

THE HUNGRY RABBIT JUMPS

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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.

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. Sara'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. This is a couple in love.

Nick watches Laura join her best friend TRUDY (20's, white), Trudy's husband, MAX (30's, white), ANNABEL (40's, black) and Annabel's HUSBAND (40's, black).

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, white), 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.

JIMMY

And what am I now? Chopped liver? I
secure a very important cultural
institution. "High profile target" is the
operative word.

NICK

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 flinch, startled, their rhythm interrupted. They roll off each other, LAUGHING.

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, thank you.

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, chuckles over the absurdity of 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) stands in front of his class, holding a vial in each hand.

NICK

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? The power of 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.

TEAMMATE (O.S.)

Look out for Gretzky!

Nick smiles big (showing his mouthguard), glides around the back of the net and points 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
I'm 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, taking a shower, and passing out.

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

BACK ALLEY

Waiting for her are Trudy and Max. Jimmy is also there. He's the head of security for the Kimmel Center, dressed in a blazer, walkie-talkie on his hip.

LAURA
(still on cell)
Come on, 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.

Laura, Trudy and Max head up the alley, calling out good-byes to Jimmy.

JIMMY
Have fun, folks! See you manana!

CUT TO:

EXT. HEALTH CLUB - NIGHT

On the second floor of an office building, floor-to-ceiling windows display GOOD-LOOKING MEN AND WOMEN on stationary bikes, treadmills, and elliptical exercisers.

ON THE STREET BELOW

A MAN (40's, mixed race, prison energy) watches the "show" (and it is nothing less than a show) in the gym windows. The man wears a hooded sweatshirt, jeans, and high-end work boots.

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

He eyes a fit woman...his gaze moves to another woman...

Lizard's gaze lowers, finds the window of an upscale Tapas Bar. Sitting at a window table are

LAURA, TRUDY and MAX. They drink wine, share a plate of assorted tapas, unwind after their performance. They laugh at some unheard joke.

A fat raindrop SMACKS the pavement. And ANOTHER. And ANOTHER.

EXT. TAPAS BAR - NIGHT

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

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 descends. 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--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.

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, 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, fights tears, crouches beside his wife.

DOCTOR BURDETTE

Mr. Gerard, I'm Doctor Burdette.

DETECTIVE

I'm Detective Douglas, Mr. Gerard.

NICK

She's okay?

DOCTOR BURDETTE

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

NICK

But she's going to be okay?

DOCTOR BURDETTE

We're keeping a close watch. Internal bleeding is extremely serious.

Nick turns to the detective.

NICK

Do you know who did this?

DETECTIVE

We'll get there.

NICK

What does that mean exactly?

DETECTIVE

Your wife gave us a description earlier. We start with that, sir. It's a process. But we take this very seriously.

NICK

You take it seriously?

DETECTIVE

This is a terrible thing to happen to anybody.

Nick turns back to his wife.

NICK

Could you all give me a moment with my wife.

The men and nurse exit the room.

Nick watches Laura breathe. He leans in close.

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.

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.

TRUDY
Is she okay?

NICK
They don't know.

JIMMY
Motherfucker.

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 ridiculous, Nick.

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

JIMMY
Stop it.

NICK
It's true.

JIMMY
Just fucking stop it.

Nick sips his coffee, stares past his friends at the night and the rain.

NICK
I'm going up to stay in her room. Go home, guys, and get some sleep.

There are unsure glances among the friends.

NICK (CONT'D)
I'm fine.

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

Nick nods. Everyone hugs.

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

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Mounted in an upper corner, a TV (with the sound muted) shows an infomercial for plots of land in some idyllic valley.

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, looks up to the television.

SIMON
(re: infomercial)
Where is this?

NICK
Don't know.

SIMON
Beautiful.

Nick nods. The men watch.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I went to Iceland a few months back.
Stunning. It's always good to get out of
your space, get of your head. Don't you
think?

Nick nods, still silent.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Who do you have in here?

NICK

My wife. You?

SIMON

A friend. His wife was raped.

Nick eyes Simon.

SIMON (CONT'D)

What happened tonight, to Laura, it
shouldn't have happened.

Nick takes a hard look at Simon. Simon has the calm,
slightly unsettling, demeanor of a funeral home director.

NICK

You're a detective?

SIMON

No. How are you doing?

Simon doesn't wait for an answer.

SIMON (CONT'D)

That was a stupid question, wasn't it?

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 small window in the door. He's
making sure nobody is there, nobody listening.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I know what you're feeling. I've been
there.

Simon studies Nick, sizing him up.

SIMON (CONT'D)

We can take care of the man who raped
your wife. 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 greater.

(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 report him, hand him over to the
criminal justice system. It's up to you,
it's your choice.

NICK

You know where he is?

SIMON

I need an answer, Mr. Gerard. There's a
time issue.

NICK

Where is he?

SIMON

It can't work like that.

NICK
(pause)
I don't believe this.

Simon rises, frustrated.

SIMON
We'll tell the authorities, he'll be arrested.

Simon heads toward the door.

NICK
Wait.

Nick says nothing more. Simon stares hard at him.

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)
And, Mr. Gerard, we never talked, you never met me. You will never talk about anything that went on in this room.

Simon exits.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Nick stares down at the battered face of his wife. He puts a hand on her forehead, brushes back her hair.

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, Latino, 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 cheery.

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)
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. But 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 and exits.

OUTSIDE

Under his umbrella, Nick glances back at the Oncology lobby. He wonders what the hell he's set in motion.

CUT TO:

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

A WAITRESS (Thai, 20's, slender, bad skin) moves through the room holding a bowl of soup. She places the bowl before Lizard, the rapist, who sits by the windows.

WAITRESS

Tom yum gai.

LIZARD

Thank you, sweetheart.

Lizard squeezes a half a lime into the soup. He stirs the broth, catching glimpses of mushrooms, lemon grass stalks, cilantro, spicy peppers, and several oddly shaped chicken pieces.

Lizard SLURPS the soul-comforting soup. 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. Sees nothing. He continues up.

He suddenly freezes, coming face to face with two men: "SIDEBURN," from the Jeep and "CANCER," the man from the Oncology lobby. Cancer flashes some sort of badge, shows his gun in his waistband.

SIDEBURNS.

Turn around, Mr. Hodge.

LIZARD

What the fuck?

SIDEBURNS

Now.

Lizard turns around. Cancer secures his wrists with plastic cuffs.

LIZARD

What the hell is this bullshit?

SIDEBURNS

Up.

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 a lumber supply yard. Sideburns puts a gun to Lizard's forehead.

SIDEBURNS

Did you rape a woman in a public parking garage tonight, Frank? Tell me the truth, and you live.

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

LIZARD
(pause)
Yeah.

SIDEBURNS
Yes you did.

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 ground with a DULL THUD. Sideburns and Cancer eye the motionless body below.

SIDEBURNS (CONT'D)
Go cut the cuffs, make sure he's gone,
I'll meet you at the car.

Cancer moves to the rooftop door. Sideburns takes out his cell, speed-dials.

SIDEBURNS (CONT'D)
It's done.

FADE THROUGH TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA SKYLINE - DAY

A grey sky of early November.

SUPER: "FIFTEEN MONTHS LATER."

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN LOFT - DAY

THREE DEADBOLT LOCKS. They turn, open 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, sweaty from jogging, enters with the paper and two coffees.

NICK
It's me.

Nick puts down the paper and coffees, climbs the stairs to the

BEDROOM AREA

Laura finishes dressing for a yoga class. The loft is Nick and Laura's home.

LAURA

Morning. How was your run?

NICK

Fine.

LAURA

Cold out?

NICK

Not too bad.

LAURA

Remember we have Abrams at four.

NICK

You don't want to cancel today? Opening night.

LAURA

No. Don't forget your tux.

NICK

I will not forget my tux.

LAURA

Do you want me to pick it up?

NICK

(testy)

Did we not talk about this last night, Laura?

LAURA

I'm just offering.

NICK

Actually, you're nagging.

Laura, peeved, grabs her yoga mat and heads downstairs. Nick enters the bathroom, shuts the door a bit too hard.

IN THE BATHROOM

Nick leans against the door, tense, frustrated at the iciness that exists between he and Laura. He hears the DOOR (O.S.) SLAM as Laura leaves the loft.

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

NICK (CONT'D)
Edwin, sit up, please.

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

NICK (CONT'D)
Cute. Head up, please, Edwin.

Edwin raises his head. He's a frail kid, very handsome. Yet his eyes are ferocious. It's as if somebody has sucked the humanity out of him.

He sticks his tongue out at Nick, waggles the tongue.

NICK (CONT'D)
Get out. You know where.

EDWIN
Puta.

NICK
Out. Now.

Edwin takes his time, shuffles out of the class.

Nick attempts to compose himself. The teaching racket is wearing on him. Nick moves to the windows, gathering himself, staring out.

NICK (CONT'D)

Liquid nitrogen. Who wants to hypothesize as to a few modern uses.

The class is silent. Nick looks out to the street beyond the school fence. It's an inner city, commercial strip: a laundromat, liquor store, and take-out Chinese restaurant.

Nick's suddenly frozen. Because there's a man standing in the laundromat, and his profile is familiar: Cancer, from the oncology department. But Nick can't be sure. The man moves deeper into the laundromat, out of sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEACHER'S PARKING LOT - DAY

Nick drives out of the lot.

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick slows as he passes the laundromat. He stares in. Doesn't see any sign of Cancer. He glances in the liquor store and Chinese restaurant. There's no sign of him.

And then a car passes. Cancer's at the wheel. He doesn't look at Nick. But Nick's certain it's him.

CUT TO:

INT. DRY CLEANERS - DAY

THE OWNER (50's, Korean) works the electronic conveyer.

Nick stands at the counter, waiting for his tux. The DOOR JINGLES open. A MAN (40's, white, thinning hair, chin scar) enters.

The Owner finds Nick's tux, hangs it at the counter. Then punches in the order on a computer.

COMPUTER

You owe ten dollars and fifty-eight cents.

Nick hands over a twenty.

SCAR (O.S.)
Crime.

Nick glances at Scar.

SCAR (CONT'D)
Ten dollars to wash a tux? Come on.
(pause)
People think they can get away with
whatever they can get away with. And we
just take it.

Nick says nothing. Is this guy just chatting, or is there
something else going on here?

COMPUTER (O.S.)
Your change is nine dollars and forty-two
cents.

SCAR
Where you headed with that tux?

NICK
(pause)
Wedding.

The Owner hands Nick his change with a smile and a nod.

SCAR
Enjoy your wedding.

Nick eyes Scar, nods, and exits.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Nick crosses the street. He glances back at the store.
Scar exits the dry cleaners (with no dry cleaning), walks
up the street away from Nick.

Nick's spooked, wondering if this man is following him.
Nick eyes the businesses on this side of the street. He
spots a travel agency with travel posters of vacation
spots. He heads toward it.

He stops before the agency. He looks up at the posters
showing beautiful photos of Hawaii, Italy, Mexico, and
Greece.

Nick stares at the posters. But what he's really doing is staring at the reflection of the street. And in the reflection he sees Scar watching him.

Nick, fear rising, enters the Travel Agency.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY

Nick glances back out the window, through a slit between posters.

TRAVEL AGENT (O.S.)

Help you?

Nick doesn't answer. He's looking for Scar. There's no sign of him.

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives quickly through the city, late for he and Laura's appointment.

He eyes his rear view mirror. It doesn't appear that anybody is following. But all the faces are starting to appear suspicious to him.

CUT TO:

INT. MARRIAGE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Nick hurries in, late. Laura sits on a couch across from DOCTOR ABRAMS (50's, female).

NICK

Sorry I'm late. Good afternoon, Doctor Abrams.

Nick sits beside Laura, pecks her hello.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hi. Sorry.

(to Abrams)

That's the right thing to say, right?

Nobody thinks his comment is funny.

Laura eyes her husband, sensing something is off.

LAURA

Are you okay?

NICK

Great. Want me to start? I think we're doing better.

LAURA

I disagree.

NICK

Why do you say that?

LAURA

You think about that night all the time, Nick.

NICK

That's not true.

LAURA

You're not being honest.

NICK

Sometimes I think about that night. Is that wrong? Wouldn't any normal person think about that night? We've been through this before, haven't we, Doctor?

Nick glances at Doctor Abrams. She says nothing.

LAURA

What does that mean, "normal person?" You don't think I think about that night? The difference is, Nick, I don't obsess about it.

NICK

I do not obsess about it, Laura.

LAURA

You ask me every single day if I have my gun in my purse.

NICK

Laura, you forget where you put your keys. You're forgetful.

LAURA

(to Doctor Abrams)

He blames himself.

DOCTOR ABRAMS

Talk to each other.

LAURA

You blame yourself, Nick. You think it's your fault. Which is totally ridiculous.

NICK

I'll tell you what I know. If I had gone with you to get that drink, it never would have happened.

LAURA

Well if I hadn't been so stupid and stubborn, I would have let Trudy and Max walk me to my fucking car.

They're at an impasse. An uncomfortable silence fills the room.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I just miss the old Nick.

NICK

I don't know what that means.

LAURA

When you were happy.

Nick forces a smile.

NICK

I'm happy.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

PATRONS arrive, dressed in tuxes and formal gowns.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

The theater fills for the opening night of Verdi's "The Masked Ball." 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. He eyes Laura, tuning her violin. Then he looks out over the audience. Hundred of anonymous faces. No sign of Scar or Cancer.

The CONDUCTOR enters to APPLAUSE. The center grows quiet. The baton is raised and the Opera begins.

LATER

Onstage, PERFORMERS (costumed in various masks and 18th century clothes) surround RICCARDO, who wears white-face and a mask.

It's the final scene of the opera. Riccardo has been stabbed and he's dying melodramatically while singing an ARIA.

His song ends and he's still. The curtain falls.

The audience rises to their feet and APPLAUDS.

NICK'S on his feet clapping. He meets his wife's eyes. The two exchange small smiles.

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.

NICK

I got one.

JIMMY

Uh oh.

NICK

How many inner city kids does it take to
screw in a light bulb?

TRUDY

How many?

NICK

"Fuck you, motherfucker."

Groans and chuckles. Laura eyes Nick, knowing the dark joke reflects his dark mood these days.

Nick downs his whiskey, holds up his empty glass.

NICK (CONT'D)

Who's still thirsty?

AT THE BAR

Nick orders from the bartender.

NICK

...a Kir Royale, and a Jack 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?

SIMON (PHONE)

Bring them the drinks, excuse yourself to go the restroom, then head outside.

NICK

Who is this?

SIMON (PHONE)

It's Simon.

Simon hangs up. Nick's shaken. It's the moment he's been dreading for a year and a half.

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, no sign of Simon. Nick's cell BUZZES. ID shows, "RESTRICTED."

NICK

Hello?

SIMON (PHONE)

Do you 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, go through again.

Nick puts his keys and cell in an 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 a bubble mirror which shows every aisle in the store. There's nobody here but him and the clerk.

Nick's cell BUZZES.

NICK

Yes.

SIMON

Buy a pack of gum, come back outside.

Nick buys a pack of gum, exits. There's no sign of Simon.

NICK

(to himself)

What the fuck?

An SUV (tinted windows, temporary plates) turns the corner, approaches, passes him. It stops several storefronts down.

The back door opens. Nick approaches. Simon's inside.

SIMON

Come on in for a few minutes, Nick.

NICK

What do you want?

Nick glances at the driver: Cancer.

SIMON

Get in the car. Close the door.

NICK

No thanks.

SIMON

Nick, please. What do you think we're going to do to you?

Nick enters the SUV, closes the door. They idle.

NICK

(re: Cancer)

He was following me.

Simon ignores Nick's comment.

SIMON

Since I saw you that night, has anyone ever talked to you about any of this? Any mention of it.

NICK

No.

SIMON

Nothing? Anything ever strike you as strange, didn't feel right? An instinct.

NICK

No...today. There was another man. I think he might have been...I don't know.

SIMON

What did he look like?

NICK

White. Starting to lose his hair. Small scar here, on his chin.

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

SIMON

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

Nick eyes Simon, thinking, "Is this a joke?"

NICK

What is this?

SIMON

It's a letter to Santa Claus. Nick, that's all it is to you. Now tomorrow, 3:30, mail that letter.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nick weaves his way back to his wife and friends.

LAURA

You okay?

NICK

Fine.

Laura's buzzed. She leans into her husband, gives him a kiss.

LAURA
I missed you.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives home, Laura in the passenger seat. Nick chews gum.

LAURA
Did you have fun tonight?

NICK
Yup.

Laura puts a hand on his Nick's, squeezes, trying for a small connection. Nick forces a smile.

LAURA
I want us to work.

NICK
Me, too. Don't you know that?

Laura nods, wanting to believe it.

LAURA
I do.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Laura climbs up to the bedroom area. Nick waits until she's out of sight and then he 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 trying to open it. Decides against it.

He places/hides the envelope in his shoulder bag between teaching folders.

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. Nick unfolds the paper. 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. Buy your ticket with cash. When you're inside you'll see a gift shop. Buy a paperback, use cash. Sit on one of the benches and watch the entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. ZOO - DAY

Nick exits the gift store, paperback in hand. He sits at a bench, glances about the area, having no idea what the hell is going on.

He glances at his watch, then up at the PEOPLE entering the zoo. His cell BUZZES, "RESTRICTED."

NICK

Hello.

SIMON (PHONE)

They're coming. Now when the woman and the girls enter, follow them but keep your distance. If that man shows up, you call the number immediately.

Simon hangs up. Nick eyes the entrance. He sees the woman and the two girls enter.

LATER

Nick follows the woman and girls. They come to the Humboldt penguin exhibit, watch the penguins frolic and BRAY like donkeys. Nick's cell BUZZES.

NICK

Yes.

SIMON (PHONE)

You're with them?

NICK

I'm watching them, yes.

SIMON (PHONE)

The man, any sign of him?

NICK

No.

SIMON (PHONE)

You know what he looks like, you'll remember?

NICK

Yes.

SIMON (PHONE)

I want you to fold that sheet in quarters, then tear it up until it's confetti.

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.

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.

CUT TO

INT. CAR - MOVING - DUSK

Nick drives home. His cell BUZZES.

NICK

Hello?

SIMON (PHONE)

He never showed?

NICK

No.

SIMON (PHONE)

Okay. Now forget about today. And thanks for your help. It's appreciated.

Simon hangs up. Nick takes a breath, visibly relaxes. He's a free man now. He's fulfilled his obligation.

He punches in a CD. Finds one of his favorite rock songs and turns up the volume.

CUT TO:

EXT. KIMMEL CENTER - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Laura and other performers prep their instruments for the night's performance.

Nick enters, wearing a smile.

LAURA

Hey you.

The couple kiss. Nick's in a cheery mood, feeling that he's even, that it's all behind him.

LAURA (CONT'D)
This is a nice surprise.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

The door bangs open and Nick and Laura enter, in each other's arm, lips locked.

Nick shuts the door, locks all three deadbolts. Laura grabs Nick by the shirt, drags him toward the living room couch. The couple trip over the rug, fall to the ground. They LAUGH, begin to take off each other's clothes.

LATER

Nick makes himself a drink, moves to the couch.

LAURA (O.S.)
Hey, you.

Nick looks up at Laura, staring down from the bedroom space.

LAURA (CONT'D)
That was great. Just wanted you to know.

Laura disappears with a sexy grin.

NICK
Thank you.

LAURA (O.S.)
Thank you!

Nick plops down on the couch. He's feeling good. He checks his cell. There's a missed call from "RESTRICTED." No message.

Nick hears the SHOWER (O.S.) start. He remotes on JAZZ. He closes his eyes and listens.

Feeling damn good.

And then his CELL BUZZES again. ID shows, "RESTRICTED."

NICK
Hello.

SIMON (PHONE)

We need you to do one more thing for us.

NICK

(pause)

No. I'm done. I followed that woman, the girls.

SIMON (PHONE)

Behind your refrigerator, you'll find instructions.

Nick eyes the refrigerator. He glances about the loft, suddenly paranoid, wondering if somebody's been in here.

NICK

I did what you wanted. I'm done.

SIMON (PHONE)

Almost there, Nick. Your car won't start tomorrow morning, the battery's dead. You'll take the subway to work. You'll oversleep your stop and you'll be where you need to be.

Nick moves to the windows and looks down to the street. There's nobody here.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Your alibi is you witnessed a suicide.

NICK

I don't understand.

SIMON (PHONE)

It's in the instructions. 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.

(pause)

One last thing. After it's over, make sure you get rid of the instructions, shred them.

Simon hangs up. Nick's slowly shuts his cell. He moves to the refrigerator.

He maneuvers the fridge away from its wall space. He takes out an envelope from the slot on the back of the fridge.

AT THE KITCHEN COUNTER

Nick eyes the envelope. He hesitates, glancing above the bedroom area. He can still hear the shower running.

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.

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 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. It's a scene of domesticity.

Laura reads the travel section.

LAURA

Awesome. We should really force ourselves to go to Antarctica some day.

NICK

Put it on the list.

LAURA

"The Fin whale can live to a hundred years old."

Nick nods, reads his paper, his mind on the upcoming task.

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 wound, a bundle of nerves. This thing's really happening.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

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

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

INT. SUBWAY - PLATFORM - DAY

Nick eyes the waiting COMMUTERS. He doesn't see Walczak.

SIMON (V.O.)

"We think he'll be on the 7:12 train. If he's not on that train, wait for the next one. If he hasn't appeared by the 7:55 train, go to work."

Nick glances up at two security cameras.

SIMON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

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

Nick suddenly spots the back of 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.

THE TRAIN powers past, comes to a SCREECHING stop.

THE DOORS open.

And in steps Walczak, trailed by Nick. Nick hasn't done it--hasn't killed him--wasn't able to do it.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick sits half a car down and across from Walczak. The train rumbles beneath the city, the lights of the car flickering on and off.

Walczak scans the front section of the Philadelphia Inquirer. He looks up from his paper (jumpy, nervous eyes), glances around the car--

Nick leans back, stares up. He finds himself looking at an ad for a dermatologist, a DR. WOODMAN. "Look Like The Real You!" A graffiti tagger has given Dr. Woodman bushy eyebrows and a bubble caption: "The Real You is Fucking Ugly!!"

Then he glances at Walczak again. Walczak has his cell to his ear. He shuts his cell and rises as the train approaches the next station.

The train stops. Walczak steps off. Nick debates following...he rises, moves to the door. But he's too late as the doors close. He eyes Walczak as Walczak disappears up and out of the station.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY PARK - SKATING RINK - DAY

Nick skates among other SKATERS. Around and around, trying to clear his head.

And then he feels eyes upon him. He searches for whomever is watching him.

There. Simon.

Simon's a hundred yards away, by the Schuylkill River, staring back at Nick.

LATER

Nick approaches Simon, who sits on a bench, watching the river.

SIMON

We have an agreement.

NICK

I can't do it.

SIMON

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

Nick nods.

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.

Simon hands Nick an envelope.

NICK

What's this?

SIMON

Open it.

Nick opens the envelope. Inside, there are Polaroid pictures of a crime scene. PHOTOS of Lizard's body (his Lizard tattoo clearly visible) at the lumber yard where he "jumped."

SIMON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We did that for you.

Nick hands the photos back to Simon.

SIMON (CONT'D)

There was a man, five months ago. He went back on his agreement. He was a commercial pilot. South America route. Guy has a two day layover in Buenos Aires. Heads out for a nice meal. Walking back to the hotel, he's killed. Over what? The hundred bucks in his pocket? His wedding ring? And they never found out who did it.

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. You send them money.

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)

Your sister drinks too much. Do you want me to continue?

Nick stares bullets.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You made it out of there, Nick. You got yourself a degree from Penn. You could be making a hell of a lot of money, right? But you're not. You're in that terrible school.

Simon rises.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You're a good man. 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)

Nobody "likes" this, Nick. But we do it because it's important. When the justice system allows animals to fall through the cracks we step in. What we do is necessary. It's right.

Simon heads off through the park.

FADE THROUGH TO:

INT. METRO - STATION PLATFORM - DAY

MORNING COMMUTERS wait three deep. WALCZAK stands beside the tracks. Nick maneuvers through the commuters and up behind him.

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.

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.

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.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB - MOVING - DAY

Nick. Sweating. Breathing quickly 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.

DRIVER
Close the window.

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

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, trying to keep it together. He's thinking about what he's done. It's already haunting him.

LATER

A scuffle breaks out. Nick and A SCHOOL GUARD are on it. The guard holds one kid. 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, his principal and friend (seen at the Labor Day barbecue).

ANNABEL

Striking a student is a minimum three week suspension. What the hell were you thinking, Nick?

NICK

It was stupid, Annabel.

ANNABEL

Beyond idiotic.

(pause)

I want to tell you something that I'm not supposed to tell you. Edwin is being abused.

NICK

Shit.

ANNABEL

His stepfather. Asshole named Oscar Jenks. He's a bus driver for the city.

(MORE)

ANNABEL (CONT'D)

(pause)
Explains a few things, doesn't it?

NICK
What's being done?

ANNABEL
Nothing. Our hands are tied because Edwin insists nothing's going on. And until he says something, the State won't move.

NICK
That's bullshit.

Annabel slides over paperwork.

NICK (CONT'D)
(getting worked up)
Fucking bullshit.

ANNABEL
Sign. The school board will review your case and notify your union of their decision.

Nick signs with an angry flourish.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives through a working class area of Philly. He slows, stares out at a brick townhouse, focusing on the basement apartment door.

Nick parks the car down several houses and across the street.

LATER

Nick eyes his rear view mirror. Walking down the street are his student, Edwin, and Edwin's mother (40's, Guatemalan, hotel maid's uniform).

They enter the basement apartment of the brownstone.

LATER

Night has fallen. Nick listens to a FLYERS HOCKEY GAME on the radio.

He tenses as he eyes A MAN in his rear view mirror. He's white, in his forties, wearing the uniform of a city bus driver.

He turns at the brownstone, down the steps and into the basement apartment. This is OSCAR JENKS, the man abusing Nick's student.

Nick waits a moment. And then he gets out of his car. He crosses the street, approaches Jenks' apartment door--

THE DOOR OPENS. It's Jenks.

NICK'S frozen for a split second--then starts up the street. He stops before a newspaper rack, crouches as if he's reading the headlines. Jenks passes behind him.

Nick turns and eyes Jenks as Jenks turns the corner.

Nick follows. He reaches the corner, spots Jenks crossing the street and entering a neighborhood grocery store.

INT. GROCERY - NIGHT

Jenks selects a box of Alka Seltzer, half gallon of milk, and a quart of cheap, Neapolitan ice cream.

He moves to a checkout line. And suddenly Nick is behind him, holding a box of cereal he's grabbed off a display.

Jenks' items are rung up. Nick hovers behind him, eyeing the man. Jenks is solid, bulky, big hands and neck. A brute.

Jenks pays his tab, exits. Nick puts down the cereal and follows.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jenks walks home. Nick follows.

Nick picks up his pace, getting closer, adrenaline starting to course. Feeling a warped power, an immunity of sorts. He's killed a man today and now he's going to confront this asshole.

He closes in on Jenks--Jenks oblivious to Nick's presence.

Closer.

And then Nick stops. His nerve failing him.

Jenks continues, turns down the basement steps and disappears into his apartment.

Nick eyes the door.

Then he crosses the street, enters his car. He takes a moment, staring at Jenks' apartment. Then starts his car and drives off.

DOWN THE STREET

Sideburns sits in an SUV, watching Nick. He starts his engine and follows. He eyes Jenks' apartment as he passes. Then focuses his attention on Nick's car.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A working class bar. The mood is subdued, the bar half-filled with people escaping the world for a spell.

Nick and Jimmy sit at the bar, nursing drinks.

JIMMY

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

NICK

You've seen some crazy stuff.

JIMMY

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

NICK

And how did you handle it?

JIMMY

One foot in front of the other, brother. You hit a kid. There's worse things.

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

NICK

It's more than hitting that kid...

Beat.

Jimmy gestures, "Tell me."

Beat.

And then Nick decides not to involve his best friend, not to confess what he's done.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's the fucking Flyers. Can't score a goal. How hard is it to put a puck in the back of the net?

The men CHUCKLE. Nick downs his drink.

NICK (CONT'D)

Bano.

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 hesitates in front of the TV.

REPORTER

...who was Alan Marsh? He was a husband, a father, and a 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 returns to the bar, throws down a twenty.

NICK

I got this. I need to go. Thanks for coming by.

JIMMY

You alright?

NICK
Just miss my wife, you know?

JIMMY
I hear you.

The men clasp hands. Then Nick heads out of the bar, Jimmy watching him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ONCOLOGY LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby doors slide open. Nick enters, in a semi-rage. A FEW PEOPLE, none Nick recognize, are scattered about the seats inside.

THE GUARD (40's, white) eyes him.

GUARD
Help you, sir?

NICK
You tell me.

GUARD
I'm sorry?

Nick points to the vending machines.

NICK
Food.

Nick moves to the 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 sits. He rips the wrapper and takes a bite of one of the bars. He chew mechanically.

Nothing happens. Nobody arrives. He's set nothing in motion as far as he can tell. It's ridiculous. He'll never be able to get in touch with the Organization again.

Nick throws the bars into the trash. He approaches the guard. Stares down at him.

NICK (CONT'D)
I got the Eternity Bar. Two of them.

The guard says nothing, just eyes Nick carefully.

NICK (CONT'D)

That doesn't mean anything to you? Two Eternity Bars? Come on. You know.

GUARD

Sir, I have no idea what the hell you're talking about.

Nick SLAPS the man's desk, frustrated. He turns and exits into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick cruises the streets of Philadelphia. A light snow falls. Nick doesn't know where he's going, what exactly he's looking for. He's just driving. He's angry. He's guilty. He's a rage of emotions.

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

Nick pulls up to a crosswalk, the light red. There are no people, no cars. 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 an SUV several blocks back. The SUV pulls to the side of the road. Nick can't see who's driving.

Nick steps on the gas and U-turns. He speeds back toward the SUV. The SUV pulls out from the spot, races down the street.

The cars pass. The SUVs windows are tinted and all Nick can see is the profile of a man. He can't tell who it is.

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

Nick floors it, takes the corner...

There's no SUV. Nobody. It's seemingly disappeared.

Nick continues to the next cross street. He looks up and down. No sign of the SUV. Ahead, no SUV. He's lost him.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOFT - DAY

Nick unlocks the door, enters, carrying the paper and two coffees. He looks like hell, having been out all night. And 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

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 with his raccoon eyes for the first time, and who has no idea where he's been all night.

DETECTIVE RUDESKI (CONT'D)

Do you know why we're here, sir?

NICK

(pause)

Is it 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. I've been out all night. It's been eating me up.

The detectives take hard looks at Nick.

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

The precinct house. 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. PRECINCT 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 frozen 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 work. School. I teach.

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

No.

RUDESKI

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

NICK

Yes.

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.

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, Mr. Gerard. 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. And 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.

The two detectives exit the room.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Rudeski, Green, and their superior, LIEUTENANT DURGAN (50's, black, slim, physically unimposing, at the tail end of 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 was raped September last year.

DURGAN

Victim?

RUDESKI

Alan Marsh. Journalist for the Philly Inquirer. Separated. Two daughters, six and eight. He was fired eleven weeks ago.

DURGAN

Why was he fired?

RUDESKI

We didn't get there yet.

GREEN

(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 fucking case, detectives.
Thank you.

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

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. PRECINCT HOUSE - BULLPEN - DAY

Durgan leads Nick through the precinct house.

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.

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

NICK
He wasn't who they told me he was.

Durgan takes a quick glance about the room. POLICE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL go about their business.

DURGAN
That's enough.

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 with us for a few days?

Nick and Laura lock eyes.

DURGAN (CONT'D)
Mr. and Mrs. Gerard, have a great day.
And thank you, sir, once again, for your help.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

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

NICK
I should have told you.

Laura says nothing.

They stop at a red light. A HOMELESS MAN (50's, black, 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 (CONT'D)
No!

The homeless man runs his squeegee over the windshield.

Nick grabs Laura's purse, pulls out the handgun she carries since she was raped.

LAURA

Nick!

Nick is out of the car, the gun by his side.

NICK

I said no.

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

NICK (CONT'D)

Get away from my car.

The homeless man eyes Nick's gun.

HOMELESS MAN

Harkedy. Lieutenant General Harkedy, yes, sir.

The man salutes. Nick realizes he's mentally ill. Nick gets back in his car and peels off.

LAURA

Jesus, Nick!

NICK

We should move from this city forever, Laura. It's a disaster.

LAURA

What the fuck?!

NICK

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

Nick gestures outside to the barren, inner city landscape.

NICK (CONT'D)

A fucking joke.

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

LAURA
What's wrong with you?

NICK
A joke.

They drive in silence.

They approach their loft, pull into the complex's

UNDERGROUND GARAGE

Nick parks beside Laura's car, turns off the car. Quiet.

NICK
I'm sorry. I'm sorry about back there,
okay?

LAURA
No, not okay. It's just not fucking okay.

Laura exits and slams the door closed. Nick sits, staring straight ahead at a concrete wall.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - DAY

Laura practices her violin, struggling to lose herself in the music.

Across the room, Nick works his laptop. He Googles: "secret vigilante organization." He scans the results. There's nothing that might lead him to any information about the Organization.

Nick Googles: "*the hungry rabbit jumps.*" He clicks on the first result. It leads him to a homepage with a disturbing Robert Crumb-like drawing of a smiling rabbit with wolf-like teeth. There are two lines of text: "*The hungry rabbit jumps is just a myth perpetuated by very sick people.*" The second line says, "*You decide.*"

Nick moves his mouse, tries to click into the website from the home page. There doesn't seem to be anyway to enter the site.

And now he looks closer. There's a kind of pulse beneath the drawing of the rabbit. But now it's gone...

...there it is again. A brief pulse-like image beneath the rabbit drawing. It's gone...

There. Again. Slower this time. A slow enough pulse to shows the image of a man dressed in 18th century garb. He's white, middle-aged, with wavy hair and a pudgy face.

LAURA stops playing. She approaches. Nick tries to exit the web page but the computer freezes. Laura passes on her way to the fridge. She glances at Nick's screen. Doesn't say a word.

On the screen, the image suddenly comes alive. The outline of the man fades away while the rabbit's head "comes alive." The rabbit's smile disappears and is replaced by a frown. A tear flows from the rabbit's eyes to the bottom of the screen.

When the teardrop hits the bottom of the screen the screen flares blinding white and the browser closes. An error message appears: "ERROR 3248674. *WOULD YOU LIKE TO REPORT THIS ERROR?*"

CUT TO:

EXT. LOFT - NIGHT

Middle of the night, and there's not a soul on the street in the frigid air. Steam vents breathe.

Through the loft window, we see Nick move down the stairs from the bedroom.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Nick works his laptop. He's gotten back to the error message: "ERROR 3248674. *WOULD YOU LIKE TO REPORT THIS ERROR?*"

Nick types, "Yes."

"Please enter your complete name."

Nick types: "Peter Smith."

"DENIED."

Nick types: "Henry Totti."

"DENIED."

Nick types: "Simon...Harkes."

"DENIED."

The screen goes dark and then another question appears:
"What is the square root of 324?"

Nick types: "Sixteen."

Then: "YOU WILL BE CONNECTED IN 5...4...3...2...1--"

The browser is sent to a web page. There's a live Webcam.
It shows a gorilla troop lounging in dense jungle.

Nick studies the screen. Dark figures in a dark world.
Nick can't figure out any rhyme or reason as to what this
is all about. If it's about anything at all.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - BATHROOM - DAY

Laura brushes her teeth. In the mirror she watches Nick
put on a suit in the bedroom.

LAURA

Where's the meeting?

NICK

Annabel's office.

LAURA

Who's going to be there?

NICK

A union rep, couple school board members,
Annabel. I'm supposed to give my side of
the story.

LAURA

What is your side?

NICK

I made a mistake. I'm truly sorry. It
won't happen again. I'm human.

LAURA

That's all you can do.

Laura spits, rinses.

LAURA (CONT'D)
You know today's Abrams.

NICK
I'll be there.

Laura approaches Nick.

LAURA
You can always tell me anything, Nick,
you know that. And I promise not to
judge.

NICK
I know.

LAURA
Whatever it is, we need to keep
communicating.

NICK
You're right. I will.

Laura nods, gives him a look that pleads, "Tell me if
there's something else you want to talk about."

Nick forces a smile, pecks her goodbye.

NICK (CONT'D)
I'll see you later.

Nick heads down the stairs. Laura stares after him,
sensing, knowing deep down, that he's still not right.

LAURA
Good luck.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick drives through a suburb of Philadelphia, his guilt
weighing heavily upon him, staring blankly ahead.

He eyes a funeral home up ahead. He pulls into the
crowded parking lot.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - LOBBY - DAY

MOURNERS make small talk before the start of a memorial
service.

Nick enters. He's met at the door by a funeral home ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Marsh Memorial?

NICK
Yes.

The asst. director gestures down a hall.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Up on your right, sir. Yarmulkes by the door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MEMORIAL ROOM - DAY

Nick enters, adjusting his yarmulke on his head. There are twenty-five people scattered about the pews.

Nick sits in an empty row. He focuses on the front of the room where a closed casket sits.

LATER

The room has filled. A hush overcomes the room as the immediate family enters from a side door: Marsh's wife, Marsh's two daughters, MARSH'S MOTHER (70's) and several other EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS.

Nick tenses. Marsh's wife and daughters are the woman and girls he followed at the zoo.

The family is followed by A RABBI, who steps up to the podium.

RABBI
A moment of silent prayer.

The Rabbi lowers his head as do the gathered. There's a moment of silent prayer and then the rabbi addresses the room:

RABBI (CONT'D)
I know the one question we've all been asking ourselves since we heard this terrible, terrible news...is why? Why, God? Why?

NICK sits very still. Feeling sick to his stomach, guilt suffocating him.

Nick's cell BUZZES. It's Laura. He sends it to voicemail.

LATER

The rabbi introduces the next speaker.

RABBI

Our next speaker will be Alan's best friend, Daniel Schulman. Daniel.

DANIEL SCHULMAN, late 30's, jet-lagged, wrinkled European suit, rises, makes his way to the podium. He's a compact, in-shape man, used to working as a journalist in the most difficult places in the world.

Daniel looks out over the crowd. Then glances back at the coffin.

DANIEL

I miss you, Alan.

Daniel takes a breath, composes.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I miss him but I know that he lives on within all of us.

There are nods throughout the gathered.

NICK feels eyes upon him. He glances behind him. In the last row, he spots Scar, the man from the laundromat. Scar meets Nick's gaze with cold eyes.

Nick, a wrenching feeling in his gut, turns back to face the front of the room.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Jane, girls, I want you to know that when I last talked to your father, all he talked about was his family, you guys. How much he loved you all.

Daniel nods to Alan's wife and daughters.

Then Daniel looks out over the crowd. His gaze lands on Nick--stays there. Nick's skin crawls. Then Daniel averts his eyes, continues his eulogy.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

He was like a brother to me. And even though I work in Moscow now, and we rarely saw each other, we were still as close as ever. I remember when we began our journalism careers here at The Inquirer...

LATER

The memorial comes to a close.

RABBI

We will now follow one another to Har Nebo cemetery where we will lay Alan to rest. After, the family asks that you join them at the Marsh home.

The mourners rise. The pall bearers (including Daniel) carry the casket down the center aisle and out of the room.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The mourners disperse to their cars. Nick emerges, scans the area for Scar. He spots the back of a man--could be Scar, but Nick can't be sure--getting into a Town Car.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARSH HOME - DAY

Nick walks up to the house. Down the porch, FOUR JOURNALISTS (friends of Marsh's) smoke and chat. Included among them is Daniel, who watches Nick enter the house.

INT. MARSH HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Guests mingle, eat from a spread of catered food. The room is crowded and stuffy.

Nick steps into the house. He scans the living room, sees no sign of Scar.

He crosses the room, takes a flute of orange juice. He drinks, loosens his tie. He glances at a wall of FAMILY PICTURES. Stages of life. Happier times.

His cell BUZZES. ID shows, "Laura." He sends it to voicemail. He feels eyes upon him. It's Daniel, who's come in from outside. He makes his way to Nick.

DANIEL

Daniel.

NICK

Nick. I thought you did a great job.

The men shake.

DANIEL

Thank you. Nick...?

NICK

Gerard.

DANIEL

How'd you know Al?

NICK

He spoke to my class a few years ago.

DANIEL

You teach journalism?

NICK

Chemistry, actually. At-risk kids. I bring in different professionals to show them...possibilities, options.

DANIEL

Good for you. Do you smoke, Nick?

NICK

No.

DANIEL

Will you join me, anyway?

Nick follows Daniel down a hall, into the kitchen, and out onto a back porch.

EXT. BACK PORCH - DAY

Daniel lights a cigarette.

DANIEL

Four years in Moscow as an investigative journalist will make you a smoker. That or an alcoholic.

Daniel CHUCKLES, a man with a dark sense of humor.

The men look out over the fallow back yard. Their breaths show the cold air. Daniel drags on his cigarette.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

How'd you find out that Alan died?

NICK

I happened to see it on the news last night.

An uncomfortable silence falls.

There's the SOUND (O.S.) of a door opening. Both men glance back to see Jane (Marsh's wife) emerge from inside.

JANE

There you are.

DANIEL

Janie. Ready for your smoke?

JANE

Just a hug for now.

She and Daniel hug.

JANE (CONT'D)

Brutal in there.

DANIEL

Don't go back in.

Nick stands awkwardly beside them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

This is Nick, Jane. Al spoke to his class.

NICK

I'm so sorry.

JANE

Thank you for being here.

NICK

It's the least...

Another awkward silence.

JANE
(to Daniel)
Save me that cigarette.

DANIEL
Promise.

Jane moves back inside.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Jane's great. I was surprised she put up
with him all those years.

NICK
What do you mean?

DANIEL
Al was a pain in the ass. It's what made
him a good reporter. He was like me.
Obsessive.

Daniel stubs out his cigarette.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What I said today was bullshit. The last
time I talked to him we got in an
argument. I told him it didn't surprise
me that he had been fired.

NICK
No?

DANIEL
Al had stopped being a journalist.
Crossed the line into a conspiracy
theorist. Guess what his latest was?

Nick shrugs, though he has a strong, wrenching instinct
of what Daniel is about to say.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
A secret vigilante group. Worldwide
reach. "Enforcing" justice.

Daniel closely watches Nick's reaction. Nick tries to
show nothing.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Crazy, huh?

NICK
Sounds it.

The door to the kitchen opens again and Scar steps out. He lights a cigarette, moves to the far side of the porch, and looks out over the yard.

DANIEL

It's true, the Moscow subway system is a marvel.

Daniel pulls out his PDA, glances down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Work. Excuse me for a moment.

Daniel re-enters the house. Scar moves to Nick.

SCAR

What were you and Daniel talking about?

NICK

None of your fucking business.

SCAR

You need to leave this alone. You witnessed a suicide and that's the end of it.

NICK

That's it, huh? Just like that. Done.

Nick moves to the kitchen door.

SCAR

The second camera in the subway, the one across the tracks, it was also working, shows clearly what you did. If you keep prying, it'll be sent to the police.

Nick stares daggers at Scar. Then re-enters the house.

INT. MARSH HOME - DAY

Nick, rattled, moves through the house. He glances at Daniel--their eyes meet for a moment.

Nick continues through the living room and out the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nick, trying to stay calm, pulls away from the curb. He glances back up to the Marsh home. Nobody's watching him as far as he can tell.

He checks his voicemail. Three messages, all from Laura. The first message plays:

LAURA (PHONE)
Hey, it's me, I just wanted to know how the meeting went. Call me.

Nick deletes the message. The second message plays:

LAURA (PHONE) (CONT'D)
It's me again. I'll see you in few minutes at Abrams.

Nick glances at the dashboard clock, realizing he's forgotten all about their weekly counseling meeting.

NICK
Damn it.

Nick deletes the message. The third message plays:

LAURA (PHONE)
(angry, dismayed)
I called Annabel. She told me. You didn't have a fucking meeting today.

Laura HANGS UP (ON PHONE).

NICK
Shit.

Nick snaps closed his cell. Then speed-dials Laura.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFT - DAY

Laura rifles through several pairs of Nick's pants, checking pockets. Her cell BUZZES. It's Nick. She doesn't answer.

She checks the pockets of several of Nick's jackets.

She eyes the safe on the closet floor. She unlocks the safe, rifles through paperwork, jewelry, passports.

She heads downstairs. She opens Nick's shoulder bag and rummages through papers and folders.

AND FINDS the Walczak/Marsh instruction.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S CAR - DUSK

Nick sits in rush hour traffic. Dashboard clock shows 5:00 and night is already falling.

NICK

Come on and drive already.

He glances in his rear view mirror. He studies the FACES of drivers. Any one of them could be following him. Nick's paranoia is in full bloom.

CUT TO:

INT. LOFTS - UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

Nick pulls into his spot. Laura's car isn't there.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Nick enters, eyes the apartment.

He moves to the kitchen counter. There's a Post-it note from Laura on the kitchen counter: "*I READ THE PAGES.*"

The Post-it is stuck atop the Walczak/Marsh instructions.

NICK

Shit.

Nick speed-dials his wife. He cringes as he gets her VOICEMAIL, leaves a message.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's me. Call me as soon as you get this. Listen, what you saw, don't talk to anybody about those pages. Nobody.

(pause)

You'll understand what it is eventually, okay. It might seem like one thing, Laura...but it's not. Call me.

Nick hangs up.

He paces the room, his world spiraling out of control. He passes the windows, hesitates. He stares far down the block, where a Town Car is parked. It looks like the same one from the memorial.

Nick moves to the kitchen, rummages through a drawer and finds a pair of binoculars.

BINOCULAR POV: the Town Car. The side mirror. And in the side mirror is the reflection of Scar.

Nick backs away from the window.

He makes a decision. He's had it. *Fuck this.* He hurries out of his loft.

INT. LOFTS - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Nick hurries down the stairs and into the

LOBBY

Nick moves to the entrance door. In the b.g., the elevator heads up.

Nick bursts out the lobby entrance to the street.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Nick walks purposefully toward the Town Car. It appears Scar is no longer in the car.

Nick hesitates, looks around cautiously. Then continues to the car. Scar lies across the front seats. Nick flings open the door.

NICK

Hey!

Scar doesn't move. His eyes are vacant. Now Nick notices that blood is pooling on the passenger seat beneath the man's head. He's dead.

Nick shuts the car door, backs away from the car, shaken. He looks up and down the street. Then feels eyes upon him. He scans the area...

...looks up to his loft. Daniel stands at the windows, staring down at him.

Daniel moves away from the window, disappears within the loft.

Nick walks down the street, away from his loft. He stops at the corner, glances back.

DANIEL emerges from the lofts, heads toward Nick.

NICK turns the corner and runs through rush hour pedestrians.

DANIEL stops at the Town Car, glances in at Scar's body.

Then he continues after Nick. He turns the corner. Two blocks ahead, Nick runs across a major thoroughfare and into a downtown park.

NICK runs through the park. He reaches the other side. He sprints across the road, dodging traffic backed up at a light. There's a row of stores. Nick ducks into a florist.

INSIDE

Nick stares back out to the park, breathing heavily. He spots Daniel in the park. He's lost Nick. Daniel does a slow 360, eyeing every person, areas of the park where Nick might be hiding, and then the stores across the street.

He spots Nick--their eyes meet for a split second--Nick backs away and hurries to the rear of the store.

FLOWER SHOP CLERK (O.S.)

Can I help you, sir?

Nick doesn't answer. He pushes through a rear exit door and into a

BACK ALLEY

There's one way out. And it's gated, locked closed. Nick glances up. There's a fire escape ladder but it's too high to reach.

Nick moves to the rear of the next business. He tugs the door. Locked.

He moves to the next business. Yanks on the door. It opens and he enters.

INT. PRINT SHOP - NIGHT

Nick finds himself in the rear of the small print operation. He moves through the store past the SHOP OWNER and a second EMPLOYEE.

SHOP OWNER (O.S.)

Excuse me!

The front door JINGLES as Daniel enters--Nick wheels and runs through the back exit--Daniel sprints after him.

IN THE ALLEY

Nick sprints to the gate, jumps and climbs. He drops to the other side just as Daniel arrives.

DANIEL

Don't.

Daniel holds a gun on Nick through the gate. Nick freezes, debates running. There's a tense two second stand off.

PRINT SHOP OWNER (O.S.)

What the fuck?!

Daniel glances back behind him--when he turns back, Nick's gone.

NICK sprints down the street, dodging pedestrians.

DANIEL runs back through the flower store, bursts out the front door.

NICK slams into a WOMAN, the two tumble to the ground. Nick scrambles to his feet, glances back as

DANIEL sprints toward him. Nick turns and runs.

THE TWO MEN scramble through the sidewalk crowds.

DANIEL gains...tackles Nick--the two men fall hard to the pavement. They roll, struggle for position. Daniel gets the better of Nick, shoves a knee in his chest.

DANIEL

I'll kill you right now.

Daniel glances around--people are watching. He yanks Nick to his feet. He keeps a hold of Nick's upper arm as they walk up the street.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Do anything, you're dead.

Daniel leads them down a side alley. He pulls his gun, shoves Nick against a wall, puts the gun to Nick's head.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Who killed Alan?

NICK
I don't know.

DANIEL
You're lying.

NICK
I swear I don't know.

DANIEL
(re: Scar)
The guy back there in the Town Car, why'd you kill him?

NICK
I didn't.

Daniel shoves the gun against Nick's cheek.

DANIEL
You're a goddamn liar.

NICK
You did. I saw the body. You killed him.

Daniel shakes his head no. No, he didn't.

The men eye each other, both confused, neither knowing whether to believe the other.

DANIEL
Walk.

Daniel shoves Nick down the alley.

They emerge out the opposite end and another street. They move down the street and up to a parked rental car.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Get in. Drive.

CUT TO:

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives. Daniel's in the passenger seat, gun pointed at Nick's gut.

NICK
Where are we going?

Daniel doesn't answer.

NICK (CONT'D)
Where's Laura?

DANIEL
Who's Laura?

Nick doesn't answer.

Up ahead, on the other side of the street, Nick spots a police car.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Don't.

They pass the cop car. Nick looks to the COP. He glances at Nick and their eyes meet for the slightest moment.

Nick eyes his rear view mirror, praying for brake lights, for the cop car to U-turn. It doesn't. It disappears in traffic.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEN FRANKLIN BRIDGE - NIGHT

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

INT. RENTAL CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick and Daniel. Nick's cell BUZZES in his pocket.

DANIEL
Give it here.

Nick hands over his cell. Daniel checks the ID.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Who's Laura?

NICK

Nobody.

Daniel puts the gun to Nick's temple.

NICK (CONT'D)

She's my wife. She has nothing to do--

Nick stops himself.

DANIEL

Nothing to do with what?

Nick doesn't answer. Daniel tosses the cell to the floor.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Your wallet.

Nick pulls out his wallet. Daniel takes out Nick's teacher ID, studies it. He studies other ID's, a PHOTO of Laura.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Who's this?

NICK

My wife.

Daniel glances ahead. They're reaching the other side of the bridge, entering Camden.

DANIEL

Left down there.

Nick turns onto an access road. Heavy industry with a post-apocalyptic feel lines both sides of the road.

They pass warehouses, a refinery, a demolition yard, empty, weed-infested loading docks.

They approach a large warehouse: faded lettering indicates, "ZOMOPOLOUS IMPORT/EXPORT."

A small sign just beyond the warehouse says, "SUNSHINE MARINA." An arrow points down a narrow road.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Turn there.

Nick turns. The gravel road leads down behind the warehouse to a decrepit marina beside a channel.

Daniel surveys the area. A few boats are up on stilts. There's a single dock, the boats covered for the winter. The men exit the car.

Nick's convinced he's about to be murdered in this desolate spot.

NICK

I didn't have anything to do with it. I swear. Please.

Daniel gestures toward the dock. There's a security gate.

DANIEL

Fifty-two, eighty-one.

Nick punches in the numbers and the gate clicks open. The men move down the dock. They come to a 34 foot sailboat, *The April Rose*.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Take off the cover.

Nick pulls back the cover. There's a lock on the hatch to the cabin. Daniel tosses Nick a key. Nick unlocks the hatch.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

In.

INT. *APRIL ROSE* - CABIN - NIGHT

Daniel switches on a light. The cabin contains eight months of Marsh's investigation of the Organization. The walls are covered with photos, names, charts, printed information from the internet.

A laptop sits on a fold-out chair. The screen saver scrolls: "PARANOIA IS JUSTIFIED...TRUST NO ONE."

Daniel taps the laptop. The screen comes to life. There's a frozen image of Alan Marsh, staring out from a Webcam recording.

Daniel moves to the galley, where a small CCTV sits on a kitchen counter. He clicks on the CCTV. There's a black & white view from the warehouse roof to the adjacent road/entrance.

Daniel gestures with his gun to Nick.

DANIEL

Now tell me everything you know.

Nick moves about the cabin, eyeing:

(1) A xeroxed sketch of an old man. It's the man who pulses beneath the hungry rabbit web site. "Edmund Burke." Alan has scribbled, "Founder?" on the xerox.

(2) A large pile of books. Among them: Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment," Camus', "The Stranger,", and an academic text, "Historical Homicidal Rate: A Statistical Analysis."

There are also several books by Edmund Burke: "A Vindication Of Natural Society: A View Of The Miseries And Evil Arising To Mankind" and, "A Philosophical Enquiry Into The Origin Of Our Ideas Of The Sublime And Beautiful."

(3) A wall of photos with the heading "TARGETS?" Several of the photos have been X'd through.

(4) A second wall with a large poster board. Photos are arranged like a genealogy chart: arrows point/connect to various "headshots", surveillance photos, names and question marks. At the top of the chart is a photo of Simon. There's a name beside it, "Douglas Sylvester."

NICK

That's the man who contacts me. Douglas Sylvester. He told me his name was Simon.

DANIEL

Who else do you know?

Nick eyes other photos, people in Simon's cell. He taps them one by one: Durgan (the PPD Lieutenant who asked Nick the questions in the interrogation), Sideburns, Cancer, and Scar.

There are several other faces that have never been seen before.

Arrows above Simon point to five surveillance photos. In each photo Simon is meeting with a different man.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Which one is Simon's contact?

NICK

I don't know.

Daniel takes out his PDA. He hands it to Nick. Nick stares down at a photo of himself. It's Nick in the subway car, when he was sitting across from Marsh. Taken from Marsh's cell phone.

DANIEL

Who killed Alan?

NICK

I have no idea.

With a quick, furious motion, Daniel WHACKS Nick across the head with his gun. Nick falls to the couch, bleeding.

DANIEL

That picture was taken the day before he was killed.

NICK

I didn't do it.

Daniel presses the barrel of the handgun against Nick's bloody forehead.

DANIEL

Then tell me who did.

NICK

I don't know.

DANIEL

Who did it. Don't think I won't do this.

Daniel smirks, a semi-crazed look on his face. He's a man on the edge.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Who killed Alan?

NICK

My wife was raped. Last year. They came to me, said they could kill the man who did it. I owed them.

DANIEL

And?

Nick's silent.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

And?

NICK

They told me he was a child molester.

DANIEL

Alan was a child molester?

Nick nods.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Bullshit.

NICK

They threatened my family. I didn't have any choice.

DANIEL

(pause)

Sure you did.

NICK

(pause)

You're right. I did. I had a choice.

DANIEL

You killed him.

NICK

I didn't know.

Daniel keeps the gun on Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)

I didn't know.

Beat.

And another.

Daniel rises slowly, pockets his gun.

DANIEL

Fuck.

Daniel moves about the cabin. Nick slowly gets to his feet.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Daniel grabs a rag, tosses it to Nick. Nick presses it against his bleeding head.

NICK

I'm sorry.

There's a moment of relief for Nick, a purging in the admission of guilt.

NICK (CONT'D)

I didn't know.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUDY'S APARTMENT - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laura and Trudy sit on the bed. There's an open suitcase with the clothes and personal items Laura has brought from home.

TRUDY

Stay here as long as you want.

LAURA

Thank you.

TRUDY

Of course. Listen, I'm sure there's a good reason he's not himself.

Laura debates telling Trudy about the instructions. She eyes the clock on the wall.

LAURA

We need to get going.

TRUDY

You are not playing tonight. You're staying here, ordering Chinese, watching a movie, and drinking wine.

Laura forces a small smile.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

This thing will work itself out.

Trudy gives her a big hug. She exits the room.

Laura eyes her cell. She scrolls down her contacts. Stops on "JIMMY". Hits speed-dial.

CUT TO:

INT. APRIL ROSE - NIGHT

Daniel works the laptop, turns it so that Nick can see the screen.

ALAN MARSH (ON SCREEN)

The genius of the Organization is it appears to not exist. It doesn't have a name, doesn't have a leader. It's structured in a way so that each cell can be cut off or activated at a moment's notice.

(pause)

This is the perfect world for them to bloom. Our world which is governed by irrational fear.

Daniel hits a few keys, finds another recording:

ALAN MARSH (ON SCREEN)
(CONT'D)

(reading from a book)

"It is not what a lawyer tells me I MAY do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do." Edmund Burke.

(pause)

Hungry-H-Humanity. Rabbit-R-Reason. Jumps-J-Justice. Humanity Reason Justice. Edmund Burke. Born Dublin. 1729. Politician, philosopher, writer, supporter of the American colonies. I believe the Organization might have begun with Burke. But I don't know.

In the b.g., on the CCTV screen: two SUVS stop on the access road on the other side of the warehouse. Nick and Daniel don't see them.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN, Marsh closes the book, stares into the camera.

ALAN MARSH (ON SCREEN)
(CONT'D)

Working in my favor is that a basic tenet of the Organization is that they kill only the most heinous and guilty.

Nick suddenly catches movement on the CCTV SCREEN: Simon, Cancer, and Sideburns hurry from their vehicles, drawing guns. They make their way down the entrance drive.

NICK

Daniel.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARINA - NIGHT

Simon, Cancer and Sideburns approach the dock. They glance in Daniel's car, eye the area.

They hear a SMALL SPLASH (O.S.). Simon and Cancer move quickly toward the dock and the noise. Sideburns keeps watch on shore.

Simon and Cancer hurry to the *April Rose*, where the cover's pulled back and the hatch is open.

Simon aims his gun down the hatch.

SIMON

Get out.

There's no answer. Simon starts down, followed by Cancer.

BELOW DECK

The men enter the cabin. A Webcam recording plays on the laptop, Marsh.

MARSH (ON SCREEN)

(with a weak laugh)

My friends think I'm insane. They're worried for me.

Simon takes it all in while Cancer checks the galley and head.

CANCER (O.S.)

Clear.

Simon approaches the chart of his cell, stares at his own face. Then he eyes the faces above his, one of whom Marsh theorized was Simon's contact/superior within the Organization.

SIMON

We need to find them.

A DOG BARKS (O.S.).

SIDEBURNS (O.S.)
Eyeball!

Simon and Cancer scramble back up on deck. Sideburns is already racing down the marina.

SIDEBURNS (CONT'D)
Channel!

Simon eyes the water. Fifty yards away, Nick swims.

A SHOT (O.S.)--Cancer's hit.

DANIEL crouches in a boat, gun leveled at Cancer. He SHOOTS him a second time. Cancer falls into the water. Dead.

SIMON PEPPERS Daniel with TWO QUICK SHOTS to the shoulder and leg. Daniel crumples to the boat. Simon approaches, stares down at a writhing Daniel.

IN THE CHANNEL

Nick powers away from the scene. He passes a demolition yard where a GERMAN SHEPHERD BARKS MANIACALLY at him.

SIDEBURNS runs down the shore, approaching the dog. A SHOT--YELP--the dog is dead.

NICK glances to shore as Sideburns aims--Nick dives below.

UNDERWATER

Nick powers below. There's the RIPPING SOUND of bullets in water.

Nick reaches the bottom of the channel, kicks up mud and sludge. He can't see anything. He feels his way along the bottom and up to the other side of the channel.

IN THE WEEDS/MARSHLAND

Nick emerges, takes a quick gasp of air--then sinks as low as he can into the muck.

He eyes the channel through the weeds. On the far shore, Sideburns peers out into the dark. Simon arrives. He's leading an injured Daniel.

Daniel and Sideburns have a brief conversation that Nick can't hear. Sideburns heads back to the marina.

Simon shoves Daniel. He falls to the edge of the water. Simon puts a gun to the back of his head.

SIMON
Your choice, Nick!

NICK, eyes wide with panic, does nothing.

SIMON (CONT'D)

One.
Two.
Your choice, Nick...
Three.

ON NICK. A half-second of relief. Simon hasn't done it--

A SHOT (O.S.). Nick flinches.

ON THE SHORE Daniel falls forward. Dead.

ON NICK. Shell-shocked.

And then Nick hears an ENGINE (O.S.). An outboard skiff approaches, Sideburns at the wheel. He cuts the engine and drifts, eyeing the marsh, gun leveled, searching.

Nick's frozen. The boat drifts ten yards from him...

...passes him. Continues further down the channel.

SIMON stares out in the darkness of the marsh.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Do I need to go talk to your wife, Nick?!
Is that what I need to do?!

NICK eyes Simon, a wrenching feeling in his gut.

Beat.

SIMON heads back toward the dock.

NICK slowly crawls deeper into the marshland.

LATER

Nick trudges through the marshland. He emerges at the other side. The Delaware river is before him.

The wind whips the river into whitecaps. The lights of Philadelphia twinkle beyond.

He debates trying to swim across. No. He'd freeze to death or drown.

He moves along the shore, walking the perimeter of the marshland. He hears SIRENS off in the night, back in the direction of the marina.

He reaches a far corner of the marsh, where one outlet of the channel meets the Delaware River.

Down the channel, he spots flickering yellow in the night. The April Rose and the other boats burn. Emergency vehicles are arriving.

Nick looks across the channel: there's a city salt yard. Nick enters the frigid water. He breast strokes to the opposite shore, trying to swim as quietly as possible.

He emerges from the channel, crouches beside a snowplow. Shaking violently from the cold.

He skulks across the yard and to an office. He peers in the office. Spots a phone.

He bunches his shirt over his fist and smashes the glass window on the door. He reaches in and opens the door from the inside.

INSIDE

Nick punches in Laura's number with shaking, frozen fingers.

LAURA (PHONE)

Hello.

Nick's relieved to hear her voice.

NICK

It's me. Are you okay?

INT. TRUDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Laura on her cell.

LAURA

What the hell's going on, Nick?

INTERCUT

NICK

Where are you?

LAURA

Trudy's. Where are you?

NICK

You need to get out of there.

LAURA

What the hell are you talking about?

NICK

You didn't tell anybody about what you saw today, did you?

Laura doesn't answer.

NICK (CONT'D)

Laura?

LAURA

I told Trudy and Jimmy I was worried about you.

NICK

But you didn't talk to them about those pages. Right?

LAURA

No.

NICK

Good. I need you to--

A DOOR BELL (O.S.).

Laura flinches at the sound.

NICK (CONT'D)

What's that?

LAURA

The door.

NICK

Don't answer it.

Laura moves to the door, looks through the eyehole. It's Jimmy.

NICK (CONT'D)

Laura?

LAURA

It's Jimmy.

Nick breathes a sigh of relief.

NICK

Let me talk to him.

Laura opens the door. She hands the phone to Jimmy.

LAURA

It's Nick.

JIMMY

Nick.

NICK

I'm in trouble, Jimmy, and there's people coming after Laura. I need you to get her somewhere safe.

JIMMY

Tell me what's going on, what people?

NICK

I can't. Just...please.

JIMMY

I have a place I can take her, no one'll find her. We'll go there, you call me.

NICK

Thank you.

Nick hangs up. He looks warily out at the night. Then he grabs a worker's winter jacket and hurries out of the office.

CUT TO:

INT. JIMMY'S SUV - MOVING - NIGHT

Jimmy drives a one lane road in southwest Philly. Laura's in the passenger seat, distraught and confused.

JIMMY

It's going to be okay.

Jimmy turns down an unmarked road. The road is in disrepair, dotted with potholes.

They pass an auto salvage yard, then a cement yard. And then the road dips down into a ravine.

The road ends at a line of loading docks beside train tracks. The docks haven't been used in twenty years. There's several truck trailers up on blocks.

And there's an idling SUV. Tinted windows.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Sit tight.

Jimmy exits. He approaches the SUV. The door opens--

SIMON steps out. He glances to the SUV, to Laura. She looks at the men with increasing apprehension.

SIMON

Thank you.

JIMMY

(re: Laura)

Nothing happens to her after you've got him.

Simon doesn't answer.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Right? Nothing happens to her.

The men lock eyes.

SIMON

It's not my decision.

(pause)

It's his.

Simon gestures behind Jimmy. Jimmy turns and looks down the endless stretch of track. There's nobody there--

A SHOT (silencer) to the back of Jimmy's head. Jimmy crumples, shot by Simon.

Simon turns, eyes Jimmy's SUV. The passenger door is open--no Laura--her handbag on the seat--

THERE SHE IS. Scrambling, running away from the SUV, into brush, up the ravine.

SIMON sprints after her.

LAURA, eyes showing pure panic, runs through the thick bramble. And then she stops, crouches. We now see the gun in her hand. She can HEAR Simon approaching quickly.

Laura levels her gun. Waits. There's movement. She waits a split second longer--movement--she SHOOTS.

SIMON--hit in the lower leg--A GRUNT--falls to the earth.

LAURA. Can't see him now. She approaches, gun leveled, moving through the thick foliage.

Where the hell is he?

Where is he?

Is that blood on a patch of snow?

AN ARM whips out of the darkness and grabs Laura around the neck.

SIMON puts her in a choke hold. Squeezes hard.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Drop the gun.

Laura struggles. Simon squeezes harder. She can't get air. She drops the guns.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Stop struggling.

Laura becomes still. Simon lessens his hold. Laura gasps, wheezing in air.

Simon grabs her gun from the ground.

SIMON (CONT'D)

You say a word, try anything stupid, I'll kill you.

BACK AT THE TRAIN TRACKS/LOADING DOCKS

Simon's on his cell, pacing twenty yards from his SUV. There's no sign of Laura.

SIMON

...yes...yes, of course. Krickland. I remember it.

Simon shuts his cell. There's a moment. He's thinking hard about the situation.

He limps to his SUV, glances in the rear seat. LAURA lies across the seat, arms handcuffed with plastic cuffs, Duct tape over her mouth, eyes petrified. She has no idea who this man is, or what's going on.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARINA - NIGHT

The boats and docks burn--two fire trucks spray water over the conflagration. There's a dozen emergency vehicles of various ilks scattered about the marina.

INSIDE AN ARSON INVESTIGATOR'S CAR

The RADIO CRACKLES. The car is empty.

The door opens, Nick slides in. Keys are in the ignition. Nick starts the car, drives back toward the access road.

He turns onto the road, heads back toward the Ben Franklin bridge. He speeds up.

He eyes the rear view mirror. Nobody following. He catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror--rings under his eyes, wound on his forehead, matted hair, dried sludge on his face. He's a fucking mess.

WHAM! The car is sideswiped by an SUV, Sideburns at the wheel. The car skids down a bank, stops violently as the front end jams in the mud. Nick's head whips into the steering wheel. He's dazed, but he's got enough wits to throw open the door and crawl outside.

Nick staggers away from the car and into a asphalt field of rusted car parts. He glances behind him to see Sideburns scrambling down the bank.

NICK runs. He reaches a fence, climbs it, drops to the other side.

SIDEBURNS reaches the fence. Climbs and jumps over it.

Nick sprints behind a large warehouse. He suddenly finds himself hemmed in by buildings and a barbed wire fence. The only way out is back the way he just came him.

He tries the warehouse door. Locked. He spots an open window above. He jumps, grabs the ledge, and pulls himself in.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Filled with tall rows of industrial plumbing supplies: toilets, piping, etc.. Nick moves quickly down a row. Then stops. Listens.

He hears nothing.

He moves deeper into the warehouse--

THE SOUND of BOOTS FALLING ON THE CEMENT FLOOR (O.S.), someone dropping into the warehouse.

SIDEBURNs, gun drawn, moves down a row. He stops. Listens. Hears nothing.

He moves to the end of the row. Then wheels back--Nick sprints across the aisle. Sideburns FIRES, misses, runs after Nick.

He turns in the direction Nick ran. Nick's vanished. Sideburns turns back the other way--

A flash of reflected light as a metal pipe comes down viciously on Sideburns head with a DULL THUNK. Sideburns crumples instantly.

All is suddenly very quiet. Nick stares down at his victim.

Then he moves off. He finds a door, slowly unlocks it and opens it. He's wary, thinking there are probably other men in the area.

OUTSIDE

Nick eyes the area. He hears nothing. In the distance, he can see yellow in the night sky, the burning boats.

Then he turns back and re-enters the warehouse. He finds Sideburns' cellphone. And his car keys.

And his gun. Nick shoves the gun into a pocket of the worker's jacket.

ON THE ACCESS ROAD

Nick appears out of the night, glancing up and down the road, looking for more trouble.

He scrambles into Sideburns' SUV, starts it, and drives toward the Ben Franklin bridge.

ON THE BRIDGE

Nick speeds back into Philly. He punches in Laura's number on Sideburns' cell.

RING (PHONE).

RING (PHONE).

RIN--

LAURA (PHONE)

Hello.

NICK

You're okay?

Nick hears nothing. Then MUMBLING, people talking, but Nick can't understand a word. Someone's got their hand over the phone.

SIMON (PHONE)

Hello, Nick.

Nick is paralyzed at the sound of Simon's voice.

SIMON (PHONE) (CONT'D)

We need to meet.

NICK

Leave her out of this.

SIMON (PHONE)

Here's where you're going.

INT. SUV - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick crosses the Walt Whitman Bridge, leaving Philadelphia, the skyline in the b.g..

LATER

Nick heads east. The suburbs and strip malls thin, replaced by pine forest.

LATER

Nick drives, eyeing the mile markers. He slows as he passes the marker he's looking for. There's an unnamed road just beyond it. He turns down the road.

He's drives through forest, a thin layer of snow on the ground.

He turns on his brights. There's nothing out here but forest.

He drives.

Finally, there's a stone marker, "KRICKLAND SANATORIUM."

Nick turns in the entrance. An abandoned sanatorium spreads before him. Massive. Built of stone. The remains of several statues are scattered about the front lawn.

There's an SUV parked by the fence. Simon's.

Nick stops the SUV, turns off the car lights. The half moon reflects off the snow, giving the whole scene an otherworldly feel.

Nick exits. He's met with the deep silence of a night forest in winter.

He eyes Simon's SUV. Nobody there. Laura's purse in the passenger seat. He tries the door. Locked.

He moves around the perimeter of the fence, through snow and mud. He finds a hole in the fence right where Simon told him it would be.

He approaches the sanatorium. The windows are either boarded up or gaping, black holes. There's scrawls of graffiti on the wall. A part of the roof has caved in.

Nick turns the corner, moves down the side of the sanatorium. And now he reaches the back of the building, where English gardens once thrived, their precise outline still visible.

He eyes a stone gazebo fifty yards away. Sees movement. People.

Nick approaches. And now he can see them. Simon holds his gun to Laura's head.

A moment.

NICK

Let her go. She doesn't have anything to do with this.

SIMON

Take off your jacket.

Nick slowly takes off his jacket.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Toss it over there.

Nick tosses the jacket.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Turn around.

Nick turns around. Simon eyes his pocket and waist band.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Show me your socks.

Nick pulls up the bottom of his pants, shows his socks. No gun in there.

Simon (still with his gun to Laura's head) moves to the jacket, feels around. He feels the gun. He pulls it out and pockets it.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Over there.

Simon gestures. Nick moves toward the dark woods. Simon shoves Laura in Nick's direction.

NICK

I thought there was a code, Simon. You don't kill people like us. We're not those people.

SIMON

Tell me who's first.

Laura starts to sob.

NICK

Marsh found a tape. Did you know that? It shows you killing a man. Do this and a friend sends that tape everywhere.

Simon eyes Nick with a small look of pity. Nick's a man doing anything to save his life.

SIMON

There's no tape. Just like there's no
tape of you in the subway.

NICK

(pause)

You let us go, we never say a word.
Never.

SIMON

You can't jeopardize the Organization,
Nick. You saw what was in the boat. Now
who's first?

LAURA

Fuck you.

Simon smiles a warped smile.

SIMON

Turn around. Both of you.

Nick and Laura don't turn around.

SIMON (CONT'D)

NOW!

The couple slowly turn around. Nick looks to Laura. She
stares ahead. She won't meet his gaze.

NICK

I'm so sorry.

For the briefest moment, their eyes meet.

A SHOT (O.S.). Nick flinches. Laura SCREAMS.

A SECOND SHOT (O.S.).

Neither Nick or Laura is hit. *What the hell is going on?*
Nick turns to see Simon falling to the ground.

Behind Simon, A MAN (30's, white) lowers his gun. He
approaches Simon, stares down. Simon's quivering. Then
his eyes go vacant. He's dead.

The Shooter looks up to Nick. Nick's frozen, thinking
he'll be shot now.

But the Shooter throws his gun to Nick's feet. Then takes
a sheet of paper out of his pocket. He approaches, hands
the sheet to Nick.

SHOOTER

I'm done now.

Nick is baffled, doesn't comprehend what's going on.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)

I'm done, Nick.

There's a manic intensity in the Shooter's voice, the voice of a man on the edge, in a situation he can't control.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)

You gave me your word. We have our agreement. Now leave me and my family alone.

The Shooter turns and heads back toward the front of the sanatorium.

NICK

Wait!

The man tenses, a bundle of nerves. Nick approaches.

NICK (CONT'D)

Nick? I'm Nick?

The shooter nods yes.

NICK (CONT'D)

How do you know I'm Nick?

The Shooter doesn't answer.

NICK (CONT'D)

Is this what my voice sounds like? Is this what my voice sounded like when I called you?

The Shooter doesn't answer.

NICK (CONT'D)

It's not, is it? No.

The Shooter is frozen.

NICK (CONT'D)

Go. You're done.

Shooter turns and runs. He disappears around the side of the sanatorium.

Nick picks up the sheet of paper. It's faxed instructions. There are directions to the sanatorium. And there's a detailed outline on how and when to kill Simon. It describes everything that's just happened.

Nick looks up from the sheet. Laura, shell-shocked, stares down at Simon. Then she looks up to Nick. Their eyes meet and hold.

Nick slowly puts his arms around her. She keeps her arms at her side, doesn't hug back. He holds her tight as she shakes violently.

CUT TO:

INT. SUV - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick drives, Laura in the passenger seat. They drive in silence, both people staring ahead into the night.

A beat.

And another.

Finally:

LAURA
I would have done the same thing.

Nick looks to his wife.

LAURA (CONT'D)
If they had asked me that night, I would have done the same thing.

Laura reaches out, takes Nick's hand. She squeezes. He squeezes back.

FADE THROUGH TO:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - SKYLINE - DAY

Framed by a low, grey sky. Winter drags on.

EXT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

The half dome is lit. Several large holiday wreaths hang on the front face of the building.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

Nick sits in the audience listening to Handel's "Messiah." A CHOIR sings on stage. Laura plays among the orchestra.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - LOBBY - NIGHT

Intermission. Nick moves from the bar with a Jack neat. At the windows, he looks outside. It's begun to snow. Big, beautiful snowflakes.

Nick steps outside. The cold, the wet snow, the liquor-- it all feels wonderful.

A MAN (60's, white, suit and overcoat) exits the lobby. He stands several yards from Nick.

Nick glances at the man. It's one of the men from the photos in the *April Rose*, one of the men who might have been Simon's superior/contact.

Nick is frozen.

MAN

Your fingerprints were on the Town car outside your apartment.

Nick tenses, a sick feeling overcoming him.

NICK

I didn't kill him.

MAN

No, you didn't. Still, we made sure the prints disappeared.

NICK

(pause)

What do you want?

MAN

Simon was out of control. He bent the rules. The rules are what protects us from ourselves.

NICK

You were in charge of Simon?

The man nods yes.

MAN

There's a protocol. Individuals don't decide who dies.

NICK

Who does?

MAN

I have no idea. As I said, there's a protocol, a chain. I don't know any of the people at the top, the people who judge. But I do know that we would never kill someone like Daniel. Or you. Or your wife. That's not what the Organization does.

The man turns to Nick.

MAN (CONT'D)

We take care of men like your student's stepfather, Oscar Jenks.

NICK

(pause)

You killed him?

MAN

He killed himself.

The man takes a hard look at Nick.

MAN (CONT'D)

We believe you'd be an asset. Would you like to help us again?

NICK

No.

MAN

Why not? Sure, things sometimes get complicated. It doesn't mean it's not worthwhile. Right?

NICK

I'm done.

The man looks out at the night.

MAN

Are you, Nick?

The man doesn't wait for Nick's answer. He heads down the steps to the street. He gets in a waiting cab and drives off into the night.

INT. KIMMEL CENTER - NIGHT

Nick returns to his seat. From the orchestra, Laura throws him a small smile. Nick does his best to return it.

The house lights go down. The second half of the performance begins. The heavenly sounds of "The Messiah" fill the hall.

FADE OUT.