

Serve and Protect

by

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(Inspired by true events)

Nicholl Fellowships in Screenwriting Quarterfinalist

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SERVE AND PROTECT

FADE IN:

THE BRONX, NEW YORK

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

The rising scream of a police siren drowns out the usual angry sounds from this borough.

INT. FORD CROWN VICTORIA - NIGHT

DETECTIVE NICK ANGELOS, late 40's, drives fast but in control.

Dark, intense eyes, the type that search for truth, also give away a sense of being wounded on the inside; scarred. It shows on his battle-worn face.

His partner, FRANK RESNIK, mid 40's, also has that hardened look, but his eyes are wild. There's a cockiness to him that adds a very dangerous element; a spring wound tighter and tighter.

He rides shotgun, chewing ice cubes from a Styrofoam cup.

As Nick drives, we see various street images:

A pack of TEEN GANG MEMBERS on a street corner.

NICK (V.O.)

I was too young to remember my father. He died in the line of duty, never getting the chance to watch me grow up and follow in his footsteps, or to give me advice; words of wisdom. He might've told me not to be a cop.

On a different street, a LITTLE GIRL, around toddler age, is crying. Her TEEN MOTHER motions for her to be quiet. The mother is buying crack from a local DRUG DEALER.

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

I don't regret what I do for a living, just some of the choices I've made along the way. I guess we all have regrets in life. Sometimes we just make a mess of things.

An OLD MAN lies dead in the middle of the street. With a chalk outline around the mangled body, a team of E.M.T.'s, police and onlookers fill the closed-off intersection.

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And sometimes no one can fix the
 mess except the one who makes it.

Their car turns off the main road onto a dark street.

EXT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

Nick and Frank arrive at a brick duplex house at the end of a sleepy neighborhood.

Red lights flash from other police vehicles already on the scene.

INT. BEDROOM - DUPLEX - NIGHT

Crime Scene investigators mingle busily among plain-clothed detectives, gathering and marking evidence as well as photographing and documenting a homicide.

Nick and Frank enter the bedroom where a WOMAN lies on her bed; her sheets and nightgown drenched in her own blood.

DETECTIVE MONROE, early 40's, stocky build, reads from his notes:

MONROE
 Middle-aged housewife,
 approximately mid-forties, one
 single, large gunshot wound to the
 chest. No initial signs of struggle
 or sexual abuse-
 (sees Nick and Frank)
 Hey guys, what's happenin'? Welcome
 to the show that never ends.

FRANK
 Hey, Billy. Whaddaya got?

MONROE
 We got the mother here in the
 master bedroom and the kids down in
 the basement.

NICK
 Kids? How many?

MONROE

Two. Twin boys. No more than five or six years old.

NICK

Is there a father? Who's been contacted so far?

MONROE

Neighbors say they heard loud arguing a few hours before gunshots went off. So, it was probably a domestic, since everybody's dead except for dear old dad who's conveniently missing.

Looking at the blood on the woman's body:

FRANK

(straight-faced)

Now that's what I call a "heavy flow day."

Monroe chuckles but Nick is not amused.

NICK

Where'd you say the kids are?

MONROE

(pointing)

Last door on the left.

INT. BASEMENT - DUPLEX - NIGHT

One YOUNG BOY lies face down on the floor, near the bottom step, covered in a puddle of blood. A large bullet hole is visible on the back of his head.

In the background, his BROTHER'S body is in a crouched position in the corner, near the boiler. Behind the body is a large, exploding star pattern of blood and brain fragments.

With more police milling about, Nick leans over for a better look at the boy lying face down, while Frank inspects the brother.

FRANK

Poor little guys...had nowhere else to run...

Nick, with a look of discomfort on his face:

NICK

The more I see this kinda shit happening... I can't even remember the last time I had a good night's sleep.

FRANK

Maybe you need more time off.

NICK

That's the last thing I need. How's it look with the other one?

FRANK

Pretty fuckin' sick. That anyone could do this to kids... Take a look.

Nick peers at what's left of the boy's head. The awful sight makes him step back. He leans against a wall for support, draws a deep breath. His complexion turns pale.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, what's wrong? You comin' down with somethin'?

NICK

Nah, I'm all right. I'm gonna step outside for a minute and get some air. I'll be right back.

Frank watches Nick leave before kneeling down for a closer look at the boy.

INT. ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH - THE BRONX - NIGHT

Nick and Frank walk down the center aisle, observing various large and overbearing statues and stained glass images of saints with pained expressions on their faces.

They come upon a YOUNG PRIEST, in his late 20's, standing next to another MAN, in his 50's, who sits with his head bowed in a front row pew. The man's eyes are closed and tears stream down his face as he groans in agony.

FRANK

Is this the guy, Father?

PRIEST

Yes. Please treat him fairly in his hour of need. This man has already suffered enough, tonight.

NICK

(to the priest)

Excuse me!? Treat him fairly? Do you know what this man did?

FRANK

(staring at Nick)

Allegedly did.

NICK

Allegedly did!? For your information, Father, this man allegedly blew a hole the size of the Lincoln Tunnel into his wife and then did the same to his twin boys. Blew one's head clean off. You wanna see the crime scene photos?

FRANK

That's enough, Nick. Just read him his rights so we can get the fu... so we can take him in.

PRIEST

(to Nick)

Detective...?

NICK

(seething)

Angelos.

PRIEST

Thank you. Detective Angelos, are you a Catholic?

NICK

Not anymore.

PRIEST

And why is that?

NICK

No offense, but that's none of your business.

Frank wants no part of this. He starts cuffing the suspect and reading him his Miranda rights.

PRIEST

(to Nick)

I sense something happened in your past that made you lose your faith.

NICK

Yeah, it's called reality. Let's go Frank.

Frank leads the sobbing man away in handcuffs.

FRANK

Thank you for your cooperation Father.

PRIEST

Don't you need to take some sort of statement from me?

FRANK

Nah, it's late. We'll swing by tomorrow.

As Nick and Frank walk up the aisle with the suspect apprehended, the priest calls out to Nick:

PRIEST

God will never turn his back on you, Detective.

NICK

(turning back)

You just can't let this go, can you?

FRANK

Let's go, Nick.

NICK

(facing the priest)

Fine! You wanna know why I don't believe anymore? How about an innocent, eight year old girl, kidnapped, molested and...

(beat)

...murdered. You think if God exists, he'd let that happen?

PRIEST

Did you know this child? Was she related to you?

NICK

Again, that's none of your goddamn business.

PRIEST

Detective, God didn't murder that girl. Man did. God gives man the choice of accepting His love or turning his back on Him. It's lost souls who turn away, who are capable of committing-

Sermon over. Nick whips around, begins walking quickly toward the exit. Frank and the handcuffed man pick up the pace behind.

As he walks:

NICK

(to the priest)

Whatever. You live in your world, I'll live in the real one.

The priest watches the three men walk out.

EXT. CROWN VICTORIA - NIGHT

Frank opens the rear passenger door for the suspect. Nick, from the driver side door, signals that the coast is clear.

Frank rams his fist into the suspect's stomach, doubling the man over in intense pain.

FRANK

(to the suspect)

That's for the wife and kids, asshole. Get in the fuckin' car.

He shoves the suspect in and sits down next to him, slamming the door. Nick gets in, they drive off.

INT. BRONX SUPERIOR COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - DAY

The stained, oak-panelled room is packed as the jury files in, taking their seats. There's a tense buzz in the air.

A young BLACK MAN, early 20's, sits at the defense table, nervously thumb wrestling with himself. He looks a little "dull" in the eyes.

His lawyer, STEPHEN RILEY, early 40's, leans back in his chair, chewing on a pencil. He's the typical sleazy, fat-cat defense lawyer: dark Armani suit, slicked-back hair and a confident gaze in his eyes.

He stares down each member of the jury as they sit, one by one.

JUDGE

Mr. Foreman, has the jury reached a verdict?

FOREMAN

Yes, your Honor.

As Riley and the defendant rise, a COURT OFFICER hands over the verdict, on a folded piece of paper, to the judge whose face registers no reaction upon reading it.

JUDGE

How does the jury find on the count of Murder, first degree?

FOREMAN

We, the jury, find Tyrone Coleman not guilty, your Honor.

Tyrone's MOTHER rises from her seat, loudly praises Jesus.

The PROSECUTION TEAM slam their briefcases in frustration as Riley and Tyrone "low five" each other.

RILEY

(to Tyrone, smiling)

Like I said, I'm worth every penny.

INT. BRONX SUPERIOR COURT HOUSE - CORRIDOR - DAY

As Riley walks, he notices several COPS eyeing him with disgust.

RILEY

Just doin' my job, fellas.
Everyone's entitled to a fair trial.

(under his breath)

Even the guilty ones.

Riley's cell phone goes off inside his jacket pocket.
Answering:

RILEY (CONT'D)

'Lo?

INT. RILEY'S HOME - LONG ISLAND - DAY

His wife, DONNA, mid 30's is on the other end. Tooling around her palatial kitchen, she's over dressed for the room. Their six year old daughter, HALLIE, is playing on the floor.

DONNA

Hey, it's me.

INTERCUT:

RILEY

What's up. I'm busy.

DONNA

Joan called. She can't baby sit tonight.

RILEY

Jesus Christ! Again? Fuckin' fire her ass and call an agency!

DONNA

Stephen, she's only twelve!

RILEY

You want me to do it? I got no patience for this shit anymore, Donna.

DONNA

Okay, fine, calm down.

RILEY

Put Hallie on the phone.

A beat.

HALLIE

Daddy?

RILEY

(too mushy)

Hi Pumpkin. How's Daddy's little angel? I love you.

EXT. FAIR LAWN CEMETERY - THE BRONX - DAY

Nick kneels in front of a grave. The tombstone reads: SOFIA KATERINA ANGELOS, BELOVED DAUGHTER. AN ANGEL CALLED AWAY TOO SOON. LOVE, MOM AND DAD.

Above the inscription and embedded into the stone is a small, round picture of a smiling little blonde-haired girl: Sofia.

A small tear wells up in a corner of Nick's eye as he winds up his visit.

NICK

Okay sweetheart, time for the old man to get up before his knees give out. I'll see you next week. Mommy and Daddy love you...so much...

A woman cries softly at a nearby grave as Nick walks past. He looks on sympathetically for a moment before moving on.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - DAY

The office is cold, clinical and sterile in decor. Nick sits across from the desk of DR. REDDING, mid 50's, his therapist, who has that post-hippie, scholarly look.

Redding appears engrossed by what Nick is saying.

NICK

I just couldn't hold it in anymore. He pushed the wrong button when he told me it's "lost souls" who commit vicious crimes and how "God" gives them that choice.

REDDING

Then what happened?

NICK

(smirking)

I shot him. It was the next best thing to confessional. I feel like a new man.

REDDING

Well, I'm glad to see we've made progress all these months.

(then)

(MORE)

REDDING (CONT'D)

I thought we came to terms with God and the Church, and how it had nothing to do with what happened to your daughter?

NICK

I have. I just can't ignore bullshit, especially when it's so blatant and thrown in my face like that.

REDDING

Well, based on what I've been hearing, it sounds like you over reacted, which led to the exchange.

NICK

Whose side are you on? When last I checked, you were still an Atheist. Why are you defending the Catholic Church all of a sudden?

REDDING

I'm not. I'm merely bringing it to your attention that it was you who over reacted, and-

NICK

Fine! It was my fault, okay? Are you happy now? It's my fuckin' fault for everything. For picking the fight, for being angry and not letting go, for every shitty thing that happens in the world. There! Now that it's all out in the open, I'm cured. I can go on with my life thanks to this great session. Thanks, Doc.

REDDING

It's not about fault, Nick.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY - TWO YEARS AGO

Nick and his wife, HELENA, mid 40's, grind their car to a stop in front of a crime scene where police activity surrounds an industrial garbage dumpster several yards away.

REDDING (V.O.)
Only when you truly accept that,
can you move on.

Helena rushes out of the car, her eyes wide and her expression frantic and tortured.

After a few steps, she freezes.

NICK
(grabbing her shoulders)
Stay here. I'll go.

REDDING (V.O.)
You can blame yourself every day,
but the reality is that there was
nothing you could do to keep your
daughter from being taken that day.

Detective Monroe gives Nick a sympathetic look before lifting up the heavy, blue, metal lid.

Buried among rotting food and other decomposing rubbish, a little girl's face is visible; eyes closed: Sofia.

Nick's face goes blank with shock as he stumbles back a step.

NICK (V.O.)
I'm a fuckin' cop. I should've done
something. I have friends,
resources.

Seeing Nick's reaction, the moment of realization hits Helena. She crumples to the ground, wailing and destroyed.

BACK IN DOCTOR REDDING'S OFFICE:

REDDING
Unfortunately, even cops can't
solve every crime on the planet.
It's an awfully big world, Nick.
Stop carrying it on your shoulders
every day.

EXT. MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Across the street, in her parked Honda Accord, Helena waits for her husband.

She's more handsome than beautiful. The years of living with a cop have given her face a strong, but weary look.

Honking the horn, she gets Nick's attention as he steps out the front door. He crosses the street, gets in the passenger seat.

INT. HONDA ACCORD - DAY

They share a quick peck that feels more like a formality; the sort a couple exchanges after the passion has gone and companionship is the only thing left keeping them together.

HELENA
So, how'd it go?

NICK
It went.

A long beat as Helena looks at Nick, who looks straight ahead.

HELENA
(perturbed)
Is that all you're gonna say?

NICK
(sighs)
I talked, he listened, then he said something stupid and I'm supposed to reflect on it. Same shit, different week.

HELENA
You know, it wouldn't kill you to actually give it an honest effort, Nick. It made all the difference with me.

NICK
Are you gonna start that again, huh? I just got outta one argument a few minutes ago. I don't need another one, Helena.

HELENA
I'm not the one who's arguing again, Nick. I just asked you a simple question and once again, I'm sorry I asked.

Flustered, Nick gets out of the car.

NICK

You know what? I'll catch a cab to the precinct. You go on, I'll see you tonight.

He slams the car door.

Helena cranes her neck to look out onto the street at Nick.

HELENA

Get back in the car, Nick. Don't act like a child.

Nick walks away from the car, back across the street, speaking loudly.

NICK

I said I'll catch a cab. Go! Go home! I'll see you tonight. Bye!

HELENA

Fine! Have it your way. Asshole!

Helena drives off in a tire-screeching huff, leaving Nick to watch from across the street. A look of self-disgust crosses his face as he signals an oncoming cab.

INT. VIDEO ARCADE - THE BRONX - LATER THAT DAY

Loud sounds of children enjoying themselves blend with arcade bells and whistles.

Eight year old JESUS RIVERA, a vivacious munchkin, and ANTOINE TUCKER, a confident black man in his mid 20's, shoot fake pistols at a game screen. Their target: evil cops - 100 points.

EXT. JERICHO AVE. - THE BRONX - DAY

Leaving the arcade, Jesus and Antoine walk side by side.

They're being watched by TWO YOUNG BLACK MEN, both approximately the same age as Antoine, in a parked Infiniti Q30T across the street.

INT./EXT. INFINITI Q30T - DAY

DRIVER

Is that him, yo?

PASSENGER
Yeah. Let's do this.

The car pulls out from the parking spot, slowly follows a few feet behind.

From under his seat, the passenger produces a silver-plated 9MM automatic pistol and slides a bullet magazine into the handle. It locks into position.

Creeping towards Jesus and Antoine, but blending into the scenery with loud Rap music from inside the car, the passenger marks his spot.

PASSENGER (CONT'D)
You see that alleyway just up front?

DRIVER
Yeah.

PASSENGER
Stay close and as soon as they get to it, pull in. After I cap his black ass, we can shoot down the alleyway and turn right.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO ALLEYWAY - DAY

Unaware of the pursuing car, Antoine and Jesus come up to the alleyway's lip.

In a blur, the car swerves quickly off the street, cutting them off. The passenger opens the door, confronts Antoine, standing a foot away.

PASSENGER
You're Antoine, right?

ANTOINE
Who wants to know?

PASSENGER
Close enough.

The passenger whips out his silver 9MM.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

The force from point blank range pins Antoine against the wall. Only after the fourth shot, is the bloody, limp body able to slide to the ground.

As panicked people run screaming in several directions, seeking protection from this sudden burst of gunfire, Jesus is too paralyzed to move. He can only stare at Antoine's corpse lying just a few feet away.

PASSENGER (CONT'D)

(to Jesus)

You didn't see nothin', got it? Or I'll cap you and your moms.

Jesus is too afraid to answer. The passenger jumps back in the car, speeding off down the alleyway and around the corner, burning rubber. Gone.

Jesus meets Antoine's blank, lifeless stare with his own blank look of shock and confusion.

INT. 59TH PRECINCT - DETECTIVE'S DIVISION - DAY

Nick arrives to see Frank staring intently towards the Captain's office. Three silhouettes move about inside.

After a beat, CAPTAIN ABRAMS, early 60's, walks out with two Internal Affairs Detectives: SAM KELLY, early 50's, with deep-set, sensitive eyes and CHRIS WALSH, early 40's, as intense as they come.

The three men walk over to Frank's desk. Nick is seated at his desk across from Frank, observing as he goes through the motions of "busy work."

ABRAMS

Frank, these gentleman need to speak with you for a minute.

NICK

For what?

WALSH

(to Nick)

Excuse me, but we're talking to Detective Resnik.

SAM

(to Frank)

We're conducting an investigation into narcotics being dealt within this precinct. We'd like to ask you a few questions.

WALSH

(to Nick)

Don't worry, we'll be getting
around to you as well,
Detective...?

Nick doesn't answer, instead he swivels his chair around,
turning his back to Walsh.

SAM

(to Frank)

So, we'll see you downtown on
Friday at 1 P.M.

(to Nick)

And schedule you for early next
week sometime. Thank you gentleman.

As the three men walk away, Nick mutters:

NICK

Fuck off.

Walsh whips back around, standing in front of Nick.

WALSH

What did you just say?

Nick rises to meet Walsh, face to face.

NICK

I didn't say nothin'. Get the fuck
outta my face.

Captain Abrams and Sam quickly create space between the two
men as Frank watches on, his fists tightly clenched.

ABRAMS

(to Nick)

Calm down. What the hell's wrong
with you?

NICK

(at Sam and Walsh)

I'm just sick and tired of all this
bullshit!

WALSH

We wouldn't be here if there wasn't
a problem.

NICK

The only problem is you guys
pretending to be real cops.

SAM

We're real cops just like you.
Sworn to uphold the law, remember?

NICK

You guys? You're not cops. You're
fuckin' cannibals. You eat your
own.

ABRAMS

All right, that's enough outta
everybody.

WALSH

(to Nick)

We'll see ya real soon, Detective.

Walsh and Sam walk out.

ABRAMS

Jesus Christ, Nick! What the hell's
up your ass?

NICK

Not today, Lou.

ABRAMS

All right, both of you, go cool
off. There's a homicide that just
went down on Jericho Avenue. Keep
yourselves busy.

As Nick and Frank leave the squad room:

FRANK

(re: Sam and Walsh)

Fuckin' assholes.

NICK

No, you're the asshole. I told you
this shit was gonna catch up with
you sooner or later.

Nick walks ahead of Frank in a huff.

EXT. JERICHO AVE. - THE BRONX - DAY

Yellow strips of police tape separate Antoine's body from the
crowd that's gathered. Red lights flash, a chalk outline
surrounds the body and officers canvas the area for
information.

Nick and Frank arrive on the scene.

Detective Monroe is inspecting the body. He sees Nick and Frank, waves them over.

Frank notices the streaking blood stains on the wall.

FRANK

Pretty artistic. This guy do a jig
before he went down?

MONROE

Yeah, the "Dead Homie Slide." Of
course, no one saw nothin' except
for the kid.

NICK

What kid?

MONROE

Over by my car. We got a female
uniform with him and a unit
bringing the mother over right now.

FRANK

What did he see?

MONROE

Everything, we think. He's too
scared shitless to talk.

NICK

What's his name?

MONROE

(reads his note pad)
Jesus Rivera.

NICK

Maybe he's calmed down enough now
to give us something.

MONROE

Go for it. He's all yours. I got no
way with kids. That's why I got
goldfish.

Monroe turns back to the crime scene, continues to look over Antoine's body. Forensic investigators probe the corpse and Crime Scene photographers snap away.

Nick and Frank approach Jesus, who's sipping a cup of hot chocolate and staring straight ahead. The shock is still too strong for tears to come out.

Nick bends over to look into those big, dark eyes.

NICK

Hi Jesus, my name is Detective
Angelos and this is Detective
Resnik. How's the hot chocolate?

Jesus doesn't respond, instead, continuing to sip and stare straight ahead.

NICK (CONT'D)

I know it's tough right now. You
saw a pretty bad thing and we wanna
help you. But we need your help
first. You think you can tell us
exactly what happened and what you
saw?

FRANK

Your mommy is on her way, son.
She'll be here any second.

NICK

(to Jesus)

So when she gets here, maybe
together, we can all figure out who
did this and catch the bad guy.

Still no response from Jesus. Nick straightens himself.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to Frank)

Keep an eye on the kid for a
second.

Crossing over to the crime scene:

NICK (CONT'D)

(to Monroe)

Find anything?

Detective Monroe produces a bloody I.D. card.

MONROE

We found this in the wallet.
Antoine Tucker, age twenty six. The
kid's mother is gonna get here any
second. Tucker's her boyfriend, but
not the father.

(MORE)

MONROE (CONT'D)

She just went nuts in the squad car when she heard what happened, so get ready. Any luck with the kid?

NICK

No, he needs his mother. Let's just hope she pulls herself together when she gets here. He doesn't need anymore shit.

A squad car pulls up and out jumps GINA RIVERA, Jesus' mother. In her mid 20's, her striking Latin looks are replaced by the effects of this trauma.

She frantically searches for her son, calling out to him.

Her bloodshot, puffy eyes finally find their way to her son. She races over and they embrace. Jesus begins sobbing uncontrollably in the safety of his mother's arms.

Nick approaches the pair.

NICK (CONT'D)

Ma'am, we'll need to ask your son some questions about what happened over there.

GINA

(fighting back tears)
Please, can't you see he's terrified?

FRANK

We understand that, but we'll need to take some sort of statement from the boy while things are still fresh.

Nick shows Gina the I.D. Card.

NICK

Do you recognize this man?

Tears start flowing down her cheeks.

GINA

Yes...that's my...boyfriend,
Antoine.
(breaks down)
Oh God, no! No!

Gina lets out a loud, tortured scream.

Nick and Frank look at each other.

INT. 59TH PRECINCT - DETECTIVE'S DIVISION - LATER THAT DAY

A thick loose-leaf binder, containing photos of known and convicted criminals, lays open on Nick's desk. Jesus flips through the pages. Several stacked phone books on his chair help him reach the top of the desk.

Gina sits next to her son, looking drained as Nick hands her a cup of tea and sits down, facing her. Frank stands nearby.

GINA
My head's still spinning.

NICK
It's all right. Just relax.
(to Jesus)
Is that bad guy in any of the pictures you've seen so far?

JESUS
No.

NICK
You think you can remember what happened and tell me about it?

Jesus grows nervous as he looks to his mother.

GINA
It's okay, baby.

JESUS
(trembling, to Gina)
I can't. He said he'd cap you and me if I said I saw it.

NICK
The man who did this spoke to you?

Jesus looks like he's about to burst into tears.

GINA
Just tell the truth, sweetie.

Finally, after a scared beat:

JESUS
It was DeRon, Momma. DeRon shot Antoine.

NICK
(to Gina)
You know the gunman?

Gina starts tearing up again but fights to control herself.

GINA
DeRon Snipes. We dated for a while last year. But when I found out he was dealing drugs, I stopped seeing him. I don't want Jesus involved in that world.

FRANK
Did he ever threaten or harass you guys after you broke it off?

GINA
At first, he wouldn't stop calling. Then after I changed my number, he'd come around, wanting to get back together. When I started seeing Antoine, DeRon found out and just freaked.

NICK
How?

GINA
He came up to me one day and said Antoine was gonna regret seeing me. I told Antoine, but he just called DeRon a punk and laughed it off. Now look... I feel like this is all my fault.

NICK
(to Frank)
That does it. We'll get an arrest warrant today and bring him in.
(to Gina)
We'll have a squad car take you guys home. You'll have 'round the clock protection and then after a lineup I.D., we'll move you into a safe house until this is all over.

GINA
(emotional)
A safe house? You mean go into hiding? Living like caged animals?

NICK

Take a look at that brave little boy of yours, Ms. Rivera. I'm not telling you how to be a parent, but if I was you, I'd do everything humanly possible to make sure no harm comes to him.

GINA

Why should we trust you to protect us?

NICK

Look, legally you have the right to turn down police protection. But should you do so, you're giving Snipes an open invitation to possibly finish the job. It's your call.

After a thoughtful beat:

GINA

What would you do? Do you have any children?

NICK

(beat)

No. But if I did, I wouldn't think twice about it.

GINA

I guess it's too late now.

Nick softens up. He places a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

NICK

We'll get him and the courts will put him away.

(to Jesus)

Your mommy and I are very proud of you, son. You've done a good thing by helping us today.

JESUS

Is DeRon gonna kill us?

NICK

No. I'm not gonna let anything bad happen to you or your mother. My last name is Angelos. You know what that means?

JESUS

Angel?

NICK

That's right. It means I'm your guardian angel. So, I'm gonna watch over you and your mom to make sure you're both safe.

JESUS

You promise?

NICK

Angels don't lie.

INT./EXT. CROWN VICTORIA - EDGAR STREET - THE BRONX - SUNSET

With Nick at the wheel and Frank beside him, they stake out Snipe's apartment building down the block.

Nick can see another unmarked Crown Victoria inconspicuously parked several yards away. Detectives Monroe and WALLER are assisting in the stake out.

NICK

(to Frank)

I wish this prick would get here already. My ass is falling asleep.

Frank takes out a tiny bottle from inside his jacket, sprinkles a small amount of cocaine from it onto his finger. He does a quick bump.

Nick throws him a disapproving look.

FRANK

Gotta stay sharp.

NICK

You didn't learn your lesson today with those two I.A. assholes, did you?

Frank does another bump of coke.

FRANK

I don't bitch about your drinking, so just drop it.

NICK

You better fuckin' cool it with your little side income 'cause I'm not gonna lose my job over that shit.

FRANK

Then get another partner.

NICK

Maybe I will.

FRANK

Fine with me.

A thick wall of tension sets in between them.

Nick's attention is drawn to a city bus which pulls up to the corner. DeRon Snipes steps out, walks toward his building.

NICK

There he is.
(into his walkie talkie)
Billy, he's here. Let's move!

Nick steps on the gas pedal, his car roars onto the sidewalk, cutting off Snipes' path.

EXT. EDGAR STREET - SUNSET

Instantly, Monroe's car jumps the curb as well, both vehicles now cornering Snipes against the building's front wall.

Before any of the detectives can jump out of their cars, Snipes hurdles over Nick's car, takes off.

All four detectives give chase. Monroe and Waller head off in separate directions. Nick and Frank are several yards behind the younger, faster Snipes.

NICK

(yelling as he runs)
DeRon! Wait up, we just wanna talk to you.

Snipes continues his furious pace as he rounds a corner onto an alleyway, swatting several trash cans as he goes, in an attempt to slow down his pursuers.

Frank stumbles into one of the trash cans, goes down.

Nick looks behind as Frank signals that he's okay and to continue on.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SUNSET

The alleyway leads to a dead end but where's Snipes?

Nick looks around, hears the sound of rattling metal. He looks up to see Snipes climbing away on a fire escape.

Leaping up and grabbing onto the metal ladder, Nick continues the chase. Snipes is several stories ahead, but Nick presses on. Snipes reaches the building's roof and climbs over, out of sight.

EXT. ROOF - SUNSET

Several long seconds later, Nick reaches the roof. He leaps onto it, eyes Snipes leaping from that roof onto another.

Nick follows, leaps as well, never stopping to consider the danger in miscalculating his jump.

Snipes slips as he lands, twisting his ankle. He struggles on, now hobbling and slowed down considerably.

Nick closes in, tackling Snipes from behind.

The two grapple and struggle on the rooftop, with Snipes yelling obscenities and wildly swinging at Nick. He misses Nick's face. His weak ankle makes him fall down.

Nick throws his full weight on Snipes' back, pinning him to the floor. Handcuffs come out, Nick slaps them on a now detained, but still wild, Snipes.

NICK

Muthafucker! You have the right to remain silent.

SNIPES

I thought you just wanted to talk to me? You can't arrest me!

NICK

Hey, shut up! Anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law.

SNIPES

This is bullshit. I didn't do nothin'. I ain't sayin' shit!

NICK

Hey fuckhead, I said shut up! Now, you're entitled to a lawyer. If you don't have one, one will be afforded you by the state.

SNIPES

Fuck!

INT. FORD CROWN VICTORIA - NIGHT

On the way to the precinct, Snipes sits handcuffed in the back seat with Frank at his side and Nick up front, at the wheel.

Frank turns to face Snipes. He's holding his service revolver, jams it into Snipes's mouth.

FRANK

Say "Ahh", muthafucker.

Snipes' eyes widen in shock and panic.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I haven't forgotten about the garbage can back at the alley.

Frank cocks the hammer back on his gun.

Snipes begins squirming. He tries mumbling something to the effect of "What the fuck you doin'?"

FRANK (CONT'D)

Who's to say you didn't try to escape, put up a fight, and I had to blow your fuckin' face off?

Snipes just stares at Frank, too afraid to make a wrong move.

FRANK (CONT'D)

C'mon, asshole. Give me a reason.

(a beat)

You're a real tough guy now, aren't you?

Nick is observing Snipes' expression from the rear view mirror, but says nothing; drives on.

INT. 59TH PRECINCT - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

The room is small and narrow, stripped of any warmth or hope.

Snipes is seated at a table with Frank standing by the door. Nick is seated adjacent to Snipes, leaning into his face.

NICK

Why did you run away from us tonight, Ronnie?

SNIPES

My name's DeRon and whadda ya mean, why did I run? If you was being chased by four fat, ugly crackers, you'd run too.

FRANK

Cut the wise cracks, asshole, and answer the fuckin' question.

SNIPES

Yo, I ain't answerin' shit 'til my lawyer gets here.

NICK

Listen up. We got a warrant for your arrest in the murder of Antoine Tucker and we got a witness who places you at the scene, pulling the trigger. So help yourself and tell us everything we wanna know. 'Cause all bullshit aside, you're pretty fucked right now.

Snipes says nothing; smirks defiantly.

NICK (CONT'D)

Fine, have it your way, but you won't be able to post bail 'til morning. You wanna fuck around and spend the night in lock up, then sweet dreams.

Snipes shoots Nick and Frank a deadly look then smiles menacingly.

SNIPES

I can take what you got. You guys ain't so tough now, with people around.

FRANK

You sure about that, hot shot?

Frank pats his service revolver, tucked into his shoulder harness and then with a clenched fist raised to his open mouth, he mimics the universal gesture for giving a blow job.

He winks at Snipes.

INT. 59TH PRECINCT - LINEUP ROOM - DAY

From behind a protective one way mirror, Jesus' eyes barely reach up to view.

Nick picks Jesus up, holding him in his arms, affording the youngster a better view. Gina, Frank, and PROSECUTOR TOM MURPHY are present.

The door to the lineup room opens and in walk FIVE MEN. All have that hardened look to them but are all different shapes and sizes. Each one is asked to step forward, one by one.

At the moment Snipes steps forward, Jesus yanks at Nick's shirt sleeve.

JESUS

That's him. That's DeRon.

MURPHY

Are you absolutely sure?

JESUS

Yes.

NICK

(to Gina)

Is that him, your ex boyfriend,
DeRon Snipes?

Gina nods in sullen acknowledgement.

MURPHY

All right then. Let's try to get a
confession out of him. Even if he
won't budge, we can still go to
trial with a witness.

GINA

Now what happens?