

"California Uber Alles"

by  
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INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

From the vantage point of a cruising police car, observe this mid-sized, central Californian city's quiet downtown. Look over the few pedestrians and motorists still on the streets. Linger on some with suspicion.

EXT. RURAL OUTSKIRTS -- NIGHT

The city in the distance now. Dark streets, undeveloped land. Fog drapes the trees and construction equipment.

INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

Peer out the windshield. Objects emerge from the fog.

A car turns on to the road, weaves momentarily out of its lane. The driver corrects the error, but too late as-

A COP'S HAND flips a switch. The siren WAILS.

EXT. RURAL OUTSKIRTS -- NIGHT

The car veers towards the shoulder. But instead of pulling over, the wheels CUT sharply. The car completes a wild u-turn and ZIPS past the police cruiser.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

A long stretch of unoccupied show homes -- lit up, furnished and eerily empty. The quietude is shattered by-

THE TWO CARS

Slice through the fog, a WHOOSH of sound and color.

AT THE END OF THE STREET

The car makes a sharp left, the police cruiser follows-

Up a hill, to a stop sign, and the fleeing car STOPS.

The cop SLAMS on the brakes-

Too late. The cruiser BANGS into the back of the car, which fishtails on to the muddy shoulder. The COP gets out, CHARGES the car with his gun aimed at the driver, who won't look up-

COP

Hands where I can see them!

The SECOND COP pounds on the side of the car with his gun-

SECOND COP

Hands! Show me your hands!

COP

Hands, now!

Finally, casually, the driver lifts his head. RICKY is in his early 20's, Latino. The cop SWINGS the door open, PRESSES his gun to Ricky's temple.

COP (CONT'D)

Hands on the dash!

There's an electronic CHIRP. The cop YANKS Ricky from the car, and a cell phone SLIPS from his grasp.

The second cop grabs it, it's blinking: "TEXT MESSAGE SENT."

SECOND COP

You almost got yourself shot over a cell phone.

COP

You got any weapons or needles, anything I'm gonna stick myself with?

RICKY

I don't have anything like that.

The cop pats him down, hands his partner a wallet.

SECOND COP

You don't have an i.d.?

Ricky sees, reflected in his car's mirror, headlights approaching.

RICKY

That ain't a crime, ain't gotta have your papers everywhere you go. It ain't 1984 yet, sir.

COP

You gotta have a license to drive a car, you dumb shit.

SECOND COP

What's your name?

RICKY

Come on, man, look at me. You know who I am.

(with a big grin)

I'm Superman's son.

SECOND COP

This car's stolen, that's something we can handle like gentlemen, easy.

(MORE)

SECOND COP (CONT'D)

But the longer you bullshit me, the more I'm gonna think there's something else going on.

The approaching headlights are joined by swirling, red and blue lights. A BACKUP OFFICER arriving.

RICKY

It's in the glove box.

The backup car comes to a stop in the foggy distance. As the second cop searches the glove box-

COP

Rook got out here quick.

SECOND COP

Youthful enthusiasm, let him pay for it, he can drive the kid in.

The second cop finds Ricky's license, emerges from the car-

SECOND COP (CONT'D)

Get the cuffs on this guy.

COP

You just said the rookie'll-

SECOND COP

Get the damn cuffs on him!

Before he can-

The backup cop, approaching on foot, his face concealed by the night, SNAPS his flashlight on. Shines it right in the cop's eyes.

COP

Shit, rook, knock it off.

Ricky's cell phone VIBRATES. The second cop flips it open, reads the incoming text message: ALREADY THERE.

And the flashlight shuts off.

THWACK -- something comes firing out of the black.

The cop moves his leg into a headlight's beam.

COP (CONT'D)

(stunned)

Rook shot me.

Ricky slips out of the cop's grasp and flees-

The flashlight comes back on, darts around the night, moves over the cops, assesses who is where-

Before it shuts off again. The cop scrambles to get to the other side of his car, but the backup officer FIRES a series of bullets into the night-

POP-POP-POP-

And the cop's body DROPS into darkness and death with an unceremonious THUMP.

The second cop takes cover and SHOOTS. He can't see a thing. Pitch black. It's guesswork until-

The flashlight comes on again.

Locked on a target, the second cop fires repeatedly.

Until he realizes that the flashlight is wedged between rocks.

The shooter is behind him.

He turns but the backup officer FIRES a bullet into the second cop's chest. Extinguishes the flashlight with another.

And then, frantic SCURRYING, two pairs of footsteps, Ricky racing back to his car, and the shooter to his-

Doors SLAM, engines REV, and there's a WHOOP, WHOOP from a siren on the shooter's car, the sound of the police, as the two vehicles motor into the night.

TITLE CARD

"CALIFORNIA UBER ALLES"

EXT. TRACK -- DAY

Just past dawn. ELLIOT jogs, listening to an ipod, the lone man up and about.

He's in his early 30's, scruffy but fit, a few rough edges but he has his shit together. Unflappable and untroubled, he largely floats through the world. As cool as his namesake Mr. Gould was in "California Split" or "The Long Goodbye."

EXT. CITY -- DAY

Elliot, sweat-soaked, stumbles up a hill. Suddenly MARVIN - fifteen, black, out of breath - runs up to him.

MARVIN

Hey man, hey you got a phone man?

Elliot ignores him, keeps walking. Marvin extends an arm.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Hey man.

Elliot pauses the ipod. Assesses Marvin. He seems scrawny, scared, non-threatening.

ELLIOT

I heard you. I didn't bring my wallet, man, I'm out running.

MARVIN

You didn't hear shit, I asked if you got a phone.

Elliot gestures to indicate that he has nothing on him. Marvin's eyes dart around nervously, checking all directions-

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Then can you do me a favor, I gotta get downtown, I'd pay you ten bucks if you drive me, man, twenty.

ELLIOT

There's a bus stop on Fourth.

MARVIN

You don't trust me, man? Fuck. At least could you walk me someplace?

ELLIOT

Will I go on a walk with you?

MARVIN

To that donut shop right there, man, walk with me to right there.

Marvin indicates a shop a few blocks away, in the opposite direction that Elliot was running.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

These dudes think I'm some other dude. If you walk me someplace there's a phone, I'll be all good.

ELLIOT

You'll be all good. And what about me, your walking shield?

MARVIN

Yeah, man, my shining white shield. They ain't gonna shoot a white man, that shit gets a nigga on the news.

ELLIOT

Sorry, man.

Elliot resumes jogging. Marvin tries, but can't keep up.

INT. ELLIOT'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Elliot, fresh from the shower and a towel around his waist, washes his sunglasses in the sink. In the next room-

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The television is on to a political ad. Sheriff JACOB DAVIES is in his fifties, strong-jawed, clean-cut, and earnest.

DAVIES

-spent the last twenty years working  
hard to make this city safe. When I-

Elliot pitches his towel at the tv, obscuring Davies' face and muffling the sound. He opens the closet -- 90% women's clothing. He gathers it all together, lifts the hangers free, and tosses a heap of dresses onto the bed.

Spreads out the few remaining shirts. Selects one. Finds his keys, wallet, phone. Something's missing. He looks around, but the morning news catches his eye-

He removes the towel obscuring the tv. A grim-faced reporter, the story: "COP GUNNED DOWN." Immediately, Elliot dials a familiar number on his cell-

ELLIOT

Hey, you okay?

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Elliot descends the stairs. Gets into his car.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- DAY

As he drives by the donut shop, Elliot notices Marvin sitting inside, at the table nearest the pay phone.

An SUV muscles in ahead of Elliot. He slams on the brakes, sees the SUV's "LAW AND ORDER - RE-ELECT SHERIFF DAVIES" bumper sticker. Elliot waves it in, flips the driver off.

A red light, and the SUV's door explodes open. A meathead in a shiny suit stomps back to Elliot's car-

ELLIOT

If you used your signal-

And PUNCHES Elliot in the nose.

Elliot stops up the blood flow with a napkin. By the time he looks up for the license plate, the SUV is speeding off.

EXT. NEWSPAPER BUILDING -- DAY

A grand building that has fallen into neglect. Elliot parks out front. As he jogs to the front door, he keeps a close eye on a diner across the street.

INT. NEWSPAPER BUILDING -- DAY

He walks through a large, open workspace. Visual evidence of downsizing: cardboard boxes, disassembled cubicle walls and extra desk chairs piled up in the corner.

INT. ELLIOT'S OFFICE -- DAY

Elliot flicks his computer screen on to a half-finished article about a drive-by shooting. His phone rings-

INT. DONALD'S OFFICE -- DAY

Elliot has been summoned by DONALD -- sixties, black, quietly commanding.

ELLIOT

This isn't going to go well.

DONALD

I know. But I need somebody there.

ELLIOT

You didn't need someone for the last one, or the one before that. Or the ten before those two.

DONALD

I mean this strictly in the sense of subscriber interest, and you know it: a dozen gangbangers don't equal one cop.

ELLIOT

Most homicides in a year and it's April, there's no interest in that? "Deadliest Year Ever," "City on Verge of Race War" -- this isn't stuff you can sell? When are you going to let me write this stuff?

DONALD

Not now. It's called for ten-thirty, be early. Sooner or later, you had to take your wallops on this.

ELLIOT

Sure. One quick wallop across the street, then I'm on my way.



EXT. DINER -- DAY

REBECCA -- dressed professionally, pretty, thirties -- sips coffee. Elliot watches her through the window.

INT. DINER -- DAY

Elliot arrives at her table, wads of toilet paper still in one nostril to staunch the bleeding. Rebecca moves her briefcase to the floor, but Elliot remains standing.

REBECCA

So you're taking the easy road.

ELLIOT

I can't stay; work. And we both have a pretty good idea what's going to be said, most of it's valid.

REBECCA

Yeah, I imagine you've heard it before.

ELLIOT

Imagine I have.

REBECCA

You don't even know which one I know about, do you?

ELLIOT

The neighbor.

REBECCA

It wasn't the neighbor.

ELLIOT

(after a moment)

You still have a lot of stuff at my place. A lot of clothing.

REBECCA

We'll figure out a time, I'll come by, it may be a few days. I'm busy. Aren't you busy, Elliot?

ELLIOT

I am. I'm pretty sure I left my-

She takes something from her purse and tosses it at him. His lucky pen. Elliot affixes it to the collar of his shirt.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You know this, somewhere. I could be a lot worse of a guy than I am.

REBECCA

Quite a closing argument.

ELLIOT

What can I do to make this easier?

REBECCA

It's not about what you can, it's what you will. And what you will is pretty easy to guess.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- DAY

Elliot drives-

REBECCA (O.S.)

Because people like you never change.

Until he notices something when he passes the donut shop. Marvin is still there, waiting. Elliot slows.

INT. DONUT SHOP -- DAY

ELLIOT

You're still here? I'm heading downtown, I can drop you off someplace closer to where you're headed.

MARVIN

Nah I'm good, man.

Marvin monitors a car idling across the street.

ELLIOT

If these guys are waiting for you, if they're following you, you should call the cops.

MARVIN

I got this shit figured out.

Marvin shifts in his seat, and Elliot sees that Marvin is concealing a gun in the pocket of his jacket.

ELLIOT

Fine, the shit's figured out, kick the white shield to the curb.

And Elliot heads out-

EXT. DONUT SHOP -- DAY

Just as the formerly idling car SQUEALS into the parking lot. Marvin slips past Elliot and jumps into the passenger seat. Elliot gets a look at the driver-

It's Ricky.

Pulling away, Ricky shoots a long look at Elliot.

INT. COUNTY BUILDING -- DAY

A Media Relations official reluctantly approves Elliot's press pass and lets him in.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Sheriff Davies speaks from a podium, where he is flanked by suits and cops. Elliot catches icy glares from other journalists as he finds a seat in the back.

DAVIES

Not exact, no. Minutes.

REPORTER 1

Did Officer Mullens say anything when they found him, to that family, or in the ambulance?

DAVIES

Right now the priority is his health and recovery. As soon as he's well enough, we'll take a full statement.

REPORTER 2

Do you have any visual on the shooter?

DAVIES

At this point, no, no visual.

ELLIOT

You must have something from the dashcam.

Davies' eyes land hard on Elliot.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

They're supposed to be on constantly. Maybe the collision knocked it out?

DAVIES

That's possible.

ELLIOT

Then there should be a visual of everything preceding the collision, right? Including a plate. Either that or they violated policy.

DAVIES

You know what? We're not going to do this right now.

Davies steps down from the podium and crosses the room towards Elliot, motioning for officer GARY to join him.

DAVIES (CONT'D)  
I want him out of here.

ELLIOT  
You can't do that.

Davis snatches Elliot's pass away.

DAVIES  
Go ahead and lock him up. We'll  
sort out what I can and can't do  
later.

INT. POLICE CAR -- DAY

Elliot, handcuffed, is placed in the back seat by Gary.

GARY  
You have no class. You know that?

ELLIOT  
Thanks, man, I appreciate that.

As Gary gets behind the wheel, Elliot looks out the window  
at the other reporters gawking at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
But, in fairness to me, and that's a  
big concern personally, every word I  
wrote about your boss is true.

GARY  
I don't care who my boss fucks.

Gary drives away from the county building-

ELLIOT  
I don't care either, but I care that  
he had you guys driving his mistress  
around, using cops like a taxi  
service. And if you don't want to  
get caught, don't fuck a stripper  
named Mandy Lynx at the Motel Six.

GARY  
I'm talking about today. You've got  
no class for today, even your cousin'd  
say that.

ELLIOT  
I asked questions, that's my job.

GARY  
There's a time and place, this was a  
man's funeral practically, a cop's  
public funeral.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

Second in the line in two weeks, two dead, one in critical, and you're grinding your fucking axe about dashcams.

Something about this silences Elliot. He settles back. Eyes on the dashcam. Even now, it's recording.

INT. COUNTY JAIL CELL -- DAY

Elliot's cellmate, a suit-wearing drunk man, leans forward and vomits senselessly into his own lap.

ELLIOT

You're gonna make me watch this?

GARY

I can't make you watch anything.

Gary returns to paperwork. Elliot pitches a roll of toilet paper over to the vomiting man.

ELLIOT

I know I'm not going anywhere until the boss cuts me loose, but I'm sorry if I disrespected your friend.

GARY

He wasn't my friend.

ELLIOT

But he's brethren, I get it, I was out of line, the second one this year. Who was the other?

GARY

Coover.

ELLIOT

Franklin Coover. He committed suicide, didn't he?

GARY

So?

ELLIOT

You said he died in the line.

GARY

Doesn't matter how they say it officially, in the papers or whatever. Every cop dies in the line.

INT. COUNTY JAIL -- DAY

As he waits for his articles to be returned, Elliot glances at a display honoring the fallen officer Coover. A detail catches Elliot's eye: Coover's service was held at Morningside Church.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL -- DAY

Elliot rounds the corner, reattaching his pen to his shirt, and suddenly there's a RUSH of blue motion as a cop SHOVES Elliot into the brick wall.

ELLIOT

I figured you'd be pissed.

THOM

I am, you're an idiot.

THOM -- a cop, clean-cut, early twenties, Elliot's cousin -- bats the pen off of Elliot's shirt.

ELLIOT

You're not doing the job right if you don't end up in jail once in a while.

THOM

Or maybe you end up in jail 'cause you're doing the job wrong. Did that ever occur to you?

ELLIOT

(retrieves his pen)

Nope.

INT. THOM'S CAR -- DAY

Elliot, in the passenger seat, fidgets with the radio dial.

ELLIOT

Hey, did you know Franklin Coover?

Thom leans over, searches the presets. As Elliot speaks, Thom turns the volume up gradually.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

The cop who arrested me said Coover died in the line. Officially it's a suicide, but his service was at Morningside, and they quite famously don't accommodate suicides, as you might recall with Uncle Conrad.

Elliot shuts the radio off.

THOM

I'm not talking to you about anything work-related, I'm driving you to your car and that's it. Lesson slowly learned.

ELLIOT

It's obvious my quotes were from higher-ups, no one thinks you're the source for that story.

THOM

You managed to get a dig in there, too, real nice.

Thom stops at a light.

THOM (CONT'D)

I've been doing this four months, bottom of the totem pole here, trying to climb, trying to make people proud of me for once-

ELLIOT

I am proud of you.

THOM

And how do you show it? You get me drunk on piss rum and get me to tell you that I'm driving the chief's mistress around. Next thing I know it's in the paper.

There's a honk from behind - it's green. Thom gives the driver an apologetic wave, accelerates.

THOM (CONT'D)

One guy slips up and says something and you immediately think conspiracy. Cops think like that, okay; if you're a cop, it's the job that kills you, it's not like he's just some random guy who shot himself.

ELLIOT

So he shot himself?

Thom flicks the radio back on.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Elliot types "Franklin Coover" into Google. An article about a police case Coover worked, a wedding website, a brief obituary, marathon times.

ELLIOT

Marathon man, I see.

And, buried near the end, a listing for a MyDeathSpace page, where "LADY-M" has written a touching eulogy for Coover. LADY-M's MySpace reveals a slightly overweight woman with a pleasant grin (MELISSA). Messages from Coover crop up again and again, right up until the date of his death.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Mistress of Marathon Man, a good place to start.

He clicks on her page. Current job: The Aquarium.

INT. AQUARIUM -- DAY

Elliot pretends to study the information panel for a monstrously large fish. Melissa approaches.

MELISSA

They said you had a question?

ELLIOT

Is that really true, they eat four times their body weight every day?

MELISSA

No, they wrote it on there but it's totally a lie. I told you guys everything I could already. You're a cop, one of the CAST guys, right?

ELLIOT

I'm not a cop. But it's about Frank, that's why I'm here. I'm a reporter, I write for The Times.

MELISSA

That's supposed to impress me?

ELLIOT

Statement of fact, it doesn't impress me.

Melissa removes a pack of cigarettes from her pocket.

EXT. AQUARIUM PARKING LOT -- DAY

She lights her cigarette, and Elliot refuses one.

ELLIOT

I keep my vices in rotation - if I'm drinking, I don't smoke, vice versa.

She sits on the trunk of her car.

MELISSA

So that means you're drunk right now?



ELLIOT

I meant in more general terms.

She searches his eyes. Abandons her flirtatious tone.

MELISSA

You don't know why he did it. You came to ask me if I do.

ELLIOT

I was going to take a while to get there but, yeah.

MELISSA

It wasn't about me.

ELLIOT

How do you know that?

MELISSA

They told me, it wasn't just to make me feel good, the CAST guys said it was something about a case, something about drugs. I thought you'd know the rest of it.

ELLIOT

What's CAST?

MELISSA

Shouldn't you know that?

ELLIOT

The acronym slipped my mind.

MELISSA

If you don't know, I'm not going to say. I don't want an article about me. Not that it would be about me, I didn't mean that, just I don't want you to say anything about me and him. For his wife's sake. She's been through enough.

ELLIOT

It's hard losing someone.

MELISSA

It's not exactly like she just, whoops, *lost him*. She had to clean his brains off the living room wall.

EXT. SUBURBAN CUL DE SAC -- DAY

Elliot eyes a house halfway up the block. A car in the driveway, but the house looks closed up, except for one window where a cat peers through a torn-up screen.

Elliot flips open the neighbor's trash, digs through it, and-

SECONDS LATER

He uses a half-eaten tuna sandwich to lure the cat out of the window.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE -- DAY

The doorbell rings. HEATHER opens the door to find Elliot holding her cat awkwardly.

ELLIOT

Hi. A girl up the street said it might be yours.

HEATHER

Oh, thank you. He is.

She reaches for the cat but it jumps down and darts off.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

It's the screen, he tore through. He got you.

Elliot bleeds from a gash on one cheek.

ELLIOT

I didn't notice.

HEATHER

Your nose, too.

ELLIOT

No, that's an old one.

HEATHER

I could get an antiseptic. I'll get an antiseptic.

Heather scurries off. Elliot spies - everything is neat, orderly. A stack of unopened newspapers. In the kitchen, a glass of water and a pill bottle (anti-depressants).

Elliot's gaze drifts into an adjacent room and he steps into-

INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM -- DAY

A bookshelf, computer area, well-worn armchair. Elliot looks it all over, inspects the carpet, the wallpaper, searching for blood stains. Nothing. He removes a painting behind the armchair to inspect the wall beneath. Nothing.

He still has the painting in hand when Heather returns.

ELLIOT

Who's the artist?

HEATHER

I think you should leave.

EXT. SCHOOL BASKETBALL COURT -- NIGHT

Elliot squares off against Thom in a one-on-one game. Elliot drives, makes a running bank shot.

ELLIOT

Seven-seven, win by two.

Elliot takes the ball in, dribbles around the perimeter...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

There's no way Coover shot himself.

THOM

Damnit, play ball.

Elliot fires a jump shot - swish.

ELLIOT

Eight-seven, step out on that. At least it wasn't in the living room, and that's the story they're telling.

THOM

We're playing "CLUE" now?

Elliot dribbles around the perimeter.

ELLIOT

Cops are dying, gangbangers are dying, and Davies is keeping a lid on all of it until after the election.

THOM

He's practically running against himself, Davies isn't sweating this election. He could shoot the mayor and still not lose to Fowler. Give it up, there's no conspiracy, not everything's Watergate.

ELLIOT

But some are. Ballgame.

Elliot drains another jump shot.

LATER - AT THE FENCE

Elliot throws the ball over to Thom, then scales the fence-

THOM

I'm done tonight, man.

ELLIOT  
So I'm drinking alone?

THOM  
Not for long, I'm sure.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Elliot waits for his first drink. He surveys the crowd, lingering on attractive women. A brunette catches his eye. Sends him a smile. She's familiar. He goes over to her.

ELLIOT  
Hey, how've you been?

INT. BRUNETTE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Elliot sits on the bed, his pants half-on. The brunette, in her underwear, lights a cigarette. She runs her finger over his cat scratch, hands him the cigarette, goes to the bathroom. He takes an automatic, unthinking drag.

ELLIOT  
Shit. I didn't mean to do this.

She chokes out a laugh and kicks the door shut. He meant the cigarette. Elliot extinguishes it, and-

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- NIGHT

Chewing gum vigorously, a little drunk, Elliot turns the radio up as he motors down the road. Cautiously, he checks his mirrors and maneuvers into the right lane.

A turn, another, on autopilot, until-

Elliot sees a police cruiser's lights up ahead.

He slows, checks his speed, checks his breath. Realizes the police car is stopped. Elliot rolls down his window enough to hear-

BANG - flesh and bone colliding with metal.

Elliot sees LEE, a burly cop with a shaved head, SLAM a teenaged black kid into a metal dumpster.

The kid BOUNCES off and Lee twists his arms back, cuffs him. Elliot gets a look at the kid's face -- it's Marvin.

Elliot pulls his car to the side of the road.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER -- SECONDS LATER

The officer smashes Marvin, cuffed and not resisting, into the dumpster one more time. Elliot approaches.

BYSTANDER

Let the police handle this.

ELLIOT

That's going really well so far.

Elliot pushes past the BYSTANDER and continues on to Lee.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hey, how's it going? You've got handcuffs on him, mission accomplished. Now put him in the back of your car and drive off.

LEE

This doesn't concern you.

ELLIOT

It does, he's my kid, you don't see the resemblance?

LEE

Are you drunk?

ELLIOT

Are you?

Elliot watches Marvin, out of Lee's view, STASH a small scrap of paper in a potted plant.

LEE

You need to leave from here, sir, or I will arrest you for interfering with the duties of a police officer.

Lee yanks Marvin over to the car. A second cop (JANICE) steps forward to handle Elliot.

JANICE

What's the problem here, sir?

ELLIOT

No problem, just questions.

Elliot flashes a press i.d.

JANICE

Does this look like a press conference?

ELLIOT

I don't know, maybe if I squint.

JANICE

Are you drunk?

ELLIOT

Yeah, your partner gave me a couple tugs off his flask in-between smashing that kid's head into a dumpster.

The prisoner securely in the cruiser, Lee returns.

LEE

Interfering, failure to obey a lawful order, D.U.I. How's that sounding to you so far? How about assaulting an officer? You can go home or go to jail, it doesn't mean shit to me.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- NIGHT

Elliot waits in his car, slumped down, out of view, the headlights off. The police car pulls on to the street. Elliot gives it a second, then goes in pursuit.

LATER

Elliot follows, as the cop car drives past the exit for the police station.

LATER

And rolls past the city limits, heading away from the hills. Elliot remains a few car lengths behind. He looks around -- it's flat, farmland, a few dark houses-

ELLIOT

Where are you taking him?

No people, no cars, until-

Elliot catches headlights-

IN THE REAR VIEW

The headlights approach fast, insanely fast-

He maneuvers his car to the right as-

The second car ZIPS by-

CUTS sharply in front of Elliot's car-

Elliot applies the brakes-

As the second car slows, too, Elliot sees the two men in the back seat. One looks back -- it's Ricky. Ricky taps the shoulder of the other man. This is-

A.M.

Shaved bald, no facial hair at all, eyebrows gone, not a whisker on the chin. Black, twenties but weathered. An enraged blankness about him, furious and empty eyes.

A.M. fixes his eyes on Elliot. And raises a machine gun into view.

ELLIOT

Hits the brakes hard.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Elliot's car falls back.

A.M. lowers his gun. Turns back. And, in precise and ritualistic gestures, places a policeman's cap on his head. The car transporting him accelerates.

Elliot pulls his car to the side of the road.

He checks the rear view, there are no other cars.

And then-

The muted RAT-A-TAT-TAT of a machine gun.

DOWN THE ROAD

The second car pulls alongside the cop car-

The FLASH and ECHOING CRACKLE of gunfire-

Bullets spray the police cruiser's exterior-

Elliot gets out of his car, crouches down behind his open door, and watches as-

The cars SLOW and SPEED up, weaving and jockeying for position on the road-

A couple of measured, aimed SHOTS from the police car-

A flurry of BULLETS from the second car-

And then it swerves around the cruiser and speeds off.

The police car pulls to the side of the road.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- NIGHT

A few heart-pounding seconds as Elliot drives up to the police car. No one's seriously hurt. Janice, the driver, was nicked in the arm by a bullet. Lee's gun is pointed at Elliot.

ELLIOT

Are you guys all right?

Marvin sees Elliot, sits up.

MARVIN

Hey, man. Hey. You gotta-

Janice steps down on the gas and the police car zooms off.

Elliot waits, surveys the area. Ricky's car is long gone. He watches the cop car go...

ELLIOT

Shit.

And pursues it.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

A smaller station, older, a squat brick building with four or five police cars parked in front. One has a shattered window. Elliot pulls into the lot.

INT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Elliot enters. There's no one around. He steps behind the front desk, and peers through a window into the station. At the far end of the hall, he can see fragments of reflected movement -- Marvin's elbow, a blue sleeve.

Elliot loses sight of Marvin, gets a different angle, and now he sees-

INTO A CONFERENCE ROOM

Seated alone, handcuffed to a chair and wearing a prisoner's garb, is a young black man with a prominent tattoo on his neck. This is PERCY.

The door behind the desk swings open. Davies emerges.

With a light hand on Elliot's shoulder, Davies guides him back to the other side of the desk.

DAVIES

Everything's under control.

ELLIOT

If everything were under control, you'd be at home in bed with your wife. Sorry, I didn't mean that.

DAVIES

There's no story here.

ELLIOT

I know there's a story, I was driving right behind it.



DAVIES

This ends well for you if you drive home right now.

ELLIOT

I saw two of your guys come under fire, I saw the guys who shot at them. I recognize that there's animosity between us, but I'm only doing my job; right now, I'm not even doing that. Someone's killing cops, I'm here to help you.

DAVIES

We don't need it.

ELLIOT

I got a good look at them; you don't need this kind of information?

An ambulance pulls up out front - no lights, no siren. It occurs to Elliot-

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You already know who you're looking for. They shot Coover, too, didn't they, and you kept a lid on that.

Two paramedics enter, gear in hand. Davies unlocks the door, sends them into the station.

DAVIES

You do have a job to do, a function. I respect it, even though it's caused a considerable amount of pain for my family of late. Yours is an important function, but not a necessary one. You can't do your job if we fail at ours, you can't do anything if we don't keep you safe.

Elliot tries to steal another glance at Percy, but Davies obscures his view.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

You can't write about this. It isn't ready to be written about yet.

Davies goes back to his desk. Opens a drawer, sorts through stuff: tape, pens, a hammer...

ELLIOT

If you're planning on breaking my writing hand, remember I'm a lefty.

DAVIES

You're what? Six-one, six-two?

Davies finds what he was searching for -- a portable breathalyzer. Tosses it over to Elliot.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

Six-two, call it two hundred, and I can smell the booze on your breath from here. I'd say you're blowing a 1.2, maybe north of that.

ELLIOT

Impressive carnival barking. But you can't compel me to do this.

DAVIES

You drove yourself to the front door of a police station and stumbled in reeking of Jack Daniels. I could have you in cuffs right now.

Elliot exhales into the device. Returns it to Davies.

ELLIOT

It was Dewar's.

DAVIES

1.5, felony range. That in addition to the charges from earlier -

ELLIOT

What charges?

DAVIES

Resisting, interfering, battery.

ELLIOT

Oh right, the charges your officers invented earlier.

DAVIES

Add all of that together, get a sum of it. How long before the paper fires you, how long in seconds?

Davies places the breathalyzer in an evidence bag, seals it.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

You're not going to write a word until I say it's ready to be written.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- NIGHT

Elliot drives home. He slows when he passes the spot where Marvin was arrested. Where Marvin stashed something in the potted plant.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER -- NIGHT

Elliot searches the plant and finds the scrap of paper. It has a code or combination, scribbled in pen: 38-45-21.

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Elliot, exhausted, flicks on the light. Sees the heap of dresses on the bed.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Dresses piled high in his arms, Elliot drapes the garments over the metal railing. Stumbles back to his place-

INT. ELLIOT'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Stretches out on the bed, his eyelids heavy-

A pre-sleep IMAGE flashes through his head-

A.M. in the back of the car-

His movements unnaturally slowed down, A.M. TWISTS his neck-

RAISES the machine gun, and this time-

BANG-BANG-BANG!

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Elliot JOLTS awake.

Sunlight in the windows. He's been asleep for a while. Was someone knocking? Elliot hears a second, softer set of sounds at the door. He grabs a robe.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

By the time he opens the door, there's no one there. Elliot steps out, glances one way then the other, and sees-

MAGGY -- his attractive, hipster neighbor -- unlocking her bicycle. She looks up, sees Elliot, averts her eyes.

MAGGY

Your mail got mixed up with mine again.

There's a stack of envelopes at his feet.

ELLIOT

I keep reminding the guy, he transposes the four and the six.

MAGGY

I remember that.

Maggy pushes her bicycle towards the elevator, notices the dresses draped over the railing.

MAGGY (CONT'D)

She had a lot of stuff at your place,  
that wasn't among the details you  
chose to impart.

ELLIOT

She's coming by for it.

MAGGY

Well you shouldn't just put her stuff  
on the lawn, it's an asshole move.

When she looks back, something shocks her. Maggy gives up on the elevator, hoists her bicycle over her shoulder, and descends the stairs.

Elliot looks down -- his robe's drifted open, exposing his boxers. He tightens the robe, approaches the stairs-

But Maggy's gone. And Elliot notices-

Someone else. Standing on a fire escape, two flights up. Eye contact. It's Ricky.

Elliot darts for his door, but-

A heavysset man, RODRIGO, ducks into the open door and pulls it closed.

Ricky swings down from the fire escape, drops onto the stairwell one flight up, gallops down the stairs-

Just as - DING - the elevator arrives.

Elliot jumps on, taps the buttons. Ricky runs over, extends his arm, but the doors CLOSE-

And-

INT. APARTMENT ELEVATOR -- DAY

Elliot relaxes. For half a second. There's a long pause before the elevator JOLTS and begins to move. Elliot hears, in the stairwell, the POUND-POUND-POUND of Ricky's footsteps, just outpacing the elevator's painfully slow descent.

ELLIOT

This was a poor idea.

The elevator stops. The doors part, placing Elliot face to face with Ricky and two of his pals. His pals have big guns.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ROOFTOP -- DAY

Elliot, still in his robe, and A.M. Ricky and the two armed guards linger close by. The harsh sunlight makes Elliot squint, look down. A.M. wears sunglasses.

A.M.

I wanted to speak with you.

ELLIOT

You could've called, we could've set something up, real civilized and clandestine, the back booth at Denny's wearing fake moustaches, something like that.

A.M.

I saw you last night. You saw me.

ELLIOT

I did. I saw you open fire indiscriminately on a police car.

A.M.

It wasn't indiscriminate. I was aiming for heads.

ELLIOT

I should assume it was you who killed the cop two nights ago? And Coover?

A.M.

If you want.

ELLIOT

You got tired of shooting at each other?

A.M.

You're the reporter. We've read your name in the newspaper, there's a photograph of your face.

ELLIOT

I love that feature, yeah, makes abductions a snap.

A.M.

Do you have a notepad?

Elliot reaches instinctually for his pen. No luck-

ELLIOT

Normally I at least have a pen. You want me to quote you on something?

A.M.

No. You can't write about this.

Ricky hands A.M. a pen and paper; he jots something down.

ELLIOT

People keep telling me that. My boss, the cops, now you, nobody wants to me to write.

A.M.

There are no quotes, no descriptions of the cars or of me, my associates. I would kill you.

A.M. hands Elliot the paper. In blocky, childlike handwriting, he's written five names: Mario Soils, Jeremy Morris, Juan Sandoval, Eduardo Villa, George Bellamy.

A.M. (CONT'D)

Find them.

ELLIOT

If I don't, you'll kill me?

A.M. takes a moment to consider it.

A.M.

Yes, I would.

EXT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Ricky and Elliot climb the stairs returning to his apartment.

ELLIOT

So you work for him? Does he have a name?

Rodrigo opens the door to Elliot's place.

RODRIGO

We done?

RICKY

Yeah, man, we done, let's go.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Elliot enters his place and sees that it's been trashed -- drawers emptied, boxes overturned, papers scattered.

ELLIOT

You guys are as bad as the cops, what're you even looking for?

RICKY

You gotta be a little paranoid when you're talking revolution, man.

ELLIOT

That's what you're talking?

Ricky goes over to the fridge. Snags a beer.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't have to tell me the guy's real name, but what am I supposed to call him?

RICKY

You call him A.M.

ELLIOT

That stands for something?

RICKY

Like the morning. Wake up, man. You ask a lot of questions.

ELLIOT

It's my nature.

RICKY

Better mix up your nature for a minute.

Ricky scribbles a phone number on a chalkboard by the fridge.

RICKY (CONT'D)

That's for when you find them. Don't just type the names into Google.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Elliot types the final name into Google. Nothing.

ELLIOT

Shit.

INT. COUNTY RECORDS ROOM -- DAY

A smiling CLERK -- a familiar face, familiar banter -- hands a printout to Elliot.

CLERK

You lucked out, good sir, they're all in the new database.

ELLIOT

What's that, sir, a new database?

CLERK

It matches names with gang aliases, it's the gangster phonebook, no, corporate directory, it's got the hierarchy, too, top to bottom.

ELLIOT

Where are these guys?

CLERK

Low to mid-level. So they're all there, names and aliases, and I'll give you that stuff even though I probably shouldn't but no one's gotten around to explicitly telling me I can't yet, that plus you did bring me a bottle of that good Tahitian rum next time I see you, wink wink.

ELLIOT

Done and done. Now where are they?

CLERK

That's the bad news.

EXT. CENTRAL PRISON -- DAY

Belying the name, this characterless gray building is in a remote rural area. Elliot's car pulls up to a checkpoint.

INT. CENTRAL PRISON -- DAY

A PRISON CLERK, less friendly and a compulsive gum-chewer, scrolls through information on her computer screen again.

PRISON CLERK

Nope.

ELLIOT

Your system says they're here.

PRISON CLERK

Well they ain't.

ELLIOT

So where are they?

The clerk spins her monitor around, shows him.

PRISON CLERK

Bellamy, see? Nothing. He ain't here.

ELLIOT

Then you better call your boss because you've got five convicts on the loose.



INT. CENTRAL PRISON HALLWAY -- DAY

Her humorless boss EDGAR leads Elliot down a corridor.

EDGAR

My guess is they were transferred  
down state and it's not in the  
computers yet.

They pause to wait for an elevator. Elliot has a view of the crowded rec room a floor below. A fight breaks out, and it turns ugly quickly. The violence is eerily silent, the pummeling and shouting muffled by thick glass.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

You're welcome to look at the files,  
you know I can't say that you can't,  
but you also know the sheriff doesn't  
like fishing expeditions and I'm  
telling you the files won't be there.  
But by all means, waste your time.

ELLIOT

I will. Shouldn't you stop that?

EDGAR

It's not my job.

Edgar watches the fight blankly. The elevator arrives. Elliot lingers until, finally, a guard halts the fight.

INT. CENTRAL STORAGE AREA -- DAY

Boxes and boxes, little order. Elliot's opened several, and he searches another. Nothing. Except, at the back, an '04 training manual. Inside, printed on red paper, a list of Central employees. Elliot notices a name - Franklin Coover.

Hearing footsteps, Elliot coughs loudly to cover the tearing sound as he rips the page out. He just has it into his back pocket when the door opens.

Edgar sees all of the open boxes.

EDGAR

I told you to look them up  
alphabetically.

ELLIOT

I did, last name first, just like I  
learned in school. They weren't  
there, I figured they'd been misfiled.

Edgar snatches the binder out of Elliot's hand.

EDGAR

You came in here looking for those files and they're not here.

ELLIOT

So where are they?

EDGAR

California's got a big prison system, two hundred thousand inmates, it's practically its own city.

ELLIOT

So somewhere in San Quentin there's a second guy in a bunk and nobody notices? We're talking about people here, not files, these are serious guys, fifteen years minimum, one of them had ninety. You don't release people like that without causing a stink, unless they release themselves.

EDGAR

They didn't escape. And all I'm talking about are files. If you can't locate them, you can place a search request; I'm sure we'll get to it in the next few months.

EXT. CLUB -- NIGHT

DARWIN, a heavily tattooed black security guard, checks i.d.'s. Elliot approaches; Darwin recognizes him. Elliot promptly offers his hand for the classic handshake.

DARWIN

Always old school, I dig it.

ELLIOT

It's all I know.

INT. CLUB (OFFICE) -- NIGHT

A view of the dance floor below. Elliot surveys the crowd while Darwin looks over the list of names.

ELLIOT

Any of them familiar?

DARWIN

Not off the tippy top but I always find 'em for you.

ELLIOT

They're supposed to be at Central but I don't know if they still are, I'm looking for confirmation.

DARWIN

Confirmation that they're in jail?  
Shit, ask the jail.

ELLIOT

That occurred to me, no dice. They're there but they're not there, I'm looking for guys who've seen them in Central, recently, cellmates, whatever. Prices the same?

DARWIN

Up ten percent, just like every time you ask, man. Same great service.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Elliot and Thom, up at the bar, a couple of beers.

ELLIOT

Another?

THOM

Couldn't hurt.

Elliot signals to the bartender. Pretends to watch the game.

ELLIOT

What's CAST?

THOM

It's like pathological with you.

ELLIOT

This is an easy one, it's a police unit, right, an acronym? I could get it from anywhere.

THOM

So do. You said we were gonna watch the Warriors and ogle women.

Their beers arrive, and Elliot pays. He notices the woman Thom's stealing glances at.

ELLIOT

I know her, she's a friend of Rebecca's. I'll introduce you.

THOM

I'll pass on that recommendation.

ELLIOT

This one still likes me.

THOM

CAST is a taskforce, the guys who got SWAT training. They serve high risk warrants, do crowd control at riots, stuff like that.

Elliot gets off his stool, starts towards the woman, pauses.

ELLIOT

Last thing, I promise. A kid got arrested, I wanted to find out what for. I don't know his name, but I heard they took him to Northridge.

Elliot gauges Thom's reaction to "Northridge."

THOM

They don't hold anybody there, it's storage and admin. The tip's bogus.

ELLIOT

Yeah? Maybe you're right.

Thom knows Elliot's hiding something.

THOM

Wait. What don't I know about Northridge?

Elliot waves the question off, and heads over to his ex's FRIEND. She does indeed recognize him.

ELLIOT

How are you?

FRIEND

You're thoroughly incapable of evolving, aren't you?

She sets her drink down, and walks straight out of the bar.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

As Elliot returns to his car, his phone rings. He answers-

DARWIN (O.S.)

I found one.

EXT. RUNDOWN URBAN AREA -- DAY

Elliot maneuvers his car carefully on this congested street. Crowds form around a few street vendors.

He finds a spot, pulls in, watched by a couple of tough-looking ten-year-old KIDS bouncing a basketball back and forth. Elliot gets out, locks his car door.

KID ONE

Man, you ain't got an alarm?

KID TWO

He don't even got The Club.

KID ONE

White people always got The Club.

ELLIOT

That's good, you're paying attention  
in History class.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX -- DAY

Elliot enters the courtyard to approach an older Latino couple, HERBERTO and MARIA, seated in lawn chairs.

ELLIOT

Mr. Sandoval? Are you Mr. Sandoval?

Maria looks Elliot over.

MARIA

Why are you asking?

ELLIOT

I'm a reporter. I wanted to ask you  
questions about your son Juan.

Herberto whispers in Spanish to his wife, very animated.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'm getting the idea he doesn't want  
us to speak.

MARIA

No. We're not supposed to talk, but  
he wants to, for a long time he has.  
Nobody asked.

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY

An immaculately clean living room, religious art and candles.

MARIA

Juan was put in jail for stealing a  
car and assault. They said he was a  
gangster but he wasn't, he never  
was, they have no proof, they say it  
and that's enough.

HERBERTO

When he go in, he's strong, healthy.  
Look how he come out.

Herberto motions for Elliot to join him. The two men walk back to a closed bedroom door. Herberto pushes it open, flicks on a light, and leads Elliot into-

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

A cluster of photographs tacked to the wall. A radio tuned to jazz. In the center, in a hospital bed, lies Juan.

There's a great deal of machinery surrounding him, plugged into him, keeping his body alive. A woman in pink nurse's scrubs stands at the back, smoking a cigarette and blowing the smoke out the window. Elliot watches the machines chug and whir, watches the boy's chest rise and fall.

ELLIOT

They gave you a settlement, they  
paid you not to talk?

He notices Juan's tattoos -- clearly gang-related. One is identical to a tattoo on Ricky's arm.

MARIA

Not to talk and not to sue. They  
let him go and they gave us money to  
take care of him but it's gone. It  
would've last twenty years without  
the machines. But there's no choice.  
Life is the only choice.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Elliot flips through the pages of the settlement; at the back, there's a medical file from Juan's stay at Central. It's completely blank. The form is signed by "Dr. Weems."

ELLIOT

There's hardly anything here, how do  
they even know how to treat him?

MARIA

We knew it wasn't the right way, but  
we didn't know what to do.

Herberto mutters something in Spanish.

MARIA (CONT'D)

He says it's no different.

Herberto continues, and Maria translates:

MARIA (CONT'D)

We moved here from Guatemala, we had  
to leave because the police were  
killing the Mayans.

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

They said we were guerrillas and communist, we weren't, but it didn't matter. If you have a uniform, you do whatever you want.

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY -- DAY

Elliot finds an office shared by several doctors.

INT. DR. WEEMS' OFFICE -- DAY

The lobby is hip, ultra modern.

ELLIOT

Hi. I have an appointment. My name's Juan Sandoval.

The RECEPTIONIST gives him a look before she flips through the appointment book. Elliot looks around. Expensive furniture, original art on the walls.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Pretty nice digs here, a breath of fresh air after Central I bet. But you probably weren't over there.

Elliot spots a Christmas card, still on the receptionist's desk, showing Dr. Weems (African-American, fifties), his wife, and their teenaged son and young daughter.

RECEPTIONIST

At the jail with Dr. Weems? Is that who your appointment's with, didn't we call you?

ELLIOT

I made the appointment yesterday, ran into him at our kids' school, he probably forgot to call it in.

RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Weems passed away two days ago.

ELLIOT

Well, shit. He didn't mention that.

INT. NEWSPAPER BUILDING (RESEARCH ROOM) -- DAY

Elliot sorts through a stack of recent editions, finds yesterday's. A young INTERN stares at Elliot incredulously.

INTERN

All the obits are online, you know, like instantly.

ELLIOT

I'm feeling nostalgic. What've you got for me?

The intern hands Elliot the red page of Central employees.

INTERN

I cross-checked lists, Coover was a guard at Central and so were four other current cops, including Lee Whaller, Davies' number two guy. The department won't confirm who's in CAST, they say the unit works maybe four times a year, big drug busts, stuff like that.

Elliot finds what he's looking for - the obituary for Dr. Weems. Died in a car accident.

ELLIOT

What does C.A.S.T. stand for?

INTERN

Excellent question, I made some amusing guesses for you.

(hands over a notepad)

Then I found out the real one, which trumped all of mine comedy-wise.

*Californians Against Street Thugs.*

INT. DONALD'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Donald leans back in his chair.

DONALD

You're saying Coover, who committed suicide, was actually killed, because of something that happened at Central.

ELLIOT

This was four years ago, right after the sheriff's department assumed control of the prison. Davies was in charge, several current officers were guards. Something happened in that jail, it's spilling onto the streets, and Davies is trying to cover the whole thing up. No response?

DONALD

I was imagining the headline:  
Something Happened.



ELLIOT

I know it's early but the people I want to talk to seem highly prone to disappearing and/or dying so it seemed like a reasonable time to check in.

DONALD

Who are you talking to?

ELLIOT

I can't say yet.

DONALD

A reasonable time is when you have facts, documents, quotes, photos, tape. Names. Which you don't. I need something on the cop who's still in the hospital, Mullens, an easy profile. Stop chasing bullshit and do your job.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Elliot's car drives right by the hospital.

INT. ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT -- DAY

Darwin is in the middle of lunch; Elliot takes a seat and waits. Darwin chews. Then:

DARWIN

Okay, I got shit on the other four. I went up to Central myself, man, my one day off, talked to a grip of dudes. Nobody seen them, all's they could figure is maybe D Wing.

ELLIOT

D Wing's isolation?

DARWIN

It's where they put motherfuckers they get sick of looking at, you end up there, man, that shit's indefinite, ain't nobody'd hearing a peep outta you for a long-ass minute.

ELLIOT

So, nothing at all on any of those four? Am I still paying for five names if I only get one?

DARWIN

You're the reporter. But, as a tip, maybe you oughtta ask yourself about where you got the names from in the first place.

INT. ELLIOT'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Elliot reads the number off his fridge, dials it into his cell. The line picks up-

VOICE (O.S.)  
Fifth and Lemoyne. An hour.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR -- NIGHT

Elliot rolls slowly through a dark, industrial part of the city. At Fifth and Lemoyne, he pulls the car to the curb. Sees no one. Hall and Oates comes on the radio and he reaches to turn it down, but-

FISTS BANG on the windshield.

Elliot startles and accidentally cranks the music way up. The passenger side door pops open and JASON (muscular, black) punches the radio off and pulls the emergency brake.

ELLIOT  
Sorry about that.

JASON  
We've gotta drive you someplace else.

ELLIOT  
Leave the key?

JASON  
Do we look like fucking valets?

Elliot gets out of the car. Sees that Jason's there with two other men, both have guns.

ELLIOT  
I should make sure that we're both here for the same thing.

JASON  
If you're here for something else, you're basically dead.

ELLIOT  
Must be the same thing.

INT. CAR -- NIGHT

Elliot sits in the back, blindfolded, wedged between the two armed men. Out the window, quiet hills roll by. Inside, loud rap music rattles the windows.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS -- NIGHT

The car reaches the peak of a hill, the last home at the end of a long dirt road.

A couple of run-down looking nursery buildings, an abandoned barn, untended fields. Further up the driveway, a simple one story house. Behind it, a smaller back house, its windows lit by flickering tv light.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jason leads Elliot through the front door-

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

And they quickly pass through the house -- minimally furnished, tidy, a front of normalcy. Two guys play cards at the kitchen table. Out the back door, and-

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Here's where the action is. A crowd of twenty or so - a nearly even black/Latino split, spread out in the spacious backyard area. Hanging out, drinking laughing, dancing.

JASON

Wait here.

As Jason continues down to the back house, Elliot spots Ricky playing a three on three game at a rickety basketball hoop. Four blacks, two Latinos, gang tattoos all around. The tone of the game is competitive but friendly.

Something else catches Elliot's eye. A very attractive black woman with short red hair sips a drink while she dances by herself. Rodrigo emerges from the back house with Jason.

RODRIGO

He's not ready for you. You're gonna have to wait.

LATER

Elliot integrates himself into the hoops game. Keeps the ball moving, hits an open jumper, takes a tough rebound.

With the score tied, Elliot hits a game-winner.

RICKY

Damn you and that white man running one-hand bullshit.

INT. GREENHOUSE -- NIGHT

In one corner, a small grow operation, a dozen or so cannabis plants. Ricky rolls a joint while Elliot looks around.

ELLIOT

Any idea how much longer this might be?

Ricky shrugs. He offers the joint to Elliot, who declines. Ricky lights it up.

Elliot wanders, spots a plant -- a nightshade, white flowers and hard-shelled fruit. It's been thoroughly roped off with yellow caution tape.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

This must be the really good shit.

RICKY

Nah, that's scopo, devil's breath.

ELLIOT

You're ahead of me, educate me on devil's breath.

RICKY

Most fucked up drug on earth, some dude we know smuggled it up from Colombia. Ain't got no taste, no color, no smell, but you put a pinch of that shit in somebody's drink and motherfucker turns into a zombie, like you hypnotized them for real, motherfucker'll do whatever you say. "Buy me a flat screen," "take a grand outta the bank," "eat that piece of shit," they'll do it. That shit ain't recreational, it's tactical.

Elliot has an obscured view of the basketball game.

ELLIOT

I've got to ask you something, about the guys we played with, the mix of people here.

RICKY

I wish there was more chicks, too.

ELLIOT

I didn't mean that.

RICKY

You wanna know why my crew and his crew ain't shooting at each other.

ELLIOT

Twelve guys have been killed since January, a seven-five split. It's a mess, worse than it's ever been, it's practically a race war.

The door swings open -- it's Jason and Rodrigo.

RODRIGO

He's ready.

Ricky again offers the joint to Elliot. Again, he declines.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)

He ain't asking. A.M. won't talk with you unless you blaze up.

ELLIOT

How about a Dewar's neat instead?

RICKY

It ain't me, man, this shit's a matter of policy. Blaze up or go home.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Elliot is clearly high. He stumbles through the field, following Jason and Rodrigo. Ricky catches Elliot stealing a long glance at the girl with short red hair.

ELLIOT

She looks familiar.

RICKY

Her face or her ass? 'Cause all I see you looking at is her ass.

Elliot laughs. As they approach the back house, he regains his composure.

INT. BACK HOUSE -- NIGHT

Elliot is led in. Two armed guards. In the center of the room, A.M. slouches down in a big couch. A large American flag is tacked to the wall behind him. A wall of tvs in front of him. The main one plays "Easy Rider," the others are tuned to various news channels.

A.M. wears sunglasses, drinks brandy. For a long moment, he won't look away from "Easy Rider."

A.M.

Bikes and cocaine. Bikes. Cocaine. If you repeat words, they lose meaning. Bikes and cocaine. Bikes, cocaine, bikes-

Elliot stifles a small laugh.

A.M. (CONT'D)

You're high, good. Pot makes it hard for other people to lie, and I have difficulty detecting lies. It evens the playing field for me.

ELLIOT

I had no intention of lying to you.

Rodrigo leans in, cell phone to his ear.

RODRIGO

I gotta bounce, A, my girl's trippin' out about her water breaking, man; it ain't, but I gotta deal with it.

A.M. nods his approval. Rodrigo leaves.

A.M.

What do you know?

ELLIOT

I know you have a great lawyer. You were sentenced to seventy years, double murder. And here you are, a free man. You're George Bellamy.

A.M. fidgets with his sunglasses -- looks at the movie with them off, then back on.

A.M.

Don't confuse my state with one of freedom. And I owe nothing to my lawyer. What else?

ELLIOT

Each of the five was arrested between April and June of 2004, convicted of a violent crime. The lowest sentence was fifteen years, the stiffest was ninety. By September '04, all five are locked up at Central. That's where three drop off the radar. Number four's in front of me and five's in a coma, Juan Sandoval, I found him, his family. The other families were untraceable -- in Mexico, dead ends. I couldn't find your family.

A.M.

That's not a concern. What happened to Juan?

ELLIOT

I don't know. His family signed a settlement, a little cash, no disclosure.

A.M.

Tell me what you think happened.

ELLIOT

I prefer it when the people who were there tell me, it seems more journalistic that way. Whatever happened to Juan Sandoval happened to you, too, right?

A.M.

I can't be a source of information.

ELLIOT

Why not?

A.M.

I don't exist. Ask the sheriff, the jail. Before I disappeared, I was a double murderer and it's the same thing, I didn't exist then either.

ELLIOT

You want me to find proof about something that happened there and I believe you, I believe there's something there because they buried the hell out of those files. Coover, the cop who died last month, he worked at Central, so did other cops, Davies was in charge. I see the pieces. I won't use you as a source if you don't want me to, but I can't put the pieces together unless you tell me what you know. I'm dead in the water on this.

A.M. removes the sunglasses with finality, and slides them across the coffee table. He stares ahead at the wall of tvs with unfocused eyes, fixates on the rhythms of the flickering light patterns.

A.M.

In May of 2004, I was arrested on charges I didn't understand.

EXT. ARCADE -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

A cop pins A.M. against the wall. He seems different -- his head isn't shaved, a scruffy beard, life in his eyes.

A.M. (V.O.)

I had shot people before but not the ones they arrested me for. I had a meeting with a woman they said was my lawyer. She looked like everyone else in there but they said she was on my side.

INT. CENTRAL VISITORS' ROOM -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

A.M. sits across from an anonymous female lawyer.

A.M. (V.O.)

She plea bargained for ninety years.  
In exchange, they wouldn't kill me.  
I went to Central, the general pop.

INT. CENTRAL DINING AREA -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

ANGLES FROM SECURITY CAMERAS

A riot erupts. Trays are hurled, punches thrown, guards tackled, tasers deployed.

A.M. (V.O.)

There was a riot. I participated.

Chaos all around him. A.M. steps back. He's just plunged a shiv into another inmate's stomach.

A.M. (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Afterwards I was sent to D Wing.

INT. CENTRAL HALLWAY -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

A.M. is escorted by two guards (Coover and PAUL, prematurely gray-haired) down a long corridor. They pass a cell door.

There's a loud THUD as the unseen prisoner hurls his body at the metal door. THUD, THUD, THUD.

A.M. (V.O.)

I wasn't alone.

Coover removes A.M.'s cuffs while backup guards join Paul at the other cell. Batons out and ready. They open the door and A.M. gets a brief glimpse of the other inmate.

His face is severely bruised. Blood pours out of his nose, covers his face. One arm hangs limp, broken. A dazed expression, his eyes vacant. It's Juan.

Juan cowers at the back of the cell as the guards enter and-

Coover SLAMS A.M.'s cell door shut.

INT. A.M.'S CELL -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

A.M. listens to the WHACK of batons on flesh, the wounded screams from Juan. Finally, silence.

For a moment, and then the STOMP-STOMP-STOMP of boots as two guards cross back to A.M.'s cell.

The door opens.



Before A.M. can even rise from his cot, there are taser darts in his neck.

Somehow, A.M. manages to yank the barbs out. And before Coover can reload the cartridge, A.M. grabs hold of the taser and WRESTLES with Coover, until-

Paul brings his baton down hard on the back of A.M.'s head.

He's knocked unconscious immediately.

Out even before his head BOUNCES violently off the floor.

INT. CENTRAL MEDICAL UNIT -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

A.M. wakes in a hospital bed. But he can see nothing, his eyes are covered, his head bandaged, his mouth gagged. Thick black restraints prevent his arms and legs from moving.

A.M. fights to free himself, squirms in his bindings, moans under the gag, until a doctor - Dr. Weems - arrives. Weems injects something into his arm. Again, A.M. blacks out.

INT. A.M.'S CELL -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

A.M. paces the perimeter of his darkened room, speaking to himself in a low mumble.

A.M. (V.O.)

I don't know how much time it was.  
The bandages came off and I could  
see again but things seemed darker.  
Noises sounded different. Everything  
I touched and looked at was flat.  
Things were gone out of my head.

LATER

A.M. sits cross-legged on the floor of his cell, tugging on his growing beard, his eyes fixed on a small patch of light.

A.M. (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I tried to put them back in.

SAME CELL -- WEEKS LATER

A.M. lies on his cot. A stack of books by his pillow. The Bible, Sun-Tzu's "Art of War," a book on the Black Panthers.

A.M. (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For what stayed gone, I put new things  
in. For the parts of me I lost, I  
made up new ones.

INT. COUNTY VAN -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

A.M. sits in the back.

A.M. (V.O.)

In June of 2006, I signed several documents and was released into a halfway house.

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

The unmarked white van pulls up. Paul helps A.M. out of the back. A.M. squints at the assaulting noontime sun.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

A.M.

I was given a probation officer, a job and a name they wanted me to use: Aaron Marshall.

ELLIOT

They tried to hide you like they hid Juan, stash you away somewhere and act like it didn't happen. How did you get from there to here?

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

A.M. sets his bag down on the bed. Goes into the bathroom.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE BATHROOM -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

A.M. studies his reflection in the mirror. He uses an electric razor to eradicate his beard. Then his moustache. Every last hair on his head. Eyebrows, nasal hair, any hint of facial hair is removed.

A.M. (O.S.)

It's of no concern what happened to Aaron Marshall.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

A.M.

You were looking for George Bellamy.

A.M. stands up. A guard moves quickly to Elliot's side.

A.M. (CONT'D)

Now find the other three.

INT. CAR -- NIGHT

Elliot rides in the back, blindfolded again.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

A ticketed motorist goes on her way and Thom returns to his car, sees that he's just down the street from Northridge.

INT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Lee watches the front desk. He looks up as Thom enters.

THOM

How are you tonight? You mind if I  
use your guys' bathroom?

Lee sighs loudly, and goes to get the key.

THOM (CONT'D)

Dumb question, but you guys don't do  
any processing here, nobody's ever  
held here, right?

LEE

Just me 'til retirement.

INT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Thom emerges from the bathroom. As he strolls down the  
hallway, his eyes survey the conference rooms. A door is  
slightly ajar, and Thom pokes his head in to see-

A makeshift interrogation room. Handcuffs attached to the  
side of a chair, a video camera set up.

INT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Lee is gone. Thom leaves the key on the desk.

INT. THOM'S POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

As he drives away, his cell rings.

THOM

Hello?

LEE (O.S.)

I need you back at Northridge.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Elliot rounds the stairs and returns to his place. It's  
been trashed again, in an even greater state of disarray.  
His computer's gone, so are his notes.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Elliot steps through the clutter on the ground, cracks a  
beer, and sits down with a notepad. A knock at the door.  
He checks the peephole, opens it. Maggy looks past Elliot  
at the mess.

MAGGY

Good, she got you, too.

EXT. MAGGY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Her place has been trashed.

ELLIOT  
This isn't her style. But I'm  
guessing it's still my fault so I'll  
help you clean up.

MAGGY  
It's almost midnight.

ELLIOT  
Tomorrow maybe.

MAGGY  
Call before you come over, don't  
just knock on my door.

She writes her phone number down, hands it to him.

MAGGY (CONT'D)  
Hey, so you know? I don't find you  
charming. I only slept with you  
because I thought you could get me a  
job at the paper.

Elliot laughs. The mood lightens.

MAGGY (CONT'D)  
What?

ELLIOT  
That actually makes me like you more.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Elliot returns to snag his ringing phone-

ELLIOT  
Don?

DONALD (O.S.)  
They're discharging the cop, the one  
you were supposed to write the profile  
on. You need to get over to Mercy's.

ELLIOT  
Why are they sneaking him out at  
three in the morning?

INT. NORTHRIDGE HALLWAY -- DAY

Lee leads Thom to a metal door with PIN access. The clerk  
taps in the code, and pushes the door open for Thom.

INT. NORTHRIDGE STORAGE ROOM -- DAY

Thom steps into darkness. The door closes behind him, then the overhead lights flicker on to illuminate this sterile, metallic room.

Two dozen riot gear suits are staged throughout the space. Various other gear -- guns, tear gas launchers. And a large, black, disc-shaped object mounted on a metal stand. As Thom inspects the device's control panel, a second door opens.

Davies steps in. Strides over to Thom, shakes his hand.

DAVIES

The L-RAD, Long Range Acoustic Device,  
for crowd compliance.

Davies demonstrates how it's operated.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

It fires a burst of sound, a continuous tone at a level that's debilitating, like giving someone an instant migraine. Breaks up a crowd.

THOM

I didn't realize we had half this stuff.

DAVIES

I believe in being prepared. What did your cousin tell you about Northridge?

THOM

He, uh, he said a kid was taken here and booked.

DAVIES

That's the entirety of what he told you? That a kid was booked here?

THOM

Yes, sir, that's all he said. Did something happen?

DAVIES

Elliot has a function, and I respect it. But he can't do his job unless we do ours, ours is the primary function.

Davies draws close, lowers his voice.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

I want to believe that I can trust you, Thom, as a cop, a man.

THOM

Of course.

DAVIES

Someone was brought here, but he wasn't booked. He's a witness and I need to keep him safe, out of the system. He saw something. Cops are involved. There are things that have been brewing here for years, things I'm trying to clean up. We're close now. If Elliot comes barnstorming in here, rattling the damn cages, he's going to get this kid killed.

INT. ELEVATOR -- NIGHT

Elliot rides alone. The doors open on Six. Elliot pokes his head around - nurses, doctors, a patient or two.

Nope. The doors close. Seventh floor, the same.

Then-

INT. EIGHTH FLOOR -- NIGHT

Elliot pokes his head out. No doctors, no patients. But, within seconds -- the CLOMP-CLOMP-CLOMP of boots as an officer approaches. It's Gary.

GARY

Hey, you look familiar, but I remember bars in front of your face.

ELLIOT

Very funny, you big lug, which way do I go?

GARY

The floor's closed.

ELLIOT

Yeah, no kidding, our photographer's already in the girl's room, I need to get there before she nods off, it's the front page tomorrow.

GARY

What kid?

ELLIOT

The dog bite girl, 812, right?

GARY

There's nobody else up here.

ELLIOT

I'll run down and check, they just told me 812 downstairs for the dog bite kid.

Elliot sprints down the hallway. Gary, too slow to stop him, remains at the elevator, monitoring Elliot as he reaches room 812/814, right at the corner. He enters -

INT. ROOM 812 -- NIGHT

An empty room. Elliot cuts through, exits the other door-

INT. HOSPITAL EIGHTH FLOOR -- NIGHT

Into a perpendicular hallway. Down this hall, there's a wheelchair parked in front of a bathroom. And, closer, the door to the stairwell.

GARY

Gives up waiting. He half-runs down the hall, rounds the corner, and finds... Elliot walking back.

ELLIOT

I tried 821 in case they transposed the 2 and 1.

INT. HOSPITAL SEVENTH FLOOR -- NIGHT

Elliot gets off the elevator on the busy seventh floor. He walks down a hall to the stairwell door-

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

And climbs back up to the eighth floor door, where-

ELLIOT'S PEN

Props open the otherwise locked door.

INT. HOSPITAL EIGHTH FLOOR -- NIGHT

Elliot emerges from the stairwell. He creeps down the hall towards the wheelchair, and ducks quietly into-

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Here, Elliot finds-

MULLENS, the injured cop. He doesn't acknowledge Elliot at first. Seated in a chair, he splashes his face with water, then struggles to retrieve a paper towel.

Elliot snags one for him. Mullens dries his face. He's slow, medicated.

There's extensive bandaging around his midsection, the bulk of which has been peeled back to facilitate the changing of gauze. The bullet hole is stitched-up, bloody, grotesque.

Mullens catches Elliot looking.

MULLENS

I don't even feel it. It looks bad but it's like watching a movie or something they have me so doped up.

Elliot hears footsteps approaching.

MULLENS (CONT'D)

Is the flight nonstop?

ELLIOT

(thinking quickly)

There's a layover in San Francisco. It was the best we could do, how far out of the way is that anyway?

MULLENS

For Denver? It's stupid but it's fine. Sorry, it's fine.

ELLIOT

Why are they moving you so soon?

MULLENS

They? You said I had to, you guys said I had to get out of here, they're coming after all the CAST guys and somebody thinks I'm CAST, right? You tell me, what's going on?

Mullens discards the towel. Something becomes clear to him.

MULLENS (CONT'D)

Are you Davies' guy, are you the lawyer? Where's Lee?

The bathroom door opens - it's a NURSE with fresh gauze. She spots Elliot and yells into the hall.

NURSE

Gary!

Elliot ducks past her, runs.

He vacillates - elevator, stairwell -- before the elevator doors open, revealing Lee and the suit-clad lawyer Mullens mistook Elliot for. Elliot heads for the stairs.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

He charges down one set of stairs. Another. Another.



ELLIOT

Bad choice.

INT. HOSPITAL SECOND FLOOR -- NIGHT

The stairwell door opens. Elliot sees the cafeteria, sees Gary step off of the elevator, barring his path to the front door. So Elliot heads into-

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA -- NIGHT

A handful of workers, a half-dozen people in line. Elliot steps in behind a mother and her teenaged sons. Gary confronts Elliot.

GARY

Davies needs to talk to you.

ELLIOT

I don't feel like talking.

Gary puts a hand on Elliot's shoulder. Elliot shakes it off. The teenagers start filming the confrontation on their cell phones. Elliot can see them, Gary can't.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Are you arresting me? What's the charge, getting off the elevator on the wrong floor?

GARY

I don't want to but I will. I've done it once this week.

ELLIOT

What's the charge?

GARY

I don't need a charge to arrest you.

ELLIOT

Say that louder, it's going to be all over YouTube in half an hour.

Elliot nods, indicating the kids and their cellphone cameras.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

If your boss needs to talk to me, he can call my office tomorrow, not before eleven, it's been a long night.

Elliot exits the cafeteria.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

But as soon as he rounds the corner-

Lee grabs Elliot by the arm. The teenagers come running with their camera-phones-

LEE  
Put those fucking things in pockets  
or I'll break arms.

The kids pocket the cameras and step back. More onlookers arrive. Lee whispers in Elliot's ear-

LEE (CONT'D)  
You can walk out quiet now, or I can  
start yelling that you touched some  
kid's dick in the bathroom.

Elliot offers his hands to be cuffed.

EXT. SCHOOL -- NIGHT

Thom parks his car at the corner. Three or four kids skateboard in front of the school. Thom approaches, slowly and quietly, and watches one KID wipe out. He retrieves the fallen kid's board, hands it back.

THOM  
Get out of here.

KID  
That's it?

THOM  
That's it.

INT. THOM'S POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

Thom returns, catches the tail end of a radio call requesting backup. He turns the siren on and accelerates.

INT. RICKY'S CAR -- NIGHT

Rodrigo, A.M.'s bodyguard, drives back from the hospital. His pregnant wife BETHANY tries to get the ipod to work.

RODRIGO  
Move your finger for the volume.

BETHANY  
Move it how?

RODRIGO  
In a circle or some shit.

Rodrigo cranks the volume up on a Manu Chao song. Police SIRENS. He turns it back down.

BETHANY  
It's in the song, dude.

Turns the music up again. Almost immediately, police lights appear in his rear view, but Rodrigo doesn't notice.

BETHANY (CONT'D)

Don't cuss, he can hear it already.

The ipod goes to the next song, but the SIRENS remain. Rodrigo spots the cop car behind him.

RODRIGO

Fuck, I was barely over.

Rodrigo yanks the ipod connection free, silencing the music. A HISS from the speakers. As he pulls the car over, he presses his cell phone into Bethany's hand.

INT. COP CAR -- NIGHT

Elliot sits in the back. Lee drives.

ELLIOT

I like your style. Very upfront, complete lack of regard for civil liberties, it's impressive.

LEE

We know who you're meeting with, dipshit. They went to your place.

ELLIOT

So did you, I knew it was the cops because you went to the wrong address first.

LEE

They're planning something for the march Sunday. I need to know what they're planning.

ELLIOT

I don't have any of that information.

Lee slams on the brakes, punches the bulletproof glass separating them.

LEE

These guys are cop killers!

ELLIOT

Look, man, I went right up to your boss, I volunteered my help, and I was rebuffed, so, no offense, but if he thinks I'm going to spout off everything I know to one of his bellicose flunkies who's never so much as mouth-breathed on a copy of the Bill of Rights, he's mistaken.

EXT. DOWNTOWN -- NIGHT

Thom's police car maneuvers down a tight one-way street, further narrowed by parked big rigs.

INT. THOM'S POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

He scans the street, searching for an address. Tries the radio, it isn't working, static. The computer's down, too. Thom rolls forward, peers down side streets until he sees-

A COP CAR

Parked in an alley.

Lights flashing, siren silent, doors open.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Rodrigo's been pulled over.

He stands behind his car with Paul (a cop recognizable from his stint as a prison guard). The OTHER COP returns from the cruiser with Rodrigo's license.

RODRIGO

I don't have a record, man, nothing.  
We're comin' from the hospital, homey,  
she's pregnant, eight months.

The other cop hands Paul the license, and whispers something. Paul removes the taser from his belt.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)

Whoa, what'd I do?

PAUL

Turn around, hands on the car.

RODRIGO

(as he complies)  
You have my i.d., man, you ran that  
shit, it's the car, it's registered  
to her brother, it was blocking my  
shit in so I took it, it ain't about  
me. I ain't got no warrants, no  
record. What'd I even do?

PAUL

Failure to signal, failure to maintain  
a lane, resisting arrest, attempted  
battery on an officer.

RODRIGO

What are you talking about? Sir, I  
didn't touch you.

PAUL  
 (suddenly yelling)  
 Stop resisting!

Rodrigo is bewildered, he's not doing anything. And then, the officer deploys his taser.

Two barbs PIERCE Rodrigo's side. 50,000 volts of electricity SIZZLE through the wires and enter his body. The SHRIEK he releases is awful, blood-curdling and immediate, without any masculine filter, a man shrieking like a wounded child.

Rodrigo HITS the ground, twitches violently. The car door opens as Bethany races to her boyfriend's aid-

BETHANY  
 What are you doing to him?

The other cop draws his taser. Points it at Bethany.

OTHER COP  
 Back in the car. Back in the car!

Rodrigo waves at Bethany, indicating she should return to the car, but his movement prompts a swift response from Paul, who tases him again.

RODRIGO  
 Ahhhhhh!

PAUL  
 Stop resisting! Stop resisting!

OTHER COP  
 Stop resisting!

RODRIGO  
 ...I can't move, man, why are doing this... I told you who I am...

The cop looks menacingly down at Rodrigo.

PAUL  
 That's-why-we're-doing-it!

EXT. WAREHOUSE PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Lee drives his cruiser to the back of the lot. The warehouse is closed, no cars anywhere.

Lee goes around to the rear door and opens it.

LEE  
 Turn around.

Elliot twists his back around. Lee removes the handcuffs.

LEE (CONT'D)

I don't want it to look like it wasn't  
a fair fight.

Lee takes out his baton.

LEE (CONT'D)

Get out of the car.

ELLIOT

This isn't Baghdad, man, it's  
California, I'm a journalist.

The cop drags Elliot out of the car, tosses him down into  
the street. His head hits with a THUD.

LEE

What are they planning? The rally,  
what are they planning?

ELLIOT

I don't know. My memory goes to  
shit whenever someone dribbles my  
skull on asphalt.

LEE

Guys like you, smart asses like you  
who want to shit on cops, tear it  
all down, you don't know what it  
takes to keep you safe. It's a  
different world, do you have any  
clue what'd happen to you without  
us? You'd get torn apart!

Suddenly, Lee SWINGS his baton and SMASHES it down on Elliot's  
leg. Elliot yells out in pain.

Lee raises the baton over his head to strike again, but his  
radio CHIRPS and he hesitates, listens.

It's a radioed call for backup. In the background of the  
call, Rodrigo's moans and Bethany's screams are audible.

EXT. DOWNTOWN -- NIGHT

Thom gets out of his police car.

Cautiously, his gun drawn, he enters the alley and approaches  
the parked police car.

Peers in the front and back -- no one.

Gets around the car and continues down the alley to an  
intersection with another street.

Thom hears scuffling, voices.

He rounds the corner cautiously, and sees that-

TWO COPS have someone on the ground, handcuffed. They're in a weed-thick vacant lot between apartment buildings.

COP ONE

Where the fuck you been, man? Guy was spraying bullets everywhere.

Thom holsters his gun.

THOM

I couldn't find you guys, they gave me the wrong street. Your radio down, too?

COP ONE

I don't know. Go check.

The other cop goes to check the radio.

COP ONE (CONT'D)

You gimme a hand?

Thom helps lift the arrested man from the street.

It's Percy. The kid with the neck tattoo who was being held at Northridge.

They lift Percy, but his arms SWING down to his sides.

The cuffs SLIDE off of his hands, DROP to the ground.

The cop RELEASES Percy's arm.

Thom maintains a hold on the other arm.

THOM

What's going on?

A WHOOP from a siren.

Thom glances over, sees the second cop in his car.

When Thom returns his attention to the first cop, he's turned his back, walks away from Thom-

THOM (CONT'D)

What is this?

The cop stops at a dumpster, pivots.

A gun in his hand.

Thom has no time to react.

The cop FIRES a bullet into Thom.

Thom FALLS.

Percy slips away, tries to flee, runs right into the hands of the second cop.

The first cop walks over to Thom, checks, he's still moving, breathing. While Thom struggles for a word, the cop returns to the dumpster.

And fires a second shot into Thom, killing him.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Rodrigo is curled up, gasping for air, saliva pouring from his mouth. Paul kneels down. Looks Rodrigo in the eye.

PAUL  
(a near whisper)  
Stop resisting.

Paul PRESSES the taser to Rodrigo's neck, prepared to deliver a charge directly into his body. Before he can-

Bethany DIGS her fingernails into Paul's neck-

Paul SHOVES her away. The other cop restrains her.

BETHANY  
You can't kill him! You can't just  
kill us!

PAUL  
Isn't that how it works? You kill  
one of us, we kill one of you.

BETHANY  
You're cops, not gangbangers!

A passing motorist slows. Paul points his taser at the unseen driver.

PAUL  
Police business!

The car drives on. Paul goes over to Bethany.

As the other cop holds her, Paul presses the taser against Bethany's throat. Slowly, he SLIDES it down her body, over her breasts, down to her pregnant belly.

Rodrigo flails one arm desperately, trying to trip up the cop to prevent this, but he can't reach-

BETHANY  
Please don't, please...

Paul's finger TIGHTENS on the trigger.



PAUL  
Fuck you. Both of you.

There's a BANG, and-

A BULLET

Explodes the cop's head.

Bethany screams.

As the other cop instinctually FIRES the weapon in his hand.  
But it's a taser, not a gun.

The darts ZIP through the air, it's too great a distance,  
and they fall harmlessly at the feet of...

A.M.

Wearing a loose-fitting policeman's uniform and cap, betraying  
no expression, his arm rigid, his aim flawless, he SHOOTS a  
bullet into the second cop's chest.

The second cop fumbles his gun away. But he's not dead.

He leans his back against his car, tries to push himself to  
a standing position, but he can't. Tries to stop the blood  
from cascading out of his wound. He can't.

A.M. picks up the cop's gun.

Gun in each hand, he leans against the police cruiser and  
SLIDES down into a sitting position a few feet away from the  
cop. A.M.'s eyes study the asphalt.

A.M.  
Is it painful?

The blood flows, turns the cop's uniform a darker blue.

A.M. (CONT'D)  
It's been a long time.

With a wave of his gun, A.M. indicates the dead Paul. The  
cop looks over and, when his head turns, A.M. fires a bullet  
at the street.

The bullet ricochets up, and PINGS harmlessly off of the  
side of the car.

A.M. (CONT'D)  
Do you remember me?

The cop tries to ease away, but can't go far, inches. A.M.  
adjusts his aim and fires a second bullet at the street. It  
takes a short hop and careens away.

OTHER COP

I'm not giving you shit. Whatever happened to you, fuck you.

A.M. lowers his eyes to the ground. Finds a new angle with his gun. Shoots. The bullet ricochets off of the asphalt, BOUNCES up-

And BURROWS into the cop's head.

His head jerks back, slower than expected.

He dies.

A.M. sets the guns down on the road.

EXT. VACANT LOT -- NIGHT

The two cops stand on either side of Thom's body. A moment of thoughtful silence, then-

COP ONE

So what happened?

COP TWO

Officer Long arrived on scene first.

COP ONE

We couldn't find the address, we were driving around. We heard shots.

COP TWO

Our windows'd be up. We saw the lights of his car first, no shots.

COP ONE

We saw lights, thought we saw movement, drove into the alley. Didn't hear anything. Got out here and saw the two bodies on the ground.

INT. POLICE CAR -- LATER

The back door opens. Percy looks up.

FIRST COP

We need you for one more thing.

INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

Lee drives, with Elliot in the back again.

They come upon Rodrigo's car from a distance.

The abandoned police car's lights sporadically illuminate the three bodies on the ground.

Lee pulls to the side of the road, and his headlights reveal the blue uniform on the first body.

Lee draws his gun, gets out of the car, leaves Elliot locked in the back.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Lee kneels down to look at the first body, Paul. He continues to the second, but a sound in the bushes startles him.

Lee trains his gun on the bushes. Nothing.

He continues to the third body and, as he does so-

The second body RISES up.

It's A.M.

He steps silently over to Lee, his gun aimed at the back of Lee's head.

FROM A DISTANCE

Elliot, watching in the back seat of Lee's car, tries to wriggle free from his handcuffs.

ELLIOT

Hey! Hey!

He KICKS at the window until-

Bethany hears. She's hiding in the bushes with Rodrigo.

LEE

Hears him, too.

He turns just in time-

A.M. can't shoot now, too close, so he backhand SMASHES the gun into Lee's face. Lee drops his gun, staggers backwards-

A.M. charges at Lee, collides, SLAMS Lee's body down on to the hood of Rodrigo's car-

Bethany lets Elliot out of the back of the police car. Still in cuffs, he LIMPS his way over to A.M.-

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hey, hey!

A.M. pummels Lee's face with the butt of his gun-

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't have to kill him, you don't get anything out of killing him!

A.M. discards Lee, dropping him to the ground. He TURNS to meet Elliot, the gun pointed at his head.

A.M.

I'm the one protecting the people!  
Protecting them from him!

Lee picks himself up. Elliot tries to buy the cop some time.

ELLIOT

This is to get revenge for what happened at Central? Because it's not going to make anything better, not in the jails, on the streets. Killing cops is only going to mean more cops.

A.M.

I'll buy more bullets.

A.M. catches Elliot stealing another look, and pivots at the same instant that he FIRES-

Where Lee used to be, but he's gone. The bullet pings off of a guard rail.

BETHANY

Hey!

Lee runs right by her, hops back into his police cruiser-

A.M. marches towards the car, spraying bullets-

Lee pulls the driver's side door shut, ducks down, slams the car in reverse and then forward-

The car barrels straight at A.M.

He holds his ground, SHOOTS bullets methodically-

INT. POLICE CAR -- NIGHT

A bullet shatters the windshield and ZINGS by Lee's head, clipping his ear, and he yanks down hard on the wheel-

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

The police car veers wildly around A.M., narrowly avoiding him, but A.M. barely flinches, pivots and shoots until he's out of bullets. Lee gets away.

A.M. goes over to Rodrigo. Elliot checks on the two cops - they're dead.

A.M.

We have to leave. Help me lift him.

ELLIOT

You murdered two men, you were going to kill a third.

A.M.

I shot two pigs.

ELLIOT

Two people, human beings, with families.

A.M.

The pigs were going to kill them.  
 (points to Rodrigo)  
 His family, his kid! A pregnant woman, they were going to kill her.

ELLIOT

How do you know that?

A.M. points his gun at Elliot. Elliot searches his eyes - there's nothing there, he's intimidatingly blank.

Elliot moves around to the other side of Rodrigo. They lift him up and labor to carry the big man back to his car.

A.M.

It's happened ten times in this city, this year. All the same. Pulled over, identified, and shot. One bullet in the back of the head.

They reach his car, hoist Rodrigo into the passenger seat.

INT. A.M.'S CAR -- NIGHT

A.M. follows Bethany, who drives for Rodrigo. A.M. removes his policeman's cap and sets it on the dash.

ELLIOT

If the cops killed ten people, give me some names.

A.M.

Hunter, Perez, Rodriguez, Braggs-

ELLIOT

No, these guys shot each other, these were drive-bys, shootouts, it's practically a race war on the streets.

A.M. nods to Rodrigo's car driving in front of them.

A.M.

Do you see us exchanging bullets?  
 There's been a truce since February.

(MORE)

A.M. (CONT'D)

Two of the twelve, one each, those are ours. The rest aren't.

ELLIOT

You're saying the rest were the cops?  
Did you see them shoot somebody?

A.M.

I saw the bodies. They left the first two to rot like dogs in the street. Hours and hours. They were sending a message. This is bigger than Central. You were right, it's a war, but you got the colors wrong, it's not brown against black. It's the people versus blue.

ELLIOT

You're declaring war on the police?

A.M.

No. They declared war on us.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

ON THE TELEVISIONS

Each offers the same violent series of images. A montage of real footage, captured on video cameras and cell phones, documenting actual cases of police brutality.

A cop applies a taser to a handcuffed, non-resisting female protester. She screams out in pain.

A cop repeatedly punches a handcuffed man in the face.

Cops brutalize a sixty-year-old man.

A dozen cops swarm a car, drag three young men out onto the street, beat them, punch them, kick them.

Frederick Williams, a church deacon, is restrained, surrounded by cops. He pleads for his life. Instead, he is tased until he ceases moving, ceases breathing, dies.

And, finally, on a crowded street in Puerto Rico, a cop wrestles with a man. The cop pulls his gun and fires several bullets. The man squirms in near-death agony. The cop fires a kill shot into the man's head.

A.M.

We were born into this conflict; our parents, grandparents, it was the same. Nothing has changed. They've been putting fear into us for too long.

(MORE)

A.M. (CONT'D)

It's time to put fear back into them,  
it's time they relearned a fear of the  
people.

ELLIOT

You're going to kill every cop in  
the city?

A.M.

If we have to, before they kill us.  
They're moving down the list.

ELLIOT

The list they have, the gangster  
corporate directory. You think  
they're going to kill everyone in  
this city with a gang tattoo?

A.M.

They don't have to kill all of us to  
achieve what they want. Kill the  
names at the top, cut off the head  
of the snake and send the rest a  
message: *It's not your city.*

ELLIOT

It's not hard to persuade me of a  
conspiracy, I know the department's  
crooked under Davies, I know things  
are bad. But I can't believe that  
they're organizing death squads like  
it's El Salvador in the 1980's.

INT. NORTHRIDGE STORAGE ROOM -- DAY

ON A TELEVISION

From the dashcam feed, Paul tases Rodrigo again and again.

DAVIES

Unacceptable.

Davies stands beside the tv.

He addresses twenty cops, the remaining members of the CAST  
unit. Lee sits in the corner, silent, fidgeting with the  
bandage covering the nasty wound on his ear. (Notably absent  
is Gary - he's not part of the unit.)

DAVIES (CONT'D)

There's no excuse for this. For  
extending the situation. We had him  
i.d.'d, there was no one else on the  
road. By now he should be dead.

On the tape, A.M. emerges from the night, his gun firing-

DAVIES (CONT'D)

If the suspect had been properly handled, none of this would have happened. But now it has. They've pushed us to the point where we can't continue to simply cut at the margins of the problem. We need to confront the threat directly.

Davies goes over to the SWAT uniforms. He lowers a bulletproof vest, and dons it.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

The media will expand coverage of the shootings, expose this new threat, the gangs united. People will be afraid.

Davies removes his gun. Hands it to Lee. Davies counts his steps silently as he strides to the other end of the room.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

We'll be able to hit them hard now, and in the open.

Davis stops, turns back to face Lee.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

Put a bullet in my heart.

LEE

What?

DAVIES

I want you to shoot me, shoot me in the heart. Shoot me in the heart!

Lee drops to one knee. Takes careful aim. And SHOTS.

The bullet SMASHES into the center of the vest, knocking Davies back half a step at best. Steadies himself.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

Preparation trumps everything.

(removes the vest)

Wars are won before they're fought. We have the weapons, the armor, the manpower, the training. And most importantly, we have the will of the people behind us.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Elliot dials Thom's number, waits.

THOM (O.S.)

This is Thom, leave a message.



ELLIOT

Hey.

He doesn't know where to start, what to say. All he can think to ask is-

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You okay?

INT. MORGUE -- NIGHT

A cop helps the mortician lay Thom's body down on a table.

His eyes remain open. Davies strolls over to the corpse. Looks down into Thom's empty gaze.

DAVIES

Unfortunate but necessary.

There's a RATTLING sound across the room.

Davies follows it and finds Thom's cell phone, vibrating in a metal scale. It chirps to announce a new message. Davies checks the last call received -- Elliot.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Elliot dozes on a couch as the first light of the morning brightens his room.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Elliot steps down into the yard. Bethany sits on a bench with an unlit cigarette.

BETHANY

I wanna have a smoke so bad but no way, I've been real good about not doing it so no way. You want it?

He shakes his head, no. She breaks it in half, discards it.

ELLIOT

Is your boyfriend all right?

BETHANY

We have to watch him 'cause sometimes they have heart attacks from it, big people, their hearts can't handle the shock.

ELLIOT

Why were you were pulled over?

BETHANY

He was speeding, like five miles over, that's it.

ELLIOT

Did he try to run, he fought?

BETHANY

No, he didn't do anything and they was gonna kill him, kill me. It's all on the camera, the one on the police car like they always show on COPS but he didn't do anything so they're never gonna show it on the news or whatever, they're gonna lose it like they lost the one from the jail. White people never believe shit happens to us unless somebody videotapes it.

ELLIOT

What tape from the prison?

BETHANY

The one you were supposed to find.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Elliot enters, looks around, doesn't see anyone.

INT. SAFE HOUSE BASEMENT -- DAY

Elliot descends the steps. He's almost to the bottom, when he notices a shotgun pointed at him. It's Jason.

ELLIOT

I was looking for A.M.

JASON

He has a job for you.

EXT. LOADING DOCK -- DAY

Ricky hands an envelope of cash to an older Chinese man, who shakes Ricky's hand and returns to the warehouse. Ricky and Elliot load large cardboard boxes into the car.

ELLIOT

Do you know what's on the tape from Central?

RICKY

It's too late for that shit, we moved on from the fact-finding phase. Besides, you seen all that stuff A.M. played you, all those tapes of dudes getting fucked up by the cops. None of those changed shit.

ELLIOT

Does it show A.M. getting beaten?  
If there's a tape of inmates being  
beaten, if Davies knew about it, it  
would ruin him, put him in jail.

RICKY

It ain't a beating, man. They killed  
three dudes, that's what's on the  
tape.

ELLIOT

Mario Soils, Jeremy Morris, Ed Villa.

RICKY

I don't know the names.

ELLIOT

Where'd it come from?

RICKY

This doctor at the jail-

ELLIOT

Weems.

They pick up the last box.

RICKY

What I heard is he stole it a long  
time ago so he could bribe Davies  
someday, and he hid it someplace.  
But when shit started happening, one  
of the dudes the cops killed is  
friends with Doc's kid, they stay in  
the same place, same hood. Doc gets  
scared, sends his kid to New Mexico  
or some shit and tells one of his  
kid's friends about the tape, Marvin,  
the dude you saw get busted. Tells  
Marvin where to get it. Marvin goes  
to get it and he gets popped, Doc  
set him up.

ELLIOT

No, Doc's dead. So Marvin knows  
where the tape is?

Ricky opens a box, roots around inside. The boxes hold dozens  
of knock-off cop uniforms. Ricky puts a policeman's cap on.

RICKY

Yeah, let's go knock on the door and  
ask for Marvin.

INT. GAS STATION BATHROOM -- DAY

Elliot waits by the door. Ricky emerges from a stall fully disguised as a cop. He straightens his cap in the mirror.

RICKY

Shit, this looks good on me.

ELLIOT

It's a quick stop, ten minutes.

RICKY

I told you, man, no stops, there's too much shit we gotta get done.

ELLIOT

For the rally tomorrow, right?

RICKY

If A.M. ain't told you shit, I ain't going to either.

INT. CAR -- DAY

ELLIOT

The cops told me.

RICKY

You talking to the cops?

An SUV cuts in front of them. Ricky honks.

ELLIOT

They talked to me, a prelude to beating me up. They know you're going to be there, they're itching to bash heads.

RICKY

Sounds cool to me.

ELLIOT

You're going to get people hurt -- women, children. Look at what happened to your sister. This isn't the right way to do things.

RICKY

Man, fuck the right way, you don't know how bad it is. You don't know what it's like when they're on you, holding you down, pushing on your neck like they could do anything. They got all the power, their friends standing around watching. They could say whatever happened. Do whatever.

The SUV drifts across the line, weaves back in ahead of Ricky, forcing him to hit the brakes.

RICKY (CONT'D)  
Motherfucker.

Ricky's worked up, over-angry, he honks and yells. The SUV driver flips him off.

And Ricky snaps into action. Rolls down the window, digs an attachable siren out from under the seat, affixes it to the top of the car. Dons his policeman's cap.

RICKY (CONT'D)  
Time to show you what it means to be  
a cop.

As Ricky flashes the siren and the SUV slows, Elliot notices the pro-Davies bumper sticker, and gets a better look at the driver. It's the meathead who punched him earlier.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Ricky looks over the guy's license and registration.

RICKY  
Out of the car, please.

The GUY gets out, follows Ricky behind the vehicle. He doesn't recognize Elliot.

GUY  
Who's that?

RICKY  
He's a plainclothes detective, sir,  
he spotted the violation.

ELLIOT  
You're over the maximum height.

GUY  
Maximum... What're you talking about?

Ricky steps up to the SUV, eyeballs it.

RICKY  
Four inches over. Can't let you  
drive off like that.

GUY  
Uh... I don't know what this is but  
let me do something here.

He removes his wallet. Ricky grabs it and draws his gun.

GUY (CONT'D)

Holy shit!

Elliot steps in to halt him, but-

It's too late-

Ricky pulls the trigger-

But his aim is lower-

BANG!

He shoots out one tire. And moves around the car, methodically pumping a bullet into each tire.

With a rapidly deflating hiss, the SUV slouches down. About four inches.

RICKY

Now you're in compliance.

INT. CAR -- DAY

Ricky and Elliot return to their car. Immediately, Ricky busts up laughing. He glances over at Elliot, catches a small, satisfied grin.

RICKY

Okay, man. What's your stop?

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Elliot and Ricky are parked down the street, monitoring Elliot's apartment building. There's a cop car out front and an officer - Gary - standing guard at Elliot's door.

A nearby phone rings.

INT. MAGGY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Maggy has answered.

MAGGY

Do you a favor? Are you drunk or something? I hope not because it's, what, like, noon?

INT. CAR -- DAY

Elliot's using Ricky's phone.

ELLIOT

It's work-related. You can consider it the first day of your internship.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Sportscenter on mute. Gary's dozed off on the couch. A knock, and he jolts awake, goes to the door.

MAGGY

Hi.

GARY

Who are you?

MAGGY

Who are you, why are you here?

GARY

You answer that.

MAGGY

Answer why you're here?

GARY

Why you are.

MAGGY

We made a time, I was supposed to pick up my clothes. I left him because he fucked the slut next door.

(steps in)

Geez, it's a mess. What'd he do?

GARY

Hurry up, get your stuff. And I want to see what you leave with.

EXT. GAS STATION -- DAY

Behind a gas station down the street, Maggy hands Elliot a couple of his suits.

MAGGY

I had to leave with something, I said you got rid of my stuff so I was going to sell your suits on E-Bay. Turn around, I hid it.

She fishes a scrap of paper out of her bra, and hands it to him. It's a the piece of paper he recovered after Marvin was arrested. There's a combination -- 38-51-12.

MAGGY (CONT'D)

What's it unlock?

ELLIOT

Thank you for your help. If anybody asks about me, not a word.

MAGGY

Right, I'll claim neighbor to neighbor confidentiality. You said you'd tell me what was going on, you completely lied. There's that cop a block away, I could scream.

ELLIOT

You trust me more than you trust them.

MAGGY

I do, how sad. But it's about the cops, right, your story, about the three cops who got shot last night?

ELLIOT

Wait. Three cops?

MAGGY

Yeah.

ELLIOT

Do you remember the names?

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Elliot returns. Before Ricky can get into the driver's seat, Elliot GRABS him by the shirt.

RICKY

Yo, chill, man-

He PINS Ricky against the car.

ELLIOT

Where were you last night?

RICKY

What're you talking about, what the fuck, man?

Ricky glances up, sees Gary in the doorway of Elliot's apartment, he hasn't spotted them yet...

ELLIOT

The other cop, Long, did you guys kill the other cop? Was that you?

RICKY

I wasn't even there, you're the one who was there, man.

Ricky looks again - Gary descends the staircase.



ELLIOT

There was another, this was somewhere else, downtown. Who was there?

RICKY

I ain't heard shit about us and another cop, I swear, man. It wasn't me, I ain't never shot a gun before today. Now can we can split before that pig shoots us?

Elliot releases Ricky. Gets in the passenger side.

INT. CAR -- DAY

As Ricky merges onto the freeway, Elliot notices the newspaper building. A couple of police cars idle out front.

INT. BACK HOUSE -- NIGHT

ON ONE TELEVISION

A news broadcast. Photos appear side-by-side, one of Thom and one of his "killer," Percy.

Ricky, alone, watches with the sound off. Another image of Thom, at his graduation, standing next to Elliot. Then, a stock photo of Elliot by himself. Ricky unmutes the tv-

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

-that the reporter may have information about the shootings, not just of his cousin, officer Thomas Long, but the murders of three other police officers in the last week. Though not a suspect, he is being sought by police as a "person of interest" and-

INT. SAFE HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Ricky pushes the door open to look in on his sister. Bethany is fast asleep, one arm draped over the snoring Rodrigo. Ricky watches her belly rise and fall with each breath.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Elliot stands, alone, in the dark of the field, with a bottle of wine. He takes another healthy drink, eyeing the silhouettes of people moving about in the greenhouse.

A flashlight's beam. It's Ricky.

Elliot holds up the wine.

ELLIOT

Easy, it's not an escape attempt.

Ricky steps over, accepts the bottle, takes a drink.

RICKY

I didn't know he was blood, man. I didn't know that cop was your cousin.

ELLIOT

He didn't have anything to do with this.

Elliot takes the wine bottle back.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

He was one of the good ones. What a cop's supposed to be.

RICKY

They showed on tv the guy who did it, he wasn't with us, I'd never seen the dude.

ELLIOT

It wasn't that kid. The cops were holding him at Northridge, I saw him there, they framed him.

RICKY

So the cops killed your cousin.

ELLIOT

I want to get the motherfuckers. But I don't think a shootout through civilians is the way to do it.

RICKY

I don't want a war either, man, but what the fuck are we supposed to do? They've been killing us for months, nobody gives a shit, nobody knows.

ELLIOT

What about the tape from Central?

Elliot's eyes return to the silhouettes at the greenhouse.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I know you think it won't matter, that no one'll care about another tape, I don't know if they will. Things are so fucked up, maybe I'm irrelevant, my way of thinking, I don't know. A relic. I chase after things without thinking of the consequences, dumb instinct, it's all I can think to do. But I still think there's value in chasing down the truth and showing it to people.

RICKY  
So how do we do it?

ELLIOT  
Admittedly I'm drunk. But I have a  
pretty great idea.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The next morning.

Gary drinks coffee, sports on the tv. Footsteps. Gary sets his coffee down. Lowers his hand to his pistol. He listens, waits. There's a knock at the door.

He approaches. Leaning back against the wall, he opens the door sharply and points his gun at -

No one.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Gary steps out, looks both ways. Over to the stairwell. Looks up, down. No one.

Hears something, turns, and sees that a window to Elliot's apartment has been forced open.

Gary charges back into the apartment, where-

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Ricky RIFLES through papers on Elliot's desk.

Gary steps in, takes the safety off of his gun.

Ricky looks up.

Caught, he raises his arms in surrender.

INT. GARY'S POLICE CRUISER -- DAY

Ricky's handcuffed, in the back. Gary stops at a light. Takes a swig of his coffee.

RICKY  
Damn, man, I fucked up, huh? Made  
it all easy for you?  
(no response)  
So anyways, these things are tight.  
You wanna get them off me, man?

GARY  
I don't think I'll be doing that,  
dumbass.

RICKY

That's cool.

Ricky watches Gary take another big drink of coffee.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I'll wait.

INT. ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT -- DAY

Harsh early morning sunlight, a single waitress. Elliot's friend Darwin, carrying an unopened bottle of Tahitian rum, leads Donald through the restaurant and out to-

EXT. ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT -- DAY

A cramped outdoor cooking area. Elliot sits, hiding under sunglasses and a hoodie. Darwin leaves them alone.

DONALD

All this is necessary?

ELLIOT

You tell me, you carried the story, am I still a "person of interest"?

DONALD

It means they want to talk to you.

ELLIOT

Are you serious? They want to frame me, they're killing people.

DONALD

You're in too deep on this. Davies is trying to bail you out. Help them with what you know.

ELLIOT

This isn't them bailing me out.

DONALD

Why don't you tell me what this is?

ELLIOT

No matter what I find, you'd never print anything. Davies has been in your ear from the beginning.

DONALD

You're naive to think it would even be my decision. You need to call your lawyer, that's who you need to be talking to.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

ON A LOW WINDOW

A view into the crowded basement.

A mixed group of gangbangers, thirty or so, retrieve their cop outfits from the cardboard boxes. They change into the blue uniforms. Load their guns. Prepare.

INT. ELLIOT'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Elliot finds his door open. Enters to see-

Gary.

Sitting on the couch, watching the soaps, eating a plate of pasta. He doesn't reach for his gun. In fact, he doesn't have one.

Finally, Gary looks up. His movements are slow and deliberate, his limbs heavy, his pupils dilated.

GARY

Hey, Elliot.

(quite sincerely)

I'm sorry about your cousin, my condolences. Goddamn gangbangers.

Ricky returns. He tosses a piece of garlic bread onto Gary's plate and sits next to him.

GARY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Gary takes a big bite of bread. Like everything is normal.

ELLIOT

So this is Devil's breath.

RICKY

Most fucked up drug on the planet,  
I put it in his coffee, twenty minutes  
later he took my handcuffs off.

Ricky snatches Gary's fork and slurps spaghetti off of his plate, splattering Gary's uniform. Gary looks slightly annoyed, keeps munching bread.

ELLIOT

Don't abuse your power.

RICKY

(mouth full)

Well this part worked, man.

ELLIOT

Yeah, now for the easy part.

INT. BACK HOUSE -- DAY

Rap plays, the televisions are on: news, movies, Black Panthers footage, a civil uprising in Central America, Tiananmen's Square, people fighting back against the police.

The last few gangsters file in, now fully disguised as cops. There's no standard issue firearm; each "gangster cop" has his own piece. The mood is somber, the moments before battle.

A.M.

There are many neighborhoods in this city, this state, this country, where the people are afraid of the police. Where they are more scared of the police than they are of the gangsters. The police don't exist to protect and serve the people any longer. They protect the rich and serve the corporations. They are enemies of the people. We pay the police, we pay them to exist. And they repay us by using the batons, tasers, and bullets we bought against us. They kill us in the streets like wild dogs. They lock us in cages. One in one hundred locked up. In the jails and the streets, we've given them enough bodies. We've allowed them to treat us like dogs too long. Our day has come. Let them throw us scraps, let them reach down to pat us on the head. Because today we will rise up. We will snap our mighty jaws and we will bite their throats out whole!

INT. CAR -- DAY

Elliot and Ricky sit up front. Gary sits in the back, staring out the window, docile as a neutered dog.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

They drive past the Northridge police station, turn up a parallel road.

EXT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- DAY

The three men monitor the station from their hiding place behind a large dumpster.

RICKY

They got all the gear out here but once they roll out, there'll be nobody. We've been watching this place, watching everything.

The doors open.

Emerging, in a double file line, is the face of modern law enforcement.

It's faceless. Two dozen anonymous officers, faces concealed behind helmets and visors, no visible badges, clad in black with bulletproof vests and riot shields. Prepared for war.

Elliot looks over, sees that Ricky is tracking one of the officers with his gun. Elliot lowers it.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I'm not crazy, man.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK -- DAY

A large, grassy park several blocks wide has been designated for the event. Rally organizers prepare a podium on a makeshift stage as people begin to arrive in large numbers.

Among them is Maggy, there with a couple of friends. She adjusts the settings on her video camera, hears the police buses pull up on a street above the park, and she FILMS:

The CAST troops storm out of the buses like an occupying military force.

FROM THE STREET ABOVE

As the CAST cops prepare, Davies and Lee (the only two CAST cops in blue uniforms) survey the growing crowd below.

DAVIES

No media in the park, no cameras, not public, not friendlies. It's important that we control the narrative on this. They were the aggressors, they moved first. And whoever we get, whichever bodies we have at the end, those are the shooters we've been looking for.

INT. NORTHRIDGE POLICE STATION -- DAY

SANDRA, a beat cop, looks up as a ragtag crew enters. Ricky is handcuffed. Elliot and Gary flank him.

SANDRA

You've got the wrong station, G.

Gary doesn't respond, a look of drug-induced bewilderment fixed on his face. Elliot steps forward.

ELLIOT

No, this is right, we're here to pick one up for a transfer and then we're taking both to Central.

SANDRA

Who're you?

ELLIOT

The lawyer.

Elliot looks back to Gary for help. There's none coming, not without some prompting-

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Tell her.

GARY

Tell her what?

ELLIOT

That Davies sent you and he wants this done right away.

GARY

Davies sent me.

SANDRA

I don't know anything about this.

Ricky mutters something only Gary can hear.

Suddenly snapping into action, Gary takes Ricky by the arm and drags him up to the desk.

GARY

I gotta get this scumbag and the nigger to Central before the rally's over or Davies'll tear my nuts off.

Sandra buys it. She unlocks the door for them-

SANDRA

(to Gary)

Sounds like we're missing out, it's gonna be a headcrasher downtown.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK -- DAY

A few hundred in the crowd now, it's a mix -- young, old, mothers, fathers, kids, black, brown, white. CAST officers take up positions on the perimeter of the park.

MAGGY



Continues to film the cops from a distance, zooming in on Davies and Lee, until-

OFFICER (O.S.)

No cameras.

An OFFICER lowers Maggy's camera. She squints at the glare off his helmet, can't see his face at all.

MAGGY

It's a public place, it's legal for me to film. What's your badge number?

OFFICER

Walk the camera the fuck out of this park before I break it in two.

ELSEWHERE

Lee leads Davies to a point that offers a good view of-

ONE STREET OVER

Here, standing at attention, at the top of a grassy hill that leads down into the opposite end of the park, are two of the gangster cops in blue.

LEE

What do we do?

Before Davies can reply, the two cops are joined by ten, twenty, thirty more.

They form a ragged but intimidating phalanx, watching over the park, watching over the cops.

Davies' gaze moves from the gangster cops, to his own men, to the park below.

DAVIES

Push them into the crowd.

INT. NORTHRIDGE HOLDING AREA -- DAY

Marvin looks up from behind his cell bars as Elliot and the others enter.

MARVIN

Shit, man, you're everywhere.

ELLIOT

Yeah, we're really running in the same circles these days.

Elliot gets close to the bars, whispers-

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Listen -- I'm your lawyer.

MARVIN

What fucking law school did you go to, man?

ELLIOT

Pretend I'm your lawyer.

Sandra is last into the room. She goes over to the cell door with her keys.

MARVIN

So what's the deal? You and these cops're busting me out?

Sandra doesn't know what to make of this comment. Gary's demeanor shifts. Like he's peering through a fog-

GARY

(turns to Ricky)

No, this one's supposed to go in.

RICKY

We ain't doin' it like that today.

GARY

You're not supposed to tell me what to do. I'm supposed to tell you.

ELLIOT

I'm the lawyer, I tell everybody what to do. This one's coming out and then we're taking both of them to Central.

This sounds half-right to Gary. But-

GARY

You're a reporter.

ELLIOT

No, you're confused. I'm a lawyer.

Sandra pauses, just before she unlocks Marvin's cell. Turns to Gary, a hand lowering to her gun.

SANDRA

Explain to me what this is again.

EXT. HILL -- DAY

A chartered bus arrives, delivering more protesters. They make their way through A.M. and the other gangster cops, moving down the hill and towards the park. A lot of curious looks. And then, suddenly-

A commotion-

A handful of CAST officers have left the park to advance on A.M. and his men-

A.M. draws his gun-

Other gangster cops do the same-

The cops duck behind their riot shields-

And they LAUNCH tear gas canisters, the explosions muffled by the cheering in the park below.

The canisters ARC through the air and land, EXPLODING at the feet of the gangster cops and late-arriving protesters.

Flashes of light, noxious smoke fills the area-

And the line starts to break apart-

A.M.

Hold your ground!

But there's a sense of panic in the area, with the protesters terrified, unsure of what they're caught up in-

A few tentative shots are exchanged, but no one can see well enough to aim through the haze-

And then-

The CAST cops, their ears protected, deploy the sonic crowd control device, the sound weapon.

There's a loud crackle and then the device emits an EAR-PIERCING tone-

It provokes immediate screams of pain, people drop to their knees-

A.M. clutches his head, the sound overwhelms him, and he runs to escape it-

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK -- DAY

Maggy hears something from above. She still has her camera. Hiding behind her friends, she points it up-

THROUGH MAGGY'S LENS

A.M. charges down the hill.

His troops follow.

From this vantage point, there's no sign of the CAST cops, the tear gas is just a vague haze, there's no sense of what precipitated this-

So it looks like the gangster cops, guns drawn, are storming the park.

OTHERS

In the crowd take notice.

The panic spreads rapidly-

INT. NORTHRIDGE HOLDING AREA -- DAY

Marvin remains in his cell. Sandra is growing doubtful...

ELLIOT

Nothing's confused. Everything's fine, right? Tell her it's fine.

Gary hesitates, clearly confused.

Elliot notices Sandra unholster her gun. There's no time to talk his way out of it, so-

Elliot LUNGES forward and PINS her arms to her body-

Ricky tries to snatch the gun, but he's cuffed. After a brief struggle, Elliot gets the gun away from Sandra.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Unlock it and get in the cell.

Sandra complies. Marvin pushes past her and gets out. Gary has his arms raised in surrender.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Put your arms down. Get in the cell.

MARVIN

Nah, man, you gotta shoot her, shoot them.

ELLIOT

We're not shooting them.

MARVIN

You don't know what they done in here, what they're doin' to us! They're killing us!

ELLIOT

I know. But we're not shooting them.

Gary joins Sandra in the cell. Elliot pulls the door closed, locking them in.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK -- DAY

The gangster cops maneuver through the crowd, being pursued closely by CAST cops, who pin-ball protesters out of the way with their riot shields.

Two CAST cops corner Jason. He immediately drops his gun.

FIRST COP

Drop the gun! Drop it!

The cops shoot. Jason's lifeless body lands on the gun he'd already dropped. A WOMAN who witnessed this screams out.

WOMAN

What are you doing?

The cop smashes his shield into her, knocks her to the ground.

And then, his head JERKS backwards.

He falls, a bullet in his neck.

A.M. appears.

He is relentless, unleashing a storm of bullets that BOUNCE off of the second cop's shield and drive him backwards, until he's stumbling, his shield dipping up and down-

Now A.M. waits for a good, clean shot but-

The cop gets one first.

Bang.

A.M. looks down, see that his right leg has been exploded open. Blood everywhere. He screams a controlled, clipped scream. Fires back. He's out of bullets.

The cop takes aim for a second shot, but the older woman grabs his arm. He can't shake her off, and A.M. manages to limp away, back into the park, moving against the tide, he gets quickly lost in the crush of people fleeing-

INT. CAR -- DAY

Marvin is just into the passenger seat-

ELLIOT

Where's the tape?

MARVIN

Shit, man, I'm still tryin' to figure out who the fuck you are and what the fuck this is, you're a lawyer or you work for the newspaper?

RICKY

He's good, man. He's helping us.

ELLIOT

If this tape is real, it'll put a lot of people in jail. A lot of cops in jail.

MARVIN

I'll tell you where Mr. Weems says he put it, but I don't remember the combo, I tried to keep it in my head but the numbers got all fucked up.

Elliot digs the scrap of paper with the combination out of his pocket. He hands it to Marvin.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK -- DAY

Near the stage, A.M. finds the overturned microphone. With his right hand pressed against the massive wound in his leg, A.M. yanks the mic loose with his left.

A.M.

We are here to protect you! We are here for the people!

His eyes scan the park. A red-gray smoky haze hangs over everything. Several bodies, most of them gangster cops. On the other end of the park, A.M. watches CAST cops gun down two more of his comrades. It's a slaughter.

A.M. drops the microphone.

INT. ROLLER RINK -- DAY

Largely empty. A few kids skate listlessly.

OVER AT A BANK OF LOCKERS

With Elliot and Ricky waiting behind him, Marvin twists the combination lock. Ricky's phone rings.

The locker POPS open.

Inside, wrapped in a sheet of newspaper, is a dvd.

Marvin hands it to Ricky.

MARVIN

I'm out. I ain't gonna be in this no more, I wanna disappear. We're cool about everything, right?

RICKY

Yeah.

EXT. ROLLER RINK -- DAY

As they return to the car, Ricky shows Elliot a video clip someone sent to his cellphone -- shaky images from the park.

RICKY  
It's bad. I have to go.

ELLIOT  
How is that going to help?

Ricky says nothing, gets back into the car.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK -- DAY

Distant gunshots echo from nearby streets, but the park has largely emptied out.

DAVIES

Wears a gas mask as he stalks his way through the hazy, bombed-out battlefield. Looks over a couple of wounded civilians impassively, moves on towards the stage.

Until he spots movement underneath a park bench. Davies strides quickly over to the bench, his gun aimed at-

A.M.

He's in bad shape, tries to reload his gun, but he keeps dropping the bullets.

A.M.'s trembling hand closes around a bullet.

He LIFTS it.

DAVIES  
Drop the weapon.

And, immediately, Davies SHOOTS.

Once, twice.

Blood everywhere.

A.M., bent backwards, gurgling.

Davies steps in.

And fires a fully gratuitous kill shot into A.M.'s head.

INT. SAFE HOUSE GARAGE -- DAY

Ricky hurriedly changes into his policeman's blue.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Now clad in his uniform, Ricky hops into the back of a jeep with Rodrigo, a couple of gangsters without uniforms, and the red-haired woman Elliot noticed earlier.

Elliot watches the jeep motor off, headed into the city.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARK EXIT -- DAY

People continue to flee the park, among them Maggy. She CONCEALS her camera under her jacket, scrambles awkwardly over a short fence and escapes into the parking lot, just as-

Rodrigo's jeep SQUEALS to a stop.

Ricky gets out, dons his policeman's cap, looks around, sees the chaos, hears shots-

And bullets sprinkle Rodrigo's back-

Ricky reaches down to help the red-haired woman out of the jeep, but she's already running away-

Ricky tries to get around to the driver's side but the bullets come fast and furious, and he takes off in the other direction, his cap in one hand and revolver in the other, his head ducked down low, racing away from the park, towards a street of apartment buildings-

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Ricky tries a couple of car doors, no luck. He turns down an alley, sprints for the other end, when he hears-

OLIVIA

Perdone, pardon, I need help, please.

OLIVIA is twelve or so, looks scared. One of her sweater sleeves is torn.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

My uncle's drunk and he's going crazy,  
he's beating up my mom.

RICKY

I'm, uh, I'm off duty.

OLIVIA

He's gonna kill her.

A police car's SIREN sounds. It's close. He needs to hide.

RICKY

Where's your house?



INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The girl's uncle, ROBERTO, spits out some blood, takes a drink of beer. Olivia leads Ricky in.

ROBERTO  
Oh, what the fuck is this.

Roberto rises up, wobbles. The girl runs to the bedroom.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)  
She locked herself in there.

The bedroom door opens. Olivia steps inside, and Roberto starts for the door, but-

Ricky blocks his path. Olivia's mother lets her daughter in and closes the door again. Roberto looks Ricky over.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)  
You're a cop, man? You don't even tuck your fucking shirt, huh? She's a dumb bitch, my sister, stupid about money and I said what the rules is...

Roberto looks past Ricky, an eye trained on the bedroom door. The knob turns. Roberto pushes past Ricky-

Olivia emerges carrying an infant girl, trying to get her to safety. She sees Roberto coming and ducks back into the bedroom, but she can't get the door closed fast enough-

Roberto throws his weight at the door-

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

The door starts to open, with the baby's head in Olivia's arms, right in harm's way-

Ricky FORCES his policeman's baton into the gap between the door and the wall, jams it, blocks the hinges, and-

The door CRACKS violently and HALTS suddenly, stopping a couple inches away from smashing into Olivia and the child.

IN THE HALLWAY

Roberto picks himself up from the floor. He sets his eyes on his already bruised sister and steps forward, but-

RICKY  
Hey.

Ricky lowers his hand to his holstered gun.

That's all it takes.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY -- DAY

Outside the door, Roberto hands his keys to Ricky.

RICKY  
This one's for the car?

Roberto nods. Ricky pockets it, slides the remaining keys under the door. He hears the deadbolt turn.

INT. ROBERTO'S CAR -- DAY

Ricky lets Roberto out at a freeway exit.

ROBERTO  
When do I get my car back?

RICKY  
I'll notify you.

Ricky drives on. Catches sight of himself in the rear view mirror. Removes his policeman's cap.

INT. SAFE HOUSE -- DAY

Elliot plays the dvd on the large screen. The tv begins with nothing, blackness, then a hum and static, and-

Images cut in and out of the static with significant time jumps. The audio is muddy, the picture quality poor.

The video camera is in the hands of a prison guard. He's filming a prisoner, on his back, as he's led down a hall by two other guards, Coover and Lee.

The officers stop at the Medical Unit-

The camera CUTS OUT, and back-

As the prisoner has been strapped to a gurney, held motionless by thick black straps. Catch a quick glimpse of the prisoner's bruised face. It's A.M.

CUT OUT, resume as-

A NEEDLE punctures A.M.'s skin, injecting him with morphine. The needle is in the hands of Dr. Weems.

A group of men observe the procedure. The two guards, a man in a suit, and Davies.

CUT OUT, and back as-

A.M. is unconscious. Dr. Weems removes a medical instrument from a drawer. It looks like an icepick.

Weems goes over to A.M. He makes a small adjustment, tilting A.M.'s head back.

Weems instructs Coover to help. Following the doctor's lead-  
Coover lifts A.M.'s eyelid.

Holds it open.

Weems SLIDES the icepick into A.M.'s tear duct.

He TAPS the pick with a small hammer lightly.

Once, twice, three times, until there's a crack.

Two more taps yield a fuller CRACK.

The orbital bone breaks.

Weems sets the hammer aside.

He moves around to a position behind A.M.'s head. Takes the ice pick and PUSHES it forward.

A couple of inches, into A.M.'s brain.

Weems JOSTLES the icepick back and forth.

A.M. stirs slightly. Weems steadies A.M.'s head with one hand, while he jabs with the other, severing the connections to the frontal lobe, SCRAPING away brain matter-

And-

ELLIOT

Can't watch any more. He pauses it.

Sees someone reflected in the tv, standing behind him.

It's the girl with the short red hair.

She looks distraught, horrified, tears in her eyes. Clearly she was watching, too.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

What were they doing? What were they doing to him?

Elliot is visibly shaken by what he saw-

ELLIOT

They didn't beat them, they lobotomized them.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

What's that mean?

He's distracted by a lingering sense that she's familiar-

ELLIOT

They cut out part of the brain, they did them in mental hospitals fifty years ago, it was supposed to make patients less violent, pacify them, mostly it killed them.

(scrutinizes her face)

How do I know you?

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

Why would they do that? Why did they do that?

She turns from Elliot, looks out the open door.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN (CONT'D)

Why would you do that?

She's asking someone else. And it dawns on Elliot - both who's outside, and who she is.

ELLIOT

You dyed your hair. You're Mandy Lynx, Mandy Lynx from the Motel Six. But you're not his mistress, you're his mole.

Davies enters. He sees the image frozen on the tv.

DAVIES

She was both actually.

Davies fires a bullet into Mandy's chest. She hits the ground. He puts another bullet into her head.

A window SHATTERS downstairs.

Davies turns the gun on Elliot.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

Sit down.

Elliot sits. Footsteps on the stairs as Lee, still wearing his policeman's blues, ascends from the basement.

LEE

There's nobody down there.

He sees Mandy's body.

LEE (CONT'D)

Nobody anywhere.

DAVIES

Check the grounds again.

Lee exits. Davies hits play on the dvd, and it continues, jumping ahead to preparations for another procedure.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

It wasn't solely a deterrent, to show the others what we were capable of. They are mentally ill, they're sick. I thought I could help make them functional.

ELLIOT

You stuck icepicks into their eyes!

DAVIES

It's science, an accepted technique, tens of thousands were performed in this country.

ELLIOT

Fifty years ago, the Dark Ages.

On the tv, the procedure goes awry. When his skull is cracked, the inmate jolts awake.

DAVIES

It was an attempt to solve a problem. The violence is born into them, I thought we could scrape some of it out.

The inmate fights the straps pinning him down, the guards step in to restrain him, Weems readies another injection.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

The failure justifies our new method.

The inmate ceases moving.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

It's a disease, it spreads, spreads to our kids. Their culture of violence. It's my duty to arrest its progress.

ELLIOT

You're talking about people, about killing human beings.

DAVIES

It's not the same, they're not the same as us, don't you see that? They kill each other over street corners they don't even own, all they know how to do is kill each other. All we're doing is accelerating the natural order.

Someone enters -- Davies glances up briefly, sees the familiar shade of blue, and there's a habitual easing of the nerves.

DAVIES (CONT'D)

Anything?

No response. Davies looks again.

It's not Lee.

It's Ricky.

He holds a gun, unsteadily, his arms wobbling.

Davies lifts his gun, and-

Ricky FIRES once.

The bullet CLIPS Davies in the shoulder.

He staggers back. Doesn't fall. Regains his balance.

And SHOOTS a bullet into Elliot.

Ricky immediately shoots back at Davies but he misses, misses again-

Davies takes cover behind the couch-

Ricky ducks behind the doorway.

He looks over at Elliot, who's fallen to the floor.

A stunned look on Elliot's face, blood seeps from a wound in his stomach.

Bang. Bang. Bang.

Three bullets ZIP by Ricky's head and embed in the wall.

Ricky doesn't even have time to aim, he fires in the direction of where the shots came from and-

Davies takes another bullet in the opposite shoulder. This time, he groans loudly, drops his gun, falls to his knees.

Ricky rushes over, sticks his foot out, and-

KICKS Davies down to the ground.

PRESSES the trembling gun against the back of Davies' head.

Looks back at Elliot.

He can't see his face, but Elliot is still moving-

RICKY  
What do I do?

And then, frantic footsteps, someone CHARGES in-

DAVIES  
Stay out!

But it's too late, Lee doesn't hear the warning.

Ricky SHOOTS.

The first bullet hits Lee in the gut, the second in the chest.

Lee falls, dead.

Ricky freaks out.

RICKY  
Fuck, man, fuck! What do I do?

Ricky sees Davies try to get up, and he kicks him back down.

RIPS the handcuffs off of Davies belt, WRENCHES the sheriff's arms behind his back, SNAPS the handcuffs on.

DAVIES  
You're arresting me?

Ricky scoops up Davies' gun, a gun in each hand now.

In the distance, faint: SIRENS.

Ricky steps away from Davies, goes over to Elliot, kneels down to see his face-

RICKY  
What do I do?

But Elliot's eyes are blank.

He's gone.

The sirens draw closer.

Ricky retreats to the doorway.

Davies, handcuffed and bleeding, rolls himself over on to his back. He tilts his neck, looks back, scans the carnage. An upside-down view of Elliot's body.

DAVIES  
Don't worry.

When Davies' eyes reach the doorway, it's empty.

Ricky fled.

