

ROCKING CHAIR MONEY

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A 1948 Dodge passes as the camera pushes in toward the house.

SUPER: "Cleveland, Ohio 1948"

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Two boys, JOHN KARAMU (11) Black and ZACK GERBER (10) White, play an intense game of checkers on a table covered with empty beer cans, playing cards, a lipstick-smearred glass, and an unemployment claim notice while a black-and-white television blares a Hamm's beer commercial in the background.

ZACK  
(excited)  
What if I did this?

Zack removes another checker from the board.

John smiles as he retaliates with a double move of his own. A disheveled MACK BERGER (39) observes from the doorway.

JOHN  
That was nice, but I had to do it  
twice.

ZACK  
(perplexed)  
Did you do that?

Zack makes his next harmless move.

John smiles confidently like a cat about to pounce on a mouse.

JOHN  
I planned that about two moves ago,  
but this...  
(beat)  
That's how you win a game!

John sweeps the board and stuns Zack.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
I knew the outcome before we  
started.

Unbeknownst to the boys, Mr. Berger walks over to a partially gift-wrapped chess set.

He drops it on the table, interrupting their game. He walks to the fridge, grabs a bottled beer, and leans against the sink.

MACK  
 (drunk singing)  
 Happy Birthday to Zack Berger, La-  
 La-La.

An embarrassed Zack tries to play it off, glancing over to John, who offers an empathetic expression.

ZACK  
 (off John)  
 Thanks, Dad!

MACK  
 Don't thank me, it was something  
 your momma wanted you to have  
 before she ran off with that...

Mack takes a long drink while staring at John.

His concentration is broken by a KNOCK on the door.

He shakes his head and leaves the room.

John watches Max exit.

Zack unwraps the box and starts reading over the chess game rules.

JOHN  
 (to Zack)  
 Happy Birthday, Zack! But you do  
 know that I am still older than  
 you, right?

ZACK  
 We are both 11, buddy!

JOHN  
 Well, I guess even a broken clock  
 is right twice a day

Both boys laugh. As they place the chess pieces on the board, Mr. Berger reenters the room with John's father, JEROME KARAMU (40), a troubled pastor with a penchant for salvation.

JEROME  
 (to John)  
 Let's go, sport! We have to get  
 going.

He glances around the room and spots scraps of gift wrapping.

Mack scurries to pick up the place a bit, tossing items on the table into a cardboard box, including the unemployment notice that Jerome sees before it is snatched and stuffed into Mack's pocket.

Jerome conceals his cross necklace under his collar.

JEROME (CONT'D)

Hi Zack, looks like someone is getting older. Happy Birthday, sport!

JOHN

That's what I said, right before you showed up, and because it...

JEROME

(interrupts)

That's good, son. Let's go.

John, sensing that Jerome is uncomfortable and in a hurry to leave, decides to prolong the visit.

JOHN

And go we will. But what I didn't get to say was...

Glances over to Zack for help.

Zack picks up on his queue and intervenes.

ZACK

(to Jerome and Mack)

I remember, "Because it was Zack's or MY birthday, maybe you and my dad could teach us how to play this game."

The boys smile, knowing that their dads can't resist.

EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

Mack and Jerome stand on the porch as Zack and John chase each other around the front yard.

JEROME

Thanks for letting our sons play together.

MACK

After what your daddy did for mine,  
I wouldn't have it any other way.

JEROME

If your mother, bless her soul,  
knew about that child.

MACK

(embarrassed)

The family that raised her could do  
a better job than us. He had no  
choice.

Jerome steps off the porch and looks back at Mack, who is  
looking at Zack.

JEROME

(off Zack)

But you do!

(beat)

It's your move, Mack. That boy  
needs a father.

Jerome motions for John to get in the car.

Mack is at a loss for words, but he has to say something. He  
watches Jerome as he embraces John with a playful gesture.

MACK

We all do! Even you, Preacher!

Zack observes as Mack motions for him to go inside.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

The place is packed, and the music is good. People make their  
way from the bar to the dance floor, and sophistication is  
the theme.

SUPER: "Detroit 1970"

Well-dressed patrons move around with purpose. Among them is  
John, who appears to be looking for someone in particular. He  
finds a seat, orders a drink, and sits back and enjoys the  
music. He sips his cognac, closes his eyes while living in  
the moment. A moment that would soon be interrupted when he  
is spotted by Zack.

ZACK

(excited)

John? Well, I be...

John stands, and Zack makes a half-hearted attempt at a military salute before the two embrace.

JOHN

Z-Berg! Zack! You are looking good for someone who left me to do Uncle Sam's work near Saigon.

ZACK

It's a dirty job, and somebody had to do it. But that somebody was nobody I knew, so I split the scene, you know what I mean.

JOHN

How's life in Canada?

ZACK

Cold! But back-up. Were you in a war zone? Did you see a lot of action and ugly stuff?

JOHN

The detail I was assigned to was actually based in Ubon, Thailand.

John pauses as if what he is sharing with Zack brings back memories for him. Zack leans in, but as a Conscientious Objector, doesn't know what to say.

JOHN (CONT'D)

If you are wondering if I ever had to whip out my weapon and use it on someone...?

John drops his head as if to regain his composure before speaking. He appears to be overtaken by reliving a traumatic experience.

ZACK

(concerned)

It's okay. You don't have to talk about it.

John waves it off and strengthens his resolve.

JOHN

(emotional)

There were nights when it was surreal, Zack, I mean, I can still see the bodies lying there, naked or partially dressed.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

The loud sounds, music, moaning,  
and the glass bottles. But my good  
friend from Tennessee stayed by my  
side.

ZACK

Who was that? Is he still...  
(beat)  
around?

JOHN

Private Daniels. But we called him  
JD.

ZACK

What does the "J" stand for?

John is silent. He appears to be in heavy thought. He looks through Zack, staring off in the distance.

Zack is afraid that John is experiencing a PTSD episode. He then looks in the direction of the bar.

At the bar, the waiter is pouring a patron a drink from a bottle of Jack Daniel's.

Zack snaps back to look at John, who is smiling.

They both erupt into laughter. Both do 'double-takes' as if they can't believe they are seeing each other. John places a birthday card on the table.

ZACK (CONT'D)

You remembered!

JOHN

Do you think I would forget my best  
friend's birthday?

ZACK

Well, being that I had nearly four  
of them in your absence, I worried  
that you might not show.

JOHN

Looks like 'well-being' is what you  
have been doing. Check you out, Mr.  
Fitness. Must be that Canadian  
Bacon, eh?

ZACK

Nothing special, just long runs in  
our northern park. You should join  
me sometime.

JOHN  
I will, just say when.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

The two men reminisce and enjoy the night.

JOHN  
You know, wife, life, man, it's  
such a blur.

Someone catches John's attention, and he glances over and smiles, while Jack is oblivious to John's distraction.

ZACK  
You! Married with Kids?

John stands and responds quickly before motioning to Zack that he'll be back.

JOHN  
Was! No!

Zack watches as John heads toward the dance floor.

GERTRUDE HIGGINBOTHAM (40s), an attractive woman dressed to kill, approaches the table, catching Zack off guard.

GERTRUDE  
And you?

Zack is impressed with both her demeanor and looks.

ZACK  
Excuse me?

GERTRUDE  
You asked your friend a very  
important question, but I didn't  
hear his answer.

ZACK  
What makes you think that?

GERTRUDE  
Think what?

ZACK  
That he was my friend?

GERTRUDE  
(impressed)  
Nice move.

Zack is intrigued.

ZACK  
And what move was that?

GERTRUDE  
It's called deflection. I asked a specific question, but you chose to respond to what I didn't ask, thus making me...

ZACK  
(interrupts)  
What?

Gertrude picks up her wine glass and takes a sip before responding.

GERTRUDE  
Do you like playing games,  
Mister...?

ZACK  
(interrupts proudly)  
Berger!

Gertrude looks directly into his eyes.

GERTRUDE  
I didn't ask for your name,  
Zachary.

Zack is surprised that she knows his name. But before he can respond, she leans in toward him.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
My favorite game is Hide & Seek.  
What's yours?

ZACK  
As a kid, I used to play checkers.

GERTRUDE  
I thought you and John played  
chess.

Zack is shocked and perplexed that she knows so much.

ZACK  
Wait! How did you know that?

GERTRUDE

You told me. Well, not exactly.  
When you greeted your childhood  
friend, John, he called you Zack,  
which is probably short for Zachary  
Berger.

Zack sips on his drink while she speaks.

ZACK

And?

GERTRUDE

What's John's last name?

ZACK

(curious)  
Karamu.

GERTRUDE

Spell it.

ZACK

K-A-R-A-M-U.

GERTRUDE

Where was I? Oh, yes, you and John  
Karamu played checkers as kids and  
probably migrated to chess, which,  
by the way, is a much more  
sophisticated game. Do you agree?

ZACK

Agree? With what?

GERTRUDE

That you two like to play games.

ZACK

I didn't say that.

GERTRUDE

You didn't have to.

Gertrude stands and gathers herself. Zack stands.

ZACK

Who are you?

GERTRUDE

You already know.

As Gertrude walks away, Zack spots a folded paper on her  
seat.



WILLIAM  
 (sarcastic)  
 No, I'm planting flowers in  
 Denmark! My suit, have you seen it?

Gertrude places her dish on the desk, walks over to the closet, and retrieves the suit.

GERTRUDE  
 This one?  
 (beat)  
 So, where are you headed?

WILLIAM  
 Thanks!

William snatches it and places it into the suitcase.

She picks up her dish and begins to walk out of the room.

He notices that her teacup left a ring on the furniture.

GERTRUDE  
 I'll clean it up!

WILLIAM  
 (irritated)  
 How many times do I have to remind  
 you to appreciate the finer things?  
 If you can't take care,  
 (beat)  
 Maybe you shouldn't have them!

Gertrude SEES William place a card and a box of chocolate in the suitcase.

GERTRUDE  
 (to herself)  
 You're allergic to chocolate.  
 (loudly with sarcasm)  
 Can I get you anything else? Some  
 coffee, a ride to the airport, a  
 hug?

William tosses some underwear and a pair of swimming trunks into his suitcase before closing and locking it.

He stares sadly at Gertrude.

WILLIAM  
 Look, this business deal we have  
 been working on is about to close.

He places his hands on her shoulders in an effort to convince her.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I will be in Toronto for the next week to finalize matters. When I am back, we can slow down and maybe take that trip you have been asking for, huh?

We HEAR a car horn outside.

He picks up his suitcase.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Sounds like my taxi.

GERTRUDE

You'd better get going. Don't want to be late.

William kisses her on the forehead.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gertrude watches as William enters the taxi.

The driver closes the trunk, and the car speeds off.

She stares off into the distance as a tear slowly rolls down her cheek.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She places the dishes in the sink, and the house phone rings.

GERTRUDE

Hello.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Zack is holding the note Gertrude left for him at the club.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL

ZACK

So the number is real?

GERTRUDE

Maybe. Or all of this is just an illusion.

ZACK  
Perception for some is reality, so  
I am told.

GERTRUDE  
You never answered my question?

Zack is intrigued.

ZACK  
And what question is that?

GERTRUDE  
I'll tell you the next time I see  
you.

ZACK  
Where and when will that be?

GERTRUDE  
My place. Today.

END PHONE CALL

INT. LUXURY HOME - LATER

The room is quiet, and the silence is broken by the sounds of tapping on the front door.

Gertrude walks slowly toward the door. She pauses, takes a deep breath, and opens it.

Zack enters and follows Gertrude to the living room.

He nods, impressed with the home.

They take seats opposite each other.

On the table, next to a chess clock, Zack sees a tray of crumpets carefully positioned on some fine China along with two Lenox footed cup and saucers.

She pours Zack a cup of tea and hands it to him.

He spies the crumpets.

ZACK  
Thank you. This is nice.

GERTRUDE  
Really, how so?

Zack scans the room before answering.

ZACK

Look at this place, it's beautiful.  
The furniture, this room, you, I  
mean, it speaks for itself.

After a moment of awkward silence, Gertrude walks over to the bar.

GERTRUDE

How forgetful of me. May I pour you  
a beverage?

ZACK

Only if I can drink it.

GERTRUDE

Of course, what will it be, Mr.  
Berger?

ZACK

Quit with the formalities, my name  
is Zachary.

GERTRUDE

I see. What do your friends call  
you?

ZACK

(smiling)  
Zack.

Gertrude points to a large oil painting of William Higginbotham.

GERTRUDE

(off Zack)  
Mr. Berger, what do you think of  
this painting?

ZACK

It's huge. Looks like an original,  
possibly oil or acrylic. A  
distinguished gentleman, no doubt.

GERTRUDE

That is Mr. Higginbotham, William  
E., to be exact.

ZACK

Your grandfather?

GERTRUDE

Oh no, he's...  
(beat)  
My husband.

Shock is seen on Zack's face, but he tries to play it off.

She notices before topping off his drink.

Zack shows empathy with a sad face.

ZACK

Is he...?

GERTRUDE

Out of the country and not expected  
to return for another week.

Zack is lost for words and pauses.

ZACK

Seems like a nice guy.

GERTRUDE

(off Zack)  
And I quote, "Perception for some  
is reality, so I am told."

EXT. LUXURY HOME - NIGHT

Someone is lurking in the dark.

John (unrecognizable in dark clothing) approaches the house,  
glancing in the windows until his silhouette spots Gertrude  
and a male guest.

A camera is raised, and a photo of an unidentifiable Zack is  
snapped.

The sound of a barking dog scares the person away before  
additional photos are taken.

INT. LUXURY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gertrude hears a dog frantically barking and peers out of the  
window in response.

She is joined by Zack.

EXT. LUXURY HOME - CONTINUOUS

The photographer turns and focuses on the two people in the window.

PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)  
(Whispers)  
Say cheese!

We hear the sound of the shutter capturing several shots, including one of Gertrude looking directly into the lens.

With the sound of the final shot, we are transported immediately to...

EXT. CALIFORNIA HOME - MORNING

The sky is bright, and the birds are doing what they do. Gardeners attend to the property of the homeowners, while joggers (in modern jogging clothes) take advantage of the weather.

SUPER: "Current day."

An elderly person (Zack Gerber, now in his 80s), wearing gloves, walks toward the house. We are unable to see the person's face.

As he approaches the house, he places a leather bag on the ground and pulls out a piece of paper as if to verify the address.

Satisfied, he raises his cellphone to capture a photo of the house, turn to capture the license plate of the 2020 Ford Fusion parked in the driveway.

He picks up the bag and proceeds to the front door.

He presses the doorbell.

After a short while, the door opens, and we follow Zack into the home.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - CONTINUOUS

From Zack's POV (Point of View), we arrive at a table where an elderly man is seated. It is John Karamu (80s) placing the pieces on a chessboard.

JOHN  
 (looking at the chess  
 pieces)  
 Didn't think you would show.

John looks up at the aged Zack. His face looks the same, give or take 50 years.

ZACK  
 Do you think I'd forget my best  
 friend's birthday?

JOHN  
 The question is...

Zack looks directly at John with the makings of a slight grin.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
 Can you remember what I told you to  
 forget?

CUT TO BLACK.

INSERT TITLE CARD:  
 "Rocking Chair Money"

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Zack opens the leather bag and pulls out the original chessboard he received on his eleventh birthday to John's surprise.

Both men reposition their chess pieces.

JOHN (O.C.)  
 It's your move.

John's caretaker, EVELYN HERNANDEZ (30s, strict), enters the room and places a glass of water on the table and two pills in his hand.

EVELYN  
 It's that time.

She smiles and nods at Zack, while keeping an eagle eye on John, who pretends to take the medicine.

JOHN  
 (to Evelyn)  
 You know, staring can be considered  
 rude in some cultures.

EVELYN  
Open, let me see!

John opens his mouth wide.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
Your hands!

John looks directly at Zack as he swallows both pills.

ZACK  
Tough nurse, what's her name?

John watches Evelyn leave the room.

JOHN  
I don't remember. I just call her  
Gert.

ZACK  
Is that really her name?

Zack is taken aback.

JOHN  
Could be Fred, but I am embarrassed  
to ask.

John points to a pill container on the table.

Zack picks it up to read the label.

ZACK  
(humorous)  
What drugs are people taking these  
days?

JOHN  
Says it's supposed to help with my  
cognitive function.

ZACK  
Does it?

Evelyn returns to the room carrying a tray with a pot of tea  
and crumpets.

JOHN  
(whispers so Evelyn can't  
hear his response)  
I don't remember.

Zack puts the container down. He fixes his tea and watches as  
she pours John a cup.

Zack smiles at her and introduces himself.

ZACK  
Hello, my name is Zack. And you  
are?

John cuts Evelyn off before she can respond.

JOHN  
(abruptly)  
Busy! That's who she is.

EVELYN  
(to Zack)  
Nice to meet you! Will you be  
joining us for lunch?

JOHN  
(to Zack)  
Yes, that would be great, if you  
have time. Can you?

ZACK  
At this stage, I have nothing but  
time.

Evelyn exits the room.

JOHN  
(under his breath)  
Thanks, Gertrude.

ZACK  
(to John)  
I haven't heard that name in years.

JOHN  
It's been 25 years, give or take a  
few parole hearings.

ZACK  
Yeah, those were the worst.

JOHN  
The hearings or the accommodations?

ZACK  
Both, but at least San Quentin had  
a view.

JOHN  
If you say so, I couldn't see it  
from Leavenworth.

The chess pieces are set. Both men ready themselves for the match.

At once, John makes the first move.

Zack gives him a 'you've-got-to-be-kidding' look.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Age before beauty.

Zack ponders and makes his first move.

ZACK  
Yeah, right! Next thing you'll tell me is that youth is wasted on the young.

John studies the board.

JOHN  
True.  
(beat)  
I am older than you. And with age...  
(beat)  
comes wisdom.

John makes his second move to deliver checkmate with his queen.

Zack is stunned and bangs the table.

ZACK  
No way!

John relishes the moment and finishes his tea while offering Zack a crumpet.

JOHN  
Fool's Mate! It happens when we make mistakes.

ZACK  
And we've made a few.

JOHN  
We? Speak for yourself

Both men reset their pieces on the board. Zack makes the first move and picks at his crumpet.

CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY HOME - NIGHT

Gertrude walks away from the window, and Zack follows her to the living room.

GERTRUDE  
They only bark in the dark.

Once seated, a confused Zack gulps his drink.

ZACK  
The dogs?

GERTRUDE  
There's only one, and you have no idea.

Zack realizes she's not talking about canines.

ZACK  
Does he bite, or is it his bark that bothers you?

GERTRUDE  
Both.

ZACK  
Why don't you leave him?

Gertrude is visibly upset and looks directly into Zack's eyes before speaking.

GERTRUDE  
(through tears)  
Because he's leaving me.

She stands and starts pacing the room, becoming more agitated with every breath.

ZACK  
Why would he do that?

GERTRUDE  
It's part of his plan. He divorces me and...

ZACK  
(interrupts)  
And you move on with your life.

GERTRUDE  
(frantically speaking)  
William and his new wife?  
(beat)  
(MORE)

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

We had a life together; I remember when we met. My friends are laughing at me because of his age, my putting up with his infidelity, and moving into this house.

Zack tries to console her.

He slowly joins her on the sofa.

She pats the tears from her eyes and blows her nose into the same tissue paper.

ZACK

Our past can sometimes be painful.

GERTRUDE

Sometimes? It's always painful. We just choose to cherry-pick those moments to make it bearable.

ZACK

(under his breath)  
Selective amnesia.

GERTRUDE

(sniffing)  
What?

ZACK

Recalling what you want to and forgetting what you don't...

GERTRUDE

Want to remember!

ZACK (CONT'D)

Want to remember!

They both smile, realizing that they spoke at the same time.

ZACK (CONT'D)

Exactly! We can't live in the past.

GERTRUDE

Unless  
(beat)  
The past lives in us.

Gertrude walks over to the painting of William. Her frown turns into a smile as she looks at Zack.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

(off William's portrait)  
So, what's the best way to predict the future...

(MORE)

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

(beat)  
Zachary?

ZACK  
You create it.

INT. LUXURY HOME - LATER

Gertrude returns to the room with a more confident demeanor.

Zack stands as if greeting royalty.

She looks over at the chessboard, grabs the chess clock, and places it on the table in front of Zack.

GERTRUDE  
(in a seductive voice)  
Would you like to play?

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK TRAIL - NOON

John and Zack jog for a while and rest near an old wooden fence.

JOHN  
(concerned)  
That seems odd. First of all, why would you go to her home?

ZACK  
She invited me!

JOHN  
My proctologist invites me to a periodic exam, but that doesn't mean I have to go.

ZACK  
But she's different.

John is in disbelief.

JOHN  
Yeah, she's different; she's older, she's married, she's...

Zack cuts him off.

ZACK  
(defensive)  
It's not like that!

JOHN  
(curious)  
Tell me you didn't...

ZACK  
(interrupts)  
Okay, I didn't.

John looks him directly in his eyes.

JOHN  
(slowly but firmly)  
Did you?

ZACK  
I just told you.

JOHN  
That you didn't?

ZACK  
That's what you told me to say!

JOHN  
I didn't do that!

ZACK  
That's what I said!

JOHN  
So you spend most of the night at  
her place, and all you got is a sob  
story? I don't believe it.

ZACK  
She gave me this.

Zack pulls an engraved watch out of his pocket.

JOHN  
(shocked, shouting)  
A man's watch?

There is a long silence as both men take a moment to think.

John looks through a pair of binoculars at a bird perched in  
a tree.

He approaches Zack.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Zack, she's playing you, man. What MARRIED woman would invite some newly acquainted guy into her home...to tell him about her broken heart and mean husband, whose gold watch you are holding, without having some kind of agenda. It doesn't make sense!

ZACK

She needs help.

JOHN

Not from you!

ZACK

She's in trouble.

JOHN

Operative pronoun 'She' is in trouble! Not 'YOU.'

John grabs Zack by the shoulders and looks him in the eye.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Stay away from this scheming woman. She's dangerous.

Zack shrugs it off and attempts to defend his position.

ZACK

She wants to meet me again.

JOHN

When?

ZACK

Tonight.

JOHN

Don't go!

ZACK

I said I would.

John is disgusted with Zack's decision.

JOHN

You sound like my grandfather. A man of his word, despite the consequences.

ZACK  
(embarrassed)  
That was then. This is now.

JOHN  
So now is the time for you to find  
yourself a phone booth and tell  
her.

ZACK  
And tell her what?

JOHN  
(smiling)  
That your name is Bennett and you  
ain't in it.

John slaps Zack on the shoulder and starts walking away.

ZACK  
Man, you sound crazy.

John keeps walking and doesn't look back.

JOHN  
(shouting)  
Crazy about my friend, that's all.

Zack heads off in the opposite direction.

John turns around as Zack disappears in the distance.

John appears worried and uncomfortable with the situation.

EXT. ZACK'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

As John approaches, we see Zack exiting his apartment and heading west toward Gertrude's house.

Unbeknownst to Zack, John is following him to her home.

EXT./INT. LUXURY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

There is a KNOCK on the door, and Gertrude opens it.

From her POV, we see a smiling Zack. He enters, walking past her, and she closes and locks the door.

Gertrude leads Zack into an office.

She motions for him to sit.

He notices a large backpack on the desk.

GERTRUDE  
I thought about our conversation.

ZACK  
As did I and...

GERTRUDE  
(interrupting)  
You were right!

ZACK  
(confused, intrigued)  
About what?

GERTRUDE  
Futures are being created, and our  
pasts are being forgotten.

Zack clears his throat and decides to end this little charade.

ZACK  
I spoke with my friend.

GERTRUDE  
John?

ZACK  
Yes.

GERTRUDE  
Good. That's good.

Zack looks totally perplexed.

ZACK  
Good?

GERTRUDE  
Of course, Zack. A friend of yours  
is a friend of mine.

Zack freezes, not knowing what to say or think.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
Besides, he's part of the plan.

ZACK  
(surprised)  
Plan? What are you talking about?

GERTRUDE  
(sinister demeanor)  
Hide and seek. I told you when we  
first met.

ZACK  
But...

GERTRUDE  
(interrupts)  
Talk is cheap, but action is rich.

She turns to face Zack, then places an envelope into his pocket.

Zack is confused, assuming the envelope contains cash and that she is attempting to pay him to keep quiet (hush money).

As Gertrude walks over toward the desk, he blurts out.

ZACK  
Look, I don't want your money or  
play some stupid game.

She unzips the backpack that is filled with over \$1 million dollars in cash.

EXT. LUXURY HOME - DUSK

While observing from a distance, John notices a man (likely Gertrude's husband, William Higginbotham) walking toward the house.

John fears potential trouble, and he rushes to the home.

INT. LUXURY HOME - CONTINUOUS

As William enters his home office, he sees a backpack full of cash and is immediately confronted by the sight of an unknown man (Zack).

WILLIAM  
(yelling)  
Gert!

Confused and irate, he lunges at Gertrude and misses her as Zack intercepts him.

When John rushes in, he sees William attacking Zack and rushes over to break up the mayhem.

In the process, John yanks William off Zack and inadvertently slips, causing the man to hit his head on the edge of the table as they both crash to the floor.

John springs up, but William lies there bleeding from his head. He is lifeless, but no one tries to revive him.

A shocked Gertrude, Zack, and John stand over his dead body.

The doorbell RINGS.

Panic ensues as the three try to figure out what to do, considering this impromptu disaster.

JOHN  
(to Gertrude)  
Are you expecting somebody?

GERTRUDE  
Yes, a live husband!

Zack sees blood splatter on Gertrude and motions for John to get the door. He reaches the door and opens it.

Match CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - AFTERNOON

As the door slowly opens, we see the smiling face of Evelyn, who enters carrying food and talks as fast as she walks.

EVELYN  
Sorry about that, I must have  
locked my keys in the car.

John looks out and sees that the car windows are open.

JOHN  
I think I know where they are.

He starts out the door, but when his vibrating ankle bracelet is triggered, he immediately turns around, slamming the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Don't make a move without me, Zack!

EVELYN (O.S.)  
Gentlemen, lunch will be served  
soon.

John returns to the table. Zack is not there.

John looks around and spots Evelyn carrying trays of lunch food.

They make eye contact.

She nods in the direction of the bathroom.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zack is seated on the edge of the tub, staring at the two images taken earlier on his phone.

He moves the cellphone around the room and near the window in search of a signal.

EXT. CALIFORNIA HOME BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

John approaches the door.

JOHN  
(suspicious)  
You okay, buddy?

Zack's cellphone emits a beep indicating the message has been sent.

John turns and walks into an open door down the hallway.

He looks back before closing the door.

ZACK (O.C.)  
Everything is copasetic.

Zack flushes the toilet and immediately exits the bathroom. He misses John by mere seconds.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John answers a VIDEO CALL on his Google Home device. It's a call from his grandson, MARCUS KARAMU (20s).

BEGIN VIDEO CALL

MARCUS  
(on video screen)  
Hey, Pops, it's me.

John looks into a drawer and retrieves a black pawn, then looks back at his phone.

JOHN  
I can see that. What did you find out?

MARCUS  
A Zack Gerber was released from prison on February 11th. He was to report directly to his cognitive therapist, but didn't show up.

John stares back down into the drawer, focusing on the white king before looking back at his phone.

JOHN  
(concerned)  
Really?

MARCUS  
When they asked why, he said that he forgot.

JOHN  
(perplexed)  
Hmmm, that's funny.

John pauses and stares into space for a brief moment.

MARCUS  
Pops, what do you mean?

JOHN  
Because he found me! He's here!

END VIDEO CALL

EXT. CALIFORNIA HOME POOL AREA - LATER

John and Zack finish devouring their lunch and are sipping on some libations.

JOHN  
I don't really recall much from that night.

ZACK  
But you do remember being there?

Evelyn comes over and starts to remove the empty plates and glasses.

Her necklace hangs loosely when she reaches for a fallen napkin.

Zack notices her necklace.

EVELYN  
Can I get you two anything else  
before I leave?

JOHN  
The board, please, I think we'll  
continue our game here. Is that  
okay with you, Zack?

Zack appears fixated on the design of Evelyn's necklace. He  
is lost in thought.

Zack hears their muted voices calling to him.

Zack!	EVELYN	Zack!	JOHN (CONT'D)
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MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

GERTRUDE  
(frantic)  
Zack!

While standing over William's body, the three of them try to  
figure out what to do, considering this impromptu disaster.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
Zack! This wasn't the plan.

JOHN  
(confused, looks to Zack)  
What plan?

ZACK  
She had one, but this got in the  
way.

Zack points to the body.

JOHN  
(defensive)  
But he was trying to hurt you. I  
thought...

Gertrude rushes over to draw the curtains closed.

After doing so, she nearly trips over William's luggage.

She kneels next to it, looks inside, and gasps.

GERTRUDE  
 (bewildered)  
 Oh, can't be!

We see items from her POV: the same box of chocolate and card that we saw earlier, a native American necklace, and a Toronto postcard without a stamp.

Gertrude reads the handwritten postcard.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
 "Dear Gert! Toronto is a pretty city, but not as beautiful as you are. I was going to mail this, but thought I would hand-deliver it.  
 Love, William"

She rips open the card taped to the box of chocolates, and she reads it.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
 "Although I can't indulge, please enjoy these morsels as a reminder of how sweet you are. I know I have been stressed at times, but I promise to do better. Please forgive me. Love, William!"

Gertrude shakes. She's having a nervous breakdown. She starts hyperventilating while screaming incoherent orders.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
 We need to get this place cleaned up. William will be home soon.

John and Zack dart eyes at each other.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
 This rug needs to be cleaned. He would be upset if the dog were here when he returned.

Gertrude, clutching the necklace, is clearly delusional.

She pets her husband's body, thinking it is their pet dog.

Seeing that she is unstable, both men look around, planning their next move.

Before they can act, Gertrude snaps out of her psychotic episode.

John helps her up and offers a glass of water.

JOHN  
Please drink this.

GERTRUDE  
(sighs)  
Ahhh!

Once she is settled, she places the necklace around her neck and approaches Zack as John looks on.

JOHN  
(troubled off Gertrude)  
What is going on, Zack?

ZACK  
We have to stay focused.

Zack drags the body away, and John reluctantly runs away with the backpack containing the money and SLAMS the door. THUD!

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - CONTINUOUS

A loud THUD can be heard as Zack's cellphone accidentally falls from his chair and echoes off the hollow table base.

John and Evelyn jump as a result of the sound, to see Zack mesmerized by the white queen on the chessboard.

When Evelyn attempts to pick up the phone, Zack immediately covers it with his foot to hide what is revealed on the screen.

As Zack fumbles to retrieve the phone, John catches a glimpse of the photo of his home as it disappears.

John's eyes dart between Zack and Evelyn as they do the same.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

John and Zack sit silently on the beach facing the water. Next to them is a suitcase, a wardrobe trunk, and a folded map.

A lone Waiter (20s, handsome and slick) delivers drinks and exits with several empty "Belikin" beer bottles.

He spots US currency on the table.

Garifuna music plays in the distance  
(<https://www.last.fm/tag/garifuna>)

After a long silence and without turning his head, John speaks in a perplexed tone.

JOHN  
Why are we here?  
(beat)  
What were you thinking?

ZACK  
You didn't have to board the plane.

John is clearly upset.

JOHN  
I had no choice.

ZACK  
Did I?

Zack stands and walks to the edge of the water. John remains seated.

EXT. CAFE - TWO WEEKS LATER

Zack and John are seated at a sidewalk café.

The two are studying the menu when a seductive server, DARIA (25), approaches the table. She has an alluring Belizean accent.

DARIA  
What would you gentlemen like this evening? Anything at all?

Both look at each other before Zack responds.

ZACK  
What do you recommend?

Daria approaches the table.

DARIA  
If you are interested in our local cuisine, I might suggest the rice and beans with potato salad.

JOHN  
(flirting)  
Is that served solo or does it like company?

Daria blushes and maintains her composure.

DARIA

You have a choice of beef, chicken,  
pork, lobster, shrimp, or gibnut.

JOHN

(confused)  
What's gibnut?

DARIA

A delicacy found in our rainforest.

ZACK

Is it good?

Before she can answer, John speaks up, trying to impress Daria while blocking Zack's flirtatious advances.

JOHN

You heard the lady! It's a  
delicacy.

DARIA

Some say it could be our national  
dish.

ZACK

Then we'll both have that!

JOHN

And heavy on the gibnuts!

Daria smiles while writing down their order, as she walks away, swinging her hips to keep their attention.

DARIA (O.S.)

Good choice and much better than  
your national dish?

ZACK

Aw, Come-on! Who doesn't like a  
good American hot dog?

Daria shakes her head.

She returns with the food and places the check on the table.

Zack quickly scans the check and places it and a \$100 bill in her hand.

DARIA

I'll be right back with your  
change.

ZACK

(flirting)  
You are welcome to come back, but  
the money is all yours.

Zack takes a long, slow sip of his beer. Daria smiles at the money and looks at John.

DARIA  
 (to John)  
 Are all Americans like him?

JOHN  
 Crazy?

DARIA  
 Rich?

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

John and Zack stumble out of a bar and are spotted by a small group of men. One is the Waiter we saw earlier at the beach. He is dressed in a bright pink electric suit.

WAITER  
 (to his friends)  
 Those are the guys I was telling  
 you about.

Two Guys (20s, handsome patrons) look on with excitement.

GUY #1  
 Yeah, the crazy Americans.

GUY #2  
 They rich?

WAITER  
 Must be! Daria says they tipped her  
 really big.

GUY #1  
 Saw them flexing that cash at the  
 bar.

GUY #2  
 (excited)  
 Maybe they will give us some.

WAITER  
 Or maybe we just take it.

The guys watch as John and Zack make their way toward the hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The door swings open as John and Zack stumble into the room.

John shuts and locks the door quickly.

Zack turns on the room light and checks the closet.

Inside, we see the backpack resting against the back wall.

When Zack pulls it out, the loose wallboard falls forward, revealing a crawl space.

The backpack is slightly open, and we see cash and lots of it.

ZACK

(sultry voice speaking to  
the money)

What are we going to do with you?

(to John)

John, I think we'd best...

JOHN

(interrupts)

Shhhhh.

John motions to Zack to be quiet and turns the light off before darting over to the window.

Outside, they spot the Waiter and two Police Officers (varied ages and types) walking toward the hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

There is a KNOCK on the door. Both men look at each other and immediately close the wardrobe truck and carry it into the closet.

The door handle is rattled and again there are knocks. This time, they hear the voice of the Police Chief, MIGUEL COOTI (58), through the door.

MIGUEL (O.S.)

This is the police. I need to have  
a few words with you.

Zack quickly re-opens the closet door, removes the loose board, and forces the backpack into the cavity.

He kicks the board to secure it.

John acknowledges the officer.

JOHN  
(nervous)  
Who is it?

He slowly opens the door, rubbing his eyes as if he were asleep.

MIGUEL  
Hello, I am Police Chief Miguel  
Cooti, and I wanted to ask you...  
(beat, looking around)  
A couple of questions.

JOHN  
About what?

MIGUEL  
I was contacted by the U.S. State  
Department that two men fitting  
your description are wanted for  
questioning.

John is apoplectic.

Miguel peers into the room and notices someone moving.

He draws his weapon and sees Zack exiting the bathroom, who appears to be naked, except for the towel wrapped around his torso.

Zack senses that this could be a major problem and goes into his act.

ZACK  
(sexy tone to John)  
I am ready, baby.

Zack then acts surprised when he spots Miguel.

ZACK (CONT'D)  
(off Miguel)  
You didn't tell me that we were  
having company.

Miguel is stunned and places his gun back into his holster.

John, uncomfortable at first, sees what Zack is doing and plays along.

JOHN  
Honey, this is Police Chief.

At once, Zack jumps up on the bed and screams.

ZACK  
(afraid)  
What is that?

As he points to the open door, we see a small rodent enter the room.

Miguel laughs it off and is slightly amused by Zack's reaction.

MIGUEL  
We call that a gibnut, which is considered a "bush" meat. One of the few native animals regularly hunted in the rainforests of Belize.

Reminded of the meal he had earlier, Zack grabs his stomach and rushes into the bathroom.

Face down into the toilet he goes.

He raises his hand to flush the toilet.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY HOME BATHROOM - MORNING

Close-up of swirling water going down the toilet drain.

Gertrude is face down in the toilet and rises slowly.

In the trash is a small box, "Predictor Pregnancy Test."

Outside the bathroom, a Police DETECTIVE (40s, male, in a suit) watches over her.

GERTRUDE  
(frightened)  
I don't know why they would do this.

DETECTIVE  
Who?

GERTRUDE  
The two men.

DETECTIVE  
So you saw the two men?

GERTRUDE

(agitated)

Of course, they were standing over my husband's body when I returned home.

DETECTIVE

Can you describe them?

Gertrude motions to the sofa and takes a seat. The Detective remains standing. He writes on his pad.

GERTRUDE

Tall, about your complexion.

DETECTIVE

Age?

GERTRUDE

Hard to tell. How old are you?

DETECTIVE

Not sure that is relevant, Ma'am. We just need the details.

GERTRUDE

Well, he's about your height and build.

Gertrude stops talking as the Detective takes notes.

She fixes her hair and sits up in the chair.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

I'm guessing 33.

DETECTIVE

And the guy with him?

GERTRUDE

I'm sorry. I was talking about you.

Gertrude rises and walks over toward the window. The Detective eyes her suspiciously.

DETECTIVE

Excuse me?

GERTRUDE

I'm guessing you are 33, and he was about that age. He was nice-looking, but not as handsome.

The Detective is joined by another OFFICER #2 (uniformed, 30s).

OFFICER #2

We combed the exterior, and there is no sign of a break-in.

Gertrude watches as they talk.

Officer #2 leans in and whispers something to the Detective.

Officer #2 begins to exit.

DETECTIVE

(to Officer #2)

Okay, thanks. I will be out in a minute.

He turns his attention to Gertrude.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Do you know anything about a large withdrawal of cash on the day your husband was...?

The Detective tries to be sensitive before completing his sentence. Gertrude sobs and blurts out.

GERTRUDE

Murdered!

The Detective is taken aback and tries to console her. Gertrude puts on her sad face.

POLICE

Look, Ma'am, I am sorry. I just need to get the information so we can help find the men who did this.

GERTRUDE

Look, I'll give you anything you want to find those two killers.

The Detective walks toward the door as a distraught Gertrude escorts him out of the house.

He steps out onto the porch and turns back, looking directly at Gertrude.

DETECTIVE

How would you describe the other man?

GERTRUDE

Black.

POLICE

Glasses, haircut, size...?

GERTRUDE

It was dark.

INT. LUXURY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gertrude closes the front door and returns to the window. The room is quiet. We SEE the silhouette of her as she stares out.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

We see the silhouette of Gertrude as she stares out. When she turns, we see that she has aged a bit. Her apartment reflects that it, too, has seen better days.

She turns on the television and flips the switch to an electric teapot.

She spots a previously used tea bag, as the television NEWSWOMAN (30s) provides background details of modern-day events.

NEWSWOMAN (O.S.)

It's been over 50 years since man walked on the moon. And in the near future, according to SpaceX, a woman is scheduled to do the same.

She searches for a cup in the cabinet near the sink and has a variety of unmatched styles to choose from.

After a moment, she arrives at her choice.

GERTRUDE

(to herself)

There you are.

The wrapped package is carefully removed and placed gingerly on the small table in the kitchen.

When the teapot signals, Gertrude unwraps the paper and pours the hot water into a Lenox footed cup, which sits proudly on a matching saucer.

Gertrude sits quietly at the table while occasionally sipping her tea.

Her phone RINGS in another room, and she rises, attempting to reach it, but it stops before she can answer it.

An insert shot of her phone screen reveals that she has several 'missed calls' from Evelyn.

Gertrude places a call to Evelyn. The phone begins to ring when her phone beeps, indicating an incoming call.

BEGIN INTERCUT PHONE CALL

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

(excited)

Hi, Honey! Sorry, I missed your calls. Did you find out anything?

The person on the phone is AGENT RUSS MUMFORD (30), an investigator with the prosecutor's office.

AGENT MUMFORD (O.C.)

Ms. Higginbotham? Hi, this is Agent Russ Mumford.

Gertrude is caught off guard and tries to recover.

INT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

GERTRUDE

Of course, how are you?

(beat)

Good morning.

INT. PROSECUTORS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Agent Mumford is seated at his desk. On it is a file from the Higginbotham case. We can see the photo taken of Gertrude and Zack years earlier as they stood in front of the window. He looks at the time on his computer screen. It is 3:15 PM.

AGENT MUMFORD

I'm sure it's morning somewhere, but this afternoon...

(beat)

I have a few questions for you. Is it okay if we meet?

INT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Gertrude, trying to decide what she will wear, looks over to her closet, which is visible from any vantage point in her small apartment.

GERTRUDE

Sure! What time?

AGENT MUMFORD

Now would be nice.

GERTRUDE

What?

AGENT MUMFORD

Yes, Ms. Higginbotham. Like last time. I can call you from my computer, and you simply answer your phone. We can then see each other, remember?

GERTRUDE

And like last time, I told you to call me Gertrude. Give me five minutes to put on my face.

AGENT MUMFORD

I'll call you.

Gertrude hangs up and darts off to the mirror, fixes her hair, puts on some lipstick, and pinches her cheeks.

Her phone RINGS.

Evelyn answers the phone.

GERTRUDE

(concerned)

I thought we agreed to five...

It's Evelyn instead of Agent Mumford on the phone.

EVELYN (O.S.)

(whispering)

He's here! Zack in the flesh!

GERTRUDE

Does he know who you are?

EVELYN

No, neither does John, he thinks...

Gertrude's phone screen LIGHTS UP. It's Agent Mumford calling back on video as agreed. She swipes immediately to answer, abruptly ending the call with Evelyn.

GERTRUDE

Hello.

Gertrude positions her phone as she sits at the table, waiting for Agent Mumford to appear. She is put together from the waist up and is wearing sweatpants and socks below.

INT. PROSECUTORS OFFICE COMPUTER SCREEN - CONTINUOUS

Agent Mumford's video image is on the screen, left of Gertrude's.

AGENT MUMFORD

Can you hear and see me okay?

(beat)

Let me press record.

GERTRUDE

Yes, I can. How do I look?

Gertrude mimics a model's pose, sucking in her cheeks.

AGENT MUMFORD

Okay, great. Yes, nice cup.

GERTRUDE

Enjoying my morning tea.

Gertrude's fancy cup and saucer are positioned in the lower frame of the screen.

Agent Mumford positions himself on camera and checks to make sure that the record function is activated.

AGENT MUMFORD

(into camera)

My name is Agent Russ Mumford with the prosecutor's office. Today, I will be interviewing Gertrude Higginbotham regarding case number 19981.

(to Gertrude)

It is my obligation to inform you that this video call is being recorded.

Gertrude sits up straight and looks at herself (on the screen), trying to ensure that she looks good while posing like an Instagram model.

Agent Mumford watches Gertrude, realizing that she has forgotten that he can see her every move.

GERTRUDE  
Okay, I'm ready.

AGENT MUMFORD  
(serious)  
So, here is what we know. On the day of Mr. Higginbotham's death...

Agent Mumford pauses and looks off camera as if someone is communicating with him.

AGENT MUMFORD (CONT'D)  
Um, Ms. Higgin... (beat) Gertrude, have you ever been contacted by either Zack Gerber or John Karamu since that unfortunate night decades ago?

GERTRUDE  
No, I would have told you if I did.

AGENT MUMFORD  
Are you aware that both men were released from prison within the past 30 days?

GERTRUDE  
(concerned)  
Are you serious? Where are they? Is my life in danger?

Agent Mumford tries to calm her down.

AGENT MUMFORD  
No need to be alarmed. Everything is under control.

GERTRUDE  
How can you be so sure?

Agent Mumford checks another video monitor attached to his computer and observes ankle bracelet GPS tracking data, which shows Zack near Tucson and John in southern California.

AGENT MUMFORD  
(off monitor)  
I'm sure.

Agent Mumford turns off the surveillance monitor before noticing movement or a glitch in Zack's tracking device.

GERTRUDE  
(sarcastic)  
So...  
(beat)  
I'm safe?

Agent Mumford pauses the recording.

AGENT MUMFORD  
Gertrude, of course. Speaking of  
secrets and keeping them safe...

Gertrude is not sure how to respond or what Agent Mumford is about to say next. Agent Mumford lowers his voice.

AGENT MUMFORD (CONT'D)  
(sinister whisper)  
According to my files, during the  
initial investigation, you were  
asked a question, but for some  
reason, I can't find a written or  
recorded response.

Gertrude appears to be surprised by this insinuation.

GERTRUDE  
I don't recall, it was so long ago  
and...

Agent Mumford cuts her off, looks around his office, and leans in

AGENT MUMFORD  
(interrupting)  
Well, Gertrude, let me refresh your  
memory. On the same day that  
William was found dead, a large sum  
of cash was withdrawn from your  
joint account. Is that true?

Gertrude is starting to feel the pressure. Agent Mumford can sense it.

GERTRUDE  
Um...

AGENT MUMFORD  
(interrupts)  
I'll assume that it is.

Gertrude does not take the bait and remains silent.

AGENT MUMFORD (CONT'D)  
(aggravated)  
Come on, Gert! It's safe!

GERTRUDE  
What's safe?

AGENT MUMFORD  
Our secret...

Right when Gertrude starts to respond, Agent Mumford is distracted by someone off-screen and immediately resumes the interview by clicking on the 'record' icon.

Gertrude is relieved as she spots other people entering Agent Mumford's office.

GERTRUDE  
It looks like you're busy. Should we talk later?

AGENT MUMFORD  
(sounding official)  
No! That's fine. We can continue.  
Let's see...

Agent Mumford pretends to scan a list of interview questions while observing the people in his office.

AGENT MUMFORD (CONT'D)  
I think that's it for now.

Agent Mumford starts typing into his computer.

AGENT MUMFORD (CONT'D)  
To summarize, you have not been contacted by John Karamu or Zack Gerber, nor do you know the whereabouts of these men. True?

Gertrude stares directly into the phone camera. Agent Mumford captures a screenshot, then holds up the photo taken years earlier of Gertrude staring directly into the lens of the camera as she looked outside the house. Her eyes look remarkably similar.

GERTRUDE  
True.

With a click of the mouse, the video call ends.

INT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Gertrude's eyes are still. She's alone and lost in thought, as if carrying the world on her shoulders.

She walks into the kitchen, opens a lower cabinet door, and pulls out a large bag of rice.

She places a large empty pot on the counter and starts to empty the rice into it.

Out falls a Ziploc bag containing a cellphone.

She removes it and presses the power button.

EXT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Marcus Karamu stands outside.

He watches as a delivery person exits Gertrude's building.

Marcus walks away and places a phone call.

MARCUS

(speaking on the phone)

Looks like the building is still standing.

JOHN (O.S.)

Sure, you're at the right place?

Marcus pulls out an old photocopy of a newspaper with the headline, "MAN REPORTED DEAD - BODY MISSING." Next to it is a handwritten address that matches the building.

MARCUS

This is it.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

John hangs up the phone, exits the room, and closes the door behind him.

John is caught off guard as Zack is standing directly in front of him.

This awkward moment is disrupted by the sound of a RINGING cellphone. Evelyn answers it.

EVELYN (O.S.)  
Hello?  
(beat)  
Hello?

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Both John and Zack enter the room and observe a whispering Evelyn speaking with someone.

Evelyn realizes she is not alone and pretends to carry on a regular conversation.

EVELYN  
(into phone)  
No, no, that's fine. I should be  
able to attend.

She laughs out loud as if her caller told a joke.

Zack and John appear to be buying it.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
(smiling)  
Now, who wouldn't be honored to be  
a bride's maid in your wedding?

Then, suddenly, the charade is disrupted when her phone actually rings.

Evelyn is stunned but plays it off by answering the actual call.

EVELYN (CONT'D)  
Ha! Musta got disconnected!

Zack pulls John aside.

ZACK  
(concerned)  
How well do you know this woman?

JOHN  
She was assigned to me about two  
months ago.

ZACK  
I don't trust her.

JOHN  
Why would you need to?

Zack senses that John may be concerned about his statement about Evelyn, so he tries to lighten things up.

ZACK  
(smiling)  
True.  
(beat)  
So, hey, what do you two talk  
about?

JOHN  
It's good to have someone around to  
talk to. At this stage, it beats  
talking to the wall.

ZACK  
At least the walls stay silent.

JOHN  
No, my friend. These walls do talk.

Both laugh and re-enter the room where Evelyn has just finished a call.

Evelyn is collecting her things.

EVELYN  
(to John)  
The meals are labeled, and I placed  
your medicine in the refrigerator.  
The pills are marked "Sat" and  
"Sun."

JOHN  
Which means I will see you again on  
"Mun."

They chuckle.

EVELYN  
(to Zack)  
Nice to meet you. Will you be  
staying for the weekend?

Zack is caught off guard and thinks about it.

John looks at Evelyn and back at Zack.

JOHN  
Now, Gert, this guy has plans,  
hands to shake, babies to kiss.

Zack realizes that with her gone, he might be able to get John to relax and open up about their past.



He spots John's medicine and scans the labels before placing it in his pocket.

He opens the lower drawer, pulls out some lunch meat, and condiments.

The two sit down and engage in a serious match of chess. The mood turns tense.

Zack stares at a white pawn, but he is disturbed by the sound of Evelyn's car driving off. He looks up as he reaches for a white pawn and accidentally drops it on the floor, forfeiting his move.

Under the table, we see a listening device.

John captures Zack's white rook.

JOHN

Sometimes we are forced to  
sacrifice the battle to win a war.

Zack winces and studies the board.

ZACK

Maybe it's better to *WANT* what you  
have than to *HAVE* what you want.

JOHN

What do you want, Zack?

ZACK

Time (beat) that would be good. But  
for now, I'll take this.

Zack takes John's black pawn.

EXT. CALIFORNIA HOME - EVENING

Evelyn returns to the house carrying food and beverages. She enters the home.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - CONTINUOUS

EVELYN (O.S.)

(shouting)

It's me!

JOHN

Back so soon? I thought you were  
gone 'til Monday.

Evelyn walks into the kitchen and places bottles of beer in the refrigerator along with some ready-to-eat food dishes.

She notices that John's medicine is missing.

EVELYN (O.C.)  
Okay, where is it?

She walks into the room where John and Zack are playing chess.

JOHN  
What are you barking about?

EVELYN  
(off John)  
Where did you hide your pills?

JOHN  
Hide what? I...

John spots an opening on the board and makes his move. Taking down Zack's white knight.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
While you were talking, I just  
found a way to escape a trap laid  
for me by my good friend, Zack.

Zack smiles while making eye contact with Evelyn.

He motions in the direction of the pill bottle, which is partially visible in one of John's plant containers.

She walks over and holds them in front of John.

EVELYN  
(to John)  
Oh, so here is where you hid them!

John is caught off guard.

ZACK  
I did it.

JOHN  
What?

ZACK  
(to Evelyn)  
John asked me to hide the medicine  
for him.

JOHN

I did not.

ZACK

(to John)

Yes, you did, don't you remember?  
We were talking about our time  
outside the United States.

JOHN

I, I never...

ZACK

(interrupting)

You were saying something about a  
suitcase in some hotel.

John looks surprised. Evelyn briefly exits the room.

EVELYN

Looks like you two might be  
thirsty.

She returns, placing two bottles of beer (*one Heineken and the other Belikin*) on the table and slides them toward the men.

John stares at a black pawn that is dangerously close to a white pawn before he picks up the Heineken and starts drinking.

John instructs Evelyn on the finer points of chess, but his comments are aimed at Zack.

JOHN

Gert, are you aware that chess is a  
contact sport?

EVELYN

Contact sport?

Zack glares at John.

JOHN

Yes. When Zack and I were young and  
just learning the game, he would  
often take it as a personal insult  
when I took a chess piece from him.

ZACK

(calmly)

The bigger the chess piece, the  
angrier I got.

EVELYN  
(scoffs at them)  
You both survived!

JOHN  
He'd get particularly mad when I  
took a knight, bishop, or rook, but  
if I captured his queen...  
(beat)  
He would go berserk!

ZACK  
That was then. This is now.

John smirks at Zack.

JOHN  
Wasn't just wrestling, Sally.

ZACK  
A couple of fistfights. Not many.

JOHN  
Broke my jaw once.

Zack stands upset.

ZACK  
How many black eyes did you leave  
me with?

JOHN  
I don't recall.

ZACK  
Coward's way out! I don't recall! I  
don't remember!

Evelyn backs up like there's going to be trouble, but Zack  
calmly sits down and smiles wryly at John.

ZACK (CONT'D)  
A couple of things I learned in the  
house.

JOHN  
What was that?

ZACK  
Play a better game of chess, and  
control my emotions.

JOHN  
'Cause popping off got you hurt?

ZACK  
 'Cause thinking kept me alive! In  
 the game of chess and in the house!

Evelyn starts to back away from the table.

John holds up two chess pieces for Evelyn: a pawn and a king.

JOHN  
 The toughest part of the house is  
 learning your place in life.

ZACK  
 Like the outside.

John replaces the pieces on the board.

JOHN  
 Evelyn, bring us a couple more  
 beers. We could be here a while.

Zack and John smirk.

CUT TO:

INT. GERTRUDE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Marcus enters Gertrude's apartment building. He checks the directory and mail slot for her name without success.

He climbs the stairs and starts walking the halls looking for Gertrude's apartment.

On the final floor, he moves slowly down the hall, looking for any sign, and notices a delivery notification sticker on what appears to be door 847.

He removes his cellphone to take a photo of the delivery note when suddenly the elevator door immediately opens and a white ELDERLY MAN (63) approaches and responds to Marcus sneaking around on his floor.

ELDERLY MAN  
 (concerned)  
 Hey, may I help you?

MARCUS  
 (nervous)  
 I doubt it, but let's give it a  
 try.

ELDERLY MAN

What are you doing snooping around  
Gertrude's apartment?

Bingo! Marcus now knows what's behind door 847.

MARCUS

Sir, I was trying to surprise her.  
She hasn't seen her nephew in a few  
years and thought...

The man realizes that Marcus meant no harm.

He decides to help with the surprise and knocks on Gertrude's  
apartment.

Marcus wants no part of it.

ELDERLY MAN

Gertrude! Can I get your help?

GERTRUDE (O.S.)

(yelling)  
What do you want?

The man looks and smiles at Marcus.

ELDERLY MAN

My cat ran out of dog food, and  
maybe you.

Gertrude opens the door and steps into the hallway.

The elderly man smiles at her, then turns his attention to  
the hallway.

ELDERLY MAN (CONT'D)

(enthusiastic)  
Surprise!

He points down the hall and immediately drops his smile.  
There is no one there.

GERTRUDE

There's nothing there!

EXT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Marcus bolts out of the building and runs down the sidewalk.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Zack stares alternately at the black king on the chessboard and the Belikin beer label before reaching for the beer.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CAFE - DAY

A hand picks up a cold bottle of Belikin. It is Marcus. He is chatting with NIGEL MESTOS (50s), a local reporter.

MARCUS

Yes, it's my first time in Belize.

NIGEL

There are many places with sandy beaches, so what brings you here?

MARCUS

My grandfather visited years ago.

NIGEL

Did he enjoy it?

MARCUS

I'm not sure.

(beat)

But for some reason, he held on to this.

Marcus reaches into his backpack and pulls out an old hotel key chain embossed with the initials, TGH.

NIGEL

Oh yes, The Great House.

Nigel holds the item with reverence.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

But they haven't used keys like that in forever. Impressive place.

MARCUS

How so?

NIGEL

In the States, you would call it a historic hotel.

MARCUS

And here?

NIGEL

We would say, heritage. It draws from the cultural value versus, say, design or architecture.

MARCUS

Is it still standing?

NIGEL

Let's go find out.

CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - AFTERNOON

John and Zack continue a challenging game of chess.

John points to his black pawn diagonal to Zack's white pawn with concern.

JOHN

See, if I take your pawn, you might be inclined to take it with your rook over there.

Zack smiles.

ZACK

Maybe.

JOHN

If I move forward, you'll move forward and unleash your bishop!  
(beat)  
You learned a lot in the house.

Evelyn backs away toward the kitchen, but continues to listen to their conversation.

ZACK

Too bad chess pieces can't talk.

JOHN

Think they got secrets,

Zack glares at John. Their voices rise with each statement.

ZACK

Oh, they got secrets. Hiding!  
Lurking in plain sight!

JOHN

What do you mean? They're loyal to a fault.

ZACK  
 Planning several moves. Devious  
 bastards, all of them.

JOHN  
 They never switch sides. They never  
 defect!

ZACK  
 They make enemies out of the best  
 of friends!

John stands angrily.

JOHN  
 They don't leave the board until  
 they're captured.

John looks feeble as he stands, a bit older and fragile.

Zack stands angrily at first, but sees that John is weak.

ZACK  
 Whoa, my friend. Take it easy.  
 Don't have a stroke.

Evelyn races in to see Zack helping John back into his chair.

JOHN  
 Guess we all need a little help  
 from time to time.

John stares at his black pawn, mesmerized.

BACK TO:

EXT. - THE GREAT HOUSE - LATER

Nigel and Marcus arrive at the hotel.

Nigel turns to face Marcus.

NIGEL  
 The Great House was built in 1927  
 for Mr. and Mrs. Barney Melhado, a  
 prominent merchant of Belize. Mr.  
 Melhado, whose family was  
 originally of Portuguese descent  
 and born in Belize, contracted Mr.  
 Cuthbert N. Frazer, a Scotsman  
 living in Belize, to build his  
 home.

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Mr. Frazer, an independent contractor, was at that time in the business of selling mahogany to the Belize Estate and Produce Company.

MARCUS

Must have cost a pretty penny.

NIGEL

It is rumored that the house was built for the equivalent of \$12 million U.S.

MARCUS

Impressive indeed.

NIGEL

Let me guess. Was it either the price tag or the home itself?

MARCUS

Actually, it was your knowledge of this place. So, I'm guessing you are a tour guide, no?

NIGEL

Reporter, but on occasion, I cover some of Belize's historical stories.

Marcus looks around, smiles, and freezes.

MARCUS

I think my grandfather stayed here with a friend long ago. What was that room number?

MARCUS (V.O.)

I know damn well it was Room 315.

MARCUS

You must have all the scoop in some archives.

NIGEL

If not, our library probably does.

Marcus plays tourist and takes out his cellphone to capture photos of the hotel and its surroundings. Then, in true tourist-mode, he turns on the video and takes a selfie of himself.

Nigel steps away to give Marcus some space to enjoy his surroundings while posing for a selfie.

MARCUS  
(into camera)  
This place is amazing. The hotel  
looks like it hasn't changed in  
decades.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

John watches the identical clip on his cellphone. He immediately sends a text message to Marcus.

JOHN  
(using voice-to-text)  
That's it. That's the place.

John exits the bedroom and returns to the chess game with Zack.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Sorry, stomach trouble.

Zack doesn't look up from the chessboard. About a third of the pieces have been taken. He's worried.

ZACK  
Happen often?

John glances at Evelyn in the distance and whispers to Zack.

JOHN  
Only when she tries to poison me  
with health food.  
(beat)  
Vegetables. Hated 'em when I was  
young. Hate 'em more now! Don't  
worry about me. I'll be fine.

Zack tries to smile, but he's in a quandary about his next move.

ZACK  
Not worried about you, you old  
fool. Worried about my knight!

John looks away.

JOHN  
Ah! Knights in shining armor! The  
piece you can count on! Offense,  
defense, strategy...

ZACK  
(interrupts)  
Will you cease your gabbing?

Zack glares at John.

JOHN  
What?

Zack looks deep into John's eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
What's really bothering you?

John glances over at Evelyn in the distance. She's dusting furniture and listening in. Zack whispers.

ZACK  
You know what's bothering me.  
Missing duffle bag!

John glances back at Evelyn, who isn't letting on that she heard Zack.

Evelyn decides to dust the furniture that's a little bit closer to the chess game.

John changes the subject and speaks loudly.

JOHN  
The damn overnight bag you had when  
we were kids?

John nods quickly toward Evelyn, and Zack catches on.

ZACK  
I spent the night at your place  
after my fourteenth birthday party,  
and I haven't seen it since.

JOHN  
I can't remember my 60th birthday  
party, much less your fourteenth!

Zack's voice turns coldly serious.

ZACK  
You stole it, didn't you?

JOHN  
Did no such thing!

ZACK  
Wanted it all for yourself!

JOHN  
 Don't know what you're talking  
 about!

Zack makes a chess mistake, moving his knight into a  
 vulnerable spot where John's bishop can capture it.

Without speaking, John seizes his opportunity to take Zack's  
 white knight!

ZACK  
 Damn it! You distracted me!

JOHN  
 Gave you all the time in the world.  
 Not using a clock!

ZACK  
 Not supposed to talk! You haven't  
 stopped blabbering!

JOHN  
 You've been complaining about a  
 stupid duffel bag you lost decades  
 ago!

Angry Zack glances at Evelyn and bites his tongue.

Zack is forced to regain his composure.

ZACK  
 You'd feel the same way if you lost  
 your black knight.

John looks at his black knight, then looks away.

JOHN  
 Indeed, I would.  
 (beat)  
 Indeed, I would.

EXT. THE GREAT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marcus reads the text before rejoining Nigel.

MARCUS  
 What does the inside look like?

NIGEL  
 Great question! Let me show you the  
 answer.

The two men walk toward the hotel. Before entering the hotel, Marcus looks up at the roof line and the crystal blue sky.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. OLD APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Puffy white clouds float across a splendid blue sky as Gertrude exits her building. She is pulling a piece of rolling luggage.

She disappears into the crowd.

INT. THE GREAT HOUSE - LATER

Nigel and Marcus are in the lobby, standing near the front desk.

Marcus pulls the key chain slightly out of his pocket, glances at it before he is interrupted by a hotel employee, JUDY (20s), cute and athletic looking, who is straightening her name tag, which reads 'Judy.'

JUDY

Will you be checking in...

(beat)

Mr. Karamu?

Marcus is caught off guard and surprised that she knew his name.

Both Nigel and Judy are stone-faced as they observe his reaction.

Nigel bursts out in laughter, as does Judy.

Realizing that he had been punked, Marcus joins in with them.

MARCUS

Wow!

(beat)

No, I'm just visiting.

JUDY

We got you!

NIGEL

We got you!

Marcus shakes his head and takes it all in.

Nigel takes a call on his cell, and he separates from them.

JUDY (CONT'D)

That's what they all say.

MARCUS

Who are they?

JUDY

Tourists! They visit, then they forget about our little piece of paradise.

MARCUS

And what makes you think that I am a tourist?

JUDY

Oh, let me see.

She gazes warmly into Marcus's eyes and speaks without blinking.

MARCUS

Okay.

JUDY

For one, you are standing in a hotel lobby.

Marcus waits in anticipation for the next clue.

MARCUS

Uh-huh.

JUDY

Number two, which should be number one...

MARCUS

(interrupts)  
And what's that?

JUDY

Your accent.

MARCUS

My accent!

JUDY

Yeah. It's that sound you Americans make when you speak.

They both chuckle.

Nigel comes back into the area (holding his cellphone to his ear).

He motions to Marcus that he will be on the call for about five more minutes.

MARCUS

Yours is not that bad.

She glances over toward Nigel, then picks up the ringing desk phone. She holds up one finger while maintaining eye contact with Marcus.

JUDY

(on phone)

No problem. I'll bring it right up.

She hangs up the phone, reaches under the counter, and retrieves a monogrammed corkscrew.

She holds it up to show Marcus and nods for him to follow her.

JUDY (CONT'D)

Looks like you have been stood up.  
I'll give you a tour.

MARCUS

Has that ever happened to you?

JUDY

What? Being stood up by the police?  
(beat)  
Never.

Marcus is confused by her comment.

He glances in the direction of Nigel.

She heads toward the staircase, and Marcus follows.

Nigel observes from a distance.

NIGEL

(into phone)

He just walked up to the second floor, but he turned quickly into a room, and I lost sight of him.

CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - SAME TIME

Now, John looks worried as Zack captures one of John's black bishops with his white rook in a move that shocks John.

JOHN

What? Where did that move come from?

ZACK

The house. Many hours playing against the best in the joint.

John is stunned as Zack points to his white rook.

ZACK (CONT'D)

Know why the inventors of chess added the rook, or the horse, as we used to call them?

John is still upset.

JOHN

No, why?

ZACK

Legend has it, to allow a common horse soldier to capture a royal enemy with a non-linear move: Two over and one up or down.

(beat)

Or one across and two...

JOHN

(interrupting)

I get it. You're gloating after taking my bishop.

ZACK

Your dad was a pastor, right? Honest, truthful, strict...

John is struggling to make a move, with only half the pieces remaining.

JOHN

(interrupts)

Okay, that's enough!

ZACK

He sure kicked you to the curb when you ran afoul of the law!

JOHN

Let me concentrate!

ZACK

I'm sorry! Is my blabbering bothering you?

JOHN  
It's a question of loyalty.

ZACK  
You should be talking!

John stands ready to punch Zack, but Evelyn steps in.

EVELYN  
Settle down, you two, or I'll take  
that chess set away and send Mr.  
Gerber home.

John sits down and calms himself.

Evelyn returns to dusting, staying close.

John moves his one remaining rook into a safer defensive  
position.

JOHN  
You're right, Zack. The peculiar  
moves of the rook can aid in an  
escape.

Zack smiles wryly.

ZACK  
Or get you into more trouble.

John's eyes open widely as he worriedly studies the board.

BACK TO:

INT. THE GREAT HOUSE SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The two walk down the hall toward a guest room.

Judy stops to speak with a Housekeeper (female, early 20s,  
meek).

She hands the housekeeper the corkscrew and rejoins Marcus.

As they pass an open door, Marcus glances inside the room,  
which appears to be under construction.

Marcus stares at the room number: 313!

The tour continues.

JUDY

Now, this is one of our spacious rooms, with a little repair. Number 315 will be ready soon.

They walk away, and Marcus stops.

MARCUS

Maybe I *should* stay here.

JUDY

In Belize?

MARCUS

No here! This place is impressive.

Judy winces before responding.

JUDY

Unfortunately, we are booked through the end of the month.

MARCUS

So, no room in the inn?

JUDY

Sorry. Every room is taken or reserved.

Marcus steps back and stares into the open door.

MARCUS

Except 315.

Marcus freezes as if he hears his grandfather's voice.

JOHN (V.O.)

Zack, old buddy, we both know the boundary of a chessboard is finite. 64 squares, eight by eight, squares of alternating color. There is no escape. No place to hide anything, or anybody!

EXT. THE GREAT HOUSE SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Both Judy and Marcus step out onto the balcony. As Judy speaks, the locations are intercut with location footage.

JUDY

This Magnificent Colonial Home is conveniently located...

We LOOK OUT across the city.

JUDY (V.O.)

In the Tourism Zone of Belize City,  
just across from the Radisson Fort  
George Hotel, within walking  
distance to the water taxis,  
tourism village, restaurants,  
lighthouse, museum, banks, parks,  
shopping, downtown, and...

Marcus is overwhelmed by the information and cuts her off  
with a bit of sarcasm.

MARCUS

But wait, there's more!

Judy blushes. But before she can continue, Nigel joins them  
on the exterior staircase. Judy steps back and walks away.

NIGEL

Yes, she was about to tell you that  
this hotel is located within one  
hour of interior waterways, cave  
systems, and Mayan ruins.

Judy returns and hands Marcus a room key.

Nigel is surprised, but doesn't let on.

JUDY

And offshore, there's the Belize  
Barrier Reef, the outer atolls, and  
the cayes.

MARCUS

Thanks for the information and the  
key.

(beat, looks out)

I look forward to seeing it all.

Nigel and Judy make eye contact.

NIGEL

But to do that, you might need to  
freshen up and get a change of  
clothes.

MARCUS

Good point. I should go do that.

NIGEL

Later, I'll join you and show you  
around.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - SAME TIME

John stares at the chessboard with a worried look. Only a handful of pieces remain on the board, and John's black rook is targeted by Zack's white queen.

ZACK

One move away from check.

John has an epiphany and counters with a rarely used chess move called castling. John castles queen-side to protect his king. Because he anticipates Zack's next move. John speaks in a defeated voice.

JOHN

I see that!

Zack snickers at his friend's anguish.

Zack counters with a castling of his own to protect his white king and unleash his rook.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You did learn a lot in the joint.

ZACK

Learned to think ahead.

JOHN

I see that.

ZACK

Learned to rely on myself.

John glares at Zack.

JOHN

'Bout time.

ZACK

Meaning?

John glances back at Evelyn, who is lounging in a chair, thumbing through a magazine with her feet up on a coffee table.

JOHN

You know what I mean.

(whispers)

I did everything, while you drank  
and chased women.

Zack glares at John, but remains surprisingly calm.

ZACK

Your move.

JOHN

Castling. Rare move. Protects the king and unleashes the rook.

ZACK

You're in a lot of trouble.

John pauses and speaks philosophically to Zack.

JOHN

What got you through prison?

Zack stares quietly at the chessboard.

ZACK

Chaturanga, or what we know as chess.

JOHN

Chaturanga, the ancient Indian precursor to chess. Did you study its history?

ZACK

Everything about it. Kept the mind off other thoughts, allowing me to survive that hell hole.

Zack looks up sadly at John.

ZACK (CONT'D)

What got you through prison?

JOHN

Marcus.

Zack looks puzzled and worried.

ZACK

Marcus? Who's Marcus?

John makes an inconsequential move with a pawn, and Zack counters with an expert move with his unleashed rook.

Zack doesn't sound particularly triumphant.

ZACK (CONT'D)

Check!

John looks and sounds defeated.

JOHN  
Unraveling. It's all unraveling.

Evelyn sets down her magazine.

EVELYN  
Who wants tea?

EXT. BELIZE CITY - LATER

Marcus and Nigel exit the hotel and walk down the street.

Nigel points out some of the landmarks along the way.

Suddenly, Marcus is bumped/knocked down by an unidentified running woman (the first "Judy") who takes off with his bag.

Marcus races after the woman, screaming at her. But she is too fast for him.

MARCUS  
(shouting)  
Stop! Stop! Stop!

Nigel follows at a slower speed.

They run in pursuit of the assailant, but cannot keep up with her pace.

Marcus follows her to an abandoned building where he finds his bag and belongings scattered about.

He sifts through his personal belongings or what's left of them.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
(dejected)  
Sorry, Grandpa!

NIGEL (O.S.)  
You okay?

Nigel walks out of the dark carrying a pistol and surprises Marcus.

MARCUS  
I'm fine, but your "Land of friendly people" just took a turn.

Marcus grabs the last of his stuff and forces it into his bag.

NIGEL  
Whoever that was must have...  
(beat)  
Known why you're in Belize.

He notices that Nigel has a weapon.

MARCUS  
What...  
(beat)  
Is that?

Marcus points at Nigel's weapon as he re-holsters it.

NIGEL  
You can never be too safe.

MARCUS  
When did reporters start carrying  
guns?

Nigel walks slowly, circling Marcus while he talks.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
Or are you really a reporter?

NIGEL  
(sinister)  
You have a lot of questions for an  
American.

Marcus is uncomfortable with the change in Nigel's demeanor.

MARCUS  
How's that?

NIGEL  
Most of you don't do any critical  
thinking...  
(beat)  
But I do!

Suddenly, Nigel draws his weapon and aims it at Marcus.

NIGEL (CONT'D)  
Why are you really here, Mr.  
Karamu?

MARCUS  
(frantic)  
How do you know my name?

NIGEL

Let's just say that your reputation  
and DNA precede you.

(foreboding)

With modern science and technology,  
you can never escape your past.

Marcus is frightened but tries not to show it.

He proceeds to walk out of the building when a single shot  
rings out. BAM!

Preparing for the worst, he slowly turns to face Nigel.

Nigel is face-down on the ground. He has been shot.

Marcus squats down next to Nigel to check his pulse.

He spots a bloodstain, jumps back, slips, and gets splashed  
with blood on his left pant leg.

Not knowing if Nigel is alive, he panics, picks up the gun,  
and bolts out of the building.

EXT. BELIZE CITY - MOMENTS LATER

Marcus runs full speed toward the Great House hotel.

He spots two Policemen (30s-40s, uniformed) walking in the  
same direction just in front of him.

Marcus slows his pace but walks past them to avoid attention.

All is well until one of the police notices his heavy  
breathing and the blood on his pant leg.

BELIZE POLICE #1

(On alert)

Excuse me, Sir.

(beat)

Are you okay...?

Without turning around, Marcus bolts.

The police chase after him.

Marcus turns and darts down a street full of tourist-related  
shops.

He snatches a shirt, then a hat as he passes.

He crosses the street, dodging traffic, and disappears into a  
diving shop near the historic Swing Bridge.

INT. DIVE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Marcus walks in.

He immediately spots the sign for the Men's Room and heads that way.

As he pushes on the door to enter, we see the Two Police that were chasing him slowly walk past the shop window.

An announcement blares over a speaker.

VOICE ON SPEAKER (O.C.)  
Our snorkeling trip to Goff's Caye  
will depart in 10 minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - DAY

The piercing sound of an oven timer indicates that the food is ready. Evelyn pulls out a pan of Grouper that has been grilled to perfection. She sticks her head out of the kitchen and shouts over the Garifuna music that is playing.

EVELYN  
(shouting)  
Seafood coming up.

Zack and John are fully engaged in an aggressive game.

John thinks about his next move. He sits back and stares at Zack.

JOHN  
But what if you realized your plan  
has a fatal flaw?

John moves his Knight closer toward Zack's Queen.

ZACK  
To escape was all we had to do!

Zack reacts to John's move by moving his Queen out of harm's way.

JOHN  
We did escape, per se.

Zack closes his eyes and leans back in the chair. He sways to the rhythms of the MUSIC.

Evelyn enters carrying a platter of seafood delicacies. She places a small plate in front of each of them.

ZACK  
(eyes closed)  
Can't you see it, John? The night  
we returned to the hotel? You and I  
were...

JOHN  
(interrupted)  
Followed by that guy from the  
Special Branch.

ZACK  
Don't remember that.

JOHN  
What do you remember, Zack?

Evelyn watches from a distance and tries to listen to them speaking over the music.

ZACK  
Remember walking on the beach.

JOHN  
As do I.

ZACK  
Eating some kind of rat!

JOHN  
Gibnut, Check!

John reaches for some food off the platter. Places a breaded shrimp in his mouth, but the tail remains visible.

Zack looks up in disgust. Shakes his head.

John reaches for a beer and hands it to Zack, who immediately takes a large swig.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Thirsty?

ZACK  
Gibnut! Ugh!

He finishes off the bottle and places it on the floor next to the table.

He reaches for a piece of fish and places it in his mouth.

JOHN  
(looking at Zack)  
Gibnut!

Evelyn walks over to pick up the empty bottle and notices a flashing red reflection.

She slowly peers under the table and spots the transmission device.

ZACK  
(disgusted)  
Your move.

Evelyn reacts and rises quickly, bumping her head on the edge of the table.

Both men lean over to see if she is okay.

Zack reaches down to assist Evelyn.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. GOFF'S CAYE - AFTERNOON

YOUNG KID  
Are you okay?

Marcus is leaning over with his head in his hands. He is dressed in the stolen shirt and hat. His pants have been cut off into a pair of make-shift shorts. He is wearing dress shoes.

He is surrounded by white families with children who are having a great time. He is literally a 'fish-out-of-water'.

EXT. THE GREAT HOUSE - EVENING

Marcus walks from the port area. He approaches the hotel and surveys the area before entering.

INT. THE GREAT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marcus enters the lobby and walks toward the staircase. He spots a different woman behind the desk. But he doesn't notice that her name tag reads "Judy."

Marcus is on the second floor, heading toward his room.

He approaches the door and inserts the keycard. The lock flashes green, and he opens the door.

Marcus turns on the light and is startled when he sees a woman, with her back to him, sipping a beer while seated on an old trunk next to a missing piece of the wall.

MARCUS  
(stunned, excited)  
Excuse me, but I think you are in  
the wrong room.

GERTRUDE  
(monotone)  
Do you know how long I have waited  
for this moment?

Gertrude slowly turns her body just enough to make eye contact with Marcus.

MARCUS  
Get out, or I will call the police.

GERTRUDE  
(snickers)  
No, you won't...  
(beat)  
because...

Gertrude stands up and slowly walks toward Marcus.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
If you did, you would have to  
explain why your grandfather  
tricked you into retrieving MY  
MONEY!

Marcus is confused. He tries to exit the room and reaches for the door handle that is missing.

MARCUS  
(frightened)  
I, what...?

Gertrude holds up the door handle like the Statue of Liberty.

GERTRUDE (O.C.)  
This piece of metal represents the  
way out, Marcus.

Gertrude tosses it toward the window, nearly hitting it.

Marcus moves backwards as she continues to approach him.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

For 25 years, it was metal that kept your grandfather, John Karamu, and that friend of his, Zack Gerber, safe.

MARCUS

You call prison safe?

GERTRUDE

Yeah, because I couldn't get to them.

MARCUS

And if you did?

She pulls out a photograph of Evelyn and stares at it before showing it to Marcus.

GERTRUDE

(off the photo)

Oh, I did.

Marcus doesn't recognize the person in the photo.

MARCUS

(confused)

Am I supposed to know who that is?

Gertrude and Marcus slowly circle each other.

GERTRUDE

No, but neither does her father, whom she never met.

MARCUS

Why not?

GERTRUDE

Oh. Let's just say he got into a little trouble about eight months before she was born.

Marcus notices that Gertrude is becoming emotionally agitated.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

They say that the best way to predict the future is to create it.

Marcus is not sure what is happening.

MARCUS  
Is that right?

CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - EVENING

GERTRUDE (V.O.)  
Right about now, your grandfather  
and his friend are playing chess.

Off the chessboard, we see that Zack is tending to Evelyn's head injury. She is semi-conscious.

GERTRUDE (V.O.)  
At some point, after the two ex-  
cons have some shellfish, which  
Zack is allergic to...

The fish platter is mostly consumed, except for the shellfish on Zack's plate.

GERTRUDE (V.O.)  
Evelyn will serve them some more  
beer.

Both men are standing over Evelyn as she is resting on the sofa with an icepack on her bandaged head.

John picks up several empty beer bottles.

GERTRUDE (V.O.)  
Then, being the host that she is,  
the time will come when she will  
serve them tea.

Zack turns off the howling tea kettle and pours hot water into a cup.

GERTRUDE (V.O.)  
Not just any tea, but a special  
blend.

He motions to John, "Where are the tea bags?" Zack turns and accidentally knocks Evelyn's purse off the counter.

Out falls a box of tea.

Zack opens it and retrieves the two tea bags.

He places them into the cups with hot water and carries them into the other room.

Zack places one in front of Evelyn and the other in front of John, who is nursing a drink. John respectfully declines his offer.

Zack attends to Evelyn by helping her drink the tea as he holds the other cup and drinks it for himself.

Evelyn becomes disoriented, and Zack leans her back on the sofa. His eyes appear fixated on her necklace.

GERTRUDE (V.O.)

A tea that will put those two to  
sleep for a very long time.

There is banging on the door, and John looks up.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. THE GREAT HOUSE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two Henchmen (30s-50s; goons) and a woman (Judy from earlier) burst into the room. Gertrude backs up in shock.

MARCUS

(yelling at Gertrude)  
Are you saying that you killed my  
grandfather?

Amidst the commotion, Marcus lunges at Gertrude.

GERTRUDE

(frantically to invaders)  
Oh, thank you for saving me. I  
didn't know what he was going to  
do.

The Two Henchmen start roughing up Marcus before exiting with the trunk.

Marcus is bruised and battered and cannot believe what just happened.

After a moment, he forces himself up and unknowingly drops the gun he took from Nigel and staggers out of the room.

Marcus finds a way into Room 313.

Gertrude remains in room 315 and sits in silence.

Agent Mumford enters the room and pulls his weapon.

AGENT MUMFORD

Hello, Gertrude!

Marcus exits Room 313, carrying an oversized backpack, and sneaks down the hallway. He looks back at Room 315 when, suddenly, he hears a single gunshot. BAM!

He stares in disbelief as the door slowly opens. Panicked, he darts away before seeing who exits room 315.

EXT. BELIZE CITY - MORNING

A battered, homeless-looking Marcus walks slowly down the street. He passes a couple having breakfast and spots their cellphones being charged. They watch him as he turns and approaches their table.

MARCUS  
Do you have...?

The couple recoils as they look at Marcus.

MAN  
I'm sorry, not interested.

Marcus turns his attention to the woman. Looks past her and directly at the phone charger.

MARCUS  
How about you? I just need 5  
minutes.

Close-up of Marcus's phone being charged next to the phone on the table.

Marcus' phone is picked up and replaced by a \$100 bill minted in Denver circa 1970.

The couple looks up as Marcus disappears into the crowd.

CUT TO:

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - DAY

A distraught John is seated at the table, staring at a courier envelope. Not sure if he wants to open it.

Two bodies are lying on the floor, both covered in sheets.

His cellphone beeps, indicating that he has a text. He opens the message.

CLOSE-UP OF SCREEN:

Selfie Photo of a battered Marcus with words, "I am okay, money gone."

John immediately grabs the envelope and rips it open.

It contains a single photograph of a backpack. The same backpack he hid years earlier.

JOHN  
(yells)  
No! This is not happening.

John stands and walks into the other room.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
It was mine. I have waited all  
these years to reclaim what is  
rightfully mine.

A ringing phone is heard in the next room.

He looks at his own phone, which is silent.

John follows the sound to Evelyn's phone.  
CLOSE-UP OF SCREEN: "Mom - 555-555-5555"

John glances over toward the covered bodies of Zack and Evelyn before pressing the speaker button on the phone.

BEGIN INTERCUT PHONE CALL

GERTRUDE  
(on Speakerphone)  
Evelyn, it's me! Don't say  
anything. Just listen.

John is stunned to hear Gertrude's voice. He sits and starts placing the pieces on the chessboard.

John picks up the white queen while listening to Gertrude.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
The money, OUR MONEY, has been  
found. That agent, Agent Mumford,  
tried to double-cross me. But  
honey, he didn't know that I had  
already emptied the cash and  
replaced it with old newspapers.

John meticulously aligns the other chess pieces while squeezing the white queen in his fist.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)  
The reporter helped me find Marcus,  
and Marcus helped me find the room  
where your father hid the money.

John reacts and looks at the phone.

A tear runs down his face.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

But the reporter knew too much, and  
I think he was trying to take our  
money, so Judy took care of that.

There is silence, except for John's snuffle.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

(crying)

Evelyn, be careful. Dispose of the  
bodies and tea bags. Can you do  
that?

John picks up the phone and makes snuffle sounds in response.

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Agent Mumford had a photo of the  
house. I think he is heading your  
way.

John presses the end button, still sniffing.

END INTERCUT PHONE CALL

He sits back in silence. He reaches for a glass of water and  
takes two pills.

The silence is broken by a knock on the door.

INT. CALIFORNIA HOME - DAY

The room resembles a mental ward or a place where patients  
suffering from Dementia would reside.

The sound of orderlies milling about, tending to the needs of  
other patients.

JOHN

(yells)

It's open!

The door opens, and we follow DETECTIVE SNIPES (50s) into the  
room. From his POV (Point of View), we arrive at a small  
table where John sits alone playing both sides of a match on  
a cheap dime store chessboard.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Mr. Karamu, it's good to see you under better circumstances. The last time we spoke was in...

JOHN

Court. In fact, the last time we saw each other, you were wearing a nice wool blazer, and I was in an orange jumpsuit.

There is a history with Detective Snipes that he would rather not re-live. His constant glares say it all.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Remember, you have been 'conditionally' paroled and assigned to this facility. Play your cards right, John, and you might get to stay in your home.

JOHN

But this is my home!

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Which means that to enjoy your newly found freedom.

JOHN

I must cooperate!

DETECTIVE SNIPES (CONT'D)

You must cooperate!

Detective Snipes is annoyed but plays along.

DETECTIVE SNIPES (CONT'D)

Exactly. Here is what we know.

JOHN

(sarcastic)

Okay.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Gertrude was asking questions about the two of you.

JOHN

(confused)

Who?

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Zack Berger.

JOHN

Where are they now?

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Zack appears to be somewhere near Tucson, and Evelyn is being monitored in hopes that they will lead us to the infamous cash.

John stirs his tea slowly and returns his attention to Detective Snipes.

JOHN

So, when can I go home?

DETECTIVE SNIPES

You are home, sir, but you may need some help.

JOHN

(defiant)

I can take care of myself; I don't need any help!

DETECTIVE SNIPES

But we do! This person, Thaddeus Lake, comes highly recommended, and I have made arrangements for him to be assigned as your caregiver.

JOHN

But I can do without a caregiver.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Speaking of which, have you ever heard from the other caregiver, Evelyn? Strange that she just disappeared. If you see her, please...

John cuts him off excitedly.

JOHN

I want to see Gertrude's face when you arrest her.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

(direct)

No, that's not possible. You need to stay clear and let us handle this.

JOHN

(agitated)

Like you handled my parole request?

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Look, I am the one who got you released. If it wasn't for me, you would still be locked up.

JOHN

What, you call this FREEDOM? Or did you decide to give that to Zack?

John pushes the chessboard, forcing the pieces to fall over.

The detective shows John a folder with the information about the home caregiver, along with his photo, background details, etc.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

Do you have any questions for me?

JOHN

One.

DETECTIVE SNIPES

And what question is that?

John looks directly at Detective Snipes with the makings of a slight grin.

JOHN

Can I remember what I promised to forget?

John watches as the detective leaves the room.

John starts to play a single game of chess. It takes him back to his time with Zack.

John notices an extra chess piece on the board. He slowly reaches for the black Pawn, but bypasses it for the Knight when suddenly a backpack crashes onto the table. It is the hidden stash of cash.

MARCUS (O.S.)

Hello, Pops!

John looks directly into the camera and raises the Black King to hand it to Marcus.

QUEUE GARIFUNA MUSIC

ROLL CREDITS

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER: "In chess, Fool's Mate is the checkmate delivered after the fewest possible moves."

**THE END**