

# THE HUNGRY RABBIT JUMPS

By Robert Tannen

6.5.09

FADE IN:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - SKYLINE - DAY

Summer heat and haze give the city a dream-like feel.

EXT. BROWNSTONE DUPLEX - BACKYARD - DAY

A Labor Day barbecue in a middle class neighborhood.

TWENTY-FIVE FOLKS (mid 20's to 50's, all races) mingle, eat, chat, sweat. THREE KIDS (5, 8, 10) run back and forth through a sprinkler in the small yard and play in a kiddie pool.

Manning the grill is NICK GERARD, solid physique, sharp mind, a high school chemistry teacher. He wears a chef's apron, works the grill. Smoke billows over him, rivers of sweat course down his face.

LAURA GERARD approaches her husband with a cold beer. She's an attractive woman with a playful, intelligent twinkle in her eyes. There's a vitality to her.

She holds the beer to Nick's cheek. They look out over the party, some of their closest friends in the world.

LAURA

I'm glad we did this.

NICK

Me, too. Annabel's kids soaked the Franklins' cat so expect a call.

LAURA

Maybe the monster will stop leaving us dead birds now.

Laura kisses Nick's neck, tastes his sweat.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Yum. I'm going to do my duty and mingle.

Laura moves off, turns and winks at her husband. Nick winks back, mouths, "Love you." This is a couple in love.

Nick watches Laura join her best friend TRUDY (20's, white), Trudy's husband, MAX (30's, white), and several other FRIENDS.

Nick turns his attention back to the grill. He prods a burger. Blood oozes.

NICK

Jimmy, rare, blue cheese, with your name  
on it!

JIMMY (40's), an ex-Philly cop, approaches.

NICK (CONT'D)

Is that too bloody?

JIMMY

I call it flavorful, Nicky. That's  
perfect.

Nick plops the burger on Jimmy's plate/bun.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Thank you, brother. So how are you  
feeling about tomorrow?

NICK

I'm in denial. I've got a few more hours  
of summer left.

JIMMY

I don't know how you do it year after  
year. It's people like you, Nick, who  
give us all hope.

NICK

You did your part, too, officer. Here's  
to you.

JIMMY

Here's to both of us.

The men toast with their beers, drink.

A spray of water hits Nick and Jimmy. The older boy has  
taken the hose off the sprinkler and holds it with a sly  
grin.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

On three, Nick. You take the left flank,  
I got the right. Three.

Jimmy and Nick race into the yard, chase the kids, tussle  
with the hose.

The five year old child grabs Nick by the leg, "tackles"  
him. Nick mock-falls into the kiddie pool. Nick lies on  
his back in the water, puts his arms behind his head. The  
water feels like heaven.

He stares up at the leafy trees and the cumulus clouds which billow across the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. ATTIC BEDROOM - NIGHT

An air conditioner HUMS in the window. Beyond, there's a flash of heat lightning.

Nick and Laura make love on their bed, sweating, grunting. There's a CLAP OF THUNDER (O.S.)--the couple flinches, startled, their rhythm interrupted. They roll off each other, LAUGHING.

Laura smiles giddily.

LAURA

Aren't Annabel's kids great?

NICK

Monsters.

LAURA

I can't wait until we have one, you know that?

NICK

I do.

Laura nestles into his arm. The couple cuddle. Happy and at peace.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives a mid-90's Honda Civic through the streets of southwest Philly, one of the rougher areas of the city. He stops at a red light. He's the only white face to be seen.

JUNKIE (O.S.)

Hat for the heat, hat for the sunshine!  
Five dollars, five dollars!

A JUNKIE (30's, black) works the interchange, selling "vintage" (read: used), Phillies baseball hats. He balances a half-dozen on his head, sweats heavily as the heat wave continues.

JUNKIE (CONT'D)

Hat for the heat, hat for the sunshine!  
Hey, officer, I know you a Philly fan.  
These here are classics.

NICK

No, thanks, and I'm not a cop.

JUNKIE

Alrighty, officer, how about a ferret  
then?

The man opens his trench coat. A ferret sticks its head  
out of an inner pocket.

JUNKIE (CONT'D)

I'll give you the early bird special. Ten  
dollars for this cutie.

NICK

No, thanks.

The light turns green and Nick drives off as the junkie  
works the cross traffic:

JUNKIE (O.S.)

Hat for the heat, hat for the sunshine!

Nick eyes the man in the rear view mirror. Absurd, a man  
selling a ferret on a street corner. Welcome to  
Philadelphia.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CHEMISTRY LAB - DAY

The room is filled with basic chemistry equipment and  
THIRTY NINTH GRADE STUDENTS (wearing black and white  
"uniforms.") All the students are black or Latino, poor,  
and "at risk."

Nick (wearing safety goggles and gloves) paces in front of  
his class, holding a vial in each hand. He's animated--a  
man who loves teaching.

He focuses on one of his students who slumps on the desk,  
head down, hands and fingers palming his head.

NICK

Edwin, kind sir.

EDWIN (14, Latino) maneuvers his fingers on his head into  
giving Nick the finger.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Head up, please.

Edwin raises his head. Ferocious eyes. It's as if somebody has sucked the humanity out of him.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Potassium chlorate. Sugar.

Nick pours the two together in a beaker.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Nothing. No reaction. But now I add one drop of sulfuric acid.

Nick squeezes in a drop of sulfuric acid. The reaction of the chemicals creates an intense, white flame.

NICK (CONT'D)  
How beautiful is that, people? A simple, chemical reaction.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - AERIAL - NIGHT

Soaring past the lights of downtown's skyscrapers. On the horizon, there's the flickering of heat lightning.

Among the downtown buildings, is an illuminated half dome. This is the Kimmel Center, home of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

The Philadelphia Orchestra slugs their way through Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring."

Among the orchestra is Trudy (violin) and Max (cello).

LAURA, looking striking in a tux, works the violin, sitting amongst the second violins.

CUT TO:

INT. ICE RINK - NIGHT

A men's hockey league. The level of play leaves much to be desired.

Nick skates down the rink, working the puck. He winds up, shoots, sends the shot high up over the boards. His shot is met with ribbing from his teammates.

JIMMY  
Look out for Gretzky!

Nick smiles big (showing his mouthguard), glides back off to the spot where he whiffed.

NICK  
Wet spot! Right there! Zamboni!

His teammates GUFFAW at his weak excuse.

CUT TO:

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

The orchestra stands as the audience gives them a standing ovation.

LAURA leans over to Trudy.

LAURA  
Starving.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick's on his cell, talking to Laura.

NICK  
We only lost by one. And I didn't get injured. So it was a good night.

EXT. KIMMEL CENTER - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Laura's on her cell, in a dressing room shared with other performers.

LAURA  
You're coming out with Trudes and Max and me.

INTERCUT

NICK

Some of us have real jobs and have to get up early.

LAURA

Come on, Nick. Let's celebrate. You survived another first day.

Laura gathers her stuff, moves out of the room and through the backstage area, still talking on her cell.

NICK

I'm going home and passing out.

Laura exits through the performer's entrance and out to a

SIDE STREET

Waiting for her are Trudy and Max.

LAURA

(still on cell)  
Live a little, old man.

TRUDY

Come on, Nick!

NICK

Say hey to Trudy and Max.

LAURA

I'll miss you.

NICK

Wake me when you get home. Love you.

LAURA

You, too, honey.

Laura closes her cell.

LAURA (CONT'D)

No dice. Let's go have some fun.

Laura, Trudy and Max head down the street.

CUT TO:

## EXT. TAPAS BAR - NIGHT

Through the window we see Laura, Trudy, and Max. They drink wine, share a plate of assorted tapas, unwind after their performance. They laugh at some unheard joke.

LATER

Outside, Laura, Trudy and Max hug goodbye. The wind has kicked up, the storm on the way, fat raindrops PEPER the cement. Laura hurries off in one direction, Trudy and Max head the opposite way.

CUT TO:

## EXT/INT. PUBLIC PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

Laura presses the call button. The elevator doors jerk open and she steps inside.

## INT. ELEVATOR - MOVING - NIGHT

The elevator ascends. Laura glances at the inspection report. The glass covering the report has been graffitied over and the report can't be seen.

The doors open. Laura exits and makes her way toward her car.

A METALLIC CLICK (O.S.)--

Laura freezes, glances behind her as the elevator doors close. She scans the parking garage...

She sees nobody, just a few parked vehicles under the weak lighting.

Laura continues to her Subaru Outback. She enters the car, quickly shuts the door. She locks the doors.

Laura's visibly relieved, safe in her car--

A SHARP TAP TAP on the window--the muzzle of a gun--a stocking-headed man--Laura SCREAMS--glimpse of a lizard tattoo on the man's neck--she reaches for the ignition button--

GLASS SHATTERS, rains down upon her.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick's sound asleep. The PHONE RINGS and jolts him awake. He listens...his reaction shows that something terrible has happened.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The storm has finally hit and the heavens have opened. A blur in the rain, Nick, hurries into the hospital entrance.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick, shell-shocked, dripping from the rain, hurries down a long, anonymous hallway.

INT. ICU UNIT - NIGHT

A NURSE leads Nick to a patient room. She knocks once on the door, opens it.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Nick is led in by the NURSE. There's A DOCTOR, A SECOND NURSE (working a feed line), and A DETECTIVE in the room.

NURSE  
(to the men)  
Husband.

Nick freezes as he sees Laura. She's asleep and sedated. There are bright red scratch marks across her neck. One eye is swollen shut, the size of an apple. She's hooked up to an IV and an EKG machine. Her heartbeat BEEPS.

Nick slowly approaches. Crouches beside his wife.

NICK  
Is she going to be okay?

DOCTOR BURDETTE  
Mr. Gerard, I'm Doctor Burdette.

DETECTIVE  
I'm Detective Douglas, Mr. Gerard.

DOCTOR BURDETTE

Her eye socket's broken. She has several deep lacerations. We're also concerned that she might have internal bleeding.

Nick fights tears.

NICK

Jesus.

DOCTOR BURDETTE

We're keeping a close watch. Internal bleeding is very dangerous.

Nick shakes his head in dismay.

He eyes the detective.

NICK

You know who did it?

DETECTIVE

(matter of fact)

Not yet. But your wife gave us a description. He's got a distinctive tattoo. Here...

The detective runs a finger down the side of his neck.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

...a lizard.

NICK

That's all you have?

DETECTIVE

We have the rapist's semen. We'll run the DNA. If we get a match in our database, then we know who we're looking for.

NICK'S CONCERN FOR HIS WIFE IS TURNING TO ANGER: *WHY THE HELL DID THIS HAPPEN TO US?*

NICK

(pause)

I'd like a moment alone with my wife.

The men and nurse exit the room.

Nick turns back to Laura. He's still trying to wrap his head around the reality of this. It's like a nightmare come to life.

He watches Laura breathe, listens to the medical machinery working. It's horrible. He leans in close to her.

NICK (CONT'D)

You're going to be okay, sweetie.  
Everything's going to be okay. You hear me?

Nick kisses his wife's cheek. His lips linger.

He feels devastated.

And powerless.

CUT TO:

INT. ICU - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Nick fills out admitting forms.

JIMMY (O.S.)

Nicky.

Jimmy enters, trailed by Trudy (tears) and Max. They take turns hugging Nick.

There's an awkward silence. Nothing to say.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Nick and his friends sit, drinking coffees out of Styrofoam cups. In the b.g., the rainstorm continues through the front windows/doors.

TRUDY

That's absurd, Nick.

NICK

I go for the drink, this doesn't happen.

JIMMY

Stop it.

NICK

It's true.

JIMMY

Just fucking stop it.

Nick, angry, moves to the windows. Jimmy joins him. He hands him a paper bag with a fifth of Maker's Mark.

NICK

They'll never get the asshole who did this.

Jimmy's silent.

NICK (CONT'D)

They won't, will they, Jimmy?

JIMMY

It's Philly, Nick. You know.

Jimmy cracks open the fifth.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Here, have a taste.

The men take swigs.

They rejoin Trudy and Max, share the bottle.

NICK

I'm going to stay with her tonight. Go home, guys, get some rest.

There are unsure glances among the friends.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'm fine. Get out of here.

JIMMY

We'll be back first thing. You call if you need something before then, my cell's on all night.

Nick nods. Everyone hugs goodbye.

Nick watches his friends exit, disappear into the rainy night.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Nick sits in a chair, feeling a raging mix of anger, guilt and sorrow. He's alone in the room with Laura, watching her sleeping, listening to the cold beeps of the medical instruments and the rain pelting the window.

He takes a hit from the fifth. He gets up and exits the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Mounted in an upper corner, a TV (with the sound muted) shows a travel show about the Fjords of Norway.

Nick, the only one in the waiting room, stares numbly up at the screen.

A MAN (40's, white, a focused energy) enters the room. He wears a generic, grey suit. This is SIMON.

Simon takes a seat two rows behind Nick, who looks blankly up to the television.

SIMON  
(re: infomercial)  
Where is this?

NICK  
Norway.

SIMON  
Beautiful.

The men watch the show.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
I went to Iceland couple years back.  
Stunning place. It's always good to get  
out of your space, get out of your head.  
(pause)  
Who do you have in here?

NICK  
My wife. You?

SIMON  
Nobody.

Nick eyes Simon. Simon has the calm, slightly unsettling demeanor of a funeral home director.

SIMON (CONT'D)  
What happened to Laura, it shouldn't have  
happened.

NICK  
(pause)  
You're a detective?

SIMON  
No. My name's Simon. A friend told me  
about tonight. How are you holding up?

Simon doesn't wait for an answer.

SIMON (CONT'D)

That was a stupid question, wasn't it?  
You're a wreck. Who the hell wouldn't be?

Simon moves to a seat closer to Nick, lowers his voice.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The man who did this to your wife was  
paroled three weeks ago. He's done it  
before, he'll do it again.

Simon glances out the hallway. He's making sure nobody is  
there, nobody listening.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I know what you're feeling. Years ago, I  
experienced it myself.

Simon studies Nick, sizing him up.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Nick, I represent an organization that  
deals with people, terrible people,  
people like the man who raped your wife.  
(pause)  
We can take care of him. It would need to  
happen tonight.

NICK

What the hell are you talking about?

SIMON

You understand what I'm saying, don't  
you?

The two men lock eyes.

SIMON (CONT'D)

If you want this to happen, you need to  
understand one thing about the way we  
work: we might ask something in return.

(pause)

We might ask you to watch somebody for a  
few hours, or break a security camera,  
little things like this. Or maybe  
something bigger.

(pause)

But most likely, Mr. Gerard, you'll never  
hear anything from us for the rest of  
your life.

NICK

Who's "we"?

Simon ignores Nick's question.

SIMON

We could tell the authorities. Of course, police in this city...no guarantees there.

(pause)

If he's caught, there will be a trial. Your wife, assuming she didn't drop the charges, would be forced to re-live the night over and over. The lawyers will question her, bring up her sexual history, they'll manufacture lies. All they need is the smallest hint of doubt. It will be a terrible experience for her. And you.

(pause)

This is your decision.

NICK

You know where he is?

SIMON

Yes. I need an answer--there's a time issue.

NICK

Where is he?

SIMON

It can't work like that.

NICK

This is a joke, right? A sick joke.

SIMON

The farthest thing.

NICK

(pause)

No. No.

Nick rises, heads toward the door. Simon follows.

SIMON

There's a row of vending machines in the Oncology Department lobby. If you want this to happen, select the Eternity Bar. Buy two of them. Do it in the next hour.

(pause)

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

And, Mr. Gerard, we never talked, you  
never met me.

Simon slips past Nick and exits.

Nick steps into the hallway in time to see Simon boarding an elevator. A last glance between the men--a slight nod (*do it*) from Simon--and then Simon's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Nick stares down at the battered face of his wife. He puts a hand on her forehead, brushes back her hair--Laura violently swats his hand away, turns away from him with an ANIMAL-LIKE YELP. Then she's immediately back asleep, having never really awoken under her sedation.

Nick paces the small room like a caged animal.

He stops at the end of her bed, stares down at Laura.

He heads out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Nick approaches the Oncology Building. He stares across the street and into the

EXT/INT. HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY LOBBY - NIGHT

Through the rain and floor-to-ceiling windows, three people can be seen inside:

- (1) A NIGHT GUARD (60's, black) mans a security desk.
- (2) A DOCTOR (30's, Indian, doctor's coat) eats a bag of peanuts, talks on his cell.
- (3) A CANCER PATIENT (30's, gaunt, shaved head, white, earring, hospital gown,) stands by the windows staring out.

The entrance doors glide open and Nick enters, shakes out his umbrella. He receives a nod from the security guard.

MUZAK plays from ceiling speakers. There's a security camera trained on the entrance. The doctor CHATS IN HINDI on his cell.

Nick makes his way to the vending machines. He eyes the selections, spots the Eternity Bars. He feeds a dollar into the machine.

Nick debates.

He presses the button for the Eternity Bar. The bar CLANGS down to the retainer. He buys a second one.

Nick takes the bars. The wrapper says, "Eat Smart, Do Great Things."

GUARD (O.S.)  
(slight Jamaican accent)  
You sure you want the healthy one?

NICK  
Excuse me?

GUARD  
The way I see it, if you're going to have a treat, you might as well have something worth it. I get myself the jalapeno chips and a Mountain Dew and I'm happy.

The guard grins. Nick doesn't know what the hell is going on. Is this man just making conversation, or is he involved with Simon?

GUARD (CONT'D)  
Me, I got high blood pressure so those chips are not on my approved diet, but you know what I figure? I have a heart attack, I'm in the right place.

Nick glances at the doctor, still babbling in Hindi, then at the cancer patient who stares out the window. Nick realizes the man is watching Nick in the reflection of the window. Or not. It's impossible to tell.

Nick moves to the exit.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
Stay dry.

Nick nods, snaps open his umbrella. He glances at Cancer again. Cancer stares at him with a creepy, menacing look. Nick is rattled and exits.

OUTSIDE

Under his umbrella, Nick glances back at the Oncology lobby. Cancer moves through the lobby and out the exit. He disappears around the corner.

Nick wonders what the hell he's set in motion. He heads back up the street to the ICU and his wife's room.

CUT TO:

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The place is a joint, nothing fancy, filled with downtown artists, third shift workers, and night owls.

A MAN (40's, mixed race) sits by the windows. He wears a zip-up Ecko sweatshirt, jeans, and high-end work boots.

He slurps his soup. Focused. Calm.

Feeling the heat of the soup, starting to sweat, he unzips his sweatshirt.

Sprouting out of his collar, on the side of his neck, is the LIZARD TATTOO with a flicking tongue.

This is the man who raped Laura.

He glances out the window as he feels eyes upon him.

A JEEP slowly passes. HIP HOP THUMPS from inside. The DRIVER (black, 30's, sideburns, with a semi-hipster/gangster look that could blend into any area of the city) locks eyes with Lizard. And then the Jeep and the man disappear into the night, the thumping music lingering...then gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE - NIGHT

Lizard enters the run-down apartment house where he lives.

INT. APARTMENT HOUSE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lizard climbs the stairs toward his floor. His boots CLOMP on the linoleum.

He stops. Listens. He heard something. He peers up. Then down below. Sees nothing. He continues up--

SIDEBURN

Mr. Hodge?

Lizard freezes. Two men stand behind him. "SIDEBURN," from the Jeep and "CANCER," the man from the Oncology lobby. Cancer flashes some sort of badge, shows his gun in his waistband.

SIDEBURN (CONT'D)

Keep going, Mr. Hodge.

LIZARD

What the fuck?

SIDEBURN

Keep walking up.

LIZARD

What the hell is this bullshit?

SIDEBURN

Up. Now.

The men climb up the stairs.

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The rain has ceased--mist swirls off the rooftop. Cancer leads Lizard to the edge of the roof.

LIZARD

This is wrong, man.

They reach the edge of the roof. Lizard glances down: five stories below is an empty lot. Sideburns puts a gun to Lizard's forehead.

SIDEBURN

Did you rape a woman tonight, Frank?  
Public garage over on Filbert.

Sideburns pushes the barrel of the gun against Lizard's skin.

LIZARD

I don't know what you're talking about.

SIDEBURN

What were you doing at eleven-fifteen tonight?

LIZARD

I was in my place. Watching TV.

SIDEBURNNS

What were you watching?

LIZARD

The news.

SIDEBURNNS

What was the lead story?

LIZARD

I don't remember...it was a crash. A plane crash.

Sideburns pockets his gun.

Then, in an instant, he expertly kicks out one of Lizard's legs, shoves Lizard over the side.

Lizard lets out a SHOUT then falls. He hits the mud with a DULL THUD. Sideburns and Cancer eye the motionless body below.

Sideburns takes out his cell, speed-dials.

SIDEBURNNS

It's done.

He shuts his cell. The men leave the roof.

The lights of the Philly skyline flicker in the rain.

CUT TO:

INT. ICU WAITING ROOM - DAY

Daylight streams through the windows, the storm over.

A few RANDOM RELATIVES of ICU patients are scattered about. The TV is set to a morning news show.

Nick pours a cup of coffee from the coffee machine in the corner. He looks terrible, barely slept.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. Gerard?

Nick turns and faces a MAN (30's, dress shirt and tie), some sort of hospital administrator.

NICK

Yes.

ADMINISTRATOR

We need you to fill out a few more insurance forms, sir.

The administrator hands Nick a sealed envelope.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

If you could get to it right away, that would be great. Thank you.

The administrator turns and leaves the room.

Nick sits, sips his coffee. He opens the envelope--A POLAROID photo falls to the floor.

It's a photo of the dead rapist. The photo is a tight shot of the guy's face, the lizard tattoo on his neck is clearly visible.

Nick pockets the photo, glances about the room nervously. Nobody's looking at him.

He moves to the

HALLWAY

Glances up and down. There's no sign of the "administrator."

Nick approaches his wife's room. Through the door he sees a nurse drawing blood. Laura looks terrible: pale, purple and black bruises, rings under her eyes.

Nick takes a deep breath and enters the room.

NICK

Hi.

Laura tries a small smile but it comes out very weak.

LATER

Nick and Laura are alone. Laura stares out the window, the sunlight streaming in.

Nick rises, shuts the door.

He sits beside his wife.

NICK

I talked to the police this morning.  
(pause)  
They found the rapist.

Laura looks to Nick, wanting more details.

NICK (CONT'D)

He's dead. Committed suicide.

Beat.

Laura tears up. Then cries hard, emotion flooding over her. Nick puts his arms around her, trying to comfort her.

NICK (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be okay.

Nick says it as much to convince himself as he does for Laura.

FADE THROUGH TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA SKYLINE - DAY

A claustrophobic grey sky of early November.

SUPER: "FIFTEEN MONTHS LATER."

CUT TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - PARK - DAWN

Nick jogs through a downtown park.

He runs out of the park, across a thoroughfare and into an above-ground

PARKING STRUCTURE

He runs across the lower level and enters the

STAIRWELL

He runs up the stairs, taking them two at a time. Pushing himself to the fifth floor--the top floor--and out through the door.

## ROOFTOP PARKING LEVEL

Nick sprints to the end of his workout. He puts his hands over his head, feeling the good pain of the workout. A small, satisfied smile forms.

CUT TO:

## INT. DOWNTOWN LOFT - DAY

THREE DEADBOLT LOCKS. They turn one by one.

REVEAL: high ceilings, sealed cement floors, brick walls, an open floor plan. The large windows reveal a slice of the Philly skyline.

Nick enters with two cappuccinos and the paper. The loft is Nick and Laura's home now.

NICK

I'm back!

Laura heads down, still in her bathrobe.

LAURA

Morning.

The couple peck hello, she takes the coffee.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Laura takes her coffee, a section of the paper, and sits on the couch.

NICK

You're not going to Pilates?

LAURA

I don't think so.

NICK

You should go. It'll make you feel good.

LAURA

I feel fine.

Nick moves behind her, massages her shoulders. Then kisses her neck.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Nick...not now.

Nick backs off.

NICK

No problem. I'm taking a shower.

Nick makes his way up the stairs to the bedroom area.

At the top of the stairs, he glances back to Laura. Their eyes meet. He tries a smile. She doesn't return it, looks back down at the paper. A tenseness is evident in their relationship.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Nick (goggles and gloves) stands before THIS YEAR'S STUDENTS. He holds a rose above a beaker of liquid nitrogen. He blows the rose, the petals flutter.

Nick drops the rose in the beaker. Removes the rose with tweezers. The rose glitters. He drops the rose on the floor. It shatters.

NICK

Liquid nitrogen.

Nick eyes his class. And there's Edwin. His problem student from the previous year, repeating his class. Edwin has grown a weak moustache. He's blowing a bubble, bigger and bigger...POP.

Nick gestures for Edwin to join him in the hall.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to the class)

Think about everyday uses of liquid nitrogen.

IN THE HALLWAY

Nick and Edwin.

NICK

Our second year together. Now as much as I do like you, Edwin, I also know that you are probably getting tired of me. Right? You've heard all my bad jokes, and you know all my tricks.

Edwin raises his head, chomps his gum, stares daggers at Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)

Let me tell you a secret, just between you and me. When I was your age, I hated the world, too.

Edwin scowls, not wanting to be lectured by Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)

But here's the thing that I know now: it gets better. It's never perfect. No. But it gets better.

Edwin shuffles uncomfortably.

NICK (CONT'D)

You're smart. Science, math, whatever you wanted to do, if you applied yourself, you'd be outstanding.

Edwin is silent. Nick might be getting through to him.

NICK (CONT'D)

Go back in there and let's get to work.

Edwin chews his gum, doesn't move.

EDWIN

Fuck you.

NICK

(frustrated)

Your choice. You know where to go.

Edwin shuffles like a tough guy down the hall towards the administration offices.

EDWIN

Fuck you, pussy!

Nick takes a moment. Composes himself.

He's not going to let one kid get to him. He re-enters his class.

NICK (O.S.)

Uses of Liquid Nitrogen! Tell me, people!

CUT TO:

EXT. RITTENHOUSE SQUARE - DAY

A beautiful, small public park in the heart of the city. A small placard indicates this is:

*"RITTENHOUSE SQUARE -- EST. 1683"*

The park is surrounded by upscale town homes, restaurants, and a large, Episcopal church.

LAURA sits on a bench, watching the water dance in a fountain. It's peaceful, even meditative.

She takes out her cell and speed-dials.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CLASSROOM - DAY

End of the school day and Nick's packing up. His cell RINGS. ID shows, "LAURA."

NICK

Hi.

LAURA (PHONE)

I'm sorry about this morning.

INTERCUT

NICK

There's nothing to be sorry about.

LAURA

Sometimes I just...I can't shake it.

NICK

I know.

LAURA

I wish it had never happened.

NICK

Me, too. But it did...and we're doing fine. Right?

LAURA

(pause)

How was your day?

NICK

Looking forward to tonight.

Nick's at the windows of his classroom, looking out over the schoolyard. Beyond the yard, is an inner city commercial strip.

LAURA

Don't forget your tux.

NICK

I'm picking it up as soon as I leave school.

Suddenly, Nick grows very still. He eyes a SUV parked at the curb. There's a man in the driver's seat whose profile is familiar.

*Cancer.* The man from the Oncology lab.

*But is it him?* The sun reflecting off the car window makes it impossible to be certain.

LAURA

See you soon. I love you, Nick.

NICK

Me, too, honey.

Nick hangs up. He squints at the SUV.

He can't be sure if it's Cancer or not.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEACHER'S PARKING LOT - DAY

Nick exits the school, cautiously heads across the lot toward his car.

He looks out to the commercial strip.

The SUV is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. FORMAL WEAR SHOP - DAY

Nick waits for his tux. A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER shop for a wedding dress.

Nick feels eyes upon him. He turns, looks out to the street. The sidewalks are crowded with PEDESTRIANS. He doesn't see anyone watching him, doesn't recognize any faces.

Then he sees the SUV across the street, the same one that was outside his school. The driver, Cancer, staring directly at Nick.

Cancer puts the SUV in gear and starts off.

Nick moves quickly out the door, spots the rear of the SUV. No plates.

The SUV disappears into traffic.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

PATRONS arrive, dressed in tuxes and formal gowns.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

The theater fills for the performance. There's the BUZZ OF THE AUDIENCE and the DISCORDANT SOUND of the orchestra tuning up.

Nick (tux) moves down an aisle, finds his seat beside Jimmy near the front of the theater.

JIMMY

Thanks for the invite--I could be watching the Flyers, you know?

Nick glances out over the audience. Hundreds of anonymous faces. He's wary after spotting Cancer earlier.

Nick eyes Laura, tuning her violin. She's a sight. Beautiful.

She looks up. She and Nick share small, loving smiles.

NICK

(mouthing)

Kick ass.

Laura winks, then focuses.

The CONDUCTOR enters to APPLAUSE. The center grows very quiet. The baton is raised and Haydn's Symphony No. 103 begins.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's the post-performance opening night party. The high-ceilinged space is filled with performers and supporters. A JAZZ TRIO PLAYS. The mood is festive.

Nick, Laura, Trudy, Jimmy, and Max stand at a table, drinking and socializing.

JIMMY

...five years I dated Gong Wu, this is when I lived in China.

TRUDY

You never lived in China.

JIMMY

Trudy, please. Gong Wu was the love of my life.

LAURA

What about your ex?

JIMMY

People, can I tell a joke here?

Jimmy takes a piece of folded paper out of his pocket.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

When Gong Wu broke up with me, she wrote me this long letter. Now you all don't mind if I read to you what she said?

MAX

Tell us.

Jimmy unfolds the paper.

JIMMY

When Gong Wu broke my heart into a million tiny pieces, this is what she wrote...

Jimmy "reads" from the sheet of paper. He speaks CHINESE GIBBERISH. It's the punch line. Everybody LAUGHS.

Jimmy jiggles his glass, empty, only ice cubes left.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Nicky, your turn.

NICK

Who else is thirsty?

AT THE BAR

Nick orders from the bartender.

NICK

...a Kir Royale, and a Johnnie Walker  
Black neat.

The bartender moves off to make the drinks. Nick glances about the crowded room: the people, the music, the buzz of conversation and laughter. It's all so civilized and wonderful.

Nick's cell BUZZES. ID shows, "*RESTRICTED*."

NICK (CONT'D)

Hello?

MALE VOICE (PHONE)

Bring them the drinks, tell them you have to make a call, come outside.

NICK

Who is this?

SIMON (PHONE)

It's Simon. We need to talk.

Nick is frozen. It's the moment he had almost convinced himself would never come.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Do it now.

Simon hangs up. Nick scans the room, peers out the windows to the street. He doesn't see any sign of Simon.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nick exits, scans the street. There are a few pedestrians. Nick's cell BUZZES. ID shows, "*RESTRICTED*."

NICK

Hello?

SIMON (PHONE)

See the liquor store on the corner?

Nick eyes the store.

NICK

Yes.

SIMON (PHONE)

Meet me in there.

Simon hangs up. Nick crosses the street, walks to the liquor store and enters.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Nick enters, passes through a metal detector. It BEEPS.

CLERK (O.S.)

Take out your keys and cell phone, go through again.

Nick puts his keys and cell into the empty Cool Whip container. He passes through the metal detector again with no problem. He collects his personals, moves down an aisle.

He stares up at a bubble mirror which shows every aisle in the store. There's nobody here but him and the clerk.

Nick's cell BUZZES.

SIMON (PHONE)

Buy a pack of gum, come back outside.

Nick buys a pack of gum, exits. An SUV (Mercedes, tinted windows, temp plates) turns the corner, approaches, stops before him and idles.

The back door opens. Simon's inside.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Come on in, Nick.

NICK

What do you want?

Nick glances at the driver: Sideburns, the man who killed the rapist. But Nick has never seen him before.

SIMON

Relax. A quick talk. Come in and shut the door.

NICK

What's this about?

SIMON

What do you think?

Beat.

Nick enters the SUV, closes the door. The SUV idles.

Simon hands Nick a sealed envelope. It's addressed to, "SANTA CLAUS. NORTH POLE." A stamp is already affixed.

SIMON (CONT'D)

There's a mailbox at Girard and 34th. Go there after work tomorrow. I want you to mail that letter at exactly 3:30.

NICK

What is it?

SIMON

It's a letter to Santa Claus. We'd like you to mail it for us.

NICK

(pause)

And then I'm even?

SIMON

It's not up to me.

NICK

Who's it up to?

SIMON

All I know is you need to mail the letter at 3:30 tomorrow.

Nick hesitates.

Then he pockets the letter and exits the SUV. The SUV drives down the street, turns the corner, and is gone.

Nick heads back to the restaurant. He's rattled.

He takes a breath, calming himself. He eyes the restaurant across the street.

He spots Laura inside with their friends. She's buzzed. Laughing. Beautiful. Vivacious.

For this moment, she's how he remembers her before the fateful night.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nick weaves his way back to his wife and friends. Laura whispers in his ear.

LAURA

I missed you, handsome.

She kisses his neck. Then instinctively senses something's bothering him.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Everything okay?

NICK  
All good.

Laura wants to believe him.

LAURA  
Who was on the phone?

NICK  
Colleague. School stuff.

LAURA  
Boring.

Laura kisses her husband again, presses up against him suggestively.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Laura climbs up to the bedroom area. She glances back down at Nick, throwing him an exaggerated, sexy smile.

LAURA  
You coming?

NICK  
Three minutes.

Laura disappears above.

Nick takes the envelope out of his tux jacket pocket. He holds it up to the kitchen light. Can't make out what's written on the sheets of paper inside.

He eyes the seal closely, debates whether to open it. Decides against it.

Nick hides the envelope in his shoulder bag between teaching folders.

Nick climbs the stairs. Laura steps out of the bathroom, in lingerie. She moves to Nick, presses up against him.

They kiss. Laura runs her hands over Nick's back.

LAURA  
You're all tense.

NICK  
I'm fine.

Laura leads him to the bed. She pushes him down, straddles him, starts to unbutton his tux shirt.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives through Philly.

He pulls up to 34th and Girard. He finds himself in front of the Philadelphia Zoo.

He scans the area. Doesn't see any mailbox. He checks the dashboard time, "3:27." His cell BUZZES in his pocket. ID shows: "RESTRICTED."

NICK  
Hello?

SIMON (PHONE)  
Are you there?

NICK  
I don't see any mailbox.

SIMON (PHONE)  
Open the letter.

Nick opens the envelope. There's a sheet of legal paper folded in thirds. Inside is another folded sheet of paper. There's a phone number (703 555-8905) and three xeroxed photos on the sheet:

(1) A WOMAN (40's, white).

(2) A MAN (40's, white, glasses, mop of hair, intense eyes).

(3) TWO GIRLS (6 & 8, white).

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)  
Enter the zoo. You'll see a gift shop. Buy a paperback. Sit at one of the benches and watch the entrance. If they show up, follow them. If that man appears, you call the number immediately. Understand?

NICK

Yes.

SIMON (PHONE)

Now tear up the sheet until it's confetti. Remember what the man looks like.

Simon hangs up. Nick takes a last glance at the paper, committing the PHONE NUMBER to memory.

He rips the sheet into tiny pieces, flutters the pieces into a trash bin.

CUT TO:

INT. ZOO - DAY

Nick sits at a bench, holding a paperback, eyeing the entrance.

He spots the woman and the two girls enter. He follows them.

To Nick, they just look like a young, happy family, the girls racing excitedly from exhibit to exhibit.

LATER

Nick follows the woman and girls as they exit the zoo. They make their way to a Volvo, get in and drive away.

Nick is left standing alone at the edge of the parking lot. The sun is setting and his cell is silent.

Nick's face clouds, he's not sure what exactly he did, what any of this means.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Nick grades papers. He's alone. Laura's at work.

His cell RINGS. ID shows, "RESTRICTED."

NICK

Hello?

SIMON (PHONE)

We need you to do one more thing for us.

Nick tenses at the sound of Simon's voice.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)  
Behind your refrigerator, you'll find  
instructions.

He gets up and eyes the refrigerator, covered with  
scrambled letter magnets.

Nick glances around his loft nervously. *Was somebody in  
here?*

NICK  
What are you talking about?

SIMON (PHONE)  
Your car won't start tomorrow morning,  
the battery will be dead. You'll take the  
subway to work. You'll oversleep your  
stop and you'll be where you need to be.

NICK  
*How the hell did you get into my loft?*

SIMON (PHONE)  
Your alibi is you witnessed a suicide.

NICK  
I followed that woman, those girls. I'm  
done.

SIMON (PHONE)  
Almost.  
(pause)  
Now I want you to remember one sentence.  
*The hungry rabbit jumps.*

Simon lets the sentence sink in.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)  
Don't ever say it unless you need to. The  
hungry rabbit jumps.

NICK  
What the hell does that mean?

SIMON (PHONE)  
After it's over, make sure you get rid of  
the instructions, shred them.

Nick is silent.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)  
Are we clear, Nick?

NICK

I don't understand what you're asking me to do.

SIMON (PHONE)

It's all in the instructions.

Simon hangs up. Nick slowly shuts his cell. He nervously eyes the fridge. Approaches.

He spots a scuff mark in front of the fridge.

*Someone was in here.*

He maneuvers the fridge away from its wall space.

Laura STOPS PLAYING (O.S.)--Nick freezes...hears the BATHROOM DOOR CLOSE above. Then the SINK RUNNING.

Nick removes an envelope from the slot on the back of the fridge.

AT THE KITCHEN COUNTER

Nick tears open the envelope. He pulls out four sheets of paper. He looks through them:

SHEET 1: A photo of one LEON WALCZAK. It's the same man who was on the sheet at the zoo.

SHEET 2: A two paragraph bio on Walczak describing him as a child pornographer who hides behind the job of a network administrator.

SHEET 3: A collage of pictures of GIRLS between the ages of five and eight. Walczak's victims.

SHEET 4: A page of extremely specific instructions on how to murder Walczak, although the words "murder" and "kill" are never mentioned.

Nick's appalled. *This is wrong. It's wrong and very messed up.*

Nick moves to the balcony and steps outside. He closes the door behind him. He punches in numbers on his cell as he repeats the numbers (memorized from the slip of paper at the zoo) to himself:

NICK

703 555-8905.

There's one RING, then:

RECORDING (PHONE)

The number you have dialed has been  
disconnected or is no longer in service.

(in Spanish)

The number you have dialed has been  
disconnected or is no longer in service.

Nick hangs up. He stares out over the city, the WHITE NOISE of the metropolis drifting up over him.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - DAY

Nick and Laura sip coffees, read sections of the paper.

LAURA

No run today?

NICK

Early meeting.

Nick glances at the clock. He slowly and carefully folds his section of the paper, as if delaying the terrible chore ahead of him.

Nick rises, pecks his wife goodbye. She senses something's off.

LAURA

You okay?

NICK

Yup. Call you later.

Nick grabs his jacket and shoulder bag and exits.

INT. LOFTS - ELEVATOR - MOVING - DAY

Nick rides the elevator down to the parking garage.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Nick approaches his car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Nick turns the ignition. Car doesn't start.

He takes a moment then tries again. The battery's dead.

Nick is a bundle of nerves, realizing this is really happening.

He takes out the instructions and studies them one last time...

NICK (V.O.)  
(reading)  
"We think he'll be on the 7:12 train."

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick stands shoulder to shoulder among MORNING COMMUTERS, the crowd swaying as the train hurtles underground.

NICK (V.O.)  
"If he's not on the 7:12, wait for the next one. If he hasn't appeared by the 7:55 train, go to work."

The train slows to the next stop. Nick makes his way out onto the

SUBWAY PLATFORM

Nick eyes the waiting COMMUTERS, searching for Walczak.

NICK (V.O.)  
"There are two security cameras, one behind you, one in front across the tracks. Neither camera will work."

Nick glances up at two security cameras.

He turns his attention back to the crowd...

He spots Walczak (baseball hat, scarf, rough beard) standing in front of the tracks. Nick makes his way through the waiting commuters and up behind Walczak.

Nick stares at the back of Walczak's head, his unshaven neck.

A LOW RUMBLING (O.S.). Heads turn at the sound of the approaching train. The train's headlight appears in the tunnel.

The crowd moves nearer to the tracks. Nick shuffles closer to Walczak.

BRAKES SQUEAL (O.S.) as the train enters the station.

NICK stands very still.

Here comes the train...

The lights...

WHAM!--THE TRAIN powers past, comes to a SCREECHING stop.

THE DOORS of the train open.

In steps Walczak. Nick hasn't done it--hasn't killed him--wasn't able to do it.

Nick watches the subway car move off through the station and disappear into a tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Nick's students work at their labs.

Nick stands at the window, staring out, worried what the repercussions will be of not pushing Walczak.

THE HARSH PERIOD BELL sounds and the class is over.

CUT TO:

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DAY

The dive on the commercial strip across from Nick's school. Nick finishes his lunch and exits, eating a fortune cookie.

EXT. COMMERCIAL STRIP - DAY

Nick crosses the street, heading back to school. He freezes as he spots Simon waiting for him on the curb.

SIMON

We have an agreement.

NICK

This is insane.

SIMON

He's a child pornographer. He arranges for adult men to have sex with young girls, videotapes the sessions, distributes the content. You read his profile, didn't you?

Nick is silent.

SIMON (CONT'D)

The girls in the zoo, we thought they were his next victims. So tomorrow morning, same everything, assuming he's there.

NICK

I'm not doing it.

SIMON

You owe us.

Nick glances at the time on his cell.

NICK

I need to get to class.

SIMON

There was a man, five months ago. He went back on his agreement. He was a commercial pilot, South America route. He has a two day layover in Buenos Aires. Walking back from dinner one night to his hotel, he's killed. Over what? The hundred bucks in his pocket? His wedding ring?

Nick clearly understands the not-so-veiled threat.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You come from a working class family in Pittsburgh. Your father died of emphysema. He was a mechanic, the most he ever made was ten dollars an hour. Your mother lives with your sister in Pittsburgh. Your sister drinks too much. You help them out, send them some cash every month. Do you want me to continue?

Nick stares bullets, freaked out and furious.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You made it out of there, Nick. You got yourself a degree from Penn.

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

You could be making a hell of a lot of money, right, degree in chemistry? But you're not. You're in that terrible school. Why?

Nick doesn't answer. Simon rises.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Because you give a damn, don't you? And I don't want to see anything happen to you, or anybody close to you.

Simon glances down at the river. Then back at Nick.

SIMON (CONT'D)

When the justice system allows the scum, these animals, to continue doing what they do, our Organization steps in.

Nick hesitates.

NICK

I can't do it.

SIMON

You gave your word--

Mercifully, the SCHOOL BELL RINGS (O.S.).

NICK

I have to go.

Nick turns and walks onto the school grounds.

SIMON

Nick!

Nick keeps walking, not looking back.

CUT TO:

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nick makes his way through the space.

He finds Laura in the orchestra dressing room.

LAURA

What are you doing here?

Nick kisses his wife.

NICK  
Just missed you.

LATER

From offstage, Nick watches Laura play with the orchestra.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Nick and Laura sit in a booth, eating, post-performance.  
Nick picks at his food, no appetite.

LAURA  
We should have a dinner party.

Nick nods, distant.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
We haven't had one since...since  
before...

NICK  
You know, why does everything have to be  
a reference to that night?

LAURA  
(pause)  
That's not true.

NICK  
It is. It's like an elephant in the room.  
Always.

The couple grow silent.

LAURA  
Are we supposed to pretend it never  
happened?

NICK  
Did I say that? All I said was...forget  
it.

LAURA  
(pause)  
I wish I could. Every single day I wish I  
could forget it.

A painful beat.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Nick, is that you?

Nick glances behind him. Simon stands before their table, wearing a smile.

SIMON

Nick Gerard.

Simon puts out his hand. Nick has no choice but to shake.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Simon Adams. We taught over at Bartram.  
It was your rookie year. My last.

Nick has no choice but to play along.

NICK

Right.

Simon sticks his hand out to Laura. They shake.

SIMON

Simon.

LAURA

Laura. Nick's wife.

SIMON

A pleasure.

(pause)

You still fighting the good fight, Nick?

Nick nods yes.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I got out. Moved to Seattle. I'm back here to visit a friend. His wife was murdered.

LAURA

Oh, God, that's horrible.

Simon stares at Nick.

SIMON

Should never have happened.

Nick understands the doublespeak here. He's powerless to do anything.

An awkward beat of silence.

LAURA

Do you want to join us, Simon? Have a bite or something?

SIMON

That's very sweet of you, but no, I have to get going. Meeting a friend over at Rittenhouse Square, one of my old haunts.

LAURA

I love that park.

SIMON

Great space, isn't it.

Nick, barely able to contain his anger, knowing that the Organization has been watching Laura.

Simon glances at his watch.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Time's flying. Nick, be well. Laura, you too. And if you folks are ever in Seattle, give me a ring.

Simon hands Nick his card.

LAURA

So sorry about your loss.

SIMON

Tragic. It should never have happened.

Simon heads out through the restaurant. Nick and Laura watch him exit. He passes a man at the counter who rises and exits behind him. It's Cancer.

LAURA

Did you really remember him?

NICK

He was a complete asshole.

LAURA

He seemed like a nice guy.

NICK

*He's not.*

Nick glances at the card Simon handed him. All it has is a number.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

The couple enter. Laura heads upstairs. Nick places his keys, wallet and cell on the counter. He's rattled.

He freezes--eyes the refrigerator. The magnets have been arranged to say, "YOUR CHOICE."

Nick's furious, freaked out. He glances around the loft, worried someone might still be in here.

He hurries upstairs where Laura has begun to undress. Nick eyes the closet. It's closed.

He moves to the closet. Flings open the door. Empty.

Nick moves to the bathroom. Enters. Pulls back the shower curtain. It's also empty.

LAURA (O.S.)

What's wrong?

NICK

(thinking fast)

Did you see my work bag?

LAURA

It's right there.

Laura points to his shoulder bag beside the bed. Nick grabs the bag and heads back downstairs.

Nick moves to the refrigerator. He scrambles the magnet letters.

He hears the SHOWER (O.S.) start above.

Nick takes out the card Simon gave him. He dials the number.

MALE VOICE (PHONE)

Kirksey Funeral Home.

*What the fuck?*

MALE VOICE (PHONE)

(CONT'D)

Hello? Kirksey Funeral Home.

NICK

(pause)

I want to talk to Simon.

MALE VOICE (PHONE)  
Is this Mr. Gerard?

NICK  
(pause)  
Yes.

MALE VOICE (PHONE)  
Mr. Gerard, I've been expecting your call. He explained the unfortunate situation your wife is in. I'm truly sorry to hear about it.

NICK  
Put Simon on the phone.

MALE VOICE (PHONE)  
Mr. Gerard, I know this is a very tough time for you but we at Kirksey Funeral Home want to make things easy on you. Whatever your budget, we have a funeral package that will work for you. For instance, there are--

NICK  
*Tell Simon to leave my wife the fuck alone.*

Nick hangs up. Shook up.

*There's no way out.*

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN PARK - EARLY MORNING

It's still dark out as Nick powers through his morning run.

INT. BATHROOM - SHOWER - DAY

Nick stands still under the shower faucet, letting the water pound him, rubbing his face mechanically with his fingers.

INT. LOFT - DAY

Nick pecks Laura goodbye.

NICK  
Be careful today.

LAURA

I'm always careful, Nick.

Nick moves to the kitchen counter, glances in Laura's handbag.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

NICK

Making sure you have your gun.

Nick exits. Laura puts down her paper, sensing, knowing, something's wrong with her husband.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick stands among COMMUTERS, jerked about by the motion of the subway car.

The subway car slows to a stop. The doors open and Nick steps out.

Nick sits on a bench, eyes the crowded platform. He glances at his watch. He turns his attention to the escalator.

LATER

Nick eyes each commuter as they descend on the escalator. He glances at his watch again. *Where is Walczak?* He checks his cell. No messages. For a brief moment, he lets himself believe he won't have to do it.

But then there he is. Walczak. Riding the escalator down.

Nick watches as Walczak steps off the escalator and makes his way to the edge of the tracks.

Nick doesn't move. Doesn't want to do this. Can't.

But he has to.

He rises, weaves his way through waiting commuters and up behind Walczak.

Walczak, feeling Nick's presence, glances back at Nick, vaguely recognizing him from the previous day.

A moment as their eyes connect. Nick sees fear and paranoia in Walczak's eyes. Nick glances down at his watch.

IN THE TUNNEL there's the light of the approaching train.

WALCZAK turns back and faces the tracks.

The crowd presses forward, jostling for position, bodies against each other...

Nick stands poised, his face blank, ready...

Here's the train--deafening--BRAKES SQUEAL as it hurtles past.

There's a SCREAM (O.S.) which is drowned out by the SQUEALING BRAKES.

IN THE TRAIN'S SIDE WINDOWS

The image of Nick flashes past in each window, again and again, like frames of a film.

ON THE CONDUCTOR'S WINDOW

A splattering of blood over the glass. The CONDUCTOR hits the emergency button and an EAR SHATTERING, PULSING ALARM sounds in the station.

ON THE PLATFORM

Nick weaves his way through the waiting commuters and back to the escalator. He steps aboard, stares up into the blown-out morning light. A transit cop races down past him.

EXT. METRO STATION - PUBLIC SQUARE - DAY

Nick crosses the square. He hurries to a public bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Nick bends over the toilet, retches, sick with what he's just done.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB - MOVING - DAY

Nick. Sweating. Breathing deeply as if he can't get enough air.

He lowers a backseat window. Cold air streams in. The DRIVER (40's, black) eyes Nick in the rear view mirror.

Nick glances at the driver, locks eyes for a moment.

NICK  
(threatening)  
What?

The driver turns his attention back to the road. Nick breaths in the frigid air, fighting off nausea.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - REC YARD - DAY

Kids play basketball, gossip in groups, flirt with one another.

Nick looks out over the yard, on PE duty, chewing gum vigorously, trying to keep it together. Haunted by what he's done.

Nick stretches his neck, looks up to the sun, closes his eyes, and feels the heat on his face. Trying to forget the morning, trying to put it behind him forever.

SHOUTS (O.S.). Nick's eyes shoot open. A fight has broken out and Nick races to it. A SCHOOL GUARD grabs one of the fighters while Nick yanks the arms back of Edwin, his class troublemaker.

NICK  
Stop it. Stop it, Edwin.

Edwin flails his arms--an elbow catches Nick's nose.

Blood flows--Nick releases Edwin. There's THE MURMUR of testosterone-saturated adolescents.

EDWIN  
Keep your hands off me, faggot.

Nick locks eyes with Edwin. And Edwin sees a change in Nick's eyes, something's off.

Nick lashes out--throws a single, vicious punch into Edwin's face.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick sits across from ANNABEL (50's, black) his principal and friend (glimpsed at the Labor Day barbecue). She slides over paperwork.

ANNABEL

Sign.

Nick signs.

ANNABEL (CONT'D)

You're indefinitely suspended until your case is reviewed by the school board. You need to contact your union.

NICK

Will do.

ANNABEL

I never would have guessed.

NICK

(wary)

What's that?

ANNABEL

You were capable of smacking a kid. You're supposed to be one of my sane ones, Nick.

NICK

It was stupid and it was wrong. I'm embarrassed.

Nick shrugs.

NICK (CONT'D)

I have no excuse.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - DAY

Nick sits in the parking lot of his school. He's perfectly still. He's feeling the crushing psychological weight of his deed.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives.

He fiddles with the tuner, trying to find a station to take his mind off what he's done that day. He finds a rock station and BLASTS the song.

He bobs his head to the music.

And then he smiles to himself. It's a warped, little smile. His mood is shifting from sullen and depressed to a strange frantic energy--an emotional overcompensation for having killed a man.

He speed-dials Laura.

NICK

What are you doing right now?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives, Laura in the passenger seat. Laura reaches out and touches Nick's nose.

LAURA

It doesn't hurt?

NICK

If you press it, it hurts.

LAURA

You promised me next time you got injured playing hockey, you'd give it up.

NICK

Would you really deprive me of one of the few things that keep me from going insane?

Nick pulls up in front of a roller blading rink, smiles big.

NICK (CONT'D)

We're here.

LAURA

Oh, my God, I can't believe it's still here.

NICK

Seems like a million years ago, doesn't it?

CUT TO:

INT. ROLLERBLADING RINK - DAY

Nick and Laura rollerblade to DISCO music. Nick takes his wife's hand and kisses it.

NICK

I love you.

Laura eyes him. She hasn't seen him with this kind of energy in...she can't remember when.

LAURA

You, too.

AT A TABLE

Nick and Laura eat cheese fries and drink milkshakes. Nick drums the table.

LAURA

Thank you. This is great.

NICK

I'm happy.

LAURA

Me, too.

They kiss across the table. Laura wipes sweat off his forehead with a napkin.

NICK

Alright, I've not been exactly honest about breaking my nose. But it's embarrassing and I'm not sure how you'll take it.

Laura reaches out, takes his hand, and squeezes.

LAURA

Tell me.

NICK

I didn't break my nose playing hockey.

(pause)

A kid hit me, broke it. Then I lost my temper and I hit him back.

Laura is shocked, at a loss for words. She pulls back her hand.

NICK (CONT'D)

I broke his, too. The whole thing was unfortunate.

LAURA

How the hell could you hit a student?

NICK

He's a terror--Edwin--I've told you about him. He should have been expelled last year but, because of this dysfunctional school system, I seem to be stuck with him forever.

LAURA

You're blaming the school system?

NICK

Thanks for the support, darling.

LAURA

I just don't understand how you could hit a student.

NICK

You're not there everyday.

(pause)

Here's the great thing: with my "time off" I can make a serious dent in my To-do list.

Nick tries a smile but it comes out weak. Laura studies her husband.

LAURA

This morning, something was bothering you. I could tell you were stressed. What was it?

NICK

I don't remember that.

LAURA

Think harder.

NICK

Laura...

A moment.

An opportunity for Nick to come clean.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'm fine. Really. Sometimes stuff like this happens. I don't know what else you want me to say?

The couple eye each other.

Laura shakes her head, doesn't believe him.

LAURA

I want to go.

She gets up and walks toward the exit. Nick catches up to her.

NICK

Hey.

Laura's fighting.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey, don't do that.

Nick reaches out to console her--she pushes away his arm.

LAURA

You're lying to me. You're not telling me everything.

Nick says nothing, doesn't deny it.

Laura turns and exits the building.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Nick composes a To-Do list. The manic energy he was feeling earlier is gone. He's now settled into a serious low.

Laura descends from above, headed to an evening performance.

NICK

Break a leg.

Laura doesn't say a word. She heads to the door, hesitates, glancing back at Nick with a look of hurt and disappointment.

Then she's gone.

NICK (CONT'D)

Shit.

Nick crumples up his To-do list and throws it across the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOFT - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Nick's got a baseball bat and a bucket of tennis balls. He tosses a ball in the air, whacks it hard into the night with A PRIMAL SHOUT.

Nick gets another ball, tosses, swings hard and whiffs. He slams the bat on the rooftop--the bat flies out of his hand and bounces about the roof.

He stares out over a slice of the city, the sounds drifting up. He takes out his cell and speed-dials Jimmy.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A working class bar. The mood is subdued, the bar half-filled.

Nick and Jimmy sit at the bar, nursing whiskeys.

JIMMY

Cheer up. Shit happens, especially to good people. I've got stories from when I was on the force...but I think you've heard 'em all.

Nick says nothing, stares down into his drink.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Hell, I've seen some things nobody should see, brother.

NICK

How did you handle it?

Jimmy raises his drink.

JIMMY

Sometimes this. Sometimes chasing tail.  
Mostly just getting up each morning and  
keeping on, you know?

(pause)

You hit a kid. There are a lot worse  
things.

Nick glances about the room. Nobody is near enough to hear  
their conversation.

NICK

It's more than hitting the kid...

Jimmy gestures, "Tell me."

Nick hesitates.

JIMMY

Come on, brother. What the hell's eating  
you? You fall in love with someone else?

NICK

(pause)

Nah. It's nothing. Just one of those  
days.

JIMMY

We all have 'em.

Nick downs his drink.

NICK

Baño.

JIMMY

Another?

NICK

Please.

Nick heads to the restroom. He passes a TV mounted at the  
far end of the bar. It's the local news. A REPORTER  
(female, 20's) stands in front of subway tracks.

Nick freezes in front of the TV.

REPORTER

...who was Alan Marsh? He was a husband, a father, and an investigative journalist. He was a long time employee of the Philadelphia Inquirer. Marsh had been fired from his job five weeks ago.

A PHOTO of Marsh/Walczak appears on the screen. Marsh and Walczak are the same man.

REPORTER (O.S) (CONT'D)

Earlier today, during the height of the morning commute, Marsh jumped to his death.

Nick is numb, paralyzed.

And then he gets angry--he realizes that he killed an innocent man.

He returns to the bar, throws down a twenty.

NICK

Gotta go.

JIMMY

What are you talking about?

NICK

Had enough. Thanks for the company.

JIMMY

Anytime.

Nick heads out of the bar. Jimmy eyes him closely.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby doors slide open. Nick enters, enraged. A FEW PEOPLE, none Nick recognize, are scattered about the seats inside.

THE GUARD (40's, white) eyes him. Nick moves to the vending machines. He feeds in a five dollar bill. He selects an Eternity Bar. And then a second. Three dollar coins CLANG loudly to the change retainer.

Nick glances about the lobby, eyes each person. Nothing happens. Nobody arrives. He's set nothing in motion as far as he can tell.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick cruises the streets of Philadelphia. Nick doesn't know where he's going, what exactly he's looking for. He's an emotional mess: racked with guilt for killing an innocent man, and furious that he was lied to by Simon.

He looks out, passing the DENIZENS of late night Philadelphia. There's an anguish in their faces. Struggle. Pain. Hints of madness.

Nick pulls over to the side of the road. A breeze kicks up a dusting of snow. The snow swirls. It dances as if it's alive. It's beautiful. And it's gone in an instant.

Nick glances in his rear view mirror just in time to see the headlights go out on a Lexus sedan several blocks back. The Lexus pulls to the side of the road. Nick can't see who's driving.

Nick U-turns. He speeds back toward the Lexus. The Lexus pulls out from the spot and passes Nick, headed the opposite direction. Scar's at the wheel.

Nick makes another U-turn, speeds after the Lexus. Now several blocks ahead, the Lexus turns down a street.

Nick floors it, takes the corner...

...the street's empty. No car. Nobody. The Lexus has seemingly disappeared.

Nick continues to the next cross street. He looks up and down it. No sign of the Lexus. He's lost him.

Nick's cell RINGS. ID shows, "RESTRICTED."

SIMON (PHONE)  
What are you doing, Nick?

NICK  
*He didn't do what you told me he did.*

SIMON (PHONE)  
There was a very good reason he was targeted.

NICK

Yeah, what's that?

SIMON (PHONE)

Trust me when I say the less you know the better.

NICK

I want to know what he did.

SIMON (PHONE)

Leave it alone and have a great life.

CLICK (PHONE). Simon is gone.

Nick drives off, still searching for the Lexus, scanning the Philly streets.

FADE THROUGH TO:

INT. LOFT - DAY

Nick unlocks the door, enters, carrying the paper and two coffees. His "raccoon eyes" from his broken nose have bloomed.

Sitting in the living area are Laura and TWO MEN (30's, one white, one black, wearing suits). The men have the cocky swagger of Philly detectives. They rise.

NICK

(wary)

What's going on?

DETECTIVE RUDESKI

I'm Detective Rudeski, Mr. Gerard, and this is Detective Green. Philadelphia police.

The men flash badges.

Nick can't hide his nerves. He glances at Laura, who's seeing him for the first time with his "raccoon eyes." She's also wondering where he's been all night.

DETECTIVE RUDESKI (CONT'D)

Do you know why we're here, sir?

NICK

(pause)

It's about yesterday.

DETECTIVE RUDESKI

What happened yesterday?

NICK

I saw a man jump in the subway. I was going to report it today but I haven't been thinking straight.

The detectives take hard looks at Nick. Laura is stunned.

NICK (CONT'D)

I should have stayed at the scene. Right?

RUDESKI

We're going to need you to come with us, sir.

NICK

Where?

RUDESKI

Down to the station. Just a few questions.

NICK

Absolutely. I'll take a quick shower.

RUDESKI

We need you to come now, sir.

Nick glances at Laura.

NICK

(to the detectives)

Whatever you need.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION HOUSE - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nick, trying to keep his nerves under control, sits before a laptop. The two detectives hover behind him, intimidating presences.

The COMPUTER SCREEN shows an angle from the Metro camera mounted over the platform. The image is paused on the commuters waiting for the train.

RUDESKI

That's the back of you there, right?

NICK

I think so.

RUDESKI

You think, or is that you?

NICK

It's me.

RUDESKI

Who's in front of you?

NICK

That's the man who jumped.

RUDESKI

How do you know him?

NICK

I don't know him.

GREEN

Where were you headed, Mr. Gerard?

NICK

To school. I'm a teacher.

RUDESKI

Why didn't you drive?

NICK

My battery was dead.

RUDESKI

Why didn't you get a jump?

GREEN

Your wife have a car?

NICK

It was easier to take the train. I like the train.

It comes out sounding ridiculous.

GREEN

How did you know Alan Marsh?

NICK

I didn't know him. I already told you that.

Nick stares hard at Green.

RUDESKI

Okay, watch closely. You can hear the train coming.

Rudeski presses a key on the computer. The image on the screen moves in SUPER SLOW-MOTION.

RUDESKI (CONT'D)

Your shoulder, your arm--see the movement there? When you push him.

The movement of Nick's arm is indeterminate.

NICK

I didn't push him. I was reaching out to try and grab him.

GREEN

You pushed him.

NICK

I didn't.

RUDESKI

Are you saying you tried to save him? That's what you're saying?

NICK

Yes. That's exactly what I'm saying.

GREEN

Wow.

Green CHUCKLES.

GREEN (CONT'D)

Wow.

RUDESKI

You turn, walk out of the station? Where'd you go, Mr. Gerard?

NICK

To work. School.

RUDESKI

How'd you get there?

NICK

I took a cab.

RUDESKI

How long did that take you?

NICK

About fifteen, twenty minutes.

RUDESKI

So when we check the security cameras at your school, you should arrive at around, what: 8:00?

NICK

I'm not sure the exact time. I had just witnessed a man killing himself so I wasn't exactly thinking straight.

Rudeski stops the tape. He sits across from Nick, scrutinizes him. Says nothing.

Finally:

RUDESKI

How'd you break your nose?

NICK

One of my students hit me.

RUDESKI

What'd you do?

NICK

I hit him back.

Rudeski nods as if he approves of Nick's actions.

RUDESKI

I'm on your side. You and me, cop and a teacher, we try to do something worthwhile, and people fuck with us, try to stir up shit. I mean, all we do is put our lives on the line every fucking day and we get what? These prick journalists think we're all a bunch of corrupt assholes. Well, fuck 'em. What was it with this asshole, Marsh? He was an asshole, right? He looks like an asshole. What did he do to you? Here you are a teacher, trying to do good, and what did this prick Marsh do to you?

Nick leans back in his chair, gaining confidence.

NICK

You don't think I know what you're doing?  
(pause)  
I've never met him. I want a lawyer.

RUDESKI

Mr. Gerard. Here's the thing. You tell us the truth, we help each other. If you don't...

Rudeski shrugs.

NICK

I want a lawyer.

There's a TAP TAP at the one way window. Rudeski and Green share a glance.

GREEN

Don't go anywhere.

NICK

(sarcastic)

I'll be waiting at the bar.

The two detectives exit the room.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Rudeski, Green, and their superior, LIEUTENANT DURGAN (40's, black, slim, tired face from a long career) stare in at Nick.

RUDESKI

Nick Gerard, no priors, teaches high school chemistry. Married, no kids. Only perhaps semi-interesting thing is his wife, Laura Gerard, was raped September last year.

DURGAN

Victim?

RUDESKI

Alan Marsh. Journalist for the Philly Inquirer. Separated. Two daughters, six and eight.

(re: Nick)

This is our guy.

DURGAN

Is that an opinion or a fact, detective?

GREEN

It's on the tape.

DURGAN

I saw the tape. It's inconclusive. What about a motive?

RUDESKI

We're getting there.

DURGAN

Connection between him and the victim?

Rudeski and Green are silent, not having any connection, either.

DURGAN (CONT'D)

You guys are off. I'm working it.

RUDESKI

Lieutenant, what the fuck?

DURGAN

What the fuck, Rudeski? I'm working it. Because your time could be better spent working a real case, like the sixteen up on the board that you have jackshit on.

Rudeski and Green smirk.

DURGAN (CONT'D)

Go solve a case, detectives. Thank you very much.

Rudeski and Green exit. Durgan stares in at Nick.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Nick.

He glances up at the one way mirror. A KNOCK at the door and Durgan enters.

DURGAN

Mr. Gerard, I'm Lieutenant Durgan.

Durgan sits across from Nick.

DURGAN (CONT'D)

I'd like to ask you a few simple questions. It's just procedure, nothing to be worried about.

NICK

I want a lawyer.

Durgan ignores Nick's request. He opens his folder. He reads off a standardized test, jots down Nick's answers in the appropriate spaces.

DURGAN

"The day after Monday is..."

NICK

I want a lawyer.

DURGAN

You haven't been charged with anything,  
Mr. Gerard.

(pause)

"The day after Monday is..."

Nick sees no harm in answering the question.

NICK

Tuesday.

DURGAN

"My favorite color is..."

NICK

Green.

DURGAN

"If a baby is unhappy, he..."

NICK

Cries.

DURGAN

The hungry rabbit...

Nick eyes the detective. The detective meets Nick's gaze.

NICK

Jumps.

Durgan writes down Nick's answer.

NICK (CONT'D)

The hungry rabbit jumps.

DURGAN

Got it. "The cow jumped over the..."

NICK

Moon.

DURGAN

"Ashes to ashes, dust to..."

NICK  
Dust.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION HOUSE - BULLPEN - DAY

Durgan leads Nick through the station.

DURGAN  
Thank you for your time, Mr. Gerard.

They reach the door to the lobby. Through a small bulletproof window they see Laura waiting in the lobby with several other random people.

DURGAN (CONT'D)  
Your wife will drive you home?

NICK  
*He wasn't who you said he was.*

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

Durgan opens the door, smiles at Laura.

DURGAN (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Gerard, you can have your husband back now. Is that what you wanted or do you want us to keep him for a few days?

Nick and Laura lock eyes.

Then Nick sees an odd thing. There's an OLDER MAN (60's, white) sitting near Laura. He looks like a businessman nearing retirement. He has a briefcase.

There's the slightest moment, eyes meeting, some hidden communication, between the older man and Durgan.

DURGAN (CONT'D)  
(to Nick)  
Thank you, once again, for your help.

Nick takes a last look at Durgan. He glances at the Mystery Man as he and Laura exit.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives, Laura in the passenger seat. They drive in tense silence. Finally:

NICK

I should have told you.

LAURA

Why wouldn't you talk to me about something like that?

They stop at a red light. A HOMELESS MAN (50's, beard, wild hair and eyes) approaches. He carries a bucket of water and a squeegee. Nick taps the window and shakes his head no.

The homeless man throws the bucket of dirty water over the windshield.

NICK

No!

The homeless man runs his squeegee over the windshield. Nick pops the trunk, exits the car.

He grabs a lug wrench from the trunk. Approaches the homeless man.

NICK (CONT'D)

I said no.

LAURA (O.S.)

Nick!

The man MUMBLES GIBBERISH, takes a rag and rubs a trouble spot.

NICK

Get away from my car.

Nick shoves the guy. The man stumbles backward.

Laura gets out of the car.

LAURA

Nick!

NICK

Get back in the car!

HOMELESS MAN

The man on the moon ate all the motherfuckin' cheese.

LAURA

Put that down, Nick!!

NICK

(to the homeless man)

What'd you say?

HOMELESS MAN

Every three thousand miles, every three  
thousand miles. That's right. Tune it up  
sharp and keep her rolling.

The guy's mentally ill. Or is he? Could he be linked to  
the Organization? Is he talking in some warped code?  
Nick's not sure.

NICK

(to Laura)

Let's get out of here.

Nick throws the lug wrench back in the trunk and slams it  
closed.

He and Laura get back in his car and Nick speeds off.

LAURA

Jesus, Nick!

NICK

We should get the hell out of this city--  
it's a disaster.

LAURA

What the hell was that back there?!

NICK

And moving downtown was ridiculous. I  
don't know why I let you talk me into it.  
Look at this fucking place.

Nick gestures outside to the barren, inner city landscape.

NICK (CONT'D)

A goddamn joke.

Laura stares at her husband, the man she no longer  
recognizes.

NICK (CONT'D)

A joke.

They drive in silence, both fuming. They approach their  
loft, pull into the

## UNDERGROUND GARAGE

Nick parks, turns off the car, tries to calm himself.

NICK

I'm sorry. I'm sorry about what happened back there.

Laura eyes Nick with a look of disappointment and confusion.

NICK (CONT'D)

I just lost it.

Laura gets out the car, SLAMS the door shut. Nick stares after her, frustrated.

He exits the car and hurries after her.

CUT TO:

## INT. LOFT - DAY

Nick enters, makes his way to the stairs and up to the

## BEDROOM AREA

Where he finds Laura lighting a cigarette.

NICK

I'm sorry.

Laura takes a puff, exhales, upset.

LAURA

You want to tell me what's going on or should we keep playing this game?

NICK

There's nothing else.

LAURA

Stop lying to me.

NICK

Laura...

Nick tries a different tact. He approaches her, tries to take her in his arms. She pushes him away, wants no part of it.

NICK (CONT'D)  
There's nothing to say.

Laura, pissed, stubs out her cigarette.

LAURA  
I'm going to work.

NICK  
I'll drive you.

LAURA  
No. I'd prefer you didn't.

Laura enters the bathroom, SLAMS the door. Nick GROWLS in frustration.

LATER

Nick stands at the living room windows watching Laura drive off for a performance.

He skulks around the room.

He grabs one of his hockey sticks, swings it against a wall, SMASHES it.

Beat.

He moves to his laptop. He Googles, "Alan Marsh."

Scans the results.

FADE THROUGH TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER HDQTS - DAY

Nick enters the historic building.

INT. PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER HDQTS. - DAY

Nick exits an elevator and finds himself on the main floor of the paper. It's oddly subdued, just a few people at work.

RECEPTIONIST  
Can I help you?

NICK  
I was wondering if there was someone I could talk to about Alan Marsh?

RECEPTIONIST

Everyone's already at the wake.

NICK

Right. Where's that again?

RECEPTIONIST

Kelliann's. Over on Spring Garden and  
16th.

CUT TO:

INT. KELLIANN'S IRISH PUB - DAY

Nick enters the pub and is met by a raucous scene. The MUSIC BLASTS, the bar is crowded with plastered JOURNALISTS.

Nick passes an altar of sorts with a large, blown up photo of Marsh, cigarette dangling out of his mouth, giving the person behind the camera the finger.

In front of the photo, there's an array of personal items: pack of American Spirit cigarettes, bottle of tequila, Captain's hat, etc.. Nick is drawn to a photo of two young girls and a woman. Marsh's daughters and wife. It's the same woman and two girls Nick was following at the zoo.

LATER

A JOURNALIST stands on a pool table and toasts Marsh.

JOURNALIST

...that piece was beautiful, better than any of you underpaid hacks could ever write! And not only that, that piece had LEGS. Beautiful. Long. Long legs.

NICK watches from the bar, sipping a whiskey.

THE JOURNALIST looks to the altar, the photo of Marsh, and holds up his drink.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

Marshy, here's to you. You were the real deal, you asshole.

The whole room "Here, Here's" in agreement.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

(to the bartender)

Augie!

The BARTENDER puts on one of Marsh's favorite songs, Pearl Jam's, "Last Kiss." All the journalists sing along with the song. Nick semi-mouths the words, trying to fit in and not bring attention to himself.

LATER

Nick moves through the bar and approaches THREE JOURNALISTS who are well on the way to drunk. One of them wears the Captain's hat that was at Marsh's altar.

JOURNALIST 1  
I wanted the Captain's hat!

Journalist 1 yanks the hat off Journalist 2's head.

JOURNALIST 2  
You get the hat, then I get the boat.

JOURNALIST 1  
You can have the damn boat. This hat is the bomb.

NICK  
(to Journalist 1)  
Great toast.

JOURNALIST 1  
All lies.

NICK  
Nick Gerard.

JOURNALIST 1  
Nick meet Hack One, Hack Two, and I'm Hack Three.

NICK  
Can I buy you a round?

JOURNALIST 2  
Does a pig fart?

LATER

Shots of Tequila with beer chasers are lined up on the bar. The four men throw down their shots.

JOURNALIST 1  
To Marshy!

The men cry out Marsh's name.

JOURNALIST 2

Thank you, Nick. Here's to Nick the  
chemistry teacher!

JOURNALISTS

To Nick!

The men drink their beers.

NICK

Marsh was a great guy, huh?

JOURNALIST 1

Prick.

JOURNALIST 2

Essential traits of any decent  
journalist.

JOURNALIST 3

He was a hell of a journalist.

The journalists nod, drink.

NICK

After he spoke to my class, I buy him a  
coffee in the cafeteria. He gets quiet,  
then starts telling me about this secret  
organization, handing out justice when  
the justice system fails. I found it very  
odd.

The men stare coldly at Nick.

JOURNALIST 1

He told you that?

Nick nods.

JOURNALIST 2

It's true.

JOURNALIST 1

They killed him and made it look like a  
suicide.

JOURNALIST 2

Watch your back, Nick. Because anyone who  
associated with Marsh is a marked man.

Nick eyes the men. They're all business.

NICK

Why did they want him dead?

JOURNALIST 1  
Because...Joe, you tell him.

JOURNALIST 3  
Because Alan Marsh, Nick...was an alien.  
Sent here as a scout to prepare for the  
invasion of the earth.

The journalists burst out LAUGHING.

JOURNALIST 3 (CONT'D)  
And the eventual enslavement of the  
entire human race.

The journalists are tearing up with laughter.

JOURNALIST 1  
Nick, you are one gullible motherfucker.

JOURNALIST 2  
Oh, shit, dude, if you had seen your  
face. You are now obligated to buy us  
another round, my friend.

Nick forces a small smile. He gestures to the bartender  
for another round.

JOURNALIST 1  
He told everybody that crazy story, Nick.  
The mysterious organization formed in the  
70's, stepping in when crime was rampant  
and law enforcement was impotent.

(pause)  
No name, no leader. Each cell could be  
cut off or activated at a moment's  
notice.

JOURNALIST 2  
Crazy shit.

IN A BOOTH

Sideburns watches Nick and the journalists.

AT THE BAR

The bartender lines up the shots. The men clink shot  
glasses and throw them down.

JOURNALIST 1  
Goddamn pity.

JOURNALIST 2

You know what: we didn't do enough. What we should have done is gone down to his boat and dragged his ass to a hospital. That's what we should have done.

The journalists grow silent, feeling a drunken guilt.

NICK

What boat?

JOURNALIST 2

Where he lived after Jane kicked him out of the house.

NICK

Where did he keep his boat?

JOURNALIST 1

Over in Camden. Cesspool of a marina.

NICK

What was the name of the boat?

JOURNALIST 2

What are you, Nick? A journalist?

JOURNALIST 3

He named it after his daughters. The April Rose.

LATER

Nick heads to the exit, pushes out into the night.

IN A BOOTH

Sideburns watches Nick leave. Then he gets out of the booth and weaves his way towards the journalists to whom Nick was talking.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN FRANKLIN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Cars stream across the bridge from Philadelphia to New Jersey. Among the cars is Nick's.

CUT TO:

## INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick reaches the other side of the bridge, enters Camden. He turns down a road which parallels the Delaware River. Heavy industry lines both sides of the road.

CUT TO:

## INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Laura, suspicious, trying to figure out what the hell is going on with Nick, looks through his shoulder bag. She pulls out a folder with lesson plans and leafs through it.

A folded sheet of paper falls to the floor.

She picks it up and unfolds it...

CUT TO:

## EXT. CAMDEN - NIGHT

Nick drives, passing warehouses, a refinery, a demolition yard, empty, weed-infested loading docks.

He spots a small sign indicating, "SUNSHINE MARINA." An arrow points down a gravel road. He studies the desolate area.

He U-turns and drives back up the road. He turns into the demolition yard. He parks his car behind a stack of crushed cars. He grabs a flashlight out of the dash, and exits the car.

He makes his way back to the marina. It's decrepit, garbage strewn about. A few boats are up on stilts. There's a dock where a handful of boats are covered with winter tarps.

It's quiet. The only sound is the distant drone of cars over the bridge and a dog barking far off somewhere.

He approaches the dock. There's a locked security gate. Nick climbs over it.

He walks down the dock and stops before a 34 foot sailboat, *The April Rose*.

Nick pulls back the cover, steps aboard. The hatch is locked.

Nick moves back to the shore and finds a cement block. He returns to the boat and CRACKS the block against the lock. The lock doesn't open.

Nick glances to shore, seeing if the noise has attracted any attention. There doesn't seem to be anybody else here. Nick CRACKS the block against the lock again. It doesn't open.

BACK AT HIS CAR

Nick pops the trunk, finds a screwdriver and a hammer in his tool kit.

AT THE BOAT

Nick hammers the screwdriver under the latch, slowly prying the latch from the boat. He yanks it off.

He opens the hatch and lowers himself into the boat.

INT. *APRIL ROSE* - CABIN - NIGHT

Nick switches on a light. Nothing happens--there's no power.

He shines his flashlight over the cabin. It's empty. He opens cabinets and storage spaces. There's nothing, no sign that anyone was living in here.

He studies the space. This place is TOO clean. Odd.

He moves throughout the cabin again, double checking any place where something might be hidden, scouring hidden spaces and prying up a few floor boards with his screwdriver.

He finds nothing but a coil of rope, flares, life vests and blankets.

A LIGHT flashes from up on the road--headlights. They momentarily pass the small window. Then they're gone.

Nick flicks off his flashlight and moves to the hatch. He looks to the shore. It's very dark.

He spots headlights...catches glimpses of an SUV moving down the access road...passing the marina...continuing down the road.

Nick lifts himself out of the boat. He shines his flashlight over the *April Rose*...

He spots something on the gunwale. He moves closer. Carved into the gunwale are the words:

**HUMANITY REASON JUSTICE**

*What the hell is that?*

He moves down the dock, illuminating a few more moored boats.

He climbs back over the security gate and onto shore. He eyes the marina...the boats on stilts, running his flashlight over them, walking around and beneath the boats.

He shines his flashlight on the ground, over dirt and gravel...

His light catches a GLINT on the ground at the far side of the marina. He approaches.

Half buried in the dirt and gravel is a crumpled pack of cigarettes, the glint coming from the lining. It's American Spirit, Marsh's brand (glimpsed at the wake.)

The pack is beside a fence. Beyond is a field littered with tires, scrap metal, stripped and rusting vehicles.

Nick spots a tear in the fence. Moves into the field.

He eyes a rusted VW van up on blocks. Wood boards cover the windows.

He approaches the van. All the doors are locked. He tries to see inside. Can't.

He takes his screwdriver and punches a hole in one the boards--steps back--worried what, or who, might be inside.

Silence.

He works the screwdriver in the wood until the hole's the diameter of a soda can.

He shines his flashlight through the hole, trying to see what's inside. All he can see is a pair of boots and a rain jacket.

He looks around the field. No movement. Seemingly no one else here.

Beat.

Then he puts his hand tentatively through the hole. He reaches down, feeling about, trying to find the inside door handle...

...he grasps it and yanks. The door clicks open.

Nick slides the door open further. He shines his flashlight around the van: there's a sleeping bag, clothing, power bars, small radio, vial of Valium, space heater.

Nick climbs in, closes the door behind him.

He finds:

--a laptop.

--a book, "A Vindication Of Natural Society: A View Of The Miseries And Evil Arising To Mankind" by Edmund Burke.

--a pile of investment brochures for a company called C & K INVESTMENT SECURITIES.

Nick turns on the laptop. While the computer boots up, Nick thumbs through the Burke book...

One of the quotes on the back cover is by Burke, "It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do."

HUMANITY REASON JUSTICE. The words on the gunwale.

The computer is up. Nick eyes the desktop, the files. He double-clicks on a file marked, "PONZI." A graph fills the screen filled with numbers and names. At the top of the chart is the company name, "C & K Investments."

He double-clicks on another file, "PONZI NOTES/STORY." Nick scans the document, certain phrases jumping out at him:

"...25 million offshore...", "...154 known victims...", "...4 aliases..." "...ruthless..."

Nick's cell BUZZES. ID shows, "LAURA."

NICK

Hi.

There's seemingly nobody there.

NICK (CONT'D)

Laura?

LAURA (PHONE)

(shaky)

I found the instructions in your  
bag...you told me he committed suicide.

Nick's mind races, frantic, trying to figure a way to not reveal the truth.

LAURA (PHONE) (CONT'D)

*What is this, Nick?*

NICK

(pause)

It's not what you think.

LAURA (PHONE)

I don't believe you.

NICK

Laura...I'm coming home right now and I'll explain everything. Okay? I'll be there in --

A DIAL TONE. Laura's gone, hung up--

THE SOUND OF TIRES ON GRAVEL (O.S.).

*Fuck.* Nick turns off his flashlight. Stays still.

He hears CAR DOORS OPENING (O.S.). Then SHUTTING (O.S.).

Nick glances out the door, across the field and to the marina...

Simon and Cancer approach the dock. Both men hold guns.

Nick needs to get the hell out of there. He takes a last glance around the van. He grabs the laptop and exits.

He eyes the men. They're on the dock, approaching *The April Rose*.

He crouches, moves through the field--CLANG--his foot hits a rusted oil can.

Nick freezes and eyes the marina. Cancer is squinting in the dark directly at him. Cancer WHISTLES SHARPLY ONCE--a signal to Simon.

Nick runs...

...through the field...

...scrambling up a small hill, through bushes--scraping his face--hitting A FENCE.

Six feet high. Scalable. He climbs over the fence, falling awkwardly on the other side.

He runs up the access road, toward the demolition yard and his car.

AT HIS CAR

Nick, breathing hard, listens for voices in the night. Doesn't hear anything.

He gets in the car, closes his door quietly. He slides the laptop under his seat. He starts the car--doesn't turn on the headlights--drives quickly out of the demolition yard and up onto the access road.

Nick speeds back towards the bridge. He eyes the rear view mirror. Nobody's coming after him.

Not yet.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING- NIGHT

Nick speeds over the bridge and back into Philly.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Nick pulls his car to a quick stop in front of his loft complex and hurries into the building. He carries Marsh's laptop.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Nick enters.

NICK

Laura!

No answer. He calls up above to the bedroom area:

NICK (CONT'D)

Laura?!

Nothing. He puts Marsh's laptop on the kitchen counter and spots the Walczak/Marsh instructions.

Nick speed-dials Laura's cell. He gets her VOICEMAIL and leaves a message:

NICK (CONT'D)

It's me. Where are you? Call me as soon as you get this.

Nick glances at the clock: 7:30. If she went to work, Laura would be warming up for an evening performance.

A LOUD POP outside.

A gunshot.

Nick hurries to the windows and scans the street. He spots a parked Lexus sedan (the same one he saw the night he killed Marsh) with the driver's door open.

There's a man slumped against the steering wheel. It's Scar, a single bullet wound to the temple, blood splattered over the interior of the car.

*Jesus.*

Nick hurries out of the loft, grabbing Marsh's computer.

EXT. LOFT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Nick races outside to find all four tires of his car slashed.

He nervously scans the street...

Suddenly, Simon's SUV speeds around the corner towards him.

Nick races back into the

LOBBY

He moves past the elevators and down a service hallway. He pushes through an Emergency Exit and out into an

## ALLEY

Nick runs down the alley--the laptop slips out of his arm and falls on the cement.

Nick grabs the computer and--knowing he won't be able to run with it--slips the laptop between a rack of loading pallets.

He sprints out of the alley and into the

## STREET

He heads away from his loft complex, running. He glances behind him and sees:

SIMON'S SUV taking the corner fast.

NICK dodges pedestrians and races towards the park where he runs every morning.

THE SUV gains, bears down upon him.

NICK crosses a thoroughfare and sprints into the park.

CANCER jumps out of the SUV and runs after Nick.

NICK powers through the park, suddenly stumbles and falls hard. He scrambles to his feet, glances behind him and sees Cancer sprinting toward him.

THE SUV drives the periphery of the park, trying to cut off Nick.

NICK angles to avoid the SUV. He reaches the edge of the park, sprints across the thoroughfare, dodging traffic, and into the

## PARKING STRUCTURE

Nick sprints across the ground level and flings open the door to the stairwell.

CANCER is at the edge of the park, waiting for an opening in the traffic.

NICK powers up the stairwell.

THE SUV flies into the parking garage and screeches to a stop. The door opens.

It's Simon. He scans the area, searching for Nick.

NICK reaches the rooftop level. He runs to the edge of the structure and looks down. He sees Cancer entering the parking garage. Nick hears TIRES SQUEALING (O.S.). He realizes the SUV is speeding up the garage ramp.

Nick glances over the side again--five stories--he'd break his leg or worse if he jumped.

He runs to the stairwell--yanks open the door--he hears Cancer running up towards him.

He's trapped on the roof.

THE SUV bursts out of the ramp. Nick sprints across the rooftop and into the exit ramp.

NICK runs down the ramp as the SUV hurtles down after him, scraping and sparking the sides of the winding ramp.

Round and round they go.

NICK exits, sprints across the second level. He reaches the edge of the level, climbs up, and jumps...

...hitting, rolling into an alley. He gets to his feet and runs to the street and across to the park.

#### IN THE PARK

Nick scrambles behind a cluster of trees. He glances back to the parking structure. It's very dark.

He spots Cancer crossing the street, hesitating at the edge of the park, trying to figure out where Nick's gone.

Suddenly, Nick sees a FIGURE in a hooded sweatshirt walk past Cancer--POP--a flash of orange light--Cancer crumples to the ground as the pedestrian continues walking.

Nick's baffled. He doesn't understand what just happened. Who killed Cancer?

Then Simon's SUV exits the parking garage and speeds down the street.

SIMON steps out of the SUV, crouches beside Cancer's body. He glances up into the park, knowing Nick is out there, assuming Nick just killed Cancer.

Then Simon hurries back to the SUV and speeds off.

NICK eyes the scene. Cancer lies still. Cars stream past, nobody paying the slightest attention to a body lying on the sidewalk.

Nick's call BUZZES. ID shows, "JIMMY." Nick doesn't answer.

He moves off through the park.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

Nick hurries to the performers' entrance.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nick moves quickly through the backstage area. From offstage, he eyes the orchestra--Laura's seat is empty.

Nick hurries to the performers' dressing room. He unlocks the combination lock of Laura's locker. Her locker is empty. Nick SLAMS closed the locker.

He moves out of the room, back to offstage. He eyes Trudy playing.

NICK  
(under his breath)  
*Trudy.*

Trudy doesn't hear him.

NICK (CONT'D)  
*Trudy!*

Trudy glances over. Nick gestures vigorously for her to join him. She gives him a look that says, "Are you crazy?"

NICK (CONT'D)  
*Now!*

Trudy rises, moves off the stage.

NICK (CONT'D)  
*Where's Laura?*

TRUDY  
(looking him over)  
*What happened to you?*

NICK

*Where is she?!*

Trudy eyes Nick as if he's a madman.

NICK (CONT'D)

Do you know where she is, Trudy?

TRUDY

She's upset, Nick.

NICK

I know that...I...Trudy you know I would never do anything to hurt Laura. You know me and if I tell you I need to find her, there's a very good reason.

(pause)

*Please. Do you know where she is?*

TRUDY

(relenting)

At my place.

NICK

Thank you.

(pause)

I need your car keys.

Beat.

Trudy hands over her keys and Nick hurries off.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUDY'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick pulls the car over before a brownstone. He hurries out of the car and up to the brownstone. He unlocks the door with Trudy's keys. He enters.

Laura's there. Nick shuts the door and locks it. He moves to the living room and draws shut the curtains. He turns off the lights.

Laura studies him. A mess. Crazed.

Nick grabs Laura and holds her tight.

LAURA

Those instructions were for you.

Nick lets her go.

NICK  
Forget you ever saw them.

Nick catches a glimpse of himself in a hallway mirror. He looks like a madman with his raccoon eyes, mud peppered over his face, his pants ripped and stained.

LAURA  
You killed that man.

Nick moves to the curtains, pulls a corner back and glances out to the street.

NICK  
We can't stay here. You didn't say anything to Trudy, did you?

LAURA  
No...I talked to Jimmy.

Nick slowly turns, eyes his wife.

NICK  
*Why did you do that?*

LAURA  
Because I don't know what the hell's going on! And I'm worried about you, okay! And...

NICK  
Damn it!

LAURA  
Jimmy can help. He was a cop.

Nick paces, trying to think this through. He flips open his cell and speed-dials Jimmy.

NICK  
Jimmy, it's me...I'm with her, yeah...we're coming to you.

Nick shuts his cell.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives, Laura in the passenger seat.

LAURA

You need to tell me what's going on.

NICK

I can't. Just trust me.

Laura opens her door.

NICK (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?!

LAURA

Pull over, let me out, enough of this bullshit!

Laura unbuckles, shifts sideways as if she's going to jump out.

NICK

Close the door!!

Laura shifts her body closer to the edge of her seat.

NICK (CONT'D)

Close the door and I'll tell you!

Laura slams her door closed, eyes Nick.

Nick takes a moment, gathers his thoughts, then dives in:

NICK (CONT'D)

The night of the rape, a man came to me. He told me he represented a group that could kill the guy who did it. But then I might have to do something for them.

(pause)

I said yes.

(pause)

Five days ago, the guy shows up...

LAURA

And?

NICK

They wanted me to kill a child pornographer.

Laura stares back in utter disbelief.

NICK (CONT'D)

They threatened me. They said if I didn't do it they would hurt you. Us.

Beat.

LAURA

*Oh, God.*

NICK

I pushed him.

(pause)

But he wasn't guilty of anything. He was just a journalist. They lied to me. They set me up.

Laura shell-shocked, can't find words. She stares straight ahead, their car stopped in traffic in the tourist area of South Street.

NICK (CONT'D)

Laura.

Laura won't look at Nick. She eyes the traffic, the tourists.

She spots TWO COPS patrolling on foot.

She throws open her door, grabs her handbag, and runs out of the car.

NICK (CONT'D)

LAURA!

LAURA weaves her way through the traffic.

NICK pulls the car to the curb. He flings open his door and exits, hurrying after Laura.

He scans the sidewalk across the street. Can't spot her.

Nick dodges the traffic and reaches the sidewalk. There are pedestrians everywhere. He eyes the area--spots the cops--they're eyeing him suspiciously, having seen Laura run past.

He takes a last look for her, but she's gone.

He hurries back to his car.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives, cell to his ear, scanning the South Street neighborhood. There's no sign of Laura. He gets Laura's voicemail, leaves a message.

NICK

You don't know what you're doing, you're  
in real danger, Laura. Call me.

Nick snaps closed his cell.

NICK (CONT'D)

FUCK!!

Things are spiraling out of control. Nick steps on the  
gas, speeds down the street and out of the neighborhood.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX - NIGHT

Nick pulls up to the curb, hurries into the complex.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick rides the elevator up to Jimmy's floor. He's  
sweating, anxious. He exits into the

HALLWAY

And makes his way quickly to Jimmy's door. He POUNDS on  
the door. The door swings open. It's Jimmy. Nick pushes  
past him and enters.

NICK

Close the door and lock it.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

Nick, pacing, intense, has just told Jimmy everything.

NICK

She could be anywhere--she's not  
answering her phone.

JIMMY

They have a name, this group?

NICK

I don't know.

JIMMY

Okay. Here's the thing. After Laura  
called me, I got in touch with a friend.  
He's a detective, still on the Force.

(MORE)

JIMMY (CONT'D)

He's cool--anything you tell him is on  
the down low, understand?

Nick eyes his friend.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

He's headed over here to talk to you, to  
help.

Nick takes a hard look at Jimmy, suddenly wondering if  
Jimmy is connected to the Organization.

NICK

(weakly)

What's his name, your friend?

JIMMY

Elliot. We'll figure this out, Nick.  
Laura's going to be fine.

NICK

(cracking)

Right.

Nick moves to the window. He eyes his good friend in the  
reflection.

Nick opens his cell.

NICK (CONT'D)

Weak signal. I'm going to try Laura again  
up on the roof.

JIMMY

Just use my landline.

Nick thinks fast:

NICK

Need some air, too. Be right back.

Nick moves through the apartment and out to the

HALLWAY

He moves quickly to the

STAIRWELL

Instead of walking up, Nick hurries down the stairs.

He reaches the lowest level, the lobby. He's about to push through the door when (through the small window in the door) he spots a man at the elevators. It's Sideburns.

Beat.

Then Sideburns steps into an elevator. Nick waits a moment then enters the lobby. He hurries through and out into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA STREET - NIGHT

Nick hurries to Laura's car, glancing nervously back to the condo complex. No sign of anybody.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives, tries Laura again on her cell. Gets her VOICEMAIL again.

He snaps closed his cell, frustrated.

Thinking.

He has an awful realization.

He speed-dials Jimmy.

JIMMY (PHONE)

Where the hell'd you disappear to?

NICK

Where's Laura?

JIMMY (PHONE)

I don't know. Where are you, brother? My buddy Elliot's here.

INT. JIMMY'S CONDO - NIGHT

TIGHT ON JIMMY on his phone.

NICK (PHONE)

Don't play games. You're with them and I want to know where the hell Laura is.

JIMMY  
Calm down, Nick--

A KNOCK (O.S.) at Jimmy's door.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Get that, will you, Elliot.

REVEAL: We see Jimmy's friend, Elliot. Elliot is Sideburns. He moves to answer the door.

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives, on his cell.

He hears MALE VOICES (PHONE), strange SNIPPETS of conversation. Nick's confused. *What's going on, what's being said?*

The voices grow HEATED.

JIMMY (PHONE)  
What the hell?!

GRUNTING AND SOUNDS OF A STRUGGLE (PHONE).

A SHOT (PHONE)--Nick flinches at the sound.

Then he hears the JIMMY'S PHONE FALLING ON THE FLOOR.

*What the fuck?*

Nick worries, no he's certain, that it was Jimmy who was just shot.

SIMON (PHONE)  
What did I make very clear?

Nick freezes at the sound of Simon's voice.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)  
Not to say a word to anybody? Christ,  
Nick, who else did you say something to?

Nick is silent, still rocked by the killing of his friend.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)  
*Nick.*

Nick gathers his wits. He channels his rage into action:

NICK  
I have Marsh's laptop.

SIMON (PHONE)  
(with a slight chuckle)

And?

NICK

If you want it, you leave me and my wife alone. Or everything on that computer will be made public.

SIMON (PHONE)

It's worthless, Nick. Everything on there.

NICK

(pause)

If it was worthless, you wouldn't have killed Marsh.

SIMON (PHONE)

I didn't kill him, remember? You did.

(pause)

And one more thing. What happened to your wife that night...it'd be a travesty if something similar, or worse, were to occur.

A terrible beat.

*CLICK.* Simon is gone.

Nick shuts his cell. He's trembling, shaken to his core.

CUT TO:

EXT. RITTENHOUSE SQUARE - NIGHT

Laura sits on a bench eyeing the water dancing in a fountain. She's trying to make sense of everything, trying to process what Nick's told her.

She looks beyond the fountain. A man on a bench also watching the fountain. He looks familiar. She's seen him before, but can't place him.

Beat.

Then realizes she saw him at the diner. He's the man who was sitting at the counter and followed Simon out.

Cancer.

Laura is suddenly worried. It can't be a coincidence. He's not watching the fountain. He's watching her.

Laura rises. She does her best to casually walk out of the park.

She glances behind her. Cancer's still eyeing the fountain. He's now on his cell. There's no indication he's paying the slightest attention to her.

She exits the park, crosses the street, and heads toward the adjacent church.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Several blocks from Nick's loft.

Nick pulls his car to the curb. He gets out and heads toward his home.

He reaches the alley behind his loft. He moves cautiously down the alley.

He grabs the laptop from between the pallets and hurries out of the alley.

He moves warily down to his street. There's a half dozen PEDESTRIANS going about their business. There's a tow truck beside a car. The TOW TRUCK DRIVER (Bluetooth in his ear) is changing a flat tire.

Up the street, Scar's body and car are gone. There's no sign of a murder ever taking place.

From across and down the street he looks to the windows of his loft, thinking Laura could be in there.

He sees no movement inside.

He approaches, passes the tow truck driver, continues toward his loft.

He enters his lobby. His cell BUZZES. A text message. From Laura:

*CHURCH RITTENHOUSE*

Nick tries to make sense of it. The text seems to be cut off.

*Rittenhouse.* He turns and hurries back out of the lobby.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A soaring, Cathedral-like space. Dim light. It's empty save for an older couple praying in a pew.

LAURA stands behind a column, hiding. At her side, she holds her gun.

She hears THE DOOR CREAK OPEN (O.S.).

CANCER enters. He lets his eyes adjust and scans the interior of the church.

LAURA

Pressed against the back of the column. Breathing fast. Gripping the gun.

She hears the DOOR OPEN (O.S.) again.

She waits a moment...

...glances out from behind the column.

No sign of him. Gone--

She turns--a figure rushes her from behind.

SHE FIRES A SHOT--it misses--HITS the stone wall. Cancer is upon her, grabbing her wrist with the gun--yanking her arm and forcing the gun from her grip.

Laura SCREAMS. They struggle. Fall to the ground. Cancer's got something in his hand he's trying to stab Laura with.

Laura's no match for Cancer. He uses his weight, his leg and forearm to pin her down.

He stabs Laura with a syringe. Laura YELLS in pain, manages to bite Cancer's hand--

CANCER

Fuck!

Cancer backs off her, gets to his feet.

Laura tries to rise...stumbles...falls back to the ground. Unconscious.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Nick hurries away from his loft, back up the street toward his car.

He passes the tow truck driver. He continues to the end of the street, and turns the corner--

He feels a presence behind him--glances back--the tow truck driver's upon him--STABS him with a syringe in the thigh--Nick SHOUTS in pain.

Nick stumbles away from the man. The driver makes no effort to come after him.

Nick runs up the street. Ahead, he sees a SECOND MAN getting out of a car. The man eyes Nick, makes no move to approach or engage him.

Nick scrambles across the street to avoid both men.

He suddenly becomes dizzy and limp. The laptop slides out of his grip, falls to the pavement. He tries to keep moving but he can't. The injection (Sodium Thiopental) is working its magic.

NICK'S POV: everything gets fuzzy--

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. DARK SPACE - NIGHT

BREATHING.

Movement within the dark space.

A person in here.

Feeling his or her way, touching the walls, realizing they're in a small, claustrophobic space.

A STRANGE, AUTOMATED VOICE MUMBLES (O.S.) in the distance.

Light from a cellphone. It's Nick in here. He uses the light of his cell to examine the space. He's in some sort of storage closet. He's wearing an overcoat he doesn't recognize.

A BLAST (O.S.) and RUMBLING. The force of the blast seems to shake the whole room. Nick instinctively crouches.

Then the rumbling is gone and all is quiet.

Nick finds a door handle and opens the door. He steps out onto a narrow walkway beside underground tracks. Far down the tracks he sees the red lights of the disappearing train.

Nick moves along the walkway which parallels the tracks. Somewhere to his left he hears the SQUEAKING of rats.

He reaches a wider loading platform and continues along it to a set of stairs. He takes the stairs up and emerges into

#### 30TH STREET STATION - MAIN CONCOURSE

A large space with a soaring ceiling. It's crowded with hundreds of commuters. A BUSKER plays a bucket drum in a corner, the sound echoing around the space.

Nick moves through the space. He stops in the middle of the concourse. He scans the area, all the anonymous faces.

*What the hell is going on?*

*And why is he alive? Why wasn't he killed?*

Nick feels his pockets--touches metal. He glances inside to see a handgun with a silencer. The other pocket has his car keys, his cellphone, and an envelope.

He rips open the envelope. Inside there's a card key, and two lines of cryptic instructions:

THE CAR IS OUTSIDE

FINISH R.L. WASHINGTON

Nick's baffled.

Nick looks around him, trying to see if he's being watched. He can't tell.

He checks his cell phone. One missed call from "RESTRICTED."

He speed-dials Laura's cell, gets her VOICEMAIL.

NICK  
It's me...call me...

Nick shuts his cell. Thinking the worst has happened to Laura.

Then banishing the thought from his head.

EXT. 30TH STREET STATION - NIGHT

Nick exits the station, studies the area and the people. He's confused and paranoid.

He spots Laura's car across the street parked in a handicapped zone.

Nick's cell suddenly BUZZES. ID shows, "RESTRICTED."

NICK

Hello.

There's no answer.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hello?

SIMON (PHONE)

Why couldn't you just do what I fucking told you, go live your life and forget it all?

NICK

Where's my wife?

SIMON (PHONE)

I'm sending you an address. You'll be told your final target when you get there.

NICK

(pause)

I'm not doing it.

SIMON (PHONE)

You need to.

Nick hears strain in Simon's voice.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You want this to end, Nick, you want to be done forever? Then do what we ask.

Simon hangs up. Nick shuts his cell.

His cell BUZZES as a text arrives. An address.

Nick moves to his car. Enters. He sits still. At a loss, doesn't know what to do.

He tries Laura's cell again--gets her VOICEMAIL--hangs up.  
Thinking.

Glancing around the area outside, crowded with people...

There. The man who stabbed him--the tow truck driver (now in dress clothes) watching him from near the entrance to the station, Blue Tooth blinking in his ear.

Nick hurries out of the car, walks directly towards the man. The driver turns back in the station.

Nick runs after him, up the steps and into the

#### STATION

Crowded. Nick scans the area. Spots the man. Hurries after him. The man turns down a tunnel which leads to a train track.

Nick runs after him.

Turns down the tunnel. Reaches the train track. A waiting commuter train, people boarding, sounds echoing.

Nick scans the area. Can't find the man. Steps aboard the train.

#### INT. COMMUTER TRAIN - NIGHT

Nick moves up the aisle, pushing past people, searching for the driver.

He moves through several cars--then steps back out onto the

#### PLATFORM

He's halfway down the length of the train. He looks up and down the platform.

No sign of the guy. The doors to the train shut behind him.

The train starts out of the station. Nick eyes the faces in the passing windows...

The Driver--staring out at Nick from a window...then gone.

Nick moves back up the platform towards the heart of the station.

EXT. 30TH STREET STATION - NIGHT

Nick exits the station, warily eyes the area. He's guessing there must be someone else here watching him.

But he can't tell. Doesn't recognize any of the faces.

He approaches Laura's car. Gets in.

INT. LAURA'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick takes another long look around the area. Still doesn't see anybody he recognizes.

Thinking about Laura. Remembering her last text.  
*Rittenhouse.*

He starts the car and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. RITTENHOUSE SQUARE - NIGHT

Nick pulls up beside the park. There are pockets of people: couples, homeless, a group of taxi drivers smoking and waiting for fares.

He sees nothing suspicious, no sign of Laura.

He eyes the other side of the street. A church.

He gets out of the car and climbs the steps to the church. Tries the door. Locked.

He turns, looks out over the area, searching for a clue...

A Town Car pulls up behind his car. Idles.

Then Durgan (the Lieutenant from the police station) steps out of the driver's side. He crosses the street to Nick.

NICK

What did you do with my wife?

Durgan doesn't answer. He's all business.

Nick eyes the Town Car. The Mystery Man (glimpsed in the police station lobby earlier) sits in the passenger seat, staring intensely at Nick.

DURGAN

The target is moving.

Durgan approaches, hands Nick a sheet of folded paper with the new address.

DURGAN (CONT'D)

Here's where you need to go.

Nick tosses the paper to the ground.

DURGAN (CONT'D)

Pick it up.

NICK

Tell me where my wife is.

Durgan picks up the paper with the address, hands it to Nick.

DURGAN

I'm trying to help you here.

Durgan, frustrated, glances back to the car and the Mystery Man. The man exits the car, approaches.

He offers a forced smile. It's the farthest thing from comforting.

MYSTERY MAN

We have a window of opportunity. If it closes, everything will get more complicated. For all of us.

(pause)

Go kill the bad rabbit.

NICK

What the hell are you talking about?

MYSTERY MAN

You have no options here, Mr. Gerard. If you don't kill the target, you put yourself in jeopardy.

The mystery man's meaning is clear: Nick will die.

NICK

(pause)

Why me? Why do I have to do it?

MYSTERY MAN

Because you're perfect--the bad rabbit  
knows you, and won't be expecting you.

NICK

(re: target)

Who is it?

MYSTERY MAN

Go. It needs to happen now.

Nick tries to think this through.

But he can't figure a way out.

Nick enters his car. He drives off, glancing at the men in his rear view mirror.

Nick unfolds the sheet. Reads the handwritten address and directions. Punches the address into the GPS.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick speeds down the highway, following the directions. He leaves the skyline of Philly behind.

LATER

Nick takes an exit and drives into a Philly suburb.

He follows the directions to a generic business park. The park consists of three, 5 story, identical office buildings surrounded by parking lots.

Nick slows, turns off the headlights, pulls the car to a stop in the parking lot before building number 3.

He scans the area. There's no movement, no people, a few cars scattered about the area.

Nick glances at the instructions and pockets them. He exits the car and skulks across the parking lot toward building 3.

Nick keeps to the wall as he makes his way to the entrance door. He slides the card key--the reader shows green--and the door unlocks.

Nick enters the lobby area. It's professional with marble floors, tropical plants, and a sculpture fountain. There's no one manning the lobby desk.

Nick moves through the lobby and into one of the elevators.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOVING - NIGHT

The elevator reaches the top floor and the doors open. Nick warily steps out into the

HALLWAY

He eyes a set of double doors far down the hall.

Nick pulls his gun, glances up and down the long hallway. Still and quiet.

Nick moves past closed office doors. He's tense. A few beads of sweat on his forehead.

A MECHANICAL NOISE (O.S.) behind him. He wheels. It's just the elevator door shutting.

He takes a breath, focuses on the set of double doors at the end of the hallway. Heads toward them.

He reaches the doors.

He steels himself. He pushes through, gun at the ready.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

A reception desk and a waiting area. Several framed avant-garde paintings on the walls.

There are two doors, one on either side of the reception desk.

He listens...

Thinks he hears something from behind the right door.

He slowly approaches. Puts his ear to the door. He doesn't hear anything.

He throws open the door (a copy/supply room), gun at the ready, and sees:

LAURA. She's tied to a chair, industrial tape over her mouth. Her eyes show terror.

Nick is frozen. *No no no no. This is all wrong. Laura is the bad rabbit.*

Nick takes a step closer to Laura. His face clouds with dread.

He glances down at his gun...

...back up at Laura.

Laura makes a MUFFLED SOUND. She directs Nick with her eyes back out to the lobby.

Nick glances behind him. Nobody there.

He turns to Laura--

CLICK (O.S.). Nick wheels. Across the lobby, the opposite door opens.

SIMON steps out.

Nick levels his gun, steps toward him. Simon freezes. The men are both stunned to see each other.

SIMON

What are you...

Beat.

Then Nick sees a glimmer of recognition in Simon's face-- Simon realizes why Nick is there. Simon makes a quick move for his gun--

A SHOT--the shot is muffled by the silencer--it hits Simon in the arm and Simon recoils, thrown off balance, back to Nick.

Nick can't tell if Simon's reaching for his gun or not. Simon turns--

Nick SHOOTS AGAIN--hits Simon in the shoulder.

Simon's got his gun--trying to raise it--A THIRD SHOT. Hits Simon in the chest.

Simon crumples to the floor. Nick stands over him ready to shoot again if necessary.

Simon takes his last breaths.

Then he's gone.

Nick's breathing fast, adrenaline coursing. He's still wary, eyeing the door from which Simon emerged.

He slowly pushes open the door, gun leveled. He enters a large

OFFICE

It appears to be empty. He flings open a closet door. Nobody in there.

He glances about the room, noticing various items.

He heads back towards the lobby. But he freezes at the door.

Thinking.

He turns back and looks over the items in the office again. He eyes:

--C & K financial literature on the desk.

--Several photos of Simon shaking hands with political dignitaries.

--A nameplate on the desk which reads, "R.L. WASHINGTON."

An ever-so-slight, warped smile of relief forms on Nick's lips as he realizes that Simon's real name is R.L. Washington. SIMON IS THE BAD RABBIT.

Nick hurries out of the office and back to Laura. He crouches beside her. She's shell shocked. Nick peels the tape off her mouth, unties her hands.

He holds her. They hold each other.

Nick's still not sure if this is over or not, and if they're still in danger.

NICK

We need to get out of here.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick and Laura. Neither saying a word. They drive out of the parking lot and through the suburb.

They drive in silence.

Finally:

NICK  
I'm sorry. I didn't...I'm so sorry,  
Laura.

Laura won't look at him. She stares straight ahead.

Nick takes a ramp onto a highway. They drive through the night.

Laura reaches out and takes Nick's hand.

LAURA  
I would have done the same thing.  
(pause)  
If they had come to me that night, I  
would have done the same thing.

A moment between the two.

FADE THROUGH TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA SKYLINE - DAY

A morning sky, the sun rising over Philly.

INT. DINER - DAY

Nick and Laura sit across from each other in a booth. They're trying to regain a semblance of normalcy, reading sections of the paper, sipping coffee.

LAURA  
Be right back.

NICK  
I'll be here.

Laura gets up, kisses Nick on her way to the restroom.

Nick turns his attention back to the paper, the sports section--

The Mystery Man slips into the booth across from him.

NICK (CONT'D)  
What do you want?

MYSTERY MAN  
We wanted to thank you.

NICK  
(pause)  
Simon was the bad rabbit.

MYSTERY MAN  
He went rogue. His actions compromised  
the Organization, compromised our ability  
to act swiftly, to cover up, to operate.  
(pause)

Men get a taste of power, occasionally  
they feel the need to operate  
independently. Obviously, that can't  
happen.

(pause)  
There's a very rigid protocol when we  
choose targets. We would never target  
innocent people like you, or your wife,  
or your friend Jimmy.

NICK  
Why me? Why did I have to do it?

MYSTERY MAN  
Because our most important rule is that a  
member can't kill another member. So we  
needed you to do it.

(pause)  
I want to reassure you the Organization  
made certain there's nothing that ties  
you to any of this.

The Mystery Man takes a hard look at Nick.

MYSTERY MAN (CONT'D)  
Would you like to help us again? We think  
you'd be an asset.

NICK  
No.

MYSTERY MAN  
Things can get complicated. But that  
doesn't make it any less worthy.

NICK  
*I'm done.*

MYSTERY MAN  
(pause)  
Are you?

Nick doesn't answer. He's not sure if the man's question is a threat or just a question.

The Mystery Man rises. He moves through the diner and exits.

Nick follows. At the front windows of the diner, he eyes the busy street, the pedestrians, searching for the man.

There. Standing at the opposite curb beside an idling Town Car. He stares back at Nick. He raises his cell to his ear.

Nick's cell BUZZES. ID shows the number, "215-555-3876."

NICK

Hello?

MYSTERY MAN (PHONE)

In case you ever want to get in touch.

The man hangs up. He enters the car. The car enters traffic and disappears into the night.

A HAND on Nick's arm--it's Laura.

LAURA

What are you doing?

NICK

I thought I saw a friend. Wasn't him.

Laura kisses Nick's cheek, takes his hand. The couple head back to their table. They sit, sip their coffees, read the paper like any normal couple.

They glance up at each other and share small smiles.

FADE OUT.

\*