

Untitled Crime Drama

by

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Studio Draft

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UNTITLED CRIME DRAMA

FADE IN:

BLACKNESS gives way to a corridor of shadows. We CREEP past basement stairs. Up ahead... a DIM LIGHT. PUSH INTO --

INT. BASEMENT WORKSHOP - DAY

In a hazy room, under a bare hanging bulb, a tall gaunt man solders wires onto an enigmatic ELECTRONIC DEVICE. Nervous sweat beads on the tragic face of MR. FONTANA, a scholarly but tired man, an over-driven tire that lost its tread.

In a SERIES OF CUTS: Mr. Fontana highlights the "5:32 p.m." stop on a TRAIN SCHEDULE... inserts AAA batteries into a HANDHELD REMOTE... removes an unusual T-BAR HANDLE with trolley wheels from a box... and finally loads a 9mm HANDGUN.

Dipping into unknown reservoirs of will, he beats back his fear and places the gun into his battered leather saddlebag, next to the other mysterious items, then CLOSES THE FLAP.

EXT. HISTORIC DISTRICT - DAY

CLOSE ON THE SADDLEBAG moving. PULL BACK to find Mr. Fontana wearing a thread-worn suit, striding purposefully under a canopy of moss-laden oak trees in Savannah's historic district. The sound of a PASSING TRAIN rises and takes us --

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Mr. Fontana turns up the walkway of a towering antebellum townhouse, evocative of old Savannah. CRANE UP to reveal a LOUD TRAIN passing on tracks directly behind the townhouse.

On the porch, Mr. Fontana RINGS THE BELL. An imminently likable college student named SEBASTIAN opens the door. Skinny with curly hair and a spark in his eyes, Sebastian lights up at the sight of Mr. Fontana.

SEBASTIAN

Professor Fontana. Come in.

MR. FONTANA

I'm sorry, I'm early.

As Mr. Fontana enters, he apprehensively glances back at the street to see if anyone has noticed his arrival. Satisfied, he enters the townhouse and the DOOR CLOSES.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Excited and jittery, Sebastian pours himself a cup of coffee.

SEBASTIAN

I'm glad you're early. Coffee?

MR. FONTANA

No, thanks. It makes me paranoid.

SEBASTIAN

I'm dying to know what you think.

(cuts some cake)

Pound cake? My mom made it. She's all about the butter.

MR. FONTANA

No. Thank you, Sebastian. What do you say we get to work?

Sebastian gathers his coffee and pound cake.

INT. STAIRWAY/HALLWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The boy walks up the stairs with his food and drink. Behind him, the professor scans the empty rooms as they walk.

SEBASTIAN

I know I'm nervous and all, but I want you to tell me the truth. You thought it was crap, didn't you?

Mr. Fontana smiles as Sebastian enters --

INT. STUDY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The boy sets the cake and coffee by the computer and sits down. An ITALIAN CANTATA plays from computer speakers. Mr. Fontana shuts the door behind them, then turns to his pupil.

MR. FONTANA

You really want to know what I think?

SEBASTIAN

Yeah.

Mr. Fontana slowly opens the saddlebag holding his gun, reaches inside, and pulls out... a TYPED MANUSCRIPT.

MR. FONTANA

I think it's promising.

SEBASTIAN

Really? I mean -- really?

MR. FONTANA

Of course, I have notes.

SEBASTIAN

Of course. Right. I've never gotten notes from a published author before.

MR. FONTANA

Hold off on the flattery. My book doesn't hit the stands for months.

The professor hands the manuscript to Sebastian, who drops into a chair at his desk and starts devouring the notes.

SEBASTIAN

This is good, less backstory, more character...

As the boy reads, Mr. Fontana's fitful eyes sweep the simple but stylish study. Noting a small attic window STREAMING LIGHT from above, he closes it with a studied casualness.

MR. FONTANA

That's right. Readers love to see how a main character reacts under stress in the pursuit of a goal.

Hearing a TRAIN HORN, the professor glances at a desk clock: 5:32 p.m. He takes a tense breath. Can he really do this?

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

Does he have the courage needed?

With forced resolve, Mr. Fontana steps behind his reading pupil and takes out the HANDGUN, holding it awkwardly.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

Is he willing to do whatever it takes to fulfill his destiny?

The train LOUDLY PASSES by outside. It's now or never.

SEBASTIAN

I can't believe everything I'm learning from you. Thank you for --

The professor abruptly steps forward, aims the gun at the side of the boy's head, winces -- and FIRES point blank.

BLOOD SPATTERS onto the desk lamp and nearby books, creating a gruesome still life. We hear the BODY FALL onto the floor.

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

PULL BACK out of the study window with ROCKET SPEED, until we're across the street, looking out at the townhouse from --

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - VERANDA - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

An ELDERLY WOMAN sits at a cafe table, sipping tea on her veranda. Despite the gunshot, she doesn't even look up, thanks to the LOUD TRAIN passing behind the townhouse.

A few seconds later, a car pulls up to the townhouse. ROSE, Sebastian's mother, exits and walks up the drive. TILT UP to Fontana's SHADOWY FACE staring down from the upstairs window.

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Rose, a second generation Italian-American, enters with a handful of mail. She hears the Italian cantata upstairs.

ROSE
Sebby! I'm home!

Rose sets down her purse and flips through the mail.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Any calls? Sebastian?

That's odd. With a frown, she puts down the letters. FOLLOW Rose to the stairs. She looks up.

ROSE (CONT'D)
Are you up there?

Rose takes two steps up the stairs -- when the FRONT DOORBELL rings. She stops. FOLLOW her to the front door, which she opens to reveal... *Mr. Fontana standing on the front porch.*

ROSE (CONT'D)
Hi, Professor. How are you?

The professor enters, subtly dabbing sweat from his forehead.

MR. FONTANA
Good, thanks. A little winded from the walk over. Is Sebastian home?

ROSE
Who else could listen to music at that volume? You want coffee?

MR. FONTANA
No, thanks. Makes me paranoid.

He smiles, the cantata builds to a climax, and a GUNSHOT rings out. Rose and Mr. Fontana jump, startled. What was that? Rose races up the stairs. Gathering his courage, the professor follows her up.

INT. STAIRWAY/HALLWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Rose reaches the door -- it's locked. She pounds on the door, as Mr. Fontana joins her side.

ROSE
Sebby, open up! Open the door!

MR. FONTANA
(jiggles the door)
Sebastian!

He throws his shoulder into the door. Once. Twice --

INT. STUDY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The door FLIES INWARD. Rose enters in horror to see her son lying in a pool of blood, with the handgun next to him. She races to his side, falls to her knees, shakes him --

ROSE
Oh Dio, no... Non il mio ragazzo.
No... no...

Behind her, Mr. Fontana pantomimes some sympathetic moves to comfort her, before deciding to reach out and embrace her. As Rose cries in the arms of her son's killer, DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAILER PARK - NIGHT

A TWINKLING NEON SIGN that says: "Starlite Starbrite Mobile Estates." TILT DOWN to a massive woman named MAGGIE HARMON, 20s, with a tear-stained face, sitting on the steps of a double-wide trailer.

MAGGIE
...it had a crystal teardrop over a diamond star-burst, and 1998 written in rhinestones. That's the year I was crowned Miss Coastal Georgia.

PAN TO two Savannah Metro Police detectives. CHARLIE HUDSON, 30, an offbeat everyman with soulful eyes, and his slightly unpolished partner, TOM TAYLOR, a paunchy guy in his 40s.

HUDSON
What else did the intruder take?

MAGGIE
Nothing, just my tiara. I know who did it, too.
(shouts across park)
I'm onto you, Jolene!
(to detectives)
(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I let the little teenage hoodrat
try it on last week. I'm never
gonna see it again, am I?

Maggie starts to cry, her whole body heaving. The men stare
at her uncomfortably. Taylor nudges Hudson and whispers.

TAYLOR

Do something.

Hudson shakes his head and takes a small step back. No way.
The detectives receive a call on their two-way radios.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Twenty-four. Homicide requests
assistance. Inwood and 2nd.

HUDSON

(into radio)

Twenty-four. Copy. On our way.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

One man is sufficient, twenty-four.
The lieutenant wants Hudson. Copy?

HUDSON

(into radio)

Me? Uh, affirmative. I'll be
right there.

Taylor nods at Hudson, who's slightly dumbfounded.

TAYLOR

A special request from the boys in
homicide. You're getting called up
to the show, big guy.

HUDSON

(to Maggie)

Ma'am, do you have a photo inside
your home there? Something to help
us investigate the missing item?

MAGGIE

I think so.

Maggie lifts her considerable weight and enters her trailer.
When she's gone, Hudson anxiously turns to Taylor.

HUDSON

Why are they asking for me?

TAYLOR

Didn't you put in for homicide?

HUDSON

I don't know, maybe. Five or six years ago. Who can remember?

TAYLOR

I can. You wanted it, bad.

HUDSON

I also wanted to be The Rock. Look how that went. I'll take the car and send a patrol to pick you up.

As Hudson splits, Maggie returns and hands Taylor a PHOTO. Taylor looks close to see a SKINNY TEENAGER wearing a TIARA.

TAYLOR

Is this the girl you let try on your tiara?

MAGGIE

No -- that's me. The night I was crowned Miss Coastal Georgia.

Taylor can't hide his shock. Maggie starts crying anew.

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

A sad 1980s DATSUN SEDAN pulls to a stop next to emergency vehicles with flashing lights. Hudson exits and nervously surveys the swirling CRIME SCENE. Heading inside, Hudson stares at PARAMEDICS loading a BODY BAG into an ambulance.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Hudson enters the room, buzzing with DETECTIVES and CRIME-SCENE PERSONNEL. One BEEFY DETECTIVE looks up and sees him.

BEEFY DETECTIVE

Here comes the support! Property Crime Charlie in the house!

Everyone turns and CHEERS. Hudson sheepishly smiles, holds up a hand. And then everyone starts heading out. Confused, Hudson turns to LT. JAMISON, 50s, rough-shaven, ill-tempered.

HUDSON

Hey, Loo. Where they all going?

LT. JAMISON

Choir practice. Jack Dash here was just promoted to sergeant.

Jamison turns and claps the back of JACK DASH, 40s, unfairly handsome and charismatic, a true Southern gentleman.

HUDSON

What about the homicide?

DASH

Suicide.

Despite himself, Hudson is bummed. He stares at the BLOOD.

HUDSON

It's a suicide?

DASH

Yes, sir. One shot to the head. Close range. Upward trajectory. Two witnesses were in the house when it happened, the kid's mother and his teacher. They found the door dead-bolted from the inside.

LT. JAMISON

What kind of son does this to his mother? Look at that mess.

DASH

We got the mother's statement, along with the teacher and some neighbors. It all lines up.

HUDSON

So... what do you need me for?

LT. JAMISON

Pay attention, we're going drinking.
(to the room)
Everyone to the Club Deuce! First round's on me!

Another CHEER goes up. Dash hands Hudson his NOTES.

DASH

I need a detective to finish the paperwork. Attend the autopsy. If you'd be so kind, Hutton.

Hudson is deflated but not surprised.

HUDSON

Hudson.

LT. JAMISON

I want this case closed and filed in twenty-four hours.

HUDSON

Yes, sir.

Detective VERONICA KING, 30s, dumps her paperwork on Hudson. This woman is gorgeous, forthright, charming, and way out of his league. Worse still, she treats him like her girlfriend.

KING

How do I look, Charlie?

HUDSON

You look...

(scans her perfect body)

...good.

KING

(nods to Dash)

His wife's out of town this week.
You know how bad I want him.

HUDSON

Don't you think it's risky to --

KING

Shhh, he's coming. Wish me luck.

She splits away and joins Dash, flirting shamelessly as they walk out. With a sigh, Hudson dutifully turns to his work.

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An hour later. The house is empty. Hudson comes down the stairs, hands overflowing with papers, on his way out.

ROSE (O.S.)

Did you clean the blood?

Hudson stops to see Rose sitting in the darkness, staring out the window.

HUDSON

We're actually... no. We're not allowed to do that. There are certified bio-recovery services that specialize in trauma scene cleanup. I could call one for you.

(no response)

Okay, well... good-bye.

As he starts to go, Rose turns to reveal a tear-stained face.

ROSE

Sebastian would never kill himself.
He had too many plans.

HUDSON

I'm sorry.

Rose looks back out the window, and Hudson quietly exits.

EXT. RIVERFRONT - NIGHT

Establish the colorful, romantic Savannah Riverfront, with the water glistening under the moonlight. FIND a colorful hole-in-the-wall diner called the Deep Water Diner.

INT. DEEP WATER DINER - NIGHT

Late-night REGULARS populate the long counter and single row of vinyl booths. An adorable waitress, 24, with a name tag that says DARCY, comes out from the back with a to-go carton and hands it to Hudson, waiting at the end of the counter.

DARCY

The usual. One carton, white gravy. Sure you don't want anything to go with that? Like a straw?

HUDSON

(a little embarrassed)
Just the gravy.

As Darcy rings him up, he watches her a bit longingly.

DARCY

That'll be seventy-nine cents.

As Hudson reaches for his wallet and pulls out a dollar bill, his jacket opens slightly to reveal his HOLSTERED SIDEARM.

DARCY (CONT'D)

Whoa. Never noticed that before, Charlie. I hope you're not here to rob me.

HUDSON

What? Oh, no... I'm a detective.

DARCY

(impressed)
I always wondered.

HUDSON

Yeah... in fact, I was just working a big homicide case.

DARCY

Homicide. Really?

Hudson nods, milking it. Darcy hands him his change.

DARCY (CONT'D)

Maybe next time you'll stick around
and order some food with your gravy.

HUDSON

Maybe.

With a shy smile, he leaves a dollar on the counter for Darcy, takes his gravy, and heads out into the night.

INT. ATTIC APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hudson scoops sizzling pork sausages from a pan, sets them on a slice of white bread, and smothers it with gravy from the to-go carton. He sits down at the counter with his food and a bottle of beer and hits play on the answering machine.

As he listens to messages, the CAMERA EXPLORES his dimly lit, hard-core bachelor pad. One room, basically, with the bare essentials of male living, including a king-sized bed, a big-screen TV, and a monster stereo system. Streamers flutter from a rusty AC unit.

SEXY FEMALE VOICE

Hi Charlie, it's Angie. I need your touch, baby. My sink's backed up again. Can you pleeease come fix it? You are such a good friend.

Rolling his eyes, Hudson sips his icy beer. BEEP.

MALE VOICE

It's DogBoy. We got the football field on Saturday night. Nicky, ButtBob and Lucky Bastard will be there. Don't bitch out this time.

Hudson shrugs. Whatever. If he feels like it. BEEP.

LARRY'S VOICE

Mr. Hudson, this is Larry Lerner, Steinberg and Associates. I'm calling on behalf of the deceased -- Walter Hudson.

That stops Hudson cold. This is news to him.

LARRY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I'm the probate attorney for your father's estate. I need to see you in person immediately. My office is located at 133 West Maple.

CLICK. The messages have ended. Staring blankly, Hudson takes a bite of his sandwich and chews in the dim light.

INT. STEEL-CAGE ELEVATOR - DAY

Hudson stands inside a steel-cage elevator, heading up.

LARRY (PRELAP)
As I understand, you two didn't
have any relationship.

HUDSON (PRELAP)
He disappeared when I was five.

INT. LAW OFFICES - HALLWAY - DAY

Hudson walks with LARRY LERNER, a warm probate attorney, through the halls of a distinguished law office.

LARRY
Did you know he lived in Atlanta?

HUDSON
No.

LARRY
Walter contacted us when he first
became ill to help organize his
estate. He left specific orders
pertaining to you, Charlie. I can
read what he --

HUDSON
No need. Did he leave anything?

LARRY
His home was sold at auction to pay
his mortgage and debts. There's
some furniture in storage --

HUDSON
Donate it. That's it then?

LARRY
There's one more item to discuss.
Did you know that your father had
another son?

Larry reaches a door and continues inside --

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Hudson stops at the doorway and stares in without emotion. The news is another bombshell, but Hudson doesn't flinch.

HUDSON

Does he want the furniture? 'Cause I'm fine with that.

LARRY

Charlie is a minor.

This time, for the first time, Hudson reacts. *Shocked.*

HUDSON

His name is Charlie?

LARRY

His mother died at birth.

Outraged, Hudson strides into the office.

HUDSON

That's my name.

LARRY

Your father was raising him alone.

HUDSON

He already had a Charlie.

LARRY

I believe he wanted to try again.

Hudson angrily points at himself.

HUDSON

There was nothing wrong with the first try!

LARRY

That's good, because your brother wants to meet you.

HUDSON

Well I don't want to meet him.

The lawyer points to a frosted door in his office.

LARRY

He's right behind that door.

HUDSON

Is this a joke?

LARRY

Before I introduce you, I should inform you about Charlie's special nature.

HUDSON

No need. I was in those "special" classes, too. I have no interest in playing Big Brother to a hoodlum with reading disabilities.

LARRY

You don't understand. The child is profoundly gifted... a prodigy.

HUDSON

Define prodigy.

LARRY

A genius IQ is 140. The boy scored 190. It puts him in the 99.99997th percentile of the nation.

Huh. Hudson is intrigued. Larry opens the frosted door.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Your brother's here.

Larry moves back and CLEARS FRAME. Hudson tentatively leans forward, peering around behind the door. After a beat --

CHARLIE steps out. He's 11, with an open face and owlish glasses, way too big for his head. He holds a half-eaten, frozen PUSH POP, dripping down his hands. Hudson looks around for help.

HUDSON

Uh... hi.

CHARLIE

(holds up push pop)
You want some?

Hudson winces, shakes his head no, and turns to Larry.

HUDSON

Okay. We met. Now what?

LARRY

Whatever you want. Your father named you Charlie's new legal guardian.

Off Hudson's utter and extreme horror --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. COMPACT SEDAN - DRIVING - DAY

Hudson drives his brother through town in his beater compact sedan. Hudson is uncomfortable, but Charlie is calm and curious, taking in his surroundings through his big glasses.

HUDSON

So, you're a genius.

CHARLIE

No. I just find some things easy.

HUDSON

Which things?

CHARLIE

My cognitive profile says I have logical-mathematical intelligence with a gift for lateral thinking.

HUDSON

Meaning?

CHARLIE

I can identify abstract patterns. Order and compare. Use inductive and deductive logic to... whoa, is that a siren?

Charlie flips on the siren -- it WAILS. Hudson flips it off.

HUDSON

No, no... you can't touch that. It's not a toy.

CHARLIE

What do you do for the police?

HUDSON

I'm a detective.

CHARLIE

(thrilled)
A detective?

HUDSON

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Do you solve murders?

HUDSON

Well, there are a lot of types of detectives, each one has a role. It's a very complex mechanism.

CHARLIE

But you're a detective. Wow.

HUDSON

And you're 10. Wow.

CHARLIE

I'll be 11 next month.

HUDSON

If you're so smart, you should see I can't take care of an 11-year-old. I talked to the lawyer and he's gonna find another relative. You can crash with me until then.
(then)
I can't imagine what your dad was thinking.

CHARLIE

Our dad.

HUDSON

Did he ever talk about me?

CHARLIE

No.

HUDSON

Do you need to... talk about him?

CHARLIE

No. Dad helped me study for this. I have books on grieving. And he made me a checklist.

HUDSON

Good.

(stares at him, unsure)
You need anything?

CHARLIE

I'm a little thirsty.

INT. DEEP WATER DINER - DAY

CLOSE on a frothy milk shake. Charlie sips a straw, SLURPING LOUDLY. Hudson sits across from him in a booth, slogging glumly through his case report. Charlie watches in wonder.

CHARLIE

Did you crack the case yet?

(no response)

How many suspects do you have?

HUDSON

(looking up, annoyed)

We need to get you in school. Are they sending your transcripts?

CHARLIE

I just graduated from high school.

(off Hudson's stunned
silence)

How come I can't stay with you?

HUDSON

You mean like forever?

CHARLIE

No. Until I grow up.

HUDSON

There's the money, for starters. I can't afford to support two people.

CHARLIE

How much do you make?

HUDSON

You don't ask that.

CHARLIE

Oh.

The kid didn't know. Hudson senses there's a lot he doesn't know. Feeling badly now, he leans close and speaks soft.

HUDSON

Four-hundred and sixty a week.

CHARLIE

Before or after taxes?

HUDSON

(beat, annoyed)

After.

CHARLIE

How much is your rent?

HUDSON

I'm not doing this anymore.

CHARLIE

I come with financial benefits.
Head of household filing status.
Child tax credits. I can lower
your taxable income.

HUDSON

How do you know all this?

CHARLIE

I did the taxes for Dad.

Behind Hudson, Darcy walks up and sets down the check.

DARCY

I could use help with my taxes.
(to Charlie)
Who's your accountant here?

HUDSON

This is my brother, Charlie.

DARCY

Get out. Charlie and Charlie?
That's the cutest thing ever.

HUDSON

No it's not.

CHARLIE

I'm not really an accountant.

DARCY

I don't care, I'll still pay you to
do my taxes. If you guys need
anything else, just let me know.

As she walks away, Hudson stares at her sexy skirt. Slurping
his milk shake, Charlie notes Hudson's attraction to her.

CHARLIE

Do you live alone?

HUDSON

Yes.

CHARLIE

No girlfriend?

HUDSON

No.

CHARLIE

Aha!

HUDSON

"Aha" what?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

HUDSON

Look. Just because I'm alone, that doesn't mean I sleep alone.

CHARLIE

Whoa! Is that a riddle?

(musing to himself)

"Just because I'm alone, it doesn't mean I sleep alone." "Just because I'm alone, it doesn't mean I sleep alone."

To Hudson's relief, his cell phone RINGS and he answers.

HUDSON

Hello.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. AUTOPSY SUITE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Taylor, looking ill, stands over an autopsy table. A CORONER stitches up SEBASTIAN'S BODY after the autopsy. Blood covers the floor, the table, the hanging scales.

TAYLOR

Autopsy confirms a single, self-inflicted gunshot wound.

(fights off nausea wave)

You owe me large quantities of an alcoholic beverage for this.

HUDSON

Thanks for attending, big guy. I'm dealing with a personal crisis here.

TAYLOR

You know they use a bread knife to cut out the organs? They don't tell you that up front.

As they talk, Charlie sneaks an eager peek at Hudson's CASE FILE, flipping through crime scene photos, enthralled.

HUDSON

What do you have on the weapon? I want to find out where it came from. Put that in my report, too.

TAYLOR

It's a nine-millimeter Walther P38,
but the serial number was filed off.

HUDSON

A street sale.

Charlie stops at one photo, eyes furrowed. A CLOSER LOOK reveals a picture of the POUND CAKE by Sebastian's computer.

CHARLIE

Excuse me. What about the cake?

Hudson turns to see Charlie in his case file. He drops the phone and snatches the file from the boy, closing it.

HUDSON

You can't look at that! Those are
suicide photos.

(beat, curious)

What about the cake?

CHARLIE

If someone is about to kill himself,
why would he cut a piece of cake?
Isn't that suspicious?

Hudson stares at the boy. Good question. Charlie innocently slurps his shake. The slurp ECHOES, CAVERNOUS. Off Hudson --

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - DAY

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO of the cake.

LT. JAMISON (O.S.)

Open a murder investigation based
on this? Where's your evidence?

PULL BACK to Hudson standing timidly with Jamison, Dash and King before an EVIDENCE BOARD, full of brutal crime scene photos of a STABBING VICTIM. The bullpen around them buzzes.

HUDSON

I don't have "evidence," exactly.

KING

Then, can this wait, doll?

HUDSON

(to Jamison)

A depressed kid about to put a nine-
millimeter to his head, he's not
thinking about dessert. Right?

DASH

He's not thinking at all, or his brains would still be inside his head.

HUDSON

It's not just the cake. The kid was straight A's. There was no note. His own Mom said --

LT. JAMISON

Charlie, you're a solid Property Crimes detective. Best we have.

HUDSON

There's only me and Taylor.

LT. JAMISON

And you're better than him. That's why I put you on this. So take a deep breath, relax, and finish the paperwork.

KING

Go get 'em, Charlie!
(whispers confidentially)
And next time, talk to me first --
so you don't look like a dumbass in front of the lieutenant.

Feeling small, Hudson turns away and King resumes briefing Jamison. Dash splits off and catches up with Hudson.

DASH

Hey. You're thinking outside the box, that's good. But the evidence is pretty straight up on this one. You got the forensics report yet?

HUDSON

Not yet.

DASH

Well I'll bet my retirement fund they find gunshot residue on the victim's hand. Then you can put your mind and this case to rest.

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN CORNER - MINUTES LATER

Hudson sits at his desk, two-finger typing, ego bruised. It's a low-rent corner of the bullpen, a private fortress of dented file cabinets and discarded office furniture. Taylor sits at his desk, staring at the photo of the pound cake.

TAYLOR

Charlie Two raises a good question.
Who brings snack food to a suicide?

HUDSON

Doesn't matter. It's over.

TAYLOR

Probably a wise move. Stick with
your own. Here in Property Crimes
we are masters of our own domain.
There'd be no World of Warcraft if
we were out in the main bullpen.

In the bullpen, Charlie hovers over the Beefy Detective,
working at his computer. Charlie points to the screen.

CHARLIE

"Harass" only has one R. It's a
commonly misspelled word. Along
with "misspell," which has two S's.

BEEFY DETECTIVE

Who brought the kid?

HUDSON

Charlie! Get over here.
(as Charlie walks over)
You can't just tell people things.
You need to find out if they even
want your help.

Hudson resumes his work. Charlie stares at him, perplexed.

CHARLIE

I don't get it. You're a detective.
You can be out investigating. Why
are you sitting at a desk?

HUDSON

Why? Why it's my expertise. After
six years of burglary reports, I
can teach a master class in the
finer nuances of filling out forms.
So stand back and watch a virtuoso.

Charlie looks at Hudson, now totally confused.

TAYLOR

I don't think children understand
irony so good.

Taylor opens a drawer, pulls out an old-fashioned MAGNIFYING
GLASS with a wooden handle, and tosses it to Charlie.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Here, kid. Go fry some ants.

CHARLIE

A magnifying glass! Thanks!

Charlie takes the magnifying glass and starts exploring.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Can we take this to the scene of the crime?

HUDSON

(losing patience)

This ends right now. There was no crime. Two people heard a gunshot. The room was locked from the inside. Explain that to me. Explain it.

CHARLIE

Maybe the killer was hiding in the room and snuck out after the body was found.

TAYLOR

Bam! He did it again. See that?
(to Charlie)
How'd you do that?

CHARLIE

We should check the crime scene.

Hudson forcefully folds his hands on the desk. Then he rubs his eyes. Then he turns to Taylor, hating to admit this --

HUDSON

We should check the crime scene.

TAYLOR

What? You said it was over.

HUDSON

I want it to be over, I do.
(despite himself)
But what if he's right?

TAYLOR

I dunno, Charlie. The lieutenant told you to let it go. And we got our own cases here to close.

HUDSON

You know, they think we're a joke out there.

TAYLOR

I'm comfortable with that.

HUDSON

I'm not. I used to want more than this. This is our chance to show them we're not total bobbleheads.

TAYLOR

(beat, taking pity)

I suppose I could check out the gun from evidence. Maybe ballistics can recover the serial number.

HUDSON

Yes. We find the owner, we find out for sure who pulled the trigger. I'll go back to the crime scene.

Charlie holds the magnifying glass over one already BIG EYE.

CHARLIE

What can I do?

HUDSON

Nothing.

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE on Rose's weary face.

ROSE

No, he wasn't on any medication.

FIND Hudson sitting across the dining table from Rose.

HUDSON

Did your son have any enemies?

ROSE

Sebastian liked to stay home and write. He never got into any trouble at all.

MR. FONTANA (O.S.)

Detective...

PAN TO Mr. Fontana, the picture of concern, sitting beside Rose. Sympathy casseroles and baked goods surround them.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

...is this necessary right now? This woman deserves a chance to grieve her son.

HUDSON

I know you went over all this last night, Mr. Fontana, but a couple things aren't quite adding up.

MR. FONTANA

And this can't wait until...

The professor's words drift off. Something has caught his eye. He turns his head and looks out the window in alarm.

ROSE

No, it's okay. I want answers. Ask anything you need.

As they talk, follow Mr. Fontana's troubled gaze OUT THE WINDOW to see Charlie in the backyard, snooping with his magnifying glass. Mr. Fontana struggles to keep calm.

HUDSON

Have you noticed anything of value missing from your home?

ROSE

I went over the house carefully, but no... everything's here.

The professor nervously checks again to see Charlie examining two WOODEN BARRELS by the back fence. As we PUSH INTO Mr. Fontana's distressed face --

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mr. Fontana, saddlebag over his shoulder, scrambles onto a BARREL and uses it to scale the back fence, draped in thick kudzu. As he disappears over the wall --

RESUME:

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mr. Fontana watches as Charlie uses his magnifying glass to examine *the very barrel the professor used to escape after the murder*. Finding something of interest, Charlie stands, looks toward the window, and starts waving, trying to get Hudson's attention inside. Off Mr. Fontana's panic --

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Mr. Fontana watches Hudson scold Charlie, who stands beside the two upright wooden barrels.

HUDSON

I told you to wait in the car.

CHARLIE

I was looking for clues, and I found one.

MR. FONTANA

Oh, so you're a detective?

HUDSON

This is my brother. Charlie. I'm sorry about this. He likes to solve cases -- it's a game we play.

Charlie pats one of the barrels. Up close, we can see now that the barrels are built with sturdy legs on either side, which support a heavy metal rod through their mid-sections.

CHARLIE

Somebody was on this barrel. See the mud on top?

MR. FONTANA

Nothing unusual about that. These are tumbling barrels, for compost.

He puts his hand on the other barrel and pushes at the top. It SPINS FREELY, end over end, on the rod through its center.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

I think it'd take a circus acrobat to balance on that. What do you think, Charlie?

CHARLIE

(no idea)

I've never been to a circus.

HUDSON

Never?

CHARLIE

No. Can we go to one?

HUDSON

No.

CHARLIE

Why?

HUDSON

I'm... allergic to elephants.

CHARLIE

I see.

(to Mr. Fontana)

I know that one spins. But this
one doesn't. See?

Charlie tries to spin the other barrel. It won't budge. FOLLOW Charlie down to his hands and knees. Peering under the barrel now with the boy, we see a CINDER BLOCK shoved beneath it. Charlie drags it out so the men can see.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

This was stuck underneath. Isn't
that suspicious?

HUDSON

(intrigued)

A cinder block.

MR. FONTANA

I wonder how long that's been there.

CHARLIE

Not long. Look...

Charlie points to a RECTANGLE OF DEAD GRASS nearby. He picks up the heavy cinder block and sets it on the rectangle. A perfect fit. As we PUSH INTO the professor's worried face --

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

In a sequence we didn't see earlier, Mr. Fontana picks up the cinder block from that very spot, shoves it under the barrel, then starts climbing over.

RESUME:

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Hudson examines the kudzu next to the barrel in question.

CHARLIE

Maybe the murderer used this barrel
to climb the back wall and escape
without being seen.

Hudson feels the fire of investigation kindling inside.

HUDSON

That would explain the torn kudzu.

MR. FONTANA

Slow down, you two. You're moving too fast for me. If there was a killer, how'd he slip past me and Sebastian's mother? We were in the house when we heard the gunshot.

HUDSON

We have a theory on that. The assailant may have been hiding in the study when you found the body.

MR. FONTANA

That's an interesting thought.

CHARLIE

I think we should investigate this.

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - STUDY - DAY

PAN AROUND the small study, which has no real hiding places, until we reach Hudson and Mr. Fontana looking around.

HUDSON

Not many options for concealment. Window's too small for egress.

CHARLIE

Look... over here.

Charlie's magnifying glass reveals a DENT behind the door.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The paint, it's chipped. Maybe this is where the killer was hiding.

MR. FONTANA

I suppose it's possible. Unless... Charlie, would you please step back?

Charlie does so. The professor opens the door, all the way, until the knob FITS NEATLY into the depression in the wall. The bubble of excitement Hudson was feeling abruptly bursts.

HUDSON

The door knob created the dent when you broke it open. If someone was standing here, there wouldn't be a mark.

Charlie looks at his big brother. Hudson, flooded again by feelings of inferiority, avoids his gaze. Mr. Fontana looks up. OVERHEAD SHOT: Straight down on the three staring up.

MR. FONTANA

Maybe the killer was hanging from the ceiling. It supports my acrobat theory. What do you think, Charlie?

HUDSON

I think we've wasted enough of your time.

MR. FONTANA

You can see what I'm talking about now. Sebastian locked this door himself. There was no other way.

Rose enters with a tray of homemade sweets and pastries.

ROSE

Take some, please. I have more food than I know what to do with.

CHARLIE

Why did you make so much?

ROSE

(smiles fondly)

I didn't. They're from friends. You know, you remind me of Sebby, my son... in the eyes.

CHARLIE

He had a crossed eye, too?

ROSE

No. The way you see the world. Full of wonder. It is why Sebby was going to be a great writer.

Hudson's cell phone RINGS, and he wearily answers.

HUDSON

Yeah?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Dash walks down the hall, scanning a FORENSICS REPORT.

DASH

It's Jack Dash. Labs came in on your suicide. Like I thought, gunshot residue on the victim's hand. You owe me your pension. And a finished report. Jamison's making noise.

HUDSON

Yeah, okay. Thanks, Dash.
(hangs up)
Come on, Charlie. We're done here.

He turns to go, annoyed with himself for this fool's errand. But Charlie is using his magnifying glass to closely examine the BROKEN SLIDING LOCK on the study door.

CHARLIE

I read an Ellery Queen book where the murderer used a magnet to lock a door from the outside.

Mr. Fontana almost falls over in shock as we --

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The professor quickly closes the door on the dead Sebastian in the study, then places his LARGE MAGNET against the door and uses it to SLIDE THE LOCK into place in the study.

RESUME:

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - STUDY - DAY

The flummoxed professor does his best to recover.

MR. FONTANA

Ellery Queen? Never read him. And here I am, a literature professor, how embarrassing.

HUDSON

Charlie, enough. Magnets don't go through wood doors. It's time to leave these people alone.

CHARLIE

Actually, it all depends on the density of the wood --

HUDSON

I said stop, please. This is real life. Not a story book.

CHARLIE

It was a novel.

HUDSON

(sharply, losing it)
Charlie! Let it go!
(to the professor)
We're very sorry for troubling you.

Humiliated enough for one day, Hudson strikes out. Charlie follows him out. Off the professor's immense relief --

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

In a charming, moss-laden square, Charlie dips his magnifying glass into a Gothic fountain to see what it does to water.

HUDSON (O.S.)

This isn't working out. Did you find any other relatives?

LARRY (O.S.)

I'm afraid you're it.

FIND Hudson, a short distance away, talking on his cell.

HUDSON

Then find the kid a Foster family. Find him a good one. I'm not cut out for this.

INT. LAW OFFICES - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Larry, the probate attorney, sits at his desk on the phone.

LARRY

Okay. A boy like Charlie shouldn't be too hard to place. But are you sure this is what you want?

HUDSON (O.S.)

Trust me, I'm sure.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Hudson sees Taylor pull up and exit his car.

HUDSON

Call me when you find someone.

Hudson hangs up and meets up with Taylor, who walks over and hands Hudson a plastic evidence bag with the HANDGUN inside.

TAYLOR

Ballistics couldn't restore the serial number. Not even a partial.

HUDSON

Doesn't matter. It's a dead end. I'll take this to the ATF guys for disposal.

TAYLOR

At least we tried, right big guy?

HUDSON

We did more than try, big guy. We succeeded in showing 'em we belong exactly where we are.

TAYLOR

Nothing wrong with where we are. Property Crime has the pimp hours. None of that gotta-work-through-the-night propaganda for us, right? Oh, you in for the fooseball tournament Saturday night? ButtBob was asking.

HUDSON

Sure, why not.

TAYLOR

What are you gonna do with the kid?

Hudson looks over at Charlie, now leaning so far over the fountain that he accidently tips over and DUNKS HIS HEAD. Hudson turns back to Taylor.

HUDSON

I'm working on it.

INT. ATTIC APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlie sits at the table in silence, eating one of Hudson's messy gravy concoctions in silence. Hudson sits across from him with a beer, grinding to finish his report.

CHARLIE

I've been thinking about the murder.

HUDSON

(eyes on his work)
There was no murder.

CHARLIE

I calculated magnetic power through different densities of wood --

HUDSON

Charlie, not now. Please.

Charlie regards his focused brother for a beat.

CHARLIE

Have you always given up so easily?
Every puzzle has a solution. You
just have to work through it slowly
and carefully. Use basic logic.

Hudson slaps down his pencil. He has truly had enough.

HUDSON

Goddammit, Charlie! Basic logic?
I'm into basic survival. And I've
been doing pretty good at it until
yesterday. I made detective, by
myself. Figured it out, by myself.
I know I'm not moving up the ranks,
but I'm proud just to be here.
I've never had the benefit of what
you'd call a "proper role model."
Your dad kind'a ran out on me.

CHARLIE

Me, too.

Hudson stares at his brother, seeing him for the first time.

HUDSON

Yeah, I suppose he did. So, what'd
you two do for fun? You and your
father.

CHARLIE

Puzzles.

HUDSON

Of course.

CHARLIE

He also read to me.

HUDSON

What, Ellery Queen?

CHARLIE

No. Bronte. Chaucer. Kafka.

HUDSON

And nobody called Protective
Services?

CHARLIE

You kind of look like him.

HUDSON

Kafka? I'm not even Jewish.

(realizing)

Oh, Dad. Great.

(then, for Charlie)

I mean, great. Do you miss him?

CHARLIE

I have to go to the bathroom.

Charlie abruptly scampers off. Hudson sighs, takes a swig of beer, and returns to his paperwork. After a beat, the spoon on the table in front of him begins to ROCK BACK AND FORTH.

Astonished, Hudson leans closer to look. The spoon magically SLIDES ACROSS THE TABLE, spilling his beer. Hudson jumps up, rescuing the papers.

HUDSON

What is that?

Charlie, beaming, pops out from under the table.

CHARLIE

I told you a magnet works through wood! It just has to be big enough.

HUDSON

Where'd you get a magnet?

CHARLIE

I took apart your speaker when you were in the shower.

Charlie holds up a 15-INCH WOOFER, encapsulated by a CIRCULAR MAGNET. Hudson looks over at his stereo to see one of his big speakers disassembled, then back at Charlie in amazement.

INT. ATTIC APARTMENT - LATER

Lights out. In boxers and a t-shirt, Hudson lies in bed. Charlie, wearing pajamas, lies on the couch. Two brothers, staying up late, staring at the ceiling, swapping theories.

HUDSON

Once the killer got outta the room, how in the hell... heck, did he slip past the witnesses and into the backyard? There wasn't a fire escape, I checked.

(MORE)

HUDSON (CONT'D)

And why do you knock off a college kid in the first place?

CHARLIE

We need more facts.

HUDSON

We can rule out crime of passion as a motive. This was too thought out.

CHARLIE

We can't rule out anything yet.

HUDSON

But we can narrow our focus based on the evidence at hand. You have to do that sometimes.

CHARLIE

No, it's a common deductive mistake. Drawing conclusions before you have all your information.

HUDSON

I'm a detective, and I'm telling you, this is what the police do.

CHARLIE

It's also what that yellow sponge does. It's why he and the big pink starfish keep getting into trouble.

(truly perplexed)

I really don't understand that cartoon.

HUDSON

Oh-kay.

CHARLIE

I can demonstrate my point with a puzzle.

HUDSON

By all means.

CHARLIE

A man lives in a penthouse on the 28th floor. Each morning, he takes the elevator to the ground floor. But after work, he takes the elevator only halfway up and uses the stairs the rest of the way. What can you tell me about the man?

HUDSON

He likes to exercise after work.

CHARLIE

See what you did? You made up a fact to fit your theory. You need more information. Now, what if I told you on rainy days the man takes the elevator all the way up to the penthouse. Then everything becomes clear, right?

HUDSON

Riiiiight...
(beat, confused)
I don't get it.

CHARLIE

The man is a little person. When he needs to go up, he can't reach the higher buttons on the elevator panel, except on rainy days.

HUDSON

What happens on rainy days?

CHARLIE

(duh)
He has an umbrella.

HUDSON

And this is going to help us catch a killer... how?

CHARLIE

When it comes to puzzles, the obvious clues are always a trap. We need to see the clues nobody else sees.

HUDSON

The pound cake. The cinder block.

CHARLIE

What else haven't we observed?

HUDSON

(thinks, beat)
Go to sleep.

Determined, Hudson rolls out of bed, moves to his desk, and switches on a desk lamp. He starts pouring over his files, scouring them for something, anything, he might have missed. After a beat, he calls across the room.

HUDSON (CONT'D)

By the way, I'm not really allergic
to elephants.

CHARLIE

Okay.

As Hudson settles in to work late --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ATTIC APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

PAN the silent apartment. Dark. Quiet. We reach Charlie on
the couch, hours later, fast asleep and tangled in sheets. A
HAND ENTERS FRAME and rudely starts shaking him.

HUDSON

Charlie! Charlie!

(waves FORENSICS REPORT)

There were only sixty particles of
gunshot residue on Sebastian's
hand. According to my research, a
nine-millimeter handgun should
leave hundreds of particles on the
shooter's hand.

(echoing Charlie's words)

Isn't that suspicious?

Charlie puts on his glasses, crooked, and stares blankly.

CHARLIE

You woke me up.

HUDSON

You woke me up, too. Thanks.

Off Charlie, blinking behind his big glasses, no clue what
his brother is talking about --

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. POLICE STATION - BALLISTICS LAB - DAWN

In a MUSIC MONTAGE, a white-coated LAB ANALYST watches Hudson FIRE A BLANK from Sebastian's handgun toward a safety target.

In the hallway, Charlie sits sleepily on a bench, watching through a glass window. He looks out of place wearing his pajamas. Taylor sits next to him doing a crossword puzzle.

The Lab Analyst SWABS Hudson's hand for gunshot residue.

Stuck on a word, Taylor hands the puzzle to Charlie and points to the clue. Charlie thoughtfully takes the pencil.

Hudson watches the Lab Analyst examine the residue under an electron microscope.

Charlie hands the puzzle back to Taylor -- every answer is completed. Off Taylor's bafflement, we END THE MONTAGE.

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - MORNING

The Lab Analyst, holding a report, briefs Hudson and Taylor on his findings. Charlie listens from Hudson's nearby desk.

LAB ANALYST

According to a preliminary analysis,
the firearm expelled 1,200 unique
particles of gunshot residue onto
your shooting hand, give or take.

HUDSON

Our victim only had sixty on his
hand. From the exact same weapon.

Charlie picks up the gun from Hudson's desk for a close look.

CHARLIE

I don't see any gunshot residue.

HUDSON

(taking gun)
Gimme that.

TAYLOR

It's microscopic dust. That's why
there were particles on the victim
even though he wasn't the shooter.

CHARLIE

How come nobody else noticed this?

HUDSON

Because detectives search for patterns of evidence to support their theories. Just like you said, Charlie.

(pulls out TICKETS)

Braves v. Phillies. Wednesday night. Behind home plate.

LAB ANALYST

Anytime you need a favor.

The Lab Analyst smiles, takes the tickets, and heads away. Hudson turns to Taylor and Charlie, galvanized.

HUDSON

Finally. Our first real evidence.

(to Charlie)

I mean, police evidence.

(back to Taylor)

Now we need suspects. A motive.

I'll talk to the victim's friends.

TAYLOR

I guess I could take another run at the murder weapon. It had to be stolen from somewhere, right?

CHARLIE

(eager)

What about me?

EXT. DAYCARE CENTER - PLAY YARD - MORNING

CLOSE on a sign that says: "DELIA'S DAYCARE." TILT DOWN to find two hyper ALL-AMERICAN BOYS, 10, talking to Charlie. One holds a rubber ball.

BOY ONE

Okay, so do you want to be the monkey? If you're the monkey, then you try to get the ball from us. Got it?

BOY TWO

It's called Monkey in the Middle. We throw the ball over your head and you jump and grab it. Okay?

CHARLIE

I think I understand. There's a linear structure with three of us in a straight line?

The two boys exchange a look. Who is this kid?

BOY ONE

I guess.

CHARLIE

Can the monkey protest if one of the players breaks formation?

BOY TWO

Dude, just try to get the ball.

ACROSS THE YARD

Hudson talks with DELIA, a sweet daycare worker.

DELIA

We only get the older children before and after school, unless it's summer, of course. But in your brother's case, I'd be happy to make an exception.

Hudson is only half-listening. He's got one eye on Charlie in the background, who's proving to be a rather listless Monkey in the Middle, to the growing frustration of the boys.

HUDSON

What would Charlie do here all day?

DELIA

Be my big helper. Pass out cookies and juice boxes to the little ones during circle time. Giving children responsibilities like that does so much for their self esteem.

Hudson looks out to see Charlie, turned all around. The rubber ball THUMPS him in the back of the head.

EXT. SAVANNAH ARTS COLLEGE - DAY

The Savannah River flows behind a beautiful arts college.

MR. FONTANA (O.S.)

If you desperately desire a dream, the universe will conspire to make it happen.

INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - CLASSROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Mr. Fontana stands before a room of COLLEGE STUDENTS.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

What does Paulo Coelho call this concept in his book, *The Alchemist*?

(MORE)

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

Anyone?

(beat)

Controlled Luck. Think about that.
You can make something happen just
by wanting it badly enough.

The professor turns to write "Controlled Luck" on the chalkboard behind him. He keeps talking as he writes.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

My dream was to make the transition
from teaching literature to writing
it, and as you know, I just closed
a book deal. Only one thing can
stop a dream from being achieved,
according to Coelho. Who knows
what that is?

SMALL VOICE

Fear.

Mr. Fontana turns from his chalkboard to see Charlie standing with Hudson in the back of the classroom. Off his dismay --

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The professor, forcing calm, stands with Hudson and Charlie.

HUDSON

Hello again. I've been questioning
Sebastian's friends this morning.
His mother gave me a couple names
in your class.

MR. FONTANA

I thought you discarded the murder
theory.

CHARLIE

We found forensic evidence.

MR. FONTANA

(to Hudson, re: Charlie)
Is he actually on the pay roll?

HUDSON

I'm having child-care issues.
(to Charlie)
Silent observer, remember?

MR. FONTANA

(to Hudson)
If you don't mind me asking, what
kind of evidence did you find?

Hudson's cell phone RINGS. He holds up a hand.

HUDSON
My partner. Could be important.

Hudson turns away to answer his phone. Feeling the heat now, the professor glances around. Charlie is nowhere in sight.

INT. PROFESSOR FONTANA'S OFFICE - DAY

The professor walks into his office, next door to his class.

MR. FONTANA
Do you always wander into people's
offices?

CLOSE on Charlie looking out the third-floor window.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry, sir. I was exploring.
Look, there's an electrical wire.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

From an ANGLE OUTSIDE THE BUILDING, REVEAL Charlie sitting on the ledge of the open window, one leg inside the room, the other leg dangling out.

INT. PROFESSOR FONTANA'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME TIME

Mr. Fontana joins Charlie and gazes down at the steep drop.

MR. FONTANA
Is there?

Charlie points and the professor leans out to observe a POWER LINE attached to the roof, angled downward, with BIRDS on it.

CHARLIE
I've been trying to figure out how
the killer got away with witnesses
in the house. Stilts? Ladders? A
parachute? Nothing logically made
sense. Until now. You know what a
zip line is?

EXT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mr. Fontana climbs out an upstairs window, hooks a zip-line handle (the T-bar from Act One) over a power line angled toward the back fence, then slides down into the backyard.

RESUME:

INT. PROFESSOR FONTANA'S OFFICE - DAY

The professor, beyond surprise now, stares calmly at Charlie.

MR. FONTANA

"The world is full of obvious things,
which nobody by any chance observes."

CHARLIE

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. *Hound of
the Baskervilles?*

MR. FONTANA

(nods his head)

You seem to have quite the mind for
mysteries, Charlie. You're the one
who's pushing this case forward,
aren't you? The curiously uneaten
cake. The devilish use of magnets.

The professor looks back out the window.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

But, c'mon... is a power line really
strong enough to support a human
body? How thick would you say that
wire out there is?

Charlie leans forward to get a better look, until his whole
torso hangs perilously out the window.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

Make sure you get a good look.

EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY - SAME TIME

LOW ANGLE -- CLOSE ON CHARLIE'S FACE -- LOOKING DOWN AT US

The camera rapidly ZOOMS OUT from its position on the ground
to accentuate the height of the high window, as Charlie leans
forward even further.

INT. PROFESSOR FONTANA'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

The professor puts a hand on the boy's back, ready to push --
when Hudson enters behind them and freaks, racing forward.

HUDSON

Charlie!

The professor swiftly grabs Charlie with both hands --

MR. FONTANA

Ah ah ah -- I got you!

-- whisks him from the windowsill, and sets him down in the office. Hudson leans over his brother, frightened.

HUDSON

What were you thinking?

CHARLIE

I was just --

HUDSON

I don't care! That's the last time you do anything like that. Got it?

Charlie nods. Hudson turns to Mr. Fontana and vents.

HUDSON (CONT'D)

What am I supposed to do with this kid? Daycare isn't an option, but I can't leave him alone. Now my partner needs backup and I'm screwed.

MR. FONTANA

Leave the boy with me.

CHARLIE

Thanks for the offer, but I think I should stay with the investigation.

MR. FONTANA

C'mon. We'll have fun. You can sit in on my classes.

CHARLIE

(beat, wavering)

I am curious what college is like.

HUDSON

No, it's too much. I can't impose.

MR. FONTANA

Go, I insist. Leave your brother with me. I'll take good care of him.

As the killer places a protective arm around the boy --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

PAN the now rapt faces of colleges students, listening.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Paulo Coelho believes we all have something called a Personal Legend. It's what we were born to do.

FIND Charlie standing in front of the class. Mr. Fontana sits at his desk, listening in fascination with the rest.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Some people ignore their Personal Legend. Like the crystal merchant did in the book. But then they're sad for the rest of their lives.

COLLEGE GIRL

How do you know all this?

CHARLIE

I read a lot. And remember things.

GEEK

What's your IQ and rarity?

CHARLIE

I scored a 190 on the Standford-Binet, with a rarity of one in 107 million.

Everyone in the room is amazed. The professor wonders --

MR. FONTANA

Charlie. What would you say is your own Personal Legend? Your, uh... reason for living?

CHARLIE

Solving puzzles.

Fontana coolly regards this looming threat. What to do?

INT. PROFESSOR FONTANA'S OFFICE - DAY

After class, Charlie scours the class titles in the book shelves. Mr. Fontana flips through papers at his desk, stealing disquieted looks at Charlie. He needs a plan to deal with this boy. STUDENTS drift past in the hallway.

MR. FONTANA

I have an idea. Since you love mysteries so much. What do you say we head over to Sebastian's house? Search for more clues.

CHARLIE

Really? Can we?

MR. FONTANA

It's a short walk. Ten minutes, tops. I just need to finish here. Why don't you head outside, wait for me in the back parking lot.

CHARLIE

(unsure)

You want me to go alone?

MR. FONTANA

It's a college campus. You'll be fine. Just keep to yourself.

Charlie respectfully nods and heads out.

EXT. WATERFRONT - BRIDGE - DAY

In a dirty industrial area, Hudson pulls his sedan to a stop under a bridge. Taylor waits for him there. Hudson exits his car and pops the trunk. As they talk, they pull on bullet-proof vests and check their handguns.

TAYLOR

You said, we find the gun's owner, we find the killer. So I spent the morning going through ATF incident reports. Our murder weapon was the third Walther P38 recovered in the commission of a crime this month. All with serial numbers filed off.

HUDSON

Someone's flooding the streets with our weapon. Any idea who?

TAYLOR

Remember Gordo Parente? Small-time thug? We nailed him two years ago for stealing a crate of Walther P38s from Al's Sporting Goods. Well, guess who just got out of jail?

Hudson puts on his jacket over his vest and smiles. They start walking away from the water. HOLD on their backs.

HUDSON

He kept the guns stashed and now
he's moving 'em on the street.
Idiot.

TAYLOR

He sold one to our killer.

HUDSON

Nice work, big guy.

TAYLOR

Thanks, big guy.

CLOSE ON FEET WALKING. TILT UP to reveal they belong to --

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - DAY

Charlie and Mr. Fontana, walking along a barren stretch of road, with the college campus receding behind them. The professor scans the area to make sure nobody is watching.

MR. FONTANA

There's a shortcut to Sebastian's
house, just ahead.

CHARLIE

Can we log onto his computer?

MR. FONTANA

What for?

CHARLIE

Motive. Suspects. My brother says
we need those for our case. We
might find them on his computer.

MR. FONTANA

I knew Sebastian. He didn't write
a diary, if that's what you mean.

CHARLIE

But what did he write? That's the
question.

MR. FONTANA

Is it?

CHARLIE

Sebastian's mother said he was a
great writer. If that was his
Personal Legend, maybe he was good
enough to write something worth
killing for.

As Mr. Fontana regards the boy with awe --

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - STUDY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

After shooting Sebastian, Mr. Fontana takes the blood-flecked manuscript -- titled "Jaws of Life" -- and puts it back in his saddlebag. Next, he sits behind Sebastian's computer and drags the files for the novel into the trash.

RESUME:

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - DAY

MR. FONTANA

You're too smart for your own good,
Charlie. Sure, we'll check the
computer.

(looks up)

Here we are. This is our shortcut.

He guides Charlie down a trail that opens onto an isolated stretch of TRAIN TRACKS. Charlie stops uncertainly.

MR. FONTANA (CONT'D)

It's okay. You're safe with me.

The professor holds out his hand. Charlie trustingly takes it, and they start walking together down the train tracks.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDINGS - ALLEYWAY - DAY

A complex of low-slung apartments. Hudson and Taylor stand at a door at the end of an alleyway. Taylor pushes a BUZZER. Hudson POUNDS on the door.

TAYLOR

Savannah Metro. C'mon, open up!

Some pebbles hit Hudson's shoulder, and he looks up to see a grossly overweight Cuban man in sweats -- PARENTE -- skirting the narrow edge of the pebbled roof, trying to sneak away.

HUDSON

Hey! Gordo!

Parente jumps over the narrow alleyway, onto another rooftop. Hudson shoots Taylor a look.

HUDSON (CONT'D)

Here we go...

Percussive CHASE MUSIC kicks in, as Taylor turns to kick down the door. Hudson holds up a hand, tries the door -- it's unlocked. They rush inside, pushing past a CUBAN WOMAN.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

Hudson and Taylor clear the stairs and race onto the roof. They look over a sea of flat rooftops dotted with clothes lines and broken patio chairs. In the distance, Parente clumsily hops from one rooftop to the next. The detectives split up and take off running after him.

TAYLOR

Runs past an inflatable above-ground SWIMMING POOL, bursts through drying clothes on a clothes line -- and stops short when he finds himself facing an angry ROTTWEILER. The dog starts barking viciously, moving in on Taylor, who's trapped.

HUDSON

Runs parallel to Parente on an adjacent rooftop.

HUDSON

Would you stop? We're rational people, Gordo. Let's talk.

But Parente JUMPS off the edge, landing in a SAND PILE for construction. He rolls onto his feet and starts running again. Hudson turns to see where his partner is --

TAYLOR

Now stands in the middle of the 12-foot circular pool, holding off the attack dog with a pool toy.

HUDSON

Turns back to the chase. He JUMPS off the building, lands in the sand pile, rolls and keeps running.

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

Parente runs along the river, sweaty and sucking air. Hudson starts closing on the big man, whose belly bounces with each step. The chase runs out of gas when Parente, struggling to breathe, waves his hands and stops, clutching his side.

Hudson catches up, stumbles to the ground, and stays down, spent. Neither of them speaks for several seconds, as they fight to catch their breath. Hudson pulls out his gun.

PARENTE

I didn't have anything to do with knocking over that deli. It was Jackson. I only took one short loin for a barbecue at my cousin's.

HUDSON

What are you talking about?

PARENTE

The hit on the Central Market.
That's why you're here, right?

Hudson climbs to his feet and leans over Parente.

HUDSON

You'll go to jail just for making
me run. Now who are you selling
handguns to?

Off Parente, suddenly very nervous --

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Charlie and Mr. Fontana continue down the tracks, shrouded
from the road by live oaks, kudzu and magnolias.

MR. FONTANA

If your murder theory proves to be
right, there's one thing I don't
understand. Why would someone kill
Sebastian with people in the house?

CHARLIE

(truly stumped)
I don't know why anyone would kill
anyone.

MR. FONTANA

It's risky, is all I'm saying.

CHARLIE

I never thought of that.

Mr. Fontana stops. This is a key moment. If Charlie loses
suspicion here, he's no longer a threat to the professor.

MR. FONTANA

So, your murder theory could be...
wrong? Please, Charlie. Tell me
it's wrong. We'll go see a movie.

Charlie stares at Mr. Fontana for a beat. Thinking. Then --

CHARLIE

No, there was definitely a murder.
Your question's a good one, but I
can offer possible solutions.

MR. FONTANA
(sighs regretfully)
Then we should keep walking.

Mr. Fontana takes Charlie's shoulder and leads him deeper into the desolate area.

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

Hudson sits beside Parente, overlooking boats passing in the river. Taylor writes names on a list, as Parente gives them.

PARENTE
Tinsley. Tinsley got one, too.

TAYLOR
I know all these clowns. None of them are smart enough to stage a suicide. Who else did you sell the guns to?

PARENTE
I didn't sell them to anyone. They were gifts. For my associates.

HUDSON
Dammit, Gordo! You moved a weapon that put a bullet in the head of a college student. You're going back to jail, no matter what. Only question is, how many charges?

TAYLOR
You help us, we help you. That's how it works, Gordo.

PARENTE
(beat)
I sold one to a guy from the college. He read about my arrest in the papers and tracked me down.

HUDSON
(shoots Taylor a look)
College kid? Skinny? Curly hair?

PARENTE
Naw, naw, older dude. Cheap suit. Big head. Weird guy. Said he wanted to rob a bank, but he wasn't a robber. Psycho killer, maybe.

Time stops for Hudson, as the chilling realization hits --

HUDSON
Charlie's with him.
(already turning to run)
Stay with Parente!

As Hudson takes off running, without looking back --

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Mr. Fontana leads Charlie down the tracks.

MR. FONTANA
You said you had theories. About
why someone would murder Sebastian
with people in the house.

CHARLIE
That's right. What if the killer
didn't know you were downstairs?

MR. FONTANA
We were pretty noisy.

CHARLIE
Then maybe he wanted witnesses.

MR. FONTANA
What in heavens for?

CHARLIE
Well, if he already killed Sebastian,
he might want the murder to look like
a suicide.

MR. FONTANA
Charlie, Charlie. Somebody would
have heard that shot. A neighbor.

CHARLIE
When the trains pass behind my
house, you can't hear anything.

MR. FONTANA
But we heard the shot. Sebastian's
mother and I. We were there.

CHARLIE
Faking a gunshot is easy. All you
need is a firecracker. A bullet
squib. Maybe a crash box.

MR. FONTANA
(slightly indignant)
You think a bullet squib is easy?

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - STUDY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Mr. Fontana hides the EXPLOSIVE DEVICE inside an air vent.

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Rose talks to the professor, right before the shot goes off. Only this time, we see him covertly pull the HANDHELD REMOTE from his pocket.

ROSE
You want coffee?

MR. FONTANA
No, thanks. Makes me paranoid.

With a smile, he pushes the button. CUT TO:

INT. ANTEBELLUM TOWNHOUSE - AIR VENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

In the vent, the explosive device FIRES WITH A BANG.

RESUME:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

CHARLIE
But it doesn't hold up as a theory.

MR. FONTANA
Why not?

CHARLIE
The police would have found traces of the explosive device. Nobody had a chance to remove evidence before they got there. I mean, nobody except Sebastian's mother and...

Charlie's voice trails off, as a chilling possibility hits him for the first time. He looks up at Mr. Fontana in fear.

MR. FONTANA
Congratulations, Detective. You cracked your first murder case.

CHARLIE'S POV: As the killer reaches down to grab him --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

FADE IN:

INT. PROFESSOR FONTANA'S OFFICE - DAY

The door BURSTS OPEN and Hudson charges in --

HUDSON

Charlie!

-- looking around frantically. The office is empty.

INT. COMPACT SEDAN - DRIVING

Hudson speeds away from the college, flying over ditches and screeching around corners, talking on his cell phone.

HUDSON

Fontana told his students Charlie ran off to the train tracks and he's gone to "rescue" him.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

Taylor talks to Hudson on his cell phone. Behind him, two UNIFORM OFFICERS load a handcuffed Parente into a patrol car.

TAYLOR

Why would Charlie do that?

HUDSON

He wouldn't. It's a cover story Fontana made up to get him alone.

TAYLOR

How do you know?

HUDSON

The professor recently signed a six-figure deal to write a book. Only I think the book's already written.

TAYLOR

By his prize student, Sebastian. That's why Fontana killed him.

HUDSON

And now he's got Charlie. I'm driving to Alabama Junction. Meet me there. Bring backup.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE - DAY

A LONG LENS on Mr. Fontana, holding a scared Charlie closely in his arms, waiting patiently. Wind blows their hair.

MR. FONTANA

You'll never know what it's like, Charlie -- to make something your life study. You immerse yourself daily in great talent. You feel the thrill of identifying that talent in a student. You help it grow and flourish. And then... then comes the slow dawning that you possess none of that which you worship. It's a sad story, right?

CHARLIE

It's the story of Antonio Saliere.

MR. FONTANA

The Patron Saint of mediocrity, of course. See, you have talent. Too much talent, I'm afraid. What sort of tragic child reads Ellery Queen?

CHARLIE

You don't have to worry, Mr. Fontana. I'll never tell anyone.

MR. FONTANA

(sadly)

No, you won't, Charlie. You certainly won't.

Mr. Fontana hears what he's been waiting for -- a TRAIN HORN. As he turns his head to await the approach, PULL WAY BACK to reveal them nestled high, high in the girders of a remote TRAIN BRIDGE stretching over a lush Savannah waterway.

EXT. FRONTAGE ROAD/INT. COMPACT SEDAN - DAY

Hudson races along a frontage road. Unable to find a gate through the chain-link fence bordering the train tracks, he cranks the wheel and BUSTS THROUGH THE FENCE.

Hudson skids to a stop near the tracks, creating a cloud of dust. He jumps out of his car, hears the TRAIN HORN, louder now, and takes off running, hard, leaping across tracks.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE - DAY

Hudson bursts onto the bank of the waterway, under the train bridge.

He looks up and sees Mr. Fontana now on his feet, holding the struggling Charlie in his hands, ready to push him in front of the unseen train.

HUDSON

Don't do it! He's just a boy!

Looking down at Hudson, the professor reacts with misery.

MR. FONTANA

No. No, no, no...

His plan ruined, the only viable option left for Mr. Fontana is escape. He releases the boy, turns to the water... and JUMPS. In the river, he starts swimming away from Hudson.

Hudson sees the TRAIN round the bend into view. Panicked, he wades into the water, yelling desperately at Charlie, who's still standing in the middle of the tracks.

HUDSON

Charlie! Jump!

CHARLIE

I can't swim.

HUDSON

(splashing further out)

Goddamn it, Charlie, I'm coming to save you! I can do this. Just JUMP!!

Charlie turns to look at the train, now seconds away from impact, then he turns back down to Hudson and says simply --

CHARLIE

I can't swim.

HUDSON

(sheer horror)

CHARLIE!

HUDSON'S POV - FROM THE WATER

The train COLLIDES WITH CHARLIE -- only somehow, Charlie is still standing, as the train rumbles by safely behind him.

ANOTHER ANGLE reveals for the first time that the bridge has DUAL TRACKS. The train passes on the one next to Charlie.

Down in the water, Hudson stares up in wonder and relief.

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE - ON THE TRACKS - MOMENTS LATER

Hudson, soaking wet, trudges up the tracks. Glancing down, he sees Taylor and POLICE OFFICERS arresting Fontana on the far shore. Hudson reaches Charlie, standing exactly where he was. Charlie looks at his brother and pushes up his glasses.

HUDSON

I would have saved you, you know.

CHARLIE

It wasn't logical to jump. Even if I knew how to swim, there are safety hazards to factor in. Unpredictable water levels, submerged objects...

HUDSON

I would have saved you anyway. Did he hurt you? Mr. Fontana?

CHARLIE

No.

HUDSON

You did good, big guy.

Charlie stares numbly at his brother, and for the first time we see deeper, confused emotions roiling. Hudson enfolds him into his wet arms. As he holds his brother reassuringly --

HUDSON (PRELAP) (CONT'D)

Four months ago, the victim showed his literature professor the first few chapters of his first novel.

INT. POLICE STATION - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Hudson stands in front of a BIG SCREEN projecting a PHOTO of a personal check from a major publishing house. Around him are maps and diagrams of Fontana's suicide scam, which he's finishing explaining to the assembled detective force.

HUDSON (CONT'D)

...the professor presented those chapters to a publisher as his own work and received a \$50,000 advance to write the book. Once his pupil finished the novel, the suspect staged the meticulous suicide scene I just described, borrowing heavily from the mystery books he taught.

As Hudson continues, he flips through evidentiary photos -- the magnet, the remote control, etc.

HUDSON (CONT'D)

Magnet to lock a dead bolt, bullet squib to mimic gunfire... it looked like an open-and-shut case, complete with eye witnesses.

(respectfully to Dash)

Anybody could have been taken in.

DASH

But not you. You got one over on me. Good work, Charlie.

LT. JAMISON

Spectacular work.

(to his other detectives)

I hope you slackers were paying attention.

POLITE APPLAUSE for Hudson, as someone turns on the light.

HUDSON

It wasn't just me. I had help from... multiple sources. But mostly Detective Taylor.

TAYLOR

Quit lyin'. He's being modest sir. I had nothing to do with this case.

Hudson shoots Taylor a look. What's that about? As everyone starts heading out, Dash turns to Jamison.

DASH

You know, Loo, homicide could really use this kind of fresh thinking.

LT. JAMISON

Hell, yes. Huntley, come to my office tomorrow and we'll talk.

HUDSON

(blown away)

It's Hudson. And I'll be there.

Everyone clears out, leaving Hudson and Taylor alone.

HUDSON (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you. That could have been your promotion.

TAYLOR

I'm a man of small dreams and low ambition. I kind of like what we had going. Congrats, big guy.

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN CORNER - NIGHT

Hudson returns to his hidden corner -- to find King waiting for him, looking hotter than ever.

KING
How'd you do that?

HUDSON
Do what?

KING
All of it. You know how much I adore you, but you're not that smart, you lack drive, and your instincts are flaccid.

HUDSON
You're right. That's who I've been. I think I'm ready for a change.

KING
(regards him suspiciously)
I'm not used to seeing you like this. With a vertebrae and all. What's gotten into you?

HUDSON
That's kind of hard to say. I guess I found my hidden genius.

KING
Well, don't lose it, Charlie.
(holds out her hand)
Let's go celebrate your promotion.

HUDSON
Can't. But thank you.

King looks him over one more time. Is this the same guy? As she walks off, intrigued, a RECEPTIONIST approaches Hudson.

RECEPTIONIST
Detective Hudson? A probate lawyer called during the briefing.
(reads a MESSAGE)
"Found the perfect family." That make sense to you?

HUDSON
It makes sense.
(takes message from her)
Anyone seen a kid around here?

INT. POLICE STATION - DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hudson walks dark hallways, searching for his brother.

HUDSON

Charlie... Charlie?
(quickens pace, worried)
Charlie? Where'd you go?

He rounds a corner and stops. PAN to a BULLETIN BOARD behind glass, across a maze of murderous headlines: "TWO BODIES, NO JUSTICE." "SHOOTING NOT A RANDOM ACT." "NO SUSPECTS IN POOL-SIDE STABBING." KEEP PANNING to Charlie, reading the cases.

CHARLIE

This woman's body was found by a swimming pool, but the suspect had an argument with her there in front of everyone. Why would a killer leave a body where he knows he'll be accused? Isn't that suspicious?

HUDSON

I suppose we should look into it.
(off Charlie's surprise)
We're partners now. A sort of...
top secret, undercover team we
can't tell anybody about. Right?

CHARLIE

I guess.

They turn and start walking away from us. Hudson crumples the phone message in his hand and drops it into a trash can.

HUDSON

You guess? Since when? I thought you were the logic master.

CHARLIE

Not a master yet. "Just because I'm alone, it doesn't mean I sleep alone." I'm still working on that one.

HUDSON

Oh yeah? Well, so am I.

As the two brothers disappear from sight --

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW