

SHADES WITHIN

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FADE IN:

A close shot of a man's smiling face. The man, RUDY ZIMMERMAN (30) stares wide eyed at something unseen in front of him.

RUDY (V.O.)

The moment we think we know ourselves, what we are capable of, is the exact moment we should be worried.

Rudy's face remains, unchanging.

RUDY (V.O.)

Worried that we may do something... Something drastic to change the place we find ourselves. And it is this deed that will ultimately define who we truly are.

Rudy's face still unmoving.

An UNIDENTIFIED HAND gently pulls Rudy's eyelids down, closing them, letting us know that he is dead.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

SUPER: ONE WEEK EARLIER

The golden desert goes for miles in all directions. Flat-topped mesas sit in the distance.

A RATTLESNAKE winds its way through the harsh sand going somewhere.

A MACHETE comes down on top of the thing cutting it in two.

EXT. TRAILER HOME - DAY

Model circa 1960. A dilapidated trailer that's been there so long it looks as though it has become part of the surrounding desert.

An old FORD PICK UP sits in the front.

Desert surrounds the place going for miles in all directions with dirt roads looking more like trails leading away from it.

SEVERAL TRAILER HOMES sit separated by at least a quarter mile between them.

INT. TRAILER HOME - BEDROOM

Steam comes from the open bathroom door. Someone taking a shower.

On the bed, an open, half-filled suitcase, sits.

BATHROOM

Hold on the silhouetted, plastic shower curtain.

From the curvaceous outline, we know it is a woman.

Within the frame A MAN'S ARM moves close to the shower curtain.

The large, DEAD SNAKE dangles from it almost touching the ground.

It moves around the shower curtain to where the woman is.

BEL (O.S.)

Jesus Christ!

In a wild flailing motion, BELULAH (BEL), 30's, a curvaceous blonde yanks the shower curtain causing it and the shower rod to come crashing down.

Bel swings wildly at the dead snake.

BEL

Rudy, Goddammit, I'm going to kill you! Crazy! Get that thing away from me.

Water from the shower soaks the surrounding bathroom floor, including Rudy.

Rudy, a cool, cowboy version of Powder with his bald head and thin build LAUGHS at the joke.

Bel not so much.

RUDY

Look what you did. You're getting the floor soaked.

BEL

I don't care! Get that thing way from me! That thing best be dead.

Rudy does as he's told. Pulls the large snake carcass away.

Holds it up high, looks at it.

RUDY

Course it is. 'bout a six-footer.

BEL

I don't care if it's a no-footer. Get it away from me! I hate you.

RUDY

What do you mean you hate me?

Rudy inches the snake closer to Bel.

BEL

Don't you do it. Get it away from me!

Threatening him with a glare, Bel gets her wish.

Rudy moves the snake away.

RUDY

Relax.

BEL

Not funny, asshole.

RUDY

Relax.

Rudy moves in to kiss Bel.

Bel pushes him away.

BEL

Get away from me.

Bel rinses the shampoo from her hair. Closes her eyes to protect them from the soap.

RUDY

You love me.

This gets a smile from Bel. She can't resist his charm even though he's holding a dead snake.

Again, Rudy moves in close to Bel.

The water from the shower continues to soak everything around, including Rudy.

He doesn't care.

RUDY

Tell me you love me.

Rudy kisses Bel.

This time she allows it.

BEL

I hate you. Now go. Get that thing out of here.

RUDY

Love you, too.

BEL

You're crazy. And put this shower curtain back up.

Rudy makes a mocking face.

INT. TRAILER HOME - LIVING ROOM

A COUNTRY AND WESTERN SONG plays. The SIZZLE of food comes from the connecting

KITCHEN

Rudy puffs on a cigarette blowing the smoke out an open back door.

Several PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION BOTTLES sit on the table.

Some opened others not.

BEL (O.S.)

What are you doing in there.

RUDY

Nothing.

Rudy gets rid of his cigarette, blows extra hard trying to get the last of the smoke from his lungs.

INT. TRAILER HOME - LIVING ROOM

Rudy sits on the beaten up couch. Holds a CHEAP SILVER NECKLACE in his hands. Watches the silver horse ornament twist at the end of the chain.

EXT. TRAILER HOME - LATER

Rudy loads luggage into the back of the old Ford truck then gives a RETRIEVER a big hug and pats the dog on the head one last time before getting into the driver's side.

RUDY

Be a good boy and take care of the place.

The dog watches Rudy like he's not coming back. WHINES.

INT. TRUCK

Bel now wearing a YELLOW SUNDRESS and cowboy boots, exits the trailer. She jumps into the passenger side of the truck.

Both look at each other as if to say "Ready?"

Rudy, leans over, opens the glovebox and retrieves a half-used pack of NICOTINE GUM. Pops one in his mouth.

RUDY

I'm doing it so I don't kill no
one?

Rudy pats Bel on the leg.

RUDY

'Cluding you.

BEL

You couldn't kill a flea.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Rudy's Ford Truck pulls onto a paved, four-laned highway and gets going past a speed limit sign.

INT. TRUCK - LATER

A RADIO STATION plays a country song.

Rudy, driving, looks out the passenger window at a highway sign reading: LAS VEGAS 210 MILES and follows it with his sight.

Bel sleeps with her head in Rudy's lap.

Rudy's face looks off-white. Sickly. For the first time, we get a sense of reason for his choice (or lack thereof) of hairstyle. He looks for a place to pull over.

As Rudy pulls to the side of the highway, Bel stirs awake

BEL
We stopping?

Rudy doesn't respond.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Ford sits on the edge of the highway idling. The passenger door sits open.

CARS speed by throwing wind around the truck.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Bel sits at the edge of the passenger seat, door open rubbing Rudy's back who is sitting between her legs.

RUDY VOMITS on the roadside away from the truck.

EXT. DESERT SUBURB - DAY

Rudy's truck pulls onto a street.

One story, falling apart houses, most with kids toys, broken down cars, and dirt front yards fill the neighborhood.

INT. TRUCK

Bel drives slowly. Rudy eyes each house number.

RUDY
Here.

Bel stops short of number 13 just up ahead. Pulls the car to the curb, cuts the engine.

RUDY
Wait here.

We watch as Rudy crosses the street to number 13. The house like the rest, run down and not well taken care of.

At the end of the drive, he straightens the crooked mailbox, picks up toys strewn across the yard. Finally gets to the door, hesitates. Knocks.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Rudy waits at the front door. The door opens and ASHLEY (5), a chubby blonde girl, stands there, immediately jumps into Rudy's arms.

ASHLEY

Daddy!

Rudy squeezes her tight for what seems like forever. Ashley pulls away.

ASHLEY

Daddy, what happened to your hair?

Ashley rubs Rudy's bald head.

RUDY

I cut it. Cool ain't it?

ASHLEY

It's so slick and shiny. Like a bowling ball.

FROM THE TRUCK

Bel watches the reunion.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Rudy searches his pockets. Finds the cheap necklace.

RUDY

Look what Daddy brought you.

ASHLEY

Horse neck-a-lace! I love it!

Ashley throws herself into Rudy's arms. Rudy gushes.

ASHLEY

Daddy, can I come and live with you? I don't want to be with mommy's boyfriend. He scares me.

Rudy searches for an excuse.

RUDY

Sometimes daddies can't be with their kids. Doesn't mean Daddy doesn't love you.

ASHLEY

But why?

RUDY

Listen, baby, Daddy wants you to know that whatever happens, I love you. I think about you all the time.

ASHLEY

But why can't I come with you?

RUDY

Daddy has to go somewhere.

RUDY'S EX-WIFE (O.S.)

That's because Daddy doesn't care about you, Ash.

Rudy and Ashley look up to find RUDY'S EX-WIFE (30s) standing within the open door. Her once held beauty gone behind the booze and cigarettes.

Rudy stands, backs off.

RUDY

Look, I don't want no trouble...

RUDY'S EX-WIFE

That's your fucking problem. Afraid to face what's in front of you.

(MORE)

RUDY'S EX-WIFE(cont'd)
Big tough guy, 'fraid he might
punch a woman again. Go ahead, do
it. Or you too scared?

Rudy's Ex-wife daring him. Rudy not taking the bait.

Ex-wife's BOYFRIEND (30s), hulking man, shirtless, pants
sagging now within the doorway.

BOYFRIEND
Problem here?

RUDY
Ain't no problem.

RUDY'S EX-WIFE
Goddamed right.

ASHLEY
Mommy, look what Daddy got me!

Ashley shows off the necklace.

RUDY'S EX-WIFE
Ash, get inside. Daddy isn't
'sposed to be here.

FROM THE TRUCK

Bel watches. Sees the standoff between Rudy and his ex-wife.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

BOYFRIEND
Your daddy was just leaving,
Ashley.

The Boyfriend pulls Ashley inside. You can see the anger
beginning to well in Rudy's face though the Boyfriend's
physical presence too much.

ASHLEY
I want to go with Daddy!

RUDY

Daddy loves you, baby girl.

RUDY'S EX-WIFE

Go ahead, run away again, you son-of-a-bitch. Coward.

Rudy backs off down the steps.

The Boyfriend prevents Ashley from leaving. Rudy's Ex finally slams the door shut.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Daddy! Please!

Rudy stands there considering. His wife is right, he turns and leaves like a defeated animal.

Ashley's CRIES from inside follow Rudy across the street.

Rudy turns one last time as if he might go back. He doesn't.

INT. TRUCK - HOURS LATER

The landscape outside not much different. Still desert.

Bel drives. She takes a moment to look over at Rudy who is leaned up against the passenger door.

His pale, sleeping face not the peaceful kind.

Bel looks at the rearview mirror.

Stuck to it, a small photo of Rudy, full head of hair and heavier, with Ashley.

Bel removes the photo and holds it close to get a better look.

RUDY (O.S.)

Shame you never met her.

Bel looks over at Rudy who is now awake and sitting up.

BEL
Not your fault.

RUDY
Yeah it is. Would've been two peas
in a pod you two.

BEL
We'll meet one of these days.

Bel hands the photo over.

Rudy takes it and places it back in its spot on the mirror.

RUDY
When you do, tell her that her dad
wasn't such an asshole. Wasn't such
a bad guy.

BEL
Why would I lie to her on our first
meeting?

This draws a smile from Rudy.

RUDY
How much further?

BEL
About another hour or so. How are
you feeling?

RUDY
I don't feel like I wanna shoot
myself. I need a cigarette.

BEL
Get some gum.

Rudy leans on the window, stares out the front at the
horizon.

BEL
I know you don't feel good, baby.

Bel puts her hand on Rudy's. Watches him.

RUDY

Ever wonder what it would be like
to watch your own funeral?

BEL

I'd like to sit in the back row and
watch all those people who didn't
give a shit suddenly give a shit.

RUDY

Would you surprise everyone at the
end to let them know it was only a
test run?

BEL

I want to know who's gonna sit
where, what they're wearing, who
they're with. Don't want nobody
there that I didn't like. Giving
bullshit speeches, drinking my beer
afterwards.

RUDY

You're gonna have beer after?

BEL

Maybe even some hard liquor. Have
my friends pass a joint around.

RUDY

What kind of beer?

BEL

Doesn't matter.

RUDY

Course it does. Don't want people's
last recollection of you being
Milwaukee's Best.

BEL

Doesn't matter.

RUDY

Giving me diarrhea just thinking about it. Make it Coors for me, at least. Don't want people being pissed at me after I'm dead. Every time they think of me is running to the head.

BEL

You mean all four people?

RUDY

Four's better than none. I don't need a line of people waiting to see my ugly face.

BEL

Won't let more than two people gather in the same place at the same time. Because I love you so much.

RUDY

Wonder when it's all over if all the bullshit goes with it? Will it all be worth it?

Bel hesitates. Searching for the right response.

BEL

Has to be.

RUDY

Not sure anymore.

Eyes full of doubt, Rudy averts his gaze, stares at the passing landscape.

RUDY

I'm scared.

Bel puts her hand on Rudy's neck.

BEL

Me, too.

She watches Rudy. Bel smiles, a tear formed in her eye. Turns to hide it.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Rudy's Ford Truck sits at a gas pump.

Rudy tops off the tank.

Parked nearby, a CADILLAC sits. Has "PLARH8T" as a vanity plate.

A CHOLO(20's) leads a YOUNG GIRL (15) - with an identical YELLOW SUNDRESS as Bel - towards the waiting Caddy. Her face is one of dread.

She looks over at Rudy as if to say "help me" before being forced into the passenger's side.

Rudy notices and keeps his eye on her.

Rudy gets in the driver's side of the truck.

INT. TRUCK

From the REAR VIEW, Rudy watches the parked Caddy. In the photo, Ashley eerily resembles the young girl. Rudy moves his sight from the picture on the rear-view back to the girl.

The Cholo gets out of the Caddy and goes into the Gas Station bathroom leaving the young girl alone.

Rudy takes another look at his daughter in the photo.

OUTSIDE

Rudy leaves his truck and walks towards the Caddy. The young girl looks directly at him surprised to see Rudy walking towards her.

With his eye on the bathroom door, Rudy goes right up to the passenger window.

At the window, the frightened girl rolls it down.

Rudy Checks the bathroom door once more.

RUDY

Everything okay? You need some help?

Before the girl can answer...

CHOLO (O.S.)

Hey, tough guy...

Rudy turns to find the Cholo standing right behind him, postured up.

CHOLO

...unless you's handing out hunerd dollar bills you best find someone else to talk to.

Rudy backs down.

RUDY

Just asking directions.

At the same time, Bel exits the gas station. Immediately spots Rudy at the Caddy. Motions for him to come.

Before moving, Rudy looks down at the young girl.

The girl looks over at the Cholo who stands on the driver's side.

CHOLO

Get a map and get the fuck away from my ride.

The girl forces an awkward smile at Rudy.

GIRL

I'm fine.

The scared look on her face says she lying.

RUDY

Sure?

The girl gives a weak nonverbal "yes". Begs him with her eyes to save her.

CHOLO

You deaf, motherfucker?

Rudy hesitates as though he may do something.

RUDY

My mistake.

Rudy leaves back to his truck.

CHOLO

Fucking joto.

The Cholo gets behind the wheel. Eyes Rudy through the windshield.

I/E. TRUCK - DAY

Bel sits in the passenger side of the truck.

Rudy hops in the driver's side. Watches the Caddy pull out in the rear view. The young girl watches Rudy's truck as the Caddy pulls out and gets going down the highway.

The Caddy throws dirt and rocks on the way out.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Rudy starts the truck and puts it in gear.

BEL

What was that all about?

RUDY

Nothing. Thought I knew them.

BEL

That girl, had the exact same dress
I did. You see?

RUDY

Didn't notice.

Bel throws a new pack of cigarettes on Rudy's lap.

Rudy takes the pack, looks at Bel.

Bel keeps her eyes straight ahead.

BEL

That's all you get for the rest of
the trip.

Rudy smiles, gets the truck going down the highway.

RUDY

How did you get these?

Bel grins.

RUDY

You stole them.

BEL

Guys are suckers for cleavage.

RUDY

I'm not visiting you in jail.

BEL

Not even a conjugal?

Smiling, Rudy tears into the pack. Gets the truck started and moving.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAY

Packed with drunks, gamblers and families all walking to somewhere.

The main drag almost bumper to bumper.

Rudy's truck sits in traffic.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

A reserved quietness between Rudy and Bel.

BEL

How are you feeling?

RUDY

Fine.

Something in his voice betraying his answer.

An uneasy smile between them.

EXT. RITZ HOTEL - DAY

A place way out of price range for Rudy and Bel.

Rudy's Ford Truck pulls up to the front valet. Its rust and loud engine sticking out like a sore thumb.

A VALET(20s) and CONCIERGE (20s) watch curiously.

INT. ELEVATOR

MUZAK plays from overhead.

Rudy, Bel and the concierge stand quiet.

The concierge looks down at Rudy's exposed forearm. Notices several TATTOOS.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM

Across the room, Bel draws the curtains letting a flood of sunlight into the large, expensive area. The Las Vegas Strip sits below.

Bel's face lights up.

BEL

This is beautiful.

Rudy stands at the front door with the concierge just out of earshot of Bel.

CONCIERGE

You do time in San Quentin?

Rudy looks over at Bel preoccupied with the view, hesitates before...

RUDY

Yeah, I did some time.

CONCIERGE

You were a bad-ass.

Rudy gives a half-assed smile before giving the concierge a ten dollar bill.

The concierge takes it.

CONCIERGE

Shame what happened with you,
Champ.

(waits for response)

Well, Champ, if you need anything.
Anything. Just let me know. I have
access to everything and anything.

(quiet)

Anything you can shoot, sniff or
smoke. Like the good ol' days.

The Concierge gives Rudy a wink and a nod.

RUDY

That ain't me no more. Things
changed.

CONCIERGE

(awkward)

Good to hear. Enjoy your stay.

One last look from the concierge before he excuses himself.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - LOBBY

The Concierge stands talking with THE VALET.

CONCIERGE

Remember that boxer, the "Great
White Hype"?

VALET

White dude with the left hook?

CONCIERGE

That's him. Looks like shit.
Amazing what the years'll do to
you.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM - LATER

Rudy, shirtless, leans over the dresser and snorts a rail of COCAINE, leans back and allows it to drain in the back of his throat.

He then begins searches the luggage looking for something.

Without a shirt, we get a good look at the several TATTOOS covering his torso and arms, most looking as though they were done in prison. Most notable the pair of crossed BOXING GLOVES on his shoulder.

A shower RUNS O.S.

Rudy Looks towards the bathroom, paranoid then continues his search for something. Goes to Bel's carry-on bag, looks through it.

He finds a small, make-up bag and unzips it revealing a stack of 100 DOLLAR BILLS stuffed in it.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM

Rudy lies on the bed, fully dressed. Stares at a BUSINESS CARD studying it.

Bel enters the room drying her hair, a white, hotel courtesy robe covering her body.

Rudy hides the business card in his shirt pocket.

Bel immediately looks over at her bag which is noticeably out of sorts.

BEL

What were you doing?

RUDY

Looking for the fingernail clippers. Why'd you tell the desk guy it was our honeymoon?

The first thing she does is check her bag finding the clippers. Before throwing the clippers, Bel notices the cocaine residue on the dresser.

BEL

Because it was easy. Here.

Bel throws the clippers to rudy.

BEL

Don't be doing that shit here.

RUDY

What shit?

Bel isn't buying it.

Rudy casually clips a fingernail.

RUDY

Why not? Not like it's gonna kill me.

BEL

I don't like it when you're on
that.

Rudy SNIFFS from the cocaine residue draining in his throat.

Bel glares at Rudy.

RUDY

Fine.

Rudy gets up and finds the hidden stash, hands it over.

Bel takes it and immediately goes to the restroom.

Rudy goes to stop her.

RUDY

No. Don't throw it! Two-hundred
dollars worth of stuff.

Too late. A TOILET FLUSHES from the restroom.

Rudy lets out a frustrated SIGH.

RUDY

Damn.

He falls on the bed, pouts.

Bel exits, a look of satisfaction over her face.

She, again, drops her robe revealing her goods.

BEL

Yeah? This is worth more than that.

Bel approaches Rudy and kisses him.

Rudy isn't as enthusiastic about it as Bel.

BEL

Quit pouting.

RUDY

Stop.

Bel stares at Rudy trying to get something positive out of him.

He isn't giving in.

Bel gives up, goes to the restroom and returns seconds later with the cocaine baggie. She tosses it on Rudy's lap.

BEL

Do what you want. It's your life.
Lose everything for that shit. Go
ahead.

She goes back into the bathroom. A BLOW DRYER starts.

By the look on Rudy's face, that comment hurt.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

The lights of downtown Vegas are visible in the distance, indicating Rudy and Bel's location as being blocks off the strip.

Rudy follows Bel down the sidewalk. When he reaches her, he grabs her arm hard and turns her around.

RUDY

Hey.

Bel yanks her arm away.

RUDY

I'm sorry.

Bel softens.

BEL

I just don't want you all messed
up. I don't like it. I want you the
way you are. The way it used to be.
No more. Promise?

RUDY
(reluctant)
No more. I promise.

Rudy kisses Bel.

BEL
You even know where you are going?

RUDY
You're talking to a master
navigator.

A HOODED STRANGER follows behind them, hidden within the shadows unnoticed.

BEL
Some navigating getting us lost in
the woods for two days in North
Carolina.
(mocking)
It'll be fun camping.

Rudy's not listening. He's more concerned with the man behind them.

He pulls Bel to get going.

BEL
Hey...

They turn into an intersecting alley.

Rudy checks behind him for the stranger.

Nothing this time.

As he turns around, TWO THUGS stand in their way causing the couple to stop dead.

Rudy looks back towards the way they came and finds the hooded stranger blocking their escape.

Bel realizes.

THUG 2 (O.S.)
Where's the party?

Rudy turns to face Thug 1 who now holds a PISTOL aimed at him a few meters away.

His face hidden within the shadows.

THUG 2
I said, where's the party?

THUG 2 (18), tattooed and pierced, looks high as a kite.

THUG 2
Those things have party written all
over them.

Bel reflexively tries pulling her dress up to hide her cleavage.

RUDY
Have some respect.

Rudy puts himself between he and the thugs. Surrounded now.

THUG 1
We'll do this thing either the hard
way or the hardest way.

Rudy steps away from Bel leaving space between himself and her.

RUDY
Leave her alone.

BEL
Rudy!

Thug 1 stares Rudy in the eyes before shooting him point blank.

Rudy falls face first onto the concrete.

WALNUT

More excuses from a washed-up,
Cheat. Heard you broke a nail in
that dive you took, or dare I say,
didn't take.

RUDY

That was ten years ago. Anything
more recent?

WALNUT

How bout a dead woman with your
name on it? Or did you take a fall
for that, too, Champ?

RUDY

You can't hurt what is already
broken.

WALNUT

Oh I can make it hurt. I can make
it hurt a lot more.

Rudy takes a pack of cigarettes off the table, takes a
cigarette out and lights it. He takes a long drag.

RUDY

How much did you lose on that
fight, Detective? Your pretty
little wife leave you after you
blew her savings?

Without warning, Walnut grabs the hammer and smashes Rudy's
pinky finger.

RUDY

Motherfucker!

Rudy grabs his hand and holds it close.

WALNUT

(to Burns)

Confused suspect fell and smashed
his finger, Burns.

(MORE)

WALNUT(cont'd)

(to Rudy)

That's your first warning. This is my town and I do what I want. I'll get what I'm owed. Now tell me, where's the money, Champ?

Walnut takes a deep drag off his cigarette.

RUDY

I don't know what you're talking about! Fuck. I'm the one with a fucking hole in my head!

WALNUT

We have all night to play games, Champ. My partner's wife can bring us dinner. Burns here sleeps standing up, like a horse. Keeps his eyes open. Creepy, really. I can sit here all night asking you questions until your ears bleed. I can make your ears bleed like your finger.

A silent beat.

WALNUT

Now, who's got it? Where is it? Think real hard. Trace your steps back.

RUDY

I don't fucking know!

INT. AMBULANCE - RUDY'S POV

The blurry image of an EMT working on Rudy. Hanging IV lines, putting tubes here and there. A hectic scene.

RUDY (V.O.)

All there is is bits and pieces...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - RUDY'S POV

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Sir? Can you hear me? Show me two fingers.

A DOCTOR shines a small flashlight into Rudy's eyes.

Rudy goes out again.

Again, blurred vision that begins to get clearer where we notice the Doctor, and Walnut and Burns standing bedside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

A shot of the entire room reveals Rudy lying in bed, head bandaged, hooked up to an IV and other monitors and devices. His head has a clean, white bandage. One eye covered by a black patch.

DOCTOR

How do you feel? Anything bothering you right now?

RUDY

Feels like someone is playing drums in my head. What happened? Where am I?

DOCTOR

You're in the hospital. You had a penetrating injury to the left side of the head, through the eye. Small caliber weapon damaged your eye and part of your frontal lobe. We had to open your skull to allow the pressure room to escape. Remarkable recovery. Do you know what year it is?

Rudy takes a moment to think about the answer.

RUDY
Two thousand fourteen?

DOCTOR
Good. Squeeze my fingers.

Rudy does.

DOCTOR
You know what Month it is?

RUDY
October?

DOCTOR
Good. Where were you born?

The Doctor goes to Rudy's feet. Removes the blanket covering them.

RUDY
Arkansas?

DOCTOR
Good. Wiggle your toes.

Rudy responds by wiggling his toes.

DOCTOR
Good. Do you remember what happened? Anything about the accident.

Rudy takes another moment.

RUDY
No.

DOCTOR
Raise your left leg.

The Doctor holds his hand just above Rudy's leg. Rudy raises it as the doctor pushes against it.

DOCTOR

The other.

Rudy does the other leg. The doctor pushes against it.

DOCTOR

Some weakness on the right. Not too bad, considering. Any numbness or tingling in the arms or legs?

RUDY

Little numbness on the right. Bel. Where's Bel?

DOCTOR

Well, I'm pleased with how well you're doing. Given your recovery to this point, I expect the same over the next weeks to months.

WALNUT

Doctor, can I have a few minutes with your patient?

DOCTOR

You've got five minutes. Then he needs to rest.

The doctor checks the several BEEPING and HUMMING monitors, writes down his vital signs.

DOCTOR

Five minutes, detectives.

WALNUT

Sure thing, doc.

The doctor leaves.

RUDY

What's going on?

WALNUT

Rudy Zimmerman. Boxing's great white hype, I mean, hope. All those years of throwing fights finally caught up with you.

RUDY

I never threw a fight in my life. What happened?

WALNUT

Yeah, well, not even when you were supposed to. You had an apparent bullet wound to the head. Grazing shot. No bullet, though as far as we can find. Horrible shot whoever it was. Who knows what happened? Detective Walnut, Detective Burns, Las Vegas Homicide.

RUDY

Homicide? Who's dead?

WALNUT

(laughs)

Who's dead?

(to Burns)

Looks like your days of hiding are over, Champ. Somebody finally found you.

Rudy suddenly remembers.

RUDY

Bel. Where's Bel?

WALNUT

Maybe you owed her money, too? Excuse me for being off topic. Good to let old dog's lie dead, no? What do you remember?

RUDY

Nothing. I don't remember anything.
What happened?

WALNUT

You were attacked near the
restaurant. I spoke with the
restaurant staff and they said you
left around eleven. What about him?

Walnut shows Rudy a crime scene photo of a unidentified, dead
man's bloodied face - THUG #2.

RUDY

Should I know him? Who is it?

Walnut holds the photo in front of Rudy a moment before
putting it away.

WALNUT

(looks to Burns)

We're running in circles here,
Champ. I'm starting to feel like a
gerbil out for a run.

INTERRUPTING FLASHBACK

FROM RUDY'S POV, SIDEWAYS

Bel SCREAMS.

Blurred images of what appears to be Bel being assaulted by
THUG 2.

BACK TO SCENE

RUDY

(to himself)

Bel. My God.

An uneasy silence.

RUDY

I don't feel good. I need some time.

Burns gives Walnut a "not so sure" look.

WALNUT

(looks at Burns)

He won't leave. He's an old dog with bad habits. Big bad ex-fighter without a spine.

(at Rudy)

You need some time. Just so we're clear, Champ,

(gets close)

I don't like being fucked unless it's a blonde with tits. I certainly won't be fucked by a has-been, on-the-run boxer. I have a reputation of getting my way, Champ. Getting my guy. If you understand that then we'll have no problems with this whole process. That clear? Good.

The Doctor enters, eyes the Detectives.

WALNUT

(easier)

Well, our five minutes are up, anyway. We'll be in touch. Soon as you're healthy, you and me will have a nice discussion about everything.

Both Detectives excuse themselves from Rudy's room.

WALNUT

Doc.

The Doctor checks Rudy's hanging IV bag.

DOCTOR

Lab values are all over the place.
White blood count is non-existent.

RUDY

What does that mean?

DOCTOR

Means we have some investigating to do. Could be nothing. Need to monitor you close for the next few days. Follow up scans of the head. I'll be back around later to check on you. Sound good? Get some rest.

The Doctor leaves.

Through the open door, Rudy notices a MALE NURSE standing outside preparing medications.

The nurse moves out of sight.

Rudy stares into dead space...

A FLASH OF IMAGES

Showing what looks like Bel being accosted. Bel SCREAMS.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy sits on the edge of the bed, gathers his wits. Struggles to stand. The time in bed causing his legs to betray him.

He pulls the privacy curtain around blocking the view to the hallway.

He grabs his throbbing, bandaged head. Takes a moment to gather himself.

Rudy removes the IV line from his arm, does the same with the heart monitor leads.

Blood oozes from the puncture site in his arm.

Rudy stands and limps towards the door. Sheer determination keeping him upright.

A URINE TUBE attached to URINE BAG prevents him.

He returns to the bed and removes the half-full urine bag, carries it with him to the room door.

Rudy closes the door to the room.

Rudy goes into the connecting bathroom. From behind, we watch Rudy yank the urine tube from his body.

While we don't see it, we know where it's being pulled from.

Rudy GROANS in pain and tosses the urine bag and tube in the nearby garbage.

He then stands there over the toilet, urinates a mixture of urine and blood, before going to his belongings in a clear CUSTODY BAG sitting nearby.

Hurriedly, Rudy removes the belongings: Pants, shirt, cell phone and hotel room key and dresses himself.

INT. NURSE'S STATION

Rudy slides by. The preoccupied nurses don't notice.

HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

The male nurse enters, looks around seeing an empty bed. Goes to the bathroom, sees the urine bag on the floor. Leaves in a hurry.

EXT. RITZ HOTEL - DAY

Rudy stands on the sidewalk at the front.

He compares the logo design on the card key with the design at the front of the building showing he's found the right place.

As he limps towards the entrance, the Concierge gives a nod of the head. Follows Rudy with his eyes until Rudy is out of sight.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Rudy walks through the empty lobby.

The DESK CLERK not there.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM

Empty and made up. Not a sign of anyone having been there in a few days.

Rudy stands at the mirror. Stares at the hollow depression where his eye used to be. Then unwraps the bandage from his head.

A good look might even show his brain.

Rudy touches around the open wound in his head, leans in close to get a good look, curious.

LATER

Rudy sits on the edge of the bed considering his next move. Checks his shirt pockets, finds the BUSINESS CARD missed by the detectives.

CLOSE ON CARD

Shows a FLAMING DRAGON and the name: Dragon's Den. On the back, in Rudy's handwriting: FOOTE.

Rudy watches his reflection before we go to

EXT. THE DRAGON'S DEN NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The image of the FLAMING DRAGON on a sign hanging above the club door.

INT. THE DRAGON'S DEN NIGHTCLUB

Rudy enters the club past several large, grotesque BOUNCERS. They eye his eye patch and BLACK BEANIE on his head.

The interior reveals a stage surrounded by ASIAN MEN sitting at small tables watching naked ASIAN GIRLS dance on stage.

An 80's SONG plays loud and distorted from a cheap sound system.

Rudy approaches the bar and orders something from the BARTENDER. Rudy asks the bartender something.

The Bartender points across the room towards a sexy, Indian girl sitting alone.

Rudy approaches the girl.

VINDALOO(20's) wears a long blonde wig and smacks gum.

VINDALOO

(southern accent)

Don't be nervous. You want a lap dance, hun? Give you one, real nice. Like your momma used to give.

RUDY

No, thanks.

Vindaloo looks Rudy up and down. Notices his bare feet.

VINDALOO

Did you take a wrong turn or something?

RUDY

A guy gave me this.

Liar. Rudy hands Vindaloo the business card.

She takes it and inspects it quickly then hands it back.

RUDY

Said I could find some information
here.

Vindaloo looks around the club then eyes Rudy carefully like she's trying to gauge his sincerity.

VINDALOO

Somebody trying to get you killed.
Only reason to send you here.

RUDY

I need some help. Where can I find
this guy?

VINDALOO

You don't know your own ass from a
hole in the ground, do you?

She leans in close to Rudy.

VINDALOO

How 'bout that lap dance? On the
house.

Her look shows she's going to give him more than a lap dance.

SECLUDED AREA

Vindaloo grinds up close, facing away from Rudy who is sitting. Rudy sits uncomfortable, like a teenager on his first night at a strip club.

VINDALOO

You got a cigarette?

RUDY

No.

Vindaloo stops mid-grind, scours the ground before finding a half-smoked cigarette butt.

VINDALOO

Good thing. Studies show smoking is the number one killer for all age groups.

Rudy lights it with a lighter from the table.

VINDALOO

We all have to have at least one vice. Do things we know will kill us in the end, right?

(at his shoes)

What happened to you? You look sick. Shouldn't you be in the hospital?

RUDY

You're a doctor trying to make some extra money, I assume? I'm looking for my girlfriend.

Vindaloo turns to face Rudy. Puts her tits right up on his face.

VINDALOO

I went to medical school, believe it or not. My problem was I liked to party like a rock star. Conservative Indian parents not very liberal when I was a teenager. I made up for it when I moved away from home. I rode the Oxycodone express right out the front door. Medical school loans are the real gifts that keep on giving. Take a case of herpes any day. So here I am. No herpes, tons of debt. What about you? Real honorable thing for a man to stick up for his woman. Can't even get a man to light my cigarette around here. Take. Take. Take. You think I like taking my clothes off for fat dudes?

(MORE)

VINDALOO(cont'd)

His wife and kids eating buffet
while their daddy sweats all over
some tittie dancer. No real
gentlemen left in this world. I
appreciate that.

She finally pauses to take a breath.

RUDY

Appreciate it by helping me, then.

VINDALOO

One thing to comment on a guy's
upbringing. Another to go sticking
my nose up the Devil's ass.

RUDY

Aren't doctors supposed help
someone in need? What happened to
all that?

VINDALOO

Medical school drop-out doesn't
qualify. Lost my sense of altruism
long time ago. Sense of humor,
though.

(close; seductive)

Now tell me, who gave you this
business card?

Vindaloo winces in pain as a BOUNCER (40s) grabs her by the
back of the neck, and drags her away.

A large BLACK MAN (30s) with a tattoo on his face (think Mike
Tyson), stands over Rudy and casually motions him over to

VIP SECTION - JULIUS'S TABLE

JULIUS (MR. J) CHAN, 50, an Asian man plays a marble board
game with another OLD ASIAN MAN.

The Bouncer stands off to the side.

The Black Man sits Rudy down across from Julius.

JULIUS

You a cop?

RUDY

No. I'm not a cop.

Long, awkward silence.

Julius suddenly breaks out in LAUGHTER.

JULIUS

I know, I'm just fucking wi'cha. I
know who you are.

Julius reaches out to shake Rudy's hand.

As Rudy and Julius shake hands, Julius pulls Rudy forward and
raises a large hunting knife to his throat.

JULIUS

You high, crazy, or just stupid!?

Rudy stiffens up, scared, and stares back at Julius's glaring
eyes.

JULIUS

Well? What happened to the nigga
that limped right up in here...

Julius looks at Rudy's bare feet.

JULIUS

and made his self at home? Where's
all the questions you was asking!?

He pushes the knife further into Rudy's chin.

Rudy doesn't flinch.

RUDY

Place was recommended. Told it had
good music, and a great atmosphere.

An ELDERLY MAN runs up to the trash can next to Julius's
table and vomits his last two hours' booze.

Julius pauses, looks at his BODYGUARD, nods and smiles to Rudy as if acknowledging the accuracy of his comment.

The elderly man sits near the trash can and passes out.

Julius LAUGHS.

JULIUS

I like this, nigga. Even his ugly
toes.

Julius pulls the knife from Rudy's neck and pats him hard on the back.

He leans over and snorts a huge rail of cocaine from the table.

He springs back, wide eyed, rubbing his nose and gums offering the snorting straw to Rudy.

Rudy refuses.

JULIUS

Parasites are amazing creatures.
They've survived, flourished and
even evolved by living off the
means of another. Not a symbiotic
relationship. That'd mean both
parties rely on one another for
survival without one harmin' the
other. This parasite
(points to temple)
ain't no different. It survives by
using and manipulating the other
organ systems. Even while it's
slowly killing them, and, thus,
killing itself. The systems only
survive so that they can serve the
parasite. Anything to make the
mothafucka happy.

RUDY

System is dead from the beginning,
then.

RUDY'S POV

Julius's face warps and bends.

JULIUS

Nigga wit an education. Props.

Julius taps his temple with his forefinger.

JULIUS

Unfortunately, the system has evolved with the parasite and is useless without it.

RUDY

You're a pro-system, anti-parasite guy.

JULIUS

I like giving the parasite what it needs.

Again, Julius snorts a line of cocaine from the table.

JULIUS

Because I... Am... The parasite.

Julius grabs Rudy's hand, places it on his chest.

JULIUS

Feel that? By pleasing the parasite, I'm killing the system. The heart is meant to beat fifty to a hundred beats a minute. That's a hundred thirty easy. Decreasing the life of the system by a few months, years.

Julius lets Rudy's hand go.

JULIUS

Feels damn good, though, huh?
Feeding the parasite. Wouldn't have
it any other way, really.

RUDY

Why discuss it?

JULIUS

Get to it. What I like about nigga
like you. All business. All right.
I know why you're here and I'm a
gambling man...like you used to be.

Julius pulls out a large revolver and empties the bullets on
the table.

JULIUS

Live out your dreams in Vegas! You
win a little wager wit me I'll give
you the info you want.

He places one bullet in, closes the receiver and spins it. He
lays the gun on the table.

Julius's table stares back.

JULIUS

If you live. The parasite lives.
And so does the system.

RUDY

This is a joke.

JULIUS

How bad does the parasite want my
information, Rudy?

Rudy considers.

JULIUS

I can give the parasite what it
wants, tell you what you want to
know, Rudy.

(MORE)

JULIUS(cont'd)

You want your pretty little girlfriend back, don't you? How bad? Put the gun to your head and pull the trigger. Simple.

Rudy slowly grabs the gun off the table and studies it.

A mix of sweat and blood rolls down Rudy's head coming from beneath the black beanie causing Rudy to wince in pain.

JULIUS

That's a nasty bump you got there. Musta been a nasty crew that done that. Go ahead. What do you have to lose?

A beat.

JULIUS

You can change things. Make things right by making the right decisions even if it goes against your instincts.

Rudy puts the revolver to his temple.

Tense moment.

JULIUS

Go ahead. Only we have the power to change ourselves. Make things right. Can't rely on others to do it for us.

Rudy slowly squeezes the trigger.

A horrendous BANG! explodes from the gun echoing throughout the club.

The revolver falls to the ground.

Rudy falls to one knee.

The bartender, DANCERS and PATRONS stop and look in Rudy's direction, quiet. The DISTORTED MUSIC is the only thing still going.

Rudy struggles to stand shaken but not seriously harmed.

JULIUS

Damn! Those things sound real.

(to table, like a kid)

I told you those things sounded real, didn't I?!

BODYGUARD

Big fucking cap gun, boss.

The Asian man at the table nods and smiles in agreement. Throws a DOLLAR on the table in front of Julius. His bet.

Julius places his forefinger in his ear, clearing it.

JULIUS

Didn't think you had it in you,
Rudy. Guess reputations can be
misleading.

Rudy holds his throbbing head.

The Bartender, Dancers and patrons return to what they were doing as if nothing happened.

Julius takes a DRAGON'S DEN BUSINESS CARD out and hands it to the bouncer.

The bouncer moves to Rudy and places it in his shirt pocket.

JULIUS

Get him some shoes.

The bouncer goes to the passed out drunk and removes his shoes. Takes them and gives them to Rudy.

JULIUS

Can't go around this nasty place
without something covering your
feet. The filth'll kill you.

Rudy takes the shoes.

The Bouncer escorts Rudy to the front exit.

JULIUS

Don't let me see you again, Rudy.
Or I will finish the job.

EXT. DRAGON'S DEN CLUB - NIGHT

The club door flies open and Rudy stumbles out.

From across the street, a BUSINESSMAN watches Rudy from the half rolled, tinted window of a BLACK CHEVY CAPRICE. The man rolls up the window.

Rudy hails a TAXI.

INT. TAXI - BACKSEAT - ON RUDY

Rudy fidgets and looks over his shoulder suspiciously before turning to the MEXICAN DRIVER.

RUDY

Ritz Hotel.

DRIVER

Ritz Hotel coming right up.

The driver gets going. Starts the meter.

Rudy is out of breath. The Driver looks Rudy up and down through the rear view.

DRIVER

Hey, boss, you're bleeding. You
need a hospital?

Rudy dabs his head with his hand and notices fresh blood.

RUDY

I'm fine.

Rudy pulls the business card from his shirt pocket and reads it.

CLOSE ON CARD

Shows "619-222-3212" handwritten on it.

Rudy pulls out his cell phone and begins dialing.

The Driver gets excited when he suddenly recognizes Rudy.

DRIVER

Early nineties. Rudy Champ
Zimmerman! El Campion! Dios mio!
You were the most cabron fighter
outside of Mexico. I'm only saying
that because, God
(kisses crucifix)
Forgive me for saying this, you
were tougher than Chavez or De la
Hoya in their prime.

Rudy's cellphone RINGS once on the other end until an
OPERATOR ERROR MESSAGE interrupts the ringing.

RUDY

Not me anymore. Good to know I
still have some fans though.

DRIVER

Fans? Boss, you are a Mexican
legend. Shame you never got that
title shot, though.

Rudy hangs up the phone, frustrated.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM

Rudy stands in front of the mirror inspecting his wounded
head. He pulls chunks of dried blood from his scalp and
throws them in the sink causing a swirl of red in the water.

Rudy takes a mini bottle of liquor from the mini bar and downs it in one gulp.

He takes another bottle and also downs it in one gulp then lies down on the bed with his feet still on the floor, winces as pain shoots through his head again.

The pain subsides and he stares at the ceiling.

RUDY'S POV

The ceiling morphs and breathes.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy sits up and pulls business card from his pocket, picks up the HOTEL PHONE and dials.

A RING is heard from the receiver. Then another.

Rudy's cell phone suddenly BUZZES from inside his pocket.

Startled, Rudy looks down at it oddly before taking out his cell phone and answers it.

RUDY

Hello?

(beat)

Hello?

Rudy puts his mouth to the hotel phone's receiver and his cell phone to an ear. He blows into the hotel phone receiver.

The SOUND echoes out of his cell phone.

Rudy hangs up both phones and stares at his reflection in the bathroom mirror, studies it.

A silent beat.

Rudy's cell phone BUZZES again.

He looks at it and hesitates before answering.

The cell phone continues BUZZING.

Not sure what to expect, Rudy finally answers it.

RUDY

Hello?

No one answers.

RUDY

Who is this!?

A CLICK then a DIAL TONE.

Rudy pulls the phone from his ear.

CLOSE ON CELL PHONE - RUDY'S POV

As he scrolls through the Caller ID's list of numbers and stops at the most recent number. It shows the number "212-555-3478" on his cell phone display.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy presses "send".

A RING from the other end.

RUDY

Who the fuck is this!?

Dead silence on the other end before the phone goes DEAD.

Rudy quickly hangs up the phone and studies his reflection in the bathroom mirror.

He goes to the mini bar and pulls out several small bottles of a variety of hard liquor and empties them all in one plastic cup and downs the concoction one swallow.

Rudy goes to the large bay window overlooking the Vegas Strip.

We hold then are at

INT. TRAILER HOME - LIVING ROOM

A COUNTRY AND WESTERN SONG plays.

The SIZZLE of food comes from the connecting

KITCHEN

Where Rudy puffs on a cigarette blowing the smoke out an open back door.

Several PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION BOTTLES sit on the table.

Some opened others not.

BEL (O.S.)

What are you doing in there?

RUDY

Nothing.

Rudy quickly throws his cigarette, blows extra hard trying to get the last of the smoke from his lungs.

From the stove, smoke trails from the frying pan.

The retriever watches from the couch.

Rudy quickly hides the cigarette pack just before Bel enters.

Bel's tight tee shirt showing off her breasts. Makes Rudy take a second look.

BEL

What's burning?

Rudy rushes to tend to his cooking.

RUDY

Snake tacos.

Bel gets close to look.

CLOSE ON FRYING PAN

Parts of a rattlesnake sizzle and cook in oil.

BACK TO SCENE

Bel makes a putrid face.

BEL

Gross. It's nine in the morning.

Bel moves over to the kitchen table.

RUDY

Can't ever say it's too early for
tacos.

Rudy removing the pan from the fire, burns himself.

RUDY

Shit!

Bel disappears into the bedroom.

BEL (O.S.)

Good! Now get ready.

RUDY

I am ready.

(to himself)

We'll just have to eat one of them
buffets when we get there.

BEL (O.S.)

You're not wearing that.

RUDY

Why not?

BEL

Cause I said.

RUDY

Fine. If I can't wear my jeans, you ain't wearing that stripper shirt.

Bel steps in the doorway facing Rudy.

BEL

Stripper shirt?

RUDY

Stripper shirt. The only person I want seeing those is me.

Bel disappears into the bedroom.

BEL (O.S.)

Fine. I don't wear my stripper shirt and you don't wear pants with holes in them.

Rudy looks down at his faded, torn jeans then continues trying to save what's left of his food.

RUDY

People pay top dollar to have holes in their jeans. I'm at the forefront of fashion.

BEL (O.S.)

People pay top dollar to see strippers.

A CELLPHONE RINGS on the table in the living room.

RUDY

Fine. I'll wear my cut off shorts.

Rudy cautiously answers it.

RUDY

(into phone)

Yeah?

Looks towards the bedroom where Bel has disappeared into.

Rudy says something undecipherable into the phone speaking to someone on the other end then hangs up the cell phone. Takes a moment to look at it, lost in thought.

BEL (O.S.)

Who was that?

Rudy is broken out of his thought by Bel's voice. He goes to the kitchen to tend his burnt food.

RUDY

Nobody.

Rudy watches towards the back bedroom when

A HOTEL PHONE RINGS from somewhere.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM

The HOTEL PHONE RINGS. Finally, Rudy comes to, holds his throbbing head before answering it.

RUDY

Hello?

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Mr. Zimmerman. I see you made it back to the hotel.

Rudy looks at the blinking ALARM CLOCK.

11:30.

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

It's Detective Walnut. Can you meet me today? I have some new information about your accident. Your wife.

RUDY

Wife? When?

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Half an hour?

RUDY

Where?

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

I'm working another case about
twenty minutes east of town. Meet
me at Vinnie's Diner off the
fifteen freeway. You know where
that is?

RUDY

I can find it.

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Half an hour, then.

Rudy hangs up, grabs his cell phone, puts it in his pocket.

He looks around and finds the shoes given to him by Julius.
He squeezes into them, using mostly his left hand, then
immediately goes to the door and opens it.

He's startled seeing Detectives Walnut and Burns standing in
the doorway.

WALNUT

Afternoon, Champ. Going somewhere?
You left the hospital without
checking out. Very
uncharacteristic. Unexpected.

(sarcastic)

We were worried something happened
to you, right Burns? We need to
talk.

RUDY

(casual)

I was feeling better so I thought
I'd check myself out. No need to
rack up unwanted hospital bills. I
was just going to get a soda. Dying
of thirst.

WALNUT

Why don't we sit and chat first,
Champ?

RUDY

You can watch me walk down the
hall. Can't talk if I'm dead from
dehydration, can we?

Walnut and Burns look at each other

RUDY

If I was going to run do you think
I'd be hanging out in my hotel
room?

A silent beat.

WALNUT

Get me one, then.

There is a long tense moment as Walnut searches his pockets
before finally handing Rudy a dollar bill.

WALNUT

Coke.

RUDY

Diet or Regular?

WALNUT

(smiles)

I see where this is going.

(pats belly)

Regular.

Rudy squeezes past Walnut and Burns. He limps down the
hallway and stands at the Coke machine.

Walnut sticks his head in the hallway, watches Rudy insert a
buck into the machine and make a selection.

A soda can makes a THUD as it drops into the dispenser.

Satisfied, Walnut steps back into the room out of sight for a moment.

A moment is all Rudy needs, he rushes out the nearest fire exit.

PARKING LOT

Rudy sprints across the street towards a taxi, same driver as before.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - RUDY/BEL'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Burns and Walnut wait for Rudy. Meanwhile they survey the room noticing the empty liquor bottles on the counter.

Walnut pokes his head outside. Rudy's gone.

WALNUT

Son of a bitch.

INT. TAXI - BACKSEAT - RUDY'S POV

as he waits anxiously in the taxi scanning Vinnie's parking out of sight.

The CHEVY CAPRICE sits in the parking lot. The Businessman's profile visible from Rudy's POV. His attention is on the road on the other side away from Rudy's direction.

DRIVER

Knew I'd catch you out there today.
Hope you don't think I'm stalking
you. My friends don't believe I'm
friends with *El Campion*.

CLOSE ON DRIVER'S WATCH

it shows: 11:55.

Rudy's cell phone BUZZES. He answers it watching the businessman's movement from the taxi.

Rudy watches as the Businessman puts a phone to his ear.

RUDY

Hello?

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Mr. Zimmerman. Detective Walnut here. I thought we had a meeting?

RUDY

Be there in five. You already there?

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Yes.

RUDY

Detective, how'd you get my cell phone number?

VOICE #2 (V.O.)

Hospital records.

Rudy hangs up his cell phone, watches the Businessman remove the phone from his ear then look at it - confirming what Rudy already suspected.

As he contemplates his next move, Rudy's cell phone BUZZES.

He ignores it.

The phone continues to BUZZ as Rudy opens the door of the taxi.

RUDY

Wait here. I'll be right back.

TAXI DRIVER

Sure thing, Boss. I'll be right here. Made sure I have some time for *El Campion* today.

TRACK RUDY INTO THE PARKING LOT

Where he heads towards the Businessman in the waiting car and gets right up on the rear of the unsuspecting man's vehicle.

Rudy approaches the passenger door, pulls the door handle and quickly slides into the passenger seat next to the Businessman.

INT. CAR

RUDY

I will shoot you and leave in the desert somewhere where the animals will have a nice meal.

Startled, the Businessman looks at Rudy and then at his pointed jacket pocket mimicking a gun.

A PISTOL sits in the Businessman's lap.

Rudy looks at it and we are taken back to

ALLEYWAY

Thug 1 approaches Rudy, gets the same PISTOL near his face, stares Rudy in the eyes.

BANG!

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy regains his composure.

RUDY

Put your hands on the steering wheel and don't move them.

The Businessman slowly raises his hands towards the steering wheel and places his fingers tightly around it.

Rudy leans over and quickly grabs the man's weapon from his lap.

The man doesn't flinch.

BUSINESSMAN/VOICE #2
Careful with that thing, Rudy.

RUDY
Who are you!? How'd you get my cell
phone number!?

BUSINESSMAN
We thought you were dead, Rudy.
Don't do anything stupid. You're
confused.

RUDY
Then you'd better start talking.
All this confusion is making me
crazy.

A tense moment.

BUSINESSMAN
I have a family to take care of.

Rudy reacts suddenly from a searing pain in his head.

WHAT RUDY SEES

The Businessman's face warps and bends.

Rudy pulls his hand from his pocket and covers his wounded head relaxing his grip on the pistol.

The Businessman instinctively grabs Rudy and begins choking him with one hand and wrestles with the pistol in Rudy's other hand.

A struggle ensues.

Rudy's face turns red to blue as he desperately tries to free himself.

Rudy is on the verge of passing out when an ELDERLY PATRON from the diner approaches the car and RAPS on the window.

ELDERLY PATRON

What's going on in there?

The Businessman looks up at the Elderly Patron and releases his grip on Rudy.

The Elderly man opens the car door.

Rudy falls and pushes himself to the ground outside.

The gun falls to the ground beside him.

ELDERLY PATRON

You ok, fella?

The Businessman's car PEELS off, out of the parking lot.

Rudy lies on the graveled ground a moment before getting up.

The BUSINESSMAN'S PISTOL lies nearby.

He picks it up and places it in his pocket, massages his wounded neck.

ELDERLY PATRON

I'd call the cops on that sombitch.

RUDY

I'm okay.

Rudy gets up with the Elderly Patron's help and heads across the street, to the waiting Taxi.

INT. TAXI - DRIVER'S POV

The Mexican Driver looks back at Rudy as he gets in the vehicle.

DRIVER

Everything okay, Boss?

RUDY

Wonderful. Get me back to the hotel.

DRIVER

Sure thing.

Taxi drives off.

EXT. RITZ HOTEL - NIGHT

The Taxi pulls up the front drive.

Rudy gets out then leans in the passenger side window to talk.

RUDY

Give me five minutes, okay?

DRIVER

That's okay. I'll take my break.
Eat my sandwich.

Rudy leaves the idling taxi and goes inside.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - LOBBY

Rudy approaches the front desk. The Desk Clerk sits quiet reading the newspaper. He looks up at Rudy from his paper.

DESK CLERK

Mr?

RUDY

Zimmerman.

DESK CLERK

Right, Mr. Zimmerman. There were a couple of rather, rough-looking gentlemen looking for you earlier today. Policeman, I think. Did you find them?

RUDY

Sure did.

DESK CLERK

Great. What can I help you with?

RUDY

There a computer I could use with Internet?

DESK CLERK

Sure. We have a computer room over there you can use. What room are you in?

Rudy pulls out his room key and shows it to the clerk.

DESK CLERK

Just use your last name and room number for access.

RUDY

Thank you.

DESK CLERK

Oh, Mr. Zimmerman? How many more days should we be expecting you here?

RUDY

Couple more, at least.

ON COMPUTER

Rudy does a search for, "people search".

Several websites come up and Rudy selects one.

REVERSE PHONE NUMBER LOOKUP comes on the monitor.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy pulls out his cell phone and scrolls through the caller ID function. He stops at a number.

ON COMPUTER

He enters the number "212-555-3478" in the search box and after a moment studies the information on the screen. Writes the info down.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The Taxi pulls up in front of a run-down apartment building.

The waning sun provides an eerie glow to the place.

Rudy peers at the place from inside the taxi. He confirms the address with the one written on his paper.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWAY CORRIDOR

Rudy reaches the top of a stairwell, still clutching the piece of paper in his hand.

The hallway's only light dims and brightens occasionally.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY

Rudy stops in front of several doors and listens before arriving at the third door numbered "194".

He checks the paper confirming the address.

A ROCK N ROLL SONG plays loudly from inside the apartment.

Rudy peers through the eyehole trying to get a glimpse of the inside, takes out his cell phone, scrolls through the caller ID and stops at a number.

Dials it.

Simultaneously, A HOUSE PHONE RINGS from inside the apartment building.

It RINGS again.

The music goes QUIET and the phone suddenly stops ringing.

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Yeah?

Rudy quickly hangs up his cell phone.

He hesitates not sure what to do and stands quietly outside the apartment door.

The music RESUMES inside the apartment.

Rudy pulls the pistol from his pocket and KNOCKS on the door and stands to the side, out of sight.

The MUSIC cuts off once again.

FOOTSTEPS approach the door from inside.

The door slowly opens and a wary eye peers out the barely cracked door.

Rudy jams his foot against the bottom of the door, preventing it from closing and shoves the pistol in the stranger's face.

Without saying anything, Rudy pushes his way into the apartment.

FOOTE

Rudy!

Now fully inside the apartment, Rudy slams the door shut behind him and shoves the pistol against Foote's nose bending it sideways.

RUDY

Where the fuck is my girlfriend!?

Foote looks at Rudy like he's seen a ghost. He puts his scrawny arms high in the air.

FOOTE

Please don't kill me.

RUDY

Who are you!? How do you know my name!?

Rudy walks Foote back into his kitchen area to a table with a cluster of papers scattered across. He pushes the gun further into his face before forcing him into a chair.

Foote falls back into a chair and sits with his hands pushed up into the air.

FOOTE

Listen, Rudy, you don't want to do this.

RUDY

Quit saying my name, Dammit!

Rudy pushes the pistol against Foote's nose.

RUDY

How'd you get my cell phone number!?

FOOTE

You gave it to me, Rudy.

RUDY

Bullshit! I've never seen you before. Why would I give you my phone number!? Who are you!?

FOOTE

Really jacked up your brain. You don't remember, do you?

RUDY

Remember what!?

FOOTE

What happened, Rudy. Why you're here.

Rudy grows angrier and pulls back the hammer on the pistol.

Rudy's eyes are hollow.

RUDY

What did you do with Bel!?

FOOTE

I didn't do anything with her!

Foote's struggles to find words.

FOOTE

Look, I'm just the middleman. I was contacted...

RUDY

Who?

FOOTE

You did, Rudy. How do you think I got your number? You gave it to me. You set up the deal.

Rudy steps back and stares blankly at Foote. He slowly lowers the gun from Foote's direction.

Foote relaxes a little.

FOOTE

Look, I don't know what happened to you... to your head.

RUDY

I don't believe this. Why would I want her dead!? I loved her!

FOOTE

I don't ask why. You can do what you like.

(MORE)

FOOTE(cont'd)

If someone wants a person dead,
that's their business not mine.
Like I said, I'm just the
middleman.

Rudy grabs his head in pain.

The walls and Foote's face and voice distort as he continues
talking.

FOOTE

Trust me, Rudy, my mouth is shut.
You okay?

Rudy turns and stumbles towards the front door.

INT. TAXI - BACKSEAT - NIGHT

Rudy sits in the back of the taxi sitting silent watching the
outside world flash by through tear soaked eyes. Oblivious to
everything, he doesn't notice the taxi stop in front of his
hotel building.

The DRIVER waits for Rudy to respond watching Rudy through
the rear-view mirror.

DRIVER

Boss?

Rudy does not respond.

The Driver looks over his shoulder at Rudy.

DRIVER

(louder)

Campion.

Rudy turns toward the Driver.

DRIVER

We're here.

RUDY

Can you wait here? Got to grab a
few things.

DRIVER

It's been fun hanging out and all
but my shift is up in an hour.

Rudy opens the car door.

RUDY

What would your friends say knowing
you left El Campion stranded? Two
minutes.

Rudy pats the Driver on the shoulder.

DRIVER

Okay, boss. I'll be here. Just
letting you know.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - LOBBY

Rudy begins to walk by the front desk when the DESK CLERK
recognizes him.

DESK CLERK

Mr. Zimmerman.

Anxious, Rudy turns to hurry towards his room, ignoring the
desk clerk.

DESK CLERK

Mr. Zimmerman! There's a message
here from a Detective Walnut. I
think you should read it!

Rudy stops in his tracks and turns towards the desk clerk. He
walks over to the front desk.

DESK CLERK

Sounded pretty urgent.

The desk clerk stares at Rudy's head wound and hands Rudy the
message. Rudy reads it.

DESK CLERK

They found your wife. Good news,
right?

Rudy stares at the clerk, dumbfounded. Not sure if he's gonna
laugh or cry.

RUDY

(unemotional)

Yes. Yes it is.

The clerk gives Rudy a reassuring smile.

INT. RITZ HOTEL - BEL/RUDY ROOM

Rudy sits on the edge of the bed with his cell phone to his
ear. His face is reflected on the wall mirror.

A POLICE OPERATOR picks up the line.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Las Vegas Police Department.

RUDY

Detective Walnut, please.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

One moment.

A silent beat.

WALNUT (V.O.)

Walnut.

RUDY

It's Rudy.

WALNUT (V.O.)

Rudy, what happened? I never got my
soda. We found a body we think is
your wife. We need you to come down
to the station to see if you can
identify it.

Rudy's face is death white. He sits there a moment shocked at the news and puts his head in his hand. Tears begin to well up in his eyes.

WALNUT (V.O.)

And we are still missing that talk.

Rudy fights to hold back his emotions and stares at his reflection in the mirror as if searching for something.

WALNUT (V.O.)

(beat)

Rudy?

RUDY

What's the address?

Rudy writes down the address on the stationary pad on the bedside table, his hands shaking almost uncontrollably.

He slowly hangs up the phone and studies his reflection in the mirror before suddenly pulling the hotel phone from the wall hurling it into his mirrored reflection.

He stands silent surveying his now broken image, takes the gun out of his jacket and looks at it turning it over slowly several times inspecting it.

Rudy puts the gun to his temple and slams his eyes shut.

He holds the gun there, now shaking.

A tense moment.

Rudy can't do it. SOBS, lays the gun on the bed unsure of what to do. He then goes the fridge and takes a small liquor bottle from the mini bar and downs the contents.

Rudy lies down on the bed and closes his eyes - for a moment everything seems peaceful.

He, then suddenly sits up, grabs a small wastebasket on the floor next to the bed and pulls it next to him and VOMITS nearly missing the wastebasket.

Rudy sits on the edge of the bed over the wastebasket.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORGUE

Walnut, Burns and Rudy stand in front of several marked, METAL DRAWERS lining a wall.

Detective Burns grabs the handle to one.

WALNUT

We have to warn you, the body has been in the elements for days, animals have taken most of the flesh.

RUDY

Go ahead.

Burns pulls the drawer door revealing the outline of a body covered by a white sheet.

Walnut pulls the sheet from the head and torso of a half dressed corpse - skeleton mostly - lying on a steel table. He and Burns both cover their mouths and noses in disgust.

Rudy immediately covers his mouth, turns away.

WALNUT

Not the prettiest of sights, is it? Disgusting, really, what rats can do in a short period of time.

Regaining his composure, Rudy turns around to view the body - or what's left of it - surveying the eaten face and torso now unrecognizable.

The only thing identifiable is the corpse's clothing - a FLOWERED SUNDRESS.

QUICK IMAGE

Bel in a FLOWERED SUNDRESS.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy stands over the corpse.

RUDY

That's her.

WALNUT

You sound pretty sure. How do you know?

RUDY

That's the dress Bel was wearing.

Rudy turns away, breaks down.

WALNUT

Positive?

RUDY

I can't believe this.

Walnut gives his partner a "we got this fucker" look before replacing the sheet over the corpse.

WALNUT

Let's take a ride, Rudy.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE

Rudy slouches at the interrogation table holding his smashed pinky, a grimace on his face.

Burns throws a white handkerchief on the table next to Rudy.

WALNUT

You're bleeding all over the place,
for heaven's sake.

Rudy takes it and wraps his finger.

WALNUT

I just want the money you owe me. I don't want the shirt off your back. Just what's owed to me.

RUDY

I don't owe you or anybody! You got me mixed up with your low-life friends.

WALNUT

(looks at Burns)

You don't owe me any money.

(at Rudy)

That your final answer? Phone a friend? Fifty-fifty, maybe? What do you need to help you find the answers, Champ?

Walnut sticks his finger to Rudy's bleeding head. Pushes at it. Rudy reacts, SCREAMS in pain.

WALNUT

You think you can pull this shit in my town and get away scott free? Again? Think of it as me getting my refund on that shit fight ten years ago.

RUDY

So that's what this is about, money?

WALNUT

Isn't everything? You should know. Hire some idiots to make it look like a robbery, a little injury to put a point on things. Listen, I know you had your girlfriend killed to collect the insurance money. Now collect it, pay me back and I'll let you go. We're even. Clean slate.

Rudy considers.

RUDY

I'm gonna trust you?

Rudy's response makes Walnut easier.

WALNUT

Trust is the basis of a relationship, Champ. I trust my partner, Burns, here with my life. I'd marry the guy if I liked cock. Seventy thirty is the split that I think is fair. What about you, Burns? See Burns is a man of few words. If he talks, someone fucked up somewhere.

Burns' face is neither agreeing or disagreeing.

RUDY

Sonofabitch.

Rudy considers his options. No way out.

RUDY

Need a few days to get it. We meet up again. You get your money.

Walnut smiles, almost relieved, then looks at his, as always, silent partner.

WALNUT

Please don't fuck with me, Rudy. Unless you grow a pair of nice tits.

Walnut hesitates, gets close to Rudy. Takes the hammer.

WALNUT

And I will smash the other side of your fucking head if anything else happens in my neighborhood.

(MORE)

WALNUT(cont'd)

I still have to uphold the law when the need arises and I don't need assholes like you coming in here screwing things up. This will be the last time we have a civil conversation if you don't get my refund.

Walnut opens the door to the room.

Rudy stands up to leave without looking at the two detectives.

WALNUT

You've got two days. Two days. You call me when you have it. I *will* find you if you stand me up again. Believe that.

Before leaving, Rudy finds a dollar bill and throws it on the table in front of Walnut.

RUDY

Here's your soda.

Walnut watches Rudy leave.

WALNUT

(to Burns)

What do you think?

Burns remains silent and gives an "I don't know, but you smashed his finger pretty good" look to Walnut.

WALNUT

Where's he gonna go? He ain't going nowhere.

Detective Burns holds up a bag of cocaine.

WALNUT

We'll add it to his murder charge after we get our money. No one'll believe a washed-up cheating, ex-boxer, mental patient anyhow.

Walnut takes the dollar bill, searches his pockets.

WALNUT

Where the hell is my wallet?

INT. TAXI - BACKSEAT - NIGHT

Rudy stares out the window of the moving taxi, trancelike.

The taxi comes to a slow stop on a familiar-looking street.

Rudy comes to.

RUDY

Here. Cut the lights.

(beat)

We wait.

DRIVER

Look, boss, I think you're great
and would love to hang out again
but I can't hang out here all
night. Wife'll kill me if I'm out
all night. You don't know Mexican
women. Cabronas. Like badgers when
they get pissed.

Rudy pulls out several hundred-dollar bills from WALNUT'S
WALLET and throws the stack in the front seat with the
driver.

RUDY

That cover it?

The driver scoops the money off the seat and counts it.

DRIVER

(obliging)

Just say the word, boss.

Rudy returns to looking out the window.

EXT. FOOTE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

From across the street, inside the taxi, Rudy watches the empty street in front of Foote's dark apartment building.

INT. TAXI - FRONT SEAT

The taxi driver is fast asleep, almost snoring in the front seat.

SPANISH TALK RADIO plays softly from the car stereo.

Rain begins to fall gently on the taxi's windshield.

As though frozen in time, Rudy sits motionless still eyeing Foote's apartment building. He take a quick look at his phone. Nothing. Battery's dead. He tosses it on the seat.

Something outside catches his eye.

WHAT RUDY SEES

A SHADOWY FIGURE steps onto the sidewalk from the apartment entrance and stops to light a cigarette.

The glow from the lighter shows Foote's clearly recognizable face.

Foote takes a drag off the cigarette and hurries to the parked GEO METRO a few meters away.

INT. TAXI - BACK SEAT

Rudy watches Foote's car move out of sight then reaches in the front seat and nudges the sleeping driver awake.

DRIVER

Yeah, boss?

RUDY

Be right back.

The driver gets comfortable again.

DRIVER

Uh huh. Wake me up if you need me.

Rudy gets out and heads across the street towards the apartment building.

The driver dozes off.

TRACK RUDY ACROSS THE STREET

He limp-jogs towards the apartment building.

Headlights illuminate Rudy's lone figure in the wet street.

A car's engine REVS stopping Rudy dead in his tracks.

Rudy stares at the lights like a deer caught.

The CHEVY CAPRICE suddenly begins speeding toward Rudy.

Rudy takes off running down the street.

INT. TAXI

Hearing the commotion outside, the taxi driver stirs and watches the CHEVY CAPRICE chase the now sprinting Rudy.

DOWN THE STREET

Rudy, now in full panic mode, narrowly escapes the charging car as he limps down an alley.

ON THE CAR

It SKIDS to a stop just past the alleyway, it's reverse lights come on and it quickly backs up, almost squealing the tires.

It stops and turns down the alley after Rudy.

ON RUDY

As he searches for an escape in the dead-end alley by trying several doors though all are securely locked and don't budge.

The alley is now fully illuminated by the car's headlights as the rain comes down harder.

Having no escape, Rudy freezes and focuses on the car shielding his eyes trying to get a glimpse of the driver.

The car creeps towards Rudy.

Rudy feels for his pistol as the car comes to a complete stop several meters away.

The driver gets out.

Rudy tries to make out the shadowy figure through the shimmering beads of rain and the glaring headlights.

The man raises a silhouetted gun in Rudy's direction.

BUSINESSMAN/VOICE #2

Hate doing this, Rudy. You should have died in the alley. You're not worth anything alive.

RUDY

What do you want from me!? Why are you trying to kill me!?

Behind the Chevy Caprice, at the end of the alley, the taxi pulls into view with its headlights on the stranger.

The taxi driver sticks his head out of the window.

DRIVER

What is going on here!? Everything okay, Boss?

The Businessman turns to face the taxi driver.

He turns to Rudy and takes several unaimed SHOTS at him with the gun.

Rudy ducks behind a dumpster fumbling with the pistol in his jacket pocket as bullets ricochet off the wall behind him.

Trapped, the Businessman jumps in his car and throws it in reverse.

INT. TAXI

The taxi driver jumps back in the taxi and braces himself as the car's rear-end speeds towards the taxi's front.

The vehicle CRASHES into the taxi's front-end forcing the taxi closer to the alley entranceway.

The Businessman's car tires continue to spin on the wet cement as he tries pushing the taxi out of the way.

The taxi only budges a little.

The car moves forward and prepares for another collision with the taxi.

INT. ALLEYWAY - ON RUDY

He stands in front of the Businessman's car now wielding the pistol in the direction of the car's windshield.

The Businessman stops the car, watches and waits for Rudy's move.

The alley has grown eerily quiet except for the RAIN hitting the cement.

The only other sound comes from the two cars' engines.

RUDY

(pleading)

Turn the car off!

The Businessman is frozen.

Rudy can clearly see the Businessman's face now, his eyes.

A stand off.

WHAT RUDY SEES

The lights and shadows of the alley converge and swirl into one another as a sharp pain sears Rudy's head.

BACK TO SCENE

The car's engine REVS and begins to move towards Rudy.

Rudy unloads the pistol into the car's windshield.

Rudy steps out of the way as the car rolls slowly past him and gently bumps into the far alley wall.

The stranger is slumped over the steering wheel.

Rudy moves slowly over to the still running car and approaches the driver-side door.

INT. CHEVY CAPRICE

Blood splatters the front seat and side windshield. Shattered glass covers the dash.

The stranger motionless, apparently dead.

Rudy nudges the man's temple with the end of the pistol and pushes his head on its side.

Rudy pulls his hand - covered in the man's blood - back and looks at it, trance-like, studying it. The realization of what has just happened suddenly becomes apparent to him. His face one of horror and regret initially.

Then like a wave coming over Rudy, his face gives the impression of a trained killer. Something in his past coming back.

He searches him finding his wallet. Moves with precision, determined now.

The taxi driver slowly gets out and stands behind the open door.

DRIVER
You all right, Boss?

Rudy looks at the Driver.

RUDY
No. I'm not all right.

He hurries towards the taxi.

The driver recoils back into his car reflexively seeing Rudy approaching, wielding the gun.

RUDY
No! Wait!

The driver waits with his hands in the air.

RUDY
I'm not going to hurt you. I'm the Champ, remember? The good guy.

Rudy stands a few meters away from the driver's door.

Distant POLICE SIRENS wail.

RUDY
Tell the police what happened. The guy attacked me. I only shot him because he was trying to kill me.

A silent beat as the taxi driver stares at Rudy.

DRIVER
You'd better hurry, Boss. Looks like the welcome wagon is on its way.

The POLICE SIRENS grow louder.

Rudy looks in the direction of the approaching SIRENS.

Rudy takes off out of the Alley and down the street, out of sight.

The taxi driver gets in his car and waits, lights a cigarette with shaky hands.

DRIVER
(to himself)
My wife is going to kill me.

Several SQUAD CARS pull up behind the taxi.

The taxi driver gets out and puts his hands up.

DRIVER
Don't shoot! I'm Mexican!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

INVESTIGATORS and CRIME SCENE WORKERS hover around the alley and the businessman's car.

Some take photographs while others dictate information.

CORONER WORKERS pull the dead man's bloodied body from the car and place it in a body bag.

Detectives Walnut and Burns finish questioning the taxi driver.

WALNUT
Thank you, Sir. If we need any more info we'll get a hold of you.

The taxi driver leaves.

WALNUT
I'm gonna fucking kill him. I told him. Imma smash the rest of his brains in. In town less than a week. Like stirring up a hornet's nest.

Silent, Burns stares intensely at Walnut.

WALNUT

Two days.

The two walk over towards the wrapped-up corpse and examine it from a distance.

WALNUT

He better hope I don't see him
before then.

CAPTAIN BENDON, a squatty, intimidating man, walks up to the two Detectives.

CAPTAIN BENDON

I want the Taxi Driver's story
checked out. He says it was self
defense. You don't run if it's self-
defense.

The captain motions to the body bag.

CAPTAIN BENDON

And find out who this poor fool is.

WALNUT

Aye, Cap'n.

Walnut and Burns turn to walk towards their squad car. Captain Bendon stays behind and lights a cigarette.

CAPTAIN BENDON

I want this guy found! I don't care
how! Do what you have to. I just
don't want to know about it.

INT. LAS VEGAS GAS STATION - MEN'S ROOM

Rudy stands in front of the dented, metal mirror examining his distorted and menacing reflection.

He turns the faucet on, leans over and throws water in his face and head, taking care around his wound.

The wound appears to be pulsating in the yellow light.

Blood swirls in the sink.

Rudy pulls the beanie back over his head, unconcerned about keeping the area clean or sterile.

He dries himself off with a wad of paper towels and goes into the far stall and locks it.

TOILET

Rudy sits on the edge of the toilet and pulls out the stranger's wallet. He surveys the contents.

ON WALLET

Rudy quickly goes through several pictures in the wallet's photo collection. He stops at a picture of the BUSINESSMAN AND FAMILY.

The family picture looks like the typical American Family - wife, husband and two small children - all smiling, happy.

Rudy pulls out the man's DRIVER LICENSE. Studies the info on the it.

CLOSE ON LICENSE

The man's picture and the name, "Christopher T. Stone" with other identifying information.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy finds several business cards. The first one Rudy comes to is a "Dragon's Den" card. He turns the card over studying it.

The number "619-222-3212" is handwritten on the back.

Rudy searches his pocket and pulls out the business card that Julius gave him.

He compares the phone numbers on both cards.

They are identical - both his own cellphone number.

CLOSE ON CARDS

The second card Rudy looks at reads, "Life Adjustment and Insurance Co., Christopher T. Stone, Adjuster". It also has several telephone numbers, including the man's home and work numbers.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy skims through the rest of the wallet and finds nothing of interest except for several bills, which he pulls out and places in his pocket.

The door to the restroom OPENS O.S.

Rudy looks under the stall and sees a pair of shiny, patent leather "Corofram" shoes with black police trousers above them. He raises up straight and tries not to panic.

POLICEMAN #1 steps to the urinal. Urine SPLASHES the water in the urinal.

POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.)

Unit nine, what's your twenty?

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S.)

Shoot.

Policeman #1 tries to finish urinating.

POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.)

Unit nine, I say again, what's your twenty?

The Policeman ZIPS his pants.

POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.)

Unit nine...

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S.)

Alright already!

Rudy begins sweating. His heartbeat loud enough for the policeman to hear. Pulls the gun from his waistband, ready to shoot his way out of there if he has to.

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S.)

Go ahead dispatch, this is nine.

POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.)

What's your twenty?

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S.)

I'm a block from our one eight seven, over.

(to himself)

Can't even take a piss...

POLICE DISPATCH (V.O.)

What was that, nine?

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S.)

Er, I said, What'd I miss?

The bathroom door CREAKS open.

POLICEMAN #2 (O.S.)

You're not takin' a crap in here are you? We gotta go.

POLICEMAN #1 (O.S.)

I'm coming.

The two policeman head out the door.

Rudy lets out a long BREATH as the policemen move further away from Rudy.

INT. LAS VEGAS GAS STATION - MEN'S ROOM - LATER

Rudy slowly gets off the toilet and unlocks the stall door.

He shoves the pistol in his front waistline and looks himself over in the bathroom mirror before leaving.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The men's room door opens and Rudy casually comes out.

Rudy quickly goes to the nearby dumpster and tosses the wallet in then turns to walk away but stops dead in his tracks.

A waiting POLICE CRUISER sits parked at the front entrance of the gas station.

Rudy almost takes off running but realizes that no one is in the car.

He hurries off in the opposite direction.

INT. FOOTE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The front door knob is barely illuminated by outside lights coming in through a near window.

Keys CLATTER on the other side of the door trying to find the lock.

The doorknob begins to turn slowly.

The door opens and a figure steps into the doorway then into the apartment and closes the door, fumbles for the light switch.

The apartment suddenly illuminates showing FOOTE standing in the entrance.

He stops dead as he looks up to see a PISTOL inches from his face.

RUDY

Where ya been, Foote?

Rudy looks maniacal and irrational. His clothes are soaked with rain. His voice somehow different, meaner.

FOOTE

Rudy. Thought we were done here?
You've become a celebrity these
last few days. Face is all over the
TV.

RUDY

Starstruck?

Rudy grabs Foote and forces him into the kitchen. Rudy sits him down at the kitchen table.

RUDY

Now listen to me very carefully,
I'm going to ask you this only
once. Who killed Bel!?

Foote takes a moment before answering choosing his words carefully.

FOOTE

It's the shades within, Rudy, the
skeletons that motivate people to
do things. Me? It's business. I
don't know what type of
relationship you and your
girlfriend had, Rudy. Like I said
before, I don't know why. And I
don't care. I wish I didn't know it
was you, Rudy, I swear on
everything that's holy.

Foote pulls a crucifix from beneath his shirt, kisses it and motions towards the sky.

FOOTE

You had a significant life
insurance policy. You paid ten
thousand up front. Really, how do
you think I got your number?

(MORE)

FOOTE(cont'd)

Why would a complete stranger have your phone number? This whole thing has become one big headache for all of us, Rudy.

Rudy stares blankly trying to corroborate Foote's story. Rudy almost looks convinced.

FOOTE

Look, no hard feelings?

Foote relaxes a little.

Rudy cocks the hammer on the pistol. He points it inches from Foote's head.

RUDY

You're right. They messed my head up! Bel's dead and someone killed her!

FOOTE

Why would I lie to you now, Rudy? You're holding all the cards.

Rudy doesn't respond - his mind made up - and slowly squeezes the trigger on the pistol.

The hammer begins quivering ready to fall forward.

Foote slams his eyes shut.

FOOTE

Rudy! Please!

Rudy puts his palm out in front of his own eyes covering his view of Foote's face.

Changes his mind at the last minute.

Foote opens his eyes, realizing Rudy's change of heart, and lunges at him knocking him to the ground.

He hits Rudy in his healing head wound doing this several times.

Rudy goes limp, almost unconscious.

Foote stands up over Rudy, satisfied, he turns and walks back to the kitchen table then grabs a pack of cigarettes and takes one.

He lights it and takes several drags from it facing away from Rudy.

FOOTE

Why don't you just die, Rudy? It'd
make this thing a whole lot easier.
You're not worth anything alive,
pat'nah.

FLASH OF IMAGES, RUDY'S POV, SIDEWAYS

Blurred images of what appears to be Bel being assaulted by THUG 2 then running off down the alley.

The Hooded Stranger approaches Rudy.

HOODED STRANGER

Sorry 'bout this, pat'nah.

Rudy goes out, A GUNSHOT goes off.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy struggles to his feet and finds the pistol.

Foote unaware.

Rudy gets behind Foote and pistol-whips him in the head, knocking him to the ground then straddles him and continues to beat him with the handle end of the pistol.

Blood streams down Rudy's crazed, hollow face.

Foote goes limp.

Rudy hits him several more times with the pistol before stopping.

Blood is puddled on the floor around Foote's mangled skull.

Rudy sits over Foote, out of breath and studies the now unrecognizable face. Rudy has a cold, flat affect even though he's got blood covering his face.

EXT. DOWN THE STREET FROM FOOTE'S - NIGHT

Rudy is in a full sprint (limping) as runs down the dark narrow street away from Foote's apartment building.

The bloodied pistol dangles from his right hand.

A POLICE CRUISER pulls onto the street in front of him.

Rudy ducks down a back street and behind a dumpster then crouches down trying not to breathe.

The Police Cruiser pulls in front of the back street entrance and stops. Its spotlight surveys the dark, wet street investigating around the dumpster and the rest of the street.

Rudy sits dead still.

The Police cruiser continues on after a tense moment.

As Rudy gets further down the street, several VAGABONDS seem to appear out of nowhere.

Rudy ignores them and picks up the pace.

The lifeless bodies surround Rudy now in a funneled mass of flesh.

Panicking, Rudy flails his arms trying to keep the encircling mass back.

RUDY

Get off me!

Suffocating.

RUDY

No!

Rudy thrashes around wildly.

WIDER ANGLE OF RUDY IN THE ALLEY

Rudy's dark figure standing in the now empty alley.

A lone BYSTANDER stands at the end of the alley watching Rudy.

The bystander continues on.

Rudy leans against the near wall and puts his head in his hands.

Rudy sits there for a moment for what seems like forever.

INT. TRAILER HOME - LIVING ROOM

A CELLPHONE RINGS on the table in the living room.

RUDY

Fine. I'll wear my cut off shorts.

Rudy rushes to get it, grabs it and looks at the screen before answering it.

RUDY

(into phone)

Yeah?

We hold then are back at

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Thug 1 - The Businessman - approaches Rudy, gets the gun near his face and stares Rudy in the eyes.

BANG!

FROM RUDY'S POV, SIDEWAYS

Blurred images of what appears to be Bel being assaulted by THUG 2 then running off down the alley.

The Hooded Stranger - Foote - approaches Rudy.

HOODED STRANGER/FOOTE
Sorry 'bout this, pat'nah.

Rudy goes out, A GUNSHOT goes off.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rudy is lying on a neat, sterile hospital bed motionless beneath neatly tucked linen with eyes closed.

His head is heavily bandaged.

Several machines HUM and BEEP.

The room is flooded with bright sunshine from the oversized window directly in front of Rudy's bed.

Ashley sits in a plain chair at Rudy's side reading a book quietly.

Bel sits next to her.

Rudy's eyelids begin quivering before slowly opening.

Unsure of his surroundings, he surveys the area still lying motionless.

Ashley notices Rudy.

ASHLEY
Daddy!

BEL
Rudy!

Bel leans directly over Rudy's face.

BEL

Why did you do this to us?!

Rudy lies there quiet, motionless.

ASHLEY

Yeah, why, Daddy? Why didn't you come back like you promised? I waited for you.

BEL

You leave us like this. How could you be so selfish? You were a fighter, now you are as helpless as two-year-old.

Rudy doesn't respond. It's as if he can't.

Bel's voice sounds hollow and distant.

Bel caresses Rudy's face.

BEL

(soft)

Why? Why would you do it? Answer me. Sunshine.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

SECURITY GUARD

Sunshine. Hey, sunshine

A bright light shines on Rudy who is now lying down in the alleyway passed out.

The young, rookie SECURITY GUARD (20's) nudges Rudy with a nightstick.

The security guard's MOCK POLICE CRUISER sits behind the guard RUNNING. It's headlights illuminate the rest of the alleyway.

Rudy stirs out of his unconscious state startled by the bright light in his face.

SECURITY GUARD
Rise and shine.

Rudy shields his eyes from the light.

SECURITY GUARD
You can't sleep here. You'll have
to go somewhere else, buddy.

He staggers to his feet, still dazed then moves down the
alley away from the security guard.

SECURITY GUARD
God still loves you, buddy. You
just gotta get rid of those demons.

The Security Guard notices the blood covering Rudy's clothes
and face.

SECURITY GUARD
Hey, wait!

Rudy continues down the alley without turning around.

The security guard watches Rudy approach the alley entrance.

SECURITY GUARD
Hey! Stop!
(on the radio)
This is Kenny, I'm in the alley. I
think I got that guy the cops are
looking for.

Rudy continues down the alley now almost a block away from
the guard.

SECURITY GUARD
Freeze!

He takes off around the corner out of sight.

SECURITY GUARD
Stop!

ON RUDY

He turns the corner and

DOWN THE STREET

Rudy quickly approaches the first intersection and enters the intersecting street at full speed.

A black, tinted MERCEDES runs into Rudy, knocking him to the ground.

Rudy lies on the ground in front of the car dazed.

A large, well-built black man - the one with the face tattoo - gets out of the passenger side and scoops him up and tosses him into the back seat.

The black man gets in the front seat.

The Mercedes leaves as the security guard turns the corner finding no one except the lone car driving off.

INT. MERCEDES

Rudy sits in the back seat disoriented and dazed. Gathers himself and looks around at the occupants of the vehicle.

Two large BODYGUARDS sit in the front.

One drives and the other points a pistol in Rudy's direction.

Both are from the Dragon's Den.

Julius sits in the seat next to Rudy.

JULIUS

Rudy. I thought we'd never see you again. Like a gift from God runnin' into you like this.

Julius looks Rudy up and down.

JULIUS

You look like nigga running from
his master.

Rudy sits back in his seat exhausted and hurting then looks
at the pistol pointed at him.

Julius takes out cigarette and offers it to Rudy who refuses
silently.

JULIUS

You've got a lot of people looking
for you.

Julius pulls the cigarette back, lights it and takes a long
drag.

JULIUS

Says alot about a man. Surviving
what you have. The desire to
survive is a instinct that goes
back billions of years. Killing
yourself or allowing yourself to be
killed means you've either lost the
most primitive survival instinct we
have or there is something worth
more than your own life. We're
animals, Rudy. We fuck, eat and
survive. I know you didn't kill
your girlfriend, Rudy.

This gets Rudy's attention.

RUDY

(unconvinced)
That so?

JULIUS

Yeah.

Silent beat.

RUDY

Who did?

Julius bellows with LAUGHTER.

He snorts a line of coke from a hand-held mirror as if to prepare himself for the following...

JULIUS

You think you have any idea who you are, what you're about? They control everything about you, Rudy. Your worth more money dead than alive. You should know that better than anybody. But you don't and that's the problem. Go on vacation and hire thugs like Foote to make sure you don't return. Ingenious, if you ask me. 'Cept Foote's a moron. He couldn't find his way out of a wet paper bag.

Rudy sits silent trying to absorb it all in.

JULIUS

I'm left to clean up the mess. We all do what we have to to get the right outcome, right, Rudy?

RUDY

Doesn't justify it.

Julius LAUGHS almost uncontrollably.

JULIUS

Preaching to the fucking choir.

RUDY

You're fucking crazy.

JULIUS

Not the one limping around with a hole in my head, Rudy.

Julius turns toward the window and watches the outside go by.

JULIUS

Thing is your fault, Rudy. A lot at stake here, a lot to lose. Only way to make this thing go away completely is for you to be gone for good.

EXT. FREEWAY ON RAMP - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls onto a freeway on ramp and begins to pick up speed merging onto the freeway.

Another CAR follows close behind.

INT. MERCEDES

WHAT RUDY SEES

The sounds and visuals smear into one another. The world has become a living watercolor swirling around him.

JULIUS

(smeared)

Sometimes, just sometimes, sacrificing ourselves *will* get us to the truth, make everything right again. I'm really not a violent man.

As Julius talks, Rudy moves his hand slowly toward the car door handle.

JULIUS

This nigga's gotta make a living, though...

Rudy watches the exterior move faster as the car speeds up.

JULIUS

Consider it a favor.

Relaxing a little, the man holding the gun turns his head to look out the front windshield.

Rudy throws open the rear door and tumbles out.

Julius and the Gunman turn to see Rudy disappear from the moving vehicle.

JULIUS

Fucking eh'.

OUTSIDE

The speed of the fall throws Rudy off the road and down a small embankment.

The Mercedes comes to a screeching halt.

The car behind SCREECHES its tires to avoid hitting the Mercedes.

The tattooed man gets out of the vehicle after Rudy.

His pistol glimmers in the headlights of the car behind.

Rudy stumbles to his feet and disappears into the dark, cold night.

The tattooed man looks at the man in the vehicle behind, hesitates then gets back in the Mercedes.

The Mercedes speeds onto the freeway.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL - CHECK IN DESK

WHAT RUDY SEES

The smeared mess of colors and sound continue and worsen. A dizzying sight.

A lone CLERK sits behind a plexi-glass security window watching television almost asleep.

Rudy, trying to stay composed RAPS on the security window several times startling the clerk.

The young clerk makes his way to the window.

The clerk eyes Rudy's head wound and disheveled appearance.
Rudy tries charming the clerk with a smile.

RUDY

All I've got is eighteen bucks.

The clerk does some calculating.

CLERK

(smeared)

Let's see, that'll get you to six-
thirty, friend.

RUDY

Fine.

Rudy hands the clerk the bills through the security window.
The clerk pushes something for Rudy to fill out.

CLERK

Fill this out.

Rudy stares at the page. Makes an attempt at writing. His
letters are off-centered and illegible. Does what he can
before pushing the thing back.

WHAT THE CLERK SEES

A two-year-old's scribbled mess.

BACK TO SCENE

The clerk hands Rudy a key with large FUZZY DICE attached
barely fitting through the hole in the clerk's window.

Rudy takes the key.

CLERK

Enjoy.

The clerk gives Rudy a fake, business-like smile and leans in
to watch Rudy stumble away.

CLERK
 (to himself)
 Alcoholics.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM

The front door open opens.

Rudy flips the light switch.

The room is decorated in plush and red velvet with a large heart shaped swing in the middle of the room.

Rudy immediately goes to the bed, lies down and closes his eyes as if trying to get the mess of images out of his head.

SERIES OF IMAGES, SMEARED AND DISTORTED

1. Walnut's face obscured by smoke.

WALNUT
 ...you had your wife killed to
 collect the insurance money...

2. Julius's face.

JULIUS
 ...you hire thugs like Foote to
 make sure you don't return...

3. The Businessman's face.

BUSINESSMAN
 You shoulda died in the alley, Mr.
 Zimmerman. You're not worth
 anything alive...

4. Julius's face.

JULIUS
 ...The only way to make this thing
 go away completely is for you to be
 gone for good...

(MORE)

JULIUS(cont'd)

Sometimes we have to sacrifice
ourselves to get to the truth,
Rudy.

BACK TO SCENE

Rudy lies down on the bed with his feet still on the floor,
winces. The colors of the room continue to swirl into one
another.

VINDALOO (O.S.)

(from bathroom)

Something to drink? We have
champagne.

Startled, Rudy looks towards the bathroom. Sits up. Suddenly,
his vision and senses have cleared somewhat.

Vindaloo enters carrying a bottle of champagne and two,
plastic cups. Rudy watches her. Plays it cool.

VINDALOO

(reading bottle)

Eighteen percent. More like rubbing
alcohol. Stuff will make you blind.

RUDY

How long have you been here?

She stops, looks at him crazy, confused.

VINDALOO

You okay?

RUDY

(angry)

How long you been here!?

Rudy stands and approaches her, threatening.

VINDALOO

Easy, baby. You forget I came with
you?

RUDY

Quit lying!

Rudy grabs her by the arms.

VINDALOO

Hey! I'm gonna leave if you start acting all crazy and shit again.

Vindaloo pulls away.

VINDALOO

You asked me to come! Wasn't my idea!

Rudy stands there in shock. Not sure what to believe. Backs onto the bed, sits with his head in his hands covering his face.

VINDALOO

Oh, baby, your confused. Lie down.

Rudy does.

Vindaloo sits on the bed next to him. Rubs his chest.

WHAT RUDY SEES

Vindaloo's face distorting. Rudy's vision become difficult again.

VINDALOO

Relax. You've been through alot.
Done real good. Guy who never backs down from anyone.

The room, too, begins to distort, spinning. Dizzying.

VINDALOO

Amazing the lengths we'll go to. To get what we want.

The room spins faster, out of control.

VINDALOO

Bet she was pretty, your
girlfriend.

Without warning, Rudy grabs Vindaloo by the throat pushing her to the ground. He's on top of her now.

She struggles against Rudy's weight.

Suddenly the room stops spinning. Everything silent.

Rudy raises up and looks over the limp body.

HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Rudy drags Vindaloo's lifeless body to the bathroom. Leaves it there, closes the door behind him.

Her feet preventing the door from closing.

Rudy forgets it, stumbles back into the main room, falls against the night stand.

He hits his head on the floor.

Blackness.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The hotel phone RINGS loudly.

It RINGS again.

Rudy sits up in bed and answers the phone.

The empty champagne bottle falls from the bed.

Rudy looks at the bedside clock.

8:00 AM.

RUDY

Yeah?

CLERK (V.O.)
This is the front desk? You're half
an hour overdue. Sir?

Rudy drops the phone and grabs his head in pain.

ANGLE ON PHONE

Phone lying on its side on the bed.

CLERK (V.O.)
Sir? Sir?

WIDER ANGLE OF ROOM

Empty room with the front door open wide.

The sunlight from the outside lights up the interior.

The bathroom door slightly open. Nothing else inside. No
evidence of anyone else being there.

EXT. CHEAP HOTEL - PARKING LOT

Rudy limps across the parking lot past the hotel office and
goes to a nearby, barely functional pay phone.

He finds a quarter, picks up the receiver and dials a number.

The phone begins to RING on the other end.

WALNUT (V.O.)
Walnut.

Rudy hesitates.

WALNUT (V.O.)
Hello?

RUDY
It's Rudy.

WALNUT (V.O)

(calm, cheery)

Where are you, Rudy? You fucked up.
Can't run forever.

RUDY

I got your money.

WALNUT (V.O.)

Smart move. Let me meet you
somewhere. Make it official.

RUDY

I'm leaving the money then getting
out of here. All I want is to be
left alone after this. Forgotten
about.

Silent beat.

WALNUT (V.O)

Whatever you want, Rudy. Tell me
where.

RUDY

Give me your word.

Rudy waits a moment for the person's response.

WALNUT (V.O)

What are we, fucking best friends
now? I give you my word. When and
where?

RUDY

Vinnie's Diner, east side of Vegas.
Half an hour. Money will be in a
bag in the bathroom trash can.

WALNUT (V.O)

How do I know I can trust you?

RUDY

Trust is the most important part of
a relationship, right?

The phone is silent.

RUDY

Want your money? Half an hour. Come
alone. Get your money. I get my
freedom.

Rudy hangs up the phone then immediately picks it up. Dials 9-
1-1.

OPERATOR

9-1-1 what's your emergency?

INT. VINNIE'S DINER - MEN'S ROOM

Rudy rests his hands on the edge of the sink and he stares
into the mirror, thinking.

His face looks distorted.

INT. VINNIE'S DINER

The setting sun casts shades of red and orange on the plastic
booth seats and tables.

The Diner is nearly empty except for a few lone TRUCKERS.

The only WAITRESS flirts with a trucker in the corner.

The bell on the front door RINGS and Walnut enters. He
immediately scans the restaurant for Rudy. Nothing.

The waitress looks up at him.

WAITRESS

Kin I gitcha?

WALNUT

Restroom.

The waitress motions towards the back of the restaurant before continuing her conversation with the trucker.

Walnut scans the parking lot and the interior of the place before heading for the back approaching the men's restroom door.

He looks back toward the dining area once more before pushing the door open revealing the confined space.

Walnut goes straight for the trash can, turns the lid upside down and finds a medium-sized duffle bag. Takes it without opening it and leaves.

OUTSIDE

Walnut goes to a parked UNDERCOVER POLICE CRUISER.

I/E. UNDERCOVER CRUISER

Walnut slides in and greedily unzips the bag. Inside, wads of cut up newspaper. He's been had.

From behind, a PISTOL points at his head.

WALNUT

Where you going to go, Rudy? Can't get away now. You made your point.

Walnut scans the parking lot as if looking for someone to help.

RUDY

Not yet I haven't. Start the car.

Rudy holds the pistol at Walnut's neck.

RUDY

Drive.

WALNUT

What do you think you are doing, Rudy?

RUDY

Shut up! Turn the car on and drive
before I smash your little brain.

He does as he's told.

RUDY

Drive.

Rudy touches the back Walnut's neck with the gun, letting him
know it is there.

Walnut reluctantly puts the car in gear and proceeds slowly
out of the parking lot.

WALNUT

You'll never get away with whatever
it is you're planning. You ain't
got the balls. Entire police force
knows where I am, who I'm with.

Rudy concentrates on his surroundings. Looks at his watch.

RUDY

I know. I called them.

Walnut's face shows this news is unexpected.

SAME SCENE - MINUTES LATER

Walnut drives with Rudy's pistol on his neck.

WALNUT

If it's the money you're worried
about, forget about it, Rudy. Call
it even. I let you go, never see
each other again.

Walnut watches Rudy in the rear view mirror.

Rudy is distracted.

RUDY

Turn here.

The car turns into an abandoned business district.

RUDY

Behind that building.

Walnut follows Rudy's orders and turns behind the building out of sight.

RUDY

Stop the car. Get out.

Walnut turns off the car but doesn't move, testing Rudy.

WALNUT

C'mon, Champ.

Rudy pulls the hammer back on the pistol and pushes the gun into the skin of his neck.

RUDY

Don't make me tell you again.

Walnut reluctantly gets out.

Rudy follows. Again, he looks at his watch.

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT - DAY

The two stand meters apart facing each other. Rudy points the gun at the man.

WALNUT

Fucking with the wrong guy, Rudy? I
will rip off your fucking head
before this is over.

Faint police SIRENS in the distance.

Rudy looks at the time.

RUDY

Sometimes we have to sacrifice
ourselves in order to get to the
truth.

A tense moment.

WALNUT

What?

Several POLICE CRUISERS pull in meters behind Rudy and stop.

POLICE OFFICERS jump out of the vehicles and take defensive stances behind their open doors.

Detective Burns and Captain Bendon stand behind the closest vehicle, pointing their weapons at Rudy.

Rudy turns to look at the unfolding scene holding the gun steady.

CAPTAIN BENDON

Put the gun down, Mr. Zimmerman!
There's nowhere to go.

WALNUT

For fuck's sake, kill him!

Rudy looks at Captain Bendon then to Walnut.

CAPTAIN BENDON

It's over! Drop the weapon! You
don't want to do this, Rudy.

RUDY

Life isn't always better than
death. Remember that, Detective.

Rudy shoots the wall behind the Detective, separates himself from Walnut.

A barrage of bullets simultaneously strikes Rudy from all angles.

He falls slowly to the ground.

Rudy lies on his back barely conscious.

A pool of blood collects under Rudy's limp body.

Rudy watches several police officers hover over him with pistols drawn.

The world has gone silent as Rudy watches the officers scramble around him.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

In the distance a freshly dug grave surrounded by several older graves, all with gravestone markings.

AS WE MOVE CLOSE

A plain, cement identifying marker (the kind you don't pay for) of a fresh grave.

In plain letters it reads: Rudy Zimmerman, 1974-2014.

Sitting atop the cement fixer is Rudy's old photo of himself and his daughter Ashley.

INT. CAR - DRIVER POV - DAY

A view through the front windshield shows a clear view of the trailer park.

A brand new MERCEDES SUV sits parked in front of trailer - Rudy and Bel's trailer - with its back-end open, unattended.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

The door to the trailer swings open and Bel exits carrying a BOX OF BELONGINGS.

She goes to the passenger door, opens it and loads the box with the others already packed in the back seat.

She pauses for an instant and looks around, WHISTLES for something.

Rudy's retriever quickly comes to Bel, answering her call.

Bel kneels and gives the animal a vigorous pet.

BEL

Good boy. Ready to go on a trip?

Bel smiles and kisses the dog on the nose before ordering it into the back of the open SUV.

INT. CAR - DAY

From a safe distance, Walnut sits behind the wheel watching Bel's every move.

Detective Burns sits in the passenger seat, quiet, as always.

Walnut takes a deep drag from his cigarette.

WALNUT

How 'bout that, Burns? She collected that Life Insurance money and is gonna get away with everything. Scott free. Weasel sets up his own murder and gets exactly what he wants.

(looks at Burns)

I know what you wanna say but there ain't nothing we can do. Ain't nothing to get her for.

(back out window)

Technically, she hasn't committed a crime. Nothing that we can prove. We are the one's who killed her husband and the guys involved are dead. Sometimes two plus two equals seven.

(takes drag)

All we can do is watch her load up all that stuff in that brand new Mercedes and drive away.

(to Burns)

And what do we get?

(MORE)

WALNUT(cont'd)

Demoted to desk jockeys for letting
our number one suspect to a murder
that never happened get his face
blown to pieces. What a bitch.

Outside, via the front windshield, Bel loads the SUV.

Walnut starts the car.

DETECTIVE BURNS

A real bitch.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE START

INT. TRAILER HOME - LIVING ROOM

A CELLPHONE RINGS on the table in the living room.

RUDY (O.S.)

Fine. I'll wear my cut off shorts.

Rudy, standing in the kitchen, rushes to get it, grabs it and
looks at the screen before cautiously answering it.

RUDY

(into phone)

Yes? Yeah, we're still on. Of
course we're certain. Just be
there. Of course she's down with
it. We both are. We'll bring the
money, just be there.

Rudy hangs up cell phone.

BEL (O.S.)

Who was that?

Rudy is broken out of his thought by Bel's voice. He goes to
the kitchen to tend his burnt food.

RUDY

Nobody.

Rudy takes the burnt food and throws it away. He looks up to find Bel standing in the living room.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - STREET - NIGHT

A view of the downtown lights tells us we're some distance from the Vegas Strip.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - ALLEYWAY- NIGHT

The two thugs stand over Rudy's unconscious body.

Thug 1 as the BUSINESSMAN.

Bel stands nearby, panicked.

All look down at the unmoving Rudy.

BEL

Is he dead?

FOOTE (O.S.)

He's not waking up from that, trust me.

From behind, Foote - the hooded stranger following behind Rudy and Bel - approaches.

Bels looks up at Foote. Something in her eyes tells us that, for the first time, she realizes what's happened.

Tears swell in her eyes.

BEL

(to herself)

God. Rudy.

FOOTE (O.S.)

Bad time to be crying for the guy. Too late to change it. You're not supposed to be here, anyway. Think of it like putting a bullet in a dead man.

FOOTE

It's done, get out of here. Go
before somebody sees you. Don't
talk to no one. Go straight home
like you were never here.

Bel reluctantly leaves, disappear down the street on foot.

The thugs watch her leave out of sight before looking back
down at Rudy's body.

Thug 2 searches Rudy's pockets for anything valuable.

As Thug 2 stands, Foote points the pistol in his face and
without hesitation, shoots him point blank.

Foote and the Businessman stand over both Rudy and their
partner-in-crime.

FOOTE

Dope-head. I told him not to come
fucked up.

At the end, just around the corner, VOICES of people talking
approach.

FOOTE

Let's get out of here.

Not waiting for a response, Foote gets going down towards the
opposite end, away from the approaching voices.

The Businessman follows.

Foote and the Businessman are out of sight when a COUPLE
enters the alleyway entrance, stops and notices both bodies.

Hold on Rudy's unconscious face.

INT. TRAILER HOME - BEDROOM

Rudy and Bel lay next to each other. Both naked and half-
covered with a sheet.

Rudy puffs on a cigarette.

Bel strokes Rudy's bald head.

RUDY

You got a bunch of annuals in a garden... know why they call em annuals, right?

BEL

Think I'm stupid? I made straight A's all the way through junior high.

RUDY

Story ain't good if you don't get what I'm talking about. So you got these flowers that last only a certain time. When their time is up they die. What happens if you don't clean the garden? Get rid of these sticks?

BEL

I don't garden.

RUDY

Don't cook neither, don't mean you stop eating.

Bel hits Rudy on the shoulder.

RUDY

You got this garden full of sticks. Keep watering and watering hoping one day they'll come back. What you don't know is that they are only made to last a certain time. You want your garden? Got to pull the sticks and plant new ones. Ain't room for both.

Bel shakes her head, not wanting to believe.

BEL

What if they are wrong? Doctors
aren't God.

RUDY

They are right. I feel it.
Something inside me telling me it
is my time to go. Eating away at my
insides.

Bel CRIES.

BEL

We'll find something new, something
experimental to fix you.

RUDY

With what? Insurance is refusing to
pay. I've tried. Can't anymore.

Bel turns away from Rudy, now staring at the ceiling and
wipes the tears.

BEL

The only way the insurance will
cover it?

RUDY

Only way.

BEL

I'm still going with you. I don't
care what you say. I want to be
there with you.

Rudy's face not completely agreeing with her.

RUDY

Don't think it's a good idea. Could
happen anytime, anywhere.

BEL

Don't care what you think. I'm
going.

Hold on Rudy and Bel.

RUDY

Fine. Only thing I want you to do is make sure Ashley has what she needs. Make sure she knows who it's from.

Bel takes the still lit cigarette from Rudy and puts it out in a beer can on the night stand.

RUDY

Hey! What are you doing that for?

BEL

Ain't for you. You're supposed to quit anyhow.

Bel rolls on top of Rudy. Straddles him.

RUDY

Sorry I haven't been the guy you wanted. I love you.

BEL

I hate you.

She leans over and kisses him passionately.

END FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. MERCEDES

Bel sits in the driver's seat. Places a photo of Rudy on the dash, smiles.

BEL

(to photo)

Hate you.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

The Mercedes takes off down the road, leaving a trail of dust behind it.

Walnut's FORD TAURUS pulls forward after it then quickly does a U-turn and gets going the other way.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Ashley's house.

At the door, a hand reaches up and KNOCKS.

After a moment, the door opens up and Ashley stands in the entranceway.

BEL (O.S.)

Ashley?

Bel, standing at the doorway, smiles at the little girl.

BEL

Your daddy wanted me to give you something.

We hold on Bel's face a moment.

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT - DAY

Rudy lies on his back barely conscious.

A pool of blood collects under his limp body.

Rudy watches several police officers hover over him with pistols drawn.

The world has gone silent as Rudy watches the officers scramble around him.

Walnut stands over Rudy then kneels down close to him.

WE MOVE CLOSE

The beginning shot of Rudy's smiling face.

RUDY (V.O.)

The moment we think we know
ourselves, what we are capable of,
is the exact moment we should be
worried. Worried that we may do
something. Something drastic to
change the place we find ourselves.
And it is this deed that will
ultimately define who we truly are.

Officers scramble around him.

RUDY (V.O.)

Our deaths are inescapable. How we
die is up to us.

Walnut kneels and gently pulls Rudy's eyelids closed.

FADE OUT.

THE END