

FIRST SNOW

by

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FADE IN:

A TIGHT SHOT: JIMMY MUNSON's face in the shadows. A peculiar stillness to him. Eyes blank, lifeless. Tinny SOUNDS of an Oldies radio station waft from somewhere.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

A car idles at a crossroads. The chugging of the exhaust pipe mingles with the fizzy tune.

BACK TO: Jimmy's expressionless face. As we begin suspecting he's dead, a cigarette arrives at his lips. He drags deeply, savoring the smoke. Soon--

Approaching headlights begin filling out the darkness, and we keep PULLING BACK slowly, revealing we've been watching Jimmy through the open driver's window. And we see--

His white collar shirt is soaked with blood.

The WHOOSH of the approaching car crescendos, its headlights burning the screen white. We hold, then--

FADE IN FROM WHITE:

EXT. TOWN OF EPANOLA - DAY (SIX WEEKS EARLIER)

Jimmy's Camry, a few years past its prime, rattles off the highway into a service station--dragging some of its guts in tow. The ATTENDANT, a sunbaked Latino, raises an eyebrow.

SERVICE STATION - MINUTES LATER

Jimmy paces, one trembling hand shielding the sun, the other grasping a cell-phone--his lifeblood companion. He's in his late 30s, and most of it appears to have been smooth, easy road. But right now he's pissed...

JIMMY

--right out in front of me, you shoulda' seen this moron. Un-fucking-believable. Two seconds to

decide if I'm in the ditch, or up
this clown's asshole.

(shakes his head)

Sixty thousand miles the past two
years, without so much as a flat.
Then this cocksucker--

Jimmy notices the mechanic gesturing him over.

JIMMY

Listen, I gotta check on my wheels.
Should be an hour or two, most.
Need you to drop in on Morelane for
me--keep the coals glowing.

He balances a huge Filofax on his knee--spilling over with the
clutter of his busy existence. Flips a few pages, reads.

JIMMY

Five-thirty. Says he might re-do
the whole mall in Nob Hill, 'round
Christmas time. (beat) Jesus, Ed,
you owe me -- I wouldn't be out
here in...in "Low Rider" Central,
'cept to cover your ass. (beat)
Yeah, love you too. I'll let you
blow me when I get back.

Jimmy pockets the phone and approaches the mechanic.

JIMMY

So, how's the patient?

ATTENDANT

Ripped up the undercarriage pretty
good. Going to be a while. This
evenin', maybe...

JIMMY

Evening? Can't you just--?

ATTENDANT

Need parts -- new set of bushings.
Got a man coming down from Santa Fe.

Jimmy regards the sparse town behind him -- looking past vendors
in the adjacent lot, selling their wares from the backs of
pickups. No fucking way he's hanging around here.

He sizes the mechanic up, squints at the name on his overalls.

JIMMY

Listen -- Enrique. I've been on
the road since seven. I'm a sales-
man. Got a wife at home, a week to

the stork, and--well, she gets nervous when I'm held up...

The Attendant's sympathetic smile evaporates as he spies Jimmy's hand, sans wedding band. Jimmy quickly stuffs the hand in his pocket, but the moment is lost.

ATTENDANT

Like I said -- this evening at best.

JIMMY

(a sigh erupts)

Any...interesting diversions?

ATTENDANT

Some cliffs about a mile walk.
Pretty sunsets.

Jimmy does a 360, surveys his scant options and we CUT TO:

INT. TAVERN - LATER

Jimmy clicks off his cellphone, rocks restlessly on a barstool. A plate arrives in front of him -- the steak and egg "cardiac" special -- along with a flirty wink from the WAITRESS.

Jimmy admires the shape of her Levis, then turns to the BARTENDER, who delivers a fresh scotch as if on cue. Jimmy's recharged, with the confidence of a few drinks. Sleeves rolled up, revealing his gold watch -- no Rolex, but on his way.

JIMMY

Pete, wasn't it? Listen to this...
Got a contact down in Hallandale,
who's giving me a sweet deal on a
fleet of retired jukeboxes. Wurlitzers,
the vintage 1015s. Classic American.
Had them all refurbished, and
get this--they've all got the original
45s in them. No shit.

(sips his scotch)

Drop one of those in the corner,
and you'd have the classiest joint
in a hundred miles.

BARTENDER

Already got a jukebox.

JIMMY

True, but we're talking a Wurlitzer
here. A '1015'. Most popular juke-
box model of all time. People can't
help but stuff them full of cash.

(leans a bit closer)
I'm looking around here, and I see
a guy who's simple, unpretentious--
but who gives a shit about his
place. Brass polished. Bathrooms
clean. Liquor arranged just so.
A guy with his own sense of style.

This Bartender's heard it all, holds his granite stare. Jimmy
quick-draws a business card and slides it across the bartop.

JIMMY
Don't decide now. Think about it.
Right in that corner. A glowing
tribute to Presley...Otis Redding...
Buddy Holly. (winks) Guaranteed
money magnet.

The Bartender looks at the card, confused.

BARTENDER
Says here you sell flooring.

JIMMY
Right now, yeah. But in a few
months, I'm breaking out on my own.
It's all mapped out.
(raises his glass)
To bigger and better...

Jimmy finishes the drink, goes to work on his food. His
attention is drawn to the vendors outside in the twilight -- in
particular, a fortune teller by his battered 50s-style RV camper.

JIMMY
Not trying to snow you, Pete. Just
sniffin' for a win-win situation.

POV, CLOSER -- the FORTUNE TELLER, a shadowy figure sitting in a
lawn chair, face obscured by a newspaper.

JIMMY (V.O.)
--now there's a guy with the 'sales-
man' in his blood. Sizes up a total
stranger...tailors the message just
right. Whatever they want to hear,
need to hear. If he's any good,
that is.

Jimmy shrugs, picks up his cellphone -- but the battery alarm
protests. His gaze returns to the fortune teller, then he laughs
to himself, a thought striking.

JIMMY
Christ, what the hell--call it

"research".
 (settles his tab)
 Think it over, what we talked about.

Jimmy heads for the door, still finishing his drink. As he reaches the exit --

BARTENDER
 Leave the glass.

Jimmy grins, places it on the jukebox, gesturing again to that 'perfect corner'. As the door slams, the Barman moves to flip Jimmy's card in the trash -- then stops. He glances over to his pathetic juke, squints ever so slightly, as if imagining...

EXT. TAVERN - DUSK

Jimmy shuffles through the near-empty lot, past peddlers selling hand crafted wallets, chili ristras, sunflowers. He hums a little Otis Redding, still cheery from the liquor.

He reaches a crude hand-painted sign proclaiming "VACARO -- TELLER OF FORTUNES". VACARO folds his paper, rises from the lawnchair -- a man of indeterminate age and ethnicity.

JIMMY
 Let me guess...you've been expecting me, right?

Vacaro allows a polite smile as he folds the chair. He speaks softly, each word measured.

VACARO
 Just closing up shop. Slow day.

JIMMY
 No kiddin'. You mean it gets busy?


VACARO
 You'd be surprised.

Vacaro nods politely and moves for the RV door.

JIMMY
 So -- how much for a reading?

VACARO
 (a moment, assessing)
 Ten dollars.

JIMMY
 Bit steep, isn't it?



VACARO

I charge what you can afford.

Jimmy grins, he likes this guy's style. Checks his watch.

JIMMY

All right, why not?

Vacaro opens the camper door for Jimmy, who steps up, fishing out the money. He suddenly stops.

JIMMY

This doesn't involve killing any poultry, does it?

VACARO

Not unless you'd like it to...

INT. CAMPER - MINUTES LATER

Notable only for its lack of distinction -- no beads, candles, mystical bric-a-brac. An ordinary traveler's setup.

Jimmy's face registers disappointment. Vacaro motions him to sit, then takes a seat opposite him at a small table. A ceramic Jackalope, with exaggerated eyes, stares up at Jimmy.

JIMMY

What, no crystal ball?

VACARO

It's in the shop.

(reaching out)

The energy is stronger if I touch your hand -- but not required.

JIMMY

(offers Vacaro his left)

Yeah, whatever. Do your thing.

Vacaro places his leathery hand over Jimmy's, grasps it gently.

JIMMY

So...how does this work? I ask specific questions, or--

VACARO

What would you like to know, Mr.--?

JIMMY

Munson. Jimmy Munson. I don't know.

(shrugs) I'll leave it up to you.

Dazzle me, the whole show.

(a sudden thought)

Hey, what about my car? Think it'll make it home?

Vacaro nods, then closes his eyes, concentrates, as if listening to far away voices. Jimmy can barely keep a straight face.

VACARO
(sober, serious)
It will.

JIMMY
Woah! -- just from touching my hand?
Amazing. What else you picking up?

VACARO
Roads, purple mountains...a woman's waiting for you there. (beat) She makes you feel twenty again.

JIMMY
Yeah? What's she wearing?

VACARO
(ignoring the quip)
A noisy mind, cluttered with fears...
Strong ambition -- it has brought you trouble in the past.

Jimmy's grin wanes a notch -- that one may have touched a nerve. Vacaro's eyes open, sensing discomfort.

JIMMY
(switching gears)
How 'bout them Lobos? Think I should take the spread?

VACARO
I wouldn't bet against them.

JIMMY
(shaking his head)
You kiddin' me? With Olney on crutches? Forget it. That kid's their secret weapon.

VACARO
Olney will recover.

JIMMY
From a blown knee? Sorry, chief, he's out for the count. Doc said he tore the tendon.

VACARO
(permits a smile)

Wouldn't bet against them...

Jimmy shrugs and laughs. His free hand instinctively massages the edge of his hairline.

VACARO

Don't worry, Mr. Munson--no baldness in your clan.

Now Jimmy is hooked -- this guy is a trip. He leans in, as if proffering a challenge.

JIMMY

All right, let's look down the road a bit. Got a business venture sort of...hanging in limbo. Tell me, how's that looking?

VACARO

Mmm...the future. That will require a deeper descent.

A silence, then Vacaro clears his throat, stares apologetically down at his hands. Jimmy grins in understanding -- fishes out a fiver and holds it up. Vacaro nods his approval, takes the bill.

He closes his eyes once more, his face rippling through a range of emotions. After a silence --

VACARO

Mmm...your venture is secure. You will benefit from a windfall, a large sum of money. Coming to you by way of Texas...

JIMMY

(snorting)

Texas! Don't know anyone in Texas, but I'll take it. Nothing but sunny skies ahead, eh? (beat) Hey, ask Elvis if--

Jimmy reacts as Vacaro's grip suddenly tightens.

JIMMY

Hey, chief. That's a bit--

His eyes widen as Vacaro begins convulsing violently in his chair, his white-knuckle grip now painful.

Finally Vacaro snaps back, releasing Jimmy's hand as if he's just been scalded. The ceramic figurine wobbles on the table, then falls to the floor and shatters.

JIMMY

Jesus, what the...? (beat) You
all right, old man?

Vacaro is on his feet, a step back from the table, rubbing his hands together -- expression grave. Jimmy is a bit spooked.

VACARO

I...my concentration was broken.

JIMMY

(breathes relief)

Christ, thought you were having a
goddamn coronary. (beat) You sure
you're all right?

Vacaro nods weakly, remains frozen. Jimmy kneels, begins gathering up the statue fragments. He picks up a ceramic eye, winks back at it.

JIMMY

S'okay. I'll let you catch your
breath a minute.

VACARO

I'm afraid the session is over.

JIMMY

(stops cleaning)

Huh? You kidding me? That was
fifteen bucks worth?

VACARO

I'm sorry. I do not control the
vision. I am its servant.

JIMMY

(irritated)

No offense, but I've had better
fortune cookies...

He finishes with the glass, then smiles as a thought hits him.

JIMMY

That's good. You're good.

He makes a gesture -- a hook in his mouth, the snared fish.

JIMMY

(standing)

All part of the show, ain't it?
Let me guess -- another twenty, and
maybe just maybe you can summon the
ol' vision back. Another ten spot,
and I find out...my hamster is in

grave danger. Something like that,
right?

Vacaro's heavy expression doesn't waver. Color gone from his face.

JIMMY

Not bad. Almost had me. Just...

(fingers pinched)

this far over the line. I like the routine, knocking over the statue, whole bit. But the freak-out, it's a bit over the top, don't you think?

(checks his watch)

Tell you what -- I still got time to kill. And I'm intrigued. We could learn from each other. Why don't we...rewind a bit, give it another crack?

VACARO

The session is over, Mr. Munson.

JIMMY

What, you sore 'cause I saw through some parlor tricks? (laughs) I'm sort of an expert in the area. So, c'mon, at least give me my money's worth.

Vacaro feebly fishes in his pocket, holds Jimmy's money out. Jimmy, flustered, takes it and moves for the RV door.

JIMMY

Got a strange way of doing business, partner.

VACARO

Go now. Please.

EXT. RV - NIGHT

Jimmy descends as the door closes behind him, latches. He laughs to himself, unfolds Vacaro's lawn chair and plops down. He fumbles through his jacket for cigarettes.

JIMMY

(lighting up)

Diamond in the rough, chief, but you gotta work on your presentation. Half the game right there. Get yourself some beads, pack of Tarots, some decent lighting. And keep a feel-good spin on things. Could have the suckers lined up.

Jimmy shrugs as the RV lights go out. He tosses his smoke, as he spots the mechanic backing his car out from the garage.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - NIGHT

In the soft dash glow, Jimmy drums his fingers on the wheel, keeping time with the radio. Feeling good.

POV - on the side of the road, a scraggly HITCHIKER sticks out his thumb hopefully.

JIMMY

Dream on, partner...

EXT. JIMMY'S CAR - SAME TIME

LOW ANGLE - THE ROAD, lunging at us from the darkness beyond the headlights. The steady HUM of tires on asphalt. Suddenly we--

SHOCK CUT TO:

A GLASS SHATTERING in a sink. Loud, startling. A NEW ANGLE reveals--

INT. JIMMY'S KITCHEN/ALBUQUERQUE - MORNING

DEIRDRE swears, trying not to cut herself on the shards. She's Jimmy's girlfriend, 27, fit and down-home pretty.

She's late for work, and the world's not cooperating. Now the PHONE RINGS...and RINGS...but she's too busy to deal with it.

THE BEDROOM

The RINGING PHONE cuts through Jimmy's deep slumber. He lifts the receiver, groggily.

JIMMY

-yeah?

No-one there, just a peculiar, DISTANT STATIC -- like far-off, crashing waves. He hangs up, swings his feet out of bed. Lets his organs settle, can feel the hangover churning.

THE KITCHEN

Deirdre rushes to the foyer mirror to affix earrings, when Jimmy shuffles in wearing boxers. She's distant, snappy.

DEIRDRE

Someone's casing the joint.

Jimmy fingers a newspaper clipping taped to the fridge.

POV - THE CLIPPING, a real-estate photo of an adobe home on a sprawl of open land. "TAOS, 10 ACRES--HANDYMAN SPECIAL!"

JIMMY

Nah, 's probably one of those auto-dialers. Lowest form of organic life -- the tele-marketer. Anyway, I called the phone company.

(suddenly noticing)

Jeez, you look good.

DEIRDRE

You should have seen me at *bedtime*.

JIMMY

Deej, I was stranded out there.

DEIRDRE

(wrestling her shoes)

Sounded dangerously like a bar, not a garage.

JIMMY

I was waiting in a bar.

DEIRDRE

Hey, I'm not launching an investigation, Jimmy. (smartass) I got *Jane Eyre* for a lover, anyway...

JIMMY

I can't believe you're giving me shit. I could've been a highway statistic yesterday...

DEIRDRE

(cutting him some slack)

You drive too fast. Always on that stupid phone--

JIMMY

(nuzzling her)

Damn, you look good.

DEIRDRE

No! I gotta go, Jimmy. I'm showing a four-bedroom...

JIMMY

(hands venturing)

All I said was, you look good.

DEIRDRE
 (straining against)
 Yeah, then you -- (squeals!) I'm
 going, now!

JIMMY
 I was thinking...that split second
 before I almost became road-meat--

DEIRDRE
 Fuck you, don't even joke about--

JIMMY
 (stroking her)
 How'd I'd miss the smell of your
 hair...(tracing) the soft curve of
 your neck...how I might check out
 without touching my angel one
 last time...

DEIRDRE
 (makes a face)
 All that in a split second?

JIMMY
 Uh huh.

His hands slide along her hips, dragging her skirt with them.

DEIRDRE
 (to the wall)
 Amazing -- this guy still thinks
 he's getting laid...

INT. BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Jimmy hangs on for dear life as Deirdre rides him frantically.
 And as things go DEFCON4, the PHONE RINGS...

They're doing their damndest to block it out, but it's
 winning...and finally the machine kicks in. The greeting ends,
 followed by a Man's voice.

MAN (O.S.)
 Jimmy? -- Robert. You up yet...?

Jimmy shifts an eye towards the machine.

DEIRDRE
 Don't you dare--don't you--

JIMMY
 I'm here, baby--I'm with ya--

MAN (O.S.)

--know we promised you a day, but you gotta swing in here. The Lopez situation's comin' to a boil. "Upstairs" wants it dealt with today...

Deirdre grinds to a halt, as Jimmy's resolve softens.

DEIRDRE

Goddammitt, Jimmy!

JIMMY

No, what?!! I'm with ya here--

DEIRDRE

Clearly you're not.

She pulls off him, slips out of frame.

MAN (O.S.)

-got to be a finesse kinda thing, as little blood as possible. And, well, since the kid's sorta under your wing...

Jimmy grabs the phone. Both VOICES are now heard over the answering machine speaker.

JIMMY

--that fucker wants me to pull the plug on Lopez?

MAN (O.S.)

(taken aback)

Hey, Jimbo, you're there. Listen... we all like Andy, good kid, but he's finished -- that's just the reality here. He fucked up and, 'tween you and me, Roy thinks he's a cholo.

JIMMY

--Roy's so high on cuttin' throats, he can do it himself...

MAN (O.S.)

C'mon, be smart here. Besides, Roy's still sitting with that proposal you brought him. The jukebox thing? Seemed pretty sweet on the idea.

JIMMY

(surprised)

He told me he passed on that.

MAN (O.S.)

No, no--he's still playing with the numbers. And I'll tell ya, taking care of Lopez ain't gonna hurt matters...

Jimmy is pensive for a few moments, then distracted by Deirdre slamming the front door on her way out.

JIMMY

Give me an hour.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

ANDY LOPEZ is a late-twenties hot-head who moves like a mongoose. He's a sharp dresser, hair set perfectly with pomade. He's standing beside Jimmy at a roadside hot dog stand.

ANDY

You kiddin' me? -- Roy has nightmares about handin' me a Gringo account...

(laughs at a thought)

Thinks I'll pull up in my cholo-mobile...chrome wheels...3-D Virgin Mary air freshener--some serious *barrio shit* crankin!

Andy cracks himself up. Jimmy is edgy, uncomfortable.

JIMMY

Listen, Roy may be a hard on -- but he's one tenth the asshole of some guys you're gonna meet out there. This is a tricky game. No-one tells you when the rules change.

The hot dogs arrive. Jimmy pays for them and they stroll along.

JIMMY

You've got a hell of a future, Andy. Always been one of my sharpest guys. But you're a big dreamer, a lot like myself -- and sometimes you're gonna look for those short-cuts.

Andy stops short of biting into his hot dog.

JIMMY

This company is just...one eddy in a big ol' river. I'm getting out myself, next couple of months...

And now something trips in Andy's mind.

ANDY

Jimbo...what are we doing here?

Jimmy is still, looking at Andy from behind his shades.

ANDY

Waitaminute--wait--! Are you--?

JIMMY

(a heavy sigh)

The audit, Andy. Roy flipped about your expense sheets.

Andy raises a finger, takes a moment to gather his thoughts.

ANDY

Listen, I can...I had some personal shit, okay? And I was gonna make up for it next month--

(suddenly angry)

Shit, Jimmy, you practically taught me how to pad my sheets--

JIMMY

You got nailed, kid.

(shakes his head)

Not my rules.

Jimmy looks down at his untouched hot dog. The incredulity rips through Andy, fury welling up in him.

JIMMY

Look, if you need--

Lopez flings his food at Jimmy, wreaking havoc on his shirt.

JIMMY

Hey! For fuck's--

ANDY

Goddamn snake!

JIMMY

Listen, I'm the only one--

ANDY

Just save your bullshit, 'maricone.

He stomps off, then turns and walks backwards to say--

ANDY

Couldn't even take off the shades, could you, big man?

He grins coldly. Jimmy watches him go -- feeling like a rat, but holding his stony demeanor.

INT. JIMMY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy stands before a mirror, breathing heavily, still sweat-soaked from a run. He can't help but pull his bangs back, eyeing the hairline. A hint of recession he's concerned about.

The PHONE RINGS.

DEIRDRE (O.S.)

They can't leave you alone on a Saturday?

Deirdre answers in the background; moments later, she walks over and hands Jimmy the phone.

DEIRDRE

Dr. Bates' office...

Jimmy takes the phone, puzzled.

JIMMY

Yeah?

Jimmy listens as Deirdre nuzzles up to him.

DEIRDRE

Mmm...ybu smell good...

He nudges her away.

JIMMY

Uh huh. (beat) Today? I...I guess so. It can't wait?

Jimmy grips the phone, ashen-faced. Voice becoming low and strained. Deirdre is suddenly concerned.

JIMMY

...mhm...sure, okay. I'll come on in.

He hangs up, runs a hand through his hair.

DEIRDRE

Jimmy? (beat) Everything okay?

JIMMY

Ah, yeah--it's just about my check-up last week. Had him do an EKG, you know, 'cause of my old man. (beat) Said he saw something on

there. A "spike" or something.
Wants to have a closer look.

DEIRDRE
Do you think it's--?

JIMMY
Nah -- wants another look, that's
all. Said the machine was free.

DEIRDRE
I'll come with you.

JIMMY
No, no--stay here. Won't take long.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - DAY

Jimmy's driving aggressively, tapping his hands nervously on the steering wheel. He reaches for his Marlboros on the dash, shakes one out and lights it. He drags deeply -- then suddenly regards the cigarette and tosses it out the window. Crushes the pack.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Jimmy is sandwiched between two senior citizens, looking out of place in the drab waiting room. He's twisting a coffee stirrer in his hand, knotting and re-knotting it. He folds his legs, unfolds them--exhales, glances at his watch.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE/EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a monitor, the magnetic resonance image of a pumping heart--squeezing life with a grating, mechanical wheeze.


ANGLE ON Jimmy, lying on one side, a sonogram gun against his chest. Eyes wide at the shrill sounds, imagining the worst.

DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Jimmy is sitting upright, putting his shirt on. DOCTOR BATES analyzes data from the echo-cardio machine.

JIMMY
Didn't sound so hot.

BATES
Oh, you mean the noise? That's just
the machine.



Bates tears off a long strip of paper from the device, sits.

BATES

Well, what we're looking at here is a simple mitro-valve prolapse.

JIMMY

(tightening)
-hell is that?

BATES

A bit of a lazy valve.
(demonstrates with a fist)
Heart squeezes blood out, the valve doesn't close all the way, and some of it backflows. (beat) Usually a benign condition.

JIMMY

Lazy valve?
(relief spreading)
So, so I'm basically all right then?
You--didn't see anything else?

BATES

No, looks good. We'll schedule you an echo for next year, start keeping an eye on that valve. But otherwise...

JIMMY

(exhales)
So...there's nothing I gotta change?

BATES

Well, the cigarettes could go, but that I'd tell anyone--

INT. THE FIREHOUSE PUB - NIGHT

Jimmy salvages an unbroken Marlboro from the pack he crushed earlier, and as we PULL BACK, he lights up. He walks to the bar, grinning, stepping to a jukebox tune.

He reaches the bar, slaps down a bill, and his usual arrives.

JIMMY

Any news on the pool?

The Bartender (SAMMY) gives a sly smile, pulls a huge roll of twenties from his shirt pocket.

JIMMY

Sonofabitch. Guess this round's on you.

He takes his drink, turns to see ED JACOMO and a few guys at a nearby table -- work buddies. Jimmy grabs a seat.

ED

(a nod towards Sammy)

What kind of freak bets against a sure thing?

Jimmy's attention goes to the TV set up on the wall.

POV -- the basketball game. A shot of ROYCE OLNEY, the Lobos' "secret weapon", sinking a beauty from 3-point range.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

...Olney's stupendous comeback from injuries most thought would sideline him for the season. Unbelievable, baby!

We HOLD on Jimmy for a few beats, dumbfounded as he watches the screen. A balled-up napkin from the bar snaps him out of it. He turns to Sammy.

BARTENDER

Shouldn't bet against the home team.
's bad luck.

THE BAR - LATER

Music. Laughter. Chatter. Jimmy is the usual life of the party, keeping everyone's glass full. A local girl cackles at his joke, leans against him a bit too friendly. Jimmy doesn't mind.

Eyes shift to the door as ROY HARRIS enters the bar, scans the room. Formerly 'one of the guys' who's clearly stepped up in the world. The revelry downshifts a notch as he reaches the table.

ROY

-fellas...

(nods to the TV)

Catch them Lobos? Un-fuckin'-believable.

Ad-libbed responses, as Roy puts a hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

ROY

Hey, Jimbo, come by the bar when you get a sec'.

Roy nods to the guys, heads for his usual spot. Jimmy raises an eyebrow to the "oohs" and "aahs" of the others.

NEW ANGLE - LATER

Jimmy and Roy in serious conversation.

ROY

-really appreciate you handling Lopez. Lotta guys turn whining pussy, you throw 'em a challenge.
(drinks hard)
That's why you're my number one...

Roy suddenly clinks Jimmy's glass, expression brightening.

ROY

Well! Here's to success...

JIMMY

(a bit confused)
Yeah...success.

ROY

Had an interestin' time down in Dallas, that goddamn convention. I'm at some little dive, having a few -- and there's this juke in the corner, full of scratchy old records. Like them...Wuz...Wizzlers you been talkin' about--

JIMMY

Wurlitzers--

ROY

(laughs)
Right, right. Anyway, all night I'm watching people--lining up to stuff this thing full of money. Speakers shot, records skippin', half the fucking tunes I never heard of. And then it hits me-- it's the goddamn "intangibles", just like Jimmy Munson said.

JIMMY

Yeah, you know, nostalgia can be--

ROY

(shoving in)
I think we should give your idea a whirl. Maybe scaled back a bit, test the waters. But who knows, we could be sittin' on a winner here.

JIMMY

You mean--? Oh, Jeez, that's fantastic. No, no, I've done the numbers, this thing is real sound.

I can't believe--
 (suddenly struck)
 Wait, you said you were in Dallas?

A FLASH in Jimmy's memory -- the fortune teller's ceramic Jackalope shatters in slow motion.

ROY
 Dallas, Texas. The self-same.

Over Roy's shoulder, Jimmy sees Olney on the TV, sinking another sweet one for 'three'. His eyes linger on the screen--like he's trying to compute some impossible equation.

ROY
 Come by Monday before you hit the pavement. We'll start working out the details. Jimmy? Jimmy!

Jimmy comes out of it, a little hazy, returns his eyes to Roy.

ROY
 (bit miffed)
 Shit, thought I'd have to peel you off the ceiling when I told you.

JIMMY
 No, no...I mean, great. Shit--
 fantastic! Let's get it rolling...

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - NIGHT

Jimmy reaches for his jacket, fishes through the pockets for something. He pulls out keys...loose change...and finally--

POV -- The ceramic eye from Vacaro's camper.

He stares into the eye in silence, weighing it in his hand.

EXT. CORPORATE PARK - DAY

Jimmy exits carrying his sample case. He opens his car, tosses the case in back and removes his stiff jacket.

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Jimmy sits motionless behind the wheel, preoccupied. Then he reaches, pops open the glove box and pulls out an area map. Spreads it out, scanning it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jimmy's car exits a desolate stretch, following a sign reading "ESPANOLA - 10".

JIMMY (O.S.)

Fuck!

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

Jimmy's Filofax slides from the passenger seat as he brakes, spilling its contents into the floorwell.

EXT. TAVERN - DAY

His car stops outside the same tavern from earlier. Jimmy gets out, does a 360 sweep and spots what he's looking for -- Vacaro's RV, in a different place than last time.

Jimmy approaches the camper, stops before the side door. As he's about to knock, the door swings open.

POV -- Out steps a corpulent Hispanic woman, dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief, Vacaro lending a supportive hand as she descends the steps.

The woman blesses herself, bids Vacaro farewell in Spanish, then shuffles towards her car. Vacaro spots Jimmy -- quickly steps down and crosses to the front of the RV. Jimmy follows him.

JIMMY

Hey, remember me? Didn't figure you'd see me again...

Vacaro pops the rusty hood of the camper, begins fiddling inside.

JIMMY

Ah, come on. You still annoyed?

VACARO

No. Just busy.

JIMMY

Engine troubles? Goin' somewhere?

VACARO

'like to do some fishing, up Abiquiu Lake. Good this time of year.

JIMMY

I hear you.

Jimmy fidgets uncomfortably, then comes out with it.

JIMMY

Listen -- 'bout last time.

VACARO

What about it?

JIMMY

(nervous laugh)

Well, I gotta tell you...when I first came over here...I really didn't buy it. I mean, I'm not a believer.

VACARO

Gave you your money back.

JIMMY

I know, but...

(gathering himself)

Certain things have happened. Coincidences. Stuff you couldn't have known, unless...

VACARO

Unless what, sir?

JIMMY

Well, unless...you were for real.

Vacaro pauses -- unnerved by this conversation. Then he returns to his tinkering.

VACARO

I'm a performer, Mr. Munson. A salesman. You said it yourself. I tell people what they want to hear--like a fortune cookie.

JIMMY

A performer doesn't stop half-way through the act. Salesman doesn't give refunds.

Jimmy exhales heavily, as Vacaro faces him.

JIMMY

The Lobos game...this, this money my boss promises me out of the blue. You knew it was coming from Dallas, for Chrissakes. What are the chances?

VACARO

A few lucky guesses -- my gift to

you. (beat) If I recall, you'd had quite a lot to drink that night.

Vacaro slams the hood shut and rounds the RV. Jimmy tails, not ready to let it go.

JIMMY

That seizure. It was like...you were pulling your hand off a hot stove. Like you saw something.

VACARO

(getting impatient)
Parlor tricks. Part of the show. I only regret you saw through them.
(pastes on a smile)
Even if I could see things -- you seem to be a man who twists destiny to fit him. What would it matter?

JIMMY

(nerves rising)
So wait, wait, now you're sayin'--?

VACARO

Go live your life, Mr. Munson. Forget all this. It serves no purpose.

JIMMY

I had a bit of a scare a few days ago. My health. Is that it?
(beat) Listen, I'm sure you got some code of ethics here, but I can handle--

Vacaro searches Jimmy's eyes, as if sizing him up. Then--

VACARO

I saw nothing. Good day.

He turns away, reaches for some tools in the camper's cargo hold.

JIMMY

All right, then -- let's do it.

He shoves past Vacaro, opens the RV door and enters. Vacaro tosses down his toolkit, exasperated, and follows Jimmy inside.

INT. RV - CONTINUOUS

Vacaro closes the door, finds Jimmy seated -- a knot of bills splayed on the table, next to a new ceramic Jackalope.

JIMMY

I want another reading.

VACARO

I am not open for business.

JIMMY

I'll pay double.

Vacaro regards Jimmy sadly, shakes his head.

VACARO

Don't do this. Go live your life.

JIMMY

(irritation growing)

I'm offering you money. You're a businessman! Take it!!

VACARO

You had your reading.

JIMMY

Am...am I missing something here?
What is the angle, old man?

And now anger erupts. Jimmy leaps up in frustration, almost knocking the table over. Vacaro steps back as Jimmy approaches.

JIMMY

(cornering Vacaro)

You have no right...to toy with people like this. Now I want a goddamn reading!

And now Jimmy is right up against him, and can see--

POV - CLOSE on Vacaro, his eyes filled with terror.

Jimmy shrinks away, as the cold realization begins to set in. Vacaro breathes heavily, kneads his hands together. The fear in his eyes turning to compassion. And in a low croak--

VACARO

I saw no more roads. No more tomorrows.

(a grave pause)

Not much time left. I'm sorry.

Jimmy stands frozen, breathless, letting it sink in. Then he begins pacing, shaking his head.

JIMMY

Is that right?...that right...
(then laughing nervously)

So, so how does it happen? When?
I may as well know.

VACARO

(shaking his head)

The vision comes in impressions...
images...not the specifics you de-
sire. (then) You are protected
until the first snow -- that much
is certain.

JIMMY

Well, shit -- hell with buyin' new
skis, I guess.

He laughs again, this time with a manic edge.

JIMMY

What a trip! Planning my future
with some crazy geezer, lives out
of the back of a tin can.

(heading for the door)

Let me ask you -- what carnival
freak show did they fire you from?

(grabs his money)

Fucking nutjob.

Jimmy stumbles out. Vacaro sadly watches him go.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jimmy puts the pedal to the floor, the speedometer climbs.

POV -- the deafening WHOOSH of passing cars in the opposite lane,
no more than a foot from Jimmy's fender.

POV, MOVING -- on the grass divider, a parked motorist lays a
memorial cross and flowers, to mark a highway death.

Jimmy drags hard on his cigarette, head reeling, then eases up on
the pedal.

EXT. SANTA FE PLAZA - NIGHT

Jimmy and Deirdre stroll through the bustling marketplace, arm in
arm. She nuzzles him, playful, full of bounce. But Jimmy looks
uneasy amidst the throngs of carefree weekenders.

DIERDRE

--so can we just go up and take a
look? I mean, the house needs work,
but it's on ten acres! In Taos!

He hesitates, Deirdre is miffed.

DEIRDRE

Relax, Jimmy, I'm not picking out china patterns...

Down a side street, Jimmy spots a neon sign over a tiny storefront, "PSYCHIC ADVISOR - FORTUNES". He's struck by a thought, fishes for some money and holds it out to Deirdre.

JIMMY

Why don't you get us some ice cream?

DEIRDRE

Come with me...

JIMMY

Nah, I want to smoke. I'll be right here, go ahead.

Deirdre makes a face, grabs the money and heads off. Jimmy waits till she rounds the corner, then heads for the shop.

INT. SHOP - SAME TIME

Jimmy enters the dimly lit parlor, complete with beads, burning incense, mystical trinkets everywhere. A heavy, dark-skinned WOMAN looks up as she stubs out her cigarette.

JIMMY

Hello. I'd...like a reading.

The Woman smiles, closes a door to the adjacent room -- where a young boy sits cross-legged in front of a TV set.

THE SHOP - MINUTES LATER

The Woman is reading Jimmy's palm, as he looks on worriedly.

WOMAN

Yes, yes. The Mount of Jupiter is quite pronounced. You are a hard worker, industrious...and the long ring finger represents your strong creative abilities. An Aries, no?

JIMMY

Taurus...

WOMAN

(another look)

Of course. The loops on the fingerprints tell the tale.

Jimmy is fidgety, distracted.

JIMMY

What about...the life line? Is there any way of--?

She focuses on Jimmy's wrists, scrutinizing something.

WOMAN

Three bracelets of life...perhaps four...very deep, defined.

JIMMY

That's...good?

WOMAN

(smiling, indicating)
Twenty-five years of life to each bracelet. That's seventy-five years at least -- one hundred at most. Very long life. And good health.

The Woman leaps up suddenly, startling Jimmy.

JIMMY

What? What is it?

She rushes over to the now opened door, where the Child stands holding the TV's remote control.

CHILD

Mommy, this broken...

The Woman hushes the boy, scolding him in another language. She gently shoves him back into the room, shuts the door, and turns to Jimmy apologetically.

WOMAN

I am most sorry.

Jimmy stands, wringing his hands, seemingly un-cheered by the news of his hundred years.

JIMMY

Let me ask you. About fate. Is it something...that can be changed?
(trying to articulate)
If...if I knew something was going to happen, if I saw it coming -- could I change it?

The Woman nods, speaks like she's reading from a manual.

WOMAN

Each life is a unique tapestry.
Some of the threads are woven
tightly, cannot be altered --
these are our fate. But other
strands are looser. With these,
our free will, we weave the
story of our lives.

Jimmy, queasy, hands the woman a twenty and heads for the door.

WOMAN

Thank you! Thank you very much,
sir! Come again!

EXT. SHOP - NIGHT

The shop door closes behind Jimmy as he trudges away, lost in
thought -- right past Deirdre, holding two vanilla cones.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

We MOVE past an alarm clock, glowing 5AM. Then to Deirdre,
curled up asleep, lightly snoring. Finally, we reach Jimmy,
awake, staring at the ceiling. Then--

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Still dark. Jimmy, in sweats, pumps his arms as he scales a hill
-- running furiously, soaked in sweat.

Half-way up the grade, he stops, gasping. Puts a hand to his
chest, feels his hammering heart -- eyes wide with concern.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A haggard Jimmy tosses aside a file, unable to concentrate on it.
On his desk is a dog-eared paperback, the title "FORTUNE TELLING
AND DIVINATIONS - A PRACTICAL GUIDE".

His attention is suddenly drawn to something out the window--

POV -- down below. A familiar souped-up Silver Camaro, parked on
the edge of the property. Someone behind the wheel, watching.

Jimmy squints to be sure, and we see that it's ANDY LOPEZ, the
young man he fired earlier. Lopez doesn't get out, doesn't move.
Just sits and stares at the building.

BACK TO Jimmy's troubled face.



INT. DOCTOR BATES' OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy sits on the examining table. The Doctor scans his folder.

BATES

For ten years, couldn't get you in here. Now I can't get rid of you.

(puts down the folder)

So, any palpitations? Shortness of breath? Any pain?

JIMMY

No. I mean, I'm not sure. Sometimes I feel--

(hand to his chest)

--like I said, I'm not really sure.

BATES

What's on your mind, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Nothing, I...I just figured while I'm at it, I should get some more tests. Have everything checked out. To be sure.

BATES

Just had your 50,000 mile check-up. Looked fine.

JIMMY

I'd like the 100,000.

Bates fixes on Jimmy, trying to read the situation.

BATES

Be honest with you Jimmy, it'd be a waste of your time.

JIMMY

How do you know that?

BATES

Well...your bloodwork was tops, lungs, arteries clear, prostate fine. No significant symptoms, inward or out. (then) Hey -- that cardio-gram wasn't intended to panic you. Just a precaution. Small nick in the armor.

JIMMY

No, I know...

BATES

And short of a head-to-toe MRI,
pointless in my opinion, I'd say
you're in pretty excellent shape.

Jimmy shakes his head, breathes heavily.

JIMMY

But there are things -- I get these
lumps...under my neck. Sharp head-
aches, right behind my eyes. Some-
times I see white spots--

BATES

You keep looking for symptoms,
you'll be in here every 48 hours.

The Doctor can sense that Jimmy is still troubled.

BATES

Look, I can't give you an *absolute*
guarantee on your health. Ten thou-
sand things have to go right every
second, for you to keep breathing--

Jimmy registers panic.

JIMMY

Jesus, that's reassuring...

Bates laughs, punching Jimmy's arm.

BATES

Was a joke, Jimmy! You got more to
worry about from lightning bolts
and schmucks on the highway. (beat)
Go get a drink, have a cigarette--
one! And think about a vacation.
Stress'll kill you quicker than any-
thing you can dream up.

Jimmy nods, grins uneasily. No solace here either.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE STREET - DAY

Jimmy, carrying his sample case, walks like a man under siege in
a perilous world. Everything moves at half-speed, under his
paranoid gaze.

ANGLE as Jimmy passes an appliance store window. A jumble of
SHOTS plays out on rows of TV sets -- some program on airline
disasters. Charred, blackened metal. Body bags. He turns his
head, continues and--

ANOTHER ANGLE - STREET CAFÉ

Jimmy sips a coffee, smokes. Newspaper pages flap in the breeze, revealing a tabloid cover, "VETERAN RAMPAGE, 4 DEAD." Then--

POV - A STRANGER passes, meets Jimmy's eyes, moves from the frame. Revealing--

A CIGARETTE PLACARD on a news kiosk, the oversized SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING screaming out dire pronouncements.

Jimmy steps out his smoke. Grinds his teeth.

A CROSSWALK - MINUTES LATER

Jaywalkers dash across the bustling avenue. Jimmy approaches the corner, hesitates. Presses the pedestrian 'cross' button. Begins cursing to himself, slaps the button repeatedly.

NEW ANGLE -- MINUTES LATER

Jimmy rounds a corner, sees the Stranger from before lingering near his parked car.

JIMMY

Hey!

Jimmy rushes over as the man hurries off.

Jimmy rounds the car, scrutinizing, then leans down and checks underneath. Change, keys and Roloids from his breast pocket clatter to the pavement. He curses and gathers the mess up.

As he stands, he spots the Stranger some distance away -- fastening an ad flyer to the windshield of another car. Jimmy then sees the same flyer flapping under his own wipers.

CUT TO:

A BLISTERING WHITE LIGHT fills the screen. Then vanishes and reappears.

We PULL BACK from the WASH to reveal the harsh beam of an overhead projector on a conference table.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy sits at the edge of the table, next to Ed and some familiar faces from the bar. Roy is at the rear, rapping the temperamental projector, which keeps flickering.

VOICES AND SOUNDS are slurred, far-off in Jimmy's muddled mind. He squints into the flickering light, mesmerized by the glare.

Roy gets the projector working, displaying a regional map carved up into sales territories. He addresses the group, taps the overhead again to keep it lit.

MOVE in on Jimmy and his far-away eyes, CLOSER as a VOICE slowly takes focus and filters through.

ROY (O.S.)
Jimmy? Jimbo! Hey, do they have
Chinese food on Pluto?

Laughter from the others.

ED
He's dreamin' jukeboxes...

JIMMY
(snapping to)
Whuh? Oh--sorry. Sorry.

ROY
What's the story with Nob Hill?
(reminding him)
The strip mall. We got a bite on
this guy?

Roy sits, signaling the floor now belongs to Jimmy. He stands, stabbing at his hand with a pen cap, then leans on the table for support. He's sweating heavily.

JIMMY
Nob Hill...the uhh...

He loses himself in the projector light, seemingly unable to complete the thought. An uncomfortable length of silence. Some of the guys snicker, figuring ol' Jimmy is up to his tricks.

JIMMY
(a feeble croak)
...sorry. Some water, please...

The laughter fizzles as Jimmy holds the dazed expression.

ANGLE ON Ed, truly spooked.

ED (O.S.)
You're shitting me...

INT. DINER - DAY

Ed and Jimmy sit opposite at a diner booth, an incongruous green salad in front of Jimmy. Ed regards his friend with worry.

ED

Tell me you're making this up.

Jimmy nervously toys with a fork.

ED

Boy, Jimbo, you know how fucking nuts that sounds? Even for you...
 (a laugh erupts)
 Some...trailer park Kreskin grabs your hand, tells you you're toast. Think about that a second...

JIMMY

(shaking his head)
 It's like a tune that gets stuck in your head. Wish I could forget it.

Ed looks at the conviction in Jimmy's eyes.

ED

You believe this guy?

JIMMY

(on his own train)
 We're always so sure we're...callin' the shots in life. But, what if the script is already written? We're just playing it out?

Ed takes a bite, pondering...

ED

What, like I was...destined to order this omelet?
 (eyebrow up)
 You're outta my area, Jimmy, but-- I was gonna get a burger.

Ed finishes his food, downs the rest of his coffee. Leans in.

ED

Obvious answer is the right one, like the cops always say. (beat)
 This guy's playing you. He's a scammer -- probably a good one. Bet that was your first instinct...

Jimmy nods weakly.

ED

You just wait -- next thing, he'll offer to talk with the Big Guy on your behalf, erase your bad omens. First, it's hard boiled eggs under

your pillow...next it's empty out
your savings account.

(shakes his head)

I've heard about these guys. Once
they get inside your head...

JIMMY

He never mentioned--

ED

Money? He's patient. Figures
you're not the superstitious
type. So this Kreskin makes a
few lucky guesses--

JIMMY

Luck doesn't explain--

ED

Bullshit! You think this guy didn't
size you up...observe every detail?
Probably saw the Lobos sticker on
your bumper, figured you had to have
money on the game. Saw a guy with
ambition, goin' places, tells you
the big windfall is just around the
corner...

JIMMY

What about *Dallas*? He knew--

ED

This fucker plays the percentages,
Jimmy. One guy takes the bait,
another fifty he never sees again.
And you -- you start looking around,
finding proof under every rock...

Ed holds his cup out for the waitress' refill.


ED

You...remember that highway game
when you were a kid? See how many
red Volkswagens you could spot on
the road? (nods) You see an awful
lot of them once you start lookin'.

Jimmy raises his head, Ed is making a lot of sense.

ED

C'mon, take this prick out of the
equation, the past two weeks --
and what do you really got here?



Jimmy stares at the table for a long time, then pushes the hair back from his face -- begins laughing to himself.

JIMMY

Christ.

ED

You're just in a funk. Dee says you've barely been sleeping. Why don't you two slip out of town for a few days. Get off this track.

JIMMY

Yeah. Yeah. You're right.

ED

Okay. Much better.
 (to the waitress)
 Jen! Bring this guy some French fries with gravy.
 (mock disgust)
 Can't believe you're eating a fucking salad--

Ed shoves the mixed greens aside, then holds his hand out.

ED

Hey, give me a fiver. I'll tell you your goddamn future--

Jimmy laughs easier, and it feels good. A ray of sunshine pierces the gloom.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

The burning red sign, up close. We hear the CRACKLE OF NEON.

INT. MOTEL - SAME TIME

A pair of panties do lazy revolutions on the ceiling fan. An overturned champagne bottle on the nightstand. A rumpled bed, empty.

THE BATHROOM

Jimmy and Deirdre in the tub, spent. Candles on the sink flicker.

DEIRDRE

--dancing, champagne, non-smoking room. I like this new Jimmy...

JIMMY
 Yeah, well, right now this new
 Jimmy would sell you for a cig-
 arette, so--

Deirdre laughs, lays her head back against his chest and closes her eyes.

EXT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jimmy, weekend-bag in hand, does little dance steps towards the house. Deirdre tags behind, laughing. He grabs the mail and they head inside.

EXT. JIMMY'S BACKYARD - LATER

Jimmy sets the cordless phone on the table and cracks his beer. Takes a long cool swig, holding his face to the sun. Feeling rejuvenated.

The PHONE RINGS. He hikes the cordless.

JIMMY
 Yeah...?

There's that DISTANT STATIC again. He listens hard, trying to decipher the sound. Shrugs and clicks off.

He flops into a lawn chair and sorts through the mail, when a particular envelope brings him to a halt.

CLOSE ON - THE ENVELOPE. It's blank. No address. No postmark. He flips it over. Completely unmarked.

He slits it open, folds out the contents: a shooting-range target bearing the silhouette of a man. It's pocked with bullet holes.

DEIRDRE (O.S.)
 --wanna go running?

Jimmy is transfixed. Whatever distance he'd put between thoughts of doom has been closed in an instant.

THE LIVING ROOM

Deirdre pulls on a jogging shirt, goes to open the door.

DEIRDRE
 Hey! Got your ears on? Jimmy?

She stands in the backyard doorway, puzzled. A beer, foaming over, sits on the table. Jimmy's nowhere in sight.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Andy Lopez, shirtless and sweating, mows the postage stamp of grass in his front yard. He looks up as--

Jimmy's car pulls up to the curb, and he hops out.

Andy's surprise becomes a glare as Jimmy strides over.

ANDY

Hey man, this is private property.

JIMMY

So's my mailbox.

ANDY

Huh?

Jimmy stops at a safe distance.

JIMMY

Look, I don't like the way things went down, either. I think you got the short end, okay? I told that to Roy.

ANDY

You're a regular saint.

JIMMY

I'm not the guy. Firing you was management's decision. All right?

ANDY

Just the innocent messenger...

JIMMY

(yelling it out)
You listening? I AM NOT THE GUY!

ANDY

(yelling louder)
One WORD from you and Roy would've spared my ass!

Jimmy is struck for a moment, as the truth of that sinks in.

ANDY

You fucking SOLD ME OUT -- for your goddamn JUKEBOXES!! Tough shit if that keeps you up nights...

(back to his work)
Get the hell out of here.

JIMMY

The harassment stops now, Andy.

Jimmy unfolds the target and holds it up.

ANDY

What the fuck is that?

JIMMY

Leaving little presents in my mail-box. Hanging around the office like some pissed off postman...

ANDY

You been smokin' too much ye-ho.
I ain't been--

JIMMY

I'm not fucking around here. The cops know, all right? They know. Anything happens--

ANDY

Waitaminute! The fuck are you--?
If you're spreadin' shit--

JIMMY

Anything happens to me, and the law comes here. Understand?

ANDY

You're crazy, man. I'm out there bustin' my hump to get work...if you're spreadin' false shit about me, I'll sue your fuckin'--

JIMMY

You've been warned.

ANDY

I swear, you ruin my name--

JIMMY

And what? WHAT!?
(fury taking over)
Dare you fuckin' threaten me--

Jimmy stomps towards Andy, who moves to meet him half way, when--

WOMAN (O.S.)

Andy! ANDY!!

Through the slits in the venetian blinds, we see the eyes of Andy's wife, looking pleadingly out to him. A little lower, the frightened eyes of their young daughter.

ANDY
Get out of here, 'maricone. Before I change my mind.

JIMMY
(defiant)
It stops now, Andy.

Jimmy turns and walks back to his car -- with Andy's eyes burning holes in his back. And we

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - THE TARGET. A pinkie wriggles through one of the bullet holes.

NEW ANGLE

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - DAY

Jimmy stares at the target sheet, then looks up, contemplating--

POV -- the Police Precinct Station, where he is parked.

He taps his fingers on the sheet, then folds it up and returns it to his pocket. Starts up his car and pulls out.

INT. JIMMY'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Jimmy points out to the parking lot through glass doors, addressing the pretty RECEPTIONIST.

JIMMY
You so much as see Andy Lopez around here, or his car -- the silver Camaro -- I want you on the phone to the police. Tell them he's trespassing. Is that absolutely clear?

The Receptionist nods nervously.

INT. MALL - NIGHT

Jimmy walks through a spacious, empty strip mall with TED MORELANE--a pal from the old days and now a client. Behind them, cleaning crews are busy buffing the floors.

MORELANE
So, how you been, man?

JIMMY

Ah, you know. Still in the game.

MORELANE

How's Katie?

JIMMY

Jeez, it's been that long?

MORELANE

Shit--

JIMMY

Yep. Splitsville. Going on two and a half years now.

MORELANE

Sorry to hear it.

JIMMY

S'okay. We're both better off.

MORELANE

Two and a half years. Shit, that's about the time we had you guys do the new wing. Woosh! Where the fuck does it go?

Jimmy toes at the floor, assessing.

JIMMY

Jesus, look at these things. You have restrooms in this place?

MORELANE

(laughing)

Of course, why--?

JIMMY

Looks like people've been pissin' on your floors. Who the hell put these down?

MORELANE

Ah, some outfit in Old Town. Garcia Brothers, something like that.

JIMMY

Yeah, I know them. Fucking bandits.

Jimmy crouches, runs a palm over the floor surface.

MORELANE

Hey, you'll never guess who I ran across a few days ago. Mrs.

McClure. (beat) Vincent's mom.

Jimmy's face registers these names--they don't sit well with him.

JIMMY

Oh, yeah?

MORELANE

Yeah. She blacked out in Tabard's, lookin' through the discount bins.

(shakes his head)

Looks like hell, ninety pounds if she's lucky. But she's one tough old broad -- wouldn't let me call her an ambulance.

Jimmy pinches his nose, fidgety, as he stands again.

MORELANE

Wasn't gonna let her go, but she told me Vince was waiting in the car. Said he's looking after her.

This stops Jimmy cold.

JIMMY

Vincent...is here? In town?
Thought he was still in Oklahoma.

MORELANE

Yeah, I heard that too. Guess he made parole. (then) Hey, what do you think landed him in Creedmore? I've heard some fuckin' stories.

JIMMY

I don't know.

MORELANE

Guess you two don't, uhh...

JIMMY

No. Not for a long time.

MORELANE

Did you guys ever get a chance to...you know, square things up?

Jimmy suddenly turns to Morelane, flustered.

JIMMY

Nothing to square up, Teddy. He took his road, I took mine. End of story.

MORELANE
Yeah, no, I--

JIMMY
I wish things worked out better
for him -- but it's his life.

They resume strolling, past gated shops.

MORELANE
Hey, I hear ya. (beat) Weird how
shit gets twisted around.

JIMMY
What do you mean, twisted around?
What's being twisted?

MORELANE
No, look, I don't even know the
details...I just heard--

JIMMY
What have you heard?

MORELANE
Hey, come on, there's no reason
to get all--

JIMMY
What the hell have you heard, Ted?

MORELANE
Jeez, let's just--
(shakes his head)
All right, okay. It's been said...
that Vince got left holding the bag,
back when the shit hit the fan for
you two.
(hands up)
But hey, it's not my business...

JIMMY
The guy put his own life into a
tailspin. It's got nothing to do
with me. Who the fuck said--?

MORELANE
Listen, forget I brought it up.
Okay? Hearsay over a few drinks.
It means shit.

He puts a reassuring hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

MORELANE
C'mon, let me show you the new

food court.

Jimmy exhales, nods, decompresses a notch. They head down the mall's seemingly endless corridor.

MORELANE

(hands clapping together)

So, what's the best deal you can give an old pal on sixty-thousand square feet, huh?

But Jimmy's barely heard him, his thoughts far off -- rearranging puzzle pieces in his head.

INT. JIMMY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Jimmy pours himself another scotch, settles back deep into his chair. Thoughts interrupted by--

THE PHONE, which he lets ring several times.

He finally picks it up, brings the receiver slowly up to his ear.

JIMMY

Hello?

The non-descript WHITE NOISE again. Jimmy's face tenses as he tries to decipher it. Rushing traffic on a highway? Someone's labored breathing?

JIMMY

Hello... Hello!?
(voice wavering)
Lopez? That you?

Nothing. He puts the receiver down, spooked -- downs his drink in a single swallow.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

Jimmy drives slowly along a once-familiar street. He stops before a dirt and gravel drive, a skewed mailbox reading 'McClure'. Kills the ignition and gets out.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Jimmy makes his way along the drive, peering around the thick growth that bends towards a house fifty yards away.

NEW ANGLE as Jimmy prepares to knock on the side door. He hesitates -- and instead rounds the neglected adobe split-level to the garden in back.

He approaches the deck door, leans to peek inside--when he nearly leaps out of his Timberlands.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello, James.

Jimmy does a lightning 180 -- then sucks in his breath.

JIMMY

Hello, Mrs. McClure.

POV on the birdlike woman, stooped over with age and infirmity, but with a fierce glint still in her eyes.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Jimmy fidgets in the cramped living room, as Mrs. McClure enters with a can of Coke and a glass of ice. She hands them to him, then settles herself gingerly into an easy chair.

MRS. MCCLURE

Never thought I'd see you on that couch again. You and Vince -- I remember when your feet didn't touch the floor.

JIMMY

Sorry I woke you. I know you like your afternoon nap.

MRS. MCCLURE

(scoffing)

Ah! There'll be plenty of time for sleepin', soon enough. If the doctor's are half-right...

JIMMY

No, no--don't say that. You're looking well.

MRS. MCCLURE

(shaking her head)

Still got a gift for the bullshit. No need, kiddo, I ain't in the market. (beat) I'm dying, Jimmy. Got anything to sell me for that?

Jimmy sits silently, can't come up with anything clever or apropos. He cracks open his Coke, listens to it sizzle over the ice cubes.

MRS. MCCLURE

So...what brings you 'round?

JIMMY

I, uh, heard that Vincent was in town. That he was taking care of you. I was hoping I might--

MRS. MCCLURE

Who told you that?

JIMMY

Just a friend. He, uh, runs the shopping center in Nob Hill.

MRS. MCCLURE

(suddenly recalling)

Brat. Manners of a goddamn mule...

An uncomfortable pause.

JIMMY

You told him Vincent was here.

MRS. MCCLURE

(leans forward)

Know what they do to old ladies livin' alone--'specially ones with dizzy spells? (nods) Ship 'em off to the "rest farm"...to die nice and quiet, out of everybody's hair. No thank you.

Her eyes scan the cluttered living room -- a proud place, slowly giving way to chaos.

MRS. MCCLURE

This place is all I got.

(defiant)

And I ain't never used a bedpan in my life!

(smiling)

So, if I bent the truth a little with your friend...

A glint of relief in Jimmy's eyes.

JIMMY

So Vincent hasn't been around?

Mrs. McClure is suddenly wary of the repeated question.

MRS. MCCLURE

Who's interested?

JIMMY

Nobody, just...just me. Thought maybe he and I could talk.

MRS. MCCLURE

Ah, I don't know, James. Vincent's been struggling. The liquor, those goddamn drugs. Got himself some construction work, doin' his best to keep out of trouble. I don't think he needs to dig up any--

JIMMY

No, I'm not trying to--

MRS. MCCLURE

You really should've looked out for him more. He needed that. Broke his heart, the way things turned out.

JIMMY

I...we were young. And stupid. If I could turn back--

MRS. MCCLURE

(a hint of acid)

You weren't stupid, Jimmy.

(a smile returns)

I got a good feeling this time. Vincent knows he won't have me around much longer. (beat) First time in his life he'll be alone.

JIMMY

(still fishing)

So, he hasn't been in town since--

MRS. MCCLURE

(clipped, suspicious)

That would be violating his parole, wouldn't it? They like to keep 'em on a short leash, the first six months.

A KETTLE BOILS in the adjacent kitchen, and Mrs. McClure struggles to her feet.

MRS. MCCLURE

You sure I can't fix you something? Got some nice cold cuts this morning...

JIMMY

No, no thank you. (then) You think I could...have a look at Vince's old room? This place...holds a lot of memories.

MRS. MCCLURE

(wary, then--)

You know where it is.

INT. VINCENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

The door swings open and Jimmy steps in, eyes roaming over the past: Led Zeppelin posters, shelves stacked with adventure books, a corkboard with tacked-up photos. A boy's room frozen in time.

POV, CLOSE on some of the photos. One of Vincent and Jimmy as teens, grinning arm-in-arm, graduation robes flapping.

Jimmy smiles in remembrance, but it soon fades as he sees--

POV, ANOTHER PHOTO -- Vince, a bit older, aims an imposing rifle at some distant target.

Jimmy's eyes sweep the dead-quiet room, satisfied that nothing's out of place. He turns to go, when his feet kick something protruding from under the bed. His face tightens as he sees--

A pair of work boots, surrounded by crumbs of caked mud.

CUT TO:

Jimmy's feet hustling down the stairs into--

THE FOYER

Mrs. McClure begins chattering, having heard Jimmy come down -- but he's not listening. He wipes his damp brow, looking queasy.

Atop a commode, he spots a stack of letters neatly bound with a rubber band. He takes a closer look.

CLOSE ON - THE TOP ENVELOPE. The return address from Vincent, a residence in Oklahoma. All the letters bearing the same address.

He slides a letter out from the middle of the stack, slips it into a pocket. He hears Mrs. McClure's nattering from the kitchen, and suddenly the urge to flee becomes overpowering.

Jimmy rushes for the door, unlocks it and bolts out.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Jimmy loosens his tie, sweating heavily. Looks down at the letter in his hand, leans his head on the steering wheel.

JIMMY'S CAR -- LATER

Now cruising on the empty highway, mumbling into his cellphone.

JIMMY

Thing is I'm sittin' here in crazy traffic...yeah, looks like a tractor-trailer kinda situation--real ugly... yeah...uh huh...next week would be ideal. Okay, then. Yep. Bye now.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - JIMMY'S ANSWERING MACHINE. Counter reads '4'. His finger reaches in, presses the replay button. BEEP! CLICK. BEEP! CLICK. BEEP!... Four hang-ups.

ANGLE ON - JIMMY'S FACE, real fear there for the first time.

INT. JIMMY'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

Jimmy flicks the blade of a knife out -- cuts away at the yellowed tape sealing a cardboard box. He spills the contents on the table before him.

CLOSE on the mess as Jimmy sifts through it. Stuff hastily packed and long forgotten. Heaps of receipts, contracts, blueprints -- along with a scattering of loose PHOTOGRAPHS. Jimmy gathers the pictures together.

He flips through several of the photos, until one stops him--

POV - two boys in cowboy hats, holding miniature pick-axes -- like a pair of mining prospectors. Gap toothed grins.

Another few photos, then--

CLOSE ON - THE BACK OF A PICTURE. Scribbled in ink, "The Sun Kings." He turns it around and we see two men in their mid 20s-- Vincent and Jimmy. Wearing tuxedos and exuberant smiles, toasting with champagne. Two guys ready to take on the world.

CLOSER ON - VINCENT. His face is obscured by harsh shadows, features barely perceptible apart from the wide grin.

Jimmy stares at the photo with somber eyes, holding back a flood of memory -- then forces his mind on, as he always does. Reaches for the phone.

EXT. THE FIREHOUSE PUB - NIGHT

Jimmy leans on the hood of his car, as Ed's Impala pulls up alongside. Ed gets out. Behind them, the neon of the pub flickers, beckoning.

ED

Late night phone calls? Meetings
in dark parking lots?

JIMMY

Need you to handle my calls tomorrow.

ED

Jeez, this the new weekly ritual?
I'm swamped tomorrow. And Roy,
you know, is getting service com-
plaints -- asked me if you're hav-
ing personal problems.

(shaking his head)

Told me he laid out a hundred grand
for that juke project, and you ain't
even touched it yet. Jimbo, that's
your baby!

JIMMY

That's...just gonna have to wait.
Can you cover me or not?

ED

What the hell is up?

JIMMY

(looking away)

I gotta make a trip. Personal.

ED

Where to?

JIMMY

(reluctant)

Oklahoma City.

ED

(an eyebrow up)

This doesn't have anything to do
with...a certain fortune teller?
'Cause if it does--

JIMMY

No. Some personal shit.

ED

What's in Oklahoma?

Ed senses Jimmy's unease. He nods back toward the pub.

ED

What do you say we grab a few?
Talk it out.

JIMMY

No. The whole fucking crew is in there, and--

He looks at Jimmy's stone-face for a moment, changes gears.

ED

Would you characterize our thing here as a... 'close friendship'?

JIMMY

Close as two adult males probably oughta get.

ED

Then, as a close friend it's my duty to voice my, uhh, profound concern over this recent tack--

JIMMY

(impatient)

You gonna cover me or not?

ED

Quit snowing the snowman! What the fuck is in Oklahoma?

Jimmy snorts, agitated. Finally--

JIMMY

That target in my mailbox. Lopez may not be the guy.

ED

Ah, you see--you see now! What did I say? (beat) Tell me what's going on.

Jimmy kicks at the dirt, grits his teeth--then finally relents.

JIMMY

I think it's a Valentine from an old buddy of mine. Just got paroled from Creedmore.

ED

Phew. Home for errant boy scouts.

JIMMY

We had a business together, bunch of years back. Things kinda went sour. He did some time, got all... fucked up in there. Think he still blames me for his hard luck.

ED
This guy violent?

JIMMY
Not back then -- but I figure he's
seen some rough miles. In and out
of a lot of jails. Everybody's
heard a story, it seems.

Ed lights up a cigarette, trying to process all this.

ED
That's a long time to wait to set-
tle an old score. I mean, how do
you know it was him?

JIMMY
Makes sense. His mom's real sick,
I think he's been slipping into
town to see her. (beat) Maybe he's
tying up loose ends or something.

ED
And you're gonna go down there and
fuck with him like you did Lopez?

JIMMY
He's not going to know I'm there.
Strictly reconnaissance.

ED
Reconnaissance? You suddenly Nor-
man Schwarzkopf?
(frowning)
Let the pros handle it. Call a
cop. Call his parole officer.

JIMMY
And tell them what? I can't prove
anything. I'm in the dark here, I
need some leverage -- in case he's
got ideas. (beat) I gotta do
something.

Ed pushes off from the car, walks a nervous circle.

ED
This...this is fucking crazy. Guy
could be a major nutjob--

JIMMY
What do you suggest? Wait around
for him to use me as target practice?
Call him up and ask, "hey, did you
by chance put a threat in my mailbox?"

He tosses his beeper to Ed, who catches it.

JIMMY
Goddammit, this is serious -- this
is real shit here. Help me out.

Ed sighs, pockets the beeper, signaling to Jimmy he's agreed.

EXT. HIGHWAY - POST DAWN

We're down low on a ribbon of asphalt, stretching into oblivion. The stillness is shattered by Jimmy's Camry blasting by.

HIGHWAY - LATER

Jimmy slows for an intersection light. A tattered HITCHHIKER sidles up to the car, jerking his thumb towards the horizon. Jimmy quickly reaches over, locks the passenger door button.

EXT. MOTEL/HOSTEL - LATE MORNING

A row of standalone pre-fab cabins, the type catering to monthly transients.

Jimmy's car is parked in the near-empty lot. At the far end sits a shack with a sign reading 'MANAGEMENT OFFICE.' Inside the office, a geezer is lost in his newspaper.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - SAME TIME

Fingers nervously drum the wheel.

JIMMY (O.S.)
(on his phone)
Cabin one thirty five, please...

CLOSE ON - JIMMY'S CELL PHONE pressed against his ear. We hear RINGING. No answer. He hangs up.

CLOSE ON - THE DASH CLOCK. Eleven twenty in the morning.

Jimmy slips on his shades, presses a baseball hat down and pops his door.

EXT. MOTEL/HOSTEL - SECONDS LATER

Jimmy heads for a cabin near the end of the row, trying to be nonchalant and failing miserably.

Arriving at the cabin, he slinks to a side-window, cups his

hands.

POV - a gap in the drawn curtain affords only a limited view.

He steps back, considers his options. Late morning lull -- it's dead around here. He pulls out his wallet, eyes the assortment of plastic, selects his American Express card.

CABIN ENTRANCE

Jimmy feigns tying a shoe-lace by the door, doing a sweep of the perimeter ending at the cheap doorknob. He goes for it.

CLOSE ON - THE DOOR FRAME. Jimmy's Amex card saws its way into the crack, trying to get at the latch. He's no pro -- and the longer this goes, the more frantic he becomes.

He's about to cut his losses when the door CLICKS open. He darts inside.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

He peeks out the window, stiff with fear. No-one's the wiser. He turns, scanning the cluttered dwelling.

Clothes scattered. Dishes heaped up. The only sound is the restless drip of the KITCHEN TAP, ticking like a clock.

He scurries across the room, races through a few drawers, finds nothing out of the ordinary.

On the nightstand a few skin mags and a self-help paperback, "MENDING THE PAST". He flips the book's pages, finding two joints tucked inside.

A thought strikes him. He slips his hand under the mattress, groping. Suddenly he gasps, holding his index finger.

CLOSE ON - HIS FINGER. A drop of blood blooms from the tip.

He licks off the blood, lifts the mattress finding a small kit with a needle poking out. He opens the zipper, revealing a syringe, glassine envelope, and some crystal pills in a clear bag. Zips the pouch back up.

And then he notices something else, further under the mattress. Dark metal. He reaches for it. A full barrel .38.

He's unable to remove his eyes from the cold steel. Is he holding his own murder weapon? He unlocks the tumbler, shakes one of the bullets out. Stares at it a long time.

He slips the bullet back, snaps the tumbler in place and pockets the gun. Decides he's seen enough. Halfway to the door, he

hesitates, pulls the gun back out. Unsure now.

Just as he returns the gun to its hiding place, he hears the distinct sound of BOOTS approaching outside.

Jimmy is frozen with panic.

We MOVE IN, lightning-fast, on the doorknob. JANGLING KEYS. A key enters the lock, the sound deafening. Suddenly--

Jimmy grabs the knob, holds onto the latch with his fingers, not allowing it to turn with the key. The person outside tries harder. Jimmy holds on, gritting his teeth.

CURSING from the person outside, as he pushes against the door, jiggles the lock violently. A muffled growl of annoyance.

The door is given a hard kick and the key is snatched from the lock. BOOTS retreat.

Jimmy dares not move. He notices the window to his right darkening, and squeezes up to the wall. The silhouette peering in finally withdraws.

Jimmy finds it hard to let go of the lock, petrified even to breathe. The FOOTSTEPS fade across the lot. Jimmy stretches to the window---

POV - from the back, we see a Man in a flannel shirt and construction boots stomping towards the management office.

EXT. CABIN - SECONDS LATER

The moment the Man enters the office, Jimmy flies out of the cabin and races for his car. He jumps in.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - SAME TIME

He fumbles with his keys, drops them in the foot well. As he finally gets the car started, we see two people exiting the management office in the b.g.

Jimmy's a tad too eager pulling out, making the tires yelp--then stalling out the car. He frantically tries to re-start, the engine finally coughing to life.

EXT. MOTEL/HOSTEL - SECONDS LATER

POV - Jimmy's Camry races away from us, swerves onto the road and speeds away.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - SAME TIME

He pounds the wheel, cursing his stupidity and a LOUD HORN sounds as he nearly side-swipes a car.

He pulls to the roadside, faint with the after-shock of his ordeal, breathing like a madman.

HOLD, then--

CLOSE ON - THE PHOTOGRAPH from Jimmy's basement. The words "Sun Kings" scrawled on the flip side. We PULL BACK to reveal--

INT. FIREHOUSE PUB - NIGHT

Ed scrutinizes the picture, holding it at another angle.

ED

This the best you got? Can hardly see the sonofabitch's face.

He holds it out to Jimmy.

JIMMY

Just hang on to it...in case.

ED

In case what? No way, Jimbo. You're getting mixed up in something...and I'm not going to be part of it, half in the dark. No fucking way.

(lights a cigarette)

I'm either all in, or all out.

Jimmy thinks about this, slides the photo back to Ed. Breathes hard, ready to unearth what he's worked so hard to bury.

JIMMY

All of this...stays local, got me?

(Ed nods his agreement)

Like I said, me and Vince were in business a while back. Set up this little import-export gig, mostly low-end shit--toys, cheap sunglasses, kinda crap you see on those super-market racks. Figured it was our short-cut to the big pool...

Ed sees Jimmy's hand trembling, as he fiddles with a shot glass.

JIMMY

Routed the stuff for some reps in Mexico City. And--

(voice drops a notch)
 we both knew the whole gig reeked
 of...something. It was all too
 fucking easy. But the green start-
 ed rolling in, and well, ignorance
 being bliss--

ED

These guys washing a little money?

JIMMY

Vince was never one for sharing the
 details, but I guess it was obvious.
 Anyway, one day these suits show up
 flashin' FBI badges. Announced we
 were in a world of shit.

ED

(eyes raised)

Wow. Far out.

JIMMY

Got us in separate rooms, started
 tightening the screws. My guy said
 Vince had come clean, laid it all
 out for them. Suggested I do the
 same.

ED

And you did.

JIMMY

Seems they were gunning for Vince,
 anyway -- knew he was the point man.
 Had a pile of wire transfers with
 his name on them.

(shakes his head)

So...six months probation for yours
 truly. Vince's defender cut him a
 deal, skipped trial. Three years
 in the clink.

A silence as Jimmy stares at his drink, rolling it in the glass.

JIMMY

Went off to jail, grinnin', like he
 had to prove he wasn't afraid. Like
 it was all some big joke. (beat)
 Stupid fuck -- good behavior, could've
 been out of there in a year.

(grave silence)

We never talked again.

ED

Heavy shit, Jimbo.

(changing gears)
 Well if this guy's got loaded guns
 and a junk kit stashed under his
 bed, those are serious parole in-
 fractions, right?
 (as Jimmy nods)
 Call his parole officer. End it now.

JIMMY
 (shaking his head)
 Not going to tip him off. But if
 he makes a move...

Ed pours Jimmy's untouched drink into his, downs them both.

ED
 Past is the past, kid. Think it's
 time to get back on track.

JIMMY
 Trying.

Jimmy rises to go.

ED
 Hey, Jimbo.
 (waves him back)
 I, uhh, got nailed for shoplifting
 some corn nuts at Circle-K in '86.

JIMMY
 What?

ED
 Ah, you know...one criminal to
 another.

JIMMY
 (smiles)
 See ya, Ed.

Ed watches Jimmy go, concerned for his friend

INT. JIMMY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Silence is shattered by the PHONE. Jimmy lets it go for several
 rings -- then lifts the receiver apprehensively.

JIMMY
 Yes?
 (nothing)
 Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)
Mr. Munson?

JIMMY
...who's this?

VOICE (O.S.)
Mr. Beckwith, from Southwestern
Bell. Are you James Munson?

JIMMY
Yes...

VOICE (O.S.)
I hope I'm catching you at a
convenient time. I'm following
up on a harassment trace you'd
requested for this line.

JIMMY
Yes! Yes. Find out anything?

VOICE (O.S.)
Well sir, as is with most of these
cases, it turned out to be errant
tele-marketing server.

JIMMY
Tele-marketing? You're sure--?
I mean, that's confirmed?

VOICE (O.S.)
Yes sir. The system operator has
been notified, and assures me that
the problem has been corrected.

JIMMY
Great, that's great. Thank you.

VOICE (O.S.)
Thank you for your patience, Mr.
Munson. And good evening.


Jimmy hangs up, exhales. Some measure of control returning.

BEDROOM - LATER

Jimmy and Deirdre sleep intertwined. The PHONE jars Jimmy awake.
He stares in disbelief, then yanks up the receiver.

JIMMY
HELLO!?

There is only a distant HUM.



JIMMY
Don't fucking believe this!

He looks like he's about to chuck the phone, when--

MAN'S VOICE
How're they hangin', partner?

Jimmy is struck for a moment.

JIMMY
Who's this?

MAN'S VOICE
C'mon, you don't know? I'm hurt.

Jimmy is paralyzed. He knows. Vincent McClure.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Still there?

JIMMY
...yeah, I'm still here.

DEIRDRE
(groggily awakens)
...who the hell--?

Jimmy waves "it's okay" to her.

JIMMY
Hold on a second.

He hangs up the phone, gets out of bed.

THE STUDY

Jimmy clicks on the cordless.

VINCENT (O.S.)
That Katie?

JIMMY
No.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Jeez, another statistic? Hey, if
you need a shoulder...

JIMMY
It's a little late, Vincent.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Aren't you gonna ask how I've been?

JIMMY

Sure. How've you been?

VINCENT (O.S.)

Peaches, man! Thanks for asking!
(cackles, then--)

So how'd you like my set-up?

JIMMY

What?

VINCENT (O.S.)

My little joint here. I'm planning
some improvements, but what did you
think?

JIMMY

(cringing)

I don't know what you're--

VINCENT (O.S.)

Jeez! Maybe I got it all wrong.
First I hear you dropped by to see
Mom -- next thing I see a set of
New Mexico plates hauling ass out
of my lot.

JIMMY

I *did* visit your mother, yes...

VINCENT (O.S.)

So maybe that Camry was just co-
incidence. Yeah, you're probably
all dandied out in a shiny Kraut
Cruiser by now. A Beamer, some-
thing classy like that.

JIMMY

Not quite.

VINCENT (O.S.)

I should come up and check out
your set-up sometime.

JIMMY

Thought you already had. I got
your little calling card.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Can't say I know what you mean,
partner. My P.O.'s got my nuts in
a vice. You know -- work, shit,
sleep. Almost had to wear one of
them 24 hour bracelets--

The phone crackles with static. Jimmy abruptly stops.

JIMMY

Where...where are you calling from?

VINCENT (O.S.)

Home, sweet. Out on the deck with my cellphone, sippin' a drink by the inground pool.

Something suddenly occurs to Jimmy. He goes to the window, cracks the blinds and peers out.

POV - through the blinds. Down the street a car is parked in the shadow of a tree. We can't tell if anyone's inside.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Hey, this new girl of yours. She treat you right?

Jimmy quickly heads for the back door.

JIMMY

Uh-huh.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Lemme guess--five foot seven, maybe eight...brown eyes...dark hair. A little skinny -- you always liked 'em underfed...

Jimmy checks the lock, makes sure it's secure. He grabs a boning knife from the kitchen block.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Am I close?

Jimmy moves into the living room, a deep unease building.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Hey partner, am I close?

JIMMY

Yeah, 's pretty close.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Yep. We're creatures of habit, the two of us.

He tests the patio door. Locked.

VINCENT (O.S.)

So, then, things are going well I take it? Life panning out just like you planned?

JIMMY

Look, Vince, what happened--

VINCENT (O.S.)

(suddenly hostile)

Let's not do that, Jimbo--let's not trip down memory lane. I'm trying to keep cool here. Got my shirt off, just trying to stay cool...

Jimmy stops dead, listens... a FLUTTERING SOUND.

THE CORRIDOR

Jimmy inches towards us, knife in hand.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Bit late to grow a conscience, friend.

POV - we're approaching the half-open bedroom door. The FLUTTERING grows.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Did you wanna try stitching up old wounds? That why you came here?

And we come to a stop, peering into the bedroom. The venetian blinds flutter in the breeze. The window is open.

Jimmy's blood freezes.

JIMMY

(voice wavering)

You've been in the clink twice. Three strikes, Vincent. Think about that before you do something stupid.

A long beat, just McClure's breathing on the other line.

VINCENT (O.S.)

You...threatening me, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Stating a simple fact--

VINCENT (O.S.)

Fact is, you broke into my place.

JIMMY

Let's just keep going our separate ways, huh Vince?

VINCENT (O.S.)
 Hey! You came looking for me,
 remember? Goddammit--what are
 you tryin' to pull here?!

Jimmy pushes the bedroom door a crack further -- eyes the hump
 under the duvet. Too petrified to move.

JIMMY
 Anything happens to me, they're
 gonna know where to go.

VINCENT (O.S.)
 (agitation growing)
 Fuck are you talking about? I'm
 the victim here! Dammit, you're
 heating me up, Jimmy--!

JIMMY
 Listen Vince--!

McClure hangs up. Dead air. Jimmy is still frozen by the
 doorway.

JIMMY
 Dee? DEE?!

She doesn't answer. He reaches around the corner, flicks on the
 light. Nudges the door open, knife ready. The BLINDS SHUDDER
 like a rattle-snake--

JIMMY
 DEIRDRE!

He rushes to the bed, peels the covers from her. Reaches for the
 pillow clasped over her head, when--

Suddenly, she jerks awake, scaring the hell out of him.

JIMMY
 JESUS! Fuck!

DEIRDRE
 (jumping up)
 What the hell--? I have to get up
 in five hours, Jimmy!

JIMMY
 You open that window?

DEIRDRE
 Yeah, I opened the damn--

JIMMY
 (slams it shut)

Jesus H. Don't open anything!

DEIRDRE

I can't breathe in here! It's a fucking tomb!

JIMMY

It's like an invitation...to any psycho! We could be slaughtered in our beds, ever think about that?

Deirdre is exasperated, watching a red-faced Jimmy pace like a madman.

DEIRDRE

What the hell is wrong with you?

JIMMY

What's the matter with me? I gotta worry about everything in this god-damn place. You have any idea how dangerous it is out there--?

She yanks the blanket from the bed, grabs her pillow and shoves past him. Jimmy deflates, his gaze settling on the pathetic boning knife in his hand.

EXT. GUNSHOP - DAY

Jimmy exits, looking unsure, a small package tucked under his arm. He walks to his car and gets in.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

CLOSE ON - A BRAND NEW SNUBNOSE .38. The tumbler is open as bullets are fed into the cylinder. It's snapped back in place.

Jimmy weighs the gun in his hand -- ominous and comforting at the same time. His BEEPER interrupts. He checks the number, curses under his breath, and stashes the gun in his briefcase.


EXT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - DUSK

A weary Jimmy steps out of his car, case in hand. From behind--

VOICE (O.S.)

Jimmy.

He whirls around, startled, case dropping to the gravel. It's Andy Lopez.



ANDY
.Yo, easy, easy...

Andy reaches to pick up the briefcase for him, but Jimmy lunges for it -- remembering the gun inside.

JIMMY
What do you want?

He holds up a joint, shrugs.

ANDY
Brought a little peace-pipe. What do you say?

Jimmy eyes him suspiciously. Andy looks down, kicks the dirt.

ANDY
I'm an asshole, okay? I got this temper and...I do stupid shit sometimes. My wife, she always sets me straight later.

(fixes on Jimmy)
C'mon, what do you say? No hard feelings?

Andy extends a hand. Jimmy hesitates, then shakes.

JIMMY
...yeah, sure.

ANDY
Tryin' to stay on the straight and narrow, you know, para mi familia. Guess I got a lot to learn.

Andy sparks up the joint, offers it. Jimmy shakes his head; Andy shrugs, takes a hit.

ANDY
You didn't, uhh, go to the cops or nothing about that little target prank, right?

JIMMY
What?!

ANDY
It was...God it was a stupid thing to do. You know I didn't mean nothin' by it, right? I mean, with my sick sense of humor...

JIMMY
You put...

The world stands still for a moment. Jimmy's mind is a maelstrom. He sways.

ANDY

You all right there, chief? Hey--!

He grabs Andy's shirt, teeth clenched, like he wants to tear the kid in half. Then he pushes past, heads for his house in a daze. Andy pinches out the doobie, unsure what just happened.

ANDY

Hey, said I was sorry.

(calls after him)

We square on this thing? Jimmy!

INT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON - THE ANSWERING MACHINE. The message light glows, reading '12'. It's replaying messages, all from the same person.

VINCENT (O.S.)

...hey, Jimbo, you're probably out golfing with the guys, catch ya later... (BEEP!)...where are you, chief?...feel like we left a few things dangling, let's talk... (BEEP!)...hey, whattaya think about double-datin'? You, me, that chiquita of yours, and...well, I could hire this one-legged gal...

CLOSE ON - A GLASS being filled with bourbon. The answering machine BEEPS grow deafening.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Hear that? I'm pissin' and phonin' at the same time...what they call being ampeedexterous...

(cracks himself up)

Not ignoring me, are you partner?... after all that initiative you took looking me up...amigos to the end, remember that one?... (BEEP!, BEEP!)

The machine cuts out. Then dead silence. Jimmy lifts his glass, takes a brazen gulp when the RINGING PHONE jars him. Whiskey dribbles down his chin onto his shirt. He eyes the cordless.

RING!...RING!...

He shoots the remainder of his drink, steels himself and picks up the phone.

JIMMY
 (after a beat)
 Hello, Vincent.

VINCENT (O.S.)
 Shit, how'd you (BURP!) know it
 was me?

JIMMY
 Hunch.

VINCENT (O.S.)
 (drunk)
 You just gettin' in? Shit, those
 hours'll kill ya! So how are the...
 (trying to be witty)
wheels of commerce turnin' today?

JIMMY
 Not too bad.

VINCENT (O.S.)
 Played hookie myself. Been lyin'
 here, just reminiscing...

Jimmy pinches his eyes, trying to focus. Time to end this now.

JIMMY
 Look, I, uhh, I wanna apologize. I
 made a mistake coming at you the
 way I did and--

VINCENT (O.S.)
 's left a bad taste, Jimbo.

JIMMY
 Someone pulled a prank, I over-
 reacted -- jumped to some crazy
 conclusions.

VINCENT (O.S.)
 Like...who do I know who's a
 convicted felon?

JIMMY
 Well, not exactly--

VINCENT (O.S.)
 's okay. They briefed us on this
 kinda thing in the release program.
 A con's past is like quicksand.
 Harder you try to pull yourself out,
 deeper you sink.

JIMMY

I'm sorry, Vince. I really am.
If there's anything--

VINCENT (O.S.)

In the system they preach responsibility -- you know, owning up to your crimes. The crucial step. But most guys in the joint, they'll wax fucking epic on how they got framed, how so-and-so done it -- major frikkin' denial. Now those guys, there's no hope for them.

Jimmy pours another bourbon. Turns his head as he hears Deirdre close the front door.

VINCENT (O.S.)

You there?

JIMMY

I'm listening.

VINCENT (O.S.)

I figured you came back here to take responsibility.

JIMMY

Not sure I follow.

VINCENT (O.S.)

I need to hear you say it, partner. What went down in Oklahoma City.

JIMMY

Hey, Vincent--

VINCENT (O.S.)

Say it Jimmy, for both of us.

JIMMY

I didn't sell you out.

VINCENT (O.S.)

You see, you see what I'm saying? Till we fix this, we'll always be stuck at this moment.

JIMMY

(trying to stay cool)
Listen Vincent, sounds like you haven't come to terms with your end of it. You had a chance to help yourself, but--

VINCENT (O.S.)
You really disappoint me...

JIMMY
(heating up)
--but no, you chose to walk the
gangplank! Did that all by your-
self, no help from me! So, I won't
do it, Vince -- I won't take respon-
sibility for your fucked up life!!

The sound of a GLASS BREAKING, McClure losing his grip.

VINCENT (O.S.)
You got it all figured out, don't
you Jimbo? You ever lose an hour
of sleep, your whole life?

JIMMY
Dammit, this is harassment! Plain
fucking harassment and--

VINCENT (O.S.)
Face to face! You look me in the
eye and tell me you didn't--

JIMMY
And if it doesn't stop--

VINCENT (O.S.)
Then what? You gonna tell my mommy?

Jimmy bites down and plays his ace.

JIMMY
I'll call your parole officer.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Ooo! And what'll he do?

JIMMY
Make you pee in a cup.

There's a long pause.

JIMMY
Look, I don't want this...we go
our separate ways, okay?

VINCENT (O.S.)
(distant, cold)
I don't know Jimbo. Smells kinda
like a situation to me.

The phone goes dead. Deirdre approaches, aghast at what she's

heard. Before she can speak, Jimmy wings the phone against the wall--his nerves dangerously frayed.

INT. POLICE STATION/BACK OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy fidgets in a chair across from SARGEANT VAN MEER. The cop raises an eyebrow, puts down a printout.

VAN MEER

Quite a sheet on your friend, here. So, this guy starts calling you out of the clear blue, after what--?

JIMMY

About seven years.

VAN MEER

Must've been some falling out. Any idea why he'd contact you?

JIMMY

No. I mean...I did pay his mother a visit, when I heard he might be in town. But that was to--

VAN MEER

Wait a second, you went to see his mother? So, you were looking for him?

JIMMY

No, I was--

VAN MEER

He probably assumed you wanted to get in touch.

(growing impatient)

Mr. Munson, has this man actually made threats?

JIMMY

Not in so many words. It's more what he's *implying*...

VAN MEER

Doesn't quite sound like harassment. But since he's got a history, I'll put in a call to his P.O. -- make sure they've got a sharp eye on him. That's all I can do.

JIMMY

(blurting it)

I think he might be using again. He had a pretty serious habit.

VAN MEER
 (eyeing Jimmy)
 You have any evidence of that?

Jimmy thinks better of it, shakes his head. Van Meer gathers some papers and rises.

VAN MEER
 We know where to reach you.

INT. MRS. MCCLURE'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. McClure potters to the kitchen in an old flowery robe, followed by Jimmy. The place is getting bare, like a museum packing up and shutting its doors forever.

JIMMY
 Sorry I skipped out last time. A little overwhelmed, I guess.

MRS. MCLURE
 Wasted a perfectly good soda.

They arrive in the kitchen, where dozens of boxes are being packed and labeled -- all the treasures of a lifetime. The table is littered with dusty wine bottles. Mrs. McClure sits, begins wiping them clean.

MRS. MCCLURE
 Can I fix you something? A sandwich maybe?

JIMMY
 No thanks, I--

MRS. MCCLURE
 (smiling sadly)
 Was saving all these for the right occasions. Guess there were plenty-- just didn't seem so at the time.

She hands a bottle to Jimmy.

MRS. MCCLURE
 Keep your house in order Jimmy. I know you young folks don't think much about it, but...

JIMMY
 (suddenly)
 Maggie, I'm worried about Vincent.

MRS. MCCLURE
Oh, he's doing just fine.

JIMMY
I talked with him last night. I got the feeling he's...thinkin' of doing something stupid.

MRS. MCCLURE
Stupid? Like what? He on those damn drugs again?

JIMMY
I think maybe if you called him, talked some sense...it might set him straight.

She suddenly slumps over, begins hacking violently for breath. Jimmy, mortified, stretches out a hand. She waves it away, finally regains herself. Talks as if nothing had happened.

MRS. MCCLURE
I can't call him, Jimmy.

JIMMY
Why not?

MRS. MCCLURE
He's gone to Cimmaron with his parole program. They're digging ditches for those flood victims -- isn't that wonderful?

Jimmy turns ashen, kneads his hands nervously.

MRS. MCCLURE
I wish I'd been awake when he left the message. Said he loved me. Doesn't say that too often.

Jimmy is stiff with dread. Mrs. McClure pulls her robes tighter.

MRS. MCCLURE
Getting real cold out there.

JIMMY
Could you...try him anyway?

MRS. MCCLURE
I already did. There's no answer.

Jimmy drifts towards the front door, dazed. She follows him.

JIMMY
Thank you, Maggie.

As he steps on to the porch.

MRS. MCCLURE
 Jimmy! You forgot your wine!
 (hands it to him)
 Don't wait too long to open it.

Jimmy stands regarding the bottle. Then, A VOICE, one we've heard recently. Sergeant Van Meer.

VAN MEER (O.S.)
 ...seems Mr. McClure failed to report in to his parole officer. But with his type of recidivism, this is fairly routine. Probably off on another bender...

INT. JIMMY'S STUDY - EVENING

Jimmy paces, agitated, phone in hand.

JIMMY
 So what you're saying is, you won't do anything until this guy shows up at my door and puts a goddamn bullet in me!

VAN MEER (O.S.)
 Sir, there's absolutely no indication he intends to cross state lines, or to do you any harm. This is a routine--

JIMMY
 ROUTINE WHAT? HE'S COMING HERE!!
 What's it gonna take?!!

VAN MEER (O.S.)
 Mr. Munson, if you'd like to talk to a counselor--

Jimmy slams down the phone, head reeling.

SERIES OF SHOTS as Jimmy locks down the house.

- Jimmy knocks several flowerpots over as he shoves a stubborn window closed, secures the latch.

- He slides the safety chain on the front door. Bolts the back. Pushes a heavy table against the rickety patio entrance.

- Jimmy nails plywood over a shattered window in the garage.

- Blinds being lowered. More latches thrown. Doorknobs checked.

JIMMY'S STUDY - LATER

Jimmy, at his laptop, removes his glasses and rubs the bridge of his nose. It's late.

RAIN chatters on the window. DISTANT RUMBLING, flashes of LIGHTNING.

He goes to the bar-cart under the window, pours himself a scotch. And as he tilts his head back to drink--

POV - outside the window, lit in a strobe of lightning, is a hulking SILHOUETTE hefting a rifle. The WINDOW EXPLODES and--

Jimmy crashes back clutching his throat which fountains blood and we--

SHOCK CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE - a WHIRL OF BEDSHEETS being flung aside and--

We FOLLOW a pair of bare feet racing over the carpet, down the hall and into a room where--

LIGHTS GO ON in JIMMY'S STUDY -- the room we were just in. Jimmy, in boxers, scans the room, face flushed and sweating.

POV - The scotch tumbler is empty. Computer off. Window intact.

Deirdre runs in moments later.

DEIRDRE

What?! What is it?!!

Apprehensive, he inches up to the rain-streaked window.

REVERSE ANGLE - OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Jimmy's face pressed up against the glass. Hands cupped, squinting into the rain-fouled night. To his horror, he spots--

Footprints in the muddy ground, pooled with water.

He reels from the window, back against the wall. And in the doorway, Deirdre stands incredulous.

JIMMY

Somebody's out there! There are
are footprints!

Deirdre comes closer, spooked -- but mostly by Jimmy.

JIMMY

No, don't--

DEIRDRE

Cut it out!

She slaps his hand away, puts her face to the window. Then deflates and turns to Jimmy.

DEIRDRE

I cleaned the windows yesterday, remember? Those are my prints-- from the goddamn hose.

Jimmy digests that, lets his defenses down a notch.

DEIRDRE

Jimmy...what's going on?

JIMMY

I had this...just a dream...

DEIRDRE

No, I mean what's going on? The past couple of weeks. What's happening to you? (beat) I want to help.

He locks eyes with her on this last comment.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

LOW ANGLE - THE ROAD, racing at us in the harsh glare of morning. We fly past a grizzled carcass on the shoulder.

INT. CAR - SAME TIME

DEIRDRE

What am I supposed to think? You're...living your life by what some crackpot fortune teller said?

JIMMY

What happens when that crackpot is right about everything?

DEIRDRE

I'd say he's a pretty good guesser.

JIMMY

Maybe you don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

DEIRDRE

Hey--!

JIMMY

(ignoring her anger)

When we get there, you go in alone. Tell him you want a reading. Ask about the future. Not just yours-- ours. Marriage, kids, the whole deal. What are our lives going to be like?

DEIRDRE

(staring ahead)

Marriage and kids? News to me.

JIMMY

If he says anything's gonna happen to me, you ask him exactly what. Press him. Lay on the tears if you have to. (beat) Fucker has a problem answering a direct question.

DEIRDRE

(with a sigh)

Whatever you say, Jimmy...

EXT. PARKING LOT/TAVERN - DAY

Jimmy hops out of his car, scans the lot. The spot last inhabited by Vacaro's camper is now empty.

JIMMY

He was right here. Right here.

Deirdre watches silently, not sure what to think. Jimmy heads for the nearby tavern, then is stopped by--

POV - A VENDOR'S CART. Lined with hundreds of ceramic figurines, including rows of identical JACKALOPES.

INT. BAR - MINUTES LATER

Jimmy, with Deirdre in tow, moves for the bar. He flags the Bartender, who ambles over.

BARTENDER

What can I--hey! You're the fella sells floors. Glad you came back, I been thinkin'--

JIMMY

The RV parked out there. The old

silver one, with the fortune guy.
Know where it went?

BARTENDER

A lot of comin' and goin' around
here. He sometimes vanishes for
weeks at a time.

(remembering)

Hey, Marcy!

Ms. Levis looks up from her book. Smiles, remembering Jimmy --
then scowls at the sight of Deirdre.

BARTENDER

Wasn't someone else in here
'quirin' about the old man?

WAITRESS

Yeah, people are always lookin' for
him. Satisfied customers, I guess...

JIMMY

Know how long he's been gone?

WAITRESS

Fella was in here, oh, about four
days back.

JIMMY

He say where he was going?

WAITRESS

Never says much. (then--) Oh wait,
he had a map open. The campgrounds
at Abiquiu. I spilled coffee on
it. He was a gentleman, though.

Jimmy turns to Deirdre, a glimmer of hope.

BARTENDER

Listen, about that Wurlitzer. How
much do you think--?

But Jimmy is already half-way out the door.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - EVENING

Deirdre slips on her seat belt, Jimmy is going too fast. He's
agitated, overheating. Close to coming unhinged.

DEIRDRE

Abiquiu is two hours! Can't we--

JIMMY
 (checking his rearview)
 That fucker's been on our ass since
 Espanola. You notice that?

POV - REARVIEW. A set of headlights creeps up on them.

Jimmy curses, then reaches under his seat, comes up holding the
 .38 he'd bought earlier. Deirdre's eyes go white.

DEIRDRE
 Jimmy! JESUS, where'd you--?

JIMMY
 What? You think I'm going to rely
 on the cops?

DEIRDRE
 Put that away! You know how I
 feel--

JIMMY
 Get down!

Jimmy grips the weapon as the headlights overtake his car. The
 vehicle behind inches up, and as it does--

POV - two travelers in ridiculous hats nod a hello to Jimmy as
 they blow past him.

DEIRDRE
 PUT IT AWAY!!

Jimmy, flustered, finally listens. Deirdre catches her breath.

DEIRDRE
 Jimmy, it's time you got help.
 This isn't funny anymore.

Jimmy suddenly begins chuckling. Deirdre is freaked.

DEIRDRE
 This is amusing?

JIMMY
 The first snow. The old man said
 I was safe till the first snow.
 It's okay. We're okay.

Deirdre softens, tries a different tack.

DEIRDRE
 You're going to live to be on old
 fart, just like your Dad. This
 fortune teller -- it's gotta be

some kind of sick joke.

JIMMY

(hasn't heard her)

Bet I could get away with *anything*
till that first snow. Step out in
front of a truck -- it would swerve,
last second. It would have to.
Jump out a tenth story window...

An idea suddenly strikes him. He shuts the car's lights off.

PITCH BLACK. The straight stretch of highway vanishes.

DEIRDRE

JIMMY!

JIMMY

Relax, relax. We're okay, baby.
Nothing's going to hurt us.

Deep in the distance a set of headlights grows nearer.

DEIRDRE

STOP FUCKING AROUND!

The headlights approach, begin to blind us. Just as they seem to
swallow us up--the oncoming car ROARS past, HORN BLARING.
Jimmy's way over the yellow line.

Deirdre begins flailing at Jimmy with clumsy blows. It snaps him
out of his stupor.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The car screeches on the shoulder. Deirdre storms out, Jimmy
following. Tears are streaming down her face, her arms hugging
her shoulders.

JIMMY

Hey, kid, I'm sorry--I didn't...

Deirdre explodes in a fury, as Jimmy attempts to embrace her.

DEIRDRE

You're a maniac! You're sick!

JIMMY

C'mon, get back in the car. Please.

She considers for a moment -- then wipes her eyes, sticks out her
thumb to an approaching pickup.

JIMMY

Dee...

The truck slows for her. Deirdre leans in, explaining something to the driver. She regards Jimmy, then gets in the pickup -- which pulls a U-turn and speeds off. Jimmy watches the tail-lights vanish into the night.

EXT. ABIQUIU CAMPGROUNDS - DAWN

Late-autumn desolate. Trees stretch and dance in the wind sweeping off the lake. Jimmy's car seems to rise from the landscape as it draws near.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - SAME TIME

He's forward in his seat, scanning the terrain. Suddenly his exhausted eyes hone in. The car stops, idles. Then--

POV - deep in the distance, a yellow square of window-light.

Jimmy reaches to the dash and kills the headlights.

EXT. VACARO'S CAMPER - MINUTES LATER

Jimmy slips out of the scrub and inches towards the door. He braces a moment, then watches the door sway lazily open in the breeze. He steps up cautiously.

INT. RV - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy finds Vacaro at the table mending a trout lure. He looks up -- distressed, though not particularly surprised.

VACARO

Mr. Munson. (beat) Do you fish?

Jimmy slumps against the wall, waiting for Vacaro to say more.

JIMMY

I'm here. Goddammit, you got me all the way out here. What... what do I need to do?

VACARO

I don't understand...

JIMMY

What is the game? You...you want money from me, to erase the curse?
(laughs nervously)

That it? I mean -- you gotta give me the punchline!

Fear flickers across Vacaro's face, as Jimmy pulls out the .38 and approaches. He rests the gun on the table, sits opposite him.

JIMMY
You see, I don't know the rules here. Tell me the rules.

VACARO
I'm afraid I don't--

Jimmy lashes out instinctively, smacking the old man with the gun. A trickle of blood runs from his lip.

JIMMY
How far are you going to take it?
I mean, WHEN DOES IT END?!!

Jimmy points the pistol. Vacaro reaches slowly for it.

VACARO
(leaning in)
We both know you won't use that.
Please hand it to me.

JIMMY
Saw that in my future, did you?
Maybe...I'll blow your brains out
anyway, show you I can change the
script -- anytime I want!

Vacaro's hand is almost at the trembling barrel now. Jimmy's finger pressures the trigger.

Jimmy quivers with strain as Vacaro's fingers close around the weapon -- gently twisting it free, then resting it on the table.

JIMMY
(deflating, near tears)
I've got a little money. Maybe
I can get some more. Just make it
stop -- tell me what to do.

VACARO
I want nothing from you, Mr. Munson.
I am a retired farmer with an imper-
fect gift. It pays for food, gas --
but I have no other needs.

The realization crashes over Jimmy, and he begins sobbing.

JIMMY
You shouldn't have told me!

VACARO

I am sorry I did. But you'd have persisted until you knew. It is in your nature.

A flicker of hope suddenly lights Jimmy's eyes.

JIMMY

I could take precautions, if I knew. When...how...

(reaching out his hand)
You can see that, can't you?

VACARO

Your fate lies on whatever road you choose. Even if you choose to run from it.

JIMMY

I, I read in this book...a gypsy told this woman her dog was gonna be run over. It was *destined*. So the lady started bein' real careful, tyin' the dog up and everything. (beat) And it never happened. She changed the future. It...must be possible.

VACARO

Who's to say, Mr. Munson...

JIMMY

(hand out again)
You've got to tell me!
(on Vacaro's silence)
It's my friend, isn't it? A friend from the past. He thinks I fucked him over -- he's coming to even things up.

VACARO

(eyebrow lifted)
You see more than you think.

Jimmy rises, mind racing. Vacaro dabs at his bloody mouth.

JIMMY

There's got to be a way to slip through. Maybe -- it's some kind of test. A debt I have to clear. Then I get my future back. Couldn't that be it?

VACARO

These are not matters for men to

decide. Go live your life. There are still things you can change.

JIMMY
(teeth gritted)
Shouldn't have told me!

VACARO
Think of all those who departed this life without warning -- you might have been one of them. In some ways, you've been blessed.

JIMMY
(laughs bitterly)
BLESSED!?

VACARO
To live without blinders. To prepare -- for a good death.

Jimmy gives a hard stare, retrieves the gun and moves for the door. He looks back.

JIMMY
I don't want a good death. I want to live. And I'm not gonna lie down-- I don't care *who's* decided for me.

He shoves the door open, steps into the growing daylight outside.

INT. SERVICE STATION/MARKET - DAY

Jimmy hands the cashier some money, is unnerved by a strange smile on the clerk's face. He looks back over his shoulder.

POV - outside, Jimmy's car sits at the pump, gas nozzle still attached. And drifting down on the scene is a faint, almost imperceptible scattering of SNOWFLAKES.

Jimmy's face goes white as he shuffles towards the door.

CLERK (O.S.)
Sir! Your change!

EXT. SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy quickens the pace towards his car, nearly knocking over a kid who's staring wondrously up at the snow. He brushes flakes from his arm, as if they were corrosive acid.

He jumps into his Camry, struggles to get it started, slams the wheel in anger. The car ROARS to life and Jimmy shifts into gear, ignoring--

VOICE (O.S.)

Sir! SIR!! HEY ASSHOLE!!!

Jimmy SQUEALS out of the lot; a loud SNAP as the gas nozzle is yanked from his tank and clatters to the blacktop.

INT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jimmy bursts in and chains the door behind him.

JIMMY

Deirdre! Dee!

LIVING ROOM

Jimmy enters the room, then stops dead. Deirdre sits on the couch, knees together. Ed's by the bar, drink in hand. Heaviness in the air.

ED

You're out of bourbon, hombre.

JIMMY

What's going on?

Ed puts down the glass, fixes Jimmy with a serious eye.

ED

Tell you the truth, Jimbo -- we're both a little worried about you. 'Bout what's been going on the past few weeks.

Deirdre rises, takes a few steps towards him.

DEIRDRE

You...need to see someone.

She holds a card out to Jimmy. He takes it.

DEIRDRE

He's a friend of my folks. Maybe he could--

JIMMY

A shrink?

(laughs to himself)

Your folks know any voodoo priests?

He flings the card away, regards Ed.

JIMMY

You been fucking her too, Giacomo? I know you were always fond of her tits...

ED

Not even going to respond...

Jimmy storms from the room. Deirdre follows him into--

THE BEDROOM

Jimmy grabs a duffel bag, starts tossing clothes into it.

DEIRDRE

Remember what you said about your dad being manic-depressive? And how you could never reach him, and that drove you--

JIMMY

(spins to face her)
This isn't a nervous breakdown. This is happening! There's an ex-con stoved up on smack and revenge -- and he's on his way here with a loaded gun, as we sit here talking BULLSHIT!

Ed appears in the doorway. Jimmy continues packing.

ED

You really believe that?

Jimmy's about to answer when headlights sweep across the window blinds. He leaps into action, switches off the light and peers through the slats. Tense seconds, then--

JIMMY

We can't stay here.

ED

What do you got here, Jimmy? What do you got that's concrete? And don't give me this...fortune teller crap--

Jimmy turns to both of them.

JIMMY

You've got all the time in the world, both of you -- all your dreams intact. You can see tomorrow and tomorrow, and the day after that.

(hefts the bag)
Wait till your bubble bursts!

Ed tails him back to the--

LIVING ROOM

ED
You're doing it to yourself! Digging
shit up, interpreting meaningless--

JIMMY
Hey, why don't you kick back, have
another beer? Smoke a jay, put on
some groovy tunes. The 'Ed Jacamo'
secret to life.

ED
(calling after him)
Ignorant bliss is highly under-
rated, my friend.

DEIRDRE
Jimmy -- where are you going?

But he's already gone, trailed by the slamming door.

FADE IN FROM BLACK:

We TRACK along a dimly lit room, spotting a rumpled bed --
littered with dozens of unopened cans of food.

We continue on to the night table, where a .38 pistol lies next
to the phone -- the chord dangling out of its jack.

Finally we reach Jimmy, haggard and unshaven, peering out through
the blinds into the harsh sunlight. Hears something and--

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Jimmy rushes to the TV and turns up the volume--

POV - THE SCREEN, an ANNOUNCER gestures before a regional map.

ANNOUNCER
...and continuing clear skies and
high temps in the Albuquerque region,
despite scattered flurries earlier
in the week. Bad news for skiers...

Jimmy returns to the door, checks on a chair wedged under the
knob. Double checks the lock and safety chain. Paces over the
green shag carpet in the cramped, dingy room.

LATER

Jimmy is still pacing, carrying the plugged-in phone, receiver to his ear.

VAN MEER (O.S.)

...same thing I told you this morning -- he was spotted on a security camera two days ago, holding up a Texaco. An APB's gone out on the wire -- he's not gonna get far.

JIMMY

So basically, nobody's got a fucking clue where he is...where he's going?

VAN MEER (O.S.)

(getting steamed)

Mr. Munson, he robbed a gas station near Tulsa! That means he's probably traveling away from your vicinity. Now those folks down there are handling it, and I'd appreciate it if you'd let us--

Jimmy slams down the phone. Seized with anger, he rips the chord from the wall.

LATER

Strips of daylight through the blinds. A CAR DOOR slams, VOICES.

Jimmy barrels out of the bathroom, holding his pants up. He spies out the window.

LATER

Jimmy is sprawled on the bed. A BACKFIRE from the parking lot tears him from his slumber. He leaps up -- regains himself, shakes his head to clear it.

At the nighttable, he pops a No-Doz from its foil. Turns up the TV's volume to blaring.

LATER

In the dark, the glow of the 24-hour Weather Channel. The same updates on an endless loop.

Jimmy sits, back against the wall, rocking, mumbling. The solitary confinement beginning to feast on his sanity. It's unclear how many days he's been in here.

LATER

A plastic fork stabs at dry flaking tuna. He doesn't have the stomach, tosses it in the trash with a heap of empty cans.

Another No-Doz is pressed out.

LATER

Through the darkness, a single snowflake floats down in swirling, hypnotic spirals. Then another, and another, and--

A terrible SCREAM tears the stillness and--

Jimmy launches off the bed, shrieking -- trips over something and crashes to the floor.

Someone BANGS on the DOOR now.

Jimmy trains his gun. Wild eyed, a week's worth of beard.

VOICE (O.S.)

What's goin' on in there?

Jimmy cocks the gun. The BANGING continues, pushing him to the edge. He extends the .38, bracing for the explosion.

JIMMY

GO AWAY! I'LL SHOOT!

The BANGING ceases. Aching stillness.

Finally, he dares to the window, peeping out the slats with nervous, bloodshot eyes.

POV - OUTSIDE. A hint of desolate dawn. Snowfree.

LATER

Jimmy falls to his knees and begins to sob. A deep racking that reaches down into his soul.

Crumbling from the insides out, he flops against the wall. Beyond exhaustion, beyond hope. Without respite. He looks down--

CLOSE ON - THE GUN. We hold...and hold...then--

Jimmy, as the horrible thought begins to build. Trembling, he lifts the gun to his temple. Can't make himself do it. Shifts the gun, which now points at his heart.

JIMMY

--can change the script anytime
I want...

He begins laughing, the irony of the situation dawning. He returns the gun to his head, bites down, squints -- and there's a long moment where the disparate forces in him do battle.

Finally, he lets the gun drop -- gasping, unable to cry. The urge to live wins. Then -- he is mesmerized by something out of frame.

POV - THE BLINDS as something dances and flickers behind them.

Jimmy struggles up, makes a peephole in the blinds. And outside--

POV - the SNOW has begun to fall. Heavy wet flakes, a thick layer already coating the tarmac.

Jimmy turns, looks at the gun on the carpet. His eyes hold in them the blank terror of the place he has just passed through.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

CLOSE ON - THE DOOR LOCK. Being undone. The chain slipped off.

From behind, we see Jimmy opening the door. The light outside burns everything a shimmering white.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy emerges, the gaunt prisoner, .38 in hand. He regards the falling snow for a few moments, then steps out into it.

He lifts his face, lets the flakes cover him, cleanse him. Feeling their cold, fresh sting all the way to his marrow.

Jimmy moves further into the parking lot -- suddenly looking tiny against the surrounding blanket of white. Tears come, then laughter, as a calm resignation takes hold -- the futility of running any more.

The gun slips from his hand as he walks further away from us -- finally being swallowed up by the blinding whiteness.

INT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tomb-like, then--

The front door opens and Jimmy enters, bag in hand. He stops center room, gazing about. Lets the bag drop.

SERIES OF SHOTS

--Blinds being yanked up, letting the sun back in.

--The patio door shoved open, the breeze making curtains dance.

--Wilted plants receive water.

--Jimmy in a steaming shower.

--In EXTREME CLOSE-UP, a razor cuts through old stubble.

THE KITCHEN

Jimmy regards the real-estate clipping on the fridge. The house and land in Taos. Pulls the clipping off.

THE STUDY

Jimmy stares at the answering machine, the frantic light blinking '37'. He presses 'CLEAR' and they are gone. Then takes the machine, disconnects it and drops it in the trash.

EXT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jimmy stretches back on a lawnchair, in jeans and a summer shirt. A serenity about him now. The patio around him is covered with snow.

He takes a sip from his wine glass, Mrs. McClure's opened bottle on the table beside him.

POV - Clouds sail past in a robin's egg-blue sky. A kid in the next yard flails around in the powder. A mailman trudges along his daily route.

There is an almost surreal feel to the world. Hyper-clear. Every image and sound, razor sharp.

He lights a cigarette. Inhales deeply, savoring the smoke. Gut unclenched, completely in the moment.

The cordless PHONE RINGS. Several times. Jimmy reaches for it.

JIMMY

Hello?

VINCENT (O.S.)

Jesus, Jimbo -- where you been hiding? Got the feeling you were avoidin' me.

JIMMY

Had some things to take care of. But I'm right here.

VINCENT (O.S.)

Well shit, the plan's all in tatters,

owing to your little vanishing act.
I've had to keep moving.

JIMMY
Heard you were in Tulsa. Cops
say you robbed a Texaco.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Nasty rumors. I borrowed some
traveling cash.

JIMMY
(calmly)
What do you want, Vincent?

VINCENT (O.S.)
What do I want? I thought you were
up for a little reunion. Have a
few laughs, tell old stories.

JIMMY
(after a silence)
All right.

VINCENT (O.S.)
(taken aback)
You're...not setting me up, are ya
Jimbo? I'm counting on you not to
fuck this up.

JIMMY
I'll be there -- alone.

VINCENT (O.S.)
Good, Jimmy. I got your word on
that.
(a few heavy beats)
I'm glad you're coming...

JIMMY
When and where?

VINCENT (O.S.)
Tomorrow night -- I gotta find my-
self another car. You remember the
old train depot outside Cerrillos?
You believe that's still standing?

INT. JIMMY'S KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Jimmy reaches for a card wedged behind the phone. We see--

POV - 'SGT. DANIEL VAN MEER' and a phone number.

He regards it a long moment, then crumples it in his fist.

INT. JIMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Jimmy sits on his desk, eyes scanning the room. Sees--

An in-box heaped with paperwork...a pile of phone message slips...rows of sales awards, photos...his swollen Filofax...

A KNOCK on his door is followed by Roy Harris. Jimmy rises.

JIMMY

Roy.

ROY

Jimmy, good to have you back. Everything...kosher? Ed's been handling your accounts, but -- do I need to be concerned here?

Jimmy is quiet for a few moments. A decision brewing. Then--

JIMMY

A personal situation, Roy. Taken care of. It won't interfere again.

He fixes his boss with a reassuring nod -- his confident serenity erasing all Roy's doubts.

JIMMY

We still set on those Wurlitzers?

ROY

Green is sittin' in Southwest Federal, waiting for your lazy ass...

JIMMY

Great.

ROY

(slaps Jimmy's shoulder)
Let's roll then, let's make us some money.

(turning to go)

Still my number one guy, Jimbo.

INT. BANK - DAY

Jimmy sits across the computer from a MANAGER. Their easy rapport suggests they've done business for years.

MANAGER

(typing, shrugging)

--all right, you're *the man* Jimmy.
 You sure you want to be hefting
 that kind of cash around in a tote
 bag? I mean, we could wire it no
 problem...

JIMMY

(hands him a duffel)
 You kiddin' me? These guys are ex-
 gamblers -- pals of Meyer Lansky.
 Greenbacks only, preferably in a
 black leather suitcase...
 (as the Manager grins)
 Don't think they trust us *desert
 rats*.

They share a laugh as the Manager rises, heads to the vault.

INT. WIRE OFFICE - DAY

The Clerk finishes counting stacks of hundreds, eyebrow raised at
 the sum, then gathers and bundles them.

Jimmy is handed a bright yellow receipt, nods to the Clerk. Then
 he grabs the tote bag, still laden with cash, and exits.

INT. FIREHOUSE PUB - DAY

Jimmy enters the bar, spots Ed at the far end.

BARTENDER

Hey, Jimbalaya! Happened to you?
 Rumor mill's been working O.T.!

ROY

Ah, little touch of ebola, nothin'
 serious. Give me the usual, and
 (nods) one for that shoplifter
 down at the end.

He makes his way to Ed. They regard each other for a moment,
 then Ed pulls out the seat beside him. Jimmy sits.

ED

Good to see ya.

JIMMY

Likewise.

ED

...everything, you know, copasetic?

JIMMY
...yeah. (then) Sorry for being
such an asshole.

ED
Ah, maybe...I was a dick too.

JIMMY
Well, it's nice for an asshole
like me to have a dick like you
for a friend.

They crack up -- then harder, nearly to tears. Ed lights up a
smoke, offers one to Jimmy. To his surprise, he accepts.

ED
You seem...different. You smoke a
big fat jay prior to comin' here?

Jimmy shakes his head. Ed studies him.

ED
What happened out there?

Jimmy plays with the rivulets of water on his beer.

ED
It's okay, if you don't--

JIMMY
No, I...I'm not really sure.
(thinks hard)
You heard about those weather guys
who fly into hurricanes? When they
get past all that black fury into
the center, it's suddenly real calm.
Look up, there's the sun. And
stillness. A little paradise right
in the middle of hell.


Ed chews on that for a moment.

ED
This is where you're at?

JIMMY
Best I can describe it.

ED
That means you're still in the storm.

JIMMY
It's a good place to be. However
long it lasts.



Ed's BEEPER goes off. He glances at it, annoyed.

ED

Well shit, you get nirvana, and I
get Espanola. Damn! Wanna come?

Jimmy shakes his head, holds up his beer and smoke. No way.

ED

See you tomorrow?

JIMMY

Okay, hombre.

Before Ed reaches the door--

ED

Should give your lady a call sometime...

Jimmy smiles as Ed leaves. He finishes up his beer. Stands and fishes in his pockets.

JIMMY

Hey Sammy. I'll clear out my tab.

BARTENDER

Huh? It's not end of month.

JIMMY

's okay.

The Bartender dips behind the register and pulls out a sheaf. Jimmy counts out the bills and lays them down.

JIMMY

Hey Sam -- you're an amazing barman,
know that?

BARTENDER

Huh?

JIMMY

Just wanted to say it. I've really
enjoyed your work over the years.

BARTENDER

(first time ever)

Uhh...thanks.

Jimmy knocks twice on the bar, turns, and heads out -- glancing back at what has been his home away from home. Sammy assesses his domain, stands a little taller.

By the door, he spots a veteran barfly searching his palm for some jukebox change. Jimmy fishes out a twenty, feeds it into the juke, then pats the oldster on the back.

JIMMY

Play a few for me, willya?

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A HITCHHIKER, even more Manson-esque than the earlier ones, raises his thumb. Runs alongside Jimmy's car as it slows.

HITCHER

'preciate it, man. Tryin' to get to Colorado before--

The Hitcher glances in the window. Jimmy calmly staring ahead. The tote stuffed full of cash lying on the passenger seat. Thinks a second, then--

HITCHER

You know...I could really use the exercise--

Jimmy shrugs and tears off.

EXT. ANDY LOPEZ'S HOUSE - DAY

Andy opens the door, surprised to see Jimmy.

ANDY

What do you want, 'maricone? You pressin' charges now?

Jimmy slips the yellow wire receipt into a folder -- then holds the folder out to Andy.

JIMMY

Wurlitzer 1015's. Most popular jukebox in the history of man. Got fifty grand worth of 'em paid for, sitting in a warehouse in Florida.

(nods to the folder)

Got the leads right here. This is a winner. You interested?

ANDY

(overwhelmed)

Thought this was...your big ticket out of flooring.

JIMMY

I need a guy to manage it for me.

I think you're the guy. (beat) This isn't charity--what do you say?

Lopez weighs the file in his hand, shakes his head, laughs.

ANDY

I say you're crazy, gringo.
(then all serious)
But sure -- I'll have a look, let you know what I think.

JIMMY

Good. Your name's already on the account.
(nodding)
You'll do fine.

Andy, stunned, watches Jimmy hurry off.

EXT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jimmy gets out of his car, struck at the sight of Deirdre emerging from the house, bag in hand. They stop, regard each other.

DEIRDRE

Heard you were...out of jail.
(Jimmy nods)
Just came by to get some clothes.
Headin' home for a week -- Dad's been sick again.
(a long silence)
Well...I gotta go.

She moves for her car, Jimmy stops her -- holds her dearly. She resists, then begins crying, burying her face on his shoulder.

INT. JIMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room in shambles, the aftermath of make-up sex. Dee lies on Jimmy's chest, laughs to herself.

DEIRDRE

This feels like...an affair.

Jimmy stares up at the fan, something on his mind.

JIMMY

Listen, maybe we'll...take a ride to Taos next weekend. Have a look at those ten acres. Sick of paying rent on this place.

DEIRDRE
 (lifts her head)
 You serious?

JIMMY
 Gave 'em a deposit, didn't I?

Deirdre is overjoyed, speechless. She squeals, smothers Jimmy with kisses.

JIMMY
 Stay here. Don't go to Denver.

DEIRDRE
 It's just a few days. Back before
 you know I'm gone.
 (now serious)
 I really love you, James Munson.

Jimmy kisses her hard, pulls her closer.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Jimmy and Deirdre say goodbye on the snow-coated platform.

DEIRDRE
 See ya Wednesday, *stud*... Don't
 you dare change your mind about Taos!

He kisses her again, doesn't want to let go. Watches her brown hair tossing around in the wind.

DEIRDRE
 Gonna miss my train, Jimmy.
 (he releases her)
 Call you when I get there.

She boards and waves to him, blows him silly kisses.

JIMMY
 It's gonna be okay, Dee.

She wonders what he means by that as the door closes on them. The train pulls away and he keeps alongside, trying to spot her through a window. It picks up speed, then is gone.

There's nothing else to do. He turns and walks away.

INT. JIMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON - DOCUMENTS. We glimpse the header: "AETNA LIFE INSURANCE". They're put conspicuously in the top drawer.

THE FOYER

Neatly dressed, tote bag of cash in hand, Jimmy looks over his home. A thousand things left undone -- but he's out of time. He steps out, killing the lights behind him.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - DUSK

The highway at sundown. The white-capped Sandia Mountains are a breathtaking purple and pink as the sun sets on them.

EXT. DESERTED DEPOT - NIGHT

Ruins of a Santa Fe passenger depot. Crumbling brick and wood structures left to rot.

Jimmy's car bumps along the dirt road, squeaks to a halt. It sits there a moment, then the engine goes silent. Headlights remain on.

He exits and steps into the lights to show himself. Swivels around -- no signs of life.

JIMMY
(calling out)
Vincent! (beat) I'm alone.

Just the faint WIND, tugging at withered slats. Then--

From the doorway of an old guard's shack extends an arm, playfully waving a pint of Wild Turkey. The hand vanishes inside.

Jimmy walks slowly towards it. Turns and enters.

INT. GUARD BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The headlights partially illuminate the room. A rusted steel desk, two crates for chairs.

Jimmy steps into the wash. A FIGURE in the shadows swigs from the bottle, then emerges -- transforming into VINCENT MCCLURE.

Wild-eyed and unshaven, heavily on the slide. Smaller than we might have expected -- more Buscemi than DeNiro.

JIMMY
(calmly faces him)
Hello, Vince.

VINCENT
(an eye toward the door)
Actually showed up without the

cavalry. (smiles) I'm proud of you, Jimbo.

Vincent gestures, Jimmy takes a "seat".

VINCENT

Figured this was a fitting place to meet up. You...remember the time the old man took us here? Pretended we were gold prospectors?

JIMMY

(nodding)

That was a good day.

Vincent moves closer, surveying his old friend -- in stark contrast to his own filthy, matted appearance.

VINCENT

Shit, you get all dressed up for me? Would've cleaned up myself, but -- (shrugs) Ritz was all booked.

(holds the bottle out)

Have a drink, Jimmy. Not too good to drink with me, are ya?

Jimmy accepts the bottle, swigs, hands it back to Vincent.

VINCENT

Feels good -- to be back home, hanging with a buddy. You know, I still consider you my best friend, even after everything? Friends like us, that don't wear out like old tires.

Jimmy spies Vincent fiddling with something under his shirt.

VINCENT

Used to imagine, you and me'd live next door to each other. Wives'd be best friends, our kids would play together. Maybe we'd even bring 'em here, to pan for gold.

And now Vincent removes a gun from his belt -- the same gray .38 Jimmy found under his mattress. He itches his chin with the barrel, places it on the table.

VINCENT

Why, Jimmy? Why'd you have to fuck all that up?

JIMMY

(shakes his head sadly)

Wish I could tell you.

VINCENT

What were we lookin' at -- a year apiece in Stillwater? Could've done that on our fucking heads. Share the same cell, tell jokes in the mess hall -- dream up crazy schemes for when we got out. We would've been all right.

Vincent drinks hard again, now rocking on his crate, agitated.

VINCENT

Suppose, though, that's none of your concern. Not your responsibility, my fucked up life--

Vincent reaches for the bottle again, Jimmy grabs it too -- their hands touch. Vince releases it, allows Jimmy to drink. He fixes his eyes on Vincent, and after a long silence--

JIMMY

I am responsible. (beat) I sold you out to those Feds. I caved. But you always knew that.

Vincent rubs his head like it's pounding -- clearly unprepared for a full confession. Jimmy leans closer to him.

JIMMY

Six hours they grilled me in that fucking sweatbox -- I kept askin' them please to give me a drink of water. After a while I...just started yessin' them, tellin' them whatever they needed to hear. Just to get out of that goddamn room.

Jimmy takes another swig. Vince is on his feet now, pacing, the gun dangling in his hand.

VINCENT

Ever think of tellin' 'em the truth, Jimmy? No elaborate laundering operation...no secret drug routes... just two stupid gringos in over their heads! (beat) You coulda backed off--after you had your drink of water--told 'em you got it all wrong. Shouldered some of the weight with me!

Jimmy's stooped over, head in his hands.

JIMMY

I was...scared. Scared of jail.

Vincent tears something out of his pocket -- an age-yellowed letter. He flings it at Jimmy, who reluctantly picks it up. Knows what it is.

VINCENT

Read it! I've read it so many times, got it memorized. "I'm gonna hire us a lawyer, Vincenzo, a good lawyer--prove we were manipulated by those FBI fucks! I'm getting you out of that hell-hole!"
(shaking his head)
What about it, Jimbo? Happened to the plan? No lookin' back, that it?

JIMMY

Nobody...would touch the case. God, if I could turn back--

VINCENT

A man's sinkin' in quicksand, you DON'T KICK HIM IN THE TEETH!! You grab his hand, try to pull him out!

Vince is at a boil now, his fury bubbling up faster than he can think.

VINCENT

Like my own fucking mother! I show up there two days ago, she runs and calls my P.O.--

JIMMY

She's dying, Vince--she wants you to go straight--

Vincent reacts like he's been stung, clocks Jimmy with the gun.

VINCENT

SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH! My mother ain't--

Jimmy wipes his bleeding mouth. Looks back at Vincent, who's near tears.

JIMMY

I'm offering that hand now. There's some money in the front of my car. Fifty grand. To help you start over.

Vincent is frozen for a second, then approaches menacingly.

VINCENT

Always the salesman, eh Jimbo?

Still trying to...negotiate your way out of a scrape?
 (bursts into laughter)
 Fifty grand! Like tossin' a band-aid to a guy bleeding to death!

JIMMY

Not a bribe, Vincent. It's a gift.

Vincent shows Jimmy the needle tracks criss-crossing both arms, the roadmap of his ruined life. Then he wings the bottle -- it explodes against the wall.

VINCENT

Too late. I'm all bled out.
 (aims the gun at Jimmy)
 It's been eating at me a long time, how to set things straight. Then you showed up out of nowhere, and everything fell in place. Like it was all arranged...

Vincent grits his teeth, pained, like he's being torn to pieces inside. He points the gun right in Jimmy's face -- gripping the trigger, hand violently trembling.

Jimmy fights the fear, stares back into his friend's eyes. Prepared to die. Then Vincent grabs him in a hug, begins shoving him towards the doorway. Gun digging into Jimmy's chest.

VINCENT

Had this real prick of a cell-mate once--Rhodes was the guy's name. One time after mess, this schmuck head-butts a guard, grabs his .38 --was just like this one here...

Vincent starts laughing as he pushes Jimmy outside.

EXT. DEPOT - CONTINUOUS

VINCENT

And ol' Rhodesy, he's got the guard pressed up next to him, like us right now, and he's screamin' "back!, back!, I'm walkin' outta here, or this pig gets it!" So finally, the guards charge him -- old Rhodes pulls the trigger, and--
 (now cracking up)
 --bullet goes through both their skulls, ends up in a fuckin' dinner tray, hundred yards away. Asshole blew his own brains out!!

Vincent is sweating heavily now, shaking all over despite his cackling. He pushes Jimmy to his knees.

Vincent walks over to the car, opens the passenger door. Returns with the bag of cash. Drops it in the dirty snow next to Jimmy.

VINCENT

Well I do thank you for the thought, Jimbo. But it ain't what I had in mind.

(yanks Jimmy to his feet)

Let's do it, partner. Two birds, one stone. Butch & Sundance -- out in a blaze of glory.

He kisses Jimmy's forehead, hugs him again, their heads pressed tightly side to side. Vincent raises the gun to his own temple.

VINCENT

We're gonna be some team in the next world, know that? Unstoppable! But no more lying, okay? Gotta be straight with me, from now on.

Jimmy feebly attempts to loose himself, but Vincent's got him like a vice.

JIMMY

Don't. We can drive away from here. Start over. Things can be just like we--

VINCENT

It's too late. This is better. Won't feel anything.

Vincent is calmer. The .38 is no longer quivering.

VINCENT

(cocks the gun)

Here we go, Jimbo. Ready?

(grits his teeth)

Amigos till the end! See ya on the other side, hombre!

JIMMY

VINCENT--!!

A DEAFENING EXPLOSION as the gun fires. The SCREEN GOES BLACK.

Silence. Then a low RINGING. We FADE IN to a blood-spattered Jimmy and Vincent, lying in the snow, still in an embrace.

After a long moment, Jimmy's eyes open -- blinking frantically. He clumsily rises and Vincent slides off him.

Jimmy presses his ears, the RINGING continues. He looks around, dazed, in shock. Feels his temple, where there's a bleeding gash, then spots--

The .38 slug on the ground, twisted and misshapen. He turns to-- Vincent, blood gullying from twin wounds in his head.

Jimmy's senses return in an instant. He slumps over, cradles Vincent's ruined skull on his lap, mumbling and crying.

We can't hear anything, just the incessant RINGING.

And we begin drifting away from Jimmy, gently rocking his dead friend in the bright glare of the headlights.

EXT. DESERTED DEPOT - LATER

Jimmy glances a last time into the guard's shack, where--

POV - Vincent's body rests in a pool of scarlet, arms crossed, at peace.

He trudges trance-like back to his car. Money from the tote bag is scattered in the snow, a flurry of bills dancing on the wind.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - LATER

Jimmy stares ahead calmly as the highway lines shoot by. The RINGING in his ears slightly less.

INT. GAS STATION RESTROOM - LATER

Jimmy splashes his face with water. Looks at himself in the mirror. His face and shirt still caked with dried blood.

INT/EXT. JIMMY'S CAR - LATER

Jimmy's car idles at a lonely fork in the highway. Continuing now where the OPENING IMAGE of the film left us.

His eyes are focused far, far off. He smokes. Turns on the radio -- some Bobby Darin. Has he defused the bomb? Been granted a reprieve? He no longer seems to care.

The snow has started falling again. Jimmy watches the flakes drift lazily onto his windshield.

He looks at his cigarette--down to the filter. A last drag and he drops it out the window. Then he reaches, shifts and pulls out.

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

The snow is falling more heavily now.

D.J.'S VOICE (O.S.)
--snowfall continuing overnight.
Here's one to keep you warm, and re-
member, take it easy out there.

Another vintage tune begins. Jimmy's distant eyes are suddenly drawn to a photo of Deirdre stuck in the dash. We CUT TO:

EXT. AN OPEN FIELD - DAY

Deirdre, all smiles, yanks at a real-estate sign, trying to pull it out of the grass. Across the sign, we can read 'SOLD'.

Behind her is a sprawling stretch of land, and an old adobe house, clearly in need of some handiwork. She's laughing at the offscreen Jimmy, still tugging at the sign, then BACK TO:

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - NIGHT

Jimmy smiles at the vision, as his car comes around a curve. Suddenly, the world is lit up by oncoming headlights. Bright, swelling.

EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY

Back to Dee again, as she falls to the grass, her hair spilling everywhere. She's laughing up at us, saying something but--

A SOUND drowns out everything. The deafening ROAR of an ENGINE. LOCKING TIRES. BACK TO:

INT. JIMMY'S CAR - NIGHT

Jimmy, as the light swallows him up. Staring ahead without fear or anticipation.

The image is washed out by a blinding white. GARBLED NOISES, dream-like. Then SILENCE. A few moments, then we--

FADE IN FROM WHITE:



EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A crystal New Mexico morning. A ribbon of highway wiggles into oblivion. Sheets of snow reflect the sun in an endless sky.

Somewhere along the road is a set of skid-marks. A broken lane divider. Diamonds of windshield glass.

We hear RADIO CRACKLE, then a voice bleeding in.

VOICE (O.S.)

Last night, heavy snow claimed its first victim out on I-25, after a tractor trailer lost control and skidded through the divider -- instantly killing the driver of an oncoming vehicle. The treacherous roads have also been blamed for--

The VOICE gradually trails off, as Vacaro's RV appears over a rise. It growls past us, out of frame, and we--

FADE OUT

THE END.