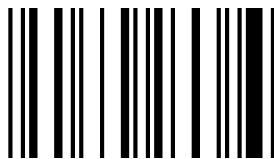


10/24/02

Written by

Connor McKnight



"Knowledge, like air, is vital to life. Like air, no one should be denied it."

– Alan Moore

"People think they want to know everything these days. But they don't. They really don't."

– Tom DeLonge

The following takes place in real time.

OVER **BLACK**:

The reverberating ROAR of an engine firing on full cylinders -

HARD OPEN ON:

A BEAT-TO-SHIT, '86 VOLVO STATION WAGON

dark blue, careening across the two-lane desert highway of...

**ROUTE
66**

Pedal-to-the-metal. Navigating between the lanes of road tripping traffic and eighteen-wheelers with a death wish -

Weaving between them with merely inches to spare.

INT. '86 VOLVO STATION WAGON, ROUTE 66 - SIMULTANEOUSLY

ON: the driver's hard eyes in the rearview mirror - anxiously peering back behind him, scanning the cars in his wake...

- *For any sign of his pursuers -*

Flooring the gas with each thundering beat. Speedometer streaking past a hundred, RPM resisting the engine's thrust.

HIS BLACK-GLOVED HANDS

gripping the steering wheel tight -

THE POLICE SCANNER

on his dashboard broadcasting muddled, static-ing FREQUENCIES that altogether sound like their own distorted, synth score. The desperate chatter of frantic HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICERS...

THE THOMAS GUIDE MAP

spilled across the dashboard beside it his only form of direction. Tracking his route the old-fashioned way, lit by:

HIS HEADLIGHTS

cutting through the black night ahead -

THE FADED, YELLOW HASHMARKS

disappearing, re-appearing before him by the speeding second.

EXT. ROUTE 66 - NIGHT

AERIAL: the Volvo breaks through an RV bottleneck, ignoring a trailing semi's HORN, and rocketing past a rusted road sign:

NEXT REST STOP
51 MILES AWAY

Before disappearing into the vast, endless dark of the desert horizon beyond. His fleeing vehicle hidden in its shroud...

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN NEW MEXICO, 2002

SMASH TO:

CLOSE-UP: the off-kilter, flickering fluorescent sign that towers above what could only be a Route 66 motel -

Its blue neon logo a kitschy, retro sketch of a science fiction moon. Feeling like a drawing out of a pulp novel or one of those '60s cartoons commemorating the moon landing.

While overlooking the appropriately named --

EST. MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

-- a run-down, crumbling roadside lodging. Built of the right combination of Southwestern stucco and adobe architecture.

Two stories.

Ten rooms a floor.

The type of place you stay en route to someplace better.

Or more fittingly, as the sign tells us:

*Servicing Route 66 Customers
Since 1946!*

At the fair, road trip price of...

**\$44 A NIGHT
HBO & SHOWTIME NOT INCLUDED**

The "no" in the rusted **VACANCY** sign doesn't work, but it doesn't matter. There have been vacancies here since 1946.

A SMALL MANAGER'S OFFICE

rests in the sign's shadow. Nothing more than a stucco shack adjacent to the motel rooms themselves. Its off-blue, gutter fluorescents flooding the paved parking lot ahead.

The varied collection of vehicles parked here dust-covered from this barren stretch of the American Southwest's highway.

The dreary, small town drag beyond the motel offering other amenities for the road-tripping drivers just passing through:

An old-school **DINER** that feels like a time capsule of the nation's past. A drive-thru, fast food **TACO JOINT** that is that same nation's future. A tired **TEXACO** gas station. And a **LIQUOR STORE** that gets held up every once in a blue moon.

Altogether surrounded by the New Mexico desert darkness beyond. Peaceful at this time of night. At least until -

WHOOOOOOOSH!

THAT BEAT-TO-SHIT VOLVO **ROARS** AROUND THE STREET CORNER -

Nearly toppling over with its startling speed and unwieldy axels. Flipping a screeching U-turn, and veering into the --

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

-- forgetting to signal, as the vehicle blurs past the Manager's Office alongside the two-story motel...

Before pulling into a spot beside what could only be a rancher's pick-up truck and a once-white Karmann Ghia.

INT. '86 VOLVO, MOONCREST MOTEL - SIMULTANEOUSLY

ON: those familiar, black-gloved HANDS - slowly shifting the clutch into park, and for the first time introducing us to...

THE DRIVER

A hardened, self-assured man in his mid-30s. Stone-chiseled features with a muscular, military build. Sweating forehead. Haunted eyes that have seen horrors on this Earth we can only begin to fathom. His get-up distinctive and purposeful:

Dark jacket. Dark jeans. Dark, Easy Rider beard.

Relinquishing his gloves' grip from the steering wheel here. And turning OFF the ignition - the once thundering, overworked engine finally fading away. Leaving just the...

CHAOTIC CHATTER

of the police scanner in its wake. At least until the darkened Driver reaches forward, switching it... OFF.

Letting the calming quiet fuel him here.

While his eyes confirm his destination with his Thomas Guide map, this very motel marked with a Sharpie star. Clocking the time on his vehicle's instrument display:

8:51

Right on schedule.

Taking off his gloves, one after the other, and grabbing...

A RUBBER-BANDED WAD OF CASH

in his cup holder.

Counting out three twenties and pocketing them -

Before he reconsiders, and pockets the rest, too. Now reaching forward, opening his glove compartment, removing...

A SCREWDRIVER

from within. Flexing it in his grip, familiar in his fist. Slipping it into his back pocket like his weapon-of-choice.

Before finally stepping out of his vehicle into the night --

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- the authoritative strut of his black Doc Martens BOOTSTEPS echo in the still, heading straight towards...

THE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Yet while he moves, he appraises the cars in the lot...

Any that look suspicious. Out of place.

Scanning across the interior lights of the motel rooms beside him. As if memorizing their details. Their numbers...

Which rooms seem occupied. And which don't.

Something tactical about his approach. Intuitive.

Before reaching the Manager's Office, pushing inside --

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- a cozy, quaint roadside interior that frankly, has taken the motel's moon landing theme far too liberally:

Kitschy NASA collectibles cover the walls, the furniture. Psychedelic, pulp art drawings of space shuttles. Newspaper headlines in faded frames. Photographs of Armstrong, Aldrin -

But notably no Collins.

Too many potted plants: cacti, Venus fly traps, others that look strangely extraterrestrial. Their only UV light coming from an algae-hazy fish tank in dire need of a clean, while -

NO ONE

waits behind its front desk, covered with old AAA travel brochures from the '70s that no one has ever claimed...

A HAZY, GOLDEN CALL BELL

that could use some serious WD-40 sits beside them.

The Driver hardly hesitates, tapping it hard -

DING-DING!

echoing in the otherwise quiet interior.

But to his surprise, greets...

No response.

Reaching forward, rings it again -

DING-DING!

But still...

No response.

And his patience has been tested -

DING-DING! DING-DING! DING-DING!

finally inspiring movement from the ROOM behind the desk.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Goddamnit, I'm comin'!

DING-DING! DING-DING!

drawing her near, as -

AN OLDER WOMAN

on the latter side of 60 emerges from the office beyond - with a hoarse, chainsmoker's voice. Sun-wrinkled skin from a long desert life. Her gray hippie hair halfway to white.

A **BARBARA** by appearance and her name tag. Slotting her Camel Golds and UNM Lobos lighter on the desk before her guest.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
I'd apologize, but when you get old,
you don't move as quick. And I'm sure
as shit ain't sorry for that.

Sizing up the stranger across from her.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
What can I get ya, feller?

THE DRIVER
Room for the night.

BARBARA
Just the one?

THE DRIVER
Just the one.

BARBARA
Just you?

THE DRIVER
Just me.

BARBARA
You gotta pay in advance.

THE DRIVER
I know how motels work.

Barbara bristles at his bluntness.

BARBARA
Goddamn feller, don't need to be
rude about it. Just laying down the
ground rules.

Moving to her register, starting a hand-written receipt.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
HBO and Showtime ain't included, if
you're a tele man.

THE DRIVER
I saw the sign.

BARBARA
Adult channels cost extra, if
that's your fancy.

THE DRIVER

It ain't.

BARBARA

Your loss, mister. Ain't much else to do out here. Fair warning, dial-up's been fried, too. Gonna get a feller up here Wednesday to fix it.

THE DRIVER

That's fine.

BARBARA

Got a preference on room number?

(...)

We got plenty of vacancies.

Pointing to the nailed collection of numbered key rings on the wall behind her - and there's truth to her words...

A WHOLE HANGING SLEW OF MOTEL OPENINGS

Something the Driver internalizes.

THE DRIVER

No preference.

BARBARA

Even or odd?

THE DRIVER

I said don't matter.

BARBARA

I'll give you Seven. Ain't no one in Six and Eight so you'll get some privacy.

Sliding the key across the desk to her guest.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Always used to say you can tell a lot about a man based on if he likes even or odd numbers. Told my late husband, if they single or screwin' around on their wives, they take the odds. A happily married man takes the evens. These are the things you learn in the motel business, I suppose.

THE DRIVER

Interesting theory.

BARBARA
Not much else to pass the time these
days.

RIP! - tearing his written receipt, showing him.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
That's forty-four even, plus a five
dollar cleaning charge.

THE DRIVER
So forty-nine?

BARBARA
Forty-nine.

THE DRIVER
Why don't you put that on your sign
if that's what it costs?

BARBARA
(flashes a Cheshire grin)
Gotta offer a deal, don't we? It's
the American way.

The Driver begrudgingly forks over those three twenties,
annoyed at being hustled, while Barbara counts his change.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Also need to see some ID.

The Driver hesitates.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Can't rent a room without it. Those are
the rules, Mr. I Know How Motels Work.

The Driver reluctantly slides over his license, which Barbara
takes, heading to her shitty HP SCANNER behind the desk.

ANGLE ON: his ID in her fist -

GEORGE HARRISON
124 Westmont Road
Chula Vista, CA 92154

She appraises his dated photograph as she moves.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Good picture. Used to be a looker, eh?

Making a quick photocopy with a mechanical *WHIR!* and a
bright burst of white light, before handing it back to him.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 Not half bad now. Checkout's at ten.
 Minute over, you owe for the next night.

Stapling his copied ID to her receipt for her records.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
 Sweet dreamin', Mr. Harrison.

~~The Driver~~ **GEORGE** nods his thanks, before stepping out of the Office with his room key and back out into the night --

EXT. MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- heading under the awning above the motel's first floor of rooms. Passing, inspecting them with the same tactical stare:

ONE's dark. From the shadows in **TWO**, a road-tripping family of four's lit by the television playing what seems like an old black-and-white, science fiction flick to drown out...

The drunk couple arguing in **THREE**. Lights off in **FOUR**, but from the faint glow of the television and the primal grunts coming from within, someone paid for the adult channels...

And from the lights off in **FIVE**, it's either someone actually fucking or just the sound of the neighboring television.

SIX quiet as the night. Empty as sin.

Bringing him to...

ROOM SEVEN

Eyes assessing the night beyond. To see if anyone's watching him... and after a satisfactory scan, slips his key inside --

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- giving us our first view of the contained, claustrophobic enclosure where the majority of our film will take place...

Minimalist at best. Disgusting at worst.

Exactly what you would expect:

A single bed with terrible patterned sheets, pillows. A wooden bedside table with a cheap lamp, dusty white shade.

A rabbit ear television positioned across from it, a feature from the '70s that still miraculously works.

Beside it, a lone chair sits before an end table fit for a single man's breakfast and nothing more. Beyond it, a shallow closet and an AJAR DOOR at the room's end to...

THE BATHROOM

Faulty grout work, faded fixtures. Details seedy: gangrene tile, rusted sink, dirty mirror. The back window above the sad shower/bath combo overlooking the motel alley beyond.

All taken in here by...

GEORGE

the moment he steps within.

And the second he locks and deadbolts the door behind him...

He gets right to work.

THAT SCREWDRIVER

immediately removed from his back pocket. Gripping it in his fist. Climbing right onto the bed and reaching for...

THE SMOKE DETECTOR

above. Quick to unscrew. Peering inside the device...

- **For bugs** -

Yet finding...

Nothing.

The beginning of his focused, frenetic process. Quick and calculated in his movements. Meticulously moving down to...

THE CLOCK RADIO

on the bedside table, red digital numbers reading:

8:57

Taking it apart...

Nothing.

THE LANDLINE PHONE

Unscrewing the receiver...

Nothing.

THE LAMP

Taking off its shade, inspecting the bulb's coil...

Nothing.

THE AIR CONDITIONING VENT

above, removing its grate. Feeling around the space beyond...

Nothing.

THE TELEVISION

Its back removed, its mechanical innards examined...

Nothing.

THE LIGHTS IN THE BATHROOM

Their rusted, faulty fixtures assessed...

Nothing.

THE ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

arranged throughout the room. Unscrewing them one after the other, after the other. Probing their conductive wiring...

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

Before finally withdrawing, assured.

A suitable lodging for the night. By his standards.

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

George slips out of Room Seven's door, quickly locking it behind him with his key. Double-checking that it's secure.

Before stepping out into the motel lot. Scanning for watching eyes, signs of anyone monitoring his movements. Probing...

The motel's first floor.

The second floor.

Noticing no cameras on the lot lamps -

It's 2002 after all, and this place is a shithole.

The street beyond the motel empty at this time of night. Empty for miles. The reality of an isolated Route 66 life.

While, without drawing attention to himself, he starts reading the license plates of the parked vehicles he passes:

Arizona.

Nevada.

New Mexico.

California.

Florida.

He stops before Florida, appraising its car...

A FAMILY SUV

A dusty, black 2001 Ford Expedition if you want to be technical. Perfect for road trips, and that's about it.

He scans the motel rooms in the two-story structure behind him, making a calculated assessment of its owner...

Presumably Room Two with the family inside. Their shadows preoccupied by the television movie playing within, so...

HIS SCREWDRIVER

quickly emerges from his back pocket, covertly -

REMOVING THEIR LICENSE PLATE

with fast, thieving fists -

One screw, after the other, after the other, after the other.

Before dislodging the plate and slipping it into his jacket. Now moving stealthily back to his own vehicle...

THE BEAT-TO-SHIT '86 VOLVO

And for the first time, we notice its bumper sticker -

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Another careful scan at the empty streets.

The quiet motel rooms above, below...

Before he resumes his theft. Rapidly switching out his Nevada plate for its Florida counterpart. The screws coming off with ease. Palming them, before fastening them back on.

Tactical, precise in his efforts. Not his first rodeo.

Still no sign of anyone...

As he crouches down, stalking back to the Expedition. Eyes still scanning his surroundings with a soldier's focus...

Before securing his Nevada plates onto their vehicle with his sturdy screwdriver and a sly smirk. Finishing the final screw, and withdrawing a beat here to admire his handiwork:

Good as new -

Before peering back up and abruptly noticing...

A LITTLE GIRL

sitting on a turquoise tricycle staring right back at him -

Positioned at the far end of the motel lot. Hispanic, braided hair, rosy cheeks, mischievous eyes. Maybe five, six-years-old at best. Sporting a faded pair of well-worn overalls.

George having no idea how long she's been there.

And what she's seen -

So he plays it innocent. Nodding, nonchalant about his work.

GEORGE
Registration was off.

As if she knows what the fuck that means.

But her lack of response here makes him wonder...

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Hablas anglais?

But the girl still...

Says nothing. Staring back at him for a long, uneasy moment.

That gets under his skin, and ours...

Until she moves on, wheeling her tricycle away with a smirk.

While the mysterious man gathers himself in her wake, burying any concerns from the potentially incriminating encounter. Moving back to his car and opening its trunk for his luggage -

We notably don't see what's inside.

Just the items he removes, one after the other. Setting each of them down carefully on the parking lot tarmac below:

-- AN AGGRESSIVELY STUFFED, ARMY DUFFLE.
-- A BLACK LEATHER BRIEFCASE.
-- AND AN **OFFICE DEPOT** SHOPPING BAG.

Wasting not a second here - quickly shutting the trunk, grabbing his three items in haste, and heading back to...

ROOM SEVEN

The duffle he holds noticeably heavy. The reason for his grimace as his fist tightens around its leather straps. But not wanting to make more than one trip out here in the open.

Gritting his teeth. Struggling through the pain.

Before reaching the door. Peering around one last time for any witnesses. Then unlocking it, and disappearing inside --

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- immediately locking and deadbolting the door behind him. Powering through the last few steps, and setting the duffle bag down in a LOUD, ECHOING HEAP at the far end of the room.

Breathing heavy here. It was a strenuous struggle after all.

Before getting right to work.

He has things to do -

Setting the black briefcase onto the bed and opening it up:

A MILITARY-FOLDED CHANGE OF CLOTHES

one of the first things we notice. Along with a series of...

STRANGE VACUUM-SEALED, SEE-THROUGH PLASTIC BAGS

He then removes every article of clothing. Slow, purposeful in his process. Putting each one in its own vacuum bag:

His shirt.

His jeans.

His jacket.

His socks [one bag for each].

Both boots.

Both gloves.

Down to his black Calvin Klein underwear. His body not as chiseled as we expected. Maybe in his 20s he lifted weights, served in the military. But he's let it go with age, adding:

A DARK BLUE SKI MASK

to its own bag. Strange silver wires running along its edges.

While now, solely in his briefs, he heads over to the --

BATHROOM, ROOM SEVEN - CONTINUOUS

-- turning on its sputtering shower.

INT. SHOWER, ROOM SEVEN - NIGHT

The water steaming, scalding hot as George aggressively scrubs every inch of skin with a coarse bar of soap.

Obsessive. Compulsive. Relentless.

So much so... that he causes his skin to bleed.

But he keeps on scrubbing here.

Harder. HARDER. HARDER.

Determined to rid his body of whatever might afflict it.

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

ON: his black underwear in its own vacuum-sealed bag, as -

George towel-dries himself with the same diligence as his body scrub. Every last drop of water gone. Before grabbing...

A BAG OF SILVER STEEL TOILETRIES

from his briefcase, heading back to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM, ROOM SEVEN - NIGHT

Facing his own reflection in the fogged-up motel mirror, George shaves with a glinting silver razor.

Clinical strokes. Swiftly sliding his way through shaving cream. His dark beard disappearing with each movement.

Before he finishes his efforts, washing his face in the scalding hot sink, and taking in his own reflection.

REVEAL: *not a single inch of hair left -*

A near unrecognizable man.

JUMP TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Facing the same clean-shaven reflection, George labors over an open "Just For Men" home kit. Dying his hair blonde. Every single strand down to the scalp accounted for...

Until it's perfect.

Drying off any residue with a motel towel. Ruining its cheap cotton in the process. But it doesn't matter...

He won't be here beyond tonight anyway.

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

A fully blonde, clean-shaven George moves to his briefcase, putting on the exact same articles of clothing as before -

Same fashion. Same fit. But each different colors:

Brown jacket. Black jeans. Burgundy boots.

A man transformed before us. We almost do a double take.

Not the Driver we first met - in fact, if we didn't watch him change his appearance... we wouldn't know who the fuck he is.

But we don't have time to marvel as he resumes his work here, returning to his briefcase and setting the **FOLLOWING ITEMS** on the motel room's table with OCD precision [if not perfectly arranged, and off by the slightest degree, he'll adjust it]:

AN IBM THINKPAD LAPTOP

A clunky, steel piece of dated PC technology before Apple aggressively took over the industry and made them obsolete.

A PERSONAL NOTEBOOK

Small, black cover. Folded-over pages and erratic Post-it bookmarks jutting out from aggressively text-marked depths.

A FIFTH OF JACK DANIELS

Already opened, a little taken off the top.

A PRESCRIPTION PILL BOTTLE

Xanax, the **NAME** on its label notable:

PAUL McCARTNEY

A SILVER BERETTA HANDGUN

Checking its chamber, locking its clip home -

How many bullets? Too fast to count.

A SINGLE, BLACK SHARPIE

Placed perfectly horizontal in front of him -

While ~~George~~ **PAUL** now sits down at the table, staring out at his work station ahead as if assessing its order...

Before opening his laptop, and booting up its operating system, the old Windows XP *DING!* disrupting the motel quiet.

ON: a patient Paul waiting for it to load, before logging in. His Terminal black desktop [green typeface] emerging to his satisfaction. So he now turns his attention down to...

HIS OFFICE DEPOT BAG

below, reaching inside for...

AN UNOPENED BURNER PHONE

One of those old, ugly geometric flip phones from the early 2000s. Bulky, black hull, antenna. Motorola unfortunately.

Carefully opening its plastic packaging with his trusted screwdriver's edge and removing his new phone. Examining it.

Before slotting in its corresponding SIM CARD and turning it on. And while he waits here, he veers his focus towards...

HIS SMALL, BLACK NOTEBOOK

Peeling back its crinkly pages of dark, schizophrenic scrawl. Frantic Sharpie handwriting that reeks of a psychotic break.

A madman's collection of clues. Drawings, dates of unknown meaning. Dark, detailed sketches of actual artistic merit:

SCIENCE FICTION CREATURES AND MONSTERS

Alarming and terrifying at first glance. Now joined by...

BLACK-AND-WHITE SURVEILLANCE PHOTOGRAPHS

of prominent political figures stapled to scribbled pages: Kennedy, Hoover, Kissinger, Cheney; we recognize them all.

JAGGED NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

taped to those that follow, headlines drifting past:

"AGENT ORANGE" "MOTHMAN" "SS-582 BONEFISH"

Until Paul gets to the notebook's final page and what he was looking for... a single, unknown PHONE NUMBER written down:

775-628-1141

He reaches over to his burner phone, quick on the DIAL...

And the second the tone kicks in -

IT'S IMMEDIATELY PICKED UP:

MALE VOICE (OTL)
(on the line/"OTL")
Jesus fucking Christ **JOHN**, it's been
three hours. Where the fuck have you
been? Nearly gave me a goddamn heart
attack. Was even starting to worry I'd
never hear from you again-

PAUL JOHN
(cutting him off)
-is this line secure?

MALE VOICE (OTL)
What?

JOHN
Is this line secure?

MALE VOICE (OTL)
Yes, it's secure.

JOHN
Are you sure, **DOC**?

DOC (OTL)
Yes, John. I'm on a brand new
burner. Same as you.

JOHN
We need to be one hundred percent
certain of these things.

DOC (OTL)
And we are. That's why we bought
burners in the first place.
(...)
What took you so long?

JOHN
I needed to make significant distance
and lose any chance at a tail.

DOC (OTL)
Did you?

JOHN
Far as I know.

DOC (OTL)
I can't believe we pulled this off.

JOHN
So far. But we're not in the clear
just yet.

DOC (OTL)
Closer than when we started. Walk
me through where we're at.

JOHN
Did exactly what we planned. Changed
plates three times along the way.

DOC (OTL)
Where?

JOHN
An Arby's a hundred miles from it.
A Waffle House at the Nevada border.
A Gentlemen's Club south of Utah.

DOC (OTL)
All different states?

JOHN
All different states.

DOC (OTL)
Don't tell me where you are just in
case.

JOHN
Wouldn't dream of it.

DOC (OTL)
Clothes?

JOHN
In sterile bags. Individual ones. Will
destroy in case of contamination.

DOC (OTL)
My contact said fire works best. Do
it in the desert, away from any
watching eyes.

John peers back at...

THE PILED, PLASTIC BAGS on his bed's comforter.

JOHN
Consider it done.

DOC (OTL)
Your appearance?

John runs a hand through his dyed blonde hair.

JOHN
Brand new. Wouldn't even recognize
me if you were staring right across
from me.

DOC (OTL)
I'd recognize you.

JOHN
Don't think so. But if we do our jobs
right, that day will never come.

DOC (OTL)
So you got something?

JOHN
Oh, I got something alright.

DOC (OTL)
How was it?

JOHN
Unlike anything we could have ever
imagined. I mean, to finally be inside
something you've read so much about,
the fact that it's even real... it's
hard to believe it even happened.

DOC (OTL)
I meant how was it for you?

JOHN
Honestly?

DOC (OTL)
Honestly.

John considers a beat, genuine.

JOHN
Terrifying and unlike anything I've
ever done. But I don't regret a
moment of it.

He shakes his head to himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)

The adrenaline, they don't tell you about that part. You can't prepare for it. Heart thumping like that, feels like it even took an hour to come back to normal. Hell, I'm still feeling it now.

DOC (OTL)

So the plan worked?

JOHN

To the tee. The years we put into this were worth it. Every last one.

DOC (OTL)

Intel was good?

JOHN

Good enough.

DOC (OTL)

Maps?

JOHN

Accurate. For the most part.

He turns his chair to his briefcase, removing...

A SERIES OF DARK BLUE SCHEMATICS

out from within - *of what?* - we don't know just yet. Merely a brief glimpse of its faint, detailed architectural markings:

A bureaucratic, steel structure of multiple floors.

JOHN (CONT'D)

At least for the top two sectors. I'll make some adjustments before sending it back to you.

DOC (OTL)

I'll let my guy know his contributions were much appreciated.

JOHN

Do. And that because of him, our understanding of human history will never be the same.

DOC (OTL)

So what you have is good?

JOHN

It's *that* good.

DOC (OTL)
Security give you trouble?

John eyes his table-perched Beretta.

JOHN
Only on the way out. Vents were a
good call. Place was more tightly
guarded than Fort Knox.

DOC (OTL)
It holds the secrets to the universe.
Do you blame them?

JOHN
I always blame them. But not for that.

An audible swallow on the other line.

DOC (OTL)
So I have to ask... what did you get?

John turns his gaze to...

THE HEFTY DUFFLE BAG, at the motel room's edge.

JOHN
Everything I could fit in the
duffle. Some futuristic tech, a
steel storage canister. But the most
important things I got on the stick.

DOC (OTL)
From?

JOHN
One of their computers.

DOC (OTL)
Please tell me you got footage.

JOHN
Oh, I got footage.

DOC (OTL)
Of what?

JOHN
Everything.

DOC (OTL)
Everything?

JOHN
Everything.

DOC (OTL)
Can I... see it?

John shakes his head at his partner on the line.

JOHN
The less culpable you are, the better.

DOC (OTL)
But this is different. I didn't
think we'd actually get this far.

JOHN
But we did. And now we have to take
the proper precautions.

DOC (OTL)
Can I at least hear it?
(desperate)
Please, John. We risked our lives for
this. Just give me the satisfaction.
I need to know. That this wasn't a
colossal waste of time. That we were
right. That we were always right.

John sighs to himself, as if this were the greatest
inconvenience in the entire history of the universe.

JOHN
Fine. But just for a second.

He now moves over to...

THE DUFFLE BAG

burner phone still to his ear. UNZIPPING it with a loud
screech... we briefly see what's inside its cluttered depths:

-- A MESMERIZING MESH OF ASSORTED SILVER WIRES.
-- TECHNOLOGY BEYOND ANY MODERN CONCEPTION.
-- A SILVER STEEL **CRATE** MARKED WITH UNSEEN MILITARY NUMBERS.

But just for a moment, as he ZIPS it back up with...

A BLACK USB STICK

in his fist - back when they were much larger and had the
bulky, unappealing aesthetic of mini-hard drives. Carrying
it over to his laptop, inserting it into its USB port...

INTERCUT:

ON HIS COMPUTER SCREEN:

Scrolling through an overwhelming folder of .mov files. Hundreds, all labeled with unknown numbers and meanings:

461798412_8243.mov
 461798412_6644.mov
 461798412_8645.mov
 461798412_7847.mov
 461798412_1748.mov
 461798412_8462.mov
 461798412_112263.mov
 461798412_13168.mov
 461798412_42368.mov
 461798412_112471.mov
 461798412_11480.mov
 461798412_121595.mov
 461798412_91201.mov
 461798412_102402.mov

Before finally selecting one.

REVERSE ON JOHN:

Staring at the screen that we now don't see. Bringing the burner phone down to its computer speaker. And pressing PLAY.

CARNIVOROUS, CREATURE CRIES

ABRUPTLY RISE FROM HIS SPEAKERS - the grainy, pixelated light from the unseen .mov file reflected in his eyes.

DOC (OTL)
 (disbelief)
 Holy... shit...

JOHN
 Holy shit is right.

DOC (OTL)
 Is that... what I think it is?

JOHN
 Yes. And it's not the only one either.

Pausing the video, its screeching sounds gone in an instant.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 It's only the tip of the iceberg
 down there.

DOC (OTL)
 I... I can't believe this.

His shortness of breath audible on the line.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
It's like we always said, the truth
was out there.

JOHN
Or more fittingly, down there.

DOC (OTL)
Then we need to get to work. Get this to
the people who can help broadcast it.

JOHN
Wasting time already, my friend.

DOC (OTL)
Remember, no email. Nothing that can be
traced electronically. We have to do this
old school, right under their noses.

JOHN
All the way to the end.

DOC (OTL)
You have the other USBs?

John reaches down into his Office Depot bag, removing...

FIVE PLASTIC-WRAPPED PACKAGES, one after the other.

JOHN
Yes.

DOC (OTL)
Five?

JOHN
I can read a shopping list, Doc.

DOC (OTL)
Just confirm it. For me.

JOHN
There are five.

DOC (OTL)
Okay, then we need to make the copies.
Double check they have everything on
them. We only have one chance to do
this. We need to do it right.

JOHN
I won't make a mistake. We've come
this far.

DOC (OTL)
 You have the envelopes?

John nods to himself, grabbing a series of...

HEFTY, MANILLA MAILING ENVELOPES from his Office Depot bag.

JOHN
 Yes. Padded and reinforced to get past
 their scanners. My personal invention.

DOC (OTL)
 Great. Get a pen ready?

John arms himself with his black Sharpie.

JOHN
 Yes, sir.

DOC (OTL)
 Then I'll give you their addresses,
 one after the other. Write them down.

JUMP TO:

MOMENTS LATER

ON: five perfectly arranged, Sharpie-labeled ENVELOPES on the motel table, sealed-and-stuffed with their USB contents. Each of their respective, scrawled addresses visible before us:

THE NEW YORK TIMES
 620 Eighth Avenue
 New York, NY 10018

THE WASHINGTON POST
 1150 Fifteen Street NW
 Washington, D.C. 20071

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
 1211 Avenue of the Americas
 New York, NY 10036

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE
 560 W. Grand Avenue
 Chicago, IL 60654

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES
 202 W First Street
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Before John gestures to...

THAT BLACK USB AND ITS UNMARKED ENVELOPE

positioned on the table's edge, burner still to his ear.

JOHN
 And as discussed, one unmarked
 stick as an insurance policy.

OCD-adjusting its envelope so it's perfectly in place.

DOC (OTL)
 You have the postage?

JOHN
 Yes, sir. Flags and all.

He begins to stick a series of STAR-SPANGLED BANNER STAMPS onto each of the five envelopes, meticulous in his process.

DOC (OTL)
 Feels ironic, don't it?

JOHN
 Way I see it, it's the patriotic
 thing to do.

DOC (OTL)
 Hopefully they see it that way, too.

The stakes of that simmer as John finishes his efforts.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
 You know where you're going to make
 the drop?

JOHN
 It's why I picked this motel.

DOC (OTL)
 You said you weren't going to tell
 me where you were.

JOHN
 Didn't tell you which one, did I?

He gets up from his seat, moving towards the **VENETIAN-BLINED WINDOWS** of Room Seven. The hazy, neon blue light from the Mooncrest's sign filtering through the cracks between them.

While John reaches his hand forward, peeking through -

JOHN POV:
 INTERCUT:

Peering across the parking lot and the empty street to a familiar sight and the obvious destination for their labor:

A BLUE-PAINTED USPS MAILBOX.

JOHN (CONT'D)

There's a box across the street. With a pickup time tomorrow morning at 6 AM.

Withdrawing from his window, assured.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'll do the drop there at 5:55. Can't risk them staying out there overnight.

DOC (OTL)

Risk seems minimal.

JOHN

But if something happens to them between now and tomorrow morning, this was all for nothing. And I won't let that happen. Control the things you can control, and worry about the rest.

DOC (OTL)

Is that a famous quote or something?

JOHN

(distant)

Something an old captain used to say.

DOC (OTL)

Once they're out there, there's no turning back.

JOHN

Something I can live with. Can you?

DOC (OTL)

Been dreaming of the day for the last fifteen years, partner.

JOHN

Speaking of the last fifteen hours, I'm starved.

DOC (OTL)

You didn't stop to eat?

JOHN

Barely even stopped for gas. Took no chances. Floored it and got across state lines before they could react.

DOC (OTL)

What are the options?

John turns towards the blinds again, assessing the food choices across the street in the quiet New Mexico night...

JOHN POV:

Gravitating towards the familiar bell logo of the FAST FOOD TACO JOINT that shares a desert-dusty parking lot with...

The ROUTE 66 DINER that has seemingly been there for an eternity. Its once triumphant, red neon sign fading way:

FASTH'S

The stories that place could tell.

JOHN
Fast food tacos and a diner.

DOC (OTL)
Denny's?

JOHN
Local.

DOC (OTL)
And fast food... chain?

JOHN
Chain.

DOC (OTL)
Do the diner then. Chain might have cameras.

JOHN
Copy.

Stepping away from the blinds, and reaching for his room key on his work table, pocketing it along with his SCREWDRIVER.

DOC (OTL)
You going out?

JOHN
Yes, sir. Call you when I get back.

DOC (OTL)
Hey, John...

JOHN
Yeah?

DOC (OTL)
Be careful.

JOHN

I'm always careful. We wouldn't have gotten this far without it.

DOC (OTL)

John, I'm serious.

JOHN

So am I. Rest easy, we're almost at the finish line. The world as we know will never be the same after tonight. And we, Doc - we will be responsible.

Moving towards his motel room's door.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Talk to you in a bit.

CLICK! - as Doc's line goes out.

John slipping his burner into his jacket pocket. Breathing there a beat, gathering his bearings. Before undoing the deadbolt, then Room Seven's lock, and stepping outside --

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- John not missing a beat, locking the door behind him.

And heading into the motel lot beyond for the first time with his new appearance. No longer the scruffy-bearded, dark-haired Driver in the night. Something we gather when...

THE LITTLE GIRL

on the tricycle hardly looks his way -

Because she doesn't recognize him.

Which makes John smirk here, satisfied. The same smirk he wears at the sight of the newly-minted Florida plates on his beat-to-shit Volvo. Altogether, a job well done tonight.

Crossing under the motel's neon blue sign, and into the --

EMPTY STREET - CONTINUOUS

-- beyond, peaceful at this time of night. No cars on the road. Any Route 66 traffic having either reached their lodgings or are driving through the night on the highway.

THE USPS MAILBOX

on the approaching curb carrying clear meaning for John.

But not tonight. Tonight, his sights are set on -

FAITH'S DINER

Its flickering red sign ahead beckoning him in the night. An old school roadside quality to its decaying diner aesthetic. That beneath its dusty, red-checkered awnings and paint-chipped walls, it used to be a vibrant spot off of Route 66.

Now it's not.

Despite its neon "**24 HOURS**" promise, it looks like it's been asleep for the past fifteen years. A sore sight for John's eyes as he swings open its grease-coated door for dinner --

INT. FAITH'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

-- taking in an interior that hasn't changed since the '60s:

A juke box-stocked establishment with counter service, red leather booths for travelers in the night, and chalkboard specials that frankly, weren't that special to begin with.

Yet John still smiles at its timeless sight, his eyes drifting up to the old school "Dr. Pepper" CLOCK on the wall [*Enjoy a DP at 10, 2 and 4!*]. Its hands currently reading:

9:11

Still right on schedule, as he veers towards...

The **WAITRESS** at the register. Barely 18. Too much eyeliner to hide the bags under her eyes. Taking out her displeasure at being here tonight on a piece of Wrigley's Double Mint.

Looking at John, expectant. And bringing him back to Earth.

JOHN

Can I - get whatever your best
burger is to go?

She reaches for her pad and pen.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And can I get that patty medium?

She stares up at him blankly.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Or whatever you guys normally do is
fine, too.

WAITRESS

Name for the order, mister?

JOHN
Ringo.

WAITRESS
(raises her eyes)
Ringo?

JOHN
(assured)
Ringo.

She shakes her head, *fucking weirdo* - RIPPING his order and sticking it onto the diner carousel behind her, sitting on the window slit to the greasy, fire hazard KITCHEN beyond.

WAITRESS
Be ready in five.

Gesturing out at the mostly empty diner around them -

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
Feel free to take a seat wherever.

JOHN
Can I get some coffee?

WAITRESS
Cost extra.

JOHN
No complaint.

John sidles over to the nearest booth, eyeing his fellow diners as he does. As if assessing them individually. Gauging their intentions, their reasons for being here like a hawk.

Collectively, all feeling like lonely travelers in the night:

A trucker.
A vagabond.
A day laborer.
A local couple that seems to be sobering up.
A lady of the night [running mascara].

All avoiding eye contact.

No threats. At least, as far as John is concerned.

SMACK! of a WHITE CERAMIC COFFEE CUP disrupts his scrutiny -

The WAITRESS reaching his booth, pouring him a steaming mug of Joe from her Mr. Coffee pot until it reaches the brim.

JOHN
Thanks.

WAITRESS

Uh-huh.

John reaches for his table's Sweet N' Low, ripping open two packets, dumping its contents into the black coffee depths.

Stirs it. Takes a sip. Tastes like radiator piss from his grimace. A third Sweet N' Low fixes that [for the most part].

Before he peers out the diner window into the brooding night, feeling it. The reason he reaches inside his jacket for...

THE BURNER PHONE

Pulling down his sleeve slightly to REVEAL: a half-smeared, Sharpie-scrawled phone number on the inside of his wrist -

7253569165

Considers a moment... before dialing it, one digit at a time. Bringing the phone up to his ear, and listening to the tone:

RING. RING. RING.

Eyes wandering across the dreary diner interior as he does -

RING. RING. RING.

The overflowing bus bin of dishes on an empty table -

RING. RING. RING.

The blowing tissue paper attached to the grills of the overworked air conditioning unit on the diner's far wall -

RING. RING. RING.

The waitress lighting a cigarette *indoors* -

Before John's ears finally greet... HER VOICEMAIL:

ADULT FEMALE VOICE (OTL)
 Hey, you've reached **MADELINE** Redfield,
 the incredibly talented Brandon, and-
 (Jetsons singsongy)
 -his dog Astro.

ON: John's genuine smile at the sound of their voices -

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
 We can't get to the phone right now,
 but please leave your name and number
 after the beep, and we'll get back to
 you as soon as we can. Thank you.

That very *BEEP!* now echoes.

John takes a deep, consoling breath, then -

JOHN

Hey... it's me. I'm just calling
because, I... I just wanted to hear
your voice. I wanted to hear Brandon's.

His fingers unconsciously TAP-TAPPING his diner table.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I wanted to say... I was right.
After all these years, I was right.

A long, vulnerable beat simmers for him. Swallowing hard.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Anyway... you can reach me back at this
number. Hopefully I hear from you guys,
it'd mean the world. But if not, well -
goodnight, Mads. Give Brandon my love.

HANGING UP, and slowly setting his burner back down on the
diner table before him. Staring at its screen longingly...

As if waiting for it to ring...

But it doesn't come. No matter how badly he wants it to.

Peering down into the darkness of his coffee and feeling it.
Taking a sip in his solitary booth, ON: his reflection in the
half-empty diner's glass alongside the other solitary diners -

Just another lonely traveler in the night.

EXT. FAITH'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

Gripping a Route 66 diner TO-GO BAG in his fist, John pushes
out of the diner, and into the eerie New Mexico night beyond.
Keeping to himself as he passes that USPS box out into the --

EMPTY STREET - CONTINUOUS

-- jay walking without pause. Glancing up at the night sky,
clocking the sheer number of stars you get this far out here.

Which is why he misses...

THE SCREAMING CAR HORN

from the brake-screeching -

OSCAR-MEYER MEATS TRUCK

BARRELING PAST HIS POSITION, startling him - *inches* away from plowing through him. If it wasn't for his sudden stop...

Gathering himself, his bearings again. Staring off angrily at the truck now disappearing down the empty street in the direction of the highway. Breath stolen right from his lungs.

Before he exhales, and continues his trek with his diner to-go bag towards his seedy, neon blue destination ahead:

THE MOONCREST MOTEL

While remaining oblivious to...

THE HOSTESS DELIVERY VAN

Driving past his position behind him, as he crosses into --

PARKING LOT, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- eyeing the same set of parked cars under the flickering motel sign's light. His Volvo with its new plates, the Expedition with his old plates. And that's when he notices *it*-

THE DARK SEDAN

parked in the far corner of the lot, a new motel guest.

The sight of which makes him immediately swallow - visibly blanching here. But he doesn't dare break his stride.

He doesn't want to draw attention to himself after all.

Quickly reaching the door to...

ROOM SEVEN

Key slipping into its lock, and forcing his way inside --

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- the lock and deadbolt shortly following. Shut out from the world again. A small sense of security in just that.

But John doesn't miss a beat - quick to the window, fingers already parting aside its blinds to peer out into the night.

JOHN POV:

Clocking the PARKED SEDAN out in the lot beyond. Situated on its far, distant end. Seemingly incognito, innocent...

But is it?

John withdraws from his view, anxious. Breathing to himself, slow. Trying to calm himself down. No need to fret just yet.

Right?

Besides, his dinner's getting cold. Turning his back on the window and heading towards his motel room's table. Moving the arranged items of his workstation aside for his meal as we...

ANGLE ON: his prescription bottle of Xanax -

While John grabs his to-go bag of dinner, removing a styrofoam container out from within. Opening it to REVEAL:

His diner burger. Appetizing enough from this vantage point.

Reaching back into the bag for a napkin... not one to risk a stain. Grabbing his beverage here: the fifth of WHISKEY. Taking a drink straight from the bottle to clear his mind.

Before scrutinizing his meal, takes off the bun to check on the patty: well done an understatement. Charred would be more accurate. Luckily, melted American "cheese" fixes everything.

But the second he moves to take his first, begrudging bite...

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

Nearly JOLTS him out of his skin, coming from his burner.

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

John quickly wipes his hands with his napkin - before reaching for it, suspiciously eyeing its number to confirm:

775-628-1441

And answers:

JOHN
What's up, Doc?

The first thing he notices, is...

THE SHALLOW, PANICKED BREATHING ON THE OTHER LINE.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Doc...?

DOC (OTL)
John... you need to turn on the news.

JOHN
What? Why?

DOC (OTL)
Just do it. Don't ask questions.

John scans around the motel room, until he sees...

THE BLACK TELEVISION REMOTE

on the bedside table, picking it up. Turning ON the room's rabbit-ear television and flipping through its channels of static-shitty reception, until he finally finds...

THE NIGHTLY NEWS

ON THE TV:

A national broadcast of an ambiguous three-letter network of two stern-looking **ANCHORS**. A man and a woman (dignified, 40s). Both Caucasian, designer-dressed, and heavily-botoxed given this network's pedigree. The telecast clock reading:

9:22

The MALE ANCHOR caught mid-word:

MALE ANCHOR
-developing story in the Southwestern states tonight... a federal manhunt for convicted felon **JOHN REDFIELD** has begun after a rather startling discovery was made just hours ago. The FBI report that Redfield is the man responsible for an armed robbery, aggravated assault, and double homicide of two federal employees at a Nevada Rest Stop just off of Highway 95. Both men were murdered in cold blood in a crime scene that first responders described as grisly, even inhumane. And that's not all, as Redfield's theft of highly valuable government property has only expedited the need for his immediate capture.

FEMALE ANCHOR
A convicted felon and military veteran from the Gulf War, Redfield is considered armed and highly dangerous. A previous trespassing and assault charge saw him recently do eighteen months in a Nevada Penitentiary.

(MORE)

FEMALE ANCHOR (CONT'D)
 But the startling events of tonight
 have quickly earned Redfield a place on
 the FBI's Most Wanted List, according
 to Bureau representatives in the area-

ON: John frozen there, watching, hardly able to believe his eyes, staring back at his own MUGSHOT displayed on screen -

Until he can't take it anymore, quick with the remote...

MUTING THEIR SENSATIONALIZED COVERAGE. Bringing the phone's speaker close, his hand shaking uncontrollably with anger:

JOHN
 It's bullshit, Doc. Absolute.
 Utter. Fucking. Bullshit.

DOC (OTL)
 John...

JOHN
 You know I wasn't at no fucking
 rest stop. You know where I was.

DOC (OTL)
 John... answer me. Did you kill
 someone while you were down there?

John shakes his head, adamant.

JOHN
 No. I would never, you know that.

DOC (OTL)
 But you said... you said there was
 trouble with security on the way out.
 And you did insist on bringing a gun-

JOHN
 -to protect myself!

Eyeing his silver Beretta before him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 But I didn't fire it. Not once.
 Honest to God.

DOC (OTL)
 You don't believe in God.

JOHN
 Doc, I didn't. I swear.

The silence on the other line...

Betrays his partner's doubt.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You have to believe me. This is all just part of their lies. Dragging up an old trespassing charge and that bullshit assault they threw on me because the Feds needed to punish us for finding that Montana black site.

His partner's continued quiet getting under his skin.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Look... I would've told you if something happened. But this is all just to drum up paranoia. To publicly discredit us. To justify in the eyes of the law what they're willing to do to stop us from getting what we found out there.

His eyes growing increasingly desperate.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(pleading)
Doc... you know me better than anyone. You know I wouldn't do that. You know I wouldn't hurt someone...

And to his great relief, Doc sighs on the other line.

DOC (OTL)
But I also know how badly you wanted this to work, John...

JOHN
And it did work! But there are lines we don't cross. I don't cross.
(then, definitive)
I am not them.

The sternness of his words echo in the quiet after.

DOC (OTL)
Okay. Okay, I trust you. But... this changes things. The FBI's already involved this early on.

JOHN
They're not who I'm worried about.

A long beat in the wake of that -

Both men feeling it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, we knew it would come to this eventually.

Nodding to himself, finding his assurance again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But we need to stick to the plan. Remember, they don't know where I am. What I even look like now. I could be anywhere. It's not like the entire American Southwest is something they can cover overnight.

DOC (OTL)

Okay...

(as if convincing himself)

Okay.

John clocks the muted news on screen before him...

ON THE TV:

His own MUGSHOT still superimposed behind the anchors for the whole nation to see - his beard dark and scruffy, along with the dark Driver's hair with which he began our story.

JOHN

But what does worry me is... I don't know how they got my real name and ID'd me so quickly.

DOC (OTL)

Maybe they have some kind of facial recognition software down there.

JOHN

I wore the mask.

Eyes to the plastic-bagged, STEEL-WIRED SKI MASK on his bed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We don't have a leak in the network, do we?

DOC (OTL)

I don't know, John... but this is freaking me out.

JOHN

It's concerning me, too. But we need to stay calm here. We need to stay calm.

DOC (OTL)

That sounds more for you than for me.

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

from the vibrating burner in his fist nearly proves it - SLIPPING OUT of a startled John's grip onto the floor below.

He quickly bends down, picking it up, and eyeing the number of the CALLER on the other line, the reason for his grimace:

725-356-9165

Bringing the receiver back to his ear.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
-where'd you g-

JOHN
-hold on, Doc. Mads is calling me.

DOC (OTL)
Mads is calling you? On what?-
(abruptly realizes)
-on *your burner*?! How the fuck did
she get the num-

But he never finishes his sentence, John switching lines...

CLICK! And the angry voice he greets hardly misses a beat:

MADELINE (OTL)
-holy fucking shit, John... you really
did it, didn't you? Do you know you're
on *national fucking news* right now?

John's annoyed eyes betray him -

Not the conversation he wants to have right now.

JOHN
I know, I know. I saw. But it's not
true. Any of it. Complete and utter
bullshit. Another story they spin.
Another lie they tell.

MADELINE (OTL)
They said you killed *two fucking*
people, John-

JOHN
-and I'm telling you I didn't! That
I was never at any fucking Nevada
rest stop. That I never harmed any
government employees.

MADELINE (OTL)

I didn't hear you correct the part about
stealing valuable government property...

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

from the vibrating burner interrupts him. But this time, he's prepared, not dropping it and checking the number on screen:

775-628-1441

Doc trying him again.

John doesn't hesitate here, clicking IGNORE - and moving back to the far more pressing matter on the other line:

JOHN

Mads... I didn't do any of it, I promise.

MADELINE (OTL)

John, you know I can tell when you lie, right? Believe me, I have seven long, fucking years of practice...

JOHN

But have you ever known me to be violent, Mads? EVER?

The silence on the line his answer.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. I'm not a fucking fanatic.

MADELINE (OTL)

That one's up to debate.

JOHN

No, Mads. It isn't. *Because I was right.* I know you don't believe me. I know you never have. And probably never will. But Doc and I... we were right. We were *always* right.

MADELINE (OTL)

His name is fucking Carl, John! He is not a doctor of any kind. He has no degree. He is just an overweight, unemployed fuck that spends too much time on the goddamn internet and reading science fiction-

JOHN

-it's not fiction-

MADELINE (OTL)
 -yes, it fucking is, John!
 (...)

This has gone too far this time. You guys need to stop with your fucking fantasies, your games. Because what's happening right now, in the real world... is they say you're a murderer. And there's a federal manhunt, a federal fucking manhunt, for you!

JOHN
 But they're lying-

MADELINE (OTL)
 -who gives a shit if they're lying?!
 It's happening. They're the government. If they say it is, it is. That's how the government works. You know what they do to people like us?

She darkly swallows at the thought.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
 In fact, you know *exactly* what they do. You of all people should know better, John. They already sent you away once!

JOHN
 Which is why this time, we were careful.

MADELINE (OTL)
 How exactly is getting your fucking mugshot on *national fucking news* careful, John?!

The muted broadcast on his room's TV cements it.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
 You have got to turn yourself in.
 You have to clear your name.

JOHN
 I can't do that. Not after what we've done. What we now know.

MADELINE (OTL)
 What did you do?! What do you know?!

JOHN
 I can't tell you that. What if the line's bugged?

MADELINE (OTL)
 The line's not bugged, John!

JOHN

You don't know that! None of us
ever really know that...

Shaking his head, pacing around his room in a frantic frenzy.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't you see, Mads? There's no turning
back now for me. We did it this time.
For real. We found it. The crack in the
system that reveals it all for what it
really, truly is. That everything we
know, everything they tell us about
everything is a goddamn lie!

...a dark, disbelieving beat...

MADELINE (OTL)

Turn yourself into the fucking cops, John.

JOHN

I can't. They work for the government.

MADELINE (OTL)

(GROANS)

Un-fucking-believable... do you even
listen to yourself? Like really, truly
listen to yourself? Your story has
never changed. You've never changed.
You live in your own delusional fucking
world, John. And I can't! I can't deal
with this bullshit any longer.

JOHN

It's not bullshit! For once in my
life, I have proof that it's not
bullshit. That none of it was ever
bullshit. Aren't you listening to me?

MADELINE (OTL)

Are you listening to me, John?!

(...)

If you care about your son, you'll turn
yourself in. Because I don't want him to
have to live in a world where everyone
says his father was a criminal. A
nutjob. A terrorist. Brandon doesn't
deserve that. That kid is the best of
both of us. You know it, I know it. He
deserves a father that is *worthy* of him.

JOHN

(vulnerable)

And that's all I'm trying to do here...

Despite their divide, the genuineness of his voice resonates –
Something her silence can't help but convey.

MADELINE (OTL)
(slow, composed)
Turn yourself into the cops, John.
Because I can't help you anymore.

Swallowing to herself on the other line.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
You're beyond saving.

CLICK! –

Hanging up just like that.

Her words still ringing in John's ears. The reason he stops there for a moment. Staring off blankly into space...

Clear the effect her opinion still has on him.

An opinion he's fought against for so long –

But the sight of the muted television newscast brings him back, the dire circumstances he's in demanding his attention, his focus. Peering back down to the burner phone he holds:

Missed Call (1)

Flipping it open, and DIALING Doc. Listening to its tone:

RING. RING. RI–

DOC (OTL)
–there you are! You can't ignore my fucking calls, John. Not now. Not when we've come this far. We're in the middle of an op here. We need to be on the same page at all times. Especially if we need a contingency plan.

Doc's tone turns stern, annunciating every word that follows:

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Which is why you need to answer me...
right fucking now. Why the fuck does Mads have your number?

JOHN
Because I called her.

DOC (OTL)
You called her?!

His audible disbelief echoes on the line.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Why John?! It's a fucking burner for a reason. Don't you think she'd be the first person they'd go to once they realized it was you who broke in? Given what we've done? What we've taken?

A defensive John eyes the DUFFLE at the room's far edge –
Just sitting there, innocent. Despite what it holds.

JOHN
Look... I did something tonight I'd never thought I'd do. I could have died. For all we know, if it went any differently, I could be in an off-grid black site right about now, never to be seen again by anyone. And after it all... all I wanted, the one thing – was to hear my son's voice. To talk to my wife. And if that's a problem, Doc... fucking sue me. Because I'm not sorry.

DOC (OTL)
But John, don't you see?! You put everything at risk. *Everything.*
(then, more personal)
You put *me* at risk. She's not even your wife anymore, you're separated!

A sudden realization stops Doc on the line.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Wait, fuck! Does Mads know I'm involved?
Does she know about me?! Does she?!

John's silence confirms it.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
...you told her?

JOHN
She guessed it, what did you want me to do?

DOC (OTL)
John, listen to me... what we did is beyond a federal crime here. This is the type of shit you disappear for. Forever. We need to be careful.

JOHN

I am being careful! All I've done tonight is be careful. I took on all the risk. I'm the one who broke in. I'm the one who took from them. What did you do? Just sit on your couch and wait for me to call?

He shakes his head, increasingly angry.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't lecture me about risk, Doc. You don't get to lecture me about risk. Now you know how I feel. I'm the one exposed here. The one they're talking about on the news right now! The one they're hunting the entire Southwest for!

DOC (OTL)

Well, I'm just saying... it was a mistake to call her.

JOHN

And you made yourself heard. But it doesn't change anything. This is where we're at. And now we have to deal with it.

A long pause, the tension between them slowly subsiding.

DOC (OTL)

...you're right.

JOHN

I know.

(...)

Any chatter on the frequencies?

DOC (OTL)

It's quiet. Both on the HAM and the web. Which is either good. Or very, very bad. Because if we've been compromised, they would be going to that great of lengths to find us. And that includes everyone we know and everyone in the network.

JOHN

You don't need to tell me. I remember what happened to the Columbus Group. That's why we made it so hard to track us all down.

DOC (OTL)

But those measures mean nothing in relation to what they can do.

John swallows a beat, suddenly remembering something from earlier - his partner reading into his silence on the line:

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
What is it, John?

JOHN
I don't know if I'm being paranoid...

DOC (OTL)
Paranoid about what?

John moves back to his window's blinds, prying them aside with his fingers and peering out into the night beyond...

JOHN POV:

THAT SAME **BLACK SEDAN** - parked at the lot's far corner. Sitting there ominously under the neon-flickering motel sign.

JOHN
There *is* a sedan in the lot that wasn't there before.

DOC (OTL)
What?

JOHN
I said there's a sedan in the motel lot.

DOC (OTL)
That's what I thought you said. And you didn't think to tell me about it?

JOHN
I only noticed it when I came back with my dinner.

DOC (OTL)
What kind of sedan we talking here?

JOHN
Dark.

DOC (OTL)
Black?

JOHN
Yes.

DOC (OTL)
Fuck!
(then)
What type?

JOHN
 Maybe a Mercury, early 2000s model?
 Something like that.

DOC (OTL)
 Got a plate?

JOHN POV:

Straining his eyes to gauge the distant vehicle's details.

JOHN
 It's a little far to see.

DOC (OTL)
 Get your 'nocs. This is important.

John withdraws from his window perspective, moving to his motel bed where his briefcase awaits. Reaching inside for...

MILITARY-GRADE BINOCULARS

While we momentarily catch a greater glimpse of...

THE BUILDING SCHEMATICS - laid across the bed's comforter. This time, the details of its strange, steel bureaucratic structure more clear, including a label of unknown meaning:

SUB-SECTOR C

But only for a split-second -

Because John's already heading back to the blinds, parting them, bringing his binoculars as close to the glass as he can-

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

Narrows in on the **BLACK SEDAN**'s license plate, reading aloud:

JOHN
 New Mexico plates. Six... Alpha...
 Charlie... Four... Two... Three...

DOC (OTL)
 Copy. Looking it up now.

John waits out the silence, continuing to survey the **SEDAN** -

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

Taking in its details from this removed perspective...

Its pristine black paint job. Treaded tires. Steel rims. Sedan-standard body. And *strange*, silver radio antenna...

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Says civilian.

JOHN
Civilian? You sure?

DOC (OTL)
It's what it says.

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

Now bringing his view up to the car's front window,
struggling to peer inside, almost able to make out...

TWO **WATCHING SHADOWS WITHIN.**

JOHN
There are two people inside, I think.
Two men. Or, at least, seems like it.
Hard to see clearly, probably a tint
in the window or something.

DOC (OTL)
Are they watching you?

JOHN
I don't know. Could be.

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

Trying to push closer, CLOSER to them to know for sure...

JOHN (CONT'D)
But can't confirm it.

The frustrated tremor of his binoculars betrays him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I don't know, Doc... I got a bad
feeling here.

DOC (OTL)
Notice anything else? Anything out
of the ordinary?

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

Scanning across the eerily still, dark motel night...

JOHN
No. Nothing, but the sedan.

DOC (OTL)
So it's quiet?

JOHN
Too quiet.

Slowly setting his binoculars down, shaking his head.

DOC (OTL)
I mean there's no way they're on to
you this fast, right...? You said
it yourself... you made significant
distance between there and the
motel before even doing anything.

JOHN
It's unlikely....
(swallows)
But not impossible.

DOC (OTL)
Doc... don't do that shit to me. It's
important we keep everything here calm-

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

on Room Seven's door does the exact opposite -

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
HOUSEKEEPING!

Nearly giving John a heart attack right then and there.

JOHN
Jesus fucking Christ-

Quick to find some semblance of composure again. Or at least,
the appearance of it. Setting his burner aside to shout back:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Not now! I'm on the phone!

But notably greeting...

No response

from the world on the other side of his motel door.

Not even the slightest sound. Nor whisper.

The reason for his unnerved expression...

DOC (OTL)
What was that?!

ECHOES DOWN FROM THE BURNER HE HOLDS -

A rattled John quick to bring it back up to his ear.

JOHN
Housekeeping...

DOC (OTL)
(beat)
John... why *the fuck* would
housekeeping be coming at night?
Aren't you staying at a motel?

The truth of his statement hits John. And hits John hard.

JOHN
I don't know...

Widening eyes peering back at his closed motel room door.
Putting two-and-two together, the realization damning...

JOHN (CONT'D)
You think it's a plant they sent?

DOC (OTL)
We don't know if they're even there yet.

JOHN
What about the sedan?

DOC (OTL)
What about it? Don't go creating
narratives unless we know for sure.
Not when we've come so far.

JOHN
You're right. You're right.

Turning towards his room's table for a means of appeasement.
Finding it, reaching for the PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE at its edge.

ANGLE ON: its Xanax "0.5mg" and its "PAUL MCCARTNEY" label -
Struggling with its lid with his sweaty palm, tossing a pill
down his throat. Chasing it down with his fifth of whiskey.

DOC (OTL)
What was that?

JOHN
Nothing. Just gathering my breath.

DOC (OTL)
Good, keep a steady baseline. We're in-
(...)
Hold on, getting a call on the other line.

His words break John's false sense of calm.

JOHN

Wait, what?

(...)

Why the fuck would you be getting a call on the other line? Isn't this a burner?

DOC (OTL)

Yeah. A burner for you and everyone else who helped us pull this off!

JOHN

You said it was secure?

DOC (OTL)

It is secure! It's a fucking burner. That's what I've been trying to tell you this whole time.

His words not stopping the worry flooding John's eyes.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)

I'll call you right back. Don't go anywhere.

JOHN

Where the fuck would I go?

DOC (OTL)

I don't know. Just don't. Don't you dare leave your room. And stay by the phone, John. Please.

And before John can respond -

CLICK!

Doc's gone just like that. Nothing, but...

SILENCE on the line. The quiet hardly helping Doc's state.

JOHN

(sotto)

Goddamnit.

He begins to PACE, tracing the limited layout of his motel room with each step... the rate of his motions growing more frantic by the second, treading across the room's carpet...

Moving from the window back to the room's interior, past the motel bed, the open bathroom door, and back around again.

Before taking a swig of whiskey when he reaches the table, gripping its edge, letting the alcohol calm his nerves...

Or at least, trying to -

Now sitting on the corner of his bed and staring down at his burner. Waiting beside it for it to ring as Doc requested...

But that's worse than Guantanamo torture -

Now turning towards his rabbit-ear television. Peering at the nightly news on screen. Before reaching for the remote, and -

UNMUTING ITS BROADCAST

The same ANCHORS continuing his character assassination. With the same telecast clock in the corner of its frame reading:

9:34

His same MUGSHOT staring back at him.

MALE ANCHOR

-multi-state manhunt continuing tonight for suspect John Redfield, wanted in regards to a double homicide and the theft of government property. The FBI has issued a warning that Redfield is armed and dangerous. A former violent offender suspected to be driving across the interstate tonight. Any possible witnesses to any sightings are encouraged to call the FBI's hotline to bring this criminal to justice-

JOHN
(sotto)
-goddamn liars.

CLICK! - flipping the channel with a STATIC DISRUPTION from the desert's shitty satellite connection and the old TV tech.

ON THE TV:

-- World Series, Game Five, 10/24/02. Anaheim versus San Francisco. B.Weber on the mound, bottom of the sixth, two outs. R.Aurilia on first, two balls, one strike count against J.Kent, pitch clocking a surreally slow 51 miles per hour...

CLICK! --

-- Another news broadcast, different three-letter network. War in Afghanistan unfolding under the Bush administration, the search for the infamous "Weapons of Mass Destruction..."

CLICK! --

-- A local weather report with an apocalyptic graphic promising **RAIN** tonight courtesy of a cold front. Documenting the rise of meteorological activity from climate change...

CLICK! --

-- An informercial for Miss Cleo's Psychic Readers Network, everyone that's watching a Mastercard payment and a Tarot reading away from discovering your man's a cheating whore!...

CLICK! --

-- Finally settling on an old, black-and-white pulp film:

ED WOOD'S PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*

Its sci-fi narrative depicting the strangest extraterrestrial invasion in Earth's history: aliens joining forces with the undead. Its fearful characters shouting about a UFO sighting:

KELTON (ON SCREEN)
Lieutenant, Lieutenant! Did you hear that?

LARRY (ON SCREEN)
How could we help it?

POLICEMAN (ON SCREEN)
It sure was strange.

The very film John settles on here in an attempt to calm himself. Trying to find a happy place, to get lost in its science fiction and avoid the *real* panic whirring within...

ON: John's fingers TAPPING against the remote. Only the very keen of us will notice its Morse Code pattern [S.O.S.]:

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

Turning up the VOLUME of the film to block out the noise of his own tapping, the neon-lit world beyond his room peeking through the blinds, surreally lighting the motel interior...

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

ON: the black-and-white film reflected in John's pupils -

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

The motel sign's off-blue glow filtering through like a UFO -

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

When he SUDDENLY GETS INTERRUPTED -

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

from the burner phone his sweating fist grips too tight -

*[NOTE: this film is in the public domain, and is fair use here].

Not even looking at the number this time - quick to PICK UP and PRESS MUTE on the television and its sci-fi before him, its silent black-and-white still playing in the background:

JOHN
(into the burner)
Jesus, Doc. Nearly gave me another goddamn heart attack.

DOC (OTL)
John...

The sudden graveness of his partner's tone brings John pause.

JOHN
What? What's wrong?

DOC (OTL)
My contact... the one who gave us the specs for the map?

John peers at the SCHEMATICS laid out on the bed before him.

JOHN
Yeah...? What about him?

DOC (OTL)
(swallows)
He's gone.

JOHN
What do you mean he's gone?

DOC (OTL)
He's gone, John.

JOHN
I don't follow...

DOC (OTL)
No one's heard from him in the last hour!

John's tension immediately subsides at the notion.

JOHN
Wait... just an hour? Why are you overreacting then?

DOC (OTL)
No. You don't understand, John.
(...)
I have everyone in the network checking in with me every sixty minutes just in case. No exceptions. On the hour, on the dot. And I... I didn't hear from him.

JOHN

What do you mean?

DOC (OTL)

What do you mean what do you mean? I mean exactly what I said! He's gone.

(...)

I think they fucking got to him, man.

JOHN

Let's not jump to conclusions here.

DOC (OTL)

It's the only possible explanation.

JOHN

What the fuck makes you think that? How could they have "gotten" to him? Last I checked, there's no manhunt for anyone but me.

John hears his partner's hesitation on the other line.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(uneasy)

Doc...

DOC (OTL)

Remember... how I told you I purposefully kept everyone's names from each other while we planned this? So no one knows who we're working with in case they get caught and interrogated?

JOHN

Yes...

DOC (OTL)

Well... I never told you about him. And how he came into possession of that map.

(...)

And where he worked.

John can hardly believe his ears.

JOHN

Jesus, are you fucking kidding me? We had a man on the inside this whole fucking time? On their payroll? Under their security clearance? That they probably fucking monitor?!

DOC (OTL)

Yes. That's exactly what I'm telling you.

John pinches the bridge of his nose, trying to calm himself.

JOHN
Goddamnit Doc, how can you be so stupid?

DOC (OTL)
(defensive)
We needed the floor plan. How else were we going to be able to strategize on what to do once you were inside?

And as much as John wants to argue, Doc's logic is sound.

JOHN
Fuck, man. Fuck!

His frantic pacing returns. The amount of steps he's covered and will cover tonight enough of a workout for a month...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Well, if they have him... they sure as shit know about you.

DOC (OTL)
He wouldn't break like that. He's strong. He believes in the cause.

JOHN
This is the goddamn government we're talking about. Not the FBI. Not a bureaucratic agency with rules. We're beyond that now.

(...)
This is the side of them that doesn't exist. The side that doesn't have to operate by the book.

Breathing to himself, slow. But it's no use.

JOHN (CONT'D)
We're so fucking fucked here.

DOC (OTL)
Maybe... maybe we move the envelopes now?

John eyes his five sealed, stamped, and Sharpie-scrawled manilla ENVELOPES - shaking his head at the very prospect.

JOHN
No. Not if I'm being watched.
They'll know exactly where they go.

DOC (OTL)
John, are you one hundred percent sure you're being watched?

One anxious look out his room's blinds enough to suggest it.

JOHN

No, but I'm not one hundred percent sure I'm not. And if they see me put the envelopes in the mailbox, then we're fucked. All the hard work, everything we did... was for nothing. And I'm not risking that-

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

on his motel room door STRIKES like a gunshot in the night, disrupting their frenzied conversation, JOLTING John again.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
HOUSEKEEPING!

John quickly setting his phone aside to shout:

JOHN
I told you, I don't need it! Come back tomorrow!

But just like before...

No response

to his words beyond his motel door. Just the undercurrent of:

RAIN

now picking up outside - *pitter-patter, pitter-patter* - the early showers of the storm the local weather report promised.

DOC (OTL)
John! Is that housekeeping again?

Directing him back to his burner.

JOHN
Yeah-

DOC (OTL)
-John, *why the fuck* is housekeeping coming at night? Why would they come twice after you said no the first time?

The darkness of that crossing John's face, expression failing to hide his brimming panic, coming to a hard conclusion:

JOHN
What if we've already been made?

DOC (OTL)
We don't know that for sure...

JOHN
Do you have a *better* explanation?

Peering warily at his closed motel room door.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What if your contact broke? What if
they're already headed to you? Isn't
that within the realm of possibility?
(...)
This is the government we're talking
about. You know what they're capable of,
just like I do. We know even more now...

Eyeing the SEALED ENVELOPES on his room's table. The LAPTOP
of dark footage. The DUFFLE BAG of strange, stolen material..

JOHN (CONT'D)
If anything, we know too much.

A long beat for them to stomach, until -

DOC (OTL)
Holy shit... I think you're right.
Maybe I need to hang up. Maybe I need
to get out of here right fucking now.

JOHN
What? No, that's not what I meant.
You can't abandon me, we're mid-op.

DOC (OTL)
No, you're absolutely right. If they
knew about Munro, I've already been made.

JOHN
You're not supposed to tell me his
fucking name!

DOC (OTL)
Who gives a fuck if you know? It
doesn't matter, if they already do!
He's probably dead in a ditch
somewhere. Or under his fifth hour
of Chinese fucking water torture.

The anxiety practically audible on the line.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Fuck, I need to pack a bag. I need to
pack a bag. You have your gun, right?

John eyes his Beretta on the table, his own reassurance.

JOHN

Doc... you need to keep your shit together. I'm the one that's supposed to be unhinged, the one with the dark history. Weren't you the one telling me to keep my head ten minutes ago?

DOC (OTL)

Yeah, ten minutes ago when everything was hunky fucking dory. Now we're in deep fucking shit.

We hear his FRANTIC MOVEMENTS on the other line, as if rashly rifling through drawers, pulling things out of a closet.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)

I'm grabbing my go-bag and getting the fuck out of here.

JOHN

Doc, listen-

DOC (OTL)

-no, you listen to me! I'm glad we got what we got. But this is now about making sure it gets out there. That we didn't die for nothing.

JOHN

What are you talking about? No one's going to die, Doc.

DOC (OTL)

You can't make that promise. None of us can. All that matters is delaying the inevitable and making sure what you have on those drives gets out there. That the truth is known. That the public knows what we now know. What they store down there. What the government's been lying about. Who knows? Maybe this is just the tip of the iceberg? What else have they been lying about? The War on Terror? 9/11? Trickle down economics?

JOHN

Let's not get ahead of ourselves. This just changes our understanding of the universe and what's out there. That's it.

DOC (OTL)

Whatever your logic is, justification, I don't give a fuck - it doesn't matter.

(MORE)

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
 Point is, we can't afford to let them
 stop that footage from getting out there.

JOHN
 And I'm agreeing with you, Doc. But
 we need to play our cards right.

DOC (OTL)
 And my cards now are getting in my
 fucking car and driving far far away
 from my trailer and never coming back-

BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING!

SUDDENLY BELLOWS from the other end of John's motel room.

Loud, jarring, and coming from...

THE MOTEL LANDLINE

on the bedside table, its screech the source of his shudder.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
 What the fuck was that?

BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING!

rises from it, raising the hairs on the back of John's neck.

JOHN
 (swallows)
 The room's landline...

DOC (OTL)
 Who the fuck would have your room's
 landline?

JOHN
 I don't know...

BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING!

DOC (OTL)
 Are you going to answer it?

JOHN
 Don't really have a choice, do I?

Eyeing the cheap, white plastic communications device ahead.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Stay on the line, Doc...

BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING!

Each ring luring him closer...

...AND CLOSER, by the second -

Treading towards the bedside table with slow, unsteady steps.

His stare LOCKED ON the motel phone ahead.

The digital alarm clock beside it reading:

9:42

Before he reaches the phone's bedside table, his hand ever so slowly descending down towards its ringing receiver below...

BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING! BRRR-IIING!

And PICKING IT UP with an anxious:

JOHN
Hello...?

FEMALE VOICE (OTL)
Hello, Mr. Harrison?

Is the voice familiar? Neither we nor John can tell for sure.

JOHN
(uneasy)
Yes...

FEMALE VOICE (OTL)
It's **BARBARA**. From the front desk.
(...)
The motel manager from earlier tonight?

John's deep relief felt.

JOHN
Right...
(then, polite)
What can I do for you tonight, Barbara?

BARBARA (OTL)
I'm calling because someone placed a noise complaint about Room Seven. Loud, arguing voices, the feller said. And I wanted to know... is everything alright in there?

JOHN
Yes, of course. Everything's fine.

BARBARA (OTL)
Are you sure, Mr. Harrison? You're not under duress or anything?
(MORE)

BARBARA (OTL) (CONT'D)

Anything I should know about? Trust me, you wouldn't believe the things that have happened here over the years. Things stranger than fiction, mark my words.

JOHN

Yes, everything's fine. Just on the phone.

That's when his eyes peer across the motel walls around him, curious, suddenly turning paranoid at the flick of a switch.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Wait... which room called the complaint? I thought you said earlier there was no one in Room Six or Eight?

BARBARA (OTL)

No one is. But this is a two-story motel, Mr. Harrison. There are people above you... in **ROOM SEVENTEEN**.

John immediately pales at the realization, slowly craning his neck up at... the ratty MOTEL ROOM CEILING above him.

JOHN

And they... they can hear me?

BARBARA (OTL)

When you talk that loud, yes.

JOHN

So they can hear what I say?

BARBARA (OTL)

Yes, Mr. Harrison. That's why I'm calling.

JOHN

(sotto)

Fuck me.

BARBARA (OTL)

Excuse me?

JOHN

Sorry, slip of the tongue.

BARBARA (OTL)

Is everything alright, Mr. Harrison?

JOHN

Yes, I said everything's fine.

BARBARA (OTL)

You sure? You seem a bit frazzled to me.

JOHN

Thank you for your concern, Barbara. But truly, I'm fine. Completely fine.

Still nervously eyeing the motel room's ceiling.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'll do my best to keep it down.

BARBARA (OTL)

That's all I can ask for, Mr. Harrison. Although do know that if they call again with a similar complaint, I will have to try the police. Motel policy and all.

The threat of which bringing John clear trouble.

JOHN

I'll keep it down, Barbara. Don't you worry.

BARBARA (OTL)

Music to my ears. You have a good and quiet night now, Mr. Harrison.

JOHN

You, too.

ROUGHLY HANGING UP the room's landline with an aggressive **SMACK!** of its receiver on its answering machine's plastic.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Goddamnit.

Anxiously running his hands through his dyed blonde hair, getting some of its artificial coloring on his fingers.

DOC (OTL)

What?!

ECHOES FROM THE BURNER HE HOLDS – momentarily forgetting he even had it in his hand, bringing it back up to his ear.

JOHN

They... they can hear me.

DOC (OTL)

Who can hear you?

JOHN

The people above me, they can hear me.

DOC (OTL)

What do you mean they can hear you?

JOHN

The motel room above mine. Maybe the ceilings are thin, I don't fucking know. But they can hear our conversations in here. They can hear what I say.

DOC (OTL)

You don't know that.

JOHN

I'm saying the motel manager just called me to tell me to keep it down in here. I do know that.

DOC (OTL)

Then stop yelling on the goddamn phone!

But even his simple solution can't slow John's pacing or racing mind. Shaking his head, thoughts running wild.

JOHN

What if they heard something? What if they know what we have and what we did? What if they watched the news, put two and two together? Figured out who I was? What if they already called the police?

DOC (OTL)

Then the cops would be there.

John quickly moves back over to his room's window, hearing the building - *pitter-patter, pitter-patter* - from the rain storm beyond that has now gone from a gradual drizzle to...

A FULL DOWNPOUR. The *smack-smack-smacking* water mirroring his mood. Roughly prying aside his closed blinds to take in...

JOHN POV:

The **SEDAN** still there. Parked at the lot's edge underneath the motel sign. Details difficult to decipher in the rain.

The streets beyond it eerily empty.

JOHN

Who says they're not already?

Withdrawing from his window, rattled. The muted black-and-white science fiction on his rabbit-ear TV staring back at him. Its frantic characters further fueling his frenzy...

DOC (OTL)

Now you're the one sounding paranoid.

And paranoid John is, peering up at the motel ceiling above.

JOHN
But what if... they know something?

Clocking his solution sitting on his table: THE BERETTA.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What if I go up there? To be sure?

DOC (OTL)
Are you nuts? Don't go up there? You'll sound like a crazy person. And what are you gonna do when you get there? Ask them real nicely if they heard something potentially incriminating from your room?

JOHN
I wasn't going to ask nicely.

The meaning of his words not sitting well with Doc.

DOC (OTL)
John, calm down. This is not who you are. Remember thirty minutes ago, you were the one who swore to me you didn't hurt anyone when you were down there.

JOHN
And I didn't. I swear on my mother.

DOC (OTL)
You hate your mother.

JOHN
I swear on my son then.

The split-second hesitation on the other line troubles him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You still believe me, don't you...?

DOC (OTL)
Unfortunately. But you had to have done something, man. Because they're coming at us with the force of a thousand suns if Munro's already missing. Fuck!

Abruptly remembering exactly what he was halfway through doing before they got derailed by the ringing landline -

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
I needed to leave five minutes ago.

JOHN
No, Doc. Stay with me.

DOC (OTL)
I'll call you from the car. I can't
be here when they get here.

JOHN
You don't even know if they're coming.

DOC (OTL)
I'd rather be wrong and ten steps
ahead, then made dead.

The echoing sound of a go-bag's ZIPPER on the other line.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Keep a cool head, wait for my call. And
whatever you do, don't go up there or
leave your room. I'm serious, John.

JOHN
I won't. I'm not stupid.

DOC (OTL)
I know you're not. Talk to you in a bit.

A SUDDEN CLICK! -

on the line, Doc hanging up just like that. Leaving...

JOHN alone to his pacing anxieties. No more sounding board
for every frantic thought, fear, the stresses of the night.

The quiet of the room unnerving, hardly helping John's
state. The only other sound in the seedy motel still...

THE RAIN THUMP-THUMP-THUMPING

on the exterior, John feeling every damn drop.

A FLASH OF LIGHTENING

whips his eyes back to the window, shortly followed by...

A RUMBLE OF THUNDER

that echoes in his bones. Drawing him, grabbing...

THE MILITARY BINOCULARS

and returning to his window, shaking fingers pulling blinds -

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

It's really raining now, thick sheets of storm slapping onto
the parking lot tarmac below... the intermittent flash of
LIGHTENING and trailing THUNDER only furthering his unease.

Peering his gaze back towards the **BLACK SEDAN**, struggling to see beyond its tinted windows at the shadows within...

*But in the storming night, the car could very well be empty -
The source of his fear, its passengers could be anywhere...*

JOHN (CONT'D)
God-fucking-damnit.

Setting his binoculars aside, turning back to his motel room.... and RESUMING HIS PACING. Each LIGHTENING STRIKE and THUNDER CLAP startling him. That's how on-edge he is.

Desperate for some sort of assurance, anything. Before remembering what brought him that same feeling moments ago:

THE SILVER BERETTA

awaiting him on his table - quickly picking it up, gripping its steel. Unlocking its chamber, OCD-checking its clip -

We still don't see how many bullets are inside.

But their sight is enough for John to feel secure, slotting it beneath his waistband. Made confident with it on his person. As much as he can given the circumstances. Now eyeing-

THE PILL BOTTLE OF XANAX

on the table where the gun once was - his "PAUL MCCARTNEY" prescription peering back at him. As if taunting him here.

John breathing fast, ragged. Can't stand still. Running his hands through his hair, more blonde dye staining his fingers.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Just keep it cool. Keep it cool here.

The polar opposite of his eye-darting demeanor.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't be who they say you are.

And to help him achieve that...

He SUDDENLY GRABS at the pill bottle, unscrewing it. Another Xanax down the hatch with a whiskey swig to calm him down.

THE BLACK-AND-WHITE **PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE**

on the TV beckoning him. A means to escape his reality.

At least for a moment -

Sitting down on the corner of the bed cluttered with his briefcase and plastic-bagged clothes, reaches for the remote.

UNMUTING IT:

COL. EDWARDS (ON SCREEN)
This is the most fantastic story
I've ever heard.

JEFF (ON SCREEN)
And every bit of it's true, too.

COL. EDWARDS (ON SCREEN)
That's the fantastic part of it-

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!

on his motel room door disrupts his viewing, followed by -

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
HOUSEKEEPING!

But this time, John's quick on the jugular -

DARTING UP IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, MOVING to the door without hesitation, already working on its deadbolt, unlocking its frame, AND SWINGING IT OPEN - Beretta out and at the ready --

EXT. MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- but there's no one there.

Not a single person nor soul outside the door...

The space before him too empty.

Too still.

John stuck standing there, gun geared forward into the night and the pouring rain beyond the cover of the motel's awning.

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

Looking like a crazy person. Out there in the open, in the night armed and with wild eyes, while fully in the view of...

THE BLACK SEDAN

still in the parking lot, still impossible to discern the passengers within. If they're even in there, watching him...

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

John quickly hides his silver Beretta behind his back as he slowly peers down to his right in the direction of...

The SIX OTHER MOTEL ROOMS beneath the rain-pelting, drizzle-dripping awning. The blue, neon-lit OFFICE just beyond them.

No sign of whoever or whatever knocked on his door -

But the faintest sound of...

MOVEMENT

beneath the rain coming from his left confirms their presence. Rising from just beyond the awninged row of rooms.

Drawing John here, slow, stalking towards it -

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

Covertly putting his gun by his side. Purposefully hidden from view of anyone in the lot, close enough if he needs it.

Treading towards the source of the disturbance... wary of making the slightest sound in his approach, creeping past...

ROOM EIGHT

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

ROOM NINE

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

ON: John gripping his Beretta in anticipation -

Muscles tensing. Cold sweat sliding.

ROOM TEN

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

Tactical BOOTSTEPS echoing beneath him. Betraying his approach to whoever or whatever awaits him beyond...

Crossing the final few feet now -

Deep breath in, deep breath out.

Before WHIPPING AROUND THE BEND, and facing...

THE ALLEY

along the side of the Mooncrest Motel: a collection of old school ice and vending machines under a leaking, *drip-drip-dripping* awning, with a familiar face awaiting at its end:

THE LITTLE GIRL

on a red tricycle. Smiling at him mischievously.

ON: John deflating at her sight, quickly realizing the prank that was pulled. Visibly embarrassed for falling for it, disappointed in himself that he's fallen this far tonight.

JOHN
Goddamnit.

Before turning around, noticing what he's left in his wake...

THE DOOR TO ROOM SEVEN WIDE OPEN

Its contents vulnerable to anyone in the night -

A beyond damning sight for him to process...

SPRINTING back towards his room, no reservations. Panic fueling him, driving him forward as if shot out of a cannon -

But the second he reaches his motel room's threshold, does he notice something else, something worse...

- THE SEDAN **GONE INTO THE NIGHT** -

Whoever was watching him having gotten what they needed.

Or so he thinks -

Not taking any chances here, filing into --

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- SLAMMING its door shut. Locking it and sliding the deadbolt tight in place before he can even breathe.

And the second after he does...

He gets right to work - TEARING THE PLACE APART, desperately searching its interior to make sure nothing was taken...

All while on the motel television behind him, the black-and-white pulp film plays the voice of its "extraterrestrial":

DISTORTED VOICE (ON SCREEN)
-this is Eros, a space soldier from
a planet of your galaxy...

John RACES over to his duffle, quickly rifling through its contents: the bizarre futuristic tech, unopened steel crate.

Everything right where he left it.

DISTORTED VOICE (ON SCREEN)

Since the beginning of your time, we have been far beyond your planet. It has taken you centuries to even grasp what we developed eons of your years ago...

John DUMPS his briefcase onto the floor, checking all of his plastic-bagged clothing, the strange government schematics...

All accounted for.

DISTORTED VOICE (ON SCREEN)

Do you still believe it impossible we exist? You didn't actually think you were the only inhabited planet in the universe? How can any race be so stupid?

John PROBES every item on his desk: the five sealed letters, the backup USB drive, his laptop, his fifth of Jack Daniels, his Xanax prescription, even his untouched diner dinner...

Just as OCD-perfect as they should be.

DISTORTED VOICE (ON SCREEN)

Permit me to set your mind at ease. We do not want to conquer your planet. Only save it...

John THROWING open every drawer, the closet. RIPPING the comforter off the bed. HURLING the pillows onto the floor.

DISTORTED VOICE (ON SCREEN)

You are on the verge of destroying the entire universe.

John left staring out at...

A DESTROYED MOTEL ROOM. That reflects his mental state to the tee. Ravaged in every meaning of the word. His final findings-

Nothing missing.

That he knows of, at least...

DISTORTED VOICE (ON SCREEN)

And we are part of that universe.

And before the film further adds to his distress, he quickly scans his motel floor's mess, before finding the REMOTE...

MUTING ITS SCIENCE FICTION

And not taking any more chances here - heading over and climbing onto his bed's mattress, while reaching for...

THE AIR CONDITIONING VENT

above, taking off its aching grate to REVEAL: the rather narrow, visibly filthy, industrial vent compartment beyond...

The perfect hiding spot for contraband -

Grabbing the DUFFLE and his FIVE SEALED-AND-STAMPED ENVELOPES before... SLOTTING THEM DEEP WITHIN. Securely putting the grate back on and withdrawing a beat, admiring his handiwork.

Breathing to himself now that that's taken care of. Before grabbing the binoculars from the overwhelming mess of the floor, and heading back to the window to confirm what he saw.

Quickly prying aside those blinds and bringing the 'nocs up to his eyes. And sure enough... its sight is unavoidable...

JOHN'S 'NOCS POV:

THE SEDAN DEFINITIVELY GONE -

Swallowed up in the night and the pounding rain. A LIGHTENING and THUNDER CLAP only reinforcing the ominous feel of it all.

A defeated John breathing here, shallow. Practically hyperventilating now. Feeling the walls caving in, in his alarmingly cluttered, increasingly claustrophobic motel room.

What the fuck does he do now?

ON: the overturned alarm clock beneath the bedside table -

9:51

That's when John's eyes find... the uneaten diner burger on his motel room's work table. Drawing his attention here.

JOHN
(sotto)
Just eat something. Low blood sugar.

Sitting right down before the burger, gripping its bun. Completely forgetting about a napkin for stains, spillage.

His OCD tendencies now completely out the window tonight -

And taking a Carl's Jr. commercial-worthy bite. Enjoying it as if it were the most delicious thing on the entire planet.

He hadn't eaten in hours, remember?

ON: the Thousand Island dressing mixing with the blonde dye on his fingers as he chows down, dripping bite after bite.

His rash, rapid chewing betraying the thoughts still whirring within. Taking another sip of whiskey to drown down his meal.

*We start to wonder how much he's had.
And mixed with the Xanax...*

But he couldn't be bothered. The burger not just hitting the spot, but giving him life. Composure returning by the bite.

At least for a moment, before -

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

suddenly DISRUPTS HIS DINING, coming from...

The burner he practically forgot about. Quickly wiping his hands on his jeans, even quicker on the draw with the phone:

JOHN
(into the burner)
Doc...?

But the voice on the other line surprises him:

MADELINE (OTL)
No, it's not fucking Carl. It's me. You
need to tell me right now - what the
fuck did you guys get into this time?

JOHN
What do you mean?

MADELINE (OTL)
The Feds were here, John! They were here.
At my house. And they're looking for you.

The mere mention spurring a jarred John up from his chair in an instant. Cementing all their worst fears tonight.

JOHN
Holy shit, Doc was right...

MADELINE (OTL)
Fuck "Doc" and fuck Carl, John. You
need to tell me right now. What the
fuck did you guys do?

JOHN
I can't tell you. I don't know if
this line's secure...

MADELINE (OTL)
Of course it's secure! It's my fucking
phone, John!

JOHN
Not if they were just there!

Before his expression drops, panic returning.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Wait... what did you tell them? Did
you tell them anything?
(grave)
I need to know everything you said,
Mads. And I need to know it now.

MADELINE (OTL)
Jesus, John. I'm not a fucking snitch.
Do you not know me any better than that?

JOHN
Mads, I'm serious.

MADELINE (OTL)
So am I. Obviously that I haven't seen
you in weeks and you're a no good,
sperm-giving sonuvabitch that is the
absentee fucking father of my child.

JOHN
And they believed you?

MADELINE (OTL)
The second part's the truth, ain't it?

Despite everything, her words still sting.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
John, it's your turn. You need to tell
me right now. I'm not playing around
here anymore. What the fuck did you
guys do? This is serious. Why are you
on national fucking news like Jeffrey
fucking Dahmer?

JOHN
Nothing! It's all lies!

MADELINE (OTL)
How am I supposed to believe that, John?
The Feds were at my house! And they
weren't fucking around either! They
scared Brandon. Tearing through the place
like it was the end of the fucking world.

JOHN
I'm telling you the truth, Mads! I
didn't kill anyone. Whatever's on the
news is a goddamn lie.

Staring out at the scattered remains of Room Seven, feeling like the scattered pieces of his life he's clinging onto...

JOHN (CONT'D)
You used to believe me once, remember that?

MADELINE (OTL)
Yeah, and look where it got me...

JOHN
That's not fair.

MADELINE (OTL)
Isn't it?

Her rhetorical question hanging there in the silence between.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
Even if I believed you, that *they* - not you - were full of shit... you did something to make them lie in the first place. To come to my house looking for you. They don't start a multi-state manhunt if there wasn't a guilty fucking man to hunt. If he didn't do something.

JOHN
I am not the bad guy here.

MADELINE (OTL)
I don't give a shit who's the good or bad guy! That's not the point. You're in this situation and now it's affecting me! It's affecting us!

Her irritation felt in her wavering voice.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)
So what you need to do... is undo it. Right now. And make this right. For me. And more importantly, for your son. Because he doesn't deserve this.

JOHN
It's too late for that. What we've done here... it will change everything. Everything we thought we knew about the universe, about American history, will never be the same after tonight.

MADELINE (OTL)
Well, John... I'm glad you believe that. Really.
(MORE)

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)

I'm glad you feel like you've finally been fucking validated after all these years. But this is what you've always done. And will always do. Put those batshit conspiracies of yours over your own goddamn family.

JOHN

They're not conspiracies! They're the truth. Are you not listening to me? I've finally proved it! That I was right all along! My son will live in a world and a country that is a little more truthful because of what I did here tonight!

MADELINE (OTL)

I'd rather him live in a country with a father.

A long beat simmers in the wake of that...

ON: John struggling for words.

The *pitter-patter, pitter-patter* of the pelting rain filling the void between them. Until he just can't take it any longer-

JOHN

I just... for once in my life, wanted to do something that matters. That's important. That makes a difference.

MADELINE (OTL)

There are more important things in this life, John. And *he's* in the next room getting ready for bed.

And we can almost hear the defeat in her voice.

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)

You just don't get it, do you? You never have. And I hate to admit it, because Lord knows I've tried, but you never will.

(...)

Don't call this number again, John. I fucking mean it this time.

Are those tears on the other line?

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)

Goodbye, John.

JOHN

Wait, let me at least talk to Br-

CLICK! - John greeting only...

THE DAMNING DIALTONE

in her wake, his one line to his family severed.

JOHN

FUCK!

THROWING HIS BURNER PHONE ACROSS THE ROOM - its plastic hull HITTING the far wall beyond the bed with a resounding *SMACK!*

John immediately regretting his rash reaction. Racing over towards roughly where the phone hit, discovering it's slid...

UNDERNEATH THE BED IN ITS FALL

So he gets down on his hands-and-knees, extending his fist deep beneath the bed, really having to strain for it here...

Much farther than he anticipated. Gritting his teeth, stretching hard, beyond the point of comfort. Before finally -

GRABBING HOLD OF IT, pulling it out from under the bed.

John quick to inspect it. The phone's hull still in-tact, just its plastic's aggressively chipped. Opens it to find...

IT STILL WORKS

Whew, what a fucking relief. Would've completely left him in the dark, alone in this. ON: the time on the phone's clock -

9:54

Taking another pull of whiskey here to calm himself.

And to forget his conversation with her -

The black-and-white film on the television now drawing his eyes, a better means to forget and distract. Reaching for the room's remote and UNMUTING its glorious, sci-fi pulp:

EROS (ON SCREEN)

-first was your firecracker, a harmless explosive. Then your hand grenade. You began to kill your own people a few at a time. Then the bomb, the larger bomb. Many people were killed at a time. Then your scientists stumbled upon the atom bomb. Split the atom. Then the hydrogen bomb, which actually exploded the air itself.

(MORE)

EROS (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Now you bring the destruction of the
entire universe, served by our sun. The
only explosion left is the solaronite.

COL. EDWARDS (ON SCREEN)
Why there's no such thing!

EROS (ON SCREEN)
Perhaps to you. But we've known it
for centuries. Your scientists will
stumble upon it as they have all the
others. But the juvenile minds you
possess will not comprehend its
strength, until it's too late.

ON: John's hand hovering over the TV remote's channel buttons. As if wanting to change it back to the news -

But he doesn't.
 He doesn't want to know.

The TAPPING of his finger resuming here, the same Morse code:

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

Trying to get lost in the movie...

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

Failing to do so. Anxiety creeping back into his expression, fear in his eyes. Fingers moving faster, FASTER, FASTER...

Tap-tap-tap! TAP-TAP-TAP! Tap-tap-tap!

And that's when -

THE BLINDING RED LIGHTS OF A SIREN

abruptly FLASH through the room's blinds, flooding the motel interior, John immediately FREEZING at its sight.

Quickly MUTING the television's sound, and crouching down from view. Staring up at the revolving **RED LIGHTS** dancing across his room's walls. Knowing full well what they mean...

Was he too loud again on the phone with his wife?

Crawling over towards the window now. Getting up slow, cautious, peeking through the blinds out into the night.

JOHN POV:

And catching sight between the pelting sheets of rain...

A NEW MEXICO HIGHWAY PATROL CAR

pulling across the motel lot with its sirens on - before coming to a steady stop between the aisles of parked cars.

AN OFFICER

now emerging from the driver's side door. Wearing a standard-issue jacket and clutching something shiny in his fist...

A TACTICAL FLASHLIGHT

turning it ON in the rainy night beyond. Scanning across the array of drenched, parked cars before him, more specifically:

THEIR LICENSE PLATES

taking them in, one by one. Slow, purposeful in his scrutiny.

INTERCUT:

ON: John's fear as he watches, body tensing -

JOHN POV:

The beam crossing over the white Karman Ghia parked beside...

HIS BEAT-TO-SHIT VOLVO

The officer reading his stolen Florida plates...

For an excruciating beat.

Before continuing on - to John's visible relief. Moving to the rancher's truck beside it, then gravitating towards:

THE FORD EXPEDITION

Stopping at the sudden sight of...

JOHN'S NEVADA PLATES

Confirming something critical...

They're here for him.

The flashlight-clutching officer inaudibly BARKING back towards the red lit-Highway Patrol cruiser behind him...

HIS PARTNER

emerging from the passenger side, inspecting the same plate.

JOHN

Shit-

Quickly veering his focus to his burner here, dialing one of the only two numbers in his phone's limited log:

775-628-1441

Desperately waiting out Doc's tone:

RING. RING. RING.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Come on, come on...

RING. RING. RING.

Having not left his perch at the window, blinds parted and monitoring the night with the **SIREN'S LIGHT** washing over his face, revealing the worry thriving in his eyes...

RING. RING. RING.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Pick up. Pick up, you sonuvabitch...

But to his deepest, darkest disappointment...

The AUTOMATIC EARLY 2000S VOICEMAIL picks up instead:

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL (OTL)
The number you have reached is not available. Please leave your name and number after the tone.

John HANGING UP with frustration.

JOHN (CONT'D)
FUCK!

Looking back up and peering back out into the night...

JOHN POV:

The Highway Patrol Officers now standing before the neon blue-lit front office, beckoning a familiar face out from within:

BARBARA

looking like she's complaining as she puts on a rain jacket two sizes too big, stepping out into the pouring rain...

While they gesture her towards the Expedition. Pointing down to... THE VERY NEVADA PLATES we know await her there.

An unheard conversation between them.

One that seemingly goes... for an eternity...

ON: John fretting throughout its entirety, his imagination of what's said inevitably worse than what it probably is...

Before Barbara points towards...

ROOM TWO

Presumably in the direction of the vehicle's owner. Both Highway Patrol officers quick to react, abruptly drawing...

THEIR SERVICE SIDEARMS

Reporting their findings into their shoulder-strapped radios, and slowly... moving towards that room for their suspect...

A panicking John doesn't waste a beat here, quickly moving away from the window and to his room's table, grabbing...

HIS CAR KEYS

Climbing onto his motel bed for the air conditioning vent above, taking off its ACHING grate, reaching inside for...

THE FIVE STAMPED-AND-SEALED ENVELOPES

slotting them right into his jacket pocket, before jumping back down and heading right towards the motel room's door. Eyes craning up to its small, needle-sized peephole...

JOHN'S PEEPHOLE POV:

Gauging the distance to his car in the storming lot ahead. Almost as if asking the rather pressing question...

Does he makes a run for it?

His answer coming from his hands reaching for the deadbolt...

UNLATCHING IT

Moving down to the door's knob...

UNLOCKING IT

Gathering his breathing here hard, now counting to himself:

One.

Two.

Three...

BEFORE **SWINGING OPEN THE DOOR INTO THE NIGHT**

And the second he burns across the threshold...

RIIING! RIIING! RIIING!

nearly stops his heart, or at least his step - SLAMMING the door in an instant, dead-bolting and locking it, before picking up his burner, relieved by his partner's presence:

JOHN
(into the burner)
Thank God, Doc... it's a code red
here. The cops-

And that's when he notices...

THE THUNDERING SOUND OF A HURLING, VEHICULAR ENGINE
on the other line, joined by the thump-thump-thumping of...
PELTING RAIN ON A WINDSHIELD

And the debilitating fear in his partner's voice:

DOC (OTL)
They're fucking after me, man!

ON: the immediate confusion crossing John's face -

JOHN
Wait, what? What do you mean? Who's
after you? What's that noise?

DOC (OTL)
I said they're fucking after me!

THE ROARING OF AN ENGINE THRUST INTO HIGHER GEAR
echoes in the burner's speaker, John suddenly realizing:

JOHN
Are you *driving* right now? Where are you?

DOC (OTL)
(panicking)
I don't know! Some fucking road not far
from my place. They ambushed me, man!
The whole fucking cavalry was heading
right to me. Knew my car and everything,
'cause the second I passed, they veered
right around and followed fast.

The rising BEATING of the rain mirroring John's racing heart.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
These aren't even the cops, man. I
don't even think they're the Feds.
(MORE)

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
 Their vehicles, they're unmarked.
 And they're in these fucking suits.

A STARTLING **RAT-A-TAT-TAT!** OF AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE

nearly bursts John's eardrums, jerking his phone away.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
 And they're shooting at me!

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! -

continuing on the other line like a cruel chorus.

DOC'S SCREECHING ENGINE, firing on FULL CYLINDERS now.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
 We really fucking did it this time,
 John... there's no coming back from
 this. We poked the bear. And the
 bear bit back. He bit fucking back.

JOHN

Someone had to, the world deserves
 to know what we now know. We have a
 responsibility. The world needs to
 know what we found-

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! -

seemingly getting CLOSER from the faintly heard...

CONVOY OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES, hot on Doc's tail.

DOC (OTL)
 And I'm telling you... I don't think
 the world will! They have us cornered,
 man. We're like a rat in a trap. And
 this trap has fucking spikes, and
 nukes, and a national fucking anthem.

And as if to assess his own fuckedness, John moves back to
 his room's window, parting the blinds to clock...

JOHN POV:

The two Highway Patrol offices bringing out...

A VACATIONING FLORIDIAN FATHER

in handcuffs and an Aloha shirt, adamantly arguing with the
 cops. Pointing right towards his vehicle with his restrained
 arms. We don't hear the words, but gather their context:

Not his license plate.

The pressure mounting, John gripping the envelopes he holds.

JOHN
(determined)
We'll find a way. I'll find a way.

DOC (OTL)
You better. Because we're gonna fucking die for this, man. I'm gonna die for this. As soon as they catch up to me.

JOHN
No, you're not. Don't say that.

DOC (OTL)
Easy for you to say! You're not the one being fired at!

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! -

This time audibly SPARKING METAL, as if hitting the shell of Doc's car, denting its steel frame with crescendoing CRUNCHES-

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
They're shooting to kill, John!
When does the government have that kind of authority?

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! -

The SPARKING METAL GETTING CLOSER, moving farther up the steel of Doc's vehicle, nearing the burner phone he holds.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
Why do they have that authority?

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! -

followed by... A LOUD, STARTLING SHATTERING OF GLASS.

A window taken out by... A STREAM OF BULLETS - the sounds of RAIN SLAPPING inside the car now, the WHIPPING WIND...

JOHN
You don't know where you are?

DOC (OTL)
No! I've just been driving blind away from them! It doesn't even feel real.
(...)
Fuck! I'm getting on the highway now.

JOHN
Which highway?

DOC (OTL)
I don't fucking know, John! I'm
already on it!

THE REVERBERATING ROAR OF **BEATING ROTORS**

now sounds on the other line - coming from above. Loud, harsh
and practically **DEAFENING** with the bullet-breached window...

JOHN
Is that... a fucking chopper?

DOC (OTL)
Yes, it's a fucking chopper! And it's
following me. It's following me!

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! -

THE BULLETS. THE ENGINE. THE ROTORS. THE RAIN.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
I'm telling you, this is bad. This
is really fucking bad.

THE **SCREECHING** OF HIS TIRES SOUND

interrupted by... THE ANGRY **HORN** OF AN EIGHTEEN-WHEELER.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
They're not trying to arrest me,
John. They're trying to kill me!

THE CHOPPER ROTORS ONLY GETTING LOUDER, CLOSER -

John at a loss for fucking words.

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)
What the fuck did you do when you were
down there, John? Be honest with me.
You owe me at least that. You had to
have done something, taken-

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! - A MASSIVE **BURST OF GLASS**
THIS TIME, PRESUMABLY THE FRONT WINDSHIELD EXPLODING INWARDS -

And that's not even the worst sound...

A WAVE OF SHARDS FLOODING THE INTERIOR - AUDIBLY **SLICING**,
IMPALING THEMSELVES INTO DOC'S FLESH TO HIS PAINED SHOUTS.

John stomaching Doc's agony.

JOHN

Nothing! Literally nothing! I didn't kill anyone, I promise! Why does no one believe me?

DOC (OTL)

Because they're acting like the fate of the fucking world's at-stake!

JOHN

With what we found, it is!

DOC (OTL)

I don't think proof of what they had down there would elicit-

(cut short)

-HOLY SHIT, JOHN! THERE'S A FUCKING ROADBLOCK AHEAD!

John's eyes widening at the notion, feeling his friend's fate-

DOC (OTL) (CONT'D)

What the fuck do I do?! You're the one made for situations like these, not me!

JOHN

Can you brake?

DOC (OTL)

No! I'm going one-fifteen, one-twenty now!

JOHN

Brake, Doc!

And all we can do is hear what hell comes next...

THE SHUDDERING SLAM OF BRAKE PADS. ENGINE SCREAMING. ROTORS BEATING. BULLETS RAINING. RAIN SLAPPING. TIRES SCREAMING.

Then -

DOC (OTL)

OH SHIT, THERE'S A SPIKE STRIP!

No time to breathe...

WHOOOOOOOOOOOSH! THE VIOLENT SOUNDS OF BREACHED RUBBER - A ONCE ROARING VEHICLE NOW AIRBORNE, WEIGHTLESS, before...

FLIPPING, CRASHING. CONCRETE BEATING METAL. CRUNCHING STEEL. BURSTING GLASS. BOUNCE-BOUNCE-BOUNCING ACROSS THE HIGHWAY.

Until...

Silence. Suffocating silence.

John hardly able to breathe.

JOHN
Doc... Doc... can you hear me?!

But greeting...

Nothing

Not even the sound of the airbags.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Doc! Please!

Then -

THE MOST PAINFUL GROAN

we've ever fucking heard - A BLOODED, BEATEN BODY trying to rise, pinned beneath what we can only assume is a concrete-crunched steel cage of glass shards and sharp, jagged metal.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Doc, is that you?

But instead of his response, we start to hear something else -

BOOTSTEPS

on highway tarmac. Technically, dress shoes. Approaching under the pelting *pitter-patter* of rain beyond the wreckage.

CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK.

Getting closer.

CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK.

Louder.

CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK.

That's when we hear -

A HEAVY BODY SUDDENLY SHIFT

directly beside what could only be our phone -

JOHN
Doc!

DOC (OTL)
(weak)
John...

CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK.

JOHN

Doc... you need to get out of
there. Someone's coming!

But if his partner's audible agony conveys anything...

He can't move.

All John can do is bear the sound of -

CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK. CLICK-CLACK.

Then -

Silence. Again.

For an insufferable moment.

Or ten.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Doc...?

John never gets a response -

RAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!

PELTING THE WRECKAGE WITH A STARTLING STREAM OF BULLETS -
RUTHLESS, UNRELENTING. SPARKING METAL. SPRAYING GLASS.

And the worst sound of all...

**AUTOMATIC AMMUNITION BURSTING THROUGH A BLOOD-PUMPING
BODY AT THE CLOSEST RANGE, A REMORSELESS EXECUTION.**

An auditory nightmare neither we nor John will ever forget -

The silence after debilitating. Demoralizing.

John's heart caught in his throat, bearing...

Just the final sound of Doc's PHONE SLIPPING out of a still
fist to the wet wreckage and concrete below amidst the rain.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Doc...

Before the phone is...

ABRUPTLY PICKED UP BY SOMEONE UNKNOWN

The call still going, uninterrupted.

John frozen there in fear, listening to...

BREATHING

on the other line. Nothing, but...

HEAVY, MALE BREATHING

for an excruciating series of seconds, before...

THE UNKNOWN CALLER HANGS UP ON JOHN

Doc's line definitively dead.

MOS: John frozen there, shaking. Hardly able to fathom what the night has become. The horrors of what he just heard...

The grief of his friend's loss hard for him to bear. For the first time, starting to feel alone in this. Alone in here...

THE RAIN'S DUMPING DOWNPOUR

mirroring his emotions, the panic brewing within. Not even...

THE MUTED BLACK-AND-WHITE

of the sci-fi pulp film can offer a way out of his reality. Trapped in this disheveled, destroyed motel room of his...

With seemingly no escape.

Something he feels even more the moment he heads to the window, fingers pulling aside the blinds to take in...

JOHN POV:

The confrontation unfolding in the dark, storming lot beyond:

THE FLORIDIAN FATHER

still in a heated argument with the two officers and Barbara. Vehemently directing them away from his Expedition and its "wanted" license plate towards their suspect's true vehicle -

THAT BEAT-TO-SHIT VOLVO

No words, but we gather their meaning all the same:

That's his real plate.

Meaning the Volvo...

John QUICK TO RETREAT from the window. Turning OFF the motel room's lights at the flick of a switch, the television black-and-white with the click of its remote. Now sitting there in:

- DARKNESS -

Besides the intermittent **RED** of the Highway Patrol car's SIRENS seeping through the gaps in the window's blinds, dancing off the walls, reflecting off his fearful face.

THE SILVER BERETTA

he grips in his fist feeling like his own security blanket. Bracing for their approach. His tactical eyes locked on...

THE CLOSED MOTEL ROOM DOOR

Feeling like it's only a matter of time. Holding...

THE SEALED LETTERS IN HIS HAND

what he did all this for. The reason he was willing to die.

But now, not so sure...

Not a single sound in the night, beyond the pelting rain:

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

Each drop feeling like his own gallows' march.

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

ON: his fist gripping his Beretta tight, aimed at the door -

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

Before -

AUTHORITATIVE FOOTSTEPS

echo from the motel world beyond.

Getting closer...

...CLOSER -

Growing louder...

...LOUDER -

An apprehensive John staring out at the **RED** SIREN LIGHT bleeding through his blinds into the room's black, until -

TWO SHADOWS

step across the window before him -

Heading in the direction of...

HIS DOOR

His eyes shifting down to...

THE LOCKED DOORKNOB

waiting for it to move, shake, struggle with someone's touch.

But to his surprise...

It doesn't come. It never comes.

THE TWO SHADOWS

finally crossing his window... and continuing BEYOND his door towards the awninged room to his left, followed by:

BARBARA (O.S.)
You said Room Eight, sir?

Rises from the other side of his door, a voice he recognizes. But it's the following voice that gets right under his skin:

COLD MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Yes. And my associate, when he arrives - will be in Six, correct?

BARBARA (O.S.)
That is correct.

The GRINDING SOUND OF A KEY GREETING ITS LOCK echoes, coming from the room directly beside John's, beyond his motel wall.

BARBARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I like your suit, by the way. Very dapper.
Reminds me of the good ol' days back when that looker Kennedy was in office.

COLD MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Thank you, ma'am.

Before audibly CLOSING the door behind him -

The strutting sound of DRESS SHOES stepping into Room Eight echoes beyond his wall while John's eyes simultaneously catch-

BARBARA'S SHADOW

crossing his window again, heading back to her motel office.

Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter. Pitter-patter.

Drawing John up in an instant, bringing his ear to the wall neighboring Room Eight beside him... desperately trying to make out something, anything from the motel quiet within...

Waiting out the suffocating stillness.

That builds...

...AND BUILDS, until -

THE HEAVY, MALE BREATHING

OF THE MOTEL GUEST ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL SOUNDS.

John shooting back from his position, deeply rattled.

Confirming the threat that lurks beyond.

ON: John's eyes as panic and realization strike - feeling definitively and utterly trapped here. Needing a way out.

Not missing a beat, quickly heading back towards the --

BATHROOM, ROOM SEVEN - CONTINUOUS

-- eyes to the soiled shower/bath combo and...

THE BACK WINDOW

to the ALLEY outside. But the second he opens it to escape -

FOOTSTEPS

rise from the alley beyond. Confirming what he now knows:

He's surrounded. There's no way out for him tonight.

OFF: the defeated look in his eyes -

JUMP TO:

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

A FRANTIC JOHN - having resumed his motel pacing, navigating the minefield of mess that covers his room's floors:

From the discarded pillows, to the overturned briefcase, to the plastic-bagged clothes, to the detailed schematics for a bureaucratic structure whose identity we still don't know...

ON: the cold sweat slipping down his face, running dye down his sideburns. Desperate for an out, not knowing what to do.

THE BURNER PHONE

he's used throughout the night in his fist. Staring down at a dead Doc's number. Alongside his separated wife and son's.

And that's when...

He stops for a moment. Having an epiphany.

Hearing a chaotic chorus of VOICES from over the course of the night in his head, the answer always right there:

MADELINe (OTL)
You need to tell me right now - what the fuck did you guys get into this time?

DOC (OTL)
You had to have done something, man. Because they're coming at us with the force of a thousand suns!

MADELINe (OTL)
The Feds were at my house! And they weren't fucking around either! They scared Brandon. Tearing through the place like it was the end of the fucking world.

DOC (OTL)
*What the fuck did you do when you were down there, John? Be honest with me. You owe me at least that. You had to have done something, taken-
 (...)
 They're acting like the fate of the fucking world's at-stake!*

Spurring John here, quick to the bed and reaching up for:

THE AIR CONDITIONING VENT

above, taking the grate off, digging inside for the heavy...

DUFFLE BAG

struggling with its weight as he brings it down to the unmade bed below. Quickly searching for and finding its zipper -

ZIIIIIIIIIIIIIPPPPPPPPPP!

Pulling out the strange futuristic tech: every wired item and steel modem. Circuit boards that feel of 2023, not of 2002.

Until he eventually comes in contact with *it*, removing...

THAT SHINING STEEL CRATE

And for the first time, we see its hull's military markings:

A-51

REVEALING all here in full: *everything tonight the aftermath of a heist at the US government's most infamous black site -*

While John reaches for that SCREWDRIVER he always keeps in his back pocket, and makes quick tactical work of the crate's hinges, removing them one-by-one until the lid breaks free...

John breathes a beat, gathering the courage, before -

OPENING THE CRATE

And what he sees inside changes everything tonight -

Something we will never see.

ON: the defeated look in John's eyes as he marvels at what this stolen crate holds, what *they* were so keen to retrieve.

Before he nods to himself, slow - and for the first time, John Redfield accepts that he's going to die tonight.

BLACK.

Silence - but just for a moment...

Interrupted by a STARTLING BURST OF STATIC. Followed by the rising, numbing chatter of white noise and radio frequencies, a chorus of shouting, DISTORTED VOICES echoing from the void:

Fragments of details we're only able to briefly pick out amidst the grating, overwhelming bombardment of the senses:

FEMALE DISPATCHER (OTL)
...suspect has been located...

MALE DISPATCHER (OTL)
...Mooncrest Motel, Room Seven...

DISTORTED POLICE SCANNER (OTL)
...be advised, suspect is armed and dangerous...

HIGHWAY PATROL RADIO (OTL)
...T-minus three minutes until the evacuation of motel patrons is complete...

EYE IN THE SKY (OTL)
...FBI's set a perimeter, only authorized personnel within a mile of the asset...

MILITARY SAT PHONE (OTL)
...they're here...

FADE BACK IN:

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

ON: the rabbit-ear television, John's briefcase, pillows, and whatever else in the room he can manage PRESSED against Room Seven's door, BARRICADING its frame from the world beyond -

While a now noticeably... *resigned* John sits in his chair, facing it. His Beretta in hand and waiting out his fate.

The only lights from the revolving **RED** of the sirens outside and the red numbers of the room's overturned alarm clock:

10:12

The continual *pitter-patter, pitter-patter* of the rain outside echoes along with something else beneath its storm:

The rapid rise of MALE, MILITARY VOICES. TACTICAL MOVEMENTS. The escalating arrival of SCREECHING TIRES. RUMBLING, VEHICULAR ENGINES. ELECTRIC ROAR of GENERATORS, SPOTLIGHTS.

The audible sounds of an assembling operation.

None of this we see, just hear -

Because instead, we're with John...

Just sitting there, taking it all in. The occasional LIGHTENING and THUNDER illuminating his empty expression.

Momentarily staring down at the burner phone he holds...

ON THE PHONE:

his cursor hovering over his wife's number:

725-356-9165

Losing himself in the sight of those ten digits. Avoiding the very thing he knows he needs to do here. What he must do...

Until he can't avoid it any longer.

John breathes to himself. Slow, controlled. Taking a pull from his fifth of whiskey for some liquid courage before...

Finally moving to his burner and DIALING, greeting the tone:

RING. RING. RING.

ON: John waiting it out in the dark motel room, the revolving **RED** of the siren momentarily crossing his face -

RING. RING. RING.

Bearing the rain's slapping *pitter-patter, pitter-patter.*

RING. RING. RING.

The military MEN gathering beyond.

RING. RING. RING.

Before -

The damning sound of her voicemail.

MADELINE (OTL)

Hey, you've reached Madeline Redfield,
the incredibly talented Brandon, and-
(*Jetsons singsongy*)
-his dog Astro.

ON: John hearing the very family he's not a part of -

MADELINE (OTL) (CONT'D)

We can't get to the phone right now,
but please leave your name and number
after the beep, and we'll get back to
you as soon as we can. Thank you.

Before that very *BEEP!* echoes.

JOHN

Hey... it's me. I figured you probably
wouldn't pick up given how our last call
ended. And know I'm deeply sorry for how
it did. But I'm calling again, because...

He swallows, no longer able to avoid his reality.

JOHN (CONT'D)

...I think it's the end of the road
for me. I finally got myself in a
situation I don't see a way out of.
And I've been doing a lot of thinking
over these past few minutes. What I
want to do. What I want to say. How to
do these last moments right. To make up
for the mistakes I've made, the people
I've hurt. And I... I don't think
that's possible in the time I got left.

The clock's ticking "10:15" staring back at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Because I can't change the past. That's
science fiction. And I know that now.

He sighs to himself, heavy. Staring out at his dark, lonely motel room. His door barricade made up of all the critical items from his life's work and "op" - now just *reinforcement*.

JOHN (CONT'D)

For so long, I thought if I could just... prove I was right, that I wasn't crazy, then everything would be right in my life again. That everything would go back to normal. With you, me, Brandon. That I'd be some sort of national hero, someone you guys could be proud of... **but that was a fantasy**. More of a fantasy than any theory or conspiracy we ever had. Because... there was a moment here tonight where I was sitting there, alone in this diner. With everything I've ever wanted back in my motel room across the street. And it was supposed to be this big victory I'd always dreamed of. But it didn't feel that way. It didn't feel that way at all. Instead... I felt empty inside. Hollow. As alone as ever. And I just had this urge to pick up the phone and risk it all just to hear your and Brandon's voice. And that was the moment I realized that all I ever wanted... was just to be a hero in both your eyes. And all I had to do to be that, was just be present in your lives. And I wasn't. I wasn't. **And that's my greatest failure.**

ON: his burner shaking in his fist -

JOHN (CONT'D)

So I'm sorry I wasn't a better husband, I wasn't a better father. I'm sorry these reckless pursuits of mine took my time away from you, away from Brandon. Because it couldn't have been for the greater good... if I was hurting the very two people I was supposed to be good to.

His regret simmers in his eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

So whatever you read about me, whatever they say - I just want you to know, from me, that I'm sorry. I'm *so fucking sorry*, Mads. I'm sorry for it all. Goodbye, Mads. I love you. Tell Brandon I love him to the moon.

And just like that, John ends his last message -

Slowly setting his burner down by his side, expression frozen there. Eyes empty, staring out into the distance...

Or at least, to the motel room's barricaded door. Paying no mind to the FRENETIC ACTIVITY, SHOUTING, **SIREN LIGHTS** beyond.

Finally feeling truly, fully alone in the dark here - alone with the consequences of what he's done, the life he's led. Alone and surrounded in this Mooncrest Motel prison of his...

A bitter pill for a man to swallow.

But swallow it he must - sitting upright in his chair. Facing the door and the firing squad that's bound to come inside eventually. No family or friends to call in his darkest hour. A fate of his own design. Closing his eyes, breathing deeply.

Before turning towards...

THAT STEEL, A-51 CRATE

on his motel bed - we still don't see what's inside. Nor will we ever. Just John's accepting expression, coming to terms with what he must do. While we begin to hear...

THE LOUD, BEATING ROTORS OF **A DESCENDING BLACKHAWK**
echoing from beyond his window, hovering over the motel -
ITS BLINDING SPOTLIGHT

now flooding from the night beyond through his room's Venetian blinds and sending us to an all-encompassing...

WHITEOUT.

The BEATING-BEATING ROTORS continuing over the void, before the Blackhawk's SPOTLIGHT gradually comes into focus --

BACK IN:

EXT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

-- ON: its blinding beam geared towards the motel room where we spent most of our story. This time, from the outside...

Shielded from the rain's pitter-patter by the awning above.

We hear *their* approach, before we see them -

A FORMIDABLE FORCE OF MILITARY HEAVIES IN SILVER HAZMATS

nearing the door in tactical formation. Silent, soldier gestures. Coordinated movements. Gloved fists gripping:

SHINING, STEEL ASSAULT RIFLES

futuristic in design, with the WHIR of *current-coursing rounds* echoing down their hollow, silver chambers. Checking their clips as they move, safeties disengaged, before...

Their leader ABRUPTLY HOLDS UP HIS FIST -

Stopping his unit before **ROOM SEVEN**'s door. All tactically gauging the uneasy silence, stillness beyond its frame...

INT. ROOM EIGHT, MOONCREST MOTEL - SIMULTANEOUSLY

A motel room turned FULL-BLOWN MILITARY OPERATION: the entire left wall that borders John's Room Seven beyond...

TENTED IN CLEAR PLASTIC

for unknown containment and precautionary purposes -

A SECOND UNIT OF HAZMAT SOLDIERS

positioned before it, weapons locked and at the ready.

STRANGE G-MEN IN BLACK SUITS

behind them, overseeing their efforts alongside a command center of unfamiliar, seemingly futuristic technology.

INT. ROOM SIX, MOONCREST MOTEL - SIMULTANEOUSLY

An identical scene here -

THE RIGHT WALL TENTED. Along with the armed Hazmats, G-Men, and futuristic tech that seems far removed from 2002. All bracing for impact, fingers gripping triggers, gazes steeled.

EXT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - NIGHT

The pounding *pitter-patter* of the rain continues, with the Blackhawk's BEATING ROTORS and its spotlight geared towards:

THE HAZMAT HEAVIES

in prime position before Room Seven's door, while their leader beckons a trailing soldier forward, who clutches...

A SILVER STEEL BATTERING RAM

that mirrors the assault rifles they hold - angling its blunt edge towards Room Seven's motel lock. Turning towards his commander for a quick, coordinated count-off...

One. Two. Three...

BOOM! - THE BATTERING RAM **SHATTERS** THROUGH ITS DOORFRAME, SPLINTERING ITS WOOD AND HERDING THE HAZMAT HEAVIES INSIDE --

INT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

-- GUNS GEARED FORWARD, SHOUTING, HAZMAT HANDS SHOVING THROUGH THE DOOR BARRICADE JOHN ONCE BUILT, and into...

The strangely dark, empty motel room.

John nowhere to be found -

Just the disheveled aftermath of his stressful night covering the floors, the furniture... the OPEN air conditioning vent, the overturned alarm clock, the unattended diner dinner...

THEIR ASSAULT RIFLES' TAC LIGHTS

quickly coming on, barrels swiftly scanning across the space, probing around the cluttered interior in search of a threat -

And finding it in...

THE OPEN A-51 CRATE, on the unmade bed -

The source of their immediate panic:

HAZMAT HEAVY
(into comms)
The asset's found a new host!

COLD, MALE VOICE (OTL)
DON'T LET IT ESCAPE!

A split-second before...

A DARK HULKING SHADOW DROPS DOWN FROM THE CEILING ABOVE -

EXT. ROOM SEVEN, MOONCREST MOTEL - SIMULTANEOUSLY

-- triggering chaos we see FROM THIS REMOVED PERSPECTIVE:

Ghastly glimpses of science fiction-horror through Room Seven's shattered door and the closed blinds of its window...

MUZZLE FLASHES OF WHITE LIGHT FROM ELECTRICALLY-CHARGED GUNFIRE. THE **SCREAMS** OF DYING MEN RIPPED APART. THE CARNIVOROUS, **CREATURE CRIES** OF THE PREDATOR IN THEIR MIDST.

All before...

AN EXPLOSIVE BLAST OF NEON BLUE LIGHT

Swallows everything we see.

HARD OUT.

For a long, gathering moment to even process, until -

OVER **BLACK**:

The familiar, distorted sound of our old school, pulp film:

CRISWELL (O.S.)
My friend, you have seen this
incident based on sworn testimony.
Can you prove that it didn't happen?

FADE IN:

ON: the early morning light shafting outside the --

EXT. MANAGER'S OFFICE, MOONCREST MOTEL - DAWN

-- from its flickering neon blue sign and the lights within, the power's clearly come back on in the wake of everything.

SMACK! A THROWN STACK OF NEWSPAPERS -

from a passing delivery van HITS the wet concrete before its front door. Its "Roswell Daily Record" header visible along with John's familiar mugshot plastered across its title page:

"MANHUNT FOR FBI SUSPECT ENDS IN DEADLY MOTEL SHOOTING"

The very same newspaper...

AN OLD, WRINKLED HAND

picks up, belonging to -

BARBARA. Smirking at its headline as if she knows otherwise. Lighting her pre-breakfast hash cigarette, flicking ash into a drying puddle of rain. And staring out at her motel...

REVEAL: A RAVAGED, HALF-COLLAPSED TWO-STORY BUILDING AND...

A CRATER WHERE ROOM SEVEN ONCE WAS.

What's left of the structure aggressively TENTED and surrounded by a FRENETIC BUZZ OF ACTIVITY from the SILVER HAZMAT SCIENTISTS, GAS MASKED SOLDIERS and MILITARY BLACK HUMVEES that've made her parking lot their base of operation.

She takes a long drag of hash, before shaking her head.

BARBARA
(sotto)
Goddamn Feds.

MATCH CUT TO:

The same sight overseen on the opposite side of the lot by...

A HISPANIC MAID

in a blue "Mooncrest" housekeeping get-up that needs ironing, standing beside her daughter and her turquoise tricycle:

THE LITTLE GIRL FROM EARLIER

in the same overalls from last night, marveling at the full-scale GOVERNMENT OPERATION that has overtaken her motel home.

MAID
(in subtitled Spanish)
You can go play. But as far away from
the motel as possible, understand?

That's when she notices something strange sticking out of her daughter's overalls pocket, reaching down to grab it...

A HEFTY, YET FAMILIAR WAD OF CASH

The source of her mother's confusion.

MAID
(in Spanish)
Where'd you get this?

SMASH TO:

INT. BATHROOM, ROOM SEVEN - LAST NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

ON: a rattled John staring up at the very back window he just opened above his room's shower/bath comb, hearing...

FOOTSTEPS

coming from the motel's back alley beyond -

ON: the resignation flooding his eyes...

But this time, we don't abruptly cut or have a transition that disrupts our film's otherwise real time storytelling -

While John clocks the surprising source of the disturbance:

THE LITTLE GIRL

playing in the motel alley below - John drawing her near, deeply relieved by her sight. Giving him an opportunity.

JOHN
Little girl, is that you?

She stares back at him blankly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can you do me a favor?
(then, translates)
Un favor?

The little girl nods, while John extends those...

FIVE STAMPED-AND-SEALED ENVELOPES down to her as an offering.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can you take these and put them in
the mailbox across the street?
(translates)
El buzón?

Before retrieving something familiar from his back pocket:

THAT WAD OF CASH, waving it out the window towards her.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'll give you this.

The girl's smile grows contagious, a little light in a night of darkness as John hands over the envelopes, cash. Breathing easier in the aftermath, having found a way out after all...

BACK TO:

EXT. MOONCREST MOTEL - DAWN [PRESENT]

While her mother stands there holding John's money, staring bewildered at both her daughter and the chaotic government craze unfolding before her, as we notice OVER HER SHOULDER:

A USPS VAN

driving through the characteristically empty street beyond the motel and coming to a stop before that very...

MAILBOX

Its driver stepping out, emptying the box's contents into the trunk of his vehicle. Before SLAMMING it shut, and...

Driving off into an early New Mexico sunrise. A new dawn.

FADE TO **BLACK**.

THE END.

POST-CREDITS:

ON: the struggling, silver CASTER WHEEL of an unseen cart coursing over the pristine, white tile floor of an --

INT. UNKNOWN BUREAUCRATIC FACILITY - NIGHT

-- pushed forward through the fray by...

A HAZMAT SUIT

humming to himself as he goes about his work, the groovy beat of what might be The Beatles echoing from within his suit.

Navigating the hanger-like industrial interior. Moving in and out of the building's fluorescent lights above while passing -

TOWERS OF SLEEK, SILVER CRATES

of all shapes and sizes, military designations on their hulls-

Holding secrets we will never know.

Before coming to a stop near one tower in particular. Moving over to his cart and clipboard, sifting through and reading the various-shaped, silver CRATES piled in front of him...

Selecting a familiar one stamped with our film's title:

10.24.02

Grabbing it and slotting it onto the nearest tower -

Before the Hazmat continues on his merry way with his work, pushing his cart and humming along to his psychedelic track.

The sound of the struggling CASTER WHEEL below echoing across the hollow interior, while we PULL farther and farther up...

Taking in the full extent of the facility: towers, crates, and government secrets that will remain here hidden forever.

FINAL BLACK.