

WHATEVER IT TAKES

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Attempting to save their 9-year-old, a reformed ex-crook and his straight ex-wife are led into crime.

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER:

"Diseases desperate grown,
By desperate measures are relieved,
Or not at all."

Shakespeare.

FADE IN:

INT. KAREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In half light, a woman called KAREN, sleeps alone, restless.
CLOSE ON her eyelids flickering with rapid eye movements.

DREAM SEQUENCE - INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

SEPIA TONE

POV SHOT DOWN AN EMPTY FLIGHT OF STAIRS.

(O.S) an EXPLOSION rocks the frame, a crackle of GUNSHOTS.

SNYDE (O.S)

(yells)

Get the bastard!

An empty wheelchair hurtles down stairs, overturns and
crashes into the hall. It lies on its side, one wheel
spinning.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

Karen awakes in fear, swings out of bed and runs to the
door.

INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Illuminated by a night light, Karen tiptoes to her
daughter's bedside. 9 year-old ALICE, snub nose and wispy
hair, hugs a soft toy as she sleeps. Karen gently kisses
her.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUNDOWN L.A. STREET - DAY

Parked cars, closed eateries. DAN NICHOLS, a rough diamond
of fifty, well-built, a face that knows how to grin, jogs in
frayed Nikes and T-shirt patched with sweat.

A Bentley Azure pulls up alongside, glittering as if from the showroom. The window lowers. RAZZER, forties, a face ravaged by excess contrasts with expertly cut hair and an expensive groomed look.

RAZZER
Long time no see, Dan.

DAN
Razzer?! How you doing?

RAZZER
Snazzier car, bigger house, sexier woman. And you?

Dan shrugs.

DAN
I get by.

RAZZER
(glancing around)
Not exactly the lap of luxury, huh?

DAN
To what do I owe the honor?

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - ON RAZZER - DAY

Razzer ferrets around, picks up framed photos.

PHOTO 1: a chirpy nine-year old tomboy with a fringe.
PHOTO 2: motocross dirt bikes leaping a knoll.

Razzer riffles Post-It notes sticking from Parenting, Motorcycle and Chemistry books on the bookshelf.

Dan enters, toweling his hair, rosy faced from the shower.

RAZZER
You still ride?

DAN
Sometimes. Just to keep my hand in.

Razzer nods, exuding expense he sits on a sofa. Dan, tousled, sits in a battered chair.

DAN
So what's this about school vacations, huh? Didn't think you had kids.

RAZZER
I don't. But everybody else seems to. How's your daughter, by the way?

DAN
Alice? Nine now. She's a great kid.

RAZZER
Must be difficult, you being
separated like that?

DAN
(sarcastic)
Since you and I worked together, I
don't have much choice, do I?

RAZZER
True... Where was I?

DAN
(tired)
School vacations.

RAZZER
Oh yeah. Parents vacation with their
kids. So there's always a last
minute rush to buy stuff. Malls,
sports stores, food halls they all
do bumper business.

DAN
Cut to the chase, Razzer.

RAZZER
There's a lot of cash around.
Security companies are short handed,
'cos a lot of their people want to
vacation with their kids too.

DAN
So they make do with what they've
got?

RAZZER
(nods)
A company I know, instead of taking
cash to a bank as usual, unloads
several security trucks into a
centrally parked one. Then sends
them off again to collect more.

(beat)
So right after that first vacation
weekend, there's one armored truck
stuffed with the cash normally
carried by ten. Interesting, huh?

DAN
Sure. But stickups have a nasty way
of going wrong.

RAZZER

Exactly. That's why I thought of you.

DAN

Me?

RAZZER

Sure. Creative thinking and all that. You know where to get info and you know how to use it. It's your sort of thing.

DAN

Razzer hey! I live here because I have to! Not because I want to. The last creative thinking I did with you cost me my marriage, house and ability to visit my daughter!

RAZZER

Hey, but it gave you a whole slew of money didn't it? How many years it been?

DAN

Five.

RAZZER

As long as that, huh? You must be running pretty low?

DAN

Like they say, money ain't everything.

RAZZER

Huh! Come off it! People who say that just don't know where to shop.

DAN

Listen, working for you didn't buy me happiness -- but it did teach me that it's all too easy to get caught.

(beat)

I don't understand. With all you've got, why do you wanna take the risk?

RAZZER

Maybe you haven't noticed, the cost of living goes up, not down. You know how much it takes to stay a millionaire? I need more investments to stay at the top of the game.

DAN

Sorry, Razzer. The job's not for me. I'm not interested in that stuff anymore.

RAZZER

C'mon, you've done it before.

DAN

Sure. But the thing is to learn from mistakes - not repeat them.

RAZZER

Look, don't do the stickup. Just do the chemistry. Course, it won't pay as much...

DAN

Sorry, Razzer.

RAZZER

You got a job?

DAN

Nope.

RAZZER

Some woman keeping you?

Dan shakes his head.

RAZZER

Seems to me, like you don't have much choice.

DAN

Sure I do. I have the choice to say no. And that's just what I'm doing...

EXT. RUNDOWN L.A. STREET

Dan and Razzer walk to the Bentley. Razzer gets in.

RAZZER

Well, if you change your mind give me a ring. But don't leave it too long.

Dan nods without conviction. As the big car glides off, Dan shrugs and turns away.

CUT TO:

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

NETBOOK SCREEN

Dan talks via Skype to nine-year-old ALICE, his second grade tomboy.

DAN
So why are you fed up?

INTERCUT DAN AND ALICE

ALICE
(chin in hand)
Teacher says I'm shy.

DAN
You're not shy.

ALICE
Sure, I am. Mom says so too. I'm
scared to put my hand up, even when
I know the answer...

DAN
That's normal. Everyone's a bit
scared.

ALICE
No they're not. Just me.

Dan scratches his head.

DAN
Look, imagine a glass half full of
milk. Can you do that?

ALICE
'Course I can.

DAN
Well, I might say it's half full,
but someone else might say it's half
empty. Understand?

Alice nods.

DAN
But it's the same glass of milk,
whether half full or half empty.

ALICE
'Course it is.

DAN

Well, it's like that with kids that put their hands up, and those that don't. Those that put their hands up think they're excited. And those that don't think they're scared. Right?

ALICE

(hesitantly)

Uh, yeah...

DAN

But its all the same thing. It's the same question for everyone. It's just that some say putting their hands up is 'exciting', and others say putting their hands up is 'scary.' See?

ALICE

(doubtful)

Yeah...

DAN

It's like the glass of milk, some call it one thing, some call it another.

ALICE

So I'm excited, really?

DAN

Sure. Just change the words. Next time you know the answer, say to yourself I'm 'excited' and put your hand up. 'Cos it's all the same thing. You'll see...

EXT. BOSTON - SMALL GARDEN - DAY

Alice stares up into a tree. High above her a kid's ball is lodged among the branches. She launches a stick at it, misses, and casts around for another...

Alice drags a step ladder across the grass, leans it against the tree, reaching the lower branches she climbs to the ball. She dislodges it and starts back down.

As her foot touches the top of the stepladder it wobbles..
..with a SQUEAL, Alice and ladder CRASH to the ground!

ALICE
(stunned and shaken)
Oh sh.. ..sugar!

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. CASINO - NIGHT

Late night gamblers straggle from a casino. A couple giggle as they get into a Rolls, a Ferrari GROWLS AWAY. Dan walks zombie-like to his restored classic '66 Corvette Coupe.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON INSTRUMENT PANEL the fuel gauge shows empty. Dan taps it.

He flicks on the roof light and opens his wallet: only a five dollar bill. Dejected he turns the ignition key.

DAN
Shit!

EXT. BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The Corvette burbles down a boulevard and halts at an ATM in a bank façade.

Dan slots in a credit card and taps in his PIN.

ATM SCREEN FLASHES: "Cannot process transaction"

The ATM swallows his card and shuts down.

DAN
Oh, shit no!

He hammers the machine but to no effect.

INT. CORVETTE - NIGHT

The starter grinds but the motor refuses to start. He tries again with no success. He thumps the steering wheel in frustration.

He tilts his seat and settles back, resigned he closes his eyes.

TIME CUT:

INT. CORVETTE - DAWN

Air brakes SQUEAL, Dan awakes startled, a truck rumbles past. He sits up, eyes himself in the mirror and smooths his hair.

INT. BANK - OFFICE - DAY

As a female ACCOUNT MANAGER consults a screen Dan fiddles with his tie.

ACCOUNT MANAGER
(saccharin sweet)
Ah yes, Mr. Nichols. It's normal.
Your account is overdrawn.

She fields pages from a printer and hands him a statement.

ACCOUNT MANAGER
Do you have anything to deposit?

DAN
Um, er, no. Not right now...

ACCOUNT MANAGER
Well, I'm afraid I can't return the
card. We'd need to see the overdraft
cleared and proof of solvency.

INT. SAFE DEPOSIT VAULT - DAY

Dan opens a safe deposit box. It contains only a gold Rolex. He slips it into his pocket and replaces the box.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLECTOR'S WATCH STORE - DAY

Dan eyes collectible watches in the window, hesitates, then enters.

LATER

He leaves, slipping his wallet into his tuxedo, then pats it to make sure it's still there.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Dan lugs a jerrycan along the sidewalk.

He angrily snatches a parking ticket from the Corvette's windshield and stuffs it into his tuxedo pocket.

Gas glugs into the Corvette's tank.

EXT. L.A. STREET - DAY

Retired men sit on a stoop as Dan pulls a flimsy cart piled with fliers past them. He raises a hand in greeting. One man waves back, another shakes his head sadly...

Mechanically Dan stuffs junk mail into mailboxes.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

In working whites, Dan scrapes plates and loads a dishwasher in a steam filled kitchen. He glances at a clock, wipes his hands on his apron and pushes a wheeled bin to a chef station.

DAN

Peelings!

A chef steps aside as Dan sweeps vegetable waste from the counter into the bin. Dan hurries on to the next chef station.

DAN

Peelings!

LATER

The kitchen is silent and deserted. Dan washes the floor, wringing out a mop. The MANAGER enters, inspecting the work surfaces with a finger.

MANAGER

You free Friday and Saturday?

DAN

Sure. I'll take anything.

The manager nods, peels three bills from a roll and hands them to Dan. Dan looks at them - his life raft.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIRU MOTOCROSS PARK - DAY

The BUZZ of a dirt bike as Dan flies along a track, gunning up knolls, leaping crests.

He halts the dirt bike near the Corvette which has a small trailer hitched to it. He kills the engine and tugs off his helmet.

The bike on the trailer, Dan drinks from a carton. A phone RINGS and he leans into the car to answer it.

DAN

Hello?

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

KAREN, Dan's ex wife, ten years younger, is on the East Coast. Through her kitchen window Alice can be seen in a wheelchair, her leg in plaster, laughing with a school friend.

KAREN

Dan, it's Karen. You got a minute?

DAN

Sure. How is she? How's the leg?

KAREN

The doctors say the bone is knitting fine. But she seems to be losing sensation.

DAN

Wow! That's scary. What'd they say?

KAREN

They say she needs a special sort of MRI, an MRS scan.

DAN

When's she having it?

KAREN

That's the trouble. They don't do them there. And there's long waiting lists. Everything takes so long...

Dan bites his lip, stands back from the car, taking in the smooth lines of the restored Corvette.

DAN

Bring her here. They've got all the latest equipment. We can get it done quick.

KAREN

That'll cost a packet. My health insurance won't cover that.

DAN

Don't worry about it. I'll take care of the bill.

KAREN

You sure?

DAN

Yeah. Sure I'm sure. I'll fix it
right away and ring you back, okay?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Dan stares wistfully at the Corvette parked outside. In Car Collector magazine he circles small ads, picks up his phone and dials a number.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Dan and the GARAGE OWNER look on as the Corvette raises on a rack. A MECHANIC with an inspection lamp, inspects its frame.

The mechanic nods, satisfied.

GARAGE OWNER

Very well. Come this way.

INT. BACK OFFICE - DAY

GARAGE OWNER

Always had a soft spot for that
model. Bet it'll raise a few
eyebrows at the golf club this
weekend.

The garage owner hands over bundles of notes held by green striped straps over the desk.

GARAGE OWNER

Five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty
two. I think you'll find that's in
order.

They stand and shake hands.

EXT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

A "FOR SALE" real estate sign hangs on the balcony rail.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAX - ARRIVALS - DAY

Karen pushes Alice's wheelchair, an airport porter wheels a suitcase. Dan approaches, tips the porter and takes the case. He squats beside Alice's chair.

He leans in to kiss the girl but she pulls away, eyes bright and reluctant, a hard little smile.

She stares at a small plastic Mickey Mouse figurine she twiddles in her hand.

ALICE
(blurts out)
You're not my dad!

DAN
(bewildered)
What on earth d'ya mean?!

ALICE
If you're my dad, then why don't you live near me?!

DAN
(patiently)
But your mom and I are divorced...

ALICE
So is Jane's mom and dad. But she sees him all the time!

DAN
I live here, Alice.

ALICE
Why not near me?

DAN
I wish I could.

ALICE
(looks away)
You don't like me really!

DAN
Of course I do. I love you.

He kisses her cheek, this time she doesn't resist.

DAN
Daddy has to live here. For, um, for my work...

ALICE
You never come and see me.

DAN
True. But you often come and see me.

ALICE

No I don't. And anyway it's not the same! Why don't you come to our house?!

DAN

It's hard to explain. You'll understand when your bigger.

ALICE

No, I won't! I won't understand. So there!

Dan glances at Karen, frustrated, crestfallen. He follows them wheeling their suitcase.

KAREN

(to Dan)

Don't worry. She'll come round. Not having you near is hard on her.

She leans over and speaks to Alice.

KAREN

So first we're going to Disneyland...

ALICE

(mood changing)

Yesss!

KAREN

Then we'll see the nice doctors who look after all the film stars...

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY NEAR DISNEYLAND - DAY

An old clunker, a Chrysler convertible with a patched top passes beneath a sign saying DISNEYLAND NEXT EXIT. The muffler smokes and there's grubby orange primer on a wing and a door.

INT. CLUNKER - DAY - TRAVELING

Dan and Alice sit in the front, Karen behind them.

DAN & ALICE

(sing)

"There's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza, dear Liza, There's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza, a hole..."

EXT. DISNEYLAND - DAY

ENTRANCE

Alice's face is pressed against the car window. The clunker parks between a gleaming SUV and a sleek sports car.

Crowds throng towards the theme park. Dan pushing Alice's chair in a determined charge, Alice leaning forward eagerly. Karen follows at a more leisurely pace.

OLD FASHIONED STREET

A model T chugs by and HONKS in a street lined with timber stores. Alice sits in the wheel chair wearing Mickey Mouse ears. As Dan pushes, Karen points things out to the girl.

WALTZING TEACUP RIDE

Dan sits with his arm around Alice. Alice looks proud and excited, her face flushed. As the ride ends she touches Dan's temple.

ALICE

You've got gray hairs, daddy!

Dan nods regretfully.

ALICE

(insouciant)

But I love you anyway.

She pushes the Mickey Mouse figurine into his shirt pocket.

ALICE

Mickey wants to live there now.

DAN

Okay, I'll keep him right next to my heart.

DISNEYLAND PARADE

Doting parents point things out to their kids. Dan and Karen stand apart, Alice's wheelchair between them. Dan's hands thrust in his pockets, Karen's arms crossed.

CUT TO:

INT. L.A. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

HOSPITAL ROOM

Dan stands beside a hospital bed, his hand on Alice's head, monitoring equipment connected to her finger.

DAN
 (story telling)
 And Dumbo said, "You were right,
 Mommy. Mister Hippo wasn't angry
 after all..."

The girl's eyes flutter and close.

Dan waits to see if she will stir. He gazes at the snub nose
 and wispy hair, leans over and gently kisses her.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Dan leans back on a bench, Karen hunches forward, each
 locked in their own thoughts.

DOWN THE CORRIDOR

A gray haired man talks to a small Asian lady and a large
 African American woman.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN
 ...and now they using every dirty
 trick in the book to get out of
 paying my claim.

GRAY HAIREd MAN
 Them health insurance companies is
 all the same. They deny claims then
 cream off billions for the
 shareholders.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN
 That ain't health care, that's
 wealth care!

GRAY HAIREd MAN
 You said it. Them pharma companies
 is just the same. I got a bum hip
 and not enough insurance to cover
 all the copays and deductibles. I
 have to shell out fifty bucks for a
 packet of pills what costs 'em fifty
 cents to make. My pain's their gain!

ASIAN WOMAN
 My uncle he in smash, get head
 injured, he need doctor, right?
 Wrong! \$60,000 is what he need. You
 no got insurance, go home, buddy.
 Take an aspirin!

GREY HAIREd MAN
 Jesus! What happened to him?

ASIAN WOMAN

He no have money. They call security, stick him in cab with a drip in his arm. They drive him cross town, push him out at Skid Row charity...

BACK TO DAN & KAREN

A white coated surgeon opens a door and beckons.

SURGEON #1 OFFICE

Illuminated X-rays and scans. An elderly surgeon sits before a screen, a younger one stands behind him.

SURGEON #1

There's a small tumor pressing on the spinal cord. We've determined it's not malignant.

Dan and Karen glance at each other, a flicker of hope.

SURGEON #1

We don't know if it was there before her accident, or if it was caused by it. But in any case, because of the location it can't be removed.

KAREN

What does that mean?

SURGEON #1

Unfortunately, it means that the nerves of the leg will slowly atrophy and the leg will waste away. Over time both legs will be affected. If it progresses to the heart or lungs, death will ensue.

(beat)

I'm sorry...

Karen covers her face.

SURGEON #2

(coughs)

Mr. Nichols, perhaps you and your wife would come with me?

KAREN

(dully)

Ex-wife...

SURGEON #2

If you'd come with me?

SURGEON #2 OFFICE

Dan and Karen stand, strain showing on their faces.

KAREN

And nothing can stop it?

SURGEON #2

That's not exactly true - but in practical terms, I'm afraid it is.

DAN

What do you mean "not exactly"?

SURGEON #2

Well, there was an article in The Lancet recently. In a similar case neutron capture therapy was used to shrink and destroy the tumor and then stem-cell therapy used to regenerate the damaged tissue.

KAREN

Can't you do that?

SURGEON #2

That patient was the son of a Russian oligarch and his father had political clout. He hired a Japanese neutron capture facility and medical stem-cell research lab to carry out a highly experimental procedure.

DAN

How much did it cost?

SURGEON #2

It was exorbitantly expensive.

DAN

How expensive?

SURGEON #2

You have to understand, here in the States there are only a handful of research facilities with their own particle accelerators. And are no stem-cell research labs with viable treatments. The entire treatment was carried out in Japan and set the Russian back two and a half million dollars.

KAREN

Two and a half million! No health insurance would pay for that!

SURGEON #2

Precisely...

DAN

And it worked?

SURGEON #2

The boy's back in Russia now. Apparently he's a very good tennis player. In 10 years time this kind of therapy will probably be standard practice.

KAREN

But ten years is too late for us...

The surgeon nods, sympathetic. He goes over to an aquarium and taps on the glass.

CLOSE ON PINK AXOLOTL

SURGEON #2 (O.S.)

This little fellow, the axolotl, can regenerate lost limbs. But humans can't. This mystery has fascinated researchers for years.

(beat)

The axolotl is now all but extinct in the wild. But research labs breed them because they can regenerate anything: brain, heart, limbs, lungs, spinal cord...

REVERSE ANGLE

Dan and Karen stare at the axolotl through the glass.

BACK TO SCENE

SURGEON #2

Mammals develop scars after an injury which creates a physical barrier to regeneration. But the axolotl doesn't. Japanese researchers have found differences in its molecular signaling that promotes regeneration.

(beat)

Human infants have a potential for regeneration. They can regenerate heart tissue or fingertips -- so it's probable that even adults retain the genetic code somewhere.

(beat)

Transcription factors control the way DNA is copied into proteins.

(MORE)

SURGEON #2 (CONT'D)

They can convert specialized cells, like skin cells, into stem-cell-like cells that are pluripotent, these have the ability to become many different types of cells.

CUT TO:

HOSPITAL RECEPTION

A receptionist hands Dan a bill. He pays with bundles of notes having green striped straps.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

Karen paces, smoking nervously.

DAN

What have we got to lose? If it worked for him it should work for us.

(beat)

You heard what they said. It'll only get worse! This isn't a choice. It's our only hope!

Karen distractedly crushes her cigarette out.

DAN

How are you for money?

KAREN

I get by, nothing more. I'm still paying off a mortgage. You?

DAN

Nothing left. I'm selling my apartment just to live.

(beat)

I thought your father had money?

KAREN

Huh! A Ponzi scheme and the financial crisis took care of that!

Dan leans his forehead against the wall.

DAN

I feel useless, stuck here, broke... If only I'd been there. I could've stopped her.

KAREN

What about me? I can't help her either... I feel so guilty about being unable to help.

Dan twiddles the Mickey Mouse figurine between his fingers. He straightens and comes to a decision.

DAN
Look, you get all the details on that treatment. Leave getting the money to me...

Karen stares at him, incredulous. Dan stares back, unblinking, deadly serious.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - PANEL VAN - TRAVELING - DUSK

San Diego traffic, city skyline. The panel van is driven by Dan. He wears gloves and the same tuxedo he wore at the casino.

His phone RINGS.

CLOSE ON his gloved hand as it goes into his pocket. As he pulls out his phone he unwittingly drags out a crumpled parking ticket. It falls unnoticed beside the seat.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

RAZZER (O.S.)
You get everything?

DAN
Yep. In a couple of days we'll be millionaires.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Or in prison.

DAN
Or dead...

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN DIVIDED HIGHWAY - HARD SHOULDER - DAY

TRAFFIC NOISE. Hazard lights flashing the panel van is stationary on the hard shoulder.

INT. PANEL VAN CAB - DAY

Razzar sits at the wheel, a storeman's coat barely covering a riot police uniform. ABDUL, 29, no stranger to San Quentin Penitentiary, sits alongside.

INT. PANEL VAN REAR - DAY

Dan sits in the gloom wearing a riot police uniform. One hand holds binoculars to a slit in the cardboard taped over the rear windows, the fingers of his other hand twiddles the Mickey Mouse figurine.

BINOCULAR POV

Half a mile distant an armored truck noses out from an on ramp.

DAN
(into lapel mike)
Here they come!

EXT. PANEL VAN - TRAVELING - DAY

The van dawdles, traffic streaming past, when the armored truck comes astern the van speeds up and the armored truck falls in behind; its driver chatting to a guard.

EXT. ROAD WORKS TRUCK & PICK-UP - TRAVELING - DAY

LAKEY, early thirties from Austin, Texas, wears a hard hat. He slots his truck in behind the armored truck. Alongside him comes BISHOP, a coarse-featured big man from Sunnyside in a Chevy pick-up.

DAN (O.S.)
Everyone's in place.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Looks like the second light.

DAN (O.S.)
Second light!

INT. PANEL VAN - TRAVELING - DAY

Dan gulps a pill, snaps the studs of his gloves and tugs on a riot police helmet.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Second light red.

EXT. DIVIDED HIGHWAY - DAY

The panel van halts at the red light, the armored truck halts behind it. Bishop pulls the Chevy pickup alongside the armored truck, slightly to the rear.

RAZZER (O.S.)
This is it!

The armored truck the driver idly picks his nose.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Twenty five... Twenty...

INT. PANEL VAN - DAY

Abdul pushes through a curtain into the rear and dons a helmet.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Fifteen... Ten...

Abdul and Dan hang onto overhead straps.

INT. CHEVY PICKUP - DAY

Bishop swaps his hard hat for a riot police helmet.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Five...

EXT. DIVIDED HIGHWAY - DAY

The lights turn green.

RAZZER (O.S.)
Green grow the rushes oh!

The panel van reverses and CRUNCHES into the armored truck.

PANEL VAN

In a shower of glass its rear doors stave in, Dan and Abdul are almost thrown down. A SIREN screams. Abdul wrenches open a side door, Dan jumps down clutching a gas cylinder.

EXT. ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

The armored truck rocks wildly, nudged from behind by the road works truck, the guard's and driver's white faces behind its bulletproof windshield.

Bishop clambers onto the rear of his pickup, using a ladder he clambers onto the roof of the armored truck.

ROOF

Bishop tugs a flexible hood over the air conditioner unit and pulls draw strings tight.

GUARD'S DOOR

The barrel of a .38 pokes from the gun port.

FRONT OF ARMORED TRUCK

Dan crawls on his belly pushing the gas cylinder ahead of him, wriggling below the gun port's angle of fire.

Once past the gun port Dan stands and throws a plastic tube up to Bishop who connects it to the flexible hood. He gives Dan a thumbs up.

Gas mask on his face, Dan turns a valve. Liquid races up the tube. Through the guard's window vapor can be seen entering the cab from through the air conditioner vents.

Razzer wriggles beneath the gun port bringing an L-shaped tube and a sledgehammer.

With a CRACK! Razzer smacks the .38 barrel back into the cab with the sledgehammer. Dan slots the L-shaped tube into the gun port and Razzer TAPS it home.

CLOSE ON barbs on the tube CLICK open so it can't retract.

Dan connects a plastic tube to it and squirts gas through the guard's door.

ARMORED TRUCK CAB

Choking, driver and guard scramble into the rear of the truck and a heavy door SLAMS. From its tiny window angry eyes glare out.

ROOF OF ARMORED TRUCK

Fumes pour out of a ventilation grill. Bishop inserts a metal rod into it, PINGING it stops the fan blades. He duct tape closes the grill.

REAR OF ARMORED TRUCK

Abdul has setup a 'Police Line' sawhorse barrier. He is bowling tear gas canisters under the backed up traffic.

Eyes streaming, drivers abandon vehicles. An inquisitive one moves forward, Abdul fires a warning SHOT, people scatter.

SIDES OF ARMORED TRUCK

The hijackers HAMMER OUT a VIOLENT RHYTHM on the truck's panels with their riot batons.

EXT. DIVIDED HIGHWAY - BIRD'S-EYE VIEW - DAY

SIRENS wail. In the far distance a patrol car tries to thread through stalled traffic.

EXT. ARMORED TRUCK - DAY

The POUNDING SPEEDS UP. Abruptly the internal door opens, the driver stumbles back the cab, scarlet faced, gasping like a fish out of water.

He eyes a list of demands taped to the windshield, eyes streaming, he nods.

The truck's SIREN HALTS and the gang STOPS POUNDING. For a moment the distant police SIRENS and HONKING traffic seem almost like silence.

The driver holds up a revolver and spills out cartridges. Other weapons follow and all are stacked in view up against the windshield.

Pistols drawn the hijackers stand back. The side door of the armored truck cracks open. Then the driver and three guards step down and stand with heads hanging.

Razzer shoos them away, after a moment's hesitation they break into a trot.

The four hijackers drag bulky satchels from the truck.

Lugging three each they step across a safety barrier and struggle up a billboard strewn embankment.

EXT. TOP OF EMBANKMENT - DAY

Dan tears off his gas mask, his face streaming with sweat. Below the armored truck lies in a haze of fumes, a patrol car enters INTO FRAME.

RAZZER
(yells)
Come on!

Dan struggles with satchels to a waiting van.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Palm court MUSIC. Dan sits in a booth in an expensive restaurant, caviar and champagne on the table.

He slips his netbook from a briefcase, slots in a CD and watches a video clip, listening to the sound track via an earpiece. The screen displays a research facility.

VIDEO (V.O.)

"The Yamasuka Freedom Clinic in Kyoto, Japan is the home of a Neutron Capture Treatment facility and houses numerous experimental studies and projects. Its facilities include Stem-cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine Research."

Dan closes the netbook.

INT. RESTAURANT/INT. KAREN'S HOUSE - SPLIT SCREEN - DAY

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

I got the money.

KAREN

Oh my God! Dan. What've you done?

DAN

You don't want to know.

KAREN

You told me you'd given all that stuff up...

DAN

(bitingly)

Oh yeah? And where was I gonna get that kinda money? From a payday loan?!

KAREN

Dan, I don't think I can live with this. Your making me an accessory!

DAN

Life's making you an accessory, Karen. Not me. And nobody can make an omelet without breaking eggs.

KAREN

I can't handle this...

DAN

Tough shit! You better grasp the nettle with both hands, 'cos your daughter's life depends on it...

KAREN

I know but...
(hesitantly)
You got it all?

DAN

Yep! And it's in a bank! You'd better come as soon as you can because we need to set things in motion.

KAREN

Look Dan, there's, um, there's a problem.

DAN

Problem?

KAREN

Yes. I met with Professor Yamasuka at a medical conference here. He's on the Board of the Yamasuka Clinic...

(beat)

He told me that treatment for the Russian oligarch was strictly a one-off job. They only did it because they were asked to by the Japanese State Department.

(beat)

He said the only way that that kind of treatment could be done now, is if it helps to democratize it.

DAN

Democratize it? What the hell does that mean?!

KAREN

It means we'd have to set up a charitable foundation. Finance a pilot program so the same treatment could be offered to other children who need it.

DAN

Jesus! And how much is that going to cost?!

KAREN

He said four point six million.

DAN

What?! But that treatment only cost the Russian two and a half!

KAREN

I know. But the Yamasuka Freedom Clinic has since confirmed what he said in writing. They say they'll only consider another stem-cell patient, if the procedure helps pave the way for other kids to have the same.

DAN

I don't believe it!
 (beat)
 I risk my ass getting all that money! And now you tell me I need twice as much?!

KAREN

I know, Dan.
 (beat)
 What's more, they say that if a deposit is made to reserve a time slot, the full amount must be paid within 45 days. Otherwise, the slot gets allocated to another project - and any money paid is non-refundable.
 (beat)
 Maybe we'd better forget it, huh?

Dan sits blankly staring into space.

KAREN

Dan?... Dan?... ..are you there Dan?

DAN

Uh?... What?

KAREN (V.O)

..you there?

DAN

Yeah. Yeah I'm here.

He stares at the plastic Mickey Mouse figurine, turning it over and over in his fingers.

DAN

Well, er, I guess, um..
 ..I guess I'll just have to do whatever it takes...

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTLAKE HOTEL - DAY

DAN'S ROOM

Dan stands on the balcony of his fourth floor room, it's divided from the next room by a frosted glass panel. He has a drink in one hand, his phone in the other.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

So now I'm back at square one.

RAZZER

Hey, so you lost a battle. Not the war. Stop crying over spilled milk and look for another cash cow instead...

(beat)

Come to think of it, I know of someone who might help.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

Dan crosses the bedroom and lounge to open the door. A plainclothesman, call him DELACROIX, and a uniformed officer unexpectedly push their way in. Dan snaps his phone shut.

DELACROIX

(showing ID)

Lieutenant Delacroix - Robbery-Homicide. I have to ask you to pack your bag Mr. Nichols and accompany me.

DAN

What the hell's this about?!

DELACROIX

A parking ticket.

DAN

A parking ticket! Are you joking?!

DELACROIX

No sir. The ticket was written for a car registered in your name. It was found in a vehicle used for an armed robbery.

DAN

But I sold my car!

DELACROIX

Nevertheless, sir. I must ask you to accompany me.

Delacroix goes to the bedroom and glances around. Then he goes to stand with the uniformed officer next to the door.

Sullenly Dan puts clothes in his case. He carries the open case into the bedroom, momentarily out of sight he slips out onto the balcony.

BALCONY

Ignoring a four floor drop, Dan swings out and around the glass balcony divider.

EXT. WESTLAKE HOTEL - NEXT DOOR ROOM - DAY

On the bed a thin woman sits astride a portly man.

THIN WOMAN

It's always the friggin' same! If you'd taken the Viagra when I told you, instead of having another whiskey!

Dan races past the astonished pair. He yanks open the corridor door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COAST ROAD - TRAVELING - DAY

Dan drives his clunker along a narrow coast road. He halts where a tearaway or bored hunter has put bullet holes through a road sign, he pulls the car off the road.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Cicadas RASP. Dan gazes at the sea, then starts down a rocky path. As he reaches the shoreline his phone RINGS.

HEAD HUNTER (O.S.)

(over phone)

Turn left.

Dan picks his way between boulders. He spots a man standing in shade beneath trees and makes his way up a slope towards him.

The HEAD HUNTER is gaunt, his clothes yell money but his yellowing hair and sunken cheeks whisper incarceration.

HEAD HUNTER

(tapping cheek)

You bring the bread?

Dan hands over a roll of notes. The Head Hunter licks a finger, counts and pockets them.

HEAD HUNTER

Okay. Four for the consult, another six if you take a job. So what you after?

DAN

Big league. You tell me what you've got. I'll tell you if I'm interested.

HEAD HUNTER

Well, there ain't a lot going right now. But I'll take a look.

The Head Hunter's eyes flick up into his head as if he's meditating. After a moment his eyes flutter open. It's like a corpse coming back to life.

HEAD HUNTER

Got somebody looking for a backup man on a bank stick-up?

Dan shakes his head.

HEAD HUNTER

How's about smuggling a Russian warhead to Iran?

Dan looks disgusted.

HEAD HUNTER

I got a cat burglar, wants someone who knows a lot about antiques?

Dan shakes his head, restless, he's getting nowhere.

HEAD HUNTER

Well that's about it. Only other thing is smack refining.

DAN

(suddenly alert)

I want it!

HEAD HUNTER

You sure? They want some kind of a chemist.

DAN

This is for me. I'll cook them heroin ninety percent pure.

HEAD HUNTER

Oh yeah? Maybe, but I've already put a South American onto it. Does nothing else, smack, coke, you name it. Got a big boat out in the bay.

DAN

Tell 'em I'll do it for less.

HEAD HUNTER

Don't think it'll make any difference. I'm seeing him this afternoon to fix up a meeting. But I'll put you on the standby list, in case it doesn't work out.

The Head Hunter glances over Dan's shoulder. Dan turns, a young man is coming up the slope.

HEAD HUNTER

My assistant. Late as usual.

The young man comes up the slope.

HEAD HUNTER

This is Felix.

FELIX is in his mid twenties, a baby face and hair that looks as if it's combed by his mother. Dan nods to him.

DAN

Well if anything comes up, you've got my number.

Morosely Dan picks his way back along the beach and climbs back to the road.

EXT. COAST ROAD - DAY

Dan turns the clunker around. As he drives off he sees the Head Hunter coming up another path from the sea. The germ of an idea flashes into his mind.

He turns his car off onto a track and bumps along until it is out of sight. Then he runs back and crouches behind a bush. A Lincoln, Head Hunter at the wheel, goes past.

Dan reverses down the track. He trails the Lincoln at a distance.

EXT. BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

The Lincoln signals and enters the lot. Dan pulls into another aisle and watches the Head Hunter walk to the exit. He tags behind, talking on his phone.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

RAZZER

You know how to do that?

DAN

No. But you can find out anything on the Internet these days. And I know enough chemistry to figure it out. It can't be that hard. And anyway, beggars can't be choosers.

RAZZER

Well, don't let them load you down with tons of used notes. Ask for payment in ounce gold bars.

The Head Hunter disappears down steps to the beach.

DAN

Listen, I gotta go!

Dan peers over a balustrade. The Head Hunter sits at a café talking to a dark man in a white suit. After a few words the man nods, leaves and mounts the steps.

DIEGO, is dark-skinned and muscular. A mane of black hair flows over his collar like a rock star, his shirt open to the waist, white moccasins and no socks show dark ankles.

Dan follows Diego until he gets into a white Porsche and speeds away. Dan tries to hail a cab. But by the time one comes along the Porsche has long gone.

EXT. L.A. MARINA - DAY

Rigging JINGLES in the breeze, coastline stretches away. Dan's eyes rove over cars, yachts and power boats.

At the end of the marina he spots a white Porsche at the stern of a muscular hundred-foot powerboat. The trunk lid is up.

Dan strolls past. On the stern of the powerboat:
"L'ESPERANZA" Lisbon.

Diego is in Bermuda shorts, a plastic tube from a can leads up to one of the jet skis hanging on davits. He is pumping gas up to it.

Dan sits at a distance on a bollard to admire the view. A slim blond guy we'll come to know as HANS arrives in a red Mustang Coupe. He carries supermarket bags aboard.

Two women arrive: a blonde in a pink shift with a bust that defies gravity. Her partner, leggy with an Afro, teeters on platform heels, a skirt any shorter would be around her waist.

They gawk as Hans leads them aboard. He introduces them to a Doberman Pinscher.

INT. CHANDLERS STORE - DAY

STORE OWNER

I've got a five seater with a ninety horse Evinrude. Could have it ready for you at seven in the morning. You get live bait, bass rods and enough ice to last the day.

Dan nods and takes out his wallet.

EXT. PROFISH OFF SANTA CATALINA - DAY

Dan sits at the helm of a sixteen-foot Profish with a vinyl top on stanchions. He sips a can of beer, fishing rods providing him with good cover. He raises binoculars.

BINOCULAR POV

The powerboat is anchored, the four on deck, the women fooling with the dog. The men lowering two jet skis. Then both couples head on the jet skis for a harbor.

Dan watches them stroll out of sight.

BACK TO SCENE

Dan speeds to "L'Esperanza" where a chrome ladder runs down to its stern swim platform.

From the taffrail a pointed face with erect ears looks down. A thread of drool glinting as Dan and the Doberman eye each other.

Dan backs his boat off a little, crushes tablets in a bait tray, then kneads them into a meatball.

The Doberman watches the arc of the meatball, hesitates, then trots off to find it. It returns, running a pink tongue around its chops, stubby tail twitching.

DAN

Nice doggy!

Dan backs off, opens a can of beer and settles down to wait.

EXT. "L'ESPERANZA" - LATER

Dan steps onto the swim platform and cautiously climbs the ladder.

DAN

Here boy!

Somewhere a door CREAKS. Dan inches around the outside of the boat, feet on the lower rung of the deck rail, ready to fall off backwards into the sea if the dog rushes at him.

ON DECK

The Doberman lies sprawled, head between its paws, It strains to get up, eyeing Dan with baleful lidded eyes, then sinks back again, the effort to rise too great.

Dan swings over the rail, tugs a plastic bag from his pocket and rubs powder into cracks between the deck planks, working his way towards the chart house.

DAN

There's a good dog. Don't you worry.
Your master's doing better than me.
With what he's got salted away he'll
turn this into a minor blip in his
illustrious career.

CUT TO:

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

In a bathrobe Dan sips coffee. His phone RINGS.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

HEAD HUNTER

Got something for you. That, um,
thingy you wanted? Seems to be
coming round again...

DAN

Really? That's interesting.

HEAD HUNTER (V.O.)

Yeah, meet me same place? Say, er,
eleven thirty. Okay?

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Dan hums as he makes his way to where the gaunt memory man waits beneath the trees.

HEAD HUNTER

That South American got himself
busted. Narcotics guys all over his
boat. Sniffer dogs, the lot.

DAN

Careless.

HEAD HUNTER
Yeah. Very amateur.

His phone RINGS interrupting him, he fumbles in his pocket.

HEAD HUNTER
(into phone)
You'd be late for your own friggin'
funeral. No point coming now.

He snaps the phone shut.

HEAD HUNTER
Felix, my assistant. The asshole can
memorize the yellow pages, but can't
remember to be on time.

Dan waits for him to go on.

HEAD HUNTER
Anyway. My client's glad he didn't
take the South American now. Wants
to meet you instead...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Dan stands at a checkout, his phone RINGS.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

HEAD HUNTER
I hear you got that job all sewn up?

Dan smiles a secret little smile.

DAN
Uh-huh.

HEAD HUNTER
Usual spot for payment. Say three?

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Dan picks his way to the spot beneath the trees. As he approaches he sees Felix, the Head Hunter's assistant, standing alone.

DAN
Hey, you're early!

Felix smiles sheepishly.

DAN
So how's business?

FELIX
Not bad. The boss'll be here in a
minute.

They stare out to sea.

FELIX
You're better off out of that
refining job, anyway.

Dan looks at him, taken aback.

FELIX
The last guy we put with them ended
up fished out of the bay.

Dan is suddenly very still. A breeze RUSTLES branches, surf
HISSES on the shore.

DAN
Really?

The two men stare out to sea.

FELIX
Yeah, two summers ago. Last we saw
of him was a mug shot in the paper.
Believe me, you're better off
without 'em.

Dan nods, wondering how to draw the man out.

FELIX
Ah, here he is!

The bony figure of the Head Hunter is picking his way up the
slope.

HEAD HUNTER
So they hired you, huh?

Dan nods. His eyes slide to Felix who looks confused.

FELIX
He was hired?!

HEAD HUNTER
Sure. They took him for the refining
job.

Felix blanches.

DAN
Here, I owe you this.

The Head Hunter takes the notes, counts them, peels off two and hands them to Felix.

DAN
So, the last time you did business
with my new employer, the recruit
ended up out in the bay?

The Head Hunter freezes. He shoots Felix a dirty look.

HEAD HUNTER
He tell you that?

DAN
So what gives?

HEAD HUNTER
(defensive)
Only know what I read.

Money lies forgotten in the Head Hunter's hand as Dan holds his gaze.

DAN
And that is?

The Head Hunter squirms.

HEAD HUNTER
A trawler dragged up a tin trunk. It
bust open and a nasty mess fell out.
Cops said the guy had been in the
water for months.

DAN
And you didn't think to tell me?

HEAD HUNTER
Listen, I put people together. What
they do afterward ain't my business.

The headhunter notices the notes in his hand and pockets them quickly. The three stand in silence, looking in different directions, thinking different things.

HEAD HUNTER
(clears throat)
Well, we'll, uh, be off then. Watch
out for the tin trunks, huh?

Dan watches them walk away. Despite the sun he shivers as he gazes out to sea.

CUT TO:

INT. KAREN'S KITCHEN - BOSTON - DAY

KAREN
(into phone)
Great! I'll tell her. Bye.

She hangs up and turns to Alice sitting in her wheelchair, reading American Girl magazine.

KAREN
Penny's mom says if you go to their place, Penny'll show you her homework and tell you what you missed.

ALICE
Great! I'll go straightaway.

KAREN
Hey, hang on! I'm not ready.

ALICE
You don't have to come, mom! It's only a block away. I'm not a baby!

KAREN
I'm not sure that's a good idea, Alice.

ALICE
Oh don't fuss, mom. It's just one block.

KAREN
Okay, well if you're sure. I'll collect you at six-thirty. Okay?

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Alice bowls along the street, attempting wheelies with her wheelchair.

On the sidewalk ahead of her a BLIND WOMAN taps with a white cane. At an intersection, road works confuse her and block her way.

Alice rolls up behind.

ALICE
Can I help?

BLIND WOMAN
I thought I could cross here.

ALICE
They're fixing the road. We have to go around. Hold on to my wheelchair and I'll show you.

BLIND WOMAN
You're in a wheelchair?

ALICE
Yeah, bust my leg.

The woman holds the wheelchair handle as Alice guides her around the obstacles.

ALICE
Why don't you have a dog?

BLIND WOMAN
A guide-dog?

ALICE
Yeah... If it was me I'd have a dog. But my mom won't let me have one.

BLIND WOMAN
I usually manage okay.

They cross the intersection.

ALICE
Well, I gotta leave you now, 'cos my friend lives down there.

BLIND WOMAN
Okay, thank you.
(over shoulder)
Hope you get your dog!

INT. FRIEND'S HOUSE - DAY

Alice and a plump friend PENNY, munch biscuits at a table littered with schoolbooks.

PENNY
Lucky you. Not having any school.

ALICE
It's no fun stuck at home. It's alright for you.

PENNY
What you mean?

ALICE
Well, you've got a brother and a dog. And two parents.

PENNY

(munches)

Thought you had a hamster?

ALICE

You can't do anything with a hamster! You can't take a hamster for walks or teach it tricks!

(beat)

My mom won't let me have a dog. Says she'll end up looking after it. It's just not true!

Penny nods sympathetically and tugs a schoolbook from a satchel.

ALICE

What they give you?

PENNY

English, geography and boring old math.

ALICE

Mom says if I want to be a doctor and save the planet I have to be good at math.

PENNY

I wanna catch crooks and stuff. But my dad says I should be an accountant. Says they're the ones who get their hands on all the money.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL BASTION - HOUSE - DAY

Dan drives his clunker along a back road. He stops at high wrought iron gates in a high stone wall. An old brass plate says "El Bastion." A newer plastic sign tied on with wire says "AROGOL HOLDINGS"

Dan takes a remote control from an envelope and aims it at the gates. They swing open and he drives through. Half a mile away is an old house, squat and substantial. A track winding towards it through stubble.

Once a ranch or farm, now there's lawns and garden furniture under trees. Next to the house is a low wooden extension and four car garage. A barn stands a little way off.

GARAGE

Dan pulls into the garage alongside a Volvo station wagon, a Jaguar and a Cherokee. From a door at the rear of the garage a brawny man beckons.

Call him SCHILLER, his body a thick rope of muscle. A derisive twist to his mouth and a swinish cast to his eyes promises all the warmth of a deep freeze.

Dan follows Schiller past a workshop and a utility room. A wooden corridor leads into the house.

GREAT ROOM

Cartwheel chandeliers hang from the beams and at the far end tall windows give onto an olive grove.

Schiller slumps onto a sofa. Dan stands, eyeing his new partners in crime.

A man with pinched hawkish features and deep lines around his mouth, struggles to his feet.

KNOX

(puts out hand)

G'day clobber. Sid Knox's the name.

Glad you made it.

KNOX is an Australian, tall with thinning hair slicked back from a widow's peak, an expensive suit. If it wasn't for his shifty eyes he might be an executive or financier.

DAN

If you're not in, you can't win.

KNOX

Too damn right.

Knox waves at the man Dan followed in.

KNOX

This here is Schiller.

SCHILLER

Crime pays, huh?

Knox points at a small dumpy man.

KNOX

And this is Benny.

BENNY's hangdog expression and lumpy clothes give him the air of a loser. Someone flabby to shop, clean and do all the tacky things others don't want to do.

BENNY

(uneasy)

Welcome aboard.

Dan pours himself coffee and sits on a settee.

KNOX
So, Benny's your assistant. Choose
the place you need for the lab. Then
come and see me.

Knox glances at Schiller and jerks his head. Schiller leers
at Dan and both men leave.

Dan eyes Benny's worried face and crumpled clothes.

BENNY
Cheer up. It could be worse. You
might have got Neanderthal man.

DAN
(grins)
True. So let's make the best of it.

BENNY
Sure. It ain't forever...

MONTAGE - BENNY SHOWS DAN AROUND

- They glance into a large open-plan kitchen
- Peek into a small pantry
- Look at a dining room
- Walk through a plant-filled conservatory
- Glance into a study, where Knox and Schiller are talking.
- Descend a stone staircase to where a steel door opens
onto a vaulted cellar, now a games room.
- They go into the wooden extension and look at the
workshop cum artists studio.

BEDROOM

BENNY
This one's yours. Knox has the
master bedroom. I've got a small one
on the other side of the house.
Schiller sleeps in the Great Room on
one of the couches.

GARAGE

They eye the Volvo station wagon.

BENNY
This is for use on the job.

Dan spots a Suzuki 750 motorcycle, riding leathers hanging on a hook.

BENNY
The Brazilian asked for it.

DAN
That so?

He goes over, presses the starter, the ENGINE bursts into life.

DAN
I like it. This is for me.

INT. EL BASTION - STUDY - DAY

Dan and Knox are alone.

KNOX
I run this operation. What I say goes.

Knox's mouth settles back to an icy crevasse. He has nicotine-stained fingers and eyes like the mist in an ice box.

KNOX
No shooters. You need a piece, I give you one. Afterward you give it back.

Dan nods.

KNOX
This place is rented. So once you've finished, you have to put everything back, just like it was. Understood?

Again Dan nods.

KNOX
So, where've you chosen?

DAN
That studio cum workshop in the extension will do fine.

KNOX
Righty-oh. Come see me soon as you're ready to collect the gunk. And get rid of that heap you drive. I don't want anything drawing attention to us here.

Knox looks away, bored, the interview done.

INT. EL BASTION - EXTENSION - WORKSHOP CUM STUDIO - DAY

Dan and Benny carry out easels and canvasses and remove a partition to make space.

They bring in chipboard from a drop side truck, lay it on the floor, then tack up polyethylene to protect the walls.

INT. EL BASTION - KITCHEN - DUSK

Knox and Schiller are munching tortilla chips and making inroads into a six pack. Dan and Benny enter and begin to wash their hands.

BENNY

(to Dan)

How's about going into town for a bite?

SCHILLER

There's grub here you little gopher.

DAN

Hey, all work and no play...

SCHILLER

Makes Benny a dull boy. But he's dull anyway.

DAN

He loves you too...

(to Knox)

What you think, boss?

KNOX

(studies his nails)

You use your own car and get yourselves out of any jams. 'Cos this place doesn't exist.

INT. COCKTAIL BAR - NIGHT

A couple in a booth look married, but not to each other. Dan and Benny sit at the end of the bar, no one in earshot.

BENNY

..I went to take a leak and when I got back the restaurant was in an uproar. Schiller had bet Knox he could break a plate and before anyone knew what was happening he'd pulled out his wanger and whacked a dinner plate in two. Boy, did we have to leave there fast!

DAN

The nearest thing he gets to culture
is his underarm bacteria.

BENNY

Yeah, nice smile too. I call him
'King Leer.'

A hen party squeals at the other end of the bar.

DAN

(confidential)

Your old woman know you're bent?

BENNY

Sure she does. She was bent long
before me.

DAN

You don't say?

BENNY

We got so many skeletons in our
cupboard we've had to take out all
the shelves.

DAN

What was she into?

BENNY

Ripped off stuff from fashion
boutiques. Nice little earner.
Women'd say they'd tried on such and
such and ask her to get it half
price. My old woman'd rip it off, or
send someone to.

DAN

She still at it?

BENNY

You joking?! Not with three kids she
ain't! Anyway, you can't keep up
that lark once you're known.

(beat)

So how come you left the straight
and narrow?

DAN

Me? Dunno really. Remember being a
kid in the sandpit at the park. Some
kids came along with bucketful's of
toys, things that cost real money.
Didn't seem fair.

(beat)

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

I covered up a fire engine with sand so when it was time to go they couldn't find it. Made me realize the kind of lives other people had, what money could buy.

BENNY

My old man always yacked on about hard work never killed anyone. But what I say is, why take the chance?!

The BARMAN, balding with a bow tie, refills bowls on the bar.

BARMAN

There you go boys. Best things in life are free.

DAN

Tell us that when we ask for the bill!

BARMAN

Ouch!

(then)

Tell you one thing though, whoever came up with that line certainly didn't live round here.

DAN

You're damn right. We'll have the same again, barman. And have one yourself.

The barman nods and moves away.

DAN

I envy you.

BENNY

Me?! You must be joking!

DAN

Someone waiting for you, someone caring.

BENNY

I'll bet you've a string of girls long as your arm.

Dan shakes his head.

DAN

Not really. When you're on the lam anything more than one night stands is risky.

CLOSE ON mirror behind the bar, a card reads: "AS TO MARRIAGE OR CELIBACY, LET A MAN TAKE WHICH COURSE HE WILL. HE'S SURE TO REPENT. SOCRATES."

The barman returns with the drinks. Dan nods at the card.

DAN

Bit of a pessimist, aren't you?

Amusement lights the barman's face.

BARMAN

Hey, marriages may be made in heaven, but mine went straight to hell!

He grins, moves away then calls back:

BARMAN

You thinking of getting married, better buy a pup.

DAN

A dog?

BARMAN

Sure. At least after a couple of years the hound'll still be glad to see you...

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

MAKESHIFT LAB

The workshop cum studio now resembles a cross between a building site and a soup kitchen. Open-top fifty gallon drums sit on bricks with gas rings beneath. Hoses and cables snake everywhere.

GARAGE

Dan and Benny fold down the seats in the Volvo station wagon and manhandle a large plastic tank inside. The rear hatch barely closes.

STUDY

Dan enters. Knox, in shirt sleeves, sits at a leather topped desk, eating cornflakes.

DAN

I'm ready for the gunk.

Knox places his bowl in a desk drawer and spreads a map over the desktop.

KNOX

So, the stuff is liquid opium gunk that came in on a Turkish freighter stashed in an engine room oil tank. They've pumped it into a tank trailer what collects waste oil from engine rooms. I've got two-thousand liters.

Dan nods.

KNOX

So, you agreed to a total of three point two million. With a quarter once the gunk is converted into morphine base. Half when that base is converted into pure morphine. Another quarter once the morphine's transformed into heroin. And a final payment once the heroin is purified, packed, and everything here put back like it was.

DAN

Right. And the end product has to be Number Four, a fluffy dry white powder worth two hundred and fifty times its weight in gold...

Knox nods. He opens a small wall safe covered by an oil painting. He places a snub nosed .38, two mobile phones with earpieces and a key on the desk in front of Dan.

KNOX

No using your own mobile on the job. And no using these for any personal stuff.

Knox smooths out the map and taps a location, his thin lips in a watery smile.

KNOX

X marks the spot...

EXT. FREEWAY - TRAVELING - DAY

SUZUKI

In helmet and leathers Dan rides the Suzuki. Benny follows the motorcycle at the wheel of the Volvo station wagon with its empty tank.

INTERCUT mobile phone conversation.

DAN

Can you hear me?

BENNY

Yeah. I got ya.

DAN

Okay, let's speed it up. This is going to take most of the day.

Dan opens the throttle. Suzuki and Volvo begin overtaking slower traffic.

EXT. STREET NEAR LOS ANGELES PORT - DAY

An industrial street, somewhere a ship hoots. Cars rattle across a fly-over. Dan halts the Suzuki, cuts its engine and tugs off his helmet.

The station wagon halts behind him. Placing the bike on its stand Dan walks back to the Volvo.

DAN

Could take the best part of an hour.
Stay here with the bike.

Dan leaves Benny astride the Suzuki, holding the crash helmet. Then drives off in the Volvo. In an alley of lock-up garages he halts in front of one.

He slips the key in a padlock. Its hasp springs open.

INT. LOCK-UP GARAGE - DAY

Light angles down from a skylight onto a dirty double-axle tank trailer against a wall, the kind of thing seen towed around on farms.

Dan reverses the Volvo inside and closes the door. Standing on a mud flap he lifts the tank lid. It falls back with a CLANG! He winces at the odor.

CLOSE ON dark liquid, wisps of vapor curling from its surface.

Dan eyes the tank trailer with the Mickey Mouse figurine turning in his fingers. With a sigh he unreels a coupling hose, puts the nozzle in the Volvo's plastic tank and opens a valve.

EXT. STREET NEAR LOS ANGELES PORT - DAY

Dan halts the Volvo station wagon behind the motorcycle on its stand. Benny is nowhere to be seen.

Dan looks around and checks his mirrors, drumming his fingers on the wheel. Where is the idiot? He dials.

MOBILE OPERATOR (O.S.)

(phone)

The correspondent you're calling is
not available right now, please
leave a message after the beep...

Dan angrily snaps his phone shut, thumps the wheel and starts the engine. As he releases the handbrake..

CLOSE ON rear view mirror. Benny is trotting down the street carrying the crash helmet.

Benny comes up to the Volvo window, out of breath.

DAN

Where the hell you been?!

BENNY

Sorry. Thought it'd take you longer.

DAN

(bitingly)

If you've quite finished. Perhaps
you wouldn't mind getting in the
fucking car and doing what you're
paid for!

Dan gets out. Benny slides in shamefaced. From behind the wheel Benny looks up.

BENNY

My youngest came off his bike, has
concussion. I just went back there
to use a pay phone.

DAN

(softens)

How is he?

BENNY

They're letting him out tomorrow.

DAN

I know how you feel. My daughter's
sick at the moment. The things we
have to do for our kids, huh?

Benny nods. He glances back at the full tank and wrinkles his nose.

BENNY

Phew, that stuff's got a kick like a
mule!

DAN

Don't worry about it. Just keep a
window open. And take it easy, okay?

EXT. APPROACH TO ROUNDABOUT - DAY

SUZUKI

Dan riding ahead on the motorcycle, leaves Benny behind in traffic.

As he approaches a roundabout leading to the freeway he spots two LAPD motorcycle patrolmen standing near BMW motorcycles on stands.

Dan stays close to the center of the roundabout masked by other traffic and goes past the patrolmen. He rides full circle then heads back to warn Benny.

The Volvo passes in oncoming traffic and Dan makes a U-turn and accelerates after it. He speed dials, but Benny's phone just RINGS and RINGS...

DAN
(gritted teeth)
Answer your phone, Benny! For God's sake, answer the goddamn phone!

He thumps the motorcycle tank in frustration.

VOLVO STATION WAGON

Benny, one hand on the wheel, has lost his earpiece, and is searching for a phone he can hear ringing but can't locate.

SUZUKI

DAN
(yells)
For God's sake, Benny. Change lanes!

VOLVO STATION WAGON

The Volvo chugs around the very edge of the roundabout with Benny groping on the floor for the phone.

A patrolman steps out and flags Benny down!

SUZUKI

DAN
Oh my Christ!

Dan enters the roundabout and hard against the center sails past Benny and the patrolmen. He is raging: he hasn't come this far to watch everything slip down the tubes.

A HIGH PRESSURE HISS as adrenaline pressurizes Dan's skull.

As he comes around full circle, a patrolman is standing next to the station wagon, Benny's white face staring up from the driver's window.

Dan jerks out the .38 and standing tall on the Suzuki's footpegs, he sails past them at arm's length.

DAN
(yells)
Yee haw!

He fires BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! punching holes in the rear doors of a semitrailer ahead.

PATROLMEN

One patrolman shoves Benny's license back at him and both leap onto their machines.

SUZUKI

Dan veers wildly across traffic, HORNS BLARE. He rockets to the ramp, flicks the bike into a knee grazing turn then wheelies the down the ramp to the freeway.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Lying flat on the tank Dan careens across lanes, overtaking, undertaking. A blur of road rushing towards him, rev counter in the red.

MONTAGE - MOTORCYCLE PURSUIT

-- DAN -- his eyes like slits.

-- PATROLMEN -- flashing lights and SIRENS.

-- SUZUKI -- passes beneath a bridge, flat out.

-- PATROLMEN -- reach same spot seconds later.

-- EXIT SIGN -- with a glance over his shoulder Dan slices to an off-ramp.

EXT. OFF-RAMP - DAY

Dan roars into a hard bend, the road curling around and round.

Barely out of the bend he stands on the footpegs, shoots across the hard shoulder and rockets up an overgrown embankment, leaping the crest.

PATROLMEN

Engines SNARL and gears SHIFT as seconds later the patrolmen take the bend. They come out of the bend and accelerate away, the MUFFLER NOTES and SIRENS dropping an octave.

EXT. CREST OF EMBANKMENT - DAY

Lying on his stomach Dan watches his pursuers disappear.

Behind him the Suzuki lies smashed against a broken fence post...

Dan tugs out his phone, its screen cracked. He dials.

BENNY (O.S.)
 Jesus, Dan. Thank Christ you're
 there!
 (cautiously)
 You okay?

CUT TO:

INT. VOLVO STATION WAGON - OFF RAMP - TRAVELING - DAY

Dan sits in the passenger seat nursing his ribs, one foot minus sock and shoe. Benny drives in guilty silence, his face crumpled with worry.

BENNY
 (whines)
 What'll happen to me?!
 (beat)
 It wasn't my fault...

Dan looks away.

DAN
 Why didn't you answer the goddamn
 phone?

BENNY
 I couldn't find it.

DAN
 Are you serious?!
 (beat)
 All you had to do was keep close to
 the center of the roundabout, there
 was no way they could've pulled you
 over.

BENNY
 Knox'll go crazy when he hears about
 it, I know he will.

DAN
Just concentrate on your driving,
Benny. Okay?

But Benny goes to pieces. He brakes wildly, the station wagon skids to a halt. The gunk in the tank surges forward, slamming it against the rear of their seats.

It takes them both a second to recover.

BENNY
I can't go back. I can't.

His chin wobbles, his knuckles white on the wheel.

BENNY
You don't know what they're like.

But Dan knows. He stares out the car window.

DAN'S IMAGINATION - A TRAWLER'S NET

Among flapping fish, a rusty tin trunk, water peeing from drilled holes.

BACK TO SCENE

DAN
God knows why they chose you, Benny.
You're a slob. But this once, I'll
forget it.
(beat)
You tell them it was impossible not
to get pulled over - and I'll back
you up. Okay?

BENNY
(blubs)
Jesus, Dan. I don't know what to
say.

DAN
Good. So don't. Just get what's left
of me back in one piece, okay?!

EXT. EL BASTION - DAY

GARAGE

Knox and Schiller are waiting. As soon as the station wagon enters they open the rear hatch and gloat over the full tank.

Schiller looks through the window at Dan.

SCHILLER

You look like shit. Where's the bike?

KITCHEN

Dan sits on a stool in dirty torn leathers, he gulps a whiskey.

BENNY

..then the cop threw my driver's license back at me, jumped on his bike and took off after Dan.

Dan nods and hands the .38 to Knox. Knox tips cartridges and spent cases into his palm, looks at them.

KNOX

Okay. Well, the bike had false plates anyway. And nobody uses that station wagon anymore. As soon as the tank's empty we'll get rid of it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CEDARS-SINAI - CONSULTANT'S ROOM - DAY

Dan hobbles on a forearm crutch, stripped to the waist, one side of his ribs are adhesive taped from sternum to spine, one ankle strapped, and a wrist bandaged.

CONSULTANT

The X-rays show a hairline fracture of one rib, and internal bruising.

The consultant scribbles a prescription.

CONSULTANT

You got someone to look after you?

DAN

Um, the wife's away at the moment...

CONSULTANT

Well, maybe a few days in a private clinic would be good?

Dan nods. His phone RINGS.

DAN

Excuse me...

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

KNOX (O.S.)

Listen, cobber. I'm not paying you to sit around recuperating. You're no use to me where you are. I'm sending Schiller to pick you up. Just you be ready, 'cos otherwise I'm getting me a replacement...

DAN

Hey, take it easy. I'll be ready.

He closes his phone and turns to the consultant.

DAN

Look, think I'll manage without that clinic. Thanks all the same.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

MAKESHIFT LAB

Dan sits on a swivel chair, his bandaged ankle resting on a crate. With his crutch he points to a ventilation grille in the wall.

DAN

Remove that grille and run a hose out to the septic tank. We've two thousand liters of gunk to cook, and most of it will end up going down the tubes.

LATER

Benny lugs in jerrycans. He pours gunk into one of three open-top fifty gallon oil drums. Dan hobbles over and gazes down at the dark liquid.

DAN

This part's more like making soup than chemistry.

STILL LATER

A gas burner ROARS and the oil drum steams. Following Dan's directions Benny adds a shovelful of lime from a paper sack.

A thick whitish scum floats to the surface.

DAN

Ladle all that scum off into a bucket. That's the morphine.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Then when the rest has cooled, pump it out to the septic tank and get rid of it.

Plastic sheeting on the walls ripples as Benny ladles scum into a bucket.

BENNY

Hubble, bubble, toil and trouble.

Schiller puts his head around the door and leers at them.

BENNY

Anyone for soup?

SUPER:

"TEN DAYS LATER"

The makeshift lab is even more chaotic, three oil drums steam while a fourth is pumped empty. Benny lugs in a pair of jerrycans.

BENNY

This is the last of it. The tank is empty.

Rows of plastic buckets filled with a yellowish scum are lined up against the walls.

DAN

Great. Must easy be two hundred and fifty keys there.

INT/EXT. MAKESHIFT LAB - DAY

Benny lugs out empty oil drums, burners and hoses and heaves them onto a drop side truck. Dan tosses his crutch up to join the scrap.

Benny clambers into the cab and Dan slaps the door.

DAN

Get rid of it all. That's the first phase over.

INT. EL BASTION - MAKESHIFT LAB - DAY

In the now almost empty lab, Knox and Schiller gloat over the rows of scum filled buckets. Dan stands back, watching.

KNOX

Ace work, Danny boy. So now we'll all take a long weekend.

(MORE)

KNOX (CONT'D)

Monday you get your first payment.
And then you crack on with the next
stage.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Carrying a suitcase Dan lets himself into his apartment and opens the balcony doors. He sits, twiddling the Mickey Mouse figurine.

He opens his netbook and Skypes.

INTERCUT Skype conversation split screen.

DAN

So how's things?

Alice in her wheelchair at home.

ALICE

(sulkily)

Don't want to talk about it.

DAN

Is Mommy angry with you?

ALICE

No.

DAN

Is she there?

ALICE

Upstairs.

The distant sound of a VACUUM CLEANER.

DAN

Listen, I don't mind if you don't
want to talk. I don't care, as long
as you're happy.

ALICE

You don't care! My hamster is dead!
And you don't care!

DAN

Oh I am sorry. When did it happen?

ALICE

Yesterday.

(beat)

I went to stroke him and he wasn't
there. And when I looked in his
nest, he was dead.

DAN

Oh dear, I am sorry. I don't know what to say.

ALICE

We put him in a matchbox and wrote his name on it. Then I buried him in the garden.
If anybody digs him up I'll kill them!

DAN

Wish I could hug you.

ALICE

Me too.

DAN

It's like that all the time. Things born, things die. It happens all the time, somewhere. Only we don't see it.

ALICE

I know...

EXT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dan goes out onto the balcony and leans on the railing next to the FOR SALE sign. He glances down.

DOWN ANGLE - STREET

Two patrol cars halt and uniformed men get out.

STREET LEVEL

Lieutenant Delacroix walks up to them and points at the entrance of Dan's building.

DELACROIX

Okay, you cover the elevator and stairs. You two come with me.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dan dashes to the refrigerator, grabs a large tub of ice-cream from the freezer and jams it in his suitcase. Carrying his case he rushes out.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Elevator lights change showing it's on its way up. Down the stairwell Dan glimpses blue shirts. He races to the end of the corridor but is halted by a locked door.

PING elevator doors slide open. Delacroix and two officers step out.

Dan yanks opens a corridor window and tosses out his suitcase. He grabs the nozzle of a wall mounted fire hose and clambers out of the window.

The hose reel CLATTERS wildly, hose SCREECHING over the sill.

EXT. REAR OF APPARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Dan abseils down on the hose, kicking himself away from the wall. It's slower than falling - but not much.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACHELOR APARTMENTS - DAY

Outside a building of one bedroom furnished apartments Dan stands next to his battered suitcase, tired and irritable.

AGENCY WOMAN

Utilities are paid by the owner.
There's a bedroom, shared laundry
room and one parking space.
You're lucky to find anywhere at
such short notice.

DAN

Tell me about it! I've been
searching all weekend.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

STUDY

KNOX

Good weekend?

DAN

(dryly)
Oh marvelous. You?

Knox nods. He puts an aluminum case with the maker's label dangling from the handle on the desk.

KNOX

Okay, one quarter payment, as agreed.

From the wall safe he takes out ten and a half gold coins, each 3 inches in diameter and half an inch thick.

CLOSE ON COIN: "THE AUSTRALIAN NUGGET 1 KILO 9999 GOLD - 2005 - RED KANGAROO".

Knox stacks the coins in the case.

KNOX

There you go, eight hundred thousand, give or take a smackeroo.

Dan nods, closes the case and goes to the door.

KNOX

(tongue in cheek)
How's about a tip?

DAN

(incredulous)
A tip?!

KNOX

Yeah, ain't you gonna give me a tip?

DAN

A tip?! Well, if I were you, I'd remember to lock that safe!

Knox's shoulders fall.

MAKESHIFT LAB

Benny is kneeling, assembling trestle tables.

DAN

Benny, There's something I have to take care of. I'll be back this afternoon, okay?

BENNY

Got what makes you happy?

Dan nods.

DAN

I don't believe that Knox guy. He asked for a tip. And what's more he meant it.

BENNY

What'd you do?

DAN
Told him to get lost. He's making
more than me.

BENNY
(winces)
Be careful. Knox the obnoxious
expects a cut of everything. He'll
find a way of making you pay.

Dan shrugs and goes out the door.

EXT. EL BASTION - GATE - DAY

Dan drives out the gate in a hired white Ford Fusion,
talking on his phone.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

KAREN
Dan?

DAN
Yes, listen, everything's on track.
I'll be at the airport when you
land.

KAREN
Wow! Fantastic!

EXT/INT. BARATIER PRECIOUS METALS - DAY

Dan and Karen pass through an access control vestibule and
enter a precious metals depository.

Around the room are displays of rare coins, ads for gold,
silver, palladium and platinum deposit facilities.

BARATIER, a white-haired businessman, steps forward.

BARATIER
Mr. Nichols? I was expecting you. If
you'd come this way.

They enter a barred vault. MACARTHUR, a stocky mustached man
in shirt sleeves, stands as they enter.

BARATIER
This is Mr. McArthur, our assay
verification manager.

McArthur nods deferentially.

Dan opens the case. McArthur weighs the coin ingots then plugs headphones into a device with knobs and a display. He runs a probe over each of the coins.

BARATIER

(to Karen)

You'd be surprised at all the counterfeit bullion on the market. Tungsten filled gold bars, lead filled silver bars. They can be very deceptive.

McArthur probes the coin that is sawed in half. He removes his headset and nods.

BARATIER

Excellent, excellent. I'll give you top price, as promised.

INT. FEDERAL EXPRESS OFFICE - DAY

Karen takes a certified check from her purse, touches it to her lips then staples it to a letter. Dan takes a check from his wallet and Karen staples that to the letter too.

CLOSE ON CERTIFIED CHECKS:

'City National Bank' "EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS"
'Credit Suisse' "ONE MILLION FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS"

Karen slips the letter into a FedEx envelope and sticks on a label addressed to: "Director of Research, The Yamasuka Freedom Clinic, Tanaka, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto-shi. Japan."

KAREN

Once they acknowledge receipt, there's 45 days to the deadline.

They glance at each other. Dan nods.

KAREN

(hands over letter)

When will it be delivered?

FEDEX AGENT

They'll have it by lunchtime tomorrow.

Karen turns to Dan.

KAREN

So, the clock starts ticking...

EXT. EL BASTION - GARAGE - DAY

Knox stands, hands on hips, as Dan's white Fusion pulls in.

KNOX
Where the hell you been?!

DAN
Had to see someone off at the
airport.

KNOX
Really? Did you now?! Well in
future say your fond farewells in
your own time and not in mine! Get
it?!

DAN
Got it.

KNOX
Good!

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - MAKESHIFT LAB - DAY

Dan and Benny place heating mantles, flasks, condenser
columns and measuring cylinders on newly erected trestle
tables.

As Benny lifts a heavy metal clamp stand from a box it slips
from his grasp and drops with a CLANG!

BENNY
Jesus! These things weigh a ton.

LATER

Benny watches as with a Sharpie Dan writes on a white-board.

"#1 OPIUM + LIME = SCUM.

#2 SCUM + AMMONIA = MORPHINE

#3 MORPHINE + ACETIC ACID = HEROIN

#4 HEROIN + ETHER = 95% PURE"

He strikes out the first line, then taps the second.

DAN
So this is next.

EVEN LATER...

Benny measures yellowish scum into rows of glass flasks sitting in heating mantles. Dan follows him, fitting each flask with a reflux condenser held in place by a clamp stand.

With goggles and gloves, Dan adds "AMMONIA" from a brown glass bottle.

MORPHINE PRODUCTION - MONTAGE

-- Twelve columns percolate in heating mantles.

-- A quarter of the scum buckets are upside down, empty.

-- Columns percolate in heating mantles.

-- Half the row of buckets are now upside down.

-- Columns percolate.

-- All the buckets are empty.

-- Benny carries the buckets out and tosses them onto the drop side truck.

EXT. EL BASTION - REAR PORCH - DAY

SUPER:

"DEADLINE 27 DAYS"

Schiller leans on the porch rail watching Dan and Benny in lab coats lay out two hundred trays of brown paste to dry in the sun.

SCHILLER

(sneers)

Looks like--

DAN

(overlaps)

Don't say it...

BENNY

Don't knock it, fella. By the time we've finished with it this stuff'll have you giggling all the way to the bank.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - STUDY - DAY

Knox pays Dan another ten and a half gold coins. Dan stacks them in the aluminum case, the maker's label still dangling.

EXT. EL BASTION - GATES - DAY

Dan leaves in the white Fusion. As he waits for the gates to swing open he talks on his phone, the aluminum case lying on the passenger side floor.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

Karen? Get a flight soon as you can. We're half-way there!

KAREN

Wow! That's fantastic! I'll come straight away!

EXT. BACHELOR APARTMENTS - DAY

A bearded balloon seller leans on the wall near the entrance of a parking garage. Above his head a clutch of golden heart-shaped balloons bob.

Dan in the Fusion waits as the garage door rises. The balloon seller ambles to the Dan's window and taps it. Dan glances at him, shakes his head apologetically.

Abruptly the passenger door is yanked open. Diego leaps in, a handgun covered by a brown paper bag and jabs Dan savagely in the ribs.

DIEGO

Drive amigo!

As the Ford enters the garage the balloon seller lets go the balloons, they jostle and soar skyward. He ducks under the closing door and follows the car down the ramp.

INT. BACHELOR APARTMENTS - PARKING GARAGE - DAY

On the hood of the Fusion the aluminum case lies open. Even in fluorescent light gold looks good.

Diego rams Dan against a concrete column, the gun in the bag against his throat. Diego slowly tears the brown paper away.

Behind him the balloon seller is peeling off his beard, removing sunglasses and baseball cap to reveal Diego's buddy, Hans.

DAN

(desperate)

You don't understand! I need that money-

DIEGO
 (overlaps)
 I no give damn! Is mine. You cheat
 me. Now I want back. All!

DAN
 Listen-

DIEGO
 (overlaps)
 Is you listen, amigo! Is me what
 talk. I interview job. I know how
 much. I know how long...

Dan's knees give way, he sinks down the column in despair. Diego's gun tracking him, the barrel ending up on Dan's mouth.

CLOSE ON pistol's blade-style foresight.

With a vicious jerk Diego rips open one of Dan's nostrils with the foresight. Dan writhes in shock, blood pouring between his fingers.

Car doors SLAM.

DAN
 No!

The Fusion screeches away. Dan races after it, clawing at the trunk, for a moment he clings on but is thrown off as it swerves onto the ramp.

INT/EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Dan is leaving. He has stitches and a Steri-Strip on his nose, a wrist is bandaged and there's blood on his clothes.

EXT. YELLOW CAB - TRAVELING - DAY

Regretfully, Dan stares at the Mickey Mouse figurine. As the taxi approaches the bachelor apartments he spots a badly parked white Fusion.

DAN
 This is fine, thanks. Stop here.

MOMENTS LATER

Dan walks to the white Fusion. It's empty. On the trunk, in his own blood, is scrawled the word "REMEMBER!"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUDGET HOTEL ROOM - DAY

KAREN
(distraught)
But what are you going to do?! You
can't just let them get away with
it...

DAN
So what you suggest? That I tell the
law I had eight hundred K in gold,
that I got it for cooking heroin.
And that it was ripped off by a
crook that I framed?!

KAREN
But you can't just do nothing.
Alice's future depends on it!

DAN
You think I don't know that? You
think I don't know that every minute
she's getting worse?

He fingers the wreckage of his nose.

DAN
Look, you go back East and take care
of her. I'll, um, I'll call you...

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

KITCHEN

Dan enters. The gang stare at his wrecked nose.

KNOX
Jesus, Mary and Joseph. What
happened to you?

DAN
I, um, slipped in the bathroom.

SCHILLER
(leers)
Serves you right. Should never drink
in the shower, dilutes your gin.

MAKESHIFT LAB

In lab coats, Dan and Benny measure morphine paste into
round-bottomed flasks, fitting them with condensers held in
metal clamp stands.

BENNY

You don't seem your chirpy old self these days.

DAN

Huh? Oh, you know, um, woman trouble.

(beat)

Listen, there's a couple of things I got to take care of. Could you cover for me for a couple of days?

BENNY

What the hell am I gonna tell the others?!

DAN

Say I'm rounding up supplies or something. Anything. I'll be back as soon as I can...

CUT TO:

INT. BACHELOR APARTMENT - DAY

SUPER:

"DEADLINE 21 DAYS"

Dan takes the large tub of ice-cream from the freezer, he opens it and holds it under the hot tap. As ice-cream melts a clear plastic bag appears. Inside it a 9mm Glock.

EXT. L.A. MARINA - DAY

Dan sits on a street legal dirt bike wearing an integral crash helmet. He's observing L'Esperanza fifty yards away through a monocular scope.

SCOPE POV

Hans carries a crate down L'Esperanza gangplank and pushes it alongside another in the rear of his Mustang. Then he returns on board.

He reappears lugging an aluminum case, the maker's label dangling from its handle. He puts it inside the car.

EXT. L.A. STREETS - DAY

Dan trails the Mustang through traffic. It halts at a red light. Dan rides up behind it and kicks down the motorcycle stand, his hand slides to his gun..

..at that moment a patrol car appears from a side street and Dan freezes. The patrol car halts at a double parked SUV, and a patrolman gets out to write a ticket.

The light changes, the Mustang moves off. Dan follows.

EXT. SECURE STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

The Mustang turns into a storage facility in an industrial zone. Dan halts outside its high chain-link fence where a sign reads "ARMED RESPONSE".

Dan watches Hans park near the office then enter lugging the aluminum case. Dan rides slowly into the parking lot, unsure what to do.

INT. STORAGE FACILITY - RECEPTION - DAY

Hans shows a card to the manager, then carries the aluminum case down a corridor lined with secure units.

He slots his card into a reader and the door of a storage unit rolls up.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY - PARKING LOT - DAY

Hans returns to the Mustang pushing a trolley.

Dan quickly kneels beside his motorcycle, pretending to adjust something, observing him.

Hans loads the two crates onto the trolley. Then pushes it inside.

INT. STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

RECEPTION

Wearing his crash helmet, Dan enters. The manager is leaning through a doorway, talking to someone in the back office. Hans is pushing the trolley down a corridor.

Dan snatches a cardboard box from a display of removal cartons, and hurries after him.

REVERSE ANGLE - CORRIDOR - SECURITY GUARD POV

From the other end a security guard glances down the corridor, sees two men, one pushing a trolley, the other holding a carton. They appear legit so he moves on.

CORRIDOR

Hans enters his unit, Dan walks slowly past carrying the carton.

Hans exits the unit with the trolley now empty. He pulls his card from the reader and the unit door lowers.

As Hans returns towards the office, Dan sprints with the carton and dives under the closing door, the carton collapses beneath him with a loud PLOP!

HANS' POV

Hans glances back, but the corridor is empty.

INSIDE STORAGE UNIT

Blackness, silence. A tiny orange filament flickers. Lights come on, Dan's hand on the light timer switch.

Against one wall leans an inflatable dinghy and marlin rods. The aluminum case sits beside a crate. Dan quickly hefts it onto a crate and CLICKS open its catches.

The case is filled with radar equipment manuals. Dan tips them out. Nothing else! Desperately he searches the unit. One crate holds an anchor and chain. The light goes out.

DAN

Fuck!

Dan presses the light timer again. One crate holds an old radome, another just cable and plastic buoys. Dan sits on a crate, shoulders slumped, head in hands. The light goes out.

WIPE TO:

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The office and perimeter lights of the storage facility are lit. The motorcycle stands alone in the darkened parking lot.

INT. STORAGE FACILITY - NIGHT

IN STORAGE UNIT

Precariously perched on stacked crates, Dan jabs at the light timer with a marlin rod, then reaches up to pull the cover off a ceiling smoke alarm.

CLOSE ON SMOKE ALARM

Dan pushes two wires together - a FAT SPARK! A raucous KLAXON sounds! Fire sprinklers SPIT and drench him.

CORRIDOR

A watchman pulls a wheeled fire extinguisher along the corridor, another drags a fire hose.

The watchman uses a key and the storage unit door rolls up on a darkened unit, its sprinklers spraying.

WATCHMAN #1

Don't see no fire.

WATCHMAN #2

No smoke neither.

Dan jumps out from behind the inflatable dinghy, brandishing his pistol, distorted face behind the wet visor of his helmet.

DAN

Move! Get out of here! Scoot!

The watchmen back away. Dan runs to the office. The keys hang in the lock of the entrance door.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The dirt bike ENGINE BURSTS INTO LIFE. Dan hurtles to a handful of vehicles, jumps the bike onto the hood of a sedan, motors up its windshield onto its roof.

He jumps the bike onto the roof of an adjacent van. Bike and rider hang for a second, then with a ROAR OF THE ENGINE leaps the perimeter fence and lands out in the road!

Fast GEAR CHANGES as the dirt bike disappears without lights into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - MAKESHIFT LAB - DAY

Dan and Benny eye rows of percolating flasks and columns. Knox enters.

KNOX

Where the hell you been?! Two days you been gone! Schiller says you dragged yourself in four-o'clock in the morning looking like a drowned rat.
What you think you're playing at?!

DAN

Stuff I had to take care of.

KNOX

You think I'm gonna sit around waiting for you to decide to turn up?!

DAN

I'm on the job now, okay? I'm back on it.

KNOX

You better be! And you see you stay on it, too!

EXT. EL BASTION - OLIVE GROVE - DAY

Dan stands behind the house among olive trees, cell phone to his ear.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

Yeah, I know I said I'd ring you. But there's been a hitch. And before you ask, no I don't have it right now. It's too complicated to explain. But I'll get it, I swear. I just need more time.

KAREN

But we don't have more time... And I've been thinking. Is this really what we should be doing?

DAN

You got another idea?

KAREN

But it's all so sordid. Addicts, needles, ruining lives...

DAN

You got another way to give Alice a chance?! 'Cos if you do, believe me, I'll drop all this crap like a shot!

KAREN

No, Dan. I don't...

DAN

(irked)
So do I continue or not?! 'Cos I know there's a friggin' deadline!

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

GREAT ROOM

Schiller is sprawled on a settee, watching TV. Knox enters.

KNOX

Time to get off your butt and do
what you're paid for.

He turns on his heel and goes out.

STUDY

Schiller puts his head around the door.

KNOX

Come in and shut the door.

Schiller enters and sits. Knox resembles a praying mantis about to bite its mate's head off.

KNOX

Two days we don't see hide nor hair
of this Danny boy. Then he turns up.
What's the dipstick playing at?

SCHILLER

What'd he say?

KNOX

Stuff to take care of. If he thinks
I'm having a clown risking my
operation, he's another think
coming! Find out what the jerk's up
to.

EXT. EL BASTION - OLIVE GROVE - DAY

Dan talks into his phone, touching his nose where blood has clotted black.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

That's a quarter of the money ripped
off. If I don't meet the payment
schedule I lose everything. But what
can I do? The berth where their boat
was is empty. I've no idea where
they've gone.

RAZZER

That's crap...

DAN

Now I'm caught between trying to get back my ripped off payment or continuing with the job to get the next one.

RAZZER

Well, you screwed the South American. You shouldn't be surprised he's screwing you. What'd you tell your mob?

DAN

Nothing. What can I tell them? You think they're going to pat me on the back for cheating 'em out of their chemist. All I can do is continue as if nothing happened...

INT. EL BASTION - MAKESHIFT LAB - DAY

Two hundred trays of dried brown paste are stacked beneath the trestle tables

PRODUCING HEROIN - MONTAGE

-- Benny measures out dried paste into flasks.

-- Dan wearing goggles and gloves pours in "ACETIC ACID".

-- Rows of flasks and columns percolate.

-- An entire row of trays has changed color, an off-white paste replacing the brown.

-- All the trays are off-white.

WIPE TO:

INT. EL BASTION - STUDY - DAY

Knox stands in front of the safe.

SUPER: "DEADLINE 17 DAYS"

KNOX

Got Monex kilobars. Okay?

Dan nods and hefts one, the kilobar in the palm of his hand like a Hershey bar.

Dan stacks ten and a half kilobars in a small sports bag. Knox looks at him hopefully. But Dan zips up the bag turns and goes out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HYPERMARKET - UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - DAY

Car doors SLAM and tires SQUEAK. Cars arrive and leave.

Diego and Hans get out of a white Porsche and walk over to Knox's Jaguar. Diego slides in the front, Hans gets in the rear.

JAGUAR

HANS

Diego never lets drugs aboard.
Nothing. Not even a joint.

DIEGO

Is good rule. No drug. Never.

HANS

So why would someone frame him? To get him out of the way, that's why. So they could grab his job. Then bingo! Up pops this clown!

KNOX

Nichols?

HANS

Yeah, Nichols. Lucky for us the case was thrown out.

KNOX

How'd that happen?

HANS

It never got to court. Diego slipped the prosecutor a bung and he allowed himself to be persuaded by the defense lawyer that the evidence was circumstantial. The drugging of the dog proved there'd been an intruder, and Diego wasn't even present at the time.

Diego nods, content to let Hans do the talking.

HANS

Anyway we're not letting your chemist get away with it. We already ripped off one of his payments.

KNOX

Have you now?

(thoughtful)

Oh, so that's why he turned up
looking like he'd been through the
wringer...

HANS

And now we're gonna grab another.

Knox jabs a finger at Diego.

KNOX

Be very careful, dago! I'm not
having anyone mess up my operation.
And I'm not interested in your
reasons...

DIEGO

Senor, give me job back!

KNOX

Oh yeah? And what do I do with the
chemist I got, huh?

DIEGO

Then I take another money.

KNOX

I don't want anyone rocking my boat.
The asshole has already taken off
enough time as it is.

DIEGO

So I take money. Is fair!

KNOX

(sarcastic)

Oh very fair. Seeing as how you're
not doing any of the work.

(beat)

And what do I get out of it?! He's
hardly gonna be very productive if
you keep knocking off his take.

HANS

We could come to an arrangement.

KNOX

Oh yeah. Like what?

(aha! moment)

Let me think a second...

Eyebrows raised, chin stuck out, Knox stares straight ahead.
He counts on his fingers, then nods to himself and turns to
Diego.

KNOX

Okay. You rip him off - but this time you give me his take.

Diego and Hans are taken aback.

KNOX

You keep your first snatch, and then when I give you the signal, you step in and finish the rest of the refining.

(beat)

You'll only get half the total, but then you'll be doing much less work...

Hans leans forward and whispers in Diego's ear.

DIEGO

Y el quimico?

HANS

And your chemist?

Knox slowly draws a finger across his throat.

DIEGO

Okay, is deal!

INT. LAX AIRPORT - DAY

P.A. SYSTEM (V.O.)

JetBlue flight 4231 from Boston now disembarking at Gate 14.

MED. CLOSEUP Karen's head and shoulders bob in a crowd. She says something to a shorter white-haired woman beside her, but no apparent relationship between them.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR RENTAL LOT/INT. AUDI - DAY

Dan has changed the Fusion for a black Audi. Ready to leave he racks the slide of his Glock and slips it under a map on the passenger seat. The sports bag lies on the floor.

His phone RINGS.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

Karen?

KAREN
Hi, I'm at the hotel.

DAN
I'll come over.

KAREN
No, I want to freshen up a little.
Why don't I just meet you there. The
walk will do me good.

DAN
You remember where it is?

KAREN
How could I forget?!

DAN
Okay. Two-o'clock then. But don't be
late.

EXT. BARRATIERS PRECIOUS METALS/INT. AUDI - DAY

Dan sits vigilant, checking his mirrors.

Karen approaches on the sidewalk, phone to her ear. She
shakes her head in irritation and cuts the call. As she
comes to the passenger door Dan lowers the window.

DAN
Hop in. They're not back from lunch
yet. It'll be a couple of minutes.

He slides Glock and map onto his lap. As Karen gets in her
phone RINGS.

KAREN
This is ridiculous!

DAN
What is?

She cuts him short and puts the phone to her ear. Then
shakes her head exasperated, she offers him the phone.

KAREN
It's been doing this ever since I
left the hotel.

Dan puts the phone to his ear. CHIRPS of a fax signal.

DAN
It's a fax machine trying to
connect. Somebody has a wrong
number.

He hands back the phone.

Karen taps the sports bag with her toe.

KAREN
This it?

Dan nods. Karen's phone RINGS again, irritated she lifts it.

KAREN
What? Mother?!

Karen plugs one ear with a finger and listens, her face blank becomes agitated, then alarmed. The call only lasts seconds but when it ends she's ready to break down.

DAN
Hey! You okay?

KAREN
(trembling)
Not okay!

DAN
Bad news?

He tries to comfort her but she shakes him off.

KAREN
You don't understand!

DAN
What don't I understand? What's happened?

Karen's face crumples...

KAREN
(wails)
They've got Alice!

DAN
What?! Who have?! What do you mean "they've got Alice?!"

KAREN
(face in hands)
I brought her here with me...

DAN
What?! You brought her here?! You fucking crazy?!

KAREN
(sobs)
I thought it'd be a nice surprise.
(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

I left her at the hotel with my mother.

Dan slumps, head touching the steering wheel.

DAN

Oh my God! Do you know what you've done?!

Karen terrified, nods.

Dan sits upright, staring straight ahead.

DAN

(dully)

I suppose they told you what I have to do?

KAREN

(sullen)

They said they'd call at three-o'clock and give you instructions.

Dan covers his eyes. After a moment he pockets the Glock and starts the engine. With a SQUEAL of tires the Audi rockets out into traffic.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. L'ESPERANZA - DAY

The angular powerboat slices across the sea.

Dan stands in the wheelhouse, jaw set, phone to his ear. On the dashboard a starter switch has been ripped out, jump leads connect its wiring.

Karen, head in hands, sits at the chart table.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

Without a wreck you won't get any insurance money.

DIEGO

I kill them!

Dan throttles back and flicks on the auto pilot. He goes down the companionway, opens the door of a stateroom

DAN

You're not thinking straight, amigo.
Uno, you won't get the gold.
Dos, you won't get your boat back
which is worth at least as much.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

Tres, you'll be camped out living in hotels with the police on your back.

He pushes open another door.

DAN

I'll prop open all the doors, cut the engine hoses, turn off the bilge pumps and open the seacocks. She'll go down in three minutes. And no insurance company ever pays anything for a scuttled boat.

DIEGO

Oye! You no hurt my boat, *senor*.

(beat)

You give boat - I give old woman.

DAN

No, I want both, the girl and the old woman.

DIEGO

I no give two, *senor*. Only one.

Hans cuts in:

HANS

You heard him. You bring the boat in and we'll give you the old buzzard. But the girl's gonna cost you. Maybe you should look at your messages.

Dan opens a video clip on his smart phone.

VIDEO CLIP

A Doberman snarls at Alice's ankles, cartridges drop into a shotgun breech. Alice wide eyed, face pinched in a man's hand, a shotgun muzzle against her head.

ALICE

Dad?! I'm scared!

EXT. L.A. MARINA - DAY

L'Esperanza swim platform touches a pontoon and Karen steps ashore with a painter. Moments later, Dan follows. Hans approaches cautiously, skirts them and slips aboard.

The short white-haired woman glimpsed at the airport stands by the red Mustang. Karen runs to her and they hug.

KAREN'S MOTHER

He seemed so nice and said it was your idea for us to go with him.

(MORE)

KAREN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I tried ringing to check with you,
but your phone was always busy...

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTHILLS - DESERTED ROAD - NIGHT

Darkness. Headlights in the distance. Tires CRUNCH on gravel as the white Porsche without lights rolls into the frame.

Dan steps from the darkness, weighed down by care and the sports bag.

He goes to the trunk, lifts out a folded wheelchair and replaces it with the sports bag. He steps back, the Porsche accelerates away.

SAME - MINUTES LATER

Distant headlights. The Mustang pulls up. Alice struggles out on crutches. The girl barely upright the car ROARS off in a SHOWER of gravel.

Dan runs over to Alice and hugs her, staring bitterly in the direction of the disappearing Mustang.

He holds her, the union of parent and child, both drawing out the moment to replenish themselves.

DAN

I promise. I'll never let that
happen again, Alice. Understand?

Her small face searches his.

ALICE

Yes, dad.

DAN

I'll do everything I can to make you
well again. And I'll live closer to
you, I promise.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL BASTION - GARAGE - DAY

Schiller in his Cherokee pulls into the garage where Knox stands, a notebook in one hand, a pencil in the other.

KNOX

That son of a bitch is taking time
off again. Who he think he is?
Little Lord Fauntleroy?!

SCHILLER

Dunno. But I do know he's changed address. Left no forwarding one, either.

The pencil in Knox's fist SNAPS.

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. MARINA - DAY

Hans comes down the gangplank of L'Esperanza, he gets into the Mustang Coupe and drives away.

SUPER: "DEADLINE 16 DAYS."

Hans halts at a stop sign on a deserted road.

INT. FORD MUSTANG - DAY

Hans leans forward to check the road is clear. CRASH! Dan kicks down the rear seat and emerges from the trunk space. His Glock aimed at Hans' head.

INT. HUNTING CABIN - DAY

Hans, red-faced and veins bulging, is on the edge of asphyxiation. He's tied to a chair, a clear plastic bag over his head. Dan releases the bag to give him some air.

DAN

So?

HANS

(chest heaving)

After we grabbed it, Diego drove off with it. I don't know what he did with it. I swear. I never saw it again!

(beat)

You think he trusts me? By rights, half that stuff should be mine!

Hans' wallet and phone lie on a table. Dan picks up the phone, scrolls to "DIEGO DA SILVA", and turns on the loudspeaker.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

Da Silva?

DIEGO

Si señor?

Dan holds the phone to Hans' mouth.

HANS
Diego, it's Hans. Nichols has
kidnapped me!

DIEGO
Secuestro? Secuestro no good.

HANS
He's torturing me!

DIEGO
Tortura? Tortura no good.

Dan jerks the phone away from Hans mouth.

DAN
If you want to see your friend
again, *amigo* - you'd better listen
to me.

DIEGO
Why I want him? Eh? *Es imbecil.* You
kill him. Me have him enough.
(beat)
Muy bien, you kill him I pay you.
How much you want, eh? Like this I
no give him nothing.

This is not what Dan expected. Foiled, he hangs up. Hans is stupefied, outraged, livid!

Disheartened, Dan pockets his Glock and leaves the cabin.

CLOSE ON HANS' HANDS

Hands tied behind his back, Hans flips out a small flap sewn inside the rear of his waistband. He lets fall a handcuff key but grips a two-inch cutter.

The sharp blade CLICKS out and he begins slicing through his bonds.

EXT. HUNTING CABIN - DAY

Dan leans against a tree dispiritedly. A car ENGINE starts and a car SPEEDS AWAY. Dan rushes back to the cabin. Hans has gone!

EXT. L.A. MARINA - NIGHT

Stealthily Hans moves up *L'Esperanza* gangplank. The Doberman trots to the rail and Hans strokes it then silently steps aboard.

INT. L'ESPERANZA - NIGHT

Hans inches open a stateroom door. Diego is standing before a full length mirror, slipping into a frilly black shirt, admiring his own chest. He sees a movement and whirls.

Hans enters with a cocked .45

HANS

(sad)
I thought I meant more to you than
that, Diego!

DIEGO

(blusters)
Hans, *te adoro*. I no mean it. I say
kill you, is only joke, only joke,
te amo.

HANS

You're tired of me. I don't believe
you.

DIEGO

What you say, Hans? Never. How you
think so? I swear on cross of Jesus,
see!

A large gold crucifix hangs around Diego's neck, he kisses it, eyes tender and moves towards Hans. Hans falters, lowers his pistol. They come together and kiss.

The flash and SNAP of a switchblade. Hans stumbles back in shock. He falls, staring at Diego disbelievingly.

BLAM! BLAM! Diego staggers with the bullets impacts and crashes back into the blood spattered mirror.

WIPE TO:

EXT. L.A. MARINA - NIGHT

Dan sidles up L'Esperanza gangplank carrying a home-made contraption fashioned from the butt of a fishing rod, bungee elastic and nylon cord.

As the Doberman thrusts its head through the rail and bares its teeth, Dan snags its head in his homemade noose. Dan snags its jaws closed and fastens the dog to the rail.

INT. L'ESPERANZA - NIGHT

Glock at the ready, Dan creeps down the companionway. The lower deck is in darkness, he inches open a stateroom door where a chandelier is lit.

Diego lies slumped in the splinters of the broken mirror. He looks very dead. Dan blanches and enters.

Hans lies dead on the floor like a man nursing a stomach ache.

CLOSE ON DIEGO'S CRUCIFIX

Next to it is a high security key.

EXT. LUNADA BAY - STREET - DAY

SUPER:

"DEADLINE 14 DAYS"

Dan gets out of the Audi at a home surrounded by high walls. He checks a utilities bill. CLOSE ON subscriber's name: "Diego Da Silva. Chelsea Rd. Lunada bay."

Dan's phone BEEPS and an instant message window pops up

BENNY

"Dan, where are you? They're going nuts. Can't cover for you anymore! Benny"

Dan tries the security key in the gate. It opens onto a stunning Ranch style home, swimming pool, grass and trees. Dan drives the Audi inside and closes the gate.

INT. LUNADA BAY - HOUSE - DAY

Dan puts the key in the door. Security system diodes flip from red to green.

Dan slips from room to room, searching drawers and closets. When he finds a shotgun he swings it angrily breaking lock, stock and barrel against a floor to ceiling fireplace.

He explores walls, fireplaces and floors with a metal detector. But the only thing he discovers is that the precious metal isn't there.

LATER

Amongst the wreckage of the master bedroom he shakes his head. He crosses to a bathroom where he's demolished a Jacuzzi.

He takes a leak in the toilet pan, flushes, then on second thoughts lifts off the cistern lid. Nothing.

As he rinses his hands he eyes the red scar on his nostril in a mirror.

Something catches his eye. Beside the toilet bowl is an orange plastic container. He picks it up. "BioGran biological activator. Keep your septic tank sweet."

GARDEN

Dan wrestles off an overgrown septic tank cover. Cockroaches scurry and he reels from the smell.

He lies beside it with a rusty piece of bent iron rod and begins fishing in the frothy surface below.

LATER

Dan is grubby but triumphant! On the grass beside him lie two plastic shrimp pots dripping slime. Inside them the unmistakable glint of gold!

EXT. AUDI - TRAVELING - DAY

Grimy, tired, but euphoric, Dan talks on his phone.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

DAN

Karen? I've got it back! All of it.
We're back on track!

KAREN

What?! That's fantastic!

DAN

Get a flight.

KAREN

Listen Dan.. ..um, I really don't
think I can handle any more
kidnapping stuff again.

DAN

Don't worry. It's all fixed. There
won't be any more interference.
Never again. I guarantee.

KAREN

How can you be so sure?

DAN

Let's just say, those concerned have
gone out of business. They no longer
exist.

KAREN

Oh my God! Dan, what have you done?!

DAN

Me? Nothing. The problem just sort of took care of itself.

KAREN

You sure?

DAN

Sure, I'm sure. Come as soon as you can. This we celebrate!

CUT TO:

EXT. L.A. ROOFTOP RESTAURANT - DAY

Dan and Karen sit beneath a parasol, white wine, lobster and silver cutlery on the table.

Karen has a ruffled off the shoulder floral print dress that goes well with her blonde hair, eye liner and heels. Dan is relaxed in a safari shirt, Chinos and moccasins.

KAREN

I can't believe it! I just have to look at it again.

She opens her purse and takes out a certified check. It reads: 'City National Bank' "ONE MILLION SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS"

She kisses it leaving a trace of lipstick, then slips it back in her purse.

DAN

One more payment and we've made it.

KAREN

You'll have made it, you mean. I'm just here to collect the money.

DAN

Whatever...

He picks up his wine glass, she picks up hers.

KAREN

This is so nice. Pity we don't do it more often.

Dan nods, non committal. They eat in silence. Karen dabs her mouth with a napkin.

KAREN

I never understood why you took to crime, Dan.

DAN
(ill at ease)
We had very different lives. You
wouldn't understand.

KAREN
Why not?

DAN
Look, things are going well right
now. Why spoil them by raking up the
past?

KAREN
I need to know.

DAN
You might not like it.

KAREN
Let me be the judge of that.

DAN
(cautious)
I came from a poor background. You
knew that.

Karen nods.

DAN
At school they called me 'Hasn't a
nickel' Nichols, because all my
clothes were second hand.

KAREN
So?

DAN
So, you've no idea what life's like
without a safety net. You've never
gone hungry in your life.

Karen opens her mouth to say something, but as she's about
to fork lobster into it, she thinks better of it.

DAN
You had your education paid for. And
your parents bought you your first
apartment.

He toys edgily with a bread roll.

DAN
When you met me I was only just
starting to make money. But if you'd
met me before, you wouldn't have
looked at me.

KAREN

You bitter about money?

DAN

Not money. Your approach to it.

KAREN

What do you mean?!

DAN

When we were together your motto was 'What's yours is mine. And what's mine's my own.'

KAREN

That's just not true!

DAN

Oh no? So how come you never paid for anything? Not the car, the phone, the electricity or the repairs. And how about the new kitchen and bathroom I fitted? I was still paying off a bank loan, but you just sold your apartment to pay for your share.

He refills his glass irritably.

DAN

I spent all my time fixing things. Building patio, rewiring, re-plastering. But every time there was any work to do, you just disappeared to your parents.

(beat)

We lived under the same roof but we had very different lives. For you it was just a playhouse. But for me it was a work filled construction site.

KAREN

Well if you felt like that, why didn't you say something? Why did you keep on paying all the bills?

Dan's eyes drop, he looks beaten.

DAN

'Cos I wanted to be the breadwinner. I was so tired of being poor.

A waiter comes to the table to refill their glasses. Dan keeps his eyes down on his plate.

DAN

When I got laid off I was mad. The only thing shareholders cared about were bigger profits. They were shipping whole industries abroad.

(beat)

I was sick of worrying how to pay the bills, seeing the years go by and me getting nowhere.

(beat)

I saw an opportunity and took it. I thought we'd start a new life. But instead it all went horribly wrong.

KAREN

I didn't care about the robbery. Their insurance would cover that. But how could we continue? You couldn't even visit your own daughter!

INT. FEDERAL EXPRESS OFFICE - DAY

Dan is subdued, but Karen elated. She places the certified check with a letter in a FedEx envelope.

KAREN

Just thirteen days left to the deadline.

Dan nods dully.

INT. AUDI - DAY

Dan halts the car outside a hotel.

DAN

I have to go. They're watching me like hawks. I daren't take any more time off.

KAREN

That's okay. I'm going to do some shopping, I'll get a flight in the morning.

DAN

Give my love to Alice...

EXT. DOWN THE STREET - DAY

Schiller sits in his Cherokee, watching Karen say goodbye.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

MAKESHIFT LAB

Tray after tray of off-white paste steam beneath the crimson glare of infrared lamps. Dan stands watching. Benny enters.

BENNY

Jesus. Smells like a pickle factory in here.

DAN

Yeah, I know. Bring in that ventilation gear from the truck. We'll set it up now. We'll really need it in the last stage.

BENNY

It's going to smell worse than this?!

DAN

We'll be using ether. A mistake with that stuff and we could blow ourselves sky high.

BENNY

Charming!

DAN

What we need is height. So all the smells are carried away high on the wind, instead of hanging around near the ground.

BENNY

How about using the chimney on the house?

DAN

Good thinking. But how to connect to it? Where's the nearest fireplace?

BENNY

There's one in the dining room.

DAN

Okay. So put the stuff in there and we'll give it a try.

DINING ROOM

Benny carries metal ducting in. They move a table away from the fireplace and kneel, pushing metal duct sections up the chimney, slotting them together.

Schiller puts his head around the door.

SCHILLER

Benny, the boss wants you to fetch
cigarettes.

Benny sighs, gets up and goes out. Dan fits another section and connects a length of flexible duct to it. Then lifts a blower unit from a carton and kneels to connect it.

CLOSE ON the open end of the flexible, from it come TINNY INDISTINCT VOICES. Curious, Dan leans down and puts his ear to it.

SCHILLER (O.S.)

(via duct)

I didn't sign up for giving anyone
the chop.

MASTER BEDROOM

PAN from fireplace to where Knox and Schiller sit in chairs near the window.

KNOX

Course you didn't. I didn't either.
He's brought it on himself. Anyway,
think of it like this, once we've
got the South American back to
finish the job, you can wring out of
Danny boy what he's done with his
cut. And you get to keep twenty
percent.

SCHILLER

Thirty.

KNOX

Okay. Thirty. But go and check on
what that asshole is up to right
now.

DINING ROOM

Dan, stunned, is open mouthed and retches. He darts to the table.

Moments later Schiller looks through the door.

SCHILLER POV

Dan appears to be moving table and chairs.

INT. EL BASTION - NIGHT

MASTER BEDROOM

Knox snores noisily, mouth open, a 9mm Heckler & Koch pistol on the night table.

GREAT ROOM

Schiller snores softly in a sleeping bag on a sofa. On the floor beside him a "Driveway Alarm" unit.

A LED flashes and an alarm BEEPS.

Schiller rolls over and hits a button to silence it. He CLICKS on a torch. On the Driveway Alarm a handwritten label reads "SHRUBBERY".

SCHILLER

Friggin' rats.

He rolls over to go to sleep. Another LED blinks and the alarm BEEPS again. Schiller clicks on his torch.

On the Driveway Alarm a label reads "GARAGE"

SCHILLER

Shit!

He throws off his sleeping bag, steps into trousers and grabs binoculars.

SCHILLER'S BINOCULAR POV

Beyond the lawn, across the stubble, a car without lights is creeping towards the gate.

BACK TO SCENE

Schiller races into the kitchen, yanks open a cabinet and torchlight illuminates a distribution board. He trips a circuit breaker.

EXT. EL BASTION - NIGHT

TRACK

Dan's Audi creeps along the track, behind it the house is in darkness.

AUDI

Dan aims his remote control at the gate and presses the button. Nothing happens. He tries again. The gate doesn't move.

Sweating, turns on the dome light, opens the remote and jiggles the batteries. Still nothing. Behind him the house remains in darkness.

He slips his Glock from the glove compartment and pushes it into the pocket of his windbreaker.

GATE

Leaving the car Dan searches for a latch. Not finding one he yanks the gate. Futile. He casts about, finds a fallen branch and levers the gate. CRACK the branch snaps.

He runs and opens the trunk, slips off his windbreaker and lays it inside. Then grabs the jack handle and runs back to the gate.

As he levers at the lock an ENGINE ROARS. He spins and headlights stab out, dazzling him. The vehicle is almost upon him. He wildly throws the jack handle at it and sprints..

..running alongside the wall the Cherokee's headlights throw long shadows in front of him. Behind him the engine ROARS. Dan skids to a halt..

..the Cherokee turns and smacks him with its wing, sending him crashing into the wall.

MINUTES LATER

Strange lights FIZZ and POP as Dan comes to. He's lying face-down, his hands trussed. He turns his head and Schiller leers down at him in the headlights.

INT. EL BASTION - NIGHT

KITCHEN

Schiller pushes Dan towards Knox standing in his dressing gown, his hair awry.

KNOX

You've come a gutser now, cobber!

Knox lets fly a dirty low punch that crumples Dan. From the floor Dan stares up at him with contempt. Knox aims a kick at his groin.

KNOX

Bail the drongo up, and let me get back to sleep.

CELLAR

A metal bolt SCRAPES. The cellar door opens and Dan stumbles in wearing a leg iron and chain. A blanket is tossed in after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL BASTION - GARAGE - DAY

Knox stands hands on hips as Schiller's Cherokee enters the garage.

KNOX

So why don't they answer my calls?
What they playing at?

SCHILLER

They're not playing at anything no more. When I got there the law was all over the boat and paramedics were carrying two stiffs off it.

Knox's eyebrows shoot up in surprise.

SCHILLER

I slipped a c-note to a marina worker. He says one's the South American, thinks the other's Dutch.

KNOX

Dead?!

SCHILLER

As dodos. What you reckon happened?

KNOX

Dunno. But one thing I do know is I'm up shit creek right now!

(beat)

One chemist in the morgue and the other banged up down in the cellar. And Danny boy isn't gonna want to work for me no more.

INT. L.A. BUDGET HOTEL - DAY

BATHROOM

Karen touches up her makeup in the mirror. Hearing a NOISE in the adjacent room, she peeks around the bathroom door and recoils.

Schiller with a nylon stocking over his head has entered and he's holding a gun.

Karen slams the bathroom door and CLICKS the lock. She watches petrified as the door handle turns.

A moments silence. Has the intruder left?

CRASH! the door splinters.

Terrified Karen grabs her purse, yanks open the bathroom window and stares into the alleyway below. Beneath is a half filled dumpster.

CRASH! the door gives as Karen scrambles through the window.

DUMPSTER

Karen lands badly, SCREAMS, pain and panic on her face. A WORKMAN drops his wheelbarrow and runs to assist her.

INT. HOSPITAL - A & E - DAY

Karen sits in a wheelchair, one leg of her jeans split to the knee to accommodate a plaster cast. A nurse hands her a scrip.

NURSE

This is for painkillers. There's a pharmacy on the ground floor. Keep the cast on for three weeks, then, go to your local hospital and have them remove it.

The nurse hands her an x-ray envelope.

NURSE

You fractured a bone in your foot. And tore cartilage in your other knee. It may take some time to heal.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

KITCHEN

Dan, unshaven and handcuffed, sits sullenly at the table. Schiller kneels nearby, rummaging in a carpetbag filled with straps, handcuffs and chains. He leers up at Dan.

SCHILLER

Tools of the trade.

Using a padlock and chain, Schiller fastens Dan's leg iron to the fridge door handle. Then removes Dan's handcuffs.

Knox breezes in, nods at Schiller, Schiller nods in return and leaves the kitchen.

Voices are heard in the corridor:

BENNY (O.S.)

I can't get the main gate open.

SCHILLER (O.S.)
 Push the circuit breaker back in,
 asshole. In the cupboard by the
 door.

Benny enters, looking hangdog he avoids Dan's eyes, goes to the cupboard and CLICKS in a circuit breaker, then leaves.

KNOX
 Okay, time to get with it.

DAN
 You really think I'm going to work
 for you?!

KNOX
 Oh, feeling stroppy, are we?

Knox leans a buttock on the table and pours himself coffee, not seeming in any hurry. He cocks his head, listening.

Suddenly he flings out an arm and trumpets...

KNOX
 Ta-da!

Schiller wheels a wheelchair into the kitchen - it's Karen!

Dan rushes towards her but is pulled up short by his chain. He stumbles and falls, skewered by despair, answerable now for Karen's life too.

Schiller smirks, enjoying the spectacle.

KNOX
 So, it's like this, Danny boy. I
 want everything converted to Number
 Four, pronto. Otherwise, it won't be
 a broken leg your girlfriend has -
 it'll be her neck!

Karen lunges at Knox, but Schiller yanks her back by her hair. He jams his gun into her temple, amused at the idea of her trying to attack them.

SCHILLER
 (to Dan)
 Tell the bitch to stop.

But Karen doesn't need any instruction. She goes limp.

KNOX
 (to Dan)
 So get her upstairs.

SCHILLER
 You heard him.

Dan and Karen stare at each other engulfed by anarchy.

Schiller unlocks Dan's chain. Dan kneels in front of Karen's wheelchair, she locks her arms around his neck and he swings her onto his back then staggers upright.

Eyes burning with shame he lurches out of the kitchen.

DAN'S FORMER BEDROOM

Dan lowers Karen to the bed. Chest heaving he slumps into a chair. Knox and Schiller crowd the door.

SCHILLER

Nobody get any ideas.

KNOX

No worries. She's not running anywhere. And the only place he's going is straight back to work.

SCHILLER

You heard him.

Dan stands, beaten and sullen. He exits the room.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - CELLAR - NIGHT

The steel door SLAMS, bolts SCRAPE shut, RECEDING FOOTSTEPS echo on stone stairs.

Dan and Karen are alone.

Beneath a vaulted roof, a billiard and a table tennis table are covered with dust sheets.

Karen sits in her wheelchair head in hands, her back to Dan. He wants to go to her, but knows she'll just push him away.

There are sleeping bags on the floor and a bag of groceries and a microwave on folding chairs. Trailing chain, Dan warms up pizza in the microwave.

He puts a slice on a paper plate on a chair beside Karen. She ignores it and begins brushing her hair, holding up a pocket mirror in one hand.

DAN

I see you're feeling better.

KAREN

(bitter)

Since when can you see what I feel?

She returns to the deliberate brush strokes.

DAN
What's wrong?

KAREN
(fiercely)
Are you joking?! Those bastards are going to kill us. And now there's not a chance in hell Alice will ever get that treatment. I wish to God I'd never listened to you. I wish I'd never met you!

DAN'S DAILY ROUTINE - MONTAGE

-- Dan struggles, piggybacking Karen up from the cellar to his former bedroom.

-- Dan takes her wheelchair up to the bedroom.

-- Dan works alone in the lab, Schiller holding Dan's leg chain as he sits out in the corridor with his feet poking through the door.

-- Dan struggles piggybacking Karen down from his bedroom to the cellar.

INT. CELLAR - NIGHT

Karen, cold and precise, thumbs aimlessly through an old magazine. Dan randomly rolls a billiard ball across the green baize. SUPER: "5 DAYS LATER."

DAN
How did they get you?

KAREN
Schiller was at the hospital holding up a sign saying "Car for Karen Nichols." I was still shaken up, and I thought that you or the hospital had arranged it.

Dan nods morosely.

DAN
Table tennis?

Karen nods.

With Karen in her wheelchair and Dan on a chair they paddle a Ping-Pong ball back and forth, lifelessly.

Karen smacks a return, Dan slices at it. The ball loops over the net, hops up and lodges in the 'V' of Karen's tank top.

She looks at it, as if it were spilled ketchup, then plucks it from her cleavage and tosses it back across the table. Dan traps it - unsure whether to go on.

Karen is unsure whether to laugh or cry.

KAREN

Oh Dan, what have we become?!

Dan skirts the table and puts his hands on her shoulders.

KAREN

I'm so scared.

DAN

Me too.

KAREN

The last payment is due in nine days.

She takes out a crumpled snapshot of Alice as tears course down her face.

KAREN

I've been praying...

DAN

(bleak)

God always answers. Trouble is, he's a nasty habit of saying no.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL BASTION - GARAGE - NIGHT

A starter motor GRINDS. Benny holds up an inspection lamp over the engine of an aging VW. Schiller appears.

SCHILLER

Hey, Knox wants you to fetch cigarettes.

BENNY

My car won't start.

SCHILLER

So take another. There's plenty of 'em here. But, hey, don't touch mine!

Benny peers into Dan's rented Audi. Keys hang in the ignition. He gets in and starts the engine.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Two bored patrolmen operate a tripod mounted radar speed gun.

VIEWFINDER

OCR software displays license plate numbers and speeds. The Audi comes into the frame. Its license plate displays, its speed reads 37 LOW OK.

INT. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT CENTER - NIGHT

Screens flank a satellite map. Operators sit at work stations as a supervisor looks on.

OPERATOR'S SCREEN

License plate digits scroll. One is highlighted a message opens up "PERSON TO CONTACT: Lieutenant Delacroix."

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

OPERATOR
(into mike)
Lieutenant Delacroix?

Delacroix stands in a crowded tapas bar.

DELACROIX
Yeah?

OPERATOR
I've a fix on a vehicle you queried, sir. It's a hire car, so it may have been rented out again.

The operator eyes the night vision shot of Benny.

OPERATOR
The driver doesn't look like your man's description.

DELACROIX
Okay, thanks. It's probably nothing. I'll check it out anyway.

EXT. EL BASTION - NIGHT

GATE

A carton of Marlboro is on the seat beside Benny. He aims a remote and the gates swing open. He drives through and the gates begin to close.

ROAD

Delacroix arrives fast in a Dodge and leaps out. The gates are almost closed so he jams his foot between them. The gates judder for a moment then open again. He dives into his car and drives through.

INT. EL BASTION - GREAT ROOM - NIGHT

Benny is sprawled on a couch watching TV. Delacroix's face appears, peering through a window. His head suddenly SMASHES into the glass breaking it. Unconscious he slides out of sight.

Benny leaps up startled. Out in the night beyond the window, Schiller is grinning.

INT. EL BASTION - UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

Delacroix sits on a chair, hands trussed behind him, gashes on his forehead and nose. Schiller loosens the cord binding one of Delacroix's ankles to the chair leg.

SCHILLER

Now spread wide for uncle.

He presses a knife point against Delacroix's inner thigh, forcing him to open his legs then rams a stool between them with a grin.

SCHILLER

Know how they castrate bulls? They stick a rubber band around their scrotum. After a few days the balls wither and drop off. Farmers say it don't hurt none. Me, I don't believe it. Anyway we ain't got time for that, so I'll just use my little friend here.

He holds up a cheese cutter, a thin wire loop with wooden pull handles, he demonstrates how the loop closes.

SCHILLER

Maybe, like they say, you won't feel a thing.

He starts to unbutton Delacroix's fly, Delacroix writhes wildly.

DELACROIX

Hey! Wait! Hang on! I'll tell you. Whaddya want to know?!

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - CELLAR - NIGHT

NOISE on the stairs. The cellar door opens and the light CLICK on revealing Karen and Dan lying in sleeping bags, well apart.

They sit up. Delacroix stumbles in and falls. Dan throws off his sleeping bag and goes to help him.

DELACROIX

(croaks)

So this is where you are.

KAREN

Who's he?

INT. EL BASTION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

KNOX

So, what you get out of him?

SCHILLER

He's major crime unit. Danny boy is wanted for armed robbery. He's already given them the slip a couple of times.

KNOX

So how'd he know he was here?

SCHILLER

Got a tip about Danny's rental car. Benny took it to fetch your cigarettes so he followed him back here.

KNOX

Who else knows?

SCHILLER

No one. He got the tip off but hadn't discovered anything. Leastways, not until I banged him on the head.

Schiller tips broken phone parts onto a work top.

SCHILLER

And they won't be tracing this.

KNOX

You believe him?

SCHILLER

(leers)

Usually people are pretty much in earnest when you got a cheese cutter around their nuts.

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - CELLAR - NIGHT

SUPER:

"DEADLINE 6 DAYS."

Dan helps Delacroix limp back from the toilet and lowers him onto a rough bed of cardboard and coats. Karen watches.

DELACROIX

Could you spare another painkiller?

Karen hands him a packet.

DELACROIX

He threatened to castrate me, so I told him everything. But the bastard punched the hell out of my privates anyway.

Delacroix swallows a tablet.

DELACROIX

You think they'll let us go, once the job is done?

DAN

No chance.

DELACROIX

So how do we get out of here?

DAN

Well, you can't walk and anyway they keep you locked up down here. That leaves Karen and me.

(beat)

Maybe if I could create a diversion, Karen could fetch help.

KAREN

Oh fucking marvelous! In case you hadn't noticed I'm in a wheelchair...

DAN

Right. But you could drive.

KAREN

With a broken foot and gimpy knee?

DELACROIX

My car's an automatic. I left it in the barn, with the keys under the seat.

They all meet each others eyes, then look away, locked in their own thoughts.

LATER

DELACROIX

Karen says you were doing this to pay for your daughter's treatment?

Dan nods.

DELACROIX

I see the motivation. But that doesn't give you the right to break the law.

DAN

What was I supposed to do? Let her die?

KAREN

I thought the law is about protecting people.

DELACROIX

Course it is.

KAREN

So how come it always comes down on the side of the multimillionaires?

Delacroix raises his eyebrows.

KAREN

Who exactly is the law defending? Seems to me it's pretty high on ideals but pretty low on statistics!

DAN

Hey look, there's not much chance of any of us getting out of here. Moralizing isn't going to help.

(beat)

You're a cop, you want notches in your career. I'm a father, I want to stop my kid dying. Let's just leave it at that.

DELACROIX

But what about the drugs? You know the damage heroin does? All the crime and violence that goes with it?

DAN

(dejectedly)

I didn't choose it. I just took what was available...

CUT TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAN'S FORMER BEDROOM - DAY

Dan and Karen sit downcast on the edge of the bed. Benny enters, avoiding their eyes. He leaves a tray with sandwiches.

SUPER: "DEADLINE 4 DAYS."

With only an angry red scar on his nose now, Dan takes a sandwich and trails his chain over to the window.

BELOW THE WINDOW

The drop side truck is there. On its bed lie three cheap tin trunks.

BACK TO SCENE

Dan bites his lip and goes back to Karen.

DAN

(whispers)

In two days the last of the heroin will be purified. And our use to them will be over. This afternoon is our best chance.

He slips her a remote control and a screw of tin foil.

KAREN

What's this?

DAN

The remote to open the main gates.

KAREN

And this?

DAN

Heroin.

KAREN

(hisses)

I've no intention of becoming an addict!

DAN

Listen, if you don't make it out of here you won't need to worry about that! There's no one to help you and you have to get your chair downstairs, get over to the barn, into Delacroix's car, then get out the gate, all that without any help. You may be glad of a little something..

KAREN

Dan, I'm scared.

DAN

Me too. It never seems the right time to die.

Karen's mouth puckers and tears brim in her eyes.

KAREN

If anything happens to me, tell Alice I love her...

Dan nods, then looks away.

EXT. EL BASTION - DROPSIDE TRUCK - DAY

Knox stands eyeing the three tin trunks on the truck.

KNOX

They don't look big enough to me.

SCHILLER

They was the biggest they'd got.

KNOX

Yeah? Well let's try one out. Bring one in and fetch our Peeping Tom.

SCHILLER

He's got trouble walking.

KNOX

Listen dipstick, I don't care if he's got trouble flying. Get him up here - now!

INT. EL BASTION - UTILITY ROOM - DAY

In the tiled room with washing machine, dryer and ceiling mounted drying rack, Delacroix lies on his back in a tin trunk, knees bent, duct tape over his mouth.

KNOX

Push his knees down!

SCHILLER

How?

KNOX

I don't fucking know. Just do it!

Schiller presses down the trunk lid but the metal buckles.

KNOX

Turn him on his side, you dipstick.

Schiller manhandles Delacroix, forcing his calves back with the soles of his feet touching his buttocks. Delacroix's face contorted by pain.

KNOX

Okay. That'll do. It'll be easier to fit 'em in once they've snuffed it.

Schiller pinches Delacroix's nostrils closed, the man writhes, eyes bulging in terror.

SCHILLER

Shall I do it now, boss?

KNOX

No, not yet. We don't want him stinking the place out. We'll get rid of them all together. Tomorrow you get a hand truck. And once we're ready we'll wheel 'em aboard the boat and drill a few holes. They can keep the sardines company. Fuck 'em!

INT. EL BASTION - MAKESHIFT LAB - DAY

In a lab coat, Dan stirs a bucket-size glass vessel set in a pan of dry ice. As the solution cools a white slush of crystals grow.

Out in the corridor Schiller lazes in the armchair holding Dan's long ankle chain, his feet poking through the door.

Knox arrives and jerks his head. Schiller gets up and goes into the lab. From under a bench he drags two bulging bin liners packed with brick-hard vacuum packs.

He passes the bin liners to Knox who drags them away.

ON DAN

Dan slips the Mickey Mouse figurine from his pocket and places it on the bench in front of him. With crossed fingers he touches it, then puts the figurine to his lips.

He places a laboratory clamp stand on one end of the drying table and on the other plugs in a heating mantle, turning the rheostat up to "MAX" so the mantle's filaments glow red.

From a bottle of "SULFURIC ACID" he fills a beaker and places it near the clamp stand. Then begins tipping thirty trays of now dry fluffy white powder from beneath the drying lights into a plastic bin.

He the refills trays with moist powder and watches as they steam. Glancing at Schiller, he says dreamily:

DAN

This stuff is so pure, you could cut
it thirty percent and no one would
be any the wiser.

He shakes his head at the idea of such a waste. Then drags the plastic bin over to a vacuum packer, measuring heroin out into foil bags and laying them in the packer.

The machine CHUGS and BEEPS and Dan takes out the now brick-hard vacuum packs and tosses them into a bin liner.

Schiller, tongue in cheek, eases himself from his armchair and moseys over to the drying trays. Dan half turns to watch. Schiller pokes his forefinger into a tray of damp powder and sucks it thoughtfully.

Dan slides off his stool and goes to stand near him. Schiller leers at him.

DAN

See what I mean?

Schiller nods. Dan points to the tray nearest the door.

DAN

And you see that tray?

Schiller glances in the direction of the tray. He turns back to see Dan jerking the beaker of sulfuric acid into his face!

Schiller shrieks, one hand goes to his eyes the other to his gun. Dan grabs the clamp stand and skips away from him.

Half blinded, Schiller FIRES, misses, FIRES again. Dan dances around and swings the heavy clamp stand catching Schiller on the ear, Schiller lurches against the drying bench.

Dan hits him again, Schiller falls, his gun CLATTERS to the floor.

CLOSE ON Schiller, eyes like pink dumplings he grovels after the gun. His hand reaches for it but Dan stamps on it and kicks the gun away..

..with another blow he fells Schiller like an ox.

Dan snatches up the gun, grabs a brown glass bottle of "ETHER" and runs to the door. From the doorway he hurls the bottle at the heating mantle. GLASS BREAKS and the lab ERUPTS in flame.

Dan sprints away dragging chain, a flame front rushes down the corridor, blowing him off his feet...

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

DAN'S BEDROOM

Karen charges her wheelchair at the bed, rams it, grabbing the covers and sliding with them to the floor.

LANDING

Wriggling on her stomach she pushes the wheelchair ahead of her and slithers out onto the upstairs landing.

IN HALL BELOW

Knox rushes in, pistol in one hand, a heavy canvass bag in the other. With a METALLIC CLUNK he heaves the bag behind an armchair then darts through a door.

LANDING

Karen knots a necktie to the rear of her wheelchair and hesitantly lowers it down the top two steps of the stairs.

A sudden EXPLOSION somewhere downstairs startles her. The necktie swiftly slips through her fingers, she watches horrified as the wheelchair cart-wheels downstairs.

It SMASHES into the hall, lies on its side, one wheel spinning.

Ungainly, on backside and hands, Karen descends.

HALL

She tries to right the wheelchair but it tilts absurdly, one wheel hopelessly bent.

Frantically she squirms to the outside door trailing her legs. As she reaches up for its handle she hesitates. She turns wriggles back and looks in the canvass bag.

CLOSE ON a slew of Heraeus vacuum packed 100g gold ingots.

WIPE TO:

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

KITCHEN

Smoke hangs low in the air. Dan struggles to his feet and throws off his smoldering lab coat. He goes to the distribution board and pushes the gate circuit breaker home.

Chain in one hand, gun in the other, he casts about. Where's Karen? Did she get downstairs?!

Knox scuttles across a doorway. Dan FIRES, plaster flies from the wall.

Dan crouches, hiding behind the central island of hobs and sinks, his back to the French doors. A SHOT, a slug SMASHES into the central island RATTLING the pots.

A cartridge case rolls across the tiles and a pool of water spreads.

Dan glances over his shoulder, with horror he glimpses Karen through the French doors dragging herself across the lawn like a wounded animal! If Knox sees her she's done for!

Dan launches a skillet through the door where he saw Knox and with a WAR WHOOP he takes off like a runner from the blocks, dashing into the great room, zigzagging..

GREAT ROOM

..SHOTS sends him diving for cover. He crouches behind a sofa. A picture frame on the wall above him SHATTERS.

KNOX (O.S.)

For crying out loud, Benny. Can't you shoot any straighter? He's behind the bloody sofa, not halfway up the wall!

Dan sees Knox flit across a doorway and FIRES, he glimpses him again and FIRES. In the long eerie quiet, Dan anxiously eyes all directions.

The rear porch door CREAKS and Dan glimpses Knox pushing it open with a broom handle. He aims and squeezes the trigger, but the hammer falls with a dry CLICK.

Feverishly he checks the gun. It's empty!

CUT TO:

EXT. EL BASTION - LAWN - DAY

As smoke pours from the burning lab Karen drags herself along on her forearms, jaw set, legs trailing behind her, hampered by the heavy canvass bag.

Half way to the barn her strength gives out and she collapses with a sob. Grimy and exhausted she wipes sweat from her eyes, beating the ground in frustration.

She rolls over and digs out the silver foil from her jeans. Trembling she opens it clumsily and sniffs up the powder.

She rests a moment, then with new determination drags herself and the sack onwards, urging herself on like a seal racing for the sea.

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

GREAT ROOM

Dan lays down the empty gun and coils his chain. Then weaving like a hare he dashes back in the direction he came as bullets SING past..

..as he scrabbles at a door something slams into him. He CRASHES through the corridor door, splinters flying around him.

CORRIDOR

Dan lies on his side in the smoke-filled corridor as flames lick up a nearby door frame.

His breath is like a plunger trying to clear a blocked sink, the ugly wound in his upper back blowing grotesque bubbles of mucous and blood.

Trailing blood and chain he scrabbles to a narrow pantry and lies among mops and brooms, a freezer towering above him.

PANTRY

The door is suddenly kicked open. Benny stands there, a revolver in his hand.

CLOSE ON the revolver cylinder, it turns as the hammer is cocked.

But Benny turns the gun aside and FIRES three times into a sack of rice. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! He nods at Dan, winks, then backs out into the corridor.

BENNY
(yells)
Got the bastard! Let's get out of here!

Dan falls back and spasms rack him, a HISS, he turns his head, rice grains stream from the punctured sack and as he watches it slowly crumples.

EXT. EL BASTION - GARAGE - DAY

Knox savagely reverses his Jaguar out of the garage and yells to Benny.

KNOX
Get the sacks!

Benny runs to the house, as Knox opens the trunk and changes the clip in his Heckler & Koch.

Red-faced and perspiring Benny returns, dragging several large bin liners.

KNOX
Well, put them in the trunk, you dipstick!

Benny hefts them in and runs back for more. He comes back with two more. The trunk full, Knox opens a rear door and Benny manhandles other sacks onto the rear seat.

Benny rubs his aching back, but Knox just jerks his head. Benny trots back to the house and returns with three more sacks, forcing them in, filling the rear to the roof.

Benny backs out of the car, rubbing his spine. As he reaches out and closes the car door Knox SHOOTS him in the back. Twice.

INT/EXT. EL BASTION - BARN - DAY

Karen drags herself into Delacroix's Dodge and hauls in the heavy canvass sack. She finds the keys and the motor starts. She moves the selector to 'R' and tramps her plaster cast leg on the accelerator.

The Dodge rockets in reverse, SMACKS a roof support and shoots outside in a cloud of dust just as a section of the barn roof COLLAPSES.

EXT. EL BASTION - DAY

Knox spins, sees the Dodge and FIRES again and again.

EXT. DODGE - TRAVELING - CLOSE ON KAREN - DAY

Slugs hammer into the Dodge's bodywork, windows blow out. The car bucks wildly, spins in reverse then hurtles off forwards. Knox runs after it, FIRING, trying to keep in range.

INT. EL BASTION - DAY

PANTRY

DAN
(croaks)
Karen!

KITCHEN

Trailing blood and chain, one arm useless, Dan scrabbles across the kitchen floor to the door.

EXT. EL BASTION - DAY

Dan crawls to where Benny lies dead beside the Jaguar. Briefly Dan touches his brow to the dead man, then tugs out Benny's revolver.

NEAR BARN

Knox trots back towards the house. Ten yards from the Jaguar he stops to light a cigarette and begins to walk.

CLOSE ON Dan's chain trailing behind the Jaguar.

JAGUAR

Masked by the car, revolver in hand, Dan tracks what he can see of Knox's legs from beneath the car's low clearance.

Footsteps CRUNCH on gravel. Knox sing in a nervous reedy voice.

KNOX
Once a jolly swagman camped by a
billabong, Under the shade of a
coolibah tree..."

His CRUNCHING footsteps suddenly become a SPRINT and he dives across the hood FIRING wildly. He slides uncontrollably off the hood. For an instant he and Dan stare at each other.

Dan FIRES. A hole appears where one of Knox's eyes should be...

Dan gazes at Benny and Knox, at the makeshift lab well alight, and at the bulging bin liners filling the Jaguar.

He wriggles to the rear of the Jaguar, FIRES at the gas tank and liquid gurgles out. Wriggling closer he FIRES again, the muzzle flash IGNITING the gas.

DISSOLVE TO:

Faint CRIES drift to Dan. He lifts his head, but falls back, his lung wound RASPING horribly.

DELACROIX
Help! Somebody! Help!

Drunkenly, Dan raises his head.

DELACROIX
Somebody! Help me!

The windows of the burning Jaguar shatter with the heat. A rear door pops open and a blazing sack topples out, scattering steaming vacuum packs.

With a superhuman effort Dan staggers to his feet. Trailing chain he lurches back into the house.

INT. EL BASTION - UTILITY ROOM - DAY

Dan staggers into the smoke filled room. Delacroix lies on his side in the tin trunk, one wrist handcuffed to a radiator pipe, a loose flap of duct tape on his mouth.

DELACROIX
Thank God, Dan!

Dan lurches to the radiator pipe. CLOSE ON bloody mucous bubbling from Dan's wound, his desperate RASPING.

DELACROIX
Holy shit!

Dan coughs blood speckling the wall.

DELACROIX
Get out Dan! Save yourself!

Dan ignores him and wraps one end of his chain around a hexagonal radiator union and chain over his shoulder he heaves. The union turns and water spews out. Dan unscrews it freeing the cuff.

DELACROIX

Oh Jesus! Thank God!

He struggles to get out of the trunk.

DELACROIX

(panicky)

I can't!

Dan drops the ceiling mounted drying rack. Delacroix grabs it and as Dan hoists it Delacroix tips himself out onto the floor, crippled by cramp.

Dan tugs a wet sheet from a washing machine.

DAN

Get on this!

Delacroix wriggles onto the sheet and Dan tows him out the door. As they reach the kitchen, the utility room ceiling CRASHES DOWN.

EXT. EL BASTION - DAY

Dan staggers out, towing Delacroix, after a dozen steps he collapses.

SAME SCENE - LATER

A SWAT team is leaving the house, firemen finish dousing the makeshift lab.

CLOSE ON DELACROIX

He's stretchered to an ambulance staring at a crumpled photo of his wife and kids.

CLOSE ON DAN

He lies beneath a silver emergency blanket, a medic holds up a drip. As Dan's stretchered, Karen grimy and disheveled, scoots alongside in a folding wheelchair.

KAREN

Don't die, Dan! Please don't die!

As Medics lift Dan into an ambulance his bloody leg chain slithers out. A medic heaves it inside, wipes his hands on his slacks, slams the doors and trots to the cab.

MEDIC
 (to driver)
 You really need to hammer it!

The ambulance moves off, SIREN wailing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - DAY

CORRIDOR

Karen, now cleaned up, sits in a wheelchair talking to a green gowned SURGEON. Down the corridor a uniformed police officer stands on guard outside a door.

SUPER: "DEADLINE 36 HOURS."

SURGEON #3
 He's just out of surgery. You can
 see him, but don't stay long.

INTENSIVE CARE

Transfusion bags, drainage tubes, monitoring equipment, oxygen mask. Dan lies on one side, eyes closed. Karen scoots her wheelchair over to his bed.

KAREN
 Dan? Dan?
 Look! I've something to show you!

Dan's eyelids flutter.

Karen quickly glances around to make sure she's not observed. She opens her purse and flashes gold ingots lying inside it. Dan sees them, smiles and sinks back into torpor.

Karen squeezes his hand.

KAREN
 I have to go, Dan. We're taking a
 flight to Kyoto this afternoon.
 (beat)
 I just wanted you to know -
 everything's going to be alright!

CUT TO:

EXT. LAX - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

A JAPAN AIRLINES aircraft picks up speed on a runway and angles into the sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. YAMASUKA CLINIC - KYOTO - DAY

INSERT - ENTRANCE SIGN

"THE KYOTO YAMASUKA FREEDOM CLINIC"

BACK TO SCENE

On one side of the grounds excavators and dump trucks are working.

INSERT - A SITE BOARD

In English and Japanese a building permit and architect's layout. The sign reads:

"The Alice Nichols Foundation for Children - SITE OF A
FUTURE 12 BED REGENERATIVE MEDICINE CLINIC"

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. YAMASUKA CLINIC - KYOTO - DAY

SUPER: "ONE MONTH LATER"

Watched by a white coated Yamasuka Clinic team, Alice, now recovered walks out of the clinic, smiling. Karen hobbles alongside with a walking stick.

As they enter a taxi the Yamasuka team waves them goodbye.

INT. L.A. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE - DAY

Dan lies unconscious surrounded by equipment. On his bedside locker the Mickey Mouse figurine stands facing him.

Dan rallies momentarily. His eyes open and his arm stretches out for the figurine.. ..but falters, and falls.

CLOSE ON MONITORING EQUIPMENT

All the equipment flat lines. ALARMS BEEP. Nursing staff rush in.

CLOSE ON Mickey Mouse figurine

LONG CROSS DISSOLVE TO:

Mickey Mouse dissolves, progressively replaced by the figure of young Alice, standing in a cemetery, roses in her hand.

EXT. L.A. EVERGREEN CEMETERY - DAY

Karen stands in the background as Alice goes over and reads the black marble headstone with gold lettering.

CLOSE ON HEADSTONE

" DAN 'HASN'T A NICKEL' NICHOLS

FOUNDER OF THE ALICE NICHOLS FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

1973 - 2022 "

INSERT - BLACK MARBLE GRAVE ACCESSORY PLAQUE

" With grateful thanks from the Lieutenant DELACROIX L.A.P.D family "

BACK TO SCENE

Alice places three pink rose buds on the headstone. Her fingers trace the carved letters of Dan's name.

CLOSE SHOT

She touches her forehead to the headstone, kisses it gently.

ALICE
(whispers)
Thanks, Dad...

FADE OUT.