

Hollywood Shadows

written by

Frank C. Senia

Address: United States

Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

E-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. DICKEN'S DISCO - NIGHT

A dusty neon sign buzzes above the club's entrance. The street is alive with the throb of nightlife, a long line of people— young, hungry, half-drunk—wind around the block.

SUPER: Los Angeles, 1981

INT. DICKEN'S DISCO - NIGHT

The door creaks open. The inside world explodes in strobes. A DJ scratches vintage vinyl. Lights slice across smoke and mirrors. Patrons writhe in chaotic rhythm on the sawdust-covered dance floor.

AT THE DOOR -

BILLY BONDS stands like a fortress in black. **6-foot-2**, built like a statue, arms folded, eyes scanning. Young, but hardened. A stillness about him.

A COUPLE stumbles toward him, laughing.

BILLY

(quiet, firm)

IDs.

He inspects the IDs like they're lies incarnate. Hands them back without a smile. They disappear into the haze behind him.

INT. DICKEN'S - CONTINUOUS

Billy watches from his post. A wallflower with power. Faces blur in and out of focus, joy coating their misery in glitter and lipstick.

V.O. (BILLY)

Here I stand, a grain of sand in
California's glittering coast, guarding

the edge of adulthood.. while still
teetering on mine.

A FLASH OF MOVEMENT -

Three MEN enter. Dressed to impress. Their swagger cuts through the crowd like knives through smoke. One of them locks eyes with Billy as he passes. Older. Slick. Confident. **MR. WISEMAN (50s)**.

He pauses. Takes out a sleek business card. Hands it to Billy.

MR. WISEMAN

Call me.

Billy accepts the card. Doesn't say a word.

Wiseman offers a wry smile and vanishes into the club.

V.O. (BILLY)

It felt like nothing...
Until it didn't.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A small, dim apartment. Posters peeling. A twin bed. A half-empty fridge hums in the corner. Billy walks in, drops his keys, shrugs off his jacket. Exhausted.

The card—"Warner Bros. Studios - M. Wiseman, President"—rests on the table, out of place among cluttered receipts and used coffee mugs.

He stares. Then stares harder.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The phone trembles in his hand. He dials.

INTERCUT - INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

A polished room. Awards on the wall. Old Hollywood meets corporate power.

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

Billy Bonds. I remember.
Come by Saturday. 1 o'clock.

EXT. WARNER BROS. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Sun-drenched concrete. Silence hangs over the weekend lot like a film paused mid-frame.

Billy parks his car. Looks around. Swallows hard.

INT. STUDIO LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

A RECEPTIONIST types with mechanical precision. Billy stands like a statue.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Wiseman's expecting you.

She motions to an elevator.

INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Wood-paneled elegance. Behind the desk, Mr. Wiseman lounges like he owns every studio light in the city. He studies Billy.

MR. WISEMAN

What's your name, kid?

BILLY

Billy Bonds.

Wiseman leans forward, intrigued.

MR. WISEMAN

I need a big, muscular guy like you to handle some of the shit our clients get into.

Some of it'll be ugly. But you'll be paid well.

Billy doesn't blink.

BILLY

I'm listening.

MR. WISEMAN

I'll tell you the problem.
You never tell me the solution.

Billy nods once.

MR. WISEMAN

You're on your own.

Wiseman slides a **black cell phone** across the desk.

MR. WISEMAN

I've got the number.
Be in touch soon.

Billy takes the phone. It feels heavier than it looks.

EXT. STUDIO LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Billy walks to his car. The sun glares off windshields, casting harsh shadows. He stands still for a beat, caught between **two worlds**—the smoky sanctuary of disco nights and the unseen world Wiseman just cracked open.

V.O. (BILLY)

I didn't know if it was a beginning...
Or the beginning of the end.

He drives off.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - MORNING

A quiet, pristine street winding through opulent mansions. The sun gleams over the skyline, casting long shadows across the hills. A sleek black CAR pulls up and parks down the street from a modern, gated house. BILLY, mid-30s, hardened but quietly charismatic, steps out, dressed in plain jeans and a black shirt. Calm eyes scan the area.

CLOSE ON:

A YOUNG MAN (25) standing near the front gate, clutching a camera, snapping away.

BILLY

(quiet, firm)
What are you doing here?

The man flinches, startled, caught in the act.

YOUNG MAN

(awkward)
Nothing, man. Just... street photography.

BILLY

(steely)
Wrong street. Don't come back here
again. Next time, the lens breaks
before your face does.

A tense moment. The young man bolts. Billy watches him go.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

He calls WISEMAN. We don't hear Wiseman, just Billy's side.

BILLY

Handled. Guy's gone.

(pause, listening)

Yeah, I'll keep watch a few more days.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NEXT DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Billy drives slowly past Nicole's house. There—~~AGAIN~~—the same
young man. Same camera. Same obsession. Standing like a phantom.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Billy grips the steering wheel. Breathes. Opens the trunk and
retrieves a TIRE IRON. The glint of steel catches the light.

EXT. NICOLE'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Billy walks with purpose. Deliberate. Eyes locked. Each step
like a drumbeat. The young man doesn't notice—until it's too
late.

WHAM!

The tire iron connects with the man's
side. A sickening CRACK. The man
SCREAMS, collapses to the pavement.

Billy stands over him, chest heaving. A moment of hesitation.
Then cold clarity.

INT. NICOLE'S FRONT DOOR - MINUTES LATER

Billy walks to the door and knocks.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Who is it?

BILLY

Billy. Wiseman sent me. I'm the guy
keeping the press away.

The door opens a crack. Then fully. **NICOLE**, early 20s, fresh-
faced beauty, ethereal, disarming, barefoot in a white robe. Her
blue eyes sparkle.

Time slows.

BILLY

(stammering)
I'm Billy. Uh... I'm here to keep an eye
on things. You might see me around.

NICOLE

(smiling, inviting)
Nicole. Want some iced tea?

Billy nods, entranced.

INT. NICOLE'S KITCHEN - DAY

A light-filled kitchen. A pitcher of iced tea glistens with
condensation. Lemons in a bowl. Nicole dials her phone.

SPLIT SCREEN - NICOLE & WISEMAN (ON PHONE)

NICOLE

So... you think I need protection from
the press?

WISEMAN (V.O.)

You've met Billy. He's loyal. He'll
take care of you. You're our next star.
Stay safe.

BACK TO SCENE

Nicole looks over at Billy, sitting awkwardly on a barstool.

NICOLE

(sighing)
Guess that makes you my shadow, huh?

She hands him the phone.

WISEMAN (V.O.)

You watch her 24/7. If anything happens to her, Billy...

(a beat)

You'll need a bodyguard yourself.

Billy swallows hard. He understands.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Billy watches Nicole as she sips her tea. Sunlight kisses her face. He tries to focus on conversation, but he's mesmerized.

BILLY (V.O.)

I've seen beauty before, but this... she was unreal. A 12+ on any scale. Natural, flawless. She didn't need makeup. She didn't need Hollywood. Hollywood needed her.

Nicole catches him staring. She raises an eyebrow.

NICOLE

(straightforward, teasing)

Is the tea that good, or are you just sizing me up?

BILLY

(smirking)

Both, maybe.

She smiles again, a touch of warmth in her guarded tone.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy lies on his couch. Takeout container open on the coffee table. TV flickers soundlessly. He stares at the ceiling.

BILLY (V.O.)

I couldn't get her face out of my head. She was out of my league. Out of anyone's league. But something about her pulled at me. Something more than beauty.

MONTAGE - DAYS LATER

- Billy driving slow loops around Nicole's neighborhood.
- Watching from his car, eyes scanning.
- A shadowy figure darts down an alleyway—Billy follows.
- Nicole, stepping onto her porch, catching a glimpse of Billy down the block, a silent presence.
- Billy writing something in a small notepad, eyes always up.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - NIGHT

Phone BUZZES. Caller ID: **WISEMAN**.

WISEMAN (V.O.)

Another one. TV actor. Fentanyl. Beat his wife. Address incoming. You know what to do—keep it quiet.

Billy's face darkens. He pulls a sharp U-turn.

BILLY (V.O.)

This job... it wasn't bodyguard work. It was janitor work. Cleaning up messes no one wanted to talk about. But I was good at it. And sometimes, when the light hit just right... I didn't mind the dirt.

INT. BILLY BONDS' CAR - NIGHT

The dim glow of city lights flashes past the windshield. **BILLY BONDS**, mid-30s, ruggedly handsome but with the wear of life's trials etched on his face, grips the wheel of his nondescript sedan. His eyes scan the road, but his mind is elsewhere—preoccupied with the scene ahead.

EXT. ACTOR'S HOME - NIGHT

The house sits like an island in the midst of suburban calm. A two-story home with a neatly manicured lawn, but the darkness surrounding it feels tense, charged. Billy pulls up, the engine purring to a stop. He looks out at the house. He hesitates for a moment.

The faint sound of shouting comes from inside. A man's voice, raised in anger. The door slams open, and a woman's panicked cries follow. Billy's jaw tightens. He steps out of the car and moves toward the door, his demeanor calm, but his body alert.

INT. ACTOR'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Billy bursts through the screen door without knocking. The yelling is louder now, a chaotic blur of slurred insults and desperate sobs. The actor, a disheveled, slurring man in his 30s, stumbles around the room, a half-empty whiskey bottle dangling from his hand.

Before Billy can speak, the actor swings the bottle. The sharp **CRACK** echoes as it connects with Billy's temple. The world tilts for a moment, but Billy recovers quickly, grabbing the actor's wrist, twisting it sharply to disarm him. With a grunt, he lands a punch to the actor's stomach, knocking the wind out of him.

The actor stumbles back, his face a mixture of shock and drunken rage. Billy follows up with another gut punch, and the actor collapses to the floor, unconscious.

Billy stands over him, breathing heavily, the adrenaline still coursing through his veins. He glances at the battered woman in the corner, her lip split, eyes wide with fear. She's trembling.

BILLY

(softly, to her)
It's okay now.

Billy steps over the actor's prone form, walking over to the woman. He gently helps her to a chair, sitting down next to her.

BILLY

(talking softly)
Look, I'm not here to make things worse. I'm just here to make sure this doesn't happen again, alright? I'll keep him off you—just stay calm.

The woman nods silently, her hands shaking as she wipes away a tear.

Billy sits with her through the night, his eyes flickering occasionally toward the unconscious actor. The house is still and heavy with the weight of unspoken words.

Time passes, and the camera holds on Billy, now slouched in an armchair, eyes closed, but restless. The storm outside matches the chaos in his mind.

CUT TO:

INT. ACTOR'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The sunlight filters in through the blinds, casting a soft glow over the room. The actor stirs on the couch, groaning, as Billy watches from his chair. The actor's eyes flicker open, then snap wide with shock as he realizes where he is. He sits up suddenly, holding his head.

ACTOR

(hoarse)

What the hell happened?

BILLY

(gruff, standing up)

You happened. And I'm the guy who had to clean up the mess.

Billy's voice is low and calm, but it carries a weight of finality.

BILLY

(cont'd)

Listen, you pull this again, and the studio won't have a place for you. And I'll be back. You'll be the one picking up the pieces, not me.

The actor looks at him, eyes wide with a mix of fear and realization.

ACTOR

(quietly)

Yeah. I get it.

Billy stands, nods to the woman, and moves to the door. Before he leaves, he turns back to the actor.

BILLY

(soft, almost pitying)

You're a weasel, you know that?

With a dismissive glance, Billy steps out, leaving the man to contemplate his failure.

EXT. ACTOR'S HOME - DAY

Billy walks toward his car, his pace brisk but measured. He pulls his phone from his pocket and dials **MR. WISEMAN'S** number. The phone rings, and Billy presses it to his ear. His gaze is distant, lost in thought as he waits for the line to pick up.

BILLY

(into phone)

Yeah... it's done. The guy's out cold,
and his wife's safe, but you need to
know the whole story.

He listens, nodding as Mr. Wiseman speaks on the other end.

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

(calmly)

Come to the office. We'll talk about
it.

Billy exhales, rubbing his forehead. His heart races, anxiety
bubbling up as he processes everything.

BILLY

(quietly)

Alright, I'm on my way.

He hangs up and heads for his car, the weight of the night's
events pressing down on him.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - LATER

The car cuts through the city streets. The silence between Billy
and his thoughts feels deafening. The streets blur into one
long, endless highway. His hand grips the steering wheel
tightly, his knuckles white.

He glances at the rearview mirror. The cut above his eye from
the whiskey bottle is still visible, a reminder of the night's
chaos.

EXT. WARNER BROTHERS STUDIO LOT - DAY

Billy pulls up to the gates of the studio lot, the vast studio
complex stretching ahead of him. He stops at the security booth,
nodding at the guard.

BILLY

I'm here to see Mr. Wiseman.

The guard eyes him for a moment, then picks up the phone and
makes the call. Billy leans back in his seat, eyes scanning the
lot. His mind races again—what's next?

Moments later, the guard waves him through. Billy drives into
the lot, the gates closing behind him with a heavy clank. He

parks, steps out, and walks toward Mr. Wiseman, who stands waiting for him.

Mr. Wiseman, older, more composed, nods at Billy as he approaches.

MR. WISEMAN

You did well. Good job, Billy.

He reaches into his coat and hands Billy an envelope. Billy opens it to reveal a stack of crisp bills—\$5,000.

Billy's eyes flicker with something between surprise and gratitude. He takes the envelope, his fingers brushing against the money.

BILLY

(still processing)

I didn't do it for the cash...

MR. WISEMAN

(smirking)

I know. But it doesn't hurt. We'll talk later. But for now...

Mr. Wiseman leans in, lowering his voice.

MR. WISEMAN

You're on the payroll now. \$10,000 a month. Studio security. Fill out the papers, sign the non-disclosure agreement. Now you're working for Warner Brothers.

Billy nods slowly, the weight of the offer settling on him.

BILLY

(smirking)

Guess I stepped in the right shit.

Mr. Wiseman chuckles as Billy glances down at the envelope in his hands, the sense of validation flickering through his veins.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - DAY

Days later, Billy stands in front of a high-rise apartment building in Hollywood Hills. The sun is setting, casting long

shadows over the city. He nods at the security guard as he walks into the building, his posture more confident now—this is his new life, his new world.

Inside, the apartment is pristine. A one-bedroom unit, perfect for his needs. Billy looks around, nodding in approval.

BILLY

(to himself)

It'll do.

The camera lingers on the view outside—Hollywood sprawled beneath him, a city full of opportunity, danger, and dreams. Billy is at the edge of it all now, teetering between success and the shadows.

FADE OUT.

SCENE TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SEASIDE VIEW - DAWN

The first whispers of dawn paint the sky in shades of pink and orange, creeping slowly over the edge of the world. The sound of soft waves crashing against the shore accompanies the faint hum of city life in the distance. The sky is vast, almost endless, but the world below remains a blur—a delicate balance of calm and chaos.

INT. SPACIOUS BEDROOM - DAWN

The camera slowly pans across the spacious bedroom, the light creeping in through the open window. The room is tidy yet dim, with a few personal touches scattered around—a picture frame, a cup half-drunk, an empty glass on the nightstand. A quiet sadness hangs in the air.

In the bed, a figure stirs. Marquis, late 20s, lean and muscular, yet weary beyond his years, slowly opens his eyes. His gaze is heavy, distant. The edges of his consciousness are frayed, and he struggles to pull himself from the fog of sleep.

A soft, persistent beep-beep of the clock cuts through the silence. 5:00 a.m. The cold, unforgiving digits blink in the quiet room, a reminder that time waits for no one.

Marquis' hand pushes the sheets aside, his fingers catching the edge of the bed as he pulls himself upright. He stumbles toward the bathroom, barefoot, his feet grazing the cold hardwood floor. His eyes are heavy with the remnants of a restless sleep. He pauses in front of the bathroom mirror.

The reflection that greets him is not the man he wants to see. Disheveled hair, a patchy two-day beard, and sunken eyes staring back at him. The man in the mirror feels like a stranger. He runs his hand over his face, and for a fleeting second, the thought hits him like a cold gust—"Am I becoming my father?"

The thought is a sharp sting, a realization he has tried to bury. He looks away, as if trying to escape the reflection, but the weight of his thoughts presses down on him.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The small, sterile bathroom stands in stark contrast to the disarray of his mind. White tiles. Black grout. Simple. Functional. Nothing special. Marquis stares at his own face in disbelief, feeling lost in a haze of confusion.

MARQUIS

(whispers to himself, a hint of bitterness)

How the hell did I get here?

He shakes his head and steps into the shower, turning on the hot water. The steam begins to fill the room, thickening the air, clouding his thoughts. The warmth envelops him like a temporary solace, as if the water can wash away the heaviness in his chest.

Under the stream of water, Marquis runs his fingers through his hair, eyes closed, trying to ground himself in the sensation of the water—something, anything to pull him from the fog of last night.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

The memory crashes into him—violent, vivid. He stands in the small bathroom again. A victim, panicked, thrashes in the bathtub, struggling to breathe as Marquis holds him down, anger fueling his actions. The splashing water, the bubbles rising to the surface, the sound of desperate gasps as life slips away. Marquis pushes harder, his face set in grim determination.

The moment is agonizing, suffocating.

The memory continues, vivid in its cruelty. The victim's limbs fall limp. The water stills.

Marquis' breath is heavy, uneven. He steps back, his hands trembling. He sits on the toilet lid, trying to catch his breath as the silence presses in. His body shakes—exhaustion, guilt, dread. Everything weighs on him, sinking deep into his bones.

MARQUIS

(to himself, almost a whisper)
What have I done?

He reaches for the bottle of Scotch on the counter. The liquid sloshes into the glass with a familiar, hollow sound. He tilts the bottle, pours the alcohol down the throat of the victim to give the appearance of an accidental drowning. The scene is methodical, practiced.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTRIGGER BAR - NIGHT (PAST)

Marquis, now dressed in a different set of clothes, is at the bar, swirling a glass of tequila in his hand. The muted lights of the bar cast long shadows over his face. The sound of distant conversations and clinking glasses fills the air, but it's all a blur to him.

He takes a drink, the sharp sting of alcohol mingling with the bitter taste of guilt.

FLASHBACK:

A fleeting image of his childhood plays in his mind—a younger Marquis, laughing with his brother, Rickey. The warmth of family, now a distant memory, a lost connection. The ghost of a time when things weren't so broken.

He pushes the thought away, but it lingers, like a splinter lodged too deep.

MARQUIS

(muttering to himself)

Rickey... what happened to you?

The question hangs in the air, unanswered. His brother's face fades into a blur as the memory slips away, replaced by the suffocating weight of the present.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dimly lit by the remnants of early morning light. Marquis sits on the couch, staring into the distance. His mind races, caught in a tangled web of thoughts and regrets. His fingers drum absently on the armrest, lost in contemplation. The room feels empty, hollow, like the rest of his life.

MARQUIS

(under his breath)

I'm not like him. I'm not like my father.

But doubt creeps in. How long can he keep pretending?

The weight of his past, his decisions, and the person he has become press down on him. He stands up abruptly, pacing the room, his frustration mounting.

MARQUIS

(shouting, to no one in particular)
I didn't ask for this! I didn't ask to be this... thing!

He stops, eyes narrowing as he stares at the window. The first light of day spills through, soft and golden, illuminating the chaos in the room. For a moment, he feels the pull of the outside world—the horizon, the life he might have had, the family he lost. But it's all a distant dream now, a phantom of what could have been.

He walks toward the window and gazes out. His reflection in the glass merges with the outside world—the strip of shops, the distant traffic, the calm before the storm.

The light from the sun hits his face, warming his skin, but it doesn't touch the cold emptiness inside.

MARQUIS

(softly, to himself)
I can't keep running.

He stares into the distance, lost in his thoughts.

MARQUIS

(whispering, almost pleading)
I need to make it right. I need to fix this.

But the world feels like it's slipping away, and no amount of trying will ever bring back what he's lost.

The camera pulls back, leaving Marquis standing there, framed by the light of dawn, a man caught between his past and his future, uncertain of which path to follow.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - EARLY MORNING

The city begins to stir. The streets are quiet, bathed in the soft amber glow of the early morning sun. A few cars pass by, their headlights slicing through the haze of daybreak.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

A slow pan across a small, dimly lit apartment. Piles of junk food wrappers, empty pizza boxes, and the cold, indifferent glow of a television screen flickering in the background.

BILLY, rugged, worn out, is slouched in a chair, feet on the coffee table, eyes glazed over as he munches on another slice of pizza. Empty bottles and smoldering cigarette butts fill the ashtray. The air is thick with neglect.

A sense of isolation hangs heavy, as shadows press in around him.

BILLY (V.O.)

It's funny, isn't it? The way people look at you... like they know something about you that you don't. Like they know you're broken. But they don't know the half of it. They'll never understand what it's like... to feel nothing.

Billy chews slowly, lost in thought.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And the world keeps turning. People come and go. But there's always that one thing. That one thread you cling to, no matter how frayed... Rickey.

Billy's phone buzzes on the coffee table. He stares at it, his face hardening. He picks it up, answers.

BILLY

(gruff)
Yeah?

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

(voice only, calm, collected)
Billy. It's Wiseman. Got a situation. You need to handle it.

Billy's expression darkens as he listens, his gaze shifting toward the window where the sun climbs higher.

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

One of my clients—Jacko, a Lakers player. He got into something last night, driving drunk. Ran into a biker. Now the guy's dead. We need it cleaned up.

Billy is silent for a moment, assessing.

BILLY

(sighs)
Where is it?

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

Near Jacko's estate. Half a mile from his place. It's a mess, Billy. Handle it.

Billy throws the last piece of pizza into his mouth, chewing mechanically. It's like the news doesn't register. He sets the phone down, rubs his face, then grabs his jacket from the back of the chair.

BILLY (V.O.)

And this is what I do. Clean up messes. For a price. But something about this one... just another day at the office. It's what keeps me going. Keeps the lights on.

EXT. JACKO'S ESTATE - DAY

Billy's car cruises down a winding road, flanked by dense greenery. The view is breathtaking—Jacko's secluded mansion atop a hill. As Billy approaches, the air grows still, the silence unnerving.

His car pulls to the side. He steps out, boots crunching on gravel, eyes scanning the area. The environment is eerily calm, broken only by the occasional rustling of trees.

Billy approaches a twisted bike, half-hidden in the bushes. The handlebars are snapped. His gaze narrows.

BILLY (V.O.)

I've seen this before. A life snuffed out. Another mess to clean. They never tell you what happened, who's at fault, who needs to be paid. They just leave it to me.

Billy kneels, inspecting the body of a cyclist in his thirties. His face is smeared with blood, his body bent unnaturally. Billy pulls on rubber gloves. The only sound is the crunch of leaves beneath his boots.

Billy stands and walks back to his car. He opens the trunk, pulls out a beach blanket, and heads toward the body. The cold professionalism in his movements contrasts with the brutal scene.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No questions asked. Just a body, a blanket, and a plan. That's how it works.

Billy rolls the body into the blanket, dragging it up the hillside. It's a difficult task, but he moves with a practiced precision. He pauses, wiping sweat from his brow.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You ever wonder how it feels? To die? To just... stop? I don't think it matters much in the end. You're gone, and that's it.

He places the body in the trunk, closes it with a soft thud. He retrieves the bike and carefully places it in the backseat. He slams the door shut and stares at the road, at the mansion in the distance, before getting in the car.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And that's it. Another day. Another job. Another ghost to carry.

Billy drives off, the car vanishing into the morning fog, leaving the scene behind.

FADE OUT.

SCENE THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. HILLSIDE ROAD - DAY

A well-maintained rental car glides along a winding, quiet road. The faded suburban landscape stretches in all directions, its charm muted under an overcast sky. The car crests a familiar hill, revealing a view of the protagonist's past.

CUT TO:

A wide shot shows a weathered, once-proud house perched in the distance. It stands against the horizon, smaller now, as though time has shrunk it. The childhood home—once a beacon of comfort—now feels like a ghost of what it used to be.

CLOSE UP: JACK

The protagonist, JACK (early 30s), rugged but introspective, grips the steering wheel. His eyes narrow as he focuses on the house. He swallows hard, a lump rising in his throat.

JACK (V.O.)

(soft, reflective)

As I crested the hill, there it was—my childhood home. The place where memories were born. A fortress built from laughter, tears, and dreams. Or so I thought.

EXT. JACK'S RENTAL CAR - DAY

The car slows as it approaches the house. The engine hums, then falls silent when JACK parks at the curb. He sits for a moment, staring at the house. His face is unreadable, burdened with the weight of lost time.

JACK (V.O.)

(soft, contemplative)

Back then, this was everything. Family, safety... love. Now, it's just a hollow shell of what it used to be.

JACK rolls down the window. The air carries faint sounds of laughter from the neighborhood—children playing, life continuing in its own rhythm. The wind stirs the trees, but it doesn't feel like home.

JACK (V.O.)

The years haven't been kind to it. The paint's peeling, the steps worn down.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Three YOUNG MEN (late teens, scruffy, disheveled) sit on the front steps. They eye JACK's rental car suspiciously, whispering among themselves. JACK glances at them, tension in his posture.

JACK (V.O.)

(quiet, uncertain)
They probably think I'm some cop.

JACK's gaze moves across the yard—overgrown grass, a sense of neglect that echoes the house itself. The YOUNG MEN watch him, their eyes narrowing with quiet curiosity.

JACK (V.O.)

Could be a drug house now. Time has a way of changing everything.

His hand rests on the car door, hesitation in his grip. He stares at the house for a long beat, the urge to step inside battling with the reality of what it's become.

JACK (V.O.)

(whispers)
I used to dream about coming back here.
But now... it's just a place. A place
where ghosts linger.

He shifts the car into reverse. The YOUNG MEN continue watching as he drives away, their interest fading into the background.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

JACK's car weaves through the narrow streets, a ghost on its own path. He drives in silence, lost in thought.

JACK (V.O.)

I never expected to come back, not like this. But there's one person I need to see—Rickey.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

The car turns onto a better-kept street. This neighborhood has a different air—neater, slightly more prosperous. A modest home appears, well-maintained and unassuming. JACK slows to a stop. He stares at it, uncertain.

JACK (V.O.)

I haven't seen him since I was a teenager. Rickey's life took him somewhere else. Huntington Park. Not far, just about fifteen minutes from where we grew up.

JACK takes a deep breath, his hand hovering over the door handle. He steps out of the car and heads for the front door, each step heavier than the last.

JACK (V.O.)

Rickey. He opened the door to this whole mess I'm in. The way he lived, the way he behaved—it set the stage for everything that came after.

INT. RICKEY'S HOUSE - DAY

The door opens. RICKEY (mid-30s, stocky, a little rough around the edges but with a friendly, unguarded smile) stands in the doorway. He freezes for a moment, uncertain, before recognition flickers in his eyes.

RICKEY

Jack?

JACK

Yeah. It's me.

They stand there for a beat, sizing each other up. The years between them have changed them both, but some connection remains.

JACK

I figured I'd surprise you. It's been a long time.

RICKEY

(laughs nervously)
Yeah. No kidding. Come in.

INT. RICKEY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

They sit at a modest table, beers in hand. The living room is cozy, decorated with family photos and kids' toys. JACK looks around, unsure how to feel about it—comfortable, yet unfamiliar.

RICKEY

I've heard about you, you know. Still in Hollywood, fixing problems for those movie stars?

JACK

(sighs)
Yeah. That's the job. It's... not glamorous. But it pays well.

RICKEY

(chuckles)
I bet. It's funny, you know, I thought you'd come back with some big shot attitude. But here you are, sitting at my table, just like old times.

JACK

I never forgot where I came from, Rickey. Doesn't matter what I do.

RICKEY

That's the thing with you, Jack. You always had a way of convincing people of things. Even if they weren't true.

JACK

(quietly)
Maybe. But I'm not the same guy I was back then.

RICKEY

Yeah. I can see that.

An awkward silence falls between them. JACK takes a long sip of his beer, his mind clearly elsewhere. RICKEY watches him, sensing the tension but unsure how to break it.

JACK (V.O.)

Rickey was the wild one. The one who got into trouble, the one who was always running from something. He opened the path for me. I just never expected to walk it.

JACK

(looking at Rickey)
You still working at the dealership?

RICKEY

Yeah. Family's doing well. Got two kids now. A lot's changed, Jack.

JACK

I bet.

JACK (V.O.)

I wonder if I'm here to fix things with him, or if I'm just trying to fix myself.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Billy (rugged but worn by time) drives through his old neighborhood in a red Cadillac. The car purrs softly as he stares ahead, eyes distant.

BILLY (V.O.)

(softly, introspective)
Five hours... barely a blink. First class, they said. What's the difference, right? More legroom. Reclines a little further.

He glances at the rearview mirror, eyes flickering to the road.

BILLY (V.O.)

A woman sat next to me. Quiet, book in hand. Didn't mind. A book's a good companion when you don't feel like talking.

He grips the steering wheel tighter, pulling his gaze back to the road.

BILLY (V.O.)

We landed. East Coast, same as always. The people... rushed. Abrupt. Made me feel like I didn't belong.

CUT TO:

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

An overhead shot of a bustling JFK airport. Billy is moving quickly through the crowd, carrying the weight of years in every stride.

BILLY (V.O.)

Picked up my car from Hertz. Limited choices. A red Cadillac or an economy Toyota. Couldn't bring myself to drive a tin roller skate. Took the Cadillac.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Billy drives east, heading toward Huntington Park. The red Cadillac glides smoothly through the streets. He's deep in thought.

BILLY (V.O.)

Made my way to Rickey's dealership.
Thirty-minute ride, same old route. But
everything felt different, like the
whole world had changed while I was
gone.

He pulls into a run-down area. The Cadillac, polished and pristine, contrasts against the crumbling streets. Billy parks in front of Larry Miller Chevrolet, a place that hasn't seen better days.

INT. DEALERSHIP - DAY

Billy enters the dealership. Two eager SALESMEN rush to greet him, but he waves them off with a polite smile, uninterested.

BILLY (V.O.)

I'm not here for a car. Just here to
see an old friend. Their disappointment
was... palpable.

Billy walks past them, heading toward the service desk. The SERVICE PERSON picks up the phone and calls someone. Moments later, Rickey appears.

BILLY (V.O.)

Rickey. Same old baby face. But his
eyes... they've changed. Like
everything else.

Rickey spots Billy, his confusion quickly turning to recognition. They embrace briefly.

RICKEY

(surprised, soft)
Billy, is that you?

BILLY

You look good, man.

They pull apart, Rickey wiping a tear.

RICKEY

(chuckling)

Well, damn. You're looking good too.

They walk to a waiting area. Rickey lights a cigarette and offers Billy one, but he politely declines.

RICKEY

Where the hell have you been all these years? Jail?

BILLY

(avoiding the question)

No. Work, travel... A lot of time on the road.

RICKEY

(raising an eyebrow)

Work, huh? What kind of work? You in some kind of trouble?

BILLY

(small smile)

Just wanted to see you, Rickey.

Rickey, clearly taken aback, writes something on a napkin.

RICKEY

(scribbling)

Come by my house tonight. The family'd love to see you. We'll talk more.

He hands Billy the napkin with the address.

RICKEY

I'll be home by six. Catch you then.

Billy watches Rickey leave, the gesture uncomfortably distant. A thought lingers—this reunion isn't quite what he expected.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Billy pulls into a small, rundown motel. "The Three Judges" sign flickers above the entrance. He parks the Cadillac and heads inside. An elderly FRONT DESK CLERK looks up, offering a bored smile.

FRONT DESK CLERK

Sixty bucks.

Billy pays and takes the room key. He heads to Room 208.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dingy, faintly smelling of stale smoke. The furniture is outdated, and the carpet is worn. Billy drops his suitcase on the bed, scanning the room before heading for the shower.

BILLY (V.O.)

Not great, but not the worst. I've slept in worse.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

Billy stands under the warm stream of water, letting the noise of the outside world fade. His eyes close, and he lets the weight of the day wash over him.

He steps out, wrapping a towel around his waist. He glances at himself in the mirror—tired eyes, but something more—a quiet, unresolved longing.

He turns on the TV, the light flickering across the room. The news is on in the background. He stares at it absently.

BILLY (V.O.)

This place. The memories come back... old, faded, but they're still here.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKET - NIGHT

Billy walks into a small, local market. He picks up a dozen roses, the soft petals a contrast to the gritty town around him. He places them in the passenger seat of his car and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. RICKEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Billy pulls up to Rickey's house, a modest, cookie-cutter home. Rickey and his family are outside, waiting. The kids, PATTI and CAROL, run up to him.

CAROL

You and Dad don't look like twins, why?

BILLY

(laughing)

We've been trying to figure that out
our whole lives.

PATTI

How come we haven't seen you before?

BILLY

I live on the West Coast.

CAROL

Is that in America?

Billy smiles, shaking his head. He hands Page the roses.

BILLY

For you.

The family walks inside. Billy follows them to the dinner table, where mismatched plates and plastic utensils await. The room feels humble but warm. Rickey says a short prayer before they eat.

CUT TO:

INT. RICKEY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dinner is pasta and meatballs. Billy looks around at the old photographs of him and Rickey on the walls. The room feels worn but filled with history.

After dinner, Carol comes running in with a package.

CAROL

A package came for you today. Want to
open it?

Billy opens the box, revealing stacks of cash—fifty thousand dollars.

BILLY

For you, Rickey. For you and your family.

Rickey and Page freeze, shocked by the sudden generosity. Billy stands tall, a proud smile on his face.

BILLY

It's a wedding gift... and a little something to help out.

RICKEY

(shaken)
We can't take this.

BILLY

You can. And you must. Use it for whatever you need.

Rickey, still overwhelmed, pulls Billy into a hug.

RICKEY

Let's go outside. We need to talk.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Billy and Rickey sit on a wooden bench. The night sky stretches above them, silent and vast.

RICKEY

Are you okay, Billy?

BILLY

(softly)
I'm fine. Just wanted to do something nice for you. Spend it on what you need.

RICKEY

(squinting)

What do you do out there in L.A.? How do you make all this money?

BILLY

(smirking)
You remember when I helped run that dealership? Same deal.

RICKEY

(exhales)
I thought you were out of the business. What happened?

BILLY

I took a few trips. They paid off.

RICKEY

(leaning back)
How long you staying this time?

BILLY

A few days. I'll hit the road again soon.

They sit in silence for a moment.

RICKEY

You're different, Billy. Changed. In a good way.

Billy leans back, a thoughtful look on his face.

BILLY

I am. Just didn't know it yet.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit, shadows cast across the peeling wallpaper. Billy (rugged and worn) is lying on the bed, eyes closed, barely able to stay awake. He shifts, trying to get comfortable, but his mind is too restless. He reaches for his cell phone on the nightstand.

The phone rings. It's Mr. Wiseman. Billy squints at the screen, puzzled.

BILLY (V.O.)

(soft, exhausted)
Mr. Wiseman... At this hour?

Billy answers, bringing the phone to his ear.

BILLY

(half-asleep)
Billy here.

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

(sharply)
Where the hell are you?

Billy rubs his eyes, still groggy from the trip.

BILLY

(trying to gather himself)
I'm back east for the day—visiting my brother.

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

Listen to me, Billy. Hop the next red-eye and get your fuckin' ass back to my office. I need you. Now.

Billy's eyebrows furrow as he processes the urgency in Wiseman's voice. He sits up in bed, suddenly more awake.

BILLY

(slightly confused)
What's going on? What's so important?

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

(voice cutting)
Just get here, Billy. Don't ask questions.

The line goes dead. Billy stares at the phone, his confusion deepening.

BILLY (V.O.)

What the hell is going on?

CUT TO:

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - NIGHT

Billy's red Cadillac pulls up to the airport, its headlights casting long shadows in the deserted parking lot. The airport is quiet, almost eerie in the late-night stillness.

BILLY (V.O.)

Couldn't shake the feeling. Whatever it was, it had to be bad. Wiseman never calls like that. Never. Not unless it's serious.

Billy steps out of the car, tossing the keys to the attendant. He heads inside, briskly walking to the American Airlines desk.

He stands in front of the COUNTER AGENT, who looks up sleepily but offers a polite smile.

COUNTER AGENT

(half-heartedly)
Can I help you?

BILLY

(urgently)
I need a one-way flight to Los Angeles. Red-eye. What's your earliest?

COUNTER AGENT

(half-checking the screen)
We have a flight at 3:00 AM. You're in
luck, there's one seat left.

Billy nods, pulling out his credit card.

BILLY (V.O.)

I could get some sleep on the flight.
Maybe figure this out. But that feeling
in the pit of my stomach wouldn't go
away. Whatever it was, Wiseman needed
me fast.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

*The cabin is dim, with passengers scattered around, many of them
asleep. Billy leans back in his seat, his eyes flicking between
the window and the empty aisle. He closes his eyes for a moment,
the hum of the plane's engines almost lulling him to sleep.*

BILLY (V.O.)

Sleep never really came. Not that
night. You can't sleep with that kind
of adrenaline, the kind that hits your
veins when you don't know what's coming
next.

*The seatbelt sign dings. Billy's eyes snap open, and he looks
out the window, squinting at the faint glow of the Los Angeles
skyline stretching beneath him.*

BILLY (V.O.)

There it was. The city of angels. Or
whatever it is they call it these days.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

*The sun is just beginning to rise, casting a pale orange light
across the LAX terminal. Billy exits the terminal, dragging his
luggage behind him. A taxi pulls up, and he slides into the
backseat.*

BILLY (V.O.)

Back in LA. Same damn city, different damn day. Just hope this time I can get some answers.

The taxi drives off into the early morning light.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

The taxi pulls through the gates of a sprawling movie studio lot. Billy leans forward, giving the security guard his name. The guard nods and waves him through.

Billy steps out, glancing at the studio buildings, all quiet in the early morning hours.

BILLY (V.O.)

You'd think something would feel different after all this time. But it didn't. It all felt... the same. Just bigger and more expensive.

He walks briskly to Mr. Wiseman's office, his footsteps echoing in the quiet halls. He reaches the door and knocks twice.

BILLY

(through the door)

It's me. Billy.

A pause. The door creaks open, revealing Mr. Wiseman. His usual crisp demeanor is gone. His hair is disheveled, his tie undone, his jacket hanging off his shoulders. The smell of alcohol is thick in the air.

Wiseman doesn't say a word as Billy enters. He gestures to the couch, where Ezra Wiseman, his brother, lies motionless, his eyes wide open, face pale. Billy's eyes narrow in confusion and concern.

BILLY

(surprised)

What's going on?

Wiseman sighs deeply, his voice ragged with panic.

MR. WISEMAN

(voice trembling)
Ezra and I... we were arguing over the studio's budget. I couldn't take it anymore, Billy. I slipped a few sleeping pills in his drink. Just to make him shut up. But... I guess I put in too many.

Wiseman swallows hard, staring at his brother's lifeless body.

MR. WISEMAN

(voice cracking)
I thought he just fell asleep. I... I couldn't wake him. I checked his pulse. He was... he was dead.

Billy steps closer, trying to process what he's hearing. He takes a moment to look at the body, then turns back to Wiseman.

BILLY

(steady, professional)
Okay. First things first. Was his car here all night?

MR. WISEMAN

(nodding)
Yes. His car's parked right outside.

BILLY

Did anyone else hear you arguing?

MR. WISEMAN

No. Just us. No one else.

BILLY

(slowly, thinking)
Where did you get the pills?

MR. WISEMAN

(quiet)
From my doctor. He's the one who prescribed them.

Billy's gaze hardens. He's starting to put the pieces together.

BILLY

Did Ezra know where you kept them?

MR. WISEMAN

Yes. In my desk.

Wiseman begins to panic again, wringing his hands.

MR. WISEMAN

(voice rising)

Billy, what do we do? What the hell do we do?

Billy sits down, takes a deep breath, and looks at the body. After a few tense moments, an idea strikes him.

BILLY

(standing up suddenly)

I have a solution.

Wiseman watches as Billy starts to pace, clearly figuring things out in his mind.

BILLY

Let's make it look like he killed himself. Do you have a rope?

MR. WISEMAN

(confused)

A rope? Yeah, I can get one from the prop room.

Wiseman hurries off to get the rope. Billy moves toward the bathroom, dumping the sleeping pills into the toilet, wiping away any traces of the drugs.

When Wiseman returns, Billy immediately sets to work. He and Wiseman drag Ezra into the adjoining office. Billy ties a noose and places it around Ezra's neck, flipping the rope over a ceiling beam. They pull Ezra into a hanging position, making the scene look convincing.

Wiseman, overwhelmed, vomits onto the floor. Billy helps him sit down on the couch, trying to keep him composed.

BILLY

(quietly, reassuring)
We're going to say he was distraught
over the studio's finances. Took the
pills, went into his office, and hung
himself. When you woke up, you saw him,
and... you didn't know what to do. You
called me, and I came. We'll tell the
police everything.

*Wiseman nods, still in shock, as Billy finishes setting up the
scene. He grabs the phone, hands trembling.*

BILLY

Now make that call.

Wiseman takes a shaky breath and dials 911.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

*Billy watches the studio's gates from a distance. Police cars
arrive, sirens blaring, flashing lights. He takes a long, slow
breath, the weight of the situation finally settling in.*

BILLY (V.O.)

It's done. But nothing's ever really
done.

FADE OUT.

SCENE SIX

FADE IN:

INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The camera slowly pans across Wiseman's sleek, yet sterile office. The hum of fluorescent lights is a subtle undertone to the mounting tension. A flicker of movement catches our attention—Wiseman's gaze drifts across the room, his eyes hollow with worry. He stands by his desk, his hand trembling as it hovers over his phone. The weight of the moment presses on his chest like an invisible hand.

CLOSE-UP of Wiseman's face, his expression distant, lost. His eyes shift to the ajar door across the room—Ezra's office. A sharp breath escapes him as the door seems to beckon him. His chest tightens as the door swings open slightly, and in the half-light, we see something that no one should ever witness.

CROSSCUT TO:

INT. EZRA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Through the cracked door, we see Ezra, lifeless, hanging from the ceiling by a rope. The stillness is suffocating, unnatural. The camera lingers on the haunting image of Ezra, the man who once filled this space with laughter and ambition, now reduced to a tragic symbol of despair.

BACK TO WISEMAN

Panic rises within Wiseman's chest. His breath quickens. He stumbles backward, his hands shaking uncontrollably as he reaches for his phone. He dials, the numbers blurred through a haze of disbelief.

WISSMAN

(choking, whispering)

I... found my brother... he's dead...
He hanged himself...

The words barely escape his lips, but they hang in the air, heavy with finality. His vision swims, blurring with the tears that threaten to spill over.

WISSMAN

(desperate)

Please, send the police quickly.

The phone call drags on, but the operator's calm voice feels like a distant echo, disconnected from the chaos enveloping him.

OPERATOR

(on phone, cool)

Can you please confirm your name and address, sir?

Wiseman barely hears the operator's questions, lost in the suffocating silence of the office. His hands grip the phone tighter, as if trying to hold onto something—anything.

The camera pulls back slowly, showing Wiseman's office in disarray, mirroring the chaos that has suddenly gripped his world. Outside the office, the world continues, indifferent to the personal disaster unfolding within.

CUT TO:

EXT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

SIRENS wail as multiple police cars pull up to the curb. The officers rush past the camera in a flurry of movement, their footsteps echoing through the now-quiet hallways. We follow them into the building, the tension palpable.

INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - LATER

The atmosphere is now a mix of official business and somber grief. Officers move briskly around, questioning Wiseman, taking notes. The paramedics, too, are at the scene, their faces grim but professional. Wiseman sits on the sofa, his eyes distant, consumed by the loss.

A PARAMEDIC, a woman in her mid-30s with an expression of quiet sympathy, approaches Wiseman and gently asks.

PARAMEDIC

Did he want to go to the hospital?

Wiseman doesn't respond immediately. His silence says everything—there's nothing more to be done. He shakes his head, the tears threatening again but not yet falling.

WISSMAN

(softly, broken)

No... it's too late.

The camera stays on his face, capturing the anguish as the paramedics begin their work, cutting the rope and gently laying Ezra's body onto a stretcher. The stillness of the moment is almost unbearable.

The camera pulls back, showing the entire scene—Wiseman sitting motionless, as Ezra's lifeless form is taken away.

LATER: INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hours have passed. The initial frenzy has slowed, leaving a lingering, oppressive silence. The investigation has dwindled to a few remaining officers, their voices low and murmuring in the background. Wiseman remains seated, eyes closed, his face in his hands. The desk lamp casts long shadows, stretching across the room, the weight of the night pressing down.

Billy, still in the office, sits across from Wiseman. They are two souls bound by grief—each trying to navigate the overwhelming sorrow that now hangs in the air.

The tension between them is thick. Words are exchanged, but they feel hollow, like empty echoes of what was. The two men, now connected by shared pain, share a glance—an understanding that cuts deep. They both carry a burden, a secret guilt that they cannot escape. Neither man can find comfort in the other, but the shared grief binds them together in a way nothing else can.

WISSMAN

(quietly, almost to himself)

This... this will follow us. Forever.

BILLY

I know.

The silence that follows is deafening, each man lost in their own thoughts, their own regrets.

CUT TO:

EXT. WISEMAN'S HOME - DAY

The camera shows the grand estate from a distance, the imposing walls of the Beverly Hills home standing as silent witnesses to the tragedy that has unfolded. The sun is high, casting a muted light on the mourners who have gathered. Floral tributes are delivered in waves, each one a symbol of remembrance for Ezra—each one a painful reminder of his absence.

INT. WISEMAN'S STUDY - DAY

A smaller, more intimate scene unfolds in Wiseman's study. The house is filled with the noise of guests arriving, but here, in this room, it's just Wiseman and Billy. Wiseman looks at Billy, his face worn and exhausted, but there's a quiet gratitude there, as if the weight of the last few hours has pushed him to see things clearly.

WISSMAN

(with deep sincerity)

Billy, I... I don't think I could have made it through today without you.

BILLY

I'm just doing my job.

Wiseman steps forward, offering Billy a firm handshake. The gesture is simple, but its meaning is profound. The bond between them has been solidified in ways neither man can fully articulate. There's something unspoken between them now—something that transcends mere friendship. It's a connection born of shared tragedy, a connection that will last long after the funeral and the empty house.

WISSMAN

(with quiet resolve)

We've got each other.

Billy watches him, his face a mirror of the pain Wiseman is trying to bury. He nods, but he knows, deep down, the weight of this day will never leave him.

BILLY

We do.

The camera lingers on their faces, capturing the depth of their emotions as the door closes behind Wiseman. The weight of their shared grief hangs in the air, unspoken but understood.

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

FADE IN:

INT. FOUNTAIN CLUB - NIGHT

The warm, golden glow of the Fountain Club envelops the room. The low hum of conversation and the clink of glasses fill the air as people unwind from the day's chaos. A hint of tension lingers, woven into the fabric of the scene. The door swings open, and BILLY enters.

His eyes scan the room, restless. He moves through the crowd, navigating the familiar faces and quiet chatter, until his gaze locks onto the booth in the corner.

There, seated in a black leather booth, is NICOLE. Her beauty stands out against the mournful atmosphere surrounding her. Her long blonde hair cascades down her shoulders, her black dress an elegant echo of the day's somber events.

Billy takes a breath, his heart aching as he watches her, caught between the desire to offer company and the respect for her solitude. He steps toward her, hesitates for a beat, and then sits down across from her.

NICOLE

(without looking up)
Surprised to catch you here.

Billy studies her for a moment, noticing the vodka martini in her hand. He gestures to the bartender.

BILLY

(ordering)
Same thing, please.

The bartender nods and walks off. Billy looks back at Nicole, his eyes lingering on her. There's a shared understanding between them, unspoken yet powerful.

BILLY

How's the... funeral?

NICOLE

(half-smiling)
All its glory... and, of course, the
expense.

Billy chuckles lightly, taking his drink as it arrives. He sips it slowly, his thoughts elsewhere. A tension simmers beneath his words.

BILLY

You want some advice?

NICOLE

(gazing at him, intrigued)
I'm listening.

She leans in slightly, her voice low.

NICOLE

My girlfriend... she's been cheating on
me. Should I dump her?

Billy's expression tightens. He takes a long sip from his martini, eyeing Nicole with sympathy.

BILLY

(with conviction)
I would if I were you. Anyone cheating
on you? Nuts. How do you know?

NICOLE

(grimacing)
She came home the other night...
smelled like men's cologne. Sweat. And
I found an empty condom package in her
purse.

Nicole shakes her head in frustration, signaling the bartender for another drink. Billy observes her with empathy, his eyes drifting to his reflection in the glass mirror behind her. A fleeting moment of introspection crosses his face.

The bartender arrives with another drink for Nicole. She gulps it down, clearly upset. The atmosphere grows heavy. A pause hangs between them.

BILLY

Can I ask you a personal question?

NICOLE

(softly, almost amused)
Yeah. Go ahead.

BILLY

(hesitant)
I didn't know you were gay.

NICOLE

(laughs)
No, bi.

She continues, her voice low, as though she's sharing something personal, something deep.

NICOLE

I've always been like that... it's just... the way I am. Doesn't matter who's in front of me.

Billy listens intently, his discomfort growing. He shifts uncomfortably in his seat as the air between them grows thick. He stirs his drink, trying to steady himself.

Nicole orders another drink. She gulps it down quickly. Her face shows signs of becoming unsteady, but she smiles faintly at Billy.

NICOLE

(dizzy, a little tipsy)
I'm getting drunk. *laughs weakly* Can you... can you go to the hotel next door and get us a room? I can't drive home.

Billy raises an eyebrow, his concern visible.

BILLY

I'll take you home.

NICOLE

(shaking her head)
No. Get a room. I'm getting sick.

She struggles to stand, leaning on him for support. Billy helps her up, concern etched across his face. Together, they walk out of the club into the night.

EXT. HYATT HOTEL - NIGHT

Billy and Nicole enter the hotel lobby. Billy approaches the desk, paying for the room. They head to the elevator, the tension palpable between them.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

They enter the room. Nicole immediately heads to the bathroom, clearly unwell. She vomits violently into the toilet. Billy stands in the doorway, watching, waiting.

After a moment, Nicole emerges, looking pale and exhausted. She walks to the bed and begins undressing. Billy, unsure what to do, sits at the desk, staring into space. He watches her silently for a while.

BILLY

(quiet, to himself)

One of the most spectacular women I've ever seen... even passed out, she's gorgeous.

He sighs heavily, torn between desire and doing the right thing.

BILLY

(resolute)

No... don't do it. You're better than that.

He writes a quick note, "Hope you feel better in the morning," and places it gently on the bed next to her. He walks out of the room, placing the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door handle as he leaves.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy enters his apartment, the weight of the night hanging over him. He pours himself a shot of tequila and drinks it quickly. He gazes at the ceiling, his thoughts racing. The night plays over in his mind, lingering in his chest like a weight he can't shake.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Morning light filters in, the harsh reality of the day breaking through the fog of last night. Billy slowly rises from his bed, his head pounding. He moves through his routine, getting dressed in a daze. His mind is consumed by last night's events.

After a quick breakfast, he calls Wiseman.

INT. PHONE CALL - BILLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

WISSMAN (V.O.)

(sounding depressed)

Take a few days off, Billy. You've earned it.

BILLY

(gripping the phone tightly)

Alright. What do I do with the time?

Wiseman doesn't answer, the line goes silent for a moment. Billy is left in the quiet, unsure what to do with his newfound time.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - DAY

Billy walks along the shore, the ocean breeze tugging at his clothes. The waves crash against the sand, offering a brief moment of peace. He stops, gazing at the endless horizon. There's a quiet reflection in his eyes, as if he's searching for something he can't name.

INT. BROWN BAGGER CAFE - DAY

Billy enters a small café, the interior warm and inviting. He sits down at a booth and orders a cheeseburger deluxe. He eats slowly, savoring the small comforts of life.

EXT. NICOLE'S HOME - DAY

Later, Billy drives to Nicole's home, uncertainty gnawing at him. He arrives, presses the intercom button.

NICOLE (V.O.)

Who's there?

BILLY

Billy.

The gate buzzes open, and Billy drives in. He gets out of the car and walks up to her doorstep. The door is ajar, and inside, Nicole is seated on the couch, an ice pack on her head.

BILLY

(with a smirk)

Hard night?

NICOLE

(weakly)

Yes, Billy. Thank you. I'm embarrassed,
but thank you for taking me to the
hotel.

Billy smiles faintly, a touch of sympathy in his eyes.

BILLY

Think nothing of it. Life just turns to
shit sometimes.

NICOLE smiles, grateful. She takes a deep breath.

NICOLE

I owe you an iced tea one day.

*Billy nods, standing up. He waves a goodbye and heads for the
door, his thoughts elsewhere.*

INT. BILLY'S CAR - DAY

*As Billy drives home, a thought crosses his mind, sudden and
resolute.*

BILLY

(to himself)

Maybe I'll go to Las Vegas. Take the
ride. Just for myself.

He starts the engine, the road ahead an open possibility.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

*The desert stretches endlessly before him as Billy drives toward
Las Vegas, the journey a quiet escape from his past and his
troubles.*

FADE OUT.

SCENE TWO

FADE IN:

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

The first rays of dawn filter softly through the curtains, casting a gentle glow across the room. The silence is broken only by the faint hum of the air conditioning.

ANN (*alluring yet weary beneath the surface*) rises from the bed. Her silhouette is framed by the light as she walks toward the bathroom.

ANN'S POV

The steam from the shower rises, each droplet glistening in the sunlight, creating a shimmering veil around her.

BACK TO BILLY (*disheveled, the weight of the world on him*) watches from the bed, entranced. His gaze tracks Ann's every move, but there's an underlying tension in the air.

BILLY (V.O.)

(softly, with longing)
Her body, her spirit... raw,
unapologetic. And yet... I can't quite
grasp it. Is it the remnants of last
night? Or is it something real?
Something lasting?

He swallows hard, unable to look away. His eyes flick to the bathroom mirror. In the reflection, Ann's physical beauty contrasts with the deeper layers of her persona—something unseen, something more.

CLOSE ON BILLY'S EYES

As he fights the urge to speak, silence takes over. His breathing is shallow, uncertain.

The sound of the shower turning off.

ANN (O.S.)

(low, teasing)
I've got to run. Take care of yourself,
Billy.

ANN steps out of the bathroom, now dressed. She casually tosses her clothes onto the bed. She approaches Billy, planting a soft kiss on his cheek.

She picks up a notepad from the desk, jots down her number, and places it beside him.

ANN

(sweetly)

In case you ever need a friend.

Billy stares at the number for a long moment. Ann walks toward the door. She pauses, her hand on the knob, then turns to look at him.

ANN

(sincere, playful)

Take care of yourself.

She exits. Billy watches her leave, a mixture of admiration and confusion in his eyes.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The sun is now high. Billy lies back on the bed, eyes barely open. He reaches for the phone on the nightstand and dials room service.

BILLY

(mumbling)

Room service... coffee... eggs...
toast...

He slips back into unconsciousness.

A knock at the door interrupts his rest.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL POOL AREA - AFTERNOON

Billy lounges by the pool, soaking up the sunlight. He closes his eyes, but all he can smell is Ann's perfume, lingering in the air. His mind drifts to her.

BILLY'S POV

A flash of memory—Ann laughing, the carefree smile she gave him before she left. She's everywhere, even in her absence.

INT. MIRAGE CASINO - NIGHT

Billy enters the casino lounge. His eyes are red and tired, but there's a determined edge to him. He heads for the card table.

He exchanges his last five hundred dollars for chips and turns to the dealer.

BILLY

(gritting his teeth)

Five thousand dollar marker.

The dealer hands him the marker without hesitation.

BILLY (V.O.)

(shaky, uncertain)

Maybe this'll change my luck.

TIME LAPSE:

Billy loses hand after hand. His pile of chips shrinks with each failed bet. The drinks flow freely as his losses mount.

INT. MIRAGE CASINO LOUNGE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Billy, now visibly drunk, slams his cards down on the table.

BILLY

(slurring, belligerent)

Give me another marker. Five thousand.

The dealer watches him, eyes narrowed, but hands over the marker with an unsettling calmness.

INT. MIRAGE CASINO LOUNGE - LATER

Billy stumbles from the table, swaying unsteadily. His balance is gone.

BILLY

(gritting his teeth)

I'm done. I'm done with this.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Billy is thrown into a chair in his hotel room. His face stings from a slap, his head jerking to the side from the force.

SECURITY GUARD 1

(gruff)
Wake up, asshole.

Billy blinks his eyes open.

SECURITY GUARD 2

(aggressive)
Did you forget about your ten thousand
dollar markers?

Billy, still groggy, reaches for his phone and dials **MR.
WISEMAN.**

BILLY

(weak, pleading)
Mr. Wiseman, I'm in Vegas. I've lost
everything. I owe ten thousand... can
you wire the funds?

The guard watches, impatient. Billy hands the phone over.

MR. WISEMAN (O.S.)

(calm, authoritative)
Let me speak to them.

A BEAT.

Billy watches nervously as the guards speak to Mr. Wiseman.
After a few moments, one of the guards hands Billy the phone
back.

SECURITY GUARD 1

(surprisingly calm)
Go back to your room. You're good.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Billy stumbles back into his room, disoriented. He shuts the
door behind him and locks it.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Billy stands under the shower, hot water cascading over him. The
silence is oppressive, broken only by the sound of the water.

He lies back on the bed, staring at the air vents above. His
thoughts swirl.

BILLY (V.O.)

(angst)
I keep bailing others out of their
problems... but who's there for me?

A knock at the door interrupts his spiraling thoughts. Billy rises sluggishly and opens the door.

INT. MIRAGE HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANN stands in the doorway, casual in blue jeans and a ponytail—completely different from the polished image she presents when working. She smiles at him.

ANN
(smiling softly)
I've got nowhere to go... nothing to
do. How about we hang out? No charge.
Maybe a drink or two?

Billy's eyes light up, tinged with surprise and something deeper.

BILLY
(softly)
Just what I needed...

Ann enters and lies down on the bed, resting her head on the pillow.

ANN
(sighing)
How nice your life must be...

Billy sits down beside her, a moment of quiet hanging in the air. He doesn't answer right away. She doesn't expect him to.

ANN (CONT'D)
(softly)
I'm done with this life, Billy.
Vegas... it's all I've known for five
years, but it's enough. The men, the
shows, the... bullshit. I can't do it
anymore.

Billy listens, his silence heavy with meaning.

ANN (CONT'D)
(earnestly)

Can I come with you? Maybe to L.A.?
Find a job... something decent. A
chance to start over.

Billy stares at her, hesitation in his eyes.

BILLY'S POV

He sees her—vulnerable, yet strong.
She's not just a prostitute. She's
someone looking for a way out. Just
like him.

BILLY

(slowly)

I've always been fiercely protective of
my solitude... my sanctuary. It's the
only place I feel... safe.

Ann's smile softens, understanding.

ANN

(teasing)

I'll make you breakfast. And dinner.
And when you want me to leave, just say
the word.

She laughs lightly, and her laughter fills the room, breaking
the tension.

Billy exhales after a long pause.

BILLY

(quietly)

Why not?

FADE OUT.

SCENE THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. ANN'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Billy's car pulls into the parking lot of Ann's apartment complex. The headlights illuminate the building as Billy gets out, glancing around. Ann, with a determined look on her face, opens the trunk and pulls out several suitcases. Billy watches as she fills them with clothes and items, each piece an essential for her survival.

BILLY

(to himself)

How much stuff does she need to exist?

ANN

(calling out)

You're quiet. You alright?

BILLY

(half-smiling)

Just thinking.

Ann pulls out a few more items and packs them into the suitcase with an almost mechanical precision. Billy steps closer, hands in his pockets, watching her, a silent observer to this ritual.

BILLY

(casually)

You really need all this?

ANN

(without looking at him)

Yeah, believe it or not, every piece counts.

Billy watches as she closes the trunk and locks the car. There's a slight pause as she walks toward the apartment building, her figure cutting through the dim light, a contrast to the darkness surrounding them. Billy follows, his steps slow and deliberate.

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ann's apartment is small but cozy, filled with the remnants of her life. Her laughter fills the room as she moves from one pile of belongings to another. Billy watches from the doorway, his gaze shifting between her and the clutter around him.

ANN

(playfully)

This place could use some work. Don't worry, I'm a pro at this.

BILLY

(chuckling)

I'm sure.

(pauses, thinking)

I've never been great at this stuff.
You know, making a home.

Ann gives him a soft look as she starts packing another bag, her movements quick and efficient.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Billy and Ann, each in separate showers, the sound of water running. The tension from earlier has settled into something more comfortable. As they both retire to the bed, the room is bathed in a warm glow. Ann cuddles up close to Billy.

Ann's hair smells fresh and clean. Billy, with a faint smile, leans into her, finally allowing himself a moment of peace.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The room is disorganized—takeout menus, old dishes, signs of a life lived in a hurry. The apartment feels more like a temporary space than a home. Billy walks through the clutter, grabbing his phone.

He dials Wiseman's number. It rings twice before Wiseman picks up.

WISEMAN (V.O.)

(sharp, with urgency)

Billy, where the hell have you been?

BILLY

(sighs)

I'm back. Got some stuff to handle.

WISEMAN (V.O.)

(pause, serious)

Can you meet tonight?

BILLY

(shrugging)

I'll be there at 9.

Billy hangs up the phone, the tension of the meeting already weighing on him. He turns to see Ann walking out of the bathroom, freshly dressed.

ANN

(with a smile)

You're gonna make it, right?

BILLY

(hesitating)

I'm not sure. But I have to try.

Ann watches him as he heads toward the door, a flicker of uncertainty in her eyes.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

The city buzzes with energy as Billy drives through the winding streets. His mind is elsewhere, thinking of the looming meeting with Wiseman, and of Ann, her laughter still echoing in his mind.

INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The door opens to reveal Wiseman's office—a space that exudes wealth and power, but tonight, it feels like a pressure cooker about to explode. Wiseman sits behind his desk, his face tight with frustration.

BILLY

(casually)
What's going on?

WISEMAN

(sourly)
Since my brother passed, I've been
looking through the studio books. Fifty
million dollars gone. Stolen.

BILLY

(nodding slowly)
What do you need me to do?

WISEMAN

(gritting his teeth)
Find the money. Find it fast.

BILLY

Where do I start?

WISEMAN

(leaning in)
Al Weinstein. You'll find him on
Beverly Drive. He's our accountant.

Billy nods, steeling himself for the next steps. He's been in
tight situations before, but this one feels different.

BILLY

(flatly)
I'm on it.

Billy turns to leave, but as he opens the door, Wiseman's voice
calls after him.

WISEMAN

(darkly)
Break all his bones if you have to.
Just get my money.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Billy returns to the apartment around midnight. Ann is asleep in bed, the room clean and tidy—her touch unmistakable. Billy removes his clothes down to his boxer shorts and quietly slips into bed next to her. He watches her sleep for a moment, deep in thought.

BILLY

(to himself)

What the hell have I gotten myself
into?

His thoughts are interrupted as he drifts into uneasy sleep, the weight of the day—and the decisions ahead—hanging heavily over him.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - MORNING

Billy drives to Beverly Hills. He parks his car in the parking lot of Weinstein's building and waits, watching for him to arrive. After a short while, Weinstein pulls up in a black Mercedes. Billy watches carefully, calculating the moment.

As Weinstein gets out of the car, Billy makes his move. He quickly pulls up behind Weinstein's car, blocking him in, then opens the trunk and forces him inside.

Weinstein yells, but Billy doesn't flinch. He slams the trunk shut and drives off.

EXT. COASTAL OIL FIELDS - LATER

Billy's car stops by an abandoned stretch of land near the Pacific coastline. He opens the trunk, pulling Weinstein out, and walks him toward the desolate area.

BILLY

(coldly)

Where's the money?

Weinstein shakes, terrified.

WEINSTEIN

(frantic)

I didn't take it! Ezra told me to do
it!

Billy sticks the gun in Weinstein's mouth, silent and unyielding.

BILLY

(calmly)

Tell me where the money is. Now.

Weinstein breaks down, shaking in fear.

WEINSTEIN

(sobbing)

It's in an offshore account! I'll transfer it today. Please—just don't kill me!

Billy pulls him back into the car and drives him back to Beverly Hills.

INT. WEINSTEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy and Weinstein arrive at Weinstein's office. They walk through the building and enter Weinstein's private office. Weinstein sits at his desk, trembling, and begins typing the transfer.

Billy watches as the money is transferred. He pulls out his phone and calls Wiseman.

BILLY

(grimly)

Check your account.

WISEMAN (V.O.)

(pausing)

Yeah, I see it. Thanks, Billy.

Billy turns to Weinstein as he finishes the transaction.

BILLY

(flatly)

Looks like you lost a big account.

Billy stands, nodding to the now-defeated Weinstein.

BILLY

(walking out)
Have a good day.

Billy exits the office, his mission complete—for now.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. LUXURIOUS LIVING ROOM - WISEMAN'S ESTATE - EVENING

The camera pans over a luxurious Beverly Hills estate, revealing its opulence – grand chandeliers, sleek modern furniture, and an extensive art collection. The view of the pool and patio through the glass walls adds to the extravagance.

BILLY BONDS (early 30s, ruggedly handsome but with a haunted air) and ANN (mid-20s, beautiful, yet with a fragile innocence) stand by the front door, greeted by MR. WISEMAN (60s, sharp, calculating) and his wife, MRS. WISEMAN (60s, elegant, poised).

MR. WISEMAN

(grinning widely, extending a hand)
Billy, Ann, welcome! It's good to see you both.

Billy shakes Mr. Wiseman's hand, holding two bottles of expensive wine carefully like a prized possession.

BILLY

(with a slight chuckle)
Thank you, Mr. Wiseman. This is for you—Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley. Two bottles. Only the best.

MR. WISEMAN

(raising an eyebrow)
Very impressive, Billy. You didn't have to, but it's much appreciated. Come in, come in.

The door opens wider, revealing the grandeur of the home. A chef in the background prepares an elegant display of appetizers.

ANN looks around, impressed but maintains her composure, while BILLY's internal monologue is a whirl of thoughts about their disparity in status.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BILLY and ANN settle on plush armchairs as the camera pans over the lavish space. Mr. Wiseman pours the wine with a flourish, looking pleased with himself.

MR. WISEMAN

(toasting)

Here's to the new couple—Billy, Ann. A new beginning.

They all raise their glasses, and a brief, awkward silence settles. Wiseman breaks it.

MR. WISEMAN

(to Billy, with a sly grin)

Billy, I must say—what you accomplished today for me... well, you've definitely solidified your place here. A nail in the coffin of our "friendship," as it were. Thank you again.

ANN looks curiously at BILLY, unsure of what he did. Her expression falters slightly, and she turns to Wiseman.

ANN

(innocently)

Billy, what did you do?

BILLY is caught off guard but recovers quickly. Wiseman speaks before he can answer.

MR. WISEMAN

(casually)

Oh, nothing too exciting, Ann. Just a special favor for the studio. Billy here, making things happen.

BILLY smirks, but there's an underlying discomfort as he picks up his glass.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The group sits at the grand dining table, the atmosphere now more relaxed. A series of appetizers—lobster, shrimp, oysters—are laid before them. A large, ornate chandelier lights the scene. The conversation flows more easily now.

Mrs. Wiseman turns her attention to ANN, clearly intrigued.

MRS. WISEMAN

(leaning forward, with a genuine curiosity)

So, Ann, how did you end up in Las Vegas?

ANN hesitates but quickly adjusts her story.

ANN

(smiling softly)

I worked as a cocktail server at the Venetian Hotel.

Mrs. Wiseman's eyes light up with recognition.

MRS. WISEMAN

(enthusiastically)

I love that place! The gondola ride inside—just magical! And now you're in Hollywood, huh? What will you do here?

ANN

(shrugs, a bit uncertain but hopeful)

I'm not sure yet. I've only been here a few days.

Mr. Wiseman, overhearing, joins the conversation.

MR. WISEMAN

(with a smile)

Well, we're always looking for new faces at the studio. Maybe we can find something for you to do, Ann.

ANN smiles graciously, her optimism hiding her uncertainty.

ANN

(gratefully)

That would be wonderful, Mr. Wiseman.

Mrs. Wiseman stands up, gesturing for ANN to follow her.

MRS. WISEMAN

Please, come with me, dear. I'll show you around the house.

As the women walk off, BILLY and MR. WISEMAN exchange a knowing glance. Wiseman gestures for Billy to join him in a quieter conversation.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The two men move to a corner of the room. The mood shifts—less friendly, more businesslike. Wiseman leans in, his tone low.

MR. WISEMAN

(grinning darkly)

So, Billy... how did you get him to talk? Break a few bones?

BILLY smiles but his eyes betray a darker intent.

BILLY

(matter-of-fact)

He was cooperative once I let him out of the trunk. He wasn't involved—just doing what he was told. Ezra's orders. He just wanted to get the money back.

WISMAN's smile falters for a moment, his mind shifting toward his brother's actions.

MR. WISEMAN

(with genuine surprise)

I'm surprised Ezra did this. It's not like him. I wonder what made him do it.

BILLY is sharp, probing deeper into Wiseman's story.

BILLY

Did he have any enemies? Someone who could've blackmailed him?

MR. WISEMAN ponders, clearly conflicted about the situation.

MR. WISEMAN

(thinking aloud)

Not that I know of. We each had our role at the studio. I made the films, Ezra handled the money. The funds started going missing just before we were about to start our new project. If he was being blackmailed, surely the money would've gone elsewhere, not to an account with his name on it.

There's a long pause, both men lost in thought. BILLY pushes forward, more focused.

BILLY

(calmly)

He recently hired a new secretary.
Still at the studio. Maybe she knows something.

MR. WISEMAN

(nodding)

Maybe. I'll have a word with her myself, see what she knows.

The conversation ends as Mrs. Wiseman returns, her arm around ANN's shoulder. The moment of tension breaks as the women join the men at the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. WISEMAN ESTATE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The camera follows BILLY and ANN as they leave the estate, their conversation subdued. The elegance of the Wiseman estate looms behind them as they step into their car.

BILLY breaks the silence, glancing at ANN.

BILLY

(calmly)

I told him about Ezra. He seems...
lost. No idea why Ezra would do this.

ANN nods, still processing everything she's heard.

ANN

What was that all about, Billy? What really happened today?

BILLY's gaze shifts, the weight of his actions settling in.

BILLY

(with a soft, reluctant smile)

Nothing that should concern you, Ann.
Just... business.

They drive off into the night, the atmosphere in the car heavy with unspoken thoughts.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY AND ANN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Later that night, in the quiet of their apartment, the camera zooms in on BILLY and ANN lying in bed. ANN leans in, her mood shifting to something more intimate. The air between them is thick with desire.

The quiet rhythm of their movements is interrupted only by soft laughter and the fading sound of a neighbor's annoyance. The scene grows more intimate, the camera capturing the moment as the world outside falls away. Their bodies move in synchronicity, the weight of the day finally falling behind them.

As the moment passes, their breaths slow, and the room fills with quiet contentment.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. WISSMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

We open in the sterile, modern office of MR. WISEMAN, a man in his fifties, with a sharp, calculating demeanor. The sun filters in through the blinds, casting lines of shadow on the walls. Across from him, we find the protagonist, a man in his thirties whose face is marked by fatigue and an unsettling realization. The air between them is thick, as if the tension of a long, difficult story is about to unfold.

WISEMAN

(leaning forward, impatient)
What did you find out?

The protagonist takes a breath, trying to steady his nerves. He pulls out a photo and places it on the desk in front of Wiseman—a young, vibrant man with a striking smile. Wiseman's gaze sharpens as he stares at the image, his lips curling in disgust.

PROTAGONIST

Ezra was having an affair. This is the guy. Tony Glassman—works in the make-up department. And it wasn't just a one-time thing. Ezra was meeting him regularly. In the same room at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Over and over. For months.

Wiseman recoils slightly, his face contorting with disbelief and anger. He picks up the photo, inspecting it with growing contempt.

WISEMAN

(snarling)
Besides stealing from me... he was gay? What the fuck? I'm glad I killed that motherfucker. That four-eyed prick was always a worm.

Wiseman slams the photo back onto the desk, his hands shaking with barely-contained rage. He takes a long pause, trying to steady himself.

WISEMAN

(eyes narrowing)

What was he gonna do with the money?

The protagonist shrugs, his face tired and resigned.

PROTAGONIST

I don't know. Maybe run off with this kid. Somewhere far away. A new life, maybe. That much money could buy it.

Wiseman's expression hardens, his mind churning with new thoughts. He slams his hand onto the desk, leaning back in his chair.

WISEMAN

Find this kid. Tony Glassman. I want to know everything about him. His background. What he's been up to. He works in my studio, you said?

PROTAGONIST

(quietly)

Yeah. He's in the make-up department.

WISEMAN

(voice low, cold)

Show me that photo again.

The protagonist hands over the photo again. Wiseman looks at it with cold, calculating eyes. He suddenly gestures to his secretary, MARY, who stands at the door, waiting patiently.

WISEMAN

Mary, get in here.

Mary enters. She's in her thirties, professional, with an air of efficiency. Wiseman holds up the photo of Tony, his voice smooth but with a dangerous edge.

WISEMAN

Find out who this guy is. I want a full background check. Make sure you dig deep—he works in my studio, I'm sure he's got a history.

Mary nods quickly and exits the room without a word. Wiseman turns back to the protagonist, his demeanor shifting from anger to something colder—something more dangerous.

WISEMAN

I want this taken care of, tonight. Discreetly. I don't want any noise about this. I'll deal with Tony myself when we have him. But I want him... now.

PROTAGONIST

(softly)
Understood.

As the protagonist turns to leave, there's a sudden knock at the door. Mary enters again, this time with a small stack of papers in her hand. She walks over to Wiseman's desk and places the papers down, her face neutral.

MARY

This is Tony Glassman. His background, work history, and a few personal details. Looks like he's been at the studio for about three years now. No criminal record. But we'll dig deeper.

Wiseman takes the papers, scanning through them quickly. His expression grows darker with each line.

WISEMAN

(to the protagonist)
Find him. Bring him to me tonight.
10:00 p.m. I'll deal with him. Make sure it's quiet. And no one finds out.

PROTAGONIST

(nods)
You'll have him.

As the protagonist walks out, he stops at the door. He pauses, turning back to Wiseman.

PROTAGONIST

(somber)

I think there's more to Ezra than we know. But whatever it was, he's gone now. We may never know why he did this.

Wiseman looks up, his eyes narrowing as he mutters a response.

WISEMAN

We'll find out. Everyone has a price. Even the dead.

The protagonist exits the office. Wiseman leans back in his chair, his fingers tapping the desk rhythmically, deep in thought.

INT. STUDIO LOT - AFTERNOON

The camera follows the protagonist as he walks through the busy studio lot. The hustle and bustle of the film industry are all around him—actors rehearsing, crew members moving with purpose. He strides past the soundstages, looking for a glimpse of Tony. His eyes scan the area as if searching for a ghost. He stops, watches as Tony Glassman, the young make-up artist, exits one of the soundstages. The protagonist follows him at a distance, unnoticed.

INT. MAKE-UP DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Tony is at his station, working on a movie star, applying make-up with practiced precision. The protagonist watches from the doorway, carefully studying him. There's something almost eerie about the way Tony moves—meticulous, controlled. The protagonist's gaze hardens as he notices Tony leaving his station, heading towards the restroom.

INT. STUDIO RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The protagonist is at the sink, pretending to wash his hands. He waits. Tony enters, moving towards a private stall. The protagonist stays calm, observing. The sound of sniffing fills the air. The protagonist's eyes narrow as he watches, recognizing the signs of cocaine use.

Tony emerges from the stall, wiping his nose with a careful precision. The protagonist follows him back to the make-up station, but he doesn't engage. Instead, he quietly leaves the restroom and exits the studio lot, his mind racing.

INT. PROTAGONIST'S CAR - NIGHT

The protagonist sits behind the wheel of his car, the headlights cutting through the darkness as he drives towards the hotel. His thoughts are swirling—Ezra, Tony, Wiseman's demands. Everything is coming to a head. He knows what he has to do next, but it's a dangerous game he's playing now.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - NIGHT

The camera pulls back, revealing the shimmering lights of the Beverly Hills Hotel. The protagonist pulls up, parking in the shadow of the entrance. He steps out, his face grim. He knows this is the moment everything changes.

FADE OUT.

SCENE SIX

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON

A dim, oppressive atmosphere fills the room as the camera slowly pans over the neglected office. The fluorescent lights buzz overhead, casting a harsh, artificial glow. BILLY, a rugged man with a weariness that clings to him, leans back in his chair, staring at the clock. It's almost 7:00 p.m. His eyes narrow, the mundane ticking of time growing louder in his ears. The world outside seems distant, muffled.

He shifts uneasily in his chair, feeling the weight of the day pressing on his chest. The silence is suffocating, like he's caught in the eye of a storm that refuses to pass.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

A break in the monotony.

TONY, a jittery man in his late 20s, emerges from the building. His face is tense, as though he's trying to shake off the weight of something he can't quite place. BILLY watches from the shadows, his expression unreadable.

BILLY'S POV: Tony hesitates by the restroom door, looking around, checking his surroundings.

Then, in a burst of adrenaline, BILLY slips out from his hiding spot. His movements are quick and calculated, a predator closing in on its prey.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Billy strides towards Tony's car, the red Toyota standing out under the dim lights. He moves with purpose, his steps growing louder, and then -

With a swift, practiced motion, he grabs Tony by the neck and throws him into the bed of his truck, the metal of the truckbed clanging as Tony grunts in surprise.

BILLY (V.O.)
(under his breath)

Sometimes, a car's trunk is the best place for a conversation. Not too much room, but plenty of time to think.

INT. IN-N-OUT DRIVE-THRU - NIGHT

Billy sits in his car, parked in front of the drive-thru window. He takes his time, enjoying the bite of his cheeseburger, the crunch of fries, and the creamy sweetness of a vanilla shake. The muted sounds of Tony yelling from the back of the truck filter through the air, adding an odd soundtrack to his meal.

TONY'S VOICE (O.S.)

(urgent)

Let me out! Let me out!

Billy chews slowly, unfazed by Tony's desperate pleas. He stares into the night, his thoughts turning inward. There's something almost soothing about the chaos he's caused. His finger taps the side of his cup, rhythmically, like the ticking of a clock.

BILLY (V.O.)

Should I blindfold him before I take him to Wiseman? Maybe make him feel more... uncomfortable. Let Wiseman decide if he should see his face.

Billy glances at the clock: **9:30 p.m.**

BILLY (V.O.)

It's time.

EXT. WISEMAN'S STUDIO LOT - LATER

The sleek black security gate opens as Billy drives through without hesitation. **The security guard nods at him.** They know him here, as part of the backdrop of this world. He parks near the front entrance. The engine hums for a moment, as though breathing life back into the world around him.

BILLY (V.O.)

The gates are open, the night's still young. But there's something about the

quiet... something unnatural, like I'm waiting for a final act to unfold.

Billy steps out of his car, the faint sound of his footsteps echoing as he approaches the truck. He pops the trunk open.

A white In-N-Out Burger bag is quickly placed over Tony's head.

BILLY

(grinning)

Now, you're a burger head instead of a coke head.

He twists Tony's arm behind his back, pushing him forward with purpose.

TONY

(whimpering)

What is this? What's going on?

BILLY

Don't ask questions.

INT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - LATER

The door to WISEMAN'S OFFICE creaks open. Billy shoves Tony inside, the bag still obscuring his face. WISEMAN, an imposing figure, stands by the desk. His expression is cold, but there's a flicker of something else – impatience, perhaps anger, waiting to be unleashed.

BILLY

(quietly)

You want me to remove the bag or leave it on?

WISEMAN

Take the fucken bag off, and let's see this piece of shit.

Billy rips the bag off Tony's head, revealing the terror in Tony's eyes. Tony recoils, his face a mixture of fear and recognition as he sees WISEMAN.

TONY

(panicked)

No... no, please... I-I don't know anything!

WISEMAN

(stepping closer)
What the fuck were you and my brother doing and planning?

Tony stammers, eyes darting around the room.

TONY

I... we... we were lovers.

WISEMAN

(voice rising)
And the Coke?

TONY

(weakly)
He enjoys using it during sex... he was my boss... What could I do?

WISEMAN

(cutting him off)
What about the money?

TONY

(defensive)
What money? I don't know anything about any money. We just did coke... and... you know...

Billy glances at **WISEMAN**, signaling that Tony is lying, or simply too scared to know the full truth.

BILLY

(muttering)
I don't think he knows about the money. That was Esra's swindle.

Billy looks at **WISEMAN**, a questioning glance.

BILLY

What do you want to do with this piece of shit?

WISEMAN

(sneering)

Get the fuck off this lot. And don't ever show your face in Hollywood again. Now, get the fuck out.

Tony bolts from the chair and races out of the office, his panic palpable.

BILLY

(half-smiling)

Well, now we know what's been going on behind closed doors.

Billy turns to Wiseman as the sound of Tony's hurried footsteps fades.

EXT. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Billy walks out of the building, passing WISEMAN, who nods his approval.

WISEMAN

Thank you, Billy.

BILLY

It's nothing. I'm heading home.

WISEMAN

Get some rest. We'll talk tomorrow.

Billy's thoughts drift as he walks toward his car. The weight of the night's events hangs over him.

INT. MINI MARKET - LATER

BILLY walks into a dimly lit mini market. The store owner is nowhere to be seen, but a stranger, a scruffy-looking man, eyes Billy's cash, his hands itching for an opportunity.

Without a word, the stranger lunges for the money, but Billy, faster than expected, grabs his arm and slams his face into the

glass countertop. Blood splatters, and the man crumples to the ground, dazed and bleeding.

The store owner nods at Billy, a silent acknowledgment.

Billy calmly collects his change, unbothered by the incident, and walks out.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy enters his apartment, the door creaking closed behind him. He steps inside, glancing over at ANN, who is sound asleep in bed. The dim glow of a bedside lamp illuminates her peaceful face.

The glass of wine on the table catches his eye. He sighs, realizing that tonight, he needs something stronger. He grabs the bottle of Scotch from his bag and pours himself a generous drink.

Sitting down on the couch, he takes a deep swig, the burn of alcohol sinking in, easing the pressure in his chest. His mind drifts, thoughts of his brother Rickey swimming through his mind.

BILLY (V.O.)

I should call Rickey tomorrow. It's been a while.

He stares into the amber liquid, his thoughts churning. He wonders if he should tell Ann the truth about his work – the truth about everything.

BILLY (V.O.)

Maybe tomorrow.

The camera lingers on Billy's face as the weight of the night presses down on him, but the promise of tomorrow remains unspoken.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

ANN is the first to stir, her voice a soft lullaby.

ANN

Is that you, honey?

Billy stirs on the couch, groggy from his restless sleep.

BILLY

(quietly)
Yeah... I'm here.

ANN

(sweetly)
I'll make breakfast.

The smell of freshly brewed coffee fills the air, and for a moment, Billy lets himself relax, the warmth of the morning filling the silence.

BILLY

(softly)
I need to talk to you, Ann. There's some stuff... I need to get off my chest.

ANN

(supportively)
Great. I'm all ears.

As the aroma of coffee fills the space, the camera slowly pulls back, the scene fading as the weight of the truth lingers in the air.

FADE OUT.

SCENE SEVEN

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

The scene opens with the *soft clatter of plates* as ANN sets down two breakfast plates on the table. The *sunlight filters gently through the window*, bathing the room in a soft, golden glow. The air feels serene, the quiet stillness of the morning only broken by the faint sound of *birds chirping outside*.

BILLY, mid-thirties, rugged yet softened by time, sits at the table, his eyes tracing the eggs and bacon, but his mind is elsewhere. He takes a deep breath, collecting his thoughts.

ANN

(smiling softly)

What is it that you want to talk about?

Billy looks at her, his eyes softening. He has something important to say, but the words are harder than he expected. There's an unspoken tension between them, as if she senses it too.

BILLY

(steady but emotional)

Us.

Ann freezes for a moment, her face flickering with uncertainty, her eyes wide. She braces herself, expecting something painful, something that could shatter the fragile bubble they've built.

But Billy knows the truth—something much deeper than she realizes. He gathers himself and speaks again, this time with a rawness that surprises even him.

BILLY

(gentle, vulnerable)

This past month... with you by my side... it's been the most beautiful chapter of my life. You fill my days with light... and it would mean

everything to me if you'd make this
home your home too.

He watches her closely, his voice trembling with a truth he's
been holding in for too long.

BILLY

(heartfelt)
I love you.

ANN

*(stunned at first, then
breaking into a radiant
smile)*
I love you too.

The world outside them seems to disappear for a moment. The
weight of their words hangs between them like an invisible
thread pulling them closer.

Ann rises, moving around the table with a fluid grace, as if
caught in a dream. Before he can process, she's at his side, her
lips finding his in a kiss that holds promises, memories, and an
unspoken understanding. It's a kiss that signifies more than
just affection—it's the start of something real.

She pulls away just enough to look him in the eyes, her voice a
whisper full of strength.

ANN

(with glistening eyes)
Let's take this leap together.

Billy's heart swells with emotion, the joy of her words filling
him in a way he never thought possible. He takes her hand,
drawing her closer, as if afraid she might slip away.

BILLY

(smiling warmly)
I'll call Mr. Wiseman today. I'm sure
he can find you something at the
studio.

Her eyes light up at the mention of work. A new chapter for both of them, a fresh start.

ANN

(with excitement)
I'm tired of just being at home... of shopping. Let's make it happen.

Billy watches her, feeling a deep sense of connection. They are in this together, and it feels right. As they sit down to finish their breakfast, a sudden thought strikes Billy.

BILLY

(murmuring)
I should call Rickey... check in on him and his family. It's been too long.

Ann nods, understanding his need to reconnect, but the unease he's been trying to push aside lingers in the air.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Billy picks up the phone, dialing Rickey's number with the familiarity of decades of brotherhood. The *old-fashioned dial tone* hums as he waits for the call to connect.

Finally, the sound of someone picking up breaks the silence.

PAGE (V.O.)

(with a strained, distant tone)
Hello?

Billy pauses, a sense of dread creeping over him. There's something in her voice—something off.

BILLY

(casually)
Hey Page, it's Billy. How are you guys?

There's a long, unsettling pause. The silence speaks louder than words.

PAGE (V.O.)

(her voice trembling)
I've been trying to reach you... but
only Rickey had your number.

Billy's chest tightens. His instincts flare with concern. His words come out before he can stop them.

BILLY

(anxiously)
What's wrong?

A beat passes, heavy and suffocating. Then, Page's voice shatters the moment.

PAGE (V.O.)

(voice cracking)
Rickey... had a heart attack at work.
He died last week.

Billy's world halts. The room around him seems to fall away, his pulse pounding in his ears. Time itself stretches, pulling him into a vacuum. His heart races, and for a moment, he can't breathe.

BILLY

(barely able to speak)
What? No... no...

PAGE (V.O.)

(softly)
We buried him two days ago... it
happened so fast, Billy. I'm so sorry.
I know how much he loved you.

The words are cold, and they don't make sense. Rickey—his twin, his other half—is gone. The very thought of it feels alien, impossible. His hands tremble as he holds the phone, the receiver slipping in his grasp.

BILLY

(weakly)
I'll... I'll call you back.

He hangs up, staring at the phone in disbelief. His chest tightens, suffocating him with grief. His twin... gone. The man who shared his childhood, his life, his every memory.

He stands, the room spinning as the gravity of the news settles in. The *clink of a glass* as he pours himself scotch is the only sound, a dull comfort in the chaos.

ANN

(softly, concerned)
What's wrong?

Billy stares at her, his eyes filled with shock and pain.

BILLY

(hoarsely)
My twin brother died last week.

Ann is immediately at his side, her arms enveloping him in a tight embrace. He collapses against her, the weight of the loss finally crashing down on him. His body trembles as he lets the tears flow.

ANN

(whispering)
I'm so sorry, my love.

Billy is lost in a storm of emotions—grief, guilt, anger, and sorrow. He clings to Ann, his lifeline in this moment of despair.

BILLY

(softly, almost to himself)
Rickey...

He's not sure if he's saying it to Ann, to himself, or to the universe. He's broken.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Billy, now numbed by the scotch, sits slumped on the sofa, staring blankly ahead. Ann quietly slips out, giving him space to grieve. Her absence is a small relief, but the emptiness inside him only deepens.

His phone buzzes—Mr. Wiseman's name lights up on the screen. He answers automatically.

BILLY

(in a hollow voice)

Mr. Wiseman... Rickey... he died.

There's a pause on the other end, a long stretch of silence. Then Wiseman's voice, soft but filled with sincerity.

MR. WISEMAN (V.O.)

Take all the time you need, Billy. A few days, a week—whatever you need. I'm so sorry for your loss.

Billy doesn't respond. His mind is far away, consumed by the memories of his twin—of their childhood, their bond, the shared life that is now just... gone.

The *low hum of the music* fills the silence, and Billy lets himself drift. He thinks of all the things left unsaid, of the choices he's made, of the life he's built.

BILLY

(to himself, quietly)

Am I having a midlife crisis... or is this just my past catching up with me?

He closes his eyes, allowing the alcohol to pull him into a numb slumber. As the *screen fades to black*, memories of Rickey, of lost time, and of a life filled with secrets flood his mind.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

FADE IN:

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Soft amber and gold light spills through partially drawn curtains. The apartment, once a chaotic mess, now seems quieter. BILLY (mid-30s) stands before a bathroom mirror. He scrubs his face with determination. His unshaven, weathered look is slowly being replaced by a cleaner, more resolute appearance.

BILLY (V.O.)

After days steeped in anguish, I decided enough was enough. I couldn't let sorrow steal the sparkle from Ann's eyes—or mine.

Billy splashes water on his face, then dries off and dresses carefully in his cleanest suit—no tie. He takes a long look at himself in the mirror, as if promising a new beginning.

CUT TO:

EXT. MR. WISEMAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Billy's car cruises along bustling Hollywood streets toward a sleek, modern studio building. As he steps out, the vibrant energy of the studio contrasts sharply with his transformed appearance.

Billy enters and makes his way to the waiting area. The space hums with the excited chatter of producers and artists, but Billy remains distant, lost in thought.

INT. STUDIO WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Billy sits in an uncomfortable leather chair. He glances at his watch—minutes stretch taut with anticipation. Finally, after a flurry of activity, the door to the executive office opens

and a receptionist announces the departure of Wiseman's last visitor.

Billy steels himself, rises, and heads toward the closed office door.

INT. MR. WISEMAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The office is a quiet oasis amid controlled chaos—sophisticated décor, a large window overlooking the lot, and the comforting glow of a desk lamp. MR. WISEMAN (early 70s, dignified but weary) sits behind an imposing desk. He gestures for Billy to take a seat.

WISEMAN

Sit down; we need to talk.

Billy complies, his expression guarded yet expectant.

WISEMAN (CONT'D)

Billy, you and I... we've been through a hell of a lot these past years. I value our friendship—I see you as a son. I hope you feel the same.

Billy nods, his eyes moist as he swallows.

BILLY

Yes. I do.

Wiseman's gaze softens. He leans forward, voice low and sincere.

WISEMAN

I'm approaching seventy, Billy. And soon the board will demand I retire. But you—you're in your midlife, with a future ahead... and Ann.

Billy's eyes brighten slightly.

BILLY

That's why I came. I want to see if you can help me get a position for Ann—give her a real chance in this industry.

Wiseman smiles, nodding.

WISEMAN

Of course. Let her visit Human Resources. I'll call them today.

After a brief pause, Wiseman brightens with a wry chuckle.

WISEMAN (CONT'D)

Now, take your lady friend to a movie tonight; we need those ticket sales, eh?

Billy stands, shaking Wiseman's hand. As he turns to leave, Wiseman calls out.

WISEMAN (CONT'D)

Stop.

Billy halts. Wiseman, his eyes suddenly grave, steps closer.

WISEMAN (CONT'D)

Billy, I'm telling you this because I'm dying. I've got an inoperative tumor—maybe a year at best.

Billy's face pales in shock.

BILLY

What? When did this happen?

WISEMAN

I've known for a while... only my wife knows, but not the studio. Let's keep it that way.

A heavy silence falls as Billy absorbs the news. The weight of betrayal, loss, and his own hidden past mingles with the grim reality of his mentor's condition.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STUDIO LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

Billy drives back to his apartment, the streets quiet as the sun begins its descent. Lost in thought, his mind replays Wiseman's words—a final goodbye mingled with a call to move forward.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

Billy enters to find ANN waiting, quietly setting the table for dinner.

The apartment, though modest, feels comforting in its simplicity. She looks up as he enters.

ANN

(softly, with concern)
Where were you, Billy?

Billy looks into her eyes—a mix of vulnerability and resolve.

BILLY

I was on a life-changing journey.

Ann smiles gently, reaching out to him. They sit together at the table, plates of eggs, bacon, and toast before them. The ambience is intimate; quiet music plays in the background.

Billy pauses, summoning every ounce of courage.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Ann... I want to marry you. I want to spend the rest of my life with you.

(He takes a breath, his voice thick with emotion.)

But I need you to know who I am—what I've done... the life I've led with Wiseman... the terrible things I cannot forget.

Ann listens, her eyes searching his as his confession hangs in the air.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I've killed, I've fixed impossible situations... I'm not a perfect man, Ann. I'm not an angel.

(Voice trembling)

Can you accept that? It's all part of who I am.

There's a long, charged silence. Ann looks at him—her gaze soft, understanding, and raw.

ANN

(gently)
Billy, I've been a prostitute most of my adult life. I'm not perfect either. I'm damaged, yes... but I love you.

(Pauses, a hopeful smile emerging)
Can we just move on? Please... a fresh start for both of us.

Overwhelmed by relief and joy, Billy and Ann embrace. Tears mix with laughter as they acknowledge the depth of their connection.

ANN (CONT'D)

(excitedly)
Let's get married this weekend in Las Vegas. Are you game?

BILLY

(with a heartfelt smile)
I'm game. Let's do it.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

The room is bathed in the soft morning light. Billy sits by the window, staring out contemplatively. The weight of last night's revelations lingers, but so does a spark of hope.

BILLY (V.O.)

(quietly reflective)
Moving on isn't easy... It means facing every dark secret, every bad decision. But with Ann by my side—maybe I can find a way to begin again.

He picks up his phone and dials a number.

BILLY

(on phone, determined)
Mr. Wiseman, it's Billy. I'm done. I can't continue this life anymore.

There's a pause as he listens. His expression slowly softens into acceptance.

WISEMAN (V.O.)

(calm, resigned)
I agree, Billy. Let those fuck-up
people handle their own problems.

Billy hangs up, a sense of finality washing over him.

He stands and walks over to Ann, who is now in the living room with a gentle smile, a plate of freshly made breakfast in hand.

ANN

(softly, with tenderness)
Good morning, love.

Billy takes her hand. Their eyes meet—two souls battered by life yet ready to embrace a hopeful new beginning.

BILLY

Let's start again.

They share a long, meaningful look as the gentle sunlight fills the room.

FADE OUT.

SCENE TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

A silver convertible glides along the winding PCH, ocean mist veiling the road like a dream. ANN sits in the passenger seat, head tilted to the window, lost in the rhythm of waves crashing below. BILLY drives, eyes calm but distant, a smile flickering as the coastline sprawls before them.

BILLY (V.O.)

The first weeks with Ann felt like
sanctuary. Like the world had paused...
for us.

Soft LA jazz plays on the radio. The car weaves past cliffs and cypress trees.

EXT. SANTA BARBARA - MIDDAY

Sunlight streams through palm trees. The air is a mixture of salt, breeze, and slow laughter. They walk hand-in-hand near the boardwalk. A small, elegant restaurant looms ahead: THE FISH HOUSE.

ANN

Smells amazing. Think this is it?

BILLY

If it isn't, then the ocean's lying.

INT. THE FISH HOUSE - PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

A grilled salmon glistens on a plate. Vibrant vegetables. A glass of white wine catches the sun. ANN laughs mid-story, her hair tousled by the breeze. BILLY raises his glass.

BILLY

To getting lost.

ANN

(smiling)

As long as we're lost together.

They clink glasses.

Across the boardwalk, the sleek facade of the HILTON SANTA BARBARA gleams in the sunlight.

EXT. HILTON SANTA BARBARA - LATER

They roll a small suitcase toward the entrance. The Spanish-style lobby swallows them in elegance.

INT. HILTON ROOM - EVENING

Oceanfront view. The waves whisper through the open balcony. BILLY adjusts his collar in the mirror. ANN lies on the bed, barefoot, half-dressed, sipping a nightcap of Cognac.

ANN

You're really something, you know that?

BILLY

I try. *(beat)* Still thinking about tomorrow?

ANN

Not if you promise me tonight will last.

She leans in, eyes half-closed, then collapses face-first into the bed, deeply asleep.

BILLY

(soft chuckle)
Just like Nicole...

A beat. His smile fades.

INT. HILTON ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

The digital clock glows: 9:58 PM.

BILLY sits alone by the balcony door, nursing a mini Scotch bottle from the minibar. His PHONE BUZZES. He sees the name: "WISEMAN." Hesitates. Answers.

BILLY

Hello?

MRS. WISEMAN (O.S.)

(quiet, broken)
Billy... I thought you'd want to know. He passed today.

BILLY

(still)

What happened?

MRS. WISEMAN (O.S.)

The tumor... it couldn't be sustained anymore.

A long silence.

MRS. WISEMAN (O.S.)

(gentle)

He thought of you, even at the end.

Click. She hangs up.

INT. HILTON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BILLY lowers the phone slowly. He turns to ANN, still asleep, breathing peacefully.

BILLY (V.O.)

Even knowing it was coming, it hit like a wave. Sudden. Final.

He drains the Scotch. Another bottle. Sits again in the armchair, silhouetted against the moonlit ocean.

BILLY (V.O.)

I made a vow to that man. A vow I'll carry to the grave.

His gaze drifts to the bed. To Ann. To the ocean.

INT. HILTON ROOM - EARLY MORNING

ANN stirs awake, dazed.

ANN

Billy...? Did... something happen last night?

BILLY

Yeah. It wasn't a dream. He's gone.

ANN reaches for his hand. He holds it for a long, silent moment.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Their car winds south again. The scenery unchanged, but something heavier in the air. A journey ended. A chapter closed.

BILLY (V.O.)

We all carry ghosts. Some louder than others. But they ride with us... always.

As the car disappears into the curve of the road.

FADE OUT.

SCENE THREE

FADE IN:

INT. LAW OFFICE - LOBBY - DAY

Will stands in a pristine lobby, dressed in a dark, fitted suit. A subtle unease lingers behind his sunglasses. The room hums with quiet murmurs. Elegant floral arrangements hint at wealth and legacy.

Across the room, **MRS. WISEMAN**, in black and pearls, locks eyes with Will. Cold. Unreadable.

MRS. WISEMAN

(skeptical)
What are you doing here?

WILL

(sincerely)
Mr. Wiseman's attorney asked me to attend. I was told I'm... part of the estate.

MRS. WISEMAN

(smiles, bitter)
Ha.

She turns away. The tension is sharp. Will adjusts his cuff, his jaw tight.

INT. LAW OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A long mahogany table. Family members sit on one side. Will sits alone on the other. An oil painting of Wiseman hangs over them all like a silent guardian.

ATTORNEY STEWART (60s), sharp and composed, enters with a leather folder.

STEWART

Good afternoon. Thank you all for coming.

(pauses)

As instructed by Mr. Wiseman, I'll now read his last will and testament.

The room stills. No one moves.

STEWART

"To my loving wife, I leave the bulk of my estate and our home. To my daughter, the sum of ten million dollars. To my charitable trust, five million for medical research. And—"

(beat)

"To my loyal friend and confidant, William 'Billy' Bonds, I leave the sum of two million dollars... for his loyalty and discretion."

SILENCE. All heads turn toward Will. His face betrays a flicker of stunned emotion.

MRS. WISEMAN

(flatly)

I don't know what you two were up to... but he must have appreciated your friendship.

Will meets her gaze. Says nothing. He doesn't need to.

STEWART

I'll be in touch regarding the disbursement schedule. Thank you.

INT. WILL AND ANN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The door swings open. Will steps inside, grinning, riding the adrenaline of life's biggest curveball.

ANN (O.S.)

Well??

Will walks in, eyes gleaming.

WILL

He left me two million.

Ann GASPS, throws her arms around him in joy.

ANN

Oh my God, baby! That's amazing!

(sits him down)
Okay, okay—listen. I've been thinking..

WILL

I know that tone.

ANN

I want to start my own business. Fixing problems. Investigating. Doing it my way. I can finally do what I love.

Will stares at her. Something clicks deep inside.

WILL

Then let's do it. Together.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

They lie in bed, still buzzed from excitement. A soft glow from the city washes over them.

ANN

What happened to our trip to Vegas?

Will turns his head slowly. The whirlwind of death, money, and reinvention had buried that thought.

WILL

Tomorrow. Vegas. We'll get the license downtown. Find a chapel. Just not one with Elvis.

ANN

(smirking)
Deal.

She rolls over, grabs her laptop.

ANN

"Chapel of the Roses." It looks beautiful. Let's go there.

WILL

Excellent choice.

She closes the laptop, snuggles in.

INT. WILL'S OFFICE VISION - DREAM SEQUENCE - NIGHT

Will, alone in a clean, small office. Blinds half-drawn. A nameplate: "William Bonds - Private Investigator."

Shadows move. Clients enter. Conversations whisper over images. A basketball player shakes Will's hand. A woman sobs. He comforts her. A stack of cash. A secret revealed. A problem solved.

Then—a FLARE of LIGHT. The smell of burning flesh. Flash of a car wreck.

WILL (V.O.)

(faint)

You owe me, Jacko.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Will sits upright, sweating. He breathes deep. Grabs a sleeping pill and a glass of water. Swallows. Lays back.

INT. APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Sun pours in. Ann zips up a suitcase. A full breakfast waits on the table.

ANN

I packed your blue suit and some casual stuff. I also called my brother Ben—he'll meet us at the chapel.

Will pauses.

WILL

Ben?

ANN

My brother. He manages the MGM Grand in Vegas. You'll like him.

Will smiles, stunned at the unexpected web of new connections.

WILL

Sounds... perfect.

He steps toward her, kisses her forehead, then looks at the bags.

WILL

Let's go get married.

INT. MGM GRAND - SUITE - DAY

The camera sweeps across the lavish room—flowers, champagne, and an incredible panoramic view of the Las Vegas skyline glittering in afternoon sun. The sounds of faint jazz echo in the background.

BILLY (V.O.)

(reflective)

Every great story begins with a breath of excitement and the scent of new beginnings. But beneath all that glitter, there's always a truth waiting to be uncovered. Vegas doesn't hand out dreams—it sells them.

He fastens his cufflinks, gazing at his reflection. Behind him, ANN lays out his jacket on the bed.

ANN

There. Perfect. You'll knock him out, babe.

BILLY

You think he'll like me?

ANN

(smirking)

He's going to test you. Just don't flinch.

INT. MGM GRAND - JOEL ROBUCHON RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The opulent dining room hums softly with muted conversation and the gentle clinking of cutlery. BILLY and ANN walk in, hand in hand. BILLY's eyes sweep the room—crystal chandeliers, soft golden light, and opulence that feels... calculated.

ANN spots BEN at a corner table. A stack of papers rests beside him, untouched wine in hand.

ANN

There he is!

She rushes forward and embraces him. BEN stands, expression warm, but eyes sharp—like a man who has seen every bluff in the book.

BEN

Annabelle.

ANN

Don't start. It's Ann now. Meet Billy—my fiancé.

BEN offers a hand. BILLY shakes it firmly.

BEN

I'm Ben. The brother.

BILLY

Billy. The lucky husband-to-be.

They sit. A server pours wine. Small talk begins, but BEN's questions are anything but casual.

BEN

So what do you do, Billy?

BILLY

Used to work security in the film business. Now... I'm opening a PI firm.

BEN

(tilting his head)

Ah. A man who cleans up messes.

Pause. BEN studies BILLY. Their eyes lock.

BEN

Tell me—ever had someone... vanish?

BILLY

(coolly)

Sometimes people go missing on their own. Other times, they need help disappearing.

ANN shifts, breaking the tension with a sip of wine.

ANN

Ben, don't interrogate him. We're here to celebrate.

BEN

(smiling)

Just doing my due diligence. It's what I do.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

The plates are cleared. Conversation drifts to family, to home. BEN loosens his tie.

BEN

I never thought I'd see her marry. Thought the game had swallowed her whole.

BILLY

I pulled her out. She pulled me out, too.

BEN leans in, lowers his voice.

BEN

Vegas doesn't forget. Neither do its players. You want in—really in? You don't just clean messes. You collect. You decide who gets another shot... and who's done.

BILLY nods silently, understanding.

BEN

(raising his glass)

To tomorrow. To fresh starts.

They toast.

INT. MGM GRAND - SUITE - NIGHT

Back in their room, ANN kicks off her heels, sighing with both relief and nervous energy. BILLY loosens his tie, watching her.

ANN

He likes you. That's rare. But I could tell... he's testing the waters. Always is.

BILLY

He's sharp. Dangerous. But fair.

ANN

He made himself from nothing. College kid to casino boss. People still owe him for chances they never deserved.

BILLY

Like you?

ANN looks out the window. Her reflection floats in the glass, ghost-like.

ANN

Maybe. Maybe I still owe him more than I know.

BILLY comes up behind her, wraps his arms around her waist. She melts into his chest.

BILLY

You're free now. We're starting our own story.

She turns, kisses him—deep, vulnerable. But she pulls back before it deepens.

ANN

Not tonight. Wait till I'm yours.

They lie together, still dressed, watching the city lights flicker.

INT. MGM GRAND - SUITE - MORNING

A KNOCK at the door. BILLY, in boxers and T-shirt, opens to ROOM SERVICE wheeling in a breakfast feast. The aroma of eggs, pancakes, bacon, and rich coffee fills the room.

BILLY (V.O.)

You think you've got time. That Vegas gives you space to breathe. But every tick of the clock here... is a transaction.

ANN walks out of the bathroom in a robe, hair up, radiant.

ANN

Ben sent it. Said every bride deserves a morning feast.

They sit, side by side, eating and laughing as the city wakes beneath them.

BILLY (V.O.)

Today, I marry the woman I love. But
tonight... the game begins.

Camera lingers on BILLY's face—equal parts joy, focus, and a spark of darkness.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The new office is modern but modest. Natural sunlight spills in. ANN, late 30s, sharp and organized, is busy at her desk – on the phone, surrounded by Amazon boxes, half-assembled office furniture, and a whiteboard with "TO DO" lists scribbled in red and blue.

BILLY (tough, calm demeanor, exudes ex-military vibes), leans back in a new executive chair, gazing at the clean desk. The shiny nameplate reads:

BILLY BONDS - PRIVATE INVESTIGATION SERVICE

Billy adjusts his cuff, looks up at the wall clock. It's nearly 1:30 p.m.

BILLY

(casual)

Time to call in the cavalry.

Ann puts down her phone and smiles.

ANN

Already did. Ben's expecting your call.

BILLY

(smirks)

Efficient as ever.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Billy dials. On the third ring...

INTERCUT - INT. BEN'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

BEN, sharp-dressed, connected, big shot at MGM casino, answers with a grin.

BEN

(laughing)

Billy Bonds, brother-in-law! I hear you're back in business?

BILLY

I'm open for business. What's the job?

BEN

Steven Wong. Film director. Owes the casino a hundred grand. Said he'd wire it last week. Never did. Send him a reminder, will you?

BILLY

Got it. Text me the address.

BEN

On its way. Let me know if he gets difficult.

Billy's phone *pings* — **777 RODEO DRIVE NORTH.**

BEN (CONT'D)

Don't break his legs. Just shake the tree.

BILLY

(smiling)
Only the branches.

Billy hangs up.

BILLY (to Ann)

Client visit. Back in a bit.

Ann nods as Billy grabs his keys and jacket.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS — STEVEN WONG'S MINI ESTATE — LATE AFTERNOON

Billy's sleek black sedan pulls up the circular driveway. A minimalist, modern mansion sits like a sculpture in the quiet street.

Billy gets out, surveys the place. Rings the bell.

SILENCE.

He rings again. Then knocks. Still no response.

He circles around, sees someone slouched in a living room chair through the window.

BILLY

(muttering)

We're doing this the hard way.

Billy wraps his hand in his jacket, *SMASHES* the window with precision. Glass *SHATTERS*. He climbs in.

INT. STEVEN WONG'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room reeks of stale smoke, weed, and perfume. A disheveled man - **STEVEN WONG (pale, jittery)** - lies limp in a designer recliner. A needle dangles from his arm.

Billy slaps him - once, twice.

BILLY

Wake up, Wong. Time to pay the piper.

Steven groans, eyes fluttering. Sees Billy. Flinches.

STEVEN

(slurring)

Who the hell are you?

BILLY

MGM's collection department.

Steven rubs his face, starts to sit up.

STEVEN

Shit. I forgot... been a rough week.

BILLY

Let's not make it rougher.

Steven staggers toward a wall-mounted painting.

STEVEN

Behind here...

He pushes the painting aside, revealing a digital safe. Taps in a code. *BEEP*. Opens it. Pulls out stacks of crisp cash.

He turns, drops ten bricks of cash onto a table. Each labeled:
\$10,000.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

There. One hundred grand. Where's my
receipt?

Billy smirks, takes the money.

BILLY

You're alive. That's your receipt.

He turns and walks out.

EXT. ESTATE DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Billy exits the estate, money in hand. Walks with cool authority
to his car, opens the trunk, places the bag inside.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Billy starts the engine, dials Ben.

BILLY

Collection made.

INTERCUT - INT. BEN'S OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

BEN

Already? Fast work.

BILLY

Client handed over cash like candy. I
don't want to make these drops in cash
every week.

BEN

Understood. I'll call Ann with the wire
instructions for now. But long-term...
we'll set up a delivery route to Vegas.

BILLY

(beat)

Let's keep it quiet. No armored cars.

BEN

This ain't a movie, Billy. But yeah -
we'll figure it out.

CLICK.

Billy leans back, the L.A. skyline ahead of him.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Ann finishes another Amazon return. Billy walks in.

ANN

How'd it go?

Billy pulls out a sealed pack of cash. She raises an eyebrow.

ANN (CONT'D)

That good, huh?

BILLY

Piece of cake.

They smile.

ANN

Welcome to business, Mr. Bonds.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. COLOSSEUM PARKING LOT - EVENING

Golden light bathes the lot. The city's pulse echoes faintly in the distance. BILLY leans against his car, fingers drumming anxiously on the roof, eyes on the arena doors.

A massive WHOOSH of sound—fans, security, voices—bursts forth as the doors open. Players emerge like gods descending Mount Olympus. Flashbulbs strobe the dusk.

CLOSE ON: TRAVIS, nearly seven feet tall, a walking sculpture of power and poise. His face is unreadable until he sees Billy. A sly, warm grin.

TRAVIS

Get in.

Billy obeys, slipping into the passenger seat of Travis's sleek black sports car.

INT. TRAVIS' CAR - CONTINUOUS

The doors shut, muting the world. For a beat, silence.

TRAVIS

She's got a photo. Me. Coke. Strippers.
It'll ruin everything. She wants fifty grand.

BILLY

(quietly)
What's her name?

Travis exhales, defeated. He pulls out a card and scribbles on it.

TRAVIS

Joan. West Hollywood. This is her address.

Billy pockets the card, opens the door.

BILLY

I'll be in touch.

EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD - JOAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Billy walks to the door of a modest upscale building. He rings the bell. The door opens. JOAN, early 30s, provocative, sharp eyes, stands in a lacy bra and panties.

JOAN

(eye roll)

What the fuck do you want, man?

BILLY

I'm here to resolve the Travis issue.

She tries to close the door. Billy's foot blocks it. He leans in.

BILLY

Not here to hurt you. Just talk.

Joan crosses her arms.

JOAN

You know the price.

BILLY

That's not happening.

She starts to shut the door again. Billy pushes it open with ease, steps in slowly.

BILLY

You have two choices. One—you hand over the photos, and you never see me again. Two—I make you disappear. Permanently. Either way, this ends tonight.

Beat. Joan's eyes flicker. She tries to bluff strength, but a shadow of fear crawls over her.

JOAN

You threatening me?

BILLY

That's what I do.

(beat)

Look, I don't want to mess up that pretty face. But the Pacific is cold, and bodies float. What's your play?

She stares at him, then turns toward a desk. Billy lunges, grabbing her wrist mid-reach.

JOAN

You want them or not?

She pulls out an envelope and a memory card. Billy takes them, hands her a small wad of cash.

BILLY

Five grand. Keep away from Travis.

Joan snatches the cash. Billy walks out, quiet, controlled.

EXT. COLOSSEUM PARKING LOT - NEXT DAY - EVENING

Same lot, different air. Billy leans against Travis's car. Travis approaches, guarded but hopeful.

TRAVIS

Well?

Billy hands him the envelope and memory chip.

BILLY

Five grand.

Travis opens his sports bag, hands over ten thousand in cash.

TRAVIS

You the man.

He drives off. Billy watches, expression unreadable.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cozy lighting. ANN, early 30s, elegant, sits at the dining table. Dinner set. Billy walks in, kissed by the scent of roasted vegetables.

ANN

How was your night?

BILLY

Two profitable days. I'm a lucky guy.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Moonlight spills in. ANN lies beside him. Billy stares at the ceiling. His phone buzzes. He checks it.

INTERCUT - PHONE CALL

BEN (V.O.)

Management's agreed. Ten percent of everything you collect. You earned it.

BILLY

Thanks, Ben.

BEN (V.O.)

You'll get your next one soon.

Call ends. Billy turns to Ann. She watches him silently. A quiet intensity fills the space between them.

BILLY

Made one collection. Resolved another.
I feel good again.

Ann brushes her fingers across his face, pulling him close. Their kiss is slow. Deep. A reconnection.

MONTAGE - INTIMATE NIGHT

- Clothes falling like forgotten fears.
- Skin meeting skin, breathless.
- Moonlight caressing their bodies.
- Gentle whispers, laughter muffled in silk sheets.

As the night stretches, they move in perfect rhythm, rediscovering what they thought was lost.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Wrapped in each other, their bodies entwined, serenity on their faces. A sense of calm. Renewal.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY - MORNING

Sunlight streaks through the blinds. Billy sips coffee, scrolling news on his laptop. His phone rings.

BEN (V.O.)

Got a tough one. Oscar Sánchez. Left a \$100,000 marker at the hotel. Skipped out last night. Gang member. East L.A. Be careful. He's dangerous.

A new address pings his phone. Billy stares at it. A deep breath.

EXT. EAST LOS ANGELES - STREETS - LATER

The city pulses with Latin flavor. Street murals, taco stands, music. Kids play soccer. Grandmothers gossip on steps. But something simmers beneath.

NARRATION (BILLY, V.O.)

In East L.A., beauty lives in tension. Between dreams and fear. Warmth and silence. Family and shadows.

He drives slowly, eyes scanning alleys, corners. The people stare—silent, tight-lipped. Something heavy hangs in the air.

NARRATION (BILLY, V.O.)

Oscar lives in Alhambra. No address. Just whispers. A ghost in a city of voices.

Billy parks. Cracks his neck. Looks at the streets like a hunter about to enter the forest.

BILLY (V.O.)

Time to work.

FADE OUT.

SCENE SIX

FADE IN:

EXT. ALHAMBRA - LITTLE MEXICO BAR & GRILL - AFTERNOON

A warm golden light pours across the streets of Alhambra. The camera follows BILLY BONDS (weathered but determined) as he walks alone, his eyes shaded, jaw tight. His pace slows as he approaches the Little Mexico Bar & Grill. A weather-worn sign squeaks in the breeze.

INT. LITTLE MEXICO BAR & GRILL - CONTINUOUS

The door *creaks* open.

Inside, sunlight glints through dusty windows. The place hums with low laughter, sizzling fajitas, and murmured conversations. Billy moves toward the bar like a man returning to a battlefield.

BARTENDER

(Hispanic, rugged))
spots Billy and nods.

BARTENDER

The same, Burban?

BILLY

Yeah. Make it a double.

The BARTENDER pours with silent understanding. Billy slides a crumpled twenty across the counter.

BARTENDER

(*pauses, then softly*)
You still looking for Oscar Sanchez?

Billy turns his eyes toward the man, heart quickening.

BILLY

Yeah.

The Bartender looks past Billy. His voice is low.

BARTENDER

He's standing behind you.

A chill.

Billy *slowly turns*. Standing ten paces away is OSCAR SANCHEZ (built like a storm), a pistol drawn, eyes unreadable. Behind him, two goons hover.

OSCAR

What is it you want, gringo?

CLOSE-UP: BILLY'S FACE - Flashbacks hit like shards: - CASINO FLOORS, bright and ruthless.

- Oscar laughing, cheating.
- A hand of cards.
- A whispered warning.

BILLY

You never paid your debt. Vegas remembers.

OSCAR

laughs cruelly, his men join
I'm curious. What's your plan for collecting?

BILLY

Come back to Vegas... clear your tab today.

A quiet beat.

Oscar grins, raises the pistol.

OSCAR

Take this back to Vegas.

BANG.

SLOW MOTION -

Billy is hit in the stomach.

He collapses.

Blood pools quickly beneath him.

Laughter fades.

Footsteps echo.

Oscar and his men *vanish*.

BILLY'S POV

Blurry vision.
The ceiling fan spins above like a
dying sun.
Then, *blackness*.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Bright fluorescent lights. The *beep of machines*. Billy awakens,
pain etching his face.

By his side—**ANN** (loving, worn by worry). Her hand clutches his.

ANN

Billy...

NURSE (O.S.)

Mr. Bonds, are you in pain? I can give
you morphine.

BILLY

(*weakly*)

H-Hell yes...

The *injection* slides in. Billy fades again.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DOCTOR (60s) stands at his bedside.

DOCTOR

We removed the bullet. You'll live—but
it'll take time.

Billy nods faintly.

ANN

(*teary*)

Billy... it's time to stop.

He doesn't reply. Just stares at the ceiling.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Billy alone. *Pain-ridden*. Lost in thought.
Flashbacks flicker—*faces helped, lives changed, mistakes made*.

BILLY (V.O.)

This is my life... I'm Billy Bonds, the Fixer.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Billy slips into unconsciousness again.

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. DESERT - DAY

Billy, now in a BLACK SUIT (no tie), stumbles across a vast desert. Heat waves ripple. He's sweating, weak.

BILLY (V.O.)

Where am I?

His vision blurs. He falls. The sand *scorches* his skin.

WIDE SHOT: A TOMBSTONE rises from the sand ahead. Billy crawls toward it.

CLOSE-UP: ENGRAVING

"BILLY BONDS"

Billy gasps.

BILLY (V.O.)

Is this it...?

SOUND: HOOVES.

Billy turns. A FIGURE on horseback gallops across the horizon, a BLACK COWBOY SUIT cutting through the golden dunes.

As the rider nears, details sharpen:

- Black cowboy hat.
- White collar.
- Silver star pinned subtly to the chest.
- Saddlebags swaying.
- A WATER BAG sloshing.

He stops over Billy, jumps off.

BILLY (V.O.)

God? Or just another shadow?

The RIDER kneels beside Billy.

RIDER
(low, calm)

You still got breath. That means something.

Billy tries to speak but chokes.

RIDER
You ain't done yet.

He pours water onto Billy's lips. The camera lingers on the RIDER'S FACE—part angel, part outlaw.

BILLY (V.O.)
Trying to save me... would be a waste of God's energy.

RIDER
(placing hand on Billy's chest)
Don't flatter yourself. You ain't that special. But you are worth saving.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Billy awakens. Weak, but with clarity in his eyes.

BILLY (V.O.)
As long as I breathe... as long as I feel... I will rise.

ANN
enters with a coffee cup. She sees the change in him.

ANN
You're awake.

BILLY
(nods)
And not done.

She approaches, hesitant.

ANN
No more chasing ghosts?

Billy reaches out, holds her hand.

BILLY

No more ghosts. Just today. Just us.

She exhales, rests her head beside him.

CLOSE-UP: THEIR HANDS TOGETHER

TEXT ON SCREEN:

*"We are all wanderers in the desert of our past. But sometimes,
salvation wears a cowboy hat."*

FADE OUT.

SCENE SEVEN

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The sterile white light from the hospital ceiling flickers gently above BILLY BONDS. His eyes slowly flutter open. Pain lines his face. He's disoriented, pale, and hooked up to an IV. His gaze focuses as two familiar figures enter his field of view—ANN and her brother BENJAMIN.

BENJAMIN

(sincerely, gripping Billy's hand)
Billy... I'm sorry, man. I told you. Sanchez is a corrupt bastard. I should've done more.

ANN

(softly, touching his shoulder)
You're safe now. You're back. That's what matters.

Billy struggles to sit up, groaning from the pain. His brow furrows, caught between memory and confusion.

BILLY

(in a haze)
Was I in Mexico... or LA? Nicole?
Wiseman? Were they real?

Benjamin and Ann exchange a worried glance. Billy stares ahead, jaw clenching as a fire sparks in his eyes.

BILLY (V.O.)

I don't care where I was. I know what I'm doing next. Sanchez... will pay.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

A montage begins—

Nurses adjust Billy's IV.

Pills being poured into a tiny plastic cup.

Billy, slowly lifting his shirt, revealing no wound.

He turns toward a mirror, confused, angry.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A fresh bouquet of flowers is placed by Billy's bed. NICOLE and MRS. WISEMAN enter.

NICOLE

(gently)

Billy... maybe it's time to let go.
Haven't you suffered enough?

MRS. WISEMAN

Mr. Wiseman always believed in you.
Don't waste that by becoming someone
else.

*Billy remains silent, eyes distant. Their words fall like
whispers into a void.*

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 5 - DISCHARGE

DOCTOR stands over Billy, clipboard in hand.

DOCTOR

You're good to go, Mr. Bonds. But rest.
That wound may be invisible, but you're
still healing.

BILLY

(gruffly)

Loud and clear, Doc.

EXT. HOSPITAL - LOADING ZONE - DAY

*ANN's car pulls up. Billy is wheeled out. She helps him into the
passenger seat, strapping him in. They exchange a quiet look.*

INT. BILLY'S HOUSE - DAYS LATER - VARIOUS

A comforting series of moments:

ANN spoon-feeding him soup.

Billy watching old westerns on TV.

A notebook open beside him, filled with sketches and names.

BILLY (V.O.)

I gave myself a week. Maybe a month.
Then... I'd find him. And when I do,
he'll feel everything.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Stacks of papers. A laptop screen glows. A photo of SANCHEZ flickers on screen-blurry, old. Billy leans in.

BILLY (V.O.)

The Little Mexican Bar & Grill...
Alhambra.

He types furiously, pulling up the name "Tony Garcia." Then—an address: 2525 Blackrock Road.

EXT. GARCIA'S HOUSE - ALHAMBRA - DAY

Suburban calm. Kids playing in the yard. Billy, in black sunglasses, walks up the steps. ROSA answers, kind but cautious.

ROSA

(heavy accent)
Tony? He is working... at the bar.

BILLY

(smiles faintly)
Thanks. You've been helpful, Rosa.

Billy turns, stealing a last glance at the innocent children before walking away.

EXT. LITTLE MEXICAN BAR & GRILL - EARLY EVENING

A dingy sign flickers above the entrance. Billy parks, checks his sidearm, and enters.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

A worn-down dive. One DRUNK CUSTOMER slumps over his drinks. TONY GARCIA tends bar. Billy takes a stool.

TONY

What'll it be?

BILLY

Corona.

Tony turns away. Billy stares at his back like a predator stalking prey. Tony returns with the beer.

TONY

Here you go.

Billy doesn't drink. Instead, he studies Tony's face.

BILLY

Tony... Do you recognize me?

Tony's eyes squint-puzzled.

TONY

No. Should I?

In a lightning move, Billy grabs Tony's head, slamming it into the bar. Blood drips. The DRUNK CUSTOMER barely flinches.

BILLY

(stern, icy)

I'm the guy your friend Sanchez shot.

Tony gasps-terrified. Billy pulls a pistol from his waist and sticks it in Tony's mouth.

BILLY

Now... you're gonna call Sanchez. Tell him to meet you here. Say nothing about me. Got it?

Tony nods frantically, lips trembling around the barrel. Billy leans in.

BILLY

I met Rosa. Tony Jr. Padro. Cute kids. You want to keep seeing them? Don't screw this up.

Billy yanks the gun out-blood on the barrel. Tony stammers.

TONY

I—I don't know how to reach him.. He just shows up... once a month..

BILLY

Next time he does, you call me. Now.

Billy scribbles a number on a napkin. Places it in front of Tony.

BILLY

You talk to anyone about this? They'll vanish.

Billy turns, gun tucked away, and exits calmly.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Billy steps into the night air, breathes deep, then walks slowly to his car. The camera pans to his face—deadly calm, eyes like steel.

BILLY (V.O.)

One step closer. He's out there. And I'm coming.

Billy drives off into the black.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FERNANDO VALLEY - NIGHT

A golden haze of sodium lights glows over tired streets. Neon flickers half-alive over motels, liquor stores, and faded adult video signs.

INT. MODEST HOME - NIGHT

The weight of a heavy day sits silently in the room. ANN (40s, gentle but weary) brushes her hair in the mirror. Behind her, the protagonist—BILLY BONDS (sharp, eyes that have seen too much)—sits motionless at the table. He stares at a printed name: GEORGE BRUCE.

ANN

(softly, not looking)
You don't have to go. Not tonight.

BILLY

I do. Before it goes bad.

He tucks a gun into his waistband and kisses her on the shoulder.

BILLY

Don't wait up.

EXT. TONY'S BAR - ALHAMBRA - NIGHT

A classic dive. Billy's car creeps into a back alley. He parks two stores down. Rain starts to mist the pavement. He walks around front, passing the bar window.

Through the glass:

OSCAR SANCHEZ (brutish, drug-laced swagger) sits with two men. Bottles. Laughter. The *wrong kind* of confidence.

Billy notes it all—numbers, positions, exits.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Billy waits by the rear door. A shadow in the mist. His gun reflects faint moonlight as he loads a full clip.

Inside, Tony serves tequila. He subtly nods at Billy through a corner of his eye.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Billy storms in. The door *clangs* against the wall. Gun raised, pressed firmly against Sanchez's temple.

The room freezes. The other two men unholster—slow, unsure.

BILLY

Drop them. Unless you want to clean his brains off your shirts.

Sanchez hisses:

SANCHEZ

Hazlo.
They drop their weapons, trembling.

Billy grabs Sanchez by the throat, dragging him toward the back.

BILLY

Tell them to stay seated. Or you're a corpse before I hit the door.

Sanchez obeys—in Spanish. Billy opens the trunk.

THUMP.

Sanchez vanishes inside. Trunk slams.
Engine roars.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Billy drives through the desert night. Darkness blankets the freeway. Sanchez's MUTED SCREAMS echo faintly from the trunk.

Billy turns the music up.

A slow burn of *Johnny Cash* comes on the radio.

He exhales, calm. In control.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - LATER

A remote dirt road off the highway. Billy's car pulls over near a low rocky hill. Wind howls across the emptiness.

Billy steps out, eyes hollow. Opens the trunk.

Sanchez is drenched in sweat, lips cracked.

Billy zip-cuffs his hands. Sanchez spits threats.

Billy slaps him hard with the butt of the gun.

THWACK.

Sanchez crumples. Billy reaches down—SMASH.
A rock hits Billy's temple. He collapses.

The world blurs.

FLASH VISION - DESERT PAST

A vision: Billy crawling on the ground. A burning house behind him. A man on horseback—WISEMAN—riding through the sand.

BACK TO PRESENT - NIGHT

Billy is kicked—once, twice.

Oscar looms with a rock, blood in his eyes.

GUNSHOT.

Oscar collapses. He's wounded. Who
fired?

Billy sees no one.

He fumbles for his gun, fires point-blank into Sanchez's chest.

SANCHEZ

You son of a—

He bleeds, gasping.

Billy grabs a rag, stuffs it into Oscar's mouth. Forces him up.

EXT. STONE HILL - NIGHT

Billy marches Oscar to the hill. Each step heavy. Each breath harder for Sanchez.

Oscar resists. THWACK. Another hit. He drops.

Billy stands behind him, gun to head.

BILLY

You almost killed me. Put my wife
through hell. All because you couldn't
pay.

Oscar tries to speak, choked behind the rag.

BILLY

It ain't about the money anymore.

He pulls the trigger. **BOOM.**

Oscar's body jerks forward. Brains splatter the sand.

EXT. BASE OF HILL - NIGHT

Billy drags the body. His boots crunch over gravel. The desert
wind picks up.

He douses the corpse with **VODKA**. Lights a matchbook.

WHOOSH.

The flames explode. The fire dances—
violent, raw.

Billy stares—haunted. The blaze reflects in his eyes.

Smoke coils into the stars like a spirit set free.

EXT. HILLSIDE - LATER

Sweat drips from Billy as he lifts rocks—one by one—covering the
scorched remains. The effort is endless. Final. Ritualistic.

As the last stone lands, he steps back. The desert silent. The
grave crude, unmarked.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - NIGHT

He sits. Breathing heavy. The engine idles. Silence inside.

BILLY (V.O.)

(quiet, almost numb)
It should bother me. It doesn't. Not
the killing. Not anymore.

The car pulls onto the road, swallowed by the dark.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - PRE-DAWN

Billy's car disappears into the horizon. The desert behind him still smolders.

A thin line of sun creeps over the earth.

FADE OUT.

SCENE TWO

FADE IN:

INT. BILLY'S CONDO - NIGHT

The condo is dimly lit. The room feels heavy with silence, broken only by the distant hum of city life outside. Billy enters, his movements slow, deliberate. His clothes are worn, the scent of smoke still clinging to him. He shuts the door quietly behind him, trying not to make a sound as if the weight of his actions can somehow be muted by the quiet.

Ann, sitting on the couch, looks up from her book. Her face is painted with concern, a shadow crossing her features as she notices the state he's in.

ANN

(softly, but with a bite)
Where were you?

Billy's hand instinctively goes to his head, touching the still tender wound. His face tightens in a flash of pain, but he masks it quickly.

BILLY

(stammering, then more
confidently)
I followed Bruce to a... to a nude bar.
A dive, really. Full of smoke and shady
characters. Cigar smells, cigarettes...
the works.

He steps further into the room, but Ann's gaze doesn't soften. She's not fooled. She knows something's off.

ANN

(skeptical)
What happened to your face?

Billy, now seated on the couch beside her, leans in, his voice laced with forced casualness.

BILLY

(smiling thinly)
A drunk next to me—didn't see it
coming. Sucker punched me. You should
see the guy now though.

Ann furrows her brow, but Billy's nonchalance seems to at least hold her back from pushing further.

She sits back on the couch, still not convinced. The tension lingers between them like smoke.

ANN

(quietly)
Is that all?

Billy hesitates, his eyes darkening as memories of the desert flicker behind his eyes. The words that almost slip from his lips are buried under layers of deceit. He wants to confess, but he knows better.

Instead, he nods.

BILLY

Yeah. That's it.

He takes a deep breath, staring at the floor as if summoning something from within. Ann watches him closely, unsure whether to push or let it be.

ANN

(slightly softer)
Alright.

Billy stands up, his body aching from the day's horrors, both physical and emotional. He moves toward the bathroom.

ANN

(still watching)
Billy...

He stops in his tracks, turns, and faces her. His eyes are clouded—distant, almost cold.

BILLY

What?

ANN

You're not telling me everything.

Billy doesn't answer. Instead, he enters the bathroom, the door closing with a soft click behind him.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Billy stands in front of the mirror. The image that stares back at him is a stranger's face. The wound on his head is still visible, but it's the look in his eyes that unnerves him. He begins to wash the grime from his face, scrubbing at the smoky smell and the residue of his darker choices.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy lies in bed, his back to Ann, who is curled up beside him. The room is dark save for the faint glow of city lights filtering through the curtains. His mind races with the day's events, the lies, the violence, and the haunting image of Sanchez's body burning in the desert.

His hand reaches for Ann's, resting gently on her arm. She stirs, but doesn't speak. Her breathing slows, and for a moment, everything is peaceful. But Billy's mind is anything but.

BILLY'S POV - DREAM SEQUENCE

The scene shifts.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Billy crawls through the desert, the sun beating down relentlessly on his body. His mouth is dry, cracked, and he's burning up from the heat. His vision blurs as the pain from his wounds sets in. The sound of his labored breath fills the air, loud against the vast emptiness.

Through the haze, a shadow appears in the distance. It's a rider on a horse. The rider moves toward him, steady and calm amidst the chaos.

BILLY

(voice-over)

I asked him... I asked Wiseman for help.

The rider approaches and dismounts. He is dressed in simple, yet authoritative clothing. He is older, with a calmness that contrasts sharply with the agony Billy feels. The rider offers Billy a canteen of water. Billy reaches for it, his hands shaking.

BILLY

(voice-over)

I'm not ready to die...

The rider helps Billy to his feet, steadying him as they begin to walk away from the desolate desert. The sun begins to set, casting long shadows over the sand.

BILLY

(voice-over)

He saved me... but what did it mean?
Why?

BACK TO REALITY - INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy jolts awake, gasping for air. His shirt is soaked in sweat. The remnants of the dream linger in his mind, the emotions raw and unsettling.

ANN

(half-awake, concerned)

Billy?

He turns to her, his face a mix of confusion and dread. His breath comes in shallow gasps, and the room feels stifling.

BILLY

(softly)

Just a bad dream.

He lies back down, but the thoughts don't stop. The feeling of the desert. The face of Wiseman. The terror of what he's done.

Ann, still unsure, doesn't say anything. Instead, she gently rests her hand on his chest, offering silent comfort.

INT. GEORGE BRUCE'S STUDIO - DAY

The following day.

Billy stands in the lobby of George Bruce's pornographic film studio. The walls are grungy, cluttered with old movie posters and cluttered desks. The atmosphere is heavy, uncomfortable, with a sense of decay hanging in the air.

Billy is led to an office, where George Bruce, a balding, disheveled man in his mid-forties, is just finishing a phone call.

GEORGE BRUCE

(gesturing to the chair)
Have a seat. What can I do for you?

Billy sits down, folding his arms across his chest. His voice is calm, but his presence is imposing.

BILLY

(sternly)
I'm here to collect the \$200,000 you
owe the casino.

Bruce's face freezes, his entire demeanor shifting from nonchalant to tense.

GEORGE BRUCE

(slowly)
I don't have it.

Billy leans forward, his tone darkening.

BILLY

Tomorrow noon. The money. Or your
studio becomes a pile of ashes.

Bruce's eyes dart to the gun holstered at Billy's side, his expression hardening.

GEORGE BRUCE

Can you give me more time?

Billy stands, towering over the desk.

BILLY

(gravely)
No. Tomorrow noon.

As Billy turns to leave, Bruce watches him, his face pale and unsettled.

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - MORNING

Billy sits in a booth at a quiet Denny's, his breakfast in front of him. The waitress, a young woman with tired eyes, approaches with a hesitant smile.

WAITRESS

(slightly hopeful)
Are you in the porn industry? I've been trying to get an interview for months...

Billy looks at her, surprised, but responds gently.

BILLY

No. But I just left someone who is.

The waitress sits down across from him, a nervous energy about her. Her name is Debbie, and she's eager, almost desperate. She writes her number on a napkin and slides it across to him.

DEBBIE

(softly)
If you can get me an audition... I'll show my appreciation.

Billy looks at the napkin, his thoughts drifting. The offer hangs in the air, but his thoughts are already elsewhere. His mind flickers back to Ann.

He stands, leaving a generous tip on the table, and walks out.

INT. BILLY'S CAR - DAY

Billy drives back to his office, his mind clouded with thoughts of his past, the choices he's made, and the paths he's walked. The encounter with Debbie lingers in his mind, but it's quickly overshadowed by memories of Nicole, and the connection they once shared.

EXT. NICOLE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Billy arrives at Nicole's home, the gate opening as he presses the intercom. His heart pounds as he waits for the familiar voice.

NICOLE

(cheerfully)
Come on in, old friend.

Billy drives through the gate, his pulse quickening. Memories of their time together rush back as the car comes to a stop.

INT. NICOLE'S LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Nicole greets Billy with a hug. The space is warm, familiar, filled with old memories. Billy sits on the sofa, feeling the weight of the years.

BILLY

(quietly)
Remember when we did mushrooms
together? I need help again...

Nicole's eyes sparkle with mischief, and without missing a beat, she disappears down the hallway to fetch the mushrooms.

Billy sits back, staring at the vibrant red rug. His reflection in the glass door is a man caught between past and present, lost in thought.

NICOLE

(coming back in, with the
jar)
Let's take another trip.

She hands him the mushrooms, and as Billy eats them, the world around him begins to twist and warp. The familiar becomes surreal.

NICOLE

What's bothering you, Billy?

Billy stares at her, his mind racing.

FADE OUT.

SCENE THREE

FADE IN:

INT. BILLY'S LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The soft, golden light of dawn spills through the curtains, painting the room in a gentle glow. BILLY (rugged, yet showing signs of wear from a troubled life) lies on the sofa, his chest rising and falling with the weight of a restless sleep. The drug-induced haze of psilocybin still lingers in his mind, mixing with fragments of memories and dreams.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

The dreams. They don't leave. The faces... the words... the choices. They haunt me, like shadows that never leave. But today... today I feel something different.

The soft aroma of brewing coffee wafts into the air, drawing Billy's attention. Slowly, he stirs, blinking his eyes open to clear the remnants of sleep. The fog is lifting, but there's something heavier beneath it. He pushes himself up, his body stiff from the long night.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

I've been trying to run. To escape the past, the guilt... the choices. But there's no running anymore. The universe has a way of bringing you back when you need it most. And today, it feels like I'm at a crossroads. A chance for redemption. But I don't know where to start.

Nicole (warm, yet stern) is in the kitchen, her silhouette framed by the soft morning light as she turns, catching Billy's gaze. Her expression is knowing, tender, and patient. She doesn't need to say much—her eyes speak volumes.

NICOLLE

(Billy) "I think you know what you should do."

Billy's gaze shifts from Nicole to the coffee cup she hands him, the warmth of the mug grounding him in the moment. He takes a

sip, savoring the bitter strength of it, letting it settle in his chest.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

I wish I didn't. I wish I could ignore it. But I know. I know what I need to do. The question is, can I do it?

The silence stretches, heavy but filled with an unspoken understanding. The weight of Nicole's words presses on Billy's mind, the path forward flickering into view like a distant lighthouse in a storm.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

God. How do I make up for this? For everything? How do you pay back a debt that stretches into eternity? I don't know. But I think I'm starting to figure it out.

He stands, his decision crystallizing.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

I'm going to change. I have to.

Billy walks toward Nicole, giving her a soft kiss on the cheek, a silent thanks for her unwavering faith in him. He leaves, stepping into the chaos of his thoughts.

EXT. BILLY'S CAR - NIGHT

Billy drives through the city, his grip on the steering wheel tight, his mind racing. The bright lights of the streets blur past him, shifting in impossible colors as the psilocybin still holds sway over his perception.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

Should I ask for forgiveness? Or is it enough to show him... to show God that I want to change? Maybe both. Maybe... I don't know. I just need to find a way to pay back the sins I've committed.

Suddenly, Billy's car slows as he enters the parking structure of his condo, his senses overstimulated by the kaleidoscope of lights. He pulls into his space, the engine sputtering to silence. Billy sits there, staring at the chaotic display before him.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

I've spent my life running. Running from pain, from responsibility, from God... And now, I'm not sure I have anywhere left to run.

INT. BILLY'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ann (mid-30s, calm, composed) waits for Billy as he enters, her presence like a grounding force. She looks up as he steps inside, her gaze soft, yet questioning.

ANN

Where have you been?

Billy's eyes flicker, the weight of his inner turmoil clear in his expression. He takes a deep breath, his voice shaky but sincere.

BILLY

I needed to resolve a conflict... with myself.

ANN

What conflict?

Billy pauses, gathering his thoughts, unsure of how to articulate the labyrinth of emotions swirling within him.

BILLY

The one I've been having... for years. About being lost. About... being stuck in the desert. In my dreams.

Ann raises an eyebrow, intrigued but patient.

ANN

Tell me more about this.

Billy begins to recount his visions—dreams where he's abandoned in a desert, where faces from his past haunt him, and where he feels lost, like a man on the edge of his own redemption.

BILLY

It's like... it's like I'm trying to find my way back. But I don't know how. I think... I think it's God's way of telling me that I need to change my life.

Ann takes his hand, her grip comforting and steady. She leads him toward the bedroom, offering no words, only support.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The streets are quieter now, the morning sun illuminating the world with a sense of calm. Billy drives down Ventura Boulevard, a sudden, inexplicable pull urging him to turn toward a church. His fingers tremble slightly as he steers the car into the lot, the church's silhouette standing tall against the sky.

Billy steps out of the car, the air filled with a mixture of unease and anticipation. His footsteps echo in the quiet as he walks toward the open church doors.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

*I don't know what I'm looking for. But
I think... I think this might be where
I find it.*

He enters the church, the soft glow of candlelight dancing in the air. The cross at the altar is the first thing he sees, its presence grounding him. Billy slides into a pew, closing his eyes to the world, allowing the peace of the church to wash over him.

In that moment, all the anger, the hurt, the frustration melts away. What remains is a strange, yet welcome, sense of calm.

INT. CHURCH CONFSSIONAL - DAY

The sound of footsteps approaches. A priest (Father Carroll, late 40s, wise and gentle) steps in front of Billy, his soft voice breaking the silence.

FATHER CARROLL

Are you here for a confession, my son?

Billy hesitates but feels drawn in by the priest's calm presence.

BILLY

Yes. I am.

Father Carroll motions to the confession booth. Billy nods and follows him inside, his heart heavy with the weight of his past sins.

FATHER CARROLL

Tell me your sins, my son.

Billy's voice cracks slightly as he begins to speak, his guilt hanging like a storm cloud overhead.

BILLY

I've done so much... bad. I don't even know where to begin.

Father Carroll's voice is soft, reassuring.

FATHER CARROLL

You don't need to list them all. Simply acknowledge them. And ask God for forgiveness.

Billy nods, the gravity of the moment sinking in.

BILLY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for everything.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy exits the confessional, a weight lifted from his shoulders. He feels a sense of peace unlike anything he's known before. He steps back into the quiet church, his body relaxed, his heart lighter.

NARRATOR (BILLY)

I feel lighter. The anger, the guilt... it's like they're fading, slipping away. Maybe I can change. Maybe I can start over.

He exits the church, his steps steady, no longer burdened by the past.

EXT. BILLY'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy parks his car, a newfound sense of purpose filling him. He steps out of the car, a smile tugging at his lips. Inside, Ann is waiting, her eyes bright with curiosity.

ANN

Why are you so happy?

Billy's smile widens as he crosses the room, drawing her close.

BILLY

I just had a moment. A moment that changes everything.

Billy begins to tell Ann about his visit to the church, the confession, and the peace he found in the silence. Ann listens intently, her pride in him evident.

ANN

I'm proud of you, Billy. This is exactly what I've been praying for.

She kisses him on the forehead, a simple gesture, but one that signifies more than words can convey.

ANN

Let's figure out how we can make this change together.

INT. BIG BROTHER MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit, heavy with the weight of shared secrets. The boys are seated in a loose circle, their eyes fixed on Billy. The tension is palpable, as if each one is waiting for something—an answer, a lifeline, a spark of hope.

BILLY

(nervously adjusting in his chair)
My name is Billy. I've had a difficult and challenging life. But I'm here to help you in any way I can. So, do not be afraid to ask or discuss anything you want with me. Whatever we speak of here stays in this room. Understand?

The boys nod slowly, some tentative, others more confident. A silence falls over the room.

BILLY

(softly)
Let's start by telling me your names.

The first boy speaks up, his voice shaking slightly. One by one, the others follow suit.

SCOTT

(quietly)
Scott.

TROY

Troy.

JASON

Jason.

DANNY

Danny.

Billy nods, meeting each boy's eyes with sincerity, trying to let them know they aren't alone.

BILLY

Who would like to tell me why you're here?

A moment of stillness. Billy waits, allowing them time. Finally, **Father Carroll** speaks up, his voice warm yet firm.

FATHER CARROLL

Your sharing will go no further than this room. Do you all understand?

The boys murmur affirmatively, their voices low.

BILLY

(gently)

Now, who wants to start?

SCOTT

(hesitating)

I... I don't know. It's... it's just... my dad.

Billy leans forward slightly, his expression one of empathy, as he motions for Scott to continue.

SCOTT

(eyes downcast)

I'm tired of my dad cursing at me and slapping me around all the time.

The room falls silent, the weight of his words sinking in. Billy's heart tightens—he can feel the echo of his own past in Scott's words. It's too familiar.

BILLY

(calmly, but with a piercing gaze)

I understand. Tell me more, Scott.

Scott's voice quivers as he speaks.

SCOTT

When I get home from school... he's there, waiting. And... and there's always stuff to do around the house. He calls me lazy... tells me I need to finish the chores before I can eat.

Scott pauses, struggling to hold back the tears.

SCOTT

And when I don't do it right... or I get a bad grade... he... he takes off his belt. Hits me. Slaps me around. Sometimes I just want to kill him.

Billy closes his eyes for a moment, fighting against the memories that rise within him—memories he thought he had buried long ago. The fury that bubbles within him is a fire that hasn't been fully extinguished.

BILLY

(softly)
Scott... I hear you.

Billy turns to the rest of the group, searching their faces. One by one, they begin to speak up.

TROY

(almost whispering)
It's not just my dad. My mom knows... but she doesn't do anything.

BILLY

(gently)
What does your dad do, Troy?

TROY

(voice breaking)
He... he touches me... down there. When she's not looking.

A collective gasp fills the room. The boys look to each other, uncertainty, and fear in their eyes. Billy's jaw tightens, and for a split second, there's an ominous silence.

FATHER CARROLL

(firmly, protective)
You're safe here. We don't judge. We listen.

BILLY

(gritted teeth, voice cold)
Troy, that's not your fault. It's never your fault.

Billy stands up, pacing for a moment. His hands are clenched into fists. He's trying, so hard, to keep his cool.

BILLY

(forcefully)
We've all been through things. Things that no one should ever have to go through. And I'll be damned if I let your fathers continue this. No one hurts you. Not anymore.

Billy's voice rises, firm with authority, but also with an edge of something darker.

The boys sit in stunned silence, absorbing the weight of Billy's words. Father Carroll looks on, knowing the path ahead is dangerous but necessary.

FATHER CARROLL

(calmly)
We will keep meeting, week after week. This is just the beginning.

The tension starts to ease, but there's still a heaviness in the air. The boys nod, some visibly relieved to have spoken their truth.

BILLY

(smiling gently)
Thank you, all of you, for sharing. I'm proud of you. And remember, you're not alone.

The meeting comes to a close after another half hour of talking and sharing. Billy exchanges small nods with the boys, silently promising to protect them. As they leave, Father Carroll claps him on the shoulder.

FATHER CARROLL

(softly)
You're doing good, Billy. But remember,
it's not just the boys who need saving.
Take care of yourself too.

Billy nods, silently, but there's a lingering storm behind his eyes.

EXT. BILLY'S CAR - NIGHT

Billy drives home, lost in thought. His hands grip the wheel tightly, knuckles white. The night air outside is thick with tension, as if the world is holding its breath.

INT. BILLY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy sits at the kitchen table with Ann, the dim light of a lone lamp casting long shadows across the room.

ANN
(softly, with concern)
Billy... why don't you try being nice?

Billy's expression hardens, the walls he's built around himself beginning to rise again.

BILLY
(gruffly)
It's not in my blood, Ann.

Ann looks at him, heart aching for the man she loves, but doesn't fully understand.

ANN
Then how will you change?

Billy looks at her, the weight of his past and his actions heavy in his gaze.

BILLY
I probably won't. But if I can help others in a good way... I can accept being me.

The conversation lingers, but Billy's mind drifts back to the boys, to the violence in his veins that's never far from the surface. His eyes harden, but there's something else there now—a glimmer of doubt.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. STUDIO CITY - DAY

The scene opens on a warm, cloudless afternoon. The camera follows BILLY, sitting in the back of a taxi as it drives through the quiet streets of Studio City. His face, hardened by years of rough work and disappointment, is set in determination. He clutches the address Debbie gave him in his hand, the paper crinkling slightly between his fingers. The taxi slows down, and he spots the address in front of him: a nondescript building with the number "222 W. Duxbury" on the door.

EXT. STUDIO CITY BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The taxi stops, and Billy steps out, glancing around. The area is filled with quiet, suburban charm—nothing extraordinary, but there's an edge of mystery lurking in the background, as if the place holds secrets. He adjusts his jacket, tightens his grip on the address, and heads towards the entrance.

As Billy approaches the building, the camera zooms in on his face—he's on edge, calculating, planning. His thoughts are a whirlwind of what he'll say to Mr. Bruce, how he'll force him to pay up, and what the consequences might be.

INT. STUDIO CITY BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Billy walks through a dimly lit hallway, his footsteps echoing in the quiet space. The walls are lined with faded posters of actors from a bygone era—ghosts of a different time in the entertainment industry. He approaches the door at the end of the hall, knocks once, and waits.

There's a brief silence, then the sound of footsteps from inside. The door swings open to reveal a burly, middle-aged MAN in a wrinkled suit. His greasy hair is combed back with an unbothered flair. He squints at Billy as if sizing him up.

MAN (JOHNNY)

(with a smirk)

Billy, huh? I've been expecting you.
Come on in.

Billy steps inside, and the door shuts behind him with a soft click.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The office is an odd mix of outdated glamour and disarray—old movie props stacked against the walls, worn leather chairs, and a cluttered desk overflowing with papers. The air smells faintly of cigarette smoke and stale coffee. Billy takes a seat across from JOHN, who motions to a half-empty bottle of whiskey on the desk.

JOHN

(grinning widely)

So you're looking for Bruce. I hear you're not the only one. He's a real slippery bastard, that one. Took my money and ran off with it, just like he's done to a dozen others in this business. Hell, I'm just one of many who've been left holding the bag.

Billy leans forward, his voice quiet but firm.

BILLY

I just need to find him. Get the money he owes me. Or... whatever assets he's hiding. What do you know about him?

JOHN

(rubbing his chin)

Oh, I know plenty. Bruce? That guy? He's always got a scheme going. Last I heard, he was out in some shady corners of the industry trying to make a comeback. Like a bad penny, you know? Shows up just when you think you're rid of him.

Billy listens intently, his eyes narrowing, a plan forming in his mind.

JOHN

(leaning back in his chair)

But, hey, you're looking for him? That's good business. You find him, and I'll make it worth your while. \$20,000 if you can bring him back to me, or at least give me something useful.

Billy nods. His mind races, connecting dots. The camera focuses on his face, calculating.

BILLY

I'll find him. And you'll get your money or whatever else he's got. Trust me, I'm good at getting things done.

The two men shake hands, and the scene lingers for a moment as they exchange knowing looks. Billy stands, ready to leave, but then pauses at the door.

BILLY

(after a moment of hesitation)
By the way, you still looking for fresh faces in this business?

Johnny grins and pulls out a card, handing it to Billy with a flourish.

JOHN

You bet I am. You find someone good, you let me know. I'm always on the lookout.

Billy pockets the card, nodding before exiting the office. As the door closes behind him, the camera stays focused on John, who stares at the bottle of whiskey on his desk, contemplating his own next move.

EXT. STUDIO CITY BUILDING - DAY

Billy steps out of the building into the bright sunlight. The camera tracks his movement as he walks away, his mind set on the next phase of his plan. He pulls out his phone and dials a number, waiting for the call to connect.

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The scene transitions to a bustling diner. Billy steps inside, the bell above the door chiming as he enters. The aroma of coffee and sizzling food fills the air. He spots DEBBIE at the counter, her eyes lighting up as she sees him.

DEBBIE

(teasing)
Can't stay away from me, can you?

She leads him to a booth, and Billy follows, a little more solemn now, the weight of his mission pressing on him. As they sit, Billy pulls out Johnny's card and slides it across the table to her.

BILLY

I need you to call this guy. Go for your screen test. Tell him Billy sent you.

Debbie looks at the card, then at Billy, her expression shifting from playful to thoughtful. A flicker of doubt crosses her face, but beneath it, there's a spark of ambition.

DEBBIE

(softly)
Billy, I... I don't know.

Billy leans forward, his voice gentle but firm.

BILLY

Debbie, this isn't just about you getting the job. It's about finding Bruce. He's the key to everything. If you help me track him down, I'll owe you one. A big one.

Debbie takes the card, her fingers brushing against his. There's a brief moment of connection, a mutual understanding that this is bigger than both of them. She tucks the card into her pocket and looks at him with a sense of determination.

DEBBIE

(nodding)
You got it, Billy. I'll do it.

Billy smiles faintly, his relief palpable. The camera holds on the two of them for a moment before cutting to the next scene.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Billy sits alone at his desk, the room dimly lit by a desk lamp. He flips through a stack of papers, his mind racing with the events of the day. He glances at the clock. It's late, and his thoughts are elsewhere.

His phone buzzes. It's a message from Ann: "How's everything going? Are you okay?"

Billy stares at the screen, then puts the phone down. His eyes drift to the window, looking out into the dark night.

BILLY (V.O.)

(reflective)

I've been chasing shadows for so long.
But now, it's all coming together.
Bruce... the money... everything.

He takes a deep breath, then picks up the phone to call Ann.

BILLY

(smiling faintly)

Yeah, everything's fine. Just getting things done. You know how it is.

The camera lingers on Billy as he leans back in his chair, the weight of the past few days heavy on his shoulders, but with a new sense of resolve in his eyes.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FIVE

FADE IN:

EXT. M.G.M. CASINO - LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

The neon lights of the M.G.M. Casino glow with an almost surreal intensity, casting vibrant reflections off the pavement. The sound of slot machines and clinking coins creates a symphony of chaos and anticipation.

INT. M.G.M. CASINO - LOBBY - NIGHT

ANN and BILLY enter the lobby, the chaotic energy of Vegas surrounding them. ANN, still in her own world, scrolls through her phone, anxiety and excitement battling for control. As she dials, her fingers tremble slightly, a mix of eagerness and nostalgia.

ANN

(softly, to herself)

I can't believe it's been this long...

BILLY walks up beside her, glancing around the bustling casino, soaking in the atmosphere. There's an undeniable tension in the air between them, as if their unspoken emotions weigh more than the glimmering lights surrounding them. He smiles at her, but she's too distracted, her mind somewhere else.

ANN

(into phone, anxious)

Ben? It's Ann... yeah, we just got here.

The camera pulls back as ANN turns to BILLY, her face softening. The loud buzz of the casino fades into the background as they lock eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. M.G.M. CASINO - LOBBY - NIGHT

A tall figure steps forward through the crowd—BEN. He's the perfect reflection of the city's vibrant pulse: a warm, welcoming grin plastered across his face, his energy electric.

BEN

(grinning widely, arms open)

Ann!

He wraps his arms around her in a tight, heartfelt hug. There's a moment where time seems to freeze—the city around them bustling, but their embrace, filled with years of shared history, slows everything down.

BILLY watches, heart swelling at the bond they share, and their familiarity. As they break apart, BEN turns to BILLY, extending his hand.

BEN

(with a wink)

Billy, man, good to see you.

BILLY shakes his hand firmly, a quiet nod passing between them.

BEN

(playfully, gesturing to the bellhop)

Let's get you to the penthouse.

INT. M.G.M. CASINO - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The trio rides up in the elevator with a bellhop, the fluorescent lights flickering softly above them. The doors open to reveal the penthouse suite—luxurious, expansive. Plush sofas, a well-stocked bar, and floor-to-ceiling windows offering a panoramic view of the Strip.

The bellhop exits after delivering the bags, BILLY slipping him a crisp \$20 bill.

BILLY

(to BEN, smiling)

You never disappoint.

BEN grins, a quiet confidence radiating from him as he moves through the space, checking the room with a casual but approving glance.

BEN

(gesturing around the room)

Make yourselves at home. I'll be back in a bit to show you the ropes.

ANN remains silent, her movements more mechanical as she begins to unpack, her thoughts somewhere far away. BILLY catches her eye but doesn't press her, the silence between them thickening.

CUT TO:

INT. WOLFGANG PUCK'S GRILL - NIGHT

The restaurant is upscale, dimly lit with an intimate ambiance. BEN sits across from BILLY and ANN at a reserved table, the chatter of nearby guests forming a low hum in the background.

The waiter approaches, and BEN orders champagne for the table. He raises his glass, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

BEN

(raising his glass)
To my favorite couple!

BILLY

(with a grin, raising his own glass)
To the best brother-in-law.

A beat of laughter fills the air, but it quickly settles into a more serious tone. BILLY pulls out an envelope, sliding it across the table to BEN. BEN, without a word, slips it into his jacket pocket, the action smooth and practiced.

ANN watches, her gaze flickering between the two men. There's a subtle shift in her demeanor, a quiet sense of unease. She doesn't speak about it, but the tension remains.

BEN

(breaking the silence, jovial)
Billy, I have a proposal for you.

BILLY

(raising an eyebrow, curious)
What's that?

BEN

(leaning forward, serious but with a touch of excitement)
How would you like to become head of security here at the M.G.M.? A position's opening up soon, and the money's good. You both can move to Vegas, we can become a family here. What do you think?

Before BILLY can respond, ANN blurts out, her voice tinged with urgency.

ANN

(interrupting, eager)

Yes, that's exactly what we need— something new, a new start. I don't want Billy to get shot again.

BEN nods, satisfaction evident on his face as he watches them.

BEN

(smiling)

Great. Can you start next week?

ANN

(without hesitation)

Yes.

BILLY looks between them, a bit surprised by the sudden decision but seeing the logic in it. There's no real choice, not when Ann has already decided. But a part of him knows this opportunity could be the fresh start they both need.

BEN

(gesturing to Ann, warmly)

You can both move in together. Start fresh. I think it'll be good for you.

As the conversation continues, the tension between BILLY and ANN begins to soften, and a new chapter of their lives starts to take shape.

CUT TO:

INT. WOLFGANG PUCK'S GRILL - NIGHT

The meal arrives, and the plates are set before them. As they begin to eat, the atmosphere shifts from business to more personal. BEN laughs with ANN about old family incidents. There's an ease now, a shift in their dynamic, but BILLY can still feel the weight of their past lingering.

BEN

(suddenly serious, pulling out his phone)

Sam—come to Wolfgang Puck's. It's important.

A few moments later, SAM enters the restaurant—she exudes confidence and elegance, a sharp contrast to the buzzing chaos of Vegas outside.

BEN

(with a welcoming smile, gesturing to BILLY)

Sam, meet our newest addition to the casino security team. Billy.

SAM smiles warmly at BILLY, the understanding clear in her eyes.

SAM

(in a measured, welcoming tone)
We're lucky to have you.

BEN

(nodding toward SAM, businesslike)
I need you to take care of whatever requests Billy and Ann need. And Ann, by the way, is my sister. Make sure everything goes smoothly.

SAM nods once more, her gaze holding BILLY's for just a moment longer, as if confirming an unspoken promise.

SAM

(to BEN, before leaving)
You can count on me.

CUT TO:

INT. M.G.M. CASINO - SURVEILLANCE ROOM - NIGHT

BEN, BILLY, and ANN arrive at the security headquarters of the casino. The place is a labyrinth of monitors, buzzing with information. Dozens of employees sit at desks, eyes flicking between screens, each one watching the pulse of the casino from above.

BEN

(leading BILLY through the maze)
This is where the real action is.
Everything gets tracked here.

BILLY takes in the sight—the endless stream of footage, the palpable tension that lingers in the air.

BEN

(introducing BILLY to the staff)
Billy's taking over next week. You're all gonna be working under him now. Get used to the new boss.

There's an undercurrent of uncertainty among the staff, but no one dares to speak out.

After a brief tour, they make their way back down to the lobby, and the night winds down.

CUT TO:

INT. M.G.M. CASINO - SUITE - NIGHT

The weight of the evening hangs heavily in the air as BILLY and ANN return to their suite.

BILLY

(sighing deeply, his voice weary)
Well, you didn't give me much of a choice. But after thinking about it, I think this might be the fresh start we need.

ANN looks at him, her expression softening. There's a moment of understanding between them.

ANN

(optimistically)
Let's look for a new place tomorrow. Maybe something nearby. A fresh start here, too.

BILLY nods, the weight of their decision settling into him. He looks out the window, the Las Vegas Strip glowing below, a new chapter beginning.

BILLY

(quietly, almost to himself)
Maybe this city will be good for us.

FADE OUT.

SCENE SIX

FADE IN :

INT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The car rolls into the parking lot, its tires humming softly against the pavement. The air is cool, the dim glow of the streetlights casting long shadows across the lot. ANN sits beside me, her breathing soft, peaceful—her sleep a stark contrast to the turmoil in my chest.

I pull into the designated parking space and turn off the engine. Silence fills the space between us for a moment, before I gently reach over to wake her.

ANN

(groggily)
Mmm... What's going on?

ME

(softly)
We're home.

Her eyes flutter open. She looks around, adjusting to the quiet of the moment, still partially wrapped in the warmth of sleep. The weight of the day hasn't quite settled in yet.

ANN

(yawns, stretching)
You woke me up from such a good nap..

I chuckle softly, brushing a stray lock of hair behind her ear.

ME

Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you.

She smiles, but then, as if something clicks in her mind, she straightens up.

ANN

Wait... we're home? Already?

ME

Yeah, we made it back earlier than expected.

ANN

(gently)
You look a little... tense. Something
on your mind?

I hesitate. The weight of the day's choices, of everything
that's brought us here, suddenly feels overwhelming. But I push
it down, not wanting to burden her just yet.

ME

Nah, just tired. You ready?

ANN

(nodding)
Let's get inside.

She opens the door first, stepping out into the cool air. I
follow, locking the car behind us. Just as we reach the
sidewalk, a faint rustling noise catches my attention. A car
pulls up to the curb, slowing, before it comes to a stop a few
yards from us.

ANN

(glancing at the car)
Who's that?

The car's headlights flicker off as three men step out. Each one
is tall, imposing. They carry themselves with a quiet
confidence, their hands tucked behind their backs—something off
about their posture, too still, too controlled.

I instinctively move closer to Ann, but it's too late. The
leader of the group speaks, his voice low but unmistakably
clear.

LEADER

(coldly, to me)
You know where my brother is, don't
you?

I blink, confusion bubbling up inside me. I glance at Ann, who's
staring at the men, her hand instinctively gripping mine.

ME

(confused)
I don't know what you're talking about.

The man steps closer, the others flanking him. The leader's face
is shadowed, his eyes piercing with accusation.

LEADER

(with a dangerous edge)
Don't lie. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You took him.

ANN

(frantic, stepping forward)
Please, just leave us alone!

The man turns his cold gaze to Ann, his hand still hidden behind his back, but the others slowly raise their arms, fingers twitching near their waists. The tension in the air is palpable—each movement of the men deliberate, heavy with the promise of violence.

The leader steps forward again, closing the distance.

LEADER

(calmly, voice seething)
You know what you did. The man you killed... the one who mattered to me. My brother.

I feel my pulse racing. My mind flashes back to Oscar Sanchez. The biker. Everything that led to this moment.

ME

(shaking my head)
You're wrong. I didn't—

LEADER

(cutting me off, sneering)
Save your lies. You don't get to act like the victim now. You've already paid for your actions.

Ann's grip on my hand tightens. I glance down at her, seeing the fear in her eyes, the fear I've caused.

ME

(defensive, trying to protect her)
She had nothing to do with this!

The leader looks between us, considering his next move. The gun in his hand gleams under the parking lot lights. The other two men take a step closer, their bodies blocking any escape.

I feel the grip of fear in my chest—this is the moment. The weight of my past, the destruction I've caused, all coming down on me.

I look at the men. Their anger is raw, untamed. But my own anger, my own fear—it's just as real.

ME

(raising my arms in surrender)
Go ahead. Do it. I've already lost everything.

The gun clicks. The tension snaps. Time seems to slow as the world holds its breath. Then—

BANG! BANG!

Two shots ring out, sharp and deafening.

I'm thrown backward, my body slamming into the car. Pain erupts through me, and the world around me tilts, darkens. I feel warmth spreading through my chest, the blood pooling faster than I can react.

I can't breathe. The air is too thick, too cold. I gasp, my vision blurring, as the world fades at the edges.

Through the haze of pain, I hear Ann screaming. I turn my head, just enough to see her crumpling to the ground, her body folding like paper. My heart seizes.

No. Not her.

I try to move, try to reach her, but everything is fading. The pain is too much. My strength is drained. And then, I hear it. The sound of footsteps, the scrape of leather against the asphalt.

LEADER

(approaching, voice low)
You think you can escape the consequences of your actions? You're nothing but a killer.

I can't feel my legs anymore. The world tilts. The lights are fading.

But in the distance, a silhouette cuts through the haze—Mr. Wiseman. His figure seems to shimmer with urgency. I want to reach for him. I try, but I can't.

Everything is slipping away. I hear nothing but the ringing in my ears, the rush of blood pounding in my head. My vision goes dark. And then.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

