

C R I S T O

by  
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Inspired by  
THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO  
By  
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*"Through rock and stone,  
The black wind still moans  
Sweet revenge, sweet revenge  
Without fail."*

--John Prine

INT. TENEMENT BATHROOM - MORNING

For a moment, everything is jittery, unsettling: a trembling hand turns on a faucet, cold water splashes us in the face.

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
Ok... Ok...

WHAM WHAM -- we whirl to the door, someone banging on it.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Zero-hour, Coleman, hurry up!

REVERSE to our hero: COLEMAN, age 13. Too young for this. Wiry frame, haunted eyes, pale buzzcut, wearing an oversize jumpsuit. Looks at his hand... and somehow makes it go still.

COLEMAN  
...ok.

THROWS open the bathroom door, game-face on, strides out--  
INTO A GRUNGY TENEMENT

--where a gang of grimy, hope-to-die TEENAGE BANGERS in khaki jumpsuits pack up cases of POWER TOOLS (which all look *not-exactly-of-our-era.*) Coleman gets razzed as he goes through:

GANG MEMBERS  
Gonna pop that cherry?/Needa' puke,  
it's cool, puked my first time--

A sheep in a wolfpack, Coleman follows them out to...  
AN URBAN SLUM STREET

...where a junked-out FUTURISTIC CAR rumbles by. CCTV DRONE-CAMS hover in tropical smog. A siren screams, as a POLICE AIR-CRUISER swoops overhead, levitation panels (AKA "repulsors") thrumming on its underside. Ladies and gents, we are in...

#### **MIAMI, OPA LOCKA DISTRICT -- A WAYS FROM NOW**

As Coleman and the rest of the "Fuck-The-World-Day" Parade push through the teeming corridors of this American favela, we hear PHENG'S VOICE, oozing sleazy British *joi de vive*.

PHENG (V.O.)  
Gentlemen, long ago, back when this country still had the firepower to scare a bit of act-right into the rest of the world, the idea was: you worked hard, you got rewarded.

The crew brushes aside a TANGLE OF VINES, dripping down into an alleyway from a FOLIAGE CANOPY above; this neighborhood is so neglected, the jungle has started to reclaim it.

PHENG (V.O.)

No matter what you were born as,  
you could become something better.

On they go, past store-front churches where PREACHERS screech in Haitian-Creole, past DOBERMANS barking behind razor-wire, past gimlet-eyed THUGS throwing dice, some with modified robotic limbs -- the garish result of back-alley Robocopping.

PHENG (V.O.)

To that I say: take it out behind the shed, put it down and make a bath-mat out of it, because that dog does not hunt.

Up to a SEMI-TRUCK they march, into the cargo hold, Coleman glancing over his shoulder before the door SLAMS DOWN.

PHENG (V.O.)

You're born what you are, you die what you are... and everything else is just noise.

**WHHHHROOOM** go the truck's repulsors as we CUT TO:

EXT. MIAMI, AERIAL VIEW - MOMENTS LATER

The semi rises past a weed-strewn ABANDONED FREEWAY and heads for the shimmering oasis of SOUTH BEACH. Opulent TOWERS loom and ANTI-GRAV CARS crisscross along sheets of white LASER-LIGHT; air-roads, to keep the traffic from going willy-nilly.

From the sides of buildings, 3-D ADS bloom: hawking "vacation shuttles" to distant planets, contact-lens video cameras, synth-limb cosmetic surgery, while on a massive news-screen, images of food-riots rage. In this future, the rich got richer, the poor got poorer, and the middle class evaporated.

PHENG (V.O.)

Take heart, gentlemen. These people up here had the game rigged 100 years before you got a hand dealt.

The truck joins a stack of cars going into a SKY FUNNEL -- like two massive elevator shafts with sheets of white laser-light for walls, traffic rising toward the heavens as...

INSIDE THE SEMI-TRUCK TRAILER

Pacing past his seated crew: PHENG -- 30, platinum shades to match his teeth, a 22nd-century slickster Fagin. Enough charm to make you think crime not only pays, it might tip as well.

PHENG

But if there's one thing I've learned in my years, it's this: these people up here tend to forget. They forget that people lower on the ladder than them still exist. They forget that those who cook their meals and clean their homes and raise their spoiled spawn all come from somewhere.

A crew member stuffs a rag into a LARGE GLASS JUG full of amber fluid and passes it down the row of his cohorts...

PHENG

They forget that when they *go on vacation*, for example, their security guards might be conveniently looking the other way.

The Molotov cocktail ends up in Coleman's sweaty hands.

PHENG

They forget that people like us can still get to them.

Pheng motions him up, Coleman follows to the loading door as it's HAULED OPEN. Sunlight blazes in, Coleman gazes out...

PHENG

(hand on his shoulder)  
Today, we make them remember.

We PULL OUT AND AWAY to reveal...

AN AIRBORNE SUBURBIA

...hovering a mile above the pollution line. Estates the size of city blocks, powered by lev-panels. A gated community in the sky, what Pandora might look like if the bad guys won.

Each unit encased in what looks like a massive translucent bubble, which clouds pass like water around a rock; "security domes." We WHOOSH through one, down to the lush grounds of...

EXT. MCCORMICK ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

...the MCCORMICK ESTATE: this one is bigger than the others, housing several Italian villa-style masterpieces separated by woodland glades. We push down towards--

THE SECURITY UNIT

--a simple guard shack outside the first mansion. Two guards (CLEAN CUT and SKETCHY) play cards, occasionally glancing at the monitors. Sketchy throws a full house, Clean Cut moans--

CLEAN CUT  
That is straight-up *highway robbery*-

VROOM! A big shadow passes over the shack. Freaked, the guards turn to the door, throw it open, looking up to see a gallon-jug Molotov cocktail SLAMMING into the dome above, sending flaming gasoline trailing down the invisible slope--

SKETCHY  
Jesus, whatthe-- they trying to  
*burn down the dome?*

CLEAN CUT  
Nope.

Sketchy turns to see Clean Cut aiming his REVOLVER at him.

CLEAN CUT  
...it's a signal.

BLAM! Clean Cut blows Sketchy away, and without a wasted movement, he taps a code into a keyboard, as outside--

EXT. MCCORMICK ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

--the dome FLICKERS and VANISHES, sending fiery Molotov fluid raining as the TRUCK ROARS IN LOW. Paratrooper-style, the crew LEAPS in pairs from the semi as it swoops over the lawn.

Coleman fights vertigo, LAUNCHES OUT, stumbles hard while others hit the ground running. Behind, Pheng hops out of the truck, joined by Clean Cut, leading them to the front door--

CLEAN CUT  
--you got three minutes before the emergency seal goes up, after that you're permanent residents. And don't touch any safes, 'less you want the calvary called in early.

PHENG  
Bravo, ten percent well earned.

Clean Cut leans into the security eye-scanner. CLICK! Locks retract. WHIR-POP! Clean Cut's felled by a shot from Pheng's chunky HOMEMADE MAG-PISTOL (uses magnets, not gunpowder, to fire bullets). Coleman forces himself not to react.

PHENG  
Look who just saved us ten percent.

Coleman eyes the dead guard before he's PULLED INTO--

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION - CONTINUOUS

THE ROBBERY: like a documentarian on bathtub speed, we follow feral young thieves looting everything valuable in sight. We note framed magazine covers on walls: futuristic versions of *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Car and Driver*, touting the advancements of McCormick Industries. One features CEO GREGOR MCCORMICK next to an anti-grav car: "We were promised flight. He delivered."

PHENG  
Two minutes, thirty seconds!

CRASH! A museum-style glass case gets SMASHED OPEN and a gleaming ANTIQUE CAR ENGINE gets carried out, Coleman eyeing the apparatus with something that seems almost like interest--

PHENG  
 Go north, young man.

Pheng sends him hustling up the stairs and into--

THE UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

--where Coleman empties out the bedside table; finds a HANDGUN inside a velvet-lined box. Bags it, as--

BRAIDS (O.S.)  
 Here, here, take this shit--

A KID WITH BRAIDS bursts by, hands him an x-ray scanner. Coleman follows him up onto the bed, they scan the walls: seeing piping, insulation... and a SMALL HIDDEN COMPARTMENT.

BRAIDS  
 Bingo.

Braids YANKS a dime-thin TV away, revealing the SAFE hidden behind it -- just as Pheng calls from the doorway:

PHENG  
 Don't touch, it'll set off the back-up alarm.  
 (to Coleman)  
 You, closet, now. You, downstairs--

As Braids hurriedly follows Pheng out with the TV, Coleman lunges for the teak doors of the--

WALK-IN CLOSET

--throws them open, sees a neatly hung array of DESIGNER BUSINESS SUITS, rows of ITALIAN SHOES. WHAM -- bagged.

PHENG (O.S.)  
Two minutes!

WHOOSH! Coleman grabs an armful of suits, bags them. Grabs the next few... and STOPS. Because there's a live animal in the closet. A collie, hind quarters sticking out under rows of suits. What the hell? Coleman pushes them aside to see--

--the dog's being clutched by a 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

This is ELISE. Sunny, adorable, and right now, utterly terrified, squeezing the dog's jaws shut to keep it quiet. Time freezes as she and Coleman stare at each other.

ELISE  
(a trembling whisper)  
...please.

Coleman gives a glance to the door... then looks back to her fear-stricken face, mind whirring, as we SMASH TO:

OUT IN THE HALLWAY

PHENG  
ONE MINUTE! ALL OF YOU OUT, NOW!

Stragglers slip-streaming past him, Pheng storms into... THE BEDROOM, where Coleman's got the closet door shut and is already gathering his loot-bags, turmoil internalized.

PHENG  
Chop-chop, train's leaving.

Pheng hustles the kid out, when... there's an ANIMAL WHIMPER.

Pheng pauses. Turns. HAULS OPEN the closet, looks in...

PHENG  
...My God, Coleman.  
(turns, smiling)  
You almost left a *goldmine* sitting in here. Amazing what parents will pay once you've sent them a few of their kid's fingers. C'mere, sweetie-

Pheng lunges to grab her, she scrambles back, he's almost got her when... CLICK-CLICK!

Pheng pauses. Turns to see Coleman, aiming the revolver he stole from the drawer, trying to keep his hand steady.

PHENG  
Oh, now you decide you don't have the stomach for this? Put that damn thing down before I feed you to the-

BLAM! Coleman fires a round straight into the wall-safe, setting off its alarm with an ear-splitting RIIINNNNGGGGG! The sound fills the house, shouts rise from downstairs--

BAM! Pheng knocks the gun out of his hand and DECKS HIM into the wall, just as SIRENS RISE IN THE DISTANCE. Pheng gives him a smile as he makes a fast exit...

PHENG  
Give my regards to the police.

Coleman, reeling, struggles to find his feet as we CUT TO:

EXT. MCCORMICK MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Work-boots pound the grass as the remaining crew breaks for the semi, Pheng bringing up the back, not even bothering to shut the door as the truck's repulsors CRESCENDO, while--

COLEMAN

--rushes to the window as the TRUCK RISES outside, leaving him behind. Sirens getting closer, he BOLTS FOR THE DOOR... then DARTS back into frame a beat later. Facing the girl. Like there's something he *has to tell her*. But all he has is:

COLEMAN  
Sorry about your house.

ELISE  
It's not my house, I'm just taking care of the pets.

She's scared of him. He doesn't want her to be. SIRENS closer-

COLEMAN  
What's your name?

ELISE  
Elise.

The howling sirens are practically right on top of them.

COLEMAN  
...have a good life, Elise.

ELISE  
You too.

In a better world, they could've been something one day. In this one, Coleman turns to flee as we SMASH TO:

EXT. MCCORMICK MANSION, GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

CRASH! A paperweight SHATTERS a sliding glass door, Coleman runs through, into the gardens surrounding the mansion, as--

--BODY-ARMORED COPS drop from the hovering cars on QUICK-DRAWS, sprinting, TASER-DARTS flying from their rifles as--

--Coleman THROWS HIMSELF up onto the adobe wall surrounding the property and RUNS ALONG THE EDGE OF THE ESTATE, one step from a mile-deep drop into the city, searching for a way out--

--and sees, 25 feet below, a brick-shaped DELIVERY VEHICLE heading for the "flight path" of cars descending to earth -- about to pass right under him. If he times this *just right*...

COPS (O.S.)  
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE! /HANDS UP!--

He has two options: A -- arrest, B -- suicide. But to a gang kid from the favelas, they're the same thing. 2 seconds until the cops pounce, Coleman steels himself, heart in his throat--

AND JUMPS.

FALLING. ARMS SPIRALING. WIND WHISPERING.

**KA-BAM!** He slams into the roof of the cube-truck's container, but his momentum's too strong and he's sent ROLLING--

STRAIGHT OFF THE BACK OF THE VEHICLE

--and grabs hold of METAL HANDLES ON THE REAR SHIPPING DOORS. SLAMS into the paneling, leaving him dangling as--

THUNK! The handles SNAP DOWN and the doors SWING OPEN, Coleman clings to the door as it arcs out from the truck, opposing air-traffic BLURS PAST, wind pulls hard at him--

--HIS HANDS SLIP FREE.

And **CRASH!** His fall is stopped cold... having just landed on the HOOD of A COP AIR-CRUISER. As he dazedly looks around...

COLEMAN  
...shit.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A blank police interrogation room. Coleman sits at the steel table, shackled. It's clear that the cops have not been gentle with him. There's a CLANG and...

PERKINS  
...fine, don't listen, have at it--

TWO MEN walk in: OFFICER PERKINS, fat, hatchet-faced, tissue stuffed into his busted nose, leading GREGOR MCCORMICK -- the guy from the magazine cover, 40's, slyly intelligent, seersucker suit, peering down at Coleman like he's a menu...

GREGOR  
So you're the reason I had to come back from Barbados early.  
(MORE)

GREGOR (CONT'D)  
(examines his face)  
Looks like someone else had a rough  
day too, huh?

COLEMAN  
Should see the other guy.

PERKINS  
(makes to grab him)  
Son of a bitch--

GREGOR  
Mind giving me a minute with our  
handcuffed, underage suspect here,  
Officer Perkins?

That straightens Perkins out. Gives Coleman a malevolent  
wave, *see ya soon fucko*, and he exits. As Gregor sits down...

COLEMAN  
Cool -- your very own policeman.

GREGOR  
Not bad, huh? Comes standard when  
you join the rich-guy club.

Coleman plays it quiet, cagey. He does this around adults,  
authorities, anyone with money, power, whatever he never had.

GREGOR  
I suppose I should be thanking you  
guys for not getting into the  
garage. Imagine the headline: *Top  
Auto Manufacturer Loses Entire Car  
Collection To Gang Of 13-Year-Olds.*

COLEMAN  
Couldn't have got all of 'em.  
(off his look)  
The PX-22, maybe. Thing's way too  
easy to hotwire.

GREGOR  
You've hotwired a PX-22?  
(Coleman shrugs)  
There's about ten guys in the world  
that could circumvent the security  
system on that thing. I'd know,  
they're all working for me.

COLEMAN  
They notice the key-scanner can't  
tell between a thumb and a thumb-  
print on a sheet of cellophane?

Gregor takes that in, impressed and hiding it. Then...

GREGOR

Well, I hope you're better at  
stealing cars than you are at  
robbing houses, 'cause from my  
limited knowledge of your trade,  
purposefully triggering the alarm  
seems like kind of a rookie move.

That gets Coleman's attention.

COLEMAN

I didn't--

GREGOR

Neighbor says you did. Says you  
saved her life.

(beat)

I'm curious: some feral little  
bastard from the *favelas* robs a  
house, then risks his ass to save a  
witness... make any sense to you?

Coleman just gives him that 100-yard stare. Gregor gets up...

GREGOR

Been nice talking to you, Coleman.  
Just wanted to tell you face to  
face that I'm not pressing charges.

Hearing this, Coleman's facade disintegrates.

COLEMAN

...you aren't?

GREGOR

Stop sounding disappointed, you're  
going back where you came from--

COLEMAN

I can't.

(sputters it out)

After today, I go back there, I'm  
gonna get...

Suddenly, Gregor gets it. And for the first time, he sees  
what Coleman is: a scared kid, in over his head. Finally...

GREGOR

You know about cars.

(off his nod)

Know anything about fixing them?

Off Coleman, wondering where this is going, we CUT TO:

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION, GARAGE - DAY

A door rises, spills light across a row of gleaming CLASSIC CARS. Gregor leads Coleman into the garage at the McCormick Estate, toward a rusty, once-beautiful Porsche Spyder.

GREGOR

My wife spotted her in a scrap yard, next thing I knew she was having it unloaded into our garage. That's the kinda woman she was.

Coleman glances at him, Gregor moves the conversation on.

GREGOR

You help fix this thing, you work hard, and you don't do anything colossally stupid, you earn yourself a month. You don't live up to your end of the bargain, I send you back to the favelas wearing a pink bow on your head. Sound fair?

Coleman's about to respond, when--

MAX (O.S.)

Don't make any deals with this guy, he'll screw you every time.

They turn to see Gregor's son MAX MCCORMICK at the sunlit entrance -- 15, hip, spoiled, likable. He's inherited his dad's wit, but where Gregor's springs from self-confidence, Max's reads as the overcompensation of an underloved kid.

MAX

I seem to remember a promise about us going sailing on my birthday?

GREGOR

And I seem to remember you almost burning down the sun-room about a week beforehand. How peculiar...

(motions)

Coleman, Max, Max, Coleman. Gonna be helping with the Porsche.

Max examines Coleman for a beat, like he's doing an equation in his head. Then, quick as a magic trick--

MAX

Nice to meet you, Coleman. C'mon...

## EXT. MCCORMICK ESTATE - DAY

A prince in his domain, Max leads Coleman through the lush grounds of the estate, WORKERS using laser-blade tools to trim hedges of the courtyard around them.

MAX

...ok, so, courtyard, has trees and shit in it, the guy trimming the hedge is either Vincente or Vincenzo, I get them mixed up. Out here's the employees quarters--

Tossing a ball to the dog we saw earlier in the closet, Max leads him up to the perimeter grounds where there's a TWO STORY GUESTHOUSE. Coleman takes it in when, off-handedly...

MAX

Real step up from the favelas, huh?

Coleman looks to him, on guard now; this guy has his number.

MAX

Relax. My mom always told me to give everyone the benefit of the doubt til they prove you wrong.

(mischievous)

'Course, if you do that, I will be forced to end you.

COLEMAN

Fair enough.

Max smiles a little bit. Ditto Coleman. They could get along. For now. As Max turns and heads back for the house...

MAX

Welcome to the 'burbs.

## EXT. MCCORMICK ESTATE, LAWN - NIGHT

WHACK! Gregor, on the moonlit lawn of his estate, swings his 9-iron and sends a golf ball for a long drive into the night.

MAX (O.S.)

Y'know, I was thinking about that time when I was 10 and I found that terrier wandering by our old place.

Gregor turns to see Max approaching.

MAX

I wanted to keep it for a pet. Remember what you told me?

GREGOR  
 ... "We don't take in strays."

MAX  
 How long's he staying?

GREGOR  
 Depends on him.  
 (off his silence)  
 You worried about something, kiddo?

Max is worried about something... but he doesn't voice it.

MAX  
 Naw, it's cool. Guess I'll have  
 someone to go running with now.

GREGOR  
 That's m'boy.  
 (tosses him a club)  
 And thus we begin today's round of  
 humiliating your aged father...

Clear that these night games are a long-standing tradition  
 between these two. As Max tees up, we PULL BACK...

INT. MCCORMICK ESTATE, EMPLOYEE'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

...into a window to see Coleman, in his sparse new room in  
 the EMPLOYEE'S QUARTERS. Gazing at the father and son on the  
 moonlit lawn. Max sends a drive into the security dome, faint  
 ripples echo in its wake. Gregor slaps his back.

Coleman watches them for a long beat. Then he lays back down,  
 an unfamiliar ache in his heart, as his eyes flutter and we--

INT. MCCORMICK ESTATE, EMPLOYEE'S QUARTERS - MORNING

MATCH TO Coleman's eyes opening -- older now: 20's, cleaned  
 up, tight haircut, still rail-thin and tinged with rogueish  
 charisma. With the discipline of a man determined to not blow  
 his chance, he's out of bed before his alarm goes.

CUT TO THE EMPLOYEE DINING ROOM

His routine: studies over breakfast in the empty dining hall.  
 No one else is awake. Title of the textbook he's got open:  
 MECHANICAL ENGINEERING. He's making notes while sketching out  
 the DIAGRAM SCHEMATICS of some sleek, futuristic vehicle.

CUT TO THE GARAGE

Coleman, hands grease-stained, labors on Gregor's collection  
 of cars.

Nearby, we see the old Porsche Spyder is now fit for a photo-op. As Coleman works, he wears earbuds and a wireless device, playing an audiobook: *The Odyssey...* in Latin.

AUDIOBOOK (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)  
*...for shame, how the mortals put  
 the blame on us gods, for it is  
 they, rather, who by their own  
 recklessness, win sorrow...*

CUT TO THE BACK DECK OF THE HOUSE

...where Coleman, done with his morning duties and changed into workout gear, jogs up the steps past Gregor -- now going a little gray, enjoying a cup of French-press and a digi-hologram newspaper. A familiar ease has developed here.

GREGOR  
 Tell me you didn't wake up at five  
 in the morning again.

COLEMAN  
 Early bird gets the worm--

GREGOR  
 --but the second mouse gets the  
 cheese. Siddown, have some coffee.

COLEMAN  
 Love to, but I promised Max I'd get  
 his ass out of bed.

GREGOR  
 Good luck with that.

CUT TO MAX'S BEDROOM

Coleman strides into a messy room to wake up a hungover Max.

COLEMAN (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)  
*Onward, Athenian, destiny awaits--*

MAX  
 Do not start talking Latin at me--

WHOOSH! Coleman opens the blinds, sunlight spills in.

MAX  
 (groans, sing-songy)  
 I'm gonna have you mur-dered...

CUT TO THE GLADES SURROUNDING THE ESTATE

Coleman and Max go for their AM run. Max has grown up: hazy-eyed, handsome, insouciant charm. Despite his hangover, he's sprinting to outrun his opponent. For Coleman, it's friendly competition; for Max, deep down, it's not-so-friendly.

MAX

That all you got? Damn, I oughtta  
just chop my legs off--

As Coleman BOLTS AHEAD, Max tackles him. A horseplay brawl,  
Max taunting a domesticated tiger to see if it'll bite.

MAX

Come on, come on, what're you gonna  
do? Gonna give me that ass-beating  
I so richly deserve?

Max SMACKS HIM in the mouth. WHAM! Coleman overpowers him and  
rolls him over, pinning him, fist REARING BACK. Then...

COLEMAN

Think I'm really gonna hit you on  
your graduation day?

They bust up cackling, Coleman helps him up to his feet and  
they run on, Max again sprinting to outrun him as we CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

A graduation reception in a lush college campus. In the sky,  
the same way we see planes floating along, SPACE SHUTTLES  
drift skyward. In the courtyard, Gregor stands with Max,  
Coleman and a few FRIENDS/BUSINESS ASSOCIATES (including BOB,  
a 50's silver-haired hard-ass.) Champagne flutes raised:

GREGOR

To Max: who, despite the ever-  
present specter of academic  
probation, and engaging in enough  
frat-debauchery to kill several  
marines, still somehow graduated...

It gets a laugh from the group. Max laughs too, but if his  
thoughts were subtitled, they'd say "Fuck You." But he lets  
it go as Gregor delivers the money-line:

GREGOR

...and who, this time next week,  
will become the youngest member of  
my R&D team.

(over their applause)  
Bob, I trust you'll keep him from  
reducing the lab to a pile of  
rubble.

BOB

Got my eye on this one.

Bob gives the kid a finger-gun, Max shoots him one back.

GREGOR

(turns)

And while we're on it, here's to  
Coleman -- who'll be wearing the  
ol' wizard sleeves soon enough.  
Looks like he's finishing a four-  
year program in three.

This gets a few "oohs" from the party. Coleman looks a bit  
embarrassed; Max looks like he's swallowed a razor blade.

GREGOR

(extends his glass)

To Max and Coleman. Your futures.

CLINK! The group sips, gets to talking. To Coleman, "joking":

MAX

Always gotta be the bride at the  
wedding and the corpse at the  
funeral, huh?

Coleman glances at him, not knowing what he means, when--

ELISE (O.S.)

What the hell is he doing here?

They turn to see ELISE DEMARCO -- the girl Coleman saved, now  
all grown up, in a flattering summer dress, spunky, whip-  
smart, sexy as hell. The sight of her has a visible effect on  
both the guys. Smirking at Coleman as she approaches.

ELISE

Shouldn't you be out causing  
mayhem, stealing cars, breaking  
into houses, that kind of thing?

COLEMAN

Hey, breaking into houses was a  
lucrative business. I could've got  
at least thirty bucks for this girl  
I found in a closet one time.

She CRACKS UP, dazzling smile, these two love busting each  
other's chops. They kiss, for a beat -- and by the way Max  
stands there, trying not to watch, we can tell: he's jealous.

MAX

Elise, for the record, I would've  
paid at least a hundred for you.

ELISE

'Course you would've, you cheap  
bastard, c'mere, congrats...  
(bear-hugs him)

Let me get a picture of you two  
handsome devils.

Elise lifts a thin glass camera, aims it at them, frames a PHOTO of Max and Coleman -- Coleman's arm on Max's shoulder, Max's smile hiding distant thunder. Off the CLICK we CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS, COURTYARD - DAY

A STRING QUARTET plays on the courtyard stage, couples sway on the grass dance floor. Coleman and Elise, cheek to cheek:

ELISE

Question: since you're about to become an engineer, do you get to wear one of those old-timey hats?

COLEMAN

That's actually all I'm gonna wear.

ELISE

Somehow, I think that will not cause great joy in the land.

COLEMAN

Says you.

ELISE

(voice lowers, sensual)  
...by the way, I got a little pre-grad present for you, should come over later and see it.

COLEMAN

...is it an old-timey hat?

Elise snorts back a laugh as we CUT TO:

THE COURTYARD BAR

...where Max, having just slugged his third drink, motions for another -- never taking his eyes off Elise and Coleman.

PICKNER (O.S.)

Maximus!

JEFF PICKNER, one of Max's fratty pals, oozes up next to him.

PICKNER

It's all coming together, bro. I'm about to kick ass at my dad's bank, you're about to kick ass at McCormick Industries--

MAX

Yes, asses everywhere are cowering in fear.

It's only then Pickner notices where Max is looking...

PICKNER

Dude. I don't get it. Chick's surrounded by guys who'll be owning the world in ten years and she's hooking up with, like, the janitor.

Max polishes off his drink, gives a shrug.

MAX

We live in fascinating times.

Pickner chuckles, but from the look in Max's eye, we can tell his feelings run deeper about the issue.

EXT. MCCORMICK MANSION - NIGHT

That night at the McCormick estate. Coleman leaves the garage and makes for the employee quarters, alone in the dark, when--

HIGH-BEAMS BLAST ON, Coleman WHIRLS to see a sporty burgundy M.I. LYNX speeding down the driveway toward him.

He DODGES, the car follows, SKIDS to a sideways stop--

MAX

Like the graduation present?

Max is at the wheel, fresh from the party. Coleman wipes his brow, approaches the car, digging it:

COLEMAN

Thanks, really, you shouldn't have--

MAX

Ha ha, funny--

COLEMAN

I'm serious, I'm gonna have to steal this. I can't help it, my childhood instincts are kicking in--

MAX

--hop in, let's take her out.  
(off his hesitation)

You'll work on 'em, but you won't give yourself the joy of riding in one? You that much of a boyscout?

A beat as Coleman thinks. Max smiles, knowing he's got him.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MIAMI - NIGHT

The boys WHIP into the city like a blow-dart through Amazon foliage. Slaloming by rickshaws and under HOVER-TRAINS.

MAX

You, grease monkey of all grease  
monkeys, should dig how she steers--

COLEMAN

(SKIDDING through a turn)  
Whoah, whoah--

MAX

Doesn't do anti-grav, but let's  
face it, anti-grav's kinda trashy--

Coleman looks over to see Max taking a long pull off a FLASK.

COLEMAN

The hell are you--

WHAM! Max slams the gas, jerking Coleman back in his seat as they ROAR onto a FREEWAY RAMP, past a sign marked **CLOSED**. The road beyond them blocked by a chain-link gate.

COLEMAN

*Holy shit--*

CRASH! They PLOW THROUGH THE GATE and speed up onto...

THE ABANDONED FREEWAY: a concrete strip of crater-sized potholes, dead streetlights, foliage-choked cracks. Max weaves PAST HUNKS OF DEBRIS and FALLEN SIGNS--

MAX

(off Coleman's fear)  
C'mon Coleman, stop freaking out,  
you're supposed to be the *man*! You  
finished a 4-year program in *three*!  
Why do you look so scared?--

COLEMAN

--that what this is? You pissed off  
that your dad called me out--

MAX

Who said I was pissed off?

COLEMAN

Fine-- *what do you want?*

MAX

I want you to beg my forgiveness.  
Can you do that, Coleman?

Max looks him, pleasant smile, "patient", just as a REBAR SPIKE sticking out of rubble pile emerges ahead of them and--

KA-CHUNK! The spike RIPS OUT A TIRE, throws the vehicle into a nauseating SPIN, it clips the median, door imploding and CRUSHING MAX'S ARM, airbags deploying, car rolling over the barrier and toward the street as we SMASH TO:

**NEWS FOOTAGE OF THE CRASH:**

Coleman, battered and bloody, pulling Max away from the car as flames rise up within it, rubberneckers gathering around to watch, as a handsome NEWSCASTER continues:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)  
--in recovery after his accident  
last week, police say the crash  
resulted from a faulty navigation  
system in the prototype vehicle--

Coleman, cuts and bruises healing, shakes his head as he passes the TV, revealing we're in...

**THE LOBBY OF A HOSPITAL**

...Gregor, quieter than normal, strides down the gleaming hall with him, past NURSES filling out charts on digi-tablets. We note the PACKAGE Coleman carries as we CUT TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL, PHYSICAL THERAPY WING - DAY**

A PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM, where Max (seen in profile, wounds bandaged) talks with PERKINS -- the cop from earlier, looking even fatter and scummier, his nose still slightly crooked from when Coleman broke it all those years ago.

PERKINS  
--look, Max, this ain't exactly  
proving easy to keep under wraps--

MAX  
If it was easy, I wouldn't be  
paying you. Just stay on message--  
(sees he's got visitors)  
You made it.

As Gregor and Coleman enter, Perkins quickly tucks a THICK-STUFFED ENVELOPE into his jacket as he turns, "innocent"--

PERKINS  
Mr. McCormick. Thought I'd drop in,  
see how the patient's doing--

GREGOR  
Get the hell outta here, Perkins.

Perkins makes for the exit, gives Coleman a look-of-death.

COLEMAN  
Still got your nose out of joint,  
officer?

PERKINS  
That's "detective" now, shithead.

SLAM! Perkins shuts the door behind him.

MAX  
I think he missed you.

Coleman lifts his gift out of the package -- it's a FRAMED  
PHOTO: Max and Coleman at the graduation, all smiles.

COLEMAN  
Thought it'd class up the joint.

Max, smirking, takes it from him as we reveal his left arm is gone -- replaced with a ROBO-PROSTHETIC. Attached at the shoulder, scar tissue giving way to artificial flesh and exposed titanium, mini-hydraulics, whirring gears, etc.

MAX  
Great, now I gotta spend all day  
looking at your ugly mug--

GREGOR  
Why'd you lie to me, Max?

Gregor just shut down the room with that. Max feels it out...

MAX  
I don't know what you're--

GREGOR  
You were drunk. Night of the crash.

Max glances at Coleman. Storm clouds. Gregor sees it.

GREGOR  
He didn't say shit. Drone-cams  
picked up a nice shot of you  
chugging brandy at a stoplight.

MAX  
Pop, it's ok, I handled it--

GREGOR  
I don't care how much cash you  
throw into Perkins' yacht-fund, you  
coulda' killed people last week,  
I'm not letting you sweep that away-

MAX  
So what, huh? This gonna be news?

GREGOR  
It already is.

MAX  
How am I supposed to go to work for  
you with that all over TV?

There's dead silence, before Max puts it together--

MAX  
You're not giving me the job.  
(Gregor shakes his head)  
What, because I messed up?

GREGOR  
Because you drove drunk. Because  
you barely graduated. Because you  
treat the world like it's a gift-  
bag. Because of who you are, Max.  
And you're not the guy for this--

MAX  
That's bullshit--

CRASH! Max swings his prosthetic arm across the bedside  
table, sweeping its contents onto the floor. The picture  
Coleman gave him CRACKS. Everything goes quiet. Then...

GREGOR  
I'll send a driver over tomorrow.

With that, Gregor exits. Coleman and Max are left alone.

MAX  
(seething)  
Go.

INT. HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Shaken, Coleman exits. Across the hall by the elevator--

GREGOR  
My father once told me "Beware the  
life bereft of consequence." Took  
me a while to learn that, it'll  
take Max time too.

COLEMAN  
That's a helluva teaching method.

GREGOR  
I didn't take the job away because  
I was angry at him, Coleman.  
(focuses on him)  
I did it because I found a better  
candidate.

A loaded pause. Coleman looks at him cautiously.

GREGOR  
I've seen the diagrams you work on.  
Interesting stuff--

COLEMAN  
You've been looking at my--

GREGOR  
Only for the past four years.  
(off his gobsmacked stare)  
Look: this job requires maturity, a  
work ethic, and genuine passion for  
what we're building. And no matter  
how much I want that to be my son,  
he's not there yet.

COLEMAN  
Due respect, this is insane.  
There's no way I'm qualified, I  
went to *night school*--

GREGOR  
I know where you went. Know where I  
went? Night school. Turned out ok.

Coleman keeps his distance. Struggling with his choice.

COLEMAN  
...what about Max?

GREGOR  
Let me worry about him. And no  
matter what you decide, keep it to  
yourself for the time being, I  
don't want this going wide yet.  
That includes with Elise.  
(off his silence)  
Take a day to think about it.

As Coleman ponders, we PULL BACK into Max's room: Max stands, his back to the door, listening. Head low, trembling in his hospital gown, eyes squeezed shut in rage.

INT. ELISE'S LOFT - EVENING

A doorbell CHIMES in a shabby-chic artist's loft. Elise puts down her paintbrush and makes for the door to reveal Coleman--

ELISE  
Well if it isn't the Terror of the  
410 Freeway--

COLEMAN  
Hold still.

He reaches up... and fastens a GOLD LOCKET NECKLACE around her neck. She looks at it, stunned.

ELISE  
You can't afford this--

COLEMAN  
I'll be able to.  
(before she can speak)  
Can't tell you what the deal is,  
not yet. But it's good news.

Taking the hint, she pulls him in to kiss him as we CUT TO:

INT. ELISE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Elise -- sweaty, sated, unclothed -- flops down next to Coleman on the bed. In her windows, the sprawling city glitters, distant anti-grav cars drifting like fireflies. Draping an arm over him, she quotes "The Odyssey":

ELISE (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)  
You are an *indurate man*, *Odysseus*.  
Your limbs never wear out...

COLEMAN (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)  
(rolls over)  
...you must be made all of iron,  
when you will not let your  
companions find sleep--

ELISE  
Someone's been doing his homework.

COLEMAN  
Audio version, at least--

ELISE  
*Lame--*

COLEMAN  
--your favorite book's a thousand  
years old and I'm lame?

Grinning, she walks her fingers up his chest.

COLEMAN  
When you gonna finish the Ravenwood  
Cliffs?

He's pointing across the room at a half-finished PAINTING on an easel: a muted-color landscape, a weathered cabin perched atop cliffs overlooking the ocean, hidden in trees.

ELISE

I was waiting for you to graduate  
and get some big, mysterious job  
you can't tell me about, then  
charge you double for it.

He chuckles, but his eyes are focused out the windows, where  
FAINT FIREWORKS CRACKLE over the far-off favelas.

COLEMAN

When I was about 10, me and some  
friends found a bunch of fireworks  
over in the Chinese quarter.

ELISE

Oh, you "found" them?

COLEMAN

Yeah, we found 'em. In a shipping  
container. That we broke into.

(off her laugh)

Anyway, we went up to the roof of  
our building, started lighting 'em  
up. Thought it'd piss people off,  
but the whole neighborhood came  
out. We had 4th of July in January.

ELISE

(a nod)

Good day.

COLEMAN

My best. For a while.

ELISE

(after a beat)

...my best day? If I had to pick?  
Last week, this Italian male model  
came in for my nude-drawing class,  
it was, like, life-changing--

COLEMAN

(stands)

Where is he, I must fight him--

ELISE

Yes, go, defend my honor--

Cracking up, he lets her pull him back in, and they kiss.  
More fireworks rise and twinkle dimly in the hazy distance.

ELISE

I don't know what my best day is.  
But I have an idea of what my best  
years are gonna be.

He nods, ditto, and as their lips meet again, we CUT TO:

## EXT. MCCORMICK MANSION, LAWN - MORNING

In the light of Sunday morning, Gregor hits golf balls on the lawn. Glances over to see Coleman, in his AM routine, jogging out of the woods surrounding the mansion.

GREGOR

That looks like the stride of a man  
who's made a decision--

COLEMAN

I wanna work for you.  
(beat)

But I'm not gonna take something  
that was supposed to go to Max.

GREGOR

The idea that things are "supposed  
to go to Max" is Max's problem.

COLEMAN

Is he a little entitled? Yeah. But  
his heart's in the right place. And  
you're not gonna teach him anything  
getting his arm ripped off hasn't.

(off his look)  
It's a big company, there's gotta  
be room for both of us.

Gregor silently appraises him a beat... and we see something  
like respect settling into his gaze. Finally:

GREGOR

Maybe you're right. Let's figure it  
out, grab a club.

As Coleman makes his way over, we CUT TO:

## INSIDE THE HOUSE

...where Max, fresh from the hospital, walks in as his DRIVER  
unloads his bag from the car. Flexes a hand as he goes, his  
synth-arm almost identical to his real one. Calling out:

MAX

Dad?

No answer. Then he hears a familiar CRACK. Walks fast to a  
window, looks TO THE LAWN... where his dad and Coleman are  
hitting golf balls into the trees. Talking, friendly.

Staring at this final insult, Max lets out a low breath. A  
long-gestating decision solidifies in his brain. And as the  
room's ambient noise builds to a horrible hiss, we CUT TO:

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION, STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WHOOSH! Down in the gloomy storage room of the McCormick Mansion, amidst the rows of crates and file cabinets, Max HAULS OPEN a drawer and dumps its contents onto the floor.

Feverishly sifts through the papers, searches, searches, gets a papercut, barely notices, until... he finds THE FILE he's after. Throws it open, reads it, eyes lit, yes, yes, yes...

PERKINS (PRE-LAP)  
Let's see here: got paroled three weeks ago after a a seven-year bid for murder, grand theft and B&E...

EXT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Det. Perkins exits the precinct with Max, going over a file.

PERKINS  
...priors of aggravated assault, trafficking... wanna tell me why you wanna find this winner so bad?

No answer as we pan down to the file: PHENG'S MUG-SHOT.

INT. PHENG'S PAD - EVENING

The past 9 years have not been kind to Pheng: he's still got that same sleazy elegance, but he's now weathered, broken down, living in a favela hovel. Hums along with "Pachelbel's Cannon" as he settles in for a post-dinner bath...

PHENG  
Dummm dah dah dah dummm...

Taking a DROPPER of Push, he drips the liquid narcotic into his eyes as WHAM! His door gets KICKED IN by Perkins.

PHENG  
Perkins! Lovely. If you're here to shake me down for old times sake, afraid all you'll find is a toaster and some used hypodermic needles.  
(as Max enters)  
Good, your partner's here. Teaching him the fine art of taking bribes?

MAX  
We're not here for a bribe, Pheng.

PHENG  
God, a first. Someone take a photo.

Pheng's mood shifts as Max takes a hit off his eyedropper.

PHENG

So... I'll assume you're *not* a cop?

MAX

If I was, I'd charge you with  
 "Possession of Push Cut With So  
 Much Windex I Don't Know Whether To  
 Get High Or Clean My House."

PHENG

So you're more of a *connoisseur*--

MAX

I'm a guy with an offer.  
 (off his look)  
 Remember a skinny little bastard  
 who used to work for you? Got you  
 seven years on some prison planet?

PHENG

(a slow nod)  
 ...not a day goes by.

Max grins, leans in to make his deal as we CUT TO:

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION, KITCHEN - NIGHT

OPERA plays as we float through the McCormick's kitchen,  
 where a SERVANT preps cocktails. As she goes into the pantry--

--MAX slips into frame, emptying the contents of TWIN EYE-DROPPERS INTO EACH DRINK, exits before the servant reemerges.

IN THE HALLWAY

We follow Max down the corridor, past the DEN, where Gregor talks with Coleman, the servant coming out carrying their drinks. Max gives them a final glance... and keeps walking.

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION, GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

A car door SHUTS and Max slumps down in the driver's seat.

MAX

...they're good to go.

That's all he says. Pheng climbs out of the backseat as Max drives off to his alibi. As Pheng pulls on a GAS-MASK...

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION, DEN - SAME

OPERA BLARES as the half-drunk cocktail sweats in Coleman's hand as Gregor LAUGHS FREAKISHLY HARD at a joke he's just made. Coleman's pale now, pupils wide as--

OUTSIDE: Pheng glides through a door, grooves down a hall as--

IN THE DEN: Coleman, forehead slick, COLLAPSES. Through his POV, Gregor tries to shake us out of it--

--and as the MUSIC SWELLS, a blurry MASKED FIGURE appears behind Gregor and aims a HANDMADE GUN at his skull...

COLEMAN

...no...

From OUTSIDE THE HOUSE, we hear a **POP! POP! POP!**

SMASH TO BLACKNESS.

TABLOID ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Just this week, the blood-soaked  
saga of Edward Coleman...

TV NEWS FOOTAGE: the BLOOD-SPATTERED MURDER SCENE, Gregor McCormick getting auto-sealed into a body bag, beat-up Coleman being hurled into a cop car amidst a swarm of police.

TABLOID ANNOUNCER  
...ended with a guilty verdict.

Coleman in court, being sentenced, as the announcer goes on:

TABLOID ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
We caught up with Max McCormick,  
longtime friend of the convicted--

Max, in a tasteful suit, addresses a reporter on camera:

MAX  
--I do not believe, for one  
instant, that he committed these--

REPORTER  
--he claims to have no memory of  
the night, yet he was found at the  
scene with a gun used by his old  
gang, drugs in his system-

MAX  
I'm aware--

REPORTER  
--the arresting officer testified  
he found Coleman in a rage about  
your father renegging on a job--

Max SWATS the camera away as we cut back to the announcer:

TABLOID ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 Detective James Perkins, key  
 witness to the DA, delivered his  
 statement this morning--

Footage of Detective Perkins, delivering his soundbite:

PERKINS  
 Greg McCormick took a leap of faith  
 letting this diseased soul into his  
 life... and he paid dearly for it.

Cut to Coleman, muscled out of the courtroom by armed guards--

TABLOID ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 With a life sentence awaiting him  
 on I.F. 35, Edward Coleman's only  
 begun to pay a price of his own.

And as the camera zooms in on Coleman's eyes, we CUT TO:

INT. JAIL, VISITING ROOM - DAY

Coleman's eyes -- dead, lifeless. He sits in the jail  
 visiting room: steel table, blast-proof glass walls.

ELISE  
 I'm not gonna stop.

Reveal Elise across from him -- looking older than her years  
 now. But true to form, she won't wave the white flag.

ELISE  
 I'm gonna get it overturned. I  
 don't care how long it--

COLEMAN  
 Elise?  
 (beat)  
 Wake up. Perkins won. He wanted to  
 put me here since I was a kid--

GUARD (O.S.)  
*That's time, people.*

A guard approaches to escort her out. A few seconds to go...

ELISE  
 See this?  
 (re: necklace he gave her)  
 ...this stays on until I see you  
 again. You're gonna be right here,  
 nowhere else. Understand?

She motions to the locket, by her heart. As she's lead off,  
 he leaves her with familiar words...

COLEMAN  
...have a good life, Elise.

CLANG! The door shuts. Coleman looks down... failing to notice Max, ushered in by a guard. Soon as they're alone--

MAX  
Hey brother.

Coleman looks up as Max sits. Keeping his voice steady.

MAX  
I'm... I'm sorry, I...  
(quiets)  
...I wish it didn't come to this.

Max isn't being disingenuous. For him, this is a deeply emotional moment; a catharsis. Coleman's eyes narrow...

COLEMAN  
What the hell are you--

MAX  
Remember when I said *I give everyone the benefit of the doubt until they prove me wrong*, Coleman?  
(beat)  
Remember what I said would happen  
*if you did*?

And as he meets Max's stare, Coleman realizes...

COLEMAN  
...you... did this...

MAX  
No. You did this. Because you just couldn't learn your place. You had to go and try to take mine.

Coleman's quaking with rage in his chair, as Max ramps up:

MAX  
You got my father, you got my job, you got Elise, and you know what I get?  
(leans in)  
*I get to see the look on your face right now.*

Coleman LUNGES at him, just as GUARDS pour in, SHOCK-BATONS sending Coleman down, CHOKED RASPS coming out of his mouth as--  
--the last thing he sees is this: Max, guiding Elise away under his arm, door closing behind them as we SMASH TO BLACK.

INT. CONVICT TRANSPORTER

A hand trembles. Coleman rides along, shackled in a line of ROCK CONS. Stares at his fingers, trying to still his panic reflexes through sheer will... only now, it doesn't work.

SPARLING (O.S.)  
Lookin' a little shaky there, son.

He gives a quick glance at a tattooed thug we'll call SPARLING, scuzz and violence encoded into his DNA. Sparling, sensing weakness, smiles. Over the INTERCOM we hear:

VOICE OVER INTERCOM  
Inmates prepare for landing.

The vessel SHAKES VIOLENTLY as it enters the atmosphere and we PULL OUTSIDE to reveal the ship descending towards...

...A LOOMING PLANET: the color of stomach acid, desert-like expanses stretching as far as the eye can see. And slowly taking shape amidst curtains of dust-strewn wind is...

THE PRISON ITSELF: like a 1000-foot titanium tree, pod-like cells lining its branches. A looming megalith of despair.

#### DETENTION FACILITY I.F. 35

INT. PRISON SHIP, LOADING BAY - DAY

HISS goes landing gear as the ship docks in the LOADING BAY: a massive hangar where ROWS OF SHIPS eject lines of cons and crates of gear. Dirty orange wind howls through the portals.

Joining the line, Coleman looks out to a deck where a PRIVATE SPACESHIP rests -- a two seater, sleek as a vitamin capsule, MI logo on the grill -- before he's hustled on toward hell.

WARDEN WEISBECKER (PRE-LAP)  
I'd like to welcome you all to  
Detention Facility I.F. 35.

INT. PRISON - DAY

The prisoners file through the security gate where WARDEN WEISBECKER waits: female, 30's, attractive in a polished-steel kinda way. If she's at all intimidated by the predatory looks she's getting from the inmates, it doesn't show.

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
My name is Warden Weisbecker. If  
you'll follow me, please...

Weisbecker suddenly FLICKERS and VANISHES. Then REAPPEARS a beat later, down at the processing desk;

she's a hologram, giving a pre-recorded spiel. No wonder she seems so fucking comfortable. As she guides them toward the MEDICAL CENTER...

WARDEN WEISBECKER

First thing: body-mods. Against regulations. You'll be relieved of them here in the medical bay...

Half surgery theater, half industrial disassembly line: teams of HAGGARD-FACED DOCTORS use power saws and hand-drills to remove BODY-MODS from semi-sedated prisoners gritting their teeth in pain. A cart of robo-limbs gets dumped down a trash-chute marked MEDICAL WASTE, into the raging fires below as--

INT. PRISON, WARDEN'S OFFICE - SAME

Aromatherapy candles burn as the real Warden Weisbecker sits in her long, sleek office, getting a hand-massage from her tiny FEMALE ASIAN ASSISTANT. On a bank of security monitors, we see her digital doppelganger continue the tour...

HOLOGRAM WARDEN WEISBECKER (V.O.)  
Over here is the com-center...

DOWN IN THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

...hologram Weisbecker leads the prisoners past a blank room lined with glass cubicles, each with a projection screen.

HOLOGRAM WARDEN WEISBECKER

...once a year, you'll receive messages here. Your correspondence card is a privilege. You fight, you destroy property, you so much as irritate an employee, specifically me, you lose your one line to the world. Make your choices carefully.

(beat)

Enjoy your stay, gentlemen.

Coleman, taking this all in, is guided into the belly of the beast... and we hear the last thing we expect: a clear, familiar voice. Sam Cooke singing "A Change Is Gonna Come."

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*I was born by the river in a little tent...*

CUT TO A SERIES OF SHOTS

--Coleman's stripped naked. Strapped to a chair. Robotic razors shave off his hair. A dental speculum gets shoved into his mouth, props his jaws open, a TUBE-LIKE CAMERA gets fed down his throat, checking for contraband as he writhes.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*Oh and just like that river/I've  
 been running ever since...*

--WHAM! Steel bars shoot out of the walls, clanging into place. Coleman, head shaved, gazes out in quiet terror. We pull away, gradually losing Coleman's cell amidst the others.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*It's been a long time coming/But I  
 know a change gonna come...*

--We soar over the yard, into a BRAWL: Coleman, getting beat by Sparling and his gang. Refusing to fight back, he takes it, head SNAPPING SIDEWAYS in a spray of bloody spittle.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*It's been too hard living but I'm  
 afraid to die...*

--Coleman, beat to shit, limps into the MESSAGE ROOM. Stuffs his plastic CORRESPONDENCE CHIP into a slot, a holo-screen boots up. Like a supplicant before a shrine, he watches a message from Elise; his reward for not fighting back.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*Cause I don't know what's up there  
 beyond the sky...*

--A PRISON RIOT rages on the main floor, an almost balletic panorama of destruction. We PULL BACK INTO COLEMAN'S CELL, where he stands, his back to the chaos, a statue.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*It's been a long time coming, but I  
 know a change gonna come...*

--Consequences for staying out of the riot are brutal. WHAM! Coleman gets HAULED OUT OF HIS LUNCH SEAT by Sparling and his gang, dragged along the floor, kicking and struggling as...

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*Then I go to my brother/And I say  
 brother help me please/But he winds  
 up knockin' me down on my knees...*

--WHOOSH! 3-D x-rays show a shattered jaw. Coleman, in the med-bay, a pile of human rubble, takes food through a straw.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*It's been a long time coming...*

--Coleman, eyes bruised into slits, hurriedly feeds his correspondence card into the slot, the holo-screen boots up. A new year, a new message from Elise. She's still wearing the necklace, but seems sleep deprived, exhausted... distant.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*But I know a change gonna come...*

--Coleman, in his cell, pulls the bandages away from the slash-wound on his stomach and sees that GNAT LIKE INSECTS have infested the gash. Dry-heaving, he CLAWS AT HIMSELF--

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*There were times that I felt I  
 couldn't last for long...*

--Coleman, another year older, lunges into his com-booth... and discovers his inbox is empty. He sits, bathed in the cold light, as we WHOOSH AROUND him, through the screen, and--

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*...but now I think I'm able to  
 carry on...*

--WE'RE BACK WITH HIM, a year older, bearded, haggard, still with no messages. His face desolate as we WHOOSH AROUND--

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*It's been a long time coming...*

--AND INTO HIS CELL, where he lays still on the floor in a dark spreading puddle, having slashed his wrists open with the sharpened edge of his correspondence card. As a GURNEY is wheeled into frame and MEDICS haul him up, we FADE TO BLACK.

SAM COOKE (ON SOUNDTRACK)  
*But I know a change is gonna come.*

INT. PRISON - DAY

A chyron reads:

**5 YEARS LATER**

CLANG! The bars of his cell retract and Coleman -- still alive, unfortunately -- walks out. Scarred and skeletal, aged beyond his years, barely recognizable. A GUARD calls for him:

GUARD  
 Correspondence room, Coleman,  
 you're up.

Coleman stares at him, zombie-like, then follows.

INT. PRISON, CORRESPONDENCE ROOM - DAY

The screen FLICKERS on -- and there's a message waiting. Coleman's eyes light up... but then he sees it's not from Elise. The sender's name is listed as **M. McCormick**.

ON THE SCREEN

HANDHELD FOOTAGE plays of a lavish outdoor wedding reception. The cameraman trying to get someone's attention--

CAMERAMAN  
--man of the hour, anything to say?

Turning to the camera is the groom -- Max, tuxedo'd, tipsy.

MAX  
Hey babe, be articulate for me--

The POV swerves over toward ELISE, in her wedding dress. The necklace he gave her is gone. She looks happy. Almost.

MAX  
Got anything to say for anyone who couldn't make it?

ELISE  
...where are you that's so important?

Max smiles at us: "Fuck you, I won." Leans over, they kiss, for a while, and CLICK! The transmission ends. PAN OVER TO-- Coleman. Sitting. Staring. The zombie's been resurrected.

GUARD  
Hey pal, time's up.  
(Coleman doesn't move)  
You heard what I--

WHAM! Coleman grabs the guy and slams his face into the screen. CRACKS IT. Drops him. Snatches his shock-baton as--

INT. PRISON, MAIN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

WHOOSH! Doors open, Coleman storms into the dining area. ALARMS WAIL, but Coleman pays no mind. He beats a path straight towards Sparling and his crew at a table--

SPARLING  
Well if it ain't the prodigal--

BAM! Coleman blasts the guy's teeth out with the baton. Sends him to the floor, KEEPS SWINGING, gets pulled back by guards, rips free, and tears a SWATH THROUGH THE INCOMING CROWD as...

The floor erupts into a RIOT. Coleman's SWARMED and BUFFETED OVER THE HORDE, face a rictus of suicidal ecstasy--

COLEMAN  
**WHO WANTS IT?!**

INT. WARDEN WEISBECKER'S OFFICE - DAY

FREEZE FRAME on Coleman's face -- it's security footage of the riot, on a screen in Weisbecker's office, where the warden confers with a Guard (call him ONE-EARED JACK):

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
You're telling me he's spent the past nine years keeping to himself and then--

ONE-EARED JACK  
--starts the biggest riot in prison history and bites off my goddamn ear? Yep, pretty much.

Jack has a red-blotched bandage over the remains of his ear.

ONE-EARED JACK  
Enough's enough, warden, this guy's about to have himself an accident--

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
That's not going to send the right kind of message, now is it?  
(off his look)  
We're gonna put him downstairs.

One-Eared Jack's frown gets turned upside down as we CUT TO:

INT. PRISON, LOWER LEVELS - NIGHT

CLANG! A cage elevator arrives in the bowels of the prison. Coleman's hauled out by TWO GUARDS, One-Eared Jack in the lead. The guards simultaneously swipe TWIN SECURITY KEYS to open a barred gate, guiding him into the dank realm ahead...

ONE-EARED JACK  
Gonna love it down here, pal...

They pass through the security checkpoint and into a dim corridor of basement cells, MUFFLED SCREAMS and MOANS heard within, the whole place rank with piss, sweat, misery...

ONE-EARED JACK  
...gonna fit *right in.*

...they get to the end of the row, where the guards twin-scan open a BARRED TRAPDOOR IN FLOOR. As they unshackle Coleman--

ONE-EARED JACK  
(calls down into cell)  
Enjoy!

Jack THROWS Coleman down the hole, scan-locks the trapdoor.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CELL - CONTINUOUS

Dark in here. Blacker than the inside of your fist. Coleman sits up, looks around. Ten by ten. Steel walls. He turns slowly, trying to get his bearings... and someone SNIFFS.

COLEMAN

Hello?

FSSSHT! A match strikes and suddenly there's a LIGHT, coming from a SINGLE LUMPY CANDLE. Coleman, sensing an oncoming attack, just stands there. Welcoming it.

COLEMAN

Gave you a candle in here, huh?

A MAN'S VOICE, flat and metallic, floats out of the darkness.

MAN'S VOICE

I made it myself.

(beat)

Want to know how?...

The voice is coming from a different direction now. Coleman's getting circled. Stalked. Still, he doesn't move a muscle.

MAN'S VOICE

Rendering fat. Human fat. From the ones they put in here. They became my light. Just as you will.

WHAM! Coleman's knocked to his knees by an unseen blow. SCREEE! A LONG BLADE drags across the wall, sprays sparks, before it touches down on the back of Coleman's neck. He doesn't struggle; to him, it's like icewater on a hot day.

MAN'S VOICE

(a whisper)

Are you ready?

A nod. The figure winds back... and in the flickering light, Coleman sees WORDS ETCHED ON THE WALL. A phrase in Latin.

COLEMAN

(bleary last words)

..."the die is cast."

CLANG! The blade drops to the floor. Coleman's attacker moves around, lighting more candles, until finally... we see him.

GABRIEL MOLDESANTOS -- 50's, with a wiry strength that belies his size. Pale, waxy skin. Eyes that glint in the gloom.

GABRIEL

You speak Latin.

His voice has done a 180. No longer the whispery wraith-sound it was moments before; it's posh, English, more like something aged in an oak barrel. Almost... gentlemanly.

GABRIEL

Gabriel Moldesantos. Pleasure to make your acquaintance.

(offers his hand)

In case this is still unclear, the only reason you're not being converted into candle wax is because I think you might make for slightly more stimulating company than the illiterate refuse they usually throw down here.

(beat)

Where did you learn Latin?

Coleman stares, bewildered. Gabriel motions -- *come, sit.*

INT. BASEMENT CELL - DAY

Chess pieces cut from human bone get moved across a "board" carved into the floor. Gabriel and Coleman, mid-match:

GABRIEL

(completely at home)

So. What are you in for?

COLEMAN

(freaked, hiding it)

Unpaid parking tickets. You?

GABRIEL

I was responsible for a rash of jaywalkings about 30 years ago.

COLEMAN

This what lifers talk about?

GABRIEL

"Lifer" as in "a man who is going to spend his life in prison?"

It's an odd question, and before Coleman can say anything--

GABRIEL

(makes a move)

Check.

Seeing he's got no more moves, Coleman tips his king over.

COLEMAN

Only the 26th time you've won today, you must be very proud--

WHAM! Gabriel SWINGS HIS ARM across the board, spraying pieces all over the place, flying off in a sudden rage:

GABRIEL  
 Not proud. Bored. You're Boring Me.  
 Give me paint drying. Give me grass growing. Give me a thousand-page book on the history of sand. But if you give me one more predictable game of chess, so help me, I'm going to slit your throat.  
 (smiles)  
 Shall we go again?

And off Coleman's wan expression, we CUT TO:

COLEMAN AND GABRIEL

Coleman, sweating, plays with laser-like focus. Gabriel, lounging, moves pieces with the tip of his machete.

GABRIEL  
 (eyes the board)  
 Interesting move, why that one?

COLEMAN  
 You always attack my knights first.

GABRIEL  
 Fair enough. It'll cost you a rook--

Gabriel FLICKS his rook off the board with the blade.

COLEMAN  
 ...and that'll make it check-mate.

Coleman makes his move. A beat as Gabriel surveys the board... and tips over his king. Impressed.

GABRIEL  
 Good. Why did you win this time?

COLEMAN  
 Made better moves.

GABRIEL  
 Wrong. You made me make worse moves. That's the secret: you cut off your opponent's options until he stops playing his game and starts playing yours.  
 (off his "what?" look)  
 ...it's not every day you find someone who can make good tactical decisions while under pressure.

Leaving it at that, Gabriel stands, satisfied.

GABRIEL  
 Congratulations, your throat will  
 remain blissfully unslit this week.

And as he BLOWS OUT the almost-burnt-down-to-nothing CANDLE on his bedside table, we hear:

WARDEN WEISBECKER (PRE-LAP)  
 What do you mean, "still there?"

INT. WARDEN WEISBECKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Weisbecker and One-Eared Jack, in her office, talking tensely as she sucks down edamame and flicks the pods into a bowl.

ONE-EARED JACK  
 I mean he's alive. Breathing. It's  
 been over a week...

She processes this new intel for a moment. Then--

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
 Get him in here.

INT. BASEMENT CELL - NIGHT

Something BUZZES, Coleman JERKS UP from his cot, as the trap-door WHOOSHES OPEN and TWO GUARDS come rushing down:

GUARD  
 Position 1, NOW!

Coleman, follows Gabriel's lead -- sinks to his knees, puts his hands behind his head. Gabriel, unperturbed:

GABRIEL  
 So good to see you all again.  
 (to Coleman)  
 Try to keep your jaw shut so you  
 don't swallow your tongue when they-

BZZZT! Gabriel gets SHOCKED TO THE FLOOR by a guard's baton. Coleman WHIRLS and BZZZT! He drops too as we SMASH TO:

INT. WARDEN WEISBECKER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Water trickles. Soothing music plays. Coleman blinks, sits up... he's on a couch inside Warden Weisbecker's office, where small fountains flow amidst clusters of bonzai trees.

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
 I'm making some tea.

Weisbecker walks past. Strangely, he's alone in here with her. She turns her back on Coleman, scanning her kitchenette.

COLEMAN

...you brought me up here to talk  
to a hologram?

Behind Coleman, a voice says:

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Good eye.

Coleman turns across the room to see the REAL Warden Weisbecker -- seated at her desk, a pair of steaming Japanese teacups before her. She switches off the webcam-like HOLOGRAM PROJECTOR on her desk and FZZT! Holo-Weisbecker vanishes.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

So you're the one who killed Gregor McCormick, huh?

COLEMAN

I remember hearing about that.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Shame. He built amazing machinery.  
I'm a fan on the MI-12 myself.

She toys with the crystal on her necklace and we realize it's a key-- with a McCormick Industries logo carved into it.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Whenever I get overwhelmed by  
running this glorified zoo, I like  
to take it out, blow off steam.

COLEMAN

We all got our stress relievers.  
Mine involves prison riots.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

I remember hearing about that.  
(motions to a cup)  
Tea?

He takes the black ceramic cup off her desk, sniffs it... and realizes something odd: the surface of the mug is coated with a STICKY FLUID, webbing itself to his fingers. *What the hell?*

WARDEN WEISBECKER

It's ok. Just a little tree-sap.

Coleman suddenly goes RIGID in his chair, body JERKING like he's going into anaphylactic shock.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Of course, it's from the Urushi  
tree from the Yamashiro Colony, and  
it effectively paralyzes you for  
about 2 hours, but you'll be fine.

Coleman's stuck in his chair as if by a magnet. Weisbecker  
rises, and we see she's toting a SHOCK BATON.

COLEMAN

Hell's going on?--

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Normally I'd have guards do this,  
but when there's ten billion supra  
at stake, it seems discretion is  
the better part of valor.

COLEMAN

...ten billion--

BZZZT! She swipes the baton across his head, sends 50,000  
volts careening into his skull. He STIFFENS like he's been  
hit with a hot poker... but doesn't scream.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Funny story: thirty-one years ago,  
the US Treasury finally decides to  
switch over to globalized currency.

BZZZT! Going lower, she gives him a TAP on the lips --  
blowing sizzling spit from his mouth.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

That first printing that came out?  
About ten billion, give or take?  
Goes missing in transit, *poof*. Took  
a while, but they eventually caught  
the person who did it...

BZZZT! Shocks him in the throat. Coleman doesn't scream so  
much as let out a guttural RATTLE, esophagus spasming.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

(leans in)

It was a 21-year-old philosophy  
student from London named Gabriel  
Moldesantos.

Coleman, gasping for breath, eyes watering, processes this  
new information. Weisbecker continues her circle around him,  
turning up the voltage dial on the baton.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Best part? He stashed the loot  
before he got caught, somewhere out  
in the Epsalen galaxy -- and even  
when he was looking at lifetime  
behind bars, on the worst prison  
planet in the known universe, he  
wouldn't tell anybody where it was--

COLEMAN

(gets it)  
--and you think he's gonna tell me.

BZZZT! She shocks him in the chest. He TREMORS hideously.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

I think you're going to get the  
information out of him. Because  
until you do, you're going be back  
in here each week, and what I'm  
doing to you now is going to seem  
like... a nice *amuse bouche* before  
the main course. Any questions?

COLEMAN

The hell is an *amuse bouche*?

BZZZT! She shocks him in the gut. Coleman's jaw CHATTERS. But  
still, she cannot get a fucking scream out of this guy.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

You notice the general trajectory  
we're heading in?...

She motions the shock-baton toward his crotch. Sucking air,  
face flushed, he asks her...

COLEMAN

...know what your problem is?  
You're all stick and no carrot.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Excuse me?

COLEMAN

You actually believe you can do  
anything to me that hasn't already  
been done in the past 10 years?

And a grin crosses his face. Mocking her, even in the face of  
a sizzling shock-baton hovering over his personals. A long  
beat, then... CLICK! She shuts off the baton, sets it aside.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Ok, let's talk carrots. Let me  
guess: you cooperate, I let you out  
the back door, something like that?

COLEMAN  
Think I'm stupid? I want something  
you're actually gonna give me.  
(off her "go on" look)  
Transfer to facility of my choice.  
On Earth. Minimum security.

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
...somewhere it'd be easy for you  
to waltz out of.

No response. A long beat as she ponders. Then--

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
Deal.

COLEMAN  
Good. Hit me in the face with that.  
(off her look)  
I gotta get into character, right?

Weisbecker smiles and winds back with the baton as--

INT. BASEMENT CELL - DAY

WHAM! The door to Coleman's cell flies open and he's TOSSED IN by a pair of guards. Hits the floor, looking beat to shit. Gabriel looks up from his bunk as the door slams shut.

COLEMAN  
...hell was all that?...

GABRIEL  
Something you get used to.  
(sees him flexing a hand)  
Gave you the sap, did she?

Coleman doesn't respond, because... he's just noticed something odd. There's A FRESH CANDLE burning on Gabriel's table. A little alarm bell goes off in Coleman's brain. He starts peering around the cell as Gabriel talks...

GABRIEL  
I have information they want, and  
they've been trying for years to  
get it out of me, by hook or by  
crook. Looks like they're going to  
be using the same method with you.

Coleman looks under the cots, under the table, behind the toilet, seeing nothing, when...

GABRIEL  
Might I ask what you're--

COLEMAN

Where'd the new candle come from?

GABRIEL

I made it.

COLEMAN

Within the last 12 hours?

Gabriel gives no answer. TAP TAP. Coleman taps on the cell walls with his fingertips. Moving along, up and down... TAP TAP... until in a low corner, he hears an echo. A beat, then--

He snatches the lit candle, runs it along the wall, and suddenly WAX STARTS TO DRIP FROM A BARELY-VISIBLE SEAM AS--

--we reveal it: there's a false front built into the wall, held in place with wax, leading to a HIDDEN COMPARTMENT behind, the width and length of a coffin. Coleman looks at Gabriel... who just smiles.

COLEMAN

You wanted to see if I'd find this.

(off his nod)

Why?

Still no answer. Coleman shines light into the compartment: a cluster of candles, Gabriel's machete, a fat pile of prison-clothes, writing utensils, a leather-bound JOURNAL. Coleman rips open the journal, scans the pages: crudely-sketched DIAGRAMS OF DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE PRISON. Arrows. X's.

COLEMAN

...is this what I think it is?

GABRIEL

(a smile)

It's exactly what you think it is.

Coleman's eyes light up like a pinball machine as we hear:

WEISBECKER (PRE-LAP)

So: he's planning a break-out...

INT. WARDEN WEISBECKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Coleman, back in the warden's office for another "session."

WEISBECKER

Consider my interest piqued. Sit down, please, care for some tea?

COLEMAN

I'll pass.

WEISBECKER

Quick study.  
(smiles, sits)  
Why are you telling me this?

COLEMAN

'Cause you're gonna let it happen.  
(off her look)  
Think about it: you spent years  
trying to get him to give up the  
coordinates to his loot, you've  
thrown everything you got at him,  
and he's given you zip.

WEISBECKER

Your point?

COLEMAN

He's never gonna spill his guts.  
It's the only thing he's got left.  
But if you let him break out...

WEISBECKER

(catches his drift)  
...first thing he's going to do is  
try to steal a shuttle. He punches  
in the coordinates, we swoop in--

WEISBECKER

--and I get a first-class ride back  
to Earth.

Weisbecker sits back, weighing his words. Then--

WEISBECKER

Sounds like if you want to get out  
of here, you two better start  
making some plans.

Coleman gives a nod, ready to get his hands dirty, and as  
RISING DRUMS start to clatter, we CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT CELL - DAY

RIP! A page gets torn from a journal. Coleman and Gabriel  
crouch on their cell floor, piecing something together, as  
the drumming continues over the sequence:

GABRIEL

The first thing I can tell you is  
that it's impossible for a man to  
break out of I.F.-35.  
(puts pieces in place)  
But with two men, it's merely  
almost impossible.

As we rise, we see they're piecing together a hand-drawn BLUEPRINT OF THE PRISON. The first stage of fevered planning.

CUT TO: GABRIEL'S COT

WHAM! The metal-framed bed gets flipped sideways and shoved against the wall, as we widen to reveal Gabriel is turning their cell into a DIY fight-ring.

GABRIEL  
You have any formal training in hand-to-hand?  
(Coleman shakes his head)  
The guards here do.

COLEMAN  
They also got guns. Last I checked, those are slightly more effective.

GABRIEL  
A guard pulls a gun, he's shooting to kill. Which means your job is to incapacitate him before then.

Gabriel tosses him a shirt -- *wrap up*.

SMASH TO: THE MATCH

WHAM! WHAM! Coleman and Gabriel roustabout in the cell, their blows creating counterpoints to the fevered drumming. Coleman's style is pure street scrapping, no match for Gabriel's icy control, a newfangled mix of Krav-Maga & Judo.

GABRIEL  
(blocking punches)  
See the problem here?

COLEMAN  
I'm fighting some old bastard who's spent thirty years dreaming up ways to hurt people?

Gabriel UPPERCUTS him, Coleman doubles over, gasping--

GABRIEL  
Thirty-three years. And no--

WHAM! Coleman LUNGES at him and Gabriel calmly JUDO-THROWS him down, planting a foot on his heaving chest--

GABRIEL  
Man cannot live on rage alone.  
Focused rage... now that's useful.  
(takes his foot off)  
On your feet.

SMASH TO: COLEMAN ON HIS COT

After-hours, working by candlelight as Gabriel sleeps, scratching notes onto paper. Names: MAX, PHENG, PERKINS. Then a mess of, stats, diagrams, etc. Feverishly scribbling, like the devil creating a guest-list for his party.

SMASH TO: COLEMAN AND GABRIEL BACK IN THE RING

WHOOSH-WHAM-WHOOSH go their sparring fists. Coleman's wearing his training, bruises and cuts all over. But he's gaining muscle, speed, agility, and most importantly, he's getting it: saving energy, planning his strikes, landing blows as--

GABRIEL  
That's it, boyo, better--

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! Coleman lands three more blows, comes in for a spin-kick, when Gabriel grabs his foot and WHIRLS HIM to the floor. Gasping for breath, Coleman gets up--

--to see the older man is nowhere to be seen. At least until:

GABRIEL (O.S.)  
Up.

Coleman looks up to see Gabriel perched ten feet up, propping his feet against the far wall's corner.

COLEMAN  
How did you--

GABRIEL  
The same way you will.

And as Gabriel casually drops we CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT CELL - NIGHT

The calm before the storm. Coleman and Gabriel in their cell, pulling Gabriel's laundry-stash out of its hiding place, rolling the garments up into bundles. As they work...

COLEMAN  
Never told me why you're in here.

GABRIEL  
Yes, well. Neither did you.

COLEMAN  
The first thing I learned growing up was that people are vicious, and the world doesn't give a shit about you... and I made the mistake of forgetting that.

Gabriel smiles. Like he knows wherefrom Coleman speaks.

GABRIEL

A long time ago, I was planning a particularly lucrative robbery. I did it for the same reason men used to climb mountains. I planned it perfectly, executed it perfectly, made the perfect getaway, but my one imperfection was my choice of partner. He got caught, served me up to the police, and that's how I came to enjoy this 5-star subterranean tomb with you.

Coleman takes this in for a moment. Realizing, regretfully, that he's got more in common with this man than he thought.

COLEMAN

So that's what you're gonna do when we get out? Track him down, get your revenge?

GABRIEL

No, no. I already killed him. Five minutes after I realized what he did.

(a pause)  
...and if there's anything I deeply regret in my life, it's that.

COLEMAN

Killing him?

GABRIEL

No. Not making him *suffer*. If I could do it again, I'd do it right: I'd make him watch as I ripped away every single thing he held dear, and only then would I let him die.

(smiles)  
Absolution doesn't come in the form of a bullet, boyo, but from knowing you took from them exactly what they took from you, and then some.

Gabriel finishes bundling up the last of the clothes...

GABRIEL

In the future, should you ever cross paths with your friend Max... let me know how it goes for you.

Coleman looks up, stunned -- *how did you know?*

GABRIEL

You talk in your sleep.

A half-smile from Gabriel. Coleman just shakes his head.

GABRIEL  
 Rest well, boyo. After tomorrow,  
 we've got business to attend to  
 beyond these walls.

Gabriel makes for his cot. We hold on Coleman, weighing those words, face in turmoil, as we CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT LEVEL - NIGHT

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM! It's the next night and boots are pounding the floor -- a pair of GUARDS, BLONDIE and BOWLCUT, heading down the subterranean hall towards the basement cell.

BLONDIE  
 Position 1, both of you, now!

The guards enter, guns up. In the gloomy-dark cell, Gabriel's on his knees, face to the wall, hands behind his head.

BLONDIE  
 Hell's the matter with your friend?

GABRIEL  
 Beauty-rest, I assume.

We see it: Coleman, curiously enough, hasn't moved from his bed, back to them, sheet draped over his torso.

BOWLCUT  
 You! Position 1, now, or you're  
 going outta here feet first!

Coleman doesn't move. Bowlcut, weapon ready to spit, approaches him... and sees something odd: this isn't Coleman at all -- just his jumpsuit stuffed with rolled-up LAUNDRY.

BOWLCUT  
 What the--

WHOOSH! Coleman DROPS from his perch high in the corner of the room -- just like we saw Gabriel do -- plummeting down to elbow-drop Bowlcut in the spine with a CRACK as--

Blondie WHIRLS with his gun, just as Gabriel SNATCHES his makeshift machete from its hiding place in the bedframe, THROWS IT, slashing the gun out of the guard's grip and sending it flying, blade SLICING Coleman's arm as he dodges--

WHIR-BAM! Gabriel spin-kicks Blondie's legs out, bounces his head off the floor, knocks him cold. On his feet in a flash--

GABRIEL  
 Bravo, boyo. Dress that--

Gabriel hauls off his PRISON SHIRT, tosses it to Coleman, who turns it into a tourniquet for his bleeding arm as we CUT TO:

EXT. BASEMENT LEVEL - MOMENTS LATER

WHAM! The trap door opens and TWO GUARDS -- actually Coleman and Gabriel, wearing stolen uniforms and weapons -- emerge from it. They round the corner, twin-scanning their key-passes, heading through a barred gate toward...

THE ELEVATOR CHECKPOINT STATION

...where a JOWLY GUARD looks up as the "guards" head towards him, helmet visors pulled low.

JOWLY GUARD

Any goodies back there? Guy in 14 had some freaky Korean porno comics. Disgusting! Y'gotta see 'em-

ZZZTT! Coleman nails him in his fat neck with the shock baton, spilling Jowly and his comics to the floor as--

UPPER LEVEL OF PRISON

CLANG! The elevator doors open as Gabriel and Coleman HAUL a shaking-and-convulsing Jowly out into the main hall--

COLEMAN

Man down, man down! Need help here!

GUARDS run toward them, rolling a stretcher from the med-closet, Coleman and Gabriel loading Jowly onto it (giving us a glimpse of the SHOCK BATON Coleman's stuffed up the guy's pant-leg, which he furtively triggers every few seconds.)

GUARD

Jesus, what happened--

COLEMAN

(subtly shocks him again)  
Seizure, what's it look like? We got this, take point downstairs--

Coleman and Gabriel RUSH Jowly on, glancing back as the guards make for the elevator, setting the clock ticking, as--

INSIDE THE MED-BAY

WHAM! The med-bay doors ERUPT OPEN and Jowly gets pushed through by Gabriel and Coleman, PRISON DOCS rushing over--

PRISON DOC

Talk to me, what'd they do to--

No answer. And it's then the doc looks over to see one of the guards is wrapping SURGICAL TUBING around his hands. And as the EMERGENCY KLAXONS START WAILING, the doc realizes...

PRISON DOC (INTO EARPIECE)  
*They're here, they're in the medica-*

CRACK! Gabriel swings a heavy robo-prosthetic forearm at the doc's head, puts him down, just as--

GUARDS (O.S.)  
 OVER HERE!

GUARDS rushes toward med-bay entrance, OPENING FIRE. Coleman slams the QUARANTINE SEAL button, doors SLAMMING INTO PLACE before the guards can get there. Gabriel tosses him surgical tubing, starts to wrap a wet towel around his face as--

OUTSIDE THE MED-BAY

--the guards punch in codes, trying to get the door open, repeatedly getting rejected, until finally a BURLY BASTARD approaches with a STRAP OF SLEEK FEATURELESS HAND GRENADES.

BURLY  
 Step back--

--he primes the grenades along the entry portal and...

INSIDE THE MED-BAY

BLAM! The grenades go off, sending the flaming, warped door askew on its track. Guards pour into the smashed-up room to search for our heroes, finding no one, as we PAN OVER to...

...the MEDICAL WASTE CHUTE.

INSIDE THE MED-WASTE CHUTE

Coleman and Gabriel shimmy up the confined metal shaft, using the surgical tubes around their hands for traction, breathing through wet towels wrapped around their mouths. Below, the INCINERATOR glows a hellish orange, sparks streaking up--

COLEMAN  
 Christ--

The walls are so hot, they're melting the tubing around their hands and shoes, leaving tendrils of molten rubber behind.

GABRIEL  
 C'mon, boyo.

Steeling himself, Coleman pushes himself onward, following Gabriel, making for the VENTILATION GRATE above. Only a few more feet to go, but the rubber of Gabriel's shoe MELTS and DRIPS onto Coleman's face, he hisses in pain as--

Gabriel makes a final UPWARD LUNGE and pushes open--

THE TOP GRATE

--climbing out, Coleman snaking up after him, and as he plants a foot-hold on the wall--

--his shoe SLIPS, he fumbles and--

WHAM! Gabriel grabs him before he can fall into the incinerator. Gets pulled up to the floor, gasping, as we see--

THEY'RE IN THE LOADING BAY

--the hangar where DOCKED SHUTTLES tower in rows. They break a cinderblock-looking monster of a SUPPLY TANKER, ramp-stairs leading to its entry. The two men rush up into the ship and--

INTO THE VESSEL'S CONTROL CENTER

--where Gabriel throws himself into a captain's seat, Coleman taking the one next to him. A look between them, a trace of something -- guilt? -- crossing Coleman's face.

COLEMAN

Didn't have to pull me up.

Gabriel looks at him like it's the most obvious thing.

GABRIEL

What did I tell you? We both have business to attend to...

Coleman watches, heart-rate rising, as Gabriel punches COORDINATES into the navigation system, takes hold of the controls... and something strange happens.

The ship's power dies. Screens flash the words: **ENGINE LOCK.**

OUTSIDE THE SHIP

Warden Weisbecker, Blondie, Buzzcut, and One-Eared Jack storm up the steps and into the ship's entrance, guns out--

GUARDS

HANDS UP!/BOTH A' YOU, NOW!

--and they find Coleman sitting, stone-faced, avoiding looking at Gabriel. As Warden Weisbecker approaches...

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Thank you, Coleman, let it never be said you're not useful.

(to Gabriel)

On your feet, Moldesantos.

Gabriel doesn't move. Refusing to look at her.

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Don't get sour, you held out for as long as you could. Sorry your cell-mate wasn't so disciplined.

(checks the screen)

...fine, we've got the coordinates, will somebody shoot him please?

BAM! Blondie shoots Gabriel in the head. The bullet SPLINTERS the front screen... and Gabriel does nothing except *flicker*.

COLEMAN

Never know what someone's gonna walk out of your office with, huh?

Weisbecker looks to see Coleman, who's holding her HOLOGRAM PROJECTOR. The image of Gabriel is a digital forgery.

BAM! BAM! Behind her, guards DROP, cut down by fire from GABRIEL -- the real one. Coming down the corridor, loaded with riot-weapons, strap of grenades on his chest, guns hot--

WHOOSH! Weisbecker -- realizing she's been *thoroughly* had -- ducks, spins, kicks Coleman's legs out, then SNATCHES THE MACHINE-PISTOL from his hand--

--just as Gabriel gets a bead on her and she UNLOADS at him, sending him diving out through the ship's entry portal, Weisbecker lunging after him like a demon, bullets SPARKING off the metal loading stairs as he rolls down them and--

WHUMPH! Coleman TACKLES her into the wall, her gun bouncing away, but she unsheathes a SHOCK BATON and it's all-out close-quarters combat. This woman knows what she's doing -- but so does Coleman. At least until--

BAM! A baton-blow sends Coleman flying back through the--

ENTRYWAY OF THE SHIP

--sending him BOUNCING off the stairs and hitting the loading-bay floor with a *OOOF*. Into her earpiece she says:

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Loading bay, now. Shoot on sight.

(to Coleman and Gabriel)

Forget who you were dealing with?

COLEMAN

...did you?...

Coleman holds up her NECKLACE KEY -- the one to her ship. Ripped from her neck in the fight. Weisbecker gives an ashen smile as across the room, DOORS WHIR OPEN, GUARDS INCOMING--

WARDEN WEISBECKER

Uh oh. Here come the adults.

**BRAAAAAAP!** Guards on the catwalk spray a BLIZZARD OF BULLETS as Coleman DIVES behind stacked metal crates, Gabriel behind him when WHAP! A shot NAILS GABRIEL in the back, drops him.

COLEMAN

--no--

Coleman lunges out and OPENS FIRE on the guards as he runs for Gabriel, dragging him back with one hand--

BEHIND THE CRATES

--shots WHIZZING overhead as they slide into place. Coleman sees the puddle of DARK FLUID spreading out from under his friend. He pulls off his jacket to tie off Gabriel's wound--

COLEMAN

Hang in there--

GABRIEL

Boyo--

COLEMAN

Hold still, we'll get you tied off--

Gabriel shoves a hand out, keeps him at bay.

COLEMAN

What happened to "we both have business to attend to?"

GABRIEL

We do... Mine's just not in the same place as yours.

COLEMAN

Bullshit--

GABRIEL

Coleman, when an old man's about to use his dying breath to give you the location of a vast fortune... don't interrupt.

Gabriel LAYS DOWN MORE SUPPRESSION FIRE, then grabs Coleman and starts whispering COORDINATES INTO HIS EAR as--

ACROSS THE ROOM

--a guard runs for the control panel, punches in a code and WHIR-BOOM! Around the loading bay, HEAVY STEEL DOCK-DOORS START TO COME DOWN, shutting off all exits one by one, as--

BEHIND THE CRATES

--Coleman and Gabriel look out to see the exits sealing off. Coleman zeroes in on WEISBECKER'S SHIP in its private hangar, just beyond the shutting doors. Ten seconds. Turns to Gabriel-

GABRIEL  
It's been an honor.  
(grips his hand)  
Now do me a favor and go kill that  
son of a bitch.

Summoning his final strength, Gabriel shoves him away and lunges out, spewing sizzling lead at the onrushing guards. Coleman, now or never, turns and RUNS, eyes glued to...

THE LOWERING BAY DOOR, CLOSING FAST.

COLEMAN  
No-no-no-no--

Coleman breaks into a SPRINT. Breaknecks past stacks of FUEL BARRELS that go up like FIREWORKS as gunfire rakes them--

Eyes glued to THE DOOR.

DOWN IT COMES.

HE DIVES INTO A HEAD-FIRST SLIDE.

SPACE TIGHTENING AROUND HIM AS HE SKIDS THROUGH.

**CRUNCH.**

The door CLOSES ON HIS LEGS, pulverizing them. Trapped and spasming like a hooked fish, he fights not to go into shock--

White hot agony distorts his vision... but with a teeth-gritting ROAR, Coleman HAULS HIMSELF OUT, drags his destroyed legs from under the crushing door as it BOOMS into place. Free. Inside the shipping bay, Gabriel looks on...

GABRIEL  
Arrivederci, boyo--

BLAM BLAM BLAM! Gabriel's taken down by a hail of gunfire as--

OUTSIDE

Coleman pulls himself towards Weisbecker's ship. Pure determination. Suddenly, **BOOM!** He ROLLS ASIDE just as FUEL BARRELS burst through the roof and kamikazie to the ground.

Coleman, going wan from blood loss, looks to the red hot surface of the burning fuel barrel behind him... and gets an idea. But it's something he *really doesn't want to do*.

COLEMAN  
...ohgod...

No choice. Suck it up or die. He steels himself, PUSHES HIS WOUNDED LEGS AGAINST THE BARREL and cauterizes his wounds as--  
IN THE MAIN HANGAR

Motioning for the guards to hold fire, Weisbecker strides toward a fast-fading Gabriel, gun held casually, smiling.

IN WEISBECKER'S SHIP

A TREMBLING HAND grabs hold of the armrest as Coleman pulls him into the control seat. Jams the stolen key in. Shaking fingers punch in the coordinates Gabriel gave him, as--

IN THE MAIN HANGAR

--Weisbecker plants a foot on Gabriel. Triumphant.

WARDEN WEISBECKER  
Any final statements on your part?

She kicks him over... to see he's got a strap of GRENADES.

GABRIEL  
The die is cast.

**KAA-BOOM!** The grenades GO OFF, toss bodies, set fuel ablaze--  
OUTSIDE

--Weisbecker's ship LIFTS OFF at the same moment the hangar VOLCANOES. Chunks of flaming rubble BUFFET THE SPACECRAFT. Turbulence knocks Coleman onto the floor, head hitting hard as THE SHIP BLASTS OFF and goes into ZERO GRAVITY...

...and for a moment, Coleman's drifting free, arms out, in a floating hailstorm of TINY ORBS OF BLOOD AND SWEAT, a gasp of either agony or euphoria, and we... **SNAP TO BLACK**.

EXT. SPACE

Vast, twinkling emptiness. Drifting slowly into the distance, a shiny speck: the MI-12 ship. Alone in the endless void...

...until we pull back to see we're watching it through the viewscreen of ANOTHER SHIP. A voice, New Zealand accent:

MAN 1  
Lousy place to run outta fuel, eh?

Man 2 doesn't respond for a beat. Then--

MAN 2  
Bring her in.

INT. M1-12

Inside the M1-12, we move through the vacant control center, all's quiet... until BAM! The entry portal gets blown off its hinges, drops to the floor, smoke rises from the drill-holes.

Across the cabin, laying like a pile of human rubble, Coleman's eyes blink open. Through his hazy POV, he can barely see FOUR FIGURES coming into the cabin...

MAN 1  
Christ, mate...

As they loom in, staring at the destroyed human beneath...

MAN 2  
Whaddya' call a guy floating alone  
in space with his legs smashed off?  
(over their laughter)  
Screwed.

They BUST UP LAUGHING as Coleman drifts back into darkness.

INT. SCAVENGER SHIP, BREAKDOWN BAY

WHAM! Coleman JERKS UP on a table in what looks like a mechanic's garage. SHIP PARTS stacked in messy piles. Hot in here; he's got a sweat-soaked sheet over him, brow dripping. Sensing something's wrong, he YANKS the sheet aside...

COLEMAN  
(deadpan)  
...well, shit.

We don't see what the problem is, just him piecing it together. Then, down the corridor, he hears MUFFLED ARGUMENT.

Coleman eyes a WHEELCHAIR by the bed and as he pulls it over to him and climbs in, we see it: his legs are GONE, above-knee amputated, stumps swathed in bandages. And we CUT TO:

THE SHIP'S KITCHEN

A STEAK gets flipped on a pan as we reveal KIP: 21, punkish, New Zealand accent, with a cheerfulness at odds with his job title ("galley-slave.") Carries plates out of the kitchen--

KIP  
Hold onto your tastebuds, mates!

AND INTO THE DINING AREA

...where fans circulate swampy air, a vent DRIPS in the corner, and a seated crew of FORAGERS (aka "space pirates") ignore their servant.

The captain, SYKES, a scowling hulk in welder's goggles, is engaged in a charged conversation with his crew -- SCUZZY, SHORTY, and SPINDLY. Sykes drinking beer, the crew's sucking down sake, as Kip hands out plates...

SYKES

...ain't even up for discussion,  
there's no way he's staying on  
board, it's too goddamn dangerous--

SPINDLY

You didn't want him kept alive,  
that would've been helpful to know,  
I dunno, before I went to the  
trouble of amputating his legs?--

SYKES

I can't be *everywhere* on this  
shitcan at once--

SHORTY

Look, way I see it? We either dump  
him and get nothing, or take him  
back to the prison and get paid.

SYKES

Or get killed, ever think about  
that? Think I.F. 35 wants it to be  
common knowledge that someone was  
able to escape from there? We're  
gonna dump this prick out the  
airlock and be done with it--

KIP

Hold on a second.

The crew shoots mad-dog glares at Kip -- *why is the kitchen-bitch talking?*

KIP

Bloke managed to steal a guard's  
uniform, break out of prison, in  
the warden's ship -- which is  
awesome -- got half his body  
crushed to hell, survived that, and  
now we're gonna just dump him out?  
Seems a bit... unfair.

CRASH! Sykes throws his BEER BOTTLE at Kip, it SHATTERS off  
the wall. The crew laughs as Sykes HUCKS MORE BOTTLES at him-

SYKES

Hear that, gentlemen?  
(CRASH!)

Our trusty galley-slave has an  
opinion he'd like to express!

(CRASH!)

(MORE)

SYKES (CONT'D)  
 And if there's one thing we love,  
 it's Kip expressing his opinion!  
 (CRASH!)  
Please, Kip, go on--

Sykes makes to throw the MAGNUM SAKE BOTTLE when--

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
 Throw one more, I'm gonna walk over  
 there and kick the shit out of you.

All eyes look over to see Coleman: in the entrance, slouched legless in the wheelchair. Surprisingly cool for a guy in his condition. Sykes and the crew fight can't help but crack up.

SYKES  
 Look who it is: Captain Stubs.

COLEMAN  
 So what's this I hear about you  
 dumping me out the airlock?

SYKES  
 (shrugs)  
 Sorry, pal, you're a liability.  
 Can't have that on board my ship.

COLEMAN  
 Your ship.

SYKES  
 That's right.

COLEMAN  
 Tell me something: why is it so  
 goddamn hot in here?

That brings things down a notch. Coleman frost-eyes Sykes; a brash, nihilistic confidence starting to manifest itself.

SYKES  
 I dunno what you think you're--

COLEMAN  
 I'm giving you two reasons you  
 better keep me on board, and since  
 your lives and livelihoods depend  
 on them, I'd shut up and listen.  
 (lifts a finger)  
 One: your ship's about six days out  
 from a catastrophic malfunction.

That gets their attention. Coleman points across the cabin--

COLEMAN  
 That stuff dripping out of the  
 vent? Smells kinda like copper?  
 (MORE)

COLEMAN (CONT'D)  
 It's propylene glycol, it's what  
 your combustion chamber uses to  
 keep cool.

SHORTY  
 How do you know--

COLEMAN  
 Let's just say I've had some  
 experience with engines.  
 (to the crew)  
 You've got a leak, which means your  
 system's overheating, which means,  
 at this rate, within the next few  
 days, it's gonna melt down like a  
 nuclear reactor and kill everyone  
 on board. Unless someone fixes it.  
 Luckily for you -- unlike your  
 captain -- I know how.

SYKES  
*Think I don't know how to fix my  
 own goddamn--*

COLEMAN  
 If you did, you'd have done it  
 already.  
 (to the crew)  
 In my professional opinion, for all  
 the good this guy's doing you,  
 you'd be better off throwing him  
 out the airlock.

Sykes, who's had enough, quick-draws a HAND CANNON, aims it  
 at him. Coleman -- bored -- to the crew:

COLEMAN  
 Ready to hear reason number two?  
Gabriel Moldesantos, anyone  
 recognize that name?

SYKES  
 Hey, Earth-to-asshole-with-the-gun-  
 pointed-at-him--

COLEMAN  
 Robbed the US Treasury, got sent to  
 I.F. 35? They never found the loot  
 'cause he stashed it somewhere out  
 in the ass-end of the universe?

A look between Spindly, Scuzzy and Shorty, cautious--

SCUZZY  
 Just 'cause you were on I.F. 35  
 doesn't mean you know him--

WHAM! Coleman slams it onto the table -- A PRISON SHIRT, the one Gabriel gave him for a tourniquet, Gabriel's name and serial number on the back. A muted "whoah" from the crew.

COLEMAN

Moldesantos is dead. But before he died, he told me where the money was. And if any of you want even a taste, I suggest you shoot this idiot before he shoots me.

CLICK-CLICK! Sykes cocks the gun, voice low, dangerous--

SYKES

Ease up, stubby. This crew's been with me a long time and they're the most loyal sonsabitches I've ever--

CLICK-CLICK! The crews has their guns out and aimed at Sykes. Sykes LUNGES UP, losing his shit, waving his piece around--

SYKES

*Y'all got TWO SECONDS TO GET ON THE  
RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY--*

CRASH! Kip HURLS the sake bottle, SHATTERING IT over Sykes' dome, drops him. A shocked beat, then all eyes to go Kip...

KIP

That is me expressing my opinion!

And off Coleman's satisfied smile, we SMASH TO:

INT. SCAVENGER SHIP, STORAGE ROOM

WHAM! Sykes, SNARLING, hands bound, gets TOSSED into a storage room, the crew locking the door behind him, cutting off his howls of rage. As they turn to Coleman...

COLEMAN

Welcome aboard, gentlemen.

(hands a LIST to Kip)

Kip, love your style with that sake bottle, you just made first mate. Order of business number-one, get me everything on this list.

Kip, liking the sound of that, eyes the list. Then--

KIP

What the hell you *making*?

**A SERIES OF SMASH-CUTS:**

CRATE IN THE STORAGE AREA MARKED "ROBOTICS" -- RIPPED OPEN.

SLAMMED ONTO A TABLE: METAL RODS. HYDRAULIC GEARS. BLOWTORCH.

COLEMAN: GOGGLES ON, WORKING IN SPRAY OF TORCH-SPARKS.

INT. SCAVENGER SHIP

Coleman, sitting up on the "surgery table" where his amputation took place. Kip and the crew stand by, post operation, watching in awe as Coleman gets up and...

...we see he's engineered himself a pair of ROBO-PROSTHETIC LEGS. He takes a step forward -- CLANK.

SPINDLY

See? Like nothing ever happened.

INT. SCAVENGER SHIP, ENGINE ROOM

Coleman, atop a boom lift in the engine room, wrenches and solders away on the gasket of a massive COOLANT TANK. Kip tosses him a beer as he repairs the leak, as we hear...

INT. SCAVENGER SHIP, CORRIDOR

CLUNK-CLUNK! Coleman's "feet" go lumbering down a corridor, Kip leading him on a physical therapy run. Coleman keeps trying to push himself too hard, tripping, stumbling--

KIP

Easy, easy--

Coleman, disregarding him, lunges onward and BIFFS IT--

KIP

(offers hand up)

Slow down, mate, what's the rush?

COLEMAN

(stands, runs on)

Got some business back home that I gotta get in shape for.

KIP

Like a... track-meet?

COLEMAN

Like "finding the people who put me in prison and destroying them."

Coleman VAULTS UP a ten-foot stairway in one jump. Kip looks after him -- what? -- and we CUT TO:

INT. SCAVENGER SHIP, LIVING QUARTERS - LATER

Coleman furiously does SIT-UPS as Kip pins his "feet", taking in everything he's just been told...

KIP

...so, the takeaway from this is:  
Max = needs-to-be-made-dead. Yes?

COLEMAN

(flops down, gasping)

Pretty much.

KIP

Cool. Where we going first?

Coleman looks at him -- we?

KIP

Two weeks ago, I was scrubbing toilets and hand-washing jumpsuits belonging to guys with names like Scuzzy Pete, and if you hadn't shown up, that would still be my lot. So... I'd say I owe you one.

Before Coleman can respond, there's a CLANG of an opening door behind them. They look over to see Scuzzy leaning in...

SCUZZY

Hate to interrupt but uh...

CUT TO OUTSIDE THE SHIP

...we see their vessel is floating toward a DERELECT SPACE STATION, like a steel giant hibernating through an endless winter. The only sign of human life for eons.

SCUZZY (V.O.)

...think we've officially reached the ass-end of the universe.

INT. SPACE STATION, CARGO HOLD

CREAK! A wheel-lock on A MASSIVE STEEL CONTAINER spins. Widen to Coleman, Kip and the crew, in the cavernous hold of the space station. And as the container door swings open...

...we DON'T see the money; we do see their REACTION to it. Dumbstruck awe. Even from Coleman.

KIP

Goddamn, captain...

COLEMAN

...I'm not your captain, Kip.

KIP  
Then what should I call you?

Coleman thinks, before eyes catch the brand-name of the container, printed on the door: **CRISTO, INC.** And as he and Kip stand before this (still unseen) mountain of money...

COLEMAN  
(to Shorty/Scuzzy/Spindly)  
Gentlemen, before you three go on  
your way as billionaires, I'd just  
like to say, to all of us...  
(an evil smile)  
Merry Fucking Christmas.

We hear MUSIC playing from somewhere...

FRANK SINATRA (PRE-LAP)  
*He's making a list, checking it  
twice...*

INT. TIKI BAR - NIGHT

A very old song plays on a retro jukebox:

FRANK SINATRA (FROM JUKEBOX)  
*Gonna find out who's naughty or  
nice. Santa Claus is comin' to town*

Pull away into a shithole TIKI BAR, dressed up with chintzy Christmas decorations. A skinny Cuban BARTENDER calls:

BARTENDER  
Lil' more seasonal cheer, Perkins?

A Mai Tai slides across the counter, joining a cluster of empties in front of retired DETECTIVE JAMES PERKINS: now in his 50's, and looking better than the last time we saw him. He's overtanned and rotund, sure, but he's had some work done on his face, finally getting his busted nose straightened.

PERKINS  
(lifts glass)  
Ho ho ho.

EXT. FLORIDA KEYS, HARBOR - NIGHT

Outside, moonlight shines over the Florida Keys. Slur-singing, Perkins heads past ROWS OF FUTURISTIC BOATS looking like massive white dragonflies with solar-panel wings. Fails to notice he's being watched by a guy in Bermuda shorts...

KIP (INTO EARPIECE)  
He's coming in.

Perkins shambles his way up the ramp and onto his 50-foot vessel -- the HMS RETIREMENT. Makes his way down into the...

CABIN BELOW

...where he fumbles for a light, starts to get undressed... and then hears it: a boat engine starting. His boat engine. He lumbers up the stairs to the deck, where sure enough, at the helm, a punkish-looking Kiwi fella mans the controls.

PERKINS

Hey, asshole! Hell ya think you're--

COLEMAN (O.S.)

Remember me, detective?

Perkins WHIRLS -- there's a figure behind him. We don't see his face; Perkins does... and he's transfixated for a beat.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

(closes in)

You've had work done on your nose.

PERKINS

The hell are you--

BAM! Perkins takes a blow to the face, his expensive new nose CRUMPLES, he falls to his knees moaning.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

Remember me now?

WHAM! Perkins gets KICKED -- *as if by a fucking elephant* -- 20 feet across the deck and into the boom as we CUT TO:

EXT. PERKINS' YACHT - LATER

Perkin's eyes open. The night sky seems to be CHURNING. We FLIP UPSIDE DOWN to see the sky is actually ocean. Perkins is strung up by his feet from the mast, tissue stuffed in his broken honker, boat idling somewhere out in desolate waters.

PERKINS

Oh God-- HELP! HELP ME!

BAM! The boat's stern light turns on, he winces in the glare.

COLEMAN (O.S.)

Nice boat.

A figure hops jauntily down from the stern into the light; all we see is a silhouette, never his face.

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
 Mine's a little bigger, but this is  
 nice. Glad to see you at least got  
 paid well for what you did.

Perkins goes pale as SHINK! The figure draws a DIAMOND-SHAPED KNIFE, slides it up to the corner of Perkins' eyeball.

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
 Know what I've discovered over the  
 past ten years, detective?

Perkins SQUIRMS and KEENS, the knife poised to jab into his tear duct ay any second... but it backs away.

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
Everyone can be bought.

PERKINS  
 NAME IT-- *name your price--*

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
 I want all of it: where they live,  
 where they sleep, what they're  
 doing, what they drive, who they're  
 screwing, who they've screwed over,  
 who owes them money, who they owe  
 money to, what libraries they  
 haven't returned books to--

PERKINS  
*I'll tell you, I'll tell you--*

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
 --and most importantly, I want our  
 conversation to stay a secret. Or  
 I'm going to see how many pieces of  
 you I can cut off. Understand?

PERKINS  
*Yes, I swear, I won't say a--*

THUNK! The knife gets THROWN into the boom, a few feet away.

COLEMAN (O.S.)  
 Start talking.

We push in on Perkins' blubbering face as we SMASH TO:

EXT. PERKINS' YACHT - MORNING

Dawn breaks over the ocean. Perkins' yacht rocks gently, the only vessel for fifty miles. We hear a ROPE CREAKING as--

ON THE YACHT

Perkins, alone, still upsidedown, heaves his body back and forth, reaching out... until he's finally able to grab the knife from the boom. Cuts the rope and WHUMPH! Hits the deck, air belching out of him. Legs too numb to stand, he crawls...

PERKINS  
*...think you're gonna come here and pull this shit...*

...making for the steering station, where his CELL PHONE sits. Snatches it, scrolls through until he finds "MAX."

PERKINS  
*...another thing coming, asshole...*

CLICK! He hits the "call" button and listens as the phone rings once... then goes to a pre-recorded message. Kip's cheerful New Zealand-accented voice saying:

KIP (THROUGH PHONE)  
 Shouldnta' dialed that number, mate-

Perkins' eyes go wide as BEEEEP goes a digital timer across the deck -- from a stack of EXPLOSIVES among the fuel tanks.

PERKINS  
 God--

KA-BOOM! The HMS Retirement, along with its captain, is ATOMIZED INTO FLAMING CHUNKS. A FIERY BOAT ENGINE flies at us, the logo -- **MCCORMICK INDUSTRIES** -- hits us in the face.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Max McCormick sits up in bed, blinking awake as if from an intense, disorienting dream.

He's now ten years older, a little soft from living the good life. We'll see that his youthful entitlement has distilled into weapons-grade arrogance, which he hides behind a life-of-the-party *bonhomie*. Behind him in bed, a woman dozes.

MAX  
 You ever have one of those dreams  
 where the floor suddenly gives way?

The woman rolls over and we see it's not Elise, but ARABELLA: a high-toned Italian beauty, accent that could melt copper.

ARABELLA  
 You want to talk about dreams, it costs extra.

MAX  
 You're ruthless. I like that.

He gives her a smack on the ass, stands, tosses her a stack of supra (globalized currency) off the table. Gets dressed--

MAX  
How do I look?

ARABELLA  
Like a man who's spent the night doing things his wife would not. I recommend a fresh shirt.

MAX  
(blows her a kiss)  
See you next week.

Welcome to a Day-In-The-Life Of Max. Hang on, enjoy the ride.

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - MORNING

We WHOOSH into Max's apartment: a 4000 square foot shrine to his ego, interior designed within an inch of its life. As he heads in, he takes coffee from his waiting servant MARTHA--

MAX  
Martha, light-of-my-life...

She giggles as he glides to the DINING ROOM, where Elise eats toast in her robe. The past 10 years haven't gotten the best of her.

MAX  
Hey pretty lady.

ELISE  
How was New Jamestown?

MAX  
Next time the company makes me do a walk-through on a sub-orbital, I'm threatening ritual suicide.

No way to tell if she believes him. He goes to the fridge, pours cream into his coffee, tosses the empty bottle out, the item gets auto-added to a DIGITAL SHOPPING LIST on the door.

MAX  
(re: her robe, teasing)  
Please, please, please tell me you're gonna wear that particular bit of sexiness to the party.

ELISE  
Yes, Max, I am going to wear a bathrobe to the charity gala I spent the past six months planning.

He doesn't have a comeback; it's almost like he's trying to recreate the rapport she had with Coleman and not doing very well at it. Max gives her a kiss and goes to get cleaned up, Elise gives him a lingering glance as we WHOOSH TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT TOWER - MORNING

Max, in a fresh suit, swoops into the parking garage, where Gregor's old James Dean-era PORSCHE SPYDER pulls up. JOEL, the young valet, opens the door as Max wipes a smudge off it.

VALET

Morning, Mr. McCormick--

MAX

Hi, Joel. Smudge my car again, your head's going on top of my Christmas tree.

(off his "oh shit" look)  
Kidding, kidding. Here, take this, buy yourself something shiny.

Max slaps a hefty tip into his hand, gets behind the wheel and VROOOM! Motors off into BUSTLING MORNING TRAFFIC, being followed by a souped-up repulsor-bike as we WHOOSH TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - MORNING

Max weaves into an UPSCALE CAFE, towards a table where JEFF PICKNER sits -- Max's college pal from 10 years ago, now 30's, bank VP, living proof that money can't buy charisma.

MAX

Pickner! How's the sexiest bank VP on God's green earth?

PICKNER

Max, listen--

MAX

Denise doing well? Your kids staying in school and off the drugs and all that?

PICKNER

Max?

(gets his attention)  
I'm sorry, but... we're calling in your loans.

MAX

Funny. Love it. Your bank can't afford to call in my loans, Jeff--

PICKNER  
Someone bought us out.

MAX  
What?...  
(beat)  
Who?

PICKNER  
It was over my head. Guy apparently swooped in out of nowhere, started making bids like the money was gonna burn his hands. First order was to call in your markers.

MAX  
And this was the best way to tell me? Was, I dunno, a cake with frosting letters not available?--

PICKNER  
--I'm sorry, Max, there's nothing I can do. You've got thirty days.

Unaware that this is an omen, Max chews thoughtfully. This is a guy who will be your best friend, until you slight him.

MAX  
Jeff, nothing personal, but by the time my lawyer is done, your unborn descendants will be in hock to me.  
(makes to go, then:) And next time you're out of town, don't leave Denise at home by herself. She tends to get lonely.

Gives his shocked pal a salute, strides on as we WHOOSH TO:

EXT. MCCORMICK TOWER - MORNING

The McCormick Tower, the big HQ, looms amidst the shimmering skyscrapers of downtown. We CATAPULT towards it, over its ascending pyramid-like levels of sloping glass, each sheet the size of a football field, which we GO WHOOSHING THROUGH--

INTO THE MEZZANINE

--as Max cruises past EMPLOYEES, talking into his earpiece, phone in hand, jovially rattling off orders to his lawyer.

MAX

--ok Gene, buddy, time to earn your retainer, I want you to pore over the loan documents until you find some subsection that allows me to drag Jeff Pickner into an alley and perpetrate sexual violence on him--

WHAM! He slams into a 20-ish EMPLOYEE, the phone skids off.

EMPLOYEE

So sorry--

MAX

Oh my, a curse upon your house.

The employee darts for the phone and we see he is actually KIP, who subtly slips a tiny LAYER OF CLEAR FILM onto it.

KIP

(hands phone back)

Have a good one.

Max walks on, as we push into his phone, into THE STRIP OF FILM Kip stuck to it, ZOOMING into a sea of tiny nanochips--

INT. PENTHOUSE - DAY

--and out of a SET OF LISTENING-STATION SPEAKERS, set up in a well-furnished penthouse. Someone sits at the desk, seen only from the back, LISTENING IN ON MAX'S LIFE, hearing...

MAX (FILTERED)

As you can see, we're looking at a major upward surge of ROI in the coming months...

INT. MCCORMICK INDUSTRIES, BOARDROOM - SAME

Max confidently gives a presentation to the BOARD OF DIRECTORS, pointing to different HOLOGRAM CHARTS.

MAX

...so think "last quarter with a shot of human growth hormone."

Everyone laughs. Except Bob, Gregor's old right-hand-man, the one we met at the graduation, now in his 60's and still made out of steel. The man's icy stare almost trips him up.

MAX

(back on track)

Let's take a look at the projections for--

INT. MCCORMICK TOWER, BATHROOM - DAY

WHOOSH! Water spews from a tap, Max washes his face, alone in the gleaming executive men's room. Straightens his tie, rolls his neck -- maintaining his cool against the rising tides.

BOB (O.S.)  
You ever spend any time at culinary school, Max?

Max turns to see Bob shutting the door behind him.

BOB  
By the way you cook the books, I'd almost take you for a chef.

MAX  
Bob, with cataracts like yours, I'm amazed you could even see the projections.

BOB  
Must be me and my old age, not understanding how you can spend like a fleet of drunken sailors and still end up in the black every quarter. You must be *that much* of a better businessman than your dad.

Max doesn't like hearing about his dad. But he stays cool.

MAX  
I don't know where you're getting your intel from--

BOB  
I've been in contact with a well-informed source.  
(off his look)  
Who would prefer to remain anonymous.

Max has no idea what this means. Yet.

MAX  
Y'know, there's such a thin line between "anonymous source" and "imaginary friend." Sounds almost like early onset dementia here...

BOB  
Keep it up, kiddo. But if someone was to take a look at your private files, I have a feeling they'd get a damn near *panoramic* vision of the hole you've dug this company into.

MAX

You wanna look in my files, Bob,  
 get a court order, wait the 48  
 hours to get it processed, and  
 while you're waiting, contemplate  
 spending your few dwindling years  
 being sued up your barely-  
 functioning prostate.

BOB

Oh, I already called in a court  
 order, Max. And that's *forty-seven-*  
*and-a-half hours to go*, as of now.

(beat)

Contemplate that.

Bob smiles. Max does not. Just thinking of how he's going to  
 handle this new wrinkle. As Max watches Bob exit, we hear:

MAX (PRE-LAP)  
 ...so, I need you to kill someone.

INT. PHENG'S COMPOUND - DAY

A steel door BUZZES OPENS and we reveal PHENG, 10 years older  
 and elegantly sleazy as ever, swiftly leading Max into his  
 COMPOUND -- an abandoned police station in the favelas,  
 surrounded by walls, turrets, and machine-gun GUARDS.

PHENG

I'm getting the strangest sense of  
*deja vu* here. Makes me wonder how  
 you deal with other problems in  
 your life -- like if your coffee  
 maker breaks, do you think to  
 yourself "Ah, yes, I'll just hire  
 Pheng to shoot it for me?"

MAX

You get funnier every time I see  
 you, Chinaman.

PHENG

I'm Thai, you imbecile.

CLANG! A guarded door opens and Pheng leads him through into--

PHENG'S SUPERLAB

--a drug-making facility on steroids, THUGS IN GAS MASKS  
 working an assembly line, filling eye-droppers with liquid.

MAX

Leave it to you to build a drug lab  
 in a police precinct.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)  
Should send a picture to Perkins,  
he'd get a kick out of it.

PHENG  
I somehow doubt that, mostly on  
account of his being dead.  
(off Max's "what?" look)  
Didn't hear? Last week his boat  
decided to blow up with him on it.

MAX  
(thinks for a second)  
...there's a "barbecued pork" joke  
in here somewhere.

PHENG  
Slapstick abounds.

And that's all the thought they give it. As Pheng checks on  
his "experiments", Max gets down to business:

MAX  
I'll make this simple: I need to  
refill my company's coffers in the  
next 48 hours, there's a guy in my  
office asking questions and I need  
him to go away. You'll get paid for  
this. Like last time. Questions?

PHENG  
Yes -- you need money so badly, why  
don't you just take out a loan?

MAX  
Because my bank got...forget it.  
Any relevant questions?

PHENG  
How about: "Why should I help you?"

MAX  
Did you miss the part about--

PHENG  
--getting paid? I'm already getting  
paid, Max. I've got a shipment  
going out tonight that's worth  
fifteen of your little hit-jobs.  
(waxes rhapsodic)  
Look around. This facility is like  
a lamp full of genies that grant  
unlimited wishes, as long as those  
wishes involve money and drugs.

MAX

Only reason you're here is 'cause  
10 years ago I hired you out of  
that hovel you called home. You  
forgot that I made you?

PHENG

Oh, you made me? Excellent. Make  
another me.  
(motions to a guard)  
I do believe we're done here.

A 19-year-old tattoo-strewn GUARD makes for Max--

GUARD

Move it--

MAX

This asshole puts a hand on me--

GUARD

(grabs him)  
I said, move it--

For the first time today, Max lets his mask fully drop. BAM! DECKS the guard, sends him 30 feet, bouncing off the conveyor belt. Heads whirl to Max, as pale green fluid seeps from his knuckles and runs down the "skin" of his robo-prosthetic arm.

MAX

There goes one of your genies.

Max exits, leaving the hoodlum on the floor, drooling blood.

MAX (PRE-LAP)

My father once told me: "Your  
character is defined by who you are  
when nobody's looking."

INT. CHARITY BALL - DAY

We glide through a CHARITY GALA, in the ballroom of a hotel overlooking the water, boats floating past the veranda. As Max addresses the crowd from the podium, we notice his knuckles have patches of synth-skin on them, "healing."

MAX

I think my dad came up with that  
when I was sixteen and he caught me  
stealing a bottle of his scotch.  
(gets a laugh from crowd)  
But as smart as my dad was, he and  
I think differently. I think that  
character can be judged by what  
you're willing to fight for in  
public.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)  
 And that's why, for the past five years, the "Max McCormick Favela Foundation" has been working to improve the conditions of our city's poorest neighborhoods...

In the audience, only Elise catches how little of a shit Max actually gives about this. Everyone else is eating it up.

MAX  
 ...and I like to think if my father were here now, he'd say--

LOUD CLASSICAL MUSIC rises in the distance: "Ode To Joy." Max pauses, confused, as the audience stirs, heads turning to the windows, where the view is rapidly overtaken by...

**A GIANT POWER-YACHT**

...pulling up to the veranda: four stories tall, with a LIVE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA playing on the deck. A display of wealth so ostentatious it forces you to redefine the word.

MAX  
 If I, uh, could ask everyone to--

But the crowd is already heading out to see what's going on. Max, impotent and ignored, follows. Guests crowd onto the veranda to see *who on earth* is making such an entrance as--

**UP ON THE BOAT'S DECK**

WHOOSH! A walkway ramp ejects. Kip, all cleaned up in a snazzy tuxedo, sends a red carpet down it. As the music CRESCENDOS, a POSH BRITISH ACCENT (like Gabriel's) calls out:

CRISTO (O.S.)  
 My apologies for being late.

And a LONE FIGURE appears at the top of the ramp. He plants a hand on the deck rail and JUMPS, launching forty feet through the air, clearing the ramp, touching down with a WHUMPH on the marble veranda, strolls onward like it ain't no thing.

CRISTO  
 Had quite the journey getting here.

It's Coleman -- or as we'll now be calling him, CRISTO. The malnourished boy scout has become a rockstar: his hair long and dyed dark, contact lenses have turned his brown eyes deep blue. Sharp facial hair, sharp suit, lean muscle beneath. The transformation is striking; a world away from his old self.

CRISTO  
 (taps a leg)  
 They're brand new, thought I'd take them out for a test-run...

Lifts a pant-leg to and we see his clunky prosthetics have been replaced by flawless living-tissue synth-limbs.

CRISTO  
God bless progress, no?

Cristo mingles through the crowd, notices the stare he's getting from ELISE -- like she's trying to place him. He gives her a glance and keeps right on moving, toward...

CRISTO  
The fabled Max McCormick.

MAX  
(puzzled)  
...have we met?

CRISTO  
Depends. Do you believe in  
reincarnation?  
(off his pause)  
Then it's an honor to make your  
acquaintance.

Cristo shakes his hand and heads in. Max turns after him; he too, feels something oddly familiar about the guy.

MAX  
...and you are?

CRISTO  
It's on the boat.

Max turns to the yacht, sees a name embossed in gold: **CRISTO**.

AUCTIONEER (PRE-LAP)  
The Yuan Dynasty jade yongju angel,  
Going, going, and--

INT. HOTEL CHARITY GALA - NIGHT

WHACK goes the gavel wielded by the AUCTIONEER.

AUCTIONEER  
Sold, once again, to the gentleman  
with his feet up in row three.

WIDEN TO REVEAL Cristo: lounging with his wing-tips up on a chair, ignoring the looks he's getting from the crowd, sipping bubbly, chatting up a pair of smoking-hot FEMALE PARTY-GOERS, pausing only to give a quick nod to Kip--

CRISTO  
Put it with the others.

Kip helps some EMPLOYEES wheel out Cristo's latest purchase as we see he's cleared off the auction block single-handedly. We pull back further to find--

MAX

--milling at the bar with a CROWD OF GUESTS, one eye always focused on Cristo. His internal wheels turning, as the rumor mill churns around him; big rock, meet small pond.

PARTY GUESTS  
Heard he's based somewhere off in  
the Abell Cluster./Made his money  
in shipping./Gotta be inherited--

MAX  
Excuse me a moment.

Like a shark to blood, Max heads toward Cristo, who's parting ways with the two smoking-hot Female Guests, one girl slipping a phone number to Cristo and whispering in his ear.

CRISTO  
...that's horrifying. Count me in.

A conspiratorial laugh from them, he plants kisses on both their hands and sends them shimmering off into the party.

MAX (O.S.)  
Careful. We call those two "The Succubus Twins", and not for the reason you're thinking.

Cristo looks over to see Max, standing alongside him with his champagne, watching the girls walk off.

CRISTO  
And I was assuming they just had a soft spot for wealthy men with unspeakably depraved personal lives.

MAX  
Glad to see you and I already have something in common.  
(raises his glass)  
To depravity.

CRISTO  
(clinks it)  
Always.

Max motions for Cristo's glass to be refilled, and they walk on through the festivities...

MAX

There's a betting pool going on.  
Everyone's trying to figure out  
what the scenario is on the  
mysterious party-crasher.

CRISTO

What are the odds favoring?

MAX

10 to 1, you're a shipping magnate  
here to buy out the Southern Ports.

CRISTO

You put money on that?

MAX

No, I was betting on "owner of  
extremely successful fish-and-chips  
franchise."

CRISTO

It's like you've known me forever.

Max, not getting the joke, gets down to brass tacks:

MAX

Let's be real. There's only one  
reason someone shows up to an event  
like this the way you're doing it:  
because you're looking to make an  
investment. And since you just  
rolled in here with the subtlety of  
the D-Day invasion, you're gonna  
have every hitter in the room  
looking to be in business with you.

CRISTO

I'd heard you were a lot of things,  
Mr. McCormick. I suppose I can add  
"perceptive" to the list now.

Max smirks -- *what can I say?* Gestures out to the ballroom,  
the whole place seeming to ooze wealth and power.

MAX

Do your due diligence. Make the  
rounds. Shake some hands. Find out  
who thinks they can hunt big game.  
And when you're done...

Max lifts his card: **MAX MCCORMICK: CEO, MCCORMICK INDUSTRIES.**  
Cristo glances at it, but his attention is on Elise, excusing  
herself from a conversation and heading down a hall.

MAX  
Don't wait too long, my schedule  
fills up quick.

CRISTO  
(hands over his own card)  
I get a feeling we'll cross paths.

Max glances at the card Cristo just gave him, perplexed as he reads it: **CRISTO -- FORMER BUSINESS CARD OWNER**. And as he looks up, Cristo is gone.

INT. CHARITY GALA, SIDE ROOM - NIGHT

In a private bathroom, Elise washes up at the sink. Looking in the mirror, she plasters her game face on and turns to go--

THROUGH A SIDE OFFICE

--where something stops her. On a desk, there's a portfolio of receipts, with **MAX MCCORMICK FAVELA FOUNDATION** across the cover in hideous shiny-gold lettering; very Donald Trump-ish.

Impulsively, she grabs the portfolio and throws it. It topples a wine glass on a table, breaks it, Merlot spills. She storms over, starts picking glass from the stained rug--

CRISTO (O.S.)  
Mrs. Elise McCormick, fearless  
destroyer of wine glasses.

She looks up to see the darkly handsome gent in the doorway. Looking at her with eyes a shade of blue normally associated with Viking visionaries or sidewalk schizophrenics.

CRISTO  
(extends hand)  
Pleasure to meet you.

ELISE  
Pleasure's mine, Mr.--

CRISTO  
Cristo.

She motions for him to go on. He doesn't.

ELISE  
You one of these one-name guys  
like... "Hercules?"

CRISTO  
Simplicity's a virtue.

ELISE

Like the five-story monstrosity you docked outside.

CRISTO

Never said I practice what I preach.

ELISE

What'd you name that thing, the "S.S. Good Taste?"

CRISTO

Considered that, but I wound up naming it after myself.

An odd, charged moment -- like they've immediately picked up where they left off, busting each other's chops. Elise looks at him like he's a puzzle piece she can't quite fit. Cristo grabs seltzer and a napkin, starts scrubbing the floor.

ELISE

Pretty proficient at scrubbing floors for someone of your means.

CRISTO

I wasn't always rich.

ELISE

What were you before?

CRISTO

The details of my background are earth-shatteringly uninteresting, and at the risk of drinking alone, I feel it's best not to bore you.

ELISE

...so, are you this full of shit with everyone or just me?

(off his "pardon?" look)

"Earth-shatteringly uninteresting" is not the term I'd use to describe someone who shows up uninvited to a charity gala, jumps off his boat, buys everything on the auction block, and ends up scrubbing the floor with a stranger.

CRISTO

And what term would you use to describe a woman who spends months setting up a charity gala and then hides out all night in a back room?

Elise pauses, taken aback...

ELISE

How'd you know the gala was mine?

CRISTO

McCormick Industries has always  
ranked high amongst my interests.  
And Max McCormick is not known for  
his dedication to charity.

Elise shakes her head, *truer words...*

CRISTO

How's that going for you?

ELISE

How's what going for me?

CRISTO

Being married to such a... goal-  
oriented individual.

ELISE

(a beat)

You want the truth?

CRISTO

If it's more interesting than the  
lie, absolutely.

Elise pauses... and the way you'd spill your guts to a  
stranger on the subway after a bad day, she lets it out:

ELISE

He's unfaithful. He's narcissistic.  
He's patently insincere. But, being  
with him allows me the resources to  
do what I was put here to do.

CRISTO

Which is?

She motions outward -- *you're looking at it.*

CRISTO

I'm sorry -- "favela-aid?"  
(off her nod)  
...why?

ELISE

Because I had a friend from there  
once and he would've wanted it.

CRISTO

Your friend would've wanted you to  
end up with an unfaithful, patently  
insincere narcissist.

Before she can answer, there's a KNOCK as--

MAX  
(letting himself in)  
Ah, there you are. I was getting worried you ran off with the help.

CRISTO  
She did.

MAX  
(laughs)  
Mind if I borrow my better half?  
Gotta go make the closing remarks.

CRISTO  
Take her, take her. It's been a pleasure, Mrs. McCormick.

He shakes her hand. A final, electric moment, their eyes meeting... then Max guides her out. Coleman watches them go; Max whispers into her ear and strokes a hand down her back. And off Cristo's blood starting to boil, we CUT TO:

EXT. CRISTO'S SHIP - NIGHT

Cristo's shoes go BOOMING up the ramp to his yacht, he storms across the deck toward Kip, who's loading up a HEAVY, BLAST-PROOF CASE. (Loading it with what, we don't see.)

KIP  
Evening, robo-legs.

WHAP! Cristo slaps down Max's business card. His facade is gone; he's ice-cold, all business, his accent back to normal.

CRISTO  
Set the meeting.

KIP  
On it.

CRISTO  
Car?

KIP  
Waiting up front.

CRISTO  
(hustles him up)  
Good, let's move--

KIP  
Y'know, I really liked the version of you from five minutes ago better than this, he was less pushy--

As Cristo packs up to head out, Kip glances down at the crowd in gala, eyeing Elise as she goes through with Max.

KIP  
Was that who I think it--

CRISTO  
That was nobody.

KIP  
...you see the love of your life  
for the first time in 10 years, and  
all you say is "That was nobody?"  
(off Cristo's dark look)  
Fine. Let's go cause a traffic jam.

INT. PHENG'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

SWOOPING we go: through the favelas, over trash fires, between vines, up over TALL STEEL WALLS and down into...

PHENG'S COMPOUND

...where PHENG'S CREW works fast, loading cases of Push, everyone's favorite liquid-based narcotic, into crates. The crates get stacked in a waiting SEMI-TRUCK -- a ground-only vehicle, with a bread company logo on the side.

At its front and rear are GHETTO-RIGGED "TECHIES" (machine-gun mounted sentry jeeps, armored with Frankensteined found materials.) As a handful of GUNNERS make for the vehicles, a DRIVER hands out CONTACT LENS CASES.

GUNNER  
C'mon, man, damn things feel like  
sandpaper, I hate this shit--

PHENG (O.S.)  
Know what I hate?...

They look up to see Pheng, at the door to his office above.

PHENG  
The idea of someone waltzing off  
with my product and thinking I  
won't see it. Now put 'em on.

Grudgingly, the gunner tilts his head back and inserts the CONTACTS into his eyes. In his POV, the world goes watery as--

IN PHENG'S OFFICE

--on a large bank of monitors (FEED SCREENS) we see through the gunner's POV; the contact lenses are actually live-feed CAMERAS. Pheng checks the different monitors, seeing four different views of the compound.

PHENG (INTO EARPIECE)  
 Good... perfect... you, stop  
 blinking so much... aaand good.  
 Let's boogie.

EXT. PHENG'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

ENGINES ROAR as the convoy rolls out of the compound, the semi-truck guarded at both ends by the techies, winding through the favela streets. KIDS scramble to get out of the way as the lead techie plays Pac-Man with debris in the road.

LEAD GUNNER  
 (hits errant fruit cart)  
 Ten points!  
 (hits a trash-can fire)  
 Twenty points!

They round a corner down into...

A TIGHT STREET

...where the techie skids to a stop -- because, oddly enough, there's a COUPLE OF JUNKED SUVS blocking their path.

GUNNER 1 (INTO EARPIECE)  
 Goddammit, I thought you checked  
 this route out--

GUNNER 2 (THROUGH EARPIECE)  
I did, shit musta' happened in the  
 past thirty minutes--

GUNNER 1 (INTO EARPIECE)  
 Jesus Christ, back it up, we're  
 taking the long way--

The convoy backs up out of the street and re-routes, driving onward past Kip, watching from an alley.

KIP (INTO EARPIECE)  
 Get ready.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL SECTOR - NIGHT

In the industrial sector, atop a warehouse roof, Cristo stands -- a MINI-REMOTE in hand, blast-proof case open at his feet. Gazing out into the favelas, as the convoy approaches in distance, waiting like a gunfighter for the word "draw."

INT. PHENG'S OFFICE - SAME

Back in his office, Pheng watches a screen intently, eyes focused like lasers...

but as we widen, we reveal he's not watching the feed, but his favorite THAI SOAP OPERA: an emotionally fraught break-up between MONGKUT and SUMALEE.

PHENG  
(over their argument)  
God's sakes, Mongkut, I told you  
that bitch was bad news.

Behind him, his CHUCKLEHEAD RIGHT-HAND-MEN raucously play *pai-gow* poker at a table, while on the FEED-SCREENS nearby, we see the world through the gunners' POVS -- INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT rolling past. We ZOOM IN on the screen and wind up--

BACK WITH THE CONVOY

The vehicles TEAR down the street. 100 feet ahead, a debris-stuffed SHOPPING CART sits in the road. We pan up to a NEARBY ROOF, where Cristo crouches, watching, mini-remote ready...

IN THE LEAD TECHIE

The gunner points a fat finger at the shopping cart--

GUNNER  
Thirty points!

They barrel towards it, gaining speed, as we RISE to see the cart's shopping bags are loaded with SILVER CANNISTERS as--

BACK WITH PHENG IN HIS COMPOUND

Pheng's glued to his soap opera: Mongkut is now blocking the door, Sumalee's aiming a gun at him...

PHENG  
Don't you dare, Sumalee.

BANG goes Sumalee's gun, Pheng recoils -- just as ON THE FEED SCREEN, the techie slams into the cart and GETS THROWN INTO A WHIRLING SPIN, framed by a corona of fire as--

PHENG  
(head in hands)  
Why do I even watch this show?

RIGHT-HAND-MAN 1  
Uh, *Pheng*?

PHENG  
What?

Pheng follows his gaze to the feed-screens: one's COMPLETELY BLACK, another shows a sideways-on-the-pavement view of a FLIPPED-SMOKING-WRECKED TECHIE, the other two are showing...

PHENG  
Good God--

BACK WITH THE CONVOY

The REAR TECHIE lays rubber to speed ahead of the semi, the GUNNER spraying TRACER FIRE, tearing plum-sized holes through the buildings around it as he screams into his earpiece--

REAR GUNNER  
PHENG, COME IN, WHAT THE HELL IS--

PHENG (THROUGH EARPIECE)  
Do not stop! Keep that truck going!

ON THE FEED-SCREEN

The gunner's POV aims up and we just barely catch a glimpse of a HUMAN FORM VAULTING THROUGH THE AIR, coming in for a crash landing on the warehouse rooftop adjacent--

REAR GUNNER (THROUGH EARPIECE)  
What the--

WITH THE CONVOY

The REAR GUNNER swivels his 50-cal on its tripod, sweat trickling down his face, scanning the area--

REAR GUNNER  
DID ANYBODY ELSE SEE--

WA-BAM! Something slams into the vehicle, and--

ON THE FEED-SCREEN

--the POV whirls to reveal someone's dropped down onto the truck's gear crates, leaving a massive dent, springing straight at us in a blur and--

PHENG  
--ohgod--

--we're THROWN FREE OF THE VEHICLE AND WE SLAM TO THE STREET, rolling across the pavement, ground blacking out the screen--

PHENG (INTO EARPIECE)  
THE BLOODY HELL'S GOING ON THERE?!

No response. Pheng looks to a WHIRRING POV in the last feed-screen, sees his final remaining gunner's in the middle of a BRUTAL HAND-TO-HAND, slashing at a barely-seen figure with a KNIFE, slicing the guy above his collarbone, before there's a A KICK and we're FLYING. Then monitor goes to black.

Pheng stares at the dead screens. *Holy. Fucking. Shit.*

RIGHT-HAND-MAN  
Uh... what just happened?

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

WHRRRRMMMM! Repulsors blow trash off the street as a CUBE VAN whips overhead -- Pheng, driven by a flunkie, doing 80 ten feet off the ground. Traveling adjacent to an ABANDONED ELEVATED FREEWAY soaring 100 feet overhead.

PHENG  
There we go, there we go--

He jams a finger at the GPS screen in the dash, where the GLOWING DOT of the shipping-semi moves along--

PHENG  
--step on it, run 'em down.

RIGHT-HAND-MAN  
It should be right in front of us--

PHENG  
Clearly, now where the hell is it?--

**BOOM!** Seen through their windshield, 50 feet ahead and 80 feet above, there's an EXPLOSION OF DUST AND ROCK...

...and there's Pheng's truck -- having just BLASTED THROUGH THE FREEWAY'S CEMENT SIDE-BARRIER, soaring out into the air, arcing downwards like a dive-bombing dragon as--

PHENG  
AHHHHHHHHHHH--

The cube-van SWERVES, needle-threading between a cement post and the 60 tons of steel diving past their windows and...

**CRAAAASSSHHHHHH!** The truck FACE-PLANTS INTO THE STREET. Debris rains, freed tires bounce high, it's shipping trailer rips off, JACKNIFING like a suicidal gymnast, ROLLING INTO OUR FACES WITH A SPINE-DISINTEGRATING BOOM as--

BEHIND

--Pheng LEAPS OUT of his barely-stopped cube-van, RUNS LIKE HELL toward the mangled remains of the truck, past the WOUNDED THUG dragging himself out of the driver's compartment-

WOUNDED THUG  
*I made it-- Pheng, I'm alive--*

BLAM! Pheng puts a bullet in the guy while barely even breaking his stride, and BOLTS straight for what's *really* important here: the trailer containing his drugs.

PHENG  
Please, please, oh god, please--

WHIR-POP! He blows the LOCK off the trailer's doors, yanks up on the metal handle -- and SIZZLE GOES HIS PALM-FLESH. He SHRIEKS and pulls his hand away, as his driver sprints over--

PHENG'S DRIVER  
*Hell's going on?--*

PHENG  
*LOOK!*

Pheng puts his shoe on the door and kicks upward, opening it to reveal... the entire shipment of drugs has been set ablaze. A 50-foot bonfire, burning toxically in the trailer. The two men gaze on in horror as we CUT TO:

EXT. PHENG'S COMPOUND - NIGHT

Pheng, mid phone-call, is back in the cube-van and ROARING through the entrance to his compound.

PHENG  
--no, no... I assure you, the shipment is on its way, we've just had a... minor transport issue--

Pheng and his flunky hop out and head toward the lab.

PHENG  
How soon will you get it? Very soon. Very, very--

Suddenly a familiar HIGH-PITCHED TONE RISES... coming from inside the darkened confines of his lab. Pheng stops, listens-

PHENG  
Please tell me that's not what I think it--

**KA-BOOM!** Pheng's knocked ass-over-teakettle as his superlab detonates in a cumulonimbus of fire and debris, as we CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP - SAME

Cristo, standing with Kip on the rooftop he started on, watching it burn. Palpable satisfaction in his face, as he takes in a deep breath of the smoke-tinged air. A beat, then--

KIP  
(motions to go)  
Shall we?

CRISTO  
Not yet.

He wants to enjoy this. Basking in the flickering light of his destruction, Cristo smiles with delight as we SMASH TO:

EXT. CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE - MORNING

A JAZZ QUARTET whips up a sweet swing as top-shelf vodka gets poured through an ICE SCULPTURE and down into glasses, bloody mariés get mixed and carried on a silver platter across...

THE DECK OF CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE

Palatial digs atop a downtown hotel. Beside the infinity pool that seems to drop off into the city below, Cristo and Max do breakfast. Cristo still glowing with last night's adrenaline.

MAX  
Let it never be said that you suffer from a lack of style.

CRISTO  
One of the many benefits of being monomaniacal.

MAX  
(notices)  
Hurt yourself?

Cristo sees he's motioning to the bandage peeking out from under his collar; from when he was knife-slashéd last night.

CRISTO  
Things got a bit rough last night.

MAX  
Let me guess, the Succubus Twins?

CRISTO  
I admit nothing.

Max grins, then suddenly glances down at his buzzing phone -- the name PHENG flashes on the screen. Silences it.

CRISTO  
So I did my due diligence, I asked around, I shook a lot of hands--

MAX  
--and here we are.

CRISTO

Exactly. But before we get into the salient details, I should offer you some due diligence on me: there are certain business ventures of mine that require a... specific level of discretion. Does that make sense?

MAX

Can't live the life we enjoy and not have some skeletons in your closet. I upgraded to a warehouse.

CRISTO

Then I'm in good company.

Max's phone HUMS once more -- Pheng again. He shuts it off.

CRISTO

Hypothetical: let's say I arrived in this country carrying some less-than-legitimate funds... and that any company that assisted me in legitimizing them would receive a very healthy percentage.

MAX

And *hypothetically*, how much are we talking about here?

Cristo pauses a moment, then smiles:

CRISTO

It's probably easier if I show you.

INT. CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The doors to the penthouse's ballroom swing wide, as Cristo ushers Max in... and Max's jaw goes agape, expression brightening in a flush of awe and greed.

CRISTO

Does that answer your question?

THE BALLROOM IS FULL OF MONEY. Pallets of shrink-wrapped cash towering in stacks. An old-growth forest of greenbacks. Max turns to Cristo, his face like a man delivered to salvation.

EXT. CRISTO'S BUILDING - DAY

WHOOSH go the lobby doors as Max strides merrily out of Cristo's building and towards his roadster, on the phone...

MAX

--Gene, I'm telling you, I solved the problem, ok?-- Yes, I'm fully aware of Bob and his scary little court order, but don't worry, it's under control. Now have you found a way for me to screw Jeff Pickner?-- Well then, I know what *your* weekend's looking like.

His call waiting beeps -- looks down to see it's PHENG.

MAX

Gotta go, Gene, buh-bye.  
(switches call over)  
Wanna tell me what's so goddamn important, Pheng?

EXT. PHENG'S COMPOUND - SAME

Pheng -- looking utterly beleaguered, face singed, burned hand wrapped in gauze -- stands across the street from the SMOLDERING WRECKAGE OF HIS DRUG LAB, while hovering firetrucks spray water onto the remains from above.

PHENG

Nothing, just thought I'd drop a line to say that *someone destroyed an entire shipment of my product and then blew up my goddamn shop.*

INTERCUTTING between the two, as Max cleans a spot off the window with a handkerchief and gets behind the wheel--

MAX

That's terrible, you should call the police, I remember there being a precinct in your neighborhood--

PHENG

I can't have this, I am not dealing with investors who take rainchecks.

MAX

Ah so, shoe, other foot, etc etc.  
Interested in my job offer now?

PHENG

Your gift for understatement remains acute.

MAX

Well then chin up, Chinaman...

Max glances up at the building, towards Cristo's penthouse.

MAX  
Got something even better for you.

INT. CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

Cristo stands at the window, watching Max's Spyder drive off through a pair of retro-futuristic opera-glasses. Behind him:

KIP  
Not too hard getting those two ducks lined in a row, now was it?

CRISTO  
"Make them stop playing their game and start playing yours."  
(off his look)  
Long story.

Cristo turns from the window, starts unpacking a case...

CRISTO  
Do me a favor, get on the phone, set the Elise meeting for the AM.

KIP  
Alright, ok...  
(beat, has to ask)  
Just what the hell you gonna do about her, exactly?

Cristo looks up at him, surprised at his directness.

KIP  
I mean, you just gonna pull off your mask and yell "*Surprise, and by the way, I'm going to kill your husband?*" Doesn't seem like ideal circumstances for winning her back--

CRISTO  
I'm not trying to win her back.

KIP  
...why not?

CRISTO  
Because I have you.

KIP  
I'm flattered. Now stop bullshitting me.

Cristo stops unpacking electro-darts for a moment. Kip hears something odd in his voice: a trace of vulnerability.

CRISTO

She gave up on me. She did what she had to.

(beat)

There's just something I need from her before this is over.

It's all he's gonna say. Cristo exits the living room, Kip pondering his last statement as we hear:

PHENG (PRE-LAP)

So this "Euro-dynasty brat" wants you to clean 10 billion supra...

INT. FAVELA PARKING LOT - EVENING

Tight on Max and Pheng, sitting, planning their heist:

PHENG

...and you're telling me *he's keeping it in his bloody penthouse?*

MAX

Sorry, what? I was just admiring your new base of operations.

Widen to reveal they're in the back of Pheng's CUBE-VAN, parked on the overgrown outskirts of the favela.

MAX

Got a great minimalist vibe, very--

PHENG

Finished?

MAX

--utilitarian. Yes. Anyway, the guy is the easiest mark in the history of marks. You make it out with even half his stash, you and I are gold.

PHENG

For the kind of money you're talking about, I'll even throw in killing that old bastard from your office for free.

MAX

No longer necessary, but it's the thought that counts.

(sticks out a hand)

We in business?

Pheng smiles, shakes his hand... and we hear something CLICK. Pheng winces. Not in pain -- but holding back laughter.

PHENG

You didn't.

MAX

I did.

PHENG

You scoundrel.

MAX

I know, right?

As Pheng lifts his wrist, we see the SEGMENTED TITANIUM BRACELET that Max fastened around it when they shook hands-- a thin strip of RED LIGHT glowing ominously within it, a little McCormick Industries logo imprinted on the metal.

MAX

This time next year, they'll be putting prisoners in these things.

PHENG

Yes, but on the bright side, it really matches my sunglasses.

MAX

And on the *not-so-bright* side, if you fail to deliver the funds to my account by 7 AM tomorrow, it'll auto-detonate and turn your ass into a Chinese firework.

PHENG

For the last time, I'm Thai.

MAX

So we understand each other.

Pheng eyes the bracelet... and gives a nod as we CUT TO:

EXT. CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Nightfall. Out of the deck of Cristo's penthouse, the water in the infinity pool SHUDDERS as...

Pheng's CUBE-VAN comes in for a landing. The back doors open and Pheng and his crew leap out, mag-pistols in hand, masks on, beating a path toward the penthouse, lights off within as-

INSIDE THE PENTHOUSE

--a BEAM-TORCH cuts a man-sized hole in the glass, which then gets removed with suction-grips, before the four figures slip through into the living room. Guns up, moving silently, they spread out, Pheng's eyes searching...

CLICK! The room's suddenly GLOWING WITH LIGHT and ECHOING WITH LOUD VOICES as Pheng and his crew WHIRL to see--

--the WALL-SIZED HOLOGRAPHIC TV has turned on, playing NEWS at top volume -- coverage from a trial. Pheng's crew doesn't recognize the footage; Pheng does. A chill runs through him.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)  
*We're here on day 46 of the Edward Coleman murder trial...*

FZZZT! One of Pheng's cronies DROPS TO THE GROUND and starts SPASMING -- there's an ELECTRO-DART sticking out of his neck.

PHENG  
 GET BACK--

They dive for cover as FZZZT! FZZZT! Out of the darkness come MORE DARTS, dropping Pheng's crew one by one as--

IN THE DARKNESS OF THE BALCONY ABOVE, a figure aims a SILENCED DART-RIFLE with a HEAT-VISION SCOPE as--

--IN THE ROOM BELOW, Pheng SLIDES UP behind a kitchen island, breathing hard, auto-pistols clenched in his sweaty palms. Peers out to the living room; he's the last man standing. No sign of the gunman. Then his eyes shift to...

THE CUBE-VAN

...still waiting outside, engine idling, repulsors humming. 20 feet away. If he sprints, he's got a chance. Guns up, Pheng takes a tentative step out of his hiding place... just as the TV footage jumps back/replays at ear-blasting volume:

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)  
*Edward Coleman murder trial--*  
 (pauses, jumps back)  
*Edward Coleman murder--*  
 (pauses, jumps back)  
*Edward Coleman-- Edward Coleman--*  
*Edward Coleman--*

**WHIRPOPOPOPOPOP!** Pheng, losing his shit, vaporizes the holo-TV lens and RUNS FOR THE DECK, shooting artwork, furniture, the glass doors, finally DRY FIRING as he sprints--

OUTSIDE

--bolting towards the CUBE-VAN, just as, to his dismay...

THE VAN RISES and WHUMPH! His unconscious DRIVER smashes down to the deck. He looks up to Kip at the wheel, saluting.

PHENG  
 No--

**VR000000M!** The truck SWOOPS IN, repulsor-forces BLOWING PHENG OFF HIS FEET, sending him TWIRLING through a glass patio table. A cut-up mess, he watches his ride vanish into night.

Then... A VOICE from behind him:

CRISTO (O.S.)  
Not a very good feeling is it?

Face like he's just watched a replay of his life with only the shitty parts left in, Pheng turns to see our hero...

CRISTO  
Wasn't too much fun for me either.

Pheng's heart skips a beat as he stares up at the man standing over him. Trying to place this motherfucker.

CRISTO  
I got two questions for you, ready?  
(kneels down before him)  
Question 1: do you know who I am?

A beat, Pheng's brain wrestling to process the information...

PHENG  
...you can't be him.  
(off his look)  
He's been dead for three years.  
Died from an infection on I.F. 35.

CRISTO  
Unfortunately for both of us, you  
got some bad intel. Question number  
two: do you know why I'm here?

PHENG  
(pauses)  
Because...

Pheng spits some blood. And for a beat, his facade drops. A vulnerability surfacing, the man looking every inch his age.

PHENG  
...because I did something that no  
sane person could forgive. And I  
was instrumental in taking away  
that which meant anything to you.  
And because the moral arc of the  
universe is apparently very long,  
but it always leads toward justice.  
That, old pal, is why you're here.

Cristo pauses. Certainty wavering a beat...

PHENG

(smiles)

And because I splattered some rich  
*prick's brains all over his living  
 room* and you got pinched for it.

Pheng BUSTS UP LAUGHING -- and SO DOES CRISTO.

PHENG

Go ahead and shoot, dickhead.

CRISTO

I'm not gonna shoot you, Pheng.

Cristo GRABS HIM, drags him across the deck, face-down through the broken glass, and for the first time, Pheng's eyes fill with genuine, unmistakable horror as we CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - MORNING

In Max's bedroom, the holographic big-screen SNAPS ON, waking Max up with the sound of the WEATHER FORECAST.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)

Ten to seven in South Bay, clear  
 skies in our Christmas stocking--

Max JERKS OUT OF BED, rushes to his desk, flips on the hologram monitor, bashes in a code...

MAX

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon...

Brings up the file for his PRIVATE ACCOUNTS, scans down... and sees the balance. His face darkens.

MAX

...no...

CLICK! The door opens behind Max, he yells over his shoulder--

MAX

Now's not a good time, Elise--

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Elise left, Mr. McCormick.

Max turns to see it's just his servant Martha entering--

MARTHA

She's meeting an art collector--

MAX

Good for her! Thank you, goodbye--

MARTHA  
 Mr. McCormick?  
 (off his look, quiet)  
 There's some policemen at the door.

The blood drains from Max's face. Then--

MAX  
 Tell them I'll be one moment.

She exits. Max sucks in a deep breath, thinks...

...and makes his decision. Throws on clothes, snatches his wallet, grabs a HANDGUN from his desk, and beats a path toward HIS PRIVATE ELEVATOR across the room as we CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT TOWER, GARAGE - DAY

Max STORMS OUT of the elevator and into the parking garage, SNATCHES his keys out of the valet stand and warpaths onward, phone to his ear, hissing out a message for Pheng--

MAX (INTO EARPIECE)  
 Hi, asshole, don't bother calling back, 'cause you know what I just looked at? An account that doesn't have any money in it.  
 (checks watch)  
 Being you've got about 15 seconds before that bracelet sends you off to the Great Panda Express In The Sky, I suggest you take these last moments and ask yourself--

Max stops dead in his tracks -- because ahead of him, inside his precious Porsche, is PHENG: bound and gagged. Muffled screams rising as THE BRACELET LIGHTS UP RED on his wrist...

MAX  
 Motherfu--

KA-BLAM! THE CAR EXPLODES FROM WITHIN, incinerating Pheng, debris-strewn shockwave BLASTING MAX BACKWARDS, setting off car alarms all over the garage.

Blasted in soot and grime and blood, Max gapes at the flaming wreck... then notices he's be stared at, by Joel, the valet.

MAX  
The hell you looking at?!

As SIRENS rise in the distance, Max starts RUNNING.

EXT. MAX'S APARTMENT TOWER - DAY

BAM! A side door leading into an alleyway BURSTS OPEN and Max comes stumbling out into broad daylight--

--sprints down the alley, out into the PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC on the sidewalk, a POLICE AIR-CAR idling outside, cops ahead...

MAX  
...ok, ok, ok...

Throws sunglasses on, ducks his head low, and starts beating a path in the opposite direction down the sidewalk, when--

BOB (O.S.)  
There! There he is!

Max looks up to see BOB, flanked by police, coming around the corner, twenty feet away, pointing at him. Fear spiking, Max TURNS TAIL, the cops BOLTING AFTER HIM as he lurches into--

THE STREET

BAM! He's knocked off his feet by a ground-car, sent twirling to the pavement, gasping as the car skids to a stop. Cops gaining, Max thinks fast, YANKS OPEN the driver's door, a TERRIFIED TEEN GIRL looking at him as he digs for his weapon--

MAX  
Out, princess.

He gets his gun out just as the girl rips something from her purse and FSSST! Sprays him in the face with a lipstick-sized container of MACE. Max JERKS BACK, HOWLING, half blinded and--

BLAM! He FIRES, hits her in the leg, HAULS THE SCREAMING GIRL OUT OF THE CAR, lunges into the driver's seat and PEELS OUT, seconds before the cops can get a bead on him as we SMASH TO:

INT. ELISE'S HOUSE - MORNING

A doorbell CHIMES, and a beat later, the door opens to reveal Cristo -- at Elise's old loft, which she's converted into her studio/gallery. Elise looks surprised to see him.

CRISTO  
We meet again.

ELISE  
Hi, uh... I'd invite you in, but I'm meeting with a collector--

CRISTO  
He's arrived.

Elise shakes her head, watching as he walks in and appraises the sunlit workspace before him. Composes herself.

ELISE  
So what are you in the market for,  
Mr. Cristo?

Before he can answer, she gets a phone call. Glances at the screen -- Max. She sends it to voice-mail as we CUT TO:

EXT. FAVELA ALLEYWAY - DAY

In a dingy, *favela* alley, behind an overflowing dumpster, MAX crouches -- so beat-up, fucked over and desperate that he almost blends in with his surroundings. Into his phone--

MAX (INTO EARPIECE)  
Elise, listen, things are about to  
get a little bit crazy right now  
and I need you to go to the  
vacation home and clear out the  
safe in the master bedroom--

Down the alley, some ROUGH-LOOKING GUYS make their way over, looking for an easy mark. Annoyed, Max AIMS HIS GUN at them:

MAX  
Not now, ok?  
(back to phone)  
'Cause, uh, it's looking like one  
or both of us is gonna have to  
leave town, which means that some  
fast cash is gonna be necessary, so-  
(beat, loses it)  
WHERE IN THE GODDAMN HELL ARE YOU?!

INT. ELISE'S STUDIO - DAY

Elise gives Cristo the tour of her studio...

ELISE  
This piece here is something I did  
last year, oil-watercolor hybrid...

CRISTO  
Tell me about the Ravenwood Cliffs.

She turns, sees he's looking at an old painting on an easel. The same landscape she was working on years ago. The tree-shrouded cabin overlooking ocean cliffs. Still incomplete.

ELISE  
It's... not for sale.

CRISTO

Why not?

ELISE

I'm saving it for someone.  
 (off his look)  
 ...they're unfortunately no longer  
 able to receive it.

CRISTO

And yet you don't toss it out, or  
 paint over it, or...

A held look. For just a beat too long. Fighting nerves, he moves on to the living room, motions to another painting--

CRISTO

Tell me about--

ELISE (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)

*You called it "The Ravenwood  
 Cliffs."*

She said it in a language he *shouldn't* understand, but does. Cristo turns, pauses. Keeps his game face on.

CRISTO

I'm sorry-- what langauge is--

ELISE (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)

*The Ravenwood Cliffs don't exist, I  
 made them up. And only one person  
 knows I named the painting that--*

CRISTO

--is that Latin?

ELISE (IN LATIN, SUBTITLED)

*If you keep lying to me, I'm going  
 to walk out the door, and I will  
 make sure you never see me again.*

Cristo can only shake his head apologetically. Elise stares him down... then turns, makes for the door. And he lets her.

Then--

CRISTO

Why'd you do it?

She stops. Turns. He's dropped the facade. He's wide open, exposed. Confronted with the impossible, her lips part...

ELISE

Coleman--

CRISTO

Sorry, you must not have heard.  
Coleman's dead.

She pauses. Sees him for what he is now: a raw, ragged nerve.

CRISTO

He made the mistake of trusting you people, and he paid with his life, so let's not dishonor the departed.

(off her fighting tears)

While he was locked up, he was given a chance to see someone he loved, once a year, even if it was only on a screen. And once a year, he had a reason to keep going. So you can imagine his surprise when those reasons stopped showing up--

ELISE

Don't. Don't you throw that at me. The news said you were dead--

CRISTO

--and let me guess: you felt so confused that--

ELISE

No--

CRISTO

--you just somehow... fell into bed with Max?

ELISE

That's not what--

CRISTO

And then married him?

ELISE

I tried to kill myself.

Cristo stops. Taken aback. Looks at her.

ELISE

Would've worked too, but Max found me, rushed me to the ER.

(beat)

He was there for me, no one else was, and things just... happened between us. And it took me years to fully admit that it was a mistake.

Cristo takes this in, silent.

ELISE  
I still have this.

Elise goes to a bureau, opens a drawer. From within, she lifts the necklace he gave her all those years ago.

ELISE  
I said I'd hang onto it until I saw  
you again. And you're here. It's  
not too late to start over--

CRISTO  
Sorry, afraid it is.

ELISE  
You came back for me--

CRISTO  
I came back for Max.

ELISE  
What are you--

CRISTO  
He had his father killed and had me  
thrown in prison for it.

She goes quiet. Trying to process what he's just said. Can't quite bring herself to believe it.

ELISE  
...no...

CRISTO  
No? Of course not. He's a lying,  
cheating, pathological narcissist,  
so there's no chance that's all  
just the tip of the iceberg--

ELISE  
It was Perkins, he was the one who--

CRISTO  
Perkins was just the fuse, Max was  
the one who lit it. And I hate to  
be the bearer of bad news, Elise,  
but he is about to be all kinds of  
dead. Sorry if that bothers you.

She takes in all that's been thrown on the table here. And, voice steady, she says what she has to say:

ELISE  
You do that, I can't be with you.

CRISTO

(stares daggers at her)  
He only married you because he  
wanted to hurt me. You can stomach  
that, but not me?

ELISE

Why should I have to "stomach"  
anything? Why should I have to pick  
the lesser of two evils?

CRISTO

I'm nothing like him--

ELISE

You will be to me if you go through  
with this.

(beat)

You ever heard the saying "The best  
revenge is living well?"

CRISTO

Most likely said by someone who  
never really needed it--

ELISE

Does "*losing the person you love*"  
sound like "*living well*" to you,  
Coleman? Because it sure as hell  
doesn't to me.

CRISTO

And what if I don't love you?

A dagger. There's silence in the room, for ages. Then...

ELISE

(a whisper)  
...go.

She STUFFS the necklace into his hand and SHOVES HIM BACK.  
Breathing hard, he looks into her... then storms to the door.

INT. CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

CRASH! A shelf of sculptures gets SWEPT onto the floor. It's  
Cristo, coming into his penthouse, raging. At least until--

KIP

So I take it the ten-year reunion  
didn't go as planned?

Cristo looks over to see Kip exiting the kitchen, a half-eaten caviar sandwich on his plate. Saying nothing, Cristo goes to a locked case on a table, pops it open, starts assembling components for a twin hand-held AUTO-CANNONS.

KIP  
 Tell me something: does this girl  
 love you?

Cristo stops putting the guns together for a moment.

KIP  
 If so? Walk away from this. Mate,  
 if you hadn't got me off that ship,  
 I probably wouldn't even like you--

CRISTO  
 Kip, your assistance is  
 appreciated, but I'm afraid I no  
 longer require your services.

KIP  
 (after a beat)  
 Are you... firing me?

CRSTO  
 Call it "creative differences."

KIP  
Bollocks. You're about to make the  
 biggest mistake of your bloody  
 existence and I seem to be the only  
 one trying to stop you--

CRISTO  
 Get out of my way, or I will put  
you out of my way.

A stare-down... and WHAM! Cristo KNOCKS HIM into a shelving unit, sends him to the ground. As Cristo storms for the door, Kip lurches to his feet, shouting:

KIP  
 I feel bad for you, mate. Even if  
 you get what you want, you'll still  
 be stuck with yourself!

SLAM goes the door as we SMASH TO:

EXT. FAVELAS, BAZAAR - EVENING

A bustling outdoor bazaar in the *favelas*. In a shop window, rows of KNOCK-OFF HOLOGRAM TVs play the news: the manhunt for Max, the CEO-turned-fugitive, in full swing. We pull back...

...to find Max, filthy and sweating, crouching behind a fruit stand, waiting... A COP CAR GOES SWOOPING PAST... and a beat later, he makes his move: running for an idling AIR-TAXI, the CABBLE wrapped up in Haitian-Creole religious radio-talk.

CABBIE  
 (Max yanks his door open)  
 Whoah, heyman--

Max grabs him with his robo-prosthetic arm and HURLS HIM, sends him flying through shop windows, then lurches into the car and BLASTS OFF, almost mowing down gawkers as we CUT TO:

EXT. FLOATING SUBURB - NIGHT

Moonlit clouds and VEHICLE LIGHTS whir past us as we soar toward the ELEVATED ESTATES, hovering quietly above the city below. Pushing onward we go, towards THE MCCORMICK ESTATE, where an AIR TAXI is parked askew in the drive...

INT. MCCORMICK MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Dark inside. Max has turned his family's old home into a vacation house he never uses. Sheets over couches. Dust on the mantles, coating framed pictures of his father.

IN THE BEDROOM

...Max's fingers punch a code into the WALL SAFE, and CLICK! The door retracts, revealing a SEALED METAL CASE inside. Max snatches it, dials in the combination...

MAX  
 C'mon, c'mon, c'mon--

Hauls the case lid open to reveal...

...instead of money, there's a PICTURE.

The one of Coleman and Max at the graduation a decade ago. Coleman's arm around his friend, Max smiling his fake little smile. And all at once, it all comes together for him.

MAX  
 ...no...

Then he notices something reflected in the glass of the frame: a reflection of a man behind him. And at once, the color drains from his voice.

MAX  
 ...jesus, Coleman.

Max's hand JERKS into his jacket for his gun--

CRISTO (O.S.)  
 Bad idea. Take it out, toss it across the floor, turn around.

Max, seething, does as told. Then turns around, they meet each other's gaze. Cristo giving Max that pitiless smile he's been practicing in his dreams.

MAX

Wow. Wow. Perkins, Pheng, now me.  
And I thought I had a busy week.

Max eyes the auto-cannon Cristo's got in hand.

CRISTO

Why'd you do it?

MAX

(after a beat)

Because you were a cancer on my life. And you can't begrudge a cancer patient for getting chemo.

CRISTO

Sure you can, Max.

Max is refusing to give him the thing he wants: fear.

MAX

...got you pretty good though,  
didn't I?

CRISTO

You were on a roll there for a while. Part where you told Elise I was dead? That was my favorite.

MAX

Hey, I tried to give her time to get over it, but she kept sending you those goddamn messages. But you'd be *amazed* how much one little news story can facilitate things.

Cristo keeps his rapidly boiling anger in check.

MAX

Let me tell you, though: once she got the green light? *Whoah*. No stopping her. Was like a starving dog getting its jaws on a t-bone.

(off his building rage)

The things she'd ask me to do to her, just... *filthy*. And that's coming from *me*.

Cristo, losing it, SHOVES THE GUN INTO MAX'S FOREHEAD. Max's smile gets even wider. At least until Cristo says:

CRISTO

An old friend once told me that  
absolution doesn't come in the form  
of a bullet.

MAX

...hell's that supposed to mean?

BAM! Cristo PISTOL WHIPS HIM hard enough to turn teeth to chalk dust and sends him SPLAYING ACROSS THE ROOM. Max hits the floor rolling as Cristo HOLSTERS his gun, then lunges in--

WA-BOOM! Max catches him in the gut with his robo-prosthetic arm, pinballs him through a tall ceramic sculpture, rushes to grab his tossed-away gun. Gets a hand on it, just as Cristo springs at him, sending their bodies sailing through the--

GLASS WALL OVERLOOKING THROUGH LIVING ROOM

--we follow them through the haze of falling shards as they drop and SLAM HARD into the floor with a WHUMPH, gun sliding away from them, under the couch.

Sucking wind, both men find their feet... then come at each other. Unstoppable force, meet immovable object. Grudge match of the titans. Tearing into each other in a house-destroying brawl, locked in mortal combat, damn well getting their money's worth out of their prosthetics, until--

WHAM! Cristo pins Max's arms with his knees, straddles him, wraps his hands around his throat... and squeezes. Waiting to hear his esophagus go snap-crackle-pop. Max, face losing color, struggles, but it's no use. This is about to end, when-

ELISE (O.S.)

STOP.

Everything freezes. It's Elise -- in the doorway, looking ghostly pale, out of breath, scared, but standing her ground.

ELISE

Let go of him.

MAX

--uh oh, plot thickens--

Cristo doesn't let go, still choking Max's throat.

ELISE

Stop it--

CRISTO

That what you came here for, to  
protect him?

ELISE  
 Not him. You.  
 (off his look)  
 I know who you are, Coleman... and  
 this isn't it.

A long beat. Despite his circumstances, Max can't hide his gleeful grin. Until Cristo levels a gaze at him that would make Hannibal Lecter shiver... and tightens his grip.

CRISTO  
 You got the only family I ever had.  
 And ten years of my life. And her.  
 And you know what I get?  
 (tightens further)  
 I get to see the look on your face  
 right now.

Max's eyes bulge, his body spasms, skin going purple until--

Cristo suddenly LETS GO. Bounces Max's head off the ground. Climbs off him, as Max rolls over, gasping for air on his hands and knees, looking over his shoulder to see...

...Cristo -- taking out his phone and dialing a number. Max's face goes wan as we hear a faint ROBOTIC VOICE pick up:

ROBOTIC VOICE (THROUGH PHONE)  
 Emergency services, state your--

CRISTO  
 I'm holding a fugitive in custody.

Elise looks to Cristo, not quite believing what she's seeing.

CRISTO (INTO PHONE)  
 Villa 33, Amalfi Elevated Estates--

MAX  
 --don't do this--

CRISTO  
 Sorry, Max.

We see where Max's eyes are focused: on the GUN, the one that slid under the couch, just a foot or two in front of him.

MAX  
 I don't-- do well when cornered--

CRISTO  
 Then you're *really* gonna hate where  
 you're going--

ROBOTIC VOICE (THROUGH PHONE)  
 Estimated response time--

WHOOSH-BLAM! With prosthetic-enhanced strength and speed, Max grabs hold of the couch-base and HURLS IT OVER HIS HEAD, knocking Cristo on his back and sliding across the floor, as Max snatches the gun and FIRES, bullets shredding through the still-sliding couch as Cristo rolls to get out of the way--

--and a bullet SEARS across Cristo's torso, bringing blood, sending him crumpling to the floor and crying out as--

--Elise scrambles to pull him up, only to get YANKED AWAY by Max, stuffing the gun to her temple as--

--in the distance, SIRENS RISE. Coming in fast. Max, gun up, using Elise as a shield, backs towards the door out to--

THE FRONT DRIVEWAY

--where he stuffs her into the passenger seat of her car, climbing in through the driver's side door, FIRES UP the repulsors and BANK-TURNS out of the driveway as behind them--

CRISTO

...moving as fast as his prosthetics allow -- which is to say  *fucking fast* -- rushes toward the departing vehicle. Back where he started: fleeing the McCormick Mansion to the sound of sirens. Only this time, hell couldn't stand in his way.

CRISTO

MAX--

He gains ground, coming after the car as it TAKES OFF, joining the midnight air-traffic below as--

--Cristo LEAPS onto the tall adobe wall around the villa, racing along, eyes locked on the car 100 feet beneath as WHOOSH WHOOSH! Above Cristo, POLICE AIR CRUISERS swoop in, spotlights hitting him, voices coming over the loudspeakers:

COP VOICES  
PUT THE WEAPON DOWN! HANDS UP!

Cristo BOLTS FASTER, builds up a furious head of steam and--

HURLS HIMSELF OFF THE VILLA WALL

...soaring out over the smoggy neon abyss, legs kicking in the air, arms pinwheeling...

...and BAM! He touches down on the security dome of the neighboring estate, a half "block" away, impact shooting out ripples of static everywhere as he ROLLS and SKIDS...

Stands, gasping, eyes whirring, as he squints down into the SKY FUNNEL, where earthbound traffic descends in vertical columns of light. Catches a glimpse of Max's car entering the funnel, about to vanishing into the mass of vehicles.

CRISTO

No--

WHOOSH! He THROWS HIMSELF down the dome, barely able to get his legs under him as his momentum hits critical mass and--

SPRINGS FORWARD

--off the dome, seconds before he'd otherwise go dropping off into the void, arcing forward through the air--

--BOUNCE-SKIMMING across the roof of a limo-style transporter below, hanging on tight as the vehicle goes down into...

THE SKY FUNNEL

...whirring down through this elevator shaft made of pale white light, stacked traffic sinking towards earth beneath him, upward-heading traffic ROARING PAST behind him.

Dripping sweat, trembling with adrenaline, he clings to the roof of the vehicle as we PULL BACK TO SEE--

--he's only four vehicles above Elise and Max, all of them trapped together in the traffic funnel as we SMASH TO:

INT. CRISTO'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

ABRASIVE PROTO-PUNK plays on Cristo's penthouse stereo. On the hologram-TV screen across the room, THE NEWS is on mute. Kip's stacking money, getting ready to skip town.

KIP  
Fire me? Bollocks, you're fired--

Kip HAULS a heavy cash-case over to the door, when he suddenly stops. Something on the news catches his eye: drone-cam footage of Max, in Elise's car, speeding out of the descent funnel... and just for an instant, Kip sees CRISTO HOLDING ONTO THE ROOF OF A CAR BEHIND THEM.

KIP  
...Jesus...

Kip looks from the TV, to the money, frozen, as we CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

In Elise's car, Max steers, Barely 100 feet off the ground, a SPEEDING METRO AIR-TRAIN whooshing past as--

KA-BLAM! A human shape comes pinwheeling onto the roof the train beside him. Skidding, tumbling, lunging to its feet--

MAX  
Are. You. KIDDING ME?

Cristo. Riding neck and neck with Max, on the train roof. WHIRRERRRR! Max mashes the pedal, cuts across three lanes of air-traffic, trying to fight his way upward as--

CRISTO

--races along the top of the metro-line, SLIDES to avoid overhead signage, pops back up and takes a LONG-DISTANCE JUMP over the street, toward a HOTEL...

...with a GLASS ELEVATOR rising up its exterior. WHAM! Cristo tumbles into the elevator roof, shocked PASSENGERS looking up at the WARPED METAL CEILING inside, as our guy rides upwards, getting ready to make his next move as...

INSIDE MAX'S CAR

--Max JERKS the wheel left and right, trying to fight his way higher through traffic, almost out of the thick of it when--

CRUNCH! Cristo tumbles onto the hood, holds on with one hand, gun aimed, having just vaulted from the elevator to the car. A Mexican stand-off through the windshield.

CRISTO  
Set it down.

MAX  
My pleasure.

WHRRRR! Max JERKS THE CAR SIDEWAYS, Cristo LOSES THE GUN, but manages to grab hold of the hood with both hands, its lid POPPING OPEN under his weight, body dangling over the glittering city below, straining, kicking, before--

--he DYNO-THROWS himself at the ENGINE, grabs on with one hand, RIPS OUT THE GLOWING REPULSOR LINES with the other as--

INSIDE THE CAR

--the dash-screens FLASH WORDS: "**POWER FAILURE -- INITIATING EMERGENCY LANDING**", the car going into emergency auto-pilot--

MAX  
Sonofabitch!--

OUTSIDE THE CAR

Cristo clings to the grill for dear life as the vehicle makes a SWOOPING SPEEDY DESCENT, repulsors FLICKERING and SHORTING OUT as they spiral in for a SCREECHING, LANDING atop...

EXT. MCCORMICK TOWER, LOBBY ROOF - NIGHT

...a familiar place: the glass roof of the McCormick lobby. SHOCKLINES shoot out from the car's impact point. Cristo gets THROWN FREE of the hood as it touches down, his body tumbling along the panels of thick glass, skipping like a stone--

--skidding straight toward the edge of the roof. Ahead of him, the long, steep slope of a GLASS AWNING, shooting down 80 degrees and ending in an abyssal drop toward the city. If he goes over, he's goulash. He tries to dig in with his feet to slow his skid as Elise screams from the car--

ELISE  
COLEMAN!

HE TUMBLES OVER THE EDGE... *but not quite*. Body hanging halfway on the roof, half on the awning. Like a bug ascending a slippery windshield, he tries to pull himself up as...

IN THE CAR

Elise rips away her safety belt as Max, thrown askew in his seat from the crash, reaches for his dropped handgun, as--

--Elise GRABS IT, Max struggles to wrestle the gun away as **BLAM!** The gun goes off -- Max takes a round in his foot. He SCREECHES in pain, Elise scrambles out of the car--

ELISE  
HANG ON COLE--

WHAM! Max LUNGES AFTER HER and tackles her. She whirls at him with the gun, pulls the trigger again... and CLICK! Empty. He SWATS the gun away and pulls her in, elbow around her throat.

MAX  
Hey Coleman, wanna see what happens  
when I do this?

**BAM!** Max SLAMS HIS ROBO-PROSTHETIC FIST into the glass ceiling. SHOCKLINES spread like ice cracking over a pond. Beneath them, a 300 foot drop to the marble lobby floor.

MAX  
(lifts his fist again)  
See that?

ELISE  
(voice choked)  
Don't do this--

MAX  
I'm sorry. He doesn't get to win.

WHIR-CRASH! Max HAMMERS his fist down at the glass, making the bodies on it JUMP like kernels in a frying pan. We WHOOSH UPWARD to see the whole surface is criss-crossed with spiderweb-like cracks. Cristo's eyes whir for an escape, sees only hundreds of feet of fracturing surface all around them.

CRISTO  
What do you want, Max?

MAX  
 I want you to beg my forgiveness.  
 Can you do that, Coleman?

The same question from all those years ago. Cristo pauses... because he sees something: 100 feet up, his AUTO-PISTOL. Dropped askew on an executive-balcony railing.

MAX  
 I said CAN YOU DO THAT?--

WHAM! Max wallows the glass, the shockwave runs up the building, makes the gun TEEETER. Cristo looks to Elise, trying to communicate a message with his eyes -- get ready -- then locks his gaze onto Max. And says two words:

CRISTO  
 You first.

Max's face -- *fine, die*. He BASHERS THE BEJEESUS out of the glass... and the impact KNOCKS THE GUN OFF THE LEDGE.

Sailing out over our heroes below...

Max rearing back to swing again...

As Cristo PLUCKS THE GUN FROM THE AIR--

--and UNLOADS AT MAX before his fist can come down. Bullets sew up his body, the breath catches in Max's throat...

...and his grip releases from Elise's wrist. She's on her feet in a second flat.

CRISTO  
 GO!

SPRINTING she goes toward Cristo, as behind her--

--Max, with his dying strength, throws one last punch--

...and *there's the straw that breaks the camel's back*. RAMP DOWN INTO SUPER SLO-MO, as the following things happen in eye-popping succession:

--The surfaces ATOMIZES beneath Max. He seems to FLOAT in the sea of shards, before it DROPS 300 FEET DOWN TO THE LOBBY FLOOR with a wet WHUMPH. His car SMASHES DOWN a beat later, bouncing and *rolling onto him* as--

--A WAVE OF FALLING GLASS goes shooting out in all directions from the break-point above as--

--Cristo LUNGES at Elise, grabbing her tight and HURLING THEIR BODIES off the roof and onto the downward slope of the long glass awning, milliseconds before the surface behind them vaporizes into airborne crystals.

--Sliding down the awning they go. Chased by a fast-moving tide of falling glass as--

--just ahead, they see it: A METAL SUPPORT BEAM connecting the sloped glass to the roof below, just as--

WHOOSH! The fall-wave catches up with them and they're no longer sliding but FLYING THROUGH SHARD-STREWN SPACE...

BAM! Cristo's hand slams down on the metal support beam, catching hold, still holding onto Elise's wrist with the other, now 200 feet above the marble floor--

ELISE  
Holyshit--holyshit--

CRISTO  
Don'tletgo-- don't--

KA-BOOM! Below in the lobby, the destroyed vehicle ERUPTS IN FLAMES, fireball turning the world beneath their feet a blossoming orange. Elise SCREAMS.

His sweat-slick hand starts to slip on the beam...

Gravity sucking at them both, struggling to hang on...

Their eyes lock on each other...

And suddenly, there's a GUST OF WIND blowing at them.

KIP (O.S.)  
*Hang on!*

Eyes lighting up, Cristo and Elise look up to see--

KIP

--at the wheel of the air-cruiser, repulsors blasting as he gets beneath them, delivering them from doom as we CUT TO:

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - DAWN

Dawn. The sun rises above an abandoned freeway as we dip below an overpass to find the three outside the car, Cristo trading his destroyed shirt for Kip's jacket, Kip mid-story:

KIP  
There I was, back at the penthouse,  
about to jump in the jacuzzi, then  
I saw you on the telly and I'm all  
"Kip to the rescue!" and then--

CRISTO  
Kip?

Kip looks over at him. Cristo hands him a scanner-key.

CRISTO  
You've earned your cut.  
(holds onto the key)  
But I got one last job for you.

Cristo murmurs it to him, and Kip's eyes widen in disbelief. Then, shaking his head, Kip sticks out his hand.

KIP  
Been good knowing you, Robo-Legs.

CRISTO  
You too, Kip.

They shake. Kip climbs into the car, and as it departs...

ELISE  
...so what now, Mr. Cristo?

CRISTO  
I'm considering a name-change.

ELISE  
Interesting. You know, I've always  
been biased toward "Coleman"...

CRISTO  
"Coleman." I can do that.

ELISE  
Are you sure?

It takes a moment before he realizes she's serious. He thinks for a beat... and a little smile slowly emerges on his face.

COLEMAN  
Long time ago, somebody told me...

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Just as we saw in the very beginning: water running from a faucet. Coleman puts his dirty, beat-up, blood-specked hands under the flow, lets the grime spiral away as we hear his VO:

COLEMAN (V.O.)  
 "You're born what you are, you die  
 what you are, and everything else  
 is just noise."

CUT TO: THE BATHROOM MIRROR

Coleman takes out his CONTACTS. Lurid blue irises going back to their natural brown. Takes a RAZOR to his lathered facial hair, his old face gradually reemerging.

COLEMAN (V.O.)  
 But that's not the truth.

CUT TO: A METAL TRASH CAN

A stack of immaculate SUITS gets tossed in, doused with lighter fluid, set ablaze. Coleman watches the flames dance.

COLEMAN (V.O.)  
 No one's born to be anything but  
 what they choose to be.

CUT TO: A FLASHY SPORTS CAR

Kip hops out in front of a modest storefront -- the MCCORMICK FAVELA FOUNDATION. Delivers an envelope to the harried RECEPTIONIST. As he exits, the envelope gets opened: the foundation has just been given an 8-billion supra donation.

COLEMAN (V.O.)  
 And sometimes all they need is a  
 chance to be better.

CUT TO: A BLACK MUSTANG

Coleman, now looking very much like himself, drives along in one of Gregor's old cars, Elise at his side. Sun glints off her locket necklace. Wind whispers in the coastal trees.

COLEMAN (V.O.)  
 What they do with it is up to them.

CUT TO: A CABIN OVERLOOKING THE OCEAN

The setting sun bathes the coast in gold. Coleman and Elise, in silhouette, on the deck. Phantom figures in the dusk.

COLEMAN (V.O.)  
 The die is not cast.

SNAP TO BLACK.