

BLANCO

"Pilot"

written by  
Mark Rosner

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**BLANCO**

FADE IN:

**INT. JESUS APT - DAY**

It's dark...shades pulled down. A clip is SLAMMED into an assault rifle...slide RACKED. A hand raises the shade a few inches.

RUBEN

Get away from the window, man.

RUBEN FONSECA, 30, street edge, Mediterranean good looks, cat-burglar cool, stands across the room from his older brother --

**JESUS**

Kneeling by the window with his AR-15. JESUS is a raging bull, darker and heavier than Ruben. Tats cover more of his body than his clothes.

JESUS

I'ma kill Freddy and every one a his mothafuckers.

RUBEN

Or get your brains splashed all over the carpet.

JESUS

Dass my problem.

RUBEN

Not when you stick me with the bill.  
(beat)  
Look around. Nobody left but you and me.

JESUS

So? You sayin' lay down?

RUBEN

I'm sayin' get away from the fucking window. We live to fight another day.

JESUS

With what? Freddy took our spots, ran off our crew --

RUBEN

I'ma get us a lifeline. Sit down with Ortiz.

(CONTINUED)

Jesus peers out the window again.

JESUS

Nah, I'm a smoke that nigga today.  
Get the car, bring it 'round back.  
Motor running and shit, aight?

RUBEN

Jesus. Give me one hour --

JESUS

Shut your fucking hole and let the  
shot-caller call the motherfucking  
shots!

VERONICA, 25, Jesus' babymama, sassy but long-suffering,  
comes in from the kitchen -

VERONICA

What's all this yelling?  
(re rifle)  
*Loco cabron*, your son in the next  
room, one stray bullet --

JESUS

(*Spanish*)  
*Get back inside.*

VERONICA

I'm talking to you, caveman.

JESUS

Bitch, take your sloppy ass out the  
room now, before I bust a knuckle on  
you!

He takes a step towards her. She gives him the finger and  
splits.

RUBEN

Are you high?

JESUS

I'm cool. Let's roll.

CUT TO:

**EXT. WASHINGTON HTS - DAY**

Streets full of hustle and flow, near the GW Bridge.

**INT. BENZ - DAY**

Rolling up Broadway, Ruben at the wheel --

(CONTINUED)

JESUS  
 Freddy gone to ground.

RUBEN  
 You expect him out in the street  
 waiting for you, like Clint Eastwood?

Jesus pushes a button on the climate control screen. A secret "trap" opens, revealing a Glock.

JESUS  
 He shows, I'm a spread his *tripas*  
 all over the pavement.

Jesus removes the pistol, checks the clip.

RUBEN  
 You're buggin', man. This is no  
 time for a drive by.  
 (beat)  
 We can do business with Ortiz.

JESUS  
 It's wolf time. We at war.

RUBEN  
We need a war chest. Ortiz is my  
 homie. He got a trust level with  
 me.

JESUS  
 You tellin' me to fuck off, *blanco*?

RUBEN  
 You're the shot-caller, man. But  
 I'm the one knows how to get to yes.

Jesus looks hard at Ruben, then smiles. He SLAPS the Glock back in and closes the trap.

CUT TO:

**FLAMES ON A GRILL**

Sear two T-bone steaks. A long-handled fork lifts each steak onto a platter loaded up with rice and beans.

**INT. DOMINICAN RESTAURANT**

Ruben at a table with ORTIZ, a big man, blinged-out, with carefully trimmed facial hair. They sip from beaded-cold bottles of Presidente beer.

RUBEN  
 I'm saying it's business as usual.

(CONTINUED)

ORTIZ

(drinks)

If it was, you don't need to say it.

CURVY *NEGRITA* WAITRESS brings over their steak platters. Ortiz looks her up and down, but she smiles at Ruben.

WAITRESS

*Let me know if you need anything else.*

As she sashays away --

ORTIZ

(shakes his head)

*Papi shampoo. Like your own force field - one look and their legs part like the Red Sea.*

In this neighborhood they speak English for privacy.

RUBEN

Ten kilos, *papi*. That's all I'm askin' you to front me. Just enough to stay alive.

ORTIZ

You went to war with Freddy Garcia and you lost. I cross him, maybe I catch a bullet too.

RUBEN

We put Freddy in business. Now that ungrateful *puta* try and jump past us and buy directly from you?

ORTIZ

You took your corners from Angel Rivera. Jumped past Canelo and his crew, too.

RUBEN

Hey, we put in our ten thousand hours. We earned the right to be masters.

ORTIZ

Freddy got that same lean cuisine and hungry look Jesus used to have. And Jesus got his own cemetery.

RUBEN

Be real. You the wholesaler with the Juarez connection. Freddy won't muss a curly Dominican hair on your head.

(CONTINUED)

Ortiz makes a "who knows" gesture. Drinks beer.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
I'm asking you as a brother. Since  
we was shorties. Closer than my  
real --

Door SWINGS OPEN and Jesus swaggers in like John Dillinger.  
All eyes on Jesus as he crosses to their table and DRAGS a  
chair over.

JESUS  
Wassup.

Ruben eyeballs his brother - what the fuck? Ortiz looks  
from Jesus to Ruben.

ORTIZ  
It's all good.

JESUS  
(smiles)  
It's all good.

RUBEN  
We was just talking --

JESUS  
No more talking. Time to load up  
the car.

Ortiz looks at Ruben.

ORTIZ  
Freddy ain't playin', *papi*.

JESUS  
(leans in)  
Motherfucker, look at me. I ain't  
playin' neither. And I'm sitting a  
lot closer to your fat ass than he  
is.

CUT TO:

**INT. GARAGE - DAY**

TWO WORKERS in overalls load plastic-wrapped kilos of cocaine  
into secret compartments, beneath the trunk of Ruben's Benz.

CUT TO:

**EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY**

Ruben and Jesus walk out to the garage next door. Ruben hands his ticket to the ATTENDANT. Scans the street, quietly fuming.

JESUS

(smirks)

Dass how I get to yes.

RUBEN

He was already hooked.

JESUS

We ain't got time for you to suck his dick all day. Let's get this shit to Jersey and make some fucking money.

**BENZ**

Pulls up the ramp to the driveway. Attendant climbs out and Ruben hands him a twenty. Ruben and Jesus climb in and drive off.

**INT. BENZ - MOVING - DAY**

They drive in silence for a beat.

JESUS

You gonna pout like a bitch all day?

Ruben makes a sharp left turn in front of oncoming traffic.

JESUS (CONT'D)

*Chingada!*

RUBEN

We got a white 600 on our ass since we left.

JESUS

Freddy.

Presses the button for the trap -

JESUS (CONT'D)

*Put*a can get his right now.

Jesus grabs the Glock and swivels around as --

**PICKUP TRUCK**

EXPLODES from the cul-de-sac and T-BONES Ruben's Benz, SLAMMING IT up onto the sidewalk and along the side of an apartment building --

**JESUS**

Is tossed like a rag doll and loses the gun --

**BENZ**

SCRAPES off the wall and spins out onto the street in a SHUDDERING 180 stop.

Ruben's head bounces off the wheel.

**TWO FREDDY GARCIA SHOOTERS**

Scramble out of the truck, strapped -- MUSTACHE has a TEC 9 machine pistol. SHAVED HEAD RACKS THE SLIDE on a .40 semi-auto.

**RUBEN**

Blinks blood from his eyes. Jesus crawls to the back looking for his piece --

**SHOOTERS**

OPEN FIRE. Windshield SHATTERS.

**BENZ**

Ruben drops onto the passenger-side mat beneath showers of glass --

But Jesus is HIT in the back. He sprawls across the rear seat.

Ruben flat on his back, reaching desperately towards his shoe, stretching his fingers --

As Mustache yanks the driver's door open -

Ruben closes his hand around the Walther PK .380 in his ankle holster. Pulls and FIRES.

Mustache spasms and flails for his neck. The machine pistol BUCKS.

Passenger window BLOWS OUT and SHAVED HEAD takes a THREE-ROUND BURST to the chest and drops to the pavement.



**WHITE MERCEDES S600**

CAREENS into a SKIDDING-ASS STOP.

**FREDDY GARCIA**

Would-be kingpin, 25, plenty of gold, slides out, wielding twin .45s.

FREDDY

*Fuck you both and your whore of a mother!*

He raises up BLASTING with both guns --

**RUBEN**

Rolls out of the car onto the crumpled body of Mustache. Grabs the Tec 9 off the ground and FIRES --

Freddy spins around and falls to one knee. Drops one gun and grabs his side, hit.

FREDDY

*Putamadre!*

He steadies the other .45 with both hands --

Ruben SQUEEZES OFF ANOTHER BURST. Freddy pancakes to the pavement.

RUBEN

Jesus! Talk to me!

But Jesus is incoherent, BABBLING IN SPANISH...

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Hold on hold on...

Ruben drops back into the driver's seat and gets his car STARTED --

**WIDER - STREET**

Ruben SLALOMS AND SLAMS the Benz through the jammmed-up vehicles and THUMPS right over Freddy's body as the first SIRENS FILL THE AIR --

CUT TO:

**EXT. APT BUILDING - DAY**

A livery cab is parked in front. FELIPE, the driver, is helping an ELDERLY WOMAN to the door.

(CONTINUED)

Ruben's shot-up Benz rounds the corner and Ruben jumps out.

RUBEN  
*Felipe, give me a hand!*

Ruben flings the back door open.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
*Jesus needs a ride.*

Felipe hustles down to Ruben. He sees Jesus, crumpled and bloody, in the back seat.

FELIPE  
*Madre de dios!*

Felipe backs away. Ruben grabs his arm.

RUBEN  
*Take him to the hospital.*

FELIPE  
*No, no, I can't --*

RUBEN  
Do me this favor and save my brother's life. Or I find someone else to bring you both in. *Claro?*

Felipe manages a nod.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
*Get his legs.*

They wrestle Jesus, MOANING, into the back of the livery cab. Ruben reaches onto his pocket, pulls out a wad of cash and stuffs it into Felipe's shirt pocket.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
*Gimme your jacket. Come on.*

Felipe shrugs the leather coat off as fast as he can.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
*I was never here. Go!*

Felipe scrambles into his cab and DRIVES OFF.

CUT TO:

**EXT. DYKMAN BOAT PIER - NIGHT**

Ruben throws his handguns and the TEC 9, wrapped in his bloody shirt, into the river.

**EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT**

The Benz is parked behind a concrete stanchion. Ruben loads the kilos into a duffel bag. His shoulder and pants leg are dark with blood. He stuffs an oily rag into the gas tank. Lights it and hobbles away with the duffel bag.

Behind him, the gas tank IGNITES. Benz EXPLODES.

CUT TO:

**INT. DENTIST OFFICE - NIGHT**

Ruben in the chair, shirt off. DR. ALVAREZ, 50, cleans the shoulder wound.

RUBEN

I appreciate this, doc. I really do.

The duffel bag sits a few feet away.

DR. ALVAREZ

You always looked out for Bruno in school. So I do what I can...

He taps his syringe. Finds a vein and injects Ruben. Ruben's body relaxes. Dr. Alvarez looks through his instruments.

DR. ALVAREZ (CONT'D)

I need to get another clamp. One moment.

He goes to the door. Turns back to Ruben --

DR. ALVAREZ (CONT'D)

You also looked out for Bruno's sister, didn't you?

RUBEN

(woozy)  
What?

DR. ALVAREZ

She was fourteen.

He walks out. After a moment, DETECTIVE GEMMA DAWKINS, 35, military bearing, athlete's body, walks in, gold shield in one hand, 9MM at her side ...followed by an older detective, MARTINEZ, and TWO UNIFORMS. All with guns in their hands.

GEMMA

Easy, now. You know who we are. Keep your hands where I can see them.

(CONTINUED)

Ruben blinks at her, woozy from his injection.

Martinez gets Ruben on his feet and pats him down. Cuffs him behind his back.

GEMMA (CONT'D)

(looks him over)

One round in the shoulder...Plus some fragments in your leg? You're a lucky man. I haven't seen carnage like that since Baghdad.

She opens the duffel bag. Smiles.

MARTINEZ

Jackpot?

She holds up one of the plastic-wrapped kilos.

GEMMA

Something you want to tell us, Ruben?

Ruben's eyes close and his head lolls forward. Martinez grabs him.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL ER - NIGHT**

NURSE finishes bandaging Ruben's shoulder. Martinez YAWNS. Gemma is on the phone as she walks back in with a coffee tray --

GEMMA

Thanks, Donny. Tell those Narco rangers I owe them a round.

(to Ruben)

Starbucks?

RUBEN

Thanks.

She hands him one. He sips.

GEMMA

You're no virgin, Ruben, so why bullshit? In the system since you were fourteen, got caught twice for drugs and weapons, you and your brother Jesus have been cocaine cowboys in Washington Heights for years. You're the brains, he's the muscle.

(CONTINUED)

MARTINEZ  
*El Abusador, si?*

Ruben says nothing. Sips coffee. The Nurse finishes her work.

NURSE  
All set.

RUBEN  
(smiles)  
Thank you.

She walks out, shooting Gemma a reproachful look.

GEMMA  
But Jesus is laid up in ICU with a bullet in his spine and your whole operation was decimated by Freddy Garcia's crew.

RUBEN  
Is that, like, decaffeinated?

MARTINEZ  
Now Freddy's dead. That's what I said.

Gemma looks at Martinez.

MARTINEZ (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

GEMMA  
Freddy had a Scarface complex. Taking him out was what we call a PSK.

MARTINEZ  
Public service killing.

GEMMA  
Especially if it was self-defense.

Ruben looks at her.

RUBEN  
Dawkins, right? Precinct detective from the three-four?

GEMMA  
That's right.

RUBEN  
They say you was in Iraq.

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA  
Two tours. Third Battalion, Fourth  
Marines.

RUBEN  
(grins)  
You was a jarhead?

GEMMA  
Let's focus on you and how you can  
help yourself. We're running out of  
time.

RUBEN  
(smiles)  
You ain't Narco, you ain't DEA, you  
a million miles from REDRUM. What  
the fuck you gonna do for me?

Gemma shows Ruben her phone.

GEMMA  
I've got all their numbers right  
here. Just give me the name and  
location of your connect.

RUBEN  
You wanna make a call? Call my  
fucking lawyer.

CUT TO:

**INT. 34 PRECINCT - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT**

Ruben's attorney ANDY SILVER, north of 50, with a certain  
put-upon, shabby-chic grandeur, sits with him.

ANDY  
You think you're jammed up? Michelle  
signed us up for salsa classes. I  
blame you.

RUBEN  
Me?

ANDY  
You tripped the light fantastic with  
her at the office party. She's been  
on my case ever since.

RUBEN  
How much time until my next dance?

(CONTINUED)

ANDY

With a woman? Ten kilos is Federal weight. That means Mandatory Minimums.

Ruben looks at him.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Twenty years. If they can tie you to the bodies, it's life.

Ruben takes a moment to process this. Then --

RUBEN

Fed time, huh? A smart AUSA, an ambitious prosecutor...he don't get on TV locking my ass up. He wants RICO cases, he wants to take down drug organizations, right?

ANDY

Gold star. But they'll make you give up everything you ever did and everybody you did it with. Including Jesus, if he pulls through.

RUBEN

Fuck that. Not my brother.

Andy leans back in his chair.

ANDY

Did you ever read about Br'er Rabbit when you were a kid?

RUBEN

Who?

ANDY

An old folktale from the South. Br'er Rabbit is this trickster type of character, a hustler with a line of patter who can talk his way out of any jam. Remind you of anybody?

He leans back, laces his hands behind his head.

ANDY (CONT'D)

Anyway, ol' Br'er Rabbit gets himself grabbed by Br'er Fox. Says whatever you do, kill me, cook me, eat me, please don't toss me into the briarpatch.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ANDY (CONT'D)

Which looks thorny and twisted and gnarly...but that's where the rabbit was raised. He knew every inch of the terrain - the hiding places, the escape routes.

RUBEN

(grins)

The fox tosses him and he lams?

ANDY

(nods)

The genius was making the fox think it was his idea all along.

CUT TO:

**INT. US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - SOUTHERN DISTRICT - DAY**

AUSA JENSEN PARK, 30, Korean, Harvard Law, glasses... looks like a World of Warcraft geek but talks like Giuliani. He looks from his watch to Gemma.

RUBEN

No way am I going back on the street to snitch for you motherfuckers.

PARK

Everybody hollers 'stop snitchin', but seven out of ten defendants in the Federal system talk to us. Seventy per cent.

(beat)

And the other thirty? Rot in their cells and wish they had.

RUBEN

'Bitches talk shit and snitches get killed.' I'm a do my time like a man.

CUT TO:

**INT. MCC - VISITING ROOM - DAY**

A long, LOUD room filled with INMATES and VISITORS. Ruben, in a tan prison jumpsuit, waits in a plastic chair as VERONICA pushes Jesus, in a wheelchair, up to Ruben. It's a heavy moment for both brothers.

RUBEN

Hey. Thanks for coming.

He leans over to embrace Jesus, who turns away.

(CONTINUED)



VERONICA

Hi Ruben.

RUBEN

(smiles)

Lookin' fly, V.

Ruben and Veronica hug. He sits facing Jesus.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

How you makin' out?

JESUS

Half of me dead and the other half on fire. *Pendejo* doctors took me off the morphine. What are you lookin' at?

RUBEN

Feds are hangin' twenty over me.

VERONICA

Twenty years!

The brothers look at each other.

JESUS

Go get a soda or something.

Veronica gives him a look but does as he says. As she walks away --

JESUS (CONT'D)

You dyin' to tap that *culo*, ain't you? Now I'm in this chair.

RUBEN

Don't be an asshole. What do the doctors say?

JESUS

Bullet hit my spine, I'm a T-8. Never walk again.

RUBEN

They don't know that.

JESUS

You know better?

Ruben struggles for words.

RUBEN

At least...Freddy got paid in full.

(CONTINUED)

Jesus looks at Ruben.

JESUS  
You put me in this fucking chair as  
much as Freddy Garcia.

RUBEN  
How you figure that?

JESUS  
Ortiz was your idea. You don't drag  
me over there this never happens.

Ruben stares at Jesus. Veronica returns with supplies from  
the vending machines.

VERONICA  
I got sodas and chips --

JESUS  
We out.

VERONICA  
You need another Vicodin, baby?

JESUS  
*Don't backtalk me. We out.*

She looks helplessly at Ruben. Sets down the sodas.

JESUS (CONT'D)  
Twenty years? I caught a  
motherfuckin' life sentence. It's  
on you, *blanco*.

Veronica waves goodbye to Ruben. Wheels Jesus away. OFF  
Ruben --

CUT TO:

**INT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY**

Gemma catches up with Jensen Park. He is wheeling a heavy  
roller bag full of evidence down the marble corridor.

PARK  
I'm on my way to court --

GEMMA  
But you read my Ruben Fonseca memo,  
right?

(CONTINUED)

PARK

Not bad, most detectives can't write anything but a DD5 to save their life.

GEMMA

And most Assistant U.S. Attorneys would wet their pants if they actually had to save a life.

PARK

(looks at her)  
English major, Fordham?

GEMMA

History and International Relations, Dartmouth, and about Fonseca --

PARK

According to you he's the Zelig of the underworld --

GEMMA

(working hard)  
According to OCCB, Manhattan North Narcotics, Intel... he's an outsider everywhere but he goes everywhere, a Puerto Rican in a Dominican culture, hooked into the downtown club scene, plus he's got a serious Mob connections from his time at Green Haven --

PARK

He already told us to go fuck ourselves. Let him sit down in Atlanta for a few years and get his mind right --

GEMMA

And throw away your chance at a major cartel prosecution?

PARK

That's a shot in the dark.

GEMMA

Fonseca's tight with Victor Ortiz. Major wholesaler, and gateway to the boys from Juarez.

PARK

Where did you get this?

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA  
Mike Florio at REDRUM.

Park stops and looks at her.

PARK  
You know Mike?

GEMMA  
My dad broke him in, up in the four-six.

PARK  
Mike's been making international-level cases for years. You're a precinct detective.

GEMMA  
How old were you when your parents first told you that you were going to Harvard? The dream comes first.

CUT TO:

**INT. MCC - DAY**

TWO US MARSHALS lead Ruben, cuffed, down the corridor.

PARK (O.S.)  
We're prepared to take your brother off the table.

**CONFERENCE ROOM**

Ruben and Andy Silver sit across from Gemma and AUSA Park --

GEMMA  
But you go back on the street. You're my new C.I.

PARK  
You have one week until your trial date. This is your only offer.

RUBEN  
You expect me to turn rat and help you lock up my friends, so you can make partner at some white shoe firm?

PARK  
No, I expect you to go to prison for twenty years.  
(to Gemma)  
I told you he was too pig-headed.

(CONTINUED)

He gets to his feet, ready to go.

PARK (CONT'D)  
We're done here.

GEMMA  
Ruben, look at me. How long do you think your brother will last, with you inside? Stuck in that chair, surrounded by his enemies...

Ruben lurches to his feet, KNOCKING OVER his chair. His eyes blaze with hate.

RUBEN  
Fuck you!

ANDY  
Shut up.  
(to Park)  
Guys, please. Can I have a word with my client?

PARK  
I'll give you sixty seconds.

Andy looks stern until Park and Gemma walk out.

RUBEN  
Over the top?

ANDY  
Like a young Pacino. Wait ten seconds, then punch the table.

**P.O.V. GEMMA**

Through the glass in the door: Ruben does as he's told BAM. Andy rests a fatherly hand on his shoulder, talks in his ear. Ruben slumps back down into his chair.

**IN THE ROOM**

Park and Gemma come back in.

RUBEN  
(defeated)  
Okay.

Park stands there, arms folded.

PARK  
Okay what?

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN

I sign on, but my brother never does a day inside.

PARK

He's on a hook, which we yank the minute you stop producing.

GEMMA

You've got to put your heart and soul into it. No going through the motions.

RUBEN

Then what?

PARK

You make cases until you work off your time. The day comes, we write a 5K letter to the Judge. He's satisfied, we say our tearful farewells.

Ruben looks to Andy.

ANDY

Briarpatch.

FADE TO BLACK

**TITLE OVER BLACK: SIX MONTHS LATER**

SLOW FADE UP: A rhythmic BANGING...a man's GRUNTS...a woman's MOANS, LONGER AND LOUDER...

**INT. APT ABOVE POOL HALL - DAY**

MAGDALENA, voluptuous Dominicana, with half her clothes off and busting out of the rest, is grinding her magnificent ass against Ruben's crotch, reaching back to run her nails through his hair...

MAGDA

*Sucio*, no, no, no...you are so bad...don't make me...you can't make me...

She has him backed against the wall, practically impaled --

RUBEN

What? Make you what?

He's cupping her breasts trying to hold his own --

(CONTINUED)

MAGDA

Lie and sneak around and cheat on my man.

RUBEN

You called me.

She turns and tears at his clothes...shirt buttons pop, her hands plunge down his pants...

MAGDA

You are evil, no no no...

She pulls his belt off and hands it to him.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Punish me.

RUBEN

What?

MAGDA

I'm a bad girl...

She assumes the position on the bed.

RUBEN

It's not my thing...

MAGDA

Now!

He hits her lightly with the belt.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Harder *maricon* you hit like a little bitch!

He smacks her half-heartedly with the belt, then she rolls over and grabs him --

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Now right now.

He drops his pants and gets to it. Her ankles lock up around his neck and her nails across his back and they have wall-shaking sex --

**APARTMENT - LATER**

Ruben lounges in bed. Magda comes out of the bathroom and lights a cigarette. She starts to dress, as cool and distant now as she was hot and bothered before.

(CONTINUED)

MAGDA

I haven't had no Grade A dick in weeks. It makes me crazy.

RUBEN

I didn't notice.

MAGDA

A woman has her needs, you know. You assholes think it's just you.

RUBEN

(smiles)

Maybe he been laying up with the wife. Puttin' in family time.

MAGDA

(a look)

Cabeza wouldn't fuck that cow with your *polla*. No, he always this way before a score.

RUBEN

(casual)

That right?

MAGDA

Won't touch me for nothin'.

RUBEN

But then he takes care of you, right?

Magda wriggles her fingers, showing off her rings --

RUBEN (CONT'D)

You're a lucky girl.

MAGDA

You're a lucky boy.

She gives his crotch a playful squeeze.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

But not after tonight.

CUT TO:

**EXT. RIVIERA APT BUILDING - DAY**

CABEZA, (street-named for his big head), walks to a beat-up Buick parked in front of the tall, yellow-brick apartment house.

(CONTINUED)



Climbs into the car and swings a u-ie, parking it directly across the street from where he was parked before. Locks it up and walks away.

**RUBEN**

Is watching from down the block. He takes out his phone and SENDS A TEXT.

CUT TO:

**EXT. GORMAN PARK - DAY**

Deserted, except for one TEENAGE COUPLE in the throes of making out.

Gemma is waiting for Ruben by the stone wall that looks out over Broadway, and beyond to Jersey.

GEMMA

It's on for tonight?

RUBEN

That's what his girl says.

GEMMA

Why does he keep moving that car?

RUBEN

Alternate side of the street parking.

GEMMA

But he doesn't live there.

RUBEN

That's the arsenal. They show up, grab the guns from the trunk, and crash the spot.

GEMMA

We'll be ready. REDRUM is taking this one. Locked and loaded.

Their dynamic is different now - from adversaries to partners.

RUBEN

You miss that semper fi shit, don't you?

GEMMA

I was an officer. The military was my career.

RUBEN

How come you left?

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA

They wouldn't let me lead Marines  
into combat.

RUBEN

You might see some action tonight.  
Cabeza won't go easy.

CUT TO:

**EXT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT**

Chaser lights dance up and down the blazing sign, a big cocktail-glass V that holds a 40s-era bombshell, her long golden legs spilling out into the night sky.

**INT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT**

A dark room full of dangerous men, drinking in TWO GROUPS on either side of the big horseshoe-shaped bar. Dominican *bachata* music THROBS on the sound system.

Cabeza is the shot caller for the *hodedores* (hoodlums) on the left. As Ruben enters--

CABEZA

*Hola, Ruben.*

RUBEN

*Cabeza, que pasa?*

But he crosses the room to the other side of the bar, where the DEALERS - a little older, a little more prosperous -- do their drinking.

Ruben catches the eyes of the young, statuesque BARTENDER. She smiles at him.

ORTIZ

*Oh no, not this time, papi shampoo.*

Ortiz looming above him, pulling Ruben into a big *abrazo*.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

*Lolo! This useless cabron is drinking  
with me.*

As she pours Ruben a glass from Ortiz' bottle of Armand de Brignac --

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Why you lose my number, papi?

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN

Everything went sideways. I got grabbed, couldn't pay you for the goods --

Ortiz drapes his arm around Ruben and lowers his voice --

ORTIZ

Forget about that. Freddy and his click dead or locked up, streets is wide open again.

RUBEN

I'm retired, *papi*.

ORTIZ

Spare me this bullshit. It takes longer to count the money than to move the product.

RUBEN

Come around to the pool hall. First game of eight ball is on the house.

As Lolo approaches with Ruben's drink --

ORTIZ

(*sotto*)

*Carne fresca*, just up from the DR.  
Hands off.

BARTENDER

*I'm Lolo. Nice to meet you.*

Ruben smiles and raises his glass to her. Eyeing Cabeza and his boys --

RUBEN

(to Ortiz)

I never understood why you heavyweights let those home invaders drink in your bar.

ORTIZ

*Todos los gatos son negros.* Better to keep the eye on them.

RUBEN

While they rip off half the dealers in the Heights?

ORTIZ

They travel in packs now. You want to take on eight *chorros* with guns?

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN

Me? I'm the playboy, remember?

The *hodedores* are starting to drift out, two plus two plus three...Cabeza is the last one out.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Time to play.

Ruben sends a text: ON THE MOVE. 8.

CUT TO:

**EXT. RIVIERA APT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Doors SLAM as Cabeza and his crew emerge from two cars. They go straight to the blue Buick, parked across from the building.

Pop the trunk and pull out the arsenal they have stashed: handguns, chopped-down shotguns, .223 semi-automatic carbine, grenades. Pass out the weapons, Cabeza taking the rifle for himself, holding it close to his body as he leads seven armed-to-the-teeth robbers across the street.

**FRONT ENTRANCE**

Is set back from the street between brick walls, forming a narrow alley from the street to the doors.

**GEMMA**

Clocks the action through night-vision goggles from up on the roof, while nearby --

**ESU SNIPERS**

Squint through their scopes as Cabeza leads the home invaders up to the --

**DOORS**

Which BANG OPEN as REDRUM DETECTIVE SGT MIKE FLORIO, 40, gunslinger with a badge, steps out leveling a Mossberg 590 pump shotgun, backed by ESU SHOOTERS in full riot gear, wielding M4 assault rifles.

SGT. FLORIO

Police, motherfuckers! Drop your weapons! Hands in the air!

Cabeza and his men freeze as --

**ESU TRUCK**

Closes off the alley, disgorging more DETECTIVES and AGENTS in REDRUM raid jackets, packing HP-5 submachine guns and shotguns -- led by DETECTIVE PHIL NEARY, 45 --

NEARY

Put 'em down! Onna ground!

**CABEZA**

Eyeballs Florio for a looooooong second - while the world stands still --

UNTIL Cabeza raises his rifle and is BLOWN OFF HIS FEET --

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE as REDRUM and ESU OPEN FIRE -- the FOOL behind Cabeza is cut down, a gun in each hand -- others drop their weapons and run -- or hit their knees.

It's a crazed, bloody inferno out on the street --

CUT TO:

**INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Ruben splashes water on his face. Stares at himself in the mirror. Bracing himself.

CUT TO:

**EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT**

Ruben rolls up in his glossy carbon-black X3, tosses the keys to one of the teenage WANNABES hanging outside.

**INT. POOL HALL**

This is Ruben's place. Everybody looks sharp when the boss shows up. Ruben bee-lines past the tables to the register.

BOBBY

Hey boss.

BOBBY, neighborhood kid, hands him a zip-bag full of cash and the night's receipts...Ruben gives it a quick glance.

RUBEN

My brother take another 'loan' from the register?

BOBBY

Ah...

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN

What I tell you to do, he puts his hand in again?

BOBBY

Shoot him. But you was joking...right?

RUBEN

He decimates our cash flow, I can't pay your sorry ass.

NANDO, 22, tatted, sideways Yankees cap, desperate to be Ruben, comes up to them --

NANDO

Ruben, yo, you ain't believe this.

RUBEN

You see I'm busy?

NANDO

My *primo* says Five O blew up some motherfuckers over at the Riv.

RUBEN

(cool)  
Tonight?

NANDO

Cabeza dead on the ground, bro.

He passes Ruben his phone. Ruben stares at the photo. The finality of the events he set in motion hitting home.

RUBEN

Jesus and Cabeza was the last of the old school gladiators. Never took a step back in their life.

NANDO

Now one dead and the other...

RUBEN

You seen my brother tonight?

NANDO

No, but you know where he go, he got some paper in his pocket.

CUT TO:

**EXT./INT. BODEGA - NIGHT**

Ruben enters, nods at GUY behind the counter, continues to --

**BACK ROOM**

Where Jesus, in his wheelchair, is playing dominoes with ALVARO, an older man in a cap. Bottle of Bacardi on the table. Jesus pulls on a blunt, Alvaro puffs a fat hand-rolled cigar.

ALVARO  
*(gleefully)*  
*Why you play that when you know I*  
*have the six-three, Jesus?*

He takes money off the table. Jesus pours himself more Bacardi.

RUBEN  
 How much you lose so far?

Jesus waves him off.

JESUS  
 What the fuck you care, piglet?

RUBEN  
 You're playing with my money.

He takes hold of Jesus' chair.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
 Come on. I'll take you home.

JESUS  
 Motherfucker I'll cut you...

Flashing a nasty-ass blade. Ruben steps back.

ALVARO  
*Where you going? I'm winning!*

RUBEN  
*He's tapped out.*

Ruben tosses him a hundred and a stern look. Alvaro pockets the cash, stands.

ALVARO  
*Next time then.*

He reaches for the bottle but Jesus grabs it first.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ST. NICHOLAS AVE - NIGHT**

Ruben walks alongside Jesus, who propels himself in his chair.

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN  
Stay out the fucking register, man.  
You need dough come to me.

JESUS  
I got to beg you? Like some cripple  
in the street?

RUBEN  
You got to beg me for the rent every  
month?

JESUS  
I was the shot caller. You did what  
I told you.

RUBEN  
(weary)  
Here we go...

Jesus swigs on the bottle of rum.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
You mixin' rum and Oxy again?

JESUS  
Straight Oxy don't do shit. Pain I  
got make you puddle up like the candy-  
ass bitch you are.

A sector car CRUISES past them --

RUBEN  
At least put it in a fucking paper  
bag.

JESUS  
*Chingada!*

Jesus tosses the bottle INTO THE STREET, but the police car  
is already gone.

They are silent for a beat, the chair's wheels scraping  
rhythmically along the sidewalk.

JESUS (CONT'D)  
One *pinche* year. Dass all you done.

RUBEN  
Andy Silver is a good lawyer. Got  
the drugs tossed for improper search.

JESUS  
Plenty motherfuckers got Jew lawyers.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



JESUS (CONT'D)

They still caged up. You a free man.

Ruben walks around in front of Jesus. Stops the chair.

RUBEN

You got something to say? Say it to my face.

JESUS

Anybody else, I know he's a fucking *chiba*. But you, *blanco*? You just a lucky motherfucker.

RUBEN

That's right. I got you in my life.

He turns and walks back the way they came. Jesus watches him go, eyes blazing.

CUT TO:

**EXT. BMW X3 - MOVING**

Cruising down the West Side Highway, twin turbo-6s GROWLING, Ruben doing his best to cool down, he's got the window open, night air blowing in his face...dials his phone.

LESLEE

(speaker)

Hello?

RUBEN

Hey. I'm on my way down.

CUT TO:

**EXT. GREENWICH STREET - NIGHT**

Ruben turns onto the cobblestone street, sees a spot. He pulls forward to parallel park.

A Lexus knifes in behind him, stealing the spot. Ruben stops his car and gets out. His hands flex.

YOUNG MISTER WALL STREET and his DATE are tumbling out of the Lexus. Clueless.

RUBEN

Maybe you don't see me parking.

YOUNG MISTER

You snooze you lose, bro. Survival of the fittest.

(CONTINUED)

He's a linebacker to Ruben's middleweight.

RUBEN  
That's you? The fittest?

Ruben hasn't moved.

DATE  
Kevin?

Now that he's been confronted in front of his date, Young has to try and swag it off --

YOUNG MISTER  
I don't see your name on this spot, asshole. So back off.

He tries to push past Ruben. Ruben HITS HIM FIVE TIMES really fast, doubling him over.

DATE  
Kevin!

RUBEN  
My name?

He grabs Young by his collar and SLAMS him face-first into the window, the door, the fender. Young drops to the concrete, bloody and prone.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
It's down there somewhere. Keep looking.

Date is fumbling with her phone, drops it. Ruben picks it up.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
A man like that, with no manners?  
You need to lean out.

He drops her phone back on the pavement and STOMPS it under his heel.

CUT TO:

**INT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

It's closing time, just a few CUSTOMERS finishing up. Ruben walks in like the joint's best customer, greets several STAFF MEMBERS by their first names --

RUBEN  
Hey Mary... T, what up?

(CONTINUED)

Ruben is just at home in this swank setting as he was in the pool hall uptown.

He finds LESLEE, the restaurant's owner, sipping wine at the bar. She is a stunning woman in her early 40s.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Hey. Tough night?

LESLEE

120 covers, way overbooked, I've been on my feet since three in four-inch Manolos...

He leans in to give her a kiss --

RUBEN

Why so early?

LESLEE

We started serving afternoon tea.

She melts as soon as Ruben slips off her heels and expertly massages her feet.

LESLEE (CONT'D)

Ohhhh...You haven't lost your touch...

He smiles as he kneads her feet.

RUBEN

You make money off tea?

LESLEE

Fixed costs are so high we've got to maximize revenue...the tables are here, the kitchen is here...You hungry?

RUBEN

Starving.

LESLEE

We have some duck confit left, your favorite.

RUBEN

Can I get it to go?

Off her knowing smile --

CUT TO:

**INT. TRIBECA LOFT - NIGHT**

Ruben continues Leslee's massage in front of the fireplace, but he's using his whole body now, and hers, too. Ruben and Leslee make passionate, sophisticated love by the flames...

**LATER**

Leslee, wrapped in something silky, pours two glasses of champagne. Ruben is eating duck from the to-go container.

LESLEE

Do you know what day this is?

RUBEN

Uh...

LESLEE

It's our two-month anniversary.

RUBEN

A milestone. *Salut.*

They clink and drink.

LESLEE

And I don't know anything about you. Except you're a great dancer...and not bad at this, either.

RUBEN

I don't know so much about you.

LESLEE

You know where I live. You know I own a restaurant, you know I have a daughter in college, one ex-husband --

RUBEN

One mad fool.

And he reaches for her but she pushes away.

LESLEE

No. Tonight we talk.

RUBEN

Three words that strike fear in the heart of every man.

His grammar and diction are very different with Leslee than in his world uptown.

(CONTINUED)

LESLEE

Baby, a fling is a fling. But if you want to get to month three...

RUBEN

Just me and my brother, Jesus. That's the family tree.

LESLEE

You lost both your parents?

RUBEN

Fonseca was Jesus' pops, not mine. He was a cop in San Juan. Liked handing out beatings so much he always saved some for moms when he got home. She took my brother and ran to Nueva York.

LESLEE

And then what? The stork delivered you?

RUBEN

Yeah, but a lot paler than Jesus, or Fonseca. There was this housing cop who came around, Mancini. I guess moms had a thing for men in uniform.

He takes a drink of champagne.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Jesus and his boys, they started calling me *cerdito*. Piglet. But they had to fight when they said that...at the park, on the street, in school, all we did was throw down. So we called a truce around *blanco*.

Leslee looks at him.

LESLEE

Where was Mancini in all this?

RUBEN

With his wife and kids on Long Island. When he stopped coming around with groceries, moms went on the hustle. Left us pretty much to raise each other.

LESLEE

Are you still close to your brother?

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN  
Like Siamese twins. I'm stuck with  
him.

CUT TO:

**EXT. RED HOOK DOCKS - DAY**

Ruben walks down the old pier. Gulls fly overhead. Tugboats motor past.

Gemma Dawkins is waiting. She hands Ruben a cup of coffee.

RUBEN  
Mission accomplished last night?

GEMMA  
Two home invaders dead, six in  
custody.

RUBEN  
Then why we out here so early?

GEMMA  
It's time to quit stalling on Ortiz.

RUBEN  
I told you. Ortiz like a brother to  
me.

GEMMA  
The deal was for your real brother.  
Not 'like a brother'.

RUBEN  
So you can shoot him down in the  
street like Cabeza?

GEMMA  
That would defeat its own purpose.  
Dead men can't open doors.

Ruben sips coffee, considers.

RUBEN  
Ortiz punches our ticket into REDRUM?

GEMMA  
I can't make any promises, but --

RUBEN  
You been blowin' smoke up my ass  
about REDRUM since day one. Best  
squad on the job, right?

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA

That's right.

RUBEN

Detective and his CI go in as a team, you said. CI goes on the Federal payroll, he can make six figures a year, legit. Doing the same shit, risking his life, like I'm doing now. For *nada*.

Ruben tosses his coffee in the trash.

GEMMA

I told you it was political. The PC has to approve every transfer personally.

RUBEN

I snitch for some fat mick with a rabbi, we're already in. But a lady cop who's trippin' just to get out the squad? I got to bang my head on your glass ceiling.

GEMMA

I come from a family of fat Mick cops and let me assure you, I intend to go farther than any of them.

RUBEN

On the sweat of my brow. Soon as we hook up, you get bumped to the Task Force. Fed status, your own car, making grade --

GEMMA

I'm asking you to be patient. Once the REDRUM bosses see what we can deliver on a regular basis --

RUBEN

Patient just another word for chump. How 'bout I talk direct to that *chinito* prosecutor --

GEMMA

Korean --

RUBEN

Maybe he could intro me to REDRUM himself. No skin off your nose.

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA

You know what? You're worse than my husband.

Ruben registers this new piece of information.

RUBEN

Next time he complain you got no time for him? Tell him you're too busy fucking me.

Ruben walks off, glancing out at Lady Liberty in the harbor, a private smile creasing his lips. *SOUND PRELAP: WHOMP WHOMP WHOMP!*

CUT TO:

**INT. POOL HALL - DAY**

Ruben POUNDS focus mitts held by Nando, LEFT RIGHT LEFT RIGHT LEFT, the fingerless UFC gloves THUDDING into the mitts with every roll of his shoulder and snap of his elbow.

They work beneath posters of Puerto Rican greats Jose Torres, Macho Camacho and Miguel Cotto... and a Golden Globes poster featuring a young Ruben "Blanco" Fonseca.

RUBEN

It's a birthday present? Flowers are always correct.

NANDO

Chanelle got admirers. I can't show up with some street-corner bouquet, homes.

RUBEN

Her name's Chanelle?

NANDO

Dass her... dancer name.

Ruben stops punching and steps back, grinning.

RUBEN

You mean her stripper name? Walk away right now, son. Before she breaks your heart and your bank.

He starts throwing leather again. Out of the corner of his eye Ruben sees --



**MAGDA**

Approaching, dressed head to toe in skin-tight black. Dark glasses cover her eyes.

**RUBEN**

His last hook slips wide of the mitt and THUDS into Nando's ribs. He doubles over in pain.

RUBEN

Shit. Sorry, man.

Nando struggles to get his breath back. Ruben rips his gloves off.

**AT THE COUNTER**

Bobby hands Ruben a towel and a blended juice drink.

MAGDA

Let me do that, baby.

She towels off his face. He takes the towel from her.

RUBEN

What's up?

MAGDA

What's up? *They slaughtered my man like a pig at Easter...*

She falls into his arms, a little theatrically.

RUBEN

I'm sorry.

Leaning back to look at him --

MAGDA

It's not your fault...

But of course it is.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

Ruben, I got nothing to wear to the funeral.

RUBEN

His wife gonna be at the funeral.

MAGDA

And my rent. Cabeza took care of that, but now...

(CONTINUED)

Ruben pulls out his roll. Counts out bills and hands them to her. Then a couple more.

RUBEN  
Nobody's putting you out in the street, okay?

MAGDA  
*Gracias, papi.*

She puts her arms around his neck.

RUBEN  
This is a sad time and I want to help. But you need to start empowering yourself.

She looks at him, what? He frees himself.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
Like you said, going behind Cabeza's back was wrong --

MAGDA  
It ain't behind his back no more cause his ass is dead --

Reaching for him again but he takes hold of her arms.

RUBEN  
I think it's better if we move on.

MAGDA  
Better for who?  
(then)  
What's your *puta's* name? I'll cut her fucking eyes out.

RUBEN  
You look good, baby. That glutton-free diet makes a big difference.

Moving her aside --

MAGDA  
I'm serious Ruben! You know I'm one crazy bitch.

RUBEN  
Yes, I do.

He walks away. Magda puts her dark glasses back on. Re-assumes the role of mourning "widow."

CUT TO:

**EXT. COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - NIGHT**

Ruben walks past a row of parked cars. He stops at a Lexus with MD plates.

**INT. LEXUS - MOMENTS LATER**

DR. PATEL hands Ruben a paper bag. Ruben hands Dr. Patel a wad of cash.

CUT TO:

**INT. JESUS' APT - NIGHT**

TONY, 8, is playing Grand Theft Auto with Jesus looking over his shoulder.

JESUS  
Smoke him. Smoke that pig. Booyah!

Doorbell BUZZES.

**VERONICA**

Comes out of the kitchen to answer the door. It's Ruben, with flowers and a bottle of wine. She smiles.

VERONICA  
It's about time your skinny white  
ass walked through that door,  
stranger.

RUBEN  
*Querida.*

They hug happily. For maybe a beat too long. Then --

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
Something smells great.

VERONICA  
*Pernil, idiota.* Don't I always make  
it for you?

He sets down the wine and hands her the flowers.

VERONICA (CONT'D)  
I'll put these in water.

RUBEN  
He inside?

VERONICA  
*El Hombre's* teaching Tony how to  
steal cars and shoot people.

(CONTINUED)

Ruben hands her an envelope as well.

RUBEN  
Rent and groceries. Put it someplace  
safe.

On the move before she can hug him again --

**LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Ruben finds Jesus and Tony absorbed in their game.

RUBEN  
*Que pasa* dudes?

TONY  
*Tio Ruben!*

He runs over to give Ruben a hug. Ruben produces a baseball from his pocket.

RUBEN  
You know anybody could use a Robinson  
Cano ball?

Tony's eyes get wide --

TONY  
No lie?

RUBEN  
No lie. Go show your mom.

Tony runs off and Ruben sits next to Jesus, who has picked up the controller.

JESUS  
*Papi Noel.* You make me small to my  
family.

RUBEN  
I got something for you, too.

He dumps the doctor's samples out of the paper bag.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
Seroquel, lithium, clanazapan. You  
take them in a cocktail to help you  
sleep. The doc says it chills out  
the pain.

Jesus looks at the pills.

JESUS  
How much these go for on the street?

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN

Not this time. Not if you got the pain 24-7.

JESUS

Dass forever, bro.  
(playing)  
*Putá!* My *sucia* is a Fed!

RUBEN

Doc said the pain in your legs? Means there's hope. A chance you could walk again.

JESUS

Hope? That fuck up a cripple worse than a bullet. *Gracias por nada.*

CUT TO:

**INT. STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT**

Backroom. Retirement party in progress. Gemma eases her way through the crowded room.

Sgt. Mike Florio, last seen making like Wyatt Earp in the Cabeza takedown, now at the podium in a Men's Wearhouse two-button that's a little too tight for his weightlifter muscles, is winding up...

FLORIO

It's not easy to lose a man like Phil Neary.

Neary sits nearby; we recognize him from the Cabeza takedown.

FLORIO (CONT'D)

All these years working side by side, facing the shit together - what if someone saw him under the desk, blowing the ASAC after lunch every day?

Waits for the LAUGHS. Gemma watches from the bar. NINA, leather jacket, jeans, short hair, approaches her with a smile.

FLORIO (CONT'D)

But seriously, REDRUM'S loss is the Biltmore Hotel's gain. It's a beautiful place and I know we're all invited to eat and drink onna cuff as long as Phil has his job...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FLORIO (CONT'D)

(more laughs)

Hey, let's raise a glass to a great detective and a better friend, congratulations and good luck to Phil Neary!

Everyone drinks. Gemma turns to Nina and smiles.

NINA

Hello, stranger.

GEMMA

How are you?

NINA

Lonely, since you transferred uptown. What are you drinking?

GEMMA

I'm good.

Nina puts her hand on Gemma's arm.

NINA

Don't you miss me a little?

GEMMA

That was mostly in your head.

The BARTENDER hands her two beers.

GEMMA (CONT'D)

Good to see you. Excuse me.

She moves off to --

#### **FLORIO'S TABLE**

And sets one in front of him.

GEMMA

Quite the sendoff.

FLORIO

You know how much those clueless yuppies are paying that *stunod*? I hope he chokes on it.

Gemma raises her glass --

GEMMA

To friendship.

(CONTINUED)

FLORIO  
You break balls just like your father.

Gemma smiles, hands the beer to Florio.

GEMMA  
Not a bad takedown last night.

FLORIO  
I heard you had a great C.I. That was the first time I saw what you could deliver.

GEMMA  
I'm on the grid, Mike. First Grade.

FLORIO  
You're a regular comet, Gemma. Since you hooked up with your guy.

GEMMA  
And you've got a slot open after Neary.

FLORIO  
No way Donovan lets you transfer out of his Group. Be happy where you are.

GEMMA  
Happy? I'm Irish.

FLORIO  
Two things a colleen like you needs to get into REDRUM. One of the best CIs in the city --

GEMMA  
Check --

FLORIO  
And a hook inna PC's office. With both your dad and uncle retired now...

GEMMA  
(smiles)  
I guess you didn't hear about my brother Danny? He just got assigned to the Commissioner's security detail.

Florio drinks his beer.

FLORIO  
Maybe down the road, but right now?  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FLORIO (CONT'D)

You work your side of the street,  
when you got something give me a  
holler.

GEMMA

(shakes her head)

Free trial is up, Mike. Do the right  
thing or watch someone else get the  
gravy.

CUT TO:

**INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT**

A GIRL on the pole. Not just any girl...This girl has star  
quality...and by the look on Nando's face, sitting at the  
first table by the stage, this is definitely --

ANDY (O.S.)

Chanel? Even her name is expensive.

**VIP ROOM**

Ruben and Andy Silver have a great view of the action from a  
table by the window. Andy pats at his suit pocket.

ANDY

You bring me here without my nitro  
pills? I'm having a long distance  
coronary, putz.

RUBEN

Remember that OG Whitey, he got  
grabbed in LA after lammin' for years?

ANDY

Whitey Bulger, sure.

RUBEN

Twenty years as an FBI snitch, and  
he ran the Boston underworld the  
whole time.

ANDY

Not just any snitch. He was a signed  
and sealed Top Echelon Informant.

RUBEN

Killed anybody who tried to blow the  
whistle on him...And the Feeds helped  
him do it.

Andy beams at Ruben, professor to prize student.

(CONTINUED)



ANDY

Because all his handlers cared about  
were their promotions...and Whitey  
was the goose who laid the golden  
eggs.

RUBEN

Like me.  
(grins)  
Blanco.

ANDY

The Chinese believe a man's name is  
his destiny.  
(beat. )  
Or maybe that was the Cherokee...

When a BIG MOBSTER saunters over -- this is DANTE "JUICE"  
PEPITONE. If Ruben isn't thrilled to see Juice, he's careful  
not to let it show.

JUICE

There they are. The Latin Playboy  
and America's Top Shyster.

ANDY

Spoken like a schmuck who still owes  
me ninety large.

RUBEN

What's up, Juice? I haven't seen  
you since you hit the street.

Hugs all around.

JUICE

(to waitress)  
Bring these gents another bottle.  
And a glass for me.

ANDY

You're working here now?

JUICE

Matty recently took an undisclosed  
interest. He asked me to keep an  
eye on things.

RUBEN

He looks out for his people.

JUICE

The Barber takes an interest in  
everybody who works for him.

**ON THE FLOOR BELOW**

Chanelle is draped all over Nando. He slides a Benjamin into her garter. She takes him by the hand and leads him behind a curtain for a private dance.

JUICE (O.S.)  
Especially her.

**RUBEN AND ANDY**

React. Andy more visibly.

ANDY  
Excuse me, fellas. It seems I forgot  
to call my wife.

He lurches from the table and stumbles off.

JUICE  
That little spic is a friend of yours?

RUBEN  
He's a good kid. Young and dumb and  
full of come. Like we were.

JUICE  
Drop some science on him. He gets a  
warning out of respect to you. But  
only one.

RUBEN  
I appreciate that.

Waitress returns with the bottle of wine. Juice takes it and flicks off the foil with the blade of the cork screw.

JUICE  
I hope so. He shows his fucking  
face in here again I got no choice.

Juice jams the corkscrew into the cork and twists.

OFF RUBEN --

CUT TO:

**EXT. POOL HALL - DAY**

Nando with his back to the wall --

NANDO  
She can't stand that fat goombah, he  
makes her skin crawl!

(CONTINUED)

Ruben gets right in Nando's face --

RUBEN

This is Matty the fucking Barber DeSario, he'll make your fucking skin crawl right off your fucking bones.

NANDO

You think I'm some faggot-ass punk? I won't fight for my woman?

RUBEN

She's a money-grubbing ho who's using you to make Matty jealous.

NANDO

I'll fucking fight you, too!

Ruben ducks his hook and SMACKS him three times real fucking fast and puts him against the wall.

RUBEN

I did time with these animals. Matty had a beef with a three hundred pound Blood and Juice crushed his skull like he was shelling a peanut. You feel me?

Nando nods but can't speak because Ruben has his forearm in his throat.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

This is New York City, the wet pussy capital of the world. Move on.

He releases Nando, who rubs his throat. Glares after Ruben as Ruben walks away.

**INT. POOL HALL - CONTINUOUS**

Jesus is running a table when Ruben enters --

JESUS

Yo, Blanco.

RUBEN

(a look)  
Hold on.

Jesus glares as Ruben continues to Bobby at the counter.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

We still slow from like three to six during the week?

(CONTINUED)

BOBBY  
Mad slow, sometimes.

RUBEN  
Drop the table price and cut the  
drinks in half, too. Like a Happy  
Hour.

BOBBY  
But we got no booze.

RUBEN  
The tables are here, the drinks are  
here. Fixed costs are high and we  
need to max out our revenue stream.

BOBBY  
What?

Ruben turns away and heads over to Jesus.

RUBEN  
I'm all ears.

JESUS  
Mothafucka, I know who ratted out  
Cabeza.

RUBEN  
Yeah?

Ruben struggles to stay casual as he waits. He picks up a  
cue, chalks it.

JESUS  
Truth hurts. It was your piece of  
shit homie, Ortiz.

Ruben looks at him. Not what he expected at all.

RUBEN  
Get the fuck outa here.

JESUS  
Cabeza hit Ortiz' crib last year,  
took a million in cash from his safe.

RUBEN  
Cost of doing business.

JESUS  
A player like Ortiz, in the game all  
his life, he never took no collar.  
He a *chiba* for REDRUM.

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN  
Where did you hear this shit?

JESUS  
Cabeza had homies too, bro.

RUBEN  
But nobody throws shit in the game  
like you.

JESUS  
Dass how you thank me for the heads  
up? Stick close to that fat fuck.  
Maybe you get your ticket punched,  
too.

CUT TO:

**INT. SUBWAY - DAY**

Ruben stares at his reflection in the window as his car  
RATTLES forward.

**EXT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY**

Ruben comes up the steps. Sees Gemma's Jeep and climbs in.

**INT. JEEP - MOVING**

Gemma rolling slowly past warehouses, churches, tenements...

GEMMA  
We picked up a bunch of chatter on  
our Title IIIs, it checked out.  
There's a red dot on Ortiz.

RUBEN  
For what we did.

GEMMA  
This is an opportunity, not a crisis.  
This is how we sign him up.

RUBEN  
You mean like witness protection?

GEMMA  
Down the road, maybe. After he hooks  
us into his cartel connection.

RUBEN  
Every day you leave him out on the  
street --

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA

We are not talking about Gandhi here,  
or Snow White. Either he plays for  
our team and makes cases, or...

(shrugs)

One less trafficker. Cry me a river.

RUBEN

That's how you lead men in battle?  
One less Marine, tough titty?

Gemma yanks the wheel and pulls over.

GEMMA

Fucko, pull your head out of your  
ass. You don't owe him shit. He  
put your brother in a wheelchair and  
set you up to die.

RUBEN

The fuck are you talking about?

GEMMA

Freddy Garcia's phone. We recovered  
it at the scene.

Ruben waits.

GEMMA (CONT'D)

His last call was from Ortiz. Five  
minutes before the shooting started.

Ruben processes this --

RUBEN

That don't mean...they could have  
talked about anything. Or nothing.

GEMMA

(laughs)

Really?

Ruben looks at her.

GEMMA (CONT'D)

Good as you are at lying to other  
people? You're better at lying to  
yourself.

CUT TO:

**INT. CLUB VARGAS - DAY**

Ortiz glares across the booth at Ruben.

(CONTINUED)

ORTIZ

You know how to take a motherfucker's head off.

RUBEN

That's what we tryin' to avoid.

Ortiz gulps the rest of his drink. Signals to Lolo, the foxy bartender, for another bottle of Armand de Brignac.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

You want to sweep her off her feet? Bring her down to the island.

ORTIZ

Not now, *papi*. Bad timing.

RUBEN

Put her ass on American tonight. Get into Santo Domingo early. Breathe the tropical air, eat mangoes for breakfast...then *chocha* when you get to the hotel.

Ortiz drinks.

ORTIZ

I got business.

RUBEN

With the Mexicans?

ORTIZ

When that shit goes down it goes down fast. Pickup then distribution. Otherwise I'm a target for those motherfuckers.

Meaning the home invaders at the bar.

RUBEN

Let me stand in for you. You know I know the moves.

ORTIZ

That's beautiful, *papi*, you would show me that love. But those fuckers from Juarez...they don't want to know nobody they don't know.

RUBEN

You ain't no use to no one in a casket, *papi*.

(CONTINUED)

ORTIZ  
You sure about that?

Ruben looks at him.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)  
I make the introduction, then you  
jump my place in line? Deal direct  
with the Mexicans? Is that your big  
comeback, you been schemin' on all  
this time?

Ruben looks at Ortiz. Then rises slowly.

RUBEN  
Who you see across from you at this  
table? A brother or Freddy Garcia?

Ruben turns and walks out, just as Lolo arrives with the  
next bottle.

CUT TO:

**INT. ESCALADE - DAY**

Juice Pepitone, in warm-ups, and DEX, 20s, skinny in tight  
clothes, watch Nando enter the pool hall.

**INT. POOL HALL - MOMENTS LATER**

Nando takes several used phones from a bag and lays them on  
the counter in front of Ruben.

NANDO  
Freddy had a Galaxy Note just like  
this.

Ruben examines it.

RUBEN  
No detours?

NANDO  
Like what?

RUBEN  
Like Chanelle?

NANDO  
You hollered at me stay out the club.  
I'm out the club.



**FRONT DOOR**

Swings wide as Juice and Dex enter. Nando looks from them to Ruben.

RUBEN

Chill.

Juice and Dex make their way past Jesus, walk up on Nando and Ruben.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

You want a table, Juice?

JUICE

I warned you what would happen.

NANDO

I ain't been back.

JUICE

No, this rice and beaner went to her crib, instead.

RUBEN

Mother...

Even as he wheels on Nando, Nando bolts -- but Dex trips him up.

NANDO

Wait! This ain't right! Ruben!

Juice grabs Nando by the neck and SLAMS him face-first into the nearest table. Nando MOANS and sinks to his knees.

Dex kicks him, then shows Nando the gun in his waistband.

DEX

Let's go.

JUICE

He's into you for any dough, better collect now.

Ruben looks at Juice. Makes a decision, not an easy one --

RUBEN

Juice, all due respect, you're in my house.

JUICE

Fuck you, pork chop.

He grabs Nando by his ear, yanking him to his feet --

(CONTINUED)

Followed by the UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF WEAPONS BEING COCKED  
AND SLIDES RACKED --

Jesus is behind them with a sawed-off in his lap.

Bobby, at the register, has a street-sweeper trained on them.  
A COUPLE OF POOL PLAYERS have drawn iron as well.

DEX  
(feeling seriously  
outgunned)  
Fucking kidding me?

JUICE  
(addressing Ruben)  
These niggas don't know who they're  
dealing with. But you do. You really  
want the cross-hairs trained on you?

RUBEN  
Philosophically, you make a strong  
argument. But right now the cross-  
hairs are on you.

Jesus rolls forward, brandishing the sawed-off.

JESUS  
I'm a stick this up your ass and  
give you a big kiss goodbye, *gordo*.

Juice stands very still. Dex is starting to twitch. Ruben  
steps forward and carefully takes Juice's gun, then Dex's.

RUBEN  
We gonna take a cooling off period.  
Before we talk again.

JUICE  
All you accomplished? They gonna  
dig another fucking hole.

Juice and Dex turn to leave, when Nando lunges at them --  
grabs a pool cue from a nearby table and BASHES Juice across  
his head.

NANDO  
Fuck you guido!

Nando wails on him until Ruben pulls him off. Jesus jams  
the shotgun under Nando's chin --

JESUS  
Dass enough. Never disrespect this  
place or my brother again.

(CONTINUED)

OFF RUBEN, reacting -- did Jesus just take his side?

CUT TO:

**INT. REDRUM SQUADROOM - NIGHT**

Gemma sits with Florio --

FLORIO

Your C.I. says Ortiz brought up Juarez  
Cartel specifically?

(Gemma nods)

We've been trying to get a hook into  
them for years.

GEMMA

So that would be points on the board.

FLORIO

Better than a sharp stick in the  
eye.

GEMMA

I need more than that to take to my  
guy.

FLORIO

Not gonna happen.

He leans back and puts his feet up on the desk.

GEMMA

Mike --

FLORIO

He knows who we are. The last bona  
fide killers on this Job. He gets  
cute, crosses us, plays a double  
game? We'll put him down like his  
pal Cabeza.

CUT TO:

**EXT. APT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Ruben enters through the back door.

**INT. HALLWAY - RUBEN**

RAPS on door. BEAT. Ortiz checks him out through the  
peephole, lets Ruben in.

**ORTIZ APT**

Suitcases lined up, things strewn about...

(CONTINUED)

ORTIZ

*Didn't think you was comin'. Just about to walk out the door...*

He finds a briefcase among other bags, hands it to Ruben.

RUBEN

What's this?

ORTIZ

There's two sixty in there. Take twenty for your trouble. Bring the rest to the travel agency on St. Nick and 172. Ask for Chivo. He knows what to do.

RUBEN

You trust me with this?

ORTIZ

*Money? I owe you my life.*

They look at each other.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

I was stupid before. That's this business, make you turn on your own brother.

Ruben says nothing.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

He's from Juarez, Chivo.

RUBEN

You do that for me?

ORTIZ

Maybe you don't thank me, when you got that snake crawling up your *culo* every day.

RUBEN

You really walkin' away.

ORTIZ

I'm in the wind, *mi hermano*. Color of my parachute is green.

He crosses to his bags.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Time to sit on my moms' porch and eat *mofongo*, watch the kids play on the beach.

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN

You sure you don't got to call  
somebody, soon as my ass is through  
that door?

Ortiz turns back to Ruben. Ruben shows him the phone Nando  
got for him.

RUBEN (CONT'D)

I grabbed this off Freddy's dead-ass  
body. Check out the last call on  
his log.

Ortiz looks at the phone like it might bite him.

ORTIZ

Papi? Somebody been...

He trails off when he sees the automatic in Ruben's hand.

RUBEN

Don't you fucking lie to me. Or  
your name on this phone will be the  
last thing you see.

ORTIZ

Please...I just handed you the keys  
to the kingdom. Don't do this...

RUBEN

Tell. Me. Why.

ORTIZ

When Jesus got up in my face like  
that, everybody watchin'....I...make  
a mistake. It was about him, never  
about you...I'm goin' away, *papi*,  
just set you up for life...

Ruben exhales slowly.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

Now Freddy rotting in the ground and  
we survivors, big-time.

Ruben lowers the gun, sticks it in the small of his back.  
Ortiz suddenly pulls Ruben into a big *abrazo*.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

*Thank you, papi, you won't regret  
this.*

His powerful arms wrap around Ruben's wiry frame. Ortiz  
reaches for Ruben's gun. Then he buckles and GASPS. Ruben  
has a six-inch blade plunged deep into Ortiz' guts.

(CONTINUED)

Ortiz' shirt darkens. His eyes go wide as Ruben "runs the gears" up and over to Ortiz' heart. He tries to talk, gurgles blood instead.

Ruben steps back. He screws a silencer on his pistol.

RUBEN  
Motherfucker don't you watch TV?  
Only one survivor.

FIRES POP POP --

CUT TO:

**INT. SHOWER - NIGHT**

Water BLASTING out of the nozzle, streaming all over Ruben...and Magda, wound tight around him...going at it full tilt, hands and legs braced against the tile

MAGDA  
*Don't stop don't stop...*

**BEDROOM**

Magda, stretched out across the bed, smokes while Ruben dresses.

MAGDA  
Hey superman...what lit your fuse tonight?

He looks at her, shakes his head.

RUBEN  
I was here all night.

He shows her a sheaf of bills. Lays the money on the night table.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
With you.

CUT TO:

**EXT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

Ruben climbs out of the cab. Checks his look in the restaurant window.

**INT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT**

Ruben finds Gemma sitting at the bar with Leslee. He covers his surprise.

(CONTINUED)

RUBEN  
You two look thick as thieves.

GEMMA  
I waited for you to introduce us?  
I'd never have tasted this...  
Unbelievable.

LESLEE  
It's Ruben's favorite.

Leslee gives Ruben a searching look.

LESLEE (CONT'D)  
I'll send out some more food and let  
you two catch up. So nice to meet  
an old friend of his, Gemma.

She heads off and Ruben sits next to Gemma.

RUBEN  
This place is off limits.

GEMMA  
No place is off-limits. Nothing you  
do is off-limits. I thought you got  
that by now.

Bartender brings Gemma another Diet Coke and a glass of wine  
for Ruben.

GEMMA (CONT'D)  
Somebody hit Ortiz tonight.

Checking out Ruben's reaction, which is...subdued.

RUBEN  
Didn't think it would go down that  
fast.

He drinks some wine.

GEMMA  
When's the last time you saw him?

RUBEN  
Yesterday.

GEMMA  
Not tonight?

Ruben shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA (CONT'D)

You had better be a hell of a lot more convincing when Homicide puts it to you.

RUBEN

You told me about the call. What did you think would happen?

GEMMA

No. You do not use me to settle scores.

RUBEN

We use each other. That's the deal with the devil we both made.

GEMMA

No way.

RUBEN

Who's lying to herself now?

Gemma gulps some Coke.

GEMMA

Tell me you've got a stone-cold fucking alibi.

RUBEN

It's a delicate situation. A woman is involved.

(beat)

You could get me in trouble with Leslee.

GEMMA

I could put you in a cage for the rest of your scheming, two-faced life.

Ruben sips some wine.

RUBEN

I don't think so. You already cashed in your chips on one career.

(beat)

That spot in REDRUM still open?

GEMMA

Why?

RUBEN

I got an introduction. Juarez Cartel.

(CONTINUED)



Leslee is smiling at Ruben from the open kitchen. He smiles back.

RUBEN (CONT'D)  
 You want them? Don't come back here.  
 She means a lot to me.

Gemma lets this settle. Then --

GEMMA  
 Look at me.

Ruben does.

GEMMA (CONT'D)  
 You do not have a Double O Snitch  
 license to kill. This never happens  
again.

She tosses money on the bar. Waves goodbye to Leslee.

GEMMA (CONT'D)  
 A woman like that, she'll see right  
 through you. I won't have to lift a  
 finger.

Putting words to Ruben's secret fear. Gemma walks out.  
 Leslee returns with food.

LESLEE  
 She's a cop.  
 (Ruben nods)  
 Are you in trouble?

He cups her head with his hand and brings her close.

RUBEN  
 Way over my head. You got your  
 dancing shoes?

CUT TO:

**INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT**

Ruben spins Leslee into the hottest *merengue* in town...turning  
 the other DANCERS' heads on the jam-packed dance floor --

He's a natural and she's game and it seems for the moment  
 that they could sway and move and glide forever -- like the  
 music will never stop -- faster and faster and --

FADE OUT: