

THE PUNISHER

by

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OPEN TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT

On a deserted rain slicked street, FRANK CASTLE watches a heavy equipment warehouse thirty yards down the road through the windshield of a non-descript vehicle, parked in the shadows. His partner JAKE BERKOWITZ, slightly rumped, slightly older, dozes next to him. Castle extracts a package from a paper sack and begins to unwrap it. Inside is a beautifully prepared meal, complete with napkin and utensils. Mischievously Castle crumbles the wrapping paper loudly. Berkowitz wakes and squints over at him malevolently as Castle pretends to go about his business.

CASTLE

Good morning Princess.

Berkowitz grumbles, looking at his watch.

BERKOWITZ

Three o'clock. They were supposed to be here two hours ago. I don't know why they call them organized crime. The assholes are never on time for anything.

He looks at Castle eating, not with a little envy. He pulls a soggy paperbag out from under his seat and extracts a leaky cup of coffee and a soggy sandwich.

CASTLE

Why do you eat like that?

BERKOWITZ

Because I'm a bachelor, that's why. I don't have someone in my life who loves me enough to prepare gourmet fucking meals everytime I go on a stake out.

CASTLE

Yes you do.

Castle takes another package out of his bag and hands it to Berkowitz. Berkowitz beams and tosses his soggy fare out the window. He bites into a wedge of pie.

BERKOWITZ

She's too good for you. You know that.

CASTLE

(warm)

Yeah. I do.

A car pulls up to the warehouse. Two men get out and enter the warehouse. One carries a suitcase.

CASTLE

Rock-n-roll.

Castle is out of the car in a flash, gun in hand. Berkowitz stuffs the rest of the pie into his mouth and follows.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE

Heavy machinery stands like dinosaurs in the shadows. In a small lit area in the middle of the room seven men stand around a table on which the open suitcase sits, filled with clear plastic bags of white powder. The two men who brought the bag, visibly anxious, watch as the CHEMIST checks the powder for purity with a test kit. Their eyes flick from the test to the four men across from them. Three thugs, BIG LOU, TOUGH TONY and FRANKIE THE FIST, flanking their boss, an extremely stylishly dressed, impeccably coiffed hood, DAPPER DINO MORETTI. The Chemist looks at Moretti and shakes his head.

CHEMIST

Only sixty percent pure.

COURIER NO. 1

That's impossible. Do it again.

Moretti's expression doesn't change.

MORETTI

Where's the other forty percent?

COURIER NO. 2

This thing is off.

As he goes to grab the test kit, he accidentally gets some white powder on Moretti's suit sleeve. Everyone freezes. Moretti stares at the spot as if it were an anathema to his very soul.

COURIER

(nervous)

Sorry Mr. Moretti.

Moretti looks at his thugs. In a flash they grab the two men and force their right hands onto the table.

COURIER

Hey! What are you doing? Hey!

Moretti picks up a steel bar and viciously smashes it across each man's hand twice. The men shriek. Moretti wags a pipe under their pain contorted faces.

MORETTI

(calm)

Monday a hand. Tuesday an arm.
Wednesday a head. I want my
other forty percent. Understand?

He taps the first man's chin with a pipe. The man nods.

MORETTI

And if you ever get me dirty
again you son-of-a-bitch, your
wife's a widow.

CASTLE (V.O.)

Don't move, police!

Everyone turns to Castle on one end and Berkowitz on the other end of the room, guns raised, jumping from behind the heavy equipment. The thugs pull their guns and start firing. Castle and Berkowitz take cover and fire back. Two thugs go down, the others head for cover. Moretti grabs the suitcase of dope.

The gun battle ensues, with shots ringing off metal. Castle is stalking around a piece of equipment when he sees two thugs sighting up Berkowitz, who has the couriers and the chemist cornered. Thinking quickly, Castle notices that the men are moving in front of a frontloader. Castle hops from where he is perched right into the driver's seat. He hits the starter button, the thugs hear the sound, turn just in time to see Castle bearing down on them with the frontloader. Castle scoops them up and tosses them into the dump truck. He smiles and waves at Berkowitz. A shot pings next to his head. Berkowitz fires shooting an assailant who has snuck up behind Castle. Castle jumps down.

CASTLE

Where's Moretti?

BERKOWITZ

I don't know.

A noise across the way turns Castle. His P.O.V. Moretti, with the suitcase, running into a maze of machinery.

CASTLE

Stay here.

Castle rushes off. He races through the maze of machinery, trading shots with Moretti trying to cut him off from the rear door. The two men duck and dodge, using the machinery to their best advantage. Moretti circles around behind Castle and hits a switch. A derrick drops its bucket just above where Castle is standing. Castle jumps out of the way not a moment too soon, losing his gun. The bucket hits the floor missing him by inches as he springs back up. His P.O.V. Moretti about to reach the door. Castle looks around. He cannot reach Moretti in time and his gun is lost. Thinking quickly he grabs a block and tackle and swings it for all he is worth. It misses its mark but not by much, hitting the suitcase which flies apart. White powder rains on Moretti. He glares at Castle and runs through the exit door. By the time Castle exits, the streets are deserted. He stares up the streets, a hunter thwarted; the rain running down his resolute face.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE'S HOUSE

Berkowitz is dropping Castle off.

BERKOWITZ

So did we do good tonight or what?

CASTLE

We could have done better.

BERKOWITZ

We nailed thirty ki's of smack and six wise guys. What more do you want?

CASTLE

I want to nail the man.

BERKOWITZ

Who, that sleeze bag Moretti?

CASTLE

The other sleeze bag. His boss, Franco.

The house door opens. A woman appears on the porch in a robe, silhouetted by the light inside.

BERKOWITZ

Shift change.

Castle goes to exit.

CASTLE

I'll see you tomorrow.

BERKOWITZ

Yeah. Listen Frank you want to do yourself a favor? Tomorrow's your birthday. Give yourself a gift. Cut yourself a little slack.

CASTLE

I will.

BERKOWITZ

(warmly)
Bullshit. Kiss the kids.

Berkowitz drives off. Castle mounts the steps to his wife JULIE, who greets him with open arms and adoring eyes.

JULIE

How's my hero tonight?

CASTLE

Okay.

JULIE

Just okay?

She kisses Castle softly.

CASTLE

Well, better than okay.

She kisses him again, with full passion. Their eyes come away sparkling with each other. Castle scoops Julie up in his arms and enters the house. P.O.V. someone else. A moment later the light goes off.

PULL BACK TO:

The SOMEONE ELSE

Dapper Dino Moretti watches the house from behind the wheel of his car. His anger etched in stone on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE BEDROOM - MORNING

PAN a sun-dappled room. On one wall pictures and citations: Castle as a karate black belt. Castle and Berkowitz graduating from Police Academy, clowning, Julie standing proudly between them. The Castle family, with Berkowitz at Halloween, all in costume. Frank and Julie on their wedding day. And the citations: Detective of the Year. Patrolman of the Year.

PAN past the door as it opens a crack. Two gun barrels appear. The unseen gunmen's P.O.V. As they enter the room, Frank and Julie asleep in each other's arms. The P.O.V. moves closer, closer until it is right on top of Castle. Castle opens his eyes. They fill with terror.

CASTLE

No! Please don't! No!

The sounds of shots ring out. Castle grabs his chest and falls off the bed. Giggling erupts as the Castles' two daughters FELICE and ANNIE, six and four, flags saying Happy Birthday, sticking out of the barrels of their toy guns, jump on the bed and look over the side with Julie. Castle lies very still on the floor. The girls look at each other, when suddenly Castle springs up.

CASTLE

Urrgh! Super-Cop.

He pounces on the girls, kissing them furiously amidst gales of giggles.

CASTLE

Kissing the enemies of law and order into submission.

He looks up at Julie.

CASTLE

No one escapes his vengeful lips.

He grabs her, subjecting her to more of the same. The whole family falls off the bed. A gleeful jumble of arms and legs tangled in the bedding.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM

Castle is tying the bow into the back of Annie's party dress.

ANNIE
Daddy, what's divorce?

CASTLE
Where did you learn that word?

ANNIE
From Katherine in school. Her parents are getting it.

CASTLE
Divorce is when a mom and dad don't live together anymore.

ANNIE
How come?

CASTLE
Lots of different reasons, sweetheart.

ANNIE
Are you and mommy going to get divorced?

CASTLE
Never.

ANNIE
Good.

She turns and hugs her father for all she's worth.

BERKOWITZ (V.O.)
Hello.

Annie runs off.

ANNIE
Uncle Jake!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Berkowitz is in the kitchen. Both kids pounce into his arms and smother him with kisses.

BOTH
Did you bring them?

BERKOWITZ
What?

ANNIE
Our presents.

BERKOWITZ
It's not your birthdays. Why
should I bring you presents?

FELICE
Because you love us.

BERKOWITZ
Ah, the magic words.

He takes little watches out of his pocket. The kids squeal with delight as Julie enters and kisses Berkowitz affectionately.

KIDS
Mommy, look.

The kids show off their watches.

BERKOWITZ
That pie was the high point of
my night.

JULIE
That's not what I heard. The
rest is in the fridge.

Berkowitz makes a beeline for the refrigerator and digs into the pie, at home. Castle enters wearing a sport jacket and a fish tie.

BERKOWITZ
Don't we look nice.

FELICE
Do you like the tie?

ANNIE
We bought it with our money.

BERKOWITZ
I love it. It's so him.

CASTLE

Your mother-in-law makes lasagne dinner in your honor, the least you can do is look nice. By the way in case you forgot, we're eating in an hour.

Berkowitz continues to gobble pie, ignoring him.

BERKOWITZ

I didn't forget. I'm warming up for the main event.

The phone rings.

JULIE

Hello.

Her smile dies a bit as she hands the phone to Castle.

JULIE

The Captain.

CASTLE

Yes Sir.

Castle's mouth tightens.

CASTLE

We're on the way.

He hangs up and looks at Julie apologetically.

CASTLE

Franco's leaving the country in an hour. The judge just issued a subpoena.

BERKOWITZ

I'll go.

Julie looks at Castle reading his conflict correctly.

JULIE

Go.

CASTLE

The party.

JULIE

The party will wait. This won't. You've been working on him two years. It means something to you.

CASTLE
Not as much as you do.

He takes her in his arms and kisses her tenderly.

BERKOWITZ
I'll be in the car.

CASTLE
I'm coming. Meet you at your
mother's.

JULIE
Good luck.

Castle runs out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE

Two cars are parked in the driveway side by side. A station wagon and a Camero. Castle and Berkowitz hop into the Camero. Castle inserts the key when he notices the front tire of the station wagon is flat.

CASTLE
Come on, we'll take your car.

The two men exit and hurry towards Berkowitz's car at the curb.

CASTLE
Jules.

JULIE (O.S.)
What?

CASTLE
The station wagon has a flat,
take my car. The keys are in
the ignition.

JULIE (O.S.)
Okay, thanks.

Berkowitz and Castle enter the car. Castle begins to remove his fish tie.

BERKOWITZ
Hey, what are you doing?

CASTLE

Can you see Franco's face if I hand him a subpoena in this.

BERKOWITZ

(smiles)

Yeah. Keep it on.

(beat)

You know, you got a nice family.

CASTLE

I keep telling you. You should have one.

BERKOWITZ

I already do. They just live someplace else.

CASTLE

Oh yeah, where's that?

BERKOWITZ

Your house.

Castle smiles warmly and knots his tie up again. Berkowitz puts the car in gear and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT

Two limos pull up to the entrance. Moretti and a half a dozen henchmen exit from one, and form a protective squadron around the other. Moretti opens the door and an ENGLISH GOVERNESS steps out followed by five year old TOMMY, excited to be at the airport.

TOMMY

Come on, Dad!

A moment passes, and then GIANNI FRANCO emerges; impeccable tailoring, perfectly cut hair. A man exuding confidence. Power. Control.

FRANCO

Was it taken care of?

Moretti nods, with a cruel smile.

TOMMY

(impatient)

Dad! The planes!

Franco smiles, takes his son's hand and allows himself to be pulled into the terminal. The bodyguards follow him closely.

CUT TO:

INT. BERKOWITZ'S CAR

Stuck in traffic across two dividing islands and a walkway, Berkowitz and Castle see Franco's entourage enter the airport. Berkowitz hits his horn. Castle springs into action, jumping out of the car.

CASTLE

Meet me in the front.

Castle dashes across the roadways, dodging traffic, hurdling dividers, heading for the terminal.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLES' HOUSE

Julie and the kids head for the Camero.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRLINE TERMINAL

Franco strides down the corridor towards the gate talking to Moretti.

FRANCO

With that son-of-a-bitch out of the way everything should run smooth until I come back. You keep it the way I set it up and we got no problems, just profits. Right?

MORETTI

Right.

TOMMY

Hey Dad, look.

Franco stops and joins his son at a window. Their P.O.V. A 747 lifting off.

TOMMY

Do you know how they make planes
fly dad?

FRANCO

It has to do with the air.

He takes a model plane Tommy is holding and demonstrates.

FRANCO

See as the engine pushes the plane
forward, the air gets underneath
and lifts the wings. When the
wings lift, the nose lifts then
the power from the back pushes
here and off we go.

TOMMY

You know everything, don't you,
Dad?

FRANCO

I wish.

MORETTI

(anxious)
Hey boss, we ain't got time.

Franco scoops Tommy up and continues down the corridor.

FRANCO

I ever tell you about the first
time grandpa took me to Europe?

TOMMY

You mean when you throwed up on
him?

Franco smiles. The entourage hurries on.

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL

Castle consults the flight board and runs down the corridor.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE'S HOUSE

Julie seatbelts the kids in the rear of the Camero. She
buckles herself in and goes to turn the ignition.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

Berkowitz pulls up to the curb outside the terminal. His radio crackles. He picks up the mike.

BERKOWITZ

Yeah?

CUT TO:

INT. TERMINAL

Castle runs through the metal detector which goes off. He flashes his badge, sprinting down the hall. His P.O.V. Franco saying goodbye to his men at the gate. Castle turns on the speed, reaching Franco as he is about to enter the airplane. Castle hurdles a barrier, ending up right in front of Franco who looks at Moretti surprised.

CASTLE

Going somewhere, Gianni?

FRANCO

It appears that way.

CASTLE

Not anymore.

MORETTI

Hey, what do you want?

TOMMY

Are you a real policeman?

Castle looks down at Tommy eyeing the shield on his jacket.

CASTLE

That's right.

TOMMY

Well where's your gun?

CASTLE

This your boy?

Franco nods, Castle bends down.

CASTLE

(conspiratorial)

I keep it hidden so I won't scare people.

TOMMY
 (serious)
 Oh. (beat) That's a good idea.

CASTLE
 Is that your Nanny?

TOMMY
 Uh-huh!

CASTLE
 Why don't you go over to her
 while I talk to your dad.

TOMMY
 Okay.

Tommy scampers over to the governess.

FRANCO
 Thanks.

CASTLE
 I did it for him. Not you.

He pulls a subpoena out of his pocket and stuffs it in
 Franco's pocket.

CASTLE
 See you in court.

Moretti steps between them.

MORETTI
 What are you trying to pull?

Before Castle can react Berkowitz's voice turns him.

BERKOWITZ
 Frank.

Berkowitz comes running up.

BERKOWITZ
 You gotta come right away. There's
 been an accident at home.

Castle is stunned. Caught unawares.

BERKOWITZ
 Come on, it's serious!

Castle turns, and then something strikes him. He turns
 again, to Franco. The two men lock eyes. Castle runs off.

FRANCO
I thought you took care of it.

MORETTI
I did. Personally.

Franco's mouth draws tight. He takes the subpoena out of his pocket and throws it on the floor.

FRANCO
Deal with it.

Franco boards the plane with his son and governess.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE'S BLOCK

Berkowitz's car, with Castle at the wheel, comes racing down the street, screeching to a halt in front of a growing crowd. Castle and Berkowitz rush out.

Their P.O.V. through a crowd being held back by police. Castle's Camero in flames. The flames licking perilously close to the propane gas tanks on the side of the house.

V.O.
Get back! It's going to hit
the gas tanks.

CASTLE
(frantic)
No!

Sirens sound in the background. Castle rushes forward. Berkowitz restrains him.

BERKOWITZ
Frank, it's too late! There's
nothing you can do.

CASTLE
Let go.

Castle tries to pull away. Berkowitz holds on.

BERKOWITZ
Frank, the tanks! The flames
are almost at the tanks!

People start running. Castle punches Berkowitz in the jaw. He breaks free and rushes toward the burning car.

V.O.

Watch out!

The flames reach the tanks. The entire screen explodes in a massive fire ball.

The flames die. The screen goes black. Castle's voice seared by anger and tremendous loss speaks from the darkness.

CASTLE (V.O.)

People say when a man begins to talk to God he's either found his way or lost his mind. I talk to God all the time. I'm not looking for the way and I don't care if I've lost my mind. I just want to know if what I am doing is right or wrong but no matter how many times I ask I get no answer. Does that mean there is no God or just no answer?

A low bass pulses on the soundtrack filling the screen. SUPERIMPOSED. Five years later.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE

The courthouse doors fly open. Flash bulbs pop. T.V. cameras roll as DAPPER DINO MORETTI, dressed to the nines, flanked by his henchmen, sweeps out triumphantly.

ANNOUNCER

This is Larry Silvers at the Courthouse where moments ago, after deliberating for ten weeks, a jury has declared Dino Moretti, the Dapper Don, innocent of all charges including the murder of Detective Frank Castle and his family nearly five years ago. Mr. Moretti, how does it feel to be finally acquitted?

MORETTI

Great! Just great.

ANNOUNCER

The government says it's going to appeal. How do you feel about that?

MORETTI

Let 'em appeal, a hundred times.
I'll still win. This is America.
If you're innocent, justice prevails.

ANNOUNCER

Are you worried about the Punisher?

Moretti's smile fades.

MORETTI

Let me tell you something about the
Punisher, whoever he is. If he
ever shows up within one thousand
yards of me, he'll learn just what
the word punished really means.
Now, if you'll excuse me.

Moretti and his entourage pile into two limousines and pull
away.

ANNOUNCER

There you have it. The Dapper Don
allegedly head of the powerful
Franco crime family. Once again
shrugging off any fear of the
Punisher, despite the fact that
over 125 organized crime figures
have been murdered by the self-
styled vigilante in the last five
years. This is Larry Silvers for
Channel 2 News.

The mikes shut down. The crews pack hurriedly.

ANNOUNCER

Let's go.

PULL BACK:

As a caravan of media vehicles follows the limousine, to the
back of a figure sitting on a black chopper. His hair
slicked back, pulled in a severe polytail. He wears a black
leather jacket and black combat pants tucked into black
engineer boots.

PAN TO THE BOOTS

CLOSE UP a stylized skull made out of brass lays flush along
the foot. The boot comes up and kicks the bike to life.
The bike roars off after the media caravan.

CUT TO:

INT. MORETTI'S HOUSE

Moretti enters to a big victory banner strung across the luxurious foyer of his elegant home. There is a cake decorated with a picture of Moretti in flamboyant icing, kicking a figure of justice in the ass. The three body guards, MIKEY, JOEY and DANNY, give Moretti a round of applause.

MORETTI

So enough with the applause.
Where's champagne?

TONY

I'll get it.

Moretti stops him.

MORETTI

You check the house. I'll get
the champagne. And let's get
some music going here.

He hits the switch on the wall. Music blasts throughout the house. The bodyguards spread out.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERIOR ATTIC

A louvered window opens. Two black boots hit the floor.

CLOSE UP one boot, the stylized skull. A hand reaches up and pulls the skull up. A thin blade comes out of an invisible sheath built into the boot.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Mikey hears steps across the ceiling. He unholsters his gun and opens the door. He takes one step. A leather-jacketed arm swings down like a sledge bearing the skull dagger deep in Mikey's chest. Mikes falls back into the room.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER BEDROOM

Joey hears sounds outside. He rushes into the hall, gun drawn and looks around. He looks down from the landing over the railing, seeing nothing, he turns back around as two boots thud into his chest. He falls over the railing. His screams drowned out by the music. Danny, another bodyguard, comes running out of the den down below. He sees Joey's body.

DANNY

Jesus, Joey.

He bends over Joey. A nylon noose descends from the landing and falls around Danny's neck. Too late, the noose cuts into his neck as he is yanked off the floor, his feet kicking frantically in the air.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Moretti is topping off the last of the champagne glasses, singing to the music. Moretti lifts the silver tray with five glasses and exits the kitchen, pushing the door open with his backside.

MORETTI

Okay, party time.

He turns into the foyer and stops, mortified, the tray crashing to the floor. His P.O.V. Joey dead on the floor, Danny hanging by his neck ten feet above him. Moretti grabs Joey's gun.

MORETTI

Mikey! Tony!

There are no responses. Moretti stalks through the house, his heart beating, sweat dappling his brow.

MORETTI

Hey, quit fuckin' around.

Moretti moves down a hallway, opening doors, leading with his gun. He hears a noise behind and turns ready to fire. Nothing is there. Momentarily off guard, he turns, again his eyes open wide at what he sees confronting him.

MORETTI

You!

He raises the gun and fires.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE

The news teams, loitering across the street, jump with the shots. They spring into action, grabbing their cameras, running for the house. They barely make the other side of the street when the house explodes from within. The reporters hit the deck. As the front door opens, they look up. Their P.O.V. Smoke pours out the door. A moment lapses and Moretti, his clothing in tatters, singed, his eyes glazed with a far away stare walks out of the smoking house. His gun hangs limply at his side.

REPORTERS

Where are those cameras? Get them rolling.

Moretti stands for a long moment and then keels over face first.

CLOSE UP

HIS BACK

The skull dagger plunged to the hilt.

REPORTER #1

The Punisher! It's the Punisher!

REPORTER #2

Look!

P.O.V. all. Through the smoke and flames a spectral figure, an apparition, stands staring out through the inferno.

REPORTER

It's him! Get the goddamn cameras going!

The flames leap higher. The figure disappears. A moment later, the whole house blows up.

FADE TO:

EXT. MORETTI HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is a smoldering ruins. Police cars and fire engines illuminate the scene. The press is kept behind a cordon. A car drives up. Berkowitz, a little worse for the

wear of the last five years, exits and heads for the house, scouring the ground with his eyes for clues. The press, seeing Berkowitz, break through the cordon and track with him. He ignores them.

REPORTER #1

Lieutenant, is it true you're being pressured to step down as head of the Punisher Task Force?

BERKOWITZ

No comment.

REPORTER #2

Lieutenant, do you have any leads?

BERKOWITZ

No comment.

Cold, dry, noncooperative, Berkowitz goes to enter the house.

REPORTER #3

Lieutenant, do you still stick to your theory that the late Frank Castle and the Punisher are the same person?

Berkowitz turns.

BERKOWITZ

Absolutely.

REPORTER

Despite the fact that the official police department's statement is that Castle died with his family.

BERKOWITZ

Don't you have anything better to do at two o'clock in the morning, Santana?

Berkowitz enters the house to Chief of Detectives O'Banion.

O'BANION

(sarcastic)

That was smart. Very smart.

Berkowitz ignores the barb.

BERKOWITZ

To what do I owe the honor of the visit?

The Chief hands Berkowitz the skull dagger. Berkowitz peruses it, feeling its balance.

O'BANION

I have a message from the mayor.
I quote. Frank Castle is dead.
No more talk about him being
otherwise. You toe the line or
you get the boot.

Berkowitz fixes O'Banion with a stare.

BERKOWITZ

And you'd go along with that?

O'BANION

Jake, we can't let the public
think there's some psychotic
ex-cop running around wacking
out wise guys like he's got a
hunting license.

BERKOWITZ

Why not?

O'BANION

Berkowitz. I'm tired. It's
late. You're warned.

(pause)

What the hell ever happened
to you?

With the wagging of his head, the Chief exits. Berkowitz continues to look for clues.

WOMAN'S V.O.

Lieutenant Berkowitz?

Berkowitz turns to SAMANTHA LEARY, a young, bright detective with something on her mind.

SAM

I'm detective Sam Leary.

She holds out her hand. Berkowitz ignores it.

BERKOWITZ

Sam?

SAM

Samantha.

Berkowitz rolls his eyes.

BERKOWITZ

What can I do for you?
(sarcastic)

Sam.

SAM

I'd like a shot at being your partner.

BERKOWITZ

I don't work with a partner.

SAM

I know, but you used to.

BERKOWITZ

Right. Used to. Past tense.

Berkowitz goes to exit. Sam follows doggedly as he heads for his car.

SAM

Look, I'm not after a free ride. I can pull my share of the load.

BERKOWITZ

I'm sure you can.

SAM

No you're not. You're not even listening to me.

BERKOWITZ

That's right, I'm not.

SAM

Why?

BERKOWITZ

Because I worked with the best, and anything else is a waste of my fucking time. What do you think, you're the first person to apply for the job?

SAM

No, but I'm the most qualified.

BERKOWITZ

Based on what?

SAM

I graduated first in my class at the academy. I scored in the top one percent of all officers on the target. I made detective first time up, second youngest member of the force ever to...

Berkowitz cuts her off by getting in the car.

BERKOWITZ

Your parents must be very proud, but I haven't heard one reason why I should consider taking you on.

His hand goes to the ignition.

SAM

I believe Frank Castle is the Punisher.

Berkowitz stops cold. He stares at Sam's unwavering eyes.

BERKOWITZ

Be in my office, nine o'clock.

He starts the car and drives off.

TRACK with the car half way down the street to a manhole cover. ZOOM in on the manhole cover.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER SYSTEM

TRACK along through the large drain pipes fed by smaller ones. The pipe is large enough for a man to walk upright.

CASTLE (V.O.)

Are you here in the darkness?
You must be. You're everywhere,
aren't you? Why don't you
answer me? It's years I'm asking
you why. Why are the innocent
dead and the guilty alive? Where
is justice? Where is punishment?

(pause)

Or have you already answered?
Have you already said to the world
here is justice. Here is punishment.

The camera tracks down a large pipe. At the end, a candle flickers through an open doorway. Track through the doorway into a small spare room with a sleeping mat, some guns, a small shop where skull daggers are made and a man with his back to the camera, shirt off, sitting in lotus position. The camera circles slowly to the front.

CASTLE (V.O.)

Here in me.

CLOSE UP CASTLE'S FACE

Eyes closed, sweat beading his forehead matting his hair. His eyes open. The depths of pain and anger revealed. A pulsing bass builds on the soundtrack. Louder and louder until the throbbing threatens to explode.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT

Reporters are gathered around a terminal exit. At the curb a black limo waits, the door held open by JIM TARRONE, 28, the mafia gone Yuppie via Versace. Tarrone scowls at the reporters. The terminal doors swing open and three burly bodyguards, carrying luggage, exit, followed by Franco as self-assured and strongly handsome as ever; and Tommy, nearly twelve, beside him. The same self-assurance in his eye.

REPORTER

Mr. Franco, how does it feel to be back home?

FRANCO

It's 30 minutes since I've landed. So far, so good.

REPORTER

Have you come back to take over?

Tarrone intercedes.

TARRONE

Come on fellows, it was a long flight. The man's tired. Let's give him a break.

Tommy scrambles into the car. Franco is about to enter.

REPORTER

Aren't you afraid of the Punisher?

Franco stops, turns and smiles.

FRANCO

Punisher? You know what they think in Europe? You guys made that up to sell papers. There's no Punisher.

REPORTER

Then what's been killing your associates for the last five years?

FRANCO

Too much red meat in their diet maybe. Thanks for coming.

Franco is about to enter the limo when a car backfires. He crouches, on edge. His bodyguards go for their guns. The action doesn't go unnoticed by the news crew. After a moment, Franco straightens up and enters the limo. Tarrone follows, slamming the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. LIMO

TARRONE

Let's hit it.

The car pulls out.

TOMMY

Hey dad, I didn't know you were so famous.

FRANCO

Neither did I. You remember your cousin Jim, Uncle Dom's boy.

TARRONE

I used to pull you around in that wagon.

TOMMY

Oh yeah, hi.

TARRONE

So how were those fancy European schools we heard you were going to?

TOMMY

All right.

FRANCO

Just all right! I got the next Einstein here. Go sit in the front. I want to talk to Jim here.

Franco tussles Tommy's hair with real affection. Tommy squirms through the partition into the front seat. Franco raises the glass.

FRANCO

So how bad is it?

TARRONE

How bad? If you didn't come home, I would be head of the family. Is that a joke or what? The only consolation is all the other families are in the same boat because of this psycho. I mean Freddie Deleo is a capo, a thirty year old mongoloid with a driver's license and he's in charge of 200 guys.

(beat)

None of us know what we're doing. We're not experienced enough to run a family.

FRANCO

There's not going to be any such thing as families anymore, Jim. It's old thinking, dead thinking. The world's changed and we haven't. But we're going to.

TARRONE

What are we going to change into?

FRANCO

A corporation. There'll be no more territories, no more wars. Each group will be responsible for one area of work. These

(MORE)

FRANCO (CONTINUED)

guys will do hijacking, those guys loan sharking. No more competition. Everyone will have his place and shares. We're all going to work together for the good of the corporation.

TARRONE

How are you goin' to convince anyone of this?

FRANCO

With an act of good faith, so generous, even Freddie Deleo will see the light.

(beat)

A week from now, I've arranged for six hundred kilos of pure junk to come in.

TARRONE

Six hundred kis?

FRANCO

Five hundred million dollars worth. And everyone gets to share. Provided they work together to make it happen. One group on security, one on transportation, one on receiving, one on distribution and one on collection. That shouldn't be too hard.

TARRONE

And what do we do about the Punisher?

FRANCO

One thing at a time, Jim. First we consolidate, then we obliterate.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN

CASTLE (V.O.)

What does it take to forget?
How much blood washes away pain?
Where does evil end and innocence begin?
Why can't I get an answer?

CUT TO:

INT. BAR

A room full of hustlers. Tough guys in sharp clothes, drinking and carousing. SHAKESPEARE, a down and outer, whose shabby clothes and five day stubble border on dereliction, is trying to cadge a drink. He approaches a flashy thug and speaks in rhyme with a florid theatrically English accent.

SHAKE

Excuse me, kind sir, but I
can't help but see in you a
man far luckier than me.

MAN

(confused)
What?

SHAKE

What ever you can spare would
be sufficient I think, to
stand this thespian a very
stiff drink.

MAN

What the hell's a thespian?

SHAKE

(dignified)
An actor, sir.

Realizing this is a performance the man laughs.

MAN

Sure.

He goes to his pocket and hands Shake a dollar. Shake
removes his beat up hat and bows graciously.

BARTENDER

Hey!

Shake rises startled.

BARTENDER

What I tell you about buggin'
the customers? Ritchie, throw
this trash out.

Before Shake can escape, a huge black bouncer grabs him by
the collar and the seat of his pants and rushes him toward
the door.

SHAKE

You can't treat me like this,
it's a lousy, bad plan. I
demand some respect. I'm not
trash. I'm a man!

On that note, the bouncer flings Shake out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

Shake propelled out the bar door sprawls across the sidewalk
of a dark deserted street.

SHAKE

Maybe I should have tried
some Eugene O'Neill.

Shake sits up, he looks at the dollar bill ripped in half.
His spirits sink. He hears a sound. He turns right. His
P.O.V. A bottle of scotch atop a small remote control toy
dump truck, turns from the alley and heads toward him. The
bottle comes right up to him. The truck flashes its little
lights twice, turns and heads back towards the alley. Shake
can't believe his eyes. He follows on his hands and knees.
The truck turns the corner, Shake follows getting closer and
closer until the truck goes between two legs and stops.
Shake's P.O.V. A stylized brass skull sheathed in a black
boot. Shake looks up and gulps. He stands, smiling weakly
at Castle who looks at Shake menacingly. The truck's remote
control unit in his hand. Shake stands, obsequious.

SHAKE

Hi there. Nice weather we're
having for this time of year.

CASTLE

You were supposed to meet me
four hours ago.

SHAKE

(self-pitying)

I know, I know all about it.
Been hearing it all my life.
Shirks responsibility, can't
keep an appointment, a friend,
a job; disappoints everyone.

Castle steps within a hair's breath of Shake.

CASTLE
Almost everyone.

SHAKE
Right, just what I was about
to say. There are a select few...

CASTLE
I don't have all night. Where's
the dope coming in to?

SHAKE
The dope, the dope. Oh that.
Pier Thirty.

Castle fixes Shake with a hard stare, hands him the bottle
of scotch from the dump truck, and turns around to mount his
chopper.

SHAKE
But the location's not the
big story.

Castle turns.

SHAKE
Who'll be there is.

CASTLE
Who'll be there?

SHAKE
Everyone. They're all working
together now. One big happy
family. Under the fatherly wing
of your old friend Gianni Franco.

Castle starts his chopper.

SHAKE
Mr. P.

He toasts Castle with the bottle of scotch.

SHAKE
Happy hunting.

Castle kicks the chopper into gear, zooming off as Shake
takes a long pull off the bottle.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUDSON RIVER - NIGHT

A medium sized trawler is chugging slowly through the water towards the light of the city. On its deck are several Frenchmen in work clothes.

FRENCH LEADER

Allez vite. L'heure s'approche.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER THIRTY - NIGHT

There are two vans and four cars on the pier along with several members of the "new mafia". All under thirty, a bit anxious about each other and the situation. Equipped with the latest communication and surveillance gear, they are trying to be professional. Bill fiddles with a hand held radio.

BILL

I can't get this friggan thing to work.

Tim takes it out of his hand and pushes the power button. He hands it back condescending.

TIM

Very difficult.

BILL

Fuck you!

TIM

Fuck you!

Tim pushes Bill. Bill pulls a gun. Tarrone jumps in.

TARRONE

Hey, hey. We got five hundred million dollars out there assholes! Cool out. Here.

He thrusts the radio at Bill.

TARRONE

Check the perimeter. Get with it.

Tarrone enters his car and drives off.

BILL
Hello Red One. Come in.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR

By the pier entrance, a young hood is reading the Wall Street Journal. Bill's voice comes over his walkie-talkie. The hood puts the paper down.

HOOD
Yeah, what do you want?

BILL'S V.O.
Everything's okay?

The young hood gives a perfunctory look out the windshield. Tarrone's car drives by and heads up the street.

HOOD
Okay here.

He puts the radio down and picks the newspaper up. A Samurai sword thrusts through the windshield, through the paper and through the young hood, pinning him to his seat.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE

A man pitches pennies with a view of the drive leading down the pier. His radio crackles.

V.O.
Red Two, Red Two. What's
doing?

Man
Nothing. It's dead here.

He puts down the radio and turns. A silencer fired bullet smashes into his forehead. He falls, dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF TOP

Another man sits sighting the area below him with an infrared-scoped rifle.

V.O.

Red Three, what have you got?

MAN

I gotta pee.

V.O.

So pee.

The man puts down his rifle and walkie-talkie. He goes over to the side of the building and starts to pee. On the wall is a pin-up of a big breasted model. He smiles looking at it. The breasts explode with two silencer bullets which rip through his chest.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAWLER

The French are working when a search light from an approaching boat hits them.

V.O.

This is the U.S. Coast Guard.
Cut your engines. We are coming along side.

FRENCHMAN

Merde.

The Cutter comes along side the boat.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAWLER HULL

Three black clad figures, one tall, one broad and one small, silently come out of the water and begin to scale the hull with suction cup devices on their hands and feet.

CUT TO:

TRAWLER DECK

The Cutter light shines in the French Captain's eyes. Through his squint, he only sees the outline of the Cutter crew.

CUTTER CAPTAIN

What are you doing here?

FRENCHMAN

We have to pull into dock, our hull is leaking. Here take a look.

The Cutter Captain steps forward. He is Japanese.

FRENCHMAN

Regardez-la.

He points to a spot above the water line. The Cutter Captain looks down then up. The Frenchman smiles. The Cutter Captain pulls out a pistol and shoots the smiling Frenchman dead. The French crew is stunned, when three thumps from behind startle them. Their startled P.O.V. The three black garbed figures landing on the deck. The two bigger ones spring into action, decimating the six crew men with throwing stars, Okinawan hand sickles and their deadly karate hands and feet. Their work is swift, brutal. They are invincible.

ANGLE ON the wheel house. A Frenchman with a pistol stealthily comes around the corner. He aims to fire when a foot flies out and hits his wrist. His hand, pistol still in it, is severed clean. His terrorized P.O.V. The smallest figure in black slices with the other foot, kicking him in the throat. When the foot comes away, a deep gash spurts blood. The black figure takes a handkerchief out of the man's pocket and wipes the side of the bloodied shoe clean.

CLOSE UP a silver blade forms the side of the shoe. The smallest black clad figure gives orders with hand signals to the other two who, unmasked, are shown to be Japanese. On cue, the Coast Guardsmen come out of the shadows, pouring onto the French boat. They too are Japanese. They begin to dress themselves in the hats and coats of the dead Frenchmen, tossing the bodies overboard. At a signal from the smallest, the three black clad figures disappear over the side of the boat.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER THIRTY

The Italians are still standing there, waiting. Bill is pacing angrily, nodding his head.

BILL
 Fifteen minutes late, Jesus
 Christ. Fucking faggot
 Frenchmen.

The lights flash a short distance away as the French trawler comes into view.

TIM
 Here they come.

JOE
 All right. Come on you guys,
 look professional.

The mafiosi spread out into position around the pier ready for danger as the trawler approaches the dock.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE ROOF

Castle comes across the roof in a crouch, an auto shotgun slung over his back, a steel cross bow with a brace of black arrows in his hand. A length of nylon cord hanging from his belt. His P.O.V. on the pier. The trawler pulling to dockside. The vans are backed up and open ready to be loaded. All the Mafiosi face the trawler, their backs to the warehouse. Castle loads an arrow in his cross bow and hooks the nylon cord through a loop in the back. He raises the bow and takes aim when something catches his eye. Three black clad figures rise from the water onto the pier and sneak up on the unsuspecting Mafiosi. Castle lowers his cross bow and watches.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER THIRTY

Bill steps up to the trawler, flanked by two other men.

BILL
 You're fifteen minutes late
 you poof. What's the big...

A knife hits him in the back, he spins around, stares bug-eyed and falls at the startled feet of his companions who pull their guns and turn to the three black figures. Before they can fire, they are subdued. The tall black figure neatly slices one man's head open with a sickle

attached to a long chain. The stout black figure throws two, three-pronged sai which catch another Mafioso high and low simultaneously. The third is dispatched by the smallest figure, who with a flick of the wrist sends a stiletto-thin blade through the man's throat. The Japanese on the boat jump off and begin to unload crates of heroin into the vans.

ANGLE ON Castle. Watching. Perplexed. He hears the faintest noise from behind and rolls to his right, swinging his shotgun around as a spray of silencer bullets fired from an uzi hits where his head had been. He lets go a blast, wasting the Japanese assassin who had snuck up behind him.

ANGLE ON the Japanese loading on the pier. Looking up as the blast sounds. An arrow whistles through the night and pierces one of the Japanese with such force, it pins his body to the side of the van. A nylon cord extends from the arrow to the opposite warehouse. A figure comes sliding down the cord. It's Castle. He scatters the Japanese, as he rushes towards them, with a deadly spray of uzi fire. Castle hits the ground right in front of the pierced Japanese. He yanks the body off the van.

CASTLE

Let's stick together.

He uses the body as a shield. Not a moment too soon. The Japanese recover and start to fire their weapons, riddling their dead companion's body. Castle opens the van door, yanks the parking brake, and pushes the van towards the end of the dock. As it goes over into the water, Castle sprints for the safety of the wharf building. The Japanese charge. Castle blasts two, three dead.

ANGLE ON the three black clad figures. The smallest hand-signals to the other two. They split up, disappearing into the shadows.

CUT TO:

CASTLE BEHIND A PILLAR

Reloading his shotgun, he looks up. The tallest black figure springs out and throws his sickle and chain. Castle raises his shotgun and catches the sickle's deadly blade. He twists down blowing the chain apart and blasts again at this attacker. The black figure dives into the shadows. Castle hears an engine start up. His P.O.V. The second van, loaded with heroin, is leaving the pier. Castle runs at an angle trying to cut it off, blasting two more would-be assassins to early graves who get in his way. Out of nowhere a sai is thrown, hitting Castle's shotgun out of his hands. The stout, black figure charges with two sai raised.

Castle ducks behind a pillar as a sai aimed for his head hits. He ducks behind a second pillar as another crashes into it. He grabs a block and tackle with a rotting netting and swings it, entangling his assailant. The van is almost past him. Castle scoops up his shotgun, slipping it over his shoulder. He sprints, bullets grazing left and right. He is on a collision course for the van. He whips a knife out of his boot and leaps.

CLOSE UP

INT. VAN

Castle's fist crashes through the window. His knife imbeds in the driver's chest.

ANGLE ON Castle hanging on through the window, steering as best he can. The van veers towards the end of the pier. A moment before it plunges into the brine, Castle jumps off. He somersaults and comes up running, shotgun blasting away. Another three Japanese assassins fall. Castle's P.O.V. in slow motion. The smallest black figure steps out some ten yards in front of him. Castle raises the shotgun to fire. The black figure is faster. A flick of the wrist sends a deadly stiletto slamming into Castle's shoulder. The shotgun flies up shooting skywards. Castle falls back clutching his shoulder and plunges into the dark water below. Four Japanese with uzis rake the water with lead. When they finish, the three black clad figures step forward and peer into the still water below. Nothing surfaces, neither body nor bubbles. After a moment, all the Japanese leave except the smallest black figure, who still masked, peers into the water a moment longer.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER

A van is pulled out of the water and onto the pier where the other van already salvaged, its heroin unloaded, is surrounded by dozens of cops. Berkowitz stands on the dock. The van is lowered in front of him. Sam comes up with a pad.

SAM

Six hundred kilos of dope.
Seven dead wise guys, all
from different families. Looks
like a drug deal gone bad.

Berkowitz opens the van door. Water and the dead Japanese driver spill out.

BERKOWITZ

Look again.

SAM

(startled)

I don't get it.

Something catches Berkowitz's eye in the van. He pulls out the skull-topped dagger.

BERKOWITZ

Neither do I.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER PASSAGE

Castle staggers through a drain pipe. The dagger still embedded in his shoulder. He falls into the fetid water, gets up slowly and staggers on.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE'S ROOM

A broad-bladed Bowie knife heats to white hot in a fire. Castle sits, his shirt off, his body drenched in sweat. The stiletto still in his shoulder, blood running down his arm. He steels himself, grabs the hilt of the stiletto and pulls. His body shivers as the long blade comes out. The wound bleeds profusely. Castle lifts the white-hot Bowie knife, regards its pulsing glow for a moment then lays it quite deliberately on the wound. He screams with the pain.

CUT TO:

THE SEWER PASSAGE

Echoing with his scream.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK TOWER - DAY

PAN from the top of the sheer glass, black skyscraper to the ground floor where a long black limo waits. The doors to the building open. Sato and Tomio, the tall and stout black clad figures, unmasked now, clad in the height of Japanese New Wave fashion with haircuts to match, exit and secure the

short distance from door to car. A moment later, LADY TANAKA, a striking looking Japanese woman in her late forties dressed in a conservative white business suit exits accompanied by a slightly built American woman in her early twenties, dressed in hot, tight black leather. The two women get into the rear of the limo, the two men into the front. The car drives off.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP

A slide of Lady Tanaka, flashing on a screen in a dark room.

FRANCO (V.O.)

Hideko Tanaka. She is single, in her late forties. She has one daughter, a mute American girl she adopted at birth who never leaves her side. She is a graduate of Harvard Business School and the first female ever to head the Yakuza.

DELEO (V.O.)

Yaku what?

The lights go on. Five young men and Franco are in his study. Tarrone, Deleo, Laconne, Musso and Bellini.

FRANCO

Yakuza. The Japanese Mafia.

LACONNE

This is a long fuckin' way from Japan.

FRANCO

Yes it is.

TARRONE

Well, what the hell are they doing here?

There is a knock on the door.

FRANCO

I don't know, but I think we're about to find out.

The door opens. Franco stands as Tanaka and her three cohorts enter. Franco bows slightly, graciously.

FRANCO

Lady Tanaka.

Tanaka returns the bow.

TANAKA

Mr. Franco it is an honor.
Your reputation precedes you.

FRANCO

As does yours. Please, sit down.

TANAKA

No thank you. What I have to say will be brief. We have been tracking your organizations for quite some time. Your leadership has been decimated. Your soldiers are inexperienced. Our little demonstration on Pier Thirty is ample proof of that. You are weak, Mr. Franco. Vulnerable. We are not. We can cripple all your operations, legal as well as illegal, very easily but we don't want that.

FRANCO

With all due respect, Miss Tanaka, let's cut through the bullshit and get to the heart of the matter. What do you want?

TANAKA

A partnership.

FRANCO

Define the term.

TANAKA

You will continue to manage and oversee all your business on a day to day basis. We will assume the duties of executive administration, investment and financial services.

All the Mafiosi rise to protest at once.

FRANCO

I'm not through.

The young Mafiosi quiet down.

FRANCO

What do you propose as a split?

TANAKA

Seventy-five percent for us,
twenty-five percent for you.

Deleo jumps up, a big bull with brutish manners.

DELEO

No fuckin' way am I gonna be a
salary boy to some bunch of
nips. Got that. I don't know
about the rest of you, but the
Deleo family gives up shit. We
don't work for nobody. Who the
fuck do you think you are?

Deleo towers over Tanaka. He stabs his finger in her face as he talks. She listens calmly and then grabs his bear-paw of a hand and twists. Deleo falls to his knees grimacing in pain.

TANAKA

We are Yakuza. When your ancestors
were still shepherds screwing sheep,
ours were the crime lords of Asia.

She looks up to Franco still holding onto Deleo's hand.

TANAKA

I am not offering terms, Mr. Franco,
I am making demands.

FRANCO

And what if we choose not to comply?

TANAKA

Steps are now being taken to ensure
that you will. You Americans have
a great capacity for violence.

She looks down at the still grimacing Deleo.

TANAKA

But it is wild, unfocused. You
will learn.

Her eyes glint cold. She squeezes hard, breaking Deleo's wrist. He screams and drops to the floor in agony.

TANAKA

Good day, gentlemen.

Tanaka heads for the door.

FRANCO
You left one thing out of the
equation, Madame.

TANAKA
What's that?

FRANCO
There's a psycho running around,
knocking all our people off. By
taking over you're right in the
line of fire.

CLOSE UP a small black dot on the underside of a door above
Franco's head.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE'S ROOM

Castle recuperating, his shoulder bandaged, listens to a
small speaker.

TANAKA (V.O.)
You mean the one they call the
Punisher?
(beat)
He has been put in his proper
place.

CUT TO:

FRANCO'S ROOM

FRANCO
(skeptical)
And where's that?

TANAKA
At the bottom of the harbor.

Tanaka exits.

TARRONE
What do we do?

FRANCO
Only thing we can.
(beat)
We go to war.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE'S ROOM

Castle greeting the news with a self-satisfied look. He lays back on his bed and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN SCHOOL - DAY

Ginny, a pretty young girl of twelve is walking out of the building, surrounded by several of her friends. They are swapping lipsticks and laughing with each other.

GINNY

I get the red. I hate the other stuff.

GIRLFRIEND

The red is gross, Ginny.

Suddenly the two girls are pushed aside. An arm wraps itself around Ginny. Two Japanese men drag her into a car waiting right at the corner, while her girlfriends scream, and drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. PLAYROOM

Two little girls, five year old twins, are sitting on a bed being entertained by their nanny who carries a large teddy bear in front of her.

NANNY

Hi girls. It's Mister Teddy. Would you like to ask me a question?

The sound of a silenced bullet shoots through the window, through the teddy and into the nanny. Blood comes out of the teddy. The two girls scream, horrified, as two shadows fall over them. They look up wide-eyed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

Tommy Franco comes out of the building, his books under his arm. Ahead of him in front of the school a black limousine is waiting. He walks up to it and looks in. Tommy knocks on the front window.

TOMMY

Hey Roger?

There is no response so Tommy opens the back door himself. The driver's side opens. Two hands reach out and pull him inside the car. The chauffeur, his throat slit, is dumped out. The limo takes off.

CUT TO:

INT. LONG HALLWAY

Tommy blindfolded, his mouth taped, is hustled down a long hallway by two Yakuza to a metal door guarded by another Japanese. The door is opened. The tape is ripped from his mouth, the blindfold from his eyes. Tommy is thrown into a dimly lit room. His eyes adjust to the new light. His P.O.V. Fifteen children of all ages from thirteen on down, some weeping, all scared.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING ROOM

The five young Mafiosi drawn with anger and worry and a brooding Franco sit in a smoke-filled room. Deleo jumps up banging the table.

DELEO

Enough of this fucking brain storming. I say we snatch her daughter, take her to the meeting with this.

He waves his gun around.

DELEO

In her mouth. And then we talk.

FRANCO

Freddie, before you go off snatching anybody, let me tell you a little story about our Miss Tanaka. The only person she was ever close to was her twin brother. They grew up in an orphanage in Tokyo after the war. They were inseparable, lived together their whole lives. One day he stuck the Yakuza for a lot of money, which he had no intention of paying back. Nothing

(MORE)

FRANCO (CONTINUED)

happened to him because of her. Then other people started getting the same idea. Before she was allowed to become head of the organization, the other leaders demanded an act of absolute loyalty. So you know what she did? She went home, cooked her brother a beautiful meal. Waited until he finished. And then slit his throat.

Everyone is silent. Franco rises.

LACONNE

So what are you saying, we don't deal with her?

FRANCO

I'm saying we can't deal with her.

MUSSO

No, what you're saying is there's nothing that can save our kids.

FRANCO

There is. But it's lying on the bottom of the harbor.

DELEO

Well I'm going to the meeting.

The other four men say the same thing.

FRANCO

I'm not.

He exits.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN

CASTLE (V.O.)

A soldier goes off to war with the idea that one day he goes back home. But what about the soldier who has no home to go back to? Just the memories of
(MORE)

CASTLE (CONTINUED)

one. Does he stop fighting
when the war ends or the memories
end?

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

Shake descends into the sewer. He reaches the bottom and
lights a match.

SHAKE

Hello. Hello. Come out, come
out wherever you are.

The match goes out. Shake lights another. A rat scurries
across his foot. He yelps, dropping the match plunging
himself into darkness.

SHAKE

Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble,
I'd better get out of here on
the double.

He lights another match, jumping back. Castle stands in
front of him, his mouth drawn in a tight line. Shake
screams, startled. Castle hits a switch on the wall. Dim
maintenance lights come on.

SHAKE

You know with your flair for
entrances you should consider
a career in theater.

CASTLE

I'll put it on my list of things
to do. What are you doing
here?

SHAKE

What would I be doing tramping
around the sewers of this great
metropolis?

CASTLE

Sightseeing.

SHAKE

Very funny. I bring you news,
you give me grief. You know
they all think you're dead.

CASTLE

Then let's not do anything to change their minds. Turn off the lights when you leave.

Castle turns and walks towards his motorcycle parked in the shadows.

SHAKE

But, there's more.

CASTLE

Not for me. They'll kill each other now.

SHAKE

And what will you do while the carnage ensues?

Castle mounts his bike.

CASTLE

Maybe take a vacation.

SHAKE

Yes, I hear the sewers of Paris are lovely this time of year.

Castle hits the starter on his bike.

SHAKE

And what about the children?

Castle stops abruptly at the mention of the word.

CASTLE

What children?

SHAKE

The children of the new bosses, snatched out of thin air by the Japanese. If their fathers don't make a deal, the world will not see their like again.

CASTLE

Why are you telling me this?

SHAKE

Because you punish the guilty, not the innocent.

Castle reaches into his saddle bag and pulls out a bottle of liquor and hands it to Shake. Shake refuses.

SHAKE

This one's on the house.

Castle recognizes Shake's altruism and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK TOWER

Sato and Tomio enter the building carrying a suitcase.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

Sato and Tomio, carrying a suitcase, and several other passengers watch the elevator go up. 38, 39, 40. The last floor. Everyone gets out except for Sato and Tomio. The doors close. Sato takes out a key and inserts it into a slot. The elevator starts up again to an unnumbered floor. The elevator stops and the doors slide open to a large, traditional Japanese Martial Arts School, where dozens of Yakuza soldiers are training. They all stop on cue as Sato and Tomio exit and bow in unison. Sato and Tomio bow back and then stride through the hall and out. The Yakuza return to their practice.

CUT TO:

SATO AND TOMIO

Striding through a museum room of antique Japanese weapons and suits of armor and down a shogi screened hallway. From the door at the end of the hall comes the strains of a full orchestra playing Beethoven, the piano solo begins played to perfection. Sato and Tomio enter the room to Tanaka seated at a concert piano. The orchestra is a tape played through gigantic speakers. Tanaka's daughter turns the page of the score. Tanaka finishes with a grand flourish. Tomio puts the suitcase on the piano. Off to the side a stock ticker tape hums away.

TANAKA

What's this?

Tomio snaps open the suitcase.

TOMIO

The money for the children.
Hasan agreed on your price.

(MORE)

TOMIO (CONTINUED)

Two hundred fifty thousand dollars per child and an additional bonus of one hundred thousand for each girl over twelve. We will net 2.25 million dollars from the sale.

TANAKA

Have we heard from their fathers?

SATO

They have agreed to meet with us. You were right. They let sentiment get in the way of business.

Tanaka closes the suitcase and pats it.

TANAKA

Luckily we do not.

Tomio removes the suitcase from the piano. He and Sato kneel facing the piano. Tanaka nods to her daughter who pushes the tape deck button. The concert begins. Tanaka takes the piano solo grandly.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM

The mafia kids are huddled in the dim light, scared. Tommy tries to break the wooden boards covering the windows. He succeeds only to find metal shutters behind them. A little girl begins to cry. Tommy comforts her.

TOMMY

Hey, don't cry. We're going to be okay.

He gives her a candy from his pocket.

GIRL #2

We're not going to be okay. It's 'cause of my father I'm here.

TOMMY

That's not true.

BOY

So why are we here, Mr. Know
It All?

TOMMY

I don't know.

BOY

I do. We're being held for
ransom 'cause our fathers are
rich gangsters.

TOMMY

Then why am I here? My father's
not a gangster.

BOY #2

What are you kidding? Your
father's the biggest gangster
and a coward. My dad said if
he didn't run away from his
responsibilities, there wouldn't
be this mess.

TOMMY

Bull shit!

BOY #1

You're bull shit.

Tommy jumps him. They start to fight. The door opens. Two
Yakuza break them up and hold them apart.

YAKUZA

No fight.

Tommy struggles.

TOMMY

Let go! Get off!

YAKUZA

Quiet!

A third Yakuza slaps Tommy across the face. Tommy stops
struggling. A moment later, Tanaka appears at the door
followed by her daughter. Everyone falls silent. A little
girl starts to cry. Lady Tanaka bends down smiling and with
a tissue handed to her by her daughter, wipes the child's
tears. Tanaka picks the girl up in her arms.

TANAKA

Why are you fighting? Everything
is going to be all right.

CHILD

I want to go home.

TANAKA

And you will.

TOMMY

When?

Tanaka caresses the child's face. She walks over to Tommy and stares at him.

TANAKA

Very soon. Here.

She gives the little girl a candy to suck on.

TANAKA

No more tears now.

She kisses the little girl on her cheek, puts her down and exits. Some of the kids are buoyant.

GIRLS

We're going home. We're
going home.

Tommy sifts around through some rubble. He picks up a short dowel, takes a piece of splintered wood and starts tying it to the end of the pole making a short spear.

BOY #2

What are you doing?

TOMMY

You believe her?

The other boys watch Tommy for a moment and then start foraging for weapon material.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN OF INIQUITY

The room is smokey and full of the devil's work. In the center are gaming tables surrounded by frenzied players. Along the walls are dozens of slot machines. In two dark, cave-like rooms, people smoke opium, prepped by ancient Chinese men. In other side rooms, prostitutes do business. In a cashier's booth two Japanese take care of the cash. Four Japanese brutes walk the floor as bouncers. All at once the skylight shatters. A rope descends. Castle comes

flying down onto one of the crap tables. He has a large weapon on his back with a thick cylinder attached. The two bouncers move to grab him. One grabs for his foot. Castle kicks his lights out. The other bouncer draws a gun. Castle's knife is faster. The man falls. Castle lifts a third bouncer to his face after wacking him with a sack kick.

CASTLE

Where are the children?

The bouncer just stares at him.

CASTLE

Every day the children are gone is gonna cost you. Take that message to your people.

Castle removes the gun from his shoulder and begins to pump explosive shells into the slot machines one after another. People start running and screaming. Slot machine after slot machine explodes, sending coins in the air. A Japanese tries to run from the cashier's booth with a suitcase. Castle pumps his shell into the suitcase. Cash flies everywhere. Castle shoots the gaming tables. Chips go flying. He shoots the bar. Liquor bottles burst. He shoots the water pipes. Water sprays on everything. Castle keeps pumping shell after shell after shell.

FADE TO:

THE AFTERMATH

The entire room reduced to soggy debris. Police are wading through the destruction looking for clues. Suspects are being led out. The two Japanese bouncers are being held handcuffed. Berkowitz and Sam come down the stairs looking around at the destruction. Berkowitz eyes the glum Japanese.

BERKOWITZ

Who are these happy campers?

COP

I don't know, I can't get a word out of them.

Sam looks at them.

SAM

Take your shirt off.

The man looks at her surprised.

SAM

I said, take your shirt off.

BERKOWITZ

Sam, what the hell you doin'?

Sam grabs the man, without warning, by his shirt front and yanks hard. His clothes pull away. Everyone's P.O.V. His whole body is covered with tattoos.

COP

What the hell?

SAM

They're Japanese Yakuza.

BERKOWITZ

Who did this?

He is about to get aggressive with the Japanese when his beeper goes off.

SAM

I'll get it.

Sam hustles for the door.

COP

Lieutenant?

Berkowitz walks over. The cop points to the floor. His P.O.V. in a puddle of water and his own blood, the third bouncer. With Castle's skull knife sticking out of his chest. Sam comes running over.

SAM

You're not going to believe this.

His eyes lead hers to the corpse and the knife.

BERKOWITZ

Try me.

SAM

The kids of all the new family heads have been snatched. They've named the Punisher as the prime suspect in the case.

Berkowitz starts to walk away.

BERKOWITZ

They're wrong.

SAM

It makes sense.

BERKOWITZ

It does, but they're still wrong.

SAM

You got a reason for saying that?

BERKOWITZ

Two.

He pulls out his wallet and takes a picture out and shows it to Sam.

CLOSE UP Castle's little girls in Easter dresses.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP THE SAME PICTURE

Tattered around the edges.

PULL BACK to Castle in a dark alley sitting in front of his bike, the headlight illuminating the picture. Castle looks up from the picture, troubled, alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUMBER YARD - NIGHT

Castle and Shake pull up across the street on Castle's chopper. Castle has his auto shotgun slung over his back and a .09mm pistol stuck in his waistband.

CASTLE

You're sure this is the place?

SHAKE

I'd stake my reputation on it. If I had one.

Castle dismounts and checks his shotgun and the pistol.

SHAKE

Got a spare?

CASTLE

If they're holding the kids,
it's with an arsenal. You
move left instead of right,
you're dead.

SHAKE

The critics said the same thing
about my Hamlet.

CASTLE

Stay here. I wouldn't want to
get a ticket.

He looks up at a No Parking sign and pats Shake's shoulder.

CASTLE

You've done your fair share.

Castle disappears into the shadows. Shake looks around a little nervous. To calm himself and pass the time, he takes out a pair of bifocals and a tattered copy of Backstage and begins reading the classifieds. A black-gloved pair of arms grabs Shake from behind and yanks him into the shadows.

CUT TO:

INT. LUMBER YARD

Castle stalks through the lumber yard, cautious in the eerie silence. His senses keen and alert. A slight noise from behind spins him, shotgun at the ready. There is nothing. All of a sudden a brace of lumber from above him comes sliding off a second story shelf. Castle dives up a small aisle. The boards hit the aisle supports, breaking them. More lumber starts to fall.

Castle rolls and runs, losing his shotgun, staying only a few inches ahead of the avalanche of wood. Bullets begin to spatter all around him and hell breaks loose. Castle turns the corner. Two Yakuza jump out with automatic guns. Castle hits a board sticking out of the pile, it swings back into the Yakuza knocking them over. Castle pulls a pistol out of his belt and pops up another aisle. Shots drive him back. He spins and fires up. A body falls from above. Castle runs. A Yakuza jumps him from behind. He flips the man over and smashes his chest with an elbow crushing his sternum. As Castle is about to head for the exit another blazing gun blocks his way. He sprints up another aisle.

As he turns the corner, a hand grabs his arm. He is flung into a sheaf of boards. Tomio kiais loudly and attacks with a large punch. Castle ducks. The punch smashes through the beam behind him, cracking it with awesome force. Tomio charges again. Castle blocks his punch and is cracked with a backhand so strong it sends him spinning. Tomio jumps up and goes to stop Castle. Castle rolls out of the way at the last moment, grabs a 2x4 and rises to face Tomio.

His P.O.V. To the left a board holding back a stock of 2x4's. Tomio charges. Castle swings knocking the board away. The 2x4's fall on Tomio, burying him. Castle runs for the exit and almost makes it, but Sato jumps out and fires an uzi across his path. Castle takes off running through the stacks of lumber, drawing fire from all sides. He swings onto a hoist and takes off sailing over the fence landing outside the yard. He slams the door as the Yakuza charge, firing, and bolts it with a thick board.

He runs for his motorcycle across the street. Shake is nowhere to be found. The Yakuza across the way pound on the door. Castle mounts his chopper and takes off.

CLOSE UP a hand swings a chain with a grappling hook. The hook flies through the air and lands in Castle's spokes. The bike upends. Castle flies off into a bunch of empty wooden crates. When he rises, the smallest black clad figure is walking towards him, masked but for the eyes. Castle's hand imperceptively grabs a wooden dowel. Waiting, feigning incapacity until the black clad figure is almost upon him. He springs, swinging with the dowel. The Yakuza grabs his arm and flips him over effortlessly. Castle rolls out. The Yakuza attacks. Castle barely gets out of the way. He grabs the Yakuza by the shoulder and goes to flip him around but a wheel kick spins before he can, catching him in the jaw. Stunned, another wheel kick drives him to his knees. Castle attempts to get up. He is kicked again and again. The other Yakuza come bursting out of the warehouse. Castle's vision blurs as the Yakuza come running up.

His assailant spins again, kicking him in the head. He falls to his knees. His P.O.V. before he fades to blackness. The Yakuza removes the mask. It is Tanaka's daughter. A final wheel kick sends Castle spinning into darkness.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

Castle's vision clears. His P.O.V. as the haze lifts. He is strapped to a rack-like device with bright lights

overhead and darkness beyond. Sato, Tomio and Tanaka's daughter look down at him. A moment later Tanaka comes into view holding a remote control device in her hand.

TANAKA

That was a very expensive question you asked in our place the other night. It cost us nearly two million dollars in cash. How much pain do you think that buys you?

CASTLE

Is the question true or false or multiple choice?

TANAKA

Neither.

She hits a button on the remote control device. The rack creaks back, stretching Castle's every body fiber to the breaking point. She releases the button, the machine relaxes. Castle goes limp, panting with the pain.

TANAKA

Who sent you?

CASTLE

Nobody.

Tanaka hits the switch again. Castle screams in pain.

TANAKA

Do you get the impression I don't believe you?

Castle looks her in the eye hard.

CASTLE

Do you think I give a shit?

She presses the button again for an even longer time. Castle seems about to come apart at every seam. She takes her finger off the button.

TANAKA

You handle your own pain very well. Let's see how well you handle the pain of others.

Sato forces Castle's head to the side. Castle's P.O.V. A light goes on ten feet away. Shake is tied to a similar rack. Tanaka hits the remote control. Shake screams with pain. Castle flinches. Tanaka observes.

CASTLE

He has nothing to do with it.

TANAKA

Then who does?

CASTLE

I already told you.

Tanaka sighs. A very sadistic looking man, ITO, steps forward. Tanaka hands him the remote control device.

TANAKA

I have an appointment. You'll be in good hands with Mr. Ito. He can keep you alive much longer than you'll want to be. I hope it won't come to that. Good bye.

Tanaka exits with her escort, leaving Ito and two other Yakuza in attendance. Ito addresses Castle in Japanese. Then hits the switch on Shake. The old man is pulled beyond endurance. Blood begins to trickle from his mouth. The Yakuza go over and examine him with a stethoscope. They laugh. Ito stretches him again, slapping him awake.

CLOSE UP

CASTLE'S WRISTS

As he works them back and forth against the rope that binds his hands to the rack. His blood starts to flow, lubricating the bonds. After a tortuous effort, Castle slides mostly out of the rope.

CASTLE

Okay. Okay. No more.

The Yakuza turn around. The power is turned off Shake who slumps unconscious.

CASTLE

Come here!

Ito addresses the other Japanese. The two of them stand on either side of Castle, their jackets off, their shoulder holsters in the open.

CASTLE

(whispered)
I got somethin' to say.

Castle pretends to be close to expiration. The two Yakuza bend forward.

ITO
What you have to say?

Castle whips his hands out from the bindings and pulls the two pistols out of the shoulder holsters of the two startled Yakuza. He crosses his hands left over right.

CASTLE
Sayonara!

He pulls the triggers and blows both Yakuza away. Ito goes for his gun. Castle shoots him in the arm with one gun and shoots the rope binding his feet with the other. Castle hops off the rack and hoists Ito onto it, tying him down.

CASTLE
I don't want to stretch this out so why don't you tell me where the children are?

Ito curses him in Japanese, getting a little nervous about the rack. Castle picks up the remote control. Ito eyes it nervously, steeling himself. Castle pauses and then hits a button. Ito screams. Castle's face goes hard.

CASTLE
I know you understand me. You don't tell me where the children are, I hit this button so hard they'll find you in pieces like chickens at the supermarket.

Ito spits at Castle.

CASTLE
Have it your way.

Castle holds his finger on the button so long that Ito's muscles start coming away from his bones. His flesh starts to rend.

ITO
Avenue A! Avenue A!

Castle releases the button. He goes over to Shake and takes the old man off the rack, examining him. Shake regains consciousness.

SHAKE
Go. Take care of the children.

CASTLE
(gently)
First things first.

He lifts Shake and starts to exit. He looks back at Ito. His eyes harden. He hits the button on the remote and tosses it into the room, closing the door on Ito's hellish screams.

CUT TO:

INT. LASTRADA RESTAURANT

The young bosses are all seated around a back booth. Franco is conspicuously absent. Deleo has a cast on his hand. There are a dozen people in the restaurant having dinner. Off to the side, the bodyguards frisk all the waiters and the kitchen help.

TARRONE
You know, maybe Franco was right.

MUSSO
Hey, we're totally covered. It's a public place. We got fire power up the wazoo.

TARRONE
I know. I know. I just don't like it.

DELEO
(sharp)
Hey! You want your kid back, or what?

TARRONE
What kind of stupid question is that?

DELEO
You know what your big problem is, Jimmy? You got no fuckin' balls.

TARRONE
And you got no fuckin' brains.

DELEO
Hey, let me tell you somethin' about brains...

Deleo never gets to finish the sentence. The maitre d' comes cover with a bottle of champagne and chilled glasses.

MAITRE D'

Mr. Deleo? Your guest called and said she would be a few minutes late. She sent the champagne with her compliments.

The bosses look at each other suspiciously.

DELEO

You first.

MAITRE D'

Beg your pardon.

Laconne grabs a glass off of the adjoining table. He pours some champagne.

LACONNE

Drink it.

The maitre d' looks at the bosses like they're a little crazy. He shrugs and drinks.

MAITRE D'

Delicious. It's our best bottle.

The bosses watch. Nothing happens.

TARRONE

Okay. Pour it.

A glass is put down in front of each boss. The champagne is poured.

DELEO

You know when we get the kids back, I'm going to rip her fuckin' heart out with my bare hands. I swear. None for me. I'm on medication.

He refuses his champagne. The glass stays empty.

MUSSO

Hey, salud! Here's to the safe return of our children.

The men clink their glasses and drink. At that moment, Tanaka and her daughter walk in.

LACONNE

Here we go.

The men stand up.

TANAKA

So, Mr. Franco decided not to attend. A smart decision.

TARRONE

What are you talking about?

At that moment all the patrons in the restaurant rise and pull out silenced, automatic weapons and drill the bodyguards dead. Then they turn their guns on the bosses.

DELEO

You fuckin' bitch!

Deleo pulls out his gun. Awkward, left handed. Tanaka's daughter whips her wrists forward. Two knives seem to fly out of her sleeves, pinning Deleo's arms to the wall behind him. He screams in agony. The other bosses freeze. Tanaka does not move.

TARRONE

Come on. What are you waitin' for? You gonna kill us? Do it.

TANAKA

I already have.

The pain catches the bosses all at once. Their lungs freeze. Tarrone looks at Tanaka uncomprehendingly.

LACONNE

The champagne!

Tanaka smiles and picks up Deleo's empty glass. She runs her finger around the inside rim.

TANAKA

The glasses.

The bosses die horribly right before our eyes. She fills Deleo's champagne glass and approaches him as he moans crucified to the wall.

TANAKA

Thirsty, Mr. Deleo?

She raises the poison glass. Deleo raises his head and spits in her face. Tanaka's expression does not change. She puts the glass down and calmly wipes her face.

TANAKA

Since you have refused the
drink, please accept the
chaser.

She lifts his pistol off the table, jams the barrel in his mouth and pulls the trigger. His brains decorate the wall. Tanaka drops the pistol and exits followed by her daughter and all the other patrons.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE'S ROOM

Castle gently tucks Shake into his bed after having bandaged him. He grabs a small sawed-off shotgun and a pistol and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - NIGHT

The last stop. One old drunk is asleep in the back.

DRIVER

Okay pops, last stop.

The drunk does not move. The driver goes back and shakes him.

DRIVER

Hey pops.

The drunk waves him away.

DRIVER

Okay. See you in fifteen
minutes.

The driver exits and heads for a coffee shop across the street. He is about to enter the coffee shop when the bus takes off.

DRIVER

Hey! Hey!

The driver watches the bus moving away, picking up speed.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS

The bus is moving very fast. The drunk wakes up as it whizzes past the stop.

DRUNK

Hey! That's my stop!

The bus does not slow down.

DRUNK

HEY!

The drunk wobbles to the front of the bus.

DRUNK

I said...

His P.O.V. Castle, his guns in evidence, black camouflage paint striped on his face. The drunk's eyes go wide. Castle hits the brake, gives the stunned drunk a transfer and nods for him to get off. The drunk does. He stands in the street watching the bus disappear into the misty night.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

A gray van with smoke black windows rises over a dip in the road. A second and then a third van appear behind it. The soundtrack pulses ominously.

CUT TO:

EXT. AVENUE A

A dingy, deserted row of crumbling tenements. Half the street lamps are out along the block. A black car with black windows pulls up to one building. Sato exits and enters a tenement.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM

Tommy listens at the door. When he hears footsteps, he draws back and picks up his homemade weapon. He has organized the other kids. All the older ones have make-shift weapons as well. The younger ones hug the back wall.

TOMMY
Remember the plan.

The door starts to open.

TOMMY
Now!

As the two men enter, Tommy lunges at one with his spear, pinning the man through the chest. The children overwhelm the second guard with their weapons. All the kids charge out of the room, Tommy leading. He now has a gun. A Yakuza in the hall stands to confront them. Tommy blows them away.

TOMMY
This way! Watch the
little ones.

The kids run down the stairs. Sato, at the bottom, looks up. Tommy fires three shots at him. Sato ducks back.

TOMMY
Come on, let's go!

The kids run down the stairs, Tommy covering them with the gun. They are three quarters of the way down when Sato jumps at Tommy, a bullet grazing his arm. He grabs Tommy and flings him against the wall. The other guards spring into action, jumping on all the kids. Tommy sees a spare gun lying by a chair. In the confusion he grabs it and fires it in the air. Everyone stops and turns. He points the automatic weapon at the Yakuza.

TOMMY
Okay, let them go! I said,
let them go!

In an instant, Sato whips out a knife and grabs a little girl. The knife goes to her throat.

SATO
Put down gun.

TOMMY
Let her go!

SATO
I give you three. One,
two.

Tommy drops the gun. Sato drops the child and backhands Tommy across the room. Sato barks orders in Japanese. The children are all gathered and herded back upstairs. Sato

grabs Tommy and drags him upstairs. The kids are put back in the room. Tommy is thrown into a small closet. The door is locked.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

CLOSE UP the vans moving inexorably forward, fill the screen; the soundtrack pulsing.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS

Castle maneuvers the bus down the desolate streets, sticking to the alleyways.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

Sato looks up and down the street. A caravan of headlights appears at the far end.

CUT TO:

EXT. REAR ALLEY

The bus pulls up and stops. Castle swings up onto the roof of the bus and surveys the metal-shuttered windows of the building he is hard up against. He grabs onto a fire escape and swings up towards them.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM

The kids are all huddled together under the watchful eye of two armed Yakuza.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

The gray vans pull up. Their drivers, rough looking Middle Eastern types, exit and shake hands with Sato. The sides of the vans open to reveal manacles riveted to the walls and

floor below the blank benches. Sato talks into a walkie-talkie.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM

One of the Yakuza gets Sato's call on his hand set.

YAKUZA

Out! Out!

The kids are forced out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. REAR OF BUILDING

On the fire escape, Castle listens through a metal shutter. He sets two miniature charges into the shutter's lock and blows them. He pulls open the grate and steps cautiously into the room. He draws his knife from his boot.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY

The kids are lined up in the hallway. One Yakuza in front of them, one behind, waiting for the second call. The door opens suddenly, knocking the first man senseless. Before the second Yakuza can draw his gun, Castle's knife is buried in his chest. The kids regard Castle fearfully. His eyes soften, looking at them.

CASTLE

I'm here to take you home.

The kids hesitate, then one little girl steps forward and takes Castle's hand. The touch of her hand brings back a flood of memories and he smiles.

CASTLE

Come on.

He leads them back into the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

Sato, growing impatient, calls into his hand set. He gets no answer. He heads into the building.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM

The kids almost all filed out through the window.

BOY

They locked Tommy in a closet.

CASTLE

Where?

BOY

Out in the hall.

Castle runs out into the hall and begins opening the different doors with increasing urgency.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING

Sato comes bursting in. He orders two of the Yakuza to follow him up the stairs.

CUT TO:

CASTLE

Opening door after door in a long hallway until he comes to one that is locked. He takes his knife and bangs the lock open. Tommy falls out. He squints. His eyes adjust to the light. Tommy looks into Castle's eyes. There is something that looks familiar. The same holds true for Castle. Castle hears footsteps on the stairs. He grabs Tommy's hand and starts to run back toward the room.

CUT TO:

SATO

Hearing the noise, he sprints ahead of his escort taking the stairs three at a time and sees Castle and Tommy run into the room. Sato jumps into the room. Castle with Tommy half

out the window, throws his knife. Sato ducks. The knife slams the door shut revealing one of the little children behind it, scared, sucking her thumb. Sato's eyes go to the child. He leaps. Castle leaps at Sato catching him broad side. They fight furiously. Tommy grabs the little girl and passes her down just as Castle is about to be stabbed by Sato. Tommy turns, makes a decision and jumps hitting Sato's arm deflecting the knife. Castle rolls out but before he can save Tommy, the other Yakuza burst in and fire their weapons, driving Castle out the window. He jumps down the fire escape hitting the bus roof and swinging inside just as fire starts raking the roof.

CASTLE

Get down!

Bullets pepper the roof as Castle takes off.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

Sato comes running out shouting orders to the drivers of the three gray vans. A dozen Yakuza pile in the vans and take off.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS

Castle barrels the bus down the narrow back alleys. Slamming anything that gets in his way; garbage cans, debris. His P.O.V. between buildings on the street running parallel to the alley. The gray vans in hot pursuit. Castle sees the end of the alley. A gray van suddenly skids in front, blocking his way. Yakuza jump out and start firing their automatic weapons. Castle hits the accelerator. His windshield shatters. The Yakuza jump out of the way. One goes through the open windshield as Castle blows into the van and turns left onto the street proper. The kids scream as the Yakuza runs toward Castle, a gun in his hand. Castle turns a corner sharply as the man reaches him leveling his weapon. He opens the door and with one foot kicks the man out. He turns back to the road.

His P.O.V. through the rear view mirror. Two vans in hot pursuit. The rear windows are shattered by gunfire. Castle turns onto another street. It is larger with oncoming traffic. Cars fly onto the curb hitting posts, running into buildings. One of the vans pulls up alongside the bus.

Through the side mirror, Castle's P.O.V. A Yakuza has jumped from the van grabbing the side of the bus. Castle swerves trying to knock him off but the man hangs on, trying to climb up through a window. Two girls jump up and sink their teeth into his hands. The Yakuza falls off screaming. The van pulls abreast of Castle. A Yakuza, in the driver's side, points his weapon. Castle hits his brake. The van shoots past, the shots missed. Now the van is in front of the bus. Castle hits the accelerator and bangs into the van.

ANGLE ON the van's driver growing nervous as he loses control of the wheel. Gunmen inside try to open the rear door but the bus has them blocked closed. Castle pushes the van hard off the street, and into a building. The van explodes.

Castle spots the third van, coming at him from the right. He turns the wheel sharply onto an even wider boulevard. The gray van tries to pull alongside. Sato appears with an automatic weapon at the open door. Castle turns the bus just as the gun fires. Police sirens start to sound in the background. The gray van comes alongside again. Sato sets to jump through the open bus doors. Castle looks at Sato as he is about to jump then Sato looks forward. He sees something which makes him change his mind. The van turns off sharply onto a side street.

Castle turns his head forward. His P.O.V. Two dozen police cars, their lights flashing, block the street. Cops are all around, guns pointed. Castle hits the brakes.

CASTLE

Hold on!

The bus goes plowing into the police cars. A fire hydrant bursts. Street lamps topple. Cops scramble for safety. The bus finally comes to a stop. The cops surround the bus, guns pointed at the entrance. For a long moment nothing happens. Then the bus doors open. A child appears, then another and another until all the children are out. The cops keep their guns trained on the door. A moment later, Castle appears with a little girl in his arms. He looks at the wall of guns and stunned faces. He lowers the little girl to the ground and slowly raises his hands in the air.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CORRIDOR

Triple security is in effect. Armed guards with bullet proof vests line the corridor. Footsteps sound, followed by

the clanking of one steel door after another. Berkowitz appears before the last steel door. It opens. He is accompanied by two heavily armed guards. They stop before a metal cell door guarded by two more armed men. Berkowitz nods. The door is opened. The two guards prepare to enter with Berkowitz. He waves them off, steels himself and enters.

CUT TO:

INT. CELL

The door closes. Castle manacled from head to toe sits with his back to the door. Emotion plays heavily across Berkowitz's face. He composes himself and walks in front of Castle.

BERKOWITZ

(warm)

Hello, Frank.

CASTLE

Hello, Jake.

There's no emotion in Castle's voice.

BERKOWITZ

How you been?

CASTLE

Keeping busy.

BERKOWITZ

I know. I'm in charge of the body count.

(sincere)

What the hell happened, Frank?

CASTLE

I woke up one morning and I found myself dead, Jake.

BERKOWITZ

And so you decided everyone else had to be too?

CASTLE

Only the guilty ones.

BERKOWITZ

Courts decide who's guilty, not cops. I've been after you five years. You know that?

CASTLE

I know that.

BERKOWITZ

Then why didn't you come to me for help?

CASTLE

I didn't need help.

BERKOWITZ

You don't realize it. You do. You're sick, Frank.

CASTLE

No I'm not.

BERKOWITZ

No! What the hell do you call a hundred twenty-five murders in five years?

CASTLE

Work in progress.

Berkowitz loses his temper and grabs Castle by the shirt pulling his face to within inches.

BERKOWITZ

They were my family too Frank, remember? This is no fuckin' joke. They're going to electrocute you and there's nothing I can do about it if you don't help me, goddamn it! Now stop it!

In his frustration, he shakes Castle. Castle looks at him with dead eyes. Berkowitz realizes the futility of his plea.

BERKOWITZ

What the fuck am I doing. You wanna die? Die! I don't give a fuck. My friend died five years ago anyway.

Berkowitz bangs on the metal door. It opens. He turns once more to Castle's back. Castle does not move. With a sigh of great sadness, Berkowitz exits.

CLOSE UP Castle's face. Stoned except for one small tear forming in the corner of his eye.

CUT TO:

FRANK CASTLE'S FACE

Warped by billowing heat as he moves through a column of burning flames. In super-slow motion he moves forward. His little girls are in the back seat, screaming, pounding at the window of a car. Castle reaches back and punches the glass, shattering the window. He reaches into the car for the girls. His hands filling the frame. Castle pulls the girls to his chest only they are no longer in the burning wreck but in a bright, sun dappled, grassy field. He spins them around and around laughing happily as Julie watches, sitting on the grass nearby. Castle puts the little girls down. Their mother beckons to them and they go running into her arms.

CLOSE UP on Julie as she smiles at her husband. Castle smiles back and starts to walk towards her when suddenly a wall of flames shoots up in front of his family and then another, then another, until they are completely obscured by the fire. Castle screams at the top of his lungs.

CASTLE

No!

There is a tremendous, blinding explosion.

CUT TO:

INT. CELL

Castle jerks up from his cot, his body soaked with sweat. His chest rises and falls like a marathon runner's. He is shaken to his very soul.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: A T.V. SCREEN

The interior of the jail. A score of armed guards surround a prison van waiting for Castle.

REPORTER

In a few moments, Frank Castle,
the ex-police officer who has
waged a one-man war against

(MORE)

REPORTER (CONTINUED)

organized crime for the past five years, will be escorted to court to face an unprecedented one hundred twenty-five first degree murder charges.

The door from the jail opens. The guards shift to high alert. Castle emerges, heavily manacled and walks the twenty steps to the van. Before entering, he stops to look around. Not finding who he's looking for, Castle enters the van. The doors are slammed shut and locked. The garage door opens. The van, with an escort of two police cars, pulls out.

REPORTER

And so begins the long road to justice for the man who has redefined the term.

The T.V. is shut off.

ANGLE ON Franco sitting in his son's room. His face drawn from lack of sleep. The T.V. remote in his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN

Castle, chained to the bench, stares at Sam sitting opposite him.

CASTLE

Where's Berkowitz?

SAM

Hurting. What happened between you when he came to see you?

CASTLE

What do you care?

SAM

I care.
(beat)
I'm his partner.

Castle registers surprise.

SAM

You surprised he had a partner?
Or he had me?

CASTLE

Both.

SAM

I was in the academy when the two of you were making headlines. Everyone needs a star to set their course by. I chose you. I studied every case you ever made. Every bust and used what I learned to make myself as good as you.

(beat)

He's been carrying the burden for a long time by himself. He needed help. You weren't there. I was the next best thing.

(beat)

Now I'm the only thing. He resigned from the force after he saw you.

Castle turns his face away.

SAM

You know you're killing him. He lived for the day he found you so he could help you. That's all he had and now you're taking that away.

(beat)

I can understand punishing those you hate, but not those you love.

Castle's jaw tightens uncharacteristically. He avoids Sam's gaze.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

The escort car, following the van, is broadsided suddenly from a side street.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN

The driver and guard in the front of the van turn at the noise behind them. When they turn back to the windshield, a truck has pulled out in front of them, seemingly out of nowhere. They hit head on and both go through the windshield.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN

Sam is thrown against the wall and knocked unconscious. Castle rattled around but chained down looks around confused. The van doors are blown off. Three masked men with guns appear. Sam gets up feebly going for her gun. One man wacks her with his pistol. She goes out again. A fourth man steps forward and points a pistol straight at Castle's heart.

MAN

Nighty, night asshole!

He fires a dart into Castle's chest. Castle's vision blurs.

FADE IN

Castle's vision clears. His P.O.V. Franco stands in front of him in a dark, empty room underneath a single glaring light. In the shadows beyond, Castle can make out the outlines of armed men. He focuses on Franco.

FRANCO

Surprised?

Castle says nothing.

FRANCO

Okay, I'll do the talking. Five years ago I left this country with a six year old boy. You met him at the airport. I never wanted him to know what I was or what I did. I sent him to the best private schools in Europe, got him the best tutors. He speaks three languages besides English now. He skis like a pro, jumps horses like a goddamn cavalry officer and writes short stories so beautiful they'd break your heart.

Franco's voice catches. He holds up a picture of Tommy. Castle is stunned.

SMASH CUT TO:

TOMMY JUMPING AND DEFLECTING SATO'S KNIFE.

CUT BACK TO:

FRANCO

I want him back. I can't do it myself or I would. I need you Castle. I need you to help me get my son back. I'll do anything you want, give you anything you want, just help me get my boy back.

CASTLE

Why don't you just pay the ransom?

FRANCO

I offered. Double. They said he's not for sale, at any price.

Castle takes a long moment.

CASTLE

All right. But just so it's straight, I do this for him, not for you. For you I have other plans.

FRANCO

I'm sure you do.

Franco leans forward and unlocks Castle's manacles. The chains fall to the ground. Franco turns and walks off into the darkness leaving Castle alone, unchained beneath the glaring light.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR

Berkowitz is sitting at the bar lost in his thoughts and a drink. A game show program blaring on the television above the bar is interrupted by a news bulletin of Frank Castle's abduction. Berkowitz looks up from his drink, a lover for whom the affair has not yet ended. He rushes out.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP

White spray paint being applied to black Kevlar body armor. PULL BACK to Castle spray painting a stylized skull across the body armor. PULL BACK AGAIN to reveal an arsenal of a room stockpiled with enough fire power to fight a war. Two of Franco's bodyguards watch bemused from the corner. The door opens. Franco in a Kevlar vest enters. He looks at Castle, then at his bodyguards. One bodyguard taps his head smirking at Castle. Franco nods in agreement. He approaches Castle, his face and voice mirrors of sincerity.

FRANCO

I just wanted you to know
that no matter what happens,
from the bottom of my heart,
I thank you.

Castle keeps painting as if Franco weren't there. Franco goes to exit. He addresses a bodyguard.

FRANCO

(low)

If he survives, I don't care
what it takes, how much money.
How many men. Find him. Kill
him.

CUT TO:

INT. TANAKA'S PRIVATE ROOM

Tanaka and her daughter dressed in traditional Japanese kimono are doing Ikebana, the art of traditional flower arranging. The shogi screen slides open and Tommy is brought in by Sato and Tomio. Tanaka smiles warmly.

TANAKA

Ah, Tommy. I just wanted
to say good bye to you before
you left.

TOMMY

(excited)

I'm going home?

TANAKA

To your new home.

Tanaka pushes a button on a remote control. A large black glass descends covering a whole wall. She pushes another

button. The black glass is backlit turning into a map of the world with red lights dotting large parts of Asia and a few coastal areas of the Western Hemisphere.

TANAKA

This is our empire.

She hits another button. Green lights dot throughout the U.S. and Canada.

TANAKA

Soon this will be too and we will need someone to run it. Someone who feels like them but thinks like us. I have chosen that someone to be you. You will be sent to Japan, where your mind will be trained, shaped, molded until here.

She taps her head.

TANAKA

We will be the same. You will have more riches than your father ever dreamed of. More power than he ever knew existed. You will be the first American Yakuza overlord.

(pause)

What do you think of that for a future?

Tommy regards her for a moment. Then picks one of the Ikebana vases and hurls it through the entire glass wall. The map shatters. Tanaka's composure does not. She nods to Sato who grabs Tommy and leads him away.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

Franco, Castle and Shake huddle over blueprints. Shake moves in too close to Franco who looks at him askance with distance. Shake smiles at him mischievously and moves a step closer. Franco and Castle are armed to the teeth with uzis and pistols.

FRANCO

They're right above us, forty one stories up. The elevator stops at forty. We'll need a

(MORE)

FRANCO (CONTINUED)

key to get it to forty-one which a guard has in the lobby. We can get there through this vent. You ready?

CASTLE

After you.

Franco climbs up rungs leading into a tube going into the building. Castle pulls an explosive device from his pocket and slaps it onto a thick electrical power box whose wires run up into the building. He takes two beepers out, hands one to Shake and clips one on his belt.

CASTLE

When the first signal light goes on, throw the first switch. Second signal light, the second switch. Signal check.

Castle presses the beeper on his belt. The red light on Shake's beeper flashes.

CASTLE

Wait for my signal.

Castle goes to climb up the rungs.

SHAKE

Sir?

He holds out his hand. Castle regards him for a moment and takes his hand and shakes it.

SHAKE

Just in case. It's been an honor to know you.

CASTLE

Likewise.

Castle hands Shake a pistol and one of his skull-topped daggers.

CASTLE

Just in case.

Castle disappears. Shake sits down placing the gun and dagger on one side and the beeper on the other. He takes out a pair of bifocals, a tattered copy of Backstage out of his pocket and turns to the classifieds.

CUT TO:

INT. VENT

Castle and Franco peer out a vent opening at two Yakuza guarding the elevators in the empty lobby. Franco takes out his pistol, screws on a silencer and goes to take aim through the vent. Castle stops him. He removes a skull dagger from his boot sheath and undoes the four screws on the vent then he taps on the vent until the noise catches the Yakuza's attention.

FRANCO
(whispered)
What the hell are you doing?

One Yakuza guard comes over to the vent to investigate. Castle holds his dagger poised. The Yakuza peers into the vent. Castle thrusts the dagger into his throat.

CASTLE
Now!

Castle thrusts forward pushing the vent and the Yakuza out of the way. The other Yakuza, caught by surprise, does not even get a chance to raise his gun. Franco drills a bullet through his heart before he can fire. Castle and Franco jump out and head for the elevator. Franco takes a set of keys off the dead Yakuza. Castle replaces the dagger in his boot. The elevator doors open. Franco enters holding the door.

FRANCO
Come on!

Castle stoops and activates another plastic explosive charge on a pillar by the elevator bank. He runs into the elevator. The doors close.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

Shake reading his paper looks down at his beeper. His P.O.V. a large rat is making its way towards the beeper. Shake goes to swat it with his newspaper. The rat scurries away. The beeper tips and falls through a narrow space in the floor. Shake groans and tries to reach the beeper straining his fingers. It is just a bit out of reach.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

Castle and Franco reach forty. The elevator stops. Franco begins inserting key after key into the control panel looking for the right one. Castle checks his weapons.

FRANCO

Can I ask you a question?
What's the reason behind
you killing all those guys?
I mean, there's a limit to
revenge.

CASTLE

I guess I haven't reached
mine yet.

Franco finds the right key. The elevator begins to move.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

Shake strains to reach the remote control when a huge rat attacks his hand. He screams in pain withdrawing his bloodied fingers.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

The elevator stops. Castle and Franco unstrap their silence equipped uzis.

FRANCO

Ready?

CASTLE

Wait.

Castle hits the first switch on his remote.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

Shake sees the first light go on. He forces his hand back in. The rat attacks again.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR

Castle looks at his remote. He presses the button again.

FRANCO

We gotta do it.

Castle forgets the beeper and points his uzi at the door. Franco pushes the button. Both men tense in readiness. The door opens. They jump out.

Their P.O.V. Twenty Yakuza divided into two lines practicing Iaido, the art of the sword. Each man has a live blade in front of him. In a blink of an eye the Yakuza seize their swords and charge. Castle and Franco spray the hall with silenced uzi fire. The Yakuza go down like cut wheat. As the two men jump out of the elevator, their guns spitting death, one Yakuza lunges from the side. Castle drills him, grabs his sword and sends it through another charging Yakuza. In a moment all the Yakuza are dead. Franco looks at two doors one on either side of the room.

FRANCO

Which way?

A door on the left opens and two Yakuza appear, startled by the carnage. They sound the alarm drawing their guns.

CASTLE

Not that one.

He fires off a burst dropping the two Yakuza. Castle and Franco exit on the run through the opposite door. More Yakuza appear and charge after them. Castle and Franco run down the hall, Yakuza bullets coming closer. A shogi screen door opens, a Yakuza charges out. Franco drops him with a shot to the head.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

The rat takes another bit of Shake's hand as he tries vainly to reach the box. Finally, Shake pulls his hand out, grabs the revolver Castle left him and drills the rat with four quick shots. Shake tries to jam the gun barrel down and touch the button. It will not fit through the grating. He grabs the dagger and with the point pushes the first switch, the electric box some ten yards off explodes throwing Shake to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. YAKUZA HEADQUARTERS

Castle and Franco come running around a corner and reach a dead end in a shogi-lined hall. They turn as the Yakuza also turn the corner. Suddenly the lights go out. In the dark there is tremendous shouting, shooting and confusion. A moment later the emergency lights go on. The hallway is bathed in red light. The Yakuza look around. Castle and Franco are gone. The Yakuza's confusion turns to terror as deadly fire rips through the shogi screens to their left and right. Castle and Franco empty their clips into the Yakuza then kick out the remaining shogi and meet each other over the bodies.

CASTLE

You go left! I'll go right!

The two men take off in opposite directions.

CUT TO:

INT. MARKED CAR

Berkowitz cruises the streets listening to the police radio.

V.O.

Double homicide. Two Japanese males at 2603 Broad Street. Identifying characteristics: complete body tattoos.

Berkowitz perks up, turns on his red light and hits the accelerator.

CUT TO:

INT. YAKUZA HEADQUARTERS MUSEUM ROAD

Castle stalking down a red, lit hallway past displays filled with antique weapons and suits of Japanese armor. As he passes two suits of armor, they suddenly come alive. Castle turns as two sickles flash out stripping him of his uzi and slicing into his Kevlar. The helmets come off revealing Tomio and Sato. Sato attacks with his sai. Castle grabs an antique sword from another set of armor and blocks the sai without an inch to spare. He counters, slashing at Sato's armor. The breastplate falls away. Sato spins and throws his third sai from his belt stripping Castle of his sword. Castle kicks Sato sending him off balance and crashing through a glass display. The glass slashes through his entire exposed body.

Tomio attacks, a whirlwind with sickles. Castle back peddles, throwing a kimono rack in Tomio's path. Tomio slices right through it and keeps coming. He slashes as Castle twists away. The sickles cut the straps of the Kevlar suit and the beeper belt. With another quick move, the sickle points catch the Kevlar and rip it from Castle's body. Tomio flings the armor away and charges Castle. Castle grabs a staff and tries to defend himself swinging at Tomio's feet. Tomio jumps up and comes down splitting the staff with his sickles and cutting Castle neatly across the face. Castle swings a large metal weapon which knocks Tomio's sickles away. Tomio spins at the same time and kicks Castle with a back kick. Castle doubles over. Tomio knees him in the face. Castle falls back. Tomio spins again kicking his head left, then right. He punches Castle hard. Castle falls into a wall filled with weapons and sinks to the floor.

Castle's P.O.V. His beeper within reach. Tomio grabs a Samurai sword from the wall, cocks his entire body back and charges Castle. Castle hits his beeper.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER

Shake sees the second light go on and hits the switch with his knife.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

The lobby doors blow out with the force of the explosion. The whole building rocks.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM ROOM

The force of the explosion rocks the building. Tomio loses his balance as he is about to slash at Castle and falls backward. Castle grabs a spear off of the wall and flings it for all he is worth. The spear pierces through Tomio's antique armor with such force it comes out the other side, pinning the man to the wall behind him.

CASTLE

I hope I got my point across.

Castle finds his pistol and rushes out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING

Half a dozen police cars, lights swirling, surround the entrance. Berkowitz's car comes to a screeching halt as a manhole cover in the street opens and Shake comes hobbling out. Berkowitz exits his car and runs right into Shake, knocking him down.

BERKOWITZ

You okay?

He helps Shake up.

SHAKE

Don't worry about this poor old slob. Get on the case, do your job.

Berkowitz looks at this rhyming bum askance.

BERKOWITZ

Murray. Get this nut out of here.

A uniformed cop comes and takes Shake away leading him by the arm.

SHAKE

I operate under my own power.
Thank you.

As he pulls away, something falls out of his coat and clatters to the sidewalk. Berkowitz turns at the sound. His P.O.V. The skull dagger. He strides over and picks it up.

BERKOWITZ

Hey!

Shake turns but before Berkowitz can continue, gun fire erupts from the building. When Berkowitz turns again, Shake has disappeared into the night. Berkowitz hurries into the building.

CUT TO:

INT. TANAKA'S HEADQUARTERS

Franco moves cautiously along a wall. From behind a shogi a burst of gun fire catches him in the chest. Franco falls. Two Yakuza kick the screen down and approach his corpse. He bolts up, surprising both of them, filling them with deadly

lead. His P.O.V. through the broken shoji as he sits up. Tanaka, her daughter who is all dressed in white, and Tommy hurry across the far corridor and through a door.

FRANCO

Tommy!

Tommy turns.

TOMMY

Dad!

Tanaka stops then hurries through the door. Her daughter fires a .09mm at Franco. He dives for cover. She makes her escape. Franco recovers and goes after them.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING LOBBY

In the smokey rubble-filled lobby the cops wait anxiously as a repair man takes his time trying to get the elevators to work. Berkowitz is exploding with impatience.

BERKOWITZ

We ain't got all day here!

REPAIRMAN

Elevators are very temperamental things. Not many people know that, but it's true.

Berkowitz leans over and talks into his ear.

BERKOWITZ

So are cops who feel they're gettin' jerked around. So can the philosophy and get me up there.

A second later the elevator starting sounds high up. Berkowitz looks up to the numbers. The car is descending from the top floor.

CUT TO:

INT. TANAKA'S HEADQUARTERS

Franco moves quickly, but cautiously through the rooms.

CUT TO:

CASTLE

Moving along a corridor, bloodied but mobile. He opens a shogi screen. His P.O.V. Across the room, through the far shogi, Tanaka, her daughter and Tommy in silhouette. The daughter's silhouette climbs the wall like a spider, disappearing on the roof into the ceiling. Tanaka and Tommy move past. Castle sees them briefly as they pass the slightly open door. Castle hears footsteps coming fast. His P.O.V. Franco's silhouette comes running down the hall and stops.

CUT TO:

FRANCO

Charging down the hall and coming up short. His P.O.V. Tanaka at the end of the hall, her hand over Tommy's mouth. Tommy tries desperately to warn his father of the danger above, but Franco doesn't see it.

TANAKA

Mr. Franco. Nice to see you again. If I knew you were coming, I would have prepared a little something.

FRANCO

Cut the crap! I want my boy!

TANAKA

Yes. I get that feeling.

FRANCO

Let him go. You got everything you wanted.

TANAKA

Not quite yet.

Franco has walked past where Tanaka's daughter is camouflaged into the white ceiling. She makes her way down behind him on a short rope and prepares to throw a knife into his back, when Castle comes diving through the shogi tackling her into the next shogi wall. Franco turns to see the two of them locked in deadly embrace. Tanaka escapes with Tommy. Franco hesitates one moment and then runs after his son, leaving Castle to face his fate.

Castle grasps the woman's wrists. She twists around and under and flips him through the shogi. He rolls and rises. She flicks her wrists, a knife barely misses Castle's face

and embeds in a beam. Before Castle can recover, she jump-kicks right at him. Castle barely has time to get out of the way as her shoe sides rip across his face leaving a long gash. Castle falls back as she kicks again. He lets it go past and then grabs her and tries to flip her but she reverses on him, punching him twice, hard, sending him reeling. Again she attacks with her feet, but this time she sweeps his feet out from under him. He lands on his back hard. She lifts a heel. Castle's P.O.V. Two sharp spikes coming right out of the heel like spurs. The spikes come down an inch from his head with such force they stick into the wooden floor. Castle locks her foot in place and pushes her forward. She tumbles in slow motion, comes up and spins with another knife in her hand cocking her arm to throw it. She releases. At the same moment, Castle yanks her shoe out of the floor and throws it. Her knife catches Castle in the arm and pierces through. His shoe catches her square in the chest. The side embedding in her heart like a hatchet. She falls over dead. Castle yanks the knife out of his arm and hobbles off.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY

The elevator comes. Berkowitz and a dozen cops in riot gear pile in.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR

Franco runs down a corridor towards the two doors to Tanaka's private quarters. He bursts through the doors and stops cold in the doorway. Tanaka stands in the middle of the room with a knife to Tommy's throat.

TANAKA

Not another step, Mr. Franco.

Franco goes to move forward. Tanaka draws a bead of blood from Tommy's throat with her knife. Franco flinches and stops.

FRANCO

You can't win here. You kill him, I kill you.

TANAKA

And who loses more? Certainly not me.

Franco realizes what she says is true. His shoulders slump. The gun goes to his side.

FRANCO
What do you want?

TANAKA
Get on your knees.

Franco hesitates. Tanaka pulls Tommy's hair back tighter and puts the knife up against his throat. Franco complies and gets to his knees.

TANAKA
Put the gun in your mouth.

Franco is stunned.

TANAKA
You have my word. He will live.

Tommy tries to shake his head. Franco's conflict is huge.

FRANCO
How do I know you'll keep it?

TANAKA
You don't. But some chance is better than no chance.

After a long moment, Franco makes his decision. Slowly he raises the gun to his mouth. He puts the barrel to his lips.

TANAKA
All the way in.

Franco inserts the entire barrel into his mouth. Tommy tries to turn his head away. Tanaka yanks it back forcing him to watch.

TANAKA
This is part of your education.
Watch!
(beat)
Goodbye, Mr. Franco.

Franco tries to summon up the courage to pull the trigger, when Castle lunges from behind through the doors pushing Franco over and simultaneously flinging her daughter's knife into Tanaka's forehead. As Castle falls to the floor, the

knife in Tanaka's hand falls away from Tommy's throat. Her eyes go blank. She topples backward. Tommy runs into Franco's arms. They hug fiercely. Franco kisses his face over and over. His P.O.V. Castle sitting up, propped against Tanaka's concert piano. Franco's mind goes to work.

FRANCO

Tommy. Wait outside for a minute. Mr. Castle and I have to tie up some loose ends.

TOMMY

Okay Dad.

Tommy walks towards the door. Franco approaches Castle. Castle's P.O.V. Franco's hard vengeful eyes, the gun in his hand. There is no doubt as to his intent. Castle sits bleeding, battered, seemingly exhausted. He does not move. A man awaiting his fate.

FRANCO

You helped me. Now I'm going to help you,
(beat)
to the next world. Have a nice trip. You son of a bitch.

Franco raises the gun. ANGLE ON Tommy turning at the door.

TOMMY

Dad! No!

Franco keeps his eyes on Castle. His gun leveled.

FRANCO

Wait outside, son.

TOMMY

He saved you. He saved me.

FRANCO

You don't understand what is involved. Now get outside!

TOMMY

I do understand. You are what they said.

Franco turns angry.

FRANCO

(scolding)
I said wait...

He never gets to finish the sentence for Castle has thrust a skull dagger, from his boot, into Franco's gut. Franco falls over dead, the dagger sticking up. Tommy is stunned. He and Castle look at each other for a long moment. Tommy throws himself on his father's body, sobbing. Castle gets up slowly, painfully. He picks up Franco's gun, sticks it in his waistband and starts to leave the room.

TOMMY

I'm going to kill you!

Castle stops in the doorway and turns slowly.

TOMMY

I don't care how long it takes. When I'm old enough I'm going to learn how to use a gun and I'm going to find you and I'm going to kill you.

Castle takes Franco's gun out of his waistband and slowly walks towards Tommy. The hate in Tommy's eyes is unabating. His chest heaves with it. He doesn't back down. Castle takes the gun, raises it, points it at Tommy.

CASTLE

It's easy to learn. There's nothing to it. You flip the safety, aim and pull the trigger.

He points the gun at Tommy and then turns it around, lifts Tommy's hand and puts it firmly on the handle. He gets down on his knees and places the gun barrel between his eyes.

CASTLE

Do it! Get it over with now. Maybe if you do, you won't grow up and be like him.

A thousand emotions play across Tommy's face. He bites his lip, tries to steel himself to the task, but he can't pull the trigger. A sense of satisfaction, a hint of softness fills Castle's eyes. He rises and looks down at Tommy kindly. Tommy breaks down and begins to sob. Castle puts his arm around his shoulder. Tommy leans on him, sobbing into his chest.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL

The elevator door opens. Berkowitz and the other cops pile out. The carnage stops them for a moment, then Berkowitz starts running.

BERKOWITZ

Frank! Where are you? Frank!

CUT TO:

INT. TANAKA'S ROOM

Castle hears Berkowitz. He steps away from Tommy ready to leave.

CASTLE

You're a good boy, Tommy.
Grow up and be a good man.

He takes two steps to the window and turns.

CASTLE

Because if not,
(pause)
I'll be waiting.

He fixes Tommy with a look a young boy will not forget for a long time, if ever, and exits through the window. Tommy stands beside his father's corpse numb. Berkowitz and the cops burst into the room, their guns leveled. Berkowitz looks at Tommy, then at Franco, then at Tommy again.

BERKOWITZ

What's your name?

TOMMY

Tommy Franco.

BERKOWITZ

The man who did this Tommy,
which way did he go?

Tommy looks at Berkowitz plainly and points at a door to the left.

COP

Come on!

The cops run out. Berkowitz is about to follow them when he sees a trail of blood leading to the open window. He looks at Tommy once more, suspiciously, and heads for the window.

He looks outside left, then right outside. There is nothing but the night. His frustration builds. He bellows into the night.

BERKOWITZ

Frank Castle! I'm here Frank.
Did you hear me? I'm here.
Frank! Fraaank!

ZOOM OUT as his plaintive cry reverberates through the night shrouded city. ZOOM OUT to the stars twinkling in the heavens.

CASTLE (V.O.)

I still talk to God sometimes.
I ask him if what I'm doing
is right or wrong.

The screen goes to black.

CASTLE (V.O.)

I'm still waiting for an answer.

THE END