

THE BLADE ITSELF

by
Aaron Stockard

Based on the novel by Marcus Sakey

Ideology
3000 Olympic Blvd.
Ste. 2510
Santa Monica, CA 90404

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EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

It's late. Security gates shutter the storefronts and the windows of the office towers have dimmed. The traffic lights cycle from green to yellow to red above streets that are empty and stone quiet.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Twenty yards deep in a darkened alley sits a BLACK 1969 MUSTANG tucked behind a steel dumpster.

INT. MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

EVAN McGANN (25) sits behind the wheel toying with a SNUB-NOSED REVOLVER. DANNY CARTER (25) is in the passenger seat eyeing the gun nervously. These two have been best of friends since birth, and it reflects in the ease of their rapport.

DANNY

Put that thing away before you hurt
yourself.

Evan smiles, revealing a chipped tooth.

EVAN

Keeps me calm.

DANNY

Makes me nervous.

EVAN

Everything makes you nervous- Hot
cocoa makes you nervous.

DANNY

(chuckles)

Well one of us has to be.

EVAN

How about that fine-ass girl you
met at Frank's a couple weeks ago?
Worked up the nerve to kiss her
yet?

DANNY

Her name is Karen.

EVAN

And has Karen been tagged yet?

DANNY
Mind your business.

EVAN
(grins)
Wow. It's serious, huh? A man who
won't talk pussy with his best
friend is a man in love.

DANNY
Who said that? Joan Rivers?

They start to laugh. But something through the windshield catches Danny's eye and he shushes Evan with a finger to his lips.

DANNY'S POV: The mouth of the alley glows a dim yellow in the street lights. After a long moment, a DRUNK STUMBLES FROM THE SHADOWS and pisses against the alley wall.

Evan and Danny breathe a sigh of relief. The drunk zips up, teeters back across the alley and sits against the wall, pulling a bottle from his jacket.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Looks like he's settling in.

EVAN
Can I shoot him?

DANNY
Lemme talk to him first.

Danny gets out of the car and starts down the alley. As he approaches, the drunk looks up at him fearfully.

DRUNK
Please don't cut me, man. I ain't got nothin'.

DANNY
Relax. I'm not gonna cut you. I just need a favor.

Danny pulls a \$20 bill from his wallet.

DRUNK
Oh God, no... I have herpes.

DANNY
What?!
(then realizing)
No. Jesus no. Nobody's pants are coming off...
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Listen to me: I have a very important assignment for you, okay? I need you to take this money up to the liquor store on Grand and LaSalle, get yourself a bottle, and find a seat in the parking lot.

(leans in: conspiratorial)
In about 20 minutes a friend of mine carrying a brown umbrella will come by. I need you to deliver a message to him. One I can't give him over the phone, know what I'm saying?

(off the drunk's nod)
You tell him -- you listening? You tell him, '*the birds have flown the cage.*' You do that and he'll give you another twenty.

DRUNK

That's all I gotta do?

DANNY

Easiest money you ever made.

Danny extends the \$20 bill toward the drunk. He reaches for it, but Danny jerks it away.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What are you gonna tell him?

DRUNK

The birds are flying out of their cages.

Danny smiles and presses the bill into the drunk's palm.

DANNY

Good man. Now get moving soldier.

The drunk nods purposefully before ambling from the alley and down the street. Danny turns back to Evan with a smug grin.

CUT TO:

SAME - MINUTES LATER

The mustang idles in the middle of the alley. One end of a HEAVY CHAIN is fastened to the rear fender. Danny attaches the other to a STEEL CAGE mounted over a door...

Evan inches the mustang forward, pulling the chain taut. Standing clear, Danny cocks his head and holds a hand up to Evan: waiting -- listening for...

The LOW RUMBLE of an approaching EL TRAIN. Slow at first, it builds swiftly to a FULL CLATTERING ROAR...

Directly overhead, SPARKS blow sideways as the wheels SQUEAL around a bend in the tracks. Danny drops his hand...

And Evan stomps on the gas. The mustang lurches forward, the metal latch gives, and the cage rips from its hinges...

The mustang's BRAKE LIGHTS bathe the walls in red as the train trails off and the alley falls quiet again.

Evan and Danny move fast: Danny stoops by the door and pulls a purple CROWN ROYAL BAG from his coat. He removes LOCK PICKING GEAR from the bag and sets to work on a DEAD-BOLT.

Evan detaches the chain from the cage and the mustang's fender, and tosses it into the trunk...

DANNY (O.C.)

In.

Evan hurries to Danny's side -- a flashlight in one hand, his pistol in the other.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(re: gun)

Come on, man...

EVAN

Shut up.

Danny bites his tongue and they step through the door...

INT PAWNSHOP (BACK OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS

The FLASHLIGHT BEAM SCOURS the interior, picking up quick glimpses of:

A MINI FRIDGE atop two rusty FILING CABINETS; A rumpled MATTRESS on the floor; A CALENDAR with a swimsuit model cozying up to a carburetor; A WOODEN DESK-

DANNY

There.

Evan holds the beam on the desk as Danny moves to it. He turns on a DESK LAMP, illuminating the entire room: a BACK OFFICE stuffed with clutter.

DANNY (CONT'D)
This looks like a *manager's desk*,
right?

EVAN
That what we're looking for?

DANNY
Yeah.

Danny tests the desk drawers: locked. He sets the Crown Royal bag down and starts on the locks.

Evan crosses the room to a door opposite the one they entered.

EVAN
I'm gonna check the register.

DANNY
Flashlight!

Evan sighs and turns off his flashlight before slipping through the door.

ANGLE ON: Danny, concentrating hard. He runs a pick down the inside of the lock, counting clicks... Four. He eases in a TENSION WRENCH and starts on the first pin...

Moments later, the lock twists open and Danny pulls out the drawer. A sleek, black AUTOMATIC PISTOL lays atop a NYLON BANK BAG with a big, brass lock: Jackpot.

He removes the bag, sets it on the desk, and hurries to the door Evan just went through.

INT PAWNSHOP (FLOOR) - CONTINUOUS

Danny pokes his head in. The pawnshop is a forest of dim shapes: electric guitars strung above power tools; a couple of racks of TVs. Evan is behind a counter rummaging through an open cabinet.

DANNY
Come on, man. I got it.

EVAN
Give me a hand.

DANNY
With what? Let's go.

EVAN

This dude sells weight, right?
There's gotta be a pound of reefer
here, maybe two. That's another
couple grand easy.

DANNY

No, Evan. That wasn't the plan.

EVAN

Fuck the plan. It'll take two
minutes... Check those cabinets
over there.

Danny shakes his head in agitation, but knows it'll be faster
to help than to argue. He pushes through the door.

DANNY

This is how you get popped,
shithead.

EVAN

This is how you get a plasma for
your bedroom.

Danny rips open a cabinet: nothing but miniature porcelain
FIGURINES. He moves to the next one.

EVAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna check the office.

DANNY

Ninety seconds-

Suddenly, a LOUD METALLIC RATTLE makes Danny jump and his
eyes go wide. He turns to the front of the store:

The security gate is up and the front door swings open. The
light from the streetlamps pours in alongside the THICK
SILHOUETTE OF THE SHOP OWNER.

OWNER

You won't lose control on this
stuff, sweetheart... It's Hawaiian.

The FLUORESCENT OVERHEADS flicker on. The OWNER, bearded and
clad in an orange hunting vest looms in the doorway, his
skinny, acne-scarred DATE by his side.

He spots Danny almost immediately and in a quick, practiced
move produces an AUTOMATIC PISTOL from his vest, spreads his
feet, and racks the gun while leveling it on Danny's chest...

Time slows down on Danny as he waits to be shot...

BOOM.

A RED STAIN BLOOMS across the owner's stomach. He collapses to the floor and his gun clatters away.

At the far end of the shop, Evan stands with his arm extended -- smoke wafting from the barrel of his gun

ANGLE ON: Danny -- frozen; mouth agape: *Oh shit!*

Evan races across the shop floor and slams the front door shut, shoving the shell-shocked date aside.

On the floor, the owner writhes in a widening pool of blood, clutching his stomach and groaning.

EVAN
You alive?
(leaning closer)
You alive?!

Evan stands over him. His eyes are afire, but his movements are calm -- unhurried.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Where's the weed, motherfucker!?

Danny snaps from his fog.

DANNY
Evan.

EVAN
Where's it at fucker!?

Evan kicks the owner hard with his steel-toed boot.

DANNY
(stronger)
Evan!

EVAN
Relax!

DANNY
No. You relax. Let's go.

EVAN
I ain't going anywhere til this motherfucker tells me where his weed is at.

He kicks the owner again -- harder.

EVAN (CONT'D)
(to owner)
You hear me!?

DANNY
EVAN!

Evan spins around and glares at Danny... But then a flash of movement catches their attention and they turn to see the owner's date making a dash for the office.

EVAN
Stop!

She doesn't, crashing through the door and locking it behind her with an audible CLICK.

EVAN (CONT'D)
GOD DAMMIT!

His coolness evaporating, Evan delivers another kick to the owner whose groans have turned to whimpers...

Danny steps between them and pushes Evan back. Evan stumbles but doesn't fall, then gets up in Danny's face -- eyes narrowed, gun trembling in his hand.

DANNY
(slow and calm)
Stop. We gotta take a deep breath,
okay?
(beat)
Brothers.

The tension ebbs from Evan's body.

EVAN
All right... Fuck the weed.

But it occurs to Danny that he left the money on the desk in the office. He drops his head and squeezes his eyes shut.

DANNY
Shit.

EVAN
What?

DANNY
(pointing to the office)
I left the cash in there.

EVAN
Jesus, Danny.

DANNY

Well I hadn't planned on a shoot-out, bro. Didn't think my fucking partner-

EVAN

Shut it. Save that whiney bullshit for another time.

DANNY

Fine. Nothing we can do about it now. Let's go.

EVAN

No.

Evan starts back towards the office.

DANNY

The cops will be here any second, Evan.

EVAN

I ain't leaving empty handed.

Evan calls through the office door.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Lady?! Open the door or I will break it fucking down.

Silence.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Okay... Here I come.

Evan rears back and SLAMS the sole of his boot into the door near the knob. It shudders but doesn't give. As he winds up again, a GUNSHOT rips a hole through the door, spraying splinters everywhere. A SECOND BULLET punches through the door and Evan dives for cover...

A beat of silence -- stillness... And then EVAN ERUPTS. He empties his gun into the door, leaps to his feet and starts kicking it again -- frothing at the mouth.

ANGLE ON: Danny. His friend gripped in a homicidal rage and a stranger bleeding to death at his feet, Danny makes a decision:

He RUNS...

EXT STREET - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Danny bursts through the front door of the pawnshop and sprints down the sidewalk... before slowing to a brisk stride, wary of drawing attention to himself.

At the next corner he darts up the stairwell of an EL STATION. The first WAILS OF A POLICE SIREN can be heard...

After pushing through the turnstile, he heads down the platform, away from A YOUNG COUPLE snuggling on a bench. The LOW RUMBLE of an oncoming train starts to build...

As the train approaches, its HEADLIGHTS bathe Danny in blinding white... And as it races into the station, the RUSH OF AIR snaps at his clothing -- whips up his hair.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CREDITS

INT BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

A pale dawn spills through the windows and onto a young couple asleep in bed.

The man stirs, rolls onto his back and opens his eyes. It's Danny (now 32). The clock on the nightstand: 5:47 AM.

INSERT CARD: Seven years later.

INT BATHROOM - LATER

The bathroom is thick with steam as Danny showers. His girlfriend KAREN (32) sits on the toilet peeing -- rubbing sleep from her eyes.

She finishes, lets her bathrobe slide to the floor, and steps into the shower with Danny.

KAREN
(groggy)
Morning.

DANNY
Hey sunshine.

They embrace.

DANNY (CONT'D)
It's all yours.

Danny starts to pull away, but Karen doesn't let him go. She takes his hand and slides it onto her ass.

KAREN

No.

DANNY

I'm gonna be late.

He squeezes her butt, kisses her forehead, and steps out of the shower.

KAREN

Noooooo.

DANNY

Raincheck.

KAREN

It's not raining.

Danny chuckles.

DANNY

I should've been outta here five minutes ago.

KAREN

Well it's not like you're gonna be *in here* any more than ninety seconds so what's the harm?

Danny laughs... relents and steps back into the shower.

DANNY

Mockery only makes it worse, honey.

We can see their SILHOUETTES through the curtain wrapping themselves around one another.

CUT TO:

INT PRISON CELL - MORNING

The cellblock echoes with the fear and anger of hopeless men.

Evan (32) lies awake on a steel cot. The years have had a more noticeable effect on him than Danny: Lines cut his face into sharp angles; His body is lean and coiled... Everything about him just looks hard.

INT PRISON - DAY

Evan stands before a steel cage. On the other side, a CORRECTIONS OFFICER behind a counter pushes Evan's belongings through a small opening: A change of clothes; his wallet and watch; a pair of steel-toes; and an envelope with \$50 cash.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER
(pointing O.C.)
Shower and change through there.

Evan crosses to a door and pushes it open. Inside, an ENORMOUS CON, naked and sopping wet, stands under one of a half dozen shower heads and stares back at him.

EXT STATEVILLE PRISON - DAY

A gate swings open. Evan and TWO OTHER CONS step through -- free men again.

Evan looks for a familiar face among the SMALL GROUP OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS waiting outside, but there isn't one... And so, after a beat of contemplation, Evan starts up the road away from Statesville Prison -- alone.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

FIVE STORIES OF STRUCTURAL STEEL rise from the ground, the skeleton of what will become luxury residential lofts. WORKERS ZIG-ZAG across beams in hard hats and orange vests. WELDERS crouch in corners over showers of sparks.

On the ground floor Danny talks with the foreman, JIM McCLOSKEY (45) and his son MARK (23).

JIM MCCLOSKEY
Nothing's ever on time, Danny. You know that. It gets here by next week, we're fine.

DANNY
It's getting cold already.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
Even if it's the week after we'll be fine. We already got the floors, most of the wall-studding, the stuff we usually do later. Once it gets here, we'll have the exterior up pronto... We'll put the whole crew on it.

MARK MCCLOSKEY
Just an early chill.

DANNY
(snorts)
Yeah. Be seventy again before you
know it. We'll be working in
bathing suits.

MARK MCCLOSKEY
You mean we'll be working.

Danny shoots Mark a hard look -- one from his old life. It's still effective and Mark's eyes shift to his feet.

DANNY
(to Jim)
Why don't we finish up inside.

CUT TO:

EXT TRAILER - DAY

Establish. A small trailer atop cinder-blocks serves as an on-site office.

INT TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

It's cramped and cluttered inside. PLANS and REGULATIONS paper the walls; FAST FOOD WRAPPERS are strewn everywhere; Stack after stack of NEWSPAPERS and FILE FOLDERS.

Danny sits in a chair. McCloskey stands, his hard hat tucked under one arm.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
I'm sorry about that, Danny. He
works hard, but still got that
angsty bullshit-

DANNY
(cutting him off)
Don't worry about it. I mouthed off
to plenty of people in my day.
Imagine you did too.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
(chuckles)
One or two.

DANNY
It's forgotten.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
I'll make sure it doesn't happen
again.

DANNY
I didn't bring you in here to chew
you out about your boy...
(hesitates)
I'm sorry, Jim, but I'm going to
recommend to Richard that we put
the site on hold for the winter.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
That's a mistake. We can get it
done. We got two months -- maybe
more.

DANNY
Maybe.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
I'm telling you, we can.

DANNY
Let me level with you: We're
treading water. It was not the year
we hoped it would be and Richard's
starting to panic. Money's tight.
The economy is- Shit, you don't
need me to tell you what's going on
with the housing market. We had two
projects default on final payments
this year. Good people, just ran
out of money... Remember the office
building over on Racine? Our *big*
score? That was one.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
Jesus.

DANNY
I'd love to see this place humming
all winter, I really would. But
it's a bad play. Something goes
wrong, we can't get the other two
ready...

JIM MCCLOSKEY
What about my crew?

DANNY
I talked Richard into moving them
onto the two other sites.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
We may have to go to shifts, but no
one loses their job this winter.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
And me?

DANNY
We have work for you, Jim. And
you'll get to finish here.

McCloskey nods -- mulling things over.

JIM MCCLOSKEY
All right. I'll tell my boys.

The foreman starts for the door, then turns back.

JIM MCCLOSKEY (CONT'D)
Hey Danny. I appreciate you being
straight with me like that.

DANNY
No worries, Jim.

McCloskey exits and Danny beams a little, proud of the way he
handled that.

INT EVAN'S UNCLE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Underneath a "WELCOME HOME" banner tacked to the wall, Evan
sits on a couch next to an old girlfriend, DEBBIE. She's in
her early 30s, but too many nights at the end of a bar have
her looking closer to 40. Her make-up is thick -- her clothes
a few sizes too tight.

EVAN'S UNCLE (60s, with the reddened, bulbous face of a long-
time heavy drinker) is slumped in a chair across from them,
close to passing out. A RADIO is tuned to the local classic
rock station.

EVAN
This might just be the shittiest
party I've ever been to.

DEBBIE
I'm sorry, Evan.
(re: uncle)
I shouldn't have let him do the
planning.

Evan's uncle emits a loud SNORE and they can't help but
chuckle. Debbie fills two glasses with whiskey, hands one to
Evan, and raises her own.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Cheers.

EVAN
Cheers.

They swallow their drinks in one big gulp and sit through an awkward beat of silence.

DEBBIE
I'm happy you're back.

Evan looks into Debbie's earnest, glazed eyes, then pulls her close to him and kisses her. And, at least for the moment, the tension and discomfort drains from their bodies and the kiss moves toward something more...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT BEDROOM - LATER

In a back bedroom, a post-coital Debbie is asleep in bed. Evan lies next to her wide-awake. After a long moment he slides out of bed and pulls on a tee-shirt.

EXT UNCLE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Evan exits onto the porch and heads around the side of the house toward a RUNDOWN GARAGE set back from the street.

INT GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Evan tugs the chain on a bare bulb hanging from the ceiling, filling the garage with light. It's dank and full of crap -- everything blanketed in a thick layer of dust...

Including Evan's MUSTANG which sits against the far wall. And while it's seen better days, it's still a bad-ass car.

He gets in, finds a KEY stashed long ago beneath the seat and slides it into the ignition. He pauses for a brief moment, then turns it... Nothing. Not even a click.

Evan reclines the seat back and closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT CAFETERIA - DAY (MOS)

Dressed in blue coveralls, Evan swipes a mop back and forth across the floor of a huge, empty cafeteria.

A CUSTODIAN in his early 20s approaches Evan, shaking his head with a frown. He snatches the mop from Evan and demonstrates the proper technique: pushing it down the floor ten paces and pulling it back over the same area; then taking a step to the left and repeating the process. Evan watches him, unable to hide his disdain...

INT SAME - LATER (MOS)

The cafeteria is still empty. At a table near a large picture window, Evan sits alone eating lunch.

INT PUBLIC BUS - DAY (MOVING - MOS)

The Bus is packed tight with rush hour COMMUTERS. Evan is wedged in deep amongst a throng of bodies. It's more physical human contact than Evan had in seven years at Statesville...

But it makes him anxious -- claustrophobic. And as the bus PULLS TO THE CURB at the next stop, he squeezes his way to the door and exits...

EXT SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS (MOS)

Evan takes a moment to catch his breath, get his bearings. Then determines which direction's home and starts walking.

INT LEE'S BAR - NIGHT

Lee's is a working-man's bar: press-paneled walls; a warped pool table in the back; a faded newspaper cutout of an American flag tacked above the bourbon.

Danny & his best friend PATRICK (30) sit at the bar before two empty pints. Patrick calls to a SHOVEL-FACED BARTENDER.

PATRICK
Two shots of Bush.

The bartender plunks two shot glasses onto the bar and fills them with whiskey.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
So I'm out in the West Loop the
other day, where they're making all
those fake warehouses for yuppies.
You know, people like you.

Danny smiles, taking the ribbing in stride.

DANNY
You mean lofts?

PATRICK
Why you people would pay four
hundred thousand dollars for a
house with no walls is beyond me.
But anyway, it's a good spot,
decent cars, not too many people.
And there's a GTO, you know the one
with the V-8?

DANNY
Sure.

PATRICK
So I'm in the middle of loading it
when, all of a sudden, running down
the street comes this dude -- looks
like he might be J. Crew himself...
Probably a buddy of yours.

DANNY
Fuck you.

PATRICK
I don't have the car locked down
yet and I don't want to just dump
my truck. And worse, the guy's on
his cell as he's running.

DANNY
(winces)
Ouch.

PATRICK
No shit. So I'm telling myself, be
cool, just pop the guy hard enough
to drop him, lock down the car, and
get the fuck outta there.

Patrick downs his shot.

DANNY
And?

PATRICK

(chuckles)

Just as I'm about to hit him, he yells to whoever he's talking to that his car's getting towed and hangs up. My fist is balled, but I hold off -- just stand there staring at him. Guy barely looks at me, just asks what the problem is. So I tell him he was sticking into the alley.

They both laugh.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Then this clown, thinking he knows all the angles, pulls out his wallet and says, what's it gonna take to settle this right now? Dude offers me fifty bucks to lower the car I'm in the middle of stealing.

DANNY

Did you take it?

PATRICK

Fuck no. Made him give me a hundred, went down the street for a steak, then came back an hour later and stole his car anyway.

They burst into a long fit of laughter...

DANNY

(to the bartender)

Can we get two more beers?

BARTENDER

Before I get you anything you should know something.

DANNY

What's that?

BARTENDER

You two start any trouble, we keep a pistol under the bar.

DANNY

(taken aback)

What makes you think we're gonna start any trouble?

The bartender's eyes move off of Danny and over his shoulder.

BARTENDER

Because that big guy's been eye-fucking you since he walked in.

Danny swivels around in his chair...

DANNY'S POV: And there, standing against the back wall and staring straight at him is Evan.

Danny is thunderstruck, his heart hammers against his chest. Evan pushes off the wall and starts toward them.

PATRICK

Holy fuck.

Evan steps up to them, his eyes square on Danny.

EVAN

Long time.

DANNY

(stammers)

Evan, man. Shit.

Danny gets up and embraces Evan in a hug. Evan offers a stiff pat on the shoulder and pulls away.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You know Patrick.

EVAN

Yeah, I know Patrick.

PATRICK

Hasn't been twelve years, has it?

EVAN

No... it hasn't.

Patrick and Evan eyeball each other for a hostile beat -- they've clearly got some history.

PATRICK

I'm gonna go introduce myself to those ladies over there, let you two catch up.

(rising from his stool)

And Evan, if you're ready to give up the dick and come back to flavor country, feel free to join me whenever you like.

Evan smiles, reminding himself he's not on the yard anymore.

EVAN
Nice seeing you, Patty.

Patrick heads off towards a table full of YOUNG, DRUNK WOMEN.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Still got your lapdog, I see.

Danny ignores the comment and calls the bartender over once again. Evan sits.

DANNY
What are you drinking?

EVAN
(to bartender)
A Brubaker... and a big whiskey.

BARTENDER
(to Danny)
You too?

Danny nods and the bartender steps away.

DANNY
So...

EVAN
So.

DANNY
Bad?

EVAN
No. It was awesome.

The bartender returns with their drinks and sets them down. Danny throws a \$20 bill on the bar and raises his whiskey.

DANNY
Welcome back.

EVAN
Cheers.

They *clink* glasses and down their shots. Danny looks Evan up and down.

DANNY
Christ, you're fucking huge.

EVAN
Not much else to do

DANNY
You're out early, huh?

EVAN
Don't feel early.

DANNY
Behaved yourself?

EVAN
Dug myself a great tunnel.

ANGLE ON Danny: huh?

EVAN (CONT'D)
I busted out thirty-six hours ago.
I'm on the run, man.

Danny's eyes go wide -- he can't believe what he's hearing.

DANNY
You escaped?!

Evan milks the moment... before breaking into a laugh.

EVAN
Good to see you still got the panic
in you, Danny.

SAME - LATER

Danny and Evan have finished another round.

EVAN
The *North Side*. Look at you.
Probably rooting for the Cubbies
now -- buying five dollar coffees.

DANNY
Something like that.

Evan laughs.

EVAN
And this is the girl you were with
before I went in?

DANNY
Karen. Yeah.

EVAN
Karen... right. That worked out,
huh?

DANNY

Sure did.

EVAN

She was at my trial, wasn't she?

DANNY

I asked her to go... Figured you should have *someone* there.

EVAN

You had plans that day?

DANNY

They'd have made me in a heartbeat, Evan.

EVAN

...yeah.

An awkward beat.

DANNY

Listen, Brother, it's good to see you, but I gotta head out. I'm a civilian now. Got work in the morning.

EVAN

Oh yeah? What do you do now, Danny?

DANNY

Construction... But I'm in an office mostly. I'm a project manager.

EVAN

Beats shoveling shit.

Danny nods and places two \$20 bills on the bar.

EVAN (CONT'D)

You don't need to buy my beers.

DANNY

Yes I do. Least I can do.

He cringes inside, wishes he hadn't said that.

EVAN

All right, Danny.

DANNY
Congratulations again, man... Good luck.

Danny turns and walks off before his foot finds its way any deeper into his mouth.

ANGLE ON: Evan, watching him go...

INT DANNY & KAREN'S CONDO - EVENING

It's late and Danny can't sleep. Lying on the couch, he flips aimlessly through the channels on the TV.

Off screen, he hears the front door UNLOCK and swing open: Karen coming home from work. She enters the living room, surprised to see Danny awake.

KAREN
Hey sweetheart. Can't sleep?

DANNY
Wide awake.

KAREN
(sweet)
Awww...

Karen moves to the couch and sits next to Danny.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Those pesky voices stirring things up in there?

He pulls her close to him.

DANNY
Glad you're home. Work okay?

KAREN
Enh. Same... You see Patrick?

DANNY
Yeah.

KAREN
How's he?

DANNY
Same.

We linger on them for an extended beat...

INT PAROLE OFFICE - MORNING

Evan's disheveled, overworked PAROLE OFFICER (50s) sits at his desk looking through a file folder. Across from him, Evan is slumped in a chair -- tired... discouraged.

EVAN

Even if I get one of these jobs what does that mean for me? How long am I really gonna be able to get up at 4:30 in the morning to clean cow intestines off the floor? Or salt french fries with some fucked-up-looking paper hat on my head? A month? I just endured seven years in prison for Christ's sake and I can't imagine doing more than two weeks in some of these places before taking my AK-47 to them.

(pause)

I realize I probably shouldn't be saying this to you, but I'm just being honest... I mean, why don't I just save everybody the trouble and go back to stealing shit from people now?

PAROLE OFFICER

(takes a long look at
Evan)

I wouldn't blame you for it. I'd arrest you, but I'd be hard pressed to blame you.

(off Evan's sideways look)

What do you want me to say? It's an imperfect system, to say the least. But I'd like to talk about this AK-47.

EVAN

(rolls his eyes)

I don't have an AK-47. I was just saying-

PAROLE OFFICER

Are you angry at specific people or people generally?

Evan stands, effectively ending the conversation.

EVAN

I'll let you know if I find anything.

He turns and exits the office.

EXT ZOO - DAY

SHORT MONTAGE: Danny and Karen stroll through the zoo hand in hand...

A CHEETAH sleeps in the shade...

A GORILLA slumps against a wall in his habitat. Karen sits next to him (separated only by plexi-glass) talking softly to him -- trying to cheer him up...

Karen's got a swirl of COTTON CANDY...

SAME - LATER

Karen sits at the edge of a park bench. Danny is stretched out, his head in her lap.

KAREN

Happy?

DANNY

Mm-hmm.

KAREN

Me too.

THUD... Out of nowhere, a 5-year-old ASIAN BOY slams into their bench, startling Karen and Danny.

DANNY

(to the boy)

You okay?

The boy breaks into a radiant smile and darts off. Karen and Danny watch him rejoin a SMALL GROUP OF KIDS PLAYING TAG.

KAREN

I'm gonna want one of those, you know.

DANNY

A small Korean boy?

She laughs, smacks him playfully.

KAREN

I'm serious.

DANNY

Well I don't *not* want one.

KAREN

Good... No pressure. It's just that pretty soon it could turn into fertility clinics and triplets. I don't want that.

DANNY

Oh God, me neither.

A long beat.

KAREN

So when should we start?

DANNY

Stop pressuring me.

Karen gives him a playful whack.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(grinning)

I can't breath, woman. Your love is stifling me.

They laugh together on the bench, very much in love, and WE PULL UP & AWAY from them... WIDENING to see the whole park and the city beyond.

EXT NORTH-SIDE STREET - DAY

Toting his briefcase and a coffee, Danny emerges from a convenience store into a stream of BASEBALL FANS converging on Wrigley Field. He weaves his way through and ducks down a side street...

The GUTTURAL RUMBLE of a car engine catches Danny's attention. The Mustang, looking and running great now, crawls alongside him in the street. Evan looks out from the open passenger window with a shit-eating grin on his face.

Danny stops and admires.

DANNY

Even prettier than I remember.

EVAN

And just as fast. Hop in, I'll show you.

DANNY

Shit. I wish I could, man, but I
need to get out to Evanston.

EVAN

We'll go to Evanston then.

DANNY

(hesitates)

...All right.

CUT TO:

INT MUSTANG - DAY (MOVING)

Evan floors it along the PARKWAY, roaring through the light traffic. Evan and Danny are loving it -- like they're sixteen again.

DANNY

Is this a parole violation?

EVAN

Only if they catch me.

Danny laughs.

EVAN (CONT'D)

But don't worry. I'll take the heat
if we get stopped.

Evan chuckles at his dig, but Danny's smile quickly fades.

EXT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - MORNING

The Mustang rolls down an upscale street in EVANSTON and pulls to the curb in front of a LARGE SINGLE FAMILY HOME.

Evan remains in the car as Danny gets out and starts up the walkway toward the house. As he nears, A 12 YEAR-OLD BOY (TOMMY) bursts through the front door hollering angrily:

TOMMY

AND ONE OF THE CONTROLLERS BROKE,
TOO! EVERY TWO PLAYER GAME I HAVE
IS USELESS!

Tommy storms past Danny in the driveway. Without looking up or losing his red-faced scowl, his voice softens:

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Hi Danny.

DANNY
Hey Tommy.

Bemused, Danny turns and watches him grumble off.

INT. RICHARD'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Danny steps through the open door into the foyer.

DANNY
(calling out)
Hello?!... Richard?!

RICHARD (O.C.)
I'm in the back, Danny!

Danny heads down a long HALLWAY. At the far end, he enters a plush DEN/OFFICE and finds RICHARD (50s, balding; in his pajamas) hunched over a mess of papers spread across an enormous mahogany desk.

DANNY
Hey Boss.

Danny removes a small bundle of papers from his bag and places them in front of Richard. Richard immediately begins scribbling his signature on them.

RICHARD
You see Tommy?

DANNY
Doesn't seem to be a big fan of
yours this morning.

RICHARD
I got him that video game machine
last Christmas -- less than a year
ago -- and now it's *obsolete*.
(shaking his head)
I will not buy two of them in the
same calendar year. I won't do it.

DANNY
Hold your ground Richard.

RICHARD
I plan to.

Richard hands the papers back to Danny.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Thanks for coming out on a
Saturday, Danny. Good man.

DANNY
Not a problem.

RICHARD
I'm having lunch at the club with
some friends. You can tag along if
you like.

DANNY
Thanks Richard, but I got an old
friend in town. We got some
catching up to do.

RICHARD
Maybe next time.

DANNY
You got it.

The two exchange good-byes and Danny leaves.

INT MUSTANG - DAY (MOVING)

Danny directs Evan through the streets of his neighborhood.

DANNY
I'm on the left up here.

Evan pulls to the curb and looks out at Danny's house.

EVAN
This it?

DANNY
That's it.

EVAN
The whole thing?

DANNY
No. About twelve hundred square
feet of it.

EVAN
A house, a woman, an SUV. All
settled in -- snug as shit.

DANNY
Snug as shit.

EVAN

So that's what you get? Life as a civilian?

DANNY

That's all I want.

EVAN

And what do I get?

DANNY

For what?

Evan shakes his head, a rueful smile.

EVAN

For what... How long we known each other?

DANNY

Long time.

EVAN

Since we were four.

A beat.

DANNY

You're pissed I walked out.

Evan raises his eyebrows: *you think?*

DANNY (CONT'D)

What was I supposed to do?

EVAN

Get my fucking back, bro. That's what you were supposed to do.

DANNY

Get *your back*?! You were kicking a man in the face who you'd just shot.

EVAN

If I hadn't shot that man, he'd have shot you.

DANNY

Bullshit. He'd have made me freeze and called the cops.

EVAN

Come on, Danny. You remember that dude: The vest; The little stance. He'd been waiting his whole life for that moment.

DANNY

We should have been out the back before he ever showed.

EVAN

I saved your ass. Then I kept my mouth shut. And then I went to state prison for seven years all by myself.

Danny averts his eyes.

EVAN (CONT'D)

That judge just banged his little hammer. Said, 'twelve years' just like that. And where were you? Buying a fucking condo and coming up with names for your new Labra-Doodle.

(beat)

Know what I was doing? Celling with a 270-pound banger named Isaiah, eye-ballng me to see if I'm a guppy or a shark. How would you sleep?

DANNY

(soft)

I'm sorry, man. I'm grateful for what you did for me.

EVAN

You are?! Really?! I came out short seven years -- seven *prison* years. Okay, bad beat. But at least I figure when I get home I'll find my partner waiting for me. Surely he'll have something set up to take care of his best fucking friend. Only instead, he's nowhere to be found. In fact I have to track him down. And when I do? He says he's gone legit, buys me a beer, and says, 'good luck.'

(pause)

I say bullshit to that.

DANNY

What do you want me to do?

EVAN

Help me level shit out. Show me how
mother-fucking grateful you are.

DANNY

I told you, Ev, I'm out of the
game. I'm retired.

EVAN

So I suppose I should just crawl
back to my hole then.

DANNY

No... I'll help you. I'll do what I
can. But my life's different now.

A silent pause before Danny opens his door.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I won't go back to work.

EVAN

(pissed)

I heard you the first time, D.

He puts the car in gear. Danny pauses -- searching for
something to say. But nothing comes. He gets out of the car
and Evan speeds away.

ANGLE ON: Danny, watching the Mustang race down the block.

EXT O'DONNELL CONSTRUCTION CO. - DAY

Establishing. A typical suburban office park housing several
companies. A sign hanging above one of the entrances reads:
O'Donnell Construction Company.

INT O'DONNELL CONSTRUCTION CO. - DAY

Inside, the offices are clean and plush: framed artwork on
the walls; expensive fixtures; thick carpeting throughout.

Danny walks to the end of a hall and raps on a door.

RICHARD (O.C.)

Yeah?

Danny pushes the door open and enters Richard's office.

DANNY

Hey boss. Got a minute?

RICHARD

Sure. Come in.

Danny sits in a chair on the other side of Richard's desk.

DANNY

So, I was catching up with this old buddy of mine last weekend. It turns out he's moving here and looking for work. He asked if I knew of anything. I know we're looking to cut payroll, but I told him I'd at least ask.

RICHARD

(pauses)

We are looking to cut, Danny. But if you can find a way to offset some of the cost it's okay by me.

DANNY

I really appreciate that, Richard.

RICHARD

Listen. You're pretty much second in command around here as far as I'm concerned. You may not have the title to prove it, but that doesn't mean you don't get the benefits of the position, right? You want to do a solid for an old friend, do it. You've earned it.

DANNY

I appreciate that, Richard. I really do.

Richard stands, signaling an end to the conversation.

RICHARD

But whatever you do, don't offset the cost out of your own salary. That's not how we big-shots do it.

DANNY

Yes sir.

They share a small laugh before Danny stands and exits.

INT POOL HALL - EVENING

Danny enters a large pool hall and scour the room... He spots Evan alone at a table near the back and starts towards him.

As he nears, Evan sinks a tricky shot.

DANNY

Nice shot.

Evan looks up -- barely acknowledging Danny -- before circling the table and lining up another shot.

DANNY (CONT'D)

They let you have a pool table in
your cell?

Evan buries another shot.

EVAN

No. My cell had a mattress and a
steel toilet.

A long beat as Evan continues to focus on his game.

DANNY

I have an idea. But listen: You
need to think about it for awhile.
Don't just snap on me... Like I
said, I can't come back. But I can
help you earn. I can give you a
job.

EVAN

A civilian job?

DANNY

It's the best I can do, Evan.

Evan looks up at Danny with a smirk: *really?*

DANNY (CONT'D)

I make more than we ever did. And
it beats shoveling shit.

Evan places his cue on the table and stares down at the felt.

Danny tosses a THICK ENVELOPE onto the table in front of
Evan. He looks up: *what's this?*

DANNY (CONT'D)

I wish I had more, but I got a
mortgage to pay.

Evan picks up the envelope. There's about \$1000 CASH inside.

EVAN
I don't want your money.

DANNY
I want you to have it.

Evan laughs incredulously and throws the envelope back at Danny, who catches it awkwardly.

EVAN
Fuck off, Danny.

He picks up his cue and starts shooting again.

DANNY
You want my help, Evan, you can't be too proud to accept it.

Danny places the envelope on the edge of the table and walks away. Evan watches him go, scorn across his face.

EXT STREET - EVENING

Karen and Danny walk down the street holding hands. They turn a corner and arrive at the front of a NIGHT CLUB. This is where Karen works.

She kisses Danny goodbye and heads inside, greeting the THICK BODYGUARDS manning the door. Danny continues on.

INT CONDO - NIGHT

A pair of STEEL-TOED BOOTS on the floor.

Danny stands just inside the front door staring down at them curiously. He moves into the apartment, looking around...

And spots EVAN SITTING AT HIS KITCHEN TABLE. He's drinking a beer and leafing through a J. Crew catalog.

EVAN
Nice place, Danny. The beer sucks, but otherwise...

DANNY
What the fuck are you doing in here?

EVAN
Hoping to finish that conversation.

DANNY

You gotta break into my place to do it? What if Karen was home? She'd have had a heart attack.

EVAN

For Christ's sake, Danny, relax. I didn't break anything. And you can frisk me on my way out.

Danny wants to slug him, but knows better. Instead, he goes to the fridge and grabs two Heinekins.

He sits opposite Evan, pops the top off both beers and slides one across the table.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Got a story for you about this con up Statesville -- prison queer named Chico. Kind that shaves his chest, wears his jumpsuit half-open... Well, Chico belonged to Lupe, this big-ass Norteno Mexican and they had an understanding: Chico could work to keep himself in luxuries as long as he split the take.

(Evan tugs on his beer)

I'd been in only two months or so, still wide-eyed and shit, when Chico got a new cellie and fell madly in love... So much so that he tells Lupe he's quitting him -- he's a changed woman and demands to be set free. Now Lupe couldn't care less about Chico giving his heart to someone else. What he *did* care about was Chico giving his ass to someone else who wasn't paying for it. So a couple days later, Chico and his new fella are drinking pruno in their cell when Lupe and his crew pounce on 'em and gag 'em up. Lupe makes Chico watch him slide a 4-inch shank into his boyfriend's throat and leave it there -- handle deep... He kisses Chico on the forehead and walks out while his boys break both Chico's legs til the bones stick out.

Danny can't help but cringe.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Chico didn't walk so good after
that. But he never forgot who he
was... or who he belonged to.

(beat)

I thought about your offer. Fold it
sideways and shove it up your ass.

Evan removes the envelope Danny gave him at the pool hall
from his pocket and slides it across the table.

EVAN (CONT'D)

You owe me Danny. I'm not gonna
waste my time trying to convince
you to feel the same because I just
don't really give a shit. I've
thought of a way to square us. And
you're gonna help, like it or not.

They eye-ball one another. Danny swigs his beer.

CUT TO:

INT BAR - LATER

Evan and Danny have moved to a local bar and occupy a small
corner table. Danny downs a shot, winces at the burn, and
looks up at Evan -- his face a tangle of amusement,
disbelief, and incredulity.

DANNY

So... your big plan is to kidnap my
boss's twelve year old son and hold
him for ransom? For a million
dollars?

EVAN

Yes.

DANNY

And that'll square things with us?

EVAN

We split it in half and we're even.

DANNY

(laughs)

Are you kidding me? We were petty
thieves -- fucking cat burglars.
Not home invaders.

EVAN

We can rob antique stores for two years if you want, but you said you weren't going back to work. This will take three days and it's done.

DANNY

Both of them involve going back to work, Evan. Kidnapping Tommy is work -- and then some. They charge you with *mayhem* for that kind of shit, for Chrissake.

(pause)

Listen man, I'm sorry that things worked out the way they did. I really am. And if I wasn't a good enough friend to you these last years, I'm sorry. I hope I can make up for that. I want to make up for that. But not like this... I wish you understood. And I know that if things were reversed, I wouldn't begrudge you for such a choice.

EVAN

But things *weren't* reversed, were they? So you don't know how begrudged I should be.

Evan slides his chair away from the table and leans back, exposing a HAND GUN STUCK IN HIS BELT.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Think about it.

HOLD on them for an extended beat...

EXT CONDO - NIGHT

Patrick and Danny huddle on a small balcony. Patrick smokes, listening to Danny with wide eyes.

PATRICK

He pulled a gun on you?

DANNY

He showed it to me.

PATRICK

Motherfu-

DANNY

Shh.

Danny looks inside. Karen is clearing the table from dinner.

PATRICK
What are you gonna do?

DANNY
I don't know -- I really don't.
Either we're partners or I'm
disrespecting what I owe him.

PATRICK
You don't owe him shit.

DANNY
He doesn't see it that way.

Patrick takes a long drag on his cigarette.

PATRICK
I'll talk to him.

DANNY
(quick)
No.

PATRICK
Just to hear what he's got to say.

DANNY
Not a chance. This ain't the Evan
we grew up with.

PATRICK
I'm all grown up too, Danny.

Danny looks at Patrick.

DANNY
I know you are, P.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Karen and Danny walk Patrick to his motorcycle.

PATRICK
Shit. Forgot my gloves.

DANNY
I'll get 'em.

Danny turns and hustles back towards the house.

PATRICK

Thanks.

(to Karen)

And thank you. That was the best meal I've had since the last time I was here.

KAREN

You're welcome, Patrick. And that's the nicest compliment I've had since the last one you gave me.

A nice, earnest moment between them. Karen seizes it.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Is Danny happy?

PATRICK

What do you mean?

KAREN

I mean, I know he's *happy*. But sometimes I get the feeling he misses the old life.

PATRICK

Really? Why?

KAREN

I don't know... The way he listens to your stories. I get the feeling sometimes he wishes he was back in the game... that he had some of those stories too.

PATRICK

(smiles)

Didn't you tell him that if he ever so much as stole a candy bar you'd leave? Wouldn't even *listen* to an explanation?

KAREN

Yes.

PATRICK

Danny's like my brother, Karen. Even if he was robbing again, I wouldn't tell you. I can't-

KAREN

No, I know. I'm not asking you to-

PATRICK

Look: I steal things. Danny used to steal things and he was *really, really* good at it. The times I worked with him were the smoothest jobs I ever had. And I trust him with my life. So I would love to see Danny come back to work. In fact, there's only one thing I'd rather see him do.

KAREN

What's that?

PATRICK

Not come back... He's happy Karen. Happier than I've ever seen him. I'm sure he has moments where he wishes he was still at it, but he belongs in the life you guys have. I know it, and more importantly, he knows it.

KAREN

Thanks Patrick.

Karen wraps her arms around Patrick in a tight hug and we HOLD ON HIS FACE, the wheels in his head turning.

EXT DINER - DAY

Establishing. A small, typical 24-hour diner in downtown Chicago. A phone call plays in VOICE-OVER.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Homicide.

DANNY (V.O.)

Detective Sean Nolan please.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Hold.

INT DINER - DAY

Danny approaches a MAN DRESSED IN A CRISP BROWN SUIT perusing a menu at the counter.

DANNY

Sean?

NOLAN

Danny.

SEAN NOLAN (36; Broad shouldered and serious-looking) extends a hand. Danny shakes it and sits next to him.

DANNY

Been some time. How've you been?

NOLAN

Fine. Yourself?

DANNY

Excellent. Never better.

A WAITRESS arrives in front of them, coffee pot in hand.

NOLAN

I'll have the number one: eggs over hard with bacon and wheat.

DANNY

(scanning the menu)

I'll do the Denver Omelette with white toast.

WAITRESS

Coffee?

DANNY

Please.

She flips over a coffee cup in front of Danny and fills it before moving off.

DANNY (CONT'D)

So, you still in the neighborhood?

NOLAN

No. We're out in Beverly now.

DANNY

Yeah?

NOLAN

It's nice. No gangs... No drunks at the St. Paddy's Day Parade. My kids got a yard to run around in.

DANNY

Sounds nice. You know I left too. Got a place in Lakeview. Nothing fancy, but it's mine, you know?

(beat)

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

I work in construction. I'm a project manager. It's nice to have made a place for myself. Made something... *legitimate*.

NOLAN

Good for you.

DANNY

So how many kids you got?

Nolan looks at Danny: he's done with the chit-chat.

NOLAN

Plenty. Now how 'bout you tell me why I'm sitting here.

Danny sips his coffee.

DANNY

When I started working construction one of the first things I realized was how much being a former thief helped out. Knowing how to bargain, negotiate. Being able to plan. But mostly, knowing when to take risks.

NOLAN

That what you're doing here?
Because I'm the *poh-lice*?

DANNY

Yeah.

NOLAN

Thought you said you were clean.

DANNY

Oh, I'm hundred-proof. Go to work, pay my taxes. I'm a civilian.

The waitress plunks their plates down in front of them.

NOLAN

Get to the fucking point, Danny.

DANNY

I've got a problem. Someone's harassing me. He broke into our apartment last Friday.

NOLAN

He steal anything?

DANNY

No. He was waiting for me.

NOLAN

Waiting to do what?

DANNY

To talk. To threaten me.

NOLAN

So this is someone you know?

(off Danny's nod)

You file a report?

DANNY

It's not that simple.

NOLAN

Why?

DANNY

Because I got a felony conviction
on my sheet. You know how tough it
is for us when we yell for help.

NOLAN

What makes you think it'll be any
easier with me?

Pause... Danny searches for the words.

DANNY

We don't owe each other anything. I
know that. But I've been spotless
for years. Worked my way up same as
you -- same as anybody. I did it on
my own and I did it square.

(beat)

I'm worried. For myself. For Karen.

NOLAN

What aren't you telling me?

DANNY

(hesitates)

It's Evan McGann.

Nolan almost chokes on his eggs, then erupts with laughter.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm not kidding, Sean.

NOLAN

Oh, I believe you. Time to pay the piper, eh Danny-Boy?

DANNY

He's not messing about.

NOLAN

I bet. Probably a little pissed about his last fall, yeah?

DANNY

Come on, Sean. For Chrissake we grew up in the same neighborhood.

Nolan's tone switches abruptly.

NOLAN

Bullshit. Bullshit, Danny. Don't lay that on me.

DANNY

You won't help.

NOLAN

Help you what? Your old partner's back in town and wants something from you? You're in construction, right? So what's he want?

Danny doesn't answer.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I thought so. What, is he after some old score you spent instead of splitting? Or just pissed you bailed on him? You were in that pawnshop, weren't you?

(Danny looks away)

You crack me up, you really do. You're clean? Good for you. Most people have been their whole lives. You want special treatment because you mended your ways?

DANNY

The same would be nice.

NOLAN

Then call it in and have a squad car come by, get the whole story. But you can't do that, can you?

Danny shakes his head.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

And that tells me all I need to know. Time to pay the fucking consequences... Long overdue if you ask me.

DANNY

Sean-

NOLAN

Thanks for breakfast.

Nolan stands, grabs his coat, and walks away. Danny stares dejectedly at the Denver omelette in front of him.

EXT DINER - LATER

Danny emerges from the diner and heads down the block towards his parked SUV...

He opens the door and slides in. As he starts the engine he notices a SLIP OF PAPER tucked under the windshield wipers. He rolls down the window and retrieves it:

INSERT NOTE: D- I knew you were a DESERTER, but a RAT too? This thing is happening with or without you. Just know that if I go back to prison, you're coming with me this time. -E

Danny steps back into the street and looks all around for Evan... But he's gone.

INT CONDO - NIGHT

Danny stares into the bathroom mirror. He hasn't slept much and it shows. Karen appears behind him and wraps her arms around his waist.

KAREN

Trouble sleeping again, baby?

DANNY

A little bit.

KAREN

What's bothering you?

DANNY

Work's busy is all.

KAREN
(furrows her brow)
Work makes you tired. What's making
you anxious?

DANNY
Just a lot to get done before
winter comes. Not sure we're gonna
make it.

Karen lets go of Danny, frowns at his reflection in the mirror... Then exits the bathroom.

KAREN (O.C.)
Let me know when you want to talk
about what's really going on.

He turns back to the mirror and sighs.

INT MUSTANG/EXT STREET - MORNING

POV: From a block away, someone is watching Danny and Karen through the windshield of a car as they exit their condo. They walk to the curb where the SUV is parked. They exchange an extended goodbye kiss. Danny opens the door, but before getting in he pauses and looks down the street.

REVERSE POV: Evan's mustang is parked at the far end of the block.

Danny holds his gaze for a long beat before getting into the SUV and firing up the engine.

Inside the Mustang, Debbie is next to Evan.

EVAN
For two people who've been together
for so long they sure do get a kick
out of each other.

DEBBIE
(wistful)
They're in love.

Evan shoots her a look as he starts the Mustang.

EVAN
Let's get some eggs.

DEBBIE
I thought we were gonna follow 'em.

EVAN
Don't need to.

He whips a U-turn and speeds down the street.

INT PATICK'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Patrick rubs sleep from his eyes. Danny paces around the apartment -- agitated.

PATRICK
Where's he staying?

DANNY
His uncle's place.

PATRICK
Where's that?

DANNY
No Patrick.

PATRICK
Relax, Danny.

DANNY
No.

A pause. Patrick relents.

PATRICK
Well what are you gonna do?

DANNY
I don't know... I go to Richard, he'll go to the cops and Evan pops me for the pawnshop. He's doing it with or without me. I say, 'no' and who knows what he does to Tommy.

PATRICK
What if you did it?
(Danny shoots him a look)
I'm just saying... You know the house, the routines -- probably know the alarm code... Could be the easiest way out is all.

Danny pauses...

DANNY
Too much to lose.

EXT RICHARD'S HOME - DAY

Danny pulls into Richard's driveway. A 4-MAN CREW OF LANDSCAPERS shout to one another in Spanish as they rake leaves and push lawn mowers.

INT RICHARD'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Richard leads Danny down the HALL and into the KITCHEN.

DANNY

Sorry. Lakeshore was bumper-to-bumper.

Danny dumps a stack of contracts on the granite island.

RICHARD

You look them over? I don't want to get rogered again.

DANNY

They're clean.

Richard leafs through the contracts.

RICHARD

How's Pike Street?

DANNY

McCloskey will have it locked down by the end of the week.

RICHARD

Good. And we've got him on contract for the spring?

DANNY

We're keeping him on over the winter, remember?

RICHARD

Yeah, I thought it over. It's not gonna work.

DANNY

What?

RICHARD

We'll pick him back up in the Spring.

Danny shakes his head -- irritated.

DANNY

I gave him my word that we had work
for him.

RICHARD

Why would you do that?

DANNY

Because we agreed to do it.

RICHARD

I never agreed to anything like
that. I might have said it would be
nice to, but...

DANNY

We were in the conference room.
Reviewing budgets. You wanted to-

RICHARD

Hey. I know how you feel. But you
know how rough things have been.
Believe you me, nobody's been
bleeding more than I have.

Richard starts scribbling his signature onto the contracts.
Danny stares at him for a beat then turns away, incredulous.
His eyes scour the room and find:

The STATE-OF-THE-ART APPLIANCES that fill the kitchen, many
of them have likely never been used; A 42-inch PLASMA-TV
mounted on the wall; A FRAMED PHOTO of Richard lounging on
the deck of his sailboat moored in a tropical cove...

Outside the bay window, Danny watches the men hard at work on
Richard's yard.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Here.

(handing back the
contracts)

Make sure Pike Street is locked
down tight. I don't want it turning
into a homeless camp.

Danny keeps his eyes out the window.

EXT BRIDGEPORT - DAY

The SUV crawls along the streets of Chicago's South Side. Tan
and orange bungalows crowd the sidewalks; Gothic church
spires tower over tract housing -- White Sox flags dangling
from their windows.

INT SUV - CONTINUOUS

Danny looks out on his old neighborhood filled with nostalgia.

He stops at a red light and A PACK OF TEENAGERS peacock across the street in front of him. ONE OF THEM glares in at Danny with a menacing sneer. Danny gives it right back to him: Just like old times.

EXT STREET - DAY (MOVING)

Cold winds blow grim clouds across an October sky. A MOTORCYCLE roars through the streets on the South Side of Chicago, SLOWING through the turns and FLYING down the straightaways...

Slicing through a residential neighborhood, the motorcycle slows -- its driver searching the numbers on the houses...

A black Mustang with its hood up is parked in a driveway. The motorcycle revs its engine and pulls up fast behind it. The brakes squeal and Evan snaps his head out from behind the Mustang's hood, a wrench clutched in one fist.

The driver kills the engine and pulls off his helmet: It's Patrick. Evan's muscles relax -- uncoil.

EVAN
Fix you a drink?

PATRICK
All right.

Patrick dismounts and follows Evan inside...

INT EVAN'S UNCLE'S HOUSE - DAY

In a clean, sparse KITCHEN, Evan pulls a bottle of Jameson's from the cupboard and fills two glasses. They sit around a small table and Evan slides one of the drinks to Patrick.

EVAN
What's on your mind, Pat?

PATRICK
I know what you're doing to Danny.

EVAN
It's between Danny and me.

PATRICK
He's not in the game anymore.

EVAN
So I hear.

PATRICK
You guys were like brothers, man.

EVAN
There's a debt.

PATRICK
Balls to your debt. Nobody fucked
you. You fucked you.

EVAN
That what you came to say tough
guy?

PATRICK
No. I came to ask nice: Leave him
alone.

Evan takes a swallow of whiskey, picks up a hand towel, and
wipes at the grime on his hands.

EVAN
Go fuck your hat.

PATRICK
Just got too used to being a bitch
inside, huh?

EVAN
Still shooting that mouth off,
Patrick. Gonna get you slapped one
of these days.

Discreetly, Patrick lifts his foot and slips a hand down to
meet it. He slides out a knife tucked in his boot.

PATRICK
I don't get slapped around much
anymore...

Evan places the towel on the table, leaving his hand atop it.

EVAN
Fuck you, Patrick.

Patrick lunges toward Evan, the knife raised to strike-
POP! The whiskey bottle EXPLODES into tiny shards...

And Patrick stops cold halfway across the table, as if he'd been sucker-punched hard in the chest. A puzzled expression washes across his face...

He looks down at his body: *what was that?*... then across at Evan... and then down to Evan's hand resting on the kitchen towel, SMOKE CURLING FROM A RAGGED HOLE, its edges burned powder-black.

ANGLE ON Patrick: *Oh, no...*

Evan stands and slaps Patrick hard across the face. He crashes to the floor, a red stain of blood filling his shirt.

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK, the sound of a car crawling to a stop. A car door opens and shuts... A key turns in a lock and click:

EXT RIVERSIDE - NIGHT

The Mustang is parked beside a huge, deserted INDUSTRIAL PLANT along the river with its trunk popped open. Evan reaches in, lifts Patrick's body out, and throws it over his shoulder.

With surprising ease, he carries it to the edge of the river and dumps it in...

Evan lights a cigarette and watches Patrick disappear beneath the water -- the ripples fanning across to the far shore.

INT NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

A DANCEFLOOR FILLED WITH YOUNG CLUB-GOERS throbs to a thick bass beat. Lasers cut rainbow swaths through the swirling cigarette smoke...

CRANING UP, we find Karen perched at the railing of a balcony watching the throng below...

She then turns and weaves through a maze of couches and tables that make up the balcony's VIP section and disappears down a back staircase.

EXT NIGHT CLUB - LATER

Karen exits the club. Outside, the line to get in is long and restless. HECTOR THE BOUNCER (6'6"; 320lbs.) stands at the head of the line ignoring the barrage of impatient pleas.

KAREN

Hey Hector, where's Rodney?

HECTOR

He went home. He wasn't feeling good, so I told him I'd cover for him.

(off Karen's grimace)
Sorry Karen, I didn't think you'd mind.

KAREN

No, that's all right. I was just hoping for a walk to my car.

HECTOR

(pulling out his radio)
I'll get Kevin or Joe.

KAREN

Don't bother. I'm just around the corner.

HECTOR

Gimme two minutes.

But Karen has already started off, holding up a can of mace for Hector to see.

KAREN

That's okay Hector. I'm armed.

HECTOR

Okay, boss. See you tomorrow.

The sounds of the crowd outside the club fade and give way to the CLICK-CLACK OF HER HEELS AGAINST THE SIDEWALK. At the end of the block she turns onto a darkened side street...

And suddenly a SECOND SET OF FOOTSTEPS join her own: heavy and muffled -- a man's stride. She quickens her pace and grips the can of mace -- her thumb poised on the trigger...

As she nears an alley, the footsteps seem to be closing fast. Worry washes over Karen's face and she darts into the alley.

Her JETTA is parked 20 feet in. Karen runs to it, pulling keys from her purse. As she slides the key into the lock a SHADOW WIPES ACROSS THE ALLEY WALL...

Karen GASPS and fumbles with the can of mace... But a FIGURE grabs her from behind, clasping a gloved hand over her mouth and ripping the mace from her grip. THE ATTACKER pulls her close, puts his mouth to her ear.

ATTACKER

Relax, kitten. I'm not gonna hurt you tonight. But I may not feel so generous the next time.

And then, as quickly as he had grabbed her, he pushes her, still holding one arm, as if dancing. But as she reaches the end of her steps he lets go, the momentum sending her sprawling to the ground.

ATTACKER (CONT'D)

You need to be careful, Karen.
Chicago is a dangerous place for a woman after dark.

And then, as quickly as he pounced, the attacker bolts from the alley... And Karen is alone -- rattled something fierce and bleeding from an ugly scrape across her knee.

FADE OUT.

INT CONDO - NIGHT

Every light in the apartment is on. Karen's face is red and puffy from crying, and Danny clasps her hands in his own -- concern etched into his face.

DANNY

You sure you don't want to go to the hospital?

KAREN

I'm fine... Just pissed off about ruining my favorite skirt.

She attempts a smile.

DANNY

What scared him off?

KAREN

I don't know. I don't think anything. He just let me go.

DANNY

Must have been something.

KAREN

Maybe... But he said he *wasn't* gonna hurt me tonight.

DANNY

Huh? Said he wasn't gonna hurt you
tonight?

KAREN

And that Chicago is a dangerous
place for a woman.

Danny stiffens.

DANNY

Did you get a look at him?

KAREN

No... But he knew my name, Danny.

DANNY

He knew your name?

KAREN

He called me Karen.

Bothered, Danny stands and starts pacing.

KAREN (CONT'D)

What is it?

DANNY

(distracted)

Nothing baby.

(off Karen's look)

It just scares me, you know? The
thought of something happening to
you -- the thought of someone
hurting you...

ANGLE ON: Karen, watching Danny's agitation -- her suspicions
that he's not being straight with her growing.

EXT STREET/INT MUSTANG - DAY (MOVING)

Evan's Mustang rumbles past the boutiques on Halsted and into
Boystown, Chicago's gay district.

He slows as he nears an intersection and pulls up alongside a
BUS STOP where Danny's waiting. Danny rises and walks to the
car -- a look of utter contempt on his face. He gets in.

EVAN

Hey partner.

DANNY

Drive, cocksucker. Lakeshore North.

Evan chuckles, pops the car in gear, and tears away from the curb.

CUT TO:

EXT PARKING LOT - LATER

Evan parks in a lot for a recreation area near the Lake Michigan shore. It's crowded with JOGGERS, DOG WALKERS, and ROLLERBLADERS.

DANNY
Let's take a walk.

They exit the car and Danny heads across a field toward the Lake. Evan follows a few paces behind.

EXT LAKE MICHIGAN - MOMENTS LATER

At the water's edge, Danny stares out at the horizon. Evan lights a cigarette.

EVAN
You want to cuddle? Watch the sun go down?

DANNY
Let's talk about the rules.

EVAN
What rules?

DANNY
The rules of the job.

A grin spreads across Evan's face and he takes a long drag from his smoke.

EVAN
So you're in.

DANNY
Not giving me much choice, are you?
You made your point.

EVAN
About time.

DANNY
I got three rules and they're non-negotiable.

EVAN

Yeah?

DANNY

First off, nobody gets hurt. Not a scratch. Especially not Tommy.

EVAN

Who's Tommy?

DANNY

Tommy's the boy you want to kidnap, shithead.

(beat)

Second: You listen to me. You want my help? Fine. But only if I make the plan and we stick to that plan. Understand?

EVAN

(nods)

And third?

DANNY

Third is that this squares us. After it's done, we never see each other again. You and I? We're done.

Evan cocks his head at Danny and takes another drag.

EVAN

All right.

DANNY

One more thing-

BAM! DANNY SUCKER-PUNCHES EVAN square in the jaw, dropping him to the ground.

DANNY (CONT'D)

That's for Karen, motherfucker. Don't you even think about touching her again.

Evan swallows hard, gives Danny a free pass on that one. He props himself up and rubs his jaw as Danny offers his hand to help him up.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Let's go to work.

EVAN

Now?

DANNY
Now.

Evan grabs hold of Danny's hand.

EXT RICHARD'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

An October shower has soaked the hell out of everything.
Rotting leaves tattoo the asphalt streets orange and brown.

INT MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Evan are in the parked mustang half a block down
from Richard's house.

DANNY
Where do you want to go in?

EVAN
(thinks a beat)
Why don't we just knock on the
front door sometime when he's alone
and grab him?

DANNY
(grimaces)
We'll break in the back.

EVAN
House like this, there's gotta be
an alarm.

DANNY
Yeah, but the maid kept setting it
off. They only use it at night.

Evan smiles, slaps Danny's shoulder playfully.

EVAN
There it is: Excellent inside info.
You're paying off already.

Danny stares at Evan -- his mood not ready to lighten.

DANNY
We'll go next week sometime. After
school.

EVAN
You know the maid's schedule?

DANNY

Yep.

EVAN

Cha-ching.

DANNY

We need to keep him from hitting
the 'panic button' or calling 911,
but I'll think of something.

EVAN

Yes you will.

DANNY

Let's get outta here before the
neighbors start getting curious.

Evan puts the car in gear and pulls away from the curb.

INT SOUTH SIDE BAR - DAY

An empty bar in the afternoon. The BARTENDER chats with a BARFLY. Danny and Evan sit at a table strewn with a half dozen empty beer bottles...

Danny finishes a beer with a full swallow and plunks it on the table. He and Evan are both feeling the buzz.

EVAN

I love beer in the afternoon...
Ever since we used to smuggle it
into the girls' soccer games in
high school.

Evan starts to laughs. Danny cracks a smile.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Didn't we go to a girls' swimming
practice once?

DANNY

(laughing despite himself)
Yeah. That's when you went down to
the bench and offered massages.
Told them physical therapy was one
of your hobbies.

They crack up at the memory.

EVAN

We need a place to stow him.

Danny nods, scanning instinctively for anyone in earshot.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Someplace where if something goes wrong and he makes a lot of noise, nobody can hear.

Another nod from Danny.

EVAN (CONT'D)
I'm thinking an even million.

DANNY
Too much.

EVAN
Too much? You see that house?

DANNY
It's not the Playboy Mansion. It's a five-bedroom.

EVAN
How many bedrooms you have growing up.

DANNY
That ain't the point.

EVAN
That's exactly the point. You know how it works. Guys like that, they make sure that the rest of us stay where we are. They hire us to work shitty jobs for shitty money so we can pay for our shitty one-bedroom apartment with no windows. Tell us the world needs ditch-diggers as they send their kids to private school. And all the while they're building prisons for when we get upset about being on the shit side of the bargain. Fuck that.

(pause)
Or have you forgotten how it works?
Now that you got your Cubs jersey and discovered the pumpkin latte at Starbucks it's all different now?
Now that you're pretending to be someone else?

DANNY

What, because I have a job I'm supposed to vote Republican? Fuck you, man. It doesn't work that way.

EVAN

How does it work then, smart guy?

DANNY

I don't know. But blaming your dad and the cops and every guy out there who's got more than you ain't the answer. And it doesn't change the fact that you're a thief... a criminal. And criminals get caught. Especially when they do stupid shit like ask someone for a million dollars they don't have -- five-bedrooms or not.

(beat)

That was my point.

They fall silent. Evan pulls on his beer.

EVAN

So how much do we ask for, smart guy?

DANNY

Two-fifty's the safe play.

EVAN

Half a mill.

After some thought, Danny nods reluctantly.

DANNY

Also, we need someone else. To watch Tommy.

EVAN

Why?

DANNY

Because we shouldn't be around after we take him. We don't want to give him anything to remember when he's talking to the cops afterwards.

EVAN

Why not just tape him up and leave him be? Come in once a day to feed him, let him piss.

DANNY

Jesus, Evan. He's a kid.

EVAN

It's only for a couple days.

DANNY

I said nobody gets hurt. Leaving a twelve-year-old kid duct-taped in the dark for a couple days counts.

(pause)

I can ask Patrick. I don't want to, but...

ANGLE ON: Evan, betraying nothing.

EVAN

I got someone.

DANNY

Who?

EVAN

A girl of mine.

Danny eyes Evan skeptically.

EVAN (CONT'D)

She'll do what she's told.

Danny stands, pulls some cash from his wallet and throws it on the table.

DANNY

I want to meet her. But right now, I'm going home. I'll call you later.

He turns and heads toward the front door.

EVAN

Welcome back, Danny-Boy.

Danny ignores him, exiting the bar without looking back.

INT CONDO - MORNING

Danny's in the kitchen with the phone pressed to his ear. The other end rings several times before an answering machine picks up. Danny curses as the message plays.

DANNY

Where are you, Patrick? I need to talk to you about that thing from the other night. Call me back as soon as you get this... It's Danny.

He hangs up -- frustrated.

INT DENNY'S RESTAURANT - MORNING

Danny, Evan, and DEBBIE sit in a booth at Denny's scanning through the endless menu options.

EVAN

I'm gonna take a dump. Order me some eggs if they come by.

DANNY

Nice... Very classy.

He ignores Danny and walks off. Awkward silence falls over the table until...

DEBBIE

So Evan tells me you're a thief.

DANNY

I'm in construction.

DEBBIE

Really? He said you were his partner.

DANNY

Long time ago.

DEBBIE

Must feel like deja-vu, huh?

DANNY

Something like that.

Something on the menu catches Debbie's eye.

DEBBIE

That's what I'm talking about. Chocolate Chip pancakes with strawberries.

Debbie pops her chewing gum. Danny forces a smile, clearly unimpressed by this potential co-conspirator.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Lemme see your hand.

DANNY
What?

DEBBIE
I read palms.

Reluctantly, Danny plays along and lays his hand in front of Debbie. She holds it still and studies it closely.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
Hmmmm... Fascinating. I see a
couple of things.

DANNY
Oh yeah?

Debbie nods and traces one of the lines on his palm.

DEBBIE
This here is telling me that you
think I'm a moron.

DANNY
(smiles -- surprised)
That's in my palm?

DEBBIE
That's in your eyes. Your palm
tells me you work in management.

DANNY
How?

DEBBIE
I used to date an ironworker. His
hands were like baseball mitts.
Yours are soft.

DANNY
(his smile widens)
What else?

DEBBIE
You're not wearing a wedding ring,
but you didn't check me out. So I'd
say you've got a serious girlfriend
you really, really love.

Danny pulls his hand away, leans back, and looks across the table at Debbie -- a self-satisfied expression on her face.

DANNY
Very impressive Debbie.

DEBBIE
Thank you.

Evan returns from the bathroom and slides in next to Debbie.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)
My God, that was a speedy dump.

Danny bursts out laughing.

EVAN
It was occupied.

DANNY
(to Evan)
I think we'll get along just fine.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Danny's SUV and Evan's Mustang are parked side by side in front of the trailer.

INT TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

The interior of the trailer has been cleaned out. Danny, Evan, and Debbie sit around a coffee table finalizing their plans.

DANNY
(to Debbie)
We'll bring him directly here and drop him with you.
(she nods)
The fridge is stocked and the TV works, but you'll be holed up here for a couple of days, so make sure you bring whatever else you might need to make it through.

DEBBIE
Okay.

DANNY
(turns to Evan)
And you should wait until morning to get the car. Doesn't matter what kind, so long as it's decent. Neighbors might notice a beater.

EVAN
And afterward?

DANNY
(pointing off-screen)
Leave it right down here in front
of Cabrini Green with the keys in
it. It'll be gone before you make
it to the corner.

Evan smiles -- he likes it.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'll bring masks and gloves...
And Evan: *No fucking guns.*

EVAN
(shrugs)
Okay.

DANNY
I'm serious. Not a scratch,
remember?

EVAN
I remember, boss.

DANNY
All right. You can pick me up in
the same spot as last time. One
o'clock.

EVAN
We going tomorrow?

DANNY
You got somewhere else to be?

Evan thinks... then shakes his head, "no."

INT SUV - EVENING

Driving home along the parkway, Danny's eyes are fixed on the road before him. WE PUSH IN TO A CLOSE-UP and...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT CORNER STORE - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

A MATCHING CLOSE-UP OF A 12 YEAR OLD DANNY emerging from a convenience store into the streets of his old South Side neighborhood.

Just behind him is 12 YEAR OLD EVAN and we TRACK WITH THEM as they stroll down the block.

As they get further from the store, they take stock of their haul: pulling CANDY from their pockets; COMIC BOOKS from inside their jackets; SMALL TRINKETS from their pants.

With a proud grin, Evan holds up a STAR WARS ACTION FIGURE.

EVAN
Check it out.

DANNY
Boba Fett!

Danny takes it and inspects it admiringly. Then Evan stops, looking up at something in the skyline. He grabs Danny's arm.

EVAN
Challenge.

Danny follows Evan's gaze to AN ENORMOUS NEW SKYSCRAPER being erected. The concrete and glass facade is only half done, the dark silhouette of a tower crane looms sixty floors up.

DANNY
No.

EVAN
Challenge.

DANNY
Come on, Evan.

EVAN
"The Big Dick" just called a challenge. But hey, you want to stay "The Pisser" for another three months, fine with me.

Danny hangs his head and curses to himself.

EXT SKYSCRAPER SITE - LATER

The sun has ducked below the horizon. TWO SMALL FIGURES hop a chain link fence and dart towards the base of the skyscraper.

INT SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Evan enter the building and bound up a set of stairs...

Several flights up, the stairs give way to plywood ramps and the boys zig-zag their way to the base of the crane...

Danny hoists himself over the rail and starts up the gridwork stairs. Evan stops here and watches Danny's ascent.

Danny charges up with grim determination. He's ten stories up... Then twenty -- his calves burning.

Thirty-five stories up the outside wall ends and the wind hits... At fifty stories the people on the street below are dots -- the cars no bigger than grains of rice...

At 60 stories, Danny's at the top of the skyscraper, but he's not done climbing... One hundred and eighty steps later, he's at the operator's cab of the crane...

He stops and takes a deep breath. On the ceiling of the city, surrounded by an indigo sky, the world is spread out beneath Danny like a jeweled quilt...

Then Danny steps out onto the two-foot wide crane arm and starts out toward its tip. With eyes fixed on the horizon, crouching low to fight the wind, he moves beyond the skyscraper walls -- two inches of steel between him and a five second trip to the street below... Step. Breath. Step Breath...

Danny reaches the end of the crane. And very carefully, he stands up straight and takes a bow -- the slightest of smiles evident on his face. The FLASHBACK ENDS as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT RICHARD'S HOUSE - DAY

TRACKING CLOSE UP OF TOMMY trudging down the street. PULLING BACK, we see him turn up the walkway to his house lugging a cumbersome school bag on his back. He takes keys from his pocket, opens the front door, and enters...

INT RICHARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEADI-CAM ON TOMMY:

In the FOYER, Tommy dumps his coat and bag on the floor and heads down the HALL and into...

The KITCHEN. He goes to the freezer, grabs a frozen burrito, tosses it into the microwave and sets the timer...

He retrieves a glass from the cupboard and fills it with soda he's pulled from the fridge...

In the PANTRY he finds a bag of chips... and 2 Oreo's.

The microwave BEEPS and Tommy retrieves a now steaming burrito...

Gathering up his goodies, he exits the kitchen through a door across from the one he entered, which leads him into...

The LIVING ROOM. Tommy sets his food onto a large coffee table, plunks himself onto the couch, and manipulates a handful of remote controls that fire up a high-end TV SYSTEM.

As Tommy starts flipping through stations, we PUSH IN ON HIM... Then DRIFTS OVER HIS SHOULDER...

Through a window, a SAAB pulls up the driveway and stops in front of the closed doors of the garage. A wide-eyed Danny stares out at Richard's house from the passenger window.

EXT RICHARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The doors of the Saab pop open. Evan and Danny step out and move quickly to the rear of the house...

Danny leads them to a door underneath a deck overlooking the big, green back yard. He slips a backpack from his shoulder and removes the Crown Royal bag we first saw at the pawnshop.

EVAN
(smiles)
Couldn't quite get rid of every
piece of your past, huh?

Danny ignores him, concentrating hard on the door. Within seconds -- like riding a bike -- POP, the door opens and they slip inside...

INT RICHARD'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The door leads them into a MUDROOM. From his backpack, Danny removes 2 SKI-MASKS which they pull over their faces. Evan moves for the door leading into the kitchen, but Danny grabs him and hold up a finger: wait.

He opens his cell-phone, scrolls to a number tagged "Debbie" and chooses "send text." He types the word: "NOW" and presses the "send" button. Evan cocks his head inquisitively. Danny holds his finger to his mouth and cracks open the kitchen door...

They can hear the blare of the TV... which is shortly joined by the SHRILL RING OF THE HOUSE PHONE...

Danny pushes into the kitchen -- Evan following close behind. They cross the room and pause at the doorway to the living room...

The phone RINGS again... and we MOVE OFF Danny and Evan into the living room where Tommy, still on the couch, answers the phone.

TOMMY

Hello?

We can hear the FEMALE VOICE on the other end of the phone which we soon recognize to be Debbie's.

FEMALE VOICE

Is this Tommy O'Donnell?

TOMMY

Um... yeah.

FEMALE VOICE

Congratulations Tommy! You've just won a Sony Playstation3!

TOMMY

What?!

FEMALE VOICE

You just won a Playstation3! This is Tina Cervasio from MTV's Trick-or-treat Thursdays and you've just won our big treat of the day: The Playstation3 from Sony!

TOMMY

I did?

FEMALE VOICE

Yes you did!

Tommy is up on his feet now, his initial confusion giving way to excitement.

FEMALE VOICE (CONT'D)

You got your TV on Tommy?

TOMMY

Yeah!

FEMALE VOICE

Well if you put on MTV you're gonna
see your name scrolling across the
screen any minute now.

Tommy grabs the remote and switches to MTV. An earnest rapper
in a jacuzzi with a dozen women.

TOMMY

It's a Nelly video.

FEMALE VOICE

Just keep your eyes on that scroll
Tommy.

ANGLE ON DANNY: Peeking into the living room, he's overcome
by a sudden realization of what he is about to do. His eyes
fill with panic and he turns to Evan.

DANNY

Wait-

But Evan is out of his crouch and charging into the room
WIELDING A TASER in his right hand...

Danny races after Evan, shoves him aside and grabs Tommy,
who's frozen stiff with terror. Danny covers Tommy's mouth
and glares at Evan.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing?!

EVAN

You said no guns.

DANNY

Goddammit! I said no one gets hurt!

As the two continue to bicker, WE PUSH IN ON TOMMY: his eyes
bulge... he starts to hyperventilate.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT GAS STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

2 pumps, a service garage, and a mini-mart. Danny's SUV turns
into the station and drives around to the back. Evan's
Mustang is parked along a fence and Danny pulls up next to
him. They lower their windows.

DANNY

Let's get this done.

They get out and walk to a PAY PHONE. Danny hands Evan a pair of GLOVES.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Wear these.

EVAN
Christ. Your ass must be puckered
so tight you need a shoehorn to
take a shit.

Danny ignores him, and after some hesitation Evan snatches the gloves and pulls them on. He picks up the phone and deposits fifty cents into the coin slot...

DANNY
8-4-7... 8-6-6... 0-3-0-0.

Evan punches in the number and waits for an answer...

RICHARD (O.C.)
(through phone)
Richard O'Donnell.

EVAN
We have your son.

A long beat of silence.

RICHARD (O.C.)
What? Who is this-

EVAN
We have Tommy. When I hang up you
can go home and see for yourself.
But now you're going to want to
listen quietly. You got me?
(pause)
Good boy, Dick. Here's the story.
To save your son's life, all you
have to do is everything I say. If
you call the cops or do anything to
make us nervous, Tommy dies.
(silence)
Dick? You there?

RICHARD (O.C.)
How do I know he's all right?

EVAN
Nope. We're not gonna do that. I'm
not gonna send you a photo of him
holding up today's newspaper.
(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna play a tape of his voice, and I'm not gonna threaten to cut his fingers off and send them to you in the mail. I'm just gonna kill him and disappear. Understand?

RICHARD (O.C.)

How much do you want?

Evan looks straight at Danny...

EVAN

A million dollars cash.

Danny closes his eyes and drops his head.

RICHARD (O.C.)

I don't have that much.

EVAN

Nice talking to you, then. Goodbye-

RICHARD (O.C.)

Wait! I can get it- I mean I will get it.

EVAN

Atta boy. We'll call you in a couple of days. And Dick? Remember that you're dealing with serious people. Doubt it for a minute and you'll spend the rest of your life wishing you hadn't.

Evan hangs up. A big smile spreads across his face.

DANNY

You're a stupid bastard.

This only pleases Evan more. He chuckles.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Half a million he could pull from his bank account. Cash in an IRA. A million makes it more likely he goes to the cops.

EVAN

You wanna call him back?

Danny stares at Evan -- incredulous... then turns and starts back towards his car without saying a word.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Hard part's over, partner. It's all
down hill from here.

As he watches Danny go, Evan takes a paper and pen from his jacket and writes: **847-866-0300 Dick**

INT CONDO - NIGHT

Danny enters the apartment. It's dark -- quiet. His exhaustion is evident as he hangs up his coat, shuffles into the LIVING ROOM, and slumps onto the couch...

He picks up the phone, dials, and places the receiver to his ear. After several rings, Danny hears Patrick's outgoing message on the other end...

DANNY
(to himself)
God Dammit.

PATRICK
(over the phone)
Leave a message.

DANNY
C'mon man! Where the fuck are you?!
I need your help! Please. Call me
back.

CUT TO THE BEDROOM where Karen stands by the door listening. HOLD on her for a long beat as she tries to sort through what she's just heard.

EXT RIVERFRONT - NIGHT

PATRICK'S CORPSE lies in an open body bag -- stiff and discolored.

Nolan and his partner, DETECTIVE MATTHEWS (40s) stand over the body with TWO UNIFORMED COPS. An EVIDENCE TECH kneels by Patrick, painting his fingertips with black ink.

MATTHEWS
How long's he been in the water?

TECH
Medical Examiner can say for sure,
but it looks like a couple of days
at least.

MATTHEWS
Prints gonna be clean?

TECH
Should be, yeah.

MATTHEWS
(turns to Nolan)
What do you think?

NOLAN
(takes a beat)
You can do the prints if you want,
but I don't think we need them...
Because that's Patrick Connelly.

INT CONDO - MORNING

In the kitchen, Danny is dressed for work and filling a travel mug with coffee. Karen watches him from the doorway.

KAREN
I was thinking we could go out
tonight.

DANNY
If I don't need to work, sure.

KAREN
When will you know that?

DANNY
I'll call later.

Danny crosses the kitchen and slides past Karen into the hall. He pulls his coat on and grabs his briefcase.

KAREN
When are you going to stop keeping
things from me?

DANNY
(taken aback)
What?

KAREN
Something has clearly been
bothering you-

DANNY

(interrupting)

I told you, Karen, I've got all
this shit going on with work and
it's wearing me out.

KAREN

Keeping things from me hurts,
Danny. Lying to me pisses me off.

DANNY

I'm not lying to you.

(she stares at him --
unconvinced)

I'm not lying to you, Karen.

Karen shakes her head in disgust, then turns away from him
and starts down the hall toward the bedroom.

KAREN

See ya...

DANNY

Karen.

KAREN

Go to work, Danny.

Danny sighs... his shoulders sag.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - MORNING

The SUV pulls into the construction site and parks next to an
old FORD TEMPO covered in BUMPER STICKERS and DECALS.

INT SUV - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Danny kills the engine and looks out at the trailer...

A moment later, the door opens and Debbie slips outside. She
comes to the passenger side and gets in.

DEBBIE

Good morning.

DANNY

Morning...

(indicating a coffee in
the drink holder)

That's for you.

DEBBIE
Bless you.

She picks it up eagerly and has a sip.

DANNY
How is he?

DEBBIE
He's fine. He was pretty scared at first, but calmed down pretty quick. We're halfway through a 24 hour *Cheers* marathon on WGN.

DANNY
Jesus. You didn't take his mask off did you?

DEBBIE
Of course not. I thought we were past the part where you thought I was dumb.

DANNY
Right. Sorry... But he's okay?

DEBBIE
He is. Really. He's a sweet kid. He calmed down after an hour or so and we're buddies now. He's got a crush on this girl at school and I've been telling him what to say to her... He's totally gonna score.

Danny leans back and sighs -- relieved.

DANNY
It's good to hear that, Debbie.

A beat. Debbie frowns.

DEBBIE
Can I ask you one thing?

DANNY
Of course.

DEBBIE
He said you guys had a gun.

DANNY
(sighs; looks down)
It was a taser.

DEBBIE

A taser? You were gonna electrocute
him? He's twelve.

DANNY

That wasn't supposed to happen.

A silent beat falls over the SUV...

DEBBIE

I should get back.

DANNY

Thanks for taking care of him,
Debbie.

She nods, then steps out of the car and starts back for the trailer. Danny rolls down the window.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Hey.

She turns and he indicates the car he's parked alongside.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I like your car.

DEBBIE

Yeah?

DANNY

Reminds me of you.

DEBBIE

I remind you of an '84 Tempo?

DANNY

(laughs)

Just that at a glance, it might
give someone the wrong impression.

She smiles and nods her head in thanks.

INT PATRICK'S APT - DAY

Nolan and Matthews search Patrick's apartment. At the kitchen counter, Nolan plays through the messages on Patrick's answering machine:

BEEP. It's Danny's voice.

DANNY (O.C)
(on machine)

Where are you, Patrick? I need to talk to you about that thing from the other night. Call me back as soon as you get this... It's Danny.

ANGLE ON: Nolan, starting to fit the pieces together.

INT DANNY'S OFFICE - DAY

Danny sits in his office before a desk full of paperwork, but his mind is elsewhere. A KNOCK on his open door snaps him to attention. His co-worker, JEFF (40s) sticks his head in.

JEFF
Hey Danny.

DANNY
Jeff. What's up?

Jeff takes a step into the office, pulling another MAN in beside him.

JEFF
Can I introduce you to Clint?

DANNY
(standing and smiling)
Of course.

JEFF
Clint's an electrician. Gonna come aboard with us this winter.

Danny comes around his desk and shakes hands with Clint.

DANNY
Welcome Clint. I'm Danny.

CLINT
Nice to meet you.

JEFF
Danny's one of our project managers. The one you hope is running your job.

DANNY
Easy, Jeff, you're on contract now.
No need to kiss my ass anymore.

They all laugh.

RICHARD (O.S.)
Danny.

Danny looks to the door and sees Richard leaning in. It's been a long 20 hours for Richard and it shows -- dark circles around his eyes; a tuft of hair sticking in the wrong direction.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Can you join me please?

Richard disappears and the three of them exchange a look.

DANNY
But we all need to keep kissing
his.

More laughter.

INT RICHARD'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Richard leans over his mahogany desk, staring at a mess of papers. He jumps when Danny raps on the open door, then motions to an empty chair.

RICHARD
Get the door, would you?

Danny closes the door behind him and sits. Richard leans back and rubs his eyes -- exhausted.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
What's our progress on the
restaurant?

DANNY
Fine. Running electrical this week.

RICHARD
They know they need extra breakers
in the kitchen?
(off Danny's nod)
And they're aware of the new wiring
codes?

DANNY
It's under control, Richard. What's
on your mind?

Richard hesitates.

RICHARD

Nothing... Just going over the financials. Making sure everyone's up to date.

DANNY

As of last week.

RICHARD

Good.

(beat)

We haven't gotten the advance from Cumberland, have we?

DANNY

No, not yet. But I don't expect that until February.

Richard nods -- thinking.

DANNY (CONT'D)

But I could call them about it.

RICHARD

Yeah, do that.

DANNY

Any reason I should give them for why we want it this early?

RICHARD

(checks his notebook)

Tell 'em we can swing a twenty percent discount on materials.

DANNY

How we gonna do that?

RICHARD

I'll negotiate a ten percent on a preorder. We'll make up the rest by running a tight project.

DANNY

That bid's already tight.

RICHARD

(testy)

We'll figure it out when the time comes. Right now I just need the money.

Seeing the anguish on Richard's face, Danny softens his tone.

DANNY
I'll call them now, okay?

RICHARD
Okay... Let me know how it goes.

DANNY
I will.

Danny stands and as we LEAD HIM OUT OF THE OFFICE, the strain and guilt are clearly evident.

INT THE FIG TREE - NIGHT

A classy Italian restaurant: hushed and dimly lit.

Karen and Danny sit at a table together looking over the menu. Danny finishes his drink and sets the empty glass on the table. Karen's wineglass is still full.

KAREN
Want another?

DANNY
Guess I was thirsty.

KAREN
I'll catch his eye.

Danny nods and turns back to his menu.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I'm at a total loss, Danny.

DANNY
About what?

KAREN
I'm not an idiot.

DANNY
Who said you were an idiot?

KAREN
You're treating me like one. And it's infuriating. And confusing. I know you better than anyone and I know when something's wrong. But not only do you deny it, you act as though I'm nuts for thinking it. I mean, how can you treat my concern with so little regard?

(beat)
(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)
I've never felt like this with
you... I've never felt alone with
you.

Danny reaches across the table and wraps his hands around
hers, squeezing them tight.

DANNY
Oh, Karen. Sweetheart. I'm so
sorry...

He pauses, teetering on the brink of breaking down and
telling her all that has happened. But he balks, unable to.

Karen pulls her hands away and sits back.

KAREN
Why did a detective call our house
today?

The words hit Danny like a ton of bricks.

DANNY
What?

KAREN
A Detective Nolan left a message
for you. Said he had some things he
wanted to discuss.

DANNY
(scrambling)
Oh... Right. Good. We had some
break-ins. Vandalism, some tools
stolen. Probably just kids, but we
gotta go through the motions, you
know?

The lie could not have fallen flatter.

KAREN
Good night, Danny.

She rises from her chair and walks away, leaving Danny all
alone.

FADE OUT.

EXT IHOP - DAY

Establishing. The familiar facade of the ubiquitous pancake
house.

INT IHOP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Debbie and Evan share a booth. Her plate is clean, but he's still working on a burger.

DEBBIE
We should go.

EVAN
Relax.

DEBBIE
It's almost two. I told him I'd be back to watch *The Rockford Files*.

EVAN
That's sweet. Let's adopt him.

DEBBIE
Fuck you. I just don't think Danny would be happy about us leaving him alone for this long is all.

Evan shoots a look across the table.

EVAN
Fuck Danny. Christ, the two of you are like a broken record.
(with a mocking whine)
Oh golly, I hope nothing goes wrong. Oh gee, I just know we're in for one heckuva disaster.

DEBBIE
You're mean.

EVAN
No. I'm just not soft.

He finishes his burger and stands.

EVAN (CONT'D)
C'mon. I gotta make a call. Then we can go, okay Polly Panic?

He throws cash on the table and leads Debbie through the dining area to a pay phone near the restrooms.

Evan takes the SLIP OF PAPER from his jacket with Richard's phone number on it and dials.

DEBBIE
Who are you calling?

EVAN
Danny's boss.

Her eyes widen with worry and her voice drops to a whisper.

DEBBIE
You mean Tommy's- You're not
calling him from here, are you?

EVAN
What? Something could go wrong?

DEBBIE
Evan-

He holds up a finger, cutting her off.

EVAN
(into phone)
Dick. You know who this is?
(pause)
That's right. How's the money
coming?
(pause)
Half the money, you get half the
kid. You want the top or the
bottom? Or I could split him down
the middle, you'll still have one
of everything.
(pause)
By tomorrow, Dick. We'll call you
with a time and place... And if we
even suspect that you've called the
police, I'll shoot your boy in the
head. Okay?
(pause)
Good. We'll talk tomorrow then.

As Evan hangs up, the men's room door suddenly swings open and a MIDDLE-AGED MAN emerges. His eyes meet Debbie's briefly and the anxiety in them betrays that he's heard too much.

Evan watches him hustle back to his table, grab his BILL and head for the front register.

EVAN (CONT'D)
He heard me.

DEBBIE
No he didn't.

As the man exits, he steals a glance back at Evan.

EVAN
Yes he did.

Evan starts after him...

EXT IHOP PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Evan and Debbie walk through the lot arm in arm. Ahead of them, the customer gets into his SUV which is parked a couple of spaces from Evan's Mustang.

Upon reaching the Mustang, Evan opens the door for Debbie and she gets in.

DEBBIE'S POV: Evan starts around the front of the car, but instead of getting into the driver's side, he moves quickly to the customer's SUV and jumps into the passenger seat. Evan grabs the man violently by the neck and pins him back in his seat. The man's eyes bulge with fear.

ANGLE ON: Debbie, just as terrified... And then she FLINCHES at the MUFFLED POP-POP-POP OF THREE GUNSHOTS.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT CONDO - DAY

Karen's in the BEDROOM -- restless and agitated. She searches the pockets of Danny's clothes, rummages through his chest of drawers, looking for something -- anything -- that will clue her into what Danny is keeping from her.

On the closet floor she sees the backpack Danny had when kidnapping Tommy. She grabs it, sits on the bed, and opens it. Inside she finds the ski-masks, gloves, and Crown Royal bag.

INT CONDO - LATER

Karen paces nervously in the kitchen, the phone to her ear.

NOLAN (O.C.)
(through phone)
Detective Nolan.

KAREN
Hi. This is Karen Moss. You called
Danny and me yesterday... Danny
Carter.

NOLAN (O.C.)
Yes, you're right. I did. Is Danny there?

KAREN
No. He's been real busy lately so I thought I'd see if I could help.

NOLAN (O.C.)
I'd really like to speak to him. Do you have another number?

KAREN
Not really. It's difficult to get him at work. He's away from his desk most of the time.

NOLAN (O.C.)
I see. When does he get home tonight?

KAREN
I'm not sure when that will be.

A pause.

NOLAN (O.C.)
Does Danny know you're calling me, Ms. Moss?

KAREN
(another pause)
No.

NOLAN (O.C.)
Could we talk in person, Ms. Moss?
Can I buy you a coffee? Some lunch?

Karen hesitates...

CUT TO:

INT BELMONT RESTAURANT - DAY

Karen and Nolan sit at a corner table in a NEAR EMPTY DINER.

NOLAN
How long have you and Danny been together?

KAREN
A long time.

NOLAN

Yeah? Since before he got into the construction business?

She gives him a look.

KAREN

What do you mean?

NOLAN

Nothing... I've known Danny since before he could walk. Known all those guys: Danny, Patrick Connolly... Evan McGann. That whole sticky-finger crew.

(beat)

You know them? Patrick, Evan?

KAREN

(cautious)

Patrick's a friend. He and Danny are like brothers really. We still see a lot of him.

NOLAN

Oh yeah? When was the last time you saw him?

KAREN

Just last week. He was over for dinner.

NOLAN

And Evan? You know Evan McGann too?

KAREN

We haven't seen Evan for many years.

NOLAN

Since he went to prison?

KAREN

Why did you call, Detective?

Nolan sits back in his seat, looks Karen over.

NOLAN

Did you know that Danny came to see me last week?

Karen looks up at him, betrays her surprise.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
We had breakfast.
(beat)
And I know he's got a problem.
I know that Evan came to see him.

KAREN
But he's not out yet.

NOLAN
Yes he is.

KAREN
He got twelve years.

NOLAN
And got paroled after seven.
(beat)
What's Danny up to, Karen?

KAREN
I'm sorry. I don't know what you're
talking about.

NOLAN
I think you do. Your boyfriend and
Evan McGann are back together
again, Karen, and you and I both
know how dangerous that can be.

Her heart pounds in her chest.

KAREN
I can't help you, Detective... I'm
sorry.

Without meeting his eyes, she slides out of her chair and
walks away quickly.

REVERSE ON KAREN as she beelines for the exit.

INT SUV - EVENING (MOVING)

POV: Approaching the parking lot of O'Donnell Construction.
Suddenly, out of nowhere, Debbie appears in the street. Danny
squeals to a stop and rolls down the passenger window.

DANNY
You shouldn't be here, Debbie.

She leans in through the window -- rattled, scared.

DEBBIE

I know, Danny. I'm sorry. I didn't
know what else to do.

DANNY

Are you okay?

DEBBIE

No... Evan killed someone.

DANNY

Get in.

INT SUV - LATER

They're parked in a MALL PARKING LOT. Danny stares vacantly out the window. Debbie talks to her lap.

DEBBIE

We drove to O'Hare and left the car
in long-term parking. Said he'd
deal with it later.

DANNY

Where is he now?

DEBBIE

At the trailer.

DANNY

All right. You should go home.

DEBBIE

And do what?

DANNY

Do your best to pretend none of
this ever happened.

DEBBIE

What do you mean?

DANNY

Time to walk away, Debbie.

DEBBIE

How do I do that?

Danny stops, looks over at her: *good question.*

DANNY

I don't know.

DEBBIE
What are you gonna do?

A long pause...

DANNY
I don't know.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Danny pulls in fast and parks next to the Mustang. As he jumps out, Evan exits the trailer and descends the steps.

EVAN
Hey partner.

Danny closes the distance between them in four long strides and unloads a HAYMAKER that connects square to Evan's jaw. Evan falls back, crashing onto the steps...

Danny keeps coming. But Evan recovers quick and POUNCES, driving Danny backwards with a series of BOOMING PUNCHES, several of which land solidly...

Danny gets a hold of Evan's jacket and grapples him to the ground...

As they writhe in the dirt, Evan frees an arm and delivers two brutal hits to Danny's ribs, then hops to his feet and backs away...

Slowly, Danny stands, wincing in pain. They're both out of breath, shoulders heaving...

Danny's not done yet, however. He takes a step towards Evan and LUNGES. But Evan sees it coming. He steps to his left and buries an uppercut fist in Danny's face, dropping him to the dirt with a thud...

ANGLE ON: Danny, splayed across the ground and staring into the night sky. His ears ring -- his brain reboots... Now he's done.

Evan sits on the trailer steps and lights a cigarette. Danny's right eye is swelling shut fast.

EVAN (CONT'D)
So that dumb cooze of mine found
you, huh?... Well, I'm not going
back to Statesville because of some
fat-ass Bears fan.
(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)

I realize it probably wasn't part of the plan, but I don't seem to fit into your plans anyway. So I went my own way.

DANNY

You need to get out of here. And I need to get that kid home somehow.

EVAN

Nothing changes.

DANNY

Everything already *is* changed, Evan... Killing someone in the middle of the job *changes* everything.

EVAN

It doesn't change the fact that tomorrow I'm trading that kid in there to his father for a million bones.

DANNY

You have to leave, man. You need to get as far away from here as you can. This ain't pawnshops. You killed a guy in the middle of the afternoon. In a fucking IHOP parking lot! Cops are coming for you, bro.

Evan sneers at Danny. He stands and starts up the steps.

EVAN

Come with me... I got something to show you.

Danny struggles to his feet and follows Evan into the trailer.

INT TRAILER - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

They step inside. The TV lights the dank interior in flickering shades of blue and white. Empty microwave dinner packages litter the counter.

Tommy lies prone across the couch, strips of duct-tape covering his eyes and mouth. His feet are taped to one arm of the couch, his hands to the other. It's a horrific sight.

DANNY
Jesus Christ.

Evan moves to the couch. He takes a gun from his belt and presses the muzzle to Tommy's forehead.

EVAN
You're right, Danny. This isn't a pawnshop.

DANNY
Evan-

EVAN
Enough of your talking. It's time you understood something. You bailed on me once. That's not gonna happen again. Not without consequences.

He cocks the pistol and holds a hard stare on Danny.

DANNY
(relenting)
Okay... Okay Evan.

INT CONDO - NIGHT

Danny enters the condo holding an ICE PACK to his eye. The swelling has gone down some, but there's still nothing pretty about it. As he's pulling his coat off he notices 2 SUITCASES at his feet. Karen appears at the lip of the hall, the Crown Royal bag in her hands.

DANNY
I didn't know we'd gotten this far.

KAREN
You should have.

DANNY
Would it make any difference that I was coming home to tell you what's been going on? To tell you the tru-

KAREN
You're too late, Danny. Someone already told me what's going on.

DANNY
(taken aback)
What?
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
(she doesn't answer)
Who told you what's going on?

KAREN
It doesn't matter. What matters is
that you broke the only rule I ever
had.

DANNY
Karen, you need to tell me who you
talked to.

KAREN
Why?

DANNY
Because there aren't that many
people who know what's going on.
And I need to know which one it
is.

KAREN
Sean Nolan told me.

DANNY
(surprised)
Sean Nolan? What did Sean Nolan
tell you?

KAREN
He told me that Evan is out of
prison.

DANNY
He is.

KAREN
And that you two are back together
again.

DANNY
(laughs)
Back together again?

KAREN
Don't fucking laugh, Danny.

DANNY
Sean Nolan doesn't know anything,
okay? And whatever he might have
told you is just a guess on his
part...

KAREN
Then you tell me.

Danny takes a deep breath -- steeling himself.

DANNY
None of it's good.

KAREN
Is it the truth?

DANNY
Yes.

(pause)
About three weeks ago, Evan came to see me. He was out on parole and wanted to go back to work. I don't know why I didn't tell you. I think I was scared to even bring up the idea of Evan back into our lives... I guess I thought I could get rid of him.

KAREN
But you couldn't.

DANNY
(shakes his head)
I told him I wasn't interested, but he wasn't having it. I offered him a job -- some cash for his pocket, but that only seemed to piss him off more. It insulted him.

(beat)
And then one day I came home and found him sitting in the kitchen.

KAREN
Our kitchen?

DANNY
Yes.

KAREN
Why didn't you call the police?

DANNY
I did. That's when I went to Nolan.

KAREN
I mean the *regular* police.

DANNY

Because... I'm an ex-con. Because I was in the pawnshop. I was worried they'd start digging through all of that. At least with Nolan, I thought maybe he'd understand -- help out. But I couldn't tell him everything either.

KAREN

Why not?

DANNY

(hesitates)

Because I was thinking about doing it.

KAREN

Doing what?

(beat - nothing)

Doing what, Danny?

DANNY

He wanted me to help him kidnap Richard's son.

A laugh bursts from Karen. But Danny remains straight-faced, and Karen's expression changes rapidly to disbelief -- a hand comes up to cover her mouth.

KAREN

(a whisper)

Oh my God...

DANNY

It's complicated, Karen.

KAREN

Oh my God. Why aren't you telling me you didn't do it?

Danny looks down. Karen can't believe what she's hearing -- the room starts to spin.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Why would you do that? How could you do that?

DANNY

I didn't think I had a choice. If you understood what was-

KAREN

What is there to understand?

DANNY

Listen-

KAREN

No. I don't want to- I can't. Oh my God that poor little boy. What did you do to that poor little boy?

DANNY

Karen!

KAREN

You're a monster.

DANNY

Goddammit, Karen. You're not listening to me!

And in a quick and violent burst, Danny PUNCHES HIS FIST THROUGH THE WALL. Silence -- stillness -- descends on the room.

KAREN

You need to leave.

DANNY

I did it because I had to. Because I thought that if I was there I could keep Tommy safe -- protect him from getting hurt. That I could somehow manage the situation-

KAREN

Danny-

DANNY

I did it because he attacked you in an alley and I couldn't think of any other way to get him to leave us alone.

Taken aback, Karen looks at Danny -- shaken, overwhelmed.

KAREN

Please go Danny... Please just go.

His eyes plead, but she turns away from him and disappears down the hall.

INT APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Danny pounds on the front door to Patrick's apartment. But after several attempts and no response, he fishes a SWISS ARMY KNIFE from his pocket, drops to his knees, and starts picking the lock.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)
I'll call the police, sir.

Danny freezes. The voice comes from behind a neighbor's door.

DANNY
Please don't do that. My friend
lives here -- Patrick. I haven't
been able to reach him for a while.
I just want to make sure he's okay.

A long silence fills the hallway... Then a BUSINESS CARD slides out from beneath the neighbor's door.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)
The detective who was here left
this.

Danny picks up the business card: It's Sean Nolan's.

DANNY
Why was he here?

Another long silence.

MALE VOICE
I'm very sorry, sir... but I'm
afraid your friend was killed last
week.

The words hit Danny like a bag of wrenches to the head. His knees buckle and he slumps awkwardly to the floor in a heap.

And we HOLD ON Danny for an extended beat... and then:

FADE TO BLACK.

INT SUV - MORNING

The bright morning sun burns through the windows and onto Danny's face as he sleeps in the back seat of his car.

His eyes crack open and he sits up -- hair a mess; clothes disheveled -- wearing the events of last night like a bad hangover.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - MORNING

The SUV enters the site and parks next to Debbie's car. Danny jumps out and hurries to the trailer door...

INT TRAILER - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

He enters. The lights are off and so is the TV. He scours the trailer, but it's empty: No one's here.

A NOTE scribbled on a piece of paper sits on the counter. Danny picks it up and reads:

INSERT NOTE: *Partner - Change of plans. Sorry.*

DANNY

Fuck!

He takes a moment -- considering his option... before exiting.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Emerging from the trailer, Danny stops short...

NOLAN (O.S.)

Danny Carter.

Sean Nolan and Detective Matthews stand next to a BLACK CROWN VICTORIA that has pulled in behind the SUV.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Turn around and put your hands on your head.

Danny hesitates... Before complying.

Nolan approaches Danny and fastens a PAIR OF HANDCUFFS around his wrists. He then leads him toward the Crown Victoria.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

You know you really should return phone calls from the police.

DANNY

Sorry.

NOLAN

You know who doesn't?

DANNY

People who are busy?

NOLAN

People with something to hide.

He opens the back door to his car and shoves Danny inside.

DANNY

Touche.

Nolan slams the door shut.

EXT PIKE STREET - SECONDS LATER

The Crown Victoria pulls out of the construction site and we follow it down the block. But as it turns, it leaves frame and we stay on a PARKED CAMARO with tinted windows.

INT CAMARO - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Evan and Debbie sit inside. She's agitated -- staring after the Crown Victoria.

DEBBIE

What the fuck, Evan?

(he doesn't respond)

What the fuck does that mean? Did you rat him out?

(still nothing)

...Evan-

EVAN

(sharply)

Shut it or I'm throwing your tired ass in the trunk too!

She recoils, slumps in her seat. Evan stares at her hard. But then something occurs to him and he starts the car...

As the Camaro pulls from the curb, we DRIFT into the back seat and PUSH THROUGH the leather cushions INTO THE TRUNK where Tommy lies bound and gagged in the darkness, his eyes wet with tears and round as half-dollars...

CUT TO:

INT HOLDING CELL - DAY

Danny sits on a bench inside a small holding cell.

A PEEPHOLE cut into the door darkens suddenly and Danny realizes someone is watching him.

DANNY
Do I get a phone call?

A long beat... And then a key turns in the lock. The door swings open and Nolan stands framed in the threshold.

NOLAN
Yeah... Then we'll talk.

DANNY
You're the boss.

INT HOMICIDE DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Nolan leads Danny through the department to a desk. He cuffs Danny to a chair and points to the phone.

NOLAN
Ten minutes.

Danny nods and Nolan walks off. He waits until the cop is out of earshot before picking up the phone and dialing... The other end rings several times before the answering machine picks up:

KAREN'S VOICE (O.C.)
(message)
You've reached Danny and Karen.
We're not in right now, but if you
leave your name and number we'll
get back to you as soon as we can.
Thanks.

BEEP.

DANNY
Karen? Pick up if you're there...
Dammit Karen, where are-

Click. The other end picks up.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Karen?

EVAN (O.C.)
(on phone)
Hey Partner.

Danny's stomach drops.

EVAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, but Karen's tied up at
the moment.

Evan chuckles. Danny's grip tightens around the phone.

DANNY
I'm warning you-

EVAN (O.C.)
Shut up you arrogant prick. She's okay. But you just be careful about what you say to our old buddy Sean, or that'll change.

DANNY
(a long pause)
I understand.

EVAN (O.C.)
Atta boy. Gotta run.

Click. Evan hangs up.

DANNY
Okay. I'll see you later then.

He places the receiver back in its cradle, the dread unmistakable across his face.

MATTHEWS (O.S.)
Bad news?

Matthews has materialized beside him. Danny forces a smile and stands.

DANNY
Angry girlfriend. You guys ready for me?

MATTHEWS
(smirks)
Yeah... This way.

INT INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Danny and Nolan sit across from one another at a table in a small windowless room. A two-way mirror fills one wall; A surveillance camera mounted in one corner of the ceiling records the conversation.

NOLAN
So, I'm obligated to remind you that you can have counsel here if you like.

DANNY
Do I need it?

NOLAN
(shrugs)
I just have a couple questions.

DANNY
About Patrick?

NOLAN
Mostly, yeah.

DANNY
I only found out last night.

NOLAN
(skeptical)
Is that so?

DANNY
What happened?

NOLAN
Someone shot him and dumped him in
the river.

Danny winces.

DANNY
Well I don't know who would do that
to Patrick, but he was the closest
thing I had to a brother, so I'm
just as interested in figuring it
out as you are.

NOLAN
Right. So how come your little
brother didn't follow your lead on
the path to upstanding citizenry?

DANNY
I can't answer that.

NOLAN
You can't, or you won't?

DANNY
If I could, I wouldn't.

Nolan snorts incredulously.

NOLAN

So it was brotherhood that
prevented you from severing ties
with a piece of shit felon like
Patrick?

Danny's eyes narrow.

DANNY

You want to push my buttons, Sean?
It ain't gonna work. Talk shit
about my friend who just got killed
and I will lawyer up right now.

Nolan puts his palms on the table in front of Danny and leans in close to him.

NOLAN

Fair enough. But give me another
flip answer and I'll shine up that
left eye of yours brighter than the
right.

They stare one another down like a couple of prizefighters.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

(re: black eye)

How'd you get that anyway? Looks
nasty.

DANNY

Work. Ran smack into a cold water
shut-off valve.

NOLAN

I see. Thought maybe it had to do
with that thing you came to see me
about the other day.

DANNY

Evan? Haven't heard from him in a
couple weeks.

NOLAN

Just went away, huh?

DANNY

Guess he figured I wasn't much of a
target for a shakedown.

NOLAN

Nice when problems solve themselves
like that, huh?

DANNY
Sure is.

Pause.

NOLAN
So who killed Patrick?

DANNY
I don't know, Sean.

NOLAN
I think you do. In fact, I think
you killed him.

DANNY
What?

NOLAN
I think you hired him to get rid of
Evan, but Evan got the best of him.
Which means, basically, you killed
him.

(pause)
We got you on tape asking Patrick
to call you about a job. Sounding
desperate. This is a couple of days
after Patrick was supposed to have
taken care of Evan and you're
getting worried.

DANNY
What tape?

NOLAN
Come on, Danny. You were scared.
You needed help. You paid your best
friend to take care of it for you,
but things went bad. And that's why
you've been running from me.

DANNY
I have no idea what you're talking
about.

NOLAN
Don't be stupid. Evan is still out
there and I'm sure he knows who
sent Patrick after him. We can
protect you. We can make a deal.
You might have to face some
charges, but Evan will go away for
good -- for killing your brother...
(MORE)

NOLAN (CONT'D)
And you can stop looking over your shoulder.

Danny takes a long beat, considering the choice before him... then looks square into Nolan's eyes:

DANNY
I have no idea what you're talking about.

Nolan straightens, starts to seethe.

CUT TO:

INT OBSERVATION ROOM - LATER

Nolan now stands on the other side of the 2-way mirror. He and Matthews watch ANOTHER DETECTIVE (50s) run Danny through the same questions as before.

MATTHEWS
You wanna hold onto him? Sweat him over the weekend?

NOLAN
No. He ain't gonna budge. Turn him loose when Willie's done. See if he leads us someplace.

MATTHEWS
All right.

INT SUV - LATE AFTERNOON

Parked in a POLICE IMPOUND LOT, Danny sits inside his SUV searching for a number in his cell phone. Finding it, he presses send and puts the phone to his ear...

DEBBIE (O.C.)
Hello?

DANNY
Listen. I don't have much time so I need you to pay attention. Evan has lost it. He's got my girlfriend... He kidnapped my girl-

DEBBIE (O.C.)
(interrupting)
I know.

DANNY

What?

DEBBIE (O.C.)

He put a gun in my mouth, Danny. He put a gun in my mouth and said he'd kill me.

Danny hears the panic in her voice and softens his tone.

DANNY

Where's Karen, Debbie?

DEBBIE (O.C.)

She's here. Tied up in the other room.

DANNY

(shudders)

Did he hurt her?

DEBBIE

No. Not yet.

DANNY

Where are you, Debbie?

DEBBIE

In the bathroom.

DANNY

What bathroom? Where?

DEBBIE

I'm scared.

DANNY

Then tell me where you are so I can come and help, okay?

DEBBIE

I can't. He'll kill me if you come here.

DANNY

I know you're scared Debbie. I know you're hoping things will turn out all right -- that you can ride it out. But you can't. Evan is gonna kill Karen, and probably Tommy and his dad, too... He's gonna kill Tommy, Karen.

DEBBIE

You don't know that.

DANNY

Yes I do. I thought the same as you, okay? Thought I could just play along and everything would work out. But it can't. Not anymore. The only way things will end is if we end them.

A BANGING SOUND on the other end and a muffled voice:

EVAN (O.C.)

What the fuck's taking so long,
Deborah?

DEBBIE (O.C.)

I'll be right out.
(to Danny)
I have to go.

DANNY

No. Wait! Debbie, please. Tell me where you are.

DEBBIE (O.C.)

I'm sorry, Danny.

DANNY

Debbie!

But the line is dead.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He redials... but the phone goes directly to Debbie's voice-mail.

DANNY (CONT'D)

FUCK!!!

He slumps, about to concede defeat... But suddenly, an idea occurs to him and he sits up straight. He starts the car and tears out of the parking lot.

EXT RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

HALLOWEEN NIGHT in a prime trick-or-treating neighborhood. COSTUMED KIDS stalk the houses in small clusters. EXCITED PARENTS watch from the street under a barrage of CAMERA FLASHES.

Danny stands at Richard's door and rings the bell... No answer. He rings again and peers through the door's windowpane into the darkened interior... He spots something and starts pounding on the door with his fist.

DANNY

Richard! Richard, I need to talk to you.

The door cracks open and Richard pokes his head out. He looks awful.

RICHARD

I can't talk right now, Danny.

DANNY

Please. I need to talk to you.

RICHARD

Not now.

He starts to close the door, but Danny stops it with his foot.

DANNY

I know what's going on, Richard...
I know about Tommy.

RICHARD

(startled)

What?

DANNY

I know about Tommy. I know he's been taken.

Richard pulls the door open.

RICHARD

How do you know that?

DANNY

(a long beat)

Because I took him.

Richard stares blankly at Danny for a long time... Then turns and heads down the hall, leaving the front door open. Danny pauses before following after him.

INT RICHARD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Danny follows Richard down the length of the hall and into his OFFICE...

Richard goes to a closet and searches inside. Danny lingers just inside the door...

Richard pulls out a BASEBALL BAT and charges Danny -- his anger bursting forth...

RICHARD
Where is MY SON!?

DANNY
(flinching)
Jesus Christ, Richard!

He pummels Danny, who falls to the floor, covering himself with his arms.

RICHARD
(screaming)
WHERE IS MY SON!?

DANNY
I don't know. I don't know,
Richard! Please!

RICHARD
You fucking asshole! WHY!? WHY
WOULD YOU DO THAT!?

He continues to pound on Danny.

DANNY
Richard, STOP!

RICHARD
FUCK YOU!

DANNY
RICHARD!

RICHARD
FUCK YOU!

DANNY
Please! He's gonna kill your boy!
Just listen to me. Before you kill
me just listen to me.

And then, as quick as it came, the homicidal impulse loses its grip on Richard and he drops the bat to the floor. He staggers across the room and collapses into his desk chair.

RICHARD
Is he hurt?

DANNY

No... At least he wasn't yesterday.

RICHARD

(sharp)

What do you mean?

(beat - nothing)

What do you mean?!

DANNY

The man I took him with disappeared
last night... with Tommy.

RICHARD

The man who's been calling me?

DANNY

Yes. His name is Evan.

RICHARD

Evan?

DANNY

When did he call last?

RICHARD

This morning- What do you mean
disappeared?

DANNY

What did he say?

RICHARD

Where did he disappear to?

DANNY

I don't know. Did you set up the
exchange?

RICHARD

Answer me, Goddamnit!

Danny stops. A long beat passes between them...

DANNY

There are some things you should
know, Richard.

RICHARD

Yes there are.

DANNY

Some other things, too.

(beat)

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

I've been lying to you for a long time. Ever since I met you... I didn't grow up in Detroit. Or go to Michigan State -- never even been to East Lansing. I didn't lay brick for my father before coming to work for you. Those were all lies. My dad was a longshoreman, died of heart failure when I was fourteen. I'm from the South Side -- born and bred in Bridgeport. And in an earlier life I robbed people... I was a thief.

Richard stares at Danny in stunned disbelief.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME - LATER

They're in the same spots as earlier. Danny has finished laying it all out before Richard.

RICHARD

You kidnapped my son to settle a debt? A criminal debt?

DANNY

No. I did it because he blackmailed me. He threatened Karen, jumped her in an alley... I did it because I knew he was going to do it either way. If I didn't help, he was going to hurt Karen. And I thought that if I were involved, I could protect Tommy.

Richard glares across his desk at Danny.

RICHARD

Why are you here, Danny?

DANNY

Because if you deliver the money alone he's going to kill you and Tommy both.

RICHARD

How do you know that?

DANNY

Because he's already killed two people since he got out.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

My best friend and some guy who overheard a call he made to you. This is his big score. He's not taking any chances... I'm here to help, Richard. I know that sounds crazy, but it's true.

RICHARD

Why should I believe anything you say?

DANNY

Because he's got Karen too.

RICHARD

What?

DANNY

He took Karen from the apartment this morning. He thought I was gonna go to the cops so he took her to insure I kept my mouth shut.

A long silence passes between the two men.

RICHARD

I'm supposed to be at the Pike Street construction site at 9:00 with a million dollars.

A WALL CLOCK reads: 7:14

MATCH CUT TO:

INT RANGE ROVER - NIGHT (MOVING)

The CLOCK on the dashboard reads: 8:31. Richard drives; Danny next to him in the passenger's seat.

RICHARD

It's funny. This is the last thing in the world Tommy would expect from me.

DANNY

What's that?

RICHARD

Me coming to save him.

(beat)

Tell me again why we're not calling the police?

DANNY

Trust me. You bring the police,
Tommy and Karen die. Evan will be
watching. You'd save your life, but
it will cost you your son's.

RICHARD

They have SWAT teams -- snipers.

DANNY

You call now, you'll get squad
cars, maybe a couple of detectives.
They'll be noisy and they'll be
slow.

RICHARD

That's gotta be better than the two
of us.

DANNY

You'd be surprised.

Pause.

RICHARD

Why is this happening to me?

DANNY

Because you have something. Because
your life is blessed. Because
nothing is out of reach... It's not
complicated. It's happening because
you have something and others
don't. And that's all the reason
some people need.

RICHARD

People like you.

ANGLE ON DANNY: That stung... but it was not unfair. He looks
out at the approaching Chicago skyline towering before them.

EXT STREET - NIGHT

The Range Rover pulls to the curb. Danny gets out of the car
and darts into a lot alongside an abandoned building.

As Richard drives off, we see a Crown Victoria idling a short
distance away. It's Nolan. He drops the car into gear and
follows the Range Rover.

EXT ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Atop the roof of an abandoned CONVENIENCE STORE, Danny crawls to the edge. The rooftop borders the construction site and gives him a clear view of the unfinished lofts.

Danny's eyes search the structure, but plastic sheeting encases the first four floors making it impossible to see inside. He looks at his watch: **8:49**.

DANNY

Fuck.

He starts to turn back, but something catches his eye and he stops...

DANNY'S POV: By the stairwell on the top floor he sees movement. Squinting, he can make out the faint outline of two people huddled on the floor: Tommy and Karen!

And then, two floors below, a BRIEF FLASH OF LIGHT shines through the plastic: Evan lighting a cigarette.

Danny scurries back across the roof and descends a metal ladder to the alley...

EXT ALLEY/STREET - CONTINUOUS

He hits the ground and races down the alley, emerging onto the street that runs along the back of the construction site...

In plain view of the structure now, Danny slows as he moves to a 7 foot high chain-link fence that surrounds the site. He takes a deep breath, grips the top of the fence, and pulls himself up and over...

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE - CONTINUOUS

On the other side, he hurries to the base of the structure, stopping at an H-BEAM that extends all the way up one corner of the building. The plastic sheeting has come loose in a few spots and it SNAPS and POPS violently in the wind.

DANNY'S POV: Looking up, the beam seems to ascend into the clouds...

But Danny does not hesitate. He grips the lip on either side of the beam, extends his arms, and places the soles of his shoes flat against its sand-papery surface. He throws his weight back and puts one foot in front of the other, sliding his hands along with them...

And it works! Soon his hands bump into the CROSS-BEAM of the second floor. He pulls himself up and repeats the process...

Danny reaches the third floor...

Then the fourth. His arms are tiring and the strain shows on his face, but he presses on...

His hands hit the cross-beam of the top floor and Danny hauls himself up. He rolls onto his back -- exhausted.

EVAN (O.C.)
Stop there!

Danny's eyes squeeze shut: *Fuck!*

EVAN (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Under the light. Take your jacket off... Throw it on the ground and turn around.

Danny opens his eyes, realizing Evan is talking to Richard. He moves to the front of the building and looks down:

The Range Rover idles inside the gate. Richard stands ten feet away following Evan's orders.

Danny turns away and rushes to the stairwell. Tommy and Karen are gagged and blindfolded -- their wrists bound to a railing. He removes their blindfolds to find two sets of the most petrified eyes he's ever seen looking up at him.

DANNY
(softly)
It's okay. We're gonna be okay. But we need to be really quiet.

He puts his hands on their shoulders, trying to calm them.

DANNY (CONT'D)
You're gonna follow me to the bottom of the stairs. We're gonna get in the car that's down there and we're gonna drive away... Easy as that, understand?

Karen nods. Tommy doesn't -- his eyes still as big and round as half-dollars. Danny puts both of his palms on Danny's shoulders and looks him square in the eye.

DANNY (CONT'D)
It's gonna be okay. I promise. We just need to remember to be really quick and really quiet.

He gets a slight nod from Tommy and Danny smiles.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Good.

Danny frees them from the rest of their bindings, then pulls Karen into him and squeezes her tight.

EVAN (O.C.)
Atta boy, Dick. Come on up.

They stand and Danny peers down the stairwell. He can see Richard starting up, hears the heavy plod of his shoes.

DANNY
(to Karen)
Count to thirty and then follow me,
okay? Straight to the bottom and
into the car.

KAREN
No...

DANNY
You can do it, baby.

KAREN
Where are you going?

DANNY
I need to stop on the third floor.

KAREN
No.

DANNY
I need to help Richard.

KAREN
Danny, no.

DANNY
Count to thirty.

Danny spins and darts down the stairs. On the fourth floor landing, he sees Richard exit the stairwell one floor below.

RICHARD (O.C.)
Where's my son?

EVAN (O.C.)
Where's my money?

RICHARD (O.C.)

It's here.

EVAN (O.C.)

Well bring it over and let me have
a look-see.

Danny descends the next flight of stairs and perches at the doorway Richard has just entered. He hears the PULL OF A ZIPPER and peeks around the corner...

POV: The space is large. Light from the street lamps outside pour through the plastic sheeting, but the half-finished walls create large pockets of shadows throughout the expanse. Twenty feet away, Richard stands facing Danny, holding open the duffel bag of cash. Evan, his back to the door -- gun at his side -- leans over and inspects the contents.

RICHARD

It's all there.

EVAN

It better be.

A PILE OF CARPENTRY WOOD sits on the ground nearby. Danny grabs a THREE FOOT LONG 2' BY 4' and slips silently into the room. He sneaks toward them, his soft-soled shoes silent on the concrete floor...

But he doesn't make it three strides before he stops dead in his tracks: Off to his left, no more than a dozen feet from him, is Debbie. And she's staring straight at him...

The moment seems to hang in the air for an eternity...

But then Debbie takes a pull on her cigarette and turns away, returning her gaze to the streets below. And Danny exhales and continues to close on Evan.

RICHARD

Where is my son?

EVAN

Right... Well, I changed up the
plans some, Dick.

He points the gun at Richard's chest and cocks the hammer-

WHACK! Seemingly out of nowhere, Danny drills Evan in the side of the head with the 2' by 4' -- staggering him...

Dropping him to his knees, and then the floor. Evan loses his grip on the gun and it clanks against the concrete floor.

Danny kicks it across the room and stands over his old friend, his 2' by 4' raised and ready to strike again.

TOMMY (O.C.)
DAD!!!

Tommy races through the stairwell door and leaps into his dad's arms. Richard squeezes him, overcome with emotion.

On the floor, Evan is coming to. He rolls onto his back with a groan.

EVAN
Danny Fucking Carter.

Danny turns to the others.

DANNY
Everyone down to the car.

EVAN
That's some ace lookout work,
Debbie. Nice job.

DEBBIE
I wasn't- I was looking out there.
For cars.

EVAN
(propping himself up)
Sold me down the river too?

DEBBIE
No, I-

DANNY
Always someone else's fault, huh
Ev?

EVAN
(bile in his tone)
You don't say a word to me, Judas.

DANNY
Judas? What does that make you?

NOLAN (O.C.)
Drop that board, Danny!

Danny spins around to find Sean Nolan, gun drawn, herding Karen, Richard, and Tommy towards him.

DANNY
Sean-

NOLAN

Drop it.

As the 2' by 4' clatters to the floor, Evan springs to his feet and scampers in the direction of where Danny kicked his gun.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

STOP!

Nolan FIRES HIS GUN -- BANG! BANG BANG BANG! But Evan has reached the cover of a dividing wall... and his GUN. He returns fire: BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Caught in the crossfire, Danny hits the floor and scurries towards the stairwell where the others have fled. Nolan dives behind a PILE OF BRICKS, unloads two more shots -- BANG BANG -- and screams into his radio:

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Taking fire! Taking fire!
Construction site on Pike Street!
RIGHT NOW! Pike and Warren.

Danny reaches the door and hurls himself onto the landing, right on the heels of Karen, Debbie, Richard, and Tommy.

DANNY

GO! GO! GO!

As they reach the bottom and spill into the night TWO MORE GUNSHOTS RING OUT... Followed by Nolan HOWLING IN PAIN.

Debbie, Tommy, and Richard pile into the Range Rover. Danny pushes Karen into the passenger seat, slams the door behind her, and then races back into the building...

KAREN

Danny!

Danny takes the stairs three at a time. On the third floor landing, he pauses and listens just outside the door. It's quiet... He takes a deep breath, pokes his head around the corner, and looks into the room:

Standing over a groaning Nolan, who's bleeding badly from GUNSHOT WOUNDS to the shoulder and leg, Evan reloads his gun.

EVAN

I know you got backup on the way so
this'll have to be quick. But we
had ourselves a little reunion
going, didn't we?

(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)

Before Danny pulled his little, bitch-ass runaway move again, we had the whole range going: The Cop, the criminal... and whatever the hell Danny thinks he is these days.

NOLAN

Shut it, convict.

Evan delivers a sharp kick to his jaw, knocking Nolan over -- his head crashing into the floor. In the distance, a SIREN WAILS.

EVAN

All right, I gotta get outta here.

He raises the gun to the cop's head...

EVAN (CONT'D)

Good night, Sean.

Suddenly, DANNY POUNCES FROM THE SHADOWS BEHIND EVAN. He plows into him, knocking the gun from his hand, and driving them both into the plastic sheeting. Their weight rips it away in several spots and they fall out away from the floor. But it doesn't give completely, and for a moment the two dangle above the ground, suspended in a cocoon of plastic...

But they're too heavy and the rest of it tears away and they PLUMMET TWO STORIES, slamming into the ground with the DULLEST OF THUDS...

The sheeting settles to the ground around them. Evan's back is flat against the ground. Danny lies atop him... Neither one moves...

Finally, Danny lifts his head and looks down at his childhood friend beneath him: Evan's eyes are closed -- unconscious -- but he's breathing...

The LIGHTS of an EMERGENCY VEHICLE flicker across their faces and we:

FADE TO BLACK.

INT COOK COUNTY JAIL - DAY

A long row of cubicles runs down the center of the VISITING ROOM. PRISONERS talk to LOVED ONES and LAWYERS through thick panes of plexi-glass.

Danny and Karen sit opposite each other at one of them, talking through a phone line.

KAREN

He fired you.

DANNY

I should hope so.

KAREN

But he doesn't plan to help the D.A. make his case, Danny. He wanted me to tell you that.

DANNY

(taken aback)

Really? Why?

KAREN

Tommy. Doesn't want him to have to deal with a trial -- relive it all.

DANNY

How is Tommy?

KAREN

I could hear him playing video games in the next room when I went over there. But when I asked Richard about him he told me it was none of my business.

DANNY

He said that?

KAREN

Pretty much. He also said that if you ever try and contact him or Tommy he will bring 'a world of shit' on you.

DANNY

Jesus. Well my world's all set in the shit department right now-

A RECORDED VOICE cuts into their line.

RECORDED VOICE

Sixty seconds.

Danny hangs his head -- sad... contrite.

DANNY

Karen, I'm sorry.

KAREN

I know.

DANNY

Thank you for coming. You don't
know how much it means...

KAREN

Staying away would have been
harder.

DANNY

Can you come back?

KAREN

Whenever they'll let me.

DANNY

I love you, Karen.

The line goes dead.

Karen kisses her hand and presses it to the glass. Danny
brings his hand up to meet hers, takes the "kiss" and tucks
it in his pocket.

INT STATESVILLE PRISON - DAY

Evan stands in a row of CONVICTS being processed. He pulls on
his JUMPSUIT and picks up a neatly folded set of sheets and a
pillow from the table in front of him. A GUARD approaches.
They know each other and the exchange is friendly.

PRISON GUARD

What happened?

EVAN

No room for me out there, Fenton.

The line of convicts starts moving out of the room. Fenton
walks alongside Evan.

PRISON GUARD

Sorry to hear that.

EVAN

Nah... Ain't nothing but simpletons
and degenerates in this place, but
at least I get 'em.

They enter a cavernous, circular-shaped CELL BLOCK. WHISTLES
and THREATS and CATCALLS rain down on them from the six tiers
of prisoners above.

PRISON GUARD

Welcome home, Evan.