

bolsa negra

written by

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inspired by a true story

(well, actually 99 of them)

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INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - THE MORGAN GROUP - DAY

STEVE SANTOS sits at his tiny desk inside what probably used to be the janitor's closet. He squeezes at a foam Nerf ball.

Steve is thirty-six years old, light-skinned Latino, neatly groomed. He wears a suit from Sears and isn't proud of it.

SUPER: Beverly Hills, California - 1994

Right outside Steve's office: the glaze and polish of a trendy, upscale sports agency.

An ASSOCIATE appears at Steve's door, knocking gently.

ASSOCIATE
Closing time.

Steve sighs, setting down his Nerf ball.

INT. HALLWAY - THE MORGAN GROUP - DAY

Steve stands outside a conference room, watching as:

Three AGENTS -- all white -- sit opposite a dark-skinned Latino ATHLETE.

Steve observes the courtship. Takes a breath.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE MORGAN GROUP - DAY

Steve gently peels the glass door open, moves to the corner.

The lead agent ANDREW SACKS adjusts his three-piece, a smile on his face. Andrew is 40, Ivy-League suit, Ivy-League smarm. He acknowledges Steve with a slight nod.

ANDREW
(to Athlete)
...we handle everything. Arbitration,
taxes, sponsorships, even nightlife.

The athlete (FRANCISCO, early 30s) stares, his eyes slit. He looks at a mammoth contract which sits center-table.

FRANCISCO
I may need some time to... read this.

Steve, sensing his moment, pulls up a chair, extending his hand to Francisco.

STEVE

Francisco, hey. Steve Santos. I've been a fan of yours since you played for the Dukes in Triple-A.

FRANCISCO

No shit?

STEVE

Yes shit. Still remember that walk-off you hit in the conference championship.

FRANCISCO

Yeah man, that felt good.

ANDREW

Steve can help you navigate the contract terms, answer any of your questions...

(then)

En Español, if you need. Steve's actually Cuban.

Steve shoots a look to Andrew. Francisco looks to Steve.

FRANCISCO

They always call you in here for the Spanish-speaking ones?

A knuckle-gnawing beat.

Andrew and the associates rise.

ANDREW

We'll, uh-- let you two... to it.

They exit the room, leaving Steve and Francisco alone.

FRANCISCO

What's with that guy?

STEVE

Someone comes in here any shade of brown, he thinks they need "translating" or whatever.

Francisco laughs.

STEVE (cont'd)

If my Nanna calls me on my birthday, I'll speak a little Spanish. But that's my Nanna. And this is America.

(MORE)

STEVE (cont'd)
So I don't do "en Español."
(lifts contract)
What I will do is lay out exactly
what's in this beast. No bullshit.
Sound good?

FRANCISCO
Yeah, man. That sounds great.

STEVE
Take my word, this place will get you
your money. Sign here, and you'll
only have to deal with me.

Francisco leans back, at ease.

INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE - THE MORGAN GROUP - SHORTLY AFTER

Steve opens the door to a nicely-sized office and sets
Francisco's contract in the door-mounted bin.

Inside, Andrew reclines at his desk, chatting on the phone.

STEVE
I'm done closing out meetings.

ANDREW
(into phone)
One sec.
(to Steve)
What was that?

STEVE
You make things awkward for
prospects. They know what you're
doing, bringing me in. They see right
through it. It's embarrassing.

ANDREW
Hey, we landed the guy, didn't we?
That's a big get! Ya feel me, Pepe?

Steve stares at Andrew. Andrew stares back, a wide smile on
his face. After a moment, Steve leaves the office.

ANDREW (cont'd)
(into phone)
Sorry about that. Just a colleague--

Andrew looks up to see--

Steve STORMING BACK INTO THE OFFICE... a man on a mission... he grabs the phone base off Andrew's desk with both hands and HEAVES it against the wall. *CRASH!*

Andrew sits there, receiver in hand, stunned into silence.

STEVE

Consider that my two weeks notice,
dickhead.

A beat of silence. Steve storms out of the office and SLAMS the door just as we--

--SLAM TO THE TITLE OVER BLACK:

bolsa negra

INT. RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

A convergence of SUITS, FANS and BEAT WRITERS, mostly men.

We're at America's annual baseball orgy.

Steve dices through the crowd, now wearing a fitted designer suit. He walks with a little "fuck you" in his step.

He rolls his head around his neck. Psyching himself up.

SUPER: Boston, Massachusetts - Winter Meetings

Two Years Later

A familiar face catches Steve's attention. It's Andrew, stepping into an elevator.

Steve sprints toward the elevator. Seeing Steve, Andrew mashes at the DOOR CLOSE button.

Just as the door closes, Steve wedges his hand in between.

ANDREW

Steve. Hi.

STEVE

You're dodging my calls.

ANDREW

Our lawyers are handling that. You poached our client so--

STEVE

--Francisco chose to go with me. And last I heard, the court agreed.

ANDREW

Yeah? And how are those legal fees treating you?

STEVE

Fuck you.

The doors start to close again, but Steve forces them open.

ANDREW

Who are you even here for anyway?

(then, smiling)

Did you come all the way to Boston for a backup?

Steve doesn't say anything. Andrew taps Steve's suit.

ANDREW (cont'd)

Nice rental.

STEVE

I bought this.

ANDREW

Sure.

The elevator closes, and as the doors shut...

ANDREW (cont'd)

Enjoy your TV dinners.

INT. ST. LOUIS CARDINALS SUITE - RITZ CARLTON - DAY

Steve sits at a long table, on which rests the fakest, silkiest set of flowers in a jar.

Across from him: Assistant GM WALLY DOYLE, forties.

DOYLE

You're with The Morgan Group, right?

STEVE

On my own now, actually.

DOYLE

Well. Good for you.

A rental tag creeps out from Steve's sport coat sleeve. He surreptitiously slides it under the cuff.

DOYLE (cont'd)

So: Manny Peña. We'd like to offer four hundred over two years.

Steve recoils just a bit. Doyle, sensing the reaction:

DOYLE (cont'd)

It's standard.

STEVE

"Standard." You cram me into this time-slot, your GM and research folks aren't even here. It's insulting.

DOYLE

Look. We love Manny. But let's be honest: the guy is a bench-warmer.

Steve starts to say something but stops himself. Then:

STEVE

You like your playoff chances?

DOYLE

We'd like to think so. Your point?

STEVE

So what if Manny rides the bench? You need him for that crucial pinch-hit in game seven. Someone who doesn't get rattled. A journeyman. Instead, you prefer to low-ball the insurance player. And then whose ass is it gonna be when a late-season injury dashes your playoff chances? Yours, Wally. You're the fall guy.

Steve stands. Steps to the door. Hand on the knob...

DOYLE

Steve.

Steve turns.

DOYLE (cont'd)

Take the four hundred or we cut him.

EXT. MEN'S WEARHOUSE - DAY

Steve walks out of the store and into the parking lot, wearing an undershirt, a brick of a cell phone to his ear.

STEVE

See if you can get me onto an earlier flight home... assuming the change fees aren't too high.

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Lying in a bed with no bed frame, Steve snaps awake as his alarm hits 7:00 am. His eyes open to the spinning pull-chain of a wobbly ceiling fan, which could fall any second.

SUPER: Alhambra, California

QUICK CUTS -- Steve's morning routine:

- Post-shower, Steve shaves his face
- Tightens a tie over his pressed dressed shirt
- Runs a comb through his hair, carefully applies mousse

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

A cramped office. Sloppily spaced-out photos of players adorn the walls. A worn couch is next to a liquor cabinet.

Steve paces back and forth, squeezing a Nerf ball.

At a nearby desk, BRANDY (28) looks at once both harried and in total control, punching at a calculator and filing bills.

STEVE

Seriously? Not one call?

BRANDY

Do telemarketers count? Apparently you won a free cruise to the Bahamas. Also, your mother called.

RING-RING! Steve stops pacing, expectant--

BRANDY (cont'd)

(into phone)

Hello, S-S-I...

(then, to Steve)

It's the collection agency. About the lawyer fees.

Deflated, Steve signals to Brandy "I'm not here."

BRANDY (cont'd)

(into phone)

No, I'm his assistant. I don't have
him now. Okay... right. ...Yes, we
are aware. Yes. Thank you.

Brandy hangs up. Looks to Steve.

BRANDY (cont'd)

A hundred eighty thousand due--

STEVE

--at the end of next month. I know.

BRANDY

This month.

A beat.

BRANDY (cont'd)

Can they take your house?

STEVE

C'mon, no.

(then)

We'll figure something out. Relax.

Steve looks at his watch.

STEVE (cont'd)

I gotta go scout some kid. Can you
look at flights for the Miami
Classic? I should really see
Francisco play.

BRANDY

The Miami Classic's tomorrow. And
isn't he a reserve?

STEVE

Vaughn got injured, so Frisco's
taking his place. As a starter.

BRANDY

You want to max out the credit card
for a game you could watch on TV?

STEVE

What? The guy pays our bills. I'll
surprise him... he'll love it.

BRANDY

Help me understand why you want to splurge money just to show your face at a game.

STEVE

No agent would miss seeing their client play for Team USA. It's a huge honor for him. Besides, the game's against Cuba. Those are my people.

BRANDY

Yeah. "Your people." You only mention your heritage when it's convenient.

STEVE

(faux-serious)

That's insulting. My parents fled communism.

BRANDY

You never called your mom back.

Steve chuck's the Nerf ball at Brandy. She one-hands it.

RING-RING. Brandy picks up the phone.

BRANDY (cont'd)

Hello, S-S-I...

Brandy turns to Steve, mouthing "Francisco." Steve immediately takes the phone from her.

STEVE

Frisco! Aren't you flying out today?

INT. LAX AIRPORT - ARRIVALS TERMINAL - DAY

Francisco speaks into a payphone.

FRANCISCO

Not without my wallet.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve swears silently.

STEVE

Terminal seven? Hang tight.

Steve hangs up, picks up his keys, darts for the stairs.

BRANDY
Sure you don't want me to--

STEVE
I've got this one!

We follow Steve as he steps up the stairs, into--

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

...and through the front door of--

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He bolts to his car parked in the driveway, a seen-better-days 1982 Toyota Camry.

INT. STEVE'S CAR - 405 FREEWAY - SHORTLY AFTER

VROOOM! Steve maneuvers through sluggish traffic.

STEVE
Come on, come on...!

Steve looks at the clock, his mind now insane.

EXT. WEST LA NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Steve's Camry peels into the driveway of a nicely-sized house in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood. He jumps out.

EXT. FRANCISCO'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve looks underneath the welcome mat. Nothing. He tries the front door. Locked.

There's a window next to the door. Steve makes his decision: he locks his elbow and WHAP -- slams it into the window.

Nothing happens. Steve looks around the quiet neighborhood.

Steve reloads his elbow and SMASH -- the glass shatters.

INT. FRANCISCO'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve unlocks the door, dashes inside. A house alarm BLARES.

STEVE

Shit.

Steve makes his way to the kitchen, where he nabs Francisco's wallet from the kitchen island, then--

--dashes back to the foyer where the alarm keypad blinks. He types in a few digits to try and disarm it.

EXT. FRANCISCO'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The alarm still blaring, Steve steps out to the driveway as an LAPD Patrol Car pulls to the curb. Two white COPS pour out.

COP #1

Hands where we can see em!

Steve puts his hands up.

COP #2

(into radio)

Suspect is Hispanic, male--

STEVE

I know the homeowner--

COP #2

Shut the fuck up. Hands on the car.

Steve puts his hands on his Camry. Cop #2 frisks him. Stops at Steve's elbow, which is bleeding from broken glass.

STEVE

Let me just explain--

Cop #1 pulls two wallets from Steve's pocket, inspects them.

STEVE (cont'd)

I'm a sports agent. You know Francisco Diaz? He lives here.

The cops look at each other: of course they've heard of him.

STEVE (cont'd)

He's at LAX. He left his wallet. He plays for Team USA in the Miami Classic tomorrow.

COP #1

(to Cop #2)

License is Francisco's.

STEVE
Are you Dodgers fans by any chance?

They nod.

STEVE (cont'd)
Ever sit behind home plate?

EXT. LAX AIRPORT - ARRIVALS DECK - SOON AFTER

Huffing and puffing, Steve FLIES up the escalator, wedging his way past stationary TRAVELERS, into--

INT. TERMINAL 7 - CHECK IN AREA - CONTINUOUS

--where he turns, heaped in sweat, to find Francisco standing there with his WIFE and two YOUNG SONS.

Seeing Steve, Francisco's family jubilantly runs towards him. Steve hugs Frisco's kids, kisses his wife on the cheek.

FRANCISCO'S WIFE
Steve, you're a lifesaver.

FRANCISCO
You couldn't send your assistant?

STEVE
I was in the area.

Steve reaches into his blazer, hands Francisco his wallet.

STEVE (cont'd)
Good luck tomorrow, buddy.

FRANCISCO
Thanks bro. We gotta run.

Steve waves as Francisco and family power-walk away.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DUSK

Steve sits on the couch, squeezing his Nerf ball, as Brandy uses a Q-tip to treat Steve's elbow with rubbing alcohol.

STEVE
...any window repair company in the Yellow Pages will do. Ouch!

Steve jerks his arm away, wincing in pain.

BRANDY

C'mon. Almost done. And you still
gotta pack.

STEVE

I know my flight's super early, but--

BRANDY

--yes, I'll give you a ride.

STEVE

You rock. I'll reimburse you for gas.

RING-RING! Brandy throws on her headset. Steve jumps up.

BRANDY

S-S-I.

(to Steve)

It's Jackie.

Steve smiles, nods to Brandy, and fits on his headset.

STEVE

Jackie! What's new in Dodger-land?

INT. DODGERS OFFICES - DUSK

JACKIE STONE sits at her desk in a compact office overlooking Dodger Stadium. She's 35, formally-dressed and jaded, with a certain Midwestern wholesomeness.

JACKIE

Nelson Rojas.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Steve looks amused.

STEVE

No hello? Just throwing a name at me?

INTERCUT STEVE AND JACKIE AS NEEDED:

JACKIE

What do you think of him?

STEVE

Not much. Only that he was a great client who defected to TMG and I hope he's a huge goddamn failure. Why?

JACKIE

My bosses are trying to sign him.

STEVE

Of course they are. So you're looking for dirt.

JACKIE

It's a boys' club over here. I'm practically invisible to them.

Outside Jackie's office: laughing MEN IN SUITS stroll by.

JACKIE (cont'd)

Unless, maybe, I prevent them from signing a bust. So help me break the glass ceiling: what's wrong with Nelson Rojas?

STEVE

You think I'm just gonna volunteer precious intel on a silver platter?

JACKIE

Yes I do. At dinner, tomorrow night.

STEVE

Brandy, you can hop off.

Brandy smirks, replaces her headset with Walkman headphones.

STEVE (cont'd)

Can't do tomorrow. But we should get together soon.

A beat.

JACKIE

Are we dating?

STEVE

Well, we go on dates.

JACKIE

When do we go on dates?

STEVE

I took you to see *Primal Fear*.

JACKIE

That was like three weeks ago. And a terrible choice for a date movie.

STEVE

Okay. Dinner on Friday. Can you expense it?

Jackie smiles: typical Steve.

JACKIE

Fine. We'll talk business.

(then)

Before you go: Rojas. It can't wait till Friday.

A beat.

STEVE

He's had knee pain since Triple-A. Think he might need surgery.

JACKIE

Surgery... no shit.

STEVE

Yes shit. See you Friday.

JACKIE

Don't blow me off this time.

STEVE

I'm not that big of an asshole.

EXT. CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS - DAWN

Steve parks his Camry in a ritzy area off Wilshire Blvd. He looks out the window at a FOR LEASE sign on a high-rise that sits adjacent to The Morgan Group's building.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Brandy idles inside her car on the curb. Looks at her watch. After a few moments, Steve's car turns into the driveway. He hops out with a suitcase, dashing to her car.

INT. BRANDY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Steve collapses into the passenger's seat with his luggage.

BRANDY

Cutting it close. Where were you?

STEVE
Looking at some places for when we expand.

She stares at him.

STEVE (cont'd)
What? We're in Alhambra. I can't bring prospects here. I gotta meet em in a cafe like a goddamn peasant.

BRANDY
If we keep spending out of pocket the agency's not gonna grow.

STEVE
Gotta fake it till you make it.

A beat.

STEVE (cont'd)
I, uh, post-dated your paycheck for Saturday, after the money from Frisco's card deal comes in.

Brandy puts the car into gear. Reverses out of the driveway.

BRANDY
Maybe you should post-date it a little more.

EXT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Steve's plane touches down on the runway.

INT. JOE ROBBIE STADIUM - DAY

The crowd is heavy, with the game already in progress. Steve sips a beer in a field-view seat by Team USA's dugout, next to an OLD-TIMER SCOUT (60s).

OLD-TIMER
Which one's yours?

Steve points to center-field.

OLD-TIMER (cont'd)
Francisco? Great arm.

STEVE
Even better wheels.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Now batting: Hector Gonzalez.

Some fans in the stadium ROAR as HECTOR GONZALEZ struts to the plate. Hector is a mountain of a man: tall, hulking, tanned Cuban features, twenty-five years old.

OLD-TIMER
Keep an eye on this guy.

STEVE
A Cuban?

OLD-TIMER
They call him *El Coco*. "The Boogeyman." Plays for the *Industriales*.

STEVE
Ah, the Yankees of Cuba.

OLD-TIMER
See that? He holds the bat like a toothpick. Zonked about a hundred dingers over the fence in practice. Raw power to all fields. Quick hands. He's a mix of Frank Thomas and Albert Belle, minus the attitude.

STEVE
Too bad he's the property of a Communist country that hates America.

SMACK! Hector sends the ball over the wall... and out of the stadium. He rounds the bases.

Steve looks to the scout, who returns an "I toldya so" look.

OLD-TIMER
Too bad indeed.

Hector steps on home plate and gets mobbed by his teammates. Steve watches, wheels turning in his head.

STEVE
Wait... René Arocha. The guy on the Cardinals. Isn't he Cuban?

OLD-TIMER
That's right. Played in a game just like this. Then... missed his flight.

Steve focuses on the Jumbotron as it replays the home run.

INT. TEAM USA LOCKER ROOM - JOE ROBBIE STADIUM - DAY

Steve jukes by half-naked BALLPLAYERS before finding Francisco packing his bag at his locker.

STEVE
What's up, Frisco?

Francisco turns, puzzled to see Steve.

FRANCISCO
Steve? What are you doing out here?

They clasp hands, pull in for a hug.

STEVE
Thought I'd surprise you. This a bad time?

FRANCISCO
No. I mean, I've got some news, but I wanted to wait till I was back--

STEVE
--I'm right here. What's up?

A beat.

FRANCISCO
It's kinda hard to... can we maybe--

STEVE
Come on. You can tell me anything.

FRANCISCO
You're right. Sorry for being weird.
(takes a breath)
I'm going back to The Morgan Group.

Steve pulls back. Shock.

STEVE
What?

FRANCISCO
You've been really great, but I just feel like those guys over there can do better for me and my family.

Steve tries to keep it together.

STEVE
It's a contract year...

FRANCISCO

I just don't think you could land me
a max deal.

STEVE

I see. You think I'm small time.

FRANCISCO

TMG is used to top dollar clients.
They don't get strong-armed.

STEVE

You think I'd settle for any amount.

FRANCISCO

I'm not saying that. It's just--
what's the largest contract you've
personally negotiated? Half a mil?

ANDREW (O.S.)

You don't need to justify yourself.

Steve turns to find Andrew Sacks chewing on a stadium hot dog. Andrew places a hand on Francisco's back.

ANDREW

I'm taking three percent. It was an
easy call.

(then)

Plus, I actually have a law degree.

Steve launches himself at Andrew, who fumbles his hot dog. The two tussle as Francisco gets in between them. The other PLAYERS in the locker room stare.

FRANCISCO

Goddammit guys, grow up!

Andrew and Steve separate, finally cooling down.

FRANCISCO (cont'd)

(to Andrew)

Can you just... give us a minute?

Andrew nods to Steve, smirking his way out of the room.

Steve just stands there, suit disheveled. No words. Until it finally dawns on him....

STEVE

I'm gonna lose my business.

Steve wilts onto a bench. Crushed.

STEVE (cont'd)
All because I got sued... over you,
my now ex-client. I'm... finished.

Francisco pats Steve on the shoulder.

FRANCISCO
Think of it as a fresh start. You
won't have me weighing you down.

Francisco retrieves a small box from his locker.

FRANCISCO (cont'd)
Here, I want you to have something.

Francisco opens the box. Inside: a GOLD WATCH displays Cuban
and American flags. Francisco wraps it around Steve's wrist.

FRANCISCO (cont'd)
Twenty-four karat. Individually
numbered. Everyone on each team got
one: it's a collector's item.

STEVE
I don't want a watch. I want you to
take a second to think about this.

Francisco shakes his head. The decision's been made. He
extends his hand... Steve takes it, reluctant.

FRANCISCO
Love you dude. We had a good ride.
Anyway, I gotta head to the bus...

STEVE
(distracted)
The bus.
(then)
The bus. Shit.

Steve jumps up and dashes for the locker room exit.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONCOURSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve bursts out of the locker room, sprints down the
concourse and out of the stadium to--

EXT. JOE ROBBIE STADIUM - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

--where he spots a trail of idling Coach buses.

Several CUBAN PLAYERS carrying duffel bags board the buses.

Steve side-steps through barricades. He sees Hector, who is feet away from the steps of the bus.

A STADIUM SECURITY OFFICER steps in front of Steve.

STADIUM SECURITY OFFICER
Sir, you can't be here.

STEVE
Hector! Hector!

The officer places a hand on Steve's chest.

STEVE (cont'd)
Listen, he knows me, okay?

Steve powers past the officer, charging straight for Hector.

STEVE (cont'd)
Hector!

Hector turns to see Steve bee-lining towards him.

STEVE (cont'd)
Hector! You played a helluva game.

Steve holds out a baseball and a Sharpie. The security officer catches up and puts a hand on Steve's shoulder.

STADIUM SECURITY OFFICER
Sir! No unauthorized personnel past--

HECTOR
(heavily accented)
He is okay.

The security guy looks at Hector, then nods and steps away.

Hector takes the ball and Sharpie. He's about to sign it, when he sees something written on the ball:

Don't get on the bus

Tucked under the ball, Steve's business card:

Steve Santos - Certified Agent, Major League Baseball

STEVE
I'm a very big fan. You understand?

Hector processes all of this. Nods. Looks back to Steve.

HECTOR
(in Spanish)
I have a family.

Hector signs the ball and hands it back to him, but he pockets Steve's business card.

INT. TEAM CUBA COACH BUS - CONTINUOUS

A TEAM TRAINER (40s) wearing flip-up sunglasses and a red sweatsuit, sits near the front, watching this interaction.

As Steve and Hector shake hands, the Trainer notes the gold Cuban-American watch on Steve's wrist... identical to the watch ticking away on his own wrist.

STEVE (PRE-LAP)
It's practically a fucking
invitation.

EXT. MIAMI - LITTLE HAVANA - DAY

Cooking in the sticky Florida humidity, Steve walks along a sidewalk, his cell phone to his ear.

STEVE
Delay any meetings, push back any
calls. If anyone asks, I'm on a
scouting trip. Which isn't untrue.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Brandy sits at her desk, eyes incredulous.

BRANDY
Right. You're just going to a
Communist country and stealing a
baseball player.

INTERCUT BRANDY AND STEVE AS NEEDED:

STEVE
Not stealing. Helping him defect.
(then)
I guess it does sound kind of insane.

BRANDY
It is insane. All he said was that he
has a family. That's an invitation?

STEVE

Meaning they gotta come too. Fine!
Let's get the whole Gonzalez clan on
a boat then! You said it yourself:
this agency needs to grow.

BRANDY

Glad you listened to me for once.
This Hector guy must be something.

STEVE

He's not something. He's the thing.

BRANDY

So what happens after you kidnap him?

STEVE

I'll get him to a nearby country,
anyone but this one, in order for him
to be considered a free agent. *I'm*
telling you, this guy is a goldmine.

BRANDY

Do you even speak Spanish?

STEVE

I was around it when I was younger.
I'll get it back. How much do we have
in the emergency fund?

BRANDY

Twenty-one thousand terrified
dollars... earmarked for legal debts.

STEVE

Hector can get us all that and more.
Flush it out. Wire it. Overnight my
passport. And book a one-way flight.

BRANDY

Flights.

STEVE

What?

BRANDY

You can't fly directly to Cuba.
There's an embargo.

STEVE

I don't care if I have to go through
Bosnia. Get me to Havana.

INT. GATE 54 - TORONTO PEARSON INTL. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Lugging a suitcase, Steve crosses the airport lounge near a sign that reads: Havana Departures.

INT. RESTROOM - TORONTO PEARSON INTL. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Inside a stall, Steve removes a brown paper bag from a pouch in his suitcase. Shakes out a **HUGE PILE OF CASH**.

He digs out a house key from his pocket, saws into the suitcase lining. With his fingers, he claws the hole wider.

He pulls back his hand a moment. It's *shaking*. CLASP. He grabs the hand, firm. Sucks in a sharp breath.

ANGLE ON: Steve's face -- *what the fuck am I doing?*

Composing himself, Steve loads the cash into the lining.

INT. TURBOPROP PLANE - DAY

Steve is jolted awake as the plane hits the runway. Outside his window, a tiny runway surrounded by dirt fields.

He sucks in a breath: Cuba.

INT. JOSÉ MARTÍ AIRPORT - ARRIVALS - DAY

Steve waits on a slow-moving line of CUBANS and TOURISTS. The room is nearly silent. No AC here. A half-broken TV hangs on a column, showing a low-fi Cuban soap opera.

A buzzer goes off. The line inches forward.

INT. ARRIVALS / PASSPORT CONTROL - JOSÉ MARTÍ AIRPORT - DAY

Steve steps up to a small booth occupied by an unsmiling CUSTOMS AGENT (female, Cuban). He hands her his passport.

She glances at it. Suspicious.

CUSTOMS AGENT
American.

STEVE
You got me.

Steve smiles big as she scrutinizes the passport.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Purpose of visit?

STEVE
...Business.

CUSTOMS AGENT
What is your business?

STEVE
Agent.
(then)
Travel agent.

A long beat.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Where are you from?

STEVE
Los Angeles. USA.

She studies his face, the complexion of his skin.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Before that.

STEVE
...Nowhere. Just California.

The Customs Agent eyes Steve, ever more distrustful. She looks at Steve for what feels like an eternity...

...and THUD. Stamps the passport.

INT. CURRENCY EXCHANGE - JOSÉ MARTÍ AIRPORT - DAY

Steve watches as a TELLER finishes counting his stack of cash, before substituting a stack of PESOS on the counter.

Steve scoops up the pesos, quickly counts.

He looks up to the teller, a glint of suspicion. Looking back at Steve, the teller's expression doesn't change.

Steve nods to the teller, opting to walk away.

The teller watches him go, then reaches into his sleeve cuff where -- like magic -- he slips out a fifty dollar bill.

Seeing Steve exit the terminal, he picks up a phone.

EXT. JOSÉ MARTÍ AIRPORT - GROUND TRANSPORTATION - DAY

Steve steps outside, greeted by the PUTTERING of diesel engines, taxis and classic cars lined up on the curb.

Before he can reach the curb, several MEN approach--

CUBAN MEN
Taxi? / Taxi! / Where you need to go?

Steve moves past them. Walking parallel to the road, when--

A HAND lands on his shoulder, causing him to JUMP. He spins around to see a MAN WITH A CREW CUT (Cuban, 40s).

CREW CUT MAN
You should relax, my friend.

STEVE
I'm good. I'm relaxed.

The Crew Cut Man laughs. Almost friendly.

CREW CUT MAN
You must not worry. Three million
Cubans and two million police.

The man flags down a boxy, Russian-style car for Steve.

CREW CUT MAN (cont'd)
Word of advice: the crappier the car,
the cheaper the taxi ride.
(then)
Welcome to Cuba.

INT/EXT. STATE TAXI - HIGHWAY - SOON AFTER

Steve's taxi passes a building with a large mural of Fidel Castro. Beside it, a slogan: **SOCIALISMO O MUERTE**

Seated beside the CAB DRIVER (20s), Steve takes in stretches of barren land as rain starts to patter the windshield.

The driver reaches just above Steve's knees, grabbing a rusted lever to manually rotate the windshield wipers.

CAB DRIVER
Very difficult to get here from
America. Why are you here?

A beat.

STEVE
I came for cigars.

CAB DRIVER
Ah! My sister works at the factory.
I'll sell you five for forty dollars.

The driver opens the glove box, fumbles out a bag of cigars.

STEVE
No thanks.

Steve reaches for a seat-belt, but the car doesn't have any.

CAB DRIVER
My friend, these are the same cigars
you will get on the tour.

The driver, eyes on the cigars, swerves a bit, barely
missing another car. Loud HONKS all around.

STEVE
Sir. Could you please watch the road?

The driver turns to Steve. Accusing.

CAB DRIVER
You really come here for cigars?

STEVE
Yes.

The driver cuts off a CYCLIST, who yells in angry Spanish.

CAB DRIVER
Then just for you, my friend... five
cigars for twenty five.

The windshield fogs up. The driver rolls down a window.

CAB DRIVER (cont'd)
It's only half price--

He grabs the wheel, swerving a bit as Steve has a coronary.

CAB DRIVER (cont'd)
--you pay more at the factory. It
would be crazy not to take this deal!

EXT. STATE TAXI - CITY STREETS - MINUTES LATER

The taxi chugs through tight cobblestone streets, finally entering Old Havana: stray cats... doors flung wide open... SHIRTLESS MEN on sidewalks... ARMED POLICE at every corner.

INT./EXT. STATE TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Steve cradles a plastic bag full of cigars.

CAB DRIVER

What do you plan to do today? I can arrange for a private boat tour--

STEVE

(over it)

I'm good.

The cab pulls to the curb beside half-crumbling apartment buildings. Steve points to his travel guide.

STEVE (cont'd)

This isn't the hotel.

Outside, a red wooden door BURSTS OPEN, revealing a bony man in his thirties, with striking raccoon eyes. This is RAYMÓN.

RAYMÓN

Hello! Welcome.

Steve watches as Raymón makes his way to the back of the cab, opens the trunk, and grabs Steve's suitcase.

STEVE

Hey, wait--

Steve jumps out of the cab as Raymón lugs the suitcase toward a blue wooden door adjacent to the red door.

STEVE (cont'd)

What the hell is this?

RAYMÓN

Forget the hotel. This is my beautiful casa particular.

Steve lunges for his luggage, but Raymón yanks it away.

RAYMÓN (cont'd)

Don't you want to experience the real Havana? With real Cubans? Or you want to stay in a place with tourists?

Steve considers this... on edge...

STEVE
Ten a night?

RAYMÓN
(smiling big)
Ten is good, you got it. Third floor.

Steve rips some cash from his pocket. Hands it to Raymón, who keys open the blue door. Steve steps inside.

After a beat, Raymón slips a few dollars to the cab driver.

INT. CASA PARTICULAR - DAY

Steve enters a small living room with a rocking chair and a worn couch. Draped across the far wall, a flag of Cuba.

Steve peeks into a bathroom, where a scribbled note taped to a toilet reads: "Don't flush paper."

He steps into a bedroom, where he spots a stained bed linen. A rotary phone sits on a dresser below a painted mural of Che Guevara. Che's gleaming eyes almost mesmerize Steve.

RAYMÓN (O.S.)
I painted that.

Steve flinches, startled to see Raymón behind him.

STEVE
It's very life-like.

RAYMÓN
I like to think he watches over the place. If you need anything, I'm right next door.

STEVE
Actually, know any good restaurants?

INT. PRIVATE RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A house that's been converted into a restaurant. Moody candlelight, classical music.

Steve and Raymón sit at a table in the back corner of the place. Raymón scoops a mound of chicken, ham, and rice into a to-go container as the WAITER drops off the check.

(*Note: *Italicized dialogue indicates subtitled Spanish*)

WAITER
 (quietly to Raymón)
Looks like you found a good one...

Raymón laughs, and as the waiter leaves:

STEVE
 What'd he say?

RAYMÓN
 Oh, nothing.

Steve watches the waiter carefully as he disappears into a narrow corridor. There's an energy about this place that doesn't sit well with Steve.

RAYMÓN (cont'd)
 Stop worrying. Three million Cubans, two million police. No crime here.

STEVE
 Yeah, "no crime." That's what I keep hearing. But you and that cab driver have a nice thing going, huh?

RAYMÓN
 What do you mean?

STEVE
 I wanted to go to a hotel, next thing I know I'm dumped on the curb outside your place. It's a hell of a scam.

RAYMÓN
 Scam? My friend, I'm just trying to make a living.

STEVE
 Doesn't the government give you a job? Isn't that the whole point of the system you guys have here?

RAYMÓN
 I'm a painter. But nobody makes enough at their job. So bolsa negra is the only way to make real money.

STEVE
 Black bag?

RAYMÓN

Bolsa negra. Black market. You know, like a side hustle. Here, everyone does it. So watch for Cubans who try to recommend their favorite places. They get commissions.

STEVE

I'll keep that in mind.

Steve drops cash on the table, then walks out. The waiter takes the money, and slips Raymón a few bills off the top.

EXT. PRIVATE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Steve and Raymón step out onto the cobblestone street.

RAYMÓN

You interested in cigars? I can get you a good deal.

Steve pulls out the cigars he bought from the cab driver. Raymón is unable to hide a grin.

STEVE

They're not authentic, are they.

Raymón snorts a laugh, then quickly turns stern.

RAYMÓN

So. Why Cuba?

Steve gives pause, surveys the empty street.

STEVE

I've always wanted to see the *Industriales* play.

Raymón's eyes light up.

EXT. ESTADIO LATINOAMERICANO STADIUM - DAY

Steve sits beside Raymón in the mezzanine level nearest the first base line in the crammed stadium.

PLAYERS for Havana's *Industriales* warm up on the field.

Steve surveys the field, not finding a familiar face...

STEVE

Where's Hector Gonzalez?

Raymón shakes his head.

RAYMÓN

El Coco? Ah, you won't be seeing him today. Too bad! He's suspended.

Steve tenses.

STEVE

Wait, what? He's suspended? Why?

RAYMÓN

Castro's order. An incident in your country involving some American.

The blood drains from Steve's face.

RAYMÓN (cont'd)

These players are like sons to him.

EXT. ESTADIO LATINOAMERICANO STADIUM - LATER

The crowd CHEERS on a thrown strike to the opposing batter. Swarms of fans rise from seats, walking up the stairs to the exits. Steve hustles down the stairs toward the field.

RAYMÓN

Exit is this way. Steve--

Steve reaches the *Industriales* dugout. He leans over a bar, watching the players pack up. A PITCHER looks up at Steve.

INDUSTRIALES PITCHER

(heavily accented)

Would you like to buy a ball?
Used in game. Five dollars.

STEVE

Yes, I would, actually.

Steve gives him a five. The pitcher hands him a dirty ball.

STEVE (cont'd)

Where's Hector? I want his autograph.

A stillness. Some players within earshot look up at Steve, as if Hector's name was poison. The pitcher SPITS.

INDUSTRIALES PITCHER

*He's sweeping floors at a school by
the airport. He deserves worse.*

Raymón catches up to Steve, heaving and out of breath.

RAYMÓN

What... what are you doing?

STEVE

(ignoring Raymón)

Hector... escuela... aeropuerto...?

The pitcher nods, then disappears into the dugout.

RAYMÓN

Why are you asking about Hector?

Ignoring Raymón, Steve looks around, seeing fans dribbling out the stadium. Then, above the opposing dugout, he sees:

The friendly man with a crew-cut from the airport.

He smiles and waves. Steve limply waves back. And then...

ANOTHER MAN appears from the dugout, in a red sweatsuit and flip-up glasses. The trainer from the Coach bus in Miami. He looks Steve up and down, recognition crossing his face...

TRAINER

Security! Security!

A switch goes off in Steve. He takes Raymón by the arm.

STEVE

Gotta go. Now.

A PLAIN-CLOTHES OFFICER rises from a seat, fast pursuing--

INT. EXIT HALL - STADIUM - SHORTLY AFTER

Steve and Raymón forge ahead past remnants of fans, gunning for a baseball cap VENDOR. Steve slams down five bucks.

STEVE

Uno sombrero, por favor. Rápido!

The vendor, not wired for speed, showcases his selection.

VENDOR

Which hat would you like?

Steve yanks one of the hats from his hands, fits it on his head, and paces towards the exit with Raymón. AHEAD--

A SEA OF FANS moving so slow, it seems like they're stopped.

Steve grabs Raymón's arm as they slice between bodies, and then STOP SUDDENLY, looking straight ahead in awe at--

AN IMPOSING FIGURE, shadowing above all at well over six-feet. Jungle-green army fatigues, fat cigar resting between his fingers. It's FUCKING **FIDEL CASTRO**. The Beard himself.

He chats with CUBAN CIVILIANS, all the while--

--looking directly at Steve...

--who just stands there, mouth agape, entranced by the man from his history books.

Castro inches closer, approaching arms-length, when...

FIDEL CASTRO

American?

Steve half-chokes, mustering:

STEVE

Yes. Yes. I'm... an American.

FIDEL CASTRO

Ah. You're here for... baseball?

Raymón looks to Steve, alarmed, careful not to interrupt.

STEVE

No... well... visiting. I just wanted to... see a baseball game.

The Beard doesn't smile. His eyes drill holes in Steve, who is visibly sweating now... searching for the right words...

STEVE (cont'd)

Cuban baseball... is the best kind of baseball.

THWACK. The Beard pats Steve's arm.

FIDEL CASTRO

Good answer.

The Beard chuckles, then marches off...

...leaving Steve and Raymón with their jaws on the cement.

EXT. ESTADIO LATINOAMERICANO STADIUM - DAY

Steve and Raymón walk with purpose up a street, the stadium fading in the distance behind them.

RAYMÓN

The fuck have you gotten me into?

STEVE

I'll tell you once we get outta here.

Raymón stops suddenly.

RAYMÓN

Why did you come here? Don't give me that tourist bullshit.

Steve spots a police patrol car rolling towards them.

STEVE

Can we please talk about this somewhere else?

RAYMÓN

I'm not going anywhere until you tell me: what do you want with Hector?

A beat.

STEVE

I'm a sports agent. I have baseball players as clients. I get a... commission off of them.

Raymón takes this in.

RAYMÓN

Shit, that's a good job. I thought you had to be white to get that.

STEVE

Generally speaking, yes.

(then)

I need to get Hector out of Cuba.

Raymón takes Steve my the shoulder.

RAYMÓN

Let's get a cab.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

A taxi idles at the curb. Steve steps out of the taxi. Raymón follows. Steve puts up a hand: wait out here.

INT. BATHROOM - PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

Hector mops the floor of an empty stall. Cigarette hanging from his mouth. He peeks in the toilet: streak marks. He struggles to fit on yellow latex gloves. Squats.

STEVE (O.S.)

Hector.

Hector turns, sees Steve. A glare.

HECTOR

Leave. Now. Before you get me in more trouble.

STEVE

I'm so sorry for what happened.

HECTOR

Fuck you.

Hector sticks his gloved hand in the toilet.

STEVE

Let me make it right. You wanna stay here and scrub shit or you wanna live like a god?

Hector removes his hand from the toilet. He stands. Steps close to Steve. He dwarfs the agent.

HECTOR

(switching to Spanish)

I'm trying very hard not to snap you in half right now.

STEVE

(clearing his throat)

*No one would blame you if you did.
But everything you've ever wanted...
I'm the guy who can give you that.*

(*Note: Any time Steve speaks Spanish, it's semi-broken Spanish)

The door opens. A TWELVE YEAR OLD BOY in a school uniform walks in. He takes a look at Hector. SPITS on the floor.

The boy looks at Steve: a stranger.

TWELVE YEAR OLD
You shouldn't be here. I'll tell.

Steve digs into his pocket. Holds up a five dollar bill.

STEVE
Will you?

The boy snatches the bill and walks into a stall.

After a moment:

STEVE (cont'd)
(quietly)
 I'm working on a plan.

Hector reaches back into the toilet.

STEVE (cont'd)
 I can get you and your family out
 safely.

Hector stops scrubbing. He's listening now.

HECTOR
 What is the plan?

STEVE
 I'm working on it. But I need to be
 able to contact you when I'm ready.

EXT. CAMPUS - UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA - DAY

Cuba's oldest institution. Neoclassical architecture, age-stained pillars. Steve and Raymón climb steps to an imposing building.

RAYMÓN
 I have an arrangement with a
 professor here. I give him fresh
 paint; he recommends my casa
 particular to visiting academics.

Walking down the steps, a familiar-looking man passes by...
it's the Crew Cut Man. Steve looks away as the man passes.

RAYMÓN (cont'd)
 Something wrong?

STEVE
No.

INT. HISTORY BUILDING - UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA - DAY

Steve and Raymón stand outside a classroom as a flurry of STUDENTS exits. Finally, PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ steps out, a slight man in his 50s, wearing glasses and carrying a case.

RAYMÓN
Professor.

Álvarez stops. Alarmed at Raymón's presence.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
I told you never to come here.

STEVE
He's here because of me.

Álvarez looks at Steve. Sizing him up.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
(nearly accent-free)
My office.
(to Raymón)
You stay outside.

INT. OFFICE - UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA - SHORTLY AFTER

Professor Álvarez sits at his desk. Steve sits across.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
After Arocha defected, I knew it was
only a matter of time before one of
you came for Hector.

STEVE
So you agree with what I'm doing.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
As a capitalist: yes. As a Cuban: no.

Álvarez locks eyes with the American before him.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ (cont'd)
The humanitarian group I work with is
called Hermanos al Rescate. They get
people off the island and deliver
them to their families in Miami.

STEVE

They ever take someone like Hector?

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

No. And considering his price tag, it will require a hefty fee.

Steve nods. This is a language he can understand.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ (cont'd)

They'll ask for a cut of Hector's contract. And for setting this up: I'll need fifty thousand.

STEVE

Fifty thousand? For what?

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

Travel expenses, lodging, logistics--

STEVE

--Will Hector be able to get citizenship from another country? MLB free agency rules require that--

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

Yes. They will handle all of that.

STEVE

But for fifty thousand? Level with me. Where I'm from, we negotiate--

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

And where I am from traitors get shot. Where are you from anyway?

STEVE

America.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

But where are you really from? You're clearly Latino, yet you make no effort to speak Spanish.

Steve fidgets in his chair. Restless.

STEVE

My parents were born here. I was born in Florida. I'm not anything but American.

Álvarez sets down his eyeglasses.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

So... your parents flee to the States
to let their son live his American
dream. And yet, here you are, testing
your American dream in Castro's Cuba.

STEVE

It's not my dream. It's Hector's.

(then)

Work with me here. Ten thousand.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

(scoffing)

That's an insult. You can leave.

STEVE

I'm not going anywhere, man. I'm
giving you a deal. Cash in your
pocket. And for what? A consultation?

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

You're paying for my expertise. And
my contacts. And my vessel.

STEVE

What if I found my own boat?

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

If you happen to find a Cuban willing
to transport a national icon through
coast guard waters? Twenty thousand.

STEVE

Twelve.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

Fifteen.

STEVE

Thirteen and I'm not going higher.

Álvarez considers this. Nods slightly.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

Is your client on board with this?

Steve hesitates. Álvarez leans forward.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ (cont'd)

Listen to me carefully. I want to
hear it straight from Hector's mouth.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ (cont'd)

(then)

You're a foreigner. Immune from real consequences. But Hector? His wife? They die in prison. And the son? An orphan.

Álvarez lets this float.

STEVE

I'll find a boat. A good one.

EXT. CASA PARTICULAR - SIDEWALK - DAY

The cab driver that drove Steve from the airport ushers a EUROPEAN COUPLE inside Raymón's building.

INT. STATE TAXI - DAY

The cab driver opens the door, sits behind the wheel. He counts a handful of bills, snickering, when...

STEVE (O.S.)

Hey there.

The driver jumps, startled at the sight of Steve lighting a cigar in his backseat.

STEVE

I'll be honest. I'm starting to think these cigars you sold me are fake.

CAB DRIVER

I never sold you anything.

Steve takes a puff. COUGHS.

STEVE

This Cohiba tastes like tree bark. And yeah, my friend... it was you who sold me them out of your glove box.

The cab driver says nothing.

STEVE (cont'd)

Maybe I should talk to la policia about this, ask their opinion.

Steve opens the car door, starts to get out.

CAB DRIVER

Wait. Come back. You want a tour of the tobacco fields? Let's go. Free.

STEVE

I was actually thinking about that private boat tour you mentioned.

EXT. DOCK - OCEANFRONT - DAY

Steve and the cab driver approach ADRIAN (60s, portly), who sleeps on the deck. The driver slaps some dollars onto Adrian's belly.

CAB DRIVER

New customer.

On a dime, Adrian awakens, pivots to charismatic.

ADRIAN

Okay! Very good, my friend! Let's go!

Adrian stands up, beckoning Steve to the water, but not before sliding a few dollars off the top for the driver.

Steve fixates on the water, where--

Moored and bobbing in the waves: a hot-pink, motorized WATER TAXI with a decal of a palm tree and smiling woman.

EXT. WATER TAXI - OPEN WATER - DAY

Adrian steers the boat as Steve looks over every inch of the vessel. The boat's motor RAT-TAT-TATs loud into the air.

ADRIAN

Mojito?

STEVE

What?

The boat's motor rattles so loud, it's hard to hear. Adrian opens a LONG COMPARTMENT in the deck, eyeing a cooler.

STEVE (cont'd)

(shouting)

Now we're talking! Here, let me help.

Steve steps knee-deep into the chamber, gauging its size.

EXT. WATER TAXI - SHORTLY AFTER

The boat's engine is now off and quiet. Steve sips a mojito, lounging on the deck.

STEVE

How far can you take this thing?

ADRIAN

How far you wanna go?

Steve points to orange buoys in the distance.

STEVE

Past there?

Adrian chuckles, rubbing his thumb along his fingers.

ADRIAN

You understand, my friend?

Steve smirks: of course he does.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

Who you taking?

STEVE

A friend.

ADRIAN

Why they want to leave?

STEVE

Same reasons as everyone.

HERMMMM!!! A loud-as-hell horn shakes Steve sober.

Coast Guard. The imposing ship casts a shadow over the water taxi. Adrian waves to a COAST GUARD SAILOR who waves back.

STEVE (cont'd)

They ever stop you? Give you trouble?

ADRIAN

Why? We're just having a nice time.

Steve watches, ever vigilant, as the ship passes by.

EXT. HECTOR'S HOUSE - DUSK

Steve steps out of a cab in a flat, crumbling neighborhood.

He eyes the small house in front of him. Takes a breath and steps to the front door. Knocks.

After a moment, Hector appears at the door.

INT. HECTOR'S HOUSE - DUSK

Hector, Steve and Hector's wife CELIA (20s, guarded intensity) are seated around a table, the food hardly touched. Celia holds a BABY (Iván), looking at Steve warily.

CELIA

Is the raft big enough?

STEVE

Not a raft. It is a boat.

CELIA

And who is driving this boat?

STEVE

*I have this guy... he does tours.
Coast Guard sees him all the time.*

CELIA

How long have you known him?

STEVE

...I just met him.

Celia looks to Hector, fierce.

STEVE (cont'd)

*He knows the waters better than anyone. Plus, I'm paying him well.
(then, re: the food)
My mother used to cook this dish. It wasn't as good as this, though.*

CELIA

I'm sure your mother has as much food as she needs. But because of your government, I only have a pinch of what I used to cook with.

HECTOR

What is the problem?

STEVE

I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to--

CELIA

--*The problem is you let vermin into our home. He doesn't see you as a human! Only a goldmine, no more!*

HECTOR

He is our guest.

CELIA

He's your guest. And the reason I now get dirty looks from the neighbors!

STEVE

If I could say something...

Celia looks at Steve as if she forgot he was in the room.

STEVE (cont'd)

You're right. I'm here because I think I can make money off of him.
(then)

But you're wrong about one thing: I do see Hector as a human. A human who has an extraordinary talent, for which he should be compensated.

Celia takes this in, unconvinced, as Iván starts to cry.

STEVE (cont'd)

Your husband makes the equivalent of about seven dollars a month playing here. I could get you closer to seven million on the open market, easy.

Hector and Celia don't know how to react to this.

STEVE (cont'd)

Think about it. There's nothing your child would ever be without--

CELIA

--*You know what happens to defectors?*

Celia abruptly stands up, walks out with the crying baby.

HECTOR

You should go.

Steve nods, calm. He drops a stack of dollars on the table.

STEVE

For the meal. And your trouble.

Steve hands Hector a paper with an address.

STEVE (cont'd)
Come here tomorrow. Eight pm. Okay?

Hector blankly stares at the paper. Doesn't respond.

Steve stands up, leaves through the front door.

Celia re-enters the kitchen, eyeing the money on the table.

INT. BEDROOM - CASA PARTICULAR - DAY

Steve hunches over four separately labeled cash stacks laid on his bed: Boat, Professor, Professor's contacts, Raymón.

Steve counts the Professor's stack. Then he scours through his suitcase, digging mad, the veins popping from his head.

Thinking a sec, he peels a few bills off Raymón's stack and adds it to the Professor's.

INT. RAYMÓN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Raymón sits by a coffee table, whistling the Cuban national anthem, while Steve paces the small room, wound tight.

KNOCK KNOCK. Steve jumps to the door, opens it. Professor Álvarez steps inside, holding an attache case. Looks around.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
Is Hector--?

STEVE
Just give it a few minutes. Please.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
Five minutes. No more.

STEVE
While we wait, we can discuss--

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
--I believe you are missing a step.

Steve nods. He disappears into the other room.

Steve returns with a brown paper bag, from which he pulls a wad of money and hands it to the Professor, who counts it.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ (cont'd)
It was my understanding I would be
paid upfront. In full.

STEVE
I thought we discussed this. I'll
send you the rest when Hector signs.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
You'll be in Mexico.

STEVE
I'll pay the rest of your share
through the humanitarian group--

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
--You'll be in Mexico, and I'll be
here, in the country I betrayed. Do
you even understand the risk I'm
taking here?

HECTOR (O.S.)
We are all taking a risk.

All eyes swing to Hector, who stands by the front door.
Behind him, Celia cradles Iván.

HECTOR
Pay everything now, Steve. Todo.

A beat. Steve takes a stack and hands it to the Professor.

HECTOR (cont'd)
You are the Professor?

The Professor nods.

HECTOR (cont'd)
I've heard what you can do.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ
I've heard what you can do. Seen it a
few times with my own eyes.
(then, in English)
You are sure... about this?

Hector looks around, studying the room of strangers.

INT. RAYMÓN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Steve, Hector, Celia, Álvarez, and Raymón huddle around a map of Cuba spread across a coffee table.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

On Sunday at noon, Hector, Celia, and
their son will depart on a boat--

STEVE

Wait wait. That's two days from now.
I thought we had more time.

Celia looks to Hector, who looks to Steve. Distressed.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

Things changed. It's two days or two
months from now. Understand?

Steve motions for Álvarez to continue.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ (cont'd)

They will depart on a boat from the
Gulf of Batabano with...

STEVE

Adrian, the boat captain.

(then, to Hector)

*He doesn't know he's transporting
Cuban royalty, so let's make sure we
keep it that way.*

Steve unfurls a Panama hat from a bag. Hector nods.

The Professor traces his finger down to an archipelago.

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

You will go south to a remote part of
Isla de la Juventud, a Cuban island.
You must depart precisely at noon, as
you'll have a tiny window of time to
sail without being intercepted by the
coast guard. When you reach the
island, you will meet my contacts.

HECTOR

(new to the word)

Contacts?

PROFESSOR ÁLVAREZ

(to Hector)

*Gloria and Gerardo Ceballos run the
humanitarian group. You will board
their boat and set sail for Cancún.*

Raymón points at a landmass north of Cuba: Key Largo.

RAYMÓN
Why not go straight to Florida?

STEVE
If he sails directly to the States,
Hector's at the mercy of the Major
League draft. Meaning he can't be a
free agent on the open market.

CELIA
Less money.

Steve snaps his fingers, pointing to her.

STEVE
*Way less money. So you're gonna go to
Mexico first.*

HECTOR
And you?

STEVE
I'll be flying. *Avión.*

Hector just stares. He wasn't aware.

STEVE (cont'd)
Trust me, your boat's tight as it is.

Hector considers this logic.

INT. RAYMÓN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Steve hands Raymón three separate stacks of cash.

STEVE
The captain's cut. The humanitarian
group. And... for you.

Raymón carefully fits the first stack through a cracked tile
in the floor just under the fridge.

STEVE (cont'd)
No one else knows about this?

RAYMÓN
Just her. *Mi madre.*

RAYMÓN'S MOTHER (70s) knits in the dining room.

Raymón fits the second stack of cash through, then the
third... but then pulls it back. Quickly counts it.

RAYMÓN (cont'd)
You're short.

STEVE
I'm sorry. It's all I can pay now.

RAYMÓN
You serious, man?

Steve takes out his wallet.

STEVE
See? This is all I got. Enough for a couple meals and airfare. If I give you this, I can't leave Cuba.

Raymón pokes Steve in the chest, suddenly threatening.

RAYMÓN
Bullshit. I gave you a fucking deal on this. I put this all together.

STEVE
Take it easy. You've been helpful. But there's literally no more cash.

RAYMÓN
To you, I'm nobody. You could leave with Hector and I could die and you wouldn't give a shit.

STEVE
Come on, that's not true.

RAYMÓN
I heard Hector was seen talking to an American sports agent.

STEVE
I don't follow.

RAYMÓN
It was you.

A beat.

STEVE
It could've been anyone.

Raymón stares Steve down.

RAYMÓN
I'm very loyal to my country.

STEVE

How loyal?

RAYMÓN

Help me make some cash and you won't have to find out.

STEVE

And just how am I going to do that? You're a *jinetero*... you're asking me to be a criminal.

RAYMÓN

Cabrón, wake up. You're already a criminal. And after this week, you'll be the most wanted man in Cuba.

EXT. PLAZA - OLD HAVANA - DAY

A lively plaza in the heart of Old Havana. Raymón watches as an ENGLISHMAN (70s) with a cane saunters by. Raymón walks alongside him, holding up a cigar wrapped in gold foil.

RAYMÓN

Where you from?

ENGLISHMAN

(guarded)

Cheshire.

RAYMÓN

Ah, British! Always the kindest. You need cigars? I'm selling half-price.

The man stops, studying the cigar in Raymón's hand.

From across the street, Steve observes the scam. He sucks in a heaping breath, before walking to them.

STEVE

Sir, just to let you know, I heard that anyone selling cigars on the street is scamming you.

ENGLISHMAN

Yes, I read that in my travel guide.

RAYMÓN

I can prove they are authentic.

Raymón hands Steve a cigar and a lighter. Steve debates the offer, then torches the cigar. Puffs on it once, twice...

STEVE
How much you charging?

RAYMÓN
Eight dollars a piece.

Steve casts a quick look to the Englishman, then steps in closer to Raymón, suddenly conspiratorial.

STEVE
Eight bucks for Cohibas?

ENGLISHMAN
Cohibas? Doesn't Castro smoke those?

STEVE
I'm not sure.
(to Raymón)
I'll give you...

Steve counts out a wad of cash.

STEVE (cont'd)
Three hundred for the whole box.

ENGLISHMAN
Do you have any more?

RAYMÓN
Only one box today.

The Englishman uses his cane to cut in front of Steve.

ENGLISHMAN
I can do better than that...

He takes out his wallet, counts out a stack of cash, as Raymón sneaks Steve a look of approval.

Raymón collects the money, and Steve sees someone watching them from a balcony: the Crew Cut Man.

STEVE
(quietly, to Raymón)
Let's go.

Steve power walks around the corner. Raymón follows, catching up to him, grabbing his arm.

RAYMÓN
You're a natural!

Steve shakes him off.

STEVE
Do you work for the government?

Raymón laughs.

RAYMÓN
In Cuba, everyone works for the government.

STEVE
Someone's been... following us. This guy... he was on the balcony...

A beat. Raymón curls his arm around Steve's waste.

RAYMÓN
My friend... you are too tense.

EXT. MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR - PLAZA DE LA REVOLUCIÓN - DAY

An eight-story building. Rows of awnings alternate teal, pink and yellow. Outstretched along the facade, a steel etching of Che Guevara's face in a military beret.

INT. SECURITY DIVISION - MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR - DAY

Our Crew Cut Man, now in security garb, stands before a processing desk. He signs his name on a request form:

Gustavo Bolívar

The CLERK takes the form, reads it. Then looks at Gustavo.

CLERK
You need high-level clearance.

The clerk gets up and disappears behind a corridor.

Gustavo waits as the wheels of communism churn.

INT. PRIVATE ENCLAVE - SECURITY DIVISION - DAY

A GUARD nods to Gustavo as he enters. Inside, a TECHNICIAN waits beside a desktop computer.

GUSTAVO
Internet?

The technician motions Gustavo to a swivel chair.

TECHNICIAN
You can conduct a search for anything. Places... people...

Gustavo rests his hands on the keyboard.

INT. PRIVATE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A home doubling as a restaurant. Steve, Hector, Celia, and Iván are the only ones dining. The OWNER (50s) drops off plates at their table: flank steak, plantains, pork loin.

STEVE
(to Hector, re: Owner)
How well do you know him?

HECTOR
Since I was a child.

Steve is forcing himself to relax -- it's a losing battle.

CELIA
*You should go to the disco tonight.
Be with your cousins.*

HECTOR
The night before?

STEVE
*She's right. You need to do what
you'd normally do.*

CELIA
*So I'll stay home with the baby while
you go out and act like a drunken
idiot.*

INT. CLUB RIO - NIGHT

A hopping crowd. The night still young. At a long table, Hector and two of his COUSINS (20s) recline like kings -- sipping on mojitos, puffing their lungs out.

INT. SECURITY DIVISION - MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR - SAME

Alone, Gustavo sits at the internet station. The only source of light -- the computer screen gleaming on his face.

INT. CLUB RIO - NIGHT

Hector and his cousins salsa dance on the dance-floor. Roping in WOMEN who buzz off the group's energy.

INT. SECURITY DIVISION - MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR - SAME

Gustavo types away feverishly. A search engine on his screen. Alta Vista. Search results populate...

INT. CLUB RIO - NIGHT

Hector and his cousins dance together, drinks in hands, as Hector's cousins are sprawled out on couches, women on laps.

INT. SECURITY DIVISION - MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR - SAME

Gustavo is now hunched over the computer. Breathing audibly. A soft *CLICK* as he leads the mouse down the pad...

As the screen reveals: "Major League" and "Baseball Agent."

Another mouse *CLICK* produces a new screen, with:

Steve's face. Steve's name. A full biography.

Gustavo swivels the computer chair away from the computer, his face filled with a renewed energy.

INT. CLUB RIO - NIGHT

Hector yells over the music to his cousins on the couches.

HECTOR

I'm too drunk!

The cousins yell back, raising their drinks.

Hector shakes his head, drunk-stumbling out of the club.

EXT. CLUB RIO - CONTINUOUS

Hector lurches out the door into the cold, silent night, the loud music from the disco muffled.

A moment passes. Hector stands up straight. Sober.

INT. BEDROOM - CASA PARTICULAR - NIGHT

Steve sits on the bed, packing his clothes.

A harsh RINGING PHONE makes him jump. He pulls the shrieking receiver off the wall.

STEVE

Hello?

A muddled voice on the other end:

MUDDLED VOICE (O.S.)

It's Raymón. We have a problem. Come to my place quick--

The line goes dead.

EXT. CASA PARTICULAR - OLD HAVANA - NIGHT

Steve steps out into the humid Cuban night. He looks at the door to Raymón's apartment.

It's slightly ajar. Swaying back and forth. The sound of WEEPING is coming from inside.

STEVE

Raymón?

Steve pushes the door open and soft-steps into--

INT. RAYMÓN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The place is in disarray. Ransacked.

Sofa pillows, chairs strewn about. Scattered papers. The air conditioner ripped from the wall.

Steve crosses into--

THE DINING ROOM

Another mess. Broken glass. Framed pictures askew.

In the far corner on a rocking chair, Raymón's mother weeps.

STEVE

What happened?

RAYMÓN'S MOTHER
They took him! They took him away!

She loses herself in a fit of tears.

And before Steve can process this--

GUSTAVO (O.S.)
Steve Santos.

Steve whirls around to see Gustavo standing there, holding a pistol aimed at his chest.

GUSTAVO
Hands up. No sudden movements.

STEVE
Let's talk about this.

GUSTAVO
Shh. No slick talk.

The gun pokes Steve towards the sofa.

Steve sits slowly. Gustavo sits on a chair opposite, gun still trained in Steve's direction.

STEVE
What happened to Raymón? Where is he?

GUSTAVO
Cold. Bleeding somewhere... running
out of teeth to knock out.

Gustavo clicks his tongue, shaking his head, as Steve processes all of this.

STEVE
You work for the government.

Gustavo strikes a smile.

GUSTAVO
You know what Cuba's best natural
resource is? Its people. So when I
see a foreigner come and try to steal
our homegrown talent--

STEVE
I'd like a lawyer.

Gustavo scoffs.

GUSTAVO

I think you should have looked up our laws before you came here.

STEVE

I can just leave. Send me out on the next plane and we'll call it even.

GUSTAVO

You know, the internet is such a wonderful tool. And to think it was invented by an American...

STEVE

The Web. Of course. So you found out I'm an agent. Big surprise.

GUSTAVO

That's not all I found.

From his pocket, Gustavo produces a crumpled-up piece of paper, worn with time. He presents it to Steve.

It's a stamped document marked CERTIFICACION DE NACIMIENTO.

The name on it: ESTEBAN SANTOS

GUSTAVO (cont'd)

Seems you were born in Cuba, Esteban.

Steve takes the paper from Gustavo in a daze. His incredulous eyes running over the text.

STEVE

What? No, this is impossible. I was born in Miami, Mercy Hospital. Two months after my parents left...

GUSTAVO

Your parents would risk an escape when your mother was seven months pregnant?

Steve continues staring at the paper. Dumbfounded.

STEVE

This thing is a fake.

GUSTAVO

This country takes great pride in keeping track of its people. Why would you be an exception?

STEVE
My U.S. birth certificate--

GUSTAVO
Forged, likely. Your mother and
father must have really hated Cuba.

Steve looks like he's going to vomit.

GUSTAVO (cont'd)
If you attempt to go to the airport.
You'll be detained. As a citizen.

Steve takes this in. Reality dawning.

STEVE
What do you want from me?

GUSTAVO
A confession.

A beat.

GUSTAVO (cont'd)
Did you come to Cuba with the
intention of aiding Hector Gonzalez
in defecting from our country?

The question hangs in the air.

STEVE
Yes.

GUSTAVO
And you arrived in Cuba with an
excess amount of dollars?

STEVE
There's nothing illegal about that.

Steve looks around, seeing how thoroughly the house has been torn apart, realizing--

STEVE (cont'd)
You're just looking for the money.

GUSTAVO
It's been hidden quite well.

STEVE
And I thought you actually cared
about your country.

GUSTAVO
Government jobs pay shit. Tell me
where the money is.

Steve is silent.

GUSTAVO (cont'd)
Tell me where the fula is, and I let
you go. You might even have enough
time to carry out your plan.

STEVE
Why would you let me go? The police--

GUSTAVO
The police only know what I told
them. They have no idea Hector is
involved. But I give it less than an
hour before your friend gives you up.
So: the money.

Steve weighs this. No leverage.

STEVE
Refrigerator. Broken tile.

Gustavo breaks into a smile. Almost warm.

GUSTAVO
I hope you enjoyed your stay in Cuba.

EXT. HECTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hector and Celia sleep soundly. Iván asleep in his crib.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Hector and Celia sit up instantly--

INT. STATE TAXI - NIGHT

A FEMALE CAB DRIVER (50s) guns it down the highway, a
Santeria *Changó* dangling from her rear-view mirror.

Steve sits shotgun. In the back, Hector's Panama hat tilted
down to obscure his face as Celia comforts the wailing baby.

INT. ADRIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adrian lays in bed, out cold.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

EXT. ADRIAN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Steve bashes at the front door. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

No answer.

He cocks his right elbow, and stops, seeing his bandage. He cocks his left elbow... and *CRASH!* -- smashes the window.

ADRIAN (O.S.)

What the fuck?!

Adrian flings the door open, wearing only underwear.

ADRIAN

You broke my window you asshole!

STEVE

We have to go right now.

ADRIAN

Get the fuck out of here! It's the middle of the night!

STEVE

Adrian. Listen... I will double your pay if we leave now.

A beat. Adrian tries to calm himself.

ADRIAN

That's eight thousand.

STEVE

Yes. Eight thousand dollars.

Adrian considers this. Then nods.

STEVE (cont'd)

Good! Throw on clothes and we'll go.

Adrian doesn't move.

ADRIAN

You pay me. Then we go.

STEVE

I don't have the money right now.

Adrian looks at him like he's crazy.

ADRIAN
Money first.

Hector jumps out of the taxi, hat shielding his face.

HECTOR
The police took the money.

ADRIAN
Police?

STEVE
It's our problem. Not yours. When we get to the island, you get paid.

ADRIAN
I have tour appointments in the morning. What will they think when they see I'm gone?

STEVE
What can I do to make you leave right now? Please, I'm begging you!

Steve gets down on one knee, hands clasped. His eyes focus, eye level, at his own wrist. The watch.

STEVE (cont'd)
See this? Twenty-four karat gold. Muy raro. Only fifty made, from the Cuba-USA game. Collector's item!

He wiggles it off his wrist.

STEVE (cont'd)
A down payment for your trust. Once we get to the island, you get paid.

Adrian weighs this as Steve mentally prays.

HECTOR
Hey! I'm not spending the rest of my life in jail! Let's go! Now!

ADRIAN
Real gold?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - HAVANA JAIL - NIGHT

A low-lit room. Crumbling cement walls.

Raymón sits in the corner, naked. Shivering. A purple bruise on his left cheek. A SECURITY OFFICER stands above him.

SECURITY OFFICER
The names, please.

EXT. DOCK - OCEANFRONT - NIGHT

Steve, Hector, Celia and Iván wait on the dock, two suitcases at their feet. Adrian unties his boat from a post.

STEVE
You'll lay down in there until we pass the Coast Guard.

Adrian pulls a latch and opens the luggage compartment on the floor. It's maybe four feet long, two feet wide.

HECTOR
We can't fit in there.

STEVE
No time for debate. We're doing this.

Hector and his wife look to each other, then get in. Laying fetal, tight. Iván has started to lightly cry again.

STEVE (cont'd)
And whatever you gotta do to quiet the baby... now's the time to do it.

Celia gives Steve a look.

Steve looks down the harbor. The ocean entirely black.

EXT. WATER TAXI - GULF OF BATABANO - NIGHT

The boat motors into the foggy mist, the bay now just a distant speck in plain sight.

Steve crouches on the deck. Beside him, Adrian pilots the boat, momentarily admiring the gold watch on his wrist.

Suddenly, a FOGHORN rattles Steve. Coast Guard.

Steve and Adrian look to each other. As--

UNDERNEATH THEIR FEET

Hector, Celia and child are packed like sardines. Terrified.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - HAVANA JAIL - NIGHT

Raymón sits at the table. Clothed. A mug of coffee in front of him. Still shaken up. The security officer sits opposite.

RAYMÓN

The others are... an American. His name is Steve Santos. And--

A long beat.

RAYMÓN (cont'd)

Hector Gonzalez.

The news, like a firecracker--

SECURITY OFFICER

Shit!

The officer springs from his chair.

EXT. WATER TAXI - GULF OF BATABANO - NIGHT

The Coast Guard ship's ladder DROPS onto the deck of the water taxi, CLANGING loudly.

A COAST GUARD OFFICER descends the ladder and steps onto the boat, which rocks slightly.

ADRIAN

Miguel, is there a problem?

COAST GUARD OFFICER

I've never seen you out this late.

The water taxi's motor is so loud, the men have to shout.

ADRIAN

Special arrangement for my customer.

STEVE (O.S.)

Howdy!

The officer eyes Steve, who sits in a reclining position.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Why are you out this far?

(then)

Turn off the engine.

UNDER THEIR FEET

Speckles of wood crumble through the cracks onto Hector's face. The officer's boot inches away.

ANGLE ON: Iván, hysterically crying on her shoulder. The boat motor still *RAT-TAT-TATS*, only decibels greater.

BACK ON THE BOAT

The officer walks the boat from front to back. *RAT-TAT-TAT*.

ADRIAN

Please. He pays good money for this trip. This is bad for business.

RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT. Steve takes out a cigar from his pocket.

STEVE

Miguel, you have a light?

COAST GUARD OFFICER

This is a Coast Guard inspection, not a Disneyland ride. You are to be silent unless spoken to.

(to Adrian)

And I said to cut that engine!

ADRIAN

It takes a long time to start. And if I can't start it, we'll be stranded.

A beat. *RAT-TAT-TAT*. The officer eyes the floor compartment.

COAST GUARD OFFICER

Are you transporting any contraband?

STEVE

Sure, if cigars count.

The officer lunges to the bow. **Cuts the engine dead.**

Steve and Adrian wince. Their futures dependent on the silence of the night.

--but the only sound to be heard is the officer's crunching footsteps on the deck.

The officer squats by the floor latch. Hand reaching for it.

Through the cracks, Celia clutches the baby close... Hector holds his breath, closes his eyes ... silently prays, when--

The officer stops. Pulls his hand back. Turns to Steve.

COAST GUARD OFFICER
Cigars are only contraband in your
country.

After a beat, the officer walks back toward the ladder.

COAST GUARD OFFICER (cont'd)
Don't go out too far.

The officer climbs up the ladder and off the water taxi.

INT. COAST GUARD SHIP - CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is empty as an emergency telephone rings.

It rings. And rings. And rings.

No one there to pick it up.

EXT. COAST GUARD SHIP - FIRST LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

The Coast Guard Officer steps off the ladder onto the deck.

ANOTHER OFFICER watches through binoculars as the water taxi cruises out of view.

COAST GUARD OFFICER
Crazy fucking Americans.

OFFICER #2
Rich people...

They share a laugh, as they make their way towards--

INT. CONTROL ROOM - COAST GUARD SHIP - CONTINUOUS

--where the phone seems to ring LOUDER, more urgent. Ringing for minutes by now. Blocked by soundproof glass.

CLOSE ON: the shaking phone-- which could well ring forever.

And ever.

And ever.

Until... finally... the ringing stops.

And the control room door opens.

EXT. WATER TAXI - OPEN WATER - LATER

Steve pulls open the luggage latch, revealing the family.

STEVE
We're in the clear!

Steve and Adrian extend their hands, bringing Hector and Celia to the surface. Everyone smiling.

Hector removes the hat that's been masking his face.

Adrian looks at Hector, something suddenly familiar about him. Then, with not an ounce of uncertainty:

ADRIAN
El Coco...

Adrian stands up, in utter awe of the national icon, who is just inches away. He shakes Hector's hand.

ADRIAN (cont'd)
*I didn't know we were taking him!
You're the meanest hitter I ever
seen. I watched all of your games!
(then)
What's all this about?*

HECTOR
I'm gonna play baseball in America.

Adrian takes this in.

ADRIAN
You're defecting.

A beat. Steve and Celia exchange uneasy looks.

ADRIAN (cont'd)
*How am I supposed to go back to Cuba
when I helped Hector Gonzalez escape
the island? They'll throw me in jail!*

Adrian snaps his head to Steve, who's at a loss for words.

ADRIAN (cont'd)
*What did you think would happen to
me? I'm talking about my life.*

STEVE

Let's just... get to where we're going first... and we'll figure something out. I won't leave you hanging. I will fix this. Please.

Adrian shakes his head, steaming mad. He steps to the bow.

EXT. WATER TAXI - ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD - DAWN

Hector, Celia, and Iván are huddled together, sleeping. Steve sits against the side, nodding in and out of sleep.

Adrian reaches down and nudges Steve, who snaps to.

Steve stands. Looks to the horizon: land.

EXT. DOCK - ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD - DAWN

GLORIA and GERARDO wave as the boat slides into the dock.

Gloria (40, Latina) is effortlessly fit, cosmopolitan. Gerardo (45, Latino) is dressed like he's on vacation. Both speak English without an accent.

GLORIA

Hello, welcome!

Gloria tosses a mooring line to Adrian, which he ties to a cleat. Hector and Celia kiss, jubilant.

EXT. DOCK - ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD - LATER

Waiting on the dock, everyone but Hector has disembarked. Gerardo helps Hector off the boat, firmly clasping his hand.

GERARDO

There he is. Our star.

Hector pats him on the arm.

STEVE

I can't believe you guys are here...
I was sure we'd have to wait.

GLORIA

Álvarez alerted us that you had some trouble and would be leaving early.

STEVE

Well, we're very grateful. Thank you.

GERARDO

It's no problem at all, really.

ADRIAN

When do I get paid?

Gloria and Gerardo look at Adrian a moment.

STEVE

(to Gloria)

The "trouble" you referred to... it involved losing some of our... upfront cash. It was stolen.

GLORIA

Is that so?

STEVE

(to Adrian)

Tell you what, take a trip with us to Cancún and I'll be able to withdraw everything I owe you at a bank---

ADRIAN

No. I'm not going to fucking Mexico! I get you here safe. I transport Hector motherfucking Gonzalez--

GLORIA

--Hey, let's not talk business here.

ADRIAN

No. I was told I'd be paid upfront.
He never told me I was taking a
celebrity. They are probably already
looking for him. Now he's a fugitive!
If I go back, they'll arrest me! The
Coast Guard saw me!

A beat.

GLORIA

How much are you owed?

ADRIAN

Eight thousand dollars.

Gloria looks at Gerardo. Nods. Gerardo digs into a pouch near his feet and produces a wad of cash, counts off bills.

He hands the cash to Adrian, who stares wide-eyed at the money, before pocketing it.

GLORIA

And we'll make sure you get back safe. We have an arrangement with Cuba's Coast Guard.

ADRIAN

Really?

Gloria nods, giving a comforting smile.

GLORIA

We've been doing this for years. Besides, they would never admit to letting a boat sail past them.

GERARDO

Never. We'll call them today.

ADRIAN

Gracias!

Steve looks like a thousand pound weight was lifted off him.

Adrian points to the watch on his wrist.

ADRIAN (cont'd)

You want it back?

STEVE

I broke your window. Keep it.

Adrian nods his thanks. Gloria leads him by the arm.

GLORIA

Come. I'll get you some supplies for the trip back.

Adrian follows Gloria, and they disappear around a trail.

Steve plops down in the sand. Hector drops next to him.

HECTOR

You lucky motherfucker.

Steve and Hector share a laugh.

EXT. FAR CORNER OF THE DOCK - ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD - DAY

Steve, Hector, Celia and baby follow Gerardo onto the cabin cruiser. Astonished by the natural amenity of seating space.

STEVE

Some boat you got here.

GERARDO

Beats the hell out of a timeshare.

Gerardo leads them to a counter, where there are cans of soup, a platter of rice, cuts of beef, chips and drinks.

GERARDO (cont'd)

There's a microwave to the side. Milk in the fridge for the little one.

EXT. SHORELINE - ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD - DAY

Gloria and Adrian walk along the sand, as waves lap gently.

ADRIAN

Thank you again. For everything.

GLORIA

It's no problem at all.

Gloria stops. Points out toward the horizon.

GLORIA (cont'd)

There is a current a couple kilometers out. It will take you west. To avoid it, go toward that tiny island just above the horizon.

ADRIAN

(squinting)

I don't see it.

GLORIA

Follow my finger.

Index finger outstretched, she traces the horizon.

ADRIAN

I still don't see it...

And with her other hand, Gloria pulls a small pistol from her belt and--

BANG! Shoots Adrian in the back of the head. His body slumps to the sand.

Gloria kneels down and digs her hand into Adrian's pocket.

ANGLE ON: Her neck where her collar droops. A tattoo of a snake, huge fangs jutting out, swallowing a hawk.

INT. CABIN CRUISER - DOCK - DAY

Gloria steps in, big smile. Sees everyone eating, content.

GLORIA

We all ready for Cancún?

She's met with grateful smiles.

Gerardo looks at her until her eyes meet his... and Gloria nods ever-so-subtly.

EXT. CABIN CRUISER - GULF OF MEXICO - NIGHT

Gerardo at the bow, the boat cuts through deep black water.

INT. CABIN CRUISER - MAIN CABIN - NIGHT

Steve, Hector and family sleep peacefully on two pull-outs.

EXT. CABIN CRUISER - GULF OF MEXICO - DAY

On the horizon, we can make out the high rise hotels of downtown Cancún along the Yucatán Peninsula.

UP AHEAD: a MEXICAN COAST GUARD CUTTER heads directly for the cabin cruiser, COAST GUARD OFFICIAL at the bow.

Gerardo, at the bow, doesn't move the wheel an inch--

He instead removes his sunglasses, making clean eye contact with the official-- who, at the last moment, shifts the cutter's angle, just missing the cabin cruiser.

INT/EXT. TAXI CAB - HIGHWAY 307 - MORNING

A green taxi van blows past an exit sign for Cancún. The party of six from the cruiser sits inside.

STEVE
Wasn't that our exit?

GLORIA
We're set up on the outskirts.

The taxi passes a small baseball field. Steve points at it.

STEVE
We need a place like that where
Hector can work out for the scouts.

GERARDO
Sure, I think we can arrange that.

STEVE
He also needs some cleats. Size
sixteen. The more he impresses those
guys, the better contract we get.

EXT. DIRT DRIVEWAY - OUTSKIRTS OF CANCÚN - DAY

The group walks to a wooden structure with an angular-sloped roof, loft windows with "X"s, and alley doors.

Steve trails in back, his pace oozing slower.

STEVE
It's behind... whatever this is?

GLORIA
No, this is it.

Hector, rocking Iván, looks at Steve. Concerned.

STEVE
It's actually kinda nice. Rustic.

INT. BARN (SAFE HOUSE) - MOMENTS LATER

They enter the door, where inside, an empty space with wood-planked floors. Scattered beds. Clean, yet hardly welcoming.

GERARDO
It's not exactly the Four Seasons,
but given our funding limitations...

Silence. Celia and Hector look at each other, until a soft SCRATCHING sound breaks their daze.

Their heads turn in sync as a field mouse teeters past.

No one says a word.

GLORIA
Meet our son, Arturo...

Nearby, ARTURO (20s, size rivaling Hector) fits sheets onto beds. The hunk of meat gives a small nod and waves.

STEVE
Does he play baseball too?

Gerardo and Gloria laugh.

GLORIA
As you see, we're applying finishing touches to the living space--

CELIA
--This is where we are living?

GLORIA
Since you arrived early, we didn't--

STEVE
--Totally understandable. We were way ahead of schedule.

Steve feels the firmness of one of the mattresses.

STEVE (cont'd)
Box springs. Great.

No one reacts.

GLORIA
We'll let you get settled in.

Gloria and Gerardo exit the room, joined by Arturo.

Celia takes a tour of the premises, inspecting every corner. Finally she stops. Looks at Hector. The baby. Then Steve.

CELIA
We can't stay here.

EXT. BEHIND THE SAFE HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve sits on a rotted bench opposite Gloria and Gerardo.

GLORIA

One of our routes goes to Miami.
Celia and her child can stay at a
safe house there until Hector--

STEVE

No. No more safe houses. There's
nothing closer? Like downtown Cancún?

GLORIA

With all due respect, Mr. Santos, we
can't keep spending out of pocket.

GERARDO

And it's unclear how exactly you will
pay us the two hundred thousand we
are owed after the deal is made.

STEVE

How much did the Professor explain to
you about baseball contracts?

Their blank expressions give the answer.

STEVE (cont'd)

There's a signing bonus paid once a
deal is reached. That money gets
wired immediately. To you. Assuming
we play our cards right, I can get
Hector a bonus of two hundred grand.

Gloria and Gerardo look at each other for a moment.

GLORIA

And you are sure you can negotiate a
signing bonus for that amount?

STEVE

I'm an agent. It's what I do.

EXT. DIRT RUNWAY - NIGHT

An unmarked jet sits on a runway. Its turbine engine WHIRS
to life. On the tarmac, Hector hugs Celia tight, squeezes
Iván's hand. Nearby, Steve gives them a moment.

Arturo brings Celia's luggage up the jet stairs.

Steve steps towards Hector.

STEVE

Sure you wanna go through with this?

HECTOR
America will be better for them.

Steve nods, picking his battles.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Steve talks on a landline phone. Arturo looks on.

BRANDY (O.S.)
You really pulled it off. Holy shit.

STEVE
Not yet. I need you to call the front office of every team in the league.

INTERCUT STEVE WITH BRANDY IN STEVE'S OFFICE:

Brandy scribbles notes on a pad.

STEVE (cont'd)
An exclusive invite to Hector's workout for Sunday at one pm. Talk only to the higher-ups. We don't want the press blowing this thing up.

BRANDY
No press, got it.

STEVE
If anyone else calls... you don't have me. We hold the cards. We're gonna dangle Hector under their noses, toy with 'em.
(then)
What's the number we need? To pay the legal debts and stay afloat?

Brandy opens a ledger. Punches into a calculator...

BRANDY
Well, factoring in my salary, your mortgage, credit card debts and late fees, just shy of five hundred thou.

Steve takes a deep breath.

STEVE
Okay. Five percent of... ten million.
(then)
Anything else?

BRANDY

Your mother called. I said you were out of town. And Jackie kept calling. I had to tell her about the whole Cuba thing. Didn't go over so well.

STEVE

Don't invite the Dodgers front office. Only Jackie.

(then)

I'll set time aside for us to catch up. Tell her we'll do something fun.

BRANDY

Can I tell her which hotel you're at?

STEVE

I'm not at a hotel.

A beat.

BRANDY

Is everything okay?

STEVE

Yeah. Why?

BRANDY

No reason. Except a bunch of things that sound vaguely... ominous.

STEVE

Don't worry. We've got El Coco. And when this thing pans out, you and me are going to the next level, baby.

INT. IMMIGRATION SERVICES - PROCESSING AREA - DAY

Steve and Hector reluctantly tail Gerardo, who cuts a line full of MIGRANTS, maneuvering his way to a DESK CLERK (70s).

GERARDO

Excuse me. Is Carlos working today?

INT. BREAK ROOM - IMMIGRATION SERVICES - CONTINUOUS

Just feet from the clerk, behind a corridor, CARLOS (30s) chows on a chorizo torta he's not enjoying.

GERARDO (O.S.)

Once again, my name is Gerardo.

Carlos stops chowing. He springs up, throws on his work vest and turns the corner into the...

PROCESSING AREA

...where, seeing Gerardo, he curls a smile.

CARLOS
How can I help you today, sir?

INT. PHOTO STATION - IMMIGRATION SERVICES - SHORTLY AFTER

Hector sits on a stool, ear-to-ear grin on his face.

FLASH. A photo is taken. Hector rises.

Carlos pulls Hector's photo from a printer, slips it into a stack of documents, applies an ink stamp to the top of the pile. He hands everything to Steve, who scans it over.

STEVE
Congrats Hector... you're a Mexican
ice vendor.

Hector takes the stack from Steve. Looks at it, chuckles.

INT. CAR - HIGHWAY - DAY

Arturo drives, with Steve up front. Hector, in his Opening Day best, sits in back, twirling a baseball in his hand.

Steve turns back to Hector.

STEVE
You got nerves? Nervioso?

Hector shrugs.

STEVE (cont'd)
Everything you had to prove you
already proved in Cuba. They just
want to see that you're healthy.

Steve turns forward, watching as the hotel skyline of downtown Cancún gets closer and closer.

He smiles. Calm, relaxed. Arturo hits the radio: a pulse-pounding dance track by Real McCoy chimes on.

STEVE (cont'd)
Alright! Western music. Turn it up!

Arturo merges to the highway exit, turning up the radio. His fingers rhythmically drum the steering wheel.

Steve's eyes focus on Arturo's forearm as he taps the wheel: a tattoo of a fangy snake sinking its teeth into a hawk.

And then Steve's mouth hangs open as he sees it...

On Arturo's wrist, in plain sight, a **24-karat gold watch, Cuban and American flags.** Its face glaring at us.

Steve sits there dazed, not daring to say a word, his mind racing in all directions, when--

ARTURO
Should be there in five minutes.

Steve can hardly nod.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A couple-dozen SCOUTS and a few suit-and-tie-clad EXECUTIVES are gathered on a set of bleachers. The old-timer scout from the Cuba-U.S. game is also present.

Arturo's car pulls up. All in the bleachers eagerly watch--
--as natural wonder Hector "El Coco" Gonzalez emerges.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - LATER

The mood in the bleachers is quiet, attentive. Steve sits among the crowd. They watch as:

Arturo, on the mound, soft-lobbs a pitch to Hector--
POP! The ball sails way over the fence.

A murmur in the bleachers. Excited energy.

Steve turns to make eye contact with the old-timer, who nods. A YOUNGER SCOUT beside the old-timer chimes in.

YOUNGER SCOUT
Looks a little famished to me.

OLD-TIMER
How would you look if you just got
off a boat from Cuba?

CLUCK! Another ball soars to another area code.

Steve's eyes don't follow the ball. His eyes squarely beamed at Arturo's watch, when--

JACKIE (O.S.)
Good form.

Jackie, looking at once displeased and relieved to see Steve, is sitting next to him on the bench.

For a moment, Steve can't even speak. Then:

STEVE
You made it.

Silence.

JACKIE
All I needed was a phone call--

STEVE
Can we talk about this some other--

JACKIE
Would it have killed you to just--

STEVE
Yes. It might have.

JACKIE
What?

STEVE
I'm sorry I didn't call, okay? I
didn't even tell anyone. And I feel
awful about skipping out on dinner.

A beat.

JACKIE
I'll let you make it up to me.

She leans in. Close.

JACKIE (cont'd)
I booked a hotel for the weekend.

STEVE

Why would you do that?

JACKIE

Your assistant led me to believe
you'd make time for me.

STEVE

I can't go anywhere with you.

Silence.

JACKIE

Man, does your ego swell when you
find a shiny new toy--

STEVE

It's not safe here.

Jackie processes this.

JACKIE

What's going on?

Steve looks to the outfield where, behind the fences, Gloria and Gerardo watch Hector impress the suits.

STEVE

I'm not sure yet. But whatever it is,
I don't want you to get involved.
Just watch Hector, take notes, and
leave when the other scouts leave.

The crowd gushes over a smash from Hector.

JACKIE

Leave with me. Now. We'll get a cab.

STEVE

I can't.

JACKIE

Then let me call the police--

STEVE

Do not call the police.

Steve grabs Jackie's hand for a second. Then pulls away.

STEVE (cont'd)

I need this.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - ROOM UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

A low-lit room. Confined, yet cozy. Arturo eats a bowl of cereal off his bed as his switch-dial TV plays the news.

NEWS ANCHOR

...over in the sports world we have some breaking news, star Cuban baseball player Hector Gonzalez has reportedly defected to Mexico.

ON TV: A photo of Hector in an *Industriales* uniform.

Arturo, only half attentive, suddenly sits up straight at the sight of Hector's photo.

NEWS ANCHOR (cont'd)

News of his defection came after internal memos from Major League Baseball circles were leaked.

Arturo sets down his cereal, cranks up the volume dial.

NEWS ANCHOR (cont'd)

Experts predict Hector's value to be in the multi-millions, with some hinting at a record deal...

Arturo reaches to a nightstand, snatches up a telephone.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

A TV telecasts the 7 o'clock news report on KTLA when--

Brandy removes her headset, seeing Hector on TV.

BRANDY

Oh shit...

INT. SAFE HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are out. Steve and Hector sleep in adjacent beds.

BOOM! The barn door FLIES open. Gerardo storms inside, Gloria and Arturo behind him.

Gerardo grabs Steve by the shoulders. YANKS him out of bed.

GERARDO

Steve, my good friend. Come with us.

Now fully awake and terrified, Steve stumbles as Arturo forcibly drags him across the room, pushes him out the door.

Gloria stays, her gun trained on the slowly-waking Hector.

EXT. BEHIND THE SAFE HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve is led down an uneven path by Arturo and Gerardo.

STEVE

Where are we going?

As they come to a rocky ravine, Gerardo stops walking. He and Arturo look at each other.

A stream of water is the only thing audible out here.

STEVE (cont'd)

What happened to Adrian?

No response.

STEVE (cont'd)

Tell me you didn't kill him. Please, just tell me that.

Steve is met with silence.

STEVE (cont'd)

Please, guys... I'm on your side. If your goal is to make a good profit, that is. All those scouts who showed up? They came because--

GERARDO

They came because of Hector.

Steve tries his best to appear calm.

STEVE

They came because I'm the guy they know they're going to be dealing with if they want to buy Hector. I'm a licensed Major League Baseball agent! If you negotiate? They're gonna laugh! That's if they take your call.

Arturo pulls out a gun. Points it at Steve.

GERARDO

You misled us about Hector's value.

Arturo places his gun on Steve's forehead.

STEVE

Hector doesn't have any value until we -- until I -- expose him to the marketplace.

GERARDO

The news said he's worth millions.

STEVE

With the right negotiator on your side. Yes. Not with a goddamn bullet in his head. I'll get you more money. I'll get you more signing bonus. I'll get you a bidding war. I promise.

GERARDO

How much more?

Arturo's finger hugs the trigger.

STEVE

Signing bonuses can go up to a million. Sometimes -- rarely -- even more. You keep me alive, I can get you a million dollars.

GERARDO

That's enough.

Arturo lowers his gun.

GERARDO (cont'd)

Signing bonus of two million dollars. That's the number. And if it isn't the number, we'll come back out here.

Steve nods. He'll take that deal.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Field mice scurry away as Arturo muscles an old wooden table into the room. Gloria and Gerardo stand by, arms crossed.

Steve bakes, sweating in a rickety chair, his feet bound. Hector sits against the wall, hands bound.

Steve looks to the wall clock: 2:33pm.

Arturo plops a phone on the table, plugs it into the wall.

STEVE

How many more phones can we get?

GLORIA

You need more than one?

STEVE

Want the two mil? Get me more phones.
And untie me. I like to kick my feet
up when I spit numbers.

A salty beat. Arturo tenses. Looks from Steve to Gloria.

STEVE (cont'd)

(in total control)

I said: do you want two million
dollars or what?

Gloria signals calm to the room.

GLORIA

Give him what he wants.

STEVE

And a Nerf football. Get me a goddamn
Nerf football.

QUICK CUTS OF THE SMUGGLERS SETTING THE ROOM:

-- Gerardo and Arturo dragging in boxes of intercom phones.

-- Setting the phones on the table, unfurling their cords.

-- Flipping through phone instruction booklets.

-- Running cables across the room.

-- Gerardo sweeps a mouse out of the room, shuts the door.

The clock shows 2:59pm.

Arturo stands, handgun drawn, beside where Hector is bound.

Untied, Steve kicks up his feet as he squeezes an off-brand
squishy football. Five dormant phones in front of him.

STEVE

Our target is ten million and two
million. Ten million a year. Two
million dollar signing bonus.

Steve turns to Gerardo and Gloria.

STEVE (cont'd)
Which goes to you. Ten million to
Hector, minus my five percent. Five
hundred thousand, enough to keep my
operations afloat. You guys get a
payday, Hector's family a new life,
and I keep my agency. Everybody wins.

A beat. Steve looks to Gloria.

STEVE (cont'd)
We're gonna start.

Steve grabs a phone. Dials a long number.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Hello, S-S-I...

STEVE
We're all set up. Any calls waiting?

BRANDY
Not yet. Stand by.

Steve sits back in his chair.

GERARDO
What's happening?

STEVE
No one wants to be first.

Gerardo absorbs this.

Silence. Until finally...

BRANDY (O.S.)
I've got Carl Pohlad on line one.

(Note: Lots of phone calls coming. Intercut as necessary.)

Steve picks up phone two, keeping phone one to his ear.

STEVE
Carl! How's the weather in Minnesota?

INT. TWINS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

The TWINS OWNER (80, looks like everyone's grandfather) sits in a sumptuous office overlooking Minneapolis.

TWINS OWNER
Colder than Mexico, I'm sure.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEVE
I don't doubt it.

TWINS OWNER
With Kirby gone, we're looking for
another bat. You know what it's like
to raise a family in the Twin Cities?

STEVE
What's your offer, Carl?

TWINS OWNER
Five years. Three million a year.

STEVE
Signing bonus?

TWINS OWNER
Half a million.

STEVE
Sorry Carl... that won't cut it.

TWINS OWNER
What's your client think?

Steve looks at Hector.

STEVE
He thinks he trusts my judgment.

TWINS OWNER
Okay, Steve.

Steve places phone two back while talking into phone one.

STEVE
Anyone on hold?

BRANDY
No.

Gerardo's focused on the phone that Steve just hung up.

GERARDO
What was the offer?

STEVE
It doesn't matter.

Gloria pulls a Glock from her waist, and **BANG!** Fires it at the wall right behind Steve, who JUMPS.

STEVE (cont'd)
Jeez!

BRANDY (O.S.)
The hell was that?

A cluster of roaches trickles out from the blasted wood.

GLORIA
When Gerardo asks you a question, you answer it.

Steve's shaking now, but tries to play it cool.

STEVE
Three million a year. Half a mil signing bonus. They're always gonna start low. It's how this works.

Before Gloria can react:

BRANDY (O.S.)
John Hart, Indians. Line two.

Steve grabs the phone.

STEVE
John! Finally returning my call...

INT. INDIANS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

The INDIANS GM (47, stern) sits at a table with his STAFF.

INDIANS GM
Yes, Steve. We are definitely catching those vapors.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEVE
What are you giving me, John?

INDIANS GM
It's about what I'd be giving Hector.
A spot in the best lineup in
baseball. A lineup that happens to be
full of Spanish-speaking players.

STEVE
Give me a number.

INDIANS GM
Three years. Four million a year.

Steve's face falls.

STEVE
No thanks.

INDIANS GM
We'd give him a signing bonus, too.

STEVE
I've got another call.

Dejected, Steve hangs up.

STEVE (cont'd)
Any other calls?

BRANDY (O.S.)
No.

GERARDO
What was the offer?

STEVE
Four mil a year. No bonus.

GLORIA
We're not getting shit.

Gerardo crosses his arms, impatient.

STEVE
Anyone, Brandy?

BRANDY
Nope.

A long silence.

GERARDO
You said this would be a bidding war.
(MORE)

GERARDO (cont'd)

(then, to Gloria)

*I say let's waste this piece of shit
and do the negotiating ourselves.*

Steve braces himself, squeezing the base of the phone tight, readying to make a panic move.

Gloria looks at Steve. She's thinking.

HECTOR

Please.

All eyes swing to Hector.

HECTOR (cont'd)

*Put your faith in Steve. He got us
this far. Just give him some time.*

Gerardo looks at Gloria...

She looks at Steve... then at Gerardo... and back to Steve.

GLORIA

Let's hurry this up.

Steve can breathe again.

STEVE

(into phone)

Get me the Cardinals. Wally Doyle.

(to Gloria)

Watch this.

BRANDY (O.S.)

Wally's on.

STEVE

Say we're giving each team a chance to bid. Then tell him the Cubs are the high bidders. Then hang up.

BRANDY

You want me to just hang up on the Cardinals' front office?

STEVE

Yes I do.

Steve rests the phone on his shoulder. Squeezes at his foam football, absorbing the stares from around the room.

After a few moments, Steve puts the phone to his ear. Waits.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Done. Now what?
(then)
Oh shit, Wally's calling back.

Steve picks up the phone.

STEVE
Wally! Talk to me.

INT. CARDINALS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Assistant GM Wally Doyle sits at his desk.

DOYLE
You're that nut in Mexico I've been
hearing about.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEVE
I'm also the guy you low-balled at
the Winter Meetings.

Doyle grimaces, recalling--

DOYLE
Right. Nice hearing from you. What's
this I'm hearing about the Cubs?

STEVE
I just spoke with Ed Lynch. He's
pretty excited about Hector.

DOYLE
The Cubs can't afford Hector.

STEVE
Could be a good fit. Plus, Hector's
got a hard-on for Chicago. He's
touring Wrigley on Monday.

DOYLE
I'm trying to figure out if you're
looking to screw me.

STEVE
How? By giving away free intel?

A beat.

DOYLE
The Cubs are actually serious?

STEVE
They're all in.

DOYLE
I'll call you back.

Click.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Incoming call.

STEVE
Who we got?

BRANDY
...George Steinbrenner.

STEVE
(oh shit)
Great.

Steve readies himself, gingerly picks up phone two.

STEVE (cont'd)
Mr. Steinbrenner. Hello.

INT. YANKEES OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE STEINBRENNER (65, imposing) sits in his plush office.

GEORGE STEINBRENNER
Mr. Santos, I want Hector. Five and a half mil, five year deal. One million for the signing bonus.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve pumps his fist quietly.

STEVE
I appreciate the offer. But I can't accept at this time--

GEORGE STEINBRENNER
--it's New York, Mr. Santos. You can't put a price on that.

STEVE

Unfortunately, the price is all I'm interested in right now. I hope I'll hear from you again.

GEORGE STEINBRENNER

You sure do.

Click.

Steve regards the rest of the room.

STEVE

Five and a half with a one mil bonus. We're getting there.

Gerardo and Gloria relax. Hector takes a breath.

BRANDY (O.S.)

Two calls. Cardinals and Red Sox.

STEVE

Cardinals first. And just put all the calls through. We're set up like a telethon over here.

Steve signals Arturo to assist with the phones. Arturo looks to Gloria, who nods. He pulls a chair beside Steve.

BRANDY (O.S.)

Line three.

RINGGGGGGG.

Steve reaches for phone three, as a tiny roach crawls on the table. He internalizes his disgust, snatches the phone.

STEVE

Hello?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CARDINALS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

The CARDINALS GM (45) sits beside Assistant GM Wally Doyle.

CARDINALS GM

I wager the Cubs can't top six mil a year, for a five year deal. Two million dollar signing bonus.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve relaxes. This is getting fun.

STEVE
Lovely offer, but Cubs have you beat.

CARDINALS GM
Really?

STEVE
Guys like Hector come around once a generation. Talk soon.

Steve hangs up phone three as Arturo hands him phone two.

STEVE (cont'd)
Dan, hello!

INT. RED SOX OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

The RED SOX GM (37) and an AIDE hover over a speaker phone.

RED SOX GM
How much did George offer you?

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEVE
With respect to George, I can't say.

RED SOX GM
Fair enough. Seven million, three year deal. One million signing bonus.

STEVE
Hector's got a family. He needs a longer-term deal at market value.

RED SOX GM
George offered more than that?

STEVE
I didn't say that.

RED SOX GM
Alright hotshot. You'll hear from me.

Click.

STEVE

Hold calls for a second, Brandy.

(to rest of room)

Best offer so far is six million a
year, signing bonus two million.

GERARDO

They offered two million dollars as a
bonus? That's for us. Take that deal.

STEVE

Why take it when we can get more?

GLORIA

More for you or more for us?

STEVE

More for all of us.

Gerardo looks at Gloria. She nods.

STEVE (cont'd)

Brandy, let 'em loose.

RINGGGGG! Phone two and phone four.

Steve snatches up phone two, as phone four rings twice,
three times and...

A fourth time. We're wondering why Steve and Arturo have
their jaws wedged open, until we see--

Perched on the handle of the phone, a plump, winged beetle.

Arturo hovers his hand just above it, until--

SPLAT! Gerardo bare-hands the receiver.

GERARDO

Steve Santos.

(to Steve)

Jackie Stone of the Dodgers.

STEVE

Really?

After a moment's hesitation, Steve takes the slimy phone,
wiping the cockroach guts off his hand.

STEVE (cont'd)

Jackie. Hey.

INT. DODGERS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Jackie sits at her desk.

JACKIE

You've got everybody in a frenzy.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEVE

The offers keep going up. This is gonna work out for us.

JACKIE

Us?

STEVE

I can't talk about it right now... but I wanna do this.

JACKIE

Do what?

STEVE

The you-and-me thing. You asked if we're dating. The answer is yes.

A beat. Gloria and Gerardo are staring at Steve.

STEVE (cont'd)

(to Gloria and
Gerardo)

It's a negotiating tactic.

JACKIE

Can we maybe table this conversation?
My bosses are gonna be calling you.

STEVE

Great. Any idea what--

JACKIE

I have no clue.

(then)

Please be careful.

STEVE

I know what I'm doing.

JACKIE

I really don't think you do.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Ed Lynch, line three. He's not happy.

STEVE
(to Jackie)
I gotta get yelled at by the GM of
the Cubs. I hope I hear from you
again before the end of this.

Steve exchanges phone two for phone three.

STEVE (cont'd)
Ed! How's it--

CUBS GM
Shut the fuck up with your phony
slick-speak. You goddamn used me.

STEVE
C'mon man. It's not like that--

CUBS GM
--don't "c'mon man" me. Everybody
knows how you got Hector. You'll get
a nice fee for this one, but it's all
dirty money and you know it.

Click.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Dodgers on the line. Fred and Peter.

Steve hangs up one phone and grabs the other.

STEVE
Fred, Peter! Talk to me.

INT. DODGERS OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

The GM FRED CLAIRE (late 50s), sits alongside owner PETER O'MALLEY (late 50s). They've waited for this.

DODGERS GM
Ready to do some business, Steve?

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

STEVE
Let's.

DODGERS GM
We all know Los Angeles is the place
for Hector. So let's say eight mil a
year for four years and a million
dollar bonus and call it a day.

Steve looks at Gerardo and Gloria. Nods.

STEVE
Love the numbers. We're almost there.

DODGERS OWNER
Almost?

STEVE
I need a solid ten and two.

A beat.

STEVE (cont'd)
Please. I don't have much time here.

DODGERS GM
We think we put up a really generous
offer. Especially for you, man.

This triggers something in Steve.

STEVE
You're right. It's more than fair.
And I'm respectfully declining your
more than fair deal right now.

DODGERS OWNER
Think it over.

Click. Steve slams down the phone and sits back.

STEVE
Here's the situation. We've got four
teams in play. Yanks, Cardinals, Red
Sox, Dodgers. They all got spending
power and a reason to want Hector.
Now it's about who gets us to the
magic number.

Gerardo and Gloria take this in.

STEVE (cont'd)
Any calls, Brandy?

BRANDY (O.S.)
Nothing right now.

Steve squeezes at his football.

STEVE
Get me the Indians.

After a moment:

INDIANS GM
Stevie! Is Hector ready to play with
his compadres?

STEVE
Um, he might be. I got a number for
you and if you match it, he's yours.

INDIANS GM
Go ahead.

STEVE
Eleven million per year, two and a
half million signing bonus.

INDIANS GM
You're dreaming.

STEVE
That's market value right now.

INDIANS GM
Oh yeah? Then why call me?

STEVE
Professional courtesy.

INDIANS GM
Know what? I'm out of this.

STEVE
John--

Click.

STEVE (cont'd)
Shit.

Phone two rings. Steve perks up, grabs it.

DOYLE
I can do nine and one.

RINGGGG!

STEVE

Wally, this isn't one of your
"standard deals." My best offer right
now is nine and two. Can you top it?

Arturo picks up phone three.

DOYLE

I think that's too steep for us.

ARTURO

Someone named Steinburner.

STEVE

Brenner. Steinbrenner.

(back into phone)

Yanks wanna play. Call back if you
wanna play with them.

Steve exchanges phones.

STEVE (cont'd)

Mr. Steinbrenner!

GEORGE STEINBRENNER

Santos. Listen up. I'm gonna give you
an offer. It is generous, and it is
final. Understand?

STEVE

Yes, sir.

GEORGE STEINBRENNER

Eight and a half million a year for
five years, two mil signing bonus.

Steve thinks a moment. Makes eye contact with Gloria.

GLORIA

What is the offer?

He tactfully waves her off.

STEVE

Mr. Steinbrenner, while that is a
fantastic offer, I need ten million a
year with a two million dollar bonus.

A brief, disbelieving beat, then:

GEORGE STEINBRENNER

You stupid cocksucker. You'll never
do business with the Yankees again.

Click.

Steve puts the phone back slowly, his face ashen.

GLORIA
What was the offer?

STEVE
Eight and a half million a year.

Steve quickly dials phone one.

GLORIA
What was the signing bonus?

STEVE
(into phone)
Are the Red Sox calling?

BRANDY (O.S.)
I don't think they're interested any
more now that the Yankees are out.

GLORIA
What was the signing bonus?

A beat.

STEVE
Two million.

A longer beat.

GERARDO
Two million is what we need.

STEVE
What about what I need? We wouldn't
be here if I didn't get Hector off
that island. I left Cuba in a goddamn
love boat. I'm getting my fee.

Silence.

STEVE (cont'd)
Brandy! Anything?

BRANDY (O.S.)
No.

Steve calms himself.

GLORIA

Get the Yankees back on. Tell them
you'll take that deal!

Steve sags his head.

STEVE

I can't. They pulled out.

A beat.

Gloria tosses a cordless phone to Arturo, who steps outside.

Gerardo rises from his chair, withdraws his firearm and
SWACK -- pistol-whips Steve. Blood streams from his nose.

Steve writhes in pain, sleeveing some blood off.

BRANDY

I have, umm--

STEVE

Which team?

BRANDY

Not a team.

STEVE

Who?

BRANDY

Celia Gonzalez.

A beat.

STEVE

Put it through.

Steve grabs phone one.

CELIA (O.S.)

Please Steve. Finish the deal.

STEVE

Great to hear from you.

A heavy beat. Steve briefly hones his eyes at Hector.

STEVE (cont'd)

Don't worry. We're real close.

CELIA (O.S.)

Make the deal or they'll kill us--

Click. The line goes dead.

On the other end of the line, Brandy is sheet-white.

STEVE

(to Gloria)

That was... a friend from the Expos.
He read the news. We're a huge story.

GLORIA

No... that was Celia Gonzalez.

Hector perks up. Looks at Steve.

HECTOR

Celia? What did she say?

A beat. Arturo returns, holding the cordless phone.

STEVE

She said she's okay.

GLORIA

Um... I think it was more like: "make
a deal fast or they'll shoot us."

(to Steve)

Am I close?

HECTOR

Don't you fucking touch her!

Steve, avoiding Hector's teary glare, speaks into the phone:

STEVE

Get me the Cardinals. Wally Doyle.

Steve slowly picks up phone two.

DOYLE

This is Wally.

STEVE

Hector likes what the Cardinals have
to offer.

DOYLE

Good. We're in agreement there.

STEVE

I need ten and two from you.

DOYLE

George didn't get you there, huh.

STEVE

Bright lights, big media market--
just not ideal for him--

GLORIA

Less talking, get a number.

HECTOR

Steve! Close the deal!

Gloria places the barrel of her gun to Steve's temple.

DOYLE

New York not "ideal?" Steve, what are
you up to--?

STEVE

You've got the purse. Give me ten and
two and we'll get this done.

A beat.

DOYLE

No.

STEVE

No?

DOYLE

You sound desperate.

STEVE

I'm not desperate.

He eyes the handgun pushed against his head.

DOYLE

Well, go make it with someone else.
The Cardinals are out.

Click. Steve replaces the receiver, solemn.

He looks at the rest of the room.

STEVE

We're down to two teams.

The room tenses.

STEVE (cont'd)

When I'm on the phone, trying to make
a deal, I have a modest request:
don't point a gun at me.

Gloria and Steve are in a heated stare down.

Gloria blinks, slowly lowers the gun.

Steve rubs his temple, a barrel-sized imprint on his skin.

STEVE (cont'd)
Brandy... get Jackie Stone.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Line two.

Steve takes the phone.

JACKIE
I don't think they can afford your asking price.

STEVE
I need you to try talking to them.

JACKIE
They're in a closed meeting and if they wanted my opinion, they would--

STEVE
You're the only member of the Dodgers to see Hector up close.

No response. Steve turns to Hector. Fear in his eyes.

STEVE (cont'd)
I gotta close this thing. Please.

A beat.

JACKIE
I could lose my job over this.
(then, after a beat)
I'll take a walk down the hall.

Click.

STEVE
(to Gloria)
I've got an insider in the Dodgers organization. They'll go for it.

GERARDO
Two million for us. Or we take over.
And you're in the ground.

Steve nods.

STEVE
Brandy, anything?

BRANDY (O.S.)
No.

A beat.

STEVE
Try the Red Sox.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Red Sox said they're pulling out.

STEVE
Shit. Shit. Shit!

Steve hammers the phone into the table.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Steve. Steve!

Steve puts the phone back to his ear.

BRANDY
Morgan Group is on. Andrew Sacks.

STEVE
What the fuck?
(then)
Put him through.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE MORGAN GROUP - CONTINUOUS

Andrew leans over a speaker phone while a couple well-dressed PARTNERS linger.

ANDREW
Cuba, huh? Hell of a move. I gotta hand it to you, you've got hustle.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Steve straightens his posture.

STEVE
I'm under the gun. What do you want?

ANDREW
We want you back. With Hector. We'll make it worth your while.

STEVE
But... you sued me.

ANDREW
What if we took care of all those legal debts and made you partner?

Steve thinks on this for a moment.

STEVE
And if I say no?

ANDREW
I know for a fact the Dodgers are your best bet right now. But they have the purse for just one right-fielder. Which is why I'm dropping the asking price for Nelson Rojas.

Steve tightens his grip on the phone. Fuming.

ANDREW (cont'd)
I make one phone call to Fred and Peter and they'll pull your offer.
(then)
So, whatty a say?

STEVE
I say: fuck off.

He slams the receiver down, and brings it back to his ear. Gloria and Gerardo stare at Steve, quizzical.

STEVE (cont'd)
Old business.
(into phone)
Brandy, get me the Dodgers. Now.

A beat.

STEVE (cont'd)
Brandy--

BRANDY (O.S.)
Tried them. We're on hold.

STEVE
Shit.

Gerardo stands. Takes out his pistol and walks to Steve.

STEVE (cont'd)
I'm asking you for time.

GERARDO

You've been asking for that already.

STEVE

We're close.

GERARDO

Not close enough.

STEVE

I need minutes.

GERARDO

Last time you made a call you fucked it up. Now no one is calling!

HECTOR

Don't shoot!

Gerardo wheels around.

GERARDO

Speak one more time, and I'll slice a finger off your throwing hand.

INT. DODGERS OFFICES - WAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dodgers BRASS, including the Owner and GM, huddle around a wood-laminate table, in serious talks, when they hear--

--high-heels CLICK-CLONKING on the marble floor. All heads swivel to... Jackie, standing there.

JACKIE

We have to sign Hector Gonzalez.

OWNER

(to the table)

Who's she?

DODGERS GM

Jackie Stone. Research department.

(to Jackie)

Do you know something we don't know?

JACKIE

I just spoke with Hector's agent and he says the Cardinals are all in at ten and a half, but he'll settle for ten so Hector can play in LA.

DODGERS GM
ESPN says Cubs are the high bidders.

JACKIE
The Cubs? That story's just a plant.

OWNER
We can have a proven All-Star in
Nelson Rojas for cheaper.

JACKIE
Rojas is hiding a knee injury.

The Owner looks to the GM, who can only shrug.

JACKIE (cont'd)
Watch tape of any recent game. He
doesn't run hard. He won't even pass
a physical. But he will need surgery.

Jackie now has the room.

JACKIE (cont'd)
Hector's got baseball in his blood.
He sleeps in his batting gloves. I
just scouted him. The guy's a tank!
(then)
He's not perfect. A raw talent. But
he's a grinder. Likable. Fan-
friendly. He's an investment, I know.
But we're going to lose him if you
don't get on the phone and bid now.

The owner looks to the phone, poker-faced.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Gloria takes the phone from Steve's hand, sets it down on
the table. Gerardo grips his pistol.

GERARDO
Time's up. Let's go, start walking.

Steve grips the foundation of a phone, tangles a cord around
his neck with the receiver dangling at his mouth.

STEVE
I just wanna know--

Steve starts spinning, the cord now cocooning him.

GERARDO

The fuck you doing? Drop it and--

STEVE

--I wanna know your next steps after you shoot me. Literally, what are you going to do?

Gerardo tries to pry the phone from Steve's hands.

GERARDO

Drop the phone and start walking!

But Steve is stuck, held hostage inside the phone's wires.

Gerardo haphazardly yanks at the cord around Steve's neck.

GLORIA

Don't unplug it!

JUST THEN: the faint sound of YELLING through the phone--

--Gloria lifts the receiver, brings it to Steve's ear...

BRANDY (O.S.)

We've got the Dodgers on the line!

STEVE

Dodgers! They called!

Gerardo hesitates. Lowers his gun.

STEVE (cont'd)

Is it Fred? Peter?

BRANDY

The Dodgers aren't on the line.
Just... buying you some time.

Steve tries not to react. Starts to untangle the wires.

STEVE

Good. Put them through.

He grabs phone two. Takes a seat, still untangling.

STEVE (cont'd)

Now, about that signing bonus...

BRANDY

Right, okay. Let's just say they're thinking about it. Sell me.

STEVE
He's got... a great spirit. Upbeat.

BRANDY
Okay.

Steve and Hector make eye contact.

STEVE
He's a good guy, too. That I can
vouch for. I haven't always treated
him well, but he's a true class act.
And he doesn't deserve this.

BRANDY
That was really nice, but the Dodgers
are on the line, for real.

Steve tries to play it cool.

STEVE
Oh, the owner on line three?

Gloria and Gerardo look at each other, puzzled.

Steve frees his body from all remaining cords. He slams down
phone two, grabbing phone three.

STEVE (cont'd)
Hello.

DODGERS GM
Steve. We've got an offer for you.

Steve squeezes at the foam football, silently praying.

DODGERS MANAGER
And it's a final offer.

DODGERS GM
Ten million a year for four years.
One point five million signing bonus.

Steve's face falls.

DODGERS GM (cont'd)
How's that sound?

STEVE
Lemme put you on hold a sec.

He hits the mute button.

GLORIA
What is the offer?

STEVE
Bonus is one point five million.

GLORIA
We need two.

Steve unmutes the phone.

STEVE
We need a two million dollar bonus.

DODGERS GM
Not gonna happen. Sorry, Steve.

Steve mutes the phone... and shakes his head.

Gerardo steps to Steve, presses his gun against his head.

Steve looks from the gun, to Gloria, to Hector. He knows what he has to do...

STEVE
My share.
(then)
It's half a million. I give you that, plus the signing bonus, you get two million.

Gerardo looks at Gloria.

She nods.

Steve lets out an audible sigh. He unmutes the phone.

STEVE (cont'd)
Okay, one point five. We have a deal.

DODGERS GM
Fantastic, Steve! When you get back to LA we'll celebrate.

STEVE
Sure thing.

Click. Steve turns to Hector.

STEVE (cont'd)
You're gonna be a Dodger.

Relief fills the room. Guns fall.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Gloria and Gerardo watch as Hector steps onto a prop plane. Once inside the plane, Hector turns around.

HECTOR

What's gonna happen to Steve?

The question drifts in the air. The PILOT shuts the door.

INT. AIRPORT GATE - DAY

A sign comes into focus. The words: *WELCOME TO LOS ANGELES*

Hector follows a sea of TRAVELERS as they dribble towards a barricade where LOVED ONES hold signs. His eyes scanning.

CELIA (O.S.)

Hector!

Hector turns to see Celia, healthy and unharmed, little Iván in her arms, wearing the biggest smile of her life.

Hector dodges around the barricade, and they embrace.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - DAY

Steve leans against the wall. Famished, eyes bloodshot. A full glass of water before him, untouched.

In the corner of the room, Arturo babysits his every move.

Gloria comes in. Rare smile.

GLORIA

It happened this morning. One and a half million to our account.

Gloria tosses Steve a bottle of imported spring water. He quickly uncaps it and gargles it down.

GLORIA (cont'd)

You can go.

Steve stands slowly and slinks toward the door.

GLORIA (cont'd)

Remember, the remaining five hundred thousand. Or we'll send for you.

Steve nods, goes out the door...

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRLINER - DAY

Wild turbulence. Jittery PASSENGERS. While...

Steve sleeps soundly in his middle seat.

INT. COMMERCIAL AIRLINER - LAX AIRPORT - DAY

Steve watches the blur of the landscape as his plane lands on the runway, until the plane rolls to a gentle halt.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - DAY

Steve steps through the front door of his house. He looks around. It all feels... weird.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Steve takes the longest shower of his life.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Steve sits there. Depressed. His answering machine blinks with messages.

Brandy comes in. Looks at Steve, judging. Then hugs him.

BRANDY

For a minute I thought you died.

STEVE

So did I. Thanks for holding down the fort. Listen -- I'll write you a killer recommendation letter.

BRANDY

What are you talking about?

STEVE

I gave up our commission. Was this not abundantly clear to you?

A beat.

STEVE (cont'd)

Before you pack up, I need you to wire the five hundred thousand--

BRANDY
Listen to your messages.

Brandy hits the answering machine. *Beep.*

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
Hi Steve, this is Peter Sanders, VP
of Marketing for Adidas. Real quick,
does Hector have a shoe sponsor yet?

Steve's face lights up.

Beep. Brandy presses the machine again.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.) (cont'd)
Mr. Santos, Tony Callahan from
Chevrolet here--

She hits it again. *Beep.*

MESSAGE
This is Roger Deeds from Meineke--

Beep.

STEVE
Endorsements.

BRANDY
Eighteen offers so far.

Steve takes this in.

STEVE
Let's go out for lunch today.

Brandy steps to the stairs. Steve follows, but stops.

STEVE (cont'd)
Go ahead. I just gotta do something.

Steve returns to his desk. Picks up the phone, dials. After
a moment:

STEVE (cont'd)
Hi mom.

EXT. CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

CLOSE ON: a Cadillac. So new its plates are blank.

SUPER: Two Months Later

Behind the wheel is Steve, who maneuvers the sedan into a parking garage beneath a sparkling structure off Wilshire.

INT. OFFICES - SANTOS SPORTS INTERNATIONAL - SOON AFTER

Steve and Brandy lug boxes into a spacious office where a silver plate on the door reads Esteban Santos.

Steve marvels at a new fax machine, a smile on his face.

STEVE
You like the view?

Steve points to the neighboring building visible through the corner window: The Morgan Group.

BRANDY
No shit.

They step closer. Through the window they can see him: Andrew Sacks, toiling away in his TMG office.

Andrew looks up, eye contact is made. He does a double take. Steve clicks a remote, and the curtains automatically lower.

STEVE
Yes shit.

EXT. DODGER STADIUM - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Opening Day. Swarms of FANS overwhelm TICKET-RIPPERS as VENDORS push Dodgers merch, cotton-candy, and team guides.

Plastered on the stadium forefront are enormous cut-outs of Dodgers players, including our Hector Gonzalez.

INT. DODGER STADIUM - LAWRY'S PRIME RIB - LATER

Steve enters the restaurant, dressed in a flashy suit. Big dopey smile on his face. A HOSTESS (20s) greets him, and leads him through the restaurant towards a private area.

As Steve tails the hostess, the sound of a phone ringing. Steve stops and pulls out his cell phone:

STEVE
It's opening day.

BRANDY (O.S.)
Your lawyer's on the line.

STEVE
We paid him. Like, weeks ago.

BRANDY (O.S.)
It's not that. He says it's urgent.

Steve squeezes his face.

STEVE
Put him through.

After a beat:

LAWYER (O.S.)
Steve. Where are you right now?

INTERCUT AS NEEDED BETWEEN STEVE'S LAWYER (50) AND STEVE:

STEVE
Dodgers Stadium. Opening day.

LAWYER
Look... I've been getting some calls.
From the Department of Justice.

STEVE
Huh?

LAWYER
The Attorney General's office. Are
you aware that it's a federal crime
to smuggle illegal aliens into this
country?

Steve sucks in a breath.

LAWYER (cont'd)
Steve?

STEVE
...This is insane.

LAWYER
This is not gonna go away on its own.
I just need to know, are there any
witnesses who might be willing to
testify against you?

A long beat.

LAWYER (cont'd)
Are you there, Steve?

INT. LAWRY'S PRIME RIB - DODGERS STADIUM - JUST AFTER

Steve sits at a curtained-off booth, almost zombie-like. Next to him-- Jackie. Her hand clasped with his.

Behind them: a view overlooking the outfield.

A DODGERS EXECUTIVE is saying something to Steve...

STEVE

Huh?

DODGERS EXECUTIVE

Your man is on deck.

STEVE

Oh. Great.

JACKIE

Also-- I wanted to tell you. Hector's signing opened the floodgates.

STEVE

Floodgates?

JACKIE

We hired a couple of new scouts. To help dig up new treasure.

STEVE

New treasure...

JACKIE

I invited them today so you guys can talk shop. I told them to look to you first for representation.

The booth curtain peels open.

Steve turns around, and is completely spellbound at the sight of Gloria and Gerardo standing behind him.

Steve watches as they exchange quick kisses with Jackie.

He mechanically shakes the hands of the new Dodgers scouts.

GERARDO

Mr. Santos. Pleasure. Gerardo.

GLORIA

Gloria, hi. Seems like you caught yourself a big fish.

Gerardo and Gloria take their seats, directly across Steve.

GERARDO

It's a goldmine down there. But not anyone can just start digging and call themselves a miner. There will be practical -- and legal -- hurdles to encounter.

Gerardo and Gloria drill their eyes into Steve.

GLORIA

That's where we come in. We excel at taking such challenges and helping to make them... disappear.

(then)

Great job with Hector, by the way.

GERARDO

(raising his glass)

To Steve!

DODGERS EXECUTIVES

To Steve!

Everyone but Steve raises their glasses.

Steve just stares blankly, stupefied, horrified, as--

A POP! AND THE ROAR FROM THE CROWD breaks his concentration.

He looks on in awe at the fans-- CHILDREN cheering in their FATHERS' ARMS, their starry eyed faces, hands raised high.

Steve slowly rises, his attention now on the field below, where Hector is trotting the bases--

Watching the baseball he just smashed sail through the cool April air...

Arching over the wall, towards the restaurant window--

As we--

FADE TO BLACK.