

NO KILLING ON CHRISTMAS

Written by

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EXT. ONE STORY HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are all off in the one-story brick house, including the icicle Christmas lights hanging from the roof.

INT. ONE STORY HOUSE - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

MARCO MILAZZO (40s), handsome and burly, and TOMMY LOBRANO (30s), portly and balding, both Italian with dark hair, sit on a sofa watching TV.

Each are wearing polo shirts under sweaters and an overcoat, and speak in thick New Jersey accents.

ON THE TV

A gangster in a black and white movie, in a suit and fedora, wildly fires a machine gun on a city street.

BACK TO SCENE

MARCO

Ain't that gun nice? Those were the golden years.

Tommy nods in agreement, then lights up with inspiration.

TOMMY

Yeah. A Tommy-gun. Same name as me.

Tommy kisses the air and gestures his hands in approval at the TV.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Molto dolce. Very sweet.

Marco looks at him and answers with condescension.

MARCO

Right, Tommy.

ON THE TV

The gangster stops firing, lowers his gun, and smiles with evil satisfaction.

BACK TO SCENE

MARCO (CONT'D)

It's unethical, though.

TOMMY
What's unethical?

MARCO
Tell me that's a fair fight. Even against cops, I can't support that. All they got is thirty-eights. Six shots against a hundred? It's unethical.

TOMMY
Cops don't deserve ethics. They live a rat's life.

MARCO
They got a boss just like us. They just chose a different side. And I appreciate a fair fight.

TOMMY
Like gentlemen.

MARCO
Shootouts are a thing of the past, anyway. These days, lawyers are more effective than guns.

Marco's phone buzzes and he answers right away.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Yeah, we're ready to cook. How do you want your sauce.

Marco listens for the response and is disappointed.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Microwaved? That ain't right. You know I prefer a slow simmer. It suits the occasion.

Marco listens again, and settles down, with acceptance.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Alright. I'll let you know when it's done.

Marco nods at Tommy with affirmation and they both stand up. Marco picks up a large kitchen knife from the coffee table.

The two men walk behind the sofa where a FRIGHTENED MAN (40s) is tied to a chair in only boxer shorts, with his mouth duct-taped shut. He looks up at them with wide eyes and squirms.

Marco shakes the knife at him, inches from his face.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You're lucky. Especially after what you done, you traitor. If I had my way, tonight would end differently.

Marco tosses the knife away, and the man is relieved.

Marco pulls a silenced pistol from inside his coat, and the man is frightened again, mumbling through the tape.

MARCO (CONT'D)

The boss said to make it quick. Who am I to argue?

The man squirms harder, in protest.

MARCO (CONT'D)

What, you think you deserve mercy? There ain't no coming back from treason.

Marco points the gun at his face and pulls the trigger.

Marco and Tommy look at each other with no emotion.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Alright, let's call the cleanup crew. All this talk about sauce has me hungry.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Marco drives his white service van along an upper-middle-class street, singing happily along to a Christmas song on the radio, admiring the Christmas lights on all the houses.

His business logo is written in black lettering on the side of his van: "Milazzo Inspections, Inc."

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marco pulls in the driveway to his large, two-story house.

He hops out, stares at his plain, undecorated house, then over at each of his neighbors' houses, which are brightly lit with Christmas lights. His joy fades.

He reaches back into his car, hits the garage door opener, slams the door shut and hurries into the garage, determined.

He picks up a large cardboard box that is overflowing with Christmas lights and sets it on the driveway. He grabs a ladder and leans it against the outside wall of the garage.

FATHER ANTHONY (60s), a thin, Italian, Catholic priest dressed in his black robes, opens the front door and approaches Marco with a smile.

Behind Anthony, Marco's wife, ARIA (40s), a beautiful, stylish woman in silk, red pajamas, pokes her head out the open door, shivering in the cold.

FATHER ANTHONY

Marco, I'm glad I caught you. Aria and I just had a good chat about the Church's Christmas pageant, and we think Dom would be a great addition to the choir.

MARCO

Merry Christmas, Uncle Tony.

FATHER ANTHONY

How many years, and you can't call me Anthony?

MARCO

Nobody named Anthony goes by Anthony.

FATHER ANTHONY

Well, I do.

MARCO

I think the kids would say that it sounds a little too... 'bogie,' I think is the word.

FATHER ANTHONY

I don't know what the kids say.

MARCO

If you did, they might just volunteer for your pageant all on their own.

FATHER ANTHONY

Perhaps.

Aria steps out onto the porch and shuts the door.

ARIA

I think Dom would enjoy it.

MARCO

Yeah, alright. I'll talk to him.

Anthony grips Marco's shoulders with his hands and smiles.

FATHER ANTHONY

There's a good man in you, Marco.

(pats his cheek)

Maybe we can get him into
confession more often, huh?

Marco returns the smile and pat on the cheek.

MARCO

If we can crack into your stash of
wine, I'm there.

ARIA

(scoldingly)

Marco.

MARCO

I think even God likes jokes.

A small boy, LOGAN (9), peers ominously at them through the
neighbor's window and catches Anthony's eye.

FATHER ANTHONY

You have a little observer.

Marco turns to look and Logan narrows his eyes.

MARCO

That's Logan. He's going to make a
fine narc someday.

Anthony chuckles as he walks to his car.

FATHER ANTHONY

Have a wonderful evening, you two.

Anthony drives away as Marco goes back to decorating.

ARIA

Honey, you want to come inside and
have a little dinner? I made
risotto.

Marco begins to untangle a strand of lights.

MARCO

I'll microwave a plate later. I hate being the only house on the street without lights. It ain't Christian.

ARIA

Christmas is three days away, and then you'll just have to take them down again. You had a long day. Come inside and relax.

MARCO

We don't have to pull them down the day after Christmas.

Marco grunts as he grabs another box from the garage.

MARCO (CONT'D)

And this is relaxing.

ARIA

Honey, I just think it could wait another-

MARCO

(angrily)

I said it ain't Christian. I bet all the neighbors think we're sadists or something.

ARIA

I think you mean Satanists, honey. And I doubt anyone thinks that.

Marco throws the strand of tangled lights down in a rage and kicks the box over.

MARCO

You go to mass every Sunday, but you don't want to celebrate Jesus' birthday properly?

Aria droops her head, sad and offended. Marco notices and his expression turns sympathetic.

MARCO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, love. You're right, it was a long day, but I think I'll feel better if I can get a few lights up. I'll be in soon for your risotto. You make the best.

Aria gives him a warm smile.

ARIA
Want me to send Dom out to help?

MARCO
Nah, he needs to focus on his
homework and get good sleep.

ARIA
Alright, just put a hat on or
something. It's freezing out here.

They exchange smiles for a moment, and Aria goes back inside.

Marco scoops up the spilled lights, grabs a staple gun,
sighs, and starts up the ladder.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Marco scurries in the front door, tosses his coat on a chair
and rubs his hands, shivering and blowing air into them.

Aria approaches with a plate of risotto and a glass of wine.

ARIA
Did you get the lights up already?

MARCO
Some o' them. Is Dom still awake?

ARIA
Doubtful. He's been in bed a while.

MARCO
Aww...well, I'm gonna check. He's
got the school pageant tomorrow and
I wanna wish him luck.

ARIA
Alright, just don't be long, this
won't taste as good if I have to
heat it up a third time.

Aria heads back into the kitchen and Marco goes upstairs.

INT. DOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Marco slowly pushes the door open, letting a sliver of light
shine over the bed in the corner of the cluttered room.

DOM (12) raises his head off his pillow, squinting at his
dad, and holding a hand up to block the light.

MARCO

Sorry to wake you, Dom, I just wanted to tell you to be great in your Christmas pageant tomorrow, in case I don't see you before school in the morning.

DOM

Thanks, but I don't think it'll matter much how great I am.

MARCO

Whattaya mean? You got a big part, don't ya?

DOM

I do, but the director let this thing get out of control. I don't think it's going to be good. I wish I wasn't in it anymore.

MARCO

Don't say that. You got a great singing voice. Sometimes we gotta be good little soldiers and play our part the way we're told, you know?

DOM

I guess so.

MARCO

Uncle Ton--I mean, Uncle Anthony says there's a really great pageant down at the church, and they want you in it.

DOM

I don't know if I could do another one after this.

MARCO

I hear you. One day at a time, huh?

Marco's phone buzzes in his pocket and he quickly grabs it.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Hold on, buddy. Just be a second.

Marco answers the phone and grows concerned.

MARCO (CONT'D)

What's goin' on, Tommy?

(listens)

(MORE)

MARCO (CONT'D)
 A turkey fry? Tonight?
 (listens)
 Alright. I'll be there.

Marco hangs up and looks back at his son.

MARCO (CONT'D)
 You get some good sleep, alright?
 Stay positive. I can't wait to see
 the show. Goodnight, bud. Love you.

Marco slowly shuts the door, but stops as Dom responds.

DOM
 Wait, Dad?

MARCO
 Yeah?

DOM
 You gotta go back to work?

MARCO
 It's just a meeting. No big deal.

DOM
 Kinda late for a meeting.

MARCO
 We all gotta be good soldiers.

DOM
 Umm...Dad? What do you do?

MARCO
 Whattaya mean, what do I do?

DOM
 Like, my friends have dads that
 work at banks or offices or
 something, and they get to shadow
 them at work, but I don't really
 know what you do. Do you think I
 could shadow you some time?

Marco hesitates to respond, with sadness overcoming him.

MARCO
 Oh, well, I don't think so. It's
 really a...well, I inspect
 construction sites and it...it can
 be dangerous sometimes, and they
 can't have kids around. I'm sorry.
 You understand, though, right?

DOM
(disappointed)
Yeah, I understand. No big deal.

Dom lays back down and pulls his covers up to his chin.

MARCO
Love you, kid.

DOM
Love you, Dad.

Marco stares sadly for a moment, then slowly shuts the door.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Marco bounds down the stairs and quickly puts his coat on.

Aria walks down the hallway with a glass of wine, concerned.

ARIA
You're going back out?

MARCO
I gotta. I'm really sorry. Your
risotto is so good, I'm sure after
nuking it again it'll still be
delicious.

ARIA
I guess if you have to.

Marco pulls her close, looking her in the eye, romantically.

MARCO
Believe me, there are plenty of
things I'd rather do, but I gotta.

ARIA
What did Dom say about Father
Anthony's pageant.

MARCO
Oh...he said he'd think about it.

Marco gives Aria a firm kiss and they both smile lovingly,
then he steals her glass of wine and gulps it down.

ARIA
Is that going to hold you over?

Marco gives her another quick kiss and a sly smile.

MARCO
Definitely not.

He lets go of her, swings the door open, and looks back.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Love you, babe.

ARIA
(teasingly)
Uh, huh.

Marco grins as he leaves, shutting the door behind him.

Aria grins back and shakes her head. She raises her glass to her lips, then realizes it's empty. She sighs with slight disappointment, and turns back to the kitchen.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL CITY STREET - NIGHT

Marco slowly drives his white service van down an empty street lined with industrial buildings. He parks on the street next to a warehouse surrounded by a chain link fence.

After exiting the van, he stops and stares at a plain, gray, brick, two story building a block away with the sign "Garden State Concrete" painted in large block lettering on the side.

He looks cautiously around him to ensure he wasn't followed, then slams the van door shut and walks toward the building.

EXT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - NIGHT

Marco walks to the back of the building and approaches a gate in the fence, where a GATE GUARD (20s), a tall, muscular Italian man stands watch with his hands in his coat.

The guard immediately recognizes Marco and opens the gate.

GATE GUARD
Evening, Marco. Cell phone?

The guard holds out his hand, and Marco hands it over.

GATE GUARD (CONT'D)
Everyone's here. Go right on in.

The guard gestures to a metal door set in the brick façade.

Marco walks through the gate and casually slips a folded fifty-dollar bill in the guard's pocket.

MARCO
How's the old man's mood?

GATE GUARD
Can't tell.

Marco nods approvingly, with a genuine smile.

MARCO
Glad to hear it.

Marco walks down the path to the building.

INT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - NIGHT

Marco enters a drab office space filled with cheap folding tables and chairs.

Tough-looking Italian men line the room, some sitting and some standing, including Marco's partner, Tommy.

A skinny, younger man, RELI (20s), standing in the corner catches Marco's eye. He is noticeably smaller than the rest.

The boss, RIGO (70s), a stocky man with a strong chin and an expensive suit, sits at the front of the room with an unlit cigar in his mouth, feeling his pockets for a lighter.

MARCO
(addresses the room)
A fine turkey fry it is, with all
the best people.

The men mumble back, lacking enthusiasm.

Marco walks directly over to Rigo, pulls out a lighter and reaches over to light his cigar, but Rigo hesitates, looking suspiciously at the lighter.

MARCO (CONT'D)
It's butane, Rigo. Only the best.

Rigo relaxes and allows Marco to light his cigar, then Marco drops the lighter into Rigo's suit jacket pocket.

Marco gives Rigo a friendly pat on the shoulder, sits down next to Tommy and FRANKIE (30s), a husky, gruff man, and gives them both a nudge and a nod.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Hey Tommy, Frankie.

Rigo takes a few satisfying puffs, leans back in his chair and addresses the room.

RIGO

I appreciate the time you're all taking away from your...culinary pursuits.

The men ghoulishly smile back and elbow each other in jest, except for Marco, who keeps a straight face.

RIGO (CONT'D)

Although we have found some success in bringing justice to the men who have betrayed us, we still don't know the location of Judas himself.

MARCO

We've been working night and day for you Rigo, and we're not about to stop. We'll get him.

Sounds of agreement spike up around the room.

RIGO

I know you will, Marco. But we're losing money every day this rebellion survives. What we've been doing isn't working fast enough, so I'm instituting some changes.

Rigo nods to Tommy, who can't hold back a big grin.

RIGO (CONT'D)

To make up for lost business, I'm giving Tommy his own driver and territory.

The men shout congratulations and pat Tommy on the back.

Marco is surprised, but after a moment, he forces a smile and gives Tommy a playful one-armed hug around his neck.

MARCO

You deserve it, friend.

RIGO

And Marco, I have a special job for you, and a special driver I'm putting under your mentorship.

Rigo motions to Reli, the skinny man in the corner. He steps forward and straightens his posture, feigning toughness.

RIGO (CONT'D)

This is my nephew, Aurelio. You may remember him before he went away to those fancy schools in the city.

Reli nods his head once in greeting, and speaks in a higher, more youthful voice than the others.

RELI

Call me Reli. It's a pleasure to be a part of the family business.

RIGO

Marco, Aurelio will be your new driver. I have every confidence you will be able to shape and mold him into another Tommy.

MARCO

I'd say that shape is a few thousand cannolis away.

Tommy touches his round belly and nods in concession.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Honestly, though, Rigo, look at this string bean. I bet he pulls a muscle wiping himself.

The men laugh, but Rigo does not.

RIGO

I'm sure he's capable of pressing down the gas pedal for you.

MARCO

Yeah, but we may have to fatten him up for the brake pedal.

The men laugh again, but Rigo's expression sours.

MARCO (CONT'D)

I'll take good care of him, Rigo.

RIGO

And I have a special mission for the both of you, so listen up.

Rigo looks around the room, making eye contact with his men, shutting up any remaining commotion, then back to Marco.

MARCO

Anything, boss.

RIGO

That attitude is exactly why it has to be you. We have to take out Dante. We have to do it soon. And every option is now on the table.

Rigo addresses the room again.

RIGO (CONT'D)

He knows how to hide and he knows how we work, which is why none of us have been able to find him. So we need to be unpredictable. We need to change our methods.

Rigo pauses to let his words sink in, and surveys the room.

RIGO (CONT'D)

While we don't know where Dante is right now, we do know where he will be soon. Very soon.

MARCO

We're all ears, boss.

RIGO

Every year, without fail, Dante hosts a Christmas dinner with his closest family members. And if I know him well, and if he knows us well, he will feel safe enough to host it again this year, even when we're at war.

MARCO

What're you saying, Rigo?

RIGO

You and Reli will be his guests at the party, and you will bring the sauce. That way, everyone can stop looking for Dante now, and get business back to usual before Christmas.

The room remains silent, with many shocked faces.

MARCO

But we never cook on Christmas.

RIGO

It's a courtesy that Dante no longer deserves.

MARCO

He's got a boy, and three girls.
Please, not in front of them.

RIGO

Back in the old country, you would
do it to the boy, too.

MARCO

It ain't Christian, Rigo.

RIGO

Christ's Judas did Him the courtesy
of checking himself out. Our Judas
stubbornly continues to betray and
it's costing us a great deal of
money. Everyone needs to be back to
earning, not hunting.

Marco reads Rigo's determined stare, and his face saddens.

MARCO

You know I'd follow you into any
trench, boss, but...

Marco looks around the room at the wondering stares, and
locks eyes with Reli, who shows no emotion.

Marco looks to Tommy for reassurance, but Tommy stares back
blankly. He looks back at Rigo, hopefully.

MARCO (CONT'D)

There has to be another way.

RIGO

If you won't do it, I will assume
you are a traitor as well.

MARCO

Rigo, I've never refused a job from
you before, so please, please don't
take this as a sign of disloyalty.
Just three more days. No one knows
Dante better than me. Everyone else
can go back to business, and if I
can't find him before Christmas,
I'll do it your way.

Rigo looks up in contemplation, then over at Reli, then back
down to Marco.

RIGO

On Christmas Eve, you and Aurelio
will bring proof to me that the job
is done. Otherwise...

MARCO

The job will be done.

EXT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - NIGHT

Marco storms out of the building, grabs his phone from the
guard, with Reli quickly pacing along, trying to catch up.

RELI

Marco, wait! Don't we need to
coordinate or something?

Marco stops and turns around to face Reli, annoyed.

MARCO

It's late. Go home.

RELI

We only have three days until
Christmas. Shouldn't we get
started?

Marco sighs and looks around the street.

MARCO

You got a car, Jelly?

RELI

It's Rel-

Reli resists correcting Marco, seeing his sour face.

RELI (CONT'D)

I, uh, yes...I do have a car. The
black one right there.

Reli points to a compact car parked ten feet away with a
rainbow flag bumper sticker on the back.

MARCO

No, that can't be it, that's some
homo's car.

RELI

Oh, uh, no...it...it...it's mine.

MARCO

No, it couldn't be. No professional driver would ever park this close to his destination.

RELI

Sorry, that was a mistake.

MARCO

Yeah, so is the rainbow sticker there. You bat for the other team?

RELI

No, I, uh...
(thinks for a moment)
I put it on there as a disguise?

MARCO

A disguise? We going to a parade?

RELI

Uh...I figured the cops would be less likely to follow us if they thought we were...uh...gay.

Marco looks at him with squinted, judging eyes.

RELI (CONT'D)

You know, cuz there aren't any gay wise-guys, right?

MARCO

You're damn right there aren't.

Marco walks to the passenger side of the car, and Reli spastically rushes to the driver's side.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Take it off. This little matchbox car is gay enough without it.

Reli crouches down and starts peeling the sticker off, while Marco gets in the car.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Hurry up. I got a place we can go.

EXT. MC-O'FLANNIGAN'S BAR - NIGHT

Reli parks the car across the street and a block over from an Irish pub with a green sign that reads: MC-O'FLANNIGAN'S.

Marco is uncomfortably squished into the tiny car, annoyed.

RELI

That can't be a real Irish name.

MARCO

Dante and I lent the owner some money so he wouldn't have to close the place down, and we eventually became part owners when he couldn't pay us back. Dante made him change the name for the grand re-opening, (chuckles) just to mess with him.

RELI

So you own this place?

MARCO

Dante might disagree with that, which is why we're here.

Marco struggles to squeeze out of the car while Reli watches with pleasure. Marco finally stumbles out and slams the door.

Reli exits with ease and watches Marco straighten his jacket.

RELI

Maybe I'll pass on the few thousand cannolis you recommended.

MARCO

Maybe you just need a man's car.

INT. MC-O'FLANNIGAN'S BAR - NIGHT

Marco walks into the bar, strutting with authority. Reli follows close behind, clearly nervous, but trying to hide it.

The bar is mostly empty, with just a few occupied tables. The place is covered in Christmas decorations.

SETH (40s), a thin, red-headed man with a beer-belly and a green apron, stands behind the bar cleaning up.

SETH

Marco, top of the evening to you. We're just about to close up. I'll be with you in just a few minutes.

Marco stops in the waiting area and surveys the room.

MARCO

No, I think you're closing now.

The last few patrons look up at Marco in fear.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Don't worry, everybody. I'll settle your tabs. Just run on home. I'll take care of everything.

The guests all scurry to leave. Seth watches with concern.

After everyone is gone, Marco approaches the bar and leans over it with an intimidating presence.

MARCO (CONT'D)

It's been too long since our last chat, Seth. I only hope there isn't too much to catch up on.

SETH

What do you mean?

MARCO

You seen Dante lately?

Seth hesitates and blinks nervously.

SETH

Lately? I don't know...maybe it's been a while with him, too.

Marco fidgets with a strand of Christmas lights that line the edge of the bar, pulling it up slightly.

MARCO

You seen him more recently than me?

SETH

I, uh...things are so busy here, and I haven't had good help in a long time, and my memory ain't as good as it used to be. I, I...really couldn't say.

MARCO

(jokingly)

The memory of an Irish drunk, huh?

SETH

(chuckles nervously)

Yeah, I guess you could say that.

Marco grabs the collar of Seth's shirt with one hand, pulling him violently over the counter.

With his other hand, Marco rips the strand of lights off the bar and wraps them around Seth's neck.

Reli takes an instinctual step back, surprised by Marco.

MARCO

Let's see if we can sober up that memory a bit.

Marco tugs the strand of lights enough to make Seth struggle and choke. Seth wiggles and paws at the lights.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You support treason, Sethy-boy?

SETH

N-n-never, Marco. What're you-

MARCO

You still doing business with Dante?

SETH

What do you mean?

Marco grabs a round glass ornament from a Christmas tree and smashes it on the side of Seth's head. Seth gurgles a scream.

MARCO

Sober up that memory, Seth. Has Dante come in to collect lately?

SETH

I--I've made payments to you both lots of times, Marco! I don't under-

Marco tightens the lights, causing Seth to struggle harder.

MARCO

(to Reli)

Jelly, grab a couple of bulbs off that tree and help me sober up this waste of skin.

Reli nervously approaches the tree and grabs an ornament in each hand.

Marco smashes Seth's head into the counter.

MARCO (CONT'D)

(to Reli)

C'mon. Hurry up while he's still conscious.

Reli rears his hand back a bit and hits Seth with an ornament, but it doesn't break.

Marco lets up on Seth and looks up at Reli in surprise.

MARCO (CONT'D)
What was that? He ain't your
college boyfriend. Hit him!

With determination, Reli winds up and hits Seth on the top of his head, again failing to break the bulb.

MARCO (CONT'D)
We gotta get you into the weight
room, kid.

With anger, Reli swings again, but this time he misses Seth completely, smashing the bulb over the counter and cutting his own hand on the shards.

Reli holds his hand up, with blood trickling down his forearm, letting out a high-pitched squeal.

MARCO (CONT'D)
What is the matter with you? Ain't
you ever hit a guy before?

In his surprise, Marco lets go of the strand of lights and Seth gasps for air, still writhing on the countertop.

Marco turns back to Seth and leans in closely, speaking in a low, threatening voice.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Listen closely, you pathetic Mick.
This is mine and Rigo's business,
not Dante's, you understand?

Seth nods in agreement, struggling to speak, but can't.

MARCO (CONT'D)
If Dante comes in here again, you
call me. No excuses or I'll deck
these halls with your insides.

Marco walks past Reli, who is clutching his bleeding hand and wincing with pain. Marco shakes his head in disgust, then walks toward the door, gesturing for Reli to follow.

MARCO (CONT'D)
C'mon, Nancy. That's enough for
tonight.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marco parks his van in his driveway, gets out and stares up at his house. It is very poorly decorated with a few strands of lights around the garage and front door.

One end of the strand just above the garage detaches and swings like a pendulum. Marco looks up at the sky.

MARCO

It's the thought that counts,
right?

INT. MARCO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marco, in a white undershirt and Christmas tree boxers, collapses into bed on his back, next to his sleeping wife.

He stares at the ceiling, restlessly, then grabs his cellphone from his nightstand.

On Marco's phone, he texts to DUMBASS:

"Get a better car. TOMORROW."

He sets his phone back down, smiles with satisfaction and closes his eyes.

INT. MARCO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Marco is laying down in the same position as he fell asleep, with a peaceful grin on his face.

The sound of curtains grating along a metal rod breaks the silence and light baths over Marco, causing him to squint.

Aria sets a plate of bacon and eggs on his stomach and walks away, speaking in a commanding tone.

ARIA

Dom's Christmas pageant starts in
two hours. I gotta run a few
errands and I'll meet you there.

With his eyes still squeezed closed, Marco grabs a slice of bacon and gnaws on it, but makes a face of disgust.

MARCO

Ugh, how do you mess up bacon?

He puts the bacon back and shouts as Aria leaves.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Thanks, honey. See you there.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DAY

Marco fumbles with his keys as he approaches his van.

As he reaches for the door handle, he is startled by Logan, the little boy next door, standing a few feet away.

MARCO
Logan!
(breathes heavily)
Why you always gotta sneak up on me
like that?

LOGAN
(proudly)
I know what you are.

MARCO
What do you mean you know what I
am? It ain't a mystery.
(points at his van)
I'm a building inspector. It ain't
glamorous, but it pays for this
house next your creepy a-

Marco stops himself from swearing at the kid, as Logan grows increasingly menacing.

MARCO (CONT'D)
What's the matter with you?

LOGAN
You're in the mob. Hired muscle.

MARCO
You don't think any Italians got an
honest job?

LOGAN
I'm a quarter Sicilian.

MARCO
That must be the scary quarter.

LOGAN
You sound just like the guys on
Goodfellas, and you only work at
night.

MARCO
How's a kid like you watching
Goodfellas?

LOGAN
And you have blood on your coat.

Logan points to the end of Marco's sleeve. Marco holds it up to look and sees a few splatters of blood.

MARCO
It's tomato sauce.

LOGAN
What did you have?

MARCO
Spaghetti.

LOGAN
What restaurant?

MARCO
Leftovers. My wife's cooking.

Marco leans in and speaks in a low voice.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I had to microwave it, if you must
know. And I'm about to microwave
you if you don't run along.

Logan turns and walks back home.

LOGAN
(in a Goodfella's accent)
I got my eye on you, my eye on you.

Marco chuckles in amusement as Logan walks away.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

The booming of loud brass band music can be heard from the quiet parking lot in front of Dom's middle school.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Marco and Aria sit squished together in the crowded auditorium watching students march onstage with a colorful, sparkly banner that reads: "Happy Wintertime."

Marco watches in horror as Aria watches with glee.

MARCO
I thought this was supposed to be a
Christmas pageant.

ARIA
It is. Sort of.

MARCO
When did Christmas turn gay?

Several parents seated around them turn in disgust. One
PARENT (40), in glasses and a business suit, responds.

PARENT #1
That's offensive.

MARCO
(insincerely)
Oh, I'm sorry. Is your son gay?

PARENT #1
Well, no. But you can't say that.

A line of students dressed in flamboyant marching band
uniforms strut onstage doing jazz hands.

MARCO
Jazz hands?!

Aria elbows Marco and shoots him a disapproving glare.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I know the three wise men and all
those shepherds didn't come bearing
jazz hands for baby Jesus.

ARIA
Stop. You're ruining the show.

MARCO
I think the jazz hands are ruining
the show.

Aria stands up, grabs Marco by the arm and pulls him along.

ARIA
Come on, you're making a scene.

MARCO
(shouts)
Where's baby Jesus? Mary? Joseph?
Anyone with a towel over their
head?

Aria shoves him more harshly and they shuffle down the aisle.

ARIA
Please, stop.

MARCO
Alright, I'm going.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Aria pulls Marco through the doors and onto the sidewalk.

MARCO
We're going to miss Dom's part!

ARIA
No, you're going to miss it.

MARCO
What's the matter, don't you see a
problem with all of that?

ARIA
It's a school pageant and it's an
all-inclusive holiday program.

MARCO
It's the anti-holiday program. They
can't even use that word. It's a
'Happy Winter' show.

ARIA
You picked a hell of a time to
fight for Christmas rights, Marco.

MARCO
Somebody's got to. I mean-

Marco suddenly turns deeply sorrowful.

MARCO (CONT'D)
We can't lose Christmas, Aria.

Aria chases her anger away and lovingly hugs him.

ARIA
That show doesn't mean we lose
Christmas, love.

MARCO
Maybe not, but...it feels like...

ARIA
What's going on with you?

Marco kisses Aria's forehead.

MARCO
I'm sorry. It's nothing. I'll be
alright.

ARIA
Dom can be in the church pageant,
where I'm sure there will be plenty
of people onstage with towels on
their heads.

MARCO
(laughing)
That'd be nice.

ARIA
Let's get back inside, but you
gotta promise me you'll go talk to
Father Anthony about this...and
whatever else is bothering you, ok?

MARCO
Alright. I could probably use a
couple o' Hail Marys.

Arm in arm, Aria and Marco turn to go back inside, but a
SECURITY GUARD stops them.

SECURITY GUARD
Hold on. You can go back in, ma'am,
but not him.

Marco puts his hands up in concession.

MARCO
Fair enough.
(to Aria)
Video it for me?

ARIA
Of course.

MARCO
But try not to get any jazz hands
in the shot.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Marco approaches the massive stone church, pauses and looks up at the sky with his hands together in prayer.

MARCO
Please, no bolts of lightning, ok,
Lord?

He pats his clothes down with both hands.

MARCO (CONT'D)
See, no guns, alright?

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Marco nervously walks in but calms down to the singing of a choir of mixed ages. He watches for a moment, entranced.

To the side of the choir, Father Anthony perks up as he sees Marco and quickly walks over.

FATHER ANTHONY
Marco, bless you for coming.

Marco snaps out of his trance and puts on a straight face.

MARCO
Uh, yeah...hey Uncle Anthony. Aria
asked me to.

FATHER ANTHONY
Whatever the motivation, I'm glad
you're here. But it's Father
Anthony in here, if you don't mind.

MARCO
I don't think your brother would
approved of me calling you father.

FATHER ANTHONY
Your father would be proud of you
for coming here, no matter what you
called me, but uncle will be fine.

MARCO
Is that the choir for your pageant?

FATHER ANTHONY
It's one of them.

MARCO

It's nice. I'm gonna get Dom to join. He needs it after today.

FATHER ANTHONY

How was his school pageant?

MARCO

Well, that's sort of why I'm here. I may need a short confession.

FATHER ANTHONY

Sure, come with me.

Anthony puts a hand on Marco's shoulder and points to a confession booth made of dark, ornate wood.

CONFESSION BOOTH

Anthony and Marco sit on opposite sides of the booth, with a black screen in-between that partially obscures vision.

FATHER ANTHONY (CONT'D)

So you shouted out that the pageant was gay?

MARCO

I shouted out 'where's baby Jesus' but, yeah, I probably should have kept my mouth shut. It being a public school and all, I guess they can't be too religious. But come on, jazz hands and glitter?

FATHER ANTHONY

You know, we have a fine school here that's run by the Church.

MARCO

I'd the hypocrite of hypocrites sending my son to a Catholic school and telling him to pray every day.

FATHER ANTHONY

We're all hypocrites here, Marco. Anyone who espouses a high moral code is going to break it. The only way to avoid hypocrisy is to abandon that code, and become one of the animals.

MARCO

I've been called an animal before, and it was probably true.

FATHER ANTHONY

People end up here when they break
their code, and it eases the mind
and the soul to talk about it.

MARCO

I'm only here for the pageant thing
cuz Aria asked. I got a code and I
haven't broken it, yet.

FATHER ANTHONY

It can't be a very high code if
it's never been broken.

MARCO

(angrily)

I'm not talkin about your little
kiddy-code here where you just
gotta repeat a poem a few times and
you're saved again. If I break my
code, that's the end of the line.
No forgiveness. No mercy.

FATHER ANTHONY

Your god doesn't sound so nice.

MARCO

I'm not talking about God, Uncle.

FATHER ANTHONY

Are you sure about that?

MARCO

How many Hail Mary's or whatnot for
the gay pageant thing?

FATHER ANTHONY

None today. Come back when you're
ready to really talk.

MARCO

Not likely, but you have a good one
(mockingly)
Uncle-Father.

Marco exits the booth and walks away. Anthony exits and
stands still, calling out to him.

FATHER ANTHONY

It was wonderful seeing you in here
again, Marco. You always seemed at
peace here as a child. I'll always
be here when you need to talk.

INT. MARCO'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Marco, Aria and Dom eat pasta at the dining room table.

DOM
So, Dad, did you enjoy the pageant
today?

Dom looks up at his dad, struggling to hold in a smirk.

MARCO
I always enjoy supporting you in
anything you do.

Dom removes his phone from his pocket, and Marco scolds him.

MARCO (CONT'D)
No phones at the dinner table, you
know that.

DOM
You're going to want to see this.

Dom hands the phone to Marco with a video playing.

ON DOM'S CELL PHONE:

The video is of Marco's outburst at the pageant taken by
someone in the same row as him, down the aisle.

Marco shouts "Where's baby Jesus..." and Aria pushes him down
the aisle. The video ends as he is pushed into the camera.

BACK TO SCENE

DOM (CONT'D)
It has a lot of views. A lot of
'likes'...and some 'dislikes,' too.

Marco hands the phone back and looks at Aria, who's giggling.

MARCO
Sorry, bud.

DOM
You weren't wrong about the
pageant, it was pretty g--

ARIA
You don't have to say it.

MARCO

Well, I talked to Uncle Anthony today, and I really think you oughtta be in the church pageant. They actually sing about Christmas.

DOM

I don't want to sing anymore, Dad.

MARCO

That's crazy talk. It's a beautiful thing to share with the world. Something I could never do.

DOM

I don't even know what you do.

MARCO

This isn't about me, Dom. You're doing the pageant. We need a little more Christmas spirit around here.

DOM

To go with the terrible decorations outside?

ARIA

Dominick Milazzo! Don't you dare speak to your father that way. Get upstairs and do your homework.

Dom quickly obeys without another word and scurries off.

Marco and Aria sit in silence, picking at their food, when Marco's phone buzzes. He checks the text.

ON MARCO'S CELL PHONE

A text message from DUMBASS:

"I'm outside."

BACK TO MARCO

MARCO

I gotta run. Thanks for dinner.

Marco gives Aria a quick kiss and leaves the table.

Aria sadly watches him leave, alone, holding a glass of wine.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reli is leaning against a boxy, lime-green Scion XB, with a proud look on his face. Marco freezes at the sight.

MARCO

What the hell is that?

RELI

Our new ride. The cops will never be looking for us in this.

MARCO

The cops are off pulling over speeders and the feds think the mafia disappeared years ago. They're all looking for the next serial killer so they can go on TV, write books and get famous.

INT. DOM'S ROOM - SAME

Dom hears his father chatting outside and abandons his homework to watch him from the window.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - SAME

Marco looks the car over in disbelief.

MARCO

This the only color you could find?

RELI

It's all I could afford last minute.

MARCO

You paid money for this?

RELI

How else was I supposed to get us a new car?

MARCO

How else are you supposed to get a car without paying for it? Is that really your question?

Reli shrugs and Marco walks to the car, shaking his head.

INT. DOM'S ROOM - SAME

Dom watches as Marco and Reli drive off.

DOM
Where do you go at night?

Dom notices Logan hiding behind Marco's van and the two boys lock eyes.

Logan motions for Dom to come outside. Dom is startled and just stares back at Logan, who continues to motion.

Dom gives Logan a thumbs up, mouths 'OK,' then scurries away.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Dom sneaks down the stairs towards the front door, stops halfway down and listens, hearing his mother doing dishes.

He creeps the rest of the way down the stairs and quietly sneaks outside wearing only his pajamas.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dom steps onto the front porch and looks around.

LOGAN
(whispers)
Over here.

Dom sees Logan still hiding behind the van, and runs to him.

DOM
What are you doing out here? Spying on my dad?

LOGAN
Of course. He's a mobster.

DOM
(shivering)
What're you talking about?

LOGAN
He exhibits all the behaviors.

DOM
You know all my dad's behaviors?

LOGAN

I can't find his business anywhere online and he leaves your house late almost every night. Don't you want to find out what he does and where he goes?

Dom looks around nervously, rubbing his arms and shivering.

DOM

Yeah. I do.

LOGAN

Ok, then you gotta do exactly as I tell you.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Marco and Reli sit in their parked car, staring at a condo on a quiet city street.

INT. RELI'S CAR - NIGHT

Reli is eating a hamburger and Marco watches the street.

RELI

So why are we looking out for this chick again?

MARCO

You couldn't eat before you left?

RELI

It's a stakeout. I figured I'd have time to burn.

MARCO

This isn't a stakeout, we're just waiting for Violet to get home.

Reli finishes the last bite and licks his fingers.

RELI

And what's her deal?

MARCO

Ugh. Eat a mint and throw that smelly trash out the window.

RELI

I'm not going to litter.

MARCO

You want to off a guy but you won't litter?

RELI

What'd the environment do to us?

Marco rolls his eyes.

MARCO

Dante used to see Violet on the side. We're looking into any possible lead, into places we haven't looked, yet.

RELI

Is she hot?

MARCO

Mr. Rainbow Sticker wants to know if Violet is hot?

RELI

I'm not gay! I put that sticker on my car when I was in college for street cred.

MARCO

Gay street cred?

RELI

Homophobic, much?

MARCO

Why would I be afraid of gay guys? What're they gonna do, jazz hands me?

Marco does wild jazz hands in the air.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Actually, maybe they would.

Marco shakes one of his hands with the jazz hands motion, but this time in a cupping motion as if playing with testicles.

RELI

Real funny.

Marco laughs at himself.

RELI (CONT'D)

I was trying to date this bi-chick,
so I put the sticker on my car to
show my support, and it turned out
to be a huge plus for my social
life.

MARCO

Did you get the girl?

RELI

Eventually.

MARCO

I suppose guys have done worse to
get a girl.

The guys sit in silence for a moment, watching the house.

MARCO (CONT'D)

I was Dante's driver the first time
I met Violet.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

IN A BOOTH

Marco and several Italian guys sit in a corner booth drinking
beer in low, red and purple lights.

All the guys are entertained except DANTE (40s), with shiny,
slicked back hair, who leans back, bored and unimpressed.

MARCO (V.O.)

We used to go to this one strip
club all the time, and one day
Dante just had a enough of it, I
guess.

Dante makes a call on his cellphone, perking up with joy.

MARCO (V.O.)

He called this girl he said he had
been seeing and asked her to come
over. He said she was some
incredible dancer.

THE BAR

Dante slips a muscular BOUNCER (20-30) standing next to the
bar some folded up cash and walks away.

MARCO

He even paid off the bouncer to let his girl give us a dance, since she didn't work there.

IN A PRIVATE ROOM

All the guys except Dante watch in horror as VIOLET (20s), an obese woman with a pretty face and a big smile, swings a jacket in circles over her head and starts to dance.

MARCO (V.O.)

In comes Violet, ready to rock our worlds, but the problem is, this lady couldn't be less than three-hundred pounds.

RELI (V.O.)

No way.

Still wearing a t-shirt and jeans, Violet bends over and shakes her butt in Dante's face, to his great pleasure.

MARCO (V.O.)

So she's getting really into it and her massive caboose is inches from Dante's face...

Violet unbuttons her jeans with her butt still in Dante's face, who's excitement builds.

MARCO (V.O.)

She starts to take her jeans off, still shaking it in his face, and she just totally rips one off.

Dante's face turns sick, as if he's going to throw up.

END FLASHBACK

INT. RELI'S CAR - NIGHT

Reli is in shock as he watches Marco tell his story.

MARCO

I'm telling you, it was like a trumpet sounding reveille and seconds later...

Marco doubles over, laughing.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Dante totally pukes all over this chick's behind.

Marco continues to laugh hard out loud while Reli continues to look on in disbelief.

After a moment, Marco calms himself down and sits back up.

MARCO (CONT'D)

And that's why we call Dante "Ahab."

Reli fakes a laugh, pretending to get the joke.

MARCO (CONT'D)

But Dante claimed that from that day on he swore off whales.

RELI

So why are we here now?

MARCO

He couldn't stay away, even after that. Although the guy is very good to his family, he's a depraved sicko when it comes to sleeping around.

RELI

But fat chicks?

MARCO

Anyone sleeps around as much as Dante needs to try anything and everything to keep it interesting.

Reli shifts in his seat as he sees a rotund silhouette approaching the front door of the condo.

RELI

That's gotta be her. Let's go.

MARCO

Hold on. Let's wait until she's inside. We don't want to spook her and draw attention.

They watch silently as Violet enters the building, then simultaneously exit the vehicle.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Marco struts calmly toward the condo, moving faster than Reli, even though Reli is anxiously speed-walking.

EXT. VIOLET'S CONDO - NIGHT

Marco knocks on the door and stands still while Reli shifts in place and shoots his eyes around, nervously.

MARCO

Will you please chill out?

Violet calls out through the door.

VIOLET

Who's there?

MARCO

A friend of a friend.

Violet cracks the door open, peaks through, then slams it shut. Loud stomping can be heard as she runs away.

MARCO (CONT'D)

She's heading for the back door,
run around and stop her.

Reli sprints into the dark alley in-between the buildings, while Marco casually follows.

EXT. VIOLET'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Reli hops over the fence to Violet's small backyard and skids to a stop by the steps to her back door, holding his hand up with a halting command.

RELI

(breathing heavily)

Stop, Violet! We just want to talk!

Violet is running full speed at the screen door and does not slow down.

Marco opens the fence gate and strolls into the backyard in time to see Violet barrel through the screen door.

Reli, frozen in panic, is steamrolled by Violet, who knocks him to the ground.

Violet trips over a garden hose, rolls like a ball over Reli and lands on her back with her breath knocked out.

Marco watches with jaw dropped, but quickly comes to his senses as Violet and Reli lay nearly motionless.

Marco surveys the neighbor's windows to see if anyone else is watching. Seeing no one, he pulls out his silenced pistol, stands over Violet and points it in her face.

MARCO
You scream, you die.

Violet nods silently in agreement.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Let's get in the house.

INT. VIOLET'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Violet sits in the middle of a sofa, Reli sits in an easy chair nursing a bloody nose with a tissue, and Marco sits on the coffee table opposite Violet, with his gun in hand.

VIOLET
I honestly haven't seen Dante in weeks, and if I did, I wouldn't take him back. We're through.

MARCO
Oh, yeah? Got a lot of guys lined up to get flattened?

VIOLET
(offended)
Rude.

MARCO
Who's Dante seeing now.

VIOLET
Besides his wife?

MARCO
Naturally.

VIOLET
Why do you care? I heard you're not friends anymore.

MARCO
Are you protecting him?

VIOLET
He can fry in hell for all I care.

MARCO

Great. Then help me find him.

VIOLET

Well...I don't want him dead.

MARCO

How else can he fry in hell?

Violet grows worried and looks around the room, nervously.

Marco stands up and points his gun at her.

MARCO (CONT'D)

I can send you there now to wait for him. Or you can tell me who he's seeing now. I know you know. A woman scorned always knows.

Violet sinks back into the cushions and starts to cry.

VIOLET

Ok. Ok. He's dating The Viperess.

MARCO

The Viperess? The strip club owner?

Reli leans forward with interest.

VIOLET

You know any other Viperesses?

Marco moves his gun in closer.

MARCO

Don't get smart with me. Are you sure he's with her?

VIOLET

I'm sure. I've seen them together.

Marco holsters his gun inside his coat, motions to Reli to get up, and walks to the door.

MARCO

You know the drill, Violet. We were never here, and if I find out you lied to me, I'll be back. You may now return to your regularly scheduled routine of hamburgers and ice cream.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Marco and Reli sit back down in their car and Reli removes the tissue from his nose.

RELI

Are we going to the same strip club
where you first met Violet?

Reli's nose starts to bleed again and he quickly catches the drip with his tissue, while Marco answers his buzzing phone.

MARCO

You better have news for me, Seth.
(listens)
He's there now? Good boy. Hold him
as long as you can.

Marco hangs up and slaps the dashboard with excitement.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Dante's at Mc-O'Flannigan's. Let's
move.

Reli squeals the tires and cranks the wheel, but the car turns too slow and he slams the corner of the bumper into the parked car in front of them.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You had to buy a shipping container
on wheels?

Reli is flustered and hesitates to move.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Alright, switch with me. I'm
driving.

The two switch places in the car, and Reli looks dejected.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Cheer up. We'll add 'hit and run'
to your bonafides.

Marco backs up, pulls out carefully, then steps on the gas.

EXT. MC-O'FLANNIGAN'S BAR - NIGHT

Marco slowly rounds the corner a block from the Irish pub and parks in the shadows.

MARCO

Let's move.

Marco and Reli start to open their doors when they see Dante and another THUG exit the pub towards a parked black sedan.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Hold up.

RELI

What do you mean? We gotta move.
This is our chance.

MARCO

No. It's too late to ambush 'em and
we don't want a high speed chase.

RELI

We'll lose them if we don't-

MARCO

No, we won't. We'll tail them
quietly. It's your green
abomination's time to shine.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Dante and his driver pull off down the street and Marco and Reli follow a distance behind.

INSIDE RELI'S CAR

RELI

What's our plan?

MARCO

For you to sit back and watch the
master at work.

Reli complies, sitting silently, but fidgeting nervously.

Marco gradually speeds up until they are side-by-side with Dante's car.

Marco and Reli lock eyes with the driver. Both are aghast.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Frankie?

Frankie looks over at Dante with surprise.

FRANKIE

It's Marco!

MARCO

Frankie's with Dante! Traitor!

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE LOT - NIGHT

SIDEWALK

Marco speeds up and swerves in front of Dante's car, forcing him off the road in front of a large Christmas tree lot.

Both cars slam on their brakes, skidding to a stop, with Dante's car slamming into the side of Marco's.

Dante quickly exits his car and disappears into the tree lot.

Marco jumps out of his car with his silenced pistol drawn and fires a few shots after Dante, but misses.

Reli scrambles to climb across the front seats to exit through the driver's side, as his door is blocked.

MARCO

(to Reli)

You stay here and watch Frankie.

RELI

Yeah, yeah. I got him.

Frankie opens his door and stumbles out, but freezes as Marco fires a few shots into his door.

MARCO

(to Frankie)

You're not going anywhere!

IN THE TREES

Marco sprints off into the Christmas tree lot.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Dante! This ends tonight, you hear!

Marco weaves in and out of the trees, desperately searching.

Dante shouts from a distance and Marco stops, trying to gauge his whereabouts.

DANTE

I'm just trying to be my own man,
Marco! You should be yours. Just
walk away.

Marco moves in a different direction, his head on a swivel.

MARCO

We're part of a family. You don't
get to be your own man.

(MORE)

MARCO (CONT'D)

And you know what happens to us if we don't follow Rigo's orders.

Marco stops again as he hears Dante's voice change directions.

DANTE

Rigo's lost his touch. He's gotten greedy and abandoned his ethics.

MARCO

I don't need an ethics lesson from a traitor.

DANTE

Get out before it's too late for you, Marco. You're a good guy.

Marco continues to run through the trees, but after a moment, he gives up, bending over to catch his breath.

After a few gasps, he stands up and yells.

MARCO

Dante!

SIDEWALK

Marco returns to the scene of the accident to see Reli sitting on the pavement, leaning up against his car with a bloody lip and a swollen eye.

RELI

Frankie got away.

MARCO

Why didn't you shoot him?

Reli looks up at Marco with a guilty look and shrugs.

MARCO (CONT'D)

(in disbelief)

No.

Marco tosses his hands in the air and spins around once in frustration.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Do you even own a gun?

Reli looks at the ground in shame and doesn't answer.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Pick your bloody carcass up off the ground. We gotta get outta here.

Marco opens the driver's side door. Reli struggles to rise.

RELI

Won't they come back for their car?

Marco loses his temper.

MARCO

It's not their car, Jelly-boy!
We're criminals. We steal cars and
we carry guns. If you don't like
it, you can go back to college to
chase skirts.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marco, still driving, with Reli nursing his wounds in the passenger seat, parks in front of his house.

MARCO

Meet me in the morning around nine.
We got a special visit to make.
(sarcastically)
You gonna survive?

RELI

I'll be there. With a new car.

MARCO

Good boy.

Marco exits the car and goes in the house, while Reli switches seats and drives away.

Logan steps out from behind Marco's van with a walkie-talkie.

LOGAN

Dom?
(listens)
Dom, you there?

INT. DOM'S ROOM - SAME

Dom wakes up to the sound of the walkie-talkie under his pillow and answers it.

DOM
Umm...copy...or Roger...or
whatever.

LOGAN (V.O.)
He's home. Make your move, then
radio silence until morning.

DOM
Yeah, ok.

Dom puts the walkie-talkie back under his pillow, walks to the door and peaks through a small opening.

Marco comes up the stairs and passes by Dom's door and down the hallway.

Dom waits a moment and then sneaks down the stairs.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Dom sneaks quietly down the stairs and over to Marco's coat that is draped over a chair by the front door.

He pulls a small plastic, square computer chip from his pajamas' pocket, slips it into Marco's coat pocket and quickly disappears up the stairs.

EXT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - NIGHT

Reli's car is parked a block away as he walks to the big, gray brick building.

INT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - NIGHT

Rigo is relaxing, smoking a cigar and watching news on TV when Reli walks in and sits down next to him, exhausted.

RIGO
Long night, kid? You look terrible.

RELI
We almost got Dante.

Rigo leans forward, grabs the remote and turns the TV off.

RIGO
Almost?

RELI
I think Marco let him go.

Rigo leans back and takes a puff of his cigar, thinking.

RIGO

Does he seem sympathetic to him?

RELI

I don't know. He did tell me a story from when he was Dante's driver, and seemed a little nostalgic, maybe.

RIGO

Interesting.

(puffs cigar)

Well, let's not jump to any conclusions, yet, but I'd like you to watch him more closely, after hours.

RELI

I don't know if I'm cut out for this, Uncle Rigo.

RIGO

You're a smart kid. I have faith in you. Go get some sleep. Everyone goes through a few growing pains in this business.

INT. MARCO'S BEDROOM - DAY

Marco wakes up with a plate of bacon and eggs on his stomach, to the sound of Aria opening the drapes.

ARIA

Dom isn't feeling well today, so I'm leaving him home.

Marco struggles to open his eyes in the sunlight, but fails.

MARCO

Oh, yeah? What's wrong?

ARIA

He says he was tossing and turning all night with a headache, but he's asleep now, after some melatonin.

MARCO

What time is it?

ARIA

Eight-thirty.

Marco pops up, grabbing his plate just before it spills.

ARIA (CONT'D)
What's the matter?

MARCO
I got an errand to run.

ARIA
Now? But I have last minute shopping to do.

MARCO
On Christmas Eve?

ARIA
I wanted to give something to Father Anthony at the pageant tonight, to thank him.

MARCO
Alright. Dom will be ok in bed by himself for a bit.

ARIA
Ok, but don't be long.

Aria leaves the room and Marco holds up his breakfast plate, looking at it for a moment, then perks up as an idea strikes.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DAY

Marco walks across his lawn, carrying his plate of bacon and eggs, to the new black luxury sedan with Reli in the cockpit.

Marco sits down in the passenger seat, settles in, sniffs and looks around the car.

MARCO
Is this Rigo's new car?

RELI
(embarrassed)
Yeah. He let me borrow it for today.

MARCO
Alright, we'll try not to wreck it.

RELI
Yes, please.

MARCO

And if we do, I'll teach you how to steal another one.

RELI

Breakfast on the go this morning?

MARCO

Oh, this isn't for me.

RELI

That's so nice of-

Reli reaches over for the bacon, but Marco slaps his hand.

MARCO

It's not for you, either. Drive.

RELI

You got it.

Reli slowly pulls away.

MARCO

You're not gonna drive like a grandma the whole way, are you, Jelly?

INT. DOM'S ROOM - DAY

Dom is woken up with a jolt by the sound of the walkie-talkie under his pillow, and fumbles around to answer it.

LOGAN (V.O.)

Your dad's on the move.

DOM

But it's daytime.

LOGAN (V.O.)

I know, but he's with his partner. Meet me outside, A.S.A.P.

DOM

Fine.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DAY

Dom exits through the garage and wheels his bike over to Logan, who is already straddling his and waiting.

Logan holds up a cellphone with a map on it.

LOGAN

I'm tracking him on G.P.S. They're not far, but we need to hurry. Mobsters are in and out of a job quickly.

Logan mounts the phone in a holder on his handlebars.

DOM

Can you please stop calling my dad a mobster until we know for sure?

LOGAN

Fair enough. Follow me.

Logan rides off quickly down the street, with Dom in tow.

EXT. FRANKIE'S GIRLFRIEND'S HOUSE - DAY

A well-kept, white, one-story house sits on the corner of a suburban street with Rigo's car parked in front.

INT. FRANKIE'S GIRLFRIEND'S ROOM - DAY

Frankie is fast asleep on a king-sized bed with white sheets in a room with white furniture and white curtains.

Marco sits down on the bed next to Frankie, holding his breakfast plate, and Reli stands off to the side.

Marco gently nudges Frankie.

MARCO

Wakey, wakey.

Frankie doesn't react, so Marco nudges harder.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Wakey, wakey, eggs and bakey.

Frankie opens one eye, sees Marco and sits up like a bolt.

Marco punches him in the nose, knocking him back down flat.

MARCO (CONT'D)

No sudden moves, Frankie.

Marco holds his nose, which is dripping blood, and grabs a sheet to stop the bleeding.

FRANKIE

What're you doing here?

MARCO
We brought you breakfast.

FRANKIE
You what?

MARCO
Go ahead, eat while we chat.

Marco holds out the plate for Frankie. He hesitates to take it, but Marco persists, nodding until he does.

MARCO (CONT'D)
A shame about those nice white sheets.
(looks around the room)
You really got a vision of heaven in this pearly white room. I almost need sunglasses to stand it.

Frankie holds the plate, not eating, but staring at Marco.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Try the bacon. My wife made it.

Frankie slowly brings a slice of bacon to his mouth and nibbles off a small bite, and almost immediately cringes.

MARCO (CONT'D)
It's terrible, isn't it? The woman is a maestro with pasta, but her breakfast is nearly inedible. It's a phenomenon. But, I eat it every morning and in our fifteen years of marriage I've never said a thing. That's love for you. That's loyalty.

EXT. FRANKIE'S GIRLFRIEND'S HOUSE - SAME

Logan and Dom roll to a stop next to Rigo's car. Logan looks in the driver's side, front window.

LOGAN
That's the car they left in. No guns, dead bodies, or even blood.

DOM
(sarcastically)
That's a relief.

Logan wheels his bike over to a large tree in the yard and props it up, and Dom follows.

LOGAN

I think I see someone moving
inside. Come on.

Logan tip-toes up to a window and crouches down. Dom
hesitates.

DOM

I...I don't know.

Logan waves him over with enthusiasm, and Dom relents.

The two boys slowly peak in through a crack in the white
curtains.

DOM (CONT'D)

They're watching someone eat
breakfast in bed.

LOGAN

Yeah, but his nose is bloody.

INT. FRANKIE'S GIRLFRIEND'S ROOM - SAME

FRANKIE

Marco, I don't know what you're-

MARCO

Keep eating. You're going to taste
what love is at least once in your
miserable life, even if it is in
the end.

FRANKIE

It doesn't have to be this way.

MARCO

Unfortunately, our little lesson on
love and loyalty has to happen in
your girlfriend's room, and not
with your wife.

FRANKIE

How did you find...where is she?

MARCO

I haven't seen her. And my dumbass
partner made two phone calls to
find out who you're sleeping with.

FRANKIE

Please leave her out of-

Frankie sits back up and Marco immediately punches him back down.

EXT. FRANKIE'S GIRLFRIEND'S HOUSE - SAME

Logan and Dom flinch as they watch Marco bust Frankie in the nose.

LOGAN

Whoa, you're dad can really throw a punch.

DOM

Holy crap, what was that for?

The boys peak in again and watch Marco deliver another jab.

LOGAN

He's letting him have it. Maybe he's hogging all the bacon. If so, your dad is totally justified.

DOM

I can't watch this anymore.

Dom scurries over to his bike and wheels it to the curb.

LOGAN

But we...ok. Let's go.

Logan grabs his bike and the two boys ride away.

INT. FRANKIE'S GIRLFRIEND'S ROOM - SAME

The plate of food is scattered across the bed and Frankie is laying flat, clutching his nose with the bedsheet.

MARCO

What's it going to be, Frankie? A nuke or a simmer?

FRANKIE

I'm no rat, I...I...I won't-

MARCO

This is your penance for betraying Rigo and running off with Dante. It ain't ratting when you're atoning for treason.

Frankie lets go of the sheet and looks back and forth between Marco and Reli, with fear in his eyes.

FRANKIE

He's been staying with The Viperess. I think she has a room set up for him above her club, or maybe in the basement. I've never been there...just heard him talk.

MARCO

(solemnly)

Thanks, Frankie. You did the right thing.

Marco pulls out his gun and aims it at Frankie's face.

FRANKIE

Wait...I'd like an open casket.

MARCO

Sure.

Marco shifts his aim and shoots him three times in the chest.

Reli stands still, horrified, as Marco holsters his gun in his coat and walks to the bedroom door.

RELI

Just like that?

MARCO

(sadly)

Congratulations. You're a first-time accomplice to murder...of one of my friends. And don't think that can't be you some day if you choose not to follow orders...even if you're the boss's nephew.

RELI

And we just...leave him?

MARCO

I'm not the cleanup crew.

Marco walks out as Reli stares at Frankie's dead body.

MARCO (CONT'D)

C'mon. I gotta get home to my son.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DAY

Marco and Reli sit in Rigo's sedan outside Marco's home.

MARCO

I've got some personal things to attend to this afternoon, and we'll meet up again when it gets dark.

RELI

It's Christmas Eve. Shouldn't we-?

MARCO

We know where Dante's hiding now. We have time, and you need to clear your head.

RELI

Yeah, but if we know where he is, let's go get him before he-

MARCO

Listen, I am not killing on Christmas, got it? I will not let the opportunity to get Dante pass us by, but now is not the time.

RELI

Alright, yeah. We'll meet later.

Marco exits the car and walks up his driveway, where he is startled by Logan, who's lurking behind his van.

LOGAN

So how many people did you kill today?

MARCO

Holy sh-, do you live behind my van?

LOGAN

How many?

Marco leans in close to Logan, with a vicious face.

MARCO

No one under ten...yet.

Logan is frightened and runs back home. Marco watches with a straight face.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Dom is sitting on the stairs with his head on his knees and arms wrapped around them when Marco enters the house.

MARCO

Oh, hey Dom. Sorry I wasn't here when you got up. I had to run an errand. You feeling better?

Dom looks up with tears in his eyes and Marco sits down.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Whoa, bud, what's the matter?

DOM

I...Logan and I...we followed you and...

Gloom overwhelms Marco's face.

DOM (CONT'D)

We saw you beating someone up. Why, Dad?

MARCO

You saw me hit him, huh? And then...?

DOM

We were scared and ran away.

Marco sighs with great relief.

MARCO

I, uh...I'm really sorry you had to see that, Dom. I just...I was having a disagreement with him, and...I know I didn't handle it the right way.

DOM

What kind of disagreement?

MARCO

I...don't think you would understand. I lost my temper, and I set a bad example for you. I'm really sorry.

DOM

What do you do for work, Dad?

MARCO

I put food on the table, son.

DOM

I...I know, but-.

MARCO

Have you eaten all day?

Dom shakes his head 'no.'

MARCO (CONT'D)

Let's go get a couple of burgers
and we'll talk some more.

INT. MARCO'S VAN - DAY

Marco and Dom sit in the parked van in an empty parking lot
eating hamburgers and drinking milkshakes.

MARCO

I doubt your friends understand
anything there is to know about
accounting or finances, or
lawyering, or whatnot. They can
spout off their dad's job title
during show-and-tell, but it ends
there.

Dom chews his burger and stares out the windshield.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You got any kids in school with a
dad in the Army, Navy, Marines?

DOM

Yeah, a know a couple.

MARCO

I bet their dads have had to do a
little more than punch a guy in the
nose.

DOM

Isn't it different when it's war
and there are, like, generals and
bad guys and stuff?

MARCO

Soldiers follow orders and
sometimes have to do very
unpleasant things. Do you think
that when a bomb drops on a city,
that it only kills the bad guys?

DOM

You're not making this any better.

MARCO

I'm a soldier, Dom. And I can promise you that I have never hurt a good guy.

DOM

Never?

MARCO

And I never will.

Dom finally looks at his dad and cracks a faint smile.

DOM

So...I can assume you aren't a building inspector?

MARCO

Yeah. You could assume that. And please know that I will always do what's best for you and Mom, and I'll always love you both.

DOM

Ok, Dad.

MARCO

Now finish up that shake on the way to the church. Your pageant practice starts soon.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Marco climbs up the steps of the church with his hand on the back of Dom's neck, horsing around as they walk.

As they go through the door, Reli creeps up the steps behind them, paranoid, looking over his shoulder.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Father Anthony greets Marco and Dom as they enter.

FATHER ANTHONY

I'm so glad you could make it, Dom.

DOM

Hey, Uncle Anthony. I'm not sure about this. Isn't it your last practice before the performance?

FATHER ANTHONY

You'll fit in and catch up just fine. It's all very traditional Christmas music. Go on back and join the choir.

MARCO

Have a good time, bud. Your mom will pick you up after, and I'll see you at the pageant tonight.

Dom walks by him and Anthony stoops over to his level.

FATHER ANTHONY

And Dom, if you don't know the song, mouth the words 'watermelon, cantelope.' It'll look like you know what you're doing.

Dom smiles and runs off to join the choir.

Reli sneaks in the front door, sees Marco and Anthony talking, and turns away to look at a painting on the wall.

MARCO

You got a minute, Uncle Anthony?

Marco gestures over to the confession booth, and Reli looks over his shoulder with interest.

RELI

(whispers to himself)
Uncle?

FATHER ANTHONY

I told you any time.

Anthony guides Marco to the confessional with a hand on his back. Once inside, Reli sneaks over to listen in.

INSIDE THE BOOTH

MARCO

I hit a guy this morning, and-

FATHER ANTHONY

You...
(emphasizes with concern)
'hit' a guy?

MARCO

That's not what I meant. I punched a guy in the nose, and...

Marco pauses, letting out a deep breath.

FATHER ANTHONY
Confession can be difficult, but
you're doing fine, Marco.

MARCO
I'm not exactly here for
confession. The problem is...Dom
saw me do it and...I think he knows
what I do for a living.

FATHER ANTHONY
Oh, my. That can be traumatizing
for a child to see his father...

MARCO
I guess I should have more regrets
about my work, but I honestly don't
have many...but this morning felt
different, even before I knew Dom
was watching.

OUTSIDE THE BOOTH

Reli's eyes widen with surprise as he listens.

INSIDE THE BOOTH

FATHER ANTHONY
Paul once wrote to the violent and
prideful Romans that "all the world
may become guilty before God"
because His law is so high that all
will break it.

MARCO
He set us up for failure?

FATHER ANTHONY
No, for growth.

MARCO
I just want to relax and enjoy
Christmas, but this year, I don't
think I can.

FATHER ANTHONY
It sounds like you might be ready
to trade in for a higher code and
live a better life.

MARCO
Maybe, if that was possible.

FATHER ANTHONY

You may answer to man now, but you
will answer to God in the end.

OUTSIDE THE BOOTH

Concerned, Reli dials his cellphone as he storms out of the church.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Reli runs down the steps with his phone to his ear, stopping at the bottom, and paces.

RELI

Uncle Rigo, I'm very concerned.

RIGO (V.O.)

Concerned how?

RELI

I followed Marco to confession with a priest, who's...who's his uncle, and...

RIGO (V.O.)

Relax, Aurelio. What's the problem?

RELI

We know where Dante is and we should be out there, uh...making him dinner, uh, right now, but Marco's confessing to his uncle that he feels guilty about what he's doing. And this morning, he told me with complete conviction that he is not going to do it on Christmas.

RIGO (V.O.)

You were right to call me. I didn't pair you with Marco to learn how to drive. You are meant for greater things.

RELI

Thanks, Uncle Rigo, I-

RIGO (V.O.)

Listen. I need your complete loyalty now.

RELI
Anything.

RIGO (V.O.)
Marco is our best cook, but if he's
compromised, he may need a little
push to get the job done. Open the
trunk of my car and listen closely.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - SAME

Father Anthony gives Marco a big hug by the front door.

FATHER ANTHONY
There's a good boy in there, Marco,
and he's waiting to be his own man.

MARCO
My own man, huh? I thought I
belonged to God.

FATHER ANTHONY
Only by your own choice. And He
wants you to be free of your
chains.

MARCO
Yeah, yeah. Laying it on a bit
thick, eh?

Marco gives Anthony an affectionate pat on his cheek, then
turns to leave.

MARCO (CONT'D)
See you tonight. Love you, Uncle-
Father.

INT. MARCO'S VAN - DAY

Marco drives alone, holding his phone to his ear.

MARCO
C'mon, pick up, Jelly.

The phone goes to voicemail:

RELI (V.O.)
(a gunshot)
Ha! Missed me! Leave a message.

Marco rolls his eyes as he listens to the beep.

MARCO

We got work to do. Meet me at the address I just texted you, now.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Reli enters nervously, with beads of sweat building on his forehead.

He scans the room and settles his gaze on Father Anthony, who is watching the choir and listening peacefully.

Dom is singing happily along, then locks eyes with Anthony, and they both smile.

Reli shivers, closes his eyes, then take a deep breath and approaches him.

RELI

Um, excuse me, Father?

FATHER ANTHONY

Yes, my son?

Anthony turns to look at Reli and is concerned.

FATHER ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Oh, are you alright? You look pale.

RELI

I, uh...I just need to get something off my chest, can we...?

FATHER ANTHONY

Of course. Right this way.

Anthony smiles and leads Reli to the confession booth.

IN THE BOOTH

Reli squirms in his seat and avoids facing Anthony.

FATHER ANTHONY (CONT'D)

What is on your soul, my son?

Sweat drips down Reli's face. He closes his eyes and listens to the beautiful choir music. He stutters as he speaks.

RELI

I, I d-don't remember how to...

FATHER ANTHONY
How long has it been since your
last confession?

Reli's head swoons and he blinks his eyes, struggling to focus, then pulls a silenced pistol from inside his coat.

Anthony sees the weapon through the black mesh divider.

FATHER ANTHONY (CONT'D)
My son, what are you doing? Put
that away.

Reli points the gun at Anthony and looks up at him with tears streaming down his face.

FATHER ANTHONY (CONT'D)
It's not too late to make a
different choice, my son. Don't-

Reli fires multiple shots through the divider and into Anthony's chest, killing him instantly, without noise.

Reli puts his gun away and wipes his face with his sleeve.

OUTSIDE THE BOOTH

Reli stares straight ahead and walks quickly to the door.

EXT. THE VIPER'S TONGUE - NIGHT

Marco sits alone in his van in front of a strip club with 'The Viper's Tongue' in neon lights.

In lights, a neon snake licks a large human ear, and the light forming the snake's tongue flashes on and off as if the tongue is going in and out of the ear.

INT. MARCO'S VAN - NIGHT

Marco's phone buzzes and he checks the text from THE BOSS:

"Reli has been with me. I'll send
him your way now."

He texts DUMBASS:

"When you get here, get a table and
wait for me."

Marco puts the phone away and shakes his head.

MARCO
That kid is useless.

EXT. THE VIPER'S TONGUE - NIGHT

Loud techno music is thumping as Marco walks in.

INT. THE VIPER'S TONGUE - NIGHT

A HOST (20s), wearing a snake skin sport coat with no shirt underneath, greets Marco with a big smile.

HOST
Welcome to 'The Viper's Tongue,'
home of the famous-

MARCO
I'm here to see your boss.

HOST
Oh, is she expecting-?

MARCO
No, she isn't.

Marco walks past the host through a door behind him with a sign that reads: "Employees Only."

INT. THE VIPERESS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Marco walks into a dimly lit office with snake-print wallpaper, snake skin furniture and behind a large wooden desk is a snake terrarium holding a brightly colored snake.

THE VIPERESS (40s), a pretty woman with too much make-up, wearing black leather pants and a shiny silver blouse, sits at the desk with her feet up.

MARCO
This screams 'James-Bond-villain.'
Is this how you spent our money?

The host pokes his head in the door.

HOST
Are you ok, ma'am?

THE VIPERESS
I can handle it, thank you.

The host smiles, then shoots Marco a stern glare and leaves.

THE VIPERESS (CONT'D)
Hey, handsome. Looking for a job?
You'd fit right in here, Marco.

Marco approaches her with confidence, pulls out his silenced pistol and points it at her.

The Viperess is briefly startled but puts on a strong face.

THE VIPERESS (CONT'D)
Playing tough guy. I love it.

MARCO
Don't scream.

Marco shoots her leg and she lets out a short yelp, but covers her mouth with her hand to stop herself.

Looking down at the hole in her pants, she grabs her wound with both hands.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I don't have time for a monologue.

The Viperess leans back, pulling her leg into her chest, wincing with pain.

MARCO (CONT'D)
No, no. Elevation and pressure.

She puts her leg back on the table and presses her hands down on the bloody wound, groaning with pain.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I knew Dante was into some freaky stuff, but I never thought he'd want to hang out here.

THE VIPERESS
(laughs through the pain)
He doesn't come for the dancing. I keep it interesting enough for him.

MARCO
You've been a good, paying customer for a long time, but you messed up. You made it personal and got involved with Dante.

THE VIPERESS
I paid back my debts.

MARCO

That's never the end of our contract. You know that. Now where is he?

THE VIPERESS

He's not here.

MARCO

I didn't ask where he's not.

Marco walks over to the viper terrarium and stares inside.

MARCO (CONT'D)

He seems like a calm little fella. Bright and pretty. He poisonous?

THE VIPERESS

She's venomous, yeah.

Marco removes the lid and grabs the snake behind the head.

MARCO

Venomous. My mistake.

Marco paces the room, looking the snake in the eyes.

MARCO (CONT'D)

So where did Dante run off to?

THE VIPERESS

He didn't say.

Marco grows angry and holds the snakes face up to The Viperess' wound.

MARCO

Do these things like blood?

THE VIPERESS

They're not sharks.

MARCO

You're telling me sharks are the only animal that likes blood?

THE VIPERESS

They only bite when they feel threatened.

MARCO

Threatening is at the top of my resumé.

Marco raises the snake over his head and begins a throwing motion toward The Viperess.

THE VIPERESS
Stop! Don't throw her!

MARCO
I need answers.

THE VIPERESS
He said he had to go out to cook someone a meal or something. I have no idea what he was talking about or where he was going, I swear.

Marco's phone buzzes repeatedly. Still holding the snake up high in one hand, he checks the multiple texts from Aria:

"Come to the church now!"
"Emergency!"
"COME NOW!"

MARCO
Something's come up, but you'll call me immediately when you hear from him.

Marco tosses the snake into the corner of the room and turns to leave. The snake slithers along the wall.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I'll send my doctor. Tell him you shot yourself while cleaning your gun and he'll understand. Don't leave this room.

INT. THE VIPER'S TONGUE - NIGHT

Marco steps back into the lobby and Reli hurries up to him from the main entertainment room.

RELI
Where have you been? There's only dudes dancing in there.

MARCO
That's your punishment for being late.

Reli is sweating and shaking.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You alright? I didn't think banana hammocks could have that kind of effect on someone.

RELI

I'm fine...I just...I can't unsee that.

MARCO

Alright, I'll never question your L.G.G.T...Q.R.S. leanings again.

Marco pulls Reli aside, away from the host.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Dante isn't here and The Viperess said he went out to "cook someone a meal."

RELI

Who do you think he's out to hit?

MARCO

I have no idea, but an emergency came up at home, and I gotta run.

RELI

(nervously)

Wh-wh-what's the matter?

MARCO

I don't know, yet, but we'll have to rally up later. I'll call you.

Marco leaves and Reli stares blankly, breathing heavily.

HOST

Can I help you with anything?

RELI

I need a drink.

Reli heads back into the main room toward the pounding music.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

An ambulance and several police cars are parked in front of the church with lights flashing. Emergency tape surrounds the front of the building.

Marco drives his van slowly past the church, surveying the scene with mouth agape.

He is waved on by a POLICEMAN. He slowly passes the taped area and sees Aria sitting on the curb next to Dom, with a blanket draped around him.

Marco stops his car in the road and runs over to them.

MARCO
What's happening?

ARIA
Dom is in shock, but he'll be fine.

Marco puts his arm around Dom.

MARCO
What's going on?

Aria looks Marco in the eye, sympathetically.

ARIA
Someone shot Father Anthony.

Sadness fills Marco's face.

MARCO
What? No...

The sadness fades into anger.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Dante.

ARIA
Do you know who did this?

Marco stands, helps Dom up, and holds his hand out to Aria.

MARCO
We need to get home where it's safe. Come with me.

INT. DOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dom is fast asleep in bed.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marco paces the path in front of his house, on his phone.

MARCO
It's on for tomorrow, Rigo.

RIGO (V.O.)
You had a change of heart?

Marco sees Logan staring at him from his window next door,
and Logan scurries away.

MARCO
He crossed a line.

RIGO (V.O.)
I'm very sorry about your uncle.
There is no honor in civilian
casualties.

MARCO
I told Reli I'd do it myself.

RIGO (V.O.)
Take him with you. He needs to see
this to the end.

MARCO
He's too green. Even if Dante feels
safe enough to come out in the open
on Christmas, he's a cautious
person. He'll have bodyguards.

RIGO (V.O.)
Take him with you. No argument.

MARCO
Alright, boss. I'll check in when
it's done.

RIGO (V.O.)
You want me to send protection to
your house for the night?

MARCO
I appreciate the thought, but I can
handle it.

RIGO (V.O.)
God be with you, Marco.

MARCO
Merry Christmas, boss.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Marco and Aria sit at the dining room table with untouched
plates of food and full wine glasses.

MARCO

Dom almost saw me...end someone today.

ARIA

How could you let that happen?!

MARCO

It was the devil-kid next door! He tracked me down and brought Dom along, but they only saw me hit...punch someone.

Aria stares in shock.

MARCO (CONT'D)

I just thought you should know that he's had an even harder day than you might think.

ARIA

We can't continue this life, Marco.

Marco takes a long sip of his wine.

MARCO

I know. It just ain't easy to go.

ARIA

If these people are willing to kill a priest in cold blood on Christmas Eve, I'll never feel safe again.

MARCO

I'm going to take care of it.

ARIA

How?

MARCO

You agreed never to ask that question.

Aria picks at her food and drops her fork.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You should go get some sleep. I'll stay up and keep watch.

ARIA

You don't need me to help you stay awake?

MARCO

The night is my day. I'll be fine.

Aria gets up and kisses Marco on his forehead.

ARIA

I love you. I'd say Merry
Christmas, but...

MARCO

I know. I'm sorry it won't be a
merry one.

Marco's phone buzzes and Aria leaves.

On Marco's phone:

"Come outside."

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marco looks out a window to see Tommy, standing next to the open trunk of a worn down, four-door sedan, waving at Marco to come outside.

Marco crosses his yard while putting his coat on.

MARCO

Shouldn't you be home playing Santa
for your kids?

TOMMY

I heard about your uncle, and it
pissed me off.

MARCO

Uh, thanks, I guess.

TOMMY

But I don't just bring my
condolences. I brought you a gift,
too.

MARCO

Ah, I've missed you, Tommy. You've
always been good to me. What is it?

TOMMY

I spent the last two days going
through all my connections and
nobody had what I wanted. I dug
deep, mio amico. I called cops,
feds, bureaucrats in-

MARCO

Yeah, ok, I get the picture.

TOMMY

So finally, I called this collector guy. He's got all kinds of historical junk. I mean, you should see it!

MARCO

C'mon, it's almost Christmas morning. This story have an end?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah. I tell you all of this to say that I bought this from a totally legitimate dealer, just for you. I may have used a fake identity, but still, close enough.

MARCO

I'm on the edge of my seat.

Tommy reaches in his trunk and opens a long, black gun case.

TOMMY

I followed the law for you, Marco...mostly...and got you this for your party tomorrow. Merry Christmas.

Marco looks in the trunk to see an old-fashioned Tommy Gun-style machine gun, with a circular drum magazine.

MARCO

She's beautiful. Thank you, Tommy.

TOMMY

You ain't going into a fair fight, but this should improve the odds.

Tommy gives Marco a hug, then shuts the trunk and tosses him a set of keys.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

The car's for you, too. I got that less legitimately.

MARCO

You think of everything. You gonna walk home?

Tommy points to a car down the block.

TOMMY

I got my own driver, now, remember?

MARCO

Well go on and enjoy your family,
then, my friend.

TOMMY

Yeah, I've got some cookies and
milk to eat.

Tommy walks away, but turns his head back as he walks.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

We're all rooting for you.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marco sits on his couch with a glass of wine, sets his pistol on the cushion next to him, grabs the remote and puts a classic Christmas movie on the TV.

He looks over at the well-decorated Christmas tree in the corner with wrapped gifts overflowing underneath.

MARCO

Aria's the best. But, I really hope
she skips the bacon in the morning.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy's stolen car sits by the curb. No lights are on in the house.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DAY

The sky lightens up and Reli walks up to the parked car. He checks it out, then walks to the front door and knocks.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Marco wakes to Reli's loud knocking and grabs his gun.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Holding his gun up, Marco cautiously walks to the door and looks through the peephole, calming as he sees Reli and opens the door.

MARCO
Why didn't you text first, let me
know you were out here?

RELI
I did.

MARCO
(embarrassed)
Oh, well let's get moving, then.

Reli nods his head toward the curb.

RELI
Who's car?

MARCO
It's my Christmas present.

EXT. DANTE'S STREET - DAY

Marco's car is parked behind a group of trees at the end of a long, uphill driveway that leads to Dante's large house.

Marco and Reli are looking into the open trunk.

RELI
Tommy got you a Tommy Gun?

MARCO
It's less cheesy than it sounds.
This thing is ruthless.

Marco takes it out of the case, loads the drum magazine, and slides the bolt back, chambering a round as he releases it, then hands a pistol from his pocket to Reli.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Use this. Safety's on the trigger,
so just point and shoot.

RELI
And you just want to roll up?

MARCO
I've never been the sneaking type.

EXT. DANTE'S HOUSE - DAY

Two THUGS in long black coats and winter hats stand guard at the door of a large, brick, two story house.

A long, circular driveway loops through the front yard and exits the property.

The guards watch with suspicion as Marco and Reli drive uphill to the house and roll to a stop in front of them.

Marco waves with a friendly smile, confusing the guards.

He gets out of the car and greets them kindly, with his machine gun just out of their view, behind his legs.

MARCO

Merry Christmas, gentlemen.

Before the guards draw their guns, Marco swings his Tommy Gun from behind him, sweeping their legs with a burst of fire.

Reli cautiously steps around the car, crouching down.

RELI

That was louder than I expected.

Marco looks at him quizzically, then pulls some zip ties from his pocket and tosses them to Reli.

MARCO

Zip-tie their hands behind their backs. I'm heading in.

INT. DANTE'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Marco fires a burst of bullets into the door handle and quickly kicks the door open, shattering the locks.

He charges through the large, open entryway to see Dante, his WIFE, and THREE YOUNG KIDS fiddling with the back door lock in panic.

MARCO

Let's do this the easy way, Dante.
No need for your family to pay for
your sins, too.

Dante pushes his kids into his wife's arms and tries to settle them down.

Marco proceeds down the hall to the living room.

LIVING ROOM

The room is filled with toys, boxes, and wrapping, with a Christmas tree in the corner and decorations all around.

DANTE
 Calm down, kids, he's not going to hurt you.
 (to Marco)
 Are you, Marco?

MARCO
 As long as Daddy cooperates.

Everyone goes still as Marco stops a few feet away, towering over them.

MARCO (CONT'D)
 You got a basement?

DANTE
 Yeah, the door's right there.

He points to a nearby door behind Marco.

MARCO
 Send your family down there so we can talk.

Dante nods to his wife and they start moving.

MARCO (CONT'D)
 And we don't want the cops involved, do we, Dante?

DANTE
 Leave your phone, ok, honey? Just wait for me down there. It'll be alright.

Dante's wife nods, sets her phone on the floor, and she and the kids disappear through the door, shutting it behind them.

Marco listens until the sound of Dante's family clambering down the stairs stops.

MARCO
 Your last words to her were a lie.

DANTE
 On Christmas, Marco? Is nothing sacred anymore?

Reli enters the room and stands shyly to the side.

MARCO
 That's a bold judgement coming from the man who had my uncle, a priest, killed on Christmas Eve.

DANTE

Father Anthony? I would never do that. He was good people.

MARCO

Your honor and loyalty are worthless since you betrayed us.

DANTE

Starting my own crew and killing an innocent man of the cloth are very different things, Marco.

MARCO

I talked to The Viperess about you last night.

Dante cringes at the mention of The Viperess.

MARCO (CONT'D)

(lowers his voice
sarcastically)

Oh, should I speak quietly so your wife doesn't hear?

(speaks normally)

Don't worry. We don't need to talk about fidelity. But she did say you were out "making someone dinner" at the same time my uncle was murdered.

Reli starts to sweat and shake. Dante notices and it piques his interest, but he looks back at Marco to answer quickly.

DANTE

That's true, but I wasn't out to get Father Anthony. I was at Mc-O'Flannigan's to take care of Seth for ratting me out to you.

Marco takes out his phone.

MARCO

Alright, I'll call him and see if he's ok.

DANTE

Stop. I...I didn't go through with it. I...I went kinda soft. I figured none of it was his fault. I felt like a divorced parent fighting over custody.

MARCO

I'm supposed to believe that?

Reli wipes a large pool of sweat from his brow and his shaking intensifies.

DANTE

What's wrong with this kid?

Marco looks at the pale, suffering Reli with disgust.

MARCO

You losing nerve, Jelly?

DANTE

Wait, is that Rigo's nephew?

(smiles)

It is. I haven't seen you since your high school graduation.

MARCO

This isn't a reunion, Dante.

DANTE

You ain't got the stomach for this, do you, kid?

RELI

I'm fine.

DANTE

(to himself)

Rigo's nephew?

(to Reli)

Where were you last night?

MARCO

He was with Rigo.

DANTE

With Rigo? The same Rigo that told you to kill me on Christmas in front of my family? Oh, Marco. Wake up, brother.

A look of horrified revelation pours over Marco's face, and he looks over at Reli, who is pointing a gun at him.

MARCO

You did it? You killed my uncle Anthony?

RELI

I followed orders, just like everybody does. You said it yourself after you killed Frankie...that I could end up like him if I ever disobeyed.

DANTE

(sorrowfully)
Aww...Frankie.

MARCO

We...we gotta draw the line somewhere, kid.

Marco turns toward Reli, who pulls the trigger, but it only clicks.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You're cold-blooded, Jelly.

Reli pulls the trigger twice more, with repeated clicks.

MARCO (CONT'D)

I didn't trust you with ammo. It was just so you could threaten Dante a little.

Marco raises his machine gun and strikes Reli on the side of the head, knocking him unconscious.

MARCO (CONT'D)

(to Dante)

I'm sorry, Dante. I did everything I could to avoid being here today. I really did.

DANTE

I know you did, Marco. But I'm glad you came. Now you truly know the kind of man you're working for.

INT. MARCO'S CAR - DAY

Marco speeds down an empty road in his stolen sedan on his cellphone.

RIGO (V.O.)

Is dinner ready?

MARCO

All the ingredients expired and all the stores are closed today, Rigo.

RIGO (V.O.)
 (angrily)
 You were given a very specific menu. What's the holdup?

MARCO
 Meet me at the place in twenty minutes and I'll fill you in.

RIGO (V.O.)
 You don't give the orders.

MARCO
 If you ever want to see your nephew again, you'll be there.

RIGO (V.O.)
 Anybody who threatens me-

Marco hangs up and calls Aria.

ARIA (V.O.)
 Where are you? I'm scared.

MARCO
 Everything's going to be fine, but I need you to pack up anything you can't live without in the back of my van.

ARIA (V.O.)
 That doesn't sound like everything's going to be fine.

MARCO
 Look out front and tell me if you see a car down the block with two people in it.

ARIA (V.O.)
 Ok, I'm checking.
 (hysterical)
 I see one, what do I do?

MARCO
 Is it a real P.O.S.?

ARIA (V.O.)
 It's pretty ugly.

MARCO
 Good. That's Tommy. He's there to watch the house until I get there.
 (MORE)

MARCO (CONT'D)

I love you. You're going to be safe.

ARIA (V.O.)

I love you, too.

MARCO

Hurry and pack.

Marco hangs up and smiles as he hears thumping in the trunk.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Somebody's awake.

INT. MARCO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dom is sitting by the Christmas tree, surrounded by torn wrapping paper and playing with a pair of binoculars.

Aria sits next to him with a loving face.

ARIA

That was your father on the phone, Dom. He's on his way.

DOM

He's ok?

ARIA

Everything's fine, but we may be leaving for a while.

DOM

What?

EXT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - DAY

Marco parks his junky, stolen car in front of the building and approaches the gate guard with his hands up.

MARCO

I come in peace, my friend.

GATE GUARD

I know you do, Marco, but I gotta frisk you anyway.

Marco keeps his hands high while the guard checks him out, not finding any weapons.

GATE GUARD (CONT'D)

No cellphone?

MARCO

Left it in the car.

As Marco lowers his hand, he slips a folded \$50 bill in the guard's shirt pocket.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Pro tip. When a bunch of guys run out that door, you should go, too.

Marco walks to the door and the guard stands still, worried.

GATE GUARD

Oh, ok. Thanks, Marco.

INT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - DAY

Marco enters the office to see Rigo smoking a cigar in his usual chair with FOUR TOUGH MEN standing around him.

RIGO

You're not willing to kill on Christmas, but I can see that you're willing to die.

MARCO

Sixteen-year-old me would be shocked to see how long I've lasted.

RIGO

He would be surprised at your body count, too. So why couldn't you add just one more to the list?

MARCO

I guess I'm not the perfect soldier after all.

RIGO

Agreed. Now tell us where to find Aurelio and I'll ask these fine gentlemen here to make it quick.

MARCO

I have a few requests, first.

RIGO

I'll humor you.

MARCO

First, you retire.

RIGO
(laughs)
You brought your sense of humor.

MARCO
Next, I'm leaving town with my family, and you're not going to pursue me.

RIGO
You're not leaving this room alive, Marco. The only control you have over that, is how painfully you go.

MARCO
That's not in the Christmas spirit. I thought you might be more reasonable.
(sighs)
Alright, here's how it's going to go. You might have a chance to get to Jelly-boy before the cops find him, but you have to move fast and do exactly as I say.

RIGO
What're you talking about?

MARCO
You sent a rookie to do a hit in the middle of the day in a public place. You know he left evidence. Now, all the cops need is the DNA source, and then he's gettin twenty-five to life.

Rigo is worried for the first time and sets his cigar down in an ash tray.

RIGO
Where is he?

MARCO
You send these four fine gentlemen south toward downtown, and once I get safely back to my car, I will text them the location.

RIGO
And then I'm left unprotected, here with you?

MARCO
It's still Christmas, Rigo.

Rigo nods to the men and they run out of the building.

Marco removes Logan's computer chip from his pocket and slaps it on the table.

RIGO
What's this?

MARCO
It's your retirement plan.

Rigo picks up the chip and inspects it.

RIGO
Does it access an account, or what?

MARCO
My son used it to track my location to Frankie's house and he watched me break his nose.

RIGO
What?

Rigo looks up and Marco shatters his nose with his fist. Rigo lets out a painful shriek and reaches for his face.

MARCO
He didn't sound that girly, though.

Marco zip-ties Rigo's hands and feet to his chair.

RIGO
You're just going to leave me here?

MARCO
You had my uncle killed.

Marco turns to leave.

MARCO (CONT'D)
But don't worry, the cops will be here soon to take good care of you.

EXT. GARDEN STATE CONCRETE - DAY

Marco walks away from the building smiling as Rigo screams.

RIGO
I'll never stop looking for you,
Marco! You're dead!

EXT. MARCO'S STREET - DAY

Marco parks in front of Tommy's car across the street from the house and rolls down his window.

MARCO

Thanks for watching out, Tommy.
I'll miss you.

TOMMY

My pleasure. You want me to dispose
of that car for you?

MARCO

Yeah, put it out of its misery.

TOMMY

How was the boom stick?

MARCO

Loud and obnoxious. She's your
perfect woman. Take her home with
you.

TOMMY

I was hoping you'd say that. God
speed, amico.

MARCO

I think Dante will be hiring soon.
You should give him a call.

TOMMY

What? Why?

MARCO

You'll see.

EXT. MARCO'S HOUSE - DAY

Aria runs out the front door to greet Marco with a hug as he walks up the driveway.

ARIA

You big jerk.

MARCO

Merry Christmas to you, too, honey.

Marco opens the garage door and grabs a hammer and a duffel bag from hooks on the wall and starts smashing drywall.

MARCO (CONT'D)
You both ready to go?

Dom walks up behind Aria and holds her arm.

ARIA
We packed the van, but what are you
doing?

Marco rips large pieces of drywall off the wooden studs to
reveal stacks of cash, then loads them into the duffel bag.

ARIA (CONT'D)
How far will that get us?

MARCO
Not as far as the stacks lining the
walls of the van.

Marco tears another large piece of wall apart, revealing a
long rifle bag. He drops the bag on the floor with a clank.

MARCO (CONT'D)
Where do you want to go?

ARIA
(with a smile)
Everywhere.

Marco smiles back, then crouches down, holding his arms out.
Dom runs into his arms with the binoculars around his neck.

MARCO
I'm sorry for putting you through
this, buddy, but I'm going to make
it up to both of you.

He holds the binoculars hanging on Dom.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I promise you won't ever have to
worry about what you see me do, ok?

DOM
Ok, Dad. I trust you.

Marco breaks the hug with a slight gasp, and pulls out his
phone. He smiles at Dom as he types.

MARCO
I forgot to text someone.
(winks at Dom)
It's very important.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

The sun sets as Rigo's four bodyguards pull up to the church and walk up the steps with confused expressions.

At the top of the steps, Reli is tied with Christmas lights to a stone pillar, with mouth duct-taped, and shivering naked in his red and green Christmas boxers.

A cardboard sign hangs on his chest with a message in black marker: "I have sinned." A cellphone is duct-taped to the sign, with a map app open and a blinking dot in the center.

Blue lights flash around them and sirens bleep.

The thugs turn around with their hands up as squads of cops approach them with guns drawn.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Marco's van cruises down a mostly empty highway.

INT. MARCO'S VAN - NIGHT

Marco drives as Aria holds Dom in her arms, who is propped up against her, asleep on the passenger seat bench.

MARCO

Ya know, I was thinking. We could start a business right outta this van and just stay on the move. We could name it something like: "Father Anthony's I'll Do Anything for a Buck Out of this Van, Incorporated."

Aria humors him with a chuckle, but can't resist an eye roll.

ARIA

Maybe when we run out of money, and maybe limit the 'anything' part.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Snow falls as Marco's van passes a large billboard, decorated with Christmas lights that reads:

"You Are Now Leaving New Jersey:
The Garden State."

FADE OUT.