

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

by

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Based on the memoir
by Stanley Alpert

UNITED ARTISTS
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This is a true story.

BLACK.

A WOMAN'S VOICE reaches us...

WOMAN'S VOICE
I wanna be honest. May I be honest? I mean
horribly, horribly honest?

INT. RESTAURANT - UPPER EAST SIDE - NIGHT

STANLEY ALPERT (38) nods. He's half-listening to a woman in the empty bar area; her voice is a bit tipsy.

WOMAN'S VOICE
I'm having a hard time coming to terms with
how focused men are on the physical.

Stan's not a handsome man but an intense one. People like to say he "sucks up the room". It's not a compliment.

For starters, he's a lousy listener.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
You know how women always fear men don't want us to be smart, successful -- they don't wanna be "challenged". Bullshit.

He actually fidgets when he's not the one speaking.

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
It's so much scarier. They don't care. All they want is a certain type of butt. What comes attached to it is pretty much gravy.

He chuckles. Late. We see two empty wine glasses.

STANLEY'S DATE (40) is dolled-up. Ernest. Smart. Wounded.

STANLEY'S DATE
Sorry.

STANLEY
No, I understand.

STANLEY'S DATE
Do you?

STANLEY
Totally.

STANLEY'S DATE
It's just so frustrating, right. I don't know you. You're a blind date.
(MORE)

STANLEY'S DATE (CONT'D)

I haven't even formed an opinion of you. But you have. Five seconds after you saw me, you put me on some scale. Not My Type. One Night Stand. A Few Booty Calls. A Six-Month Affair. Okay, you don't know if we could fall in love, but you at least know if it's a possibility. And the sad thing is you can't tell me. If I ask directly, if I say, "Stanley, are you attracted to me enough that you could envision us dating?" ...you'd probably lie. Right? Am I right?

Stan smiles and stretches.

STANLEY

No, you're right. Well, not in this case cause you're very attractive. At least to me. But I get the frustration. I do.

She knows he's lying -- she'll never hear from him again.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Men suck. Seriously.

Stan reaches for the check.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I've got an early arbitration. Don't let us get to you, Gail. We're idiots. Really.

STANLEY'S DATE

(a forced smile)

Ummm.

He takes a moment to review the bill.

As he pulls out his wallet, still running the numbers...

STANLEY

Hey, do I have your best email?

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

A complex junction of subway passages. Dark. Empty.

We hear FOOTSTEPS. Someone running.

And a TITLE appears...

January 21, 1998

Stan flies out a narrow tunnel, down a few stairs, over a transom, around a corner, down another set of stairs -- where his feet do the shallow jig of a man running for...

A train waits on the platform.

STANLEY
C'mon. C'mon. C'mon.

The departure buzzer.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
C'mon!

At this late hour, the Conductor takes pity.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Stan leaps in as the doors close. He's paunchy and out of shape, puts his hands on his knees to catch his breath.

The train rolls out of the station.

Stan wipes his glasses, turns to sit, and FREEZES.

This side of the car is occupied only by TWO SERIOUS GANG-BANGERS. Both men watch him, legs sprawled in the aisle.

Putting on a tough face, Stan starts their way...

And stops immediately, remembers something, turns to go back and check the car's subway map. He pretends to study it. Makes a show of nodding. Goes to the other way.

He moseys to where the only other occupants sit, a WHITE COUPLE. He leans back against a door near them. A sign over his shoulder reads: "Do Not Lean Against the Door".

CLOSE on Stan, his face is passive but a vein on his neck pulses slightly. He cuts his eyes to the Gang-Bangers.

Thankfully, they aren't looking his way.

Stan sighs, opens his book, "The Bright and Shining Lie".

He hears a man CACKLE.

The couple is a NEBBISHY MAN and CURLY-HAIRED BEAUTY. He seems to be flirting; she's polite but uninterested.

Stan gets snippets of their conversation: "Who knows with the new volunteers"..."UJA"..."Mary? How's she Jewish?"

When the train slows, the Nebbishy Man stands.

NEBBISHY MAN
Good to see you.

She flutters fingers. He exits. The Gang-Bangers, too.

As the train moves on, Stan and the Curly-Headed Beauty exchange the tight smile of strangers suddenly alone in a subway car. They ride a moment. Furtive glances.

Stan puts his book away and feigns boredom.

STANLEY
Excuse me. I thought I heard you mention the United Jewish Appeal. You're not going to the Washington conference are you?

CURLY-HEADED WOMAN
Oh. Next month? Yes. I mean, probably.

STANLEY
Me, too. Probably. Weird. Hi. Stanley.

He puts a hand on his chest.

CURLY-HEADED WOMAN
Lisa.

STANLEY
Sorry, I was totally eavesdropping.

She just nods. Polite. Cool.

An awkward beat.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
I'm coming from a blind date. Yikes. You?
Big night out? You look great.

LISA
The 92nd Street Y. I program the lectures.

STANLEY
Wow. You work for the Y. Volunteer at the UJA. Suddenly, all I can hear is the roar of my mother salivating.

More awkwardness. Stan's pushing too hard.

LISA
What do you do, Stanley?

STANLEY
Assistant Federal Attorney. Environmental
section. Corporate dumping. Contamination.

LISA
That sounds honorable.

STANLEY
Yes! Honorable. You get me.
(then)
Actually, JFK's in my jurisdiction. I spend
way too much time prosecuting the crazies
who try and smuggle wildlife past customs.

LISA
People smuggle wildlife?

STANLEY
More than drugs. It's more profitable.

LISA
You're kidding?

He takes the opportunity to sit, albeit not too close.

STANLEY
Oh, yeah. People will fly with a poisonous
snake taped to a leg. Drug birds and hide
them in tennis ball cans. Import cars with
the tanks full of exotic fish.

LISA
How do they get the poor fish out?

STANLEY
Put the car on a lift and torch a hole in
the tank. I feel sorry for the mechanic. The
most commonly smuggled fish is piranha.
(acting it out)
Ssshhhh! Ching! Woooossh! Aaaahh!

It's a funny little pantomime. Lisa has a generous laugh.

LISA
Omigod! That's so freaky.

STANLEY
You'd be surprised how many people treat
the rainforest like a Costco.

He shrugs ruefully. She's charmed. And if she's like most
people, this should last about fifteen minutes.

INT. SUBWAY PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

CLOSE on a boom-box blaring BUSTA RHYMES's "Dangerous".

BUSTA RHYMES

*Too much of us is dangerous. We dangerous.
So dangerous. My entire unit is dangerous.*

Who's shouldering the box? A Skinny Hipster White Kid.

Stan and Lisa come the other way, their chat interrupted by the aggressive rap echoing off the tile.

Naturally, Stan has to say something...

STANLEY

You're dangerous! We get it, Radio Raheem!

The Kid ignores him as they cross paths.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Appropriate something we can all enjoy!

The Kid flips him off without turning. Stan chuckles for Lisa. Uncomfortable, she affects an empathetic grimace.

EXT. UNION SQUARE - NIGHT

Stan and Lisa come out of the subway portal...

STANLEY

You've never even tried the Entenmann's soft-baked chocolate-chips?

They're hit by a blast of crisp, cold air.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Jeez-Louise. Okay, you're on Ninth Street?

LISA

Tenth.

STANLEY

There's an A & P on your corner. I'll buy a box. You can try one. One. Only one.

LISA

One. Sure. Why not.

They make their way against the gale.

STANLEY

And don't be trying to seduce me after,
cause I'll know why.

LISA

Believe me, your cookies are safe.

INT. AISLE - A&P GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Stan holds a bag of Entenmann's Chocolate Chips, watches Lisa take a bite of a very appetizing cookie.

LISA

(mouth full)

Omigod. Omigod.

STANLEY

Huh? Can you believe these are Jewish? Our food usually sucks.

She ignores him, closes her eyes, chews in pure bliss.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Look at Israel. Smartest thing they ever did was steal the Arabs' cuisine.

She swallows. Moans happily.

LISA

I don't think you want put the word steal in a sentence starting with "Israel" and ending with "Arabs".

She raises her eyebrows and takes another bite.

STANLEY

Oooh. You're one of those people.

LISA

I love Israel.

STANLEY

Yeah well, Israel's easy to love. It's liking it that's hard.

(she moans again)

That's it. I'm buying you your own box.

She shakes her head.

LISA

(mouth full)

Just let me enjoy this one.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - TENTH STREET - NIGHT

Stan stands with Lisa in front of her building.

LISA

Well, thanks for the cookie.

STANLEY

Sure.

She touches his arm and steps up her stoop.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Hey, you wanna go for some tea?

LISA

Tea?

STANLEY

Yeah. Tea.

She almost seems to consider it.

LISA

It's kinda late. Give me your card.

He pulls out his wallet and steps closer. He hands her his business CARD. She angles it to the porch light.

LISA (CONT'D)

Is the best email address for you?

Stanley stops short. The resonance to earlier slams him, as it does us. He deflates. She'll never call.

STANLEY

Sure.

EXT. TENTH STREET - NIGHT

A grey sidewalk. Occasional pools of dim streetlight.

Footsteps. Stan emerges from darkness, peeved. He's now feeling the cold, pulls his trench coat tighter.

As he disappears into another patch of darkness...

A VOICE GRUNTS

...Yo...

Stan spins to look over his left shoulder as a HAND grabs his right elbow. He trips. Stumbles.

The cookies and book fall to the sidewalk.

A STOCKY BLACK TEENAGER holds Stan by the arm. Close. He wears sunglasses under a dirty orange knit cap.

STOCKY TEENAGER
Don't talk.

He waits for Stan to see the automatic submachine gun now sticking out from his puffy down coat, a TEC-9.

Another black teenager appears, a KID WEARING A TIE.

The stocky boy pulls Stan into the gutter.

STOCKY TEENAGER (CONT'D)
Get in the fuckin' car, Motherfucker.

The Teenagers hustle Stan between parked cars and down to where a brand new LEXUS idles ominously, double-parked in a fog of its own steam, chrome catching the light.

The Kid Wearing a Tie runs ahead and opens the left rear door. Terrified, Stan looks up and down the empty street: *No one sees this? Should I run? Scream? Fight?*

The older kid seems to anticipate his thoughts...

KID WEARING A TIE
Just get in the car.

The Stocky Teenager pushes Stan into the sedan. Hard.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Stan tumbles into the back seat, settles to see a serious .45 semiautomatic, inches from his face. In the passenger seat is a THIRD BLACK TEENAGER. Muscular. Menacing.

THIRD TEENAGER
Don't look at me, bitch!

Stan lowers his eyes.

The Kid with a Tie gets in the driver's seat. The stocky boy gets in the back, his gun aimed at Stan's side.

The doors LOCK. The car begins to roll.

Tense silence. Everyone's breathing hard from adrenaline and the cold. Stan can't stop swallowing.

The Lexus turns down Fifth Avenue.

For a moment, we see Stan through his car window -- small and terrified as million-dollar buildings wash over him.

The buff kid in the passenger seat hisses...

THIRD TEENAGER (CONT'D)
Give me yo wallet.

Stan does so without hesitancy. The boy goes through it.

Stan peeks up at him: he's tall, wearing matching leather jacket and leather Yankees cap. Earrings.

KID WEARING A TIE
Sen, you have his cash card.

THIRD TEENAGER
Right here, Lux.

SEN (16) hands a Chase bank card to LUCKY (18).

LUCKY
What's your name? Stanley?

STANLEY
Yes.

Lucky's accent is vaguely Southern; his speech, stilted, like he's trying hard to sound professional, albeit with the kind of professionalism formed in retail.

LUCKY
All right, Stanley, let me explain to you what's about to happen. I see you have an ATM card. Fine. What's your PIN number?

We watch Stan consider lying. Briefly.

STANLEY
Seven. Four. Seven. Four.

Lucky punches the number into green iridescent face of a cellular phone, nestled in the car's fancy cradle.

Stan dares to watch the boy's hands, oddly delicate.

LUCKY
Do you know what kind of car this is?

The question's bizarre since a large Lexus logo is etched into the seat back right in front of Stan.

STANLEY
It's a Lexus?

He answers like a game show contest unsure of the rules.

LUCKY
That's right. Now, do you have PIN number to get cash off any of your credit cards?

STANLEY
No. I'm sorry, I've never gotten any. The interest is like 24.8 percent.

LUCKY
Fine. Let me tell you what we're going to do. We are going to drive you to a cash machine and you are going to help us remove your money. Do you understand?

Lucky checks him in the rearview mirror. Stan nods.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
You are also going to keep your mouth shut. My affiliates here will be very unhappy if you do anything stupid.

STANLEY
(quickly; sincerely)
I'm not doing anything stupid. I want to fully cooperate here. It's just money.

LUCKY
Fine.

There's nothing left to say. Lucky sips from a HIP FLASK. They turn up 6th Avenue and ride in strange silence.

EXT. 6TH AVENUE - NIGHT

The Lexus moves among midnight traffic. Familiar store signs reflect off ominously tinted windows: Old Navy; Bed, Bath & Beyond; Barnes & Noble, etc.

EXT. 23RD STREET - NIGHT

The Lexus makes an U-turn, double parks at a Chase Bank with a brightly-lit, cash-machine vestibule.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Sen checks the vestibule. Empty. In the backseat, REN has his Tec 9 still on Stan, cranes to see out the back.

LUCKY

Stanley, what's that ATM number?

STANLEY

Seven. Four. Seven. Four.

Lucky checks his phone to make sure it matches. Stan is suddenly glad he didn't lie. *Okay, don't lie to them.*

LUCKY

What kind of funds do you have available?

STANLEY

Maybe two thousand dollars.

LUCKY

Do you have a savings account?

STANLEY

Yes.

LUCKY

How much is in there?

Stan hesitates again. *They can learn this with one call.*

STANLEY

About a hundred and ten thousand.

Lucky and Sen exchange a happy smirk.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I haven't invested it cause my dad's sick and I thought, I mean you never kn--

LUCKY

What do you do for living, Stanley?

STANLEY

Okay, well, you kinda picked the wrong guy.
(dramatic)
I'm an Assistant U.S. Attorney.

Lucky's reaction is unseen, but Stan's expecting more of an intimidated response than Sen's mock impressed...

SEN
Ooooh, he an attorney.

A beat. Lucky sips at his flask, considering, then checks the back of the bank card and dials a number.

LUCKY
What's your mother's maiden name?

STANLEY
Robins.

Everyone waits for Lucky to get a bank operator. Instead, he gets a voice-mail prompt to KEY IN the account number.

Then another prompt. And another prompt. Sen GRUNTS.

Another prompt. Another. Sen's ready to punch somebody.

Lucky holds up a finger as he gets a human.

LUCKY (ON THE PHONE)
Stanley Alpert...Manhattan...It's Robins...
I'm just fine. How are you?...I'd like to
transfer some money from my savings to my
checking...About a hun--fifty thousand
dollars...Yes...Yes...Sure...No...Correct
...Thank you...You have a good night, too.

He disconnects.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Stay in the car.

Lucky gets out of the car. A passing truck HONKS.

Stan watches him enter the bank, then turn to secure the door behind him, like's he's afraid of muggers. With the boss gone, Sen grows restless; he turns to study Stan.

Stan's careful not to look at him.

SEN
Give me yo watch.

Stan hands it forward -- he's anxious to be cooperative.

SEN (CONT'D)
This gold?

STANLEY
I dunno. My Dad gave it to me for finishing
law school. I couldn't really ask.

SEN
How about the ring?

STANLEY
Maybe. My Grandmother got it for me. She's
on a limited income so, I dunno, maybe not.

Stan glances up reflexively, to make sure the ambiguity
is not being read as resistance. Their eyes meet.

The .45 jerks right out at him.

SEN
Motherfucker! You got big eyes! I should
kill you for fuckin' big eyes!

Stan focuses on the floor again.

STANLEY
I'm not looking! Okay?! I'm not looking!

REN
Not in the Lexus, Sen.
(then)
Lucky said 'bout the Lexus.

SEN
Take off them fuckin' glasses!

Stan does so, hands shaking.

Sen pulls the gun back. He appraises the watch, concludes
its worthless, tosses it back into Stan's lap.

Stan's putting it back on as Lucky gets in the car -- now
masking extreme annoyance.

LUCKY
Stanley, do you have a thousand dollar
limit? I could only get eight hundred.

STANLEY
I think that's everybody's limit.

Lucky and Sen exchange another look. They clearly assumed
card limits didn't apply to the wealthy white guys.

Sen mutters to Lucky...

SEN
I garaun-fuckin'-tee you, Oprah Winfrey
ain't got no fuckin' limit.

STANLEY
No, actually, she probably does.

SEN
Motherfucker.

Sen turns to Stan, who keeps his eyes down and hands up.

STANLEY
It's a standard theft-protection device.

SEN
Oprah ain't got no fuckin' limit.

STANLEY
It's not a race thing.

Sen aims.

SEN
Oprah ain't got no fuckin' limit!

STANLEY
Okay. Yes. What you say.

A beat. Sen spits air and turns back around.

Lucky's thinking. He wants this man's money. Bad.

LUCKY
Do you have a car, Stanley?

STANLEY
No.

LUCKY
You have a hundred thousand dollars in the bank but you don't have a car?

STANLEY
Parking around here is six hundred a month.

LUCKY
Do you have a girlfriend?

STANLEY
No.

LUCKY
How old are you?

STANLEY
Thirty-eight.

LUCKY
Kids?

STANLEY
No.

LUCKY
Stanley, you're thirty-eight years old, and
you don't have a car and you're not married
and no girlfriend and no kids?

Stanley nods. He's trying hard to seem insignificant.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
What the hell have you been doing?!

Sen laughs. Ren does a reptilian snicker. Shy. Damaged.

Through his window, we watch Lucky study the bank's neon facade. The Chase logo obscures his face.

Lucky breathes deep, and makes a bad decision.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
All right, let me tell me what we're going to do. We're going to take you to a place we have to crash at, and keep you there, just for tonight. Tomorrow, we'll find a Chase drive-through someplace and withdraw fifty thousand from your account.

He glances back at Stanley again.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Do you understand?

Stan can only nod, too shocked, too petrified to speak.

EXT. WESTSIDE HIGHWAY - LOWER MANHATTAN - NIGHT

The Lexus disappears under the World Trade Towers, half its windows still burning bright at this late hour.

INT. LEXUS - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Lucky. Sen. Ren. But no Stan.

LUCKY
We need to buy some tape to tie him up.

SEN

I know a place off the BQE.

Sen looks warily over his shoulder. We see Stan's body is crunched into a fetal position on the backseat.

Lucky sips at his flask, turns the stereo up for privacy.

Rap rattles the car, ghetto style, an ode to thug life by TUPAC and TRICK DADDY called "Still Ballin'".

TUPAC

*Now, ever since a nigger was a seed, only
thing promised me was the penitentiary.*

We see Stan's been blindfolded with his own scarf.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

*Ridin' on these niggaz cause they lame. In
a six-one Chevy, still heavy in this game.*

CLOSER on Stan.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

Blame it on my momma, I'm a thug nigger.

STAN'S POV: He can see out the bottom of his scarf -- the car's interior is being strobed by tunnel lights.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

Up before the sunrise. Like a drug dealer.

We see a trip entirely from Stan's POV...

I/E TRAVELING MONTAGE - STAN'S POV - NIGHT

Images flash and float through imperfect darkness...

Ancient GRAFFITI on a retaining wall along the FDR.

TUPAC

*Ain't nobody love me as a broke nigger,
finger on the trigger.*

The PYLONS and CABLES of the Brooklyn Bridge.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

*I got shot but didn't die. Let 'em see
who's next to try.*

GAS STATION LIGHTS. The car's stopped. Still.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

*Did I cry? Hell, naw, nigga. Not a tear shed
except for all my homies in the pen, dead.*

(the chorus)

Still ballin'. Till the day I die.

A broken sign for CASH ADVANCE STORE.

TUPAC/TRICK DADDY

*You can bring your crew, but we remain
true, Motherfuckers.*

The car stopping beneath drooping TELEPHONE WIRES.

TUPAC/TRICK DADDY (CONT'D)

Still ballin'. Niggaz wonder why.

STAN'S FEET being pushed over a cracked sidewalk.

2PAC/TRICK DADDY

*You can bring your crew, but we remain
true, Motherfuckers.*

A poorly lit Foyer. The MAIL left in a pile, unsorted.

2PAC/TRICK DADDY (CONT'D)

Still ballin'. Still ballin'.

The faded TILE PATTERN of a tenement house Lobby.

TRICK DADDY

*I hope the Lord understand. When he's gone,
I devolve, become a dangerous man.*

A flight of creaky Stairs. A DEAD COCKROACH.

TRICK DADDY (CONT'D)

*Ain't crazy or deranged -- but when these
kids go to sprayin', boy, I be playin'.*

A metal apartment Door with STICKERS. Onyx. Wu Tang Clan.

TRICK DADDY (CONT'D)

*With clientele, any rhyme sells. Question
is, will you fuckin' niggaz ride for real?*

A dark Hallway strewn with CLOTHES.

2PAC/TRICK DADDY

Still ballin'. Till the day I die.

Dirty Living Room. Stan's shoe kicking a BEER BOTTLE.

2PAC/TRICK DADDY (CONT'D)
*You can bring your crew, but we remain
true, Motherfuckers.*

A FILTHY MATTRESS. Closer. Closer. Falling.

2PAC/TRICK DADDY (CONT'D)
Still ballin'. Niggaz wond--

MUSIC OUT COLD TO:

BLACK.

Heavy breathing.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE on Stan, blindfolded, winded, terrified. PULL back to see he's sitting on a mattress in a corner.

The three black teenagers hover over him.

LUCKY
Take your coat off.

Stanley struggles to remove his overcoat.

This holding room has little furniture, just three large and dirty MATTRESSES, an old DRESSER by the door, clothes strewn about, crumpled bags, a broken toy fire truck.

The Room, originally a dining room, extends into a living room, also empty but for trash and a STEREO on crates.

The windows onto the street haven't been cleaned in years and the overhead LIGHT above Stan is harsh.

Welcome to Stanley Alpert's new home.

REN
You want I should duct tape him?

LUCKY
Not yet.

We see the boys clearly for the first time...

Lucky's light-skinned, thin, unremarkable, a guy you'd rent a car from. Sen's dressed very street. Gold teeth. Ren's poor. His dirty clothes are almost comically baggy.

Lucky gestures for his men to back away. Sen sits on the mattress across the room; Ren, on one to Stan's right.

Lucky kneels, sips from his flask. Stan's all ears.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Would you like to know something I have a good knack for doing?

STANLEY

Yes. Okay. Sure.

LUCKY

Business. And what is it that businessmen do, Stanley? They take care of business. If you yell, or try to run, if you lie, mess with us in any way, I will have you killed.

Stan waves his hands to cut short this line of thought.

STANLEY

No, no, no, you'll get no problems from me.

LUCKY

I won't even be here when it happens. My affiliates do these things. I'll be in my home, in my bed, with my fiancee.

STANLEY

I'm gonna fully cooperate. I swear to you.

Lucky considers him. The blindfold makes Stan's sincerity impossible to gauge, but he is nodding slightly. Eager.

LUCKY

Fine.

He stands. Stan's got his hands balled up in the coat on his lap, hiding them, hoping Lucky will forget the tape.

After a few seconds,...

LUCKY (CONT'D)

I need to go see my girls working the clubs.
If he moves off that mattress, shoot him.

Stan's so anxious to please he nods like this a truly fine idea. Lucky exits. Stan can hear his footsteps recede down the hallway until the FRONT DOOR opens and closes.

A strange silence. Stan's not moving a muscle.

A gun's safety CLICKS.

STANLEY

Hello?

No response.

Another CLICK.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Guys?

Sen and Ren are on their mattresses, guns in hand, ready.

CLICK. CLICK.

CLICK. CLICK.

CLICK. CLICK.

It's a two-man orchestra of terror.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Do not fucking shoot me! Okay?! That would not be cool! Just be careful. Okay? Okay?

SEN

Shut up.

Quiet.

Then, another CLICK. Ren giggles.

This all the opening Stan needs...

STANLEY

If you guys would talk, I could help you.

REN

He said shut up.

A beat. Stan fidgets. Shifts his weight. Sighs. Too loud.

He just can't help himself...

STANLEY

Look, I'm gonna shut up. Okay? I am! But you guys should know banks have policies about releasing large sums of cash. They make you see the branch manager. Okay? You have to go inside, show your ID, fill in a lot of these forms. A branch manager has to see you!

He raises his palms. *That's all I wanted to say.*

No response.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Look, otherwise, tellers could all fake--

Sen RACKS the .45.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay.

A long beat.

Then,...

STANLEY (CONT'D)
See. I'm quiet.

FADE TO:

EXT. TENEMENT HOUSE - NIGHT

The apartment's dirty windows are brightly lit. The Lexus rolls to a stop across a quiet avenue.

INT. TENEMENT HOUSE LANDING - NIGHT

Hip flask in back pocket, Lucky comes up the stairs. He's busy going through the CARDS from STAN's WALLET. He finds his AMEX, slides it into his shirt pocket.

At the landing, he peers cautiously up to the floor above and moves quickly down to the apartment door. As he takes out his keys, he stops. Listens.

Lucky can hear hushed voices just inside the door.

Irritated, he unlocks it to find...

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sen and Ren are waiting for him, having a panicked chat a good fifty feet from their assigned position.

SEN
Yo, Lucky, it ain't like down South, man.

Lucky peers down toward The Room. Still. Normal.

SEN (CONT'D)

The drive-thru plan ain't gonna work! Ain't no bank gonna hand out that kinda cheddar in the motherfuckin' drive-thru!

REN

Fifty thousand won't go in they tubes!

Lucky's "affiliates" have been spooked. Stanley's clearly been trying to scare them into letting him go.

LUCKY

This isn't drug money, Ren. The bank will provide us new bills. C notes. In packs.

(managerial)

Bank money is thin. It has a crisp quality.

REN

What if they outta crispy?

SEN

Man, what if Stanley starts yellin' shit?!

LUCKY

Don't use his name. Not among ourselves.

Puzzled by the command, Sen snarls bemused defiance.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Use his name and you humanize him. Makes it harder to do what we have to do. Didn't you see "Silence of the Lambs"?

Sen throws his chin up. *Whatever.*

REN

Naw, he won't watch it.

SEN

I ain't down with eatin' people.

(defensive)

That shit's fucked up! I ain't puttin' that fuckin' trash in my motherfuckin' head!

Lucky rubs his face. *It's going to be a long night.*

LUCKY

Just stay in the room. Please.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Lucky enters to find Stan sitting just where he left him, only now there's an odd confidence to his posture.

LUCKY

What have you been doing in here, Stanley?

STANLEY

I'm just trying to help you guys. I swear.

Sen and Ren enter again, wary, weary.

LUCKY

I'm changing the plan. We're all going in your bank tomorrow morning. You'll withdraw the money with us standing near-by. Once we get outside, we'll let you go. Understood?

STANLEY

Yes. But, and I'm not being uncooperative in any way, but, honestly, I'm not 100% on the new plan. People are racist. Okay? They just are! They see three African-Americans come into a bank with a white guy, they start to ask questions. Not me. Okay? Personally, I just assume the white guy's the keyboardist.

He grins and waits. Nothing. The boys are in no mood for inter-racial jesting.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Look, all I'm saying is, let's do this safe.

SEN

He chock fulla this bullshit...

Lucky silences his henchman with a hand.

LUCKY

Stanley, do you really want to cooperate?

STANLEY

Yes. Absolutely.

SEN

Fuck that, Lux, he gonna talk! Nigga ain't shut up since we nabbed him!

LUCKY

No. He won't say anything. Because if he does...we're going to kill his Father.

A stunned beat.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
We'll kill him and then we'll kill his Dad.
We'll break every bone in his body.

CLOSE on Stan. Frozen. Silent. Breathing with his mouth open. He hears Lucky cross the room. A chair scoots.

Lucky sets it right in front of Stan. Sits.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Here's what I need. I need you to prove to me you're a team player-type person.
(then)
Tell me your Father's name and address.

Stan reels.

STANLEY
Lucky, I can't just--

SEN
What yo Daddy's name, Motherfucker?!

A long beat. Stan's doing the ugly math.

Finally, quietly,...

STANLEY
Benjamin. It's Benjamin Alpert.

LUCKY
Where does he live?

Stan won't say it. He keeps his head straight on Lucky, as if staring right at him through the blindfold.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Where does he live?

STANLEY
My Dad's seventy-seven-years old. Okay?! He has Parkinson's Disease. He's sick and--

SEN
Whoa! Whoa! Nobody here give a fuck?!

Lucky holds Stan's WALLET, taps it quietly, menacingly.

STANLEY
Brooklyn. Okay? He lives in Brooklyn.

LUCKY
We need an address, Stanley.

A horrible beat. Ren engages his weapon.

Stan has no choice...

STANLEY
Nine-Sixty-Two Ocean Parkway.

Lucky opens the wallet, takes out a RATTY BUSINESS CARD.

Benjamin Alpert
Cantor (SAG)
962 Ocean Parkway
Apt. 4N
Brooklyn, NY 11230

This is why Stan has no choice. He knows the card is in his wallet, but he can't know if Lucky has seen it.

LUCKY
I assume that's an apartment building.

Stan nods.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Well?

CLOSE on Stanley, trapped, stalling, miserable.

SEN
Yo, Bitch! Tell him the fuckin' number!

STANLEY
(barely audible)
3N.

Lucky runs his thumb over the spot on the card with the apartment number. It's 4N. Lucky doesn't react, just sits a moment, as if he sees in the card some part of himself.

Sen waves for his attention. *That the right address?*

Lucky nods. Lies.

LUCKY
(standing)
That's fine, Stanley.

Stan mutters something inaudible. Something unpleasant.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
I'll be back in a little while. I need to
make some calls.

Lucky checks around the room and notes the dirty windows. There's an old READING LAMP on the floor. He turns it on, then turns out the OVERHEAD LIGHTS.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
If he says another word...beat him.

Lucky tosses the wallet on the dresser and exits, leaving Stan to smolder with anger and guilt in near darkness.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Lucky gets in the driver's seat -- doesn't start the car. He rubs his face. Exhales. We realize he's afraid.

Across the sleepy avenue, he can see just the faint lamp glow within the apartment. He's not calling anyone.

He takes a STARBUCK'S CUP out of the cup-holder and pours the last half of a Latte into his hip flask.

He waits. Sips. Waits. Sips nervously.

A TAXI pulls up across the deserted avenue.

Lucky watches THREE TEENAGE HOOKERS, Lucite heels, puffy jackets, pile out and go in the tenement building.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, Stan checks his pulse. Sen and Ren wait on their respective mattresses. An INTERCOM BUZZES.

SEN
Make sure it ain't them niggaz upstairs.

Ren hawks as he goes.

Sen turns on the OVERHEAD LIGHT. Stan starts slightly at the warmth; his lips are tight and troubled.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ren opens the front door to three chatty girls of wildly varying sizes. The tallest has big hair and a child's voice. This is MYSTIC. She's the oldest (18). Maternal.

MYSTIC
Ooh, ooh, ooh. Cold out there, Sugar.

Mystic's followed by an icy Puerto Rican beauty, MERCEDES (15); she lit a cigarette in the stairwell.

MERCEDES
Taxi was sixteen dollars forty cent.

Mercedes is always thinking about money.

The last girl through the door is pudgy and dark-skinned. HONEY (16) has a quick scowl and a vulnerable sulk.

HONEY
Brooklyn taxi drivers is straight racist!

MYSTIC
They just afraid we gonna make 'em drive up in some bad part a town.

HONEY
Where the fuck you think we was?!

Ren gestures for the girls to listen but they're too used to ignoring him to notice.

HONEY (CONT'D)
They oughta pick us up, cause any place we goin' round here is shit.

MERCEDES
They oughta pick us up cause we hot.

REN
We got somethin' serious goin' on.

A beat. The girls peer suspiciously down toward The Room.

HONEY
Good serious or bad serious?

INT. THE ROOM - DAY

Stan's on edge. He can hear strangers trying to be quiet.

In the doorway, the three girls eye a rumbled, blindfolded and unhappy white man sitting on a mattress.

HONEY
Nu-uh, Nigga. No. No.

Honey stomps off. Sen waves for the others to come inside The Room. They do so, Mercedes and Mystic gawking.

SEN
Lookin' good, Mercedes. Whussup, Mystic?

MYSTIC
Hey, Sen. How...how y'all doin' tonight?

SEN
Crippin' and trippin'.

REN
This here Steve. He ain't allowed to talk.

SEN
His name Stanley, Ren.

Stan sorta half waves, both petulant and distressed.

MERCEDES
You askin' for it. Draggin' some businessman back here like he was nuthin'.
(still)
Taxi come to seventeen dollars.

Sen peels a TWENTY out of his wad. Makes her come get it.

SEN
How things out at the track?

MERCEDES
We did our job. Ain't yo business, anyhow.
We answer to Lucky, not you.

SEN
Don't forget, me and Ren is yo protection.
Where Honey go at? Yo! Honey!?

REN
She in her bedroom.

Tiny, fierce FOOTSTEPS approach. Honey stays at the door.

HONEY
Is ya'll ordinary stupid?! I ain't stayin'!
I'ma go sit in MacDonald's! Fuck y'all!

REN
You ain't goin' nowhere.

HONEY
Nigga, please, don't tell me what to do!

Stan's got his head bowed -- the play of his eyebrows the only thing to tell us he's following every single word.

HONEY (CONT'D)
This 'posed to be my fuckin' crib!

Sen gestures her closer for a tete-a-tete. He's over near Stan. She refuses. He waves again. *C'mon. C'mon.*

She sighs big and goes to him. They stand close. Whisper.

HONEY (CONT'D)
Why you doin' this for, Sen?

SEN
Real niggas keep real shit real. Ain't no studio gangstas up in here. We puttin' work in, Baby. Gettin' paid. Thug life. Shit.

There's history between them.

CLOSE on Stan. He can hear but is careful not to react.

SEN (CONT'D)
Why you wanna disrespect my gangsta?

HONEY
You gonna get us all served.

SEN
Don't think negative, baby. When you think negative is when you get caught.
(solicitous)
So, what? You not gonna stay here with me?

She considers, looks around. There's something about the white man so close, pretending not to listen.

She lowers her voice still further...

HONEY
No. Not tonight. Maybe later.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Lucky sees Honey come out of the their building and head out into the cold night. *What the hell's going on now?*

LUCKY
Shit.

He checks his watch, caps his flask, and gets out.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Stan's jittery, senses they're all staring at him. No one dares speak. It's makes him feel infuriatingly naked.

Lucky enters, having come in with surprising stealth.

LUCKY
Everything all right? Where's Honey?

Stan starts a little at that voice's sudden appearance.

MYSTIC
Out. She said we all gettin' accessorized.

Sen shrugs. Lucky absorbs the scene and kneels in front of Stan, who makes a show of turning away. When Lucky starts to adjust the blindfold, Stan jerks his head back.

Stan hisses, sotto, at his breaking point,...

STANLEY
Fuck you if you hurt my Dad. I'll hunt you down like fucking cockroach!

LUCKY
Pull yourself together, Stanley. Every time a negro takes a couple bills off you people, you act like there's been a genocide.
(simply)
It's America. There's crime. Deal with it.

He gives Stan's leg an avuncular pat. Stands.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Who's hungry?

MYSTIC
I'm hungry but I ain't hungry hungry.
(then)
Can we get the cracker somethin'?

LUCKY
Sure.

SEN
Stanley, man, we gettin' McDonald's.

All eyes go to Stan. He makes them wait.

STANLEY
I thought I wasn't allowed to speak.

SEN
Damn, Nigga, just say what you want!

STANLEY
Nothing.

MYSTIC
How 'bout somethin' to drink?

Their insistence undercuts his righteous petulance.

STANLEY
I wouldn't be comfortable eating or
drinking right now. Thank you.

A collective shrug.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mercedes and Mystic follow Lucky toward the front door, where he puts an arm around Mercedes.

LUCKY
You go ahead. I've got a business meeting.
I need to talk with Mystic before I go.

MERCEDES
Fuck that! Drive me over! Talk in the Lexus!

Mystic sashays off down a Side Hallway.

MYSTIC
Stop at the A-rabs for my News, Sugar. And
get extra napkins. We outta toilette paper.

Lucky holds up a TWENTY. Mercedes snatches it, peeved.

LUCKY
It's two blocks.

She exits out the front door. SLAM!

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lucky jiggles the broken lock, now agitated. Mystic sits on the tub in her underwear, considers her arms.

MYSTIC
You think I'm gettin' ashy?
(no response)
It smell like hot dog water in here.

Lucky gives up on the door. He undoes his belt and pants.

MYSTIC (CONT'D)
You wanna come on my face or tits?

LUCKY
No! No. Jesus. Just do it normal.

Scowling, he knocks away a pair of PANTIES drying on the towel rack as Mystic goes to work on him below.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Eating sounds.

Stan has his hands tucked under his armpits, bounces his heels in anxious rhythm. His body's starting to revolt.

Sen and Ren's devour food on their respective mattresses.

Mystic lies on her stomach in the middle of the room like a 50's teenager, reads the DAILY NEWS under the lamp.

Mercedes has her meal spread out on a windowsill. Smokes.

MERCEDES
What his name again?

REN
Steven.

Stanley waits for Ren to be corrected.

When nobody does...

STANLEY
My name's Stanley. Okay? Hurt me if you want but get my name right! Stanley. Or Stan.

He half-expects Sen to fly at him in a rage.

Instead...

SEN
Steven was last night, Ren.

Stan's ears perk up.

STANLEY
Steven? What happened to Steven?

SEN
That's enough. Stan.

Snickers.

Mercedes leaves her roost to get a Snapple out of a brown paper bag on the dresser, steps over to the prisoner.

MERCEDES
Here. I got you a Snapple at the A-rabs.

STAN'S POV: hands with ghetto nails place a PEACH SNAPPLE on the floor between his feet. He hesitates. Grabs it.

He gulps it down. Quick. Thirsty. They all watch him.

STANLEY
(wiping his mouth)
Thank you.

Mystic has found something in the paper...

MYSTIC
Some nigga jacked a Neon with a baby in the back. You know that a mistake -- no brother takin' no baby, less'n a judge say so.
(laughs)
I'm serious! Watch Maury! Please, Niggaz.

The food's relaxing the kids.

MYSTIC (CONT'D)
Y'all look for a boy baby in a red Neon. I hope he don't die. That a double tragedy. Cause a his soulmate and all. There's a girl baby God done picked out as that boy baby soulmate. Everybody got a soulmate. Waitin' since the beginnin' a time. This boy baby soulmate, she gonna go her whole life lookin', even with her one true love dead. She'll be all lonely and in a bad relationship and not know a damn thing why!

Stan TITTERS nervously. Since he's the only one to laugh, everyone looks over. Mystic's pleased to be entertaining.

REN
What if that boy baby gay?

MYSTIC
Gays got soulmates, Sugar.

SEN
Fuck that ignorant shit.

MYSTIC
What do you think, Stanley?

Stan opens his mouth.

REN
We ain't supposed to talk to him.

MERCEDES
He in the fuckin' room!

SEN
Everybody just shut the fuck up!

Stan closes his mouth. The room goes quiet again.

Mystic holds up a PHOTO of Arafat.

MYSTIC
Looky, Ren. This man a Muslim. Like you.

REN
I ain't decided if I a Muslim yet.

MYSTIC
Well, you best get on it.

Stan smirks -- he's starting to like this girl.

SEN
Aight. Let's do it.

Without comment, Mystic stands and turns off the OVERHEAD LIGHT. Mercedes comes from the window to Sen's mattress.

CLOSE on Stan. *They're gonna kill me? Now? Why? A smirk?*

He stiffens. His breathing goes shallow.

A small CLICK. Deep inhale. Exhale. Stan sniffs the air.

Stan deflates. Sen's smoking a JOINT. He hands it up to Mercedes. She brings it over to Mystic. Ren's last.

SEN (CONT'D)
How 'bout some weed, Stanley?

REN
Yeah, how 'bout some smoke, Stanley.

The boys chuckle.

STANLEY
No, thanks. I'm good.

Stan chuckles, too. *This couldn't get any weird.*

SEN
Shit is smooth. Damn. Damn! Mercedes, why
don't you bring that biscuit over here?

MYSTIC
We need condoms, Sugar.

Stan FREEZES. What?

MERCEDES
Ain't nobody gettin' no blow job or nuthin'
without a fuckin' condom.

MYSTIC
Honey maybe got some.

Stan's mortified as HEELS clack off down the hallway.

Just as he's formed a polite protest...

SEN
Hey, Ren, where Ramos at?

REN
Ain't been home all night.

SEN
Man, that jumpy nigga need Prozac. He
steady trippin'. Like a Jack Russell.

Ren snickers. Heels return.

MYSTIC
She gonna know these two missin', Y'all.
(then)
Get them baggies off, Ren.

Ren grabbles to pull his pants down while sitting. As Sen does the same, Mercedes spits in her hand.

PUSH in on Stan. Embarrassed. Dry swallowing.

Across The Room, he starts to hear gurgling and clucking; then, next to him, rhythmic swishing.

REN (O.S.)
That good?

MYSTIC (O.S.)
You fine, Sugar. Get you some.

The swishing intensifies. Stan opens his mouth to speak for a third time, but now has NO idea what to say.

We leave him -- a man blindfolded, sitting on a mattress in a suit, surrounded by a chorus of sex.

FADE TO:

EXT. TENEMENT HOUSE - HOUSE

The apartment's windows are mostly dark. Distant gunfire.

SEN'S VOICE
You prayed yet, Stanley?

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Stan's startled by the question; he was feeling his chest to check his heartbeat. He's becoming hypochondriacal.

STANLEY
Oh. No.

SEN
You believe in God?

STANLEY
Yes.

SEN
You Jewish?

Stan hesitates. The Room's air is sluggish. Post-coital.

STANLEY
Yes, I'm Jewish.

MYSTIC
Do Jews believe in God?

STANLEY
Yes. They do.

Stan's voice is tentative, this sort of conversation does not generally end well. Then, surprisingly,...

SEN

That's cool. I like Jews. Jews and Blacks the same. You shoulda told us you a Jew. We wouldn'ta grabbed yo white ass.

REN

Hey, what you 'posed to be doin' tomorrow?

STANLEY

A lot of meetings. People in my office will be looking for me. You guys probably should think about that. Then at night, my friends are all expecting me at a concert. For...

(realizing)

Terrific. Perfect...Tomorrow's my birthday.

SEN

No, it ain't!

Stan nods, gloomy. *Yeah, it is.*

SEN (CONT'D)

Shit! We grabbed a nigga on his birthday!

This fact elicits sleepy mirth.

SEN (CONT'D)

Happy Birthday, Stanley.

STANLEY

Yeah. Thanks.

They take turns wishing him sleepy Happy Birthdays. Stan's forced to thank each individually. It takes awhile.

SEN

Yo, we gotta get you a gift, man! Right, Ren? How 'bout a birthday blow job?

STANLEY

Thanks, but...I'd rather not.

REN

You don't like black girls?

STANLEY

I'm just not feeling very horny right now. Maybe it was the Snapple. Thanks.

SEN

You gotta get somethin'.

REN
Yeah. Somethin'.

STANLEY
Then take this blindfold off. Okay? Just put a lamp on my face -- I won't be able to see behind it. I can't stay like this. My heart keeps racing. I have a weak heart. I mean, okay, it's not been formally diagnosed, but they made me wear the monitor. Once. Look, I just don't wanna have a heart attack. Okay?

Ren scoffs like Stan's crazy.

Sen gets up, comes over, stands over Stan. He gets on one knee and stares right at him, menacingly close.

Stan can feel his breath.

MERCEDES
You a dumbass, Sen.

Sen grabs the reading lamp, scrapes it closer, turns the shade up, directly on Stan like an interrogation light.

SEN
Happy Birthday.

Sen backs into the dark again.

SEN (CONT'D)
Aight. Take it off.

Stan gingerly removes the blindfold. Blinks. Adjusts.

He's very careful NOT to look up.

STANLEY
Thank you.

SEN
How many fingers I holdin' up?

STANLEY
No, Sen, if it's all the same, I'd rather not even try. Let's not risk it. Okay?

Sen racks his 45.

SEN
I said, "How many?"

Stan just shakes his head.

SEN (CONT'D)
Motherfucker, how many?!

Stan looks briefly into the dark.

STANLEY
I can't tell.

SEN
How many?

STANLEY
I can't make out fingers.

Sen's voice is suddenly full of inexplicable rage...

SEN
What'd we tell you 'bout lyin', Bitch?! How
many motherfuckin' fingers am I holdin' up
on my motherfuckin' hand?!
(no response)
I'ma count five! One.

STANLEY
My pupils haven't adjusted--

SEN
Two!

STANLEY
C'mon, Sen. Please. This--

SEN
Three!

STANLEY
Look, I promise, I can't--

SEN
Four!

Sen's gun catches a glint of light as it's aimed at Stan.

Stan screams into the dark...

STANLEY
I can't fucking see you!

Utter silence. CLICK.

SEN
I know that.

Ren snickers. Everyone chuckles. Tension deflates. Sen sits back on his mattress against the wall.

Then, from the darkness across the room,...

SEN (CONT'D)
Ain't nuthin' wrong with yo heart.

CUT TO:

CLOSE on name on a credit card: **Stanley Alpert**.

An impression roller loudly WIPES the screen.

INT. SUPERSTORE - NIGHT

The massive place is open all night. In the electronics section, Lucky buys a computer with Stan's card.

The SALESMAN (38), white, pot-bellied, dingy button-down, takes the card out of the machine to examine it.

Lucky doesn't seem at all nervous, he's busy looking at the cell phones under the glass counter.

SALESMAN (O.S.)
You country-ass quadroon fuck.

The Salesman's clearly a friend. Of sorts. Lucky looks up to see him holding the credit card with his finger on the business name, right under Stan's.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
What the fuck does that say?

The card's issued to the...

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
Department of Justice? Tell me that's some nigger record label. Please. Tell me that.

Lucky doesn't have to answer.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
You jacked a fuckin' Federale?!

The importance of Stan's employer now descends on Lucky.

Finally, he nods.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
There tape of you using this?

There is. The ATM machine.

LUCKY
Shit!

The Salesman grunts. Staring at Lucky hard, he yanks out his own shirttail, starts wiping his prints off the card.

Then, forcing himself to find patience,...

SALESMAN
You listening, asshole?

LUCKY
Yeah.

SALESMAN
The FBI has to get involved with crimes committed against federal employees. I'm not gonna ask -- and I sure as shit don't wanna know -- if you touched this man.

The Salesman holds the card up by a shirttail.

Lucky takes it back.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
You don't fucking know me.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Late. Quiet.

In the LAMP's glare, Stan wakes. Remembers his situation.

STAN'S POV: Vague forms in the dark around him seem to be asleep. Mercedes is curled on Sen's mattress. Mystic lies on a make-shift bed of rags. Ren's lump on his mattress.

Stan's alone. He glances furtively toward the door. Open. A light out in the Main Hallway leaks into The Room.

CLOSE on Stan. He's pondering a dangerous idea.

Gingerly, he lifts himself and scoots down the mattress, closer to the exit. Again. And again. And again.

He reaches the corner of his safety island, considers the short distance. Prepares himself. Stops breathing.

Now. Stand. Go.

Stan doesn't have the courage. The ugly fact descends on him like sad news. Every muscle in his body goes slack.

Then, somewhere deep in the apartment, a DOOR SLAMS.

Someone's moving around out in the halls. Stan starts to quickly slide back toward his spotlight.

Just as he gets into position,...

SEN
(groggy)
Ramos come home yet?

Silence. No one seems to know.

FOOTSTEPS approach.

SEN (CONT'D)
Ren!

Ren grunts, locks, loads.

The DOOR OPENS. We recognize Honey's form as she comes in searching for something, rifles through dresser drawers.

MYSTIC
You not find a place to stay, Sugar?

SEN
Where yo panties at, Girl?

Stan can barely make out that the bottom half of a short, heavy girl indeed appears naked.

HONEY
That's what I'ma fuckin' find out!
(Ren snickers)
Y'all can suck my dick.

She leaves. Their DOOR SLAMS shut. Everyone's awake now.

The interruption has made Sen antsy...

SEN
Yo, Ren? Maybe we should go over to Stan's 'partment and get his check book.

MYSTIC
They got doormen in Ma'hattan, Sugar.

Stan stares off at nothing, doesn't seem to have heard.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Honey finds her panties among the trash on the floor.

HONEY
...goddamn...

She turns and stops COLD. Floating in the toilette are two condoms, recently used, probably hers.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Stan's perfectly still, lost in despondent thoughts. *I'm a fool and a coward. I'll be in this room forever.*

So, he starts a bit when the DOOR BANGS OPEN.

Honey holds up her panties.

HONEY
Who threw my clean panties on the bathroom floor?! I wanna know?! Who threw my goddamn panties on the goddamn floor?! This here's my house! You hear?! Mine!

No one responds, which deflates her only slightly.

HONEY (CONT'D)
I'ma find out. And I'ma fuckin' chuck you!

She goes. The DOOR SLAMS.

Calm descends.

SEN
Guess you don't hafta worry 'bout none of this shit, huh, Stan?

STANLEY
Sorry. What?

SEN
We takin' yo money and all. You make that paper back, no sweat. Mr. Trench Coat. It's why we nabbed you. We was lookin' to roll some Fifth Avenue nigga in a trench coat.

STANLEY
I live in the East Village.

SEN

We got nuthin', man. We doin' this to eat.

STANLEY

Okay.

SEN

Rich cracker like you ain't got no worries. Not like us. Cops fuck with a nigga if'n he walk down the street. Motherfuckin' Five-0 always bustin' heads! And for what? You the attorney. Why they steady stressin' us?

In the glare of the light, Stan can feel enquiring eyes.

A switch inside Stan flips...

STANLEY

I dunno. Except maybe for the weed. And the illegal weapons possession. Maybe the armed robbery? The whole...kidnapping thing. Bank fraud. Extortion. It's profiling, I guess.

Ooohs. Aaahs.

MERCEDES

Snap!

In the dark, we see Sen can't help a sheepish grin -- he loves being cast the criminal entrepreneur.

SEN

Fuck you. I do this shit to survive. You got shit handed to you. Opportunities.

STANLEY

I made opportunities.

He has their attention. In the dark beyond him, they seem to wait for the white man's secrets to success.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I had serious problems growing up, too.

SEN

Yeah? What?

Stan hesitates.

STANLEY

My parents divorced. When I was twelve.

Silence.

Then a WAVE of derisive laughter.

SEN
Ooooh! This cracker come up hard!

MERCEDES
Dumbass.

MYSTIC
Sugar, I don't even know my Daddy's name!

REN
Po-lice took my Momma when I was ten. I come up with the ladies in my buildin', hidin' me from Child Services and shit.

MERCEDES
Please, Nigger! My mom's a crack whore! She always draggin' in some greasy-dick fien'. And he be in her room slappin' her like she stole somethin'. You know what I be doin? I be in my bed, thinkin', "Good!" Thinkin', "Don't feel so hot, do it, Momma?!" That before I get old enough bang on the damn wall and yell, "Kick her ass, Motherfucker! Go on! Bust her lip and I'ma suck you off!"

Sen and Ren lose it. *This girl's hard!* Sen likes her last line so much that he repeats it. Twice.

MYSTIC
That just sad, D.

STANLEY
Okay. Okay. Fine. The cracker's an idiot.
(fishing)
What's your story, Sen?

SEN
Fuck that. I don't talk 'bout my peoples.
Never have. Never will.

There's shame in his voice. And finality.

The calm returns.

SEN (CONT'D)
Hey, Stanley?

STANLEY
Yeah?

SEN

What would I get for you if we was caught?

Stan stalls; this is the last subject he wants discussed.

MYSTIC

Y'all abducted him, that be ten to twenty
right there!

SEN

Yo, straight up, what they give me?

STANLEY

(carefully; honestly)

It depends on how you end this. I mean, you
know, what happens from here on.

SEN

Aight.

STANLEY

If you do the right thing, I can talk to
them. Should the need ever arise.

MERCEDES

Tell 'em I got you a Snapple. I got you the
Snapple and I don't want no damn prison.

SEN

Prison don't scare me. Three hots and a cot
-- I don't give two rats fuckin'.

In the lamp light, Stan smiles empathy. A delicate beat.

REN

Yo, Stanley?

STANLEY

Yeah, Ren?

REN

When we let you go, you goin' to the cops?

CLOSE on Stan. The question of course is deadly. The kids
all watch him consider it. He takes his sweet time.

Finally, casually,...

STANLEY

No.

(then)

You guys seem pretty cool.

The DOOR OPENS again.

SEN
Fuck, Honey--

LUCKY
What the hell is goin' on?!

Lucky stands in the doorway.

Sen jumps up, nervous, covering.

SEN
Yo, Lux. Hey, man. How's it goin'?

Lucky simply turns, goes down the hall. Sen follows. We HOLD on Stan, head down, eyes askance, watching.

INT. SIDE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lucky paces. He waits with Sen around the corner from the Main Hallway (the Side Hallway leads to a KITCHEN).

A TV is playing off in one of the bedrooms.

Ren hurries around the corner, hands Lucky Stan's WALLET.

REN
His card say "Assistant Federal Attorney".

SEN
See? He just the assistant.

LUCKY
The FBI will come after us.

SEN
He ain't seen our faces.

LUCKY
They have video of me from the ATM!

SEN
So? They don't know you, Lux. You ain't got no record. Not even back in Virginia.

Lucky's patrician control is quickly fraying.

LUCKY
This isn't snatching chains at the mall!
This isn't NYPD! This is the FBI! They'll put my picture on the news, Sen! Shit!

SEN

Aight. Aight. How you wanna carry this?

LUCKY

Can you do whatever I need you to do?

SEN

Let the dog outta the cage, he gonna bite.

LUCKY

Fine.

Lucky can't look at them.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

It's nobody's fault. This guy just got caught in a...tragedy-type situation.

Sen and Ren get VERY uncomfortable.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

We'll dump him in the park. I'll go to the police. Report I was jacked last night by two black males. They made me drive into Manhattan, forced me to withdraw money from an ATM machine. I assumed they didn't want to be videotaped using the card. When I asked what happened to the owner...they told me to mind my own fucking business.

SEN

What'd them two black males look like?

LUCKY

Like the gentlemen upstairs.

Ren and Sen like this part of the plan. Knock fists.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

When the FBI investigates, sees the tape, I just stick to my story. "They killed that man? Oh my God, that could've been me!"

MERCEDES (O.S.)

You better deal real with his DNA.

Mercedes lurks at the corner, eavesdropping.

LUCKY

Mercedes...Go watch Stanley, please.

REN

Yo, Lucky, don't use his name.

SEN
Niggerachi, do me a favor and shut up!

Sen pushes Mercedes away.

She goes, hands up in ironic compliance. Having a witness douses the plan with a little cold water.

SEN (CONT'D)
I dunno, Lux.

LUCKY
What?

SEN
I'm down for mine. You slippin' in my hood,
you gonna get done dirty.
(however)
We brung this man up in here.

Lucky's face says he doesn't know why this should matter.

SEN (CONT'D)
Stan's tight, Lux. We been hangin' with him
all night. He sayin' some diesel shit.

Sen looks to Ren for support.

Instead, he gets...

REN
I'll do it if Sen won't.

Lucky and Sen stare in disbelief a moment. Finally, Sen takes his .45 out with an aggravated *pfiff*.

SEN
I ain't shootin' this motherfucker cold.

INT. HONEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Honey lays on her mattress and watches an ACTION MOVIE on a tiny TV/VCR combo. It's a bootleg, filmed off someone's TV -- we can hear a DRYER clunking on the sound-track.

Mystic comes in, curls up in bed beside her, looking off.

MYSTIC
Sen and them gonna kill that white man.

Honey takes this without reaction.

MYSTIC (CONT'D)
 In the bathroom.
 (then)
 We all gotta help wipe up.

Honey just watches the movie.

And we hear a bunch of men suddenly yell...

SCREAMING MEN
Wu Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with!

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

The WU TANG CLAN plays on the stereo. Loud. Very loud.

WU TANG CLAN
Wu Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with!

Stan's blindfolded again, wincing at the music. He can't see that Lucky, Ren and Mercedes stand over him. Over at a window, Sen does a line of COCAINE to pump himself up.

Finally, Sen takes out his gun and nods to Ren. *Let's go!*

REN
 Stanley, you need the bathroom?!
 (he doesn't)
 You had a Snapple!

Stan shakes his head again.

The kids exchange unsure looks. *Now what?*

WU TANG CLAN
Wu Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with!

Lucky leans down to the prisoner.

LUCKY
 Go to the toilet! I gotta leave! They can't let you use it when I'm not here!

Stan nods, accommodating. *Yeah. Okay. Whatever.*

Lucky helps him up.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
 The boys will cover you!

Mercedes takes his hand. Ren pokes the Tec 9 in his back. Feeling it, Stan walks with his hands raised.

WU TANG CLAN
 (Rza's Verse)
*Tossin' and flossin', my style is awesome! I
 cause more family feuds than Richard Dawson!*

The murderous entourage leaves The Room.

WU TANG CLAN (CONT'D)
And the survey said...You dead!

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mercedes leads. Stan takes blind man steps.

WU TANG CLAN
*Fatal flying guillotine chops off your
 fuckin' head!*

Lucky glances over at Sen, who's trying to move with the song, trying to force his adrenaline to take over.

INT. HONEY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mystic's facing the wall. Through a crack in her door, Honey can see the gang pass by out in the hall.

INT. SIDE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mercedes leads Stan around the corner...Ren's gun at his back...Sen behind them, ready breathing.

Lucky stops at the front door, looks back to the MUSIC, looks to the ceiling, does a truncated WHISTLE.

Sen's heard it, comes back to give Lucky his ear.

LUCKY
 The music isn't enough! Don't shoot until
 he flushes! Use the flush!

Sen nods without meeting his eyes. Lucky hangs back, then with a glance to Honey's room slips out the front door.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mercedes leads Stan through -- he bumps into the table.

REN
 Watch yo'self.

A door off the kitchen opens onto the infamous...

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mercedes helps Stan step over a rise for the tile.

MERCEDES

We gonna stand in the door. Go straight.

Stan uses his right foot to probe the junky floor.

MERCEDES (CONT'D)

You there.

Stan feels down for the toilette bowl. Finds it. Unzips.

Sen quickly moves into position. Mercedes watches his gun rise beside her, puts her fingers in her ears.

Sen aims. Steadies his pistol hand. Ren watches.

SEN'S POV: The .45 barrel moves from Stan's head to the toilette tank chain, dangling in front of him.

But there's a problem...

Stan can't pee. We see him holding it. Nothing.

STANLEY

Sorry, guys. I'm a little stressed, okay.

(then)

Give me a minute.

They wait. Distant music.

Nothing.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

It's like Paruresis. That disease where you can't pee around other people.

REN

Go on and piss.

STANLEY

I'm trying! Just back off. Let me relax.

Nothing.

Stan rambles to calm himself...

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I knew a guy in high school, Dave Goldfarb, he had this. Bad. He couldn't even pee in the building. His parents got him a van so he could go out and do it in a jug. Weird thing is he had no problem taking a dump right in front of you. His family had like some nutty open bathroom policy. He'd wipe and everything. Gross. The sounds.

Sen gives Ren a brutal look. *Do somethin', Motherfucker!*

REN

You gotta hurry, Stanley.

STANLEY

You're only making it worse.

They wait. Sen's gritting his teeth, steeling his will.

Nothing.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I don't know how they found out, but Senior Prank Week, somebody shoe-polished his van: "If this van's a leakin', don't come a peekin'!" His folks made him change schools.

Sen's had enough. Lowers his weapon. Leaves.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sen sits at the table, peeved, tosses the gun down.

MERCEDES (O.S.)

Fuck, Cracker!

STANLEY (O.S.)

I'm doing my best here! Okay?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Everyone waits. They have no other choice.

Then, unbelievably,...

STANLEY

I heard he got better. His Mom told my Mom he'd joined a support group. They'd all go out to the mall and drink coffee -- then go together in the men's room and try to pee.

INT. TENEMENT HOUSE LANDING - NIGHT

Lucky waits for the shot. Checks his watch. Worries.

INT. HONEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Honey and Mystic also listen, ignoring the movie.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sen's coming down. Sweats.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Stan, still holding his penis, still rambling,...

STANLEY

I saw them once. Maybe. Dave was at a table in the food court with four other guys. No one was really talking. He looked kinda sad.

A trickle.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Here we go.

The trickle becomes a STREAM.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Yes!

(then)

Wow. Okay. That was scary.

In the doorway, Ren hisses for Sen to come back. *Hurry!*

Sen appears again, takes up his position.

Mercedes stands beside him, fascinated, like a little kid watching a big brother set off fireworks.

Sen aims, creeps closer.

All we hear is piss and the muffled...

WU TANG CLAN

Wu Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with!

The barrel's inches from Stan's temple. Mercedes winces.

The urine stream dies. Stan turns cocks his head as if he senses something. It's not entirely clear he'll flush, he turns away, remembers...reaches for the flusher.

MERCEDES
It's a chain.

Stan feels along the wall, finds it.

He yanks the old wooden handle down.

The FLUSH is deafening.

Sen can't pull the trigger.

He simply spins and pushes roughly past Mercedes and Ren.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

WU TANG CLAN
Wu Tang Clan ain't nothin' to fuck with!

Lucky is just peeking in the apartment as Sen comes down the Side Hallway and heads for The Room.

INT. HONEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Honey watches Sen, then Lucky, hurry past her door. She mutters something inaudible. *Fools.*

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Sen storms in and slams the MUSIC OFF. Soaking. Nauseous.

Lucky's a few steps behind.

LUCKY
What happened?!

Sen points the gun at Lucky to shut him up, his eyes wild with coke and confusion. He lowers the weapon.

SEN
You do it.

He holds the .45 out for Lucky by the barrel.

A nervy beat. Ren enters.

SEN (CONT'D)
Take it! Go on! You do it!

Lucky doesn't. He can't kill either. Not here. Not now.

Ren calmly takes the gun out of Sen's hand. Quietly, he puts his Tec 9 on the dresser, takes a ratty pillow off Sen's mattress and exits.

Lucky and Sen exchange a incredulous look.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ren raises the pistol at a hipster angle. The effect is adolescent, uncool, scary. This kid will shoot.

Around the corner, Mercedes and Stan shuffle closer.

MERCEDES (O.S.)
We goin' right. Not yet. Not yet.

He'll have kill the white man right here in the hall. Ren wraps the pillow over the .45 as a dampener.

MERCEDES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Aight.

Stan's out-stretched arms appear around the corner...

THWACK!

A NUNCHUCK whacks Ren's skull. He flies against the wall.

Honey's sucker-slammed him.

HONEY
Who you think you are?! Huh?! Who?!

She holds a old pair of beaten and taped "chucks".

Ren can't answer, checks his forehead for blood, cuts his eyes back to where...Mercedes holds Stan at the corner.

THWACK!

Honey hits him again, awkwardly, clipping his skull this time but nailing the collar bone.

REN
Owww! Fuck. Bitch!

Stan waits in for the commotion, perplexed.

HONEY
This is my goddamn house!

She raises her makeshift whip to chuck Ren again -- he holds his hands up, the .45 angled impotently.

HONEY (CONT'D)
This is my house! This is my house!

LUCKY (O.S.)
Cut it out!

Lucky and Sen watch from down inside The Room.

Honey spins to them, near tears,...

HONEY
You here on my say so! I let you stay in my place! Mine! This the only place I got!

No one knows what to say. Silence.

The downstairs BUZZER sounds. Three quick bursts.

A beat. Looks.

LUCKY
It's Ramos.

Honey goes back into her bedroom and SLAMS the door. Ren turns to Lucky, who gestures for him just bring Stan back into The Room. Embarrassed, he drags Stan by the collar.

STANLEY
Careful. I have the weak heart thing.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Ren and Mercedes bring Stan in and set him down. Lucky nods for Ren to go deal with the arriving Ramos.

Sen and Lucky's eyes meet. Sen looks away, ashamed.

Lucky considers their prisoner. Rubs his face. Concedes.

LUCKY
Stanley, I've got some good news for you. I'm going to come back in a few hours, at nine AM, and we'll drive you back to your neighborhood and drop you off.

STANLEY

Thank you. That's smart, Lucky. I mean it.

Lucky gives Sen a withering glance.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

You're making a sound business decision.

INT. SIDE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The front door opens and jittery LUIS RAMOS (22) enters.

Ramos is a wiry Haitian with a wisp of a mustache and old black-framed glasses and work sores on his hands.

Ren waves for him in the kitchen. Ramos grows suspicious.

LUIS RAMOS

Yo, son, I ain't carryin' no cheese, man.

Ramos steps closer, peers into his bedroom.

REN

C'mere, Ramos. Nobody tryin' to rob you.

LUIS RAMOS

Then why you actin' faggy?!

Lucky comes up behind -- he's in no mood for Luis Ramos.

LUCKY

Calm down, Luis.

LUIS RAMOS

Yo, yo, what the fuck goin' down, Homes?!

LUCKY

You shouldn't be here today.

LUIS RAMOS

Why?

Lucky doesn't want to tell him. Ramos is a quick panic.

RAMOS

Tell me! Tell me, yo, tell me, son! I'm the landlord, yo. Fuckin' tell me!

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Mercedes smokes. Sen nurses his pride. They both turn to watch Luis Ramos peek in with elaborate stealth.

Stan's back on the mattress, still blindfolded. He's more relaxed now, knowing he's soon to be released.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY

Ramos tip-toes back to Lucky and Ren by the front door.

LUIS RAMOS

Yo, yo, yo! Is Y'all niggas crazy?! Y'all wildin', now! All that hooka shit, sellin' girls and shit, now you kidnap a cracker?!

LUCKY

He's giving us fifty thousand dollars.

LUIS RAMOS

Oh, fuck!

This stops his protest cold.

LUIS RAMOS (CONT'D)

Yo, you gotta to bust me down, Lucky.

(then)

Bust me down, yo. Five hundred. Do what y'all gotta do, just don't put my name on it. Bust me down, yo. For real.

Lucky turns back The Room. Thinks. Wonders.

LUCKY

Fine. But I may need your help.

Ramos nods. Lucky leaves the apartment.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Lucky gets the car. He's still holding Stan's WALLET. He throws it on the dashboard, harder than is necessary.

He rubs his face. *Shit! Shit!*

Then, with one final glance at the apartment windows, he starts the Lexus and pulls away.

FADE TO:

INT. THE ROOM - DAY

Early light beams through dirty windows. Stan's still on his mattress. Listening. Seagulls. A BUS passes.

He collects himself -- uses the end of his blind fold to wipe his forehead; runs a hand over his hair; sniffs his underarms, pulls his jacket lapels forward. Straightens.

Stanley Alpert is ready to go home.

A TITLE tells us it's now...

January 22, 1998

EXT. LINDEN AVENUE - DAY

Morning bustle. Wearing another dark shirt and tie, Lucky comes out of his house sipping at a coffee mug. He's with his fiancee, SANDRA (19). They've clearly not slept much.

They kiss good-bye -- cranky, perfunctorily -- and go in different directions. Sandra shoulders a book bag.

Just your average young man, Lucky shuffles to his Lexus, and STOPS COLD...The passenger window has been smashed.

He's been robbed. He spins in shock, fury, indignation.

LUCKY
Fucking negros!

He means it -- there's not a trace of irony in his voice.

OFFENDED BUREAUCRAT (O.S.)
(pre-lap)
Did you just call me Robert Moses?!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - BROOKLYN FEDERAL BUILDING - DAY

DAN MORETSKY (36) stands at the back of the room full of heated Community Activists and Government Suits.

WOOLLY ACTIVIST
No one's calling you Robert Moses!

PRAGMATIC WOMAN
It's a bike path, people!

Anxious, Dan checks his watch and leaves.

INT. ASSISTANT'S BULLPEN - DAY

Dan peeks in Stan's office. Empty. Someone sent flowers. A Happy Birthday balloon bouquet dances under a vent.

STAN'S ASSISTANT comes up, bundled up from a donut run.

STAN'S ASSISTANT
He hasn't checked in.

DAN
The Gowanus arbitration's going south.

She grimaces. Dan picks up her desk phone.

STAN'S ASSISTANT
I've tried like nine times.

He puts the phone down again.

DAN
Where's Scott Daniels this morning?

INT. COURTROOM - BROOKLYN FEDERAL COURT BUILDING - DAY

The judge waits. The jury waits.

At the prosecutor's table, SCOTT DANIELS (42) has turned to confer with a colleague leaning in from the gallery.

Dan and Scott's whisperings appear full of gravitas...

SCOTT
He had a blind date last night. And it's his Birthday. Do the math.

Dan nods. *That's probably it. Of course.*

DAN
How does he do it?

SCOTT
Attrition. He wears them down. That, and the environmental angle.

DAN
You're right. Women love the environmental angle, don't they?

SCOTT
Dude, you have no idea.

INT. THE ROOM - DAY

The girl's are gone. Ren snores. Sen's only half awake.

Stan's impatient voice breaks the morning stillness...

STANLEY (O.S.)
What time is it now?

Sen clears his throat, raspy from the long night.

SEN
Lucky a little late is all.

Stan bobs his blindfolded head, trying to keep hope alive.

He fidgets. A PLANE passes out in the morning sky.

SEN (CONT'D)
Sun's up. You best ride back in the trunk.

STANLEY
Oh? Okay.

A strained beat.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Sen?

SEN
Umm.

STANLEY
The trunk thing kinda makes me nervous.
(then)
I might not be able to breathe back there.
Lexus's probably have a pretty tight cargo
seal. They have a lot of monsoons in Japan.
It's very wet there. Humid. It's tropical.

SEN
Don't worry about it, Stanley.

Stan tries to let it go. He can't.

STANLEY
What if the exhaust system has a leak? I'll
be on top of all that carbon monoxide.

SEN
Yeah, don't worry.

Stan bites his lip. *It's fine, Stan. It's probably fine.*

Still...

STANLEY

I dunno, Sen. This trunk thing...

SEN

Stan! Shut the fuck up! Damn!

They hear car tires SQUEAK outside.

EXT. 1430 EASTERN PARKWAY - DAWN

The Lexus is parked in front. Again, we see the passenger-side front window has been violently smashed.

INT. THE ROOM - DAWN

Stan smiles huge as he hears the FRONT DOOR open.

LUCKY (O.S.)

Luis! Get up! Luis!

Hurried FOOTSTEPS.

Lucky enters in a loosely controlled panic.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Alright, there's been a change of plans.

(calling back)

Luis!

STANLEY

What?! No! No, change of plans. No! No way.

LUCKY

Just a couple of hours, Stanley. I need to replace a window in the Lexus. One of our affiliates, Luis, is gonna watch you.

STANLEY

Okay, Lucky, you made me a promise...

LUCKY

I need to take Sen and Ren someplace.

STANLEY

What? Where?

REN
We got school, Lux.

Luis enters. Sleepy.

SEN
What the fuck happened?

STANLEY
Wait! What school?!

Lucky takes Sen's .45 and shoves it in Luis's hands.

LUCKY
My fiancee left Stan's wallet on my dash--

STANLEY
What school?! High School?!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TENEMENT HOUSE - DAY

The avenue outside is surprisingly busy during the day.

Rap MUSIC. Hard. Angry. Something from early ICE CUBE.

INT. THE ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on blindfolded Stan. Stewing. Furious.

When Stan's mad, everyone around him knows it...

STANLEY
Okay, can we listen to a station that plays something besides rap? Hello? Please.

No response. Stan MOANS. The stereo blares unchanged.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Has this artist been shot?! I only listen to rappers who've been shot! It has to say so on the CD. "This artist has been shot." Not female rappers though. Them, I judge on the ability to treat their backsides like jello.

No response.

Stan doesn't realize he's alone in The Room.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

God, this music's repetitive! Do these guys have any emotional register other than angry and horny? And their rhyme schemes? "Git" does not rhyme with "Gat". Okay? What's the hell's a gat anyway?! There's always a gat. Gat! Gat. Sounds like a Dr. Suess character.

Honey's bed head appears in the doorway.

HONEY

Who you talkin' at?
(calling)
Luis?! What the fuck?!

STANLEY

Great abduction management, Guys!

FOOTSTEPS mosey down the Main Hallway.

Ramos enters, sniffling. She gives him a dirty look.

HONEY

Yo cracker lookin' peaked.

LUIS RAMOS

That's how they look.

Stan does seem pale; his hair, matted; his shirt, soiled.

The FRONT DOOR opens and closes.

STANLEY

Who's that? Is that Lucky? Lucky?!

MYSTIC (O.S.)

Just us, Sugar.

Stan deflates. Mystic and Mercedes enter with food. They are not day people. Luis rifles their bag hungrily.

LUIS RAMOS

Yo, yo, yo, yo. I said chicken sandwich.

MERCEDES

Burrito a sandwich.

HONEY

No it ain't.

STANLEY

Listen...

MYSTIC
It like a sandwich, Sugar. Bread. Insides.

HONEY
Burrito ain't a goddamn sandwich. You ever have a baloney burrito?

MERCEDES
Yeah.

STANLEY
Listen...

LUIS RAMOS
I ain't even a part of this nigga shit!

HONEY
Ramos right. This man ain't our business.

MYSTIC
We helpin' out in our community.

STANLEY
Listen!

Stan finally their attention.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Listen. Right now, all of you are guilty of felony kidnapping. Federal. They can send you to any penitentiary in the system. Not upstate. Somewhere you won't know anybody. Someplace run by angry skinheads. Wyoming.

(angry)
Or you can let me go! Immediately! Now!

Stan's started to sweat. He habitually checks his pulse.

A beat. Looks.

HONEY
Fuck it. I'm callin' Lucky.

She drops her burrito, goes to the door.

MYSTIC
He comin' back directly, Sugar.

HONEY
Yeah, cause I'm callin'! What the number?
Nine-one-seven...six-nine--

The others WAVE their hands frantically. Honey FREEZES. She's said half of Lucky's number in front of Stan.

Stares. *Did he hear?*

HONEY (CONT'D)
Yeah. Y'all. I be right back.

She exits with scared look of girl who just screwed up.

CLOSE on Stanley. Yanking at his collar. Raging. Unwell.

INT. SEARS - DAY

A brand new PLAYSTATION BOX is set down on the counter.

Ren tosses Stan's AMEX beside it. An Older Sales Woman picks up the credit card to examine it.

SEN (O.S.)
Yo, Stanley Alpert?! What up, G?!

Sen passes by, pretending to have encountered his friend, Stan Alpert, out shopping. They clinch fists.

SEN (CONT'D)
New Playstation, huh? Tight.

REN
It for my kids.

Sen's face tells us Ren's gone impromptu.

SEN
Yeah? Aight. Yo kids, huh? Aight.

EXT. SEARS PARKING LOT - KING'S PLAZA - DAY

The Lexus idles in an isolated corner of the wintery lot; its broken window has been taped up with PLASTIC.

INT. LEXUS - DAY

Lucky looks about furtively. He sees Sen march toward the car. Ren's twenty feet behind, carrying a SEARS BAG.

Sen gets in the front, irked; Ren in the back, sheepish.

REN
You got a new Platystation, Lux.

LUCKY
Fine. Thank you.

Lucky drives. Distracted. Hiding something from the boys.

INT. THE ROOM - DAY

Honey returns. Pushes the door open slowly.

Mystic, Mercedes and Luis stand around Stan. Sweat runs down his face and neck; his shirt is wet; his breathing has gone quick and shallow.

MYSTIC
Stan don't feel none too good.

Stan rolls over his side, gets up on all fours.

LUIS RAMOS
Yo, yo, yo, what the fuck you doin'?

STANLEY
It's my heart. It's racing. My chest hurts.
It's radiating! Okay? It's radiating down my
left arm! I'm pretty sure it's radiating.

LUIS RAMOS
Oh, shit! Yo, he gonna mess us up, yo! What
the matter with yo fuckin' heart, man?
(then)
Don't be fuckin' with us!

Luis waves the .45 as if he would shoo away the illness.

LUIS RAMOS (CONT'D)
Yo, Homes, you know what's good for you,
don't be makin' shit up, yo!

Stan's having a hard time catching his breath.

MERCEDES
He can't breathe. You best dial 9-1-1.

LUIS RAMOS
You do it!

MERCEDES
Nobody put me in charge, Nigger!

A tense beat. Everyone watches the white man wheeze.

LUIS RAMOS

Lucky gonna call me a rat, yo! You gonna
get me shot, or killed or somethin'!

(then)

How we know he ain't fakin'??!

(then)

Stop that! Yo?! I said, stop that!

MYSTIC

He dyin', y'all.

Ramos aims the gun at Stan with both hands.

LUIS RAMOS

I ain't watchin' this!

MERCEDES

You gonna shoot him for dyin'??!

LUIS RAMOS

I ain't fuckin' watchin' this!

Stan tries to speak, manages only two words...

STANLEY

...I'm...okay...

HONEY

He lyin' now.

LUIS RAMOS

Fuck!

Stan's still on all fours, drooling. In a death panic, he reaches up, yanks down his blindfold.

LUIS RAMOS (CONT'D)

Put that back on! Put that back! Yo, tell him to put that back!

Stan faces the mattress, pale, gasping.

It's painful to watch.

LUIS RAMOS (CONT'D)

Stop that! Yo! Stop it!

Stan can't speak. The .45 shakes wildly in Luis's hand.

MYSTIC

He dyin'.

LUIS RAMOS

Fuck!
(then)
Fuck!

Stan starts gagging.

Luis is ready to shoot just to make the situation go away
-- he starts to mutter hysterically...

LUIS RAMOS (CONT'D)
Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

Finally...

HONEY
Shoot him!

Honey has screamed so loudly that Mercedes, Mystic, and Luis are all cut short. She's trembling. Near tears.

The sudden weirdness of it breaks the spell over Luis. He lowers the gun. Stan's wheezing slowly dissipates.

He holds up a "wait" finger.

STANLEY
...had this...before...

His PANIC ATTACK subsides.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
...didn't eat...

They watch his breathing stabilize.

Everyone relaxes.

The BUZZER sounds out in the hall. Mystic goes to get it. Mercedes looks baleful at Honey, who still quivers.

Honey won't meet Mercedes's eyes.

MYSTIC (O.S.)
Sen and Ren comin' up, Y'all!

When Honey finally looks over,...

MERCEDES
Yeah, you try and save yo chunky ass.

EXT. RIVERDALE TOWERS - BROOKLYN - DAY

A massive project. Dilapidated. Scary.

A DEALER KID (14) lurks in a frozen dirt playground as a black Lexus pulls up in an adjacent parking lot.

INT. LEXUS - DAY

The Dealer Kid sits in the back and gives Lucky attitude.

DEALER KID

I don't sell guns. You wanna get strapped, go down South like every other nigga.

LUCKY

I'm looking for something special. A burner used in some serious shit.

He takes the PLAYSTATION BOX off the floorboard and hands it back. The Dealer Kid's eyes get big in a hurry.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

I'm looking for an enterprising-type young person who's maybe dumped such weapons.

The Kid's checking out the console's box. The corner has a star burst that reads: "NEW! DUALSHOCK CONTROLLER!"

DEALER KID

This one got the dual shock con-trol?

Lucky turns, thinks he's kidding, realizes he can't read.

LUCKY

Yeah.

EXT. BROOKLYN RAIL YARDS - DUSK

We fly over the massive yards. Trains. Tracks. Icy weeds.

In a far corner of the yard, nestled against an overpass for the Shore Parkway, there's a baseball diamond.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - DUSK

The diamond is muddy and grey; the outfield, patched with filthy snow. Out in center field, a young black man treks in a tie, sipping a STARBUCK'S, holding an ice scraper.

At a rusty "no trespassing" sign, Lucky kneels and digs.

He digs. And digs. Beach wind wets him.

He hits plastic. Glancing around, he yanks an old trash bag out of the earth. Inside are three guns. Wrapped.

He unwraps a Glock 31, its polymer body strangely new.

Then he sees the T-shirt it was wrapped in has a serious blood stain. Lucky's breath catches.

His coat and tie flap timidly in the wind.

EXT. THE BOTTOMLINE CLUB - NIGHT

Waiting silently with Scott and Dan are Stan's Friends: tough DARCY (40), elegant and married ALYSOUN (32), and Scott's brother, MATT (29), with his date, DAFNE (30).

They hug themselves in the cold. Breath mist rises from each like an thought bubble of roiling worry.

DARCY

It's freezing out here.

Darcy's a lawyer with bad attitude and a great body.

ALYSOUN

And we're sure he knows the venue.

DAN

He's got the tickets, Alysoun.

MATT

Isn't his Dad really sick?

DAN

Parkinson's. He'd call one of us.

DARCY

We talked on the phone last night around six-forty-five. He seemed distracted. Like there was somebody else in his apartment.

Scott and Dan exchange a covert glance.

ALYSOUN

Maybe he met a girl. They could've run off somewhere. I dunno, Cancun. Brussels.

Darcy breathes deep, and makes a hard decision.

DARCY

Actually, Stan's started seeing someone.

ALYSOUN

He has?

MATT

Who?

DARCY

Me.

Dan's goofy grin goes lopsided, a circus smile, like he's afraid he's about to see something unpleasant.

DARCY (CONT'D)

It's not like you send out announcements.

ALYSOUN

Oh. Sure. Of course.

(covering)

To be honest, Michael and I have had zero quality time with Stan lately.

DARCY

It's only been three weeks.

DAN

That's great for you guys, Darcy.

Clearly, no one thinks it's great. A beat. Darcy looks up the street, petulant. *Where the hell is Stan?*

DARCY

God, it's fucking freezing.

SCOTT

Let's wait in Dojo's.

He points an chain DINER across the street.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

We'll get a booth by the window.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Stan faces the corner with the blindfold down around his neck, lamp at his back. He's careful not turn around.

The long delay has unleashed Stan's mouthy bravado...

STANLEY

Lucky said "a couple of hours"! That's a quote! A "couple of hours"!

SEN

Man got busy is all.

Sen, Ren, Mystic, Mercedes and Ramos are scattered around in the dark behind him. Pot smoke wisps hang in the air.

STANLEY

It's dark! I may be facing the wall but I can certainly tell when it's dark!

SEN

Lucky be here soon enough.

Honey lurks by the door, feeling apart from the group.

STANLEY

Is that a promise? Do I have your word, Sen? Cause it'd be really terrific to have a high school kid's solemn oath.

SEN

Damn, white man, why you gotta be a dick?

Stan doesn't answer -- he is being a dick.

Then, to the room in general,...

SEN (CONT'D)

What got Stan all salty?

MERCEDES

He had a heart attack. But he alright now.

Mercedes and Honey keep glaring at each other.

MYSTIC

Don't you wanna stay with us, Sugar?

REN

Yeah, Stan, you should join our gang.

SEN

Tell us which of yo friends to rob.

The boys snicker.

MERCEDES

He gonna need some decent clothes.

SEN
We get you iced out. Tims. Blowy shirt.

The image of Gangsta Stan tickles everyone.

SEN (CONT'D)
Ain't nobody gonna fuck with you.

STANLEY
What, just for dressing like a thug?

SEN
Fuck, yeah. Black man got two choices. He can be a nigger. Or he can be invisible.

MYSTIC
If you wanna be black, you gotta be ghetto, Sugar. All them others is oreos.

SEN
Damn straight. Niggas keepin' it real.

Ren grunts his contempt for a rainbow of middle-classes.

A SIREN passes outside. No one speaks until it fades.

STANLEY
You know what, guys, you shouldn't use that word. Seriously. I get offended for you.

SEN
What word?

STANLEY
You know what word, the N-word.

SEN
"Nigger"? You mean, nigger? What, you never say nigger?

STANLEY
No.

Everyone PFIFFS and MOANS in cynical disbelief.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Hey. Hey. I always say "African American".

SEN
Say it. Say "nigger". Call me a nigger.

STANLEY
No.

SEN
I ain't fuckin' askin'!

He appears to mean it.

Finally,...

STANLEY
Okay. Nigger. You're a nigger.

SEN
Motherfucker!

Sen racks his gun. The girls giggle.

Silence returns.

SEN (CONT'D)
See? What's happenin' now? Nothin'. Thirty-nine flavors of motherfuckin' nothin'. That African-American shit stupid.

Ren snickers.

SEN (CONT'D)
I hate crackers frontin' with that. Like they down cause they say African-American. Get away with all kinds of bullshit, long as you stick "African-American" in there.
(a few white voices)
"You should dress less...African-American."
"At work, we don't speak African-American."
"African-American babies is so cute?"

They're not bad imitations.

SEN (CONT'D)
Park Slope Crackers. I say, slap 'em naked.

MERCEDES
The women, the worse. Sayin' 'excuse me' when they ain't even close. Thin-lipped bitch passin' ten feet away, "Excuse me. Sorry." Fuck you. I ain't got the bug!

REN
And snow skiin'. That's fucked up.

Everyone just looks at Ren, obscured in the dark.

SEN
What the hell you talkin' 'bout?!

REN

Snow is nasty. Who knows what done shit in
there! I ain't slidin' round in no snow!

Laughs.

SEN

Damn, Ren.

MYSTIC

Do white women do anal?

The room EXPLODES.

Sen laughs so hard he bangs his gun onto the floor.

MYSTIC (CONT'D)

I'm serious. Y'all! I'm serious! I am!

Even Stan has to chuckle.

MYSTIC (CONT'D)

Listen. I don't do anal, right? Not with no
stranger. That somethin' special. Somethin'
you give a man. Like on yo weddin' night.

MERCEDES

Oh, it special. Ninety-Nine Dollar Special.

The boys love it. Ren does an old school "whoop, whoop".

MYSTIC

You niggas just rude. You got no idea how
to act round company.

(then)

You make yo girls do anal, Stanley?

Everyone calms down.

Stan realizes they expect an answer.

STANLEY

Okay. Well. Yes. I've tried...giving it.

SEN

Damn straight!

MYSTIC

Whose idea was it?

STANLEY

Mine. I guess.

MYSTIC

Why? What I'm askin' is, what make a man
need to put his junk up in there?

SEN

It tight...

MYSTIC

Shush, Sen.

STANLEY

I dunno, Mystic. I suppose you wanna see if
she lets you. If you can take things to the
next level. You're right. You think it means
you're special. You think it shows...trust.

(then)

Maybe that's harder to find than love.

MYSTIC

Thank you, Stanley. Thank you very much.

Mystic's form collapses with satisfied grunt. Triumphant.

There's a oddly warm silence.

SEN

Hang on, Stan. You be home in couple hours.
You got my word on that.

Then, calmly, comforted,...

STANLEY

Okay, Sen. Okay.

(then)

Yeah, I can do that.

INT. DOJO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Late. Almost empty. Scott, Darcy and Dan are on one side
of a window booth; Matt and Aysoun, on the other.

Dafne's just returning from a pay phone out in the Foyer.

She slides in beside Matt.

DAFNE

Okay. I tried every hospital in Manhattan.
No Stanley Alpert. No John Doe's.

DARCY

Are you sure they really checked?

MATT
She's a medical doctor, Darcy.

DARCY
You said she was an allergist.

Matt gives Darcy a tough look.

DARCY (CONT'D)
I'm just saying, if our goal here is to get some harried ER nurse to scour her records, maybe, you know, maybe allergies aren't the most intimidating specialty.

Matt drops it. Everyone's irritable. Scott looks out the window. The sidewalk in front of BottomLine is barren.

A miserable beat.

Dan decides to lighten the mood...

DAN
Stan's probably fine, you guys. Manhattan's different now. We've got Giuliani.

The mayor's name seems to make no one feel better.

SCOTT
I say we find a way to break into Stan's apartment. Let's talk to his Super.
(a plan)
Worst comes to worst, somebody climbs up the fire escape, and breaks a window.

INT. HALLWAY IN STAN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Scott and Dan talk with the Super, his name is MR. PENALTA (44), in his doorway. Spanish TV plays behind him.

MR. PENALTA
Twenty years, I have this building. No problem. Two weeks ago, Three-Zero-Nine is hang herself. Nice girl. Actress. Dirty movies, okay. Not my business. Now, my friend, you say Eight-One-Seven is no come to work. Maybe Mr. Stan is also...

He makes a hanging gesture and a guttural sound.

MR. PENALTA (CONT'D)
Maybe. I am only thinking because is many
times catching. First one. Then another.
More. Other Supers, we know of this. Wait.

He quickly disappears, leaving the door cracked.

The guys wait a few seconds before Scott calls...

SCOTT
Should we go up without you?!

Mr. Penalta appears again, now holding his flashlight.

MR. PENALTA
I go. And if I go, you go.

INT. HALLWAY ON STAN'S FLOOR - NIGHT

Darcy paces in front of Stan's door. Alysoun and Dafne sit on the carpet, backs to the wall.

ALYSOUN
How long have you and Matt been dating?

DAFNE
Tonight.

They share a tired giggle. Darcy checks the peep hole.

EXT. COURTYARD - STAN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Matt peers up the fire escape to see three dark figures climbing high above. Spidery forms. A beam of light.

INT. KITCHEN - STAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Narrow light refracts in the window.

Out on the landing, we see Mr. Penalta being held by Dan and Scott, who brace themselves dramatically, goofy white guys trying too hard at any physical task.

The Super says something muffled. They let him go.

Mr. Penalta SHATTERS the glass with his light, clears the shards from the frame. Scott steps through first.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The track lights come on to illuminate a messy bachelor's living room. Gaudy sofa. Huge TV. Glowing electronics.

DAN
I'll check the bedroom.

He goes through its door carefully, the cop creep. While Mr. Penalta decides to stay put in the kitchen.

Scott searches Stan's desk, lifting papers with a pencil.

The girls POUND on the front door.

SCOTT
Hold on! Let us secure the premises!

DAN (O.S.)
Scott!

Scott drops the pencil, hurries back to the...

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Scott finds Dan standing inside the Bathroom.

SCOTT
What?!

Dan gestures toward the front door, waves him closer.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Scott enters. Dan points to a nearly empty waste basket. Stuck to its plastic liner is a used CONDOM.

SCOTT
So?!

DAN
What if it wasn't Darcy?!

Scott scoffs. Ancient, male, cloaking instincts click in.

SCOTT
Take it out and flush it.

DAN
No! Yuck. Man. No.

The girls BANG on the door. Scott goes. Dan considers the possibly damning condom. Wincing, he reaches down...

INT. LIVING ROOM - STAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Stan's Friends gather around his whirling PHONE MACHINE.

BEEP.

TWO SINGING OLDER WOMEN

*Happy Birthday to youuu!
Happy Birthday to youuu!
Happy Birthday, dear Staaann!
Happy Birthday to youuu!
(one voice adds)
And many mooore!*

The Friends stay silent. The message is sort of sad.

ARLENE ALPERT'S VOICE

It's Mom and Grandma. Call us, Honey.

BEEP.

DAN'S VOICE

Dude, I just did the jump rope class. You won't believe the hot chicks! God, I love working out--

Dan hits forward. Smiles. Darcy manages to say nothing.

BEEP.

BENJAMIN ALPERT

Son? Stanley? Hello? It's your Father. I wanted to wish you--

Dan hits forward.

BEEP.

A BLACK FEMALE VOICE

Hello. This is Michelle. I found your credit cards this mornin' in the street.

Alysoun gasps. The faces around the machine lean closer, each a mix of fear and disbelief.

MICHELLE

About seven in the mornin'. It was near my work in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

DARCY

Omigod.

MICHELLE

By the car wash. My number is 718-631-8437.

Scott writes the number down. No one dares speak.

BEEP.

AN OFFICIAL VOICE

Mr. Alpert, this Chase Bank. There's been unusual activity on your cash machine card.

ALYSOUN

Oh, no.

They're all in full panic now.

AN OFFICIAL VOICE

We'd like to find out if this has been authorized. Please call Chase immediately. At 1-800-734-8000. Thank you.

The last message. It leaves the room in a ravenous quiet. Dafne keeps a hand over her mouth.

Finally...

SCOTT

No one touch anything.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Late. Everyone waits. Facing the wall, Stan is exhausted from hunger, the day's roller-coaster of emotions.

Stan's fight is almost gone.

LUCKY (O.S.)

Why isn't he blindfolded?

The kids all turn as Lucky enters, quietly yet again.

SEN

We got him facin' the wall's all.

Lucky neither approves or disapproves. He steps over and studies the back of his prisoner -- we see Stanley think better of speaking. He's too desperate.

LUCKY
You ready go home, Stanley?

STANLEY
Yes.

LUCKY
Let me tell you what's going to happen. I'll drive the girls over to the track. Then I have some business to attend. I'd like to get a bit more money from your account. I'll be back after midnight. We'll take you home.

Another delay. Stan's on the verge of frustrated tears. Lucky kneels -- his tone's solicitous.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
No hard feelings, huh? I've just tried to ensure your safety with your own fear.

Facing the wall, Stan says nothing.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Stanley, let me ask you something.

A meek nod.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
If you had the chance to put me away for life, would you do it?

Stanley considers.

Then...

STANLEY
You know where I live. You know where my Father lives. I don't know who you are. I don't know where we are. I don't care.
(a beat)
Please. I just want this whole thing over.

Lucky contemplates the flat sincerity of Stan's answer.

Then, he LAUGHS.

Everyone looks. It's a strained laugh.

LUCKY
That's right. Make the negro think he's got a chance. Open that door wide, then boom!

He SLAPS his hands together in Stan's ear. Stan flinches.

As Lucky stands and turns away from him...

STANLEY

Grow up.

LUCKY

Pardon?

STANLEY

I said "grow up".

LUCKY

Yeah, I heard you.

STANLEY

Shoot me or let me go. Either way, stop pretending you're the victim here.

(then)

Stop whining.

There's no anger in his voice.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

The door's open, Lucky. Okay? Not always. Not everywhere. But after thirty years of people like me, it's pretty much fucking open. If you'd stop worrying about being a negro, maybe you could just walk through it. And if you don't, don't blame the rest of us. White man's keeping you down. White man put crack in the hood. The white man's given you AIDS. Please. Grow the fuck up.

Stunned silence. Lucky steps back over to him, looks down on the back of Stan's head with confused menace.

Stanley's not done.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

The door's open. Deal with it. You're just too proud to walk through. Or afraid.

(unflinching)

It's either that or you're just plain lazy.

Lucky grabs Ren's Tec 9. He yanks Stan backwards by the scarf and crams the muzzle into his mouth.

Stan RETCHES. Mystic SCREAMS.

Stan forces himself to keep his eyes shut.

LUCKY
Stand.

Grabbing Stan by the tie, gun still in his mouth, Lucky drags him to the Hallway. Sen and Ren rush to follow.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Stay here!

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lucky forces Stan down the hall. We think he's taking him to the bathroom, and to his execution.

Instead, he pushes Stan hard against the front door.

LUCKY
There. There's your door.

He pulls Stan back, opens it wide, gets behind him.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Open your fucking eyes.

STAN'S POV on the building's landing framed by the open front door, dark and dangerous freedom.

Lucky presses the gun to Stan's back.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Door's open. Go. Bounce. Go on.
(nothing)
Walk through! Walk through!

Stanley doesn't move, can't move. A decisive beat.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Yeah. It ain't that easy.

Lucky slams the door shut. He turns to see Stan has his eyes closed again; as always, refusing to see him.

He gets right in the white man's face.

They stand there. Close. Worlds apart.

And then Lucky mutters,...

LUCKY (CONT'D)
Negro.

INT. BASEMENT IN THE SUBURBS - NIGHT

FBI SPECIAL AGENT RICHARD MEADE (54) is a schlubby Barney Rubble, more Jersey beat cop than federal bureaucrat.

He's doing his laundry, spraying the underarms of all his dress shirts with pre-wash. Mist gets in his face.

The phone RINGS upstairs. Meade considers ignoring it.

INT. KITCHEN - MEADE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The RINGING phone's on a wall. We hear FOOTSTEPS come up the stairs. As Meade appears, the phone stops. He sighs.

He goes back down the stairs. We hear him...CREAK, CREAK.

A BEEPER on the counter vibrates. The creaks stop.

EXT. PALISADES PARKWAY - NIGHT

Close on the door of ratty, brown van: **Caribe Grocery**.

We move up to see the driver: Special Agent Meade speeds through the night, blows into his hands to keep warm.

The van rattles purposefully down the empty highway.

Up ahead, lights from the George Washington bridge glow orange and ominous off low winter clouds.

INT. LOBBY OF STAN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

A suburban dad scribbles in a notebook.

DETECTIVE SAMUEL FELDEN (35) is wearing a garish Giants jacket, the kind wives universally relegate to weekends. Though it takes us a while to notice -- and no one ever mentions it -- Felden also wears a yarmulke.

The West Village detective is flanked by two FBI AGENTS.

FBI AGENT ONE
Here he comes.

Special Agent Meade enters, cold, rubbing his arms.

MEADE
Heat's out in the brown van.

Detective Felden extends his hand.

FELDEN
Special Agent Meade, I'm Detective Felden.
Sixth Precinct. Everybody's upstairs.

INT. ELEVATOR IN STAN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Special Agent Mead listens to Detective Felden read from his notes. The two FBI Agents ride up behind them.

FELDEN
He's single. No depression. No substances.
Seems pretty reliable. Prefers "Stan".

MEADE
You work a lot of kidnappings, Detective.

FELDEN
Nope.

MEADE
Well, there are two types of federal-officer kidnappings: the good kind and the bad kind.

FELDEN
What's the good kind?

MEADE
Good kind is when we find the body.

The Detective blows air out through pursed lips.

FELDEN
One of his friend's says he's been working a big industrial pollution case. It's civil but the plaintiff may have mob connections.

MEADE
Meh.

FELDEN
Sir?

MEADE
How many people you got upstairs?

FELDEN
Including my detective squad? Eight. Ten.

MEADE
How many we got?

FBI SUIT TWO
Seven. Mehan and Wyatt are in transit.

EXT. THIRD STREET SIDEWALK - NIGHT

AGENT MEHAN (34) has a black eye and paces in the street. She's agitated, breathing furiously, hands on her hips so that we see she has a serious revolver.

AGENT WYATT (28) barrels out of the bar in front of her. Wyatt's a preppy black man. A baby face.

AGENT WYATT
Third avenue. Not third street.

AGENT MEHAN
Crap!

INT. ELEVATOR IN STAN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Special Agent Meade and Detective Felden as before.

MEADE
So, basically, we got twenty, twenty-five law enforcement officers. All biting at the bit to run down somebody. Tonight. That's a lot of heat for an environmental case.
(kindly)
This isn't a mob job, Detective. People who dump bodies in the East River aren't too worried about violating the Clean Water Act.

INT. STAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A zoo. With Stan's Friends, FBI, uniformed NYPD and the Sixth Detective Squad, it's a good two-dozen people.

The phone RINGS and is answered unseen throughout.

Stan's Friends have been joined by two additions: Alysoun holds hands with her husband, MICHAEL, wearing a tux; and a bubbly woman in club clothes, JANICE JANOFSKY (24).

Special Agent Meade's entourage enters. He climbs up on a chair among the Friends; his tone is calm, paternal.

MEADE
Hello, everyone. My name is Special Agent Rich Meade.
(MORE)

MEADE (CONT'D)
 I'm in charge of finding Stan, and I'd like
 to do that before the sun comes up.

SCOTT
 Were you briefed on his mob case?

MEADE
 I was. Thank you. Alright. First things
 first. Does Stan have a girlfriend?

JANICE JANOFSKY
 Not exactly.

Puzzled looks. *Why is Janice Janofsky answering this?*

JANICE JANOFSKY (CONT'D)
 I was his intern last semester. We still
 spend a lot of time together. As friends.
 (sheepish)
 Mostly. So far.

DARCY
 Fuck me.

All eyes go to Darcy. The air turns incredibly awkward.

MEADE
 You've been seeing Stan as well, Ma'am?

DARCY
 (peeved)
 Yes. Since New Year's Eve.

Janice and Darcy's eyes meet. Janice shrugs politely.
 Darcy's in no mood for gracious commiseration.

MEADE
 Alright. Anybody have any idea what Stan
 did last night?

All heads shake no. Dan gives Scott a questioning look.
 Scott nods, ruefully. Dan steps forward.

DAN
 To be honest...I think he had a blind date.

Darcy audibly moans. Two Uniformed Officers snicker.

DAN (CONT'D)
 (to Darcy)
 The daughter of one of his mom's friends.
 (to Janice)
 He was just going to be polite.

The fact he's addressing both women elicits from Darcy a furious grunt. Janice holds out her palms to signal it is absolutely none of her business.

MEADE

Alright. That's fine. We'll sort it out.
But here's what I need from friends and family right now: leave. This is a crime scene. Detective Felden over there will take your statements out in the hall.

Meade steps down, quietly pulls Dan aside, whispers,...

MEADE (CONT'D)

Can I get you to stick around, Buddy?

DAN

Sure.

Dan turns and calls loudly to the exiting others...

DAN (CONT'D)

Guys! The FBI needs me to hang back!

Special Agent Meade shakes his head. *That was discrete.*

Everybody stops. Jealous glances that Dan gets to stay. Darcy starts to protest, then just throws up her hands. Scott gives Dan a dramatic good-luck thumbs up.

The Friends leave as Agents Mehan and Wyatt now squeeze though the door, arriving late and embarrassed.

Special Agent Meade chin points to Mehan's black eye.

MEADE

What happened to you?

She hesitates. Wyatt struggles to suppress the chortles. Mehan's one of those female officers who manages to seem both tomboyish and mousy. She's also a blusher.

Finally,...

AGENT MEHAN

It sorta happened during sex, Sir.

Their boss considers her.

MEADE

Alright.

INT. THE ROOM - NIGHT

Stan's blindfolded for the last time. Waiting. Given his outburst, he now has no idea what will happen to him.

He can hear Sen breathing across the room. Ren sits over there, too, hawking intermittently.

SEN
'Bout that time, Ren.

Both boys stand. Stan can hear them getting their coats on, preparing their weapons. Someone cracks a knuckle.

SEN (CONT'D)
Okay, mah man, put yo coat on.

There's warmth in Sen's voice. Stan puts his coat on.

Sen kneels in front of him.

SEN (CONT'D)
Keep yo fuckin' eyes closed.

He removes the scarf. Stan's careful to do as he's told. Sen slips a NIGHT MASK over Stan's eyes, then takes Ren's SUNGLASSES, fits them over the mask to hide it.

We move CLOSER on Stan. Disheveled. Unsure. Afraid.

CLOSER. We see The Room reflected in the sunglasses. This the last we will see of it.

CLOSER.

The screen goes BLACK. Dirty black. Light still flutters and flares at the edges of the screen

Out in the Main Hallway, the front door opens and closes.

FOOTSTEPS approach.

LUCKY (O.S.)
Let's go.

I/E TRAVELING MONTAGE - STAN'S POV - NIGHT

BLACK. Unlike our arrival in The Room, our exit is masked in nearly complete darkness. No music. Ambient sound.

Our emotions can be measured by our labored breathing.

Three sets of footsteps take us down the MAIN HALLWAY and echo as we descend the TENEMENT STAIRS. The pace quickens over the LOBBY marble floor, out the intercom VESTIBULE.

The sounds of the CITY slam us. Cars. Buses. Planes. Off in the distance, a car alarm. Two women shout.

BLACK.

Shoes on the sidewalk. Car doors open. We slide into the back seat. Someone gets in to our right, another, left.

Doors slam. The satisfying thud of Japanese engineering.

LUCKY (O.S.)

We good?

Lucky's in the driver's seat. The responses go unheard.

We're winded from fear and lack of food and sleep.

BLACK.

The engine starts. The car pulls away. The plastic cover for the passenger side window RATTLES angrily.

Bumps. Potholes.

The tires' whir changes when the car turns.

Our breathing regulates.

We ride awhile with the windy rattle. Turns. Bumps.

BLACK.

Suddenly, the car slows down, tires chew gravel.

Our breathing intensifies.

The Lexus is stopping.

Lucky lets the engine idle and gets out of the car.

We clear our throat, confused, afraid to speak.

Shoes scrape pavement. The trunk opens. Items scrape as they're moved around. The trunk slams shut.

We're on the verge of hyperventilation.

Then, we hear...RIIIP! RIP! RIP! RIIIIIIIIIP!

Industrial grade DUCT TAPE is stripped from its roll.

And we grunt in abject terror.

FADE IN:

Opaque plastic, gently undulating. Strange lights. Human hands. Lucky. He's re-taping the broken window plastic.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Stan sits nervous in the back seat between Sen and Ren. When he's finished re-taping, Lucky climbs back inside.

They pull away.

The Lexus moves almost silently through traffic.

Sen can see Lucky's eyes in the mirror. He's nervous, he keeps blinking, wiping his forehead.

Sen gives Ren a look. Something's wrong.

SEN
(fishing)
We givin' him a twenty for a cab?

Stan cocks his head. *They're not taking me to Manhattan.*

Lucky studies Sen a moment in his mirror.

LUCKY
Who's going to give him twenty dollars?

REN
We got a twenty left from the split.

LUCKY
I haven't made the last withdrawal yet.

SEN
Tch.

Sen reaches into his own pocket, pulls out his wad, rips out a twenty and stuffs it into Stanley's hand.

Done with that, he looks defiantly back at Lucky.

LUCKY
Fine.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK - NIGHT

A vacant park road. The Lexus stops under a street lamp. Lucky and Sen get out. Sen pulls Stan out after him.

SEN

Wait a sec.

Lucky comes around from the driver's side. Sen gives him a hard look, which he ignores. He turns Stan's body.

LUCKY

Don't say a word. Put your hands over your head. Start walking. Straight. Don't stop.

Stan starts walking. We STAY on him.

Someone follows.

SEN (O.S.)

Lux?

LUCKY (O.S.)

I'll be right back.

Stan can hear footsteps consistently two or three meters behind him. They walk awhile. A long while.

Until,...

LUCKY (CONT'D)

That's far enough.

Stan waits. Silence. Wind.

Lucky's not going back to the car.

STANLEY

I can go in the trunk. Okay? The trunk, we can just do the trunk thing!

Stan's starting to panic.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Lucky, I can handle the trunk! I can!

LUCKY

Get on your knees, Stanley.

There's an awful flatness to the instruction.

STANLEY

Why are you doing this?! I haven't done anything! I haven't! I respect you!

LUCKY

Get down.

Stan hears him step over the gravel, feels the end of the Glock as Lucky forces him to the earth.

STANLEY

Why are you doing this?!

A horrible beat.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Okay, Lucky, please, please! Please! I'm begging you! Do not shoot me like this. Please. Not in the dark. Let me see! Do not fucking shoot me in the dark! Lucky?!

No response.

Lucky has his gun aimed at Stan's skull. Tears appear in his eyes. The gun shakes wildly.

The thin, young black man looks back toward the Lexus but it's much too dark to see Sen or Ren.

Lucky's expression is that of a terrified child.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I was just walking down the street, okay?! I didn't do anything to you! (hysterical) I didn't do anything!

Stanley's crying.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Fuck you! You don't know me! You don't know my heart! What I feel about! You don't know the things I do! You don't know!

No response.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I'll rat on you?! Yes! Of course, I'll rat on you! What do you fucking think?! You can pick somebody off the street?! You don't do that! My life's not a game?! You want the truth?! Yeah?! Nothing you could say or do would keep me from turning on you! Nothing! (MORE)

STANLEY (CONT'D)
I hate you! I fucking hate you!
(no response)
I hate you! I hate you!

He's screaming now -- his voice bouncing thru the woods.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
I've earned that...I earned that right...

No response.

Stan weeps a few desperate seconds.

Then, collecting himself,...

STANLEY (CONT'D)
You want me to...You do...You need me to
hate you...It's all you've got.
(simply)
It's all you're ever gonna have.

No response.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Fuck you.

Stan rips away the night mask and sunglasses. His sylvan surroundings surprise him -- the last place he expected to be is in a park, as if already in some afterlife.

He turns to see...

Lucky's gone.

The smoky haze of midnight air hangs over a lonely road that curves off without cars and without people.

He shrieks in disbelief. Stands. Spins. Searches.

He's dizzy but alone in the clear, cold night.

Stanley Alpert SHOUTS. A man in a suit and overcoat, just after midnight, shouts in the middle of a park.

He tries to recognize his surroundings, pats his pockets, finds his glasses and puts them on.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Prospect Park. Yes! Okay. Okay.
(realizing)
Just don't get mugged.

He takes a split second to choose a direction and wobbles off into a meadow, high-stepping over tall grass.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK WEST BLVD. - NIGHT

An elegant row of massive townhouses face Prospect Park.

Paunchy Stan darts out of the woods and across the broad avenue. Dress shoe heels echo off lonely asphalt.

EXT. 7TH AVENUE - NIGHT

Stan stumbles onto the Slope's sleepy commercial strip.

INT. PIZZA PLACE - NIGHT

A YOUNG PIZZA GUY scrapes down the oven. Stan bursts his way through orange chairs and up to the counter.

He's barely capable of speech.

STANLEY

Excuse...Excuse me...Can I use your phone?!

The Pizza Guy stares with no expression.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I was kidnapped....They just released me...
I'm fine, I'm okay...I need a phone!

The Pizza Guy allows himself a skeptical head tilt.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I don't have money...I have money, I have a twenty, but the kidnappers touched it...The FBI will need it...for the prints...

PIZZA GUY

You can't get prints off paper.

STANLEY

Money isn't paper, it's fabric -- Look! I'm a federal prosecutor! I need help!

The Pizza Guy makes weary show of handing him the phone.

PIZZA GUY

Make it quick. We're closing.

Stan takes the flour covered remote and dials furiously. The guys just stands there. Stan gets a busy signal.

STANLEY
Fuck!

The Pizza Guy waits. Stan dials again.

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
Hello?

STANLEY
Dad?! It's Stanley! I was kidnapped, but
I'm okay! I'm fine!

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
What? Where are you?!

STANLEY
A pizza place in Park Slope! They just let
me go! They held me for twenty-five hours!

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
I'll be damned. Are you all right?

STANLEY
I'm fine! Has anyone bothered you?!

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
No. What are you talking about?

STANLEY
I'll tell you later. Just stay inside.

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
Call your apartment.

STANLEY
What?

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
Call your apartment. The FBI and everybody,
they're all in your apartment.

STANLEY
Okay. Okay. I'm sending some agents to you.

MR. ALPERT (ON THE PHONE)
I'm glad your safe, Son. I don't know what
I would have done. God forbid. I don't.

STANLEY
Me too, Dad. I'll call you later. Bye.

Stan hangs up. Dials.

To justify another call...

STANLEY (CONT'D)
The FBI is at my apartment.

PIZZA GUY
I gotta close.

INT. LIVING ROOM - STANLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dan's on the sofa with his face in his hands. Police and FBI Agents cluster importantly as the phone RINGS.

Special Agent Meade picks it up.

MEADE
Yeah?...Special Agent Rich Meade of the
FBI. Who's this?...

He raises two fingers to silence the room.

MEADE (CONT'D)
Stan?

Dan jumps up off the sofa.

DAN
Stan? Is it Stan?!

Meade waves him off.

MEADE
Whoa. Whoa. Hold on there, Stan, I need you
to tell me your home address.

He's checking the caller's ID. Everyone waits.

Meade nods. Chatter. A whistle. Postures visibly relax.

Dan runs for the front door.

MEADE (CONT'D)
Do you need medical attention?

Out in the hallway, we can hear an eruption of CHEERS.

EXT. PIZZA PLACE - PARK SLOPE - NIGHT

The Pizza Guy yanks the gate down. Stan's standing beside him, nervously checking the deserted avenue.

Stan desperately wants him to hang around.

STANLEY

They were leaving right away. It can't be more than another ten minutes.

PIZZA GUY

I gave you a Snapple.

Stan does indeed hold a SNAPPLE. The Pizza Man walks off without apology, leaving him very much alone.

Stan waits. Wind. Cold. The streets seem ominous.

He jumps back as something flies at him...blowing trash.

Enough. Stan sees a STOREFRONT lit up on a far corner of the next block and walks quickly toward it.

EXT. CAR SERVICE DEPOT - NIGHT

TEN IMMIGRANT DRIVERS gather around a dispatcher's desk, waiting for a livery call. Stan enters.

STANLEY

Excuse me, do you mind if I wait in here? I'm getting picked up in a minute. Look, I was robbed. Can I just sit here? Please.

RUSSIAN DISPATCHER

Sure, sure, you ken ssiht.

Stan sits on a bench by the window. A multi-culti mix of eyes watch him, sympathetic if not entirely trusting.

INT. FBI SEDAN - NIGHT

Agent Wyatt drives; Agent Mehan, beside him. They follow another FBI sedan, both with flashing BUBBLE LIGHTS.

Dan's in the backseat, frustrated at the lead car's pace.

DAN

Don't they have a siren?

EXT. CAR SERVICE DEPOT - NIGHT

Stan's come outside to check down the street. Nothing.

STANLEY
C'mon. C'mon.

In the picture window behind him, Ten Immigrants crane their necks to look where he's looking.

The turns to them, shrugs. They shrug back.

Engines gun behind him. Two FBI Sedans come up the other direction, red lights flashing. They don't slow down.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Hey! Hey!

INT. FBI SEDAN - NIGHT

Dan peers ahead, looking for the Pizza Place.

He doesn't see Stan jump into the street behind them and give chase, like some crazed accountant strobed by light.

EXT. 7TH AVENUE - NIGHT

The FBI sedans stop in front of the dark Pizza Place.

Special Agent Meade and Detective Felden get out of the first vehicle; Wyatt, Mehan and Dan, out of the second.

Dan turns as he hears distant...

STANLEY
Dan! Hey! Dan!

DAN
There he is, guys!

Stan's running up the middle of the avenue.

Dan sprints toward him.

Seeing them all turn his way, Stan slows to a jog, then a walk, hands on his back, breathing deep.

His eyes well with tears of release and relief.

It's finally over.

Dan slows on approach. It was beginning to feel too much like lovers-running-to-each-other-in-the-field.

DAN (CONT'D)
Oh, my God! Buddy! You're alive!

STANLEY
Yeah.

Dan embraces him, big and guyish.

DAN
I love you, Buddy. I love you.
(then)
I love you.

He just holds on until...

STANLEY
Better let go, Dan.

Dan releases him.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
I dunno...my coat...maybe there's prints.

DAN
Don't worry, you can't get fingerprints off
fabric. They can't, it's like money.

Dan beams. Stan can't catch his breath. He gives in now
to exhaustion, twenty-four hours of adrenaline.

Agent Mehan walks up.

AGENT MEHAN
Are you okay, Mr. Alpert?

Stan nods. Smiles.

STANLEY
The guys in...that car place...I wanna
thank them...for letting me wait.

DAN
I'll go do it.

He jogs off. Stan's left alone with Mehan. She just looks
at the him, emotional and bedraggled.

STANLEY
Wow. Wow.

AGENT MEHAN
You're safe now.

STANLEY

Thank you.

He's just too shaken to get his wind back.

AGENT MEHAN

Cup your hands. Breathe into them.

He does this awhile, calms, looks at her over the tops of his fingers, gets enough air to ask a muffled,...

STANLEY

What happened to your eye?

AGENT MEHAN

Just breathe.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

The FBI sedan drives back into the City.

We see Stan through his window's reflection, pylons fly past and disappear like bars falling away.

INT. 6TH PRECINCT STATION HOUSE - NIGHT

APPLAUSE. Whoops. Whistles.

STAN'S FRIENDS cheer him from a LOBBY on the other side of the shift sergeant's desk. He and Dan have just been brought through the rear of the Station House.

Stan takes a few bows. Waves.

STANLEY

(huge smile; sotto)

Darcy didn't meet Janice, did she?

DAN

Oh, yeah.

STANLEY

Is Suzanne out there, too?

DAN

Who the hell's Suzanne?

Meade gestures for the boys to follow. *That's enough.*

DAN (CONT'D)

Wait? Suzanne? Yoga Suzanne?

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - 6TH PRECINCT - NIGHT

A round table. Stan sits with Detective Felden and Agent Wyatt and Agent Mehan as they interview him.

Special Agent Meade leans against a wall behind him.

STANLEY

It was the Brooklyn Bridge. I recognized the sound of the tires on the grating.

JUMP CUT:

STANLEY (CONT'D)

The building must be mostly transients. The postal carrier doesn't even sort the mail. Dumps it in a pile in the foyer. The lobby floor has white cross-pattern tile. With an elaborate border of red and black diamonds.

The cops exchange a look. *This guy's incredible.*

JUMP CUT:

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I could hear car alarms. Gulls. Commercial jets. It'll be on the approach to Kennedy. Near the ocean. On a fairly major avenue -- a bus goes by every three-and-a-half minutes.

More looks. *He even calculated the bus schedule?!*

JUMP CUT:

STANLEY (CONT'D)

But Honey isn't sure of his number. So, she sorta half asks: "9-1-7..6-9...?"

Delighted cops scribble furiously.

JUMP CUT:

Stan's on fire, talking ninety-miles-an-hour,...

STANLEY (CONT'D)

There was a band sticker on the front door. Blue Tan Club maybe? They do this chant. "Blue Tan Club ain't your fucking friends! Blue Tan Club ain't your fucking friends!"

He also butchers the melody. The black guy, Wyatt, looks up to see Felden eyeing him expectantly.

AGENT WYATT
Don't look at me. I'm from Vermont.

AGENT MEHAN
You mean Wu Tang Clan?

STAN
Yes!

AGENT MEHAN
"Wu Tang Ain't Nuthin' to Fuck With." Cool.

They all give her a look.

JUMP CUT:

STANLEY
The only one I couldn't get to talk about
his family was Sen. Luis's last name must
be Ramos. Oh, Mercedes they also call Dee.
My best guest is she's Puerto Rican.

They're getting a bit suspicious. He's too good.

JUMP CUT:

AGENT WYATT
Wait. They offered you pot?

STANLEY
Yes.

AGENT MEHAN
And oral sex?

STANLEY
Yes.

FELDEN
And cab fare home?

STANLEY
Yes.

The atmosphere has turned sour; they're openly skeptical.
Special Agent Meade steps into view.

SPECIAL AGENT MEADE
Mr Alpert, do you appreciate how unusual
all this sounds?

Stan nods. *Yeah, pretty weird ride, huh?*

Special Agent Meade just looks at him. Calm. Inscrutable.

INT. DETECTIVE'S BULLPEN - NIGHT

WORLD-WEARY DETECTIVE
That story's a steaming pile a shit.

Six steel desks face forward with phones on them. The FBI Agents stand behind Detective Felden. He's just finishing briefing his cynical SQUAD, holds his notebook.

TOUGH DETECTIVE
Man's seeing two women. Goes out on blind date with a third one. Then, coming home, he picks up another one on the subway? Buys her a cookie?! Then gets himself abducted by the only kidnappers in the history of New York City offering fuckin' blow jobs?!

HANDSOME DETECTIVE
Nobody picks up a girl on the subway.

FEMALE DETECTIVE
Nobody asks you out for "tea", either.

There's a slight note of disappointment in her voice.

Detective Felden turns to Special Agent Meade.

FELDEN
How does the FBI want to treat this?

MEADE
Like a steaming pile of shit.
(then)
That just may be true.

FADE TO:

INT. STAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A BANNER has been hung and altered to read...

"Congratulations ~~Retiree~~ Escapee!"

Beneath it, we find an IMPROMPTU PARTY.

January 23, 1998

Stan is with a yuppie group listening to an attractive woman in her forties. This is SUZANNE.

SUZANNE

I'm so over yoga guys. If another man calls me his "anima" I'll vomit.

DARCY

At least it's Latin! I always get soulmate. "You're my soulmate". "Yeah, right. You've know me for two weeks and won't let me use your toothbrush!"

(laughs)

I'm not mating my soul this season, thanks.

CLOSE on Stan. Withdrawn. The resonance to Mystic earlier is depressing. His world's starting to seem small.

Stan discretely turns away, wanders over to a window.

STAN'S POV: The ordered lights of lower Manhattan give way to the dark continent that is Brooklyn. Aglow between them is the Brooklyn Bridge, inviting emotional passage.

Stan surveys the sight. Remembering. Disquieted.

DAN (O.S.)

Did you sleep?

Dan joins him.

STANLEY

Yeah. A little. I'm not a nap guy.

DAN

You okay, Buddy?

STANLEY

Yeah. I just...those kids. I dunno. I said things. When it got ugly. Racial things.

(then)

Things I didn't know I feel.

DAN

Were they all, you know, African-Americans?

STANLEY

Mostly.

Dan raises his eyebrows.

DAN

But you couldn't see them?

STANLEY

Well, yeah. No. I mean, they sounded black.

DAN
Are we allowed to say people "sound black"?

STANLEY
Jeez-Louise, Dan, a little help maybe.

DAN
Sorry.

Janice Janofsky approaches to introduce a Black Friend.

Stan and Dan smile big and fake...

STANLEY
Hey, Guys!

DAN
Whaaasssssuup!

Stan gives Dan a look. *What are you doing?* Back in the group around Suzanne, Darcy eyes them closely.

INT. STAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Darcy leads Stan into his bedroom. Kisses him. It's full of forced intimacy, forced reunion. They stand close.

They speak quietly under the PARTY NOISES.

DARCY
How are you holding up?

STANLEY
Good. Yeah. Well.

DARCY
Are you sure? Do you need to see someone?
Maybe you should call my therapist.

STANLEY
I'm fine. Really.

She cups his face in her hands.

DARCY
I wanna tell you I'm glad you're alive. And that I really, really, really want to bite you right now. Not in a sexy way. Not that I would. I wouldn't. You hurt me, Stan. I'm not entirely sure how I let that happen.

STANLEY

Darcy...I...You're right. I'm sorry. I am.

She takes his hand, kisses it, holds it to her lips.

DARCY

I need to ask you something. Be honest. I can't really be more mad.

(then)

Was our relationship ever going anywhere?

Stan looks her right in the eye.

STANLEY

No.

Darcy nods bravely. Then, she opens her mouth and ever-so-gently puts her teeth on a knuckle. The softest of bites.

She drops his hand and leaves the room.

FADE TO:

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Rain.

Lucky and Sen roll through the night. The beats of BIGGIE jiggle a high school tassel hanging from the mirror.

January 24, 1998

Lucky notices a classic cop sedan -- we know it belongs to the FBI -- parked on his street. Occupied.

LUCKY

I'm driving around the block.

He passes the sedan. It pulls out behind him. Sen watches the car in the mirror on his side.

EXT. UTICA AVENUE - NIGHT

Rain.

The Lexus turns creepy slow onto the busy avenue. The FBI sedan and a brown van follow. Slow. Slow.

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Lucky and Sen as before. Another turn. Lenox Avenue.

The sedan's BUBBLE LIGHTS now go off. A SIREN.

SEN
Fuck, Lux! Fuck!

LUCKY
I'm pulling over.

He does so. Kills the engine. Leaves the wipers running.

They wait.

SEN
Fuckin' Stanley.

LUCKY
Calm down. It's only been a couple of days.

A FEW QUICK CUTS:

INT. A&P GROCERY STORE - DAY

QUICK DOLLY in as Agent Mehan hands a BUSY MANAGER Stan's PHOTO. He doesn't hesitate.

A & P MANAGER
Yeah, I remember him. He bought a bag of Entenmann's so Lisa could try one.

PAN from a stunned Mehan to the World-Weary Detective.

WORLD-WEARY DETECTIVE
Lisa?

A & P MANAGER
Marantz. She lives around the corner.

INT. LISA'S FOYER - DAY

MOVE in on Lisa. She's answered the door for Agent Mehan and the World-Weary Detective.

LISA
He did. He asked me out for tea.

Mehan smiles.

INT. DETECTIVE'S BULLPEN - 6TH PRECINCT - DAY

SLAP. A PHOTO of Mercedes goes up on the corkboard.

MEADE

Diannes Santamaria. AKA Dee. AKA Mercedes.

Special Agent Meade addresses a dozen Agents and Cops.

MEADE (CONT'D)

Between Beta, Bads, Pims and Field Force,
we got seven photos. And an address.

INT. EMPTY LOT - BROOKLYN - DAY

PULL OUT from an abandoned lot to find Agent Wyatt stands looking at it with the Tough Detective.

AGENT WYATT

If she gives this as her address, she knows it's an empty lot.

(scans their surroundings)
She lives close.

INT. INDOOR POOL - DAY

OVERHEAD on Stan. Floating in bluish-green luminescence.

Though free, though safe, he's not a happy man.

EXT. CHARLES STREET - DUSK

FOLLOW Detective Felden out of the Precinct, checking his watch. Late. The Female Detective comes out after him.

FEMALE DETECTIVE

Detective Felden!

He stops. Yeah? She hurries up apologetically.

FEMALE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

We just got a hit on the citywide inquiry for robberies with the same MO. Six seven had one on January nineteen. Two black males. Black Lexus. Victim's name: Steven.

(this is the big news)
They took his cellphone.

INT. FELDEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A Shabbat Dinner is going on down the hall. PAN to find Detective Felden, covertly on the phone. He holds a FAX from the "Technical and Reconnaissance Unit".

FELDEN

A 9-1-7-6-9 number showed up on the dump of Steven's cell records. Same number called Chase Bank at 23:03 Wednesday. It belongs to a Terrance Micelli. M-I-C-E-L--

FELDEN'S WIFE (O.S.)

(suspicious)

Sweetie?!

INT. BROWN VAN - NIGHT

BAM! Special Agent Meade pounds the dashboard for heat.

MEADE

Micelli's address also matches one of the Lexus owners off the DMV list.

Two Cops and Two Agents are suited up in the back.

INT. SARGENT'S DESK - 6TH PRECINCT - NIGHT

WHIP from the harried NIGHT SARGENT to a NATIVE AMERICAN YUPPIE, hands on his hips, serious weapon showing.

SHORT GUY

Warrior. United States Postal Police. Who here needs an address for a Luis Ramos?

EXT. EASTERN PARKWAY - DAWN

CRANE down to Agent Wyatt's car. He idles. Window down. The Tough Detective approaches from a building.

TOUGH DETECTIVE

White cross tiles but a yellow border.

AGENT WYATT

Damn.

They've been at this all night.

The Tough Detective nods down the street behind them.

TOUGH DETECTIVE
What's your story with these two here?

Agent Wyatt checks his mirror to see two girls coming up the sidewalk with McDonald's bags. Honey. Mercedes.

FLY in on them, startled, as they hear,...

AGENT WYATT (O.S.)
Hello, Ladies.

INT. LINDEN AVENUE - DAY

CLOSE on BROKEN AUTO GLASS. TILT up to a brown van parked directly on the spot. "Caribe Grocery" on it's side.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - 6TH PRECINCT - DAY

CLOSE on Honey. Sobbing. Agent Wyatt hands her a KLEENEX.

HONEY
I couldn't call no po-lice! That my boyfriend! That's my peoples!

BACK TO:

INT. LEXUS - NIGHT

Lucky and Sen as before. Silent. Nervous.

A loud speaker squeals and squawks...

MEADE'S VOICE
Get out of the vehicle!

The Lexus is suddenly flooded by SPOTLIGHTS.

EXT. LENOX AVENUE - NIGHT

Lucky and Sen get slowly out of the car, hands in the air and squinting in the glare of the spots.

A perimeter of Cops creep closer, weapons drawn.

MEADE'S VOICE
Lay down on the ground!

Both stand their ground. Unmoving. Rain hits their faces.

Cops start yelling. "Now!" "Get Down!" "On the ground!"

Sen looks over to Lucky, who stares into the light with vacant eyes, the tired look of resignation.

INT. OLD CADILLAC - DAY

An ANGRY WHITE MAN (49) drives fast and reckless. Lucky's frightened fiancee, Sandra, chews at her cell beside him.

SANDRA

Lenox! Darryl said on Lenox!

They fishtail around the corner and toward...

A SERIOUS POLICE SCENE. It's drawn a CROWD: the two FBI sedans, three squad cars, a uniform van, the brown van.

Lucky and Sen are cuffed and stood facing a fence.

ANGRY WHITE MAN

Stay in the fucking car!

EXT. LENOX AVENUE - NIGHT

The Cadillac slides to an aggressive stop. Even with the crowd commotion, Cops react at the intrusion.

The Angry White Man gets out yelling...

ANGRY WHITE MAN

Fuck you! It's his Lexus! It's not stolen!

Cops hold him back.

Agent Mehan supervises as Sen is led through the crowd to the uniform van. The Angry White Man grabs her jacket.

ANGRY WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

That's his car! His Grandmother bought it?!

AGENT MEHAN

Please step away from the scene, Sir.

She waves for Cops to get ready to bring Lucky through.

ANGRY WHITE MAN

Listen, you fucking Dike! Nothing better happen to that car! You fucking hear me?! You fucking racist cunt! You hear me?!

Lucky recognizes the voice yelling at Mehan. Turns.

LUCKY
Dad! Stop! Dad! It's not the car! Okay?!

Lucky gets his Father to stop yelling. The Cops take him off the fence. He passes his Father on way to the van.

LUCKY (CONT'D)
I did something. I need some help. Okay?
But I'll pay you back! I promise!

Lucky's voice cracks as the police drag him away...

LUCKY (CONT'D)
I'll pay you back! I promise I'll pay you!

SANDRA (O.S.)
Terrance! Terrance!

Sandra's gotten out of the car. Hearing her voice, Lucky turns his face to the pavement. Ashamed. Near tears.

And we HOLD on his Dad's confused expression, the look of a man realizing the extent of the damage he's wrought.

EXT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - DAY

Wearing an Greenbay Packers jersey and cheese wedge hat, Dan jumps out his car and starts RUNNING.

The hat flies off. He tries to stop himself. Slides in a bit of gravel. Falls. Scrapes an elbow. Limps.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SCOTT'S APARTMENT - DAY

A Battery Park view of the Hudson River and New Jersey. A SUPERBOWL PREGRAME SHOW plays on television.

Scott and Stanley watch. They hear the FRONT DOOR open.

A woman SHRIEKS out the kitchen.

SCOTT'S GIRLFRIEND
Christ! Dan!

DAN (O.S.)
Sorry...

Dan enters carrying his cheese wedge. Bleeding. Exited.

DAN (CONT'D)
They got them!

STANLEY
What...?

DAN
Your guys! They got them! Felden called my place! Looking for you!

STANLEY
What? Who'd they get?

DAN
All of them! He needs you at the precinct!
They're putting the males in line-ups!
(they don't get it)
Now!

SCOTT
The game's about to start...

Dan gives him a look. A beat. *Is this real?* Scott grabs his coat. Suddenly, Stan's very nervous.

INT. LINE-UP ROOM - 6TH PRECINCT - NIGHT

Tiny. Four by six. Drab. Wood panelling. Old shag carpet.

Detective Felden leads Stan into the room. A BORED MAN is in the corner, a Paid Witness. Stan faces darkened glass.

DETECTIVE FELDEN
Just tell me if you see the people that did this to you, but only if you're certain.

Felden flips off the OVERHEAD LIGHT. A dingy tiny CURTAIN is pulled back manually from the other side. Sticks.

Stan breathes deep...

SIX BLACK MEN sit in a similarly generic room through the glass. No height lines. No special lighting. Just young men sitting as if attending a tiny AA Meeting.

STANLEY
I didn't think they'd be sitting.

DETECTIVE FELDEN
We'll get them to stand.

STANLEY

No, it's okay.

Stanley notices Lucky's delicate hands -- and he knows it's him. Lucky seems somehow younger than we remember, and skinnier; his salesman's suit, cheaper.

Lucky stares straight ahead, defiant but terrified.

DETECTIVE FELDEN

Do you recognize anyone?

Stanley says nothing.

DETECTIVE FELDEN (CONT'D)

Mr. Alpert?

CLOSE on Stanley. Stalling. Wrestling.

He can see Lucky through his own reflection.

DETECTIVE FELDEN (CONT'D)

Mr. Alpert?

Interminable seconds drag.

Finally, softly, almost to himself,...

STANLEY

He can't see me.

FADE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - MANHATTAN CRIMINAL COURT - DAY

Judge EDWIN TORRES has a strong Hispanic accent, and even stronger sense of moral outrage. He's listening calmly as Luis Ramos CURSES him out in Spanish.

October 19, 1998

Stan enters in the back. A Court Officer points him thru a metal detector. He takes a seat.

As Three Other Court Officers hold Ramos back, his female PUBLIC DEFENDER finally says to the bench...

PUBLIC DEFENDER

I don't think Mr. Ramos understands the rule of accessorial liability.

JUMP CUT:

Ren stands before the court.

JUDGE TORRES
Do you admit to the charge of Kidnapping
with Intent to Terrorize?

REN
Yeah. No. Maybe. What you mean terrorize?

Ren's Lawyer whispers in his ear.

REN (CONT'D)
Yeah. We did that. Guilty.

JUMP CUT:

Sen stands before the court.

JUDGE TORRES
So, you had a plea agreement of ten years-to-life. Then Mr. Davis here tells his cell mate he's going to get a friend to smuggle a steak knife into court, kill his court-appointed attorney, take a hostage, escape.

Sen's Lawyer sits as far from his client as possible.

JUDGE TORRES (CONT'D)
He then discusses this very brilliant plan on a Rikers Island telephone.
(Sen picks his palm)
So, now...puff. No more plea offer?

THE DA
That is correct, your Honor.

JUMP CUT:

Lucky stands before the court. The Judge shuffles papers.

JUDGE TORRES
The court has some character letters...Let's see, one from your supervisor at Sears...and two from teachers at the College of Staten Island. You're a double major...business and criminal justice...?

Lucky looks down. Nods. The irony doesn't escape Torres.

CLOSE on Stan: Lucky's real life is shockingly mundane.

JUDGE TORRES (CONT'D)
Mr. Micelli, do you have anything to say
before sentencing?

LUCKY
I only wish to say...I wish I had met the
victim under different circumstances. I
think he would have been impressed by me.
That is something I would like to hope.

This is the last thing Stan expected to hear.

JUDGE TORRES
All right. It is the judgement of the Court
that the defendant be hereby committed to
the custody of the Department of
Correctional Services to be imprisoned for a
term no less than twenty years...

JUMP CUT:

Torres sentences Sen.

JUDGE TORRES (CONT'D)
...to be imprisoned for a term of no less
than eighteen years...

JUMP CUT:

Ditto Ren.

JUDGE TORRES (CONT'D)
...a term of no less than seventeen years...

JUMP CUT:

And Luis Ramos.

JUDGE TORRES (CONT'D)
...no less than fifteen years. You do, of
course, have the right to an appeal.

GAVEL. Commotion.

Ramos is led away squirming.

He sees Stan...

LUIS RAMOS
Yo, man, can you believe this shit?!

JUMP CUT:

GAVEL. Murmurs.

Ren also turns to find Stan. He smiles surprised, happy to see him, raising his hand to wave.

Then, as if remembering, Ren shyly drops the gesture.

JUMP CUT:

GAVEL. Crying.

Sen hugs two gentleman over the balustrade. Elegant men.

Stan realizes Sen's Father and Grandfather are middle-class professionals; it's why he won't speak of them.

Sen's eyes drift onto Stan. A cold stare.

Sen spits air. Vengeful. Hurt.

The Bailiff jostles him for the Courtroom's side door.

JUMP CUT:

GAVEL. Quiet.

Stan's standing by the time Lucky sees him. Embarrassed, the prisoner looks away. Both just men watch the Bailiff put the cuffs around Lucky's wrists.

Finally, their eyes meet, hold.

It's the first time they've seen each other face-to-face.

Their gazes hold, even as the Bailiff leads Lucky away.

Then, just at the door, Lucky seems to nod. That's all. A simple nod. Recognition. Familiarity.

Stan smiles the saddest of smiles...but it comes too late and Lucky's already disappeared through the doorway.

FADE TO:

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Late. Hot. Stan waits alone for his subway still trying to get through "A Bright Shining Lie".

May 17, 1999

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Stan comes in to find the car empty save a MASSIVE GANG-BANGER listening to large headphones worn open around his neck like mini-speakers, an auditory "fuck off".

Stan stops. Thinks. Decides.

He goes and sits right across from the Gang-Banger, whose attitude is far from welcoming. He glowers.

The train leaves the station and picks up speed.

A rap beat BLARES. It's TUPAC SHAKUR's confused, tortured anthem of hope and hopelessness, "Changes".

TUPAC

I see no changes. Wake up in the morning and ask myself: "Is life worth living, or should I blast myself?" I'm tired of bein' poor.

Stan gives up trying to read.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

Even worse, I'm black. My stomach hurts. So, I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch.

Stan listens.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

We gotta start makin' changes. Learn to see me as a brother, not two distant strangers. And that's how it's supposed to be. How can the Devil take a brother if he close to me?

Then, surprisingly, almost imperceptibly, Stan starts moving his head to the music.

TUPAC (CONT'D)

I'd love to go back when we played as kids but things changed -- that's the way it is.

The chorus kicks in...

TUPAC (CONT'D)

That's just the way it is. Things will never be the same. That's just the way it is.

Stan's mouthing the words. Faintly.

The Gang-Banger notices. Their eyes meet.

But Stanley Alpert keeps grooving...

TUPAC (CONT'D)

*All I see is racist faces. Misplaced hate
makes disgrace to races. And I wonder what
it takes, to make this one a better place.*

They ride on through the night. A black man. A white man.
Facing each other. Not speaking. Listening. Seeing.

Somewhere in the second verse, about the time we hear,...

TUPAC (CONT'D)

*And though it seems heaven sent, we ain't
ready to see a black President.*

...the screen FADES to BLACK.

CREDITS.

End.