE  
I know right. Never ceases to amaze me the things that happen in this city.

DAMIEN  
Do you know what would amaze me?

RICK STONE  
What's that?

DAMIEN  
If we actually got a customer today.

RICK STONE  
Hey! come on now. That's not fair.  
We had a customer come in last week.

Damien pours himself a jug of coffee from the pot brewing under the counter.

DAMIEN  
Why do you do it boss? This place must cost a fortune, but yet you just keep it open.

RICK STONE  
I like reading comic books, this way I get them on release day.

DAMIEN  
Expensive way about doing it.

RICK STONE  
It's only money.

DAMIEN

Which is what a guy who has too  
much of it says.

(beat)

Fuck, if you really want to waste  
it you could just give it all to  
me.

(smirks)

I can spend that in a weekend.

RICK STONE

(chuckles)

I bet you could.

Rick closes his book, he places it down on the counter.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)

So, we doing the Chinese for lunch  
today?

DAMIEN

Ah dude, I don't think they're  
opening today.

RICK STONE

(confused)

Huh?

DAMIEN

You not seen the news? It got  
raided last night by immigration.

RICK STONE

Damn. I really liked their spring  
rolls.

Rick walks up to the window, he creaks the blinds open and  
looks out.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)

I hope they won't be there all day.  
Really brings the vibe of the area  
down.

Damien takes a sip of the coffee, he recoils at the taste of  
it.

DAMIEN

(spits, coughs, then)

The fuck is this?

RICK STONE

Oh yeah, don't drink that it's from  
yesterday.

DAMIEN  
Oh so now you tell me?

RICK STONE  
Yeah. I thought it was going to be  
funny.  
(beat)  
Didn't disappoint.

DAMIEN  
But you ain't laughin' Rick.

RICK STONE  
I am on the inside...

Rick flicks the open sign to "back in 10 minutes"

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
Now, let's go get a cup of coffee  
huh?

DAMIEN  
But we just opened.

RICK STONE  
Trust me, with that going on  
outside ain't no-one coming in here  
this morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Rick and Damien stride down a bustling city street. Winter air clashes with steam rolling from the sewers.

DAMIEN  
So, you took my advice yet?

RICK STONE  
What advice?

DAMIEN  
That dating app. Get yourself  
hooked up boss.

RICK STONE  
Damien, I got other things to do  
than "hooking up"

DAMIEN  
Yeah. Like?

RICK STONE  
I read, I play my piano, I keep it  
simple.

DAMIEN  
And lonely.

RICK STONE  
I'm not lonely. I like it this way.  
Less hassle.

Rick suddenly tenses up, eyes locking onto someone ahead.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
(under breath)  
Ah shit.

A sharp, familiar voice calls out.

AISHA (O.S.)  
Stoney?!

Rick and Damien approach AISHA (late 20s), effortlessly  
stylish, red hair tied back. She holds a tray of coffees

RICK STONE  
Ish! What - What are you doing  
here? Damn, you look great!

AISHA  
Thanks, I moved round here.  
Settling in and on a coffee run.  
And you? Still rocking the...  
whatever this is?

FROM THE DISTANCE: A CAMERA SHUTTER SNAPS-CLICK, CLICK,  
CLICK. Someone's watching.

RICK STONE  
Rugged charm. It's a choice.  
(beat)  
Wow, it's - It's been a while.

Rick's gaze drops to her hand—a sparkling ENGAGEMENT RING.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
Oh, and you're engaged now too.  
Congratulations.

Aisha instinctively hides her hand.

AISHA  
Th-Thank you. It was a sudden  
thing.

Damien, wide-eyed, looks between them like he just stumbled into a soap opera.

RICK STONE  
That's fantastic, I'm happy for  
you. I hope he's a decent guy.

AISHA  
He's a bit of a character, but he  
has good intentions.

RICK STONE  
Well, I won't keep you. It was  
really good to see you.

Aisha leans in, kisses his cheek.

AISHA  
You too.

She walks off. Rick and Damien head the other way.

DAMIEN  
You know who that was right?

RICK STONE  
Yeah, an old flame.

DAMIEN  
She was YOUR GIRLFRIEND?! Dude,  
she's all over the news. Engaged to  
freakin' KEVIN ANDERSON. The social  
media guy. Just landed a government  
gig.

RICK STONE  
Never heard of him

DAMIEN  
Are you kidding me?

RICK STONE  
What? I don't have a T.V and the  
news is really fucking depressing.

Damien looks back at Aisha, then at Rick, incredulous.

DAMIEN  
No wonder she left you. You  
ignorant ass.

RICK STONE  
(offended)  
ACTUALLY, it was me who did the  
breaking up. And I'm not ignorant,  
I just can't be arsed. BIG  
difference.

DAMIEN  
Damn bro.  
(beat)  
You were punching SO above your  
weight with her.

RICK STONE  
Shut the fuck up and get inside.

Rick shoves Damien into a coffee shop. Before stepping in, he steals one last glance back.

Rick exhales, a sad look hits him, he shrugs it off, turns and enters the cafe.

Aisha walks away, back turned.

She pauses, glances back, smiles softly-then keeps walking.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Detective MANN surveys the locked-down crime scene. The room is a mess-police tape, blood outlines, and chaos frozen in time. He glances out the window. A CROWD lingers beyond the cordon, eyes glued to the scene. Across the street, a COMIC BOOK STORE. Something about it itches at him.

His jaw tightens. He pulls out his phone and dials.

RING, RING.

MISS. EDISON (V.O.)  
This is not a good time.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
I don't care. I'm here cleaning up  
one of your messes.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - DAY

MISS EDISON (30s, sharp, unreadable) stands amidst half-unpacked boxes, a LEATHER-BOUND FILE in her hands. She stares through massive patio doors at a skyline view.

MISS. EDISON

I trust in your ability, Detective Chief Inspector. That's why you're on payroll.

DETECTIVE. MANN

Why though?

MISS. EDISON

Why what?

DETECTIVE. MANN

Why set up a deal the same night as an immigration raid?

MISS. EDISON

There wasn't anything planned for last night.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS

Well, Caplan, Driesden and Miranda are all here and they're all very dead.

The FRONT DOOR OPENS --

Edison straightens, shifts her tone. Business as usual.

MISS. EDISON

(confused)

I can assure you. Nothing was scheduled last night.

AISHA enters, carrying a tray of coffees. She sets one down, offers a polite smile. Edison barely acknowledges her.

MISS. EDISON (CONT'D)

Obviously I will double-check our schedule, but I assure you we had no business plans. Out of curiosity, where exactly did this happen?

Aisha sits at the breakfast counter, pretending not to listen.

DETECTIVE. MANN (V.O.)  
Some empty office on Bridge Street.  
Opposite Weng Chu's restaurant. And  
a comic book store.

MISS. EDISON  
Hmm. Not one of ours. Anything  
else?

Mann holds the note, he grimaces.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
There was a note, says "storms  
coming" that's all.

MISS. EDISON  
Keep me updated. Anyway, I have  
more pressing matters to attend so  
if you don't mind.

CLICK. The call ends.

Edison forces a pleasant smile at Aisha.

MISS. EDISON (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry about that. Always  
something happening at the office.

AISHA  
It's fine, is everything okay?

MISS. EDISON  
Yes, just a case of crossed-wires.

AISHA  
Cool, I hope you sort it.  
(curious)  
Where's Kevin?

From the bedroom, KEVIN ANDERSON (40s, brilliant, affable)  
emerges, straightening his tie.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
Right here, honey. Just getting  
ready for London.  
(kisses Aisha on head)  
Sure you don't want to come?

AISHA  
No. London is way to busy for my  
liking. Besides, business trips are  
always so boring, when you don't  
have to do the business.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
That is true.

MISS. EDISON  
Mr. Anderson, the driver will be  
here shortly.

Aisha eyes Kevin.

AISHA  
Have you taken your medication?

KEVIN ANDERSON  
Ah!

Miss Edison smoothly produces a PILL BOTTLE from her pocket, handing it over. Kevin shakes out TWO RED TABLETS, swallows them dry, then grabs a coffee from Aisha's tray.

AISHA  
You really shouldn't do that!

KEVIN ANDERSON  
Is that your professional opinion  
Doctor Lamar?

AISHA  
No. It's concerned fiancee opinion.  
You need to drink more water.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
But, where's the fun in that?  
(concerned)  
Are you going to be okay, with this  
unpacking in my absence?

Aisha straightens his tie.

AISHA  
I'll be fine. Music, girl-talk and  
unboxing.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
(sarcastic)  
Sounds delightful.

Miss Edison clears her throat, taps her watch. Kevin sighs, grabs his BRIEFCASE and JACKET.

AISHA  
Good luck with the Prime Minister,  
Mr. Advisor!

Kevin grins. He and Edison exit.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT COMPLEX - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The apartment door swings open. Kevin strides out, Miss. Edison close behind, heels clicking. A mountain of a man in a tailored suit—MR. TRENCH (40s, ex-military, always watching)—blocks their path. His eyes sweep the corridor, sharp, assessing.

MR. TRENCH  
(low, firm)  
Mr. Anderson sir, Your car is  
waiting downstairs.

Kevin barely slows, nods.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
Good. Take the night off, Trench.

Trench doesn't move. Miss Edison stiffens.

MISS. EDISON  
Are you sure that is a good idea?

Kevin reaches the elevator, presses the button. A beat.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
We're meeting the Prime Minister,  
not running a heist.  
(glances at Trench)  
Muscle's a bad look.

The elevator DINGS. Doors slide open.

Miss Edison hesitates.

MISS. EDISON  
Hmm. You do make a fair point.

Kevin steps inside, smirks.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
They wouldn't call me a genius if I  
didn't.

Trench exhales sharply. The doors start to close—

SLAM! The doors shut.

A tense silence as the elevator descends.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A busy mid-morning rush. RICK STONE and DAMIEN sit in a booth. Rick sips his coffee while Damien is glued to his phone, smirking.

RICK STONE  
You're always great company,  
Damien. Really engaging.

DAMIEN  
Hey, man, I got a date tonight.  
Again. Thanks to this app.

RICK STONE  
You're an animal.  
(nods to coffee cup)  
Another one?

DAMIEN  
Hell no. More of that and I'll be  
on the toilet all day.

RICK STONE  
Which is different to usual how?

DAMIEN  
Not my fault we have no customers.

RICK STONE  
(scoffs)  
You make a point.

Rick stands, stretches, cracks his back.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
I'm grabbing a tea, a cookie, and  
then we'll go, alright?

DAMIEN  
Yeah. cool. Whatever.

Rick weaves through the crowd toward the counter. An overly enthusiastic BARISTA beams at him.

BARISTA  
Mr. Stone! Same again?

RICK STONE  
Nah, tea, two sugars. And a cookie.  
One of the soft ones—I don't want  
crunch or crumbs. You get me?

BARISTA  
I get you.

The barista gets to work on making the drink.

BARISTA (CONT'D)  
So, you see that crazy sh- stuff  
going on over the road from your  
comic shop.

RICK STONE  
Yeah, pretty crazy right.

BARISTA  
You're telling me. I heard some of  
the cops this morning, they said it  
looked like a professional hit.

Rick stiffens. His coffee shop chill instantly vanishes.

RICK STONE  
(stunned)  
Really?

BARISTA  
Yeah. What's the world coming too?

RICK STONE  
No idea. Kinda depressing.

The barista returns with the tea and cookie.

BARISTA  
That's four, fifty.

Rick hands over a crip's twenty.

RICK STONE  
Keep the change.

BARISTA  
Really?

RICK STONE  
Buy some books. Buy a drink. Don't  
care. Just enjoy it.

He smirks and turns-

SMACK! A well-built man in a hoodie, BERKO, shoulders into  
him, spilling tea all over Rick's coat. Berko barely stops,  
marching toward the restrooms.

Rick looks down at the stain. Beat.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
(to self)  
You got to be kidding me!

He shakes his head, heads back to the booth. Damien notices the stain immediately.

DAMIEN  
Esh, isn't that --

RICK STONE  
(cuts in)  
Dry clean only. Yeah, yeah it is?

Rick grabs napkins, dabs at the mess.

DING! The front entrance swings open.

TRAVIS JACKS (60s, frazzled, nervous) steps inside, scanning the room. He spots Rick and Damien, beelines for the booth, and squeezes in next to Damien.

DAMIEN  
Hey! Personal space, man!

Rick squints, recognition dawning.

RICK STONE  
Uncle Travis? What the hell are you doing here?

TRAVIS  
Rick, I—I'm sorry to show up like this. But I had no choice.

RICK STONE  
Okay. Is everything alright?

TRAVIS  
No. I got a message from Ben last night.

Rick freezes. His pupils dilate.

RICK STONE  
That... That is impossible.

TRAVIS  
Yeah.

RICK STONE  
What did the message say?

Travis slides his phone across the table. Damien peeks over, confused.

Rick reads the message. His brow furrows.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
Storms coming?

TRAVIS  
That's all it said.

DAMIEN  
Okay, I'm sorry to interrupt this  
whole mystery novel vibe but—

RICK STONE  
(cuts in)  
Not now Damien.

Damien clamps up.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
(to Travis)  
So, what does that mean?

TRAVIS  
I thought you would know.

Before Rick can respond—

BERKO slides into the booth next to Rick, all casual. Rick immediately bristles.

RICK STONE  
Look, buddy, can't you see we're—

Travis goes pale. His voice drops to a whisper.

TRAVIS  
You!

BERKO  
(grins)  
Yeah. Hello Travis. You got old.  
Damn.

RICK STONE  
Who the fuck is this guy?

BERKO  
An old family friend. Travis here  
can confirm that.

TRAVIS  
What do you want Berko?

BERKO  
I need Ben Stone to come out and  
play.

Rick scoffs.

RICK STONE  
Are you out of your mind? Ben's -

TRAVIS  
(cuts in)  
Gone. He's done with this.

BERKO  
Yeah, figured that was going to be  
the answer.

He reaches into his jacket-

A SILENCED PISTOL appears. He levels it at Travis.

DAMIEN  
(eyes widenening)  
Uh --

BERKO  
But incentives always bring out  
that competitive edge.

PFT. PFT. Two silenced shots.

Travis jerks. Blood blooms across his chest. He slumps.

EVERYTHING SLOWS DOWN.

Berko turns the gun toward Rick-

BERKO (CONT'D)  
You will be the signal to bring him  
back in play.

Rick's eyes narrow. He grips his tea-

WHAM! Scalding liquid splashes into Berko's face.

BERKO (CONT'D)  
ARGH, YOU BURNED ME!

CHAOS. Customers SCREAM. Tables overturn. Some dive for  
cover, others make for the exit.

Berko stumbles back, clawing at his face. Rick shoves out of the booth—

RICK STONE  
Damien! Are you okay?

Damien stares, traumatized. Then—

He FAINTS.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
Fuck!

He turns—spots Berko recovering, making a break for the door.

Rick lunges, catching him from the side—

CRASH! They SMASH through a table, momentum carrying them toward the window—

SHATTER! They EXPLODE onto the street.

Rick and Berko roll onto the pavement, fists flying—

EXT. COFFEE SHOP/ CITY STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Rick and Berko SLAM onto the pavement, rolling over each other in a violent tangle. A stunned CROWD gathers, some backing away, others raising PHONES, recording the chaos.

Rick STRIKES first—his boot CONNECTS with Berko's wrist. The GUN skids across the sidewalk.

Rick POUNCES, pinning Berko with his full weight. His fist hovers, cocked, veins bulging with fury.

RICK STONE  
WHY? WHY DID YOU KILL HIM?!

Berko SPITS blood, then LAUGHS—a sick, twisted sound.

BERKO  
Cause, they wanted him dead. You too, but seem's like you got a little fight in you dontcha?

RICK STONE  
WHO? WHO ARE "THEY"?

Berko's eyes flicker—an opening. He EXPLODES upward, HEAD-BUTTING Rick. CRACK! Rick reels, his grip falters.

Berko SHOVES him off, scrambles to his feet, and BOLTS—SHOVING through the startled CROWD, knocking over a STREET VENDOR'S CART.

Rick shakes off the impact, wipes blood from his nose. His breath ragged, but his focus razor-sharp.

BYSTANDER  
Hey, you okay? There?

Rick doesn't answer—he's already in motion. He barrels through the crowd, determined, reckless—

BAM! A PURPLE MINI COOPER SLAMS into him. Rick rolls over the hood, SMASHES onto the asphalt.

A beat.

Rick groans, his body SCREAMING at him to stay down—but he shoves past the pain. He clammers up, staggering, and glares at the driver.

RICK STONE  
WATCH WHERE YOU'RE FUCKING DRIVING!

He doesn't wait for a response—he SPRINTS off, vanishing into the chaos.

RICK STONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Fuckin moron!

The MINI'S door swings open. ANNIE steps out, eyes wide, taking in the scene—the shattered coffee shop window, the gawking CROWD.

ANNIE  
(to self)  
This isn't good.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY/ BACK ALLEY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

A THUNDEROUS CRASH—Berko barrels through a stack of crates, sending them toppling behind him. He yanks down a row of trash bins, metal lids CLANGING as they spill garbage into the alley.

Rick charges through the chaos, dodging debris, his breath sharp and steady. A dumpster blocks his way—NO TIME TO GO AROUND. He plants a foot on its rim and VAULTS over, landing in stride.

Berko glances back, eyes widening. He didn't expect Rick to be this fast. He kicks over a wooden pallet, but Rick sidesteps and closes the gap.

A CHAIN-LINK FENCE looms ahead. No exits.

Rick grins, pushing harder.

RICK STONE  
What you gonna do now, fucker?!

Berko doesn't hesitate—he LAUNCHES himself at the fence, scaling it with spider-like agility. He swings his legs over and drops down with a cocky smirk.

Rick skids to a stop at the base of the fence, their eyes locking.

BERKO  
This has been fun. Real fun. But this game isn't for you!

He gives a mocking salute and SPRINTS away.

Rick clenches his jaw, sizing up the fence. No time to think. He grips the metal links and HAULS himself up—

HALFWAY UP—The fence JOLTS. It's loose. The metal GROANS under his weight.

RICK STONE  
Fucking guy!

He forces himself higher—NO CHOICE. The fence SWAYS dangerously. Rick throws himself over the top, barely catching his balance on the other side.

He HITS the ground running, his eyes locked on Berko's retreating figure.

The chase isn't over.

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY

Berko emerges from the alley way, he looks around at his options, the street is busy, a SHOPPING MALL beacons, with it's welcoming neon-light. Berko enters the busy crowds in an attempt to blend in.

Rick emerges from the alleyway, dirty, annoyed, focused, he scans around looking for any sign of Berko, FINALLY, noticing him entering the MALL.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - AT THE SAME TIME.

A HIGH-PITCHED RINGING drowns out everything.

CLOSE ON DAMIEN - His eyes flutter open, unfocused. He GROANS, wincing. The world around him is chaos-panicked patrons scramble, sirens WAIL outside.

He blinks hard. His vision sharpens.

Across from him-ANNIE, crouched over TRAVIS'S unconscious body, rifling through his jacket with practiced speed.

Damien tries to sit up-his head THROBS.

DAMIEN  
(hoarse, dazed)  
What... What happened?

Annie glances up. A smirk flickers across her lips. She tilts her head, voice syrupy sweet.

ANNIE  
Don't worry honey. Help is on the way.

WHAM! She SLAMS her fist into his face.

SMASH TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Berko strides in, head low. He yanks a hat off a stand, shoves it on, and ditches his coat into a trash bin-seamless. He merges with the crowd, weaving between shoppers, keeping his movements tight and controlled.

At the escalator, he steps on, pulling out his phone. He presses it to his ear.

RING.

A masked, SYNTHESIZED VOICE answers.

SYNTHESIZED VOICE (V.O.)  
Is it done?

BERKO  
You didn't tell me the brother knew  
how to fight!

SYNTHESIZED VOICE (V.O.)  
Doesn't matter. Washed out of the  
service. He's no real threat.

BERKO  
He threw hot tea in my face, he's  
chasing me. He's a problem.

SYNTHESIZED VOICE (V.O.)  
Handle it. I'll arrange for someone  
to pick him up. You cannot be  
identified. "WE" can't afford it.

BERKO  
Duly noted.

He reaches the top. Below—

Rick. He spots Berko. Eyes lock.

Rick shoves through the crowd, bulldozing up the escalator,  
bodies staggering in his wake.

Berko moves fast, scanning. A fire exit. A rooftop ladder.

BERKO (CONT'D)  
(Sotto, into phone)  
Taking the roof. Heading for the  
train station. Have the pickup  
ready—Big Pines Mall.

CLICK. Call ends.

Berko slams through the fire exit. His boots pound metal as  
he ascends the rooftop ladder.

Behind him—Rick bursts through. No hesitation. He grips the  
ladder. Starts climbing.

The chase tightens.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL/ ROOFTOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The HATCH EXPLODES open—BANG!

BERKO scrambles out, his boots crunching over the white gravel. He doesn't look back. He just runs.

RICK STONE hauls himself up after him, breath ragged, eyes locked on his target.

RICK STONE  
(yells)  
I AIN'T STOPPING FUCKO!

Berko skids to a stop, nostrils flaring. Enough. He spins-charges.

They CLASH-fists fly-

Berko CRACKS Rick across the jaw. Rick stumbles but counters-SMASH!-an uppercut to Berko's chin. Berko staggers, his PHONE LAUNCHING from his grip-

It tumbles through an OPEN SKYLIGHT-

DOWN-

CRASH-

-onto a vendor's AWNING in the mall below.

Rick shakes off the hit, eyes flicking to the phone, but-  
Berko's already moving. Running out of rooftop. Fast.

SIRENS WAIL-

Berko skids to the edge-

A LONG DROP. Traffic below. People like ants. A WIDE GAP to the next building.

Rick closes in-

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
(approaching)  
C'mon man, you ain't got nowhere  
else to go from here!

A HELICOPTER ROARS overhead-

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)  
THIS IS THE POLICE, STOP WHERE YOU  
ARE!

Berko clenches his jaw. Trapped.

Beat.

Then—

He RUNS. He LEAPS—

RICK STONE  
NO WAI--

Berko SNATCHES a POWER CABLE mid-air, his gloved hand SCORCHING across it, swinging to the next rooftop.

Rick skids to a stop, eyes wide.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
FUCK!

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)  
STOP! WE ARE ARMED, THIS IS YOUR  
LAST WARNING!

Rick exhales hard. No choice.

He RIPS OFF his jacket, wraps it around one hand. Runs.  
LEAPS—

Sails through the air—

SNAPS his jacket around the CABLE—

Starts to ZIP-LINE—

CREAK—

SNAP!—

Berko LOSES HIS GRIP—

He PLUMMETS—

Rick barely catches the broken cable—

SPARKS EXPLODE—

A CITY BLOCK LOSES POWER—

Rick SWINGS—SMASHES into the building's exterior.

His grip SLIPS—

He FALLS—

CRASHES through rain tarps—

BOUNCES off an awning—

TUMBLERS into a TRASH CAN—

LID SLAMS SHUT.

BLACKOUT.

Then—

EXT. STREET — MOMENTS LATER

EXT. STREET — MOMENTS LATER

Berko sprawls in a BROKEN HEAP. Legs twisted. Arms mangled. The crowd GASPS.

BERKO  
HE- HELP ME!

The HELICOPTER HOVERS. Traffic SCREECHES to a halt.

The TRASH CAN lid FLIES OPEN—

Rick hauls himself out, bruised, battered, covered in garbage. He staggers forward, eyes locked on Berko.

RICK STONE  
Who... Who sent you?!

Berko's lips quiver—

Then—

BAM! A BUS OBLITERATES HIM.

SILENCE.

Rick turns away as RED AND BLUE LIGHTS strobe across his face.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)  
Rick Stone?

RICK SPINS—

POP!—

TASER HOOKS PIERCE HIS CHEST—

BZZZT!

RICK CONVULSES—

BANG—

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A NEWS REPORT blares from the TELEVISION, illuminating the dimly lit room with flashing images of crime scenes.

NEWS REPORTER  
The violence in the city has  
claimed two lives, with a third  
suspect now in custody—

KEVIN ANDERSON sits stiffly on the sofa, face drained of color. He grips the armrest, staring at the screen, haunted.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
What the hell is wrong with people?

MISS EDISON, poised at the mini-bar, pours whiskey into two glasses. She glances back at Kevin, studying him.

MISS. EDISON  
Quite the spectacle. And to  
think—we were just there today.

Kevin exhales sharply, grabs his phone from the coffee table.

KEVIN ANDERSON  
I should call Aisha and check in  
with her.

He stands abruptly and strides out of the room, phone pressed to his ear.

Miss Edison watches him go, then sets his untouched drink down. Her expression darkens as she steps onto the BALCONY, overlooking the CITY OF LONDON. The skyline glows, but her eyes are cold.

She dials a number. The phone RINGS.

DETECTIVE. MANN (V.O.)  
Now really isn't the time.

MISS. EDISON  
I think now is the perfect time.  
What do you have for me?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DARK ROOM

DETECTIVE MANN stands before a TWO-WAY MIRROR, his reflection fractured by the glass. Beyond it, RICK STONE sits CUFFED to a table.

Mann inhales deeply, exhales.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Shooting at a coffee shop. Right  
around the corner from where your  
men were hit last night.

MISS. EDISON  
And.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
We have the shooter... Well, pieces  
of the shooter. But, I also have  
someone in custody. The owner of  
the comic bookstore, he chased the  
shooter onto the roof of the Grand  
Pine Mall.

Miss Edison tenses.

MISS. EDISON  
How does this concern me?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
He's Ben Stone's brother.

A beat. That name lands like a bomb.

MISS. EDISON  
Oh.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Yeah. I'm about to question him.

MISS. EDISON  
The last thing we need is that  
monster interfering. Keep me  
updated and I will update "The  
network"

DETECTIVE. MANN  
I will.

CLICK. The call ends.

Mann exhales, turning back to the TWO-WAY MIRROR.

Inside the INTERROGATION ROOM, RICK STONE—mid-30s, lean,  
calculating—sits CUFFED to the table. His expression is calm.  
Too calm.

The door CREAKS OPEN. DETECTIVE LOUIS enters the dark room, a  
FILE under his arm.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
Guv, this guy, he's got no record.  
All we found is that he washed out  
the military ten years ago.  
(flips file open)  
He's got money though, inherited so  
could be a pain if we can't stick  
anything to him.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
No record?

Louis hands Mann the file.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
Not even a blip. Just a trust fund,  
rich boy, who owns a comic store.

Mann exhales, rubbing his jaw.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Best find out what's going on then?

He turns to the interrogation room door, hand on the knob,  
then pauses.

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
Check with the hospital, the kid  
they brought in from the coffee  
shop see what he says.

DETECTIVE. LOUIS  
On it Guv!

Louis exits.

Mann steels himself and steps into the INTERROGATION ROOM. The door clicks shut behind him.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rick lifts his head from the table, blinking hard. He looks almost relieved as Detective Mann steps in. Almost.

RICK STONE

I don't know what to tell you. I had nothing to do with any of this.

Mann drops into the chair across from him, eyes sharp, measured, he places the file down on the table and opens it, he scans the pages, the air is tense.

DETECTIVE. MANN

Rick Stone, washed out the army, runs a comic bookstore, looking at you, laid back, so how did you end up in this mess?

RICK STONE

My uncle showed up at the coffee shop. We talked. Then outta nowhere-  
(voice tight)  
This guy... this fucking guy in a hood shoves in and unloads on him.  
(saddened)  
My uncle. My fucking uncle.

DETECTIVE. MANN

Shooter say anything before he fired?

RICK STONE

He asked about my brother.

DETECTIVE. MANN

Why?

Rick exhales, looks down

RICK STONE

My brother was a rough guy... back in the day.

DETECTIVE. MANN

And now?

RICK STONE  
He's dead. Died five years back.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
(surprised)  
You sure of that?

Rick meets his gaze, unblinking.

RICK STONE  
Pretty sure.

Ricks gaze narrows as he reflects back, then--

FLASH TO:

EXT. BOAT DECK - DAY - BLACK & WHITE MEMORY

BEN STONE (mid-20s) stands, eyes wide, frozen in disbelief.

BANG.

Blood sprays. Rick, standing opposite, is splattered. His expression mirrors Ben's--stunned, horrified.

FLASH TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

RICK STONE  
I was there when it happened.

Mann studies him, then--

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Hmm.

Mann stands. He moves to the cameras, starts unplugging them.

RICK STONE  
What.. What are you doing?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
I think...  
(unplugs last camera)  
We need a REAL talk chat.

Mann sits back down.

RICK STONE  
Do I need a solicitor?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
No. You need to leave town.  
Tonight.

RICK STONE  
Why?

Beat.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
How well did you know your brother?

RICK STONE  
(assessing Mann)  
Not as well as you do apparently.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
(scoffs)  
I personally never met him. But  
I've heard the story.

RICK STONE  
And what is that then detective?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Things used to be different.  
Organized crime was unruly,  
chaotic, constantly fighting.  
(beat)  
Then, one night someone sent a  
message, they'd done the  
impossible. They figured out who  
the puppet masters were, not just  
on a local level...  
(gestures big)  
I mean the whole world, the ones  
with everyone in their pockets.  
(leans in)  
A first. Never been done before.  
Uproar—until the host revealed  
himself.

Rick listens, locked in.

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
This guy—bold, confident—told them,  
cut the shit or face consequences.  
(grins coldly)  
Crime bosses scoffed. "What's he  
gonna do?"  
(beat)  
So he showed them.

Mann leans back.

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
He detonated a bomb—inside one of  
their heads.

Ricks brow raises.

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
Then he told them: they all had  
one, wired up. Step out of line?  
Boom. That guy was your brother.  
Ben Stone.

RICK STONE  
(scoffs)  
One hell of a bedtime story  
Detective.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Thing is, it isn't a story. After  
that, things got quiet. The bosses  
didn't like it. But with a bogey  
man on the trigger to their heads  
they laid low.

RICK STONE  
Good for them. Progressive.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
(laughs)  
No, you don't get me. They laid low  
but grew, tightened their grip  
without making waves, they worked  
together, forming a new "network"

INT. ANNIES APARTMENT - NIGHT

Annie stares at a kitchen counter. A phone. A wallet. She picks up the phone. It lights up— PASSWORD REQUIRED.

DETECTIVE. MANN (V.O.)  
So imagine, what would happen if  
they knew the guy who had the gun  
to their heads was dead.

Annie plugs the phone into her laptop. A decryption program runs.

ACCESS DENIED. SECURITY LOCKDOWN INITIATED.

ANNIE  
Shit.

She shuts the laptop, turns to a board plastered with photos—Rick, the comic store, the massacre site, police reports.

She steps to an image of Rick exiting the store. Grabs a marker. Circles it.

DETECTIVE. MANN (V.O.)  
What would that mean for his loved  
ones, for his family?

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Rick inhales slow. Air thick, heavy. Trouble.

RICK STONE  
It would mean quite the predicament  
wouldn't it?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Yeah. And no matter how much you  
run, they'll find you.

Mann rolls up his sleeve. A tattoo—thin, black-lined. "THE NETWORK."

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
So listen to me. Run.

RICK STONE  
You're one of them?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
After the threat, the network got  
in deep, they're now so deep you  
either work for them, don't know  
you work for them or you disappear,  
it's that simple.

RICK STONE  
None of that sounds simple.

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Yes I am one of them. So out of  
respect for your brother, "just  
incase" he is still out there. I'm  
giving you a chance to run

Mann unlocks Rick's cuffs, steps back.

DETECTIVE. MANN (CONT'D)  
Now. Let's get you outta here.

Rick hesitates.

RICK STONE  
Let me ask you something detective?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
Go on.

RICK STONE  
If my brother was really that  
terrifying...  
(beat)  
If he kept them in check all these  
years... and no one knew he was  
dead—  
(beat)  
Who the hell just stirred that  
hornet's nest?

DETECTIVE. MANN  
That's what scares me.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FACILITY - NIGHT

A dimly lit corridor stretches endlessly, lined with reinforced steel doors. The hum of unseen machinery vibrates through the walls. MR. ENIGMA (60s, grizzled, gravel-voiced, eyes like dead coals) strides forward, his polished shoes clicking like a metronome of doom.

To his right, behind thick glass, pharmacists in pristine white coats concoct a spectrum of pills and vials. The glow of fluorescent lights reflects off their cold, emotionless faces. They don't look up. They know better.

Further down, another window. A surveillance room. A dozen OPERATORS hunched over glowing monitors, scrolling through financial charts, crypto markets fluctuating wildly on a massive screen at the back. The numbers shift like a heartbeat. Enigma watches for a beat, smirks, then moves on.

Ahead, two BLACK-UNIFORMED GUARDS stiffen as he approaches. Rifles slung, helmets low. Statues with triggers.

MR. ENIGMA  
At ease.

They step aside, pushing open a set of reinforced double doors.

## INT. ENIGMA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The room is an elegant contradiction—luxury stitched into the bones of something ancient and cruel. The walls are lined with priceless artwork, each piece a stolen history. Between them, towering bookshelves whisper of power and forbidden knowledge.

A massive, built-in FISH TANK glows eerily behind his imposing desk. Exotic fish drift like ghosts in dark water. One of them—a sleek black eel—wraps itself around a smaller fish, crushing the life from it.

Enigma notices. He smiles.

He lowers into his chair, fingers steepled, and lifts an old rotary handset. He dials.

RING.

MR. ENIGMA

Miss. Edison. Three mid-level street leaders dead. An unknown assassin dead. Innocents dead. AND Ben Stones brother in the center of all of it. All in your region. Would you care to explain?

INTERCUT WITH:

## INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT.

MISS EDISON clutches her phone. The dim corridor around her seems to shrink. At the far end, KEVIN, stands in a room with the PRIME MINISTER. The conversation is hushed but tense.

MISS. EDISON

Mr. Enigma, sir... I assure you, I have everything under control.

## INT. ENIGMA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Enigma tilts his head, his smirk widening like a wound.

MR. ENIGMA

Miss Edison... you don't sound convinced. And that worries me.

INTERCUT WITH:

Miss Edison swallows. A bead of sweat creeps down her temple.

MISS. EDISON  
We're tracking all possible leads.  
Our people inside the police are  
working on it as we speak.

MR. ENIGMA  
(As if savoring fine wine)  
Mmm. That's what I like to hear.  
Now, tell me about our project.  
Have you noticed any changes in  
Anderson?

Miss Edison glances down at the small BOTTLE OF PILLS in her palm. The label reads: \*Dr. H. Anderson - Experimental Dosage\*. The red pills inside shifts ominously.

MISS. EDISON  
He's meeting with the Prime Minister as we speak. He has been more susceptible thanks to the medication. As for overall changes, I can't say I've seen any.

MR. ENIGMA  
Good. Keep him compliant. I want to know the moment we see... results.

MISS. EDISON  
Of course, sir.

MR. ENIGMA  
We're close Miss. Edison. A new age is coming. Keep an eye on the Stone situation though.

INT. ENIGMA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Enigma slowly places the phone back on its receiver. He leans back, inhaling deeply, as if relishing a secret only he knows.

With a deliberate motion, he picks up a sleek, black remote. Click.

A RECORD PLAYER activates, the needle dropping onto old vinyl. A classical concerto—haunting, tragic—fills the room.

The lights slowly DIM, the fish tank the only remaining glow. Enigma watches as the eel tightens its grip, the smaller fish twitching... then going still.

His grin lingers.

BLACKOUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Rain hammers down. Rick Stone steps out, water drenching his already battered leather jacket. He checks his cracked watch—useless.

RICK STONE  
(muttering)  
Dammit.

He fishes out his PHONE, holds it to his ear.

RING.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

Damien, bruised and bandaged, reclines on a gurney. A NURSE checks his vitals. His phone VIBRATES.

DAMIEN  
Hey, uh... am I good to take this?

NURSE  
You got ten seconds before I take it for you.

She walks off. Damien answers.

DAMIEN  
(groggy)  
Yo! You alive, boss? What the hell was that?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. POLICE STATION/ CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Rick strides down the steps, rain streaking his face.

RICK STONE  
Few cuts, few bruises. Just another day in the city, right?  
(sighs, then serious)  
Listen, I gotta shut down shop for a while.

DAMIEN  
Wow. This that serious huh?

RICK STONE  
Something like that. Look, some  
stuffs come up. I'll make sure  
you're looked after alright?

DAMIEN  
Great. Love being unemployed.  
(remembers)  
Oh! Heads-up, though. When I woke  
up at the coffee shop? There was  
this woman- smoking hot, like,  
ridiculously- Purple tints in her  
hair. Amazing -

RICK STONE  
Skip the fantasy Damien.

DAMIEN  
Right, right, yeah, anyway when I  
came to she was rifling through  
your dead uncles stuff. THEN, crazy  
bitch knocked me out.  
(smirks)  
But that smile though... Damn, it  
was like butter melting in a pan.

RICK STONE  
Damn. Damien you want to marry her?

A PURPLE MINI SCREECHES up to the curb in front of Rick.  
Window rolls down. ANNIE.

CLICK. Rick hangs up the call.

Rick's eyes flick to the dented front bumper-then to her  
smirking face.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
If this is about the damages-  
(nods to bonnet)  
Remember, I helped you move in this  
morning.

ANNIE  
(smirks)  
You walked out on me.

RICK STONE  
But this ain't about that is it?

ANNIE  
What makes you say that?

RICK STONE  
Cause my friend told me you were  
robbing my dead uncle. So?

Annie pulls a GUN, rests it casually on the window edge.

ANNIE  
So, how 'bout we have a chat?

Rick tilts his head, exhales sharply. Looks up at the sky.

RICK STONE  
Doesn't seem like I really have  
much of a choice do I?

She cocks the hammer.

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
Nope. Didn't think so.

Rick walks around gets in the front passenger side.

A ROOFTOP. A FIGURE watches through a SNIPER SCOPE.

Rick gets in. The MINI speeds off.

The WATCHER, clad in BLACK TACTICAL GEAR and FULL WHITE MASK, lowers the rifle, takes out a PHONE. A synthesized voice answers.

MASKED MAN  
The brother has been picked up by  
another player. Definitely not  
Network.

SYNTHESIZED VOICE (V.O.)  
Keep an eye on it. But stay hidden,  
we need to convince "the Network"  
Ben Stone is back.

The WATCHER pulls off his mask. TRENCH. Smirks.

TRENCH  
As you wish. But you should know, I  
heard him talking to the cop. He  
told them Ben was dead.

The VOICE LAUGHS.

SYNTHEZIZED VOICE (V.O.)  
The best trick the devil pulled was  
convincing the world he didn't  
exist.

CLICK. The call ends.

Trench packs up the rifle. Melts into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. PURPLE MINI - NIGHT - MOVING

Rick stares at the road ahead, trying to process everything. Annie, eyes locked on the road, holds a pistol steady on him with her free hand.

RICK STONE  
(sighs, deadpan)  
Got to appreciate automatics huh?  
(glances at Annie)  
So, you the one from... What did he  
call it?  
(beat)  
"The Network"? That you? You here  
to kill me?

ANNIE  
No.

RICK STONE  
So what do you want?

ANNIE  
I need your help.

Rick snorts, shaking his head.

RICK STONE  
Please. I don't know what I can do.  
Just a simple guy, who runs a comic  
bookstore. I've been shot at today,  
threatened and now kidnapped.  
(sighs, then frustrated)  
How the fuck could I possibly help?

Annie exhales, finally lowering the gun onto her lap. Rick  
clocks this immediately.

ANNIE  
We both know you're more than that  
don't we Rick?

ANNIE  
We both know you're more than that.

Rick raises a brow. He does *not* know what she's talking about.

RICK STONE  
You seen my record. I'm an army washout, Age 22. I've run a comic bookstore for ten years. Not exactly black-ops material.

Annie pulls something from her pocket—an OLD, BEAT-UP PHONE. She holds it up.

ANNIE  
This phone. Look familiar?

Rick frowns.

RICK STONE  
It looks old. But yeah, you stole my uncles phone.

ANNIE  
I need you to open it.

RICK STONE  
And why the fuck would I do that?

ANNIE  
Cause it has the trigger to the networks bombs on it.

A beat. That lands.

RICK STONE  
That's an interesting theory you got there.

Rick's jaw tightens. He shifts slightly, left hand creeping toward the door handle—Annie hasn't noticed yet.

ANNIE  
I know this was your brothers phone Rick.

RICK STONE  
Okay. Well this has been real fun --

Rick nods. Then—

SNATCHES the phone. YANKS the door handle—

RICK STONE (CONT'D)  
But I got to go!

Rick bails out of the moving car, phone in hand.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT.

Rick HITS the ground HARD, rolls, tumbles—HONKING HORNS, SKIDDING TIRES, he narrowly dodges traffic, scrambling to a TRAFFIC ISLAND.

He stands, battered, dusting himself off. Turns—

The PURPLE MINI SCREECHES into a 180, coming back for him.

RICK STONE  
Oh, come on!

He BOLTS, weaving through PEDESTRIANS into a NARROW BACK ALLEY.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Rick SPRINTS, desperate for a way out. Spots a GIANT DUMPSTER.

Stops. Groans.

RICK STONE  
(muttering)  
Today can well and truly fuck  
itself.

With no time to debate, he FLINGS open the lid and CLIMBS IN, pulling it shut.

A beat. Silence.

Annie enters the alley. Eyes scanning. The wind HOWLS, pushing trash along the pavement. She clenches her jaw, fists tight.

ANNIE  
(muttering)  
Son of a—

She pivots and storms off.

Silence. Then-

WHAM! The dumpster lid EXPLODES open. Rick BURSTS OUT, gasping-

-and immediately GAGS.

RICK STONE  
Gross, what the fuck did I just  
marinate in?

He doubles over, wheezing. Then remembers-

He yanks the battered phone from his pocket. A lead. Maybe a way out of this mess.

He squares his shoulders, wipes grime from his face, and marches down the alley.

He's pissed. And now, he's got a mission.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMIC BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Rick limps up to the entrance, scanning the empty street. Too quiet.

He exhales, wincing, and digs out his keys. One last glance around, then he slips inside.

INT. COMIC BOOK STORE - CONTINUOUS

The door shuts. Rick leans against it, sucking in air through gritted teeth. He cradles his ribs, mutters a curse, then pinches the bridge of his nose.

Not the night he planned.

He pushes off the door and heads toward the BACKROOM.

INT. COMIC BOOKSTORE - BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rick shoves aside a pile of boxes, revealing a hidden safe. His fingers fly over the keypad-

BEEP.

The door clicks open. Inside: stacks of cash, a few passports, and a SMITH & WESSON 9MM.

He stares at them. A choice to make.

Behind him-

The soft CREAK of the front door opening.

INT. COMIC BOOKSTORE

A shadow slips inside. Damien. Careful, quiet, moving toward the BACKROOM.

INT. COMIC BOOKSTORE - BACKROOM

Damien steps over the threshold-

CLICK.

The unmistakable sound of a gun cocking.

DAMIEN

Oh God. Please, please don't shoot  
me!

Rick exhales sharply and lowers the gun.

RICK STONE

Jesus. Damien. What are you doing  
here?

Rick turns away, yanks a first-aid kit from the wall. He peels off his shirt-his torso is a canvas of bruises and cuts. He starts patching himself up.

DAMIEN

I, uh... left my backpack and coat.  
Figured I'd grab 'em, lock up  
properly-.

Damien moves towards his coat and backpack, hanging from the wall near a small coffee table.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

You sounded like--

His eyes drift. Something catches his attention.

The passports. Spread out on the table.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

Dude. Why do you have multiple  
passports?

Rick doesn't look up

RICK STONE  
Don't worry about it.

DAMIEN  
You just pulled a gun on me. And  
now I'm finding passports. I am a  
little worried.

Damien ignores him, flipping one open. The name: BEN STONE.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)  
Dude, what the fuck?

RICK STONE  
I told you not to look.

DAMIEN  
You're not just a comic bookstore  
guy are you?

Rick sighs. He picks up the gun and levels it at Damien.

RICK STONE  
Now we have to have a real awkward  
conversation.

FADE TO BLACK:

TO BE CONTINUED...