

SMOKIN' ACES
Screenplay by Joe Carnahan
4/23/05

FADE UP ON:

TITLE CARD

A narration accompanies this passage: ***"The events depicted herein were believed have taken place in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. All manner of record as they might pertain to these events have been seized by the Department of Justice"***

INT. VAN -- NIGHT

Wall-to-wall surveillance set-up. Two FBI AGENTS: DONALD CARRUTHERS 30's and RICHARD MESSNER 30's, man the post, staring at video monitors. Both hold telephoto images; shaky, long lens shots of a mansion some distance away. Messner tacks photographs to a corkboard on the van wall. One is labeled "Subject SIDNEY K. SERNA: UNDERBOSS/Sparazza Family."

The other is labeled "Subject VICTOR "BABY BUZZ" PADICHE LIEUTENANT/Sparazza Family." Voices begin emitting over the van's speakers.

SERNA (V.O.)

Buzzy...Buzz...?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Yeah...Sid?

SERNA (V.O.)

You got clicks, anything?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Nah, nuthin' on my end--

SERNA (V.O.)

--Okay...hang on, I gotta move--

Messner rides a digital console, tweaks frequency.

MESSNER

(keying mic)

Zoom and pan please. Stay tight.

ON THE MONITORS: The image pans, follows a figure moving behind the mansion's windows, entering a back bedroom.

SERNA (V.O.)

Alright, now Buzzy-- this is, this is it, here, okay, so listen to me careful and wait till I'm finished 'cuz we got no room for slop.

PADICHE (V.O.)

I'm here.

Messner adjusts the record level, V-U meters spike, modulate. The figure on the monitors paces the room. WE SEE it's Serna.

SERNA (V.O.)

Okay, he's gonna clip Israel, I just gotta outta there--

PADICHE (V.O.)

--he's doing it then, huh--

SERNA (V.O.)

--yeah, now lemme finish, I was eavesdroppin', so give me sec, lay this thing out, since the information might be a little loose--

PADICHE (V.O.)

--okay, g'head--

SERNA

So what I heard downstairs there is that they got a guy, some Swede, real badass, supposedly a "specialist" and they're bringing him over. Now he ain't coming cheap-- so, I'm thinkin' we *jump*, do this in the next day or so, get to Israel before the Swede can, we got chits, y'see? We're in a power position. Grab him, ransom him back, pick up that nut, we're that much closer to having our own thing.

PADICH (V.O.)

--I see that, yeah, s'smart move, for us anyway.

SERNA (V.O.)

Trust me, we keep our mouths shut, go about our thing, play the part, nobody suspects us.

(feedback distorts)

The old man's on the fade Buzzy, fuck him, y'know? And that hurts, I don't like saying that, but hey, our livelihood, our lifeboat, y'get?

PADICHE

No question, no, you're right. We gotta do what's good for us now.

SERNA (V.O.)

Fuckin' A, first survive, yes?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Y'gotta, y'gotta. But d'ya think they'll kick ransom for that little prick, assuming we get to'm.

SERNA (V.O.)

Yeah, y'ain't heard the punchline,
yet and before I get to it, one more
thing I heard, little curious, should
probably bring it up...Primo wants
Israel's heart. The actual thing,
the organ.

Pause. Feedback. The agents trade looks. Carruthers grabs
a cellphone, dials, patches a feed for the party on the other
end to hear.

PADICHE (V.O.)

...Jesus...what for?

SERNA (V.O.)

--who can say. He's off his onion,
y'know, he's old school Sicilian,
this is how they hate.

PADICHE (V.O.)

Wow.

SERNA (V.O.)

Hey, we nab Israel, they pay t'get'm
back, I'll cut the fuckin' thing out
m'self, no extra charge. My thing
is, we crew up, let's not fuck
around, someone's cousin, some Zip
off the boat from Naples, let's get
pros, people who know how to behave.

PADICHE (V.O.)

Yeah, there's a pair'a broads I'm
thinking might be good for this.

SERNA (V.O.)

Chances are, they're gonna get into
some shit too, hafta put people down.

PADICHE (V.O.)

That's not a problem. Are we goin'
outta pocket ourselves?

SERNA

Yeah, I can front this.

PADICHE (V.O.)

Well just so I got a quote in my
head. What's the rate for the Swede?

SERNA

That's the punchline, y'ready?

PADICHE

Shoot.

SERNA (V.O.)
A million flat.

PADICHE (V.O.)
No shit.

SERNA (V.O.)
None whatsoever.

SMASH CUT TO CREDITS

The Ace of Hearts, spinning through mid-air, slow motion, end over end. Bullets blast big sizzling holes through it.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CASINO -- LAS VEGAS (PAST)

Neon-framed doors fly open as a slicked-back chump with a store-bought tan strides out onto the strip, swinging underage bar-bait on each arm. He's all strut and punk swagger, grinning like a geek who just struck gold.

DUPREE (V.O.)
Buddy Israel, nicknamed "Aces" Born a bastard, mom Laverne chased the pipe dream from a Dairy Queen in Kansas City to the Vegas stage. Two months after stepping off a Greyhound, she gets knocked up by some hood.

CUT TO SCENE:

INT. DRESSING ROOM -- NIGHT (PAST)

A row of chorus girls, gilded like gold-flaked flamingos, rubbing coca-butter on bare midriffs. THE CAMERA FINDS Buddy's mother LAVERNE, prominent bulge, seriously pregnant, she's arguing with her employers, trying to suck in her belly, yelling "*bullshit, you just have to light it right...*"

DUPREE (V.O.)
Biological abandons her and the showgirl thing goes sideways so she winds up working as a magician's assistant to make extra cash.

CUT TO SCENE:

INT. CLUB -- NIGHT (PAST)

Second rate dive bar. Laverne Israel assists a pompadour-maned MAGICIAN on stage. In the lounge, sitting on a stripper's lap, a young Buddy plays with a deck of cards.

CUT TO:

INT. POOL HALL -- NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Bamboo-style ceiling fans circulate cigar smoke and shitty attitudes. At a billiard table in the back: JACK DUPREE, 40's, third generation Bail Bondsman, talks with HOLLIS ELMORE, 30's and "PISTOL" PETE DEEKS, 30's, ex-Vegas vice cops. As Dupree speaks, WE SEE the scenes behind the story:

DUPREE

...And young Buddy learns everything about cards from this Mandrake motherfucker his mom is working for...

CUT TO SCENE:

The magician being brutally beaten-- pelted with poker chips, kicked in the chops, pissed on, the works.

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

But magic man was also a degenerate gambler and got caught dealing bottom-deck at a mob-owned poker parlor.

(beat)

He didn't get outta there with much more than a pulse.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY (PAST)

The Magician, full body cast, taking his meals through a straw. Young Israel labors over him, performing card tricks.

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

DUPREE

Point is, he passed on all this slight of hand shit onto Aces and the kid is sick with it...By the age of twelve Buddy Israel is positively prodigal with a deck of cards. By sixteen, he's headlining the MGM's main room.

CUT TO SCENE:

Buddy, cards and coins dancing off his fingertips, dazzling sold-out crowds. Laverne Israel sits in the front row, decked out in ankle-length fur, applauding wildly.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. POOL HALL -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Dupree rounds the table, lines up a shot, leans over it.

DUPREE

This punk is pulling down ten bills a night and more showgirl geech than you can shake a stick at. Four years of sold-out shows, he becomes the unofficial mob mascot

CUT TO SCENE:

Buddy meets mob hierarchy; silk suits and pinkie rings.

DUPREE (cont'd; V.O.) (CONT'D)

By the tender age of twenty-one he's breaking bread with the wheels, keeping company with major muscle. And it goes to his head in a big way

CUT TO SCENE:

Buddy, poolside, glass of top dollar Dom in hand. Chicks, Coopertone and chasm-deep cleavage abound.

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

...Wiseguys start to think this sonofabitch is a mystic, something special...and Aces plays it up, lets the legend grow, takes time off from his stage act and starts showcasing the chip on his shoulder.

CUT TO SCENE:

Buddy, tipping a craps table, attacking the stick-man, stripping off one of his gold chains, going garotte.

DUPREE (CONT'D)

He buys into his bullshit, building street cred, he's got plans and pull, he's makin' plays, living the mob life for real. Somehow, it takes: Lounge act turned legitimate thug.

INT. POOL HALL

Dupree rips the eight ball, corner pocket.

DUPREE

In reality, he doesn't know the ball from the bounce...He's not a crook, so he starts fucking up fast and picking up speed, putting a floodlight on the whole Carlotta organization. Cops get curious, start camping out, compiling names and faces and pretty soon Israel's bullshit has brought the heat to bear on none other than Primo Sparraza--

LOCKE (V.O.)
 --Enforcer. Extortionist. Killer.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

WE RECOGNIZE Carruthers and Messner as the two Agents from the Padiche/Serna surveillance. They are sitting with F.B.I. Deputy Director STANLEY LOCKE. A debrief is in progress.

SUPER: WASHINGTON, D.C.

A Mafia Family Tree has been erected behind them with a photo of Primo Sparazza at the top.

LOCKE
 Sparazza is rumored to have performed in excess of one-hundred and thirty contract murders, including one of the bureau's most celebrated agents. Freeman Heller. You heard of "The Turnpike Murders" that was Sparazza.

MESSNER
 I thought Heller was a double op?

CUT TO SCENE:

FREEMAN HELLER, 20's, clean cut Cornell grad, class of 1937. He's on a pistol range, scoring perfect marks.

LOCKE (V.O.)
 No. He worked for the O.S.S. before joining the Bureau in its heyday. He was the first operative assigned with infiltrating the mob.

CUT TO SCENE:

Heller, outdistancing the rest of his recruiting class in a training run, nearly a mile ahead of the next man.

LOCKE (V.O. CONTD) (CONT'D)
 Full immersion and assimilation, fake identity, falsified background, everything that is now standard operating procedure, Heller implemented, way back when.

CUT TO SCENE:

Heller oversees every aspect of his transformation, radically altering his appearance, adding different mannerisms, an accent, etc...befuddled FBI brass can only look on in awe.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

And as a result, his undercover work was wildly successful. He eventually reached the rank of Capo inside the Carlotta crime family...but through some internal slip-up, his cover was compromised and Primo Sparazza was given the contract to kill him.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE -- NIGHT (PAST)

A '51 Ford Fairlane, flush with an embankment, bullet perforated, dead-body draped. A top-coated gunman (presumably Primo Sparazza) stalks the vehicle's sole survivor, FREEMAN HELLER; faux mafioso, full-time federal agent.

LOCKE (V.O.)

There wasn't enough evidence to bring formal charges, so the case never went to trial.

Heller collapses, the gunman looms over, levels a .45, FIRES.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Sparazza is a bit of a specter. Over the years, the serious crimes with which he was thought to be involved, including Heller's murder, could never be traced back to him.

The gunman slinks back to his car as we--

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Locke stands, distributes files.

LOCKE

A dedicated viciousness and a slavish devotion to mob doctrine had Sparazza's star on the rise. So the mob relocated him to Nevada and he became the unofficial head of the Las Vegas LCN.

CUT TO SCENE:

A PHOTOGRAPH of PRIMO SPARRAZA, sharkskin suit, vintage 60's coif, posing in front of The Riviera with a dour, pissed-off Frank Sinatra.

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

MESSNER

So he's personally issued the contract
on Israel?

LOCKE

Sparazza was the one who introduced
Israel to the life, gave him his
first big break, brought him through
the ranks.

CARRUTHERS

Made him a friend of the family.

CUT TO SCENE:

Sparazza and Israel, Casino grand opening, flashbulbs burst.

LOCKE (V.O.)

...His hand-picked protege, successor
to the throne...and Israel played
the situation very shrewd.

A MONTAGE OF more photo-pos, Buddy Israel posing with mob
power brokers, playmakers...smiling all the way to the top.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

...Slowly amassing the loyalties of
Sparazza's top men...with plans of
toppling the throne.

CUT TO SCENE:

Buddy, late-night conspiratorial confab with Sparazza soldier.

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

LOCKE (CONT'D)

In doing so, he plunged the Carlotta
organization into a civil war,
splitting the family into dual
factions. Sparazza on one side,
Israel on the other. The infighting
that followed drew the interest of
nearly every major investigative
body operating under the canopy of
the federal government.

MONTAGE

Stakeout teams snap photos- plant bugs- wire hidden cameras.

LOCKE (cont'd; V.O.)

Presently there are sixteen state
and federally funded agencies, running
concurrent criminal probes on select
members of the LCN...With Israel

(MORE)

LOCKE (cont'd; V.O.) (CONT'D)
 being the primary target in virtually
 every investigation.

CUT TO SCENE

Israel sits with a group of FBI agents, discusses a deal.

MESSNER (V.O.)
 A marked man gets wise and wants to
 come in.

LOCKE (V.O.)
 His testimony has the potential of
 blowing the lid off what's left of
 the La Cosa Nostra in this country.
 That alone warrants total immunity
 from prosecution and a vanishing
 act with Witness Protection.

Israel is walked out of the room as we CUT BACK TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

MESSNER
 So the wiretaps we conducted on Serna
 and Padiche, the mention of Israel's
 heart?

LOCKE
 --Your intel corroborates what we
 already know. Sparazza's health is
 in rapid decline and before his date
 with destiny, it seems he wants one
 last thing...The heart of his sworn
 enemy. A recently opened, cash rich
 escrow account has been traced back
 to Sparazza. This and the mention
 of this mysterious Swede makes the
 million dollar contract on Israel
 very real.

SYKES (V.O.)
 How real...?

CUT TO:

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

Greasy spoon soul food joint, packed lunch counter. Meet
 SHARICE WATTERS, 33 and GEORGIA SYKES, 24, Ebony stunners,
 ghetto queens, street assassins. They are sitting with their
 booking contact, LORENZO WYMAN, 41. He holds up a copy of a
 bank telex, sliding it across the table.

WYMAN
 How 'bout six-figures for this fool?
 How 'bout that love?

Watters takes the telex, gawks, shows the numbers to Sykes.

SYKES

Bullllllshit...

WYMAN

Naw baby, they heard about that Triad hit, the work ya'll put in and they recognize the skills. And this ain't no tryout, tap-dance "show us your shit" thing neither-- if ya'll want this then I'mma go git it for 'ya.

Watters twirls her long braids, looks over at Sykes.

WATTERS

So me and Sis here, 'cuz we got a rep on a rise, we chipped some nails on some niggas, they want us to drop this mafiaoso so and so, magician, whatever-the fuck he is.

WYMAN

S'way it works girl. Ya'll done dirt, ya'll peeled some serious caps. Word travels.

SYKES

And so I get this straight, we gotta go in, bust on this punk and remove the heart? Is that for real?

WYMAN

No, no, no, y'gotta go in and get him, pull'm out of wherever he at, forget all that other shit, that's just f'flavor. I'm still getting lil' bits'a this-n-that from this cat Padiche, the man contacting me...Right now, what we got--

(nod to telex)

--Is a number and a name...Buddy Israel.

SYKES

(to Loretta)

What else did Padiche say?

WYMAN

He said that the shit could get hot, could get heavy...I said good.

(beat, grins)

'Cuz I got two of the hottest, heaviest bitches alive.

MESSNER (V.O.)

Like who?

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

The Feds continue their briefing.

LOCKE

Like Pasquale Acosta, blood money
mercenary. His countrymen have dubbed
him the more dubious "El Estrago"

(beat)

The Plague.

CUT TO SCENE:

Death personified; sun-cooked skin, black hole eyes, tattoos
gouged out of prison boredom...This is PASQUALE ACOSTA.

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

American educated, fluent in over a
dozen languages, did journeyman's
work for CIA funded "G-2" and
"Archivo" death squads in Guatemala
and Chile...noted for his legendary
torture techniques.

CUT TO SCENE:

Acosta clips car battery cables to the eyelids of a dissident.
FLASH TO: Acosta scorching an off-camera scrotum with a
blowtorch. FLASH TO: Acosta powering up a bore-drill as a
semi-nude man screams and pleads.

CUT BACK TO:

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Sought for war crimes and human rights
violations in eighteen different
countries. When he was caught by
the SAS in Northern Ireland and
imprisoned, he chewed off his
fingertips to the bone before he
could be printed and ID'd by Interpol.

CUT TO SCENE:

Pasquale; prison cell filthy, feasting on his fingers.

CUT BACK TO:

LOCKE (CONT'D)

On an extradition flight back to El
Salvador, he murdered a security
detachment and vanished.

MESSNER

You think it's possible he could be
involved in the Israel hit?

LOCKE

Possibly. Acosta is pure mercenary. And a million dollar hit fee will draw some huge flies. But forget about Sparazza's money for a moment and remember, there's no shortage of those who want Israel killed and no shortage of cash to do just that...

DUPREE (V.O.)

...Then I'm sure you've heard of these guys...The Tremor brothers.

CUT TO:

INT. POOL HALL -- MORNING

Dupree chalks his cue, positions for a shot.

DUPREE

No?

(off dull stares from
Deeks and Elmore)

Then you've both been living under the same rock, 'cuz these cocksuckers are infamous. Three brothers, same skank mom, different deadbeat dads, used for that suicide-kamikaze style shit. You heard about that huge shoot-out in Cleveland?

DEEKS

Is that the club that got wiped out a couple months back?

ELMORE

What happened?

DUPREE

The Teamsters had a reform measure going to ballot that didn't sit too well with the local syndicate. Night of the polling, big black-tie to-do downtown and the Tremor Brothers crash the party. Literally.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DINNER CLUB -- NIGHT

THE TREMOR BROTHERS pilot a Dodge Barracuda right through the front window with wrecking ball bravado. Bodies scatter as the Tremors deploy from the car in full body kevlar, doing doomsday on the club. One of them fires up a chainsaw, chewing into the panicked crowd. Bodyguards blast back, but bullets play like spitballs against the Tremor's body armor.

DUPREE (V.O.)

Donald McGarey, the local union rep, is the mark. The Tremors go ripshit riot on the whole club, seven people dead, twenty-eight wounded. Just to get to this one guy.

Shotguns roar-- blast spreads obliterate-- a shitstorm of blood, spilled booze and busted glass--

DUPREE (CONT'D)

--And they get it about as good as they give it. In the melee, one of the brothers catches blowback from a jammed piece and is temporarily blinded, the other takes bullets to the lower back and can't walk. The third gets popped in the neck and passes out. McGarey gets out of the club alive...and not much further...

CUT TO:

EXT. DINNER CLUB -- PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

The blind Tremor, walking wounded, piggybacking his brother with the bum back, dragging the other by the scruff of his neck, unconscious across the concrete. Police sirens squeal. McGarey, the union guy, hairpiece hanging by a thread, crawling toward his car. The piggyback Tremor brother reaches into his blind brother's coat, grabs a revolver and unloads.

Long live the teamsters...Not tonight.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. POOL HALL

Dupree chalks his cue.

DUPREE

They're speed freaks, neo-nazi's. Sworn to the swastika, supposedly read and recite "Mein Kampf" like Mother Goose...And these motherfuckers can go megaton at the drop of a hat.

SYKES (V.O.)

What's the name again?

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

Wyman, Sykes and Watters, back at the greasy spoon.

WYMAN

"Soot, Lazlo Soot." Lotta folks want this white boy clapped. Soot could be workin' for one 'em.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Crammed pedestrian crossing, noon hour a trio of SUITS converse, shrouded by bodyguards.

WYMAN (V.O.)

Nobody really certain where he come from...

The party proceeds through the crosswalk, approaching them is a dark-suited man, expressionless, hands in his pockets. Others move past; a woman with shopping bags, a skateboard punk, a geriatric dog-walker and a man, full paralysis, mouth-op wheelchair, "My Left Foot" palsy.

WYMAN (CONT'D)

...and when he moves on somebody, they the last ones t'see it comin'--

The bodyguards perk up, sensing something. Dark-Suit, removing his hands from his pockets-- cellphone...Wrong guy.

The crippled cat, throwing a quilt off his lap, contorted face vanishing, two Uzi machine-pistols up, safeties off, triggers pulled-- BAP! BAP! BAP! BAP! BAP! BAP!

The bodyguards get caught napping-- bullets blaze point blank. The three suits collapse. The phony invalid empties both guns, hops up from the wheelchair, hooks a passing truck and flees the scene...that, was LAZLO SOOT.

DUPREE (V.O.)

So what do you think?

INT. POOL HALL -- BAR

The boys have retired to the bar for a round of dollar drafts.

ELMORE

I think it's idiotic to continue this conversation.

(turns, to Deeks)

We're ex-cops which means we weren't great cops or even good ones.

DEEKS

Paying bills with bullshit casino jobs, sitting watch on slot machines.

ELMORE

Which was a great gig until we we walked in here and started drinking.

DUPREE

The bond on Israel expires in eighteen hours, after that, it's a jump ball. Our window is now.

DEEKS

Who posted his bail?

Dupree pats himself down, searching for his cigs.

DUPREE

His law firm, same one that hired me. Israel walked out after he made bail and nobody's seen him since.

ELMORE

Jack, if the rumors hold and Israel is really the great white whale of snitches, then the mob is looking to put all kinds of bullets into his ass and pour some serious psychotics into the mix to do just that. So what *real* incentive is there to track him on something as small-time as a skip trace, when it's putting you and yours in the path of severe pain and suffering and an almost certain prelude to doom.

A beat. Dupree blows smoke, flicks ash.

DUPREE

So I guess you're not going.

ELMORE

Shit, if you're on a crazy jag, why stop there, why not take Fort Knox with a fucking slingshot or go into Hell after Hitler...I like your chances a lot more.

Dupree, stubbing his cigarette.

DUPREE

I know his location, we've got the drop of a maybe half a day before that location gets grape-vined and the rest of the world gets hipped.

ELMORE

That's already happened hoss. It's naive to think otherwise.

DEEKS

Where is he?

WYMAN (V.O.)

--Lake Tahoe.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

Watters, nodding, wiping red sauce off her fingers.

WATTERS

Three hours t'the east. S'day trip.
Pretty this time a'year too...

Sykes sets her fork down, wipes her hands on a napkin.

SYKES

We gotta lay something out, strategy-wise. Somethin' tight. Y'go in there ad-libbing, it's y'ass.

WATTERS

What are we talkin' on the split...

WYMAN

Forty-five apiece for you two, ten percent finders fee for me.

SYKES

What's the time frame?

WYMAN

Right mafuck'n now girl. Fast as we can get you there. We wait any longer, someone goin' dead this fool.

MESSNER (V.O.)

...Then we lose our witness.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- DAY

The briefing continues.

LOCKE

We lose our case. Twenty-four hours from now, he's scheduled to meet with federal prosecutors. His agent, a man by the name of Morris Mecklen, has guaranteed us that he'll enter into protective custody once his deal is approved.

CUT TO:

MORRIS MECKLEN, 60's, bloated, bad combover, agent to the Vegas vanguard. He sits at his desk, jawing into the phone. On the wall, framed photos; Wayne Newton, Buddy Hackett, Carol Channing and a triple-chinned, near-the-end Elvis.

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

We've been monitoring Mecklen's calls and have learned that Israel is staying in the penthouse level of the Nomad Hotel and Casino in Lake Tahoe, Nevada under an assumed name.

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

INT. BRIEFING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

CARRUTHERS

Right there? In the high-roller suite?

MESSNER

It's the last place they'd look.

LOCKE

Israel's legal representation, the firm of Culpepper, Brody and Reed, which is currently the subject of a joint SEC and Treasury Department probe, were left holding the bag after he skipped bail. Over three-quarters of a million dollars on a bond that's set to expire in less than a day. Rupert Reed, one of the firm's partners, has learned of Israel's whereabouts and dispatched a local bondsman by the name of Jack Dupree to pick him up and return him to Las Vegas...that can't happen.

(beat)

We have a Gulf Stream standing by at Reagan International to transport you two to Lake Tahoe.

(pause, with weight)

It's very simple gentlemen. Valacchi, Fratiano, Gravano-- no former witness against the mob has been as crucial or has brought more to bear on the potential dissolution of The La Cosa Nostra, than Buddy Israel.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK:

MONTAGE

Over this entire sequence WE HEAR Agent Locke speaking:

The cylinder of a .44 Magnum is popped, a speed-load dropped in, spun and snapped shut-- Porn mags and crossword puzzle compendiums are tossed into a carry-on. Morphine and adrenaline syringes get spiked and capped-- A collection of wigs, fake sideburns and moustaches get laid out, separated--

LOCKE (CONT'D)

...But understand that if an attempt
is made on his life...

Kevlar body armor gets stowed-- An elephant gun gets buffed
to a high shine-- Vintage Ww11 German Potato-Masher hand-
grenades are lovingly wrapped in terry cloth towels.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

...then it is being made by those of
the strictest professional caliber...

Torture-tools; curved cutting implements, serrated bone saws,
skull keys, a portable blowtorch, blackened with burned
blood...all packed neatly into a duffel bag--

LOCKE (CONT'D)

...They are cold-blooded, ruthless,
and without restraint...and they
must not succeed.

A gun is aimed, a trigger pulled..."BOOM"

SMASH CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- MORNING

Daybreak. Sunlight streams in, soft suffusion, the color of
good scotch. PRIMO SPARAZZA, 86, lies on a hospital bed, an
O2 mask shrouding deep-set, sunken eyes, cataract-grey, gazing
out at a four-walled world. Someone enters the room, awaiting
approval to approach...Sparazza, turning, seeing the man,
summoning him over with a feeble finger wag. The man reaches
him, kneeling down, ring-kissing reverent, whispering:

MAN

...he's here now...

Sparazza nods. The man exits. After a moment, the door opens
again...and another MAN enters, walking slowly toward
Sparazza's bedside. He sets down his luggage, a black leather
valise. The travel tags originate in Stockholm:

The Swede has arrived.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

Soaring across the pristine deep blue waters of Lake Tahoe.
Rising, revealing the gaudy, mirrored glass tower of the
NOMAD HOTEL & CASINO. We slowly DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- NOMAD HOTEL & CASINO -- MORNING

BUDDY ISRAEL, bathrobe, boxers, bags under his eyes. He absently shuffles cards, pulling aces as if by touch, telepathy. He gazes out at the snow-packed peaks. Behind him; post-bacchanalia...the ugly morning after. Prostitutes, passed out cold in a tangle of crotchless panties and stiletto heels, lying amongst smashed vodka bottles and ashtrays, coke-covered tabletops and tipped room service trays. -

Israel, sober now...contemptuous of it all. He starts walking around them the way you would casualties on a battlefield. His bathrobe brushes over, terrycloth catching one of the hooker's wigs, tugging it free. Israel looks down, zooming in on her scalp, sees dandruff and scars, gags disgust and disdain. He steps, the wigs pulls. He stops and slips the bathrobe off, letting it fall rather than pull her wig the rest of the way off and ruin what illusion remains.

He shuffles, begins dropping Aces on their bodies like dead enemy soldiers. One of his bodyguards enters; a bulging, slow-witted, ex-bodybuilder by the name of HUGO CROOP.

ISRAEL

D'you talk to'm?

HUGO

(fetching Mylanta
from the fridge)

I got his machine.

A beat. Israel fidgets, twitches, rubs coke residue from his nose and over his gumline

ISRAEL

What'd you say?

HUGO

(gulping Mylanta)

I said I got his machine.

ISRAEL

No, what did you say on the machine?

HUGO

I left him a message.

ISRAEL

I know you left him a message. What did you say!

Hugo looks up, seems confused. Moments pass. Israel, the patience of a gorilla, crammed into a canary cage.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

Jesus Hugo!

(MORE)

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

How is it that you can turn a simple conversation into a fucking hedge maze!? This is zero degree of difficulty man!

HUGO

Okay.

ISRAEL

Then why are you still looking at me like I'm asking for the square root of something! *What did you say!?*

Hugo, still unsure, speaks in spite of it.

HUGO

I said that we were returning his call and you were real concerned, because he sounded real concerned.

ISRAEL

Look at that, we didn't have to fill up the whole blackboard after all. Now, do you know anything about that?

Israel wrist-flicks a playing card, it embeds a sofa cushion like a ninja throwing star, right next to a beige coat.

HUGO

About what?

ISRAEL

Look at the collar on that coat...

Hugo, wary, walking over, inspecting the coat from a distance.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

What's that look like, that stain?

Hugo edges closer, looks down at the coat, squints.

HUGO

I dunno...Cinnamon roll?

ISRAEL

Cinnamon roll? No, good guess though. No, Hugo that looks like jizz...

(reshuffles, stares)

And I'm no forensic expert mind you, but that looks like some fuckhead shot their load on a twelve-thousand dollar calf's skin jacket. The twist? It's My twelve thousand dollar, calf's skin jacket.

(beat, then)

So y'got semen, human ejaculate--

(MORE)

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(checks watch)
 --that's been allowed to soak in for what, six, seven hours now? Work it's way into the fabric-fuck'n *fibers*-- and while you may never see it in a Tide commercial, I think it still safely qualifies as a "tough, deep down stain."

Hugo takes another pull off the Mylanta bottle, moving slowly, like most morons do, avoiding eye contact at all cost.

HUGO

I could have it sent out...

ISRAEL

...to what? *Incinerate?* 'Cuz I'm almost dead certain there's not a fucking laundry detergent or dry cleaning process known to man that can ever return that jacket to its former glory! Some shit, suffice it to say, *just don't wash out.*

(beat, cooling down)

Now, the money question...To whom does that stain belong?

Hugo, gameface falling apart...Israel prods him.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

C'mon, somebody was banging one of these skanks, sans rubber--

(beat, assesses girls)

--which is *terrifying* in its own right-- pulled out, let 'er rip and ruined the last gift my mother gave me before she died.

(snatching up coat)

The way I see it, it's the same as if she was dug up, three months dead and it was shot right on her rotting corpse, 'cuz that's how it defiled this feels!

Hugo. Long pause. Big dumb blush.

HUGO

Do you want me to say I did it?

ISRAEL

I was kinda hoping, yeah.

HUGO

Do you want me to say I'm sorry?

ISRAEL

Only if you really, truly mean it.

Hugo, swallowing, pressures on. The phone begins to ring.

HUGO
...I'm sorry...

ISRAEL
Are you a fucking colossal idiot?

HUGO
I am. Yeah.

ISRAEL
Without peer?

HUGO
I-- uh, yeah, I guess, yeah.

Cards dance, Israel's hands moves at lightspeed, he reaches into Hugo's shirt front and pulls a playing card out...Joker.

ISRAEL
(showing him the card)
No. Be sure. Be resolute. You stand alone on that summit.

The phone rings. Hugo, wobbly, what-to-do...? Buddy fires all fifty-two cards into his face. The beast barely blinks.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)
Get the phone, it might be Gill, then get out of my sight.

Hugo, furtive look to the floor, all those scattered cards, then, back to the boss, "should I?"

ISRAEL (CONT'D)
No. The cards can stay there. Get The Goddamn Phone.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR -- DAY

A cellphone being lifted, revealing Special Agent Carruthers.

CARRUTHERS
Yes Sir. Go ahead.
(listens, checks watch)
We're three miles from The Nomad now. We'll be awaiting word.

He clicks off. Messner occupies the passenger seat, reviewing surveillance tape, portable headphones on, mini-DAT player in his lap. He listens to the following excerpt:

SERNA (ON TAPE)

*--so, I'm thinkin' we jump, do this
in the next day or so, get to Israel
before the Swede can--*

Messner pulls the headphones off.

MESSNER

Anything on the Swede?

CARRUTHERS

Only the mention made in that phone
call. There's no Swedish hitman of
any renown, much less one with a
million dollar day rate.

MESSNER

Maybe he's that good. Never been
caught, no criminal record.

CARRUTHERS

Maybe.

Messner, sets the gear on the floorboard, stretches. He
turns over photographs of Victor Padiche and Sidney Serna.
(the same ones that were tacked to the corkboard of the
surveillance van in the opening)

MESSNER (CONTD)

I tell you, engineering this kind of
play against Sparazza, going to the
lengths these guys are going
to...they're playing some long odds.

CARRUTHERS

And a very bad gamble.

MESSNER

(re; the passing neon)
Well... This is as good a place for
it as any I guess.

CUT TO:

A slot machine handle gets yanked, rolls, stops, lemon-lemon-
cherry- loser...please deposit coins.

CAMERA MOVES PAST, TRACKING THROUGH:

INT. CHOW SHACK BUFFET -- MORNING

Tahoe's "First and Finest" all seasons Buffet. THE CAMERA
FINDS: A slicker older cat in a Guyabera shirt, mid-fifties,
spotted skin, sun damaged, pocked with pre-cancerous black.
We recognize him from the mugshots and surveillance video:
It's VICTOR PADICHE. Sykes and Watters enter FRAME. Padiche
stands, greeting them, smiling-cigarette-stained-dentures...

PADICHE

Girls, wonderful, here, sit.

Watters scoots in right next to Sykes, gets comfy. Sykes seems a put off by the proximity, ignores it for the moment.

PADICHE (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Okay, so...you're here, really nice isn't it? Brisk weather, but nice.
(as WAITRESS approaches)
Coffee? Anything? I didn't want to order for you.

WATTERS

No, we're cool.

PADICHE

Fabulous.
(to Waitress)
I'm fine sweetheart, thanks.
(beat, back to girls)
Okay, so...welcome to the south shore!
(big smile, then)
So, just jumpin' right in, just in terms of this thing, our thing. I spoke to Lorenzo this morning, he says y'got somethin' more or less put together, plan'a attack and me and my associate Mr. Serna, who I can put on the phone hear, we'd love t'hear it.

Watters and Sykes, non-responsive, staring...

PADICHE (CONT'D)

We ain't askin' ya t'take us through, soup t'nuts or 'nuthin' like that, I jus' like t'hear the broad strokes, y'know, so we can get an idea--

Sykes and Watters look at one another, wordless exchange, then;

WATTERS

Pussy.

Awkward beat, Padiche, head cocked, did I hear that right...?

PADICHE

Wha'?

SYKES

Pussy.

PADICHE

(leaning closer)
"Pushy?"

Watters, shaking her head, correcting him.

WATTERS

Pussy.

The old man blanches, doesn't quite understand the--

PADICHE

--Uh...

Another beat. The girls let him dangle. Watters, lewd sneer, looks almost lustfully at Sykes as she says the following;

WATTERS

Israel likes pussy...

Padiche, recovering, nodding, nervous.

PADICHE

...Oh...uh-huh, yeah--

Sykes squirms under Watters lascivious gaze, but manages:

SYKES

And we like that he likes...

Yet another beat. Padiche, wanting desperately to contribute.

PADICHE

...Pussy?

SYKES

Correct.

Padiche, big nod going from one girl to the other, he-get's-it-but-not-really.

PADICHE

...Fabulous.

He extends his hand. WE TRACK IT ACROSS IN C.U. as it meets with a male hand.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- BLACKJACK INN -- MORNING

Dupree and Deeks shaking hands with RUPERT "RIP" REED, mid-forties, showbiz-slash-mob attorney, low man on the totem at the Las Vegas based legal firm of "Culpepper Brody & Reed"

REED

Yeah, Jack, alright...hey--
(shakes Deeks' hand)
Nice t'meet you. Rip Reed.

DEEKS

Pete.

REED

Okay, good, good, c'mon, c'min.

Reed and Dupree shake. Reed glances out in the hall before closing the door.

REED (CONTD) (CONT'D)

(to Dupree)

Where's your third? This was a troika, no?

Dupree, finding a seat, almost under his breath.

DUPREE

He's...fuckin'...he's comin'...

As Elmore appears, Reed almost closes the door on him--

REED

(extending hand)

Hey, hey how r'ya, Rip Reed.

ELMORE

Hollis. Elmore.

They shake. Dupree shoots a look at Elmore, not pleased. Elmore, pissy, leans against the wall, arms crossed.

Reed, wound out, worn thin, half drunk-- his bedspread is papered with writs, summons, notaries, etc: Everything to make Buddy Israel's return to custody legally binding. He sits on the edge of the bed, reaching for a pack of smokes on the nightstand, finding a half empty glass of scotch.

REED

(to Deeks)

So Jack tells me you're both ex-cops?

DEEKS

Yeah, that's right.

DUPREE

They worked as swingmen for the Vegas Vice squad--

(to Deeks)

What? Five, six years?

Reed, digging a cigarette out of his pocket.

REED

Man the stories you guys must tell. I grew up soft myself, private schools, little blazers, you "Talked it out" nobody threw punches, t'this day, never been hit with a fist, Imagine that, huh?

(MORE)

REED (CONT'D)

Pretty much a panty-waste, trembling little faggot-fairy when I smell trouble-- and I don't say this to be self-deprecating, I just don't have much of an opinion about myself, I mean, shit, I wish I was a lot more like you guys, barfighters, big swinging dicks, gettin' it done. Sadly.

(lifts his shirt,
exposes torso flab)

This is it. It's...disgusting.
(with a look skyward)

Thanks God, dogpile a piss-poor physique with an small cock and hereditary alcoholism! 'preciate it!
(beat, to Dupree)

Okay, I'm babbling, I do this when I drink, forgive the rants, let's get at it here. This wanted felon fucking prick bastard Buddy Israel and the nearly one million dollar bail bond.

Dupree smiles, pats Reed on the shoulder, don't-sweat-this...

DUPREE

Rip, my right hand to God, we're gonna go in and recover this asshole and everybody's gonna leave the theater grinning. Trust me.

REED

That confidence translates bro, seriously, it does! Out-*STANDING!*

Reed, white-boy high-five, excruciatingly un-hip. Deeks and Elmore literally have to look away. Dupree can barely bear it.

REED (CONT'D)

I'm a lawyer, y'know, I need to hear these things, little boosts, helps allay my fears, I pass that piece of mind along to my partners.

(beat, then)

Alright, so, couple primers for you guys, maybe things we might've looked past that you should know about...His hangers-on, these idiots Israel runs with, they're all "packing heat" "strapped" whatever the phrase is. Point two, Israel likes hookers, so you might run into a harem up there. Point three: He binges between a six-to-seven thousand dollar a day cocaine habit that nobody knows about, so he

(MORE)

REED (CONT'D)

and those hookers, will most likely be high. He also drinks, self-medicates, the whole cliché, y'know? The strung out hasbeen jerkoff snitch drunk. The seven-layer loser.

(beat, exhales)

I'm praying he puts up a fight, please, please, please, rape him if possible, I'll-pay-the-extra-whatever--

Nobody knows what to make of Reed, as he giggles, nods, smokes, nods, drinks-- he looks at all of them, a sudden unexpected wave of enthusiasm seizing him.

REED (CONT'D)

Yeah-yeah-yeah. Fucking hell, this feels GREAT! YEAH!? *DOESN'T IT!*

Reed begins laughing like a complete fucking loon, like he's just lost it completely. It's paralyzingly uncomfortable. Then, just like that, he stops, grabs an envelope.

REED (CONT'D)

(hands envelope over)

Okay, we had a retainer, for services to be rendered...Fifty thousand dollars.

Reed hands the envelope to a smiling Dupree.

ISRAEL (V.O.)

FIFTY-FUCKING GRAND!

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- DAY

Israel, furious, screaming at an immense black man standing in front of him: SIR IVY, his steadfast second-in-command: The presence of a Pimp, the mien of a Mack.

SIR IVY

Calm down.

Israel gets up in Ivy's grill. A phone begins to ring.

ISRAEL

Don't tell me to "calm down" Ivy! I hate that!

(re; the phone)

HUGO GRAB THAT! I JUST PAGED GILL!

Hugo rushes for the phone.

SIR IVY

Look at the attention we're getting. It's all bad...

Hugo, hand cupped over the phone, butting in.

HUGO

Hey-- It's him, it's Gill.

SIR IVY

(gesturing to hookers)
 ...We got these tricks going in and out, we're partying like the shit might go stale, what did you think was gonna happen?

Israel, walks toward Hugo.

ISRAEL

Fifty grand *gouge*. South shore hayseeds, this is why I never play Tahoe, or redneck Reno...

SIR IVY

We're hot, and they're losing a whole floor's worth of business saying it's "under construction."

ISRAEL

Alright, bag it, I'm not shelling out that kinda bread for this shithole, this is a *junior suite* in Vegas. Call Mecklen right now, he should have his cell on, I need an update.

(to Hugo)

Get the Russian up here, have him clean this place, floor to ceiling and get us packed .

(points to hookers)

...And send out for some new skeeze, the sun's up, these ones are starting to stink...

Hug hands the phone to Israel, pulling his own cell, dialing. Ivy looks around at the collapsed hookers, strewn about the place, his face registering the appropriate disgust. Then:

SIR IVY

BEANIE!

Some of the girls start at the sound of Ivy's big Barry White baritone. They rise, groggy, burping up last night's debauchery. Mascara-smearred, hangover-hindered the girls rise as BERNARD "BEANIE" ALFONSE, protector #2, pops in; A sumo-sized brother with a diamond-studded smile.

BEANIE

(addressing the girls)
 Alright ya'll, that's the call, we had our fun, pack it in, pro-ceed to the front. Les' go, les' go--

Beanie starts herding hookers, Ivy positions himself at the door, pulls a flashroll, fingers hundred dollar bills. Israel, phone to his ear, retires to the bedroom for privacy.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Israel throws the lock.

ISRAEL

Are you on a land line?

DR. GILL

Yeah, why.

Israel checks the wall clock.

ISRAEL

Just checking...what's up? What's wrong with your voice?

INTERCUT:

INT. PRIVATE PRACTICE -- DAY

DR. GREGORY GILL, 30's, Israel's private physician, walking/sprinting up a hallway, holding a medical report.

DR. GILL

I've got concerns.

ISRAEL

...About what?

DR. GILL

About cocaine...and the amount you're doing.

ISRAEL

I'm not doing cocaine.

DR. GILL

Buddy, I'm not an ethics professor, I'm a physician, be honest, or be dead within a day...s'your choice.

Israel, grave. Guilt in his silence.

DR. GILL (CONT'D)

...I just got the cardiology work-up back and sent it to two of my colleagues, both heart specialists. They concluded, as I have, that you are showing signs of severe cardiac distress...so much so, that a massive coronary may be imminent.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- CONTINUOUS

Ivy and Beanie, marshalling the mass hooker exodus. Ivy paying the gals as they exit the suite. One YOUNG HOOKER bringing up the rear, stumbles in her stripper heels, shaky, tries to take another step, slips, trips, falls-- smacks face first into a glass coffee table, shattering it.

BEANIE (CONTD)

Damn girl, look out now!

The other Hookers; gape jawed, mild shock, mild amusement. Beanie plucks the fallen woman up, shakes her off, straightens her out, pulls off the offending heels.

BEANIE (CONT'D)

(holding up heel)

All these good for is poppin' them titties girl, but y'see what happens when you try to get around in 'em?

The hooker, covered in glass dust, stuck with shards, teetering, too out of it to care.

CUT BACK TO SCENE

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Israel sweats like a stuck pig, pained, clutching his chest.

DR. GILL (O.S. ON PHONE)

--Forget about the tissue damage you're doing to the heart itself. Sustained cocaine abuse will segue you from a very painful ventricular fibrillation into full cardiac arrest.

(beat)

Buddy, nobody knows about your condition, or your drug use. Why you lied to me, knowing that I'd find out anyway, I'll never know, but it imperative now that I see you.

ISRAEL

That's not possible. I told you.

DR. GILL

There are certain meds, certain intravenous measures that can counteract some of the damage you've done, but I'd have to administer them myself.

ISRAEL

Won't work, we're just gonna have to chance it man. I'm sorry.

DR. GILL

No. Sorry comes later, when you're in a partial coma with ambulatory paralysis. Sorry comes when we have to decide which of your limbs have to be amputated because severely constricted blood flow has brought about a gangrenous infection, sorry--

ISRAEL

--Fine, fuck, I got it...Lake Tahoe, Nevada. I'll have Hugo book your flight, you can be here in a couple hours. He'll meet you at the airport.

Buddy disconnects. Dr. Gill holds for a moment, clicks over to another line, dials a new number...waits.

DR. GILL

...He's in Lake Tahoe.

CUT BACK TO:

Buddy still standing there next to the phone, wincing, breathing shallow, looking down, rubbing his chest.

ISRAEL

Be cool, be cool, be cool...c'mon...

He walks over to the bureau, cut lines of coke await him. He bends, inserts a rolled hundred into his nostril.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

Just this last little bit, then we're done, just this tiny bit and that's it, that's it, all of it, over--

He snorts.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- CONTINUOUS

Beanie, trying to assist the ailing hooker. She lurches suddenly, retching, projectile-vomit dousing Beanie's Versace--dripping dung-like from his shirt front.

BEANIE

Awww, motherfuck me! C'mon woman! Hold your shit! This is silk!

The other hooker's titters turn to outright guffaws. Barf-girl takes umbrage, hurls her purse at them, rushing into the herd, throwing haymakers asswild, snatching wigs, sinking fake nails into skin, snapping them off, Van Helsing style.

The fur flies, a slugfest free-for-all. Ivy intervenes-- Beanie jumps into the fray, separating combatants-- one of

them wielding her pump heel like a pick-axe. Hugo heads another off hooker, hitting her like a blitzing linebacker.

Israel, who has walked back out, looks on with total disdain for what he's seeing...Then, he catches his reflection in a living room mirror, a profound sense of sadness there.

ISRAEL

(to himself, quiet)

...How the mighty have fallen...

WE PUSH PAST HIM...

In the distance, on the lake, a small boat, a man sitting inside, gazing up through a pair of binoculars.

CARRUTHERS (V.O.)

He's awake.

CUT TO:

INT. "TAHOE SKILLET" RESTAURANT -- MORNING

The Feds occupy a booth, black coffee for both. Carruthers clicks off a cellphone. Messner is engrossed in a file clipped with old surveillance photographs of Primo Sparazza.

CARRUTHERS

Spotter on the lake confirmed Israel. Penthouse level. There was apparently a fisticuffs with some prostitutes. He wasn't involved. He's also had his people phone a local madame for another group of girls.

MESSNER

No rest for the wicked.

(beat, holds up file)

Why were we never shown these files? We're sitting on Sparazza for what? Six months now and we're *just* seeing this?

(beat, reading)

Did you know that he's has had thirty-six major medical procedures performed on him since 1953?

(flips, reads)

Elective plastic surgery, every single one--

Messner, turning the file toward Carruthers, pointing.

MESSNER (CONT'D)

--look at this, look at the work he's had done; nose, three times, eyes, eyelids, chin, jaw-- he's had his jaw done a dozen times.

(MORE)

MESSNER (CONT'D)

You take every hasbeen actor in Hollywood they haven't been cut this much.

Messner flips to another part of the file.

MESSNER (CONT'D)

Unreal, this guys jacket too. Wall-to-wall major felony offenses, murder, extortion, arson, grand larceny--
 (beat, points)
 --A paternity suit...I just feel like we're playing catch-up with all this and we shouldn't be.

CARRUTHERS

Welcome to the new Bureau. Nobody shares information anymore, it's become synonymous with job security.

MESSNER

Based on what we had, I thought Sparazza was a mid-level player at best and it turns out he's this mob relic, running the show out west.

Carruthers nods, sips his coffee.

CARRUTHERS

He's stayed below the radar. You don't kill a hundred and thirty people without knowing how to tip-toe.

Messner flips the file, finds a page paper-clipped with a photograph of murder/martyred Federal Agent Freeman Heller.

MESSNER

But the Bureau knew Sparazza killed Heller. Why not go after him, guns blazing' for that one?

CARRUTHERS

Heller was buried in agency lore, anytime an operative failed or was perceived to have failed, Hoover blackballed their memory. Look at Ness.

MESSNER

Yeah, but the Untouchables took down Capone. Heller got shot and killed. The bad guys beat him. Worse, Sparazza walked.

Messner sits back, kills the remainder of his coffee, gazing out the window, watching sightseers stream by. Carruthers glances at his watch.

CARRUTHERS

It's almost five a.m. in D.C. now. Locke said the lawyers from Justice had been in there since three o'clock yesterday afternoon. Israel's manager is acting as his attorney and that's what's holding things up.

The waitress arrives with breakfast, sets it down.

MESSNER

So he has no idea what's about to happen?

CARRUTHERS

No. And I want to be in that room a half second after Mecklen calls to say the deal's done. We've got a sheriff's task force on stand-by.

MESSNER

What about the hotel staff obstructing us. Israel's obviously paid off the management.

CARRUTHERS

Tampering with a witness extraction of this magnitude makes everyone indictable at the federal level.

(beat, grins)

Trust me, we won't any problems with the hotel staff. You show 'em your ID with the letters "F.B.I." in all caps and it's instant compliance. I've seen it happen a hundred times.

CUT TO:

F.B.I. BADGE AND IDENTIFICATION

It fills the the frame. An O.S. voice explains:

VOICE (O.S.)

Special Agent Gerald Diego, Federal Bureau of Investigation, San Francisco Field Office.

INT. NOMAD HOTEL AND CASINO -- LOBBY/RECEPTION -- DAY

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Gerald Diego...aka Pasquale Acosta, aka "El Estrago" the most notorious torture-murder specialist in the biz in convincing disguise. His suit, mannerisms and speech. Pitch Perfect...he's got the fake-Fed bit down cold.

ACOSTA

We're conducting a series of impromptu inspections for the Nevada Gaming

(MORE)

ACOSTA (CONT'D)

Commission. I'd like to speak with
your head of security.

A pimply CASINO EMPLOYEE nods, dashing off to find the boss. Acosta glances around, takes in the eight-dollar-an-hour security, the array of quasi-armed guards...and smiles.

DEEKS (V.O.)

Where'd you get these?

CUT TO:

Guard uniforms, exactly like those we've just seen, worn by the Nomad's security staff. Maroon with burnished gold buttons and brown piping down the slacks. Three separate vestments laid out across the trunk of a rental car.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

EXT. PARKING LOT -- OFF THE LAKE -- DAY

Dupree and Deeks in an empty parking lot, bundled up in windbreakers, battling the frozen spindrift swirling in off the lake.

DUPREE

Same place that rents the guard's uniforms. There's a shift change at 9am. Graveyard goes home and we can blend in with the day shift coming on.

DEEKS

What about access cards? Pass keys?

DUPREE

We'll have to get our hands on them. There's two separate units; Casino Floor/Count Room Security and General Hotel Security--

(annoyed, nods to car)

Does he want to hear this or what?

Deeks bangs on the hood of the car.

DEEKS

Hollis!

Elmore steps out, moving slowly to the rear of the car.

DUPREE

Nobody put a gun to your head.

Elmore leans against the bumper, bored.

ELMORE

Yeah, we've been through that.

DUPREE

Then quit acting like somebody shit
in your cereal bowl. Reed just gave
us fifty grand.

ELMORE

--Jack, what am I doing? I'm standing
here, aren't I?

(beat, to both men)

Shouldn't that be enough? That I
made the trip?

DUPREE

Your attitude sucks.

ELMORE

I been accused of worse.

(glancing at uniforms)

What do we got...?

Dupree, dubious, does he continue...? Fine. Fuck it.

DUPREE

Two security levels, the one we're
going in under the guise of, hotel
security, has restricted access.
They're mostly there to monitor the
lobby, handle disturbances on the
different floors and toss out drunks.

(beat)

There's a thirty-five member employee
rotation going from graveyard to day
shift. If we split up, we can blend
in and enter unnoticed. Once we're
inside the hotel, we'll regroup.

ELMORE

Then what--

--A Plymouth Barracuda passes by, brakes hard, reverses.
The trio stop talking, look over...and then their lives end.
Bad intentions blaze from the driver's side, machine-gun
bursts-- Dupree is hit flush, dead on his feet, his dying
thought, cut comically short; "I had that car in high scho--

Deeks, shredded where he stands, his body absorbing a
fusillade of rounds traveling at twice the speed of sound.
One creases Elmore's skull, another blows out Deeks' back,
fragmenting, claiming three fingers from Elmore's left hand.
The three of them fall in weird, waterlogged flops, no dying
breaths, no death rattles, just lights out...just like that.

Several seconds pass. Then the car door opens and The Tremor
Brothers, like circus clowns, clamber out in a cloud of gun
and reefer smoke. LESTER TREMOR, the dandruff-caked,
pockmarked middle brother is the first out. He shakes off
the cold, yawning, stretching, revealing all manner of tattoo.

The Tremors' youngest brother, the Baby-Huey sized JEEVES TREMOR bumbles out, pulling at his crotch. He unzips & rips, baptizing the Cuda's tire with a truly prodigious piss. DARWIN TREMOR climbs from the car, the eldest brother, straw boss, brains of the outfit. He looks down at the dead men, seems saddened by their state. Some remorse maybe? Maybe so.

JEEVES TREMOR

(still pissing)

Luvin' that, rat-tat-tat-tat, clean as a nun's snatch on Kristal Nacht!

LESTER TREMOR

(stops singing)

Shut up fuckass, them spirits ain't vacated yet, s'keep quiet.

JEEVES TREMOR

Them spirts can kiss my Chinese ass.

LESTER TREMOR

...YOU AIN'T NO CHINESE!

This exchange prompts Jeeves to turn and urinate on Lester. Lester squeals war cry, launching a wild windmill barrage on his behemoth little brother. Jeeves ignores the hydrant-like urine stream soaking them both and starts swinging back.

Darwin kneels down over the dead Jack Dupree, taking Jack's face in his hand and squeezing back and forth, adding his own words in what amounts to a freakish ventriloquist act.

DUPREE (DEAD)

...I forgive you Darwin.

DARWIN TREMOR

Shoot, I appreciate that man.

DUPREE

If I needed your I.D. and your car and me and my brothers were wanted by the law, I woulda killed you to get 'em too.

DARWIN TREMOR

You woulda?

DUPREE

Oh hell yeah. We's just in the wrong place at the wrong time. So don't feel so bad dude.

DARWIN TREMOR

Damn...alright then.

DUPREE

I don't mind now anyway.

(MORE)

DUPREE (CONT'D)

You know, up here in Heaven, it's beautiful. Way better than fuckin' Hawaii or any place like that.

Darwin's eyes begin to well, the tears coming slowly. In the background, Lester and Jeeves beat each other ruthlessly.

DARWIN TREMOR

Really?

DUPREE

I'm glad I'm here. I love it. I'm gonna get laid by some fine ass angels and then go hang out with Jesus and them.

Darwin wipes his eyes.

DARWIN TREMOR

Man, that's great.

DUPREE

I got it made in the shade Amigo. Hey, I'll see you up here some day, don't worry.

DARWIN TREMOR

You think so?

Darwin uses his thumb and forefinger to make it appear as though Dupree we're smiling up at him.

DUPREE

I know so.

Darwin smiles back down at the corpse, wiping his nose on his sleeve. He reaches down and pulls out Dupree's wallet. He spots the bondsman's license, eyeballs the bail papers: He sees the name ROBERT ISRAEL in bold type. Puts it together.

DARWIN TREMOR

Damn Jack...you was after the same sacka shit as us...Small world.

Darwin continues the pat down, pauses, pulls the envelope with fifty grand inside, fingers fresh bills. With his free hand he manipulates Dupree's dead mouth one last time.

DUPREE

Don't tell your asshole brothers you know about it, that money is for you old boy.

Darwin, a nod of acknowledgement for the dead Dupree.

DARWIN TREMOR

I appreciate that pard...I wish I
coulda been a better friend.

Darwin stands, His eyes move to the guard's uniforms, still
laid out across the trunk...he looks over at his two brothers,
Jeeves now with a Lenny-like hammerlock on Lester's head.

DARWIN TREMOR (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Alright enough grabassin' goddamit!
We need t'get over t'that hotel.

WATTERS (V.O.)

We're already here baby.

CUT TO:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL AND CASINO -- LOBBY -- MORNING

Watters is once again on her cellphone to Lorenzo.

WYMAN (O.S.)

(on the phone)

So everything's cool then?

WATTERS

We sat down with Padiche, he tried
to get some details which we wasn't
gonna give up, but it's all good.
We goin' check Sis in first, 'fore I
check in across the street.

Sykes arrives at the reception counter when the elevators
open-- and Israel's Hookers, post-brawl bruised, bloodied
and barefoot, come staggering out.

They slur insults at the security team, broken heels slung
over their shoulders, wigs misaligned, miniskirts mangled.
Sykes trades looks with Watters as if assessing something,
nodding almost imperceptibly to one another. Watters then
winks, something sexual there...it gives Sykes the shivers.

The Hookers are surrounded by a horde of hotel staff and
summarily whisked away. Watters joins Sykes. The WOMAN
behind the counter checking Sykes in, looks up to see Watters.

WOMAN

Will you be needing a room with two
double beds?

SYKES

(quickly)

No, we're not together.

Watters, a grin.

WATTERS

C'mon baby, don't be shy.
(MORE)

WATTERS (CONT'D)

(to woman)

Just one bed please.

(beat, to Sykes smiling)

Although if we sweat that one up, we goin' need some clean sheets.

(As Sykes pulls away)

C'mon Girl, you know I'm playing!

Sykes looks uneasily at the counter woman, who keeps her eyes locked on the computer in front of her.

WATTERS (CONT'D)

(over her shoulder to the departing hookers)

..If ya'll let hoochie like that stay up in here, ya'll must be burning sheets by the ton.

The woman just smiles that monstrously insincere "I'm here to help!" smile, offering nothing in response.

WATTERS (CONT'D)

You just goin' grin? Y'ain't goin' comment on that, at all? Trampy ass skeezers, doin' damage they ain't even smart enough to see. That don't gall you at all?

(beat, closer)

Bitches like those are the same ones runnin' feminism right to the brink girl. Bitches like that the reason mafuckas don't take our species seriously. We jus' meat for male consumption, we jus' pieces a'ass and pussy, somethin' pretty in lipstick and eye liner can suck cock.

Sykes, embarrassed, nudging Watters, knock-it-off...

WATTERS (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Bitches like that make me weep for what could be-- if we could all, sisters everywhere, black, white, yellow and brown, put our shit down one time, unified front, the force of the female race, mobilized, moving as one...

The woman, smile severely strained, the pro-feminist diatribe falling on decidedly deaf ears. An awkward beat, then;

SYKES

I'm gonna need a mini-bar key too.

CUT TO:

A mini-bar being opened. A hand reaching in, extracting two small bottles of Jack Daniels whiskey and a bottle of seltzer.

INT. NOMAD HOTEL ROOM -- LOWER FLOOR

The figure crosses the room, pouring the seltzer onto a towel. He kneels down, dabbing a spot on the carpet, fresh spill, deep red, indelible.. The seltzer doesn't bring it up. The stain remains, smeared now but unmistakable...blood.

The figure stands. In the bathroom behind him, we see a body, male, late-50's, trussed up, hung by his feet over the tub and bled out. The figure walks in, takes a Polaroid, turns it upside down near the man's face and fires off a photo.

He crosses back into the bedroom. The resulting photo is tucked into the corner of a dresser mirror as it develops. As the figure sits, WE PAN OVER TO REVEAL:

LAZLO SOOT: world class assassin slash master of disguise. The slowly developing polaroid depicts the same face that we now see in the mirror. Soot touches up the putty and plastic appliances on his face, smoothing, sealing...

He takes up a small micro-cassette recorder, rewinds, pushes play. A butler's uniform, steamed and pressed, hangs on the door. He takes it down and begins changing into it.

LAZLO SOOT (ON RECORDER)

--Keep calm.

He glances over at the bed. The dead man's voice crackles back over the recorder.

DEAD MAN (ON RECORDER)

I am an employee, I-- I don't know
wh-- they don't let me speak to h--

LAZLO SOOT (ON RECORDER)

--Say your name. Then say "How can I
be of assistance."

Soot, back to the mirror, buttoning his collar, straightening his cuffs, smoothing out the creases.

DEAD MAN (ON RECORDER)

I don't understand.

LAZLO SOOT (ON RECORDER)

I didn't ask for your understanding.
I asked you to say your name, followed
by the phrase "How can I be of
assistance."

Beat. Soot looks down at the Silencer-fitted 9mm pistol lying on the vanity.

LAZLO SOOT (ON RECORDER) (CONT'D)

Last chance.

A pause, then:

DEAD MAN (ON RECORDER)

My name is Vitoli. How can I be of assistance.

LAZLO SOOT (ON RECORDER)

Thank you.

A muffled gunshot sounds. The recorder abruptly shuts off. Soot, gazing at his reflection now, rewinds the recorder, replays, listens, gauging the man's vocal patterns-- rough Baltic accent, throaty warble, excessive smoke & booze exposure, tracheal damage. Tough to match. He rehearses one.

SOOT

My name is Vitoli. How can I be of assistance.

He grimaces, grabs cigarettes off the bureau, lights, wails smokestack, puffing three at once, bellows-like lungfuls-- He grabs an aerosol can from the same bureau, strafes the back of his throat, pops the tops on the bottles of Jack, kills them both, gags, sputters, recovers, adjusts himself. Suddenly, the phone begins to ring. Soot stops, stares.

After another ring, he lifts the receiver,

SOOT (CONT'D)

(into phone, cautious)

This is Vitoli. How can I be of assistance.

Hugo Croop's voice booms from the earpiece.

HUGO

Answer your fucking pages! I've been calling for fifteen minutes, we need you up here to clean NOW!

ISRAEL (V.O.)

That's right! RIGHT NOW!

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- NOMAD HOTEL & CASINO -- MORNING

Israel, sequestered to his bedroom, lying on a baby-grand piano, its legs inexplicably sawed off during the previous night's hedonism. In his hands, the de riguer deck of cards, restlessly shuffled and reshuffled...Cocaine has been lovingly cut and arranged in neat, snortable rows atop the piano.

In the b.g. we see HUGO on the phone to Vitoli/Soot.

ISRAEL

They're gonna give on this in the next ten seconds or the deal's off!

MECKLEN (O.S.)

I dunno what to say to you sweetheart, it is what it is.

ISRAEL

Bullshit it is. I said, about as loud as I could say it, "no jail time for my guys."

CUT TO:

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL -- WASHINGTON D.C. -- DAY

Morris Mecklen, sleepless, sweat rings blossoming armpit to waist. He picks at the plate of room service food in front of him. A group of Feds and Fed lawyers linger in the b.g.

MECKLEN

And they're not going give there pally. They're bricking us on that particular issue.

Mecklen glances back over his shoulder, lowering his voice.

MECKLEN (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Baby, I've been co-habiting with these people for the past thirty odd hours and in so doing, have stared into the face of hell. These are the premier prick cocksuckers of all time and I feel beaten by them, I feel bloodied--

ISRAEL

--and you're gonna feel altogether fucked, by me, if you don't handle this. I'm the one, does the face plant, this falls apart, *not you*.

Buddy's rubs his chest-- grimacing-- he lays back on the piano, hoists a vial of blow, presses a nostril, does a bump.

MECKLEN (V.O.)

And I vibe that kiddo, I do indeed, but it's one'a those fait accompli things, you have to--

ISRAEL

I don't have to do shit! Which includes cooperating any further with these motherfuckers until I get what I want!

(MORE)

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(beat, considers,
looks over at Hugo)
Alright, fuck it, if we gotta hand
'em somebody from our end and they're
being hard-ons about it-- make it
Hugo, him I don't mind. He needs
that regimented thing that prison
provides--

MECKLEN

--Buddy, it's bigger than that, they
want 'em all, Ivy, Beanie--

ISRAEL

--this isn't a swap meet Morrey,
they're getting Sparazza and the
west coast syndicate, *giftwrapped*,
now if that's not good enough--

The Feds are signaling Mecklen back into the main room.

MECKLEN

--Listen kid, let's not antagonize
this any more. I got 'em backed
down on the book and t.v. deals.
They're agreeing to give you all the
after tax profits, so you can come
away with some chits and live
comfortably. If we push this, they'll
revoke your protective status, which
nullifies any agreement you got with
the government...Now that's mate and
checkmate kiddo and once that happens,
the shit'll start falling down around
your ears, real fast.

Buddy's head teeters back, bangs on the keys, sour chords,
thinking...thinking...He takes the deck, firing the cards up
in a perfect column above his head, snatching one random out
of the air with his right. He turns it over, looks...Joker.

ISRAEL

Alright...do it.

In the shadows at the far end of the room, tucked into the
midday shadows, Ivy listens as his boss betrays them all...

CARRUTHERS (V.O.)

Israel just rolled.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAHOE SKILLET" RESTAURANT -- MORNING

The Feds, heading toward their car, Carruthers snaps his
cellphone shut.

MESSNER
He's giving them up?

CARRUTHERS
All of 'em. His entire entourage. I think we should move.

MESSNER
Did the Justice lawyers sign off?

CARRUTHERS
That's happening in about ten minutes. Israel's at optimum risk of flight right now, so we can't wait.

They reach their car.

MESSNER
What about the sheriff's task force?

CARRUTHERS
Have them mobilized. I'll phone security and have the elevators locked down and stairwells secured. We need to keep Israel sequestered in that penthouse.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR (V.O.)
No, I'm sorry, the penthouse is currently under construction.

INT. NOMAD HOTEL AND CASINO -- SECURITY ROOM -- DAY

S.A. Gerald Diego, alias Pasquale Acosta, speaking with "Bill" SECURITY SUPERVISOR for the Nomad. Banks of video monitors surround them, displaying the various gaming areas and VIP floors...two of the screens are completely blacked out.

ACOSTA
(to Bill)
Can I speak to you privately?

The Supervisor nods, dismisses his staff, calls after one.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR
Gary, let's get our personnel up in the catwalk over twelve, that stickman has been acting odd and I don't like the rolls that table has been getting.

EMPLOYEE
Got it.

Acosta waits for the door to close, leaving only himself and the supervisor in the room.

ACOSTA

It's gotta be tough keeping an eye on everything.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

And everybody, all the time. Yeah, it's a chore.

Acosta laughs, keeps it loose.

ACOSTA

So, Bill, if I understand this right, you currently have your penthouse floor under construction?

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

That's correct.

ACOSTA

(points to monitors)
But with these down, doesn't that pose a major security concern if, as you say, you have to keep an eye on everything at all times?

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

Well, we were worried about dust and debris from the work being done ruining the cameras, so--

ACOSTA

--so you shut them off?

The Supervisor, quick to amend.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

Yes, but no-- we have personnel stationed at both ends of that hall, twenty-four hours a day.

ACOSTA

What kind of personnel?

CUT TO:

The Nomad's crack unit, security staffers cum bodyguards: The casino's version of a SWAT Team: Six ex-cop/military types-- bowling buddies, brushcuts and potguts-- they carry Colt .380 autos, religiously kept, strictly range-fired.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR (V.O.)

Right now? A six man security force, plus a member of our Butler staff. So seven men total.

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

ACOSTA

You have a butler working that floor?

CUT TO:

Vitoli, aka Lazlo Soot, stepping onto a lower-floor elevator, pushing a service cart tucking the 9mm into his waistband.

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

The Supervisor sputters-- stammers, realizes he just slipped.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

Uh-- well, yes, uh just in terms of the men up there now, my team, he's serving lunch and dinner and just doing general upkeep so--

ACOSTA

So there are no guests staying on that floor?

The Supervisor makes a big show of the headshake "no...."

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

No. None at present.

Acosta grins, takes a step closer.

ACOSTA

C'mon Bill...you've got some Sultan up there, one of your whales, big-spender, likes a lot of space, you cook up this "construction" thing...?

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

No, no, no. We've been looking to renovate that area of our hotel for some time now. The security team is only present to preserve floor integrity, due to the roof access.

ACOSTA

Is your security team armed?

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

Of course. Yes.

ACOSTA

And who has access to that floor?

The Supervisor...something like suspicion in his eyes. The secure "hotline" begins to ring. The Supervisor looks over at the phone, then back at Acosta...the unflappable pro.

ACOSTA (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Bill, listen, I can ask you now and you can answer me, or I can drag you up to San Francisco and depose you in front of a federal judge. Because that's where we're headed here.

Bullshit, but it sounds good. The Supervisor starts for the ringing hotline.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

I'm sorry, but I'm going to need to see your identification again. We're covering some sensitive material here and I need to safeguard myself, I'm sure you can understand.

Acosta, reaching into his coat.

ACOSTA

Of course, but if you could just tell me who has access to that floor--

The Supervisor touches a pass key that he wears on a chain around his neck as he moves to answer the phone.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

--I hold the sole pass key and personally relieve the shifts myself. Now if I could get your ID we can--

--Acosta, coming out of his coat, fake ID in hand, the supervisor reaching for it and the ringing phone simultaneously-- suddenly a six-inch, spring-loaded stiletto blade explodes from Acosta's sleeve, piercing the ID-- pinning it to the Supervisor's chest.

A surprised grunt from the man as blood begins to pour from his punctured sternum. The blade retracts. The phone sits trembling in the Supervisor's hand, --a voice-- Carruther's, tinny and barely audible, warbles from the other end-

VOICE

(over phone)

Hello? This is Special Agent Donald Carruthers of the FBI, I need an--

Acosta takes the phone from the stunned Supervisor, replacing it on the console. The Supervisor, still confused by the exchange, wanting to speak, but unsure of what to say...He gazes down to the red blossom fanning across his shirt front.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

Is...that...blood?

Acosta pockets his ID as he yanks the pass key off the Supervisor's neck. His natural accent returns.

ACOSTA

Yes it is and right now it's filling your lungs. In less than a minute, you'll asphyxiate and pass out. You shouldn't be feeling any pain now.

The Supervisor's knees begin to buckle, nervous system slowly shutting down. Acosta steadies him, easing him to the floor.

ACOSTA (CONT'D)

Close your eyes. Think of something wonderful. Don't make this face the last thing you ever see.

(beat, in Spanish)

Heaven may hold it against you.

The Supervisor, unblinking, an almost childlike clarity there.

SECURITY SUPERVISOR

...Am I really dying...?

Acosta, deadpan.

ACOSTA

Bill--

(out of respect)

William...

(pause)

We're all dying...

Bill the supervisor almost smiles as he breathes his last breath...Acosta checks for a pulse, then drags his body toward a service closet. As he passes one of the video monitors...

...WE SEE ON-SCREEN: The Employee entrance, grave and swing shifts on their way out, day shift on it's way in. Mixed in with this personnel rotation, each doing his inconspicuous best...The Brothers Tremor.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE -- DAY

Darwin, Lester and Jeeves, clad in full security attire, standing apart so as not to appear together, heads down, hands shoved into their pockets.

Darwin bird-dogs both his brothers, monitoring their movement, using hand signals and some bizarre inbred semaphore to communicate with them. They pass through and punch in, signing time sheets. The surrounding security staff oblivious to the new faces. The brothers enter the lower floors, moving through the hotel's fitness center and indoor pool.

A kid does a cannonball as they pass as we...

CUT TO:

A clouded bog-- coming to-- consciousness, then, retching, gagged gasps, throat ablaze with bile, liquid clearing convulsed lungs, breath in burning spasms-- not enough air.

EXT. LAKE --DAY

Elmore sits up in the sub-zero shallows of Lake Tahoe with a start, stripped naked, shaking uncontrollably, his skin a deep bruised blue. Dull pain quickly defines-- pinpoint, bores in, bone deep...Death can't hurt this much.

He gets his breathing under control, the onset of hypothermia turning his fingertips black-- his left hand, lighter three digits-- he looks, comprehension sparks but can't catch-- he stares impassively at the ragged space, for the moment, he doesn't seem to mind their absence. He gropes the side of his head, bullet-graze, blood congealed by the cold, the concussion he suffered has left a massive migraine behind.

He crawls from the water, muscles cramping, knotting up. He reaches the sand, unable to pull himself up any further. He turns back, sees the bodies of Deeks and Dupree, face down, the lazy lake tide gently lifting and lowering them...

MESSNER (V.O.)

Double homicide, gunshot vics, both of 'em dumped in the lake. That's where the Sheriff's task force is.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR -- DAY

Carruthers and Messner, hectic, speeding through the south shore of Lake Tahoe, cellphones pinned to their ears.

MESSNER

(back into his phone)
Deputy, have you made any ID's?

CARRUTHERS

(cups phone, to Messner)
Get a coroner's estimate too.
(back into his cell)
--Miss, I've been transferred and I was disconnected. No one is answering and I need someone from security to pick up that line. It's urgent.

Messner, nodding as he listens.

MESSNER

Dep-- Deputy, I'm going to put you on speaker, I have Agent Carruthers in the car with me.
(beat to Carruthers)
You need to hear this.

Messner clicks over, the deputies voice fills the car.

SHERIFF DEPUTY

--nd have a pending ID on a Jack Dupree, appears to be a bondsman out of Las Vegas. He was just rolled and printed by our medical examiner.

Messner and Carruthers trade looks.

CARRUTHERS

Was there anything recovered?

SHERIFF DEPUTY (O.S.)

We found a handwritten receipt in his pocket for what looks like uniform rentals. The name and phone number of the rental house wasn't listed,

MESSNER

What kind of uniforms?

SHERIFF DEPUTY (O.S.)

Receipt wasn't specific, the uniforms were just listed as maroon in color.

Carruthers mashes the floorboard, brakes smoke, power swerve, slicing the rented Taurus across four lanes of traffic.

MESSNER

Alright, deputy, we'll be there as soon as possible, until we arrive, I need you to limit physical access and restrict movement to and from the crime scene. Clear?

Messner clicks off.

CARRUTHERS

Maroon uniforms?

MESSNER

Yeah. Have you been able to get through to the Nomad's security?

CARRUTHERS

No.

(beat, decision)

I'm going over there. You take the car from there, get out to the lake.

Carruthers pushes 110mph, barreling toward the Nomad, blowing through traffic-- Both men pull out IFB/earpiece apparatus, plugging in, checking their signals.

MESSNER

You going up to the Penthouse alone?

Carruthers pulls a .45 from his holster, driving with his knees now, he jacks the slide, checks for a chambered round.

CARRUTHERS

Yeah.

The slide releases--

SYKES (V.O.)

That's a bad move.

CUT TO:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL SUITE -- DAY

Sykes, stowing a Glock 9mm, tweaking the earpiece/mic combo she's wearing-- getting primped, leather mini-skirt, lace garters, thigh-high platform boots; hooker de coutage.

WATTERS (O.S.)

Why?

SYKES

'Cuz we don't need to draw any more shit down on our heads. We hit whoever's between us and Israel. I don't want to dead the whole floor and I don't want to be killing women no matter how they make a living.

WATTERS

Wait, I'm getting some fucked up feedback off that earpiece--

Sykes pulls her earpiece, adjusts something, re-inserts it.

SYKES

Better?

WHIP PAN TRANSITION TO:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL AND CASINO -- SAME

The Hotel just across the street from the Nomad. Watters on a headset, talking to Sykes, looking out the window.

WATTERS

Much.

On a room service tray near Watters; scanners monitor calls and in-house transmissions within The Nomad.

SYKES

What are you hearin' right now?

Watters adjusts one of the scanners, searching for a signal.

WATTERS

Nuthin', we cool. There was somethin'
about a fed being in the building.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE TWO

SYKES

A Fed? Like FBI?

WATTERS

It's just a little casino inspection,
don't trip, he's alone.

(beat, then)

Alright, let's set this spinnin'...

Sykes checks her reflection, makes sure her holsters aren't
peeking out, weapons adequately conformed to her curves.

SYKES

When them tricks hit the lobby, holla
at me and I'm gonna meet them on the
way up, blend in. Once I get inside,
I'mma put m'Nina to Israel's head
and back out hot. Anybody's fucks
with that program, y'break 'em off.
They get gully--

WATTERS

I'mma grip and rip girl.

(holding up a red-
tipped bullet)

I got some handloads here ready to
cut heads.

SYKES

Jus' remember, this is more rescuin'
shit than rampagin' shit...What are
you shootin'?

WATTERS

...Girl, y'know I had to bring big
mamma through.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A .50 Caliber sniper-rifle on a tri-pod, jutting just past
the window, zeroed ut on the Penthouse level of the Nomad.

SYKES

You got the fifty up? Bitch y'tryin'
t'take down a jumbo jet? Blown the
moon out the sky? T'fuck you wanna
get that grimy?

WATTERS

The try t'wild out on my boo and
it's on and crackin'! I'm layin'
niggas out.

SYKES

Damn, this kevlar ridin' up on me, I wish they made this more sheer.

Watters puts her eye to the scope, scans, finds SYKES in the crosshairs across the way, adjusting her outfit. Watters settles on her, watches...something vaguely creepy about this bit of voyeurism. She nuzzles the Barrett close.

WATTERS

Mmmm. I tell you, I snuggle up with big girl here and my pussy start t'drip.

Sykes grimaces. Watters sees it, smiles to herself.

WATTERS (CONT'D)

...So you heard from Keith? He still fuckin' with that 'lil light-skinned girl?

SYKES

I ain't tryin' to break a sweat for that sorry ass nigga.

WATTERS

He a dog babydoll. He a great dane. I tried to tell y'after ya'll first date. He hit that ass one time, his interest in a bitch start t'landslide.

SYKES

You know I burned all his shit. All that vinyl. Chalamar, Funkadelic, I burned his turntables too. They was like three-thousand brand new.

WATTERS

Fuck that nigga. Let him go woof on some other scrub. We got one another, s'all the love we're ever goin' need.

Sykes says nothing for a moment, Watters just watches her through the crosshairs, her finger idly flicking the trigger in a strangely perverse gesture. Finally:

SYKES

Girl, lemme ask you somethin' and I want you t'tell me straight up, since I got my suspicions and y'know I ain't one t'talk circles...you gay?

WATTERS

What!?

SYKES

Ain't nuthin' wrong wit' it.

WATTERS

Damn! Why you trippin' like that?

SYKES

--I don't know, I feel like you always
pushin' up on me, gettin' close and
I love you baby, in every way you
can love a bitch, 'cept that one.

WATTERS

I ain't even goin' dignify that.
You my road dog. We threw up sets.
(beat, lets it sit)
Plus you stank.

SYKES

(laughing now)
Fuck you.

Watters spots something outside, grabs a pair of binoculars,
looks down...BINOCULARS P.O.V.: Four obvious CALL GIRLS
disembarking a taxi, mylar-colored micro-minis, fuck-me heels,
cheap shoulder bags. They smoke, laugh, chit-chat.

WATTERS

Alright girl, the ho train has
arrived. Four of 'em.

Sykes, grabbing her bag, dropping spare clips inside and
starting for the door.

SYKES

...I'm on my way out, I'm just gonna
hang in the hallway until they start
up in the elevators.

Watters loads a red-tipped round into the breach of the Fifty.

WATTERS

Just get in there and do your thing
baby...mamma gots you.

SNAP ZOOM ON BULLET as she slams the action forward, loading
the round WE SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

...Dial tones over black. A phone rings. A voice answers.

FADE UP ON:

A reel-to-reel machine activates, begins to record-- A sticker
on the pick-up spool reads: "PROPERTY OF THE F.B.I."

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

The players take their places. Over these images WE HEAR:

SERNA (V.O.)

Buzzy...Buzz...?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Yeah...Sid?

SERNA (V.O.)

Right, you got clicks, anything?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Nah, nuthin' on my end--

Vitoli, aka Lazlo Soot: arriving at the Penthouse level, exchanging nods with the security team, pushing his service cart out of the elevator and down the hall, through a metal detector, which goes off. Vitoli/Soot shrugs, gestures to his stainless steel cart. The security team wave him through.

SERNA (V.O.)

So how we lookin'?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Good. This thing's on track, looks like it's gonna get done.

SERNA (V.O.)

Fuckin' thrilled t'hear it. So the scout, the sitdown, y'musta felt it from 'em then huh?

PADICHE (V.O.)

Cold blood Sid, dead eyes, y'know?

Pasquale Acosta: Now wearing the nametag of "Bill" the recently deceased Security Supervisor. He buttons his red blazer, hanging the penthouse pass key around his neck as he moves through the lobby, carrying a small briefcase.

SERNA (V.O.)

That's what we're countin' on. What'd they say when you went for specifics?

The Tremor Brothers: Duffel bags straining with the horrible, shit inside. They move toward a service elevator, swapping pill bottles, downing overdose amounts, repeating "Mein Kampf" recitations as they push the elevator's call button.

PADICHE (V.O.)

Lil' cagey, y'know, don't like t'share trade secrets, that type'a thing.

SERNA (V.O.)

Okay-- yeah, I can, I respect that.

PADICHE (V.O.)

How are we on time...?

Hollis Elmore: Frantically ringing the alley delivery doorbell of a local Souvenir Shop-- naked, frozen, delirious, near-death, he has dragged himself there.

SERNA (V.O.)

Well, I'm hearin' the Swede's been dispatched, he's flying so--

PADICHE

Well, uh-- damn, alright, so he's headed in, does that-- where does that leave us?

Agent Messner: Watching as the bodies of Dupree and Deeks are hauled from the lake by Sheriff's personnel. He walks the shoreline, searching for clues, on his cellphone, trying to reach Security at the Nomad.

SERNA (V.O.)

--in a foot race right now. Really a matter of who out hustles who, y'know...

Agent Carruthers: Plugging in his headset as he reaches the front of the Nomad, leaping out, rushing inside, holstering his gun for the moment.

PADICHE (V.O.)

So we gotta get t'Israel pretty quick for this to fly, yeah? I think?

Georgia Sykes; Pulling a small revolver from her garter-holster, annoyed, rubbing the chaffed area, reaching the elevator, leaning back against the wall, waiting.

SERNA (V.O.)

Basically-- it'd really be the best thing right now, yeah. Can't give up the ship now Buzzy--

Sharice Watters; Her eye going to the rifle-scope...she makes subtle adjustments to the targeting-ring-- P.O.V. -- Israel's penthouse sits in the crosshairs. We see a figure, just beyond the glass...a shimmering shape, moving within.

PADICHE (V.O.)

--No, no, not when y'can see the shore. I hear ya.

SERNA (V.O.)

Okay, well, y'know, then we just gotta get Israel.

PADICHE (V.O.)

I'm working on it.

SERNA (V.O.)

Bag this fucker Buzzy.

PADICHE (V.O.)
It's gettin' done Sid.

Watters tracks the figure-- finger finding the trigger as we
SMASH CUT TO:

BLACK

FADE UP ON:

CAMERA DOLLIES IN ON -- Primo Sparazza, bedridden, blinking
at the nothingness around him...a life on its last legs...a
dying man determined to outlive his last enemy...Buddy Israel.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN UP ON:

FBI Director Locke, receiving a CONFIDENTIAL package, signing
for it, tearing it open, reviewing the paperwork inside.
The color drains from his face, casting him cadaver-like.
His phone rings, he quickly snatches up the receiver.

LOCKE
...Yes? Yes sir...I'm looking at it
now...what does this-- mean exactly?
(long pause)
...What?
(longer pause)
...Good God...
(back down at paperwork)
..Good God...
(shell-shocked pause)
No, the two of them attached, Agent's
Carruthers and Messner. I'd like to
notify them immedia--

Locke is cut off sharply, listens...as he does, he pulls his
personal Primo Sparazza file from a separate pile, flips
through, Finds a sheet, extracts it...it's a copy of the
paternity suit, brought against Sparazza in 1967. He reads...

LOCKE (CONT'D)
(still on phone)
Understood Sir...They won't be
contacted...I'm leaving now.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAHOE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

A learjet touches down. THE CAMERA TRACKS, FINDING: Dr.
Gill, at a payphone, the cacophonous racket of taxiing
aircraft forcing him to repeat every other sentence.

DR. GILL
I'm here, where's the car?

ISRAEL (O.C. OVER PHONE)

I sent Hugo, he should be there!

Gill looks around.

DR. GILL

Well I don't see him.

P.O.V. -- CAMERA PANS AROUND WITH HIM...

GILL

Should I take a taxi or what?

ISRAEL (O.C. OVER PHONE)

No, wait there. He'll be there.

...AS WE FIND:

EXT. TAHOE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- TARMAC -- SAME

A learjet unloading passengers-- The Swede steps down off the plane, dressed as we last saw him, carrying the same black leather valise. He's accompanied by two Sparazza thugs who quickly escort him to an awaiting car.

The Swede looks over, sees Gill at the payphone...The two seem to acknowledge one another as the Swede quickly climbs into the car and closes the door--

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- DAY

A door opens-- revealing Vitoli the butler, aka Lazlo Soot, standing behind it. He's with one of the SECURITY TEAM MEMBERS; waxed mustache, polo-shirt, gut sucked in.

MUSTACHE

Here he is.

Beanie, glaring at both of them.

BEANIE

(to Mustache)

Why you always gotta be announcin' this fool like he some mafuck'n muckamuck!? What, 'cuz he got an accent, y'goin' treat this cracker like he don't be scrubbin' toilet seats!? Nigga please!

(beat, to Vitoli/Soot)

Speakin' of scrubbin'-- *where the fuck you been?* I know Hugo been pagin' you like a mufucka--

SOOT

--my name is Vitoli, how can I be of service.

BEANIE

(annoyed)

I know your name man! What's wrong
wit'chu!?

(back to Mustache)

Why you standing there fool? You
make your money watching the hall.
Get y'eyes back where they belong!

Mustache nods. Beanie slams the door on him. Soot, inside
now, scanning, making split-second evaluations-- what's-
where, who's-where, he picks up voices from the master bedroom--

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY

Clothing everywhere. Israel's top dollar wardrobe, designer
suits, wadded up into balls and stuffed into a garment bag.
He's doing more cocaine, talking to himself, babbling the
classic addict's "don't-worry-it'll-to-be-alright" monologue.

ISRAEL

(calling)

IVY! Why isn't Hugo at the airport!?
It's a fifteen minute trip!

Ivy, his menace gone malignant, quietly stepping out of the
shadows...Israel has no idea that he's been there all along.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(turning back to Ivy)

Well what the fuck!? I got the Doc
in town, I need him here! Call Hugo,
find out where the car is!

Ivy doesn't budge, just stands there, staring hard.

IVY

So what'd Mecklen have to say?

Israel stiffens, board-straight, the guilt goosing him. Ivy
turns the burners slow.

ISRAEL

They're getting close. It's down to
a handful of deal points now.

IVY

But it's all good right?

Israel almost chokes on his own smile, nodding.

SIR IVY

So we're all traveling together,
getting sworn, giving our statements--

Israel starts zipping up some of his bags.

ISRAEL

--I dunno the way it's gonna play out, but-- yeah, it'll probably go something like that.

Ivy unbuttons his coat. A .50 Cal rides in his shoulder-rig. Israel averts his eyes. Ivy lets the moment load up...then;

SIR IVY

You believe in loyalty, don'tcha?

(pause, then)

'Specially the kind of loyalty where an otherwise sensible motherfucker puts his own best interests aside to selflessly serve another. 'Cuz outside a goddamn dog, that kinda loyalty, *my kinda shit*, don't get any more dedicated, or deep, or devout...

Israel, unnerved now-- spots a small handgun sticking out of his bag. He covers it with the bedspread, looking up at Ivy.

ISRAEL

...what are you tryin' to say?

CARRUTHERS (V.O.)

What I've been saying. Get me your head of security right now.

CUT TO:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL AND CASINO -- LOBBY -- SAME

Carruthers, bracing the same Casino Employee Acosta braced earlier. College kid, patch-acne, panic-stricken, stammering, struggling, a phone stuck to his hand--

CASINO EMPLOYEE

--I don't-- it's just-- I can't reach him. He's not picking up the extensio--

CARRUTHERS

--I know that. Which floor are they on?

The kid's skittish gaze shifts, locking on a figure moving through the lobby.

CASINO EMPLOYEE

(with great relief)

Wait-- He-- there, that's one of our guys ther--

Carruthers breaks off, moving for the man in the maroon jacket heading toward the elevator. He reaches him, puts a hand on his shoulder.

CARRUTHERS

Excuse me, sir.

The man turns...His nametag reads "Bill."

BILL/ACOSTA

Yes.

Carruthers badges him.

CARRUTHERS

Special Agent Donald Carruthers.
We've got a situation developing
here in your hotel.

Acosta has fully assumed the identity of the murdered security supervisor. The pimply kid at counter eyeballs him, confused. Acosta steps behind Carruthers, blocking himself from view.

BILL/ACOSTA

How can I help you?

Carruthers leads him toward an awaiting elevator.

CARRUTHERS

I need to get to your penthouse level
immediately, I also need every other
elevator with access to that floor
evacuated and locked down.

They step into the lift.

BILL/ACOSTA

Is this an emergency?

CARRUTHERS

Let's hope not.

The elevator doors close behind them as we...

CUT TO:

Elevator doors open to reveal: The Tremor Brothers, vibrating at varying speeds, pharmaceutical stares, simultaneously sharp and dull. Georgia Sykes stares back, bad vibes trickle up her back. She holds a moment. Doesn't board.

SYKES

I'm going down.

Darwin looks her over, lecherous grin.

DARWIN TREMOR

Bet'chu are.

He mimics a blowjob, treating her like the hooker he thinks she is. Sykes wants to shoot him in the face. Lester and Jeeves oogle her as the doors begin to close.

Darwin smiles wide and lewd. Sykes kisses her middle finger.

SYKES
...Faggot-ass redneck...

Darwin's smile turns scowl as the elevator doors slide shut.

WATTERS
What'd you say?

SYKES
Not you. Some assholes on the
elevator...are these bitches on a
permanent smoke break or what? Why
the fuck they call'm "working girls."

Watters grabs her binoculars; sees the four prostitutes snub
cigarette butts and start to head inside.

WATTERS
Alright, the ho train is exiting the
station. They're coming to you...

Sykes waits a beat, then reaches for the call button to signal
another car. WE FOLLOW HER FINGER to the "up" button and--

CUT TO:

A blackened fingertip, trembling, barely enough force behind
it to hold a delivery bell button down.

EXT. "LAKEY'S SOUVENIR SHOPPE" -- DAY

Hollis Elmore, hypothermia-ravaged, racked by seismic-like
seizures, body temperature terminally low. The delivery
door is flung open and A KID of about twelve stands there;
cross-eyed, coke-bottle eyeglasses, shirtless, wearing a
rising-sun head-wrap and karate Gee. He says nothing.

ELMORE
(sputtering)
Hel-- I-- ambula-- pleeeeeee--

--Elmore collapses-- consciousness strains, snaps-- he blacks
out as his jaw collides with the concrete--

CUT TO:

--As Dupree's bagged corpse is hefted onto a coroner's gurney
and wheeled into an awaiting ambulance. Deeks' body follows.

EXT. LAKESIDE -- DAY

The parking lot teems with local news trucks. Passerby's
crowd the police line. Messner is on his cellphone, incensed,
confused. A Sheriff's DEPUTY flanks him.

MESSNER

No, no clarify. What is "an emergency requisition of surrounding personnel?"

(beat, listens)

Within one-hundred mile radius, understood-- Sacramento, Reno, Carson City. So in less than an hour, we're going to have anywhere from forty to fifty odd field agents arriving, without the slightest inkling as to why they're here. Is that correct? Am I misinterpreting that or--

(listens)

No, I'm not blaming any one person, this is Bureau directive. But Agent Carruthers is the SAC and he's out of cell range at the moment, so I can't contact him to--

(listens, frustrated)

Very well. I need to get Deputy Director Locke on the phone as soon as possible.

One of the Crime Scene Recovery TEAM MEMBERS approaches, hands Messner a printout. A faxed, blown up rendering of a Nevada Driver's license...We recognize the face.

MESSNER (CONT'D)

Who's this?

CS TEAM MEMBER

Hollis Elmore, resident of Las Vegas, formerly with the P.D. there. He's a known associate of Dupree's.

The CS Team Member holds an evidence bag aloft.

CS TEAM MEMBER (CONT'D)

We found these washed up on shore.

Messner takes the bag, gawks, can't quite make out the contents.

MESSNER

What are these?

CS TEAM MEMBER

Elmore's fingers. Whorls are in bad shape from the frostbite, but we got a good pull for latents, positive ID.

(beat, nod to bag)

Those were shot off.

MESSNER

Then we've got a third man missing.

--Commotion close, Sheriff's task force members, hustling past, hopping into cruisers, firing their sirens. A fifty-something TASK FORCE CHIEF approaches Messner.

TASK FORCE CHIEF
We've recovered their car.

MESSNER
What car?

TASK FORCE CHIEF
Dupree's rental. A Dodge Stratus--
Picked up yesterday at a commuter
airport in Reno, Nevada.

MESSNER
(suddenly panicked)
--Where's it at now?

TASK FORCE CHIEF
In the parking structure of the Nomad.

CUT TO:

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE -- NOMAD HOTEL -- SAME

A crime scene unit already has the area cordoned off. Police photographers circle the rental car snapping pictures as uniformed units scribble license plate and VIN numbers.

CAMERA PANS OVER TO REVEAL:

A limo arrives, the Swede disembarks, black valise in tow. A group of Sparazza henchmen surround him, spiriting him toward a nearby stairwell, anxious to avoid the police.

CAM CONTINUES PAN TO REVEAL:

Doc Gill and Hugo, sitting in their car, a little leery at the heavy police presence. Hugo takes up his cellphone.

HUGO
Doc, I'm gonna tell 'em we're on our
way up, make sure it's cool up there.
Is there anything you need?

Gill shakes his head "no" as Hugo dials. Gill retrieves his own phone as he climbs out, dialing, moving to the trunk.

DR. GILL
(into his phone, quiet)
I'm going up now, give me ten minutes,
that should be enough time to prep...

He clicks off, Hugo is completely unaware of the call he just made. Gill pops the trunk, removing his medical bag

HUGO
 (still on his phone)
 C'mon, somebody answer...

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- SAME

The phone rings, Beanie moves to answer it, tossing his balled up Versace shirt to Soot/Vitoli.

BEANIE
 (looking back)
 That's a silk blend B, six-hundred
 and change an s'got vomit and bile
 and stomach contents all over it-- I
 ain't gonna tell'ya how t'get the
 mafucka clean, jus' put it right.

Soot nods, unfurls a laundry tote, sticks the shirt inside,
hand moving within the bag--

BEANIE (CONT'D)
 (pointing to Israel's
 soiled jacket)
 Check the man's calf-skin coat too,
 he look like he got some cinnamon
 roll an' shit all over it--

--Beanie, turning, reaching down for the ringing phone when--
 THWAP-- something plunks him hard from behind-- he's knocked
 forward by the force of the impact-- startled-- instinctively
 slapping at that area-- thinking something stung him.

BEANIE (CONT'D)
 What the fuck!?

He looks around, alarmed, head on a swivel, hand probing the
 pain, not aware of the blood coursing from that spot,
 streaming down his back...The phone continues to ring.

Then Beanie hears the small metallic warble of something
 rolling around on the floor behind him, gradually settling.
 A sensation overtakes him...and he grows very still with it.

He looks down at his hand for the first time...sees blood
 there, reaches up with that same hand and finds the tattered
 hole right above the base of his spine-- small wisps of smoke
 drifting up out of the wound...He turns, numb...and sees
 what looks like a spent shell casing, just ejected, coming
 to rest on the tile...The phone continues to ring.

His eyes track upward to Vitoli the Butler, holding a silenced
9mm-- aim still held...And that's when it dawns on Beanie...
 ...He's just been shot in the head.

BEANIE (CONT'D)
 (almost to himself)
 Aw hell no you ain't just do that...

Three more soundless shots from the 9mm put a humane end to these proceedings-- blowing Beanie's body over a sofa chair. His three-hundred plus pound frame slides to an unceremonious halt in the remnants of the shattered coffee table.

Israel's calf-skin coat lies near Beanies dead body, a pool of blood surrounding it, soaking through and all the while... The phone continues to ring.

INT. BEDROOM -- SAME

Ivy and Israel, oblivious to what's gone on, fifty feet away.

SIR IVY

What did you say to Mecklen?

Israel looks from the ringing phone-- to the gun in his bag-- no good-- Ivy will kill him before he clears the bedspread.

ISRAEL

That's probably him now...

SIR IVY

...See, this is one'a them rare moments when y'ass get a chance to be completely honest...and if I'm asking you what you said to Mecklen, assume the shit is rhetorical...so assume I already know.

Ivy lets that .50 caliber hang like intimidation itself. Israel looks over at the ringing phone, then back at Ivy. He slowly withdraws the deck of cards from his robe pocket, begins shuffling at lightspeed, firing them across his body, left to right, right to left.

ISRAEL

A set of skills, God-given gifts, I close my eyes.

He does, snatching a card cold from the deck, turning it to Ivy.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

King of Clubs...You pick up this deck, s'just playing cards, I pick up this deck it's a living, breathing thing. What do you see right now? You see exactly and only, what I choose to show you....That's illusion Ivy. That's the lie I tell your eyes. The manipulation of movement. Knowing where your gaze wants to go, guiding it there. Making the magic happen in that moment, that split-second, but seeing behind it, knowing it's all bullshit...Built on sand.

(MORE)

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(cards flying crazy)

I can show the Feds what they want to see too. And make it as real as this room. Make it more than smoke, more than mirrors...and that's why I'm valuable...and that's why you're not.

(beat)

I never wanted it this way.

Israel, a card slipping from his sleeve, into his throwing hand...Ace Of Spades. He keeps it cupped.

SIR IVY

Oh you ain't done a damn thing can't be undone Playa. The dye ain't even close t'cast. Y'wanna make some shit real? No stage, no and lemme say this one time...

CUT TO:

INT. LEARJET -- DAY

Locke, inbound to Tahoe with a detachment of D.C. Agents accompanying him. He's examining contents from the confidential package he received earlier: PHOTOS of a post-op Primo Sparazza, plastic surgery shrink-wrapped, his face swollen and deformed, dozens of photos, dozens of dates.

SIR IVY (V.O.)

...If you think old man Primo could twist your shit up...

He scans the surgical reports, specific sentences and words pop: **"MALIOFACIAL DISORDER" "DEGENERATIVE BONE DISEASE" "BULLET FRAGMENTS"** He keeps reading...

SIR IVY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...It ain't *nothin'* compared to what I 'bout to do here. Believe that.

ACOSTA/BILL (V.O.)

I don't believe this.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

"Bill" aka Pasquale Acosta, hitting a walkie-talkie against his leg, checking for a signal-- faking the whole affair.

ACOSTA/BILL

Battery's completely dead.

Carruthers, behind him in the elevator, checking his cellphone--

ACOSTA/BILL (CONTD) (CONT'D)
 Forget it, you won't get a signal in
 here. Have to wait.

Carruthers, annoyed, stowing his cellphone.

CARRUTHERS
 (re: wall phone)
 Can't you use the line in here to
 contact your people.

ACOSTA/BILL
 (not missing a beat)
 No, these phones are hardwired
 directly to maintenance. Once we
 reach the penthouse, I can call down
 and have the system taken off-line.

Carruthers, absent nods, anxious. Acosta/Bill, back to
 futzing with his walkie-talkie-- going so far as to remove
 the battery-- --And that's when Carruthers sees it...Bill's
 fingers, flesh mottled at the tips, horribly scarred over--
 --something clicks --memories fire --photostrobic...

FLASH CUT TO:

The briefing in D.C., Supervisor Locke--

LOCKE
 Pasquale Acosta-- Mercenary-- "El
 Estrago"-- "The Plague"

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

Carruthers' expression goes black...

LOCKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 When he was caught by the SAS in
 Northern Ireland and imprisoned, he
 chewed off his fingertips to the
 bone before he could be printed and
 ID'd by Interpol.

Carruthers stares at those fingers, backs against the wall,
 hand moving slowly toward his waist-- suspicions pique.

CARRUTHERS
 Can't maintenance do that?

ACOSTA/BILL
 Do what?

Carruthers unclips his belt holster.

CARRUTHERS
 Shut the elevators down.

Acosta...sensing it...keeping his back turned.

ACOSTA/BILL

An emergency shut down of our entire elevated lift system? No sir. That has to be handled by my staff.

Carruthers gets a hand on the stock of the .45 on his hip.

CARRUTHERS

How long have you worked here?
(beat)
Bill.

A long, drawn silence...then, static emits from Bill/Acosta's belt-- his walkie-talkie was working all along. Jig's up.

Acosta spins back-- spring-loaded blade firing from his sleeve-- Carruthers clears his holster-- Acosta closes the gap-- blade flashing, passing through Carruthers' hand, slashing tendons, shearing bone, hot butter.--

Carruthers screams-- grip gone, gun tumbling-- instinct kicks-- his good left hand hauls the .45 out of mid-air, clutches, squeezes-- BLAM! Acosta's abdomen eats the blast, burps blood-- Carruthers, a severed hand tucked under his chin, held in place-- he extends, pulls, fires again-- Ricochets clip overhead fluorescents, fixtures catch strays-- shatter-- glass filament explodes-- razor slivers rain down.

Acosta, struck, slumping-- a silver automatic appearing from his other sleeve, trigger finding finger just as the last of the lights flicker and die-- A beat sustained-- just hard breathing and fluid hitting the floor-- Everything goes stiff--

--the two take silent aim in the pitch black and fire simultaneously, blazing away-- emptying their weapons into each other from inside three feet-- Gunblasts illuminate ghoulish features, muted screams covered in gore...

INT. NOMAD HOTEL -- UPPER FLOOR -- SAME

Georgia Sykes, concerned, finger to her ear, picking up something off her IFB earpiece: Muted gunshots, static-scrambled ...it's the sound of Carruthers and Acosta, ending one another's lives in the lift below...

SYKES

Girl, you hear that!?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- TOP FLOOR -- SAME

Watters sweeps the penthouse level with her rifle scope.

WATTERS

Are you anywhere near the penthouse?

SYKES

No, but that definitely sounds like shots and I don't where it's comin' from--

WATTERS

--It's your IFB, somebody else has got an earpiece, you're picking up their signal--

SYKES

--I thought we had secure frequency. Aww girl, tell me this mafucka ain't goin' off right now.

Watters hears something crackle over one of the scanners... a transmission to Nomad security staff...

WATTERS

...Oh, fuck these fools...

Sykes looks up to see the elevator has reached her floor.

SYKES

What's wrong?

WATTERS

Security's locking down the elevators.

Sykes looks at the elevator doors in front of her as we...

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

The Tremor Brothers, waiting arrival on the penthouse, armed to the teeth, each one tethered with an array of pistols, rifles, knives, hatchets, hacksaws; the tools of their trade; to be implemented in the most godless manner imaginable.

Muzak drifts in over the speakers, when suddenly the car lurches, cables catch, brake boxes shriek and the elevator car comes to abrupt stop. The Brothers exchange looks as power is cut and they are plunged into darkness...An emergency recording sounds from the elevator's ceiling speaker.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Please remain calm...Elevator service has been temporarily suspended and will resume momentarily...

The recording defaults into a maddening loop...then, the sounds of someone unzipping a bag in the dark, hands moving objects around, metal clanks off metal as the bag is rummaged. A brilliant flash, hot white to iridescent red as a road flare is struck, showering Darwin Tremor with a deluge of sparks as he holds it aloft.

DARWIN TREMOR

Les' get at it then.

Lester and Jeeves, effortless aplomb; the speed and dexterity of a seasoned pit-crew. Lester pulls a torque wrench from the bag, pops the panel bolts on the elevator's power box and strips the electrical wiring in seconds--

Jeeves removes a gas-powered generator from their Mary Poppins-like carry-all carpet bag. He primes the pump, yanks it to a sputtering start and feeds the AC lead to his brother. Lester takes it, locates the service override conduit and ties in. Darwin admires this deft display of skill from his idiot brethren. As the elevator's power cycles back on we...

...CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

Light switch flipped on, revealing the shrunken, shriveled, fetal-like form that is Hollis Elmore being carried by MARGIE TURLOCK, 63, part-time RN, full-time souvenir shop owner. A substantial, tank of a woman, Margie manhandles Elmore, dropping him into a lukewarm bath, brimming with grey water.

MARGIE

Okay sweetie, now I'm a registered nurse and this was my bath not a half hour ago, so it ain't as hot as it could be, but we're gonna get you all toasty warm in no time--

(beat, to boy)

Warren, Warren-- go on an' get grandma her hot blanket and her heating bag, the one in there under the sink in my bathroom.

Warren sniffs, licks lovingly on an ice cream sandwich, but never bites it.

WARREN

Slower Nana. Talk slooooooerrrrr.

Margie indulges her grandson, no end.

MARGIE

Okay Shug...Grandma needs you to go in--

--Warren begins to smile, a snarl of misshapen yellow teeth, smeared with chocolate, bracketed by chrome-colored braces.

MARGIE (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Oh, you little foxy, trying to fool your Nana! You heard me *didn't* you!?

(MORE)

MARGIE (CONTD) (CONT'D)

(beat)

Now Boogie, Grandma needs her big helper boy now, go on an' get those things and grandma'll rub your feet!

WARREN

My karate feet? *My crazy Karate kick feet!!*

Warren puts the ice cream sandwich in his mouth and begins hopping up and down, kicking, striking the wall with great, disturbing ferocity. Margie cackles at this.

MARGIE

You little angel-butt! Grandma'll rub those feet forever!

Elmore, struggling against imminent death, watching this display with increasing dread. He scans the sink basin-- sees it lined with anti-depressants; Ritalin, Thorazine, etc Warren keeps throwing hard roundhouse kicks into the wall.

MARGIE (CONT'D)

Oh you silly-sil! Never mind, Grandma'll get it!

Margie marches off and Warren immediately rushes over to the tub, placing himself directly over the inert Elmore and assuming a martial arts stance. He opens his mouth to speak and the ice cream sandwich tumbles out, landing in the tub.

WARREN

(barking out)

Bow to your opponent!

Warren bows before he squares up and begins methodically delivering a "Kata" of punches and kicks...violently and expertly snapped within millimeters of Elmore's face. Elmore, helpless to raise his arms or defend himself, stares in horror as the boy, his glasses beginning to fog and drip with perspiration, works himself into a furious lather.

ELMORE

(trying to speak)

Pl-- kid, st-- stop...

Elmore holds up his stump of a hand, pinky wagging in pathetic plea-- no use-- Warren is in a state of unhinged, near-animal frenzy-- his eyes wild, a small, yet prominent erection beginning to poke through his karate gee...

Margie returns to the bathroom, scolds her grandson. He squares up on her, feigning a blow to her face. She clouts him, hard backhand, big flabby arms restraining him, hauling him out of the bathroom. He bleats like a butchered sheep.

Elmore, left alone, stark naked, shaking-- he turns his head, gazing into the other room-- a newscast plays on the television: A Reporter, lakeside, via live feed...standing in the same parking lot where Deeks and Dupree were killed.

CUT TO:

TELEVISION SCREEN

We slowly DOLLY BACK, revealing a different room.

REPORTER (ON SCREEN)

--the two men slain here earlier today as authorities speculate as to the apparent disappearance of a third. The names of the victims are being withheld, pending notification of family members, but Action Seven has learned that one of the deceased, identified as Jack Dupree--

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- BLACKJACK INN -- SAME

Rupert Reed, shit-faced off belts of straight scotch, a stack of shot-glasses on his chest, gaped-jawed at the television.

REPORTER

--was a resident of Las Vegas, Nevada--

Reed lurches up, going for the phone, shot-glasses scattering, scotch bottle upending, bouncing off the bed.

REED

(to himself, dialing)
...holy shit, shit, shit...

CUT TO:

TELEVISION SCREEN

We slowly DOLLY IN now.

REPORTER

We've also learned that Mr. Dupree was employed as a process server and bondsman for Draygo Bail Bonds and may have been in this area on a fugitive apprehension--

INT. GAMBLER'S RAMBLE HOTEL -- SAME

Victor Padiche, playing solitaire, one card frozen in his hand as he watches the news.

PADICHE

...uh oh...

REPORTER

A rental vehicle, registered in Mr. Dupree's name, has been recovered in the parking lot of the nearby Nomad Hotel & Casino...

CUT TO:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL & CASINO -- PARKING STRUCTURE -- DAY

Agent Messner arrives, flanked by shotgun-toting Sheriff's deputies, local cops and Bureau field agents. They deploy, cordoning off the scene, taking control.

WE SEE Hugo and Doc Gill, ducking down, Hugo still has the phone to his ear. As they approach a rear stairwell with a door that reads: "AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY: PENTHOUSE LEVEL" two FEDS descend, chaining and bolting the door.

HUGO

Shit...*answer the fucking phone.*

CUT TO:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL -- PENTHOUSE -- SAME

The phone is still ringing as Soot, Browning 9mm at his side, stalks the voices coming from the master bedroom

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- SAME

Ivy, fingers brushing his gun grip, stares Israel down.

SIR IVY

Y'ain't never had to wash another man's blood off, dig it out y'fingernails...Y'had us for that. Y'ain't ever made a real beef on y'own, shit as light in the ass as you are, I'll bet you ain't ever made anything more than a fuck'n fist your whole life.

(beat)

So if you think I'mma let your lil' punk-ass, with the dirt I've done for you, in the eleventh hour, sell me off like some fucking field nigger, hand me up to the Feds like y'last chip, then you done gone straight out-your-motherfucking MIND!

ISRAEL

(nodding to phone)

That's Mecklen. The deal's closing. I can pick that phone up and I can work this out.

(MORE)

ISRAEL (CONT'D)
 (beat, for effect)
 You'll walk with me.

Israel readies the playing card behind his back, slips it between his index and middle finger-- Ivy shakes his head.

SIR IVY
 All that slight a'hand you can do
 and you still ain't never learned to
 lie right--

--Israel steps hard, slinging the Ace sidearm, sailing it toward Ivy, surgical strike, right eye, blood bursting at his browline-- Ivy goes down in a heap.

SIR IVY (CONT'D)
 (enraged)
 MOTHERFUCK! MOTHERFUCKER!

Ivy, doubled over-- he drags the .50 cal from its holster and lets fly-- FIRING. Big bore rounds rip right through the wall, punching dinner-plate sized holes in the plaster. Israel goes to the ground as Ivy, bleeding, blazes away--

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- ANTEROOM -- SAME

--Soot takes cover as bullets whistle by-- he tucks the 9mm away just as the doors to the suite are blitzed and the security team stumbles in, guns drawn, grouped tight--

SECURITY TEAM
 (in unison)
 DOWN! DOWN! DOWN!

They assume quasi-combat stances; six idiots, crab-crawling their way across the room. Soot stays prone, plays scared, realizes that his rubber appliance nose has come loose, tries to adjust it-- can't, has to hide his face, burying it in his sleeve, wiping more make-up off in the process--

Mustache is on point, pistol trained. He spots Soot cowering.

MUSTACHE
 (to Soot)
 Are you hit?

Soot shakes his head a vigorous "no" as Mustache and his men turn their attention to the bedroom.

MUSTACHE (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Mr. Israel!?

ISRAEL
 IN HERE!

MUSTACHE

Are you hurt sir!?

ISRAEL

Ivy's trying to kill me!

SIR IVY

FUCK YOU!

ISRAEL

GET IN HERE GODDAMMIT!

Mustache and his men round the corner into the master bedroom.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- SAME

Ivy, down on one knee, depth perception shot, trying to reload, bullets slipping through blood-slicked fingers-- Israel lies on the floor behind the bed, breathless, chest heaving, frantically trying to pull the small automatic pistol out of his overnight bag.

MUSTACHE

(advancing on Ivy)

Drop-that-gun-right-now!

One of the bodyguards spots the body of Beanie, lying dead in the remnants of the coffee table.

SECURITY MEMBER #1

Jesus, he got Beanie...

(back to Mustache)

He shot Beanie!

ISRAEL

What?

Ivy hears this, let's the gun slide from his hand, standing, eye swollen to a bleeding slit.

MUSTACHE

GET ON THE GROUND!

Ivy, looking past them, seeing Beanie's lifeless body, laying there. Israel peers out, sees the same thing.

ISRAEL

Jesus Christ...

Two of the bodyguards rush to Beanie, bending over his body, checking for vitals. Ivy, suspended in the doorway, stunned. One of the security team looks back; no good...he's gone. Just then, the phone stops ringing.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(looking up at Ivy)

...you just murdered Beanie...

Ivy, shocked, dismayed. Israel, starting to see his sweetheart deal with the Feds go up in smoke. He immediately mobilizes.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(to Mustache)

Hey!

(pointing to Ivy)

Get him out-- muscle him if you have to. Take him down the quietly, use the service exit. Then get back up here and we'll handle the rest of this.

(off Mustache's look)

What? Is there somebody else in there?

Soot, from the other room, careful to keep his face concealed.

VITOLI

Eees Vitoli.

Israel, a grimace...two too many people involved. Israel nods, thinking, does a bump of coke, right out in the open.

ISRAEL

(to security)

Avert your eyes gents, y'didn't see that.

(beat, rolls neck)

Okay Vitoli, listen these last few minutes make you a material witness, do you understand what that means?

VITOLI

...How can I be of assistance...

ISRAEL

You *do know* what that means!

Tremendous, that's the attitude.

(beat, clutching chest)

Alright, Vitoli, hang tight for half a tic, we've got a special sort of "clean-up" we gotta do here, alright?

Soot nods.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(to Mustache)

What's he doing, is he getting this?

Mustache, glancing over at Soot, seeing him nod.

MUSTACHE

Yeah, he's nodding.

ISRAEL

Good. Now Move.

Mustache and his men brace Ivy, taking advantage of his disorientation and dismay and swiftly escorting him out.

EXT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- SAME

They amass around the elevator, taking care to double handcuff Ivy now. Mustache pushes the call button. It fails to light.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

Choked with generator and road flare smoke, lit like hell itself. The Tremors stand at arms, shrouded in a miasmatic mung of horribly toxic fumes, filling their lungs with it.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

Mustache hits the call button again, still nothing. Yet one of the lifts appears to be ascending

SECURITY TEAM

Wait...one of 'em looks like it's on its way up...

MUSTACHE

What about the other four? Are they out?

He keeps hitting the call button, but it won't light.

MUSTACHE (CONTD) (CONT'D)

The hell is going on...

WATTERS (V.O.)

...Forget it, it's dead.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

Sykes, trying to pry the elevator doors open.

SYKES

It ain't dead! Quit saying that shit!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- TOP FLOOR -- SAME

Watters pours herself a glass of Chablis from the mini-bar.

WATTERS

Girl, I just saw muzzle flashes comin' out that suite. S'probably where you heard that shootin' earlier, somebody jus' downed Israel. He dead, our play is dead.

Sykes, getting some separation on the elevator doors, pulling her 9mm, using it like a crowbar.

SYKES

I'm not givin' it up jus' yet...

WATTERS

C'mon, I say we bounce now, kick it for a lil' bit, play some craps.
(beat, probing)
...Maybe spend the night?

Sykes, struggling, when the doors suddenly retract on their own...She's staggered by what she sees in the elevator, tripping back, heels catching, dumping her on her ass--

SYKES

(just above whisper)
...oh...damn...

She sits up, stupefied...cordite and pistol smoke drift out of the open elevator doors like a funeral dirge. The sound of a bone-saw emanates from within.

INT. ELEVATOR CAR

Carruthers and Acosta...wartorn, shot to hell, post-battle standoff, just staring, weapons emptied, bodies bullet-punctured, leaking life...both are breathing, but just barely.

WATTERS (OVER HEADSET)

What is it...?

Filament and glass dust cover everything. Blood streams in steaming fissures, floating spent shell casings and fluorescent shards cover the floor of the car.

Acosta, clinging to life itself, clutching the whirring bone saw, trying in vain to reach Carruthers. Sykes wades forward, wary, Glock vise-gripped.

SYKES

...Shhhhhhit...girl, there's these two dudes, just sittin' here in this elevator, all shot up...

WATTERS

What?

SYKES

(beat, looking around)
They musta been beefin' *big time*
with one another, cuz this shit, got
way past words, whatever it was.

WATTERS

...What are they doin' right now...?

Sykes, glancing from Carruthers to Acosta. A beat.

SYKES

Right now?
(beat)
...Dying.

CUT TO:

INT. "LAKEY'S SOUVENIR SHOPPE" -- KITCHENETTE -- DAY

Elmore, seated, wrapped in quilts and heated blankets, shivering horribly, lips blackened, flexing brittle fingers on his good hand, trying to restore feeling, teeth clattering like ten thousand tea cups. Margie Turlock enters, arms loaded down, grandson Warren hot on her heels, a set of Nunchukas under his arm...

...Elmore, palpable hatred, pure bile for the boy.

Margie sets the assortment of goods down on the table in front of Elmore; tourist-themed hats & sweatsuits from the shop, a pair of thermals, a collection of pill bottles and what appears to be an old Vietnam-era ammo box.

MARGIE

So them fellas were your friends
then? The ones that was shot and
tossed into the lake? Were they police
officers too?

Elmore nods, rifling the pile in front of him, going for the pills. Margie pulls a pot of coffee off the stove, pours a mug. Sets it down in front of him.

MARGIE (CONT'D)

(motioning to pills)
Them was left over from my
hysterectomy, so they're a few years
old, might be outta date.

Elmore eyes the labels; Vicodin, Vioxx...morphine-based.
Nice...Just numb it all.

MARGIE (CONT'D)

You sure you don't want me to call
an ambulance honey?
(MORE)

MARGIE (CONT'D)

I think it's crazy you not going in...y'got what looks like hypothermia and real bad frostbite. They could wind up amputatin' if y'don't get it treated.

Warren sits in the chair next to Elmore and begins mimicking him, shaking epileptically, doing his doofus bit, tucking three fingers away, waving a stump, belly-laughing...

MARGIE (CONT'D)

Warren! Now you go and practice your nunchucks now, leave us be for a bit Shug.

Warren scowls, getting up, in super-slow motion, making sounds with his mouth as he stands, robotic whirs, buzzes, clicks-- Margie chuckles at her grandson, she can't help it--

Then, in a blur, Warren snaps, abruptly slamming the nunchakas on the table, the rebounding portion of the weapon almost hitting Elmore in the face. He bolts the room before Grandma can scold him, his titters echoing off like taunts...

MARGIE (CONT'D)

...M'sorry about that boy, his momma abandoned him going on a year now, his daddy, my boy Dale-- Gulf War vet, s'over in the Reno-Washoe Correctional facility-- got some "clarity" issues. He did some home invasion sodomy-torture type stuff, wrote a buncha bad checks, got hisself consecutive life terms-- shipped off to Soledad there in California.

(beat, scribbles something down)

--reminds me, I got that care package I need to send off--

(beat, continues lament)

Anyhoo, m'husband Bill took the coward's route, n'committed suicide by hangin' 'bout nine months back. Ever since then, little Boogie there's been the man'a the house!

(beat, gnarled grin)

And we make a darn cute couple I think!

Margie, cackling again-- the facade of sanity showing serious signs of strain...Elmore pulls the ammo box across the table. Stenciled on the side: "177th Airborne Division -- Charlie Company - Reckon" He cracks the lid.

MARGIE (CONT'D)

I don't think that's been opened since my husband died.

Inside, army memorabilia and bric-a-brac; patches, service-tags, dog-eared b&w polaroids, ancient titty mags, (which make Margie horribly uncomfortable) Saigon bottled beer and most importantly, a .357 Colt Python.

Elmore lifts it, looks it over, feels the heft, drops the chamber-- it's loaded. He sifts some more, palms loose bullets at the bottom of the box. He cracks a blackened grin, rolling the pistol's chamber and snapping it shut as we...

CUT TO:

A padlock being locked and secured.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL -- LOBBY

Elevators and access doors locked down indefinitely. Casino and hotel patrons file out in less than orderly fashion. Craps players, pissed that their "hot streaks" have been cut short, harangue police and sheriff's personnel in passing. Barflys and blackjack habituates, accustomed to staying in one spot for months on end, have to be manually removed.

The four call girls, trying to argue their way past security and onto one of the elevators, realizing they're not getting anywhere near the Penthouse level. Messner coordinates the Nomad's exodus, continually adjusting his earpiece, trying to contact Carruthers, two agents flank him.

MESSNER

(to agent)

I want you to locate Agent Carruthers now.

(beat, to another agent)

The guests that aren't able to leave need to be confined to their suites. And under no circumstances are they to venture out, for any reason. Have the staff make calls to that effect.

The pimply Casino Employee is at the center of an intensive on-spot interrogation being conducted by a group of agents. Messner arrives, stares at the kid.

MESSNER (CONT'D)

This him?

FBI AGENT

(nodding, then to kid)

Alright Ricky, I want you to explain to Agent Messner exactly what happened and do it slowly please.

The kid, head bobbing, gnawing fingernails, cuticles mangled.

CASINO EMPLOYEE

Yeah, ye-- I-- uh, there were,
earlier, there was that guy Carrut--

MESSNER

--Agent Carruthers. Do you know where
is he now?

CASINO EMPLOYEE

He uh-- he asked about-- I'm-- he
wanted to know whic-- what floor
security was on, then I saw him get
on the elevator with the other agent.

MESSNER

(quick, thrown)
Wait a minute, what other agent?
(beat, to others)
What other agent?

FBI AGENT

I have no idea. It wasn't anybody
from our office.

CASINO EMPLOYEE

He said he was from San Francisco.

MESSNER

Did he give you his name?

CASINO EMPLOYEE

Yeah, uh-- it was Spanish-somethin'
Garcia, or Diego, uh--

MESSNER

(to other agents)
--run both those names through the
D.C. database. Call San Francisco,
see if they've got anybody in the
field doing collateral inquiries for--

CASINO EMPLOYEE

--he was wearing one of our jackets.

Messner stops cold.

MESSNER

Who?

CASINO EMPLOYEE

The other agent. He said he was here
to do an inspection and later, when
he got on the elevator with the other
guy, Carruthers, I saw him wearing
one of our security jackets...

Messner turns, bores in on the kid, no more bullshit now.

MESSNER

This man wearing the jacket identified himself as an Federal agent?

CASINO EMPLOYEE

Uh, yeah.

MESSNER

You're sure?

CASINO EMPLOYEE

Yeah, he had the badge and everything. It said "FBI" on it.

MESSNER

And when you saw him later, he was wearing one of your security jackets--

CASINO EMPLOYEE

Yeah.

MESSNER

And that didn't seem odd to you?

The kid glances around, oops-- my mistake-- tries to amend.

CASINO EMPLOYEE

I-- I mean, I thought they gave it to him so he cou--

Messner turns on his heels, the other agents tag along.

MESSNER

(addressing others)

We may have a man posing as one of us. Get a tactical team assembled. We need to get to the penthouse level immediately.

FBI AGENT

We'll have to power the elevators back up.

MESSNER

Do it.

As they move past the group of call girls, still arguing with security as we...

...CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE -- SAME

Israel, sickly, face bloodless, sitting down on a couch, setting the small handgun down on the table next to him. He digs at his chest now, in considerable pain, rotating his arm around, trying to rouse it.

ISRAEL

Fucking things falling asleep...

Israel gazes at Beanie's body, trying to figure out an appropriate course of action.

ISRAEL (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)

Vitoli, just sit tight for a second,
I gotta make a phone call, figure
this out...

He takes out his cellphone, dialing Morris Mecklen. Soot appears behind him, easing the 9mm out of his waistband and resuming his stalk...ever...so...slowly.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- SAME

Israel's security crew, surrounding a still-stunned Sir Ivy, waiting on the lift. One of the elevators approaches. The rest appear to be down.

BODYGUARD #1

One of 'em on it's way up. This
doesn't make any sense, what's wrong
with the rest of 'em?

Suddenly, the stairwell doors are flung open, revealing Hugo and Gill. All guns whip simultaneously to that spot.

HUGO

(hands up)

Whoa, hey-- hey-- hold-up, hold-up,
I got the Doc, easy...

(beat, seeing Ivy)

What's going on?

MUSTACHE

Ivy tried to kill Mr. Israel and
shot Mr. Alphonse in the process.
He's dead.

Hugo, thunderstruck.

HUGO

--Beanie!? What? How did that happe--

(beat, angry now)

Ivy!?

Ivy, ashamed, not looking up.

IVY

Buddy was goin' jam us Hugo. He was
gonna fuck us up with the Feds...

SYKES

...Wait a minute...This one's a Fed.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

Sykes, holding Carruthers' FBI credentials after patting him down. She doesn't notice that power has been restored to the elevator.

WATTERS (O.S.)

What?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- TOP FLOOR -- SAME

Watters, trying to listen to Sykes, but concerned by the sudden surge of activity from the police scanners.

SYKES (O.S.)

Girl one of *these* fools has an FBI badge on him! Is this the one that was doing the inspection?

WATTERS

Hold up, hold up, I'm getting shots over the scanners, tons of traffic-- jus' chill for a sec, lemme listen...

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR

Sykes, pocketing the Carruthers ID. Behind her, Acosta manages to move enough to cover the "Bill" ID on his jacket.

Sykes turns back to him, moving over to his now still form-- blood drenched, barely conscious, eyes fluttering like black flies...she kicks the bone saw from his hand. It spins to a gradual stop. She leans over him...the stiletto blade he used to dispatch "Bill" and hack Carruthers digits off has retracted back into his sleeve.

Sykes begins patting him down, moving dangerously close to that sleeve, her neck hovering right above that spot--

SYKES

You jus' lay still, we goin figure out what the fuck ya'll were up t--

She pulls Acosta's bogus ID...Gerald Diego: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

SYKES (CONT'D)

You ain't gonna believe this shit.
(beat)
Both these motherfuckers are FEDS.

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- TOP FLOOR -- SAME

Watters shaking her head, monitoring scanner transmissions.

WATTERS

No, no, no no-- one of 'em ain't--
one of 'ems bullshit-- it's all over
the air here, they got an impostor,
some fool with a fake badge--

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

Messner, having commandeered an elevator-- his IFB earpiece picking up interference-- distorted crosstalk, some sync of some kind, voices, clipped, delineating, spiked with static:

WATTERS (OVER MESSNER'S IFB)

--some fool wi-- a fake badge. So w-
tch yours--f.

Messner, finger in his ear now, listening hard, hand up, quieting the rest of the car.

SYKES (OVER MESSNER'S IFB)

What I got i- a Gerald D--go and a
Donald Carruthers here...Now w--ch
one of --'ll --s for real?

As the car rises past the fourteenth floor, the signal sharpens, crystallizes less than a second--

SYKES (CONT'D)

'Cuz I'mma kill the one that ain't...

Messner reacts--

MESSNER

--STOP THE ELEVATOR!

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- SAME

The Elevator arrives with a "ding!" Mustache and his men wait for the doors to open...heavy black smoke begins to slowly seep through the cracks, rolling up and along the walls, unfurling finger-like across the ceiling. From within the elevator car itself, a pull engine sputters to a stall...

A HEART BEGINS TO BEAT OVER THE SOUNDTRACK. A steady thrum, building slowly...

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT -- SAME

Israel on the phone, consumed by chest spasms. Soot, his Vitoli visage now mangled beyond recognition; nose sheared off, rubber chin and jaw prosthesis. He throws back the tablecloth covering his service tray, takes an igloo cooler off ice inside, pulls surgical tools from it-- scalpel, forceps rib-spreader, etc., He arranges them pre-op style. He removes a phone from his jacket, hits "Send" waits, says:

SOOT
(cryptically)
Three minutes.

He reaches Israel, leveling the 9mm to his skull. Israel is completely unaware as he clutches his chest, breath coming in great laborious gulps. He's on the phone to Mecklen.

INTERCUT

MECKLEN
Buddy, they revoked the deal, they pulled it...

ISRAEL
They what? What? No. No. Why?

MECKLEN
The Deputy Director, this prick Locke, he smashed the whole thing, we're done, they won't tell me why...

The doors to the suite open and in stride Hugo and Doc Gill. Soot, gun raised, watches as both men look up and meet his gaze.

...Nobody moves.

THE HEARTBEAT CONTINUES. Quickening...

Hugo, a guarded step forward, squinting.

HUGO
Vitoli? What are you doing?

GILL
(to Hugo)
It's okay, it's okay Hugo...
(beat, to Soot)
Mr. Soot, I'm Doctor Gill.

Israel turns back, sees this demented version of Vitoli aiming at gun right in his face. Israel's breathing suddenly cinches up tight, his pulse triple-timing. He turns back to Gill.

ISRAEL
Doc-- y-- wha-- *what is this?*

Hugo takes a step away from Gill, alarmed, his hand inchworming toward the gun on his waist...WE TRACK THE HAND as it becomes--

CUT TO:

--Agent Messner, reaching for his gun as the elevator arrives at the fourteenth floor.

INT. HALLWAY -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

Messner and a heavily armed contingent of cops and fellow feds exit the elevator, fanning out, quietly situating themselves at the far side of the hallway with a clear line of sight to the open elevator at the opposite end.

HEARTBEAT ACCELERATES MORE

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

Sykes, having heard the elevator arrive, leans against the wall, gun up, listening--

INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

Messner, voice low, directing the tactical action.

MESSNER

Two man cover formation, far end,
the elevator is open, possible
aggression inside, watch for fire--

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

Sykes, hearing that last transmission simultaneously.

MESSNER'S VOICE

--watch for fire...

She glances down at Carruthers, sees his IFB in his lap, realizes that's where the voice is coming from. Plugs it into her ear.

MESSNER'S VOICE (CONTD) (CONT'D)

Stay low, breach on my mark...

Sykes, covering Carruthers' IFB, whispering into her own.

SYKES

Shar...Fourteen, I'm pinched-- I
need some heavy shit, fire-from-
heaven...my count.

CUT TO:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- TOP FLOOR -- SAME

Watters, re-targeting, bringing the Barrett .50 to bear on the lower floors, sighting down from the top, counting back to fourteen, settling, locking off the tripod, gazing through her scope... HEARTBEAT BUILDING STILL, becoming more erratic.

WATTERS POV: Fourteenth floor, big glass windows, drawn curtains...she nuzzles the eyepiece, finger slipping delicately inside the trigger guard...waiting.

WATTERS (INTO IFB)

Bet.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR -- SAME

With Sykes attention diverted, Acosta begins slowly moving his hand toward his pant leg, reaching for a hidden ankle-holster as we--

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- SAME

--Mustache and his men, hands going to their rigs, shoulder and waist. A handcuffed Ivy watches with them as the elevator doors open and a big plume of black smoke vacates the car, eerily cast light burns blood red within, infernal, hellish. Now, another pull engine leaps to life from inside the car, this one gnarled and guttural, winding out...a chainsaw.

HEARTBEAT JACKHAMMERING NOW. Out of control.

The sound falls away, leaving only the runaway throb of the beating heart as we--

CUT TO:

SLO-MO DOLLY IN:

Buddy Israel. Both hands going to his heart. Something horribly wrong. He pitches forward, falling away from Soot's pistol--

THE HEARTBEAT crescendos wildly, out-of-control...

CUT TO:

...A BELL-RANGER HELICOPTER, the heartbeat becoming the thwack of rotor blades as it lifts off with Deputy Director Locke and an FBI tactical team inside...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

...a kaleidoscope of scenarios about to be played out at the exact same second...shared fates...Shakespearean fraught...in this soundless realm the CAMERA TAKES US PAST THE FOLLOWING:

HUGO -- Looking on in horror as Israel collapses.

DOC GILL -- Rushing to Buddy's aide.

SOOT -- Bringing the 9mm up, leveling it on Hugo.

CAMERA MOVES OUT INTO THE PENTHOUSE HALLWAY PAST:

MUSTACHE -- Sensing grave danger, his gun being drawn. His men following suit.

IVY -- Pulling away from his captors, looking for cover.

DARWIN TREMOR -- Stepping from the elevator, strapped with a sawed-off pump shotgun in one hand, a vintage elephant gun in the other, looking for lives to end.

LESTER TREMOR -- Chainsaw snarling, spewing oil, psycho smile spreading viral across a pockmarked face.

JEEVES TREMOR -- Sledgehammer in a scabbard on his back, holding WWII era German "Potato-Masher" grenades, gripped like drumsticks, pins pulled. He hurls them.

CAMERA MOVES PAST THEM, DOWN ELEVATOR SHAFT TO:

SYKES -- Pulling extra clips from her handbag, securing them under her garter belt, dumping her heels in favor of hose.

ACOSTA -- Pant leg lifted, moving panther-quiet, tortoise-slow, unfastening the snap on his ankle-holster.

CARRUTHERS -- Near death, eyes locked on Acosta, his mortal combatant, trying desperately to reach his own ankle holster.

MESSNER -- Watching as his team moves into place around the elevator. Checking his own piece, flicking off the safety.

CAMERA MOVES OUT THE WINDOW AND UP TO:

WATTERS -- In the Hotel window across the way, sniper-rifle snug to her shoulder, eye on the scope, waiting for the word.

CAMERA MOVES THROUGH RIFLE SCOPE UP TO AND INSIDE EARPIECE

Inside the earpiece at 10000x normal magnification; micro-sound condensers and circuits the size of skyscrapers. Then, a voice makes the landscape tremble, like the trump of God:

SYKES

Bring it.

THE CAMERA SUDDENLY REVERSES PATH

Back out of the earpiece, down through the scope, over the barrel of the rifle...BOOM...A .50 caliber bullet is birthed.

CAMERA TRAVELS BACK TO:

The fourteenth floor window of the Nomad detonates with concussive ferocity-- creating a hailstorm of shattered glass that sweeps the length of the hallway, engulfing cops and feds whole.

CUT TO:

Another round tears in after it, exploding a gilded ceiling stanchion, sparking off the rebar, tripping the sprinkler system, dousing the corridor-- everybody runs for cover.

One of the AGENTS, wounded, summons another elevator. Messner, undeterred, advances on the elevator containing Sykes and Carruthers.

CAMERA TRAVELING BACK

Sykes, Glock ready to rock, about to move. Acosta, pulling a pistol from his ankle-rig, preparing to backshoot Sykes.

CAMERA ASCENDS BACK UP THROUGH SHAFT

Chaos. Carnage. Full blown bloodbath. Heavily-armed men on an overkill override. Mustache and Co., waging close quarters warfare with the Brothers Tremor. Bullets blaze, bodies drop, everything burns--

CAMERA CONTINUES PAST SCENE TO:

Soot, shooting Hugo several times-- Hugo falling back, confused by the abrupt pain, baffled by the appearance of blood. Gill, overtop of Israel, trying to force feed him nitro-glycerin tablets. Buddy goes into full cardiac arrest.

Disparate sounds collide now, swell to a great tumult-- an incomprehensible crescendo of explosions and chainsaws and gunshots and screams as we--

CUT TO BLACK

...nothing...complete and utter silence...

SLOW FADE UP ON:

Primo Sparazza...sitting in that hospital bed...waiting.

FADE OUT:

SLOW FADE UP ON:

The Swede...sitting on a sofa in his suite with Sparazza's men...waiting.

FADE OUT:

SLOW FADE UP ON:

Rupert Reed...drunk and despondent...by the phone...waiting.

FADE OUT:

SLOW FADE UP ON:

Victor Padiche...hand-wringing...watching his phone...waiting.

FADE OUT:

HARD CUT UP ON:

All of it happening at lightspeed. Watters, reloading, watching as leaden contrails of gunsmoke pour from the pulverized fourteenth floor. She resumes her assault.

CUT TO:

Messner, a few feet from the car containing Sykes. More sniper fire rakes the hallway. Another elevator arrives, opens...call girls inside. They snuck up somehow, past security... The gunplay gets them spooked, scared-- they scramble from the car-- cops and feds try to stuff them back inside the elevator as rounds continue to rain down.

One of the girls catches a hard ricochet, wig leaping off her head as a bounced bullet punches through her skull-- she crumbles, instant casualty. Messner hardly notices, moving instead toward the other elevator car.

MESSNER

THIS IS THE FBI! THROW YOUR WEAPON
OUT! SHOW ME YOUR HANDS!

SYKES

(whispering into IFB)
Are these feds fake or for real girl!

Carruthers, pawing feebly at her, moaning-- trying to warn her-- she shrugs him off.

WATTERS

(yelling)
I DON'T KNOW!

SYKES

Jus' keep doin' y'damage girl, keep
these mafuckas off my as--

BANG-- Sykes squeals, spins back, feels numbness spread over her legs and lower trunk, knows she's been shot.

SYKES (CONT'D)
 (panic, into her IFB)
We're out girl! I'm shot! I'M SHOT!--

ACOSTA fires again, bullet ripping through her studded bustier, gouging kevlar, nicking ribcage-- embedding into the IFB receiver on her hip, ruining it. Sykes falters-- tries to raise her gun--

Acosta raises his aim to her head, about to deliver the coup de grace-- Messner appears now, sees Acosta, sights him when--

BLAM!BLAM! BLAM!!

Acosta's chest explodes, he slumps, the gun sliding away-- Messner swings wide on the car to reveal:

Carruthers, smoking gun, trembling aim, exposed ankle holster...empty. Sykes, kevlar burning, smashed round still hot, she tries to pull her vest off, finds her newly paralyzed arm uncooperative. Messner, advancing now, keeping an eye on his partner as he moves toward the car.

MESSNER
 LADY, SHOW ME YOUR HANDS RIGHT NOW!

SYKES
 I NEED MY HANDS MOTHERFUCKER! I'M
 HIT! KILL ME OR LET ME BE!

Messner enters the elevator, rushes to the doomed Carruthers.

MESSNER
 How bad?

CARRUTHERS
 Mortal.

MESSNER
 No.

CARRUTHERS
 Yeah.

Messner takes his partner under the arms, lugging him into the open hallway, stripping off his shirt. Carruthers severed hand nearly falls away from the rest of his arm.

Acosta spits blood from the lungs-- his breathing now a bog of pinched snorts and gurgles.

MESSNER
 (re: Acosta, yelling
 to the others)
SECURE THIS SUSPECT!

TWO FEDS enter to remove Acosta from the car-- he lets out a guttural yelp as they hoist him-- real pain or playing possum,

impossible to tell...As his legs clear the elevator doors, they slowly close on the wounded Sykes.

Messner, tries to prevent them from closing, can't-- gazes up at the digital counter as the elevator continues its ascent to the Penthouse level...

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR CAR

Sykes, riding up, wounded, vulnerable, trying to reach the control panel to stop the car. She keys her now useless IFB.

SYKES

(into IFB)

Girl, I'm inside, I'm on my way up--
this elevator is going to the
Penthouse-- can you hear me--? Baby,
can you hear me--

CUT TO:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- TOP FLOOR -- SAME

--Watters, panicked, pulling the Barrett up off its tri-pod, hitting the hallway, double-timing to the stairwell...She has no idea that she's lost radio contact with Watters.

WATTERS

*Sit tight if you can hear me Girl!
I can't do shit for you from here.
I'm moving down for a sightline!*

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- SAME

Plaster and debris everywhere, sprinklers tripped, most of Mustache's team shot, shredded or burnt to a crisp. Pieces of building and bodies either waterlogged or fully ablaze. Mustache and Darwin play duck and cover, exchanging fire. Jeeves, out of grenades, sledgehammer swinging, crushing wall studs, scattering remaining security team members.

Ivy, sheltered, having survived the opening salvos, gets ahold of a gun from a chainsaw-shorn former security member; Lester sees Ivy arming himself, blitzes him-- chainsaw snarling, revved out, sending fantails of gristle and chipped bone everywhere. Less than fifteen feet separate them.

Ivy fires, shots deflected off the blade's teeth, seconds from getting gutted-- he adjusts his aim high, emptying the gun into Lester's chest, bullets blazing haywire, blowing out between Lester's shoulders, stopping a hard charge cold.

Lester, lopsided, bullet-dazed, drools blood...then dies. Ivy dumps his clip, searches for another-- the chainsaw falls, stalls.

Jeeves, hefting the sledgehammer like a hayseed John Henry, looks over as his older brother's life come to an end. He reacts badly.

JEEVES TREMOR
LESTERRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!

Jeeves buries the sledge in a wall, takes up the chainsaw, rips the pullcord, resumes the charge--

Ivy, finds a clip, slams it in the stock, points, pulls-- trigger-stick, hammer-jam. He falls to his back, scurrying away, trouble finding traction, soles slipping-- he keeps pulling the trigger. Jeeves straddles him from above, raises the saw like a great wooden stake, about to bring it down--

--BAM!

Ivy's automatic discharges. The round splits the saw's gas tank, spritzing fuel, dousing Jeeves-- A beat before the tank suddenly arcs, exploding, lighting Jeeves up like a four-hundred pound bonfire, bouncing him off the walls; a human Hindenberg, fully engulfed. He flails, burns, howls, falls...molten fat melts off his body like lard butter...

Darwin, dismayed, both brothers down...He moves on Mustache, dispatches him with detached efficiency, snapping his neck clean. He then starts toward Ivy, who's trying desperately to crawl out of there.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE -- SAME

Hugo, crawling across the floor, knees dragging over his own blood trail, trying to reach: Israel, on the ground, dying. Soot's gun has jammed. He clears it efficiently, patiently reloading the weapon as Doc Gill, in panic mode, performs full chest compressions on Buddy as we--

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

Messner, doing the same to Carruthers, trying to restart his heart. Acosta, lays there silently, slowly bleeding out, being tended to by a team of agents. In the b.g. Cops and Feds gather near the window, searching for the assailant, binoculars and rifle scopes strafing the Horizon hotel across the way, concentrating at the open window near the top floor.

CUT TO:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR HALLWAY -- SAME

WATTERS, running up the hallway, past alarmed maid service and hotel staff. She reaches the lower floor window and raises the scope to her eye, searching for Sykes--

WATTERS

Girl, where are you-- talk to me...how bad are you hit...

WATTERS POV

She sees the Feds and Cops in the Nomad window across the way. Smoke clears, her field of vision through the scope expands, sharpens.

WATTERS (CONT'D)

Georgia goddamn baby, please talk to me, please say somethin' so--

--And that's when she spots the call girl, face obscured, lying dead from a headshot in the hallway...her heart sinks...and she assumes the worst: Sykes is dead.

WATTERS (CONT'D)

MOTHERFUCKERS!!

She flicks to full-auto and opens fire right through the glass in front of her-- big gas-ejected shells pop from the breach like bowling pins-- the gathered throng across the way in the Nomad window seem to vaporize in a violent collage of heat, blood and building chunks-- Watters bucks big sobs, blasting away with the Barrett...

WATTERS (CONT'D)

M'SORRY BABY! I'M SO SORRY! I LOVED YOU SO MUCH!

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR -- SAME

Sykes, standing now, knock-kneed, kevlar discarded, down to a black bra and mini-skirt, blood dribbling over her midriff, deep indentation near her sternum-- big yellow bruise in bloom-- the bullet didn't penetrate...her elevator arrives at the penthouse level and as the doors open we--

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- SAME

Darwin, looming over Ivy, about to bring the sledge down squarely on his skull-- the elevator doors open in his periphery... He looks over, sees Sykes standing there, barely clothed, wet with blood, gun in her hand...and grins.

Sykes, seeing Darwin standing over Ivy, holding a sledgehammer-- recognizes him as the perv from earlier. She levels the Glock, stepping out of the elevator, steadying herself against the wall, steadying her aim on Darwin's head.

SYKES

Drop that hammer...

(beat, cocking gun)

And I drop this one.

(beat)

Know a killer motherfucker...know
they voice. Know they feel...and
know you 'bout to die by one.

Then, the sound of an helicopter intrudes, rotor thrum, building steadily, growing louder-- the floor seems to shake as the chopper approaches-- nervous eyes dart-- nobody moves.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT -- SAME

The chopper draws closer, growing louder-- Hugo, still trying to crawl toward his downed boss. Soot finishes him off with a flush headshot. Gill, frantic, rapid chest compressions on Israel, who gags, starts, coughs, heart back up and beating. His watery gaze moves from Gill to Soot, who now stands overtop of him, aiming the 9mm down at him.

Israel averts his eyes...the end has come. He looks over and sees his lamb-skin coat, lying there, soaking in Beanie's blood, ruined beyond recognition. A tear escapes his eye.

ISRAEL

...forgive me...

Soot puts the gun flush with Buddy's skull when suddenly, the ceiling begins to tremble and shake...the sound of a helicopter filling the air.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

Messner is losing Carruthers, can't revive him, begins to crack-- hammering on his chest...it's no use. He's dead. He sobs-- something slides from his pocket. He glances down...

...sees that the bag containing Elmore's severed fingers has fallen from his pocket. Doesn't remember hanging onto them. He replaces them in his pocket. Looks down at his dead friend, sees his severed hand, also missing fingers...

...the absurdity of this makes Messner want to cry laughing...

...and that's when he hears the chopper...and sees it as it rises up past their floor, past the contingent of Cops and Feds slugging it out with Watters across the street.

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

Watters, ears ringing with gunfire reverb, reloading-- salvos of return fire ripping back at her-- then, all at once, the shooting stops-- She pauses, thinks it's a ploy-- then slowly peers over the window sill as the Bell-Ranger comes into view, over the Nomad, touching down on its narrow rooftop.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- SAME

The doors to the Penthouse level are bashed open and the windows implode as FBI tactical agents repel in, weapons drawn, swarming, surrounding the scene, shouting commands-- Darwin Tremor drops the sledge, jackrabbits for the elevator, diving in as the doors close--

Sykes, stumbling toward Ivy. He sees she's injured, scoops her up like a new bride-- she places something in his hand...Acosta's fake FBI credentials. Ivy looks, nods, gets it-- agents approach, combat crouches, MP-5's at arms.

AGENT #1

Let me see your hands!

Ivy, flashing the I.D., taking care to cover the photo.

SIR IVY

This woman's been shot, I need to get her medical attention immediately!

Commotion and confusion swirl. The Agent, unsure, searching for some confirmation-- can't find it, dismisses them and rushes into the Penthouse. Sykes and Ivy slip out the exit.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT -- SAME

Soot, disarmed, handcuffed. Israel, propped up, sweating badly, seizures still hobbling his heart. Gill, being patted down by the Agents, prescription pills confiscated. Soot is held at gunpoint and flex-cuffed, the remainder of rubber appliance pulled off his face.

The agents begin to initiate an "All Clear" over their radios. Moments pass before Deputy Director Locke enters the room, He approaches Soot, studies him, to one of the agents;

LOCKE

Soot?

The Agent nods confirmation. Locke reaches into Soot's coat, finds his cellphone...hits redial.

LOCKE (CONTD) (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Would you join us please...

Locke disconnects, passes the phone to an underling.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Where are Carruthers and Messner?

AGENT #1

Agent Carruthers was killed sir,
(as Locke turns back)

Agent Messner is unaccounted for.

LOCKE

Account for him.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWELL -- SAME

Messner, bounding up the steps, gun drawn, hears voices coming down the stairs toward him-- stops, checks his weapon...

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRWELL -- SAME

Ivy and Sykes descending the stairs. He carries her like a princess, sweeping her down landing after landing.

SIR IVY

What's your name baby girl...

Sykes, somehow shy, sweet, gazing up at him.

SYKES

...Georgia.

Ivy, big smile.

SIR IVY

Georgia on my mind wit'yo fine ass.
You know you saved this black man.

SYKES

You know I did baby...
(smiling, assessing)
And a deep, dark one at that. Now if
you ain't a dog, which you don't
look like--

SIR IVY

--never in a million girl--

SYKES

--good, then all you got to be is
grateful.

SIR IVY

No doubt. That's my moms there,
taught me them skills.

SYKES

You love her?

SIR IVY

My mamma? C'mon shorty, y'gotta ask?

(beat, sees her wounds)

You hurtin' pretty bad?

SYKES

(nodding)

Got hit twice.

SIR IVY

It's going around ain't it? Mafuckas
catching bullets like the common
cold up in this bitch.

(beat)

I think I accidentally shot and killed
my boy today.

SYKES

Well, if it's any comfort, I's goin'
in to there to act a *fool* baby.

(taps her gun)

Straight rockin' heat and slayin'
niggas--

SIR IVY

For real?

SYKES

Mmm-hmm...and your boy very well
mighta been one of 'em.

SIR IVY

True?

SYKES

Like a mafucka.

SIR IVY

That takes some of the sting out.

SYKES

I probably woulda busted on you too
...and what a shame that woulda been.

SIR IVY

I feel like I know you girl. I feel
like I've known you forever.

(beat, smiles)

You gonna lemme see your scars?

SYKES

You do the right thing. Sit with me
while I heal, let it develop slow.

SIR IVY

What were you doin' here anyway?

SYKES

'Spose to kill this fool named Buddy Israel.

This gets Ivy's biggest grin.

SYKES (CONT'D)

Damn baby girl, you makin' a nigga fall hard now.

He reaches the seventeenth floor, rounds the corner, nearly runs into Messner, has a gun thrust in his face.

MESSNER

F.B.I. YOU'RE UNDER ARREST! PUT HER DOWN, GET UP AGAINST THAT WALL!

Sykes recognizes him and in a blink has a gun under his chin.

SYKES

Don't play out this string, 'cuz it's real short I didn't do your man downstairs. I found him that way. Now whether or not you believe that ain't the least bit important. We either goin' work this out and live, or stay doin' the shit we been doin' and die. Now I got no beef with you, or wit ya'll bureau...so you better off jus' movin' on & lettin' us be.

Messner, eyes moving from Ivy to Sykes. Stalemate, no sense pushing. He moves past them, hits the stairwell exit on eighteen. Ivy and Sykes resume their trek down the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY -- PENTHOUSE FLOOR

Messner, bashing in from the stairwell. WHIP PAN OVER TO REVEAL: The Swede, still accompanied by the Sparazza goons, arriving in the elevator at the same time.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

Darwin, on his way down, rolling around on the floor of the car, covering himself in congealed blood and bullet casings, slicking back his hair, losing the security jacket, splashing yet more blood on himself. Satisfied, he snatches Carruthers' F.B.I. credentials up off the floor...and waits.

CUT TO:

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- SAME

The elevator arrives at the far end. A small asian man carrying a stack of clean towels steps off and starts down the hall-- sees Watters, sees the .45 trained on him-- does an abrupt about face and disappears back inside the car.

Watters lowers the gun, wipes tears, the area around her is littered with spent .50 caliber shells. The fourteenth floor of the Nomad is now empty. Sirens wail in the distance. Down below, Watters can see a bevy of law enforcement personnel streaming toward the Horizon. She slowly takes the Barrett off the ledge, begins breaking it down, glancing up at the Penthouse of the Nomad as we...

...CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT -- SAME

Director Locke waits. Messner and The Swede appear in the doorway. The Swede nods to all concerned and starts toward Israel. Doc Gill acknowledges the Swede.

DR. GILL

Dr. Ingstrom, he's had a mild cardiac episode and recurring arrhythmia, I've given him 60cc's of Nobuneatol...

The Swede kneels down next to Israel, dropping his black valise, cracking it open. Messner, dazed, dumbfounded, sees Locke.

MESSNER

...Deputy Director Locke?

Locke approaches, lays a comforting arm on Messner, guiding him to a chair.

LOCKE

Here. Sit. Please.

MESSNER

(pointing to Swede)
This is him? The hitman hired to kill Israel? He's a *doctor*?

LOCKE

Difficult to explain everything now...
(beat, toward Israel)
And much larger issues loom.
(beat)
I'm sorry about Carruthers...Damndest thing to have to die for.

The Swede, working on Israel, shaking his head, something's wrong. He stands, crosses to Locke, silently confers.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

(to The Swede)

Very well.

(to other Agents)

Take Mr. Israel to the roof, he'll be traveling with us.

Suddenly, Soot breaks from his captors, sprinting for the shattered Penthouse windows, launching himself-- a swan dive out into the open air-- He hangs there for a moment, an aesthetically striking form; like Lazarus cast against a cobalt blue sky, backlit by the sun from the lake below--

--till gravity grabs, pulls-- plummeting him toward earth, sending him headlong into the vast expanse of concrete below. This startlingly event is dismissed by mutual shrugs and a collective lack of concern.

Messner is absolutely agog.

MESSNER

(to Locke, forceful)

What the hell-- *What is this!?* People died. Agent Carruthers is *dead!*

LOCKE

We have to transport Mr. Israel to Las Vegas, time is of the essence. The gulfstream is standing by on the jetway at Tahoe International. I'm sorry, I'm restricted from disclosing anymore information. Return to Washington. You'll be debriefed in the coming days.

Locke says no more-- starts out of the Penthouse with the Swede, Dr. Gill and Buddy Israel in tow. A Bureau forensics team arrives to quietly tag and bag the dead...Messner stands there, absolutely agog.

CUT TO:

INT. NOMAD HOTEL -- LOBBY -- DAY

Hives of activity. Cordons and crime scene lockdowns like onion layers, multiple law enforcement agencies, confounded, confused-- too many cooks, too many kitchens. Nobody knows who the hells in charge. Local paramedics and EMT's cart out the wounded. Coroners and M.E.'s cart out the dead.

Reporters and national news outlets crowd police barricades outside, competing for coverage, as--

THE CAMERA PANS OVER TO REVEAL:

Acosta is wheeled through the lobby, hooked up to IV and oxygen, looking ghastly, like something exhumed. He catches the eye of the pimply casino employee and manages a wink.

He's flex-cuffed to the gurney and pushed against the wall for the moment as the Agents move off to deal with the recent appearance of Lazlo Soot-- whose body has been unceremoniously splattered over the parking lot.

As the Agents depart, Acosta peers down at his shackles; simple plastic binding rods-- he smiles...a moment later the stiletto blade fires from his sleeve as--

THE CAMERA PANS OVER TO REVEAL:

Darwin Tremor staggering out of an open elevator, blood-sodden, head down-- FBI badge held aloft for all its worth. Playing it up, free pass, Agents rush in, hold him upright, help him toward a line of awaiting ambulances outside as--

THE CAMERA PANS OVER TO REVEAL:

Ivy and Sykes, being released from the stairwell, cut chains sliding off-- Ivy holds up pilfered FBI creds. Rampant confusion makes the moment possible. He's waved through, carrying Sykes, looking every bit the good Samaritan.

Sykes, a mess of mascara, adorned in her unmentionables, looking every bit the prostitute she appears to be-- she spots the woman at the counter from earlier. The woman gazes back, jaw agape. Sykes can only shrug...if you can't beat 'em-- join 'em. She and Ivy cross the lobby as--

THE CAMERA PANS OVER TO REVEAL:

Messner...morose, exiting another elevator with the sheet-draped body of Carruthers on a gurney. Gandersen, the Nomad owner, spots him, starts over, looks to unleash, gets close enough to catch Messner's expression. Sees it in his eyes...enough dead bodies for one day. Messner continues moving through the lobby, hears the chopper taking off as--

CAMERA TILTS UP TO REVEAL:

Through the clear glass atrium of the Nomad, the Bell-Ranger goes airborne against an impossibly clear winter sky, banking south toward Las Vegas.

CAMERA TILTS DOWN TO REVEAL:

The Horizon hotel across the way: The Fourteenth floor window.

INT. HORIZON HOTEL -- FOURTEENTH FLOOR -- DAY

Watters, gear stowed, seemingly indifferent about the level of law enforcement heading up her way, about to launch an Alamo-like last stand in honor of her fallen sista.

She hears commotion erupt from outside as survivors begin filing from the building. She takes up the Barrett, gazing through the scope, looking, looking, looking...stops...holy shit...it's her. It's Sykes.

And she's alive and being carried by a man, a big gorgeous black man that she's gazing upon with utter love and longing. A boulder-sized lump takes shape in Watters throat; betrayed, backbit-- tears come to fast to contain, too many to control.

Numbed...the sensation leaving her fingers, she finds herself racking the bolt on the Barrett and gazing through crosshairs...taking aim on Ivy's head. Behind her, the elevator arrives, an a dozen armed cops, hoo-rah from it, hustling the length of the hall, descending down on her--

WATTERS

(whispering)

...I loved you baby...

BOOM!

EXT. PARKING STRUCTURE -- NOMAD HOTEL -- SAME

A gunshot in the distance followed by shrieks-- Darwin Tremor snaps his head around at the sound, moving past platoons of Cops and Feds now rushing that way. His I.D. is out, affording him easy egress. He hops the stairs up, top level, Barracuda parked at the rear of the lot. As he approaches...

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey...

Darwin glances over at...Hollis Elmore, standing there, skin horribly discolored, disease afflicted. He wears a hooded tourist sweatsuit; "Ta-Hoe, Ta-Hoe It's Off To Fun We Go!" stitched in cursive across the front. He's holding the Colt Python against his hip.

ELMORE

(nodding to Cuda)

That your car?

Darwin, a beat, what-to-do...hillbilly-acumen in overdrive.

DARWIN TREMOR

No, I'm confiscating it.

(holding up badge)

F.B.I.

Now Elmore raises the Colt with his good hand, advancing on Darwin, moving gingerly, his legs not quite there...

ELMORE

You're F.B.I.?

Darwin tries to stay tight, composed.

DARWIN TREMOR

That's right...and I'd advise y'ta lower your weapon sir.

Elmore keeps coming.

ELMORE

You investigating those murders out
at the lake?

DARWIN TREMOR

(blanching a bit)

Ww...uh...

ELMORE

Three men were ambushed and shot,
two died and had their bodies tossed
into the lake, the other has severe
hypothermia, possible dementia and
will probably be a multiple amputee
by week's end...if he even lives
that long.

Darwin, uh-oh...

DARWIN TREMOR

No, I ain't even heard about--

--Oops.

ELMORE

(even more menace)

You "ain't"--

(beat, teeth clenched)

You have any idea how close to death
I've been? You understand that I'm
dying now? That I've survived bullets
and frostbite and raging fever--

(holding up hand)

missing fingers and every fucking
imaginable horror in between?

Darwin...speechless...he's done.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

And I'm asking you now, "Is that
your car" and you can't even come
clean and do me the decency of a
straight answer, with the fucking
state that I'm in!?

Elmore, that Colt looking like a cannon this close to Darwin.

DARWIN TREMOR

Yeah, shit-- hell, you're right. I'm
sorry.

ELMORE

You shot me and murdered my friends.

DARWIN TREMOR

I did. We-- yeah, I know.

ELMORE

And threw us into the lake.

DARWIN TREMOR

Pretty much, yep.

Elmore, still nodding.

ELMORE

And this is your car, isn't it?

DARWIN TREMOR

Mmm-hmm.

ELMORE

But there were more of you?

DARWIN TREMOR

Yeah, m'brothers...They didn't make it.

ELMORE

Two of 'em?

DARWIN TREMOR

(nods, tears flow)

Thass' right.

(beat, wiping eyes)

I got other brother's though, so it ain't so bad.

ELMORE

You were here huntin' a man named Israel, weren't you? Your name is Tremor.

Darwin gazes up at Elmore, some fraternal bond forms.

DARWIN TREMOR

I was. It is...That who you was here for? Israel?

A pause. Elmore nods.

DARWIN TREMOR (CONT'D)

Well...we both got beat out then, didn't we?

Darwin, slowly lowering the Colt.

ELMORE

Yes we did...

(long pause, then)

Now, give me your car keys. And get the fuck out of here.

Darwin, sifting through his pockets, tossing Elmore the keys.

DARWIN TREMOR

S'fair...lemme just grab somethin'.

Elmore brings the Colt back up. Darwin, hands up, hold on--

DARWIN TREMOR (CONT'D)

No, no, no, I'm done with all that.

He reaches in, pulls a joint off the dashboard, forages, finds matches, lights up, starts off.

DARWIN TREMOR (CONT'D)

(to 'Cuda)

Probably needs to be tuned. Air filter's old. Plugs might be bad. Heater and AC ain't worked in forever.

(seeing Elmore waver)

There's some good drugs in the glove box there, homespun, keep you smiling, semi-lucid at leas'...

(beat, puffing away)

Well, God's speed t'ya then. Sorry 'bout all that. S'way a'the world though, winners and losers y'know. S'way it's always goin' be...

Darwin, walking away, taking huge hits off that joint, traipsing down the steps, getting stoned out of his mind. Elmore, considering, re-considering, looking at that Colt.

ELMORE

...Oh, fuck that...

--As he back shoots Darwin with all six rounds from the Python, blowing holes through him. Darwin goes lop-sided, legs failing, lit-joint still smoking in his mouth as dies standing, only to fall like cut timber seconds later.

Elmore acts quickly, sliding into the 'Cuda and starting it, that big block Hemi roaring to life under the hood.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOMAD HOTEL AND CASINO -- DAY

Pedestrians and passerbys drawn to the commotion at the Nomad, the bottleneck bogs traffic down, making it impossible to move. Elmore crouches low as police and emergency personnel cross in front of the car... Slowly, the crosswalk begins to thin and then finally clear...save a single man:

Messner...standing right in front of the Barracuda, staring at the tires, staring at Elmore. The two lock eyes as he moves around to the driver's side, reaching into his pocket--

--Elmore lifts the Colt up off his lap, putting his heavily bandaged hand on the wheel. Then he sees Messner's FBI creds, clipped to his belt-- can't tell if this one's legit.

He sets the Colt down on the floorboard as Messner walks up, pulling a plastic bag from his pocket: The one containing three severed fingers. He glances down at Elmore's mummified left hand, holding out the bag for him to take.

Elmore, unsure, accepting the bag, seeing what's inside, embarrassed by it-- he sets it down on the seat next to him.

MESSNER

Your friends were taken to Carson City Memorial, they're going to be autopsied and shipped back for burial.

ELMORE

I'll take care of it.

Messner, nodding. A beat.

MESSNER

Who owned this car?

Beat.

ELMORE

The ones that killed 'em.

Beat. Messner nods.

MESSNER

Where are they now?

Elmore looks up at him-- what does it matter...

ELMORE

I just want to go home man...I just want to go home and forget this fucking place even exists.

MESSNER

Where's that? Home.

ELMORE

Las Vegas.

Messner, a thought, then:

MESSNER

You're injured...Let me drive.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

INT. CEDARS SINAI -- LAS VEGAS NEVADA -- DAY

Messner walks in, cleaned up, pressed suit, no tie. He badges himself past the front desk. An ORDERLY approaches.

ORDERLY

Are you with the group on the third floor?

Messner nods.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

Very well.

(turns, points)

You can take that stairwell up, the I.C.U. is at the end of the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. CEDARS SINAI -- THIRD FLOOR -- DAY

Messne exits the stairwell. Doves of Feds and justice department types crowd the third floor hallway, around the I.C.U. The mood is subdued. The Swede exits a per-op suite, dressed in scrubs and a surgical gown, talking with Dr. Gill, who is also dressed for surgery.

Messner searches the hall for a familiar face...finds it...Locke, far end, talking with an aide.

LOCKE

...for a press release. Officially, he took his own life, suicide by hanging, something of that sort. Basic bullet points-- despondent over the turn his career had taken, troubles with the law, history of substance abuse and so on--

The aide sees Messner approach. Locke follows her eyes, turns.

MESSNER

Where's Israel?

LOCKE

What are you doing here?

MESSNER

My debrief--

LOCKE

(indignant)

--will be handled back in--

MESSNER

--no, we need to handle it now.

Locke, angered, handing his clipboard to the aide, taking Messner by the arm, leading him away.

LOCKE

You were given instructions to get on that plane and return to Washington--

A gun is in Locke's side now-- against his ribs-- he looks down, stunned...Now it's Messner who's leading him away.

MESSNER

You're going to tell me why no call was made to inform us that the Israel situation had been "altered." Why I-- and my friend and partner, whose body is going into a furnace tomorrow, were not sufficiently apprised of Bureau movement on this matter.

Locke, pale, shook up.

LOCKE

I can't discuss--

MESSNER

--You can and you will.

LOCKE

You're finished.

MESSNER

And you just figured that out?

(jams gun into ribs)

The Swede isn't a hitman, is he?

He's a surgeon. Sparazza didn't want Israel's heart for a trophy, he wanted it for a transplant...why?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CEDARS SINAI -- I.C.U. -- RECOVERY ROOM -- DAY

Locke and Messner enter. In an oxygen tent erected on one side of the room, sits the shrunken figure of Primo Sparazza. On the other, a barely conscious Buddy Israel. Both men are hooked up to multiple I-V's and heart monitors.

LOCKE

...They're father and son...

Messner turns back to Locke, mind racing, searching his memory, sparking to--

FLASH CUT:

The Diner. The day before.

MESSNER

...A paternity suit, filed 1967...

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

LOCKE

--Brought against Sparazza by Israel's mother Laverne who was nineteen at the time. They had a brief affair which Israel was the by-product of.

Messner turns back, gazing at Israel and Sparazza.

MESSNER

...Does he know?

LOCKE

...He does now...

Israel and Sparazza glare at one another across the room with pure, unadulterated hatred for the other.

MESSNER

So the wiretaps of Padiche and Serna--

CUT TO:

The reel-to-reel machine spins:

SERNA

--some Swede, real badass, supposedly a "specialist"

CUT BACK TO:

LOCKE

Dr. Sven Ingstrom is head of cardiology at Stockholm University and the foremost heart specialist in all of Europe--

Messner...words can't begin to describe his dismay.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Sparazza was in failing health and looking for a donor. The son who had betrayed and burned him so thoroughly seemed a obvious choice.

MESSNER

So all of our intel was bogus to begin with.

LOCKE

Yes. The actual contract went to Lazlo Soot, the man that plunged to his death from the Penthouse yesterday. He was to neutralize Israel's entourage and prep for the removal of his heart.

(MORE)

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Ingstrom was to handle the surgery itself on-site with the assistance of Dr. Gregory Gill, Israel's personal physician, who was also on the Sparazza payroll.

Messner steps closer to Locke, close enough to throttle him.

MESSNER

...When did you know all this?

LOCKE

Information was arriving all day yesterday. When we finally figured out who Sparazza actually was, we--

--Oops-- slip-up, too much talking...Locke goes silent.

MESSNER

--What?

(after a moment)

What do you mean "Who Sparazza actually was..."

Locke says nothing...Messner levels his gun on him.

LOCKE

...Are you insane?

MESSNER

...Almost.

(pulling hammer back)

What do you mean "who Sparazza actually was..."

Locke reluctantly hands Messner the confidential package we saw delivered to him earlier in the film. Messner pulls the photos of a post-op Primo Sparazza--

CUT TO:

The Diner, Carruthers and Messner, the day before...

MESSNER (CONT'D)

You realize that Sparraza has had thirty-six major medical procedures performed on him since 1953? Elective plastic surgery, every single one--

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

LOCKE

It wasn't elective. It was undertaken to save his life. And it wasn't cosmetic, it was reconstructive...Look at the date of the first procedure.

MESSNER

(reading)

...Yeah, fifty-three.

LOCKE

The same year that Sparazza murdered
Agent Freeman Heller...

Messner...a slow, sickening realization taking hold...

FLASH CUT TO:

Jersey Turnpike. The past: A '51 Ford Fairlane, flush with an embankment, bullet perforated, dead-body draped. A top-coated man stalks the vehicle's sole survivor, FREEMAN HELLER, shooting him in the back. He rolls over and is shot point blank in the face. THE CAMERA TILTS UP to the top-coated gunman, who returns the pistol to its holster, revealing...

...An FBI BADGE, clearly visible, clipped to his waist...

FLASH CUT BACK TO:

Messner, staring at Sparazza...now he knows.

MESSNER

(as if to himself)

...holy shit...that's Heller...

(back to Locke)

Isn't it?

LOCKE

Primo Sparazza was Heller's alias. He went deep cover in 1940 and stayed under for over ten years, amassing materials against the mafia and other criminal syndicates. He may have ripped the organization wide open, pre-Appalachia, but his superiors were convinced that he had gone rogue, swapped allegiances...So they gave the order to terminate his cover.

FLASH CUT TO:

Freeman Heller/Primo Sparazza, lying there on the turnpike, unblinking blue eyes staring up dead, bullet punctures issuing blood, swelling consuming the facial features, distorting, perverting...then, inexplicably...those blue eyes blink.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

He survived the shooting but the injuries he sustained triggered a degenerative bone disease that required constant surgery, forever altering his features...so he assumed his alias full-time.

(MORE)

LOCKE (CONT'D)

The figment that was Primo Sparazza
became flesh and blood.

(beat)

Freeman Heller was no more.

CUT TO:

The Diner. The day before.

CARRUTHERS

--Heller was buried in agency lore--

CUT BACK TO SCENE:

Messner, head in his hands.

LOCKE

The agents of that era are all dead
and gone, history had defaulted to
fable...until now. You can imagine
the shock this sent through the
corridors of power in D.C. Heller's
op predates the second world war.
That's over sixty years of intel.
Do you know how valuable that could
be? The man's a treasure trove.

MESSNER

...So you made another deal?

LOCKE

I wouldn't go that far.

MESSNER

But you did, and have...And now people
are dead.

(beat, seething)

Did Sparazza become more valuable
than Israel...and did you make *another*
deal?

A beat. Locke, a reluctant nod.

LOCKE

Israel's agreement with the government
was tossed out. We're now attempting
to rehabilitate him to the point
where a transplant can be attempted.

Messner glowers at Locke...can't believe what he's hearing.

MESSNER

(with disgust)

You're trying to save Sparazza?

LOCKE

No...We're trying to save Heller.

MESSNER

...So you knew all this and yet y--

LOCKE

(cutting him off)
--We needed cohesion to move forward.
Not conjecture.

MESSNER

...while Carruthers and a dozen others
lie dying, you debate semantics.
The Bureau's betrayed us...
(pointing to Sparazza)
The way they betrayed him...

LOCKE

I don't see it like that at all.

Messner's head falls into his hands.

MESSNER

No, of course you don't...of course
you don't.
(long reflective pause)
...I gave all my belief and the better
part of my soul to this Bureau.
(beat, looking at the
wraith-like Sparazza)
...Look at the monsters you've made...
(beat, profoundly sad)
I won't be one of them.

Locke, swallowing hard, struggling to assert his authority.

LOCKE

I'll overlook what you've done here
today in light of what's taken place.
You've been fully debriefed. Now I
want you to return to D.C. immediately
and make no further inquiry into
this matter. I mean it. It's closed.

MESSNER

No...It's not.
(tossing Messner his
FBI ID)
What it lacks...is an end.

Locke, not getting it as Messner takes aim on the oxygen
tent containing Sparazza. Locke's eyes inflate, he reaches-
grabs-gropes-**NOOOO-!**

--Israel, the faintest of smiles as-- BOOM.

THE END