

The Night Watchman

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EXT. PARKING LOT - DUSK

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In the darkening recess of an empty lot bordered by a hillside, TWO 20 YEAR-OLDS lounge against a GOLD BENZ. We'll know them as CHARLIE and OTHER CHARLIE.

Charlie tosses a Vietnamese dice in the air - he knows it as '*Bua cua ca cop*' - leaving Other Charlie to guess which animal on the six-sided dice comes up. The game ends as--

An '87 Camaro approaches, its heat-inflated tires crackling over gravel.

DRIVER'S POV: the young men through the windshield; TWO VODKA MINIATURES in the unseen driver's palm. He rolls them like a poker player with his chips, contemplating his move.

Charlie taps his watch - '*You're late*' - as

LUDLOW emerges.

He removes his sunglasses, twitching, itching, and squinting in the setting magenta sun. Bloodshot eyes bleed into bloodshot skin.

He looks...like a guy who peaked alongside his '87 Camaro.

LUDLOW  
Konnichiwa.

CHARLIE  
What?

LUDLOW  
'Konnichiwa'. *Konnichiwa*. It means hi.  
(waves to Other Charlie)  
Hi. Hi. Hii--  
(karate chops the air)  
--ya! Watch yourself. I had you there.

Ludlow dances about: Muhammad Ali on meth.

LUDLOW  
You guys need any Tina? You partying later? It's free if you do it with me.

CHARLIE  
Lower your fucking mouth and open the trunk.

LUDLOW  
Okay, don't decide right now.

Ludlow begins to open the trunk, then suddenly SLAMS it--

LUDLOW

The money!! What about the money?

The younger men's nerves are fraying. Other Charlie lifts his shirt - a STACK tucked into the waistband of his sags.

LUDLOW

Alright, business first. Check this American sword...

Ludlow opens the trunk, revealing a massive 50 CAL. MACHINE-GUN. They all stare at it.

OTHER CHARLIE

The fuck is that? We said machine guns...

LUDLOW

It is a machine gun.

Other Charlie tries to wedge it out of the trunk.

CHARLIE

The kind you can *carry*.

LUDLOW

I couldn't get any of those. But this baby's from the Vietnam war. She's got character. Shit - probably even mowed down a few of your relations in its day... Now you can mow down some of mine.

OTHER CHARLIE

(the machine gun)

It's fucking stuck.

LUDLOW

Okay, tell you what. You double this--

Ludlow reaches into Other Charlie's jeans for the money - has his hand SLAPPED away.

LUDLOW

Ow. Fuck. Okay, I'm saying you double that - I'll throw in the car. What do you say? You wanna upgrade?

CHARLIE

Nigger I drive a Mercedes fucking Benz. And if I want your faggot-ass ride I'll take it.

Other Charlie stands next to his friend, viciously still.

OTHER CHARLIE  
And Konnichiwa's not Vietnamese.

LUDLOW  
Jeez, sorry Charlie. How'm I supposed to tell?

OTHER CHARLIE  
What's that now?

Ludlow finds himself BACKING AWAY from them.

LUDLOW  
What? I'm just saying it's confusing.  
You got eyes like apostrophes, but you  
dress white, talk black, and drive Jew.  
(pleading for a laugh)  
Right? What? Right?

They JUMP HIM.

LUDLOW  
Wait, no, don't, no, no!!

Ludlow takes a terrible beating, FISTS and BOOTS into his face and torso. His KEYS are ripped from his clutch.

CHARLIE  
Dumb fucking tweak.  
(one last *kick*; then)  
Go, let's go!

BOTH CARS spin out, spraying gravel over Ludlow. He lies still, gasping in the dark.

Then, painfully, he sits up. Feels his ear. Blood draining out. He needs an ambulance.

Instead, he gets to his feet...straightens his hair...re-buttons his shirt...and starts walking.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

TWO RANCID PROSTITUTES loiter, one of them dressed as a nurse. Ludlow limps past them to a PAYPHONE.

Drops in a quarter, dials a number. Outside the booth, the non-nurse approaches the glass. She smiles - showing off fake mangled teeth - and points lazily to Ludlow's bloody face--

PROSTITUTE  
(her friend)  
She's a nurse.

Ludlow turns away from the bizarre scene as someone picks up his call. He simply says:

LUDLOW  
Where?

EXT. LITTLE SAIGON - NIGHT

Moths rattle inside broken, blinking streetlights. Underneath, it's HALLOWEEN. COSTUMED CHILDREN run between vietnamese gardens to cramped homes - a patchwork of colors.

Ludlow stalks through the dark night, crossing down a squared-off road. He spots a 10 YEAR-OLD DARTH VADER sitting on a bike. And Darth, not trick-or-treating, spots him.

Ludlow CHARGES the young 'look-out', scooping him off his bike and scooping a PAGER from the boy's hands. Ludlow reads the pager as the boy kicks him furiously.

LUDLOW  
(in Vietnamese)  
Go home.

Ludlow looks ahead, stalking further down the DEAD END STREET...

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ludlow scurries to HIS CAR, parked at the curb of a SHABBY HOUSE. In the crumbling driveway, the GOLD BENZ glints.

Pulling keys from his pocket with bruised fingers, Ludlow quietly unlocks his trunk. The MACHINE GUN IS GONE, but he pulls back the base mat, revealing a LOW-JACK tracking device.

We glimpse a few other toys as well: a 9MM, FOUR CLIPS, a KEVLAR VEST...

Ludlow looks back down the street - no sign of backup... Looks at his watch... Looks back at the house...

INT. HOUSE - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow follows his 9MM inside. A 16 YEAR-OLD sits frozen, X-Box controller in hand.

LUDLOW  
(whispers)  
Where's she at?

The X-Boxer shakes his head. He may not know, he may not understand, but he's definitely about to piss himself.

Ludlow makes a 'keep playing' motion, scoping out a BACK ROOM. He POINTS down the hall, then holds up two fingers: *'Two of them back there?'*

The scared X-Boxer holds up two fingers - as if simply imitating Ludlow - then two more on his other hand: *'FOUR of them.'*

Ludlow steels himself - that's more than he bargained for. He graciously reopens the front door, allowing the scared kid to scamper out.

DOWN THE HALLWAY,

Ludlow steps carefully... We hear CHATTER from inside the BACK ROOM. Ludlow opens the door, unnoticed, to find FOUR MEN huddled around his 50. CAL MACHINE GUN like kids at Christmas.

LUDLOW  
Charlie. Other Charlies...  
(ignoring the gun)  
Where's she at?

The men are taken completely by surprise. But they stay quiet. They're calculating... Four of *them*, only one Ludlow...

Ludlow FIRES low, kneecapping his pal Charlie. Everybody's TALKING now - in Vietnamese.

LUDLOW  
English! Answer me!

FIFTH CHARLIE'S POV: through a back screen door, a shaking SLG-SAUER PISTOL steadies on Ludlow. The FIFTH MAN pulls the trigger--

BLAM!! Ludlow is SHOT in the back shoulder; he's thrown violently down the HALLWAY FLOOR.

Ludlow cranes back, RETURNING FIRE and dropping the Fifth Charlie. He rolls onto his back, CUTTING DOWN Other Charlie when his parking-lot-friend charges.

Strangely, no one else emerges. Ludlow lifts himself up, grimacing and gasping for breath. He re-enters

THE BACK ROOM

finding only Charlie, MOANING on the floor. TWO MEN MISSING. Ludlow *listens* - his only play - but Charlie's MOANS drown everything out. Ludlow taps Charlie in the head - BLAM! - then concentrates in the quiet...

A FAINT SOUND draws him to a CLOSET... Inside, he finds a DOOR IN THE FLOOR... Ludlow peers down the dark hole, shaking his head. *We are way off the page now.*

INT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Ludlow drops gingerly into the cave. It's as if he's just landed in one of the Viet Cong's CU CHI TUNNELS. He winds past a CARD TABLE, WEAPONS in a corner, MILITARY DUFFLE BAGS on tables.

An EXTENSION CORD leads the way down a JAGGED, WINDING PASSAGEWAY. Ludlow stalks forward... FLEETING SHOUTS ahead. His walk breaks to a RUN.

He's rushing in and out of darkness - past AUXILIARY LIGHTS. He's *gaining* on the two voices... Then--

A FACE flashes like a train going the other way...he has just run past one of the Vietnamese men. He instinctively *keeps running*, as bullets lodge into the clay by his ear.

Now Ludlow is caught in between - reloading as he takes fire from AHEAD and BEHIND.

He's RETURNING FIRE in both in directions when everything comes to a grinding halt... Ludlow stands before

a CAGE on the ground.

TWO VIETNAMESE GIRLS, 12 and 14, stare at him through wire bars in fear-induced wonderment.

Ludlow looks ahead - letting his prey go (we HEAR the footsteps fade away) - then behind: the footsteps grow LOUDER until the pursuing thug appears... POP! POP! POP! He snaps backward as Ludlow pumps three in his chest.

Ludlow walks sullenly back; he drags the body away from the cage. Ludlow kneels down, eye-to-eye with the cowering girls.

LUDLOW

It's okay... I'm-- I'm not them.

Words, even gestures, are lost on the children. Exhausted, Ludlow simply slumps down beside them. He pulls at the bullet-proof vest chafing his neck... The girls have stopped crying. They know he won't hurt them.

And this - to a point - breaks Ludlow down.

EXT. LITTLE SAIGON - A SHORT TIME LATER - NIGHT

*...now the world rolls.* A POLICE HELICOPTER shines it's belly light on the neighborhood below. Higher up, in less rarified air, NEWS HELICOPTERS jockey for position.

On the ground, POLICE CARS everywhere. Pockets of ONLOOKERS painted in the flashing red and blue lights.

In the purgatory between onlookers and the scene, an attractive FEMALE REPORTER, 30's, waits with her Channel 9 CAMERAMAN. She looks the part: hair, makeup, get-up - but there's a natural beauty beneath.

At the moment, she's transfixed by Ludlow. He's standing by a window - inside the dealers' house - answering TWO MEN.

CAMERAMAN

It's Wander.

MEGAN turns to find LIEUTENANT TERRY WANDER (50's, tall - even a little dashing) cutting through the fray towards the scene. She scurries next to him--

MEGAN

Lieutenant, anything you can tell us?  
Or tell *me*? We were here twenty minutes  
before the rest--

WANDER

(calmly)  
Hi Megan.

MEGAN

Hi.  
(then)  
Just a few words? On camera?

WANDER

What are you thinking so far?

MEGAN

L.A. cops take down sex ring.

WANDER

Anything on systems, teamwork?

MEGAN

A coordinated effort, months of planning--

WANDER

Alright, hang around after.



MEGAN

Thank you, Lieutenant.

Wander heads up shabby steps into the house. He cranes back--

WANDER

Trade.

MEGAN

What?

WANDER

Sex trade. Sex ring sounds hinky.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ludlow sits despondently - yet undiminished - beneath TWO DETECTIVES. DeMILLE is 38, white and running to fat. SHONEY is 36, black and slender. They work the system hard and fast.

SHONEY

What were you doing here Ludlow?

LUDLOW

What?

DEMILLE

You wanna work vice now?

Ludlow is clearly out of his element now, in the aftermath.

LUDLOW

I followed the guns to the girl.

Ludlow watches a STRING of PLAIN-CLOTHED DETECTIVES carrying the MILITARY DUFFLE BAGS out the back door. He locks eyes with a PIGGISH SERGEANT (CLADY, 50's), directing traffic. Something not quite right here.

SHONEY

(to Ludlow)

What's the matter, you need a bracer?  
That liquid courage wearing off?

DEMILLE

We had six months into this case, Ludlow.  
Could've at least given us a call.

SHONEY

Motherfuckin glory hound. That's all he  
is.

Ludlow looks at them for the first time.

LUDLOW  
(softly)  
What were you doing for six months?

DEMILLE  
Fuck you Ludlow!

CLADY  
(calling off his dogs)  
Hey! Cool it.

Clady's eyes are on Wander, gliding through the front door.  
The Nightwatch Commander assesses the carnage.

WANDER  
(grandiosely)  
Make me redundant, gentlemen.  
(then)  
Clady, where's my boy?

The stocky sergeant, Wander's 'second', points him to Ludlow.

WANDER  
There he is.  
(to Ludlow)  
They reading you the riot act?

SHONEY  
Just a few softballs.

WANDER  
(to Ludlow)  
Why're you sitting? You hurt?

Ludlow rises awkwardly as Wander looks beyond the men: Other  
Charlie lies on the floor, his chest subtly rising.

WANDER  
(casually)  
Jesus, this one's still breathing.  
(to an aid)  
Get a medic in here.

Wander looks exasperatedly at the three men. DeMille gets  
his pad and pencil out again.

DEMILLE  
You call an ambulance Ludlow?

LUDLOW  
No, that's what I need you for.

WANDER  
(peacekeeping)  
Alright, you got what you need fellas?

SHONEY  
Sure boss.

Wander takes Ludlow under his wing, leading him away. An EMT crew brushes past, to Other Charlie on the ground.

DEMILLE  
You might wanna check for a blood clot.  
Something about '*blood clot*' sets Ludlow off.

LUDLOW  
What'd you say?  
Wander gets a firm grip on Ludlow's arm, but says nothing.

DEMILLE  
(playing dumb)  
What'd I say?  
Ludlow holds his temper, easing away.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wander takes Ludlow aside, his aides hanging politely back.

WANDER  
(publicly)  
Alright...  
(privately)  
You okay?

Wander's checking more than Ludlow's *emotional* state.

WANDER  
Look at me. You did good and you're in  
my show now, so relax.

Ludlow nods at Wander - obviously a shared past between them.

WANDER  
Alright, they're gonna separate you; I'm  
having Ridley meet you at the station  
right now - let him take your statement;  
and--  
(searching)  
--Oh, forensics is towing your car.

Ludlow winces, eyes on the floor.

WANDER  
Better you don't drive anyway...  
Adrenaline and all that.

LUDLOW  
I'm fine.

WANDER  
I know you are. Heads up though.  
(eye contact)  
Megan's outside.

LUDLOW  
So?

WANDER  
So take a mint.

One of Wander's aides hands him a MINER'S LIGHT. A CREW  
readies to descend into the TUNNEL--

WANDER  
(to all; rousingly)  
Alright, who's coming with me boys?

EXT. PORCH - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

A UNIFORMED BLACK OFFICER (Mody, 40's) drapes a blanket over  
the teen X-BOXER'S shoulders. He watches a THIRD BODY being  
removed from the house...followed by Ludlow. In the black  
officer's eyes - sheer contempt.

MODY  
You slowing down, Ludlow?

Ludlow stops, tries to comprehend the intrusion.

MODY  
(the bodies)  
Just three tonight?

Ludlow SEES the X-Boxer sitting beneath Mody.

LUDLOW  
You taking statements now Mody?

MODY  
I'm community interface for the victims'  
family members.

LUDLOW  
Has he given his statement?

Mody stands stubbornly over the boy.

LUDLOW  
(to the X-Boxer)  
C'mere. No, keep your blanket and c'mere.

Ludlow motions a fellow detective over, handing the boy off.

LUDLOW  
(to Mody)  
You're on the wrong side of the yellow  
tape, aren't you?

MODY  
I'm right where I belong.

LUDLOW  
Mody, give out all the blankets and  
lollypops you want, just wait 'til the  
real police work's done. Okay pumpkin?

MODY  
I know how it works Ludlow.

LUDLOW  
Well you ever need reminding - I'd be  
happy...

Mody stares hatefully as ANOTHER BODY is carted out. Ludlow  
SEES it, turns back to Mody and ever so subtly... shrugs.

STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The '87 Camaro is hoisted awkwardly by a tow truck. Ludlow  
watches, pained.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(sarcastically)  
*That's* not good for it.

Ludlow turns to find Megan approaching. She smiles prettily--

MEGAN  
Miss me? You know sometimes I think  
you do these shoot'em-ups just so you  
can see me.

Ludlow stares at the CAMERAMAN trailing Megan. He makes a  
'scamper off' motion with his hand--

LUDLOW  
Go 'way.

The Cameraman knows Ludlow. He's gone.

MEGAN  
Just a few words--  
(beating him to the punch)  
--*besides* 'fuck off'.

LUDLOW  
(dismissively)  
You gonna pick me up later?

MEGAN  
C'mon, your Lieutenant's giving me something.

LUDLOW  
I'm sure he is.

Megan finally notices, Ludlow's subtly swaying.

MEGAN  
Jesus, are you alright? You're fucking shaking.

Ludlow looks at her squarely, willing himself still.

MEGAN  
Uncross your arms.

DRIVER'S VOICE  
(car door)  
It's open Ludlow.

LUDLOW  
(mock scorn)  
I really don't like you this way.

MEGAN  
I know. You like me better when I'm whoring for a story.

Ludlow settles gingerly in the passenger seat.

MEGAN  
So? What happened in there?

LUDLOW  
It's just a blur.

She considers Ludlow a moment. Then, coyly--

MEGAN  
Well, that's too bad.

LUDLOW  
(warming)  
Yeah, why?

MEGAN  
Because I really wanted a quote. And...

Ludlow seems to dare Megan to say it - *whatever* it is -  
in front of his listening driver.

MEGAN  
Well it's not going to lick itself, now  
is it, Lud?

Ludlow grins...his kind of woman...as he rolls away.

INT. HALLWAY, 77TH STREET COMMUNITY POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Ludlow interrupts a RECEPTIONIST with her magazine.

LUDLOW  
I'm Tom Ludlow. I'm heading in if  
they're ready.

RECEPTIONIST  
(disinterested)  
Ready for what?

LUDLOW  
I shot some human beings tonight.

RECEPTIONIST  
That was you?  
(he walks on)  
You know where you're going? Down the  
hall--

LUDLOW  
(sullenly)  
I know the way, honey.

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM, DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

TWO COPS (one of them RIDLEY) and a FEMALE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
make up the 'shooting team.' They're going through the motions  
across from a glazed-over Ludlow. They've *all* been here before.

RIDLEY  
Point of entry?

LUDLOW  
Front door on the north side.

RIDLEY

Okay.

FEMALE D.A.

Why didn't you call for backup?

LUDLOW

I did.

FEMALE D.A.

Why didn't you *wait* for backup?

LUDLOW

In my opinion, there were exigent circumstances. They had a machine gun and I believed a felony was taking place or about to take place.

RIDLEY

Great, great.

DISSOLVE TO:

LUDLOW

I made a point of identifying myself as a police officer. I then attempted to detain the four men when I was shot from the side.

FEMALE D.A.

Which suspect was that?

RIDLEY

Let him finish.

Ludlow looks beyond put out.

LUDLOW

I returned fire. One of the Charlies--

Everyone stops writing, their heads snapping up.

LUDLOW

Excuse me, one of the *suspects* came out. I hit him...

DISSOLVE TO:

Ludlow lazily pushes a floor plan sketch back to the D.A.

RIDLEY

Great, great.



LUDLOW  
Do you know what time it is?

RIDLEY  
Yeah, you're almost done here.

FEMALE D.A.  
You think Internal Affairs will want--?

RIDLEY  
Nah, this is all 'in policy'.

Ludlow's eyes wander, the lawyers' voices DRONING OUT...

INT. MEGAN'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ludlow's alive again - in a state of emergency - as Megan tears off his jacket, pushing him on to her bed. He HOWLS in manageable, laughable pain as she tugs at his belt. He squirms away from her, *retrieving* the jacket...

...in a pocket he finds a VODKA MINIATURE.

MEGAN  
Don't, you already stink.

LUDLOW  
You want me to take a shower?

MEGAN  
(naughtily)  
No.

Ludlow twists it open, savoring the motion. He tilts the bottle...pouring it down on Megan - *a kind of compromise*.

Megan pulls him to her, letting him drink from the base of her neck. His lapping slows, the sexual energy gone...

MEGAN  
What happened tonight Lud?

LUDLOW  
I can't tell you.

MEGAN  
Fine. You wanna put it all away and pay for it later...

LUDLOW  
No, I can't 'cause I promised an exclusive to that hot bitch on Channel 2.

MEGAN  
You're such a whore.

Ludlow laughs, wincing from the pain.

MEGAN  
Come on. Give it to *me*.

LUDLOW  
I'm trying, you won't shut up.

MEGAN  
It's not just about the story Lud. If  
you never talk about anything...you'll  
never make it back to the surface.

A heavy stillness.

LUDLOW  
Well let's help each other. What *you*  
want for what *I* want.

Megan gets his meaning, even if we don't yet.

MEGAN  
Okay. Why'd you have to shoot?

LUDLOW  
They shot me first.

Megan obligatorily removes her bra. Then--

MEGAN  
Were they all...Vietnamese?

LUDLOW  
No, there were some white kids but I  
asked them to leave.

She joylessly reaches into his pants. Then--

MEGAN  
Why don't you ever defend yourself?

LUDLOW  
Because I don't care if people think I'm  
a... whatever they think.

Megan straddles Ludlow; she's on the verge of tears.

MEGAN  
Why do you always go alone?

LUDLOW  
Because if anything goes wrong there's  
only my version.

MEGAN  
Or you're dead and gone.

LUDLOW  
Either way.

She begins moving on top of him.

MEGAN  
Are you waiting for something to go wrong?  
Ludlow stares up at Megan...she's crying now.

LUDLOW  
Stop. Jesus, stop it.  
Ludlow moves to the edge of the bed, putting on his pants.

LUDLOW  
(head killing him)  
Awe Jesus, God, Fuck.  
(to Megan)  
You want some water or something?

MEGAN  
I'm gonna spin this your way, Lud.

LUDLOW  
Don't ever spin anything for me. Okay?  
Ludlow heads for the door.

MEGAN  
I know you're not this asshole.  
Halfway out the door, Ludlow turns back in the PRE-DAWN BLUE  
LIGHT.

LUDLOW  
Remember how I like you Megan. You're  
not my wife.  
Megan absorbs the blow, her eyes - and temper - welling.

MEGAN  
Your wife wasn't even your wife.  
Ludlow could go either way; he could *leave* or he could *lose*  
*it*... He simply shakes his head, turning away.

MEGAN  
Where are you going?

LUDLOW  
(low)  
Bed.

EXT. PACIFIC DINING CAR RESTAURANT - DAY

Outside the front doors, Mody - the crisply-uniformed black officer - poses for a picture with a YOUNG BOY.

Arriving groggily at the entrance, Ludlow is forced to wait several agonizing beats for the boy's MOTHER to snap the photo.

As Mody waves the admiring boy off, Ludlow heads inside--

LUDLOW  
What is it with you and kids?

INT. PACIFIC DINING CAR RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Mody follows inside, towards a PRIVATE DINING AREA:  
THIRTY OFFICERS lunching in booths.

MODY  
Say that again?

LUDLOW  
What? No man, I was just kidding around.  
(then; sharply)  
I just don't see why the towel boy gets  
asked for his picture and autograph.

MODY  
You fucking--

Mody stops himself an inch from Ludlow, nostrils flaring.  
Ludlow is totally unfazed as Wander sternly motions him over--

WANDER  
Lud!

MODY  
They shouldn't let you out in the day,  
you know that?

LUDLOW  
That's fine, Mody. You stay outta my  
night, I won't bother you when you're  
liaising in Malibu with your shiny  
fucking boots.  
(MORE)

LUDLOW (cont'd)  
(leaning away)  
'Suspects' by the way.

MODY  
What?

LUDLOW  
You called them 'victims' the other night. They had two little girls in a cage and they're called 'suspects'.

MODY  
Oh, I'm *sure* that's what you call them in your chummy little booth.

Ludlow passes several booths - notably SHONEY and DEMILLE among a TIGHT FRATERNITY OF DETECTIVES. He flags a far off waiter - making the 'drink' motion - before dragging a chair over to Wander, the jovial king among his court.

Across the room is CLADY, the piggish Sergeant running last night's crime scene. Clady stands toasting - and *roasting* - a RETIRING OFFICER (SILKY).

CLADY  
(to all)  
...and Silky handcuffs the guy's wrist to his ankle. So I stand this wino up when Silky's not looking, and all of a sudden he's coming at Silky like this--

Clady hops on one leg, jabbing with one arm. The room is ROARING--

CLADY  
--and he got a couple shots in!

Clady pulls a CHECK from his jacket over the laughter.

CLADY  
So for all your pain and suffering Silk, here's a little cushion to go with that *enormous* pension you're coming into.

Wander whispers to Ludlow under the noise--

WANDER  
(re: Mody)  
What was he - getting your measurements?

Ludlow flags a waiter, signalling for a drink.

LUDLOW  
For what?

CLADY  
Hats off to Silky boys!

ALL THE OFFICERS stand.

ALL  
Hats off to Silky!

WANDER  
(to Ludlow)  
Your fucking coffin, that's what.

CLADY  
(the check)  
That's from everybody in this room!

The tables return to separate, boisterous conversation.

WANDER  
Mody's had coffee with Internal Affairs  
twice this week. If he were a half-decent  
cop he'd know we had a trail on him.

LUDLOW  
He's coming after one of us?

Clady sits down, including himself in the hushed conversation.

CLADY  
Look who's joining the living.

WANDER  
(re: Ludlow)  
Mody's getting in his ear.

CLADY  
Stick and move Lud.  
(swigs a drink)  
He hear from Biggs?

LUDLOW  
Who's Biggs?

WANDER  
Mody's contact in I.A.

CLADY  
Biggs was dark-horse - pun intended - for  
the police commissioner nom. That is,  
until our friend here--  
(Wander)  
--was tapped instead.

Ludlow raises an eyebrow. Wander nods, confirming the news.

LUDLOW  
'bout time.

CLADY  
(re: Ludlow)  
This guy really *has* been sleepin'.

WANDER  
Now, he's gonna take his pound by eroding  
my best people.

Ludlow looks at them - still playing catch up. BUS BOYS  
clear the plates around them.

WANDER  
(low)  
He's starting with you, Lud. Inside word  
is Mody's feeding you to him on a stick.

CLADY  
Your Little Saigon shootout won't help.

Across the room, Mody sits quietly with THREE OTHER UNIFORMS.  
He meets eyes with Ludlow, before looking away.

CLADY  
But you'll be fine. We're digging our  
own dirt on the self-righteous son-of-a-  
bitch.

WANDER  
Clady--  
(let's stay on track)  
All we need from you Lud, is just to keep  
on smiling. Alright?

Ludlow produces an unnerving fake smile.

WANDER  
I'm serious Lud.

LUDLOW  
So what's he doing here?

CLADY  
Keeping up appearances. It's what I'd do.

Ludlow looks around for his waiter. Makes a move to get up.

WANDER  
Whoa, whoa, whoa - what are you doing?  
You go anywhere near him your head's on a  
spear.

LUDLOW  
I'm not gonna touch him.

Where Wander's aggravated, Clady's amused.

CLADY  
( 'How about that?' )  
He's not gonna touch him.  
(then)  
That's your whole life right there Ludlow.  
If you ran about two degrees cooler you  
could've been in on some very big things.

WANDER  
Alright, enough.

Clady gets the hint, turning away.

WANDER  
We've been here before, haven't we? When  
the earth opened up on you? I took care  
of you then; I'm taking care of you now.  
Now goddamnit just...fall in for once.

Ludlow absorbs it all. Then--

LUDLOW  
I was just gonna take a piss.

After a beat, Wander relaxes--

WANDER  
You're an asshole.

INT. RESTAURANT HALLWAY - A SHORT TIME LATER

Ludlow lurks outside the men's room. We HEAR a clinking sound  
from his palm: VODKA MINIATURES rolling over each other.

Before Ludlow, the UNIFORMED COPS - Mody the nearest - are  
making a slow exit. Mody sees Ludlow waiting in the wings.

LUDLOW  
(mouths)  
Black before blue.

Mody reads 'black' and sees red. He approaches Ludlow--

MODY  
What was that?



LUDLOW

It's a poem. For you. All the brother  
cops I ever knew, you're the only one who  
was always black before blue.

MODY

Now what makes you say that?

Ludlow checks the dining room; Wander's not watching.

LUDLOW

You feeling left out Mody? You're  
welcome to join us in all our plotting  
and scheming.

MODY

Oh, I'm quite sure I'm not.

LUDLOW

What do you think you know around here?  
You're a bystander, Mody. You exclude  
yourself and then you say '*I wasn't  
invited. The bad white men left me out.*'

MODY

You a Christian Ludlow?

LUDLOW

(scoffs)  
Come again?

MODY

Do you believe in the sanctity of Christ?

LUDLOW

Yeah, save me Mody.

Mody extends his arm, blocking Ludlow's exit.

MODY

Only you can do that for yourself.

LUDLOW

I guess there are no criminals, right?  
(*'I got it!'*)  
That's why you never make an arrest.

MODY

No one's beyond salvation.

Mody's really in his face now.

LUDLOW

Mody have you ever fired your weapon?  
No. That's not 'cause you're a  
Christian. It's 'cause you're an  
affirmative action cop with no interest  
in real police work. You leave the war  
zones to the rest of us, and that's fine.  
Just don't take it out on me.

(eases past Mody)

It's not my fault there are Asians in  
Little Saigon. Or black people in  
Compton.

MODY

(too loud)

Is it their fault your life is shit?

Wander is now watching from a distance. Shoney and DeMille, on  
their way out, marvel gleefully at this public stab.

MODY

'Cause you sure as hell take it out on  
them.

From the depths of his soul, Ludlow drags up a smile for Mody.

Mody watches Ludlow off. *Fear* flashes amid rage.

INT. HALLWAY, 77TH POLICE STATION - LATER THAT DAY

Ludlow paces outside the door to dispatch...back and forth  
like a caged lion.

Finally, he can't help himself. He bursts into--

INT. DISPATCH - CONTINUOUS

A row of BLACK and HISPANIC WOMEN, all eating lunch at their  
stations. Ludlow approaches a LARGE, PRIMPED BLACK WOMAN--

LUDLOW

Looking fine Jada.

JADA

Pssshhh, you so bad Tom Tom.

LUDLOW

Say what's the 20 on Gil Mody?

Jada keys her headset with three-inch fingernails.

JADA  
85-A. Mody, you have ears on?  
What's your 20?

After a beat, Mody's voice comes crackling back.

MODY  
Imperial and Prairie, Jada - but I'm off.  
What's up?

She looks up at Ludlow, who makes a 'forget about it' motion.

JADA  
Sorry about that 85-A. False alarm.  
(then)  
Tom Tom what--?

She turns to find Ludlow already off on his way.

EXT. IMPERIAL BOULEVARD - DAY

GRIDLOCKED CARS seem to bend in the heat off the asphalt.

Sunglasses on, Ludlow stays two cars behind a Seville up ahead... MODY'S CAR.

EXT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK - A SHORT TIME LATER

Ludlow waits in his car - intently rolling the VODKA  
MINIATURES on his knee.

Across the street, Mody exits the bank, pushing a THICK  
ENVELOPE into his jacket as he returns to his car.

Ludlow rolls out after Mody's Seville.

INT. LUDLOW'S CAMARO - A SHORT TIME LATER

Through Ludlow's windshield, we see Mody turn RIGHT, into a  
KOREAN GROCERY STORE.

Ludlow cranks a LEFT, pulling into the parking lot of a  
decrepit mini-mall. He kills the engine, watching as Mody  
enters the store.

Sweat seeps through Ludlow's skin as he fixedly watches the  
storefront across the street...

Without taking his eyes off the store, Ludlow slowly - almost  
ritually - unscrews the lid of a vodka miniature. He puts it  
to his lips, and *this* time...he DRINKS IT DOWN.

Galvanized, Ludlow pulls off his belt. He begins wrapping it tightly around his right hand...

EXT. JU-JIN MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Hand tight at his side, Ludlow stalks across the street. He pauses for a BROWN MONTE CARLO that rumbles past, pulling in next to the Seville.

Reaching the front door of the store, Ludlow glances back; it's just a flash - a frozen moment:

TWO BLACK MALES - afros and expressionless yellow eyes. The driver makes a seemingly innocuous gesture, 'scratching' under his collar...

INT. JU-JIN MARKET - CONTINUOUS

Ludlow drifts to a halt a few steps inside. He stands - thunderstruck - as something invades his consciousness...

The belt uncoils from his fist, dropping to the floor...

He looks back at the Monte Carlo. The driver wasn't scratching anything; he's *fastening a BULLET-PROOF VEST*. The passenger readies a *SUB-MACHINE GUN in his lap*.

Ludlow crouches, drawing his service revolver. He recedes into the store, rounding a corner in a swift run-walk.

Down the aisle ahead, Mody shops...

LUDLOW  
(hisses)  
Mody.

When Mody turns - and sees Ludlow coming at him, service revolver in hand...

MODY  
Ludlow...

He *swings* his shopping basket, *SLAMMING* it in Ludlow's face like a bag of rocks.

Ludlow - caught completely off-guard - goes smacking back into the shelves in an avalanche of dry goods.

LUDLOW  
*Mody...!*

But Mody is on him before he can rise, pistol-whipping him with his gun back to the floor.

LUDLOW  
*What the fuck are you doing!?*

Mody stomps on Ludlow's gun-hand and jams his .38 service revolver under Ludlow's cheekbone.

MODY  
Drop it!

LUDLOW  
Are you fucking crazy!

MODY  
Let it go!

Mody's shaking. He's going to shoot Ludlow point-blank - right here, right now - right in the face.

The gun slips from Ludlow's fingers.

LUDLOW  
Listen to me you fucking idiot - two  
silverbacks are about to roll in here  
hot!

Mody yanks cuffs from his belt and snaps them onto Ludlow's wrists.

MODY  
And you just happened to be cruising by?

LUDLOW  
This isn't you and me--

But before Ludlow can finish, time GRINDS DOWN. At the end of the aisle, the TWO MEN FROM THE PARKING LOT...

SUB-MACHINE GUNS in their hands.

In a drawn-out second, Mody realizes that Ludlow was telling the truth. Then--

BOOM! TIME HOOKS again as one gunman shoots the GROCER point blank. The other aims down the aisle - at the detectives caught like feuding children...

Mody STRUGGLES with his holster... Ludlow crawls for cover, Mody an inadvertent SHIELD... as THUNDEROUS FIRE erupts.

Still handcuffed, Ludlow fumbles with a key. He unlocks one wrist and immediately RETURNS FIRE down the aisle.

EVERYTHING AROUND HIM EXPLODES in reply. Ludlow tries to stay small, to weather the storm, when it all falls SILENT...

He waits coiled - heart pounding - for them to step around the corner and kill him. But the only thing that edges round to him is a spreading POOL OF BLOOD.

We HEAR the shooters exit hurriedly. Ludlow cranes around the corner, finding only Mody. He hurries to the fellow officer's side...

Mody's face is opened up. He breathes in bubbling gasps. Ludlow grasps Mody's hand...

LUDLOW

Mody - Jesus - stay with me man. I'll get help. I'm gonna get help.

But Mody's hand tightens on Ludlow's, not letting him go.

MODY

...I thought... it'd be you...

Mody's blood-sputtering breathing climaxes...then STOPS abruptly.

VOICES

*Freeze!*

Ludlow looks up to find TWO UNIFORMED COPS. His bloody hand slips out of Mody's; he raises his arms...

LUDLOW

I'm a cop.

One of the wide-eyed cops pushes his partner's gun down.

YOUNG COP

Yeah... Ludlow.

The other cop kneels to examine what's left of Mody.

OTHER COP

Ho-lee shit. This one's PD too.

YOUNG COP

(to Ludlow)

You just get here? You see anything?

Cars skidding up outside. Silently, a million emotions racing through him, Ludlow gathers the HANDCUFF dangling from his wrist up into his sleeve.

INT. JU-JIN MARKET - LATER - NIGHT

Wander cuts through a buzzing crime-scene: POLICE OFFICERS, FORENSICS TECHNICIANS...

Wander carries NONE of his affable nature this time. He spares a grim, cursory glance at the Korean grocer lying dead behind the counter.

Near Mody's body, Shoney and DeMille are marking bullets. Wander lifts a plastic tarp on the ground, taking in the gory pit that was once Mody's face.

WANDER  
Surveillance tape?

DeMille nods toward a back office.

INT. BACK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow sits sullenly, Clady staring down at him. Wander enters, closing the door behind him.

A silence.

WANDER  
How bad?

Ludlow wordlessly hands him something from his pocket. A VIDEOTAPE. Wander weighs it a moment, then hands it to Clady. Wander's sergeant puts it in the player...

*A GRAINY IMAGE of Mody idly shopping.*

*Ludlow suddenly appears - gun at his side - moving quickly towards Mody.*

*Mody cold-cocks him with the basket and tackles him.*

WANDER  
...Jesus Ludlow...

*The SHOOTERS enter... They OPEN FIRE as Ludlow crawls and Mody falls.*

*One of the gunmen scurries up to Mody, firing down on him at point blank.*

Wander exchanges a LOOK with Clady, then ejects the tape.

LUDLOW  
It was a straight heist that went bad--

WANDER  
Don't say anything yet.

Wander looks to Clady, less emotional, for his take.

CLADY  
Doesn't matter what it was.

LUDLOW  
It's not what it looks like.

WANDER  
That's all there is, Lud! How it fucking  
looks. Now shut up for a second.

CLADY  
(re: Ludlow)  
Well, he's not a cop anymore.

Ludlow reels.

CLADY  
The wrong prosecutor sees this... Yeah,  
*time*. Big time.

LUDLOW  
For what? Because Mody was in the wrong  
place at the wrong time--

WANDER  
No because you were! Who gives a shit  
about Mody?  
(then)  
Jesus Christ, you can *never* see two moves  
ahead, can you? You pulled two thugs off  
the street and went after a cop who was  
testifying against you. It writes  
itself.

A KNOCK on the door. Clady opens it an inch - whispers  
DeMille away.

WANDER  
This is a wet dream for Biggs.

LUDLOW  
(low)  
If I was gonna kill him I wouldn't need  
two thugs.



Wander snaps, lunging at Ludlow and holding him by the hair. The Lieutenant may be off the street, but he's very strong.

WANDER

Is this who you are? Huh? You take a belt to another cop?

Clady gets between them.

CLADY

Alright. Alright. We're okay.

WANDER

How many times have I gone to bat for you? Every time! You think this is just about you?

Wander turns away, embarrassed by his outburst.

LUDLOW

What do you want from me? I fucked up. You want my badge? You want me to do the time? I don't fucking care.

CLADY

(calmly)

Lud, you may not care how the rest of the world sees you, but you go down you stain all of us. This whole department... Speak up if you disagree.

Ludlow stares at the floor like a schoolboy. Wander kneads his brow, agonized.

WANDER

Anyone else see this tape?

LUDLOW

What difference does it make? Even without the tape the shooters put me in the store.

WANDER

Not if they never get picked up.

Ludlow moves from confused...to astonished.

WANDER

(plainly)

I want my new job, Lud. I know Clady's not ready to work security... All I asked was that you stay away from him.

(then)

(MORE)

WANDER (cont'd)  
 You crossed me on this one, but you don't  
 deserve to go to jail for it. Letting  
 Biggs throw you to the lions isn't gonna  
 bring Mody back.

Wander checks with Clady before saying it...

WANDER  
 This one'll go to 'Unsolveds.' If you  
 get a pass...they get one too.

CLADY  
 (nods; heavily)  
 Unsolveds.

LUDLOW  
 (sheepishly)  
 I could take my chances with a jury.

CLADY  
 (amused)  
 To the fucking lions.

WANDER  
 Justice is a live wire Lud. You wanna  
 let go? Let the system work you? Or you  
 wanna let us do our jobs?  
 (candidly)  
 This is what we do for our own Lud.  
 You're just usually home in bed at this  
 point.

In a dreamlike state, Ludlow finds himself nodding.

WANDER  
 Alright, we're moving forward. Let's get  
 an acceptable account.

All eyes on Clady; we're in his world now.

CLADY  
 Mody was off duty, shopping. Two perps  
 rolled in on a 211. Ludlow was first on  
 scene - fellow officer was already down.  
 Simple. No changes.

WANDER  
 (to Ludlow)  
 Got that?  
 (beyond disappointed)  
 Bring your uniform tomorrow.

Wander exits as Clady ejects the tape.

CLADY

We would've busted Mody without you.

Ludlow's left alone with the video tape. After a life-changing beat, he rises...and POCKETS the tape.

INT. JU-JIN MARKET - CONTINUOUS

The morbid crime scene HUSHES as Ludlow emerges. He finds DeMille, who nods understandingly.

Shoney opens the front door, leading Ludlow out.

EXT. JU-JIN MARKET

Megan steps out of the KCAL news van, searching for the usual suspects through a host of ONLOOKERS. She locks eyes with Ludlow, sensing immediately that this crime scene is *different*.

Ludlow turns away from Megan, finding DeMille waiting patiently, holding his car door. And Ludlow realizes, things have changed with Shoney and DeMille...*he's one of them now*.

Megan watches as he disappears - complicit - into the car.

INT. LUDLOW'S HOME - NIGHT

Ludlow sits alone, chopsticks and empty takeout cartons before him. His windows are covered in HEAVY DRAPES, his sun-stained walls bare, save for WHITE PATCHES where pictures have been taken down. He watches a familiar face on his TV...

MEGAN

Two male suspects are wanted for the slaying of an off duty police officer tonight. The officer has been identified as Gilbert Mody, a 25 year veteran of the Los Angeles Police department. A source close to the investigation tells me *exclusively* that Mody was inside the Korean market behind me, when the suspects entered to rob it.

(off her notes)

Mody is survived by his wife Linda... and just from speaking to those on the scene, I can tell you that this is a loss not only to her, but to this entire community where Mody was very well-known and liked...

(her notes again)

(MORE)

MEGAN (cont'd)  
Funeral services are expected to be held  
Friday at the Cathedral of Our Lady of  
the Angels...

Ludlow mutes the television, staring blankly at Megan.

INT. 77TH POLICE STATION - THE NEXT MORNING

TWO DESK SERGEANT's stare curiously as Ludlow totes his  
uniform over his shoulder. They've never seen him before.

DEEPER INTO THE STATION

Ludlow walks crookedly - no sleep, and the weight of this new  
world on his shoulders. He begins to be recognized by the  
'day shift'...

Ludlow ignores the passing stares, heading into--

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow dresses at his locker, buttoning a dusty uniform.  
*It's been a long time.*

A PASSING OFFICER slaps him on the back. It's meant amicably,  
but it's just a tad too hard.

Ludlow looks back curiously, then returns to his tie - trying  
to clip it on.

2ND PASSING OFFICER  
(low)  
Still the man.

Now Ludlow turns around. He garners the attention of a  
FELLOW NIGHTWATCHMAN, who sits exhausted after a long night.

FELLOW NIGHT WATCHMAN  
Attaboy Lud.

They assume he has killed Mody - and he's the toast of the town.

As Ludlow closes his locker, something catches his eye...  
Down the line, a locker with MODY'S NAME... A BLACK LINE  
CROSSED THROUGH IT. Ludlow's enjoying none of this.

INT. WANDER'S OFFICE - A SHORT TIME LATER

Wander's on the phone, signing a gift basket that his SECRETARY  
holds in front of him. He motions Ludlow in.

WANDER (ON PHONE)

Well, listen, it's a reminder isn't it?  
My officers face that threat every day  
they put on the uniform. You just don't  
write stories about it.

Ludlow stands sheepishly - not sure if he should sit.

WANDER

Alright. I'll be reading it.  
(hangs up; to Ludlow)  
Sit down. Sheila bring Tom some coffee.

Ludlow cups himself - his silent protest - as he sits.

WANDER

How you doing? You sleep?  
(wryly)  
You've been getting me out of bed more and  
more these days...  
(then; heavily)  
We're all seeing just a little too much  
of you Tom, for someone who's supposed to  
work out of sight, out of mind... Nobody  
wants you in their living room. Christ,  
I don't even wanna know half the things  
you do.

Wander mutes his ringing telephone.

WANDER

Look, I'm not trying to give you another  
dose here. But I gotta bury you  
somewhere for a while. A nice,  
politically correct little spot.

LUDLOW

The fuck does that mean?

Sheila stands stunned beside Ludlow, his coffee in her hands.

WANDER

You're a doll Sheila. We'll take that on  
the road.

INT. HALLWAY, COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT - A SHORT TIME LATER

Ludlow looks even more uncomfortable, trailing Wander with a  
cup and saucer in his hands. They arrive at a

SPARSE, DREARY OFFICE. The sign on the door: *CIVILIAN  
COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION.*

LUDLOW  
Anywhere else. I'm asking you as a  
friend.

WANDER  
(amused)  
Look at it this way: it's your first day  
of school and all the other kids already  
know you.

Indeed, a HALF-DOZEN COMPLAINT INVESTIGATORS stare at Ludlow.  
He's well known here. A SUPERVISOR approaches.

LUDLOW  
(under his breath)  
Fuckin' embarrassing.

SUPERVISOR  
Lieutenant.

WANDER  
He's all yours.  
(whispers)  
It's just temporary Lud.

Ludlow hands off his coffee cup, being led away.

WANDER  
Play nice now.

MOMENTS LATER,

The supervisor whizzes Ludlow past the gaping 'desk jockeys'.

SUPERVISOR  
..your job is to interview the  
complainants and do back-up interviews if  
you get two or more complaints against a  
given officer. The temptation is to be a  
good brother cop. Don't be. Most of  
this shit's not going anywhere anyway.  
Handle that?

They arrive at a small desk.

LUDLOW  
Suppose I get a complaint against myself?

SUPERVISOR  
(without irony)  
Write it up and file it under standard  
guidelines.

A SHORT TIME LATER

Ludlow guzzles a coffee, waiting for his first complaint. His eyes drift to a poster on the wall: a LATIN OFFICER posing with ADMIRING CHILDREN.

MAN'S VOICE

Wake up, popo.

Ludlow turns to find a YOUNG WHITE PUNK staring at him. He is the first in a string of COMPLAINANTS - all colors and creeds - but all lower middle class or impoverished.

Ludlow uncaps his pen...takes a deep breath...

LUDLOW

You have a complaint?

WHITE PUNK

Shoot I got multiple. Okay? Multiple complaints need addressin'.

BLACK MAN

Motherfucker looked like you. But black. Beat my ass like Rodney King. But there wasn't no video.

ASIAN WOMAN

Pull me over for no reason!

LATIN MAN

Forced me out of my car, holmes.

BLACK WOMAN

Out of my house... Didn't even care my children were there.

WHITE PUNK

My boys was right there, and they make me look like a bitch.

Hold on Ludlow. He reaches into a drawer, grabs a BOX OF TISSUES and places it before the stunned punk.

BACK TO MONTAGE:

HISPANIC MAN

(holding piece of paper)

I know the law. But you don't know that I know!

Ludlow downs an Aspirin, making his 'keep going' gesture.

OLDER BLACK MAN

Stop doing that. It's an impertinent gesture and I'm not a suspect you're grilling for information.

(then)

Now I assure you, if I was dealing drugs I'd have more than a hundred and twelve dollars on me. But they took it anyway. Saying it was 'company money' now.

Ludlow stops. Actually looks at the complainant--

LUDLOW

You get a badge number?

OLDER BLACK MAN

Well since his foot was on my throat, I missed it. But it wasn't just the one guy. There was two or three of them, saying they gonna 'take it home'.

Ludlow digests a moment, then makes his 'keep going' gesture.

HISPANIC MAN

(re: piece of paper)

Look at it. You can see it right there.

Behind the aggravated complainant, a DISTINGUISHED BLACK MAN waits his turn.

LUDLOW

There's nothing wrong with this warrant.

The Hispanic man points to the crumpled page in Ludlow's hand.

HISPANIC MAN

It says they lookin' for a gun!

LUDLOW

And did they find a gun?

HISPANIC MAN

Yeah, but it don't say nothing about no coke.

LUDLOW

They found some coke?

HISPANIC MAN

Yeah, but it ain't on there. That warrant's for a gun.

Ludlow stares a disbelieving beat.



LUDLOW  
Yeah, I see your point.

HISPANIC MAN  
Yeah.

Ludlow motions for him to get up--

LUDLOW  
Yeah, lawyer up. See what you can do.

The Hispanic man rises, not entirely sure of what's happening.

HISPANIC MAN  
See what-- Yeah. Damn right I will.

The distinguished black man (BIGGS) watches the complainant off, then sits calmly across from Ludlow. ANOTHER BLACK MAN waits at a distance, not unlike a bodyguard.

BIGGS  
Say, aren't you that cop I saw on TV?

LUDLOW  
Do you have a more specific complaint against me?

Biggs, a well-kept 50, unbuttons his three piece suit.

BIGGS  
Wander's got a sense of humor, I'll give him that. Took me all day to track you down.

Ludlow's suddenly alert.

BIGGS  
(hand reaching out)  
Terrel Biggs.

LUDLOW  
Tom Ludlow.

BIGGS  
Oh yes sir, I know. And me? D'you know me?

LUDLOW  
Sure, you're the one Mody was snitching to.

Biggs is visibly stunned.

BIGGS

Now that is a *hell* of a thing to admit to knowing. Under the circumstances.

Ludlow's unmoved. He's unreadable. Biggs recovers--

BIGGS

Alright, good for you.  
(bobbing like a boxer)  
You caught me with one there.

LUDLOW

Mody tell you I'm just a racist atheist?

BIGGS

Hey, who isn't these days?  
(then)  
You did work Firestone in the 90's, though.  
'Phonebook Tom'. Ain't that right?

LUDLOW

Got my best confession with a '91  
Directory.

Biggs stares, like he's seeing an animal up close for the first time.

BIGGS

Picked up a few complaints along the way,  
didn't you?

Ludlow stiffens - wondering if the 'interview' has begun.

LUDLOW

Is this it?

BIGGS

This is just a back and forth.

LUDLOW

(joylessly)  
Twenty-two complaints.

BIGGS

Twenty-three actually. Including the  
other night.

LUDLOW

Well I got a few medals in between if  
we're counting.

BIGGS

Can't have one without the other, can you?  
(off Ludlow)  
(MORE)

BIGGS (cont'd)  
I know how it works, Tom. I know Wander  
was on duty for almost all those  
complaints when he worked the night  
watch. I noticed Clady was overseeing  
the other night.  
(off Ludlow)  
Friends in high places.

Ludlow makes his bored, '*keep going*' gesture.

BIGGS  
Like I said, a back and forth Tom.

LUDLOW  
I'm not much of a dancer, so if there's  
something you'd like to ask me...

Biggs stares intently, his edge suddenly breaking--

BIGGS  
(jokingly)  
I just wanna know what you do those  
other nights?

Ludlow cracks an ambiguous smile.

BIGGS  
They give you a lunch break?

EXT. VJ'S CHILI STAND - DAY

Ludlow sits across from Biggs in a sparsely populated food  
court. Neither seems hungry.

The Internal Affairs man places a tape recorder on the table,  
pressing 'RECORD'.

BIGGS  
You were first respondent last night...  
Tom?

Ludlow hesitates, eyeing Biggs' ASSISTANT at a nearby table.

BIGGS  
(re: 'the interview')  
This is it.

Then... Ludlow does it. He lies--

LUDLOW  
Yeah.

BIGGS  
'Yeah', you're Tom Ludlow? Or 'yeah',  
you were first on scene.

LUDLOW  
Both.

BIGGS  
Were you alcohol-impaired at the time of  
the shooting?

LUDLOW  
No.

BIGGS  
So you could describe the shooters.

LUDLOW  
Height, weight - yeah.

BIGGS  
Three men?

LUDLOW  
Two.

Biggs looks irritated as TWO PLAYING CHILDREN storm past.

BIGGS  
You a law and order man, Tom? Would that  
describe you?

LUDLOW  
Sure.

BIGGS  
But more order than law, right? What I  
mean is, Tom, at the end of the day it's  
order that counts. Don't sweat the  
details; break a few eggs to make an  
omelette; break a few bones to keep the  
public safe.

LUDLOW  
Whatever you say.

BIGGS  
I guess what I'm saying Tom - what I'm  
*asking* - is if you and Wander keep  
tearing down the law to go after the  
devil...then what protects us when the  
devil comes after us?

LUDLOW  
Sounds a little above my pay grade.

BIGGS  
That must be a real warm blanket for you.  
(then)  
Would you lose any sleep Tom, if I told  
you that not two, but *three* calibers of  
slugs were pulled from Mody's body?

Ludlow gives nothing away.

BIGGS  
To me that means there were *three* shooters.  
(then; soothingly)  
What were you doing there Tom?

LUDLOW  
First respondent.

BIGGS  
I spoke to the *second* respondents - two  
nice young boys. They say they were no  
more than two, three blocks away when  
they got the call. But you beat'em  
there... I wonder if our girl Jada in  
dispatch could explain that.

Ludlow just stares at the churning recorder.

BIGGS  
'Officer down', that mean anything to you?  
Or does that change because it was Mody?

Biggs grabs the recorder, angrily STOPPING it--

BIGGS  
This bothering you Tom? 'Cause I gotta  
tell yah, nobody seems too upset about  
the fact that two cop killers are walking  
around out there - living, laughing,  
fucking...

LUDLOW  
(begrudgingly)  
Doesn't change 'cause it was Mody.

BIGGS  
Then why don't you go find the  
motherfuckers that did it!?

LUDLOW  
It's...not my decision.

BIGGS  
Whose is it?

Ludlow's mouth tightens; he walked right into this one.

LUDLOW  
Wander assigns the cases.

BIGGS  
Well, I'm sure he's got his best cop on  
this one. Detective--  
(searching)  
--Diskant. Must be a hell of a cop if  
I've never heard of him. Anyway I'm sure  
he'll find our two cop killers for us.  
Then maybe they can tell us who that  
third shooter was. Won't that be just  
ace-crackerjack?

LUDLOW  
That'd be great.

BIGGS  
Fuck you! Where's the tape from the  
store?

LUDLOW  
Was there one?

Biggs gathers his recorder; this 'interview' is over.

LUDLOW  
You haven't seen the last of me.  
(off Biggs)  
That's your line, right? I'm gonna take  
your badge and shove it--

BIGGS  
You a little fish Ludlow. I'm a' bait my  
hook with you.

INT. COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT - LATER THAT DAY

Ludlow stews at his desk...mulling Biggs' words.

A COMPLAINANT rambles in muted tones. Suddenly Ludlow rises,  
simply walking away.

INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - DAY

Still in his uniform, Ludlow hesitates - watching his fellow detectives around their bullpens. All of them wear BLACK BANDS around their badges.

Ludlow swallows his pride, wading forward... WHISPERS and CHUCKLES in his wake. Shoney and DeMille - the slick black and white tandem - spot him.

DEMILLE

Oh, that is butch, Ludlow.

As Ludlow heads for them, Shoney and DeMille rise for a fight.

SHONEY

You lost, boy?

LUDLOW

(*'keep going'* motion)

What's the field breakdown on Mody?

The homicide detectives exchange a disbelieving look.

DEMILLE

Told you he's a piece of work. Go ahead, tell him.

SHONEY

(*'get this'*)

Diskant's leading two teams on the suspects, one tip-chaser team, and one phone team.

LUDLOW

Why Diskant? Why not you fucks?

SHONEY

Because we'd find they ass Ludlow. Then who'd be fucked?

Ludlow is visibly repulsed by these men. Nearby, an observing DETECTIVE places a call - his eyes on Ludlow.

LUDLOW

Well where is he?

DEMILLE

(*giddily*)

He's at his desk.

Ludlow starts away--

DEMILLE  
 You got a guardian angel trying to help  
 you Ludlow.  
 (pointedly)  
 I'd let him.

DISKANT'S DESK - MOMENTS LATER

A FLOPPY-HAIRED DETECTIVE, early 30's, sits amid organized  
 chaos - PAPERS and PHOTOGRAPHS everywhere.

Ludlow grabs a nearby chair, swinging it over to Diskant and  
 sitting heavily. Diskant looks back slowly, over his shoulder--

LUDLOW  
 You're Paul Diskant.

DISKANT  
 Yeah.

LUDLOW  
 Wander gave you the market shooting?

DISKANT  
 Yeah.

LUDLOW  
 You know who I am?

DISKANT  
 Yeah.

LUDLOW  
 Well you think you might want to speak  
 to me about it? Yeah?

DISKANT  
 (nodding)  
 You're on my list.

Ludlow turns his attention to Diskant's desk. Indeed, he has  
 a LIST - it actually *says* 'INTERVIEWS' - next to a nameplate  
 and SEVERAL FILES and PHOTOS...MODY'S SHATTERED FACE AMONG THEM.

LUDLOW  
 You done this before?

DISKANT  
 In Portland, yeah.

Ludlow almost loses it. 'Portland'. He kneads his brow.

LUDLOW  
 How you doing so far?



DISKANT  
I'm still trying to get my ducks in a row. Get a clear picture of things.

LUDLOW  
(sarcastically)  
But you definitely got a list. I mean, *that* we have.

DISKANT  
What are you doing here Ludlow?

Ludlow looks back; the other gawking detectives make no effort to turn away.

LUDLOW  
Well, not to rush your process, but I want a ballistics report.

Diskant instinctively puts his hand over the report.

DISKANT  
What about it?

LUDLOW  
Two or three shooters?

A beat.

DISKANT  
They pulled a third type of slug out of Mody's lung this morning.

Diskant stares knowingly. He's not as thick as Ludlow presumed.

LUDLOW  
What about forensics?

DISKANT  
Too soon.

LUDLOW  
Is that what they told you?

Diskant's eyes give him away: 'Yes.' Ludlow sighs. He's going to have to do this himself.

LUDLOW  
(leaving)  
Don't get up.

Diskant watches Ludlow off. Then - as if not wanting to miss out - he follows.

INT. L.A. COUNTY CORONER'S - DAY

A cold basement area - part lab, part storage. The CHIEF CORONER looks up from a body, staring at Ludlow through safety glasses.

LUDLOW  
(opening his badge)  
I work 77th--

CORONER  
Tom Ludlow.

LUDLOW  
(calculating)  
Yeah, you know me?

CORONER  
Sure. You were on TV the other night.  
(Ludlow relaxes)  
I recognized you from when your wife was  
brought in.

Ludlow's color fades. He focuses on the man.

LUDLOW  
You did it?

CORONER  
(pointing to table)  
Here... yeah.

LUDLOW  
(mantra-like)  
No foul play.

Diskant suddenly enters, 'booty wraps' over his own shoes.

CORONER  
(shaking his head)  
Just an explosion in her head. I get one  
in here a week. They're all different -  
- different places in the brain - but all  
the same I guess. Lights out.

The coroner looks at Diskant: 'booty wraps' over his shoes.

CORONER  
You guys can't be here.

LUDLOW  
I'm with Diskant. He's lead on the  
market shooting.

DISKANT  
Wander knows we're here.

Ludlow looks at Diskant - a brief, trust-building second.

CORONER  
(old boy's club)  
What do you need Ludlow?

LUDLOW  
Is that Mody?

Indeed it *is* Ludlow's old 'friend' beneath the coroner.

LUDLOW  
Do you have three shooters?

A pregnant beat.

CORONER  
Nah. One of the suspects switched to a  
smaller, finishing side arm. That's all.  
(then)  
Gimme another day I'll tell you if it was  
Fremont or Coates.

DISKANT  
Who's that? The shooters?

CORONER  
(skeptically; to Ludlow)  
You're just walking him through the  
motions?

LUDLOW  
(re: Diskant)  
Yeah, he still wants to make it look good.  
(makes the 'jack off' sign)  
Turn over every stone. You got a lock or  
what?

CORONER  
(nods)  
Prints, hair, even a little blood.  
LaShawn Fremont and Wade Coates.

LUDLOW  
What kind of history do they have?

CORONER  
A bad one. Rape, narcotics...murder.

LUDLOW  
Lovely. What about robbery?

One too many questions.

CORONER  
I gotta speak to Wander.

LUDLOW  
Call him. We'll wait right here.

The Coroner retreats skeptically to a phone.

DISKANT  
We're not waiting are we?

LUDLOW  
No, we're not.

Ludlow grabs a PRINTOUT off a counter, exiting hurriedly.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow walks ahead of Diskant down the dark, empty hall.

DISKANT  
Jesus. I can't believe they I.D.'d them  
already--

LUDLOW  
What kind of deal you cut, Disco?

DISKANT  
What?

LUDLOW  
You trading up?

DISKANT  
What are you talking about?

Without warning, Ludlow HITS Diskant in the stomach.

LUDLOW  
Cut the Bambi shit! You're not solving  
this case! You know it's closed--

DISKANT  
I don't--

Ludlow picks Diskant up, lodging his forearm into the younger man's windpipe.

LUDLOW  
Who came to you!? Who dealt you in?

Diskant's eyes are coming out of his head.

DISKANT  
Don't you know?

LUDLOW  
Tell me.

DISKANT  
(gasping)  
Clady.  
(Ludlow eases off)  
Clady.

Diskant gasps for air; he's really shook up. Ludlow's flooded with embarrassment, but still makes his 'keep going' gesture--

DISKANT  
He said if I stepped up - took the loss  
on this one - I'd be included in bigger  
things.

Ludlow deflates, exhausted.

DISKANT  
I was told I was doing you a favor.

LUDLOW  
How does it work? You mail it in - let  
two cop killers walk on my account? You  
like me that much? Or are you that  
fuckin' bent already?

DISKANT  
I don't know you. I don't care about you  
or Mody; he was a rat piece of shit,  
wasn't he? I care about my job.

LUDLOW  
Climbing before you can walk.

DISKANT  
Fuck you Ludlow. What about you? What  
are you doing here? All the shit you  
pulled, you get a sudden attack of  
conscience. You're better than everybody  
else?  
(off Ludlow)  
You're the worst one.

Ludlow absorbs the blows. After a long, hard beat, he nods--

LUDLOW  
 (sullenly)  
 Yeah, I'm the worst. But there's  
 different kinds of bad, Disco...

DISKANT  
 (cynically)  
 C'mon. You're really gonna find these  
 guys? Ruin your whole life over a cop  
 nobody liked...who hated you worse than  
 anyone?

LUDLOW  
 I just take complaints, Disco... You're  
 homicide.

EXT. ADAMS CEMETERY - DAY

21 RIFLES FIRE. They're reloaded and FIRED AGAIN.

A MOMENT OF SILENCE as Ludlow, dressed in a dark JC Penny  
 suit, surveys from the back of a STANDING GALLERY...

Across on open grave - a flag-draped casket still above ground -  
 a VEILED BLACK WOMAN sits amidst other women. Mody's widow.

The rifles FIRE AGAIN.

Wander stands, head bowed before a microphone. Nearer to  
 Ludlow, Diskant steals a glance at him through the crowd.

DEMILLE (O.S.)  
 Just can't let this dog lie, can you?

Ludlow turns to find his favorite couple, Shoney and DeMille.  
 They whisper over Wander's commencing eulogy--

DEMILLE  
 You know as dumb as you are, I'm probably  
 just dumb enough myself to understand  
 your motives.

LUDLOW  
 (dryly)  
 Explain them to me sometime. There's a  
 thread that keeps eluding me.

DEMILLE  
 You can't stand being in debt. That's  
 why you got no friends. Somebody helps  
 you out - you might have to look out for  
 them someday.  
 (then)  
 (MORE)

DEMILLE (cont'd)  
I don't think you give a shit about  
Fremont and Coates.

LUDLOW  
( 'Does everybody know?)  
Jesus... What do you know about them?

DeMille smiles wryly at Shoney.

SHONEY  
Heroin caballeros. From Belize. Came up  
to make a sale and liked it so much they  
never left.

DEMILLE  
We busted them ourselves a year ago.  
Rape-mutilation. Some black cooze on her  
way home from stenography class.

LUDLOW  
They walked?

SHONEY  
Bad bust. One of our own felt we had  
violated Mr. Coates and Mr. Fremont's  
civil rights.

LUDLOW  
Did you?

DEMILLE  
Of course we did.

Ludlow blinks at them - *realizing*...

LUDLOW  
Mody.

SHONEY  
We'd hardly got them downtown before he  
started mouthing off about proper  
procedure.

DEMILLE  
Before you could say 'bullshit race card'  
they were sprung.  
(disgusted)  
Didn't even make it into the system.

LUDLOW  
(disbelieving)  
Mody sprung the shooters from the market.

DEMILLE

They probably didn't even register his face before they cracked it with a bullet.

SHONEY

Pretty ironic, isn't it? He'd still be alive if it weren't for all his Negro self-righteousness.

Clady turns around angrily, silencing the threesome.

DEMILLE

(whispers)

Why do you think Wander put Mody on poster duty? He was doing more to help crime than prevent it.

Ludlow tunes them out now, his head swirling.

WANDER

(still at microphone)

..from his time on the streets, to his time in your schools and homes. He was a tireless ambassador for the department, for his church, and for his family...

EXT. GARDEN RECEPTION - DAY

PHOTOGRAPHERS snap photos as Wander poses joylessly with a CITY COUNCILMAN.

Ludlow watches from a distance, drinking alone...reddish punch in a plastic cup. He absentmindedly sets the cup down at a crowded table, drawing STARES as he winds his way towards Wander. He's cut off by Clady--

CLADY

Easy, big fella.

LUDLOW

I'm easy.

CLADY

Take it more easy.

LUDLOW

I'm fucking Chine-easy, Clady.

CLADY

Yeah, well...

(looks back at Wander)

...Not with the cameras.



LUDLOW  
I don't want a damn picture with him.

CLADY  
He doesn't want a conversation either.

Wander spots Ludlow, turning away coldly.

CLADY  
(admiringly)  
Fucking Wander man. Look at all this.  
Donations are rolling in, public  
support's through the roof. I don't know  
what Mody's widow's so upset about...  
First good thing her husband ever did.

Ludlow scowls at Clady.

CLADY  
(the scowl)  
Oooh, that's good. I'll take a picture  
with you. Watch this.

Clady turns to the cameras, shaking his head in his hand.

CLADY  
Terrible. So terrible.  
(back to Ludlow)  
You know, here we are, running around  
trying to close the doors on this thing  
for you...  
(re: Wander)  
You should've seen his face when he heard  
you were running around opening them up.  
(then)  
You don't want to lose your last friend  
in him. Believe me.

LUDLOW  
Does he know these guys are wanted for  
more than just Mody?

CLADY  
Of course he does. Everybody knows more  
than you Ludlow. Just assume that from  
now on.

LUDLOW  
Well I'm calling it off. This whole  
stand-down order--

CLADY  
(hissing)  
You don't call off shit!  
(MORE)

CLADY (cont'd)  
 You hear me? When you took your pass  
 Fremont and Coates got theirs too.

LUDLOW  
 Well I'm giving my pass back.

CLADY  
 No, no, no, no, no, no, no. If you wanted  
 to play Christ-on-the-Cross you should've  
 done it back in that grocery store. The  
 second you took that tape it wasn't just  
 your own ass on the line. It's every man  
 in this department now.

Ludlow looks about the room, OTHER COPS glancing his way.  
 He finds Diskant, having a drink with Shoney and DeMille.

CLADY  
 Brothers in arms Lud. You meet with Biggs?  
 (up close)  
 We'll assume it. 'Cause he's looking for  
 any chink in the armor right now.

Clady raises his glass as Ludlow retreats away...

CLADY  
 Don't be that chink.

EXT. PARKING LOT, ADAMS CEMETERY - A SHORT TIME LATER

Ludlow walks heavily to his car, barely aware of his  
 surroundings. No two ways about it... he's torn.

Nearby, a LIMOUSINE idles. Ludlow finds a procession of  
 MOURNING BLACK WOMEN approaching. Linda Mody, beautifully  
 poised, at the center.

Wander watches, from a distance, as Ludlow sets himself in  
 their path. The women part around him curiously, until Linda--

LUDLOW  
 Mrs. Mody?

Linda considers him through her thin veil.

LUDLOW  
 I'm Tom Ludlow.

LINDA  
 I know who you are, Detective.

LUDLOW  
 (startled)  
 I was...first on scene.

She stares at him, in a way that makes him guess at first, then reduces him to nothing.

LUDLOW  
I wanted to say--

LINDA  
(smiling)  
I thought he had more friends. I  
should've spoken, but I couldn't find  
one...

Linda is absorbed by her waiting friends, then by the limousine. Ludlow stands gutted... *'Lord, here comes the flood...'*

INT. LUDLOW'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

...*Guilt* washes over Ludlow's sweating features. He sits in the stale, dark heat, watching the tape from the market. He rewinds, over and over, as he drinks from a BOTTLE; no miniatures this time.

ON HIS SMALL TELEVISION: *Ludlow cowers behind a corner, trying to remove his cuffs. Then...he turns and FIRES down the aisle...right over Mody.*

REWIND. *He turns and FIRES down the aisle.*

LUDLOW  
(the sound a gun makes)  
Pfffhhhoohoo.

Ludlow lets it run, looking around his room for an escape. Then, SOMETHING on the tape catches his welling eyes.

LUDLOW  
What the...?

He gets to within inches of the screen...mesmerized. Suddenly he EJECTS the tape...spooked.

He reaches for his phone, holding it an indecisive beat.

EXT. KCAL 9 NEWS STATION - LATER THAT NIGHT

Megan parks her car, spotting Ludlow lurking in the shadows. She won't look at him as she approaches the front entrance. She fumbles for the right key, feeling his eyes on her.

LUDLOW  
Thank you.

MEGAN

I don't wake up this time of night for non-sex.

Ludlow simply smiles.

LUDLOW

You're a delicate flower, Megan.

She holds the door before opening it: 'Do you want my help?'

LUDLOW

I'll owe you one.

Ludlow follows Megan inside.

MEGAN

Tell me why you can't watch this at your own station?

LUDLOW

I'm not well-liked there.

MEGAN

Can't imagine why not.

She hits the button for the elevator.

MEGAN

You punch somebody out?

LUDLOW

Not *really*.

MEGAN

Accuse anyone new of sleeping with your wife?

LUDLOW

No, I exhausted that list.

Megan steps into the elevator, turning back coyly.

MEGAN

So it's just basically you they don't like.

Ludlow stares at her blankly.

LUDLOW

(the elevator)

I'll get the next one.

INT. EDITING ROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Megan works at an editing bay in the small room. Ludlow is perched expectantly before a large monitor.

MEGAN

Okay, where's the tape?

Ludlow watches her as she moves proficiently about the room.

LUDLOW

I probably do owe you a....

MEGAN

What?

LUDLOW

I could probably take you somewhere to...

(Megan waits)

...apologize.

MEGAN

Yeah? Where'd you have in mind? An abandoned parking lot?

LUDLOW

I don't mean like that--

MEGAN

It's fine Lud. We're on the same page.

He can't get near her tonight. She points over his shoulder. On the LARGE MONITOR: *the surveillance tape from the market.*

Megan sits, slowly astonished by the soundless violence.

MEGAN

God. You can't just *tell* me what happened?

LUDLOW

Okay, right here. See this mirror? Move in on that or-- make it better.

Megan tries to magnify the image.

MEGAN

I have people for this, you know?

She brings up the MIRROR in a high corner of the store. ONE OF THE SHOOTERS can be seen in the reflection.

LUDLOW  
Good, okay now run it.

At half-speed, the SHOOTER appears to LIFT HIS STOCKING MASK...SPIT ON Mody...then SHOOT him at point blank.

LUDLOW  
(astonished)  
He spat on him.

MEGAN  
So he...what? What does--  
(dawning on her)  
He knew Mody.

Ludlow nods, his fear confirmed.

LUDLOW  
Maybe. Yeah.

MEGAN  
So, it wasn't a robbery?

LUDLOW  
No...no, that would make it a hit.

Ludlow suddenly heads for the VCR, past a dazed Megan.

MEGAN  
He was snitching on you.

Ludlow guiltily pockets the tape.

MEGAN  
He was snitching all of you to some commission.

LUDLOW  
(nodding)  
I forgot who I was with for a second.

MEGAN  
What did he have on you?

LUDLOW  
Nothing. Excessive force, racist plays.

MEGAN  
That's it?

LUDLOW  
I'd know if there was more... I was just there to punch him in the mouth.

MEGAN

And you brought them to kill him.

*Time out.*

LUDLOW

Is that who you think I am?

(then)

I don't know those guys, Megan. Mody knew them.

MEGAN

Okay, how?

LUDLOW

Mody sprung them from a bust a year ago. Clady says he was dirty as all hell.

Megan isn't sure what to believe.

MEGAN

So...

She makes *his* 'keep going' gesture.

LUDLOW

Maybe they were in bed together.

MEGAN

What do you want me to do?

LUDLOW

Nothing. If you can stand it.

MEGAN

What are you gonna do?

Ludlow considers it a heavy beat. Then, as if surprised by his own conclusion--

LUDLOW

Nothing.

MEGAN

I don't believe that.

LUDLOW

Well...you're alone there.

INT. STATION HALLWAY - DAY

Back in uniform, head sunk down, Ludlow manages a busy hall.

He lifts his eyes, spying through a window to the DETECTIVES' BULLPENS. Diskant is not at his desk.

INT. POLICE EVIDENCE IMPOUND - DAY

Diskant stands defiantly at a tall counter.

DISKANT

Yeah, Gil Mody... I got a bank statement here I'm trying to cross-reference. Was he carrying any cash when he came in?

The CURATOR taps a few keys, reading from his screen--

CURATOR

Yeah - looks like...  
(eyebrows)  
Ten grand.

INT. COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Ludlow sits disconsolately at his desk. Maybe he *is* going to let it go. Across from him sit TWO PROSTITUTES.

PROSTITUTE

This ass worked longer than all y'all cops disrespecting me--

PROSTITUTE #2

And they always do it on a motherfuckin' Friday. So we don't see no judge 'til Tuesday and they know that ain't fair...

Ludlow stares at them - his mind elsewhere.

INT. POLICE VEHICLE IMPOUND - DAY

Diskant completes a circle around Mody's SEVILLE. He rifles through the glove box and console, then pops the trunk...

It's empty, aside from a jack and a spare. About to close the trunk, he spots a SMALL TAG attached to a torn string.

INT. COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Ludlow is mid-conversation with a PERSIAN MAN in jacket and tie.

PERSIAN MAN

I said please, tell me what I am being charged with. But they just laugh.

(MORE)



PERSIAN MAN (cont'd)  
They took only - maybe - a hundred dollars, but that's a lot of money back then... Then I see this picture of this retiring captain.

The man shows Ludlow a NEWSPAPER PHOTO of SILKY (the retiring officer from the Pacific Dining Car send-off).

PERSIAN MAN  
This is the man who says it was company money now. That they couldn't trust me with what I would spend it on--

LUDLOW  
Back up. 'Company money', say what...

Ludlow puts down a doughnut. Makes his 'keep going' gesture.

PERSIAN MAN  
Contribution to his corporation.  
(then)  
I don't want my money back. But it stayed with me, you understand? I am third generation American, officer.

INT. POLICE EVIDENCE IMPOUND - DAY

An IMPOUND TECH across the counter examines Diskant's TAG.

IMPOUND TECH  
Yeah, it's an evidence tag.

DISKANT  
One of ours?

IMPOUND TECH  
It's got our coding prefix.

He types the numbers into his computer, his brow furrowing.

IMPOUND TECH  
Weird... Hold on a sec.

He disappears into the stacks. Diskant turns the screen to read it: *'HEROIN - 3.255 Kilos.'*

IMPOUND TECH (O.S.)  
Funny...

Diskant quickly turns the screen back as the Tech returns.

IMPOUND TECH  
The article's in its place and properly tagged.

He picks up and re-examines the tag.

IMPOUND TECH  
Wonder where the hell this came from?

INT. COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Ludlow looks up from the NEWSPAPER CLIPPING of Silky. He looks the Persian man squarely in the eye.

LUDLOW  
I'm sorry that happened to you.

The man exhales, a weight lifted.

PERSIAN MAN  
Thank you.

And that's enough for him. He leaves Ludlow with his thoughts.

On his way out, the Persian man passes Diskant - waiting purposefully. *Diskant locks eyes with Ludlow*, then walks out.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow sticks his head into the hall. Down the way, Diskant *lets Ludlow spot him*, then heads into the MEN'S ROOM.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow opens the door hesitantly. He finds it empty, save for an edgy Diskant.

LUDLOW  
This is the faggiest thing I've ever seen.

Diskant stands his ground.

DISKANT  
Homophobe. Good to know on top of everything else.

LUDLOW  
*What are you doing?*

DISKANT  
You getting it from all sides on this?

LUDLOW  
 (sighs; reluctantly)  
 No worse than you, choir boy.

Diskant glimpses himself in the mirror, a reckoning instant.

DISKANT  
 Alright listen: I'm not saying I'm doing  
 anything - or if I tell you one thing I'm  
 gonna tell you anything else again... but  
 I think I know what they had on Mody.

Ludlow looks back at the door.

LUDLOW  
 Go take a piss.

Diskant reluctantly obliges, facing a urinal in case someone  
 enters. Ludlow moves to the sink.

LUDLOW  
 Why do you say that?

DISKANT  
 First of all he had ten large on his  
 person when he died. I checked out his  
 car at impound; he had almost four kilos  
 of 'H' in his trunk.

Ludlow takes a moment, as if soaking it all in... Then--

LUDLOW  
 (re: urinal)  
 You put your whole body in it like that?

Diskant moves back, irritated.

DISKANT  
 Look, if I'm keeping you from your new  
 job--

LUDLOW  
 Alright, so you found some 'H'. So what?

DISKANT  
 So you still have a professional  
 curiosity in Fremont and Coates?

Ludlow makes his 'keep going' gesture.

DISKANT  
 What do you think they do when they're  
 not raping and robbing?

LUDLOW  
They deal heroin.

Ludlow nods slightly; he gets the point.

LUDLOW  
And now you wanna shake some trees. Meet  
our terrible twosome.

Diskant nods begrudgingly. *Not how he would've put it.*

LUDLOW  
Listen, Disco. There's no shame if you  
wanna play ball with Clady. Get in on  
some of those big things.

DISKANT  
No shame if you wanna take your pass.

Ludlow sizes up Diskant. Maybe he *could* go to war with this  
kid.

LUDLOW  
It's your career.

DISKANT  
It's your funeral.

Ludlow can't help smirking at the volley. He thinks hard...  
*Last chance to be smart.*

LUDLOW  
Alright, let's work.

EXT. COMPTON - LATER THAT DAY

Ludlow's Camaro rolls - windows down, stereo pumping - into  
the hood. Diskant rides shotgun, second-guessing this whole  
thing.

They cross under a sign: *CENTURY BOULEVARD*. Ludlow - out of  
uniform now - kills the music.

LUDLOW  
So you're not exactly the inside man here  
Disco, but you ever hear other cops talk  
about 'The Company'? Their corporation  
or some shit.

DISKANT  
What, like investment funds?

LUDLOW  
No, like Serpico, shakedown funds.

DISKANT  
(disdainfully)  
Not interested.

LUDLOW  
I'm not fucking offering dummy, I'm asking if you've heard of it.

DISKANT  
No, never have. But I wasn't around for the good old Rampart days.  
(then)  
Why?

LUDLOW  
Just a complaint I'm following up on.

Diskant peeks at Ludlow; *this guy takes his job seriously.*

LUDLOW  
Anyway quit congratulating yourself. You would've loved the old days. We were fucking kings... Just a few bad seeds that ruined it.

As Ludlow brakes at a red light, a DEEP STEREO BASS begins to rattle behind them. Without looking, Ludlow places his 9MM under his thigh.

After a beat, Diskant subtly follows suit, placing a larger .45 under his leg.

Just then a LOUD CREW OF BLOODS pulls up. They're ready to tear into Ludlow -- "This white boy is *lost*" -- until they see *which* white boy it is.

Ludlow stares back at the silenced young men, until - one by one - they reluctantly look straight ahead.

LUDLOW  
(the .45)  
The fuck is that?

DISKANT  
Too much for you?

LUDLOW  
(exasperated)  
Almost every shooting is within ten feet, Disco. That's gonna go right through somebody.

DISKANT  
...Guess I'm more humane than you.

Ludlow turns back to the spooked Bloods--

LUDLOW  
Green light.

The driver reactively *hits the gas*, then *brakes hard* as he sees the light is still red. In the middle of the intersection - no one else around - the young men bicker with each other: "*Go! Just go Nigga*"...

Ludlow turns amicably to Diskant, really amused. Diskant shares none of Ludlow's joy.

Spurned, Ludlow mutters something to himself, driving on...

EXT. CORNER - DAY

THREE HISPANIC TEENAGERS lounge against their car, on their meager bit of turf. Ludlow slows, half a block away.

LUDLOW  
Alright Disco. Your show.

DISKANT  
My show what?

LUDLOW  
Gotta start somewhere. Go ask'em where Fremont and Coates are hiding.

The three teens SCATTER as Ludlow pulls up. Diskant jumps out, chasing one down the street.

Ludlow drives calmly beside Diskant, enjoying the chase.

The Hispanic 'RUNNER' cuts through a

BASEBALL DIAMOND,

prompting Ludlow to floor it onto the field. He spins around the Runner, causing a CLOUD of DUST as Diskant finally makes the TACKLE. The young detective wrestles the young runner into handcuffs.

Ludlow, meanwhile, calmly CRANKS THE HEAT on his dash.

DISKANT  
(to teen)  
Stop fucking moving! The more you move  
the more it hurts.

Diskant gets the dealer up on his feet.

DISKANT  
You gonna relax, or you gonna act like a  
little bitch?

HISPANIC TEEN  
Fuck you tira.

DISKANT  
Fuck me?

LUDLOW  
Jeez Disco. Don't you think that's a  
little much?  
(off Diskant)  
Let's just everybody cool out for a  
second alright?

Ludlow takes the young dealer by the arm.

LUDLOW  
Listen, I don't know what his problem is.  
You just sit down for a second, lemme  
talk to him, okay hermano?

The dealer nods slightly as Ludlow sits him in his Camaro -  
buckling him in before he can react to the SHOOTING HEAT.

Ludlow slams the door shut. Diskant watches - stunned but  
not surprised - as the young dealer sweats, squirms...begins  
to SCREAM.

Ludlow joins Diskant a quiet beat. Then--

LUDLOW  
You married Disco?

DISKANT  
(distractedly)  
F...Fiancée.

LUDLOW  
When's the big day?

DISKANT  
Ah, two summers.

LUDLOW  
(amused)  
Don't rush into it now.

DISKANT

Nah, she wants a big one, so I'm trying  
to save for it...not easy.

As if an oven timer has rung, Ludlow returns to his car,  
opening the door--

LUDLOW

Heroin! Who do I talk to after you?

HISPANIC TEEN

(gasping)

The Grill, holmes. Talk to Grill. He  
post at MLK and Fig.

Ludlow turns to Diskant, slapping a hand to his cheek in mock  
surprise.

EXT. MARTIN LUTHER KING AND FIGUEROA - A SHORT TIME LATER

GRILL, a young black male, kicks it with a BUDDY and a six-  
pack on his tricked-out '64 Impala.

GRILL

Aw, hell no.

Ludlow approaches with Diskant in tow.

GRILL

Shouldn't you be sleeping in a coffin or  
some shit?

LUDLOW

You're easy to spot in the day, Grill.

Grill exchanges a look with his buddy, even with Diskant.

GRILL

Nigga what?

LUDLOW

Great catching up. Listen, you have  
something; we need it; you're gonna give  
it to us.

Grill slides off his cherished Impala.

GRILL

Or what Ludlow? You gonna roust me?  
Pelican Bay? Lompoc?

He holds his wrists out for handcuffing.



GRILL

Party for me, White. Southside Crips -  
that's my homies up in there.

HIS BUDDY

Hey yo - I go with him?

They laugh together.

GRILL

See that?

He traces a long scar running down his face.

GRILL

Check the grill.

He pulls down his lower lip: no teeth.

GRILL

You know I seen John Wayne badass piggas  
like you before. And I tell those  
motherfuckers the same thing I tell you.

(leans forward)

Sum motherfucking total of nothing.

(easy)

Your move, White.

BAM! Diskant kicks in the Impala's shiny door.

GRILL

Nigga what the fuck! I just got that  
motha fucka motha fucking painted!

Diskant looks to Ludlow, then KICKS it again.

GRILL

Aw hell no!

Ludlow blocks Grill, as Diskant raises his arms tauntingly -  
crazily - beyond.

GRILL

You ain't gotta be kicking my shit like  
that!

(to Ludlow)

What you want!? Maybe I got it!

Ludlow's almost annoyed that it's *Diskant* who has cracked them.

LUDLOW

Don't tell me, tell Mr. Wayne.

DISKANT  
Fremont and Coates.

GRILL  
Fremont and Coat--  
(searching)  
Okay, yeah, yeah I know them cats--

LUDLOW  
He's not gonna touch your car again.

GRILL  
(honestly)  
Never fucking heard of them.

LUDLOW  
But you have heard of heroin, right? I  
mean, you do sell it in the L.A. Unified  
School District, don't you?

Ludlow puts a KEY in the Impala's trunk... Grill looks down  
at his chain, realizing Ludlow has 'picked' him.

GRILL  
Look, yo, heroin's run out of Lompoc.  
How I s'posed to help you if I ain't in  
Lompoc?

Grill immediately regrets saying it. Ludlow's eyes light up.

LUDLOW  
(cheshire grin)  
Party for you, right? All your homies in  
there.

GRILL  
No, no I didn't say that.

INT. LOMPOC PRISON - NIGHT

Ludlow walks Grill a half-step ahead of him, through the BOWELS  
of the prison. Diskant follows down the dark hall, into--

A HOLDING AREA.

INMATES on both sides, as a DEPUTY WARDEN leads our threesome  
on. HISSES and GRUMBLINGS from both sides as the Deputy  
Warden raps on a metal door.

GIANT'S VOICE  
Yo Ludlow! That you? That you boy?

The stalled threesome - Ludlow, Diskant, Grill - turn to find a 6'6", 280 pound SKINHEAD straining against his bars.

SKINHEAD

What, you can't say hello? You don't know me now? Look at me you fuck! Turn your back on me?! I will fucking end you!!

DEPUTY WARDEN

Shut your hole! Shut it!!

Grill, more than a little irked, looks up at Ludlow.

LUDLOW

(straight ahead)

I got homies in here too.

The METAL DOOR clanks open to--

A VAST ROWS of CELLS - stories of them - and a WAITING GUARD. Our men step through...

LUDLOW

How you doing?

GUARD

Good, how you doing?

LUDLOW

(re: Grill)

Our boy here's gonna set up shop tonight. Take a few visitors, ask a few questions for me.

The guard nods knowingly. Diskant watches as Ludlow palms a FEW BILLS, passing them to the guard...*just the way it is.*

LUDLOW

Alright Grill, you scan your homie database. Somebody knows Fremont and Coates, we'll help that somebody out. Maybe a knock a year off, depending. Got it?

GRILL

Yeah. Cool.

Diskant and Ludlow watch Grill off... Then, out of the blue--

LUDLOW

Wanna get some dinner?

DISKANT

Ah, I should be getting back--

LUDLOW  
I'm messing with you Disco. Get home to  
that pretty wife.

On Diskant - knowing it was a genuine invitation.

INT. USC LAW LIBRARY - NIGHT

A sea of long desks, LAW STUDENTS beneath reading lamps.  
AMIDST the younger crowd, LINDA Mody sits before a half-dozen  
open books.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)  
No food or drink, sir.

Linda looks up, spotting Ludlow at the far end of the long  
hall. He's eating his dinner - a crummy sandwich - and  
staring up at the cavernous ceiling.

Linda looks panicked as Ludlow discards the sandwich. He  
wades forward, sifting through the FACES. Something about an  
aging law *enforcer* among youthful law students.

Finally, he SPOTS Linda, approaching cautiously. He grabs  
a nearby chair; it SCREECHES across the floor. Ludlow waits  
until the surrounding stares fade. Then, over a fragile peace...

LUDLOW  
(continuing where he left  
off)  
I wanted to say that...I'm sorry this  
happened to you.

LINDA  
How did you know I was here?

LUDLOW  
Your next-door neighbor.

Linda looks about the crowded room, beyond uncomfortable.

LUDLOW  
So this is where lawyers come from.

LINDA  
So now you've said it.

Ludlow gives up on levity.

LUDLOW  
I didn't speak either... At my wife's  
funeral--

LINDA  
I know where you meant.  
(a beat)  
He spoke of you often.

LUDLOW  
All good I hope.

LINDA  
Was there something else?

LUDLOW  
...Yeah, I guess there is. I wanted to  
tell you that, even if nobody else will...  
I'm going to find the men that killed your  
husband.

A nearby student's head snaps up. Linda bolts for the exit.  
Ludlow's look says it all: *'that may have been a little abrupt.'*

EXT. USC CAMPUS LAWNS - NIGHT

Ludlow emerges glumly into a dim courtyard. Linda surprises  
him, standing off to the side.

LINDA  
What are you apologizing for?

LUDLOW  
I'm not apologizing. I'm condoling.

Ludlow thinks of moving to her. Thinks again.

LINDA  
Why?

LUDLOW  
Because...I was the first one there.

LINDA  
So what did you see?

LUDLOW  
That's not gonna make you feel any better--

LINDA  
Don't you be familiar with me. I'm not  
joining your club because I lost Gilbert.  
(then)  
I was on the Sheriff's for nine years -  
I can handle the details.

The CAMPUS NIGHT WATCHMAN - maybe 19 years old - shines his flashlight on the quarreling pair.

CAMPUS NIGHT WATCHMAN  
Everything alright here?

Ludlow looks ready to snap the youngster in two.

LINDA  
We're fine.

Left alone again, Linda's placid exterior cracks.

LINDA  
I'm sorry for your loss. I am. But God  
took your wife... Who made Gilbert's plan?  
(bitterly)  
Or was it just bad luck?

Linda can't sense the storm she's brewing in Ludlow.

LINDA  
Loss is loss detective. Not knowing is a  
whole different thing.

Ludlow moves close. He's not going to harm her, but she's going to listen.

LUDLOW  
My wife had a...thing. She was born with  
it in her brain, and she was with someone  
when it finally burst. He put her on the  
curb at Cedar Sinai, and he drove away.  
(nods firmly)  
It's in the not knowing... And I don't  
care who's plan it was.

Linda holds his stare.

LINDA  
So what did you see?

*She asked for it.*

LUDLOW  
It wasn't an accident. They knew him  
somehow and they shot him in the face.  
They're heroin dealers and I think they  
were in business with your husband. He  
was found with 10,000 in cash when he  
died.  
(then)  
Anyway, I can try to keep all of this  
from coming out.

LINDA  
(sarcastically)  
All for us? Gilbert must've really had  
you wrong.

Ludlow just stares, tight-lipped. *To hell with this.*

LINDA  
How many people knew he was talking to  
Internal Affairs?

LUDLOW  
It wasn't a well-kept secret.

Linda lets her insinuation - indeed *accusation* - sink in.

LINDA  
In my experience, detective, there are  
those who find the truth and those who  
lead it where they want it to go.  
(off Ludlow)  
I hope Gilbert *was* wrong about you...but  
your eyes just don't look clear enough to  
me.

LUDLOW  
They're clear.

LINDA  
Gilbert was a third-rate street cop. I  
can admit that and it doesn't mean I love  
him any less. But he wasn't dirty. I  
asked him to be better and it made him a  
pariah. That's what I would've said if I  
had spoken.  
(heated)  
He wasn't stupid either. He knew his  
career would be over after testifying  
against all of you. We were going to  
leave Friday to live in the Bahamas...  
Silly of us, wasn't it?

LUDLOW  
You're saying that's what the money was  
for?

Linda backs away.

LINDA  
I'm saying that funeral wasn't for him  
and you're not here for us now. I think  
you're here to find out how much I know.  
And you know what? He was so afraid of  
you he didn't tell me a thing.

Ludlow watches her off, chewing on that.

LUDLOW  
(low)  
Night.

INT. BASEMENT STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Back in his blues, Ludlow pulls a FILE from a tall, dusty stack. He looks up suddenly when he hears a NOISE--

MAN'S VOICE  
Somebody down here?

Ludlow thinks a moment.

LUDLOW  
I am.

MAN'S VOICE  
Well who the hell's that?

LUDLOW  
Ludlow.

An ELDERLY OFFICER appears at the end of the row.

OFFICER  
Oh, well...hey. What are you...?

LUDLOW  
I'm looking for Silky's old reports.  
We're throwing him a *private* retirement  
party and I'm putting together a gag reel  
for him.

The officer laughs and shakes his head like "Ain't that a  
pisser?"

OFFICER  
Well he's too old for the computerized  
stuff. You gotta look at the carbon  
files.

INT. CIVILIAN COMPLAINTS - DAY

Clady ambles down the hall, peeking furtively in on Ludlow:  
right where he should be, at his desk.

Ludlow looks up, receiving a big '*THUMBS UP*' from Clady; the  
stout sergeant is still really enjoying himself.



Ludlow returns to a FILE beneath him. A log entry reads:

*BAR VIOLATIONS/1993. Officers Clady, Harnish, Collinson, Mody.*

Ludlow stops on Mody - his name right there with Clady's.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE WANDER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow walks purposefully for Wander's office, FILE in hand.

LUDLOW (ON PHONE)

No, we got a toe hold, Disco. But a toe hold's better than no hold. Just wait for me there.

Ludlow stops himself at the last moment from barging in on Wander and Biggs. The I.A. man stands over Wander's desk.

Taking an earful, Wander SEES Ludlow but doesn't give him away. Ludlow slinks off gratefully.

CLADY

Help you Lud?

Ludlow turns to find Clady on his heels.

LUDLOW

Naw, you help me enough Clady.

CLADY

(re: Wander)

He's taking a beating for you in there. Standing by your bullshit, 'first respondent' story.

(close to Ludlow)

See they both know it was your bullet Lud. The third round in Mody. I'd say that puts you there for a jury, wouldn't you?

LUDLOW

No. No, the M.E. said one of them--

CLADY

C'mon Lud. You got the tape. You know they didn't pull a third gun.

(then)

I told you, we're trying to help you.

Ludlow swallows, his color fading.

CLADY

Now I'm not saying you killed him, but you didn't help him Lud.

(MORE)

CLADY (cont'd)  
And they'll get you for it. They'll get  
you on the drinking. They'll take it all  
from you... Let this thing go. For your  
own good.

EXT. PARKING LOT, 77TH POLICE STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow walks slowly to his car, unbuttoning his uniform.  
Shoney and DeMille are just arriving for the night shift--

DEMILLE  
Yo Ludlow! How's complaints?

LUDLOW  
Your wife stopped by today.

Shoney laughs. DeMille does not. Ludlow gets into his car -  
*starts* it. Then, after a beat - *stops* it.

He stares through his dusty windshield...torn apart.

EXT. TACO STAND, EAST L.A. - DUSK

It's dinner at sunset for Diskant. He stands alone at a high  
table, looking about the Barrio for any sign of his partner.

LUDLOW (O.S.)  
Hey golden boy.

Ludlow bites into a burrito, perfectly at home in this  
Mexican enclave. Diskant looks relieved to see him.

DISKANT  
Where you been?

LUDLOW  
No rush. I'm here.

Diskant sizes up Ludlow... *good enough*.

DISKANT  
So what are we waiting on?

LUDLOW  
(mid-chew)  
Address.

DISKANT  
Fremont and Coates?

LUDLOW  
An associate, apparently.

DISKANT  
And you left Grill in there?

LUDLOW  
(mock disgust)  
I'm not gonna let him walk until it  
checks out, *Paul*.

Diskant looks about, a little uneasy.

DISKANT  
Quit with the golden boy shit.

LUDLOW  
Well you are, aren't you? You're Clady's  
protégé.

DISKANT  
You worried about Clady?

LUDLOW  
No, I think I'm worried about you, choir  
boy. How do I know you're not reporting  
up the ladder on us?

DISKANT  
(sighs)  
I got more to lose than I can stand here,  
*Tom*. But you go ahead and sucker me  
again, 'cause I don't think 'trust me' is  
gonna do it for you.

It's not much, but it's Ludlow's kind of speak.

LUDLOW  
(satisfied)  
Ask me how's complaints?

DISKANT  
How's complaints?

Ludlow readies his *'Your wife stopped by'*... Then let's it go--

LUDLOW  
So I'm checking a complaint on Silky;  
poor guy retires so they put his picture  
in the paper. Now he's got everybody  
coming out of the woodwork on him.  
(then)  
Ask me who came up together under him.

Diskant makes Ludlow's *'keep going'* gesture.

LUDLOW  
Clady and Mody. They're written up  
 together three times.

DISKANT  
 So...what? So Clady might have been  
 involved in Mody's...

LUDLOW  
 Not what it *could* mean, Disco. What does  
 it mean right now.

DISKANT  
 Means Mody wasn't always on the outside.

Ludlow nods proudly.

LUDLOW  
 He was testifying about *something*. Maybe  
 he actually *had* something.

DISKANT  
 Okay, what?

LUDLOW  
 Mody's widow said he was going after 'all  
 of us.' Whatever that means.

DISKANT  
 You spoke to his widow?

LUDLOW  
 (stream of consciousness)  
 Something big. Organized. Unionized.

DISKANT  
 Like a corporation?

DOTS...CONNECTING.

LUDLOW  
 Were you at Silky's retirement?  
 (Diskant nods)  
 So you saw that check Clady pulled out.  
 Where's that come from? I didn't chip  
 in. Did you? I know it's not coming out  
 of Clady's pocket.

Diskant caves in, absorbing the implications.

DISKANT  
 I was having more fun a second ago.

LUDLOW  
Relax, those are just 'could be's'.

Ludlow reads his BEEPING PAGER, already on the move.

LUDLOW  
Yo, ho, ho. Toe holds, Disco.

DISKANT  
Address?

LUDLOW  
( 'could be worse' )  
Plate.

INT. LUDLOW'S CAMARO - A SHORT TIME LATER

Ludlow guns it through a hole in traffic. Diskant's shotgun.

LUDLOW (INTO RADIO)  
Alright, I'm southbound, just crossed  
Imperial. Where're you?

COP'S VOICE (FROM RADIO)  
Well, you should see me. I'm three cars  
back of a maroon Cadillac. Owner: Cedric  
'Scribble' Rose.

LUDLOW  
(to Diskant)  
That's our guy.  
(into radio; jokingly)  
He hasn't sold any heroin since you've  
been on him...?

COP'S VOICE  
Not as far as I can tell.

LUDLOW (INTO RADIO)  
Alright, I see you. Peel off - nice work.

The black and white turns away, leaving the maroon Cadillac  
exposed. Diskant readies a POWERFUL RED SPOTLIGHT.

LUDLOW  
What are you doing?

DISKANT  
I'm gonna pull him over.

LUDLOW  
For what?

DISKANT  
Are you serious?

LUDLOW  
Just wait. Let him roll through this  
stop sign.

Both men watch as the driver - amazingly - makes a complete stop.

LUDLOW  
Okaaay... Did he signal?

DISKANT  
( 'as a matter of fact' )  
Yeah.

LUDLOW  
Alright, take it easy. What's on his  
rearview?  
(excitedly)  
Are those dice?

Ludlow's saved by a voice from his radio--

WOMAN'S VOICE  
Attention 41 A. California license  
Robert, Tom, Victor, 101, comes back with  
a failure to appear out of Glendale.

LUDLOW  
Eeww, that'll do.

Diskant FIRES the spotlight.

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

The driver, unseen for now, watches Diskant and Ludlow in his  
side mirror. Both detectives approach with weapons drawn.

DISKANT  
Hands on the fucking wheel!

Diskant comes face to face with a MASSIVE, SNIFFLING, 40 YEAR-  
OLD BLACK MAN... This is SCRIBBLE. Diskant signals over the  
car to Ludlow: *'Check his eyes'*.

Ludlow drops startingly into the passenger seat--

LUDLOW  
What'up Scribble!?

Scribble stares at Ludlow through shrunken pupils.

SCRIBBLE

What you want with me?

LUDLOW

With you? Nothin' man. You're just a middle rung on a shitty ladder we're climbing. But you missed a court date Scribble. That means we're all gonna spend the weekend together... What else that mean, Disco?

DISKANT

Means he's gonna pop his trunk.

Scribble begins to tear up like a baby.

SCRIBBLE

What ladder?

LUDLOW

Fremont and Coates. And we had to pay out for you Scribble, so don't be cheap with us.

Scribble weighs two terrible options.

SCRIBBLE

...I ain't seen them in a week. Nobody heard from them.

LUDLOW

How long you work with them?

SCRIBBLE

About three months. They dumped my supplier, took over his client list.

LUDLOW

You don't have a number?

SCRIBBLE

Naw, man. Motherfuckers call me.

Ludlow takes a moment, cleans his teeth with his tongue.

LUDLOW

You sniff your own glue, Scribble? Huh?  
You using?

Scribble turns away.

LUDLOW

You know what today is? Today's fried-day.  
That means you're not gonna see a judge  
'til Monday - Tuesday. You're gonna get  
sick without your dope, Scribble. You  
don't wanna get sick, do you?

SCRIBBLE

I help you, they kill my ass.

DISKANT

Nobody's killing your ass Scribble.  
We're not even gonna bust them...

Scribble looks up at Diskant through the driver side window.

LUDLOW

We just want a piece of the action teddy  
bear.

SCRIBBLE

(deep breaths)

I picked up from them once...out in  
Palmdale. Little cinderblock place.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD, PALMDALE - DUSK

An undeveloped stretch, apart from a solitary CINDERBLOCK  
HOME. A long stretch of desert extends behind it.

9MM drawn, Ludlow cases the front of the house. Diskant  
appears from around the back: *'No sign of anyone.'*

Ludlow throws a rock at the door. No response from inside.  
He throws another rock through a window. No response. He  
kicks a loose section of the window glass, entering the

DRUG SHACK.

The place is RANSACKED - the fridge open, cushions sliced  
open...even a section of wall torn open.

Diskant surveys the wall - *good place for a stash* - as Ludlow  
is drawn out the back door...

A BLOODY DRAG MARK - feebly scrubbed - on the concrete patio.  
It ends where the sand begins. Ludlow puts his nose in the  
air... a SICKENING WAFT leads him to--

THICK OLEANDER BUSHES behind the shack. BUGS SWARM above a  
clump of shrubs. Beneath the swarm, Ludlow finds a horde of  
RED ANTS around a hole in the sand...



Ludlow kicks at the ants, scattering them and revealing--  
TWO DECAYED HEADS, bound in duct tape like mummies.

LUDLOW  
Disco!  
(then)  
Get a shovel!

A SHORT TIME LATER - NIGHT

Diskant coughs as he works a SHOVEL into the ground. He steps aside as Ludlow pulls out the SECOND PUTRID BODY.

They run their flashlights up and down the corpses. Whoever they were, they've been dead at least several months.

DISKANT  
Fremont and Coates' competition?

Ludlow shrugs, his hands are covered in HUMAN MUSH.

LUDLOW  
That might be asking a little much from  
Scribble.

DISKANT  
So what now?

LUDLOW  
I got a deputy coroner owes me a favor.  
Let's get'em I.D.'d.

DISKANT  
You know a certified M.E. who'll bag and  
freeze two decomp's?

LUDLOW  
From the good old days.

DISKANT  
Must owe you a hell of a favor.

LUDLOW  
(smiling)  
I caught him going down on a foxy little  
cadaver.

Diskant starts to laugh, but the smell sends him dry-heaving.

EXT. STREET (IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE) - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow raps on the hood of his Camaro. All 300 handcuffed pounds of Scribble shift in Ludlow's tiny backseat.

LUDLOW  
Nobody here Scribble!

Scribble's head comes up slowly from his hiding place.

SCRIBBLE  
I told yo ass they wouldn't be.

LUDLOW  
Cut the jive and listen. Fremont and Coates call you again - you set up a meet for us. Face to face.

SCRIBBLE  
You crazy White? You might's well have Vice tattooed on your forehead.

LUDLOW  
(smiles)  
You just tell them I can do for them what Mody can't anymore. You got that? Mody. They'll know what you mean.

Scribble nods reluctantly.

SCRIBBLE  
Can't we all just go home, now?

INT. WANDER'S HOME - NIGHT

Wander descends moonlit stairs. KNOCKING at his front door. He fastens his robe - dragged out of bed apparently - as ANOTHER LOUD KNOCK annoys him. He opens the door to find--

WANDER  
Jesus, Lud. I don't work the night anymore.

Ludlow just stands there.

LUDLOW  
Oh yeah.

Wander leaves the door open, heading for the kitchen.

## INT. WANDER'S KITCHEN - DEAD OF NIGHT

Wander makes coffee atop a fine granite counter. Ludlow sits at an oak kitchen table.

WANDER

How's that reporter of yours.

(off Ludlow)

Alright, how's complaints?

LUDLOW

(half a smile)

Haven't been there much lately.

WANDER

No, no you haven't.

(then)

You can't let it go, can you?

LUDLOW

(whispers)

These are bad guys, Terry. They're wiping out their competition. We found a drug shack they took over in Palmdale. The previous tenants are buried in the backyard... I think I can get a face to face.

Wander considers the world Ludlow has brought into his home.

WANDER

You don't need to whisper, Lud.

(looks upstairs)

Katrina's been gone for a year.

LUDLOW

('Jesus')

Okay. Am I the only one who missed that--

WANDER

She still comes with me to certain events. There's a political side to my job that never interested you.

(then)

We had a lot of late nights around this table, didn't we? The four of us?

Ludlow nods.

WANDER

I should've known you'd be you on this thing. Should've let you take the fall.

Ludlow wrings his face in his hands.

LUDLOW

I left my badge in the car when I went  
after Mody. I can't hide behind it now.

\*  
\*

WANDER

(sighs)

Well I give up. You wanna lead Diskant  
around by the collar - teach him all your  
old tricks - go ahead. Go on huntin'.  
But whatever you two catch...don't bring  
it home to the station. You do it the  
old way. Settle it out there.

Ludlow just blinks.

WANDER

I'll back you again.

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

GOLD TEETH next to GREY ONES. Outside the cadaver's mouth,  
a SEEDY CORONER works with a clamp.

OUTSIDE THE EXAM ROOM, Ludlow stares glassily through a  
window.

Diskant works nearby - he's got a TIMELINE going: *the Ju Jin  
Market...Fremont and Coates...Bodies in Palmdale...*

DISKANT

Wait - so Mody's wife admitted Mody was  
dirty?

LUDLOW

She said if he ever *was*, he cleaned it up.

DISKANT

You think he was working with Fremont and  
Coates or not?

Ludlow doesn't move.

LUDLOW

I'm inclined to believe...I don't know.  
But everything comes down to that.  
Either he *was*, and it was a simple score  
being settled.

(a heavy beat)

Or Mody was clean, and we're up to our  
necks in I-don't-even-know-what.

DISKANT  
 (pleadingly)  
 We found the dope in his trunk.

LUDLOW  
 (scornfully)  
 What did you find? You found an evidence  
 tag on a torn piece of string.  
 (then)  
 Nobody seems to know Mody. Not Scribble,  
 or Grill...

Diskant knows where Ludlow's heading.

DISKANT  
 Is there *any* chance Mody was just wrong-  
 place-wrong-time?

LUDLOW  
 You're looking at Fremont and Coates' rap  
 sheet. You see them pulling any Mickey  
 Mouse mini-mart holdups?

DISKANT  
 (sighs)  
 They weren't there for the register.

LUDLOW  
 Okay, Junior G. So *if* Mody was clean, and  
 this wasn't a personal score being settled...

DISKANT  
 Somebody hired them.

LUDLOW  
 (miserably)  
 On a different score.

The exhausted coroner emerges.

CORONER  
 LaShawn Fremont and Wade Coates.

LUDLOW  
 ('And?')  
 Yeah...

CORONER  
 Yeah, Fremont and Coates.

LUDLOW  
 What do you mean?  
 (the exam room)  
 In there?

CORONER  
On my tables.

DISKANT  
Fremont and Coates?

CORONER  
(sarcastically)  
Who's on first? Yeah, Fremont and Coates.  
What the hell's wrong with you two?

Diskant's CELL PHONE rings. When he sees the number he exits reluctantly.

LUDLOW  
Dead how long?

CORONER  
I'd say four to six months. Took two  
nines to the back of the head. No hands  
on either of them so I had to go dental.

He hands Ludlow the bullets.

LUDLOW  
Did you say no hands?

CORONER  
We're quits now Ludlow. No more favors.

The coroner retreats to his office. Ludlow just sits there...  
*head spinning*. Diskant returns, the blood drained from his  
face. He holds up his cell phone--

DISKANT  
It's Scribble.

LUDLOW  
Oh yeah?

DISKANT  
He's with Fremont and Coates.

Ludlow swallows. *That's interesting.* He motions for the phone.

LUDLOW (INTO PHONE)  
I knew you were the man, Scribble.  
(listens)  
Of course we got the shit.  
(listens)  
Tonight's real good. Where?

Ludlow motions for a pen, then - deflated - waves it off.

LUDLOW  
(deliberating)  
No, no that's fine. You call this number  
with the place... And Scribble? You be  
there too.

Ludlow hangs up. An EERIE SILENCE between the detectives.

LUDLOW  
Don't say anything for a second.

Ludlow keeps thinking... He SEES Diskant's ready to explode.

LUDLOW  
( 'keep going gesture' )  
Alright, go ahead.

DISKANT  
(quickly)  
Who the fuck are we meeting tonight if  
Fremont and Coates are in there? And -  
gee, I don't know - who killed Mody?  
'Cause I'm pretty sure these two were  
dead three days ago.

Ludlow stares off, thinking.

DISKANT  
Oh man, this is fucked. I thought you  
knew what you were doing.  
(then)  
Okay, well somebody's lying.

LUDLOW  
No fucking shit Disco.

DISKANT  
(re: the coroner)  
Maybe this old perv got it wrong.

LUDLOW  
What, he just pulled those names out of  
a hat?

Diskant shakes his head, finally calming.

DISKANT  
You saying it's cops that made a mistake?  
The hair, the prints - maybe they locked  
in the wrong guys.

LUDLOW  
I think we're beyond accidents at this  
point, Disco.

DISKANT  
Meaning what?

LUDLOW  
Meaning there's a loop that you and I  
missed out on. I think we're hitting on  
some of those big things you were promised.

DISKANT  
So one of ours pulled Mody's killers off  
the street?

LUDLOW  
That's a *could be*.

DISKANT  
Okay, *right now* it means...the guys posing  
as Fremont and Coates, were posing as  
Fremont and Coates when they killed Mody.

LUDLOW  
For who? For why?

Diskant caves in again.

DISKANT  
Is there any way to find out without  
actually meeting them?

Ludlow just smiles.

LUDLOW  
We need more dope.

DISKANT  
(no big deal)  
We'll sign it out.

LUDLOW  
I hate to remind you Disco, but we're on  
our own with this thing.

DISKANT  
So we'll boost it.

Ludlow's head rolls back...*he's created a monster.*

LUDLOW  
Your show.

Diskant nods, convincing himself.



DISKANT  
Is there time for me to roll home? Grab  
some of my gear?

LUDLOW  
Yeah, go kiss her goodbye.

Diskant chortles. Then, somewhat dolefully--

DISKANT  
Guess we *should* get our affairs in order.

Ludlow nods; the kid's growing on him. Ludlow's cell phone  
RINGS. The display reads: 'Megan'... He simply stares at it.

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

Ludlow stands at the door of a small home. It appears he's  
been there for some time. In his hand, *the* VIDEOTAPE.

LINDA MODY opens her front door. She contemplates Ludlow and  
his tape, before opening the door further.

LUDLOW  
I don't want to intrude.

LINDA  
(a hint of good nature)  
Well I don't want you seen on my porch.

STREET POV: from inside a parked car, we WATCH Ludlow enter  
the house... REVEAL Shoney and DeMille, tailing Ludlow.

INT. MODY HOME - CONTINUOUS

The floor is a surreal mix of FLOWERS and MOVING BOXES.  
Everything is covered in sheets - the television, furniture -  
except for a few standing pictures of Gilbert Mody.

Ludlow still carries the videotape - his personal albatross.

LINDA  
Should I know what that is?

LUDLOW  
You said you wanted to know.  
(searching)  
...I stole it from the market that day.  
I was there...before he died.

LINDA  
Why?

LUDLOW  
I heard he was testifying...against me.  
I was gonna hurt him.

LINDA  
Did you?

LUDLOW  
I would have...

Linda's rooted to the ground. Her stoicism breaks Ludlow down--

LUDLOW  
I thought he was trying to take what I  
had left.

She regards the tape.

LINDA  
And now *I* can take it.

Ludlow nods, his penance complete. He starts for the door.

LINDA  
I think I said something unforgivable to  
you. About your wife.

Ludlow turns back calmly.

LUDLOW  
You know I think I was just happy to talk  
about her.

LINDA  
I'm sure she was lovely.

LUDLOW  
Well we weren't that great, obviously.  
But I didn't think we were that bad  
either.

Linda looks at him, truly, for the first time.

LINDA  
Make room for someone else, detective.  
While you're waiting for it all to make  
sense.  
(all the flowers)  
I'm in the club, so I can say that to  
you.

Ludlow manages a rusty smile.

LUDLOW

I believe you about your husband. I think he was killed for his testimony.

Linda's eyes well.

LUDLOW

What did he have, Mrs. Mody?

Ludlow's asking for a huge leap of faith.

LUDLOW

I'm not sure what I'm walking into tonight.

LINDA

(compelled)

He was going to expose some sort of money skimming operation. He said it was organized like any company. Different stations coordinated... That's all I know.

Ludlow nods, his fears confirmed.

LUDLOW

I'll get the rest.

INT. LOCKER ROOM, 77TH POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Ludlow dresses at his locker, like a Hall of Fame pitcher making his last start. His routine is almost religious: a Kevlar vest, a shoulder holster, a 9MM, ammunition, a two-inch .38 in his back pocket...

Diskant is the only other man in the room. He armors up quietly, appreciating the moment. Ludlow SEES Diskant holster a simple 9MM; the young cop has come a long way.

DISKANT

You sure we don't wanna roll with back-up? Couple guys...?

LUDLOW

(wryly)

Which cops did you have in mind?

Diskant concedes the point.

LUDLOW

(low; razor-sharp)

Just wait 'til you see the cash. Then we can move.

(MORE)

LUDLOW (cont'd)  
(Diskant nods)  
And look for the dope as soon as we get  
in there. If they haven't tested it...  
that's not good.

DISKANT  
Wait - forget the cash. We got'em on  
murder.

Diskant hands Ludlow a BAG of DOPE.

LUDLOW  
No, we definitely do *not*. Their faces  
were covered and somebody else...

BIGGS is standing at the end of the row, his IMPOSING  
ASSISTANT behind him.

BIGGS  
Back on the night, Tom? Weren't grounded  
very long, were you?

Ludlow gives Diskant a look, prompting the younger detective  
to excuse himself.

BIGGS  
(to Diskant)  
Yeah, past your bed time boy.

DISKANT  
Fuck you.

Ludlow cringes gleefully as Diskant carries on.

BIGGS  
I know his name now, don't I?

LUDLOW  
(re: Biggs' assistant)  
Lose the shadow.

Biggs nods the man away.

BIGGS  
So you two being seen all around town.

LUDLOW  
It's purely social.

Ludlow packs a BAG of HEROIN inside his jacket.

BIGGS  
I'm surprised you'd be seen here.

LUDLOW  
Well, we had to come in for some dope.

BIGGS  
(re: the bags)  
That it?

LUDLOW  
No, *this* I stole from a dealer I know.

Ludlow closes his locker, locked and loaded.

BIGGS  
You really think I'm gonna do nothing about you?

LUDLOW  
Here's what I really think Terrell. I think for all your huffing and puffing, you're not quite ready to do my job. You're too good to go into your own alleys...clean up the needles and baby parts. You need me for all that. And more importantly--  
(face to face as he passes)  
--you need me to blame.

BIGGS  
Is this you working against them?

LUDLOW  
I keep telling you Terrell. I don't know who they are.

Biggs gauges Ludlow's sincerity.

BIGGS  
But you're waking up, son.  
(calling after)  
You keep my number Tom.

EXT. IMPERIAL COURTS, PROJECT APARTMENTS - LATER THAT NIGHT

A 16 year-old RUNNER carries a test bag away from Ludlow's Camaro. Scribble waits outside the car - Lud and Disco inside.

LUDLOW  
(breaking the tension)  
Y'alright teddy bear?

SCRIBBLE

These is bad dudes, White. If they can't fuck it, rob it or kill it, they don't want it. Cats like that don't like getting ganked - 'specially by someone like me.

LUDLOW

Nobody's getting 'ganked' Scribble. This is a business deal.

Ludlow rolls the window up, turning subtly to Diskant.

LUDLOW

Jesus.

But Diskant is just as spooked as Scribble.

LUDLOW

Listen, Disco. I trust you to back me up. Maybe you should do it from outside. I'm not used to working with someone anyway.

Diskant turns curiously to Ludlow.

LUDLOW

This is all on their terms right now... You don't *have* to know the way I do.

DISKANT

(swallows)

No, this is my show. I'm including myself. God knows I'm not gonna be part of much else after this.

Ludlow half-smiles as Scribble KNOCKS on the window.

SCRIBBLE

Looks like your shit passed.

A LIGHT FLASHES out a fifth-story window.

SCRIBBLE

You gonna kill'em right?

INT. CORRIDOR - A SHORT TIME LATER

Scribble exhales, KNOCKS LOUDLY over music inside. Ludlow waits behind him. *His focus is in stark contrast to the Ludlow we first met.*

Diskant stares back, down a shadowy hall, as the DOOR OPENS... Ludlow eases Scribble forward, almost like a shield.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The apartment is a mixture of extravagance and filth. ONE OF MODY'S KILLERS waits at a couch above a glass table.

Last in, Diskant looks around the opened door for the OTHER KILLER when he feels the muzzle of a .38 against his temple. [The gunman calls himself FREMONT, his partner COATES, so we will too.]

FREMONT  
Move to the fucking wall.

SCRIBBLE  
Nah, they cool man--

COATES  
Shut the fuck up, Scribble!

Diskant doesn't budge, but he's about to lose his cool.

LUDLOW  
Nobody's unpacking anything. We're here  
to do business and we don't do it blind.  
(to Fremont)  
You wanna feel my partner down, go ahead.  
But he's not taking it out for you.

A tense beat. Suddenly Coates breaks out laughing.

COATES  
Oh shit! You wanna touch his junk  
LaShawn?  
(a grin with Ludlow)  
Nigga take a seat at my table. You pass  
that test. Chill the fuck out LaShawn,  
Scribble say they cool.

Ludlow sits across from Coates, Diskant staying by the door.

COATES  
Ain't that right, Scribble?

SCRIBBLE  
Yeah.

COATES  
(mockingly)  
Yeah. Make us some drinks teddy bear.

*Teddy Bear.* Ludlow's nickname for Scribble. Ludlow peeks at Diskant, but the younger detective is fixed on the TEST BAG... it lies UNOPENED on a side table.

COATES  
Shoot, we got the po-po in da' house.  
Ain't that some shit? Yo, there any  
straight cops left?

Ludlow places the second BAG of HEROIN on the table.

COATES  
S'up Po-po? Talking to you.

LUDLOW  
Yeah, we're the po-po.

COATES  
You got a badge?

Ludlow tosses it to him. Coates flashes it at Fremont--

COATES  
Yo nigga! You under arrest!

LUDLOW  
Like I told Scribble, we're not in this  
for a quick score. We just wanted to  
show you a few inefficiencies in your  
system. It's vulnerable, obviously.  
We can protect you--

COATES  
Shit, you cops is like weeds, you know  
that? You pull one out, two more grow in.

LUDLOW  
(carefully now)  
Well, Mody probably got greedy.

Ludlow waits... no reaction from Coates.

LUDLOW  
We're not trying to get rich here. We  
just wanna put away a little on the side  
for our families...

COATES  
Yeah, you thinking Bahamas someday?

'Bahamas'... The Mody's plans... Ludlow is thrown.

LUDLOW  
What's that now?



COATES  
 You know: better cars, better trips--  
 (at Diskant)  
 --better honeymoons.

Diskant - engagement ring on his finger - want *out of this room*. Ludlow, on the other hand, is suddenly distracted by--

THE 50 cal. MACHINE GUN (from our opening), sitting in a back corner. It's a kind of altar, wrapped in small white lights. *However* it got here, it mesmerizes Ludlow.

DISKANT  
 Ludlow...

FREMONT  
 Yo, check this Wade.  
 (Ludlow's badge)  
 Ain't this the nigga from the market that day?

COATES  
 (a slow burn)  
 Goddamn. That was you wasn't it?  
*Ludlow*. That why you here? You want some revenge for that nigga?

LUDLOW  
 You did me a fucking favor that day. I just want to know who else I should thank.

Scribble sweats in a corner of the room.

COATES  
 (dead serious)  
 You that good, po-po? You know there was someone else?

SCRIBBLE  
 C'mon fellas, let's sample their shit.

COATES  
 Shut the fuck up Scribble.

DISKANT  
 (overlapping)  
 Ludlow...

Ludlow finally turns to Diskant.

DISKANT  
 There's no cash coming out--

BLAM! Coates has shot Diskant in the head... The young detective is DEAD BEFORE HE HITS THE GROUND.

Ludlow dives behind the couch. Stuffing punches out all around him. He FIRES wildly back, the dealers retreating.

FREMONT ducks into a BATHROOM off to one side, COATES into a KITCHEN off to the other.

The sounds of Hispanic women SCREAMING through the walls.

Ludlow's hands shake as he reloads. Near to him, Diskant's lifeless eyes cast into the dirty carpet.

FREMONT

You under arrest po-po!

Ludlow EMPTIES a CLIP, diving to a nearby closet.

Crumpled on the floor, Scribble clutches his bleeding abdomen. Ludlow, Fremont and Coates can't see each other, but they can all see Scribble.

COATES

Scribble, pick that gun the fuck up and shoot that mothafucka!

Scribble sees Diskant's gun lying on the floor. He ignores it when... BLAM! A shot from the kitchen tears into his calf.

COATES

Next one peels your cap nigga!

Scribble fumbles the gun into his shaking hand.

LUDLOW

Cedric, don't fucking do it!

COATES

'Cedric'? What that? Your slave name? You *best* fuckin' do it!

Aimed at Ludlow, Scribble slowly lowers the gun. He can't do it. He's instantly RIDDLED WITH BULLETS from the kitchen.

Peeking around the corner, Ludlow sees Fremont advance to the couch. Fremont FIRES, covering Coates as he crosses to the bathroom. They're like a trained combat unit, positioning for the kill.

Running out of options, Ludlow keys on the BAGS of HEROIN. He takes careful aim, POPPING BOTH BAGS and filling the air with CHINA WHITE.

With a deep breath, Ludlow wades into the CLOUDY ROOM. He's WINGED by a shot, but keeps moving forward...

FREMONT'S POV: he's unable to see two feet in front of him, until... LUDLOW'S RIGHT THERE.

BLAM! Fremont's gone.

Coates is caught reloading in the narrow kitchen when Ludlow aims and FIRES...

CLUNK. His 9MM jams. Coates is ready. He FIRES as LUDLOW ducks behind the fridge. As Ludlow withstands the shots - the FRIDGE denting - he eyes Diskant on the ground. Dead and gone.

COATES

You done Ludlow! I do you like I did him!

Ludlow's temper seems to boil - *he's had enough of this* - as he PUSHES THE FRIDGE like a linebacker in a football drill. He drives it right into Coates, pinning him against the wall.

In a heartbeat, Ludlow pulls the snub-nose from his back pocket - scales the fridge - and FIRES DOWN through Coates' skull.

Ludlow slides down off the fridge, totally spent. He goes to Coates, checking his pockets, desperate for any clue...

LUDLOW

Who?

...But there's nothing. Nothing to go on. He has failed.

EXT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow drags Diskant out, propping him gently against the wall. He sits beside him... unable to look at his friend.

SIRENS in the distance. Ludlow takes a deep breath - rises - and walks away...

EXT. MEGAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Ludlow limps up steps, bleeding from his shoulder down his sleeve. Megan opens the door before he knocks, her face covered in tears.

LUDLOW

Why are you crying?

She almost smiles, helping him inside.

INT. MEGAN'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow sits on the floor, back against her couch. Megan rushes out of the bathroom, tape and gauze in her hands.

LUDLOW  
..just wanted a name. We couldn't get it.

He pulls his arm away from her.

MEGAN  
Just let me do this.

Megan tries to compose herself as she wraps the bandage.

MEGAN  
(trying to convince  
herself)  
It's gonna be okay. It's gonna be okay.

LUDLOW  
She'll get nothing.

MEGAN  
What?

LUDLOW  
She doesn't get a pension 'cause they  
didn't do it yet. She's probably still  
sleeping.

MEGAN  
Lud, just take it easy. What are you  
saying?

LUDLOW  
I walked him in there.  
(turns to her)  
It went bad Megan.

Megan's still crying her own tears.

MEGAN  
I know.

LUDLOW  
(recurring to him)  
Wait, why were you crying?

Megan looks back at her TV, on in the background.

MEGAN

They called me to cover it. I didn't go because it was you.

Ludlow drags himself to the TV: *helicopter images of the IMPERIAL COURTS BUILDINGS*. Then a graphic appears:

*LUDLOW'S ACADEMY PHOTOGRAPH*. He looks young in his blues, his eyes clear and hopeful.

A REPORTER and ANALYST go back and forth over the images--

ANALYST'S VOICE (ON TV)

...the loss of his wife last year. He's had a history of violence and complaints against him that have made him a well-known figure in this community. But *this* - you don't see something like this coming.

REPORTER'S VOICE (ON TV)

Again, the details just coming in... Detective Tom Ludlow, a twenty-year man on the force...wanted for the slaying of two undercover officers in the early hours this morning.

Two more Academy photographs replace Ludlow's:

*TWO YOUNG, CLEAN-CUT BLACK OFFICERS*... the men representing themselves as dealers Fremont and Coates.

REPORTER'S VOICE (ON TV)

Ludlow and Detective Paul Diskant were attempting to sell a large quantity of narcotics to the undercover officers when the shooting occurred.

Ludlow is simply...destroyed. A ticker runs along the bottom of the screen:

*COP WANTED IN SLAYING OF THREE FELLOW OFFICERS.*

REPORTER'S VOICE (ON TV)

Detective Ludlow is at large and also wanted for questioning in the murder of Officer Gilbert Mody, killed last week in a Korea Town grocery...

MEGAN

Lud? Lud?

Megan watches Ludlow disintegrate.

MEGAN

We won't let them, Lud. You can fight this. Please don't give in like this.

(crying)

Please, you're scaring me...

LUDLOW

You don't understand...

MEGAN

Tell me.

LUDLOW

I should've known they were cops; I couldn't see it... I couldn't think it.

(then)

All I saw were two...

MEGAN

No, I know it's not true. People will listen, Lud. What are you gonna do--

LUDLOW

(resignedly)

No. There's only 'how it looks'.

Now, finally, Megan quiets. She looks about...lost. Then--A  
KNOCK ON THE DOOR. Ludlow suddenly panics.

LUDLOW

(the bandages)

Get these off me.

MEGAN

What?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Police!

LUDLOW

You don't want me here. You didn't open the door!

He tears off his bandages, handing them to her.

MEGAN

No, I don't want to do this--

LUDLOW

(for all to hear)

Open the fucking door!

(to her)

You gotta scream Megan. Do it or they'll kill you.

MEGAN

What?

He SLAPS HER hard. She cries as he SHOVES HER into her bedroom.

LUDLOW

Do it!

MEGAN

Tell me you'll meet me at the station.

LUDLOW

(shaking her)

Scream!

MEGAN

No! Tell me...

It's an isolated, peaceful millisecond between them.

LUDLOW

Alright... Now fucking scream.

MEGAN

(blood-curdling)

Help!!

She slams the door between them, just as - BOOM! - the FRONT DOOR is kicked in.

SHONEY and DEMILLE advance, guns on Ludlow.

BOTH MEN

Down! On the fucking floor Ludlow!

Ludlow drops to his knees, hands on his head.

LUDLOW

You fucking bitch!

DEMILLE

Shut up!

Shoney throws Ludlow down, taking his piece and cuffing him. DeMille KICKS IN Megan's door, finding her crying on the floor, cell phone to her ear... A trickle of blood on her mouth.

MEGAN

Oh, thank God.

DeMille stares a calculating beat... Then lowers his gun.

DEMILLE

It's alright honey. You're alright now.

SHONEY

Let's go.

DeMille reluctantly peels his eyes off Megan.

DEMILLE

Alright. Get him up and out.

Megan watches tearfully as Ludlow's led roughly off.

EXT. CALIFORNIA DESERT - LATER THAT NIGHT

DeMille's sedan cruises along an open freeway, away from the city lights.

INT. DEMILLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ludlow rides in the backseat, his head resting against the window. He's resigned now... No fight left.

He takes in the passing terrain...sand and brush in the moonlight. His eyes catch DeMille's in the rearview mirror.

DEMILLE

(to Shoney; re: Megan)

Not the most loyal girl, was she? Gimme some tips Ludlow. How do I console that hot reporter ass after you're gone?

(then)

C'mon. I know you whisper all sorts of sweet things to Mody's widow.

Shoney turns around to Ludlow.

SHONEY

You fuck'em both, right? Which one you like better?

DEMILLE

(no more jokes)

Shouldn't have given her that tape Lud.

LUDLOW

The fuck are you talking about?

SHONEY

(to DeMille)

Take it easy--

DEMILLE

No, I want him to know before we do it. Smug fuckin' prick.

(MORE)



DEMILLE (cont'd)  
You figure it out yet? How Fremont and  
Coates made it to the market that day?

Very slowly, Ludlow slides his handcuffs from behind his back  
to under his thighs...

LUDLOW  
You killed them instead of arrest them.

DEMILLE  
They hadn't made it a mile out of the  
station before we picked'em back up and  
peeled their fucking caps.

SHONEY  
No papers, no friends, no relatives.  
(turns to Ludlow)  
It was *my* idea.

DEMILLE  
Anyway, a little hair, a little blood.  
It's the ultimate get-outta-jail card.  
(rhetorically)  
Gotta get rid of a rat piece of shit like  
Mody? *'Fremont and Coates did it.'*

SHONEY  
You ruined a very good thing for us boy.

Very subtly, Ludlow lifts his knees, trying to get his hands  
in front of himself.

DEMILLE  
We gave you a lot of rope on this one  
Ludlow. We even let Mody's widow live  
this long with what she knows... And she  
fucking *knows* with that pussy-boy husband  
of hers. But you've fucked that up for  
both of you now.

SHONEY  
Guess whose hair and blood's gonna be all  
over her place?  
(to DeMille)  
Shit, maybe we should have him rape her  
too.

DEMILLE  
(howling)  
Ho, I'll let you handle that!

In one motion, Ludlow clears the handcuffs under his feet and  
THROWS THEM AROUND DEMILLE'S NECK. He hangs on - like an  
animal that won't release it's hold - as Shoney bashes his  
skull.

DeMille swerves on the freeway as Shoney HAMMERS the butt end of his 9MM into Ludlow's head - again and again - until finally, as the LAST BLOW impacts, we--

CUT TO BLACK

EXT. DRUG SHACK, PALMDALE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ludlow's eyes open slowly... his blood congeals on dusty concrete. He's lying on his cheek. OLEANDER BRUSH waves in the BRIGHT MOONLIGHT.

DeMille's suddenly in his face, swabbing blood from his scalp into a VIAL. He speaks softly, triumphantly, in Ludlow's ear--

DEMILLE

Aw, poor Tommy. I know what you're really wondering. How could they leave me out?

Ludlow coughs, choking on his own blood.

DEMILLE

You were almost approached, you know. If you can believe that. But you were just too selfish to be trusted. Just a low-class drunken loud mouth out for himself.  
(then; rising)  
You should've kept more friends, Ludlow.

DeMille leaves Ludlow on the ground, taking the vial inside.

Ludlow's eyes dart about - looking for a play - but his body is unresponsive. He wilts without moving... It's all over.

Then, a WIND picks up, ruffling the OLEANDER BRUSH before him. Still handcuffed, Ludlow's breathing rises...his face flushes...he's not ready to quit just yet.

He begins crawling, still handcuffed, towards the brush.

DEMILLE

(kidding around)  
Hey, Shones!! Get out here! He's making a run for it!

The FIRST SHOT explodes in the sand by Ludlow's ear. The brush is still fifteen feet away...

SHONEY

Where you going Lud?!

BLAM! Another shot near Ludlow's hip. They FIRE over and over, toying with Ludlow. A BULLET rips into his calf.

CLOSE on LUDLOW. *Not done yet.* FIVE FEET to the brush.

DEMILLE

He's gonna bury himself!

MORE SHOTS in the sand all around him... TWO FEET... Then, drawing from way down, he finds the strength to scurry into the thick brush.

DeMille looks partly flustered, mainly annoyed.

SHONEY

Let's just do him and get going.

INSIDE THE BRUSH,

Ludlow crawls through SWARMING RED ANTS... he's going towards the BURIAL HOLE... And, just beyond it... DISKANT'S SHOVEL.

DEMILLE

This is it Lud. I'm not gonna say I haven't enjoyed this, but I'll make it quick for you.

He finds Ludlow on his back, exhausted, hands over his head. DeMille gets right on top of him... He raises his gun...

When Ludlow's hands extend from the brush, *bringing the SHOVEL to DeMille's forehead.*

Shoney charges into the brush, FIRING at Ludlow as he drags DeMille backwards, the two of them folding INTO THE GRAVE.

Shoney gets overtop of the grave, FIRING down... From beneath the cover of DeMille, Ludlow SHOOTS STRAIGHT UP, killing Shoney instantly...

...Using his feet, Ludlow pushes DeMille out of the grave. Then, summoning all his strength, he LIFTS HIMSELF OUT... He coughs up dirt and blood...back from the dead.

INT. LINDA MODY'S HOME - NIGHT

Linda walks through her living room - still littered with boxes and flowers - to answer her front door. She opens it--

Finding Clady on her doorstep. He smiles over the chain lock...

## INT. LIVING ROOM, WANDER'S HOME - NIGHT

Wander sits in his robe - middle of the night - glued to the television. It's as if Ludlow's story, still breaking news, has sucked the life out of him. We stay on him, over--

ANCHOR'S VOICE (ON TV)

As far as we know Officer Ludlow is still at large. Again, a police spokesperson saying Ludlow is to be considered armed and dangerous.

CO-ANCHOR'S VOICE (ON TV)

Strange to hear the police use that kind of terminology on one of their own.

ANCHOR'S VOICE (ON TV)

Absolutely...

## INT. LINDA MODY'S HOME - NIGHT

A CABINET smashes as Clady chases Linda through her home. He pins her in a corner, her nose already dripping with blood.

CLADY

This place is a fucking mess, you know that? Where is it? Huh? Where's the fucking tape?

(slaps her viciously)

Look at you - getting your nigger blood all over me.

Linda turns her head away, trying to imagine herself somewhere else. Clady glimpses a VCR atop of a moving box.

CLADY

Is that a VCR?

Released for a moment, Linda slides down the wall, into a heap. As Clady checks the VCR - smashing it when he finds it empty - Linda glimpses LUDLOW looking in a window.

Linda's head falls forward - a kind of exhausted, euphoric release. She knows her trial is over.

None the wiser, Clady returns to her - angrier than ever. He picks her up, momentarily bemused as she smiles through tears.

CLADY

You're a tough a little cunt, aren't you? Tougher than that husband of yours.

(MORE)

CLADY (cont'd)  
(then)  
What's so funny? Huh?

LINDA  
Bye bye now.

One second Clady is there, the next - as if hit by a bus - he's gone. Ludlow tackles him to the floor, wrenching the air from his lungs and BREAKING HIS ARM as he cuffs him.

Linda turns away as Clady howls.

EXT. LINDA MODY'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow drags an unconscious Clady to his 'requisitioned' vehicle (Shoney and DeMille's unmarked car). He stuffs the Sergeant into the trunk as Linda watches from her doorstep.

LUDLOW  
You gotta go now Linda. Wherever it is,  
you have to go.

LINDA  
(wryly)  
I'm already packed.

Ludlow takes the cue, slowing for a moment.

LUDLOW  
I found them. The men who killed--

LINDA  
I know who you mean.

LUDLOW  
Well, I wanted to arrest them, but...it  
didn't work out that way.

Linda recovers from the news, still in tatters.

LINDA  
Take care of yourself Officer.

Ludlow nods, bittersweetly. Nothing left to say.

LUDLOW  
Goodnight.

A cell phone is RINGING... from inside the trunk. Ludlow opens it, grabbing CLADY'S PHONE...

LUDLOW (ON PHONE)  
Yeah.

MAN'S VOICE (FROM PHONE)  
 Jesus, nobody's answering - what's going  
 on out there? Is it over or not?

Ludlow goes pale.

LUDLOW (ON PHONE)  
 Terry?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KITCHEN, WANDER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Phone to his ear, Wander stands over his sink, staring into  
 his backyard. He's just as speechless.

WANDER (ON PHONE)  
 Lud?

Wander sets down a coffee mug.

WANDER (ON PHONE)  
 Where's Clady?

LUDLOW (ON PHONE)  
 Trunk.

WANDER (ON PHONE)  
 Shoney and DeMille?

LUDLOW (ON PHONE)  
 Palmdale.

Ludlow takes a breath, begins to process. He smiles bitterly.

LUDLOW (ON PHONE)  
 I guess you all had me right... I never  
 could see a move ahead.

WANDER (ON PHONE)  
 Now listen. Before you do anything else...  
 We should talk. You owe me that much....  
 Lud?

EXT. WANDER'S HOME - EARLY DAWN

Ludlow drives over the curb, onto the grass. He's brought  
 Wander's whole scheme back to him, and parked it on his front  
 lawn.

Ludlow pulls his 9MM, retrieved from Shoney's dead body,  
 sliding his hand along the rack. He clears the chamber, then--

DROPS OUT the clip... Contemplates the bullets.

INT. WANDER'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Ludlow enters cautiously, weapon drawn.

WANDER (O.S.)  
Hell of a parking job.

Ludlow follows the voice, limping to the--

KITCHEN

Wander sits passively, TWO COFFEES on the kitchen table.

LUDLOW  
Put your hands on the table.

Wander obliges, nothing - apparently - up his sleeve.

WANDER  
Sit down, you can still point that at me.

Ludlow's head swivels, watching his own back.

WANDER  
It's just you and me.

And so...Ludlow joins him at the table.

WANDER  
You wearing a wire?

LUDLOW  
Just you and me.

WANDER  
...It started with a hundred dollars.  
We were tangling with thugs that had  
better armor than us. I stole a hundred  
dollars to get a better vest.

Ludlow's listening...but he's also digging in his jacket.  
He places SHONEY'S BADGE on the table.

WANDER  
The lawsuits started about the same time  
in this state.  
(bitterly)  
Sue anybody for anything. Especially  
cops.  
(then)  
They went after Silky personally.  
(MORE)

WANDER (cont'd)  
Took his home from him... The rest of us  
started pooling together.

Ludlow places DeMILLE'S BADGE on the table.

WANDER  
The suits got bigger so we started  
skimming more. Even if we weren't in  
trouble we'd just keep pooling together,  
just to be ready for the next one.

CLADY'S BADGE on the table.

WANDER  
Got to be that, when we were in the  
black, we'd pay out here and there.  
Nobody's buying yachts or summer homes.  
Just a natural correction in a flawed  
system. Christ, Lud, if teachers could  
do it they would too.

LUDLOW  
That help you sleep at night?

WANDER  
Fuck you.  
(the badges)  
What are those? Scalps?

For old time's sake, Ludlow makes his '*keep going*' gesture--

LUDLOW  
Keep going. I want to hear you get to  
the part where we murder, and deal, and  
kill other cops.

WANDER  
(mock innocence)  
I don't know what you mean.

LUDLOW  
Mody.

WANDER  
Not a cop.

LUDLOW  
Fuck you - be a man. You put them on me.

WANDER  
I held them off you - long as I could.  
I had to put you down, Lud. You don't  
listen. I've given you so much rope...  
(darkly)  
You don't know what you are, do you?



LUDLOW

I know my part in this.

WANDER

Do you Lud? C'mon...those kids in Little Saigon? You could've waited for backup; they weren't going anywhere. But you didn't like 'em. So you killed 'em. And the world's a better place for it.

(then)

You decided what justice was, and I backed you. Because I trust you know right from wrong. That's how it works... Or you're a killer.

Ludlow teases the trigger on his 9MM.

LUDLOW

Forget it. Forget the drugs and the money.

(astounded; offended)

You got cops killing cops. You got me killing cops. And then you come after me?

(quiet, blistering rage)

After everything. The four of us around this table, huh? When did this start making sense to you?

WANDER

You wanna make this personal. I understand that. But you were just in the way.

LUDLOW

Of what? Your *corporation*.

WANDER

Of a system that was working Tom. Everybody happy. We did the job on the street and took care of our own. You and Mody fucked that up.

LUDLOW

All for a little green?

WANDER

I'm the father of a very large family. And we've gotta survive Tom. Welcome to the big picture.

LUDLOW

No. No more big picture. No more 'changing with the times'. We're not going with your version this time.

WANDER  
Our version.

Ludlow nods, conceding his part in their play.

WANDER  
I allow you to exist Lud. You tear me down you make us both extinct. Ten years - we'll all be like firemen. Just sitting around waiting for phone calls because it's too risky - too *expensive* to go out and stop something.

Ludlow smiles sadly. Wander takes it for defeat.

WANDER  
You're not gonna ruin us both.

LUDLOW  
I'm saved Terry... Even if I'm as fucked as you are.

Ludlow pulls a LAST BADGE out of his pocket.

LUDLOW  
This one's Diskant's.

Ludlow just holds it there, letting it burn into Wander.  
From total surrender, Wander moves slowly to rage...

WANDER  
I'm not going through this. The media, the bullshit system, like some Joe Public schmuck. You want to end me, then you do it. You owe me that!

Ludlow smiles as he rises; he's not going to shoot Wander.  
Wander sprays his coffee over Ludlow, TOSSING THE TABLE.

WANDER  
Fuck you! This is what you want, then you be a man and do it!

Ludlow stands his ground, dripping. He stares into his old friend's eyes, and places his 9MM on the counter.

LUDLOW  
I'm done killing cops. And you don't know better than those schmucks, you arrogant prick.

Wander sobs as Ludlow turns away. Then... Ludlow HEARS a 'CLICK'. He turns to find Wander pointing his 9MM at him.

WANDER

All you do is make heroes Lud. First  
Mody... Those nigger cops you killed  
tonight... And now me. For stopping you.

LUDLOW

You're gonna do it yourself now?

WANDER

Self-defense Lud. You're a crazed killer.

Ludlow's rage builds as Wander tightens on the trigger...

WANDER

It was me by the way. I took her to the  
hospital that night. Should've been you.  
(then; finally)  
I was fucking your wife Tom.

Ludlow absorbs what he's always wondered...and always known.

LUDLOW

I know.

Still aimed at Ludlow, Wander PULLS THE TRIGGER...

*CLICK.* Nothing. *CLICK.* *CLICK.* The magazine is empty.

WANDER

You gotta be kidding...

Ludlow begins rolling up his sleeves.

LUDLOW

That felt personal.

Wander drops the gun, rolling up his own sleeves. Both men  
wait until the other is ready. And then, with a shared nod...

BOOM! They collide like two rams, locking and grappling.  
SOUND DROPS OUT, except for their BREATHING. They snort and  
gasp as each lands CRUSHING BLOWS...

There's absolutely nothing sexy about it. This is what it  
takes to be Ludlow; what nobody out there wants to know about.

He lands ONE MORE BLOW than his old friend, overpowering him.  
He turns Wander over, cuffing him--

WANDER

No! No! No!

Ludlow slumps against the wall. Out of breath, bleeding  
everywhere. He slowly, painfully pulls out his phone.

LUDLOW (INTO PHONE)  
This is 41 Adam. Officer down. 408 Oak  
street... Send rescue.

EXT. WANDER'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Biggs waits patiently, leaning on the hood of DeMille's  
sedan. He watches Ludlow hobble out of Wander's house...

BIGGS  
Rough night?

LUDLOW  
First on scene?

BIGGS  
Came as soon as you called. I was hoping  
it'd be you that walked out.

LUDLOW  
Just sit back and let us all kill each  
other. That the idea?

BIGGS  
You're not all the same to me Ludlow.  
(sincerely)  
You're not them.

Ludlow's too tired to react. SIRENS near.

BIGGS  
Self-defense? It's all 'how it sounds',  
you know?

LUDLOW  
Whatever you say boss.

BIGGS  
You got keys to this thing? There's  
somebody in the trunk I wouldn't mind  
speaking with.

Ludlow tosses him the keys, hobbling off on his way.

BIGGS  
Where you walking son?

As TWO BLACK AND WHITE'S pull up, Biggs holds up his badge -  
shielding Ludlow.

INT. 77TH POLICE STATION - DAY

The busy station comes to a grinding halt...as LUDLOW WALKS IN.  
He limps down the long hallway - no one making a sound.

He stares up at a DESK SERGEANT, who knowingly points him  
down the hall, deeper into the lion's den.

At the end, he finds MEGAN standing plaintively at a high desk.  
She turns from the clerk ignoring her... FINDING LUDLOW...

Megan gathers her purse, composes herself, and walks to his  
side. They don't touch or speak - but she sees that he's  
still there... still in one piece. And that makes her smile.  
Ludlow manages his own, bloody version of one in return.

CREDITS over their long walk out.

THE END