

Hostage

by

Robert Crais

based on his novel

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FADE IN:

EXT. A HYPERBLUE LOS ANGELES SKY -- DAY

The sky is overlaid with the slow whup-whup-whup of an LAPD helicopter flashing through the frame, here and gone.

LAPD radio transmissions crackle like static electricity around a dirty clapboard bungalow that looks like the puckered asshole of Eagle Rock.

A man's terrified voice screams invisibly from the house --

MALIK'S VOICE

I'm gonna kill this dog! You make my wife talk to me or I'm gonna shoot this fuckin' dog!

A five-member SWAT tactical team appears out of nowhere--full black assault gear, M5s, gloved and masked--hustling into position on either side of the front door. Only now do we get the full picture: Helicopters overhead, radio cars surrounding the house, an army of cops itching the pull the trigger --

When the tac team is good to go, the team leader gives a thumbs-up to --

SERGEANT JEFF TALLEY AND LT. MURRAY LEIFITZ

Talley and Leifitz are hunkered behind the LAPD Command and Control van. Leifitz is the Crisis Response Team SWAT commander; Talley, the primary negotiator. It's so hot out here that Talley has stripped down to a tee-shirt and vest.

LEIFITZ

They're good to go, Talley. Your word, and we're in the house.

TALLEY

No one's going anywhere, L-T. We can talk this guy down.

Talley lifts a dedicated crisis phone that's been hardlined into the house, his tone reasonable and friendly --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Hey, George? George, don't kill the dog, okay? We don't want to hear a gun go off in there.

A phone crashes through the window and lands in the front yard --

MALIK'S VOICE

(screaming from the house)

Fuck you!

LEIFITZ

I don't think he wants to talk.

Frustrated, Talley slumps back against the van as the SWAT Intelligence Officer, Lloyd Keith, scuttles up to them --

TALLEY

Where's the guy's wife?

KEITH

She didn't take the kid to her sister's. The neighbors were wrong.

TALLEY

Goddamnit, you said we had her. I told him we had her!

KEITH

We got bad information, Talley. I can't pull her out of my ass!

Up at the house, George Edward Malik steps into the window. Malik is a forty-year-old freaked-out loser who has turned the corner on insanity --

MALIK

(shouting at Talley)

You said my wife was gonna talk to me, you lying fuck! I'm gonna kill her dog, then shoot myself! I mean it!

Talley stares at Malik, thinking, then abruptly grabs Keith by the collar --

TALLEY

(to Keith)

Pull the dog's name out of your ass. Get the dog's name.

Talley steps out from behind the command van so that Malik can see him.

LEIFITZ

(alarmed by Talley's move)

Talley! You're in the line of fire!

Talley ignores Leifitz; he is totally focused on Malik and on defusing the situation --

TALLEY

I didn't lie to you, George. You scared your wife pretty good last night. We're having a hard time finding her.

MALIK

She better talk to me! I'm gonna kill her goddamned dog!

TALLEY

You and I have been talking for, what, sixteen hours? Keep talking. Is that your dog, too?

Malik steps away from the window --

MALIK'S VOICE

I don't know whose dog it is. She lied about everything else, so she probably lied about the dog.

TALLEY

I know you're hurting. You lose your job, you find out your wife's fucking another guy . . . but don't give up. We'll have her talk to you.

MALIK'S VOICE

Then why won't she open her mouth?! Why doesn't the bitch say something???

Something about Malik's statement bothers Talley. The wording is odd, suspicious --

TALLEY

George? Come back to the window.

MALIK'S VOICE

STOP LOOKING AT ME!!!

Talley grows even more concerned. Was Malik talking to him?

TALLEY

George? Leave the dog alone and come to the window.

Talley sees Keith rejoin Leifitz --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(to Leifitz)
What's the dog's name?

LEIFITZ

The neighbors say he doesn't have a dog.

The pieces fall into place for Talley: The wife that no one can find, the dog that doesn't exist....

MALIK'S VOICE

OPEN YOUR GODDAMNED MOUTH OR I'M GONNA SHOOT THIS DOG!

In a single terrible moment, Talley realizes that Malik is not talking to him; he's talking to his wife --

TALLEY

Murray!! They're in the house! His wife's in the house!

Even as Talley screams, a gunshot echoes from the house, freezing the moment. A second shot follows the first as the tactical team breaches the front door --

Talley sprints forward, running as hard as he can in nightmare slow motion --

INT. MALIK'S HOUSE -- DAY

Talley shoulders inside on the heels of the tactical team through drifting gun smoke and lancing sunlight. SWAT cops are cuffing Malik even though he's already dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound; Malik's wife is sprawled on the couch where she has been dead for fourteen hours; two tac officers are trying to stop the geyser of arterial blood that sprays from the neck of Malik's nine-year-old son even as one of them screams for the paramedics --

Talley is numb; it's all too much, too heavy, too horrible. He kneels between to the tactical cops and takes the boy's hand. He stares into the boy's eyes, and the boy stares back. The child's face grows pale as he drains of blood. We hear his heart beating. We hear it slow. We hear it stop.

Talley stares at the dead boy. The dead boy's lifeless eyes stare at nothing.

TITLES

Another hyperblue sky, but now we're in an upscale bedroom community in the sun-scorched high desert north of LA --

A legend appears: One Year Later.

EXT. KIM'S MINIMARKET AND GAS STATION -- DAY

A rotted-out Toyota pickup lurches to a stop alongside the minimart, white-boy hip-hop booming on the radio which dies with the engine --

Dennis Rooney is driving; twenty-three years old, working-class desert trash with a high opinion of his own brooding good looks. In the middle: Kevin Rooney, nineteen, scared shitless at what they're about to do. Riding shotgun: Mars Krupchek, twenty-four, a large pasty guy with a shaved head and faraway eyes.

KEVIN

C'mon, Dennis, this is stupid. I thought we were gonna go to the movies.

DENNIS

(grins past Kevin to Mars)
Mars?! Whattaya think, dude? Out here on the edge, no one around, it's perfect, right?

MARS

I'll check it out.

Mars slides out of the truck. He has a tattoo on the back of his tattoo that says: BURN IT.

As soon as Mars is gone, Dennis frowns at Kevin --

DENNIS

Try to act cool, okay? He's gonna think you're a dick.

KEVIN

Robbing this place is gonna put you back in prison.

DENNIS

Not if they don't catch us, Kevin.

KEVIN

We got jobs, man; we're working. Why even take the chance?

DENNIS

Because if you don't take the chance, you're already dead.

Dennis pulls a pistol from his pants to check the magazine.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Thirty seconds, we'll be down the road. Thirty seconds. Then we'll go to the movies.

Mars returns and nods his approval --

MARS

It's perfect.

That's all it takes.

INT. KIM'S MINIMART -- DAY

Junior Kim, Jr., is short, squat, and forty-two years old. He's reading a magazine behind the counter when Dennis and Mars enter; Dennis trying to disarm him with a smile --

As Dennis reaches the counter, he lifts his tee-shirt to reveal the butt of his pistol --

DENNIS

A pack of Marlboros for my friend and all
your cash, you gook motherfucker!

But Junior Kim is ready. He lurches to his feet, bringing up
a pistol of his own --

MARS

He's got a gun!

Dennis lunges across the counter, grabbing Kim's gun, and the
two men are suddenly locked in a ferocious death-struggle for
possession of the weapon --

DENNIS

Mars, help me --

Dennis and Kim bounce from the counter to the Slurpy machine,
the Glock locked between them, pointing first one way, then
the other, their eyes meeting as -- BAM -- the gun goes off.

Junior Kim's eyes widen. Dennis and Junior both look down at
the red blossom that grows on Junior Kim's chest --

KEVIN

(screaming in the background)

Dennis! Dennis, someone's coming!

Kim falls into the Slurpy machine, then slides to the floor.
Dennis scrambles over the counter and sprints for the door.

But Mars hesitates. Instead of running, he picks up Kim's
gun, then leans over the counter to look at Kim's body. We
cannot see his face --

EXT. THE MINIMART -- DAY

A forty-something soccer mom named Margaret Hammond is about
to enter the minimart when Dennis and Kevin burst out,
knocking her on her ass. Mars follows a moment later --

Margaret watches their red pickup lurch away, then rushes
into the store --

INT. THE TRUCK -- DAY

Dennis power-shifts into gear, clashing tortured metal as he
pushes the Toyota as hard as it will go. No one is talking;
they're screaming --

KEVIN

There's fuckin' blood all over you!

DENNIS

I didn't know he would have a gun! It just went off!

Dennis sees himself in the rearview mirror. His face is splattered with red dew, the sight of it freaking him out --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Jesus! Fuckin' Jesus, it's on my face!

The trunk careens crazily off the road. Mars calmly runs a hand over Dennis's face --

MARS

Relax. It's only blood.

Dennis upshifts hard again, the truck lurching as the tranny howls --

DENNIS

FUCK you, Mars! I got it all over me!

-- whereupon the tortured transmission gives with a loud BANG and the truck loses power --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

MotherFUCKING piece of SHIT!!!

EXT. FLANDERS ROAD -- DAY

Flanders Road is lined with trees, hedges, and the exclusive housing developments that dot the countryside around Bristo Camino.

The Toyota jerks to a stop well off the road, and Dennis, Mars, and Kevin pile out, stuffing pistols and bullets into their pockets --

KEVIN

That woman's gonna call the cops.

DENNIS

Shut up, goddamnit! Just calm down!

KEVIN

What if he's dead? What if you killed him?

Dennis grabs him by the throat; Mars steps between them --

MARS

People are looking.

Dennis sees that Mars is right; people in passing cars are looking. He releases his brother --

DENNIS

That's why we gotta keep going. I'm not gonna go in for murder.

KEVIN

We're on foot. We can't get away.

DENNIS

We're surrounded by houses, dumbass. Every house has a car in the garage. All we have to do is take one.

Dennis and Mars take off for the wall, Kevin reluctantly following --

EXT. WALTER SMITH'S HOME -- THE CUL-DE-SAC -- DAY

The camera reveals a two-story California Mediterranean home in the exclusive housing development known as York Estates. You can't get in the door for less than one-point-five, and this house costs more: Eight thousand square feet of used brick and custom tile set on a lushly landscaped acre --

WALTER SMITH'S VOICE

You can pick them up whenever you want.

INT. WALTER SMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Walter Smith is at his computer behind his desk. He's forty and fit, casually dressed with thinning hair and glasses, currently leaning back as he talks on his phone --

WALTER

(into the phone)

I have his corporate and personal on two disks, labeled Marlon and Al.

As Smith talks, he ejects a Zip disk from his computer, attaches a label reading Al, then places it in a palm-sized case beside the first disk, Marlon --

WALTER (CONT'D)

What, you don't have a sense of humor? He's going to love it.

Walter's ten-year-old son, Thomas, suddenly charges around the desk and pulls at his father's arm --

THOMAS

My stomach is eating me!

WALTER

(into the phone)

Yeah, that's Thomas, the human piranha.
I have to feed the animals while Pam's in
Florida with her sister.

THOMAS

My stomach has teeth! It's eating my
guts!

WALTER

(still with the phone)

Listen, is Glen on his way? Great. The
paper's bagged and ready to go. Bye.

(hangs up; then)

All right, all right, all right--it's
feeding time!

Walter allows his son to pull him around the desk to --

EXT. THE SMITHS' BACK YARD -- THE POOL -- DAY

A boom box blasts the latest teendiva megahit as Walter's
sixteen-year-old daughter, Jennifer, stretches out in cutoff
shorts and a bikini top, working on her tan.

Walter and Thomas appear in the French doors that open from
the back of the house --

WALTER

(calling)

Jen! Come feed your brother! He's
wasting away!

JENNIFER

Can't we send him to Florida?

WALTER

Jen, c'mon, chop-chop! I've got to
finish my work!

Jennifer rolls her eyes, rises from the chaise longue, and
pads to the house. As she clears the frame, the camera
swings toward the overgrown wall at the edge of the property.
Dennis silently drops into the bushes --

EXT. BRISTO CAMINO PATROL CAR -- DAY

A sky blue Bristo Camino patrol car cruises along Flanders

Road --

INT. THE CRUISER -- OFFICER MIKE WELCH -- DRIVING

Welch is a young officer with an innocence to his eyes that you don't find in urban cops. He keeps a photo of his wife and toddler son taped to the dash.

RADIO

Four, base. You there, Mike?

Welch picks up the radio microphone --

WELCH

Four. I'm gonna hit the Krispy-Kreme.
You want a dozen?

RADIO

Armed robbery, Kim's Minimart on Flanders
Road, shots fired with a man down.

This is so unexpected that Welch waits for the punchline --

WELCH

Are you kidding me?

RADIO

Ah, suspects are three white males
driving a red pickup last seen eastbound
on Flanders.

Welch turns on his lights just as he sees the red Toyota pickup abandoned on the side of the road and stands on his brakes --

INT. THE SMITHS' KITCHEN -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

The Smiths' home sports an open floor plan with the kitchen centrally located between a large family room, a hall that leads to the front of the house, and the French doors that open onto the pool area.

Jennifer is putting the finishing touches on three tuna sandwiches as she calls to her brother --

JENNIFER

Tell Daddy that lunch is ready.
(no answer)
Thomas, don't be a turd. Tell --!

She turns to find herself face-to-face with Dennis, who clamps a hand over her mouth --

DENNIS

(quietly)

I'm not going to hurt you.

Mars is holding Thomas. Kevin is by the French doors --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Stop fighting. Relax, and I'll let go.

Jennifer struggles until she sees that Mars is holding a pistol to Thomas's head --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

That's better. Be cool and we'll be outta here in five minutes. Understand?

Jennifer nods, and Dennis removes his hand. He has her pinned to the counter, his body pressed into her's; she is suddenly very aware that she is almost naked --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Who else is here?

JENNIFER

My father.

Dennis grabs her hair and pulls her away --

INT. SMITHS' OFFICE -- DAY

It happens fast: Dennis shoves Jennifer into the room, and Mars and Kevin follow with Thomas --

Walter is feeding a computer print-out into a paper shredder as they burst through the door --

DENNIS

Get your ass in the chair! Sit down!

Dennis shoves Jennifer to the floor and stalks directly across the room, his gun trained on Walter.

Walter freezes, hands motionless, letting the paper feed into the shredder. Strangely, he has little outward reaction --

WALTER

(quietly)

Jen? Are you all right?

DENNIS

She'll be dead if you don't put your ass

in that chair!

Walter carefully sits. He is amazingly calm in the face of this invasion.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Kevin! Don't stand there, asshole, close the windows! Mars, keep him covered, dude!

Mars pushes Thomas down beside Jennifer, then aims his gun at Walter. Kevin closes the shutters as Dennis rips the electric cord from a lamp --

WALTER

Who sent you?

DENNIS

Don't go Rambo and you'll tell'm about this on the back nine. I'm gonna tie you up, then we're gonna take your car.

Walter glances toward the shredder; the final page of paper emerges as spaghetti and then the shredder stops --

WALTER

The car. All you want is the car?

DENNIS

Am I talkin' raghead?! I want your car! Gimme the goddamned keys!

A strange smile flickers at the corner of Walter's mouth as if there's a joke within all this, then --

WALTER

The keys are on the wall by the garage. Take it. The tank's almost full.

KEVIN

Dennis! The cops!

Dennis rushes to the window --

EXT. THE SMITHS' HOUSE -- CUL DE SAC -- DAY

Mike Welch climbs out of the patrol car and keys his shoulder mike as he appraises the house --

WELCH

(into his radio mike)
They had to go through the yard at 455

Castle Way. I'm going to approach.

Welch slowly moves up the walk toward the front door --

INT. THE ENTRY -- DAY

Dennis shoves Jennifer to the door --

DENNIS

Open it! You remember I'm right here!

EXT. THE HOUSE -- WITH WELCH

Welch is halfway up the walk when the door opens and Jennifer, clearly terrified, peers out. Welch hesitates --

WELCH

(into his mike)

Teenage female opened the front door.

(to Jennifer)

Miss, I found an abandoned vehicle on the other side of your wall. Did three young men run through the area?

Jennifer doesn't answer. Her eyes fill until two huge tears roll down her cheeks. Welch grows uneasy. Something is wrong, but he doesn't know what. He stays where he is --

WELCH (CONT'D)

Miss?

JENNIFER

I didn't . . . see anyone.

Welch stares into Jennifer's eyes, pointedly shifting his gaze to ask the silent question: Are they here?

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- MARS AND KEVIN

are peering out the shutters when --

Mars suddenly shouts --

MARS

He's going for his gun!

Mars opens fire, shooting through the window as --

DENNIS

kicks the door closed and fires through the door, Jennifer screaming, as --

EXT. THE HOUSE -- DAY -- MIKE WELCH

tumbles backward, struggling weakly to pull his gun as blood bubbles in his mouth. He tries to rise, but can't --

WELCH

(into his radio)

Officer down. Jesus, I've been shot.

RADIO VOICE

Mike? Mike, what did you say?!

Mike Welch blinks at the sky, but cannot answer --

INT. BRISTO CAMINO POLICE DEPARTMENT -- DAY

It's the kind of small-town police facility you might expect: A general room with desks and computers, a coffee machine, and a desk officer who thinks that crime is two teenagers egging a house.

The camera establishes the low-key atmosphere, during which it finds a glass door labeled J. Talley, chief of police --

INT. TALLEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jeff Talley is behind the desk, his voice muted because he is locked in a painful phone conversation --

TALLEY

(into phone)

It's really hard, Jane. This isn't the way I want it.

INT. JANE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Jane Talley is an attractive woman in her mid-thirties. She has the efficient manner of a registered nurse, which she is, and right now she's using all of her professional detachment to keep herself together --

JANE

(into phone)

No? Then whose idea was it for you take a job in the middle of nowhere?

Intercut Talley, who considers the photographs that decorate his wall: Shots of Talley in happier times with Jane and their teenaged daughter, Amanda; Talley as a young SWAT officer; the framed headline from the Bristo Weekly Standard proclaiming: EX-SWAT COP NEW BRISTO CHIEF!

TALLEY

I need to work out some stuff.

JANE

You're hiding, Jeffrey. You're hiding from the job and you're hiding from me.

TALLEY

I still see that boy's eyes.

Jane softens; she knows that a part of him is in terrible pain. But she's in pain, too --

JANE

That happened a year ago. You've been gone for almost six months. How long do you have to punish yourself for something that wasn't your fault?

Talley studies the picture of his wife and daughter. He focuses on Amanda --

TALLEY

Is Amanda there?

Jane cups the phone and calls to her daughter. Amanda enters and goes to the refrigerator. She's fifteen and carrying the weight of a seriously bad attitude --

JANE

(to Amanda)

It's Dad. He wants to speak with you.

AMANDA

(doesn't even glance over)

I'm gonna see him later.

JANE

(back to Talley)

She has to go to the bathroom.

Jane turns away and lowers her voice, not wanting Amanda to hear --

JANE (CONT'D)

You're not only punishing yourself, Jeff. Amanda and I are in this, too.

Talley knows, and he hurts like hell because of it --

TALLEY

Can we talk some more when you get here?

JANE

We'll see you in a couple of hours.

Jane hangs up without waiting for a response, then closes her eyes, trying hard to keep herself together.

AMANDA

I don't wanna go up there. I want to stay here with my friends.

JANE

Pack your things. You're going.

Jane stalks away without a glance back, and Amanda angrily flips off her mother --

WITH TALLEY

He is clearly shaken by the call, but his thoughts are interrupted when his assistant, an older woman named Louise Vance, bursts in --

LOUISE

Mike's been shot! Someone shot Junior Kim, too --

Talley comes around his desk --

TALLEY

What are you talking about, shot? What happened?

LOUISE

Three white males shot Junior. Mike followed them to York Estates --

TALLEY

Where are they?

LOUISE

York Estates. Four-five-five Castle Way. Anders and Jorgenson are on the way.

Talley charges out --

EXT. YORK ESTATES -- CASTLE WAY -- DAY

Talley wheels into a wide, spacious cul-de-sac lined with expensive estate homes, and pulls up behind another radio car. Anders and Jorgenson are crouched in the street --

Bullets snap into Talley's windshield, starring the glass --

TALLEY

Sonofabitch.

Talley scrambles out of his car --

EXT. THE SMITHS' HOUSE -- TALLEY'S CAR -- DAY

Talley takes cover behind his front wheel. Anders and Jorgenson are young guys; they've never worked a high-crime area; they've never made a felony arrest; and right now they're scared shitless.

Mike Welch lies on the Smiths' front lawn, forty feet away --

ANDERS

Welch is down! They shot him!

JORGENSON

We think it's the three guys who robbed Kim's.

TALLEY

Are civilians inside?

JORGENSON

He said something about a girl --

TALLEY

Holster your guns!

Another shot cracks from the house as we hear the faint wail of approaching sirens. Talley edges around his car, trying to see Welch --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(calling)

Mike! Mike, can you hear me?

ANDERS

I think he's dead!

TALLEY

Don't shout, Larry. I'm three feet away.

Talley considers the situation and comes up with a plan --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

We have to cordon off the streets, then evacuate these houses.

JORGENSON

What are we going to do about Mike?

TALLEY

Keep your head down.

Talley scrambles back into his car. He backs up, then powers the car up the drive and onto the front lawn --

WITH WELCH

Talley roars to a stop between Welch and the house, using the car as a shield. More shots ping off his car as Talley climbs out --

TALLEY

How you doing, buddy? You still alive?

Welch moans. His shirt is soaked with blood where the bullets caught him beneath his vest. Talley can't waste time. The siren is closer now --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Jesus. You hang on.

Talley hoists Welch into the backseat, then dives behind the wheel. He fishtails off the lawn and up the street --

EXT. THE CUL-DE-SAC INTERSECTION -- DAY

The ambulance waits as Talley powers to a stop --

TALLEY

He's in the backseat!

Paramedics pull Mike Welch from the car as Talley gets out. He can see into the cul-de-sac from here, where Anders and Jorgenson still hunker behind their car. Talley keys his radio --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

This is Talley. Who's on?

His radio crackles with overlapping voices --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

One at a time! Clear the air!

(as they settle)

Louise? Talk to me. What do we have?

LOUISE'S VOICE

Junior Kim was DOA at the hospital.

Frantic voices once more overlap --

COP VOICES

What about Mike? Is Welch alive? What happened?

TALLEY

(forcefully)

Quiet! I want radio discipline.

(as they quiet)

Mike's hanging in. Larry, Jorgy? Listen up.

JORGENSON'S VOICE

Go, Chief.

TALLEY

Find out who lives at four-five-five. We gotta know who's in there.

LOUISE'S VOICE

Chief? Mike said a young girl answered the door.

TALLEY

Did he say if she was shooting at him?

LOUISE'S VOICE

(hesitant)

He didn't say.

TALLEY

Then we don't know if she's part of this or not. Mickey, you up?

MIKKELSON'S VOICE

We're out two minutes, me and Dreyer.

TALLEY

Mike found a red pickup abandoned on Flanders. You see it?

MIKKELSON'S VOICE

It's right in front of us.

TALLEY

Run a DMV on the plate for the owner's name.

LOUISE'S VOICE

I pulled Mickey and Dreyer off the

minimart.

TALLEY

Jesus Christ, Louise, we can't leave a crime scene like that. Put a unit out there.

LOUISE'S VOICE

We only have eight officers on duty, Chief.

More sirens are approaching, but their help seems too little, too late. Talley stares up the cul-de-sac at the Smiths' house as if this was a terrible nightmare --

TALLEY

(to himself)
That's not enough.

LOUISE

What's that, Chief? Say again.

TALLEY

Get everyone out here. Then call the Sheriffs. Tell them we have a possible hostage situation.

INT. WALTER SMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Gunsmoke fills the air. Kevin is freaking. He throws a magazine at Mars --

KEVIN

We could've gone out the back! You didn't have to shoot!

DENNIS

Stop it! They found the truck, Kev! They're already behind us!

KEVIN

We should give up. All we're doing is making it worse.

JENNIFER

Get out of our house!

Her voice cuts through the din.

Jennifer and Thomas are huddled with their father on the floor, Jennifer's arms crossed to cover herself --

WALTER

(softly)
Quiet, Jen.

JENNIFER

Why don't they go?! Why don't they leave
us alone and go?!

Dennis charges up to her, screaming and waving his gun --

DENNIS

Shut up! Shut the fuck up!

Walter Smith slowly stands --

WALTER

None of you will get out of this.

Dennis spins toward Walter, leveling his gun --

DENNIS

Stay down! Stay down, goddamnit!

WALTER

I'm going to my desk.

DENNIS

You're not goin' anywhere! Get on the
fuckin' floor!

Dennis raises the gun to Walter's face. Walter is in
complete command of himself and nowhere near scared, but
Jennifer grabs his legs --

JENNIFER

Daddy, don't!

WALTER

(casually; to Dennis)
Take it easy, son. I'm only going to my
desk.

Walter eases past Dennis, who doesn't know what to do --

DENNIS

Get on the floor!

WALTER

I have contacts in Los Angeles. Lawyers
and judges who can help you.

Walter slips open the center drawer. Dennis thinks that

Walter might go for a gun. He screams louder and aims between Walter's eyes --

DENNIS

I'll fuckin' kill you!

JENNIFER AND THOMAS

Daddy! Please!

Walter checks that the computer disks are in the disk case. We can see their names clearly: MARLON and AL. He drops the case into the drawer, then lifts out a thick booklet --

WALTER

This is every criminal lawyer in California. If you give up now, right now, I'll buy you the best lawyer in the state.

Dennis slaps the book aside, even more angry --

DENNIS

We just killed a cop! We killed a fat chinaman! We'll get the death penalty!

Dennis suddenly screams at Mars and Kevin --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Mars, watch the cops! Kevin! Watch the back of the house!

WALTER

You won't die if you let me help.

DENNIS

Bullshit!

WALTER

But if you stay in this house, I can promise you this --

DENNIS

(shouting over him)

Shut up! Shut up and get on the floor!

WALTER

You can't imagine the fucking you're going to get.

Dennis snaps. He swings the gun hard and smashes Walter on the temple. Walter drops like a rock.

JENNIFER

Leave him alone!!

Jennifer rushes to her father's side, but Walter's out cold --

EXT. TALLEY'S CAR -- THE INTERSECTION -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Talley is at his car with Anders and two other officers, Leigh Metzger, a woman in her early thirties, and Cliff Campbell, a slender guy who looks like a retired security cop. Talley is getting information reports both in person and over the radio --

ANDERS

(referring to notes)

The house belongs to Walter and Pamela Smith. They've got two kids, a girl about fifteen and a boy younger, Jennifer and Thomas.

TALLEY

That would be the girl who opened the door. Are the others inside?

ANDERS

The mother is in Florida visiting her sister. The father works at home, so he's probably inside.

Talley keys his mike --

TALLEY

(into his mike)

Louise?

LOUISE'S VOICE

Go, Chief.

TALLEY

Get a phone number for the Smiths.

MIKKELSON'S VOICE

(from the radio)

Chief, Mikkelson.

TALLEY

Go, Mickey.

MIKKELSON'S VOICE

The truck is registered to Dennis James Rooney, white male, twenty-two. He has an Agua Dulce address.

TALLEY

Contact the landlord. I want to know employment, friends, family, anything we can find out about this guy.

A news helicopter swoops overhead in a tight turn. The cops look up --

CAMPBELL

What in hell is that?

TALLEY

(grimly)

News hawks. There'll be more. They monitor our frequencies.

Talley realizes that his officers are staring at the helicopter as if they've never seen one; these people have never dealt with a crime this large, and have probably never even seen a felon. Talley keys the mike again --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Everyone be cool. That's our job right now--stabilize the situation and don't let things get out of hand. All we have to do is hang on until the Sheriffs take over. That's all we have to do.

No one looks particularly convinced --

METZGER

How do we do that?

TALLEY

That's my job, Metzger. That's why I get the big bucks.

Talley puts away his mike --

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jennifer and Thomas are bent over their father, wanting to help but not knowing how. Walter's eyes flicker as if he's dreaming, and the lump on his head is bleeding --

JENNIFER

He's not waking up. He should be awake.

Jennifer abruptly stands and faces Dennis --

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

He needs a doctor.

DENNIS

Shut up and sit down. You think
someone's gonna make a house call?

Jennifer is scared--really, really scared--but she doesn't sit down. Both Dennis and Mars are staring at her. She feels naked and vulnerable. She crosses her arms again --

JENNIFER

At least let me get some ice for his
head.

Dennis finally relents and shrugs at Mars --

DENNIS

Make sure Kevin isn't fucking off back
there.

Jennifer hurries out as Mars follows --

INT. THE KITCHEN -- DAY

Jennifer goes to the counter. Kevin is at the French doors,
nervous and scared; Mars is a dark shadow behind her --

She kneels to a low cabinet when Mars kicks it shut --

MARS

I thought you wanted ice.

Mars towers over her, his groin inches from her face --

JENNIFER

I'm getting a wash cloth for the ice.

Mars gazes down at her, enjoying his size and power. He
steps closer, bringing his groin closer to his face.
Jennifer stands, holding her arms across her breasts --

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Please get away from me.

KEVIN

(from the background)
Mars? What are you doing?

Kevin's intrusion shatters the moment. Jennifer quickly
snatches a wash cloth from the cabinet, then takes an ice
tray from the freezer and brings it back to the counter --

As Jennifer puts ice in the wash cloth, she sees the paring knife that she used for the sandwiches partially hidden by paper towels --

She glances at Kevin, but cannot see Mars; he's at the refrigerator behind her. Jennifer slowly reaches for the knife --

MARS

Hey.

Jennifer freezes, terrified. She pushes the knife behind the Cuisinart to hide it, then turns. Mars is offering her a beer.

MARS (CONT'D)

Want one?

JENNIFER

I don't drink beer.

MARS

Mommy won't know. You can do anything you want right now. Mommy won't know.

JENNIFER

What I want is to help my father.

Jennifer hurries past him and disappears down the hall. Even as she leaves the phone starts ringing --

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- DAY

The phone seems to ring louder here. Dennis stands over it, watching the phone as if it's alive. The phone rings again and again. Finally, he answers --

DENNIS

Hello?

EXT. TALLEY'S CAR -- IN THE CUL-DE-SAC -- DAY

Talley is once more behind his car. He's on his cell phone, with Jorgenson nearby --

TALLEY

(into his phone)

My name is Jeff Talley. Is this Dennis Rooney?

Intercut Dennis on the phone in Walter's office --

DENNIS

You with the cops?

TALLEY

The Bristo Police Department. Look out the window. You see the car?

Dennis peers through the shutters --

DENNIS

Yeah. I'm Rooney.

TALLEY

We had an awful lot of shooting. You need a doctor in there?

Dennis shoots a guilty glance at Walter, then lies --

DENNIS

We're cool.

TALLEY

Let me speak to Mr. Smith. I want to hear it from him.

DENNIS

Fuck you. I'm running this shit. You talk to me.

TALLEY

How about your two friends? You don't have a man dying in there, do you?

DENNIS

They're fine.

Talley cups the phone to tell Jorgenson --

TALLEY

All three subjects are confirmed inside. Call off the house-to-house.

(back to the phone)

Okay, Dennis, I want to explain your situation --

DENNIS

(interrupting)

You don't have to explain shit! That Chinaman pulled a gun. We wrestled for it. That Chinaman shot himself.

TALLEY

Mr. Kim didn't make it, Dennis. He died.

DENNIS

How about the cop?

TALLEY

Dennis? I want you to release those people.

DENNIS

Fuck that. They're the only thing stopping you from blowing us away.

TALLEY

We're not coming in there by force, okay? No one wants to hurt you.

DENNIS

I got these people! You try to come get me, I'll kill every fuckin' one of them!

The phone clicks in Talley's ear as Dennis slams down the phone --

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- AT THAT MOMENT

Dennis is livid with fear and rage. He paces through the office like a trapped cat --

DENNIS

That fuckin' Chinaman is dead! That's murder-one, dude. That's the needle!

Kevin appears in the entry, drawn by Dennis's raving --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Get back where you belong, asshole!
Mars, keep an eye on the cops; I gotta find a way out of here --

Dennis shoves Kevin out of the office and stalks after him --

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALL -- DAY

Kevin dogs along beside Dennis, speaking softly so that Mars doesn't overhear --

KEVIN

I have to tell you something --

DENNIS

We gotta find a way outta here is what we

gotta do!

KEVIN

It's about Mars --

They reach the master bedroom suite, a huge room with sliding glass doors that overlook the pool --

KEVIN (CONT'D)

That cop didn't pull his gun. Mars lied.
He just started shooting!

DENNIS

Bullshit. Why would Mars do that?

KEVIN

I was there, Dennis! I saw! It's like
he wanted to shoot that cop.

DENNIS

You're being stupid. Check out the
bathroom. Maybe we can sneak out a
window --

Dennis shoves Kevin toward the bathroom, then steps into --

INT. THE SECURITY CLOSET -- DAY

One side is filled with racks of clothes, but the opposite side is an industrial bank of video monitors showing a dozen views of the house, both inside and out --

Dennis sees this stuff and stops in his tracks, awed --

DENNIS

Kev.

Kevin steps in beside him.

KEVIN

Jesus. What is this?

DENNIS

Are you totally stupid? What does it
look like?

One monitor shows Mars and the Smiths in the office, another the kitchen, another Jennifer's room, another the front of the house, the rear, the sides--every room and most of the exterior can be seen --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Look, that's the master bedroom out here.

Dennis goes out into the master, looking for the camera, and appears on the bedroom monitor --

KEVIN

I can see you!

Dennis steps back into the closet, and this time he examines the door. He closes it enough to reveal thick throw-bolts --

DENNIS

Dude, this is solid steel. They gotta be hiding something.

Dennis glances over to his brother, and finds Kevin on his knees with two black travel bags beneath the clothes --

KEVIN

Dennis --

Kevin pushes the clothes aside to reveal an open bag. It's filled with hundred dollar bills. Dennis kneels beside his brother and opens the second bag. It's filled with hundred dollar bills, too --

DENNIS

Go get Mars.

INT. MRS. PENNA'S FAMILY ROOM -- DAY -- ON A TELEVISION

We're watching a grainy black and white security tape of Junior Kim's robbery/homicide. It shows Kim behind the counter as Dennis and Mars enter --

MIKKELSON

One in front is Dennis James Rooney.

Talley, Mikkelson, Dreyer, and Anders are watching the tape, which is currently being played in the home of Mrs. Estelle Pena, who lives two blocks from the Smiths.

Mikkelson is a tall, strong woman; Dreyer is her opposite, a short, dumpy man --

MIKKELSON (CONT'D)

Dennis has a younger brother, Kevin Paul-- that's him entering now, the third guy.

TALLEY

Has Dennis done time?

MIKKELSON

Just pulled thirty days for misdemeanor burglary. He shows car theft, shoplifting, and DUI.

Talley steps closer to the television, and taps Mars --

TALLEY

Who's this?

DREYER

We don't know.

TALLEY

Have still prints made from the tape. Show the landlord. Maybe we can get a fast ID.

Talley looks closer. With the way Mars is positioned, we can see part of the tattoo on his head --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Here on his head. Is that a tattoo?

MIKKELSON

I can't make it out.

TALLEY

Says...burn it.

On the tape, Kim slumps to the floor. Dennis vaults across the counter and runs to the door. Mars, however, calmly picks up Kim's gun and leans across the counter. We couldn't see this before, but now we see a strange smile play over his face --

DREYER

What's he doing?

TALLEY

He's watching Kim die.

Talley watches Mars, and knows that this guy is seriously disturbed. He is still watching the tape when Leigh Metzger calls from the door --

METZGER

Chief?

Talley turns. Metzger is with Amanda and Jane --

EXT. MRS. PENA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Talley, Jane, and Amanda are walking to the street. Amanda is excited; she thinks this is cool --

AMANDA

Are men with guns really barricaded in a house?

TALLEY

Just around the corner and up that street. See the helicopters?

Five news choppers now hover high over the house. The crime scene is only two blocks away. Close.

JANE

Wait by the car, Mandy. Give me a minute with Dad.

They wait until Amanda is gone, then --

TALLEY

(apologizing)

I should've called. This thing broke right after we spoke, then everything happened so fast --

JANE

Don't worry about it. How are you doing?

TALLEY

The Sheriffs will take over when they get here.

JANE

But they're not here yet. Tell me about you.

Jane touches his arm --

JANE (CONT'D)

Jesus, you're shaking.

Self-conscious, Talley moves away so that he's out of reach --

TALLEY

Why don't you guys grab some dinner at the Thai place? I'll meet you there as soon as I can.

JANE

You sure?

TALLEY

I don't know how long I'll be stuck here.

JANE

I'm in no rush. Maybe later we can talk.

Talley gives her a gentle nod, then watches her walk away until --

TALLEY

Jane?

She turns back, her eyes asking 'what?'

TALLEY (CONT'D)

I'm scared shitless.

JANE

That's okay. I love you anyway.

Talley and Jane share the moment, and then she walks away.

EXT. YORK ESTATES -- DAY

A news chopper swings by overhead bringing us to the main entrance of York Estates. The entrance has been blocked, and cars are being turned away, so traffic is backed up both ways along the street --

INT. GLEN HOWELL'S CAR -- DAY

Glen Howell is a nice-looking man in his early forties: Sport coat, gold Rolex, deep tan. He hammers the horn of his Mercedes S600 sedan, but it does no good; traffic is frozen --

A news van trying to work up the line pulls alongside, then gets jammed by the crunch like everyone else. Howell rolls down the window --

HOWELL

Hey, you guys know what's going on?

An attractive Asian-American reporter leans from her window to answer --

REPORTER

Three men took a family hostage.

HOWELL

Jesus, no shit? My client lives in there.

The reporter checks her notes --

REPORTER

It's a family named Smith, Walter and
Pamela Smith. Do you know them?

Howell stares at her emptily, then shakes his head --

HOWELL

No. No, I don't know them. Thanks for
your time.

Howell pulls a U-turn to get out of traffic. He flips open
his cell phone and presses the speed dial --

HOWELL (CONT'D)

(into his phone)
We have a problem out here.

INT. SONNY BENZA'S OFFICE -- PALM SPRINGS -- DAY

We're in a palatial home on the ridge overlooking Palm
Springs. On the cut, Sonny Benza, Phil Tuzee, and Charlie
Fischer are watching TV news coverage of the situation in
Bristo Camino --

TUZEE

Worst case, it's a bloodbath. The
detectives come out with Smith's
computer, and we go directly to jail, do
not pass Go.

BENZA

Maybe Glen already picked up the disks.

TUZEE

I took the call from Glen personally.
They're still in Smith's house.

Fischer tries being positive --

FISCHER

Maybe we're getting too dramatic. It's
three kids. They'll give up, the cops
will arrest them, and that's that. Why
would they search the house?

BENZA

You think we should take that chance?

FISCHER

(on the spot)
I guess not.

BENZA

I guess not, too. How much information is in the house?

TUZEE

Smith was cooking the books for the IRS. That means he has it all: The cash flow, where it comes from, how we launder it, our split with the East.

FISCHER

It's on two computer disks he calls Marlon and Al.

BENZA

What, he's cute? That's his idea of humor?

FISCHER

If the Feds get those disks, the East Coast is gonna take a hit, too. You should let them know.

BENZA

No way. I tell them, that Old Man is gonna handle this from back there.

TUZEE

You should warn them, Sonny.

BENZA

Fuck them! Now get your head in the game, Phil--we have to handle this.

Benza turns back to the television --

BENZA (CONT'D)

Put our people on the scene. Smith might talk just to cut a break for his kids.

TUZEE

He knows better than that.

BENZA

Bullshit--a man will do anything to save his family. Who's running the show up there?

FISCHER

They have a chief of police, a guy named Talley. I saw him being interviewed.

The television suddenly shows Talley making a statement. He looks tired and haggard --

FISCHER

(pointing)

Hey, that's him. That's Talley right there!

Benza studies Talley, then looks at his lieutenants --

BENZA

Find out how we can hurt him. By the end of the day, I want to own him.

TUZEE

It's happening right now.

That's exactly what Benza wanted to hear.

EXT. THE DESERT ROSE MOTEL -- DAY

A low-rent motel on the road between Bristo Camino and Newhall. Glen Howell's Mercedes is parked on the side, along with several other cars.

It's late-afternoon going into evening. The sun is sinking fast --

INT. HOWELL'S ROOM -- DAY

Howell is being briefed by his operators, four men and two women. There's a minimum of bullshit; these people are professionals --

Ken Seymore is an intense, compact man who talks fast --

SEYMORE

L.A. County Sheriffs are inbound from a bank robbery in Pico Rivera.

HOWELL

Give me an ETA.

SEYMORE

An hour, tops. Might be sooner.

Duane Manelli speaks up --

MANELLI

When the Sheriffs get here, how many we looking at?

SEYMORE

(checking his notes)

A command team, a negotiating team, a tactical team--the tac team includes a perimeter team, the assault team, snipers, and breachers--thirty-five new bodies.

HOWELL

How many locals?

Gayle Devarona, one of the women, leans forward --

DEVARONA

Fourteen officers and two civilians. I have their names and most of their addresses.

She tosses a yellow legal pad onto the table --

HOWELL

And Talley?

DEVARONA

Married but separated, ex-LAPD. The fam doesn't live here, but they're coming up today. I got his address there.

MANELLI

The cops I talked to, they said Talley was a hostage negotiator in LA.

DEVARONA

His last three years on the job. Before that, he was SWAT.

Mike Ruiz joins in --

RUIZ

How's a SWAT negotiator make it up here to this shithole?

DEVARONA

I make him for a stress release.

HOWELL

Good work, Gayle--everybody. Now stay ahead of the curve. I want to know everything that happens before it

happens. I'll cover Talley.

Howell tears Talley's address off the yellow pad. This meeting is over --

SEYMORE

What if it goes south?

HOWELL

What do you mean?

SEYMORE

If things get wet, we're going to need someone who can handle that end.

HOWELL

You worry about your end. I got my side covered.

Howell tucks the address in his pocket and goes to the door.

EXT. DONUT SHOP -- NEWHALL, CALIFORNIA -- NIGHT

The sun has set. The donut shop glows greasily at the end of a strip mall. It is empty except for the overweight woman behind the counter and a lone man seated at a window booth --

INT. THE DONUT SHOP -- NIGHT

The man in the booth is named Marion Clewes. He's an average looking guy, more or less, except for the strange cant to his right eye and the thin black tie he wears over his white J. C. Penney shirt. His jacket doesn't fit quite right, but not so much as you'd notice. Marion could disappear into a crowd just by being so ordinary. That's the point.

A fat black desert fly, heavy with juice and thorny with coarse hair, buzzes past --

Marion watches it, only his eyes moving --

The fly lands in the sprinkles of sugar on the table --

Marion watches it, then, suddenly, with no warning, his hand flashes out, slamming down on the table.

He holds his hand in place, feeling for movement, then slowly peeks under his hand --

The fly oozes sideways, legs kicking, trying to walk. One wing beats furiously; the other is broken --

Marion examines his hand. A smear of fly goo and a single black leg streaks his third finger. Marion touches his tongue to the smear --

The woman behind the counter watches this, her eyes widening with disgust --

Marion holds the fly in place with his left index finger, and uses his right to break away another leg. He eats this leg, too --

The woman disappears into the rear --

Headlights flash across the glass, and Marion swivels around to see Howell's Mercedes pull up --

Marion carefully pushes the still-alive fly aside as Glen Howell takes a seat across from him. Howell puts the yellow slip with Talley's address on the table --

HOWELL

Talley lives here. I don't know if the place has security or not.

MARION

It won't be a problem.

HOWELL

He has a wife and kid. That's how we'll get to him.

MARION

Okey-doke.

HOWELL

We have to own this guy, Marion. We don't want him dead; we need to use him.

Marion puts Talley's address into his pocket.

MARION

Can we make him dead after we use him?

Glen Howell slides out of the booth without answering. Marion creeps him out --

HOWELL

Whatever you want. Page me when you're done.

Howell starts away, then turns back --

HOWELL (CONT'D)

Donuts here any good?

MARION

I don't eat junk food.

Howell frowns like he might've known, then walks away.
Marion turns back to the fly --

It lays there, still, until Marion prods it. The remaining
wing flutters --

Marion breaks off the remaining wing and eats that, too.

EXT. COMMAND STREET -- NIGHT

Talley and Leigh Metzger stride through a pool of street light
as she reports --

METZGER

PacBell shows six lines into the house.
They blocked all six like you wanted.

TALLEY

I have the only number that can call into
the house?

METZGER

Yes, sir. They'll only accept calls from
your cell.

TALLEY

Way to go.

They arrive at Larry Anders, who is waiting at his car with a
slim, nervous cement contractor named Brad Dill --

ANDERS

Chief, this is Brad Dill. Dennis and
Kevin work for him.

DILL

I didn't know anything about this. I
didn't know what they were gonna do.

TALLEY

Mr. Dill, these pricks didn't know what
they were going to do until they did it.
I want you to take a look at something.

Metzger holds out a still picture that was made from Junior
Kim's security tape --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Can you identify this man?

DILL

That would be Mars Krupchek. Jesus, he works for me, too.

TALLEY

(to Metzger)

Have Louise run the name 'Mars Krupchek' through DMV and NCIC. Tell her to list the tattoo as an identifier.

Metzger hurries away as Talley turns back to Dill --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Is Krupchek an aggressive guy? Hot-tempered? Anything like that?

DILL

Keeps to himself, more like.

TALLEY

You have his address?

DILL

Pretty sure I do. Yeah, here we go --

Dill pulls out a tattered address book. Talley hands the book to Anders, who copies the address --

TALLEY

(to Anders)

Call the Palmdale City Attorney for a telephonic search warrant. When you get the warrant, have Mikkelson and Dreyer search his house.

ANDERS

Yes, sir.

Anders turns away as Metzger calls from Mrs. Pena's door --

METZGER

Chief! The Sheriffs are ten minutes out!

Talley has wanted to hear that, but now his sense of relief is tempered by something he did not expect: Loss.

Talley keys his shoulder mike --

TALLEY

(into his radio)
Louise?

LOUISE'S VOICE

Go, Chief.

TALLEY

Call Jane for me. She's at the little
Thai place.

LOUISE'S VOICE

I know the one.

TALLEY

Tell her I'm almost home.

INT. SMITH'S SECURITY CLOSET -- NIGHT

Dennis is on the floor with the money, touching it, feeling
it, smelling it. Mars is standing over him, profoundly
unmoved --

DENNIS

There's gotta be a million bucks here.
Maybe two million!

Mars turns away from the money to consider the monitors and
the door --

MARS

It's a safety room. If anyone breaks
into your house, you can hide.

DENNIS

Who gives a shit, Mars? Check out the
cash! We're rich.

MARS

We're trapped in a house.

Mars walks away --

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Dennis and Mars are returning to the front of the house,
Dennis irritated at Mars's lack of enthusiasm --

DENNIS

We can take it with us.

MARS

You can't run with suitcases.

Dennis grabs Mars by the arm, stopping him --

DENNIS

Then we'll stuff it up our asses. This is the payoff. This is every dream you ever had, all in those two bags.

Mars continues on without responding, Dennis angrily following --

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Kevin is grimly watching news coverage of their standoff as Mars and Dennis enter. A female anchor is reporting on the events at York Estates with Dennis's booking photo cut into the picture --

ANCHOR

(from the tube)

-- thought to be Dennis James Rooney. Rooney was recently released from the Antelope Valley Correctional Institute where he served time for robbery.

Dennis spots himself on television and breaks into a big smile --

DENNIS

(thrilled)

Check me out! I look like fuckin' Jon Bon Jovi.

Kevin is anything but thrilled --

KEVIN

Everyone knows what we look like, Dennis. We won't be able to hide.

DENNIS

Jesus, first Mars, now you. You two need anti-depressants.

Across the room, Walter Smith shudders and moans; his face is swollen and covered with clammy sweat --

Jennifer is sick with worry and can't stand seeing her father like this --

JENNIFER

My father needs a doctor. Please.

DENNIS

Hey, I've got a situation here, in case you haven't noticed.

JENNIFER

All you're doing is watching yourself on TV. Look at him.

DENNIS

Use more ice.

JENNIFER

I'm getting a doctor!

Jennifer lurches to her feet and runs toward the front door. Dennis catches her in two steps and backhands her exactly the way his old man used to smack his old lady, knocking her to the floor --

THOMAS

Jen!!!

Thomas charges into Dennis like an angry midget. Kevin jumps between them --

KEVIN

Stop it! Stop it, Dennis! Jesus!

Mars steps forward and jerks Thomas into the air. Mars' physical presence is suddenly so imposing that everyone stops fighting --

MARS

(quietly)

We should tie them. We can put them upstairs out of the way.

It takes Dennis a moment to come up to speed with that, but then he nods --

DENNIS

That's right. That's a good idea, Mars.

MARS

(to Kevin)

Find something: Extension cords, rope, wire--we'll have to tie them tight.

DENNIS

Find something, Kevin. Don't just stand there.

(waves at Walter)
And tie this bastard, too. I don't want
him waking up and goin' Rambo on us.

Mars nods his approval. Subtly, there is the beginning of a
shift in power --

INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mars pushes Jennifer inside. Kevin follows her with duct
tape and a couple of extension cords. Mars, holding Thomas,
pauses in the hall --

MARS

Tie her to the chair. I'll take care of
the windows when I finish with the boy.

Mars disappears with Thomas down the hall. Jennifer stands
by the chair, arms once more crossed over her breasts.
Kevin can see that she's scared. He takes a T-shirt from
where she's left it on the floor and hands it to her --

KEVIN

Here. Put this on.

She pulls it over her head --

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You gotta pee?

JENNIFER

I don't see why you can't just lock me
in. It's not like I can go anywhere.

KEVIN

Either I'm going to tie you or Mars will
tie you. Which do you want?

Jennifer sits. Kevin pulls her hands behind the back of the
chair. As he ties her, Jennifer decides that if any of them
can be reached, it's Kevin --

JENNIFER

Thanks for the shirt.

KEVIN

Whatever.

JENNIFER

Kevin, my father needs a doctor.

KEVIN

He's just knocked out. I've been knocked out.

JENNIFER

If my father dies they'll charge you with his murder. Can't you make Dennis see that?

Kevin leans back. He knows she's right, but he doesn't believe he can do anything about it --

KEVIN

I can't make Dennis see anything.

A shadow moves behind Kevin. It's Mars, standing in the door. He holds up a wicked claw hammer --

MARS

Look what I found.

He enters and tests at Jennifer's binds --

MARS (CONT'D)

You tied her like a pussy. Make it tight.

As Kevin reties the bindings, Mars rips the phone from the wall. He smashes the phone jack with the hammer, crushing it. Then he goes to the window and drives a heavy nail into the sill, nailing the window closed --

Mars returns to Jennifer and once more checks her binds --

MARS (CONT'D)

Better.

He tears off a strip of duct tape and presses it over her mouth --

KEVIN

Make sure she can breathe.

Mars rubs his fingers hard over the tape covering her mouth. He massages the tape into her skin, slow, sensual --

MARS

Go downstairs, Kevin.

Jennifer looks at Kevin, her eyes pleading that he not leave, but Kevin is cowed; he leaves --

Jennifer looks back at Mars --

Mars leans close to her. She is terrified that he is going to kiss her, but, instead, he sniffs, smelling her --

MARS (CONT'D)

I want to show you something.

Mars hooks the claw hammer under his shirt and lifts to expose his chest. A large tattoo in flowing script is lined across his body: A Mother's Son.

MARS (CONT'D)

It cost two hundred forty dollars, but I was happy to spend it. I love my mom. You see these?

Mars points out hard gray knots that speckle his chest as if he were diseased. He fingers the lumps sensuously as if touching them excites him --

MARS (CONT'D)

My mom burned me with cigarettes.

Jennifer is both disgusted and terrified. Mars stares at her emptily for another moment, then lowers his shirt and leaves without another word.

INT. THOMAS'S ROOM -- NIGHT

The room is dark. Thomas is tied firmly to the bed. The cords cut into Thomas's wrists and Thomas can't reach the knots, but Mars made one mistake: He tied Thomas to the headboard posts, and one of the newels has been loose for years --

Thomas stretches against the ropes to reach the newel, then twists it back and forth. He works it harder and harder until the newel slides off its pin, and suddenly his hand is free, though still tied to the newel --

Thomas peels the tape from his mouth, then unties the remaining binds and frees himself from the newel. He slips off his bed and crawls along the wall to his closet --

INT. THOMAS'S CLOSET -- NIGHT

A service hatch that opens into the attic crawlspace is built into the wall beneath Thomas's clothes. Thomas prys open the hatch, then reaches inside for a small flashlight. He flicks it on, then climbs into the eaves of the roof --

INT. CRAWLSPACE -- NIGHT

The crawlspace is a long triangular tunnel that follows the edge of the roof. It was built for plumbers and air conditioning technicians, but Thomas has taken the space for his own: Witness the stack of Penthouse, pictures of sports heroes tacked to the rafters, and old soda cans strewn between the joists --

Thomas scurries quietly through the tunnel, heading for --

INT. JENNIFER'S CLOSET -- NIGHT

Thomas pushes through a hatch identical to the one in his own closet, then creeps to the door --

THOMAS

(whispers)

Jen!

INT. JENNIFER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jennifer twists around to see him, mumbling through the tape --

THOMAS

Sit still! If they're in the security room, they can see you on the monitors.

Jennifer quiets. Thomas slips out of the closet and creeps toward her along the wall --

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I figured out what these cameras can see last year when Mom and Dad went to Lake Arrowhead. It can't see me over here, but it's looking at you, so don't move!

Thomas reaches up from behind Jennifer and jerks the tape off her mouth --

JENNIFER

Ow! Shit!

THOMAS

Be quiet! Listen!

Thomas is hiding behind Jennifer so that the camera cannot see him --

JENNIFER

No one's coming.

THOMAS

That big asshole nailed my windows.

JENNIFER

Mine, too.

THOMAS

We can use the crawlspace to get downstairs. Then we can run for it.

JENNIFER

No! I'm not going to leave Daddy with them!

Thomas thinks about that and decides that he can't leave their father, either --

THOMAS

We can't carry him.

JENNIFER

You go, Thomas. You get out, and I'll stay with Daddy.

THOMAS

I'm not gonna leave you!

JENNIFER

Go! If you get out, maybe you can help the police!

Thomas suddenly realizes what he has to do --

THOMAS

We'll all go, Jennifer. All of us or none of us. I know where Daddy keeps a gun.

Jennifer jerks so hard that she almost tips over the chair --

JENNIFER

(loud)
You leave that gun alone!

THOMAS

Shh, they'll hear you!

JENNIFER

(louder)
Better than you getting killed! Don't touch that gun! Daddy says --

Thomas slaps the tape back over her mouth. Jennifer

struggles helplessly as Thomas slips back into the closet,
and is gone --

EXT. YORK ESTATES -- STREET -- NIGHT

The Sheriff's Crisis Response Team rolls through the streets like an invading army: A brown sedan leads a huge van known as the Mobile Command Post, which is followed by a Sheriff's SWAT support vehicle, two SWAT Suburbans, and four radio units.

Pools of light from the helicopters follow their progress --

EXT. COMMAND STREET -- NIGHT

Talley walks out to meet the lead vehicle as the convoy stops. Up and down the row, uniformed Sheriffs pile out of their vehicles and off-load their gear --

Two people climb out of the lead car: Will Maddox, a bespectacled African-American Sheriff's SWAT negotiator, and Captain Laura Martin, the CRT commander --

TALLEY

I'm Talley. Who's in charge?

MARTIN

Laura Martin. This is Will Maddox, the primary negotiator --

MADDOX

Is the perimeter around the house secure?

TALLEY

I've got fourteen officers on my department including me. We're as secure as we can be.

MADDOX

(to Martin)
Permission to deploy the line?

MARTIN

Do it.

TALLEY

(to Maddox)
Don't crowd the house. The alpha's a kid named Rooney. He's amped up and volatile.

Maddox turns away to bark orders into his shoulder mike --

MARTIN

Sounds like you know the job.

TALLEY

I've done it once or twice. I blocked their phones to incoming calls, so you'll have to cut in a hard line to talk to him.

MARTIN

(over her shoulder)

Maddox! You got that?

MADDOX

Doing it now!

MARTIN

(back to Talley)

I'd like you to brief my supervisors before we take over the scene.

TALLEY

Whatever you want.

Talley and Martin hurry toward her troops --

INT. THE SMITHS' GARAGE -- NIGHT

The garage is dark, lit only by the light that comes from the kitchen's open door, as Dennis, Mars and a reluctant Kevin enter --

KEVIN

Someone should stay with Mr. Smith. What if he wakes up?

DENNIS

(annoyed)

That's why we tied him, dumbass. Now come here and see this --

Dennis shows them a small casement window, and pushes open the window to reveal a thick hedge --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

(excited)

These bushes follow the wall into the neighbor's yard. All we need is some kind of diversion and we're home free.

KEVIN

That's crazy, Dennis. The cops will see us.

DENNIS

Not if they're looking at something else.

KEVIN

Like what?

MARS

Let's burn the house.

Mars says it so simply that the moment is frozen. Mars is holding the big claw hammer, kneading it as if it was a living thing. His face is masked by shadows, but his eyes both glow as if already reflecting flame --

INT. CRAWLSPACE ABOVE THE LAUNDRY ROOM -- NIGHT

We see Dennis, Kevin, and Mars through a slit overhead as they emerge from the garage and move back into the house --

Thomas is watching them. He has cracked open the service hatch in the laundry room ceiling to make sure that his way is clear --

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM -- NIGHT

The room is dark. When Dennis and the others are gone, the ceiling hatch lifts, and Thomas lets himself down. He slides onto the washing machine and then to the floor --

Thomas cups one hand over his flashlight and turns it on. He lets light leak through his fingers so that he can see. The beam cuts across a door to the garage, car keys on key hooks, and Jennifer's purse hanging from one of the hooks --

INT. HOBBY ROOM -- NIGHT

This is a small room off the end of the laundry with a work bench, a stool, and shelves above the bench for Walter's hobby supplies --

Thomas shines the light over the shelves, spotting the hard plastic pistol case on the highest shelf. That's the target; that's the goal --

Thomas uses the stool to climb onto the bench --

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Dennis is in the doorway to the security closet, handing out

one of the money bags to Kevin --

KEVIN

We can't carry all this. It's too heavy.

DENNIS

I've been carrying you our whole fuckin' lives.

Kevin drops the bag and tries to reason with his brother --

KEVIN

Everything we're doing is making it worse. You can't let him burn this house.

Dennis abruptly grabs Kevin by the throat, his face hard with fury --

DENNIS

Nothing's worse than listening to you. I'm warning you, Kevin--stop holding me back. Now you pick up that fuckin' money and get ready to go.

Dennis glares at Kevin another moment, then lets go and steps back into the closet --

INT. THE CLOSET -- NIGHT

Dennis lifts the second bag of cash when the monitors catch his eye: The Sheriffs SWAT unit can be seen moving into position. Dennis totally freaks --

DENNIS

They're coming! Kev, Mars, they're coming!!!

Dennis drops the cash and bolts out of the closet --

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Mars is placing two buckets of gasoline in the hall as Dennis and Kevin pound down the hall --

DENNIS

The cops are comin'!

MARS

I got the gasoline --

DENNIS

We don't have time!

Dennis runs to the French doors. He sees lights at the rear of the property and SHOOTS through the glass --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Get the kids! They're our only chance!

Dennis FIRES AGAIN and runs for the stairs --

INT. HOBBY ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas is straining to reach the pistol which is a fraction of an inch beyond his grasp when he hears Dennis shouting --

Thomas glances helplessly at the gun case--so near, yet so far--then scrambles off the bench and --

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas is climbing onto the washing machine when he once more sees Jennifer's purse hanging on a key hook --

Thomas jumps from the washer, grabs the purse, then scrambles into the ceiling as GUNSHOTS ECHO through the house --

EXT. COMMAND STREET -- NIGHT

Martin, Maddox, and her supervisors are gathered around Talley when the gunshots crack across the neighborhood --

TALLEY

(startled)

Who's that shooting? Martin, what's going on?

Radio transmissions crackle over Martin's radio --

RADIO VOICES

Shots fired! We are taking fire on the back wall!

Talley immediately knows what's happening, and he knows why --

TALLEY

They're too close! I told you not to crowd him! Pull back your people; do not breach that house!

Talley sprints toward the cul-de-sac --

INT. CRAWLSPACE -- NIGHT

Thomas races through the narrow black tunnel. He slips off the rafters and almost falls through the ceiling. He's losing precious time --

INT. THE STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Dennis and Mars pound up the stairs, getting closer to his room --

INT. THE CRAWLSPACE -- NIGHT

Thomas pushes his way into his closet --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Dennis and Mars reach the second floor --

INT. THOMAS' ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas scrambles into bed just before Dennis jerks open the door. Dennis drags him off the bed and carries him out of the room --

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC -- NIGHT

Talley, Martin, and Maddox run into position behind a Sheriff's unit where a deputy has set up the dedicated crisis phone --

Talley grabs up the phone --

TALLEY

(to the deputy)

This thing good?

Talley doesn't wait for the confused deputy to answer; he presses the button in the handle that dials the phone --

MADDOX

What in hell are you doing? He's shooting at my men!

The phone rings in Talley's ear --

TALLEY

(to Maddox)

Then get your men off the wall!

(to Martin)

You breach that house, we're gonna have a bloodbath! I know this guy, Captain -- I can talk to him.

MARTIN

(to Maddox)

Order your men to stand down.

The phone is still ringing. Talley pulls the mike from the deputy's car and speaks over the public address --

TALLEY

(over the p.a.)

Look out the window, Dennis. We are NOT entering the house. We're pulling back.

INT. SMITH'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Dennis is holding Thomas around the neck, using the boy as a shield. Kevin is cowering on the floor and Mars is holding Jennifer. Dennis snatches up the phone --

DENNIS

(screaming into the phone)

You fuck! I got a fuckin' gun to this kid's head! I'll kill'm, you fuck!

Intercut Talley outside --

TALLEY

It's over now, Dennis! Don't hurt anyone.

DENNIS

(still screaming)

We'll burn this fuckin' place down! I got gasoline all over in here!

Talley takes a deep breath; he forces himself to speak quietly, calmly --

TALLEY

No one's coming in. A couple of guys out here got carried away.

Dennis peers out the front. Talley's careful manner is calming him --

DENNIS

Goddamned right they got carried away. It looks like an army out there.

Talley mutes the phone to speak to Martin --

TALLEY

(to Martin)
It's over. He's cooling off.

Talley glances at Maddox. Maddox nods, his expression saying that Talley was right --

DENNIS

Talley?

TALLEY

(back into the phone)
I'm here.

DENNIS

I want a helicopter to take us to Mexico.

TALLEY

That's not going to happen, Dennis. They won't give you a helicopter.

DENNIS

I'll give you these people.

TALLEY

The Mexican police would arrest you as soon as it landed. There's only one way out and you're doing it right now--just keep talking to us.

(mutes phone; to Martin and Maddox)

I think we could make the transition now. Maddox, you good to go?

Maddox nods at Martin; he's good to go --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(to Dennis)
Hey, Dennis? Can I let you in on a personal secret?

DENNIS

(hesitantly)
What?

TALLEY

I gotta piss real bad.

Dennis can't help himself; he laughs --

DENNIS

You're a funny guy, Talley.

TALLEY

I'm going to put on an officer named Will Maddox. You talk to him for a while.

Talley hands the phone to Maddox, who moves past Talley for a better view of the house. Talley looks grimly at Martin --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

He says he has gasoline set to burn the place.

MARTIN

Jesus. He must've siphoned it from the cars.

TALLEY

If you go in, you can't use tear gas or flashbangs. The whole place would go up.

MARTIN

(not without humor)

Looks like you're bailing out at the right time.

TALLEY

(returns her smile)

That's why you get the big bucks, Captain.

Talley is moving away when his radio pops --

LOUISE'S VOICE

Chief, base.

TALLEY

(keying his shoulder mike)

Go.

LOUISE'S VOICE

I couldn't find Jane. She wasn't at the restaurant.

TALLEY

You have her cell number?

LOUISE'S VOICE

She didn't answer.

TALLEY

They might be at the house. Keep trying and let me know. I'm going to be here a little while longer.

Talley closes his phone and continues away --

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Dennis and Kevin are at the television, watching an aerial view of the Sheriffs deploying around the house. Jennifer and Thomas are huddled by their father --

KEVIN

We're surrounded. They're all over the neighborhood.

Mars enters carrying candles and flashlights. He lights a candle and place it on a table --

DENNIS

What the fuck is that?

MARS

They'll cut the power.

Mars tosses a flashlight to Dennis --

JENNIFER

What about my father?

DENNIS

Aw, Jesus, not more of this.

JENNIFER

Look at him! I think he's dying!

DENNIS

(to Kevin and Mars)

Take 'm back upstairs, but don't tie 'm like before. That little fuck untied himself anyway.

Dennis returns to the shutters as Mars and Kevin take the kids --

INT. THOMAS' ROOM -- NIGHT

Mars shoves Thomas into the room, then lifts the claw hammer. For an instant, we think he's going to hit the boy--but he smashes off the door knob, instead.

Mars glares at Thomas, then pulls the door closed. The knob on Thomas's side is gone; there's no way for Thomas to open the door.

But that's okay by Thomas. He waits until he's sure that Mars is gone, and then he hurries back to his closet --

INT. THOMAS' CLOSET -- NIGHT

Thomas pulls open the hatch, fishes out his flashlight, then dumps the contents of Jennifer's purse on the floor.

He picks up her cell phone.

INT. MRS. PENA'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Talley closes his eyes with a blissful expression as a familiar sound fills the bathroom; he's taking a piss.

His radio crackles --

LOUISE'S VOICE

Chief, base.

Talley finishes his business, and keys his mike --

TALLEY

Did you find Jane and Mandy?

LOUISE'S VOICE

Could you call me back on your phone?
Right away.

TALLEY

What's wrong with the radio?

LOUISE'S VOICE

(hesitantly)
Other people can hear us. Just call.
Please.

TALLEY

Stand by.

Now Talley is worried. He pulls out his phone and punches the speed dial. It rings only once --

Intercut Louise, at her desk outside Talley's office --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Is something wrong with Jane?

LOUISE

We have a boy on the line. He says he's Thomas Smith and he's calling from the house.

TALLEY

It's a crank, Louise. C'mon, don't waste my time with that!

LOUISE

His cell number belongs to the Smiths. I think it's real, Chief. I think this boy is inside that house.

Talley worries it only for a moment --

TALLEY

Put him on.

Talley pushes out of the bathroom into --

INT. MRS. PENNA'S FAMILY ROOM -- NIGHT

He flags Leigh Metzger as he cups the phone --

TALLEY

(to Metzger)

Get Martin. Right away.

As Metzger hurries away, we intercut Thomas, hiding in the shadows on his bed, whispering so as not to be overheard --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

This is Chief Talley. Tell me your name, son.

THOMAS

Thomas Smith. I'm in the house that's on TV. Dennis hit my dad and now he won't wake up. You gotta help him.

Talley can tell by the tremor in the boy's voice--this is for real --

TALLEY

Slow down, Thomas. Take it easy and talk to me. Was your father shot?

THOMAS

Dennis hit him. His head's all big and he won't wake up. I'm really scared.

TALLEY

How about you and your sister?

THOMAS

We're okay.

TALLEY

Where are you right now?

THOMAS

In my room.

Talley hurries to a large sketch of the Smiths' floor plan laid out on the dining room table --

TALLEY

That's on the second floor. Could you climb out your window if we were downstairs to catch you?

THOMAS

They nailed the windows. I can't get 'em open.

Martin enters with Leigh Metzger. Talley cups the phone to give her the headline --

TALLEY

(to Martin)

I've got the boy on the phone. He's using a cell phone.

(back to Thomas)

What was that, son? I didn't hear you.

THOMAS

If I try to climb out they'll see me on the security cameras. They would see you outside, too --

Thomas hears someone outside his door --

THOMAS (CONT'D)

They're coming!

Thomas hangs up, jamming his phone behind the bed --

TALLEY

Thomas? Thomas...?

Talley lowers the phone --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

He says that his father's hurt.

MARTIN

If we have a man dying in there, we'll have to go in.

TALLEY

They have security cameras. Rooney would see you coming.

MARTIN

Did the boy say that any of them are in immediate danger?

TALLEY

No. He said that his father's unconscious; he didn't say he was dying.

MARTIN

Then I think we should wait. Do you agree?

Talley finally nods --

TALLEY

You want me to stick around, I could --

MARTIN

You've been here all day, Chief. Take a break. See your family. If I need you, I'll call.

Talley looks like the most tired guy in the world. He nods his good-night, then turns away --

INT. TALLEY'S CAR -- NIGHT

Talley slides into his car outside Mrs. Pena's home. He's got a lot on his mind, and not all of it centers around 455 Castle Way. He punches a number into his cell phone --

He listens to ringing, and then his own voice answers --

TALLEY'S VOICE MESSAGE

This is Jeff Talley. Leave your name and number after the beep.

We hear the beep, then --

TALLEY

(into his phone)

Jane? If you're there, pick up, okay?
Mandy?

No one answers. Talley closes his phone, his apprehension

increasing --

EXT. YORK ESTATES FRONT GATE -- NIGHT

The Bristo officers manning the gate swing the blockade aside and wave Talley through --

EXT. MEDIA AREA -- NIGHT

The assembled television microwave vans, radio newsvans, and reporters are parked together in an empty lot one block from the front gate.

Ken Seymore steps into the street, speaking into a cell phone as he watches Talley drive away --

SEYMORE

(into his phone)

He's leaving now.

EXT. RED LIGHT INTERSECTION -- DAY

A traffic light on the outskirts of town, deserted until Talley's car pulls to a stop --

INT. TALLEY'S CAR -- NIGHT

Suddenly, two masked men point guns at his head, one from the driver's side, one from the passengers. They're wearing jackets, black ski masks, and gloves. The man on the passenger side sports a big gold Rolex, so we'll call him the Watchman --

THE WATCHMAN

(meaning the gun)

Do you see the fuckin' gun?! Look at it!

Talley freezes. He's been blindsided by this insane shit, but he knows better than to move --

TALLEY

Take it easy.

The man on the driver's side gets into the backseat, then the Watchman gets into the passenger side. The man behind Talley hooks an arm around Talley's throat while the Watchman searches for Talley's gun --

THE WATCHMAN

Where's your gun?

TALLEY

I'm the Chief. I don't carry it.

The Watchman nods at the backseater, who releases Talley.

A dark green Mustang roars up ahead of Talley's car. A second car tucks in tight on Talley's rear --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Who are you?

THE WATCHMAN

Follow the Mustang. We won't go far.

The Mustang pulls out, and Talley follows.

EXT. A DESERTED ALLEY -- NIGHT

The three cars turn into the alley. They stop, the first and last cars bumper-to-bumper with Talley's. The cars are so close to Talley that his own vehicle is pinned; he couldn't drive away now even if he wanted --

INT. TALLEY'S CAR -- NIGHT

The Watchman puts Talley's car in park, turns off the ignition, and takes the key.

THE WATCHMAN

I know you're scared, but unless you do something stupid we're not going to hurt you. You understand?

Two more masked men approach from the other cars, one coming to Talley's window, the other getting into the back seat behind the Watchman.

THE WATCHMAN (CONT'D)

Don't just fuckin' sit there, dumbass. Do you understand?

TALLEY

What do you want?

THE WATCHMAN

These guys are going to take hold of you. Don't freak out. It's for your own good.

The three men take hold of Talley, the man behind again looping his arm around Talley's neck, the other two each twisting Talley's arms --

TALLEY

What is this?

The Watchman holds a distinctive white cell phone to Talley's ear --

THE WATCHMAN

Say hello.

JANE'S VOICE

Jeff? Is that you?

Talley goes berserk. He bucks and tries to pull away, but the three men hold tight --

The Watchman closes the phone --

THE WATCHMAN

(trying to calm Talley)

I know, I know--she's all right. Your kid's all right, too. C'mon, now, relax. From this point on, you control what happens to them.

Talley can barely breathe, they're holding him so tight --

THE WATCHMAN (CONT'D)

Can we let go? You past your shock and all that, we can turn you loose and you won't do something stupid?

TALLEY

You can let go.

The Watchman glances at the men; they let go --

THE WATCHMAN

Here's the deal--Walter Smith has two computer disks like this in his house. They're labeled 'Marlon' and 'Al.'

The Watchman holds up a thick black Zip disk. Talley's expression tells us that this is the weirdest shit he's ever heard --

TALLEY

Marlon and Al....

THE WATCHMAN

We want them. You will not let anyone go into that house--or anything come out--until my people recover these disks.

TALLEY

I can't control what happens. The Sheriffs are running the scene.

THE WATCHMAN

You will re-assume command. In two hours, a group of my people will arrive at York Estates. You will tell the Sheriffs that they are an FBI tactical team.

The Watchman puts the white cell phone into Talley's hand --

THE WATCHMAN (CONT'D)

When this phone rings, you answer. It will be me. I'll tell you what to do. When I have what I want, you get your family.

TALLEY

You want . . . Marlon and Al.

THE WATCHMAN

I have people in York Estates right under your nose. If you do anything except what I'm telling you, you'll get Jane and Amanda back in the mail. We clear on that?

TALLEY

These disks . . . where are they?

THE WATCHMAN

Smith will know.

The Watchman and the others get out of Talley's car. The doors slam shut. The Watchman leans in --

THE WATCHMAN

When it rings, answer.

The Watchman tosses the keys into Talley's lap. We hear car doors open and close; the cars, front and back, roar to life and speed away --

Talley focuses on the Mustang's license plate, frantically scratching down the number --

INT. BRISTO CAMINO POLICE DEPARTMENT -- NIGHT

The place is deserted except for Louise, currently at her desk to monitor radio communications.

Talley enters, looking as if he's stricken. Louise can't help herself but to react --

LOUISE

You look terrible. Chief, are you all right?

Talley barely glances at her, going directly to his office --

INT. TALLEY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Talley steps inside and peels off his uniform shirt. He takes a bullet-resistant vest and a black sweatshirt from his closet. He straps on the vest, then pulls on the sweatshirt.

Talley sits at his desk and lifts out a ballistic nylon pistol case from the lower drawer.

He takes out his old SWAT combat piece: This isn't a pussy 9mm; it's a finely tuned .45-caliber Colt Model 1911. One shot, one kill. Talley ejects the empty magazine, then loads it with a deadly efficiency. He slams home the magazine --

Talley clips the gun to his belt under his sweatshirt. He's ready to rock. The camera finds the photograph of Talley during his days as a SWAT tactical officer --

He was one bad motherfucker.

INT. THE MAIN ROOM -- NIGHT

Talley heads for the front door --

TALLEY

I'm going back to York. Have Larry meet me at the front gate.

Talley exits without a backward glance --

EXT. YORK ESTATES FRONT GATE -- NIGHT

The helicopters orbit in the distance; the empty lot with the news vans is in the background.

Talley turns into the development, then stops at the side of the street where Larry Anders is waiting --

INT. TALLEY'S CAR -- NIGHT

Anders slides into the passenger seat. He sees a different Talley now, focused and grim --

ANDERS

What's up, Chief?

Talley stares at Anders, trying to decide: Can I trust him? Will he rat me out to the Watchman and cost the lives of my wife and child?

ANDERS (CONT'D)

Did I do something wrong?

Talley gives him a slip of paper --

TALLEY

I want you to run this license plate and phone number. Then I want you to find out everything you can about Walter Smith.

ANDERS

The guy in the house?

TALLEY

Go back to the office. Run his name through the FBI and the NLETS database. I think he's involved with illegal activity or he associates with people who are.

Anders glances at the slip again, then tucks it away --

ANDERS

Wow. Sure, right away, Chief.

TALLEY

Don't tell anyone what you're doing, not Louise, not the other guys, not the Sheriffs. You understand me, Larry?

ANDERS

I guess so.

TALLEY

Fuck guessing. You keep your mouth shut.

ANDERS

I will, Chief. Absolutely.

TALLEY

Get to work.

Anders climbs out and Talley rockets away --

EXT. COMMAND STREET -- NIGHT

Talley pulls up behind the Sheriffs' command van. Martin, surprised to see Talley, steps from the van --

TALLEY

I'm re-assuming command of the scene.

Martin is surprised and angry --

MARTIN

Excuse me? You requested our help. You turned over command --

TALLEY

And now I'm taking it back. We're getting Smith out of the house.

Talley heads for the cul-de-sac --

INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jennifer is on her bed in the darkness, groggy with fear and fatigue. She hears someone outside in the hall --

JENNIFER

Thomas?

The door knob rattles. Jennifer slides out of bed and goes to the door --

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Thomas, is that you?

The door suddenly opens, and Mars is framed in the dim light. Jennifer jumps back, terrified --

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

What do you want?

MARS

We can't make the microwave work.

That seems so outlandish that Jennifer is confused --

JENNIFER

What?

MARS

We're hungry. You're going to cook.

Mars grabs her hair, and pushes her out the door --

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Mars shoves Jennifer into the kitchen. Two frozen pizzas are waiting on the counter --

MARS

Make the pizza. I want scrambled eggs and hot dogs on mine.

JENNIFER

(under her breath)
How about dog shit?

Mars takes a carton of eggs and a package of hot dogs from the refrigerator --

MARS

With hot sauce and butter.

Jennifer takes a bowl from the cupboard. When she sets down the bowl, she sees the handle of the paring knife by the food processor. Jennifer breaks eggs into the bowl --

JENNIFER

I need a frying pan. Would you get one?
Over there, under the range.

As soon as Mars turns away, Jennifer palms the knife and pushes it into the waist of her shorts --

EXT. THE CUL-DE-SAC -- NIGHT

Talley joins Maddox behind the car --

MADDOX

What put a wild hair up your ass?

TALLEY

I changed my mind. That's all you need to know.

Talley picks up the dedicated crisis phone that's been cut into the Smiths' telephone line. He lifts the receiver and presses a button. The phone inside the house rings --

Intercut Dennis inside Smith's office. He answers --

DENNIS

That you, Talley?

TALLEY

The one and only. We got a little

problem out here, Dennis.

DENNIS

You oughta try on the problem I got in here.

TALLEY

I need you to let me talk to Mr. Smith.

Dennis shoots a nervous glance at Walter, who's twitching and shuddering on the couch --

DENNIS

We been through that. Forget it.

TALLEY

We can't forget it. The Sheriffs think you won't let me talk to Smith because he's dead. They think you murdered him.

Maddox can't believe that Talley is saying this --

MADDOX

(low, so that Dennis can't hear)

What in hell are you doing?!

DENNIS

That's bullshit! The guy's right here! He's alive!

TALLEY

(pressing Dennis harder)

If you don't let me talk to him, they're going to attack the house.

Maddox grabs Talley's arm, his voice a low hiss --

MADDOX

You're gonna set him off, goddamnit! That's crazy!

DENNIS

(screaming)

They better not!

Talley pushes Maddox away and amps the pressure on Dennis --

TALLEY

Help me keep them out! Let me speak to Smith, Dennis. Let me speak to him right now.

Dennis is freaking. He believes that the Sheriffs are about to crash through the doors --

DENNIS

SHIT!!!!

Now Talley throttles back; he senses that Dennis is at the breaking point and wants to coax him back from the edge --

TALLEY

(calmer; coaxing)

Talk to me, Dennis. Help me help you.
Why can't you put Smith on the phone?

Dennis finally makes the admission --

DENNIS

(quietly)

He got knocked out. It's like he's sleeping. He just lays there.

Talley gives a thumbs-up to Maddox, who sits back in awe. This crazy shit is working --

TALLEY

(to Dennis)

Now I understand. That helps. I can make them understand that.

DENNIS

Okay.

TALLEY

Let me come get him.

DENNIS

Fuck that! You bastards will jump me!

TALLEY

If you won't let me come in, then put him outside.

DENNIS

You'll cap my ass as soon as I step out the door!

TALLEY

You've already helped yourself once, Dennis; be smart again. If you save his life, it'll help when you get to court.

Dennis is at the edge; he's looking straight down into his deepest fears. He finally relents --

DENNIS

Fuck you, Talley, fuck you! You and one other guy, but that's it! I want you stripped! I gotta know you don't have guns!

Dennis slams down the phone --

Talley lowers the crisis phone, then looks at Maddox --

TALLEY

Bring up the ambulance.

EXT. THE CUL-DE-SAC -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Mobile banks of flood lamps illuminate the front of the house. The ambulance waits behind the lights; tactical officers with M5s and M16s hunker in position in case the program goes south --

Talley and a paramedic named Bigelow emerge between the lights, wearing only shorts and shoes. Bigelow is carrying a collapsable stretcher --

They stop in the mouth of the drive with a full view of the front door. Talley lifts his cell phone --

TALLEY

(into the phone)

Okay, Dennis, we won't approach the house until you've closed the door.

The front door opens, a crack at first, then wider. The line of officers behind the lights shifts --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)

Easy....

Kevin and Mars waddle out with Walter Smith between them. They put him down about six feet from the front door, then return to the house --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(to Bigelow)

Let's do it.

Talley and Bigelow move forward. When they reach Walter, Bigelow opens the stretcher and locks out the frame. He

peels back Walter's eyelids and flashes a penlight --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

How's he look?

BIGELOW

He's got a concussion for sure. I'm going to brace him.

As Bigelow sets a cervical neck brace, Talley gets the creepy feeling that he's being watched. He turns toward the shutters, and finds a pair of eyes only inches from his own. It's Mars.

Talley stares at Mars, and Mars stares back. It's as if they're locked in a contest of wills until --

BIGELOW (CONT'D)

Let's get him on the stretcher.

Talley turns away to help Bigelow --

BIGELOW (CONT'D)

I'll support his head and shoulders. You lift his hips and knees. On three. Three.

As they carry Walter away, Talley glances back at the eyes. Mars is still watching him --

IN THE CUL-DE-SAC--TALLEY AND BIGELOW

are surrounded by cops as soon as they step into the shadows behind the lights. Another paramedic takes the stretcher from Talley. Maddox is waiting with Talley's clothes --

MADDOX

You ready to tell me what's going on?

Talley pulls on his pants --

TALLEY

No.

Talley stalks straight to the ambulance, pulling on his sweatshirt as he goes --

INT. THE AMBULANCE -- NIGHT

A young physician named Klaus is examining Walter as Talley steps up into the ambulance --

TALLEY

I'm the chief of police here. I have to talk to him.

KLAUS

Ain't gonna happen. We've got unequal pupilation. He could have an intracranial hematoma or a fracture or both.

Talley ignores the doctor and shakes Walter by the face --

TALLEY

Smith! Wake up!

KLAUS

What are you doing?! Stop that!

Walter's eyes flutter, one more open than the other. Talley leans closer --

TALLEY

(to Smith)

Wake up, goddamnit. Who are you?

Klaus tries to shove Talley away, but it's like pushing a wall --

KLAUS

This man needs a hospital! Stop it!

Talley grabs Klaus by the arm, trying to make him see --

TALLEY

Use smelling salts, give him a shot, whatever. I just need a minute.

Bigelow climbs behind the wheel and starts the ambulance. Talley pounds on the wall, shouting --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Stop the fuckin' engine!

Klaus and Bigelow are both staring at Talley. Sheriffs and Talley's own officers have gathered at the open rear of the ambulance to see what all the shouting is about --

Klaus pointedly looks at Talley's hand gripping his arm. He speaks slowly, trying to make Talley understand --

KLAUS

I'm not going to wake him. I don't even

know that I can.

TALLEY

Just one question. Please.

KLAUS

He. Can't. Answer.

Talley stares at Walter Smith. So close. So damned close. Walter knows about the disks. Walter might even know who has Jane and Amanda. But now Walter can't talk --

Talley turns away and climbs out of the ambulance --

EXT. THE CUL-DE-SAC -- NIGHT

As Talley emerges from the van, he pulls Metzger aside --

TALLEY

I want you waiting in Smith's lap. I want to know the second--and I mean the second--that he wakes up.

As Metzger hurries after the ambulance, a phone in Talley's pocket rings. He's startled and scared; it might be the Watchman. Talley takes out the Watchman's white phone, but it's not ringing.

He answers his other phone --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Talley.

ANDERS' VOICE

It's me, Chief. Can you talk?

Talley notices that Martin, Maddox, and the others are staring at him. He turns away --

TALLEY

(into his phone)

What'd you find out?

ANDERS' VOICE

The cell phone is registered to a jewelry store in Beverly Hills. The phone company shows no unusual --

TALLEY

(cutting him off)

Dead end--it's a clone. What about the

Mustang?

ANDERS' VOICE

It was stolen.

Talley lowers the phone in frustration, then --

TALLEY

You get anything on Smith?

ANDERS' VOICE

Chief...it's like none of this exists.
I'm sorry.

TALLEY

Keep trying.

Talley pockets his phone. He watches the ambulance pull away, then strides back through the banks of lights to the nearest patrol car. He grabs the dash mike and keys the public address --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(through the p.a.)

Call me. If you're safe, call me.

Talley's voice echoes across the neighborhood. Every cop in the cul-de-sac stares at him. He has addressed the house for, apparently, no reason. Dennis shouts from his window --

DENNIS

I'll be safe when I'm outta here, you
asshole! I'm not talking any more!

Talley drops the mike without a word and walks away --

INT. GLEN HOWELL'S MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Howell is on the phone with Ken Seymore, watching the televised news coverage with increasing alarm --

HOWELL

Was Smith talking?

Intercut Seymore, who is reporting from the York front gate as the ambulance roars away, siren wailing --

SEYMORE

I heard he's fucked up. They're taking
him to the hospital.

HOWELL

Goddamnit, tell me what you know. Did the cops go in? Did Smith have the disks?

SEYMORE

I don't know. Talley talked those punks into letting Smith out. He's fucking us over, Glen. That guy is fucking us over.

HOWELL

What hospital?

SEYMORE

Canyon Country.

Howell slams down the phone. He breathes deeply, taking a moment to center himself. He lifts the phone and punches a number --

HOWELL

I have another job for you.

EXT. COMMAND STREET -- NIGHT

Talley is by himself, pacing at the curb well away from the other officers. He is holding his cell phone. Waiting.

Finally, it rings. Talley answers, listens, then --

TALLEY

Put him on.

Intercut Thomas, phoning Talley in his room --

THOMAS

Is my daddy okay?

TALLEY

The doctors are taking care of him right now. Thomas . . . are you safe? Can you talk?

THOMAS

I think so.

TALLEY

I need your help with something. But if you think those guys could catch you, then I don't want you to do it, okay?

THOMAS

Okay.

TALLEY

I'm serious, Thomas; I don't want you to get hurt.

THOMAS

What do you want me to do?

TALLEY

Your dad has two computer disks. They have funny names: Marlon and Al.

THOMAS

He has lots of disks.

TALLEY

I think he was working on them today, so they're probably in his office. Could you find them and see who they belong to?

THOMAS

Dennis won't let me go to the desk. He makes me sit on the floor.

Talley absorbs the bad news like his last best hope of saving his family is circling the drain --

THOMAS (CONT'D)

But I might be able to sneak into the office if they're not around. Then I could open the disks here in my room.

TALLEY

I thought they locked you in your room.

THOMAS

I can get into the crawlspace from my closet and climb all over the house.

TALLEY

Can you get into the office?

THOMAS

I can get into the den. The office is right across the hall.

Talley thinks about what the boy is saying, and what he'll have to do to get Marlon and Al --

TALLEY

If I get Rooney into the back of the house, can you find the disks without

being caught?

THOMAS

Yes, sir.

Talley glances toward the SWAT Command Van as he comes up with a plan --

EXT. THE COMMAND VAN -- NIGHT

Martin, Maddox, and several of her supervisors are gathered outside the van as Talley approaches --

Martin sees him coming and steps away to meet him. She's pissed off and she wants answers --

MARTIN

I want to know what in hell you're doing.

TALLEY

I'm looking for you. I need your tactical unit.

MARTIN

I'm not stupid! You can't get out of here fast enough, then you take back command; you agree to wait on Smith, then you risk everything in a stupid stunt to get him out --

TALLEY

(interrupting)

Don't question me, Captain! This is my crime scene!

MARTIN

(shouting over him)

-- then when you get him, you damn near assault the man in the ambulance! What is going on?

Talley glares at her, half-a-heartbeat from going off, and then he throttles back --

TALLEY

(simply)

I'm a negotiator, Captain. I negotiate. That's all you need to know. Now are you going to help me or not?

Martin weighs the determination in his eyes. She's angry, she's resentful, and she wants to knock Talley onto his ass--

but, instead, she glances back to her van --

MARTIN

Maddox! Let's give the man a hand!

INT. SMITHS' DEN -- NIGHT

Dennis steps through the double doors that open from the entry and admires the room--rich paneled walls, soft leather couches and chairs, and a lush beaten-copper bar. Walter Smith's office is directly across the hall.

Dennis saunters behind the bar, letting his fingers play over the copper, then pours a stiff Ketel One on the rocks.

Kevin appears behind him, watching, as Dennis takes a seat on one of the leather bar stools, then peels a hundred off a thick roll and drops it on the bar --

DENNIS

(to an imaginary bartender)

Keep the change, m'man.

Dennis takes a deep drink of the vodka as Kevin approaches --

KEVIN

We're fucked.

DENNIS

We're fucked until we think of a way out;
then we're rich.

KEVIN

There is no way out.

DENNIS

For chrissake, please! Help me
celebrate! I figured it out!

KEVIN

Celebrate what? Going to prison?

Dennis enjoys another stiff belt --

DENNIS

No, dumbass--Talley. Talley's the guy
who keeps us in here, and Talley's the
guy who can let us out.

Dennis grins as if he's discovered the wisdom of the ages --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Cops want to be rich like everyone else.
All we have to do is share.
 (leans closer and lowers his
 voice)
And if he wants someone to swing for the
Chinaman, we'll give'm Mars.

MARS

Dennis.

Mars is standing in the doors, large and ominous. For an insane moment Dennis thinks that Mars has heard, but then --

MARS (CONT'D)

The food's ready.

Dennis grins, then shoves Kevin out of the room ahead of him, the three of them disappearing toward the kitchen as --

The camera drifts up to an air vent in the ceiling, through the slats in the grate to --

INT. CRAWLSPACE -- NIGHT

Thomas watches them leave through a hole in the air duct. When he's confident that they are gone, he continues along the crawlspace to a service hatch that opens down into --

INT. WINE CELLAR - NIGHT

The "wine cellar" is a climate-controlled closet behind the bar fitted with floor-to-ceiling wine racks.

The ceiling hatch lifts, and Thomas climbs down the racks to the floor. He eases open the door and peeks out behind the bar. The den is bright with light, and empty --

Thomas lifts his cell phone --

THOMAS

 (whispers into the phone)
It's me, Chief. I'm in the den.

EXT. SMITHS' REAR WALL -- NIGHT

Talley, Maddox, and several tactical officers are lined along the rear wall, watching the house. Talley, with a phone to his ear, is looking through a night-vision scope --

He can see into the kitchen through the French doors. Mars and Jennifer are inside, and, as we watch, Dennis and Kevin enter --

TALLEY

(into his phone)

Okay, bud, here we go.

Talley hands the scope to Maddox, then keys his radio mike --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(into his mike)

Captain? Kill the lights.

INT. SMITHS' KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dennis and Kevin are digging into plates of pizza and eggs when the house goes dark --

DENNIS

Shit! It's the cops!

The backyard ERUPTS; explosions from Starflash grenades JUMP and CAREEN over the swimming pool like New Year fireworks. It sounds like World War III --

Dennis throws himself behind the kitchen counter --

INT. THE DEN -- NIGHT

The house now dark, Thomas scurries to the double doors. He peeks around the corner to see if the coast is clear, then darts across the hall to --

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The office is lit only by the flickering candles. Thomas checks his father's computer--no disks. He searches through the papers scattered over the desk, but finds nothing --

Then he opens the drawer --

The disk case that his father put there earlier is waiting. Thomas opens the case --

Marlon. Al.

He found them.

INT. THE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The Starflash grenades burn out as Talley's amplified voice echoes into the house --

TALLEY'S VOICE

It's time to talk face-to-face, Dennis.
Come out, just you, and we'll talk.

KEVIN

What's he doing? What's going on?!

DENNIS

Mars! They're trying to blindside us!
Check the front!

Mars lurches to his feet and hurries to the office --

INT. THE OFFICE -- NIGHT

Thomas is heading for the door when he hears footsteps coming fast toward the office --

Thomas reverses course and ducks under the desk. He pulls himself into a ball and tries not to breathe --

Mars is in the room.

The desk is a great oak monster, big as a boat. It sits on curvy legs that leave a gap between the desk and the floor. Thomas can see feet --

The feet go to the windows --

DENNIS'S VOICE

What's going on out front?

The feet turn toward the desk. Thomas tries to squeeze himself smaller --

DENNIS'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Mars?! What the fuck are they doin'?

The feet come to the desk --

DENNIS'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Mars! Something's happening! Get back here!

The feet hesitate, then, finally, walk away --

Thomas scrambles from under the desk and darts across the hall --

EXT. THE BACKYARD -- NIGHT

Talley approaches the house. He can see flashlights moving in the kitchen --

TALLEY

Come on, Dennis. Talk to me.

Dennis doesn't answer, so Talley moves closer. He spreads his hands wide --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

I'm unarmed. I'm looking at you. Get out here and let's talk.

Dennis comes to the French doors. He stuffs his pistol into his pants, and opens the doors --

DENNIS

You got a sniper out there, gonna shoot me?

TALLEY

Only if you try to grab me. We could've shot you from the wall.

Dennis considers that and accepts it. He steps out of the house and walks over to Talley --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

You've been in there a long time. What're you waiting for?

DENNIS

Would you be in a hurry to go to prison for the rest of your life?

TALLEY

I'd be trying to get the best deal that I could.

DENNIS

Maybe that's what I'm doing. Can I reach in my pocket, show you something?

Dennis Rooney steps closer because he doesn't want anyone else to see the wad of money he pulls out --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

That's fifty hundred-dollar bills. Five grand. They got money in this house, Talley, more than you've ever seen.

Dennis pushes the money back into his pocket.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

How much would it be worth to you,
getting me out of here?

So that's what keeps Dennis in the house--money. This is the
first that Talley has heard of the money --

TALLEY

You picked a bad house to hole up in,
son.

DENNIS

Two hundred thousand cash, right in your
pocket, no one needs to know.

TALLEY

Give up.

DENNIS

There's a million dollars in there, maybe
two million. I'll give you half.

Talley stares at Dennis, wondering how much to tell him and
whether or not it will do any good --

TALLEY

The man you sent to the hospital is a
criminal. He has partners. This is
their house and their money and they want
it back.

These simple facts settle on Dennis like a funeral shroud--
everything that Smith said earlier now makes a horrible
sense: You can't imagine the fucking you're going to get.

Dennis's eyes fill with defeat and helplessness --

DENNIS

It ain't been a good day, Chief.

TALLEY

Give up, Dennis. Let these people go.
At least you'll have your life.

Dennis steps inside and pulls the door closed, the darkness
in the house swallowing him like dirty water.

The power is turned on. The house comes to life --

As Talley turns away, his phone once more rings --

INT. THOMAS' ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas is hunkered with his computer behind his bed so that the camera can't see him.

THOMAS

I got'm!

Intercut Talley, now back in the cul-de-sac --

TALLEY

Can you open them?

THOMAS

I opened Marlon. I think it's somebody's taxes.

TALLEY

Look for names. Does it say whose taxes they are?

Thomas scrolls through a spread sheet --

THOMAS

I don't see any people names. It's all businesses.

TALLEY

Try Al. See if you can open Al.

Thomas changes disks and opens Al --

THOMAS

Yeah! Here's a name. This is somebody's personal tax --

TALLEY

Who is it?

THOMAS

Charles G. Benza.
(then; noise in the hall)
They're coming!

Thomas abruptly hangs up and the line goes dead in Talley's ear.

Talley recognizes the name as easily as an East Coast cop would recognize John Gotti, and realizes the stunning import of Smith possessing Sonny Benza's financial records --

TALLEY

Sonny Benza. Oh, fuck.

Talley sprints across the cul-de-sac to his nearest officer, Jorgenson, and keys Jorgenson's shoulder mike --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

(into the mike)

Leigh? Metzger, answer me!

METZGER'S VOICE

I'm at the hospital.

TALLEY

Put a guard on Smith! I want you with Smith until I get there!

JORGENSON

What's going on?

TALLEY

Get in the car. Now.

Talley drops the mike and shoves Jorgenson toward the car --

EXT. CANYON COUNTRY HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Marion Clewes is stepping from his car as Talley's police unit rips into the parking lot with flashing lights --

Marion watches Talley and Jorgenson rush into the ER, then he frowns and punches the speed dial on his phone --

MARION

(into his phone)

We're too late. The police are here.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Talley and Jorgenson huddle in the hall with Klaus and the ER supervisor, Dr. Estelle Reese. Metzger is outside Walter's room in the background --

TALLEY

I'm posting a guard outside his room, but we'll need help from hospital security.

REESE

Is my staff in danger?

TALLEY

Not with my officers here, no, ma'am.

Metzger steps into Walter's room, then reappears --

METZGER

Hey! He's waking up!

Talley and Klaus press for the room --

INT. WALTER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Walter's eyes flutter open. His voice is slurred, but understandable --

WALTER

Where am I?

Klaus peels open Walter's eyes, passing his penlight over one, then the other --

KLAUS

Canyon Country Hospital. Do you remember your name?

It takes Walter a few moments to answer --

WALTER

Walter Smith.

All of Walter's memories come flooding back, and he tries to sit up. Klaus forces him down --

WALTER (CONT'D)

Where are my children?

TALLEY

They're still in the house.

Walter looks at Talley. He has never seen Talley and has no idea who he is --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

I'm Jeff Talley, the Bristo chief of police. So far as we know, your children are okay.

KLAUS

Chief Talley is the one who got you out.

TALLEY

(to Klaus)

I need to talk to him. Alone.

This time, Klaus is hard-pressed to refuse. He nods, then steps away --

Talley turns back to Walter Smith, and lowers his voice --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Sonny Benza has my wife and daughter. He wants the disks, Marlon and Al. He took my family to make me help.

Talley's eyes fill. His tears drip on the sheets. Walter looks away --

WALTER

I don't know what you're talking about.

TALLEY

He's going to kill you. Don't you know that? He can't take the chance that you'll talk.

Klaus returns and places a hand on Talley's shoulder --

KLAUS

That's enough.

TALLEY

Another minute. Please --

But when he looks back at Walter, he realizes that another minute will do no good: Walter's eyes are once more closed.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Talley is pacing by his car in the deserted parking lot. He pounds the hood, cursing, awash in rage and frustration --

And then a phone rings.

Talley takes out the phones. The white phone is ringing. The Watchman's phone --

Talley answers furiously, the two of them instantaneously screaming at each other --

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE

You dumb fuckwad cop, you fucked up bad!

TALLEY

Do you think I'm going to let you murder someone?!

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE

You want a blowtorch on your daughter's pretty face?!

TALLEY

I'll go in that fuckin' house right now!
I'll give those disks to the real FBI,
you COCKSUCKINGMOTHERFUCKER!! And I've
got Smith! I've got Smith!!

A profound silence fills the parking lot, both men now
purged. When the Watchman speaks again, his voice is
measured --

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE

I guess we each have something the other
wants.

TALLEY

I guess we do.

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE

My people are good to go. You know who I
mean?

TALLEY

Your phony FBI assholes.

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE

We're almost home, you and me. Keep your
shit together. This isn't L.A.

TALLEY

What do you mean by that?

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE

You don't want another dead child on your
conscience.

The line goes dead --

INT. THE SMITHS' DEN -- NIGHT

Dennis is pouring another stiff glass of Ketel One --

DENNIS

I shouldn't have told him about the
money. Now Talley is gonna keep it for
himself.

Kevin joins him at the bar. Mars is by the doors --

KEVIN

He said that?

Dennis downs a big hit of vodka, then moves to the couch --

DENNIS

If we don't escape, we gotta get the word out about the cash. That's how we'll stay alive.

KEVIN

What are you talking about?

DENNIS

The only way he can keep the cash is if nobody knows about it. He's gotta cap all three of us before they even read our rights. He's probably planning it right now.

KEVIN

That's crazy. He's not going to kill us.

DENNIS

Kevin, you're so fuckin' stupid...

Kevin follows his brother to the couch and stares at him; Dennis has clearly lost his mind, and Kevin has reached the end of his rope --

KEVIN

It's over. We have to give up.

DENNIS

Fuck it's over. That money's mine.

KEVIN

That money's fucked up your brain. Talley's going to get tired of waiting for us to give up, and we'll all be fuckin' killed!

Dennis tips his glass, like a toast --

DENNIS

Then we might as well die rich.

KEVIN

I'm not going to die for this!

Kevin slaps the glass away. Dennis boils up from the couch. He grabs his brother and the two of them fall over the coffee table, Dennis hammering Kevin in a furious rage until he runs out of gas --

DENNIS

You're my fuckin' anchor, Kevin, the fuckin' lead around my life that I've been draggin' like a cripple leg!

Dennis gets up and steps back --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Get this into your stupid head, Kevin. We're not leaving without the money.

Beaten and whimpering, Kevin crawls away. Dennis watches him crawl out of the room, then looks at Mars --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

You got something to say?

MARS

I like it here, Dennis. I'm never going to leave.

DENNIS

Fuckin' A.

Dennis returns to the bar. When he looks around again, Mars is gone--melted into the darkness.

INT. JENNIFER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jennifer is hiding in her shadows when her doorknob moves. She reaches pulls the knife from her shorts, keeping it hidden as she backs away --

Kevin steps inside, leaving the door ajar --

JENNIFER

What do you want?

KEVIN

Keep your voice down. I'm taking you and your brother out of here.

Jennifer now sees the marks and cuts on his face --

JENNIFER

What happened?

KEVIN

Do you want to go or not? I'm offering you a way out of here.

JENNIFER

I can't go without Thomas.

KEVIN

All three of us will go, but we have to move fast. Mars and Dennis don't know I'm doing this.

JENNIFER

How can we get out?

KEVIN

Dennis and Mars are in the den. I'll get your brother, then come back for you. We'll go down the stairs and out the front door, you understand?

JENNIFER

Yes.

Kevin goes back to the door, then considers her. Maybe he wants to apologize for all this, but the best he can manage is --

KEVIN

Put on some shoes.

Kevin slips out and pulls the door closed.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL -- NIGHT

As Kevin emerges from the room, he comes face-to-face with --

Mars.

Mars is a great black shadow in the dark, only inches away. Kevin steps back --

KEVIN

You scared the shit out of me. I was looking for you. Dennis wants you to watch the monitors.

MARS

I heard you with the girl.

Kevin takes another step back, but Mars follows him, staying uncomfortably close --

KEVIN

It's over, Mars. If we stay the cops will kill us. Don't you get that?

Mars seems thoughtful, steps aside --

MARS

I get it. If you want to go, go.

Kevin expected Mars to stop him, but Mars is letting him go. Kevin turns away and hurries down the hall --

EXT. YORK ESTATES MAIN ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Talley is returning to the hospital. As he turns into York Estates, he's stopped by one of his officers, Dale Cooper. Talley rolls down his window to see what Cooper wants --

COOPER

Come FBI guys showed up, Chief. They said you were expecting them.

TALLEY

They here now?

COOPER

You'll see'm up the street.

Talley nods, and continues through the gate --

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Two gray Econoline vans are parked at the curb beneath a street light, four men in the lead van, two in the rear.

Talley pulls up behind them, then gets out of his car. He walks up the middle of the street to the lead van, eyeballing the men in the vans: They all have short haircuts and are wearing black tactical fatigues. Some of them wear ball caps that say FBI.

THE DRIVER

You Talley?

TALLEY

Yeah.

The man in the passenger seat, Mr. Jones, gets out. He looks the part of FBI SWAT: black tac fatigues, jump boots, buzzed hair. A pistol hangs under his left arm in a ballistic holster --

MR. JONES

Let me see some ID. Something with a picture. I don't give a shit about your badge.

Talley takes out his wallet and flashes his photo ID. Jones does the same in return --

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

Okay, here's mine. My name is Special Agent Jones.

TALLEY

Are all of you named Jones?

MR. JONES

Don't be funny, Chief. You can't afford it.

Jones slaps the side of the van. Doors open, and the remaining five men climb out. They strap into vests with FBI emblazoned on the back, then pass out load-bearing gear, knit masks, and flash-bang grenades.

MR. JONES (CONT'D)

In a few minutes the white phone is going to ring. So let's get our shit straight before that happens.

TALLEY

You used to be a cop. All of you used to be cops. I can tell by the way you move.

MR. JONES

Don't worry about what we used to be.

TALLEY

How do you people expect this to work? The Sheriffs have a Crisis Response Team here.

MR. JONES

What's my name?

TALLEY

What?

MR. JONES

I asked you my name. You just saw my commission slip. What's my fucking name?

TALLEY

Special Agent Jones.

MR. JONES

Think of me that way and you won't fuck

up. I'll handle the Sheriffs.

The men at the second van are now passing out MP5s, CAR-15s, and loaded magazines --

TALLEY

What are you people going to do?

MR. JONES

You and I are gonna straighten this out with the Sheriffs, and then we'll wait for the man to call. When he gives the word, we move.

TALLEY

What does he have on you? I know why I'm doing this, but what does he have on you?

One of the other men hands an MP5 to Mr. Jones. Jones jacks the bolt to chamber a round. He slings his gun without answering --

MR. JONES

Let's go, Chief. Time to get real.

Jones walks away, and all Talley can do is follow --

EXT. MARS KRUPCHEK'S TRAILER -- NIGHT

We're at the end of a gravel road in the low foothills of Pearblossom, a farm community of fruit orchards in the low foothills.

A Bristo Camino police car pulls up outside a thirty-foot Caravan trailer, and Mikkelson and Dreyer get out. Mikkelson lights up the trailer with the radio car's spotlight --

DREYER

Krupchek lives in a shithole.

The trailer is dark and silent. They walk to the door carrying their Maglites. Mikkelson tries the knob --

MIKKELSON

I guess we could jimmy it.

DREYER

I don't want to pay for breaking it.

Mikkelson pulls hard and the door pops open. Both officers cringe as a smell like simmering mustard greens rolls out at them --

MIKKELSON

Christ, that stinks.

INT. THE TRAILER -- NIGHT

Mikkelson switches on the lights as they step inside. Dreyer sees it first --

DREYER

Mickey? Look at this shit.

Mikkelson joins Dreyer in the trailer's tiny kitchen where teetering stacks of folded cereal boxes fill the counters and sink and floor. Hundreds and hundreds of Captain Crunch and Count Chocula boxes, all neatly folded and stacked --

DREYER (CONT'D)

He's burned them.

MIKKELSON

What?

Dreyer shows her a box. The nose of each character has been burned with a cigarette --

DREYER

He burned their noses.

MIKKELSON

Okay, this is creeping me out.

Mikkelson opens the oven. It's empty. She opens a cupboard. It's filled with large glass jars. She opens another cupboard. More jars. Shapes float in the jars, suspended in yellow fluid. Mikkelson and Dreyer examine the shapes --

DREYER

What are those, rats?

Mikkelson opens the fridge, then slams it, looking like she wants to puke --

MIKKELSON

Ohmigod. We gotta call Talley.

Dreyer sees the expression on her face, then looks at the fridge, wondering --

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC -- NIGHT

Talley, Jones, and Jones's phony "FBI" team are moving down

the cul-de-sac toward the house with Martin at their heels --

MR. JONES

Walter Smith is in the Federal Witness Protection program. When Washington learned about the situation here, they asked Chief Talley for his cooperation.

MARTIN

This is bullshit. I should've been notified.

MR. JONES

I'm sure you will be, Captain, but it's after midnight. Now, if you'll pull your people off the perimeter, I want to get my people in position.

Martin looks like she wants to spit bullets --

TALLEY

Let it go, Captain.

MARTIN

Goddamned small town bullshit.

Martin relents and stalks away just as Talley's phone rings.

Both Talley and Jones tense at the ring, thinking it might be the white phone, but it's not --

TALLEY

It's mine.
(into his phone)
Talley.

MIKKELSON'S VOICE

Chief, it's Mikkelson.

TALLEY

Go, Mickey.

EXT. KRUPCHEK'S TRAILER -- NIGHT

Both Mikkelson and Dreyer are leaning against their car. They look shellshocked. Mikkelson is making the call --

MIKKELSON

Chief, we just found Krupchek's trailer.
We just went in there.

She trails off and looks at Dreyer for help: How do I say

this? Dreyer, at a loss, looks away --

MIKKELSON (CONT'D)

He has human body parts in his refrigerator. He has five human heads.

Mikkelson can't handle it any more. She lowers the phone --

WITH TALLEY

The shock that Mikkelson is feeling sweeps over Talley as well. He takes a moment to get his head around this --

TALLEY

(into his phone)

Mickey? Call the state Homicide Bureau. Don't touch anything, just sit back and wait.

MIKKELSON'S VOICE

Yes, sir.

Talley lowers the phone as he stares at the house, wondering what sort of monster is in there with Thomas and Jennifer.

His gaze shifts to Mr. Jones, who is watching him --

TALLEY

We're getting those kids out of there.

INT. THE SMITHS' DEN -- NIGHT

Dennis is sprawled on the couch, sucking the last few drops of Ketel One from the bottle. He frowns at the empty bottle, then lumbers to his feet --

DENNIS

(calling)

Kev? Key, Kevin, c'mon back. I'm sorry I hit you.

Dennis weaves through the door, carrying the empty bottle like his dearest friend --

INT. THE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Dennis staggers into the kitchen --

DENNIS

C'mon, Kev, don't fuckin' pout! You're right. It's time to call it a game.

MARS'S VOICE

Kevin left. He didn't want to be here anymore.

The voice from the other side of the kitchen startles him. Mars steps out of the shadows --

DENNIS

You mean he left, as in went out the front door?

MARS

I overheard him with the girl.

DENNIS

Shit! That fuck! Even when I want to turn myself in he screws it up! Did he take the kids with him?

MARS

I don't know.

DENNIS

Jesus, get upstairs and find out! If he took those kids, we're fucked!

Mars cross the kitchen and goes for the stairs without another word --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

KEVIN!!! You ASSHOLE!!!

Dennis throws the bottle across the room --

INT. THE HOBBY ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas is scared by all the shouting, but he waits in the darkness until Dennis quiets, and then we notice that he is no longer in his room; he's in the hobby room, once more trying to reach the gun --

Thomas stacks two phone books on the bench, then uses the phone books as an extra step to reach the high shelf --

He can finally reach the gun case! He puts it on the bench, then climbs down, and opens the case. Thomas is bouyant with confidence; now, he can protect himself and his sister!

Thomas shoves the gun into his pants and creeps back into --

INT. THE LAUNDRY ROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas is climbing onto the washing machine when his foot slips and he bangs his head --

It's so dark in here that Thomas can't see what made him slip, but he tests the floor. His shoe makes a tacky sound.

Thomas cups his hand over his flashlight like before, and turns it on. A dark liquid like oil is spreading on the floor.

Thomas follows it with his light to the broom closet. He lets out more light and sees that the oil is red.

Thomas knows that something terrible is behind the door, but he is drawn to it. He reaches out --

Kevin's lifeless body topples out, collapsing in a heap at Thomas's feet. His neck is cut so deeply that his head is almost severed --

His eyes are open.

Thomas screams!

INT. JENNIFER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jennifer is anxiously waiting for Kevin. When she hears someone in the hall, she thinks that it's Kevin, but when the door opens --

It's Mars.

He steps inside, tall, wide, and massive as a bear. He's carrying the claw hammer. Jennifer backs away --

MARS

Kevin left without you.

JENNIFER

I don't know what you're talking about.

Mars turns off the lights.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Don't do that. Turn on the lights.

Jennifer grows even more frightened. Mars follows her across the room until she backs into the window --

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

You'd better get out of here! Kevin's coming back!

MARS

Kevin's gone, your daddy's gone,
everybody's gone.

When Mars reaches her, he touches the hammer to the chest,
pressing to make it hurt --

MARS (CONT'D)

Now we can do whatever we want.

JENNIFER

Stop it.

Mars rakes the claws slowly between her breasts as Jennifer
finds the knife in her shorts. She jerks free the blade and
stabs blindly burying the knife high in his chest, but Mars
doesn't even step back --

He grips the handle, moaning hideously as he pulls out the
knife. A red flower blossoms from the wound.

Jennifer tries to get past him, but he grabs her throat and
pins her to the wall --

MARS

You're going to enjoy this.

He raises the knife to her face --

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The scream from the laundry room having scared the shit out
of Dennis, he has his gun out --

DENNIS

Who's that? Goddamnit, who's there?

Dennis turns on his flashlight and sweeps the beam across the
kitchen --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Kev? Is that you? Talley?

Dennis weaves across the kitchen, pushing the gun ahead of
him --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Kevin, if that's you, say something.
Mars said you left.

Dennis steps through the door into --

INT. THE LAUNDRY ROOM -- NIGHT

Dennis shines the light on the floor and sees the red ooze. He follows the blood to Kevin's body, but even then doesn't realize what he's seeing --

DENNIS

Kevin, what the fuck? Get up.

Dennis steps closer, and now he sees the open neck, the grotesque white bone within the flesh --

Only one other person in the house could have done this --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

MARS?!?!

Dennis hears Jennifer screaming upstairs --

DENNIS (CONT'D)

MARS!!!

Dennis rushes from the room --

INT. JENNIFER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Dennis slams through the door so hard that the door crashes into the wall. Mars is across the room, still holding Jennifer by the neck --

Dennis aims his gun --

DENNIS

You're dead, you fuck.

Mars calmly pulls the girl in front of him, blocking Dennis's aim.

MARS

What's wrong, Dennis? Why're you so pissed off?

It's weird the way Mars is acting, so calm and all. But Dennis can see the fear in Jennifer's face and her swollen eyes. She manages one word --

JENNIFER

Please...

Dennis tries to aim past her --

DENNIS

This fuck killed Kevin. There's blood
everywhere down there --

Jennifer sobs. And when she does --

Mars charges across the room holding Jennifer like a shield.
Dennis hesitates only a heartbeat, and then it's too late --

Jennifer crashes into him, the full force of Mars's weight
behind her, knocking Dennis backward into the hall --

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL -- NIGHT

They fall through the door into a tangle on the floor. Mars
raises the hammer, then brings it down, smashing Dennis over
and over --

INT. JENNIFER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Thomas emerges from the closet to see the carnage in the
hall: Mars over Dennis, grunting like a pig as he turns
Dennis into pulp, and Jennifer crawling away, splattered with
blood --

Thomas pulls the gun from his pants and darts past Mars into
the hall --

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Thomas grabs Jennifer's arm and pulls her toward the stairs --

THOMAS

C'mon, Jen! Run!

Mars heaves to his feet and turns after them --

Thomas jerks up the pistol with both hands --

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I'll shoot you!

Mars stops, blood dripping from his face and hands and the
hammer. Jennifer pulls her brother --

JENNIFER

Keep going!

They back toward the stairs, Thomas trying to hold the gun
steady. Mars follows, spreading his arms wide as if to
embrace them --

MARS

Everyone's gone. We can do whatever we want. We can do anything.

THOMAS

I'll shoot you! I'm not kidding, you better stay away!

Mars keeps coming --

Thomas pulls the trigger. Click.

Mars stops, frozen by the sharp sound --

Thomas pulls again. Click click click --

No bullets.

JENNIFER

Run!!!!

Thomas and Jennifer sprint for the stairs --

INT. FRONT ENTRY -- NIGHT

Jennifer and Thomas crash down the stairs and spill into the entry. Thomas goes to the front door but Jennifer pulls him away --

JENNIFER

No! They have everything nailed!

They race away down the hall just as Mars reaches the bottom of the stairs --

INT. THE SMITHS' BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mars is closing. Jennifer and Thomas scramble through the bedroom only paces ahead of him. They run straight into --

INT. THE SAFE ROOM -- NIGHT

Jennifer and Thomas slam the door and throw the bolts just as Mars crashes into the door --

Jennifer and Thomas have made it. They are shaking and scared, but they are safe.

JENNIFER

He can't reach us in here. We're safe.

THOMAS

I know.

Mars pounds on the door with the hammer. They can see him on the monitors. Slow rhythmic pounding. Then he walks away --

JENNIFER

What's he doing?

They can see him on the monitors--moving through the hall, going into the entry....

Mars picks up a bucket of gasoline. He splashes gas on the walls and floor all the way back to the bedroom, and then he empties the bucket on the security room's door --

Mars looks up at the camera again and takes out a match. He flicks it with his thumbnail and it flares --

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Ohmigod, he's going to burn us!

Mars tosses the match, and the room erupts into flame --

EXT. THE CUL-DE-SAC -- NIGHT

Talley is arguing with Jones, trying to convince the man that they need to move into the house now --

TALLEY

We've got to get those kids out of there!

MR. JONES

Not until the man calls.

TALLEY

Those kids are in there with a fucking psychopath! He kills people!

MR. JONES

They've been in there all day.

Talley's phone rings. Again, they both think that it's the white phone, but instead it's Talley's personal phone --

TALLEY

(into his phone)

Talley.

It's Thomas. His voice cuts in and out, broken by static --

THOMAS'S VOICE

Mars killed Kevin and Dennis! We're in

the security room. He's burning the house --

Thomas' phone cuts out. Talley turns toward the house and sees a growing column of smoke. He looks back at Jones --

TALLEY

You do what you have to do; I'm getting those kids.

Talley hurries away. Jones stares after him, then comes to his own agonized decision. He catches up --

MR. JONES

Talley! We'll secure the house, but then we get the disks.

Talley accepts that; they move toward the house --

EXT. THE SMITHS' HOUSE -- NIGHT

The banks of floodlights abruptly shut off, plunging the house and grounds into darkness --

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The fire is spreading, following the gasoline trail through the hall and the rest of the house; a thick layer of smoke covers the ceiling --

Mars sees that the outside lights have been turned off, and senses that the cops are making their move. That's all right with Mars--he's been waiting to die for most of his life --

Mars checks the load in his pistol, then melts away into the dark --

A moment later, throbbing music pounds the house --

EXT. SMITHS' HOUSE -- NIGHT

Talley and Jones slip up to a side window at the front of the house. Both are carrying fire extinguishers. They peer inside, then Jones uses a pry bar to lift the window --

INT. FRONT GUEST ROOM -- NIGHT

Talley enters first, followed by Jones. The air is thick with smoke, and the music is confusing; the hall outside the room is filled with flames --

Talley points toward the bedroom, then uses hand signals to

countdown the launch--three...two...one --

Jones keys his throat mike to launch the strike --

MR. JONES

Go --

They blast the flames with their fire extinguishers, then plunge into the hall --

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The sliding glass doors shatter as one of Jones's men breaches the door. As he rolls to his feet, Mars shoots him from the flames --

A second man rolls through the door, and Mars shoots again, laughing as the man writhes in flames --

INT. HALL -- TALLEY AND JONES

fight back the flames with their fire extinguishers, working their way into --

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

It's an inferno as Talley and Jones come through the door. They spot the two men on the floor just as --

Mars rears up behind the flames. He is shirtless and glistening, screaming maniacally as he fires his gun --

Talley and Jones fire in unison, pounding Mars with bullets and knocking him into the fire. Mars thrashes and screams, burning alive --

Talley hears pounding inside the safe room: Jennifer and Thomas! He fights his way to the security door, which is covered with flames --

TALLEY

The kids are in here!

MR. JONES

Where's the office?

TALLEY

Help me, goddamnit, we can get the disks later!

Talley expects that Jones will help, but Jones is aiming his gun --

MR. JONES

We don't need you any more, Chief. We can get the disks on our own.

But before Jones can kill Talley, Mars heaves himself up from the flames, firing wildly. He hits Jones in the head --

Talley fires reflexively, his powerful .45 kicking Mars across the room and out the glass doors. Talley turns back to the burning door and douses the flames with his fire extinguisher --

TALLEY

Thomas! Thomas, it's me!

Thomas and Jennifer jerk open the door, but shrink from the heat. Talley uses the last of his fire extinguisher, then pulls them into his arms --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Stay close. We're going to move fast --

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALL -- NIGHT

Talley shepherds Jennifer and Thomas past the flames --

INT. THE ENTRY -- NIGHT

They reach the entry, and Talley uses his pry bar to break open the door --

A wall of cops are out on the street, waiting --

TALLEY

(to Thomas)

Are the disks still in your room?

THOMAS

No! They're right here --

Thomas pulls Marlon and Al from his pocket --

Talley clutches the disks and pulls the boy close in a spontaneous hug. They run out the door as we --

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER SMITH'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Walter is resting comfortably when Talley steps up beside his bed. Talley is a mess--smokey, dirty, greased with sweat --

TALLEY

(quietly)
Smith.

Walter opens his eyes, then Talley steps away. Jennifer and Thomas are standing behind him. They rush to their father --

JENNIFER/THOMAS

Daddy!

WALTER

Thank God! Are you guys all right?
You're not hurt?

THOMAS

Our house is on fire! We almost burned!

Both children burst into tears, and Walter hugs them. He looks up at Talley, then gently eases his kids away --

WALTER

(to Jennifer and Thomas)
You guys step out for a second. I have
to talk to the Chief.

Walter waits until his children are gone, and then --

WALTER (CONT'D)

Did you find the disks?

TALLEY

Yes.

WALTER

Then you have everything. You can put
them away.

TALLEY

(touches his wrist)
A man has my family. Gold watch here.
Dark tan.

WALTER

That would be Glen Howell. He was on his
way for the disks.

TALLEY

How do I reach him?

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Talley is alone in his car, his phone to his ear, listening to the ring at the other end of the line. A familiar voice answers --

HOWELL'S VOICE

Hello?

TALLEY

Two words: Glen Howell.

Intercut Howell in his motel room. He is thrown by getting this call --

HOWELL

How did you get this number?

TALLEY

Mr. Jones is dead. So are two of his men. The other three are in jail. I have the disks. I have Walter Smith. And you know what, you motherfucker? I have you.

HOWELL

I have your fucking family. Don't forget that.

TALLEY

I also have a couple of million in cash. Call Sonny Benza. Ask if I can keep it.

This throws Howell, too. He didn't expect anything like this; not from Talley --

HOWELL

What do you want?

TALLEY

My wife and my daughter and the money. I'll bring the disks to the mall by the freeway, you bring my family. We'll trade.

HOWELL

Fuck that! You think I'm crazy?!

TALLEY

I think you got no choice.

Howell thinks about it. It's a tough call because Talley might be setting him up, but they're playing even hands-- Talley still has the disks --

HOWELL

Fuck the mall. You know that motel on the road west of town?

TALLEY

Yeah.

HOWELL

You got ten minutes. If you're one minute late, we won't be here to find.

Talley tosses his phone aside, then drives away --

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- NIGHT

A graphic identifies our location: New York City.

INT. VICTOR CASTELLANO'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

Victor Castellano is "the old man" that Benza's people have mentioned. He is not a happy man in the best of circumstances and is even less happy now --

Castellano's assistant, Jamie Beldone, is briefing him on events in the West --

BELDONE

The house is in flames, Benza's accountant is with the cops, and they're stacking the bodies like cordwood.

CASTELLANO

Jesus Christ, it's a clusterfuck.

BELDONE

You wanted to let Sonny handle it. I would've moved in when we first found out.

Castellano scowls at the younger man --

CASTELLANO

And by doing so, he would've known we have spies in his organization.

BELDONE

(embarrassed)

Yes, sir. But what about the disks? If the cops end up with the disks, we're gonna see a whole lot of heat.

CASTELLANO

I hate that Mickey Mouse bastard. I hated his father, and I hate Sonny, too. Always with the tan.

BELDONE

What do you want to do?

CASTELLANO

Our people out there, they good people? People in the right place?

BELDONE

The best.

CASTELLANO

Sonny's a fuckup. If he pulls this off, fine--life goes on. But if the cops end up with those disks, we cut our losses.

BELDONE

I understand.

CASTELLANO

I want a message sent: No fuckups allowed.

BELDONE

I'll make the call.

Vic Castellano watches Beldone depart as he considers what is about to come --

EXT. MOTEL -- NIGHT

The motel floats like an island of light in the middle of nowhere. A few cars are scattered throughout the quiet parking lot --

MIKE RUIZ

is hiding in weeds across from the motel, keeping an eye on the road for Talley's approaching vehicle. A radio transmission crackles quietly --

MANELLI'S VOICE

You see anything?

Ruiz keys the mike --

RUIZ

Not yet.

Talley steps silently behind him and presses his gun to Mike Ruiz's ear --

LOU BUSTER

Buster is on the dark side of thge parking lot, standing watch outside the pool of light in the shadows --

Gravel crunches behind him; Buster turns, and --

Talley cracks him across the face with his .45 --

WITH TALLEY

He edges along the perimeter of the parking lot, working as close as he can to a Fat Man who is leaning against the green Mustang --

The door to a ground floor room opens, and Glen Howell steps out. Talley recognizes Howell from the big gold watch --

HOWELL

(to the Fat Man)

Keep your eyes open. He should've been here.

Howell returns to the room. The Fat Man steps away from the Mustang, and --

Talley slams into his blindside, using the .45 as a club. The Fat Man staggers, and Talley wraps an arm around his neck in a choke hold, running him at the door --

Talley rams the Fat man into the door, knocking it open and shoving the Fat Man through --

INT. HOWELL'S MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Talley explodes through the door with the Fat Man in front of him like a shield --

TALLEY

(screaming)

Police!

Glen Howell jerks out his pistol as he drops behind the bed. Duane Manelli rolls out of a chair, aiming from the floor in a two-handed grip --

HOWELL

Don't shoot! Don't shoot him!

Talley shifts his aim back and forth between the two men. He has his back to the wall and the Fat Man in front of him --

TALLEY

Where's my family?! Where's my family,
you fuck?!

All three men are sucking air like freight engines. No one is shooting, but if one person fires, everyone will fire. Everybody has something the other guy wants. That's the only thing holding them back --

HOWELL

Take it easy. Just take it easy. We're here to do business.

TALLEY

You said they would be here, goddamnit!
Where are they?

Howell releases his grip on the gun, and lets it swing free on his finger. He's trying to cool Talley --

HOWELL

They're close. Let me make a call. You can see they're okay.

TALLEY

You said they would be here!

Howell takes out his phone and presses a number. Talley shifts his aim from Howell to the Fat Man to Manelli --

HOWELL

(into the phone)
Put on the woman.

Howell offers the phone, but Talley is wary--he can't let go of the Fat Man and he won't put down his pistol. Howell carefully holds the phone to Talley's ear --

TALLEY

(into the phone)
Jane?

JANE'S VOICE

Jeff, we're --

Howell backs away with the phone --

HOWELL

You have the disks?

Talley takes out a single disk. It's the one labeled 'Marlon.' He tosses it onto the bed --

TALLEY

You get the other one when I have my girls. Not talk to them; have them.

HOWELL

Where is it?

TALLEY

Close.

Howell considers the disk. If Talley has the second disk in his pocket, Howell could just shoot him. But Howell can't be sure --

HOWELL

I have to see if it's real.

Howell brings the disk to a lap top computer set up in the corner. He inserts the disk, and waits for it to read. He's satisfied with what he sees --

HOWELL (CONT'D)

All right. Now the second one.

TALLEY

First my girls. I get my girls, you get the other disk.

Howell stares at Talley again, then picks up his phone --

HOWELL

(into the phone)

Bring them. Stop the car outside the room, but don't get out.

The car pulls up directly outside the door. It was only seconds away. Marion Clewes is driving; Jane and Amanda are wedged into the front seat beside him, Jane next to Marion, Amanda on the far side. They are bound tight with their mouths taped, immobile and helpless, their eyes wide with fear --

HOWELL (CONT'D)

(into his phone)

Aim your gun at the woman's head. If he doesn't give me the disk, kill her.

Marion presses a gun to Jane's temple --

Talley jerks his gun toward Howell --

TALLEY

I'll kill you! You won't get the other disk!

HOWELL

If you shoot me, he'll kill your daughter. Do you want to lose both of them?

Talley aims at the man in the car; he aims at Howell. He tried so hard to save his family, and now Howell has him boxed --

HOWELL (CONT'D)

The negotiation is over, Talley. I won. Now give me the disk or he'll put her brain on the glass.

Talley looks at Jane and Amanda, and his eyes fill. He mouths the words --

TALLEY

I love you.

He's saying good-bye.

Talley drops his gun and releases the Fat Man, who stumbles away. Talley tosses a second disk onto the bed. Manelli scoops it up and tosses it to Howell as Mation appears in the door --

TALLEY (CONT'D)

I gave the other one to the Sheriffs and they're giving it to the real FBI. This one's a fake.

HOWELL

You'd better be kidding.

Howell anxiously pushes the disk into his lap top --

TALLEY

I'm a cop, you asshole! What did you expect me to do? Pretend all this never happened?

Howell stares at the lap top with the withering face of a man reading his own death sentence. There is nothing on this

disk.

TALLEY (CONT'D)

Benza's over. You're over. I just want to take my family home.

Howell stands like a mechanical man; incredulous --

HOWELL

Are you out of your mind?

MARION

(quietly)

You fucked up, Glen.

Howell looks over as if seeing Marion for the first time, and gives him the order --

HOWELL

Kill them.

Marion aims his gun directly between Talley's eyes, then points it at Howell --

MARION

No fuckups allowed.

Marion shoots Howell in the head, then the Fat Man, then Manelli--bambambam--one shot, one kill.

He lowers his gun, considers Talley. Talley doesn't move.

MARION (CONT'D)

It's like a storm, isn't it? This raging force that you can't control does whatever it wants, and the best you can do is survive. A winner survives.

TALLEY

Why...?

The question being: Why aren't I dead? Why aren't you killing me?

MARION

What good would it do to kill you? The police already have the disk.

Marion considers Talley another moment --

MARION (CONT'D)

Your wife is a very nice lady.

Marion goes to his car. He helps out Jane and Amanda, then gets into his car and drives away.

EXT. THE PARKING LOT -- SUNRISE

Talley stumbles out of the room and runs to his family. He scoops up Jane and Amanda, hugging them tightly as the camera pulls up and away, rising, leaving this reunited family as Marion Clewes disappears like a passing thunderhead --

CLOSING CREDITS

The credits roll to black, then--

EXT. SONNY BENZA'S HOME -- DAWN

The garage door slides up. Benza backs out in his Mercedes, then roars to the front door. He pops the trunk, then gets out and hurries to the front door. He sticks his head inside and calls to his wife --

BENZA

The fucking jet's waiting! Would you get your shit out here?!

He picks up two bags from inside the door and brings them to the car --

AT THE TRUNK

Benza steps behind the raised trunk to put away his bags. When he steps back around again, a nondescript sedan is waiting in the drive --

A VOICE

No fuckups allowed.

Gunfire erupts on the quiet ridge above Palm Springs.

FADE OUT

THE END