BLANCO

"Pilot"

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BLANCO

FADE IN:

INT. JESUS APT - DAY

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

RUBEN
Get away from the window, man.

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

JESUS

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

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

RUBEN
Or get your brains splashed all over the carpet.

JESUS
Dass my problem.

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

JESUS
So? You sayin' lay down?

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
Jesus peeks out the window again.

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

RUBEN
Jesus. Give me one hour --

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

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

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

JESUS
(Spanish)
Get back inside.

VERONICA
I'm talking to you, caveman.

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

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

RUBEN
Are you high?

JESUS
I'm cool. Let's roll.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON HTS - DAY

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

INT. BENZ - DAY

Rolling up Broadway, Ruben at the wheel --
JESUS
Freddy gone to ground.

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

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

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

Jesus removes the pistol, checks the clip.

RUBEN
You're buggin', man. This is no time for a drive by.

(beat)
We can do business with Ortiz.

JESUS
It's wolf time. We at war.

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

JESUS
You tellin' me to fuck off, blanco?

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

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

CUT TO:

FLAMES ON A GRILL

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

INT. DOMINICAN RESTAURANT

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

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

(CONTINUED)
ORTIZ
(drinks)
If it was, you don't need to say it.

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

WAITRESS
Let me know if you need anything else.

As she sashays away --

ORTIZ
(shakes his head)
*Papi* shampoo. Like your own force field - one look and their legs part like the Red Sea.

In this neighborhood they speak English for privacy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(CONTINUED)
Ortiz makes a "who knows" gesture. Drinks beer.

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

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

JESUS
Wassup.

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

ORTIZ
It's all good.

JESUS
(smiles)
It's all good.

RUBEN
We was just talking --

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

Ortiz looks at Ruben.

ORTIZ
Freddy ain't playin', papi.

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

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - DAY

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

CUT TO:
EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

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

JESUS
(smirks)
Dass how I get to yes.

RUBEN
He was already hooked.

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

BENZ

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

INT. BENZ - MOVING - DAY

They drive in silence for a beat.

JESUS
You gonna pout like a bitch all day?

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

JESUS (CONT'D)
Chingada!

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

JESUS
Freddy.

Presses the button for the trap -

JESUS (CONT'D)
Puta can get his right now.

Jesus grabs the Glock and swivels around as --
PICKUP TRUCK

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

JESUS

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

BENZ

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

Ruben's head bounces off the wheel.

TWO FREDDY GARCIA SHOOTERS

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

RUBEN

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

SHOOTERS

OPEN FIRE. Windshield SHATTERS.

BENZ

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

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

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

As Mustache yanks the driver's door open -

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

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

Passenger window BLOWS OUT and SHAVED HEAD takes a THREE-ROUND BURST to the chest and drops to the pavement.
WHITE MERCEDES S600
careens into a skidding-ass stop.

FREDDY GARCIA

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

FREDDY

Fuck you both and your whore of a mother!

He raises up blasting with both guns--

RUBEN

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

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

FREDDY

Putamadre!

He steadies the other .45 with both hands--

Ruben squeezes off another burst. Freddy pancakes to the pavement.

RUBEN

Jesus! Talk to me!

But Jesus is incoherent, babbling in Spanish...

RUBEN (CONT'D)

Hold on hold on...

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

WIDER - STREET

Ruben slaloms and slams the Benz through the jammmed-up vehicles and thumps right over Freddy's body as the first sirens fill the air--

CUT TO:

EXT. Apt building - Day

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

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

    RUBEN
    Felipe, give me a hand!

Ruben flings the back door open.

    RUBEN (CONT'D)
    Jesus needs a ride.

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

    FELIPE
    Madre de dios!

Felipe backs away. Ruben grabs his arm.

    RUBEN
    Take him to the hospital.

    FELIPE
    No, no, I can't --

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

Felipe manages a nod.

    RUBEN (CONT'D)
    Get his legs.

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

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

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

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

Felipe scrambles into his cab and DRIVES OFF.

    CUT TO:

EXT. DYKMAN BOAT PIER - NIGHT

Ruben throws his handguns and the TEC 9, wrapped in his bloody shirt, into the river.
EXT. WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

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

Behind him, the gas tank IGNITES. Benz EXPLODES.

CUT TO:

INT. DENTIST OFFICE - NIGHT

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

RUBEN
I appreciate this, doc. I really do.

The duffel bag sits a few feet away.

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

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

DR. ALVAREZ (CONT'D)
I need to get another clamp. One moment.

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

DR. ALVAREZ (CONT'D)
You also looked out for Bruno's sister, didn't you?

RUBEN
(woozy)
What?

DR. ALVAREZ
She was fourteen.

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

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

(CONTINUED)
Ruben blinks at her, woozy from his injection.

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

GEMMA (CONT'D)
(looks him over)
One round in the shoulder...Plus some fragments in your leg? You're a lucky man. I haven't seen carnage like that since Baghdad.

She opens the duffel bag. Smiles.

MARTINEZ
Jackpot?

She holds up one of the plastic-wrapped kilos.

GEMMA
Something you want to tell us, Ruben?

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

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ER - NIGHT

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

GEMMA
Thanks, Donny. Tell those Narco rangers I owe them a round. (to Ruben) Starbucks?

RUBEN
Thanks.

She hands him one. He sips.

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

El Abusador, sí?

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

NURSE

All set.

RUBEN

(smiles)

Thank you.

She walks out, shooting Gemma a reproachful look.

GEMMA

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

RUBEN

Is that, like, decaffeinated?

MARTINEZ

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

Gemma looks at Martinez.

MARTINEZ (CONT'D)

Sorry.

GEMMA

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

MARTINEZ

Public service killing.

GEMMA

Especially if it was self-defense.

Ruben looks at her.

RUBEN

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

GEMMA

That's right.

RUBEN

They say you was in Iraq.

(CONTINUED)
Gemmas two tours, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines.

Ruben (grins)
You was a jarhead?

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

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

Gemma shows Ruben her phone.

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

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

Cut to:

Int. 34 Precinct - Interview Room - Night

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

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

Ruben
Me?

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

Ruben
How much time until my next dance?
ARDY
With a woman? Ten kilos is Federal
weight. That means Mandatory
Minimums.

Ruben looks at him.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Twenty years. If they can tie you
to the bodies, it's life.

Ruben takes a moment to process this. Then --

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

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

RUBEN
Fuck that. Not my brother.

Andy leans back in his chair.

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

RUBEN
Who?

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

He leans back, laces his hands behind his head.

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

(MORE)

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

RUBEN
(grins)
The fox tosses him and he lams?

ANDY
(nods)
The genius was making the fox think it was his idea all along.

CUT TO:

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

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. MCC - VISITING ROOM - DAY

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

RUBEN
Hey. Thanks for coming.

He leans over to embrace Jesus, who turns away.

(CONTINUED)
VERONICA
Hi Ruben.

RUBEN
(smiles)
Lookin' fly, V.

Ruben and Veronica hug. He sits facing Jesus.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
How you makin' out?

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

RUBEN
Feds are hangin' twenty over me.

VERONICA
Twenty years!

The brothers look at each other.

JESUS
Go get a soda or something.

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

JESUS (CONT'D)
You dyin' to tap that culo, ain't you? Now I'm in this chair.

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

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

RUBEN
They don't know that.

JESUS
You know better?

Ruben struggles for words.

RUBEN
At least...Freddy got paid in full.

(CONTINUED)
Jesus looks at Ruben.

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

RUBEN
How you figure that?

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

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

VERONICA
I got sodas and chips --

JESUS
We out.

VERONICA
You need another Vicodin, baby?

JESUS
Don't backtalk me. We out.

She looks helplessly at Ruben. Sets down the sodas.

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

Veronica waves goodbye to Ruben. Wheels Jesus away. OFF

Ruben --

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE — DAY

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

PARK
I'm on my way to court --

GEMMA
But you read my Ruben Fonseca memo, right?

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

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

PARK
(looks at her)
English major, Fordham?

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

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

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

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

GEMMA
And throw away your chance at a major cartel prosecution?

PARK
That's a shot in the dark.

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

PARK
Where did you get this?

(CONTINUED)
GEMMA
Mike Florio at REDRUM.

Park stops and looks at her.

PARK
You know Mike?

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. MCC - DAY

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

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

CONFERENCE ROOM

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

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

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

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

PARK
No, I expect you to go to prison for twenty years.

(to Gemma)
I told you he was too pig-headed.

(CONTINUED)
He gets to his feet, ready to go.

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

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

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

RUBEN
Fuck you!

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

PARK
I'll give you sixty seconds.

Andy looks stern until Park and Gemma walk out.

RUBEN
Over the top?

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

P.O.V. GEMMA

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

IN THE ROOM

Park and Gemma come back in.

RUBEN
(defeated)
Okay.

Park stands there, arms folded.

PARK
Okay what?
RUBEN
I sign on, but my brother never does a day inside.

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

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

RUBEN
Then what?

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

Ruben looks to Andy.

ANDY
Briarpatch.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER BLACK: SIX MONTHS LATER

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

INT. APT ABOVE POOL HALL - DAY

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

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

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

RUBEN
What? Make you what?

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

(CONTINUED)
MAGDA
Lie and sneak around and cheat on my man.

RUBEN
You called me.

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

MAGDA
You are evil, no no no...

She pulls his belt off and hands it to him.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Punish me.

RUBEN
What?

MAGDA
I'm a bad girl...

She assumes the position on the bed.

RUBEN
It's not my thing...

MAGDA
Now!

He hits her lightly with the belt.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Harder maricon you hit like a little bitch!

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

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Now right now.

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

APARTMENT - LATER

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

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

RUBEN
I didn't notice.

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

RUBEN
(smiles)
Maybe he been laying up with the wife. Puttin' in family time.

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

RUBEN
(casual)
That right?

MAGDA
Won't touch me for nothin'.

RUBEN
But then he takes care of you, right?
Magda wriggles her fingers, showing off her rings --

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You're a lucky girl.

MAGDA
You're a lucky boy.

She gives his crotch a playful squeeze.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
But not after tonight.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVIERA APT BUILDING - DAY

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

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

RUBEN

Is watching from down the block. He takes out his phone and sends a text.

CUT TO:

EXT. GORMAN PARK - DAY

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

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

GEMMA

It's on for tonight?

RUBEN

That's what his girl says.

GEMMA

Why does he keep moving that car?

RUBEN

Alternate side of the street parking.

GEMMA

But he doesn't live there.

RUBEN

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

GEMMA

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

Their dynamic is different now - from adversaries to partners.

RUBEN

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

GEMMA

I was an officer. The military was my career.

RUBEN

How come you left?
GEMMA
They wouldn't let me lead Marines into combat.

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

CUT TO:

EXT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT

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

INT. CLUB VARGAS - NIGHT

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

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

CABEZA
Hola, Ruben.

RUBEN
Cabeza, que pasa?

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

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

ORTIZ
Oh no, not this time, papi shampoo.

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

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Lolo! This useless cabron is drinking with me.

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

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Why you lose my number, papi?

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

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

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

RUBEN
I'm retired, papi.

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

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

As Lolo approaches with Ruben's drink --

ORTIZ
(sotto)
Carne fresca, just up from the DR.
Hands off.

BARTENDER
I'm Lolo. Nice to meet you.

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

RUBEN
(to Ortiz)
I never understood why you heavyweights let those home invaders drink in your bar.

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

RUBEN
While they rip off half the dealers in the Heights?

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

(CONTINUED)
Me? I'm the playboy, remember?

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

**RUBEN (CONT'D)**

Time to play.

Ruben sends a text: **ON THE MOVE.**

**EXT. RIVIERA APT BUILDING - NIGHT**

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

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

**FRONT ENTRANCE**

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

**GEMMA**

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

**ESU SNIPERS**

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

**DOORS**

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

**SGT. FLORIO**

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

Cabeza and his men freeze as --
ESU TRUCK

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

NEARY
Put 'em down! Onna ground!

CABEZA

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

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

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

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

INT. POOL HALL

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

BOBBY
Hey boss.

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

RUBEN
My brother take another 'loan' from the register?

BOBBY
Ah...

(CONTINUED)
RUBEN
What I tell you to do, he puts his
hand in again?

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

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

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

NANDO
Ruben, yo, you ain't believe this.

RUBEN
You see I'm busy?

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

RUBEN
(cool)
Tonight?

NANDO
Cabeza dead on the ground, bro.

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

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

NANDO
Now one dead and the other...

RUBEN
You seen my brother tonight?

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

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. BODEGA - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

RUBEN
How much you lose so far?

Jesus waves him off.

JESUS
What the fuck you care, piglet?

RUBEN
You're playing with my money.

He takes hold of Jesus' chair.

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

JESUS
Motherfucker I'll cut you...

Flashing a nasty-ass blade. Ruben steps back.

ALVARO
Where you going? I'm winning!

RUBEN
He's tapped out.

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

ALVARO
Next time then.

He reaches for the bottle but Jesus grabs it first.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS AVE - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

RUBEN (weary)
Here we go...

Jesus swigs on the bottle of rum.

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

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

A sector car CRUISES past them --

RUBEN
At least put it in a fucking paper bag.

JESUS
Chingada!

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

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

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

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

JESUS
Plenty motherfuckers got Jew lawyers.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
JESUS (CONT'D)
They still caged up. You a free man.

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. BMW X3 - MOVING

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

LESLEE
(speaker)
Hello?

RUBEN
Hey. I'm on my way down.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREENWICH STREET - NIGHT

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

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

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

RUBEN
Maybe you don't see me parking.

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

(CONTINUED)
He's a linebacker to Ruben's middleweight.

RUBEN
That's you? The fittest?

Ruben hasn't moved.

DATE
Kevin?

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

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

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

DATE
Kevin!

RUBEN
My name?

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

RUBEN
Hey Mary... T, what up?

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

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

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Hey. Tough night?

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

He leans in to give her a kiss --

RUBEN
Why so early?

LESLEE
We started serving afternoon tea.

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

LESLEE (CONT'D)
Ohhhhh...You haven't lost your touch...

He smiles as he kneads her feet.

RUBEN
You make money off tea?

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

RUBEN
Starving.

LESLEE
We have some duck confit left, your favorite.

RUBEN
Can I get it to go?

Off her knowing smile --

CUT TO:
INT. TRIBECA LOFT - NIGHT

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

LATER

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

LESLEE
Do you know what day this is?

RUBEN
Uh...

LESLEE
It's our two-month anniversary.

RUBEN
A milestone. Salut.

They clink and drink.

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

RUBEN
I don't know so much about you.

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

RUBEN
One mad fool.

And he reaches for her but she pushes away.

LESLEE
No. Tonight we talk.

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

His grammar and diction are very different with Leslee than in his world uptown.
LESLEE
Baby, a fling is a fling. But if you want to get to month three...

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

LESLEE
You lost both your parents?

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

LESLEE
And then what? The stork delivered you?

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

He takes a drink of champagne.

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

Leslee looks at him.

LESLEE
Where was Mancini in all this?

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

LESLEE
Are you still close to your brother?
RUBEN
Like Siamese twins. I'm stuck with him.

CUT TO:

EXT. RED HOOK DOCKS - DAY

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

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

RUBEN
Mission accomplished last night?

GEMMA
Two home invaders dead, six in custody.

RUBEN
Then why we out here so early?

GEMMA
It's time to quit stalling on Ortiz.

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

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

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

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

Ruben sips coffee, considers.

RUBEN
Ortiz punches our ticket into REDRUM?

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

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

(CONTINUED)
GEMMA
That's right.

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

Ruben tosses his coffee in the trash.

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

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

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

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

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

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

GEMMA
Korean --

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

(CONTINUED)
GEMMA
You know what? You're worse than my husband.

Ruben registers this new piece of information.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. POOL HALL - DAY

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

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

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

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

RUBEN
Her name's Chanelle?

NANDO
Dass her... dancer name.

Ruben stops punching and steps back, grinning.

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

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

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

RUBEN

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

RUBEN
    Shit. Sorry, man.

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

AT THE COUNTER

Bobby hands Ruben a towel and a blended juice drink.

MAGDA
    Let me do that, baby.

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

RUBEN
    What's up?

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

She falls into his arms, a little theatrically.

RUBEN
    I'm sorry.

Leaning back to look at him --

MAGDA
    It's not your fault...

But of course it is.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
    Ruben, I got nothing to wear to the funeral.

RUBEN
    His wife gonna be at the funeral.

MAGDA
    And my rent. Cabeza took care of that, but now...
Ruben pulls out his roll. Counts out bills and hands them to her. Then a couple more.

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

**MAGDA**
Gracias, papi.

She puts her arms around his neck.

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

She looks at him, what? He frees himself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moving her aside --

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

**RUBEN**
Yes, I do.

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

CUT TO:
EXT. COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL – NIGHT

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

INT. LEXUS – MOMENTS LATER

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

CUT TO:

INT. JESUS’ APT – NIGHT

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

JESUS
Smoke him. Smoke that pig. Booyah!

Doorbell BUZZES.

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

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

RUBEN
Querida.

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

RUBEN (CONT'D)
Something smells great.

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

He sets down the wine and hands her the flowers.

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

RUBEN
He inside?

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

(CONTINUED)
Ruben hands her an envelope as well.

RUBEN
Rent and groceries. Put it someplace safe.

On the move before she can hug him again --

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ruben finds Jesus and Tony absorbed in their game.

RUBEN
Que pasa dudes?

TONY
Tio Ruben!

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

RUBEN
You know anybody could use a Robinson Cano ball?

Tony's eyes get wide --

TONY
No lie?

RUBEN
No lie. Go show your mom.

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

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

RUBEN
I got something for you, too.

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

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

Jesus looks at the pills.

JESUS
How much these go for on the street?

(CONTINUED)
RUBEN
Not this time. Not if you got the
pain 24-7.

JESUS
Dass forever, bro.
(playing)
Puta! My sucia is a Fed!

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
FLORIO (CONT'D)
(more laughs)
Hey, let's raise a glass to a great detective and a better friend, congratulations and good luck to Phil Neary!

Everyone drinks. Gemma turns to Nina and smiles.

NINA
Hello, stranger.

GEMMA
How are you?

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

GEMMA
I'm good.

Nina puts her hand on Gemma's arm.

GEMMA
Don't you miss me a little?

GEMMA
That was mostly in your head.

The BARTENDER hands her two beers.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Good to see you. Excuse me.

She moves off to --

FLORIO'S TABLE

And sets one in front of him.

GEMMA
Quite the sendoff.

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

Gemma raises her glass --

GEMMA
To friendship.

(CONTINUED)
FLORIO
You break balls just like your father.

Gemma smiles, hands the beer to Florio.

GEMMA
Not a bad takedown last night.

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

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

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

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

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

GEMMA
Happy? I'm Irish.

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

GEMMA
Check --

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

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

Florio drinks his beer.

FLORIO
Maybe down the road, but right now?

(MORE)
FLORIO (CONT'D)
You work your side of the street, when you got something give me a holler.

GEMMA
(shakes her head)
Free trial is up, Mike. Do the right thing or watch someone else get the gravy.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

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

ANDY (O.S.)
Chanel? Even her name is expensive.

VIP ROOM

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

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

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

ANDY
Whitey Bulger, sure.

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

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

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

Andy beams at Ruben, professor to prize student.

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

RUBEN
Like me.
(grins)
Blanco.

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

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

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

ANDY
Spoken like a schmuck who still owes me ninety large.

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

Hugs all around.

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

ANDY
You're working here now?

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

RUBEN
He looks out for his people.

JUICE
The Barber takes an interest in everybody who works for him.
ON THE FLOOR BELOW

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

    JUICE (O.S.)
    Especially her.

RUBEN AND ANDY

React. Andy more visibly.

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

He lurches from the table and stumbles off.

    JUICE
    That little spic is a friend of yours?

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

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

    RUBEN
    I appreciate that.

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

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

Juice jams the corkscrew into the cork and twists.

OFF RUBEN --

CUT TO:

EXT. POOL HALL - DAY

Nando with his back to the wall --

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

(CONTINUED)
Ruben gets right in Nando's face --

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

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

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

NANDO
I'll fucking fight you, too!

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

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

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

RUBEN (CONT'D)
This is New York City, the wet pussy capital of the world. Move on.

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

INT. POOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

Jesus is running a table when Ruben enters --

JESUS
Yo, Blanco.

RUBEN
(a look)
Hold on.

Jesus glares as Ruben continues to Bobby at the counter.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
We still slow from like three to six during the week?

(CONTINUED)
BOBBY
Mad slow, sometimes.

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

BOBBY
But we got no booze.

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

BOBBY
What?

Ruben turns away and heads over to Jesus.

RUBEN
I'm all ears.

JESUS
Mothafucka, I know who ratted out Cabeza.

RUBEN
Yeah?

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

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

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

RUBEN
Get the fuck outa here.

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

RUBEN
Cost of doing business.

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

(CONTINUED)
RUBEN
Where did you hear this shit?

JESUS
Cabeza had homies too, bro.

RUBEN
But nobody throws shit in the game like you.

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

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

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

EXT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

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

INT. JEEP - MOVING

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

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

RUBEN
For what we did.

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

RUBEN
You mean like witness protection?

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

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

(CONTINUED)
GEMMA
We are not talking about Gandhi here, or Snow White. Either he plays for our team and makes cases, or...
(shrugs)
One less trafficker. Cry me a river.

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

Gemma yanks the wheel and pulls over.

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

RUBEN
The fuck are you talking about?

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

Ruben waits.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
His last call was from Ortiz. Five minutes before the shooting started.

Ruben processes this --

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

GEMMA
(laughs)
Really?

Ruben looks at her.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Good as you are at lying to other people? You're better at lying to yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB VARGAS - DAY

Ortiz glares across the booth at Ruben.
ORTIZ
You know how to take a motherfucker's head off.

RUBEN
That's what we tryin' to avoid.

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

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You want to sweep her off her feet?
Bring her down to the island.

ORTIZ
Not now, papi. Bad timing.

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

Ortiz drinks.

ORTIZ
I got business.

RUBEN
With the Mexicans?

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

Meaning the home invaders at the bar.

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

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

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

(Continued)
ORTIZ
You sure about that?

Ruben looks at him.

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

Ruben looks at Ortiz. Then rises slowly.

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - DAY

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

INT. POOL HALL - MOMENTS LATER

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

NANDO
Freddy had a Galaxy Note just like
this.

Ruben examines it.

RUBEN
No detours?

NANDO
Like what?

RUBEN
Like Chanelle?

NANDO
You hollered at me stay out the club.
I'm out the club.
Swings wide as Juice and Dex enter. Nando looks from them to Ruben.

RUBEN
Chill.

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

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You want a table, Juice?

JUICE
I warned you what would happen.

NANDO
I ain't been back.

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

RUBEN
Mother...

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

NANDO
Wait! This ain't right! Ruben!

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

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

DEX
Let's go.

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

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

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

JUICE
Fuck you, pork chop.

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

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

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

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

**DEX**
(feeling seriously outgunned)
Fucking kidding me?

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

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

Jesus rolls forward, brandishing the sawed-off.

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

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

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

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

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

**NANDO**
Fuck you guido!

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. REDRUM SQUADROOM - NIGHT

Gemma sits with Florio --

**FLORIO**
Your C.I. says Ortiz brought up Juarez Cartel specifically?
(Gemma nods)
We've been trying to get a hook into them for years.

**GEMMA**
So that would be points on the board.

**FLORIO**
Better than a sharp stick in the eye.

**GEMMA**
I need more than that to take to my guy.

**FLORIO**
Not gonna happen.

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

**GEMMA**
Mike --

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

CUT TO:

EXT. APT BUILDING - NIGHT

Ruben enters through the back door.

**INT. HALLWAY - RUBEN**

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

**ORTIZ APT**

Suitcases lined up, things strewn about...

(CONTINUED)
ORTIZ
Didn't think you was comin'. Just about to walk out the door...

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

RUBEN
What's this?

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

RUBEN
You trust me with this?

ORTIZ
Money? I owe you my life.

They look at each other.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
I was stupid before. That's this business, make you turn on your own brother.

Ruben says nothing.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
He's from Juarez, Chivo.

RUBEN
You do that for me?

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

RUBEN
You really walkin' away.

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

He crosses to his bags.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Time to sit on my moms' porch and eat mofongo, watch the kids play on the beach.

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

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

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

Ortiz looks at the phone like it might bite him.

ORTIZ
Papi? Somebody been...

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

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

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

RUBEN
Tell. Me. Why.

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

Ruben exhales slowly.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Now Freddy rotting in the ground and we survivors, big-time.

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

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Thank you, papi, you won't regret this.

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

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

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

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

FIRES POP POP --

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

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

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

BEDROOM

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

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

He looks at her, shakes his head.

RUBEN
I was here all night.

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

RUBEN (CONT'D)
With you.

CUT TO:

EXT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

INT. LESLEE'S RESTAURANT

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

(CONTINUED)
RUBEN
you two look thick as thieves.

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

LESLEE
It's Ruben's favorite.

Leslee gives Ruben a searching look.

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

She heads off and Ruben sits next to Gemma.

RUBEN
This place is off limits.

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

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

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Somebody hit Ortiz tonight.

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

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

He drinks some wine.

GEMMA
When's the last time you saw him?

RUBEN
Yesterday.

GEMMA
Not tonight?

Ruben shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)
GEMMA (CONT'D)
You had better be a hell of a lot more convincing when Homicide puts it to you.

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

GEMMA
No. You do not use me to settle scores.

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

GEMMA
No way.

RUBEN
Who's lying to herself now?

Gemma gulps some Coke.

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

RUBEN
It's a delicate situation. A woman is involved.
(beat)
You could get me in trouble with Leslee.

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

Ruben sips some wine.

RUBEN
I don't think so. You already cashed in your chips on one career.
(beat)
That spot in REDRUM still open?

GEMMA
Why?

RUBEN
I got an introduction. Juarez Cartel.
Leslee is smiling at Ruben from the open kitchen. He smiles back.

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

Gemma lets this settle. Then --

GEMMA
Look at me.

Ruben does.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

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

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

FADE OUT: