

Icarus Falling

written by

Justice Chukwuma

Pariah Multimedia
908-502-1251
justicechuk@gmail.com

EXT. STUDIO GROUNDS - DAY

TEN YEARS AGO

HUGH JACKSON, 30s, a black man clad in satin pants and shirt with one too many buttons unbuttoned to sport a thick gold chain, turns to his **ASSISTANT**.

HUGH
(placing a foot on a
trailer's steps)
Go grab me a Whopper.

The scrawny assistant wearing a headset nods and scurries away.

INT. TALENT TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

A young, 13 year old girl **ABIGAIL** with bright red hair, a lookalike of the Raggedy Ann doll, sits at her desk in the corner. She's hunched over sobbing, her head in her arms.

HUGH
(closes the distance to
Abigail)
So ... set's telling me you're
refusing to come out.

Abigail's sobbing doesn't break.

HUGH (CONT'D)
You can tell me what's wrong. Go
on.

ABIGAIL
(muttering)
Mi-Mi-Mit..

Hugh hangs his head in disappointment.

HUGH
What did Mitch do this time?

ABIGAIL
I was in the bathroom, and he-

The muttering erupts into a wail.

HUGH
(consoling Abigail)
Listen, baby, I'm so so sorry. I'll
deal with Mitch.
(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)
(peers at his gold
wristwatch)
But right now, we need you on set.
We're all waiting on you.

Hugh moves over to the side of Abigail's desk and points to a *Goonies* poster on the wall.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Remember when you told me you
wanted to be like these kids. And I
promised you I would make you a
star.
(a beat)
But you have to do your part. To
make it in show business, you gotta
learn to swim with the sharks,
baby.

ABIGAIL
(whimpering)
But he's a monster.

HUGH
If this truly is your favorite
movie, you would know: Monsters
aren't always what they seem.
(putting his hand on
Abigail's shoulder)
I'll see you on set in 5.

Hugh exits the trailer.

EXT. STUDIO GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Hugh's assistant runs up to Hugh, clutching a wrapped burger.

ASSISTANT
Commissary only had McDonald's
today. I got you a Big Mac.

HUGH
Fuck I look like? A clown? A king
doesn't eat no McDonald's. Get back
there and get me a Whopper!

INT. RALLY GROUNDS - DAY

PRESENT DAY

Hundreds of people cheer from the stands facing a stage. They wave banners and pump their fists, shouting their praises.

INT. RALLY STAGE - DAY

Gripping the podium with sheer passion is the strapping **ROMERO RAMON**, 30. He fills out his tailored navy suit very well, his frame matching his personality in size.

ROMERO

There's something wrong. I know you all feel it. It permeates our very thoughts. It fires up our neurons. And we need to bare it open and address it. My lovely New Yorkers, we're in a fight.

(shaking his head
dismissively and wagging
his finger)

Nope, nope - that doesn't do it justice.

INT. PIT VIPERS MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In a large room, lit up only by dim overhead lights, are a collective of people all wearing urban clothing, mostly purple. They all face the front, some leaning against walls and others standing or lounging in chairs. Most of them are Asian. One could see it in their faces.

MARS, 23 years old, of black and Asian descent and decorated with tats, occupies the front as he glares at the menacing congregation. From his crossed arms, we see that his right arm has a dark crimson color to it, not from tats but rather burn marks.

Behind him, **DIONNE**, Mars's twin of smaller proportion and much longer hair, slouches back against a desk, wearing an oversized hoodie and sweatpants with her drooping eyes lowered towards the floor. **PLUTO**, a gray Cane Corso, sits patiently by Mars's side, silently panting.

Mars's body inflates and settles with a sigh.

MARS

We're at war. They're in our neighborhood. They're trespassing on our corners. They're pushing our product.

(suddenly in an outburst)
They're spitting in our fucking faces!

Dionne jolts awake and readjusts her position to lean more upright.

MARS (CONT'D)

They're calling us fuckin' bitches!
They think shit sweet. And if no
one checks them, every one and
their mama is gon' try us. They're
taking the food outchea fucking
mouths! Outchea kids' mouths. Deebo
got a kid with yik yak teeth. How
is he gon' pay for braces? How is
Slim gon' have the funds to pay
Toothless Tiana \$20 to top him off
over on 16th? They're-

INT. RALLY STAGE - CONTINUOUS

ROMERO

-coming for our livelihood. Our
children's brains are being
poisoned. Our families are at risk.
Our very American essence is at
stake -- if changes aren't made,
we'll regress as a people.

The audience cheers in agreement. Amongst the crowd of
adoring people, one solemn face remains unstirred. **OLIVIA**,
26, green-eyed brunette, glares at the stage unimpressed.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

(raising his fist)

So, I ask you all to join me as we
reclaim our God-given freedoms. We
will-

INT. PIT VIPERS MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MARS

-cast chaos and mayhem on their
fucking heads! And piss on their
graves, so these niggas know to
stop fucking wit' us! They will
learn to respect the Pit Vipers.
Because my soldiers do not buckle
or yield. My soldiers push forward.
My soldiers scream out. My soldiers
rage!

The members raise their fists and emit a rising roar. A gang
member in the back of the room leans in a nearby ally's ear.

PIT VIPER #1

Shit, Mars copped that from Attack
on Titan. Still a bar though.

INT. RALLY STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Romero waves to the cheering applause.

INT. BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Romero smooches a well-endowed Colombian **IZABEL**, 27 and sporting a prominent belly, on the lips. He proceeds to shake hands with a queue of donors, last of whom is **MS. GLADYS**, an elderly lady in expensive clothing. Ms. Gladys claps her hands in glee as Romero approaches. Romero's assistant **NATALIE**, 24 and bright-eyed, stands at a distance.

MS. GLADYS

Oh, you were wonderful!

ROMERO

All made possible due to lovely people like yourself. Once again, thank you for your contribution.

MS. GLADYS

It's towards a good cause. Otherwise, it'd just be sitting in my account.

ROMERO

You could always treat yourself to a trip. Travel and find yourself a nice gentleman to pass the time.

MS. GLADYS

(guffaws)

Maybe if I was a few years younger.

ROMERO

Younger? Ms. Gladys, if I wasn't married, I'd take you on my arm right now.

MS. GLADYS

(patting Romero's chest)

You know how to make an old bird feel alive.

(calling out past Romero)

Izabel, careful with this one!

Ms. Gladys carefully takes her leave, as Izabel waddles over with a grin.

IZABEL

They loved you, papi. I'm making your favorite tonight to celebrate.

ROMERO

Thank you, honey, but please put my plate in the fridge. I'll be home late. I have a meeting with a donor.

Nearby, Natalie perks up and starts swiping on her tablet.

IZABEL

I thought I had you to myself tonight.

ROMERO

Baby, you know how the campaign gets. These are important people, and I need all the support I can get for this second win. You understand, right?

IZABEL

I understand.

ROMERO

And that's why I love you, mi amor.
 (signaling to a team member on the side)
 Sebastian will take you home.
 (holding Izabel's face with both hands)
 You need to be off your feet for our baby boy, okay?

IZABEL

Si, papi.

They kiss again. Romero then escorts Izabel to **SEBASTIAN**, one of Romero's security detail, tall and stoic, who takes her arm to help her walk.

ROMERO

(as Sebastian and Izabel leave)
 Bye, love!

Natalie briskly struts over to Romero.

NATALIE

I don't see anything on your schedule tonight. You had me reschedule kickboxing to Thursday.

ROMERO

This one's off the books. Big money. Real hush hush.
 (MORE)

ROMERO (CONT'D)

I've been chasing this tail for quite some time ... Also, do me a favor and have some roses sent over to Ms. Gladys. And have Izabel's favorites sent home tomorrow by noon.

NATALIE

Daffodils?

ROMERO

Bingo.

NATALIE

You and Mrs. Ramon are beautiful together.

ROMERO

A healthy marriage needs to keep the love alive. We rebuild America by first fixing the foundation: families.

NATALIE

(awestruck)

Couldn't agree more, sir.

ROMERO

Did you do something with your hair?

NATALIE

(blushing)

Not really, just washed it.

Romero looks Natalie up and down.

ROMERO

It looks real nice. Well, I'll see you in the office tomorrow. Get some beauty sleep tonight-

(a beat)

not that you need it.

Natalie smirks as she walks away, clutching the tablet to her chest.

Romero pulls out his cellphone from his pocket. He speed-dials 8.

RING. RING. RING.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Hey, it's Romero. I need a re-up on
some rhino horn.

INT. PIT VIPERS MEETING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mars spectates for a few moments as his subordinates
disperse. He turns, facing Dionne.

MARS
You fucking high?

DIONNE
Bro, chill. I don't need you on my
dick today.

MARS
Come here.

Mars grabs Dionne's arm and forces her through a door.

INT. PIT VIPERS DOJO - CONTINUOUS

Mars pushes Dionne into the room. Mars slams the door and
flicks on the light, revealing an open space with matting
encompassing the entire floor. Weights line one wall, while
boxing equipment and punching bags are organized around.

MARS
Don't piss me off.

DIONNE
I didn't even ask to come. You told
me to. I had other shit to do.

MARS
Yeah? Like what? Smoking dope? Even
fucking retards know 'Thou must not
get high on thou own supply.' If I
caught anyone else stealing from
us-

DIONNE
Wait, I think I know this one.
You'd give them a first hand look
at whether there's life after
death?

MARS
(exhales)
Listen. The Vipers need a unified
front.

(MORE)

MARS (CONT'D)

I need you to stand beside me and take more control instead of fucking around with your dumb ass friends now that niggas are testin' us. Last thing I need are our own soldiers pushing back. They already don't respect you.

DIONNE

That's because they can't wrap their simple minds around the idea of taking orders from someone like me.

MARS

Dionne, no one gives a fuck! Nero was fucking a nigga with no balls, and he still ruled Rome. The difference is that you don't demand respect. The whole 'woe is me' charade shows weakness.

DIONNE

First of all, everyone was fucking little boys, so gay-ass Rome is a bad example. Second, I'm not fucking weak.

MARS

But you've been in and out of rehab for how many years now? Last I checked, heroin don't bring a stronger mind.

DIONNE

Don't get all Zen on me, Sun Tzu. Just a few months ago, you put Kai Yu in the ICU.

MARS

No, I didn't.

DIONNE

Yes, you did.

MARS

Cailou? The bald kid?

DIONNE

No, not Cailou. *Kai..Yu*, with the dragon tats.

MARS

Oh... well, he didn't refill the Brita. That's just bad manners.

DIONNE

Ah yes, so he deserved to get curbstomped onto the Brita.

MARS

I'm not going to fucking argue with you. You're cut off. No more drugs. And if I catch someone giving you shit...what happens next will be on you.

Mars pushes past Dionne towards a punching bag, and delivers a combo, neglecting to wear gloves. POW. POW. POW.

Dionne storms out of the dojo.

INT. PIT VIPER MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DIONNE

Cailou!

A bald, lanky young man in a slightly oversized yellow shirt strides over.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

Quick, give me a bag.

CAILOU

I don't got none. I'm down to my dick and balls.

Dionne whistles.

DIONNE

Pluto!

From the corner of the room, Pluto perks up and trots towards Dionne.

CAILOU

Chill, chill. Aight.

Cailou reluctantly pulls out a small baggie from his back pocket and places it in Dionne's outstretched palm.

CAILOU (CONT'D)

That's gonna fuck up my tally. I'm gon' have to stretch the rest.

DIONNE

Not my problem. Don't forget I know
it was you who forgot to flush last
week. Some would call that bad
manners.

Cailou looks down at the floor.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

And lie to me again, and I'll have
Pluto make you wish your cancer
took you instead.

Dionne pushes her long hair to the side as she bends down and
scratches Pluto's head. Pluto pants happily.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

Good boy.

EXT. RALLY PARKING LOT - DAY

Izabel walks beside Sebastian, but she stops as she spots
Olivia walking towards her own car. Izabel signals Sebastian
to stay and shambles over in Olivia's direction.

IZABEL

Olivia? Livy?!

(Olivia stops and turns)

Ah, I thought that was you. I've
missed you. Where have you been?
What have you been up to?

OLIVIA

(anxiously)

I've been around. I've been
moderating Narcotics Anonymous for
some time. Advocating for the
disenfranchised. Just .. trying to
give back.

IZABEL

(with a wide grin)

Haven't changed a bit. We could use
some of your magic on this 2nd
campaign. Why did you ever leave
the team?

Olivia's brows furrow but relax after Olivia takes a glance
at Izabel's engorged stomach.

OLIVIA

Never mind that! You're ready to
pop, huh?

IZABEL

Si, si. Going to be tough juggling the mijo and the campaign, but we'll make it work.

OLIVIA

You'd think Romero would step down since y'all are expecting.

IZABEL

It was a conversation at first, but he's made for this. There's a reason they call him -

OLIVIA

"Golden Boy". Yea, I haven't forgotten.

(slowly walking backwards)

Well, listen, I really have to go.

IZABEL

(surprised)

Oh, ok. Well, don't be a stranger. I've missed our chats.

Olivia forces a smile as she gives a wave goodbye. Her smile morphs into a slight, sullen frown as she turns and continues towards her car.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Hugh Jackson, now in his 40s and with a noticeably larger behind, and **GUPTA**, 36 year old Indian man, are in a spacious room cluttered with miscellaneous items. Symbols of America and patriotism line the walls. Hugh's comically large bosom juts out dangerously near a sculpture bust precariously atop a skinny pillar. His hairline is now receding, the border of his oily hair curving around his prominent, bald spot. Gupta stands in front of him, sporting a big Cowboy hat and a Canadian tuxedo, in stark contrast with his heavy Indian accent.

HUGH

It just doesn't do the trick anymore. And I don't want to take anymore than I should. An associate was popping them like fucking Tic Tacs, and he had a raging boner for hours. He was screaming the entire way to the hospital.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

Doc said he had permanent penile damage and wouldn't be able to get hard anymore. Just like that. He was out of the industry.

GUPTA

What does he do now?

HUGH

Nothing -- he took a nosedive off a bridge. You can't please a woman anymore - it's liable to drive a man insane.

GUPTA

He killed himself?

HUGH

You sound surprised. The point of life is to fuck. That's what drives us. Us men.

Gupta shuffles over to the sculpture and removes it from the proximity of Hugh's ass.

GUPTA

I can think of a lot of points. Money. Success. Fame.

HUGH

No, no, no. Men only want that because the women come along with it. If a man could fuck Halle Berry in a cardboard box, he wouldn't bother having a damn penthouse and sports car.

GUPTA

Or Adele.

HUGH

Pardon?

GUPTA

If a man could fuck Adele in a box. But before she lost the weight.

Hugh's head momentarily recoils, taken aback. He promptly takes off his sunglasses, hiding his mouth in the process.

HUGH

(under his breath)
Must be a refrigerator box.

GUPTA

Would you do the same if you lost
your penis?

HUGH

(plopping down on a nearby
chair)

See, that's a tough one. It'd be
clear that my time here on Earth is
done, but I personally couldn't
bring myself to do it. I think I'd
just be more indiscriminate with my
life. You know, cross the street
without looking both ways. Step on
motherfuckers' shoes in Harlem
nightclubs. Shit like that.

GUPTA

Then, let's hope we have good
karma. Ok, Viagra's out. That's
baby shit. You want the real deal.
My connects deliver to me rhino
horn. Freshly poached just last
week in South Africa.

Gupta rummages through a box and pulls out a container of
ground grey dust.

HUGH

This'll get me bricked and ready
for action? My viewers expect a
certain standard of performance.

GUPTA

My friend, the Chinese have used
this for thousands of years. Your
penis will be like bamboo.

HUGH

That's what I'm talking about, this
is that Eastern medicine. Goddamn
geniuses. They know their shit.

(brings the container up
to the light for a better
look)

Fuck those rhinos. Humans need to
get horny too.

Gupta bellows out a laugh.

GUPTA

Very good. Very funny, buddy.

HUGH
I'll take 'em all.

EXT. GUPTA'S HOME - LATER

Romero quickly checks his surroundings, peering up and down the block. He presses the buzzer and looks into the camera. The door unlocks.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Gupta and Romero look at each other for a second and then spread their arms out wide, beaming.

	GUPTA		ROMERO
My friend!		My friend!	

They embrace each other.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Always a pleasure. I saw you on TV
today. Great speech.

Romero ambles over to the couch underneath a big American flag.

ROMERO
Yessir.
(plops down)
Now, it's time to celebrate.

GUPTA
About that, buddy. I'm sorry. I'm
fresh out of the horn.

ROMERO
What do you mean? I just called you
a few hours ago.

GUPTA
Yes, yes, but another customer
cleaned me out. It was a large
purchase. Business, you understand?

Romero grumbles, putting his head in his palms.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Hey, hey, have I ever let you down?
Give me one second.

Gupta takes out a notepad and starts scanning the page.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
 (mumbling to himself)
 African load... Nigerian juju.
 Egyptian bones. Nope.
 Afghanistan... IEDs. Grenades. No.
 (shakes head)
 New Chinese shipment yesterday.
 Jordans from the shop.
 (peering up at Romero)
 A lil sweaty, but I'll give you
 good price.
 (eyes returning to paper)
 And ahah.

Romero picks his head up a bit. Gupta rummages through a box with a Chinese flag sticker on the side. He pulls out a jar. A phallic object floats in the liquid.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
 (presenting a jar)
 Tiger penis.

ROMERO
 (springing to his feet)
 Goddamn, you never disappoint.

GUPTA
 I told you, my friend. Anything you
 need, satisfaction guaranteed.

ROMERO
 How does it work?

GUPTA
 You boil it into soup. The Chinese
 believe you take the form of a
 tiger when you eat it.

ROMERO
 (slowly nodding in
 agreement)
 You have to become the pussy to get
 the pussy. Goddamn geniuses. Those
 Chinese do mighty fine work. How
 many of these tiger penii are in
 your possession?

GUPTA
 (looking back in the box)
 I have 10 tiger penis, sir.

ROMERO
 Alright, let me get 2 of those, I'm
 feeling especially freaky tonight.
 (MORE)

ROMERO (CONT'D)

You got tigers back in your country
- do you know how to make this?

GUPTA

You think I'm Third World?

ROMERO

(laughs)

You came from India 5 years ago,
brother. You still got the same
accent as the day you came over.

GUPTA

Accent or no accent, the United
States government naturalized me. I
am married to a white woman in
Texas. I am making good money. I'm
living the American Dream.

ROMERO

I'm sorry, but please, make this
into a curry or something somewhat
appetizing. I'll pay you extra.

GUPTA

Now you're speaking my language, my
friend.

Gupta takes the jar to the kitchen.

ROMERO

(yelling after him)

Do you have some mouthwash for
afterwards?

GUPTA

No, but we can DoorDash.

ROMERO

(whispering)

Motherfucker got all sorts of
animal organs, but not mouthwash.

(sauntering to the
kitchen)

How's the wife by the way?

GUPTA

(swaying his head)

Polly is good. I miss her porcelain
skin, but the money here is too
good to pass up. I send money to
her and Bubba every week.

ROMERO
That grocery bill still over a
grand a week, huh?

GUPTA
I like my wife nice and soft.

ROMERO
(chuckles)
Gupta, I think you might be more
Jamaican than American.

Gupta drops the 2 tiger penii into a pot of water.

GUPTA
I'll add cumin and masala for
flavor.

ROMERO
Add some eggs too for extra
protein. I'm sore from all this
training.

INT. LEVIATHAN - NIGHT

No patrons in sights, except for Olivia and Dionne, who are
sitting at the bar. Old, wooden furniture is arranged across
the space lit up by the weak LED lights. A bust of a large
serpent perches atop the front of the bar's door.

OLIVIA
The motherfucker's so predictable.
I've been following him for weeks
now, and after every Monday
campaign speech, he cruises by
Fulton Park and picks up a hooker.

DIONNE
A street hooker? Why doesn't he
just get a high-end escort like
every other politician?

OLIVIA
That's because he saves those for
Thursday evenings. This
motherfucker just wants it all.

DIONNE
Men like him typically do.

OLIVIA
Once we catch him on video in the
act, he'll be forced to pay us to
keep his secret.

Dionne snorts a line of cocaine off the bar. She shoots her
head back up.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(wiping the white residue
off the bar with a rag)
Hit it clean at least so I don't
have to clean up after you.

DIONNE
(chuckling)
It is your job.

OLIVIA
But I'm off the clock, so let's
take it up to my room at least.

The pair start for the stairs.

DIONNE
Anyway, there's no way he even has
\$30k liquid.

OLIVIA
No, trust me. All these fuckers
have money on the side from insider
information. They make the laws and
then profit from their new policies
in stock trades.

DIONNE
Man, you gotta hard-on for him.

OLIVIA
He claims to be of the people, but
hasn't done anything of value. He
used me, promised the world, and
the sonuvabitch couldn't even
follow through.

DIONNE
(rubbing her nose)
Sounds like every ex I've ever had.
I knew something was off with him
when he turned Republican.

Olivia pauses at the foot of the stairs and faces Dionne.

OLIVIA

His fame and his reputation -- he doesn't deserve it.

(exhales)

Anyways, the money would be put to good use.

(stretching out her hands
to signal the space)

The boss man will sell the Leviathan to me for dirt cheap, and I'll develop it into the Oasis. I start this non-profit and then the community will actually have a hero to look up to.

Olivia relents and they start up the stairs.

DIONNE

Attagirl. Talk your shit, but do you think this is the best way to go about it?

OLIVIA

You have to grab life by the balls. Play by the rules and you get stepped on. Besides, you can use the money too. You said Mars cut you off. Now, you can have your own personal stash of drugs he can't touch.

INT. LEVIATHAN UPSTAIRS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

DIONNE

Livy, you just might be the worst sponsor in NA history.

OLIVIA

(chuckles)

The day you stopped coming to meetings, I realized that I should have just stuck to moderating.

DIONNE

There's just too much temptation. You had it fucking easy. What? Just antidepressants? I got the whole shebang.

Dionne settles into a chair at the table.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
(in a low tone of deep
introspection)
You know, I still hold on to that
orange chip.

No acknowledgement from Olivia. She brings a small sequin bag from a shelf and plops it on the table. She opens it up and starts taking out makeup accessories.

OLIVIA
All right, Venus, you ready for
your performance tonight?

EXT. FULTON PARK - NIGHT

The unlit lampposts of Fulton Park signify after-hours, yet a few solitary women in risqué clothing idle on the sidewalk, gazing up and down the barren and shady street. The only light sources are the cigarettes, at least one being smoked in each sparse pod.

Romero walks briskly down the street in covert, nondescript attire. He dons dark glasses and a baseball cap pulled low over his face. He makes eyes with a nightwalker, who then proceeds to leave her small group.

STREETWALKER
Hey, darling. Looking for a good
time?

ROMERO
Looks like the good time found me.
What's your name, beautiful?

STREETWALKER
Jasmine.

Romero gets closer to Jasmine and puts his hand on her waist.

ROMERO
You have great skin. What's your
ethnicity, Jasmine?

JASMINE
Greek and Spanish.

ROMERO
Ooo, that's a great mix. I love
Greek and Spanish food. I bet you
taste better though.

JASMINE

Come find out. I don't bite too hard.

ROMERO

I want everything.

JASMINE

That'll be \$200, baby.

ROMERO

Lead the way.

Jasmine smiles and pinches Romero's chin. She leads the way down the block as Romero follows from behind.

Moments later, one of the idle streetwalkers breaks off from her place on the sidewalk. We see that it's Dionne, but now dressed up in a short black dress. Her now wavy hair drops into 2 parts bordering her face full of makeup. She intersects the pair's path. She interjects between Jasmine and Romero and grabs Romero's groin.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

(in surprise)

OH!

Dionne smiles at Romero, still holding on.

DIONNE

Already hard, huh?

ROMERO

(under his breath)

Like a fucking tiger.

JASMINE

Nah, bitch, this John's mine.

DIONNE

Too bad. It's cold out and I want to be inside.

Jasmine steps to Dionne, who immediately glares her down. Jasmine stops in her tracks. Dionne is still holding on. Romero looks between the two.

ROMERO

Uh, ladies...

DIONNE

What's her charge?

ROMERO
200 for everything.

DIONNE
I'll do the same, but for a
hundred.
(gently squeezing Romero's
groin)

ROMERO
(without hesitation,
moaning)
Jasmine, this John will be going
with uh -
(turning his head towards
Dionne)

DIONNE
Venus.

ROMERO
Venus.
(looking back at Jasmine)
I'll see you later. Same time next
week?

DIONNE
Good boy. Follow along, now. I got
a spot.

Dionne gives Jasmine one last nasty look and tugs Romero
along. He waddles along with a huge grin on his face.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dionne struts into the room, flicking on the light to reveal
an ordinary motel room. A bed. A chair pulled into a desk
with a lamp. A bathroom in the back. Nothing special.

Dionne walks to the desk and throws her purse next to the
lamp. She pulls out a bottle of KY Gel from her purse.

ROMERO
Straight to it, huh?

DIONNE
I told you I was cold. I need some
warming up.

ROMERO
Just one sec. Need to hit the
bathroom.

Romero walks by Dionne, slapping her on the ass as he passes. The bathroom door opens and closes.

Dionne walks closer to the bed and looks towards the narrow part in the dark curtains. She winks at the hidden camera.

SCREEECHHH as the bathroom door opens.

ROMERO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This is called the Naked Man.

HIDDEN CAMERA'S POV

Just a bit away from the bed, Dionne turns to see a completely nude Romero. Romero is fully erect.

Romero approaches Dionne and grabs her hips, trying to pull her closer to him.

DIONNE
(pointing a finger into
Romero's chest)
Nuh-uh. We start at the bed. I'm a
classy girl.

Romero lifts Dionne and plops her onto the bed. They begin to kiss.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

The pair lie in bed, both nude. Dionne is laying her head on Romero's chest.

ROMERO
Wow. All that for \$100.

DIONNE
(giggling)
And if you're up for a round 2, you
can get even more *BANG* for your
buck.

ROMERO
Well, twist my cock, why don't you?
Just need a couple minutes to
recharge.

DIONNE
(lifting herself from the
bed)
Take your time. I'm going to do the
same.

Dionne walks over to the desk and takes her baggie out of her purse, along with some paraphernalia.

ROMERO
Whaddya got there?

DIONNE
Just some H. Care to partake?

ROMERO
I'll pass, sweetie.

Dionne continues to prepare her hit.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
You know I've never done this before?

DIONNE
(heats up the spoon of
heroin with a lighter)
You mean with a girl like me?

ROMERO
Yeah.

DIONNE
(nodding towards Romero's
penis)
Your friend didn't seem to mind.

ROMERO
It was definitely a surprise when the dress came off, but something just told me you could suck a bowling ball through a straw.

DIONNE
(filling the needle with
heroin)
I'm just full of surprises, aren't I? I'm glad you had fun. I had fun too. You're very fit.

ROMERO
Oh thank you, I try. I do some kickboxing.

DIONNE
Really? My asshole brother does martial arts too. Show me something that I can use to kick his ass.
(tying the band around her
arm)

Romero stands up from the bed.

ROMERO
Alright, you're ready?

DIONNE
Wait.
(injecting the heroin into
her vein)

Dionne deeply sighs and sinks back into her chair.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
(with a huge, relieved
grin)
Ok, now I'm ready.

ROMERO
Alright, this is a question-mark
kick. Ever since I've seen my
favorite fighter throw it, I've
been trying to perfect it in the
gym. First, you gotta set it up.
What you want to do is get a couple
of low leg kicks, so your opponent
starts to expect it.

Romero demonstrates some kicks softly against one of the legs
of the bed.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
And then when he least expects it,
you catch the motherfucker off
guard.

Romero demonstrates the question mark with full speed.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Act as if you're going for the low
kick and then open up your hips to
swing your leg up and catch him
right on the head. Your leg should
make this sort of arc, like the
hook of the question mark.

Romero demonstrates again, slowly this time.

DIONNE
Holy shit! Let me see it again.

Romero complies, once again in full speed.

ROMERO
Want to try it?

Dionne nods.

Romero helps Dionne up. She staggers, but Romero steadies her.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Careful now.

Dionne attempts the kick, but fails at getting her leg up.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Try to pivot on your left foot at
the right time.

Romero slowly demonstrates the pivot in the beginning of the kick.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Now try.

DIONNE
(drawling)
Ok.

Dionne steadies herself. She tries again. She swings her right leg low, and then pivots on her left leg at the end of the low leg swing. Her left foot slides out from underneath her.

ROMERO
(cringes)
Oh-

CRACK. Dionne's head slams hard on the corner of the desk on the way down.

Blood pools from the back of Dionne's head as her body lies limp on the floor.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Venus? Venus?
(falling to his knees)

Romero nudges Dionne.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Oh fuck, oh fuck! Shit!

Romero quickly retracts his hands from Dionne's body. An expression of realization comes to his face. He immediately springs up to his feet and grabs his phone. He dials 8 and brings the phone to his ear.

GUPTA (O.S.)
Insatiable, buddy! Need more soup
already?

ROMERO
(pacing up and down the
length of the bed)
Gupta, Gupta, I need your services
right now.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gupta is sitting criss-cross applesauce on the floor
indulging in a chicken curry with garlic naan and a Lone Star
beer. He's still wearing his large cowboy hat.

GUPTA
Whatever you need, brother. I got
everything.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROMERO
I- I need you to get rid of a body.

GUPTA (O.S.)
I don't got everything, buddy.

ROMERO
I know you got connects. I need
someone who can clean up a scene.
Make shit go away.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

GUPTA
I haven't expanded into that market
yet. To make shit disappear, I need
a vat of hydrochloric acid. I can
ask around but that'll take time to
come in.

ROMERO (O.S.)
Fuck. Fuck.

GUPTA
Tell your buddy what happened.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Romero plops down onto the bed.

ROMERO

We- we had sex, and then I was showing her this kick. And she fucking slipped on KY Jelly all over the floor and hit her head. There's blood everywhere.

GUPTA (O.S.)

You have her blood on you?

ROMERO

No, but we fucking had sex! My DNA's all over her! Cops are going to think it's fucking foul play, run the database, and fucking arrest me.

GUPTA (O.S.)

You said she slipped.

ROMERO

Doesn't matter. Once this comes out, my career's over. My wife is fucking 9 months pregnant, Gupta! My life will be ruined. All because this drugged-out bitch got no balance.

GUPTA (O.S.)

Hold on, what drugs?

ROMERO

Heroin.

GUPTA (O.S.)

Romero, what I can do is offer my premium consultancy services. Does she have more drugs?

ROMERO

Yes.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

GUPTA

Inject all the heroin into her.
Place the needle near her.

(MORE)

GUPTA (CONT'D)

This way, buddy, the cops will think she O.D'ed. She fell and hit her head. There we go, cheerio. Case closed.

ROMERO (O.S.)

Nah, nah. Won't forensics catch that?

GUPTA

No, sir. I watch detective shows all the time. They're lazy pieces of shit, buddy. They like obvious answers. Saves them time so they can eat more donuts.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROMERO

You sure?

GUPTA (O.S.)

I guarantee it.

ROMERO

Ok, ok.

GUPTA (O.S.)

Don't forget to check her purse for cash.

Romero hangs up.

Romero dumps more heroin onto the metal spoon. He heats it with a lighter, following the memory of how Dionne did it. He fills the needle with the substance and injects it into the same spot in Dionne's arm. He hops over the pool of blood to the bathroom.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Romero throws on his clothes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Running back to the bed, he picks up the used condom and its package, and shoves them into his pocket. He pulls his hat tight over his face and speeds out of the room.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

There's a knock at the door.

VOICE (O.S.)
Housekeeping!

No response.

The door unlocks, and Olivia enters.

OLIVIA
Dionne!

Olivia runs over to Dionne's body in a pool of stagnant, dried blood. Foam is pouring out of Dionne's mouth. Olivia spots the needle and empty baggie on the floor next to Dionne.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(voice shaky)
What'd you do?

Olivia grabs Dionne's phone from the desk and calls 9-1-1.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Hello, there's a woman overdosing
right now in Fulton Motel! And her
head - her head's bleeding. She's
in Room 3B. Please get here quick!
As fast as you can!

Olivia cancels the call and throws the phone on the desk. She runs over to the curtains and retrieves the camera from behind the drapes. She opens the door and pauses.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, Dionne.
(rushes out, leaving the
door open)

INT. PIT VIPERS DOJO - DAY

POW. POW. POW.

Mars lands powerful shots on the bodybag. Two of his henchmen are also in the dojo, their large frames overshadowing the wiry figure cowering in front of them. Behind the henchmen is a bucket and a mop. **BENNY**, so weathered and grimy that his age can't accurately be discerned, is sweating profusely and wringing his fingers. His shoulders are raised in a protective manner against the two goons at his back.

MARS

(after landing a combo)
You probably wonderin' why I got
you sittin' in on my training. You
probably think I'm just some stupid
meathead.

Benny shakes nervously. *POW. POW. POW.*

MARS (CONT'D)

You like history, Benny?

Benny doesn't answer. One of the henchmen shoves Benny in the
shoulder.

HENCHMAN #1

He asked you a question.

BENNY

No, uh, I don't know.

MARS

Me - I like history. I had a dad
once who used to teach me all that
shit - greatest leaders, battles,
...betrayals. He used to say 'Those
who cannot remember the past are
condemned to repeat it.' And there
was a pattern that stood against
time -- great leaders, I'm talkin'
niggas like Caesar, Shaka Zulu, and
even ol' boy JC, they all got sumn'
in common.

(beat)

They got fucked over by their own
people...Sometimes to find the
opps, you gotta look within the
crib.

Benny wipes his sweat with his sleeve.

MARS (CONT'D)

I've been at this bag for a couple
of rounds, Benny, but you're
sweatin' more than me. That doesn't
really instill comfort in my heart.
Now that I think about it, my guys
tell me they ain't see you in a
minute.

BENNY

I hopped off the stuff. I'm clean
now.

MARS

Hmm, except there's that one golden saying in my line of business: once a junkie, always a fucking junkie.

Mars steps away from the bag and moves closer to Benny. He puts his hand on Benny's shoulder.

MARS (CONT'D)

Who you coppin' from?

BENNY

Please, I'm sorry-

MARS

Shh. Shh. It's ok. Look at me.

(smiles at Benny)

I won't lay a finger on you.

(removes his hand from

Benny's shoulder)

We forgive those who trespass against us.

BENNY

Gupta. He sells damn near everything outside his spot over on Hancock Street. That's all I know.

MARS

And so, the condemned has redeemed himself.

BENNY

I'm sorry, Mars. His prices were cheaper, and I was fiendin', you know? It's tough out here.

MARS

In today's economy, I totally understand, Benny. They started taxin' OD on steak over at Key Food. I started havin' to get real creative in finding meat for Pluto.

(turns and walks back

towards the bag)

Pluto, munch!

Pluto beams in on Benny.

BENNY

(wails in despair)

No, please, I'll suck ya dick!

AHHHH!

Pluto mauls Benny. The blows to the body bag are drowned out by Benny's echoing screams.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Olivia is sheepishly sitting in the chair near the hospital bed supporting Dionne's sleeping body. Dionne stirs and opens one of her eyes, which falls upon Olivia. She opens the other.

DIONNE

When'd you get here?

OLIVIA

About an hour ago, but didn't want to disturb your sleep.

DIONNE

Sleep is all I can get. I gotta be in here for 2 - 3 days for head trauma.

OLIVIA

Not to mention the overdose.

DIONNE

(perks up)

Livy, you should know better than anyone that I'm like Dexter in the lab. I don't know how I fucking OD'ed.

OLIVIA

The camera caught everything. That fuckhead Romero injected you with all the heroin you had.

DIONNE

What the fuck?! I almost died. I almost died for this stupid ass plan! I told you this was a fucking bad idea!

(winces)

Fuck, I need some fucking morphine.

(shakes her head)

The nurse told me someone called the ambulance from my phone.

(looking sternly at Olivia)

OLIVIA

I'm so sorry, Dionne, but if the cops caught me there -

DIONNE

Save it.

Olivia drops her head in shame.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

Rummage through the cabinets or
sum'n for morphine. Maybe one of
the nurses left it unlocked.

(to herself)

I'll need it for when Mars fucking
kills me.

INT. ROMERO'S OFFICE - DAY

Romero types away on his computer at his desk, also cluttered
with an array of miscellaneous documents. His door pops open.

NATALIE

Mr. Ramon, you have a supporter who
called in. I put her on line 2.

ROMERO

Didn't I tell you to call me
Romero?

NATALIE

Yes, sir, I mean, Romero.

ROMERO

We're all family here on my team.

(making strong eye-
contact)

So I want you to know that my open
door policy extends to you as well.
Anytime you want to talk about
something -- anything at all --
please... come.

NATALIE

Ok, will do.

ROMERO

Alright now.

Romero observes Natalie's ass as she closes the door behind
her. He gives an impressed exhale.

Romero clicks Button 2 on the phone system.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

Hello, Romero Ramon, your former
and future NYC mayor. How can I
help you?

OLIVIA (O.S.)

I know what you did Monday night.

ROMERO

Excuse me?

OLIVIA (O.S.)

I got it all on cam.

ROMERO

This is a serious line. We don't
have time for prank calls.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

If this was a prank call, would I
know you were at Fulton Motel, Room
3B? You had sex with a hooker and
then killed her.

ROMERO

What the fuck?

Romero springs up from his chair and runs to his office
window. Through the glass, he surveys Natalie's desk. She's
busy typing on her computer. Her phone is on the hook. Romero
shuts the blinds and locks the door.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

Who are you?

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Just a concerned citizen with a
video of the entire night in that
motel room.

ROMERO

(taking a deep breath)

I don't know what you're talking
about.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Keep acting clueless, but you and I
both know what I'm talking about.
Let's see what your Republican
donors think about your sexual
affairs with transgenders. And I'm
pretty sure attempted murder
doesn't pass off too well - with
anyone for that matter.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Unless you want this video
released, you'll be at The Crete
Diner at 7pm tonight.

The call ends with a click. Romero sits on his desk for a second, and then spazzes out. He throws the phone against the door.

BAM.

Natalie rushes to the door. The door handle jiggles.

NATALIE
(through the door)
Mr. Ramon, I mean, Romero?

ROMERO
(through the door)
Natalie, the open-door policy is
closed until further notice.

INT. CRETE DINER - EVENING

Romero fidgets in a diner booth while staring at the front door. He taps his fingers against his full cup of coffee in his hands. A busty waitress with her breasts popping out of her uniform, sporting impressive cleavage, walks by Romero. His head follows her as she walks by before returning to the door.

The door opens.

Olivia stands for a second, surveying the crowd. After locking eyes with Romero, she weaves through the diner to him. She takes her time slipping into the opposite side of Romero's booth.

ROMERO
(accusatory)
It was you?

OLIVIA
Didn't think we'd meet again, huh?

ROMERO
(stutters as he racks his
brain)
That- that was fucking 8 years ago.
All...because I fired you?

OLIVIA
Oh, please don't act intentionally
obtuse.

ROMERO

What am I missing? Plans had changed and you couldn't get with the new vision.

OLIVIA

It wasn't even a month after your win. You called me into your office to ask about some paperwork, and you put your hand up my skirt.

Romero furrows his brows.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I took it fucking easy on you. I politely declined your advances. I didn't tell anyone, not even Izabel because I couldn't break her sweet heart. You see, it wasn't lost on me who you actually were. I only tolerated it because I thought you could do some good. So, I pushed it aside, thinking we'd move past it. Imagine my fucking surprise a week later when security wouldn't let me into the office.

ROMERO

You know the game. It's just politics.

OLIVIA

A game you have no business being in.

ROMERO

If you thought you could do my job, you would have ran yourself. But you latched onto me because I was your best chance of ever gracing the top.

OLIVIA

Romero, you only won the election because of me! The after-school programs. Stabilized rent. Free buses. All me! You rode my back and got all the spotlight.

ROMERO

(incredulously)

Please! You loved the press, always smiling for all the cameras. You forget all that camera time?

Olivia scoffs and shakes her head in disbelief. She collects herself, readjusts and then slowly leans forward.

OLIVIA
Have you ever heard of the
"ultimatum game?"

No answer from Romero.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Let's say someone was given 100
million dollars for themselves and
you. This person decides the split.
If you accept, you both take your
respective shares and go on your
merry ways. If you decline, you
both end up with nothing. Of those
100 million dollars, the person
decides to give you 1 million.
What's your answer?

Romero takes a second.

ROMERO
Decline.

OLIVIA
Ex-fucking-actly.

They stare intently at one another.

ROMERO
How do I even know this video
exists?

OLIVIA
I thought you'd never ask.

Olivia pulls out her phone and fiddles on the screen. She turns the phone around towards Romero.

On the phone screen, we clearly see Romero fucking Dionne from behind while he pulls at her long hair. Dionne answers each of Romero's grunts with a moan.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(skipping ahead in the
video)
Annndddd.

We see Romero panicking in the motel room while holding up a phone.

ROMERO (V.O.)
Heroin...Yes...Nah, nah. Won't
forensics catch that?

OLIVIA
(once again skipping
ahead)
And the coup de grâce..

We see Romero brandishing a needle. He bends down towards
Dionne.

ROMERO
Ok!
(reaching out to push down
Olivia's phone)

Olivia quickly pulls back the phone, holding it against her
chest. Romero retracts his hand, and puts up his hands in
surrender.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Ok.

Olivia pauses the video.

OLIVIA
I have copies stored in the cloud
and on multiple flash drives. If
you don't get me \$30,000, I'll
spread this shit across the fucking
Internet. Everywhere from Twitter
to Reddit. Even the Golden Boy
can't survive a dead girl.

ROMERO
Where the fuck am I going to find
\$30,000?! I'm not fucking
Bloomberg!

OLIVIA
I'm sure you'll find a way.
(sliding a burner phone on
the table towards Romero)
There's only one number saved. Let
me know when you have the money.
We'll do the exchange at the
abandoned church at 4 James Court
in Bushwick. Once you hand over the
cash, I'll delete the video from
the cloud and give you all the
flash drives. It's an open space,
so don't even think about trying to
get one up on me.

ROMERO

Wait, Olivia, hold on. Hold on. We can resolve this. You know I'm a shoo-in for this election. I could use your knowledge - your ideas. How does Chief of Staff sound?

OLIVIA

Money or your life is over.

Romero glares back at her. Olivia gets up from the seat.

ROMERO

Don't act like you weren't dropping hints. The short skirts. Touching my arm for just a second longer. The eye contact. You wanted it.

OLIVIA

The new amount is \$50,000. Get me my fucking money, bitch. Don't let the waitress's tits distract you.

Olivia turns and heads out the door. Romero stews over his mostly full cup of coffee and waves over the waitress.

ROMERO

Top me off.

INT. RAMON HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Izabel is standing in the kitchen making smoothies on the island, while simultaneously watching the news on the mounted TV.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

On the screen, we have the ratings of the candidates in the NYC mayoral race. Analytics calculate that 2 candidates are currently tied as the favorite to win the general election.

From the digital graphic, we see Romero is tied with the Democratic candidate Harley Berk at 37%.

IZABEL

Put a madre!

Liquid plops from under Izabel's dress onto the floor like a popped balloon.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

Mars storms out of the hospital double doors, with Dionne trying to catch up.

MARS
Who gave you the drugs?

DIONNE
(smart-aleckly)
A leader doesn't throw their people
under the boss.

MARS
A true leader wouldn't OD. They
purposely poison themselves every
day so they can withstand a lethal
dose like a fucking badass.

DIONNE
Well, I'm trying to care about them
now like you wanted.

Mars stops and turns around towards Dionne.

MARS
No, I just want you to be safe.

A moment.

MARS (CONT'D)
The gang is just a means to an end
- survival. But my number one
priority has always been us,
staying together, side by side.
Ever since we were kids.

Mars continues towards the car. They enter the front seats.

MARS (CONT'D)
Remember Mr. Jensen?

DIONNE
Of course. First time we were able
to sleep without nightmares.

MARS
Until he found you with lipstick.
He beat you fucking bloody. He
ain't even care that you shoplifted
it. So if anyone hurts you, it
doesn't matter who they are. I'll
rain down hellfire like I'm the
Devil himself.

DIONNE
 (looking at the burn scars
 on Mars's arm)
 I know.

MARS
 As long as I could remember, you've
 always been my only family. My one
 true bond.
 (presents his scarred arm)
 This is an oath to protect you.
 (gives nod of
 acknowledgement)
 My sister.
 (starts the car and starts
 driving)
 Now, who the fuck is Romero Ramon?!

Mars's car speeds out of the parking lot. Not even 2 seconds
 pass before another car swerves into the parking lot. It
 quickly brakes to a halt and the door flies open. It's
 Romero.

INT. OBSTETRICS ROOM - DAY

Romero flies into the room. Izabel is propped up in bed,
 holding a newborn baby.

ROMERO
 Izabel, work and the fucking
 traffic...

IZABEL
 Don't worry, papi.
 (nuzzles the baby with her
 nose)
 Daddy was busy working for us,
 wasn't he?

Romero sits in bed beside Izabel. He rubs the baby's head
 with his hand.

ROMERO
 (softly)
 He's beautiful.
 (tearing up, looking at
 Izabel)
 You're so beautiful.

Romero starts tenderly kissing Izabel's head, as she
 continues to sway the baby.

IZABEL

I like the name 'Roman'. Because
Daddy is going to build us an
empire.

She looks up at Romero.

IZABEL (CONT'D)

You're going to do that for me,
papi? For us?
(nods towards the baby)

Romero wipes his eyes.

ROMERO

(sniffling)
I don't know, baby. I - I could get
fucked. Politics is a nasty
business.

Izabel puts Baby Roman in Romero's arms and takes Romero's
face in her hands.

IZABEL

You're Romero Ramon. You don't get
fucked. You do the fucking!

Baby Roman coos and grabs Romero's finger. Romero deeply
inhales and clenches his jaw, mustering his cry.

INT. OBSTETRICS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Romero takes out the burner phone that Olivia gave him and
sends a message.

'GOT THE MONEY. SEE YOU AT MIDNIGHT.'

EXT. OUTSIDE GUPTA'S HOME - NIGHT

A few buildings down from Gupta's home enshrouded in the
darkness under a broken streetlamp waits a nondescript
vehicle. In the driver seat, Mars intently stares out his
side window at Gupta's front door. Two of his lieutenants
occupy the car. **STEIN**, 20, bespectacled, young, yet mature-
looking, lies back in the passenger seat. His cornrows are
neatly laid. **JUGGERNAUT**, 21 and round, is taking up two seats
in the back. Dandruff powders his shoulders from his unkempt,
nappy hair.

JUGGERNAUT

When is this Gupta guy gonna come
out?

STEIN

What's the rush? It's only been 90 minutes.

JUGGERNAUT

That Chipotle I had earlier's givin' me da bubble guts.

STEIN

(chastising)

Why would you eat that beforehand?

JUGGERNAUT

Because I was hungry, and if there's anything I learned from *The Wire*, it's that you never know how long a stakeout might take.

STEIN

You watch *The Wire*?

JUGGERNAUT

Know thy enemy, Stein.

(looking to his left at Mars)

Right, Mars?

Mars remains silently peering through the window.

STEIN

Chipotle is over-hyped. Everyone knows Cava or Naya is better. They got more diverse taste profiles.

Mars shakes his head, broken out of his trance.

MARS

Huh?

STEIN

(fixing his glasses)

Well, you know. Chipotle bowls all taste the same. Cheese, guac, sour cream. That's the standard.

JUGGERNAUT

(holding his stomach)

Oh fuck, it's fucking World War III in my stomach.

STEIN

But, let's take Naya. 3 sauces. 14 toppings.

(MORE)

STEIN (CONT'D)
That's about 50,000 different
combinations of flavor right there.

JUGGERNAUT
I think I gotta fart.

MARS
(whipping his head back)
Don't you fucking dare!
(turning back towards
Stein)
Alright genius, then why is
Chipotle such a staple that people
like this dumb motherfucker in the
back continue to eat it and shit
their pants?

STEIN
If I had to guess, it's because
Chipotle had the benefit of being
the first in the whole 'bowl'
assembly line market. If you get in
first, you can establish a more
dominant position before any other
competitors get in, ya feel me?

JUGGERNAUT
(groaning and still
holding stomach)
Like 'early bird gets the worm?'

Mars perks up.

MARS
(to himself)
No way it's this motherfucker.

Mars leans closer to the window, squinting. A man speedily
walks up to Gupta's door. It's Romero Ramon.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - NIGHT

Immediately as Gupta opens the door, Romero bursts in pacing.

ROMERO
My hand has been forced, Gupta.

GUPTA
(concerned)
What's wrong, my friend?
(peeking out the window)
You brought the feds with you?

ROMERO

(frantically)

No, I'm being blackmailed. She has a tape. She has everything. Me fucking the hooker. Our call. Staging the OD. We're fucked.

GUPTA

We?

(wobbling his head)

Gupta is a common name, buddy. And you called my burner. You could have been calling Edison, NJ for all they know.

ROMERO

She said if I don't give her \$50,000, she'll put the video everywhere, even on Twitter. She knows it's the new Pornhub. There's too much on the line.

(stops pacing)

Romero looks intently at Gupta.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

(steadily)

You know me. I open doors. But I need the election. Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

GUPTA

My cousin - Rajesh - you know, he make your Onlyfans subscriptions disappear during your last campaign - I have him hack her and delete everything.

(jumps in a realization)

Wait, he died from diabetes last year. Too much naan.

ROMERO

No, no, that wouldn't work anyway. She has physical copies. I need to end this. Tonight, I do the fucking. I'm going to make what happened at the motel look like a fucking handjob.

Romero walks towards Gupta and places a hand on each of Gupta's shoulders.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
I need counterfeit bills, a whole lot of them. Also, you still got that shipment from Afghanistan?

EXT. GUPTA'S HOME - NIGHT

JUGGERNAUT
Ohhh, mannn.

Romero exits Gupta's house with a large duffel bag and sneaks down the block. He enters a car and drives down the street.

MARS
Get out the car. I got some personal business to handle.

STEIN
Get out? What about watching his crib?

MARS
I don't give a fuck. Get out and watch it.

JUGGERNAUT
(stumbling out of the car)
You don't have to tell me twice.

STEIN
(getting out as well)
He already did, dumbass.

Once the doors close, Mars speeds off, following Romero in his car. A wet rumbling noise cuts through the air.

JUGGERNAUT
I think I just shitted myself.

STEIN
(mumbling to himself)
I shoulda just took those college loans.

INT. 4 JAMES COURT - NIGHT

Romero enters the open, empty, spacious church, holding the duffel. He fidgets, waiting.

ROMERO
(whispers)
Fucking cunt had the audacity to be late.

MARS
(walking up)
Waiting on someone?

Romero spins around, startled. He backs up a bit.

ROMERO
Who are you? You with Olivia?

MARS
Nah, but she's earned her own chat later. Trust.

Romero continues to back up.

ROMERO
Then who the fuck are you? What are you doing here?

MARS
Don't you see the resemblance? I'm my sister's keeper.

Mars sprints at Romero.

ROMERO
Hold on now. Wait.

Mars doesn't stop.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Relax.

Mars is a few feet away.

Romero throws the duffel bag at Mars. As Mars swipes the bag out of the air, Romero throws an overhead right punch at Mars. Mars slips left and throws a left uppercut into Romero's gut. Romero's body hunches over as it leaves the ground for a second. Mars follows with a flying knee to Romero's lowered head. Romero's head whips back, his nose spraying blood. Romero's body rolls back on the floor.

MARS
Nah, make me work for my kill.
(motions for Romero to stand up)

Romero wobbles up.

ROMERO
(coughs out, groaning)
You got the wrong guy.

MARS
Nah, you look just like you do on
the TV, Romero.
(takes off shirt)

Mars double jabs Romero in the face. Romero tries to respond with his own punches, but Mars slips or ducks every one. Mars answers with a straight right and left hook. Romero stumbles back.

MARS (CONT'D)
You can't outbox me. I do this shit
forreal, nigga.

Romero sends a low kick, connecting with Mars's leg.

MARS (CONT'D)
Oh, you one of those kicking
motherfuckas.

Romero sends another. It connects again. Mars is unfazed. Romero throws another low-kick, but mid-air, shifts his body to execute a question mark kick. As Romero's leg curves in the air, Mars drops and performs a perfect wrestling shot low on Romero, explodes up from beneath Romero's legs, lifting and driving him into the wall. Romero crumbles to the floor, incapacitated.

MARS (CONT'D)
That's for Dionne.

ROMERO
(weakly)
I don't know who that is.

MARS
Unlike you, I like to know the name
of the person I kill.

ROMERO
No, no, this is a misunderstanding.

MARS
Nah, what you're misunderstanding
is the current situation. It must
be that primo CTE I just gave yo
ass.
(takes out a Glock that
was stashed in the back
of his pants)
(MORE)

MARS (CONT'D)

No one fucks with my family. I shed blood over mine.

ROMERO

She - she fell and hit her head.

MARS

(dryly laughs)

And she fell on the needle too?

Mars begins to raise the gun.

ROMERO

No, wait! There's money! Please, there's money! Look.

(desperately pointing at the duffel bag)

There's \$50,000 in that bag. It's yours. Take it and go.

Mars glances back at the duffel bag on the floor a couple dozen feet away and then back at Romero. He wags the Glock at Romero and walks backwards towards the bag. He kneels and unzips it.

MARS

(whistles)

Goddamn, boy! You got stacks! You were gonna give this to some schemin' bitch? Nah, I'll take this off ya hands.

ROMERO

(pleading)

Yes, it's yours. You can have it. Please go.

Mars zips the bag closed and swings it over his shoulder.

MARS

Just one issue. Justice hasn't been delivered.

ROMERO

(shaking his head)

No..you got the money. You don't have to do this.

Mars walks towards Romero.

MARS

Hammurabi's Code. An eye for an eye.

ROMERO

It wasn't my fault.

MARS

I'll give you a fair deal. You tried to kill my sister. So, if you survive this bullet, I'll let you live. May you find favor with your God.

ROMERO

(softly)

Tried?

Mars raises the gun at Romero. Romero puts his hand in his pocket.

An explosion splatters blood in all directions, like a red firework.

A flurry of blood-stained counterfeit bills swirls around the empty space. There's a dark red Rorschach inkblot on the floor where Mars once was.

Romero pulls his hand out of his pocket. There's an IED trigger in his palm.

Across the empty church, Olivia stands in the open doorway, absorbing the scene. Olivia picks a falling bloodied bill out of the air. She gazes upon its crimson coloring and then back at Romero. She shakes her head in disgust and rips the bill.

OLIVIA

I decline your generous offer.

The door closes behind her. Romero remains on the floor, back against the wall in utter surrender.

INT. RAMON FOYER - LATER

Romero steps into the dark house and silently closes the front door behind him. He gently places his keys into the bowl on the nearby stand.

INT. RAMON LAUNDRY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He takes off his bloody clothes and shoves them into the washer. He exits.

INT. RAMON FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Romero ascends the stairs nude.

INT. RAMON BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Blood swirls in the turbulent water runoff towards the drain. Romero weeps, hushed by the shower.

INT. OBSTETRICS ROOM - NIGHT

A solemn, fully-clothed Romero slowly scoots onto the hospital bed beside a sleeping Izabel. He spoons her. She stirs.

IZABEL
You're back, baby?

ROMERO
Will you always be there for me?

IZABEL
Always.

ROMERO
(scooting closer)
I love you.

Romero kisses Izabel's neck and begins squeezing her breasts.

INT. OBSTETRICS ROOM - MORNING

A phone alarm goes off, yet Izabel remains asleep. Romero grabs his phone, turns off the alarm, and scans his notifications. Nothing. He gives a deep exhale.

INT. RAMON CAMPAIGN ROOM - LATER

Romero shuffles through the room towards his office, greeting his team. The mounted television displays the morning weather broadcast. As each head turns towards Romero, it suddenly halts, fixated on Romero's bruises.

INT. ROMERO'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Romero falls back into his chair. As he sifts through the papers on his desk, a commotion grows outside. Through his window, Romero sees a congregation forming around the television. Romero throws open his door.

INT. RAMON CAMPAIGN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Romero shimmies his way to the front of the group.

The lower banner: *BREAKING NEWS: EXPLICIT VIDEO OF EX-NYC MAYOR ROMERO RAMON.*

NEWSCASTER

A video is circulating the web that seems to depict ex-New York City Mayor and current mayoral Republican candidate Romero Ramon allegedly engaging in acts of prostitution, conspiracy, tampering with evidence, and possible manslaughter. Ramon engages in sexual intercourse with an individual, who has not yet been identified. This individual seems to later fall and hit her head, rendering her unconscious, upon which Ramon can be seen and heard conspiring with another individual by the name of Gupta to inject the rest of the drugs into the victim's body. The video ends with Ramon leaving the scene. This video has divided the Internet overnight as people speculate its authenticity - some claiming it's AI, whereas others are calling for an investigation and for Ramon's withdrawal from the mayoral race. So far, no charges have been made-

Click. The television goes black.

Romero drops the remote on a nearby table.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

(forced scoff)

Come on, Channel 7 has no merit.
They're showing tweets in the news?
Everyone knows Twitter is the new
Pornhub.

Romero snaps his fingers and points at the campaign manager, nodding fervently in agreement.

The others look at the campaign manager suspiciously. He cowers a bit. The phone on Natalie's desk rings. Natalie jogs back to her desk.

NATALIE

Sir, you have a bunch of calls coming in. Looks like donors.

ROMERO

(walking backwards)

Everyone, back to work. This is fake news and a smear campaign orchestrated by the Democrats. I'll handle this. Natalie, send one through.

(turns and jogs)

INT. ROMERO'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ROMERO

(picking up the phone)

Hello -- Don, you saw the video? Of course not. It was a deepfake. You can't possibly believe I would even touch someone like that.

INT. RAMON CAMPAIGN ROOM - SAME TIME

An employee turns the television back on.

The news banner: *BODY PARTS FOUND IN BUSHWICK WAREHOUSE.*

INT. DIONNE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Two police officers stand in the apartment hallway and knock on the door. The older officer **OFFICER GAUSS** stands distinguished and at ease. The rookie **OFFICER GANTT** stands nervously behind Officer Gauss. They look up and down the hallway, checking their 6s. The door opens.

DIONNE

You got a warrant this time?

OFFICER GAUSS

Slow ya roll, Dionne. It's not that typa visit. We got some news for you.

DIONNE

What is it?

OFFICER GAUSS

Does the address 4 James Court mean anything to you? Some old church, now abandoned.

DIONNE

Nah.

OFFICER GANTT

There were remains found inside this morning after someone reported smoke. From DNA analysis and fingerprinting, the lab identified the pieces as belonging to your brother.

OFFICER GAUSS

Mars is dead.

DIONNE

You're a fucking asshole, Gauss. What's the play here, huh? Tryna provoke me? You get tired of fiddling your batons and eating donuts?

Officer Gauss releases an unamused laugh.

OFFICER GANTT

I'm afraid my partner is serious.

OFFICER GAUSS

Dead serious.

DIONNE

Nah, tell lab they fucked up. They gotta recalibrate their systems.

OFFICER GAUSS

The evidence doesn't lie. Mars's DNA has been in our system since y'all were kids. It looks like he died from an explosive device. Maybe an exchange gone wrong - there was counterfeit money recovered on scene. If you know anything about who Mars was meeting last night or any current conflicts, that'd be helpful.

OFFICER GANTT

We can find the people who did this to him and bring them to justice.

DIONNE

(struggling to contain her emotions)

I don't know shit.

OFFICER GAUSS

You're really going to honor this gang code when your own brother was murdered?

DIONNE

Like I said, I don't know shit and I'm not saying shit.

OFFICER GAUSS

Alright, well, if anything comes to mind, you know the number. We'll leave you to grieve. Let's go, Gantt.

(walks down the hall)

Officer Gantt lingers at Dionne's door. He gives an empathetic nod to Dionne. She slams the door, and Gantt jogs up to Gauss.

OFFICER GANTT

Hey, is it just me, or does she look familiar? I feel like I've seen her somewhere.

They wait at the elevator.

OFFICER GAUSS

What you saw was trouble--the same shit that plagues these streets. Wherever Mars and Dionne go, death follows. They had a foster parent, Adrien Jensen - also my daughter's history teacher. Died in a suspicious house fire, but we couldn't prove anything. Imagine that. A good Samaritan takes in two kids just to be barbecued. That night, I knew I saw pure evil in that boy. With the Devil back where he belongs, let there be peace on these streets.

INT. LEVIATHAN - DAY

A spectacled, older gentleman with a balding head looks at a distressed Olivia across the table. He's her boss, the owner of the Leviathan: **MR. REESE.**

MR. REESE

Do you have an update on the capital, Olivia?

OLIVIA

(hesitantly)

That large settlement I told you about fell through. But, I'm looking into other options! There's a couple of banks I'm meeting with for a loan.

MR. REESE

I'm sorry to hear that, but there's no time. Look at this place. I'm losing money by the second. Listen, I appreciate how you've been helping me out with management. It's been a nice arrangement, but I gotta let it go. I have another offer.

OLIVIA

From who?

MR. REESE

Some film company called HJ Productions. The owner wants to make some series called Nightmare at Animal House. Something about a frat boy who flirts with girls at a college bar, and when that doesn't work, he has some method called the Pill Cosby. I don't know - all this stuff goes over my head. But he's paying good money. Well over asking price.

OLIVIA

(solemnly)

So what now?

MR. REESE

You should have about two weeks to move out of the upstairs room before I hand over the deed. You've done a fine job here and you'll receive a nice severance that can go towards an apartment. I'm sorry the Oasis didn't work out like you wanted. It was a noble idea: a safe haven for victims and runaways, but sometimes charity doesn't pay.

OLIVIA

I'm sorry too.

Mr. Reese pats Olivia on the shoulder and shuffles away with his cane for support. Olivia watches him for a while before turning to look at a jar of olives on the bar counter.

EXT. RAMON CAMPAIGN OFFICE - EVENING

Romero locks the front door and sulks down the sidewalk. A limo stalks down the street and halts beside him. The door ominously opens. Romero hesitantly enters.

INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

The limo starts moving again. Romero squirms in the leather seat and looks into the corner of the limo where the darkness shrouds a man's face. All that is visible are the sleek, wealthy threads of the man's suit.

ROMERO

Sir-

SIR raises his finger. Romero holds his tongue.

SIR

You had such promise, Romero. A second term would have secured your future. You were going to be my initiate to the effigy at Bohemian Grove. And you spoiled it. There's no coming back from this.

ROMERO

There is, Sir. I -

The man in the limo smashes his fist against the limo door.

A beat.

SIR

Our grand plan for New York City is bigger than you. You will formally withdraw from the race first thing tomorrow morning to clear the way for our new prospect. At such time, our relationship will be concluded. A parting gift for keeping knowledge of our association secret -- the charges coming your way will be handled. But don't let our good graces confuse you. Be well aware, Romero, if you don't do what we say or if you speak of us to anyone, your fate will be decided.

The man presses a button on his limo door, and the limo rolls to a stop. The door next to Romero opens up, and Romero departs.

EXT. RANDOM STREET - CONTINUOUS

The limo speeds off into the night, leaving Romero on the sidewalk.

INT. RAMON FOYER - NIGHT

Romero sulkily hangs his jacket on the coatrack. He kicks the door closed and drags himself down the hall.

INT. RAMON LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROMERO
(shouts out)
Izabel!

Romero pauses, expecting a response.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
Izabel?!

INT. RAMON BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Romero peeks his head in. Izabel is packing a suitcase, while Roman fusses in a baby carriage. The closet is half empty. Most of the drawers are open, showing rummaged clothing.

ROMERO
Izabel, please wait.

IZABEL
(shoving clothes
haphazardly into
suitcase)
No, Romero.

Romero tries to grab Izabel's hands, but she pushes him away. She strides to the dresser to grab more clothes.

ROMERO
Don't tell me you believe that
shit. It's all fake news. It's a
crusade, mami.

IZABEL

The experts are saying that the video hasn't been doctored.

ROMERO

Those experts are Democrats, baby! It's revenge for switching parties. They're all in cahoots! Please, I need you right now. They're telling me to withdraw from the race.

IZABEL

I thought so. Lucky for me, I got a head start on packing.

ROMERO

Why can't you believe me? Where are you going? You're betraying our family.

IZABEL

No, you betrayed our family!

ROMERO

(trying to hug Izabel)
It's not too late. We can get through this. I'll do whatever it takes.

IZABEL

(once again shoving
Romero)
You can't. You can't win. You're nothing.
(zipping up her bag)

Izabel goes to pick up Roman.

ROMERO

(standing in between
Izabel and the carriage)
You're not taking my son from me!

IZABEL

Get out of my way, or I'll call the police and say you hit me! Don't fucking touch me, pendejo!

ROMERO

(reluctantly standing
aside)
You said you were always going to wait on me on hand and foot.

IZABEL
(taking the carriage and
her suitcase)
I'm sure you got some other bitch
to be in doggy for you. Roman and I
deserve a future.

INT. RAMON STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

ROMERO
(following Izabel)
Remember what we talked about?
Roman and I sharing your breastmilk
in communion. Together. United.

INT. RAMON FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Izabel opens the front door and carries the baby carriage and
her bag out.

ROMERO
You're going to throw all that
away?! Why are you doing this?

EXT. RAMON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Izabel puts the carriage in the backseat of the Uber.

ROMERO
You want me to beg? Huh?

Izabel throws her suitcase in the trunk.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
I'm not going to. I'm a man at the
end of the day.

IZABEL
I'll be expecting child support.

ROMERO
(sternly)
You'll be back. You just need some
time. That's all.

The Uber door shuts.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
(talking through the
closed window)
(MORE)

ROMERO (CONT'D)
 I'll be here when you come to your
 senses and you're ready to work on
 our family.

The car takes off. Romero jogs along, following for a bit
 before coming to a stop in the middle of the road.

INT. PIT VIPERS MEETING ROOM - DAY

A collection of the Vipers loiter. Dionne, with Pluto tagging
 along at her side, solemnly takes the front of the room. The
 ambient conversation lessens, but is still audible.

DIONNE
 Hey.

Few members quieten.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
 (to Pluto)
 Speak.

Three resounding barks boom from Pluto. The room falls
 silent.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
 That's better.

PIT VIPER #1
 (pipes up)
 Where's Mars? We haven't seen him
 in 3 days.

DIONNE
 (bracing her jaw)
 Mars is dead.

The murmur returns. Several members look around, bewildered.

PIT VIPER #2
 Was it the Ghost Shadows? We caught
 one of they youngins lackin' over
 on 90th last week.

DIONNE
 That's what I intend to find out.
 12 came to my door and told me they
 found Mars in pieces over in
 Bushwick.

The chatter peaks for a moment.

STEIN

Last time we saw him, we were
staking out Gupta's joint.

JUGGERNAUT

Yea, he kicked us out the whip and
followed some dude that came out.
Said it was personal.

DIONNE

Was it Gupta?

STEIN

Guy didn't look Indian to me.

CAILOU

(addressing the room)

So, we ride out then? Let's pick up
Gupta and make him tell us who the
guy was.

A couple of guys mumble in agreement.

DIONNE

No, we gotta play it smart. If Mars
taught me anything, we gotta play
mad moves ahead. If they're on
chess timin', we're on Go.

CAILOU

(under his breath)

Dionne finally wants to use his
balls and tell us what to do after
all these years.

A small pause.

DIONNE

Like I was saying, the move is to
find Gupta's suppliers first. He
might not talk so we'll put eyes on
him first. Only after we know who's
providing the smack, do we cut out
the competition. We grab Gupta and
see if we can make him talk about
this mystery man. Either way, we
send him back to one of his million
gods. And the same goes for anyone
else selling on our turf.

STEIN

We'll possess more of the supply,
and as a result the market share. I
see the vision.

Others nod in agreement.

DIONNE

We'll avenge Mars, believe that.
But first we carry out his mission,
or we risk losing everything he
built. Name of the game is Observe
and Report. We'll have a couple
guys post up outside the opps'
spots. Be on the lookout for any
big deliveries or movements. Stein
and Juggernaut, y'all are on Gupta.
Same shit, but watch for the fucker
that Mars followed in case he comes
back. Stein, you assign the
lookouts for the other bangers in
the game. Everyone else, operations
continue as normal. Juggernaut,
come see me after.

STEIN

Got you, boss.
(turning to address the
Vipers)

Juggernaut sways up to Dionne. Dionne whispers in his ear.
Juggernaut nods. Juggernaut makes a beeline for Cailou,
knocking on his bald head to grab his attention.

JUGGERNAUT

You're with me.

Juggernaut guides Cailou to the dojo off to the side. He
opens the door.

JUGGERNAUT (CONT'D)

Clear out all the weights from the
dojo to the meeting room and then
back.

Cailou looks at Dionne and scoffs before entering. Juggernaut
closes the door after him.

DIONNE

(to Pluto)
Follow, Pluto.

Dionne strolls to the dojo door as Juggernaut stands aside.
Pluto stands at attention, looking at Dionne. She opens the
door and points inside.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

Munch.

Pluto leaps inside. Dionne closes the door, and Juggernaut leans his weight against it.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
(to Juggernaut)
Should only be a couple minutes -
Pluto's got an appetite from Hell.
Get some guys to clean up the mess.
Mars liked his dojo spotless.

INT. GUCCI MALL STORE - DAY

Olivia, frazzled, holds copies of her resume and pleads with a shop manager beside the checkout counter.

SHOP MANAGER
Yes, yes, I understand, but
unfortunately, I can't help you. We
don't have any positions open.

OLIVIA
But online on your official
website, it said that this location
is actively hiring. Please, I need
a job that pays. I'll do anything.

SHOP MANAGER
First of all, nice try. I was
already arrested once. Secondly,
there are no positions left.

The shop manager leaves, leaving Olivia to retreat out the store with the papers under her arms.

INT. MALL - CONTINUOUS

Olivia scans the surrounding storefronts for the next store to try. She makes her way toward the Rolex store. As she approaches, she sees Izabel in a sexy, slim dress sitting on a bench in front of the store with a baby stroller. Olivia puts her head down and is halfway through turning around when-

IZABEL
Livy?!

Olivia stops.

IZABEL (CONT'D)
How do we keep running into one
another?

OLIVIA
(feigning surprise)
Wow! I know. I know. How - how are
you doing?

IZABEL
(amicably)
Oh, cut the bullshit.

OLIVIA
Huh?

IZABEL
I'm sure you're up to date with all
the latest news. After all, that
used to be your job.

A man walks out of the Rolex store, brandishing a couple of
bags. Izabel perks up and smiles, thrusting her chest
forward. The man takes intrigued notice of her impressive
chest, then surprisingly of the newborn in the stroller,
before abruptly focusing on the path ahead of him.

IZABEL (CONT'D)
(scowling)
Put a madre.

OLIVIA
Uh yeah, it's a crazy video. Are
you ok?

IZABEL
I'm alright. This belly wrap is
just on too tight.

Baby Roman fusses and wails. A small blankie is flung out of
the stroller onto the floor. Izabel is too busy re-adjusting
her attire.

IZABEL (CONT'D)
Hush, baby. Mami's looking for your
new Daddy.

Olivia comes closer and picks up the blankie. She returns it
to Roman's outstretched hands. Eventually, he stops fussing
as he wrangles with the blankie.

OLIVIA
Very lucky that he's this young. He
has no idea what's going on.

IZABEL
No idea of the sacrifices either.
Where I'm from, there's no hope.
(MORE)

IZABEL (CONT'D)

You can go your entire life, seeing nothing but filth and spend each day scraping by. The day Romero introduced himself to me in Colombia, I knew that was my way out of the barrios. I could come to America and be the wife of a powerful man. So I did and people finally respected me. I had a better life, even if my husband wasn't always in bed. I came this far, and I won't let my son live my past.

OLIVIA

So you knew?

IZABEL

I've grown to appreciate the nicer things in life.

OLIVIA

(depressed sigh)

Huh.

IZABEL

(standing up frustrated)

Speaking of, do you happen to know which floor Tod's is on?

EXT. KICKBOXING GYM - DAY

Romero slams his car door and hauls his gym bag over his shoulder.

INT. KICKBOXING GYM - CONTINUOUS

As Romero strides through the gym, head down, murmurs rise across the gym. People stop hitting the bags to turn and stare. Two individuals in the ring halt their sparring and cross to the nearest rope.

JORGE

Yo, show us that question mark kick, son! You the Transbender!

RICHIE

(laughing)

Nahhhhh.

The gym bursts into an uproar. Romero turns on his heels and storms out. They call out after him.

JORGE

Where you going? Roosevelt Ave?

RICHIE

In the daytime? You a freakboul,
bro!

INT. RAMON LIVING ROOM - LATER

Paper plates and empty takeout containers litter the tabletops and floors. The porn on the laptop provides the only light source. The video reads *Sara Jay at the Gloryhole*. A pocket pussy lies dormant atop an ajar pizza box.

In his underpants, Romero lounges on the couch, one hand in his underpants and the other holding his phone. On the screen is a TikTok video of Natalie's close-up face.

NATALIE

Oh my God, it's literally insane
I'm alive right now. I worked as
Romero's personal assistant for
months, and I always felt unsafe
around him. He had this creepy
smile and would always make weird
comments about how I looked. At any
point, he could have tried to drug
and rape me. I could have easily
been that woman in the video.
Please like and follow if you want
me to share my experience in
another video.

Romero looks at the Likes on the video. 134K.

ROMERO

Fucking retards believe this shit?

Romero swipes up. Another video appears. Israel Adesanya is talking to the camera.

IZZY

Yo, it's the Stylebender. I do not
condone the misuse of the question
mark --

Romero swipes again. Another video.

Harley Berk is seen on stage addressing a crowd. An overlay of the TikTok creator at the corner of the screen speaks:

CREATOR

Did anyone else see the shoes that Harley Berk wore during his speech today? Tod's Blue Suede Loafers? He was highkeyly flexin' on us.

Romero clicks on the comments, while the video minimizes to the top.

PHONE SCREEN:

"That's my Republican nominee."

"\$775 for a pair of loafers??!!"

ROMERO

(mutters)

Easily impressed baboons.

PHONE SCREEN:

"I'm too broke to even see those shoes in person."

"Y'all talking about the shoes, but his biddie at the end got some yams on her."

Romero swipes down the comments, and the video enlarges.

VIDEO (V.O.)

-Blue Suede Loaf--

Romero drags the playback cursor to the far right. He brings the phone closer to his face.

Harley Berk gives one last wave and walks off the stage to a smiling woman clapping. They walk off, holding hands and her plump ass protrudes through her pink slim dress.

ROMERO

(gasps)

What?

Romero shoots up to his feet. Romero's leg hits the coffee table on the way up and the pocket pussy rolls onto the floor. His hand flies up from his underpants to palm his head in disbelief.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Fuck! Izabel! Fucking bitch!

Romero hops around frantically. His right foot slips on the personal silicone vagina, and he falls hard, trying to grab anything on the way down. His body hits the coffee table, knocking the computer and pizza on the floor. Romero screams in physical and emotional pain.

INT. NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING - EVENING

People are seated in a circle of chairs. All eyes are on **ALICE**, a skinny, worn-down lady. In her chair, Olivia has a clipboard resting against her folded legs.

ALICE

As you all know, my name is Alice. And I'm ashamed to say that I fell off the wagon yesterday. That's 2 years down the drain. I was in a bad space and my mental got the better of me. My sister found me on the floor and tended to me until the high wore off. But seeing her cry, knowing that I let her down - I kinda wished that I didn't come back.

OLIVIA

That's no way to think, Alice. Everyone here knows the temptation of drugs is strong, but it's important to acknowledge that God is stronger. If you surrender your life to a higher power, that's when you can heal and know that you belong here on Earth.

ALICE

(volume gradually increasing)

But I did that already, didn't I? I followed the 12 steps. Must have been in a fucking circle 'cause I'm right back at the start.

(voice breaking)

What's the point? It's a fucking joke having hope when my story's already written.

OLIVIA

Would you like to share what made you regress?

ALICE

One of my good friends, Benny, we grew up together. He was my high school sweetheart. Followed me around like a dog. Did whatever he could to impress me. And I used to party a lot, so naturally he partied too. That's how he got hooked.

OLIVIA

So you blame yourself?

ALICE

That's because it is my fucking fault. What else is he going to do when the person he's in love with is smoking the pipe every day? He's going to share the burden. We roamed the streets for years. And when my family got me help, it was too late--I couldn't save him from his new love. And I felt guilty being clean while he was still in alleyways giving blowjobs for a hit, knowing that he learned that from me.

(starts bawling)

Another NA member in the circle slowly shakes his head.

NA MEMBER

(mutters)

Jesus Christ.

ALICE

I stayed in contact with him regularly, helping him with food and clothes whenever I could, trying to convince him to join this fucking program... But no one has seen or heard from him for over a week. And I can't shake this feeling that he's lying in a ditch somewhere because of me.

OLIVIA

Making amends for past harms is important, as long as it doesn't cause harm to anyone else or yourself.

ALICE

You say it like it's fucking easy.
I don't think you understand the
crosses we bear. Last time we saw
you was what? A few months ago? And
now you're back with the same
holier-than-thou bullshit, but you
don't really know how hard it is.
What's the saying? Those who can't
do teach?

NA MEMBER

Goddamn.
(bites his donut, looking
at Olivia)

Olivia turns red under all the eyes glaring at her.

INT./EXT. CAR/GUPTA'S STREET - EVENING

Stein's in the driver's seat, while Juggernaut fills up the
passenger side. From their POV, they have a wide view of the
front of Gupta's home down the street.

JUGGERNAUT

It's scary how much Pluto can eat.
Nigga can eat more than me. He was
even chewin' on the bones. I almost
threw up my lunch. Almost. I just
hung back and let the other guys
clean it up.

STEIN

Look at you now. Big man got
promoted.

JUGGERNAUT

Whole time though, I was thinking
dogs could smell cancer. So you
would think the dog wouldn't want
to eat him. Spoiled food, ya know?

STEIN

And you've been studying, Jug?
You've been watching *National
Geographic*?

JUGGERNAUT

Shut the fuck up. I'm just sayin'
that for Pluto to eat him, maybe he
truly was in complete remission. To
beat cancer and then go out like
that? Shit's fucked up.

STEIN

Dogs eat their own shit - I doubt
they're picky eaters. You two seem
to have that in common.

JUGGERNAUT

(pointing)

Yo, yo, isn't that the guy?

EXT. GUPTA'S HOME - SAME TIME

Romero hastens to the front door. He buzzes.

INT./EXT. CAR/GUPTA'S STREET - SAME TIME

Stein whips out his phone.

STEIN

(into the phone)

He's here.

EXT. GUPTA'S HOME - SAME TIME

Romero slips inside.

INT. GUPTA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Gupta is lounging in his sofa on the phone.

GUPTA

(into the phone)

That's when you tell them to redeem
the gift card. I gotta go. Stick to
the script.

Romero rushes to the seat opposite Gupta. He hastily
relocates a box from the chair to the floor, before taking a
seat.

GUPTA (CONT'D)

Careful! Those are security tapes
from Bayside Mall. We're not alone,
ya know?

ROMERO

Gupta, hear my testimony. My
enemies have succeeded against me.
They took my wife, rendered me a
cuckold. My son will grow up with a
broken family.

(MORE)

ROMERO (CONT'D)

Born with a hero's name, but cursed
with a villain origin story.
They've stripped me of a title I
rightfully was owed. They have
soiled my good name.

GUPTA

A tough situation, indeed.

ROMERO

All because that bitch Olivia. She
wanted my life, so I'll give it to
her, even my ending -- the good and
the bad. Uncle Sam's got a little
gift for her.

GUPTA

JFK? The ol' Epstein?

ROMERO

(shaking his head)
Death's too easy ... and Epstein's
still alive -- they just switched
the bodies. I'm thinking we use the
coup de grâce: guns, drugs, and
kiddie porn.

GUPTA

The Trifecta.

ROMERO

They'll throw her ass underneath
the jail. Any wisp of a future she
even thought of would vanish. Dead
in the public eye and in her own
mind, it won't take long before she
provides the same end for herself
for some peace.

GUPTA

There's karmic consequences for
that.

ROMERO

And may her soul never rest.

GUPTA

What exactly do you need?

ROMERO

Unfortunately, I've recently lost
some alliances that had expertise
in this field.

GUPTA

Uh, I don't have anyone who can plant evidence. It takes time to build these connections.

ROMERO

(looking purposefully at Gupta)

But satisfaction guaranteed, right?

GUPTA

You know I don't go in the field.

ROMERO

Come on. I'll pay you double.

GUPTA

(hesitating)

I wouldn't do this for anyone. But I owe you for getting me out of trouble during that fent situation.

ROMERO

Good man. Does that mean I get that family & friends' discount?

GUPTA

Yes, 2% off, brother.

ROMERO

You're a greedy fuck, Gupta.

Gupta and Romero shake hands in agreement.

GUPTA

(scanning his notepad)

I have weapons: Glocks, grenades--

ROMERO

Add in the IEDs. Maybe the cops will connect her to the body at the warehouse.

GUPTA

Very good, sir. Drugs--heroin, LSD, and meth.

ROMERO

Let's do it.

GUPTA

How much kiddie porn would you like?

ROMERO
Industry standard is a few
terabytes.

GUPTA
Ok, need one hour to get everything
together. What if she sees us when
we plant it?

ROMERO
Ahh, um, you got anything to fuck
her up?

GUPTA
Oh, I know.

Gupta presents a bag labeled "Bath Salts".

ROMERO
Hell yeah, if we're lucky, she'll
tweak out on this when the police
arrive and they'll light her ass
up. Miami zombie Part 2.

GUPTA
And the address. I know a hacker
who can track people through city
cameras. I'll have the address
within the hour as well.

ROMERO
You're like the Indian Batman.
Really living the American dream.

EXT. GUPTA'S HOME - LATER

Gupta and Romero exit the apartment.

INT./EXT. CAR/GUPTA'S STREET - SAME TIME

STEIN
They're coming out now.

DIONNE (O.S.)
Tail 'em.

EXT. LEVIATHAN - LATER

Romero and Gupta pull balaclavas down over their faces. They
jog under the cover of darkness towards the front of the
Leviathan.

ROMERO
 This bitch really lives at a bar.
 This wouldn't have happened if she
 just let me fuck.

INT./EXT. CAR/LEVIATHAN - SAME TIME

STEIN
 They stopped outside some old bar.
 Got some snake hanging out front.
 It says ..uh..the Leviathan.

INT. PIT VIPERS DOJO - SAME TIME

DIONNE
 (urgently)
 I'm on my way.

EXT. LEVIATHAN - MOMENTS LATER

Gupta kneels. He picks out some instruments and inserts them
 into the keyhole.

ROMERO
 Where'd you learn this?

GUPTA
 In a past life back in Mumbai, I
 was a common thief.

ROMERO
 What'd you steal?

GUPTA
 Mangoes, money, panties.

ROMERO
 All a man ever needs.

The door budges open, and the two sneak inside,-

INT. LEVIATHAN BAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-closing the door quietly behind them.

ROMERO
 I'll spread some of the drugs out
 here in the open. The rest in the
 cabinets.

GUPTA

I hide the weapons while I look for
her computer.

ROMERO

Put some upstairs too.

Romero puts some Ziploc baggies of heroin on the bar counter.
He then heads into the kitchen with a big bag of weed.

Gupta rummages through his duffel bag and produces a
bandolier of grenades, some IEDs, ammo, and guns and lays
them out in an array on the table.

GUPTA

(bobbing his head while
brandishing the gun)
Olivia, you've been a naughty
naughty girl.

Romero comes back from the kitchen.

ROMERO

Alright, let's plant the rest of
the shit and then we'll drop the
tip to the police.

GUPTA

(swinging the bandolier
over his shoulder)
Need to find that laptop.

Gupta grabs a gun and some ammo and heads up the stairs. When
he's three quarters of the way up, the door at the top of the
stairs swings open.

Olivia, with headphones on, stops in her tracks as she and
Gupta stare at one another for a beat.

Her headphones: *-and such growth is necessary to transform
your life.*

Gupta lunges at Olivia, who Spartan-kicks him in the face
with a scream. Gupta tumbles down the stairs, and the
bandolier falls off, sending a few grenades skating across
the floor.

Romero grabs the syringe of bath salts off the counter and
jumps over Gupta to sprint up the stairs.

INT. LEVIATHAN UPSTAIRS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Olivia closes the door, but Romero shoulders it. The old door gives way, throwing Olivia to the side. She hits some shelves knocking down items. She throws fallen items at Romero, who tries to dodge them.

ROMERO
(still brandishing the
syringe)
Come here, bitch.

Romero ducks under one book, but his head quickly meets a snow globe. Dazed, he falls forward, still lunging for her feet in the process.

She hops over Romero's arms and attempts to run by, but Romero kicks his foot out, tripping her.

Olivia stumbles on her way to the staircase. Romero launches the same snow globe back at Olivia. It connects square with the back of her head, sending her flying through the air down the stairwell.

INT. LEVIATHAN BAR ROOM - SAME TIME

Gupta slowly gathers to his feet at foot of the stairs. He looks up to see an incoming blur.

GUPTA
(moaning)
Oh..

Olivia crashes down on top of Gupta.

Romero rushes down the steps and corners Olivia. As she struggles to her feet, she sees the needle in his hands.

OLIVIA
Please don't kill me.

ROMERO
We're not here to kill you.

OLIVIA
Are you going to rape me?

ROMERO
That's the least of your worries.

GUPTA
(rolling in pain on the
floor)
Fuck! Get that bitch!

Romero takes a step toward Olivia.

OLIVIA
No, hold on! Hold on!
(squinting)
Wait, Romero?

GUPTA
Do it!

ROMERO
(ripping off his
balaclava)
Yeah, I'm here to end the game you
started.

Gupta brings himself to his feet by grabbing onto a table.

OLIVIA
You don't want to do this. It's not
too late.

ROMERO
Oh, but it is. Now that I'm a
fucking laughingstock, you want to
call truce.

GUPTA
She ruined your life!

OLIVIA
No, I mean I'm sorry for what I
did. If I could take it back -

ROMERO
Suddenly a change of heart when at
my mercy?

OLIVIA
No, sincerely. I - I envied you. I
saw how people worshipped you and I
was blinded by this fire to clip
your wings. And it wasn't noble at
all, no matter what I told myself.
It was for no one but my own
fucking ego. I fucked up. I see
that now.

GUPTA
From the mouth of the snake itself.

ROMERO
So you agree you deserve this?
(lifts the needle a bit)

GUPTA
Just do it! The bitch fell on me.

OLIVIA
Then...make sure to stab yourself
next.

Romero gives a confused expression.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Be honest. Did the video *really*
change anything?

ROMERO
What the fuck are you talking
about?

OLIVIA
(scoffs)
Your life was already spiraling.
You built your career on promoting
family ideals, but Izabel never
really loved you. Your life is a
facade.

ROMERO
Wrong moment to chat shit.
(takes a step)

OLIVIA
(hands up defensively)
No, really. She used you -

GUPTA
Shut up, bloody bitch!

OLIVIA
- used you to stoke her ego. But
you were too busy fucking around on
her to see it.

ROMERO
You don't know shit.

OLIVIA

All I know is when shit goes wrong,
it's easier to blame someone else
than to take responsibility. And
I'm speaking from experience.

Romero falters, jittery with indecision.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I took control of my life. It's not
too late for you, either.

Romero's arm drops to his side.

GUPTA

Fuck!

Olivia releases a huge sigh.

OLIVIA

That's good. That's good.

ROMERO

(tearing up)
Fuckin' hell.

Romero back-steps towards a table and puts his head in his
hands.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

So... what's next?

OLIVIA

We move on and we do better.

Romero nods silently. He looks at Gupta in surrender.

GUPTA

(starts picking up the
planted items)
No more discount. You're still
paying full price.

Kaboom.

The wooden front door bursts open, revealing Juggernaut.
Gupta immediately drops down behind the bar before he's seen.

Stein follows close behind Juggernaut who has his gun drawn
at Romero. A couple more gangbangers come in with Dionne in
last.

DIONNE
(looking at Olivia)
You ok, Livy?

OLIVIA
(relaxing)
Yes, yes, I'm fine.

Dionne looks at Romero.

DIONNE
(in realization)
What the fuck are you doing here?

JUGGERNAUT
That's the guy Mars followed.

STEIN
Where's Gupta?

ROMERO
I don't know who that is.

Stein picks up a bag of heroin from a nearby table and analyzes the stamp.

STEIN
Some elephant god wearing a cowboy
hat.
(approaches Romero and
points his gun directly
at his head)
Want to try that again,
motherfucker?

OLIVIA
Stop! There's no need for that!

ROMERO
He left! He went through the back!

Dionne steps towards Romero and pushes Stein and his gun away. She presses her own gun against Romero's neck.

DIONNE
Remember me?

ROMERO
I'm sorry.

DIONNE
You were the last to see Mars?

ROMERO
(hesitantly)
I'm sorry.

DIONNE
Did you kill him?

ROMERO
I-I begged him to take the money.

DIONNE
What money?

Romero's eyes dart at Olivia. Dionne follows his gaze.

Still crouching behind the bar, Gupta eyes a lone grenade nearby on the floor.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
What the fuck is he talking about?

OLIVIA
(gently)
Put down the gun, Dionne. Let's talk.

DIONNE
The blackmail money?

OLIVIA
I don't know why he was there, but-

DIONNE
You were there? You knew?

OLIVIA
I didn't know it was him until later.

Dionne's nostrils flare. She hyperventilates.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. It never should have happened.

DIONNE
(breaking up)
He was the only family I had. You didn't even call.

OLIVIA
I didn't know how to face you. But I'm glad you're here now so I can truly apologize. For everything.
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I got caught up, and I was a terrible friend. A worse sponsor. I caused you so much harm, and I overlooked what you needed from me. If I can take everything back, I would. You're like a sister to me.

Flash and Boom.

Olivia's head jerks back, decorating the wall red. Dionne shoots her slumped body three more times.

DIONNE

I told you that plan was fucking stupid.

A grenade flies over the bar counter onto the middle of the bar room floor. People scatter.

Dionne leaps into a booth. Romero scampers in the opposite direction towards a pillar, with Stein pursuing.

Romero hides behind the pillar. As Stein comes around, Romero stabs him in the neck with the needle of bath salts.

STEIN

Fuck!

Stein and Romero grapple with Stein's gun. The grenade explodes, and the shrapnel hits Stein's exposed body, blowing him away.

JUGGERNAUT

Stein!

Some old furniture is alight with embers that steadily spread.

Bullets fly through the smoke.

DIONNE

(yelling)

I'm raised from the dead, Romero!
The Devil sent me back and I'll
send you in my place.

Romero crouches and reaches out to retrieve Stein's gun, as splinters of wood descend on him from the bullets hitting the beam. From his spot, he can see behind the bar, where Gupta crouches hiding.

Gupta points at the stairwell. Romero nods yes and performs the sign of the Cross.

One of the gang members walks around a burning table towards the beam as he shoots his Glock. Gupta signals to Romero, wiggling the peace sign upside down to indicate someone approaching.

Gupta jumps out from behind the bar and sprints towards the stairwell. The member turns away from the pillar towards Gupta but is quickly gunned down by Romero with Stein's gun, who steps out from behind the pillar.

Bullets whiz in Gupta's direction as well.

GUPTA
Fuck, fuck, fuck!

Romero returns fire. He hits one of the Vipers in the neck.

Dionne and her other goons duck down. Gupta reaches the steps.

The fire is now consuming some of the pillars.

DIONNE
Pluto, munch!

Romero sprints up the stairs.

From outside, Pluto bounds in and looks to Dionne for confirmation. She points through the growing flames at the stairs as Romero's legs disappear from view. Pluto obeys.

INT. LEVIATHAN UPSTAIRS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gupta is struggling to open up the window when Romero screams.

ROMERO
(falling)
Ahhh!

Pluto clamps down on Romero's ankle and furiously shakes his head. Romero rains down blows on Pluto, but his attempts are futile on the massive Cane Corso head. Pluto begins dragging him towards the stairwell emanating smoke.

Gupta continues to wrestle with the window.

GUPTA
Hold on, buddy!

Heavy steps near. A wide silhouette appears through the smoke on the stairwell. Still being shaken, Romero raises his gun.

JUGGERNAUT
 (emerging from the
 stairwell)
 Banzai!

Juggernaut swings his foot to Romero's face, knocking Romero back down and the gun sliding towards Gupta on the floor.

With his clothes ablaze, Juggernaut lets off a shot, narrowly missing Gupta, who threw himself to the ground. The bullet breaks the glass of the window.

Gupta snatches the gun off the floor and pulls the trigger at the giant. No more bullets. Juggernaut doesn't see. He's frantically removing his clothes on fire.

Pluto continues to ravage Romero.

ROMERO
 (in pain)
 Ahhhh!

Seizing the opportunity, Gupta runs at Juggernaut, who's now in his Tighty Whities.

GUPTA
 Bastard bitch!

Juggernaut lets off another shot, hitting Gupta in the trap before Gupta closes the distance.

Juggernaut throws Gupta over him. Gupta crashes down beside Pluto hard.

ROMERO
 AHH! AHHHH!

Gupta weakly jams his thumb into Pluto's arse before passing out. Pluto yelps and momentarily lets go of Romero's foot. Romero uses his other foot to kick Pluto down into the fiery blaze that has consumed what's left of the stairwell.

Smoke fills the air.

Covering his mouth and nose with one hand, Juggernaut tries to headshot Romero, who rolls out of the way. Romero punches Juggernaut in the nuts.

Juggernaut drops the gun and stumbles back, clutching his crown jewels. He simultaneously coughs while trying to get his breath.

INT. LEVIATHAN BAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bandolier of grenades lies in the white-hot blaze. Suddenly, a few of the grenades explode--the bandolier flying every which way with each explosion. The building shakes.

INT. LEVIATHAN UPSTAIRS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Juggernaut and Romero continue exchanging blows. Romero ducks Juggernaut's wide hook and gives 2 punches to the gut, but the belly rolls absorb the impact.

JUGGERNAUT

I eat those, motherfucker!

Juggernaut head-butts Romero, who staggers back.

The behemoth follows with an uppercut from the depths of hell, sending Romero flying back into the window, busting the rest of the glass out. Romero holds on to the frame, trying to keep from falling backwards. Juggernaut sets his meaty palms on Romero's neck and strangles him. Romero lets go of the frame in an attempt to break Juggernaut's grasp.

JUGGERNAUT (CONT'D)

You killed Stein!

As the walls singe, they start to bow outward. The floor lurches downwards a bit.

Romero's eyes flutter rapidly and then more slowly.

Gunshots ring out, and Juggernaut releases his grip on Romero. Romero weakly keeps his own body up as he grabs the window frame behind him for support.

Juggernaut wobbles.

GUPTA

(dropping the gun)

Fuck you bloody!

Juggernaut falls backwards. His body crashes through the floor, shooting up a plume of smoke.

Fire rapidly catches onto the walls and ceiling near the stairwell. Sounds of cracks and snaps louden below.

Gupta runs at Romero.

ROMERO

(hoarsely)

Thank you--

Gupta tackles Romero out the open window, right before the floor caves in.

EXT. LEVIATHAN'S ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Gupta and Romero crash onto the hard granite with painful yells. They roll around for a bit. The two struggle to their hands and knees, and then to their feet.

Soot-covered and bleeding, Romero and Gupta lean on one another as they limp away from the roaring blaze towards an end of the alleyway.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

They duck in between two cars.

GUPTA

They knew us. Who was that?

ROMERO

The prostitute.

GUPTA

Prostitute and gang leader. I respect a real entrepreneur.

ROMERO

She's not going to stop.

GUPTA

Key rule in business: when there's too much trouble, you cut your losses. There's always money to be made elsewhere.

ROMERO

What are you saying? Just leave? Just like that?

GUPTA

I haven't seen Polly or Bubba in months. I miss my wife's beautiful skin - white like cow's milk.

ROMERO

So headquarters is moving back home, then?

GUPTA

Too much trouble, too close to home, Romero. Maybe, I go legit.

(MORE)

GUPTA (CONT'D)
I sometimes think about import and export.

ROMERO
Gupta finding a niche. One of the crazier things to happen today.

GUPTA
(laughing)
And you, brother?

ROMERO
I don't know, but I'll give it a long thought.

Gupta nods reassuringly.

ROMERO (CONT'D)
All I know for sure is that I need a fucking hospital.
(touching Gupta's trap with his finger)
You too.
(Gupta winces)

GUPTA
You know how much hospitals cost? Bullet went through. Some peroxide and I'll be fine.

A beat.

GUPTA (CONT'D)
Her voice sounded funny.

ROMERO
I think the tiger penis has some side effects of poor hearing.

GUPTA
Tigers have incredible hearing. Don't shit on my quality product.

ROMERO
(snapping)
Well, I wasn't thinking straight that night.

GUPTA
(hands up in surrender)
Ok, your words, buddy...take care. We'll meet again.

They engage in a 'Dillon & Dutch'/Arm-Wrestle handshake.

ROMERO
Godspeed, brother.

EXT. LEVIATHAN - NIGHT

Dionne is standing defiantly, glaring into the flames of the crumbling Leviathan.

One of the 3 gang members behind her approaches, as sirens grow louder.

GANGBANGER
We gotta split.

DIONNE
Not until I see their bodies.

GANGBANGER
Fire like that, ain' gon' be
nothin' to see.

He and the other bangers jog down the block towards the car.

The roof of the building crashes down, leveling the bar to smoldering rubble.

Dionne lets out a hellish scream.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - NIGHT

Leaving the check-in desk, a disheveled Romero hobbles into an empty seat. Sullen faces and hunched bodies are scattered amongst the lobby chairs.

Hugh Jackson is seated in the corner. He spots Romero on the other side of the lobby. Hugh stares for a while and then makes his way over to the empty seat next to Romero.

HUGH
Long day?

Romero says nothing.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Or long week, more likely. I watch
CNN.

ROMERO
(tiredly)
Yup, let me have it.

HUGH

Oh no, I'm a fan. I think you're a natural. The whole caught on cam, sex tape thing is making a comeback.

ROMERO

You think I wanted this?

HUGH

No, but it'd be a shame to let an opportunity pass on by. You see, I'm a producer. I make films, only that that the genre has changed over the years.

Hugh spots Romero's inquisitive look.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Adult films. I'm sure you've seen my work. *Holes, the Sequel. No Country for Prude Women. Project XXX. Taken: If She Was Never Found.*

ROMERO

HJ Productions, right? Y'all got some quality plots.

HUGH

It's almost as if I make movies for a living.

(laughs)

So trust me when I say I can spot real talent. Looking at you, celeb status, coupled with the larger audience you can capture.

ROMERO

Larger audience?

HUGH

We'll throw in a sprinkle of that queer shit, of course.

ROMERO

(defensively)

She was trans.

HUGH

Yea, that's kinda gay.

ROMERO

(snapping)

I'm not --- uggghh.

Romero collects himself.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

Listen, I appreciate it, but as you and the whole world can see, I got shit I need to figure out.

HUGH

(sighing)

Listen, kid. I've been there. Once upon a time, I was in the movie business out in Hollywood. I was big too. And there was a little girl in my film. She was getting assaulted by one of the other producers, and I turned a blind eye. I only cared about getting the movie to premiere. I thought it was a masterpiece, my path to an Oscar.

A beat.

HUGH (CONT'D)

They found her in her trailer with her wrists slit. So yeah, they blackballed my black balls. I lost my passion, or so I thought. Look at me now, I produce and act in my own films. And I don't have a studio stifling my creative vision. I'm doing what I love.

ROMERO

You're in them too?

HUGH

Yep, Hugh Jassman was born that December. I even got a BBL -- women love a good ass just as much as the next guy. And I have a DDL scheduled next year.

ROMERO

What's that?

HUGH

Dominican Dick-lift. Very experimental. But the point I'm trying to make is: sometimes you gotta ride the wave, son.

ROMERO

That's just another way to drown.

Romero readjusts in his chair towards Hugh Jassman.

ROMERO (CONT'D)

You start off chasing a simple high and before long, you start craving bigger releases. Normal's thrown out the window and you're pushing the fringe for just a little more excitement. And so, you push and push. And you're at the bottom of the fucking Atlantic before you know it.

(snickers)

I don't even know how it started. I guess maybe elementary school, when I first started watching porn. Pokemon hentai was a fav-

HUGH

Porn is a man's best friend, whether he's married or still chasing girls on the playground. Don't blame yourself for enjoying one of the world's greatest pastimes. And especially don't let anyone tell you there's no respect in the craft. Everyone got their favorites. Who's yours?

ROMERO

Sara Jay. Ol' Reliable.

HUGH

A veteran, but all the money's in the rookies. I got a girl who'll have you shooting rope like Penis Parker. I'm sure you've seen him in a couple of my films.

Hugh pulls out his phone and shows Romero a picture of a blonde, blue-eyed doll-face in lingerie sprawled against a white linen bed.

HUGH (CONT'D)

17 years old. Young, ripe, and willing.

ROMERO

17?!

HUGH

Hey, I'm not a monster. We're filming this in Germany. It's above the legal minimum there.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

HJ's going international. Anyway,
her birthday's in a month.

ROMERO

I don't know.

HUGH

I'm extending my hand here. I'm out
of commission. Believe it or not,
the industry can be taxing on the
body. I only just recovered from a
burst BBL just to get a flaring
case of chlamydia, but that put me
in the hospital this very moment to
meet you. It's gotta be fate. Ride
the waves, Romero. You can be
eating schnitzels and fucking Heidi
Mueller by the end of the month.
Whaddya say? What else do you have
waiting for you here?

Romero looks at the picture for a few seconds and back at
Hugh. Romero's brows tighten and his lower lip quivers.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

FOUR WEEKS LATER

On a bed surrounded by a camera crew, Romero is fucking the
blonde young bombshell doggy-style. His face glistens, sweat
dripping past his dark eye circles and sunken cheeks. He
grunts with every thrust from his noticeably skinner body.

HEIDI MUELLER

Ja! Ja! Ja!

INT. STUDIO 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Hugh Jassman leans back in a chair with his legs crossed on a
table. He watches the scene unfold below him through a glass
wall.

HUGH

(on the phone)

I need new shipments of everything.
The rhino horn dust. Elephant tusk.
And don't skimp me on the tiger
penis.

EXT. TEXAN FARM - CONTINUOUS

Also on the phone, Gupta walks in a wide open field. He's wearing a nice quarter zip with an embroidered 'Mercury Shipping' logo on his left upper chest. To his side, a large Caucasian woman, easily over 200 pounds, leads a cow on a leash.

GUPTA

(on the phone)

My friend, have I ever let you
down?

INT. PIT VIPERS OPERATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dionne's at a desk. On the table are two framed pictures of Mars and Pluto. There's also a plane ticket spelling out FRANKFURT beside a decent hill of cocaine. Dionne pushes a stack of history books to the side. She forms a line of coke with the ticket and snorts it.

She chambers a bullet in her gun, cocks it, and shoots at the punching bag, plastered with a picture of Romero Ramon.

Smoke emanates from the hole in the imaged Ramon's forehead.