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mentos Mil  
Australis

John L. Sullivan  
"WHY - WHY YOU YOUNG HOODLUM, I'LL...  
I'LL KNOCK YOUR BLOCK OFF."  
(JOHN L. SULLIVAN POSE)  
"WHY, I'LL TAKE YOU APART!"

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# The Untimely Demise of that Awful David Schwartzman

(40 Drawings)

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# Schwartzman

Original Screenplay by Rudi O'Meara

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BANCO CENTRAL DE LA  
REPUBLICA ARGENTINA

RAMPHASTOS CITREOLA

THE UNTIMELY DEMISE OF THAT AWFUL DAVID SCHWARTZMAN

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**EXT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, AVIARY - NIGHT**

Seen from the bottom of a wooden hot tub, a middle-aged man floats face-down, staring directly at us.

His face is placid and calm. His unblinking eyes regard us curiously. Like he's got a million questions.

Slowly, traces of a dark red silk kimono bob and weave above him mingled with what looks very much like blood.

CLAY (V.O.)

So, yeah. Basically, we're fucked.

A tiny silver bubble hovers at the corner of the man's mouth and then darts quickly up to the surface.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And, no...

Beyond the surface, a hefty brindled bulldog gazes forlornly down into the water.

CLAY (CONT'D)

...he's not normally this *calm*.

HARD CUT TO:

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY**

The same man, DAVID SCHWARTZMAN (mid-50s), charges toward us through a pair of glass doors. His long, thinning gray hair is damp. His wire rim glasses are fogged.

His face is full of fury.

DAVID

THE FUCK did I fucking tell you?!

Behind him, at the center of a lushly landscaped aviary, sits the wooden hot tub. And the bulldog.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What are you trying to do, get me murdered?! Whenever Bruno calls, I'm NOT FUCKING HERE!!!

The image FREEZES.

Veins in both of David's temples are bulging. Spittle flies from his bulbous lips.

He's wearing the same red kimono. And he's got two lit joints, one in each hand.

CLAY (V.O.)

See.

Suddenly David REANIMATES.

DAVID

And another thing...

David spies the lit joint in his right hand, shoves it between his teeth like Patton, inhales.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Where the fuck is Phil?!

The camera WHEELS AROUND to reveal our narrator: CLAY WILCOX (early 20s), a fresh-faced kid far beyond his depth.

He sits at a sleek marble desk heaped with what appear to be dog-eared, hand-written accounting ledgers.

Behind him: a treasure trove of mid-century furniture and vintage French movie posters.

Exotic Amazonian artifacts dot every surface.

CLAY

Search me, man. He was supposed to be on the 7:30 flight back.

David LUNGES at him. The Kimono flares open.

Clay looks away.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Dude. C'mon.

David SLAMS what's left of his joint into the teeming ashtray on Clay's desk and GROWLS:

DAVID

If I find out he's lying to me, I will have your fucking head! And Sven's! And his!

(beat)

Do I make myself CLEAR?!

David FREEZES again. Clay calmly turns to us and speaks:

CLAY

(direct-to-camera)

Sad really. He's fluent in French, Italian, Yiddish, German, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese.

(MORE)

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 (deep breath)  
 And every third word is, well...

Clay reaches over, snatches the other joint out of David's frozen fingers, snuffs it out too.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 I really thought, back at the start, that this would be about making something beautiful.

Clay grabs a pack of Dunhill reds from his shirt pocket, shakes one out, lights it with a small vintage lighter.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 You know, art. Instead, it's just about money. Commerce. Finance.

Clay points his cigarette at David.

David UNFREEZES while grinding out his roach. Instead, his empty fingers send ashes flying.

He barely notices.

DAVID  
 Go to Canter's. Pick me up a chicken. A double order of *latkes*. Six not three. And a poppy seed strudel.

He thrusts a hand into a pocket in his kimono, pulls out a damp wad of bills, tosses them onto the desk.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 A la fucking MODE!

Clay nods, inhales again. Used to David's commands.

David spins on his heels and makes a beeline for the door. His kimono ripples wildly in his wake.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 And I expect exact change.

BANG! He slams the glass doors shut, disappears into the densely-landscaped space between us and the hot tub.

Clay pushes the soggy bills away with the back of his hand, doffs his ash, and turns back to us.

CLAY

It all could've just been so much  
more... *interesting*.

He lifts the cigarette back to his lips, closes one of the ledgers on his desk. THWACK!

CLAY (CONT'D)

(through smoke)

Like, when Phil first called to offer me the gig, all I knew about David was that he had something to do with The Factory.

**INT. EARTHLING BOOKSTORE, SANTA BARBARA - DAY**

A slightly younger Clay stands at the foot of the sagging shelves of a beloved hippie bookstore, thumbing through a hefty hardcover of "The Warhol Diaries".

Skimming the index, Clay turns back to us, continues:

CLAY

Warhol's diaries had just come out. It was, like, a couple years after he died. Warhol, not David.

(flipping pages)

And David's name was *all over* the index. Good sign, right?

Clay pauses at a page about a quarter of the way in, slides a finger down it, taps a passage.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Nope. Every single citation was exactly the same.

(reading)

*Stopped by a party at Halson's. Ran into that awful David Schwartzman.*

He flips a few more pages, pauses, reads again:

CLAY (CONT'D)

*Had dinner with Mick and Bianca at Max's Kansas City. Ran into that awful David Schwartzman.*

(skimming)

*Early supper at Elaine's. Saw that awful David Schwartzman.*

Clay lifts his eyes from the book.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Every. Single. One.

He slowly, almost mournfully closes the book.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Should've learned my lesson then.  
 Taken a tip from what's her name.  
 The chick with the haircut. The one  
 whose life Warhol swore David  
 totally ruined. The one who was in  
 David's first real movie...

**INT. THE FACTORY - NIGHT**

In sharp-edged BLACK-AND-WHITE, a leather-clad throng of Warhol Superstars dance, smoke, and snort their way through a pack of Random Celebs inside the silver painted space.

Amidst the scrum, a Young Woman with a fierce bob, a tight mini, and heavy eyeliner sways with a martini in one hand.

Yeah, her.

**INT. EARTHLING BOOKSTORE, SANTA BARBARA - DAY**

Back in the bookstore, Clay slips the closed book back up onto a crowded shelf.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Anyway, I took the job because I  
 thought it might be my way in.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT**

Back inside the production office, Clay takes another drag.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 My path to the big time.

The glass doors across the room abruptly SNAP open again.

DAVID (O.S.)  
 Canter's. Chicken. *Schnell!*

BANG! David slams the doors, disappears into the aviary.

In his wake, he leaves some sort of MARSUPIAL. It stands crouched on the carpet, ready to pounce.

CLAY  
 Oh, shit. That's--

The Marsupial (actually a kinkajou, a South American rainforest cousin of the raccoon) takes a couple of loping strides across the room, toward Clay.

Clay stabs his cigarette out, nervously tracks the beast with his eyes. He's trapped.

Suddenly, the creature springs up off the floor, bounces off a nearby ottoman and lands on Clay's desk.

Frozen, Clay looks like he wants to scream.

The kinkajou pauses, tips back onto its hind legs, places two paws onto Clay's shoulder.

Clay draws a quick breath, frozen stiff.

The kinkajou jumps up onto Clay's back. Its furry tail drapes all the way down Clay's right arm.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Easy, now.

The tail winds around his arm like a snake.

Clay tries to play it cool. Stay calm.

But then the animal's tail CONSTRICTS. Clay flinches.

The kinkajou bares its bright white teeth, plunges them into Clay's shoulder.

Clay LEAPS TO HIS FEET.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Motherffffff....

All instinct, he grabs the creature by the neck, rips it off his back, tosses to the floor.

It lands gracefully, pauses, lopes back toward him.

Clay frantically grabs his cigarettes, his keys, and the crumpled bills from the desk and splits.

**I/E. CAR/DOWNTOWN L.A. - NIGHT**

A 1970s Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce speeds through the darkened glass canyons of downtown L.A. with its top down.

A famous ARIA blasts from the speakers.

Clay is in the passenger seat, not freaked out in the slightest. And wearing an entirely different outfit.

CLAY (V.O.)

Wait. Lemme back up.

At the wheel of the car is a young Asian American man.

This is PHIL TAKAHASHI (mid 20s). He's unkempt but expensively dressed. Vintage glasses. Windswept hair.

He waves a pastel-colored cigarette in the air like a conductor's baton. Sparks fall from it like fireflies.

CLAY (CONT'D)

My first night in town, and it was straight to Gorky's. Blitzed out of our *freaking* minds. As one does. To escape the boredom.

The car makes a skidding right and SQUEALS to a stop in front of a bustling, ironically proletarian Russian Canteen.

The place is abuzz with night owl hipsters.

Phil cuts the engine, and he and Clay hop out of the Alpha and head for the neon-lit entry.

We TRACK with them as they cross the sidewalk.

**INT. GORKY'S - NIGHT**

Inside, the vibe is half Communist bread line, half after-hours speakeasy. The whole place thrums with energy.

CLAY

(back to us)

Oh, and that's Phil. Back before he went AWOL. Before the movie tanked. Before all of David's toucans started dying. Before David...

(beat)

Back when things were good.

The two of them grab cafeteria trays, sidle up to the buffet, fill their plates with random Russian specialties.

By the looks of it, they're both heavily stoned.

CLAY (CONT'D)

He was my editor at the paper. Back in college. Always, like, ten moves ahead of everybody.

Clay grins glassy-eyed as a woman behind the counter spoons a huge dollop of mashed potatoes onto his plate.

CLAY (CONT'D)

He was the one who figured out that we could set up a slush fund by selling alumni subscriptions to our little one-color college weekly.

**INT. COLD SPRINGS TAVERN, SANTA BARBARA - NIGHT**

A younger Phil (still dressed sloppy foppish) stands at the head of a long table, toasting his staff:

PHIL

To absent friends, lost loves, old gods, and the season of mists. And may each and every one of us always give the devil his due!

His CLEAN-CUT MINIONS beam back, lifting their cups.

A grinning, much younger Clay included.

**INT. GORKY'S - NIGHT**

Back on Clay and Phil, a stern-looking Cashier rings up their feast. Of course, Phil pays.

Clay still (stonily) monologues directly to us:

CLAY

Pretty soon we had so much money rolling in we didn't know what to do with it. Phil supposedly skimmed some off the top. And was able to start investing. Buying properties. I think, by the time he graduated, he already owned two restaurants in Santa Barbara. Maybe three.

(beat)

Bananas, right?

Ignoring Clay completely, Phil leads the way through the throngs toward an open booth.

CLAY (CONT'D)

That's actually how he met David.

**INT. EMPTY RESTAURANT, SANTA BARBARA - DAY**

A shockingly well-dressed (and very much alive) younger David stands opposite a still poshly unkempt Phil inside the empty shell of a recently vacated restaurant.

They argue vociferously behind glass.

We can't hear a word.

CLAY (V.O.)

Phil's shady business partner, who was like some heavy hitter agent or producer or something, sued David for, I dunno, breach of contract or something. The rights to some script? I dunno. Can't remember.

Phil thrusts David a hefty stack of legal documents and strides confidently away.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Left it to Phil to go after him. Even though he only had an English degree. Never even studied law.

David, alone in the restaurant, looks up from the documents, tracks Phil with his eyes as he pushes his way out the door.

CLAY (CONT'D)

We were *all* English majors. None of us cared about finance. Or so I thought at the time.

David drops the docs to the floor and moves to follow Phil.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Turns out, something about Phil's, I dunno, *ruthlessness* appealed to him. So, he asked him to be his...

(beat)

...his...

**INT. GORKY'S, BOOTH - NIGHT**

Clay and Phil slide into a booth.

Phil produces a box of smokes, shakes out a robin's egg blue cigarette, offers one to Clay.

Clay's mind is elsewhere, still searching for the word.

CLAY

No thanks.

(beat)

God, I'm so stoned!

Clay unfurls his paper napkin and tucks it into the collar of his shirt like a bib.

PHIL  
 (inhaling)  
 Really?  
 (exhaling)  
 I don't feel a thing.

Clay turns to us, remembering what he was about to say:

CLAY  
 ...*Konshiriēru!*  
 (beat)  
 Japanese for 'adviser'.

Phil reaches out, grabs his beer, washes down the smoke with a series of comically large gulps.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Although, what the hell David  
 thought Phil knew about the movie  
 business is beyond me.

PHIL  
 AHHHH...

Phil SLAMS both fists down on the table with a loud THUD.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 (quoting)  
*Idle youth, enslaved to everything!  
 By being too sensitive, I have  
wasted my life!*

CLAY  
 Rilke?

Phil's face falls ever so slightly.

PHIL  
 Rimbaud.

Clay reaches for his beer, silently scolds himself for always getting those two mixed up.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 Okay. So, here's how we do it.

**EXT. ALVEAR PALACE HOTEL, BUENOS AIRES - DAY**

A bustling, vaguely Parisian street outside of a lavish hotel in central Buenos Aires.

An older Phil clutches a briefcase on the stone steps opposite David.

David's fingers seem poised to rip out every last shred of what's left of his hair.

He SCREAMS something we can't hear, LUNGES at Phil.

But, before he can get his hands around Phil's neck, the FRAME FREEZES and quickly precedes to CATCH FIRE.

Celluloid stuck in the gate of a projector.

CLAY (V.O.)  
Hold on, hold on, hold on. Back up.

**EXT. MARIANA TRENCH, WESTERN PACIFIC - DAY**

The ocean floor somewhere in the far western Pacific Ocean.

A tiny fissure opens up in the rocky seabed. And bright orange LAVA beings to bubble up.

An island being born.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
No, no, no. Jesus! Not that far!

**INT. HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - NIGHT**

The cluttered and smoke filled interior of a sparsely but expensively furnished Hollywood bungalow.

A young man we haven't met yet sits slumped across a black leather couch strewn with papers and open books.

This is SVEN NILSSON (mid 20s), pale, thin, bookish. A chain smoker constantly mulling his own mortality.

SVEN  
So wait a minute. Wait! We just buy a defunct Dutch hospital supply company, transfer all of our production funds into their existing accounts, and then petition the Dutch tax authorities for a special assessment?

Clay sits opposite him in a zebra striped Alvar Aalto tank chair, lifting a cardboard toilet paper roll to his lips.

At the top of the roll: a hole lined with tinfoil. On the tinfoil sits what's left of a tacky black bud.

CLAY  
 (muffled by the tube)  
 And then we cross our fingers that  
 our tax rate...

Clay FLICKS his lighter open, SPINS the wheel, lifts a flickering flame to the bowl.

Behind him, Phil swirls a brandy snifter full of tequila. His pinstriped dress shirt is open to his navel.

PHIL  
 (picking up the thread)  
 ...lands far below anything we'd be  
 hit with if we passed funds through  
 onshore accounts here or in  
 Argentina.  
 (devilish grin)  
That's the way we do it!

Clay gags, coughs out a cloud of smoke, turns to us.

CLAY  
 See. Fucking finance. Not art.

**INT. GORKY'S, TABLE - NIGHT**

Back at Gorky's, Phil leans across the table toward us, attempting to elaborate:

PHIL  
 (direct-to-camera)  
 The Dutch government deliberately  
 offers companies that would not  
 otherwise seek to reside solely  
 within its territory the means to  
 reduce their tax burden on  
 interest, royalties, dividends and  
 capital gains income from foreign  
 subsidiaries.

He pauses, lifts his beer again. Instead of drinking, he stares into the golden column of tiny bubbles.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 The Netherlands benefits primarily  
 from attracting financial flows to  
 its territory by increasing the tax  
 yield that it enjoys from corporate  
 income and the employment generated  
 in the trust and tax accounting and  
 consultancy sectors.  
 (MORE)

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 (taking a sip)  
*Ipsa facto*, we get to make a \$20 million art film about tango dancing Jewish bordello gangsters in 1920s Argentina without the IRS poking around in our books.

Across from him, Clay sits studying a heaping forkful of mashed potatoes.

Instead of taking a bite, he turns back to us too.

CLAY  
 Alright. Two things.

**INT. HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - NIGHT**

We're suddenly back on Sven.

He's frozen with one hand extended toward us, presumably to take the cardboard pot pipe from Clay.

CLAY (V.O.)  
 First off, that's Sven.

Sven REANIMATES (much in same way David did earlier), takes the smoldering toilet paper roll, lifts it to his lips.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 He's a good egg, really. Even though, well...  
 (beat)  
 ...never mind. Now...

Sven covers the far end of the tube with one hand, lifts the lighter to the bowl, sucks.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 ...he and Phil go way back. They're both a year ahead of me. Both from the paper. Only, Sven's the *real* writer among us. The only one patient enough to actually finish anything halfway decent.

As Sven's lungs fill, a strangely terrified look washes across his face.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 On the outside, he reads as, like, an old man trapped inside the body of 24-year-old chain smoker.

Sven exhales slowly. Perplexed and disgusted.

CLAY (CONT'D)

But, give him a little coke and get him to a bowling alley in Encino and, well...

**INT. BOWLING ALLEY, ENCINO - NIGHT**

A coke-addled Sven in a vintage 50s bowling shirt charges at us hefting a milky orange bowling ball with his upside-down initials carved into in.

SVEN

*Kom till pappa!*

He slides across the parquet, lets the ball roll.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT**

Back in the office, back before the kinkajou, Clay sits again at the sleek marble desk.

The bulldog we caught a glimpse of earlier sits staring at him from the chaise of an Eames lounge chair.

That's BUTCH. More on him in a bit.

CLAY

Phil hired Sven before me. And, well, like me, he's still trying to figure out what the hell we're actually supposed to be doing here. I mean, back then. Before it all went sideways. When we were all so green. Optimistic. Hopeful.

Butch turns to the camera, perplexed just like we are.

**INT. HOLLYWOOD BUNGALOW - NIGHT**

From Butch, we leap back to Sven as he GAGS out smoke.

SVEN

Fuck, man! Shit! Who bought the goddamn scented roll?!

(gasping)

If I die of cancer, it's on you!

Out of nowhere, Phil yanks the 'pipe' out of Sven's hand, flicks it out the open window.

It lands on the leaf-strewn deck in a cloud of sparks.

PHIL  
Focus, people! We have money to  
launder!

**EXT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND - NIGHT**

We flash back to David floating face-down in the wooden hot tub, seen again from below.

It's literally the calmest we'll ever see him.

CLAY (V.O.)  
Total shame. Because he was, like,  
at heart, an artist. Sensitive.  
(beat)  
Someone who actually cared. Wanted  
to make something beautiful.  
Unlike, well, Phil.

**EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY**

Clay, suddenly all-business, strides across a bustling studio lot hefting two battered metal reel canisters.

CLAY  
Who, as it turns out, just bailed.  
Left us hanging. After the money  
went missing. After everything  
started falling apart. After the  
toucans. Just fucking vanished.  
Left me and Sven holding the bag.

Sven carries a third canister in one hand and a bulky old-school cellphone to his ear. It's a brick.

SVEN  
(out of breath)  
Who are you talking to?

CLAY  
Who are you talking to?

Sven jams the receiver to his chest.

SVEN  
(hushed)  
Michael! He wants to know where  
Phil went!

From the phone, a VOICE:

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
(tinny)  
Who you talkin' to?

SVEN  
 (wordlessly)  
 Shit!

Clay slows, rolls his eyes, makes hard right toward the stairs to a cream-colored stucco building. Resigned.

CLAY  
 Just tell him. It's over.

SVEN  
 Tell him what?!

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
 (over the phone)  
 Tell me what?

Sven pauses at the foot of the stairs. He couldn't look more different from his go-for-broke, coked-up bowling alter ego.

Literally petrified. Scared shitless.

Clay bounds up the stairs, SHOUTS back:

CLAY  
 Tell him the truth.

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
 (barely audible)  
 Hello?!

Sven lifts the receiver again, tries to sound convincing:

SVEN  
 We, um, haven't seen, uh, Phil. We don't know anything. We don't know where he might--

**EXT. RANCHO MIEDO - DAY**

A deeply tanned gangster type reclines on a chaise next to a long aquamarine pool with a phone to his ear.

This is MICHAEL MACCIONI (50s), slick, menacing. The arid landscape beyond the pool is reflected in mirrored aviators.

MICHAEL  
 Now, Sven. You listen to me. Phil knows better than to go runnin' his mouth off. Right?

SILENCE on the other end of the line.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 Because, between you and me and the  
 little birdies in the sky, that  
 smug little *wunderkind* knows too  
 much. Ya get me?

Still, CRICKETS from Sven.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 But, don't worry. I'll come to you.  
 Musso and Frank. Friday night.  
 We'll pick you an' Clay up at the  
 office. Say hello to the maestro.  
 Then, we'll talk.

**EXT. STUDIO LOT, SCREENING ROOM STEPS - DAY**

With the receiver still stuck to his ear, Sven frantically  
 HISSES up toward Clay:

SVEN  
 He doesn't know!

Clay pauses at the top of the stairs.

CLAY  
 I don't believe that. Of course he  
 knows. He probably--

SVEN  
 He wants to take us to dinner!

Clay stares down at him.

CLAY  
 Really?

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
 (over the phone)  
 Have fun at your little picture  
 show. Hopefully that crippled trust  
 fund freak'll pony up!

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. The line goes dead.

Sven struggles cradles the receiver, his normally pallid  
 visage even more noticeably drained of color.

Sven starts slowly up the stairs.

SVEN  
 He doesn't know David's... dead.

Clay looks away, searches for words.

CLAY  
 He doesn't want us to know that he knows. His freaking goons, they probably *did* it!

SVEN  
 What? Why?

CLAY  
 Shhh.

SVEN  
 Why would they--

Clay tightens his grip on the film canisters, turns toward the entrance to a numbered screening room.

CLAY  
 Something's rotten in the state of Denmark.

SVEN  
 Denmark? The Netherlands!

Clay pauses.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 Oh, right. *Hamlet*.

With a SIGH, Clay pushes his way inside.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 I'm so fucked.

From just beyond the door, Clay SHOUTS back:

CLAY (O.S.)  
 Not if this goes right. I think.

**INT. AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS FLIGHT, COACH - DAY**

Dressed differently again, Clay sits in a coach seat on a crowded flight.

He's wearing one of Phil's shirts. A Coke on ice FIZZES on the tray in front of him.

CLAY  
 (again to us)  
 Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I just can't keep it all straight. There are just too many stupid players.

He reaches out for the Coke, takes a sip.

A burgundy attache case is on the floor between his feet.

For all we know (and judging by his nervous air) it might as well be a bomb.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Okay, so David *is* actually dead.

Clay lifts his wrist, wearily eyes his watch.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Or will be, in about 36 hours and 22 minutes. Or the day before Michael called a second ago. A couple weeks after I picked up Arturo at LAX.

(flustered)

Fuck! Lemme start over.

**EXT. ROME - NIGHT**

Wait? Rome. Yeah, in the 1960s.

A Debonaire Man in a tailored black suit stands smoking in front of bright red sports car.

CLAY (V.O.)

David was born somewhere in upstate New York.

A Rotund Man in rumpled white suit and dark sunglasses strides over, whispers something into the other man's ear.

CLAY (CONT'D)

His parents owned a bunch of movie theaters. So you could kinda say he was *born* into the business.

The Debonaire Man nods, flicks his cigarette away, straightens his tie.

The Rotund Man spins on his heels, whips out some sort of hand-held viewfinder.

He lifts his sunglasses, peers through the device.

CLAY (CONT'D)

But, instead of going to work for his dad, he took off for Italy.

Satisfied, the Rotund Man pockets the viewer, strides away.

It's only now that we notice the entire square is ringed with massive arc lights.

A tightly clustered film crew stands at the ready in the distance, behind a battered camera dolly.

The Rotund Man leaps into an open seat on the dolly next to a balding Cameraman and shouts:

FELLINI

*Motore!*

A nearby Sound Man hunches over a reel-to-reel recorder behind a nervous Boom Operator.

The Rotund Man, FEDERICO FELLINI (40s) gives him a nod.

SOUND MAN

*Partito.*

FELLINI

*Azione!*

The Debonaire Man turns, ambles past the sports car. The hulking camera tracks him.

CLAY (V.O.)

Like David always said, Fellini was shooting dreams. Not memories.

Seated in a director's chair sketching: a much younger and much fitter David Schwartzman (mid-20s).

In the foreground, the famous scene continues to play out. The Debonaire Man, MARCELLO MASTROIANNI (30s) cries out:

MASTROIANNI

Silvia? Silvia?

He pauses at the sight of ANITA EKBERG (30s) in a black dress and a white fur stole picking up a MEWLING kitten beneath a tattered billboard.

In the background, David keeps sketching.

CLAY (V.O.)

Designing posters. One sheets. Titles. My *absolute* dream.

Lifting the kitten, Ekberg spins away.

EKBERG

Marcello, can you find some milk?

**INT. AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS FLIGHT, COACH - LATER**

Clay trudges up the aisle of the plane, toward the exit. Through the windows, we can see we're on the ground now.

Clay's clutches the briefcase tightly to his chest.

CLAY

After that, he worked for a bunch of other directors. Friedkin, Schlesinger, Preminger. The best.

**INT. BUENOS AIRES AIRPORT, JETWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Clay strides up a crowded jet bridge, toward the terminal.

No one else seems to notice him speaking to us.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Even hooked up with Corman for a while. Making a bunch of kick-ass, high-concept samurai art movies. I mean, after the thing that put him on Warhol's naughty list.

**INT. BUENOS AIRES AIRPORT, TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS**

Clay enters the terminal, looks left and right while anxiously clutching the briefcase.

CLAY

Somehow, he scraped together enough dough to option this crazy...

He glimpses a SHADY GENTLEMAN in the distance, pauses.

But then the Shady Gentleman pulls his newspaper tight, obscuring his face.

**EXT. SPANISH PRISON - DAY**

We flash to what seems to be yet another film set.

Although this one looks more modern. A wind-swept prison yard somewhere in the desert.

A different Director throws himself into a fiberglass seat next to another Cameraman.

A long crane arm hoists them swiftly skyward.

CLAY (V.O.)  
 (continuing)  
 ...magical realist Spanish novel by  
 Ernesto Ortiz. "Sting of the  
 Dragonfly".

From high above, the director, MATEO RIVERO (40s) lifts a  
 bullhorn, SHOUTS in Portuguese:

MATEO RIVERO  
 Aao!

Below, a handful of Ragged Extras converge, ready to riot.

CLAY (V.O.)  
 You probably know it. It's the one  
 set during the Spanish Civil War.  
 About a cross-dressing Nazi officer  
 advising Franco's--

**INT. BUENOS AIRES AIRPORT, CONCOURSE - DAY**

Clay lowers the briefcase, passes the Shady Gentleman behind  
 the newspaper, continues on down the concourse.

As he goes, the Shady Gentleman peers over his paper again,  
 tracks Clay with his eyes. Clay doesn't clock it.

CLAY  
 So great. Like, pure cinema. But,  
 in the end, does it matter?

Behind Clay, eight or so very similarly anxious Americans in  
 their 20s cross the concourse. Each carries their own equally  
 anonymous briefcase.

Clay slows, looks around again. *Where the fuck are they?*

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 No. Not really. Even though it was  
 was his ticket to the limelight.

He cautiously spins around, searching the concourse.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Cleaned up at Cannes. Same thing at  
 the Oscars.

All of the other young men freeze.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Best actor. Best picture. Best  
 adapted screenplay. Best director.

Finally, from out of nowhere, Phil instantly appears. He's trailed by a handful of local P.A.s.

Clay exhales slowly, strides toward Phil.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 (still to us)  
 Even though it got laughed off the screen at the New York Film Festival.

Phil veers toward Clay, a puckish grin plastered across his face. Clay's body instantly relaxes.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 David kicked Mateo off the project, stole the negative, and re-cut the whole damn thing himself.

Clay slows, turns to us again.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 I think he does this just to fuck with us. Phil, I mean.

Phil stops, thrusts out a hand. Around his wrist: an expensive vintage Cartier watch.

PHIL  
 I'll take that!

Clay happily hands him the attache case.

CLAY  
 New watch?

PHIL  
 Came with the gowns.

Phil tilts the watch back and forth. The crystal face catches the light.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 Oh, and...

He reaches inside his jacket, pulls out a fist full of white and burgundy cigarette boxes.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 ...so did these.

He thrusts them to Clay.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Sent us six cases. There'll be a whole crate at the office for you and Sven when you get back.

Cartier cigarettes. Not for sale anywhere. Yet.

CLAY

Is that all this is to you? Free cigarettes, tax write-offs, and custom freaking loafers? I thought we were supposed to be making a movie here. A film.

Phil grins, tightens his grip on the attache case.

In the background, we can barely make out a series of nearly identical exchanges going on.

Every briefcase being handed over to somebody else.

PHIL

Any suspicions?

Clay looks deflated. Crestfallen. Deeply disappointed.

CLAY

No.

PHIL

Who packed 'em?

Clay's SIGHS.

PHIL (CONT'D)

David wants to be sure.

CLAY

Just me. And Sven. Nobody else.

PHIL

*Va bene!*

Phil turns to leave.

CLAY

(flat affect)

See you on Thursday?

PHIL

See you Thursday.

(beat)

*Buon viaggio!*

Clay pockets the cigarettes, turns back around, pulls a another Aerolineas ticket sleeve from his back pocket, trudges back toward the gate.

All of the other now empty-handed Young Americans do the same thing. They all fan out.

Zero eye-contact.

As he passes the Shady Gentleman, still behind the newspaper, Clay shakes his head.

CLAY  
I know. I know...

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - EARLIER**

Back in the production office. Sven sits across from Clay.

Clay is dressed the same but looks infinitely fresher. Like it's the same day, just way earlier.

SVEN  
Why are we doing this again?

Between them sits an open attache case. In it are stacked huge bundles of American \$100 bills.

Clay SNAPS the case closed with a flourish. Behind him sit a stack of eight or nine more.

In the distance, Butch GROWLS:

CLAY  
(to Butch)  
Exactly.

**INT. AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS FLIGHT, COACH - LATER**

Back on the airplane, back in Coach, Clay now has a bubbling gin and tonic before him. Three tiny green bottles.

The sky outside is tinged with hints of sunset.

CLAY  
Sorry this is so... *complicated*.

He cracks a can of tonic water, pours. Defenses down for the return voyage.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
I blame the Argentine government.

He lifts his drink, takes a sip, savors it.

CLAY (CONT'D)

So, we were almost done with principal photography on the follow-up to "Sting".

(takes another sip)

Then the entire Argentine economy totally collapsed.

(crunches ice)

Wreaking havoc on everything. And kick-starting hyperinflation.

**INT./EXT. BUENOS AIRES, TAXI - DAY**

Phil leaps into a taxi with Clay's briefcase.

CLAY (V.O.)

You could take one taxi 15 blocks in the morning and it would cost somewhere around 1,350 Australes.

**I/E. BUENOS AIRES, TAXI - NIGHT**

Now empty-handed, Phil leaps into the same cab at night.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Same ride, same driver, same distance later that day: 5,850.

The taxi SCREECHES to a halt. Phil hands the driver a heaping pile of crumpled bills.

**INT. AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS FLIGHT, COACH - NIGHT**

Clay smiles, beckons us closer with a wag of his head.

CLAY

(hushed, to us)

To try and shore up the economy, the government froze all foreign assets. And, even though we held most of our production funds in a derelict hospital supply company in the Netherlands, all the cash we needed to keep things moving was onshore. In state-run Argentine banks. So, basically, we were totally and completely hosed.

(beat)

Or, we were...

**INT. BUENOS AIRES PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT**

Phil sits smoking in a darkened office lit by the glow of a chunky early Apple laptop.

CLAY (V.O.)  
 ...until Phil figured out a way to  
 hack the Dutch tax code *and* the  
 Argentine black market for foreign  
 currency exchange.

**EXT. BUENOS AIRES, CITY STREETS - DAY**

With an almost balletic precision, a collection of NERVOUS P.A.s step up to the grimy windows of various black market currency booths in bustling Buenos Aires.

**INT. AEROLINEAS ARGENTINAS FLIGHT, COACH - NIGHT**

Back inside the plane, Clay gestures to a passing Stewardess for a top-up.

CLAY  
 He wrote an algorithm to optimize  
 trading Dollars for Australs down  
 to the minute. Seconds, even. Right  
 place. Right time. All over town.

The Stewardess leans in with an open can of tonic, pours.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Thus the briefcases. Funny how the  
 only way to make something ugly  
 beautiful is to *launder* it.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT**

Back in L.A., Clay and Sven continue to fill more briefcases with tens of thousands of U.S. Dollars.

CLAY (V.O.)  
 Three shipments a week. Usually  
 around \$30,000 to \$120,000 per  
 briefcase. All super-junior P.A.s.  
 And, well, me. Flying blind.

**INT. LAX, INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - DAY**

Back on the ground at LAX, Clay locks eyes with us.

CLAY  
 Sometimes we told 'em it was just  
 camera gear. Lenses. Stock. That  
 sort of thing. But I'm pretty sure  
 everyone thought is was drugs.  
 Given Tommaso's... *reputation*.

**INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY**

A ruggedly handsome actor, TOMMASO DISCENZA (late 20s) sits in a director's chair with a paper bib tucked into the collar of his costume dress shirt.

He puts a hand on the napkin, bends forward, and does an impossibly long line of coke with a rolled \$100 bill.

CLAY (V.O.)

He was hot off that thing with Malick and the one with you know who. His girlfriend at the time.

In the background a YOUNG WOMAN with high cheekbones and scarlet ringlets LAUGHS out loud out of focus.

It's a familiar laugh, soon to be famous.

**INT. LAX, GATE - DAY**

Clay stands holding his briefcase, waiting to board the plane we just saw him get off.

In the distance behind him, the rest of the P.A.s fall in, trying and largely failing to look un-coordinated.

CLAY

That crazy freak was gonna be huge. If he didn't flame out first.

Clay takes a step forward, pulls out his ticket.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Anyway, Phil's master plan worked. Kept us in business. On schedule, on budget. Shooting that piece of shit movie that should have, or at least *could* have, been great.

A Gate Agent takes Clay's ticket, rips the stub, hands it back to him, smiles.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Even got Phil on the cover of "Variety" if you can believe it.

INSERT: A glossy photo of Phil beneath the headline:

HOLLYWOOD'S TWENTY-SOMETHING FINANCIAL WUNDERKIND

Back at the gate, Clay stops dead.

The line behind him snarls.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Total bullshit. And precisely the  
 moment that things *really* started  
 to go south. In a big way.

**EXT. ALVEAR PALACE HOTEL, BUENOS AIRES - DAY**

We're suddenly back in front of the ornate façade of the  
 palatial hotel from earlier.

Phil is wearing what we just saw him wearing at the airport,  
 and he's holding the briefcase Clay just gave him.

David stands frozen opposite Phil. He looks like he's about  
 to choke Phil out.

CLAY (V.O.)  
 Remember this?

Suddenly, Phil and David REANIMATE.

David lunges at Phil.

DAVID  
 Fuck you, you cocky little prick! I  
 fucking MADE YOU!

Phil stumbles backward, clearly not a brawler.

PHIL  
 Calm down! Calm DOWN! I didn't--

They awkwardly tussle.

DAVID  
 You say one more word, one FUCKING  
 WORD, to Bruno and so help me--

PHIL  
 David...

DAVID  
 You don't get it, do you? This is  
 about fucking eternity!

David steps back, loosens his collar like he's choking.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 They don't make gods anymore. Just  
 content. You'll forget me before  
 the credits even roll.

PHIL  
 What? C'mon, now. Just, relax...

DAVID

RELAX?!

Out of nowhere, David winds up and SLAPS Phil in the face.

Phil stands stunned, like someone who's never been hit in his entire lifetime.

He drops the briefcase, surges at David.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm--

More awkward blows.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But if *Hinata-san* EVER finds out...

Phil pulls back, then charges again at David, fists-forward.

DAVID (CONT'D)

...we're fucking fucked!

BLAM-O!

Phil batters David just below his sternum with both fists. David stumbles backward, nearly falls down the stairs.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(clutching his chest)

You, me, Michael. All of us.

David sucks down air, face beet red.

Seeming afraid David might actually be having a heart attack, Phil takes a couple of tentative steps down.

Leaves briefcase perched on the top step.

Behind David, a black Mercedes 600 limousine pulls up.

PHIL

What do you mean, *forget* you?

DAVID

Fuck you.

PHIL

Fuck YOU.

DAVID

Fuck...

The Limo Driver jumps out and skip/hops around to the rear passenger door, regally POPS it open.

David tumbles the rest of the way down the stairs, clutching his chest for effect.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Just keep your mouth shut and keep Tommaso from O.D.-ing until after principal! OKAY?!

PHIL  
Fine.

DAVID  
FINE!

David throws his bloated body into the limo.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
*Wunderkind* my ASS.

The door SLAMS.

CLAY (V.O.)  
He wasn't actually angry at Phil.  
He was just pissed that the world had stopped calling him a genius.

Phil flips David off.

David bats him off, looks away (still red).

The Driver hops in, slams his door, grabs the steering wheel and guns it. VROOM!

Phil reaches into his jacket for his cigarettes, pulls one out, lifts it to his lips, lights his lighter, turns around.

THE BRIEFCASE. **IT'S GONE.**

**INT. LAX, GATE - NIGHT**

Suddenly, we're back at LAX. But, this time, it's night.

Clay's still wearing what we last saw him in. And he's evidently more than three gin and tonics to the wind.

CLAY  
Forty-five grand. Poof! Buh-bye.  
Just like that.

Clay reaches into his pocket, pulls out a single sheet of paper with something printed on it in large black letters.

CLAY (CONT'D)

But you know what they say. The end  
of the beginning is almost always  
the beginning of the end.

Clay does his best to straighten out the sheet of paper.

In the distance, we can make out a bunch of inbound  
travelers entering the terminal from the only active gate.

Clay holds the sheet of paper out in front of him with two  
hands. On it, we can see a name in all caps:

ARTURO FLORES

Apparently, Clay is already on to the next task. Picking  
someone up? But who the hell is Arturo Flores?

**INT. 101 COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

A greasy trapped-in-amber diner somewhere on Franklin.

Seated in an overstuffed Naugahyde booth, Sven stares over  
his shoulder at us. His face says it all:

SVEN

Fuck me!

Unperturbed, Clay digs into a generous slice of cherry pie.

SVEN (CONT'D)

I didn't do it!

Sven spins to face us, lifting both hands our way.

SVEN (CONT'D)

(direct-to-camera)

It could've been anybody!

**INSERT MONTAGE:**

While Sven continues to elaborate, we flash through a  
dizzying who's-who of possible suspects:

-- DAVID, in the back of the Mercedes, hurriedly swallows  
blue pills on the way to the airport --

SVEN (V.O.)

Suicide? Wouldn't put it past him.

-- PHIL, back at the Buenos Aires production office, counts  
dirty money as fancy cigarettes smolder --

SVEN (CONT'D)

And Phil. Where the heck did you--

-- BRUNO HEFFELFINGER (late 50s), white hair, deep tan, some sort of mogul, stands with arms crossed --

SVEN (CONT'D)

Wait, why aren't we supposed to tell Bruno where David is?

-- MICHAEL MACCIONI, the poolside mobster we met briefly earlier, mirrors Bruno's pose but in a Speedo --

SVEN (CONT'D)

And Michael. Tonight at Musso and Frank. FUCK!

-- YOSHI HINATA (early 30s), sharply dressed, shark-y, a Japanese company man, lights a Zippo with a flourish --

SVEN (CONT'D)

And Hinata-san. Probably covered in tats. Fucking Yakuza!

-- TOMMASO DISCENZA, the coke addled actor from earlier emotes to the camera while stoned out of his mind --

SVEN (CONT'D)

Fucking Tommaso. Maybe he knows this is gonna tank his career!!  
(deep breath)  
Okay, okay. Calm down. Calm...

-- LEON SCHOLLER (mid-40s) graying heavy mustache, thick glasses, calls action on set in front of Clay --

SVEN (V.O.)

Oh, wait. Leon! His first fucking movie was about the fucking Yakuza!

-- BUTCH THE BULLDOG (age unknown) slobbery, unpredictable, occasionally endearing, stares at his own reflection --

SVEN (CONT'D)

God, if only Butch could fucking talk!

-- ARTURO FLORES (late 20s) a fresh-faced aesthete strides toward us with a curious look on his face --

SVEN (CONT'D)

And now what's his name...

**END MONTAGE.**

**INT. 101 COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Back in the coffee shop, back in the booth, Sven stares at us while Clay continues wolfing down pie.

CLAY  
 (to us)  
 Arturo. Dreat dude. You'll see.  
 (back to Sven)  
 And, man, such language. David's  
 really wearing off on you. Wearing?  
 Wore? Worn?

SVEN  
 Who are you even *talking* to?!

Clay shrugs. Sven lifts is wrist to catch the time.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 Wait. Weren't you supposed to--

CLAY  
 Shit!

Clay leaps up.

**INT. LAX, GATE - NIGHT**

Back at LAX, Arturo stands staring at Clay and the rumpled note with Arturo's name on it.

ARTURO  
 (faint Spanish accent)  
 Hey, man.

Clay jolts, as if yanked out of a dream.

CLAY  
 Hey. Arturo?

ARTURO  
 That's me.

Clay crumples the sign, sticks out his hand.

CLAY  
 Awesome! So great to finally meet  
 you, like, in-person!

Clay shakes Arturo's hand a tad too hard and way too long.

ARTURO  
 Same here, brother.

Arturo looks around, a bit dazzled.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
Can't believe I'm *actually* here.

CLAY  
Ditto, man. Huge fan. Huge! I loved  
"Hundred Years of..."

Arturo politely tries to withdraw his hand.

ARTURO  
Nope! Can't call it that anymore.  
Harvey tried. Márquez's family sued  
his fat ass!

Clay drops Arturo's hand, abruptly and turns to us:

CLAY  
Oh, shoot. That's right. Harvey! He  
could've *totally* done it!

**INT. MIRAMAX, NEW YORK OFFICE - DAY**

David stands over a ridiculously cluttered desk opposite none other than HARVEY WEINSTEIN (40s).

The two men hurl silent epithets and insults at each other in DRAMATIC SLOW MOTION.

CLAY (V.O.)  
Yeah, that Harvey. He owns the  
distribution rights to Arturo's  
first film. Title TBD because of  
the whole thing with Gabriel García  
Márquez. The writer.

Spittle flying, David and Harvey continue screaming at each other. We don't hear a word.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, that was my one shining  
moment of glory. Convincing David  
to watch Arturo's *masterpiece*.

**INT. DAVID'S SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT**

As the end titles to Arturo's first film FLICKER on the screen ahead of them, David turns to Clay and says something nice for a change. Sort of.

DAVID

When you said he was Mexican, I figured a bunch of ugly fat fucking *abuelitas* or slime ball wrestlers with machine guns or some shit.

By the looks of it, Clay's not certain where this is going.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But this. This kid. He could be the next fucking Almodóvar!

David struggles to his feet.

DAVID (CONT'D)

He could be our ticket out of this fucking hole!

Beat.

CLAY

You're welcome?

David storms past Clay, toward the door.

DAVID

Don't get cocky, kid. Get him on a flight. Coach. Pronto!

Clay's eyes glide slowly over to us.

CLAY

So, yeah. Not a suspect. The only one who cared. The only one going places. Unlike me.

**EXT. L.A. FREEWAYS - NIGHT**

Clay drives Phil's Alfa Romeo away from LAX. The top is down. The night is humid. And the sky is full of stars.

In the passenger seat, Arturo drinks it all it.

CLAY

(over the wind)

Really? First time?

ARTURO

First time! Looks *just* like I imagined. Smells worse!

Arturo's eyes drift to the center console. He yanks up a cassette tape in a plastic case, smiles.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
 "Mingus, Mingus, Mingus"! May I?

CLAY  
 Dude. Yes! Yes, of course.

Arturo cracks open the case, pulls out the cassette, slips it into the player, hits play.

And the BASELINE from "Better Get Hit In Yo' Soul" kicks in.

Arturo cranks the volume.

The two young men nod and sway to the BEAT.

Instantly bonded.

**INT. SCREENING ROOM, PROJECTION BOOTH - DAY**

Back at the studio screening room, a grizzled PROJECTIONIST (70s) threads film into a massive, ancient projector.

Sven paces nervously. Clay looks to us, then to Sven.

SVEN  
 What're we gonna do?! What're we  
 gonna fucking--

Clay gestures out the cutout toward a dimly lit screening room. By all appearances, it's empty.

CLAY  
 Keep it down. Like I said, if this  
 goes right, we're--

SVEN  
 Who CARES! It's too... late.

Ignoring them, the Projectionist hits a switch and the lights in the screening room go dark.

PROJECTIONIST  
 Quiet in the booth.

He flicks another switch, and the projector GRINDS to life casting a blinding beam through the dusty air.

CLAY  
 (to Sven, quietly)  
 C'mon.

He throws an arm around Sven, drags him out of the booth.

As they go, eerily slowed down TANGO MUSIC fills the booth as a flickering black-and-white title sequence begins.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
I need some pie.

**INT. 101 COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Clay drags Sven into the now familiar, butterscotch Naugahyde glow of this grimy mid-century diner.

Together, they slide into the same overstuffed booth on autopilot. Like they're both regulars.

A haggard waitress, PHILLIS (60s) hobbles their way.

PHILLIS  
Boys. The usual?

Clay nods, not even picking up a menu.

Sven swivels his gaze to the window looking like a man headed to the gallows.

PHILLIS (CONT'D)  
What's eatin' him?

CLAY  
Boss problems.

SVEN  
(to the window)  
HA!

Clay briefly lets his eyes wander our way.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, DAVID'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

The house is quiet. Dark. Seemingly empty.

Sven walks alone down a narrow hallway toward the warm, glowing light of David's office.

SVEN  
(over-loud)  
David? It's me, Sven.

Sven carries what appears to be an oversized leather-bound check ledger open in his arm.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
I think we got a problem. A big  
problem. With the books.

SILENCE.

Out of nowhere, the door to David's office CREAKS open. Butch stands in the doorway PANTING.

Something about him seems off. Unusually spooked.

SVEN (CONT'D)

David?

Still nothing.

Butch lopes down the hall toward Sven.

SVEN (CONT'D)

Hey Butchie. He in there?

Butch gallops past Sven like a dog who's seen a ghost.

Sven pauses, tightens his grip on the check ledger.

SVEN (CONT'D)

All that cash, all those interest payments to Michael, it just doesn't seem to add up right.

(beat)

David?

Sven pauses, reaches out, slowly pushes the door open.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, DAVID'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

The door GROANS open to reveal David, slumped in front of a glowing computer in his bright red kimono.

He's face-down in a heaping plate of spaghetti and meatballs. A hand on the desk clutches a silver fork.

And A VINTAGE NAZI DAGGER juts from the bloody silk between his shoulder blades.

SVEN

The ffff...

Sven drops the ledger. It hits the floor with a THUMP.

The sound rouses David.

And he BOLTS board upright.

His back hits the chair back, shoves the dagger deeper.

He spins slowly. His is covered in noodles and sauce.

DAVID  
 THAT SLIMY MOTHERFUCKER!

David abruptly LEAPS to his feet and does a staggering 180° as if chasing the pain in his kimono-covered back.

Sven is beside himself petrified.

SVEN  
 David? David!

Sven throws his hands out, tries to catch David's shoulders.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 What the hell is going--

At the sound of his voice, David charges toward the glass doors to the deck.

Outside, the hot tub placidly steams.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 Wait! You need to--

David lets out a BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM as he lurches headlong into the glass doors.

SMACK!

He hits the glass with a fleshy THUD and reverberates back toward Sven, leaving a marinara face print on the glass.

Sven stumbles backward. But it's too late.

David's blood-oozing back lands on Sven's chest and presses the dagger even deeper!

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 NO. NO. NO!

David GURGLES.

Sven tries to shove David forward. But he's too heavy.

Won't budge.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 Get... off... of--

Clay's face appears outside the glass doors, having been summoned by the sound.

Through David's face print, it's hard to read his look.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 (straining)  
 HELP.

Clay throws the doors open just as Sven gives David one last firm heave-ho.

And the two of them watch in horror as David's bloodied, barefoot body trips forward out the open doors, spins, and does a face-plant swan dive into the waiting hot tub.

SPLASH! Water flies everywhere.

Then, SILENCE.

Clay, his eyes wide, turns toward Sven.

Sven stands alone in David's office with the bloody dagger somehow clutched in his right hand.

Sven looks to Clay, then to David, then to the check ledger at his feet, then to the dagger in his hand.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 No, no.

CLAY  
 Sven...

SVEN  
 It's not what it--

Sven tosses the dagger to the floor.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
 Oh fuck. We are so fucking...

**INT. 101 COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Still gazing out the window, Sven finishes the thought:

SVEN  
 ...fucked.

Clay turns to us, pulls two Cartier cigarettes out of his pack, lights them both.

CLAY  
 Yeah, like I said.

He thrusts one of the lit cigarettes Sven's way. Sven takes it absentmindedly.

Phillis steps up with two steaming mugs of coffee and a hefty slice of cherry pie. A la FUCKING mode.

PHILLIS  
 You two oughta get outta town more.  
 This place'll chew you up and spit  
 you back out whole.

**EXT. FAIRFAX - NIGHT**

With Mingus still BLARING, Clay speeds up Fairfax as Arturo scours every overly lit surface with his eyes.

ARTURO  
 Wait a minute. Stop.

Clay does a double-take, pads the brakes, looks left.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
*¡Dios mío!*

Arturo points past Clay toward the façade of a tiny stucco 1930s Silent Movie Theater.

Clay looks, having never really noticed the place before.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
 We have to, no?

From the glowing marquee, the title: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Clay looks to us.

CLAY  
 See. Art. Freaking cinema!

Clay veers wildly toward the curb.

**INT. 101 COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Still filling Sven's coffee, Phillis finishes her thought;

PHILLIS  
 Or almost whole.

She shoots Clay a quick wink, spins on the heels of her orthotics, heads back to the counter.

Clay takes a drag, oddly calm, wags his head toward Sven who's still gazing out the window, stone-still.

CLAY

(to us)

But, yeah. I know he didn't do it. Why the hell would he? Even Butch knows. Although, of course, now his prints are all over the knife. The door. The ledger. And the--

**INT. THEATER - NIGHT**

As the last reel of *The Four Horsemen* fills the darkened silent movie theater with light, Clay looks briefly to Arturo, smiles.

Arturo, oblivious, just bathes in the light of Valentino's projected image. Enraptured.

CLAY

(to us)

I bet that's exactly how David used to look. Back in the day.

**INT. DAVID'S SCREENING ROOM - DAY**

Seated in nearly the same pose as Arturo but inside his luxe but modestly-scaled home screening room David WEEPS.

On the screen before him: De Sica's *The Bicycle Thieves*.

Between sobs, David PARROTS Antonio Ricci's lines in perfect, lilting, operatic Italian:

DAVID

(subtitled Italian)

*"Why should I kill myself worrying when I'll end up just as dead?"*

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT**

Clay and Sven drag David's now inanimate, hulking, kimono-clad body into the production office from the aviary.

They've wrapped his feet in newspaper delivery bags to not leave a trail of blood.

CLAY

He was just there? Face-down?

SVEN

Yeah. I thought... at first... maybe he'd finally had a fucking heart attack.

Sven pauses at the door from the office to the adjacent garage, nearly loses his grip on David.

David's expression is still incongruously placid. Content.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
Jesus, he's so heavy!

Clay reaches a hand back for the doorknob.

CLAY  
Don't speak ill of the dead.

SVEN  
Wait. How do we know that he's actually--

Clay gets the door open, and the three of them tumble down the steps into the garage.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - CONTINUOUS**

David's body slumps against Clay.

CLAY  
Trust me. He's DEAD! Now, c'mon.

Together, they drag David's lifeless body across the polished concrete floor.

Behind them sits a gold Citroën CX limousine.

Along one wall stand tall steel shelves lined with boxes full of memorabilia. Scripts, costumes, prints, posters.

And, in the distance, sits a large white chest freezer.

Its HUM is the only sound other than David's plastic-covered feet SQUEAKING across the floor.

Clay pauses in front of the freezer.

SVEN  
You sure about this?

CLAY  
Unless you wanna go to San Quentin.

SVEN  
This isn't a fucking joke!

Clay reaches a hand out, pushes the door to the chest freezer open with a WHOOSH.

An eerie blue/white glow fills the room.

CLAY  
Okay, sorry. I know! Still, until  
we figure out who--

SVEN  
Can't we just call the fucking  
cops?!

CLAY  
Your fingerprints, dude!

SVEN  
Fuck. That's--

CLAY  
On three?

Sven steadies his grip.

SVEN  
On three.

CLAY  
One... two...

SVEN  
Wait. Wait!

He lifts one hand to David's neck, searches one last time  
for a pulse.

No dice.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
Alright. THREE!

Together, they heave David's body up and into the chest  
freezer. He lands with a muted THUD. Art on ice.

Clay reaches up to close the lid. But, instead, both he and  
Sven look down at David lying face-up surrounded by large,  
clear plastic bags full of DEAD TOUCANS.

Yes, toucans. From David's once teeming aviary.

Clay draws a breath, looks to us.

CLAY  
Told ya about the toucans, yeah?

**EXT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, AVIARY - DAY**

Clay stands inside one of the bird enclosures next to a female veterinarian in a glam safari jumpsuit. Her jet-black hair teased and spiked. Heavy mascara. Blood red lipstick.

This is DOC ROCK (maybe late 30s) a punk rock guitarist with an exotic pet care side hustle. Think: Joan Jett crossed with Jane Goodall.

She gently clutches one of the last toucans. It can barely keep its brightly colored bill aloft.

DOC ROCK  
Oh, man. Poor little dude.

She reaches a hand into a pocket on her jumpsuit, pulls out a pill jar, unscrews the cap, pulls out a pill.

Pausing, she looks at the pill. It's white and circular.

She looks back to the label on the bottle, reads.

DOC ROCK (CONT'D)  
Hmm. Must've changed the formulary.

CLAY  
Huh?

The bird's head bobs side-to-side heavily.

DOC ROCK  
What the hell are you sexist freaks doing to my friends?

CLAY  
Nothing, I--

Doc Rock gently pries the toucan's bill open, inserts the white pill, gently massages the bird's neck.

DOC ROCK  
I told you. No more fucking monkey biscuits!

CLAY  
I know. Carlos and Irma--

DOC ROCK  
Pellet feed and fresh fruit only.

Clay nods.

Behind him, David's pet wrangling groundskeepers CARLOS and IRMA (late 20s) step sadly up.

Behind them, Arturo wags his head side-to-side.

ARTURO  
(to Carlos)  
*Que les paso a todos?*

CARLOS  
*Murieron.*

Doc Rock shoots them both an angry daggers glare.

DOC ROCK  
From now on, nothing but wild ficus  
and palm fruit.

She gingerly lifts the bird back up onto a branch.

In the distance, in another caged section of the aviary, the crazed kinkajou from earlier paces wildly.

Like it wants another shot at Clay.

DOC ROCK (CONT'D)  
If you can't find those, papaya,  
blueberries, bananas. That's it.

Clay looks over his shoulder to Irma. She nods like that's exactly what she's been feeding all the birds since day one.

Behind her, Butch walks by, looking dejected.

A MYNAH BIRD in its own separate cage near the hot tub CRIES OUT in Spanish-accented English:

MYNAH BIRD  
Hey Bootch. BOOOCH! Come here,  
BOOOTCH.

Butch GRUNTS, noses his way into the production office.

Doc Rock dusts off her hands, presses his past Clay and out of the aviary.

DOC ROCK  
These little angels can sense our  
stress. Our anxiety, it's a toxin.

She gestures for Clay to follow. Behind Clay, the toucan sways on its branch like a sedated sailor.

DOC ROCK (CONT'D)  
 And your little Lord of the Flies  
 film nerd boy's club here is  
 stressing them the fuck out. So,  
 cut it out or *all* our little  
 friends will go bye bye fucking  
 birdie. Got it?

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - NIGHT**

Back in the freezer, David sleeps with the toucans.

Clay SLAMS the lid.

Together, he and Sven turn and slowly slide to the floor  
 with their backs to the chest.

After a second, Clay SIGHS, looks to us.

CLAY  
 Movie making.

PRE-LAP: A classic 4/4 TANGO kicks in, mid-stream.

**INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - NIGHT**

Side-lit in blue before a line of grizzly carcasses hanging  
 from meat hooks, three BLINDFOLDED MUSICIANS pound out the  
 tune as if at the command of a firing squad.

Suddenly, Tommaso (now dressed as a pale-faced Tango  
 gangster, spats and all) forcefully pilots a YOUNG WOMAN in  
 a sequined dress to the edge of a concrete staircase down.

She pulls away, tries to resist, get free. The blue light  
 casts a halo across jet-black bob.

But Tommaso, saying nothing, GRABS her by the throat, PULLS  
 her closer, PRESSES her slowly down the concrete steps in  
 tune with the music.

At the bottom of what appears to be some sort of channel, he  
 forcefully guides her on, still backward, through a shallow  
 moat of bright red liquid.

It's a gruesome, deathly spectacle of sexist domination.

Halfway through the bloody liquid, Tommaso flicks his head  
 back. The blue light glints off the brim his black fedora.

He STOMPS, SPINS the woman around, YANKS her back to his  
 chest, presses her slowly up another set of stairs.

Pausing near the top, Tommaso reaches forward (still saying nothing) and tilts her chin ever so much with one hand.

Then he continues on steering her forcefully forward.

At the top of the stairs, the slit in her sequined dress parts. We catch a brief glimpse of what appears to be a knife blade tucked into the top of her silk stockings.

Suddenly, Tommaso SPINS her away, STOMPS his bloody heel on the concrete: BANG!

The MUSIC ramps up again before --

LEON (O.S.)

CUT!

We PULL BACK to reveal Leon seated on a dolly next a CAMERAMAN. Behind them, a shockingly large pack of GAFFERS, GRIPS, and SOUND RECORDISTS stand before arc lights.

Leon oozes his meaty frame out of the dolly seat, looks to David, who looks to Phil (who looks away).

LEON (CONT'D)

Print it! And let's reset.

David draws a breath as if to argue against printing and/or resetting. But then he hesitates briefly.

Tommaso, looks down at his stained spats.

TOMMASO

Um. That's not, like, real blood down there. Is it?

LEON

Of course it is. Places!

Judging by the faces of the entire crew - and David's sudden reticence AND Phil's shocked silence - we can tell.

This movie is a fucking dog.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Meanwhile, back in L.A., Clay and Sven sit at their desks, dutifully running numbers.

When, out of nowhere, David BURSTS through the door from the aviary wearing a brightly colored shirt and tight jeans.

Throwing up a hand, not saying a word, he cuts a quick line toward the door to the garage.

In a huff, he throws the door open, grabs his keys, and slams the door shut behind himself. BANG!

Clay and Sven stare at each other blankly.

CLAY (V.O.)  
I should've realized then.

Through the door to the garage, we hear David SLAM the driver's side door to the Citroën.

Clay and Sven stare at each other nervously as the Citroën's engine starts with a muffled ROAR.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
This was, like, right after Phil's briefcase went missing. After Harvey wouldn't budge on the theatrical rights to Arturo's movie. After basically everyone in town passed on our movie.

Inside the garage, the Citroën keeps REVVING LOUDLY. Over and over and over again.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
A problem made worse by the fact that, years ago, David had to sell the worldwide video rights to "Sting" in advance to fund the re-cut to get into Cannes. And, eventually the Oscars.

**INT. SHRINE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT**

David and Leon stand shoulder-to-shoulder beneath a pair of huge golden Oscar statues clutching their own yet-to-be engraved statuettes as FLASHBULBS POP and SIZZLE.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - ON DAVID**

At the wheel of the gold Citroën, David keeps loudly REVVING the engine. The garage door behind him is CLOSED.

And the space is slowly filling with blue/gray exhaust.

But, still, he keeps GUNNING the gas.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, BEDROOM - MORNING**

Years earlier, David sits propped up in bed wearing the now very familiar kimono reading The Hollywood Reporter while a scantily clad YOUNG MAN serves him an espresso.

An engraved Oscar glints from the bedside table.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Turns out, the date set for the video release happened to be the day *after* the Oscar ceremony.

In a fit of barely contained rage, David crumples the tabloid. Again, veins in his temples bulge.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

As the Citroën still REVS loudly, Sven and Clay still sit staring nervously at each other.

*Is he actually going to off himself?!*

CLAY (CONT'D)

So, yeah. David screwed himself out of a multimillion dollar post-Oscars theatrical release.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - BACK ON DAVID**

David continues to SLAM his foot on the accelerator:

VROOM! VROOM! VROOOOOM!

The room is so full of smoke we can barely make out that the garage door is still closed behind him.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Clay slowly stands. Sven does too.

SVEN

Shit man, we gotta do something.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - BACK ON DAVID**

David's face fills the screen. He's pure fury. Pure rage.

Then, he suddenly thrusts four thick fingers to the visor above his head, hits the button to the garage door opener.

CLAY (V.O.)

Decided he'd never do that again.  
Never pre-sell video that is.

Behind David, the garage door slowly begins tilt outward. Blue light streams in from beneath its steel frame.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Totally screwed him this time  
around though. Nobody'll touch *this*  
movie with a ten foot--

SCREECH! The sound of metal-on-metal. The garage door stops.  
David hits the button again. The door SLAMS down.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Clay and Sven listen as the garage door THUMPS shut.

But then it GRINDS open again.

More metal-on-metal SCREECHING.

SVEN  
Dude, what the--

Clay looks to see EXHAUST FUMES curling in under the door.

CLAY  
Go! Look down the alley. Something  
must be blocking the door.

Sven runs across the office, toward the door to the alley.

Butch tails him, BARKING.

SVEN  
No, Butch! Stay!

Butch GROWLS.

Sven throws the door open, leaps outside, SLAMS the door.

**EXT. BACK ALLEY - ON SVEN**

Sven runs across the gravel, SKIDS to a stop.

In the distance: a hulking white Range Rover parked directly  
in front of the tilt-up garage door.

Again, the steel frame of the garage door THUDS into the  
driver's side door to the car.

It nearly lifts the Range Rover up into the air.

Flecks of white paint litter the ground. The bare steel of  
the driver's side door is already a tangled mess.

Sven stands frozen in-place, not sure what to do.

Suddenly, out the back door to a nearby stucco building, a tall SHEIK of some sort (white robes, white turban) rushes into the alley, SCREAMING:

SHEIK  
My car. My CAR!

The Sheik slides to a stop, locks eyes with Sven.

Saying nothing, Sven turns and makes a desperate break for the relative safety of the office.

SHEIK (CONT'D)  
No, no, NO! You come back here!

Sven SCREECHES to a stop, throws open the door, leaps inside, SLAMS the door shut behind himself.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Clay looks to Sven.

Sven shakes his head, GASPING. *Don't even ask!*

From outside: BEEP! BEEP!

The Sheik unlocks his car, throws open a door, SLAMS it.

After a second: VROOM! He starts his engine.

But, as he PEELS out, more metal-on-metal SCREECHING.

Then, BUZZZZZZZ. The garage door goes all the way up.

KA-THUMP!

David throws the car into gear, SQUEALS out into the alley and guns the engine. VRRRROOOOMMMM!!!

Then, SILENCE.

Sven and Clay lock eyes again. The fumes have colored the air in the office a faint blue/gray.

Outside, the Sheik cuts the engine. A door OPENS and SHUTS.

Then: CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH. Sandals across gravel.

Then: BANG, BANG, BANG! Fists on the door to the office.

SHEIK (O.S.)  
I saw you! Whoever you are! Let me  
in this instant!

Clay waves his hands toward Sven. *No fucking way!!*

Sven's head bobs in fierce agreement.

SHEIK (CONT'D)  
My car. It's RUINED!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

SHEIK (CONT'D)  
OPEN THIS DOOR! Or I will call the  
police!

Butch GROWLS.

The office phone RINGS. Clay lunges for it.

DAVID (O.S.)  
(on speaker)  
Take a memo.

**INSERT MONTAGE:**

In a dizzying flurry of RAPID FLASH CUTS, we watch as Clay and Sven hurriedly:

-- POUND out a dictated letter on a nearby laptop --  
-- RIP a single sheet of paper out of the printer --  
-- JAM the printed sheet into a nearby fax machine --  
-- SNATCH the phone from Sven's desk and click line two --  
-- JAB out seven digits and wait nervously for an answer --  
-- BARK out silent marching orders over the phone --  
-- RUSH back over to the fax machine waiting, waiting --  
-- PULL out an incoming fax on Xeroxed letterhead --  
-- RUN across the room for the door to the alleyway --  
-- SLIDE the single printed sheet out under the door --

**END MONTAGE.**

**EXT. BACK ALLEY - SHEIK'S POV**

The Sheik lifts the sheet of paper.

All we can make out are the words:

*my client... extreme distress... possible tetrahydrozoline poisoning... acute metabolic acidosis... irreparable damage... priceless Citroën CX Limousine...*

At the top of the page: a fancy legal logo.

And at the bottom, just below the dictated salutation, we see the a swooping signature of:

**Gary Gold**  
 Founding Partner  
 Gold & Weinbaum, PC

David's overpriced, high-powered attorney perchance?

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

Clay leans closer to the door.

Behind him, Sven paces. Behind him, Butch WHEEZES.

Outside the door: SILENCE.

Then, after a second, the sound of PAPER CRUMPLING and FOOTSTEPS across the gravel.

THUMP! The door to the Range Rover slams shut. SCREECH! The car peels out.

DAVID (O.S.)  
 (still on speaker)  
 Is he gone?

Clay and Sven EXHALE slowly.

CLAY  
 Yeah, he just... left?

DAVID (O.S.)  
 Good. Call Arturo. Tell him I'm running late. And fax Gary's admin a thank you from me. Forge my signature.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. The line goes dead.

Clay turns to us, for the first time speechless.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, DAVID'S OFFICE - DAY**

Clay and Arturo sit opposite David in a pair of black leather chairs, pounding espressos while tandem pitching.

David listens, skeptical. We can't hear a word.

CLAY (V.O.)

Dunno why exactly, but from that moment on, David suddenly seemed to sort of trust me. A little. Could've been because Phil was still missing. Could've been because the whole town thought the movie was damaged goods. Could've been because Harvey still wouldn't budge on the distribution rights to Arturo's film.

(beat)

Could've been because the last of the toucans didn't make it.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, KITCHEN - DAY**

Doc Rock angrily stuffs the last of the toucans into a Ziplock while Clay and Arturo forlornly froth milk at a gigantic, gleaming espresso machine.

CLAY (CONT'D)

But, for some reason, David started letting me and Arturo pitch him new ideas all of a sudden.

On the counter next to Clay: an open jar of white truffle marinara with a yellow label. All the type is in Italian.

And, next to it sits what appears to be an oversized syringe about half-full with a clear, viscous liquid.

Neither Clay nor Arturo notice it. But we do.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, DAVID'S OFFICE - DAY**

Back in David's office, he rapidly reacts to a series of pitches that we haven't gotten to hear:

DAVID

Too facile.

Clay and Arturo open their lips to speak. We jump forward:

DAVID (CONT'D)

Been done.

Clay and Arturo inhale in synch. Again, we jump forward:

DAVID (CONT'D)

Tone poem. Next!

Clay and Arturo share a quick look. Again, we skip to:

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Television?! Hard pass.

Clay draws a deep breath to continue.

We leap ahead to David suddenly leaning forward.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Interesting. I did not know that.

Clay smiles, continues:

CLAY  
Yeah. He's the reason "Ulysses" got published. Friends with everyone from Hemingway to Picasso. Ended up broadcasting antisemitic fascist propaganda from a basement in Rapallo until he was captured by American G.I.s and kept in a cage after Mussolini's execution.

Quick look to Arturo.

ARTURO  
And then he spent 12 years in a D.C. mental hospital...

CLAY  
...before a bunch of literary hotshots campaigned to get him freed...

ARTURO  
...and then he returned to Italy never regretting a thing.

DAVID  
What are you calling it?

CLAY  
"The United States vs Ezra Pound".

ARTURO  
Or, "The Propagandist".

DAVID  
(to Arturo)  
And you wanna direct?

Arturo nods vehemently.

ARTURO  
Fuck Harvey. Let's move!

DAVID  
 (to Clay)  
 And you have the book rights?

Clay nods.

CLAY  
 Gary helped with the contract.

David's eyes narrow.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Don't worry. I paid him myself.

DAVID  
 Clearly, *I'm* paying you too much.

CLAY  
 I don't care about the--

David spins back around, cuts Clay off:

DAVID  
 Depending on how the screening for  
 Brenda's billionaire boy toy goes,  
 I'll have Gary draw up a one-step.

Clay turns to Arturo. *Holy fucking shit!*

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 First draft and one rewrite.

Clay looks like he's about to lunge forward and kiss David  
 on the lips.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Now, get the fuck out!

Arturo leaps to his feet, grinning ear-to-ear. He grabs Clay  
 by the shoulders, drags him with him out the doors.

They're the same doors David will stumble through with a  
 Nazi dagger in his back just hours later.

**INT. 101 COFFEE SHOP - DAY**

Back in the diner, the day after David died, Sven still  
 stares out the window. Still ashen.

CLAY  
 Maybe it was beautiful once. Before  
 we sold the rights to the truth.

Sven bangs his forehead on the glass: THUMP.

SVEN  
All you care about is your script.

CLAY  
What? No.

Sven turns, grabs his coffee, takes a gulp. As if steeling himself for battle.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
How can you say that?

Sven keeps guzzling coffee, doesn't reply.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Fine. We'll call the cops. Tell 'em we panicked. That the knife was already in his back when you found him. That the only reason it's covered in your fingerprints--

Sven SLAMS the empty mug down onto the table. BANG!

SVEN  
No. Fuck it.

He lifts his wrist, checks the time again.

SVEN (CONT'D)  
Last reel. Let's go.

**EXT. STUDIO LOT, SCREENING ROOM STEPS - LATER**

Together at the base of the stairs, Clay and Sven pause.

SVEN  
Bruno?

CLAY  
Possibly. And, German. So...

SVEN  
Michael?

CLAY  
Guess we'll see tonight.

SVEN  
Fuuuuck. That's right.

CLAY  
Hinata-san?

SVEN  
No way. Right?

CLAY  
We've done nothing but lose them  
money since day one.

SVEN  
Leon?

CLAY  
Hell if I know.

The two of them slowly start up the steps together.

SVEN  
What about Arturo?

CLAY  
Nope!

SVEN  
Harvey?

CLAY  
Bah!

SVEN  
Doc?

CLAY  
Please.

SVEN  
He was the last one in the house.  
Beside us and, uh, that... dorsal.

Clay looks to us briefly as if to explain.

CLAY  
(direct-to-camera)  
That's what David calls his hook-  
ups. Because, uh, when you buy  
tropical fish, you pick them out of  
the tank by their dorsal fin and--

The doors to the screening room loudly BURST open.

A dolled-up former starlet, BRENDA BARBIERI (50s) blonde,  
solicitous, salacious, stumbles out.

Pushing a man in a wheelchair.

This is said boy toy, J.F. SINCLAIR III (40s) the great grandson of an old L.A. oil magnate.

Short version: he's got bank, but his mind is fried.

Too much LSD after being held hostage by terrorists as a kid. You know the story. The one about the ear...

BRENDA  
Well, hello boys!

Seeming entirely incapacitated, Sinclair only MOANS.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
(to Sinclair)  
Oh, that's right dear. Your sunglasses!

She fumbles around in her purse, lets go of the wheelchair.

It rolls briefly toward the edge of the stairs before Clay and Sven rush up to stop it.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Here you go, honey.

She slaps a pair of Persols over Sinclair's eyes. They sit crookedly on his aquiline nose.

CLAY  
(to Brenda)  
How'd it, uh, go?

Brenda fishes a pack of cigarettes out of her purse, shakes one free, lights it up. It's ridiculously thin.

BRENDA  
(blowing smoke)  
He loved it! Didn't you baby?

Sinclair MOANS again.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
I mean, what he could make out.

Clay and Sven look to her blankly.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
He only sees in flashes now. Every few minutes or so.  
(loud)  
But everything downstairs still works *just* fine. Doesn't it doll?

She thrusts her blood red nails into Sinclair's crotch.

He smiles, MOANING even louder.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Tell David I'll do what I can.

Biting down on her cigarette, she reaches for the handles on the wheelchair, yanks it away.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
And, speaking of, where is that kinky fucker? He's not returning my goddamn calls.

Clay and Sven STAMMER.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
I need me some Butch time! Now, where's that cripple ramp?

Sven wordlessly points to their right.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Ah, right. Toodles!

Sven and Clay both watch them depart. Then:

CLAY  
We just screened a movie about tango dancing Jewish gangsters for a billionaire who can only see... in flashes?

SVEN  
Every few minutes.

CLAY  
I hate this town.

Sven lifts his watch again.

SVEN  
Fucking Phil. This is all his--

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - LATER**

Clay and Sven are back at the office, back at the scene of the crime, steps away from the chest freezer.

Suddenly, the alleyway door shudders.

Someone out in the alley KNOCKS again. Loudly.

The pounding of a boxer, a brawler.

Clay and Sven look to each other, wishing they could both somehow vanish. Go back to their old lives. Disappear.

Sven stutter-steps across the floor toward the door, hesitates for a second, throws it cautiously open.

**EXT. BACK ALLEY - SUNSET**

Standing just outside the door is Michael Maccioni and a towering BALD MAN in a tight-fitting, shiny gray suit.

Both men are wearing mirrored aviators.

MICHAEL  
Ehhhh, Svennnn!

Michael whips off his glasses, throws his arms around Sven, crushes him in a ferocious bear hug.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
How you been doin' you tricky  
little rat bastard?!

The Bald Man stands still as a statue, not saying a word.

Still squeezing the air out of Sven's nicotine-suffused lungs, Michael lets his eyes drift over to Clay.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
And look at you. Mr. fancy fuckin'  
cheap-ass two-step deal.

Michael turns his face toward the towering Bald Man while still crushing Sven.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(to the bald man)  
Prick thinks he's a fuckin'  
scribbler all of a sudden.

The Bald Man GRUNTS.

Behind Clay, Butch bounds into the room and hops up onto the ottoman opposite Clay's desk, GRUNTS back.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(to Clay)  
Just bustin' your balls, kid.

He finally lets go of Sven, who stumbles breathlessly free.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Sometimes just gettin' David to  
like somethin' halfway decent is  
twice the battle, huh? Speakin' of,  
where's the maestro?

SVEN

Out.

CLAY

With Arturo.

MICHAEL

That guy! Highfalutin' wetback's  
gonna earn me a fortune.

He gestures toward Clay.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But fuck it. C'mon! Us three and my  
associate here got alotta jaw  
about. Over dinner.

Michael spins on his heels in the gravel, heads back toward  
an idling, tank-like Mercedes G230.

The towering Bald Man doesn't budge. His body fills nearly  
the entire doorway.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Clay, Sven... meet Mariuz. Polish  
for Mario. The God of friggin' War.

CRUNCH. CRUNCH. KA-THUMP. BANG! The door to the car opens  
and closes. As if on cue, the Bald Man steps aside.

Clay and Sven GULP in tandem and then slowly walk out the  
door looking less like diner guests and more like prisoners  
on their way to the guillotine.

MARIUZ (age unknown, profession unknown but easily guessed)  
pulls the door to the production office shut behind them.

**I/E. LOS ANGELES/BUENOS AIRES - NIGHT**

In SPLIT SCREEN, we see Clay and Phil.

Clay is in the L.A. office. Phil is in the Buenos Aires  
office. They're both on the phone.

PHIL

You sitting down?

CLAY  
What? Yeah. Why?

PHIL  
David's on his way back. I need you  
to tell him something.

CLAY  
Tell him what?

They both light identical cigarettes.

PHIL  
You know your briefcase?

CLAY  
Yeah?

PHIL  
Well...

They both exhale, filling each frame with smoke.

PHIL  
We got in an argument, back at the  
hotel. He started shoving me. I  
shoved him back. Somehow I set the  
briefcase down.

CLAY  
Set it down?

PHIL  
He slapped me. Kept shoving me.  
Telling me to keep my mouth shut.

CLAY  
About what?

Nothing from Phil.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
About what?!

Phil ignores this.

PHIL  
Next thing I knew, he was in the  
car. And the briefcase was gone.

CLAY  
What do you mean, gone?!

PHIL  
Gone, gone. Stolen.

CLAY  
But that's--

PHIL  
Yeah. Forty-five grand. That's why  
you're gonna have to tell him.

CLAY  
WHAT?! Why me?

PHIL  
Because I gotta lay low for a  
little while.

CLAY  
Lay low?! What're you even--

PHIL  
Try and get to the bottom of  
things.

CLAY  
The bottom of what?!

Phil lowers his cigarette, looks around the office like it's  
the last time he's gonna see it. Ever.

PHIL  
*Live the question. And maybe one  
day, without even noticing, you'll  
find yourself experiencing the  
answer.*

CLAY  
WHAT?!

SILENCE. No response from Phil.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Fine. Rimbaud?

PHIL  
No. Rilke, silly.

CLICK.

For a second, it sounds as if someone is listening in.

CLAY  
Hello?

PHIL  
 (hushed)  
 Watch out for Michael.

CLICK. CLICK.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 He's up to no--

CLICK. BUZZ. The line goes dead.

Clay slowly cradles the phone, looks to us.

CLAY  
 Uh-huh...

**INT. MUSSO & FRANK, DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Clay and Sven sit opposite Michael and Maruiz at a table inside this warmly-lit, old-Hollywood haunt.

The starched white tablecloth between them is dotted with the remnants of a multi-course dinner and at least six half-empty martini glasses. Most are Michael's.

MICHAEL  
 See, now. That's what I'm sayin'.

Michael searches the glasses, grabs the fullest.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 Smug little prick's gonna *make* me  
 money if he's not fuckin' careful.  
 (gulp)  
 Know what I mean?

Clay, aiming for nonchalant, dusts bread crumbs from his place. Sven is frozen stiff.

Maruiz just sits there, stone-faced.

CLAY  
 Isn't that, um... Isn't that what  
 we're *supposed* to be doing? Getting  
 the film seen? Making back its--

Michael cuts him off with a deafening spit-take GUFFAW.

MICHAEL  
 Makin' it's fuckin' money back?!  
 For the fuckin' Axis Powers? That  
 repressed stiff-ass fascist and his  
 Armani wearin' Emperor Hirohito  
 knock-off company man?

Unsubtle glances from the entire room.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
No! Most definitely not.

As a WAITER nervously approaches, Michael leans across the table toward Clay.

Next to him, Sven grips the tablecloth with all his might.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
A. No movie ever makes a profit.  
That's just accounting.

Michael grabs another glass, lifts it to his lips.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
And, two...  
(hushed)  
Phil promised me he'd work it so as  
we'd have the interest write-offs  
as agreed. Yeah?

Clay draws a slow breath to respond. But before he can:

WAITER  
May I interest you gentlemen in  
some dessert?

Sven looks to Clay. Clay looks to Michael. Michael smiles.

MICHAEL  
Go for it, kid.

Sven lets go of the table, BARKS:

SVEN  
1919 sundae. To split.

The waiter looks to Michael, pencil poised.

Michael sits back, eyes locked menacingly on Clay.

MICHAEL  
Nah. Never eat dessert myself. Too  
much... *agida*.

**I/E. CITROËN / CITY STREETS - DAY**

Clay, now wearing what he was wearing during the late-night call with Phil, drives David's gold limo back from LAX.

David, in the way back, slowly crumples a crisp edition of "The L.A. Times". Eyes full of fury.

DAVID  
The fuck did you just say?

Clay shoots us a quick sidelong glance.

CLAY  
(to us)  
Talk about *agida*.

DAVID  
Forty five fucking THOUSAND  
Dollars? Gone?

Clay just nods, drives.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
You trying to *fucking* murder me?

Clay grips the wheel, eyes forward.

CLAY  
He said you got into a--

David **TOSSES** the entire paper across the car, reaches into his pocket for his blue pills, guzzles them like candy.

DAVID  
Tell Michael. Don't say a word to anyone else. Especially Bruno. And Yoshi. Can't afford anymore *fucking* fuck-ups!

He draws a breath, looks to the palms bleeding by outside.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Making movies is hard.

Clay nods. *That's true.*

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Making *great* movies requires an unending supply of major fucking miracles that will ruin your life in every conceivable way.

For a second, it looks almost as though David might cry.

**INT. BANK LOBBY - DAY**

Clay stands at a green marble plinth inside a fancy Art Deco bank somewhere on Wilshire, signing the back of a check.

CLAY  
That's why I felt so shitty.

He flips the check over, regards it somberly.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
David got into all this for exactly  
the same reasons I did. Or wanted  
to. Dreamed to.

Clay heads toward one of the teller booths.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
And now everything he put his heart  
and soul into for all these years  
is just gone. Over. Done for.

He slows, looks to us.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
The movie was fucked. The birds  
were dying. And David...

Clay keeps walking.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
He'd be dead the next day.  
(beat)  
I really thought this was my shot.  
My one chance. My way in.

Clay takes his spot at the end of the line.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
But this isn't movie making. It's  
bean counting. Gimmicks with  
numbers. A shell game run by people  
who used to care

Together, the line advances in lockstep.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Artists. Like Arturo. The only one  
who actually still gives a--

**INT. GARAGE - NIGHT**

Clay and Sven flank a flabbergasted Arturo in front of the  
open chest freezer.

There's David still, in his frosty, toucan-strewn tomb.

ARTURO  
*¡Hijo de puta!*

Clay and Sven just nod.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
Who knows?

CLAY  
Just us. You, me, and Sven.

Arturo looks to Sven.

ARTURO  
Where'd it happen?

SVEN  
In his office. He just--

ARTURO  
Why didn't you call the cops?!

CLAY  
Because Sven's prints were all over  
the knife. And the ledger. And the  
doorknob. And--

Arturo whips back toward Sven.

ARTURO  
What ledger?

SVEN  
The books. Something's fishy with  
the books. I was trying to--

Arturo reaches up, SLAMS the lid down. BANG!

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, DAVID'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER**

Arturo, Clay, and Sven stand in a tight cluster in David's office, across from David's desk.

The blood-soaked scene of the crime.

On the desk: the same plate of congealed spaghetti. On the glass door: the same marinara face print (now dried).

ARTURO  
Was he alone?

Sven just nods.

Arturo bends to one knee, looks to the slick of dried blood that colors the zebra skin rug.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
Who was here last?

CLAY  
That dorsal. Jimmy?

Arturo leans closer to the blood, squints. *The what??*

ARTURO  
Before... him?

SVEN  
Tommaso. Dropping off weed.

Arturo looks up to the the paper-strewn desk, points.

ARTURO  
Hand me that.

Clay reaches for a sheet of blank paper.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
(to Clay)  
No, no. Him. Don't touch anything.

Clay nods, takes a half step back. Sven grabs the paper.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
Dip it in that. The water.

He points to a nearby glass of dead Perrier.

SVEN  
Why?

ARTURO  
Just do it.

Sven nods, rolls the paper into a tube, dips it deep into the water, turns, hands the paper down to Arturo with one hand extended to catch the drips.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Sorry.

Arturo unfurls the wet sheet of paper, lays it flat over a section of the dried blood.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
Hmm?

Clay and Sven just stare at him, then the paper.

Arturo presses an open palm against the center of the sheet, then runs the heels of his hand to the edges.

Blood begins to soak the sheet.

Arturo stands.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
 (to Sven)  
 Pick it up slowly, by the corners.

Sven, confused, bends to one knee, complies.

Bingo. What appears to be a footprint slowly emerges.

And, at the center of the sole, a faint reversed impression of what appears to be a regal crest.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
 I don't think that dorsal can afford custom Paolo Scafora loafers. Unless David's been overpaying for his services.

Sven and Clay, spellbound, behold the sheet of paper before them like it's the Shroud of Turin.

ARTURO (CONT'D)  
 And that's definitely not Tommaso's size. Too small. Or David's.

CLAY  
 How did you...

Arturo looks to the desk. Next to the plate stands a small cluster of pill bottles. David's meds.

ARTURO  
 The statins. Metabolic acidosis from his fucked up liver. Makes his blood too acidic. Made his blood too acidic. Either the shoes were brand new, the ink on the seal still wet, or someone stepped in the blood after the fact.

CLAY  
 (catching on)  
 And the acid in his blood leached out the--

Arturo nods, presses past Clay toward the window to Clay's right. It's unlatched. Beyond it: a stand of bamboo.

He pushes the window open with his sleeve over his palm, looks out, then down.

ARTURO  
 Who smokes Nat Shermans?

Clay and Sven share a quick nervous glance.

Suddenly, from off, a VOICE:

PHIL (O.S.)  
Hey gents.

Clay and Sven GASP simultaneously.

CLAY Jesus fucking-- SVEN Don't DO that!

In the dim light of the adjacent hallway, Phil slowly emerges, wearing a pair of custom Italian loafers.

Butch trails him, SNORTING.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
I can... explain. I think.

Arturo slowly lowers the window.

ARTURO  
Living room. Now.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, LIVING ROOM - LATER**

Phil paces like Napoleon in the dim light of the lushly decorated living room.

Rare mid-century classics and gigantic French movie posters (all original) as far as the eye can see.

PHIL  
The dagger didn't kill him.

Clay, Sven, and Arturo sit shoulder-to-shoulder on a long obsidian leather Eames sofa.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
The drugs did.  
(beat)  
The Tetrahydrozoline--

CLAY  
Tetrawhatnow?

PHIL  
Tetrahydrozoline. An ingredient in over-the-counter eye drops that can induce a coma and is basically undetectable by most drug tests.  
(MORE)

PHIL (CONT'D)

(beat)

The pasta sauce. Harvey had it shipped over direct. From La Pergola in Rome. As a little 'fuck you just cave already you son of a bitch' on the rights...

(eyes on Arturo)

...to your movie. Which is great by the way. The movie, not the--

ARTURO

Why would Harvey Weinstein--

Phil shuts him up with a look.

PHIL

I had my suspicions. Snuck in. Took some. Had it tested. The sauce was laced with Tetra--

SVEN

Hold on. Hold on. He was alive... David was *alive* when I found him.

ARTURO

With a fucking Nazi dagger stuck in his back!

PHIL

That was the drugs.

CLAY

Fuck me! *What* drugs?

Phil reaches into his pocket, pulls out a little blue capsule. The same blue pills we've seen David gobbling down by the dozen from the jump.

PHIL

Clomipramine. A tricyclic antidepressant originally designed to treat OCD but, in this case, prescribed to keep rare birds from plucking out their feathers.

Phil pulls another pill out of a different pocket. It looks exactly like the pill Doc Rock smoothed down the gullet of the last Toucan standing.

PHIL (CONT'D)

And this. Tenormin. A beta-blocker. For high blood pressure. David's *actual* prescription.

CLAY  
I don't... This doesn't--

SVEN  
Someone's been switching David's  
meds. And it wasn't me. Or you. Or  
you. Or any of us. At least, I  
don't think--

ARTURO  
He was taking antidepressants for  
fucking birds?!

SVEN  
Well, the prescription was written  
by a... veterinarian.

CLAY  
Fuck me. Doc Rock?

Phil pockets the white pill. The beta-blocker.

PHIL  
Even a moderate dose of Tenormin  
can induce instant avian death via  
fatally low blood pressure.

SVEN  
Doc Rock was killing the fucking  
birds... herself?

Phil nods.

PHIL  
Whether she knew it or not.

ARTURO  
Who cares? He had a *dagger* in his--

Phil holds the blue capsule up to the light.

PHIL  
(too calm)  
Apparently, toxic levels of  
Clomipramine in the blood stream  
can lead to psychomotor agitation,  
or what's called, in the DSM,  
purposeless motion.  
(beat)  
AKA David's entire existence in a  
nutshell. In retrospect.

**EXT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GROUNDS - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]**

Phil stands in the shadows of the bamboo grove smoking a turquoise Nat Sherman as he peers through the window into David's office.

David is very much alive, and ravenously gobbling down poisoned pasta by the forkful while scratching an itch on his back with the tip of the Nazi dagger.

His eyes are locked firmly on an old black and white photo on his desk of his younger self standing elbow-to-elbow with a Factory era Andy Warhol.

DAVID  
(mouth full)  
The fuck happened to my--

WHEEZE, WHEEZE. GAG, GAG. COUGH! COUGH!

GASP!

David drops his fork, reaches for the glass of Perrier, misses. The Tetrahydrozoline kicking in?

In his left hand: the dagger.

PHIL (V.O.)  
I came to make peace. Mend fences.  
Come clean. But it was too late.

Through the window, we see David lurch forward, then sideways. His arms flail wildly, totally out of control.

He tries to stand, falls forward, stumbles backward.

AND INVOLUNTARILY STABS HIMSELF IN THE BACK WITH THE KNIFE!

Without so much a sound, he collapses into his chair and falls face-first into what's left of the pasta as Butch bemusedly watches on from comfort of the Zebra skin rug.

Blood instantly flows. Butch forces himself to all fours.

In the distance:

SVEN (O.S.)  
David? It's me, Sven.

**END FLASHBACK.**

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, HALLWAY - LATER**

Phil rushes from the living room toward the aviary.

Everyone else struggles to keep up.

PHIL  
 (to Sven)  
 I saw the whole thing. You're  
 totally in the clear.

On the move, Phil pulls out his cigarettes, pops the box open, wags it back toward Clay.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 Innocent. And I'll say so. In court  
 if it goes that--

SVEN  
 Court?

Sven stops dead.

Clay, stunned mute, pulls out a long pink cigarette.

Phil offers Sven the box. Sven just stares.

PHIL  
 Don't worry. I gotcha.

Phil closes the box, tosses Clay his fancy lighter.

Clay catches it blank-faced, lift it, lights it.

Arturo watches impatiently.

ARTURO  
 You mean to tell me, David stabbed  
*himself* in the back?!

PHIL  
 Sounds about right.

Phil spins, pockets his cigarettes, presses his way through the double doors and out into the moonlight.

In the nearest enclosure, the kinkajou bounces back-and-forth from limb to limb like it knows what's up.

Arturo hurries after Phil.

ARTURO  
 (back to Clay)  
 C'mon, man. Don't tell me you're  
 buying this bullshit.  
 (MORE)

ARTURO (CONT'D)

This fucker probably climbed through the fucking window in his twelve hundred dollar loafers and stabbed David in the fucking back himself.

Clay, frozen on the threshold inhales deeply.

CLAY

He wouldn't--

Arturo and Phil disappear into the darkness.

ARTURO (O.S.)

(to Phil)

Financial whizkid? Gimme a break. This movie's been losing money hand-over-first since the beginning. *Before* the beginning.

Sven, also frozen stiff, looks to Clay.

SVEN

Almost like somebody wanted it to.

Clay passes Sven his cigarette.

CLAY

Michael.

Sven lifts the cigarette, pauses.

Then, from just outside the production office:

PHIL (O.S.)

I stole the money. The cash.

Even the kinkajou freezes.

**EXT. ALVEAR PALACE HOTEL, BUENOS AIRES - DAY [FLASHBACK]**

Phil scales the steps of the hotel as David's chauffeur driven Mercedes pulls away for the airport.

PHIL (V.O.)

Wrote the whole program, the entire algorithm, so that I could start getting cash down there. As much as possible. As quick as possible once I saw how shitty the dailies were.

Phil pauses at the top of the stairs, looks to where his briefcase once stood.

PHIL (V.O.)  
So that I could steal it myself.

In the distance a MAN IN BLACK nods discretely toward Phil.

PHIL (V.O.)  
Well, with a little local help.

CLAY (PRE-LAP)  
But... why?

**END FLASHBACK.**

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - NIGHT**

Back inside the (relative) safety of their office, Clay stares pleadingly toward Phil. Rocked.

Phil quickly rummages through a steel filing cabinet.

PHIL  
So that I could fix the piece of  
shit movie for him. Bingo.

Phil looks up, pulls out a single file folder, holds it out like it's a precious artifact.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
Just like he fixed "Sting".

**INT. FORMOSA - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]**

Dressed almost identically, Phil sits on a bar stool next to an unshaven Tommaso. Both are three or four Gimlets in.

PHIL (V.O.)  
Tommaso was desperate. So I  
convinced him to come do some ADR.  
I rewrote a bunch of scenes, ran  
them past Leon. Who was absolutely  
no help at all, by the way.

Phil lifts a hand to Tommaso's shoulder consolingly.

PHIL (V.O.)  
And used the cash to pay Deluxe to  
release the neg to me so that Kirk  
could re-cut it from the first  
frame to the last.

TOMMASO  
(slurring slightly)  
Fuck it, dude. That bad, huh?

Tommaso downs a half-empty glass, SLAMS it onto the bar.

TOMMASO (CONT'D)

Guess this way I won't have to murder that strung-out has-been in his fucking sleep for tanking my so-called career, huh?

SVEN (PRE-LAP)

But, wait. Tommaso was just--

**END FLASHBACK.**

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - NIGHT**

Phil strides quickly past the chest freezer without so much as stopping to take a look.

PHIL

Here? I know.

While Arturo stands in the doorway to the garage with his arms crossed sceptically, Phil sets the file folder on a nearby shelf and drops to the concrete floor.

CLAY

What're you--

PHIL

(from under the car)

Looking for something.

Sven hands Clay back his smoldering cigarette while Phil rummages under the Citroën.

PHIL (CONT'D)

He swore he wouldn't tell David about any of it.

Clay takes a drag, watches Phil warily.

ARTURO

And he also said he'd *murder* him in his sleep?!

PHIL

(muffled)

There you are.

Phil yanks something off the undercarriage, stands.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Pretty sure that was just Tommaso being Tommaso.

In Phil's hand: some sort of electronic device.

CLAY  
What the heck is that?

Phil smiles, tosses the device to Clay.

PHIL  
A bomb.

Clay bobbles it. His cigarette falls to the floor.

Phil spins, grabs the file folder, looks to the mangled steel garage door.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
Guess you shouldn't fuck with the Sultan of Brunei's youngest son's Range Rover.

CLAY  
(holding the bomb)  
WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK?!

Phil charges past him and Sven, back toward the production office. Arturo reluctantly makes way.

PHIL  
Guys, chill. It was synched to the audio harmonics of the ignition system. Very rare. C-sharp then G-sharp minor. Then, kaboom!  
(beat)  
Totally harmless now.

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, PRODUCTION OFFICE - SAME**

Phil tucks the file under one arm, lets his eyes wash over the space like he misses the place.

PHIL  
(to Arturo)  
He does actually want to be in the Pound thing. Tommaso, I mean.

Clay, still clutching the device, steps inside. Behind him, Sven puts out the still smoldering cigarette with his heel.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
(to Clay)  
Loved the pages David sent him last week. For what it's worth.

Arturo collapses into Sven's office chair, looking like the one whose career is about to implode.

**EXT. POLO LOUNGE - DAY [FLASHBACK]**

Phil, now dressed in a loose-fitting gray Issey Miyake suit, strides through a sea of execs doing seven-figure deals over milk fed Veal Oscar at The Beverly Hills Hotel.

PHIL (V.O.)

When I told Bruno and Yoshi that we'd been cooking the books *and* inflating production costs so that Michael could loan us the cash we needed to make up for our frozen assets at an insanely huge mark-up... well, suffice it to say, neither of them were *thrilled*.

Bruno and Yoshi, seated together, don't even bother to stand as Phil approaches.

SVEN (PRE-LAP)

*Lending* the production money?

**END FLASHBACK.**

**INT. SCHWARTZMAN COMPOUND, GARAGE - NIGHT**

Sven steps into the office from the garage, looks to Clay.

Clay sets the device delicately down on top of the copier.

Phil turns, pulls out his cigarette box again.

PHIL

The whole thing, the hospital supply company, the tax shelter, it's all just a front. So that Michael can launder as much dirty money as possible and then loan David even more at, like, twenty-six percent interest.

Phil nips out a Nat Sherman, lights it, inhales.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Which is, of course, entirely tax deductible. Win, win for him. Lose, lose for us. Especially David.

(slow exhale)

May he rest in--

CLAY

That means this whole thing,  
everything we've been busting our  
asses for for the last, what, two  
years, has just been a fucking tax  
dodge? For Michael?

Phil nods slowly amid a gauzy cloud of smoke.

Behind Clay, Butch gallops calmly into the room, leaps up  
onto the ottoman, PANTING expectantly.

PHIL

Either Michael or Bruno or Yoshi  
wanted David out of the picture.

(beat)

Michael to cover his tracks. Bruno  
to cash the completion bond, make  
up his losses and bail. And Yoshi  
because, well, he's a badass. And  
his bosses are Yakuza.

SVEN

I knew it!

CLAY

Wait. So it's not Doc--

Across the room, perched on the seat of a stainless steel  
Bertoia bar stool, the bulky mobile phone rig RINGS.

All eyes whip toward it.

PHIL

(suddenly serious)

Don't answer that.

The phone keeps RINGING.

Arturo looks to Clay, gestures.

ARTURO

(hushed)

Just look. See who it--

Clay rushes across the room. His eyes fall to the display.

CLAY

Shit.

He turns, looks to Sven.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 (fearful)  
 It's Brenda.

PHIL  
 At this hour? What the hell could  
 that hag possibly--

SVEN  
 (to Clay)  
 It worked?

PHIL  
 What worked?

The RINGING stops mid-chirp.

SVEN  
 The screening.

PHIL  
 What screening?

CLAY  
 Don't ask.

SVEN  
 Don't ask.

BEE-DE-DEEP! BEE-DE-DEEP!

The office phone RINGS.

Clay looks to Phil.

PHIL  
 Let it go to...

Over a nearby chunky answering machine, we briefly hear  
 DAVID'S VOICE. Then:

BRENDA (V.O.)  
 David, honey? Why are you avoiding  
 me? Huh, darling? Especially when I  
 have such *fantastic* fucking news  
 for you and yours truly.

Clay steps backward across the room, toward Sven.

BRENDA (V.O.)  
 Sinclair's in! Full P&A budget for  
 a New York and L.A. release! At  
 first. Then a slow build roll-out  
 on both coasts. Backed by rave  
 reviews, fingers crossed.

Phil looks to Clay. Clay looks to us, wide-eyed.

BRENDA (V.O.)  
 Seattle, Chicago, S.F. You name it.  
 Build word-of-mouth. And, presto  
 change-o. Another fucking Oscar  
 campaign, you genius motherfucker!

PHIL  
 (hushed, to Sven)  
 What did you do?

SVEN  
 It wasn't our--

BRENDA (V.O.)  
 Have your cute little minions call  
 in your overlords. We want a third  
 of all domestic. Twelve years. All  
 media. And half of international in  
 all markets already sold.

Pregnant pause.

Arturo, still seated, wags his head side-to-side.

ARTURO  
 Great, just--

BRENDA (V.O.)  
 And the whole enchilada, everything  
 else worldwide that we close  
 between now and September.

Over the speaker, a hint of a MOAN.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
 Yes, darling. I said that part  
 already. What?

Another MOAN.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
 Oh, and no bullshit E.P. credits.  
 Full producer credits. First bill.  
 Before that fascist freak and the  
 kid from that rice cooker turned  
 monster movie puppy mill, yeah?  
 (beat)  
 Tomorrow. Breakfast. Citrus. Nine-  
 thirty. Don't be late!

CLICK.

Phil looks to Sven.

PHIL  
Where's Michael staying?

SVEN  
Chateau.

Arturo stands.

Phil, seeming for the first time a bit off-kilter, thinks.

PHIL  
I'll call Bruno and Yoshi. Tell  
them David wants a meeting to talk  
about rights.

ARTURO  
Are you insane?

CLAY  
They're here?

PHIL  
(to Clay)  
You meet Brenda. Stall her. Tell  
her David wants her to break the  
news to them personally.  
(beat)  
Get her to The Chateau. Penthouse?

Sven nods.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
Okay. Who's hungry?

CLAY  
I'm sorry. What *exactly* are you  
proposing here?

With the file folder still stuck under one arm, Phil makes a  
beeline for the door to the alleyway.

PHIL  
Solving this deal. Hitchcock style.

Arturo falls in behind him, understanding completely.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
C'mon. Pink's. On me.

As Phil and Arturo exit, Clay and Sven just stand there.  
Deer in the headlights.

Clay's eyes slowly drift back toward us.

CLAY  
(direct-to-camera)  
Yeah. Terrible idea.

PHIL (O.S.)  
 (from the alley)  
 Oh, and bring the thing. Just, you  
 know, in case. And the phone.

Sven snatches the thing off the copier, trudges past Clay.

SVEN  
 Bomb, my ass.

**EXT. PINK'S - LATE NIGHT**

Phil, Clay, Sven, and Arturo sit in a circle at a plastic table beneath a red and white umbrella scarfing down post-midnight chilli cheese dogs.

The mobile phone, the file folder, and the bomb are on the table before them. Plain as day.

ARTURO  
 He really wants to play Pound?

Clay lifts his soda, SLURPS.

CLAY  
 He doesn't even look like--

PHIL  
 All that ends if we don't figure  
 this out.

SVEN  
 What's in the folder?

PHIL  
 Our way out.

ARTURO  
 Can't we just go to the cops? Tell  
 them what we know?

CLAY  
 What we know? I don't know what we  
 know. What do we know?

Phil swallows, looks disappointed in Clay.

PHIL  
 Michael had the motive. And the  
 opportunity. Doc Rock had plenty of  
 access, but no motive. Bruno and  
 Yoshi have multiple motives, but no  
 clear opportunity. I mean, not up  
 close.

(MORE)

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 Harvey didn't want to kill him.  
 Just fuck with him, maybe. Put him  
 in a coma to shut him up.

(beat)  
 Tommaso's in the clear, too stupid.  
 And so's Leon, too lazy. Plus, Leon  
 wouldn't hurt a fly and David was  
 his gravy train for, what, twenty  
 plus years?

CLAY  
 The dorsal?

PHIL  
 I dunno. Unlikely. And how on Earth  
 would we even...

All eyes fall to the mobile phone.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 (to Sven)  
 Tell him David wants a lost  
 weekend. The Penthouse. Noon.  
 (to Clay)  
 And get Doc Rock there too. For  
 grins, yeah?

Arturo downs his Coke, looks to Clay and Sven.

ARTURO  
 (to Phil)  
 And the so-called Sultan's son? Him  
 too? Or are you *actually* the one  
 who planted that fake-ass bomb?

Phil sets his dog down, makes a show of pulling a napkin  
 from the dispenser, dusts his hands clean.

Then, he reaches out, flips the device over with a THUD.

PHIL  
 C-4. RDX. Or Hexogen. A more  
 energetic explosive than TNT.  
 Would've easily taken down the  
 whole office and the house. Maybe  
 half the block.

Everyone else seems to not-so subtly stiffen.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 Destroying this.

He taps the folder gently.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I went to Bruno and Yoshi. Outted Michael. Or tried to. Convinced them I could save the movie. And my reputation. But they threatened to go public. Sue me. And David. For breach of contract. Fraud. Racketeering. Embezzlement.

Phil lifts his soda, takes a sip.

PHIL (CONT'D)

But what they *didn't* know is that I'd gotten David to sign a document assigning *me* worldwide rights in perpetuity. As protection. To undercut all of them - Bruno, Yoshi, Michael, even Harvey - on the occasion of his demise.

(slurp, gulp)

David was so fucking strung out on bird pills, he didn't know what the heck he was signing.

CLAY

Isn't that...

Phil smiles broadly.

PHIL

Technically yes. But it was either re-cut the movie and finally find an *actual* distributor. Or lose every red cent, get run outta town on a rail, be the laughing stock of the entire industry, *and* compromise David and Leon's original vision.

ARTURO

(scoffing)

Original vision.

Phil lifts his chilli dog again. It's a disgusting mess.

PHIL

All so that Michael could keep his little heroin empire chugging along, while Bruno hobnobs with Jack fucking Nicholson 24/7, and Yoshi bends over backward to finally nab his *Bosu*...

SVEN  
 (his mouth full)  
 That's just racist.

Phil takes a feral bite, continues:

PHIL  
 ...a couple little gold men.

Phil swallows loudly. GULP!

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 This is about art, not commerce.  
 Always has been.

Clay raises his hand like a middle-schooler.

PHIL (CONT'D)  
 (chewing)  
 Shoot.

CLAY  
 Not Hitchcock. "Murder on the  
 Orient Express". Yeah?

Phil touches the tip of his nose with one finger. *Precisely.*

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Okay. You can count on me.

Arturo, disgusted but desperate, looks away.

ARTURO  
 (under his breath)  
*¡Carajo!*

Phil reaches forward, grabs another wad of napkins, dabs at his chilli-dotted Cheshire Cat grin.

**INT. CITRUS - MORNING**

Wearing the same outfit as last night (and looking nervous as hell) Clay strides through the bright white almost spa-like interior of this Hollywood power brunch institution.

He's walking away from a table at which sit Brenda and Sinclair. He's in the same wheelchair and wearing impenetrably dark sunglasses.

The third seat is canted away, like Clay just left it.

And he's got the hefty mobile phone slung over one shoulder.

CLAY  
 (to us)  
 So, yeah. I told her David was one  
 hundred percent on-board. But that  
 she and Sinclair were gonna have to  
 help him break the news...

He pauses at the host desk, fishes a fistful of mints out of  
 a tiny porcelain bowl.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 ...to Bruno and Yoshi.

In the background, Brenda dabs a napkin to her collagen-  
 puffed lips, leans to whisper something to Sinclair.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 And Michael. At his suite. At  
 Chateau Marmont.

Clay pops a mint into his mouth, pockets the rest, presses  
 on through the floor-to-ceiling glass doors.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 At noon.

**INT. THE ROXY - MORNING**

Moving with a precision and purpose we haven't quite seen  
 from him to-date, Clay enters this cavernous former hair  
 metal mecca and pauses to let his eyes adjust.

CLAY  
 (still to us)  
 I didn't wanna believe she could be  
 mixed up in all this shit. At all.

Up on stage, Doc Rock is busy breaking down gear from the  
 night before. The floor is a sticky slick of spilled beer.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 But we had to get her there, just  
 to be sure.

Doc Rock turns, catches sight of Clay. Her face falls.

DOC ROCK  
 Don't tell me the fucking  
 kinkajou...

This seems like all the proof that Clay needs. *She cares...*

CLAY  
 (quietly, to us)  
 See. She's a good egg. I think.

**INT. CHATEAU MARMONT, LOBBY - MID-MORNING**

Clay breezes past a doorman and into the luxe, welcoming environs of this storied Hollywood hotel.

Blood red carpet. Stucco arches. Dark wooden beams. Wrought iron chandeliers. Plush leather club chairs.

CLAY  
 (still to us)  
 Speaking of good eggs.

Clay nods his head discretely toward Sven seated in a yellow velvet lounge. Sven stands.

Two men opposite him stand. Tommaso and Leon.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 All three of 'em actually.

Sven, Tommaso, and Leon fall wordlessly in behind Clay as he makes his way past reception and bends right.

Up ahead: the elevators. And Arturo (who has Butch with him on a long leather lead).

Clay slows. And the mobile phone RINGS. Right on time.

Clay picks it up.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 (into the phone)  
 Yep. All good.

He cradles the phone, looks to Leon.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Thanks for doing this.

LEON  
 You got it, kid.

Clay turns to press the call button.

LEON (CONT'D)  
 By the way, your Act Two B is a bit convoluted. Coulda gotten to the climax quicker. You know?

DING! The elevator arrives.

LEON (CONT'D)  
In the Pound thing.

The doors trundle open. And someone vaguely resembling CHRISTOPHER WALKEN (late 40s) steps out.

CLAY  
(eyes on Walken)  
David sent it to you?

Arturo steps up, reaches a hand out to hold the door.

LEON  
(somberly)  
*Alav ha-shalom.*  
(beat)  
Peace be upon him.

Walken slows.

WALKEN  
So sorry. For your loss.

With bow of the head and a subtle, almost soft-shoe sideways shuffle, Walken departs.

A little starstruck, Arturo steps into the elevator, presses the button for the top floor.

Everyone else follows him in.

ARTURO  
Was that...

BANG. The elevator door slams shut.

Elevator mirrors catch their reflections. Five versions of the same bad idea rising toward the inevitable.

**INT. CHATEAU MARMONT, TOP FLOOR HALLWAY - MID-MORNING**

As the elevator doors slide shut behind them, Clay leads Sven, Leon, Tommaso, and Arturo (and Butch) down the hall.

CLAY  
(hushed)  
Okay, everybody just be cool. Me and Sven first--

ARTURO  
We need to--

LEON  
Quiet on set, second unit.

Tommaso and Leon veer right. Clay and Sven veer left.

Arturo stops dead while Butch loudly WHEEZES.

TOMMASO  
C'mon, man. Move it.

Arturo reluctantly complies, guides Butch quickly down the hallway after Leon and Tommaso.

Clay pauses at a door. The door to the Penthouse Suite.

CLAY  
(to Sven)  
You ready?

SVEN  
As I'll never be.

Clay lifts his hand, makes a fist. KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

From inside:

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
You're fuckin' late.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK.

The door swings open to reveal Maruiz with one hand inside his jacket. The bulge of a pistol beneath the linen.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Well, you dumb oaf. Let 'em in!

Maruiz lowers his hand, steps aside.

Clay enters. Sven warily follows.

THUD. The door closes.

In the distance, everyone else waits behind a potted palm.

**INT. CHATEAU MARMONT, PENTHOUSE SUITE - SAME**

The space is vast and swank. Blue velvet furniture. Fireplace. Jet black baby grand piano.

A black and white striped awning jets out over a wraparound sundeck high above Sunset.

Michael in his same Speedo from earlier strides in from the deck wearing an untied, thick white robe.

MICHAEL

Tell me you have good news.

Clay slows, sets the mobile phone rig down next to a brimming ashtray on the desk next to the piano.

CLAY

Well...

He draws a breath, looks to Sven.

SVEN

We got our tax ruling. From the Dutch authorities. And it's not great. In fact--

Michael slows, ping-pongs his gaze between them.

MICHAEL

Do I look like I fuckin' care about the fuckin' Dutch tax authorities?

He tenses like he's about the gut punch Clay.

Clay doesn't flinch. He's rehearsed this all. Endlessly.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Where the fuck is--

From behind Maruiz: KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Maruiz instinctively reaches back into his jacket.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Go ahead, let the Maestro in.

(to Clay)

Can deadlift eight-eighty but dumb as a fuckin' post.

The door swings open to reveal Tommaso, Leon, and Arturo clustered behind Butch.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

The fuck is this?

Clay exhales slowly, tries to keep it together.

CLAY

Prep meeting. Didn't you get David's email? He wants to give you the first crack at financing the Pound project now that we have Tommaso and Arturo packaged to star and direct.

(MORE)

CLAY (CONT'D)  
And, um, Leon on-board for the, uh,  
rewrites.

LEON  
Michael.

MICHAEL  
Leon.

Maruiz doesn't budge. Michael narrows his eyes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(to Clay)  
Whaddaya mean, first crack?

CLAY  
Before Marin and Yoshi. Or anyone  
else, for that matter.

Maruiz looks to Michael. He wags his head. *It's okay.*

MICHAEL  
That's not how it works, kid. And  
you know it.

Maruiz lowers his hand, steps aside.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Or at least Phil did.

Everyone steps in, Butch included (SNORTING).

THUD. The door closes.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Speakin' of which--

CHIRP! CHIRP! The mobile phone rings.

Sven crosses toward it under Maruiz's watchful gaze.

ARTURO  
Wow. This place is *locochón*.

Arturo strides past Michael, toward the doors to the deck.

MICHAEL  
(to Tommaso)  
Wetback's star-struck. Charmin'.

SVEN  
(into the phone)  
Yep. Yep. Perfect. See you in--

MICHAEL

Tell me that fucker's stuck in traffic. He'd be late for his own--

And again: KNOCK. KNOCK.

Michael does a double-take, presses past Maruiz, throws the door open - only to be confronted by the sight of Bruno and Yoshi standing shoulder-to-shoulder just outside.

Phil is right behind them, with his arms crossed and a shit-eating grin plastered across his face.

PHIL

Ta-da.

Maruiz tenses. Yoshi tenses.

Bruno reaches forward and confidently SHOVES Michael backward into the room.

BRUNO

(thick German accent)

You greedy fucking scumbag.

Maruiz draws his pistol. Yoshi shakes the sleeve of his impeccably-tailored jet black Armani suit.

What appears to be the leather-laced hilt of Katana knife slips to his grasp. A hint of cold steel glints from just below his starched white cuff.

Below the cuff: a trace of Yoshi's full-body Yakuza ink.

Michael stumbles backward into the room, lifts his hands.

MICHAEL

Easy now. Easy! We're all... professionals here. Everybody just chill the fuck out.

Phil, snake-like, winds his way between Maruiz and Yoshi.

For some reason, he's got the C-4 car bomb in one hand. And the file folder is still tucked under his arm.

PHIL

Hey Michael. Long time, no see.

Leon looks to Yoshi, smiles proudly.

LEON  
 (subtitled Japanese)  
*Sorry to see you under these  
 circumstances, Hinata-san.*

With the flick of a finger, Yoshi re-sheathes the blade.

YOSHI  
 (subtitled Japanese)  
*Always a pleasure, my dear friend.  
 Always a pleasure.*

While Maruiz nervously trains his revolver on Yoshi, Yoshi calmly reaches into his breast pocket, produces a pack of Dunhills, slips one out, tosses it into the air.

As it tumbles, Maruiz watches it.

It lands between Yoshi's lips, he pulls a silver lighter, flips it open, lights it, lights the cigarette, knocks it closed, flicks it into the air.

It too tumbles mesmerizingly before Yoshi catches it in his jacket pocket with an almost balletic precision.

YOSHI (CONT'D)  
 (accented English)  
 Put the gun away. Or else.

Maruiz looks to Michael. Michael nods.

MICHAEL  
 Will somebody please tell me what  
 the fuck you're all doin' in my  
 fuckin' suite?

Maruiz holsters his weapon, warily knocks the door closed.

THUMP.

Clay wheels around.

CLAY  
 David is dead.  
 (pregnant pause)  
 Murdered.

All of the oxygen leaves the room.

Leon looks to Tommaso. Tommaso looks to Phil.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 And someone in this room did it.

Phil blithely makes a beeline for the piano, sets the car bomb on top of it, takes a seat, points to the door.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

Everybody freezes.

DOC ROCK (O.S.)  
(from the hall)  
Yo, David. It's me. Lemme get a  
look at that pooch!

MICHAEL  
Jesus fuckin' Christ already.

Michael barrels past Bruno and Yoshi, throws the door open to reveal Doc Rock on the doorstep.

She's got her leopard print vet case dangling from one hand.

Butch BOLTS toward him, dragging his leash.

Doc falls to one knee, wraps Butch in her arms, swaps a sloppy lipstick kisses.

Everyone just stares.

DOC ROCK  
(to Clay)  
He looks just fine.

Doc Rock finally clock the sombre, standoff air in the room.

DOC ROCK (CONT'D)  
What'd I miss?

MICHAEL  
(to Clay)  
Anybody else?

PHIL  
(from the piano)  
We shall see.

Phil lifts the key cover. Hits one note. A C-sharp.

Clay and Sven eye him nervously. *The fuck are you...*

Michael throws the door shut: THUD!

MICHAEL  
This ain't funny. Where is he?

PHIL

In the chest freezer. In the garage. Where we found this.

Phil eyes the car bomb, looks to Clay.

Clay steels himself, anxiously picks up the thread:

CLAY

C-4. Attached to the undercarriage of David's Citroën. The CX.

BRUNO

(subtitled German)

*Nonsense.*

CLAY

Someone in this room has been slowly poisoning David. Swapping his meds for these.

Clay pulls one of the blue capsules from his shirt pocket.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Clomipramine.

Doc Rock slowly stands.

Phil BANGS out another C-sharp.

Sven's eyes flare, he looks to Arturo, then his watch.

CLAY

A tricyclic antidepressant. Prescribed for... birds.

DOC ROCK

Hold on, man. Hold the fuck--

Clay reaches into another pocket, pulls out a white pill.

CLAY

Someone swapped them for these. Without anyone noticing.

Doc Rock's face falls.

DOC ROCK

Oh, fuck. Fuck, dude. I didn't--

From outside:

BRENDA (O.S.)

Ding-dong!

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Who ordered the P&A? I mean T&A.

At the piano, Phil rolls his eyes. Hits another C-sharp.

BING!

On cue, Sven threads his way through the room.

SVEN  
Pardon me. Excuse me. Pardon--

Maruiz, still having not uttered a solitary syllable, just watches him go. Frozen. Like he needs a reboot.

And, presto. There's Brenda behind Sinclair's wheelchair.

MICHAEL  
The hell are you doing here, skank?

Brenda grins, pushes Sinclair in.

BRENDA  
Saving *all* your asses. That's what.

Sinclair MOANS loudly.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Yes, dear. Gang's all here!

Sven closes the door: THUMP.

PHIL  
Gentlemen, meet your newest investor.

BING! Another C-sharp.

Brenda sashays the wheelchair to a stop.

CLAY  
Mister Sinclair here has offered to fully-fund a limited release for a third of all domestic receipts.

Michael's face goes instantly beet red. Full of rage.

BRUNO  
(subtitled German)  
*Outrageous!*

YOSHI  
(subtitled Japanese)  
*Highway robbery.*

BING! Another C-sharp from Phil.

CLAY  
And everything worldwide between  
now and... the Oscar campaign.

Another MOAN from Sinclair.

BRENDA  
Twelve years. All media. And half  
of international in all markets  
already sold.

Leon, fascinated, takes a seat. So does Arturo.

LEON  
Fascinating.

Brenda gestures to Yoshi and Michael.

BRENDA  
You two take second and third  
producer credits. And get made  
whole when and if the Argentines  
finally unfreeze your assets.

MICHAEL  
*Their assets?!*

BING! Another C-sharp from Phil.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Will you fuckin' stop already?!

Phil grins, lifts a hand to the Manila folder, taps it.

PHIL  
(to Bruno and Yoshi)  
It's all in there. All the evidence  
you need.

MICHAEL  
Evidence? Of what?!

CLAY  
(to Michael)  
Of you extorting David. Using our  
pass-through for the laundering of  
approximately twenty-five point  
five million Dollars.

BING!

MICHAEL  
 So what if I did? Guilty as  
 charged! I saved your fuckin' *necks*  
 when the goons froze your assets!

Yoshi crosses to the desk near the piano, stabs out his  
 cigarette in the ashtray, throws the folder open.

CLAY  
 David was poisoned. And then  
 stabbed in the back.

Clay looks to Bruno.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 With an SS dagger.

BRENDA  
 Wait. What now?

Another MOAN from Sinclair, this time more urgent sounding.

Yoshi looks up from the folder, eyes on Bruno.

BRUNO  
 Please. You can't possibly think  
 that I would...

BING! C-sharp.

BRUNO (CONT'D)  
 I never understood his cliché  
 Hebraic self-loathing obsession  
 with Nazi paraphernalia.  
 (beat)  
 And male prostitutes.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

MICHAEL  
 Do not fuckin' tell me--

Maruiz ignores this, throws the door open.

And there's JIMMY (20s) David's 'dorsal'.

JIMMY  
 Um... I think I have the wrong--

Maruiz YANKS him into the room, kicks the door shut.

CLAY  
 (to Jimmy)  
 Were you poisoning David?

JIMMY  
 (stumbling)  
 What?! Dude. No, dude!

CLAY  
 Did you stab him in the back with a  
 Nazi dagger?

JIMMY  
 Eew. No. What is this?

CLAY  
 Do you own a twelve hundred dollar  
 pair of Paolo Scafora loafers?

JIMMY  
 Do I look like I own a pair of  
 twelve hundred dollar loafers?

BING! From the piano.

Clay wheels around to the rest of the room.

CLAY  
 (to Michael)  
 But you do.  
 (to Bruno)  
 As do you.  
 (to Yoshi)  
 And you. Especially you.

BRENDA  
 Can somebody please--

CLAY  
 (to Michael)  
 You were extorting David!

MICHAEL  
 Prove it.

Phil looks to Yoshi, hits one key. Another C-sharp.

In the background, Tommaso pulls a joint out from behind his  
 ear, sits, wags it toward Leon.

TOMMASO  
 Toke?

LEON  
 Don't mind if I--

Clay turns to Bruno, deadly serious.

CLAY

Your minions laced David's pasta with Tetrahydrozoline so that you could collect the bond, take the loss, and move on!

BRUNO

I did no such thing!

Phil's hand drifts down the keyboard, hovers.

Clay looks to Yoshi, points to the bomb on the piano.

CLAY

Your Yakuza friends planted that car bomb on David's Citroën to exact your revenge and save face for betting on the wrong horse!

YOSHI

I thought you were my--

Clay spins toward Phil on the piano bench.

CLAY

And you! You stole David's entire library out from under him. By forcing him to sign away *all* of his rights upon his death, regardless the circumstances.

A perplexed look washes over Phil's face. *This wasn't the--*

CLAY (CONT'D)

(still to Phil)

Not to mention the tens of thousands of Dollars you personally stole from our production, in cash, after our assets were frozen and Michael had to make up the difference, at interest!

Phil's hand still hovers over G-sharp minor.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Admit it. You all wanted him dead!

BRENDA

David's DEAD?!

Tommaso BARKS out a cloud of weed smoke.

TOMMASO

You are a *terrible* actress.

Leon nods, passes Arturo the joint.

ARTURO  
But I did like you in--

EVERYTHING FREEZES.

Clay looks to us.

CLAY  
(direct-to-camera)  
Now, I could tell you this is how  
it all went down from here.

Everything speeds back up.

Yoshi shakes out his Kitana knife, lunges toward Bruno.

YOSHI  
(subtitled Japanese)  
*I never should have trusted you!*

Maruiz draws his pistol, fires twice:

BANG! BANG!

The first bullet clips Yoshi's left shoulder, spins him around sideways.

The second bullet hits Bruno in the forehead. He falls backward like a bag of rocks.

At the center of it all, Brenda SCREAMS, charges across the suite with the wheelchair.

Butch gallops off after her, headed toward the deck.

BRENDA  
THE FUCKING FUCK!

Slack-jawed, Doc Rock just stands there next to Jimmy, clutching her leopard print doctor's bag.

Yoshi looks to him, raises his blade, charges instead toward Maruiz - AND CUTS HIS HEAD CLEAN OFF IN ONE DEFT SLASH!

DOC ROCK  
Oh, buddy.

Maruiz's pistol hits the floor before his head, goes off:

BANG!

The bullet hits Michael in his bare kneecap. Shreds it.

MICHAEL  
SONOFABITCH!

He falls to the ground, gushing blood.

Behind him, Arturo, Leon, and Tommaso leap to their feet just as Brenda SMASHES the wheelchair through the open doors out to the deck.

Clay, terrified, looks to Sven who looks to Phil.

PHIL  
(eerily calm)  
I never should've gotten either of  
you mixed up in any of this.

Phil's hand drifts back down the keyboard.

Outside, Brenda tries to slow down. But the wheelchair has too much momentum.

It hits the low wall hard, sends Sinclair soaring.

And as he plummets from view:

PHIL (CONT'D)  
Can't say it wasn't fun though.

Phil hits a rapid C-sharp, G-sharp minor combo.

**EXT. CHATEAU MARMONT, DRIVEWAY - MIDDAY**

A VALET (20s) hands Christopher Walken his keys, looks up:

VALET  
Um.

**SMASH!**

Sinclair's body PULVERIZES the roof of Walken's champagne gold BMW 850CSi.

Glass flies everywhere. Only Walken doesn't flinch.

WALKEN  
Well, now. That's a problem.

**KA-BOOM!**

A massive explosion DECIMATES the penthouse, sending glass, brick, steel, and flames billowing in every direction.

**INT. CHATEAU MARMONT, PENTHOUSE SUITE - MOMENTS EARLIER**

Everyone's back. Locked in their same silent stand-off.

Phil's hand still hovers over G-sharp minor.

Clay looks to us, smiles.

CLAY

Yeah. Only in the movi--

Before he can finish, Sinclair (alive and well and back at the center of the room) RIPS off his sunglasses, LEAPS out of the wheelchair, SURGES toward Michael.

He flashes a silver badge in an open leather billfold.

SINCLAIR

You're under arrest!

Sinclair, aka SPECIAL AGENT WILLIAMS (30s), whips Michael around, cuffs him, just as a bevvy of FBI AGENTS loudly bust down the door, guns drawn.

AGENT WILLIAMS

For suspicion of grand theft, money laundering, racketeering, wire fraud, embezzlement, and federal tax evasion. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.

As the Agents forcefully bring everyone present but Brenda to their knees, we glide slowly away like a guilty voyeur.

CLAY (V.O.)

Turns out, David and Brenda had been in on it together from the get-go. She didn't wanna invest. She just wanted to help David take Michael down.

More silent chaos in the suite as we drift through the open glass doors to the deck, and out into the daylight.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And maybe Harvey at the same time, too. Together, they tried to frame him with the Tetrwhatever.

Above the black and white striped awning: blazing sunshine.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Phil bought the stuff, planted the fake bomb, even got a job as a valet to park the Sheik's Range Rover in just the right spot.

We soar over the railing and glide gracefully downward past window after window, almost like Sinclair falling.

CLAY (CONT'D)

All just to get it on paper from David's attorney. From Gary.

Eventually, we reach the driveway. The entrance.

CLAY (CONT'D)

At David's request, Gary had reworked his will just two days before it all happened.

Walken's BMW is nowhere to be seen.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Before David offed himself. Entirely by accident.

Now the drive is cluttered with unmarked white FBI vans.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Saw to it that Carlos and Irma were in the will, salary for life. And that Jimmy and Doc Rock would both be cleared of any wrongdoing.

A DOORMAN makes way for Agent Williams as he guides Michael out into the light, still clad in his Speedo and robe.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Guess it might've been the stress of knowing he'd go down if Michael went down that started David self-medicating in the first place. Not suspecting at all that his little switcheroo would kill off all the toucans at the same time. Bummer.

One-by-one, everyone is quickly hustled off the portico, down the stairs, and into the vans. Handcuffed.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Weirdly though, in the end, David actually had our backs, too.

(MORE)

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Phil and I both turned state's  
 evidence and got a hand slap. His  
 testimony cleared Sven.

Clay, Phil, and Sven are the last to go. They don't actually  
 look frightened. Just bonded. An inseparable trio again.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Actually, all three of us had to  
 testify. But, from the records, it  
 looked pretty clear that two of us  
 definitely didn't have the foggiest  
 idea what the hell we were doing.

Sven looks left, inexplicably spies the Sheik from the alley  
 (the one with the ruined Range Rover) headed up the stairs.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 And the funny thing was, just  
 before the accident...

Instead of flinching, Sven flashes the Sheik a slow-mo 'I'm  
 watching you' hand gesture before ducking into the van.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 ...David secured another super-  
 hefty completion bond.

As the last agent ushers Clay into the last waiting van,  
 Clay turns, briefly catches our gaze, smiles.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 On Arturo's movie. The Pound thing.  
 With Tommaso starring and Leon on  
 deck for the rewrites.

Back up on the portico, Tommaso, Arturo, and Leon step from  
 the lobby, un-cuffed and talking shop.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 Once David died, the whole thing  
 kept going. Fully bankrolled.

The same Valet from earlier presses past Tommaso, hustles  
 Butch onto Doc Rock's sequined lap in the lead van.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 With Phil producing, if you can  
 believe it.

THUD go the doors. Each van PEELS out, one after the other.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Brenda did end up funding a New York and L.A. release of Phil's re-cut. The reviews got Bruno and Yoshi a proper distributor. They went wide. It crushed at Venice. And Phil was a bona fide hot shit *wunderkind* all over again.

As Clay's van disappears, our view slowly tilts skyward.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And me? Well, after Michael's trial, guilty on all counts, I just packed up my car, hopped on the 5, and kept going.

All we see is palm trees, blue sky, and fluffy white clouds.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Figured someday I'd get around to telling this batshit story. But until then, I just wanted to get as far away from the town as I could.

(beat)

For now, anyway.

Just another stupidly beautiful day in Hollywood.

CLAY (CONT'D)

For now.

CUT TO BLACK.

ROLL END CREDITS --

To "Blitzkrieg Bop" by The Ramones.

THE END