

BRICKTOWN HEROES

screenplay by

Eric Dickson

FADE IN:

EXT. DETROIT RIVER - DUSK

The River Princess tugs along a busy metropolitan riverfront where big city pedestrians jog and walk their dogs. It's a picture perfect sight fit for a postcard.

But it's all down hill from here.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SKYLINE - DUSK

The once symbolic structures of the city's financial prowess and stature: General Motors...The Fisher Building...One Detroit Center...

The heart of the city.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK FORD PLANT - DUSK

A tall set of inoperable smoke stacks stand as a grim reminder of what used to be.

Somewhere in this same neighborhood --

A FADED BILLBOARD

with a ten year old Ford F-150 hovers over a quiet and desolate street: *Built Ford Tough*

EXT. DETROIT PROJECTS - DUSK

A slow and methodical descent into a more depressed part of town where giant brick buildings are left in ruin.

Everything boarded up and long forgotten.

EXT. ABANDONED BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

THE BRIGHT AND BEEMING HEADLIGHTS of dozens of tricked out street racers spotlight TWO FIGHTERS slugging it out near the pitcher's mound.

A large crowd of fleece shirts and shaved heads cheer on the two brawlers: NOOCHIE (19), Hmong descent, short, all muscle and BAD RAY (20s), Korean, tall, long arms.

Bad Ray swats Noochie with a quick ONE-TWO PUNCH.

He stumbles backward...

...into a chain-link fence and to the ground.

Some BOOS and THUMBS DOWN from the crowd. A few of them climb the fence like wild animals.

SPECTATOR

Get up!

Noochie spits some blood. He stares back at --

A smiling Bad Ray throwing a HIGH KICK.

Noochie ducks down as --

Bad Ray KICKS THE FENCE behind him and WHAP! KNOCKS OUT a spectator gripping the chain-link.

The rowdy crowd point and laugh.

Our man on the ground SPITS A TOOTH as...

Bad Ray's shoe catches in the metal hole.

Noochie takes advantage and throws THREE HARD UPPER CUTS into Bad Ray's jewels.

BAD RAY

Motherfff --

High fives. Laughter.

Bad Ray stumbles.

Noochie stands, brushes off some dirt.

Bad Ray's hands still on his balls.

BAD RAY (CONT'D)

Little piece a sh --

...and before he can finish...

Noochie KICKS IN HIS LEG.

The crowd ERUPTS.

Noochie circles Bad Ray like a hungry shark as the battered champ gathers himself.

Bad Ray stands...super pissed, grits his teeth, charges Noochie head on as --

Noochie SPINS OUT OF THE WAY and returns with an awesome ROUNDHOUSE KICK.

Blood sprays. Out cold. Done.

The crowd goes nuts as cash goes hand to hand and the braggarts beat their chests.

A STRETCH LIMOUSINE

Creeps out of the darkness and into the center mound of this decaying field. Out steps --

JIMMY "THE JUMBO" MAGNUS (20s), six foot two, mulatto, bare knuckle champ. An uglier and meaner Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson but with the street cred to back it up.

Jimmy's right arm in a sling. Presumably a recent fight injury. He eyes the hostile crowd. Not one ounce of fear in his cold eyes.

SPECTATOR #2

Jumbo's here, bro.

An expensive Italian leather shoe steps from the back door of the stretch limo, stomps the clay. A long and pricey cigar drops...

Out steps --

MICHAEL VANDROSKI (40s), spiked gray hair, diamond earring, flash suit. He is all confidence and struts with a cocky swagger toward Noochie.

VANDROSKI

Nice kick. That makes what for you? Eight knock outs and one draw?

Noochie looks confused. He checks with the crowd who are just as clueless.

NOOCHIE

Nine.

VANDROSKI

That's right. Nine. I must've missed that one. Pretty impressive.

Vandroski offers him a Cubano.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Cigar?

NOOCHIE

I don't smoke that shit.

VANDROSKI

Right. Gotta keep those lungs clean if you're gonna be champ one day.

(to Jimmy)

Ain't that right, Jimbo?

Jimmy is strangely quiet and stares back at Noochie with cold menace in his eyes.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Don't mind, Jimmy. He's had a bad night. Just like your friend Ray over here.

NOOCHIE

Hell happened to him?

VANDROSKI

What happens to all of us. He went up against the wrong man. A guy about your size. Jimmy didn't even see it coming.

Vandroski turns to Jimmy who looks away in shame. The hate still brewing on his face.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

You see, anyone can be beat. It's not about size. It's about heart. And you got it, kid. You got it big time.

Noochie and Jimmy lock eyes. Jimmy fights the urge to kill him right then and there.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

You see, Jimmy here just lost his head for awhile. Forgot what it was like to be hungry. Like you and your friends.

NOOCHIE

You been watching me, man?

Vandroski struts across the old field like he owns it.

VANDROSKI

Of course. I follow all the greats.

The crowd of spectators grow curious and enter the abandoned ball field. Jimmy's long and piercing stare keeps them from getting too close.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Gotta nice following here. Good crowd. Everybody chanting your name. Sounds good, doesn't it?

NOOCHIE  
Yeah, so what?

VANDROSKI  
So how would you like that crowd to be twice as big?

Noochie watches the crowd. All eyes on him.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Or even five times as big? And about ten times the cash.

NOOCHIE  
The hell you talkin' about, man?

VANDROSKI  
Come take a ride with me and my friends and I'll show you.

Noochie checks with his homeboys, ready to scrap at the snap of a finger.

Vandroski pulls an envelope from his coat pocket.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Fifteen hundred. Cash. Just to take a ride and hear me out.

Noochie all but drools on the envelope. And so does the onlooking crowd who step closer.

Jimmy flashes a nine mil stuffed in his belt. The crowd come to a swift halt.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Spectators, street brawlers and gamblers gather on the roof of this multi-story parking structure.

The BRIGHT CITY LIGHTS of Downtown hover over the proceedings while the HEADLIGHTS of dozens of cars spotlight the center space of the roof.

CHALO (20s), a shirtless, brutish Latino banger paces the concrete like an uncaged animal. He's ready to take someone's head off.

One of his homeboys walks to the edge of the roof and peeks over the side: A POLICE CRUISER barrels down a side street with cherries flashing.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Vandroski and Noochie step from the limo and approach a long line of gamblers with cash in hand. The line so long it twists a corner and ends on a sloping ramp.

Taking all the cash bets from the back seat of a freshly waxed Hummer is Vandroski's business partner JUAN WILLIS (30s), half Latino, black, all hustler.

Juan is always the flashiest and best dressed in the crowd. But that's not saying much.

JUAN

Let's go, let's go. We ain't got time for no last minute shit. You know the rules. Time is money. Put your money where your mouth is or get the hell out.

Juan gives Vandroski a sly wink. Vandroski smiles. Noochie watches the exchange and looks clueless.

VANDROSKI

A lot of our customers have a nasty habit of switching teams just minutes before the fight. These people can make life very aggravating.

Vandroski points at Juan at the head of the line and poking his head out a back window as he keeps the cash moving quickly and efficiently.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Unlike a prize fight, where you bet on your guy's record, our customers bet on word of mouth. Word of mouth can be a very powerful thing if utilized properly.

NOOCHIE

How's that?

Vandroski smiles. He points over at Jimmy near the front of the line and keeping a careful eye on things.

VANDROSKI

Take a look at Jumbo over there. Now, he was supposed to win tonight. Why? Because he's the best. Because he fought some punk from the projects no one's ever heard of before. Turns out this punk was a fifth degree black belt who'd been studying since he was old enough to crawl.

NOOCHIE

That shit's crazy.

VANDROSKI

Jimmy lost the same reason most of these guys lose. They underestimate their opponent.

Noochie nods as he slowly comes around.

NOOCHIE

Okay. I think I understand.

VANDROSKI

Good. Come on. The crowd's waiting.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Chalo dances around like a clown, shows off like a pumped up idiot as the crowd eggs him on. Lots of shaved heads and tattoos on this roof.

CROWD

CHA-LO! CHA-LO! CHA-LO! CHA-LO!

Vandroski grabs Noochie by the arm as they lose themselves in the large crowd. A FLASHY CAR with a glowing florescent undercarriage drifts through the middle of the screaming spectators and splits them into two lines.

Out steps Jimmy, arm in the sling. And from the driver's side steps his pal DEMITRI (20s), NFL jersey, ball cap, flash bling, all attitude.

DEMITRI

Yo, yo! Check this out! Wassup!

Demitri holds up an envelope of THREE THOUSAND CASH as the crowd boos him and Jimmy.

DEMITRI (CONT'D)

Yo, I got three k! Three thousand says my boy eats this punk's lunch within three minutes!

CHALO

Yo, isn't one ass beatin' enough for one night?

DEMITRI

Lucky, man. Nothing but luck. And you know you got lucky. Or maybe you ain't got the money.

CHALO

Yeah, I got the money. I got your money. Maybe he forgot. Hit this nigga so hard he got brain damage or something.

An angry Jimmy makes a move. Chalo's boys form a wall of nothing but jailhouse tatts and muscle. A burning hatred welling in their eyes.

CHALO'S BOY #2

You better hold it right there, home boy.

Juan pushes his way to the center of the action.

JUAN

HEY! Knock this shit off! Everybody get back!

Chalo and crew don't flinch. Jimmy smiles back at them. An all too confident grin.

JUAN (CONT'D)

(to Demitri)

These people came here to see a fight. You fools wanna throw down, take it outside. Otherwise, place your bet with the house like everyone else.

DEMITRI

I don't want your money, Juan. I want this fool's money.

CHALO

You got a big mouth, homey.

Chalo makes a move but he's held back by his crew.

CHALO'S GUY #1  
Save it, man. Save it for this  
fool over here.

CHALO'S GUY #2  
That's right.

CHALO  
Alright. You asked for it, man.  
Three thousand. I could use the  
extra money.

Vandroski pushes his way to the front.

VANDROSKI  
How about six thousand?

CHALO  
You crazy or something? This  
fool's arm is busted. Couldn't  
beat me with two arms. How he  
gonna beat me with one?

VANDROSKI  
No no. Not him.

Vandroski points into the crowd at Noochie.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Him.

Chalo and his crew laugh. The rest of the crowd joins in  
their laughter.

Noochie doesn't think it's funny. He puts on his best tough  
guy act but inside he's scared shitless.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
You win, you get six grand cash  
plus your cut of the house. Right  
here, right now.

Chalo grins back at Noochie who can barely look the cocky  
cage fighter in the eye.

CHALO  
This gonna be easier than I  
thought.

VANDROSKI

But I know you boys are still small time. I'll understand if you can't cover that kind of action.

CHALO

Don't need to, vato.

His crew laughs ever harder.

JUAN

You know the rules. Can you cover the six k or what? We ain't got all night, man. Your people are waiting.

Chalo checks with the crowd. All of them strangely quiet and awaiting his answer. Chalo loses his cocky grin as the severity of the situation sinks in.

VANDROSKI

Tell you what. Since you don't have the cash, we'll just take that nice shiny car of yours and call it a day.

Chalo isn't so sure. He turns one last time to his tricked out ice blue Hyundai Genesis.

Juan shakes his head.

JUAN

(to himself)  
Lord help me.

Juan turns to Chalo.

JUAN (CONT'D)

What's it gonna be, champ? We gonna see a fight tonight or what?

CHALO

Let's do it.

The crowd explodes as they all run for the down ramp toward Juan's black Hummer. Juan and Vandroski share a smile. Noochie scared to death.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Juan back in the back seat of his Hummer as he's flooded with new bets. The line stretches the length of the garage and down another ramp.

## MONTAGE OF VARIOUS CUSTOMERS

CUSTOMER #1

A hundred on Chalo.

CUSTOMER #2

Two hundred on Chalo. KO.

CUSTOMER #3

Gimme five hundred on Chalo to win,  
baby.

CUSTOMER #4

Chalo...

CUSTOMER #5

Chalo...

CUSTOMER #6

Chalo, all the way.

Noochie watches, arms folded, back rested on the limousine.  
Vandroski rubs his shoulders.

VANDROSKI

Come on, champ. Gotta get you  
ready.

Noochie is nervous and shuffles his feet. He can't stand  
still for a second.

NOOCHIE

I don't know about this.

VANDROSKI

You want out of the hood or not?

NOOCHIE

Yeah, man.

VANDROSKI

You want things in this life, you  
gotta take it. You like his car,  
right? I saw the way you were  
eyeballing it.

NOOCHIE

Yeah, man.

VANDROSKI

Then go get it. Because there's  
people in this world who'll take  
everything you got if you let them.

(MORE)

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

They'll take you to the cleaners  
and leave you bleeding in the  
streets. It's you verses the  
world. Remember that.

Noochie paces in a circle, gets pumped up for the fight as  
Vandroski's words affect him.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

You want this prick's car and his  
girl, then go take them. Cause  
he'll sure as shit take everything  
you got. It's him or you. Him or  
you.

On the spot, Noochie's face turns pure vicious.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Chalo has Noochie in a tight headlock and punches him dead in  
the nose like he owns him.

Noochie falls. BLOOD SPILLS.

Chalo raises an arm, smiles as if he's already won. The  
place goes bananas.

But somehow Vandroski is all confidence as he exchanges  
smiles with an equally collected Juan.

Noochie barely stands. Nothing but BOOS and profanities from  
the hostile crowd.

Chalo checks with Jimmy, who uses his bad arm to throw a none  
too obvious hand signal.

Juan notices and smiles.

CHALO

(to Noochie)

Come on!!! Come and get it!

Noochie checks with Vandroski.

VANDROSKI

Go after him!

Noochie pumps himself up, dances on his toes, throws a couple  
KICKS at Chalo who takes both swats.

Noochie DROPS TO THE GROUND...

...and in a complicated SPIN MOVE...uses his legs to trip up Chalo...

...and down he goes.

Noochie LOCKS ON TO HIS LEGS. With Chalo unable to break free or move at all --

Noochie PUNCHES HIM with unrelenting menace...over and over again...

Juan mercifully pulls him off.

Chalo is done. His face turned into an expressionist painting of pain and anguish.

Juan raises Noochie's hand in the air.

JUAN

Winner!

The crowd all curse and throw beers and other trash at the feet of the unknown street fighter.

Vandroski applauds, throws a thumbs up to Noochie who's barely broken a sweat and confused by it all.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

All of the rowdy spectators and their flash rides are long gone while one lone SUV is parked across from Juan's black Hummer and Vandroski's limo.

Vandroski has his arm around a tired Noochie. A celebratory cigar in both of their mouths.

Juan greets them halfway while Jimmy squats on the trunk of the limo and watches.

JUAN

(to Noochie)

Congratulations, champ.

NOOCHIE

Yeah, thanks.

JUAN

(to Vandroski)

Cutter's here. In the backseat. He wants to talk.

VANDROSKI

You offer him the new deal?

JUAN

He's a stubborn old man. If you ask me, this one's trouble we don't need.

VANDROSKI

It's a good thing I didn't ask you then.

A flash Audi speeds up the ramp and comes to a swift halt in front of Vandroski and Noochie. A couple HIGH PRICED CALL GIRLS step out, ready to party.

Noochie checks out the goods.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

For you. Go out and have yourselves a good time tonight. You earned it.

Vandroski slaps his new protege on the back.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Good start, champ. But this is only the beginning. Remember that.

Noochie smiles ear to ear. He joins the girls in the Audi as the three of them barrel down the ramp and blast RAP MUSIC from a three thousand dollar stereo.

Vandroski joins Juan and Jimmy in the limo.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Vandroski and Juan sit across from Jimmy and local dojo operator WILLIAM "BILL" CUTTER (50s), gray crew cut, chiseled face.

Jimmy stares him down but Cutter is a true old school hard ass who doesn't scare easy.

CUTTER

I see you busted your new kid's cherry tonight. Some fast cash, a new ride and he's all yours. Brilliant throwing in the Genesis. Almost as if you knew that kid didn't have a car.

VANDROSKI

I do my homework, Mister Cutter. Just like any good businessman.

(MORE)

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

How do you think I found out you were the best? Because it's my job. Because I'm the best at what I do. We got a lot in common, me and you.

CUTTER

We don't have shit in common.

VANDROSKI

No need to be so hostile, Mister Cutter. We're all friends here.

CUTTER

Tell me. How much did that cholo take for dropping like a bag of bricks? He just cost his home boys a lot of money. Surprised they didn't rip him to pieces.

VANDROSKI

Mister Cutter, are you suggesting that I fix fights? Never.

Jimmy and Juan laugh.

Cutter holds up a newspaper headline: GANG WAR RAGES ON

CUTTER

Couldn't help but notice three of the names under this picture used to work for you.

VANDROSKI

Haven't you heard? Life's hard on these streets. Most of these kids will never make it out of here alive. That's why they come to guys like you and me. We offer them a chance out of this dump. A chance to be great. You and me...we're the same.

CUTTER

Until they get pinched by the cops. Then you cut your losses.

Jimmy makes a tight fist for Cutter. The two large men exchange their hardest stares.

VANDROSKI

Careful, Mister Cutter. You're making my associates nervous.

CUTTER  
Is that a threat?

VANDROSKI  
I don't wanna threaten you, Mister Cutter. We need you. Recruiting new fighters is starting to become a hazardous job out here. With your name involved, we can let them come to us.

CUTTER  
I train champions. I give these kids a way out and you want me to line them up like lambs to the slaughter.

VANDROSKI  
This isn't about making champions. This is about making money. Of which you still owe me.

Cutter looks away. A sensitive subject.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
I'm giving you a way to work it off. And on top of that, make us both a lot of money. Given your current position, I figured you'd jump all over the chance.

Cutter ponders the difficult decision as his eyes dance with careful thought. He finally comes around, and with a sharp and unflinching stare, he gives his answer.

CUTTER  
You thought wrong.

Vandroski checks with partners Jimmy and Juan. A silent exchange that speaks volumes.

VANDROSKI  
Understood. Well then. In case you change your mind, here's a little something to help you think it over.

Vandroski hands him a thick envelope of cash. Cutter stares at it with lust in his eyes.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Great. In that case, we'll be in touch.

Cutter hops out. Jimmy watches him like a focused hawk locking in on its prey.

JIMMY

I don't like him. He's not scared of me. Everyone's scared of me.

VANDROSKI

Don't worry, Jimmy. It's all under control.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - NIGHT

Cutter unlocks the front door, enters the dark and spacious dojo, walks to an office near the front end.

He FLICKS ON THE LIGHT SWITCH.

INT. CUTTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Cutter stands by the door. All crapped out.

A stack of bills and other unopened mail have piled up on Cutter's broken down desk with three good legs and one propped up by the white pages.

Several opened letters are face up on the cluttered and almost unrecognizable desk. All of them read COLLECTION AGENCY and FINAL NOTICE.

On this same desk sits a family portrait of him, wife DENISE (50s) and son CLAY (18) at Clay's high school graduation.

Cutter smiles as he walks to a second larger picture hanging proudly on the office wall.

A photo of him and Clay in MICHIGAN TAEKWONDO windbreakers. A large crowd sit in some gymnasium bleachers behind them. A college tournament of sorts.

SERIES OF PHOTOS

Clay (6) in karate class.

Clay (14) fighting in a tournament.

Clay (18) wins a first place medal and holds it high in the air with an ear to ear grin.

Cutter cracks a proud smile as he stares down at the envelope of cash in hand. He opens a desk drawer and stuffs it inside, locks the drawer with a key.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, TRAINING DOJO - DAY

The entire Tae Kwon Do University team are on their knees and on a giant floormat. They keep quiet as CHRISTOPHER "CLAY" CUTTER (21), handsome and lean, stands before instructor MASTER LEE HENSON (50s), sharp eyes, shaved head.

CLAY

I'm here because, if I weren't, I'd probably be dead. I'm here because I owe it to my family. To my father, who expected so much less but got more than he could've ever bet on.

Clay reflects back.

CLAY (CONT'D)

When I was a kid, I used to think that greatness was measured by how deep your pockets went. My father taught me that greatness wasn't measured by what other people thought of you. Greatness is a state of mind. It's a choice of how to live your life. My father taught me that greatness starts with discipline. With respect.

Clay refocuses, stares at Master Henson.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I'm here because I love my mother and father. And for what they put up with. Because I know it was a lot.

INT. UNIVERSITY GYMNASIUM - TOURNAMENT - DAY

Clay is now in full protective gear and circles his opponent on a large fighting mat. A stealthy referee moves with them and around them.

Watching from the almost full bleachers is HAILEY BROCK (19) blonde, girl next door. The pumped up crowd cheer on their team as Hailey stays focused on --

CLAY. He DODGES A KICK and strikes his opponent behind the neck: a winning point.

REFEREE

Winner!

The referee raises Clay's hand as Clay catches eyes with his biggest fan Hailey. She quickly looks away, nervously flips her hair, hurries down the steps.

Straight for the door.

Clay watches her duck out.

EXT. GYMNASIUM - COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Clay crashes through the double doors, now in regular street clothes. He pushes through a crowd of passing students carrying book bags.

A slew of his fans cheer and applaud. Clay gives them a quick wave hello as he stares in all directions.

HAILEY (O.S.)

You looking for someone?

Clay turns and spots Hailey on a bench. A short stack of books in her hands.

Clay smiles and heads over.

CLAY

I didn't mean to scare you back there. Just saying hello.

HAILEY

Scare me? Boy, you really are the cocky one, aren't you?

CLAY

Yeah, well. Like the man said, there's no room for fear in the ring. Or in life.

HAILEY

Christopher Clayton Cutter. Vitamin C. You really are your father's son, aren't you?

CLAY

Vitamin C. Haven't heard that since I was ten.

HAILEY

You don't remember me. I guess it has been awhile. Second grade. Your father's class.

(MORE)

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I kicked your ass twice, and to this day, your Dad still doesn't let you forget it.

Clay's jaw drops.

CLAY

Hailey Brock.

HAILEY

Very good.

CLAY

Well. Hailey. Being that you've been to my last three matches, you're either looking for a hot date or a rematch.

(smiles)

So which is it?

Hailey blushes, cracks a grin, stares at her feet in shame.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR - NIGHT

Clay and Hailey chomp a couple of fully loaded hot dogs from a street vendor as the two stroll the sidewalks of this quaint and vibrant college town.

Lots of BLUE AND YELLOW and UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN banners hanging in strip shop windows.

The two young students pass under the glowing marquee of the historic STATE THEATER. It proudly boasts the title CONGRATULATIONS CLAY.

With a silly grin, Clay spots the sign as Hailey passes without noticing.

FAN (O.S.)

What's up, Cutter???

Without looking back, Clay throws a wave hello.

HAILEY

So my Mom thought it was best to move back home after Dad passed. She could be with her sisters and I could be with my cousins. It would all be a nice distraction from reality.

Hailey shakes her head.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Truth was, she didn't do anything for two years but cry on my Aunt's couch and slip further into depression. You see, it's easy to do that when you don't have bills and rent to worry about. Didn't take long before her lack of interest in life started taking a toll on everyone.

CLAY

Is that when you moved back?

Hailey shrugs at the thought.

HAILEY

Back home? Don't know if you've noticed or not but the old neighborhood isn't exactly the best cure for depression.

CLAY

Good point.

HAILEY

My Aunt help get my mother through nursing school. Ended up taking a job at a hospital back in Lansing where she grew up. Same place my Grandma worked as a PA for some twenty five years.

Clay nods.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Moved up there during summer break. Finished my senior year there. And...here I am.

CLAY

So everything's okay now?

HAILEY

Yeah, more or less. Still misses my Dad. It's only been three years. Him dying, us moving, changing jobs and starting over. It's been a rough few years.

CLAY

Ya know, you've spent the last two hours talking about your family and nothing about you. It's like you couldn't be less enthused.

Hailey stares at the ground, hides a smile. A sore subject to say the least.

HAILEY

Let's just say I'm in a transitional phase.

CLAY

Like what kind?

HAILEY

Like the kind where I haven't decided what to do with my life. Fair enough?

CLAY

In other words, you don't wanna talk about it.

HAILEY

Let's just say, I've got some serious decisions to make. It's a lot to get into right now. Maybe when I get to know you better.

CLAY

You plan on getting to know me?

Clay and Hailey stop, face each other.

HAILEY

It depends. Are you a nice guy?

Clay cracks a shit eating grin.

INT. CLAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clay and Hailey lay in bed, under the covers and undressed. It's the middle of the night. Clay sound asleep. Hailey opens her eyes, stares up at the ceiling with a real sick look about her.

She turns to Clay.

HAILEY

Are you awake?

Clay grunts.

HAILEY (CONT'D)  
I need to talk to you about something.

Clay rolls over. Gives her a weird look.

CLAY  
Oh yeah? About what?

HAILEY  
About us. About how we met. About a lot. And I need you to not get upset. I need you to promise me you won't freak.

CLAY  
Something tells me I'm not gonna be able to keep that promise.

Hailey notices Clay's phone GLOWING IN THE DARK.

HAILEY  
Expecting a call?

Clay checks his phone. It lights up like a Christmas tree.

CLAY  
What the hell. It's Two in the morning.

Clay grabs it, reads a couple of texts. Hailey quietly watches his reaction.

Clay's feet hit the carpet. He stands, steps into a corner with a sincere sadness about him.

HAILEY  
Clay, what is it?

EXT. CEMETERY - DETROIT, MI - DAY

Clay and Hailey stand side by side at his father's funeral. Up front sits Clay's mother DENISE CUTTER (50s), tired housewife, runny mascara.

Clay puts his arm around his baby sister KRISTI (14), fast talking spitfire and a real handful. She's the spitting image of her mother at that age.

TWO MARINES fold the AMERICAN FLAG as a bugle boy plays TAPS.

Hailey stares across the casket at A BLONDE WOMAN standing on the other side. She's in her fifties and donning wide black shades which disguise her face.

She keeps her eyes down as if too ashamed to make eye contact with the family. She steels a quick glance at Hailey who watches her with disdain.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The friends and family of William "Bill" Cutter line up at a refreshments table covered with cheap cold cuts and half empty bottles of booze.

The room is tight and cramped and beginning to disappear under the fog of cigarette smoke.

A coughing Denise waves through the air and carries an empty tray toward the kitchen. A sad and emotionally deflated Clay watches from a corner love seat.

Hailey returns from the bathroom.

CLAY

I'm gonna go check on her.

HAILEY

Of course. Go ahead.

Clay heads for the kitchen. Hailey throws a glance out the front window and catches eyes with the mystery blonde, standing on the patio: drinking, staring aimlessly into the street, broken hearted.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Denise cries and scrubs down some dirty plates in the sink. Clay quietly steps up behind her.

DENISE

Careful, son. You might give someone a heart attack.

Clay cracks a half-hearted grin.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Sorry. Bad joke.

Denise grabs a half empty bottle and takes a seat at a breakfast nook, pours herself a glass of wine.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Think I'll hide in here for awhile  
before I die of lung cancer.

CLAY

Couldn't help but notice that stack  
of unpaid bills in the hallway.  
Anything I need to know about?

DENISE

Your father loved you. Both you  
kids. In a lot of ways, he was a  
great man. But he wasn't perfect.  
Far from perfect.

CLAY

None of us are.

DENISE

You know, he had a chance to turn  
things around. Sell the business  
and get out from under but he was  
too proud. Not too proud to take  
out loans from gangsters and  
criminals though. But what does he  
do with that? He blows it all on  
football and cards and whatever the  
hell other horseshit idea he could  
to save his precious gym.

CLAY

What are you talking about, Mom?

DENISE

I'm talking about it's gone! All  
of it! Our savings, retirement,  
everything! He pissed it all away  
and up and died on us! Your  
father's left nothing behind but  
debt!

Clay shuts his eyes, paces the floor in a tired slump.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Two months ago he got an offer on  
the gym. Not only did they wanna  
keep his name on the building, they  
wanted to keep him on as head  
instructor. It was a win win. But  
he turned them down.

Denise laughs.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
 Can you believe it? We're flat broke and he turns them down.

CLAY  
 There had to be more to it than that, Mom. Dad had to have his reasons.

DENISE  
 Yeah. Pride. Pure, pigheaded pride.

Denise slumps in her chair, full of tears and pent of rage. Clay wraps an arm around her neck.

EXT. CUTTER HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DUSK

Clay and Hailey step outside and down the front steps while Clay's patted on the shoulder left and right. He smiles politely as friends share their condolences.

TODD RAIMI (20s), tall, strong, a fresh black eye, greets his old childhood friend.

RAIMI  
 How you holding up, champ?

CLAY  
 Better than you.

Clay reaches for his friend's bruised eye. Raimi pulls away.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
 What's that all about?

RAIMI  
 Nothing. Got into a little something yesterday. Don't worry about it.

Clay laughs it off.

CLAY  
 I can see some things never change.

RAIMI  
 Are you surprised?

CLAY  
 Not at all.

Raimi eyes up Hailey.

RAIMI  
(to Hailey)  
Look at you. Can't believe you're  
back. You're actually here.

HAILEY  
I know, right? Crazy.

RAIMI  
It feels just like old times around  
here. If only Master Bill could  
see us all now.

CLAY  
Probably still be shaking his head  
in disappointment.

RAIMI  
Yeah, probably. Can't say that  
about you though. Full ride to  
Michigan. Captain of your team.  
Four straight tournament wins. Got  
life by the ass.

CLAY  
Almost.

RAIMI  
Yeah. Sorry. My bad, brother. I  
was just saying how proud he  
would've been.

CLAY  
I know what you meant.

RAIMI  
Hailey, could I borrow him for a  
sec?

HAILEY  
Just bring him back.

RAIMI  
I'll try.

Hailey heads up the steps and onto the porch where she's  
greeted by the mystery blonde.

Raimi walks Clay toward the side of the house for a quick  
second alone. He checks over his shoulder to see if  
they're being watched.

And they are. Lots of the older crowd, mostly men, take an  
interest in the high-strung Raimi.

RAIMI (CONT'D)

Hey, look. I didn't wanna say anything earlier. But I've been hearing some rumors. About your old man.

CLAY

Hell are you talking about?

RAIMI

Like maybe he didn't die of natural causes.

CLAY

Who told you this? You know something?

RAIMI

Look. All I know is he owed some money to some pretty heavy hitters. The kind that don't make house calls if you know what I mean.

CLAY

I know about my father and his football debts. It was enough to give anyone a heart attack.

RAIMI

Yeah, maybe, maybe not.

CLAY

Well what else was it? Someone yell Boo really loud?

RAIMI

Come with me to the dojo tonight and I'll show you.

Clay peeks around the house at Hailey waiting patiently on a porch swing. The mystery blonde woman stands over her as the two are in mid discussion.

Hailey turns to Clay. An awkward smile. The mystery blonde grows a bit nervous and heads inside.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - NIGHT

Clay and Raimi take a stroll through the back room where they keep the weights and hanging bags.

Impressive poster sized photos of the once great Bill Cutter in his prime, covered in medals and throwing opponents left and right, decorate the cracked walls.

Raimi stops at a free weight bench press.

RAIMI

This is where they found him the next morning.

CLAY

Yeah, I know, Todd. My mother told me all about it on the phone in between crying her eyes out.

RAIMI

Yeah, but you didn't hear why he was here at One Thirty in the morning. Or why he was trying to press Two Eighty Five eight months after having open heart surgery.

Clay ponders this.

CLAY

I don't know why. I guess he could've been meeting somebody.

RAIMI

Right. But who? And why?

Clay slowly comes around.

CLAY

What do you know about these people he owed money too?

RAIMI

I don't. I just know he was in over his head. Everyone in town with a pair of eyes and two ears knew he was in trouble.

Clay walks to the weight bench. He caresses it with his hand as if to channel his father's spirit.

CLAY

They said his heart just gave out and dropped the bar on his chest. The weight crushed his windpipe.

RAIMI

Or maybe it was someone else.

INT. CUTTER'S OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

Clay finds the lock on his father's feeble desk drawer has been broken into, runs a finger over chipped wood.

Raimi has one leg in and one out as he keeps a close eye on the front door.

CLAY  
Somebody was looking for something.

RAIMI  
You find something?

CLAY  
The drawer. Someone broke it open.

Clay slumps down in his father's old chair. He rocks back and forth, thinking, pondering.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
He could've done this himself.  
Like he lost his key or something.

RAIMI  
You don't believe that.

CLAY  
No. I don't.

Clay sighs with frustration.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
I don't know, bud. Right now, I can't even think straight.

RAIMI  
Come on. I just got an idea.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - MINI MALL - LATE NIGHT

Clay and Raimi exit the store. Both of them carry twenty four packs of beer.

RAIMI  
You think we bought enough?

CLAY  
I don't know. I guess we'll know when we run out.

Raimi laughs. The two are almost to Raimi's Z28 Camaro when THREE THUGS appear between the parked cars and block them from going further.

THUG #1  
Yo, man. You gotta match?

RAIMI  
Nah, man. No match. No lighter.

THUG #2  
What else you got?

The three thugs share a laugh.

THUG #3  
What's the matter? Never seen  
Death Wish?

CLAY  
You guys wanna step out of the way?

THUG #1  
I gotta better idea. How about you  
two bust out those wallets.

THUG #2  
And the keys too while you're at  
it.

Raimi and Clay share a quick smile.

RAIMI  
Sure thing, fellas. At least let  
us keep the beers.

THUG #3  
Sure, man. It's your lucky night.

Raimi takes two steps forward, sets the case of beer on the asphalt before him.

Clay sets his beer on top of the first case.

THUG #1  
Yo, wassup with these white boys,  
man?

THUG #2  
No doubt.

Clay takes a step back, runs and jumps on the stack of beers and *springs himself* into the air --

WHAP! A perfect HIGH KICK to Thug #1's face.

BLOOD spews. Down he goes.

THUG #2 (CONT'D)

Oh, shit!

Thugs #2 and #3 charge the two friends.

Raimi KNEES his attacker in the crotch and THROWS HIM TO THE GROUND while --

Clay blocks the other's punch...twists his arm...and pounds him with several hard blows to his back.

And then a swift KICK IN THE ASS.

To the pavement. But he quickly regroups...stands...

THUG #3

What else you got, bitch?

CLAY

Come and find out.

Thug #3 charges Clay who ROUNDHOUSE KICKS HIM IN THE JAW.

The thug stumbles backward, trips over the two cases of beer and face plants.

BLOOD and SPIT spray the lot. Raimi jumps out of the way as his hundred dollar sneakers get wet.

RAIMI

Shit.

Raimi picks him back up...shoves him toward Clay...

...who finishes him with a DOUBLE ROUNDHOUSE.

Out cold. Done. Raimi claps his hands.

RAIMI (CONT'D)

Nice going.

CLAY

I think we broke the beer.

All three thugs curl up in pain.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Clay and Raimi stand before a hopping mad Denise as they take their ass chewing.

DENISE  
A fight! A drunken brawl in a  
parking lot no less!

KRISTI  
Come on, Mom. At least they won.  
(to Clay)  
How about it, Clay? Did you get in  
that ass?

RAIMI  
Hell yeah he did.

KRISTI  
Tight.

CLAY  
(to Raimi)  
Stop doing me favors, okay?

DENISE  
(to Raimi)  
Yeah, no kidding.

Denise turns to Kristi, furious.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
(to Kristi)  
And watch your mouth! Shit!

KRISTI  
(whispers)  
Have a fucking cow.

Kristi gives up, heads for the stairs.

DENISE  
(to Kristi)  
What did you say to me?!

Halfway up the stairs, Kristi turns --

KRISTI  
Nothing. I said I love you, Mommy.  
And goodnight.

She stomps up the steps.

CLAY  
We weren't drinking.

RAIMI  
Not yet.

Clay slaps Raimi's arm.

RAIMI (CONT'D)  
Ouch. Cut it out.

FROM THE FRONT PORCH

Hailey leans her head in the open front window. Without warning, Denise catches her eavesdropping.

DENISE  
(to Hailey)  
Do you mind? Family conference.

HAILEY  
Sorry.

Hailey quickly faces forward.

DENISE  
Do you know what would happen to your scholarship if the cops got involved? On top of everything. With all the stress we're dealing with, you're gonna go and get into a fight! You haven't been in a fight since you were seventeen!

CLAY  
Technically it was self defense.

DENISE  
That's not what I heard. You forget this is a small neighborhood?

RAIMI  
It won't happen again, Mrs. Cutter. I'm gonna keep a close eye on him. No worries.

DENISE  
That's what I'm afraid of.  
(to Clay)  
You're going back to school.

CLAY

Don't you think that's for me to  
decide?

DENISE

I'm not letting you come back here  
so you can turn into a drunken  
loser and ruin your life. Forget  
it.

Denise fights her tears, grabs a clothes basket and heads for  
the laundry room.

LAUNDRY ROOM

Denise angrily yanks out the contents of the dryer and throws  
them in her basket with little care. A jumbled and wrinkled  
mess of mixed colors.

Clay ducks his head in.

CLAY

Don't know if you noticed but we  
don't have any money.

DENISE

I've been taking care of this house  
for twenty five years. I think I  
can handle the job.

Kristi turns the corner, peeks her head in.

KRISTI

Hey, Mom? Almost forgot.

DENISE

What???

Kristi, shocked by the outburst.

KRISTI

Nothing. Never mind. Everything's  
perfect. Fuck it.

Kristi ducks out.

Denise hangs her head, lays her tired hands on the dryer.

DENISE

If I wasn't so tired I'd wash out  
her mouth with soap.

CLAY

Look. I was just thinking. You and Dad still have some pull with channel eight. Maybe with the right publicity and some support from the University, we could maybe do like a Kickstarter campaign or a fundraiser even. With Todd's help we could re build the dojo. Start bringing in some new meat. Not just neighborhood kids who's broke parents can't split the bill.

DENISE

Honestly, Clay, the only thing that could save that place now is a miracle.

CLAY

How much money are we talking about?

IN THE HALLWAY

Kristi hides on the other side of the wall, listens in on their conversation.

DENISE (O.S.)

Don't you understand what's happening here, Clay? It's no longer safe for you there.

Kristi looks shocked. This is all news to her.

LAUNDRY ROOM

And so does Clay. He moves closer to Denise.

CLAY

Hell are you saying?

DENISE

I'm saying your father's name may be on the building but it no longer belongs to us.

CLAY

Mom, who are these people?

DENISE

Let's just say, for the sake of this family's safety, the next time we get an offer on the dojo I'm taking it.

CLAY

Dad was supposed to leave me the dojo. That was the plan.

DENISE

Your Dad was supposed to do a lot of things. But we got dealt a different hand and now we have to deal with it.

Clay leans on the dryer, looking spent.

CLAY

Okay. You want me to deal with things, I'll deal with them. Right now, Kristi needs her brother. And you need help. I'm staying. End of discussion. Dad would've wanted it that way.

Denise wilts in defeat and nods in agreement.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Todd can get me a gig parking cars at the restaurant. Uncle Jerry already said I can come back to the garage any time I wanted. We'll make it work. Whatever it takes.

EXT. CUTTER HOUSE - STREET CURB - DAY

Hailey loads her suitcase in the back of her car as Clay stuffs his hands in his pockets.

HAILEY

I'm gonna visit my Mom for a bit before heading back. I guess I'll see you in a few days?

CLAY

About that. I'm not coming back.

Hailey isn't exactly shocked by this news.

HAILEY

He's not coming back, you know?

CLAY

Yeah, I noticed.

HAILEY

So why come back now? After all you've accomplished. You know that's not what he'd want.

CLAY

Because they need help.

HAILEY

Your mother can find a job. The house is paid for. As far as your father's dojo, all his debts, that will work itself out. Now tell me the real reason?

CLAY

What're you talking about?

HAILEY

Yeah, I heard the rumors too. Your father had a heart attack. Nothing else. Your mother doesn't need you creeping around playing detective.

CLAY

Maybe. Maybe not. But she does need me.

HAILEY

I should go.

Hailey gives him a hug and a kiss.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

I'm not sure where this leaves us. So I won't push. So I guess I'll see you the next time I see you.

CLAY

Remember when you told me you felt like you were in a transitional phase? Not real sure about where life was taking you and that you needed to make some tough decisions?

HAILEY

Yeah.

CLAY

I'm feeling that way now.  
Everything I've ever done was for  
his approval. Now that he's gone  
it's like...

HAILEY

You're not sure where you belong?

CLAY

Something like that.

HAILEY

Here's an idea. Why don't you quit  
worrying about everyone else and  
try doing what makes you happy for  
awhile. From someone who's been  
there very recently, that's the  
best advice I can give you.

Clay smiles, nods in agreement.

CLAY

Maybe. One day soon.

Hailey kisses him on the cheek, crawls in, cranks up the  
engine as Clay half-heartedly waves goodbye.

He looks instantly regretful.

INT. VANDROSKI'S HOUSE - GAME ROOM - DAY

Vandroski and Juan stand at a marble-topped bar gazing up at  
a wall mounted FLAT SCREEN: Clay and Raimi beating the hell  
out of their would-be attackers.

Raimi watches from a swank leather couch. His eyes full of  
tears and regret as he nervously rubs his hands together  
and bounces his knees.

VANDROSKI

A true badass like his old man.  
You were right.

JUAN

I told you the kid could fight.

Juan pours himself and Vandroski a scotch.

VANDROSKI

Todd, when I said I'm watching at  
all times, what didn't you  
understand by that?

Raimi stares at the carpet in shame.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

First, you act all nervous at the funeral. Then you bring him back to Cutter's dojo to snoop around. Gotta tell you, it doesn't look good on your end.

RAIMI

I didn't say shit. He asked me to take him to the dojo so I took him. Nobody suspects anything, Michael. You're being paranoid.

VANDROSKI

Paranoid is what keeps me in business. It's what keeps me from dealing with the wrong people. People I can't trust.

Vandroski slowly moves in on Raimi. On his way, he snags up a cue ball from a see-through, glow in the dark pool table and tosses it hand to hand.

He walks around a tall crystal sculpture rested on a glass table before the couch.

Vandroski removes a silk pocket handkerchief from his sport coat and wraps the cue ball with eyes on the crystal.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

I get a sniff that something's wrong, I take care of it. Before it becomes a problem.

And before you can blink --

Vandroski SWIPES THE HOMEMADE WEAPON INTO THE CRYSTAL: CRASH! Shards fly everywhere.

Raimi divers for cover. Now covered with remnants of the once glorious figurine.

He slowly peeks up at a hopping mad Vandroski. A cold, dead look in his eye.

RAIMI

If I told him anything, the cops would already be here!

Vandroski checks with Juan who nudges his shoulders. The two smile back at a scared witless Raimi.

VANDROSKI

Good point.

Vandroski hands Raimi his scotch. He quickly chugs it down.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

That's why I'm giving you a second chance to make things right.

RAIMI

How's that?

VANDROSKI

The kid needs money, right? He's planning on sticking around awhile. Help out with the fam. Get a job.

RAIMI

Looks that way.

VANDROSKI

Good. Because you're gonna tell him how he can make some quick cash.

RAIMI

You gonna make a new offer on the dojo?

VANDROSKI

No. Not yet. I think we can all agree there's too much heat. It's safe to assume Cutter Junior's gonna be doing some sniffing around. And we don't want our names caught up in the mix. For now, we lay off the dojo.

RAIMI

I don't understand.

VANDROSKI

There's more than one way of skinning a cat, Mister Raimi.

Vandroski smiles back at Juan.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

The great Bill Cutter's son. On our ticket. We're talking some serious cash flow.

JUAN

He's gonna need convincing.

(to Raimi)

He's a hot shot with the University now, right?

RAIMI

Yeah. Undefeated. Why?

Vandroski and Juan laugh. Vandroski rewinds the footage on the television and re-watches the brutal fight.

VANDROSKI

You let me worry about why. Just set it up.

EXT. BARREN STREET - NIGHT

Clay and Raimi are all dressed up and out on the town in what may be the worst street in all of Detroit. The dingy back alley is littered with beer bottles and trash.

Even the air looks dirty.

Lots of abandoned packaging warehouses and loading docks dot this long and dark stretch. A couple of flickering STREET LAMPS keep things lit.

CLAY

I thought you told me this was the place to be.

Clay and Raimi approach an old AUTO SHOP AND GARAGE. A long line stretches down the street as a thick-necked bouncer named ROACH takes cash from paying customers.

RAIMI

Oh, this is the place to be alright. Come on.

Raimi heads for the entrance. Clay follows behind.

Raimi greets Roach with a quick nod. Roach nods back as Raimi skips the line.

RAIMI (CONT'D)

(to bouncer)

What's up, Roach? He's with me.

ROACH

Oh, no introduction is necessary.

(to Clay)

We been waiting on you.

Raimi laughs and pats Clay in the stomach. They duck inside.

INT. AUTO SHOP - NIGHT

The crowd is good tonight with young couples and singles ready to mingle. All dressed to kill.

A SHARP TUXEDO mixes drinks at a remodeled service desk turned make shift bar. A glowing light overhead reads THE FILLING STATION.

Clay gets an eyeful of the local talent. He's impressed and cracks his first smile in days. He takes a good look around the room and spots --

Steel racks loaded with new and used tires hanging from each corner of the garage.

A COMPLETELY NUDE WOMAN sits behind the wheel of a Ferrari 458 Spider taking cash and doling out baggies of cocaine, pills and other assorted party favors.

In the center of the old warehouse and garage is none other than Nathan "Noochie" Pang. The hottest ticket since his surprise and brutal defeat of Chalo. He circles the ring, pumps himself up.

Clay checks out a girl's ass as she passes in front of a crowd chanting *NOO-CHIE! NOO-CHIE!*

With his eyes wide and tense, Noochie grunts like a wild beast, punches himself, slaps his own face.

CLAY

Okay. So what the hell is this?

RAIMI

This? This is your ticket to freedom, my man.

CLAY

Freedom from what?

RAIMI

From whatever you want. You see this guy Noochie?

CLAY

What the hell's a Noochie?

RAIMI

Nathan Pang. Guy was holding up liquor stores same time last month.

(MORE)

RAIMI (CONT'D)

Now he's rumored of making over three grand a fight. All because he was in the right place at the right time.

CLAY

I've heard of places like this. I just never saw one before.

RAIMI

Yeah, well. Here it is, my friend. Nice view, huh?

Raimi motions toward some hotties in mini skirts, parked at the bar, smiling back at them.

CLAY

Pretty nice is right.

RAIMI

Sure beats waiting tables, doesn't it? You wanna make a friendly wager?

CLAY

Depends. Who's this dude fighting anyways? I don't see the other guy.

Raimi smiles, pats Clay on the back.

RAIMI

Get yourself a drink. I'll be right back.

Raimi ducks into a back room where a sign on the wall reads MANAGEMENT ONLY. Clay heads for the bar where he's greeted by the sharply dressed bartender.

TUXEDO

Yes, sir?

CLAY

Yeah, I'll take a beer. A tall one.

Vandroski steps up behind him.

VANDROSKI

Now there's a familiar face.

Clay turns, faces him.

CLAY

I'm sorry?

VANDROSKI

Your Bill Cutter's kid, Chris.

CLAY

Christopher. Clay, actually.

VANDROSKI

Right. Clay. Clay Cutter. Great name. Very marketable. You come here with your friend Todd?

CLAY

That's right. How do you know Todd?

VANDROSKI

He came stumbling in here, about nine months ago. With that same hungry, desperate look you got on your face right now.

Clay watches the crowd. No sign of Raimi.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Just looking for someone to throw him a lifeline. Is that why you're here?

CLAY

I don't know why I'm here.

VANDROSKI

Yeah, right. I thought so. You're a wanderer. Waiting for a sign from God to make it all right again. I get it. I've been there. Most of my life as a matter of fact.

CLAY

Did you ever find it?

VANDROSKI

And then some. You see all this?

Clay scans the room.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

I do this four to five times a week. Not just here. But all over the place.

(MORE)

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Everywhere and anywhere. I got friends all over the place because I take care of people.

CLAY

So you're a regular philanthropist? Is that it?

VANDROSKI

I like to think so. If you gotta few minutes after the show, I can tell you all about it.

CLAY

If it's all the same, I'd like to find my friend and get going.

Clay finds Raimi shirtless and in boxer trunks as he enters the ring with Noochie.

VANDROSKI

I think he's a little busy right now.

CLAY

What the hell is this?

VANDROSKI

Like I said. After the show, I'll tell you all about it.

Vandroski pats him on the shoulder and heads off. The fight begins as Raimi and Noochie circle the ring and throw punches and kicks.

INT. AUTO GARAGE - SECOND FLOOR OFFICE - NIGHT

Clay stares out a dirty, grease stained window and down at a bloodied and bruised Noochie, sitting at the bar with a bag of ice to his face and his feet kicked up.

A DOCTOR inspects his eye.

Clay turns to --

Raimi, Juan and Vandroski, champagne flutes raised in the air and ready for a toast.

VANDROSKI

Gentlemen. To another victory.

RAIMI

Cheers.

They tap glasses and throw down their drinks. Clay watches them all with growing suspicion.

VANDROSKI

So what do you think, Cutter?

CLAY

I think this is seriously illegal.

They all share a laugh.

VANDROSKI

That's one way of looking at it.

CLAY

And what's the other way?

VANDROSKI

Ever notice it's always the people who are doing okay that worry about what's illegal or immoral. Meanwhile everyone else does what they gotta do to survive.

CLAY

With all do respect, you don't look like you're starving?

VANDROSKI

No. Not now. But there was a time. And I don't plan on going back to those times anytime soon. If you know what I mean.

RAIMI

Come on, man. Don't be rude. Just listen to what the man's gotta say.

VANDROSKI

Yeah. Don't be so rude. Have a drink. Hell, have a few. Let's all get loaded.

Vandroski and his crew laugh. Clay smiles.

CLAY

I got my family waiting for me at home. If you'll excuse me.

Clay heads for the stairs.

VANDROSKI

Before you go. We have something here we thought you'd like to have a look at.

Clay stops in his tracks. He instantly looks to Raimi who stares at his feet in shame.

Juan clicks a remote to start the video. Clay turns his attention to a wall mounted flat screen.

ON THE TV:

Clay and Raimi beat the hell out of their would-be attackers. All of it caught on a hidden smartphone.

RAIMI

I didn't know they were gonna be there, man. I'm sorry.

CLAY

I got a real hard time believing that, bud.

VANDROSKI

Hey, Todd. Why don't you give us a second with your friend. Maybe take it downstairs for a minute.

Raimi hangs his head low and heads for the door.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

I hear you're a big star now. A college champion. Just raking in the medals and one step closer to a national title. Good for you.

CLAY

So what?

VANDROSKI

So I'd just imagine if this video got leaked what it would do for your reputation. For that scholarship of yours. Last I heard, these poor kids you beat up were under age.

Clay moves for Vandroski.

CLAY

Excuse me.

Juan quickly intervenes.

JUAN

Easy does it, tough guy. You don't want any of that.

VANDROSKI

The way I see it. You got one of two choices. Work for me. Make yourself some money. Get your family out of the hole your father left them in. Or I go ahead and take what's left of your life with a snap of my finger.

JUAN

I don't know, Cutter. The choice seems pretty clear to me.

Clay stares at himself on the TV screen. He and Raimi seem to be enjoying themselves as the three much weaker teens hit the pavement.

CLAY

How much money are we talking about?

Vandroski smiles. Juan laughs.

JUAN

Welcome aboard.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Clay and Raimi on a fold out floor mat as they start their usual warm up routine:

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Knee bends. Straight up and down. And to the left...*ten fast reps.* To the right...*ten fast reps...*

B) Clay and Raimi in a full split as they touch their toes. *To the right...to the left...*

C) Clay with his legs suspended between two padded footstools and a twenty five pound plate in his hands.

D) Raimi lay on his side. One arm on the matt. One behind his head. He bends his knees to his chest.

E) A labyrinth of three foot hurdles faced in all different directions are staged in close proximity across the gym's hardwood floor.

Clay leaps one hurdle after the next with little effort.  
Raimi follows behind.

CLAY  
Come on! Faster! Faster!

F) Clay, with one foot on the floor, HIGH KICKS THE AIR and pivots in a perfect circle as if to lay down a mob of attackers all at once.

RAIMI  
Is your leg broke? Let's go!

G) Raimi also pivots in a perfect circle as Clay watches.

CLAY  
Pick it up, pick it up!

H) Clay punches and spin kicks a torso punching bag, and with perfect form, roundhouse kicks a second, much taller torso bag staged to his left.

I) Clay throws several more high kicks to the torso's face as he switches leg to leg.

RAIMI  
Gimme ten each!

Clay throws one kick after the next with his left leg. The sweat shoots from his face.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

An old manufacturing warehouse with broken out and shattered windows and half the roof missing. The downtown skyline looms over the belly of the room.

It's the biggest crowd of spectators yet as they pour in from outside in drones.

The feet of hundreds of local bangers dangle from the rusted mezzanine scaffolding that makes up the second floor of the once operational packaging plant.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

There isn't a single car in the barren grass field surrounding the property.

The local spectators walk in off the street from all different directions.

Vandroski's limo parks near the front of the warehouse. And out steps Clay in a hooded sweatshirt.

Out of the same door follow Juan and Vandroski.

VANDROSKI  
Alright. Remember. Nobody here knows who you are. All the money's going the other way.

Jimmy and Raimi step from the other side of the limo.

Clay catches eyes with Jimmy, arm still in a sling. The hatred between these two is palpable.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Don't worry about him. Worry about me.

Clay refocuses.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
One thing you need to remember. Right here, right now. These punks don't fight in cushy gyms with face masks and the AC washing over them. Fighting with them is a way of life. They do it because they got no choice. They do it to survive.

CLAY  
Yeah, I get it.

VANDROSKI  
Out here, there are no rules. This guy you're throwing down with is gonna be taking cheap shots. Kickin' you in the nuts, biting your nose. He may even try to rip your ear off your head.

Clay exchanges a worried look with Raimi who watches from across the field.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
But one thing for sure we know about him. He's stupid. He's big, stupid and he's gonna try to take you out with one punch. All you gotta do is keep him running in circles until he tires himself out. That's when we explode all over him. Got it?

Clay seems worried by all the gang bangers and fleece shirts pouring in and out of the building.

CLAY

And if I win? How the hell do we make it out here alive?

VANDROSKI

Because you're with me. That's why. Don't worry about it. Worry about the fight. Let me worry about the rest.

Vandroski slaps him on the cheek.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Clay barely makes it through the loud and violent crowd. He's sporting a black tank top with matching jogging pants and looks completely out of place.

Most of the crowd BOO and throw beers and other trash at his head and feet: WHAP! Clay's struck in the back of the skull with a glass bottle.

CLAY

Fuck!

He grabs his head in pain.

CLAY'S POV:

All of the angry, protesting faces seem to blur and multiply for a sec as a dizzy Clay finds his footing.

BACK TO SCENE

Clay snaps out of it, moves to the center of the room.

No hotties or short skirts at this one. But a much bigger deal than the auto shop fight.

From the other side of the warehouse floor steps WILLY "THE BEAST" CHAPEL (30s), black, short, bulked up.

He shows off for the crowd with a couple not so great roundhouse kicks and some animal like grunts.

Raimi runs to Clay's side, whispers in his ear.

RAIMI

Remember. This guy's a clown. He's his own worst enemy.

(MORE)

RAIMI (CONT'D)

He's more interested in entertaining the crowd and flexing his muscles than he is in fighting you. That's our secret weapon. Let him tire himself out.

(beat)

But whatever you do, don't let him hit you.

CLAY

Why?

RAIMI

Because he'll lay you out with one punch. And watch the kidneys with this guy. Otherwise you're pissing blood for the next three weeks.

CLAY

Good to know.

RAIMI

Alright. Go get him.

Clay and Willy move to the center of the filth ridden floor. Clay's feet crunch beneath him. He looks down.

Lots of broken glass, dime bags, spent casings and dirty needles decorate the make shift ring.

CLAY

Oh, perfect.

Willy beats his chest like an animal and licks his own face with a lizard-like tongue.

Clay circles him like a shark but looks more like a fish out of water amongst the muscle bound crowd.

VANDROSKI

Come on, Willy! Fight!

Willy kicks some dirt and broken glass in Clay's face. Incapacitating him.

He charges him head on.

Clay ducks out of the way and TRIPS WILLY with a tricky spin move that sends him face first to the ground.

Clay dances on his toes. In full defense mode.

RAIMI

That's right, buddy! Make him work  
for it!

Willy wipes some BLOOD ON HIS ARM as the broken glass  
fragments tear his flesh.

VANDROSKI

Nice one, kid!

Willy, now angry as hell, charges Clay like a bull and KNEES  
HIM in the chest.

Clay goes SOARING ACROSS THE ROOM.

Thump! Tumbling across the dirt and glass. His arms and  
chest ripped and bleeding.

The air sucked from his lungs as he GASPS like an asthmatic.

RAIMI

Oh, fuck. Not good.

A referee hovers over Clay as he still can't catch his  
breathe.

REFEREE

One...two...three...

WILLY

What's wrong, bitch? Can't  
breathe?

Clay slowly stands upright. The referee checks him out.

REFEREE

You good, man?

CLAY

Yeah, man. Just getting warmed up.

The referee steps out of the way as Willy charges full speed  
ahead.

Clay DODGES RIGHT --

THROWS A KNEE into Willy's stomach.

But Willy takes Clay with him to the ground. An ugly fight  
with little to no finesse.

Still on the floor, Willy THROWS A HARD ELBOW into the back  
of Clay's knee.

Clay SCREAMS OUT in agony.

RAIMI

Come on, man! Stop letting him get  
so close!!!

Clay squirms on the floor like a worm. In serious pain.

Willy, back on his feet. He beats his chest for the  
amusement of his people.

Clay THROWS SOME DIRT in his face.

Willy stumbles back as --

Clay leaps to his feet and starts dancing. As Willy wipes  
his eyes clean --

Clay leaps into a HIGH KICK striking Willy in the jaw.

Willy hits the ground like a sack of bricks.

The crowd ERUPTS.

Clay dances in a circle. Keeps the momentum going.

CLAY

Come on! Get up!

Willy stands. He struggles to keep up with Clay as the  
trained fighter makes Willy work for it.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What's wrong, bitch? Can't catch  
your breathe?

Willy charges him head on as Clay once again trips him with a  
sweeping leg.

Down he goes.

Clay winces and grabs his sore leg in pain. Taking his eye  
off the prize for a split second --

Willy takes advantage and THROWS A STRAIGHT PUNCH.

POW! Right between the eyes as --

Clay spews what looks like a CUP OF BLOOD before dropping  
like wet cement. He may be dead.

The referee holds Willy's arm in the air.

REFEREE

Winner!

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Clay stares at his badly bruised and freshly mangled face in an old broken mirror. The restroom is a hell hole with open stalls and garbage strewn about.

In walks Vandroski.

VANDROSKI

Don't let it get you down, kid. He's a street fighter. It's a whole new world on this side of the tracks. One your old man was fortunate enough to keep you from. As far as first fights go, you did real good.

Vandroski peels off a few hundred from a roll of cash. Sets it in the broken sink before Clay.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

He's your cut.

CLAY

What the hell is this?

VANDROSKI

The key to mastering this game is knowing your opponent. I knew you weren't ready for The Beast. He plays dirty. You don't. It was simple math. Don't take it personally. It's just business. But don't worry, kid. We'll get him next time.

Vandroski smiles, pats him on the back. He gives Juan a quick wink on their way out the door.

Clay stares in the sink at the pile of dirty cash. Disgusted at the mere sight of it.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Juan, Jimmy and Vandroski stand by the limo as the other spectators pour out of the building.

## VANDROSKI

We'll see how Golden Boy handles his first knockout. Then see just how bad he wants to fight.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - CLAY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Clay stares at the wad of cash in his hand and then himself in a bedroom mirror. Not liking what he sees.

Below the mirror and rested on the surface of a dresser sit a shrine of tournament trophies adorned with first place medals and other awards.

With the swift stroke of his arm, he swipes them into a fat trash bin on the carpet.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Denise serves up some pancakes and sausage to Kristi as Clay tumbles down the stairs in a hurry. He sneaks for the door in a pair of black shades.

Denise turns to him just as he's got his hand on the knob and about to open.

DENISE

Hey. I didn't hear you come in last night. Where were you?

CLAY

Me? You know. Nowhere. Just with Todd. Hey, look. I'm late for a thing so I'll see you guys later.

Clay opens the door and steps out.

DENISE

A thing? What thing? Come eat something.

Clay huffs with frustration. One foot out the door.

CLAY

I can't. I'm late already.

DENISE

Late. Late for what? And what's with the sunglasses? You drinking again?

CLAY

Yeah. Look. I gotta go. I'll  
tell you about it later. I love  
you guys.

Clay ducks out.

DENISE

Hey!

And he's gone. Denise turns to Kristi.

DENISE (CONT'D)

What is he up to?

KRISTI

How am I supposed to know?

Kristi picks at her food, stares out the window at --  
Clay staring back at her. He holds a finger to his mouth.  
Kristi is unsure at first but nods back.  
Clay heads to his car at the curb.

INT. CLAY'S CAR - STREET CURB - DAY

Clay lowers his shades and observes his bright purple face  
from his embarrassing KO the night before.

Denise secretly watches from the front porch.

Clay leaves some tire behind as he speeds off.

DENISE

God help us.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS - CLAY'S WORKOUT

A) Clay goes full beast mode on a hanging bag. A full fury  
of combination punches, high kicks, reverse kicks.

B) Clay has a series of WOODEN PLANKS c-clamped and suspended  
in the air and punches and kicks through all of them with  
little to no effort.

His face and eyes full of hate.

C) Clay curls an obscene amount of weight. The veins in his arms and face bulge like a stream of electric current shooting through his body.

D) Clay butterflies some dumbbells as sweat shoots from his eyes and cheeks. His chest and pecs taking form as his body changes before our eyes.

E) Clay squats a weight bar filled with plates as he's pushing himself like never before.

F) Clay high kicks a hanging bag over and over again with the same leg without switching. His face is tense, ugly and never once losing focus on the prize.

An imaginary crowd cheer him on.

CROWD (V.O.)  
Cu-tter! Cu-tter! Cu-tter!

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Willy "The Beast" Chapel beats his chest for the usual crowd as his opponent lay in the dirt. Out cold. A couple of corner men drag him from the scene.

Willy smiles as he proudly circles the arena.

The downtown skyline shines as bright as ever and down at the belly of the decrepit room.

The large mob splits in two as they make way for --

CLAY

...walking into the ring looking more bulked up, meaner and with much more confidence.

Willy laughs.

WILLY  
You come back for another  
asswhoopin?

Clay is stopped by the referee.

REFEREE  
You're not on the ticket, home boy.

CLAY  
Then I'll just have to kick his ass  
for free.

Some nearby spectators hear this and laugh their asses off.  
The referee notices.

REFEREE

I guess they wanna see a fight.  
Good luck, man.

The referee steps aside as Clay moves for the center of the trash-ridden floor.

Willy meets him halfway and flexes an arm for the onlooking crowd. Not paying attention --

Clay KICKS HIM ACROSS THE FACE.

The crowd goes nuts.

WILLY

Your ass must be crazy.

Willy goes full speed ahead at Clay who DODGES LEFT --

...spins with lightning fast proficiency and THROWS A HARD ELBOW to Willy's face.

Willy SPITS BLOOD as --

Clay KICKS HIM IN THE BACK.

Willy stumbles to the ground. Before he can stand --

Clay leaps into a DOUBLE ROUNDHOUSE and KNOCKS HIM OUT.

Willy falls limp. Done.

Clay raises his tired arms in the air as the crowd cheer on their new hero: *Cu-tter! Cu-tter! Cu-tter!*

EXT. DETROIT RIVERFRONT - DAY

Clay runs with a new purpose up the river view sidewalk. Earplugs in and ROCK MUSIC BLASTING.

TRAINING AND FIGHT MONTAGE

A) Clay does pushups with his feet hiked up on a bench.

B) Clay does pull-ups on a children's playground.

C) Clay walks the thin ledge that overlooks the river and spins from foot to foot as he punches and kicks the air. An exhibition of perfect balance and focus.

D) Clay kicks the stomach and face of an opponent in an old abandoned sandlot. Down he goes. Vandroski smiles.

E) Clay hides his winnings in a COFFEE CAN. He slides it under the bed.

F) Raimi holds up a wooden plank. Clay leaps and bounces himself off a brick wall. BREAKS THE PLANK with his right foot.

G) Raimi puts Clay in a choke hold. Clay struggles to break free at first but walks the brick wall with his free legs and flips himself over Raimi's head.

His hands around Raimi's neck as he takes him down.

H) Clay KNOCKS out an opponent with a KICK TO THE FACE.

I) Clay hides his THIRD COFFEE CAN under the bed.

J) Clay back on the thin ridge by the river. He pivots his right foot as he spins in a circle of HIGH KICKS.

With each kick, we INTERCUT WITH:

Multiple opponents KICKED IN THE CHEST AND FACE. All of them knocked out cold.

K) Clay slides a thick envelope to a BANK TELLER as black shades hide his busted face.

INT. HIGH END MEN'S APPAREL SHOP - DAY

A BEAUTIFUL SALESWOMAN in a tight skirt helps Clay throw on a perfectly tailored sport coat as he gleefully checks himself out in a three way mirror.

From his two hundred dollar haircut to his polished thousand dollar shoes, Clay has completely transformed.

Raimi gives him the thumbs up in the reflection.

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT - STREET LIGHT - DAY

Clay and Raimi pull up to a red light on their brand new Ducati 1200 R street racers with matching racing jackets. Both revving their high-pitched engines.

The hard working citizens of this blue-collar neighborhood all take notice of the flashy bikes. None too impressed with what they see.

From a street corner, Kristi and her friend JAY (16) haul school books in back packs and watch the two bolt off the line and pop wheelies.

Cars HONK and Drivers CURSE the two reckless and out of control hooligans.

JAY  
(to Kristi)  
Isn't that your brother?

KRISTI  
I'm not so sure anymore.

JAY  
Sweet bike.

KRISTI  
Yeah. I'll let him know you think  
so if I ever see him again.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - DAY

A renovation crew throw up some bright new paint and install brand new nautilus equipment.

New lighting is installed in the freshly repaired ceiling which don several brand new fans.

Some of the crew haul out some old nautilus parts and broken down weight benches as --

Denise and Kristi walk in, awe struck.

Clay steps out of his father's office and catches eyes with Denise who stands in a state of shock.

DENISE  
Clayton. What in the hell is going  
on in here?

CLAY  
Nothing. Just a little up keep.  
Fixing the place up.

Denise walks further into the room and eyes up all of the new equipment and bright new paint.

DENISE  
No wonder you didn't tell me about  
this. This must be costing us a  
fortune.

KRISTI  
(to Clay)  
Are you doing porn?

CLAY  
(to Denise)  
We can afford it. Relax.  
(to Kristi)  
And no I'm not.

KRISTI  
Because I heard Todd was doing  
porn.

DENISE  
Oh my God. You're doing  
pornography.

CLAY  
No, I'm not doing pornography, Mom.  
Settle down.  
(to Kristi)  
That was a one time thing. Let it  
go.

DENISE  
Okay. I'm missing something here.  
I've barely seen you in days. You  
don't tell me where you're going or  
what you're doing and now I walk in  
on this. Talk to me.

CLAY  
I'm working. What do you think I'm  
doing?

DENISE  
I don't know what you're doing.  
That's the thing. You don't tell  
me.

The crew all stop and eavesdrop on their conversation.

Others use drills to finish installing ceiling fans and other  
fixtures. Denise covers her ears.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
It's a little loud out here. Let's  
step in the office.

Clay follows his mother to the office.

INT. CUTTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Clay stands before Denise who scans the once cluttered office now in perfect order. Brand new photos of Clay and his father decorate the walls.

DENISE

Okay. No more bullshit. Where are you getting the money? You selling dope with Todd? Is that it?

CLAY

I took out another school loan to get us squared away on rent. I'm working around the clock. I'm just trying to get this place up and running again.

DENISE

No, Clay. You don't scrape this kind of money together parking cars and doing oil changes. Your father was three months behind on this place and now we're two months ahead. Quit lying to me.

CLAY

Let's just say some friends are helping me get this place going again. That's all I can tell you right now.

One of the crew open Clay's door which pats Denise in the butt and nudges her out of the way.

CREW #1

(to Denise)

Excuse me. Didn't mean to interrupt.

(to Clay)

The AC repair guy is looking for you.

CLAY

Awesome. Thanks.

DENISE

Excuse us.

Denise shuts the door in his face.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Who approached you? Because if we got an offer on the gym, I need to know about it, Clay.

CLAY

Nobody made any offers. We're keeping this place just like Dad wanted. Word got out what happened to Dad back at school. We were able to raise a few bucks. I sort of wanted it to be a surprise but I guess that's out the window.

Denise reads Clay, not totally buying his story but she backs down and stares through the window at the crew hustling in and out of the dojo.

Kristi sits at a nautilus press. She attempts to push some weight but can't budge the handle bars.

KRISTI

There's something wrong with this one!

DENISE

Your sister's worried about you. So am I.

CLAY

Everything's under control.

DENISE

Clay, fixing this place is one thing. Actually running it and making it successful is a whole other thing.

CLAY

I know that.

DENISE

These people who your father owed money to. They're letting us grieve in peace. For now. But sooner or later, they're gonna come back for their money. Your father's debts won't just go away on their own.

CLAY

What're you saying?

DENISE

I just want you to be prepared for the fact that we may have to sell this place outright and square with these people.

CLAY

We'll manage. Whatever it is. How much it is. I'll work something out. We just have to make a run of this place. Do or die. Just like Dad used to say.

DENISE

I just hope you know what you're doing.

CLAY

I know what I'm doing and everything is under control. Trust me.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - RESTROOM STALL - LATE NIGHT

Clay aggressively humps a club girl from behind as his face contorts and his forehead beads with sweat.

Clay catches a glimpse of himself in the dirty mirror hanging above an even dirtier sink. Not a pretty sight.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL BUS STOP - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay (13) waits for his bus and is grabbed from behind by a couple of really bad kids. They each hold an arm while their buddy throws punches into Clay's stomach.

BAD KID #1

You gonna talk to my girl.

He kicks Clay in the nuts. Half the school forms a circle around the four students.

Bad Kid #1 THROWS A HIGH KICK into Clay's face. WHAP!

Clay slips from their grip and drops to the asphalt.

The crowd point and laugh.

BAD KID #1 (CONT'D)

Get up!

INT. NIGHT CLUB - RESTROOM STALL - LATE NIGHT (PRESENT)

Clay pumps the girl even harder as anger takes over and he loses all control.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay, now with a black eye, punches and kicks a pair of sparring mitts worn by his father.

CUTTER

Come on, Clay! Push yourself!

MINUTES LATER

Clay ducks out of a restroom and spots his father, through his office window, playing grab ass with an attractive and much younger Secretary.

He's ready to kill his old man.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay kicks the same bad kid in the chest as he tumbles over a bench and falls flat on his back.

A large crowd of students clap and cheer.

An angry Clay hovers over him.

CLAY

Get up!

INT. NIGHT CLUB - RESTROOM STALL - LATE NIGHT (PRESENT)

Clay starting to slow down now. His eyes well with tears as he watches himself in the mirror.

EXT. MINI MALL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay and Raimi, still young, grab loose cash from a Salvation Army bucket and dart across a parking lot. A couple of older ladies in red hats and holding hand bells strut after them but are much too slow.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay tries out his latest and greatest karate techniques on another unsuspecting target and sends him tumbling over a round lunch table.

He's quickly snagged from behind by a SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR and drug out the double doors.

His fans cheer him on.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay sits defiantly before his PRINCIPAL, ADMINISTRATORS and both Denise and Cutter who are none too pleased.

Cutter stares down at Clay who refuses to make eye contact with either of his parents.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Cutter spits profanities while taking a belt and whipping the absolute hell out of his troubled son.

A crying Denise watches from the top of the stairs.

EXT. FAST FOOD PARKING LOT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Clay and Raimi, now high school age, get handcuffed by a pair of cops and loaded in the back of a patrol car.

An aluminum ball bat lay on the ground.

The same Secretary from the dojo stands next to her car with the front windshield busted and smashed. A COP takes her statement as she watches Clay.

Clay gives her a nasty snare as the patrol car bolts out of the small lot.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - HOLDING CELL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An iron gate slides open. Cutter stares down at his son sprawled out on a metal bench.

Clay opens his eyes and stares up at him with disgust. A smug grin forms on his tired face.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Clay kicks and swats at his father's sparring mitts with an anger and fury like never before.

He slips a HIGH KICK and nails Cutter dead in the face as the aging man tumbles to the mat.

Clay looks down on his father with cold hatred.

Cutter wipes the blood from his mouth.

A whole new Secretary, just as young and hot, watches from the office window.

Clay shoots her a shitty look.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - RESTROOM STALL - LATE NIGHT (PRESENT)

Clay reaches a climax with the girl. Both are tired and out of breath. Disgusted with himself, Clay quickly zips up his pants and ducks out of the stall.

GIRL

Yeah. I love you too.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - UPSTAIRS BAR - LATE NIGHT

Clay stumbles out of the men's room looking spent and ready for the front door. The music is loud and bumping as the strobe light from downstairs hits his face.

He catches eyes with --

Raimi chatting up some girls at the bar and smoking a joint. The whole room is consumed with smoke and fog.

RAIMI

Hey, champ! Where you been?! More like what was her name?!

He has a good laugh. Clay not so amused.

RAIMI (CONT'D)

Yo, there's someone here to talk to you! He wants you to meet him on the roof!

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - ROOFTOP - LATE NIGHT

Clay finds his way to the top level of this multi-level night club and singles bar.

A DJ spins some records on a sound stage with a hot mic rigged for karaoke.

Standing over a railing and checking out the city lights is ex street fighter and taekwondo champion JOHNNY PAYNE (30s), thin blonde hair, knife scarred face and neck.

With a chiseled jaw and bright green eyes, Johnny was once pretty like Clay but he's seen some real shit.

CLAY

You wanted to see me?

Johnny faces him. He playfully spins a toothpick in his mouth and gives Clay a good once over.

JOHNNY

You know who I am?

CLAY

You look kind of like a guy I saw in a picture once. Johnny Payne. Class of 2005.

JOHNNY

In the flesh.

CLAY

I heard stories about you back in school. They said you were the best in the program. Up until you got tossed out for abusing steroids and belting some girl around. What a waste.

Raimi comes up the steps and eavesdrops on Clay and Johnny but keeps a safe enough distance.

JOHNNY

Funny how people only remember the bad and not the good. Yeah, I did a lot of things I shouldn't have been doing. Just like you.

CLAY

You been checking up on me?

JOHNNY

You think you're special, don't you? A real hot piece of shit. Well let me tell you something, slick. I used to be Michael's golden boy. Just like you. On top of the world one minute. The next, everything you love. Everything you care about comes crashing down right in front of your motherfuckin eyes.

CLAY

So you have been checking up on me.

JOHNNY

I heard about your old man. I also hear you got left holding the bag. A pretty big one. You should be more careful about how you're spending that money.

CLAY

Really?

JOHNNY

Sooner or later, the tax man gonna come to collect. If I were you, I'd watch my back.

CLAY

Is that some kind of threat.

Johnny moves closer.

JOHNNY

No threat. Just a warning. Watch your back, new meat. Because they're sure as shit watching you.

Clay thinks it all over. A worried look.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You have yourself a good night.

Johnny tosses his toothpick over the side and heads for the stairs, nudging Clay out of his way and passing Raimi on the steps.

Raimi watches Clay, still lost in thought.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - SIDEWALK - LATE NIGHT

Clay briskly exits the club and humps it up the sidewalk as a DRUNK CLUB GUY races out the door after him. The young man is big and strong -- but wasted.

DRUNK CLUB GUY  
Hey, douche bag!

The long line of would be clubbers watch with great amusement as Clay turns and faces the fuming young man.

CLAY  
Talkin to me?

DRUNK CLUB GUY  
I don't see any other douche bag  
out here.

He stumbles on a street curb -- blasted out of his mind.

CLAY  
It's called coffee. Get some.

Clay heads off.

DRUNK CLUB GUY  
We're not done here, bro. I saw  
you go in there with her. It don't  
take not twenty fuckin minutes to  
score some blow.

Drunk Club Guy jerks off his silk shirt exposing his ripped up chest and muscles.

GUY IN LINE  
Take it off!

The long line of rubberneckers whistle and cheer on the would-be fighters.

Clay hides a smile.

DRUNK CLUB GUY  
Now you can square up with me right  
now or you can get the living shit  
kicked out of you. Now which is  
it?

Clay spots his restroom fling watching the altercation from the comfort of the club's entrance.

CLAY  
Get lost.

DRUNK CLUB GUY

I said show me the cash  
motherfucker or we're going right  
here and right now!

CLAY

Sounds like you two lovebirds have  
some business to discuss.

Clay heads across the street. Drunk Club Guy chases after him with a small crowd following behind.

DRUNK CLUB GUY

Hey! Fuck are you going?!

Clay turns back, and in the blink of an eye, kicks, punches, spins and obliterates the bigger man in less than five seconds flat.

Drunk Club Guy drops to the asphalt, bleeding, almost in tears as he stares up at Clay with true fear written on his mangled face.

INT. CUTTER TAE KWON DO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Cutter lay on the mat with a bloodied nose as he stares up at his son with shock and surprise.

A teenage Clay takes a defensive stance as he hovers intimidatingly over his father.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - SIDEWALK - LATE NIGHT (PRESENT)

Clay huffs and puffs with an out of control rage and inner chaos he can no longer control.

He stares back at his restroom fling still standing by the front door. She darts up the sidewalk, through the crowd, escaping into the night.

Clay stares at his bloodied and shaking hands. He looks sad and completely broken.

DRUNK CLUB GUY

What's wrong with you?!

Clay watches the long line of clubbers staring back at him with shocked faces. In awe at what he's just done to this poor man.

Somewhere in the midst of this large crowd runs Kristi and Jay and a few more of her friends.

KRISTI

Clay!

Clay spots her and runs off as the sound of POLICE SIRENS draw nearer and nearer.

KRISTI (CONT'D)

Clay, come back!

Jay holds her back.

JAY

Forget it. Just leave him alone.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - LATE NIGHT

Clay comes running up a sloping garage ramp and approaches his Ducati bike and helmet. He tosses the helmet aside and jumps on.

Kristi comes running up some stairs and approaches Clay just as he cranks up the motor.

KRISTI

What the hell was that?!

CLAY

I can't hear you!

KRISTI

I know about you and Todd! You think I'm stupid?! He's only got the biggest mouth ever! You've been lying to me and lying to Mom!

Clay stares straight ahead, revs his engine, being pigheaded and stubborn.

KRISTI (CONT'D)

Mom's right! He's trouble! That's all he's ever been! And he's taking you down with him! Only you're too blind to see it!

CLAY

I can see, Kristi. I can see everything. I can see that Dad left us with shit after spitting in our mother's face for the last twenty years.

KRISTI

What're you talking about?

CLAY  
Nothing. Forget it.

KRISTI  
No! There's something you're not telling me! You haven't been able to look me in the eye for weeks now! Mom either! That's why you haven't been home! Now tell me!

CLAY  
Get home. You shouldn't be out this late.

Clay takes off, down the ramp and headed for the exit.  
Kristi left standing.

KRISTI  
CLAY!!! You're out of control!

INT. VANDROSKI'S HOUSE - POOL DECK - NIGHT

It's a hopping pool party with bikinis, a full bar, DJ and all the barbecue you can eat.

AN AMATUER RAPPER spits some lyrics as a couple girls put on an exhibition for the boys in the pool.

Vandroski, Juan, Jimmy and Clay sit near a stone fire pit dug into the rear lawn.

A perfectly toned bikini hands Vandroski a scotch and rubs his shoulders.

VANDROSKI  
You see? Things could be a lot worse, huh, Cutter?

CLAY  
Yeah. If you live long enough to see any real money.

VANDROSKI  
Oh, I'm not planning on going anywhere. Not as long as there's money to be made.  
(beat)  
Ain't that right, Jimmy?

JIMMY  
Whatever you say, Mikey.

Clay just smirks and shakes his head.

VANDROSKI

What's the problem? You won your last seven fights. Made some nice coin and we're only getting started. You should be happy.

CLAY

I guess I see the future a little differently than you.

VANDROSKI

Oh, really? How do you see it?

CLAY

You're handing these young guys the world. We're talking about guys who got nothing and never gonna have nothing. All the sudden they're cruising around in sixty thousand dollar rides and shooting their mouths off. You never stopped to think that could become a problem?

VANDROSKI

The only way it's a problem, Mister Cutter, is if you don't take the proper precautions. I have.

CLAY

Such as?

VANDROSKI

Such as. Any of these guys get pinched by the cops, they know I got their back. I'm not leaving them hanging in jail like their own families.

(serious)

They trust me with their life.

CLAY

Okay. But what happens when one of your boys gets busted for murder? We're not talking a couple months in county jail.

VANDROSKI

I take it you heard about Loco Tony and the Suarez Brothers. Grease ball turf war shit. Assholes ended up killing each other. All three of them dead in the street.

JUAN

Three more chalk outlines. Do the cops care? Hell no. To them, that's three less bangers to worry about.

VANDROSKI

You got The Seven Mile Bloods. The Latin Kings. Stupid motherfuckers shooting each other up over a pile of rubble and garbage. What the hell for?

CLAY

Well, for some people, it's all they got. Like you said, it could be all the family they ever had. That loyalty runs deeper than a few dollars.

VANDROSKI

Hey, if you're worried about these gangs coming for me, forget about it. Thanks to me, they got more protection than they could ever dream of. They should all be on their knees thanking me.

JUAN

I know that's right.

CLAY

Protection? You mean cops in your pocket.

VANDROSKI

Let's just say me and the department have an understanding. As long as they're in the ring, they're not on the streets shooting cops or each other.

Clay cracks a smug grin.

CLAY

Whatever. I'm getting a drink.

Clay heads for a tiki bar hut near the pool.

VANDROSKI

(to Juan)

Cutter sure is asking a lot of questions.

Juan keeps an eye on Clay who shakes hands with a drunken Raimi by the poolside.

JUAN  
Yeah, I noticed.

Vandroski turns, stares back at the two friends.

VANDROSKI  
Almost like someone's been doing  
some talking.

JUAN  
Raimi?

VANDROSKI  
He's had a pretty good run lately  
hasn't he?

JUAN  
Good run? He's straight up  
knocking motherfuckers out.

VANDROSKI  
Little birdie told me he owes Andy  
Kovak some serious coin. Super  
Bowl debt.

JUAN  
Explains why he's taking on all  
those extra fights.

VANDROSKI  
I'm thinking maybe it's time we cut  
our losses.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - NIGHT

Clay enters. He is careful and quiet as he shuts the door behind him. The lights are off. Everyone appears to have gone to bed. As he heads for the stairs he spots --

Denise passed out on the couch. A bottle of vodka and a glass on the table before her.

Clay quietly walks to her, picks up the near empty bottle and takes his own generous swig.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - KRISTI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kristi sits up in bed, arms curled around her legs, tears in her eyes as --

Clay passes in the hall.

KRISTI

Clay?

He stops, pokes his head in.

CLAY

Yeah, it's me.

KRISTI

Mom said Dad got an offer on the dojo. I don't understand. If he had so many problems keeping it going...why keep it?

CLAY

Yeah, well. Maybe Dad knew something we didn't. He was a pretty sharp guy. About a lot of things.

Clay walks to a family portrait on Kristi's desk, picks it up and takes a closer look.

CLAY (CONT'D)

One thing we know for sure...he wasn't a quitter.

KRISTI

That's for sure.

CLAY

Dad always told me "once quitters start quitting, they never quit".

Kristi cracks a grin.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Of all the stupid shit he used to say, that's the one that stuck with me.

KRISTI

So why'd he quit on Mom?

Clay doesn't follow.

CLAY

What're you talking about?

Kristi hands him a smartphone.

KRISTI

I went downstairs to check on Mom  
and she was holding this.

Clay reads a couple texts.

INSERT PHONE - TEXT

*When are you planning on telling them about me?*

The sender's name: Sarah Brock

BACK TO SCENE

Clay is shocked. A sick look about him as all the color  
drops from his face.

KRISTI (CONT'D)

She got a job with Dad about three  
months ago at the dojo. She was  
his new secretary. The bitch had  
the nerve to show her face at the  
funeral.

Kristi bursts into tears. Clay is hopping mad.

KRISTI (CONT'D)

You've known. You've known this  
whole time.

CLAY

No. I didn't.

KRISTI

But you're with her. She's your  
girlfriend. I mean, it's like, out  
of the blue you guys are  
inseparable. You're telling me you  
didn't know anything about this?

CLAY

You let me worry about it. I'll  
handle it. I promise.

EXT. SARA AND HAILEY BROCK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Clay throws a stone at the upstairs bedroom window. No  
answer. He tosses another one.

POP! A little too hard as the LIGHT COMES ON. Hailey races  
to the window - half asleep. Her eyes quickly open as she  
sees an angry Clay on her front lawn.

CLAY  
We need to talk.

HAILEY  
I'll be down in a second.

Clay walks to the front of the lawn and meets Hailey as she walks out in nothing but a t shirt.

CLAY  
Long way from Lansing, isn't it?

HAILEY  
We moved back over summer break.  
Mom couldn't deal with just picking  
up and leaving everything behind.  
Leaving the house. Leaving --

CLAY  
My father.

HAILEY  
I'm sorry, Clay.

CLAY  
She was seeing my father for four  
months. Correct me if my math is  
off but that's two months longer  
than we've been together.

HAILEY  
I wanted to tell you so bad but...

CLAY  
But you didn't. I get it.

HAILEY  
I watched you. For weeks at  
school. Trying to work up the  
nerve to tell you.

CLAY  
So why didn't you?

HAILEY  
Because you were doing so well. I  
figured it would just be a  
distraction you didn't need.

CLAY  
So you kept it from me. My  
girlfriend and my own mother kept  
it from me.

Clay spins in a frustrated circle, rubs his tired face. Hailey tries hard to keep up with him as he paces the lawn in a nervous fit.

HAILEY

I was gonna tell you. That night when your mother called. But by then it didn't matter anymore. He was already gone.

Hailey cries into her hands. Clay still shaking his head with disgust.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Please. Your father loved you.

Hailey grabs his arm in a desperate plea. He tears it away.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Everything you are. Everything you wanna be is because of him. He was a good man. Don't let this change anything.

CLAY

All those fights they had when I was a kid! They weren't about me fighting and getting into trouble! They were about him! I'm crying myself to sleep every night, blaming myself while he's out gambling our savings away and fuckin the help!

Hailey squints. Confused.

HAILEY

What're you saying?

CLAY

I saw it. With my own eyes. One blonde assistant after the next. And I kept it from her. Because that stupid place was all I had. It was the thing that kept me and my Dad together. It's what kept me off the street and out of juvie hall.

Sarah Brock, Hailey's Mom, quietly watches them from the porch with her robe on.

CLAY (CONT'D)

But she knew. My Mom knew about  
all of them and she never said  
anything. Both of us just going on  
with life with this secret neither  
of us had the balls to tell.

Clay stares up at Sarah who backs into the darkness in shame.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I got some news for you. You  
weren't special.

DENISE (O.S.)

That's enough, son.

Clay turns, spots his mother at the curb as she steps from  
her car and onto the lawn.

DENISE (CONT'D)

Kristi said you'd be here. I'm  
sorry you had to find out like  
this.

Denise and Sarah stare each other down.

SARAH

I'll leave you alone.

Sarah heads inside.

HAILEY

I'm sorry, Clay.

CLAY

Can I have a minute with my mother  
please?

Hailey tries to touch his face. He jerks away.

HAILEY

Right.

Hailey heads for the door.

DENISE

Come on. I'll drive us home.

NT. DENISE'S CAR - NIGHT

Clay rides shotgun, his head leaned against the window.  
Denise watches him closely.

DENISE  
Awfully quiet.

CLAY  
I don't know what to say.

DENISE  
I think we've both stayed quiet for long enough, don't you?

CLAY  
What am I supposed to say? Fuck you, Mom?

DENISE  
Yeah. Why not? At least it would be the truth for once.

Clay smiles.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
I didn't have to tell your sister anything. She figured it all out on her own. Your father was never good at hiding the evidence.

CLAY  
Look who's talking.

Clay hands Denise her phone back.

DENISE  
How much of this did you read?

CLAY  
Enough. I didn't know you knew words like that.

DENISE  
I didn't know I did either. I guess living with your father all these years... keeping things balled up inside for the sake of you kids...  
(beat)  
Guess I finally exploded.

CLAY  
It would've been so much easier if we just said something.

DENISE  
I got news for you. It wouldn't have made a difference.  
(MORE)

DENISE (CONT'D)

Your father was gonna do what your father was gonna do. Damn the consequences.

CLAY

I don't remember it always being that way. What happened?

Denise fights her tears. Too tired to cry as she gazes out the window.

DENISE

I happened.

CLAY

I don't understand.

DENISE

I was pretty hard on your father. About the business. How he was gonna turn it into this big empire and make us all rich. For years, I watched him jump from one bad business venture to the next. One football bet to the next. It's like he was never happy with himself. Like he looked at himself like a failure.

CLAY

Why didn't you stop him. Tell him to knock it off.

DENISE

Believe me. I did.

(beat)

If it wasn't about money, it was about everything else. We were both the most hard headed people you'll ever wanna meet. Sometimes when you get people like that together it makes for a rocky marriage.

CLAY

It's not your fault. You shouldn't blame yourself for him running around.

DENISE

I could've been more supportive. I guess in the long run, it wouldn't have changed the outcome any.

(MORE)

DENISE (CONT'D)  
We still struggled most of your  
life. He's still gone.

CLAY  
You think Dad would've been happier  
if you stayed quiet about  
everything? Been more supportive.

DENISE  
Honestly, I think he just wanted me  
to tell him I loved him.

Denise tears up.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
Somewhere along the line, I stopped  
doing that.

Denise pats Clay on the leg.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
It's just us now, kiddo. We're all  
we have. And I'm not planning on  
making that mistake again. No more  
secrets.

Clay looks sick to his stomach. Her words cut him deep. She  
grabs his hand. A dead serious look.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
Promise me. That you never keep  
anything from me. No matter what.

Clay thinks it over.

CLAY  
No more secrets. I promise.

INT. CUTTER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Over ten COFFEE CANS full of loose cash rest on a dining room  
table as Clay opens the front door and spots his mother  
looking irritated.

He shuffles in. Busted.

CLAY  
Hey, what's up?

DENISE  
You tell me.

Clay spots the coffee cans behind her.

CLAY

Uh oh.

DENISE

So much for no more secrets.

CLAY

I'm doing what I have to do.

DENISE

Yeah. Just like your father. He always did what he had to.

CLAY

What's wrong with that?!

DENISE

You've been fighting! You know, I heard things but I couldn't believe it! You come home all black and blue!

Clay walks the room, unable to face her.

DENISE (CONT'D)

What do you wanna do? Throw away your life for a few thousand dollars? Who are these people?!

CLAY

These people got me by the nuts, Mom! Just like Dad! He did what he had to do and so am I! I don't have a choice!

DENISE

What're you talking about?!

CLAY

They got me on video! That fight at the liquor store! That goes public, I lose my scholarship!

DENISE

What do you think's gonna happen when this gets out, dumbass?

KRISTIE (O.S.)

That's a really good point.

Denise and Clay spot Kristie eating an ice cream cone on the staircase and eavesdropping.

DENISE  
 (to Kristie)  
 Stay out of this!

KRISTIE  
 Okay, never mind. Good talk.

Kristie races up the stairs and into her room.

CLAY  
 These people are dangerous. You  
 can't just stop because you feel  
 like it. There's too much money  
 involved.

Denise spins in a frantic circle.

DENISE  
 Oh my God. You're going to the  
 police.

CLAY  
 I do that, we're all dead. You  
 understand? You. Me. Kristi.  
 Dead. Just like...

Clay stops, thinks it all over.

DENISE  
 Just like what?

A realization hits Clay as he races to the door. Denise runs  
 after him but he's long gone.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
 Where are you going? Get back  
 here!

EXT. CUTTER HOUSE - STREET CURB - DAY

Denise watches Clay jump on his Ducati and burn down the  
 street at an unsafe speed.

DENISE  
 Clay!!!

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD GYM - DAY

Clay stares through the large front window at Raimi as he  
 finishes on a treadmill. He uses a towel to wipe himself  
 down.

Clay heads for the door.

INT. GYM LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Raimi switches out shirts at his locker as Clay sneaks up behind him.

Raimi, turns, spots him.

RAIMI  
What's up, buddy? Been trying to  
call you all night.

Clay charges him, throws him against the lockers. The room  
clears out quick.

CLAY  
(to crowd)  
Give us a minute.

Clay throws Raimi over a bench as he face plants.

RAIMI  
What the fuck are you doing?

CLAY  
Get your ass up.

RAIMI  
Okay.

Raimi stands, quickly THROWS A PUNCH at Clay who easily  
blocks it, pops Raimi in the kidney and sends him to the  
floor in pain.

Raimi leaps to his feet and SIDEKICKS Clay across the mouth.  
He grabs him, throws him against the lockers. His forearm  
under his throat as Clay gasps for air.

RAIMI (CONT'D)  
Welcome home, brother. How's that  
feel?

Clay grabs Raimi by the balls and shoves him back. Raimi  
grabs them in pain.

RAIMI (CONT'D)  
Uncle! Uncle! Stop this shit!

CLAY  
What was all that shit at my old  
man's funeral? You heard rumors?

Raimi still in pain. He hunches over, hands on his knees.

RAIMI

I think you popped a nut.

CLAY

You knew it was Vandroski and you didn't have the nuts to tell me.

RAIMI

You asshole, I just saved your life!

CLAY

So why'd you bother telling me in the first place?

RAIMI

You know what would happen if Michael found out I was talking to the cops? Half of them are in his pocket! Why'd you think we haven't been pinched yet?

CLAY

So you decided to put a target on my back instead. I get it.

RAIMI

I got scared, alright? The cops all but expected you to look into your Dad's death. If I went to the cops, I'd already be dead.

Clay backs down, walks in an angry circle as Raimi still rubs his sore crotch.

RAIMI (CONT'D)

Seriously. I think one exploded. Are you happy?

CLAY

Which one was it?

RAIMI

I don't know. The right. They're both fuckin killing me.

CLAY

Not your balls, asshole! Who killed my father?

Raimi is reluctant.

RAIMI  
I don't know.

CLAY  
You're lying.

RAIMI  
I'm telling you, I don't know!

CLAY  
It was him. Wasn't it? That's why  
the arm.

Raimi turns his back, hands on his head, unable to face his best friend with the truth.

Clay grabs him by the arm, faces him forward.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Tell me something!

RAIMI  
Alright. It was Jimmy. Jimmy  
Magnus. At least that's what I  
heard on the street.

CLAY  
You gonna play that game again? It  
was either him or it wasn't! Which  
is it?!

RAIMI  
I don't know! But that's what  
everybody says! Okay?! He's still  
pissed about your old man tossing  
him out on his ass fifteen years  
ago!

Clay's anger reaches new heights. He kicks and punches the row of metal lockers.

RAIMI (CONT'D)  
Sooner or later, everyone's gonna  
know what he did to your Dad. And  
it's gonna get back to the cops.  
Let them handle it. If you don't,  
these guys will not only kill you,  
but your family too.

Clay walks out.

RAIMI (CONT'D)  
Hey! Get back here! I'm talking  
to you!

INT. ROLLER SKATING RINK - NIGHT

It's after hours as the modest crowd gathers at the closed down skating rink. A circle formed near the center of the hardwood floor.

Vandroski and Juan watch from a nearby pool hall. They are greeted by local mobster ANDY KOVAC (50s), flash suit, big hair, gold knuckles. He's joined with two of his beefed up entourage, both in silk suits.

KOVAC

Long time, Michael. Guess you forgot to check in.

Kovac shakes his hand.

VANDROSKI

We're just here to watch the fights, Andy. No worries.

KOVAC

Stay away from my guys, Mikey.

VANDROSKI

Hey. This is your block. Your streets. We would never. But that doesn't mean a friendly wager between two businessmen should be out of the question.

JUAN

You know we're good for it.

KOVAC

Nobody's talking to you, friend.

Juan smiles and munches some potato chips.

KOVAC (CONT'D)

Speaking of business. Your boy Raimi still owes me twenty large. Can't help but notice he's lost his last three bouts.

VANDROSKI

Yeah, I know. It's a real shame. And he was doing so well. Don't know what got into him.

KOVAC

I don't know and I don't care. But I'm done fuckin around with your boy. Now where is he?

Kovac and his men head for the men's room.

Juan blocks their path.

JUAN

Whoa. Hold on a second.

KOVAC

Out of the way, flash.

VANDROSKI

Alright. You caught me. We didn't just happen to be in the neighborhood.

KOVAC

What're you talking about?

VANDROSKI

You see this punk with the hair?

Vandroski motions to the Latino fighter warming up in the center rink: NICKY PAX (20s), Mexican-American, mohawk, trimmed up beard.

KOVAC

Yeah, so what?

VANDROSKI

He's in my pocket. I got exactly two thousand that says he gets KO'd in the first round. At twenty to one odds, that's forty large. When it's over, I'll cover the rest. You got my word.

Kovac checks with his crew who seem enthused about the idea.

JUAN

If I were you guys, I'd be reaching in my pockets right about now.

VANDROSKI

From what I hear, the white boy's a sure thing.

Kovac stares into the rowdy crowd. A fight about to begin.

KOVAC

(to his guys)

How much we pull tonight?

Guy #1 checks in his suit coat, pulls out an envelope filled with hundred dollar bills.

KOVAC'S GUY #1  
Fifty two hundred.

KOVAC  
Alright. Put us down for fifty two  
hundred.

Kovac's guy walks the money to the bet table.

KOVAC (CONT'D)  
Better not be stroking me, Michael.

INT. ROLLER SKATING RINK - MEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Nicky pops a couple pills and does a quick hit off of Juan's  
meth pipe.

JUAN  
You know what you gotta do. I  
don't want nothing left of this  
boy.

Nicky nods in agreement.

EXT. ROLLER SKATING RINK - REAR DOOR - NIGHT

A shirtless Raimi stands near the back door with Vandroski.

VANDROSKI  
We gotta sell this one real good.  
You know who is in the house.

A worried sick Raimi nods in agreement.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)  
Don't worry about Nicky. He's been  
taken care of.

Juan opens the back door and joins the others.

JUAN  
Nicky and I have an understanding.  
(to Raimi)  
How you feeling, champ?

RAIMI  
Good. Ready to do this.

VANDROSKI

We're not in the clear just yet. Our friend Mister Kovac needs reassurance you'll be able to square your debt. Let him get in a couple shots. Then we take him. With Nicky Pax out of the way, that makes you the new champ around here. We line up a few more key fights. That should buy you some time with Kovac and company. Got it?

RAIMI

Got it.

INT. ROLLER SKATING RINK - NIGHT

Raimi is making mince meat out of the smaller and much thinner fighter. One kick after the next.

Raimi throws a combination of punches that throws his opponent to the roller rink floor.

Vandroski winks at Kovac who likes what he sees.

Nicky gets booed by his own crew. The hostile crowd throw garbage and drinks at his face.

Raimi dances foot to foot. This one in the bag. Not a care in the world. Until --

The red hot Latino rises with a fury. Raimi looks confused and a bit frightened.

Nicky throws a lethal combination of hard kicks and fast punches that knock Raimi off balance.

NICKY'S GUY #1

Drop his ass!

NICKY'S GUY #2

Take him out!

Kovac gives Vandroski a panicked look.

KOVAC

What the fuck is this?!

Nicky blocks Raimi's punch and throws several hard punches to his stomach as --

Raimi drops to his knees. He looks over and gives Vandroski the thousand yard stare. Vandroski returns with a smug grin.

He attempts to stand but Nicky kicks him in the mouth and sends him to the floor for the last time.

The crowd goes nuts.

KOVAC (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Kovac angrily grabs Vandroski by the shirt but is grabbed from behind by two henchmen.

VANDROSKI

What can I say, Andy? It happens.  
I'll take care of it.

KOVAC

Your boy's dead! You hear me?!  
Dead!

Vandroski and Juan smile as they head for the door.

The two henchmen flash some nine mils for Kovac and company.

HENCHMEN #1

Chill, man. Keep it right there.

HENCHMEN #2

Don't go bein' stupid.

The two henchmen chase out the door.

KOVAC

I catch you in here again, you're  
dead! All of you!

INT. DINER - LATE NIGHT

Hailey sits in a corner booth with a glass of soda. A sad, broken look about her. Clay spots her from outside and ducks in the diner.

Clay walks to her booth.

HAILEY

Thanks for coming.

Clay has a seat.

CLAY

What is it?

HAILEY

Nice to see you too.

Clay kicks his legs up, gets comfortable. He grabs Hailey's soda and takes a sip.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Your Mom says you've been fighting with Todd.

CLAY

Yeah. Maybe. So what? What's that have to do with us?

Hailey tears up. Her lips and mouth quiver. She avoids Clay's look and stares out the window.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hey. I'm sorry. It's only been the worst few weeks of my life. I know you've been there and done that. So there's no excuse. What's going on?

HAILEY

Todd's dead.

Clay sits in shock. It hasn't hit him yet.

CLAY

What? I just talked to him. Where did you hear that?

HAILEY

Found him face down in a parking lot. Some skating rink near Bricktown.

CLAY

How?

HAILEY

They say it looks like he got into it with a couple of guys. I don't know all the details.

Clay stares at the table. Totally zoned out.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

Your sister told me what's been going on.

CLAY

Oh, really?

HAILEY

We had a heart to heart. About a lot of things. She said you're in so far over your head you don't know what you're doing.

CLAY

It's not like that. I know what I'm doing and I got these people where I want them.

HAILEY

Actually, I hear it's the other way around.

Clay gives up and stares out the window. He finally comes around and leans in close to Hailey.

CLAY

I tell you my old man used to hold me down and beat the shit out of me?

Hailey totally shocked by this.

HAILEY

No.

CLAY

It's why I started fighting. I was gonna turn the tables on him. Knock that sonofabitch right on his ass and look him in the eye when I did it. Maybe then I would've finally had his respect.

HAILEY

No, I didn't know that.

CLAY

I always thought I was this tough kid. Because I won a couple trophies. A few tournaments. All that time wondering if I really had what it takes to go up against these animals on the street. Or if I got this far just for being Bill Cutter's kid. Tell you the truth, every time I fight now, I think of him. It's what gives me the edge I need. You know how sick that shit makes me?

Hailey huffs with exhaustion and she's starting to lose what's left of her patience.

HAILEY

I checked up on this guy. Michael Vandroski has a sheet longer than my leg, Clay. Racketeering. Loan sharking. Just two years ago he was acquitted on murder charges. You had to have known this.

CLAY

They had my father killed. Todd knew about it. Someone must've found out about the fight.

HAILEY

What fight?

CLAY

Me and Todd. At the gym. In the locker room.

HAILEY

I don't understand.

CLAY

I don't have time to explain. I have to go.

Clay rushes for the door. Hailey follows.

EXT. DINER - SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Clay heads up a sidewalk, away from the diner. Hailey has trouble keeping up.

HAILEY

Listen to me, Clay. If you're Dad didn't die of a heart attack, your mother will. Don't do this.

CLAY

You think I'm walking away from this, you're crazy.

HAILEY

So what's the plan? You gonna run in there and karate chop everyone? This isn't a tournament! These people have guns!

CLAY  
Yeah, I noticed.

HAILEY  
So what then?

Clay stops.

CLAY  
I don't know, alright?! Give me a  
minute to think!

HAILEY  
Don't make me explain all this to  
your mother when you're dead  
because I don't know where to  
begin.

CLAY  
Your faith in me is inspiring.

HAILEY  
Look. I'm sorry, alright? I just  
don't wanna see you end up like  
Todd. He didn't have anyone but  
the streets to turn to. You do.  
You have a choice.

Clay turns his back on Hailey. Frustrated.

HAILEY (CONT'D)  
We can go to the cops. Tell them  
everything.

CLAY  
Just like that?

HAILEY  
Yeah, just like that. Or you can  
let them come after your family.  
Or anyone else in your life you  
care about. Me included. Your  
choice.

Clay nods in agreement and faces her.

CLAY  
Alright. Then we go to the cops.

The wheels in Clay's eyes still spinning. Hailey isn't so  
convinced.

HAILEY  
Promise me, Clay. Promise me  
you'll go to the cops.

Clay still lost in his own thoughts.

CLAY  
I promise.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATE NIGHT

Clay burns down the avenue after hours with rock music blasting in his ear and the weight of the world on his shoulders.

From a side street rolls a large black Suburban with all tinted windows and jet black wheels.

A back window cracks open. The face of Nathan "Noochie" Pang stares out at Clay on his bike.

Clay spots him and cuts in front of the long vehicle.

And then a second Suburban makes a left turn at a stoplight and almost runs Clay off the road.

He swerves to miss them.

CLAY  
Sonofabitch!

Clay notices the truck behind him closing in on him while the one in front slows to a drift.

He cuts down a thin alley.

INT. ALLEY WAY - LATE NIGHT

Clay burns down the alley, barely avoiding a series of large green dumpsters on both sides.

A four door sedan blocks the opposite end as he comes to an almost screeching halt.

Out of the sedan pops a couple men in dark suits and ties. One of them flashes a badge.

FBI MAN  
Clay Cutter! You need to come with  
us!

Clay stares behind him. One of the black Suburbans has the other end blocked off.

He turns, faces the FBI Man.

FBI MAN (CONT'D)  
This ends right now! Now get off  
the bike! Let's move!

Clay parks his bike, throws up his hands as he crawls off.

FBI MAN steps out of his way.

FBI MAN (CONT'D)  
In the car.

EXT. WALMART PARKING LOT - LATE NIGHT

The unmarked four door converges in the back of the lot with the other two black Suburbans.

Several more FBI MEN in suits and ties step from the two Suburbans and greet Clay as he crawls out.

With them is Noochie, dressed in street clothes but with his gold badge hanging around his neck.

FBI MAN #2  
Clay Cutter. Meet Special Agent  
Nathan Pang. Otherwise known as  
Noochie.

CLAY  
What the hell is this?

FBI MAN #2  
Agent Pang is just one of several  
of our undercovers currently  
infiltrating Michael Vandroski's  
organization. We've got him. All  
the way from racketeering to murder  
and extortion.

CLAY  
So what are you waiting on? A  
written invitation?

FBI MAN #2  
Because this thing goes a helluva  
lot deeper than just one man.  
We're talking dozens of law  
enforcement personnel.

(MORE)

FBI MAN #2 (CONT'D)

Undercover operations that have been going on for months. Not just federal but local. We're talking multiple jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies. All with their own personal stake in whether or not Vandroski rots in prison.

NOOCHIE

He goes down, he's taking a lot of names with him. You feel me?

FBI MAN #3

That means we can't have some hot shot on an outlaw trip compromise our operations.

CLAY

Now tell me the real reason you're here. You obviously want me to do something for you. So stop stalling and tell me what is it?

Noochie and the other agents share a look.

FBI MAN #2

Your father was working with us. Getting in close to Vandroski's army. Giving us names. Who and what to surveil.

CLAY

That's why he wouldn't take their deal.

FBI MAN #3

It was your old man's way of keeping Vandroski on the hook. Just where we wanted him.

CLAY

So what is this? You here to tell me you had my father killed?

FBI MAN #2

After the first several break ins, your father installed security cameras at the dojo. At our suggestion.

CLAY

You saw who killed my father?

FBI MAN #3

The whole thing is on camera.

Clay almost jumps out of his shoes.

CLAY

Show me. Show me now.

FBI MAN #2

By showing you this, I'm gonna need  
your word you keep away from  
Michael Vandroski. Once and for  
all time.

CLAY

I can't promise you that.

The agents all share one more look. They nod in agreement.

INT. FBI SUBURBAN - LATE NIGHT

Clay sits next to Noochie and watches an open laptop with  
security footage of his father's dojo.

The other agents sit across from them.

ON THE LAPTOP:

Cutter steps into his office. The light switch comes on.  
The rest of the weight room is shrouded in darkness.

Through a rear door walks a DARK FIGURE.

ON CLAY

CLAY

Who the hell is that?

ON THE LAPTOP:

Cutter steps out of his office and into the weight room where  
he confronts the mystery dark figure. A scuffle ensues as  
Cutter is eventually thrown against a tall weight rack and  
drops to the floor.

He BUMPS HIS HEAD on a STACK OF WEIGHTS.

ON CLAY

CLAY (CONT'D)

Dad...

ON THE LAPTOP:

Cutter on the carpet. He isn't moving. The dark figure checks on the immobile lump.

He looks to be checking his pulse.

ON NOOCHIE

...watching Clay's expression. He's locked in on his father's demise happening right before him.

ON THE LAPTOP:

The dark figure moves the body onto the weight bench. A straight bar with no weights rests on the rack.

The dark figure moves for a light switch on the wall. He flicks it on -- revealing TODD RAIMI.

ON CLAY

CLAY (CONT'D)

Todd...

ON THE LAPTOP:

Raimi picks up the weightless bar and hovers it over Cutter's throat...

ON CLAY

...as he pauses the footage.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Why? I don't understand.

FBI MAN #2

Your friend Mister Raimi knew your father was taking payments from Vandroski. He went there that night, like he did twice before, looking for money. Money to square up his debt with Andy Kovac.

CLAY

How did he know about the money?

FBI MAN #2

Because your father told him. All about the money. All about working with the Feds. All of it.

Clay angrily shuts the laptop screen.

FBI MAN #2 (CONT'D)

In short. Michael Vandroski.  
Jimmy Magnus. Juan Willis. They  
had nothing to do with your  
father's death.

FBI MAN #3

That means this ends. Right now.

CLAY

Why did you show me this? Why are  
you doing this for me?

FBI MAN #2

Because your father died working  
for us. And we're not gonna sit by  
and watch the same thing happen to  
you and your family.

FBI MAN #3

I know what you're going through.  
All that hate. Nowhere to project  
it. But Todd Raimi's dead. Your  
father's killer is gone. This has  
nothing to do with you anymore.

Clay bursts into tears. FBI Man #2 leans in close to him.

FBI MAN #2

Just in case you're not getting the  
picture, Mister Cutter. We're not  
asking you. We're telling you. Go  
home.

FBI MAN #3

If you understand us. Tell us you  
understand.

Clay slowly wipes his tears. And finally looks up.

CLAY

I understand. It's over.

INT. TRU WARRIOR GYM AND DOJO - DAY

Jimmy stands behind a tall punching bag as one of his new  
proteges practices his sidekicks.

JIMMY

Get that leg up. Come on.

The small gym is full of young prospects pulled straight from the hardest streets in the city. All training, sparring, lifting.

Through the door runs a focused Clay, ready to take the whole place himself. Meanwhile, everyone stops what they're doing and watches as he steps to Jimmy.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What's up, baby boy? Long way from the suburbs. You look like you got something on your mind.

CLAY

It was you. Wasn't it? You killed him. That's why the busted arm.

Jimmy steps from behind the bag. A dead serious look in his eye as he moves for Clay.

JIMMY

Run that by me again? I'm not sure I heard you correctly.

CLAY

He kicked you out on your ass fifteen years ago and you've been brainwashing his kids with your bullshit ever since. That's why his business is shot. It was all you. Wasn't it, Jimmy?

JIMMY

Boy, you must be out of your mind talking to me like that.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Don't touch him.

Clay spots Johnny Payne stepping out of the locker room and in work out clothes.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

We wouldn't wanna damage the man's new golden ticket. Now would we? Pretty boy like you.

(to all)

Just look at that pretty face!

The crowd all have a good laugh at Clay's expense.

CLAY

Johnny Payne. The man. The myth.  
What're you doing in here?

JOHNNY

Unlike you, I decided not to bite  
the hand that feeds me.

(to all)

Everyone take a good look. Back at  
U of M they say he's the best that  
ever was. A true warrior.  
Gentlemen, we're in the presence of  
greatness. I guess we should all  
be quaking in our boots.

The rough crowd burst into hysterics. Clay cracks a grin and  
nods back at them.

CLAY

I'm not here to compare records  
with you, Johnny. I wanna talk to  
Michael.

VANDROSKI (O.S.)

Do you now?

They all turn and watch --

Vandroski and Juan walk down a spiral staircase. They join  
Johnny and the others by the punching bag.

Clay nods in Jimmy's direction.

CLAY

(to Juan)

It was him, wasn't it?

JUAN

What are you talkin' about?

CLAY

I just got my answer. See you all  
in prison.

Clay heads for the door.

VANDROSKI

Of course there's still the matter  
of your little home movie.

Clay stops in his tracks. He slowly turns.

CLAY

I don't care about that anymore.

VANDROSKI

Stop and think about what you're doing. I know you're mad. You're super pissed off about your old man. I get it. But it was a heart attack. You go to the cops, they'll tell you the same thing.

CLAY

Oh, yeah? And how about Todd Raimi? Maybe I'll find one who'll listen. Guess we're about to find out.

Clay heads for the door.

VANDROSKI

Now wait. Let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Let's not talk crazy.

Clay, once again, stops in his tracks.

CLAY

What's the matter, Mikey? I thought you had friends in all the right places.

VANDROSKI

Okay, kid. Let me put this a different way. You talk to the cops...and I won't be responsible for what happens to that sister of yours. You see these guys back here?

Clay eyeballs the fighters in the background. Some real nasty go getters.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

They love them some young white girls from the suburbs. Kristi, is it?

Jimmy and Johnny stare back at Vandroski as if he's gone a bit too far for their liking.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

Face it, kid. You don't have a leg to stand on.

CLAY

Really?

VANDROSKI

Take a good look! If it weren't for me, these motherfuckers back here would be in the morgue with a bullet in their forehead!

Clay stares back at the motley crew squatted on the weight machines and swatting punches in the air. Their silence speaks volumes.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

I'm the only constant in their lives. The only one who hasn't turned his back on them. And you wanna come between that like some kind of great white knight. My friend, it's not me you should be worried about.

CLAY

I'm done.

VANDROSKI

Bullshit. You're done when I say you're done.

CLAY

Alright. What's it gonna take for you to let me go?

Vandroski smiles as he ponders this interesting question.

VANDROSKI

Oh. I think we can figure something out.

(to Jimmy)

Can't we, Jimmy?

JIMMY

(smiles)

Yes, sir.

CLAY

Me and Jimmy. I lose, you get forty large and you let me and my family go. That's every dime I ever earned from you. Consider it a cash buyout.

Vandroski turns to Jimmy. A gauze wrap around his wrist.

VANDROSKI

The man's still recovering from a sprained arm. Hardly fair.

JIMMY

Bullshit. I'll kill his ass right now.

Jimmy moves for Clay. Juan holds him back.

JOHNNY

I'll do you one better. I've been waiting a long time for this.

Vandroski and Juan share a smile.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(to Clay)

What do you say, new meat? Wanna shot at the title?

Clay cracks a grin. It's definitely on.

VANDROSKI

I love it. Old school versus new school. It's settled. Cutter versus Payne. Forty K or nothing. Winner takes all.

(to Clay)

And me and you are done. For once and for all time.

CLAY

You got it.

(to Johnny)

Call me when you're ready to get knocked out.

Clay heads for the door. Johnny and company laugh.

Jimmy can't help but smile at the collected young fighter's brazen confidence.

INT. ABANDONED SHOPPING MALL - LATE NIGHT

Lots of stadium style lights hooked to outside generators are staged in different parts of the second floor. A giant hole in the center of the room where a guard rail and glass wall once kept shoppers safe.

The space is simply the skeletal structure of what used to be a busy and vibrant shopping mall. Nothing left but dust and debris covered concrete and grafitti on every possible flat surface visible to the eye.

The large crowd is getting restless as Clay is nowhere to be found and Johnny paces the floor.

Vandroski, Juan and Jimmy walk up an inoperable escalator painted over with graffiti.

They greet Johnny.

VANDROSKI  
Where's golden boy?

JOHNNY  
Taking a nervous shit would be my  
guess.

Juan cracks up. Vandroski swats Jimmy in the stomach.

VANDROSKI  
Find Cutter and let's get this show  
on the road.

Jimmy ducks down a dark hallway that used to lead to the public restrooms.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - LATE NIGHT

Clay shuffles back and forth -- nervous and unsure of himself as Hailey quietly watches.

HAILEY  
It's not too late to back out.

CLAY  
I'm good. Just anxious to get this  
over with. Get back to normal  
again.

HAILEY  
Speaking of. I've been doing some  
thinking. About us. About your  
mom. My mom. It's kind of a big  
mess.

With his back turned, Clay rolls his eyes.

CLAY  
We gotta talk about this now?

HAILEY  
We don't have to.

CLAY  
Good.

Hailey bites her lip. She can't help herself.

HAILEY

I was just thinking. You know,  
things do happen for a reason.  
Maybe we happened for a reason.  
Just not the reason we thought.

Clay stops pacing -- confused.

CLAY

How's that?

HAILEY

It's just that the idea of us being  
together now. Knowing what we  
know. And with all the tension  
between our mothers.

CLAY

It's gonna be impossible.

Hailey slowly comes around and nods in agreement.

HAILEY

I was hoping you'd say it first.

CLAY

Look. I know you're trying to let  
me down easy here. But right now,  
I'm sort of thinking about walking  
out of here with both my legs. If  
you know what I mean.

Hailey cracks a nervous laugh.

HAILEY

Of course. Sorry. I'll leave you  
to it.

Hailey heads for the door.

CLAY

Hey.

She stops, turns back.

CLAY (CONT'D)

It was nice while it lasted.

Hailey smiles, heads out. She bumps elbows with Jimmy who  
ducks his head in.

JIMMY

Yo, Cutter. Showtime.

Clay lets out a long breathe and follows Jimmy out.

INT. ABANDONED SHOPPING MALL - LATE NIGHT

Clay moves out of the darkness and under the tall and beaming lights where he's met with the low and deafening rumble of boos and opposition.

Johnny meets him near the center floor.

Clay peeks into the dark and empty pit of the first floor. No glass wall or railing protecting them.

CLAY  
(to Vandroski)  
What is this? Some kind of joke?

VANDROSKI  
Just a little obstacle to make things interesting.

HAILEY  
He could get killed!

VANDROSKI  
Like I said. Just keeping things interesting.

CLAY  
I don't want anybody hurt.

The crowd all have a good laugh. Vandroski and Juan join in their laughter.

Clay stares back at Johnny who doesn't flinch. No fear at all in this one.

VANDROSKI  
My game. My rules, Mister Cutter.  
You in or out?

Clay checks with Hailey who shakes her head. He lets out one last sigh as he steps to Johnny.

Johnny smiles and meets him halfway.

The crowd goes nuts.

The two fighters circle each other -- neither making the first move and studying each other's eyes.

JOHNNY  
Careful, college boy. That's a  
long drop.

Clay steels a quick glance at the dark hole in the floor.

Johnny KICKS HIM IN THE FACE.

Clay stumbles, touches the floor with his left arm. As he  
turns back --

Johnny KNEES HIM IN THE JAW.

Blood spews. Clay tumbles over.

HAILEY  
Get up!

Johnny raises a knee -- high in the air. He's ready to stomp  
Clay's face until --

Clay rolls out of the way and trips Johnny with a real slick  
and lightning face spin move.

The crowd move along with the two fighters. Edging closer  
and closer to the hole.

Clay brushes himself off as Johnny collects himself. The two  
once again circling the ring.

JOHNNY  
Come on, boy. Fight.

Clay throws a hard left but Johnny grabs and twists his arm,  
forcing him to his knees.

Clay CRIES OUT in pain.

Johnny pushes back on Clay's twisted arm.

Hailey intervenes.

HAILEY  
Let him go!

Johnny smiles and kicks Clay in the ass. He tumbles over.  
His arm in serious pain.

HAILEY (CONT'D)  
That's against the rules! You  
can't do that!

The crowd all boo and hiss. Vandroski steps out of the  
huddle and onto the floor.

VANDROSKI

What're you saying, Cutter? Are you all done?

Clay still on the floor and holding his arm close.

CLAY

I didn't hear no bell.

The crowd all have a good laugh. Vandroski smiles.

VANDROSKI

Check him out.

A DOCTOR, pure white bred with goofy glasses, steps out of the crowd and checks on Clay's arm.

DOCTOR

Looks like a sprain.

HAILEY

You cheated. You can't do that.

(to Vandroski)

We're leaving. When your boy's ready to fight clean give us a call.

VANDROSKI

(to Clay)

I'm gonna need a yes or no, Mister Cutter. As you can see, your fans are awaiting an answer.

Clay slowly stands up. He checks with the crowd now quiet as a church mouse.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

I'll take that as a no. That case, I'll expect my forty thousand by the morning, Mister Cutter. Nice doing business with you.

Vandroski turns his back.

CLAY

We're not done here.

VANDROSKI

Surely you can't fight with one good arm.

(to Jimmy)

Can he, Jimmy?

Jimmy steps into the open. His arm still wrapped up.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

What are we to do about this?

JUAN

I have an idea.

VANDROSKI

How about it, Cutter? You and Jumbo. We'll make it nice and fair for you and your girl.

HAILEY

Don't do it, Clay. It's a set up. They wanted you and Jimmy this whole time.

VANDROSKI

Oh, it's still not fair. Okay. How about this. How about we forget the forty grand. We'll make it an even hundred.

HAILEY

You're crazy. He doesn't have that mind of money and you know it.

VANDROSKI

Yes, dear, I know. That's why if he loses, he'll have to work it off. Over the next, I'd say, five years or so.

HAILEY

And if he wins?

VANDROSKI

A hundred thousand. And we're done. Once and for all.

Clay checks with Jimmy. A staring contest ensues.

JUAN

What's it gonna be, Cutter? Are we gonna have ourselves a fight or what?

CLAY

(to Doctor)

Wrap it up.

HAILEY

Oh God.

The crowd erupts.

MINUTES LATER

Clay's arm is carefully wrapped in a gauze bandage and goes toe to toe with the much bigger Jimmy.

Without warning, Jimmy kicks Clay in the chest and sends him soaring across the room.

Before he can stand --

Jimmy rushes over, picks Clay up by the ear, knees him in the stomach and punches him dead in the face.

Clay trips over what used to be a bench. He lands on his sprained arm and cries in agony.

Hailey watches in horror.

Jimmy's bad arm also hurting as he winces in pain.

VANDROSKI

Come on, Jimmy! No pain!

Jimmy steps over the bench and hovers over Clay, still hurting and curled up like a baby.

Jimmy grabs him by the shirt, picks him up, and with the force of a mack truck, punches him in the face.

Clay falls limp to the ground. Blood spills from his broken nose and mouth.

HAILEY

Clay, get up!

Clay manages to stand and makes a run for it, into the dark belly of the mall and out from under the beaming lights of the main floor.

JIMMY

Where you goin, Cutter?!

Jimmy chases after him. The crowd of bangers and spectators all follow behind.

HAILEY

(to herself)

What are you doing, Clay?

FURTHER IN THE MALL

...and all is dark and quiet. All of the sudden, the bright and piercing beams of dozens of FLASHLIGHTS fill the black void of nothingness.

Jimmy makes his way to the forefront. Most of the lights are on him as he searches for Cutter.

Some of the other lights search the empty window panes of abandoned storefronts.

And out jumps Clay.

Tackling Jimmy head on and sending them both to the floor.

Clay lay on top as he uses his good arm to throw a series of unrelenting and deadly punches.

Jimmy's face a bloody pulp.

VANDROSKI

Come on, Jimmy! Get up!

Jimmy grabs Clay by the throat and shoves him off like a rag doll. Clay once again escapes into the darkness.

The rowdy spectators show their disapproval with a low and thunderous boo.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

(to Jimmy)

What're you doing?! He's getting away again! Go get him!

CLAY (O.S.)

Come on, Jimmy! I'm over here!

Jimmy follows the sound of Clay's voice further into the dark belly of the mall.

The crowd follow behind.

INT. STAIRCASE - LATE NIGHT

Jimmy is spot lit by several flashlights as he hurries up a set of steps. Graffiti painted on every possible wall and all the way up the stairs.

Clay appears at the top.

CLAY

Up here, Jimmy!

He ducks behind the wall. Jimmy chases after him.

EXT. ABANDONED SHOPPING MALL - ROOFTOP - LATE NIGHT

Jimmy kicks open the rooftop door and searches the flat terrain for Clay.

The CITY LIGHTS in the near distance spotlight the fact that they are indeed on top of the building.

The dozen or so flashlights enter the roof and help Jimmy search for his opponent.

Clay walks into the light.

CLAY

Here it is, Jimmy. It's gotta be you or me. Do or die.

Jimmy takes notice of all the smooth edges of the roof. Absolutely nothing keeping them from falling off.

JUAN

Shit.

VANDROSKI

What?

JUAN

Jumbo's afraid of heights.

Hailey stumbles through the door, spots Clay near the center of the dangerous rooftop.

HAILEY

Oh my God, Clay. What're you doing?

Jimmy moves for Clay. It's the moment of truth. Vandroski and Juan share a big smile.

Johnny walks into the open and WHISTLES LOUDLY.

Everyone grows quiet for a split second. Johnny reaches into his pocket, pulls out his wallet and tosses it to Vandroski who takes a closer look.

It's JOHNNY PAYNE'S FBI BADGE and credentials.

VANDROSKI

What the fuck is this?

Johnny smiles back at Clay.

JOHNNY  
 (to Clay)  
 Go get him!

Clay unwraps the gauze bandage from his supposedly sprained arm and wraps it around both wrists. He holds it as a sort of homemade weapon.

CLAY  
 Come on, badass.

Jimmy charges Clay head on as Clay spins and wraps the gauze around Jimmy's throat.

He slowly chokes him out as Jimmy gasps for air and is sent to his knees. Clay eventually lets go.

Jimmy gathers himself, rises up and throws another hard right which Clay blocks and returns with a fury of ultra fast and super technical moves not learned on the street.

Jimmy doesn't know what's hitting him as the flashing light and blurbs of darkness confuse him.

Clay kicks and punches him further and further toward the edge of the roof.

And finally, a DOUBLE ROUNDHOUSE sends Jimmy almost tumbling over the side. He catches himself and stares down at the old parking lot below.

He turns over, stares up at Clay who offers him his hand.

Jimmy cracks a smile. He takes Clay's hand.

JIMMY  
 Not bad, baby boy. Respect.

CLAY  
 Yeah, thanks.

The crowd goes absolute berserk.

CROWD  
 Cu-tter! Cu-tter! Cu-tter!

A furious Vandroski darts across the rooftop toward Special Agent Johnny Payne.

VANDROSKI  
 Broken arm, my ass! What the hell is this? Some kind of joke?!

JOHNNY

No joke. Just making things interesting, Michael. That's all.

Vandroski turns to the crowd behind him.

VANDROSKI

What're you waiting on?! Ten grand to the first motherfucker who tosses this bastard off the roof!

They don't budge.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

What're you waiting on?! Kill him!

CLAY

They're done, Michael. You're done.

JOHNNY

You see, Michael. Cutter and I made ourselves our own deal. One we were just happy enough to share with our new friends here.

Vandroski checks with the crowd. They are all smiles.

VANDROSKI

Hell are you talking about?!

JOHNNY

I told them Cutter here was a sure thing. After all. He's got both his arms to work with. Jimmy here never stood a chance.

Vandroski checks with Clay who picks up the gauze wrap from the ground and balls it up.

VANDROSKI

You lying, manipulative, sorry ass cheating pieces of shit.

(to Clay)

I'm not giving you a dime, Cutter.

JOHNNY

Oh, it's not Cutter I'd be worried about if I were you, Michael.

Vandroski turns to the crowd now moving in on him.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Turns out Cutter was the favorite after all. If I were you, I'd start thinking about how I'm gonna square up with these guys.

The now hostile crowd move Vandroski closer and closer to the roof's edge.

VANDROSKI

What're you doing?! You gotta help my ass!

JOHNNY

I don't have to do shit.

VANDROSKI

You're a cop! Do something!

JOHNNY

Sorry, Michael. I'm afraid I'm outgunned.

Clay smiles at Hailey still standing by the rooftop door. She smiles back.

Vandroski points at Juan.

VANDROSKI

He had Raimi killed! It was him!

Juan grows panicked and slowly moves for the door. Clay watches him closely.

VANDROSKI (CONT'D)

He had it set up so Kovac would take the fall! But when he didn't take the bait, he got nervous and did it himself!

JUAN

Shut up!

VANDROSKI

Cutter was getting too close! Raimi told him everything! The whole operation! He was gonna kill Cutter too! He was next! Ask anyone!

Johnny pulls his gun and makes a move for Juan.

Juan grabs Hailey and puts a gun to her head.

JUAN  
Everybody get back!

Juan moves himself and Hailey out of harm's way and closer to the edge of the roof.

HAILEY  
Clay! Is this part of your master plan?!

CLAY  
No, baby. It's okay. We got you. You're not going anywhere.

Johnny draws down on Juan.

JOHNNY  
Take it easy, Willis. You don't want this. Trust me.

JUAN  
You're gonna take that gun and toss it over the edge. Real slow like.

Clay and Jimmy both move closer to Juan.

Juan turns his gun on both of them.

JUAN (CONT'D)  
Get back!

Hailey elbows him in the gut as he tumbles backward without letting go of her t shirt. He stumbles over the rooftop and drops to his death.

Hailey slides across the dirt and almost follows Juan if not for a huge and powerful arm grabbing hers.

She stares up at Jimmy -- holding her up with his one good arm and barely hanging on.

HAILEY  
Don't drop me!

JIMMY  
I'm not gonna drop you, sweetheart!  
Just hold on real tight!

Clay grabs Hailey's other arm and helps Jimmy jerk her safely onto the rooftop.

They all take a moment to gather themselves.

Clay gives Hailey a giant bear hug.

Johnny cuffs Vandroski's arms behind his back as the crowd all watch in silence.

Jimmy, Clay and Hailey all stand.

CLAY  
(to Jimmy)  
Thank you.

JIMMY  
Any time.

Clay and Hailey head for the door.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Hey, Cutter.

Clay turns back.

JIMMY (CONT'D)  
Be good now.

He cracks a grin. Clay smiles back.

CLAY  
Oh, yeah.

Clay and Hailey head for the door.

CROWD #1  
(to Clay)  
Yo, you some kind of badass or  
somethin, man?

Clay faces the crowd.

CLAY  
That's right.

FADE OUT.

THE END