

BLUE MUSTANG

Written by

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EXT. BURTON'S BARN - DAY

Cypress trees grow in bunches. Loud birds and freaky insects buzz. Gators laze in the swamp water. Humid as Hell.

A sun-faded sign flickers "BURTON'S BARN" out front of a tiny wooden shop on a single lane road.

SUPER: OKEFENOKEE SWAMP - BAKER COUNTY, FLORIDA. 1986

A clean, blue 1965 FORD MUSTANG parks by a rusted-out gas pump. Florida license plate reads "**BIG SLU.**"

SLU RENARD, 50s, steps out. A blue gingham cowboy shirt clings sweaty to his hairy chest. A silver belt buckle with chunks of turquoise holds his blue Levi's below a poof belly.

The dark and silver hair on top is clearly a TOUPEE, but that gorgeous MUSTACHE -- that's all Slu.

As he walks in, Slu eyeballs a troublemaker with a mullet loitering by a beat-up MOPED off to the side. TODD, 19.

A plastic gallon MILK JUG, label removed, hangs in Todd's hand. *The clear stuff inside it ain't milk.*

INT. BURTON'S BARN - DAY

Small convenience store. RC Cola refrigerator holds cups of live bait instead of cola. Old radio plays Country Western.

A boy in a ratty "Pac-Man Fever" shirt browses. OSSIE, 13.

Slu buys a box of TRIX CEREAL from BURTON, 80s.

BURTON

'Fraid this is the last box, Slu.

Slu looks up from his wallet.

SLU

What for?

BURTON

Becoming a bait shop. Figure maybe that damned new supermarket will least let me sell worms in peace.

Slu glances around the nearly bare, dusty shelves.

He flinches as Burton raps his cane on the counter.

BURTON

Stay outta them dirty books, boy!

Ossie drops the *Playboy*. He blushes and exits with nothing.

Slu grins, but it fades seeing Ossie turn in Todd's direction. He shakes his head and takes his Trix in a brown bag.

EXT. FIELD BEHIND BURTON'S BARN - DAY

Slu turns in time to catch Todd trade Ossie a jug for cash. He sets his Trix bag on the blacktop. Cracks his knuckles.

SLU
You're Ossie Jenkins.

Ossie closes his eyes hard and turns around. *Busted.*

OSSIE
Yes, sir?

Slu swaggers over. Todd keeps cool. Ossie trembles.

SLU
Gimme a sip.

OSSIE
Sir?

SLU
I said gimme a sip.

OSSIE
It ain't mine.

SLU
Bullshit.

OSSIE
No, for reals. It's for my daddy.

SLU
Tell Jesse to buy his own damn hooch.

Ossie flinches as Slu snatches the jug from him.

Slu glares at Todd, then swigs the moonshine.

He SPITS it out as fast as it went in.

SLU
Ain't nothin' but warm piss and formaldehyde.

He dumps the moonshine bottle out on the ground.

SLU
Go on. Get the fuck outta here.

Ossie gladly leaves. Slu turns to Todd.

SLU
Brew that mash yourself, boy?

TODD
Ain't nobody better.

Slu pulls a SWISS ARMY KNIFE from his pocket, quickly curling out the CORKSCREW --

He shoves it up Todd's NOSTRIL.

Todd scoots helpless on tiptoes as Slu pushes him backward against the wall -- pinning him there.

Todd looks cross-eyed down at the pointy bump on his nose. Not breaking skin. Slu holds it steady.

TODD
Holy fuck, man!

SLU
You tryin' to blind that kid?!

Todd shakes his head the best he can.

Slu kindly removes the corkscrew and sets Todd down. He's left breathing heavy from his own badassery.

SLU
You forgot to take the Methyl outta your batch.

TODD
What? Fuck no. I put more Methanol *in*. Gets 'em more fucked up, y'know?

Slu shakes his head. *Disappointing how things are now.*

SLU
Yeah. Yeah, I know.

TODD
Hey. You're Big Slu Renard, ain'tcha?

Slu narrows his eyes on this punk.

SLU
So?

Todd gets in Slu's face.

TODD
They say you turned rat.

Slu shoves Todd back with two fingertips.

SLU
You're gonna hurt my feelings.

Todd takes a SWING at Slu's face --

Slu DUCKS --

And smashes his fist into Todd's GUT.

Todd folds over, gasping for wind.

A basket attached to Todd's Moped holds TWO FULL JUGS. Slu saunters over and POKES HOLES in each with his corkscrew.

Todd groans watching his moonshine glug to the dirt.

TODD
Awwww. You dick.

SLU
Now... get on your tricycle, and clean up your act.

POW!

Todd PUNCHES Slu in the face. *Hard.*

Slu barely recovers. He moves to punch back --

But Todd cracks him in the ribs.

Slu FALLS.

Todd gets in a few more hard KICKS.

TODD
Fuck you, you old fart fuckin' rat!

Todd starts his Moped and rides away. Right over Slu's bag. Multi-colored Trix roll across the blacktop.

Slu groans all the way up as he watches Todd get away.

SLU
(to himself)
Your daddy was a prick too.

INT. MALONE'S WHOLESALE CLUB - NIGHT

Big-box supermarket. Muzak plays overhead as Slu walks the main aisle, sporting a black eye from Todd.

AN OLDER MAN in a white leisure suit and straw cowboy hat spies on Slu from behind a Coors display further down.

A LITTLE OLD LADY passes Slu with a 10-pound bag of pintos and a 4-gallon can of jalapenos in her oversized cart.

SLU
Plannin' a trip to the moon, ma'am?

She scowls. He grins and starts down the cereal aisle.
His eyes widen.

EXT. MALONE'S WHOLESALE CLUB - NIGHT

Slu exits, barely holding a pallet of twenty TRIX boxes.
He tosses them in the back seat of his Mustang. Slides in.
Starts her up. She purrs.
He flips on the Country Western station and cruises away.
A black 1977 PONTIAC LeMANS follows. HEADLIGHTS OFF.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - NIGHT

Slu lights a wood-tipped cigar. He sings with the radio as he
lays heavy on the gas pedal. *Soon he's flying.*
He hoots as the Mustang takes curves at top speed.
The LeMans HEADLIGHTS flip on in the darkness behind.
Slu swerves a moment -- SURPRISED!
The LeMans keeps up with Slu's breakneck speed.

SLU
Who's this turkey?

Slu cuts closer on curves.
The LeMans isn't thrown off.
Slu makes a sharp right onto a DIRT ROAD.
He's disappointed to see the LeMans handles it fine.

SLU
Alright. Let's see ya stand on it.

Tall grass parts way under both cars as Slu floors it.
Slu pulls onto a path spotted with TREES.
The Mustang zig-zags between them -- narrowly missing!
The LeMans keeps up in the rear-view.

SLU
You kiddin' me?!

A TREE TRUNK is fallen ahead. Slu swerves to avoid --

Sending the Mustang a bit AIRBORNE.

It lands on soft ground.

Rear tires spin in THICK MUD.

The LeMans goes around the fallen trunk, clearing the mud, and idles alongside the Mustang.

The LeMans's passenger window rolls down, revealing the man in the straw hat.

Slu recognizes him right away.

JACK BASS, 70s. White leisure suit over a considerable belly. Leathered face with pencil-thin 'stache above a silver-toothed grin. *A legend in his own mind.*

SLU

Aw shit.

Jack drops the grin and raises an eyebrow.

The Mustang revs free of the mud --

The rear tire sprays mud in Jack's window, all over his face and white suit.

Slu speeds away and Jack launches back into pursuit.

Jack drives the LeMans a hundred feet before running it into a much larger MUD PIT in the weeds.

The LeMans starts to SINK.

Jack opens his door, pushing through RISING MUD. He gets out to find himself KNEE DEEP.

He climbs to higher ground. *His LeMans ain't goin' anywhere.*

Up ahead -- the Mustang REVERSES and stops.

Slu sees Jack is unharmed --

So he SPEEDS AWAY again.

Jack curses under his breath as Slu's DISTINCTIVE LAUGH echoes from the disappearing taillights.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

RANCH HOUSE with GARAGE. Paint job was baby blue before the elements had their way. Yard is more weeds and rusty junk than lawn. No neighbors close enough to complain.

A COVERED PORCH looks out on a yard and a NARROW DOCK running about a hundred feet into the SWAMP WATER beyond the yard.

The Mustang rests in front of the garage. Slu's legs poke out as he tinkers under the car. Pail of soapy water by him.

A mud-covered Jack approaches. He spots legs poking out.

JACK

You sumbitch!

Slu rolls from under the car. Grease on his hands and face. Wrench in one hand. Sawed-off 12-gauge SHOTGUN in the other.

JACK

Always greet company with a twelve-gauge?

SLU

Only when the company's busted me.

JACK

Twice. I ain't here to bust ya. *Again.*

SLU

Then why the chase?

JACK

Shit. See if I could still do it?

Slu accepts this and sets down the shotgun. He stands and starts casually cleaning mud off his Mustang.

Jack LIMPS closer. He gets a look at Slu's bruised eye.

JACK

See you're still lookin' handsome, with your pretty black eyes.

SLU

Where'd you get the fancy walk, Jack?

Jack lifts his right pant leg and knocks on his METAL LEG.

JACK

Gator took my leg off.

SLU

Lucky he didn't want seconds.

Jack shakes his head chuckling.

JACK

It's bullshit. U-Haul trailer backed me over two years ago. Survived forty years chasin' the scum o' the Earth -- turns out walkin' the damned dog was what's dangerous.

(glances around)

Nicer place'n I saw you in last.

SLU

Yeah, well... Donna said she liked a view of the swamp better than being *in* the swamp. How's Vera?

JACK

Vera's the same. House is the same. Goddamn meatloaf is the same.

SLU

Why you here, Jack? I only distill for private consumption now.

JACK

(exasperated breath)

First off... that don't make that shit legal. Second off... ever hear of a gang called *the Westies*?

Slu shakes his head. Keeps scrubbing.

JACK

Irish Mafia. They own most of Hell's Kitchen up in New York City.

SLU

Sounds like the perfect place for 'em.

Slu reaches out with his sponge and starts playfully cleaning the mud off Jack's white leisure coat. Jack bats his hand off.

JACK

Stop messin' with my mud 'less you want me to share it with you, you asshole.

SLU

Fine, I'll bite. Why the hell would I know the Westies?

Jack lights a Kool and starts in like a performance.

JACK

A Federal Man never retires, see?
I ain't rollin' off car hoods no more -- but I keep my ear to the rails and get asked to consult on certain cases. One keeps coming up is a turf war 'tween the Westies and the Genovese Family. Pot's been boiling for years now, and it's 'bout to froth over.

SLU

That's good. You write that whole speech down before you come over?

JACK

You piss on it *now*, but lemme finish.

A mosquito sizzles on the porch BUG ZAPPER. Jack jumps.

SLU

New York Mafia's a lil outside your command, Jack. Why don't you just skip to how it concerns me?

JACK

Head of the Westies is a Charlie Mahoney. Fat Tony Genovese wants Hell's Kitchen, and ol' Charlie don't feel like givin' it up. And he's as stubborn as Fat Tony is violent.

SLU

(facetious)

Ah, yes. Fat Tony. I was just gonna ask how Fat Tony fit into all this.

JACK

Charlie has a son. Conor. Charlie won't let the lil squirt follow into the family business. Got the boy into New York University instead, wastin' his time studyin' philosophy.

Slu impersonates Groucho Marx with a cigar.

SLU

Lotsa kids like to play with Plato.

JACK

Conor Mahoney lives in Greenwich Village with his girlfriend -- one *Susan Mathis*.

Slu's smirk falls away instantly.

He wanders away to the porch. He leans on the rail and looks out at the swamp. *Can't let Jack see his face.*

SLU

She mixed up in any of this?

JACK

Not the bigger picture, no.

Jack joins him on the porch.

SLU

But that's why they brought you in, right? Cause she links to me.

JACK

They're exploring that connection.

Slu lights a skinny wood-tipped cigar.

SLU

Ain't no connection. Not for years.

JACK

Conor ain't as clean as his Papa thinks. Just some piss-ant dope deals. But you know how we do when we want a King Rat... He and Sue ain't nothin' but collateral bait.

SLU

When's the trap set to snap?

JACK

If they already see his beady lil eyes, you can bet the cheese is out.

Slu squints back tears and rage.

SLU

Fuck am I supposed to do about it?

JACK

As a sworn agent o' justice, I'd never suggest a known felon cross state lines to stand 'tween feuding families of the New York City Mafia...

Jack lights a cigarette with his previous one.

JACK

So let's say I just thought a father should know.

SLU

Donna know anything?

JACK

Some of it, prob'ly. Reporters always know more'n they let on.

Slu composes himself enough to turn back to Jack.

SLU

Can't help ya out this time. Need to call a cab?

JACK

Yeah. Where's the phone?

SLU

Remember how you busted me the second time round?

JACK

Yeah. I tapped your phone.

SLU

You tapped my phone. Nearest one's back at Burton's Barn. Tell the boy Big Slu said it's okay to use it.

Jack's shoulders slump. Slu points out toward the swamp.

SLU

Mind any U-Haul trailers lurkin' 'bout in them waters.

JACK

You're a real prince, Slu.

SLU

Fuck you, Jack.

Slu goes in and shuts the door.

Another kamikaze mosquito zap makes Jack jump.

INT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Slu enters the LIVING ROOM.

A CURTAINED WINDOW looks out on the porch. Stacks of old boxes. Dirty laundry. Empty bottles. Wood cabinet ZENITH TV. The COUCH is folded out to a BED.

POPS RENARD, 80s, snores between the flimsy mattress and a mess of sheets. Silver-haired and scruffy. *You can read his fortune on his face.*

Slu tucks his father in. Kisses his forehead.

He takes the BROWN JUG laying beside Pops and drinks a slug. Then another. Nice big third oughtta make it about right.

Slu clicks off the TV and takes the jug to bed.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

SUPER: Meanwhile, up in New York City...

A young woman enters the ELMER HOLMES BOBST LIBRARY.

SUSAN MATHIS, early 20s. Jeans and sneakers. "N.Y.U." sweatshirt. Dark shoulder-length hair in a ponytail. She has Slu's brown eyes, *as well as his smart mouth and hard head.*

She nods at an OLD SECURITY GUARD perusing *Sassy Magazine* as she walks the main hall to the study tables.

LARA, 19, sits at a study desk, falling asleep in her binder. Stack of books. Thermos. No-Doze. She snaps out of it.

SUSAN
Hey Lara. Got that book for me?

LARA
Hi. "Tale of Two Cities." Right there.

Susan pulls the book from Lara's stack.

SUSAN
Thanks. I'll get it back to you.

Susan takes a baggie of PILLS from her pocket. She slips it in Lara's backpack pocket.

Susan exits, waving at the clueless guard on her way out.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT

Susan gets in an awaiting burgundy '86 LINCOLN TOWN CAR.

CONOR MAHONEY, 20s, at the wheel. Short blonde hair. Softly handsome. Designer leather jacket over a cheap red flannel. *The chip on each shoulder makes him less stable every day.*

She tosses the Dickens on the seat. He opens the book. Grins at a HUNDRED DOLLARS CASH folded inside.

CONOR
"It was the best of times..."

Conor kisses her, but squints over her shoulder.

CONOR
Hey. See that car over there?

She peers out the back window and shrugs.

CONOR
Think that guy's watching us?

SUSAN
I think it's a Saint Bernard. Can we go? I have a final at seven tomorrow.

Conor starts the car and merges into traffic.

A gray '85 BUICK LeSABRE follows.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Morning sun stirs Pops awake in the couch bed. He groans. Coughs up a lung. Grabs around the bed for his jug.

POPS

You make off with my jug again, boy?

Slu enters, jug in hand. LEATHER BAG in other. Blue cowboy shirt. Sleeves rolled up to show off his chunky silver and turquoise bracelet. Clean blue jeans. Gator boots.

SLU

I topped it off.

He sets the jug next to Pops, who takes his morning sip.

POPS

The hell you think yer goin', gussied up like a peacock?

SLU

I gotta go to New York City, Pops.

Slu heads to the kitchen. Pops sneers.

POPS

The fuck's up there for ya?

SLU (O.S.)

New Yorkers.

POPS

Christ. Donna?

SLU (O.S.)

The *other* one.

POPS

(brow furrows)

Not lil Sue!

Slu returns. He hands Pops a bowl of Trix.

SLU

Ain't nothin'. Yet.

POPS

Who's gonna fetch me my cereal?

Slu points out rows of Trix boxes alongside the couch.

SLU

And now you got a bowl and a spoon.

POPS

What do I do for milk?

SLU

Life don't always come with all the
fixins', does it?

Slu starts searching various boxes for something.

POPS

What about my jugs?

SLU

Other side of the bed. And all you
could ever smoke. Everything ya need.

POPS

Goddamn, I think he means it. Gonna
bring yer family back here with ya?

SLU

Dunno. Look, I drank the whole thing
over last night. Mind's made up.

POPS

You ain't takin' the car, are ya?

Slu looks up, perplexed.

SLU

Naw. I was gonna roller skate up.

POPS

You ain't takin' my Mustang.

SLU

Your Mustang?

POPS

What if I gotta go someplace?

SLU

Ha! You ain't been outta that bed in --
you want me to go get you a wheelchair?
Trip can wait for me to go get you a
damn wheelchair.

POPS

Don't need no goddamn wheelchair.

SLU

Go on. Get up. Show me.

POPS

Bah. I been up 'n down enough in this
life t'know I don't feel like doin' it
no more.

Slu shakes his head and returns to searching.

A-ha! He finds it!

Slu puts on his gorgeous black STETSON COWBOY HAT. A sterling SILVER FOX on the band, surrounded by red feathers. A round turquoise stone makes the Fox's belly.

Slu stands up straight. *Road-ready in his hat.*

SLU
Gotta go Pops.

POPS
Don't you take that car, boy.

Slu's moment of cool deflates. He slumps and walks out.

SLU
Goddammit. Okay, Pops. Love ya too.

The door slams on his way out.

EXT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Yellow ranch house. Green grass. BARN-STYLE GARAGE.

MARSHALL REED, 50s, is waxing his green '74 DODGE CHALLENGER in the driveway. Singing along to a *Charlie Rich* record playing from a large speaker set out in the open front door.

Black. Lanky. *Willie Nelson* tee. Puffy red vest. Green trucker cap. Sweet set of thick sideburns.

Slu walks up from the sidewalk, carrying his bag.

SLU
Trick or treat.

Marshall looks up from waxing, surprised to see Slu.

MARSHALL
You ain't messin' round, killer. Bout the scariest thing I seen all day.

They laugh and bro hug.

MARSHALL
Get inside here. Veronica! Bring out a couple brews! We got company!

Veronica calls out from inside the house.

VERONICA (O.S.)
What's he want this time?

Marshall shrugs at his friend, embarrassed but smiling.

INT. CONOR & SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Crappy apartment in Greenwich Village. Warped wooden floors. Decades of smoking tenants' tar on the wallpaper.

Juxtaposed by a leather couch, packed bookshelf, a big-screen TV, new Nintendo, and framed poster of young Marlon Brando.

Conor is at his desk. Smoking jacket over PJ's. Circles under eyes. Pen down on a blank page in his LEATHER JOURNAL.

He peeks out the window blinds in front of his desk, gazing at MacDougal Street down below with paranoid distress.

He pulls open the top desk drawer. A few pads. Pens. Paper clips. A BERETTA M9 PISTOL. He runs his hand over it.

Susan enters from the bedroom. He *quickly* shuts the drawer.

She grabs her backpack and heads to the door.

CONOR
When are you home?

SUSAN
One-ish. Why?

CONOR
Need to make a drop in Alphabet City.

SUSAN
Didn't think Jazz wanted us going that far downtown.

CONOR
Jazz isn't the boss here.

SUSAN
I think Jazz would disagree.

CONOR
That bitch can't be everywhere.

She was nearly out the door, but stops. She turns to Conor.

SUSAN
I'll say it. You're being weird.

CONOR
Don't start that, Susan.

SUSAN
You aren't nervous your dad'll find out if we deal all over town?

CONOR

He wouldn't believe it anyway. He doesn't think I can do *anything*.

SUSAN

Finish your book. *That'll* show him.

He looks back to his blank page. Pouting.

CONOR

Now you don't think I can either.

SUSAN

Not since you started acting like Scarface, no. It's distracting you.

CONOR

You don't know what it's like for your father to not believe in you.

SUSAN

Yeah, having one die on you does that. You're a writer, Conor. So write. Let Charlie be the gangster.

CONOR

I promise, we quit this as soon as this novel sells.

SUSAN

How long, Conor? Cause I bet that pen didn't move all night.

Conor STANDS. *Simmering up*.

CONOR

Masterpieces take time.

SUSAN

How long's a Hallmark Card take? Cause writing that crap can buy you all this stuff without getting our heads blown off.

CONOR

Jazz won't blow our heads off.

SUSAN

Says the fool who doesn't hear Jazz coming.

CONOR

SHE'S SMALL TIME!

SUSAN

So are we.

He lets down a bit. He goes to kiss her. She allows a peck.

CONOR

You like *some* of this new stuff.

Shakes her head. *Nope.*

CONOR

The cappuccino maker?

Another kiss. She smiles this time.

SUSAN

Okay. I like *some* of the new stuff. But don't get greedy. I don't want to see what Jazz looks like pissed off.

CONOR

Let me deal with Jazz.

SUSAN

Fine. But if I come home to a white tiger sitting on our sofa, I'm done.

She goes to the desk and flips his pages. He flinches.

CONOR

Don't touch my work. Please.

SUSAN

Maybe you need a fresh start.

CONOR

Never start over what's halfway done.

She goes to the door. She stops before closing it.

SUSAN

Then don't start what you can't finish.

He feels the sting as she closes the door.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Well kept. Mellow yellows and browns. House plants. Sunny.

VERONICA REED, 50s, is tall, round, and beautiful in a yellow sundress. *She speaks her mind and has plenty of it.*

She delivers SCHLITZ cans to the boys in the LIVING ROOM and sits beside Marshall on the couch. They make a cute couple. He scratches a BASSET HOUND on his lap.

MARSHALL

Slu heard from lil Sue.

VERONICA

Get outta town. How long's it been?

SLU
How old do kids start talking?

VERONICA
About two or three years.

SLU
That's 'bout right.

VERONICA
Lord Mercy, Slu. That's on you. Shoulda seen that girl by now. She want you to walk her down the aisle or somethin'?

SLU
College. My little girl got accepted at New York University.

VERONICA
That's just the best news, Slu.

He nods and sips his beer.

MARSHALL
Lil Sue asked him to help her move into the dorms.

VERONICA
A young woman's first place is a big deal. You fixin' to go?

SLU
Straight from here.

VERONICA
Donna know your comin'?

Slu shrugs.

MARSHALL
Slu wants me to check in on Pops. He ain't movin' round so much no more.

SLU
He'll be happy to see you.

MARSHALL
Hush. Pops hates my guts.

SLU
He only hates the guts of people he likes. He doesn't give a shit about anyone else.

MARSHALL
So all that grief he's given me, that's to show he cares?

SLU

Yeah. That he gives a shit.

MARSHALL

Had no idea that's how it worked.

SLU

Oh yeah. And that's if he likes ya. And he LOVES me, ya understand. I wish Mamma was still round to save me sometimes, he loves me so much.

The two men crack each other up. Not Veronica.

VERONICA

How ya gonna get there, Slu?

Slu stops laughing. *He knows she ain't buying this.*

VERONICA

You're gonna ask for Marshall's car, ain't ya?

MARSHALL

Sugar, now... Sorry, son. She's always so suspicious.

SLU

Gonna need your car, Marsh.

Marsh gives him a dirty side-eye glare.

MARSHALL

Well now. What's wrong with yours?

SLU

Pops wants the Mustang with him.

MARSHALL

You said he don't walk no more.

SLU

He don't. But don't tell him that.

MARSHALL

Well, I don't know, Slu. How's me and Veronica 'sposed to get around?

VERONICA

You forgettin' the last time he borrowed your wheels, baby?

Marshall shakes his head mournfully, looking to the Heavens.

MARSHALL

My Lucille.

SLU
This ain't like that.

MARSHALL
I got it! Take Bertha.

Slu groans. Veronica and Marshall enjoy his squirming.

SLU
I don't wanna take the truck.

VERONICA
You are helping your girl move.

MARSHALL
Reckon lil Sue thanks ya for it.

Slu finishes off his beer. Crushes the can in his hand.

SLU
Okay, I'll take the goddamn truck.

MARSHALL
You're welcome.

EXT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Slu crosses the yard to the barn-style garage.

He gazes at Marshall's Challenger longingly, shakes it off, and slides open the barn door. *And there she is --*

Huge red MACK TRUCK. Ugly as sin -- yet glorious. "RAPID REED TRANSPORT" painted on each door. Dings, dents, and scratches only add to her charm. The oil and bug-spattered grill reads "BERTHA" in chrome script.

Slu grabs the key in the wheel well and climbs in.

Bertha RUMBLES on fine as ever.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Marshall and Veronica still sit in the living room.

VERONICA
Well don't he just think he's slicker than owl shit. You buy any of that?

MARSHALL
Oh, hell no, Sugar. Load o' bull.

VERONICA
Ain't nobody movin' to no dorms in June.

Marshall stands up.

MARSHALL

That's why I gotta go with 'im.

She stands up to stare him down.

VERONICA

You what now?

MARSHALL

Shug, you know our boy. He gets hisself into more hot water than a crawdad at Mardi Gras.

VERONICA

That's not your problem.

MARSHALL

That bein' so... if this really does have somethin' t'do with lil Sue... I think the boy may need a friend.

VERONICA

His own fault if he don't have one.

MARSHALL

Remember the day you and me met?

She folds her arms. *This better be good.*

MARSHALL

Best day of my life, Shug. Know what Slu was doin' that day? -- Year four in Apalachee Correctional. Where *my ass* was supposed to be. Not flirtin' round in no Dairy Queen.

She grins despite herself.

MARSHALL

You're why I'll never stop owin' Slu.

VERONICA

Go on. Get.

Marshall grins and kisses her. They share a tender moment.

MARSHALL

Stay beautiful.

Marshall stoops to the dog and shakes its floppy jowls in each hand before kissing its snout.

MARSHALL

You too, Fugly.

VERONICA

Better hurry if you wanna catch 'im.

MARSHALL

Naawww. I gotta minute. Slu's got no fuckin' clue how to drive that rig.

EXT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Slu managed to lurch Bertha out of the barn. She sputters along the driveway inch by humiliating inch.

Marshall opens the driver's door holding a duffel bag.

SLU

I got this.

MARSHALL

What you got is a thousand miles. And this ain't no start.

Slu scoots over. He takes Marshall's duffel bag.

SLU

I don't need a partner.

Marshall climbs behind the wheel and gets Bertha moving.

MARSHALL

Shush. You *know* you need a partner.

SLU

Just said it. I don't need a partner.

MARSHALL

Ya scooted over as ya said it.

Slu laughs as Marshall gets Bertha out on the road.

MARSHALL

Now you go on and spill them beans to ol' Marsh, and I'll carry us back home 'fore Baker County realizes its Black Friend is missing.

They're ON THE ROAD to New York City.

EXT. BERTHA MONTAGE - DAY/NIGHT

Old, truck-drivin' Country music plays as scenery passes.

Bertha trucks along miles of empty highway.

They pass from swamplands into small Southern towns.

Slu cracks jokes on the CB radio in Bertha's cab as Marshall takes a leak on the side of the highway.

Day fades to night as the South goes away in the rear-view.

Pit stop at DIABLO SANDWICHES. At the walk-up window, Slu pays for a bag of sandwiches. A lingering look at a PHOTO folded in his wallet: *a much younger Slu laughing with toddler Susan standing up on his shoulders, hands held tight.*

More traffic in Northern towns, suburbs, and small cities.

A minor bar fight with the Baltimore Highway Patrol, just for shits and giggles. -- Nobody's hurt. They get away.

Finally, Marshall taps a snoozing Slu to show him the NEW YORK CITY SKYLINE ahead.

The rising sun makes it glow. The Twin Towers stand proud.

Marshall drives Bertha into the Holland Tunnel.

Bertha towers over the sea of yellow cabs in Manhattan.

They pass hot dog stands. Famous Ray's Pizza. Subway exits.

The MONTAGE catches up to real-time as they park in front of a beautiful sky-rise. THE CENTURY BUILDING.

END MONTAGE

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Small set. Two plush chairs. "BRIGHTER DAY with DONNA MATHIS" mugs on a coffee table. Aerial photo of Manhattan on a sunny day covers the wall behind them.

SMALL CREW behind rolling cameras. *Interview wrapping up.*

In one plush seat sits DONNA MATHIS, late 40s. Gray dress with shoulder pads. Dirty blonde hair. Blue eyes that see right through you. *She can love you or level you.*

In the other seat -- CONGRESSMAN GARRY, 50s. Pale. White hair sticks to sweat on his forehead. *Not having a good day.*

DONNA

That's all the time we have. Thank you for your time, Congressman Garry.

GARRY

I wish I could say it was a pleasure.

DONNA

I'm sure the hookers you spend taxpayer money on share that sentiment.

Garry's jaw drops as she smiles big for the camera.

DONNA

Join me tomorrow, when we'll be visited
by funnyman Dom DeLouise. Until then,
I'm Donna Mathis, wishing you all a
'Brighter Day.'

Lights go down. Crew bustles around.

Congressman Garry stands and looks down red-faced at Donna.

GARRY

You uppity bitch.

Donna grins as she stands.

DONNA

That's all you got? Goodbye, Congressman.

She strides away. Crew she passes compliment her.

A man in a tacky beige suit and bad comb-over approaches.
KENTON, 40s. She doesn't stop. He keeps up.

KENTON

That wasn't live, was it?

DONNA

You'd know it was taped if you were any
better at protecting that creep.

KENTON

So you can edit it?

DONNA

We *can*.

KENTON

The Congressman agreed to discuss the
drug epidemic in New York City. You
completely blindsided him!

DONNA

Advise the Congressman to find a less
talkative pimp.

KENTON

You had better bury that clip!

He stomps back to the flustered Congressman as the show
director EVIE, 30s, approaches. Brown hair. Pantsuit.

EVIE

That'll light up the switchboard.

DONNA

Congressman Garry will probably sue.

EVIE
Want me to cut it?

She stops at her office. She grins before entering.

DONNA
Not on your life.

INT. CENTURY BUILDING - DAY

Large LOBBY. HALLWAY lined with tenant mailboxes and elevators. A DOORMAN, 50s, sits bored behind a desk.

Marshall plays with a mess of FIVE POMERANIANS, all leashed by one poor OLD MAN, 70s, who just wants to get his mail.

Slu sits on a couch, leg bouncing. Staring out the window.

MARSHALL
Don't be so nervous.

Slu lights a cigar. *Trying to be casual about all this.*

SLU
I ain't nervous. She's got a TV show up here, y'know.

MARSHALL
No shit? No more newspapers?

SLU
When you're that good... well, they give you your own goddamn TV show.

MARSHALL
Don't be so nervous. That silver tongue of yours gets all tarnished up.

SLU
Said I ain't nervous.

MARSHALL
Just breathe, son. It's only Donna.

SLU
You're fulla shit. I'm nervous!

The dogs just love Marshall, jumping his leg for attention.

OLD MAN
(annoyed)
Do you MIND?

MARSHALL
(not getting it)
Naw, man. I don't mind at all.

A WHITE LIMO gets Slu's attention. *Is that her?*

Donna gets out of the Limo. She's stopped by a FEMALE AUTOGRAPH SEEKER, 18. She smiles and signs.

Slu bolts up on his feet as Donna enters the revolving door.

He removes his hat. Spit pats down hair. Straightens toupee.

Donna nods at the Doorman and makes her way by.

Slu opens his mouth to speak -- Nothing comes out --

She passes by. *His chance missed.*

She can't avoid spotting Marshall with all the dogs.

Marshall stops playing around.

They lock eyes as she passes --

But she walks on by him.

She gets on the elevator.

Now that the boys can't see --

She grins as the door slides closed.

INT. DONNA'S HALLWAY - DAY

Slu waits in a hall of apartment doors. He knocks on "1936."

The clicks of unlocking. Donna opens.

He smiles. She smiles back.

DONNA

What the hell are you doing here?

SLU

Wanted to find out how many ways they can fuck up grits on the Upper West Side. Can I come in?

DONNA

Against my better judgment.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Slu glances around the large apartment as he enters.

DONNA

Where's Marshall?

SLU
Cleaning shit off his shoe.

DONNA
He always knew where to step in it.

They lock eyes for a moment.

FEELINGS.

Slu gets uncomfortable and steps away.

He looks around. Two brown leather couches. Stocked bar. Big screen TV. Large PATIO with high-rise view of Manhattan.

DONNA
Have a seat. Whiskey?

SLU
Won't say no.

DONNA
You never have.

Slu sinks into a leather couch.

SLU
Hey. I bet some U.N. Ambassador's ass sat right here where mine is now.

Donna laughs as she pours two whiskey glasses.

DONNA
No, but you know who's ass has?

SLU
Do tell.

DONNA
Howard Cosell's.

SLU
(impressed)
He always wear that yellow coat?

She laughs and hands him a whiskey.

SLU
You've done well for yourself, Donna.

DONNA
Used to be Donna *Baby*.

She sits near, but not beside, Slu.

DONNA

I want to say it's nice to see you,
Slu. But I haven't decided yet.

SLU

Is she home?

DONNA

I wouldn't know. Susan doesn't live
here anymore.

Slu lights a cigar. She pushes an ashtray to him and lights
herself a Virginia Slim.

SLU

Know anything 'bout the boy?

DONNA

You mean Conor? I know all about Conor
Mahoney. And about his gangster father.
That's why you're here?

Slu tenses up.

SLU

Goddammit, and you let her move in?

DONNA

She's not the little girl you played
peek-a-boo with anymore.

SLU

You're still her mother, right?

DONNA

And what are you? Two decades later.

Slu shrinks. *Can't hide that hurts.*

DONNA

Why didn't you ever write her back?

SLU

And say what? "Cleaned out Pops' bedpan
today. Wish you were here?"

DONNA

How about "Great job on the spelling
bee, kiddo?" Or just "I miss you."

SLU

Bah. You always change the subject.

She looks away. *No winning this one.*

DONNA

If it makes you feel better, I have sources. Conor checks out.

SLU

I have sources too.

DONNA

Who? Jack Bass? Slu, they aren't telling Jack anything I don't know.

SLU

She in love with him?

DONNA

Hardly. His apartment is above her favorite coffee shop. I doubt it's any more complicated than that.

KNOCK at the door.

SLU

I'll get it.

DONNA

Not around here, you won't.

She gets up and answers the door for Marshall.

Slu notices a FRAMED PHOTO on the coffee table: Donna, a 9-year-old Susan, and a friendly-lookin' guy in a suit. Posing as a happy family. *Slu's family, minus Slu.*

He turns the frame down flat on the table.

Slu turns toward the hootin' and hollerin' at the door. Marshall hugs Donna up off the ground, spinning her around.

MARSHALL

You are lookin' fine, Angel Baby!

DONNA

You ain't so bad yourself, Marsh.

MARSHALL

I hear they put that face on TV.

DONNA

Just an early morning show, but may go bigger into Prime Time very soon.

MARSHALL

Well now. Didn't know they made it any bigger than this.

Slu gestures Marshall over.

SLU

C'mon. Sit yourself here.

Slu stands, offering his seat to Marshall.

MARSHALL

Here?

Slu nods. Marshall sinks into the couch.

SLU

Guess who's ass sat there before yours.

MARSHALL

Besides your ass?

SLU

Howard Cosell's.

MARSHALL

(impressed)

He always wear that yellow coat?

Slu and Donna laugh. Tension lifts between them.

MARSHALL

I'm third-wheelin' already. Anyone gonna offer me a drink?

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT PATIO - SUNDOWN

HI-FI plays *Dolly Parton* loud enough to hear outside.

Donna, Slu, and Marshall are pretty well toasted around a patio table. Greasy Chinese take-out cartons. Full ashtray. Two whiskey bottles. One empty.

The ice bucket is empty too. Slu takes it to the --

KITCHEN

He fills it from a big freezer. He gets his hand wet playing with the water dispenser in the door. *Impressed*.

Outside, Donna and Marshall discuss whether one can *actually* order breakfast at Tiffany's. Slu chuckles to himself.

Slu notices a piece of SCRAP PAPER magnetized to the fridge.

"Susan - 120 Macdougall"

He grabs a magnet pen and writes the address on his palm.

He goes back out on the --

PATIO

Slu sets the ice down.

SLU
Just realized... I gotta get someone to
check on Pops.

DONNA
Old buzzard won't die, will he?

SLU
He don't believe in it.

MARSHALL
Well, shit. I'll call Veronica. She'll
pitch a hissy fit with a tail on it --
but she'll check in on 'im.

Slu stares out at the Big Apple.

SLU
I'm gonna go out. Call Jack. See if
he'll stop by the house tomorrow.

MARSHALL
Saves me an earful if'n he does.

DONNA
You can call him from here.

SLU
Bad luck havin' a phone in the house.

DONNA
He's still on that?

Marshall nods as he opens the new whiskey.

SLU
Gonna stretch my legs.

MARSHALL
Need a partner?

SLU
Don't drink it all before I get back.

Slu leaves them.

DONNA
What do you think he's really up to?

MARSHALL
Think he ain't on the level?

DONNA

Sometimes Slu's only saving grace is being a lousy liar.

MARSHALL

Y'know, he was bout as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full'a rockin' chairs over seein' ya a'gin.

DONNA

(devious smirk)

How about I buy you a drink? I know of a joint you'll find cute.

MARSHALL

Cute? Lordy, I can't turn down *cute*.

INT. JACK BASS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A rotary telephone RINGS in a greasy KITCHEN.

Jack groans O.S. He ain't a pretty picture as he enters the kitchen in heart boxers and undershirt. Metal leg.

A snaggle-toothed Bulldog barks at his ankle. BUFORD.

JACK

Dammit, Buford. It ain't the goddamn doorbell!

He limps his way to the wall phone and picks up.

JACK

Whoever this is is makin' me miss "Matlock."

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Slu calls from a pay phone. Hipster New Yorkers pass by.

SLU

(in a goofy lisp)

Greetingsth and thalutationsth from the thity that never thleepsth.

INTERCUT between the two men on the phone.

JACK

Who's this? I ain't supposed ta know nobody goin' up to no New York City.

SLU

Cut the shit. I need a favor.

JACK

I doubt very much that I can.

SLU

Check on Pops for me.

JACK

What for? That guy hates my guts.

SLU

Probably. I'll owe ya one.

JACK

Fuck it. Fine.

SLU

I'll call you tomorrow night.

Slu hangs up and turns around to MACDOUGAL ST.

He looks up to a light in the apartment above FIELD & SHORE COFFEE ROASTERS across the street. The light goes out.

INT. SAM WHISKEY'S - NIGHT

A citified Country Western bar. Tacky fake wood paneling. Peanut shells on the floor. Old Disco ball still hangs.

Neon above the bar flashes "SAM WHISKEY'S" around a neon bull and rider perpetually bucking back and forth.

Marshall observes CITY FOLK in shiny western shirts and cheap cowboy hats cheer each other on around a MECHANICAL BULL.

A MAN, 20s, with arms as thick as his Brooklyn accent, is bucked off almost instantly to the mattresses below.

Marshall chuckles. The Brooklyn Cowboy notices as he rises.

BROOKLYN COWBOY

You see somethin' funny, shithead?

MARSHALL

Naw, Butch -- Was just wonderin' how you city boys keep ANYTHING 'tween your legs for more'n a sweet second.

Brooklyn Cowboy clenches his fists. His GIRLFRIEND backs him away. Marshall winks at him as he bitterly leaves the bull.

Donna approaches. Seven & Seven in one hand. GIGANTIC, COLORFUL MONSTROSITY OF A COCKTAIL in the other.

Marshall's eyes widen as the big one is set in front of him.

MARSHALL

What the hell is that?

DONNA

They call it the *John Wayne*.

He looks it over. Twisty straw shaped like a cactus. Little plastic cowboy hat on a toothpick sticking to the side.

MARSHALL

Too late to order a *Clint Eastwood*?

DONNA

It's got nine different alcohols.

A sip crinkles his face. She laughs.

Marshall looks around at the Urban Cowboy wannabes.

MARSHALL

Whole place is 'bout as Country as a bagel. But I'll grant ya it's cute.

They laugh. He clinks her drink and takes another sip.

DONNA

Slu still driving the Mustang?

MARSHALL

Every chance he gets.

DONNA

(smiles softly)

We fell in love in that car.

MARSHALL

He takes care of her like he could still find it in the back seat.

DONNA

(bigger smile)

It wasn't *in* the back seat.

MARSHALL

Slow down, honey. You gonna get a ticket.

DONNA

How is Slu?... *Really*.

MARSHALL

Now Donna... why you wanna ruin a good time with a sad story?

DONNA

Is he running whiskey again?

MARSHALL

Little out the back door to keep the Cablevision switched on. He can't run hooch like he did.

DONNA

Why not?

Marshall lights a Marlboro and shifts around awkwardly.

DONNA

You're gonna blame it on me.

MARSHALL

Some stories you wrote for the newspapers up in Georgia.

DONNA

The expose on corruption in Dunston County? For Christ's sake. I changed his name in that series.

MARSHALL

Honey, *your* name was all over it. Didn't take long for folks t'figure out the cat *you* named Gator McKlusky was really a cat named Slu Renard.

DONNA

It saved who knows how many families that bastard in Dunston was terrorizing out of what they earned.

MARSHALL

Slu ain't mad at'cha. Not no more. It's you and Sue leavin' that stings.

DONNA

The job was up North! We didn't leave. He stayed behind.

MARSHALL

One way to see it.

DONNA

You have a better way?

MARSHALL

The world's most hard-headed man changed hisself to near breaking -- for a woman who answered back by takin' his baby away from 'im anyway.

DONNA

That's not fair.

MARSHALL
Ain't supposed to be.

He sips his *John Wayne* from the twisty straw.

DONNA
He would've gone back to running again.
He loves it too much.

MARSHALL
Let me fill you in on that boy and
love, sister.

DONNA
Think you can?

MARSHALL
Slu loves trouble. And he loves corn
brewin'. And he looves the smell o'
grease. But none of that *shakes a stick*
to how that boy loves family.

DONNA
You're romanticizing him. Like
everybody does. I couldn't anymore.

MARSHALL
Maybe so. But I'll tell ya -- only
reason *I'm* on this adventure in the
first place is that big bad criminal o'
yours wouldn't disobey his Papa.

INT. FIELD & SHORE COFFEE ROASTERS - NIGHT

Small cafe. Wooden tables, mostly full. Cozy and artsy. Glass storefront looks out on Macdougall Street.

Susan sits, studying a textbook over a cappuccino.

Snobby HIPSTERS glance over their mugs to watch someone who doesn't fit their crowd cross the coffee shop.

A COWBOY-HATTED SHADOW falls over Susan's book as she reads.

She looks up. GASPS.

Slu looks at his daughter as an adult for the first time.

SLU
Hi Sue.

SUSAN
It's Susan now.

SLU
Know who I am?

SUSAN
I've seen pictures.

SLU
Can I have a seat?

SUSAN
If I said no?

SLU
I'd walk out that door.

She considers for a moment.

SUSAN
Only until my friend gets here.

Slu takes his hat off and sits across from her. He just stares at her with soft eyes. No words.

SUSAN
Shouldn't you be the one to start?

SLU
You sure came out pretty.

SUSAN
That's what you came to say?

SLU
Don't know. Thought you'd say to go.

SUSAN
Does mom know you're here?

SLU
Sure, I went and saw your Mamma. How'd you think I found you?

SUSAN
Ever hear of stalking?

He ignores it. Lights a cigar. She coughs. He puts it out.

SLU
So I hear you go to New York University. I'm mighty proud of you.

SUSAN
What's it got to do with you?

SLU
What'cha studyin'?

She lifts up the Chemistry textbook.

SLU
Chemistry, huh? I use that in my line.
N.Y.U. have a good football team?

SUSAN
We don't have one at all.

SLU
Too bad. I used to play pretty good.

SUSAN
I don't know anything about sports.

SLU
Thought maybe it would be something we
could talk about.

SUSAN
Nope.

He shifts in his seat. *This is painful.*

SLU
So you took your step daddy's name?
Susan Mathis?

SUSAN
(incredulous)
Are you kidding me? Who put you up to
this? Do you, like, need a kidney or
something?

SLU
C'mon, kiddo. You gotta let me try.

A student holding a book, FRANK, 20s, approaches the table.

FRANK
Hey, Susan.

SUSAN
Oh, thank God.

SLU
Oh, thank God.

FRANK
Uhm. Hi. I got that book you wanted.

He holds out "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court."

SLU
Hey. Mark Twain. I've read Twain.
There's somethin' we can talk about.

SUSAN
Well, now I'm the proud one. Frank, can
we step outside?

SLU

Maybe we can get a drink sometime? I got somethin' to talk to you about.

Susan spots Conor's Lincoln pull up outside.

SUSAN

You know where to find me.

SLU

I'll be in touch. It's important.

SUSAN

Don't doubt it.

He waves as she walks away with Frank. She doesn't look back, leaving him feeling a fool. He slaps his hat.

SLU

Welp... Doggie Daddy you ain't.

Slu looks up to see Susan and Frank outside the window.

He spies Susan PALM a bag of pills to Frank.

Slu looks sick as She gets in the Lincoln. Conor drives away. The '85 Buick LeSabre follows them soon after.

Slu's face is red. His fists clench. Big exhale.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Conor drives. Susan rides, lost in thought.

CONOR

Want to tell me about the cowboy?

SUSAN

That was my father.

CONOR

But your dad's dead.

SUSAN

George was my stepdad.

CONOR

You never told me.

SUSAN

Didn't think it was important. I haven't seen him since I was three.

CONOR
Not important? Your father?!
(frustrated beat)
He been following us?

SUSAN
Probably. So you can finally stop
freaking out every time we go out.

CONOR
How do you know? What if he's a cop?

SUSAN
(chuckles)
Far from it.

CONOR
You never kept secrets before.

She rolls her eyes at his paranoia.

SUSAN
Yeah, well -- obviously I *have*.

CONOR
What do you plan to do about him?

SUSAN
Have a drink with him. Let him talk out
whatever truth his mid-life crisis
needs answered or whatever.

CONOR
Well, that's it for *you* doing drop
offs. Now I've got to do it ALL myself,
in case he follows you again.

He screeches to a curb near N.Y.U.

SUSAN
Don't get weird again.

CONOR
You're the one who's been lying.

Susan grabs her backpack and steps out.

SUSAN
Don't you have a final?

CONOR
If you can involve your father, I can
involve mine.

She watches him swerve and speed angrily away. *Fuck.*

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Donna smokes in the dark. A *Lynn Anderson* album takes her back in time on the HI-FI. Smiling wistfully.

Marshall sleeps face down on the other couch.

Slu enters, flips on the light, and breezes past her.

SLU
Oughtta lock that door.

DONNA
I didn't know when you were coming in.

He pours a glass of whiskey and hands it to Donna. Then chugs his straight from the bottle.

DONNA
What's wrong?

SLU
Found Sue at a coffee shop.

DONNA
Oh no. Did she see you?

SLU
Didn't go so hot.

DONNA
Did you expect roses?

SLU
I don't need a crack like that.

She goes to him and takes his hand.

DONNA
Tell me what happened.

He takes another swig.

SLU
How long's our daughter been selling drugs?

DONNA
What are you talking about?

SLU
Really don't know?

She shakes her head, her face growing concerned.

SLU

I saw our lil Sue slip a bag of speed pills into her friend's hand.

DONNA

Are you sure that's what you saw?

SLU

Run enough races to know what speed looks like.

Donna takes the bottle from Slu. Takes her own chug.

SLU

Jack came round the other night. The Feds have a trap set for that Conor kid. Tryin' to get at his dad -- With *our baby* in between --

(voice cracks)

And I got no idea how to fix it.

Donna drinks big again and chuckles.

DONNA

Shithead's gonna get away with it.

SLU

Which shithead, darlin'?

DONNA

I have a Congressman over a barrel right now. I mean, I have him good.

SLU

Maybe we oughtta keep on one topic?

DONNA

Twenty-five years in this job -- I have never sold out or traded on a story. *Not once.*

Both visibly drunk, but not gone. Slu takes the bottle.

SLU

You've had enough.

DONNA

Don't patronize me. So, this shithead, Congressman Garry... he spends half his time traveling the country "Just Saying No" with Nancy, right?

Slu nods, but his face reads he doesn't get the connection.

DONNA

So he has connections in drug enforcement.

SLU

You talkin' about trading him your story for lil Sue?

DONNA

What choice do we have?

SLU

That's fantastic. I mean, no, that stinks. But that's fantastic!

She tries to smile, but can't hold back the crying.

DONNA

Aww, but Slu -- I wanna nail that dirtbag so bad.

He holds her.

SLU

What he do?

DONNA

Congressman Garry... has a penchant for girls. The kind a man pays for.

SLU

Can't be rare for his type.

DONNA

Congressman Garry pays extra for the thirteen-year-old kind.

Slu's face grows solemn. He looks her in the eye.

SLU

You nail that sumbitch, darlin'. Tell you what -- I'll find that Conor kid myself tomorrow, and I'll beat the livin' shit outta him till he leaves our daughter alone.

DONNA

I like your idea better. But mine is the only way.

She lets go of him.

SLU

Hell, I can come up with somethin'. I've done plenty of fixin' before.

DONNA

And where did it get you? Besides prison?

SLU
 (offended)
 She wouldn't be peddlin' speed back home, y'know.

DONNA
 Nooo. Just corn liquor.

SLU
 Different thing! And I didn't run again till after you left.

DONNA
 If we hadn't left, we would've just had to be there to watch it.

SLU
 I quit for you! Period! And I was the best! What I was fucking BORN TO DO!

DONNA
 You want a medal?! That's what people in love do for each other!

SLU
 Ha! Real funny, comin' from you.

DONNA
 How's that?

SLU
 Cause when I asked you to do the same thing for me, you up and left!

A deeper understanding of Slu washes over her. She calms.

DONNA
 All this time I've thought you were a chauvinist pig... turns out you were only a jealous pig.

SLU
 Ohhhh, you think you know me so well. Lookin' down on another swamp boy.

DONNA
 You didn't have to stay in the swamp.

SLU
 Girl, you better look down, see you still got that mud on your ankles.

Through the anger, she cracks a grin.

SLU
 Don't you dare. Don't you DARE find that sweet! I ain't done hollerin' yet!

DONNA

There's more?

SLU

Bet your sweet ass there's more! I --

Slu tries to look tough. But her smile derailed him.

SLU

Uh... yeah, I guess that's it.

She laughs and puts her arms around his waist.

DONNA

Staying the night, Moonshiner?

Marshall snores loudly from the couch.

SLU

Wellllll... he's so comfy.

DONNA

It's a comfy couch.

SLU

How's the bed?

Looking in her eyes. He goes in for a kiss.

She pulls back.

DONNA

Better test drive the couch first.

Slu's shoulders slump.

SLU

Where Howard's ass was?

DONNA

You can lay the other direction. That's where Robert Redford sat.

Slu goes into his stock "Groucho with a cigar" impression.

SLU

At least it's a better ass.

She laughs and gives him a small peck on the mouth.

DONNA

Goodnight, Slu.

She starts toward her bedroom.

SLU

Dream beautiful... *Donna Baby.*

She gives him a side grin before leaving.

He curls up on the couch. *On Redford's end.*

EXT. 42ND STREET - NIGHT

The Deuce in all its grungy glory. Junkies, pimps, and curious college boys wander the busy street.

Conor is at the front counter of an adult shop, HORNER'S CORNER. He hands the CLERK a baggie of speed and exits.

Peering over both shoulders. Paranoia getting to him.

Is that Slu watching him? *No. Just a guy with a mustache.* Is that him crossing the street? *Nope. Another midnight cowboy.*

Before Conor can cross the street -- a tall, muscular, gorgeous, black TRANSGENDER WOMAN steps in front of him.

This is JAZZ, 40s. Long cornrows. Dress is yellow sequins. Red stiletto heels. Blue feather boa. Lips red and furious.

JAZZ

Where you goin' without sayin' hello?

Conor's smile can't hide he's intimidated.

CONOR

Jazz. *There you are.*

He pulls cash from his pocket.

CONOR

Next week's cut may be a little low.

JAZZ

Don't flash your wad here, pipsqueak.
C'mon with me.

CONOR

Actually, I have to get home. Finals week, and I got a lot of --

She wraps her boa around Conor's throat. The feathers are attached to a METAL CHAIN.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Conor claws at the boa as she drags him into the alley.

Jazz lets go once they're out of view. He gasps for breath.

JAZZ

You got N.Y.U. to yourself. I give that to you. And yet here you are -- dealing shit down my street.

CONOR

The University is chicken feed.

Jazz wraps the metal boa around her knuckles.

JAZZ

A little bird tells me you've been down in Alphabet City too. You must think the world is yours.

CONOR

You've been watching me?

JAZZ

And you went to see your father.

CONOR

I can't visit family?

JAZZ

You didn't tell me you're Charlie Mahoney's kid.

CONOR

You didn't ask.

Jazz punches Conor in the stomach. *Hurts so bad.*

The Buick LeSabre cruises down the alley and stops.

JAZZ

I'd cram my stiletto down your throat right now for treating me this bad -- but *The Man* wants a word with you.

The LeSabre back door opens. A morbidly obese Italian man in gray pinstriped suit and pinky rings looks right at Conor.

CONOR

Fat Tony?

FAT TONY, 50s, beckons Conor over with a wave.

CONOR

You're who's been following me?

Conor apprehensively gets in the LeSabre and shuts the door.

EXT. CENTURY BUILDING - DAY

Slu and Marshall follow Donna out of the lobby.

DONNA

Please don't go bother Susan today.

SLU

I'm not gonna go bother Sue.

DONNA

Be patient. We'll discuss the plan tonight. An *actual* plan for once.

SLU

Said I'm not gonna bother Sue.

DONNA

This is New York City. Go get some culture. Go to the Met.

MARSHALL

Hey, we could go see the Mets!

She laughs getting into the white Limo awaiting her.

DONNA

You'll find something.

The chauffeur drives her away.

Slu starts walking downtown. Marshall follows.

MARSHALL

Where we goin'?

SLU

Gonna find that Conor kid.

MARSHALL

If I had my druthers on it, I'd give it a rest till Donna gets home.

SLU

Ain't got no time to sit on it.

MARSHALL

What's your endgame, son? Cause I 'spect you're gettin' us into some trouble your ass can't get us out of.

A black '84 CADILLAC SEVILLE makes a hard left from the street. It blocks the alley in front of them.

Slu and Marshall back away. Startled.

A man gets out of the car. RILEY, 30s. Black suit. Black driving gloves. Slicked back black hair. Toothy grin.

MARSHALL

Right on time. There's trouble now.

They back into another black-suited man.

This one's tall and thick as a tree trunk. Massive muscles. Bushy red hair. Freckles. Folks call him BLACKIE, 30s.

They look up at Blackie, a good foot above their heads.

Marshall throws the first and only PUNCH. *No effect.*

Blackie HEAD BUTTS each in a flash -- They go down easy.

He carries one on each shoulder to Riley's BACK SEAT.

Riley drives them away. *NYC doesn't notice.*

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

SUPER: Meanwhile, Back in the Swamp...

Jack cautiously steps up on the porch. A confused glance over at the Mustang in the driveway.

He KNOCKS.

JACK

Mr. Renard?

Pops coughs to life on the other side.

POPS (O.S.)

The fuck is it?

JACK

It's Jack Bass.

POPS (O.S.)

Don't know no Jack Bass.

JACK

I'm a friend of your boy's. He sent me up to check on ya.

POPS (O.S.)

I got a twelve-gauge shotgun.

JACK

(gulp)

Noted.

He reaches for the doorknob.

The bug zapper strikes again. Jack glares at it.

INT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jack enters with raised hands. "GUNSMOKE" on TV.

JACK
You in here, Pops?

Pops calls from the couch bed.

POPS
What ya want, checkin' up on me?

Jack reaches the couch bed. He puts his hands down.

JACK
You shit-talkin' sumbitch. You said you had a shotgun.

Pops sits with a jug at his side. And a JOINT in his mouth.

POPS
Didn't say *on me*.

Jack rolls his eyes.

JACK
Why'd Slu leave his Mustang here?

POPS
Figured if'n he left it, nobody'd come jackassin' round here an' bother me.

Pops squints his bloodshot eyes, inspecting Jack.

POPS
You're that Federal Man. One who turned my boy to a snitch.

JACK
First off, Slu only turned snitch t'save your ugly ass from lock-up.

Pops considers this information. *For once left speechless.*

JACK
Second off, from one retired badass to another -- in all my time, your boy Slu was the goddamndest best I ever saw.

Pops smiles. He extends his joint Jack's direction.

POPS
From one retired badass to 'nother.

Jack looks at the lit joint. He peers over each shoulder.

Jack sits in the recliner by Pop's bed and accepts a puff. They sit and watch "Gunsmoke" together.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Large garage warehouse. Rows of parked YELLOW TAXI CABS.
 Slu and Marshall are ROPE-TIED to WOODEN CHAIRS in a corner.
 Riley and Blackie stand watch. *Riley on the left.*

SLU

I got the one on the left.

Marshall looks Blackie up and down. He turns to Slu.

MARSHALL

Son -- I wish ya luck.

SLU

C'mon. You can take the big guy.

MARSHALL

Suuure. I'd take 'im to the zoo.

Blackie gives a gorilla scowl.

A man in an expensive blue suit enters. CHARLIE MAHONEY, 60s.
 Short. Chubby. Thinning white hair slicked back. *His whisper
 can have you dead before you wake up tomorrow.*

He points with a lit cigarette.

CHARLIE

Slu Renard. Gonna take a wild guess
 that's you.

Charlie sizes Slu up.

CHARLIE

BIG Slu, huh?

SLU

This here's Charlie Mahoney. He's
 leader of the Westies.

MARSHALL

The what now?

CHARLIE

(grins)

So you know me. *The Westies*. They're
 something of a myth around here.

Steps to Marshall.

CHARLIE

You. I don't know you.

MARSHALL

I'm Donald Duck.

Charlie laughs. He turns back to Slu.

CHARLIE

Pardon the introduction. I was told my son was being shadowed, so I took an interest.

SLU

Don't mention it. I'm sure kid's folks meet this way all the time.

CHARLIE

I dug up a little on you, Mr. Renard. Impressive. If the whiskey business was worth a damn, I'd call you for the job.

SLU

Flattery will get you everywhere.

CHARLIE

Found something else digging a little deeper. Deep enough to find a mole. One who worked for the F.B.I.

SLU

One-time gig to save my Pops twenty-to-life.

CHARLIE

That the straight truth?

Slu nods.

CHARLIE

Riley. Hit the lights.

Riley flips a switch. Overhead lights reveal a TABLE and ONE CHAIR. Three stubby GLASSES and a bottle of SCOTCH.

CHARLIE

Now -- couple of options here. We can have a few drinks and man-off about our kids, as fathers should. After that, you go straight home to the Okefenokee Swamp. Or...

Blackie steps up and cracks his knuckles.

INT. DONNA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sunny office with stocked bookshelves. Broadcasting and journalism awards on the walls.

Donna sits at her desk, lost in thought looking over surveillance PHOTOS of Congressman Garry with young girls.

Evie, her show director, knocks and enters excitedly.

EVIE

The network gave us Congressman Garry.

DONNA

No holds barred?

EVIE

They wish you'd said "call girls" instead of "hookers," but yeah, on a silver fucking platter. And wait for it... they're giving you a full hour in *Prime Time* to roast 'im.

Donna half-heartedly smiles. Evie sees through her.

EVIE

Donna! You aren't happy! Let's crack open a Glenfiddich and live it up.

DONNA

Not up for any celebrating. Thanks.

EVIE

Only the best moment of our lives.

DONNA

Sorry. I have a thing at home.

EVIE

You okay?

DONNA

Just been a while since I felt needed there. I'm checking out for the day.

EVIE

You've got my number if you need it.

Donna smiles "thanks" and leaves the office.

Evie takes a bottle of Glenfiddich from a drawer. She grins at the photo evidence left out on the desk.

EVIE

I'm gonna be drunk though.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Charlie, Slu, and Marshall sit at the table. Cracking each other up. All a little drunk. Riley and Blackie stand nearby.

Slu and Marshall are no longer totally roped up but, despite making nice, are still TIED to their chairs by one hand each. One hand free to drink Scotch and smoke.

MARSHALL

-- Ol' bitty had no idea the shit was flammable.

CHARLIE

And the cat?

MARSHALL

Pussycat didn't grow hair for a year.

Charlie guffaws.

CHARLIE

So what's a coupla *good ol' boys* like you doing here in my big city?

SLU

Curious bout a boy livin' with my girl.

CHARLIE

(smile fades)

Mean if he's good enough for her?

SLU

Is he?

Charlie takes a sip and stares off in the distance.

CHARLIE

Conor's big brother, Joey. He was a sight to behold. Just a beautiful boy. Strong. Smart as a whip. I was raising him to take my place someday. To be my legacy. Every block of Hell's Kitchen -- his for the asking.

They nod. Charlie's eyes get red. His voice quivers.

CHARLIE

Been, damn, twenty-five years now. We found Joey floating in the Hudson.

MARSHALL

I'm real sorry, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Coroner put it down as suicide. Can you believe -- That son of a bitch looked my wife right in the eye and said a Mahoney boy killed himself!

Riley steps up and massages his boss's temples from behind. It comforts Charlie, but has the opposite effect on our boys.

CHARLIE

Conor was our miracle baby. I made my wife a solemn promise to never allow our miracle baby to follow in my footsteps. To grow up right. Get a job. Give her grandchildren. He's safe for your girl.

SLU

That's, uh... that's incredible.

Charlie raises a hand, and Riley steps back away.

CHARLIE

Conor got himself into N.Y.U. on his own, y'know. Didn't have to pull any strings. He studies philosophy. Which pretty much makes him an insufferable piece of shit at parties. But what the hell, we love our kids, right?

Charlie laughs at himself. Slu looks ready to burst.

SLU

I can't do it. Sorry, Charlie. But your miracle baby is selling drugs.

Charlie instantly stops laughing and looks cold at Slu.

CHARLIE

Come again?

SLU

Seen it myself. Your son and my Sue... dealing speed in Greenwich Village.

MARSHALL

(dumbfounded)

You picked a helluva time to play *that* card, Ace.

CHARLIE

You say you've seen this? Yourself?

SLU

With my own eyes.

CHARLIE

Riley? Go check Mr. Renard's eyes.

Riley approaches Slu, reaching into his pocket.

Riley's BRASS KNUCKLES crack into Slu's eye.

MARSHALL

(tensing up)

I ain't seen nothin'.

CHARLIE

Now that you're seeing a little more clearly, Mr. Renard... what exactly was it that you saw?

Slu takes a moment to stop hearing bells ring.

SLU

I saw my daughter hand off a baggie to some jock. Then she got in your boy's Lincoln and drove off.

CHARLIE

You see Conor do more than drive?

He shakes his head. Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE

Then it never happened.

Slu looks Charlie right in the eye.

SLU

Except that you know it did.

Charlie takes a deep breath. *Dammit.*

CHARLIE

Riley. Get my son.

INT. CONOR & SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Susan studies at the kitchen table as Conor enters.

CONOR

Riley called. He says my father is sitting with yours as we speak.

SUSAN

Shit. What happens now?

CONOR

Whatever it takes.

Susan slams down her pencil and heads to the bedroom, where she starts PACKING A SUITCASE. Conor follows behind.

CONOR

Did you want him following us around?

SUSAN

I was fucking handling it!

CONOR

By getting a drink with the guy?!

SUSAN

Yes! Because that's how decent people deal with their problems! But good for you! You stumbled on the *one thing* that would ever make me give a shit about what happens to my dad.

CONOR

I thought you were different. You go around acting all self-aware and independent. But you're just another scared little bitch with daddy issues.

She bristles and steps up to him.

SUSAN

Go on. Call me SCARED one more time.

Conor SLAPS her across the face.

She's stunned. A pink hand print remains.

Years of unchecked rage ERUPTS from Susan!

She PUNCHES upper places --

KICKS lower places --

RIPS at his hair --

She yells as she womps on him --

This ain't kung-fu, or Secret Agent slickness. This is a destructive ball of awkward, clumsy, painful violence.

He can't move. Every blow lands.

She shows no sign of stopping until --

CLICK

Conor holds up his BERETTA from his pant waist.

Susan stands. Arms up in retreat. Trembling.

SUSAN

You motherfucker.

Gun trained on Susan, Conor dusts himself off as he rises. He checks all the places he's bleeding.

CONOR

Seems your dad's been talking out of line, so I'm going down myself --

She spits on him. He wipes it off his nose.

CONOR

-- to make sure he gets what's coming.

He leaves, slamming the door hard.

She breaks down and SCREAMS.

Eyes closed. Face red. *Goddamn him!*

She goes furiously back to packing.

The black journal Conor's "masterpiece" is scrawled in is noticed on the nightstand.

She thinks for a tick -- and puts his journal IN HER BAG.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Charlie, Slu, and Marshall don't have as much to say now.

Conor CHARGES in the room with a BRUISED, SWELLING FACE.

CONOR

He's lying to you, dad!

CHARLIE

Conor. Calm the fuck down. These men --

(double takes)

What the hell landed on your face?

Slu chuckles. Marshall catches on.

MARSHALL

Looks like lil Sue don't need ya as much as ya thought after all.

CONOR

I'm not going to dignify that with a response.

MARSHALL

Aw, son. You ain't gonna dignify *anything* with that face.

CONOR

Who the hell is this?

Charlie looks sternly at Slu and Marshall. *Quit laughing.*

CHARLIE

Doesn't matter who he is. You know who he's with.

CONOR

Things were fine until *he* got here.

SLU

Nice to meet you too.

CHARLIE

You charged in here calling Mr. Renard a liar. Quite an accusation for a man you've never met. Care to tell me what he's lying about?

Conor looks down, embarrassed. Child-like.

CONOR

Why do you believe him over me?

CHARLIE

Because that man there is a rat. A rat who even squealed on his own little girl. A man doesn't lie when he tells that kind of truth.

Conor grows fidgety. His face red.

CONOR

Do we have to talk about this in front of everybody?

CHARLIE

Girl's father is owed as much an explanation as I am.

Conor goes to Charlie and whispers in his ear.

CHARLIE

That's stupid.

(more whispers)

Fine. But Mr. Renard and his friend are staying right where they are.

Charlie looks to Riley and Blackie, both watching the drama.

CHARLIE

Hey, fellas? Why don't you go out for donuts or something?

Riley looks nervous about leaving but follows orders.

RILEY

C'mon, Blackie.

Slu turns to Marshall befuddled and mouths, "Blackie?" Marshall stifles a giggle as the goons leave.

CHARLIE

Now if all the theatrics are to your liking -- what the hell are you doing behind my back, Conor Patrick Mahoney?

CONOR
 (very low whisper)
 Selling speed.

CHARLIE
 Now the angels know. How about telling
 it to the rest of the room?

CONOR
 (little louder)
 Selling speed.

Charlie's shoulders slump.

CONOR
 It was only supposed to be until I sell
 my novel.

CHARLIE
 I offered to set you up with money.

CONOR
 You never asked what *I* wanted.

CHARLIE
 What more could there possibly be?

CONOR
 Being part of your business.

CHARLIE
 Sure. You wanna run this cab stand? I
 just had an opening this morning.

Conor cracks further. *Very unstable.*

CONOR
 You KNOW what I mean!

CHARLIE
 And you know I promised your mother.

CONOR
 Oh, and you're sooooo good at keeping
 your promises to mom.

CHARLIE
 This one's important to me.

CONOR
 What am I supposed to do? Live off your
 allowance the rest of my fucking life?
 Do nothing of importance?

CHARLIE
 Conor... son... *you're* the one who
 chose to be a philosophy major.

CONOR

You robbed me of the family legacy. Of my birthright. Of MY *West Side*.

CHARLIE

Where is this coming from, kid?

Conor straightens up defiantly. Reaches in his pocket.

CONOR

I want the world you owe me.

POP. POP. POP.

Charlie stands long enough to look confused at the Beretta now in Conor's hand. Then down at THREE HOLES in his chest.

He drops DEAD.

Slu and Marshall go slack-jawed.

Shock at what he's done only lasts a moment on Conor's face. He coldly turns to Slu and Marshall.

He puts the gun to Slu's temple. Slu shuts his eyes tight.

Conor decides instead to wipe his prints off with his shirt and drops the Beretta below Slu's tied hand.

SLU

You can't be serious.

CONOR

(faux panic)

Riley! Blackie! Come quick!!

Marshall stands and SWINGS his chair over his head --

He BREAKS it across the table. Wood shards fly.

Marshall grabs the chair leg still tied to his wrist --

He slings the rope around Conor's throat and CHOKES him.

Slu tries to break his chair too, but it won't break. He bangs it on the table. A cab. He remains awkwardly tied.

Conor's face turns red. Gasping.

He jabs Marshall's ribs. Marshall yelps and lets go.

Conor postures to fight.

Marshall pops him in the nose.

Conor falls on his ass.

Marshall raises the chair leg like a club.

Riley and Blackie dash in. They spot Charlie's bloody body.
They draw their PISTOLS.

Marshall lowers his club. He smiles at Riley.

Then RUNS.

Slu follows.

Riley FIRES a few misses and goes after them.

Marshall ducks through rows of taxi cabs easily.

Slu runs with his chair still tethered to him. It whips clumsily around, KNOCKING LOUDLY into cabs.

Looking genuinely sad, Blackie sees the gun where Slu sat.

CONOR
Bastard killed my father.

Blackie takes off after them.

Marshall makes it to the EXIT.

Riley reaches for Slu. *Almost grabs him.*

Slu stops, turns, and --

BUSTS his chair across Riley's FACE.

One of Riley's big capped teeth flies out as he goes down.

MARSHALL
Haul ass!

Marshall runs out of the garage. Slu behind him.

EXT. 36TH STREET - DAY

Marshall and Slu run away from the garage.

Slu recognizes Conor's parked Lincoln. It's unlocked.

Riley and Blackie exit the cab stand.

Slu gets in and takes the SPARE KEY from the sun visor.

Slu peels away with Marshall still jumping in.

Riley and Blackie are outrun.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Conor on the phone in the Dispatcher's Booth.

CONOR

It's done.

JAZZ

(on phone)

I know you *think* you're telling me good news. What you're leaving out is that you let two witnesses escape.

Conor looks around, wondering how she knows.

INT. JAZZ'S CADDY - DAY

INTERCUT between sides of the conversation.

Jazz sits in her tricked out, purple 1971 CADILLAC ELDORADO. The interior is zebra fur-lined, including the car phone. Parked within sight of Charlie's Garage.

JAZZ

If you wanna run Hell's Kitchen for Fat Tony, you little freak, you better have actual good news for me.

CONOR

I can handle the cowboys.

JAZZ

Fat Tony's not a man who puts a clock on anyone -- so you only have until he's had enough.

She hangs up.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Riley has a bloody rag to his mouth as he and Blackie return.

BLACKIE

They got away.

RILEY

In *your* car. Do you really keep a spare key in the visor?

CONOR

Where did you pick them up?

RILEY

The Century Building.

Conor smiles. *He knows who lives there.*

CONOR

Riley, take me by my place. Blackie,
you head to The Century. Apartment
1936. We'll meet you there.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Donna's bathroom is beautiful. Potpourri and fancy soaps.

She rests back on a bath pillow in her large bathtub, up to her shoulders in bubbles, arms out on the rim.

One arm holds a Virginia Slim over an ashtray on the floor. The other places a wet washcloth over her eyes with a sigh.

DONNA

(her accent returns)

Welp, Donna Baby. You sure got things
all cattywampus now, dont'cha girl?

Puffs the cigarette.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

Susan sulks down MacDougal Street in an *Elvis Costello* t-shirt, black hoodie, and Chuck Taylor's. SUITCASE in hand.

She sees Conor's Lincoln coming and ducks down MINETTA STREET. Shady and peaceful for this part of town.

The Lincoln turns the corner.

She walks faster.

The Lincoln slows to her pace.

The window rolls down. Slu driving.

SUSAN

Stealing cars now?

SLU

You headed to your mamma's?

(no response)

Goddammit, we're headed the same place.
I can explain on the way, or you can
meet me there after a long walk haulin'
a suitcase.

She turns and walks the opposite direction. Slu puts the car in reverse and keeps pace.

SLU

Conor killed someone, kiddo.

This finally stops her.

SUSAN

Who?

SLU

Haven't got time to answer at two miles an hour.

Fine. *Dammit.*

She opens the back door and yelps at Marshall in the back.

MARSHALL

Hiya, Sue.

SLU

That there's Uncle Marshall.

Marshall grins and takes her suitcase. She gets in the front by Slu. He drives away.

Tension is thick inside the car.

MARSHALL

Hate to bust up the happy reunion, but let's get me back to Bertha. Thinkin' it's best if'n we roll outta this crime scene separate-like.

SUSAN

One of you gonna tell me what the fuck's going on?

INT. CONOR & SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Conor is seething as Riley checks the other room.

Books strewn about. Stuffing pokes through slices in the couch. Brando poster in shreds. Cappuccino maker busted on the living room floor.

Conor looks at his new Nintendo. Slammed into the big screen of his new TV. Glass on the floor.

RILEY

Any idea where she'd go?

CONOR

Her bitch mother's.

Conor's face goes stone. *Where is his book?!*

He runs to the bedroom to see it's missing.

CONOR

We have to get there before Blackie kills them. I need that bitch alive. --
At least for a minute.

EXT. NYC ALLEY - DAY

The Lincoln pulls over. Marshall gets out, looking back in.

MARSHALL

I'll just start it with *you're welcome*.

SLU

(grins)

I'll thank ya as we cross the finish.

Marshall chuckles and nods. The old pals look at each other.

MARSHALL

Big Slu.

SLU

Rapid Reed.

SUSAN

Whatever.

Slu drives away. Marshall waves.

Far back in the alley, behind the dumpsters, waits Bertha.

Punks have gotten to Bertha with SPRAY PAINT. Graffiti along her body. Some artful. Some crude.

MARSHALL

Awwwww. My baby.

He pets her grill. Soothing the rig.

"BIG FAT PUSSY" is spray-painted across the driver's door.

MARSHALL

(shrugs)

Don't sound half bad, though.

He gets in. Thank God, she starts.

Marshall rumbles Bertha out on the road home to Florida.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Donna enters the living room. Fresh from the tub.

Barefoot. Sweatpants. Floppy *Florida Gators* shirt. Towel on her head. Whiskey glass in hand.

CLINK. *What was that?*

Blackie pokes around what *he thought* was an empty apartment. He's dropped the family photo, frame shattered on the floor.

Both surprised to see each other.

She gives him an annoyed look with a raised eyebrow.

INT. DONNA'S HALLWAY - DAY

Slu and Susan walk toward the apartment.

SLU
I'm not saying forever. Just til all
this blows over.

SUSAN
No fucking way.

SLU
Think no one's gonna miss ol' Charlie?

SUSAN
Please. There's probably a hundred
people throwing a party already. And
those are just the cops.

SLU
Pretty jaded way to talk about murder.

SUSAN
Welcome to New York City.

SLU
Gee, I'm beginning to see why you'd
wanna stay.

SUSAN
Stop it. You aren't taking us to
Florida. That's final.

Slu knocks.

Susan rolls her eyes as she takes out her key, unlocks, and let's herself in.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Slu follows Susan in.

SUSAN
She's still at work, dummy.

Slu spots the photo frame mess and a broken whiskey glass.

Susan reacts to the concern on his face.

SUSAN
Oh my God. What?

SOUNDS of a struggle in the kitchen.

Susan breaks for the --

KITCHEN

Blackie's HANDS ARE AROUND DONNA'S THROAT!

Her eyes panic as she PRIES at his thick fingers. Blackie's temple bleeding, so Donna got a good blow in at some point.

Susan takes a FLYING LEAP at Blackie!

Doesn't knock Blackie down, *but he lets Donna go.*

Susan goes to her gasping mother on the floor.

SUSAN
Mom? What the fuck's happening?

Slu takes a WIDE SWING at Blackie's face --

Does nothing but hurt Slu's knuckles.

Blackie picks Slu up by the shirt buttons and SOCKS him.

Slu drops to the floor. --

Blackie drops a fistful of buttons.

Susan sneaks behind Blackie and tries to pull his arms back.

Slu head charges Blackie in the gut.

Blackie grabs Slu's head while it's down --

Then smacks him down like a heel wrestler.

He flexes, breaking Susan's hold and flying her backward.

Blackie TOSSES Slu --

Landing him hard on his back on the COUNTER TOP.

Dishes and pots fly all over.

Slu more falls than jumps off the counter.

He picks up a CAST IRON SAUCEPAN.

So Blackie pulls his PISTOL.

Slu swings the pan over his head --

NAILS Blackie's face.

Blackie finally FALLS.

Upon his ass hitting the floor --

Bullet goes through Slu's RIGHT SHOULDER.

Blackie stands and aims at Slu.

Donna regains her breath --

She reaches for a BUTCHER KNIFE fallen on the floor.

Blackie spots Donna raising the knife in his periphery --

He moves his AIM --

POP.

Donna stops.

She looks down at the blood spreading across her Florida shirt. She looks dumbfounded toward her family.

She falls. DEAD.

Slu and Susan share a mortified glance.

Susan SCREAMS.

She picks up a LONG DECORATIVE WINE BOTTLE in the corner --

Then spectacularly SMASHES it over the crown of Blackie's head. Red wine and green glass fly everywhere.

Dazed Blackie drops the gun.

Susan LEAPS and LATCHES onto Blackie's back, YANKING his hair, forcing his head backward --

Slu gives him a hard left THROAT PUNCH --

Blackie TIMBERS forward.

Susan rides him all the way down.

Her fingers tangled in his hair --

Susan SMASHES Blackie's face into the hardwood floor --

Again and again.

All the while screaming at him in rage.

SLU

Sue... Sue... Sue...

Blackie ain't moving anymore.

SLU

SUSAN!

She snaps out of the rage, but not the trance. She looks around -- confused and out of breath.

Slu holds out his hand.

SLU

We gotta move. Now!

She takes it to stand. Once up --

She PUNCHES Slu's already bloody nose.

He YELPS, but shakes it off. *Figures she earned that.*

SLU

We gotta get home, kiddo.

She's numb and dazed as he leads her out.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DUSK

Slu drives through thick traffic. *Nobody giving chase.*

Susan somberly watches her city go by out the window.

Slu slams on his break to avoid a double parking car ahead of him. He honks at the turkey as he drives around.

SLU

Can't anybody here drive?

She doesn't answer. Doesn't look.

Slu honks at jaywalkers.

SLU

Can't walk none either.

SIGNS point out "Lincoln Tunnel to New Jersey" ahead.

Susan sits up straight, *realizing what's happening.*

SUSAN

Oh no. No. No. No. No.

SLU

Outta options, kiddo.

Tears fill her eyes, which triggers his. *Stiff upper lip.*

EXT. CENTURY BUILDING - NIGHT

NYPD has arrived. DETECTIVES question the Doorman as Donna's COVERED BODY is gurneyed out. COPS put out yellow tape.

REPORTERS have gathered. Taking photos and asking questions.

Riley pulls up in his Cadillac. Conor in the back seat.

CONOR
Shit. How many bodies?

RILEY
Only see one.

CONOR
See Blackie anywhere?

RILEY
No. -- Wait --

Riley points out a large shadow hiding around the corner.

CONOR
What the hell? Go get him.

They pull up to the alley unnoticed by the police.

Blackie hides flat against the wall. Looking like bloody hell. He shrinks in the headlights.

He recognizes Riley's car and gets in. Riley pulls away.

A broken nose gives Blackie's breathing a whistle.

BLACKIE
Your girl hits hard, Conor.

CONOR
They got away?

BLACKIE
I shot the mom.

CONOR
Forget her. A black book. Did Susan have a black book with her?

RILEY
Shit man. She got your little black book? What all's in it?

CONOR
Let me be concerned with what's in it. Concern yourself with finding it.

Eyes back to the road. *Sure, boss.*

CONOR

Anyone know what hillbilly haven this
guy crawled out of?

RILEY

Uhhh. *Something* swamp. Charlie said it.
Uhm. Yeah -- *Okie Dokie Swamp*.

EXT. SHARKY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Slu is in a PHONE BOOTH outside a BAR. Blue neon sign blinks
"Sharky's," reflecting on the booth glass.

Shirt off as he SEWS UP the bullet wound on his right
shoulder. A graze.

He winces as he stitches.

Phone tucked under his chin. His call rings.

SLU

Fuuuuck. Jack! Pick up!

Another stitch and a wince before he slams the phone in the
cradle. *Concern and pain mark his face.*

SLU

Be okay Pops.

He cuts the thread with his Swiss army knife and slides the
needle back in the end. *Done.*

Slu pulls his cowboy shirt back on. The right arm, the source
of thread, unraveled from the cuff.

He catches a glimpse at himself in the booth glass. Ripped,
bloody sleeve. Popped shirt buttons. Desperate. Tired.

He exits the phone booth and goes to Conor's car. He opens the
trunk and grimaces at what he sees.

He moves aside philosophy textbooks and several BAGGIES OF
SPEED PILLS to reach for a BROWN COAT beneath.

INT. SHARKY'S - NIGHT

Lots of brick and neon. Jukebox and active pool table.

Slu enters in Conor's COAT over his bloody shirt. Brown
corduroy. Navy blue patches on the elbows. *Comically tight.*

He sits in Susan's booth. Two double whiskeys already on the
table. Her hoodie is on. Hood up over her head.

SLU

Your boyfriend buy this outta the Woody Allen Collection at Sears?

She stares at nothing in particular.

SUSAN

Did I kill that fucker?

SLU

No, baby. You don't kill men like that. You only piss 'em off.

SUSAN

We need to call the police.

SLU

Ritzy place like that, neighbors probably already called 'em.

She starts sobbing. Slu looks lost, not sure what to do.

SUSAN

We were doing fine without you.

SLU

Slingin' speed to rich kids? Sure, honey, you were doin' real fine.

SUSAN

They don't carry guns in the library.

SLU

The Judge would've loved that answer.

She glares at him. Eyes red.

SUSAN

The F.B.I. wouldn't give two shits!

SLU

About a gangster's kid? Naw, I'm sure they didn't even notice.

Shrinking in her hood. *Realizes she was blind to that.*

SUSAN

You're such an asshole.

SLU

C'mon. We both need t'cool off.

He picks up her whiskey and holds it her way. She takes it.

And takes it *down*. All in one gulp. Drinking it AT him. Her sorrow narrows to bitterness toward him. Staring as she gulps.

SLU

A'ta girl.

She slams her empty glass down, and picks up *his whiskey*. She drinks it AT him again.

SLU

Okay now.

She slams it down and keeps looking right at him.

SUSAN

More.

SLU

Baby, I don't kn--

SUSAN

More.

He smiles awkwardly and stands, not sure what else to do.

SLU

Comin' up.

Slu heads over to the bar. Few LOCALS drink on the bar stools, but not crazy busy tonight. Blue collar crowd.

The bartender, JUDY, 40s, notices Slu waiting and approaches with a smile. "Sharky's" t-shirt over jeans.

JUDY

Hey, Mister. Your coat doesn't fit.

He grins. *Slu flirts like it's an involuntary compulsion.*

SLU

Not much does right now, I reckon. Can I get two mo-- better make it a whole bottle, Hun. Early Times.

She sets a bottle of Early Times Bourbon on the bar. He grabs it by the neck and sets a ten dollar bill on the bar.

JUDY

Am I gonna have to watch you?

SLU

Darlin', I might get sad if ya don't.

She gives him a sweet, flirtatious smile. She's cute.

JUDY

I like the way you talk, fella. Where ya been all my life?

SLU

Prison.

He turns with a wink and heads back to the booth.

Except Susan is no longer there!

He looks back and forth -- his stomach sinking. *She's nowhere.*

EXT. SHARKY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Slu swings the door open and steps out, looking around. Still grasping the *Early Times* by the neck.

Susan has already crossed the parking lot, marching her way to the sidewalk down this semi-busy street. Hood still up.

SLU

Hey! Susan!

He trots her way, several feet behind her. Out of breath.

SUSAN

Go flirt with the goddamn bartender!

SLU

I do that without thinkin' most times.

SUSAN

Mom must've loved that. I can't figure what the hell she saw in you.

SLU

What can I say? We were nitro and glycerin. Great combo until it ain't.

SUSAN

Why do you have to be so fucking cute about everything?!

SLU

(smirks)

You sound just like your Mamma.

She turns just long enough to make it count.

SUSAN

Fuck you, "DAD!"

She turns back and continues walking.

SLU

Susan please. You're killin' my knees.

She walks faster.

SLU
 Goddammit, kid. I got your suitcase.

She freezes, considering this. -- Then starts walking again.

SLU
 Mamma ever tell you we met helping the
 F.B.I. catch a real King Rat in
 Georgia? She was the most incredible
 woman I ever saw. Strongest too. And
 she thought I was the biggest idiot she
 ever met.

This finally gets her to stop and turn to him.

SUSAN
 What changed her mind?

SLU
 Reckon I had to prove myself. Like I
 wanna do with you. If'n you let me.

SUSAN
 You didn't even know her! My mother
 moved on from you a long time ago, Slu!
 She married a GREAT man! His name was
 George Mathis. And, God, she loved
 George. -- And it took a drunk driver
 to end what they had. Not some old
 flame showing up on her doorstep two
 decades too late.

She turns away and continues walking. *He's blowing it.*

SLU
 We'll get Mamma justice. I promise.

SUSAN
 Like some fucking hick hayseed's idea
 of justice brings my mom back?!

SLU
 You ain't got the market cornered on
 sad, y'know! I lost Donna too!

SUSAN
 Twenty fucking years ago! God. Damn.

SLU
 You gonna walk all the way back?

SUSAN
 I'll call the police.

SLU

Call them boys and I go back to prison for sure.

(no response)

Believe it or not my F.B.I. file's still stamped "Good Guy." I got a Federal man, a decent man... he'll believe my side of this. He's my only chance. Him... and *you*.

SUSAN

I'm guessing he's in fucking Florida.

SLU

Please. Susan. *I need you*.

She looks at him. Miserable. Black and blue. Exhausted. Breathing hard. Blood starting to soak through the coat.

She pulls her hood down and starts walking back his way. He breathes a sigh of relief.

SUSAN

But nothing will convince me you're not an idiot.

She reaches him. He hands her the bottle.

SLU

Then we got somethin' in common.

They start toward the Lincoln together.

SUSAN

How did *you* end up with a "guy" in the F.B.I.?

SLU

Your Mamma tell-- she *told* it better n'me. She wrote a whole feature bout it for the papers. I'll show it to you when we get home.

SUSAN

I'm not staying, okay? Just to be real clear. My home is New York.

SLU

I ain't chainin' you to nothin'. You go as you please. Do we need to worry about Romeo following after you?

SUSAN

Conor hates my guts. But he might come looking for something I swiped. His little black book.

They reach the Lincoln. Slu smacks the top, pleased to hear those words, "*little black book*." He gets in the car.

SLU
Great! What's in it?

SUSAN
Something important to him.

SLU
So he'll come lookin' for it. Him, that big red gorilla, and Fat Fuck Tony for all I know. Climb in, kiddo -- this just became a run.

He slams his car door shut and starts her up.

EXT. MCCLURE'S GAS - NIGHT

Plastic sign of a cartoon cannonball in a cape and devilish grin painted below "**McClure's Gas.**"

Riley and Blackie exit the snack shop. Riley balances three coffees. Blackie has an armful of road snacks.

BLACKIE
Hey, Riley?

RILEY
Yeah?

BLACKIE
I keep thinkin'... How'd that guy get a gun after we tied 'im up?

RILEY
Look, man. Charlie's dead. Do you still want a job?

BLACKIE
Yeah.

RILEY
Then why start asking questions?

Riley gets in the car. Blackie on the passenger side.

Conor sits in the back seat, studying a FLORIDA ROAD MAP.

EXT. US ROUTE 1 - NIGHT

Slu drives South. FAST. Nobody else on the road.

Susan pretends to not be alarmed by his speed, but it shows.

SLU
 Drivin' too fast for ya?

SUSAN
 No. I get everywhere by speed of light.

Slu smiles.

SLU
 You're in safe hands. I'm the best
 there is.

SUSAN
 You think you're some big rebel for
 driving too fast?

SLU
 It ain't the speed, it's who's chasing
 ya. Y'know?

SUSAN
 Not really.

SLU
 Hey. You weren't taking any of them
 speed pills, were ya?

SUSAN
 Not really my thing.

SLU
 Good. You're pretty with all your teeth.

She's warming to him. *A tiny bit.*

SUSAN
 (suddenly remembers)
 Oh my God! I think there's still
 baggies of it in the trunk!

He raises an amused eyebrow at her. Then back to the road.

SLU
 Let's just say the first bum in the
 dumpster behind Sharky's tonight is
 gonna have a swell fuckin' weekend.

This actually cracks her up. *He's loving it.*

SUSAN
 How long have you been out of prison?

He deflates again, shifting uncomfortably in his seat.

SLU
 Since before you was born.

SUSAN
How long were you in for?

SLU
First time? Seven years.

SUSAN
Wow. Judge must have hated you.

SLU
They usually do.

SUSAN
Was it for running moonshine?

SLU
And I wouldn't rat out Uncle Marshall.

SUSAN
And that got you seven years?

SLU
(shrugs)
I *maybe* wrecked a bunch of municipal property.

SUSAN
Oh geez.

SLU
Told the Judge I'd wreck a lot less municipal property if his Smokey's would learn how to drive.

Despite herself, she laughs. He cackles.

SUSAN
So then... why didn't you come with us?
When Mom got the job in Baltimore?

SLU
(cringing)
Wouldn't you rather talk about prison?

SUSAN
I mean it.

Slu is uncomfortable. *Throbbing bullet wound doesn't help.*

SLU
Thought about comin'. Then... There was a car wreck. A bad one.

SUSAN
Were you driving?

SLU

My Daddy. Your grandad was driving.

SUSAN

What happened?

SLU

No one really knows. Found him so wrapped up in a tree, they had to fetch chainsaws to bring 'im down.

SUSAN

Oh my God.

SLU

Pops wasn't gonna let a little thing like that kill 'im. But now he needs help gettin' round that big ol' house.

SUSAN

That's really all there was to it?

SLU

We all need someone to look after us when we get wiped out.

SUSAN

And mom knew that's why you stayed?

Slu shakes his head.

SUSAN

Why the hell not?

SLU

She'da come back.

SUSAN

Didn't you want her to?

SLU

Mamma did a lotta good for folks. I couldn't let her sacrifice *them for me*.

Susan's mouth quivers. Eyes well up. Slu notices and smiles.

SLU

Forget it. Yesterday's news. Want the wheel for a while?

SUSAN

What? Like, drive?

SLU

Yes, like drive. My shoulder's screamin' at me.

SUSAN

I don't know how to drive.

He shoots her a look. *You're kidding me.*

SUSAN

What? I never needed to.

He SQUEALS to a hard stop. Center of the highway.

SUSAN

What are you doing?

SLU

What's it look like?

Still trying not to smile. Embarrassed.

SUSAN

We're in a hurry, remember?

SLU

I just gained two hours on 'em in the last fifteen minutes.

She crosses her arms, planted in her seat.

SLU

Think you can't do it?

SUSAN

No. I just... I don't have a license.

Slu raises his eyebrow. *Are you serious?*

He gets out and goes to the passenger side.

SLU

C'mon. You're in my seat.

SUSAN

This is a bad idea.

SLU

Not even my first today. Scooch.

She gives in and scoots behind the wheel. He climbs in.

She isn't sure what to do. *She feels him watching.*

She finally turns the key --

CRAAANK -- The engine was already running.

He casually says nothing.

SUSAN

Okay, smartass. What do I do?

SLU

Move this stick here from the P to the
D, then gently ease on the gas.

Her foot already on the gas, she puts it into Drive.

The Lincoln TAKES OFF across all the lanes, finally coming to
a screeching stop.

SLU

(nonchalant)
You forgot to signal.

Slowly, she straightens back in the lane. They stop and start
every few yards, but are back to moving. Slu laughs.

INT. BERTHA - DAWN

Bertha is parked near A HOT DOG-SHAPED DINER alone off the
highway. Gas pumps in rows to either side. Neon sign buzzes
"**Fred's Dog House.**"

Sign in the window reads "LAST GAS FOR 80 MILES." *Unclear if
it means the diesel or the chili dog.*

A LAKE sparkles across the highway.

Marshall wakes in the cabin bed behind Bertha's seats.

A troop of SIX BOY SCOUTS, 10-13, stand by a STATION WAGON.
They giggle and pretend not to notice "Big Fat Pussy."

Marshall yawns and gives the three-fingered Boy Scout salute
out the window. They return the gesture.

EXT. FRED'S DOG HOUSE - FEW MINUTES LATER

Marshall sleepily pumps Bertha with diesel.

Riley's Cadillac pulls up on the other side of the "hot dog."

Conor, Riley, and Blackie get out. They don't notice Marshall
as they enter through the bun.

Marshall chuckles at his luck.

He finishes gassing up and climbs in.

Bertha's engine roars to life. She crosses the lot and idles
up about ten feet from the Cadillac.

The Scouts see Marshall at the wheel.

He grins and points at the clueless gangsters inside. He puts
his finger up to his lips. *Shhhh.*

MARSHALL

(to Bertha)

You had a facelift comin' anyway, baby.

Bertha revs --

He cranks up the volume on his *Elvis* 8-Track --

Bertha GOES --

CRUNCH!!!

Marshall SMASHES Bertha into their Caddy!

The Boy Scouts of America cheer.

The gangsters stumble out of the hot dog. All they can do is curse as Bertha PUSHES their Caddy across the highway.

Riley and Blackie pull pistols and shoot, but it's pointless.

The Caddy's tires blow out --

SPARKS fly off the Caddy as it DRAGS across the asphalt --

Marshall cackles gleefully behind the wheel.

It's all unstoppable as the Caddy hits the lake.

Once it's full in the drink -- Bertha backs away from the SINKING Cadillac and gets back to the road.

A BOY SCOUT yanks his fist in the air, *signaling a horn*.

Marshall tips his hat at the boy and obliges.

HONK! HONK!

He triumphantly drives away from the cussing gangsters.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Veronica answers a RINGING PHONE. Fugly naps on the sofa.

VERONICA

Reed residence.

SLU

(on phone)

You heard from 'im yet?

VERONICA

What. The. Fuck. Slu? You gonna slide right past tellin' me bout Donna?

SLU

(pause)

How'd ya hear bout that?

TV NEWS plays in the background. Photos of Donna. Interview with a bereaved Evie. Congressman Garry fleeing reporters outside his home. Donna's photo of Garry with young girls.

VERONICA

The TV News or the mornin' paper. You can take your pick which. What the hell you gotten my man into?

SLU

What're they sayin'?

VERONICA

Poor girl was shot in her own damn home. How much you know about that?

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - DAY

INTERCUT Veronica with Slu on a pay phone.

SLU

All of it. They mention me any?

VERONICA

No, you psychopath. Where's lil Sue?

SLU

Safe with me. Marsh know?

VERONICA

He didn't mention it last night.

SLU

What he say?

VERONICA

None of your damn business!

SLU

Goddammit. He say when he'd be home?

VERONICA

I expect his ass safe in a couple hours.

SLU

When he gets there, have 'im roll by my place. Should be home before dark.

VERONICA

Oh, fuck you, man. I ain't lettin' him play with you no more.

SLU
I'm sorry, Veronica.

He hangs up.

He limps past beautiful green forest on his way to the car.

He gets in. Susan still in the driver's seat. Crying.

NEWS ANNOUNCER on the radio reporting Donna's death.

Slu switches it off.

SLU
We're almost home, sweetie.

Susan smacks her hands on the wheel.

SUSAN
No! YOU are almost home. I'm a million
fucking miles!

He tries to put his arm around her. She instantly removes it.

SUSAN
Stop trying to make me your baby girl!
I've already been somebody else's baby
girl. You missed it, Slu. I'm not
yours. And this isn't some father-
daughter road trip.

He opens up to holler. *Decides to leave it unsaid.*

SLU
HE ain't -- You need a rest, baby.

SUSAN
(resigned breath)
Let's not try this, Slu. Okay? Let's
just focus on getting what you need
done. And getting me home.

Slu swallows his feelings. *She ain't wrong.*

He gets out and walks around the car as Susan slides to the
passenger side.

He drives the Lincoln back onto the highway.

EXT. ROAD MONTAGE - DAY

A melancholic Country song plays over Slu and Susan traveling
silently South together. Their posturing indicates no return
to pleasant conversation the rest of the trip.

Intercut with Marshall driving Bertha back home, and reaching swampland ahead of the others.

Slu gasses up the Lincoln. He peers in the car to see his baby silently staring out the window, eyes raw from tears and exhaustion. *He fights back his own tears looking at her.*

On a country highway, Conor and his thugs walk miserably as drivers speed past. *Nobody is stopping for these creeps.*

EXT. CHICKEN PIT - DAY

Fried chicken restaurant off the side of the road.

Riley and Blackie rest near a giant PLASTER CHICKEN with a sign: "**Chicken Pit -- Fastest Chicken in the South!**"

A BOY, 10, barefoot in overalls, sits on a bench by the front door and silently stares at Riley and Blackie, who smoke cigarettes and try not to be too ill at ease being stared at.

Conor is on a pay phone beside the restaurant. *Petulant.*

CONOR

-- of course not! You are the LAST person I wanted to call.

INT. GRINDHOUSE MOVIE THEATER - DAY

In grungy Times Square, Jazz is on the phone in a tiny room behind the box office of a sleazy exploitation theater.

INTERCUT with the Chicken Pit.

JAZZ

I'm a busy lady. You're lucky you even caught me in my office. Now explain why the hell are you calling *me* for money?

CONOR

(embarrassed)
I lost my wallet.

JAZZ

That's not what I asked. I asked why you're calling **ME** for it? But let's pretend I'm curious. How'd you lose it?

CONOR

It was in the car.

JAZZ

And where, dare I ask, is the car?

Conor looks down even further at his feet.

CONOR

A redneck ran it into a lake.

JAZZ

Are you fucking with me?!

Conor finally looks up with the determination of desperation.

CONOR

I just walked through twenty miles of possum shit before I resorted to calling you. You've got to trust me. I'm going to kill those cowboys. But I can do it a lot faster with your help.

JAZZ

Damn! Look who's balls finally dropped! I'm not wiring you a goddamn cent. But tell you what I'll do. -- Tell me where you are, I'll have wheels sent to you.

CONOR

(sigh of relief)

Some grease trap called the Chicken Pit in... one Carolina or another.

JAZZ

Fine. But this is it, Conor. Last of my favors. After that... as easy as I can send a car, Fat Tony can send someone to feed your pretty face to the gators.

Jazz hangs up.

EXT. CHICKEN PIT - CONTINUOUS

Conor stomps over to his boys by the plaster chicken. He kicks the chicken's leg in frustration. *It hurts his toes.*

As he bounces on one foot, the Boy in overalls laughs.

Riley finally shoots the kid a dirty look.

RILEY

Don't you have a banjo to be playing somewhere else?

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DUSK

Slu parks the Lincoln in the driveway beside his Mustang.

Bertha is parked in front. Marshall climbs out to meet them.

MARSHALL

I heard the news about Donna. I'm so sorry, brother.

He hugs Slu as he gets out of the Lincoln. Slu yelps. Marshall notices the wound.

MARSHALL

You in one piece?

SLU

Just a graze. Been home yet?

MARSHALL

Lord no. I'm gonna get a hollerin'.

Susan gets out of the car and looks around at the swamp.

Slu tosses the Lincoln keys to Marshall.

SLU

Sink the Lincoln for me, huh?

Slu goes to his muddy Mustang. His brow furrows.

SLU

Wasn't no mud on her when I left.

MARSHALL

You don't think Pops...?

Realization comes over Slu. Then frustration.

INT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

Pops and Jack watch the movie "Terms of Endearment." Munching Fried Pork Rinds. Stoned out of their gourds.

Jack snuffles as the movie breaks his heart. Pops chuckles. Jack raises his middle finger at him without looking away.

Slu RAGES through the front door, startling Jack. His bloodshot eyes practically glow red

SLU

I knew it! Fuckin' knew it! Who said you could drive my Mustang, Jack?!

Marshall and Susan follow in. Jack regains grumpy composure.

JACK

Well *someone* had to drive to the goddamn market cause some miserable bag o'dog shit left no goddamn milk for the goddam Trix! AND, for fuck sake, you put my LeMans in the mud!

SLU

I put it in the mud?

JACK

And while we're on it, I tipped you off on the kid in confidence. Why'd ya bring Tweedle-Dumber in on this?

MARSHALL

Hold up. Am I Tweedle-Dumber?

JACK

How 'bout you Tweedle-Kiss-my-ass?

MARSHALL

Y'see? There's that rapier wit I've missed all these many years.

Susan wanders away. The argument fades away to noise as she explores the disorganized room. *Unimpressed.*

She gets to Pops. He stares up at her. Eyes sunk in and red.

POPS

Hey. You. You're lil Sue, ain'tcha?

She nods. He struggles to recognize her adult face.

POPS

I reckon I'm yer Grandad.

SUSAN

Reckon so.

Pops wags his finger to come closer. She does. He leans his face close to hers. He squints.

He recognizes her and smiles. He pinches her cheek.

POPS

How ya been, Punk'in?

SUSAN

I've had better days.

He extends his jug of moonshine her direction. She's unsure.

POPS

Go on. Helps me a spell on bad days.

She reluctantly takes it and smells inside. Her nose crinkles.

SUSAN

Do I -- like, straight from the jug?

He nods, grinning. So she goes bottoms up for her first taste.

Fine at first. *Kinda nice.*

Then her eyes widen and she coughs like she's breathing fire.

POPS
(cackling)
A'ta girl.

She hands the jug back as her room begins spinning.

SUSAN
I'm feeling sick.

The argument stops. All eyes turn to her.

SLU
You okay, girl?

SUSAN
Look... can you just call your F.B.I.
guy so we can get things rolling?

Slu puts his hand out toward Jack.

SLU
This here is Jack Bass. Jack, my
daughter Susan. Least, she was my
daughter at one point.

SUSAN
This is your guy?

Jack grins at her with all the silver-toothed Southern charm he can muster. *Not remembering the lit joint in his hand.*

JACK
I saw you once when you was a baby.

Susan looks around at her family. She turns green.

SUSAN
I think I'm gonna --

Slu points his thumb down the hall.

SLU
First on the left.

She covers her mouth and breaks for the bathroom. They hear her heaving down the hall as Slu speaks up.

SLU
Alright, alright. We're all duckin' it.
What's our situation, Jack?

JACK

You're a *sumbitch of interest*. That's all. For now.

SLU

And Susan?

JACK

They're more concerned nobody's seen her. The Federal B.I. is lettin' the NYPD hang some Congressman for it, on account'a turns out he's some kinda pederast and Donna had the pictures. But *internally* -- F.B.I. thinks it's linked to somebody takin' out ol' Charlie Mahoney yesterday.
(dripping sarcasm)
But y'all don't know *nothin'* bout that, do ya?

MARSHALL

Conor Mahoney shot Charlie.

Jack's stoned mind is blown.

JACK

Whooooooooooooa. Killed his own daddy?

Marshall takes the joint from Jack. He partakes.

MARSHALL

Saw the whole thing. Front row.

SLU

And Prince Charming's on his way to us. Probably with two goons that got nothin' 'tween 'em but height and teeth.

MARSHALL

Ten-Four on them goons. Ran into those boys in Carolina. Me and Bertha slowed 'em down a spell.

SLU

Susan nabbed something of Conor's on her way out. A little black book.

JACK

Now we're talkin'. What's in it?

SLU

Maybe numbers? Connections?

MARSHALL

"Dear Diary, I'm gonna whack my dad."

Susan pokes her still queasy head out in the hallway.

SUSAN
It's his novel.

SLU
Say what?

SUSAN
The black book... It's a novel Conor's writing. Some awful shit about Irish coal miners. I took it to piss him off.

The men look at each other, not knowing what to make of it.

Slu bursts out in exhausted laughter. Practically falling to the floor in hysterics.

JACK
You nut. Best piece of your case just fell down an Irish coal mine.

Slu just can't stop laughing.

SLU
We're all gonna fry -- and that little shit can't figure out if he's Al Capone or Ernest Hemingway.

Susan goes back to the bathroom to wretch. Slu calms.

JACK
Now you'll hav'ta get yer hands on Conor Mahoney hisself to make anything stick on your end.

SLU
We stood on it all the way down. If they drive like other New Yorkers, I gained four or five hours on 'em easy. You say you slowed 'em down?

MARSHALL
Pinned 'em to a spot where they could either wait for the cops or thumb eighty miles to the next rental car.

SLU
Then they won't get here till morning. I'm exhausted. The kid's pukin'. Let us catch our breath a few hours.

JACK
Oh, I think that's a bad idea, Slu. This thing's real hot.

SLU

Want your Fed buddies havin' a good
look in those beady red eyes of yours?

Jack re-thinks how stoned he is.

JACK

Yeah. Sure, Slu. The kid's tired. I'll
call my guys in the morning. Butt crack
o'dawn though, understood?

EXT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

Marshall heads for Bertha. Jack follows.

JACK

Give an old man a lift?

MARSHALL

Shit, Jack. I was kinda lookin' forward
to havin' make-up love with my wife in
a coupla minutes.

JACK

Fine, goddammit. Not like I'm savin'
your ass too.

He mutters obscenities as he limps away.

MARSHALL

Hey Jack.

Jack turns back. Marshall tosses him the keys.

MARSHALL

To the Lincoln yonder.

Jack sees the Lincoln and smiles.

JACK

Ridin' first class.

MARSHALL

It's Conor Mahoney's. I'll be by your
place round five to dump it in the swamp.

Jack nods and heads to the Lincoln.

INT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

A dingy BATHROOM. Mildew. Brut cologne. One toothbrush.

Susan sits on the toilet lid, wiping her tears.

Slu gently knocks, and speaks through the door.

INTERCUT between her in bathroom and him out in the hall.

SLU
Doin' okay, kiddo?

She doesn't answer.

SLU
I'm goin' to bed. I'll take the guest room across the hall. Room at the end is mine. You take it. I set your suitcase in there. Sleep comfy.

Still no answer.

SLU
Look... Susan. I'm sorry, okay? Sorry for... sorry for everything.

No response. *He's trying his best.*

SLU
I... I fuck up a lot. I mean, not everything, but... I fuck up a lot. I, uh... I guess when Jack told me you was in trouble... I guess I saw my chance to... to *unfuck* something up for us.

Silence. She's crying again.

SLU
I'm sorry I couldn't fix it.

He walks away defeated.

She waits to hear the door across the hall close before she leaves the bathroom for --

INT. SLU'S ROOM - NIGHT

Susan flips on a small lamp on the nightstand.

Wooden dresser. Wooden bed frame. Wooden bookshelves. Wood paneling. Slu has a style. *Mid-Century Varnished.*

She switches on a record player. A *Lynn Anderson* album spins. *Same one as Donna's.*

She surveys his bookshelf. Louis L'Amour. Elmore Leonard. *Okay.* Hemingway? Steinbeck? Faulkner? *Unexpected.*

A BIG SCRAPBOOK sits out on the bed.

She gets the Early Times bottle from her suitcase and sits on the bed. It wiggles beneath her. *Fuck. She hates WATERBEDS.*

She cracks the seal, chugs from the bottle, and reaches for the scrapbook. She opens it up.

Baby and school photos of Slu make up the first page. Slu's Mother, dotting over her son. She flips to the next.

B&W photo of Pops looking good (and standing up!) with 20-something Slu -- laughing hysterically in daddy's headlock.

INT. GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The *Lynn Anderson* drifts down the dark hallway. A moonbeam lights Slu's face in bed. His eyes are wide open.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

Slu starts up the Mustang and speeds down the driveway.

INT/EXT. SLU'S ROOM / THE MUSTANG - MONTAGE

SLU'S ROOM

Susan takes another sip and moves to another scrapbook page of PHOTOS of Donna and Slu. *Happier, sillier, younger times.*

Photo of early-30's Slu, all denim and sideburns, beaming at a late-20's Donna in a sundress. Slu's arm propped on the hood of his Mustang. *A big red bow on top.*

THE MUSTANG

Slu makes wild turns. *Taking out his aggression on the road.*

He screams. He sobs. It all comes out.

SLU'S ROOM

Susan is increasingly emotional as she drinks and flips pages.

The back half of the scrapbook holds yellowing NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS authored by Donna.

Headlines: "Hero Bootlegger Drives 100-Proof Justice to Dunston County." "White Lightning vs. Dark Politics." "If You Can't Beat City Hall, Out Drink 'Em." "BLUE MUSTANG."

Tears stream down Susan's face as she scans thinly-veiled stories of how her father met her mother helping the F.B.I.

THE MUSTANG

Slu continues driving like a bat outta Hell. He wails as the Mustang goes airborne over a road dip.

SLU'S ROOM

Susan takes a deep breath and a drink. She flips to more photos in the scrapbook.

Photos of toddler Susan with Slu and Donna. Several interesting hair and fashion choices on all three of them from pic to pic. Holidays and picnics. *Nothing but smiles.*

THE MUSTANG

Slu punches up at the ceiling of the car. *Bam. Bam. Bam.* Tears roll down his contorted red face.

SLU'S ROOM

Last few pages are pictures of Susan growing up beside old letters handwritten by her and Donna, keeping Slu up on Susan's childhood. Photos of Susan in pigtails and braces.

THE MUSTANG

Slu's teary eyes are blurred as he races down the country road. He rubs his eyes to clear them.

When he removes his hand, he SCREECHES to a stop just before crunching into a BRICK WALL he didn't see coming.

SLU'S ROOM

Susan matches him tear for tear as she flips the last page.

The final page displays the only artifact that is not pristine. An INVITATION to the wedding of Donna Harper and George Mathis. *Ripped into pieces and scotch-taped together.*

THE MUSTANG

Slu sits parked an extended moment, sobbing into his forearm.

After a while he finally regains composure. He wipes his face with his palm. Snorts back some snot.

He gets out to peek over this new wall.

A new STRIP MALL. Fast food. Supercuts. Sign declaring "Walmart coming soon!"

SLU

Just ain't my world no more.

He spits and gets back in the car.

He turns it back home.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SUBURBAN FLORIDA STREET - NIGHT

Riley slowly drives the wobbly, piece-of-crap DODGE ARIES K STATION WAGON Jazz sent them. Exhaust trails behind them.

Blackie snores with an annoying whistle in the back.

Conor scopes out driveways to either side.

RILEY
I can't see shit.

CONOR
It's a tiny, shit-kicker town. We can search every house three times before the sun comes up.

RILEY
Or, just hear me out -- only once AFTER the sun comes up?

CONOR
They already have a lead on us.

RILEY
What if it's in a garage?

CONOR
It's not.

RILEY
How do you know?

Conor points his Lincoln out to Riley. Parked in the driveway of a cute yellow RANCH HOUSE.

INT. JACK BASS'S HOME - NIGHT

In the BEDROOM, Jack and his wife VERA, 60s, snore in bed. He's in boxers. Vera has rollers in her red hair.

Their wedding picture on her nightstand. A framed picture of younger Jack shaking hands with J. Edgar Hoover on his.

A sound startles Vera awake.

Blackie COVERS HER MOUTH!

Jack stirs awake.

His blurry vision reveals the business end of Riley's SMITH & WESSON aimed at him. Riley grins, revealing the missing tooth.

JACK
Oof.

Conor stands by Riley, looking down on the old man.

JACK

Buford?

INSERT

Buford snoozes clueless on a pillow in the kitchen.

BACK TO

Riley and Conor looking down on Jack.

CONOR

That Lincoln parked outside. Where did you get it?

JACK

Keys are on the dresser, mister. Just don't hurt my wife.

CONOR

I don't want the car, asshole. I want the fool you got it from.

Jack plays dumb and scared.

JACK

Some kid in the Kroger parking lot. Sumbitch didn't say how he got it. I didn't know it was stolen. I swear.

Riley PISTOL WHIPS Jack's nose. Blood sprays. Vera yelps.

CONOR

That's a nice picture of you shaking hands with J. Edgar Hoover. Want to try a different story, Pig?

Jack's bloodied face turns mean. He growls.

He LEAPS out of bed toward Riley --

The old man manages to knock him down.

Vera bites the hell out of Blackie's palm and screams bloody murder. He soon has her contained and silenced again.

The ruckus wakes Buford, who runs snarling for their room --

Conor slams the door. Buford's flat face runs into it with a thump. He barks incessantly on the other side.

Riley kicks Jack's metal leg out from under him --

The leg ROLLS across the floor --

Jack falls over on his stump.

He holds up on the bed's edge.

Riley stands. He puts the gun to Jack's temple.

CONOR
Want one more shot at this?

JACK
You're Charlie Mahoney's kid.

Conor looks curiously at this stranger who knows him.

CONOR
What else do you know about me?

Jack looks up with pure hate. *He knows this don't end well.*

JACK
Enough t'know the biggest mistake yo
Daddy ever made was not pushin' yo
Mamma down the stairs.

Conor laughs. He nods at Riley.

Riley SHOOTs.

In a quick spray of blood -- Jack is GONE.

Vera goes hysterical.

Riley points the gun at her. She quiets.

CONOR
I'll be more direct. Ever hear of a
redneck named Slu Renard?

Vera nods. Her tears run down Blackie's fingers.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAWN

Marshall and Veronica's BEDROOM. King-sized bed. Paintings on velvet of afro-ed black couples in Kama Sutra positions. Mirrored ceiling.

ALARM CLOCK rings. Marshall's eye pops open. He smacks the clock. He gets up and gets dressed.

Veronica, nude under the blanket, wasn't sleeping.

VERONICA
What if I say no?

He turns to her and smiles.

VERONICA
I'm serious.

MARSHALL
So is this.

VERONICA

I mean it, Marsh. I have a terrible feeling. Don't you have it too?

MARSHALL

How I feel's got nothin t'do with it.

VERONICA

You don't owe him anything.

He kisses her.

MARSHALL

Let's not fight, huh? Y'know.

VERONICA

(voice quivers)

I know, baby.

He kisses her again. Longer this time.

MARSHALL

I'll be back before supper's cold.

VERONICA

Holdin' ya to that.

MARSHALL

Stay beautiful.

He leaves the room. She hears him whistling for the dog.

MARSHALL (O.S.)

Hey, Fugly? Where ya at, pooch?

She hears the dog find him. He laughs and makes baby talk.

MARSHALL (O.S.)

You take care of Mamma, huh?

She cries in bed as she hears the front door close.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAWN

SLU'S BEDROOM

Susan sleeps on Slu's bed. On top of the sheets.

Scrapbook open on her legs. Half-drunk bottle of Early Times cradled in her arm, kinda like Pops and his jug.

She wakes from a nightmare.

She takes a moment to remind herself where she is.

She gets up and goes to...

HALLWAY

Susan stops at a door with a scribbled sign. "Pops room! Git out or else!"

Temptation too great. She opens the door into --

POP'S ROOM

An operating MOONSHINE STILL. Two blooming MARIJUANA PLANTS.

Empty jugs. Full ashtrays. Dingy underwear. Abandoned card game. Decades-old *Playboy* centerfolds.

She closes it holding her nose and goes to the last door.

The "Guest Room" where Slu snores loudly on the other side.

She opens to find it to instead be --

LIL SUE'S ROOM

Not altered since she was a toddler.

She gazes around in wonder.

Lincoln Logs. Plastic food. Raggedy Anne. Toy cars. Horse posters. A whole mountain of stuffed animals.

A FRAMED PHOTO of younger Slu holding his baby hangs on the rose wallpaper. "BIG SLU" hand-carved above the picture. "LIL SUE" beneath.

She tries and fails at not crying as she finds Slu --

Curled up snoring, cramped in her tiny TODDLER BED.

EXT. JACK BASS'S HOME - DAY

Marshall cruises his green Challenger toward the house. His head bops to the radio. Playing drums on the steering wheel.

He slows the car as he passes --

Four COP CARS and an unmarked GOVERNMENT SEDAN in front of Jack's yard. FOUR COPS talking to TWO F.B.I. MEN in suits.

A CORONER'S WAGON. A body already covered in the back.

MARSHALL

Oh, Jesus.

A CORONER rolls another DEAD BODY under a white sheet from the house. Jack's metal leg rests atop it.

Buford trots after him. The orphaned dog whines.

Marshall rolls past the scene as inconspicuously as he can.

MARSHALL

Sure got yourself some mess, son.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Slu enters the living room, scratching his crooked toupee.

Pops watches cartoons, munching a bowl of Trix.

SLU

Who got you Trix?

POPS

Lil Sue. You should ask her t'stay. She makes 'em better'n you do.

Slu rolls his eyes. *No point arguing this.*

SLU

Where'd she go?

POPS

Out front somewheres.

Slu looks out the window. He spies Susan on the end of their long dock, staring into the swamp.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

The SWAMP SUNRISE is a sight to behold. Sun dances off the water, lighting up lush land chirping with life.

Slu walks out to the start of the dock. Deep Breath.

Susan stands out at the end, out over the water.

SLU

Really somethin', ain't it?

She turns to face him. Tears in her eyes.

She holds a STUFFED ANIMAL to her chest. A FOX IN A BLACK COWBOY HAT.

SUSAN

What's his name?

SLU

That there's Mr. Swamp Fox.

She looks again at Mr. Swamp Fox, and back to Slu.

SUSAN

I think I remember... he was my favorite.

Slu smiles. Lone teardrop.

SLU
(voice cracks)
He's so happy to hear you say that.

Susan goes to her father.

They EMBRACE.

She looks up at him, smiling under his crooked toupee.

SUSAN
I just have to --

SLU
What?

She tears the toupee from his head.

Bald on top. White hair on the sides. *Still handsome.*

They laugh and hold tighter.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Wrapped in sheets, Veronica smokes off the edge of the bed.

Fugly whines sorrowful in another room. This gets her sobbing.

She wipes her nose and picks up the phone. Dials. *Fuck it.*

SHERIFF
(on phone)
Baker County Sheriff's.

VERONICA
If I tell y'all were somethin' bad's
gonna happen... I don't gotta tell
y'all my name, right?

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

KITCHEN

Slu and Susan enter through a BACK DOOR. Holding hands, smiling, and talking. Slu's toupee back in place.

SUSAN
Never had, nor intend to have, grits.

Slu starts filling a pot with tap water.

SLU
Hush. In half an hour you'll be
fightin' Jack over the last bowl.

She starts prepping a pot of coffee.

Reaching for the filters, she sees two COFFEE MUGS. The chipped, stained one has "SLU" etched in the side. The pristine white one is etched "DONNA."

SUSAN

You really loved her, didn't you?

He's taken aback, but smiles.

SLU

More than anything I was ever good at.

She smiles at his answer, but returns to her reality.

SUSAN

I'll be back home for the funeral?

He deflates. He looks to her and nods.

SLU

Hell or high water.

He looks out a window above the sink. He sees the Lincoln pull up and park outside.

He double takes when he sees *who's inside it*.

SLU

Son of a bitch.

Susan peers out the window.

SUSAN

Shit. Where's the phone?

SLU

Don't got one.

SUSAN

You don't have a telephone?

SLU

Don't believe in 'em.

SUSAN

(frustrated grunt)

Phones exist! I've seen them!

Conor, Riley, and Blackie are now out of the car.

SLU

Under my bed. Bring it here. Now.

She bolts for the bedroom.

LIVING ROOM

Slu goes to peek out the porch window.

SLU
If you can walk, ya ol' bastard, now's
the time to show me.

POPS
What th' hell is it now?

Slu clicks off the TV and looks out the curtains.

SLU
Just be ready for some shit. Hear?

POPS
They ain't takin' my grass.

Out the window, Slu sees Conor has his Beretta. Riley pulls his Smith & Wesson. Blackie pulls an UZI from his coat.

SLU
Ain't the Feds.

Slu grabs his 12-Gauge sawed-off from under the couch bed. He hands it to Pops.

SLU
If it ain't us, shoot 'im.

Susan hurries in with a RIFLE and CASE OF BULLETS.

He takes the rifle from her. He silently demonstrates to Susan how to load and rack it.

FRONT PORCH

The gangsters are at the door. Riley and Blackie await Conor's move. Blackie's busted nose whistles.

ZAAAP. The bug zapper buzzes another one.

Blackie spooks and FIRES.

RAT-TAT-TAT

Holes scatter the wall. The zapper swings and drops.

LIVING ROOM

Slu FIRES the rifle through the window. The shot hits Blackie in the arm. *He isn't phased.*

Slu and Susan drop for cover.

Blackie gives it to 'em. UZI FIRE sprays the living room.

Glass shatters. Wood splinters.

Slu fires again.

FRONT YARD

Conor heads to one side of the house. Blackie to another. Riley scurries around back.

Marshall obliviously parks his Challenger in front.

He gets out and heads to the house.

He spots the Lincoln. Scowls. *He knows who must have it.*

SLU (O.S.)

Marsh!

Blackie isn't seen, but his Uzi is sure heard. Bullets whizz as Marshall ducks and hops to the front door.

MARSHALL

Oh shit oh shit oh shit --

Slu opens the door.

LIVING ROOM

Marshall DIVES in on top of Slu. Both crash to the floor.

Pops cocks the sawed-off. It MISFIRES. Bits of ceiling fall down on him.

The Uzi answers back outside.

MARSHALL

Jesus Christ!

SLU

It's just Marshall, Pops! He's us!

MARSHALL

Yeah, old man! *I'm US!*

Warning CHIRP of a police siren outside.

Susan looks out the window. A BAKER COUNTY SHERIFF CAR has pulled up.

SUSAN

Cops. Two of them.

SLU

Two cars?

SUSAN

Two cops.

FRONT YARD

SERGEANT HAL JONES, 40s, opens the cruiser door.

Blackie fires on the police from the back of the house.

DEPUTY NED WESTON, 20s, grabs the CB handset.

NED
(into CB)
Shots fired! Big Slu's place!

The cops crawl out and shield behind their door --

They RETURN FIRE with revolvers --

They pause. Silence.

HAL
Slu ain't never shot at us before.

Blackie fires as he crosses the yard to a Cypress Tree for a better view of the cops. He covers behind it.

The cops shoot back.

They tag Blackie in the leg. *He doesn't even flinch.*

Conor shoots from his side of the house.

Hal and Ned shoot every damn where.

LIVING ROOM

Bullets zoom through the house from all sides -- barely missing our heroes ducking low to the ground.

MARSHALL
They think it's US firing back!

Holes rip through the walls. Through boxes. Glass breaks.

A bullet shatters Pop's TV. Tubes burst.

POPS
Sonsuvbitches!!!!

Riley SNEAKS in the room via the kitchen door.

They're all looking toward the window. Not seeing him --

Except for Pops.

Riley doesn't notice Pops in his bed.

Riley raises his pistol --

He aims at Slu's back --

Pops LEAPS from the bed to attack --

He reaches the final realization that he CAN'T FUCKING WALK!

He FLOPS in front of Riley.

Riley STUMBLES OVER Pops at his feet.

In his stumble, his GUN FIRES --

The BULLET enters SLU'S SIDE!

A nasty exit out his GUT!

Slu falls to his knees.

Susan doesn't miss a beat --

She grabs Slu's rifle as he falls --

She fires the rifle through Riley's ear --

Riley drops DEAD.

She's shocked as an afterthought, but shakes it off.

It sets off another shooting match outside.

Marshall and Susan drop to Slu on the ground. Marshall checks out the wound.

MARSHALL

Ain't fatal, if'n he gets help. Gonna hurt like a motherfucker, son.

Pops cackles victoriously from the ground.

SLU

Great... savin'... Pops.

Gunfire continues outside.

Susan props Pops up on the side of the couch.

Slu HOWLS as Marshall slides him across Pop's lap.

Pops looks down at his wounded son cradled in his arms.

POPS

Fuck am I supposed t'do with 'im?

Marshall hands Pops the top sheet from the couch bed.

MARSHALL

Hold this on the wound, hero.

Pops does as he's told.

Gunfire outside pauses for another reload.

Marshall very carefully looks out the broken window.

The F.B.I.'s UNMARKED SEDAN has pulled up next to the cops.

TWO FEDS, guns drawn, share the cop's car door as a shield.

MARSHALL

Couple Federal buddies have joined us.

SLU

Jack?

MARSHALL

Forgot to tell y'all... Jack's dead.

Slu and Pops groan.

MARSHALL

Well, there wasn't no way to warm up to it when I got here!

Cops and F.B.I. fire at Marshall. He ducks back down.

Slu coughs up blood.

SLU

Get me... to the Mustang.

MARSHALL

(stern look)

Nuh-uh. No way.

Slu does a shit job pretending to feel better.

SLU

I can do it.

MARSHALL

You never planned nothin' in your life. Suddenly *this* is what you got?

SLU

You know I'm right.

SUSAN

What's in the Mustang?

Slu struggles to sit up.

SLU

I can still feel my toes. I can make 'em chase me a few miles at least. Worst they can do is arrest me.

POPS

Then what the fuck they do with me?!

MARSHALL

You got two new holes, Buddy-roo. You ain't goin' nowhere.

Slu turns to Susan.

SLU

Least one of 'em left out there. We need one alive. Have you got 'em?

Susan exhales. She nods. Which turns to an insecure head shake. Then back to a nod.

SLU

I can make this.

MARSHALL

Not breathin'.

SLU

That don't make no difference now.

(beat)

Hey Marsh? Thank you. For all of it.

Marshall nods solemnly. *They've reached the finish line.*

He turns back to the window. Not much distance between the garage and the police cars. *Wheels turn in Marshall's head.*

MARSHALL

Goddammit. Might could work.

FRONT YARD

Cops and F.B.I. listen out for more gunfire.

Instead, they hear REVVING from inside the GARAGE.

They look to each other, and back to the garage.

The Mustang CRASHES out the garage door -- Top speed --

They roll away safely as the Mustang snaps off the DRIVER'S DOOR on the cop car --

The F.B.I. leap to their feet first.

They jump in their sedan and speed off behind the Mustang --

Ned and Hal look to each other in the F.B.I.'s dust.

HAL

We gotta stay put.

Ned watches the chase getting away from him. He whines.

Hal looks at the disappearing cars. Back to the quiet house.
Back to the cars. *Fine, fuck it.*

HAL

C'mon.

They jump in, sans driver's door, and join in --

THE CHASE!

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - DAY

The Mustang roars through the swamplands.

Cops and F.B.I. cars give solid chase -- SIRENS BLARING.

Hard turns. Twists.

Across a rickety WOODEN BRIDGE over an active ALLIGATOR NEST.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Conor stalks to the side of the house. Gun up and ready.

CONOR

Riley?

Nothing.

CONOR

Blackie? You there?

He spots Blackie's DEAD BODY under the tree.

He crouches and strains to turn Blackie over.

Blackie has bullet holes in his legs, torso, and arms. *The winner is right in his forehead.*

Conor checks Blackie's Uzi. Out of ammo. *Worthless.*

A breeze blows a WHITE PAGE around Conor's shoe.

He looks down at it. Stoops to pick it up.

It has handwriting. His eyes go wide. -- *His handwriting!*

It's a page ripped from his black book!

He bolts up. Looks around.

More pages litter the lawn between him and the house.

For half a second, he sees Susan turning the corner back to the front of the house.

Another page floats behind her.

He fires. Bullet ricochets off the side of the house.

CONOR

You bitch!

He starts collecting each page off the ground before the breeze can blow his masterpiece away.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - DAY

The Mustang continues its chase.

Another cop car joins --

And another --

And a few more --

The Mustang never slows.

All the cops enjoy the chase. They CB each other excitedly.
Their chance to outrun a legend!

The F.B.I. Agents never smile.

Ned holds on for life with a missing driver door. *Loving it.*

NED

My pappy had a chase with Big Slu
once. Still tells it every Easter.

The Mustang takes a reckless turn with grace.

Cop cars swerve to clear it --

Several CRASH OUT.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Conor notices his one getaway, the Lincoln, is looking more like Swiss cheese.

The pompously insecure writer side of him has overtaken the dangerously unstable gangster side of him.

He picks up each page in the yard and adds it to the paper bundle collected to his chest.

Pages all over the porch too! Panicked as he picks them up.

Susan's arm throws a few more out the front door. What's left of the screen door SLAMS, startling him up.

He turns and shoots blindly, nearly dropping his bundle.

CLICK.

His Beretta is empty. He looks at it annoyed and throws it.
 He nearly drops the bundle again as he picks up a LONG RUSTY
 SCREWDRIVER off the lawn as a weapon.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - DAY

The Mustang continues to chase with a good lead.

Sirens flash in tandem behind.

A SWAMP FOX trots IN THE PATH of the oncoming Mustang --

The Mustang SWERVES --

It COLLIDES with a thick TREE TRUNK!

The front of the Mustang CRUNCHES in on itself.

Its roar ceases.

Steam hisses from the hood.

The cops stop and get out of their cars.

They approach the Mustang slowly. GUNS DRAWN.

The DRIVER'S WINDOW is busted.

They peer in.

Marshall is in the driver's seat.

Wearing Slu's hat.

Crunched in by the ENGINE. Bleeding. *A lot.*

HAL

You ain't Big Slu.

MARSHALL

Dammit... I knew I shoulda... worn the
 fake... mustache.

Marshall spots the fox down the road.

He and the fox share a moment looking at each other.

Marshall cracks up laughing. Blood runs down his chin.

MARSHALL

The fox gets it... He thinks it's
 hysterical.

The cops don't understand.

He spits blood at them.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Conor enters the LIVING ROOM. Shaking now. Wielding the screwdriver and protecting his bundle to his chest.

He looks around. More ripped pages!

No reaction to Riley's body as he picks up papers.

Susan's voice reads out from the kitchen.

SUSAN (O.S.)
 "Her heart fairly throbbed for his
 callused Irish working hands." Christ,
 Conor, I'm doing you a favor.

RIIIIIIIIP.

CONOR
 Let's not get crazy now.

Pop's cackle rolls out of the kitchen.

POPS (O.S.)
 Boy, you sped past crazy at the last
 cloverleaf.

CONOR
 Who the hell was that?

SUSAN (O.S.)
 My badass grandpa.

CONOR
 I'm unarmed.

POPS (O.S.)
 The fuck you waitin' fer, blockhead?
 Element of surprise?

RIIIIIIIIP.

Conor's face turns. Fear disappears. *Anger radiates.*

He runs toward the kitchen --

Past the couch bed --

Where Slu POPS UP from the bed!

He jams his pocket CORKSCREW up Conor's NOSE!

Conor freezes. Drops the screwdriver.

Looks cross-eyed at the bump in his nose.

He raises his hands in surrender.

Pages waft to the floor.

SLU
Hiya there, Alibi.

Slu hurts bad -- but holds steady on his knees in the bed.
Susan comes from the kitchen, pushing Pops in a wheelbarrow.

POPS
That's all we was afraid of?

Susan sees Conor, up on his tiptoes and looking so miserable with her dad's corkscrew up his nose. Little blood trickle from his nostril down his lip.

She laughs.

SUSAN
You done fucked with the wrong family,
son.

Conor grunts in humiliation. *He hates them sooo much.*
Sirens approach outside.

FADE OUT

INT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

SUPER: Three Months Down the Line...

The walls are patched up. Windows fixed. Cardboard and duct tape work miracles. Pop's TV replaced with a bigger one.

Pops sits on the couch bed, enjoying an old Western.

Slu lounges next to him, eating a TV dinner.

Both have HOUSE ARREST ANKLETS on.

A TELEPHONE RINGS.

Slu groans as he rises. He LIMPS past Pop's WHEELCHAIR.

Buford trots in BARKING.

SLU
It's the goddamn phone, Buford!

He picks up his new *Sports Illustrated* FOOTBALL PHONE.

SLU
Slu's place.

SUSAN
 (on phone)
 Hey, Pop.

He smiles to hear her.

SLU
 Who's this?

SUSAN
 Stop playing dumb. How the hell did you
 get it here?

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She sits in her same Greenwich Village apartment. Gone is the expensive furniture. Pure thrift store Bohemian now.

Mr. Swamp Fox rests on the couch.

SLU
 (on phone)
 Let's say Santa Clause couldn't do
 better if'n he drove a *Bertha* too.

SUSAN
 Awww. Tell Uncle Marsh thank you.

EXT. FIELD & SHORE COFFEE ROASTERS - CONTINUOUS

The conversation is heard fading through her window.

SLU (O.S.)
 Wish I coulda delivered it myself --
 But figured a Daddy's on the hook to do
 somethin' when his little girl gets her
 driver's license.

Down below, parked in front of the cafe --

THE BLUE MUSTANG.

Fully repaired and gorgeous. BIG RED BOW.

New York license plate reads "**LIL SUE.**"

THE END

*DEDICATION: "For Burt -- We got a long way to go and a short
 time to get there."*