

BLOOD JUSTICE
An
Original screenplay
BY
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FADE IN:

EXT EAST HARLEM SECOND AVENUE - DAY 1956

Italian East Harlem; Tenements buildings line Second Avenue, with storefronts of deli's, pastry shops, social clubs, and clothing stores.

A well-dressed ENTOURAGE walks up the street; people wave from windows.

NICKY, ten, dressed in sharkskin pants, alligator shoes, and a brightly colored Italian knit shirt; hair slicked, cocky, leads the entourage.

Next to Nicky is his mother, ROSE, thirty one, attractive, and PHILIP PALMENTI, thirty two, muscular, dressed in an elegant silk suit, accompanied by Philip's sister, ANNA, and her daughter, AMELIA. They're all wearing birthday caps.

Nicky's girlfriend, JOANN, 10, runs up to join. Philip hands her a birthday cap. She's the only blue eyed, blond in East Harlem.

She's girlish, but confident, Philip hands her a birthday cap.

Nicky's gang of SANTO, thirteen, big, and menacing, RICO, eleven with an eye patch, dangerous, and DOMINICK, ten, plump with long Elvis side burns run up to join the entourage.

They all walk gayly along the Avenue SINGING HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU, which turns into CLAPPING and APPLAUDING.

A Cadillac SCREECHES to a halt alongside the entourage - a heavy set MAN in a Fedora hat, and sunglasses rushes towards Philip with a gun in his hand.

The man points the gun at Philip's head.

MAN

So you wanna beat me you piece of shit!!

PHILIP

I swear! I'll make it up to you!

The man stares, aims, COCKS PISTOL.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
I needed the money for my son's
birthday!!

MAN
Get on your knees and beg!!

Philip looks at Nicky, then drops to his knees.

MAN (CONT'D)
Now fucken beg!!

PHILIP
Jesus! Don't kill me on my son's
birthday!!

The man holds his foot out for Philip to kiss. Philip hesitates, then licks the man's shoes. The man shoots Philip in the head - the blood splattering all over Nicky's face, and clothes.

Rose SCREAMS. The man bends down, takes all the money out of Philip's pocket, then dashes back into the Cadillac - the Cadillac peels away.

Nicky, dazed, stares at his dead father, feeling the blood all over his face.

NICKY (V.O.)
No soap will ever wash my father's blood
off me.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSE'S BEDROOM - SAME DAY A LITTLE LATER

Anna, Nicky, and DOCTOR SEVELLI look down upon a sleeping Rose.

DOCTOR SEVELLI
I gave her a strong sedative.

Doctor Sevelli hands Anna a prescription bottle, exits the room. Anna practically drags Nicky away from his mother.

INT. NICKY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is packed with PEOPLE. Everyone becomes silent as Nicky walks in the room. When Anna sees a DETECTIVE talking to people in the kitchen her eyes light up. Nicky sees the Detective, looks at Anna.

Anna places a finger over her mouth indicating to Nicky to be silent. The Detective enters the living room.

DETECTIVE
I'm Detective Grazio.

The Detective hands his card to Anna- Nicky snatches the card out of Anna's hand.

NICKY
His hair was black - he was a fat
bastard, and he got away in a fifty four
Cadillac!!

Awkward silence as Grazio is caught off guard by Nicky's brazenness, and just forces a wry smirk.

Anna
He's in shock.

NICKY
I know what I saw!

Grazio takes a note pad out of his pocket, and begins to write. Suddenly, JOHNNY EELS, late fifties, a scar running down his face; the crime boss of East Harlem enters the living room.

Intimidated, Grazio puts the note pad away.

JOHNNY EELS
Let them grieve.

Grazio turns to leave when Nicky grabs his sleeve collar.

NICKY
I could point the guy out anywhere!

Grazio looks warily at Johnny Eels who just nods nonchalantly to just go. Grazio exits. Johnny Eels bends down to Nicky, takes him by the shoulders.

JOHNNY EELS
What'd your father say? Never talk to
cops!

Johnny Eels takes Nicky by the hand into his room.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Johnny Eels bends down, and gently grabs Nicky by the shoulders.

NICKY
Why was he killed?!

JOHNNY EELS
Doesn't matter; he's dead.

NICKY
Who did it?!

JOHNNY EELS
(sighs)
Not a clue.

Johnny Eels hugs Nicky tightly.

JOHNNY EELS (CONT'D)
Your dad wanted me to look after you, if
anything happened to him.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - MORNING

Nicky, in a black suit, sits at the kitchen table halfheartedly eating. Rose, also dressed for a funeral, sits across from him. She's obviously sedated.

ROSE
Your father always said the proudest day
of his life was when you had your story
published in that kid's magazine. Make
your father proud: become a writer.

Nicky slowly pushes the Detective card to his mother.
Rose takes the card, looks sadly at it.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Your father didn't talk business. I got
nothing.

NICKY
I know I could point the guy out!

Rose reaches out, and takes Nicky's hand firmly.

ROSE
You go the cops, that guy will kill you!

NICKY
I ain't scared!

ROSE
If anything happened to you it would kill
me!

Rose cries. Nicky hugs her tightly.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT RAYMOND'S CEMETERY BRONX - DAY

Many MOURNERS gather around Philip's casket. Rose, and Nicky stand side by side. Rose holds Nicky to her.

FATHER ALFRED, a robust priest in his forties sprinkles the casket with holy water. As the casket is lowered into the ground, mourners pass drop a rose on it, and pay homage to Nicky and Rose.

Johnny Eels drops his rose on top of the coffin, kisses Rose, then Nicky, walks away.

A MAN wearing a fedora hat and sunglasses drops his rose on the casket, but doesn't acknowledge Rose, or Nicky. Nicky's eyes light up when he sees the man.

NICKY
Ma! That's the guy who killed dad!

Rose turns pale as her facial expression betrays her.

ROSE
No! He's a friend of the family!

As the man passes Johnny Eels, Johnny Eel's men restrain their boss. Nicky sees this, and watches the man as he joins a tough looking group who leave together.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTARAUNT - SAME DAY A LITTLE LATER

The room is packed with PEOPLE eating the repast meal.

At a table far away from everyone sits Johnny Eels, and four Men. They talk heatedly.

Nicky watches.

Johnny Eels and the four men go into another room.

NICKY
Ma; I gotta go to the bathroom.

Rose nods.

INT. SIDE ROOM IN RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky pretends he's going to the bathroom, but when he sees the open door to Johnny Eels' room, he listens just outside.

Johnny Eels, BUCK, A mob boss, and three other MEN are in the room.

BUCK
(to Johnny, firmly)
You can't touch him - it'll start a war!

Johnny Eels sighs.

JOHNNY EELS
I want something for Rose.

BUCK
OK. We pay widow's comp. Then it's settled.

Nicky burst into the room.

NICKY
It's not settled! I want the guy killed!!

An awkward silence as all the men look to Johnny, fighting not to laugh as they pass Nicky.

NICKY (CONT'D)
You lied to me! You know who killed my father!

JOHNNY EELS
Because there's nothing I can do.

Suddenly, Nicky loses all his gusto, and fights to hold back tears. Johnny Eels takes him in his arms.

NICKY
Kill the guy for me, Johnny!

JOHNNY EELS
I'm not killin' nobody.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nicky stands on a chair to reach a high drawer in his mom's room. He takes out a photo album.

Excited, he turns pages. One picture catches his attention.

CLOSE UP PICTURE: a grainy black, and white picture of his father, and five tough looking men with no shirts on, all pointing guns in the air.

Nicky takes it out of the album, and puts it in his pocket, then puts the album away.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Nicky walks up to the OFFICER at the front desk, presents a card. The officer smirks, points to a room. Nicky immediately rushes into Detective Grazio's office - thrust a picture on the Detective's desk.

Nicky picks up the picture, points at a particular guy.

NICKY

This guy killed my father!

Detective Grazo looks at the picture, and nonchalantly hands it back to Nicky.

GRAZO

The case is closed.

NICKY

Why's it closed?! The guys still walking around free!

GRAZO

It's out of my hands.

Nicky snatches the picture back.

NICKY

I'll get him myself then!!

Abruptly, Nicky runs out of Grazo's office. Grazo quickly picks up the phone, dials.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Nicky kneels at the altar praying earnestly. Father Alfred watches him quietly from the back of the church, then walks up to Nicky, taps him on the shoulder.

FATHER ALFRED

What are you praying for, Nicholas?

NICKY

That the guy who killed my father gets his head cut off!

FATHER ALFRED

Don't pray for that! Revenge is a sin!

NICKY

Maybe I'm a sinner.

Hastily, Nicky runs out of the church. Father Alfred watches Nicky seemingly exasperated.

CUT TO:

INT. DELIGHTFUL RESTAURANT - DAY

Rose is behind the counter serving a CUSTOMER. Johnny Eels and Buck take a seat in a booth, nod. Rose joins them.

Johnny Eels hands an envelope full of money to Rose.

JOHNNY EELS

There's ten thou' in there for compensation.

ROSE

Ten thousand, for a life? I say, "*oochio mel occhio!*"

BUCK

You now why that can't happen.

JOHNNY EELS

Nicky went to the police with a picture today saying, " he knows who killed Philly."

BUCK

Guys are concerned.

ROSE

Will he do anything?!

Johnny Eels takes Rose's hand.

JOHNNY EELS
Not while I'm alive.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY A LITTLE LATER

Nicky watches TV. He takes the picture out of his pocket, stares at it, grimaces.

O. S. The sound of DOOR OPENING.

Nicky puts the picture in his pocket. Rose walks in.

ROSE
Give me the picture!

Nicky acts stupid, and just shrugs.

ROSE (CONT'D)
I said give me the picture!

Nicky frowns, takes the picture out of his pocket, hands it to his mother.

NICKY
(pointing)
That's the guy who killed dad.

ROSE
You went to the cops without my permission!

NICKY
I gotta do something.

ROSE
Nicholas, I loved your father very much, but we have to move on.

NICKY
Dad begged for his life!

ROSE
He'll make you beg too - he's dangerous!

NICKY
You know who he is, don't you?

ROSE
(looking away)

No.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT ANN'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Santo, and Nicky, dressed in their grammar school uniforms, play basketball against two other KIDS.

Santo passes to Nicky who fakes left, dribbles right. As Nicky goes in for a lay up, the kid guarding him hacks Nicky to the ground.

Nicky gets right up, throws the basketball at the kid's chest.

NICKY
That's a hack!!

KID
No one calls hacks - that's faggot shit!

Nicky punches the kid, knocking him down. All the KIDS in the playground watch, cheering Nicky on. Joann, and her FRIENDS cheer loudest.

Nicky is on top of the kid punching, punching furiously. Father Alfred runs to Nicky, pulls him off the kid.

CUT TO:

INT. SAINT ANN'S RECTORY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nicky sits across from a frustrated Father Alfred.

FATHER ALFRED
This is your third fight this month! You - altar boy captain!

NICKY
Being called a punk is the worst thing in the world. That's why my dad said.

FATHER ALFRED
Your dad was wrong!

NICKY
Was not!

FATHER ALFRED
The Roman's whipped the hell out of
Jesus, and still he forgave them.

NICKY
Jesus got the Roman's back. He had the
Hun's kill'em.

Father Alfred SIGHS.

FATHER ALFRED
Go. You'll be late for class.

Nicky walks to the door, stops.

NICKY
Did my father go to heaven, or hell?

FATHER ALFRED
Heaven probably. Why do you ask?

NICKY
Cauz' I wanna go see'em.

FATHER ALFRED
Then stop with the violence.

Nicky smirks, runs out of the rectory.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM - SAME DAY A FEW HOURS LATER

Nicky, and Joann walk along Second Avenue carrying their
books. A group of KIDS giggle when they see Nicky, and
Joann together. Nicky hears, puts his books down.

Nicky grabs the biggest kid by the collar.

NICKY
Something funny?

The kid nervously shakes his head no. Nicky lets the kid
go; Nicky and Joan resume walking.

JOANN
You like to fight?

NICKY
Nobody laughs at me or my girl.

JOANN
Who says I'm your girl?

NICKY

I wrote you a poem - you're my girl.

Nicky smirks, then takes Joann's books out of her hand, and carries them for her.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM OUTSIDE DELI - DAY

As Father Alfred is approaching the deli, Rose walks out carrying a grocery bag. Father Alfred practically blocks her way, but in a gentlemanly fashion.

FATHER ALFRED

Can I talk to you for a second?

ROSE

Sure, Father.

FATHER ALFRED

It's about Nicky -

ROSE

- is he okay?!

FATHER ALFRED

Nicky's been fighting a lot. Seeing his father's murder has affected him, more than you think.

ROSE

He'll get over it. He's a good boy.

FATHER ALFRED

You should give serious thought to getting him out of East Harlem.

ROSE

What?! Go live on a farm, and have Nicky milk cows? Really, Father!

Rose storms past Father Alfred. Father Alfred SIGHS.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM - TWILIGHT

Nicky, and Santo walk by Jefferson Park. Santo carries a bottle in a brown paper bag. They enter the park, sit at a bench near swings. Santo takes a liquor bottle out of the paper bag, drinks, hands the bottle to Nicky.

Nicky drinks, gags. Santo takes the bottle back, drinks. Nicky stares longingly at Santo before speaking.

NICKY
You're my best friend, right?

SANTO
Blood brothers.

NICKY
I think my mother, and everybody, know
who killed my dad.

SANTO
I coulda told you that.

Nicky takes the bottle out of Santo's hand, takes a long swig on the bottle, gags again.

SANTO (CONT'D)
When we get older we'll find out who the
bastard is.

NICKY
And?

SANTO
Three slugs in the head!

Nicky grins, starts pushing the swings feverishly. Santo joins him.

SANTO (CONT'D)
Don't just kill the prick - make him beg,
like he did your father!

Nicky stops pushing the swings, looks rigidly at Santo, then takes another long swig on the liquor bottle.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM STREET - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Santo, and Nicky, drunk, walk past a chicken slaughter house. Santo grabs Nicky by the arm to watch.

Nicky, and Santo's POV - a BUTCHER cuts a chicken's head off.

Nicky gags, then vomits. Santo laughs hysterically.

SANTO
An' you're gonna kill a guy!

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rose at the kitchen table, nervously checking the clock. Nicky staggers in. Rose looks at him queerly as she smells his breath.

ROSE
You've been drinking!

NICKY
Leave me alone!

Nicky goes into his room.

INT. NICKY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nicky picks up Huckleberry Finn, flips through it - then flings it across the room, hitting the wall.

A pigeon lands on the windowsill. Nicky studies the pigeon with cold, calculating eyes, picks up his beebie gun, aims at the pigeon, shoots three shots; all three hitting the pigeon in the face.

The pigeon falls off into the alleyway. On the sound of the beebie gun, Rose enters, looks at Nicky, goes to the window sill, looks down.

ROSE'S POV - the pigeon lays dead on the ground of the alleyway.

Rose turns to Nicky, horrified.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Nicky, and his gang shoot hoops. Johnny Eels, accompanied by two BUTTONMEN, goes up to Nicky, grabs him by the head, kisses him.

JOHNNY EELS
Nicky, God works in mysterious ways! The
guy who killed your father - dead!
Massive heart attack!

NICKY

You mean it?!

JOHNNY EELS

Cross my heart!

Rico, Dominick, and Santo all pat Nicky on the back.
Nicky joyously runs home.

CUT TO:

INT. DELIGHTFUL RESTAURANT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Rose at the counter, talks to another WAITRESS when
Nicky bursts in.

NICKY

Ma! Ma! Uncle Johnny just told me that
the guy who killed dad died of a heart
attack!!

Rose is surprised, thinks, forces a smile.

ROSE

You want a milk shake?

NICKY

Sure!! To celebrate!

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM THIRD AVENUE - TWILIGHT EIGHT YEARS
LATER.

The East Harlem riots. African Americans break windows,
flip cars, set garbage can fires. Pandemonium -- the
police can only watch.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. DOWN THE STREET FROM THE RIOT - CONTINUOUS

Expensive cars block Second Avenue from the rioting on
Third Avenue. Johnny Eels directs MEN who stand, armed,
behind the cars.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET FROM SECOND AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, now eighteen, now a tall, muscular teenager. He reads *The Lord Of The Rings*. A baseball bat lays at his feet.

Santo, Rico, and Dominick approach, carrying weapons.

SANTO

What the fuck you doin' readin', Nicky?!

DOMINICK

The niggers are riotin'!

Nicky continues to read, absorbed in his book.

RICO

C'mon, bro - you can't punk out on us!

On "punk", Nicky stops reading, picks up his baseball bat, spits on the floor.

NICKY

Anybody wanna see what kind of punk I am - step over my spit!

No one takes the challenge. Nicky places the baseball bat down, walks to Santo, puts his hand on his shoulder.

NICKY (CONT'D)

You guys defend the block. Me! I gotta find out what happens to these hobbits.

EXT. EAST HARLEM SECOND AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

When Johnny Eels sees the gang walking towards him without Nicky - he storms up to Santo.

JOHNNY EELS

Where's Nicky?!

SANTO

Said he wanted to finish his fucking book about Hobbits.

JOHNNY EELS

Hobbits!! What the hell is a Hobbit?!

RICO

Nicky says, " their midget's with lot's of hair on their feet."

JOHNNY EELS

Wait till I catch up with him! Take your post!

Santo, Dominick, and Rico join the other men behind cars.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Two teams are playing a full court, five on five. The point GUARD passes the ball to Nicky who spins left, and drives in for an easy lay up.

Buzzer sounds. Nicky , and his team head for the bench. Johnny Eels puts his arm around Nicky's shoulder, pulls him away.

JOHNNY EELS

You obey my fucking orders, you hear? You too good to protect your neighborhood?

NICKY

I'm sorry. I just got so caught up in this book-

JOHNNY EELS

-don't let me hear that no shit about Hobbits! You're my God son - you made me look bad.

NICKY

It'll never happen again - I promise.

JOHNNY EELS

Respect is not a given - you have to earn it; by havin' balls! Guys think you're weak, they'll crucify you.

NICKY

I got balls. Don't worry about me.

Johnny Eels kisses Nicky on the forehead, walks out of the gym with his men.

CUT TO:

INT. SANTO'S CAR - NIGHT.

Santo drives his car slowly along the Village streets.

Santo nods at a young COUPLE walking holding hands. Nicky pulls a switchblade, springs from the car, the gang right behind.

EXT. STREET IN VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky pushes the switchblade against the man's throat.

NICKY
Get in the buildin' and you won't get
hurt!

Santo, Rico, and Nicky hustle the terrified couple into a hallway. Dominick is look out; he is nervous.

As Dominick watches the robbery he reaches into Santos' car and turns on a doo-wop station.

The gang run out, pile into the car, speed away.

INT. SANTO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nicky counts the money.

NICKY
Ninety two bucks!

The gang WHOOP, HOLLER.

CUT TO:

INT. CHINESE RESTARAUNT - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

The gang are all sitting at a table drinking, barely touching their food. Empty shot glasses litter the table. Nicky is quite buzzed.

NICKY
With the perfect score? I'd marry Joann,
huge weddin', all of you in my wedding
party! Bachelor party? Top shelf hookers
all the way!

Nicky laughs robustly. No one joins him. A sublime silence overcomes the table as all eyes fall upon Nicky.

RICO
(to Santo)
Tell'im.

NICKY

What? You guys been actin' strange.

SANTO

I've been doin' some jobs with this guy Sergio in the Gambino family.

NICKY

An'?

SANTO

Your father came up, and the guy got all weird on me. I think you dad's killer is still alive.

NICKY

Johnny Eels wouldn't lie to me!

RICO

Bullshit!

SANTO

If the guys alive you gotta find out who it is - an' kill'em!

RICO

Yup.

NICKY

You fuckers slay me - like any of you ever killed a guy.

SANTO

I have.

(beat)

And I sleep like a baby.

Nicky looks long, and hard at Santo before speaking.

NICKY

Get a sit down with this Sergio guy.

Santo pulls Nicky to him, kisses him on the head.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

The annual feast of Saint Anthony. Crowds, colorful costumes, music, celebration.

Nicky, and Joann sit on a stoop drinking wine. Nicky watches SHRIMPY, a bookie, in front of a candy store, smoking.

NICKY
I gotta talk to Shrimpy.

JOANN
Get me a Calzone.

Nicky nods okay, kisses Joann on the head, looks cautiously around, and approaches Shrimpy.

NICKY
Hey, Shrimpy, you know any of these guys?

Nicky takes pictures out of his pocket, hands them to Shrimpy who scrutinizes the pictures.

SHRIMPY
Yeah.

NICKY
Any of them kill my father?

Shrimpy quickly hands the pictures back to Nicky, seemingly quite uncomfortable.

SHRIMPY
I have no idea.

Johnny Eels walks out of the candy store, catching Nicky off guard. Johnny grabs the pictures out of Nicky's hands, glances quickly at them, then looks at Nicky with a penetrating gaze.

NICKY
You didn't *lie* to me?

Johnny Eels takes a lighter and burns the picture.

JOHNNY EELS
He's dead!

Ashes fall. Johnny Eels walks away. Nicky looks at Shrimpy who just shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. SAINT IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Nicky in front of the CLASS reading; he's a natural entertainer. The class laughs.

Except for Father Alfred.

NICKY

So now Bobby Roach is itchin' his nose like there's no tomorrow, when he yells out stoned off his rocker, " eighty sixth street! Bra's, panties, and bra's," then falls head first over a kid eatin' an ice cream cone - an' that people is a good day in the life of Bobby Raoch; the East Harlem junkie!

The class APPLAUD. O.S. THE BELL RINGS. Class exits.

FATHER ALFRED

That was your first written assignment in six weeks. You're still failing.

NICKY

I'll do better.

Nicky tries to go past Father Alfred; Father Alfred blocks him.

FATHER ALFRED

You need college. You've got talent, but you're raw.

NICKY

Writer? I got other plans.

FATHER ALFRED

When you were a kid that's all you talked about.

Father Alfred this time makes it almost impossible for Nicky to get around him.

FATHER ALFRED (CONT'D)

I'm hearing things about you.

NICKY

Gossip.

Nicky looks nervously at STUDENTS waiting for him in the hallway. Father Alfred notices.

FATHER ALFRED

Are they waiting for you?

NICKY

No.

Father Alfred looks Nicky directly in the eye.

FATHER ALFRED

Remember, that he who ruleth his spirit
is greater than he who ruleth a city.

NICKY

Good advice. Gotta remember that one.

Nicky walks briskly past Father Alfred into the hallway.

INT. SAINT IGNATIUS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nicky motions for the four STUDENTS waiting for him, to
walk a few feet away before he speaks.

NICKY

Assholes - why don't you just hold up a
sign!!

Nicky rushes into the men's room followed closely by the
students.

INT. MEN'S ROOM -CONTINUOUS

Nicky goes into the bathroom stall, sits on the toilet
seat. WALLY enters; he is sweating, and seemingly out of
synch. Nicky studies Wally for a moment.

NICKY (CONT'D)

You don't look good. What's wrong?

WALLY

I think I'm getting hooked on these pills
- gimme ten.

NICKY

No way - no how! You ain't gettin' hooked
on my pills! From here on you get only
two!

Wally sighs, hands him the money. Nicky gives him pills.
Another STUDENT quickly enters the stall.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM - NIGHT

Santo, and Nicky case out a building. Nicky enters.

INT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Nicky runs up the stairs. PETE, a bearded man of forty opens the door. Nicky enters.

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT- CONTINUOUS

Pete opens a dresser, gives Nicky a bag of pills. Nicky hands him money.

Nicky goes to the door, stops, looks deadpan at Pete.

NICKY

You know anything about my father's murder?

PETE

I heard was that there was a guy in Rao's bar buyin' everybody drinks, and braggin' how he made your father beg -

NICKY

The motherfucker bragged!

PETE

I like you. You need a gun - see me.

NICKY

You ever kill a guy?

Pete hesitates.

PETE

Once. I was in a bad mood.

Pete turns his back on Nicky not to show how emotionally upset he is.

PETE (CONT'D)

He had kids. It bother's me, if I let it.

Pete plops in his recliner chair. Nicky quietly exits.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - DAY

Santo looks at a paper in his hand, points at Louie's restaraunt. Nicky parks, looks at his mirror.

NICKY'S POV - a car with two MEN in it, scooping Nicky's car.

Nicky taps Santo on the shoulder. Santo checks, raises his shirt to reveal a gun. Nicky, and Santo exit from the car.

EXT. STREET IN THE BRONX - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, and Santo walk cautiously towards Louie's restaraunt. The car down the street speeds up to them. Santo feels for the gun under his shirt.

The car pulls up, the two men look at them, laugh, drive away. Santo, and Nicky share a glance, then enter the restaurant.

Santo and Nicky's POV - Tables occupied with PEOPLE, but one man in a three piece suit sits alone. Santo nods.

INT. LOUIE'S RESTARAUNT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, and Santo go to where SERGIO, late 40s, mild mannered, sit, eating alone.

SANTO
Something funny just happened.

SERGIO
It's a funny old world.

Santo goes into the bathroom. Nicky, and Sergio check each other out, warily. Santo comes back to the table, sits.

SERGIO (CONT'D)
Relax. If I wanted you dead, you'd be dead.

SANTO
Nicky Palmenti.

Sergio, and Nicky shake hands.

SERGIO
You're handsome like your old man.

NICKY
- is the guy who killed my father alive?!

SERGIO
I was with'em last night.

Santo, and Nicky shoot each other a look.

NICKY

What's his name?

SERGIO

I'm putting my ass on the line. That costs 4G's.

NICKY

Hod can we trust you?!

SERGIO

With him outta the way I move up. Naked self interest. Plus I hate him.

Santo, and Nicky stand.

SERGIO (CONT'D)

I knew your father well. He's turnin' in his grave knowin' the bastard is alive.

SANTO

We'll think about it.

SERGIO

Think fast - maybe the prick gets me first.

Nicky, and Santo exit the restaraunt.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE RESTARAUNT - CONTINUOUS

NICKY

Four G's! Screw that! I ask around, an' maybe I get the guy for free.

SANTO

The more people you ask, the more chance of word gettin' back to the guy.

Nicky reflects deeply on Santo's words.

CUT TO:

INT. SOCIAL CLUB - DAY

Johnny Eels, and two BUTTONMEN drink espresso, and read the horse sheets. Other BUTTONMEN sit around playing cards. Nicky burst into the club - storms right up to Johnny Eels.

NICKY

You fucken lied to me!! The guy's still
alive!

Silence - no one disrespects the boss. Johnny Eels
stands, drags Nicky into the back room by his collar.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Johnny shoves Nicky against the wall, fights to stay
calm.

JOHNNY EELS

You ever disrespect me in front of my men
again - I'll forget who you are, an'
smack the livin' shit outta you!!

Johnny Eels releases his grip on Nicky.

JOHNNY EELS (CONT'D)

Sit!

Nicky, and Johnny sit at a table.

NICKY

Why'd you lie?

JOHNNY EELS

'Cauz I don't want you being stupid. You
gonna kill the guy?

NICKY

You told me that respect had to be
earned. I gotta.

JOHNNY EELS

Eighteen year old kids can't go around
shootin' made guys.

NICKY

My father begged!

JOHNNY EELS

An' you'll beg too! He's a pro!

NICKY

At least tell me who he is.

Johnny Eels takes Nicky's hands.

JOHNNY EELS

Let it go. That's an order.

NICKY
I'll think about it.

Nicky exits. Johnny watches Nicky with cold, calculating eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY A FEW MINUES LATER

Rose is standing before a picture of the Blessed Mother, praying rosary.

ROSE'S POV - Nicky coming out of the social club, talking to his gang.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S KITCHEN - SAME DAY A FEW MINUTES LATER

Rose paces.

ROSE
Why were you in the club?

NICKY
The guy who killed dad is still alive.

Rose goes right up to Nicky, looks him deadpan in the eyes.

ROSE
So?

NICKY
I know you lied.

ROSE
I did what any mother would do - protect you.

Nicky takes his mother's hands firmly in his grip.

NICKY
You know who it is, too.

ROSE
Go on to college, and make something of your life. Don't be a bum like your father.

Nicky breaks away from his mother's grip, goes to the alley way, looks sternly down. Rose goes up to Nicky, puts her hands around his stomach.

ROSE (CONT'D)
If you truly love me... you'll promise me
on my life that you'll never seek
revenge.

Nicky turns to his mother, kisses her on the head.

NICKY
OK. I promise.

Rose looks skeptical.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Cross my heart.

ROSE
You know, your father was a poet too,
deep down.

NICKY
What the hell you talkin' bout?

Rose goes into the bedroom, comes out with a manila envelope. Rose hands Nicky a paper from it. Nicky reads.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Dad wrote this?!

ROSE
One poem a week from prison, for four
years.

Nicky kisses his mother on the cheek, rushes into his room with the manila envelope.

INT. NICKY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, at his desk, feverishly glances at one poem after another.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Nicky, and his gang sit around a wooden table, drinking beer. They're in the middle of a heated argument.

NICKY
- yeah me! A high school senior can just
kill a made man!

SANTO
The guy has enemies- they won't suspect
you!

NICKY
But I promised my mother!

SANTO
That's not the Nicky I know talkin'!

DOMINICK
Yeah!

Nicky grabs a beer, gulps it down quickly, the liquor
falling all over his shirt.

NICKY
I'm no punk!!

The gang grin, applaud.

NICKY (CONT'D)
The bastard will *beg*!!

The gang all stand, pat Nicky on the back.

SANTO
We gotta get ya four G's.

CUT TO:

INT. JOANN'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Nicky runs eagerly up the stairs, stops at apartment
number nine, knocks. Joann opens the door, rushes into
Nicky's arms, they kiss. Nicky enters the apartment.

JOANN
I'll be ready in a minute!

Nicky sits across from CLAIRE, Joann's mother; late
forties, a stern woman. She knits. Finally, she looks up
at Nicky with searching eyes.

CLAIRE
Where do you get the money for Broadway
plays?

Nicky is startled.

NICKY
I do odd jobs.

Claire stops knitting, looks long, and hard at Nicky.

CLAIRE
Being a con's wife is very lonely. I want
better for Joann.

NICKY
I'm going to college.

CLAIRE
Sure.
(beat)
I know you found out.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Anything happens to my daughter - I'll
kill you.

Joann exits from the bathroom, kisses her mother.

NICKY
(to Claire)
Nice talkin' to ya.

Nicky, and Joann exit.

INT. JOANN'S STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, and Joann reach the bottom of the stairs before
Joann talks.

JOANN
My mother's down on you. She's trying to
fix me up with a pre med.

NICKY
Hey, free pelvic exams.

Nicky takes her in his arms, kisses her; Joann melts.

CUT TO:

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - NIGHT

Nicky, and Joann in the Mezzanine, watching WEST SIDE
STORY. Joann MUMBLES, annoying other PATRONS.

JOANN
Bastards! They got Tony!

NICKY
(whispers)
It's a friggin' play.

ACTRESS sings the finale song.

ACTRESS
(singing)
Somewhere there's a place for us; a time,
and place for us...

JOANN
(emotional)
Let the spics come to Harlem- we'll show
them!

Nicky embarrassed, lowers himself in his chair.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THEATER - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Joann, and Nicky exit the theater, holding hands.

JOANN
I think there was a message for us with
Tony dyin' at the end.

NICKY
Lighten up!

Nicky walks. Joann blocks his path.

JOANN
I know you're thinking revenge!

NICKY
You wanna marry a punk?

Joann, thinks, nods her head no.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM -NIGHT

Santo, and Nicky walk down Pleasant Avenue. Santo is
uncomfortable. Nicky senses it

They stop at Rao's restaurant. Santo motions; Nicky goes in first.

INT. RAO'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

As Nicky's enters the lights go up.

EVERYBODY
Surprise!! Happy eightieth birthday,
Nicky!!

Nicky looks bitter, hurt.

NICKY
Fuck this!

Nicky storms out. Santo chases after.

EXT. EAST HARLEM - CONTINUOUS

Santo grabs Nicky, Nicky pushes away.

Moments later, Johnny Eels grabs Nicky's shoulders.

JOHNNY EELS
I told her not to.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rose sits on the couch; she has something on her mind.

O.S. We hear the sound of a key TURNING IN THE LOCK.

Nicky enters. Rose gently pats the couch. Nicky sits next to her.

ROSE
I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking.

NICKY
Just... never do that again.

ROSE
I won't.
(beat)
Joann's mother called.
(beat)
Are you going to do something stupid?

NICKY

No.

ROSE

He wasn't worth it.

NICKY

He wrote you poems!

ROSE

He wrote his *puttana* poems too.

Nicky is shocked.

ROSE (CONT'D)

He beat me.

NICKY

I don't wanna hear this!

Nicky stands, goes to the window; Rose follows.

ROSE

He robbed from his own kind -

NICKY

-stop!

ROSE

He cut a guy's fingers off because he was late with a payment! Look at me!

Nicky doesn't move.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I said look at me!

Nicky slowly turns, faces Rose. She takes his face firmly in her hands.

ROSE (CONT'D)

You may hate me for saying this, but we're better off with him dead.

Nicky pushes Rose out of the way, storms into his room.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nicky stares at the picture of his father holding him; he fights to hold back tears. He tries reading one of father's poems, but can't concentrate.

Nicky takes pill, washes it down with whiskey.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM THE CIRCLE - DAY

TEENAGER'S sit on benches, drinking beer, smoking pot. As Nicky, and his gang enter, the kids wave at Nicky.

Nicky goes from kid to kid selling pills.

He comes to LITTLE LIL', a short, balding man of forty; he stops in his tracks.

NICKY

You doin' ludes now?

LITTLE LIL'

Gotta. I'm a nervous wreck - gotta shylock breathin' down my neck!

Nicky hands Little Lil' a pill. Little Lil' frowns at the one pill.

NICKY

One's enough. Trust me.

Little Lil' swallows the pill with a beer chaser.

LITTLE LIL'

How much I owe ya?

Nicky studies Little Lil' for a long moment.

NICKY

You work at Key Food, right?

LITTLE LIL'

Yeah.

NICKY

What's the biggest cash day of the year?

Little Lil' hesitates to answer.

LITTLE LIL'

Why do you ask?

NICKY

We could help each other.

Nicky grins slyly. Little Lil' catches on, smiles.

LITTLE LIL'
The day after Thanksgiving.

Nicky kisses Little Lil on the cheek.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM OUTSIDE PIZZERIA - TWILIGHT

Nicky, and Joann sit outside a pizzeria, eating.

JOANN
Key Food? Case it out.

NICKY
No shit.

Two teenager's, LISA, and TOM approach Nicky, and Joann.

TOM
Gimme four, Nicky.

Nicky looks around, takes out the bag of pills - Joann snatches it, gives Tom the pills. Joann grabs Tom's money, keeps it.

Nicky looks at her quizzically.

JOANN
You don't know how to save. We'll need money when we're on the lam.

NICKY
So you're comin' around?

JOANN
I wish I could talk you out of it.

NICKY
If it was your father what would you do?

Joann pauses to answer.

JOANN
I'd cut the bastards eyes out! Give me a lude! I'm nervous!

NICKY
Great, your Mom sees you on the nod.

Joann insistently holds her hand out; Nicky gives her a pill. She takes it.

NICKY (CONT'D)

My father was a poet. And a scumbag.

Nicky takes a poem out of his pocket, hands it to Joann.

JOANN

(reading)

Your father really wrote this?

Nicky nods.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Remember when we were ten you wrote *me* a poem? I'm waiting for another one.

NICKY

I got a lot on my mind.

JOANN

I'll remember that next time you wanna get laid.

CUT TO:

INT. KEY FOOD - NIGHT

Nicky, wearing a baseball cap, and sunglasses stands near the manger's office. Little Lil' casually walks up to him.

LITTLE LIL'

Mister Orville; which aisle are the deodorants in?

ORVILLE, a pale, skinny man looks at Little Lil' with distaste.

ORVILLE

You should know that! Aisle five.

Little Lil', and Nicky walk to aisle five, whisper.

LITTLE LIL'

That's the prick.

NICKY

Zinch.

Nicky looks cautiously around, places the deodorant in his pocket, walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. SAINT IGNATIUS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Father Alfred stands at the front of the class talking. Nicky is reading, not paying attention at all.

FATHER ALFRED

What was author of The Scarlett Pimpernel saying?

Three students raise their hands.

LOUD SPEAKER (O.S.)

Nicholas Palmenti; report to the principal's office!

Worried, the students watch Nicky gather his books. Father Alfred looks stern.

INT. SAINT IGNATIUS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nicky stops, thinks, then goes into the men's room.

INT. SAINT IGNATIUS MEN'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Nicky takes two pills.

INT. OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky walks to the door, hesitates, then knocks.

FATHER ANDREW (O.S.)

Come in!

Nicky enters.

INT. FATHER ANDREW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky walks in. Wally is sitting across from a stern looking, Father Andrew. There are two pills on the desk.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE FATHER ANDREW'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER.

Father Alfred is anxiously pacing up, and down the hallway. Nicky exits from the principal's office, obviously high.

Nicky tries to walking around Father Alfred; Father Alfred blocks him.

FATHER ALFRED
Selling drugs - robberies! What's next - murder?!

NICKY
(slurring his words)
Tell me about the rabbits, George; of Mice, and Men.

FATHER ALFRED
Your high now - aren't you?!

Nicky manages a feeble smile. Father Alfred grabs him firmly by the arm.

FATHER ALFRED (CONT'D)
There's consequences, Nicky!

Nicky pulls away.

NICKY
Yeah. Whatever.

Nicky exits.

-C

EXT. EAST HARLEM - DAY

Nicky, and his gang twirl hula hoops as the LITTLE KIDS they borrowed them from watch, amused. A radio plays SIXTIES MUSIC.

Rose rushes up to Nicky, waving a letter in his face.

ROSE
How could you do this to me?!

NICKY
I'm sorry, Ma.

ROSE
(bitterly)
You're just like your father.

NICKY
Leave him out of this - no one's gonna kill me!

ROSE
 (soberly)
 That's what he said on the day he was
 murdered.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Sunday mass; the church is packed. Joann and Nicky sit in the rear most pews. Joann kneels. Nicky is nervous, jumpy.

People go up to get the EUCHARIST. Joann stands, nudges Nicky.

Nicky stands, grabs her hand, pulls her out of the church.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

JOANN
 So you got caught! You know they'll take you back.

NICKY
 I'm a bad person! I'm going to hell for what I'm about to do!

JOANN
 (smiles)
 We'll burn together.

Joann chuckles. Nicky stares icily at her.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM - THANKSGIVING DAY - DAY

Nicky, the gang, and Other KIDS line up along Second Avenue.

Buses drive down, carrying the Thanksgiving day marching BANDS - everyone flings eggs at the buses.

The egg throwers laugh - the kids on the buses are shocked.

Joann walks to the corner, watches, goes to Nicky.

Nicky throws eggs. Joann pulls him out of the crowd.

JOANN

Gimme the pills! They're safer with me.

Nicky grins slyly at her, hands her a bag; Joann puts them in her purse.

JOANN (CONT'D)

I told my Mom you weren't getting revenge. Swore on my life.

NICKY

I'm all talk.

JOANN

I can live with that.

NICKY

Can I?

Joann, and Nicky lock gazes.

JOANN

I'm scared.

Nicky kisses her on the forehead.

NICKY

C'mon let's have fun!

Nicky gives Joan two eggs. Joann throws her eggs, falls way short of the bus.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Get closer!

Joann gets into the street, flings an egg - hits the bus. Joann grins triumphantly. All the other kids CHEER Joann on.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN NEW YORK - LATE NIGHT

Santo, and Nicky dressed in long coats, caps, sunglasses, pace in front of Key Food.

Rico, also in disguise, stands as look out across the street.

Nicky checks his watch, nods to Santo.

Orville comes out of Key Food carrying a stuffed shopping bag, locks up.

Orville walks past Santo and Nicky; they let him get a few feet, ahead then follow.

Rico runs from across the street.

Suddenly, Nicky, and Santo grab Orville's arms.

NICKY

Stay fucken calm, an' we won't kill ya!

Dominick, disguised, pulls up with Santo's car. Santo, and Nicky push Orville into the back seat with them. Rico jumps in the front.

The car speeds away.

INT. SANTO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Santo blindfolds Orville. Nicky ties his hands behind his back.

Nicky goes through the shopping bag, taking out milk, bread, eggs, cake.

The gang look warily at each other.

Nicky pulls out the deposit bag, stuffed with cash. The gang high five.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERTED STREET UNDER THE FDR EL - SAME NIGHT

Santo's car stops in a deserted industrial neighborhood. They push Orville out, speed away.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

The gang, and Little Lil' sit at a table, drinking. Nicky counts money into five piles.

Everyone, anxious, watches the count.

NICKY

Twenty eight hundred -- each!

The gang CHEER. Nicky hands them their money.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Shit! I'm still short six hundred.

Santo hands Nicky two hundred dollar bills, then stares hard at Rico, and Dominick.

After a moment they both do the same. Nicky reaches out for them to put all their hands together.

NICKY (CONT'D)

I'm never gonna forget you guys doin' this for me.

RICO

-it's like all of us gettin' revenge!

DOMINICK

Shit! I had nightmares for weeks!

They all laugh, a tense, forced laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT- NIGHT

Nicky sits, drinking, watching Pete cautiously as Pete searches his dresser.

Finally, Pete pulls out a gun, hands it to Nicky.

Nicky examines the gun with almost childlike wonder.

PETE

Three fifty seven - best man stopper there is.

NICKY

How much I owe?

PETE

Nothing. I know why you gotta do this.

Nicky finishes his drink. Pete refills it, sits, stares at Nicky.

PETE (CONT'D)

You don't think it'll fuck you up, but it will.

Nicky silently drinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK IN QUEENS NEW YORK - LATE NIGHT

Nicky, and Santo walk through a thick underbrush. They come to clearing.

Santo nods towards a man sitting on a bench feeding pigeons.

Santo puts his gun under his shirt; they walk up slowly, vigilantly.

The man hears them, turns. It's Sergio.

SERGIO

You shou' try feedin' pigeons. Relaxes you, before killin' a guy.

Nicky hands Sergio an envelope with money. Sergio looks inside, smiles slyly

NICKY

Who is it?!

SERGIO

His name's Vincent Periera. Owns a strip joint called Fantasy East in the Bronx. I walk in kiss'im on the cheek - that'll be your man.

NICKY

You know where he lives?

SERGIO

Not for 4Gs.

Sergio goes back to feeding pigeons.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN THE BRONX NEW YORK - NIGHT

Nicky and the gang walk cautiously down the street.

Nicky stops.

NICKY

This is my beef! You guys don't have to do this.

SANTO

I'm in.

RICO
I kill someone, people know they can't
fuck with me.

Dominick is obviously scared. Rico slaps him on the back of the head.

RICO (CONT'D)
You're fuckin' coming.

They walk up to FANTASY EAST, enter.

INT. FANTASY EAST - CONYINUOUS

Acting casual they sit at a table near the stage.
Everybody else looks like they came out of mob central.

Nicky looks around - no Sergio.

CUT TO:

INT. FANTASY EAST - A LITTLE LATER.

Dominick and Rico are engrossed by the STRIPPERS.

Santo's attention wanders - Nicky nudges him.

Sergio enters the bar, looks around, spots Nicky, nods.

Sergio goes to the bar, stands near four loud MEN. He puts his arms around a big, mean looking man, kisses him on the cheek, winks to Nicky.

This is VINCENT PERIERA; a man who looks like he eats steel for breakfast.

Nicky goes to a jukebox, which is right next to Periera.

Periera speaks loudly; it's impossible for Nicky not to hear.

PERIERA
My wife's leavin' this weekend, an' I got
an army of hooker's lined up!

Periera laughs. Nicky saunters over to the bar, standing right next to Periera.

Nicky waves to the BARTENDER.

NICKY
Gimme a Seven, an' Seven, an' give all
these guys a drink.

Sergio moves away from Nicky. The bartender gives
everyone their drinks.

BARTENDER
(to Periera)
On the kid here.

Periera turns towards Nicky, sizes him up, grins.

PERIERA
What's the occasion?

NICKY
I won big at the track.

PERIERA
Hey Guys! A toast to -

NICKY
Georgie Marmo!

ALL
To Georgie!!

Nicky, and all the guys click glasses, then drink.

Santo feels for the gun under his shirt, motions for
Rico to do the same.

Periera puts the drink down, then really gives Nicky the
once over; he feels the gun under Nicky's shirt.

PERIERA
Wacking somebody?

NICKY
Later.

PERIERA
Ya got the balls for it?

Nicky smiles slyly.

Periera pulls up Nicky's shirt, takes the gun out. Nicky
tenses, looks at Santo.

Santo pulls his gun, holds it under the table.

A stripper dances in front of Santo. He pushes her out of
the way.

PERIERA (CONT'D)

You ain't fuckin' around.

Nicky grabs the gun out of Periera's hand, places it back under his shirt.

PERIERA (CONT'D)

I like a thirty eight. To the head.

NICKY

Good to know. Enjoy the drink.

Nicky walks back to the gang.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER

Nicky, and the gang sit intensely in the car closely watching everyone coming out of the Fantasy East.

SANTO

(to Nicky)

That wasn't smart talkin' to the guy.

NICKY

I wanted to see his eyes.

Nicky nods with his head towards Fantasy East. The gang's POV - Periera, and the three men he was drinking with come out of the club. Periera talks to them, goes to the parking lot.

Nicky drives his car closer to Periera's Cadillac. Periera gets in, pulls out.

EXT. STREET IN THE BRONX - CONTINUOUS

Nicky's Toronado follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Periera drives slowly on the Cross Bronx Expressway. The Toronado follows.

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - CONTINUOUS

Nicky's sees a car tailing him, with its high beams on. He pokes Santo.

Santo looks, tenses, places his gun on his lap.

EXT. STREETS IN THROGS NECK BRONX - NIGHT

Periera's car speeds towards the Randall Avenue exit.

Nicky slows. Periera's turns left. Nicky accelerates.

The car following Nicky also exits, but goes straight.

Periera's car pulls into a big, well-maintained house.

The Toronado slows, double parks.

INT. NICKY'S TORNADO - CONTINUOUS

Nicky is trembling, scared. He takes out his gun.

The car with the high beams accelerates towards Nicky's car.

EXT. STREET IN BRONX - CONTINUOUS

Nicky speeds away - the car gives chase.

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - CONTINUOUS

SANTO

It's trap!

Rico pulls his gun. Dominick pees his pants. Rico sees it, smacks him across the head.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRUCKNER EXPRESSWAY - CONTINUOUS

High speed chase; Nicky tries to loose them, but can't.

Finally, the car chasing pulls alongside.

The three MEN inside roll the windows down, look at the gang, and LAUGH HYSTERICALLY.

The car speeds away.

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - CONTINUOUS

The gang share a confused look.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

The gang sit on bleacher seats.

RICO

Shit! That was weird last night.

They all nod agreement.

A Cadillac screeches, stops. Johnny Eels gets out, storms over.

JOHNNY EELS

(to Nicky)

You stupid assholes! Periera was in on it with Sergio! He knows who you are!

SANTO

That prick!

JOHNNY EELS

Nicky! There's a contract on you!

NICKY

I gotta move first.

Johnny Eels grabs Nicky's head, looks him squarely in the eyes.

JOHNNY EELS

This is not a fucking game - I can't protect you!

NICKY

He's mine!

JOHNNY EELS

Periera's a Capo in the Gambino family. Let one of my guys do it.

Silence. Everyone stares at Nicky.

NICKY

It has to be me.

JOHNNY EELS

Periera has two brothers, an' two sons in the Gambino family. They won't rest till they kill you. You'll have to go on the lam for a long time.

Nicky's eyes open wide at this new revelation. Johnny Eels kisses Nicky passionately on the head, turns, walks away. The gang are speechless.

CUT TO:

INT. JOJO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nicky sits, drinks. JOJO, late fifties, a forger, takes a picture of Nicky - the flashbulb momentarily blinding Nicky.

CUT TO:

INT. JOJO'S APARTMENT - A LITTLE LATER.

JoJo comes out of the dark room, hands Nicky documents. Nicky studies the driver's license; the birth certificate, and the social security card.

NICKY

So I'm Jerry Colagio.

Nicky chuckles, hands JoJo the money.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAST HARLEM - DAY

Nicky, and Joann are walk, holding hands. Santo, and Rico follow right behind. Dominick few steps further. The tension between them fills the air.

They are tense.

Dominick waves at JOSEPHINE across the street - when suddenly something catches his eye.

DOMINICK'S POV - the car that chased them last night zooms towards them

DOMINICK

NICKY!!!

Nicky turns, sees the car, pushes Joann to the ground. T

The car stops, the back window rolls down, a MAN in the backseat shoots, misses.

The gang hide behind a car as bullets hit all around them.

Rico stands, and shoots back, followed by Santo. Nicky has both his arms around Joann.

SANTO

Nicky! Fucken shoot!!

Nicky fumbles, begins to shoot. It's obvious he's never shot a gun.

The car speeds away. Rico and Santo shoot Nicky a hard gaze. Nicky bends down to Joann.

NICKY

You okay?

JOANN

I think I got my period.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - SAME DAY A LITTLE LATER

Nicky parks in front of Joann's building. They are tense.

JOANN

I know where we can go - Saint Petersburg, Florida. The retirement capital of the world. The last place they'll look.

Nicky leans over, kisses Joann on the mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nicky packs his suitcase. O.S. The LOCK TURNS in the door - Rose enters.

ROSE

It's all over the neighborhood - someone tried to kill you!

Nicky continues to pack.

ROSE (CONT'D)

It was Periera - wasn't it?!

Nicky stops packing, but still can't bare to face his mother. Rose goes in front of him, grabs both his hands.

ROSE (CONT'D)

He knows you're planning to kill him!

NICKY

All these years you lied to me! -

ROSE

- of course I lied! Because I was afraid of this!

Nicky stops packing, takes his mother in his arms.

ROSE (CONT'D)

Tell me; be honest; you're not planning to kill Periera?

NICKY

(after a beat)

Ma, I'm not killin' anybody. Johnny Eels says I should leave till this blows over.

ROSE

Where will you go?

NICKY

I can't tell you.

ROSE

Will you write, or call?

NICKY

After awhile.

Rose begins to cry. Nicky kisses her on the forehead.

ROSE

I have something for you.

Rose goes into her bedroom, comes out moments later with an envelope, hands it to Nicky.

ROSE (CONT'D)

There's ten thousand dollars hush money from the Gambino family. I have no use for it.

Nicky takes it, kisses his mother on the cheek, grabs the suitcase, exits. Rose tries not to cry.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK - DAY

Santo, and Nicky stand in a barren landscape surrounded by trees, holding guns. Nicky drinks a pint bottle of Vodka.

Santo grabs the bottle out of Nicky's hands.

Santo takes Nicky's gun.

SANTO

Now a three fifty seven has a lotta pull.
It's obvious by the way you shot
yesterday; that you've never shot one.

Santo sets a beer can on a stump, steps back, aims, shoots, sending it flying.

SANTO (CONT'D)

You try.

Nicky aims, shoots, misses.

NICKY

Shit!

SANTO

You can bet Periera will have a gun on
him - you gotta nail'em first shot.

Nicky concentrates.

SANTO (CONT'D)

Aim with the front site! Squeeze the
trigger.

Nicky shoots three shots quickly; one kicks up dust. Nicky sighs, picks up the pint bottle drinks- Santo grabs it out of his hand. Nicky aims again.

SANTO (CONT'D)

You're yankin' the trigger - squeeze it!

Nicky is about to shoot when a bird lands on the beer can.

SANTO (CONT'D)
C'mon, shoot! There may be hunters
around!

NICKY
I got no beef with the bird.

Nicky swishes the bird away, aims, shoots - hits. He hits
several more.

SANTO
My man!!

Nicky grabs the liquor bottle out of Santo's hand, takes
a gulp.

SANTO (CONT'D)
What the hell's wrong now?

NICKY
What if there really is a hell?

Santo stare warily at Nicky, then grabs the bottle out of
Nicky's hand, drinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTO'S CAR DOWN THE STREET FROM PERIREA'S HOUSE -
DAY

Santo's car is a half block from Periera's house.

INT. SANTO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Santo sees something, and pokes a nodding Nicky on the
shoulder.

NICKY AND SANTO'S POV - A WOMAN and THREE KIDS leave the
house with suitcases. They get in a car. Perireia waves
goodbye as the car pulls away.

INT. SANTO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Santo grins slyly. Nicky looks pensively at Periera.

CUT TO:

INT. JOANN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire, Joann's two brother's; LUIGI, ANGELO, and her sister, CARMELLA sternly watching Joann as they eat.

ANGELO

You could have been killed today!

LUIGI

The guy's a loser!

CARMELLA

You need to grow up!

CLAIRE

If your father were here he'd break Nicky's legs!

JOANN

You're right - I'll end it.

Everyone sighs happily.

CUT TO:

INT. JOANN'S ROOM - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Joann packs suitcase, quietly and quickly.

EXT. OUTSIDE JOANN'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Nicky paces back, and forth.

NICKY'S POV - Joann motions to him from a window.

Nicky waves back - Joan throws down her suitcase.

Joann comes down the fire escape. She's crying.

JOANN

Let's go before I change my mind!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

On the night stand is the .357 revolver; two glasses, and a bottle of Vodka.

Nicky, and Joann lie in bed fully clothed. Joann picks up the gun, stares at it with childlike wonder.

O.S. KNOCK - Nicky grabs the gun out of Joann's hand, goes to the door.

NICKY

Who is it?!

RICO (O.S.)

Us!

Nicky opens the door - Santo, Rico, and Dominick rush in.

SANTO

(to Nicky)

Ready?

Nicky nods, puts gun in waistband, puts his jacket on, takes Joann in his arms

Nicky kisses Joann on the lips, exits with Santo.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN THE BRONX - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Santo stops a block from Peirra's house.

INT. SANTO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nicky is nervous, drinks from a pint bottle - Santo grabs it, takes Nicky's revolver, checks it, hands it back.

As Nicky exits, Santo hands him gloves, and a seven bar. Nicky puts the gloves on.

SANTO

Think. He may want you to know he was gonna be alone.

NICKY

Yeah.

Santo grabs Nicky, kisses him on the head.

EXT. STREET DOWN FROM PERIERA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky enters the backyard next to Periera's house, looks at Periera's house.

NICKY'S POV - a single light on in Periera's house.

Nicky runs across Periera's yard, stops at a window. Nicky tries raising it; it won't budge.

Nicky pries it with the seven bar.

He waits, listens. Silence.

He pulls his gun, climbs through the window.

INT. PERIERA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

O.S. Nicky hears PERIERA'S SINGING. Nicky feels his way along the wall. He reaches a bureau with pictures on it.

CLOSE UP PICTURES, Periera with his wife, with his grandchildren.

Nicky studies the pictures. He is obviously somewhat touched emotionally by the pictures.

Nicky rushes into the lighted room, pointing his gun.

Periera steps out from the shadows, puts a gun to Nicky's head.

PERIERA

Put the gun on the table.

Nicky places the gun on the kitchen table.

PERIERA (CONT'D)

Turn around!

Nicky turns to face Periera, glaring at him.

PERIERA (CONT'D)

Now get on the floor, and beg like your old man did!

Nicky hesitates. Periera COCKS the gun. Nicky drops to the floor. Periera extends his foot out.

PERIERA (CONT'D)

Kiss it.

Nicky goes to kiss his foot - then pulls out a switchblade, while pushing Periera's gun hand away.

Nicky stabs Periera's hand; Periera drops the gun.

They wrestle to the floor - Nicky grabs Periera's gun.

Nicky points the gun at Periera.

NICKY

Now who's begging, motherfucker!!

PERIERA

You can't kill me - I'm a made man!

NICKY

Beg like you made my father beg!

Periera makes a pleading gesture; for the first time, he's scared. Nicky, trembling with emotion, has lost all his gusto.

Periera seeing that Nicky's heart isn't into it - seizes the moment, and goes at Nicky. With raw, brutal strength, Periera tries to strangle Nicky even with blood running down his hand.

Nicky kicks Periera in the groin - Periera screams in pain, then makes a sudden lunge at Nicky, but before he can grab Nicky - Nicky shoots him in the head; the blood going all over Nicky's face, and shirt.

Nicky looks with shock at Periera's dead body. Just to make sure he's dead, Nicky kicks Periera, picks up his switchblade, places it back in his pocket, starts to run out the front door, stops, looks at Periera's body just one more time as if he doesn't believe he did it.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Dominick, and Rico are pacing nervously. Joann tries to concentrate on the TV, but can't.

O.S. HARD KNOCK on the door. Rico points his gun at the door, motions for Dominick to open it. Dominick opens the door - Santo burst in carrying a bottle of champagne, and paper cups.

SANTO

He fucken did it!

Nicky lingers in behind Santo, blood all over his face, and clothes. Rico, and Dominick pat Nicky on the back. Joann rushes into Nicky's arms.

JOANN

Burn that shirt.

Santo pops the champagne. Rico, and Dominick CHEER, and YELL. Santo pours the champagne.

SANTO

To Nicky for honorin' his father!

Everyone toast except Nicky, who goes into the bathroom, closes the door. Sound of VOMITING.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL ROOM - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky packs his car. Santo, and Joann stand close by.

NICKY

(to Santo)

I don't want Rico, and Dominick knowin' where we're goin'.

SANTO

No problem.

Santo, and Nicky hug.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT RAYMOND'S CEMETERY BRONX - NIGHT

Nicky, and Joann walk silently through the cemetery.

Nicky walks up to his father's grave. He lights the bloodstained shirt and watches it burn.

Joann is spooked.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - LATE NIGHT

Nicky and Joan drive in tense silence.

JOANN

Was it worth it?

Nicky pulls the car to a stop.

NICKY
I keep seein' the bastards face just
before I shot'im.

JOANN
Can you live with it?

NICKY
It had to be done.

Joann looks thoughtfully at Nicky, then places her head
on his shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - CONTINUOUS

Nicky stops at an all night diner. Joann lifts up his
shirt, takes the gun out, puts it under the seat. Nicky
grins.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky and Joann finish their meal.. Nicky reaches for
Joann's hand.

NICKY
If we got married you couldn't testify
against me.

JOANN
My family would kill me!

NICKY
You'll see. I'll go to college.

JOANN
If we don't die.

NICKY
I really want to.

JOANN
Really?

NICKY
 (in a soft, soothing voice)
 "Love is, above all, the gift of
 oneself."

Joan smiles.

NICKY (CONT'D)
 Jean Anouilh.

JOANN
 Maybe some day you'll write me an
 original?!

NICKY
 When things settle down.

JOANN
 I still want a big wedding!

Nicky stands, goes to her, kisses her on the head.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE DINER - A LITTLE LATER.

Joann, and Nicky walk out of the diner holding hands.
 Joann stops, looks at the newspaper box. Nicky sees what
 she sees:

The New York Post headline reads: MOB CAPO MURDERED IN
 HOME.

Nicky buys a paper; Joan snatches it out of his hands,
 reads.

JOANN
 The cops think it's a mob hit.

NICKY
 Wonderful!

As Joann continues to read; her face takes on a hint of
 sadness.

JOANN
 His six year old granddaughter is being
 treated for shock. She found him. Poor
 kid.

Joann thrust the paper into Nicky's chest.

NICKY
Poor kid - what about me?!

JOANN
Don't yell at me!

NICKY
You're right. I'm sorry.

Joann hugs Nicky.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA - DAY

Nicky and Joann runs out of the church holding hands,
look at their wedding rings, and kiss.

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL SIDE AREA OF MOTEL - DAY

Nicky sits in a lounge chair, drinking beer reading "The
Carpetbaggers."

Joann sees him, frowns. Nicky sees Joann, and waves for
her to come down. She does.

JOANN
You drink too much, JERRY!

Nicky chuckles.

JOANN (CONT'D)
It's you name. Get used to it.

Nicky offers Joann a beer. Joann shakes her head no.

NICKY
It's our honeymoon!

JOANN
I miss my family.

NICKY
Me too.

JOANN
You miss your innocence.

Nicky glares at her.

JOANN (CONT'D)
I didn't mean it like that -

NICKY
(acidly)
Sure. I know exactly what you meant.

Joann waits a moment, takes Nicky's hand.

JOANN
Let's have some fun.

CUT TO:

EXT. RODEO - DAY

The stands are packed with rednecks. Nicky and Joann walk in, wearing matching cowboy hats and vests.

Joann kisses Nicky; her eyes light up when she feels the gun under his vest. She pokes him. Nicky LAUGHS.

A seasoned BULL RIDER comes out the chute.

NICKY
Yo! Cowboy! Ride'em!!

People notice his accent and stare.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTRY LOUGE - NIGHT

Nicky, and Joann dance awkwardly together as they watch all the other COUNTRY FOLKS dance to country music. An elderly WOMAN of fifty switches from her partner, goes to Joann, and Nicky.

WOMAN
Honey, you dance with my husband, and
I'll show your husband how to dance
country style.

Nicky, and the woman start to dance while Joann goes to her husband.

Gradually, Nicky, and Joann are getting the hang of it. The woman puts her hands on Nicky's waist - then steps back, shocked.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
You a have a GUN on you!!

Uncomfortable silence as everyone looks at Nicky. Joann rushes up to Nicky, takes his hand, and practically forces him out of the lounge under the scrupulous eyes of everyone.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - NIGHT

Joann drives, Nicky sleeps. The car reaches a secluded spot near a lake.

Joann pokes Nicky awake.

JOANN

Get rid of that damn gun!

NICKY

You crazy? This gun may be the only difference in us livin', or dyin'.

Joann searches Nicky's eyes. After a moment; she begins to cry. Nicky takes her in his arms.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT PETERSBURG, FLORIDA - DAY

Nicky's Toronado cruises along Gulf Boulevard, past elderly pedestrians in flamboyant beach clothes.

INT. NICKY'S TORONADO - CONTINUOUS

Nicky pulls the car to a stop, nudges Joann. Their POV - a sign reads: IRONWORKERS NEEDED.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX ON THE BEACH - DAY

Nicky leaves the manager's office with a key which he hands to Joann. They walk to apartment number six. Joann opens the door. They walk in.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The apartment is a dump. Joan is dismayed.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky and Joann lie in bed, naked, kissing passionately. Joann startled, sees something outside the bedroom window. She pokes Nicky to look.

Nicky and Joann POV - a PERSON'S SHADOW peering into their bedroom.

Nicky grabs his gun off the night stand, pushes Joann to the floor as the PERSON moves from the window towards the living room. Nicky quietly goes to the living room.

INT. NICKY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nicky aims the gun at the door. The door knob turns, then stops, then turns more determinedly. O.S. SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY.

Nicky opens the door, scans.

There's no one there. Nicky closes the door, walks back to the bedroom.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joann trembles uncontrollably. Nicky takes her in his arms.

CUT TO:

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

Nicky, and Joann sit, wearing dye caps. The BEAUTICIANS check their clock, nod yes to each other, remove the dye caps.

Joann is a red head; Nicky a blond.

CUT TO:

EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY

Joann, Nicky, and a used car SALESMAN walk up to a Ford Falcon which has seen better days. The salesman hands Nicky the keys, then screws on Florida plates.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

MARTHA, the complex manager, a crusty woman in her sixties sits behind the counter. She does a double take when she sees Nicky's blond hair.

NICKY

I broke an engagement when I met Joann,
and I think the girl's family is kinda
lookin' for me, so if anybody ask
questions, play dumb, OK?

MARTHA

No problem.

Nicky smiles - he's charming her.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You seem like nice kids, but any trouble,
I call the cops.

Nicky's forces a wry smile.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Joann sleeps; Nicky tosses, wakes up, groggy.

He looks at a prescription bottle, takes several pills.

Nicky sits up, picks up his gun, stares searchingly at it.

Joann wakes, watches him.

JOANN

Can't sleep?

Nicky nods his head no.

NICKY

How far will I have to go?

CUT TO:

EXT. RIGHT OUTSIDE NICKY'S APARTMENT - DAY 9 MONTHS LATER

Nicky, tanned, waters his small garden. He looks content, happy.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Nicky lazily ties up steel rods. It's obvious he's hates manual labor. BOB, the foreman watches, then approaches.

BOB
Tighter! I'm not going to tell you again!

Bob walks away. Nicky MUTTERS curse words.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

Nicky, wearing hard hat, drinks Tequila shooters and beer. GIL, a big, muscular, approaches Nicky, looks cautiously around.

GIL
The foreman has it out for ya.

NICKY
Fuck'im.

GIL
You like to party.

Nicky gives Gil his full attention. Gil puts a small envelope in Nicky's shirt pocket.

GIL (CONT'D)
Forty an ounce.

Nicky smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nicky reads a trashy novel, mumbles to himself.

He pauses, snorts two lines of coke, drinks vodka, reads.

His gun is on the table. Joann, wearing a waitress uniform, enters with a typewriter.

JOANN
(cheerful)
I got you something.

Joann puts the typewriter down, kisses Nicky, then sees the cocaine.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Where'd you get coke down here?!

Nicky smiles.

JOANN (CONT'D)

It's an electric typewriter. The best!

Nicky looks at it.

NICKY

You have a fresh head - you know that?

JOANN

That's not all!

Joann opens her purse, and takes out a brochure.

JOANN (CONT'D)

College, Nicky! They have all kinds of writing courses!

NICKY

We're not outta the woods yet.

JOANN

It's been nine months - nobody's looking for us.

Abruptly, Nicky stands, and takes Joann firmly in his hands.

NICKY

These guys don't forget.

Joann lays on Nicky's chest.

JOANN

God, I miss my family. When can I call them?

NICKY

Maybe you should go home.

JOANN

I love you!

(beat)

I need some coke!

Nicky prepares lines for her; she snorts.

JOANN (CONT'D)

At least I'll die happy-

Nicky and Joann chuckle, a sad, tight chuckle.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Nicky sits at the surf's edge reading the college brochure.

Two JOGGERS run towards him; he feels the gun under his shirt.

The joggers wave; Nicky waves back.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Professor MUSSELMEN, writes on the blackboard.

Students take notes -- except for Nicky. He's restless.

ROSALIE, a dark haired beauty, catches his eye and smiles. .

Nicky holds up his left hand, showing his wedding ring.

Rosalie sees it, smiles.

MUSSELMEN

Next assignment: bring in three pages.

Class is over.

Musselmen approaches Nicky.

Rosalie waits by the window.

MUSSELMEN (CONT'D)

You don't seem to be ... doing much in this class.

NICKY

I'm bad that way.

Musselmen studies Nicky closely.

MUSSELMEN

Were you in Vietnam?

NICKY
I've done stuff, yeah.

MUSSELMEN
What do you read?

Nicky pulls a paperback of the Carpetbagger's out of his back pocket.

NICKY
Spillane, Robbins.
(beat)
Dickens.
(continues in a different dialect)
You'll find us rough, sir, but you'll find us ready.

MUSSELMEN
I have something you might like.

Musselemen walks to a book shelf.

Rosalie throws Nicky a wide smile.

Nicky just looks at her queerly. Musselmen hands Nicky a book.

MUSSELMEN (CONT'D)
Hemmingway's "In Our Time" -

ROSALIE
- it's great!

Nicky takes the book, exits, followed by Rosalie.

INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rosalie goes up to Nicky.

ROSALIE
Rosalie Sills.

NICKY
Jerry Colagio.

They shake hands.

ROSALIE
Sounds like you're from New York.

NICKY
Philly.

ROSALIE

Why take a writing class and not write?

NICKY

I'm blocked.

ROSALIE

If you need help getting unblocked - ask me.

NICKY

I don't think my wife would like that.

ROSALIE

Well, then; you'd better get home to her.

Nicky walks away. Rosalie, stares at Nicky as he walks away, takes out a note pad, begins to write.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nicky admires himself in a mirror, goes to the closet, grabs his jogging outfit, accidentally dislodges Joann's jacket.

He picks up the jacket, and notices a stack of letters held together by a rubber band. They're from Joann's mother.

Nicky, disgusted, hangs the jacket up, keeps the letters.

EXT. RIGHT OUTSIDE NICKY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, nervous, waters his flower. Martha enters.

MARTHA

Two detectives came to my office asking about a guy named Nicholas Palmenti.

Nicky, concerned, listens.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You fit his description.

NICKY

Did they show badges?

MARTHA

Come to think of it - they didn't.

NICKY

Oldest trick in the books. It's the girl
I jilted's brothers.

Nicky rushes into his apartment. Martha watches,
suspicious.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nicky hastily packs a suitcase.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S KITCHEN - HOURS LATER

Nicky sits at the table, drinking vodka, drumming his
fingers.

Joann enters, wearing a waitress uniform.

JOANN

Damn catfish - I smell of it!

Nicky stands, thrust the letters into Joann's chest.

JOANN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Nicky. I had to let Mom know
we're okay.

NICKY

Well we're not okay! Martha told me two
guys posin' as detectives were askin'
for Nicholas Palmenti - we've been found
out because of these fuckin' letters!!

JOANN

Oh, God! I'm sorry!

Joann hugs Nicky for dear life. Nicky doesn't respond.

NICKY

Start packing.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky and Joann lie in bed, fully clothed, Nicky's gun on his lap.

They listen intently.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S CAR - DAY

Nicky, and Joann drive. The atmosphere is tense; they're not speaking to each other.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAMPA AIRPORT PARKING LOT - DAY

Nicky opens the trunk, takes out Joann's suitcase.

JOANN

Where's yours?

NICKY

You're going back to New York.

Nicky walks towards the terminal; Joann blocks him.

JOANN

You're going to kill those guys, aren't you?

NICKY

My dad said, "run once, you run the rest of your life."

JOANN

Good advice. Worked for him.

Nicky glares at Joann, then speaks:

NICKY

The truth is, I don't love you anymore. I met someone else.

JOANN

Bullshit! The real deal is; you've had a taste of blood, and you want more.

Nicky continues to walk towards the terminal.

CUT TO:

INT. TAMPA AIRPORT TERMINAL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nicky carries Joann's suitcase to the baggage terminal avoiding eye contact with Joann. Joann takes Nicky's face in her hands.

JOANN

I love you. I'm willing to die with you.
I know there's no other woman; I can
tell.

Nicky struggles not to give into the emotion of the moment, and gently preys Joann's hands away from his face.

NICKY

You're a liability; go home to your
family you miss them so much.

JOANN

Nicky! Please don't -

Joann tries to hold Nicky for dear life, but Nicky takes her hands off him, and walks away.

Joann watches him walk away, and cries.

CUT TO:

INT. TAMPA AIRPORT TERMINAL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Nicky leans against the glass watching Joann's plane take off.

Nicky's POV - the plane gets smaller and smaller.

Nicky sighs, fights to control his emotions.

CUT TO:

EXT. BY LAKE NEAR COLLEGE - SAME DAY A LITTLE LATER

Nicky sits on a bench overlooking a lake. His mind races.

Rosalie approaches with two GIRLFRIENDS. They stop, look at Nicky.

ROSALIE

He's so damn cute, but he's married.

GIRL#1

Marriage is patriarchal and illegitimate.

Rosalie grins mischievously, walks to Nicky.

ROSALIE

You seem like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders.

NICKY

My wife left me.

ROSALIE

I'm sorry. If you need somebody to talk to....

Nicky finally looks at Rosalie.

NICKY

Just talk?

ROSALIE

Yes. I'll take notes.

NICKY

What the hell you talkin' about?

ROSALIE

I'm a writer, and to be a really good writer; I go everywhere with a note pad taking notes on people I think are interesting. My gut tells me - you're a character.

Rosalie takes a note book out of her purse, writes her phone number, hands it to Nicky.

Rosalie walks away. Nicky warily watches.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICKY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Nicky gets out of his car, gun drawn, scans, goes to his apartment.

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky burst into his apartment, gun out, checks each room.

INT. NICKY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nicky checks each closet, relaxes, looks sadly at a picture of him and Joann together, goes to the kitchen.

INT. NICKY'S KITCHEN -CONTINUOUS

Nicky picks up vodka bottle, decides against it.

Nicky places the gun down, puts paper in the typewriter, sits down.

He stares at blank sheet of paper. Frustrated, he stands, takes his gun, leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE NICKY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX -CONTINUOUS

Nicky, at a pay phone, dials.

NICKY

Hi, Rosalie...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN SAINT PETERSBURG - DAY

Nicky's car pulls to a stop outside a beautiful, well landscaped house. A police car is parked in the driveway.

Nicky's POV: the car reads: CHIEF OF POLICE MADIERA BEACH.

INT. NICKY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nicky takes his gun out, hides it under his seat, exits.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROSALIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rosalie, on the porch, greets Nicky.

ROSALIE

It's my dad's.

NICKY

(lost for words)

Great.

Nicky, and Rosalie enter her house. BILL, well built, forty, and his wife ANGELINA, attractive, early forties, stand up to meet Nicky.

ROSALIE
This is my father, Bill, and my mother,
Angelina.

Nicky shakes both their hands.

BILL
Rosalie tells me your from Philly. My
brother's from Philly. What neighborhood?

NICKY
My father was a traveling salesman. We
moved around a lot.

Bill scrutinizes Nicky. He's suspicious.

ANGELINA
He's Italian - that's all that counts!

BILL
(laughs)
If my wife likes you, I like you.

ROSALIE
Ready?

NICKY
Nice meetin' you. I'll have her home
early.

Rosalie, and Nicky exit. Bill, and Angelina follow.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROSALIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BILL
Hey, Jerry!!

Nicky doesn't respond.

BILL (CONT'D)
Hey, Jerry!

Nicky realizes Bill is talking to him.

NICKY
Yes, sir!

BILL
You play basketball?

NICKY
I excel!

BILL
Good. You're on my team!

Nicky shakes his head 'yes'. He and Rosalie drive away.

ANGELINA
He seems like a nice boy.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Rosalie and Nicky are sit in a packed movie AUDIENCE.

ON SCREEN: Men are in a warehouse shooting at each other from behind crates. A man hears the SOUND OF AN EMPTY GUN CHAMBER, runs towards the sound, aims his gun at the man's head.

Nicky closes his eyes tightly; he flinches at GUNSHOT.

Rosalie stares at Nicky.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER LADIES ROOM - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Rosalie sits in a bathroom stall, writing notes.

ROSALIE
He's sensitive to violence.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTARAUNT - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky picks at his food, obviously sad. Rosalie observes, note pad out.

Nicky pours himself wine, gulps it.

ROSALIE
You really miss your wife?

NICKY

Nine years. The only woman I've ever been with.

Rosalie writes in the note pad.

ROSALIE

(determinedly)

No bullshit! Why'd she leave?

Nicky drinks more wine.

NICKY

She missed her family.

Rosalie writes in the note pad.

ROSALIE

So she loved them more than she loved you?

NICKY

(trying to stay in control)

Don't put words in my mouth!

ROSALIE

Sorry.

(softly, confiding)

But why did you leave your families and come to this one horse town?

Rosalie picks up her note pad, ready to write.

NICKY

You're a cop's daughter.

Rosalie reaches out for Nicky's hand. Nicky pulls away.

ROSALIE

I'm a cop's daughter, but I love secrets. I won't tell.

NICKY

But it goes in the note pad.

Rosalie places her note pad in her purse, smiles.

Two MEN walk in, check out Nicky and Rosalie.

Nicky instinctively feels for the gun under his baggy shirt. Rosalie notices, sees the outline of the pistol through his shirt.

ROSALIE
 (whispers intensely)
 You're packing heat. This is so
 exciting!

Rosalie reaches into her pocketbook, takes her note book
 out - Nicky grabs it.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
 Someone's after you?

Nicky avoids eye contact.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
That's why you're so jumpy in class.

NICKY
 It's writer's block!

Rosalie holds out her hand for Nicky to return her note
 book. Reluctantly he does.

ROSALIE
 This is fascinating!

NICKY
 You're odd broad - so I'm gonna put it
 right on the table for ya - bein' with me
 could get dangerous.

ROSALIE
 My house at six tomorrow; I'll unblock
 you.

NICKY
 I'm not worried about writing right now.

ROSALIE
 Great! Best time, while the emotions are
 still raw!

Nicky sighs, exasperated.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S CAR - DAY

Nicky pulls up to the front of Rosalie's house, looks
 around, puts the gun under his seat.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSALIE'S ROOM - DAY

Rosalie and Nicky sit her desk.

ROSALIE
You have to have three pages due
Thursday. Who was the most important
person in your childhood?

Nicky hesitates.

NICKY
My father.

ROSALIE
What was the most intriguing thing about
him?

NICKY
He was thug.
(beat)
And a poet.

ROSALIE
(laughs)
Like mine.

NICKY
This really could work.

ROSALIE
Danger makes your emotions raw.

NICKY
You don't get it! MY LIFE REALLY IS IN
DANGER!!

ROSALIE
You made your wife leave you so she'd be
safe!

Rosalie picks up her note pad, and writes.

NICKY
We gotta end this. You're not my wife.
You can be made to testify against me.

ROSALIE
I didn't tell about the gun.

NICKY
Why are you interested in me? A story?

ROSALIE
I bet you're wild in bed.

Nicky smiles.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
You have an assignment. Three pages,
about your Dad.

Nicky stares.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Go.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT KITCHEN -NIGHT

Nicky picks up vodka, changes his mind, types a few
lines.

He stands. Gun drawn, he peers through the living room
blinds.

Nothing there.

He goes back to the typewriter and types, furiously.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKE NEAR COLLEGE - DAY

Nicky and Rosalie sit on a bench overlooking a lake.
Rosalie reads. Nicky watches her reactions.

ROSALIE
(enthused)
East Harlem was like living in the wild
west! Your father was a street poet!

Nicky nods yes.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
(gently)
You're the little boy who saw his dad
murdered?

Nicky sadly nods yes.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
I think I know what you did.

NICKY
I gotta take the Fifth.

Nicky and Rosalie look deeply into each other's eyes.

ROSALIE
There's misspelled words, run on sentences. Needs a rewrite. Then it's an 'A'.

Nicky grins.

A car squeals to stop nearby. Nicky feels for his gun.

Two elderly WOMEN get out of the car. Nicky sighs.
Rosalie laughs.

Nicky glares at her. Rosalie stops laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Nicky plays basketball. He takes a pass and drives to the basket for an easy lay up.

Bill, Rosalie, and Angelina cheer WILDLY. The opposing team calls a time out. Nicky heads to the bench, teammates pat him on the back.

BILL
Twenty four points - it's only third quarter!

Two rugged looking MEN take seats near Nicky's bench. Nicky sees them; he's scared. Bill notices.

BILL (CONT'D)
You know those guys?

Nicky nods no.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE GYM - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky, and Rosalie exit from the gym with the crowd. The two men who were in the stands lean against their car, waiting.

Bill sees the two men.

The men realize they've been made, and drive away.

ROSALIE

Tell my dad.

NICKY

It doesn't work that way.

Nicky gets in his car, drives away. Bill walks over to Rosalie.

BILL

He only scored two points after those guys came in. What's up with that?

ROSALIE

Relax, dad. You're off duty.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICKY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Nicky pulls into the driveway, exits with his gun, walks to his apartment.

The two men in the stands jump from the shadows, shooting.

Nicky shoots back, misses, runs.

The two men chase, shooting. Lights in the apartment complex come on, one after another.

Nicky runs to the beach, losing them.

Martha runs out of her office with a shotgun.

The Two men are gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

Nicky sleeps on the beach, gun still in his hand. The sound of JOGGERS running along the beach wakes him. Nicky hides the gun under his shirt, stands.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICKY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - A LITTLE LATER.

Approaching home, Nicky sees Martha talking to a POLICE OFFICER. Nicky hides his gun under the porch, walks nonchalantly towards his apartment.

Martha sees Nicky and points.

POLICE OFFICER
The chief wants to see you.

Nicky gets in the back of the police car. Martha shoots Nicky a hard glance.

CUT TO:

INT. BILL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bill is sitting behind his desk wearing his chief of police uniform; he nods for Nicky to sit down.

BILL
Some fireworks at your place last night.
Two bullet holes in your car.

NICKY
I don't know anything.

BILL
Where were you?

NICKY
I was pumped up by the game. Walked on the beach and fell asleep.

BILL
You don't know anything about those two guys from the game?

NICKY
Am I under arrest?

BILL
(disgusted)
Go.

Nicky stands, walks to the door.

BILL (CONT'D)
If anything happens to my daughter - I will hunt you down.

Nicky nods okay, exits.

INT. MADIERA BEACH LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Rosalie and Nicky sit at a secluded table. Rosalie takes out her note pad.

NICKY
I just got the third degree from your
father, and I'm not getting it from you.

Rosalie puts her notebook away.

ROSALIE
(whispers)
Who are you?

Nicky hesitates.

NICKY
Nicky Palmenti.

ROSALIE
It was those two guys, right? They're
hit men!

NICKY
You're a nice kid. I don't want you
getting fucked up.

Nicky stands.

ROSALIE
You can't stay at your place anymore - my
brother owns a building.

NICKY
Why do you want to help me?

ROSALIE
The novel's getting juicier!

Nicky rolls his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE AN APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Rosalie and Nicky walk to an apartment complex. Rosalie looks cautiously around, motions with her hand for Nicky to give her his gun. Nicky lifts up his shirt, and hands her the gun.

Rosalie puts the gun in her oversized pocketbook.

Nicky, and Rosalie enter the apartment complex.

INT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Rosalie and Nicky knock on apartment number three. FRANK, late twenties, answers. He's wearing glasses, a silk robe; a preppy.

FRANK

Hey sis!

Frank kisses Rosalie.

ROSALIE

Jerry.. My brother, Frank.

Nicky, and Frank shake hands.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

This is the guy I told you about from college.

FRANK

C'mon in.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky notices all the bookshelves.

NICKY

You really like books.

FRANK

I'm a lawyer.

NICKY

Defense?

FRANK

Jesus no! I'm an assistant DA.

(beat)

How do you feel about capital punishment?

NICKY

It depends.

FRANK

I'm with Nixon. This country is getting soft. Let me tell you, the animals I prosecute - I wish I could throw the damn switch myself!

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

If we don't fight back against these mad dogs, the hippies, druggies, goons and commies are gonna take over.

(beat)

You know what the real problem is? Judges. They're weak-minded, sentimental fools. They want to show --

(contemptuous)

--mercy.

ROSALIE

Frank's so passionate about his work.

(beat, to Frank)

Could you show Nicky his room? He's very tired.

FRANK

I'm just curious, Jerry. What's your take on capital punishment for murder?

NICKY

It all depends on the circumstances.

FRANK

Not to me - fry the bastards is my motto.

Nicky is crawling out of his skin. Rosalie notes how uncomfortable Nicky is, grabs his hand, and leads him into the empty bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROSALIE

Pay no attention to my brother. I agree with you.

NICKY

Man; if your brother ever prosecuted me; I'm as good as dead.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSALIE'S BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

Nicky sits at Rosalie's typing. Rosalie sits near him, eagerly reading his pages.

ROSALIE

Getting there.

NICKY
I shouldn't be writin'. I should be
escaping.

ROSALIE
Tell my dad.

NICKY
He'd arrest me.

ROSALIE
I have a very good idea of what you did,
but I -

Rosalie places her hand over Nicky's mouth.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
NEVER, want to hear you say it. I want
to remember you as good.

NICKY
So you know why I can't tell your dad?

Rosalie firmly shakes her head yes.

Suddenly she kisses Nicky on the cheek.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Is that all you can think about?

ROSALIE
I'm scared too. But I can shoot a gun.

Rosalie take a .45 out of her desk.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
Been practicing since I was eight.

Nicky stands up.

NICKY
I'm not getting you killed.

ROSALIE
So you really do love me.

Nicky sighs. Rosalie puts her gun in her purse, goes to
the window.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)
I'm hungry. Let's go out. I'll follow
you down the drainpipe.

Nicky is exasperated. Rosalie points firmly at the window.

INT. ROSALIE'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bill paces nervously up, and down the living; his eyes darting every few seconds at Rosalie's room. O.S. He hears the sound of an ENGINE TURNING.

Bill rushes to the window. Bill's POV: A blue Saab blazing out of the driveway.

Bill quickly goes to the phone.

INT. A AND W RESTARAUNT - NIGHT

Rosalie and Nicky enter, sit in a booth. The WAITRESS brings menus.

The two men who shot at Nicky enter, grin when they see Nicky, sit at a table.

ROSALIE

Those two guys are here! They're laughing at us.

NICKY

Run through that kitchen door - get in your car; drive away, and don't look back.

ROSALIE

Meet you at my car!!

Rosalie stands, dashes through the kitchen door.

Nicky sighs, waves for the waitress to come over.

Nicky hands the waitress a twenty dollar bill.

NICKY

Gimme your note pad.

The waitress hands Nicky her note pad. Nicky writes something, hands it to her.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Now, honey; I'm gonna leave through the kitchen. After I do, hand this note to those two guys sittin' near the window.

The waitress looks at the note, grins.

Nicky rushes through the kitchen door. The two men don't realize he's gone.

The waitress brings them the note.

CLOSE UP NOTE: FUCK YOU!!

The two men pull guns. CUSTOMERS SCREAM. The two men run through the kitchen.

INT. A AND W KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The men push the cooks out of the way as they run to the parking lot.

EXT. A AND W PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky runs to Rosalie's Saab, gets in the driver's seat.

A COP, who's been tailing Rosalie and Nicky, sees them get in Rosalie's car.

The men run out, guns drawn.

The cop draws his gun - MAN#1 shoots - the cop falls, clutching his arm.

Rosalie's Saab speeds away - the Cadillac in hot pursuit.

INT. ROSALIE'S SAAB - CONTINUOUS

Nicky weaves through traffic, motions for Rosalie to hand him his gun.

EXT. STREETS IN SAINT PETERSBURG -CONTINUOUS

The Saab flies through traffic; the Cadillac catches up.

Man#2 shoots - the Saab's back window shatters.

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

Nicky pushes Rosalie to the floor. She gets up, gun drawn.

NICKY

Stay down!

She shoots - the Cadillac windshield disintegrates. It slows, opens distance.

ROSALIE

Head for the woods - you can loose him on the dirt!

EXT. DIRT ROADS IN SAINT PETERSBURG - CONTINUOUS

The Saab makes a quick turn down a dark street, almost hitting a tree. The Cadillac is still on it's tail, and trying to get along side the Saab, but Nicky keeps weaving the Saab in, and out of lanes making it impossible.

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

Rosalie forces to sit up in her seat so she can see where they are.

ROSALIE

Turn down this dirt road!!!

NICKY

Are you crazy?! This road looks like it leads into the swamp - they'll have us trapped!!

ROSALIE

I know these roads better than they do! I used to come back here all the time to make out! Floor this baby!! Go as fast as you can - and don't stop!!

EXT. DIRT ROAD NEAR SWAMP - CONTINUOUS

The Saab is bumping almost out of control as it goes well over a hundred miles an hour - then suddenly comes to a small ravine, and barely makes it to the other side. The Saab comes to a stop

INT. SAAB - CONTINUOUS

ROSALIE

Now watch!

Rosalie gets out of the car. Nicky is totally confused, but gets out anyway, and walks with Rosalie carrying his gun.

The Cadillac is only going about sixty miles an hour, not knowing there's a ravine coming up, and goes crashing into the murky waters below in which the water comes up only to the side of the door.

Man#1 has cracked his head on the front window. Man#2 is so shocked when he sees alligators leaving the swamp, and heading towards their car; that he is rendered speechless.

Nicky points his gun at the two men, COCKS THE PISTOL.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

If you shoot them; I will testify against you.

Nicky slowly lowers the gun.

NICKY

I'm not goin' to shoot them.

Nicky pulls Rosalie towards him, and kisses him on the head.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSALIE'S HOUSE - SAME NIGHT A LITTLE LATER.

Bill, and Angelina are standing anxiously in the front yard looking at Nicky's Ford Falcon with distaste. The Saab drives in, parks. Bill rushes to the Saab, and is both angry, and shocked at the condition of the car.

Nicky, and Rosalie get out of the Saab. Rosalie is visibly upset, and rushes into her mother's arms. Bill glares at Nicky.

ROSALIE

It wasn't his fault!

BILL

Where's the car that shot at you?

ROSALIE

They're stuck in the ravine at alligator alley.

Bill goes to his police car, picks up the transmitter.

BILL

I want three cars to go to alligator alley near the ravine, and pick up the men stuck in the car.

Bill hangs up the transmitter, and points insistently at Nicky to follow him into his house.

CUT TO:

INT. BILL'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

Bill is sitting behind his desk nervously tapping his fingers as he waits for Nicky to talk. Finally, Bill stands, goes to the liquor cabinet, takes out a bottle of Scotch, and two glasses.

Bill pours the Scotch into a glass, pushes it towards Nicky. Nicky instantly picks up the drink, and gulps it all down; the scotch falling all over his chin, and shirt, then wipes away the scotch with his hand off his mouth. Bill drinks, taps his fingers even harder on the desk.

NICKY

My real name is Nicholas Palmenti, and those two guys that tried to kill us were mob guys.

Sublime silence as Bill registers what Nicky just said, then goes back to tapping his fingers even harder.

NICKY (CONT'D)

When I was ten a guy named Vincent Periera killed my father in front of me on my birthday.

Suddenly, Bill stops tapping his finger, drinks, then sits more upright in his chair. Nicky extends his glass towards Bill for another drink. Bill pours him another drink. This time, Nicky only takes a small sip.

Nicky struggles not to give into the emotion of the moment. Bill goes back to tapping his fingers.

NICKY (CONT'D)

(finally, with conviction)
I avenged my father's murder - but if I had to do it all again I wouldn't do it!
I swear! I see the guys face before I killed'em wherever I go!

Nicky fights to hold back tears, then finally gives in, and cries. THE PHONE RINGS. Bill picks up the phone, listens.

BILL

Good... very good... he'll be okay. Yeah, hold them indefinitely.

Bill hangs up the phone.

BILL (CONT'D)

It seems the two men that tried to kill you and shot my officer, and are right now behind bars as we speak.

NICKY

I can't blame you if you arrested me... I really can't.

Silence as Bill searches Nicky intently with his eyes.

BILL

I want what you just told me to never pass this room. Rosalie, nor my wife - not anyone!

NICKY

You mean you're not -

BILL

-be forewarned that if you even get a speeding ticket while down here - I will nail your ass to the wall!

NICKY

I truly don't know how to thank you?

Bill drinks, takes a deep breath before speaking.

BILL

You see, Nicholas; we have a common bond... I wasn't always a law abiding citizen... When I was your age I was in a tough gang in Pittsburg where I grew up. We had a gang war, and... I knifed a guy in the throat as he was looking at me with pleading eyes... I've regretted it my whole life. Like you: I see his eyes everywhere...Go on with your life. Be a model citizen from this day on.

Nicky stand, reaches out to shake Bill's hand. They shake.

NICKY

Can I still hang out with Rosalie?

BILL
That's entirely up to her.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSALIE'S HOUSE THE PORCH - NIGHT

Nicky, and Rosalie are sitting in a tense silence drinking lemonade.

ROSALIE
Okay. I've had my excitement. I have a good character study in you, but this is not the way I intend to live my life - do I make myself perfectly clear?

NICKY
Understood. You mean you still wanna be my friend?

ROSALIE
Yes! I must be a little on the nutty side too.

Nicky reaches out for Rosalie's hand, kisses it.

CUT TO:

INT. NICKY'S APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Nicky sits at the kitchen table typing feverishly away. He stops, pulls out what he wrote, glances at it, smiles brightly.

NICKY
A poem for, Rosalie!

O.S. HARD KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Nicky hears the knock, looks at his gun, then decides he doesn't need it. He stands, goes into the living room.

INT. NICKY'S LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Nicky opens the door - Santo burst in, and hugs him.

SANTO
Yo cump!! Have I got a surprise for you!!
Close your eyes!

Nicky closes his eyes, and suddenly Joann enters.

JOANN
Open them , Nicky!!

Nicky opens his eyes, and is almost standoffish to Joann's exuberant hug.

JOANN (CONT'D)
I know you didn't mean what you said at the airport. I still love ya.

SANTO
And listen to this: Johnny Eels told me himself that you could come back - no one'll fuck with you! You'll be under his protection.

JOANN
That's not all - tell him the rest!

SANTO
I'm sellin' coke by the ounces, and I need with a guy with balls to be my partner!

Nicky remains listless.

JOANN
Think about it. We could sell coke for six months to a year - then have enough money for a big wedding!

Nicky turns his back on them, and leans heavily against the wall. Joann moves closer to him, sensing something is wrong.

JOANN (CONT'D)
Have you met another woman?

NICKY
I have a friend; that's all... I still love you, and always will, but I'm stayin' down here. I like it.

SANTO
What?! This is a hick town!

JOANN
After all I've done for you; how can you do this to me?

Nicky just stares blankly at Joann which only makes her madder.

JOANN (CONT'D)

I swear - if you think I'm gonna wait for you to come to your senses before I start dating again - you're fucken crazy!

NICKY

Please leave.

Joann slaps Nicky across the face, and Santo, and her leave in a huff.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Professor Musselmen is walking around the classroom giving back written assignments. Nicky, and Rosalie smile warmly at each other. Musselmen approaches first, Rosalie, then Nicky, hands them back their assignments.

MUSSELMEN

Rosalie; you're a born story teller.
Tales of a gun was excellent.

(to Nicky)

Shadows of my father was also well written. That's why I gave you an A. Here I was thinking you were getting nothing out of this class.

NICKY

I had good teachers.

Nicky throws a wink at Rosalie. Nicky hands Musselmen a book.

NICKY (CONT'D)

I loved In Our Time! As Hemmingway put it so elegantly, " All my life I've looked at words as though I was seein' them for the first time."

MUSSELMEN

Truer words have never been said if you want to be a good writer.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO - DAY

Rosalie, and Nicky sit on the deck of Rosalie's father's boat. Fishing poles rest in their mask.

Rosalie is intently reading from two pieces of paper at the same time. Rosalie finishes reading, stands, kisses Nicky on the head.

ROSALIE

This poem you wrote for me I will cherish
for the rest of my life - it's beautiful.
Your father's is also better than I
expected for a guy with a third grade
education. Words seem to be inherit in
your blood.

Nicky stands, leans over the side of the boat in deep contemplation, then lifts his shirt, and takes his gun out. Rosalie's eyes can't hide her concern. Nicky places the gun in his right hand, and flings it into the Gulf.

Nicky turns back to Rosalie who goes right up to him.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Guess what, Nicholas Palmenti? You have
just joined the human race.

They hug tightly. Suddenly one of the fishing poles starts tangling like crazy. Nicky picks up the fishing pole, and struggles to reel in the fish. After a few moments, Nicky reels the fish onto the deck.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

Red snapper - my mother cooks the best
red snapper in Florida!

Nicky, and Rosalie smile warmly at each other, kiss.

FADE OUT