# Snake Oil

by

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INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

JEROME, late 30s, trust-worthy smile, mischievous eyes.

PHILIP, old man in apron, stands behind the counter.

PHILIP
How can I help you, sir?

JEROME
I need the brightest, shiniest red paint you've got. And one of those spray gun things.

INT. JEROME'S SUBARU - MOMENTS LATER

Buckets of red paint strapped into the backseat like children. Jerome's phone buzzes as he drives off.

The name "MIKEY" flashes across the screen.

Jerome ignores the call.

EXT. JUNK YARD - DAY

Walls of old cars and tires stacked twenty feet high. It's like a Fortress of Junk. A shack of an office located at the center. A golf cart parked out front.

Jerome pulls up next to the golf cart.

RONNIE, gruff older man, grey beard, steps out of the office.

Jerome waves, Ronnie gives him a quarter-nod.

INT. GOLF CART, JUNK YARD - DAY

Ronnie drives, Jerome rides shotgun. They stop in front of a beat up Camaro.

RONNIE
How's this?

JEROME
Won't work, too new. Need a model from the 70's or 80's.

RONNIE
Shit, Jerome. This ain't a used car lot.

JEROME
Don't be unreasonable, Ronnie. I know you got what I'm looking for.

They cruise on further into the maze of junk.

RONNIE
See that Jaguar, there?

JEROME
Can't be a Jag - too obvious.

Ronnie hangs a right, stops the golf cart in front of a raggedy, beat-up 1974 Mustang Coup.

JEROME (CONT'D)
It's perfect.

RONNIE
It doesn't even have an engine. Literally, it's just a shell.

JEROME
Even better.

Ronnie picks up his walkie-talkie, speaks into it.

RONNIE (INTO WALKIE)
Tommy, you there?

TOMMY (O.S.)
Sup boss?

RONNIE (INTO WALKIE)
Bring the tow truck round, I'll turn on the tracker.

Ronnie puts the walkie-talkie down, reaches under the dash of the golf cart, flips a switch.

JEROME
Like, 'Find my Friends'?

RONNIE
The hell is that?

Jerome's cell buzzes again - another call from Mikey.

He lets it go to voicemail.

INT. VOLVO, PARKED ON STREET - DAY

MIKEY, 20s, hipster, eager eyes, holds his cellphone to his ear.

MIKEY (INTO PHONE)
Hey asshole - it's your brother. If you're alive, please call me back?

He climbs out of his Volvo, walks across the street, enters a two-story house on the corner.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - DAY

The Mustang Coup from the junk yard has a fresh coat of red paint. Jerome stands with his hands on his hips, stares down at a flat tire on the front driver's side.

A blue Chevy Blazer pulls up next to him. Window rolls down.

ROGER, 40s, Hawaiian t-shirt, dorky dad vibe, speaks to Jerome through the window.

ROGER
Holy cow, that is one hell of a ride you got there.

JEROME
Thank you sir, I'm glad you think so. Was on my way to the car show, gonna sell her for a mint.

ROGER
No kidding?

JEROME
None. But I drove over a god damn rusty nail the size of California.

Jerome kicks the flat tire.

ROGER
Don't have a spare?

JEROME
Unfortunately, no. I'm so sick a this thing.

ROGER
Just a bit of bad luck, you call triple A?

JEROME
Got a mechanic coming to change the tire. Just wanna get rid of this hunk of metal already. She was my dads. Swear he loved this car more than me. Bastard croaked on us, we find out he went belly-up on his life insurance policy--probably keeping this god dang car in pristine condition. And he couldn't even keep a spare tire.

ROGER
Oh, Jeez.

JEROME
Yeah, I'm sorry to vent to you like this. I don't normally yap my mouth off to strangers.

Jerome leans in through the window, shakes Roger's hand.

JEROME (CONT'D)
I'm Pete, Pete Jennings.

ROGER
Pleasure to meet you, Pete. I'm Roger. Tell me, what were you hoping to get for it at the car show?

JEROME
Spoke to some collectors online, about a month ago. One said he'd go as high one-hundred K. That is of course, assuming nothing else catches his eye. You know these car guys, fickle bastards.

ROGER
Woh, one-hundred K. No kidding?

JEROME
None. Here, check it out. These guys are serious.

Jerome hands his phone to Roger. An Instagram page for a car show is pulled up on the screen. Roger scrolls through it.

ROGER
Wow.

JEROME
Figure I could pull in *at least* 60, 65 grand. Help my mom pay for the funeral arrangements.

A tow truck pulls up. Jerome takes his phone back.

TOMMY, late 20s, man bun, thick framed specs, jumpsuit that looks vaguely auto-related, hops out of the driver's seat, approaches Jerome.

TOMMY
Well I'll be damned, she's a beaut.

JEROME
Thank you, sir.

TOMMY
You headed up to the car show?

JEROME
That I am, I intend to fetch a pretty penny for this here automobile.

TOMMY
Oh, I bet you make a killing. Had some fellas stop by the shop last week, some rich guys. They were talking all excited about adding to their collections.

ROGER
*Car* collections, that is?

TOMMY
Oh yeah, some big time collectors. Sounded like they were ready to throw some money around.

ROGER
Wow.

JEROME
Anyway, if you can help me get a spare tire on and have me on my way, I should be able to get to the car show in time.

Jerome checks his watch, ignores the dead battery.

TOMMY
Not a problem, I'll grab the spare.

ROGER
Hey, Pete.

JEROME
Yeah Roj?

ROGER
How would you feel about, maybe selling *me* the car?

JEROME
You?

ROGER
Yeah, I'm sure we can come to some sort of agreement. Save yourself the trouble of parading it around at the car show, maybe cut me a better deal?

JEROME
Well, I don't know...

ROGER
I could make it worth your while.

JEROME
Those hot heads at the car shows, what's good about them is they don't mind paying for things *in cash.*

ROGER
I'll drive you to the bank, right now. How's sixty-thousand sound?

JEROME
Jeez, you got that kinda money sitting in the bank?

ROGER
Recently came into an inheritance-- wife's mother. The misses has been hounding me about finding a safe investment. This could be that. Almost feels like fate.

JEROME
Well, shit.

TOMMY
I can probably have a new tire on by the time you're back from the bank.

JEROME
Think maybe I could get a ride to the bus stop after?

TOMMY
That could be arranged.

JEROME
Roger, you drive a hard bargain, ya know that?

Roger unlocks the door, Jerome jumps into the front passenger seat of the Chevy, they drive off.

INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Mikey walks through the library, pretends to study the titles of shelved books. He stops at a table where THREE COLLEGE STUDENTS study. They perk up when they see him.

Mikey looks over both shoulders, pulls out several small bags from his pockets, each filled with pill capsules. He daps each student up, slyly exchanges drugs for money with each handshake, walks away with a smirk on his face.

INT. SPORTS BAR - DAY

Mikey approaches TWO GUYS playing Billiards. Guy 1 gets so excited when he sees Mikey, he shanks the 8-ball.

Mikey does his thing, daps them up, exchanges drugs for cash.

INT. GYMNASIUM, BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Mikey strolls into the gym, watches some pick up basketball. A water break ensues.

FOUR BBALL PLAYERS jog over to their gym bags, grab some cash, approach Mikey, make the handoff.

INT. ROGER'S CHEVY - AFTERNOON

In the shotgun seat, Jerome eyes the bundle of cash tucked neatly into several official bank envelopes. Roger's got a smirk on his face--he thinks he's the clear winner of this exchange.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy finishes changing the tire. Roger's Chevy Blazer pulls up, he and Jerome hop out.

TOMMY
All finished gentlemen.

ROGER
Thank you sir, this is for you.

Roger hands Tommy a twenty dollar bill.

TOMMY
That's very kind of you.

JEROME
You sure you don't mind giving me a ride, Captain?

TOMMY
No trouble at all.

ROGER
I'd take you myself, Mr. Jennings, but I gotta get my wife to come pick up the Chevy.

JEROME
Don't you worry about me, Roj. You gotta get over to the car show. Pleasure doing business, sincerely.

ROGER
Pleasure's all mine.

Jerome and Tommy climb into the tow truck, drive off. Roger waves at them until the truck is out of sight.

INT. TOW TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy drives, Jerome rides shotgun.

TOMMY
How'd I do?

JEROME
Wasn't Oscar-worthy or anything, but he definitely bought it.

TOMMY
He actually forked over sixty thousand bucks? *In cash?* No way.

JEROME
Way. See what happens when you approach your fellow man in a calm and reasonable manner?

Jerome shows Tommy the envelopes of money.

TOMMY
Jesus.

JEROME
He had me write down directions to the car show on a pad of paper.

TOMMY
What a dork. We made a pretty good team, you and me, didn't we?

JEROME
We're not a team, man-bun.

TOMMY
Then what did we just do?

JEROME
*I* just pulled off an expert grift. *You* played support staff.

Jerome stuffs the envelopes of cash into his backpack.

TOMMY
Support staff?

JEROME
Little league stuff.

TOMMY
Fuck you.

JEROME
Do you have any idea how long I cultivated him? I picked Roger out weeks ago. I made an entire Instagram page for a car show that doesn't exist. I actually paid to have bots like the posts and leave comments. That costs money. That takes time.

TOMMY
So when do I get to play in the big leagues then?

JEROME
It ain't happening. Besides, few more months of this and I'm out the game for good. Gonna retire in South Beach.

TOMMY
Yeah, I'll believe that when I see it.

INT. MUSTANG, SIDE OF ROAD - SAME TIME

Roger climbs into the driver's seat, puts the key in the ignition, turns it. Nothing happens, not even a sound. He turns the key again, still nothing.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Roger gets out of the car, walks to the front, pops the hood.

His jaw drops. The hood of the Mustang is empty, no engine, nothing. Roger stands there, hands on his hips, mouth agape.

INT. BATHROOM, MCKAYLA'S HOUSE - DAY

MCKAYLA, *30s,* short hair, thick eye brows, black eye and a fat lip, cowers in the corner of the drab bathroom.

CHET, 6'2" 250-pound man, five o'clock shadow, stands over McKayla, screams.

CHET
How hard is it to make a God damn omelette?

MCKAYLA
Please, please--

CHET
I told you ten thousand times--cook it on low heat, or you'll burn the eggs!

MCKAYLA
Chet, please--

CHET
I'm going to the liquor store. I assume you'll have made a half decent omelette by the time I get back.

Chet storms out of the bathroom.

McKayla wipes tears from her eyes, blood from her lip. The sadness that hangs over her face evaporates, rage takes over.

Chet continues to yell from the other room.

CHET (O.S.)
Where the hell are my car keys!?

McKayla rises, turns to face the small bathroom window, quietly opens it, climbs up, shimmies out.

EXT. OUTSIDE MCKAYLA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

She falls onto the lawn, rises.

She scurries across the street to her NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

McKayla bangs on the front door.

A young BOY answers. The sight of McKayla frightens him.

MOM and DAD approach the front door.

MCKAYLA
P-p-please, my husband. Help me.

MOM
Oh my gosh.

DAD
I'll call 9-1-1.

MOM
Come, sit down.

INT. KITCHEN OF NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

McKayla takes a seat at the kitchen table. Her neighbor's house looks like the ideal American Home. McKayla eyes the CAR KEYS ON THE COUNTER.

DAD
Honey, take him to his room. Now.

Mom leads the boy to his room. Dad picks up the phone, dials.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
9-1-1, what's your emergency?

DAD
Hi, I'd like to report--

Dad turns around, sees McKayla fly out the door. Car keys no longer on the counter.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

McKayla climbs into her neighbor's Toyota Prius, smiling ear-to-ear. She puts the Prius in drive, looks up ahead through the windshield.

Across the street, Chet has found his car keys, he fumbles them in the driveway, tries to get into his car.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S CAR - SAME TIME

McKayla stomps down on the accelerator, guns it.

The Prius shoots across the street, darts into McKayla's driveway, slams right into Chet, runs him over, crashes into the side of the garage.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S DRIVEWAY - SAME TIME

Mom and Dad watch from their driveway as McKayla backs their Prius up twenty feet, runs over Chet in reverse, puts the car back in drive, runs over Chet a third time.

MOM
Oh my god--

Mom vomits. Dad drops the phone, stunned.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S CAR - SAME TIME

McKayla puts the car in park. The smile on her face fades.

MCKAYLA
Fuck.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF DRUG DEN - DAY

CHESTER, a 300 pound behemoth of a man, sits in a crater on his living room sofa, surrounded by a small crew.

JOEY, the weaselly-looking one.

REX, the one missing several teeth.

TANNER, the Eric Stoltz-looking one.

Mikey counts out cash, hands it over to Chester.

Chester hands it to Joey, who counts it again.

CHESTER
How you been, Mikey?

MIKEY
No complaints. Went to a rave last night, was a good time. Yourself?

CHESTER
I'm livin'.

MIKEY
Products been flying lately.

CHESTER
Sure seems it, you been making plays.

REX
You were here just last Thursday, weren't you?

MIKEY
Uh, that sounds right.

REX
How you moving this shit so fast, anyway?

CHESTER
Don't be runnin' your fuckin' mouth, Rex.

REX
Just a question.

Joey finishes the count.

JOEY
Hey, we're good here.

CHESTER
Good. No offense or anything, Mikey. Just keepin' you honest.

MIKEY
Somebodies got to, right?

CHESTER
You fuckin' hipsters. Always got something catchy to say. Here.

Chester hands Mikey a silver brief.

MIKEY
Shit, this looks official.

CHESTER
Yeah, I'ma need it back. From now on, this is how we do it.

MIKEY
Sure thing. Has a real *Casino* vibe.

Mikey waits for anyone to catch the reference...nothing.

He turns, heads for the door.

CHESTER
Hey Mikey?

MIKEY
Yeah?

CHESTER
Keep it up.

Mikey smiles, pleased with himself.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF DRUG DEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mikey's pocket vibrates as he exits the house. He fishes his phone out, puts it to his ear.

MIKEY (INTO PHONE)
Hello?...Holy shit--

He runs down the steps.

INT. ENTRANCE, COURT HOUSE - DAY

Mikey runs up the steps, flies through the metal detector.

The alarm WAILS. He backs up, takes his phone and wallet out.

INT. COURT ROOM, COURT HOUSE - DAY

Mikey sits among DOZENS OF SPECTATORS in the back row of the court room.

Up ahead, McKayla and her LAWYER at the defense table. Her lawyer is a grey haired man with the face of a dinosaur.

McKayla's handcuffed, wears a suit that fits her awkwardly.

THE JUDGE is an older man with curly hair and a thick mustache.

Parallel to them, sits the DISTRICT ATTORNEY and the ADA.

Jerome sneaks into the court room, squeezes into the back row next to Mikey. They whisper.

JEROME
Did I miss anything?

Mikey rolls his eyes, checks his watch.

MIKEY
I called you like seven times.

JEROME
One text message was enough, I'm here aren't I? Be reasonable.

MIKEY
Radio silence? Taking a page out of dad's book.

JEROME
Why don't you just cool it and tell me what's going on?

The Judge slams his gavel.

MIKEY
Shh, this is the important part.

JUDGE
At this time, the court has determined, upon forfeiture of the defendant's passport, bail will be set at one million dollars.

Spectators chatter.

The DA & ADA exchange a glance that says, *success.*

LAWYER
Your Honor--

JUDGE
We're talking about murder, Counselor. All things considered, this court is being generous.

Judge slams his gavel, rises, departs.

MCKAYLA
What's that mean? Wait what--

The BAILIFF approaches McKalya, escorts her to the two LOCAL COPS in the back of the court room.

They pass Mikey and Jerome on her way out.

MCKAYLA (CONT'D)
Mikey, talk to my lawyer! Talk to my--

She's gone.

MIKEY
Jesus, what just happened?

JEROME
C'mon, we need to see a bondsman.

MIKEY
Did he say a million dollars?

INT. OFFICE OF BAIL BONDSMAN - NIGHT

DARYL, 50s, heavy-set, goatee, sits across the desk from Mikey and Jerome.

Daryl fiddles with his desk for several moments, before he finally looks up, acknowledges Mikey and Jerome.

He shuffles some papers around, pretends to clean up some clutter, determines his computer isn't on, boots it up, takes a long, noisy gulp of water from a glass on his desk.

DARYL
You're gonna have to come up with one hundred thousand dollars.

MIKEY
You're kidding.

JEROME
He's not.

DARYL
I'm not. Your sister's bail's been set at a Million bucks. The fee, as always, is ten percent of the total bond. You follow?

MIKEY
Not really.

JEROME
Can you just--

DARYL
I can't.

MIKEY
But what if you--

DARYL
I won't.

MIKEY
Robert Forster was way cooler than this in Jackie Brown, man.

DARYL
That's cause he was try'na pipe Pam Grier. Come back tomorrow lookin like Pam Grier, we'll talk.

MIKEY
But--

JEROME
C'mon, Mikey.

Jerome ushers Mikey outside, fishes a cigarette from his pack.

MIKEY
But...

JEROME
It's just his job. He's not being unreasonable.

EXT. OUTSIDE OFFICE OF BAIL BONDSMAN - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome lights a smoke. Mikey runs his hands through his hair.

MIKEY
What are we gonna do?

JEROME
How much money do you have?

MIKEY
I don't know, like a few grand.
McKayla can't stay in prison, Jerry.
She won't be able to handle it.

JEROME
She handled her dip shit husband
pretty good, didn't she?

MIKEY
I always hated him. The first time he
laid hands on her--what did I say?

JEROME
She's a grown woman, she made her bed.

MIKEY
We have to get her out. We have to.

Mikey's cell buzzes.

JEROME
Who is it?

MIKEY
Number's blocked.

He answers.

MIKEY (ON PHONE)
Hello?

INT. CRAMPED CORRIDOR, COUNTY PRISON - SAME TIME

McKayla rests her forehead against the wall.

CORRECTION'S OFFICER 1 stands behind her, keeps look out.

MCKAYLA (INTO PHONE)
Mikey, it's me.

EXT. OUTSIDE OFFICE OF BAIL BONDSMAN - SAME TIME

Mikey clicks the speaker button on his phone.

MIKEY
It's McKayla. I got Jerome here, sis.

JEROME
Hey Mack.

INT. CRAMPED CORRIDOR, COUNTY PRISON - SAME TIME

The C.O. signals for McKayla to hurry up.

MCKAYLA (INTO PHONE)
I went to high school with some of the COs. This is one of their cell phones, do not call this number back. My lawyer's confident a jury won't convict me once they hear my story. We both know that asshole had it coming--

EXT. OUTSIDE OFFICE OF BAIL BONDSMAN - SAME TIME

Mikey cuts her off.

MIKEY
I'm just sorry it took so long, sis.

JEROME
And I'm sorry you didn't haul ass for Mexico as soon as you ran him over.

INT. CRAMPED CORRIDOR, COUNTY PRISON - SAME TIME

McKayla begins to cry.

MCKAYLA
My lawyer says they're in no hurry to schedule my trial.

MIKEY (O.S.)
What's that mean?

MCKAYLA
Means no matter what, even best case scenario, I'm going to be here for a while.

EXT. OUTSIDE OFFICE OF BAIL BONDSMAN - SAME TIME

Mikey wipes the moister from his face.

MIKEY
Fuck that. We're gonna get you outta there, McKayla. Just hang tight, we're gonna get you out.

MCKAYLA (O.S.)
I gotta go. I'm sorry.

The call ends.

Mikey looks at a stone-faced Jerome.

MIKEY
Jerry, c'mon.

JEROME
C'mon what?

MIKEY
You're the man with the plan. We need money, this is what you do.

JEROME
Look, even if I drained my bank account...how much cash do you have?

MIKEY
Like, twelve grand in the bank. Two under my mattress. If I sell all the ecstasy I have, that'd be like another three, three-five.

JEROME
Yeah, so we're well short.

Mikey cups his face, defeat sets in.

MIKEY
Ahh, shit.

Jerome waivers, puts his hand on Mikey's shoulder.

JEROME (CONTINUED)
It's a start, though.

INT. BLACKED OUT DODGE CHARGER - NIGHT

SONNY, 50s, cowboy vibes, parked outside the hospital, in front of a small sign that reads: "NO STANDING ANYTIME."

A handgun peeks out the shoulder-holster under his jean jacket. A police siren sits on the dash board.

LOUIS, 40s, bags under his eyes betray his inner demons, exits the hospital, walks to the Charger, climbs in.

SONNY
The hell am I picking you up at the hospital? You dying on me, partner?

LOUIS
Only on the inside.

Sonny puts the car in drive, accelerates.

SONNY
Did ya at least get any fun prescriptions?

LOUIS
Running out of Viagra, already?

SONNY
There's that textbook Louis wit. Ya know, I was doin the math while you were in there...I'm down like, six-seven grand this month.

LOUIS
How'd you manage that?

SONNY
Started betting Minor League Baseball.

LOUIS
The hell do you know about the farm leagues?

SONNY
Evidently, nothing at all.

LOUIS
Book keepers you're into, they serious?

SONNY
Unserious folk don't usually keep book.

Sonny pulls the car over across from a two-story house.

LOUIS
We really don't need any more pressure on us.

SONNY
I ever make my problems yours? No. So don't worry about *pressure*. Besides, this score's the jackpot. After this, the so-called pressure is off.

LOUIS
You talk to the Broker?

SONNY
Yeah, he's gotta buyer lined up from Houston. Would you look at that? We've got ourselves a full moon tonight.

LOUIS
Who gives a shit?

SONNY
That condo we hit in the French Quarter? There was a full moon that night and it was our biggest score in months.

LOUIS
Why's it always the spiritual bullshit with you? Can we just focus on the job, please?

SONNY
Wouldn't expect *you* to understand.

LOUIS
Fuck is that supposed to mean?

SONNY
You know what I mean.

LOUIS
Say it.

SONNY
You don't understand how things work around here. Cause you're an outsider.

LOUIS
Say it.

SONNY
I'm not gonna say it.

LOUIS
Say it.

SONNY
Fine. My proclivities for this city's more spiritual phenomenon *would be* lost on a Jew like yourself. There, happy?

LOUIS
You got one. *One.*

Louis points a single digit in the air. He opens the door.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM DRUG DEN - NIGHT

Sonny and Louis exit their car, walk to the trunk, pop it open. Inside is a shotgun, a nail gun, a bag filled with zip ties, and several stun-grenades.

LOUIS
You wanna take the front or the back?

SONNY
Onaccounta *I've* never let off a flash-bang in the car, I'll take the front.

Louis takes the shotgun.

LOUIS
Shit man, that was one time.

SONNY
One time too many, ya ask me.

Sonny puts a stun-grenade in his pocket, picks up the nail gun, takes the zip ties.

Louis crosses the street, walks around the drug den to the back door. Sonny waits a beat, heads for the front porch.

EXT. PORCH OF DRUG DEN - MOMENTS LATER

The drug den has a screen door in front of the front door. The screen door is designed to open outward.

Sonny wraps one side of a zip tie around the handle of the screen door.

He uses the nail gun to shoot a nail into the wall, just left of the door frame.

He pulls the other end of the zip tie over the nail, so that the screen door can't be opened up without force.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF DRUG DEN - SAME TIME

At the sound of the nail gun, Chester and the gang look up from what they're doing - getting high and playing cards.

REX
Y'all hear that?

CHESTER
Yeah, go check it out.

Rex grabs his gun, heads for the door--the window is smashed open from the outside, a stun-grenade is tossed in.

Rex looks down at it, confused.

CHESTER (CONT'D)
Shit.

The flash-bang goes off--blinding light and a PIERCING SOUND.

Everyone screams.

Rex drops his gun, fumbles forward, blinded, tries to feel his way out through the front door.

He manages to find the screen door, can't get it open.

REX
Shit! They've locked us in.

Chester drops from the couch, crawls through the living room.

The others find their bearings, follow him out.

EXT. ENCLOSED BACKYARD OF DRUG DEN - MOMENTS LATER

Chester stumbles out the back door. Louis presses the shotgun barrel up against the back of his head.

LOUIS
Get on your knees, big boy.

Chester hocks a loogie, complies.

Rex and the gang crawl out the back door a moment later.

REX
What the hell was that--

Rex looks up.

Sonny appears, pistol whips Rex in the back of the head.

SONNY
Everybody onna ground and we'll consider leaving you dip shits alive.

The drug dealers comply. Sonny and Louis zip tie all of their hands behind their backs.

TANNER
You cops? Where's your warrant?

Louis cocks the shotgun, uses the end of the barrel to push Tanner's head down into the ground.

LOUIS
I got your warrant right here, asshole.

SONNY
C'mon, let's get it.

Sonny and Louis enter the drug den through the back door.

REX
What the fuck was that?

JOEY
Stun-grenade. These guys are pros.

TANNER
And they definitely aren't here on official police-business.

CHESTER
You fucking think?

Louis and Sonny re-emerge, duffle bags in hand.

LOUIS
What the fuck is this? Where's the rest of it?

CHESTER
That's all there is.

Louis presses the end of the shotgun into Joey's crotch.

LOUIS
Is that your final answer?

JOEY
He's telling the fucking truth, I swear! This kid comes by almost weekly, fucking cleans us out!

CHESTER
It's true. Moves weight across the whole city. Whatever he can get his hands on. He's like our cash cow.

Sonny and Louis exchange a glance.

SONNY
What's this guy's name?

INT. KITCHEN TO LIVING ROOM, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mikey bursts in and out of various rooms, collects items, packs up his bag.

JEROME
Mikey.

Backpack on, Jerome stands in the doorway, eyes glued to his phone as he scrolls through Instagram.

JEROME (CONT'D)
Mikey...

MIKEY
What, yeah?

JEROME
Who buys most of your ecstasy?

MIKEY
Why?

JEROME
*Why?* I wanna know so I can steal your clientele, jackass.

MIKEY
Fuck you.

JEROME
I've got a concept in mind for how we can put together the rest of McKayla's bail money.

MIKEY
I mostly sell to college kids. Various groups--hipsters, frat kids, gym rats. That's the magic of selling Molly. Everyone likes to party.

Mikey disappears into his room. Jerome opens all the cabinets and drawers in the kitchen.

JEROME
Is there a GNC around here?

MIKEY (O.S.)
A what?

Jerome finds a bag of Swedish fish in a drawer, eats a few.

JEROME
A GNC. A place that sells workout supplements and shit.

Mikey enters the kitchen, brushes past Jerome, into the fridge, pulls out a vacuum-sealed bundle of ecstasy pills.

MIKEY
Yeah, there's a store not too far. Didn't take you for a muscle-head, Jerome. Guess a lot's changed, huh?

Jerome finds a bag of pretzels in a cabinet. He eats a handful, continues to go through the kitchen.

JEROME
You need to bag those up individually?

MIKEY
Usually, yes.

JEROME
But?

MIKEY
We're in a pinch for extra cash, figure if I sell them on consignment I can jack up the price 15, 20%.

JEROME
I like your business instincts. But we're in a time crunch. Who can possibly move all that quantity so fast?

MIKEY
Frat kids.

JEROME
Frat kids?

Jerome pulls open one last cabinet, a gun sits inside.

JEROME (CONT'D)
Holy shit. Is this a fucking laser beam?

Shocked to find it, he picks it up.

MIKEY
357 Magnum. I wanted the 44--ya know, like Dirty Harry? But it's so damn heavy. Not that I plan on using it much. Take it to the range every couple months.

JEROME
Hold the phone a second. You're telling me, that my brother, Mister Bernie Sanders Junior, is a closeted gun nut?

Mikey snatches the gun away, tucks it in his back waistband.

MIKEY
First of all, I never voted for Bernie Sanders. And B--I sell drugs. I need it for protection. Like...Daniel Craig, in Layer Cake.

JEROME
Pretty sure he wound up killing people in that movie.

MIKEY
It's a defense mechanism, I'm not actually going to use it.

JEROME
Haven't you seen literally any movie ever? If it's there, it's bound to go off at one point or another. The rifle in Shaun of the Dead, The Ankle Pistol in the Nice Guys-the fucking Nazi gun in Sweet Virginia. Remember Sweet Virginia?

MIKEY
Yes, I remember the Nazi gun from Sweet Virginia. Let's go, it's time to roll out.

JEROME
Alright Butch Cassidy, where to?

MIKEY
Sigma Ki. Then we can go get you some muscle milk, or whatever the fuck you wanted.

JEROME
Alright. Safe if I leave my bag here?

MIKEY
Safe? Course it's safe.

Jerome tosses his backpack on the floor, follows Mikey out.

INT. BLACKED OUT DODGE CHARGER, HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Louis drives. Sonny checks his watch, side-eyes Louis.

LOUIS
You can keep checking your watch, shooting me looks all you like. I'm going the speed limit.

SONNY
We're gonna miss our appointment. You know how he gets.

LOUIS
He'd rather us late, than not at all.

SONNY
Anyone pulls us over, we flash a badge, we're onna way.

LOUIS
They'll run our plates before it gets that far. Then there's a record of our whereabouts.

SONNY
So what? You're doing that Jewy paranoid shit again, Louis. No ones coming for us.

LOUIS
First of all, don't condescend down to me just cause you're an incompetent prick, who never second guesses a halfcocked idea.

Louis fishes a cigarette from his pocket, lights it up.

SONNY
You gonna keep me waitin? What's sec--

LOUIS
Second of all, you don't drop that Jew crap, I'll shoot you in the face and leave your body in the swamp for the fucking gators to eat. I said, *one*. Don't test me.

SONNY
Je-sus. Nice to know you still gotta lil fire in you, partner.

LOUIS
You're a prick. And it frustrates me.

Louis exhales his cigarette smoke toward Sonny.

SONNY
Well, *I'm sorry*. And it ain't nothing personal, c'mon. You might be the only Jew cop in the history of Nawlins PD.

LOUIS
So what?

SONNY
So, it's at least worth commenting on. Shit. And look, I ain't got nothing against the Jews. Well, except that y'all killed Christ, but other than that--nothing.

LOUIS
That's bullshit. That's just Anti Semitic rhetoric. It's nonsense.

SONNY
How do you figure?

LOUIS
Well, first of all, the Jews didn't kill Christ. *One Jew*, who was close to Jesus, *a fellow Jew*, ratted him out to the Romans. The Romans killed Christ. That is a fact.

SONNY
OK--

LOUIS
And secondly, think about it this way...Lee Harvey Oswald, a Christian man, shot JFK. But we don't say that the Christians killed Kennedy. But people always say, Jews killed Christ. It's just another method by which we've been made to seem untrustworthy. *Antisemitic rhetoric.*

SONNY
Wow. Guess I never thoughtta it that way before. Maybe you gotta future in politics, Detective.

LOUIS
This is us, there's the cone.

A large orange cone acts as an unofficial marker.

They pull off the highway onto a barely visible dirt path, head toward the swamp.

SONNY
Oswald was a Christian?

LOUIS
No fucking clue.

Sonny chuckles.

Louis slows the car to a halt.

EXT. SWAMP LAND - NIGHT

Louis and Sonny approach a black Chevy Silverado, parked fifty feet ahead, on the edge of the water.

The BROKER, 60s, bald, blue eyes, sits on a bench, does a crossword puzzle from the newspaper, smokes a cigar.

BROKER
You're late.

SONNY
Apologies. We came along way.

BROKER
And I came a lot longer. I got half a mind not to do this deal.

LOUIS
Bullshit.

BROKER
'Scuse me?

SONNY
You gotta excuse my partner, what he means to say--

LOUIS
What I mean to say, is that you drove three hours from Houston to get here. If you were gonna call the deal off cause we're running a few minutes late, you would've left already.

Broker puffs his cigar.

BROKER
Your partner's kind of an asshole.

SONNY
He's been feeling mighty persecuted, of late.

Louis rolls his eyes, goes to the trunk of the Charger, takes out a duffle bag.

BROKER
*Persecuted*?

SONNY
Sort of a long story--he's Jewish.

BROKER
A Jewish cop in New Orleans? Shit, he must be the only one.

SONNY
That's what I said.

BROKER
Well, let's get on with it. We both got long drives ahead of us.

Louis walks the duffle bag over toward the Silverado.

Sonny follows.

The Broker leads the cops to the bed of his truck, reveals a duffle bag inside. He unzips it--it's packed with cash.

BROKER (CONT'D)
Need to count it?

LOUIS
No.

SONNY
We know you're good for it.

They swap duffles.

BROKER
Of course. I just figured cause your partner's Jewish and all--

Louis pulls his gun, spins around, FIRES OFF two shots to the Broker's chest, a third to his face.

SONNY
Shit, Louis!

LOUIS
I've had enough of this Jew-crap. Didn't I tell you?

SONNY
Sure, but you didn't tell *him*.

LOUIS
Oh, and *everybody* just gets a warning?

SONNY
I mean...OK, shit, shit. C'mon, help.

Sonny lifts the Broker's upper-body, Louis grabs his feet.

They stuff him into the front seat of the Silverado.

SONNY (CONT'D)
Grab the duffles.

Louis complies, moves both duffles to the trunk of the charger.

Sonny puts his foot down on the Silverado's break, shifts the car's gear to reverse, shuts the door.

SONNY (CONT'D)
C'mon now.

INT. BLACKED OUT DODGE CHARGER - MOMENTS LATER

Sonny's in the driver's seat this time, inching the car forward, until the front bumper of the Charger makes contact with the front bumper of the Silverado.

He accelerates, the Charger pushes the Silverado until it rolls backward into the waters of the swamp.

The truck submerges into the uninviting, murky water.

SONNY
Shit, Louis.

LOUIS
This isn't my service piece, it's my backup. It is registered though. I'll file a report tomorrow, say someone broke into my place, stole it.

SONNY
Look, I ain't like the guy. Did I ever say I like the guy? No. But now we don't have a deal maker. You wanna try and sell this shit ourselves, run into an undercover Vice operation?

LOUIS
No--

SONNY
So, now what?

LOUIS
Now, we're gonna go back to the drug den.

SONNY
Which?

LOUIS
Same one from earlier. We'll sit on the place, until their cash cow returns.

INT. FRAT HOUSE, SIGMA KI TULANE - NIGHT

BRAD, 20s, buff white kid wears visor with matching cardigan, holds a large wooden paddle.

In front of Brad, TWO DOZEN PLEDGES sit in a cluster.

The pledges have been doused in baby powder and food condiments. They look pathetic.

BRAD
When you little fuckers let the frat down, you let me down. Are you trying to make me look bad? Are you?

PLEDGES IN UNISON
Sir, no sir!

BRAD
Okay, think about it.

The pledges all get into plank position, instead of resting their body weight on forearms, they rest on their elbows. It's painful, their arms shake and quiver.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Who's gonna step up? Which one of you's gonna take the paddle, so that all of your brothers don't have to?

The pledges don't answer, they just keep "thinking about it."

BRAD (CONT'D)
You little shits. Either one of you takes the paddle, or you all take the paddle. Who's it gonna be?

MAC, one of the pledges in the cluster, pops up.

MAC
Sir, I'll step up, sir.

BRAD
See that boys? Mac doesn't want to fuck his brothers. Assume the position, Mac.

Mac approaches Brad, gets down on all fours, ass up in the air. Brad takes a few practice swings with the paddle, like he's on the golf course about to tee off. Brad steps up to Mac to paddle the pledge's ass--like the sick son of a bitch that he is--but Mikey and Jerome arrive.

MIKEY
Uhh, this a bad time, Brad?

BRAD
Not at all, Mike. Spread like the Red Sea, bitches!

The pledges disperse from their cluster, create a walk way for Mikey and Jerome. Brad, Mikey and Jerome take a seat on a couch at the corner of the room.

MIKEY
No offense, but I'm not sure how I feel about talking business in front of your pledges.

BRAD
Not a problem. No offense taken. Pledges, ear muffs!

At once, the pledges pull their dirty shirts up over their eyes, place their hands over their ears. sing the chorus to, *This Land is Your Land,* on a loop.

JEROME
Jesus Christ.

MIKEY
Wow. You got a real *Old School* vibe going on here, huh?

BRAD
What, like vintage?

MIKEY
No, like Vince Vaughn.

BRAD
Is that your pal?

MIKEY
What? Oh, no. This is my brother, Jerome. Jerry, this is Brad. So how much of this Molly you tryna cop?

BRAD
I mean, how much you got?

MIKEY
I have access to 500 capsules, one hit each. Same stuff as last time.

BRAD
Look man, if you can front me the load, I'd take all 500.

MIKEY
I don't know--

BRAD
Swear to God, man, I can have you paid back by...Tuesday morning.

JEROME
Bullshit. You can move 500 hits in four and a half days?

BRAD
Pledges, enough!

The pledges stop singing.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Keep your earmuffs on. But raise your hands if you're going to purchase a hit of Molly from me this weekend.

All of the pledges raise their hands.

JEROME
Jesus.

BRAD
Pledges, leave your hands up if you intend to buy multiple hits.

Most leave their hands in the air.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Pledges, sing!

The pledges drop their hands, begin to sing again.

BRAD (CONT'D)
Biggest party weekend of the year, fellas. And this ain't even including the guys I have slinging under me.

MIKEY
Like a whole network.

BRAD
Exactly.

MIKEY
Okay, but if I'm fronting you these, I gotta raise the price ten bucks a pop.

BRAD
Fair enough.

Mikey pulls out the vacuum sealed pill capsules, hands them over to Brad. Brad's eyes light up.

JEROME PULLS the 357 out of Mikey's back waistband, presses the barrel to Brad's temple.

JEROME
You know what this is?

BRAD
Woh, woh, woh, woh, woh. Mikey! Check your brother, man!

JEROME
Don't talk to Mikey, talk to me.

MIKEY
Jerry, Jerry what the fuck?

JEROME
*Do you know what this is, Brad*?

BRAD
Shit, yes!

JEROME
And you realize that I now know exactly where you live?

BRAD
I'm good for the money, man. Mikey knows! Ask Mikey!

JEROME
*I'm asking you.*

BRAD
Tuesday morning, no later! I swear!

JEROME
Cause the thing is, Brad. I'm really a reasonable guy.

BRAD
I swear on my mother.

Jerome lowers the gun.

JEROME
Okay. I believe you.

Brad gasps.

BRAD
Jesus Christ, man.

Mikey snatches the gun back from Jerome, tucks it in his waistband.

MIKEY
C'mon, let's go.

EXT. FRONT LAWN OF FRAT HOUSE - NIGHT

They emerge from the frat house, Mikey moves frantically, Jerome lallygags behind.

MIKEY
What the fuck was that, Jerry?

He turns, shoves Jerome's chest with two hands.

JEROME
Would you calm down? You're the one who brought the piece.

MIKEY
As a fucking ornament. Not to pull out and use against my best customer. We're on campus, dude. This isn't fucking *Deer Hunter.*

JEROME
You just made a twenty thousand dollar investment, Michael.

MIKEY
Don't you think I know that?

JEROME
McKayla can't afford for us to go belly-up. I wanted assurances. We *needed* assurances.

MIKEY
And my word isn't good enough?

JEROME
Your word is great. *My words* are convincing.

MIKEY
Let's just...get in the fucking car.

They climb into the Volvo.

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO - MOMENTS LATER

Mikey takes a deep breath, his eyes clenched shut.

A giggle slips out his mouth.

MIKEY
Jesus.

JEROME
See...you enjoyed that a little bit, didn't ya?

MIKEY
Fuck you, Jerry.

JEROME
Nice little adrenaline rush. It's all part a the game.

MIKEY
Brad nearly shit himself.

JEROME
Bet he calls you to settle up before the Tuesday deadline, too.

MIKEY
We'll see...what now?

JEROME
GNC, remember?

INT. CAFETERIA, PRISON - NIGHT

McKayla, in an inmate jumpsuit, navigates the drab cafeteria's food line.

Slop is served. INMATES shuffle down the line.

Tray of food in hand, she turns to take stock of the whole cafeteria...where to sit?

She makes her way across the room, catches glares from various inmates.

PRISONER WITH FACE TATTOOS whistles at McKayla as she passes.

PRISONER WITH BRAIDS flashes her teeth at McKayla, chomps down, makes a BITING sound.

McKayla finally finds a mostly empty table in the back.

INT. GNC STORE - NIGHT

Mikey follows Jerome inside.

BARRY, 40s, buck teeth, overalls, at the checkout counter.

Up on the wall behind Barry, a Confederate flag.

JEROME
(whispers)
Read the labels. We want anything that increases energy. B vitamins, gin-sing, that sorta thing.

MIKEY
Why are you whispering?

Jerome starts speaking very loudly.

JEROME
What kind of half-baked supplement store pulls their sponsorship last minute like this?

MIKEY
Huh--

JEROME
I mean, how unreasonable? How unprofessional? I swear I'm never shopping there again.

Jerome elbows Mikey in the arm.

MIKEY
Uhh, yeah, serves them right.

JEROME
Right? We were their best customers by far. How many gyms do you think spend ten grand a month on their fighters workout supplements? Ten grand a month!

MIKEY
It's unheard of, really.

JEROME
Unheard of.

BARRY
You gentlemen looking for something in particular?

Barry walks out from behind the counter, approaches his only two customers.

JEROME
Two weeks before the weigh-in? I mean, you gotta be kidding me.

MIKEY
Sorry sir, my brother's pretty worked up at the moment.

JEROME
Worked up? Worked? *Up?*

MIKEY
Jerry--

JEROME
Our sponsor pulls the plug two weeks before the weigh-in, you think I'm *worked up?*

BARRY
What's this about a sponsor?

MIKEY
We gotta big fight coming up.

JEROME
We run a gym. Medium-sized.

MIKEY
He's being modest.

JEROME
The fight's gonna be nationally televised on ESPN, four of our fighters are in it.

BARRY
No joke?

JEROME
Not a one.

MIKEY
You know that muscle milk store on campus? Sorta a GNC knock-off?

BARRY
Muscle Bar?

MIKEY
That's the one.

JEROME
They got cold feet, pulled their sponsorship.

BARRY
Really?

JEROME
Real as you and me.

BARRY
Ya know, I hate to say it, but most of their so-called supplements hardly work as advertised.

Mikey slaps Jerome on the shoulder.

MIKEY
That's what I've been saying.

JEROME
Wish we knew that eighteen months ago.

BARRY
Eighteen months?

JEROME
And place wasn't cheap. Trust me.

BARRY
I believe it. So what exactly are you guys looking for from a sponsor?

JEROME
Oh you know, mutually beneficial relationship.

MIKEY
At least, it was supposed to be.

JEROME
They gave us a good deal on the supplements--

MIKEY
It was a decent deal, at best.

JEROME
We threw their store name and logo on all our gear.

MIKEY
Plus, it's a charity event, the fight.

BARRY
Charity?

MIKEY
So the whole thing is one big tax write off. And these pricks over at Muscle Bar decide to use us for the exposure, then dump us last minute.

BARRY
Well why on earth would they do that?

Jerome looks over at the Confederate flag.

JEROME
Bunch of snow-flake, pansy ass liberal-cucks, man. It's un-American.

Barry scoffs.

BARRY
Well, you know what, maybe we can sponsor you guys?

JEROME
Oh...I don't know, man.

BARRY
Yeah. C'mon, why not? I'm the manager, so I'd have to run it by corporate I suppose, but I sure as hell wouldn't leave you guys in the lurch, like those Muscle Bar leftist-fairies.

MIKEY
Ya know, Jerry, we should really do our research this time. Make sure we team with a supplement company selling stuff that actually works.

BARRY
Oh, we're a country-wide brand. You ain't gotta worry about that with us.

JEROME
I don't know.

MIKEY
It'd be foolish of us not to do any research ahead of time. Can't make the same mistake twice.

Barry raises a pointer finger.

BARRY
Tell ya what, why don't you take some of our goods to your gym tonight. On the house. I'm so confident your fighters will be able to see a difference, *feel* a difference, I know you'll be back for more. Then we can talk sponsorship. What do you think?

INT. LIVING ROOM TO KITCHEN, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mikey and Jerome enter carrying boxes of supplements.

MIKEY
I can't believe it, Jer. This is how you've survived 30-plus years on planet Earth, without a bank account?

JEROME
Not a bad way to live, is it?

MIKEY
Not at all. I did pretty good, didn't I?

JEROME
You weren't half bad, Mikey.

MIKEY
That little bit about the fight being for charity...

JEROME
It was clever, Mikey. Well done. Really.

They open the boxes--supplements out the ass.

MIKEY
So, what now?

JEROME
You got like, little baggies?

MIKEY
I do.

Mikey hides his gun back in the kitchen cabinet, pulls out a box of small sized ziplock baggies. They bag up the work out supplement capsules into individual packages--one capsule per bag.

They move on to the powder.

JEROME
You gotta scale?

Mikey fetches the scale from his room.

He watches Jerome weigh out a gram of the powdered workout supplement, bag it up, then do it again.

JEROME (CONT'D)
Congratulations, brotha man. You've just expanded into the cocaine trade.

They bag up the rest of their fake drugs.

MIKEY
If we sell all this shit tomorrow at the block party, we'll probably have enough cash to re-up with my supplier.

JEROME
Pick up another package of the real drugs, sell 'em wholesale to the frat boys, again? I'm liking the way your minds working, Mikey.

Mikey smiles, music to his ears.

INT. CAFETERIA, PRISON - NIGHT

McKayla sits at the end of a long table.

She pushes her food around the tray, oblivious as the few other inmates around her get up and leave.

A shadowy silhouette engulfs her food tray.

RONDA, a hard jawed, thick-browed woman with short curly hair, stands behind McKayla.

On either side of Ronda, stand JEWL and RENEE.

By the time McKayla realizes what's going on, it's too late.

Several punches to the neck and back, hair pulled, body tackled, stomped on, scratched.

Resilience, though.

McKayla's built up a lifetime of resilience.

She scraps her way to her feet, elbows Ronda in the nose.

Blood everywhere, hers and Ronda's.

Jewl and Renee hesitate, just a moment--enough time for a brawl to break out amongst all the inmates in the cafeteria.

EXT. BLOCK PARTY - DAY

An entire block has been closed off to traffic.

PARTYGOERS mingle, drink, dance, smoke, snort and get raunchy. Drinks are had, drugs are shared. Couples of all shapes and sizes and sexes make out amongst the crowd.

Jerome and Mikey navigate the crowd.

JEROME
God, I miss college.

MIKEY
Did you ever go to college?

THREE COP CARS make their way up the street of the block party. One particularly boisterous MALE partygoer grabs a beer, runs in front of the lead cop car, takes a knee in the street, halts the police caravan while he chugs the beer.

JEROME
What is this kid doing?

The cops do nothing, the male partygoer finishes the beer, gets up, runs back into the crowd. The cop cars continue up the street, until they disappear, out of sight.

MIKEY
We're in a bubble.

JEROME
This shit is lawless.

MIKEY
We should get to work.

JEROME
Alright, we'll split up. Meet me at the end of the block, by that corner there, in one hour. Or if you sell your whole half of the stash. Whatever comes first.

MIKEY
Split up?

JEROME
Yeah. We'll cover more ground.

MIKEY
You don't think we should work together?

JEROME
We are working together, Mike. Just separately.

Jerome scurries off, gets lost in the crowd.

Mikey navigates the faceless potential customers, leans in toward the small groups of people he passes.

MIKEY
Got that Molly. Got that White Girl. Got that Molly. Got that White Girl.

Mikey approaches a group of COLLEGE KIDS passing joints in a small circle.

MIKEY (CONT'D)
Molly? E? Blow?

He passes out a few bags of fake Molly, a few bags of fake cocaine. He collects cash from each of the college kids.

He takes a hit of their joint, moves on. Mikey approaches a series of beer pong tables, set up tournament style.

He dishes several packs of fake drugs, collects cash, takes a shot in one of the pong games, misses terribly, moves on.

He maneuvers his way through the massive block party.

He makes it toward the end of the block.

He sees a dumpster, down a short alley, approaches it, whips his dick out. Takes a leak.

As he pees, he hears THREE DISGRUNTLED CUSTOMERS approach from behind.

CUSTOMER 1
There he is taking a piss, right there!

CUSTOMER 2
Hey asshole, is your dick out?

CUSTOMER 3
Cause if it is you can't turn around!

As Mikey scrambles to put his dick away, Customer 3 shoves him face-first into the dumpster.

Customer 2 punches him in the back.

Mikey hits the ground.

CUSTOMER 1
You think we wouldn't know that coke you sold us is fake, you slimy fuck?

Customer 1 kicks Mikey in the gut.

DISTANT VOICE:
Cops! Cops! Cops!

They take off like a pack of gazelle at the sent of a predator.

Mikey tries to get up and run but he's too injured.

Jerome appears--it was he who hollered about the cops.

JEROME
You alright, bro?

He starts to help Mikey stand up straight.

MIKEY
Fuck, Jerry. This is why we should've stuck together!

Mikey pushes Jerome off him, tries to walk off, can't.

JEROME
Shit, c'mon. You're hurt, you're hurt. Let me help you, don't be unreasonable.

Jerome throws Mikey's arm over his shoulder, helps him walk.

MIKEY
We should've stuck together, man.

JEROME
They didn't get your cash, did they?

MIKEY
No, your timing was decent enough. I guess.

JEROME
Good, you sell your half of the stash?

MIKEY
Almost all of it. You?

JEROME
Every bag. Let's get the fuck outta here.

INT. LONG TERM PATIENT WING, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Long narrow room, six beds, separated by curtains. Louis sits in a chair against the back wall.

His watery eyes stare solemnly at a female patient.

JENNY, 40s, comatose.

Louis wipes his face, rises, grabs his jacket, swings it over his shoulder, steps up toward the bed, takes her hand.

LOUIS
I'll be back tomorrow, Jenny.

DR. LAETNER enters the room.

DR. LAETNER
Mr. Schoenfeld?

Louis looks up, startled.

LOUIS
This isn't a good time for me.

DR. LAETNER
I'm sure. But I wanted to catch you, before you left.

LOUIS
Doing what?

DR. LAETNER
What?

LOUIS
Catch me doing what?

Conversation stifled...

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Look, I'm on duty. I gotta go.

Louis flashes the badge pinned to his belt.

DR. LAETNER
Of course, Detective. I just want to discuss some options with you.

LOUIS
Options?

DR. LAETNER
For Jenny. It's been several months.

LOUIS
Don't you think I know how long it's been?

DR. LAETNER
Of course. I'm sorry. But, perhaps it's time we talk about the next steps.

LOUIS
Is this about my payments coming late? It's not gonna be a problem anymore, I can assure you.

DR. LAETNER
Mr. Schoen--

LOUIS
Detective.

DR. LAETNER
Detective. It's not the payments. The average coma only lasts a few weeks, at most.

LOUIS
Jenny wasn't average. There wasn't anything average about her.

DR. LAETNER
I'm sure that's the case, but--

LOUIS
I really need to get back to work.

Louis brushes by the doctor, storms off.

INT. SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, PRISON - NIGHT

Darkness.

A stray beam of light shimmies in through a little rectangular hole in the cell door.

Cot in the corner, toilet with no seat.

NOISE from the outside--the door is unlocked.

It opens.

Female GUARD stands in the doorway; light pours in behind her, she looks angelic.

GUARD
Ready to come out?

McKayla nods in affirmation.

GUARD (CONTINUED)
Let's go, then. Up.

McKayla rises.

INT. CAFETERIA, PRISON - NIGHT

The Guard escorts McKayla into the cafeteria.

Other inmates already seated with food.

Almost everyone looks up as McKayla enters--only for a moment though before its back to business.

She grabs her tray, gets served some slop, turns to face the many tables.

The table closest to her left is mostly full, taken up entirely by black inmates.

The middle tables seems to have no clear ethnic delineation.

The table furthest to the right is made up entirely of white inmates. Some with white supremacy tattoos, some without.

McKayla, food tray in hand, hesitates.

A hard looking WOMAN at the center table makes eye contact with McKayla, gives her an ever-so-slight nod.

Bodies slide down, room is made, McKayla is granted a seat.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jerome sits on the couch. He's alone. An exaggerated exhale betrays his boredom.

He rises, rummages through the closet, finds a shoe box.

INT. KITCHEN, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

He raids Mikey's kitchen of all its sugar, baking soda, dishwasher powder, detergent, all other white substances he finds that look like cocaine.

Jerome lines the inside of the shoebox with enough cellophane that it hangs over the edges on all sides.

He pours the white powder concoction into the shoebox, tosses in the last of the work out supplements.

He folds the cellophane over, uses a lighter to seal it closed, ditches the shoebox...

Vuala--a brick of fake cocaine.

Jerome nods, impressed with himself.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mikey barges in with a big smile on his face.

JEROME
Why you cheesin'? Frat boy pay up?

MIKEY
In full.

Mikey tosses a huge wad of cash at Jerome.

JEROME
Damn, guess I really scared him.

MIKEY
We make quite a team, don't we?

JEROME
Did the frat boy want another package?

MIKEY
Not yet. All the dealers he got under him, paid him up front. So all our ecstasy is still circulating. I'm sure they'll run out soon though.

JEROME
Damn, that's a nice little operation he's got running there. Maybe you should've been in a frat.

MIKEY
Eh, I'dno.

JEROME
I gotta take a piss.

MIKEY
What the hell is this?

Mikey takes a seat on the couch, lifts up the brick of fake cocaine. Jerome walks into the bathroom.

JEROME (O.S.)
Oh yeah, I packed up a fake kilo. Figured we can sell it to some street kids, get a little closer to pulling in McKayla's bail money.

MIKEY
Shit, this looks hardcore man. I'm gonna hide it in the meantime.

JEROME (O.S.)
Whatever.

Mikey picks Jerome's backup up, puts it on his lap, unzips it, stuffs the brick in.

MIKEY
Wait a second, fuck is this?

Mikey pulls out an envelope of cash, some of which spills to the floor.

He pulls out another envelope, then another.

He counts the cash up. All crisp, fresh bills.

Jerome walks out of the bathroom, zips his pants.

JEROME
Tip of my dicks kinda burns, think I should go see a--

MIKEY
What the fuck is this, Jerry?

JEROME
Mikey, that's...mine.

Jerome snatches the cash from Mikey, gathers up all the bills that fell to the floor.

MIKEY
You must have...50, 60 grand here!

JEROME
It's called a personal savings, Mike. Or didn't you learn about that in college?

MIKEY
McKayla is rotting away in a prison cell right now. I got my ass kicked selling fake drugs, *by myself*, you're packaging up a kilo of baking soda to rip off some gangsters in the middle of New Orleans--

JEROME
What's your fucking point?

MIKEY
We have the money to bail her out right now!

JEROME
*We* certainly do not. *We* have made a pretty good dent, but *we* have a long way to go. You don't see me asking you to empty your personal savings account--

MIKEY
I already did, you fucking asshole!

Mikey punches Jerome across the face. It's a weak punch, but it catches him by surprise.

He throws Jerome into a headlock. Jerome wrestles back, they fall over onto the living room table--which breaks, crashes to the floor.

MIKEY (CONT'D)
You selfish fucking asshole.

Mikey gets the upper hand, sits atop Jerome's chest. He smacks Jerome in the face, goes to do it again, but Jerome swivels his head out of the way, Mikey punches the floor.

MIKEY (CONT'D)
God damn!

Jerome wiggles free, grabs his bag, lurches for the door.

JEROME
Fuck you, man.

MIKEY
That's right, just walk away. Surprise, surprise--Jerry's leaving. You left me to get my ass kicked at the block party, just like you left me to deal with mom and McKayla, all by myself. Just like dad did. You're just like dad. You left us. Like an *asshole*.

JEROME
Mikey--

MIKEY
You don't think I wanted to join a fraternity? Every time I met *anyone* at school, I was so...fucking desperate for them to like me! *And they knew it.* Everybody knew it. You can't hide something like that.

JEROME
Mikey.

MIKEY
So I started selling drugs. Cause everyone likes when the plug comes through. I show up, peoples faces actually light up, like oh wonder what Mikey's got for us today. And I'm pretty good at it, yeah. But it's all...

Jerome takes a step toward the living room, away from the front door. Mikey gets up off the floor, sits on the couch. Jerome inches over toward the couch, joins him.

JEROME
When I left home, I was planning on coming back.

MIKEY
Sure you were.

JEROME
No, for real. I was. I was planning on coming back with dad. I went to find him, to bring him home.

MIKEY
No shit?

JEROME
None. Only thing was, when I finally found him...

MIKEY
What?

JEROME
See, I staked out that bar he used to play pool at all the time. Place I used to watch him hustle suckers on the weekends?

MIKEY
Yeah, I remember. I always wanted to come along, dad wouldn't bring me.

JEROME
You were too young. Anyway, I poked around, asked enough of the regulars if anyone knew where else he might'a been. I tracked him two towns over, to this skeevy billiards club.

MIKEY
And?

JEROME
And I was gonna go up to him, be like, hey dad where the fuck you been?

MIKEY
Why didn't you?

JEROME
Cause I saw him with this, this girl. This woman. And they looked...happy. So I had a drink, and just watched them shoot some stick. And when they left, I followed them.

MIKEY
Where'd they go?

JEROME
Just to the super market, to get Entenmann's cookies.

MIKEY
I love Entenmann's cookies.

JEROME
They drove together. I followed them in this shanty cab. Whole thing cost me like two hundred bucks by the time it was over. Then, after the supermarket...

MIKEY
What?

JEROME
They went *home.*

MIKEY
What do you mean, they went home?

JEROME
I mean, I followed them from the super market to this nice little house, in this nice little community, where there was this nice little...family.

MIKEY
Bullshit.

JEROME
It's true, Mike.

MIKEY
You're saying dad had a second family?

JEROME
I'm saying we were the second family.

MIKEY
No fucking way.

JEROME
Worst part is, mom knew what I was doing. She knew I went to find him. The thought of coming home, having to tell her *that*. So, I just didn't. I couldn't.

MIKEY
Jesus.

JEROME
Part of me thinks she knew all along. I don't know. I'm sorry I didn't tell you. And I'm sorry I didn't come back. And I'm sorry I didn't tell you about the 60 grand. I swindled it off some dork on the side of the highway, sold him a broke down car with a fresh coat of paint.

MIKEY
No shit?

JEROME
None. Funniest scheme I ever pulled.

Mikey lets out a chuckle.

MIKEY
Jesus.

JEROME
Hey. Let's go see that dickhead bail bondsman, bring McKayla home.

Mikey's face lights up.

INT. BLACKED OUT DODGE CHARGER - DAY

Louis in the driver's seat, Sonny rides shotgun.

They're parked down the block from Chester's Trap House.

Louis hand rolls a cigarette.

Sonny whistles botched melodies.

LOUIS
Would you knock it off with that? You sound like a broken tea kettle.

Louis puts the cigarette in his mouth, lights it.

SONNY
Least I never set off a flash-bang in the car, smart guy.

LOUIS
The pin was loose.

SONNY
Shit, let's get outta here. We're wasting time.

LOUIS
No, no way. He'll be here. This is the play, he'll be here.

INT. OFFICE OF BAIL BONDSMAN - DAY

Mikey struts up to Daryl's desk, slams the bundle of cash down. Daryl looks down at it, then up at Mikey, unimpressed.

DARYL
What's this?

MIKEY
One hundred thousand dollars. Cash.

DARYL
Oh.

MIKEY
For our sister, McKayla? You said we'd need a hundred K for the bond. And we got it.

DARYL
Okay, I'll fill out the paper work. She'll be released six-to-eight hours after it's processed.

Daryl picks up the cash, feeds it into his electric currency-counter.

Mikey looks back at Jerome, perplexed, then back at Daryl.

MIKEY
That's it?

DARYL
What'd you expect? A fucking parade?

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO - MOMENTS LATER

Mikey and Jerome climb into the Volvo.

MIKEY
Just thought it'd be more climactic.

JEROME
Just another day at the office for a guy like that.

MIKEY
I guess so.

JEROME
I've been thinking...

MIKEY
Careful now. Don't wanna hurt yourself.

JEROME
Ha-ha. No really. I was thinking, since I paid for more than half of the bond, I want in on the profits for the next batch of ecstasy.

Mikey starts the car, drives.

MIKEY
I guess that's fair.

JEROME
Good.

MIKEY
One condition.

JEROME
Shoot.

MIKEY
We do it as a team. You and me, through and through. Start to finish.

Jerome pretends to consider the offer, milks it.

JEROME
Got yourself a deal little brother.

He sticks his hand out, they dap.

MIKEY
Alright, we'll go pick up the rest of the cash were owed by the frat boys. Then, we'll stop at my connects place.

JEROME
Sounds good. Who's your connect?

MIKEY
*Please* trust me when I say, he's not the type a guy you intimidate with a pistol to the temple.

Jerome laughs.

INT. CELL - COUNTY PRISON

McKayla sits on the floor of the cell, reads a magazine.

FOUR OTHER INMATES hang in the cell with her. One rolls a cigarette from a pouch of tobacco, hands it to McKayla.

BOOKWORM, the inmate who pushes the cart of library books, passes McKayla's cell.

BOOKWORM
Yo McKayla, heard you made bail.

MCKAYLA
What?

BOOKWORM
Overheard them processing your paperwork in the main office.

MCKAYLA
Are you joking?

BOOKWORM
I'd have to have one sick sense of humor, wouldn't I?

Bookworm disappears down the corridor.

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Mikey drives. Jerome counts cash in the shotgun seat.

JEROME
I can't believe these guys. Greek Life's like, a whole little economy. Guy like me could be running it.

Mikey looks over at Jerome, skeptical.

MIKEY
We're almost there. I think you should wait in the car.

JEROME
Bullshit.

MIKEY
I'm serious.

JEROME
Hi Serious, I'm Jerry. I'll be accompanying you inside. I mean, c'mon, someone's gotta have your back.

MIKEY
Oh, I didn't realize you were gonna bring someone else in with us.

JEROME
Funny.

MIKEY
Just remember what I said about this dude Chester. He is not to be trifled with. No games.

JEROME
You make him sound like the Boogie Man. I bet he's just another redneck with an appetite for narcotics.

MIKEY
Maybe. But I heard once that a guy tried to rob him, Chester pulled all the guys teeth out with a pair of pliers.

JEROME
Sounds like bullshit.

MIKEY
He keeps a jar of teeth on the table where he counts his cash. I've seen it. They don't look like no baby teeth. I'm talking, grown man chompers. For real.

JEROME
Alright, I get it, Mikey. I get it.

MIKEY
No games.

JEROME
No games.

Mikey pulls the car over.

EXT. PORCH OF DRUG DEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome follows Mikey up the steps. Neither notice the nail beside the doorframe, or the used zip tie by the welcome mat.

Mikey pulls open the screen door, about to knock, when Jerome twists the knob, pushes their way inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF DRUG DEN - MOMENTS LATER

They inch quietly across the living room, the place is a mess. Floor boards ripped up, pillows and couch cushions slashed, drawers turned inside out.

MIKEY
Oh shit. Something's not right. Chester's big on security.

JEROME
Call his name.

MIKEY
No, wait--

Jerome walks toward the kitchen, peeks inside.

JEROME
Chester?

MIKEY
Jerry--

JEROME
Chesterrrrrrrr!

MIKEY
Jerome.

Louis pops up behind Mikey, gun to his head.

Sonny, in the corner, cocks his shotgun.

JEROME
Shit.

SONNY
Get on your knees, fella.

JEROME
Get on *your* knees, jackass.

Sonny hits Jerome in the stomach with the butt of his shotgun. Jerome doubles over, falls to his knees.

Mikey raises his hands, takes a knee beside his brother.

MIKEY
Hey, we're not looking for any trouble.

SONNY
Trouble's gotta way a finding people ain't looking for it.

LOUIS
You came here to buy drugs from Chester?

JEROME
Don't tell them anything, Mike.

Sonny smacks Jerome across the face.

MIKEY
Yes. Yes, we came to re-up from Chester. Stop hitting him. Just let us be on our way, and we'll act like nothing happened.

LOUIS
I really don't have the patience to dance around the exposition.

Louis picks up a duffle bag, throws it at Jerome, hits him in the chest.

Jerome unzips the duffle, packed to the brim with heroin.

MIKEY
Holy shit.

JEROME
What the fuck is this?

SONNY
You know what it is. And you're gonna sell it for us.

JEROME
Like hell I am.

Sonny smacks Jerome, again.

SONNY
You're gonna do it, or we'll cut off your brother's fingers one by one. Simple as that.

JEROME
Bullshit.

Louis grabs Jerome by the face, drags him from the living room into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN, DRUG DEN - SAME TIME

Louis throws Jerome on the floor next to four dead bodies--Chester and his comrades.

Jerome dry heaves, tries to crawl away from the corpses. Louis kicks him in the gut, drags him closer to Tanner's dead body.

LOUIS
See this one?

Louis takes a knife out of his pocket, cuts open Tanner's shirt, reveals a wire's been taped to the his chest.

LOUIS (CONTINUED)
This one was a *fucking fed*. You should of seen the smile on Sonny's face when he strangled him to death.

MIKEY
Christ.

At the edge of the kitchen, Sonny holds Mikey by the collar.

JEROME
Look, the connects are Mikey's. I don't know shit about moving weight. Mike's the one with the clientele.

MIKEY
Jerry, stop.

JEROME
Mikey's the plug. I just came in to work for him, I'm useless on my own.

LOUIS
What do you propose?

JEROME
Hold onto me. Let Mikey take the drugs, go out and move as much as he can--

LOUIS
All of it.

JEROME
He'll go out and sell all of it, come back with the cash, you'll let me go.

MIKEY
Jerome--

Louis exits the kitchen, returns with the duffle.

SONNY
Well ain't this some brotherly love.

LOUIS
Alright, alright, enough of this crap. You've got one week to sell our package or we start removing digits.

He throws the duffle at Mikey.

MIKEY
I won't need that long.

JEROME
Mikey--

SONNY
Whadoyou mean?

MIKEY
We've got a buyer lined up for a drop this evening. We recently came into a brick of cocaine, we're unloading it all at once.

LOUIS
No lie?

MIKEY
None.

SONNY
Bull shit.

JEROME
It's true, we've got a meeting in 90 minutes, at that old junk yard off I-12, near Yokum Road.

MIKEY
Buyer's always looking for weight. He'll want your product, no doubt.

LOUIS
Who is he?

SONNY
Really believin' this nonsense, Lou?

LOUIS
I'm being realistic. No body could move this much weight, in small amounts, in one week's time. If they've got a buyer lined up, I say we go for it.

SONNY
That's a big if.

JEROME
It's a regular sized if. This is real.

LOUIS
We aren't exactly swimming in options.

SONNY
Sure we are. We can wait. That's one option. We can take the slow route, have him dish out the heroin in little bits, see if he gets it done before we cut off all his brother's toes. That's another option.

MIKEY
Or, if I may, you let me leave right now. I go pick my sister up at County. She's out on bail tonight. The connect is hers, someone she met in prison. You guys take Jerome back to my apartment, grab that brick, we meet up tonight at a rest stop off the highway near the junk yard.

JEROME
Mikey--

MIKEY
Just listen to me, Jerome. For once.

JEROME
Okay, okay.

MIKEY
This is *my* play. We're gonna Sweet Virginia this. Got me?

Jerome nods, unconvincingly.

LOUIS
If we show up to the meet tonight--

SONNY
Louis, you are not really considering this?

Louis holds his pistol up to Mikey's temple.

LOUIS
*If* we show up to the meet tonight, and you don't have our cash, or this buyer is bullshit, I'm turning everybody's lights off.

MIKEY
Fair enough.

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO - MOMENTS LATER

Mikey floors it.

Frantic, through traffic, checks the time on his phone, swerves out of the way oncoming of cars, dodges pedestrians.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE OF COUNTY PRISON - NIGHT

McKayla's escorted outside by a MALE GUARD.

He turns around, reenters the prison facility, leaves her alone.

She takes a deep breath.

Mikey comes screeching to a halt in the Volvo, ten feet from McKayla.

He yells through the open front passenger window.

MIKEY
We're in a jam, Mack. Get in.

She complies. Mikey speeds away before she's even got the door of the Volvo closed.

MCKAYLA
It's nice to see you, too.

Mikey glances over at her, then back at the road.

MIKEY
Did you change your hair?

MCKAYLA
What's the jam?

MIKEY
Jerome's in trouble.

MCKAYLA
So?

MIKEY
It's a long story, we started working together.

MCKAYLA
Get out of here.

MIKEY
How do you think we paid your bond?

MCKAYLA
Who are you guys in trouble with? Tell me everything.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jerome enters Mikey's apartment, Sonny and Louis trail him.

LOUIS
Need to piss, Sonny. Mind him.

Louis walks into the bathroom, pees with the door open.

SONNY
Show us this brick of cocaine, big shot.

JEROME
Should be in the kitchen.

SONNY
Should be?

JEROME
It's my brother's place. That's usually where he keeps it, I think.

SONNY
Well fuckin' find it. Let's not drag out this charade any longer than we have to.

Jerome walks into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome opens a random kitchen cabinet, pretends to look for the fake drugs.

Sonny enters the kitchen, passes behind Jerome on his way to the fridge, opens it, pulls out the OJ, drinks it straight from the carton.

JEROME
That is *quite* unsanitary.

Sonny GULPS the orange juice down louder, milks it, raises a middle finger to Jerome as he drinks.

Jerome opens the next cabinet, removes Mikey's .357 Magnum.

Sonny glances over, mid drink of juice, realizes what's happening, lowers the carton from his mouth.

Jerome pulls the trigger--BANG--the bullet torpedoes right through the juice carton, burrows into Sonny's gut.

Juice is everywhere.

Sonny goes down. Red and orange liquids mix on the floor.

Jerome spins to his right, aims the gun at the bathroom doorway.

Louis takes cover behind the door frame, aims his gun back at Jerome. A brief, awkward moment of mutual contemplation ensues...

They both fire one shot.

As Jerome pulls the trigger, he slips on the bloody orange juice, falls backward.

The bullet fired from Sonny's gun, flies over Jerome's head, hits the wall behind him.

Jerome's shot misses by six inches. He rolls over in the mess on the floor, takes cover behind the wall.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Did you kill my partner?

JEROME
No...I don't know. I might have.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Well, look at him. He look dead?

Jerome looks back at Sonny.

JEROME
It's unclear. His eyes are open. But, there's a lot of blood.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Is his belly going up and down?

SONNY
I'm fucking alive, motherfucker!

Sonny coughs up blood.

LOUIS (O.S.)
How you feeling, pal?

SONNY
Like there's a hole in my gut. I can't reach my piece, can't lift my arm.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Alright, just hang tight.

SONNY
Kill this motherfucker, Louis.

Coughs up more blood.

JEROME
Hold on, wait. Don't kill me, don't kill me. You need me.

SONNY
Bullshit.

LOUIS (O.S.)
How do you figure? Next time I see your brother, I'll take the money he gets flipping our drugs, trade him your dead body in return.

JEROME
What about the brick of cocaine?

LOUIS (O.S.)
I'll just tear this place to shreds, find it myself.

SONNY
Or maybe, I'll torture you 'til you tell us you made it all up.

JEROME
It's real, it's real and I'll show it to you. But let me remind you, that if we don't show up to the drop soon, *together*, Mikey's gonna bail. Then you're out all your profits, seeing as how you two idiots actually let my brother leave with your drugs.

SONNY
You cannot still be listenin to this asshole, Louis.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Show me the brick.

Jerome gets up off the floor, leaves the kitchen.

SONNY
Louis, he shot me. Fucking kill him!

INT. LIVING ROOM, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Jerome picks his backpack up, removes the brick of fake cocaine, slides it across the floor toward the bathroom.

LOUIS (O.S.)
OK, put your weapon down.

JEROME
You need me, man.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Let me hear you drop your gun.

JEROME
You need me, man.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Maybe I do. But if you don't put your weapon down, I'm gonna kill you, then I'm gonna go and kill your brother.

Jerome clenches his eyes shut. Places his gun on the floor. Louis emerges from the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN, MIKEY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Sonny attempts to reposition himself, the pain from the gunshot wound is too great.

SONNY
Louis, I swear on Jesus *and* Moses, if you don't shoot this mother--

Louis squeezes the trigger--BANG--puts a bullet through Sonny's eye. His brains stain the kitchen wall.

Jerome's eyes are still shut tight. He starts feeling around his body for a bullet wound.

LOUIS
You're alive, jackass. Open your eyes.

Jerome complies.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
If your brother steals my drugs, I'm going to sell you on the black market.

JEROME
From one asshole to another, what in the fuck do you possibly need cash for so badly? Take it from me, whatever the next phase-of-life you're striving for is, no amount of money is gonna make things work the way you think.

LOUIS
Fist of all, shut the fuck up. You're a two-bit drug dealer with a silver tongue. Second of all, you don't know my life.

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO, HIGHWAY REST STOP - NIGHT

Mikey and McKayla, parked in the lot of a bustling rest stop.

MCKAYLA
This is where it goes down?

MIKEY
We're supposed to meet here then caravan to the junk yard.

MCKAYLA
I can't believe you and Jerry started working together. Sounds unbearable. He's just so smug.

MIKEY
You know, desperate times an all that? It's actually been mostly okay though.

MCKAYLA
I find that hard to believe.

MIKEY
He sort of...*apologized*. For back then.

MCKAYLA
Jerome said he was sorry?

MIKEY
Not in so many words. But he did explain to me why he left.

MCKAYLA
What'd he say?

MIKEY
It's heavy. Probably shouldn't be informing you of this the day you get out of prison, but dad had a whole other family. And Jerome went and found out. He didn't wanna have to tell mom. Couldn't face her.

McKayla snorts, attempts to hold back laughter.

MIKEY (CONT'D)
And, just what the fuck is so funny?

MCKAYLA
You think mom didn't know?

MIKEY
Well, wait, *you* knew?

MCKAYLA
Michael, we all knew. Mom wanted to keep it from you. She said you kept dad on too high a pedestal.

MIKEY
What the fuck does that mean?

MCKAYLA
I don't know.

MIKEY
I don't understand.

MCKAYLA
Jerome lied to you, again. Like he always does. Understand that.

MIKEY
He--

MCKAYLA
He left cause he hated dad, and cause he's an asshole. And cause he doesn't care about anybody but himself. Definitely not you, not me, not mom. He's an asshole.

His eyes water.

MCKAYLA (CONT'D)
Don't waste your tears on him, Mikey.

He looks away, embarrassed.

MIKEY
You're right. Fuck it.

MCKAYLA
You always were so sensitive.

MIKEY
You were always cold as ice. Bet you didn't cry one time in the clink. How did you survive that hell hole? We're gonna have to get you a better lawyer, give you a real chance to beat this.

MCKAYLA
Ya know what, it wasn't--

MIKEY
Look.

Up ahead, Louis and Jerome climb out of a blacked out Dodge Charger.

MCKAYLA
That's the psycho cop?

MIKEY
One of 'em, not sure where his buddy is. Jerome might've killed him.

MCKAYLA
*What?* Jerome? Killed him with what?

MIKEY
Chekhov's Gun. We used a code from a Jon Bernthal movie. Was a whole thing. Sweet Virginia, you seen it?

MCKAYLA
Mikey, Jerome can't kill anybody.

MIKEY
You don't get it, Mack. Maybe Jerry is a piece of shit, and a liar, but getting you out was an impossible goal. And he and I did that together. Not to mention, most of the cash we pooled to pay your bail, it was his.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF REST STOP - SAME TIME

Jerome hops out of the front passenger seat, backpack hangs off one shoulder. Louis climbs out from the driver's side.

LOUIS
Hey. Stay close.

JEROME
Where am I gonna go?

LOUIS
Just stay close.

JEROME
C'mon, we're supposed to meet them inside.

INT. REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Fast food joints line the interior. The restrooms are toward the back. The place is bustling.

PEDESTRIANS everywhere.

JEROME
Hey man, I'm gonna go take a piss.

Jerome walks toward the rest room, Louis stops him, grabs him by the backpack.

LOUIS
No the fuck you aren't.

JEROME
I gotta piss, man. C'mon, don't be unreasonable.

LOUIS
Fine, but the brick stays with me.

Jerome lets Louis take the bag.

JEROME
Sure man, say it a little louder why don't ya?

INT. BATHROOM OF REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome washes his hands at the sink. Splashes water on his face, holds his head down to drink from the faucet.

ROGER (O.S.)
Jennings! Pete Jennings, you son of a bitch!

Jerome comes up from the sink, minds his own business, unaware he's being yelled at. He dries his hands.

Roger appears--the dorky, dad-looking, Hawaiian shirt-clad mark, from the beginning of the story...the guy Jerome sold an engine-less car to for 60 grand, cash.

ROGER
You played me, Jennings. I filed a police report and everything. Your goose is cooked compadre.

JEROME
Uhhh, think you got the wrong guy pal.

Jerome brushes past him, exits the bathroom.

INT. REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome approaches Louis, Roger hot on his tail.

ROGER
You, it was you, I know it was you! You conned me. THIS MAN CONNED ME! He's a con artist!

JEROME
Shut the fuck up, man. Seriously. Be reasonable now, just shut up.

They're closing in on Louis.

ROGER
I will not shut up. We're gonna wait right here until the police come. You're a god damn con artist!

LOUIS
Hey, who the fuck is this clown?

JEROME
He's no one, let's go. We'll meet Mikey in the lot.

They head for the exit.

ROGER
I am not no one--

Jerome stops on a dime, turns toward Roger, right before they make it through the exit of the rest stop.

JEROME
(whispers)
Okay, you're right. You got me. I ripped you off, and I'm genuinely sorry about it. To be fair, you're a bit of a fucking moron, and it was far too easy passively convincing you to hand sixty thousand dollars, in cash, to a total stranger. So in a way, maybe you deserved it. But right now, that's beside the point. I am sorry, but if you don't shut your fucking mouth and stop following me, you're going to get us both mur-dured. Understand? *Be reasonable*.

Roger's jaw drops. Jerome exits the rest stop.

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO - SAME TIME

Mikey opens the driver's side door.

MIKEY
Slide over into the driver's seat, incase we need to make a quick getaway.

MCKAYLA
Mikey, what's about to go down?

MIKEY
I have no idea.

Mikey gets out of the car, approaches the Dodge Charger.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome and Louis head back to the car. Louis takes his keys out, unlocks the Charger.

Roger still follows them, but from a slight distance now.

LOUIS
Where's your fucking brother, man?

MIKEY
I'm here. We ready to do this thing?

LOUIS
Yeah, where's this fucking junk yard?

Roger takes his phone out, records Jerome on video.

ROGER
The man you are with is a no-good con artist, sir. He is a liar!

LOUIS
This guy again, what the fuck is this?

Louis slaps the phone out of Roger's hands.

ROGER
Hey! You assaulted me, that's assault! Hey, hey! I've been assault--

Louis draws his handgun, pokes the barrel into the center of Roger's abdomen, knocks the wind out of him.

LOUIS
What the fuck is he talking about, man?

JEROME
He's just some fucking crack head, I have no clue. Honest.

Roger catches his breath with a deep inhale.

ROGER
This man here, introduced himself to me as one Pete Jennings. Probably an alias, a fake name. He sold me a car that didn't work. It was fake. Just a fancy exterior, no engine. A phony.

Louis removes Jerome's backpack, rests it on the hood of the Charger. He takes a knife out of his pocket, opens the bag, cuts open the brick, scoops up some powder with his knife, tastes it.

His face creases with disappointment.

LOUIS
Sonny was right. I *hate* that.

Louis raises his gun, aims it toward Mikey--BANG!

Jerome dives on Mikey, tackles him to the ground.

A shot goes off, no one's hit, a car window shatters in the distance.

Tires SCREECH against concrete.

Mikey's Volvo lurches forward, gains speed rapidly.

Louis turns, aims his gun down toward Jerome and Mikey--

The Volvo hits Louis head-on, T-bones the Charger, pins Louis between the two cars.

INT. MIKEY'S VOLVO - SAME TIME

McKayla's in the driver's seat, emotionless.

She stares through the fractured windshield, Louis, sandwiched between two cars, dies slowly.

After a moment, the airbags burst, crack McKayla in the face.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BLACK SCREEN

Just darkness...and the consistent, slow BEEPS, of the vitals monitor in a hospital room.

The BEEPS speed up, become more lively.

INT. LONG TERM PATIENT WING, HOSPITAL - DAY

Eyelids, once sealed like a coffin, burst open with a flutter. Louis' wife, Jenny, wakes from her coma.

A NURSE in the room approaches her, stunned, waves over a passing DOCTOR.

INT. VISITING ROOM, STATE PRISON - DAY

Jerome and McKayla sit on opposite ends of plexiglass, each holds a telephone up to their ear.

McKayla is clad in an orange jump suit.

JEROME
I just can't help but feel like this was all for nothing. We let you down.

MCKAYLA
I made my own decisions--

JEROME
I'm gonna file an appeal, I know a lawyer or two. They aren't defense attorneys, but they can probably make a recommendation.

MCKAYLA
Jerome--

JEROME
Do you know the name of the Warden? I bet if I hire a private investigator we can dig up some of his skeletons--

MCKAYLA
*Jerry.*

JEROME
What?

MCKAYLA
I'm fine.

JEROME
What does that mean?

MCKAYLA
It means...this is fine...for me. I'm just tired. Out there. I'm tired.

Two broken spirits.

JEROME
Not sure where the hell Mikey is.

MCKAYLA
It's not like him to be late.

JEROME
Think I'm starting to rub off on him a bit.

MCKAYLA
That's not such a bad thing.

JEROME
No?

MCKAYLA
No. He could use a little Jerome in him.

Mikey arrives to the visitors cubicle, ears burning, takes a seat next to Jerome, picks up the other phone.

MIKEY
Sorry I'm late, sis. You hanging in there?

MCKAYLA
I'm hanging. It's not too bad.

Mikey puts his hand up to the glass partition, McKayla meets him there.

Jerome gets up solemnly, walks out.

EXT. OUT FRONT OF STATE PRISON - DAY

Mikey exits the prison, approaches Jerome, who leans against a wall in the parking lot.

MIKEY
What's your problem?

JEROME
Just bugs me to see her in there. Especially after everything we went through to get her out.

MIKEY
I don't like it either, but she seems at peace.

JEROME
That's ridiculous.

Mikey shrugs.

MIKEY
Well...You gonna need a ride?

JEROME
Nah, Tommy's parked over there waiting for me.

MIKEY
Alright, I brought the dope and the E. It's in my trunk.

They walk over toward Mikey's Volvo.

JEROME
You sure about this, Mike? We made a pretty good team, didn't we?

MIKEY
We did, we did. I'm sure though, it's time for me to move on. I'm getting out of the game while I can. I told Brad from Sigma Ki he'd be hearing from you.

JEROME
You're sure you don't wanna rethink our deal again?

Mikey pops the trunk of his Volvo.

MIKEY
Nah, Jerry. I take the cash, you take the drugs. As agreed.

Mikey pulls a duffle bag out of his trunk, swings it into Jerome's chest.

JEROME
Alright then. Just checkin' was all.

MIKEY
Take care of yourself, Jerome.

They dap, embrace for a brotherly hug.

Mikey breaks first, climbs into his car, drives off.

Jerome walks across the lot, carries the duffle bag to a pickup truck, where Tommy waits.

INT. TOMMY'S PICKUP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Jerome gets into the shotgun seat. Tommy puts the truck in drive, exits the lot.

TOMMY
Your sister okay?

JEROME
I don't know, Tommy. I don't know.

TOMMY
You think you'll be able to sell all these drugs without Mikey?

JEROME
He hooked me up wit this guy who deals out of his fraternity house. It's really a no-lose situation, you wouldn't believe it.

TOMMY
Can we maybe have a taste of the goods? Before you sell it all?

JEROME
I don't see why not.

Jerome unzips the duffle bag.

His jaw drops.

TOMMY
What? What's up?

Jerome digs into the duffle, pulls out a handful of sand.

He lets the sand fall between his fingers.

JEROME
Motherfucker.

TOMMY
What? I don't get it.

Jerome laughs.

JEROME
Motherfucker.

TOMMY
I don't get it, Rome. Where are the drugs?

JEROME
Mikey has them.

Jerome scoops up more sand, lets it slip through his grasp.

TOMMY
What do you mean?

JEROME
I mean it looks like we aren't getting into the drug game, my friend.

TOMMY
We're not?

JEROME
No. I'm gonna go back to doing what I do best.

TOMMY
Selling people shit that ain't real?

JEROME
Selling people shit that ain't real.

TOMMY
I got this cousin, yo. Told me all about this credit card fraud he made a killing with, before he got arrested.

JEROME
As promising as that sounds, Tommy, I think we should aim a little smaller, this time around.

TOMMY
Yeah?

JEROME
Something simple, so I can show you the ropes. Ya know, really teach you how to cook an omelette.

TOMMY
An omelette?

JEROME
An omelette.

TOMMY
So, you're not pissed that Mikey ripped you off?

Jerome ponders that a moment.

JEROME
Nah. He was only being reasonable.

**THE END.**